

# NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

Newsletter Annual Subscription \$18.00, Each \$1.50 Non-members \$2.00

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## FORWARD PROGRAM

**Wednesday February 7: TCC General Meeting.** Usual venue and time - hopefully some of the PB expedition slides will be flashed on the wall.

**Saturday February 10: Niagara Pot.** A trip to resurvey the "sand tubes" leading off from the original bottom chamber. The new extension was surveyed recently but the old stuff in the bottom wasn't and we don't seem to have the original data. A good trip for some of the newer bods... **Contact:** Bob Reid (280983 ah) or Stuart Nicholas (see above)

**Cauldron Pot.** A trip sometime to look further at the new extension found a few months ago... See Stefan Eberhard or Nick Hume - not an easy trip!

**Wednesday February 21: TCC Meeting.** Wheatsheaf Hotel (the usual) at around 8.30pm - be there, if only to plan some trips for the forward program in this mag!

**Late Feb: Wherretts Lookout.** A bush bash to look for a back entrance to Growling Swallet... Our mapping shows where to look and some shafts are already known on the hill, so it may be a valuable day! **Contact:** Bob Reid, Nick Hume or Stuart Nicholas.

**Late Feb or Early March:** A BBQ / Party at Stu's abode! No particular reason, it seems like a good thing to do! Watch this space in the next Spiel for more info

Wednesday March 7: TCC General Meeting. Can someone show some slides??? Usual venue and time, whatever that means!

**EASTER:** Possibly Judds Cavern area... See Stef for more insight into this one!

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# EDITORIAL

By the time you read this, the 1989/90 PB expedition will have well and truly come and gone. The work done on this trip will hopefully have cleared up a number of unknowns with regard to stream flow and so on. As well, many unexplored or only

partially explored systems still await... No doubt a report will be forthcoming in which all (well, most!) will be revealed.

The expedition this summer had amongst its pile of "necessities" for the trip, a portable personal computer for survey data manipulation in the field. Not too amazing these days you might say. However the presence of this beast raises a few questions relating to cave exploration. Is cave exploration becoming a factory process? .....Find some cave, survey it, tie it to an existing station and key it into the computer. Then, on the screen or hard copy, look at the instant map and note areas where leads can be seen to possibly exist. Take a look at the sites in question, survey anything found, tie to existing data and so on.... This is akin to systematic "rape and pillage"! Before the advent of this technique / technology, cave exploration seemed to be more a matter of considered judgement by the individuals concerned with cave maps being drawn when the cave was "finished" and usually taking a few months to do. Not as seems to be the case now of just plugging in the numbers, cranking the handle and out comes more cave. At this rate it won't be long before a prerequisite for cavers will be RSI proof hands and a data interface in ones brain, rather than physical fitness and a certain amount of bravado!

Any input or feedback relating to this subject would be welcome. Anyway, enough of the heavy philosophy - I hope your belays hold and the redirections point you to things anew! All the best for the new year, next decade and the beginning of the end of the most technologically rapidly changing century in the history of the world!

Stuart Nicholas

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#### A FEW CLUB BITZ AND PIECES....

- Trev has lost a Petzl carbide generator from his Kaboom light, so if you see something lying around looking like a jam tin with a screw thread on the top of it, give it to Trev!

- We had some T shirts and tops printed some time back and I believe there are still a few left. If you need, or just want, one of these contact Trev. The "design" is the "Oedipus Complex" thing (how do they think them up?) that appeared on the back of a Spiel a few months ago.... The artwork was drawn by Martyn Carnes and thanks must go to him for that effort! The screen printing was organised by Trev, needless to say!

- Permits for access to and through Benders Quarry must be obtained through the secretary of our Club, in order that the Dept. of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage can keep track of who's who and doing what where and with whom when, a lot more easily.... (I think)!

- Interested in photography? Looking for a good slave (not that sort, Bunty!)? Stu has evolved a flash slave unit which is highly sensitive, rugged and cheap. It is actually built from a British design, but despite that, the unit works with great efficiency and over considerable distances. See Stu for details on how to get onto these little units!

- On the subject of gear and so on, Oldham headpieces apparently now only take pre-focussed bulbs, whatever implications that may or may not have! Also, Oldham batteries are now gel cell units rather than the liquid acid filled, oversuit / person / rope etc destroying things of the past. So there we are - some info. to light up your life a little more!

