

Newsletter of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club
ESTABLISHED 1946

SPELEO SPIEL

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AUGUST 1985 NOTE: DECEMBER 4 - ASF Yes/No VOTE MEETING

NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

At our December general meeting, the future of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club in the Australian Speleological Federation will be decided by vote. The case for remaining in the ASF and the case for not remaining in ASF are both presented in this edition of Speleo Spiel. Please read both of these carefully - should you have any questions regarding the arguments please direct them to the authors concerned.

Of greatest importance is your attendance at the meeting. If you cannot attend please indicate your vote by phone to either Stuart Nicholas or Martyn Carnes, or by mail to the club address. For a fully representative vote we must hear from as many paid up members as possible. And if you haven't paid up - do so as we need the money either way!

EVENT: General meeting to discuss and vote on ASF membership.

DATE: Wednesday December 4, 1985

PLACE: 7 Rupert Avenue, New Town (Stu's place)

TIME: 8 pm - we'll endeavour to actually start on time!

MAKE SURE YOU'RE THERE (or register your vote as above)

Stuart Nicholas - Editor Speleo Spiel

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SURVEYING THE SPELEO SCENE - A FEW MISCLOSURES....

It seems that Phill, presently living on the hill, is going to move into a two room 60 acre mud hut at the Kettering ferry terminal - something like that anyway. Apparently the plan is to sell the Strickland Avenue timber abode (actually it has just been sold) and build an adobe abode on a 60 acre block down Kettering way - could be a bit of mud slinging going on for a while, so don't forget your wellies and wainwoofs!! Anyway, all the best for the future, Ann and Phill. We all eagerly await the bicentennial mud brick warming!

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After that, a rescuing quote or two might be in order!

"If this rescue goes on for a long time, it could be protracted."

"What's this rock made of - it weighs a ton."

"I knew I forgot something - a Walkman and the Rolling Stones' Emotional Rescue tape!."

So much for the funny stuff. For those that don't know, during August at Ida Bay we had the most serious cave rescue for many years. A rock rolled onto the arm of Petrina Quinn trapping her directly, and indirectly in a passage behind her, Ken Hosking, a visiting VSA bod. The problem was eventually resolved through the expert use by the Ambulance Rescue Squad of a Porta Power hydraulic jack, with assistance from Police S & R, local St John Brigade members, YHA Hostellers and Police, and TCC. A report on this Sunday evening Ida Bay epic will appear in the next edition of Speleo Spiel.

We should thank our lucky stars, or the troll princess, or something (so far.....) - a recent rescue in Switzerland involved 100 cavers over a period of three days. The victim had broken a leg at a depth of 160 metres but was otherwise OK!

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Some months ago, ANM, c/- Kim Creak, sent us a LOG (to Trev's disappointment, not the large fire-wood variety!) in which was a most expertly written article on caves and karst as found in the Florentine Valley, as well as some words on our activities. Thanks for the article and sending us the company newspaper, Kim - see you underground sometime!

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A few Spiels ago I mentioned that the address of a member for last year by the name of Ken Draper had been lost in the system. No one contacted me with his address or any info at all on the gentleman, so I will make another appeal for help in this matter - if you know or know of KEN DRAPER, please contact TCC and let us know where his now somewhat late Spiels can be sent (together with a letter of apology!).

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The recent spell of fine sunny weather must be affecting us more than we thought.... On a recent cave trip, one member was taking a photo or two but insisted on waiting for the sun to come out before pressing the shutter!

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MORE CLASSIFIED "FOR SALE" ADVERTS

WILD COUNTRY Quasar geodesic tunnel tent complete with snow valance [as used by the Australian Everest Expedition!!]. Immaculate condition - priced to sell at a mere \$550 (current RRP is about \$700). Contact Phill Hill (if you can find him) for this once only opportunity - Phone 002-391221(H)

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(2) Subscription to Australian Caver (formerly ASF Newsletter). Yes, there have been complaints and some quite justified! It hasn't always come out regularly and the content during the last year or so has not been inspiring. However, it does have a new editor who is keen to have a go and make it a success. Any club with a positive attitude would give a hand by making sure she regularly receives news from this part of the world. Not so some TCC members. They grumble about the content and want to resign when they could make a positive contribution by picking up pen and paper. Some 80% of ASF subscriptions probably go into producing the newsletter. With the numbers involved it has to be produced commercially. With four issues per year you do get your six dollars worth - the approximate cost to each member.

