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Newsletter of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club. Established 1946

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NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

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FORWARD PROGRAMME

Thursday June 11 Sports Strapping Demonstration. Learn how to strap that sprained ankle by going along to this lecture put on by the Australian Sports Medicine Federation at Rosny College starting 8 pm.

Saturday June 13 Tassie Pot. Survey trip to see how deep it really is with new extension included. See Diana Davies if you're keen to go.

Sunday June 14 Gear Checking. If we get back in time from Tassie Pot, the idea is to drag out all the gear, check it, measure it and so on. After lunch at 7 Rupert Avenue - BE THERE (if it's fine).

Wednesday June 17 Committee Meet 8 pm at 7 Rupert Avenue.

Wednesday July 01 General Meeting. Entertainment will consist of a slide show by Albert Goede of his recent Nullarbor trip. Why not come along, see the show, pay your subs., make your donation to the rope fund and go home broke....but happy! 8pm at 7 Rupert Avenue, New Town.

Wednesday July 15 Committee Meeting 8pm at 7 Rupert Avenue

Wednesday Aug 05 General Meeting. Bring your latest slides and show everyone what a great photographer you are! 8pm at 7 Rupert Avenue.

EDITORIAL

A number of trips have gone during the month but no trip reports have appeared on my desk which is a bit poor. How can we profess to be an active club if we don't publish trip reports?

Nothing outstanding has happened so I won't attempt to write a raving editorial when there is nothing to rave about!

CLUB NEWS

- Congratulations to Trevor and Susan Wailes on the birth of their first child, a son named Gavin Geoffrey. I don't know if he is living up to his name, but I'm sure his 'Wailes' during the night will be the cause of some loss of sleep during the next few months.
- After some coercion Mike Martyn has paid his subs. and is now officially a member of Australia's original (and best) caving club. Welcome to the mob!
- I won't say anything about Trev's SRT rig - just read the Cauldron Pot trip report!
- Bill Nicholson is running a raffle on behalf of the T.C.C. rope fund with second prize being one pair of Blundstone 'Mountain Master' boots. First prize is half a pair of boots! Seriously folks, Bill is running a raffle with a prize of a pair of 'Blunnies' donated by him from his shop 'Camp Scene', lower level Eastlands. So if you happen to see Bill, be sure to buy a ticket from him (or even two or three).
- In three and a half years, Tasmania is due to host the ASF Biannual Conference. This is just a warning!

CLUB NEWS cont.

- The Eberhard brothers of SCS are keen to do an exploration/survey trip to Big Tree Pot near Mini Martin at Ida Bay. This is only one of the many unexplored/ partly explored shafts in this area and should be a good hard trip. Probably to take place towards the end of the year when the new Exit track is finished. This will reduce walking time considerably which will be a welcome change.
- It may be of interest to members, especially trip leaders, to know that a new Operations Manager has appeared at A.N.M. Forest and Log Division, Maydena. He is a New Zealander by the name of Russell Croakwell (I hope the spelling is correct!) and replaces Gerry Cross who has been there for a number of years but has now moved to the Boyer mill. I sincerely hope that the good relations we have shared with A.N.M. over the years will continue or even improve with the appointment of Russell to Maydena.
- Still on the topic of public relations, perhaps we should organise another slide show/talk for the Maydena bods. Laurie Moody and myself gave a show a few years ago but I'm sure another one would be appreciated.

Subscriptions are now
overdue!

Full member	\$10
Spiel sub./Junior/Associate	\$5
Family	\$15

You will be crossed off the mailing list if you don't pay at or before the July general meeting.

JUMAR LOADING AND FAILURE

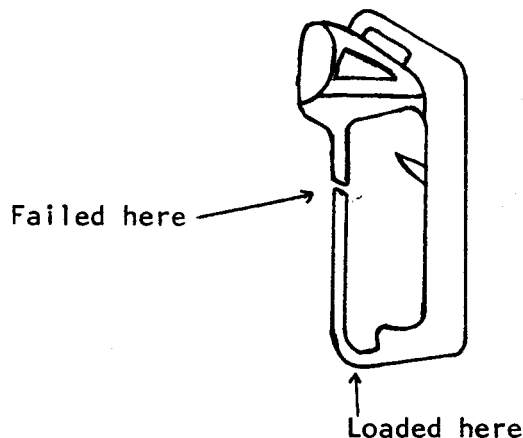
Jumar users may find some interest in this extract from Jumars, Ascending and Hauling Techniques by Off Belay Reprint series, by the way it sells for \$1.50 at the "Camp Scene" Ph: 44 6343. Here goes!

