

Speleo Spiel 451

July-August 2022



STC Office Bearers

President: Janine McKinnon

Ph: 0427 889 965

jmckinnon@caverneer.net.au

Vice President: Gabriel Kinzler

Ph: 0473 388 344

gabrielkinzler@hotmail.com

Secretary: Russell Fulton

Ph: 0427 956 297

FultonRL@bigpond.com

Treasurer: Karina Anders

Ph: 0478 228 639

karina_anders@hotmail.com

Equipment Officer: Alan Jackson

Ph: 0419 245 418

alan.jackson@lmrs.com.au

Librarian: Greg Middleton

Ph: (03) 6223 1400

ozspeleo@iinet.net.au

Spiel Editor: Janine McKinnon

Ph: 0427 889 965

jmckinnon@caverneer.net.au

Search & Rescue Officer: Jemma Herbert

herbertjemma@gmail.com

Training Officer: Janine McKinnon

Ph: 0427 889 965

jmckinnon@caverneer.net.au

Archivist/Webmaster: Stephen Fordyce

Ph: 0437 356 322

stephen.fordyce@gmail.com

Public Officer: Gabriel Kinzler

Ph: 0473 388 344

gabrielkinzler@hotmail.com

Social Secretary: Phil Jackson

Ph: 03 6243 7038

pmjackson@dodo.com.au

Front Cover: *My precious. Karina Anders (with hot chocolate) in Delta Variant, JF.*

Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

Back Cover: *There's a cave in there somewhere. Rocket Rods Pot, Ida Bay.*

Photo: John Oxley

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

Newsletter of the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Incorporated

PO Box 416, Sandy Bay, Tasmania 7006

<http://southerntasmaniancaverneers.wordpress.com/>

ABN: 73-381-060-862

ISSN 2208-1348

The views expressed in the *Speleo Spiel* are not necessarily the views of the Editor, or of the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Incorporated.

Issue No. 451, July-August 2022

Contents

Regular Bits

Editorial	Janine McKinnon	3
Stuff 'n' Stuff	Janine McKinnon	3

Trip Reports

The 2022 Irish Student Caving Forum	Ciara Smart	4
JF-761 Delta Variant	Stephen Fordyce	9
JF-761 Delta Variant	Gabriel Kinzler	10
JF-489 Perfect Pitch Pot	Ciara Smart	11
L-6 Mostyn Hardy Cave: Loongana	Deb Hunter	13
JF-757 False Positive, JF-489	Gabriel Kinzler	14
H-8 Wolf Hole	Ciara Smart	15
JF-761 Delta Variant	Gabriel Kinzler	16
IB-171 Rocket Rods Pot	Janine McKinnon	17

Other Exciting Stuff

JF-10 Sesame – Amphipod	Stephen Fordyce	18
DT-33. Map	Greg Middleton	19
JF-207 Voltera	Alan Jackson	21
Maps: JF-757, JF-489	Gabriel Kinzler	22
STC Trip Leader list	Janine McKinnon	24

The Last Page

25

This work is STC copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission from the publishers and the inclusion of acknowledgement of the source.

Editorial

As I write, we are still in the throes of the surprisingly widespread media blitz that was engendered by the recent connection trip between Delta Variant and Niggly, and the resulting record that created. Wearing my President's hat (or email address) I even received a request for someone to interview from CNN in Hong Kong. Ciara Smart spearheaded media interviews and has done an excellent job.

This can only be good publicity for caving, STC, and the general theme of “getting out there and doing exciting stuff safely and competently” that we all value as a lifestyle choice.

Congratulations to the team, including those on the lead-up trips who couldn't make the ultimate connection trip. They contributed equally to this success. It was a terrific effort, the culmination of months of work, and a great success for Tassie, and STC, caving.

Sadly for you, dear readers, any trip report has missed the deadline for this *Spiel*. You will have to wait until next issue to read the exciting, inside story. A bit of anticipation never hurt anybody. Fortunately though, this issue does contain a number of trip reports of the exciting stuff leading up to the record-making effort.

But wait...there are other exciting trip reports and articles to read in this issue. It isn't only about exploration. We even have some corrections from past issues.

Happy reading.

Stuff 'n' Stuff

Clarification of “The 1978 Cave & Cliff Rescue Team” *Speleo Spiel* 448

The late 1970s and early 1980s were very much the formative period of cave search & rescue in Tasmania, under the guidance of Tasmania Police.

The ongoing operational perspective can be credited to one man's vision, Inspector Maurice Massie, OIC of Tasmania Police Search & Rescue at that time.

The 1976 cave rescue exercise “Operation Ferret” held in Herberts Pot at Mole Creek was the first multi-club and agency exercise of such type conducted. It was largely organised by the Southern Caving Society with the Tasmanian Police Search & Rescue division.

Subsequent to “Operation Ferret” was “Operation Womguano” and that was held in Beginners Luck in the Florentine Valley in 1978, where dragmats & the Paraguard Stretcher were utilised. It was during this exercise that rampart enthusiasm led to the demise of the “victim” within 30 seconds, much was learned from this poo poo resulting in attention to appropriate vertical retrieval and welfare of the “victim”.

For those of you who have not had the pleasure of knowing me, and therefore are not privy to the often obscure humour of such, I actually did participate (physically mostly) in the “Bishop & Clerk” cliff rescue exercise that was so thoroughly exaggerated by the media at that time.

Bill Nicholson

ASF insurance addendum

I should have added the following to the article on ASF insurance in SS450, p34:

Please contact asf.caves.info@gmail.com for a copy of the policy wording.

Cave tags issues

During a recent JF entrances and tagging records audit, it was noted that a few tags had been applied that have not been recorded in the *Spiel*. This note hopes to sort that out for some of them.

JF-682 – Upon enquiry Jacko supplied the following: “JF-682 is a pissy little hole 2.5 m deep about 15 m east of JF-586.”

JF-687 – Upon enquiry Jacko supplied the following: “I did apply that tag to a little 4 m-deep slot located towards Toad Hall from Chrisps Rd. A couple of years ago Bill sent the location and pics to the Index officer. Serena, Russell and Greg were also on the trip.” I think it's fair to assume that Bill's trip report in SS442:7 covers the trip(s) Jacko is referring to. I'm also guessing that the ‘Toad Hall’ Jacko refers to is JF-651 Toads Hole. Younger members of the club could interpret this situation as a warning re the dangers of abusing both illicit and legal drugs.

JF-692, JF-693 and JF-695 are also in the unexplained basket and all signs point to Pax. He will be duly interrogated.

Erratum

The report in SS444:13 erroneously records the cave in question as being tagged JF-667. It is in fact tagged with JF-664 (Rolan Eberhard, pers. comm.).

Alan Jackson

The Cricket. ASF email Newsletter

E-Speleo has been retired and replaced with a new look and production team. You should all have seen it. They launched just in time for *International Cave and Karst Day*, on 6 June.

The production team is David Butler and Cathie Plowman from NC and graphic designer Kelly Eijdenberg.

They are the efficient crew that have brought you, and will hopefully continue to do so, ASF Cave Animal of the Year for the last few years. They do great posters each year, and my mug collection wants to continue to grow.

However, I digress.

The deadline for the next issue is mid-August for the September issue. You can reach them at: asf.caves.thecricket@gmail.com

I encourage you to send interesting stuff that STC is doing to them. More from you all is better than less, I'd think.

Trip Reports

The 2022 Irish Student Caving Forum

31 March – 2 April 2022

Pollnatagha-Pollprughlisk, Prod's Pot, Bruce's Hole, Polltullyard (Shannon)

Photos (mostly) and text by **Ciara Smart**

Participants: Ciara Smart (STC), with Angela Prior, Matthieu Briet, Adrian Bacaoanu, Aodhán Ó Gabhann, Adam Prior (Dublin City University Caving Club) and others from University College Dublin Caving Club, Technological University of Dublin Caving Club, Queens University Belfast Caving Club, and University of Limerick Outdoor Pursuits Club

Prelude

After not travelling internationally for 27 months, it was a considerable shock to the system to find myself booking a ticket to Ireland with only 36 hours' notice. Unfortunately, my grandfather was unwell, so I travelled over to Ireland expecting the inevitable. The inevitable happened, and we sent my grandfather off in a proper rural Catholic fashion; with a three-day-long funeral attended by several hundred individuals. There was ceremony, community, live music, an open coffin and plenty of tea and biscuits. The Irish are vastly superior at funerals.

Wanting to make the most of my unexpected travel, I spoke to a few friends from the caving community. I'd brought a stripped-down caving kit just in case the stars lined up. I was in luck and talked my way onto the 2022 Irish Student Caving Forum. This is a four-day long event traditionally held over Easter. I had last attended the event in 2016. In 2016-17 I was lucky enough to be living on and off in Ireland and I spent a lot of time caving all over Europe with Dublin City University Caving Club (DCUCC).

Thanks to global events, the forum hadn't been held since 2019. For much of 2020-21 caving was off the cards in Ireland thanks to extensive, country-wide lockdowns, so there was a great deal of excitement about this event. This year was again DCUCC's turn to host the event. The Irish Student Caving Forum draws university cavers and alumni from all over Ireland to cave, talk about caving, participate in workshops, listen to guest speakers, compete in organised caving games, and just generally have a solid party. Participants stay in a large community centre in Kiltyclougher, Leitrim which is right on the border with the North and about 2.5 hours from Dublin. The caves themselves are mostly in Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, and some pass underneath the border.

The caves in this part of Ireland are not hugely dissimilar to caves in the Junee-Florentine in Tasmania, although it is easy to argue that a feature of most caves is their ubiquity. Northern Irish caves are often wet, and the air temperature sits around eight to ten degrees Celsius. The caves tend to have a vertical entrance series before reaching a horizontal main streamway. However, they are rarely more than a hundred metres in depth and generally not extensive in size. They are sparsely decorated. The key difference is that caving is significantly more popular in Ireland than Tasmania. As a result, the caves tend to have permanent

anchors and are well publicised, and Irish cavers have more friends.

30th March

I organised to meet up with a few caving friends in Dublin on the Wednesday before the event to head to Kiltyclougher early. We were to pre-rig several caves before participants arrived. I got to Dublin City University on Wednesday evening which is training night for the club. Every week during semester DCUCC gets a few hours to commandeer the university climbing gym and rig hypothetical vertical set-ups involving all manner of obstructions. After basic instruction, new cavers are set loose on the wall with varying results. Inevitably, stuff-ups ensue, occasionally requiring the use of the ladder of shame. This Wednesday was no different, and it was lovely to see a new generation of cavers flailing on the wall, especially after the disruption of COVID on university clubs.



