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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

Friday night August 21 thru' Sunday August 23    SEARCH & RESCUE SYMPOSIUM - SARYS 81. To be held at The Lea Scout Camp near Kingston, this year's symposium promises to be both interesting and educational (a rare combination!) Further information from Stuart Nicholas - if you're reading this before the weekend concerned.

Weekend August 30,31    SERENDIPITY - the pot that could well rival K.D. for depth so this trip should prove exciting to say the least! Stefan and Rolan Eberhard (SCS/TCC) are the organisers.

Wednesday Sept. 02    GENERAL MEETING 8 pm at 7 Rupert Avenue. Entertainment consists of an audio/visual by Norm Poulter of his attempts to reach the shore cave on the South Coast near Rocky Boat Inlet. Note: Norm won't be at the meeting as he lives in Perth, W.A.!

Wednesday Sept. 16    COMMITTEE MEETING 8pm at 7 Rupert Avenue.

Friday Sept. 25    ANNUAL DINNER. Yes folks, it's on again! With all the razzamataz of a major cultural event, the TCC annual dinner strikes again. See screed inside for all the details. BE THERE!

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EDITORIAL

The Forward Programme seems a little thin on caving trips right now. However, don't be fooled, plenty is happening. JF341 is certainly worth another visit as is JF147 just up the hill. Both have excellent potential for significant breakthroughs. Further exploration of Serendipity may well produce a new depth record and surveying of the bottom of Tassie Pot will probably move it up the list a place or two.

All these and more are happening within the next month or two so come to a meeting and get activated!

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#### IN SYMPATHY

It is with regret that I note the recent sudden death of John Briggs in Canberra. John was the brother of well known TCC member Andrew Briggs and participated actively in caving with NUCC while studying at the Australian National University. He caved with TCC while on holiday here and was involved in survey and exploration of the Cracroft area, the Chairman, JF341, Exit and Big Tree Pot to mention a few.

I am sure all TCC members join with me in extending our sympathy to the Briggs family.

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HAPPENINGS IN AND AROUND THE CLUB

- Following a visit by Trevor Wailes and Stuart Nicholas to ANM, Maydena, a letter has been received from Russel Cocker, the Operations Manager, clarifying the gate arrangements applicable to cavers in general and TCC members in particular. It is not intended to reproduce the letter here but it provides information on gate opening and closing times which should be of interest to everyone. See Trev, Chris or Stuart for details.
- Some members have found out the hard way that a lamp hire fee of 50¢ was introduced a few months ago. So far this has raised about \$20 which is about half the price of a new battery. Thanks to everyone who has paid and may the tinkling of coins continue to disturb the quiet of the lamp room!
- During the past couple of months anyone who has been to a meeting would undoubtedly have been hassled by one Bill Nicholson of Eastlands outdoor shop "CAMP SCENE" fame. This guy, who has made a comeback after a couple of years away from caving, really got into the action when fund raising ideas were being sought for the purchase of the new Bluewater rope. He most generously donated a pair of Blundstone boots from the shop and organised a raffle with them as first prize. The raffle was drawn at the August meeting, the worthy winner being Stefan Eberhard of SCS and/or TCC. Congratulations to Stefan on your win and thanks to Bill for raising \$77 towards the rope.

Why not go and buy a pair of boots, or a couple of krabs or even some Beef Jerky from Bill - don't forget the shop, CAMP SCENE, lower level, Eastlands.

- Still on fund-raising, a sports card was run and won a month or so ago with another worthy winner, this time super keen new member, George Albion.
- Thanks to Trev we have six copies of the NPWS publication The Tasmanian Tiger - 1980 currently at Rupert Avenue. These will be auctioned or raffled shortly to raise even more money towards the rope.
- Earthwatch News Vol. 3 No. 2 June 1981 contains an article on the caves of Bermuda and the problems associated with the protection of them from man. Lack of space prevents a reproduction of the article in this month's Spiel, however, it will appear next month, so stay tuned!
- The proposed dive in June a couple of weeks ago was abandoned pending the modification of some of our diving gear. However, another attempt will be made fairly soon so keep those waders handy.

