



Speleo Spiel 464

May-June 2025

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Front Cover: The resplendent Croesus Cave in Mole Creek. Image snapped on Alex Motyka's phone, by Ashlee Bastiaansen.

Back Cover: Kubla Khan. And others. Image: Alex Motyka.

Speleo Spiel 464 was prepared by Ciara Smart, with subeditorial assistance from Alan Jackson, Greg Middleton and 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

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Editorial

It's good to see so many trips happening despite the dreary surface conditions at this time of year. Amazingly, we've got another forty-page *Spiel* here, with more than 20 diverse reports, coming in at over 18,000 words (just like the last one).

In this *Spiel*, new members Becca Lunnon and Geoff Hurst have provided very nice accounts of two separate trips down Midnight Hole. Many of us have done this trip several times over, but it's refreshing to appreciate the cave through fresh eyes. It's also great to see Ida Bay getting some attention after a few decades in the wilderness; Michael Glazer has been systematically relocating 'missing' caves and finding plenty of new stuff along the way. See his map of a recent find in this issue.

Rescue stuff has been happening with sporadic evening sessions at Fruehauf and a few people attending the Northern Rescue training weekend in May. Jemma Herbert has announced that the next big rescue exercise will be 21-22 February 2026, so you've got plenty of time to get your tyrolean lock-offs just perfect. There's also stuff coming up interstate, and New Zealand will have its big Sarex in March. Speak to Jemma if you're interested in attending any interstate rescue events, it's likely that a few STC people will be going.

This *Spiel* contains a few reports of hard-won exploration projects, including the latest update on the ongoing Niggly project. There's a report of the most recent four-day camping trip, along with a follow up trip to collect an item of lost-and-found. After four Niggly camping trips in five months, I for one, am ready for the winter break. But if you're wondering, the major lead remains open and going, poised for summer excitement and more mastercave to come.

Welcome to several new club members: Rebecca Lunnon, Trixi McCarthy-Gilbert, Emily Panietz, Michelle Schrieber, Bill Cameron, Yvonne Galaret and Geoff Hurst. Alas we will be losing our British visitor, Ben Honan, who unfortunately is moving back to England for work just after he got a taste of the big stuff. As an inadequate form of commiseration, he appears on both the front and back cover of this *Spiel*.


Stuff 'n' Stuff

Launch of STC Archive Chatbot

We might be a long way off robot surveying (thank goodness), but our club now has its very own private AI Chatbot thanks to the work of Digital Archivist, Michael Glazer. Michael has spent some time finetuning an AI interface to trawl the depths of the club's various publications, including the older ones by the TCC and SCS. Those with existing archive access may now use the interface to quickly find information,

or to direct you to relevant publications. The interface gives answers with references, so you can cross-check the information. You can ask it useful questions, like, 'Tell me about any undescended caves near JF-700,' or 'Why was it so hard to relocate Hairy Goat Hole?' It can also answer less useful questions, like, 'Who is STC's most efficient caver?' The Chatbot is privately hosted so there's no chance STC's dirty laundry might end up splashed across the internet. If this sounds interesting, but you don't have archive access, contact the exec for information about applying for access.

STC Publications Assistant

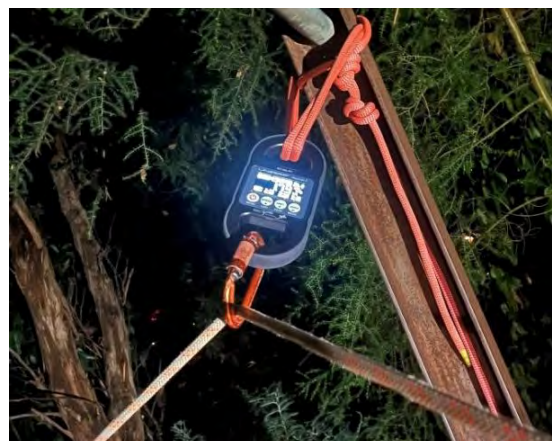
 Hello! I'm the STC Publications Assistant. How can I help you search the archives today?

STC 'Social' Night

Another social night was held in May at the Cornelian Bay Park. Games were had in the cold and no one got injured. Well done. Sea Shanties in July.

Ongoing Rescue Practice Sessions

Jemma Herbert has been organising evening rescue practice sessions to get us through the cold winter months. We've been doing the usual, as well as some new and interesting things, like using load-testers to assess forces. Come along. Next one is Wednesday 9 July, 6 pm at Fruehauf.



Load tester in action. Images: Jemma Herbert

Trip Reports

JF-36 Growling Swallet Dive Report: Coelacanth Sump, and Well Beyond

15-17 November 2024

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Ashlee Bastiaansen, Stephen Fordyce, Henry Garratt, Chris Jewell, Petr Smejkal

Theme Song: 'Feelin' Good' by Michael Buble

A belated report, which ended up on the bottom of the pile, buried by more exciting and increasingly more recent reports. This was my fifth dive here and the third in this series. See SS460, p.4 for the previous report and background, and SS461, p.8 for the interim setup trip. Yep, I doubled down on kit committed to the project and on the setup trip in September, another five bags of stuff had been brought down – a second set of tanks for another diver, a bunch more lead weights, two sets of camping gear and one bag of communal camp kit.



It was nice having a dive buddy (a new experience for me in the JF!). Image: Stephen Fordyce

So this November trip was the next push, and Chris Jewell returned with his dive gear to help enact 'desperation cubed'. This being the multiplying of three separate desperation factors:

1. Doing a dive in the first place
2. Having a second diver
3. Camping underground

Henry was keen to keep pushing aid climbs and things in Living Fossils (see separate report below) and Ashlee tagged in for Ciara, who was suffering from a looming PhD deadline. Petr came in on the Sunday to help us haul out. The theme song was 'Feelin' Good' by Michael Buble – it had a pleasing topicality by referencing things like fish in the sea (the divers), birds in the sky (the aid climbers), rivers running free (the yet-to-be-found mastercave) and a recurring theme of feeling good. Perhaps ironically, but whatever.



The best attempt at a group photo. Image: Stephen Fordyce (selfie)

On day one, we faffed our way along to the campsite, where the route first hits Black River, arriving mid-afternoon. This was acceptable, but by the time an inordinate amount of faffing (making camp, prepping dive gear, eating dinner, watching a movie, doing three DistoX calibrations) was carried out, it was a suboptimally late bed time for me. To sum up: *Muriel's Wedding* did have Abba in it but was otherwise depressing and awful; it turned out Ciara's DistoX was the one way out of calibration; firm mud is preferable to camping on sand. Also, the biggish Niggly flood recently didn't seem to have done much in Black River.

In the morning, we were fairly prompt at getting away. I could already tell my mojo wasn't the highest – a combination of lack of sleep, excess mental buildup and commitment and general overthinking. Chris and I found the dive gear left at the sump to be intact and in place, but it had maybe been submerged at some point. I dived through first, with Chris ten minutes behind. The line had broken right in the tightest bit of the bottom restriction, and I lost it, having to turn around and go right back through the restriction to find it again. I hurriedly re-ran it, but this will probably be a recurring issue. Chris came through ok.

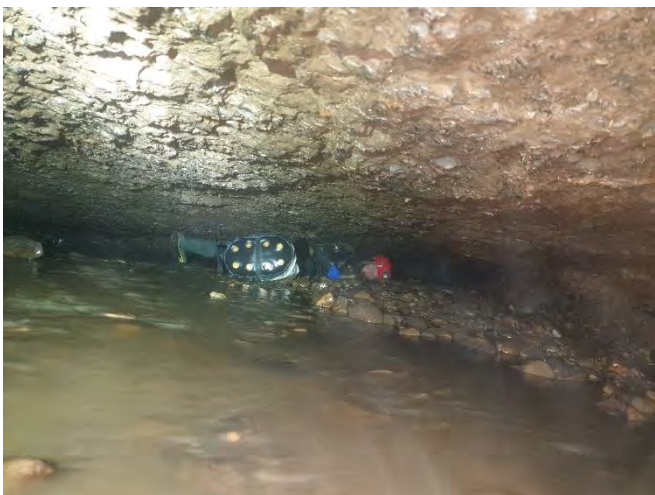
We awkwardly de-kitted in the small area at the sump exit, it was very good that I was mostly finished and out of the way before Chris arrived (he thought it would be worth crawling with our dive gear a bit further to a more open spot in future; I'm not convinced though). We stormed through the Cloaca to Sump two (Condor Sump) and roof-sniffed/ducked-under it pretty happily. We replaced the orange 3 mm dive line with 7 mm Telstra rope as we went. Reaching the far tie-off, we were ready to check the first lead in the nearby Hawk Rockpile. Note that I've done detailed worked-up sketches for everything which probably make more sense than this bunch of word salad.



Chris brought a stylish dress sense and new tech – bringing nuts through the sump in a soft drink bottle. Image: Stephen Fordyce

After the initial low grovel (not draughting like previously), we reached the stand-up passage and noted a 2-3 m climb up to the left (a bit too hard) then followed a walking-ish passage through mud and rockpile to the right. It went quite a way, back to the start of the Condor Sump! My job of lead-checking the chamber had been spectacularly poor. A sump bypass was cool, but considering the low grovel, extra distance, and the fact that we were wearing thick wetsuits, we preferred roof-sniffing the sump. The sump bypass was surveyed by DistoX and Topodroid.

With some survey data nicely in the bag, we submitted ourselves to the worst of the nasty wet grovelling in the stream, successfully following all the optimal ways, surveying as we went. It wasn't appreciably different from previous trips with wetter surface conditions. We reached the junction point with Soaring Passage (FJX1) and headed up it, going roughly parallel with the stream, in an upstream direction. It was decent passage – mostly flat and walkable and we surveyed as we went, confirming that we were probably in a fossil upper level of the stream passage.



Grovelling. Image: Stephen Fordyce

There were a few leads in rockpile on our left (south) side and we later checked these pretty thoroughly – see them marked on the sketch. Eventually in some nice-sized voids the passage ended with a hole on our right going down to where we'd looked up from below in the Hawk Rockpile, and a chamber going up rockpile on our left (checked fairly well). We didn't put in a rope but probably should have (the climb was too scary without). We'd surveyed about 500 m by now, but it was known already (my estimate was annoyingly accurate) or in the wrong direction.



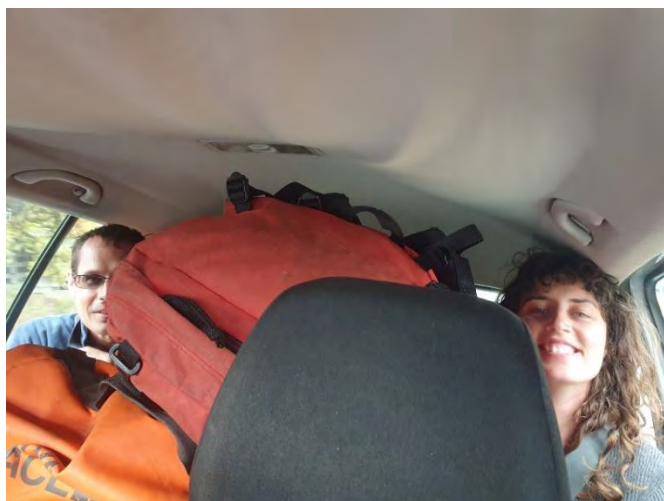
The Ibis Aven waterfall. Image: Stephen Fordyce

Following the downstream continuation of Soaring Passage (instead of wriggling in the water like I did last time) got us to the Eaglebird Rockpile in no time, and we climbed as soon as we reached the rockpile to stay on top of it which was much easier than my worming through the middle last time. Chris ducked under a roof ridge and we were in a new chamber, on our way to glory and mastercave. He noted a waterfall in a big chamber visible up through a hole at the far end.

Well that was unexpected, but luckily we'd brought some rope in case there was a sketchy climb like that. Chris assisted me to get up (about 2 m to a rockpile slope, but a bit airy if you came off), threw the rope up and I tied it off. We cut off the excess and will leave the handline there for future explorers. The large chamber was about 8 m x 8 m, and a ~40 m aven with waterfall of a sizeable stream (similar to Trapdoor). Most unexpected. I later dedicated a lot of effort to

finding the source of this water (see report SS462, p.12) and concluded humans wouldn't be getting in that way.

We poked about the chamber (the Ibis Aven – continuing the tribute to Bondi Hipsters 'A Song About Birds') and there was no obvious way on. The walls were vertical and the chamber round, although it seemed that the NW and SE walls were made of boulder/mud conglomerate rather than solid rock (there is a video). I theorise that the waterfall has bisected an upper level of the stream which has been filled with collapse and mud. There were hints of ledges and potential leads a few metres up and higher – reachable with aiding gear, but not doable for us. We both agreed there were no gaping tunnels visible up there. There were some holes in the floor under the waterfall which I pushed pretty hard for a couple of metres. It was a bit loose and scary due to the lack of mud. Of interest was the total lack of dolerite in this chamber.



The tight squeezes began before the cave (we successfully, and some suggested pointlessly, fitted into one car). Image: Stephen Fordyce

That took the wind out of our sails. The night was young but mojo was not super high. We spent the rest of it doing a pretty thorough lead check in the Eaglebird Rockpile, and as a last hurrah I also followed the stream under the rockpile to the same point I reached last time. After a nasty helmet-off squeeze with one ear in the water, there is a tiny chamber where it might be possible to dig around the right of a large boulder.

It was a relief to turn for home and the return was businesslike and uneventful. I tried to film Chris diving but it was a bit pointless in the low visibility. The dive gear was left stashed in a pile with rocks on it at the sump – there is probably only enough gas for one more dual-diver transit. It was tempting to write the thing off, but after all the setup I'd like to have a secondary scratch at the Eaglebird – plus if we take aid climbing kit beyond the sump that would make it desperation to the fourth power...