Wouldn't it be great to have these facilities?

After training, myself and Angela Prior raided the club lockers. We stuffed her small hatchback full of bursting with helmets, ropes, harnesses, oversuits, cave packs and enough general paraphernalia to rig a dozen caves and poorly outfit several dozen cavers. Every time I go to Ireland, I am amazed by the compactness and fuel efficiency of the cars. It makes me momentarily grateful that our own antipodean backwater is yet to implement an effective tax on the gas-guzzling larger vehicles so beloved by Australian cavers. At this point a litre of petrol in Ireland was almost 3 AUD! After packing we drove to Dublin airport and picked up Mattieu Briet who had flown in for the event. We got to Kiltyclougher sometime well after midnight and met

Aodhán Ó Gabhann. It was great to be back caving with these three friends whom I'd last seen on our club caving trip to Vercors, France. We started the forum off in good stead by staying up until 3 am.



Old friends Adam, Adrian, Aodhán and Mattieu (DCU)

31st March

The day of caving began as many student caving days begin; standing in the carpark gazing at a mismatched pile of gear and realising that we didn't actually have enough rope to fulfil our objectives, nor did we have a coherent plan. An urgent call to Dublin was made and an emergency shipment of gear was organised for that night. I think my general tolerance has been spoiled a little bit by caving so much with STC where displays of prolonged faffing tend to result in future caving invitations being rescinded. Student caving, on the other hand, is more... relaxed, but usually enjoyable.

To continue the tardy start, we enjoyed a full Irish breakfast at a local café. Later I was to regret the generous serving of black pudding. Afterward, the four of us headed to the Pollnatagha/Pollprughlisk system. 'Poll' translates to 'hole' in Irish and so a lot of caves begin with this prefix. We were intending to do a cross-over trip to rig two connecting caves at once.

Access to caves in Northern Ireland is generally quite good on account of well-established 'right-to-roam' legislation (*and wouldn't we love to have it here – Ed*). While most caving areas are on farmland, you can generally still access the caves which are typically fenced off to prevent livestock falling to a painful death. The access to the day's designated caves involved crossing a quintessential Irish bog positioned on a windswept treeless plateau. 'Wellies', not gumboots, were essential. When one of my compatriots described the approach as 'one of the longer walks,' I was pleasantly surprised that by 'longer,' he meant longer than ten minutes.

It took us a grand total of twenty minutes of bog-hopping in the sunshine to reach the entrance. What a relief after a summer spent thrashing around in the hilly undergrowth of the Junee-Florentine.



Carpark for Pollnatagha-Pollprughlisk

Pollnatagha and Pollprughlisk are two separate vertical entrances, both a few pitches in length, sitting no more than a hundred metres apart. Pollprughlisk sits within County Cavan in the Republic of Ireland by just six metres. Pollnatagha is within Northern Ireland. Their respective systems wind around underground before eventually connecting, making the through-trip an unusual way to cross the border. Angela and I headed to rig Tagha while the boys went to Prughlisk. All going well, we'd meet each other underground and exit out the other entrance.



Myself and Angela. Easy caves make relaxed cavers.

On the surface, Tagha's entrance pot is neatly fenced off while a large stream sinks just beside it. The 50 m free-

hanging entrance pitch is broken up with three rebelay and has a dramatic view across to a waterfall dropping away alongside. It lands in a very large chamber filled with spray from the roaring waterfall. As I descended, the majesty of the pitch was somewhat undermined by the presence of a stinking, heavily decomposed sheep carcass positioned right in the landing zone. I thought of all the student cavers who were going to have to wait their turn to ascend the rope fully exposed to this retch-inducing aroma.

From here a convoluted series of tight crawls and squeezey rifts connect to the Prughlisk system. This cave has a notorious reputation for transforming many a would-be through-trip into a bounce-trip owing to the challenging nature of the route-finding. It had been six years since I'd last been in this cave, and none of the others had been there recently. Suffice to say it took some intensive problem-solving to find the route through. Inevitably, we ran into the boys in a very constricted meander and had to backtrack some way to pass each other. Eventually Angela and I spotted a dangling rope and ascended out Prughlisk. The two enjoyable pitches of Prughlisk ascend about 60 m and sit in filtered daylight. Cavers are subjected to spray from another sinking stream making it an unpleasant trip in high water levels and cold weather. We got out about 5 pm and while we intended to rig another cave that evening, we were on a student trip, so we gave in to our stomachs and headed back instead.



Post Pollnatagha-Pollprughlisk with Aodhán. Note fenced off sink behind, and anchors drilled into the path!

1 April

On day two I headed off to rig Prod's Pot with Aodhán while Angela and Matthieu headed to Noone's Hole. The nomenclature of the caves in this area point to a little of the region's long history of conflict. Noone's Hole is the eponymous site of a gruesome murder. In 1826, Irishman Dominick Noone, a member of a covert Catholic organisation, betrayed his brethren by passing information to the authorities. His information resulted in several Irishmen being arrested and transported to Australia. As a punishment, his countrymen hurled him to his death down the vertical entrance of this cave. Prod's Pot was discovered on the 12th of July 1970 from where it takes its title. The 12th of July is celebrated in Northern Ireland for the victory of the Protestant King William of Orange over the Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne. July 12th is still a public holiday in Northern Ireland and is marked, according to some of my friends, 'by fires and Catholics getting beaten

up.' If you know a smidge of Irish history, you will understand why treating this date as a 'celebration' continues to be highly inflammatory.

A ten-minute stroll across open farmland brought us to a fenced off copse. Prod's Pot is one of the more challenging caves that is regularly done by student cavers because of its vertically constricted nature. The entrance begins with a tight 12 m pitch. Four other similarly tight pitches follow at 9 m, 10 m, 5 m and 10 m respectively, broken up with challengingly constricted vertical traverses and squeezes. The final pitch is particularly notorious, as a very tight bend around a boulder chock must be negotiated while hanging on rope. Immediately after this the pitch opens up dramatically and ends in the spacious main streamway. A sizable body of water runs through the horizontal main streamway which is several kilometres in length but is broken up by sumps. We headed upstream for about half an hour passing some excellent decorations. Eventually we reached the upstream sump and turned around before ascending out of the cave. I had last done Prod's Pot in 2016, at which point I found the tight pitches quite demanding. This trip seemed considerably easier. I don't think I've got any smaller, and the cave certainly hasn't been enlarged, which means that perhaps my caving skills have progressed. This was a nice observation.



Aodhán at the entrance to Prod's Pot

Getting back to the cars by mid-afternoon we figured we'd rig another cave. We decided to head to Shannon, one of the more famous caves in the area. After a thirty-minute drive, and opening and closing an objectionable number of farm gates, we reached a farmyard where we met our friend Adrian. By this point it was already getting dark, but we trogged up and headed up into the moor in the drizzling rain.

The Shannon is the longest river in Ireland and England and this cave is its source. Consequently, there is significant

motivation to extend the main streamway of this cave which already stretches over five kilometres and is not yet fully explored. However, Shannon is notorious for collapsing and has witnessed numerous accidents. In 1995 the original entrance, Pollahuna, collapsed. A new route into the main streamway had to be hand-dug from the alternative entrance of Polltullyard. This is now the main entrance, and the tight, hand-cut passage is called 'Rebirth.' Polltullyard is composed of a single pitch, followed by squeezes and crawls until you reach the main streamway. We arrived at Polltullyard in the dark. We quickly rigged the single 33 m entrance pitch and went down it for a bit of fun. As it was late and our intention was just to rig, we didn't go any further.

We got back to the community centre about 10 pm, as hordes of student cavers were filtering in the doors in various states of disarray and excitement. Despite the time, festivities kicked off that night with the 'Lovely Ladies and Dashing Daddies' competition taking place sometime after midnight. This gender-balanced cross-dressing contest is a historic highlight of the forum and always entertains.

2nd April

Many groggy heads made a laggardly start to the day. Over fifty cavers were now present, bringing varying levels of experience, equipment, and common sense. It was a significant logistical challenge to send everyone to appropriate caves with the necessary apparatus and knowledge of the cave's location and features. By noon most cavers had been bundled into cars and sent off. I elected to go to Bruce's Hole hoping for a shorter day.



Bruce's Hole entrance pitch

After arrival, we split into two groups - each headed to a vertical entrance. We planned a cross-over.

We entered via a short pitch then crawled through a series of tight passages. Unfortunately, several other cars of cavers had also headed to Bruce's Hole, making for an unpleasantly crowded cave and long waits at the pitches. The exit pitch was enjoyable as we abseiled out through a window in a large cliff face into broad daylight. Our 'short' cave had turned into several hours.



The exit pitch of Bruce's Hole

Back at the community centre I met Tony from Starless River. He'd come over with a car full of gear to sell and was busy making the most of a captive audience. That evening we had a few guest talks on caving-related topics. I gave a talk on Tasmanian caving which was well received. I was a little exasperated that most of the cavers were so appalled by the presence of *Hickmania troglodytes* that they immediately ruled out Tasmania as a caving destination. Then the 'Caving Games' were opened. These were a series of scored caving-related challenges. Expectedly, table traversing was a feature. The 'Squeeze Machine,' essentially limbo for cavers, was a notable focus. This was a sturdy square frame with a board fitted through the middle that could be progressively lowered to make a smaller and smaller opening. Individuals who could not fit through the opening were eliminated, and each round the board was lowered. As you'd expect, by the final round only people of a slight build were left. I was pleased to make it to the final round, impressively it appears that if my cranium can fit through an opening then my body can too. Although this is not quite an exact simulation of authentic caving conditions, I'll take the confidence boost. Revelry continued well into the not-so-early hours of the morning.

