

**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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## EDITORIAL

Well the skiing season's been great, but has just about had it by now. Sea diving is pretty mundane and a bit unseasonal with the gusty spring weather. Cave diving is pretty mundane and a bit unseasonal with the gusty spring weather. Cave diving is pretty marginal with the onset of rain. Canoeing and rafting is reaching it's peak at the moment but gets a bit repetitive after a while. Rock climbing is currently a bit draughty and patches of remnant snow in the gullies are definitely hazardous for walkoffs. Bushwalking is, let's face it, downright boring and writing SPIEL editorials is even more tedious. So that leaves us with one option to do anything exciting - let's get out and do some caving!

Nick Hume et al  
Spiel editing person(s)

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## EXCITING NEWS, PLUS SOME PLAIN OLD TRIVIA.....

COVER SHOT: Diving in Black Hole at Mount Gambier.

It's enough to make some TCC members turn on their bar stools. Seems as though we're getting a bit of rare competition in cave exploration these days, from of all quarters, the Forestry Commission! Field staffer, Rod Walters (himself something of a caving addict) noticed a bit of karst topography while working on an access line near Mount Cripps in North West Tassie.

He followed this up with a systematic search of the area, in company with workmates, discovering numerous entrances, one of which led to a large chamber, over 10 metres high in places. Protracted exploration of the chamber, yielded three major side passages which Rod proceeded to survey. "Philrod cave" may be the debut of a potentially significant caving area. Good work Rod, maybe we can shout you a beer sometime....!

What's happening at Christmas time??

Speaking of bar stools, the club annual counter tea ... errh, dinner is due on September 25th. The venue is Walters, (not a pub!), an excellent eatery situate on the junction of Harrington and Collins street. The proprietor is a member of TCC, bless his heart, so no expense will be spared in providing us with a lavish gastronomic extravaganza. Perhaps we could have after dinner laddering practice (the dining room is on the first floor) as an option to mints. In either case the opportunity is too good to pass up, so establish a firm interest in going, NOW, by contacting the president (a first rate chef in his own right!) Trevor Wailes on (002) 344862 or any of the club committee for that matter: Nick, Leigh, Stefan, Chris, etc..... In fact by the time you read this, the dinner will no doubt have been eaten, digested and disposed of in the usual way! (And I believe it was a most sumptuous affair with much frivolity and other events....)

ANM are pushing for a few cave finds themselves, with a bit of work planned up the Eight Road, later in the year. Who knows what might be turned up, another Growling Swallet or three would be useful....

Trev's been working very hard at nights lately, doing a bit of "snowdropping" with the result that a whole range of club teeshirts are now available. Creative cave, Martyn Carnes, has provided some bemusing art work, guaranteed to shatter any ardent cave conservationist. They are of good quality and come in art-deco black. An ideal attention grabber if you don't mind people staring open-mouthedly at your chest all the time. Available at meetings for a bargain.

On the subject of extracurricular activity, Nick has done a considerable amount of work on the Club equipment of late, with the result that we now have an astounding quantity of functional personal type club owned gear. The helmets stay on your head, the lamp heads stay on the helmets and as an added bonus the battery belts don't go twang in the night!

The meeting of the 19th of August saw an excellent turnout with entertainment provided by some slides of the local cave diving scene. Stuey got in on the act with some photos from the search and rescue exercise that turned into the real thing (his group were diverted to look for a missing radio reporter - deja vu!). Trev put a few slides through too, amusing reminiscences at the end of a great night. Forthcoming ideas for trips include rigging and exploring the Chairman, further exploration of Ida Bay and in the depths of Growling, plus the possibility of a sojourn to certain other parts of the state. Get togethers are held at the Wheatsheaf Hotel, 8pm or thereabouts, on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. A great chance to catch up with the latest gossip and learning who has been discovering what lately. Just seek out anybody who seems to be whispering...

Eagle-eyed Stuart has procured a set of Swiss decompression tables for use by the TCC Cave Diving Group. These tables were developed specifically for Swiss scuba divers! Though an apparent anachronism in terms, the Swiss have had an avid interest in diving mountain lakes for many years. The similarity of such conditions to the diving of cave sumps in Tasmania at altitude, is of primary interest. Without delving into pressure tolerances and half times of tissues here, these tables provide a little "leniency" and offer some alternatives, for such ventures as diving the second sump in Junee

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Resurgence. While such a margin is not likely to bring on a sudden rash of fresh discoveries, it will allow continued exploration with greater confidence of safety. Decompression problems being what they are, going anywhere near a second air space in June would be fraught with danger...

