

SPELEO SPIEL

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SPELEO SPIEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB, Inc.

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PRESIDENT:		
Trevor Wailes	214 Summerleas Road, Kingston, Tas 7050.	Ph 291382
SECRETARY:		
Nick Hume	9 Primrose Place, Sandy Bay, Tas 7005.	Ph 251934
TREASURER:		
Leigh Douglas	33 George Street, North Hobart, Tas 7002.	Ph 343789
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...!

CHRISTMAS 1990 / NEW YEAR 1991: PB Expedition (perhaps...) Is anyone interested? If not, why not?! See / contact Nick Hume for a last minute booking!

RESCUE EXERCISE - February 22 evening thru February 24: Big Tree Pot at Ida Bay will be the centre of the activity. The idea is to haul someone from the bottom to the surface as per a real operation, ie with most of the trappings including full operational control base, communications, logistic support and so on. See Stu for this interesting weekend - there will be plenty of room for everyone, so write it on your wall chart now!

EDITORIAL

Well, nearly the end of what has been undoubtedly the most dramatic and unfortunately the most tragic year in the history of Australian cave exploration. Another flood entrapment a few weeks ago emphasises again the possible difficulties of caving in mountain environments with their inevitable local and unpredictable weather patterns and rapid water runoff times.

Nevertheless, I feel that, despite all the gloom and doom, there is one bright spot (dare I say it) floating on the horizon - Dean, having been trapped twice in the same cave by the same method within one calendar year, must be the recipient of the **Golden Water Wings Award** for persistence in the desire for adversity! (Maybe Trev should get the 'Golden Oldies' **Water Wings Award** - he's been trapped twice in GS, but some years apart...) Well done Dean, Trev, Patrick and Florian during your recent entrapment - so near and yet so far....! Thanks also to all the members who fronted up or were prepared to on the night and/day for a possible rescue.

Stuart Nicholas

Many of the following trip reports were written by Dean (the machine) Morgan!! What's everyone else up to?? (I think Dean would like to know the answer to that question as well...)

EXPLORING JF133

1 September 1990

Participants: Bob Reid, Stuart Nicholas and Dean Morgan

After the obligatory 1½ hour struggle up the hill we were finally at the entrance to JF133 to finish exploration from a couple of weeks before (see Speleo Spiel 264). A couple of pitches were descended and a section of passage and we were at the top of the 15 metre pitch that had stopped progress on the previous trip. Unfortunately

after sending Bob down the pitch he reported that it was completely choked at the bottom with the water just seeping through the floor. The only lead that he found was halfway back up the pitch with a squeeze that would require a bit of digging to get through.

We had a look around for other leads but couldn't find any so headed out to have a look at another nearby "new" cave. Bob was the man with all the SRT gear on so down the pitch he went! It turned out to be a 25 metre shaft with a tight rift that couldn't be entered. So, like it or not, we started the trek out to the shop for the essential post-trip bag of chips! It looks like it might be easier to tackle this area now from The Gap as we are starting to get closer to that area and further away from the current access of The Slip.

Dean Morgan

SUMMIT OF WHERRETTS LOOKOUT, etc.

1 September 1990

Walkers: Leigh Douglas and Nick Hume.

Stuart, Dean and Bob were off to "shaft bash" some recently relocated holes on the south western side of Wherretts Lookout (see report above). Leigh and I followed them as far as the turnoff from The Slip track, then continued up towards the summit of Wherretts with the aim of obtaining some views and making a reconnaissance of karst features on it's northern slopes.

The going was open up to the slope "fracture" at the head of the (Slip) debris slide. The formerly steep going levelled off abruptly at this point, due to the interface of siltstone and sandstone in underlying sediments. There is good opportunity here of inspecting the horizontally-bedded Permo-triassic sediments unconformably overlying the steeply-dipping Gordon Group of limestones, as they are well exposed. Progress slowed thereafter, picking a best line across the plateau through the treefall and scrub. A short climb of the small isolated dolerite cap was rewarded by a panorama of the Junee-Florentine karst.

The western and northern slopes of this hill are more easily navigable than the southern side by which we had come and perhaps the fire-intensity created by strong "nor-westers", here, provides a more open assemblage too. Whatever, descent to the approximate upper level of the limestone contact (c. 720 to 750 metres a.s.l.) in this vicinity) was surprisingly straightforward.

