

NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

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

PRESIDENT:

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

SECRETARY:

Stefan Eberhard 5 Pillinger Drive, Fern Tree, Tas 7054. Ph 391424

TREASURER:

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

QUARTERMASTER:

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

EDITOR / TYPIST:

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

FORWARD PROGRAMME....!

CAVING PLANNED: Cauldron Pot, Niagara Pot, Surface bashing on Wherretts Lookout, Sesame Cave (semi-new bods trip), Lost Pot, Cracroft at Easter.

Wednesday March 21: Meeting - 8.30pm at Wheatsheaf Hotel, Davey Street.
- General chin wag, plus AGM topic discussion.

Wednesday March 28: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 8pm at Wheatsheaf Hotel, Davey Street
This is a most important meeting - make sure **you** are there!

Wednesday April 4: General Meeting - it isn't every month we have meetings three weeks in a row! Maybe we could organise an underground video?

EDITORIAL

This edition of the Speleo Spiel sees a technological first for the mag. The trip reports written by Bob Reid appearing below, whilst a little late (!), were delivered on (almost ecologically sound) floppy disk! It seems that we have well and truly entered the computer age now - the only requirement is for more people to write trip reports and send them in, whether on disk, paper, or as carved wooden ornaments isn't critical.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB

Date & Time: Wednesday March 28, 1990 at 8pm.

Venue: The Wheatsheaf Hotel, Davey Street, Hobart.

All positions on the committee become vacant and must be filled by popular election of either the present incumbent (if they are willing to stand) or someone different. If you are interested / keen / want to have a go / whatever to help with running the Club please stand for a position and/or indicate to Trev or Stef that you are

interested in taking on one of the committee positions. Of particular importance are the positions of President, Secretary and Treasurer, as well as Editor and Quartermaster.

This year it is imperative for our own protection that we become incorporated and this will require us by law to run a tighter ship, ie hold the required number of constitutionally formal meetings, keep accurate financial records, minutes of meetings and so on. Doing this will require a little work from the office bearers, but must be done. If time permits, the incorporation of TCC will be organised and ready for ratification at the AGM. Incorporation requires the position of Public Officer to be included in our Constitution - this person is the name to whom Association related notices are sent by the Corporate Affairs Office and who is the signatory for public notices in the press. The position is ideally filled by someone who is willing to take it on for some years (the Corporate Affairs Office like continuity!)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL CAVE DIVING TRAINING STANDARDS

August 1989 saw the running of the 10th UIS Caving Congress in Budapest, Hungary. Stefan Eberhard from TCC attended the Congress and was the only Australian representative at the UIS Cave Diving Commission meeting. A set of recommendations was presented for discussion in an attempt to organise a truly international cave diver qualification scheme - exciting stuff!

In essence, the proposals establish a three tiered qualification system with One Star, Two Star and Three Star Cave Diver standards. One or two star qualifications could be awarded by regional cave diving training organisations affiliated to UIS or CMAS, but three star qualification can only be awarded by the national body or at international level. Various levels of achievement, based mainly on practical caving and cave diving experience with minimum times and numbers and types of trips set to provide indication of the individual's experience in caving and cave diving. If anyone is interested, Stef has a copy of the proposals. The UIS has also established a set of safety recommendations for cave diving which give minimum equipment levels and types as well as line laying recommendations, trip organisation, air usage rules and so on. All common sense stuff, but having it written down is certainly not a bad thing.

BOOKS FOR SALE (& other classified bits and pieces)

"ATLAS of the Great Caves of the World" by Paul Courbon, Claude Chabert, Peter Bosted and Karen Lindsley.

ATLAS of the Great Caves of the World is an almanac, encyclopedia, and the book of records all under one cover. It is an invaluable reference book for cave explorers and cave enthusiasts of all levels.

Contained in its 376 pages are:

Descriptions of over 2000 caves from all over the world: 540 in America, 310 in Asia, 950 in Europe, 190 in Africa and 169 others (Ed note - it even includes surveys of Annakananda and Ice Tube!)

Maps of 200 caves that are either more than 700m deep or over 30km long or of special interest.

Caves and maps are listed for 118 countries, arranged in descending order of depth and length within that country.

Special section on deep pits with profiles of pits over 300m deep.

World's longest caves list, deepest caves list, chronology of depth record, record cave dives, largest chambers, non-limestone caves and so on.

Complete Index of all Caves.

This "world cave compendium" is available from: Cave Books, 5222 Eastland Drive, New Carlisle, OH 45344, USA for the meagre price of US\$20 per copy plus US\$3.00 postage to Australia.

"AUSTRALIAN KARST INDEX" edited by Peter Matthews - ASF Documentation Commission.

If you don't own one of these, we'll send the boys around to find out why not! Well, not quite, but if you are at all interested in caves (after all, why did you join our happy little band of cavers if you're not?), there is no excuse - you just have to buy one of these volumes. Contained within its 25mm thickness is a list of details of 6639 caves and karst features, 2400 maps and 925 references, as well as information on the Australian Karst Index database itself, history of the project and so on. The book is a true compendium of Australian cave and karst and the first publication resulting from the establishment of the computer database under the care of Peter Matthews.

