

## NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

Newsletter Annual Subscription \$15.00, Each \$1, Non-members \$2.00

\*\*\*\*\*

### PRESIDENT / QUARTERMASTER:

Trevor Wailes 47 Waterworks Road, Dynnyrne, Tas 7005. Ph 344862

### SECRETARY:

Stefan Eberhard 3 Willowbend Road, Kingston, Tas 7150. Ph ??????

### TREASURER:

James Davis C/- "Shamrock Valley", Ellendale, Tas 7140. Ph 881193

### (default) EDITOR / TYPIST:

Stuart Nicholas 7 Rupert Avenue, New Town, Tas 7008. Ph 283054

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHIRPY CONCENTRATED CAVE CHATTER

\* Don't forget - Thursday (why be consistent?) April 28 at around 8pm is the long awaited showing of the film/video made by Gerald Favre, the Swiss speleo film producer who visited here a year or so ago. The result is a tape giving some insight into the cave scene as it is Karst in Oz. Quite a significant fraction is Tassie stuff! BE THERE! The showing is at Stu's place (7 Rupert Avenue, New Town) on the recently replaced video machine. A few lemon squashes and packets of chips wouldn't go astray ..... (try out the new kitchen!!).

\* For those cavers with interests involving heaps of white stuff and First Aid combined, there is a Ski Patrol First Aid course planned for May this year. If you are at all interested, give Til Van de Vusse a call NOW on 342718. It is to be run by instructors from the Australian Ski Patrol Association and the certificate is widely recognised. The cost is around \$70 for the two weekend course.

\* Huge unplanned influxes of new and potentially new members have some of us old guys going into a bit of a spin! What's happening? People are actually contacting the Club trying to get info on caving and membership of TCC!! All this is most welcome of course and for anyone in the aforementioned category, welcome to one of the world's more esoteric and bizarre sports, to say nothing of Australia's original caving club. May your caves be dark and the streams not too cold....

\*\*\*\*\*

## A Black River Fun Run.....

21 February, 1988

"Runners": James Davis, Leigh Douglas, Lew Mitchelmore, Andrew Thomas and Nick Hume.

This trip was a "carry" of some the heavier components of diving gear to Black River (Growling Swallet), in preparation for future exploratory dives. A static sump at the far end of Coelacanth has only been cursorily explored and has the potential, at least, to yield more of the older passage development in line with the Pendant Pot / Black River / Coelacanth trend. The chance to go caving in the Florentine again, plus the "implanted" idea of contributing something

ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE...

worthwhile, saw a flattering number of helpers turning up on the day.

So many were we that all the gear I had optimistically brought along managed to find its way into the five packs somehow. We had company too..... Mark Stanford, Rik Tunney, Janine McKinnon and Mike Harris arrived as we trogged up at the end of the Eight Road. They declined our generous offer of letting them help us out though! Disappointing I thought as they were off to similar parts as ourselves. Still, no harm in trying, as Trev would say....

With the heavy loads, we were content to set a gentle pace down the streamway from the entrance. Everyone did well. Andrew more admirably so, since it was his first trip into the cave. Extremely low water levels helped and it looked as though there would be no difficulty in taking the gear all the way through.

Arriving at Windy Rift, we found it was blocked by a "body" - someone frozen in an awkward position wondering what to do next. He was "talked down" (out of the rift) at which point our group took the opportunity of setting up a chain of hands to move the loads along the Rift. We even passed the packs of some of the other group - they were as light as envelopes by comparison to ours.

We rigged a "spare parts" ladder at the handline above Refuge Aven, to make things simpler for the gear haulers. Both groups exchanged pleasantries in Slaughterhouse Aven. Mark was horrified by the severed piece of handline I was carrying (him not knowing about the new bit of ladder!). They moved on down the Trapdoor stream, while we hung about placing hose pipe protection on some of the sections of ladder. A food bag was left with the emergency cache, completing a stock that should last several years (without perishing, that is!).

I descended the 30 metre Destiny/Black River pitch first. Jim then lowered the packs using the main rope, while I cowered behind shelter in case one of the airtanks broke loose. All followed on down, with only Jim, Lew and myself continuing with the loads to the dive site.