SRT ROPE FUND

The total amount raised by members for the purchase of a 200m reel of Blue Water II is \$247.00. This does not include the credit note for \$10.00 sent to us by Caving Equipment for including a catalogue with the last Spiel.

Members who contributed \$20.00 each were: George Albion, Andrew Briggs, Stuart Nicholas, Diana Davies, Nick Hume, Mike Martyn, Chris Davies, Trevor Wailes.

Bill Nicholson's boot raffle (thanks for donating the boots and organizing it all Bill) raised \$77.00. A further \$10.00 was raised via Sports Card. The cost of the rope will be \$342 with the Club financing the difference.

Many thanks to those who contributed directly or indirectly via the raffle.

Diana Davies,
Hon. Treasurer.

EXPEDITION TO THE NULLARBOR - APRIL/MAY, 1981

by Albert Goede

Part 1 - The Mundrabilla Caves

What follows is a popular account of a scientific expedition to the Nullarbor Plain. It emphasises those aspects of the trip that are of interest to cavers. The main aim of the expedition was to collect broken cave formation for the purpose of age determination. There is abundant evidence that the caves of the Nullarbor have been wetter at times in the past and we are interested in dating such events. The caves on Mundrabilla Station were our first objective because they were known to contain a good deal of cave decoration. I had the pleasure of making the trip in the company of Joe Jennings and Adrian Davey. While on the plain, we were joined by Norm Poulter from Perth. The Australian National University provided a Toyota Landcruiser.

We left Canberra early on Easter Monday (20 April) on a two day drive to our destination. Tuesday night saw us sleeping under the stars in a pleasant spot in the mulga a short distance west of Yalata Roadhouse near the eastern edge of the limestone. After an early start the next morning, we reached the edge of the treeless plain and the cameras were produced to record the remarkable flatness of the plain - really a low plateau which terminates in spectacular cliffs up to 60 metres high at the seaward margin.

The new highway, completed a few years ago, runs much closer to the coast than the original route. The cliffs can be easily reached at a number of lookouts close to the road. The first lookout was about 7½ kms west of Wegunda Cave and seemed to have some promising sea caves at the base which should be an easy proposition for SRT enthusiasts to explore. The Bunda Cliffs continue unbroken along the coast for 200 kms and probably offer the best prospects for finding new caves.

Shortly afterwards, we struck our first tyre trouble. A lug on one of the rear tyres had broken off exposing the fabric. While we were contemplating the damage we could hear air hissing out of the other rear tyre. Under Adrian's able guidance on things mechanised, two wheels were changed and one tyre was patched so eventually we were on our way again - without a spare!

After several more cliff top stops and a visit to another lookout to photograph the spectacular sand dunes of the Merdayerrah Sand Patch, we crossed the West Australian border. In the late afternoon we arrived at Mundrabilla Roadhouse to find a patient Norm Poulter waiting for us. A new tyre for the Landcruiser was ordered from Perth. We then drove on, turned off the highway to Mundrabilla Station and from there up the escarpment of the Hampton Range. It was dark by the time we reached our camp site near Webbs Cave. This was to be our base of operations for the next five days. We were joined by a party from CEGSA (Adelaide) consisting of Kevin Mott, Graeme Pilkington and Colin Jackson who were carrying out exploration in the area.

The next day (Thursday) we visited Webbs Cave - only a short walk from the campsite. We were immediately impressed by the extent to which calcite cave decoration had been broken up by salt weathering. The process seemed to have been particularly efficient near the entrance destroying stalactites right to ceiling level where their points of attachment could still be seen. Limestone bedrock was also broken up by the same process. Further in at a low point within the cave, we found 2 series of rimstone pools composed of black calcite and long since left dry. Younger stalagmites of white calcite and salt had grown on top of the rimstone. Here was good evidence that the Nullarbor Plain had once been much wetter. How long ago? Nobody knows, and this is one of the things we hope to find out.

Further low roofed chambers were explored with some stalagmites corroded into fantastic shapes - probably as a result of bat urine dripping from the roof at some time in the past. Few bats live in the cave today.

