

NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

Annual Subscriptions \$5.00 Single copies 50¢ Non members \$1.00

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FORWARD PROGRAMME

Fri. Sept 24 ANNUAL DINNER If you didn't know about it, you're too late!

Sun. Sept 26 TRACK CLEARING Growling Swallet/Serendipity area.

Wed. Sept 29 PUB NITE The Wheatsheaf if no other suggestions are forth coming (and I hope they are!)

Sat. and/or Sun. GROWLING SWALLET No new cave has been found in here
Oct. 2 and 3 for a few weeks, so let's do something about it!

Wed. Oct 6 SOCIAL MEETING 7 Rupert Avenue. Bring the usual socialising items.

Sat. and/or Sun. SERENDIPITY AREA Surface trog and/or exploration of
Oct. 9 and 10 the known (and unknown) pots in this exciting area.

Sat. and/or Sun. CAVING Why not try something new and go caving!!
Oct. 16 and 17 It's a great sport combining excitement, danger,
and most future physical masochism and great fun.
weekends

Wed. Oct 20 COMMITTEE MEETING 7 Rupert Avenue. Would all office bearers please attend.

Wed. Oct 27 PUB MEETING Which pub? See Trev.

Wed. Nov 3 SOCIAL MEETING 7 Rupert Avenue.

Sun. Dec 26 NETTLEBED EXPEDITION The annual expedition to this classic N.Z. system starts with potential to push its current 626m depth (height!) to over 1000m.

EDITORIAL

With the onset of Spring and Summer, water (and snow) levels will, with any luck fall to something sensible. This will enable caving to proceed normally without the need for survival rations and long snorkles.

Most significant caving has been curtailed by Nature recently but as can be seen from the contents our International set have been at work on the P.N.G. Muller 82 Expedition. Nevertheless we have in our midst the best caving in the country and also some of the best cavers, so let's get stuck into the action and break some more records!

Stuart Nicholas

CLUB TRIVIA AND OTHER ITEMS

- The area around Kubla Khan at Mole Creek was recently declared a State Reserve and hence the cave will have restricted access when

gates are installed. This is a good thing and will hopefully protect its superb formation from further damage.

- Reports for this Speleo Spiel and the next are so numerous and extensive that Nick Hume's article is split into two and others have been held over. But, never fear, they will all be published in due course and needless to say more articles and reports are always welcome.
- Sorry about the inverted page 2 last month! Actually we were just testing to see if you were still awake after page 1.
- The world cave depth record has been broken again and is now 1492m in Jean Bernard. The added depth was found by diving the sump at the bottom and thereby gaining an extra 40m - Nick Hume, eat your heart out.
- That is enough trivia for one month, now on with the trip reports.
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THE GROWLING SWALLET TRACK

For as long as I can remember the access track into Growling Swallet from the Nine Road has been littered with logs and other botanical specimens. However, the bashed shins, splinters and slippery slides are now a thing of the past.

During the TCC "winter recess" when caving seemed to drop from favour, various bodies heaved, sweated and grunted and worked on the track as well. Armed with implements including chain-saws large and small, crow-bars, shovels, a cross-cut saw and Max Jeffries, every log has now been cut out and the track rebuilt where required. The piece-de-resistance of the whole project would have to be the MK II Gormenghast Creek bridge - a major civil engineering accomplishment, it was built over two weekends following design emanating from Geoff Fisher's head and the ancient Nepalese.

The inspiration for the exercise originated from George Albion and Geoff Fisher but most people have helped at some stage - even one or two bods appeared from the woodwork (there is a pun there if you think about it!) who have not been seen for a considerable time!

With a concerted effort more of our tracks could be raised to the standard of the G.S.1 Expressway. Keeping a track clear is not difficult, only the initial work gets the sweat glands going. Further work on McCallum's Track (G.S.1) is planned to extend the cleared section past the Growling Swallet dry valley towards Serendipity and the associated area.

Stuart Nicholas

POTTERING

Over the last month or so the area around the top of Chrisps Road and the Bone Pit has seen some T.C.C. activity. Originally the S.C.S. did a lot of work here so it was to them we looked for information. An attempt to locate Satans Lair JF X 39 by Andrew Briggs and myself was a wasted effort although it appears we were very close - rain, sleet and snow made for an uncomfortable bush bash. The only good thing to come out of this sortie was to note a large sink at the head of a steep sided dry valley (the one before Satans Lair). The sink is well choked but with some effort it could be opened after diverting the stream. Anyone interested in excavating should see Andrew as his attempts to return with a digging team have to date been thwarted.

Voltera was another interesting stream sink of S.C.S. discovery in the head of a dry valley about 1km directly over the top of the hill from

the Bone Pit. Our party of Rick Tunney, Janine McKinnon, Stuart Nicholas, Andrew Briggs and myself found the area with great ease and the first cave found was JF 206.