We wandered atop a distinctively large cliff-face (tower) which is also visible from the summit of neighbouring Mount Tim Shea. A resistant rock type (akin to a highly veined quartzite) caps this and is probably an anomalously siliceous (Wherretts Chert Member) in the Karmberg Limestone. The capping, as well as undercutting of the underlying (purer and massively bedded) limestone has oversteepened this feature (and the area immediately west of it) quite spectacularly. Unfortunately, these sorts of karst features were more common than actual caves along the trajectory we took, which was a fairly immediate contour line approximating the contact and heading west. On the way I recorded direction of strike and dip angle of the bedding planes, which are poorly described (ie undescribed!) for this particular area.

Returning towards The Gap, we encountered an open field of exposed *rundkarren*. Immediately south of here were a few small entrances overlooking a steep sided dry gully, but nothing startling was found (except nearby Florentine road down a very steep slope). This is an interesting area and definitely worth more time and effort than our brief transect of the place. Impending bad weather caused an early retreat back to the car at Lady Binney Corner.

Nick Hume (not Dean Morgan!!)

PENDANT POTTERING (Pendant Pot JF37)

2 September 1990

Pottereros: Nick Booth, Cian and Dean Morgan

Pendant Pot is a very enjoyable and not too hard a cave and I thought that the others would enjoy it, but Cian was enjoying sleep more as we were supposed to meet at 7.30am. After a bit of hustling on the phone he turned up although it was a late start and the bottom of the cave would probably not be reached on this day. Once at

the cave, we used a rope to haul the gear up the 7 metre entrance climb and then headed through the squeeze to the top of the first pitch. There was a bit of jostling at the top as we put on SRT gear in the limited space and rigged the pitch. I descended first followed by Nick; Cian decided to opt out as his light was having an attack of the blackouts. Nick and I then went down Pandemonium Rift and then I went down the 40 metre Pel Mel pitch. Incidentally, there is a bolt 20 metres down on the opposite wall which I only used as a redirection, but on the way out noticed that the bracket had bent and nearly pulled off the wall, so I recommend that it now only be used as a redirection.

We had decided that it would be best to head out of the cave as once again time was short and apart from me dropping a jumar, krab and sling down the first pitch, we were soon back at the car and the rain! Naturally the rain stopped as soon as we were changed and driving away!

Dean Morgan

A MUD WALLOW AT IDA BAY: Surveying in Arthurs Folly IB110

"9-9-90"

Wallowers: Dean Morgan and Arthur Clarke.

Three nines (9-9-90) only occur once a century! It seemed like a reasonable excuse to do something different; the alternatives were a bask in the sunshine, climb a mountain or listen to Hawthorn defeat Melbourne in the AFL elimination final of Aussie rules. None of these things happened!

Arthurs Folly has been estimated at being 1 km long but had only been half surveyed (to about 580 metres). The aim for the day was to finish the survey and collect some Springtails. Neither aim was achieved although another 266 metres of cave was surveyed with the major trend being SE (145 degrees magnetic). Some terrestrial Isopods and a 3cm long millipede were collected and several aquatic Isopods were seen near the entrance. A large Amaurobiid hunting spider was also seen about 300 metres in but no Springtails were found.

In the entrance there is a putrid smell which resembles the odour of human faeces. Upstream in the crawlway there is recent evidence of back-flooding due to leakage from the roadside drain, first reported by Dean Morgan in May this year. Mention of the problem is included in a recent consultancy report on Karst Features in the Lune River Valley prepared for the Forestry Commission by Arthur Clarke. Because of the back-flooding, the stream gravels are covered by a 2 to 3 cm thick layer of fine silt.

The cave was relatively dry - the water levels were down but the mud levels seemed deeper! The air in the cave smelt musty and dusty, in fact there was some dust in the cave atmosphere. Most of the tree roots in the first decorative chamber were unusually dry, although some Isopods were seen amongst the fibres. The Ascomycetes fungi had also dried up. These used to harbour Paronellid Springtails, but none were seen on this trip.

