

# SPELEO SPIEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB, Inc.

Newsletter Annual Subscription \$21.00, Each \$2.00 Non-members \$3.00

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FORWARD PROGRAMME....! (this doesn't rate a mention in the CONTENTS list above!!)

Is anyone doing anything? Dean Morgan is active (mainly doing old stuff) but what about all you other bodies?? We're running out of articles for this mighty mag, so someone will need to do something fairly soon if we are to keep publishing...

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## EDITORIAL

Issues aplenty face any organisation in these days of centralisation, decentralisation, government departmental amalgamation and restructuring, and industrial nervousness. The influence of government departments (and non-government groups) on other departments changes, dependant on (among other things) the whim of the government of the day, the influence of major industry and the perceived power of the respective heads of department.

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A New Year... New Discoveries... New Enthusiasm?!

Our Club is no exception - we are facing more "political" issues than ever before. Conservation, access, taxation, funding and legal issues are but a few. If we are to survive (whatever definition one choses for that...) and continue to carry out the aims as "defined" in our Constitution, interaction is the name of the game. As a group of people of common interest, we must establish and maintain liaison with government and industry bodies which may or do influence our activities. If this is not done, we will be bypassed in the seemingly inexorable legislative and rule production process. This has happened to a great extent in South Australia with cave access being controlled via a series of "grades" attached to cavers' "skill levels". The entire cave access and control issue has been successfully negated in Victoria through excellent liaison with the State Parks body. This works to the point that that body consults VSA before instigating any change! Not very like Tasmania at this time, although PWH have made an effort to get us involved - what have we (as a body) done?

We must identify and deal with issues before they become a crisis - this can only be done through positive interaction with State Government (PWH, Forestry, Mines and so on) plus various mining, forestry and other land use industries. Our actions must not be antagonistic (or too obviously political - we may lose exemption from taxation!) - a steering, supportive and informative role is the name of the game.

Stuart Nicholas

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**THE INCREDIBLE NIGGLY CAVE (JF237)**

Rolan Eberhard

Niggly is the most significant cave discovery in Tasmania for several years. From a narrow entrance series the cave plunges abruptly downwards in a series of deep shafts, reaching a total depth of 371m. At this level its character changes to one of roomy chambers and mountainous talus heaps. In one of these chambers a large stream was encountered - possibly water from Growling Swallet - thus making Niggly an intriguing link in the hydrology of the Junee-Florentine. It is also one of best sporting trips in the area. A total surveyed length of the system of 1749m is likely to increase as a result of future surveying and exploration trips.

**Chronology of Exploration**

**18/11/89:** While searching for caves between Wherretts Lookout and the headwaters of Chrisps Creek, N. Hume and L. Douglas discovered the entrance of Niggly. Ref: Speleo Spiel 260.

**1/4/90:** Initial exploration revealed several hundred metres of passage, including two short pitches. Progress halted at the brink of a far bigger shaft. Ref: Speleo Spiel 261.

**7/4/90:** On this trip the undescended pitch was rigged, giving a fine abseil of 85m. A short pitch below this led to the top of a further drop. A survey of the upper levels was also commenced. Ref: Speleo Spiel 261.

**28/4/90:** While one team continued exploration and surveying in the upper sections of the cave, a second group headed downwards. Five new pitches were descended, one being a shaft of 103m. A series of chambers at the bottom were explored, but an anticipated connection with Growling Swallet did not eventuate. Ref: Speleo Spiel 264.

**27/5/90:** The second trip to the bottom completed the survey traverse. A large stream was discovered beneath one of the lower chambers.

**6/5/90:** Surface surveys from Ice Tube and Lady Binney Corner to Niggly were undertaken, thus allowing the cave's position to be plotted with accuracy. Ref: Speleo Spiel 262.

**30/9/90:** All ropes still remaining in Niggly were finally removed. A previous attempt had been thwarted when a ladder broke, luckily without injury to the caver hanging off it at the time.