## THE AUSTRALASIAN CAVE & KARST MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (A.C.K.M.A.)

A.C.K.M.A. sent TCC their June 1989 newsletter which includes a couple of interesting articles by Kevin Kiernan on Kubla Khan and the need for a management plan of this cave and also on Current Karst Management in Tasmania. Some interesting statistics from Kevin's article:

1. About 4.4% of Tasmania consists of potentially karstic carbonate rocks.
2. About 31% of the carbonates lie beneath State Forest, 17% beneath parks and reserves, 33% beneath private land and 19% beneath unallocated lands.

Some information on A.C.K.M.A. itself:

The Australian Cave and Karst Management Association was formed in 1987 and was founded because it was perceived that there was not enough interaction amongst Management groups.

The aims of the Association are:

- \* To develop improved standards in the management of the cave and karst heritage of the Australasian region.
- \* To provide for liaison between services to and joint action by those interested in cave and karst management.
- \* To carry out or cause to be carried out any scientific research which may further the improvement of standards in cave and karst management.
- \* To formulate and promote policies and initiatives in cave and karst management.
- \* To do any other things which are conducive or incidental to the attainment of the above.

Membership is open to all persons or organisations which subscribe to these aims, regardless of whether or not they are professional cave or karst managers. TCC intends sending the Speleo Spiel in exchange for the A.C.K.M.A. newsletter and if anyone is interested in personal membership, see Stefan Eberhard or contact Kevin Kiernan (at Forestry Commission).

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### A BRIEF RESUME OF WHO TO CALL AND WHEN IF SOMEONE IS VERY LATE GETTING BACK FROM CAVING.

Most delays are caused by the existence of pubs and the inherent unreliability of caver's cars! Other causes may be due to the party having found some vast new extension to the cave being visited (one can only dream...) or a long trip ending after dark and with failing lights making the walk out to the car rather slow.

Obviously the possibility of some incident above or below ground must be considered if the party is very late. Firstly, some thoughts on what is "very late". If the trip is known to be long, it is the responsibility of the people going on it to tell their respective spouses, friends, flatmates or whoever that they will be late getting back. Normally, "very late" could be taken as the early hours of the next morning for a one day trip and certainly breakfast time the next day is reason for concern if nothing has been heard from the people / person involved.

**What to do:** If some members of the party are known, phone around their houses to see if the subject of your concern is staying there because of excess consumption of that strange amber liquid, just going to sleep while there, forgetfulness or some other reason that we won't go into!

If no satisfactory answer is obtained by that means, ie the others are not home either, step two is to call our Search and Rescue person in the form of **Stuart Nicholas on 002-283054 (home) or 002-284691 (work)**. Hopefully he will know the area or cave being visited and can offer some possible explanation for the delay. He will advise what further action he and/or you should take. If he cannot be contacted (he may be in the delayed party!), call our office bearers as per the header of this magazine for some explanation. Failing that, call the **Police on 002-352101 (all hours)** and ask for the Search & Rescue Section or duty officer, or call the Search & Rescue Section office direct on 002-352267 or 002-352393 (office hours 7 days a week). The officer taking the call will ask for as much detail as possible on the location and expected duration of the trip, cars taken and their registration numbers, number of people, phone numbers and so on. Have this information to hand if at all possible. A check of the road / parking area will be carried out by local Police before or while search parties are being assembled.

If a member of the overdue party calls and indicates that there is a problem, tell them not to move from the phone they are at, get the number of that phone and then either yourself or the person calling can call Stuart Nicholas or the Police as above.

Conversely, and the preferred action, if a member of the overdue party calls and indicates that all is OK, please let Stuart Nicholas and/or the Police know (if you have called either or both of them) that all is OK and no further action is needed.

Stuart Nicholas  
Search & Rescue Officer, TCC.

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## October 27, 1989 - BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE

**Party:** Dean Morgan, Cameron Booth, Peter Bostock, Tim Lyons, Stuart Poole, Bernard Ralston, Tim Sprod.

Well, that will teach me not to organise school trips on Show Day. We had planned to do the Slaughterhouse through trip on this day, but, true to form, it started raining the previous afternoon and didn't stop all night. We left the meeting point in a downpour, pausing only to pick up Dean's clean gear from his Mum's (oh, how I wish my mum would wash mine for me). One sight of the water in the rivers and gutters near Maydena forced a re-evaluation of our destination to something drier - Burning Down the House.

Trogging up in a downpour (was it the same one?), we set off for the entrance. We paused to look at the possum's nest - a surprisingly long way into the dark portion of the cave. The ladder climb was negotiated without a ladder quite easily and we set off into the nether reaches. We were all quite impressed by the varied nature of the cave and the pretties to be found near the bottom.