Ashlee did yoga on her first underground camping experience. Image: Stephen Fordyce

We made it back to camp not long after the others (who had had a good day in Living Fossils with aid climbs and writing them off), around 8 pm I think, having had 8-10 hours beyond the sump. Not super late, but somehow it felt like it. The diving and camp faffing was extensive both that night and in the morning, and Petr made it to camp in the morning just as we were putting the finishing touches on the last of the bags. He was a welcome sight and the individual bag load lessened considerably. We emerged to classic JF drizzle and collapsed gladly into cars Feelin' Good.

Stocktake of stashed gear:

Can't be arsed (section left in just to show I didn't forget it)

It's recorded on videos I'll check before the next dive

Dive gear used:

Same as previous dive

Plus dry canisters for DistoX and phone

Timing notes:

7:00(?) – alarm goes off

9:00(?) – leave camp, go to sump, faff

10:00 – start outward dive

12:30 – return from Hawk Rockpile

(push and survey higher level walking passage back to Hawk Rockpile, and return)

15:00 – start pushing Eaglebird Rockpile

15:30 – reach Ibis Aven

16:05 – leave Ibis Aven

19:20 – start homeward dive

20:30(?) – return to camp

Gas analysis and forward planning:

#2 dive:

Sump 1 only (do Sump 2 without tanks)
Out: used 360 L (40 bar from a 9 L)
Back: used 360 L (40 bar from a 9 L)
Remaining after #2 dive: 160/160 bar
(1440 L/1440 L)

#3 dive (this one):

Steve:

Start: 150/300 bar (9 L cf)
Out: used 0/100 bar (900 L) – fixing line
(@ Condor: 150/200 bar)
Back: used 0/55 bar (500 L)
Remaining: 150/145 bar (1350/1305 L)

Chris:

(Start: 300/180 bar – estimated)
(Remaining in other cylinders: 200/180 bar)
(Used 900 L return, average 450 L each way)

Plan for next dive:

Use cylinder pairs with gas 200/145 bar &
180/150 bar
Breathe 180 bar on way in (down to about
110 bar), it can stay in the cave

Breathe 150 bar on way back (down to about
70 bar), carry out

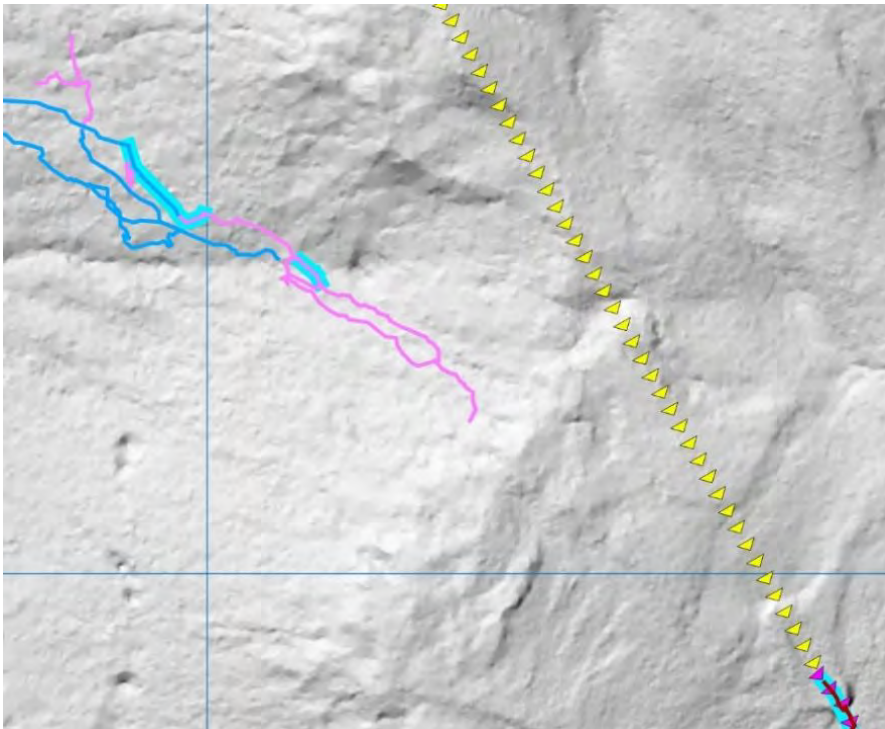
Punchlist for next time:

Aid climbs in Ibis Aven?
Survey to and dig along the stream under the
Eaglebird Rockpile (desperate)
Have another look at the dig to stream just before
Ibis Aven
Bring some 7 mm rope and install as dive line for
the constriction in Sump 1
Take the hoe, keep on clearing the Sump 1
restriction

Dive Profiles and Transit Times:

See previous report. Updated Sump 1 transit times are
added below.

2023-08 out 25 min
2023-08 back: 14 min
2024-04 out: 12 min
2024-04 back: 4.5 min(!!)
2024-06 out: 5 min
2024-06 back: 5 min
2025-11 out: 12 min (fixed the line)
2025-11 back: 9 min (got a bit stuck)



*State of play – Growling in blue with
new stuff in pink, Niggly (Bin
Chicken Haven) in maroon,
theorised mastercave from
Porcupine in yellow.
Growling/Niggly distance about
300 m.*

JF-36 Growling Swallet (Three Day Camping trip): Dry Cavers' Report

15-17 November 2024

Ashlee Bastiaansen

Party: Ashlee Bastiaansen, Stephen Fordyce, Henry Garratt, Chris Jewell, Petr Smejkal

After many conversations to ensure all involved (aka Ashlee the newbie) were prepared for the trip and to set the expectations reasonably low, the anticipation for prolonged misery and darkness, along with a diminishing will to go on, was present going into Slaughterhouse Pot on the Friday morning.

First day in, everything went smoothly. The sacred McDonalds brekkie was eaten, plenty of faffing in the carpark, a bit more faffing at the cave entrance, less faffing getting through the cave.



Image: Petr Smejkal

By the time camp was almost in sight spirits were still high and everyone was starting to come down with exploration fever... until the final pool in the dreaded wet feet section. While Steve and Chris decided they wanted to be dry, Ashlee and Henry did the hard work and brought the bags across by walking in the pool. Little did anyone know, that if you stood still in the pool for too long, you'd start to sink. The more you struggled, the further you sank. It was touch and go for a while for Ashlee's gumboots but after a bit of negotiating with the mud, all gumboots and people made it out.

First night in camp can only be described as glamping. Secluded sleeping areas, Deb and MiGoreng for dinner, popcorn and chocolate mousse for dessert, and the Australian classic *Muriel's Wedding* on the big screen. And for those still feeling peckish during the cinematic masterpiece, coke flavoured Oreos and Shrek juice was available. *Very important note for any future newbie cavers that go on a camping trip: don't wear cotton trackpants in camp. You will get laughed at.*

Second day in the cave, exploration fever had well and truly set in. After the delivery of hot water to everyone in bed, a bit of yoga and a bit of faffing, both parties set off through the roof sniff. Dry cavers waved goodbye to the divers and each party went on their adventures. The caving was pretty nice past the roof sniff for the dry caving. A few crawly bits, a few sketchy climbs, but mostly pleasant caving. It is amazing how long you can stay lost for when you go down a nice easy path (aka the wrong way) instead of up a sketchy climb (aka the right way) and you can't work out where you went wrong. Staying true to the tradition of the dry cavers in Living Fossils, Henry and Ashlee got spectacularly lost but eventually found the way and made it to the lead.

After taking the scenic detour in Living Fossils, it was time to do some aid climbing. We had intended to finish the second smaller aid climb Jemma and Henry had been looking at and had started last trip but ran out of bolts to finish. We finished off the survey to the climb, fixing the shit job Henry had done on the last trip, and started on the climb.



Cinema. Image Stephen Fordyce

Last time Henry was on this climb he got pretty much to the top after free climbing up a chimney, but was unable to get into the tantalising looking rift going horizontally due to lack of pro. This time we came armed with more concrete screws and Henry's shiny new drill! The climb was uneventful, apart from trying to kill Ashlee by knocking rocks down. Henry fixed the lead rope and a static rope. Ashlee juggled up so Henry could clean while she pushed the rift. We had high hopes that this would bypass Coelacanth Sump, but unfortunately luck was not on our side and Ashlee's first time in virgin passage only lasted about two minutes before it crapped out. The rift became too tight to be humanly passable only a short distance around the corner. We then had a good look at the passage in the other direction, directly above the chamber we had climbed from. This had solid floor and a small 5 m tall aven. We surveyed our meagre finds and went to derig. In Henry's horror he realised he'd left his orange string

at camp! So, he left the dynamic rope on the climb for now and will derig it properly next trip. *Note to other cavers: be more like Steve and write a list. Then we will all be less forgetful.* The climb was named Smelly Shadow.

After the climb we decided to do some work and survey past where the last team got to on Pommie Dreams. It was at that point that Henry's desire to do a number two started to cloud his judgement. As the leader of the dry cavers, and the only one with previous map reading skills or knowledge of this cave system, he was leading the charge. But the gas bombs had started before the climb and the only pressing matter on his mind was getting back to camp to poop in a tube. This led to a very short trip into Pommie Dreams (which is a stunning bit of cave that has some cracking straws and crystals) where we had no idea where we were the entire time we were in there despite having a map. So, we left filled with cheerfulness and singing the unofficial trip song ('Save a horse ride a Cowboy', Big and Rich) because at least we tried to do some surveying.



Prospective climbs in Living Fossils. Image: Henry Garratt

Heading back to camp, Ashlee was too lazy to put on her wetsuit again and went through the roof sniff in just her caving suit and thermals underneath, leading the way so she didn't have to keep smelling Henry's smelly shadows, which were becoming more frequent and potent. After getting back to camp, we were soon joined by the diving team. Henry and I busied ourselves cooking dinner for everyone, while Chris and Steve did some more faffing. The evening was spent sharing caving stories and discussing the exponential number of tanks Chris and Steve owned. *Note to Chris and Steve: sorry Henry and Ashlee ate all your cheese.*



Chris, glamping. Image credit unknown

Third and final day of the trip, exploration fever had passed, and we were all left moving sluggishly around camp. Miraculously we managed to pack everything back into the same number of bags we had bought in. Just like clockwork, Petr arrived (what a legend) just as we had finished packing and were ready to leave. It was a long day of hauling bags up rockpiles and through squeezes, before making it out of the cave while it was still daylight outside. The anticipation of prolonged misery, darkness, and a diminishing will to go on, was fortunately not the fate of this trip. While the leads didn't invoke the moment of glory we all went into that cave for, it was still a pretty darn good trip. *Note to Petr: thanks for being such a legend and helping in the cave and letting us wash our gear at your house!*



Eww. Image Henry Garratt

JF-761 Delta Variant

18 April 2025

Alan Jackson

Party: Ben Honan, Alan Jackson

It was by definition a Good Friday, so what better way to bring it down a few pegs than by going caving. With an impending Niggly camping trip on the cards there were organisational emails circling that included ‘jobs to do on the way in’, which is my least favourite heading (especially when it means carrying extra random gear into the cave in addition to the camping stuff). I decided to get some jobs done beforehand. Ben joined me to lend a hand and get an appreciation for what the vertical bit of the next weekend’s trip was going to be like.

There was a slightly annoying rub a few metres below the fifth rebelay on Daily Cases, I believe mostly caused by its significant offset from the rebelay below it. To hopefully solve the problem we added a second bolt to the fifth rebelay to make it a y-hang/move it over a fraction and tied in a new rope (46 m or thereabouts). I then added a new single bolt rebelay on a slightly proud rib of rock about seven metres down and a couple of metres across. The idea was this would get some of the across done, so future ups from (old) rebelay six to rebelay five wouldn’t entail such a big swing across and also the amount of time (and bounce) on the section of rope below rebelay five would be shorter and less severe (meaning less wear on the rope if a minor rub still existed). It seemed to kind of work;

the proof will be in the pudding. The new 46 m rope got us perfectly to old rebelay seven (new rebelay eight) and the old rope was transported to the bottom of the ~70 m Waterfall Pitch (to be collected and used at the push front on the next trip).

Since this cave is proving to be rather popular, the grand plan is to upgrade the exploration rigging (on 6 mm concrete screws) to something a little more permanent. Ben and I started preparing for this eventuality by making a whole lot of 12 mm holes from the bottom up. We got the last pitch sorted as well as the bottom rebelay on the Waterfall Pitch but suffered some problems at the first rebelay and the primary anchors. Ben dropped his drill bit from the primary anchors and had to go down to retrieve it. While he was doing that I managed to snap the tungsten carbide cutting tip off my drill bit (it was old and had drilled a lot of holes over the years). Luckily Ben found his bit and came back up to me but unluckily (stupidly?) I poked the new drill bit down the same hole I’d obviously just snapped the old drill bit in and the second drill bit didn’t like finding a very hard lump of tungsten carbide in a confined space and snapped ... oops. Ah well, we got eight and a half holes done!

We exited the cave, assessing the rigging as we went to determine how it could be improved and how many new bolts we’d need. By sneaking in a couple of drilled threads we figured we could get it all done with a total of 54 bolts. It’s a deep cave with lots of exposed traverse lines to avoid splashy pitches, so it’s pretty bolt-hungry. A good job for winter while the hot leads are safely ensconced behind a flooded rockpile.

Ida Bay Surface Exploration: A Productive Day of Discovery

19 April 2025

Michael Glazer

Party: Michael Glazer, Jemma Herbert, Gabriel Kinzler, Ciara Smart

For some time, I had my eye on several promising targets in the Ida Bay area, eager to locate and mark them for the ongoing GIS project. This trip was dedicated to that exploratory goal.