Beyond the rockfall before the "Y" junction, the cave passage sidles around a large aven choked with dolerite boulder (or basalt) cobbles and boulders, some of them up to 0.8 metres across. A slight draught was noticed (or imagined) in this area. There appears to be a climbable lead here which extends upwards for 15 metres but due to time constraints was not attempted. (Arthur was on standby work so had to be out relatively early.) Downstream from this choke the jasper and other siliceous fragments in the stream gravels are up to fist size. Upstream, the gravels also appear to be more angular or sub-angular although some rounded quartz fragments were seen.

The survey was commenced at the "Y" junction with the side passage that heads south, this passage includes several suspended pools of dog tooth spar calcite crystals. The main cave passage trends off to the east from the junction, then deviates slightly to the south and swings left continuing in an easterly, south easterly direction. Another smaller aven choke is encountered with the same dolerite or basalt cobbles but these are smaller fragments and are more cemented together than in the larger downstream choke.

Upstream the cave goes through a large phreatic section with a 4 metre high exposure of stratified clays and sands above a thinner sequence of gravels. The stratified clays extend up to the cave roof.

From the stream bed a particularly nice piece of banded agate was collected. Further on the cave passage narrows to a narrow vadose canyon shape through three phreatic tube section as the passage heads south. After a few large breakdown chambers and some very decorative sections with white flowstone, straws and small helictites, the cave direction abruptly turns east and the passage becomes a crawl through a 4 metre wide dome shaped roof section. This is a mixture of lying prostrate in the 30cm deep water or wallowing in the mud. The survey began flat-out! The passage height is down to about 750mm but at least the survey legs were longer. At the end of our survey an 'X' is marked in the mud and indicated by a small length of orange flagging tape tied to a small column. This crawl is estimated to continue for another 200 to 250 metres. Any volunteers to finish off the survey would be gratefully accepted. The writer is leaving his country abode in Dover for the big smoke of Hobart! Many thanks to Dean for hauling the caving pack with survey gear and bottles of bugs.

Arthur Clarke

VALLEY ENTRANCE (IB120)

16 September 1990

Participants: Doone (alcohol abuse) Pearce, Dean Morgan.

I should have just hung up the phone when I heard the drunken frivolities in the background, but instead I made the mistake of asking Doone if she wanted to go caving the next day. She then made the mistake of saying "yes"! I had no rope so it looked like Exit was the one.

The first sign was her lagging behind on the walk down to the cave as she is normally bounding along, but once at the entrance she said she was feeling OK. The water level in the cave wasn't as high as I thought it would be, although it was flowing faster than usual making it easy to spot where the D'Entreacasteau River flows in. A quick look up here at the glowworm display was had. We then went to the Ballroom and once back down at the streamway, Doone's condition was "all right" so we decided to head towards Valley Entrance. This was where her condition started deteriorating in direct proportion to the distance we travelled.

A quick look in Edies Treasure and we were probably half way there time-wise so it was no use turning back. A lunch stop was had in the Grand Fissure and from there it was straight to Valley Entrance avoiding Kellars Squeeze. From there it was a bit of grunting and groaning and we were finally out of the cave.

Doone's stomach still had to face the 1½ to 2 hour bushwalk back to the car. She must have been delirious as she thought the short walk up to the saddle was harder than walking up Wherretts Lookout!! The things alcohol can do to a person. At least the rest of the walk is downhill. Doone even turned down my offer of an egg and bacon roll from the Dover shop - some people are never happy!

Dean Morgan

MOUNT WELD

22 September 1990

Welders: Russel Fulton, Dave Rasch (SCS) and Dean Morgan (TCC)

Russell had a couple of things that he wanted to take a look at in the Mount Weld area and I was keen to go as I had never been into the area and didn't even know where it was. I took a minimum of caving gear and no SRT gear and the others just took lights as we knew that nothing would be found if we took 300 metres of rope out there!