Having some time up our sleeves, we agreed to Dean's suggestion to exit through the JF228 route. Diverging from the main passage, a short duck walk/crawl leads to a section of several metres of water-filled passage. Dean said that it looked fuller than when he'd last been through; there was an air space of only a few centimetres.

All the boys were keen to continue, as Dean thought it was the only duck, so off we went into the rather cold water. The narrowness of the airspace ensured a thorough soaking in the flat out crawl and we continued only another few metres to another dip into water-filled passage. This time it was impossible to see for sure that the duck was possible, but Dean pushed on - feet first, on your back, twisting right. To me, the water seemed even colder this time. If this goes into Burning Down the House, then with the amount of water we encountered, JF228 ought to be called the Fire Hose.

Fortunately, the rest of the cave is a vigorous climb up a steep clean streamway; just the thing to restore circulation. We emerged to another (?) downpour and were at the gate by 3 pm after an enjoyable and invigorating trip. Many thanks to Dean for so capably leading us.

Tim Sprod

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### **November 12 - Wherretts Lookout Area in the Florentine Valley**

**Participants:** Albert Goede, Bob Reid, Mark Bryce and Nick Hume

"The Slip" (a massive debris slide feature) on the southern slopes of Wherretts Lookout has been a subject of cavers' interest over a number of years. It is here that a possible way into the Junee Master System may yet be found, occupying as it does a relatively unexplored surface area above the furthest known reaches of Growling Swallet. Members of TCC, Max Jeffries\*, Chris Davies and Andrew Briggs walked over much of the "The Slip" in the early 1980's. Various draughting holes and swallets were reported, but many of them were heavily inundated with glacio-fluvial rock debris and clays, and little of note was ever documented. One trip to JF118 (Speleo Spiel 168) which is located on the contact off the eastern side of "The Slip", descended 50 metres to a blockage in waist-deep mud!

Recently, the advent of transparency copies of SMAPS cave plots has enabled such plots to be overlayed onto the new 1:25000 sheets. In this case the Growling Swallet system plot was treated in this way and the result has renewed enthusiasm for exploring the area more systematically. The plot indicates where possible water (and caver!) entry points into The System may exist and significantly simplifies the approach to future surface exploration, as well as intended hydrological assessments of the karst region.

A reconnaissance carried out some weeks ago by Leigh Douglas, Bob Reid and myself, resulted in Leigh locating a swallet high on the slopes of Florentine/Tyenna Peaks (ie south-east of Wherretts Lookout). A reasonable quantity of water disappeared under an overhanging outcrop and the constricted opening was draughting well. A promising site despite a fair amount of blockage at the entrance. Some 50 metres south-east of the find was an impressive (but infilled) doline, hinting of large scale caverniferous development somewhere below.

Our return on this trip had the aim of clearing out the entrance of the previously found swallet and to do some more surface exploration if our digging efforts failed to realise anything. Route finding in the area was interesting with Mark energetically taking up spade when we did eventually relocate the entrance. He excavated a cubic metre of rock, mud and logs to reveal water drainage through a "sieve" of further debris. an alternate attack line immediately left of the stream disappearance, managed to open a squeeze between the cliff wall and an immovable block. Beyond was a small chamber leading down to the stream-course now dry thanks to the

drainage diversion created by Mark's digging. Gurgling could be heard below breakdown sealing one side of this lower chamber. Exploration ended here. The site still has promise, but only following some major (ie mechanical!) earthworks.

Albert had the sense to go "walkabout" while the rest of the crew were wallowing in the mud. We rejoined him (eagerly!) later, Bob chancing on a deep shaft some hundred metres or so north-west and upslope of the swallet. This was rigged (from a tree immediately overlooking the drop) with some rope we just happened to have brought along. I was volunteered into making the descent, having to place a couple of hasty side-pulls (ie diverting the rope away from rubpoints on the wall) as it was getting late in the day. The 27 metre rope only just reached the higher side of a terminating rubble slope. The shaft was an enlargement of a long (ie structurally aligned) rift, but its narrowed extremities were inaccessible to any attempts at "penduluming". Two squeezes at the base of the pitch held minor draughts, though were too narrow to offer any hope of getting further.

The return to the surface was made interesting when one of the impromptu slings diverting the rope "twanged", sending the spike of (belay) rock crashing around my ears. A slower rate of prusiking ensued! We then followed a compass bearing downslope and towards the road. Albert and Bob found an apparent (fossil) resurgence entrance, at the base of a cliff-line some 200 to 300 metres down from the previously described shaft. It was draughting strongly, but will have to wait another day for fuller exploration. Some 100 meters further downslope, I found another descent shaft which, though not draughting, was of about twenty metres depth and worth a return visit as well. Somehow we broke <sup>out</sup> of the bush only a few metres from the cars!