The day proved to be incredibly fruitful, with the discovery of **12 new caves**. While some of these will require a return trip for more thorough exploration, most are now flagged for future surveying.

We managed to tag nine of the new discoveries, though more tags will need to be minted to keep up with the pace of discovery! Continuing our cheesy theme, thankfully we had Gab along who had a wonderfully diverse knowledge of cheese, the new sites were named as follows:

IB-260: Pizza Mix

IB-261: Brunost

IB-262: Stringers

IB-263: Emmental

IB-264: Yarg

IB-265: Tzaksiki

IB-266: Roquefort

IB-267: Cheese Platter

IB-268: Cheddar

XXX: Pule – (Ran out of tags at this point)

XXX: Oscypek

XXX: Motal

The terrain was characterised by steep slopes and relatively pleasant bush, although in some places had a fair bit of tree fall. We were fortunate to find that we could rarely travel more than 50-100 metres without stumbling upon something new.

In terms of gear, Ciara was the only one who came prepared with a full caving suit, while Jemma managed admirably in shorts and a shirt. Both Jemma and Ciara were always enthusiastic to dive down any gap or hole

we encountered. My role was primarily focused on the ‘paperwork’ – documentation and marking – though I generally followed them into the more interesting leads.



New cave. Image: Michael Glazer

On one occasion, Ciara's enthusiasm got the better of her in one particular hole, and a handline was required to ensure a safe exit. Apparently, my leather belt was not good enough for a handline!

Based on initial assessments, IB-263 (Emmental) and IB-268 (Cheddar) will definitely need to be properly dropped and explored. Several other holes received a quick preliminary look but will also require surveying in the future.

Overall, this was a very successful day of surface exploration. It has generated a significant amount of future work, promising to keep us busy in the Ida Bay area for some time to come. More updates to come.



One of the new finds. Image: Michael Glazer

IB-14 Exit Cave

20 April 2025

Yvonne Galaret

Party: Ben Honan, Yvonne Galaret, Nik Magnus, John Oxley, Emily Panietz, Carolyn Vlasveld

John led a small group and I to Exit Cave, starting with a stunning 1.5–2 hour hike through lush, green forest. The variety of terrain made the walk itself feel like part of the adventure. Once we arrived, we geared up, which was exciting in itself, and approached the cave's impressive entrance. Draped with vines and towering above us, it looked like something straight out of a movie. I was buzzing with anticipation. We crawled in through a narrow horizontal passage, classic caving stuff, which opened directly into a massive chamber. From there, we spent hours exploring various rooms filled with incredible stalactites and stalagmites, navigating along ridgelines and wading through water. Every twist and turn brought something new, and it was genuinely thrilling to move through the terrain.



Image: John Oxley

After a quick lunch break, we entered a boulder zone with huge rock formations that were both challenging and fun to climb through. It was a real highlight. Overall, my first experience caving in Tasmania was something special. I'm already looking forward to future trips where I can start practising vertical SRT. Huge thanks to John and his legendary Anzac cookies!



Image: John Oxley



Image: John Oxley

JF-2 Cauldron Pot

20 April 2025

Alan Jackson

Party: Alan Jackson with Carl Walsh, Ally, Lauren Jolliffe and Col (NUCC)

NUCC was in town for a couple of weeks playing in the JF. I lured them into an ‘easy’ trip to Cauldron Pot – ‘hey, it’s already rigged, so nothing to carry in!’ In a quiet voice: ‘Maybe some stuff to carry out, though.’

We toddled down the cave, swapping the rigging over to the new p-hangers to see if it worked as well as we’d hoped it would. Generally nice (heaps better than all those old floor-level Loxins, that’s for sure). Gone are the awful rubs on P3 (Chute) and the start of P7 (Traverse). We also replaced the two concrete screws on the little climb in Bills Bypass with two 8 mm 316 stainless expansion bolts.

Ben and Alex had reported on the previous trip that there was a rub on the final section of Traverse Pitch which had cut a deep groove into the soft shitty ‘limestone’ about 10 metres off the floor. I was concerned that the new bolt I’d placed to replace the old one on this rebelay was a few inches to the left of the old one, potentially making that rub worse. I came prepared with a compromise this trip, in the form of a

stainless 8 mm expansion bolt and hanger for a redirect if the rub proved to be still there. It was, so I found a spot and installed the single bolt a few metres to the right of the rub point. This not only removes the rub but also pulls you out of the waterfall a bit more, so a win-win. We left the 25 mm tubular tape tied into the hanger on this bolt to make it easier for future users to spot (but BYO crab for the live end).

I started out, putting the load tester on all the new glue-ins along the way. The others toured to the bottom, nattered (endlessly) and derigged behind me. All the old stainless hangers on the old 8 mm expansion bolts were stripped as part of the derig. All the new bolts passed with flying colours.

Bills Bypass was a complete turd, as usual.

I was annoyed to discover that I’d incorrectly assessed the entrance pitch bolts on the previous trips. They weren’t all stainless steel as I’d presumed (and the rigging guide asserts). Ah well, at least the entrance pitch is pretty easy to get to (no Bills Bypass!) for a future upgrade.

Big thanks to the NUCCers for their assistance. They caved very well (for mainlanders) and were very good company.

Updated rigging guide published somewhere later in this issue.

JF-237 Niggly (4-day camping trip)

24-27 April 2025

Collaborative report

Party: Henry Garratt, Jemma Herbert, Ben Honan, Alan Jackson, Ciara Smart

Theme Song: ‘Black Bugs’ by Regurgitator

Day 1: Entry to Camp

(Ben) I was a bit nervous about the weather forecast in the days leading up to the trip, but as it got nearer, so too did the promise of low water levels. I took this fortunate turn in the forecast as a good omen from the caving gods, surely there would be hundreds of metres of easy walking passage for us to find! I usually feel quite apprehensive about the thought of committing to days of underground living, but today I felt quite optimistic. Perhaps it was the faith I had in my companions, or maybe it was the positive forecast.

Either way, I felt quite relaxed with the concept of not seeing the sun for a bit.

Soon after entering through Negative-RAT Hole (a very good name), I remembered that I was a bit out of practice with carrying a large, heavy tackle sack through a windy horizontal passage, so it wasn't long before Henry and Alan were far ahead of me. It was my second time going down the Daily Cases pitch (the biggest pitch I've ever descended), and I was struck by how long it took to descend 160 m. It's a thing of beauty, though, and I imagine it's even more awe-inspiring when the waterfall bares its teeth.

After reaching the bottom of the last pitch, Ciara took the lead and showed me the way to camp, which required a bit of squeezing, shuffling and navigating through a boulder pile (this seems to be a common Niggly theme). Camp itself is beautiful! There's so much space, and I didn't struggle much to find a spot for my ridiculously big 3 m x 2 m tarp. I was also pleasantly surprised by the temperature. The only other cave I've camped in is about 1 degree Celsius, so 6 degrees felt positively tropical. The only unpleasant thing about camp is that the mud floor hides several booby traps (I managed to fall into a thinly covered hole under my tarp).

(Ciara): The tail end of us got into camp at the most respectable hour of 9:30 pm! A seamless commute to camp from the entrance is now solidly under two hours for experienced cavers with nothing going wrong.



Camp luxury. Image: Ben Honan

Day 2

(Ciara) We awoke to the sounds of Regurgitator's 1997 melody, 'Black Bugs.' This tune was not the democratically elected trip theme song. We had previously voted on 'I'm Sexy and I know it' narrowly beating Britney Spears' 'Hit Me Baby.' However, Henry had 'accidentally' failed to download any alternative to 'Black Bugs'. This somewhat macabre song might have been bearable as a theme song if it wasn't for a certain team member's propensity to hum

this song constantly all trip and most prior trips this year. Suffice to say, a few people cracked early in the endurance game that is 'theme song chicken'.

After leaving camp at the unheard-of hour of 8:30 am, we split into two groups at the end of Mother of God. Jemma, Ben and I headed up Sliding Doors to tackle Job One: the long-awaited Biohazard derig.

(Jemma): The first team derigged Biohazard and Temple of Doom. Ciara and Ben resurveyed Breakfast Jelly because last time something important might not have been calibrated quite correctly. Now we're never going back. Good riddance.

To get back to Biohazard now:

1. Question your life choices. Why do you want to go there? It's horrible and goes nowhere. Consider doing something better with your life.
2. Go to the bottom of the Temple of Doom pitch. Belly wriggling in sticky mud required.
3. Free climb the first 4 m or so to a small ledge and concrete screw (previously a rebelay). The bottom of the Telstra string is tied into this screw.
4. Use the Telstra string to pull up a real rope for the remaining 3 m of the pitch. The string goes through the maillons on 2 x 80 x 8 mm stainless Tru bolts in a vertical configuration. It's so close you can surely sort out inevitable tangles without too much trouble, right? You could probably get up there with a 5 m rope, make it 15 m and you'll have enough for an approach line with bonus reaching-the-ground length.
5. From the top of that pitch it's a slightly tricky muddy mantle to get onto the ledge for the first person up. You'll be able to stay attached to the rope, but you'll be above the anchors.
6. From the ledge you can replace the two concrete screws on climber's left about 2 m back from the edge (parsnipped) that were for the approach line.
7. Also parsnipped are two concrete screw holes in the ceiling directly above the top of the pitch. They could be reused if you want, but I think the Tru bolts are better located for a less muddy rope and are loaded in shear instead of tension.

8. Then you can walk through Breakfast Jelly out to the top of the Biohazard climb/tyrolean.
9. There are two parsnipped concrete screw holes at the col on your left (looking from Breakfast Jelly) at shoulder height. That serves as an approach line to scramble 10 m down the deathly mud slot to the pitch head proper.
10. At the pitch head proper there are two parsnipped concrete screw holes. They are located on your right (coming from Breakfast Jelly), at shoulder height and 1 m projected over the void, from standing at the last spot you can stand on that mud slope.
11. You'd need a 20? 30? 40? m rope to get to the bottom / across to the other side. Better to check the survey.

(Ciara) While Jemma got started on the derig, Ben and I got started on job two, the resurvey of the Biohazard/Breakfast Jelly area. Unfortunately we had one trip where, unbeknownst to me, my Disto calibration had fallen wildly out of sync. I've had to pay penance for it on several subsequent trips through a number of tedious resurveys. *Note:* you won't have a loop closure error if you never make a loop!



The crawl at the top of Temple of Doom. Image: Ben Honan

Breakfast Jelly gave Ben his first taste of proper Tasmanian mud, which he remarked was 'quite inconvenient.' We completed the resurvey, and I will never go back to Biohazard, nor should anyone else.

(Henry) While the others went off to clean up Biohazard, Alan and I kept digging at Weightwatchers (job three!). I can now do it with my full SRT kit on!

(Ciara) We left Breakfast Jelly and caught up to Alan and Henry at the end of Mother of God. We crawled through Heavy Lifting and Chrysalis Streamway as a

group before heading into El Dorado to tackle our to-do list.

One of the items on our list was dropping a pitch in a side passage that Kynan and Bo had noted on the February trip. In getting some beta, Kynan had mentioned something about getting wet feet. I was a bit incredulous (why would there be water in a high-level side passage?) but sure enough, we ran into thigh-deep, sludgy puddles. These were the kind of puddles that make a rude noise as you attempt to extricate your gumboot from muddy entrapment. I can only assume that the caramel consistency of the mud inspired the name, 'Into the Mars Bar'. Otherwise, navigating the passage was straightforward, and we soon found an obvious pitch on the right-hand wall.



Bonded in filth. Image: Ciara Smart

(Henry) We got to the pitch head and started dropping stuff. It all made a rather distinct splashing sound. Alan said he could see a sump at the bottom. No one else wanted to get wet and I wanted to go swimming so I jumped on the rope. A suitable natural was excavated from the mud and I headed down.

It was indeed a sump. The pitch descended a 1 m or so wide rift, with water at the bottom. I got up to my waist in water and didn't find the bottom trying to come off the rope and into the sump. I didn't like my chances of getting back on rope while treading water in gumboots and SRT so I gingerly chimneyed across the rift, above the water, getting about 5 m until it crapped out. Perhaps this very low priority perched sump will get dived in 50 years' time when all the other leads are

finished. In the meantime, it's a shame the name 'Never Never Sump' is taken.

(Ciara) The pitch, unfortunately, was not surveyed because the previous survey team hadn't left any marked survey stations that we could locate. This made tying in the pitch impossible without a long detour back to El Dorado. The pitch, however, was horrible, and I was slightly relieved not to have to go down it.

The next item on the to-do list was making the approach to Florence Heights more commuter friendly. The rockpile at the end of El Dorado is named Florence and the Rockpile, but Florence for short. About thirty metres before Florence it is possible to climb a 25 m high mudbank. This takes you up to an area known as Florence Heights, from where you can bypass the rockpile. The mud bank is very steep; I had to be belayed up it last trip. We spent some time working with shovels and crowbars to build industrial steps up the bank to save us putting in a rope. The steps are good for now, but we'll need to be proactive about preserving them.



The mushroom rock. Image: Ben Honan

After this, the five of us climbed up to Florence Heights to suss out the downclimbs to the new bit of mastercave that we'd found last trip. We expected to need to put a rope on these, but found they were quite reasonable without. We dug some extra steps to make it easier for average height cavers. We surveyed down from Florence Heights to the new bit of mastercave, setting us up perfectly for the next push trip. Self-restraint and maturity was necessary to stop us all running off down the new bit of unexplored mastercave. The next bit of mastercave looks much the same as the end of El Dorado. It's very inviting! I hope it doesn't crap out around the next corner.

Day 3

(Alan) We left camp bright and early but the brightness dulled when Gemma decided her compensation for her broken toe (an injury she carried before the trip) had jiggered her knee. She returned to camp for a day in her

sleeping bag doing whatever it takes to keep boredom at bay.