### Pitch Details

All bolts are 8mm terriers; no hangers were left in place. Instead, plastic bolts (most fitted with a conspicuous tag) have been screwed into the anchors. This will make them relatively easy to relocate, minimise clogging of their threads with mud and grit, and thus reduce the need to place more bolts in the future. In addition to bolts, rigging on recent trips was accomplished with the aid of slings, wire traces, and an assortment of climbing chocks. Pitches are as follows:

- P1 10m Natural anchors.
- P2 9m Natural anchors.
- P3 85m Traverse out to calcite bridge before rigging.
- P4 7m Traverse left to bolt at chest height.
- P5 25m Climb up in rift before edge of pitch. There is a bolt on a flat rock surface out to the left overlooking the shaft.
- P6 26m Climb down on rope to edge. From here it is possible to reach out to a bolt that will hang the rope free.
- P7 103m Allow an extra 15m of rope to rig an exposed traverse along a ledge on the right. There is a bolt on the left wall (head height) at a narrow point in the rift above the shaft. A flowstone boss on right allows a Y-hang to be constructed.
- P8 15m Natural anchors.
- P9 8m Leads down to a tributary stream and sump at -363m.

### Cave Description

Niggly Cave is located at the head of a dry valley on the southern side of the saddle between Wherretts Lookout and Florentine Peak. A short but impressive section of ravine carved in the limestone leads up to where water cascades off the overlying impervious beds in the form of a waterfall. Most of this flow enters Niggly, the entrance of which is located immediately behind the waterfall. In times of high flow some of the flow adopts a surface course down the ravine; the distance that it travels before sinking in the streambed depends on how high the flow is.

Inside the entrance is a short section of open passage leading to the first pitch (10m), still within sight of daylight. Although rubble nearly fills the passage at the bottom, it is possible to squeeze through into more open passage beyond. The way on is still partly filled with accumulated sediment, but becomes more spacious

heading downstream. The passage follows a joint to the north, narrowing again at a point approximately 100m from the entrance. Here a meandering vadose canyon less than 1m in width and generally several metres in height continues for some distance until the second pitch (9m) is reached.

At the base of the second pitch is a chamber where thinly bedded horizontal bands of less soluble material give the cave walls a serrated texture. A similar rugosity along the passage that follows suggested its name of Tigertooth Passage. It consists of more narrow vadose passage, heading now in an easterly direction along gently dipping beds. A narrow band of small, densely-packed marine fossils are exposed along much of its length.

After 200m a larger passage is encountered (Helictite Passage). This parallels Tigertooth Passage up to the point of intersection, and has been explored upstream - though in fact it carries very little water - for over 300m. It becomes progressively smaller in this direction, and an area of bifurcation and breakdown is finally met.

Downstream of the junction of the two passages is relatively open going. However, at various points easy progress is hampered by the presence of stretches of calcite false floor at mid-passage height. A layer of flowstone several centimetres thick has been deposited on clastic sediment that obviously once partly filled the passage. Subsequent erosion has flushed away the underlying sediments, leaving a layer of suspended flowstone. Clasts are still preserved on the underside of the remaining false-floor, while a meandering flow has incised a narrow channel through it at some points. It is an unusually good example of its type. Other speleothems are also abundant, including helictites and heligmities, neither of which are common in the Junee-Florentine.

At a depth of -75m the essentially horizontal form of the cave changes dramatically, with an 85m deep pit being encountered. It is large and cylindrical in cross-section, with an ascending rift entering from the east part-way down. A stream presumably once joined from this direction, contributing to the shaft's early formation. It is possible to bridge along the rift above the pitch in an easterly direction for some distance. Old stream deposits and calcite that are present in places, suggest intriguing sequences of erosion and deposition.

