



KING RAT SERIES, A-A-K, MT. ANNE

# SPELEO SPIEL

Newsletter of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club

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## NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

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### Charity Begins at Home.....

Those benevolent godfathers of the local cave scene, Chris Davies and Nick Hume, are building up a few sets of club SRT gear to encourage membership of beginner cavers. Let's face it, the biggest stumbling block to getting started in this bizarre game is the buying and assembling of appropriate personal caving gear. Providing club gear of this type will give novices value for their membership and enable them to come on some of the harder trips.

If you have spare jumars, descenders of any sort, oval screw-gate or plain karabiners, indeed anything that might be relevant, it would be appreciated if you would consider donating or even selling the stuff at reasonable cost, to the club. This gear will be set aside strictly for any training trips people would like to run and will not disappear into the collections of avaricious types (Trev - be warned!).

Anyone overcome with such feelings of charity are welcome to ring Chris (391419 ah) or Nick (251934 ah).

Who knows - we may train up whole armies of assault cavers and even have major expeditions to the mainland over Christmas....?!!

Nick Hume

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### Letter to the Editor

Comrades,

Re your article "Czech your Ropes" in Speleo Spiel 231 - this is yet another attempt to denigrate our glorious socialist democracy by picking on our native consumer commodities. Has The Editor considered:

- that imperialist ropes also suffer from sheath tear, when they have become damaged in rock fall;

its a bit early (or late), but - Merry Christmas...

- that flabby bourgeoisie rope would place all the load bearing labour on the stout rope of the workers, when used in combination.

Perhaps the abseiler concerned was straining his ears in fear of hearing the "Internationale" when the alleged creaking sounds occurred! The development of super-quiet ropes, is in any case, in flagrant contravention of our open spirit of glasnost. We await verification.

Nikhail Humor  
(Krasnji Okjabre Spelogicka)

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### Ubiquitous Underground Utterances

There seems to be a fair chance of the TCC "summer" expedition to PB actually happening - its not Bluff after all. Trev is floating around organising boats, Nick is thinking about it and others are, well, just are.... Potential expeditioners may be interested in the new 1:25000 maps being produced by the Department of Lands, Parks and Wildlife. The production of the sheets of the PB area was recommended by the Tasmanian Cave and Karst Research Group. Single colour contour sheets are apparently available now with full colour topo. sheets due out early 1988. Mexico expeditioners - eat your heart out!

Some members may recall a Swiss film crew headed by one Gerald Favre visiting Tasmania early 1986. With (a little...) help from a few of our bods, some excellent footage depicting the best of Tasmania's varied cave and karst features was shot. The crew continued on from here and visited many parts of Australia including most of the major karst areas, filming as they went. Recently the result of their Oz expedition arrived at Stu's place in the form of a video copy of the film. Well worth seeing sometime - when Stu's house is back together after some minor renovation work, we'll organise a night for a video viewing. Stay tuned to the "Forward Program" (the what??) for the date; better still go, along to a meeting at the Wheatsheaf (1st and 3rd Wednesday nights of each month) and find out for sure.

Apologies for the lateness of the last few Speleo Spiels. A problem or two (quite within our control!) caused a hiccup or two in the mailing system, to say nothing of the editor! Anyway, hang out no longer - your fix of Speleo Trivia should arrive in your mail box fairly regularly again....

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### Santa Claus is alive and well!!

Thanks to the considerable generosity of the Hobart Paddy Pallin shop the club now has four complete sets of SRT gear (!!!!) for training trip use. They are intended for just that, introducing beginners to the delights of vertical caving and providing incentive for them to join the club. Abused, the gear will rapidly deteriorate and not be replaced. Used sensibly and for the purpose they were designed for, the rigs should last a considerable time and be an asset to the club.

