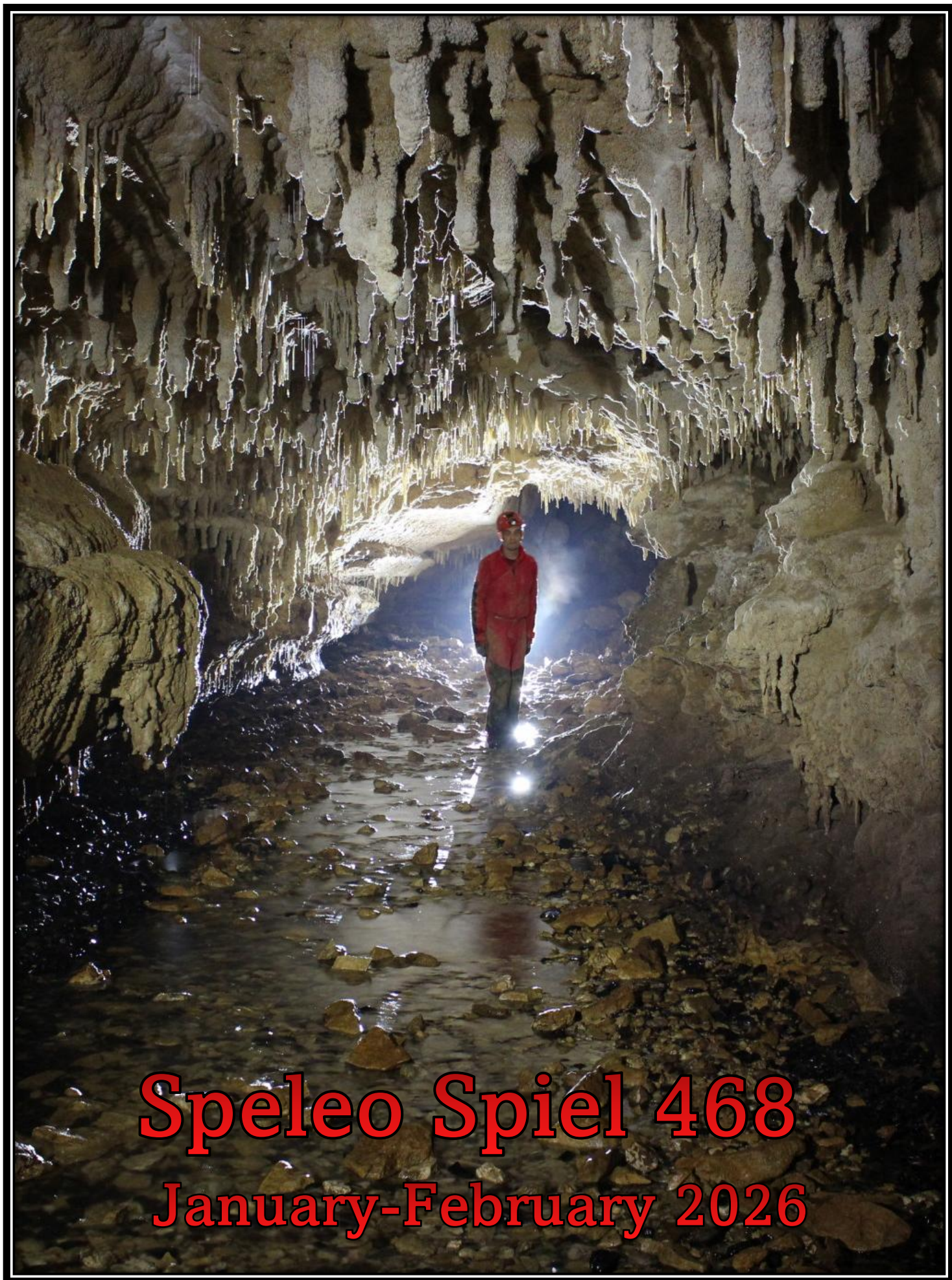




Speleo Spiel 468

January-February 2026

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Front Cover: Dave Stuckey poses in Waipuna Cave, North Island New Zealand. Image: John Oxley.

Back Cover: There's an undescended cave under there, somewhere on New Zealand's North Island. Image: Ciara Smart

Speleo Spiel 468 was prepared by Ciara Smart, with subeditor assistance from Janine McKinnon & Ric Tunney.

Speleo Spiel

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

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Editorial

The last dregs of summer are here. STC has been busy with our annual rescue exercise which featured great cooperation with mainland cavers and official agencies. We've also had a few members travel to New Zealand to participate in their triennial Deep Cave Search and Rescue Exercise. Read about these rescue exercises in the next issue. Thanks to Caves Australia and the Australian Cave Rescue Commission for all your support.

In addition to rescue things, recreational and project trips are happening in the background. This issue contains an update to the Niggly project; the days of scooping hundreds of metres of passage in a single trip may be drawing to a close - but never say never!

We've also held our Annual General Meeting. The new committee looks suspiciously like the last one! I suppose that means things are functioning. Read all the reports in this edition.

Stuff and Stuff

Thank you to VRA Rescue NSW

The Southern Tasmanian Caverneers are now in possession of 30* UHF radios thanks to a generous donation by VRA Rescue NSW. Thank you VRA! These radios will be used in exercises and are important to have on hand for a real rescue.

*Approximately 30. Some radios may have already experienced user error failures after vigorous use on the rescue exercise, including being dropped by the Underground Controller herself.

Cave Animals Website

Cathie Plowman from Northern Caverneers has created a stunning website to showcase the Australian cave animals project. You may remember this project from the mugs and posters that have been dispersed over the last few years. Check out the website!

<https://www.caveanimals.com.au/>



Cave Access Paramedics

STC trained six Ambulance Tasmania Paramedics in Single Rope Technique at Fruehauf Quarry on 16 February. The training schedule was capably planned by Bec Foxen from Ambulance Tasmania, a regular at our annual rescue training exercise. They all performed superbly. So much so that we had time to spare to play with the stretcher. Hopefully we will only see them underground on club trips or rescue exercises, but it is very comforting to know that we now have a stable of very capable paramedics to help in the case of another real rescue.

Their first rescue practice in a real cave will be the annual exercise in Khazad Dum on the weekend of 21 February, but they will be put through their paces before that with trips to Growling Swallet, Owl Pot and Tassie Pot. Thanks also to Callum and Cam from TASPOL SAR who came along to add moral support, meet people, catch up with us all, watch, and generally have a pleasant time.

Submitted by Janine McKinnon



Image: Janine McKinnon

Trip Reports

North Island New Zealand: Caving in Piopio

Week 1: 2-8 February 2025

Ciara Smart

Party: Pat Larkin, Andrew Matthews, Don Matthews, Finn Matthews, Phil Maynard, Cole Neering, Vera Morris, Alan Pryke, Megan Pryke, Tina Willmore (SUSS), John Oxley, Ciara Smart (STC), Andrew Stempel (FUSSI), Dave Stuckey (MSS)

For a decade now, most summers I have attended Sydney University Speleological Society's trip to New Zealand's North Island. The trip is organised by Alan and Megan Pryke and Phil Maynard. The trip is based near the regional town of Piopio, approximately sixty kilometres away from the famous caves of Waitomo. Much of the caving is on farmland. The trip goes for two weeks, but in 2025 I only attended the first week (Niggly was calling). This report only documents half of the trip and mostly reflects my own experiences.



Left to right, back row: Tina, Andrew, Cole, Don, Dave, Finn, Phil, Andrew. Front row: Alan, Megan, Ciara, Vera, John. Image credit: Don Matthews (selfie)

The trip has a mixture of objectives: extending known cave systems (particularly the Off-Gorse and Redirected systems), surface prospecting for new caves and visiting spectacular caves for fun. The caving in this area is glorious: typically large, wet, horizontal streamway caves with easy approaches across farmland. The caves are around 14°C, and some are extensively decorated.

The trip did not run in 2024, and the 2023 trip was stymied by record-breaking rains (see report in *SS455*, p.5) so we had great expectations for this trip. We hoped to follow up some leads dating to 2019 (the trip did not run for a few years thanks to travel restrictions). In short, we had great success. In only four days this week, we found and surveyed over 2 km of new

passage across three separate caves. Even more cave was found after I departed. And of course, there were multiple trips to the local berry farm for ice-cream.

2 February 2025: Pushing Off-Gorse

For most years, our accommodation on this trip has consisted of various farm woolsheds. In 2023 we upgraded to a farm homestead, where we were due to stay again this year. Unfortunately, the week before the trip, the dishwasher caught on fire and severely damaged the kitchen. Back to the woolshed for us! Eventually you get used to the smell and this year's woolshed had carpet and couches.

On the first full day of the trip, I headed to Off-Gorse with Phil. This cave was discovered by SUSS several years ago and has since been extended to a large system. We had a major lead through a roof-sniff to follow up here. We'd unsuccessfully tried to pass this in 2023 during the record-breaking rains. Prior to Covid, this roof-sniff was successfully negotiated to discover at least 200 m of ongoing passage, but no one had been able to get back since. This year, thanks to acceptable water levels, we were able to wriggle through the extremely sloppy roof-sniff on our backs. The wet section was about 10 m long, followed by another shorter roof-sniff. We surveyed about 200 m of reasonably spacious streamway passage to the limit of the previous party's exploration (they had left a cairn).

Rather than continuing through the increasingly wet streamway, we dropped our survey gear and headed up a dry passage on the right, just to see if we'd need to survey it tomorrow. To our shock, this passage turned into a dry, gypsum-coated passage of comfortable dimensions. In places, the floor was criss-crossed with delicate selenite needles. Spiralling gypsum flowers were sporadically scattered across the floor and walls, meaning we had to move with great care. We turned around after finding about 300 m of passage, with no end in sight. The next week, over half a kilometre of additional passage was surveyed here. It remains ongoing.

3 February: Pushing Raincheck and Prime Directive

I headed off to Raincheck with Pat and Megan while others headed to Maui and Nirvana for a splashy day out in two classic caves. We discovered Raincheck in 2023 but were only able to explore about 30 m of tight streamway passage before we turned around because of elevated water levels – hence the name. I'd been dwelling on this cave for two years and held high hopes because of the amount of water it was swallowing.



*Passage past the roof-sniff in Off-Gorse.
Image: Ciara Smart*



*Long selenite needles in Off-Gorse.
Image: Ciara Smart*



*It might just be mud, but it's still pretty. In Off-Gorse
Image: Ciara Smart*



*Gypsum flowers in Off-Gorse.
Image: Ciara Smart*

We quickly reached the limit of our 2023 exploration and started surveying downstream. The cave was fairly tight, with multiple downclimbs. After a disappointingly short time, we reached a 5 m drop which I was able to negotiate, only to encounter a 7 m waterfall. There was no downclimbing this waterfall, it needed to be rigged as a pitch. We were not expecting this cave to turn vertical as most caves in this area are purely horizontal. I left a permanent survey station above the pitch, and we turned around.

The next week, this pitch was dropped and found to immediately hit a sump. This cave most likely flows into Redirected. The downstream end is approximately 50 m off the main streamway in Redirected. The survey revealed that Raincheck is 30 m deep, and 135 m long, although it was not surveyed beyond the pitch which would yield a small amount of additional length.



Processing survey data. Image: unknown

As we'd had a short day, Megan and I decided to go to Prime Directive to push another wet lead. Prime Directive was found and surveyed in 2023. Downstream exploration had terminated at a low, grovelly sump which we hoped to pass this year in drier conditions. Prime Directive has some nice canyonesque sections, but much of the passage is fairly wet and tight.

We quickly traversed about 300 m of passage to reach the downstream limit of exploration. Here we grovelled on our stomachs in awkwardly low, wet passage. The sump appeared to still be a sump, until we dug out a large quantity of silt and pebbles and the water level dropped slightly, revealing a few centimetres of airspace. This was probably the most psychological roof sniff I've ever pushed: Megan and I took several attempts before we worked up the courage to finally

squeeze through the tight and wet grovel. It was a helmet off roof-sniff, with only a smidge of air space, and only about thirty centimetres of width to get our bodies through at the tightest point. I managed to get through first and then dug it out further from the other side so Megan could follow. Unfortunately, we immediately hit tight meander which Megan couldn't quite get through. I got a little further before the passage choked in a boulder pile with the stream still running through at floor level.

It might be possible to push this further with a crowbar and much brazenness, but the boulders were large, and it was very tight. The downstream limit of Prime Directive is less than 10 m off the downstream end of Redirected. It is possible that there is some survey error in the map, and this distance is shorter than 10 m.



Megan, victorious, post roof-sniff. Image: Ciara Smart

Still not having had enough, Megan and I exited the cave and walked a short distance to a new hole known as 'Intyreity'. No one has entered Intyreity to our knowledge as the entrance is blocked by many tyres. Megan and I removed twelve heavy tyres from the entrance before we decided it was hopeless. Several more tyres were tightly wedged into the entrance slot and neither of us could make them budge. We replaced the tyres.