At the bottom of the 85m pitch are two more drops (7m and 25m) in close succession. More vadose canyon then winds down to an elongated chamber and the next section of vertical development. At this point (-204m) the system becomes substantially more spacious. Additional shafts seem to join here from above. The next three pitches (26m, 103m, and 15m) are essentially part of the one vertical drop broken by two ledges. Horizontal development predominates again at the bottom, and the cave becomes more complex.

The stream that has been followed from the entrance sinks into talus in a large chamber at the base of the pitch. Rockfall resulting from ceiling collapse into underlying passage is a feature of this area. The lowest point in the initial chamber is at its southern end. Here an 8m drop leads down to a smaller chamber where a sizeable stream enters as cascade from a passage 10m up one wall. A short section of streamway at the lower end of the chamber continues for a several metres before sumping at a depth of -363m.

The obvious continuation from the initial chamber is to the north. A talus slope signals the point where a massive north-east to south-west trending passage is intersected. Its northern branch consists of a 30m high talus cone preceding an elongated chamber that extends for several hundred metres. Its floor is an undulating field of talus with low points at depths of -366m and -355m. Thick deposits of

mud at lower levels indicate that this area has been flooded at times, though it is hard to judge how recently this has occurred.

The southern branch of the chamber continues for an additional 120m. It is far less spacious than the northern section, being wide but generally only 1-3m in height. A thick covering of mud is also present along its length. At the southern end is a route down through rockfall to the deepest point (-371m). There is a 40m length of major streamway here. It sumps in rockfall at both upstream and downstream ends.

### Speculations

It is clear that Niggly Cave is an important component in the hydrology of the region (see Figure 1). The active streamway at the bottom may well represent water from the Mainline and Dreamtime sumps in Growling Swallet, located less than 1km away. However, at this stage the possibility that water in Niggly includes flow from either Black River in Growling, or from Porcupine Pot and other caves to the north-west, cannot be dismissed. Both Black River and Porcupine Pot contain major streams that are presumed to emerge at the Junee Resurgence, although hydrological connections have not yet been formally demonstrated by dye tracing. Some or all of these streams may unite before appearing in Niggly. However, a more easterly course is more likely in the case of the Porcupine Pot stream. Water from other caves to the north - Tassy Pot, Owl Pot and Udensala - probably also bypass Niggly.

The considerably smaller stream that enters Niggly below the last pitch is also of interest. A likely source for this tributary is Bunyips Lair (JF236). This is a swallet at a similar altitude to Niggly, but further to the east. It has been choked with debris and the water cannot be followed underground for any great distance.

Evidence of a complex history of development is found throughout Niggly. Streams that are no longer present, or now adopt different underground courses, appear to have contributed to its present form. One example is the fossil continuation above the third pitch. The trend of passage takes it towards an area to the immediate east of Niggly where a number of additional caves are located. All appear to be blocked a short distance underground, though they presumably represent former swallets that may have been associated with an early phase of Niggly's genesis. Similarly, Casamassima (JF238) - a large doline entrance a short distance downhill of Niggly - appears to be a fossil sinking-point of the Niggly stream.

The currently active swallet entrance and Tigertooth Passage are undoubtedly more recent in origin. Tigertooth Passage has not been subjected to the sequence of events that produced the prominent false floors that occur in Helictite Passage and downstream of where it is joined by Tigertooth Passage. Thus Helictite Passage, which trends back towards Casamassima, is likely to represent an earlier phase of development.

### Postscript

On February 23 a trip to Niggly continued exploration of the easterly-trending rift at the head of the third pitch (85m). The rift extends for a considerable distance to a point where a vertical drop is reached. This pitch (ca.25m) led into a spacious chamber where one or more trickles of water enter. A route through poorly consolidated rockfall at the base of the chamber gave access to a continuing vadose canyon containing two short pitches. Exploration halted at the brink of a further vertical drop. It is likely that this area will be found to connect back to known sections of the cave, probably in the vicinity of the top of the sixth or seventh pitches.