A charge is still necessary to cover wear and tear: \$2.00 for club members involved on a club trip and \$5.00 for non-members. Leaders



October, 1987

its a bit early (or late), but - Merry Christmas...

please ensure that this fee is paid to the president of TCC (an ex-Santa himself) and that the gear is returned clean and in good repair promptly after the trip.

For those who have been on a few trips, the club rigs are not an alternative to making up your own rig.... For this, the Paddy Pallin shop is worthy of your support as they have the best selection of caving gear around and have been very kind to us in supplying the Jumars and descenders for the club rigs at an exceptionally reasonable cost. Thanks again Mike!

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Do your hands say "caving"? Read on and all will be revealed.....

..... "Sex and caving have a lot in common. Cavers are constantly desiring small dark places within the firm body of mother Earth. After much scheming and planning late into the night, the actual caving experience consists of exhausting periods of groping around in the dark, much grunting and groaning, followed by short bursts of rapture and enthusiastic describing of satisfaction to others afterwards. This is not to suggest cavers are a bunch of deviates, but ... well, perhaps they are just a little strange."

..... "It would be far from amusing to be underground with only natural light - there is no natural light..... It's the sort of light which doesn't allow you to see the finger that you place on top of your nose..... Up, down, in or out have no meaning."

..... "Getting to the surface after a session of caving gives you a natural high."

#### "Caving Comfort Tips

- Caving can be strenuous - wear shorts and light top under overalls.
- Boots should be strong but comfortable.
- After a day of rock scrambling, hands become chapped and dry, so take some moisturiser or wear light gloves.
- Fresh, long-life batteries are essential for your personal torch."

So now we all know! The above stuff appeared in an article detailing adventure holidays in a "health" magazine. Just don't forget that moisturiser.....! Not much more one can say really.

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The Australian - 23/6/1987

#### "Largest Lake Below Ground to be Explored

A team of 40 South African divers, scientists and speleologists are to begin exploring next month what they are convinced is the world's largest underground lake, discovered late last year in the north of Namibia.

The South African Speleological Association is keeping the exact location secret until the cave, about 60m underground and accessible only through a small fissure, has been properly mapped.

The speleologists, or cavers, who discovered it have named it Drachenhauchloch, or Dragon Breath Hole. Mr Charles Maxwell, who is to lead the three week expedition, says the largest underground lake listed in the Guinness Book of Records is the lost lake of Tennessee, which has a surface area of 18ha.

He said that Dragon Breath lake probably had an area of just over 2ha.

The leader of the speleological expedition that discovered the lake, Mr Roger Ellis, said the team had been investigating a depression pinpointed on an aerial photograph when they found part of a cave entrance choked by big rocks.

Removing the stones, they found a hole big enough to squeeze through.

'We dropped down into a small chamber and walked along an inclined passage for about 10m,' Mr Ellis said. 'It ended in a small rift no more than 60cm wide with a metre-high boulder jammed in the bottom.'

'Climbing on to the boulder, I was blasted by a hot humid rush of air... We threw stones down. They bounced for about two seconds. There was a two-second hush before the big spladoosh.'

Team member Mr Adam Duffin then abseiled down the inky-black 20m freefall to the water below, carrying a rubber inner tube.

His shouts echoed as though he was in a cathedral. He had found an immense lake chamber with no apparent shore and with only one wall visible about 20m away, Mr Ellis said.

Mr Duffin disappeared as he floated around the lake in his tyre, and then Mr Ellis followed him down.

'What a sight,' said Mr Ellis. 'As I dropped through the hole in the roof of the chamber I saw Adam's light shining like a beacon.'

He said afterwards he thought the lake was endless. He became totally disorientated.

The lake, which the team says has warm, crystal-clear water, includes a small beach encrusted with stalagmites.

The expedition is to be filmed by a Swiss team for world wide distribution."

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June Resurgence - 18 April, 1987.

Party: Chris Davies, Max Jeffries and James Davis.

