

NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

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EDITORIAL

The new editors are tentatively in residence, presenting a different, if somewhat tardy slant to the local caving scene. We'll still be feeding you the occasional bit of jetsetting news, but there will be plenty of wholesome, homespun caving grunge, each sentence positively oozing cave mud. Don't become too intoxicated with our style though - Bunty threatens to return in September with more anecdotes than ever and no doubt, plenty of news from the lands purported to exist beyond Tasmania.

Through a combination of my laziness, Trev's forgetfulness and Stuart's.....erhh, Stuart's whatever, we've fallen a little behind in putting Spiels together. They're actually all in Stuart's computer somewhere, gathering cosmic rays. They will appear soon enough, subject to lecture times, due dates for assignments and the like.....

Nick Hume et al

Errh well, just a bit of jetsetting news phoned in from overseas.... Apparently Al Warild has recently soloed the world's deepest cave - " Jean Bernard " (-1,550 metres), in a circa seventy hour epic. The first person to have done so, this feat puts Al on the top (bottom!) of the world's best solo cavers. Well done Al, but what can the rest of us do now, by way of a challenge. A nocturnal wall traverse of Growling.....?

More bloody jetsetting news! American cavers have linked Nita Nanta to the

Sistema Huautla, yielding the third deepest cave system in the world at -1389 metres. This sort of stuff makes you want to join Al Warild's Chilchotla '87 expedition, eh? Watch out for a special issue of the Spiel, describing what caving in Mexico is really like. Out soon.....

Possibly one of this state's worst sections of cave passage has been pushed in "Splash Pot" (JF 10), to yield a further two pitches, giving approximately 50 to 60 metres more depth. The chances of this new section ever being surveyed are pretty remote.....

Nice to see a female person on the cover of this month's Spiel. Leigh Douglas is sampling the delights of 8mm rope in this shot, taken on the third pitch in "Warhol". For those concerned about the safety of thin ropes, this cave is littered with the bones of animals who didn't bother with a rope at all!

At the March A.G.M., various members of "the clique" and other esteemed persons, were re-elected or reshuffled in positions of the heirarchy (except me, I was given the boot.....hooray!). The state of play as it presently exists:

President / Quartermaster:	Trevor Wailes (not out)
Vice Presidents:	Albert Goede and Chris Davies
Secretary:	Stefan Eberhard
Treasurer:	Chris Davies
Librarian:	Rolan Eberhard
Archivist:	Albert Goede
Committee:	Leigh Douglas, Rolan Eberhard, Anne Wessing, Martin Carnes, Paul Merhulik, Nick Hume.

Congratulations!, the fine effort goes on. Hope you find time to do some caving as well!

Chris and Trev have organised a Monster Raffle to raise some money to cure the club illness. Namely a few acute deficiencies in survey gear, ladders, etc. First prize is a monster ONE GALLON of DEWARS SCOTCH WHISKY! and Martin is just hanging out to win it. If you fancy depriving Mart. and drinking it all yourself, buy a ticket from someone at the next meeting. Better still, get a whole book from Chris and distribute the tickets amongst the needy at a dollar each - it will be the best value near-fatal accident someone will ever have.

Incidentally, gatherings are held on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, 9 p.m. onward at the Wheatsheaf Hotel. These are usually well attended and are a good chance to find out what's going on. Trip ideas currently affecting various people's speech patterns, include:

- Resurveying some of Icetube, with the possibility of another through trip.
- Pushing " Frownland " in Growling - Trev's already in training!
- Pushing the second sump in Junee Resurgence, all we have to do is " go "!
- The Chairman - there haven't been any breakthroughs here for far too long.
- Another Valley Entrance through trip - fantastic caving and worth doing twice just to find out where you thought you were before.

12 APRIL - OH NO! NOT THE NORTH EAST RIDGE OF MOUNT ANNE AGAIN

"Day trip to the Devils Eyes", featuring Leigh Douglas and Nick Hume. During the strategic withdrawal of the S.U.S.S. expedition from Mount Anne in February, Bob Davies from the Surveying Department, University of Tasmania had the opportunity of flying onto and over the North East Ridge, photographing the karst from the air. He subsequently used these photographs, together with Vicki Bonwick's hardwon surface surveying, to draw up an extraordinarily detailed topographic map of the ridge.

