

NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

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PRESIDENT:

Trevor Wailes 214 Summerleas Road, Kingston, Tas 7050. Ph 291382

(Temporary) SECRETARY:

Bob Reid 21 Haig Street, Lenah Valley, Tas 7008. Ph 280983

TREASURER:

James Davis 30 Greenacres Road, Geilston Bay, Tas 7015. Ph 439367

QUARTERMASTER:

Nick Hume 9 Primrose Place, Sandy Bay, Tasmania 7005. Ph 251934

EDITOR / TYPIST:

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

EDITORIAL

The topic on everyone's lips at present is the debate relating to the proposed extension of Benders Quarry at Ida Bay. An article below describes the situation as it stands, with ideas for possible solution of the debacle. I will not elaborate further here.

Anyway, read on. We have another action packed Speleo Spiel this month, but **MORE** trip reports are needed - if you do a trip, do a report as well so others can know what you did.....

Stuart Nicholas

The Ida Bay Quarry Situation

Benders Limited have recently notified of plans to enlarge limestone quarrying operations at their present Ida Bay site. In essence, this means that extensive blasting will take place at a contentiously close distance to the Exit Cave System, much closer than is currently being carried out, with all that implies. The Tasmanian Speleological Federation, as representative body for the interests of the caving community in this State, is strongly opposed to this, for reasons outlined below.

The proposal is to broach the divide between Lunes Sugarloaf and Marble Hill, with a large area of benching being excavated on its south west side. This would effectively see the demise of such caves as Little Grunt, Giotto, March Fly Pot (the site of a recent Thylacine bone find), as well as many un-named ones and possibly extend as far as the larger National Gallery and Pseudocheirus caves over the twenty year time scale of the project. Already, road workings above the quarry have triggered a land-slip that has approached to within a few metres of Little Grunt cave. In addition, a new haulage loop-road is planned which would extend along the northern slopes of Marble Hill and potentially affect the surface drainage into the caves of that area as well.

It is known that the Forestry Commission and Department of Lands, Parks and Wildlife aren't particularly happy about this broach of the watershed, the former because of the visible scar the new workings would create and the latter because they are in the position of administering sensitive-cave-environment policies in Exit Cave. At the same time another government body, the Mines Department, is keen to see the massive blasting of the quarry extensions go ahead nearby. The crucial point is that caving explorations carried out so far indicate that feeder-caves to the Exit System are taking drainage from at least as far as the watershed divide and these caves would be obliterated by the proposed extensions. The guidelines for quarrying in limestone areas state that operations should not approach within one kilometre of caves in reserves. Yet, considering the potential for degradation of Exit Cave as an extensive hydrological system, the guidelines are clearly going to be violated in principle.

Given the wealth of cave sites contained within and immediately surrounding the boundaries of the current mining lease, cave-friendly options for expanding the quarrying operation in any direction at all are severely limited. A westerly expansion along the northern slopes of Marble Hill, could seriously degrade the major drainage that enters Mystery Creek Cave. As well, feeder sources to that area, such as Midnight Hole, Concave, Hobbit Hole, Revelation Cave, to name just a few, would be in danger of structural disruption, if not complete obliteration. Any north-easterly expansion would damage the drainage systems of Arthurs folly, Loons Cave and Bradley Chesterman Cave, and economic considerations preclude excavations eastward into Lunes Sugarloaf because of the dolerite overburden to be removed beforehand. In any case, structural weaknesses within the limestone and its varying grades of quality, simply deny many of these options. A more "friendly" possibility is to either enlarge downward, which would still allow viable ore-body removal above the level of the water table, or to shut the quarry altogether.

The main consideration here is that nearby Exit Cave is not just any old bit of cave. It happens to be the biggest known cave system in Australia and that alone justifies a redefinition of the mining lease boundaries to more fully afford it the protection it deserves. Importantly from the legal standpoint, there is a locus standi case for preventing any damage to this and any other caves in the immediate area, by virtue of their extensive recreational use by schools, youth and welfare groups, on top of the explorations / karst research purposes of our own caving organisations. Further extensions of the mining operations themselves may well pose a life-threat to the people entering the caves, due to structural movements of the limestone and to drainage alteration. Mystery Creek Cave appears to have certainly sustained structural damage from blasting in neighbouring Blayneys Quarry in the past and oil pollution has recently permeated through into Loons Cave from the currently operated quarry.