The volume is invaluable for cross-referencing cave numbers and names, finding notes on original discovery and exploration, size of systems, type of cave and so on. The details have been gleaned from data compiled by individual clubs via Cave Summary forms. Purchase of a copy of the present edition of the AKI will enable financing of future editions.

For your copy of the Australian Karst Index, contact Peter Matthews on phone 03-8761487, or write to him at 66 Frogmore Crescent, Park Orchards, Victoria 3114. Cost is \$25 for ASF members and \$35 (I think...) for non-ASF members (are we joining ASF again??).

"Issue 10 - AUSTRALIAN SPELEO ABSTRACTS 1976-79" edited by Greg Middleton - ASF Bibliography Commission.

This publication is a guide to Australian Speleological Literature, encompassing the period of 1976 to 1979 inclusive with 1970-79 index. It comprises 172 pages, containing 1951 abstracts and an index covering 1487 authors on over 3000 subjects - quite a production effort.

The price of the publication is \$25 for the general public, or \$22.50 for members of caving societies, plus \$2.50 postage in either case. This is an invaluable reference to speleo writing during the 1970's and should be in your library! Buy one now! Contact (or just send the money to) Ross Ellis, 11 Arkana Street, Telopea, NSW 2117.

TYPEWRITER / PRINTER

With all the blurb above on books and so on, maybe you are inspired to write one for yourself?? Can't afford or don't want to buy a computer / word processor?? If so, or even if not so, the editor of this rag has for sale an electronic typewriter, ideal for typing cave trip reports, or any other literary works you may have in mind.

The machine is an electronic daisy wheel type unit (ie interchangeable type wheels), has a computer printer interface and was used for a couple of years to print out this very publication with the output from a (now old) computer (also for sale!!). Several daisy wheels of differing type and pitch are supplied as well as the dust cover and even the instruction book!

The unit is a TOWA Executive 77 typewriter/printer, has a one line LCD editing screen, electronic settings of impact, margins, tabs and so on. Ideal for the budding Speleo Spiel editor, writer or anyone else! A price of around \$200 seems about right for this well cared for unit. See Stuart Nicholas for details of how to acquire this first class typewriter.

A SEASON IN THE HIGHLANDS (of Papua New Guinea)

by Rolan Eberhard

Part 1: Simbu Environs

The cave potential in PNG's highlands is quite staggering. A glance at the relevant topo maps reveals huge covered depressions, sinkholes, sinking streams and other karst features. But there are many obstacles to confront the aspiring explorer and since taking up residence in Goroka in February (1989) I have not done as much cave plundering as I might have hoped to. There are a number of relatively accessible limestone area within easy striking distance of Goroka, but the lack of other interested persons has tended to limit the scope of my activities. The fact that most caves, or at least the land where they are situated, seem to have one or more traditional owners, is also a contributing factor. Anyone who finds dealing with Tasmanian land management organisations a trifle frustrating would see things in a different perspective after trying to negotiate access with some of locals up here. Nevertheless, my time here so far has not been entirely idle on the caving front.

Chuave is a town in the province of Simbu, just over an hour's drive from Goroka. The spectacular karst scenery in the area is dominated by a big lump of limestone in the form of Mt Elimbari. This rises to a height of 2850m to the immediate south of Chuave. On a bushwalk up the northern ridge to the summit of Elimbari I observed large dolines towards the top, as well as one small shaft right beside the track. The latter did not look particularly promising, though the depth potential here is quite substantial. One small horizontal cave exists just below the summit point itself (Wilde, 1973) though I didn't look for it at the time of my visit. In fact the prospects for caves are probably better on the lower slopes of the mountain and numerous holes have been reported including several large stream sinks as well as resurgences.

In March I briefly visited the area with Nick Hawkes - an English caver who did some trips with TCC a few years ago, though he was working in Madang at this time (Ed - he was here late last year as well). We looked at Kiren Cave, one of the more accessible holes, which had previously been explored by two French cavers in 1978 (see Cellier and Parzybut, 1982). It is located close to the road from Keu to Fikombaru at a point where the road winds between a number of large dolines. From

nearly gardens we enlisted the help of several giggly girls to show us the way to the cave and payed a well muscled chap to look after the Landcruiser during our absence.

A steep but short climb brought us to a spacious hole in the cliff face above the road. This was Kiren Cave said the girls, though apparently it goes by other names as well. In fact the cave wasn't all that exciting really. An entrance gallery led to a climb up through perched boulders into two large talus chambers with a length of connecting passage between. These chambers were the home to numerous bats and flying foxes, with a rather slippery floor underfoot as a consequence of their presence. A couple of spent shotgun shells were presumably evidence of the esteem with which flying fox meat is held locally. The French cavers had noted the existence of an unexplored shaft "30 to 40m deep" located near the start of the second chamber. Nick found a way to free climb down the hole. It was only 15 to 20m deep and did not lead anywhere.

