

# SPELEO SPIEL

Newsletter of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club

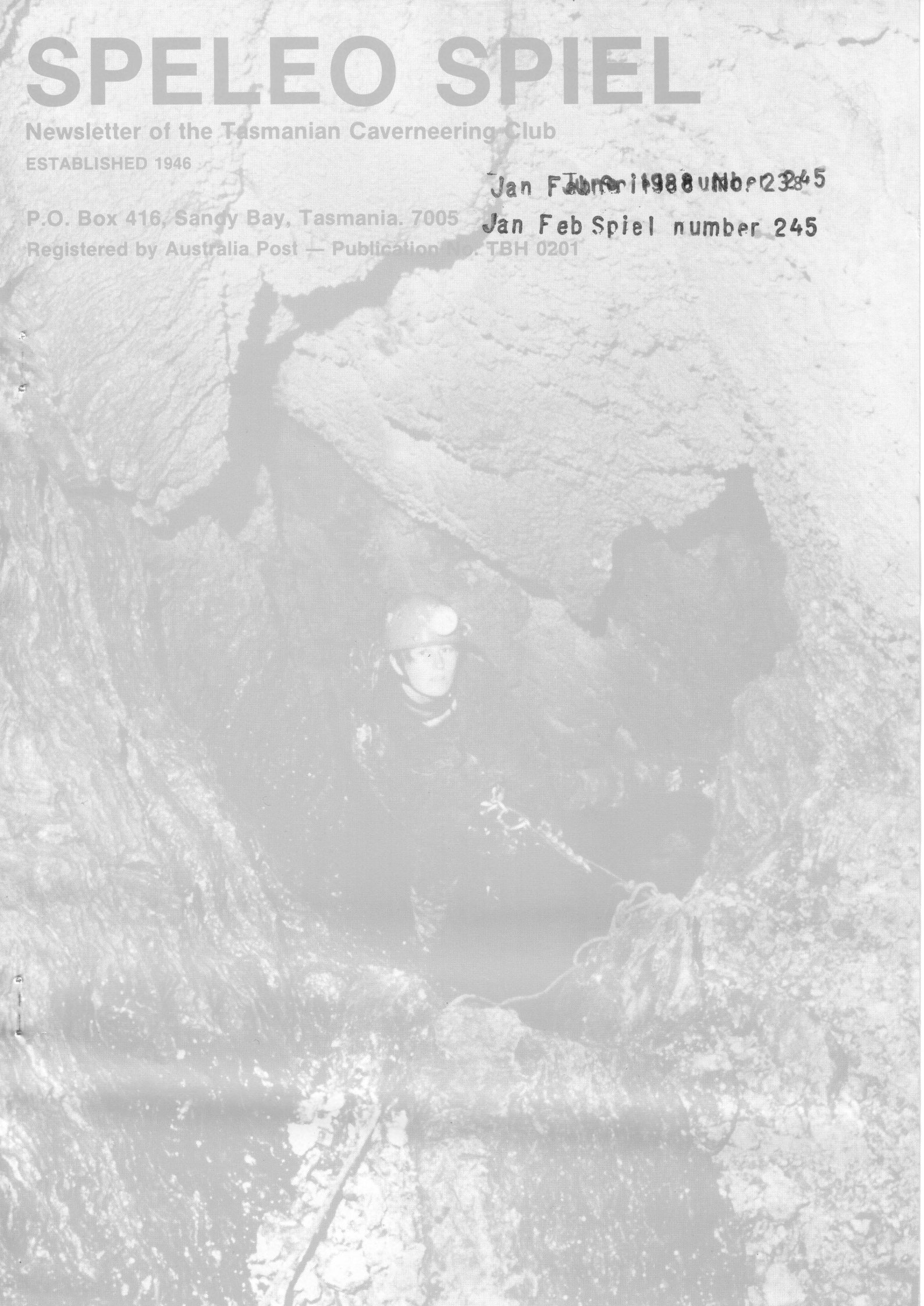
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NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

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EDITORIAL

Stuey Nicholas' subtle hints of being several months behind with SPIEL production have rubbed off at last. A second word processor has entered the SPIEL-making arena, driven by yours truly (strangely this machine was purchased through a friend of his). Stuart is still interested in continuing as editor.....but at the same time he isn't....! If none of this makes the slightest scrap of sense, what it all means is that we have two editors operating independently of one another. We intend to share the burden of producing this newsletter; which will be valuable should one of us have excessive work/academic commitments at certain times during the year.

Stuart deserves heaps of praise for single-handedly putting out many, many SPIEL'S over many, many years (beginning from the early 1980's as far as I am aware). He has acted as mainstay for the club, in several capacities (technical adviser, search and rescue, ASF delegate, quarter master, past president, host to sundry itinerant cavers.....the list is endless!) and during some pretty lean times too. A job well done lad. The new "you beaut" up to date SMAPS 4 software he has recently acquired will ensure plenty of visits from members with survey data to analyze, and along with shifts on the SPIEL, we will be relying on him to give plenty of input to the club for some time yet.