Today turned out a bit of a joke but a bit was achieved. Chris and myself had planned to do a bit of looking around up at the slip contact. However our hopes were cut short when we were refused entry at the gate ..... ANM had cancelled Chris' permit. Noel at the gate tried his best to find out if we could still get in but to no avail.

Chris decided to go visit Max for a while. We ended up having a cup of coffee and quite a long talk. We talked about everything from retired speleos to lost caves.. Max ended up taking us out to the Junee Resurgence looking for an old unexplored cave up in the hills above the Resurgence. After hunting in, under, around and through the Dog-wood trees for what seemed like a lifetime, Max finally found the hole. We attacked the prospect - maybe we would actually get some caving done, even if it was only for a few minutes. This apparently virgin hole went down about a metre and then opened up nicely - my hopes rose... A short passage to the left divided into two. Unfortunately each only went a few metres. There were even a couple of straws that looked more like helictites because the roof had dropped a bit at one end. The short trip gave us all a bit of caving fever.

Shortly after we started looking for the "big connection to the Resurgence" Chris found another hole. The only problem was that it was a little little... I was determined to make the big connection so we dug out while Max foraged around the hills some more. After an hour or so Chris managed to squeeze through the slightly larger opening - it looked very promising inside but after ten metres or so choked off...

Looks like the "big connection" will have to be made some other day!

James Davis

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September 13, 1987 - Rolan Eberhard, Trevor Wailes and The Chairman.

Once upon a time the Chairman was a popular venue for a hard caving trip. In fact it became so popular for a hard caving trip that it became unpopular. It had been pushed and in part surveyed by some of the best cavers in all of Australia. Its distance from a viable car park and the disgusting uphill / downhill slog on a less than adequate track made for a definite commitment to cave exploration.

Reaching the awe inspiring entrance shaft and not being able to view the depths without leaning off an overhanging tree offering maximum exposure, must have weakened the knees of some intrepid would-be explorers. The trips of long ago, some lasting 16 hours, failed to find conclusion - the cave was deemed infinite! So in the face of infinity The Chairman lost favour as other caves being discovered were presumed to be finite and therefore more rewarding!

In the middle ages, a party of Tony White, Mike Martyn and Trevor Wailes ventured into The Chairman in an effort to prove the earth was round and The Chairman had an end. On the way in Trev came close to dying of old age, Mike's metallic knees failed from rust and metal fatigue and Tony announced he had reached a conclusion! Trev had got lost and had a sleep waiting for the returning hardier and finally all three exited the cave and derigged it in a total of 9 hours.

Now in the age of Greenies and ANM Freedom the Chairman is looked at anew. Its still very much as it was before: disgusting overgrown track (particularly so on this day), large gaping entrance shaft, same hairy look down spot.

October, 1987

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The cave had been rigged two weeks prior by Stef and Nick - a good effort which saved us the hassle of carrying ropes and wasting time rigging. Rolan plumbed the depths first and seemed to take a while to shout "Off rope". Outside the cave, a very wet viciously windy day; in the cave on the first pitch I discovered what had held Rolan up - first a knot on a greasy 70 degree slope and 4 metres away horizontally was a redirection. Cunningly interesting! A test well perceived and executed with care, lots of strong arm stuff and a little thought and then a nice freehang 0.5 metre off the wall for the last 50 metres. Some of the knots and rebelayes further in the cave proved interesting too.

Its amazing how much you remember when you have to, after an absence of rope work for over six months... On gaining the chamber below the last pitch, Rolan had a brew ready and we discussed how much we both remembered about rope work.

On my previous visit the stream bed had been dry but now a healthy creek flowed; we followed this into the first area of breakdown and promptly lost the trail.