The April 1977 "Safety Techniques" column of the NSS News, the monthly publication of the National Speleological Society, contained a report of a cracked jumar frame. The crack occurred in the thin forward brace and was discovered when the climber's weight sprang it open. An identical failure, through the thin brace was also reported a year before in the May 1976 NSS News.

Both failures were caused by improperly rigging the foot sling to the jumar..... most sobering; the method that caused both failures is commonly used by those unfamiliar with the brittleness of the cast alloy in jumar frames.

In both the reported cases, the sling was simply passed through the hand opening. It naturally slipped down to the lowest point and put the major part of the load onto the thin brace. This brace is not designed to carry a load; it is primarily a stiffener and a protective shield for your knuckles. While it may look strong enough, it is not, and may break under body weight alone, especially if the manoeuvre being performed involves bounding or swinging, or if the brace is banged against the rock. There are many, many reports of stiffening braces that shattered when jumars were dropped, often only a few feet.

Sleep well, jumar users.



Bill Nicholson.

The following epistle/epic/not-so-short story was written by Trevor Wailes and details every move of almost everyone at the Easter Mole Creek caving extravaganza. So go and make a brew, sit down by the fire and read on.....

MOLE CREEK EASTER WEEKEND

HERBERTS POT Or, "Do you reckon we're nearly almost possibly half way there yet!? Erm, well not really!"

Despite many misgivings it actually happened almost as advertised in the last few Spiels. There was a party from T.C.C. and a guide who left a trail of steam for us to follow from the N.C. - thank you Mark O'Brian. There were those who didn't actually meet him but he was there in front somewhere!

Well, to start somewhere just after the beginning, we finally reached the N.C. mansion at about 5-ish Friday afternoon. Wood was cut for the fire, Andrew hung himself from the tree, Pete tried to chop his foot off (not Andrew's) and Chris didn't. As Chris, Di and I were last there, we expected to be sleeping outside but as it happened, the old wire bed had been ignored so your new president made it his headquarters (thank you team). I also found enough room next to the fire to have an exceptionally warm, comfortable weekend.

Some trips had been done that day - flashing trips to Genghis by various bods and a search for and eventual location of the Kubla resurgence by a couple of pseudo cave divers! So basically, everyone was keen and the camp had got off to a good start. The first evening was spent listening to Andrew's jokes or trying to ignore him, eating, playing Eucha, drinking and the odd game of chess, all round the fire. Pandemonium seemed to be the order of the evening but at last all slopped off to bed and left me to mine.

I personally enjoy a lie-in, but with early risers cooking, sitting on my bed and generally walking all over me, I soon got the message. Mike Martyn arrived about this time followed shortly after by Mark (hot foot) O'Brian.

We already had accepted the fact that ten was too large a party to "do" Herberts Pot. So, with little argument the party was set at six. By 8.30 we were on our way to the Pot 10km away by road. After leaving the gravel road to drive across fields near Wet Caves, we finally parked at the bottom of a steep track that I learned we had to climb. It was getting hard already! All ten of us had converged on this spot as the non-Herberts mob were going to "do" something in the same area. (Shish Kebab - Ed.)

Changed and with packs packed we set off up the steep track in brilliant sunshine following Mark through pasture and scrub to the insignificant entrance of Herberts Pot, the only known entrance into this section of the Mole Creek master cave. Against my better judgement, it was agreed to rope the pitch rather than ladder it.

Mark (NC), Mike Martyn and myself were the first ready to go so set off with rope and personal gear to rig the pitch. The short section down to the pitch starts as a steep grade down through a series of short climbs into chambers until it starts levelling off and the way on is down an old abandoned stream passage where eventually the old course drops away into the 70ft pitch. This was rigged by Mark with some fancy knotwork to a large protruding piece of passage wall.

