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Holocaust entrance pitch.

NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

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NEWSBITZ AND TRIVIA AND.....

Armchair cavers wanted!....errh, at least briefly. Stuart has a copy of the video on Australian Caving, made by the Swiss film crew on their sojourn here, in April 1986. The plan is to have a screening of this at 7 Rupert Avenue on Thursday 28th April, approximately 8pm - a few lemonades could be brought along as well! Apparently a large part of the film covers the caving done with some of the TCC bods, including such classics as Growling Swallet, Midnight Hole, Junee Resurgence, Welcome Stranger and also a trog of the Mt Anne area..... definitely worth seeing, particularly for those who put in so much hard effort in helping on the filming. The video also covers some mainland caving areas, just to prove they weren't biased...! Anyway just come along for an interesting evening.

At last some news from Stef, our man in Mexico... he's having a torrid time, caving 24 hours a day and getting super fit (even given up smoking!) Cueva del Toro Negro bottomed out at -555 metres, tight upper levels weren't promising but did lead to some main drain at depth. Guixani was pushed a bit further to -948 metres in desperation. A new cave, Sonconga, went straight down to -927 metres, bottomed by Stef, Al and Ross on a 24 hour epic. They are attempting to gain a little extra depth, going "up stream" in the entrance passage. Stef had a multiple rebelay failure on one pitch falling four metres on a Czech rope (who said these "Russian" ropes were lousy?), and survived! Some American cavers nearby bottomed Sotana Ocotempa at -1017 metres, how's that for rotten luck. Wake up Australia...! Stef will be one hell of a jaded caver by the time he returns to Tasmania. Seems as though he will do some more on his way through the States (Carlsbad Cavern). At the moment he is ascending a few of Mexico's shapely volcanoes in the form of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, by way of a change of pace. God, the locals won't be able to keep up with him when he gets back...

Nick Hume

don't forget: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - WHEATSHEAF HOTEL, MARCH 30, 8PM

SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM

Those who were shocked: Trevor Wailes and Martyn Carnes

After a break from caving of some 3 months or so, it was loosely decided but not necessarily agreed upon, that we would have a little push in the old frontier country of Servalane in Growling.

We got off to a leisurely 7.30 - 8.00 am departure from Hobart and indicative of our prolonged absence from the Florentine area. Trevor actually drove past the Eight Road turnoff. Trevor could, however, remember the squalid and somewhat unpleasant nature of the Servalane area - evidenced by his frequently posed question - "Are you sure you want to do this?" whilst changing. My affirmative responses were proof that I had forgotten that Servalane is one of the nastier bits of Growling.

Through the entrance series on the way in, my body gave me an acute reminder of its degree of unfitness. It was noted that the new rope ladders which were installed some 5 months previously were still in excellent condition and served their purpose admirably.

The beginning of the section of cave that we wished to explore may be reached via a climb up into and through Space Rat Alley, or via the first section of Servalane. As neither of us felt like climbing up the tatty piece of rope into S/R Alley, we almost tacitly opted for the suit rending passages of Servalane. This section of cave is reminiscent of parts of Flick Mints Hole - suffice to say that it is not at all pleasant. As you negotiate passages of this nature it is generally advisable to switch your mind off to what you are actually doing. I managed to accomplish this psychological technique to such a degree that I was totally unaware that we had gone well past our previous point of exploration. Stefan had in fact got further by following the passage at stream level, which was even more squalid than the route that we had just found. Dragging a pack of survey gear etc. through such disgusting passage, I thought it prudent to let Trevor continue whilst I languished in the silence and total darkness to further contemplate the meaning of human existence. the passage continued in equally squalid dimensions from my philosophical outpost for an estimated 100m culminating in two avens of medium dimension with a notable lack of inlet water.

With the gate time limit pressing, we decided we had accomplished what we set out to do - find a way through Servalane. The avens were beyond the point reached by Stefan evidenced by the end of his "trog prints". And so, all up, Servalane has revealed about 300m of squalid passage. While it would be nice to see it tied in on the survey in the comfort of your own home, we both commented that the surveying of this discovery would be executed by extremely dedicated people only.