The only other cave that we investigated at the time was an obvious hole right beside the road between Chuave and Keu. It was a small efflux feeding a large pool of water at the base of a cliff face at the roadside. The spot seemed to be known as "Keu Rock" by the locals who also told us that the cave went a long way and came out at the back of the hill. Maybe they had only meant that the water came from the other side of the hill; the cave itself was only about 20m long to a dead end.

On a later trip Nick and I drove past Chuave on the road to Kundiawa, stopping at Duman village to enlist guides in helping us to locate the entrance of Bibima Cave. The task of finding it was surprisingly straightforward. We followed a dirt road leading uphill off the main road a couple of kilometres past Duman. Just before a point where a landslip blocked the road a foot track led steeply uphill into a doline near the crest of the escarpment. The local people collect water from the swallet, hence the well worn track. There seemed to be three distinct entrances to Bibima in the doline. One is where the water sinks, and the other two are dry shafts leading down to the active streamway below. We were also told that people who had died of disease used to be tossed down the larger shaft entrance. John Parker - the same John Parker who later found many holes in the Florentine Valley - was the first to report the hole. He discovered its existence on patrol duties in the area in 1964. In 1972 the cave was bottomed at a depth of 494m, making it the deepest in PNG and the Southern Hemisphere at that time. It has since been surpassed on both counts.

Having ascertained Bibima's location in preparation for a future descent, we went to look at a small cave not far away that our guides knew of. This was located on the hill slopes much lower down than Bibima. The cave proved to be a small stream sink and efflux connected by a short section of passage. A few fading painted motifs could be seen on an overhanging rock surface still in the daylight zone, as well as some more recent scribblings.

Our plans to return and do Bibima were thwarted by a burst radiator hose on the appointed day. Nick was due to leave the country shortly afterwards, so the trip never took place. I did go back to Bibima for a quick look by myself some time later on. At the swallet entrance I followed a stream about the size of that in KD down to where it plunged over the first shaft. By traversing out and placing a bolt in the wall I was able to stay dry and enjoy the excellent abseil of about 40m that followed. The way on at the bottom was over slippery boulders in a high canyon that descended steadily. At first it was possible to look up and see light filtering in from the shaft entrances high above, while flying foxes flapped about and screeched like lunatics. Further downstream I noticed the slightly bizarre spectacle of a dead flying fox completely covered with fine white mould, though still attached upside down to the wall. I went as far as the top of the next pitch - one of only a further four short pitches on the way to the bottom of the cave.

One other trip I did in the area was to have a look at a cave named Maimbobo, also near Duman. This time Adrienne and two of her fellow teachers from the school came along. I had assured them that the people at Duman were nice and friendly and quite happy to show us around. When we got there a couple of young guys offered to show us the way, but just as started walking an older man intervened. He claimed to be the owner of either the cave or the land we had to cross to get to it and didn't want us going there. The more we tried to reason with him the more agitated he became and soon other local people were starting to take sides in the argument. We drove off as the shouting and fist waving became more intense.

References:

Cellerier, I.P. & R. Parzybut, (1982), "1978 Mini French Expedition to Papua New Guinea", Niugini Caver, 7(2,3,4): 67-79.

Wilde, K.A., (1973), "Notes on Some Caves in the Elimbari and Chuave Areas of the Chimbu District", Niugini Caver, 1(4): 110-115.

A SEASON IN THE HIGHLANDS

Part 2: Iaro River

In October I made the long drive from Goroka to Kagua in the Southern Highlands. With me was Tony Wrightson, an expatriate kiwi who is a keen bushwalker but whom I'd managed to get interested in seeing a big river cave. This particular cave - formed where the Iaro River travels underground for some distance - was apparently first seen by white man around 1969 when Neil Ryan was kiap in the area. He returned to the location in 1974 accompanied by Howard Beck and others, and they briefly explored a section of fossil upper level inside the entrance. Some years later Neil Hickson also made short visit to the cave. From all accounts it was a very spectacular feature, with the flow rate of the emerging Iaro River being estimated at circa 100 cumecs.

After an overnight stay at Kagua, Tony and I drove along a steadily deteriorating road towards the village of Pulpure. It was decided to leave the vehicle at a point where a small landslip had demolished part of the road and walk the final 5km. Our reception at Pulpure was rather cool. The local 'big man' said that the cave was taboo and that we were not to go there. Long discussions ensued without getting us anywhere. At this point a younger man turned up and declared himself to be 'papa bilong graun' (ie. owner of the cave), and told us that we could go right ahead and have a look at it. Having come so far we decided to take his word for it and so we followed him down the track leading to the cave. On the way another man blocked the path saying that he was 'papa bilong graun true'. It was all getting rather tedious.