Keep an eye out for April's Australian Geographic, next year. The edition promises to be packed with caving articles, principally of the SUSS expedition (sponsored by AG) to the North East Ridge of Mount Anne. Other cave articles will be included, making it a collector's item. Might have to get literate and buy a copy myself...

John Salt, TCC member who has emigrated to Sydney, has recently sent us an edited copy of all articles relating to the Growling Swallet system. These were culled from past Spiels, as part of a membership project for his newly adopted club SSS. It is quite a sizeable work, well worth the perusal and should inspire some of our newer (and older!) cavers. Good stuff John, maybe we could get you to edit the TCC Explorations Journal, just to prove it isn't a myth....

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**WARNING - CZECH YOUR ROPES.....**

Earlier this year, a visiting team of Czechoslovakian cavers left a considerable quantity of rope behind on their departure. For them this was a significant sacrifice (but easier than taking it home again) and for us an apparent bonus.

Recent trips to Midnight Hole and The Chairman have perhaps proven this to be a somewhat mixed blessing.

During the Midnight Hole trip, the double ropes used on the last pitch (one Czech and the other an Edelrid) became crossed while passing through a rappel rack. No problem there as this is not an uncommon happening, particularly with people new to abseiling. However, as the crossed ropes passed through the rack the sheath of the Czech rope tore, apparently because of the added tension at the point of crossing, and some of the core immediately protruded through the hole. While the abseil continued, the sheath tore completely, the two ends being separated by about 150 mm. The core remained intact and the sheath did not slip further.

Another Czech rope has been used to rig the entrance pitch of The Chairman and a recent trip there found it to be somewhat audible during abseiling! It creaked under the load - something ropes do not normally do. A bit like creaky snow on a mountain.....

Stuart Nicholas

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**Letter to the Editor**

I have been caving for a good many years in various countries and have been involved in a number of policies relating to constitutional rules, codes of ethics and conservation. I am prompted by the article

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"Ida Bay Review", Spiel 227 pp 4,5 to take issue with the assertion that exploration in the Ida Bay area has tended to be haphazard and out of hand. Parties from VSA have visited the area over many years and have been impressed with the systematic recording and coordination by TCC's area coordinator Arthur Clarke.

VSA trip leaders have liaised with Arthur to ascertain areas warranting further investigation and have assisted in the progressive exploration of the region. I assume that TCC and SCS trips to the area do likewise.

Whilst on the subject of Ida Bay, I was disappointed in reading Nick Hume's article pp 8,9 of the same issue of the Spiel, that he did not give recognition to those who were responsible for the discovery and opening of IB120 "Valley Entrance".

The line "..... somebody had obviously been doing a lot of digging ....." seems a bit inadequate, especially when Nick was personally informed of the discovery by those involved and invited to participate on the inaugural through trip. Trevor Wailes and Arthur Clarke did just that.

Without wanting to labour the point or hammer Nick in particular, I believe that in publishing articles, authors should make every endeavour to acknowledge the efforts of previous workers, as expressed in item 1B of the ASF Code of Ethics.

I will send you an account of the efforts of Daryl Carr and myself for that period of time if you would like to publish it; you may also like to publish my letter.

VSA shall be down at Ida Bay for the Melbourne Cup weekend staying at the railway huts. Anyone wishing to join us will be most welcome as always.

Yours in caving - Lou Williams VSA

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EXIT CAVE - 22 FEBRUARY, 1987

PARTY: Chris Davies, James Davis, Richard, Paul.

We entered Exit via a side passage and got to the main stream passage fairly quickly. The river was in flood and we couldn't walk across it as is usual. Richard stripped to his jocks and swam across in the ball freezing water. A make shift bridge was built from some other old disintegrated bridge (a tale of two bridges...! - Ed). We all gingerly crossed this with no one falling into the murky depths below. About 50 metres down the track we had to turn back because of the raging torrent.

Once outside again, Chris started bush bashing - the bug bit badly today and he was determined to find a cave! After about half an hour Chris found a bit of a hole (where was the rest of it? - Ed). He bashed his way past a few rocks at the entrance and came across a promising pitch. We didn't have the gear or time to explore further,



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so went home. As it turned out the cave was a goer! It was later named "Old Ditch Road".