Just as we finished rigging it, the rest of the party started to arrive so little time was lost descending down two short steps to a free 25ft and then on to the 80° wall to the foot of the pitch in a high dry aven. Here a short pause until everyone caught up or down as the case may be. All prusik and abseiling gear was left here as this pitch is the only vertical section necessitating SRT or ladder (with regards to an upstream trip).

From this point on, we saw "Hot Foot" only briefly at crucial junctions although for the most part the condensed air trail was enough. It was fun trying to follow him as, if you missed a step or slipped, it didn't really matter as you were on to the next step already.

The route followed the stream passage on and down through a few scalloped pools into a large collapsed chamber with a squeeze down through a keyhole to the start of what is known as "the long crawl". This section is about 40 yards long and ranges from hands and knees down to flat out (curse that ammo box) - novel on the inward trip but tiring on the return. Fortunately, the passage was relatively dry. From here on small streams appear and disappear through talus for most of the way to the main drain so some sections are still active and others deserted, dry and sandy. There are numerous side passages but route finding is easy until the boulder choke. This is not difficult as in parts there is a choice of route and the wrong one usually involves tight sections. At the beginning of this section (talus) is a sideways horizontal crawl with a tight 15ft drop below. This is sporty going-in but returning is again strenuous and time consuming. At the far side of the rock fall is a greasy 15ft climb down into a narrow stream passage. Three streams converge on this point so the rest of the 100 yards of passage to the main stream is relatively active. As you progress sideways at a slight angle down this section a faint roar becomes noticeably louder. To those not used to large volumes of water underground, this phenomenon can be awesome.

Finally, this section being the entrance series drops 4 foot through a keyhole into the main drain 20ft wide and with a height varying from 12 to 40 ft. The river was low at about 9 ins deep and 12 ft across. This was one of those rare moments

Mark O'Brian was present, not necessarily visible through clouds of steam, but certainly audible - "Which way do you want to go?" We'd already decided on an upstream trip but it was finalised as everyone was present.

Again Mark set off and left us to follow the cloud past two high inlets then up the left side of the passage to a section that crossed the river and followed a bedding plane-like crawl back to the stream. Once back to the stream, the route leads through a few high chambers and on about half a mile through clean stream passage which degenerates into a series of short forceful waterfalls no more than 3 ft high which have deep plunge pools. Our party kept to the left of the passage for most of this section using the good hand holds in poor rock and doing acrobatics to avoid a total drenching. Quite often we were chest deep, searching for footholds underwater. The poor rock handholds which looked solid were often transferable as Stuart found when he plummeted backwards into deep water holding one in either hand.

This waterfall step section eventually alters into a rift and a few yards further the roar and wind from the 25ft high waterfall becomes deafening. This waterfall is impassable by the direct route but Mark's vapourised trail led vertically up the side of the rift to a high passage and the start of the Talus Passage.

The climb out of the stream is known as the Tomestone Traverse and leads to an awkward climb over some large blocks where a static handline comes in very useful. This climb brought us up into a very large boulder choke which to describe is impossible but the crawl led through some relatively open chambers into a large hall with a distant right hand wall sparkling with flowstone - Herberts Hall - possibly the largest open chamber in the whole system. The river is 60ft below the talus through which we now descend to the junction of the Westmorland stream which enters on the left. Here we paused again waiting for everyone to assemble.

After a short rest, the consensus was to go to the far reaches near the upstream sump and maybe look at Holy Hell! We continued up the right hand branch over more talus which was the end of the collapse, into impressive streamway. As the talus breakdown section finally ended a gentle bend to the right marked the turn off up to Paragon Vaults on the left. This was ignored and we continued on a ledge with the stream incised 3 ft into the solid rock watercourse. This passage is clean with no debris and ledges on either side are wide and even. The going is easy here and good time was made following "hot foot's" trail. As the roof lowered on one side it rose on the other so traversing the stream only 3 ft wide was no real problem. This easy section only ran for 250 yards before the roof lowered and the passage changed character with a hair pin bend to the left. As the roof lowered the wall receded to almost horizontal rift proportions, the stream was wide and pebbly and hands and knees crawling gave way to sections of stomach grovelling. This section is known as the Gravel Beds and continues miserably for about 150 yards to a turn off of standing height on the right. This appears to be a flood passage and apart from a few pools seems dry. The passage does continue forward only to become a low flat out crawl or so we were informed by our steaming guide. The stream somehow bypasses our dry (?) passage but all is not too clear as the main passage is so wide and low and seems to sump in places. Our dry (?) passage soon lowered into a flat out crawl through muddy pools to one in particular which contained flood debris that was decomposing and humming loudly. This was the end of the crawl and a fair sized chamber was entered.

