

**Newsletter of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club**  
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# **SPELEO SPIEL**

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NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

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TROG TRIVIA (and other flavours)

The last couple of Spiels have, aside from appearing remarkably close together, been printed with a faulty daisy wheel. Never mind, the editor has watered his daisies now so all is well again!!

For the non-cognoscenti, our new name ought to be the Tasmanian Cynics Club. The last couple of "meetings" have been so tense (or intense) its ridiculous. We're so cynical we don't even talk to, or amongst, ourselves without bringing out the knives. How the hell do think any new bods must feel coming into that sort of atmosphere? Its bad enough for the old hags.....

On Thursday November 21, beginning at 8pm, the inaugural meeting of the Tasmanian Cave Research Group will take place. The venue will be Petrina Quinn's residence at 31 Knocklofty Terrace, West Hobart (just around the left corner from the junction with Gourlay Street). If you are at all interested in serious research or studies of any sort relating to caves and karst, it would be valuable for you to attend this meeting. Contact either Arthur Clarke or Petrina for more information.

Apparently some of our members are planning a trip (or is it just bluff?!) to P B for the Christmas break. The affluent amongst the tribe are flying in via amphibious aircraft (if one can be found floating around). Should be a Merry Christmas and Happy New River Lagoon. See Nik Hume for your plane tickets.

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ACCESS TO MINI MARTIN AREA - IDA BAY

To get to Mini Martin, the normal route has been past Exit Cave and up the steep track (the old Kokoda Trail between Exit and Entrance caves) to Mini Martin. On January 22, 1985 Tom was part of a post-conference Mini Martin - Exit through trip. After gaining permission from quarry manager Lindsay Rhodes, the cars were parked at the top of Benders Quarry. The walk down to Exit took about one hour. The walk up the Kokoda Trail to Mini Martin took nearly two hours with all the bumbling, route finding and cave locating. None of the party had seen Mini Martin before. With

heavy packs, the walk out in the dark from Exit to the quarry took the tired party nearly two hours.

On the map, Mini Martin appears to be almost the same elevation as the top of the quarry, and 2 kilometres distant. The track to Exit loses little height in the first kilometre or so. Mini Martin should be only a few hundred metres from Roy Skinner's track.

March 19, 1985. Tom verified that the route was feasible on the ground. On the walk IB-8 (Mini Martin), IB-1002 (now IB-33) and IB-7 were seen, as well as some new holes. On the way back to the quarry some fallen timber was removed from the Exit track.

April 2. Arthur Clarke and Tom located and tagged IB-27 (Chicken Bone Pot) and IB-24 (Hang-about Hole). They are about 250 metres north of (above) the Exit track and about 0.8 to 1.0 kilometre west of the top of Bender's quarry. The track is left at a 3 metre high rocky knoll that it climbs over, and a rocky ridge is ascended to the two holes.

Two hundred metres further along the Exit track from the rocky knoll is a creek that is usually dry. Twelve mm or so of rain makes this creek flow for a few hours. The track climbs for 20 metres out of the creek, then drops steeply. At this high point on the track 20 metres west of the creek on a very minor spur, Tom and Arthur began marking the short cut track with red tape. (Blue tape is predominately used on the new (Skinner's) track to Exit (IB-14).) The junction is marked with three tapes - red, blue, red, and the red taped track heads west, climbing a little along the side of the hill.

That day IB-1002 was retagged IB-32, and IB-1003 was retagged IB-33. IB-1004 (IB-34), IB-8, IB-9 and IB-7 were visited and some new holes were seen in the day's wanderings. The return was made in the dark, taping in red from IB-9 (Big Tree Pot) towards the Exit track. Two hundred metres from IB-9 a fallen log was recognised and with some relief the morning's red tape was easily followed out in the dark.

April 11. The VSA leftovers from the Mt Anne Easter trip - Tom Porritt, Darryl Carr, Phil Hutchinson, Lou Williams and Mal Fankhauser - had a reconnaissance / familiarisation day. The red track was re-aligned slightly and fully taped from IB-9 to the Exit track near the creek. Some of the small timber was removed from the track. A side track 20 metres uphill to IB-35 was taped in yellow.

