

NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

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EDITORIAL

First the bad news.... recently married members Adrienne and Rolan Eberhard have left us to take up residence in Papua-New Guinea for some three years. This is something of a blow to the club, as both, and particularly Rolan, have been instrumental in much original cave exploration in Tasmania and elsewhere, over the past decade. To itemise their contribution to the club here, would be a "mission impossible". It will humbly have to suffice, that we fondly thank them for many, many good times shared in the past, and to offer them our best wishes for the future. Sounds an interesting and unique sort of adventure.

Adrienne has taken up a contract teaching position, whilst Rolan is continuing tertiary studies through correspondence with the University of New England. Both will be based in Goroka. Plenty of karst in PNG for them to play in, and hopefully some novel trip reports will be coming our way; just to make us all very envious! We will be trying hard to make them feel envious with news from here!

As for the good news..... The Precipitous Bluff Expedition held over the Christmas/New Year was highly successful with a considerable amount of new cave being found and surveyed. Much of the new stuff is associated with the Damper Cave/Bauhaus and Quetzalcoatl Conduit drainage systems. A complete tie-in of underground and overland surveys is being put together by Stuart Nicholas in league with his SUPER-SMAPS software. PB karst is ideally suited to this type of treatment and a highly detailed overview of the areas hydrology will soon be available. Only Stuart being present on site, with a portable computer, could have improved the situation as it prevailed. Maybe this could be arranged for the return expedition later this year!

A brief synopsis of the discoveries appears elsewhere in this SPIEL. Much, much more on PB will be forthcoming in a multiple issue of this newsletter (or a journal) in the near future; including area descriptions, maps, cave and faunal surveys, cave numbering, hydrological assessments, individual trip reports, etc. Many thanks

to all those who contributed with their participation. It was good to see various cavers, from both here and interstate, working together so productively and it is safe to say that the experience was unanimously and greatly enjoyed.

A minor incident that occurred during this expedition, raises a number of issues worthy of discussion here. During the absence of most cavers from camp, on the 29th day of december, a bushwalker passing through the area apparently became offended at the sight of our few tents, and small hearth for the disposing of food scraps. Presumably because he preferred no-one else to be at his favorite campsite. Whatever, bolstered by the sole presence of the female caver in attendance, this person made claim of representing a State Government authority and then systematically proceeded to vandalise the campsite, interfering with and damaging personal property. He then promptly left the area before the other cavers had returned.

Ironically, the caver who sustained most gear damage in the incident is himself very active in wilderness conservation and has been foremost in participating and organising many of the events run by the Wilderness Society. Understandably, he was very upset; sufficiently so to seek legal advice for reparations. The rest of our group were non-plussed by the occurrence. Being bushwalkers ourselves of many years standing, it was hard to reconcile the incident with any reasonable ethical standards.

Minimal impact bushwalking is something we condone and usually try to promote. The small attended fire transgressed this, but was decided upon as the only practical solution to the problem of food scraps. These may otherwise have come to represent a health problem over the course of the expedition, and to have targetted the area for invasion by possums and devils. The hearth was well doused after use each day, and at the end of the expedition, all traces of it and our presence there, were obliterated. A meticulous ground search was made to ensure that the campsite was left more pristine than we actually found it on our arrival. So what was the real basis for this individuals antagonism ?

The contention that the fire was lit on a peat material is invalid; the soil at the site being +80% siliceous, rather than carbon based; the topsoil deposit being associated with processes operating directly behind the beach front of the lagoon. Immediately underlying the surface material is a fossil (siliceous) soil, clearly visible in the truncated " marsupial lawns " at the waters edge. Furthermore, the site was scarcely one metre above a saline watertable and conditions were generally damp because of the prevailing weather.

The point to be made is that " rambo-style " tactics, including the deliberate terrorising of a person for personal gratification, are not a very adult way of promoting wilderness sensitivity. The bushwalker should have had more sense and acted on his grievances through the legal system (which we would have quite happily contested), rather than act in the way that he did. Having bushwalked with this person myself, in the past, it's strange how his own value system has undergone such a reversal in that time. Enough said.

NICK HUME

TROG TRIPE

Review of the book: ON ROPE - North American Vertical Rope Techniques by Allen Padgett and Bruce Smith, 1987, National Speleological Society (available locally through Paddy Palin).

Once upon a time Neil Montgomery wrote a book called " Single Rope Techniques "; very informative and practical it was too, for its day. In the absence of very much competition, it was quickly hailed as the " bible " of vertical caving arts and held that position for many years. Becoming decidedly dated, it was knocked from its pedestal by an English publication; "Caving Practice and Equipment" by David Judson. This drew much from SRT, but was a definite improvement; detailed, diverse and modern, it offered much to the caver, whether experienced or even novice.

Now, not to be outdone, the Americans have come out with the mighty tome; " On Rope "; drawing heavily on the other two publications and claiming it as the new definitive " bible for vertical or single rope techniques ". Exhaustive might be a better term; for among its 340 pages there are articles on motorised ascending devices (MAD), the special problems of large breasted women, helium balloons..... Its positively mind blowing really! The sheer wealth of information makes it difficult to be at all critically objective about content. However, ignoring the trees for the forest, for a moment, it would really only rate as being indispensable to a cavers library, if you happen to be a North American one!

"Cartwheels" and "duffels" are fine for the deep pits of Mexico, etc ; where the caves are roomy and the rope is all *gratis* from the manufacturer anyway. However, it doesn't fit at all well with the European (and hence Australian adopted) necessity for lightweight, low bulk, cost efficient gear. That factor, together with the many illustrations (which as exercises in non-sexism, are very difficult to take seriously) appearing in the book are the only major criticisms that can be made.