3rd April



Another glorious carpark. Pre-Shannon

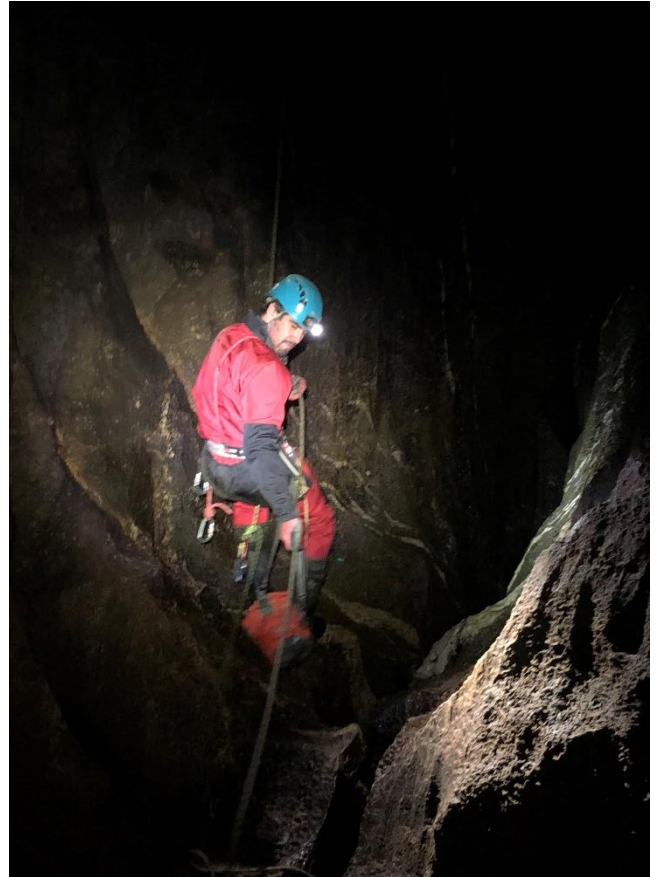
For my last full day of caving, I decided to go back to Shannon via the Polltullyard entrance. This time I wanted to make a proper attempt, having only gone as far as the entrance pitch on the first trip. Adrian, Aodhán, two freshers and I squeezed into a small hatchback, just managing to fit our gear. We were at the entrance quickly and headed down the 33 m pitch. From there, a series of crawls take you to the man-made passage known as ‘Rebirth.’ This 40 m tunnel is very low and narrow and requires an uncomfortable angled crawling technique. We set our timers and raced through. I’m pleased to say I won, at 33 seconds, while retrieving someone else’s footwear no less.



The moor on the way to Shannon



A civilised approach to Shannon



Adrian descending Polltullyard

From Rebirth we met the main streamway which was less open than I expected. While we were often able to walk in the stream, we frequently had to negotiate boulder piles and climb through rifts when the main stream became impassable. At points it took us a few attempts to find the route through. I could see why Shannon has a reputation for collapse as much of the roof in the main streamway looked unstable. I saw multiple attempts at ‘gardening,’ where safety-conscious cavers had installed metal braces to reinforce perilously placed boulders in the ceiling. We spent a few hours in the main streamway, passing several impressive decorations before eventually turning around and exiting the way we’d come in. It was an enjoyable sporting cave, and I can see the attraction of extending it.

That evening many cavers returned home, leaving a core contingent of DCU cavers back at the community centre. I had to fly home the next day, so spent much of the evening washing my gear in a very inadequate bathroom sink. The next day I got a lift to Enniskillen from where I took a bus to Dublin. In Dublin I had two hours to get a negative COVID test before being allowed to board the plane. Suffice to say, the COVID paperwork hoops were excruciating and when it came to it the airport staff barely glanced at it. The stress was exacerbated by the fact that Dublin airport was making international headlines for its staff shortages and ongoing flight cancellations. Managing to dodge COVID and successfully passing through the airport queues with at least five minutes to spare, I landed in Hobart after a forty-two-hour transit and headed straight to work. I’m grateful for my time with Dublin City University Caving Club, and hopefully it won’t be another four years before I head back to Ireland. Judging by the photos, the weather does seem better over there.

JF-761 Delta Variant

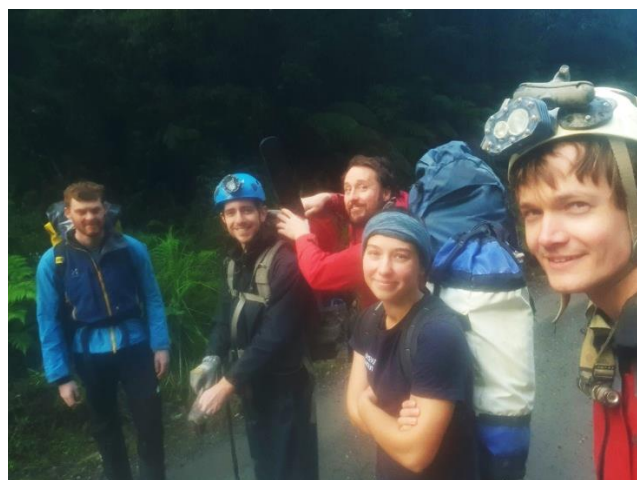
(“Freedom Day” discovery)

4 June 2022

Stephen Fordyce (text & photos)

Party: Karina Anders, Ben Armstrong, Stephen Fordyce, Jemma Herbert, Gabriel Kinzler, Petr Smejkal

It turns out this is the first report I’ve written for a Delta Variant trip! Since Daily Cases had finally been bottomed and Jemma reported a long meander at the bottom with some climbs and a ~8 m pitch, I estimated from the survey data we’d hit a final 70 m pitch into Niggly and helpfully pre-named it “Freedom Day”, being the triumphant culmination of a whole lot of sacrifice, privation, and annoyingness (of COVID lockdown).



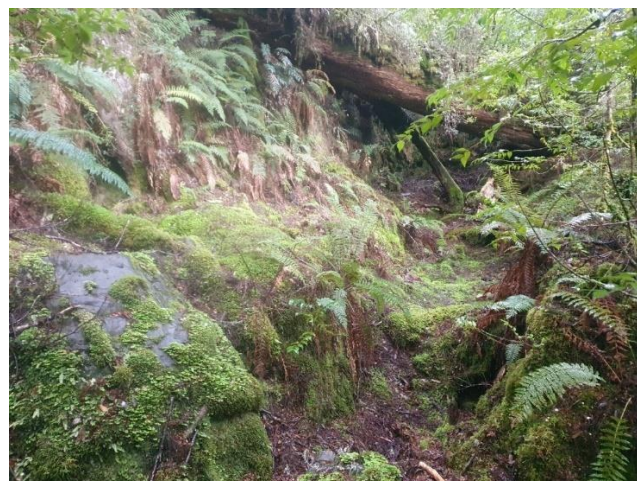
Team photo, with Petr helping to pack Gabriel’s “guitar”

This trip was meant to set the scene for a connection next time, so that we could plan ahead and figure out dates which would suit most or all of the Delta Variant veterans. Monumental self-control, a speleological curveball, or an error in gear logistics would be required so as not actually to make the connection prematurely. All played their part in achieving the main goal of the trip.

We started off by leaving the new ropes in the car. Petr and Ben went ahead to rig, but by a miscommunication, half the hardware was left at the top of Daily Cases (163 m). They made the best of it and rigged a series of traverse/safety lines, a climb better done as a 3 m pitch, and the ~8 m pitch Jemma had found and named “Positively Negative” (thanks Donald Trump). This rift passage was named “Close Contact” afterwards.

Gabriel and Karina went and poked about in Superspreader, and I scurried around on the surface for an hour or two. I hadn’t given up on Negative Dig (a survey station in Superspreader which is apparently above LiDAR surface data!) and wanted to surface survey to the point on the surface, to have a more accurate idea than GPS. Using Topodroid, I was able to plot the survey in real time and get within 0.5 m of the cave, apparently, in a karst-related gully. I poked about digging random holes but it was going to need a lot of time and ideally someone in the cave with a radio, so I swore a lot and gave up for now. It turned out that I was 10 m off after stuffing up a survey leg anyway. Oops. The way isn’t pushable from below, and would almost certainly need enlargement, but would apparently give a pretty good run

straight to the top of Daily Cases, well worth some effort. I should probably admit I haven’t actually seen it from the underside.



The karst gully close to Negative Dig

There were other small and hitherto unexciting caves which were deserving of a bit of effort to locate accurately relative to the cave survey, particularly JF-489 Perfect Pitch Pot (at 40 m deep, potentially very close to Superspreader elevation). Perfect Pitch Pot turned out to be 100 m wrong and a relationship with Superspreader was obvious, with only about 8 m 3D distance. The surface survey runs from the JF-761 Delta Variant tag, to JF-237 Niggly, JF-542 Potty, then JF-490, JF-489. I left some marked stations which are (mostly) labelled and in QGIS. JF-491, JF-492, JF-493, maybe JF-757 and perhaps some other untagged features would be nice to add, especially as several of them have surveys. At time of writing (10/07/22) this remains on the punch list, as does completing a survey of JF-492/524 Potty.

I’d faffed for too long, got dressed in record time and belted on in, a bit surprised to catch Gabriel and Karina coming out of Superspreader. We were also surprised to see a light at the bottom of Daily Cases as we headed on down and surveyed the rest of Daily Cases. Jemma had done a great job of rigging on from Karina and Ciara, with some impressive sideways swings and a total of eight rebelayes alternating single and double concrete screws. It turned out a few of these swings were creating rubs, a few tweaks will be needed (we fixed the worst one on the way up).

We caught up to Ben and Petr at the end of the Close Contact rift, where they had put the last of the anchors in at the start of a traverse line out to the big pitch – it was a complex access with water, crap rock and several steps to get out to a good hang. Another of my predictions about the cave was proven correct and I tried unsuccessfully not to be insufferable about it.

Having everyone wait around while one person rigged was pointless, so we decided that Petr and I would stay and keep on rigging, while Gabriel, Ben and Karina would survey out via Close Contact and head back to the cars, which they did. Petr was a bit sad at having to go back and take out all the lovely access rigging, but the ropes were left there so we can reinstate them later.

Meanwhile I started attacking the pitch. After the initial pair, another couple of access anchors let us stay high in a rift, then drop down to a ledge which hopefully will be just out

of the water in any but the wettest conditions. An annoying redirect and another short drop over a ledge which is much less sharp than it was, but worth keeping an eye on, and applying good caving technique to another ledge with a rare lump of good rock. A traverse presented itself along the wall to a good hang which proved exciting to clear of large rocks, and even more exciting when the impact driver battery ran out and I had to do the last concrete screw by hand at full stretch. Nice to know I'm not completely reliant on the driver.

