Newsletter of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club
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NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

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THERE'S MOVEMENT IN THE HOUSE.....

Mike and Chris Edwards have at last become officially middle class following the recent purchase of some real estate in that end of town also occupied by the editor. Rumour has it that at some time in the not too distant future there will be a house warming to end all house warmings, so stay tuned for that.

Their new address is: 67 Carlton Street
New Town
Hobart 7008

and phone number: 280624

The house is apparently next door to a small park containing a large brightly painted steam traction engine. Not too hard to find really, even after a night at the pub!

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AND NOW A WORD FROM OUR STAL COUNTER........

The club has recently spent $720 on 12 cap lamp batteries and $125 on spare parts for the lamps themselves. Please try to pay the $1 per member or $2 per non-member rental fee as we (desparately) need to recoup the expenditure!!

Chris Davies - Treasurer

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NICK HUME'S JUST MILDLY FANTASTIC PRUSIK SYSTEM

For truly international prusiking pleasure, this system is a Tasmanian refinement of an English modification of the American "Howie System". Laugh at your friends and in-laws as they don various "bras" preparatory to laborious sit-stand methods of rope ascension. Those archaic set-ups are for the birds........urh, frogs! Are you fed up with straight jackets and gnashing vertabrae? Then read on......

CONSTRUCTION AND ASSEMBLY

The foundation of this system is a back belt that replaces all those awkward painfull chest harnesses. The back belt consists of a length of stiff two inch tape, of the type that four wheel drivers use as anchor slings on winching set-ups. To one end of this is securely sewn a Gibbs ascender (see Montgomery's SRT book for appropriate methods of doing this). The other end consists of a waist krab connector of the same type that was used to tie into the old style TROLL climbing belts. A TROLL 3-bar buckle is threaded with the overlapping two inch tape (above the connector) to allow length adjustment. Though the buckle could be dispensed with once the correct belt length is found, it would be preferrable to leave it in place, allowing adjustment when using other types of sit harnesses.

The edge of a one inch section of tubular tape is sewn alongside the two inch belt. Two strands of shock cord are then inserted through the tubular tape, which acts as a protective sheath for same. The shock-cord is for attachment to ankle and knee (rope walker) ascenders, pulling those ascenders up the rope automatically on each "stroke", thus incidently allowing a hands-free ascent. Manufacturing this article will occupy your mind while watching TV. I recommend the use of a very strong thread when you are doing this, namely waxed dacron sailcloth thread available from any yachting store (take your credit card!).

DRIVING INSTRUCTIONS

In practice, the belt connector is clipped into the waist krab, then passes diagonally across the back where the Gibbs ascender sits tightly on the opposite shoulder. This holds the body close to the rope, unlike the tightest of chest harnesses. The belt has the advantage of being able to be turned into a safety belay on difficult and awkward pitches, by merely stepping out of the thing, so it is in front of you.

There are two other ascenders required. One is attached to the ankle and may or may not be shock corded to the shoulder set-up, as per preference. The other ascender floats by the knee and needs shockcording. This floater must be safety corded to the waist krab, or a change of direction will be experienced if the pin holding the Gibbs housing decides to pop out. Weaken the cam springs of these ascenders to improve efficiency while ropewalking.

To use this incredible system, simply follow the sequence in the attached diagram.

(a) Attach the ankle ropewalker (as in most rope walking systems, some bottom weighting is desirable - try tying on a small rock!

(b) Attach the Gibbs to the rope, the belt being in front of you at this stage.

(c) Sit on the Gibbs, then attach the third floating ascender to the rope.

(d) As you bear weight on the lower Jumars, duck your head through the belt, so the Gibbs rests tightly on the opposite shoulder (just like shouldering a gear rack when rock climbing!).

(e) You are now right up against the rope and equally important, your hands are completely free to hold onto cigarettes, beer cans, etc.....

(f) Clip shock cord(s) onto ropewalker(s) then race up the rope!!

This system is simplicity itself when negotiating the tops of pitches. When getting off the rope, simply slip out of the belt and it then acts as a self belay while disconnecting the ropewalkers. You can then actually straighten up and walk away, instead of being doubled up in pain!