Later in the morning, I found myself exploring another chamber with Adrian. Here also we discovered a number of salt stalagmites. While Adrian explored a fissure in rockfall, I idly started fitting together some pieces of a large broken salt stalagmite. Adrian joined in this activity when he returned and so we fitted together the pieces of what proved to be a 250 cm tall formation. When we persuaded the others to abandon their photographic exploits for a moment and view this phenomenon, an excited Joe claimed that this could well be the tallest salt stalagmite in the world. Adrian and I then explored some other parts of the cave leading off directly from the entrance doline. These also contained abundant calcite decoration, much of it broken up by natural causes. The afternoon was spent photographing various cave features. Norm also discovered the presence of pseudo-scorpions and three specimens were collected for the Australian Museum.

The next morning, we left by Landcruiser to visit Thylacine Hole. This cave is very well known for the discovery some years ago of a well preserved carcass of the Tasmanian Tiger complete with hair and skin - and stripes! The tiger was apparently present in the Nullarbor Plain until about 3000 years ago. The dry atmosphere of the Nullarbor causes carcasses to become mummified rather than decompose. We did not have a good description of the cave location and failed to find it. So we decided instead to visit another nearby cave - Kelly Cave.

Kelly Cave has an insignificant, tight entrance through rockfall but once inside it opens out into a large low-roofed chamber. Again there was plenty of evidence of salt weathering. The cave also contained actively growing salt stalactites. Of particular interest was the presence of gypsum stalactites, recently described from there by West Australian cavers. These gypsum stalactites are not active today. Another outstanding feature of the cave is the presence of at least three ceiling domes formed by concentrated salt weathering - each with a pile of chips of limestone underneath. One of the domes was about 3 metres tall. Once again much time was spent by the party taking photographs. At lunchtime, Adrian took me along the low rise about the cave and showed me a solution pan in the limestone pavement which was covered with a flat rock. It contained water about 5cms deep and once must have been a drinking hole for aborigines.

The next day - Saturday - we joined the South Australian cavers on a visit to Trampanna Rockhole. There is some doubt about the name as the cave is almost a kilometre west from the position where the name is shown on the map in the old 1:250,000 map series. It is the northern most cave we visited in the Mundrabilla area. The cave entrance consists of an eleven metres deep shaft 3 metres in diameter in the middle of a large bedrock depression adjacent to the track and with a shallow valley running into it.

After descending the ladder, one finds oneself in a daylight chamber with a circular depression in the centre. This appears to have formed due to torrents of water pouring down the hole after infrequent heavy rain. The entrance shaft also had a strong outgoing draught producing a loud roar.

The main part of the cave slopes down steeply as a dry stream passage. Near the entrance some one has smoked the name Kelly Cave on a rock surface but this is obviously incorrect. The stream passage eventually peters out at depth into a phreatic sponge work. However, part of the way down a wide, low-roofed passage partly filled with gravel, branches off. The incentive to follow this was provided by a strong breeze. After continuing as a crawl for some distance one drops down a dry waterfall and the passage continues as a phreatic tube of much more comfortable dimensions. This was particularly exciting to Joe and myself as it was the first time a passage of this kind, formed by rapid waterflow which had filled it completely, had been found in any cave on the Nullarbor Plain. We stopped for the inevitable photograph while two of the CEGSA cavers pushed on with the exploration.

We returned to the surface for lunch followed soon after by two very excited cavers who reported a major discovery. After emerging from the tube they entered an area of rockfall through which they found a route leading into several large chambers with thick flowstone deposits and active gypsum decoration.

After lunch, Joe and I were first down and, armed with cameras, went in search of the new extensions. These turned out to be the most significant find to be made on the Nullarbor for some years. It took a little time to find our way through the rockfall. We then climbed up in to a high level chamber with an impressive array of gypsum stalactites and mites, some of them still actively forming. The formations were far superior to those seen in Kelly Cave.

Scouting around in other chambers at a lower level revealed layered pool deposits exposed in the wall and roof of a low-roofed chamber. A thickness of at least a metre could be seen and the deposit may be thicker. Another relic of a far distant time when the Nullarbor was wetter than it is today. Another photographic session was called for and at this stage we were joined by the other members of the party. The mummified remains of a possum littered the floor.