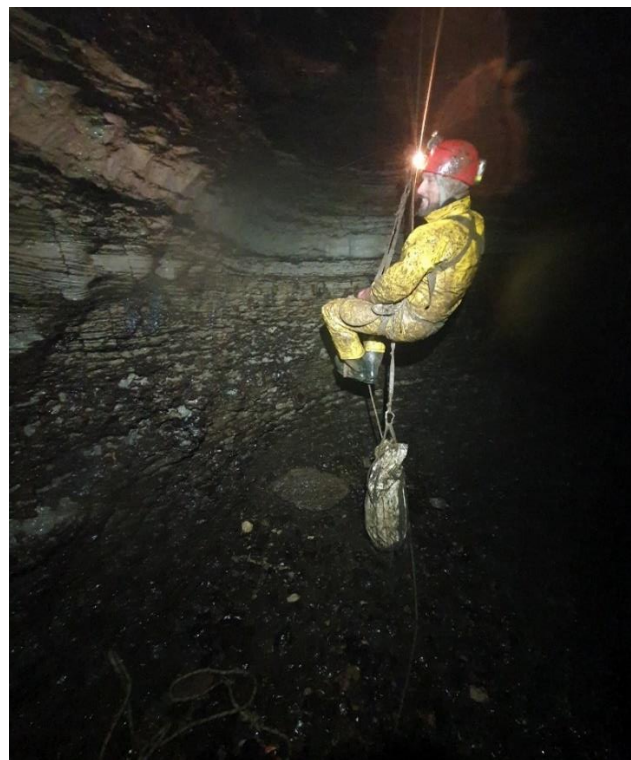


Many of the ropes in the cave are from the late Ken Murrey. I ate some Mars Bars in his honour

From here it was plain sailing. (And Petr had gone back yet again and grabbed a new driver battery). A second concrete screw went in for the Y-hang, and Petr charitably refused to take point, so I bombed halfway down the lovely dry drop to make a rebelay about 25 m off the floor. The shape of the chamber looked awfully familiar! That was the last of the concrete screws and the rope - perfectly set for next time. Well, ok, there's a whole lot of pre-drilled and tapped concrete screw holes that need installing, the rift lines to reinstate, and some significant adjustments on Daily Cases.

I also used a skyhook in anger for the first time in a while. Swinging sideways there was nothing for it to grab, but by

hooking it on a horizontal ledge and putting some weight on it, I could hold position and comfortably drill. Good times.



Petr begins the long climb up Daily Cases

We belted on out, appreciating the many rebelay on Daily Cases (longest stretch is 25-30 m, and most are less, so the lack of rope bounce, and feet against the wall help a lot). We shifted one of the rebelay to avoid a rub and had to leave things way too taut. We did a dye release at the entrance (that's still happening but scaling back) and were back at the car 2.5 hrs after the others. Fortunately, this eventuality had occurred to all, and was within acceptable parameters.

Mood Food was consumed, and we were back in Hobart around midnight.

JF-761 Delta Variant

4 June 2022

Gabriel Kinzler

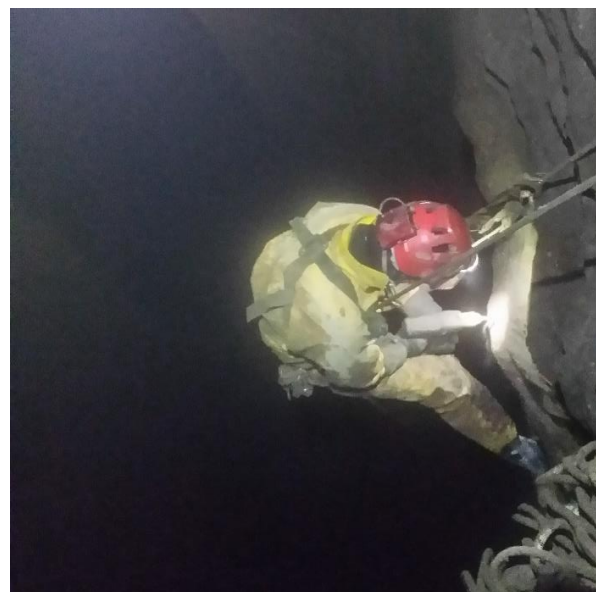
Party: Karina Anders, Ben Armstrong, Stephen Fordyce, Gabriel Kinzler, Petr Smejkal

Team Karina/Gabriel

The goal of this trip was to throw Ben and Petr down Daily Cases (not literally) and get them to explore and rig the next bits, to survey Daily Cases and beyond, and generally to have a jolly good time. Steve planned to do some surface bashing and meet everyone later.

Karina and I escorted the boys to the top of Daily Cases and saw them off. Despite the stakes, we were going to have a leisurely trip, and Karina wanted to see Superspreader. I took her to the end of it and I was surprised to find a lead we must have missed the four previous times. At station DVF51, where it forks into an aven on the right and a small chamber on the left, an upward squeeze is hidden down low. Karina felt spunky and managed to fit through after some

contortion. The lead was declared dead and I took her word for it (only because I couldn't fit myself).



Daily Cases. Photo: Stephen Fordyce



Petr again. I bet that pack is heavy. Photo: Gabriel Kinzler.

We then grudgingly proceeded to the new Pandemonium area, where I wanted to check if the horrible collapse had stabilised. It kind of had, but was now caved in. Fair enough. However, looking up where I hadn't last time because of the chaos, I saw ongoing passage into wide and easy climbs. I decided against climbing them, as Karina had opted to wait further back, on the other side of the access squeeze. We'd had enough of poking around in nasty collapse and returned to the junction in order to survey Daily Cases.

JF-489 Perfect Pitch Pot, and wanderings in the snow

12 June 2022

Ciara Smart

Party: Gabriel Kinzler, Ciara Smart

Gabriel and I had decided we wanted to look at JF-489, Perfect Pitch Pot. This cave has seen very little activity since it was tagged in 2010. It is a vertical pot composed of little more than one, perfect, 27 m pitch that apparently goes nowhere. It is once again a cave of interest as its deepest point aligns with one of the avens in the 'Superspreader' section of Delta Variant, with a vertical separation of only 15 m. After zealously reading historic *Spiel* reports (*a good thing previous visitors diligently wrote their trip reports – Ed*), and contacting the original discoverer, we were cautiously optimistic that there was a chance that something had been overlooked. A new entrance into Delta Variant from this position would allow us to bypass the current entrance, which is rather tedious, by all accounts.

The stakes were high enough that we weren't put off by a dismal forecast of hail and snow down to 200 m. Sure enough, I woke up to a few centimetres of snow in Ferntree, the first of this winter. Perfect winter caving conditions! On the drive out, we were slowed by a large wattle that had fallen across the Florentine Road, requiring some heavy pruning to pass. The walk up the Niggly track was made much more enjoyable by the novel addition of white fluffy

Meanwhile, Steve had arrived and declared he'd do station picking for the survey, which relegated Karina to simple observer above us (fine by her?). It would be a euphemism to call Daily Cases a spectacular pitch. It's an instant classic, straight into the hall of fame. I'll let a more geologically savvy person describe it, but I thought the sedimentary layering and banding were particularly impressive.

I had surveyed pitches before, but not of this magnitude. It proved an easy task, however, despite the spray and mist making the Disto go funny every now and then. The official length is 163 m (you could add a couple of sneaky metres, but it would feel like cheating to me), which makes it the third longest pitch in Australia, behind Black Supergiant (Niggly) and Bermuda Triangle (Tachycardia).

Jemma's rigging on the previous trip proved to be very adequate- excellent rebelay positioning and a real feat given she did it all in less than two hours. Only a few rebelay loops needed to be adjusted and two rubs eliminated.

The bottom is a bit wet and windy, as expected, and it would be hell in high flow. After reuniting with the guys, Karina, Ben and I started surveying out, leaving Petr and Steve to start rigging the next pitch. The passage separating Daily Cases from the next big pitch into Niggly follows a high and wide rift, comfortably meandering in base rock, with your typical series of drops and pools. Mission accomplished, our trio left the cave satisfied and waited cosily for the others at the cars... for three hours (*Cosily? I suspect humour doesn't get any drier than that - Ed*).

stuff, becoming progressively deeper as we gained elevation. The ever-attractive sight of clusters of *Dicksonia antarctica* weighed down with powder made for many a photo stop, in addition to a few snowballing sessions.

The Niggly gully felt unusually unwelcoming, lightly coated in snow, and blowing a bone-chilling gale. We reached JF-489 in good time and suited up, being careful not to lose miscellaneous items in the snow. It was now lightly snowing, and we were keen to get into the relative warmth of the cave. Gabriel rigged off a log, conveniently suspended directly over the pitch, backed up to another large log. As described, the pitch was indeed 'perfect,' one continuous 27 m drop with clean, smooth sides.



Gear in the snow. Photo: Ciara Smart



Niggly Gully in snow. Gorgeous. Photo: Gabriel Kinzler

At the base of the pitch, the floor slopes away downwards into a short rift. Several higher-level rifts were dutifully poked at and regrettably pronounced to be going nowhere. The only possibility was a small hole at the base of the sloping muddy rift. Getting my eyes to floor level, I could just see through a tight passage which appeared to open out after about 1.5 metres. The roof was solid, but the floor was mud. And so, we began digging. And digging. And digging.

The awkward angle of the passage and the viscosity of the mud made for a challenging dig. While the passage was only slightly sloping, we first had to dig straight down into the mud bank at the base of the rift to give us enough wiggle room to reach into the hole. This required removing a large quantity of gloopy mud. The mud from higher in the rift was constantly threatening to slide down the slope and undo our work. As the tunnel was sloping downhill into a narrow rift, with a slight drop to begin, heading in headfirst wasn't feasible. We worked in shifts, one person hauling mud out of the passage and the other carting the mud further up the rift. The passage was too tight to reach forward and use our arms, so we found the best technique was to use a gumboot to scoop the mud out of the tunnel, then scrape the mud off the gumboot. Desperate. Alternatively, we could crawl into the tunnel on our backs, and attempt to shove the mud forward with our feet into the void beyond. This ran the perilous risk of the loss of a gumboot.

The mud was extraordinarily sticky, and we were soon completely lathered in it from head to toe. It was becoming increasingly hard to pull ourselves upwards out of the tunnel as the mud on our suits was adhering to the deep mud in the passage. After some hours, we gave up for lack of better digging tools and motivation. The way on is going, perhaps.



Gabriel still looks enthusiastic at this point, but how early in the dig was it taken? Photo: Ciara Smart

We surveyed on the way out and then headed around to the Niggly gully. On the way we discovered we could clean ourselves by using the snow to scrub the mud off our suits and harnesses. Gabriel wanted to check out a small hole adjacent to the Niggly entrance. Predictably, it went nowhere. After the surprise of finding Delta Variant only metres from the decades-old Niggly entrance, it seems like we really can't trust an area has been comprehensively 'looked at.'

We had a peek at the Delta Variant entrance while we were there which was taking in a very large quantity of water from the snowmelt coming off Mt Field. From there we contoured back to JF-489, and then went to check some LiDAR targets to the south-east. Every now and again there was a snow flurry, and the cold was so penetrating that we kept our clunky PVC suits on for the scrub bashing. Unfortunately, there were no new caves to be found and we eventually gave up on the most distant targets as we were getting uncomfortably cold and damp. We were quite keen to get back to the warmth of the car and we made it back just on dusk.