After a couple of hours of walking we came to the dry valley which was the area of interest for the day. We split up from here and I climbed up the steep, almost vertical side of the valley on the right for 150 metres until reaching some contact cliffs. These were followed along for a while but only one entrance was found which was a 10 metre pitch hard up against a cliff. There was no draught and it didn't look promising. We then regrouped and headed up the valley as Russell was sure that he had been in the valley further up and there was a creek in it. A short distance up we came to a fork in the valley and after consulting the map it was decided the left branch was the best option which proved to be correct as we soon came to a very impressive large swallet. The wet entrance sumped in a rift still in daylight,

although the water could be heard crashing below us. Off to the side there was another small vertical entrance which I freeclimbed down to the top of a 10 metre pitch where all the water could be seen and heard. Another 10 metre pitch followed that led to a large chamber, but neither of these pitches could be descended as we had no rope!

We then spent a couple of hours bashing through the scrub finding one small entrance which I managed to squeeze through to the top of five metre pitch with walk through passage from there on. The only other thing of note was a large outcrop made of quartzite crystals which looked pretty amazing! The others then took me to a large cave found on a previous trip which is on the track. This entrance is Mystery Creek sized with an equivalent size stream flowing into it. Apparently it only goes for about 70 metres before narrowing down to small conduits taking all of the water. No prospects except perhaps in very dry conditions.

We called it a day from there and started the track back to the dreaded cutting grass which slashed my arms to bits, having made the mistake of wearing a short sleeved shirt on the way out. Many thanks to Russell for organising the trip and taking me along. Another trip is planned for the next weekend to explore the swallet as described above...

Dean Morgan

BIG TREE POT (IB9)

25 September 1990

Tree Pots: Janine Hopkins, Stuart Scott, Paul Steane (Police Search & Rescue) and Stuart Nicholas (TCC).

A prompt 7am start augured well for the day, and even the weather looked vaguely kind to us. Armed with many and varied ropes including a 135 metre 11 mm new Blue Water, we sweated into Big Tree Pot, finding it without problem.

Stu Scott rigged the first pitch and we dropped into the abysmal blackness. Locating a reported bolt for one of the pitches proved fruitless so we went for the 'anchor naturale', then found a bolt plug on the floor at the head of the next pitch. Some searching revealed the location of a casing into which the obligatory bolt was screwed. The other pitches used natural belays, often however requiring wire traces and slightly awkward starts because of the sharp rock.

The main 90 metre pitch produced some suitable exclamatory remarks from the assembled team. The 135 metre rope was belayed to the rock spike at the top and back to a very substantial mega-stal... Dropping the rope end made for more strange utterings by all assembled.

Below the initial lip (protected with a gear bag and protector), the shaft is quite magnificent, being large in section and freehanging but with the rope not far from the wall for some of its height, making prusiking up again somewhat easier. (Where does the hole on the other side go??) The everpresent streamlet was present (!) but not in any magnitude, although dropping the bottom 9 metre pitch was a little damp. This was rigged from a projection in the floor with the tail of the main rope. Paul Steane wandered / squirmed along to the end of the horizontal section but reported (visually, as well as by speech) that the mud was in fine form. Everyone else just waited around for a few minutes before tackling the prusik back up the 90 metre. Long pitches are definitely more enjoyable on low stretch 11mm rope!

While waiting at the top of the 90 metre, much discussion ensued re the suitability of the cave as a venue for a rescue exercise within the next few months and in fact this has been chosen for an exercise in late February 1991. Stay tuned for more details.

The 135 metre rope was pulled out without stuffing it in a bag, (ie as a snake) while the other shorter ropes were stuffed and lugged out. The bolt plug found on the way in was inserted in its respective spit while derigging. Gaining the surface after five hours revealed cool temperatures and a passing rain storm, but this had cleared by the time everyone was out. A less fast retreat to the car was made and the return to Hobart made in good style. All in all a good trip and certainly recommended to anyone who hasn't done it (just find a long 11mm rope and a couple of strong Police bods to lug it in and out...).

Stuart Nicholas

OWL POT JF221

7 October 1990

Party: Brian French and Dean Morgan

An early start had been organised as the plan was to do Tassie Pot but we couldn't get the long rope for the last pitch so it looked like another trip into Owl Pot as Brian hadn't been there. We didn't have enough rope for the handline at the entrance so a quick slide was the order of the day! Whilst rigging the first pitch a bolt and hanger was accidentally dropped and as I only had two left, it looked like the last pitch may not be descended. Packs usually get lighter as gear is unloaded and used during descent, but by the time we had arrived at the top of the last pitch, a swing cheek pulley, a glove and a rope protector had been found! These things were probably left behind after the S&R exercise in the cave earlier in the year, despite my having lead the trip...