Though much documentation still needs to be done, it can be demonstrated already that the caves to be directly affected hold much of scientific interest in the form of bone deposits of extinct animals and of their interdependency in an extensive network of karst hydrology. On this basis the Tasmanian Speleological Federation is using several avenues to prevent the proposal going ahead and any input to this process from cavers not already attending meetings is keenly sought. Please contact either myself (Nick Hume) on phone 281934, Arthur Clarke on 349234, Trevor Wailes on 291382 or Jeff Butt on 238620. You

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are also invited to come along to meetings of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club, Tasmanian Cave and Karst Research Group or the Southern Caving Society, to voice your opinion and help out.

Nick Hume

THE 1989 TCC ANNUAL DINNER

Eager to hear Trev make yet another "speech"? Hungary? Just dying to know if there's any justice left in the world? None of those? Oh well, I guess that's life. In any case salvation is near. The Great, if slightly late, TCC DINNER show is about to hit the streets of Hobart town! Yes folks, this year you can wine, dine and generally lay down the law, at a Spit Roast to be held at the venerable Old Bailey hotel (ex Beethoven's Bar and Bistro) in North Hobart.

The food at this establishment is excellent and there's plenty of it, so by night's end you may well tip the scales a little (more?) as well as having had a jolly good time. There is even (quiet) live music and all in all, this night should be something out of the cave!

Venue: The Old Bailey Hotel - 304 Elizabeth Street, North Hobart. This is just up from (north of) Elizabeth College in Elizabeth Street in the block between Warwick Street and Tasma Street. If those directions don't help, find the Shell Hobart Superwash service station in Elizabeth Street - the Old Bailey is almost opposite. If you're still lost, well, too bad!

Date & time: Friday September 29, from 7.30pm onwards.....

Cost: A meagre \$15.00 for the spit roast meal, plus drinks.

More info: Contact Stuart Nicholas or Nick Hume.

BE THERE!

What More Can Be Said??

TCC members are apparently on the move (sounds a bit like an ant infestation)! "News from abroad" has arrived from Stefan and his Czech experiences. Fixed steel ladders in shafts and wires (as per stream crossings in the bush here) for crossing pits are normal, as are club huts at cave entrances, totally home made gear, smelly polluted cave water and compressor lines running through caves to enable mechanical digging of adits around sumps... Makes our efforts look like grandmother weeding her pot plant!

Our expatriate members in the form of Rolan and Adrienne Eberhard, now resident in PNG, are enjoying themselves and "almost" settling in to the different cultural, social and physical environment of Australia's northern neighbour. The problem of finding other people interested in the underworld has somewhat thwarted Rolan's immediate enthusiasm to push some of the systems around Goroka, his "home town". Around the

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area the depth potential is in the 400 metre range - not to be sneezed at - and much exploration potential exists. Various walking trips seem to be about the limit of the Eberhard outdoor activities at present, although Rolan has his eye on Bibima Cave which at 494m would be a good warm-up for some of the other essentially unexplored pits! If anyone is interested in writing to Rolan and Adrienne, their address is PO Box 845, Goroka, E.H.P., PNG. Anyway, good luck Rolan and Adrienne - we await your Spiel trip reports ("international news")!

One of our members, no doubt pursuing his vocation in purchasing, sent off to Caving Supplies in England for a Premier carbide lamp, together with some spares. Nothing unusual in that. However, being an ever eager bargain hunter, he noted in the catalogue that CS also sold Mars Bars and other "cave" food far cheaper than could be had in Oz, so ordered some of that as well! Something to chew over, no doubt... All the goods in question arrived in due course, but with the added bonus that the hardware had been doubled up, ie two lamps, sets of spares and so on, at no extra cost! One can only guess that the CS store person became a little fazed by the order for food from the colonies! By this time the Mars Bar is definitely second hand, although the state of the Irish Stew is not currently known, but one of the brand new lamps is up for sale - call Lew Mitchelmore (284691 work) if you're interested in this increasingly rare item!