L-6 Mostyn Hardy Cave: Loongana

17 June 2022 Deb Hunter and Len Dougherty 3 h

11 July 2022 Deb Hunter, Alan Jackson and Nicole Anderson 3 ½ h

Collection of a possible new species of *Paronellidae* (*Collembola*; springtails).

Deb Hunter

The cave is on private land covenanted for conservation, containing valuable stands of *Eucalyptus delegatensis* and *E. viminalis*. An area excluded from covenant contains the owners' residence and cabins for guests; the property is used as a nature retreat. The collection permit was issued to Dr Penelope Greenslade, Federation University, Victoria, by the Private Land Conservation Program (Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania) for the purpose of research into the possible new species of cave paronellids. The project was begun years ago but had lapsed. The original specimens had deteriorated beyond any use and the project required new specimens if it was to be written up and the new species established. Dr Greenslade is at the point of retirement, so I was keen to help bring the project to fruition if possible.



What a delightful entrance. Photo: Alan Jackson

Mostyn Hardy Cave lies a short distance from the banks of the Leven River into which its stream discharges. It's an active stream cave with about 900 m of known passages. We entered the L-6 entrance, one of two ways in off the deep pool in the collapse doline. At about 50 m going upstream, the stream emerges out of a rockfall. There a zig-zag route leads upwards to a few hundred metres of fossil and ephemeral stream passage. This section opens up to several metres wide and high, with lovely avens extending higher and peep holes down to drainage passages. It has some good decoration and anthodite crystals. At the end of this section, the passage ceiling lowers and forks into two routes, both leading to the active stream passage. Most of the active passage is not large in dimension. The passage junction area and dry overflow stream passage in the right-hand lead contain organic rich silt abundant in invertebrates.



Nice passage. Photo: Alan Jackson

On the first trip, the right-hand lead was sampled, finding a larger than expected springtail (possibly symphypleona) species, 5 mm long. Three were sampled. Abundant troglomorphic animals were present but no small springtails. We returned, temporarily defeated, taking time to admire and photograph the cave and observing other conspicuous animals, including a female cave spider guarding her recently emerged offspring.

On the second trip, we first admired the mother *Hickmania* and babies once more, then wriggled into the stream passage past the previous collection point, but the sediments were not promising. We then resumed the search in the branch passage sediment on our return, however no more springtails were seen until suddenly, when closer to the junction of the passages, the tiny target species were spotted on the fine sediment surface. Bright white and ≤ 2 mm. We were able to sample several without any excavation at all. As a team, the technique was spot a springtail, whoop like children then dab with ethanol before they spriiiiing away! All this was tortuous, especially while in the branch passage, such a low-ceilinged space, while avoiding glowworm snares!



Not so nice Passage: Nicole avoiding glowworms.

Photo: Alan Jackson

It became clear there were several dark zone species, some arthropods likely troglobitic, others troglophilic (like the forest hunter spider and giant harvestman). The usual suspects that lurk in Tasmanian caves were also present in abundance: Tasmanian cave spiders, the two common cave cricket species and glowworms.



Alan and Deb sampling Springtails

Photo: Nicole Anderson

The samples have been sent off to Penny. I wait to hear the results, hoping enough specimens were undamaged by collection. Both genders plus juveniles were required. Meanwhile, I'm compiling an incidental species list for the land owners, who are working with neighbours, collating data for uploading to the Natural Values Atlas. The residents hope to deter power transmission lines being sited in their

remote valley by demonstrating the biological values. The habitat could easily be compromised by the considerable footprints of the pylons and the associated roading required.



Picture says it all. Good eyesight needed for that task.

Photo: Nicole Anderson

JF-757 False Positive

JF-489 Perfect Pitch Pot

19 June 2022

Gabriel Kinzler

Party: Gabriel Kinzler, Petr Smejkal

We returned one week later, this time with Petr, who was hungry for a dig or two. We reached the Niggly canyon from the car in 50 minutes, with two short stops. Yep, it's a Petr trip all right. We thought we'd save the mud bath for later in the day, so we started with JF-757, because it is rocky rather than muddy. It turns out the cave is actually a swallet, with a tiny waterfall passing over the overhanging roof, then straight into the entrance. It is enough water to quickly carve a channel into freshly dug soil.

With a combination of a recursive 3-to-1 pulley system and a lot of grunt, we made quick work of the rock jam, which opened onto a tight 4-metre climb. Below is a surprisingly roomy chamber with several distinct avens on the right-hand side, each with its own trickle. We followed the water through that chamber and met a big wall after 10 metres.

The water disappears under that wall and T-junctions another incoming stream, with low clearance. That new stream is accessible and can be followed upstream by crawling until the stickiness of the mud gets to your nerves. Unfortunately, there is a restriction in the way of

downstream, which visibly goes. That being said, two locations offer a semi-realistic chance of getting through, by digging into soft soil (see map at the end of this issue).

There is a drier crawl shooting off immediately at the base of the access climb, under one of the avens, which goes straight for at least 5 metres, but it wasn't followed (wrong direction and lack of conviction). One hypothesis is that the water passing through this cave could be one of the tight inlet streams in the Superspreader section of Delta Variant.

Off to Perfect Pitch Pot, which I had left rigged the weekend prior. Petr laid his experienced eyes on the dig and made the instant assessment that we needed to ferry out the sludgy mud further away, or it would keep flowing back in. I was stationed into the hole and equipped my military-style trifold shovel in its "hoe configuration" (90° angle). Petr would hold his caving pack open above me and schlep batches of mud away from the dig, back to the bottom of the pitch.

I plastered about 15 shovelfuls into the bag per cycle, and Petr did 10 trips. At an estimated ~1-2 kg per shovelful, that's anywhere between 200 and 300 kg moved out in less than an hour (*our imported European diggers are a vital addition to the Tassie caving scene as we locals tend to be crap at it – Ed*). We were chuffed to see the passage more open than ever, but still a bit too tight to pass. I almost managed to fit my waist through, but there's still room to go. We were exhausted from the effort and it felt like the almost empty, mud-coated pack was heavier than a filled clean pack would be.

H-8 Wolf Hole

25 June 2022

Ciara Smart. All photos Gabriel Kinzler

Party: Jemma Herbert, Jack Holyman, Gabriel Kinzler, Will Mackay, Ciara Smart

An unusually early departure from Hobart saw us in Huonville before sunrise. Jack and Will turned up at the Hastings carpark at precisely 8:30 am, despite having collided with a lyrebird with such force that both the lyrebird and Jack's front fender met a premature end (*seems like a fragile fender – Ed*). It took us a little while to locate the correct track. The integrity of the tape line is now distinctly wanting, but the hole itself is unmissable. It began to rain quite heavily as we trogged up. We went IRT for the 30 m descent, with a suitably forgiving 11 mm rope. Jemma put in one rebelay off a permanent hanger, just enough to test Jack and Will's technique.

Once in the cave we elected not to look at the map, and instead to find our own way to Lake Pluto. None of us had been there previously, except for Gabriel on a visit five years ago. Inevitably, our trial-and-error approach resulted in a very extended tour of the cave. We only made one major navigational gaffe on the way to Lake Pluto, where we found ourselves in a tight, long passage that eventually looped back to our starting point. It took us an embarrassingly long while to realise that we were walking in circles, forcing us to glance briefly at our map. Lake Pluto lived up to its reputation and was an excellent viewpoint for lunch.



Lake Pluto, always worth a photo



Lunch. What a pity this photo is too small to see some of the facial expressions



Happy (almost all) group photo

After lunch we decided to try and find some passage which we could see on the map. We located the passage which turned into a low wet crawl. At this point Gabriel and Jack wisely opted out. The three of us continued up quite a wet, tight grovel towards 'Cub Hole.' We popped out at the 'hemp rope' indicated on the map. Unfortunately, owing to the heavy rain on the surface, the hemp rope was now hanging directly down the flow of a significant waterfall about three metres in height.



One of the many detours

We didn't have the map with us, but in my memory, this was a loop, so we assumed we needed to ascend the waterfall to avoid going back through the wet grovel. We each took a turn attempting the climb but recoiled after being buffeted by the force of the cold water. Eventually, Will persevered through and made it up. Jemma and I had no excuse and

reluctantly followed. At the top of the climb we followed several leads, all of which seemed to either choke out or turn into high, tight climbs. This was not the direction we wanted to go, and we were forced to acknowledge that perhaps, we had read the map incorrectly, and this was not in fact a loop. This meant heading back down the wet climb, and back through the wet grovel. Suffice to say, by the time we rejoined the decidedly smug Gabriel and Jack on the shore of Lake Pluto, we were quite wet and cold.



Climbing success

We headed around the other side of the lake for something to do and had a poke at a few dead ends. On the way I managed to slip spectacularly, and I fell up to chest height in the water. On the way out, we continued to resist looking at the map, resulting in a very roundabout exit with very many detours. When we finally reached the bottom of the doline, it was still raining.



More wonderful expressions

While waiting to ascend the rope we noticed a huge bird's nest, precariously balanced on a small ledge, about 2 m off the ground. The nest was about 1 m wide, probably a lyre bird nest. It was a curious place for a bird's nest, being 30 m below surface level, but highly protected from the elements and predators. I felt sorry for the poor baby birds who faced a punishingly vertical first act of flight, or suffer slow starvation in the shade of the doline.

By the time we had all ascended the ropes, it was raining very heavily. I was now very cold and I abandoned the group to make a hasty retreat to the car. Perhaps the only positive of our early start was that we were back in Hobart by 5 pm, despite the day's detours.

JF-761 Delta Variant

2 July 2022

Gabriel Kinzler (text & photos)

Party: Jemma Herbert, Gabriel Kinzler, Ciara Smart



Ciara & Jemma raring to go. Jemma is definitely running a tight competition with Karina for versatile facial expressions

Back for more, and closing in on survey completeness. The idea was to go light and quick. I didn't think Ciara and Jemma would take that in earnest, however, as they decided to race through the entrance series all the way to the first pitch head. They reportedly managed to reach it in a mere 10 minutes. Impressive. In front of them, I retightened a few bolts and found that the bottom of the rope was uncoiled and hanging in the waterfall on Quarantine Pitch. I abseiled with caution and only found light damage: maybe 10-20% abrasion in one spot, nothing critical in my opinion, but worth keeping tabs on.

We first bombed to the very end of Superspreader to put the Pandemonium extension to rest. Accessing this section is moderately exciting, with loose dolerite still a menace. Back to the scene of the collapse that Ciara and I previously experienced in real time, Jemma started climbing the most promising lead, namely upper levels in sculpted rock at permanent station DVH1. She reported a tight upwards squeeze. I joined her and we both deemed it too risky: another nasty above-head dolerite dig, and I wasn't going to touch it with a ten-foot pole (and not because a ten-foot pole wouldn't have fit in there). Looks like I've learnt my lesson.