I can understand why some of the early trips had been so long - route finding and negotiating breakdown areas must have initially been very time consuming. Picking up the trail again after two damp low crawls, more rock pile and into the first chamber. Some of the chambers are exceptionally spacious and well decorated, however sections between them tend to be confined either in rift or uncomfortable rock pile. Cairns and blue track marking tape point to the usual route, however we found a few bypasses and detours which may be potentially easier. On my last trip in I'd foolishly taken a japara which had been abandoned in maybe the third or fourth chamber on the way. When returning it had become heavily disguised as a rock and avoided detection, and so spent four years or more in situ. This lost but not forgotten piece of apparel was rediscovered and noted for our return. Some will say this was my only reason for being in the cave; to be honest at this stage I couldn't really say what the hell had brought me back and after more chambers, crawls, rifts and grovels in the stream the reason for being there became more obscure. Some distance into the cave after a particularly nasty section of rift, followed by more grovelling in the stream beneath rockfall, Rolan explored up into boulders rather than follow the blue taped route through a low section of stream passage. He found a route up through boulders into a large decorated chamber with a blue taped route leading out of the far end. He had found a small bypass but after a smoko we decided our knees and bodies had had enough and began our return. Packs we left earlier on the route in, were retrieved, as was the japara, and after a few photos in the initial stream passage, a brew up and feed, Rolan headed up the first short pitch. The six month rest my rig had had caused no problem and I found I actually enjoyed going up the rope. The entrance 86 metre ascent took a little longer than planned but with rebelayes, knots and Russian rope all went smoothly. The bush bash back to the car in the sodden rain forest was easier than expected too. On our return we were asked how far we had got! In The Chairman its impossible to say - a quarter or half the way in - as there are so few landmarks it all looks the same, and where's the end anyway?!

Trevor Wailes

October, 1987

its a bit early (or late), but - Merry Christmas...Midnight Hole - A Right Royal Ritual - Saturday September 19, 1987

Party: Various bodies from the Royal Hobart Hospital (staff, not patients!), Lew Mitchelmore (TCC), plus Stu the intrepid leader...

A couple of abseiling sessions at Rocky Tom and then Sphinx Rock on Mt Wellington, initially "just for the fun of it", lead to the idea of doing something real. Midnight Hole seemed the obvious trip, so off we all went. The usual rain plus ankle deep slop on the track made for some silly comments on the walk in, but all was forgiven once the "We're going in there ???" entrance was seen.

The descent was gentile in pace and uneventful, except for a problem with the Czech rope on the last pitch. This was described in Speleo Spiel 231. A couple of dieticians in the party made for a potentially interesting lunch break some way down the cave. I guess its a matter of "do as they say, not as they do!" The food was great but not quite what one would expect from a bunch of health professionals!

The intrepid leader caused a few missed heart beats when it became apparent he did not know the precise route out... Glow worm goggling was all the rage before the team finally stumbled into the evening darkness and plodded back along the now unnoticed soggiess of the track. A good time was had by all, even if one or two Saturday night parties were missed!

Stuart Nicholas

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Victory 75 - A Loss in 87 ??

25 October, 1987

Nick Hume, Leigh Douglas, Trevor Wailes, James Davis and Stephen Bunton.

The non-worry about permits and access for the Junee Quarry Road gave caving a refreshing new breath of life. Walking out to the cave for an hour and a half in the heat of the best day there's ever been in the Maydena area, soon put paid to any vitality vibes. We needed to make a slight detour to The Chairman to collect the Czech ropes for this trip. Yes, we were going to do the cave on those un-checked ropes!! At this point I almost mutinied in search of a consistent policy towards these life threatening ladder-alternatives.

In fact the first trips to the cave were on ladder and except for a mainlander's SRT trip in 1976 the cave has laid dormant ever since. It was Nick's fault that interest was rejuvenated but his previous trip fizzed when all the rope for the final 70m pitch was used getting down the entrance non-cave verticality. Yes, a squalid vertical tube with an intriguing paucity of belays and surplus of rub points makes up the first part of the cave. A good ledge at the top of the final pitch provided a comfortable sitting spot where we watched James become initiated in caving TCC style. At the tender wet behind the ears age, he's already learned to put in bolts! If only cave conservation could be taught so easily.