Gourmet dinner in the wool shed. Image: Ciara Smart



The farm where we stayed. Image: Don Matthews

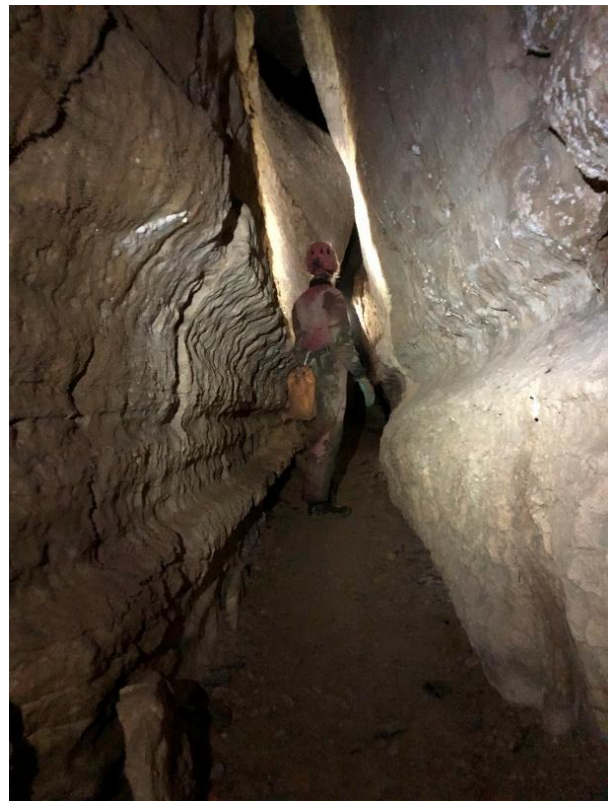
4 February: Discovery of Ronaldsons

In 2023, Pat Larkin found a small ‘rifty’ hole on the Ronaldson’s property. He did not enter as it looked like a rope was needed to get down the entrance climb. Today I headed there with Andrew Matthews and Cole Neering. The entrance was a strenuous three-minute walk from the car. We were able to descend the entrance without a rope. We stumbled into a major discovery. The cave started with an extended rift. I stayed high, about 7 m off the floor, while the others wallowed through mud and tightness at floor level. I dropped down when the rift widened beyond my ability to bridge, and the cave then immediately opened up. Suspecting that we were walking into something major, we elected to survey as we pushed to minimise scooping and preserve some pushing for the others.



The landscape directly above Ronaldsons. Image: Don Matthews

We couldn’t believe our luck with this find! The cave turned into classic, beautiful streamway canyon with a reasonable sized stream. It was remarkably consistent, approximately 1.2 m wide and 7 m high. The cave was beautiful, with a bedrock floor and very little breakdown. Impressively, we did not have to stoop or crawl! There was one point where we did have to climb over a very small rock pile, but otherwise we could stroll along as if we were walking on flat pavement.



Newly discovered serpentine meander in Ronaldsons. Image: Cole Neering

Today I broke my personal surveying record: we surveyed 101 stations. As the passage was twisty, most of our legs were short. We stopped surveying after 493 m of meander when we hit a T-junction with

another stream flowing in from our left. We turned around for lack of time, basking in the thrill of the discovery.



One happy surveyor. Image: Cole Neering



*Dinner in the woolshed. Not too shabby!
Image: Don Matthews*

I enjoyed caving today with Andrew Matthews. Andrew was one of the original explorers in Bulmer Cavern on the South Island, where I'd been only a few

weeks before. Andrew was involved in the discovery of several iconic parts of Bulmer, including being on the team to push the notorious traverse, Who Dares Wins.

5 February: Pushing and Surveying in Ronaldsons

Seven of us headed back to the new find. We tied a ladder off a tree to help with the initial downclimb. We quickly reached the T-junction, and I turned right to start surveying downstream with Cole, Megan and Pat. Alan, Phil and Andrew went upstream. We encountered some lovely wet, wide canyon sections. Eventually the roof began to lower and the inevitable happened. We hit a long, low roof-sniff with a cobble/mud floor. It looked like I could see several metres along the ceiling. This would be possible to dig and is worth revisiting with proper tools in dry conditions. The survey revealed that this downstream end is only about 200 m off connecting with upstream Redirected, which also currently terminates in a wet, low roof-sniff.

We travelled back upstream, stopping to survey a higher, muddy passage. This passage terminated in what looked like a possible dig. The data revealed we were directly above the downstream end of the main streamway. The passage was muddy, so it may be a flood overflow. It's worth another visit.



Must run in the family. Left to right, Andrew, Finn and Donn Matthews. Image: unknown

We continued back upstream to catch the other surveying team. The cave continued as a wet serpentine meander. There was one spot where we very briefly had to bend over to pass through an obstacle, but otherwise it remained stomping passage. Eventually we heard the voices of the other survey team coming from above us. They had climbed up a rift to find a dry,

wide side passage. In places, the passage had gypsum decoration. As the day was getting on, we called it and all headed out.



Andrew Matthews affixing a ladder to the entrance, showing the results of grovelling in the mud just below the entrance. Image: Don Matthews

6 February: Understorey

I headed to a cave called ‘Understorey’ with Megan, Don and Finn. Understorey was discovered in only 2020. It’s a gorgeous cave, probably the most decorated of any we’ve found in this area. We had a few sections to finish surveying. We’d tried to finish this job in 2023 but turned back because of flash flood danger. On the way to the cave, we encountered a poor soggy sheep stranded in a swamp. Don and Finn managed to haul it out, but alas it was still sitting there some hours later.

Understorey starts with a wet gravel but it soon becomes large and spacious. We knocked off the survey and oohed and aahed at the spectacular decorations. In particular, one room is extensively decorated with hundreds of straws, while the final chamber is coated in pristine flowstone with shawls and stals aplenty.

7 February: Finishing Ronaldsons

A large number of us headed back to our new find to continue the excitement. Alan and Phil climbed up the rift to finish surveying the dry upper passage. I continued surveying upstream with Andrew and Cole. Don, Megan and Finn went to ‘dig’ in the upper passage at the downstream end. Despite a few hours of work, unfortunately no progress was made here.



Soggy sheep. Image: Ciara Smart



*Ciara looking at formations in Understorey
Image: John Oxley*



Image: Don Matthews

I was starting to feel a bit bored with the consistency of surveying in the meander (how spoilt!). Just in time we reached a decorated upper chamber which gave me the chance to draw some new symbols. After a few hundred metres more passage, we started to notice organic debris in the water. Sure enough, we soon saw daylight streaming in from a passage on our left and we clambered out into blazing sunshine.



*Karst landscape near Understorey.
Image: Don Matthews*

About this time Phil and Alan caught us and were pleased to discover they had a shortcut back to the surface. They immediately exited and headed back to the car. Andrew, Cole and I surveyed a few small inlets before also making our way out.

Despite taking a GPS point of our location, we struggled to find our way back to the car. In part this was because we blindly started walking towards a water tank visible on a distant hill. We'd parked beside an identical tank. Suffice to say, it took us an embarrassingly long time to relocate ourselves and make our way back. As we had not expected to reach the surface in a different place to where we had started, I had neither sunscreen nor a hat, rendering me a grumpy caver despite the success of the day.



Don Matthews in the upper passage. Image: unknown

The survey data revealed the cave was 1694 m long. I could not believe we had managed to find, survey and 'complete' this cave in only three days at the start of the trip; that's not how caving expeditions work! There are a few minor leads, but they are all upstream and I doubt they will yield much. The most significant lead remains the downstream end, which will need to be pushed in very dry conditions. It will very likely connect to upstream Redirected.

We struggled a bit to settle on a name for this new cave. Pat wanted to call it 'Pat's Rifty Hole' but I felt it deserved something grander. Initially I wanted to call it 'Ellipsis' as the entrance was elliptical and an ellipsis (which is this grammatical feature: ...) signifies something ongoing or left unsaid. After we effectively finished the cave, this didn't make much sense. So, we settled on Ronaldsons. This is the name of the former landowners who had been very good to us over the years.



*Dinner with the Ronaldsons in 2019.
Image: John Oxley*

8 February: Looking for the Redirected resurgence

I needed a shorter day today as I had to wash my gear in the afternoon. I headed out on a prospecting day with a smaller party. Our intention was to inspect a gushing resurgence found by Pat Larkin in 2023. We hoped this might be the resurgence for Redirected which so far remains elusive. Pat guided us to the spot which was below a line of cliffs. The hole was spilling a disappointingly small quantity of water compared to the video we had seen in 2023. The hole was small, and not humanly passable. We concluded it was unlikely to be the resurgence.

That evening we had a group dinner in Piopio with the cavers who had arrived for the second week, including John Oxley, Vera Morris, Tina Willmore and Dave Stuckey. Alas I flew back the next day to go straight into Niggly. I can't complain too much though, because we found much cave there too (see SS463).

Leads remain aplenty in Piopio. At the time of publication, there is another SUSS trip planned in a few weeks (I've been a bit tardy with this report).

I would like to thank Alan, Megan and Phil for their organisational efforts, as well as all the landowners who gave us permission to be on and below their land.

Week 2: 9-15 February

John Oxley

The second week was somewhat more touristy with trips to known interesting caves in the general area. One of the highlights was Ten Acre Tomo. This is a large cave with unusually difficult access in very steep

and heavily vegetated terrain. After spending some time looking for the entrance, we negotiated an uninspiring awkward rockpile to emerge into a huge beautifully decorated chamber.

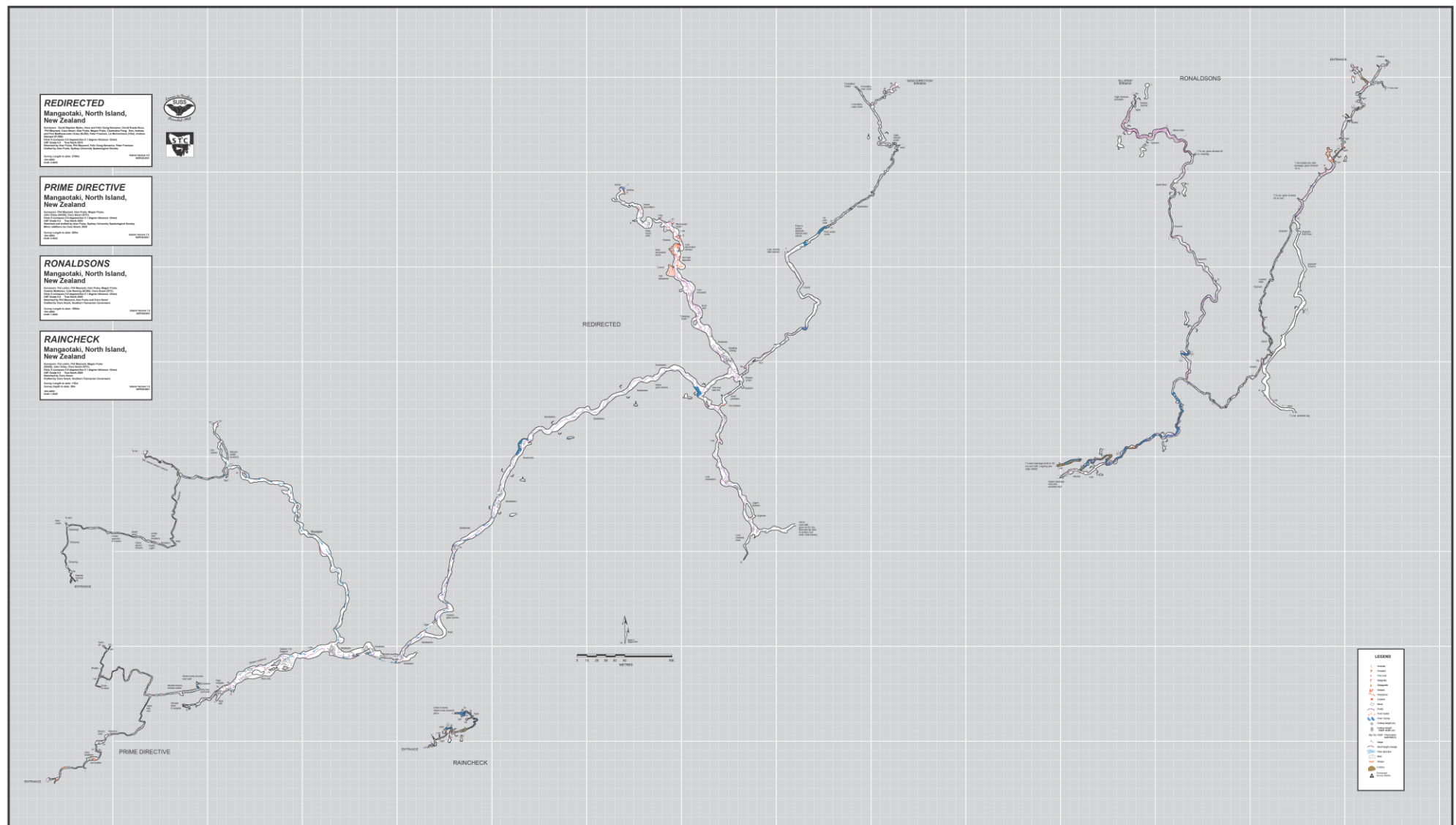
Kuratahi and Thunderer are two caves often visited for their beautiful streamway and delicate gypsum crystals. Both are on Puketiti, a large sheep and cattle station not far from where we stayed. Other caves including Waipuna and Lucky Strike I last visited more than 30 years ago. Both are spectacular streamway caves with beautiful speleothems.