Jemma in Pandemonium. It's another "Where's Wally" shot. Gabriel makes a partial-cameo appearance.

Below us, Ciara assumed book duty and we surveyed the extra bit of passage. It turns out that Pandemonium is higher than Negative Dig (the other highest point in a separate branch of Superspreader), by less than one metre. Plotting them in relation to the surface, they're both "trying" to poke

out of the ground in the same vicinity. I'm not holding my breath for an entrance, however, since we've combed through that area on the surface fairly thoroughly. On the way back, Both Ciara and Jemma checked another climb (at station DVH6) but called it too tight. Good riddance!

Back at what has since been named "The Cafeteria", a four (maybe five or even six!)-way crossroads chamber where we often have lunch, C&J noted and got excited about a window in the roof, about 6 metres above ground. There is a big void behind it, with a large patch of flowstone visible inside it. It has been suspected for a while that JF-489 Perfect Pitch Pot joins Delta Variant at The Cafeteria. This window is a prime suspect for it, and so the girls made plans to return and climb it.

We then headed to Nasal Passage, which had only been briefly looked at once, many months ago. We were surprised by its form factor: Nasal Passage is wider and taller than Superspreader and contains fewer wet inlets, but has more water in its main streamway. It does pretty much what we expected it to do, except for a surprise pitch at one end (named "Girthy Antivaxers Shaft", aka "Antivax", for its contrarian manners). The estimated length of the pitch from the lip is 15 m.

The north branch of Nasal Passage is the active streamway and has a couple of interesting higher levels, noted for future climbs. The south branch is fossil, which is explained by the Antivax pitch at its end. There is a pool at the bottom of Antivax, with a chance it carved a decent underlying streamway. There is a small waterfall in a big chamber before the pitch, which sinks immediately, presumably to that hypothetical streamway below.

We surveyed out, adding 270 m to the cave, as well as two butt holes to Ciara and Jemma's PVC suits.

IB-171 Rocket Rods Pot *et al.* A reconnoitre.

13 July 2022

Janine McKinnon

Party: Janine McKinnon, John Oxley, Ric Tunney

I was planning a beginner-friendly/easy trip for early August and this seemed like a good venue for winter. Having taken long and (not so) scenic routes to the cave before, and also quite good routes, I thought it might be a good idea to find an efficient and hopefully scrub-free way there and commit it to memory for future use.

Thus there was some discussion and general faffing at the top of the quarry. We zig-zagged our way in the generally correct direction and eventually arrived at the cave. Our meanderings had not been optimal though and we tried something a bit different on the way back. Following the old road nearby all the way, not just some of it. This worked a treat and is the way we will go in future.

After lunch at the car, we went to check out IB-2 Loons Cave bottom entrance. I don't recall ever being there, but I probably did back in the day and just never returned. Now I see why. John and I went in. It was very small, tight and wet. We managed to keep dry feet by application of our exemplary caving skills. I see no reason to ever return.



Impressed with these outstanding skills? Lucky, for me, it isn't video. Photo: John Oxley

IB-4 Bradley Chesterman was our next target for a quick assessment. This was much nicer and we went as far as almost through the rockpile. We had a little trouble finding the way out the other side and weren't motivated enough to push hard so turned it at that point.

Other Exciting Stuff

JF-210 Sesame Amphipod (New Cave Bug) Collection

17 January 2022

Stephen Fordyce

This report details the collection of two samples of undescribed Tasmanian cave-adapted Amphipod species and, along with photos/video, will accompany those samples as they are submitted to the Tas Museum & Art Gallery in Hobart (TMAG).

During the 2021 Sesame Cave (JF-210) project, deep in the caves under Mt Field related to the better-known Growling Swallet (JF-36) and Junee Cave (JF-8), I'd noticed some cave-adapted shrimp in the stream of The Wet Hole. They were definitely not Anaspides and thus different to any other aquatic life in the JF I knew of. During the 2022 project, with the help of Lachlan Bailey, two individual specimens were collected and brought out of the cave alive (albeit certainly not as energetic as they had been). We took video and photos (credit to Corey Hanrahan, Lauren Hayes and Lachlan Bailey) before preserving them in 80% ethanol. A copy of the photos and video will be stored in the STC archive, JF-210 folder.

While not new to humans (Alan Jackson collected some in 2016 – see SS413: 12), expert opinion was that they were not scientifically described, but belonged to order Amphipoda, and probably genus *Antipodeus* (widespread and endemic to Tasmania).

They were obviously different to the cave-adapted Anaspides mountain shrimp common to these caves, especially in their strange tendency to lie on their side, curling and uncurling rather than crawling or swimming along. Not pure white, but almost certainly cave-adapted and with most of their pigment lost.

Later in January, I saw (but couldn't collect) what looked like the same species of Amphipod in both Junee Cave (mid-way through Sump 1) and in Niggly Cave (near the end of Mother of God passage). These being some 5 km downstream and 1 km upstream respectively of the collection location in Sesame Cave. All sighting locations are in streams well inside the cave zone – 200 m+ vertically and 500 m+ horizontally from entrances. None of the cavers I spoke to knew of any sightings apart from in Sesame.

A table of sightings and collections is below – access to these locations requires complex caving techniques, which would need to be facilitated by the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers (STC) or their future equivalent.

Sighting	Date	# Seen	# Got	Cave Name	Cave Number	Survey Station (SS)	SS Longitude, Latitude (deg, WGS84)	SS Altitude (mASL)
1	10/01/2022	2	0	Sesame Cave	JF-210	SHLM72	146.53980,-42.71325	377
2	5/01/2022	1	0	Junee Cave	JF-008	JSA08	146.59346,-42.73639	255
3	17/01/2022	2	2	Sesame Cave	JF-210	SHLM72	146.53980,-42.71325	377
4	21/01/2022	1	0	Niggly Cave	JF-237	K54	146.53458,-42.70879	352

Sightings and locations of the Sesame Amphipod. Note: These locations are deep within the caves, not entrance coordinates.



Sesame Amphipod (photo by Corey Hanrahan)



Sesame Amphipod (photo by Corey Hanrahan)

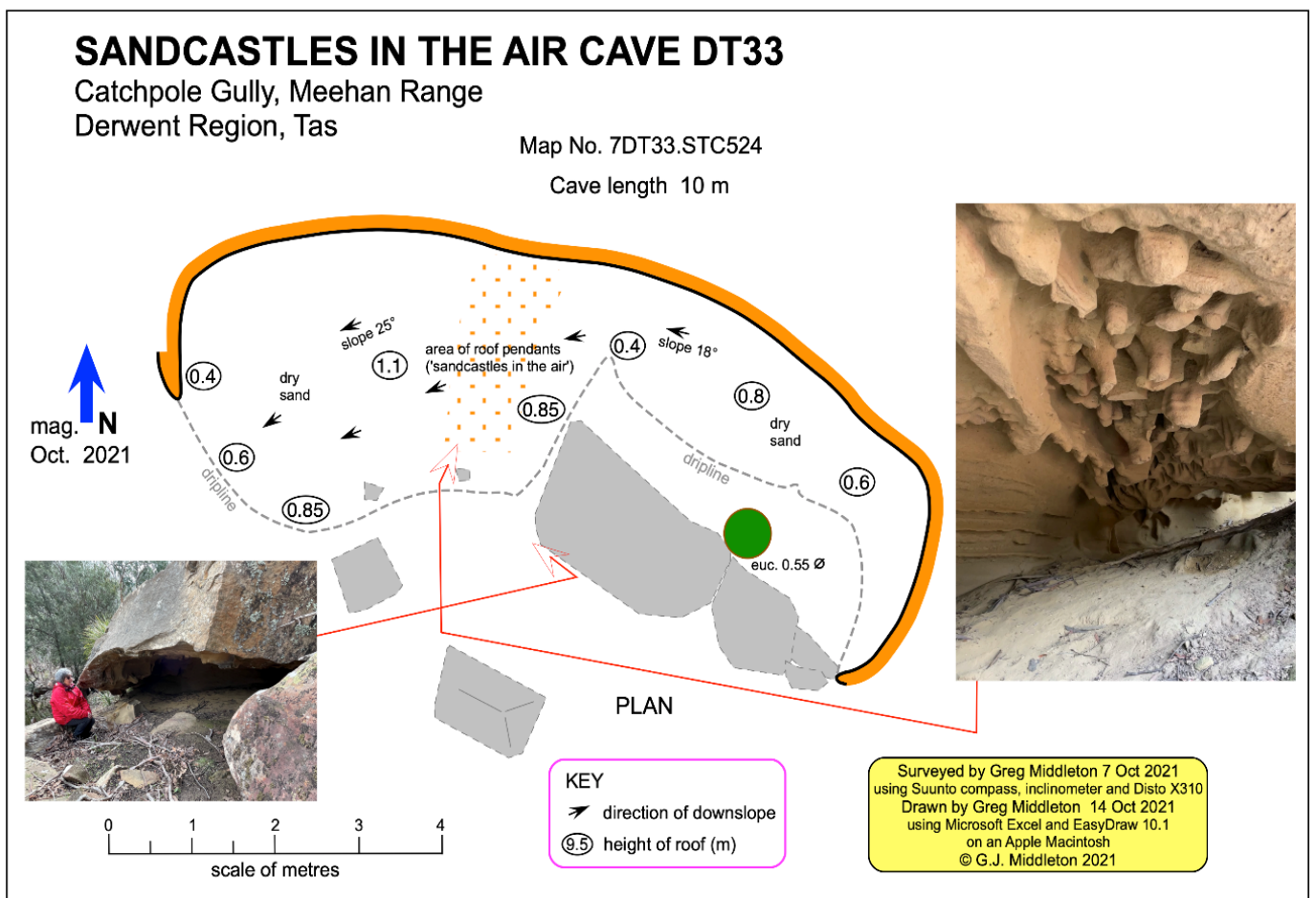


Sesame Amphipod (photo by Corey Hanrahan, above and right)



Correction:

A survey map is missing from the published version of Greg Middleton's report on Catchpole Gully in SS448: 23-27. The map of Sandcastles in the Air Cave DT33 should have appeared as Fig. 2. It did not.



JF-207 Voltera map and notes for the next generation

Alan Jackson

It has taken a while but I've finally drafted the Voltera map after the 2014 extensions. It is published in this issue of the *Spiel* in all its glory.