Before being labelled as a derider of all things American, it must be pointed out that there is a lot in the publication that is universally applicable enough to make it worthwhile getting hold of. The attributes, testing procedures and historical development of caving ropes, makes for fascinating reading, as does the coverage of sundry esoteric rope-walker prussiking systems (I'm an old fashioned frogger myself !). The rigging setups duplicate much of what has appeared elsewhere, but a lot can be learnt from the chapters on rescue, teaching/practicing ropework, aid climbing underground and even the glossary is hard to stay away from! An impressive book in some respects.

" The Unbearable Blackness of Caving "

To overcome this problem, the club is making up some more caving lamps for hire to members, school groups, beginners, etc. Anyone who has got, or can get hold of, some Oldham (or similar) headpieces and headpiece bits; please.....oh, please, would they consider donating lending, or selling them to the club, to assist us. It would be greatly appreciated.

".....just singing in the rain....."

During a recent and sudden thunderstorm/downpour; so heavy as to be described by the weather bureau as a once in 50 year event, two groups of cavers just happened to be doing two of the more prone vertical caves in the Maydena area. Martyn Carnes, together with the three visiting VSA (Victorian Speleological Association) cavers; Gavin Duffy, Mark Grapelle and Tim Dunnicliff found it highly sporting in Dwarrowdelf, and made a flying retreat back up some suddenly very damp pitches, without getting a chance to derig (the ropes were subsequently removed).

Monash Speleo's (MSS) were also encountering some unexpected water falls in Cauldron Pot and were forced to sit out the worst of it. A quickwitted Martyn left a contact number on their car window and informed the ranger at National Park of the situation. The MSS crew emerged at dawn the following morning; promptly ringing the ranger and all was well. The TCC rescue team were in a state of readiness back here in Hobart, but weren't required thanks to Mart's impromptu bit of organisation. Well done lad!

Wine not, not why not ???! Late last year our esteemed club was fortunate (?) to be the recipient of a free case of wine - not an everyday occurrence you will agree. Perhaps this is just as well (for reasons other than the quality of the wine)...

The mixed case came from the Lyndhurst Estate and contained some excellent vintages, almost too good to drink really, but if one didn't indulge, the excellence of the product would remain an unknown! Together with the remains of some of Bunty's infamous home brew beers (not such good vintages!), this array of intoxicants was consumed at an early summer BBQ/party/raindance, held purportedly as a send off for the Precipitous Bluff expeditioners. Some nearly were sent off, but that is another story.....

Anyway, to cut down on trivia, this little piece of writing is basically advertising. The Lyndhurst Estate were kind enough to send us the case as, for them, a fairly cheap but very direct and convincing advertising campaign. Hence they also sent a number of order forms and associated literature. The prices per case are fairly good and they are sent freight free, which helps immensely. Should we buy three cases; a fourth case of our choice is sent at no charge. Similarly, if we buy more cases, more are sent free! (YES, this was submitted by Stuart! - Ed.). So, if anyone is interested in a few bottles (reds and whites), port (two vintages) or champagne, contact Stu for more information. The cases can be any mixture of their products. So thats it really; wi-not buy a few (and have another party!).

The "sit-in" that followed the "cave-in".....!

Bunty recently received a post card from Dirk Stoffels, who was participating in the Pannikin Plains cave diving expedition near Cocklebidy in Western Australia. Dirk mentioned that Vicki Bonwick was having fun tying up all the loose boulders in the cave, and made the prophetic observation that; "....this place is an accident waiting to happen....."

Well...it just so happened that an influx of water from heavy rains collapsed the entrance series, and a number of people were trapped underground for a few days. The rescue effort made newspaper headlines prior to Christmas; entrapments of this kind seeming to capture the popular imagination. Anyway, excavation eventually allowed all those caught underground to be released uninjured. Rumour has it that some quarter of a million dollars worth of diving gear is still within the cave somewhere, nobody wishing to risk life and limb to go back and get it!

Tasmania: the latest world fashion craze....????

The publicity given to Tasmania in the film *Young Einstein*, seems to have aroused some international media attention. A television crew from the West German ZDF network, will be arriving here in March to film some of our wilderness scenery. The storyline of which will culminate in a documentation of archaeological finds in the caves of the South West. Tasmanian caving might turn out to be flavour of the month.....gads; we might even have to bring back the Eberhards!

The Greg Oddity column....

Observed at a recent pub gathering; Greg Jordan asked Stuey Nick how he was getting along, on the formers arrival. Hearing the standard reply; " Oh, just the same really ", Greg sunk slowly to his knees, eyes bulging, and started to bang his head against the wall of the bar! Funny things botanists.....

Things to do....

Plenty of surveying to be done in JF 341 and *Burning Down The House*. There are still a few leads to be checked in both caves as well; so why not get in on the action? Replacing the Bonwick ladders in *Avon's Aven* is long overdue, if you're after a leisurely trip. Otherwise, for that bit of fitness required over the TCC Easter Expedition into *Judd's Cavern*, how about some masochistic diving gear portage to the *Dreamtime* sumps?, or a scratch around in *Servalane* ? The North East ridge of Mount Anne would be an interesting diversion too, for that matter.

You have probably got some ideas of your own, so why not do a bit of canvassing at the next club meeting? Best place to find a few starters, all you have to do is take the initiative!