An over enthusiastic piece of reasoning on my part led to an attempt to haul gear up the side of the boulder pile, rather than to lug the stuff through it. The first load tried was an airtank, perhaps unwisely, as it naturally jammed under an overhang, sending me off into a tirade of curses. A last ditch heave-ho unbalanced me to the extent that it was either me or it that was going to fall down the 8 metres of the rift..... Rattle....., thump, thump, kasplooosh.... it didn't go off, landing upright in the mud! Disappointing, I thought, as I had always wondered what one would sound like. A dirty great tear in my new pack was the only casualty.

We returned to the pitch about 2pm, me frantically shooing the others up the thing, mindful of the 5pm deadline at the gate. I needn't have worried, as we made quite good time back out of the cave. Even had time to afford ourselves the luxury of a brief "laze" back at the cars. Everyone enjoyed the trip tremendously; its great to be back in the Florentine again..... Many thanks to Leigh, Andrew and Lew from Jim and myself. Does anyone want to help out on the actual dive??

Nick Hume

(Relevant) quote of the month:

Person A: "We're going diving this weekend..."

Person B: "I don't think I'll go.... I've only got a snorkel."

\*\*\*\*\*

Growling Swallet in Depth!

27 February, 1988

Divers: James Davis and Nick Hume.

Back in September 1985, Stefan Eberhard and myself dived the downstream sump in Black River to emerge in some sizeable new passage we named Coelacanth. During a follow up trip that October, we surveyed Coelacanth for 400 metres to a static pool - Swallowing Gullet Sump. A brief foray was made into this in expectation of it bypassing the Black River blockage and thus yielding more cave. Instead it proved to be a submerged tube following the bedding plane to depths apparently in excess of 10 metres (see Speleo Spiel 210).

Little more was made of the find at the time. Rather it was left in abeyance as a site perhaps worth a protracted diving operation at some future date. More recently some clarification of Trev's master survey using Stuart's SMAPS facility has highlighted the fact that Swallowing Gullet is the deepest surveyed point in the greater Growling Swallet system; this added an extra attraction for returning there. Not only might a push dive find more dry air passage, but even it didn't, an underwater survey would enhance the depth of the system by at least ten metres and possibly more.....

Jim, Leigh, Andrew, Lew and I had done an airtank carry to Black River the preceding weekend (see trip report above). Even so, there was a depressingly large quantity of gear that still needed to be carried in and there were only two of us this time. We made good time through Windy Rift to the head of the thirty metre pitch. Thorough familiarity with this area proved not too taxing on the enthusiasm.

Gear hauling on the pitch and through the boulder pile slowed us down considerably though we revived with interminable cups of coffee once in Black River itself. The stove proved useful in more ways than one; discarded clothes were placed over a billy of hot water to ensure a warm change on our return. After this point wet suits were the order of the day. That hands and knees crawl down to the first sump in full diving gear was definitely the least memorable part of the trip.

Jim dived the fixed line first, thrashing about a fair bit, for we were both underweighted due to limitations on the gear carries. My dive was even more interesting, as we only had one pair of flippers between us, for much the same reason and I drew the short straw. "Walking on the ceiling, not much room down there....." Fortunately the tube is shallow and only fifteen metres long. It brought us up in a short passage and then through a duck into the impressive borehole of the Coelacanth.

From here Jim carried the 72 cubic foot airtank while I shouldered the 30 "cubic footer" and one set of diving gear in a cave pack I had dragged through. Past the disappearance of Black River into breakdown, an ancient overflow passage provides fairly easy going to the final

sump. The sump pool is not fed from any source normally. Rather it represents the water rest within the cave and hence is remarkably clear (comparable in visibility to Mt Gambier stuff). Small rafts of "hard" froth on its surface further attest to its stasis.

Dive preparations consisted of clamping the smaller tank to the large so it could be used with the one backpack. Thus two separate SCUBA systems were carried, with 30 cubic feet of air available for the penetration dive (by the "1/3 rule"). This provided a good margin of safety for a moderately long dive, should the need arise.