Despite, or perhaps because of, the occasionally parochial nature of Tasmanians, many forget that the island has both a north and a south, separated by a slightly non-descript bit in the middle! Well anyway, in Launceston there exists a group of cavers who call themselves the Northern Caverneers, which isn't an unreasonable name if you think about it. At one time the group was actually a branch of TCC, but that all went by the by a few years ago. The group seems to have undergone something of a revival and as a result we received a (one page version) of their publication, "Troglodyte". Information included meeting times and places for all the clubs and groups in Tasmania, something that was planned for this esteemed publication, but we never really got around to.... Anyway, NC meet in the lounge bar of the T.R.C. Hotel, 131 Paterson Street, Launceston on Mondays at around 5.30pm (except public holidays) and visitors are welcome! Northern Caverneers intend to produce "Troglodyte" at intervals of around two months.

August 6, 1989: RECONNAISSANCE OF THE PROPOSED ENLARGEMENT TO IDA BAY QUARRY

Reconnoiters: Trevor Wailes, Arthur Clarke, Bob Reid, Leigh Douglas, Paul Merhulik, Mark Bryce, John Polya, Bernard Ralston and Nick Hume.

Surface reconnaissance and surveying was undertaken from the top of the existing quarry, south-westerly along and below the limestone contact towards Exit Cave. Arthur, Bob, Leigh and Mark, together with Greg Jordan and Dave Rasch from the Southern Caving Society, covered just some of the area of the quarry extensions proposal. They crossed

the many known holes here, but found nothing new of significance. Leigh went "free-range" while the others carried out a surface survey from the entrance of Little Grunt back to the survey peg at the start of the Skinner track.

Paul, John and Bernard went further afield along the Skinner Track. Trev and Nick accompanied them as far as the Mini-Martin turnoff before beginning a surface survey from the number tag at Mini-Martin (IB11), tying in the entrance tags of Skyhook Pot (IB35), Big Tree Pot (IB9), Milk Run (IB38) and a couple of un-named holes, eventually to return to the quarry. They then surveyed down the face of the quarry, by various interesting means, to link back to the more-or-less permanent reference of the walkers registration shelter at the beginning of the Moonlight Flats Track.

It is important now to amalgamate this overland traverse with actual cave survey data to gain a more extensive overview of the karst hydrology for the area. Stuart Nicholas' SMAPS 4 survey reduction software can certainly take care of the tedium of putting it all together, but a considerable amount of work is still required. The field notes for Big Tree Pot, Mini-Martin, Milk Run, Little Grunt and Cyclops Pot need to be brought out of personal archives just for starters and much more surveying must be completed in the myriad other known caves as well. Thank you to the many persons who turned up on this Sunday. Hopefully more volunteers will come forward to assist in this task on future trips.

Nick Hume

CRACKING CAULDRON POT

July 9, 1989

Cavers: Stefan Eberhard, Dean Morgan and Nick Hume.

Stef was lying about in the mud, picking up small white creatures with the help of a pair of tweezers. Dean gazed at the operation fairly nonchalantly. His almost casual remark that "...there's a lead there and its draughting..." sent me crawling into the thing without much hope of it doing anything. The tube was about a metre wide, but very shallow requiring sweeps of the forward arm to clear sufficient sand to be able to squeeze onwards. After ten metres, I managed to raise my head enough to see what was ahead and there appeared to be a gradual and encouraging enlargement. Sure enough, it was soon roomy enough to move about in a stoop. A few breakdown blocks up ahead made me think that the place was about to end. Turning a corner in the passage though, the meagre lead opened out dramatically and from up ahead came a very intriguing sound. Pivoting around to the direction I had just come, I yelled as loud as I could "Hey!..., there's a bloody great river in here.....!!!!!!".