CAVE SURVEY REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT

How many times have caves been " initially " explored more than once, or trips gone to explore a particular lead only to find it has already been looked at?? Worse still is the situation of having to resurvey a cave or part thereof, because the original data cannot be found. Avoidance of these problems would obviously be a good thing for caving exploration; in particular the elimination of the need for resurveying. To this end, it is desirable to centralise data reduction and management. This is not to say that anyone and everyone ought not to be doing their own reduction and map production - far from it!

The acquisition of a relatively powerful and fast computer, a year or so ago by yours truly, has made possible the centralisation of survey data within TCC, and to a great extent that has been happening. The old SMAPS survey data reduction software was effective, albeit relatively primitive, but it has recently been superseded by a completely rewritten version in the form of SMAPS 4. This software will do virtually everything needed and/or desired in the rather esoteric application of cave survey data reduction and management. A review of the software will appear in SPELEO SPIEL and/or the Tas. Cave and Karst Research Group Journal in the near future.....

This article is written, not to exclaim the virtues of the software, but to make a request that all Tasmanian cave survey data be sent to Stuart Nicholas for inclusion in the survey data system, already established with SMAPS. Don't get confused with the Karst Index - that is a separate system for the acquisition and management of descriptive information relating to cave and karst features around Australia.

Any data can be included - sump surveys with depth gauge readings, data from Topofil type thread distance measuring devices, as well as wall, ceiling and floor distances, and even "normal" survey data gained with Suunto instruments and a tape measure can be dealt with!

The invitation extends to all clubs/groups/individuals in the State and to visiting groups who may do some surveying while here. We are not trying to pirate caves or surveys, just set up some system to reduce the amount of fragmentation and dissipation of cave survey data, and hence enable a more systematic approach to further cave exploration and understanding. Rapidly available plots of traverses has already enabled the directing or redirecting of exploratory effort, to achieve maximum benefit from any one trip. The great advantage of the system is the rapidity of its operation and the ability to link many smaller surveys and plot them as one. The investigation of hydrology of the Florentine Valley has been greatly assisted by the use of the system and Precipitous Bluff is undergoing similar study. Mole Creek has had some investigation, but unfortunately access problems have limited that.

So... dig in your drawers, under the bed, or wherever you keep cave survey notes and send them (or copies) , with appropriate explanation of start points and so on, to myself (7 Rupert Avenue; New Town, Tas. 7008) or TCC (C/- PO Box 416; Sandy Bay, Tas. 7005). Cave exploration will benefit greatly if we can assemble all possible data in one place; to give a unified approach to the exploration and mapping of the underworld of Tasmania.

STUART NICHOLAS

1988/89 PRECIPITOUS BLUFF EXPEDITION - A SUMMARY

The expedition was held between 17th of december and 1st of january and was initially organised by S. Eberhard and N. Hume, with some later assistance forthcoming from T. Wailles and A. Clarke. Participating were several members of this club, two cavers from the Southern Caverneering Society and three members of the Victorian

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Speleological Association. Eight persons were considered the optimum number for tenancy at base camp; to minimise environmental impact while at the same time providing sufficient personnel to keep two or three teams operative in the field. Thus expedition members were split into two groups; the first resident until the 26th of december, to be replaced by a second group who remained until the end of the expedition.

Diving gear was used in an attempt to physically connect Bauhaus with Cueva Blanca, and also the latter with Damper Cave (a hydrological connection between the three has been proven from water tracing). This had the potential to yield quite a lengthy system. Unfortunately, diving conditions were hazardous and only some twenty metres or so were gained towards Bauhaus from Cueva, without the anticipated breakthrough. This does confirm the separation between the sumps in both caves to be of the order of forty metres; as implied by the prior overland survey. It is likely that better technical preparation next time will result in success. A deep lake series (downstream Cueva) combined with atrocious siltation, foiled our secondary plans to connect with Damper.

A labyrinth of newly found dry-passage (*Honey and Cream*) within Damper Cave, has a very real chance of entering Cueva by way of an alternative. Computer treatment of the areas survey data will point to the best method of achieving this and should be available shortly. Damper traverse-line data was essential for our own master survey of the whole area; the original material from the 1974 trips having apparently been lost, the cave had to be resurveyed.

The terminal sump in Damper was dived, and after some forty metres of clear conditions, broke into major borehole passage that was pace and compass surveyed for over 400 metres without any cessation. This lack of conclusion, plus the fact that Bauhaus/Cueva waters represent only a portion of the total flow in Damper, are suggestive of a great deal more to be found next time.

The *Lowlife* extension in Quetzalcoatl Conduit was pushed well beyond the terminus of last trip. Largely negotiated by an all-out swim, the new passage eventually led to a series of dry chambers before terminating in an unstable boulder pile. Some 1100 metres was surveyed from the prior station; extrapolations of which reveal the furthest point to be directly under sinkhole features known to occur on the eastern side of Elusive Bluff. This trip featured very varied and exciting caving and was certainly one of the highlights of the whole expedition. Once again, the formerly known parts of the cave were resurveyed because of unavailable data from the 1974 trips. Total length of the cave now stands at some 2.2 kilometres.

Surface exploration to the south and uphill from, Quetzalcoatl Conduit, revealed many karst features (such as the sinkholes marked on the new 1:25000 scale maps; these as a rule being nests of heavily blocked dolines), but only a few going shafts (one of these has yet to be explored). The slopes here appear unpromising and scrub below the major ridge, prevent direct access to Elusive Bluffs eastern side. Down on the plain/slope juncture, Reece Cave (originally found in 1974) was rediscovered and pushed along a muddy wallow to a possible dig. A strong draught, plus the direction of flow of its minor stream, make it a likely connector to Quetzal.