James Davis

A REPORT PRUNED TO THE BONE... BONE PIT - FLORENTINE VALLEY

22 MARCH, 1987

PARTY: Chris Davies, Marcus Mariott, Andrew Bayne and James Davis.

Great weather for the Florentine Valley - it was really dry! We had a good look about before going down the 23 metre second pitch. Coming out was no problem despite it being the first pitch that James, Marcus and Andrew had prusiked underground. The cave was very dry and made for quite a pleasant albeit short trip.

James Davis

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FLORENTINE VALLEY - THAT FAMILY FAVOURITE: GORMENGHAST.....

12 APRIL, 1987

PARTY: Chris Davies, James Davis, Andrew and Paul.

It was great weather for caving - a cool cloudy day and sure to rain! Paul couldn't get his super kool "drive it like a 4WD" / Toyota sports hatch-back to the end of the track because the bull-rushes were too high!

After a short walk to the end of the vehicular track we proceeded towards Gormenghast. The track was well marked but is starting to get fairly overgrown with some nice thick patches of stinging nettles.

Chris found the cave with no problems. Slithering into the loose entrance we got wet very quickly as the cold and strongly flowing stream persisted in pouring down our necks. It was a good fast descent and involved (among other things) climbing down a short 4 metre pitch. Chris rigged a ladder - the only one used on the trip - at the next similar short pitch that was accessed via a bit of a squeeze. We went on.....

A short smoko at the bottom where it all levels out gave us a minute to catch our breath, but not for long! We could all hear Chris calling but couldn't find him. After some thought we discovered that he had gone down an "impossibly" tight squeeze. Andrew and I went down after some courage was mustered - it wasn't so bad after all.

We finally got to the sump after passing some reasonably good formation and a short crawl. At the sump Andrew relieved himself in his wet suit and soon after we turned back. Back at the squeeze .... I knew it was a mistake coming down. It looked worse from below than it did from above. Chris made it up fairly quickly, but it seemed like an eternity for Andrew and I.

After we pulled the ladder up from the second pitch it was obvious that we needed a ladder for the one we were now looking at and had free climbed on our descent. Once again Chris climbed the pitch with a big struggle for success at the top. We soon were all at the top of this pitch with nothing to stop us from getting out quickly. Everyone was at the surface after just over 4 hours underground.

James Davis

AUGUST 1987 - A MOUNT GAMBIER ODYSSEY

I bopped into Adelaide, to be met by Rolan, who had been doing an admiral job seeking access permits for diving many of the sinkholes in the Mount Gambier region. Just about all of the holes are of extremely limited access, particularly at the moment, and planning any cave diving at all requires delicate and lengthy negotiation.

Fortunately, we had a 4WD Toyota flat-tray at our disposal thanks to the considerable generosity of our grandfather. Saturday saw us on the 400km drag to "the Mount", arriving in time for a late evening warm up dive in Ewens Ponds; a series of springs discharging 80 million cubic metres of fresh water per year from the unconfined aquifer. Ewens is fabulously clear and teeming with all manner of biota. A haven for divers especially for those of a photographic bent, which we were.

The final pond in the series has a small lead running of into the bedrock. This was, typically, blocked off to prevent access, but that could not detract from the pleasure of drifting through the place. We emerged on dusk and headed off immediately to a dive in Allendale, such was the pressure imposed by our tight schedule.

Allendale is a category 3 (CDAA standard) dive and is situated slap in the middle of the main road in the township of Allendale. An attempt was made in early years to fill the thing in, which fortunately did not succeed. In fact the place has become an attraction for non-diving tourists.

Underwater, the cave drops off steeply to a reasonable sized chamber. Even flooded caves aren't safe from vandals, the interior suffering from mindless graffiti carved into the soft walls with Abalone knives. Obviously not the work of true cavers. The dive was short, but refreshing at the end of a long day.

Next on the list was Gouldens Hole, only Category 1, but quite reasonably sized and typical of many sinkholes in the area. We reeled down to the bottom at -24 metres, finding a vertical fissure continuing on. I doubt if anyone has been desperate enough to push this, in spite of the new extension available at "The Mount". It would require side mounted tanks and radar vision at the very least. On ascent, we noticed a further tight lead, apparently enlarging beyond. This was scarcely visible under the rubble pushed into the place by road engineers.

In the afternoon we dived Swim Thru, a short but pretty cave, before moving on to something a bit more demanding. One Tree drops away to -42 metres. It is huge, dark and very gloomy. My Tasmanian-made-and-tested dive torch, imploded at the deepest point, with disturbing acoustical effects. We spent 13 minutes decompressing, a not unreasonable time in the relatively warm waters of South Australia.