Waipuna. Image: John Oxley



Ten Acre Tomo. Image: John Oxley



IB-11 Midnight Hole – IB-10 Mystery Creek

29 December 2025

Hannah Simmerman

Party: John Oxley, Hannah Simmerman

This was my first cave in Tasmania! And my first proper cave in 6 years. Down the third pitch, there are still the remains of a very squished echidna. John and I went down through all the pitches, then pulled the ropes through Matchbox Squeeze. Everything was much larger than I'd expected (where I'm from in the US, the only other place I've really caved, you almost never get to stand upright for more than a few minutes at a time). At the shipwreck chamber, we ran into a couple who only had one light and one pair of shoes between them. John showed them the side passage with the waterfall, then we watched them head back to the entrance to wait for the glow worms. There were so many—almost like looking at stars, they were all over the ceiling and some of the overhangs along the walls. John got some awesome pictures along the way, which I sent to my parents to alarm them once we had cell service, and we headed back to Hobart.



Hannah. Image: John Oxley

Swamping with STC: Mount Anne Gear Retrieval

10 January 2026

Laurie Jolliffe (National University Caving Club)

Party: Karina Anders, Henry Garratt, Jemma Herbert, Laurie Jolliffe, Em Panietz, Ciara Smart, Petr Smejkal

At a loose end for a week in Tassie, I made the mistake (?) of shooting off a couple emails to see if the Tasmanians were up to anything fun. Happily, they informed me that they were in the midst of planning a Mt Anne expedition and had scheduled a derig trip for that weekend that I was welcome to come along to. Jemma also offered to take me climbing up something epic the week before – a possible attempt at bribery that had me suspicious.

Not familiar with Mt Anne, I consulted my pocket karst index (Lachlan Bailey), who readily messaged back to inform me that while he'd been *to* Mt Anne, he'd never been *up* it, or *into* it; something about a horrible swamp, a long arduous walk uphill etc. etc. Sounded like a lot of fun.

Suspicious allayed, I met the Tasmanians in the Maydena rain early one Saturday morning. The plan was to jump in with Jemma and Henry, do a lap up the mountain with the Saturday crew, camp by the cars

Saturday night, and then head back up to get whatever was left on Sunday. Henry informed me there was steak, chocolate pudding *and* ice-cream for anyone who stayed for day two (more bribery?).

The sun had still yet to appear when we made it to the car parking spot, and frankly I'm not sure we saw it all day. The rain, however, kept us company as we began to push through the swamp. It's said that Canberrans' favourite past time (after going around roundabouts) is remarking on how full Lake George is. I think a similar thing might be at play with the Mt Anne swamp. Most of our discussion throughout the day was swamp related. The general consensus was that the swamp was only moderately wet given the amount of water falling from the skies.

The swamp abruptly ends at the "boot emptying spot", before leading on to a steep rainforest track that is quite tolerable with an empty pack. I imagine it would be less tolerable with a 30 kg pack. We did our part to go the wrong way several times, reinforcing the footpads leading away from the taped track as best we could while Ciara and Henry debated whether or not they remembered certain parts because it was the right way or the wrong way.

Towards the top the rainforest abruptly ends, spitting you out on an exposed false peak, where the wind snatches your breath.

Thoroughly soaked to the socks at this point, I noticed the bottom of my trousers starting to lightly freeze in the wind chill.



Swamping. Image: Laurie Jolliffe

We scrambled over to the top of the Anna Kananda doline where they'd stashed all the gear. I felt only slightly better about being more out of breath than the Tasmanians when Karina announced we'd broken the uphill record at 3 H 20. Gear was divided, and the remaining snacks squabbled over. Surprisingly not only did we manage to fit all of it in our packs, but no one's load seemed too arduous. After all the suspicious bribery, I'd been expecting a dive sherpa type of load.

Conscious of accusations of 'mainlander abuse', Henry offered to take me to at least get a better view of the entrance. However, not expecting arctic conditions on this summer hike, I'd neglected to pack gloves. Thus, being numb of hand I was less enthusiastic about hanging out in the frosty conditions than I might have otherwise been and was keen to get back into the forest where it was just wet and cold. Still, Henry dutifully dragged me to the entrance:

Henry: "Here, the views good from here"

Henry, 10 m further on: "Wait no, just climb up here".

Henry halfway down the doline: "No, I promise this is the spot".

The way down was harder on the knees, and progress was slowed on account of there being fewer snacks at the top of the hill than anticipated. Fatigue and malnutrition had set in. Still, we found joy in adding yet more false tracks and eventually betting on what time we'd make it back. By the time we hit the swamp again I had almost started to miss it. Henry and Petr had raced ahead to cook us a cursed meal of mostly cooked chocolate pudding and melted ice cream, given Henry no longer needed those essential supplies to bribe people into staying for Sunday. Somehow, in the rain, it was just the thing. More than three spoonfuls are not recommended though. Would swamp again.



Post-trip cook-up. Image: Laurie Jolliffe

Swallet hunting above JF-207 Voltera

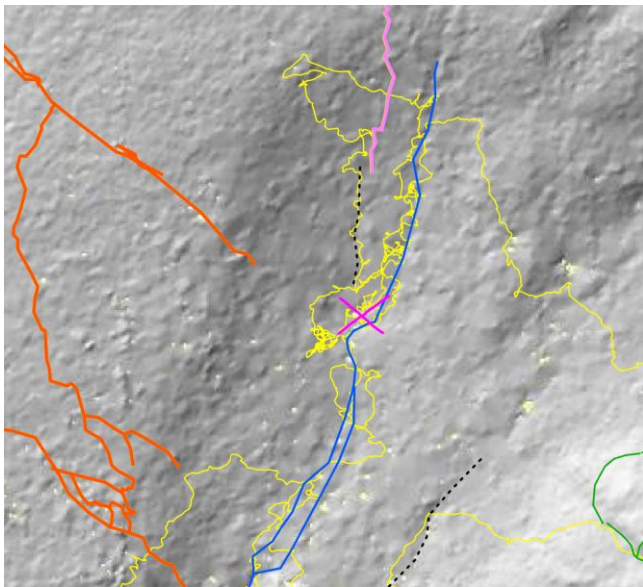
15 January 2026

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Stephen Fordyce

For some months I had been getting excited about trying to find the source of the decent sized Ram Raid Streamway in JF-207 Voltera – hopefully it would be an undiscovered swallet, and in the same way as JF-761 Delta Variant, the new swallet would provide a stimulating vertical exploration project, and a direct and easy way to the bottom of the cave. We could then tackle the connection of Voltera to Niggly with new energy. A fossil branch would go towards a nearby bit of JF-633 Ring Hole (part of the Sesame system) and connect. There would be much rejoicing.

Sadly, the tempting LIDAR target right where conceivable extensions of JF-633 Ring Hole and Voltera passages would cross, was just a flat area in the surface stream which feeds Ring Hole – the only theory I have (and it's distinctly unsatisfying) is that water soaks down from here or nearby and forms the Ram Raid streamway. Avid readers of my long and boring reports of long and boring surface days may note this is the second time I've struck out using this methodology, the previous one in February 2025 on the surface over Coelacanth.



X marks the tempting LIDAR target, with Ring Hole in orange and Ram Raid streamway (Voltera) in pink, my track in yellow, confirmed streams in blue and confirmed dry gullies dashed black (cave entrances not shown). Credit: Stephen Fordyce

I parked at Voltera (after spending 2 hrs and a good deal of motivation clearing some big logs off the road). I left the Voltera route just after JF-488 Platypus Pot and picked my way downhill until hitting the dry gully

below JF-638. I didn't mean to go so low but ended up down near Ring Hole. Just 40 m away I checked a LIDAR target which turned out to be small (6 m diameter, 3 m deep) doline with limestone outcrop and an overhanging limestone bit at the bottom with some darkness (no prospect, but cave-ish). So, I tagged it JF-792 and named it Rang Hole, as it was presumably a past tense of Ring Hole (har har).

I stumbled over to Ring Hole (and down as far as the Sesame1 doline, before running away in horror), the terrain was interesting, with limestone everywhere. I had a bit of a go at finding JF-209 from the GPS coordinate but failed (locating it from the map in the archive, I was looking in the wrong spot, it's apparently upstream from Ring Hole and 8 m east of the stream, I have updated the GPS point in the JF Master List to reflect this, but changed the classification to uncertain).



*Spot the cave - JF-792 Rang Hole.
Image: Stephen Fordyce*

From there, a circuitous route up the stream was followed, with frequent crossings to check the stream was still there. It was, although for quite a bit it had split into a small and a medium stream. I saw no limestone, and noted plenty of dolerite and eventually mudstone, following a dry gully west of the stream and topping out at 700 m ASL. Presuming this to be well above the contact, I contoured back to the stream. I've forgotten the rationale, but from there my track shows me following the stream back down to the dud target, then back up again. In hindsight this seems excessive

but was probably desperately looking for anywhere the stream might split and sink.

Anyway, from there I headed for home, checking a few targets which weren't super interesting but are in QGIS. Checking the data after, there is a quadrant SW

to NW of the target at theorised intersection which I didn't cover at definitely-above-the-contact altitude. So, there is a small chance the fabled swallet does exist somewhere above my track in that area.

Khazad Dum

19 January 2026

Hannah Simmerman

Party: John Oxley, Hannah Simmerman

Such a cool cave! This was my first trip here, thank you John for taking me. We zoomed up the first 20 or so minutes of the road walk, only to realize that both me and John were going faster and faster on the assumption that the other person was trying to pick up the pace. Not having to carry any ropes in made the rest of the walk even more lovely. We started with a small side pitch down to the creek, to make sure I knew how to prusik out, then went in down the dry route.

There's so much variety in just that one route, with everything from that one crawl to long winding passages. Going down the 28 m pitch onto the big rock

pile below was so cool. I've never seen a cave passage anywhere near that size. The waterfall down on the side wasn't very full, but it still let off enough mist that all the many photos I tried to take look like blurry grey nothingness. (All the good photos from the trip come from John, definitely not me.)

We kept going down to where the route intersects with the stream, had lunch, and turned back. A moth fluttered around while we were eating—must have stowed away on one of the bags, RIP. On the way up, we took up the ropes to leave at the cave entrance for the next group.

Going back up that 28 m pitch wasn't as rough as I thought it might be, but my arms were definitely a bit sore the next day. Climbing back up out of that massive cavern felt so surreal. When we got back out, it was a gorgeous day and we had some snacks before driving back to Hobart.

JF-207 Voltera: 'The Whiner' Setup

19 January 2026

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Stephen Fordyce, Ben Hofmann, Lauren (Laurie) Joliffe, Alice (Ally) Kelly, Carl Walsh

Before official graduation to Niggly-ready status, the NUCCers had to survive Voltera – as I grandly told them: one day of insufferable misery (and Steve-tedium) was better than four inescapable days of it in Niggly. The main aim was to place a beacon, which I built and named "The Whiner", at the very end of the Mud Bath dig, with hopes that we might be able to notice it from Niggly in a few days' time.

Here are some features of The Whiner:

- Ear-piercing siren – 1 million decibels or some such
- Flashing red light
- Bright white LED light (12V downlight globe)
- 5W UHF radio, set to CH27 (UHF) @ 477.1MHz
- High-pitched buzzer taped to the radio microphone
- 14Ah/12V lithium-ion battery (approx. 48 hrs continuous whining duration)
- Controlled by a hacked dye detector powering an assortment of hacked-together relays and modules
- The dye detector allows whining to be delayed, and temperature to be logged, giving an indirect indication that high energy-things are still happening in the case
- All mounted in a hard case which just fits into a caving bag (survived a submerge test in my sink, probably wouldn't withstand much of a flood)
- The Whiner was tested on the NUCCers at our AirBnB in Maydena and pronounced highly obnoxious.

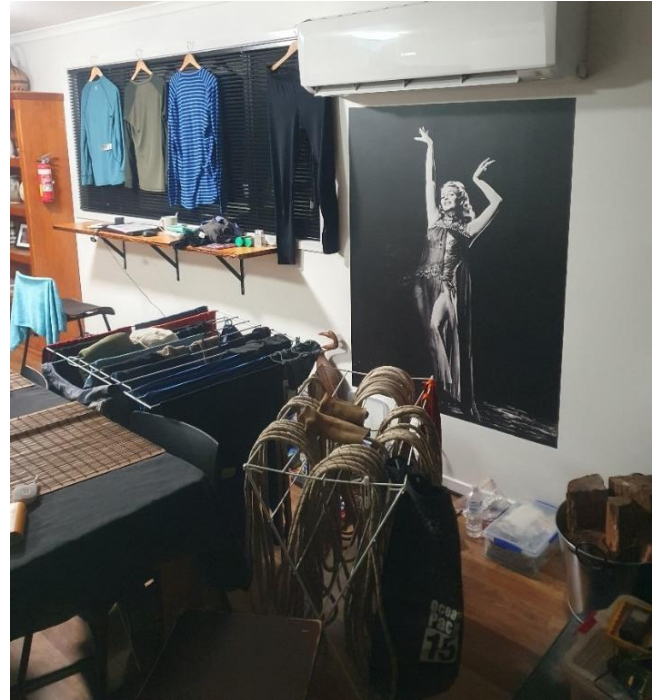


*The Whiner, and its creator – both highly obnoxious.
Image: Nadia Wu*

We all reached the bottom with no troubles and trickled down the new shortcut pitch to Mud Bath (I replaced a few bits of rigging so it's now pretty good). In an effort to try to send some coloured water down to make visible puddles in usually dry bits of Myopia/Niggly (the Mud Bath stream only flows occasionally), we had brought the garden hose from the STC washing kit (about 15-20 m) and tried to siphon water from the base of the 30 m pitch, up ~2 m, through and down the shortcut pitch.