The product of his labours was a quantum jump in improvement on the pre-existing maps of the region and a few cavers were fortunate enough to attend a display/lecture, put on by Bob at a recent Tasmanian Cave and Karst meeting. A series of features that stood out most clearly in Bob's photos were the "Devils Eyes" - two, or possibly three, enormous black spots, about five hundred metres south of the known cave, "Nemesis".

Carrying little more than cave lights and light lunches, Leigh and I clambered onto the end of the North East Ridge. Interestingly, a shaft noticed by Phil Hill et al, on a trip back in November 1983 (Speleo Spiel number 193), was now festooned with S.U.S.S.'s dental floss and an already faint painted marking - MA SC5 (?). Did S.U.S.S. bottom this or not? Anyway back to the story.

Further along the ridge, Leigh and I peered over the precipitous ramparts of the cliff containing the "Devils Eyes". On the very edge was an open rift that Bob's photos suggest maybe a connector to the larger "eye", almost directly below by some 200m. The nature of the rift meant that it was fairly suicidal to gain any sort of vantage point over it, at least without SRT gear.

To get access to the base of the cliff line, we "walked off" the ridge a couple of hundred metres to the north. "Walked off" needs qualifying, for the line we took involved a more or less controlled fall, assisted by the resistance of particularly vile vegetation. Our descent was hard up against a stepped series of outcrops and was rather direct, although we managed to procrastinate on a few of the steps.

It was a bloody long way down before we eventually turned the corner to find a narrow clearway along the bottom of the face. The dip of the bedding planes was easterly, at an angle of roughly fifteen degrees, a fact that made me go "uh oh!". The first feature from the photos was explicable in terms of a shallow overhang not far along the cliff line. One hundred metres further south, a large "excavation" in the face of the cliff seemed to be the reason for the second feature. Beyond this

point, a dierdre divided the face into two levels.

We scrambled up to the new line through some almost pleasant jungle, to be confronted by a massive great cave entrance, success at last!!!! The entrance proper was set back into the cliff and at its narrowest point was some twenty metres wide by six metres high. This led into a huge, steeply floored chamber, the height of which could not be discerned with our meagre lights. Some large shattered inlet flutings, were visible about forty to fifty metres up, but no distant daylight holes, unfortunately.

A reasonable draught was present in the relatively large cross sectional area of the entrance and two leads were checked at the rear of the chamber. These narrowed almost immediately into small ascending rifts and were not the source of the draught, which must therefore be coming from above. Whether a through from the rift entrance above is possible or not is anyone's guess.

Just to make sure there weren't any more of these features, I ventured further south to battle yet more vegetation into the next major gully. No more cliff faces were visible, so back we went. The place is aptly named, for the scrub is fiendish and we had a hell of a time regaining the ridge. Some typical S.U.S.S. weather had moved in, so we lost no time descending to the plains, emerging at the car on dusk. I suspect the features on Bob's photos appear enlarged somewhat by the overhangs along the base of the cliff and their resultant shadows. The photos were probably taken about midday. I doubt whether the "Devils Eyes" correspond to Kevin Kiernan's "point X", supposedly visible from Lots Wife, as they would be at least partially obscured from there by Gomorrah. North East Ridge contains some quite amazing karst features, but its awful hard work to get to them...

NICK HUME

IDA BAY REVIEW

The area between Benders Quarry and Exit cave is now proven to be a vast source for cave exploration. This area was opened up by the creation of Skinners Track and has proved invaluable to Ida Bays cave potential. Unfortunately the area has been picked over by T.C.C., S.C.S. and various mainland groups with little method. Arthur Clarke has attempted to number and document all finds but things seem to have got out of hand. Who's looked at what and how thoroughly? Where shall we look next? The area that received most attention was at the start of the track just over the spur from the Quarry because it was easily accessible and had the best depth potential. Finding new caves here was becoming increasingly difficult.

With changing attitudes within the T.C.C., novice trips were emerging and where better than to Exit Cave and environs. This lower section of the track had received least attention from the cave prospectors and any caves turned up could hopefully be completed on ladder (the curse of novice cavers), because of limited depth.