Another nearby entrance (PB13) found this trip, finished in a boulder pile, but probably does the same thing. Various attempts to skirt Elusive Bluff on the plain met vile tea tree-bauera-cutting grass; some progress was made, but without the success of reaching the beforementioned sinkholes.

Xymox was pushed beyond *Bela Legosi*, to reveal more of this very old style of passage. Similarly ancient chamber-passage of huge size (*Kokoku*) was found above the entrance hall of Bauhaus, and appears to continue unabated; though precipitous floor collapses prevented a complete exploration.

Surface exploration to the north of Bauhaus resulted in the finds; PB16, Persephone (PB17), Xmas Cavern (PB18) and Enone (PB19). Persephone has an impressive draught; mist wafting out of a large rift-style entrance shaft. The first pitch proved to be 60 metres deep; a length of ancient passage giving access to a "blowhole" in the floor. Two further pitches led to some sizable fossil development, below which a streamway was encountered. This ran several hundred metres downstream, to a point where a handprint was found indicating previous explorations from the Bauhaus side. A connection was duly made and the explorers were saved from having to return back up the pitches of Persephone! This and some minor additions gives the New Order/Bauhaus/Xymox/Persephone system, a known length of some 2.5 kilometres.

Xmas Cavern has a massive entrance, belying it's termination at approximately -50 metres following pitches of 25, 10 and 5 metres. Enone was similarly impressive; the entrance shaft broken by pitches of 20, 8 and 10 metres. A side lead from the boulder-choked main shaft held a 15 metre pitch, finishing in a pile of rubble. Both of these caves were surveyed and it appears highly likely that they are feeders to upstream Persephone. No physically passable connection seems feasible, unfortunately.

To the west of the Bauhaus area, were found; Aikea (PB21), Gaping Grin Cave (PB22) and PB23. Aikea is a massive shaft; 10 - 15 metres in diameter (visible on aerial photos in fact!), dropping to a vegetated floor at -35 metres. Though undescended due to time constraints, a borehole continuation was visible exiting from underneath the eastern headwall. A scaled placement of this cave upon the master survey, locates it directly above the downstream passage of Bauhaus. Piles of bones, upper level aven development and the loss of draught half way down the downstream section of Bauhaus, corresponds well with an hypothesized entry point for Aikea.

Nearby, Gaping Grin Cave proved to be a labyrinth of passages, one of which gave access to a draughting 15+ metre pitch. Although undescended due to the same reasons as above, it may well connect to Bauhaus along a line of ancient upper-level borehole extending over the latter's entrance chamber; notably from an unattainable lead underneath the New Order shaft. Ditto for PB23, which held a howling draught at a wide ledge overlooking a 30 metre pitch; also unexplored.

Extensive faunal surveys were undertaken in virtually all of the caves previously mentioned. Assessments of these are naturally a long term concern, but along with computer treatment and drawing-up

of underground/ overland survey data, should be forthcoming in a more detailed account of the expedition to be issued around the middle of this year. The close of the expedition brought a general reluctance to leave on the part of those remaining. Number-tags were placed on the various caves discovered to date. Along with three taped caving routes (purposely obscured from the major bushwalking track by a buffer zone), these were the only evidence of our passing.

The unexplored leads alluded to above, strongly beckon us to return later this year, by whatever method it requires for us to get there. Our sincerest gratitude is extended to the Lands, Parks and Wildlife Service for their sanctioning of this expedition.

NICK HUME

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE (Part 1)

We initially intended to have a semi-slack cruisy sort of a day under the guise of attempting to re-locate Rainbow Cave and a few other un-named holes in a small valley out the back of Westfield Road. On the drive up to Maydena, people appeared to be in various states of disrepair commensurate with their previous nights activities. The senses were alert enough however, to notice some unfortunate house owner watching his house burn to the ground across the river. The scene was adequately summed up by Stefan's exclamation.....Excellent!

As we neared Maydena the weather naturally worsened, and by the time we reached the area of the valley we wanted, it was nothing short of disgusting. We quickly changed and with the appropriate degree of torpidity instilled by such weather, we proceeded to locate Rainbow Cave with the view of assessing its potential for diving. We started by locating Rainbow's small valley and headed downhill from the road. After walking a small loop which landed us back at the cars, we found the entrance which was only a stones throw away from the road.

Rainbow is a friendly little cave taking a small stream via a narrow rift which is open to the sky for fifteen metres or so. The pleasant narrow meandering streamway continues for approximately thirty to forty metres to a rather uninviting small muddy sump. After a short, but unsuccessful grovel here and there to attempt a dry by-pass, noses were snooted up in the air and we exited to the rain.

Upon our return to the car; Stefan and I were aghast to find that the weather had got the better of Rolan and Adrienne, who were already changed and wallowing in the comforts of a dry car. After a quick conference and a bite to eat, Stefan and I proceeded up-valley from the road with the view of re-locating JF 228 which had a lead left unpushed by me some three years ago. However, within minutes of leaving the road we happened upon X 32 which is one of the series of caves discovered in the area by S.C.S some years ago.

The short entrance series appears to have had a reasonable amount of traffic over the years. Indeed I remember having looked at the cave

myself some years ago. The previous extent of exploration had revealed a very small stream that meanders between several small to medium sized chambers for fifty to sixty metres ending in a small rockpile. There is however, an upper level consisting of a series of small sand filled chambers sporting a host of very old and dry decoration.

We detected the previous limits of exploration in this section at a point just above the aforementioned rockpile. In this "final" chamber there is a very narrow lead which swallows an impressive draught. Stefan attempted thirty minutes or so chipping and hammering a way through but to no avail. In the meantime I had noticed a couple of small holes in the floor which appeared to lead back down to the stream level.