Earlier in the day, the prospect of such a discovery seemed far away. Dean turned up before 7.30am raring to go, but the possibility of Stef's nocturnal habits interfering with his own arrival was a bit of a worry. Our concern was, however, unfounded. Not only did he show up, but generously drove us up the Florentine as well! Good lad.

The rigging of Cauldron Pot requires some degree of imagination. The rope on the first pitch was redirected from an old in-fallen tree

trunk halfway down! Bills Bypass is best left unspoken about, though imagining you're somewhere else at the time does help a little. The shorter mid-series of pitches are fairly much ramp-like affairs, while the setting of the final rope is a bit involved, there seeming to be a fair bit of drenching incurred whatever the precautions taken. The final chamber is spray filled and draughty and not a great place to hang around in. Assisting Stef's imaginative attempts to rig the Au Cheval pitch kept us on the move. Once up, over and down this thing (Ed note: the Au Cheval pitch is an up-and-over pitch in a narrow side passage off the side of the "final" chamber of Cauldron Pot), the character of the cave changes dramatically. The airflow is still present, but it is so much drier that it feels several degrees warmer.

I waited in the lead for the others to catch up. Thoughts of "master cave" just around the corner readily came to mind. Regrouped, we broke out into a large chamber. A sizeable stream occupied a constricted course on the right hand wall, following along strike of the deeply dipping limestone. The development of the stream course appeared fairly juvenile at first, the conduit having little of an airspace present, and definitely not the most pleasant of leads to follow. However, a large fossil borehole bypassed this near-sump, linking through to another large chamber and intersection of the waters again, further downstream.

At the far end of this room was a downclimb through blocks to a large flat-floored section of canyon. the stream entered this eventually and much yelling and excitement accompanied our unhindered stroll downstream. Perhaps 300 metres from the beginning of the initial lead, a rockfall apparently barred further progress. Components of the breakdown included sizeable blocks of fluvially-eroded dolerite. the presence of such material seemed incredible for such a distance underground.

The rockfall looked particularly nasty to have to negotiate, so we cast about looking for a way to bypass the area via older development. Breakdown clogged most of the roof area above the right hand wall and there were no immediate opportunities on the left. We retreated to where the stream intercepted the final passage, then moved to the previous chamber. Everyone dispersed to the myriad leads here, Dean and I climbing steeply upward in one set of inlet tubes. Stef seemed to disappear somewhere or other, while the two of eventually returned past the point where we first encountered the river and we began a bit of a push upstream.

There were leads heading off in all directions, linking a confusing labyrinth of chamber. Passages seemed to head back to previous chambers only to emerge in new ones though a general line of fossil development paralleling the present watercourse could be discerned through it all. A re-emergence of the stream held a good draught. Again, the immersion necessary to follow it was off-putting and another possible bypass was found. This took the form of a squeeze over a slab, though wasn't attempted because we were a little stuffed by that stage, to put it mildly. We gave it away, resting for a half hour or so before heading back through the initial flattener.

While this was going on, Stef thought he would have another look at the downstream rockfall. At water level it was possible to gingerly squeeze through a couple of blocks the wide stream passage continuing immediately on the other side. He then wandered down more of the

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promising streamway, finally being halted by a waterfall..... tumbling over an estimated 10 metre pitch....!

The size of the new-found stream could in no way be accounted for by the amount of water entering Cauldron Pot itself, possibly being two to three times the quantity. It seems highly likely that the stream encompasses the drainage of Khazad-Dum (and probably other sources as well), which from a general perusal of the respective surveys, should be coursing through just such an area as the one discovered here. The streamway has most of the signs of true base-level development, though its gradient is slightly steeper than one would expect and the rate of flow is hence rapid. Certainly the 10 metre waterfall pitch seems a bit of an oddity.

Prospects for the lead are very exciting indeed. Downstream there is potential for the capture of drainage from Niagara Pot as well as the Rift Cave / JF341 area and realising only some few hundred metres of additional passage may be sufficient to achieve all of this. The extra drainage could result in enlargement of the passage further and if there are major continuations, might lead explorers into the master-system line of drainage between Growling Swallet and June Resurgence.