Our eventual success wasn't without disappointment, but gaining geographical knowledge of the area was valuable. The first trip to this area was not startlingly successful. A strongly draughting slot was found in the dry gully, to the right of the track, but would need some extensive digging to gain access - this was not what we were looking for. Within one hundred metres of this, IB 86 was relocated further

down the gully and this I considered to be valuable "local knowledge". The scrub and mosquitoes around this area were persistent and an about turn was made and the gully followed uphill. A small obvious squeeze entrance was looked at although a root at the entrance had yellow wire wound around it, so I guessed other members of T.C.C. had at some time tried to force a way in. The amount of force had not improved the likelihood of extending this type of crawl. Other sinks in the gully were also choked. Moving uphill again, the gully changed character and developed into a line of dolines, these being looked at fairly thoroughly, but nothing of any significance was found. Our attention was called away from doline bashing by a discovery on a benched area, fifteen metres above and to the left. A well formed circular shaft, four metres in diameter, had been found and was estimated at twenty metres deep. So the novices had their first taste of laddering..... Most of us descended what turned out to be seventeen metres, to a sloping mud floor with absolutely nil prospects. Unfortunately, that was the find of the day. Not really very inspiring, but the boys got to stretch their legs and learn to appreciate one of the sidelines of caving.

Present were: Byron Garrod, Paul Merhulik, Bill, Nick Hawkes, Chris Davies, Trevor Wailes and several leeches.

The next trip into this area was one week later, led by Chris Davies. A group had gone to view the entrance of Exit Cave from the far side, but water levels were quite high and little was achieved. However, the row of dolines above the gully was returned to and the next in line visited.

A small stream entered the cliff faced doline and sank between blocks in one corner but could be heard coming from a short drop in the other corner. This area was excavated until the stream was located, falling about one metre through an orifice not unlike a toilet bowl. After this rather damp wriggle, a short section of fine serpentine passage, one metre wide, was followed to the top of a twenty metre pitch. Without the necessary tackle, we were forced to leave and threats of "I shall return with my mates and more tackle", were heard drifting through the rainforest. The answer of "up yours mate", seemed to issue from the draughting entrance.

Present were: Chris Davies, James Davis, Richard Hardy, Paul Merhulik.

OLD DITCH ROAD, PART ONE....

The latest find in the string of dolines was intriguing. A strong draught almost directly above Exit Cave, taking water and an undescended pitch. Pomme cavers dream of this and on this trip there were three of them! The entrance was guesstimated to be about fifty or sixty metres above Exit, so armed with forty metres of ladder, sixty metres of rope, traces, rope protectors and some pomme mates, Chris entered the toilet bowl entrance and searched in vain for a belay for this twenty metre pitch. A small hole, a little way back from the pitch, led up to a roomy chamber that overlooked the pitch directly, a ledge ten metres down looking the ideal spot to rig from. A ten metre ladder was belayed from a flake enabling all to descend to the ledge, where a large natural rock column was perfect belay for the pitch proper. I had some misgivings about the length of this drop - dropping rocks

suggested the depth was nearer thirty metres rather than Chris's conservative estimate of twenty metres. Consequently a forty metre rope was used requiring a protector on the lip directly below the tieoff.

Chris descended first and met the free falling stream ten metres down and the cry of "off rope and bring more gear" struggled though the noise of the waterfall, so I descended eagerly with what we had left. The shaft was well decorated with flowstone but further down the walls were black and thus sent a shower of wet rotten rock where Chris was sheltering. Thirty six metres below the ledge, the shaft levelled off with the stream falling another two metres into a sink which could not be clearly seen for spray. Across the base of the shaft was a twelve metre pitch with very little to rig from. A twenty metre rope was tied back to the previous forty metre one and the pitch descended into what was assumed to be an easy walk into Exit. This pitch, perhaps the original water course into Exit, was relatively dry, but instead of the expected roomy passage, the base of the pitch developed into a rift, dropping into blackness. A rock test suggested depth around the thirty metre mark - the last rock thrown down seem to echo "up yours mate!". That's what we did, up our rope and onto the wet pitch as quickly as we could. The water had risen quite a bit, filling the neck and wellies. Sheila and Nick waiting on the ledge were cold and pissed off and our return meant we could all leave and move out into the rainlashed forest. We left the cave rigged for a future return.

Present were Sheila McKemmie, Nick Hawkes (visiting poms), Chris Davies, Trev Wailes (locals from T.C.C.)

OLD DITCH ROAD PART 2...

Under much better weather conditions, three of us entered the cave with more rope, less ladders and personal SRT gear. We descended to the base of the first wet pitch, which was now almost serene, apart from the odd drip or three. Chris threw a ladder down the twelve metre pitch, which was tied back to the previous forty metre rope. With no bolting kit, the undescended pitch was awkward to rig. A spike of rock, noticed on the previous trip, fell to the bottom while Chris was testing it. Only a few dubious chockstones remained, up in the rift. These and the ladder were eventually used - not particularly elegant, though from where I stood, it looked reasonably effective. Nick was keen to be first, never having been on a virgin pitch before, myself, well I felt rather indifferent. Nick descended into a huge chamber with much formation. Unfortunately, the rope was six metres short, so he had to return.