Upon Stefans return we investigated and found the way on through the continuation of the small horizontal stream passage interspaced with small rockpiles. The passage continued in this fashion for 150-200 metres or so until a more major rockpile was reached. About fifteen minutes and a few grunts later we emerged on the otherside to follow the stream passage for approximately another fifty to seventy-five metres. Then the dimensions of the passage quickly increased until we found ourselves at the intersection of a major streamway very reminiscent of the Porcupine Pot stream.

Feeling quite pleased with ourselves, we uttered the secret T.C.C wacry and ran down the spacious streamway like a pair of misplaced vikings. Along the way were impressive patches of pristine decoration comparable to parts of Welcome Stranger. About seventy metres down, the stream bifurcates with the main stream flowing straight ahead and the smaller stream to the left, which ultimately flows under an impenetrable rock pile. The main flow continues for another thirty to forty metres and flows under a flowstone coated rockpile on a bend in the streamway. Further to the left, a small trickle flows into a tighter passage blocked by yet another rockpile.

Just before the "flowstone bend" Stefan noticed a steeply ascending passage (just about vertical actually) which offered the hope of a bypass to the rockpile. However, due to the exposed nature of the climb and our dwindling supply of time, we decided that it would have to wait for a future trip.

Upon our return to the intersection we had a brief look upstream. The passage height narrows down to near sump dimensions after approximately twenty metres. Stefan made a brief venture beyond this point returning soaked, and reporting something along the lines that it still goes but it's too horrible for the psyche to handle at this stage of the day.

So we beat a hasty retreat to the car, and emerged only thirty minutes later to find Rolan and Adrianne reading newspapers. I think that between us, Stefan and I managed to make the intrepid newspaper perusers appropriately envious of our discovery.

THE RETURN TRIP with Trevor, Nick, Steve, Rolan, Martyn (Part 2)

This trip was essentially to show the above party what all the fuss

was about, and also of course, to push the upstream and downstream leads mentioned above. The features which make this cave so attractive are most notably its close proximity to the road, and the fact that it requires no gear.

On the way in we had to look twice during route finding through one of the boulder piles but otherwise we made reasonably short work of reaching the main streamway intersection.

While Rolan and Nick lingered in the upstream area taking photographs, the rest of us proceeded to investigate the climb mentioned earlier. Upon closer inspection the exposed nature of the climb proved to be even more hairy than was first anticipated. Rolan joined us later and ultimately came to the same conclusion. Stefan however, did return at a later date and managed to scale the climb only to discover that it didn't go after all.

Trevor and myself decided to have a look at the upstream lead before we departed. This proved to be most unpleasant. For once, Trev, was really justified in exclaiming "EEEEEE, this is just like cavin' in England"! The lead basically consists of a very low and extremely wet crawl, interspersed by a couple of near ducks. The prolonged exposure to these conditions prompted us to conclude that a wetsuit would possibly be needed for a lengthy push. I estimated that we crawled about sixty to eighty metres with no end in sight before we started to get really cold. One slightly discouraging sign was that there appeared to be little or no draught. However this remains the only obvious possible lead to this newly discovered major drainage system.

A speedy return trip to the car saw smiles and various other signs of contentment which were indicative of an enjoyable trip.

MARTYN CARNES

Caves on Tasmania's East Coast: The Gray - Mt. Elephant Karst Area

Mount Elephant is situated some 7 kilometres south east of St. Marys. The mountain is a flat-topped mass of horizontal sedimentary strata protected by a capping of dolerite (Hughes, T., 1957, Limestone in Tasmania). The geological sheet (Launceston SK 55-4) indicates a circumferential band of Permian limestone with a relief of less than 40 metres, on the slopes of Mt. Elephant, at an altitude between 400 and 600 metres a.s.l. The deposit is traversed by the Tasman Highway at Gray and Elephant Pass. Whilst outcrops of Permian limestone are widespread in the eastern portion of the State, there are only a few localities, such as here, Maria Island and possibly also Waterfall Bay, where caves are known to exist.