Eventually, after more haggling and a descent of several hundred metres down the precipitous sides of the Iaro gorge, we reached the efflux. Locally the feature is known as Tobio. From a gaping cavern in the rock face the Iaro River thundered out into daylight. The speed and force of water were quite awesome and downstream the river could be seen plunging through a narrow ravine reminiscent of the Gordon Splits. Like earlier visitors, we found that it was not possible to proceed upstream for any great distance inside the cave. The walls narrowed to a width of perhaps 12m and through this canyon pulsed the foaming Iaro. The upper level passage that had been explored in 1974 was clearly visible on the left side of the entrance, though we had no time for a proper look ourselves. Various 'papa bilong

graunas' had subsequently arrived on the scene and were looking rather annoyed. This fact, combined with the long walk back, ensured that our visit was only brief.

A few days later when back in Goroka I found a letter waiting from Howard Beck. He had been to the efflux with Neil Ryan in 1974 though is currently living in England. His letter told an interesting story about the consequences of Pulpore village politics at the time of his visit. Apparently the cave is situated on the boundary between two tribal groups. Like Tony and I, in 1974 they approached the cave from the Pulpore side and here recruited some carriers. Later however, they emerged from the cave and were confronted by an angry group from the rival village. The latter claimed that they had been cheated out of income that rightfully belonged to them and not the Pulpore men. In his letter Howard described the events as follows: "They held us captive and virtually robbed us of every cent we had! Things got rather ugly when both tribes began fighting on the trail back up to the village. While this was going on we surreptitiously made our escape." After reading his account I concluded that our visit had been a relatively smooth affair.

Despite the hassle of local politics I am hoping to get back to the Southern Highlands for a closer look at Tobio. Howard noted the existence of numerous additional entrances in the dry canyon above the efflux and it is quite feasible that fossil upper levels meander over much of the length of the river on its underground course. A large log jammed in the river just inside the efflux indicates a fairly direct route from sink to resurgence, though exploring this at a safe distance above the raging water via upper levels sounds the most sensible option. As far as I am aware the point where the water goes underground - estimated to be about 1.5km away (Ryan, 1974) - has not been seen by anyone other than the locals, though they report that it is not hard to get to.

I wouldn't like to try and estimate what the flow rate of the river was during our visit in early October (1989), though conditions were generally dry at the time. Flow rates in the wet season could be expected to double or more the size of the river at times. Based on the 1974 estimate of 85-113 cumecs (Beck, 1975), the cave is easily the largest known underground river in PNG according to Bourke (1982). However, it is interesting to note that the KERABI 1:100000 map sheet indicates that the Iaro River goes underground again for a short distance, this time some 40km to the south east of Pulpore and not far before where the Iaro joins the Erave River. Access to the location would be problematic, though the topo map indicates the existence of huts nearby. Helicopter transport sounds the most ideal way of getting there.

References:

Beck, H., (1975), "Iaro River Cave, Southern Highlands District", Niugini Caver, 3(1): 4-5.

Bourke, R.M. (1982), "The Greatest Caves of Papua New Guinea (December 1980)", Niugini Caver, 7(2,3,4): 28-37.

Ryan, N., (1974), "Some Caves in the Erave, Kagua and Lake Kutubu Areas of the Southern Highlands and Gulf Districts", Niugini Caver, 2(1): 142-146.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY MARCH 28 - 8pm BE THERE!**

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE ALSO DUE AT THE AGM (SO BRING YOUR WALLET!)

OLD DITCH ROAD -> EXIT -> VALLEY ENTRANCE through trip

JUNE 3 1989.

Party: Kazuo Masai, Mark Bryce, Steve Bradford, Arthur Clarke & Bob Reid.

The main purpose of this trip was to show Kazuo Masai (a visitor from White Fields Caving Club, Tokyo) a variety of our local caving conditions all in one trip. I picked up Kazuo from Stuart's place where he was staying and after collecting a number of other early starters along the way, a large group assembled at the quarry. As well as the above people, Nick Hume, Dean and Simon Morgan were to do a similar trip but entering Exit via one of the walk in (or crawl in?) entrances instead of via Old Ditch Road. Our party left the quarry ahead of Nick and Co., the idea being that we would all rendezvous near the Ballroom in Exit and then continue the trip as one large party. However..... this was not quite the way it worked out.....!

The pull through rigging of Old Ditch Road went easily enough (except for fumble fingers Bob dropping a krab at the top of the last pitch) but by the time some of our group had reached the Ballroom, Nick, Dean and Simon were already on their way to the talus pile and a few shouted words of conversation were all that we heard of them. (I later found out that they arrived home at 8:30 p.m.!) Before moving on from the Ballroom, some food was consumed and Kazuo took some photographs of the fine decoration of the Ballroom area.

Through the talus and onward... looking at various side passages and the Grand Fissure took a deal of time, and slow progress to the surface via Valley Entrance meant that it was well and truly past dark when we finally stood upright in the rain forest outside Valley Entrance. Minor difficulties with following the taped track to the top of the hill as well as fading lights after some ten hours of use caused a very late arrival back at the quarry. Another complication resulted when Mark and I drove up to the top of the quarry to find Arthur's (well) hidden car keys, the idea being to save time as Arthur was still changing. After looking under EVERY moveable stone in the top parking area, and uttering several appropriate words, we returned to the others and ferried Arthur up to his car. Eventually we all got under way and I somehow managed to stay awake on the long drive back to Hobart, arriving home at 2:30 a.m.!!