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Of course it has not always come out regularly. But then, neither has Speleo Spiel. We don't complain about that because we know it is produced by busy people in their spare time. The same is true of the Australian Caver. The editor, typist and manager do not get paid for it.

(3) Biennial Conferences and the field trips that traditionally precede or follow them. They have nearly always been a great success and have done much to keep ASF together. Sure, the committee meetings can be incredibly boring if you are unfortunate enough to be a club delegate. But you can't run any society, let alone a federation of societies, without getting together now and again to discuss matters of importance. True, NSW speleo politics may not seem a matter of importance to us but it is to them. And there are a lot of them in the ASF. Meanwhile the conference is a good place to find out what the others are doing and to make new friends. The fieldtrips are an excellent opportunity to show cavers from other states what the local caves are like. In Tasmania there is the added possibility of new discoveries. Of course Hobart cavers did not feel that way during the last conference. Stuart Nicholas and Phil Jackson were left holding the baby. Most TCC (and SCS) members were conspicuous by their absence. The field trips could have been great if the Hobart clubs had been willing to do a bit of organising and to provide the guides. But of course most TCC members knew that most mainland cavers could not possibly be up to our infinitely superior (?) style of caving, so why bother.

(4) ASF Handbook. This is a sore point. The first handbook was a great success but that was a long time ago. The second edition should have been out ten years ago. That it hasn't appeared yet is a long story. Nevertheless, I know Peter Matthews. He is a perfectionist, he will take his time but it will be published. I am fairly confident it will be out before the end of this year. It has shaken many people's faith in computers but when it does come out it will be a great success. As one who has done a lot of the hard work for Tasmania, I will be delighted when it appears. It will be extremely useful for every Tasmanian caver. Without ASF the handbook would never have been thought of. One more reason for pulling out I hear the cynics say.

(5) Conservation. As a national body ASF has been far more effective in promoting conservation issues than individual clubs. A lot of support has come to the Franklin River conservation battles fought interstate. More recently ASF made financial support available for the Northern Caverneer's project towards better conservation practices in Kubla Khan. This project has now been stopped by petty bureaucrats in the National Parks and Wildlife Service. With ASF support we have some chance of successfully fighting this decision. But I forgot. TCC is not interested in conservation because nowadays we only go caving in one area. Unless ANM opens a limestone quarry somewhere between Growling Swallet and Junee Cave, conservation is not really our business. Have we really become that narrow in our thinking?

We'll probably vote to leave ASF in December. We can't really afford to pay \$7.50 each to ASF next year when it could buy us a couple of metres of Blue Water, or whatever. That's what we claim to be our reason for leaving ASF. But think carefully before you vote! Isn't the real reason exactly the same as it was in the 1960's ??

Well, whatever the vote I intend to vote in favour of retaining our membership of ASF. It may not be a perfect federation but it is the best we've got. If we all made a real effort we could make it a good deal more effective and worthwhile. I am for ASF, warts and all!

Albert Goede

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THE CASE AGAINST STAYING WITH ASF

The principle element which gives us cause to withdraw from the Australian Speleological Federation is the cost of membership and the fact that we as a relatively small club primarily interested in sport caving, receive very little in return.

TCC membership fees are currently at \$16.00 for full membership. Almost half of the fee (\$7.50) is for ASF membership. The nature of the club's interests and activities involves considerable expense for the purchasing of new equipment and the publication of Speleo Spiel which at present is barely breaking even. Needless to say, an extra \$7.50 per member would do much in offsetting these costs which I may add produce tangible benefits for the club.

At present it would appear that the only tangible thing we receive for our money from the ASF is the quarterly newsletter which it is felt contains very little of interest to Tasmanian cavers. Of course it can and has been argued that you only get out of a publication of this nature what you put in. TCC has in the past contributed articles and photographs, eg reports on Cauldron Pot, Serendipity and Ice Tube. At present however, documentation of our caving activities is published in Speleo Spiel which is received by most ASF member clubs. A possible suggestion for the improvement of the newsletter may be for the editor to make contact with people who are writing interesting articles in the various club newsletter around the country, and invite them to write an article specifically for the ASF newsletter thereby creating an incentive for potential contributors.