My gripe here is that the placement of the bolt makes the cave no safer - we then rigged the cave with Czech rope. Not wanting to appear a winger. I went down, luckily at the rack-regulated (ie non-



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bone smashing) rate. Nick and Trev took to some ethical cave extending down near the sump but failed to even reach the squeeze where Mike March disrobed over a decade ago. Breeze or no-breeze I knew the cave wasn't a goer and that I was. I left as quickly as possible (while the ropes lasted). I even managed to overtake Leigh who felt she wasn't in condition for a long prusik. Why can't I be content to say I'm out of form?

On the surface I first wasted time trying to bush bash through the mirror maze of sapling regrowth to John Bull road "only 20 minutes away on the blazed trail". The job fatigued me to the point of slumber at the cave entrance. Leigh's emergence woke me. Next I was put to work pulling ropes to appease my guilty conscience and then relegated to carrying them back to the car.

Champagne and Chicken in the dusk purple hues of the Maydena Hills finished the day, and me, off completely. It was then that Leigh let me know it was 7.30pm not 6.30pm - daylight saving had started and I was suffering jet lag from the hour's sleep I was ripped off by last night.

Stephen Bunton

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### 23rd November - End of Exams Workout at Ida Bay

Martyn Carnes and Nick Hume

We had been well and truly "worked out" by Cyclops Pot the previous day (and part of the night!), hence a lethargic start to reconnoitering the area above the D'Entrecasteaux River. From our camp at Exit Cave, we followed an old track on the plain\slope juncture south of Marble Hill.

The major gully to the north of the final D'Entrecasteaux swallet corresponds to the Hammer Passage within Exit. Certainly the passage sends "fingers" of known cave towards this area so there appears some likelihood of surface connections. Quite a number of features were checked around the base of the gully. Most were of respectable size obviously influenced from a previously higher river level but nearly all had been infilled. One rift styled entrance held a bit of a draught and was explored via a ten metre pitch. This led to a labyrinth of minor passages none of which ended up going anywhere.