While we're into a bit of historical backpatting; the club has been putting out a newsletter ever since it's inception in the 1940's. Only in 1966 was the title SPELEO SPIEL (coined by that other mature aged student; John Chick - BSc pending) and the current number series initiated. They have been coming out at a rate of eleven per year ever since. With this new cooperative effort, hopefully SPIEL'S will become more timely. Gads.....with the new word processor they might even come out six months in advance, rather than six months behind. Even the legendary Explorations Journal becomes a possibility.....its frightening really!

Leigh Douglas and Nick Hume

ERRATA; Due to a certain culprit (he's from Bradford!), October and November SPIELS were incorrectly notated #241 and #242 (respectively) on their printed pages. They should have been marked #242 and #243 instead; which is correctly indicated on the issue stamp appearing on the front covers, at least.

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CAVING CAPERS

Good to see some inter-club co-operation occurring lately. Frank and Lyndsey Salt, Rod Walters and several other personalities from the SRCC ( Savage River Caving Club ), recently participated in an Old Ditch Road to Valley Entrance Through Trip, orchestrated by none other than our own redoubtable Trevor Wailes. Joint trips of this kind make caving a lot more socially interesting and a reciprocal arrangement whereby we plunder the caves in the Mount Cripps area ( just joking ! ) is on the cards for this summer.

Even members of S.C.S. (Southern Caving Society) have begun taking a liking to us, making a valuable contribution towards the annual Precipitous Bluff Regatta (actually a comprehensive caving expedition) held over this past Christmas. Members of V.S.A. ( Victorian Speleology Association ) were also present. S.C.S. and T.C.C are also getting together on surveys/hydrological assessments of caves in the Junee Quarry Road area (JF 147, JF 341, Rift Cave and Washout Cave drainage). This mutual sort of trend can only be beneficial in a state lacking great numbers of cavers, so lets hope there is a lot more forthcoming.

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The above " togetherness " probably owes a lot to the emergence of the Tasmanian Speleological Association; a new institution intended to be representative of member caving clubs and cavers throughout this state. Arthur Clarke is the driving force behind this body, Trevor Wailes, Chris Davies, Jeff Butt and Nick Hume being among the other protagonists. A president and committee have been appointed and a draught constitution formulated; regular meetings occurring fortnightly.

Initial aims will be to liaise with governmental authorities over access to restricted caves, and some future input to cave management policy is also envisaged. T.S.F. promises to be a worthwhile agency for co-ordination and political muscle flexing. Assisting contributions towards this end are welcomed from interested persons; enquiries can be made to Nick Hume ( 002 ) 251934, or the other people mentioned previously. More of T.S.F.'s biography will appear in later issues of this newsletter.

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Nomadic caver; Stefan Eberhard participated in a Sydney / Perth museum-sponsored expedition to the extensive karst of Cape Range ( North West Cape, Western Australia ) during October of last year. The major find was in " Wanderer's Delight " an 80 metre shaft now giving access to over four kilometres of crawly streamway. Wicket-keepers kneepads proved popular among the crew, giving some idea of the shallowness of horizontal passage. Many similar shaft-systems were also investigated. Entrances being turned up by the simple expediency of driving through the arid landscape until almost disappearing down a dirty great hole! The area promises to yield many more discoveries, remoteness being one of several of its unique challenges.

After a sojourn to Precipitous Bluff over Christmas, Stef is off once again; this time to the caving conference at Chillagoe. He will be comparing bugs with some of the worlds foremost experts on cave fauna. At this rate, a degree with honours in Science will soon be a prerequisite just to go caving! Anyway, half your luck lad.

Speaking of edyukashon; a very aberrant trend has become apparent among the caving ranks, just lately. For inexplicable reasons, Stuart Nicholas has expressed serious interest in undertaking full time studies for a Bachelor of Electronics (?) course ( rumour has it that he's ordered in some wine to celebrate the change in lifestyle! ). Phil Jackson is beginning engineering this year and ( golly gosh, I say... ) even Mike Edwards has made application to the School of Fine Arts.

If this keeps up, we'll all become mature-age students moralising over our various states of mid-life crises. Is there no cure? Who will be next? Maybe speleo-sports will rate inclusion among the inter-varsity competitions in the near future!

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At long last, something has appeared in international journals, regarding the Australian expedition to the karst of the Muller Range of Papua-New Guinea, that occurred during mid 1982 ( the trip included several members from T.C.C. - see SPELEO SPIEL #179 and #180 ). Coverage of this big-budget extravaganza was accorded in a two part article in the English caving magazine DESCENT ( issues number 78 and 80 ) recently. Authored by Julia James, Al Warild, Tony White and our very own Steve Bunton, the storyline is interesting, for those who were there at least.

Discoveries largely centered on the cave; Kananda Pugwa, which ultimately yielded 528 metres of depth ( then the second deepest in the southern hemisphere ) and more significantly 55 kilometres in length ( still the longest south of the equator ). Helicopter Access was necessary to overcome the logistics of operating in such horrific jungle and so far from any roadhead. Including handling of the large numbers of cavers and gear that was involved, the expedition leaders did a pretty nifty job of organizing. Though among all the other difficulties, that wasn't always obvious to those concerned.