The cave could be seen to continue downwards for a considerable distance below this point and must come close to the watertable. A survey of the system will probably show that the cave should be classified as a 'deep cave'. Possibilities for further exploration are by no means exhausted and it is quite possible that the watertable will be reached. While the strong air currents in this cave do not prove that the system is more extensive, they are at least an encouraging sign.

Sunday morning saw us on our way to Witches Cave after a brief stop at the entrance to Snake Pit for photographic purposes. The entrance to Witches Cave is from the side of a double depression from where a low-roofed 'stream' passage leads into a single, large low-roofed chamber. There was a lot of ancient black calcite decoration broken up by salt weathering, including many columns. Unlike the other three caves we had visited, there was little in the way of large scale salt or gypsum formation. However, there is a plenty of evidence of the presence of salt and its effectiveness in breaking up both bedrock and cave decoration. At one place along the wall, a half metre thick sequence of pool deposits once again hinted at wetter conditions in the remote past.

The next day, Monday, was to be our last day in the area. We broke camp and headed inland to Thylacine Hole which in the meantime had been located by the CEGSA cavers. With Kevin Mott's directions, it did not take long to find. The entrance is an impressive 13 metre deep shaft about 1 metre in diameter.

Having been intimidated by CEGSA's 25cm rung spaced ladders at Trampanna Rock-hole, I decided to stay on the surface while the other members of the party went down for a brief photographic reconnaissance. The entrance to the cave is in a small rock-floored depression and is not at all obvious unless one is close to it.

Afterwards we drove back past Mundrabilla Station to the Highway. From there we drove east for several hundred metres before turning south to follow a track across the Roe Plain to the coast. Close to the coast we visited the Noonaera Ruins - apparently the historical remnants of an early desalinization plant. Several of the cisterns are still in reasonable order.

We then visited the beach for a wash and a swim. We found the beach covered by a great thickness of seagrass but the sea was calm and swim very refreshing. Lunch followed, while we planned our next objective - a visit to the only two caves known to exist on the Roe Plain - Madura Six Mile Cave and Nurina Cave. But that is another story.

Albert Goede

TRIP REPORTS

Entrance Cave : 19.7.81

A good part of the track to Entrance Cave has been bulldozed, so being a bit lethargic, I filled the Hilux up with trogs and gunned the hell out of it to get through the mud - it saved us muddy feet and 10 minutes walk.

Anyway, there are now new big neon signs telling everybody where and how long it takes to get to the grotto. Hence, the very real need to mark a route through the system so as to help prevent the general public getting lost.

We came across a lot of rubbish in side and even a well known cave feature found mainly in Kubla Khan - one Bill Tomalin and fifteen novices.

Well, outside and down to Catamaran for a squiz - nothing there so we nicked off home except me who droppeded into Ditto's smut cabin for tea and nooky.

The astral beings that travelled the cosmic waves were George and Tim Albion and friend Wesley, Kerry Farmer (visitor), two blow flies and myself -

Bill Nicholson.

Khazad-Dum : 26.7.81

Party: Bill Nicholson and George Albion

It was a hot and glorious morning when George and I dropped down under. Nonetheless our aim for this trip was only to go to the end of the streamway, approx. 550 ft below and to familiarize myself with the system in preparation for a solo attempt soon. (Ding! - Ed.)

Quite accidentally the tackle bag (with lunch) was knocked asunder down a rift below the 92 footer. Retrieval of the bag was out of the question without more gear so we left it for another trip and surfaced only to find the sunshine had transformed into snow. We did not linger to catch butterflies on the walk back.

Bill Nicholson.

June Florentine : 8.8.81

Party: Trevor Wailes, Geoff Fisher, Stephan and Rolan Eberhard

Although we planned to explore JF147 ("Two Straws"), a technical problem at the last moment forced us to change our plans. JF341 was decided upon instead, there being sufficient gear and potential new cave to warrant a trip.