This was it, the beginning of the upstream sump, in a way - the end. Mike Martyn had a look up the canal as I climbed over a large block thinking it an easier route. Andrew followed Mike as did Diana. My route, as usual, was a blind and by the time I found the right route, I could still hear voices but see no lights, so hurried forward to catch them up.

The canal, probably wider than it appeared, lowered quickly with the water perhaps 2ft deep and with about a one foot air space which gradually lowered to about 6 ins. I could still hear their voices but saw no lights. I'd been here before or somewhere very similar and I wasn't over keen then. The water I was in was still and cold but I could hear it either running in or out, I still don't know! Calling after the others, I decided I'd had enough and started looking for the way out. The roof was scalloped in places with run lines, so looking for the maximum air space, I exited as though the "sump devil" himself was after me. I was quite stunned to find I was the only one in there as I returned to a happy little group all chewing Mars bars and the like. I had heard the voices in the sump fairly clearly and still can't understand how I had not seen them exit before I had entered!

A rift on the left as one faces the sump has an awkward climb up into a passage which shows signs of being a long deserted water course. This was where the first signal that all was not well with my light source occurred and the continuation along this section known as Holy Hell was quite frustrating as things I wanted to see were somewhat underexposed. Holy Hell will lodge itself in my mind along with Easter Grotto in the Easgill system in Yorkshire and the Hall of the Kings in the Kubla Khan system at Mole Creek. The "gypsum rope" with crystals as fine as cobwebs clustered together and the blue green colouring of the calcite helectites resembling down covered antlers (stag) and the sheer profusion of many variations of calcite formation was indeed staggering.

A boulder slope that appeared to have a large chamber on the far side was our furthest point from the entrance so, from here on, we were retracing our steps. This section (Holy Hell) appears to be a collapsed 45° inverted rift with much rubble and collapsed chambers where retracing our route became involved, as the obvious was not always so.

By now I was relying on borrowed illumination as I was trying to preserve what little power I had for ascending the pitch. The outward trip was uneventful except for 15mins. under Herberts Hall in the talus choke where I, with no light, and Mike Martyn and Di Davies searching for the onward route with theirs, became somewhat misplaced, but again a cloud appeared and so we followed it. By the time we reached the turn off in to the keyhole slot for the entrance series, we were all feeling the pace and it was a steady slow trip through to the bottom of the rope pitch.

The crawl slowed everyone up and some of the climbs became that bit more awkward. Finally, the rope was rediscovered and kitting up for the pitch began. This is the point at which I was convinced the rope was a mistake and ladder would have proved more efficient. I decided that my rope walking system wasn't what it should have been. The rest of the party ascended, leaving Nick Hume and myself still to come. I couldn't go last as I needed someone to swing on the rope to enable it to feed freely through my "system". At great length, I made it and Nick followed. Di had waited at the top of the pitch which is fortunate as my light finally said goodnight to me and so with the aid of her light we concluded the short entrance section to the surface, followed by Nick.

The trip had taken 7½ hours with very few short stops. This sort of caving doesn't agree with everyone but I feel a longer trip would not have been as enjoyable as most of us were tired as we exited. For myself, I was getting "ratty".

I would like to thank publicly the "cloud" Mark O'brian on behalf of this TCC trip and ask him when he's going to take us downstream!! Thank you Mark O'Brian.

It was a slow walk through the cool dark night air that led us back over the paddocks to the track down to the cars. We changed quickly and returned to the NC mansion where we ate. Stuart and I put the lamps on charge for the following day and then I conned him into taking me to the Mole Creek pub to join the non-Herberts drinking party which by the time I got there was well under way.