Reverse prusiking past knots is simpler, by virtue of there being a free space in front of you in which to manage the descender. The method is hardwearing, practical and with minimal practice and finetuning, will likely become your final (heh!, heh!) SRT rig.

Nick Hume

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CAVE NUMBERING: FLORENTINE VALLEY

The following caves were numbered during September, 1985:

JF-203: BONE PIT. A large rift entrance in a limestone bluff at the top of Chrisps Road. Total depth is 113 metres, although this could be increased by up to 10 metres if the JF-383 entrance is connected. The original tag could not be found and the new one was placed on a rock face on the left side of the entrance. JF-383: BONE PIT UPPER ENTRANCE. A small hole on the bluff immediately above the main Bone Pit entrance. A squeeze at a depth of roughly 4 metres is undoubtedly connected to the chamber below the first pitch of Bone Pit, although it is yet to be physically surpassed. This entrance was initially found and excavated on 2 June 1985. JF-384: EAGLE POT. A small entrance roughly 60 metres north of Asteroid Pot. The cave carries a good draught however it appears to be choked at a depth of about 5 metres. Just inside the entrance is an exceptionally tight squeeze that was enlarged with a hammer to allow access. JF-385: WHERRETS SWALLET ONE. A small stream cascades over a 10 metre high cliff on the side of a doline. It does not appear possible to penetrate this system due to fallen boulders and mud choke. The contact between the limestone and overlying impervious layers can be clearly seen in the doline wall. The number tag was placed on a rock face 6 metres to the left of the waterfall. JF-386: WHERRETS SWALLET TWO. A slightly smaller stream sinking in a doline 10 metres away from JF-385, and also apparently impenetrable. The tag was placed on a rock face on the right below a climb down into the entrance. JF-385 and JF-386 are located high on Wherrets Lookout, south west of Serendipity. JF-387: PORCUPINE POT. A large doline entrance off the F9 Road. This cave was first located in September 1982 (see SS 180) and a return trip in April 1984 managed to remove several wedged boulders and explore a steeply descending rift. Exploration halted at an impassable squeeze below a 15 metre pitch. In September 1985 this squeeze was enlarged with explosives and the cave currently has an estimated depth of 60 metres, with good potential for a lot more. The tag was placed on a rock face in the entrance chamber. JF-388: Un-named cave and streamsink. A large doline off the F9 Road (see SS 180). The tag was placed in a dry overhanging entrance in the side of the doline. The dry entrance has been explored to a depth of 15 metres, while a squeeze where the stream goes underground bars progress. Roughly 100 metres away from JF-387. JF-389: SNOW PERSON POT. A tiny entrance near the track to Udensala from the F9 Road. A 22 metre entrance pitch drops into a spacious chamber with no possibility for extension (see SS 180). JF-390: LAWRENCE CREEK RISING. A large resurgence off Cashions Creek Road. Diving has revealed a constricted passage descending to a depth of 20 metres into a spacious underwater tunnel (see SS 200). There is the possibility of a very long cave dive as the Lawrence Rivulet Sink is about 3 kilometres from the resurgence.

Errata to cave numbering in Speleo Spiel 206

JF-371. The name of JF-371 is now officially FLICK MINTS HOLE, not Florentine Pot. There is a Florentine Cave elsewhere in the valley. Flick Mints Hole was recently explored to a depth of 204 metres.

A survey of JF-368 Armadillo Pot was not included as indicated.

Errata to cave numbering in Speleo Spiel 207

JF-379: GASH POT. This should read: A long rift entrance a couple of metres from JF-358. The tag was placed on a vertical wall near a rock arete separating Gash Pot and a small shaft that joins JF-358. Gash Pot is connected to JF-380, although the connection is not humanly negotiable.

Rolan Eberhard

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THE MILKRUN - IDA BAY AREA

PARTY: Stefan Eberhard, Nick Hume, Martyn Carnes and Danielle ? (a Sydney visitor)

Having heard that The Milkrun was still going, and considering its close proximity to Mini Martin and therefore Exit, the above people decided to investigate.