For the survey, the reel line was tagged at ten metre intervals with indelible markings indicating metre divisions. A wrist slate comprising compass, capillary depth gauge and pencil completed the necessities for co-ordinate gathering. The line was tied off above the tapes indicating the previous limit of survey and fed out through a duck to the sump chamber proper.

A last minute gear check was followed by mental preparations bearing in mind the survey requirements and the various possibilities that lay ahead. I even carried a set of decompression tables - prepared for anything! The water clarity was exceptional, allowing the usually meagre helmet mounted torches to give a radius of vision of several metres. Good viz adds considerably to diving conditions and this was something of a career highlight!

The passage was flat roofed in line with the cleave of the bedding plane, dipping at about 15 degrees or so. It was 1 1/2 to 2 metres high and 3 to 4 metres wide closely following an easterly bearing with only minor variations. These were "denoted" with tie offs to sculpted fins, against the clean walls. I moved slowly to stay ahead of the minor siltation thrown up from the largely gravel floor. This allowed time to enjoy the exploration in between bouts of surveying.

At a point some sixty metres from airspace a series of roof "humps" partially obscured a downward sloping gravel bank. This I took to mean an abrupt upward trend in the passage with all that this implied. I made one more tie off to direct the line into this slot, before entering it. Disappointment! The gravel bank continued right up to the roof sealing off any continuation. There were some tiny "scallops" to the right and left, but no other way on. The bank was loose, but digging was clearly hopeless and I realized that this was as far as I could get about the same time as the siltation arrived.

My capillary gauge, being perversely American, had imperial graduations measuring the lowest point reached as 63 feet (19 metres in normal parlay!). I knotted the line and clipped on a slung lead weight as the final survey station. Only the job of cutting it remained before heading back; funny how reluctant you are to leave when there's heaps of air remaining in your tank.

On the homeward leg the viz was down to a metre, not bad for still water. A line drift held me up briefly before a familiar knifeblade of rock led me towards friendlier ground. Jim was a welcome sight, even though the dive had been fairly short, and did an admirable job of hauling me from the water.

We wandered back to the gear abandoned after the first sump. Here I committed slate notes to proper survey sheets before we headed off to

ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE...

do another little survey job, this time for Trevor. The detour was to more accurately place the huge breakdown side-chamber on the master survey. Rumour has it that Coelacanth should connect through to Space Rat Alley, even though the former would be some thirty metres below.

I figured the place must have received a visit from Rolan, resembling as it does, the site of an underground nuclear test. The vast dome of the roof was smooth with the mud "crazing" ready to collapse. Flowstone on the right hand wall was scoured and striated by past deluges of exploding rockfall and blocks on the sloping floor appeared set to trigger an avalanche if unseated.

The survey proceeded cautiously, interrupted by the occasional spontaneous debris slide. A climb at the far end of the chamber didn't seem very hospitable and wasn't attempted. Two inlets entering about twenty metres up are possible contenders for a connection although access would definitely have to come from above. The apex of the dome is hard up against the line of the main drain and at 25 metres above the streamway corresponds to the level in question. No features were visible there to confirm this. We tied back to a known cairn, our enthusiasm not stretching to checking anything further.

Attempts were made to "start" some soggy cigarettes that had been stowed in a torch. Frustrated in this we then donned diving gear and returned to the comforts of Black River. Here I offered to assist Jim on a dive into Pendant Pot while we had the opportunity. He opined that he would clearly like to do that, but suggested that if he did, it was unlikely that he would make it back out of the cave!

More coffee brewing avoided the issue of how we were going to carry all the gear. Eventually we moved; my pack must have been around the thirty kilogram mark and I had a line reel and bag of bits in my hands. Jim wasn't any better off, having to drag the steel tank as well as having a similarly heavy pack. The retreat took four hours, much of it rest stops. Windy Rift was the test piece for our dwindling reserves of strength. Jim did very well, ie I merely aligned the packs and he did most of the lifting! Without this effort, I'm sure the gear would still be in there. We emerged from the entrance at 1am, after some thirteen hours underground.