At the time of publishing (assuming Delta Variant behaves and connects to Niggly/Growling in late July 2022), Voltera sits at number five on the Australian deepest caves list at -318 m (one could argue -319 m if squinting at the survey data). Of course, Ice Tube, Niggly and DV are all deeper from entrance to bottom, but since they're all connected they become one entry on the deepest list, as Growling Swallet.

Voltera was discovered way back in the 1970s by the Southern Caving Society when Cave Hill was their favourite haunt. At that time the stream sink in the large doline was considered choked and only a ~34 m deep fossil passage in the side of the doline was explored and surveyed. It took until 2014 for someone else (Dickon Morris) to have a proper look and discover a bypass to the very narrow end of the entrance stream passage. It all came in a rush after then. The 2014 period of exploration saw the cave effectively reach its theoretical maximum depth (the point at which it should intersect the base level water table) as well as extend horizontally to a point which intersects a straight line between the downstream end of Niggly Cave and the upstream end of June Cave. It must go very close to hitting the main drain but unfortunately chokes out. Alas.

A few hot leads remain for the enthusiastic (listed here from top to bottom, not in order of hotness):

- Two pitches in Accalmie remain undescended. They'll probably just link back in with the 80 m pitch, but you never know.
- High-level passage at the top of Date of Release Pitch could go over the top of everything and lead to great reward.
- Upstream Turn the Other Cheek was getting small enough to be annoying but would almost certainly yield to someone who hasn't already just explored and surveyed hundreds of metres of much more pleasant passage in the hours before.
- A bolt traverse in the upper-level Parole Passage (i.e., by staying high beyond The Pit) would get you to a small inlet passage above the start of Hardened Criminal and could lead to something that skips over the top of the final choke.
- The two water sources in Ram Raid Streamway could be a fun outing for those inclined to aid climb.
- Find the source of the Ram Raid Streamway water on the surface. At first, we assumed it was Ring Hole, but in pursuing that we discovered it connected to downstream Sesame, so there's a streamsink out there somewhere waiting to be discovered.

Nomenclature

Voltera – allegedly Aleks Terauds (SCS), who is of Latvian origin, dubbed the cave Voltera and explained to his companions that Voltera was Latvian for the Goddess of the Great Erotic Vagina. More likely is that Aleks was young

and male at the time of discovery and only found time to think about caves when he wasn't thinking about sex.

Great Erotic Vagina pitch (P80) – this majestic pitch never really got a name during exploration but in honour of the Gods (and the opportunity to upset more prudish members of the community), I think this is a superb name.

Accalmie – this is a mostly dry/fossil section of the cave off the side of GEV. It is very quiet and my memory of exploring it with Laure GP was a delightful experience free of the machoism and testosterone-fueled flog-fest that was caving with Dickon (who went off pushing the main downstream leads while Laure and I tinkered in the upper levels). Laure is French-Swiss so a French word for 'respite' or 'lull' seems fitting (*I am unlikely to forget him after only one trip - Ed*).

Fistula – very small and unpleasant hole. Goes with GEV quite well.

Cue Cards – this pitch remained unnamed during exploration also, but a reference to Dickon remembering his cue cards (to share leads with his fellow cavers) in the trip report when this pitch was discovered seemed reasonable.

Widow Maker – again, extracted from trip reports, in reference to a boulder Andreas tried to kill me with.

But Wait, There's More – title of trip report from discovery/exploration of this section, which went a lot further than we expected and delayed the planned derig of the cave.

Stairway to Niggly – Dickon got enthused about naming features while pushing the lower sections of the cave. This passage is long and descends gradually, mostly following the bedding planes, losing a considerable amount of elevation without any rope work required. Dickon was super confident that this cave would connect to Niggly.

One Gumboot Inlet – an inlet stream/aven halfway down Stairway to Niggly. It was free-climbed by some muppet who'd lost one of his gumboots on the drive up and caved for the day in one boot and one sandshoe.

Sent Down (P20) – Dickon enjoyed nothing more than making stereotypical 'Australians are convicts' jokes. The wit, frankly, was astounding. Sent Down is something to do with being incarcerated/condemned to transportation, I guess.

The Tabernacle – side passage which Dave Taberner was always inexplicably devoted to. Just a play on Dave's surname and inexplicable houses of devotion.

Date of Release – Dickon being Dickon again.

Turn the Other Cheek – Laure made a habit of slipping in the mud and landing on her arse in this cave. She managed to bruise her good cheek while exploring this section.

Mud Bath – particularly grotty passage leading to a sump.

Parole Passage – Another of Dickon's inspired names.

The Pit – Finally one of Dickon's names that bears some resemblance to the feature itself as well as his convict theme.

Hardened Criminal – yep.

Re-Conviction Choke – I'd have thought 'recidivist' has a better ring to it, but probably too fancy a word for Dickon to know or understand.

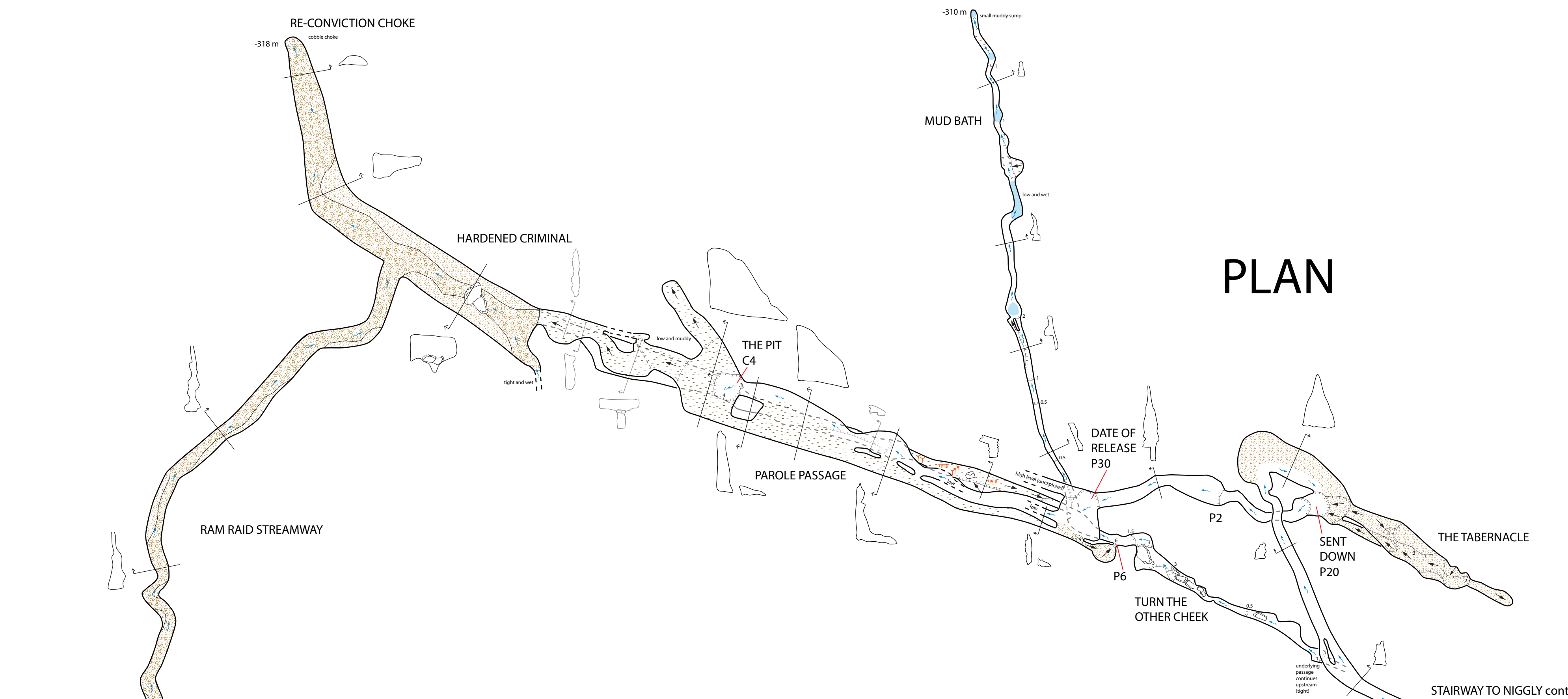
Ram Raid Streamway – more Dickon stuff.

JF-207 Voltera

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

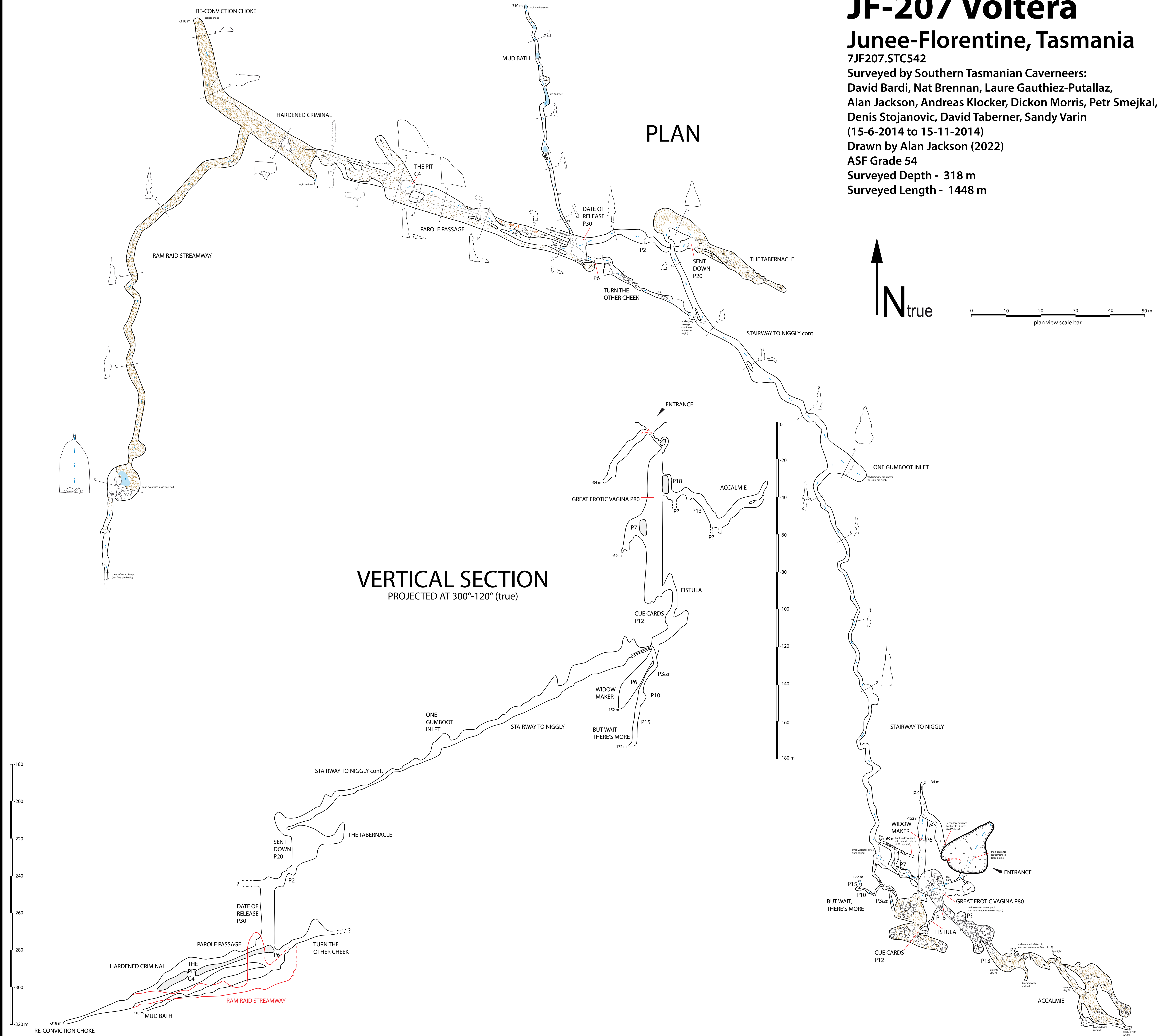
7JF207.STC542
Surveyed by Southern Tasmanian Caverneers:
David Bardi, Nat Brennan, Laure Gauthiez-Putallaz,
Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker, Dickon Morris, Petr Smejkal,
Denis Stojanovic, David Taberner, Sandy Varin
(15-6-2014 to 15-11-2014)
Drawn by Alan Jackson (2022)
ASF Grade 54
Surveyed Depth - 318 m
Surveyed Length - 1448 m