Upstream, the draught present may indicate an interconnection with Khazad-Dum, which if navigable, could result in a deepening of the whole system. Certainly there is a reasonable, and possibly corresponding draught, present in the flattener immediately prior to the first sump in KD. Over the course of the discoveries on this one trip, Cauldron Pot is likely to have already exceeded the 300 metre depth mark. Hopefully some of these claims will come to fruition on the next survey / push trip, so stay tuned... (in fact, see below!)

Nick Hume

CATCHING THE COLD IN CAULDRON POT

July 15, 1989

Cavers: Trevor Wailes, Stefan Eberhard, Dean Morgan & Nick Hume.

A follow-up trip was undertaken to explore and survey the previous weekend's breakthrough in Cauldron Pot (see report above). Trev was invited in on the action this time. The Saturday was chosen deliberately because of an anticipated overnight stay in the cave. We didn't exactly make the earliest of starts from Hobart and I'm sure that Trev's participation was not entirely at fault in the matter...

There seemed to be less water lashing the pitch series on this day, which is always a help in this particular cave. Descent on the rigging left in place from the prior trip made things very much easier too, time taken to reach the bottom being only just over an hour. The first of many rest stops took place in the relative dryness on the other side of the Au Cheval pitch. Plans were formulated to push downstream in the newly discovered streamway as far as possible and survey back, with a later push upstream from the entry junction if time and energy permitted.

We wandered the quite open passage for two hundred metres, arriving at the nasty looking rockfall which Stef had pushed previously. He

performed a check on the stability of several blocks before squirming through at water level. The rest of us crossed our fingers and followed. The passage on the other side of the obstacle was very impressive, the full width of the 2 to 3 metre wide floor being covered in ankle deep and strongly flowing water. A strong draught howled coldly through the place. Small waterfalls and rapids created by the large blocks of dolerite were obviously enhancing the depth of the cave quite considerably along this course. The "feel" to the passage was very similar to the entrance series of Growling Swallet, only on a slightly smaller scale.

A breakdown chamber was entered some two hundred metres further on, there being a fairly vociferous 10 metre waterfall pitch at its far end. This was rigged from blocks in the ceiling with little opportunity redirect the rope out of the main force of the water. Stef did a "flying" abseil to avoid the worst of it, the return prusik not promising to be a particularly pleasant affair. Shortly thereafter he encountered a near-sump terminating the main passage, by which time the rest of us had caught up. Such news was a bit of a dampener on our earlier hopes.

A partially blocked overflow passage was visible above the wall opposite the pitch we had just descended. I climbed up to the blocks, noticing that this was the route taken by the airflow, and crawled through into a smaller passage continuing on. The floor was covered in pieces of wood and twigs, the way leading directly back to the stream, albeit of much smaller dimension than we had become used to. It appeared that waters sump back regularly behind this area, but the very strong draught augured well for major continuations still to be found.

It seemed obvious that we were inevitably going to get very wet indeed. The streamway was now deeper and some low roofed sections were visible up ahead. The first was negotiated with about 50% immersion, leading on to more upright walking passage. This devolved again to the stage where the loiters, Stef and Dean, had to wade through a narrow chest-deep section. Trev and I preferred to await the outcome of their efforts before committing ourselves to "the deep"! Stef was halted by a boulder jammed in the rift which he successfully dislodged, only to find the way barred by some blocks further on. Up ahead was the tantalising sound of rapids and again the chilling draught roared through the place. Stef spent sometime trying to push a way through, but was finally discouraged by the danger involved.

Thoroughly chilled, Trev, Dean and myself began a retreat, starting the survey as a way of excusing our absence from the horrors at the exploration front. The way back through the lower sections was nasty, but soon we were delighting in the 30 metre survey legs allowed in the earlier passage. It took an hour or so to return to the entry junction leading back into Cauldron Pot, a cairn being built to mark the return point of the downstream survey (station £45).