\*\*\*\*\*

Swallowing Gullet sump is at -356 metres according to the previous survey. This makes sense in view of the fact that Dreamtime corner was formerly regarded as the official deepest point at -154 metres. No survey has been carried out to the Dreamtime sump (a job in pressing need!) and a further two metre fall here seems likely. Thus, for the known part of the Growling Swallet system, the top of the water table appears to be at the -356 metre mark. It is perhaps interesting that Swallowing Gullet is within the water rest, while the more remote sump is still flowing.

The additional 19 metres of surveyed depth found in this trip takes the system to -375 metres. It is tentatively suggested that Growling Swallet system is now deeper than Anna-Kananda on Mount Anne, though there's not much in it (AAK is -373m)!

This no doubt will give rise to some controversy. Whatever the outcome, it is hoped that the results presented here will spur greater

ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE...

exploration efforts in both systems and caving generally. Perhaps Rolan will be the first to do the entire descent / dive / through trip. Roll on -400 metres.....

As a side issue, it may be argued that capillary gauges are not true indicators of water depth at altitude. According to the NAUI publication "Altitude Procedures For Divers" by C.L. Smith, the correction factor required to convert capillary readings to actual fresh water depth at the 360 metre contour (estimated height above sea level for Swallowing Gullet sump) is 0.98. Therefore the 63 foot gauge depth attained calculates out to 61.7 feet or 18.8 metres absolute!

Nick Hume

\*\*\*\*\*

MIDDAY HOLE

9 March, 1988

Party: Steve Bunton and Peter Schwitter (from Switzerland).

This day was meant to be a simple trip through Midnight Hole. Roles reinforced, I was the local Tasmanian cave guide while in Switzerland Peter is a mountain guide. I hope he's better on his home ground than I am on mine. I'd not done the cave for two years and then I was following mindlessly on someone else's heels whilst they bashed hopelessly through the scrub looking for the track. Needless to say we took the wrong track, followed the most insane system of red tapes, there being as many as five tapes visible on occasions, ended up at a Midnight Hole look-alike and descended it! A curse, change to prusik and de-trog again to relieve the heat of the day. Another foray found the oh so obvious track, the cave, eyebolts and even with getting lost in the Rockfall Chamber it took us less time to do the cave than find it first of all. Silly really! Really silly.

Stephen Bunton

\*\*\*\*\*

"Monty Humes Caving Circus....."

Lawrence Creek Rising

6 March, 1988

"Party": Stefan and Rolan Eberhard, Peter Cover, James Davis and Nick Hume (Clowns and Divers), plus Adrienne Van Schie (Safety Officer).

It dawned on me that the orange "snakes" on the roof were bits of severed guideline. What's more, the black rock in front of me turned out to be Stef's flipper. He appeared to tying knots, as far as I could tell in the atrocious murk which also explained why we weren't moving. One of the "snakes" was pushed my way, so I passed the time winding the thing in and stuffing it up my wetsuit. These conditions made Mainline seem like a top class dive.....

Much later came the squeeze. I didn't actually get to see this constriction, even with my head inside it I could not see a thing. Stef went inside feet first and I only became aware of that when his lights ceased to be visible from half a metre away. My attempts to

ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE...

follow were halted when the lights unexpectedly reappeared; he was coming back out.

I vaguely glimpsed a "thumbs up" signal against the background of a thirty watt beam. Something of a relief as we had used almost a third of the air in our double tank arrangement getting even this far. My regulator seemed overkeen to supply me with more, having a minor freeflow problem and the whole exercise was far from being enjoyable. Normally good seeing conditions were ruined by a milky colloid, the explanation for which could be found in new forestry activity high in the watershed. This and the couple of breaks in the fixed line were rapidly turning hopes for further exploration into a farce.

Back at the mouth of the resurgence, more masochists were queuing for a "fix". Pete and Jim negotiated the roof of fallen logs into a crowded sump pool, Stef and I having just re-emerged. Prospects for anyone doing very much were grim, but they had a go anyway.

I was ultrakeen to get out of the place. Wet suits are a bit marginal in these water temperatures, particularly with suit compression at depth. Before I had even reconciled the misery of being there, the others surfaced with the expressions of those returning from very troubled sleep. Jim was speechless, though Pete was a bit more fluent, describing seeing conditions with a gesture of bringing finger up to nose. They were clearly unimpressed by this second largest resurgence of the valley.