Further returns to this area are high on (now several) people's list of priorities. Albert is one in particular as he happened to leave his camera sitting outside one of the entrances! The modicum of finds made recently augur well for more major discoveries in the area. Hopefully these may include a backdoor entrance to newer extensions in the Growling Swallet system.

Nick Hume

\* (from first paragraph) Max Jeffries recalls that the Junee Resurgence "flowed very muddy" for several days following the earth avalanche that created "The Slip" in the mid 1970's. Thus some common drainage from this area and into the Junee Master System is inferred.....

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**Wednesday November 15, 1989 - A Pink Tape Near the Road is Worth Many in the Bush!**

**Party:** Bob Reid and Stuart Nicholas

Funny how impromptu trips are usually successful! Well, this wasn't an impromptu trip, but not far off it, so make of that what you will... Anyway, the crack(-ed?) "Bob & Stu" caving team made an alpine start and arrived at the Maydena shop in time for a coffee before going through the gate (thanks to the good offices of Noel and one of the staff engineers after some minor confusion) soon after 7am on what was a magnificent day, weather wise.

Enthusiasm was high (a bad sign if ever there was one), the car groaning under a load of gear that would rig anything in the state. Lady Binney Corner on the Florentine Road with the SE slopes of Wherretts Lookout was the planned destination for the day's jaunt. The previous weekend, various bodies had found some apparently

unknown shafts and entrances at the 600 to 700 metre level in this area and a quick perusal of the computer screen indicated that a connection with the far end of Growling Swallet was not unlikely - hence the unseemly interest! A report on that trip appears elsewhere.

Bob assured me that a good taped track now existed starting "just in from the road". While discussing this, the first log truck of the day came through.... The initial parking spot on the outside of Lady Binney Corner was henceforth deemed to be not the best and the car was moved to the spur road just before the corner! Some half an hour and a quantity of sweat later we had found about three pink tapes and a considerable quantity of cutting grass and regrowth type bush. Eventually Chrisps Creek was located by ear and followed up to the rather stunning limestone bluffs complete with a "hole in the wall" feature. An obvious favourite area for Lilly the Pink, the now impossible-to-miss taped track was followed up the hill and around towards the southern flanks.

A stream sink found the previous trip was located and nearby another hole at which Albert's camera was sitting - part of the reason for this extravagance was the recovery of that piece of optical wizardry! The prime speleo aim was the exploration of a shaft downhill a little way which had been noted to be strongly draughting... Bob's amazing navigational abilities had us at this site in no time at all. Our stomachs were duly stuffed with sandwiches and expectations set to "high", whereupon the estimated 8 metre shaft was rigged with a mega-metre rope. The author's (too many) years of experience in exploration of such pots lead him to the conclusion that such a thing would not go. Anyway, for the record, both bodies present pushed the cave to its limit (just getting out of daylight) and were back on the surface in about five minutes! The draught was coming from an steeply angled solution tube off to one side of the bottom of the entry pit which was very small but just passable for about another six metres or so to a flat mud floor along which the draught came. There is no way that exploration could be continued from this point by humans (or cavers) of anything like normal stature.

Following this disappointment, we wandered in the bush both ways along the contact cliff line. This is a somewhat broken area with many small depressions and blocked entrances. Bob ended up going basically south east and Stu north west before heading down the hill in the heat of the afternoon. Several promising shafts and some fairly agile snakes were found and these (the shafts!) must be looked at in the near future (assuming we can find them again!). The saga of the pink tapes ought to never happen again as many more have been placed on the level ground near the road...

All in all, a most interesting and successful day, thanks to Bob (and Lily The Pink!). We shall return....

Stuart Nicholas

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**AGHAST! SNAKES ALIVE!..... ITS TASSY POT WITH OWLS (and other animals)**

**December 9 and 10, 1989 - Police Search & Rescue Training Weekend (alias Project Deluge)**

**PARTY:** Steve Bunton, Bob Reid, Paul Tabart, Dean and Simon Morgan, Stu Nicholas (all TCC), Steve Bradford (nearly TCC), Stu Scott, Paul Stein, Kevin, Phil, Janine,

Macca, Scotty, Ken (Police Search and Rescue), Jeff Butt, Phil Jackson and Don Hudspeth (all SCS).