It was a tad short, but I stood below the shortcut pitch and sucked and sucked, and sucked some more, until my lungs hurt and my lip got a sore on it. Eventually it got a bit easier and I sucked water – huzzah! I spat out the hose and to my horror that water disappeared back up the hose – my end wasn't low enough. We lengthened it, and Ben and I both sucked as hard as we could but couldn't get it again. I was all suckered out. As the very last thing on my punchlist, it was neglected until the very last minute and was a case of the "9 Ps": Proper Prior Preparation Prevents Piss-Poor Peckers Puckering Pointlessly. If someone miraculously gets a chance to try this again, just take a battery powered water pump (and some more hose).

The crew were directed into Mud Bath, where the original dig had closed up again with loose dolerite cobbles washing back in. Carl cleared it and got through, Ben and I followed with The Whiner, Ally and Laurie were happy to wait (and they had handheld radios to test for range – about 50 m of meander passage). I inspected the results of Henry/Will/Adrian's last dig attempt – they had made the last bit bigger for a body length or two, but it was still tapering down nastily to not much. The Whiner was deployed with considerable difficulty, deafness and dirty language - there were some issues with the UHF radio triggering a new cycle and stopping it sleeping as it was meant to.



We were too busy in the cave to take photos, so here's one of the drying station at our AirBnB (when winter briefly returned to Maydena). Image: Stephen Fordyce

In the end we left it whining to itself with the hope that the battery would last (it was sized for that eventuality, so I'm pretty confident, but should get data out of it when retrieved to confirm). Hopefully that's soon – it's waterproof but I doubt it'd survive a major flood, and there are some expensive bits of hardware in there.

We proceeded back and up the climb and along the low way to The Pit. From there a wander around the spacious bits near the sump and Ram Raid Streamway was necessary – both to prove that there was actually some cool cave after all the misery and to extend said misery to a fuller extent. That done, we headed back to The Pit, went up and derigged it (to be included in rigging notes with full de-rig). The whole cave is still accessible, you just have to decide carefully whether to take the low road or the high road from base of 30 m pitch. Ally amusingly failed to make any progress up the initial mud slope in the home direction but got there eventually.

We left the digging kit at Mud Bath but brought out everything else. The NUCCers proved undaunted by the way out (although conceded that Voltera to the bottom was quite a lot harder than Voltera half way), and the Fistula was only a minor obstacle. The car was gained by the absurdly early time of 10 pm(ish) and all were pronounced ready for Niggly.

I had hoped that would be my last Voltera bottoming trip, with Henry pledging to retrieve The Whiner and de-rig the bottom section. But with the failure to find any sign of The Whiner on the subsequent Niggly trip, the caves still so close together, and from the comfort of my computer, maybe some of those outstanding aid climbs will get a go...

The Doone Kennedy Wet Grovel

20 January 2026

Laurie Jolliffe

Party: Stephen Fordyce, Ben Hofmann, Laurie Jolliffe, Ally Kelly

The Doone Kennedy Hobart Aquatic Centre offers many delights for the unsuspecting caver. After spending a miserable day dragging Steve's garden hoses through Voltera and hearing all about how wonderful the aquatic centre was, we threatened to take him up on the offer and organised an official rest day 'trip'.

We rendezvoused in the carpark to go over the activity plan and risk assessment. And good thing we did because it soon became evident that not all the team were clear on the mission objectives. Steve had been under the impression that we would only be pushing the sauna and spa sections of the aquatic centre that day and was unprepared for our true objective - to see if the inflatables were up (read: did the inflatables 'go'?). Since it was school holidays, we were confident the conditions would be right to access this section of the aquatic centre. Still, Steve assured us he was up for the task, and we divided our gear and made for the entrance.

Unfortunately, school holidays had unexpectedly affected other conditions and the place was teeming with children. This made progress slow as we first had to swim 25 m and get a wrist band from the lifeguard before we were allowed to go on the inflatables.

Inventive caving techniques were required to make progress across the inflatables, including speed grovelling, which only Ben seemed to excel at. Unfortunately, the passage sumped out, but we've named this section of the aquatic centre The Doone Kennedy Wet Grovel, on account of our trying experiences here.

With plenty of time before callout, we toured about in the Diving Board section. Ally worked on her dive, and I contented myself with sharking around underwater and avoiding the children falling from above. Conceptually, the whole not being able to breathe while swimming thing became too much for Steve after a couple dives and he eventually retreated to the sauna and spa section.

Altogether I'd call the mission a success, and a rejuvenating rest day activity.

JF-237 Niggly: Four Day Camping and Dive trip

23-25 January 2026

Theme Song: 'One Hand In My Pocket'

*Collaborative Report. Assembled by **Stephen Fordyce**, text/photos as noted*

Party: Party: Henry Garratt, Stephen Fordyce, Ciara Smart (STC), Ben Hofmann, Lauren (Laurie) Jolliffe, Alice (Ally) Kelly, Cole Neering, Carl Walsh (National University Caving Club)

Introduction:

To cap off a busy couple of weeks in the JF, I ran my last Niggly trip over the Australia Day long weekend, with trip theme song the deliciously whiney "One Hand in My Pocket" by Alanis Morissette (carefully selected by your friendly trip dictator). Yep, I declared mid-last-year my retirement from Niggly Cave after this, my 24th 4-day Niggly camping trip. That seems like about enough, and it will be nice to redirect some energy towards other things (including other JF projects).

We successfully connected the Sesame/Ring-Hole system into the Niggly/Growling Swallet/Delta Variant system via a short but horrible dive in the new section of Niggly (El Dorado). A connection attempt with Voltera was not successful - we couldn't find any sign of the beacon left in Voltera at The Horse a few days before. So, anyone with unfinished business in Voltera had probably better jump on it soon.

And we played a reasonable game of "Mastercave or Bust", scoring about 250 m of somewhat hard-won new mastercave at the downstream end. Thanks to the locals for saving this lead for a big open-invite trip with plenty of notice. There is big upper-level mud-filled passage, and smaller passage sometimes in breakdown at lower levels, although steeper and more cascadey than we are used to (the floor is clean-washed limestone, and there are deep pools/sumps). It was nice to leave some open for the next trip, but that got snaffled with apparent finality.



Left to right, back row: Cole, Carl, Ally, Ben, Henry, Steve. Front row: Ciara, Laurie. Image: Ciara Smart

The trip was largely NUCC-powered (that's National University Caving Club, based in Canberra), with Laurie, Ally, Cole, Ben and Carl having earned their stripes during the year and impressing everyone with their fortitude and enthusiasm. The Doonamancer's Lair is their legacy.

Day 1: Entry

(Laurie) Everyone says the worst part about Niggly is the walk up the hill. Everyone also says the worst part of Niggly is the walk down the hill, and Negative RAT hole, and Daily Cases, and Close Contact, the Tiger Tooth Passage, the grovels, the cold etc. etc. Suffice to say I spent the whole time in terror of a fear that never came. Perhaps the worst part of Niggly is simply deciding what the worst part is, since no one seems to agree¹. I for one, had a great time doing all those things.

The walk up the hill seemed cheerful after our rainy hike up Mt Anne some weeks earlier. Being not of sound body, I did sit myself down at the top to take stock and reassess if I was crazy enough to do Niggly with two bruised tibias, an infected haematoma, and a fungal lung infection³. Naturally I chose to descend, neither of sound body nor mind. (Steve – jokes aside, multiple doctors were consulted specifically on the wisdom of the Niggly trip, the maladies were responding to treatment, and Laurie had completed the Voltera shakedown trip with mental and physical health intact.)



Adequately acclimatised, despite being of neither sound body or mind. Image: Laurie Joliffe

Steve has asked me to review the adequacy of his acclimatisation programme here. And I must begrudgingly agree that the various bag hauling, meanders, crappy rebelay, and more bag hauling Steve cajoled us into doing very much paid off. With every “worst” obstacle we approached and moved past, the same thoughts replayed “Oh – that wasn’t as bad as what Steve made us do!” or “That wasn’t as bad as Keith’s Faint Hole!”⁴.

At the bottom of the pitches, we dipped across the flying fox⁵ to do a bit of surveying at Atlantis. I was still very much concerned about saving myself for all the “worst” bits still ahead of us, so decided to lick my wounds and conserve my energy in darkness while the others did a quick tourist to the Pool of Promise.



Skedaddling across the flying fox. Image: Laurie Joliffe

We skedaddled back across the flying fox and onto camp, with plenty of time for a movie. I’m beginning to suspect that Steve’s movie list is carefully curated to generate trip catch phrases. After watching Bill & Ted’s Excellent Adventure, everything was “most bodacious” and “most excellent” all weekend.

¹ I would argue that the worst thing about Niggly is the never-ending fear of falling in somewhere & being immortalised by the Tasmanians by way of having some passage named after you².

² Happily I can report that the best way to mitigate this, if you do fall in somewhere, is immediately to come up with a shameful name yourself. People seemed less inclined to humble you if you're already putting in the work on your own.

³ Affectionately referred to as my 'gangrene' and 'histo' respectively.

⁴ A.K.A "KFH" – new favourite cave – would recommend – super fun squeezy wet grovel.

⁵ More fun if you do it upside down.



The last screening of the Niggly cinema – most excellent. Image: Ally Kelly

(Henry) Not wanting to take leave from work, Ciara and I elected to go in after work on the Friday. Apart from a delayed departure from Hobart, it was a largely uneventful trip. We managed to faff for about 2 hours in Hobart: shopping, sitting in traffic and retrieving my forgotten gumboots. Despite all this we still made it to the entrance before dark and down to camp by the respectable hour of 11 pm, having left Hobart around 4 pm. The others were still up watching a movie when we arrived! The new rigging was excellent; Alan did a great job in the P-hangering.

(Steve) Alan indeed did a great job in the P-hangering, but the new rigging still isn't fully optimized after being swapped over, especially on the final "Waterfall pitch" that joins the tyrolean. I improved it a little but had to admit defeat. Some short bits of rope and half an hour rejigging without two bags hanging off you would probably do it.



Ciara and Henry kept up the Tasmanian representation. Image: Laurie Joliffe

Day 2a: Myopia Dry Team

(Ally) Day two dawned on the Niggly campers (can a day dawn underground?) to the dulcet tones of American pop-rock and Steve's complaints at his thoroughly deflated new mat (fortunately, operator error was the cause). After briefly pondering if Alanis Morissette understood what an oxymoron was, we made the reluctant decision to crack on with the day and crack into our daily fortune cookie: "Keep your face towards the sunlight and you will never know shadow."

We feared we may not have been the target audience.

Day 2 was to be a day of chores, with the team splitting into three:

- Dive team (Sesame connection): Steve and Laurie
- Myopia dry team (Voltera connection): Ciara, Cole, Ally, Ben
- Myopia Rigging/Wet team (enjoyers of suffering): Henry, Carl



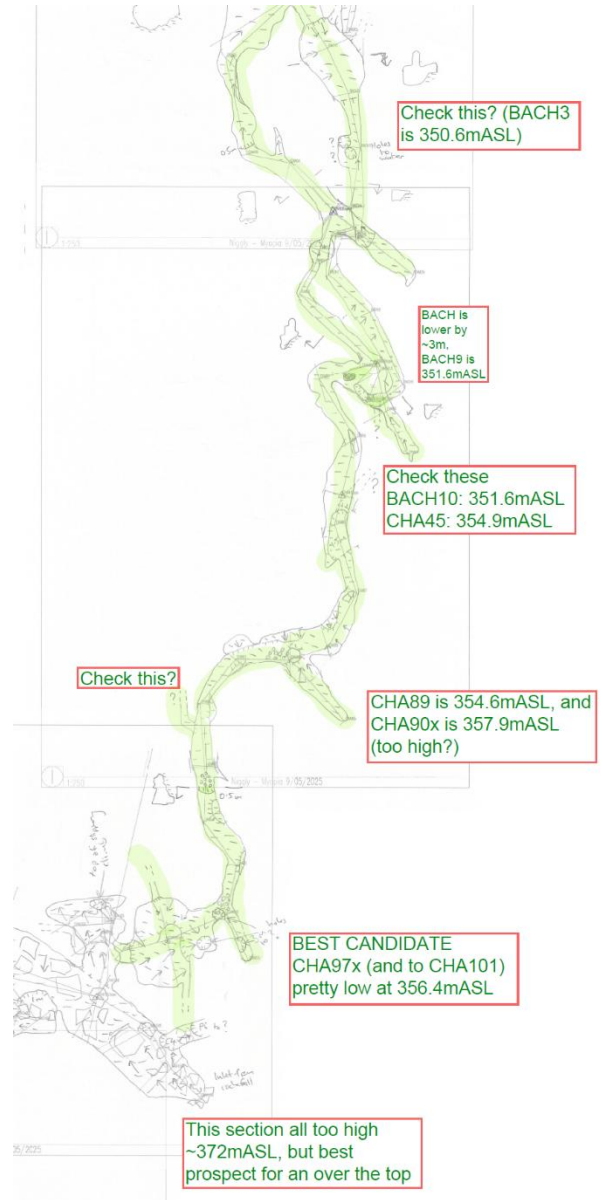
*Team Myopia wanders the master cave streamway.
Image: Ally Kelly)*

After helping carry the dive gear to the Valentine streamway and generally developing an appreciation for the misery of the Meru rockpile, the Myopia team split off. Our objective was to scour Myopia for any sign of the beacon which we'd left in Mud Bath/The Horse during our Voltera visit four days prior (See the Voltera report for the beacon technical specifics).

