

# SPELEO SPIEL

## NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB, Inc.

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### CONTENTS

FORWARD PROGRAM.....	1
EDITORIAL.....	2
IN MEMORIAM.....	2
CLUB CHATTER & CLATTER.....	3
FLORENTINE VALLEY ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS.....	3
SAVAGE RIVER CAVING CLUB.....	4
SEARCH & RESCUE "SKILLS NIGHTS".....	4
WHA DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN.....	5
NIGGLY CAVE EXTENSION.....	7
BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE (JF402).....	7
OLD DITCH ROAD (IB131).....	8

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### FORWARD PROGRAM

**TCC MEETINGS:** Held on first & third Wednesday nights around 8.30pm at the Wheatsheaf Hotel in Davey Street, South Hobart. Trips are planned / dreamed up at these meetings, occasionally slides are shown, various issues of the day discussed in a very low key manner!

**Tuesday September 24:** Climbers & cavers night at Police S&R store, Paternoster Row, North Hobart. See info below - but plan to be there (especially NEWER people).

**Friday September 27:** TCC ANNUAL DINNER...

**Tuesday October 29:** Bush searchers' night at Police S&R store, Paternoster Row, North Hobart. See info below - but plan to be there (especially NEWER people).

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May 1991

IDA BAY disaster - BENDERS QUARRY to extend...

**EDITORIAL**

Last issue (and I do apologise for the slowness in cranking out another issue...) I mentioned something about things going from bad to worse. Well the minor but significant problem of access to the Florentine Valley has been solved, thanks to the good offices of Peter Mooney from PWH. Apparently the system works well - the details of the arrangements are to found later in this issue of Speleo Spiel.

However, the **IDA BAY / BENDERS QUARRY** problem has again become one of absolutely major significance - Benders' development plan is to extend / expand the quarry through the saddle between Marble Hill and Lune Sugarloaf down towards Pseudocheuris (a long way down the south side of the saddle / valley) via a series of benches cut into the eastern side of Marble Hill and along west to the vicinity of Mystery Creek Cave!!!!

This is an absolute travesty of human sensibility - the repercussions for the Exit Cave system are quite beyond comprehension, to say nothing of the resulting total destruction of the caves in the valley south of the saddle. If this goes ahead, most known caves below the saddle will be destroyed - like, trucked away to be used as flux in some industrial process and, thrown out like the trash on Wednesday night!!!

It brings a tear to the eye.... And westward to the vicinity of Mystery Creek... This cave is a major part of the Exit System (itself in the WHA) - surely it deserves all possible care after the tragedy of just a year ago within its confines... Not very scientific or convincing I know, but, well, I'm devastated and somewhat disturbed by the news of this plan and the seemingly clandestine nature of the decision process.

We will defend the existence of this globally significant cave system... in the caves... in the confines of Parliament - fight against it's destruction for the generations of the future. Nature's millennia of activity could very well be blown apart (literally) in a few very short years and sold off for the gain of one Company.

Stuart Nicholas  
PRESIDENT - TCC Inc.

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**In Memoriam**

It is with profound regret that we announce the death of Mike March, the husband of Tasmanian Cave & Karst Research Group secretary, Therese March. Mike died suddenly of a heart attack on Wednesday, 3rd July. For many years he was a keen caver and he is a former member of both the Victorian Speleological Association and the Tasmanian Caverneering Club. In recent years his interest had turned to long distance running and he was also very actively involved in the rehabilitation of victims of road accidents. Our deepest sympathies are with Therese, their daughter Rebecca, and Mike's stepchildren Diana, Hilary and Ben.

Albert Goede

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**CLUB CHATTER & CLATTER...**

-Does anyone have a spare shed, a workshop, some spare time and the desire to be an absolutely vital part of the local caving scene?? Well - its easy! All you need to do is approach Bob Reid and offer to take the Club gear away (and never

bring it back!). Owing to the same reason this esteemed publication is somewhat late, Bob unfortunately no longer has room or time to keep the TCC gear store. Someone with a 'phone, some mechanical and electrical skills, a reasonably central location and some spare store space is needed to take over this job. It's not difficult, but is an essential part of any caving club operation. Any offers??

- The annual dinner is looming (well, the due date is anyway...). At this time, the venue is most likely the Mount Nelson Motor Inn on Friday night September 27, 1991.

- Just heard that Goeffre Jean Bernard in France is -1602m deep.... It'll take us a while to push Niggly that far! Still, those 190m pitches soon add up.....