We emerged aching and bruised into the brilliant sunshine of what had been and still was (outside that is) a superb day in the Florentine Valley. On our return journey to Hobart the familiar retrospective pleasure produced by caving began to take its toll as thoughts of going caving yet again began to emerge....

Martyn Carnes

Gordon River Rafting and Caving

6 to 9 February, 1988

Party: Rob, Alan, Ann, Jim, Ned, Dean, Leigh and Nick.

A rafting trip, organised by Rob McGregor of the Hobart Walking Club took advantage of the Hydro's temporary floodgate closure at the Gordon Power Station. This enabled an entry from the damsite to the Gordon Splits downstream and beyond. While time was somewhat at a premium, the party did manage a bit of caving on the way through.

An access road bypasses the dam to wind its way into the valley floor. The drainage tunnel was inactive, but numerous static pools below allowed marginal rafting. Feeder streams gradually gave some impetus to the watercourse. Generally though, much portaging had to be done particularly among the gorges formed by confluencing ridges.

Several gorges had to be negotiated to the Splits, an interesting task involving raft and gear dragging over slimy house-sized boulders. At least it provided a break from paddling. The Splits themselves are very impressive; the river physically having sliced its way through some considerable height and the streambed is wildly sculpted by water action, restricted as it is to only some two metres wide in places.

It took us two days to get below the Splits, delayed as we were by a late start on the Saturday. Some very pleasant campsites were available on banks normally underwater. Below the First Split, rafting is continuous with an occasional interesting rapid. Gordon limestone was first encountered on the left side of the Gordon River a kilometre or so above its junction with the Denison. Leigh and I explored one stream emerging from a cave entrance. This proved to be a through trip into a small doline fed by an open surface stream.

The party explored Rotuli Cave with Leigh and I involving ourselves in some multiframe photography. The entrance series is impressively large and illuminated for a couple of hundred metres from daylight entrances in the glade above. The cave consists of half a kilometre of easy going streamway and has a reasonable population of glowworms. Water entering from an upstream rockpile can be followed via some heavily vegetated dolines on the surface.

The low water conditions allowed easy access to Rocky Spent Cave though we lacked the time to give it much attention. Normally the series of rapids make it very difficult, if not impossible, to stop and visit the cave, offset as it is into the base of an overhanging cliff. Immediately downstream a canyon on the right feeds a large quantity of tannin stained water to the main river. This was followed for a few hundred metres disappearing partially into unenterable conduits underground.

The Ordovician limestone is virtually continuous along this section of the river. Its narrow profile indicates a lack of potential for depth, but extensive horizontal development is possible as evidenced by the two known caves visited. Numerous stream canyons were sighted along the riverbanks, most too heavily jammed with logs to inspire us into exploration. With more time available, they would likely be worthwhile to pursue.

The final day was a leisurely drift among some remarkable countryside. Rafting sure has advantages over walking. The "Wilderness Seeker" was

met at Sir John Falls at midday for the four hour trip back to Strahan. On a diversion to Sarah Island we met Angie McGowan doing some archaeological work on the convict ruins. The return to Hobart was made via a Tag Along Tours mini-bus which is a heck of a lot faster than going by coach line. Many thanks to Rob for making the trip possible.

Nick Hume

A Dive in Time....

14 February, 1988

Party: James Davis and Nick Hume - divers, Leigh Douglas and Paul Merhulik - sherpas (or should that be sherpani and sherpa?!)

James expressed interest in getting in on the numerous exploratory cave diving projects, intended for the near future. In a lead up to the real thing, he prepared himself with open water diving experience. This was followed by some pool training sessions, recreating the cave environment as far as possible. These involved line following with a blacked out face mask, sorting out various nasty problems, of which he was not previously aware.

Jim's "coolness" brought him through these preparations very successfully and the obvious next step was an actual cave dive. Junees Resurgence was considered the safest proving ground and so it was to be. Supported with much help from Leigh and Paul, we arrived at the sump in a much easier fashion than had we simply relied on ourselves to get there.

After a gear check, Jim made a short foray along the initial section of submerged tube, for acclimatisation. Returning happy and confident with this, it was decided to go further in, as a pair. I led off, waiting on occasions for him to catch up and communicate OK signals. A high output dive light allowed me to stay off the floor of the passage, assisting Jim's visibility a great deal (ie avoiding the stirring up of silt).