The beacon, as had been demonstrated to us numerous times in our tranquil AirBnB, was armed with strobing lights, high pitched wailing and a spew of radio static (VHF radio signals transmitting high-pitches wailing). Equipped with a walkie talkie and our own mud-addled senses, we hoped to pick up some sign of it in Myopia.

A number of locations in Myopia had been identified as showing promise with respect to a Voltera connection (see below labelled map). We visited each, taking a moment to pause in awkward silence as we listened for any horrible noises. Below maps the area we checked:

Unfortunately, we couldn't find any sign of the beacon, stymying hopes at a The Horse/Mud Bath connection from the Niggly side. We did, however, find Henry and Carl, who'd misplaced themselves in the Myopia mud and were cheerfully bumbling about without walkie talkie or timekeeping device.



Sketch map with beacon prospects and visits in green highlight (desktop review by Steve)

With some time of our own still to kill, we decided to pop down to the Florence rockpile to search for Anaspides and review if Henry's claims that Florence Heights didn't need a handline were to be believed (they were not).

(Ciara) Ally, Ben, Cole and I systematically worked our way through Myopia backwards, starting at about station CHA102 at the base of the slippery climb (this bit is called the Pneumatic Stripper because of the howling draft). We did not go up the slippery climb as the large upper chamber is unlikely to be aligned with Voltera (Mud Bath at least). We used Alan's worked-up sketches as a guide and worked our way backwards towards the main stream, poking our head and the radio into every hole and listening closely. Alas, we heard nothing. This section of Myopia is quite maze-like, but I'm confident we looked in every passage or crack.

There are a few steep, tight holes that go down to water which we did not climb down, including near BACH3 and CHA97, but the holes were too steep or tight to descend. The connection remains elusive.

Day 2b: Myopia Rigging/Wet Team

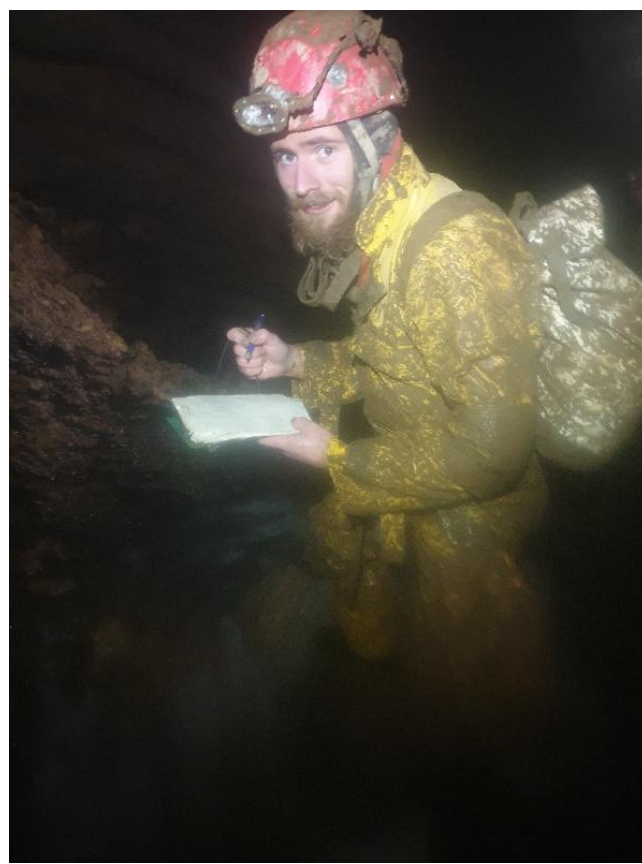
(Carl) Henry and Carl started with two tasks: bolt and check out a short pitch in Myopia and install a handline going up to Florence Heights. On the way we got roped in to escorting the dive team to the sump, as Henry had been before and Steve hadn't. The way in was deliciously muddy, great squish, much slide, potential for a fall. Steve at one point asked Henry, 'Is this doable for mortals?' Henry replied, 'Yeah it's fine!' about 5 seconds before Laurie took a tumble down and into the streamway. Steps were later cut.



Carl does some sketching and wonders what the time is. Image: Laurie Joliffe

We left the dive team, headed back to El Dorado and down to Myopia, decided we'd dump a bag there, quickly run 'about 100 m' down to Florence Heights, bolt the handline, come back and do the Myopia lead. Unfortunately, our super-efficient plan was derailed slightly as we forgot the bolts which were in Carl's bag back at the Myopia turn off, oh well, back to Myopia. After some looping around in the warren that is Myopia, we crossed over with Ciara, Ally, Ben, and Cole as they were coming out. Until then we lacked a way of telling the time, Henry stating 'Well it's Saturday and the callout isn't till Monday night, so we have plenty of time'. I think it was about 4:00 pm.

We arrived at the waterfall, climbed down on the left, through the waterfall and checked out the lead. It was a short (~7 m) pitch off the side of the rockpile going down to a small muddy passage. The water disappeared beneath us through the rockpile. We installed two concrete screws on the right wall (looking down), rock on the left was too suss for a y-hang. At the bottom the passage turned back on itself and rejoined where the water was running through the rockpile, and then down a tight sub-vertical rift which was mostly choked with boulders. It might be possible to get through but would be very wet, and require a lot of digging, plus it didn't look very promising. We surveyed (and sketched) back out, derigged the pitch and removed the bolts (no parsnips), then headed back out of Myopia and towards our unfinished business at Florence.



Henry thinks about llamas. Image: Steve Fordyce

This time we remembered the bolts and installed two 8 mm SS throughbolts at the top of the steep section of the Florence Heights mud slope in the wall on the left (going up) and rigged a handline on it (22 m rope but needs cutting). Jobs done, we headed back towards camp, stripped off and had a wash in MoG which was invigorating, and got back at 10 something.

(Steve) A note here in case this ends up being the last Myopia visit. The slippery climb (Pneumatic Stripper) around CHA102 had been handlined on and off. Henry reported that it was left unrigged, and there is a nice big natural anchor at the top. Also, while I'm noting things, the dudes forgot they had a radio despite being in prime position close to the beacon in Voltera.

You can lead a llama to water... (llamas being another feature of the day that was omitted from this section of the report).

Day 2c: Valentine Dive

(Steve) Laurie accepted my invitation to a notionally easier day since she was carrying the most gangrene of the team. It was nice of Henry and Carl to help us get to a changing spot, but I found myself annoyed at the Valentines Streamway for presenting a series of choices to crawl in the water or climb up and over steep mudbanks (I hadn't been up there at all, let alone to the sump). Most of the choices we made seemed to be wrong if you were carrying heavy bags, carrying gangrene, carrying the weight of too many Niggly trips, or were wearing three bags worth of dive gear.

We both got changed - Laurie into warm clothes, and me into a minimal dive gear setup: 7 mm wetsuit, pair of 3 L steel tanks, no fins, sump harness with no wing. I chose to go up and over the mudbanks the rest of the way to the sump, but it was more perilous than I'd hoped, and I had to use the dive hoe (digging tool) buried the whole length of the shaft as a handhold.

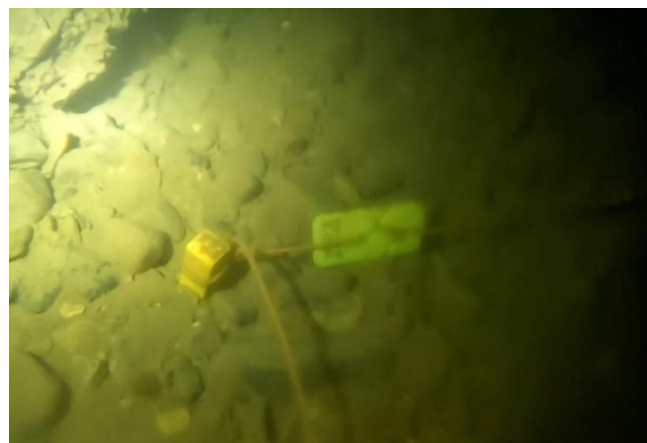


*Ready to dive but not looking forward to it.
Image: Laurie Joliffe*

An awful low wide horizontal wet thing presented, with a taped station on the right. Stupidly I'd forgotten to check the map and could not be sure if that was the sump (probably) or not (a whole lot of awkward wriggling in dive configuration for nothing). I have to admit; motivation was spectacularly low and retirement never looked so good. So, I took off the tanks but tied in the reel and did a practise run. It was very low and painful, head on one side half in the water, and too tight if you got in the wrong spot. It did kind of sump or perhaps do a kind of extreme roof sniff though, with options to the left and right – both with outward flowing water.

I wriggled back for the tanks, kitted up properly and wriggled back in, extremely thankful it was an upstream dive and clear water was coming towards me. The left way forward had looked horribly tight, so I went right, and this was good. It was still tight in the vertical, but pretty generous in the horizontal, and very shallow with roof sniffy air pockets on the ceiling which I didn't need to bother with. Being fully submerged and weightless, the going was pretty easy really.

A larger air bell was gained with half a metre of airspace, so I made a tie-off. A narrow fissure continued ahead at surface level. The easiest way on required ducking under a ledge on the RHS into parallel passage slightly deeper – this may have potential to be a line trap. Some good progress was made in only modestly constricted passaged, and a silt-covered guideline hove into view. The Sesame connection was made.



The end of the Sesame guideline. Image: Steve Fordyce

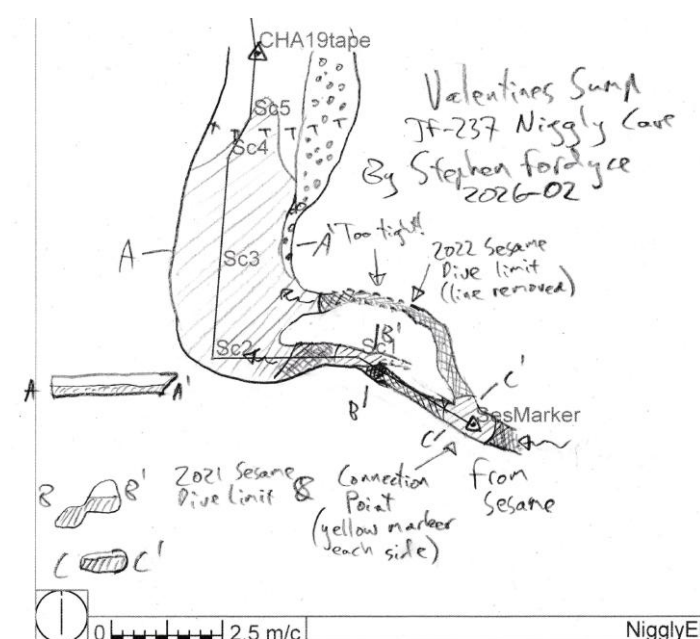
I tied the guidelines together and placed a yellow marker with the Niggly team's initials next to the Sesame one from four years earlier (see SS456, p22), then turned and surveyed out. It wasn't far – only about 25 m and so shallow my dive computer didn't register the depth (< 1 m). I'd started with 225 bar in each tank and ended with 200/175 bar – much of which was breathed for convenience rather than necessity. In case anyone is getting excited about trying to roof-sniff a through trip, the Sesame bit is definitely a dive.

I chose to crawl in the stream back to Laurie, which was hard but much preferable to precarious mudbanks. She had barely settled in but put the kettle on. We got all three bags of kit back to the main El Dorado stream just in time to share with the Myopia team on their way back. I was too shagged to consider the stretch goal of staying in my dive wetsuit to have a look at the (as yet unpushed) upstream Chrysalis roofsniff.

It was nice that the tight and horrible underwater dig I had been dreading did not eventuate. Thinking back to Sesame, from the end of the 2021 guideline I had chosen to stay on the right wall when pushing onwards/downstream in 2022. This went about 15 m further in small underwater passage which got too tight at a corner, and the line in this section was removed. However back at the end of the 2021 line (where the 2022 marker was left) I'd wondered at the possibility of following the left wall instead – and this is where the successful Valentines line came through.

So, it was agonisingly close on that last Sesame dive, but probably just as well. I don't know which thought is worse – trying to explore El Dorado via the Sesame Sump or knowing it was there but too hard to access. Incidentally, we probably would have thought El Dorado was the Mother of God stream (it's not, they run parallel until joining almost imperceptibly way downstream), got confused and never connected to Niggly, blaming poor survey accuracy.

The survey error for the connection was calculated to be 26 m in the horizontal, 3.1 m in the vertical. With the connection point being 1300 m of survey from JF-211 Sesame entrance and 3130 m of survey from the JF-761 Delta Variant entrance. That gives an error of 0.6%, which is very nice considering the conditions



Sketch map of the dive. Credit: Steve Fordyce

Day 3: Mastercave AND Bust

(Henry) This morning Steve and I set off slightly earlier than the others to go retrieve all handlines from the old route via Atlantis Junction (Steve – and pass on some tribal wisdom). The single SS hanger with 8 mm SS throughbolt at the top of the Slippery Slot was left in place, which is probably going to confuse someone in the future. The original route to The Dunes dipped down the Slippery Slot (aptly named) and followed the water, rather than squirreling up and through rockpile (The Hume Highway). It was nice to see the old route, and see the section where Ben Armstrong, Steve and Petr Smejkal nearly got stuck in floodwater back in 2018. Despite being a big Regurgitator fan I definitely like the new way better than the old way!

After our detour we ditched the handlines at camp and hooked it out to meet the others. We caught them just the other side of Chrysalis.