Nobody was keen on repeating their doses of insanity, despite the surplus of air tanks we had brought. On debriefing, our plans for pushing/surveying/photographing the place, died in the bum. It would probably take years for conditions to improve sufficiently to warrant coming back. This caused little entertaining of disappointment.

Rolan waited for half an hour or so while siltation cleared a little, before taking his turn. Donning side mounted tanks, he resembled an insect with four arms; useful for line management perhaps. Frustrated by the limitations to discovery, he laid into an obstructing fin of limestone with a geol. pick. At least the way along the entrance series is a bit clearer now.

Adrienne retreated into uni textbooks in between bouts of "sump watching", an enviably more productive use of the day. We packed up and drove to the Styx Road in an attempt to relocate Pillengers Creek Cave. Not having been there since 1981, numerous side roads had me fooled before I think we located its approximate location. Lack of time prevented us from confirming this properly. Thus ended one of those horror days that seem to crop up every now and then.

Nick Hume

\*\*\*\*\*

Dribblespit Swallet

Dribblespit Swallet is no new discovery. The hole has been known about since the old days when nearby KD and Cauldron were "goers". A stripling Stuart Nicholas was even there when the 70m entrance pitch was descended using ladders. No go they said. It often pays to be

March, 1988

ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE...

skeptical about such pronouncements when talking caves. Sometimes, in retrospect, eagerness to prove the reverse may seem a little misplaced. At any rate, Nick Hume and I had been down Dribblespit a couple of years ago for a second look. At the "bottom" a short additional pitch was found and descended, but the continuation was extremely tight. Another trip some time later also failed to get much further.

On the 17th February 1988, Martyn Carnes and I went back to Dribblespit for one more attempt at passing the constriction. Martyn's problems with his lamp did not omen well, but after some awkward squeezing and a lot of hammering, the way on lay open. A horizontal squeeze led directly to the brink of a drop. It looked good... another Dwarrowdelf perhaps? Poor deluded cavers...

The 26th February saw us both back at Dribblespit with enough spare rope to accommodate our high expectations. The drop beyond the squeeze was only short and led to the top of a more substantial pitch. It turned out to be roughly 25 metres down walls of extremely rotten rock/mud (shades of Peanut Brittle Pot). Below this was more tight rift. Horrible. Another squeeze was bashed open to reveal the top of a further pitch. This had to wait for the next trip. Meanwhile, Martyn's perception of what is reasonable had been sorely offended by the squeezes above the previous pitch. He swore never to go back...

Martyn did promise not let on what Dribblespit was really like and on 7 March a big group of cavers turned out for the show. Trevor Wailes, Stuart Nicholas, Stefan Eberhard, Paul Baustead, James Davis and I all rigged up at the entrance. Some people even looked marginally keen. A couple of hours later there was just the three of us - Stefan, James and I - at the exploration front. This was the fifth pitch in the cave so far and turned out to be only a short drop into an elongated rift. The quality of rock had not improved, nor did the continuations look any more inviting. Leads at either end of the rift were impossibly narrow. However, a small opening above floor level was discovered with a drop beyond. Cursing the mud we slid down a further two pitches. The way on was far from inviting: a constricted vadose canyon. But the tantalising draught could not be ignored.

It would be hard to say precisely how far we progressed along this disgusting passage. Perhaps it was only 50 metres in horizontal, but it seemed a lot further. It was necessary to pause several times and hammer constrictions open before wriggling along a little further. Where was it leading to? Khazad-dum probably, but we admitted defeat for the time being. The thunder of falling water could be heard somewhere in the distance. More work with hammer and chisel will be required to realise a connection.

The trip back to the surface was like a bad dream. Prusik gear had to be taken off twice in order to negotiate various squeezes. Ascenders clogged with mud and refused to grip the rope. We reached the surface long after sunset: at least it wasn't raining.

Rolan Eberhard

\*\*\*\*\*

NOTE: Anne-A-Kananda, Australia's deepest cave (??) on Mt Anne is now officially spelt Annakananda (as decreed by the Nomenclature Board).