We were keen to have a look at the large sloping chamber described in SS 166. The steeply angled floor made for hairy climbing but we eventually made it to the base of a huge boulder at the top section of the cave. The only way on was around the boulder and up to the right. Only the most adventurous of cavers would be prepared to risk the exposed climb, so Stephan had a go. He did manage to climb further than the rest of us but the route became too steep, requiring climbing gear. We estimated that we had ascended between 70-90m from the crystal pool. In places we found parts of animal skeletons which indicate a second entrance.

Returning to the main chamber, we had lunch and contemplated the pool which had mysteriously refilled since our last trip. With time to spare we hunted about the phreatic maze where a most interesting discovery was made. In a hole in the floor, in the lowest level, the sound of a large stream could be heard quite distinctly. Attempts were made to enlarge the hole, but it looked like being a lengthy operation. At this stage we packed it in, being anxious to be back at the gate on time.

Further excitement and drama was in store for us though. As Trevor prusiked up the pitch he made the horrific discovery that the rope protector had ridden up and that the rope was being abraded by a sharp edge. The damage was severe - the sheath was almost completely cut and the core was well on the way. A re-arrangement was effected to enable the remaining party members to ascend safely. So, in spite of one lead going into the "too hard" category another more exciting one has come to replace it. The next JF341 trip could be the big one.

Geoff Fisher.

Coming Attractions:

ANNUAL P.U.N.

THE 34TH TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB ANNUAL DINNER

to be held at

LETITIAS RESTAURANT

Friday, 25 September, 1981

at an all inclusive price of \$16/17

Choice of Menu:-

Krab Salad
Lace Hole Soup
Aven Pie

or Pate de Foie with toast
French Onion Soup au Gratin
or Curried Scallops on Pilaf of Rice
Crumbed Fillet of Fish with Tartare Sauce

Bluewater Fowl with Chert Sauce
Grilled Jumar topped with Stal Chips
Petzel in Shell with Cheese Sauce
Talus Mornay
Talus Mornay
Curried Rack of Lamb or Whaletail

Roast Turkey with Cranberry Sauce
Roast Leg Pork with Apple Sauce
Roast Rib of Beef
Veges in Season
Grilled Tas. Flounder Meuniere
Personal Side Salad

Wellies with Chocolate Cream
Cave Pearls topped with Gypsum

Pavlova with fruit & cream
Creme de Menthe Parfait
Apricot Pie with Cream

Coffee made from fresh spring water
Tea made from sump water

Coffee & mints

DINNER DANCE 7.30pm - 11.45pm

Beer, soft drinks, Sparkling Spumante, House Red & White Wines. All inclusive four course meal and drinks as listed - \$16/17 (excluding budget price rises).

Here is a list of present club members. We would like to see you all with wives, girlfriends and friends or friend's wives or girlfriends, also past members and future members. The more people attend, the more we can all enjoy one of the few/only annual events of the T.C.C.

If you would like to partake in this feast and free beer session, please contact Trevor Wailes - 25 1801 - so we could have some idea of how many to cater for!

George Albion
Ross Bridges
Andrew Briggs
Frank Brown MkII
Frank Brown
Dr Sam Carey
Brian Collin
Dr Andrew Davey
Diana Davies
Chris Davies
Steve Edgar
Geoff Fisher
Sue Feeney
Niel Gibson
Albert Goede
Therese Greenhill
Mike March

Elery Hamilton-Smith
Nick Hume
Peter Hutchinson
Max Jeffries
Greg Kerfoot
Dale Madden
Ross Mansfield
Mike Martyn
Paul McGlone
Bruce McIntosh
Dave Martin
Henk Meerding
Graham Michalek
Laurie Moody
Stuart Nicholas
Bill Nicholson
Keith O'Hara

John Parker
John Penwill
Miles Pierce
Norm Poulter
Chris Rathbone (Ditto)
Arthur Redman
Lloyd Robinson
Steve Smillie
Frank Salt
Peter Shaw
Roy Skinner
David Steane
Dave Southgate
Gordon Taylor
Bruce Tranter
Bill Tomalin
Trevor Wailes
Peter Watts