(Steve) Atlantis Junction handlines rigging notes:

- (Heading into the cave)
- Top of Slippery Slot:
 - o 1x 8 mm SS throughbolt LHS at knee height (left in situ with SS hanger), no backup anchor.
 - o ~25 m rope (allows for knots).
 - o The top ~3 m is the hardest without a rope, a 5 m rope would do if you were stingy.
- Climb up chimney out of stream:
 - o Going up is pretty doable without a rope if you have someone below to stand on.
 - o ~10 m rope, anchored around your choice of boulder at top.
- Climb back down to Atlantis Junction
 - o Generally doable without a rope and no help, but the rope makes it a lot easier.
 - o ~6 m rope tied around perched boulder above climb.
 - o Tie footloops in it.

(Ciara) During the evening on day 2, after Henry and Carl had dropped the new pitch in Myopia, they returned to Florence Heights to finish installing a handline. This time they remembered the drill bit and put 2 x stainless through bolts in the wall. At the moment, Florence Heights is negotiable without a handline, but I've been concerned that the top steps will disintegrate with lots of traffic. It's a steep mud bank, and a fall there would be bad, so it's nice to have a handline in place. Note that the next day, a 3 m handline was also installed off a natural in the climb down to stream level after Doonamancers Lair.



*What could possibly go wrong with this?
Image: Ally Kelly*

(Cole) We got beyond the Florence Rockpile and were soon pushing virgin passage – Laurie and I were on point. There were huge mud slopes on the sides of the passage, I attempted to climb to the top of one, got about three-quarters of the way up then slipped and slid down to the bottom. A shovel was required to dig in steps. We pushed ahead and came to a decent drop off of at least 10 or more meters, but there wasn't really anywhere good to rig off. So, another way down was required, and Henry and Carl found a climb down a little distance back that gave us access to the bottom of the drop off. The survey continued, we hit the stream again and soon came to a large cascade with white water (the first one encountered in the cave). Very promising considering how much water was pumping through it at this time of low water levels. The only way around it was over a very sketchy steep slope made up of mud and chossy limestone. Steps were dug and the passage was pushed to just around the corner where progress was halted by a sump with a very steep mud slope above it. We decided to call it a day.

(Ally) With our dual survey system we made double half speed through the new section of streamway. Our chosen survey station prefix, ANUSS (Australian National University Speleological Society), a lament to what could have been and an acronym with no inappropriate connotations whatsoever.



The precarious traverse to access the Most Non-Triumphant Sump. Image: Steve Fordyce

Some few hundred metres past the Florence rockpile the passage opened up into a dramatic chamber with a vaulting roof and sizeable central mountain of mud and rubble. Here we were above the streamway, but optimistic there would be some way to drop back down. This proved true when Henry and Carl eventually disappeared down a chute over the mountain's far side.

Having spent the weeks prior watching Critical Role's "The Mighty Nein" and finding great amusement in a form of magic the show called "dunamancy" (which surely could have only referred to the wizardry of going to sleep amongst a cosy doona), we were quick to dub this large chamber the Doonamancer's Lair.

A later adventure on the way back would determine that the upper levels of the lair led to a potential campsite, a large stadium-like amphitheatre of mud (appropriately dubbed No Team, Yes Stadium) and dunes which devolved into tunnels and doubled back over the streamway to emerge near where we had started surveying that morning (meat anchor advised, but otherwise a solid shortcut).

(Henry) The final sump was named "Most Non-Triumphant Sump" after Friday night's cinematic entertainment. Now I am not a sump diver, but it was a very white water-ery sump. Diving it would require dealing with quite a tenacious current. I managed to traverse around on tentative ledges on the right-hand



Chief of the Doonamancer movement, looking upstream from the MNT Sump. Image: Steve Fordyce

side right to the back and decided it definitely was a sump and there was no way past it there. But the left-hand side was capped by a tantalizing steep mud slope. The kind that begs you to free climb up it, while taunting that it would spit you off at any moment, crumbling under you or offsetting your balance sending you ass over tit. If the landing of this climb was more amenable it would be a straightforward prospect, but the landing was very wet, very fast flowing and generally deathly. I got about halfway up it with Carl before he wisely suggested he wouldn't follow me without a rope above him, we briefly toyed with the idea of me "leading" up with a rope to then body-belay him up.... before deciding that was a stupid idea and that it would be sensible to return with the proper tools for the job another trip (it turns out this was only 2 weeks later).

Most Non-Triumphant Sump thoughts (diver perspective)

(Steve) It's a big sump, looks deep and while probably fine thanks to the large cross-sectional area, the inward current was somewhat intimidating (especially for climbing back out of the water!). A handline to help with entry/exit are recommended (15 m rope to allow for use of natural anchors). There was some delicious (bitter?) irony to discovering such a spectacular sump on my last trip, especially with dive gear sitting back at camp. From a diver's perspective, it's a Most Triumphant sump really. It looks like it goes down at

least 6 m, so will present a difficult decision as to what gear to dive it with.

Never say never, but for the moment, retirement from the project is sitting pretty well with me. Yes, I would like to dive the Most Non-Triumphant Sump, but it would be a huge effort on top of a huge effort to tackle it properly, especially at the tail end of such a long project. So, I reckon someone else can have that dubious glory. Maybe it would be best dived from the other side anyway, ha!



View showing the cascades leading to the sump and the ramp up above it. Image: Steve Fordyce

To answer the obvious question – yes, this is the deepest part of the cave. We shot the laser to the back wall of the sump and agreed on a conservative 1 m estimated water depth at that point, which was included in the survey and overall cave depth. A dive would certainly increase the overall cave depth...



The Most Non-Triumphant Sump entry, pool, and Henry traversing around. Image: Steve Fordyce

Day 4: The ascent and shenanigans

(Ben) Author's note: The title for the day is Steve's suggestion, and no shenanigans could be identified. Instead, an accurate and sober account of appropriate caving has been provided.

Cavers began the day awkwardly navigating the space between packing up and actually committing by changing into damp clothes and a cave suit. Fortunately for pack volume, nearly all of the emergency gear we had planned to remove was instead to remain for future cavers. Left behind were (among other things) two sleeping bags in good condition, several fuel canisters, emergency supplies, and water containers.

Based on readiness and with a few remaining tasks, an advance group of Cole, Carl, and Henry was sent ahead with two extra bags. Clear instructions were given to all to leave bags at anchors or near pitches if issues arose. The rest continued to pack up and were finished with a quick detour via Rockhampton.

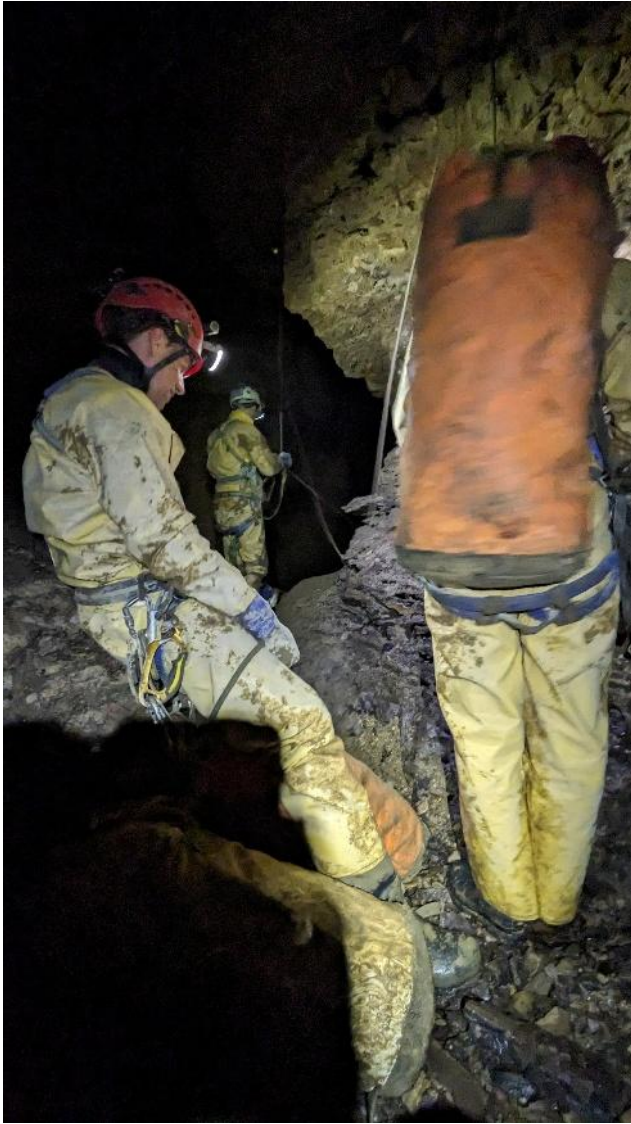
Cole put his training in Crete to good use, leading the ascent, followed by Carl, Henry, Ben, Lauren, Ciara, Alice, and Steve. Throughout the ascents, there was no significant separation between cavers. With no new discoveries to be made in the exit, most small talk was reduced to discussion of a shared dislike for the meanders that provided an onerous respite to prusiking.



Cole checks out the Pool of Promise back on day 1. Image: Laurie Joliffe

An auspicious start to Daily Cases began as the rope insisted on clinging to Ben's bag and was pulled out of reach of those below several times. Carl experienced challenges with poor rub point management between themselves and their harness. With no rope protectors on hand to protect the SRT harness, the situation escalated to the level where his second bag was left behind at an anchor to relieve harness wear. Carl admittedly proved the necessity of this issue with a chafe wound that would have been impressive had the group not been normalised to gangrene. Henry faced no such issues and adopted the bag despite already carrying two. This being unnecessary, or the concept of delegating apparently did not cross his mind, as he completed the rest of Daily Cases with three significant bags, none the worse for wear. The ascent was otherwise a long, uneventful, and lonely prusik for most involved.

Despite expectations, most cavers were in strong spirits and high energy at the pitch head. In contrast, Steve looked to be relishing retirement, and not the gung-ho attitude expected from a "Hard-core Caver". A quick check of his two bags revealed he had attempted to compete with the weight of Henry's three bags from the beginning.



Big bags and waiting around – some of the many joys of the trip. Image: Laurie Joliffe

While others pondered the final meander, Ciara showed off her bag-carrying technique with Laurie. This proved remarkably effective for the pair and was promptly rejected outright as plausible by those observing.

Negative-Rat hole formed a bottleneck as a series of cavers wisely chose to leave their bags below the dreaded squeeze. Thus, all the bags required a pullout with a few haul configurations attempted to get around the awkward angles. Ben successfully contributed to the bottleneck by adding a new bag as Steve's primary bag underwent mitosis. All cavers were able to exit without anyone being stuck or taking excessively long.

There was a small celebration upon everyone exiting and the ability to change into new clothes.

The team walked back in two groups and made excellent use of the multitude of car chips stashed. Following this frenzied feast, the Tasmanians headed home to Hobart while the mainlanders got stuck into dinner at Giant's Table.