A dry cave in the base of a cliff with three entrances situated in a significant doline with a sizeable stream sinking in gravel halfway down the slope. The cave does not rate a description although it dips steeply to a depth of maybe 20metres (the number plate is a little obscure as it is fixed at the higher entrance which is difficult to locate). Further exploration is very limited. Stuart finally found Voltera JF 207. An impressive entrance with a Lyre Bird nest on a ledge overlooking the climb down. Some surprise was expressed as he/she was home but left as we started down the slope. The major stream sank in a short cave prior to the entrance but the Voltera stream passage contained a trickle that was followed down the steeply dipping passage to the seven metre ladder pitch and a short climb down into a tiny chamber where this mini cave terminates, in a gravel soak. We had hoped to push this but the tight rift is constricted and a concentrated dig would pose problems. However, the impossibly small hole looking down the decending rift did issue a very promising draft. For myself I am satisfied that there are more worthwhile projects to direct effort at. Voltera was shown to be 15metres deep in the Check List of Aust. Caves and Karst 1979 but in fact it must be at least 25metres deep.

Thirty metres round the cliff face down the valley JF 208 has a small entrance with a short climb down into a large chamber decorated with flowstone and huge stalactites. The chamber is very extensive and dips down over a distance of 150metres to a mud sump. This cave is totally out of character with the area and is a pleasant surprise with it being roomy and dry.

JF 204 - 205 were not found and the return to the Bone Pit was somewhat misguided!

This area does have promise, the amount of water sinking at the head of the extensive dry valley is significant enough to yield cave development. Although the sinks are spread out and tend to disappear into gravels in the sides of large dolines there seems to be always a cave (fossil or otherwise) in close proximity. An active stream cave at this elevation would be of great importance as the depth potential would equal or exceed that of the present depth record (345metres).

Trevor Wailes

A NEW DISCOVERY - EXTENSIONS TO DEVILS POT

MOLE CREEK - WEEKEND 21-22 August, 1982

Party: Bob Woolhouse, Compton Allen, Kendal ? and one or two other northern caverneers, Albert Goede and about 8 or 9 University students.

The aim was to show members of the Geology Students Club some of the caves in the Marakoopa area. After staying in Launceston overnight I met the party at the Northern Caverneering Hut about 10.00am. Everyone was just about ready to go so we headed for Marakoopa Cave where we were gaped at by a few early tourists. While in the tourist cave we made a quick visit to the "Canyon" followed by a climb to "The Cathedral" (King's Hall?) where Bob thinks that water from Devils Earhole once entered the system. Next we headed up Long Creek towards Marakoopa 2. Out on the surface and back underground again to have a good look at this interesting system. The Lake Passage turned out to be dry except for two small puddles at the far end - most unusual for

this time of the year. I discovered some shrimps (phreatoicids) in this pool and with the help of Graeme Smith (one of the students) managed to collect about half a dozen. They have only twice been collected before in caves at Mole Creek - once in Scotts Cave and once in Mersey Hill Cave. To add to the excitement Graeme discovered a cave beetle larva close to the edge of the pool. After emerging from Marakoopa 2 we had lunch at the upper entrance while Bob Woolhouse busied himself placing a number (MC-128). Next we climbed up the ridge to find Lakes Entrance - a high entrance into Marakoopa 2 system. This was numbered MC-129. From there we headed across a ridge in a westerly direction until we reached the very impressive sinkhole entrance of Devils Earhole. We went most of the way down to get a good look at the entrance - a very impressive sight. We skirted around the edge of the sinkhole and then across another ridge to reach Devils Pot - an awe - inspiring sight. This cave was also numbered (MC-130) at the usual place for the descent opposite the waterfall.

We followed the eastern side of the dry valley down towards the car park. After a while we headed back down into the valley to try to locate Devils Sewer. But surprise - we promptly found 2 small entrances with 2 strong draughts to an unknown cave. A very short walk up the dry valley in an attempt to locate the sewer reverted an impressive steeply sloping entrance where water had once gone underground. While Kendal and I explored this entrance the other Northern Caverneers entered the first entrance we had found. At our entrance (later numbered MC-132) we found three possible ways in. The highest entrance was almost blocked by cemented gravels but a strong draught was present, the second one required a rope while the third one offered an easy climb downwards. Down this way we soon heard the voices of the others so we joined them. There was quite a large chamber with some good decoration. There was also a way on but this soon required a rope for further progress. A single set of footprints was found in the cave but we have no record of it having been found before. Lacking equipment we returned to the surface. The Northern Caverneers returned the following Monday and further explored the system. They found large and well decorated passages and finally reached a vertical shaft (58 metres) which linked the system with Devils Pot - the biggest discovery at Mole Creek for some years.