Here we proceeded to check upstream via various overflow passages and chambers, following the actual stream conduit requiring full immersion otherwise. The final potential bypass lead, noticed on the previous trip, eventually died altogether, the stream having to be pursued as a last resort. I crawled along this water-filled tube for about 20 metres. Almost thankfully, it declined to the stage of being a roof

sniff. Certainly the lead could still go, but it would require a wet-suit and a fair amount of close-up staring at the ceiling to get through. The draught whistled through the various narrow and shallow (50 millimetre) apertures above water level, so it didn't sump out.

The others surveyed back to station 45 from the mouth of the final upstream tube, continuing on through the initial lead to finish the survey at the base of the 35 metre pitch in Cauldron. Around three quarters of a kilometre of new cave had been documented on this survey trip. Derigging the cave commenced and in addition to the ropes on the pitch series, we had numerous ropes and gear used on the Au Cheval pitch and beyond to haul as well. Getting through Bills Bypass was a bit of a protracted affair, the lights of Trev and myself beginning to expire by that stage. Indeed, I turned mine off altogether at the top of the first pitch as its feebleness was interfering with the moonlight! We returned to the cars just before midnight. It hadn't seemed such a hard trip, but the surveying had inevitably drawn on much time.

Cauldron Pot looks set to be the fourth cave in Tasmania to go deeper than the -300 metre mark (after Growling Swallet System, Annakananda and Khazad-Dum). Only a bit of number crunching on the survey data is required to establish by exactly how much. As for the upstream and downstream leads, the waters may well include those from Khazad-Dum and elsewhere, and their course is certainly directed towards a junction with the master drainage of the Junee-Florentine. However, the sites of the two extremities, as now reached, don't seem all that promising, the dangers of flooding, hypothermia and collapsing boulder piles being the principal limitations to going further.

Nick Hume

NB: The SMAPS super survey software has told us that Cauldron Pot is now approximately 305m deep (we don't have the original data for the previous (1973) survey), the new extension dropping some 80m from the base of the Tyrolean Pitch in the "final" chamber of the old part of the system. An extra 721m has been added to the length, thereby tripling the length of the cave to at least 1071m! Unsurveyed areas in the new extension will add a little more to the length and perhaps the depth as well.... Cauldron Pot is now the **4th deepest** in Tasmania, (ie Australia!) between Khazad-dum (333m, including the sump dive) and Serendipity (278m). Anyone interested in another trip there sometime?

Stuart Nicholas

OVER NIAGARA (POT) IN A BARREL

July 30, 1989

Those in the barrel: Trevor Wailes, Bob Reid, Andy ?, Dean Morgan and Nick Hume.

The recent extensions in Cauldron Pot make a physical Niagara/Cauldron drainage connection a real possibility. Perhaps over-optimistically, the above crew thought they would explore Niagara Pot to this end, even though the prevailing wet weather should have made them attempt

something more sensible. As to be expected, a waterfall greeted their arrival at the entrance doline, ensuring a very sporting trip once below ground.

Its always very satisfying to rig a flooding vertical cave in such a way as to keep you more or less out of the direct torrent. This was actually possible over the first five pitches, thanks to them being fairly short, to the many redirections that were installed and to Dean's help. In fact most of the abseils traced a distinct "arc" along their oblique downward course. The prospect of actually getting to the bottom of the cave had virtually evaporated in the wading of the entrance series, so the fun was going to have to come from the "means" rather than the "ends".

The normal way through to the top of the penultimate pitch is renowned being a bit of a grovel. Under the conditions encountered it was actually more of a half filled drainpipe, so a retreat was made to the drier parallel drop leading off the other side of an arete. This led more directly to the ledge overlooking the final 24 metre shaft, but was itself very deficient in rigging points. Trev contrived something of a mud-bollard to act as anchor for the task and tied back to the previous rope for good measure. I pitched in with a piton equi-weighted to a chock and we soon had a spiders web of rope and slings going all over the place.