April 12 - 16. Arthur Clarke and VSA tagged IB-35, IB-36, IB-37 and IB-38. The yellow track was extended past IB-35, 80 metres NW to IB-37, 15 metres west to IB-38 and 70 metres NW to the lower end of IB-7. Access to IB-7 is probably easier from the red track and up the obvious gully to IB-7 direct.

April 26. Tom went via the red track and the yellow track to IB-7 and managed to follow the old blue tapes (all four or five of them) to IB-9. IB-1004 was retagged IB-34 and then after walking halfway to Exit (IB-14) along the Kokoda Trail (mainly blue tape) IB-1001 was located and tagged IB-31.

June 17. Some of the remaining large logs on the track were attacked with a chain saw. Nine hundred metres along the Exit track a log won by jamming the saw. Tom then went on and tagged IB-49 (near IB-38 and IB-7). On the return, half the saw was carried out, leaving the bar and chain in the log.

June 21, 23. More large troublesome logs were tamed with a chain saw. The blue track was cleared up to the red track, and the red track was cleared up to a few metres past the junction of the yellow track to IB-35.

But now with all the foot traffic and rain, mud was becoming a problem in the first few hundred metres from the quarry. This was helped by Phil Jackson who did some earth work on the worst of the muddy parts.

#### CONCLUSION

The easiest route to Mini Martin (IB-8) starts from the top of Bender's quarry and follows Roy Skinner's track one kilometre to a small spur 20 metres past an often dry creek. Here the red, blue, red tapes on a tree indicate the turn right and the beginning of the red track.

This red track is followed to its present end (June 1985) at IB-9 (Big Tree Pot). Mini Martin is about 40 metres directly from IB-9, but old existing tracks were used. From IB-9 a poor path goes east along the base of a small cliff and passes the two entrances of IB-33, 15 metres from IB-9. The original Machette Pot is probably IB-33. A further 15 metres east and downhill slightly, over a mess of fallen trees there is a tree with four blue tapes around it. This is the junction of the Kokoda Trail from IB-14 and the 30 metre track uphill to Mini Martin. The steep scramble up is on a large stringy bark log. Twenty metres uphill from the 4 tapes is a small doline with IB-34 at the bottom.

On all occasions permission was given by the quarry manager, Lindsay Rhodes, to go to the top of the quarry and either park vehicles there, or on days when blasting was to take place, park at the bottom with bushwalkers' cars.

Local caver Arthur Clarke (P.O. Box 4 Dover 7116, phone 002-981107) would be pleased to help visiting cavers, and is presently surface surveying and documenting the area.

Ref. Gordon Taylor 1980 July, Speleograffiti vol 16 no. 2 pp 5,6

Tom Porritt - VSA and Chillagoe Caving Club

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#### FLICK MINTS HOLE (JF-371): A CASE OF THE CRAMPS

Flick Mints Hole (previously referred to as Florentine Pot) was first discovered in September 1984. Two pitches were descended but the explorers were halted at a low crawl blocked by a large rock. A draught hinted that there was more to find but it was only in July this year that the incentive was taken.

20 JULY, 1985 - Rolan and Stefan Eberhard

While on a general reconnaissance and cave numbering trip in the area we took a hammer and chisel for a look at the blocked crawl in Flick Mints. After some chipping with the hammer and moving the rock a bit it was possible to squeeze into the passage beyond. Progress was halted by a constriction after three metres of crawling. Half an hour's work with hammer and chisel saw the squeeze enlarged sufficiently to allow access to a small passage that continued beyond. This passage has since been named "The Cramps". It is basically a squeeze 15 metres in length, being generally a metre in height and a third of that in width. To negotiate it involves lying horizontally on one's side and worming along, pushing a gear pack ahead. A coating of mud on the walls does not help, nor does a small trench in the floor that tends to jam boots and cave packs. Beyond this unpleasant obstacle was a small chamber where the stream re-appeared and flowed into a narrow slot. Several rocks blocked the constriction - beyond was apparently a sizable shaft.