An annual cave rescue exercise is usually held in early December, probably unknown to most readers of this mag. Anyway this year, the show was set-up more as a cave SRT training weekend rather than actual rescue training, stretcher hauling and so on.

Two trips were run on the Saturday - Owl Pot and Tassy Pot. The OP trip was good value I believe with the last (wet) pitch providing some amusement for all. The TP trip was certainly good value, with the main entertainment being the rebelay on the first two pitches and an unexpected visitor at the bottom of the second pitch.

Most of the Police have had some (some more than others) experience with travel on ropes in the vertical domain, but only on cliffs and so on. Anyway, Bunty and Jeff rigged the first two pitches of Tassy Pot for our trip and then promptly disappeared with Steve Bradford down through Goodbye Chamber and the final 79 metre pitch to the bottom streamway. Our group with Bob and Stu at the helm, descended into the gloomy depths of the bottom of the second pitch... A rebelay was rigged halfway down the 24 metre second pitch because of rope length problems (like, it was a bit short), but that was good value for the Police, giving them more experience at such things.

While descending the second pitch someone casually remarked that there was a snake down the bottom, a comment I took with the usual grain of cave grit.... However, it proved correct and yours truly, the ever unperturbed caver from years back, decided that the warm sunshine outside might be a better deal after all! While expressing my distrust of snakes, the no doubt long suffering and very hungry animal was sent to that great big snake pit in the sky by Janine, the only girl on the trip! The remainder of the day proceeded somewhat more normally, albeit slowly, with Police S&R squad bods learning "the ropes" in a sort of trial by mud situation.

Sunday, most of the group spent time under the watchful eye of Bunty, being instructed in many other aspects of SRT while playing apes in a tree at National Park. Stu Scott, Paul Stein, Macca and Stuey Nicholas did a lightning 3 1/2 hour attempt on Tassy Pot but only reached Goodbye Chamber because of the time constraints of the Police having to return to town and wash gear and so on. All in all, a good time was had by all and much was learnt about the gentle and esoteric art of SRT in caves.... Thanks to all the TCC crew and SCS as well, for helping out. Thanks also to ANM at Maydena for the generous access arrangements for the weekend. The benefits of such exercises and other similar training days will hopefully never be needed, but it is certainly in our interests to lend assistance in the training of these bods.

Stuart Nicholas

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#### DIVING TIGHT SIPHONS IN GORMENGHAST (JF35)

19 November, 1989

**Party:** Dean and Simon Morgan, Lew Mitchelmore and Stefan Eberhard.

The incentive for pushing Gormenghast is due to its strategic location between two major collectors, Porcupine Pot and Growling Swallet in the June-Florentine drainage system. Possibly the Gormenghast water connect with the master system drainage somewhere downstream of the present terminus in Porcupine Pot, although there is no evidence to suggest that any of this water enters the Growling system.



Rather, survey data extrapolation suggests that there must be another major conduit running roughly parallel to Growling but situated further under the Mt Field massif. The existence of this conduit, which theoretically carries the water from all caves north of Growling Swallet, has been proven (=Porcupine Pot) and has given impetus to further pushing in the Servalane area of Growling. But results here have not been readily forthcoming and thus it was that we found ourselves carrying diving gear down to the bottom of Gormenghast, which is a narrow and sporty little swallet 128m deep and 577m long. A survey appears in Speleo Spiel No. 137 (Aug. 1978), which shows the cave running in a northerly and then north-westerly direction (ie away from June Resurgence) before a slight dogleg prior to the siphon. It is assumed that at some stage the cave doubles back on itself and follows a similar structural alignment as other caves in the area.

The siphon at the bottom has been dived on two previous occasions. The first occasion in 1983 when I was feeling particularly reckless and attempted to free dive the siphon on a solo trip. It proved to be tight and shallow but only about 2m long. Entering feet first with some guideline wrapped around my arm and a hand-held torch I was able to get my legs through and kicking into air on the other side. However a sloping silt bank prevented me from sliding right through, and needless to say, I didn't have the courage to turn around and plunge through head first. Subsequently Rolan returned (with Stuart Nicholas and Martyn Carnes as sherpas - Speleo Spiel No. 195) with a single 30 cubic foot tank and successfully passed the siphon. Only some 30m further on he reached a second siphon which appeared to descend beneath the headwall.