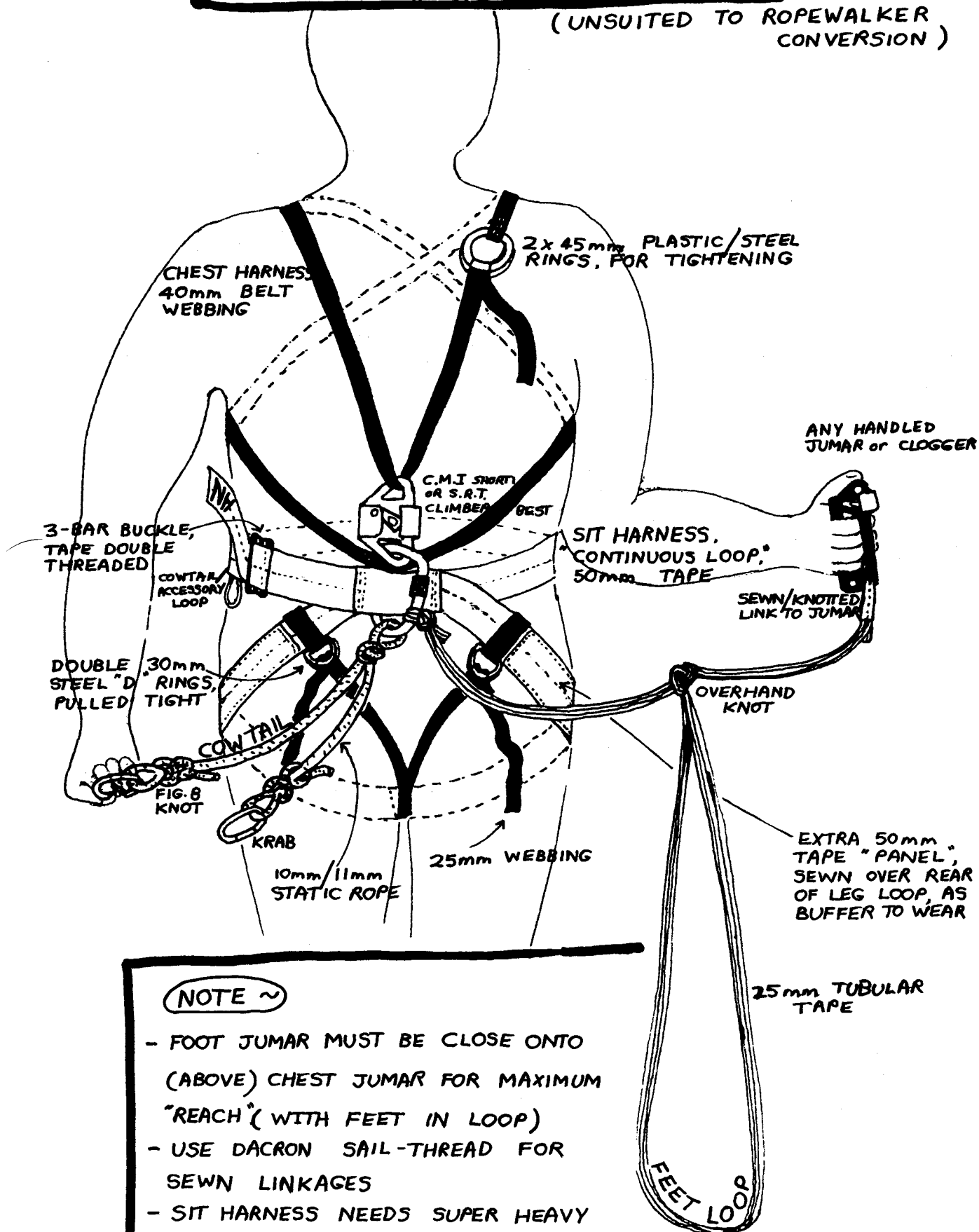
Further up the gully low and dense vegetation, notably cutting grass, predominated over terraces of exposed limestone. Reminiscent of Bubs Hill and picturesque in its own way, but quite devoid of features. A cold front sent rainfall "sheeting" down around us, sapping our enthusiasm to go further afield.

We inspected the D'Entrecasteaux swallet at stream level and it appears worth a return with a wet suit and dive gear, if only for the fun of it ??? A brief foray above yielded similar vegetation and results as in the gully. The area warrants some return trips, preferably in drier weather....

Nick Hume

A VERSATILE , EASY - TO - CONSTRUCT ,  
SIT - STAND , SRT RIG ; SUITABLE  
FOR BEGINNERS OR GENERAL USE ~

(UNSUITED TO ROPEWALKER  
 CONVERSION)