28 JULY, 1985 - Rolan Eberhard and Martyn Carnes

Martyn and I returned and although Martyn had forgotten his caving gloves we were able to remove the rocks and enlarge the hole into the pitch beyond. A rope was belayed from a bolt and a piton and I squeezed through the slot into a spacious shaft. In order to avoid the water and abraiding the rope over an initial jagged rock face, I pendulumed across to a ledge several metres lower down. Here I placed a further bolt and enjoyed a 50m abseil down a fine cylindrical pit until I reached the end of the rope. The base of the shaft was still some distance away, but fortunately a broad ledge provided a convenient place to stop and tie on a second rope. I continued abseiling to another ledge, from where I could see the rope still did not quite reach the bottom.

All this had taken a fair while and by the time I yelled for Martyn to come down with more rope, his fingers had become very cold while waiting in the draughty chamber at the top. In fact his hands were numb and he was unable to safely make the changeover at the bolt. There was nothing left for us to do but make our return to the surface.

3 August, 1985 - Stefan and Rolan Eberhard, Martyn Carnes and Nick Hume

Our departure from Hobart at 6.30 am can be taken as an indication that TCC thought they were really onto something. In a cave directly above Serendipity, with a strong draught and an undescended pitch at a depth of 120 metres, a certain amount of optimism was certainly in order. This was noted to diminish rapidly as we proceeded deeper underground. We reached the base of the undescended pitch and found a narrow canyon continuing. I expect the section of passage that followed will gain a notoriety exceeding that of both Herpes III and Fallopian Tube in Growling Swallet. I will not attempt a description other than to say it was not particularly enjoyable. Nick and Martyn never did emerge at the far end of the rift as Stefan and I rigged the next pitch.

The pitch was 20 metres into large rock-strewn chamber. We attempted following the stream into the talus but were discouraged by large precariously balanced boulders. At the far end of the chamber we discovered an alternative route into the rockfall, leading to a pitch. This was descended and found to link up with a stream, which showered into one corner of a large chamber. The full extent of the chamber became apparent as we wandered along its length. At a rough guess it was 100 metres long and 25 metres in height and width at the middle. One wall was encrusted with a layer of fine gypsum crystals - this was all very impressive, but we were after depth!!

We returned to where the water sank in talus and explored the jumble of rocks. Surrounded as we were by large loose boulders showered by water from above, it was an un-nerving place and we eventually gave up. We had reached an estimated depth of 200 metres, and as a further 150 metres of potential depth exists the cave was a bit of a disappointment. While dragging my pack, still containing 60 metres of unused rope, back through the tight rifts during our ascent, I began to regret my optimism in taking so much rope down the cave.

Rolan Eberhard

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ASTEROIDS AND ARMADILLOS: FLORENTINE VALLEY

MAY 1985

PARTY: Nick Hume and Rolan Eberhard



Our original aim was to excavate Asteroid Pot, a draughting entrance in the vicinity of the turnoff up the Serendipity valley from the packhorse track. The cave lies in a small depression and consists of two separate entrances. One entrance is almost totally filled by dirt, and the other is a small hole formed mainly in clay and terminating at a depth of some four metres. A draught noticed on previous trips and the fact Asteroid Pot is located more or less above the upstream limit of exploration in Serendipity gave us the incentive to try digging out the entrance.

I spent some time removing rocks and clay at the base of the first hole, finally concluding that digging at this location would be a protracted undertaking. While Nick started digging at the second entrance, I set off to look for other caves. Following a minor valley uphill I came to a small pothole. It did not look particularly promising and I continued, finally stumbling upon a deep gaping shaft off to one side of the valley. I retraced my steps to Asteroid Pot where Nick's excavation was proceeding steadily but without reward so far. He agreed to return to the car and fetch rope while I marked a route to the shaft. On the way I explored the smaller pothole, which proved to be roughly (...) metres deep and involved a short pitch followed by a climb. It is possible that this pothole is synonymous with a cave explored many years ago in the same area, named The Dungeon.