Anyway, it would be nice to see a more comprehensive compilation of surveys, etc at some future date, and indeed there is rumour of a forthcoming book / journal of the expedition, from the same authors as above. In addition, an Englishman called Beck is publishing an expeditions overview for PNG; a local contribution towards which will appear in the next SPIEL.

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Yet another immigrant caver has turned up in our midsts. English-person Matthew Tuck got to savour the delights of an entrance streamway trip in Khazad Dum last October, with interesting consequences ( see trip report this issue ). In spite of this hiccup, Matthew is actually a reasonably experienced trog, having been to the bottom of the Gouffre Berger ( Frances second deepest ), better than any of the rest of us have managed. Along with expatriate T.C.C. member; Nick Hawkes, he is shooting through to participate in the Bulmer Cavern Expedition ( New Zealand ) this summer, lucky sod.

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Several members of the T.C.C. were conspicuous by their *presence* at the Southern Caving Society annual dinner, held at the Shipwright's Arms late last year. No guest speakers were allowed on this occasion! Lemonade consumption was again rife and a distinctly quotable quotation was overheard emanating from the Jordan table; " ....do you visit this planet often Greg.....?????"



TASMANIA'S DEEPEST AND LONGEST CAVES - DECEMBER 1988

The last list of Tasmanian caves deeper than 100 metres was published three years ago in SPELEO SPIEL #213. Since that time various new deep caves have been explored and old ones extended. The new deepest list differs from the preceding one in the following ways;

- (1) Anne-A-Kananda ( or "Annakananda" according to the nomenclature board ) has been displaced as Australia's deepest known cave. The Ice Tube-Growling Swallet System now occupies the top of the list again with a depth of 375 metres, following Nick Humes survey/dive in "Coelecanth" ( SPELEO SPIEL #235 ).
- (2) A dive in the sump of Khazad-Dum by Phill Hill apparently reached a water depth of 10 metres, taking this cave to 333 metres in total ( SPELEO SPIEL #228.
- (3) Serendipity's depth, previously reported as 282 metres, has been amended to 278 metres following the resurveying of some sections.
- (4) Three new names appear on the list - Deep Thought ( Mt Anne ), Bauhaus ( Precipitous Bluff ) and Dribblespit Swallet ( Junee-Florentine ). Dribblespit was recently extended from a previous limit of 91 metres, while the other two caves are new discoveries altogether.
- (5) Three caves previously included have since been substantially deepened - Rift Cave, Splash Pot and Threefortyone ( all Junee-Florentine ). The depth of 193 metres attributed to Threefortyone is not a final figure as some surveying still needs to be done.
- (6) The depth of Yodellers Pot, previously shown as 115 metres, has been amended to 110 metres. A sketch map by Mick Flint in SPELEO SPIEL #203 indicates a depth of 115 metres' whereas a copy of the same map in NARGUN 20 ( 7 ) shows a total depth of 112 metres. In SPELEO SPIEL #221, Arthur Clarke gives an estimated limit of " 110 metres plus " and to cut the pedantry short, I have taken 110 metres for the list below.
- (7) Croesus Cave has been deleted from the list. A depth of 174 metres was previously attributed to this cave, based on what appeared to be an overland survey between upper and lower entrances, done quite some years ago. This figure is clearly erroneous. An examination of the LIENA 1:25,000 scale topographical map indicates that the height difference between the Mersey River and the prominent doline of the higher entrance is only some 100 metres. P. Matthews ( Australian Karst Index 1985 ) gives an " estimated after visit " depth of 100 metres for Croesus, while a figure of 91 metres quoted by Ross Ellis ( ASF Newsletter, #75 ) is possibly closer to the actual depth.

Herberts Pot and Devils Pot are the only remaining Mole Creek caves on the present list. However, the discovery of more deep caves in the area is not unlikely; Kevin Kiernan's study of the Mole Creek karst ( Land Use in Karst Areas, 1984 ) indicates that underground drainage in at least four systems exceeds 200 metres of vertical range.

DEEPEST CAVES

	<u>DEPTH (m)</u>	<u>AREA *</u>
1. Ice Tube-Growling Swallet System	375	JF
2. Anne-A-Kananda	373	MA
3. Khazad-Dum ( Dwarrowdelf )	333	JF
4. Serendipity	278	JF
5. Cauldron Pot	263	JF
6. Owl Pot	244	JF
7. Tassy Pot	238	JF
8. Arrakis	235	MW
9. Mini Martin ( Exit Cave System )	220	IB
10. Milk Run	208	IB
11. Sesame Caves	207	JF
12. Flick Mints Hole	204	JF