We moved slowly inward, to a point just short of the entry slope leading to the far sump. With Jim's air supply down by one-third, it was decided that we terminate the dive and not proceed onto the airspace. The return was interesting, much siltation being present in the large passage area. Virtually no water movement prevents any immediate clarity after disturbance and our motion through this was tentative. Better conditions prevailed back in the narrower passage.

The return to the first sump was uneventful, Jim amazed at how much quicker it seemed than on the way in. Though a bit disappointed at not reaching the airspace, that at least is incentive for him to assist us on the next push attempt in the second sump's.

Paul and Leigh were just re-entering the cave when we were making our way out. They had been scouting around above the entrance of the cave to sate Paul's curiosity as to what scrub bashing was all about. Without finding anything unfortunately, for they deserved some reward for their admirable assistance. Many thanks to them.

Nick Hume.

Washout Cave - JF129

February 1988

A large fallen log is often used to cross the first small stream on the Chairman track. From this natural bridge entrance taking the stream is visible just a few metres downhill. This is JF129, called "Train Tunnel" in the Karst Index, although the name "Washout Cave" is applied in Speleo Spiel 163. The latter is much more appropriate; JF129 has nothing in common with train tunnels. A passage roughly 1m by 1m can be followed for a short distance to where the stream splashes its way down a steeply inclined rift. Until recently a wedged boulder and the presence of the stream had discouraged further exploration.

Washout Cave is known to contain a reasonable draught and the very dry conditions during February were opportune for another look. Luckily the stream was nonexistent and this made the task far easier. The wedged rock was hammered out with no difficulty and I climbed down the steep constricted rift. A second wedged boulder also yielded to some work with the hammer. Alas, the descending rift constricted to the point of impossibility several metres further on. Rocks could be tossed through the narrow slot and heard to land in a pool of water several metres vertically below, but there was no way I could get through. Enlarging this squeeze might well be worth the effort, although the task did not look particularly easy. In doing so, dry weather would be a must. Total estimated depth of Washout Cave is now 15 metres.

Rolan Eberhard

CAVES ON NEW IRELAND, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Rolan Eberhard

New Ireland is large island to the east of the New Guinea mainland. Limestone deposits are extensive and many coastal caves are reported in the pages of Niugini Caver. Considerable potential for deep caves also exists on the Lelet Plateau where limestone occurs up to an altitude of 1400m. Expeditions from Australia/PNG and Switzerland during the 1970's explored many caves on Lelet, although nothing deeper than Lemeregamas at -203m has been found. In January 1988 I was in New Ireland and managed to visit several caves, albeit mostly small ones.

At sea level on the east coast are numerous springs from which flows refreshingly cool water. Dalum Efflux Cave is one of few such resurgences that can be penetrated for any distance and it presumably represents drainage from the Lelet Plateau above. Equipped with a survey of Dalum supplied by Gerald Favre, I proceeded to become rather disorientated trying to navigate my way through the cave. A series of rifts, generally one metre or so in width, lead into the hill. Tunnels continually bifurcate, sometimes later rejoining in a confusing pattern that resembles an underground maze. The cave is additionally unusual in that the passages that one is able to follow appear to be merely the top level of what is probably an even more extensive and complex system of underwater rifts. Bridging between walls above water of unknown depth makes for novel caving indeed. The Swiss expedition surveyed 13000m of passage during a visit to Dalum in 1979 and no doubt this length could be extended somewhat with additional work.

Just north of Dalum is Kamiriba Plantation and here I observed several other resurgences. A small stream emerges from boulders at the base of the slope immediately below the plantation manager's house. Another larger resurgence lies a couple of hundred metres up the road towards Kavieng. Not far upstream of a bridge on the road is a sizeable cave entrance. Most of the water in the stream flowed out of the cave, although the ceiling sloped down to meet water level barely out of the sight of daylight.