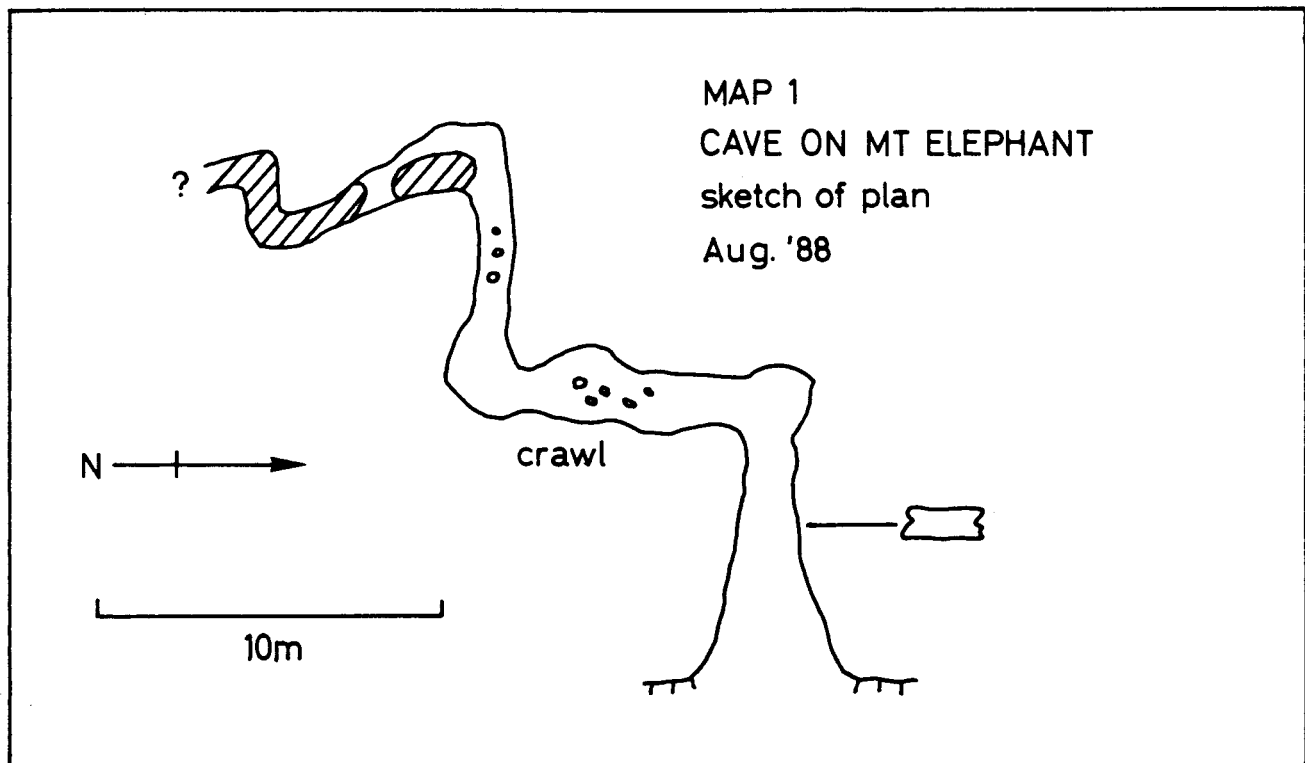
Our visit to the area was inspired by Bob Mesibov, a biologist studying the Onychophora; commonly called peripatus or velvet worms. The Onychophora are a small group of invertebrates of exceptional interest in evolutionary studies. They have been described variously as " missing links " and " living fossils ". Mt. Elephant happens to be the centre of distribution for a remarkable new species of blind, white peripatus. The only other known incidences of these are from caves at Table Cape in South Africa. The plan was to see if we could

find any of these beasts living in the caves at Mt. Elephant.

The only cave reported for the area in the Karst Index is "Bottomless Pit" (G-X 1), some 20 metres deep and 50 metres in length that TCC apparently explored in 1964. Although the exact location of this hole remains a mystery, with the assistance of Bob Mesibov, local caver Bill Hardman and Jeff of St. Marys Youth Hostel, it was possible to investigate a few other caves in the area during our trip in August 1988. Arthur Clarke also provided some information about the region. A description and sketch map of each of the caves is provided below. Plenty of bugs were seen, but no cave-dwelling peripatus.

Unnamed Cave: Map 1 (Gray 049920)

This cave is an intermittent flood-overflow efflux explored for some 35 metres of crawling. No end was reached and the passage was half full of water at the furthest point. The entrance is located at circa 460 metres a.s.l. in a feeder of Little Beach Creek on "Elephant Farm" property. The cave is in a cliff face less than 50 metres from where the creek crosses the limestone beds as a waterfall. Nearby in the same cliffline are a number of other minor holes, including a small swallet and an impenetrable resurgence of the same waters (?).