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13. Midnight Hole ( Mystery Creek Cave )	203	IB
14. Porcupine Pot	202	JF
15. The Chairman	197	JF
16. Threefortyone	193	JF
17. Cyclops Pot	192	IB
18. Big Tree Pot	189	IB
19. Deep Thought	187	MA
20. Peanut Brittle Pot	186	JF
21. Udensala	181	JF
22. Rift Cave	180	JF
23. Lost Pot	175	JF
24. Dribblespit Swallet	166	JF
25. Splash Pot	160	JF
26. Three Falls Cave	158	JF
27. Kellar Cellar	155	MA
28. Niagara Pot	149	JF
29. Satans Lair	139	JF
30. Victory 75	130	JF
31. Warhol	130	JF
32. Gormenghast	128	JF
33. Little Grunt	128	IB
34. Chicken Bone Pot	125	IB
35. Revelation Cave	125	IB
36. Thun Junction Cave	120	IB
37. Col-In-Cavern	119	MA
38. Hobbit Hole	118	IB
39. Herberts Pot	116	MC
40. New Order-Bauhaus	115	PB
41. Bone Pit	113	JF
42. Yodellers Pot	110	IB
43. Rescue Pot	107	JF
44. Devils Pot System	105	MC

Compiling an accurate list of longest caves is more difficult than doing the same for deep caves. Cavers generally appear more interested in how deep a system is than how long it might be. That is, unless that cave looks like being the longest or second longest, etc. If a cave is incompletely or totally unsurveyed, then it appears a common habit to round its length off to the nearest two zeroes.

Exit Cave is a case in point. The Karst Index gives its length as 16 kilometres, although it is noted that only 13 km + has actually been surveyed. More recently, figures ranging from 19 km to well over 20 km have been quoted during the Helsham Enquiry and elsewhere, possibly with some justification considering the number of new entrances and other discoveries in the Exit system, over the last few years. Whether such claims can be substantiated or not will depend on further surveying. Probably the whole system should be systematically resurveyed.

People have been saying as much for years now, but with the recent SUSS discoveries at Jenolan the precise length of Exit Cave is likely to become a matter of particular interest. According to Pat Larkin in his article "The Longest Cave in Australia ?" { SUSS Bulletin 28 (2) }, it is only a matter of time before the surveyed length of the Jenolan system will pass the 17 km mark. As Pat rightfully observes, the "length" of a cave has little utility other than for the purpose of publication of lists by cavers. At the same time, a certain amount of emotional fervor is aroused when it comes to a question of which is "the longest cave". The gauntlet is down so to speak. Of course, there is a risk associated with producing a conclusive survey of Exit Cave. What if it turned out to be only 15 km long ?

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The list below, restricted to caves 500 metres or longer, relies heavily on information supplied in the Australian Karst Index . There are a number of exceptions where more up-to-date figures are available. This includes Serendipity, where survey calculations have revealed a length somewhat less than the 3.5 km shown in the Karst Index. For many of the caves listed, a degree of uncertainty similar to that associated with Exit Caves length is probably also applicable. For example, The figure of just over 1 km for The Chairman is clearly well short of its actual extent. Nevertheless, the list is presented notwithstanding attendant anomalies, defects, or omissions.

LONGEST CAVESLENGTH (M)    AREA \*

1. Exit Cave System	16000 ?	IB
2. Growling Swallet System	11000	JF
3. Herberts Pot	5730	MC
4. Kublai Khan	3657	MC
5. Judds Cavern	3321	C
6. Anne-A-Kananda	3000	MA
7. Serendipity	2948	JF
8. Croesus Cave	2050	MC
9. Wolf Hole	2000	H
10. Pyramid Cave System	2000	MC
11. Georgies Hall-Wet Cave	2000	MC
12. Arthurs Folly	1900	IB
13. Khazad-Dum	1774	JF
14. Welcome Stranger	1650	JF
15. Porcupine Pot	1625	JF
16. Quetzalcoatl Conduit	1600	PB
17. Newdegate Cave	1600	H
18. Bauhaus	1485	PB
19. The Chairman	1216	JF
20. Threefortyone	1211	JF
21. Mystery Creek Cave	1200	IB
22. Lynds Cave	1081	MC
23. Honeycomb 1	1024	MC
24. Tailender Cave	1000	MC
25. Loons Cave	1000	IB
26. Rat Hole	1000	MC
27. Damper Cave	990	PB
28. Maracoopa Cave	910	MC
29. Frankcombe Cave	900	JF
30. Mostyn Hardy Cave	900	L
31. Tassy Pot	860	JF
32. Rift Cave	850	JF
33. Owl Pot	849	JF
34. Sesame Caves	800	JF
35. Junee Cave	720	JF
36. Arrakis	720	MW
37. Gormenghast	582	JF
38. Rotuli Cave ( Bill Neilsen Cave )	520	NR
39. Kellys Pot	500	MC
40. GP 4	500	GP
41. Burning Down The House	500	JF

\* JF Junee-Florentine, MA Mount Anne, MW Mount Weld, IB Ida Bay, MC Mole Creek, PB Precipitous Bluff, C Cracroft, H Hastings, L Loongana, NR Nicholls Range, GP Gunns Plains.