While most of the students went back to the cars some of us went up the side valley, lower down to have a look at Devils Drainpipe (MC-127) The entrance is close to the floor of the dry valley and slopes steeply downwards for quite some distance. At the bottom there was a hold-up to get through the squeeze into the Mud Chamber so three of us turned back because I had to be back in Launceston at a certain time. The Mud Chamber in this cave was thought to be a new discovery by Northern Caverneers when they broke into it recently. Usually the lower part of the entrance is flooded. However, having visited the cave and obtained a sketch map of it from Bob Woolhouse I have no doubt that this is the same cave as the one which Peter Shaw discovered in 1972 and called Atlantis Cave. I am not sure whether Northern Caverneers or Peter Shaw discovered the cave first but Peter's sketch maps of the cave's location and its general outline leave no doubt that they are the same cave. See Speleo Spiels Nos. 69(p 4-5) and 70(p 3-4). It is also clear that Peter Shaw and Bill Lehmann were the first people to enter the Mud Chamber on 12 June, 1972 and even tried to extend the cave by carrying out a dig at the far end of the cave beyond the area. On a subsequent visit on 25 June the dig was pushed to a small chamber where it was abandoned. On the way out Bill Lehmann discovered a possible route into some upper levels which required a scaling pole. This is probably still waiting to be done. There is a possibility of linking this cave to the extended Devils Pot system.

Back to Launceston to spend the night. When I returned on Sunday the

students decided to go to Alum Cliffs while the Northern Caverneers decided to do a geophysical survey above King Solomons Cave. I made a solo trip to Lynds Cave in the morning, then had lunch at the hut with the rest of the mob and spent the afternoon doing surface photography in very pleasant sunny conditions.

Albert Goede

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

(Tourist class!) in the Muller Range, July 1982

"You're all niggers!", a coat of brown dust can change ones appearance entirely, after a day's drive on the back of a flat tray, Stefan lit up some native tabacco, simply a rolled up leaf, smoked through a bamboo "bong". Tears streaming down his face indicated what it was like. Our evening meal was boiled chook, eaten while watching the village idiot and the town drunk have an ongoing punch up. After this spectacle broke up, we drifted off to our flea ridden sleeping bags to speculate on where the flea powder was stowed away.

We soon caught up with a few of the advance party still at Koroba, and learned of some amusing stuff ups. Essentially, there were thirty people and four tons of gear, to be moved from here to there, and nobody knew what was going. Stefan went off chasing certain nationals of a certain gender and also a certain local shrubbery.

I avoided responsibility by joining a Canadian, a New Zealander and a Westralian in a walk to the Savani Valley, referred to as the Shangri-La of Nuigini. This turned out to be an enormous polje where accumulated water percolates out through a range of 3,000 metre peaks into a neighbouring valley. Impressive limestone spires abounded to enthuse the caving tourist.

"I remember the time I carried thirty kilos of scuba gear up 9,000 feet" she told us, shortly before dying in the bum, five minutes into the walk. Everywhere the tracks are excellent because people walk on them in bare feet, good ethics I feel. Dolines to the left of us, dolines to the right of us, a local pointed out a 40metre shaft a few metres off route. We were impressed, trundling rocks and counting simultaneously.

More of these delights led us out of the moss forest into a contrasting world of an Amoco oil rig. Americans in shiny construction helmets walk over built up pathways between the well site and their air conditioned cabins. They gave us steaks and a bed for the night. We watched appropriately, Verne's, "Journey to the Centre of the Earth" on their video cassette.

The following day was largely wasted, sitting on a helipad, scanning the skies like cargo cultists, waiting on a ride in a "mixmaster bilong Jesus". Nationals often reclined on nearby avgas bladders for a smoke and a chat.

"We're not going to land on that are we? Flying over the waterfalls of the Atea river was an almost emotional experience. One had to come to grips suddenly with the isolation and commitment. The Atea river flows from an interesting resurgence cave, a short distance through a steep canyon, before cascading in great curtains to the plunge pool feeding the entrance.

We got stuck into canned dog and some rum after landing, then went caving at the respectable time of 9.00pm., Trev would thrive on this I remember thinking at the time. First trip of the trip was to rig some safety line in the incredible ship canal, so we headed off on the soon to become all too familiar twenty minute descent into Atea doline.

I attached some one inch tape etrier fashion, to the bottom rung of the entrance ladder, this got well used. A party on a five day camp to the Yaragaiya Series had rigged the few pitches involved earlier in the day, and had done a classic job, with ladders beginning two metres in the air and finishing metres below ledges. The best effort was at "Glop Drop" where the bottom rung was half a metre above deep, moving water. This entrance pitch is to the right of the riverway entrance and so bypasses a hairy traverse there. These entrance flood tubes consist of "hands in pocket" size passage, with marvellous views of flood debris high above.