Fortunately this time the dive line was still in place at the first siphon so I donned two small side-mounted tanks and plunged in, only to become wedged! Removing one of the tanks I found it was possible to slide through feet first on ones back. I then returned and collected the other tank and linereel and dragged them through with me. Grovelling along and into the next siphon I surfed ahead of the silt cloud to the bottom of a classic "U" tube at maybe 2 or three metres depth. Twisting onto my back I was able to see around the U bend and straight up an inclined silt bank to a free air space! Gazing up through the green crystal water to the mirrored surface above and with myriad white shrimps patrolling the space, it all seemed absurdly beautiful considering the ridiculous position I was in! However, the way on was narrow and very committing with no possibility of turning around and reversing the manoeuvre whilst manipulating a line reel did not appeal to me so I squirmed back out to safety and disappointment. Nevertheless I believe this siphon will "go" but preferably with another diver to operate a base-fed line. Returning would be zero visibility of course although the tube seemed smooth and straightforward with no major obstacles or major obstructions or dangerous slots. The difficulties are naturally more psychological than physical but demand confidence in technique and equipment. A major inhibiting factor is simply being the first person to prove that its possible! Indeed the first siphon is really quite straightforward and were it not for a jagged blade of rock in the roof that tends to catch passing bodies, it would be a simple free dive. Moreover, the siphon is so shallow that digging out the cobble bank on the downstream side may well drain this obstacle entirely.

A few points to consider whilst diving tight siphons in particular:

Don't rush things, move slowly and deliberately. Replacing a mouthpiece torn from your mouth in a hasty movement could be difficult in a constricted space. However, there is a problem when entering downstream siphons because the diver must keep ahead of the cloud of enveloping silt. Have a good look around and remember the configuration of the passage and any obstacles or hazards such as narrow slots which may take the line. Be prepared to exit in zero visibility by feeling your way through, in which case your sense of touch and memory of the passage will perhaps be as important as the guideline itself in indicating which direction to go. Be

constantly aware of the position of all your equipment, especially the guideline and your second mouthpiece. Line positioning and rebelaying may not be possible. Keep the line away from your body and equipment and keep a tight line since there may be no room to manoeuvre in case of entanglement. Consequently your knife should be arm-mounted rather than leg-mounted. Be mindful of air consumption; in zero visibility or constricted spaces it will not be possible to read gauges. Consider using a base-fed line. Fins may not be necessary. For short siphons with little current a single fin has proven to be perfectly adequate and it reduces the quantity of equipment to be carried to the dive site. In constricted siphons like Gormenghast fins are redundant.

Many thanks to the sherpas, Dean, Simon and Lew for helping to carry the gear quickly and efficiently through a narrow awkward hole!

Stefan Eberhard

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**Sunday December 17, 1989 - NIAGARA POT (JF29) .... Old Caves Just Get Bigger!!**

**Party:** Dean Morgan, Nick Hawkes and Simon Morgan

After the finds in Cauldron Pot and one failed attempt to reach the bottom of Niagara Pot to search for leads, it was obvious that today was the day! It had not rained for days, weeks even and the entrance waterfall was now no more than a trickle.

Dean went ahead, rigging all of the pitches while Nick and I followed. This was done fairly successfully and we soon reached the bottom. Although we had been told of a lead elsewhere, we had a look in the talus pile at the base of the 24m pitch first.

Dean disappeared down a hole toward the bottom of the higher side of the chamber, while Nick was venturing toward the top, so I had a bit of look around the sides. Nick and I soon joined up but there was no sign of Dean. I thought he must have already left his lead and disappeared somewhere else. Together, Nick and I headed toward the sand passage looking at some more holes on the way.

After another ten minutes or so, Nick was looking around somewhere and I saw Dean's light appear on the far side of the chamber. Apparently he had spent all that time in the same lead. When I asked him jokingly, "Did you find anything?", he replied "I certainly did - a bit of horizontal stuff and..... another pitch!!"

This got me rather excited, as was Dean by this stage. Dean mumbled something about ropes and it appeared that I knew something that he didn't..... We had a spare 10m rope (plus Trev's 6mm handi-stuff, if that counts) which I had in my pack.

We grabbed this plus Deans's SRT gear, plus Nick Hawkes who was just returning from his exploration and went in search of new things.

The start of the new extension is a fairly large hole with an easy climb of about 2 metres. This leads to a crawl with some loose rocks above, which brings you to the top of a 2m jump. (It wasn't a climb because there were no hand holds!) From here there is another short climb into a chamber. The entire extension is very muddy, and extremely slippery, old and rotten. From the chamber, we followed down the slope through more slippery chambers to a dead end... or so it seemed. I looked

around to see a way on, when I noticed Dean's head disappearing through a vertical squeeze in the floor. I lowered the gear down to him and then followed him through. This squeeze, which Dean informed me he had dug out, led into a chamber with a steeply sloping pitch disappearing down from one side.