After obtaining access directions from Arthur Clarke we had no difficulty in locating the cave. The first pitch was a clean dry and pleasurable 42 metre to a series of 3 short pitches, the first of which we free climbed. The next (25 metre) was rigged free hanging without traversing out to the bolt. The bolts on the next two pitches (approx. 49 metre and 25 metre) made for easy rigging, and Stefan and I were soon grovelling through the streamway reported by Arthur on his previous trip while Nick and Danielle made their way down past the unfortunate knot on the last pitch.

The streamway carried little water and progress was made through moderately tight passage for approximately 50 metres to a flattener which was deemed "not negotiable". There was absolutely no sight of any draught.

Although we didn't break through to Exit (although we must have been close at -205 metres), we had a thoroughly enjoyable trip. Many thanks to Arthur for his hospitality and directions.

Martyn Carnes

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PUNISHMENT POT 11 August, 1985

PARTY: Martyn Carnes, Stefan and Rolan Eberhard

While Martyn and Stefan continued excavating at Asteroid Pot, I continued up towards Serendipity looking for new cave entrances. Well below Serendip I branched off to the right into an adjacent dry valley. I located several entrances in a scrub-bash that took me up the valley, back down to Serendip and finally up to the top of Wherrets Lookout. The view from Wherrets was magnificent and on the way up I

located two swallets where streams shower down a cliff from the overlying impervious rock, and sink in the limestone. They are very high up and probably blocked but deserve closer investigation.

I eventually rejoined Stefan and Martyn at Punishment Pot. Using a hand winch (thanks Stu) we attempted to shift a rock (about the size of a coffee table) that blocked what appeared to be the way into the cave. It was a small triumph of engineering to winch the rock up in the air and move it to one side, chilled by a waterfall crashing down from above! A few C-clips were straightened out in the process that revealed a pool of water but no cave! This is unfortunate as the entrance is a particularly promising one. A small hole in one side of the doline carries a howling draught at times, but an impossible squeeze bars the way a few metres down. An adjacent shaft (JF-374) is blocked with mud at the bottom, and in a small hole between this shaft and Punishment Pot water can be heard but not followed far (the hole is connected to JF-374).

It appears a lot of work will be required to penetrate this cave.

Rolan Eberhard

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RESCUE AT NATIONAL GALLERY - IDA BAY 25 AUGUST, 1985

Danielle (Sydney visitor) and I were setting out for home after a social trip to Midnite Hole, when an ambulance went past in the opposite direction. We did a U-turn and followed the vehicle back to the Lune River quarry where it and another vehicle proceeded to form a "wagon train", that is they followed each other in circles, presumably trying to find a way to the top. Eventually they stopped long enough for us to ask what was going on. A girl called Karen told us that a person was pinned by the arm in "National Gallery Cave" (IB-47) and that this was preventing a third person from getting out - ie there were two people trapped in a cave that no-one present had ever heard of, with the exception of Karen.

We led the vehicles, now including a police car and another ambulance, up to the start of the "Exit Cave Track". Jim Davidson, a policeman from Dover, attempted to bring order to all the above chaos, which was no easy task. He quickly formulated a plan for attacking the problem, then informed the assembled crowd of ambulance officers, etc. Announcing that everything was OK because there were two experienced caving persons present, he pointed in the direction of Danielle and myself. We both looked at each other and inwardly groaned "Oh no, not again....".

Karen told us that the trapped person was Petrina Quinn. I remembered that I owed Petrina a drink, so threw a bottle of plum wine into my cave pack, along with pitons, pulleys, etc. We changed into wet caving gear in a chill wind, then everyone as a group set off behind Karen who was the only person knowing exactly where to go.

Ten minutes or so from the cars, the group left the (blue) Exit track and turned right up the yellow track to National Gallery cave. I left a cyalume at this spot to guide the police S & R squad, still on their way from Hobart. We followed the right branch of the yellow track for a short distance which led to an impressive doline where scattered cave gear told us we had arrived at the right place. The first problem was solved!!