Robert, the son of the manager of Kamiriba, told me of another resurgence cave that he had visited in the hills behind Kimidan Mission a little further along the coast road. Armed with a couple of local lads to act as guides, I set off into the bush behind the Kimidan Mission School. Not far away I was shown two large clear pools where water emerged from underground. In one pool the force of upward gushing water was particularly obvious from turbulence on the surface. But this water was only a tributary to the stream that was supposed to flow from the cave that I was looking for. I had been told that a couple of hours walk was necessary to reach it, but at this point my guides suddenly declared that no such cave existed. Perhaps it didn't exist, or perhaps they just weren't in the mood for a long walk. Instead we went to look at other caves that they said were nearby. These turned out to be no more than foxholes and small tunnels dug by the Japanese during the war. Apart from a few unexploded grenades and one bleached human skull, these man-made features held little of interest.

Along much of the east coast of New Ireland are numerous small caves, some just wave-cut overhangs visible from the main road. Others, such as Mromon Cave near Silom Village, are more extensive. Mromon is used as a source of water by the locals. A steep slope leads down into a spacious cavern containing a large but shallow pool of water. The chamber itself continues beyond the pool to a point where light enters through two avens extending to the surface. This area is inhabited by numerous bats and flying foxes. Bourke and Gallasch (1974) speak of being "halted by a deep crevasse" when following a side passage, but due to lack of time I was unable to see this for myself.

While staying at Namatanai I was told about several other caves that I was unable to personally check out. Apparently just upstream of the bridge at Belik Plantation a tributary emerges from a cave entrance at the base of a cliff, before joining the main river. A sump fills the cave just inside the entrance, although the passage may be seen continuing underwater. Gallasch (1974) reports a swallet 1km inland at Belik; perhaps these two features are related. I was also told that caves exist four hours walk inland at Bopine Plantation. The informant did not think that they were very extensive.

One cave that I was able to investigate is near the village of Rasese, not far from Namatanai. Gallasch (1975) gives the name of the cave as "Lockabar", although "Lakabuo" is perhaps a more accurate rendition of the local pronunciation. Lakabuo is used as a burial site by Rasese village. After consulting the village elders, it was agreed to show us inside the cave.

According to village custom a correct ritual procedure had to be observed when entering Lakabuo, or as normally would be the case, to place a corpse there. The cave belongs to one old man, and his permission must first be granted. The old man or a delegated relative must go to

the cave entrance first in order to ask the approaching burial party whether they have obtained the necessary permission. Assuming that a satisfactory answer is received, the party may then follow the man into Lakabuo. I think it was also necessary for him to utter a few more words once inside to keep the spirits happy. During our tourist visit the same procedure was adhered to. Such matters cannot be taken lightly; we were told of a time when some people attempted to place a body in the cave without first seeking permission. The body was secretly carried on a stretcher to the cave where, much to the bearers' consternation it was found that the stretcher could not be fitted through the entrance. Realising the error of their ways, permission was sought in the proper fashion and, lo and behold, the stretcher could be carried inside with ease. Another interesting story related to the cave concerns a coconut crab, a kind of large hermit crab. Unlike most other crabs who are content with a large empty shell, this particular individual adopted an empty human cranium from Lakabuo as its home.

Lakabuo itself consists of a low entrance passage that opens out into a broad and also low chamber. The more recently added bodies had been placed inside rough coffins, while older burials remained as simply skeletons in various states of articulation around the chamber. I must confess finding the atmosphere rather too musty for my liking. In the hills behind Rasese are town other caves known by the locals, although they said that logging activity had made it just about impossible to relocate them. One had been used as a burial cave in times past and the other provided a source of drinking water in the bush.

The final cave that I saw on New Ireland was located at Horus, further down the coast from Namatanai. During the war a Japanese airfield was located here, and there is plenty of junk such as bits of aircraft and unexploded bombs lying around. On the inland side of the coast road is a low ridge that overlooks where the airfield used to be. At one end of this ridge, past the last rusting cannon, is a cave. It consists of a single roomy chamber from which minor side passages extend for short distances. Evidence such as stacked rocks indicate that this cave was used by the Japanese during the war, presumably at least to shelter from falling bombs.

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essential
the TCC
DO IT
YES!
ANNUAL
general
MEETING

wednesday march 30, 8pm

Wheatsheaf Hotel - be there....

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE-----

Rates will be decided at the Meeting.....

ACTION, EXCITEMENT... election of office bearers - WHO do you want in?
president's report...?
treasurer's report...\$\$\$
and many other attractions!

BE THERE!