While TCC was one of the founding members of ASF it is generally felt that the Federation is no longer the same Federation that it once was. It now appears to be mainly concerned with issues of a bureaucratic nature of most interest to mainland clubs, who it must be mentioned, constitute the majority of the ASF membership.

It may well be that the nature of the type of caving available to particular clubs will reflect their interests in an organisation such as ASF. Without wishing to appear condescending, I would suggest that the interests of TCC which are determined by the more sporting nature of Tasmanian caving are incongruent with the present interests of ASF as a whole.

It may be argued that ASF could be of great benefit to TCC should we have the need to fight any conservation issues. However, should this situation arise it is unlikely that TCC would be the only club involved and other Tasmanian clubs who are ASF members would be affected also.

Another possible benefit of remaining in ASF could be the insurance liability should a member be injured and subsequently sue the club. Because ASF is an incorporated body the club could only be sued for its assets in ASF which of course is the membership fee. However, considering the fact that TCC has never been sued during its 39 year existence and the improbability of its occurrence in the future, I feel that it may be argued that \$7.50 per member is expensive insurance when there are so many other things the money could be used for. These include buying lamps and SRT training equipment to get potential new members interested in caving and TCC in the first place.

Martyn Carnes

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The following trip report is a highly condensed version of one that will ultimately appear in the pages of TCC's long awaited Journal. The original literary epic was too big to fit in the Spiel (about 35 handwritten pages), so this summation will have to do for the moment. Keep an eye out for a lengthy and slightly humorous raving in the aforementioned journal. With any luck it may get published before the turn of the century!

AUSSIES ABROAD - MEXICO

FEBRUARY TO APRIL, 1985

Those involved: Alan Warild, Dave and Cary Barlow, Dave Martin, Stephen Bunton, Mark Wilson, Ed Garnett, Anne Grey, Mark Bonwick and Nick Hume.

The above group loosely gathered together at the town of Tehuacan, located south east of Mexico City. We bought up big in the local supermarket then headed off to the village of Coyomeapan. This area had been recce'd previously by Al and Bunty and appeared quite promising.

Over the next two weeks we explored myriad vertical shafts, easily located in the open pine forest here. Pitches of 140 meters (+) were encountered and the caving conditions were warm, clean and dry. Very, very nice. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the karst, everything silted off at about 200 metres depth. However it was very pleasant caving in virgin territory.

A move to Huautla brought the promise of doing known 1000 metre deep systems and possibly finding some of our own. This was thwarted for almost two weeks by a then newly introduced federal permit requirement for caving in the Huautla area. This was frustrating, but we could do nothing about it until the permit came through.

During this period we did some surface trogging on the little visited Cero Rabon. This massive area has considerable potential (about 2000 metres from plateau to valley resurgence) for vertical systems. The vegetation here was extremely hostile and definitely limited the scope for exploration. Some of the more remote features on this plateau (seen on aerial photos) must be truly enormous in size. More will likely be heard about Cerro Rabon in the future, possibly from heli-cavers!

Steve and myself went off for some ice climbing on the volcanoes "Popocatepetl" and "Ixtaccihuatl" - both summits exceed 17000 feet (I claim a first ascent in "dairy boots"!). We only had one pair of crampons between us so had to take turns "soloing" when above the snowline. This was all very picturesque and one of the big highlights of the whole trip.

Steve and I returned to Huautla the day the permit came through and all of us did a prerig trip in "La Nita" the next day. We bottomed the cave in a second trip that took over 27 hours surface to surface. Derigging was extremely drawn out and tiring - between 30 and 40 pitches I believe. Fortunately the cave entrance was only some 20 metres from the van! The cave was superb, easy passageway down to 1030 metres depth, with an entrance to sump distance of eight kilometres, one way.