We rerigged the thing and I went down with spare gear. A superb pitch, the rift opening into a tube then giving way to a huge chamber. The total drop is about thirty seven metres, and I touched down with only three metres to spare. While the others were coming down I had a bit of a look around - it was definately Exit. I remembered three avens from past trips, one of which Chris was descending. We were beyond the Ball Room and only a short distance from the climb down near the rock pile.

Nick was given the honour of the first through trip. Chris prusiked up the pitch, dropping the rope for us to carry out. Chris continued the derigging by himself on an expiring light. Nick and I Exited the cave on local knowledge alone, although slightly misdirected at one point. Dragging ourselves and gear up the hill we were

pleasantly surprised to find Chris on the surface surrounded by ropes and ladders. This is an excellent through trip and could become very popular. Estimated depth from entrance to entrance would be about 130 metres.

Participants: Chris Davies, Nick Hawkes, Trevor Wailes.

MELLOWING AT MOLE CREEK - EASTER 1987

The Clans Gathered included - Stephan, Rolan, Trevor McWailes, Sue, Martin McCarnes, Adrienne, Leigh and Nick.

I always wondered why Trev wears a kilt during his hours of relaxation. It looks like a cheaper Asian version and he does not say much about the why's and wherefores of its function, so I am none the wiser really. It was with no real surprise then, that I chanced upon our leader, along with Martin, limbering up with a bit of Cabre Tossing at the Easter gathering at Mole Creek homestead. They lofted into flights of pure fantasy, trying to convince me that they were simply procuring some firewood. I was not fooled for a moment, anyway their secret is safe with me.

There was enough of Saturday left for Leigh and I to raft the white water course at Mersey Forest. The flood gates were open for the national canoeing titles, so we had a reasonably exciting ride. Didn't secure a place though, unfortunately.

Sunday was all go, at least after the obligatory late start. Rolan, Trev and Adrienne surveyed Shishkabab to the sump, doubling back to the entrance of Herberts Pot. Stef, Mart, Leigh and myself shot off to do the same thing in Kellys Pot. However, the triad of exploration, slackness and darkness factors worked against us and no surveying was done around or in Kellys Pot. Rolan's tie-up of all of the sumps in the area (using Stu's SMAPS program) will have to wait another trip, apologies to Rolan.

Monday's Kubla through trip was an initiation for Adrienne, Leigh and Alex (canoeing in the area!). It was the first time for me too! - at least barefooting in the Pleasure Dome. Quite an amazing place. The late nights were getting to some of the crew, so a mass exodus from camp ensued. This left Stef, Leigh and myself, to look for a few diveable sinkholes the following day.

Advice was sought from local farmers on the location of any water filled holes on their properties. Their enthusiasm to be of help sent us scurrying to all parts of the compass. One guy even gave us a grand tour on a four wheeled bike "thing". Needless to say we visited a lot of scunge holes that day, floating sheep carcasses were not what we had come to see. However, three quite promising sites were uncovered.

Hole one was a water pumping site for the farmer's cattle. It was an open rift entrance, dropping several metres to a crystal clear pool. Very Mt Gambier like, complete with a surrounding rubbish pile, some of which had trickled down to the water. Stef was very keen, so Leigh and I rigged a ladder and generally supported. Stef cursed and muttered at losing a fin in the rubbish but was soon placated with a spare and eventually swam off, leaving Leigh and I to entertain some curious onlookers. The following is Stef's account.

A few metres below the surface was a "sideways" squeeze, between the roof and piles of mobile jetsam. Beyond, the dimension improved considerably, a deep vertical extended beyond the penetration of torch light despite the unusual translucency of the water. A roughly ten metre penetration along the top of the rift, led to a blind shaft. Retreating a short distance, a direct descent was made to a ledge or floor at minus twelve metres, but the ensuing "agent orange" type of silt out precluded further exploration. The landowner reported that the hole had been plumbed to minus twenty metres.

Hole two had also been used to pump water for cattle. The farmer told us that he had obtained a million gallons an hour from the site, without affecting the water level a great deal. He also spoke of a diviner's prediction that a twenty metre wide submerged passage linked it to the Sensation Gorge area. However, immediately after leaving the surface, I found the way on to be a half metre diameter passage, completely blocked by logs. I could not shift these as I was in a head down position, though it may be worth a future visit with some sort of winching capability. Again, the sump pool was superbly clear, before I entered it that is.