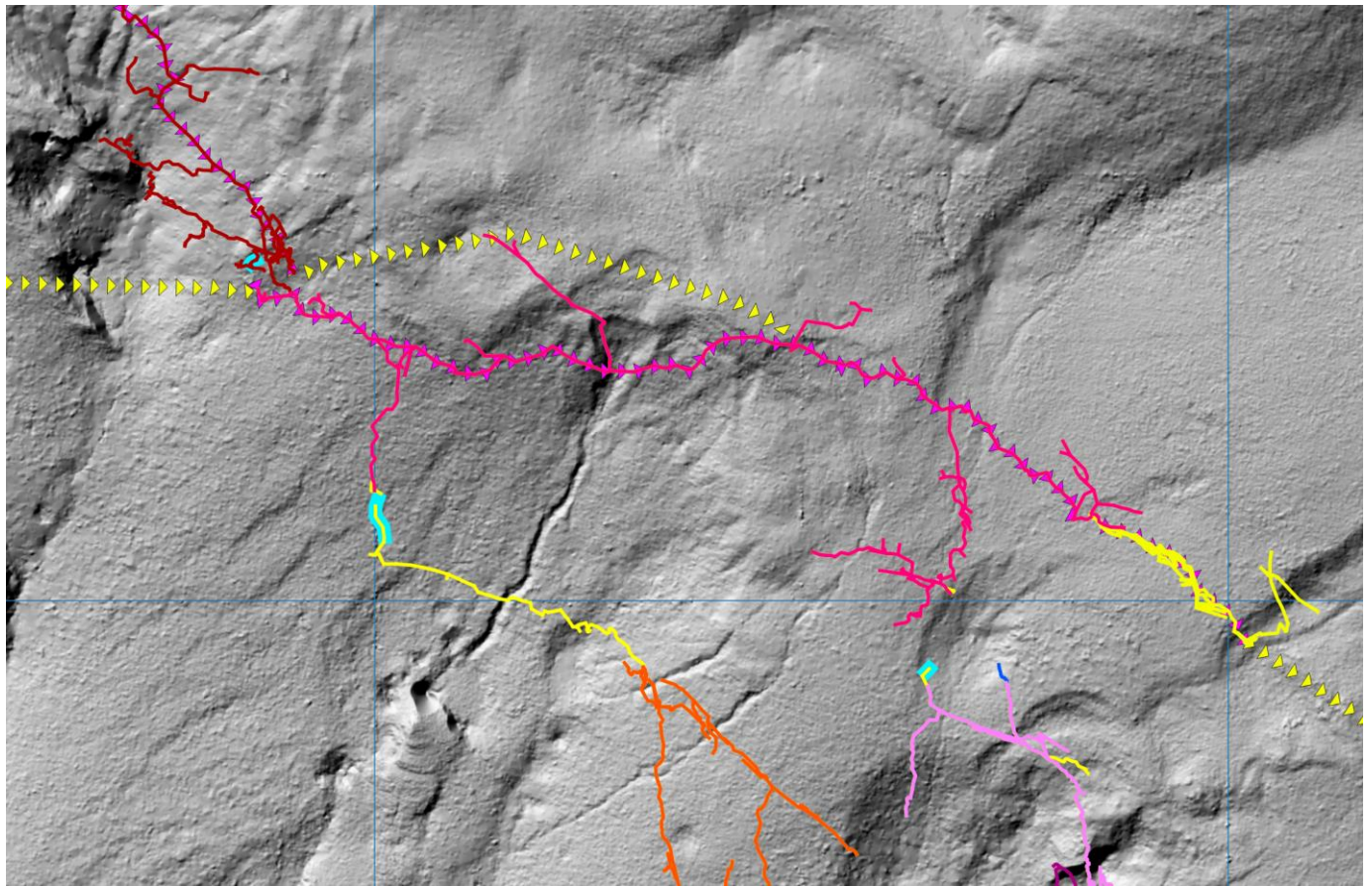


A goodly pile of bags on the surface. Image: Cole Neering

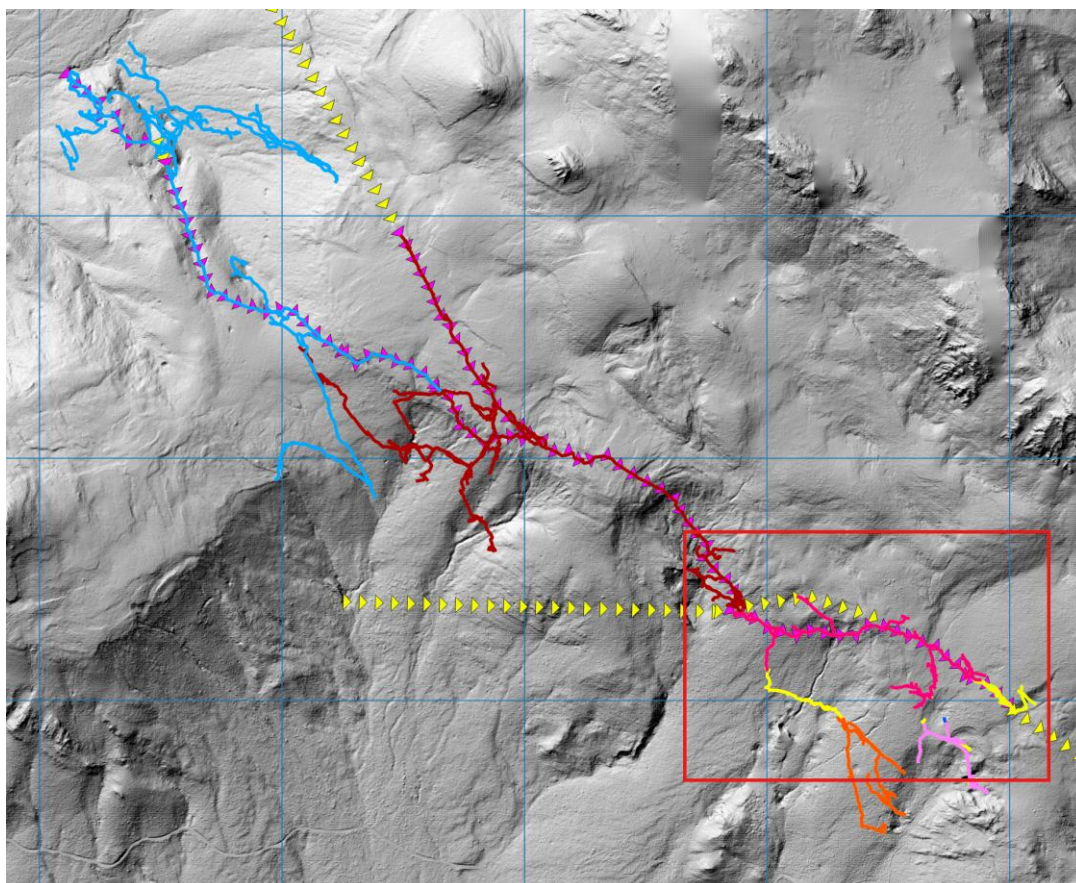
Random technical stuff

(Steve) While the others checked out the Pool of Promise, I made a small detour to survey in the Downstream Atlantis detector location from which a large flood was recorded. Later in the trip, the same was done for the one at the end of Mother of God. Analysis of depth readings during the flood showed that the water level was extremely uniform across the whole cave (!!) as it subsided. This will be used to correct the survey data, as the small inclinations across 1.5 km of fairly horizontal survey have produced some troublingly variable results. A long and boring explanation of the final Niggly/Growling depth number calculation is still in the works.

A length calculation for the system also still needs some fiddling, but with ~3 km of Sesame/Ring-hole connected in, it's about 35 km total. A state of play screenshot from the JF QGIS project follows.



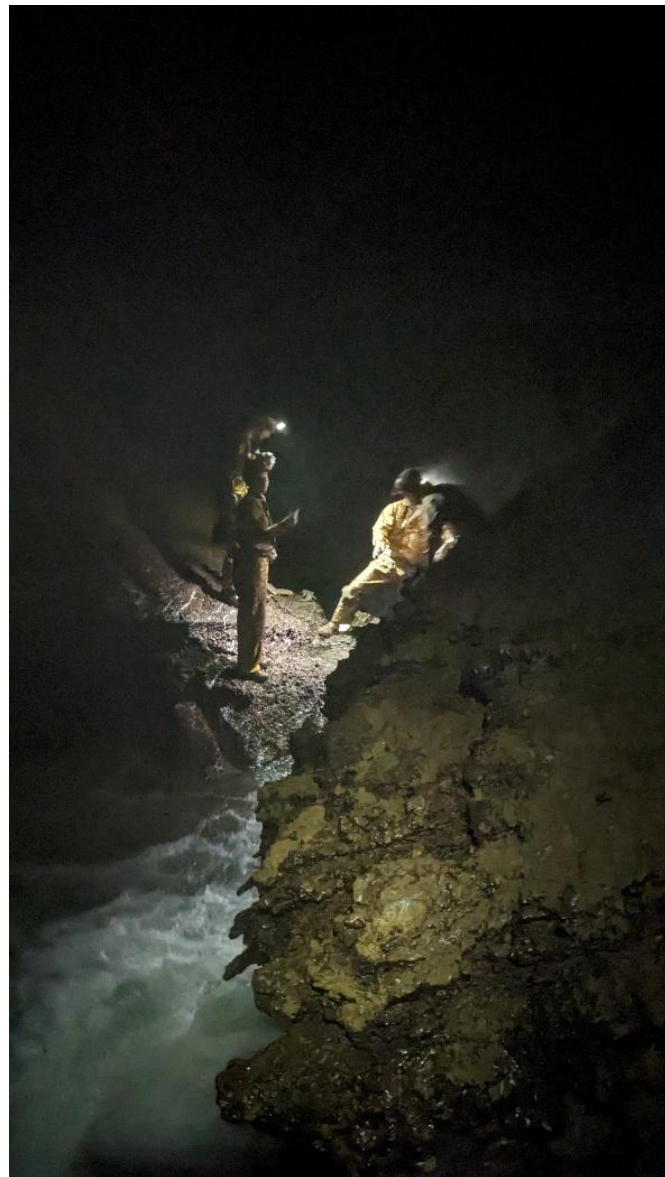
The current state of play, with pre-breakthrough Niggly in maroon, 2025 additions in dark pink, 2026-01 and 2026-02 trip additions in yellow, mastercave with magenta arrows, theorised with yellow arrows. Sesame in orange/yellow and blue background for sump. Voltera in light pink with yellow and blue new this project. 1 km grid shown. (by Stephen Fordyce)



The entire system (Growling Swallet in blue), red rectangle showing state of play map (by Stephen Fordyce)



*Looking up the cascade to Most Non-Triumphant Sump
Image: Steve Fordyce*



*Council of war at the end
Image: Laurie Joliffe*



*This is what you look like after 24 Niggly camping trips
Image: Ciara Smart*



*Dinner at Giant's Table was delicious – milk powder
and a candle. Carl's fringe grew about 30cm over the
4 days of Niggly. Image: Ally Kelly*



JF-237 Niggly: Three Day Camping Trip

6-8 February 2026

Ciara Smart

Party: Henry Garratt, Jemma Herbert, Ciara Smart

Theme Song: 'Sexy and I know it' by LMFAO

Day 1:

There's one sure way to make a Niggly camping trip that little bit harder, and that's to lose control of your bodily functions. Despite the trip's catchy theme song, 'I'm Sexy and I know it', all three of us had some distinctly messy moments on this trip.

We left Hobart at about 4:30 pm on Friday afternoon, catching the long weekend traffic for good measure. We trudged up the hill and trogged up at Negative-Rat Hole where Jemma discovered she had packed two left gloves. Ingeniously, with some brute force and teamwork, they turned the plastic glove inside out and suddenly had a right glove. We got underground by 8 pm, setting a speed record by making it to camp in only two hours from the surface with our light bags. The improved rigging is great, but to continue the time-honoured tradition of whinging about other people's rigging, we could complain that there is a fair bit of rogue glue dripped about the place.



*Magic. A left glove becomes a right.
Image: Jemma Herbert*

At camp Jemma was found to have also brought two right camp booties, luckily both clown-sized and quite usable. I stayed up late that night calibrating my FCL device. Jemma stayed up late because she was cold in her sleeping bag; so cold in fact that she woke up shivering, cracked out the emergency sleeping bag and double-bagged it!

Day 2:

We had a slow start because we forgot to set an alarm, and I had to endure the rage-inducing task of calibrating my DistoX so I could compare the calibration to my FCL. After calibration the two devices were still off slightly, but I didn't know which one was right. I also got my period that morning, making me generally want to lie in the mud and cry.

For a while we have been planning to stash two emergency kits in El Dorado, just in case anyone gets stuck in there in flood conditions. We decided not to bring them through with us today, in part because Jemma was sleeping in one, but also because it seemed more logical to do so tomorrow when we'd know if we had got any further. Little were we to know...

We stomped off down Mother-of-God, wriggled through Heavy Lifting, crawled through Chrysalis Streamway and raced down El Dorado to Florence Heights. It's a long way to the push front now. At the top of Florence Heights, we started resurveying from station CHA134 through to ANUSS18. A resurvey was necessary because we've had some ongoing discrepancies between survey devices.

From survey station ANUSS18, we surveyed up a slope to the right which we had not pushed last trip. It went a short way up a very steep mud slope then into the Stadium area. We descended the steep mud slope at high velocity and continued on.

We picked up the shovel and crowbars as we traversed Doonamancers Lair and arrived at the push front around 2 pm. Last trip we stopped when we discovered a sump (The Most Non-Triumphant Sump). The sump takes all the master streamway water and is obviously impenetrable to dry cavers, but we were hopeful that we could ascend the steep mud slope almost directly above it and access open streamway on the other side. This trip we had brought equipment to rig this slope as a pitch in the hope of gaining the other side of the sump. We know that there is still at least 4 km of distance between this point and the June

resurgence, so there is yet more cave to be found, probably....

Henry French-freed up the slope, managing to place two bolts in the left wall for protection, and a crowbar hammered directly into the mud for progress. If you fell here you'd land in the sump which flows with a strong current into and under a solid wall, it'd be unpleasant to say the least. At the top he placed 2 x 8 mm stainless steel throughbolts as an anchor and Jemma and I followed him up. It's about a 5 m section on rope.

As I ascended the top I hoped to see a wide, sloping mud bank that gently descended to stream level. Alas, this was not to be. Instead, we saw large horizontal high-level passage of significant dimensions. We decided to survey out. The passage was very dry, with lovely cracked mud formations in the floor, and some mud stalagmites in places. The passage was large, and we followed it in a straight direction first. This passage petered out. We then headed to the right through more generously proportioned passage. The roof lowered and became a solid slab. To our disappointment, it ended far too quickly. There was a very small amount of breakdown at the terminal end. We poked in a hole at the far end of the passage which had a diggable mud floor but there was no draught present.

We surveyed out from there, back towards the pitch. I climbed a higher mud bank near the pitch and found a green thing, probably a bit of lichen. I was surprised as it is the middle of summer and it has not flooded in months. Back at the pitch, we contemplated our options.

We decided to go back through the passage to double check we had not missed anything. This was a good idea as we found a small hole in the wall near flagged survey station CHJ21 which we enlarged, gaining access to an initially promising looking chamber. It ended with mud to the ceiling in all directions, maybe diggable if you were really keen, but not at all promising. Henry and Jemma then climbed up a steep, tight passage which crossed back over the main passage. A bit of gymnastics and the classic 'standing on Henry' technique got them up a slippery chimney, where the passage promptly and conclusively terminated in solid rock.

Back in the main chamber, Jemma then found another small hole in the wall, digging and

descending headfirst down a tube. She managed to get stuck, with gravity working against her. I crawled in and grabbed her gumboots, while Henry tethered himself to me with his cowstails. Together, the three of us wiggled backwards and slithered out to the hole. As a result, the whole area is called 'Three Wiggles.' You could dig at least another metre out of that tube, before it turns a corner, or more likely just dies. But I don't know why you'd want to.