ROLAN EBERHARD

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20th November; A VERTICAL SWIM IN KHAZAD DUM

The wet set included- Stefan and Rolan Eberhard, Matthew Tuck ( U.K. ), Lew Mitchelmore and Nick Hume.

PHONE CALLER- "Hi, my names Matthew; a Trevor Wailes told me you might be going caving this weekend."

RECEIVER- "Trev said that.....the bastard! Have you been underground before?"

CALLER- "I went to the bottom of the Berger three months ago!"

RECEIVER- " Uhh.....oh, well you'll probably be OK then."

Khazad Dum is normally " done " either by the dry way just along from the entrance scaling pole, or via the Serpentine route with its minor stream. The major waters entering the cave barrel off down some quite large passage, rejoining the other routes lower down. Though more obvious, the wet way has apparently not been attempted before, due to the additional and avoidable immersion involved. The fact that it was virgin territory sent Rolan into paroxysms of delight; enthusing every one else that it would be a very sporting trip to do. Some of us became convinced by this.

I collected Matthew at the youth hostel, rescuing him from the dreaded daily chore. " Are you staying here too...? ",; a demonic woman asked of me. " Fortunately no.... ", I replied! With Lew also in tow, we turned up at Maydena about the same time as Greg Jordan and Dave Rasch from S.C.S. They were up here for a thrash around JF 341; "find heaps" we hissed. Greg must attire himself army-surplus; ex Kabul, so holey was his gear!

Stef and Rolan were already gearing up along the Quarry Road; enthusiasm being a dangerous thing. Our English visitor waxed lyrical about the rainforest and karst; "... its great to be freezing again..". Meantime I packed some camera gear; the perfect excuse to get out of having to rig the cave.

The stream coming into the doline was in moderate spate, promising excitement further down. At the first pitch ( only some 30 metres from the entrance ); a boulder main-anchor was followed by some bolting on the left wall, to achieve a rebelay away from the waterfall. Another rebelay to the left of a spray lashed ledge ( halfway down ), gave further illusion to dryness. Total pitch length was about twenty five metres.

Short passage gave access to a second drop, proving to be less compliant than the first. Waters hosed out of the stream canyon into a sizable aven; poor rock at strategic locations offered few prospects for redirection. Stef made some brave attempts anyway.

Bolts on both sides of the takeoff ledge gave a freehang, but unfortunately straight down the path of falling water. Rotten nubbins to the right provided something of a fragile side-pull; Stef's descending screams attesting to its effectiveness. Piking was out of the question because of the photo opportunities below.

This thirty metre pitch is a KD classic; wet, cold and creating its own howling draught. Not a place to hang about in for very long. We ran off down more passage to a third pitch, Stef offering me the job of bolt placement, ostensibly to keep myself warm. This now resides to the immediate left of the drop.



Everyone queued up here shivering and damp, explaining their losses of enthusiasm for going any further. Stef descended while the others retreated, with me hovering between these push-pull factors. Homicidal yells below signalled his turnaround point, having reached just halfway down this estimated thirty metre pitch. His return prompted the opinion that "things" were "animal" down there and he spat out water to prove it!

We managed to stuff forty metres of Czech rope into my diminutive camera pack, a feat I would have thought impossible. Surfing on jumars followed at the crest of the second pitch. We had caught up to Matthew at that stage, but further derigging saw him move on ahead, out of earshot in the thunderous noise of water.

I wandered to the bottom of the last pitch, instinctively reaching out for the rope while concentrating on my chest jumar. Somewhat stunned, I noticed that the rope was entirely absent from the base of the aven and started hopping about in disbelief. Ten metres up the sheer walls, several coils were caught up on rock spikes." COOOEEEE....YAHOOO...."! Stef caught up wondering what all the shouting was about and wasn't happy with the answer. No return reply from Matthew; he had in fact accidentally drawn some loops upward in his hasty prussik in the waterfall.

We hoped that the others would return after about an hour or so, to see what the holdup was. In the meantime there was nothing we could do but wait; climbing the walls to retrieve the rope-end was out of the question. Freezingly wet, we huddled under a single space blanket; choking in the buildup of cigarette smoke and yelling an occasional call to the others. Not the first time this has happened in KD; Geoff Crass was involved in a similar debacle some years ago.

A half hour....one hour....an hour and a half.....Rolan turned up and replied to one of our strained shouts. An Eberhard rescue effort was soon underway; numb hands eagerly grabbing for the dislodged rope. After a bit of prussiking, we were both warm again, and moved out of the cave accompanied by a gloating Rolan. The walk back to the cars also moderated our murderous intentions. Rejoining the other two there, a bit of Matthew-stirring was pursued lightheartedly. Profuse apologies were made for being such a "Wally" and all was forgiven.

The following day, someone met with in a supermarket asked me if any caving was happening next weekend; "...Trevs going to Milk Run....give him a ring....", I croaked! A return trip is planned to Khazad-Dum, to finalise the route and take a few more "specky" photos of course. Wet suits or drier conditions will be needed.