Trev descended to the ledge and toyed with the idea of rigging the bigger pitch. Several metres down the shaft, though, a wave of water emerging from the stream canyon was positively blasting out across the entire aven, and snatches of mutiny started to emerge among the conversation. There was no immersion and the draught created by the waterfall was already chilling those waiting at the pitch top. Only Dean voiced enthusiasm for continuing on, but the great TCC withdrawal began before he had a chance to canvas for any support.

It always seems wetter on the way out and it was some time back along the track before we managed to thaw out. A great sporting trip it was, though it will have to be much drier conditions before we return with more serious intentions.

Nick Hume

August 13 - Oh what a feeling.....! A bit of spring weather and
New Feeling in Growling Swallet.

Baskers: Dean Morgan and Nick Hume.

Where was everybody? Colds, conked out cars and compacted vertebrae seemed to whittle down the horde of intended starters and the original plans to do this-and-that-and-the-other had to temporarily shelved. Instead, the remaining duo wandered off to have a bit of an explore in New Feeling. Neither had been down the 12 metre pitch in this area of Growling Swallet before (even though Nick had placed some bolts there some years previously), so there was some novelty value in going there at least.

Ted, the gatekeeper at the Florentine concession, turned on some marvellous weather for us as usual, for which we thanked him most

profusely. This was following a very foggy drive up the Derwent Valley. Keen-ness forced us to ignore the sunshine for the moment and head underground. Growling Swallet's entrance series provided very sporting caving, the streamway carrying copious quantities of snow-melt. Leaving the deluge at Stal Corner was quite a contrast and in fact we almost were suffering from heat exhaustion in the dryness leading into New Feeling proper. Oooohs and aaaahs were appropriate for the decorated borehole passage above the rockfall climb. So stunned were we that a brief sojourn in the wrong direction preceded us eventually locating the correct way on.

The crawlway dispensed with, a descent of the 12 meter pitch followed after which we were both in, what was for us, new territory. The chamber containing the Khan -look-alike stalagmite was found fairly immediately and we followed a wear pad from the original explorations up a loose rubble slope to a floor hole at its top. This led into a labyrinth of large blocks heading generally downward into a sizeable piece of stream passage. A short rope came in handy to reach the floor proper, Nick wandering upstream to become confused by an unpromising rockfall maze, while Dean went off in the other direction. We both ended up pushing downstream following something of a draught and a modicum of water.

The stream traversed some hundred or so meters of crystal-floored passage, disappearing on occasions thereafter, but which could be rejoined by various devious bypasses. One followed an upward climb into a tube a small crystal pool here containing some of the most exquisite crystallised calcite imaginable. the tube halted abruptly at a 10 metre pitch which we rigged with our last remaining rope. Below this, a "spare parts" handline was necessary to negotiate an awkward short drop back into the lower stream passage.

From there, water could be hear gurgling on the other side of a draughting flowstone squeeze at floor level. Nick wallowed in the murk attempting to bash a way through the rotten rock of the obstacle. Having got thoroughly wet and muddy in this process, it was a little disheartening to see Dean's feet wandering past on the other side. Dean had found a simple bypass passage that achieved the same result!

Further downstream, the 10 -15 dip of the limestone bedding plane inevitably forced a lowering of the roof of the passage to within several centimetres of a deepish pool. To go further was a test piece for the brave and foolhardy, so Nick sat down and waited while Dean swam out of sight! He pushed 50 metres of so to rubble choke and although finding a closed chamber above this terminus, no other leads were present.

Dean re-emerged from the duck, cold and dripping wet, so a return to the surface seemed about the only course of action to take. Packs are an irksome impediment in Growling, particularly when they are filled with sodden rope. Fortunately the distance to retreat back up the entrance series of the cave is fairly short, some exciting floundering being encountered in the very strongly flowing waters as it was. We were back at the cars by the luxurious time of 3pm, affording us a nice laze and sunbake before driving to the gate and thanking Ted once again for the pleasant day.

Nick Hume

T.C.C. DIPUS COMPLEX