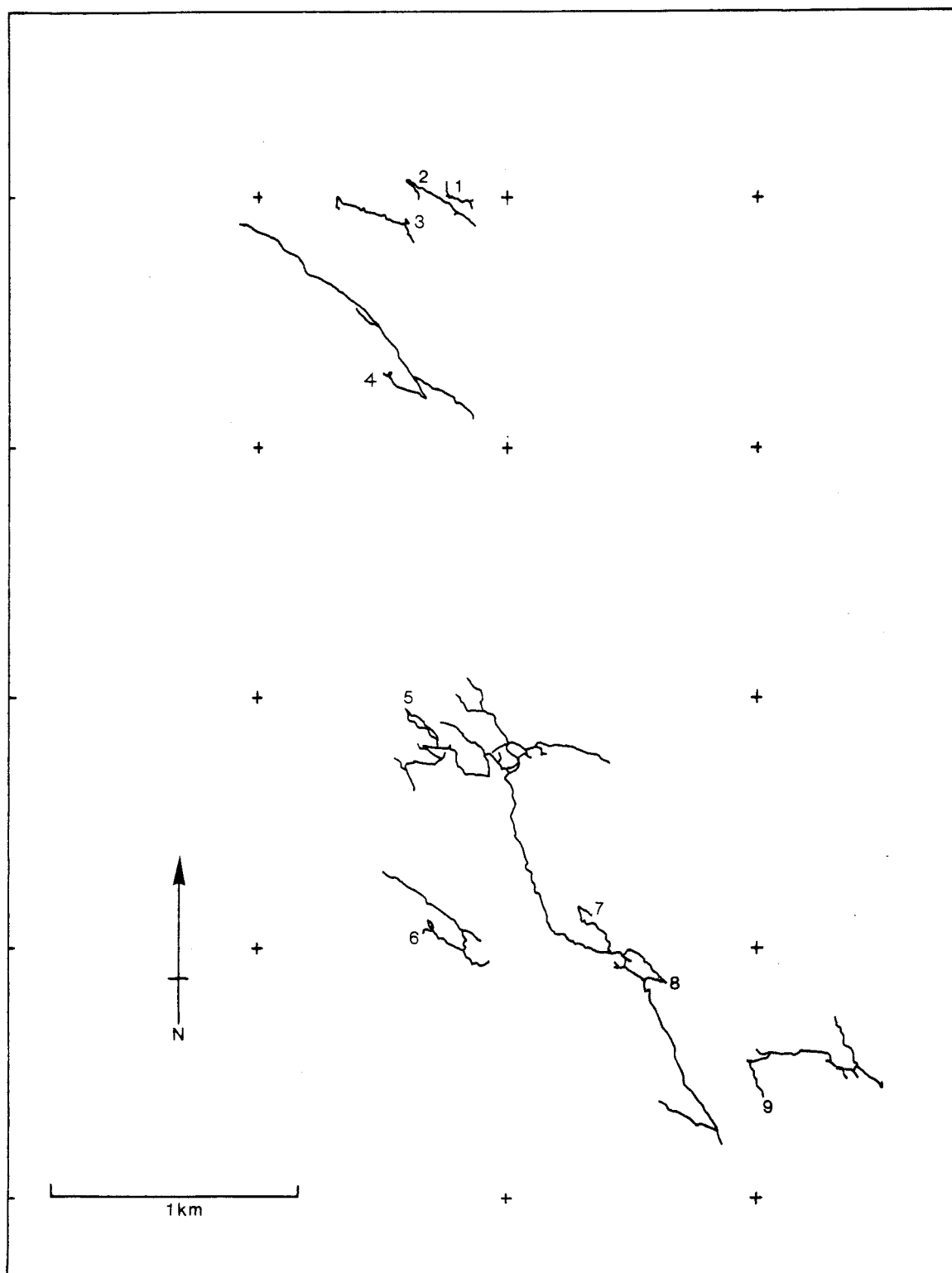


Figure 1: Cave development in the vicinity of Niggly Cave, Junee-Florentine. From a SMAP by S. Nicholas. 1: Three Falls Cave, 2: Owl Pot, 3: Tassy Pot, 4: Porcupine Pot, 5: Growling Swallet, 6: Serendipity, 7: Ice Tube, 8: Mainline and Dreamtime sumps (Growling Swallet), 9: Niggly Cave.