Nick arrived with the rope and we set about rigging the shaft. It was a most impressive pitch of fifty metres, involving two rebelayes at ledges on the way down. Its spacious character reminded me of The Chairman, although on a smaller scale. Unfortunately the shaft ended abruptly in a large chamber. The notable features were muddy flowstone walls and numerous small marsupial bones. I found one skull half cemented in a piece of flowstone, and in recognition of the abundant animal bones Armadillo Pot(\*) seemed an appropriate name.

Further searching in the forest failed to reveal other significant cave entrances. It was determined that the Armadillo Pot valley lies directly over Lost Pot. Additional surface exploration in the area could be rewarding, and number tagging and surface surveying is required.

\* armadillo: any of a great variety of burrowing mammals, having a jointed, protective covering of bony plates. They are omnivorous and mostly nocturnal. The Texas armadillo is unique for always producing quadruplets of one sex.

Rolan Eberhard

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#### DIVING DOWNSTREAM BLACK RIVER

29 September, 1985

PARTY: Trevor Wailes, Chris Davies, Stuart Nicholas, Peter Cover (supporters), Stefan Eberhard and Nick Hume (divers).

This was Pete's first ever trip into Growling!!! It was of leisurely pace. Stuart selflessly wedged himself into Windy Rift to act as a sort of skidway in assisting our cave packs through this awkward section.

While the others brewed endless cups of coffee, I donned a 30 cubic foot air bottle (back mounted) plus a 15 cubic foot one strapped to my side. Then dived the downstream sump reeling out the line reel as I went. The underwater passage was very clear and remained shallow. After 10 - 15 metres the rock ceiling gave way to a silvery water-air interface and I surfaced in "Coelacanth", moderately stunned.

I quickly shed the diving gear and began to explore. A large stream passage went

for about 30 metres before sumping again in a nice clear pool. I very nearly had a go at this too but decided to look at a few leads off the left hand side of the chamber instead. I climbed up an impressive flowstone wall, to enter a 15 metre high aven that trickled a small quantity of water. This water came from a narrow passage leading off from above and may connect with "Federation Free Space" known to be somewhere overhead.

A downclimb on the other side of the flowstone wall lead through some breakdown blocks to various tubes that were tight and blocked by mud. I followed a small quantity of water back to the main stream passage. Getting back into the diving gear I followed the tied off line back to Black River and the sight of the others still brewing interminable cups of coffee.

Explaining to Stef the value of diving the other sump I had found, he kitted up to have a look for himself. (I half expected the stream way to fizzle out in lots of sumps and airspaces, but this was soon proved very wrong!) I joined the coffee queue while Stefan dived. We waited and waited and waited.....

The second sump proved to be a three metre duck and Stefan surfaced in 6 - 7 metre wide borehole passage, pleasantly floored in small cobblestones. He moved downstream over some breakdown blocks wherein the stream disappeared; numerous holes in the roof were noted. He then followed a continuing dry passage for some distance to a static sump, before returning.

Stef rejoined us after an absence of over an hour. I was surprised by his story, but very pleased, as this discovery adds over half a kilometre to the known length of Growling Swallet. We packed and left, finishing the day with a very sporting splash back up the main Growling Swallet streamway, the water levels being higher than usual. To the support team of Trev, Chris, Stu and Pete go many thanks.

Nick Hume

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TAKING THE FLORENTINE BY SCRUB-BASH

15 SEPTEMBER, 1985

PARTY: Chris Davies, Leigh Douglas and Nick Hume

We thrashed around amongst snow damaged ferns, above the end of Sunshine Road, quickly deciding that this was not very pleasant countryside in which to explore for caves. There is a relatively untouched area west of Khazad-dum that we had hoped to look at, but this was much further uphill than we could get ready access to from here.

From the logfall near the top of the Dewhirst Quarry Road, there are numerous impressive rock outcrops visible. We ascended one of these for the view, then wandered up a large fossil stream gully in hope of discovering some sort of resurgence cave. Alas, this was not to be. Exposed cliffs revealed the local rock to be something akin to quartzite - not the most promising of basal materials for the formation of caves. An interesting area nonetheless.