- The Bush and Mountaincraft Board (part of the Department of Sport and Recreation) is setting up leadership certificate structures for the major outdoor sports. Caving is one of these sports. An inaugural meeting has been held, but the idea is to establish assessment protocols originating from participants in the relevant sports, rather than having some bureaucrat do it anyway in probably a fairly uninformed manner. For better or for worse, "accreditation" is the buzz word of the moment and the general public are beginning to demand evidence of the skill levels of leaders of "public" trips. Some assessment scheme, with achievement levels established by active participants, is one (possibly partial) solution to this demand. [For anyone considering being a candidate for accreditation, the S&R session nights as per above would definitely be worthwhile.] At this time, some members of both southern clubs comprise the caving working group. Northern & NW groups will certainly be invited to subsequent meetings.

- The next issue of the Tasmanian Cave and Karst Research Group Journal (number 5) will be out shortly. This issue will contain its usual wide spread of articles including more information on the Ida Bay conservation problem, SMAPS software review, WWII training information for cave habitation and defence (always useful!), karst geomorphology and so on. Make sure you catch a copy - see Albert Goede or Arthur Clarke. Better still, join the TC&KRG...!

- Anne Gray of Sydney - known to some of our expedition type speleo's - is getting married in October. I guess it had to happen some time. One could say its just what the doctor ordered! Best wishes from all in TCC - hope to see you down here again some time - we have some "new" cave(s) you haven't done yet... Still, living in Switzerland is probably more desirable than Tasmanian rain forest!

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#### **FLORENTINE VALLEY ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS**

Uncertainty and difficulty with access to TCC's prime caving area - the Florentine Valley - has plagued us for many years. All that is (almost) **OVER!!**

Earlier this year, following the changing of ANM's operation at Maydena, discussions with Peter Mooney of PWH (area manager south west) have enabled far less restrictive access to "the valley".

The procedure is as follows (reproduced from Peter Mooney's letter):

1. The Maydena tollgate will only remain open between 8am and 4.30pm each day.
2. If a caving party wishes to gain entry to the ANM concession for a period longer than the above hours, application must be made to ANM when applying for the normal entry permit.

May 1991 IDA BAY disaster - BENDERS QUARRY to extend...

3. Upon approval from ANM, the tollgate (phone 002 882258) must be contacted to arrange the collection of a key (to the Roberts Hill Road gate a short distance beyond the tollgate). No more than two keys will be issued on any one day.
4. The key will only be issued upon acceptance that is returned to the tollgate (into a nominated external security box) before 8am the following day.
5. The key cannot be issued before 8am on any day (should suit Trev!).
6. Obviously any abuse of this procedure may automatically deny any future access for the caving party.
7. This procedure is only in place until June 1992.

People have indicated that this arrangement works well. However, should there be any problems, please contact Stu who will discuss the difficulty with Peter Mooney, or phone Peter directly on 002 306764.

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#### **SAVAGE RIVER CAVING CLUB**

Recently received in the mail was a copy of Speleopod, the newsletter of the recently formed Savage River Caving Club. The SRCC describe themselves as "a group of old cavers who came out of various stages of retirement or inactivity" in response to the discovery of caves at Mt Cripps. The newsletter summarises their findings at Mt Cripps, which include numerous caves, several of which approach 500m in length. Also of interest is the existence of doline field resembling tropical polygonal karst and the fact that Pleistocene glaciations are likely to have influenced cave development in the area. But perhaps what is most noteworthy about Mt Cripps is the degree of cooperation between the land manager (APPM) and local cavers. APPM has facilitated the activities of cavers in return for information that will help determine management requirements for the area. It is an arrangement that less progressive logging companies might well learn from. The SRCC newsletter also contains articles on a rockfall incident in a cave at Gunns Plains, cave discoveries at Gunns Plains and a trip to Mt Anne.

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#### **SEARCH & RESCUE "SKILLS NIGHTS"**

Many people give search & rescue related things a hard time (or no time at all!). Well, in order to maintain and improve interest and encourage volunteer involvement in such things, plus better the already good liaison between cavers / walkers / climbers and Police Search and Rescue, a regular (approx. monthly) low key meetings / sessions are planned. These are open to **everyone** and will alternate between "bush" type subjects and "technical" type subjects.

The idea is to work over - in mainly practical (hands on) manner - techniques, gear, ideas etc etc pertaining to S&R. Such topics as search control, searcher fitness tests, patient care, haul techniques, gear assessment / modification and so on are some of the possible topics for these evenings. I commend these get-togethers to everyone - liaison between all involved in any S&R operation is essential and this is a way to achieve it. The first session will be on **Tuesday September 24, 7.30 pm** at the Police S&R store in Paternoster Row, North Hobart (above the Good Woman Inn...). The topic for this night will be Rope Techniques + vertical rope work.

The format is not set, but open, in order to encourage active participation of all present. The second session will be on Tuesday October 29 and will cover search control (ie where **do** those decisions come from and why??!). Topics for subsequent sessions will be solicited from the attendees. Contact Stuart Nicholas for further info. but be there anyway.