Glorious El Dorado commuting. Image: Ben Honan

We soon reached the Myopia junction and sorted our kit. I took a quick sprint down to the suspected Voltera inlet and observed clear evidence that this was Voltera water (the 'mud' that NUCC had stirred up on their trip into Voltera the day before was evident).

At the Sarlacc Pits we tossed some rocks into the belly of the beast and could hear clear splashes, so at some point someone needs to go down there and see if there's any going stream passage at the bottom. Not today! Instead we opted for tidying up a side lead in the next section. At station CHA57 we veered left, slid down the ramp and surveyed our way into the ongoing passage. It was long and muddy and then popped up into overlying passage where a pink tape labelled CHA49 was conveniently located. We tied in the survey and called it job done - just a parallel passage.

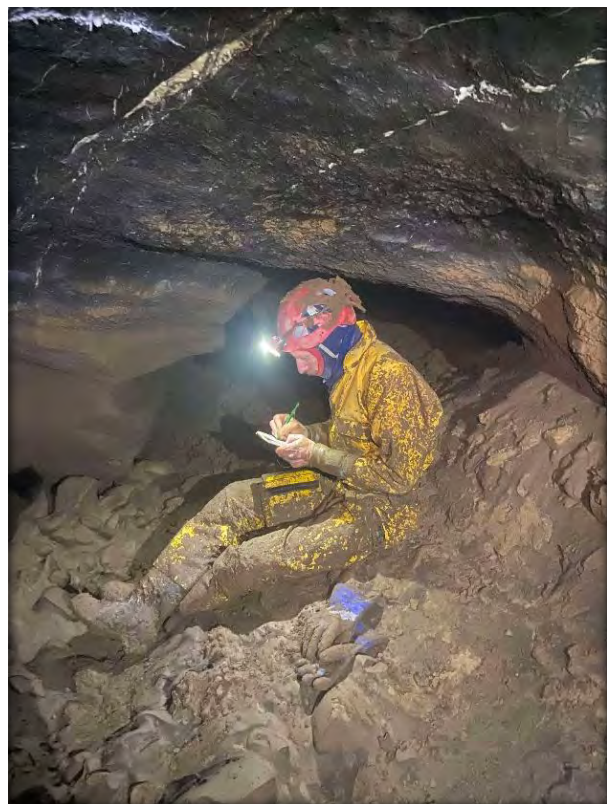
The awful mud climb beyond Pneumatic Stripper was the next obstacle. It didn't seem so epic this time but still needed a rope to be placed to assist with up and downs. We made our way to the pitch head at station CHA120. Unfortunately, the labelled tape at this station had been placed under duress and the letters were only partially legible. Alan decided to lick the mud off but managed to lick the writing off, too; people say I have an acid tongue. I couldn't remember what station number it was, so I took a punt on what it kind of looked like before it was licked into oblivion and put a shiny fresh 'CHA90' on it. Checking the previous trip's notes later indicated I got it wrong, so hopefully the next person there remembers to change the 90 to 120. Sorry!

A large natural (survey station) proved a good anchor and we sent Ben down the horrid mud slope to investigate. It was about 10 m down with a three metre vertical section at the end (no way out without a rope). The mud was horrific. Various ways down to a small streamway were found. The middle one was blocked both upstream and downstream. Back under the pitch a desperately-slippery climb intersected the downstream

continuation. To the west, up and down various mud banks, intersected the upstream continuation. We went upstream first.

The stream was clear and showed no signs of desecration by NUCC (i.e. wasn't Voltera water). It was perfectly horrible with ludicrous mud abounding. After a bit it finally opened up and an inlet came in from the left (south) via a short pitch. A few horizontal things appeared to head off from the top of the waterfall but the rock was all so rotten that we couldn't freeclimb up to check them out. An easy aid climb would get you up, though. The right-hand branch didn't go much further before reaching an unpleasantness level only Henry could endure and then it worsened and exceeded even Henry's capacity for lying on his back in the stream and squealing as the water started flowing into his suit. Ugh! We called it done.

Next we pushed downstream, back under the access pitch. This was bloody awful too and only went 30 m or so before crapping out. Continuing the eye condition theme of Myopia, we settled on Conjunctivitis for this streamway - not a pleasant thing to suffer from.



Alan in delightful survey conditions. Image Henry Garratt

We thrutched our way back up the muddy rope and reconvened in the vicinity of taped station CHA113. There were possible ways down just west of here, so we poked our noses down. There was a ~6 m drop under the perched boulders, so we mined enough mud off to convince ourselves there was solid rock underneath and did some creative natural rigging. A second ~5 m drop (with a great rub) was descended and Voltera water was encountered (it reeked of NUCC).

Brief excitement was curtailed by the presence of rockfall blockages only a few metres upstream and downstream. Henry and I started surveying our way out but noticed an option to swing over to the other side and drop down another ~4 m pitch to an upstream continuation of the Voltera stream. More dodgy naturals were roped into service. It was looking good for about 25 m but then a small 0.5 m cascade was encountered and it all went to shit again beyond that. We named this streamway Satans Rainbow.

Henry had another splash in the water and decided it would go but would involve serious digging in wetsuits. We surveyed our way back downstream, up the pitches and tied into CHA113. Ben and Ciara were satisfied that they had made the right choice not joining us. We'd been listening to too much Machine Gun Fellatio back at camp and the only thing we could think of to call this horrible set of small muddy pitches was Butt-hot Greasy Slut. We know the PC police will come after us, but we are impervious to their prudish indignation.

We thought we'd check out the pitches below the little waterfall at the eastern end of the large rift chamber but I was sidetracked en route and saw a shadow on the southern wall near taped station CHA107. After a few little climbs and some slippery slides some great phreatic fossil passage of generous dimensions (4 m wide by 2.5 m high) revealed itself. It was going left and right. I convinced the others this lead was better than the waterfall and corralled the troops. The compass said left was south (i.e. towards Voltera) so we went that way first. The stunning phreatic roof and lovely dimensions didn't last long and we were soon crawling. It had all the hallmarks of a flood overflow passage.



Look at those stunning formations. Image: Henry Garratt

Next we were digging cobbles from the floor to access a sandy slide to lower levels. One by one team members decided they'd wait and see what the person in front of them found before continuing on. I was at the front, inching along a low wide flattener which slowly descended to a small pool of water issuing from under a low blank wall. It was Voltera water and had 'put Steve (or someone else you don't like) in a wetsuit and poke him in' written all over it. Ciara ventured in for a look (against her wishes) but she had the Disto, so she had no choice. We surveyed our way back out, shooting a side leg down another cobbled slope to a short section of Voltera water along the way.



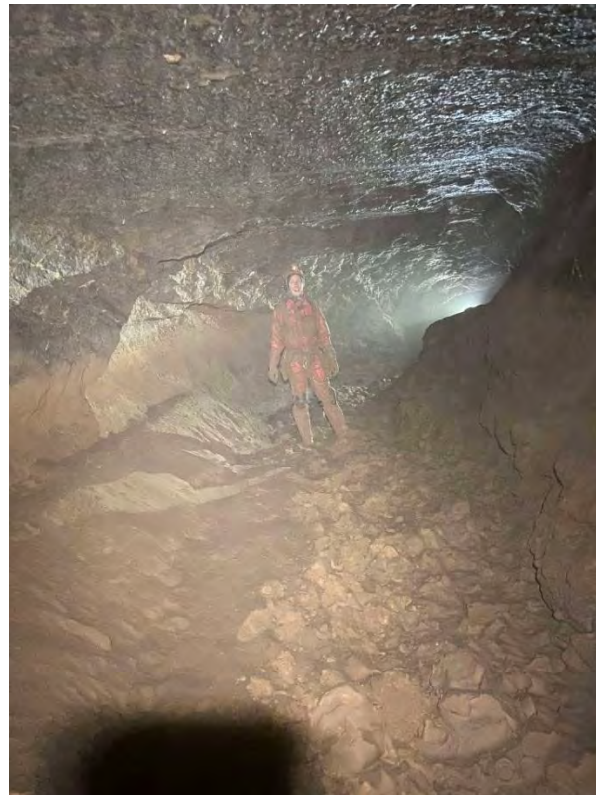
Ciara and Ben. Lunchtime. Image: Henry Garratt

Back at the junction, Ben was sent down the other way ('right') and he reported finding a pink tape labelled BACH41. He'd found a way back to the upstream limit of Butt-hot Greasy Slut. We tied in the survey loop, made some poor excuses for why we hadn't found this from the other side and then surveyed our way back up the mud ramps to the main chamber and station CHA107.

Cold, tired, hungry and completely over it, we ditched the idea of dropping the waterfall pitches and turned our tails for home. We rediscovered what colour our caving gear was back at the El Dorado main river passage, stashed the ropes (~40 m and ~15 m lengths), shovel and wrecking bar at the top of the mud slope leading into Myopia for next summer and slogged back to camp. Jemma was still alive and had a wonderful hot dinner prepared for us. Luxury!

Later data crunching indicated another ~400 m of passage surveyed in Myopia and the gap to Voltera was down from 90 m to 60 m. Plenty more shadows to shove our noses into in there, so the fat lady hasn't sung just yet on that one.

(Henry) Alan headed up CAG Inlet and decided it was wet enough to be a job for me. I belly-crawled through the water for maybe 10 m, before it became too tight. It would be on your back digging in a roof sniff similar to Auld Lang Slime and The River of Babylon (see *Spiel* 459). The floor is more pebbles rather than mud. Definitely a wetsuit job.



About the only nice bit in all of Myopia. Image: Henry Garratt

Day 4

(Alan) While the others got their faff on at camp I made an escape to Delta Variant. There was some juice left in the drill batteries we had so I wanted to put those joules to better use; empty batteries are lighter to carry out than full ones anyway, yeah? I picked up where I'd left off on the previous bounce trip with Ben and continued the glue-in anchor preparations. I got to the top of the second pitch in Close Contact before the last battery died on the last approach line hole. So, a few minutes work to finish that one then just one Close Contact pitch, Daily Cases and the stuff near the entrance to do before the glue fest.

(Ben) A comment on the mud: I initially found it quite hard to believe that the presence of mud would be a significant hindrance to exploration caving. I feel like I now have a much better appreciation of this intriguing facet of the Tasmanian subterranean experience. It weighs you down, clogs your gear, makes it hard to put

in protection, saps your body heat and your enthusiasm, and it transforms the cave into one giant slip-and-slide. I felt like a novice caver again when presented with mud. I am usually quite a confident climber, but when faced with mud, I felt like a fresher. Thank you mud for this humbling experience. Hopefully, I'll be back soon armed with greater confidence in the face of this brown menace.



Looking up Daily Cases. Image: Ben Honan

A big thank you to everyone for inviting me on the trip, and thanks for showing me your leads! I feel fortunate to be part of a select group of people to have seen the continuation of the Niggly mastercave main drain. To find kilometres of easy walking passage with a streamway so far underground is very cool indeed. I look forward to seeing what the next Niggly team finds in El Dorado. You have an amazing project here, and I hope El Dorado goes even bigger!



Quality (ancient) Tasmanian mud. Image: Ben Honan

An Unexpected Detour to IB-10 Mystery Creek

26 April 2025

Michael Glazer

Party: Ashlee Bastiaansen, Amy Brezinscak, Bill Cameron, Michael Glazer, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney, Trixi Lily Zinzi

The day began with high spirits, especially for our three new members, Amy, Bill and Trixi, who were all very keen for the planned Exit Cave trip. My first task was to pick up the key for Exit Cave from the Chalet at Hastings. However, upon my arrival, I could not find the key in its designated box. [Ed. It turns out there is a trick to this, contact the exec for details if needed.]

Understandably disappointed, I quickly called Janine, as she, Ric, and Ashlee were traveling separately, to update them on the situation. With three new members eager for a caving experience, a quick change of plans was made: the trip would now be to Mystery Creek.

We all convened at the Mystery Creek carpark around 9:00 am.

Ric outlined his plan for the day, which involved heading off to refind the route to Cyclops Pot. The rest of us, a group now consisting of Janine, Amy, Bill, Trixi, Ashlee and I, began our journey down Mystery Creek. We took a few detours to explore some side passages and admire the waterfall.

We continued along a slightly different route on the left side of the main passage. While not difficult, it did require a bit of route-finding. Our exploration took us all the way down to the Matchbox Squeeze, with a couple of concerned glances exchanged as we approached the Chasm of Doom! However, the Matchbox Squeeze didn't pose any real challenge to anyone in the group.

For our exit, we opted for the Laundry Chute and made a stop to appreciate the glow worms. We emerged from the cave around 1:15 pm, which was close to the time we had agreed to meet Ric back at the carpark.

Given our early finish, the entire group decided to head to the Kermandie Pub for a well-deserved beer and a few laughs before making our way home. It was a good end to an unexpectedly rerouted, but still enjoyable, day of caving.



Image: Michael Glazer



Image: Michael Glazer

JF-237 Niggly Cave

3 May 2025

Karina Anders

Party: Karina Anders, Alan Jackson

It was *Mission Impossible* or maybe just *Mission Improbable*. But before getting into the story of the actual caving trip, first a bit of background. Over the Anzac weekend there was a Niggly trip which I unfortunately had to pull out of due to illness of the influenza variety. I was very upset to miss out on a fun weekend, but a few days later Alan asked me if I wanted to do a day trip into Niggly the next weekend to the far end of El Dorado to find his Disto that he had forgotten and left in the cave. Excited to have the opportunity to make up for the Anzac weekend, I said 'yes'. It wasn't until the next day when I was thinking, 'did Alan really forget his Disto... that just sounds so unlike him' and I required secondary confirmation. He had indeed forgotten his Disto - the man must be getting old.