The missing / dropped hanger ended up not being needed on the bottom pitch as a 'Y' belay from one bolt and a chock in the opposite wall proved adequate. Once down this pitch, we headed for the sump. On the S&R exercise earlier in the year the sump was completely dry and the water was noted to just seep under a wall, although there was still plenty of water coming down the last pitch on that occasion. Now I severely regret not having crawled up the sump passage then as today it was completely submerged with the more normal flow conditions. The water must disappear before the sump itself - I wonder how much the streamway has been pushed at the bottom of the last pitch??? It should be looked at in drier conditions...

We made the retreat, getting back to the car by 2pm. As it was a lovely clear day time was spent admiring the view from the top of the Nine Road and Tim Shea. We even trekked into Junee Resurgence on the way out, but were still back in Hobart by 5pm after a nice pleasant slack day was had by both of us.

Dean Morgan

MIDNIGHT HOLE (IB11)

14 October 1990

Participants: Rowan Marshall and Dean Morgan

Rowan is my usual rockclimbing partner and I had been telling him how caving is much better than climbing so a trip was planned into Growling Swallet to prove the point. Unfortunately ANM weren't handing out permits this weekend so it looked like Midnight Hole was in order.

Once at the entrance it took us only $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour to get down to Mystery Creek Cave. We had planned to have a look around in far end of the cave as I always seem to just go straight through the cave and out. Unfortunately we both had an attack of the dreaded lethargy and this trip also ended up being a straight through affair with only the usual detours on the way out. We were only underground for something like two hours!

Dean Morgan

and now for something slightly different...

NEWDEGATE CAVE (show cave at Hastings...)

21 October 1990

Tourists: Phil Jackson, Andrew McNeill (both SCS), Dean Morgan (TCC) plus three other people whose names elude me for the moment...

Overnight rain had put an end to my planned Splash Pot trip so I turned up at Jacko's house at 8am to try and butt my way on to a trip with him. He mumbled a few words in his sleep about meeting at Russell Fulton's at 10 am. Knowing how much he needs his beauty sleep, I left him for a couple of hours longer and met them at 10am. After leaving at 11am and getting to Hastings, Jacko had to place some charcoal bags in the Hells Half Acre area of Newdegate for a water tracing experiment.

By early afternoon we were at the entrance gate which combined classical neo-Georgian features with all the advantages of modern technology! I was half expecting to be carried along conveyor belts once through the gate but unfortunately we had to walk. Thankfully someone had left the first pitch rigged with a lovely concrete spiral staircase and I think the club should purchase some of these as they are much easier than SRT or ladders! I'm sure the newer members could carry them in

for us. (Do we have newer members? - Ed) Eventually we ran out of concrete path and had to resort to walking on mud!! After passing over piles of smashed light globes and flash bulbs we were finally getting into some real cave.

This was my first trip into the cave and I was quite impressed with the size of the passage as I was expecting it to be smaller owing to it being in dolomite. The first and only real pitch was rigged with a ladder (wire, not concrete!) which took us into the completely dry 'Mystery Creek' streambed. A short grovel later we were in Hells Half Acre where Jacko placed the fluorescein followed by a look upstream. I eventually came to a spot where the stream was coming out of a duck / squeeze and after digging a bit of silt out of the bottom, I squeezed through and proceeded to crawl up 150 metres of small wet muddy passage before reaching the base of 4 metre waterfall. There seemed to be no way to climb it so I crawled back down the streamway thinking that this might be something new, but after meeting the others again I was informed that there was a dry bypass that even gets one to the top of the waterfall! We all made our retreat from there and apart from nearly getting lost on the epic bushwalk back to cars, everything went fine!

Dean Morgan

SERVALANE - Growling Swallet (JF36)

4 November 1990

Participants: Jonathon Simms (English caver) and Dean Morgan

The Servalane area of Growling was of continuing interest as there was some walk through passage still going that I had found with Trevor on trip a few months ago. We had run out of time on that trip and it had been too wet over winter to go in (with any certainty of getting out the same day, anyway!). As Jonathon was from England I knew he would like the Servalane type passage, so today was the day that we would connect Growling with Khazad-dum!!