Tuesday was Englebrechts, arguably one of the few true cave dives hereabouts, involving a penetration of several hundred metres, more reminiscent of Nullabor conditions. We teamed up with Andrew Cox, a CDAA research group supervisor, for the dive. The cave was excellent:

flying through liquid space bound in a kaleidoscopic corridor of rock. Numerous leads were noticed but we lacked the air reserve to do anything about them. A situation hopefully to be remedied on planned future dives.

To gain some further tolerance to the insidious, but not unpleasant effects of nitrogen narcosis, we ventured to Ela Elap. This is a big circular hole bombing off to extreme depth. We followed a shotline to the floor at -44 metres, tying on a linereel within sight of a decomposing sheep carcase. Descending further underneath an overhang to -50 metres at the deepest point. An unaffected fish and yabbie were our only companions in this hostile habitat. A splendid dive, incurring some penalty in the form of a 20 minute decompression schedule.

Barnaloot Station has three of the more popular "biggies" within its environs. Special permission must be obtained from Reg Watson, the station manager, in order to dive them. Ten-Eighty is a large submerged tunnel; 30 metres by 15 metres diameter, penetrating some 80 metres of bedrock to a depth of -51 metres. We left a deco tank on the shot line and swam off into the consuming darkness. The place is so vast there is little awareness of roof, walls or floor. We dropped to a huge breakdown boulders, swimming through many of these to "The Pinch" at -45 metres. Rolan proceeded to take a photograph while I proceeded to have an hallucination! A 15 minute bottom time, limited by the safety margin of a single airtank, is scarcely adequate to appreciate the awesome scale of such a sink hole.

The lengthy decompression stop was alleviated somewhat by circumnavigating the rim of the hole at -3 metres (that's not prescribed in my BSAC manual! - Editor) following intriguing mats of algae and observing the divergent image of the sinkhole's surrounds, refracted from the surface of the water. Residual nitrogen time mitigated against any further deep dives that day, so we moved further afield to find shallower prospects.

The Pines is a category 3 hole with a deceptively small entrance pool. Beyond, it enlarges dramatically. A guideline is hardly necessary in view of the conditions; swimming into crystal clear chamber, shafts of green light still penetrating from the entrance. Again, the refracted image of surrounding pine forest was enthralling. Pity the cave was not more extensive.

Fossil Cave is the sight of a very rich Pleistocene bone deposit. It is of similar form to The Pines, but only 16 metres deep. We found the water phenomenally clear, even by Mount Gambier standards.

Black Hole is the largest sink hole in the district, the entrance being some 50 metres in diameter. A tunnel of matching proportions penetrates to -54 metres depth. Overhanging walls require the use of a ten metre ladder to give access to the water. We dived to -36 metres, not seeing as much of the hole as we would have liked.

The Three Sisters is an advanced category 3 dive. It is actually located inside a real cave, requiring a bit of caving tackle and trogging to reach the sump. The minuscule entrance is virtually in the gutter by the road side, resulting in a predictable accumulation of broken bottles and sundry other rubbish, at the bottom of the pitch.



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On the other hand, proximity to the road assisted in rigging, the bumper bar being used as an anchor point for the ladder.

We negotiated a few rotting sheep carcasses while swimming from some interesting surface scum, to an attractive and unaffected area beneath. A tightish silt prone rift gives the dive an advanced category 3 rating. Beyond, a pleasant section of passage / chamber provides a nice swim-around.

After five days of continuous diving, we had reached a saturation point with our enthusiasm (and probably nitrogen as well!). We nevertheless forced ourselves into Little Blue, another road side sink hole. The usual rubbish accumulation at the bottom is diversified by a "driving course" including real car bodies, No Parking signs and other equally unbelievable exotica. There was even a garden gnome in the form of a concrete penguin! (Ahhhh..... the penguin still lives! - Editor) and a useful patio chair. Despite this, the visibility at -40 metres was surprisingly good and it turned out to be an interesting dive.

We returned to The Pines to take heaps of photos of the light effects; vibrant beams, not unlike the aurora. We pushed to the silt/boulder floor at -27 metres. This dive concluded a highly enjoyable caving holiday. Funny, you always feel you want to come back again someday, to do more.