There were a few collapsed boulders jammed into the top of the pitch, so we rigged from them. Dean descended, reporting that it was very slippery but still going! The rope took him to a wide ledge about ten metres down and he was apparently still 10 or 15 metres from the bottom. As we had no more rope, he came back up and we left the extension, returning to the "bottom" talus chamber. By this time my light was fading, so I headed out first.

As the PB trip was going to happen in the next couple of weeks, we derigged, vowing to return after Dean and the others returned from the PB expedition.

Simon Morgan

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Editorial note: Further trips have gone to Niagara Pot and will be reported in the next edition of Speleo Spiel, but for the statistically minded it is now 222 metres deep, putting it at eighth spot behind Tassie Pot. Up until this discovery it was 149 metres deep and eighteenth on the deepest list in Tasmania (and, of course, OZ as well!).

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#### **JUDDS CAVERN SURVEY            by    Stefan Eberhard**

Well, here it is at last, the survey of Judds Cavern as we know it! This survey shows the presently known extent of the cave since the last survey published in Newsletter No. 2 of the Tasmanian Cave and Karst Research Group. As reported in Speleo Spiel 236, Easter 1988 witnessed a TCC trip where the then terminal siphon was dived for 30m to reveal a major continuation on the other side. This was explored and surveyed for 1400m but the cave still continues. The map shows side passages explored and surveyed by SCS in 1985 including Bat Passage, Blowhole Fissure Cemetery Shaft and the 46m Propylaeum entrance shaft. The large fossil upper level of Route 66 was also surveyed at this time although this passage had been known for some years previously. (These side passages have been copied from A. Clarke's map appearing in TC&KRG Newsletter.)

Unfortunately this map does not show the position of Judds Cavern in relation to surface topography nor does it show the close relationship with other caves in the immediate area. However, an excellent survey appears in ASF Newsletter No. 90 (1980/81). Comparison of the surveys shows that Icebox Cave (C15) is tantalisingly close to the Right Passage extension in Judds. Indeed, Albert Goede had predicted a connection between these two caves and further exploration in Icebox may produce a dry route into the Divers Extension. If not through Icebox itself then other caves in the vicinity doubtless feed into the system. In the Judds extension there is evidence to suggest direct connections to the surface including avens with dolerite cobbles, small mammal skeletons and dead cave crickets. In fact, the access route crosses directly over the top of the cave just uphill from Icebox. In this area there are numerous dolines and small caves such as "Snail Pot" - short shaft leading into narrow canyon which unfortunately gets too tight. Other caves situated on the slope leading from the South Picton / Mt Bobs saddle to the Cracroft Valley include Draughting Hole which needs digging.

With a currently surveyed length of 3733m Judds Cavern evidently forms part of a very extensive cave system in the Cracroft area, although much of it is still to be revealed. Dye tracing has proven that the system collects water from streams sinking into dolines on the Farmhouse Creek side of the divide, situated some 2.5k distant and 140m higher up. The topo map shows other enclosed depressions and sinking streams situated further to the north-west and up to 300m higher up, although these features may not be formed in limestone. Whatever, it is clear from the survey that Judds collects its water from a number of different sources. The Right Passage appears to be collecting water from the lower slopes of the hill as numerous inlet feeders enter the system and passage size progressively decreases upstream. The Left Passage is located deep under the hill but further progress here is halted by a siphon which is divable nonetheless. Thus the Central Passage appears to be the major continuation. Exploration of this large passage halted at a section of draughting rockfall although this will prove to be a minor obstacle I suspect.

Judds Cavern was apparently discovered by Henry Judd and party in 1881. It was then relocated and explored by TCC in the early 1970's. However it wasn't until 1987 when archeologists found hand stencils, it was realised people had visited this place much earlier, at least 12000 years ago in fact and probably much earlier than that!

As reported by Goede in Speleo Spiel No. 250 Judds Cavern now also has an aboriginal name, Wargata Mina. Dregana Lewnana (Hand Den) is the name given to the chamber just inside the entrance which contains the hand stencils. There is another aboriginal art site called Mawbank Lewnana (Black Den) which is further into the cave but its location is not given here. Nevertheless, cavers should be aware of its existence and be careful not to disturb the site if they happen to stumble across it. Another site of scientific importance is the Bat Passage which contains a number of bat skeletons. Likewise, this section of cave should not be disturbed.