Our rented home was sitting on the edge of the huge San Augustin doline. Another prerig trip took us down to 500 metres in "San Augustin", an excellent stream cave, even better than La Nita. The first two pitches were both 90 metres and there were some thirty pitches still to go! Our bottoming trip took us to the sump at 860 metres depth, passing through the finest vertical caving I have ever done or seen. The last few kilometres carried through glass smooth limestone, wildly sculpted by the power of the water - this was similar to parts of the Franklin River. We

The Americans turned up in Huautla about this time. An expedition of 40 odd people, it opened up a new caving experience for us, seeing their massive ropes and different techniques, etc. Our joint social sessions were amusing and a few Australian-American combination caving trips proved interesting, particularly as some of our caving methods were incompatible! Anne and I joined forces with the yanks to do Nita Nanta, yet another 1000 metre deep system. We photographed our way down to their camping chamber at over 600 metres. They intended staying down for five days in an attempt to connect Nita Nanta with Sistema Huautla. The two caves approach within 20 metres of each other and a joining of the two would yield the third or fourth deepest cave in the world.

The Australians moved from Huautla, partly to give the Americans a bit more room in the available accomodation. We rented another house at Marie Louise and explored the hills above there over the next few weeks. Massive entrance shafts yielded a few caves of over 200 metres. Unfortunately our permitted time in the Huautla area had run out and at this time I had to leave the group to return to Australia.

At this stage of the expedition only Al Warild, Steve Bunton, Dave and Carey Barlow, Anne Grey and Mark Wilson were left to carry on. They went to Chilchotla and eventually found a cave which went to 450 metres - "Nita Xonga". This was as far as they got, in, quote ".....good looking stream passage, to the top of a 50 to 100 metre pitch.....", ie still going!! This cave is in an area with 1200 to 1500 metre potential.

The remaining five disbanded after this - jetsetting their individual ways to various skiing, climbing and caving areas of the world. As last word they are returning to Mexico and Nita Xonga in December of this year for another push. Anyone with the mere \$2000 required for an airline ticket would probably be welcome to join them - it certainly would be worth it.

Your roving reporter - Nikos Hume

[illegible]

NOTES ON THE SKYHOOK POT AND MINI MARTIN SURVEY

Sky Hook Pot was initially numbered IB-1004 by Gordan Taylor et al. (N.U.C.C.) in 1979-80 and first entered by Stefan and Rolan Eberhard in 1981. Pitches of 14 metres and 28 metres led to a small insecure ledge where a large horizontal fissure entertained a spectacular view across to the 110 metre entrance shaft of Mini Martin. However, IB-1004 is an independant shaft system to MM and subsequent exploration by Stefan Eberhard and Alice Ryan in Exit Cave located a pile of logs and epigeal vegetable debris at the presumed base of the IB-1004 shaft system.

As reported in SS 204, the complete connection of IB-1004 through to Exit Cave did not eventuate until December 1984. The grade 4 survey of the cave encompassed a surface survey to the entrance of MM; additionally, the survey included a deviation to the base of the final circa 30 metre pitch in MM. The termination of the survey is marked by a cairn on a large conspicuous boulder adjacent to the Exit Cave stream. For completeness, a grade 2 survey of MM has been annexed to the Sky Hook Pot survey. The depth of MM to stream level (Camp II area) in Exit Cave is 220 metres. The vertical drop from here to the resurgence of Exit Cave is not known and therefore the absolute depth of MM would be slightly in excess of 220 metres (probably 225-230 metres).

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Due to IB-1004's close proximity to Big Tree Pot it was postulated that it was indeed the long lost Machete Pot and is referred to as such in SS 204. Machete Pot was discovered at the same time as Big Tree Pot (1960's) and the name is derived from the fact that Brian Collin dropped a machete (accidentally) into the entrance, whereupon it is reputed to have plummeted for a considerable distance. Research by Arthur Clarke suggests that IB-1004 is not the original Machete Pot so herewith the cave is referred to as Sky Hook Pot. Furthermore, it should be noted that the IB-1004 tag was only intended as temporary identification and Arthur has re-numbered the cave IB-34. To avoid confusion with this synonymy, both number tags remain in-situ.

Sky Hook Pot is a pleasant cave, the rock is relatively clean and solid and provides opportunity for the application of interesting and imaginative rigging techniques - the exploration / survey trip in December 1984 made good use of chocks, pitons and a sky hook.

Sky Hook Pot represents a viable alternative to MM, or even the possibility for a double exchange through-trip between the two potholes.

Stefan Eberhard

SKY HOOK POT IB34 (IB1004) MINI MARTIN IB8

IDA BAY

EXTENDED SECTION