All the dives involved sidemounted tanks, an arrangement I found preferable from the point of view of weight balance and for utility in negotiating squeezes. Sinkhole diving techniques espoused by the CDAA owe their origin and philosophy to open water (sea) diving. By contrast, the techniques adopted by divers in Tasmanian caves are largely derived from a British sump diving model.

STEFAN EBERHARD

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22nd of August: D'Entrecasteaux River and Environs.

Those present: Trevor Wailes, Stefan Eberhard and Nick Hume.

We had been knocking back red wine by the bucket on the previous night, in honour of Leigh and Stef's birthdays. Not the most conducive preparation for a day's bush bash, but we managed to leave Hobart by 9am, which was not a bad effort.

Trev set a pace marginally below a sprint on a track above the old quarry. This went on unabated until the cresting of Marble Hill. From that point we bashed on down to Great Expectations, collecting the two remaining ropes from an exploration stash, thereabouts. Rather than confine ourselves to the few remaining prospects in the immediate area, we decided to cast fate to the wind and push on into the relative unknown.

Down the gully we went. Numerous tight fissures and bluffs were scoured, but none proved particularly remarkable. The eastern side was coated with vile vegetation, notably cutting grass. This deflected us down to the plain, into comparatively benign horizontal scrub. We reluctantly navigated on, noting the odd doline, to the D'Entrecasteaux

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River. A stove we had carried with us providing some well received caffeine spins.

The river was followed until it disappeared underground, after a length of gorge. We lacked the wetsuits that would be essential in following it at water level, preferring to stay within the surface glade that approximated its subterranean course. The streams resurged before long, suggesting an interesting through swim in low water levels (or a very interesting swim during floods!). A north-south fissure was encountered, corresponding to a minor gully from uphill. This drained a small quantity of river water, that resurged from the bottom of tight passage (heading towards Exit), but sumped very soon after.

Along further glade were truncated meanders of a higher fossil watercourse. One of these held a draught and I followed it for a couple of hundred metres to a promising chamber, that lead only to another broaching of the surface. Shortly thereafter, a quite impressive entrance enticed us into yet another short lived through trip.

The D'Entrecasteaux River resurged again, splitting at one point to drain into a narrow passage trending into the hill. This is the source of a major river entry halfway along Exit's initial passage, but did not look very navigable from the surface side.

We followed the plain/slope juncture, rather than the river. Numerous greasy logs had our pathfinder, Trev, reeling like a punch drunk fighter. He was first to spot the entrance track to Exit and was still enthusiastic enough to lead in the race back up to the quarry. Of course, our car was down at the bottom of the quarry road!. We covered an interesting area on this trip, one that has not been trogged for quite a considerable time.

NICK HUME

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16th August 1987      Growling Swallet Annual General Maintenance.

Cave "Mechanics and Janitors": Martyn Carnes, Leigh Douglas and Nick Hume.

A jaunt in Growling Swallet seemed a friendly way of easing into some August Holiday exercise. Incredibly bulky packs, full of photographic gear, homemade ladders and tins of baked beans (for restocking the emergency cache), added a bit of handicap and masochism to the exercise. Water levels were up a bit, lending some dynamicism to photography in the streamway. Coordinating two slave flashes among the waterfalls soon had me croaking like Neville Wran, and was chewing up too much of the day, so we decided to neglect art in favour of pushing on.

Rolan had actually replaced Bunty's "pirate rigging" in Refuge Aven and Trapdoor Aven with some Bonwicks for the proposed Frownland push trip. This defeated our reason for being there to some extent. However, we re-replaced the Bonwicks with homemade jobs, which have the potential to last a very long time and at least free the Bonwick ladders for use elsewhere.

The homemade ladders utilized old 8 mm cave rope bits, knotted inside P.V.C. or aluminium pipe rungs. Garden hose on the rigging

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protects the rope on anchor points and edges. They seem to work better than normal cave ladders, due to the larger rungs, and stretch is fairly minimal, but they are despicably bulky for anything other than fixed emplacement.

We resupplied the cache and continued on down the Trapdoor stream. Installing a handline at the return climb some 50 or so metres, back from the sump. Another handline was fixed on the eroded mudbank leading into Herpes III, making this greasy obstacle easier for future trippers.

Our return trip was something of a garbage run. We still managed to gather full packs, including such things as rope rungs and bits of wood from Bunty's ladders, the rotting contents of the last emergency cache, plus the two Bonwicks. Not an overly exciting trip, but a practical one that highlighted the need to get fit for future Growling pushes.

NICK HUME