So ended the longest Exit through-trip ever - Kazuo impressed us all with his obvious expert caving ability and hopefully left Hobart with some insight into the nature of caves in our State, and many photographs of the quite spectacular formation in Exit Cave.

Bob Reid.

MILK RUN - IB38

Sept 3 1989.

Party: Mark Bryce, Stuart Nicholas, Dean Morgan & Bob Reid.

This trip was the result of an earlier attempt to look at Milk Run by Mark Bryce and Steve Bradford. They had spent some time thrashing around the area in a vain attempt to locate the entrance several weeks earlier. In the meantime however Steve had departed for a four month trip overseas and so a new group including that well known person from Rupert Avenue (who in recent times had gained a considerable reputation as an armchair caver extraordinaire), was convened and the great Milk Run fun got under way.

Unseasonably perfect weather was arranged and after a deal of negotiating with the Rangers at Hastings, a key was secured for the new gate at Benders quarry. Nick Hume had recently installed some new tapes to the entrance so finding the way proved easy and after debate regarding the dubious looking rotten log belay for the 47 metre first pitch all proceeded downward. Finding the way through the 'window' proved no problem and on arrival at the bottom all agreed that this cave, aptly named, certainly has some great abseils and is well worth a visit. The rockfall area and most other possible leads were investigated quite thoroughly but nothing in the way of any extensions was located and after some food, Dean, Mark, Stuart and I retreated to the sunny daylight of the outside world.

Almost managing to ignore the attacks on my lack of stamina by certain individuals (due to a bout of the 'flu) I followed the fitter members of our party back to the quarry, thus completing a very enjoyable trip.

Bob Reid.

SATANS LAIR (JF-365)

November 25, 1989.

Party: Steve Bradford, Mark Bryce, Bob Reid.

Where to go ?? Looking for a chance to actually go underground instead of simply wandering about the bush on Wherretts Lookout and not finding anything of great import, Satans Lair seemed a reasonable prospect - if we could find it! Apparently nobody had visited it recently and some doubts were held about the track... This was also Steve's first caving trip since returning from his jaunt around the world, and he was keen to try out his pristine new trog suit and SRT gear which he had purchased in Paris (at prices which would make anyone green with envy!).

A perfect if somewhat too hot day was our luck and it seemed our fears of getting lost were unfounded - following the old tapes was not difficult - with the only real problem being the large and aggressive Tiger snake that had chosen a prime spot along the way and didn't seem at all inclined to move and allow us to pass... Steve was the lucky person to wake this reptile from its' morning snooze and despite loud cries of "Run away, run away" and other appropriate words, followed by assorted missiles, the only response from the snake was much hissing and rearing up etc. Lacking a suitable way to bypass this unpleasant creature, more and larger missiles were aimed in the general direction of the snake (all of which missed by a good margin) and eventually, having suitably impressed the three would be cavers, the reptile condescended to let us pass. Carrying LARGE sticks and walking with much trepidation we soon found the entrance and after removing the inevitable nettles the first pitch was rigged from a fallen log.

Despite predictions that the cave might be dry this was not the case and a moderate flow throughout the cave ensured a thorough soaking for Bob (no waterproof gear!) Finding a large boulder apparently suspended by anti-gravity in the climb down to the second 14 metre pitch caused a severe case of caution for everyone, but everything went well for the following climbs and pitches, although a strong draught caused quick cooling when waiting at pitch tops for any time. By the time we reached the top of the last pitch, the rapid approach of 'turn-around-and-rush-for-the-5pm-gate' time meant that a decision to retreat and leave the last pitch for next trip had to be made. Heading out warmed everyone quite well and the sudden rush of adrenaline (they say adrenaline is brown) when large bits of the rockfall began to move as we were climbing through meant that we were on the surface in good time to make the gate before the dreaded 5pm deadline. A good trip which proved

once again to Bob that he will have to spend some dollars and invest in a trog suit and thermals before doing too many more wet caves.

Bob Reid

SLAUGHTERHOUSE POT (& other dietary deviates)

November 19, 1989.

Party: Doone Pearce, Leigh Douglas & Stuart Nicholas (all TCC), Julie Chaffer, Steve Chaffer & Mike O'Neill (friends from outside TCC!).

Various hints had been dropped by the non-TCC bods over a period of a few months to the effect that another caving trip might be in order - they did a Midnight Hole trip a year or so ago and survived that with only minor bruising! So, after much consulting of various people, books, computer maps and general star gazing, Slaughterhouse Pot was the chosen venue; it can be done as a through trip into Growling Swallet, but involves a bit more than just zapping down ropes, Midnight Hole style. Quite an appropriately named system really as Julie and Steve are dietitians by trade!