Grateful for his forgetfulness, I was excited to see the new mastercave passage. It was also a good opportunity to determine if a big day trip to push mastercave would be possible, as opposed to a camping trip. We left Hobart at 7 am and were at the cave entrance by 9:30 am. Having tiny bags made for a

speedy trip and I practised my route-finding skills the whole way. I made it to Weightwatchers Squeeze no problem and the crawly section was trogged well enough for me to be able to find the way reasonably well with Alan pointing out some not obvious twists and turns. It was delightful to reach the new mastercave. It certainly rivals Exit Cave in size. Alan gave me a tour of the various side passages and streamways and it wasn't long until we came across a lonely looking Disto, sitting on the side of the streamway, right where Alan had left it. *Mission accomplished!* That was rather easy. Lucky we came in when we did; it wouldn't have taken much rain to have washed the Disto away and for it never to be seen again. Good opportunity to have first lunch for Alan, second lunch for me and a time check. It was about 1:15 pm. Not bad at all.

We had a few jobs to do on the way out so after touring a bit we headed back. Even though the man is old, he is still a bloody lot faster than me on the ropes so I let him tackle his to-do list (drilling holes for the p-hanger installation) and made my way up. It was a very leisurely pace out of the cave; I even got cold waiting for Alan to drill holes on Daily Cases. We were pleasantly surprised to be back at the car by 7:30 pm. We decided a day trip to push mastercave could be easily achieved.

IB-9 Big Tree Pot

3 May 2025

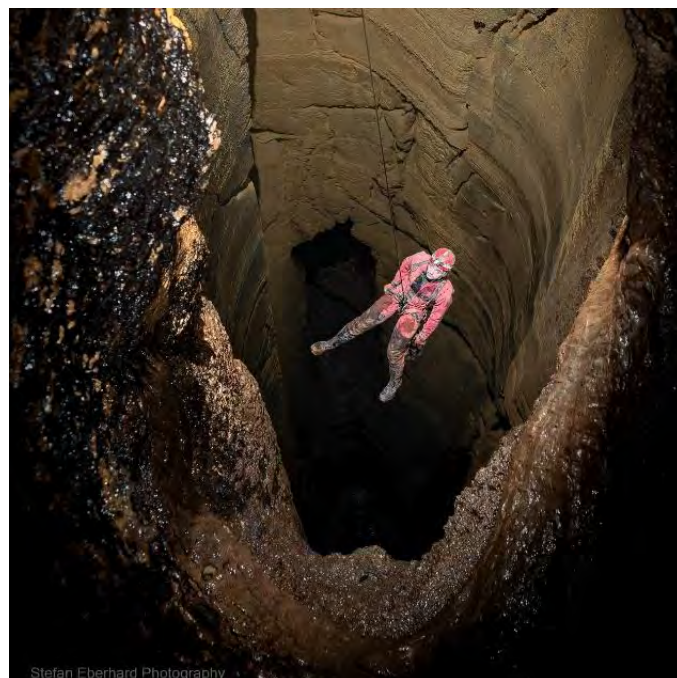
Ashlee Bastiaansen,

Party: Ashlee Bastiaansen, Ben Honan, Stefan Eberhard

Round two in Big Tree Pot to actually get the money shots and de-rig the cave. A quick demo on how all the flashes worked on the surface, and we headed down to the 90 m pitch. A bit more faffing before Ben jumped on the ropes to be the first model. Lots of flashing lights and a few numb legs later and Stefan was happy we got the shot! Lighting up the full length of a 90 m pitch is no easy task. Overall it was a successful trip.



Ashlee. Image: Stefan Eberhard



Ben. Image: Stefan Eberhard

Ida Bay Surface Jobs

10 May 2025

Michael Glazer

Party: Michael Glazer, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

Following up on the surface trip from 19/04, there were still a few tags needing to be placed, some data to tidy up, and a quick reconnaissance of IB-268 was in order to see if it warranted a return visit with Ciara and Jemma for a more extensive exploration.

Janine and Ric, ever keen for a look and some exploration, met at my place around 8:15 am. We arrived at the MC carpark about 9:15 am, with Ric apparently eager to christen my new ute with a bit of dirt. It was a stunning autumn day.

After successfully tagging IB-269, IB-270 and IB-271, we headed towards IB-268, navigating between two dolines. On the way, Ric took a slight, yet serendipitous, detour. To our excitement, he stumbled upon a fantastic new shaft, a straight drop of over 20 metres, located only about 30 metres from IB-268!

Filled with excitement, we scoped the area around this new discovery. We rigged up a rope to get a better look over the edge, revealing a gorgeous shaft. After snapping a few photos and finding a suitable spot for a tag which was IB-272 and named Raclette after Ric's favourite cheese, we turned our attention back to IB-268.

We located IB-268 again and, after placing two screws, I eagerly descended the roughly 7 m pitch. It opened up into a rather pretty chamber, but unfortunately, it didn't lead anywhere further.



Michael emerging. Image: Janine McKinnon

With the day's main objectives completed, we began our trek back to the main track. The journey was made slightly more frustrating by tree fall, a sentiment Janine expressed more vocally than I did.

Back at the quarry, a previous conversation with Jemma about drill battery consumption resurfaced. Inspired by some HowNot2 episodes on YouTube, we had pondered whether a 6 mm hole drains significantly

more battery than an 8 mm hole on modern 18v+ gear. My curiosity piqued, and with Ric timing, we decided to conduct a short test. Using a fresh 4-flute 6 mm SDS bit, it took approximately 40 seconds to drill a 70 mm deep hole, including a couple of clearing pulls. We then switched to an 8 mm bit. To our surprise, each hole with the 8 mm bit took almost exactly half the time,

around 20 seconds, with a noticeable advantage of not needing to clear the hole. This experiment certainly warrants further investigation.

Overall, it was a successful and enjoyable day out.

Northern Rescue Training

10-11 May 2025

Jemma Herbert

Party: Karina Anders, Cath, Jemma Herbert, Ben Honan, Alan Jackson, John Oxley, Yvonne Galarat, Claire, Renee, Dave, Cathy, Eleanor March, Yara, Nick, Bob

Cath organised this wicked northern rescue weekend. One day at Hillwood, Rock of Ages area, and one day at a local cave.



Image: John Oxley



Image: John Oxley

At Hillwood we got lots of ropes up for SRT practice initially, then setup a haul > double Tyrolean course. There were lots of good rigging options, with some convenient top access anchors and some high rocky outcrops with natural anchors. Most importantly there were great spectator vantage points, so everybody got to see what was going on at every stop. It was a fun and productive day for all, followed by an equally fun and less productive evening at the pub.

On Sunday we got a mock callout to try the callout tree and alert each other when and where we were meeting. Some people being out of reception and some people not reading the full instructions made for realistic hurdles.

The rest of the day we spent moving a casualty from the end of a little local cave to the surface. There was a communications line and some tricky tight stretcher carrying. At the entrance we had two long Tyroleans each with high redirects to pass in interesting ways and a mini haul to join them. Another fun and productive day.

Big thanks to Cath for putting this weekend together and keeping the climbers off our backs at Hillwood.

IB-11 Midnight Hole – IB-10 Mystery Creek

14 May 2025

Becca Lunnon

Party: Stefan Eberhard, Becca Lunnon, John Oxley, Michelle Schrieber, Trixi Lily Zinzi

[Ed. This report was first published on Becca's blog: <https://rockmonkeyadventures.wordpress.com/2025/06/01/midnight-hole-and-mystery-creek-caves-14-may-2025/>]

Midnight Hole is a perfect cave for a beginner, and a magnificent one as well. I didn't know this when I was given a last minute invitation days before the trip was due to run. Did it matter that I'd only just become comfortable with single rope technique? It was probably the perfect time to cement the new skill. Did it matter that the following day I'd be heading off to Scotland for two weeks to run 400 km? Maybe, I'd just have to be careful not to injure myself. I had little idea what I was in for, having been caving only once before. I also knew there was no way to find out but to show up and grasp whatever the experience had to offer with an open mind.



And we're off! Into the depths of darkness. Image: Becca Lunnon

One of the things I'm working on this year is a commitment to try new things, especially ones I find scary or difficult, and to embrace the possibility of failure not as an end-point, but as a learning experience, as something I actually want to do because it suggests I've finally been ambitious enough with my

goals instead of sticking to the comfortable. Too often I've avoided things out of fear of failure and I don't want to do that anymore. There is so much possibility in life and I want to see where it takes me! While caving is not something that specifically makes me afraid of failure, it is a new thing, and with that comes the usual fears about ability, competence and success, not to mention a new community to enter with all the usual concerns around acceptance, etc. (especially for an introvert). So I saw this as a relatively good place to start. Learning how to cave also comes with another strong motivation. I want to become familiar with both the sport and the community, so that as a wilderness paramedic I'll know what I'm doing should my services be required at some point in the future.

John was essentially running the trip for Trixie, Michelle and me, along with another experienced caver and photographer, Stefan. They made the experience as comfortable as it could be. It was clear from the get-go that they would offer up all the answers to our plethora of questions as best they could, and their attention to safety set my worries about forgetting to do something crucial at ease. They were always there to check we were properly connected to the ropes before we committed ourselves. The tales of incidents and rescues weren't told to scare the living daylight out of us, but purely to highlight the importance of good technique and process.



Logbook. Image: Becca Lunnon



Working our way from the bottom of one abseil to the next. Image: Becca Lunnon

In this fashion we made our way to the start of the Southern Ranges walking track, territory with which I was at least a bit familiar. I was not, however, familiar with walking in gumboots. They were admittedly a touch too big for me and, as I would discover later, actually different sizes (the joys of grabbing shoes in the dark!). I did my best to stop my socks from sliding off my feet as I walked, knowing that when we started the caving part we'd be doing very little actual walking.



Echidna remains. Image: Becca Lunnon



Tasmanian Cave Spider. Image: Becca Lunnon

At the quarry we turned left and followed a track I hadn't known existed. We quickly departed from it and headed up the hill to the start of Midnight Hole. It was a cool and overcast day, but we were all hot and sweaty as we hauled our gear up the few hundred metres through the forest. We were wearing thermals under our caving 'suits' (mine simply being old work pants and an old rain jacket) which would be perfect for the cold inactivity of caving but not so well suited to getting there!



Full admiration. Image: Becca Lunnon

At the mouth of the cave we took time to don our harnesses and make sure we were all hooked up correctly. John rigged a safety line up and Stefan gave John a crash course on what we nicknamed ‘the sun’ – a 13,000 lumen torch that seemed to rival the sun for brightness. Stefan’s primary reason for attending was to take a whole heap of photos of the cave, and ‘the sun’ would become important especially on the last pitch to ensure the light was right.

With nothing else to do, we took it in turns to embark on the first abseil, a nice short vertical walk or bounce down the edge of the cave to a small landing below, where the log book lives. The three of us girls took the time to get used to the rope and its resistance as it ran through our descenders, something we’d get better at controlling throughout the day. We continued in this fashion for the remaining five abseils, each of different lengths, and each with their own character. At times we’d pause for Stefan to take the photos he wanted. Some pitches were longer and required us to make some changes to the ropes we were using so that we didn’t run out of length. John and Stefan sorted all of that more technical stuff for us while we took the time to admire the various cave formations, the cave spiders and crickets, the slowly decaying echidna corpse or simply to dance with our shadows or eat a bunch of food when our stomachs protested at us having not realised lunchtime had been and gone.



Michelle dancing with the shadows. Image: Becca Lunnon

The last abseil was the longest, but not by a huge amount, which in itself didn’t phase me at all. What I wasn’t prepared for was that after the first half dozen metres or so you were no longer abseiling down a wall

that you could touch with your feet. The tunnel you descended into suddenly widened dramatically and it took my breath away, in all senses. It was stunning, but it was also a little scary, realising that my descent was entirely controlled by my arms/hands, which weren’t used to abseiling and were probably more fatigued than they should have been. I took a moment to steady myself, to look around at how epic a spot I was in and then continue on down. It was something else!



It’s an art form getting the shadows just right for the photos! Image: Becca Lunnon

It was almost as cool watching John descend, as standing back and having someone else in the picture for scale gave a better perspective of just how big everything was. This was followed by a section on the other end of the extreme, the well-known pinch point. It proved a breeze for all of us – the biggest problem I had was in trying to figure out how to get my oversized gumboot through! A series of different features followed as we made our way to Mystery Creek Cave, some with brilliant names like Chasm of Fear, others with impressive features including stalagmites and stalactites. We paused to turn off our head torches and enjoy the glow worms, and took a side trip to the underwater river and waterfall. John and Stefan clearly knew the cave like the backs of their hands, while I was

aware just how easy it could be to become lost down there. I figured learning how to navigate in caves would be part of the fun of the journey ahead – is it just a matter of getting people to show you the ropes, or are there resources that enable safe passage for novices through complex caving systems? I guess I'll find out!



Straddling the Chasm of Fear. Image: Becca Lunnnon

We popped out the bottom just as dusk was falling and made the short walk back to the cars. The remainder of John's homemade biscuits went down exceptionally well, the day having taken a little longer than anticipated. John kindly took all the loaned gear, as well as the ropes, to clean at home. I'm sure it's a task that takes a fair chunk of time and effort, and I was grateful for him doing this on top of having run the trip in the first place. As we drove home I reflected on how, once again, the generosity of others with sharing their knowledge, skills and time amazes me. I'd spent the Saturday before with the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers doing some rescue exercises and had felt similarly then. I resolved to make a more concerted effort to pay it forward in the ways I knew how.