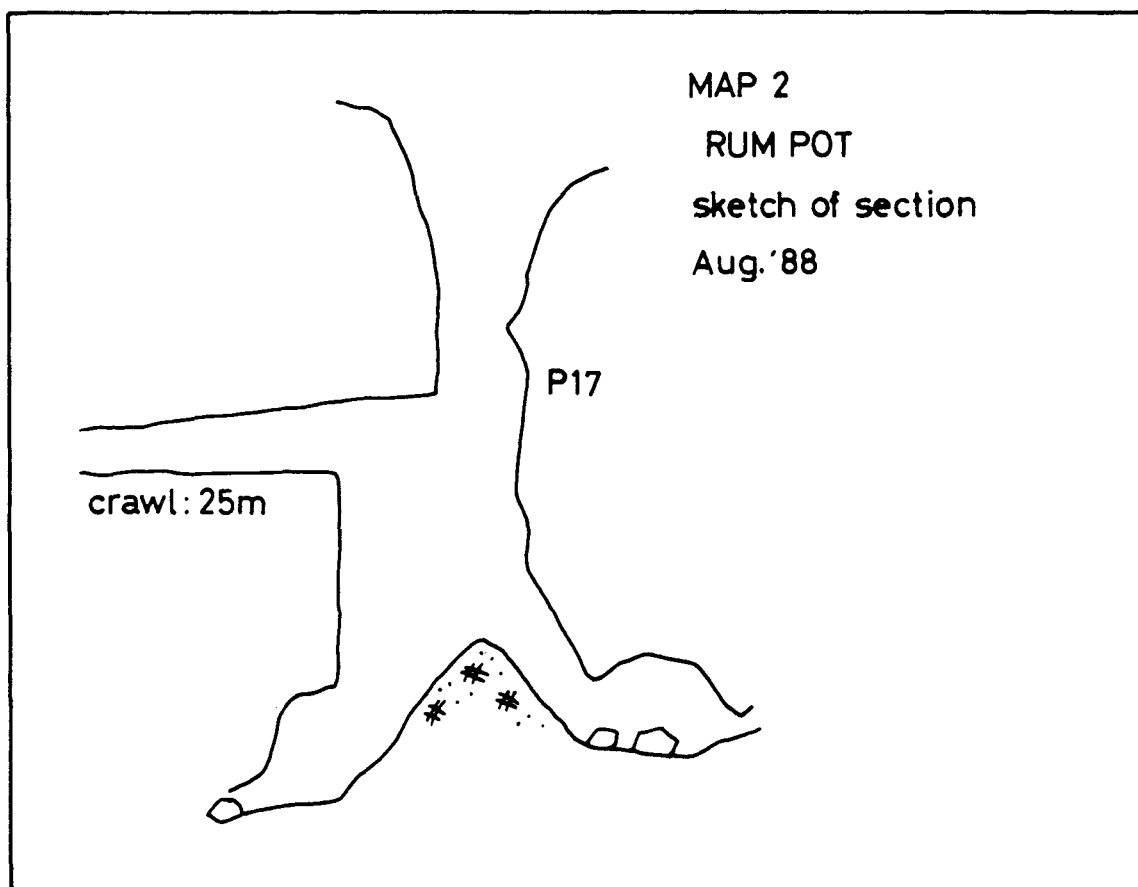


Rum Pot: Map 2 (Gray 024905)

Bill Hardman gave us copies of two trip reports describing previous descents of Rum Pot. The first is of a TCC (northern branch) trip by F. C. Brown and B. Wirnal in 1965. According to the report the hole had been explored at least twice prior to their foray. The second report refers to a trip in 1979 when Hardman and N. Allen descended the cave. In their report is mention of the rotting

remains of a wooden ladder, that had apparently been used many years previously to reach an upper level passage. An empty rum bottle was also evident!

Rum pot is located beside the Tasman Highway, 6.9 kilometres from St. Marys School heading towards Elephant Pass. On the right hand of the road is a small " car park " area, and the cave lies less than 100 metres into the bush; immediately downslope on the crest of a ridge situated between two gullies. A funnel-shaped leads into a pitch of roughly 17 metres. At the bottom is an elongated chamber that holds little hope of further continuation, except perhaps the vague prospect of digging away some blocks at its lower end. Some 6 metres up from the floor is a horizontal inlet passage (The Rum Passage) which was followed for circa 25 metres without coming to an end.

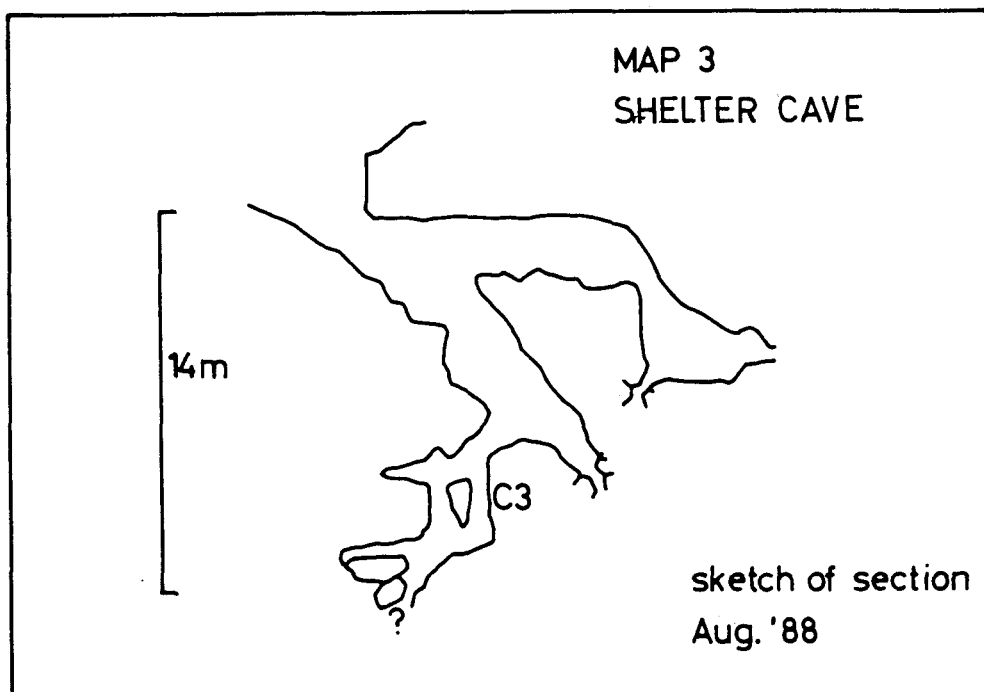


Shelter Cave: Map 3 (Gray 017904)

6.3 kilometres from St. Marys School towards Elephant Pass is a dirt road on the right, leading to a house and sheds (Reubenach family ?). Shelter Cave is a tiny swallet located at the head of a small valley beneath a wattle tree, and surrounded by blackberries. This is about 50 metres from the house on the lower side of the road, and at roughly the same contour level. The entrance is a spacious overhang formed in the overlying mudstone. Penetrating into the limestone below, is a descending passage containing talus. A draught is present in an apparent continuation. However, digging would be required to proceed further.

Shelter Cave is mentioned in the 1965 trip report by Brown and Wirnal. According to their report, the caves name was derived from

the fact that it had been used as a refuge from bushfires 50 years previously. Horizontally laid wooden planks just inside the entrance may be associated with its use for this purpose.



The three caves described above are not the only ones known to exist in the area. Bill Hardman provided us with a typed list of eight caves; two of which appear from the description given to be Rum Pot and Shelter Cave. I am not sure whether Bill compiled the list himself, or if it came from some other source. At any rate, hopefully he will not mind if it is reproduced more or less verbatim below. The source of information for caves 6, 7 and 8, was apparently a Mrs. Sumner, and it does not appear that they have been investigated first-hand. Grid references refer to the TASMAP "Break O'Day" sheet.