As can be expected on any Servalane trip, something went wrong. This time my car blew a radiator hose going through town so we had to go back and pick up Jonathon's car. This put us somewhat behind so we were doubtful of even having time to get to Servalane. I wasn't even sure of being able to find it having only been in there once with Trevor, but luckily the route wasn't as complex as I remember it and we were soon squirming our way through the Servalane passage.

After some time, the point where Space Rat Alley joins a rift high up is reached and I remembered having to climb up into a hole in the roof and dropping into a parallel rift. We looked around for about 20 minutes and couldn't find it which wasn't really a bad thing as time would not have allowed us to achieve our original aim in any case. A slow retreat was made from the cave and Servalane lives for another day. All my trips seem to have been failures over the last couple of months...

Dean Morgan

SPLASH POT AREA - Junee area

29 October 1990

The only information that I had about Splash Pot was that it was somewhere near Khazad-dum and higher in altitude so I was half expecting to be staggering around the bush all day trying to find the thing. Thankfully my incredible directional skill and cave finding ability (plus just sheer talent!) had me at the entrance in the first dry gully that I looked in. The same cannot be said for my skills at packing all of the gear necessary to do the cave... In the frenzy of trying to squeeze everything into one pack, I had forgotten to pack a light!

And so it came to pass that I spent the next couple of hours trying to convince myself that I like bushbashing while looking to the right (approximately west) of the track. All that turned up were a couple of small entrances and a dry gully with a large blocked doline at the head of it. Very thick head-high bracken fern made for slow and treacherous going and enthusiasm soon ran low, forcing me back to Hobart in the early afternoon. Splash Pot will have to wait until another weekend.

Dean Morgan

DIG the laser printing... Its just an experiment for now, but may continue...

ANOTHER BLOW (OR TWO) FOR THE WORKERS AT JF396...

4 November 1990

Party: Chris Davies (TCC) and Peter Ackroyd (VSA).

In Tasmania again! I'd last visited JF396 on 6 May 1990 (Ackroyd 1990) and was keen to extend this active and interestingly located swallet with its original digger, Chris Davies.

Clambering up the Wherretts Lookout slip and getting lost in the rainforest was the usual fun activity that I remembered. Finding that the cave had had a partial collapse just inside the entrance was also par for the course. We had left it in a rather precarious state following our last visit!

Diving headlong into the cave, lying full length in the 8°C water was, well, shocking. It did however reveal that there had been quite a lot of nature's own earthmoving going on within the cave since our last visit. After removing a few boulders and some rubble the inescapable conclusion was that it would require a few blows from the trusty pick. In a confined space that pick can be noisy, but it is sure effective.

Perhaps a little too effective! The rock blocking the way down was gone, but in its place was an even larger one, fallen out of the roof. More rock clearing, more water up the delicate parts, more cursing. Time was a-fleeting and, as numbed fingers removed all the available loose rock, the eyes wandered to the pick lying idly nearby.

Finally, with the afternoon passing quickly and an hour or so's walk yet to come, it was back to another shot in the dark with the ever reliable secret weapon. It seemed to do the trick - the way on looked good but the time for a good look was not available.

The draught is still there, blowing out, the stream was still sinking - as much as could be thrown at it judging from the evidence around about - and the hole still beckons. Chris reckons there is no-one else silly enough to take on the dig, but I'm not so sure; I've met quite a few Tasmanian cavers now!

Peter Ackroyd

Reference

Ackroyd, Peter, (1990) > So you find caves this way too? *Speleo Spiel* 261:10.

MILK RUN IB38

5 November 1990

Participants: Dave Rasch, Andrew ?, Peter Bannick (SCS) and Dean Morgan (TCC).

Dave had got to within one pitch of the bottom of Milk Run the weekend before and had left it rigged to finish it this weekend. I had done the cave a few times before, but as nothing else was happening I went along for the trip; they also needed my car as they wouldn't all fit into Dave's MG!

The bottom of the cave was reached in short time since it was already rigged, as noted above. We then started looking around the bottom area. The others went up into a high level passage which I had not noticed on previous trips and we spent a bit of time exploring this passage which dropped back into the streamway and finished in a large aven. A bit more time was spent in the mud and then we made our way back to the surface. Andrew was dumped with all but one rope and made to struggle back to the car with a pack which must have weighed almost as much as him!