NICK HUME

#### VISIT WARGATA MINA THIS SUMMER????

Wargata Mina is the Aboriginal name for Judds Cavern; where aboriginal paintings were found last year. The paintings are hand stencils, which were probably done during the last ice age over 12000 years ago. Wargata Mina means "My Blood"; which is a reference to the mixture of ochre and mammal blood used to make the stencils.

Because some of the paintings are hard to see and situated low on the cave walls, the Department of Lands, Parks and Wildlife has asked people not to go into the cave until a walkway and interpretive sign have been installed. The paintings are extremely vulnerable to touching

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and people accidentally brushing against the walls of the cave could cause irreparable harm.

In the meantime, two seasonal Rangers will be based at Wargata Mina between Christmas and early february. They will show visitors the paintings, providing information about their significance and telling them how to assist in their preservation. When not busy with visitors, the Rangers will be doing some work on improving the track from Farmhouse Creek ( " Thank God ", I hear some people gasp! ). Even Rangers can't work for weeks without a break, so there will be some days when the cave will be unattended; please check with the Department of Lands, Parks and Wildlife before you go. Phone Greg Leaman ( 002-30 3977 ) or Angie McGowan ( 002-30 6596 ) to find out which days the Rangers will be there. Their first stint will be from 27th of december to 3rd of january.

The Commonwealth and State governments have just agreed to nominate Wargata Mina, and the area of forest surrounding it, for entry on the World Heritage list because of the outstanding importance of the prehistoric paintings. What better way to celebrate this international recognition of Tasmania's Ice Age cave paintings, than by visiting Wargata Mina this summer. See you there.....

ANGIE MCGOWAN

#### MOUNT CRIPPS KARST

The Savage River Caving Club has been active in the West and North-West of the State for a number of years now. They have pursued explorations, surveying and tagging of the caves at Bubs Hill, among other things, and most recently have been instrumental in opening up an entirely new and exciting karst area at Mount Cripps near Waratah. Their list of members is impressive, including; Lyndsey and Frank Salt, Rosie & Henry Shannon, Bevis And Ben Dutton, Paul Darby, Steve Hickey, Chris Johnson, Brian Povey and Rod Walters ( " Wally-Rod " ! ).

Several participated jointly with T.C.C., in a recent Old Ditch Road -Valley Entrance through trip. From appearances they are a very capable, enthusiastic and sociable group of people and a pleasure to cave with. The following article documents some of their work at Mount Cripps and is entirely their own story. Take it away Frank.....

#### Out of Retirement

The onset of senility in elderly cavers contain a number of mile-stones that can be detected by the expert. One only has to hang around the "bath chair" circle at any caving club dinner to pick them. Such statements as "I could show the young buggers how to ladder", or "...of course we covered the whole area in '63", reveal that the arm chair is worn more often than the trog suit.

Every now and then however, an accident occurs which forces a person out of the comfort of reminiscence and into the stark horror of caving again. Such a mishap has recently taken place in Northern Tasmania. a number of "oldies" ( including myself ), were making silly statements including; "The need for a project to utilize our abilities". The good caving fairy must have been listening however, and with a wave of the magic wand we were blessed; not with a cave or a dig, but a complete new karst area on our doorstep! Our bluff had been called.

The problem all started in 1987 when an updated geological survey suddenly revealed a large patch of limestone on the map of Tasmania,

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in an area previously marked; "Here be dragons". To make matters worse, Forestry Officers looking for an easy life immediately started finding caves in it ( its against Forestry practices to log karst areas ). The third problem was that the area, called Mount Cripps, was within easy reach of Savage River. Motivated by little understood reflex reactions, a number of us decided to take a bit of a look ( the first mistake ). The area turned out to be covered in scenically magnificent tall rain forest.

We set up a base camp and with a list of the features found by the Forestry, moved into the woods and immediately started to find caves (the second mistake). By the end of the first weekend we had located eight of them, mainly small things, but caves all the same. As the distance that we had covered only amounted to a little over a kilometre, we began to get a feel for the area (I can think of no other caving area where a random 1 km walk would reveal 8 entrances). To make matters worse the geological survey indicated that there was a possible 12 - 16 square kilometres to play in.

We consulted aerial photos in the hope that karst features might be limited to a small area, only to find large depressions, blind valleys and disappearing streams scattered al over the place. It was obviously going to take longer than a single weekend. at this stage we added to our group, Rod Walters; the Forestry Officer who had been involved in some of the initial finds. Rod, it turned out, had a nose for caves and couldn't even step behind a manfern for a pee without turning up at least two. Only Henry Shannons insistence on accurate recording and surveying stopped us from going completely silly and spending large parts of the weekends underground. Since the beginning there have been half a dozen trips into the area and the number of known caves is around a couple of dozen. Two of them, Philrod Cave and Stettle Pot contain active streams, whilst a whole bag of drafting squeezes, shafts and holes require further attention. Slowly but surely, we are turning into active cavers once again.

FRANK SALT

( Senior Mobile Engineer - Savage River Mines )

#### Cave List for Mount Cripps

The area code for this karst field is CR; the prefix MC already being in use for caves at Mole Creek.