Hole three was rediscovered after a protracted pursuit of the farmer's kids, accompanying us on trail bike. An unprepossessing shaft, it appeared to be well blocked with timber. Stef muscled his way down to a toilet bowl at four or five metres! This he proceeded to vandalise in his efforts to reach the quite open sump beyond. The pool had a bluish hue and looked perfect for diving, tarnished only slightly by remnants of the toilet and floating fertilizer bags (or was it toilet paper!).

(Stef's account). Beneath the surface of the water table lake was a phreatic passage with sculpted walls and roof. The floor was of very fine flocculent silt. Careful "fingerwalking" along the roof of the submerged passage minimised silt disturbance and led me to a small hole, almost blocked by silt, roughly ten metres from the start of the dive. Peering through this "window", a tube of memorably aqua hue merged into blackness beyond. Further exploration would be possible after removal of the silt bank. The clarity of the water was exceptional, at least until I was distracted by the antics of a pair of mating phreaticoids, resulting in a complete silt out.

These exploratory dives were undertaken with a backmounted thirty cubic foot tank and a side mounted seventeen cubic foot tank. A buoyancy compensator and minimal silt disturbance techniques are essential for diving these holes. Further trips are planned.

Nick Hume and Stefan Eberhard

IB-120: VALLEY ENTRANCE THROUGH TRIP - 3rd of May

The Hash House Harriers included - Stefan Eberhard, Martin Carnes, Leigh Douglas and Nick Hume.

Valley Entrance is a new discovery, one leading into the far reaches of Exit Cave, from below Western Creek Swallet. The inaugural through trip occurred on the Sunday

prior and involved Trevor Wailes, Arthur Clarke, et al. Not to be left out of the action, Mart, Leigh and myself went down to Ida Bay, rescuing Stef from an almost certain ride on the railway, on the way through. We were very keen on attempting what promised to be an excellent sojourn through Marble Hill, though none of us had been further in Exit than Western Grand Fissure and we were not entirely sure where Valley Entrance was.

Coincidentally, we met up with Greg Jordan and Geoff Butt at the quarry. They were going errh, somewhere. Anyway, at last we had found somebody informative to help us with our intended trip. Informationally fortified, we located Valley Entrance without any trouble at all. In fact, it would require a lot of hard work not to find it.

The entrance itself is quite impressive, set in a large cliff, blocking a shallow dry valley. The entrance series consists of stable breakdown. Somebody had obviously been doing a lot of digging amongst the boulders to get through, the good draught here would have spurred them on. The rock pile was short lived and gave way (little sense!) to clear verdose canyon, a bit squirmy in places. Ten minutes of this brought us to the one and only eight metre pitch, pre-rigged from the week before though minus the abseil rope of course.

The drop was into more pleasant passage, which we followed downstream, to an even larger bit of cave. The trick was to exit left into a parallel tunnel, via an obvious sand bank. Upstream, or at least to the right, the new passage attenuated into sandhills and onto yet another dry streamway. Here we found an empty camp pie tin and a very good place to leave an ash tray too, it was! Finding the way into Exit Cave had been easy, now came the hard bit.

The Camp Pie Circuit was very nice - climbing out of the streamway we were to see some great stuff. So nice was it in fact, that we did it twice! Anyway, we eventually found the right way on and emerged into a large stream passage, carrying what is believed to be the water from the Western Creek Swallet. Though it simply means following the stream from this point, there were plenty of boulder piles and trog marks in every direction, to mislead us.

Generally we found our way through this section fairly easily, with everyone taking a turn at the "on on". Only the bugle was missing. The passage grew to stupendous proportions and with some relief we arrived at Western Grand Fissure. At last we knew precisely where we were. Exit is normally an impressive place, but our increasing tiredness made it a drag. The D'entrecasteux was on the rise, forcing us onto those dubious logs at the "bridge".

We emerged on darkness after less than six hours underground. A top trip that left us feeling very satisfied, a state that not even the slog back up the hill could dull. Trev will probably be very upset that we didn't retrieve his six millimetre caving rope.

NICK HUME

ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE.....

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[illegible]

WHISKY DRAW: DRAWN 5 AUGUST DR SYNTAX HOTEL

8:30 PM.

SLIDES AT THE WHEATSHEAF HOTEL 19 August