1. N; 5391.8 , W; 602.6

Follow creek up until water disappears, flowing from north side of bank from under scree. Possibility of cave but much scree will need to be moved. Water flow substantial. No cave previously known from here.

2. N; 5392.7 , W; 602.6

Water flows out of hill here. Best to approach from the north, over the saddle, and then follow dry creek down until water appears. Cave has two entrances, with a substantial flow from the eastern one. The two entrances join about 3 metres inside, and it is possible to crawl for at least 10 metres, although only about 2 metres attempted so far due to water and spiders. Water has since been drained and cave awaits exploration. No cave previously known here.

3. N; 5392.8 , w; 602.7

The original owner of the land filled in the entrance of this legendary "mile long" cave about 60 - 70 years ago. It is difficult to find. Start from saddle and the cave entrance is in a depression about 70 metres east of the tree line. a

substantial depression has been formed by the collapse of a portion of the cave. Entrance only partly excavated at present, and much more digging is needed. According to the description that has been passed down; the entrance descends steeply for a distance and then it is necessary to walk through water about 50 centimetres deep, to a point where water flowing from further up the cave divides and flows to north and south. Southern flow possibly leads on to cave 2.

4. N; 5390.5 , W; 602.2
Rum Pot (?)
5. N; 5390.4 , W; 601.7
Shelter Cave (?)
6. Near to N; 5389 , W; 602
A cave here somewhere which was filled in by the landowner. Apparently had some stalactites. Source; Mrs. Sumner (told about it by an old fellow before he died).
7. Near to N; 5389.5 , W; 603.5
Large cave supposed to be down valley here somewhere. Apparently had stalactites. Source; Mrs. Sumner (told about it by grandmother).
8. Near to N; 5389.5 , W; 603.2
Small hole with large draught from it, somewhere here. Never been explored. Source; Mrs. Sumner.

STEFAN and ROLAN EBERHARD

A Thrash in Growling Swallet

Party; Toni, Belinda, Ralph and Lew

" Take us caving " was the request that sent us off on an otherwise perfectly brilliant and sunny day. Belinda and Ralph were visiting from Western Australia, and Toni also had no idea what was in store. So a leisurely jaunt through Growling Swallet seemed the best way of impressing them.

Within twenty minutes of entering the cave, one of the TCC mystery lamps carked it (what are they if they don't produce light?)! The intrepid foursome pushed on regardless, to a point about three quarters of a kilometre from the entrance.

Upon returning to the cars after this epic; memories of glow-worms and flood debris were indelibly etched on the minds of the newcomers. Comments like; "Amazing", "I'm stuffed", "Why?" and "Take me home" were heard, so an adjournment to Russell Falls was made for more relaxation. Worthy of note was the impression upon the guide of having responsibility for taking a group of " first-timers " underground. It was an experience beyond words, but not entirely thankless.

LEW MITCHELMORE

MARCH 1989

AGM.....AGM.....AGM.....AGM.....AGM.....AGM.....AGM.....AGM.....

TCC Annual General Meeting

Wednesday

29th March

Be there, to be aware.....This club has been a vehicle for much speleological activity in this State. Major cave discoveries are being made by us; we have considerable expertise (much gleaned overseas) and gear to enable caving to be carried out safely; we publicise current explorations and diverse activities; we train those new to the sport and instil in them the importance of karst and its conservation; we constitute a proficient group capable of sustained and technical cave-rescue; we centralise interpretative/survey data with computer treatment.....and much, much more.

In short, the club is important and deserves the support of your participation in the elections to be held at the forthcoming AGM. We need a strong committee willing to promote caving trips and events; motivated people to ensure that the club prospers rather than just subsists. Clubs of whatever flavour face the ever-present danger of going stale, because of too few people taking on too much of the workload. Don't let this happen to TCC; come along and get involved.....being organised is half the fun anyway and simply winging never does anyone any good. Just be there.....! Where.....? Wheatsheaf Hotel at 8.30pm sharp.

FUTURE TRIPS

12th MARCH.....GROWLING SWALLET; a leisurely wade through this spectacular stream cave, suitable for anyone who doesn't mind a bit of water. We might "squeeze" through beyond *Refuge Aven* as well.....phone Nick Hume on (002) 25 1934.

19th MARCH.....MILK RUN; a vertical cavers delight. In fact, one of the better ones at Ida Bay. Start practicing your SRT now, as a bit of rope-work is definitely needed on this one.....phone Trevor Wailes on (002) 34 4862.

24th to 27th MARCH extended.....JUDDS CAVERN; something to rave over during the AGM later that week. A huge stream cave to explore at the end of a 3-4 hour walk. Requires camping as well as caving gear, just to make life a bit more interesting! Worth staying on a few days as some diving will be going on at the same time.....phone Stefan Eberhard on (002) 29 3775.

***** PLUS *****

FRIDAY'S through MARCH, from 4 pm onwards.....SRT PRACTICE at Fruehauf Quarry. Learn and/or polish up on your prussiking skills; using the clubs SRT rigs if you don't have your own. A good chance to start.....phone Nick Hume on (002) 25 1934.

SPELEO SPIEL 1989 PHOTOGRAPHIC CALENDARS- there are still some held in stock. If you want spares for gifts; back of toilet doors; etc, send \$3.00 (postage paid) to the club mail box. An absolute bargain!!!!!! Be quick though.