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#### WHA DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage has recently released a Draft Management Plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Copies of the draft plan and a 200 page long companion volume containing background information are available from the Tasmap Office in Macquarie Street for \$5.00 each. Section 7.13, which deals with caving is reproduced below. Comments, preferably on a standard format supplied with the draft plan, are invited by the Department on or before September 27, 1991.

The following is reproduced verbatim from the draft plan.

##### "7.13 Caving

The cave and karst areas of the WHA contain a variety of significant cave forms and unique fauna. Some caves and rock shelters contain archaeological sites of great significance dating back 30000 years. In a number of areas there has been interaction between ancient glaciers and cave of karst development. Important cave or karst areas occur at Marakoopa (Mole Creek), Ida Bay, Mt Anne, the Franklin-Lower Gordon Rivers, Cracroft Valley, Precipitous Bluff and other remote locations.

The WHA is nationally unusual in that it provides cavers with opportunities for cave exploration and recreation in a wilderness setting. Although caving groups only visit remote cave areas occasionally, they often stay for extended periods of time and, therefore, the environmental impacts of these trips (both inside and nearby caves) can be locally severe.

The majority of caving trips are organised by members of caving clubs for recreational purposes. Caving is also undertaken by school groups, members of the general public and researchers conducting scientific studies. All cave visits result in some form of damage, however minimal.

In order to minimise cave damage and aid in search and rescue, the Department operates a permit system which applies to certain cave in the state, including some in the WHA. Access to Exit Cave is restricted by a locked gate. Permit conditions include minimal impact regulations, party size limits and requirements relating to membership of appropriate clubs.

Marakoopa Cave, near Mole Creek, is the only cave in the WHA that has been developed for tourism. Pathways have been constructed and artificial lighting installed. There has been limited concessionaire-operated tourist access to Exit Cave. Problems associated with tourist caves include the accumulation of rubbish and dust and changes to cave climate.

### 7.13.1 Policies for Management of Caving

- The following cave classification system will be adopted for recreation management:

#### *Public Access Cave*

- Adventure Cave: available for general recreational use;
- Show Cave: existing or potential tourist cave;

#### *Special Purpose Cave*

- Reference Cave: sites of scientific interest where access is restricted;
- Outstanding Value Cave: access restricted to protect outstanding natural or cultural values;
- Dangerous Cave: access restricted and

#### *Wild Cave*

- Remote area cave where access is restricted to retain wild character. Details not to be publicised.
- Cave access may be restricted or prohibited where damage has or is likely to occur.
- Concessions for guided caving trips will only be granted in respect of cave systems for which a management plan has been completed and in accordance with conditions laid down in such a plan.
- Structures, such as cave gates, will be used as necessary to enforce cave management policies.

### 7.13.2 Actions for Management of Caving

- Improve the Department's level of expertise in karst management.
- Maintain a cave management committee (with representation of cavers and cave specialists) to:
  - evaluate the existing cave permit system;
  - investigate alternative means of regulating caving;
  - identify priority caves for management planning and
  - provide specialist advice on other cave management issues.
- Compile an inventory of caves within the WHA.
- Classify and manage all known caves in accordance with the above classification system.
- Prepare cave management plans, in consultation with caving groups and Aboriginal community, for caves identified by the cave management committee.
- Complete refurbishment of the Marakoopa Cave walkways and lighting and undertake rehabilitation work as required.
- Encourage caving groups and publishers to limit publication of information about 'wild caves' that may result in damage to assets.
- Prepare and distribute material regarding minimal impact caving and cave safety.

- Undertake regular cave inspections to enforce permit conditions.
- Erect cave gates and other structures as and where determined by the cave management committee.
- Liaise with adjacent landholders to ensure the protection of cave catchments."

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#### **NIGGLY CAVE EXTENSION**

In April 1990, Niggly Cave was explored to a depth of 371m. Subsequent trips pursued a horizontal continuation at the top of the third pitch (85m) which led to series of further shafts. The fourth pitch in the new section - a drop of 190m - was descended by Dean Morgan in June. As predicted from survey data, this pitch landed in a chamber that had been reached on earlier trips to the bottom of the cave.

A second trip down the big pitch and the fourth to the bottom of Niggly Cave took place in July. Present were Stuart Scott and Paul Steane of the Police Search and Rescue Unit, and myself. It was an opportunity to complete the survey with an accurate measurement of the length of the final pitch. The pitch was found to precisely 190 metres in length. It consists of a 6m drop from an initial bolt tie-off to a bolt rebelay at the lip. This is followed by a very freehanging drop of 184m down the centre of a massive shaft. It is easily the longest pitch known in any Australian cave. In fact the original route down the cave descends the same shaft, entering it part-way down as a pitch of 103m.