PLAN



VERTICAL SECTION

PROJECTED AT 300°-120° (true)



JF-489 Perfect Pitch Pot

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF489.STC543

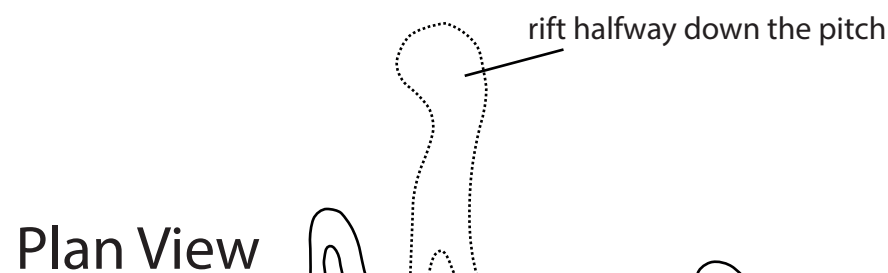
Surveyed by Ciara Smart, Gabriel Kinzler (12/06/2022)

Drawn by Ciara Smart, Gabriel Kinzler (July 2022)

ASF Grade 54

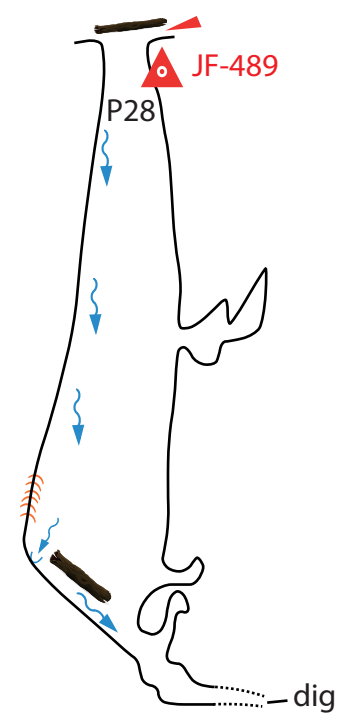
Surveyed Length - 40.5 m

Surveyed Depth - 32.4 m



Developed Cross Section

(not to scale)



muddy dig, possibly heading towards Superspreader section in JF-761

tight

slimy mud pool

LEGEND

- passage wall
- - - passage wall - conjectural or continues (tight/low)
- 2 drop off/ledge - with height (m)
- ↑ section (with view direction)
- daylight hole
- direction of floor slope
- entrance
- △ cave tag
- log/timber
- muddy water
- water direction of flow
- water (outlet)
- flowstone

4 m 8 m

N true

JF-757 False Positive

Junee-Florentine, Tasmania

7JF757.STC544

Southern Tasmanian Caverneers

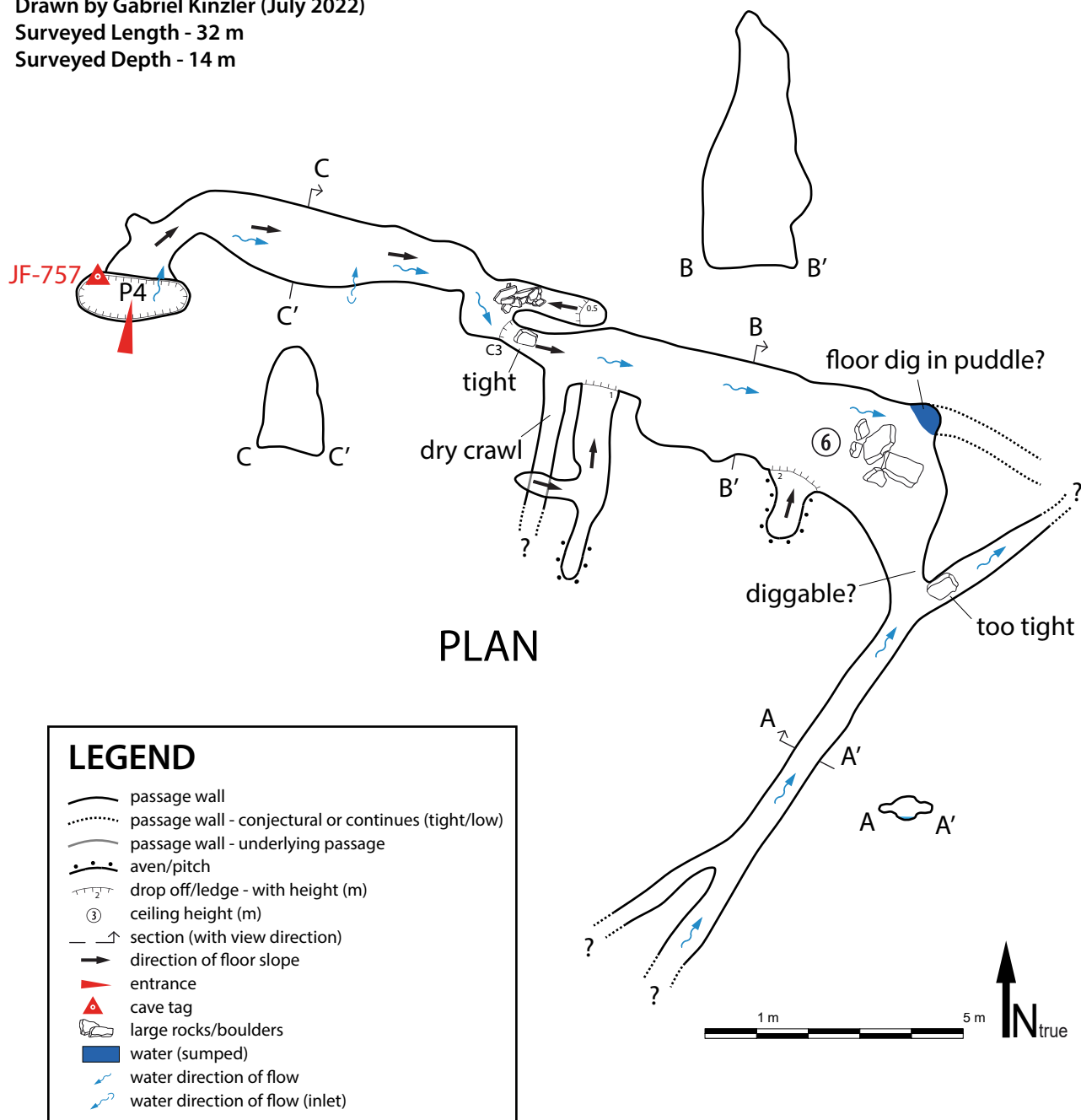
ASF Grade 54

Surveyed by Gabriel Kinzler and Petr Smejkal (18/06/2022)

Drawn by Gabriel Kinzler (July 2022)

Surveyed Length - 32 m

Surveyed Depth - 14 m



STC Approved Trip Leaders (May 2022)				
Horizontal	Caves requiring no gear.			
Ladders	Caves requiring no more than handlines or short (belayed) ladder sections (<10 m).			
Basic SRT	Caves requiring ropes using pre-placed bolts and/or established (straightforward) rigging guides.			
Advanced SRT	Exploration rigging – placing bolts and selecting natural anchors as a component of exploration.			
Name	Horizontal	Ladders	Basic SRT	Advanced SRT
Karina Anders	Y	Y	Y	N
Guy Bannink	Y	Y	N	N
James Barnes	Y	Y	Y	N
Serena Benjamin	Y	Y	Y	Y
Arthur Clarke	Y	Y	N	N
Rolan Eberhard	Y	Y	Y	Y
Stefan Eberhard	Y	Y	Y	Y
Stephen Fordyce	Y	Y	Y	Y
Russell Fulton	Y	Y	N	N
Sarah Gilbert	Y	Y	Y	N
Jemma Herbert	Y	Y	Y	N
Deb Hunter	Y	Y	Y	N
Alan Jackson	Y	Y	Y	Y
Phil Jackson	Y	Y	N	N
Gabriel Kinzler	Y	Y	Y	Y
Janine McKinnon	Y	Y	Y	Y
Greg Middleton	Y	Y	N	N
Bill Nicholson	Y	Y	N	N
John Oxley	Y	Y	Y	N
Michael Packer	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tom Porritt	Y	Y	N	N
Jane Pulford	Y	Y	N	N
Amy Robertson	Y	Y	N	N
David Rueda Roca	Y	Y	Y	Y
Chris Sharples	Y	Y	Y	N
Ciara Smart	Y	Y	Y	N
Petr Smejkal	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ric Tunney	Y	Y	Y	Y
John Webb	Y	Y	N	N
Geoff Wise	Y	Y	N	N
Tony Veness	Y	Y	N	N

This is the official STC trip leader's list as of July 2022. The TL list is maintained by the Training Officer and decided in concertation by the Exec on a case-by-case basis and following a set of rules that can be requested by anyone if they wish to understand the process better. There is a bit more on the topic in SS450: 34.

The Last Page