## HOW TO MAKE AN EASY TRIP INTO AN EPIC - THE GREAT TALE OF THE ENGLISHMAN, THE IRISHMAN, THE ROMANIAN AND THE AUSTRALIAN.

A GROWLING GREAT FLOOD II (Dean's version)

25/26 November, 1990

**Participants:** Trevor Wailes, Patrick Troy, Florian Baciu, Dean Morgan, numerous Police S&R people, numerous TCC members, two Ambulance drivers, one ANM employee and a vast array of media personalities.

Trev and I were still discussing where to go while getting out of the cars at the end of the Eight Road and finally deciding that a trip into New Feeling would be a good place to take the others. The water levels in Growling Swallet were not low but certainly not anything that you would worry about, especially as we were not going down to the sump so we couldn't get trapped by high water levels anyway...

Once down at Stal Corner, we left the main streamway and headed off into New Feeling where a few hours were spent looking around the bottom stream passage as far as the top of the last pitch - we hadn't bothered to bring a rope for this as there was nothing worth looking at down the bottom.

Around 2pm we started making our way back to the streamway to be sure of getting out of the gate on time. As we neared the Growling streamway it sounded louder than usual and after crawling through the squeeze above Stal Corner, we were greeted with the sight of torrential amounts of water rushing down it! We realised that we had to try and get further upstream as a further small rise in water level would see it backing up to where we were. Wading upstream was out of the question, so we climbed high into the roof and traversed along, finally reaching a swirlpool which had to be crossed in order to gain entry to the Yorkshire Drain, a streamway parallel to the main GS Entrance Series, but taking much less water. The swirlpool was crossed by one person traversing around the edge and securing a rope to belay the others across. From here one could appreciate the force of the water in the main streamway as where usually two cascades could be seen, water was flying off the top cascade horizontally and smashing into the opposite wall. Even the Yorkshire Drain was tricky in some spots. After some time we came into the main streamway at one of the large chambers which usually is 20 metres wide with a waterfall in the middle, but today it was a 20 metre wide waterfall!

We thought about staying here but it would have been cold and wet so the decision was made to attempt to get to the next chamber where we knew a dry spot existed up one side. This chamber was reached by traversing along the walls; it turned out to be the perfect bivvy site as it was indeed dry, but the stream could be seen and hence water levels easily checked. The next 17 hours were spent huddled under space blankets which kept us surprisingly warm.

Around 9am the next morning we decided to make a go at getting out and thankfully were able to do so without any drama and were met at the entrance by S&R personnel. As we had expected the rescue party had gone in through Slaughterhouse Pot thinking that we were trapped beyond the first (main) sump or the Trapdoor sump. Nobody including Trevor and myself thought that one could be trapped for 17 hours only one hundred metres from the entrance.

We would like to express our thanks to all people involved in the rescue effort. If anyone has any grievances or complaints about missing their Sunday night TV, send them to "Water Wings Wailes"!

On a more serious note, I would like to point out that the space blankets (aluminised thin plastic film) that Trevor and I had could have saved lives. Last time I was caught in the cave for "only" 14 hours and we all suffered mild hypothermia. This time, with one less layer of clothing but with the addition of the space

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blanket, the cold wasn't a problem and we could have stayed for a number of days if necessary. I recommend no one leave home without one tucked into their helmet!

Once again, thank you to everyone involved in the rescue effort.