Dean Morgan

And now for something **completely different.. a report not by Dean!!** They don't exactly flood in, but when they do, its all action!!

GROWLING SWALLET (GS36) - New Feeling

25/26 November 1990

Participants: Florian Baci, Patrick Troy, Dean Morgan and Trevor Wailes.

What started out with indecision about which system would be safest, given unsettled weather and taking comfort (!) into consideration, played a large part in events of the next 24 hours.

Dean Morgan and myself were in the company of two visiting cavers, Florian Baciu from Romania and Patrick Troy from Ireland. It was our intention to do something sporting in the Florentine Valley. Ice Tube entrance series was mooted but as a few pitches would be wet (and thinking of comfort!) it was rejected. Maybe a couple of pitches in Serendipity... this was also abandoned. A trip into the New Feeling area of Growling Swallet was finally decided on. I hadn't been to the end of this section and Dean wanted to try out his new Petzl Stop descender. Florian and Patrick were just happy to be going caving.

Armed with SRT gear, a couple of ropes and the weather report of scattered showers with sunny periods, we entered Growling Swallet at 11.30am. The water was higher than normal flow but not to the point of being dangerous, just sporty. The only point we got wet was the climb down in the main streamway immediately after leaving the Dry Bypass. Well, what's a little soaking between friends??? To enter this system and expect to stay dry is wishful thinking. The entrance to New Feeling is at the junction known as Stal Corner. This is about 120 metres vertically below the entrance and perhaps 250 metres distant, most of which is main stream passage. A 2 metre climb up out of the streamway into the low crawl brought us to the 5 metre climb down into the silent dry realms of the New Feeling entrance chamber.

Our trip through "New Feeling" to "Ghost Riders" was uneventful and very enjoyable. Dean had found a new bypass to the second pitch on an earlier trip which involved only a short hand line climb to enter the lower "dry" streamway. Patrick and Florian were by reputation very capable cavers and proved to be very proficient with only borrowed SRT gear and clothing being available to them. (See Speleo Spiel #204, 205) for a description of New Feeling). The group worked sufficiently well to be back in the New Feeling entrance chamber by 4.30pm, however where there should have been silence, a distant roar was heard! In the crawl above the free climb the air was almost jellied and the roar distinctive - this was the first omen that all was not well!

Patrick and Dean were on the ledge above the streamway that was now swollen. At this point there was a sense of some urgency - we had the choice of returning to New Feeling or trying to make our way towards the main entrance.

The main stream passage closes down to a bottleneck "keyhole" some 30 metres downstream of Stal Corner. When the flow of water becomes too great for this, the river backs up and flows into New Feeling which will leave the crawlway sumped for an unknown period of time. With this in mind a decision was made to traverse high level ledges as far as possible towards the entrance. Shades of what one imagines the Naré to be like... the roar of white water below us negated any conversation. The water seemed to be rising all the time; I 'thought' I'd been in Growling in flood before! The ledges 3 metres above the passage floor indicated there was about a metre of fast flowing water below us. At the first turn the ledges petered out but a climb down allowed us to traverse the wall out of the full flow of the stream. At the second corner we gingerly traversed more ledges until it was obvious that to proceed we were going to have to get in it. Dean did a great job of inching around the wall close to the full torrent of water into the lesser flooded Yorkshire Drain streamway. The ledge we stood on waiting for Dean to get to safety was dry when we had first arrived, with the water some 10cm lower. A rope was quickly produced and thrown across to Dean. Patrick krabbed on and inched into the water around the wall. The rope was returned for Florian and he likewise gained relative safety. As I stood waiting for this series of manoeuvres I had taken note of the source of the noise - this being the torrent of water flowing down the "Cascades". On our arrival at the ledge the torrent fell the short drop in an arc... as I prepared to leave this spot the torrent was now hitting the opposite wall almost horizontally and the ledge on which I stood was almost ankle deep in water. The suspended tree branch 6 metres up testified to the potential height of a serious flood.