I swear you could cave here in bombay shorts, except for the troglodyte mosquitos. A wet suit becomes a real pressure cooker until the welcome submersion in the "Ship Canal" at "Glop Drop." This stretch of water is almost a kilometre long and requires half an hour or more for a one way trip. A solo swim of this was an expedition highlight.

Hanging off the back of a fully laden lilo, you do a fair bit of cooling off, and then more cooling off and after a while even more cooling off. The more capable bods tied off the handline along the way, while fellow cavers did various interpretations of drowning, some turned back. Freshwater crabs, heaped on protruding rocks, looked on with indifference, as we floundered on to "Holocaust", a rockpile of enormous blocks and end point for our line.

Abseiling out of Atea was very peaceful at first light, few bothered to ladder it. Then the day was ruined by the twenty minute trudge up to camp, this becomes desperate returning at night, when a dying carbide spurs you on to new thresholds of pain. We found a bushrat on the track, still warm after attack by the porters dogs, this became lunch.

Our first fester day was interrupted by a portage to Mamo. During the initial helicopter supplying of camps, bad weather on the Mamo plateau resulted in a lot of their stuff ending up at Atea. Being asked to carry 25 kilos after bugger all sleep, brought an obvious answer to mind. However, we all helped out. One testy carrier devised a novel method of pack transport via a hundred metre fall, this didn't agree with the expedition microscope.

A number of trips were planned to push "Winchester" regarded as the cave's most promising area after 1978. Now this is on the far side of the "Ducks", low roofed parts of the riverway that sump during the afternoon rains. Somewhat in the style of Telecom Australia, we set off with two kilometres of telephone wire to rig a communication facility beyond these ducks, comfort for any stranded parties. Imagine a rum soaked voice telling you its still pouring outside!

This fragile, single strand wire had to be located away from clumsy trogs, either sunk in deep water or tied off, up high. One phone was placed above flood level in "Holocaust" and much to our surprise worked on the first test. We cairned a route through the maze to "Duna Sands", over hills of flood debris into the vastness of "Aftermath," even at this depth we were plagued by mosquitos attracted to our lamps. My carbide finally died in the bum just before camp, where a drunken insomniac offered me burnt soup, at 3.00AM!

We first thought the military choppers might be part of an Indonesian invasion. One disgorged copious quantities of rum and tinned delicacies, the other three sociable and generous cavers. Many other cavers shared in this luxury, grogging on for several days.

We reached the far end of Hidden Inlet via "Penny Drop", "Ferret Freeway", "Balmain Drain" and "Ooze Cruise." This involved only one pitch, into, you guessed it, water. Over a hundred metres of "Ooze Cruise" was deep streamway, the trick being to quickly haul yourself, hand over hand, along a guideline before your pack dragged you under for a last time. A gruelling aid climb opened three hundred metres of virgin passage. This remained the best single effort at Atea during my time

there. Surveying this to West Australian standards resulted in a fifteen hour trip. Ironically this was to be tacked onto a 1978 "pace and compass" survey done by Tony White.

The feature on the enlargement could have been a processing artifact or, with a bit of imagination looked like a fossil resurgence for the Atea itself! Five very keen bods abseiled a 300 metre cliff to inspect this area, finding and setting up camp in a sizable cave entrance. Sleep did not come easy at this camp owing to large rocks spontaneously falling from the ceiling. Two kilometres of enormous passage was surveyed before it all mysteriously closed up, leaving the bewildered cavers with a very long prussik. Serious rope wear occurred at a serrated Pandannis leaf.

The "New World Series" is at the end of a very pleasant stroll through "Dvorak Hall". We surveyed two hundred metres of new ground here, largely through a maze of tubes. This area linked to the "Rafting Ground" via a hundred metre crawl that took two hours to survey!

The Eberhards and company bottomed the "Black Hole" at a hundred Metres. Impassable break down frustrated attempts at greater depth. They then went walkabout to a bivouac at Uli Mindu, where, because of atrocious reception, we weren't able to re-establish radio contact to see how they were getting on. Finally they appeared out of the Jungle at Atea for some R and R, before going off to Mamo looking for something called "world records".

Long trips in Atea with meagre reward meant "touristing" the spectacular, known sections became popular. Particularly photographic efforts in the "Ship Canal". Here a waterproof setup came into its own, with a camera around your neck and the flash floating along beside you, it gave great satisfaction to see others with their gear stowed away.

A climb up to the "Balcony" provided an awesome vantage point to view others drifting by. It would be hard to tire of this place, indeed some bods clocked up ten trips or more.

Nick Hume

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH
..... SO STAY TUNED.