Dean Morgan

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**SLAUGHTERHOUSE POT (JF337)****1 December, 1990**

**Party:** Stuart Scott and Janine Hopkins (Police S&R), Trevor Wailes, Stephen Bunton and Dean Morgan (TCC).

This trip was simply to derig Slaughterhouse Pot and collect some gear that we had left at our bivvy site in GS the weekend before. Bunty and I went in through Slaughterhouse Pot and out Growling Swallet, with the others doing the opposite. Bunty and I ended up having to struggle up the GS streamway with full packs that we could only just lift which was good test of Bunty's leg as it was still recovering from being broken!

The whole trip only took us just over two hours, after which we went back to the car and waited for the others who turned up a couple of hours later. Stu Scott had a few choice words to say about Slaughterhouse Pot as he had not been in there before. As Trev said, "The only thing its got going for it is it's a through trip!".

Dean Morgan

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**MIDNIGHT HOLE (IB11)****2 December, 1990**

**Party:** Patrick (the Irishman) Troy and Dean Morgan.

Patrick was leaving Tassie the next morning and he wanted a look in Mystery Creek Cave so a quick trip was had through Midnight Hole with only a couple of hours spent underground. The water level was surprisingly low considering it had been drizzling for a couple of days. We ended up back in Hobart by 4pm so Patrick could do some shopping before he left.

Dean Morgan

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**VALLEY ENTRANCE, EXIT CAVE (IB120)****16 December, 1990**

**Party:** Dean Morgan, Stuart Nicholas and Peter Shaw

Stuart has asked me to report on Sunday's "Exit Running Trip". A brief report in keeping with the time spent underground. Dean suggested that we exit via Valley Entrance rather than enter it. We left the top of the quarry at 9.15am and were underground via the side entrance at 10.00. Dean lead off at a steady pace with myself and Stuart sweating along behind. Exit Cave seemed warmer than I remember it.

An hour later we were lunching in the Grand Fissure, always an impressive spot. After a quick snack, we headed up the Western Grand Fissure, through Kellers Squeeze towards the Acoustic Chamber. Somewhere near the Acoustic Chamber, we reached the handline hanging down from the Valley Entrance passage. Dean scrambled up the rope while Stuart and I muttered the sort of comments that are made by veteran cavers when confronted with something that looks bloody strenuous.



A short sharp struggle with a greasy rope, poorly spaced foot loops and the verticality, and then up into narrow awkward canyon. A series of short climbs followed and then up through the rockfall to emerge on the surface at 12.00, two hours after going underground. After a slog up to the Moonlight Flats track, we were back at the car by about 1.30pm. I think I'd prefer to do Valley Entrance in the opposite direction. It would be much easier to go down than up.

Peter Shaw

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#### **POLICE SEARCH & RESCUE SQUAD TRAINING EXERCISE**

8,9 & 11 December, 1990

Party: Police S&R personnel, Dean Morgan (TCC).

The three days were spent with the S&R people brushing up on their SRT skills with Owl Pot and Tassie Pot in the Florentine Valley on the first couple of days and the last day doing a Mini Martin - Old Ditch Road exchange trip.

I personally noted the improvement in their rope work since the similar exercise of a year ago. Some of them even enjoyed the trips and are keen to go on pleasure trips (!). There is also a rumour of some Cleo centrefold pictures being taken in the streamway at the bottom of Mini Martin...

The best part of these trips was that I didn't have any ropes to clean!

Dean Morgan

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#### **OUT TO THE ELEVEN ROAD (FLORENTINE VALLEY)**

23 December, 1990

Party: Dean and Simon Morgan

We started the day trying to find Settlement Road but gave up after a while and thought that we would take a look at a couple of sinkholes that are marked on the 1:25000 tiger sheet towards the end of the Eleven Road.

This area was located quickly as it had been logged recently around the sinkholes, but no caves were found in the area. We then headed up the Tiger Range hoping to find some sign of limestone. We went quite a way up on the range and then traversed along but all that we found was coarse marine sandstones and no limestone. Unfortunately we didn't get back into limestone country until we were only about 20 metres from the road indicating that the contact is only just to left of the road, about 300 metres distant from the Florentine River and only about 30 metres above it in altitude.