The original small group suddenly grew when some persuasive members of that dreaded caving club called TCC (hang on, that's us!) found out about the venture. Anyway, the arranged meet-up with Leigh at the Maydena shop occurred more or less on time (Leigh + most of the rest of TCC had been staying out at the Junee campsite the previous nite - Stef was going to dive Gormenghast sump on this day) and suitably fortified with chips, salad rolls and cans of chemical soup (alias soft drink), the team ventured off into the Florentine Valley.

The esteemed leader had not been beyond the top of the first pitch of S/H Pot before (and that was at night!), a fact that caused a little consternation among the troops, but that's what caving is about really! We were not completely in the dark however (we took lights!) and Leigh had done the through trip at some stage, so it was reasoned that with the combination of native cunning, prior knowledge, a map copied from "the book" and general good luck the team ought to be able to find the way down and out.

Pointing out the entrance (when we found it...) of S/H Pot to the troops nearly produced a couple of deserters, but the pioneering spirit prevailed and everyone was soon wriggling gleefully through the "wet cement" of the somewhat contorted entrance of Slaughterhouse Pot. The descent went surprisingly smoothly, although periodic questions along the lines of "Do I follow the rope?" and "Where are we going?" when on an abseil were a trifle bemusing. Anyway, all enjoyed themselves and the only route finding dilemmas occurred in the all too familiar entrance series of Growling Swallet! The "big" chamber in S/H Pot didn't seem as loose and unstable as some had declared it to be, but then again, yours truly was more concerned with finding the way on than looking around his immediate surroundings... Climbing down through the rockpile was quite exhilarating - almost thrilling - certainly it would have to be one of the longer rockpile climbs in the state. The final 19m pitch of S/H Pot dropping into the top of the Windy Rift Series of GS is a classic - worth doing the trip just for that! Working out exactly where we were at the point took a couple of minutes, never having entered that area from above before - it all looked familiar but seemed strange at the same time (funny how the mind plays tricks like that).

Hurrying out of the GS Entrance Series and back to the vehicles, we made it out to the ANM gate with minutes in hand - then another raid on the Maydena shop and that was about the end of the show. All in all, a great day in the underground wilder-

ness of the Growling Swallet system. Thanks to all for being there and putting up with some really bad jokes! By the way, two ropes of 38m and a 30m length respectively are ideal for the pull down through trip.

Stuart Nicholas

BLOODY SUNDAY DIVERS..... GORMENGHAST (JF35)

November 19, 1989

Ghastlies: Stefan Eberhard, Dean Morgan, Lew Mitchelmore and Simon Morgan.

After ploughing through shrubs in the middle of the Nine Road track thing, Stefan could have had a field day on his bonnet, with bugs crawling everywhere! Who needs caves?

The trip was intentionally for Stef to dive the sump and explore further into the depths of Gormenghast. Dean, Lew and myself happened to be the suckers who volunteered to be the sherpas. After finding packs without handles and various other parts in the back of Dean's car, we eventually left (mostly with Stefan's packs) for the cave. Following Dean down the entrance was uneventful with various comments about how it was like a smaller version of Growling.

At the bottom of the vertical bit, it was time for Stef to take a "bug break" and I watched and learned as he collected Amphipods and other bugs with unpronounceable names and placed them in his jar of alcohol. Through one tighter section I decided that carrying packs with air tanks in them was not so bad - they floated!

Soon it was time for another "bug break", then another and another and after about the seventh break it seemed it was time for Stefan to shed his Trog suit and put on the diving gear. After he disappeared through the sump (for the third time), Dean decided it was time to test his Cyalume light stick. It was unanimously decided that it was not bright enough to light up the hand it was held in. It seemed, in fact, that it was hopeless.

After a short while, Stef reappeared reporting that the second sump was a classic U-tube, but with a large silt bank which when stirred up would leave zero visibility. He didn't fancy trying this and so returned through the first sump to meet the welcoming party.

After refilling packs, we headed out and returned to the surface well within closing time for the gate. So well within time in fact, that we decided to have a look at the views from the top of the Nine Road and for Stef to show us the start of the Porcupine track. It was such a nice day we also decided to take a detour up Chrisp's Road to admire the view from the hills.

Simon Morgan

MOUNT RONALD CROSS

by Stefan Eberhard

Mount Ronald Cross is part of the Lodden Range in central-western Tasmania. Precambrian dolomite outcrops along the eastern and northern flanks of the mountain between 500m and 900m elevation. The dolomite is overlain by Permo-Carboniferous sediments and a capping of dolerite to a summit height of 1145m. The northern-most

extent of the dolomite intersects the Lyell Highway at McKays Peak and Shirleys Pool which is a flooded sinkhole.

Most cave exploration carried out to date has been directed to the upper limits of the dolomite, in the watershed draining the north-eastern slopes of the mountain. In this area 10 major caves have been documented (Gleeson 1974; 1976a; 1976b). These caves are typically narrow and wet, steeply descending systems with abundant loose rock. Despite the available dolomite relief of some 400m and the potential for very deep systems, none of the caves explored so far are deeper than 80m.