At the top of Chrisps Road we made plans for a future exploration trip between here and Wherretts Lookout. I have noticed (from the vantage point of Mt Mueller) that three or four major gullies dissect this area thus allowing for the possibility at least of active stream caves to exist there. Very little exploration has been done in this potentially important region.

Chris bashed over to Tarn Creek for a looksee, while Leigh and I did Bone Pit for

some SRT practice. How about a few bods getting together for some "beginners" (and rusty "old hands!" - Ed) SRT practice, at Lost World or similar, on some Saturday?

Nick Hume

CHRISPS ROAD - NETTLEBASHING

22 SEPTEMBER, 1985

PARTY: Chris Davies and Nick Hume

A walk through the bush above Bone Pit revealed one miserable hole that didn't go. Further over we ran into an un-numbered swallet that was probably "Voltera". From there we wandered over to Rescue Pot and JF-202.

Then we really launched ourselves into the thick of things, negotiating very large and very rotten logs to a sizeable river. This was followed down to an infilled swallet. Squirring down through large boulders here revealed a shallow pool that seeped away through the talus. No apparent way on.

We had originally intended to continue on to the remote corner between Wherretts Lookout and Florentine Peak, however we were running out of time and made for Lady Binney Corner instead. The walk back to the cars atop Chrips Road was interesting exercise!

The remote "pocket" under Wherretts Lookout is crossed by myriad little streams according to the Mt Field map. Also it is above a projected line from Growling Swallet to Junee Cave, thus is worth a thorough look. We plan to check this area in the not too distant future, gaining access from the slip area.

Nick Hume

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SURVEY / DIVE OF "COELACANTH"

5 October, 1985

PARTY: Nick Hume and Stefan Eberhard

We arrived at the ANM gate at 6.30 am!!!! Our keenness was also reflected in the time it took us to get into Black River - a little more than an hour. The early start had taken its toll though and we settled into a sluggish routine of brewing coffee and rolling cigarettes, while in B/R.

We dived with a single airtank each, noting that the water levels were down on the previous week. I surfaced in a small airspace halfway through the dive. In such conditions it would be possible to free dive into Coelacanth, however flippers, mask and reasonable breathholding capacity would still be needed.

We extracted survey gear and tobacco from a waterproof Ewings bag and after some ludicrous verbal exchanges, proceeded with a survey of the place. The second duck was now a mere roof sniff and we managed to survey a long leg straight through it. Once into the delightful borehole passage, 30 metre legs were the order of the day. We continued in this fashion for some 400 metres before arriving at the static sump.

The sump was a welcome sight as we had been surveying in full diving gear up to that point and were thoroughly sick of the additional burden. I proceeded to dive this obstacle, full of the hope that this would be another duck into kilometres more



passage, however the reality was somewhat different. Breathing from the greatly diminished contents of the 30 foot tank, I dived into an initially eastward bearing submerged passage that abruptly tracked right and down a steep bedding plane, and kept going down and down.....

At ten metres depth and 30 metres from the airspace, I ran out of line on the reel, my air also being in short supply. I peered down the tube through brilliantly clear water - the almost ten metres I could see further on being devoid of any hopeful sign of the passage trending upwards. This was real cave diving and exciting in itself but it was a disappointing end to our ambitions of adding kilometres more to Growling's length. I returned to Stef with just a few hundred pounds pressure remaining in the tank.

We checked various leads on our left hand side while going back upstream. These climbed up into a massive breakdown chamber, notable for the size and looseness of its flooring material. The stream simply disappears hereabouts with no further continuations forthcoming. The return dive to Black River was uneventful.

Shouldering 20 kilo packs, we exited Growling in a two hour minor epic. We had surveyed over 1/2 kilometre of new passage, but were a little disappointed that Coelacanth wasn't part of a new ongoing system in GS. Next trip we will dive upstream Pendant Pot.

Nick Hume

# FLICK MINT'S HOLE JF371

## EXTENDED SECTION

Metres from  
JF36 datum

Surveyed August 1985  
ASF Grade 43 T.C.C.

R. Eberhard  
S. Eberhard  
M. Carnes  
T. Wailes

Drawn: R. Eberhard ©