Dean Morgan

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#### **GROWLING SWALLET - REFUGE AVEN AREA**

30 December, 1990

Party: Trevor Wailes, Leigh Douglas, Peter Cover, Stuart Nicholas & Dean Morgan

There was a draughting hole close to the bottom of Refuge Aven (just on the far side of the crawl at the top of the Windy Rift series) that Trev had found previously that needed a bit of work to get through. With a bit of luck it would lead into Pendant Pot or be another way down to Black River. A few hours were spent enlarging it and a little progress was made. One metre further on the passage opened right out and a bit of water could be heard although it was starting to look like it was

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going to connect back into the passage down near the bottom of top fixed ladder. It wouldn't take much more work to get through so a return should be done to finish it off.

We then went down to another strongly draughting passage that we knew about near Destiny (but on the right hand side of the Trapdoor streamway). This was a low flattener with a cobble floor which had been pushed previously. I managed to get 10 metres further than previous trips as it seems water has flushed some of the cobbles out making it just big enough to fit through. At the end of it the cobbles came to within 750mm of the roof. There was still quite a strong draught coming through and most of the cobbles are loose making it a fairly easy dig. There is just a lot to dig out! It is also trending away from any of the known passage in Growling, so could be worth the effort...

Dean Morgan

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**PENDANT POT (JF37)**

5 January, 1991

Party: Glen, Peter and Dave (Hills Speleo. Soc. - NSW), Dean Morgan (TCC)

The mainlanders were keen to do a wet cave but a couple of days of rain had me suggesting Pendant Pot as an alternative. Four people were too many for a cave like this and progress was bit slow - we only reached the top of the last pitch before it was time to head out.

Once out of the cave we still had half an hour to spare so Glen and I went for a quick look in the entrance of Growling Swallet. The water level was surprisingly low so the our gear didn't even get cleaned!

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**MIDNIGHT HOLE (IB11)**

6 January, 1991

Party: Glen, Wayne, Peter and Dave (HSS), Dean Morgan (TCC)

Five people were too many for any of the better caves in the Florentine Valley as I couldn't stay overnight so I suggested we do Hobbit Hole at Ida Bay since I consider it to be the best cave in that area. Upon arriving at Ida Bay the weather didn't look too good, so a trip was made through Midnight Hole instead. This only took a couple of hours including the photo session at the bottom pitch and time spent dodging all the Venture Scouts that were in Mystery Creek Cave!

Dean Morgan

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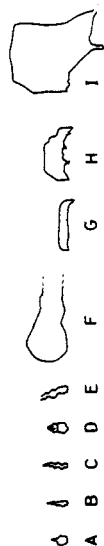
**DRAWING STRAWS (AND OTHER HOLLOW COMMENT)**

- The observant amongst the ranks may have noted the *all new (!)* CONTENTS segment at the front of the mag. It was suggested the other night and here it is!