Mystery Creek sculptures. Image: Becca Lunnnon

IB-57 Cyclops Pot

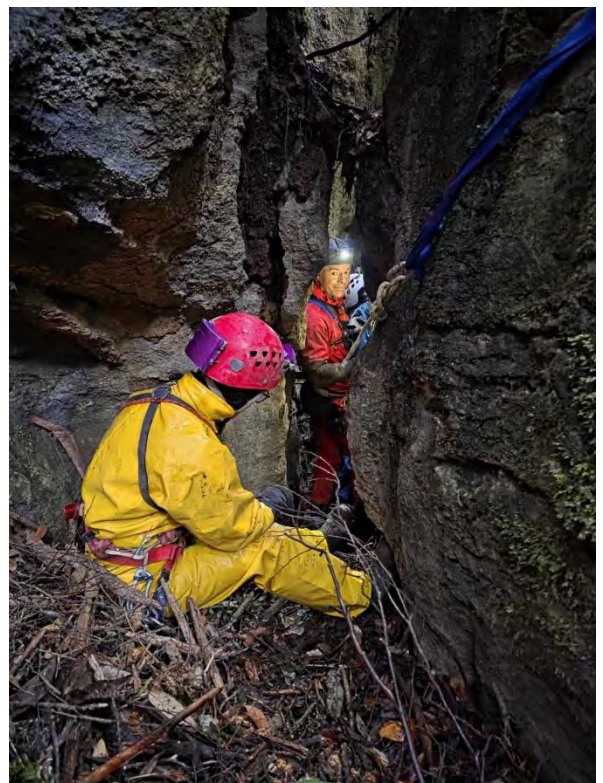
17 May 2025

Janine McKinnon

Party: Michael Glazer, Adrian Hills, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney, Raelene Watson

Decades have passed since I last visited this cave. Decades have passed since anyone visited this cave. That is a pity really as it has four beautiful pitches, and a dig at the bottom for the fanatically enthusiastic about the potential of such things.

I'm not sure why it popped into my head as a good idea to visit it again. Possibly because it would need re-rigging after such long neglect and Michael was on the look-out for training opportunities in that. Possibly because I remembered the pitches with fondness and wanted another trip down them. Possibly because I thought the dig was worth another look (it is near to IB-23 Little Grunt), but probably because I wanted somewhere new (or not familiar) that was worthwhile and not Delta Variant/Niggly (the only real game in town in this era) as my poor body can't cope with that level of punishment these days.



Almost underway. Image: Rae Watson

Winter had arrived in the form of light, cold rain and hail as we walked to the cave on a track that was starting to get a bit wet and slippery after what has been a lovely dry summer. We had been smart enough to re-locate the cave in the previous few weeks. Ric had even forged a new route from the Exit track that saved distance and effort, so the walk was now only 45 minutes and not an hour plus.

The entrance was as I remembered it, and we expected a smooth 5-6 hours underground as we kitted up. Our expectations went downhill from there.

We had a copy of ‘draft’ rigging notes done in 2009 by someone anonymous. We couldn’t remember the rigging as we only visited the cave once on a Madphil trip, so it was earlier than 2009. Michael started looking for the described chock to rig the handline straight down for the entrance climb (of 4 m). Much looking resulted in failure, so we changed tack. The climb looked very sketchy anyway; wide with lots of vegetation litter and few hand- and foot-holds. We decided to turn it into a pitch. Michael put in two concrete screws and started down. I came after him to help with whatever we found at what was now pitch two. Not that I could see anything of it as Michael blocked the passage; it wasn’t very wide.



Laid back style. Image: Janine McKinnon

How reliable is your memory? I’m not sure how typical mine is, but it has a habit of deleting, or optimistically modifying, the shitty bits of caving. Thus, it was that the pitch-head here had been erased from my memory. Yes, the map has a restriction marked, but what is the definition of a restriction I ask you? I’m small, so I frequently fail to take them seriously... enough.

So, Michael was jammed down the restriction looking for the two bolts described for rigging the pitch with a Y belay. A throughbolt, with a hanger and marker tag, was clearly visible on the left-hand wall but he couldn’t find the other described bolt. Quite some time was spent trying to find it to no avail, so we eventually decided to put another one in. Once Michael put in a concrete screw it was straight-forward to rig the pitch.

I found it a bit awkward getting through the restriction but gravity is a blessing going down. I looked carefully for that second bolt and couldn’t find one. Odd, I thought. Maybe they used a (obvious but very poorly positioned) natural instead? I have no idea, as both the rigging notes and 2009 trip report (SS373, p.6) talk about a Y belay on bolts. Odd indeed.

The pitch was as lovely as I remembered.



Gotta love a good pitch. Image: Michael Glazer

Next pitch and déjà vu arrived. Michael was at the top of the drop looking for the two bolts described for a (yes, you guessed it) Y belay. There was one, extremely obvious, throughbolt, with hanger and tag, right in front of his nose on the wall opposite the drop. You couldn’t miss it if you tried... but no sign of a second bolt. We didn’t have to look for anything like as much time to be sure there wasn’t one here either.

The pitch-head has lots of loose rocks, and is a bit steep and precarious, so in the spirit of super-safe caving we decided to put an approach line in. Michael was doing all the work (this is how you train competent people, right? Get the ‘student’ to do all the work, and sip coffee whilst glancing their way every now and then... pity I was missing the coffee), so he put in the concrete screw for approach and then the second pitch-head

bolt, rigged the rope and headed down. Adrian had (well and truly) arrived by this time, and we got a message from further up-cave that Ric had turned back after some gymnastics at the pitch head on P2.

Meanwhile, Michael called up that the re-direction noted for this pitch was unnecessary as it was a lovely free-hang. As I came down, I agreed, and was again a bit mystified by these rigging notes. Possibly it is to get further from any water coming down the pitch in wet conditions, as described in the trip report noted earlier here. It certainly wasn't needed this dry trip. I did, however, see a deep rope-rub groove in the rock just below the pitch-head, from some earlier era poor rigging. Possibly from the IRT (Indestructible Rope Technique) of the exploration days.

We were now at our P4 (old P3), which was a tiny little thing of 7 m, and so would be quick and easy. Famous last thoughts. It proved to be our Bête Noire for this trip. The rigging notes said to put a tape around the column in the middle of the chamber, climb down a short drop on the left-hand side of the column, and rig from that. We were much cleverer than that though, weren't we? The column was large and about 10 m of tape would be needed. We had it, but we (ok, I) thought that would be inelegant. We would rig from two concrete screws, for approach and pitch head, along the right-hand wall. Much neater and more professional we (ok, I) thought.

Rae and Adrian climbed down beside the column (as the notes describe) and both thought it would be easy to rig. So they are off the hook for the time-wasting that ensued.



Mud. Glorious Mud. Image: Janine McKinnon

Michael put in the two concrete screws and dropped over the lip to find somewhere for a rebelay. Much, much time was spent whacking the hammer at crumbling rock and mud in a variety of directions. Eventually Rae said that her kids were home alone and that she would start up to save time on the egress. The three of us thus changed plan to just dropping the next (45 m) pitch and then turning the trip. But we weren't actually down this pitch yet. More thumping at rock (or

fake rock) ensued but we soon decided that it was a lost cause, or our patience had run out, choose your excuse. We decided we had all had enough for today and headed out.

I went up after Rae, and Michael and Adrian de-rigged the ropes, but left concrete screws and their hangers in-situ for a return. I found the restriction at the top of P2 rather nasty, and it took some effort to get up through. How Michael managed to fit through uphill, plus getting a heavy rope pack through, I don't know. Rae had reported having a very hard time getting her heavy pack back up through the restriction (we had the ropes for the bottom two pitches with us of course). Adrian found it interesting as well, but he likes a challenge.

Ric was waiting on the surface, but he hadn't spent the day sitting around (he'd have frozen to death). He had route-found across country to a couple of other old caves in the area, looking for better approaches to them. Apparently, his plans to go from Cyclops to National Gallery had been dropped after wading through bad scrub.



That obvious column. Image: Janine McKinnon

We had managed to spend about six hours at this effort. I would expect much better efficiency for the next trip. If nothing else, we won't spend time looking for bolts specified in the rigging notes if they aren't easily findable.

It had been raining regularly all day, and was hailing lightly as we surfaced, and so the track was much slipperier and boggier on the walk back. Winter conditions on the Exit track have arrived. If I am on the next trip it will be waiting for summer.

JF-10 Splash Pot (attempt)

18 May 2025

Jemma Herbert

Party: Karina Anders, Jemma Herbert

This trip has been a long time coming. Henry and I were last there in September, when Henry earnestly promised that he would derig it whilst I was in South America over summer. Then I got home from South America in February, and it still needed derigging. Then we went to JF-40 in hope of making the connection and derigging out there. Then we skipped a scheduled trip because Henry had caved like 500 weekends in a row, or some weak excuse like that. Then we skipped another trip after my busted toe + Niggly-induced sore knee. Then Henry flaked on this one too, but Karina stepped up and dragged me along.

Karina and I caught up the night before to get our gear sorted, double check bolts and aiders and ropes and tag lines. Karina rightly pointed out that we'd need a smaller spanner for the little aid bolts, but that was a solvable problem. We were at Bunnings at opening time on Saturday to run in for a small spanner then on the road, comparing packed lunches and mentally preparing ourselves for the very big day ahead.

Just as we pulled into the Florentine I suddenly stopped the car and swore profusely and uncreatively, much to Karina's confusion. I had realised I'd forgotten the key for Junee Quarry road.

We went out to the gate anyway, on the off chance it was unlocked. It wasn't. We gave about three seconds' consideration to walking in from the gate, but definitely couldn't be fucked.

As we drove away with our tails between our legs, I had the bright idea to go practise aiding at the Junee quarry. Yeah, turns out that's up Junee Quarry road too.

Instead we had a delightful day with a little doddle around out at Mt Field, then I spent the afternoon wriggling around in the crawl space under my house installing insulation. Objectively much more pleasant than Splash Pot. 8/10, would 'forget' the key again.



That looks close enough to me. Image: selfie

H-8 Wolf Hole (attempt)

The Wolf Hole Trip That Wasn't

18 May 2025

James Barnes

With great enthusiasm, ropes and caving gear had been packed ready for a bright and early start for a Wolf Hole caving trip the next day; everything had just happened to line up; the permit had come through just in time; everyone was ready to go and excitement was running high.

As per usual, unfortunately Murphy decided to rear his ugly head and just as I was about to go to bed my alarm went off. Instead of caving, I spent between 11 pm and 12 midnight the next day slogging up Mount Field in the snow and ice for a search and rescue job for two cold and stranded bushwalkers.

We managed to get them out safely; on the plus side, it was dark and cold so somewhat cave-like? Definitely not as pretty and pleasant as Wolf Hole...

Alas this trip will have to wait for another time!



Looks uncomfortable enough to be caving. Image: James Barnes

MC-1 Kubla Khan, MC-13 Croesus, MC-38 Genghis Khan

24-25 May 2025

Alex Motyka

Party: Ashlee Bastiaansen, Ben Honan, William Grant, Josh Greenhill, Alan Jackson (Kubla only), Alex Motyka

Went caving. Didn't die. Took photos. Would repeat.

MC-1 Kubla Khan

What more can be said about *Kubla Khan* that hasn't already been uttered?— except perhaps the succinct review from Alan Jackson: 'yawn'. But let's be honest, that's the kind of review that can only come from Mr Jackson. Kubla is still the undisputed crown jewel of Australian caving and among the most highly decorated caves in the world.

The scale and density of decoration in Kubla is difficult to convey in photos, let alone text. Every type of formation is here, often at an absurd size or concentration. As Ben put it, '*pretty mental*'. There are sections so ornate that, if transplanted into almost any other cave, they would be the entire reason to visit — here, they're just a scenic route to something even more impressive.

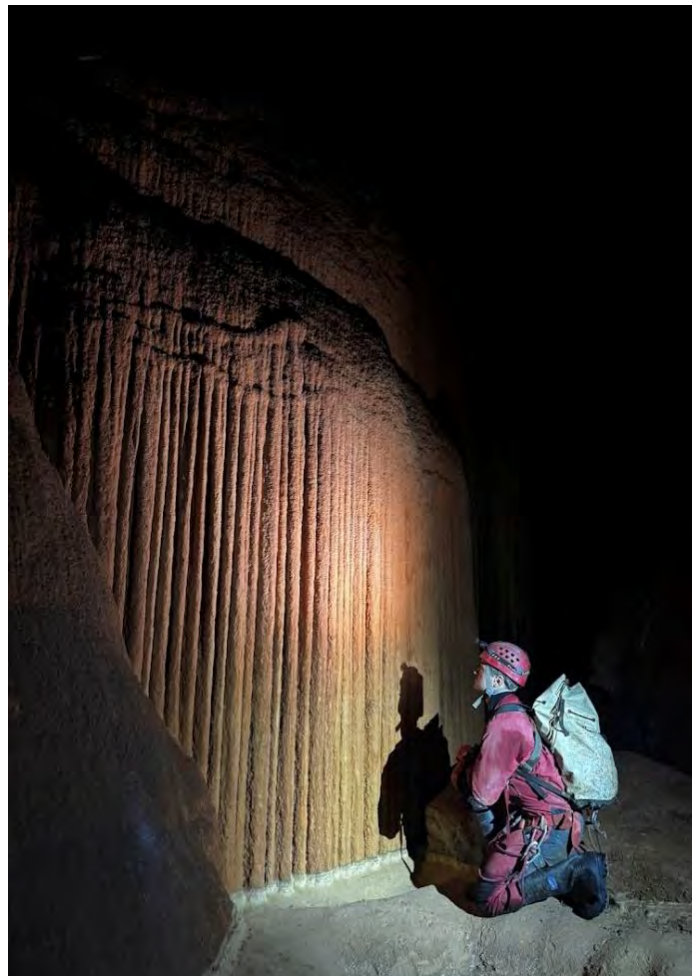


Image: Alex Motyka

Even seemingly plain, cavernous spaces reveal towering flowstone curtains that your headlamp can barely illuminate on full blast. It's overwhelming, extraordinary, and — for many — a cave that 'ruins' all others. After Kubla, nothing quite compares.