A little time was taken to organise people, after which Danielle and I set off down the entrance slope. We rigged a handline down to a smallish chamber. Generally the flooring talus here was loose and mobile and some care was needed when

moving around. We both passed through a small tube to another loose floored chamber where we found Petrina, apparently perched under a three or four hundred kilogram boulder. Richard Cronnolly had been comforting and warming her for several hours and was doing a hero's job.

The situation did not look very bright. The rock had pinned her arm in an awkward way that would require lifting the offending object some height to free her. There was not much room for a good heave-ho and there was the risk that the thing might shift or slide, bringing its full weight on her arm or even crushing her against the nearby wall. The latter possibility would quite likely have proven fatal.

Petrina was suspended above a short ladder pitch that started in a squeeze. An interesting position to be caught in. Jim Davidson, Danielle and I rigged some foot stirrups for her to bear weight on, as she had previously been virtually hanging from the trapped arm.

We then pondered the pro's and con's of what to do next. None of the options appeared particularly palatable. We could either try to shift the boulder and risk crushing her or wait until the S & R squad arrived to bring modern high-tech rescue techniques to bear. As there was no adequate communication facility available, we were unsure as to when this help would arrive, so decided to have a go at the boulder. This decision was made bearing in mind the effect a lengthy delay would have on the future wellbeing of the arm.

As it turned out, despite the use of ropes, good anchor points etc., we failed to shift the thing at all. This was due to the limited number of bodies that could effectivley bring weight to bear in the confines of the chamber. Suddenly it looked as though it would be a very long night and we all felt an intense frustration at being powerless to end the suffering.

Petrina had remarkable spirit and in fact cheered up her bleary eyed, would-be rescuers with much banter and positive introspection. I'm sure I would have been a wimpering misery in the same situation. Danielle administered ambulance supplied oxygen to amend shock, then Entranox, another gas to induce a state of euphoria, or something..... Whatever it was, it had the effect of quadrupling Petrina's verbal outflow to the point that it infected us all and everyone broke up laughing. Maybe we got a whiff of the stuff in the small volume of the chamber.

Around 10 pm the S & R squad arrived, to everyone's considerable relief. It was now up to them. Steve Williams (in charge of the operation) annnounced to Petrina that it didn't look too bad and everything would be OK (he later admitted it was one of the more grim situations he had seen). More weight was put behind the heave-ho system, this time including several persons assisting from the next chamber, again to no effect. A Porta-Power unit (the "Jaws of Life" hydraulic jack) was then carried into the cave at which point Danielle and I sneaked out to give the police a bit more room to move.

This device, operating at maximum capacity, then shifted the rock sufficiently to free Petrina. A combination of self help and a bit of dragging brought her back to the surface. This also allowed Ken Hosking to get out, as he had previously been prevented from doing so by the blockage above him. He had been doing a variety of calisthenics to keep warm during all that time.

Around midnight Danielle and I crawled up the now boggy entrance slope to be greeted by Stuart Nicholas, valiantly waiting at the edge of the doline. We shared somne plum wine and sleepy conversation with him, standing amidst a plume of smoke from a stillborn fire. Warm bed was still two hours away!!

Lavish praise must go to the Police Search and Rescue crew and Ambulance Rescue Squad, who between them freed Petrina. We are lucky in Tasmania to have, by far, the best S & R organisation in Australia. Jim Davidson, the local "copper" from Dover, was just great. The ambulance guys, whose names escape me, did an outstanding job with very little in the way of cave type gear or expertise in that environment, although their Rescue Vehicle contained the jack used for the job itself. The local St John volunteers provided most of the muscle and communications on the night and without doubt made the show very much simpler. Sorry to disturb your respective Sunday evenings. Danielle and I could really only provide company and sympathy for Petrina, that is from the peculiarly unique caving point of view. Let's hope the next rescue is a very, very, very long way off. By the way, when did you, the reader, last go to an S & R exercise??

NICK HUME

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GROWLING SWALLET - NEW FEELINGS AGAIN 1 September, 1985

PARTY: Trevor Wailes, Stuart Nicholas, Danielle Gemenis, Mark Stanford, Ann Wessing

First day of Spring and it was freezing. Wintry grey sleet, driven by uneasy gusts of wind, greeted us. Desolation - the end of Eight Road. Numb hands - New Feelings with no feelings.