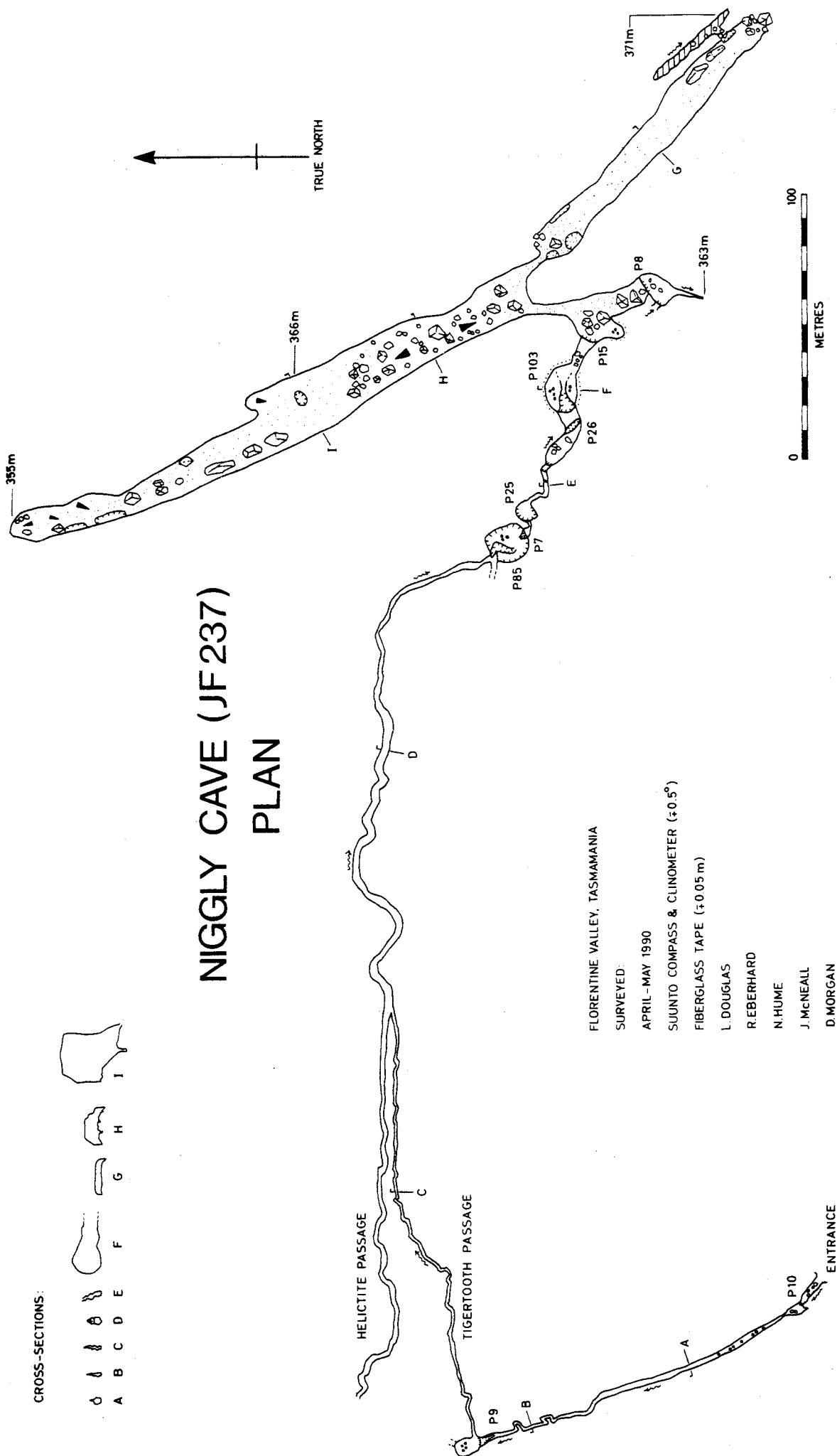
- Apathy is the buzz (should that be snore??) word of the year! When are we going to pull our respective krabs out and go caving? There are plenty more caves to be found, and others to be extended, so lets go and do it!! Read the Niggly Cave description above if you need inspiration.

- Next issue will have details of who is who now in the club hierarchy from the 1991 AGM which will have been held by the time that hits the streets.

CROSS-SECTIONS:



# NIGGLY CAVE (JF237) PLAN



FLORENTINE VALLEY, TASMANIA

SURVEYED:

APRIL - MAY 1990

SUUNTO COMPASS & CLINOMETER ( $\pm 0.5^\circ$ )

FIBERGLASS TAPE ( $\pm 0.05$  m)

L. DOUGLAS

R. EBERHARD

N. HUME

J. McNEALL

D. MORGAN

S. NICHOLAS

DRAWN BY R. EBERHARD

NIGGLY CAVE (JF237)  
PROJECTED SECTION  
AT 210°