Image: Alex Motyka

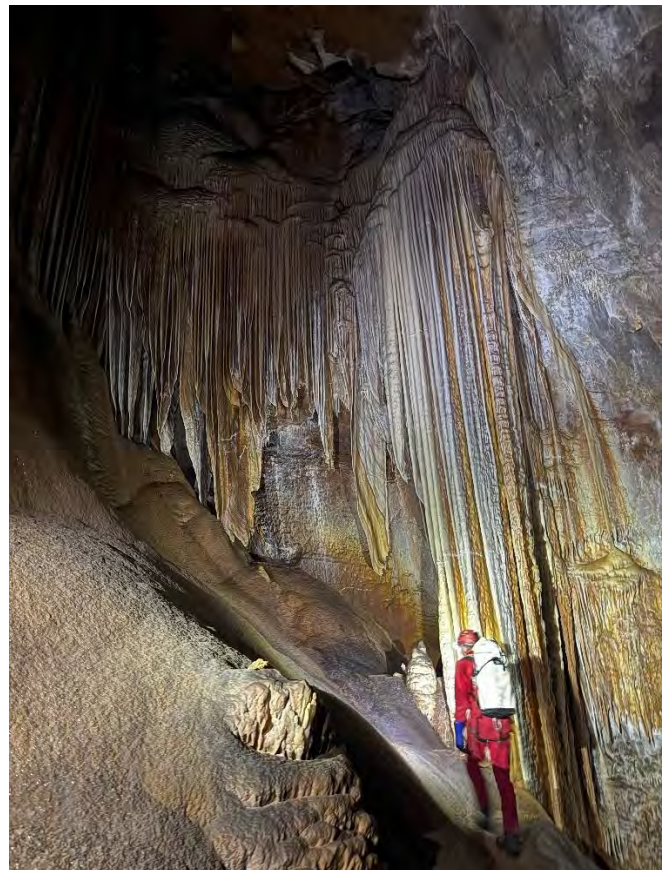
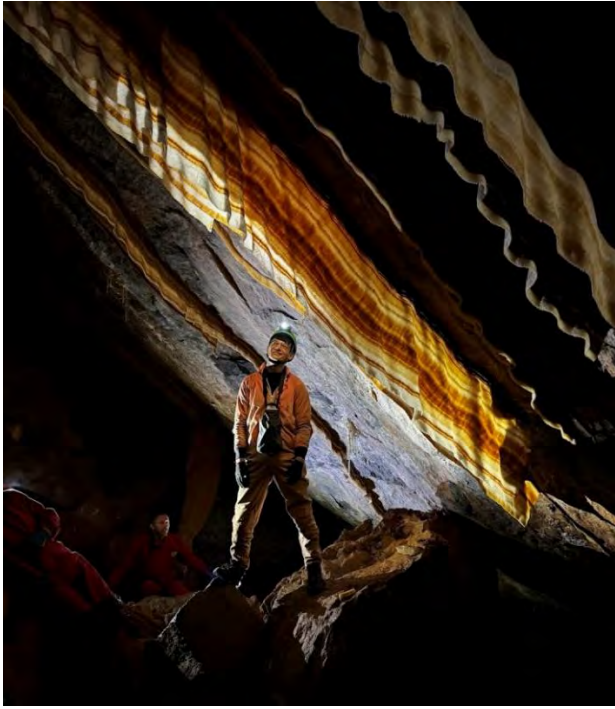


Image: Alex Motyka



MC-13 Croesus

This trip saw us tackle Croesus as a through-trip from the MC-43 entrance, rather than the usual in-and-out via the lower MC-13 entry. Cold, wet, and utterly worth it, Croesus is a stunningly decorated streamway cave — arguably the second-best cave at Mole Creek, and a contender for one of the best in Australia. Wetsuits are essential, but so is a camera. The cave's long stretch of stream passage is lined with exquisite rim pools (or 'gour pools,' in Ben-speak), and there's no shortage of photo opportunities. Pro tip for photographers: place waterproof lights under the water to bring the pools to life. Ashlee proved that gear isn't everything — she captured the best shot of the trip using Alex's iPhone 15 Pro, some clever light placement, and a steady hand. Sometimes, it's all about knowing the moment.



Images: Alex Motyka



Images above and right: Alex Motyka

MC-38 Genghis Khan

Just a very short distance from Kubla is Genghis Khan — a short (~1.5 hour), easy and beautifully decorated cave with no SRT involved. It's a gem in its own right, though best appreciated *before* you've seen Kubla... because, well, Kubla *ruins* everything else.

A soundtrack is essential: Mike Snow's 'Genghis Khan' must be played in the car en route. This trip saw Ashlee and Josh bow out after Croesus (the perks of being local!), but those of us from the mainland or further afield — like Ben and myself — had no such luxury. When you're only here for a short time, every hour underground counts.



JF-237 Niggly: Bounce Trip

24 May 2025

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Stephen Fordyce, Petr Smejkal

This was a rare alpine/tourist Niggly trip. We planned to leave an emergency cache in El Dorado, scope dive(s) for next summer, and show Petr what the digging effort he started had turned into. The weather demonstrated the reason why the cache was necessary when dry leadup weather and a 'should be ok' forecast turned into lots of rain within a day and Mother of God was too high to negotiate. So we left the emergency cache (transformed from travel mode to storage mode) in Rockhampton with the other camping gear and were back to the car at 5 pm.

The Boulder Jenga entrance was taking plenty of water on the way up, and noticeably more on the way back. Daily Cases was wet and loud but not the worst I've seen it.



Petr's choice of mug in the morning was better than mine. Image: Stephen Fordyce

Day of May 2025		Rainfall (24 hr mm to 9 am)
Sat	10	3.8
Sun	11	0.6
Mon	12	0
Tue	13	0.2
Wed	14	3.4
Thu	15	1
Fri	16	0
Sat	17	7.2
Sun	18	2.6
Mon	19	1.6
Tue	20	1.4
Wed	21	0
Thu	22	0.2
Fri	23	0.2
Sat	24	20.2
Sun	25	11.6
Mon	26	0.2
Tue	27	0.2

Rainfall at the Tim Shea BOM station

We derigged and brought back with us the spare rope leading from near the top of Daily Cases to the waterfall hole.

Anchors: three concrete screw holes in horizontal line not marked but pretty obvious on opposite wall to first rebelay; one hole in middle of streambed, one hole in ceiling in the waterfall hole. You'll need about 25 m rope.

We then went to JF-568 Chrisps Creek Swallet but it wasn't flowing despite the rain, and didn't look like it had in a long time. I think it must be sinking higher up the hill, which might be an interesting thing to check out.

Emergency Cache Notes

The cache was left in a pile (2 x large drybags, 1 x small drybag, 2 x foam mats) up in Rockhampton near but separate from the other camping gear. It's in storage mode – sleeping bags out of compression sacks.

(a few slightly outdated copies of this are on waterproof paper with the kit)

1. Water levels – everywhere in El Dorado to date is susceptible to flooding (see analysis of possible

locations), design cache to float up and have many layers of waterproofing.

2. **Avoid opening anything** unless:
 - 2.1. You've been instructed to check on things and what to do.
 - 2.2. It's an emergency (minor or major).
3. Emergency use suggestions:
 - 3.1. Once set up, break open the Emergency Fortune Cookie.
 - 3.2. Try to avoid ripping open the plastic garbage bags (so they can be re-used).
 - 3.3. Personal space may need to be sacrificed:
 - 3.3.1. Spoon for warmth.
 - 3.3.2. Consider removing wet clothes (gain consent of your fellow spooners!)
 - 3.3.3. The 2 sleeping bags can be joined together to make a big one.
 - 3.3.4. Or use the sleeping bags as quilts.
 - 3.4. Lay foam mats (probably wet) directly on ground, with plastic groundsheet (should be dry) over the top.
 - 3.5. Use foam pads, caving bags, gumboots and maybe caving suits to extend the insulated area.
 - 3.6. Leave enough groundsheet to fold it over you if there are drips (but then monitor for condensation). Or use space blankets.
 - 3.7. If plastic groundsheet is wet, use the provided mini-towel to dry it.
 - 3.8. Use snap-lock bags to line gumboots and keep feet dry if going for water or to pee.
 - 3.9. A modest flood (1-2 m) should subside in 24 hours. If you are unlucky it could be a week (hang in there!).
 - 3.10. There are lots of little things that might be useful – go through the included list in case you've missed anything.
4. Pack-up after use (no need to bother in an emergency):
 - 4.1. Stocktake any consumables you used.
 - 4.2. Make sure the sleeping bag and anything going in with it is as dry as possible – iron it repeatedly with a kettle full of hot water. Even a small bit of dampness will make it go mouldy – bring out if unsure.
 - 4.3. There should be a spare vacuum sealed desiccant for each sleeping bag (some granules in a stocking). Just before you seal everything up, take it out of the plastic and quickly put in the middle of the sleeping bag, along with the old one.

- 4.4. Reinstate the layers of plastic bags – knot the garbage bags.
- 4.5. Anything wet or muddy should go in one of the heavy duty drybags (including the towel).
- 4.6. The stove and gas canister should be wiped clean and put in the other heavy duty drybag.
- 4.7. Secure everything together, leave it as high as possible.
- 4.8. Lay out and attach orange string so the clump of camping gear can float up an aven in a really big flood, without the string tangling.
5. Moving/removal:
 - 5.1. If you are moving the kit, take 2x extra desiccants to leave when they are put back into storage.
 - 5.2. Everything you need for transport should be here, i.e.
 - 5.2.1. Sleeping bag compression sacks.
 - 5.2.2. Heavy duty drybags (re-use garbage bags to line them).
 - 5.2.3. Foam mats go without drybags.
 - 5.3. The whole lot should fit (just) in 2x XL caving bags.
6. Analysis of possible locations:
 - 6.1. K53 tape is at 364 m ASL, end MoG wash/detector spot very close to that.
 - 6.2. So the 20 m flood in 2024 went to 384mASL
 - 6.3. The 2018 flood went ~10 m higher than this, i.e. to 394 m ASL; mud indicates even higher floods are possible.
 - 6.4. ITMB is 377 m ASL.
 - 6.5. Cocoon Ridge top is 380 m ASL (but may be inaccessible).
 - 6.6. Hanging Rock ramp is 389 m ASL with aven and rockpile. A good high option with space above, close to Heavy Lifting, but poor campsite? (2nd best option).
 - 6.6.1. CHA27 at top, ACE46 and cairn at bottom.
 - 6.6.2. It looks to be at the big rockpile just downstream of Valentines Inlet.
 - 6.6.3. There's a dangerous loose rock somewhere?
 - 6.7. Adventure Time is 389 m ASL (best option)**
 - 6.7.1. Good campsites reported.
 - 6.7.2. Rift above with potential for tethered gear to float up.

6.7.3. CHA30c at top, FY21 at bottom.

6.7.4. Right next to FY inlet.

6.8. Myopia highest is 375 m ASL.

6.9. Florence Heights highest is 380 m ASL.

Cache Contents:

- Setup:
 - o Flood-proofing – many layers of protection
 - o Orange string to tether it and/or allow floating upwards
 - o Sign/tape to put at stream level
- Sleeping:
 - o 2x groundsheets
 - o 2x foam mats
 - o 2x sleeping bags, matching with R/L zips so they can join together
- Storage:
 - o 2x compression sacks
 - o 2x large lightweight storage drybags
 - o 2x transport drybags
 - o 2x vacuum storage bags (jumbo size)
 - o 4x large garbage bags
 - o 4x desiccant
 - o 2x humidity meter
- Cooking/eating
 - o Stove (test it)
 - o Gas canister
 - o Kettle
 - o 2x 2L water bladder
 - o 2x cups, 1x spork
 - o Water purification tablets
 - o Emergency ration biscuits
 - o Selection of hot drinks
 - o Emergency fortune cookie
 - o Roll of dog poo bags
 - o Handful of sanitiser sachets
 - o Roll of toilet paper (vacuum sealed, but with snap-lock bag)
 - o Drugs: Nurofen, Paracetamol, Codeine
- Utility:
 - o 2x towel/rag
 - o 6x large snap-lock bags
 - o Knife
 - o Cord
 - o 5x earplugs
 - o Mini playing cards
 - o Pencil & paper and texta

MC-120: Marakoopa Cave (1 and 2)

1 June 2025

Janine McKinnon

Party: Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

Our planned Devils Pot trip failed to launch due to drop-outs and disinterest. It was down to we two, but as we had already booked (non-refundable) accommodation before said drop-outs, and we had the Marakoopa permit anyway, we went north for a couple of pleasant days.

Water levels in the cave were low; the cave was as we remembered it. Marakoopa 2 is really quite a lovely cave; I keep forgetting that. It has the best fossils I have seen.

We came back overland. The Devils Pot track is in good condition, except where Parks have dropped some trees above the tourist cave entrance and one landed across the track, which they then didn't clear.



Looking at huge fossils. Image from a previous trip. Image: Adam Hooper

JF-35 Gormenghast - Anaspides Collection

2 June 2025

Henry Garratt

Party: Henry Garratt, Josh Greenhill, Anneke Stevens.

Josh has been doing his honours project at UTAS on cave-adapted *Anaspides*. It involves collecting live samples, and then testing their temperature tolerance in the lab.

This was a trip to collect some more samples for him. It had been rather wet in the preceding days and the cave was quite sporty. We had a good time splashing

around in the water, however the high flow and turbidity made collecting challenging. We still managed to collect our target of 12 and made it out in good time. Josh gets the toughest researcher award, having forgotten his gloves in the car and caving bare-handed for the day!