Situated as it is in the sub-alpine zone, this karst area shares some similarities with the State's other principal high altitude karst area, the North East Ridge of Mt Anne. Both these areas were probably overridden by glaciers, to some extent at least, during the Pleistocene.

Despite their proximity to the Lyell Highway, the Mt Ronald Cross caves are difficult of access. Originally supporting mature rainforest, the effects of recent fire (within 25 years) have resulted in a dense scrubby regrowth which greatly hinders the relocation of cave entrances.

The southern limits of this karst area have not been defined. In January 1989, James Davis and I explored dolomite country for a kilometre south-east of the tarn campsite, but did not find any caves. On the western side of the mountain at 825m altitude is a shallow depression (8113 225223). We flew over this feature in a helicopter but could not identify it definitely as karst, or otherwise.

Capricorn Cave was first explored during the 1974 SCS expedition. The entrance is an impressive gash in the base of a gully (approx. GR 8113 249229). Further up the same gully is Aquarius Swallet (MR201). Approximately 60m south of Capricorn (directly up the side of the gully) is the incompletely explored Scoparia Cave, a survey of which appears in Speleo Spiel No. 248.

A profile of Capricorn Cave is shown in Figure 1. The sample stations shown on the survey represent places where I made collections of cave fauna in January 1989 but from a caver's point of view they can be ignored. However, the "Psammaspididae Pool" is a shallow seepage-fed pool of less than 1m² surface area. This seepage pool is home to a very rare species of primitive crustacean, Eucrenonaspides sp. (it doesn't have a common name, but it is related to the Tasmanian Mountain Shrimp) and cavers should be careful not to tread in these pools!

One Mt Ronald Cross cave survey which remains unpublished is that of Scorpio Cave (MR209), though there is a sketch in SCS records. Beyond the first pitch is some section of rockfall and then a further large rift and a pitch with the sound of a waterfall. This remains unexplored although I certainly won't be rushing back into the ghastly scrub at Mt Ronald Cross.