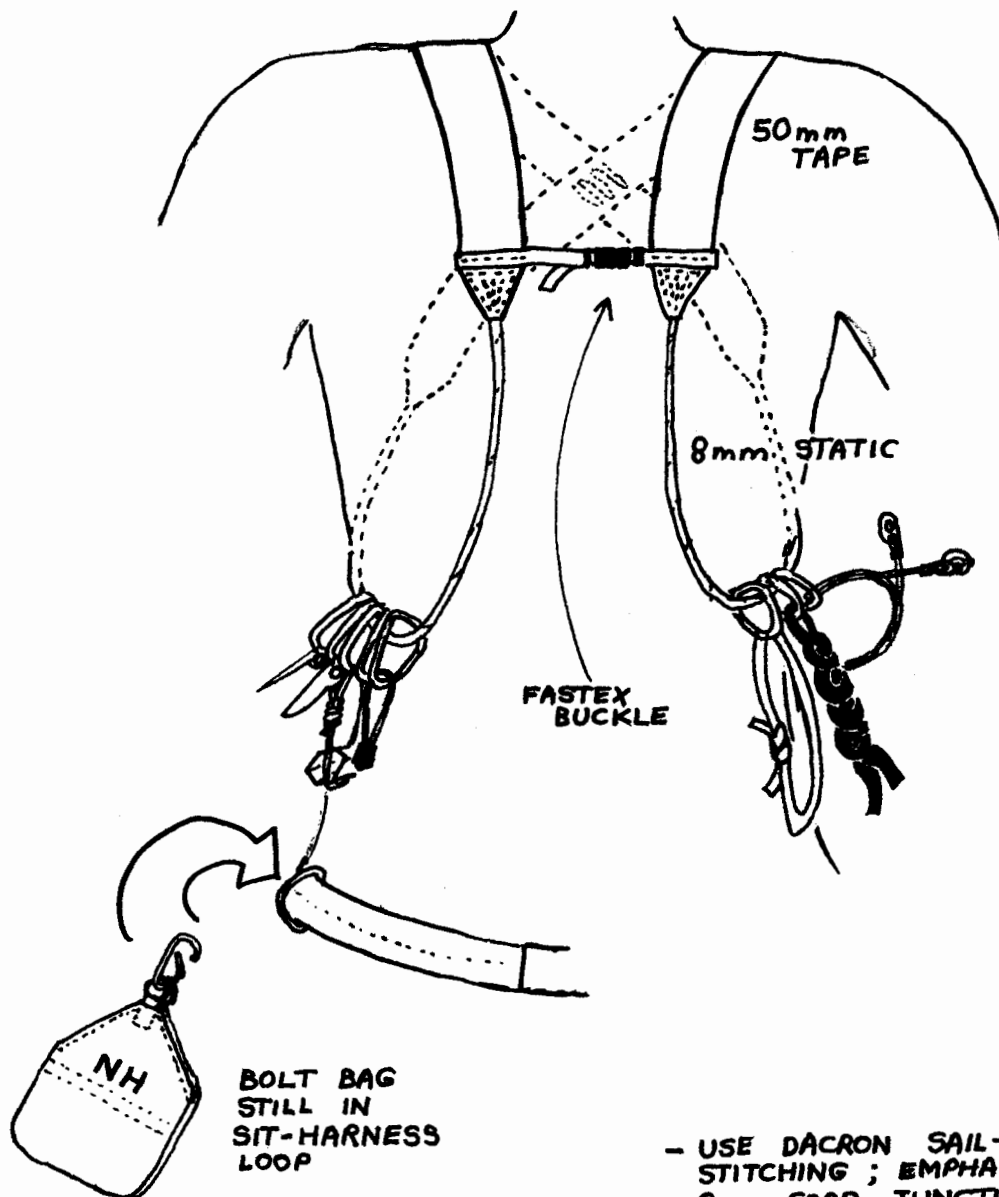


NOTE ~

- FOOT JUMAR MUST BE CLOSE ONTO (ABOVE) CHEST JUMAR FOR MAXIMUM "REACH" (WITH FEET IN LOOP)
- USE DACRON SAIL-THREAD FOR SEWN LINKAGES
- SIT HARNESS NEEDS SUPER HEAVY TAPE (eg. SRT EQUIPMENT LTD), CENTRED AT KRAB POINT WITH 50mm TUBULAR TAPE

GEAR

AN EASY-TO-MAKE  
DOUBLE BANDOLIER FOR  
"SLINGING" CAVE RIGGING  
ACCOUTREMENTS



- USE DACRON SAIL-THREAD FOR STITCHING ; EMPHASIZING TAPE/ 8mm CORD JUNCTURE

- COULD BE MODIFIED TO AN EXISTING SRT CHEST HARNESS ARRANGEMENT ; ~~or~~ CLIP-ON CORD, OR SIMILAR.

- KEEP CORD TIGHT UNDER ARMPITS DURING MAKING, TO LIFT SLINGS/ PITONS, etc. OUT OF AREA OF DESCENDER.