The following day started slowly - Chris Davies and Pete Hutchinson still wanted to have a look in Herberts but no one was keen to go back. The rope was still in there so it was essential that someone should return. The someone eventually turned out to be me and as I couldn't find my boots I thought I had a good excuse not to go.

About midday the three of us set off and I found my boots almost where I'd left them (they're quite well trained and don't wander off very far) at the foot of the steep track. We all changed very slowly and set off for Herberts entrance. Standing looking at the small insignificant hole I couldn't help but think, "What the hell am I doing here?" No one answered and we descended.

None of us was keen and at the rope pitch couldn't decide whether to call it off and remove the rope or continue. I felt like this right down to the mainstream. Pete and Chris had cheered up a bit so we had a look downstream. Some blocks bar the way 100ft downstream of the keyhole but the way on it not difficult to find and we were soon through this obstacle and looking down the next. This was a 30ft waterfall. I climbed above it and saw some small cairns which I was sure was the route but, Chris, in his new Enduro suit, had climbed down the side of the waterfall and Pete, rather than get wet, was attempting what looked like a suicidal traverse. I started chewing on the lump in my throat and followed Pete! His route was 40ft up on a very exposed bluff with transferable hand holds and I watched thinking "it's not that hard", but it was! I decided then that in future I would not follow anyone on grade 25 climbs underground. I followed him but decided that's one way I'm not returning.

The rest of the climb down from here was easy through some large blocks back down to the stream. Chris followed as far as he could to a sump and we decided we'd had enough and elected to exit.

The route I chose to climb the waterfall appeared to be the easiest and, as I climbed higher into the roof, I discovered some small marker cairns and followed them to the spot I was originally at. We returned upstream to the keyhole and on further to see the cascades and then back through the keyhole and through the system to the pitch. Chris ascended first quite easily but my rope walker system has to go out as it won't go up! Pete came up last and Chris went for the surface as Pete and I derigged the pitch and coiled the rope.

How Pete and I got lost I'm not sure, but Pete's friend the rat, had made the same mistake. Eventually, we were on the right track and out onto the surface. We were hopping for a beer in the pub but it was shut and the consolation was meeting Sue Feeney et al feeding their faces in the cafe. The evening was spent back at the mansion on chess, drinking beer and the odd game of Eucha. It had been another good trip although enthusiasm hadn't been so high.

The following day saw no caving as everyone was packing up and the weather was miserable. The weekend had gone as planned and I hope everyone enjoyed the change of caving scenery! I would like to remind everyone present that to date nothing has been collected in way of rent so we still own the N.C. our gratitude (for the use of the mansion!) and some cash!

Trevor Wailes.

A hopefully complete list of the bodies present at the Easter extravaganza:

Trevor Wailes, Nick Hume, Chris and Diana Davies, Mike Martyn, Peter Watts, Peter Hutchinson, Stuart Nicholas, Andrew Briggs and Paul McGlone.

TRIP REPORT

June Area - Cauldron Pot

Sunday, June 07

Party: Trevor Wailes and Stuart Nicholas

Having nothing better to do, and with Trev keen to de-bug his SRT rig (again, or is it still?), we trundled up the all too familiar track leading to K.D., Cauldron Pot and so on. A week of rain with some highland snow put paid to any attempt on the whole system, so we aimed to just go to the end of Bill's Bypass and subsequently do a track clearing Cook's Tour of the area.

After some stuffing about, we managed to rig the 41m entrance pitch in the wrong place, making for a somewhat wetter descent than originally planned. The stream flowing at something like twice the normal summer flow, didn't help either.

A quick trip down Bill's Bypass accompanied by various ripping noises from Trev's wet suit, was followed by a not so quick return caused by a suspect bar of chocolate making us both feel a bit off.

Trev eventually managed to prusik the entrance after rebuilding his rig half way up the pitch. Yours truly arrived at the top with hands completely numb from the cold.

Enthusiasm had waned considerably and hence our Tour was limited to a quick dash up to K.D. for Trev's edification, with various other features being pointed out en route.

Stuart Nicholas.