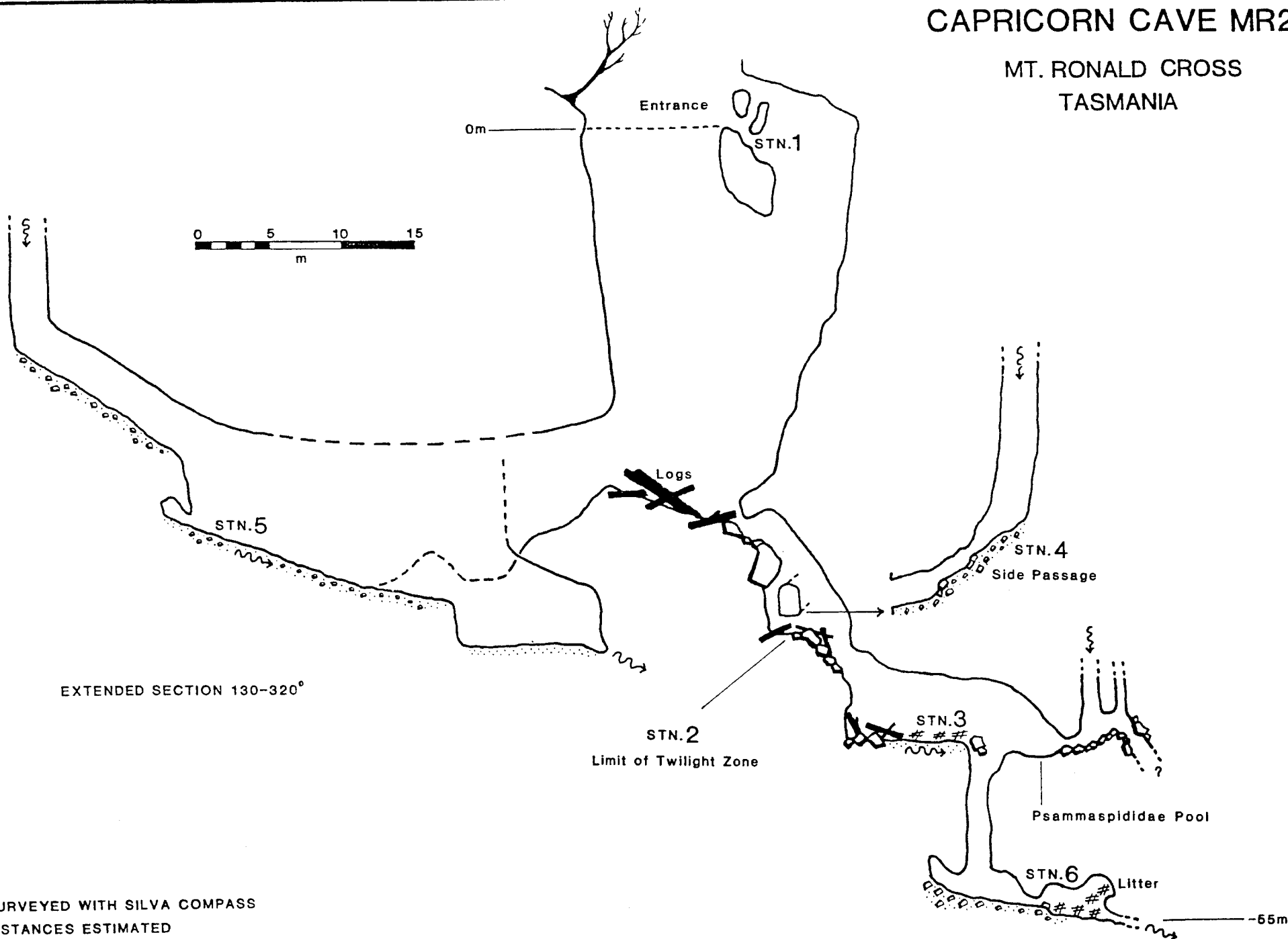
References

- Gleeson, L. (1974) Exploration at Mt Ronald Cross, Southern Caver 6(1):17-19.
----- (1976a) The Mt Ronald Cross Surveys, Southern Caver 7(2):4-12.
----- (1976b) Continued exploration of Mt Ronald Cross, Southern Caver 7(4):6-7.
Speleo Spiel No.223 & 248.

Fig. 1: Profile of Capricorn Cave showing sample stations.

CAPRICORN CAVE MR204

MT. RONALD CROSS
TASMANIA



SURVEYED WITH SILVA COMPASS
DISTANCES ESTIMATED

S. EBERHARD, JAN. 1989

MOUNT RONALD CROSS

INTRODUCTION

Mount Ronald Cross is part of the Lodden Range located in central-western Tasmania. Precambrian dolomite outcrops along the eastern and northern flanks of the mountain between 500m and 900m elevation. The dolomite is overlain by Permo-Carboniferous sediments and a capping of dolerite to a summit height of 1145m. The northern-most extent of the dolomite intersects the Lyell Highway at McKays Peak and Shirleys Pool. Shirleys Pool is a flooded sinkhole, and a variety of other karst features occurring in this vicinity have been described by Houshold and Clarke (1988).

However, most cave exploration carried out to date has been directed to the upper limits of the dolomite, in the watershed draining the north-eastern slopes of the mountain. In this area 10 major caves have been documented (Gleeson 1974; 1976a; 1976b). These caves are typically narrow and wet, steeply descending systems with abundant loose rock. Despite the available dolomite relief of some 400m and the potential for very deep systems, none of the caves explored so far are deeper than 80m.

Situated as it is in the sub-alpine zone, this karst area shares some similarities with the State's other principal high altitude karst area, the North East Ridge of Mt. Anne. Both these karst areas were probably overridden by glaciers, to some extent at least, during the Pleistocene (Kiernan 1982).

Despite their proximity to the Lyell Highway, the Mt. Ronald Cross caves are difficult of access. Originally supporting mature rainforest, the effects of recent fire (within the last 25 years) have resulted in a dense, scrubby regrowth which greatly hinders the relocation of cave entrances.

The southern limits of this karst area have not been defined. We explored dolomite country for a kilometre south-east of the tarn campsite, but did not find any caves. On the western side of the mountain at 825m altitude is a shallow depression (8113 225223). We flew over this feature but could not identify it definitely as karst, or otherwise.

Early collections of cave fauna in this area included cave crickets; Virgo Cave MR201 is the type locality for *Micropathus montanus* Richards whilst *M. tasmaniensis* Richards has been collected from fissure caves at a lower altitude in the same outcrop (Richards 1971). Further collections were undertaken in Capricorn Cave MR204 during the 1987 WHA Directed Wildlife Research programme (Eberhard 1987). Amongst other things, this collection yielded the first record of psammaspidid crustaceans from within the WHA, the discovery of a cavernicolous population of harvestmen (*Nuncioides infrequens*), and a single specimen of a probable new species of troglobitic trechine beetle.

The objectives during this latest visit to Mt. Ronald Cross under the 1989 WHA Directed Wildlife Research programme were a more detailed biological census of Capricorn Cave (including collection of additional specimens of the troglobitic beetle), and to make comparative collections from other caves.

METHODS

Fauna collections were made in Capricorn Cave and Scoparia Cave. In Capricorn Cave collections were made at 6 separate stations which correspond to different levels in the cave (Fig. 1). Air temperature and relative humidity were measured at each station, although the hygrometer readings were subsequently found to be in error. Thirty two baits (blue vein cheese or sweet potatoe) were placed throughout the cave and then checked for fauna 3 days later. Other habitats sampled included the streamway, seepage pool and flood-deposited litter; a sample of litter was taken to the laboratory and the animals extracted with a Berlese Funnel. A total of 9 hours was spent collecting fauna in Capricorn Cave.