After krabbing onto the returned rope I inched into the water feeling for ledges and hand holds. The main force of water extended for maybe only two metres but the combined flow of water at the junction of the main streamway and the Yorkshire Drain pushed against the wall I was trying to inch around. At one point I thought I would have to rely totally on the rope but then I was through the main force and paddled into the Yorkshire Drain. We traversed this streamway on ledges although the flow was not impassible. At the waterfall we ascended and via connecting passages rejoined the main streamway.

From this point on we knew we were safe. Dean suggested trying to make for a chamber close to the entrance he had noted the week before which would afford us the most comfort. The route to this involved crossing the river but choosing a wide

section, where the flow was more spread, reduced the force. Keeping to ledges and larger blocks we traversed the main stream passage to the chamber below the climbs up into the Dry Bypass. This chamber was to be our jail for the next fourteen hours. The water was still rising and assuming it to be snow melt, felt it would start to fall as daylight receded. This was considered a fair assumption from experience gained over the years. However, the water continued to rise well into the night... even to retrace our steps would have been difficult.

In the chamber on a dry bank of sediment free from flood debris, a hollow was formed by a partially buried block. The cave packs were emptied and the two ropes we had were spread over the base of the hollow with the packs positioned to sit or lean on. Both Dean and I had space blankets. These proved invaluable. We also had between us a quantity of badly bruised bananas, two rather sad looking salad rolls, three bars of chocolate and two almond Mars Bars. Each of us had a secondary light source.

By 6pm we had cooled off sufficiently to crawl into the space blankets. Patrick, Florian and myself sat bobsleigh style, relying on each other's body heat and the space blankets over and around us to keep heat loss to a minimum. This worked extremely well.

Our refuge chamber does not normally have a waterfall, but today it was spewing almost 2 metres out over the 7 metre drop. While this waterfall flowed we had no chance of exiting. The streamway must have had close to a metre of water flowing down a 3 metre wide 25° slope. None of the large cobbles could be seen for the white foaming torrent. Needless to say, no-one ventured into this to see if the climbs beyond were passable. The periods spent under the space blanket were limited to how much pain one could stand sitting on rocks and rope! Two hours seemed to be the maximum.

By 11pm the flow was slackening and Dean forced his way upstream only to meet an impenetrable wall of foam. At 1am I tried and got a little further but the drenching did little for morale and it seemed to take longer to warm up. By 3am our waterfall had almost gone, but the stream was still impassable. We shared a roll and some chocolate, hoping this fuel would warm us. Around 5am the air temperature had dropped several degrees and we really felt the cold - all had bouts of shivering and dozing off for a half hour or so before changing position. The warmest spot was in the middle of the 'bob sleigh' but this was also the least comfortable. By this time we were well aware that the media, Police S&R and our own club members would be actively pursuing us.

At 7am we shared a Mars Bar and I checked the streamway. It was just passable but rather than struggle getting out a decision was made to leave it until 9am and then, come hell or high water, go for it! No one could sleep after this and all were a little impatient, the space blankets were torn and lacked their original heat retention ability. At 8.45am we stirred... Patrick's lamp had died so he took mine and I used a Petzl head lamp. The long rope and dead cell were packed away and would be left to pick up later. The last roll was divied up and chocolate shared. The short rope was knotted and made ready for a handline if needed. Dean headed upstream first and made the climb - we could see him on the rock above our now dry waterfall. We all headed into the stream with high morale. Although the climb was wet, it was easily negotiated as were the other climbs through the Dry Bypass and out to a warm sunny Monday morning. We were met at the entrance by a relieved looking Police S&R squad. Our trial by water was over - the trial by media just beginning!

Apparently 25mm of rain fell in a short period on the Sunday which caused the rapid in water levels. This is often difficult to foresee. One fortunate occurrence was that a waterproof jacket worn to the entrance and left outside was the only sign to our rescuers of where we actually were!! All of us sharing this ordeal remained calm and alert throughout - I would like to thank the other members of the party for making the 22 hour trip bearable!

Those in this party would like to acknowledge the efforts made by ANM forestry managers, Police Search and Rescue members and our own Club members who selflessly rose to the occasion. Apologies are also offered to these groups for the trouble we caused them.

Trevor Wailes

JF 36 GROWLING SWALLET

DRAWN: T. WAILES