Having not been to Gormenghast before I was very impressed by the formations. Makes sense given the close proximity to The Friendzone in Porcupine. I was slightly disappointed, as it makes the Friendzone less unusual in the Junee-Florentine. However perhaps this makes the name even more fitting; there's plenty of fish in the sea.

IB-10 Mystery Creek Cave

4th June 2025

John Oxley

Party: Caitlin McCluskey (CSS), Giles Thomson (CSS), John Oxley

Giles and Caitlin were on holiday in Tasmania visiting family and asked if there were any suitable trips that STC was running while they were here. Given that Caitlin was about six months pregnant they were after an easy trip so I suggested we visit Mystery Creek Cave.

The last few months had been very dry and on a trip a week or so earlier I noticed that Mystery Creek was very low at the crossing on the track on the way to the cave. However there had been some rain in the last couple of days and this time the creek was slightly higher.



Caitlin in the Laundry Shoot. Image: John Oxley

In the cave, after stopping to check out the glow worms, we went through to the waterfall which was clearly flowing much stronger than on my previous trip. We continued through to the Broken Column and along Skyline to Confusing Chamber. On the return we went down the Laundry Chute where we could again hear the creek. This area was silent on my previous trip. It was interesting to note that only a small increase in water level in Mystery Creek was very noticeable in the cave.



Image: John Oxley

IB-272 Raclette

7 June 2025

Janine McKinnon

Party: Michael Glazer, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

Ric found this hole as we three wandered about a tree-fall strewn hillside off the Exit track four weeks ago (trip report on p. 21). It is slow going over this terrain, and easy to miss holes, so we were lucky Ric chanced across it as we traversed the hillside. Today was the first chance we had all had to get together to return and see if it went anywhere. I wasn't expecting it to as it was a large pit, so probably filled with debris, but hope lives eternal.



Michael practising surveying techniques using Ric's bum as a station. Image: Janine McKinnon



Ric on the way up. Image: Michael Glazer

Fortunately, it wasn't raining, as we had expected, and so gearing up and waiting while Michael rigged the drop was very pleasant. It's always nice to sit comfortably and watch someone else do all the work. He was enjoying himself, so everyone was happy.

At the bottom we found that, as expected but not desired, the floor was a dirt pile. No draughts. We think the shaft probably keeps going as the walls are vertical and solid limestone, but in-fill stopped us. Anyone fancy a serious dig?

We surveyed out, using Michael's new(er), improved, FCL. What a great device this is.

We were back at the cars before three, so had plenty of time to stop for a beer at the Kermandie on the way home. I am growing increasingly fond of this sort of caving.

IB-11 Midnight Hole

8 June 2025

Geoff Hurst

Party: Geoff Hurst, John Oxley

Well, I was pleasantly surprised that within a few days of filling in my paperwork to join this illustrious club, I was in a position to get my first trip under my belt. I was otherwise supposed to be leading a trip myself in the north of the state but due to the weather forecast and logistics of getting Scouts there we cancelled early. I don't know whether it is just very easy to convince John to go caving or it was just that he can be more fancy free when the wife is away but none the less we could be more flexible with the weather window and sneak in a trip to Midnight Hole between the forecast rain (well it probably rained while we were in the cave but we had a roof over our heads).



The slowly decomposing echidna now features mushrooms. Image: John Oxley

John may not have been the only enthusiastic one; a little lost with a long weekend now at home when I was planning to be away and an opportunity to show off the cheap travel in the new electric car, I picked up John from his place and headed south (well at least after we had turned round and collected the rope). Once on the trail I realised for a retired gent, John had a good stride to him, and we quickly covered the ground to the quarry. It was only on the hill that he was easier to wrangle and it was only his trick stop a few metres from the drop that we really rested.

After a brief description of the drops to expect below, I was sent first down the pitch to start the adventure. It initially surprised me greatly how significant this part of the cave is, having visited Mystery Creek many times for horizontal caving with Scouts, it was quite a

different opportunity to head in vertically. With each drop John graciously talked me through the rigging for each of the next pitches to help guide any future trips here with other parties. The tubes were impressive, and the work done to provide secure access by the club is much appreciated. It was fascinating to see the fungal growth on the poor echidna after the third drop and finish our descent with the wonderful sixth pitch.

From here it was some gear shuffling and out through Matchbox Squeeze, down the Laundry Chute, through some more new cave before I was on the main drag I was well familiar with. We did some minor exploring and had a side trip down to the waterfall before heading back to the car for lunch. All round a good introduction to the club. Hopefully John reckons I have earned my first stripe and on to the next adventure.



Geoff Hurst leaving the daylight. Image: John Oxley

Other Exciting Stuff

JF-2 Cauldron Pot Rigging Guide

Alan Jackson

(Adapted from Ric Tunney's March 2023 version)

P1 Entrance Pitch (41 m) [50 m will get you down easily if you're happy to swing over to the rockpile once you get to the first log stack]:

Largely unchanged from previous rigging guide. Walk around lip of doline to broad ledge at cliff line beside waterfall. Belay with tape around tree on LHS of waterfall [this tree now appears to be dead and should be inspected closely], with backup to upside down bolt underneath small ledge about 1.5 m above ground level. Rebelay off two bolts immediately above lip 8 m down, LHS of rock slab about 3 m off the fall line – short sections of rated stainless steel chain have been added to these bolts to remove the issue of badly loaded carabiners or rope rub on the sharp edge. These bolts have a tendency to get covered with moss, so be prepared to cave via braille – bolts are on smooth rock just above lip. Rebelay off bolt at rub point on projecting rock about 6 m further down [sometimes not needed depending on how you've positioned your Y-hang above]. Rebelay off bolt LHS in corner about 10 m further down above final free-hang to bottom.

Bills Bypass:

There are two 316 stainless steel 8 mm expansion bolts with hangers in situ above a short, tricky climb near the bottom of the Bypass. An 8 m rope or tape handline would help the climb for those with short limbs.

P2a First Cascade (14 m): [38 m rope for P2a & P2b if tape is used around natural.]

Affect a Y-belay between the excellent natural on LHS and the p-hanger higher on the RHS.

P2b Second and Third Cascades (2 m & 4 m):

Two p-hangers high on LHS.

P3 Chute Pitch (15 m) [25 m rope]:

Two p-hangers high on LHS at top of pitch. Tie in to previous pitch rope to back-up. Single p-hanger on LHS (right while abseiling) at the corner for a deviation/redirect. Rebelay on single p-hanger RHS (left while abseiling) around corner 5 m down.

P4 Eleven Metre Pitch (11 m) [18 m rope]:

Approach p-hanger on LHS 2 m back from lip. Main hang is Y-belay on two p-hangers (one LHS, one RHS) at pitch head. Single p-hanger for redirect on RHS (left

when abseiling) high (send someone with long arms and legs) where the initial ramp goes vertical/undercut – not essential in low water levels but will prevent a face and chest full of water in high levels.

P5 Diagonal Pitch (14 m) [30 m rope will reach to P7]:

Approach line on single p-hanger 2 m back from edge on LHS. Rebelay on single p-hanger on LHS at lip (in ceiling, effectively). Second rebelay p-hanger in ceiling approx. 8 m further down to left (right while abseiling) gives free-hang to bottom.

P6 Four Metre Cascade (4 m):

The P5 rope can be rebelayed with a 5 m tape around the 'extremely dangerous-looking boulder' at the top of P6 to reach the top of P7.

P7 Bolt Traverse Pitch (35 m) [45 m rope]:

Must now be approached on the P5 rope. A single p-hanger on the RHS (left when abseiling) on slab now offers a much less rubby and drier approach to the 'traverse'. Descend and traverse around right hand wall; 5 m round and 3 m down (away from waterfall!) to two bolts. The left bolt is an 8 mm stainless expansion with stainless hanger and the right is a p-hanger (with a short 'hero-loop' in situ to assist with reaching and pulling across). Rebelay on single p-hanger 10 m further down at lip of free hang. About ten metres from the floor (just as you're starting to really enjoy the widening waterfall) a projection/rub is reached and a single 316 stainless steel expansion bolt is placed directly to the right of this point with a ~1.5 m white tape tied in; use it as a redirect [and leave the tape in place for future users].

Pitch 8 Au Cheval Pitch (5 m up, 15 m down) [18 m rope]:

Fixed 5 m rope in situ on up climb. Rig descent rope off same natural as fixed rope.

P9 Firehose Pitch (15 m)

Downstream. Not dry! Use naturals.

Notes: All directions are facing downstream. (Opposite direction to that when abseiling.) Original exploration Loxin eyebolts remain in place in case anyone likes SRTing with horrible rubs or wishes to run a nostalgic ladder trip one day. All p-hangers are glue-in Raumer 10x80 mm Superstars and are marked with a white tag with reflective maker. All other bolts are 8 mm expansion bolts with hangers in situ. Leave all hangers in cave. Rope lengths will just reach bottom, depending on size of loops and knots.

IB-57 Cyclops Pot
Part Rigging guide May 2025
Janine McKinnon

Pitch	Rope	Rigging
P1 4 m (previously C4)	23 m	Backup tape (2 m) through thread near tag on RHS. Y-hang from 2x screws above head above pitch on opposite walls.
P2 36 m	42 m	Rope from P1 to tie in as back-up. 2x bolts on LH wall at pitch head below squeeze. One bolt old with tag, one new screw (2025). Free-hang to bottom.
P3 44 m	52 m	Back-up bolt RHS on ledge 5 m back from pitch-head. 2x bolts on wall opposite pitch - one old with tag, one new screw (2025). New bolt 1 m lower than other one. Free-hang to bottom.
P4 7m	20 m (draft guess)	2x back up screws on RHS 5 m from pitch-head. NOTE: Currently pitch not descended as no viable spot for rebelay over lip could be found. Possibly revert to 2009 draft guide.
P5 45 m	?	(2009) Bolts for Y-belay. Sketchy tie-back. 70 m rope will do P4 & P5.
P6 36 m	?	(2009) Tie-back from dodgy protrusions in squeeze. Low Y-belay around corner.

Notes:

All directions are looking down.

2009 guide says 100 m rope will do P2 & P3.

Bolts are all through-bolts, except where described as (concrete) screws.

Old bolts installation prior to 2009 rigging notes draft document.

This rigging guide is a reworking of draft guide by anonymous 2009. P5 & P6 still notes from 2009 draft guide as not descended at time of this revision.

IB-272 Raclette

Ida Bay, Tasmania

7IB272.STC572

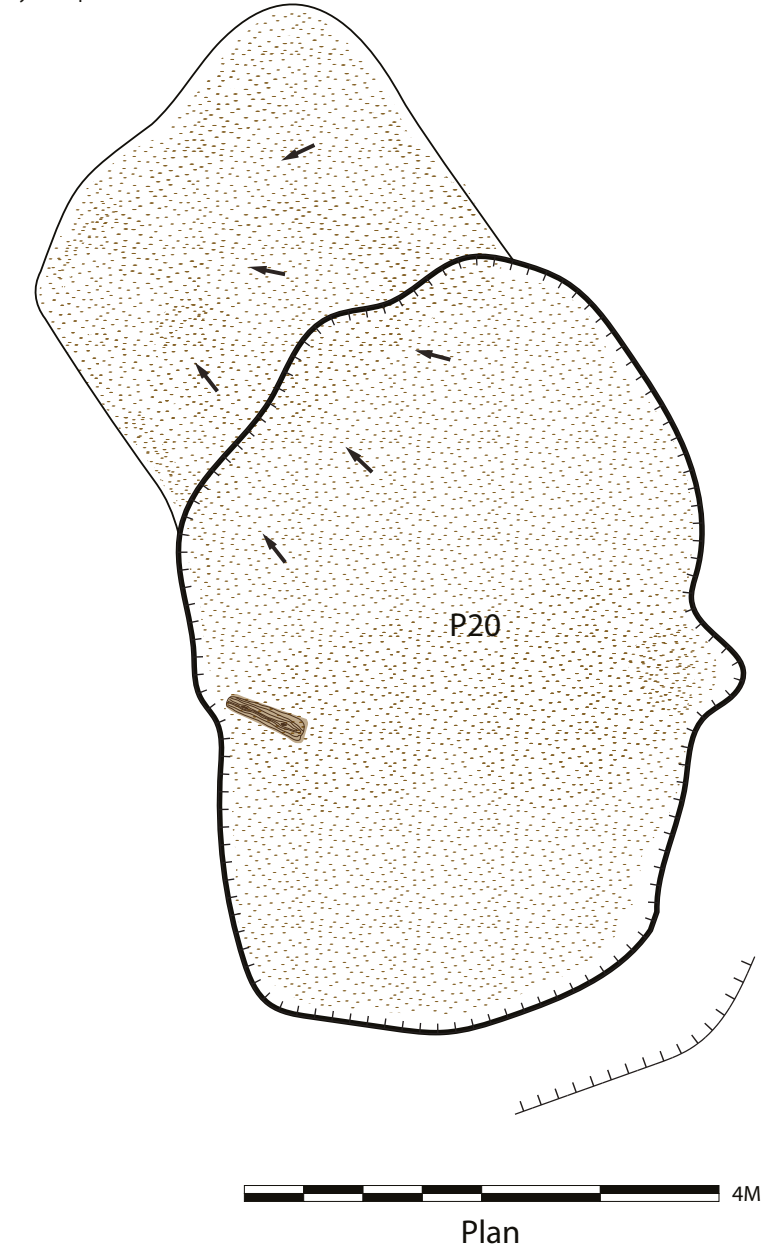
Surveyed by Michael Glazer, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

Drawn by Michael Glazer (2025)

ASF Grade 53

Surveyed Length - 33.1 m

Surveyed Depth - 25 m



LEGEND

passage wall

drop off/ledge - with height (m)

direction of floor slope

decomposed organic matter

tag

large boulders/rocks

log/timber