<u>CAVE NUMBER</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>CAVE NUMBER</u>	<u>NAME</u>
CR 1.	String Cave	CR 11.	Philrod Cave
CR 2.	Vertigo	CR 12.	House of Cards
CR 3.	My D-Cline	CR 13.	Smallend Cave
CR 4.	Choir Room	CR 14.	Aerolight Cave
CR 5.	Mossy Bank Cave	CR 15.	Deception Pit
CR 6.	Narrow Scrape Cave	CR 16.	Sunlite Hole Cave
CR 7.	APPM Cave	CR 17.	Stettle Pot
CR 8.	Cut Line Swallet	CR 18.	Frettle Hole
CR 9.	Lucinda's Cave	CR 19.	Bettle Cave
CR 10.	Venturi Cave	CR 20.	Nao Cave

( Some Edited Highlights )

#### Philrod Cave

The entrance drops from a complex doline, straight into a large cavern which is low only near the entrance. Ahead, there is a cluster of stalactites which can be skirted on either side, though the left hand

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route ( through sloppy mud ) is preferable because of the moonmilche to the right. The cavern opens out to a large alcove with a large rock in it. From its end, a maze of crawlways lead either to a cliff overlooking a streamway, or back to the main cavern at a point where the entrance streamway/mud flow sinks into a floor hole. One of the low passages of the maze gives an easy descent to the river, but care is needed past a long straw tucked to the right. Once in the streamway there are good straw stalactite clusters, and past the point where the water enters, a short climb to a second entrance. The streamway is a tall passage which expands slightly at the ceiling, at about the level of the crawlways.

Straight ahead from the large rock the cavern narrows to a gallery with a floor hole, above which is very long straw stalactite ( at about 4m it is surpassed only by one or two others in Tas. and W.A.). The natural route across the hole makes it risky for the stalactite..

Past the floor hole is a sediment bank also covered with soft "moonmilche", and beyond it another streamway. This can be followed upstream, bending to the left with the ceiling getting lower to a shallow pool/syphon at the present end. The gravelly bed includes mammalian bones.

Back at the first floor hole, there is a crawlway and a chimneyable alternative to enter the downstream branch ( 2nd passage on the right from the entrance). The crawlway is to be preferred to avoid putting mud on some 2nd rate but attractive flowstone (small rimstone dams). The three streams all come in to this passage which is narrow, sometimes tall, sometimes low. At one point the stream goes into a slot canyon which is bypassed through a crawlway, up to the left.

Features towards the end of the streamway include a near-sump at the present downstream exploration limit, which could probably be dug out easily since the floor is soft, and a rising passage with a natural slippery-dip. The end of the slippery dip has sediment banks which show layers of mud and angular muddy gravel with travertine clasts, pointing towards a former entrance and streamway.'

Further back is a corroded travertine mass, once a column like mass attached to a buttress which has been covered under water; there are well developed current scallops in the ceiling where it is part of the travertine mass. At a few points in this passage subsidence of the floor is proved by vertical striations left in some remnants of mud on the walls.

From the main cavern there is another passage to the right, closer to the entrance. It has some short side passages, one with a mud wall across it, and a loop (not enterable) with some good gours (rimstone dams). At the finish it narrows to a squeeze which comes out overlooking a seven metre drop into the downstream passage, in a noisy section. Water noise can be heard through a smaller hole further back.

A clay silt fill is characteristic of most minor sediment blocked tubes. Much of the fill is delicately laminated in convex upward arcs of the same style as the ceiling curve, which points to upward development of the tubes. The cave does not seem ever to have had a major input of water from a stream with an off the limestone catchment despite the large size of the main gallery. (Note that the cave was visited in wet conditions).

There would seem some scope for a section of sandbagged pathway (like in the Kubla Khan restoration project) to make an obvious route that

would direct visitors away from the superlong straw, and to keep people cleaner over the sloppy mud section near the entrance.

HENRY SHANNON

( Senior Geologist-Savage Resources)

#### Addendum by Frank Salt

This cave proved to be a delight with excellent formations, pleasant passages and a active stream passage of some size. In all it is believed some 250 - 350 metres of passage were examined.

The most obvious way on, the stream passage finally stopped at a point named 'The dogs front door', a hole approx. 250mm square taking the stream and leading on into the darkness.

In view of the large size of the passage up to this point and also considering the air flow through 'The dogs front door', it is most likely the cave continues beyond this point. Excavation in the bed of the stream may well produce an extension.

#### STETTLE POT

A small running creek flows into a considerable depression ( 100 metres wide ) and disappears into the base of a cliff ( 25 metres high ). Adjacent to the point where the creek disappears, a large vertical slot gives access underground. Steve explored this slot for some distance, noting vertical and horizontal development in the cave, and the sound of a substantial water-flow noise. Further exploration is essential

BEVIS DUTTON

#### CHOIR ROOM CAVE

The entrance hole is about 0.6 metres in diameter next to the remains of a stump, which may have even uncovered the entrance in falling over. The entrance boulder slope gives access to the main cavern, which runs northerley until blocked by broken rock. It is a fragment of fossil river passage of respectable size, about 4 metres wide by 5 metres high where it is obstructed by fill. From the left hand-end passageway, a wet weather streamway comes out of cemented rubble and goes down a hole against the eastern wall. A crawlway following the stream could be pushed. The significance of the cave is that other parts of the main passage, and others like it, are to be expected in the area. The name is written on orange tape left by earlier explorers.