We reconvened and assessed our options. While it's unwise to declare an area finished, I am confident we had a very thorough look. There is relatively little breakdown in this passage, the walls are mostly solid, meaning that there are not many places to poke. The complete absence of draught is a further compounding factor that makes any continuation from here seem unlikely. Even if we started digging in the furthest point, we are still at least 10 m above the streamway. I think that the way on is most probably via the sump, which might just mean that this is the furthest point for dry cavers. I had a good look at the ceiling above the sump, just to make sure there are no further holes that we've overlooked, but nothing is obvious.

Earlier in the day, when it became clear that there was not going to be an easy way through, Henry had started making noises about leaving the cave a day early. These noises only increased in vehemence and were soon joined by Jemma. In fairness, I could not mount a particularly persuasive argument otherwise; there are only a very small number of leads to finish down this end of the cave, some of which are very wet and are not my cup of tea. After a council of war and settling on the decision to exit the cave a day early, we descended back to stream level. We left the access pitch rigged (you never know, others may come to double-check). Henry descended back to the streamway first, in quite a hurry because he needed to access his emergency poop kit. Pooping occurred with quite some urgency. Later, in Chrysalis Streamway, Jemma also had to poop with urgency, despite being in a very inconvenient part of the cave where it is wet and squeazy. The emergency poo kits got a good work out this trip. It seemed that both Jemma and Henry had the shits; further urgent pooping occurred back at camp that night.



Chef Jemma in two right camp booties. Image: Ciara Smart

Day 3

This morning it was my turn to humiliate myself. A bit of toothpaste touched the back of my throat and I lost my guts. Thankfully, all my breakfast landed in the toothbrushing hole. We poured carbide over the top of it to stop it smelling. Oops. I get weird about toothpaste.... and breakfast.

Camp pack-up is always a faff but we got away at a reasonable hour and were on the pitches by 11:15 am. We would have been on the surface by 2 pm except for a hold-up at the base of Negative-Rat Hole where we met Henry. Unfortunately, Henry was not going to make it to the surface; there was just enough space in the emergency poo barrel to fit in one final surprise poo. Diarrhoea underground is no fun.

We had ice-creams at Westerway and were home before dark. Lovely.

All up, the new passage, ‘Three Wiggles,’ came in at about 270 m. While it’s less than the hundreds of metres we’ve been collecting on recent trips, it’s still respectable. Alas, I fear that the way onto the downstream continuation is most probably via ‘The most non-triumphant sump,’ but like anything, it’s worth being absolutely sure before we call it done. There remains a small number of

leads to tick off yet, but nothing that is likely to yield huge amounts of new passage.

Processing the survey data revealed that the furthest point we got to is 4456 m away from the entrance. That seems like quite a long way!



Fin. Left to right: Henry, Jemma, Ciara. Image: selfie

Other Exciting Stuff

Annual Reports

President

Karina Anders

It has been a nice year; I've chaired the meetings I have attended and worked with the exec to make decisions about various things. Thanks to the VP for stepping in when I have been away. Happy to do another year.

Vice President:

Janine McKinnon

As it has been commented upon every time the USA has a Presidential election, the VP has no power and little to do, other than jump into the boots of the President if they become incapacitated - many a Hollywood disaster movie starts that way. Thus, I have chaired a couple of meetings when the President was away and have been part of Executive discussions of various "stuff" that has come our way during the year. It is (not) an onerous job, but someone's got to do it. I am willing to stand in the role again for 2026.

Secretary

Ciara Smart

2025 was a quiet year for secretary duties. Agendas were prepared and minutes were written. In 2025 we moved to bimonthly business meetings, considerably reducing the number of minutes. Nine permits were applied for and granted. No official letters were written and little correspondence was received. I'm happy to continue in this role, but also happy to hand it over if someone else is keen.

Equipment Officer

Alan Jackson

Another largely uneventful year at the gear store. We bought some new rope, some new shiny stuff, some new SRT kit stuff and probably other stuff, too. People come and borrow it. Thanks to Henry for doing some trogsuit sewing/repairs. Thanks to everyone else for generally giving me plenty of notice when collecting stuff and returning it within a reasonable timeframe. After about 15 years talking about it, there is finally a new shed in my backyard. At some point during 2026 I'll have it wired and lined and available for filling up

with shit. If I'm still Equipment Officer for 2026, then some of that shit will be the STC gear!

Librarian

Greg Middleton

Since February 2025 the Library has received *no* new paper journals or newsletters (8 last year, 9 in 23-24, 11 in 22-23, 22 in 21-22). Our total holding remains at 5,108. We may say that hard copies of speleological periodicals are no longer being produced or exchanged.

Digital copies of journals and newsletters are stored on a 1TB hard disk which is backed up to another, and many are now available to all members through our digital archive. Additions in the last 12 months include:

ACKMA Journal: #138 - #141

ASF Annual Report: 2025

Caves Australia: #231 - #234

Helictite: Vol. 50

ISS Newsletter: Vol. 31(1)-(3)

J. Sydney Speleo. Society: Vol. 69(2)-(12)

Speleo Spiel: #462 - #466

Speleopod (SRCC): #96 - #97

Trog (KSS): Vol. 59(63-6), 60(1) - (2)

Troglodyte (NC): Vol. 35 (1) - (2)

NSS News (USA): Vol. 83(2) - (12)

J. Cave & Karst Studies (USA): Vol. 8(1) - (3)

Cave & Karst Science (UK): Vol. 52(1) - ()

No new books were added to the library this year. A list of major books is on the website; a digital catalogue of all 472 books is available.

No new CDs or DVDs were added. Our CD/DVD collection stands at 67.

I have set up a series of binders to hold loose papers and articles; about 900 have been filed. Many more remain to be accessioned.

No new issues of *Southern Caver* were produced.

I'm prepared to continue in the position but as this would be my 28th year I'm more than happy to hand the position – and the considerable volume of books and papers – over to someone else.

Treasurer**Russell Fulton****FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR 2025****Income and expenditure statement**

For the period 1 January 2025 - 31 December 2025

	2025	2024
Income		
Membership fees	\$5,034.25	\$4,866.50
Gear hire	\$223.00	\$230.00
Donations (to STC General Funds)	\$40.00	\$25.50
Grants	\$0.00	\$0.00
Interest	\$305.87	\$427.98
Sundries	\$128.59	\$0.00
Total income	\$5,731.71	\$5,549.98
Expenditure		
ASF fees	\$3,065.50	\$3,031.65
Gear purchase and repair	\$3,162.22	\$467.70
Website hosting	\$0.00	\$0.00
Social events	\$150.00	\$0.00
Google 2Tb subscription	\$43.99	\$43.99
Equipment officer honorarium	\$69.00	\$135.60
Annual return fee	\$74.80	\$71.20
PO Box Rental	\$159.00	\$245.00
Civic Club membership	\$50.00	\$50.00
Bank fees	\$6.60	\$6.60
Sundries	\$32.00	\$264.65
Total expenditure	\$6,813.11	\$4,316.39
Net surplus (loss)	\$1,081.40	\$1,233.59
Balance Sheet		
General Account (bank balance)	\$6,354.13	\$12,435.53
Fixed Term Deposit (bank balance)	\$15,000.00	\$10,000.00
Plus receipts to be deposited		
Total cash position	\$21,354.13	\$22,435.53

NOTES

1. Expenditure sundries comprised refund of overpaid membership refunds.
2. Invoicing for website hosting has not occurred for several years and it is anticipated that between \$400 to \$600 will be due for payment in 2026.
3. Accounts to be audited internally. An audit package is available for anyone who is interested.
4. Membership breakdown as of 31 December 2025:

CATEGORY	NUMBER
Single	19
Single – less ASF	6
Household	13
Concession	11
Introductory	21
Life – Active	3
Life – Active (Retired)	1
Life – Inactive	2
TOTAL	76

COMMENTS

The club operated with a loss of \$1,084.40 this year. The loss is attributable to increased expenditure on replacing worn out club gear. Additional funds of \$5,000 were transferred to the term deposit during the year from the working account. No significant additional expenditure is anticipated for the 2026 year. The club is in a sound financial position.

ASF capitation fees were increased in September 2025. Proposed new membership fees for 2026 are shown below.

Membership Category	ASF fee increase	Current STC fee	Proposed 2026 fee
Single	\$5.00	\$105.00	\$110.00
Family	\$8.50	\$183.75	\$192.25
Concession (student, unemployed, pensioner)	\$3.50	\$73.00	\$76.50
Introductory	\$2.50	\$38.50	\$41.00
Life - Active	\$5.00	\$70.00	\$75.00
Life - Active (Retired)	\$3.50	\$46.00	\$49.50
Life - Inactive	\$1.50	\$21.00	\$22.50

Science Officer

Chris Sharples

Apart from ongoing cave exploration and mapping (which is arguably scientific data-gathering but is also simply “what cavers do”), there have been two ongoing scientific research projects this last year which STC has contributed to.

The first was the continuation of the multi-year research into the genetics and evolution (above- and under-ground) of the Tasmanian shrimp *Anaspides*, which is being undertaken as a PhD project by German researcher Christoph Höpel and his supervisor Stefan Richter (with help from others). Apart from some specimen collecting at the start of this year, the main work this year was rather quiet: namely Christoph had his head down writing papers and finishing his PhD thesis! Although this crucial phase of the work is now complete, that is not the end of the story, since Christoph has got himself a job at the Australian Museum in Sydney to continue his *Anaspides* study and this means there will be further involvement down the line for STC.

The second ongoing project was the careful excavation of vertebrate bones and Quaternary sediments from Predator Pot in the Junee-Florentine karst. This project was supervised by Rolan Eberhard from the Tasmanian Department of Natural Resources and Environment, with collaboration from Bill Nicholson, Phil Jackson and others from STC, along with several Australian vertebrate fossil experts. This work is now in a wrapping up phase but has produced a number of significant discoveries including the bones of extinct species, and it is understood that papers are being prepared for the publication of what will be very interesting results.

I am happy to stand for this position again, but won't mind if somebody else wishes to try out for the role!

Speleo Spiel Editor's Report

Ciara Smart

2025 saw a return to the more usual programming of six Spiel issues a year, and a return to slightly shorter Spiels. Spiel issues 462-467 totalled 179 pages, composed all up of 83,010 words and 315 images and maps. Quite a bit really! Thank you to the excellent sub-editing team of Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney, Alan Jackson and Greg Middleton, with others putting their hands up here and there. All issues have been submitted to the National eDepository, as well as appearing on the website. Thank you to STC members who diligently send in trip reports and assorted pieces of interest. Please keep it up! I'm happy to continue in this role.

Social Secretary

Phil Jackson

It has been a good year for social activities. This is in stride with the caving activity and achievements; the club is in a strong position and in very competent hands.

Aside from the usual meetings, training sessions and trips we had pub nights, games nights and the annual anniversary barbeque. All of these were generally well attended.

This year will be the 80th anniversary, for this we're looking at slightly grander options than a byo BBQ.

ASF Googlegroups rep:

Janine McKinnon

Much has come into my inbox this year. As any communications between club reps and ASF relating to group postings goes to everyone, that is quite a lot. I have forwarded everything of potential interest to club members.

Training Officer

Henry Garratt

Another largely eventful year as training officer this year. New members joined, SRT training was offered and beginner trips ran. The most exciting thing being as a club we bought some new bits of SRT kit for the beginner sets, much improving the experience of new members. I am happy to do it again in 2026 if no one else wants to.

Physical Map Archivist Report

Ric Tunney

The physical maps and some miscellaneous documents are stored in a set of horizontal drawers (for the big ones), a filing cabinet, and various mailing tubes. All (hopefully) the maps have been digitised and placed into the Archive, so all this stuff is really only for historical purposes. Survey notes are meant to be sent to me to ensure they have been scanned and added to the Archive, and for storage. But most surveys are now electronic and this is unnecessary. As a result, the Map Archive is rarely accessed.

Some time ago, Ron Mann (an SCS member from some forty years ago) donated various newspaper cuttings and documents. Recently Janine, who was enforced to be idle, scanned these and added them to the Archive.

I am happy to continue in this role.

Digital Archivist

Michael Glazer

It's been a steady year of digital housekeeping for the STC archives. I've issued several new map numbers and have been chipping away at the Google Drive, reorganising folders to make everything a bit more intuitive. To streamline things on the admin side, the Treasurer and Secretary now have direct write access to their own folders, which should cut down on the back-and-forth.

On the tech side, we've rolled out the first version of STC Assist. It's a solid start, but the real upgrade is coming. The second version is currently in development and is significantly more reliable; most importantly, it'll be able to interpret maps and visual imagery.

As always, everything is being backed up regularly. If you have any surveys, photos, or documents tucked away somewhere, please send them through—getting them into the archive is the best way to make sure they don't go missing.

Webmaster

John Oxley

The web page has continued to operate satisfactorily. Each Speleo Spiel has been added to the Publications section as they become available. The Events Calendar is updated with upcoming trips and other activities as I become aware of them. This is usually by means of the minutes from the general meetings however if an event or trip is planned, even if already full, letting me know would be appreciated.

Search and Rescue Officer

Jemma Herbert

-No major rescues this year.

-Lots of training. Two small exercises in Dwarrowdelf and Tassie Pot. Some skills stuff at Fruehauf mostly. Big exercise will be in KD in Feb.

-Tas Ambulance have assigned six cave paramedics. We'll be running training for them in Feb before our exercise.

At the Annual General Meeting in February, all office bearers were re-elected unopposed.
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