The Cracroft area has great potential for original exploration as the results of recent expeditions show. For example the 1985 SCS expedition partly explored and surveyed The Bone Bunker (C18) located close to C17, C16 and Matchlight Cavern. This new cave contains several hundred metres of stream passage but running parallel with the Judds system. This water may connect with a small rising located further around the hill (to the north west) from the main C1 resurgence.

#### REFERENCES

Clarke, A. (1987) Cracroft Expedition 1985. TC&KRG Newsletter No.2: 31-38.

Gillieson, D. & Taylor, G. (1980) Cracroft Expedition 1980. ASF Newsletter No. 90: 2-8.

Goede, A. (1977) Cracroft Expeditions - Survey Results, Scientific Observations and Speculations. Journal of Sydney Speleological Society 21(3): 55-63.

Hume, N. (1988) Judds Cavern trip report Speleo Spiel No. 236.

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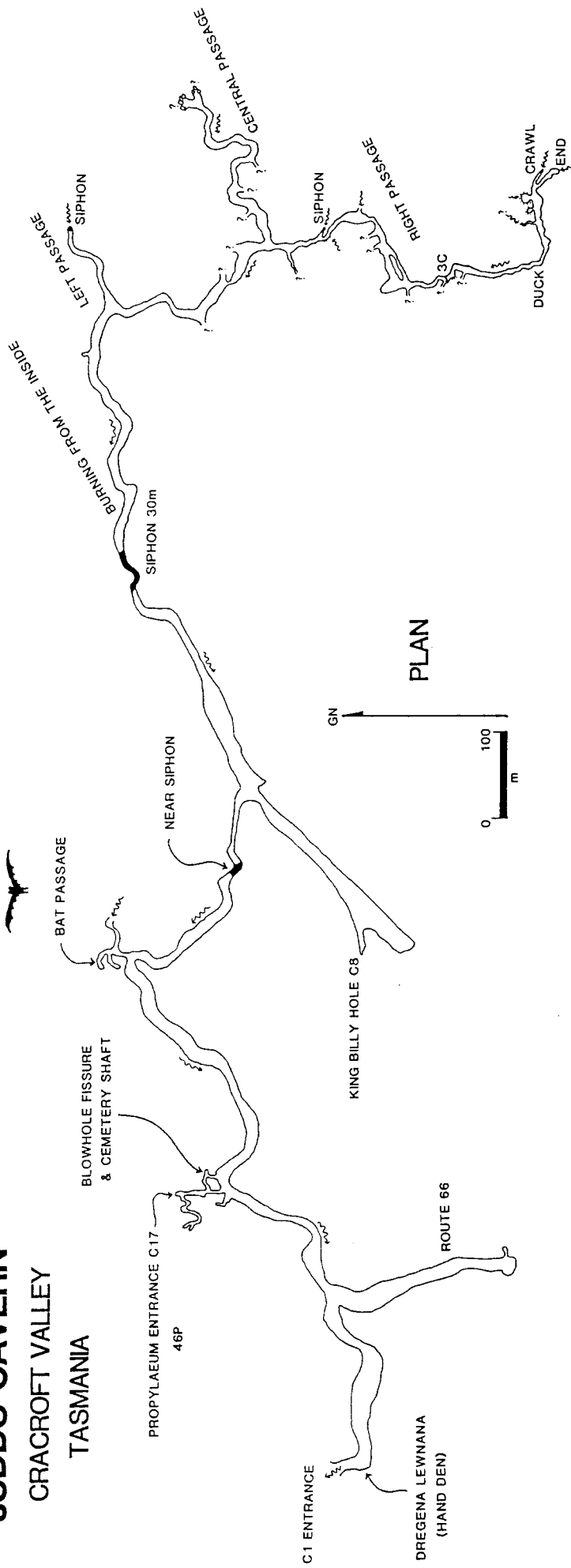
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\* A.G.M. MARCH 28 8pm. \*

# JUDDS CAVERN

## CRACROFT VALLEY

### TASMANIA



SURVEYED LENGTH 3733m

SURVEY CREDITS:  
 C1 to Near Siphon  
 B. Collin  
 J. Collin  
 P. Shaw 3-3-1974  
 A. Vrata  
 King Billy Hole section  
 P. Downes 30-1-1975  
 C. Handfield  
 Route 66 Bat Passage & C17 section  
 SCS 1995  
 Beyond Siphon 30m — Pace & Compass Survey  
 R. Eberhard  
 S. Eberhard 4-4-1998  
 N. Hume

DATA COMPUTATION: S. Nicholas

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