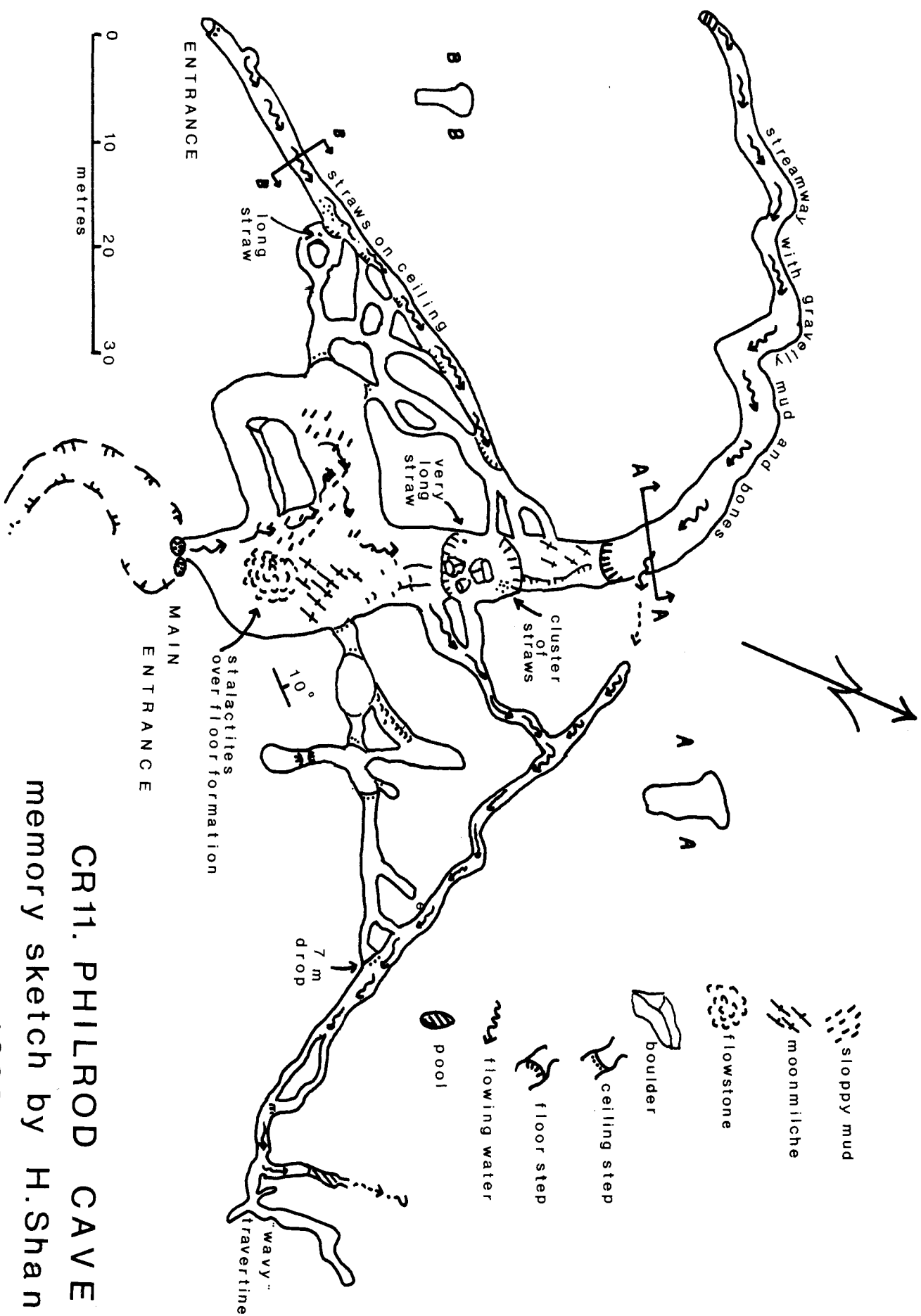
FRANK SALT

#### VERTIGO

This entrance is a fairly tight, off vertical slot which widens to some thing more comfortable inside. The floor sloping gently downwards on loose earth to an earth sump on the right. A low crawl curves rightward to a chamber lacking most of its floor. A floor slot is chimneyable but a rope is advised. From the pitch bottom the cave divides, straight ahead would require another rope, but can be bypassed to the same area, through some clean limestone subject to vadose splash activity. Turning right and descending below an overhanging wall brings you to a confused set of small caverns, which show evidence of frequent flooding; mud structures building out from overhanging surfaces, etc. The pitch from the alternate route joins in at this area.

HENRY SHANNON

JAN - FEB 1989



# CR11. PHILROD CAVE

memory sketch by H. Shannon

1988