Surprisingly, entrance water levels were low, but they would no doubt be on the rise soon. We wandered the noise that is the stream passage, then sought the quiet sanctuary of the new section. Noting, blithely, the flood debris of the initial crawls, we passed onto the beauty of the well decorated major chamber. Here, Stuart rescued me from a fare of indigestible junk food, by proceeding to quaff my entire food bag!

People poked about here and there, except for Trev and Stu, who remained almost motionless. I wandered along the crystal crawl, followed by Ann, Danielle and Mark, and whacked in two bolts above the 15 metre pitch. A protector will still be needed here, as I had no belay to place the bolts out over the pitch. Still, they are good and solid, well greased and currently without hangers. I wandered back to the main chamber, where Stu and Trev were still motionless, suffering from indigestion I would suspect.

We were rounded up and herded back to the river. I took Danielle, Ann and Mark down to the climb above the sump. Lights out, they pondered ennui, in the crashing of the waterfall. I thought about absolutely nothing, having been there a couple of times before.....

We greeted Trev and Stu again, back at the cars. They were sitting in Trev's van making chattering noises. We dropped by Max's place, but Max unfortunately wasn't home. A session at the National Park Hotel was memorable, if only because Robyn Brinton beat Trev at pool - twice!!

Nick Hume

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MINING AN ASTEROID 8 SEPTEMBER, 1985

PARTY: Stefan Eberhard, Marilyn Carnes and Nick Hume

Not having found anything of major significance for several weeks now, the above "do it yourself" party decided to manufacture a pot of their own. Optimism even possessed us sufficiently to throw SRT gear into the packs, along with less customary accoutrements in the form of spade, pick, bucket and trowels. We presented an unusual spectacle that even had the "no see ums" baffled for a while.

Three hours of digging in "Asteroid Pot" removed another two metres of sticky mud. This took us down to almost four metres below the original surface level, deep enough for lights to be needed. We tired of digging in such a constricted space before actually making the hoped for breakthrough, however another attempt would definitely be worth while.

The route any further digging would follow is obvious and heads towards the rift that is visible from the second "entrance" located four metres away. It is distinctly possible that another few hours digging will open a way into a pitch series above the furthermost chamber of "Serendipity". This would allow a through trip that would be second to none, and also give access to all the leads thereabouts. The horizontal separation between "Asteroid" and "Serendip" is about ten metres (by survey) while the vertical component is approximately sixty metres and corresponds with the appropriately high aven at the extreme end of Serendipity.

Stefan surface trogged the neighbouring area and came up with "Eagle Pot". This is a small hole, 50 or so metres from Asteroid with a "beaked" fluting above a narrow climb. There was a strong oscillating draught present, indicating another potential entrance to the previously mentioned system. A thin blade of rock protruding from the solid walls constricted access to an almost certainly passable rift. Pebbles, trundled into this rift, rolled freely down an unseen sloping passage for three to four seconds.

This cave would be an interesting and easy site for some chemical persuasion - any budding "bangers" amongst us? There is not the risk of collapsing this cave (unlike Asteroid Pot) by using such methods and the results could be very worthwhile indeed. Any takers??

Nick Hume

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FOOTNOTE to Nick's trip report above

Whilst Nick and Martyn were digging in Asteroid Pot, Stefan went surface trogging and located a small cave approximately 40 metres NW of Varmint Pot (JF-376). The entrance was marked with two blue tapes - the cave chokes off after only 10 metres. Also marked in a similar fashion is another small cave in the dry valley between the Ice Tube and Serendipity valleys. The cave is located on the northern side of the valley only 10 metres from the lower rim of the large doline where the stream sinks. The entrance is against a small cliff and descends for 10 metres as a narrow rift.

Stefan Eberhard

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STOP PRESS: HOUSE WARMING B.B.Q. at MIKE & CHRIS'S
67 CARLTON STREET, NEW TOWN
B.Y.O. everything (and glass)
SATURDAY NOVEMBER 16 BE THERE anytime after about 6pm

NICK HUMES JUST MILDLY FANTASTIC PRUSSIK SYSTEM