The length of the pitch was measured using a topofil (a thread measuring device) that had been calibrated beforehand against a 50m fibreglass tape. This device proved ideal for the job, with many advantages over other techniques that have been employed to measure long pitches in this state in the past. For example, the 103m pitch in Niggly was measured by linking several survey tapes together; the bulk of additional tapes being a disadvantage of this method. A more common expedient has been to calculate pitch lengths on the basis of the amount of rope used in descending them. Although this technique may be convenient, it is likely to slightly underestimate actual pitch lengths as a result of rope elongation under its own weight as it hangs down a shaft.

Rolan Eberhard

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#### **BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE (JF402)**

10 April 1991

**Party:** Dave Wakefield (SCS) and Dean Morgan.

Dave was a newcomer to the caving scene and had yet to go underground, so an easy trip was planned into New Feeling (GS), but unfortunately rain put a stop to that! A trip to Burning Down the House was done instead.

A leisurely trip was had down to the end, pointing out all of the best parts with the return journey being made out through JF228. The only problem was finding our way out of the JF228 doline since it is very large and overgrown. Dave thoroughly enjoyed himself and is very keen to do some more caving... So, how about some people to take these keen new members...

Dean Morgan

May 1991 IDA BAY disaster - BENDERS QUARRY to extend...

**OLD DITCH ROAD (IB131)****21 April 1991****Party:** Marcus Roule (SCS), Jason Hamill and Dean Morgan (TCC).

Marcus was another very keen new caver and Jason had only done a couple of caves so an easy trip was planned to Old Ditch Road for them to do some SRT practice. Unfortunately a series of disasters ensured we weren't down at Ida Bay until lunchtime. After trogging up in the torrential hail, we were finally off through more hail to go caving.

There was water everywhere on the way to the cave but once at the entrance there looked to be only a small trickle flowing in. Just inside there is a small hole that one normally climbs through, but a large boulder had rolled across it blocking the way in. Luckily the boulder had split in half and was able to be moved which, however, revealed great heaps of water rushing down through the hole. We climbed down through the hole as quickly as possible but were thoroughly soaked in the process. Moving to the pitches, the first 6 metre drop was dry and was descended by the group. The following 40 metre pitch however, had a large waterfall pouring down it! This was rigged with a redirection a few metres down which hung the rope nicely next to the torrent... At the bottom the scene was a bit different and somewhat wetter, colder and windier! The next pitch looked just as much fun. Since the others hadn't prusiked in a cave before and weren't wearing waterproofs, I decided it would be best to head out and come back on a less aqueous occasion.

By the time we emerged from the entrance via another thorough soaking, the ground was white with hail and no time was wasted in walking back to the car and getting changed. I wondered whether Russell Fulton's party (SCS) of people would get out of Exit Cave as they were doing a Valley Entrance through trip... As it turned out, they didn't - the phone rang at home later that evening for an S&R callout to search for a party still in Exit! Thankfully there was no drama as they just sat it out overnight until the water level was low enough to get out.

Dean Morgan

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**NEWDEGATE TOURIST CAVE - HASTINGS****24 & 25 AUGUST, 1991**

**Party:** Dean Morgan, Stefan Eberhard, Rolan Eberhard, Leigh Douglas, Trevor Wailes, Stuart Nicholas (TCC), Jeff Butt and Jean Jackson (SCS), Phil Bradley and ? (PWH), plus about eight local people.

The aim of the trip was to remove the large / heavy debris from the Newdegate tourist cave. During the sixties the timber walkways / stairways were replaced by concrete and steel structures - the old timber was thrown down convenient holes in the cave! Later revamping of the electrical system resulted in wiring and fittings (both new and old) being dumped similarly.

The clean-up was organised by Phil Bradley and Rolan Eberhard and proved highly successful and enjoyable. Over the two days, an estimated 5 tonnes of timber and rubbish was hauled up from the stream bed, cut into manageable lumps and carried out of the cave down to a waiting engine powered wheel barrow for transport out to the road. Lunch was provided on both days by PWH and accommodation was organised at the Railway Huts for those staying the Saturday night. The rain and snow was also provided at no cost! All in all, a good time was had by all with considerable reinforcement of the already good relationship between cavers and PWH being made. There will another similar trip sometime to clean out heaps of sawdust and other minor debris..

Stuart Nicholas





Phone - 30 7727  
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Forest Practices Unit  
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HOBART 7000

May 26, 1991

Tasmanian Caverneering Club  
PO Box 416  
SANDY BAY 7005

Dear Sir/Madam

The Forestry Commission is considering the management requirements of Welcome Stranger Cave in the Florentine Valley, and would appreciate input from your organisation in defining appropriate management aims and practices. Two decades of recreational usage has resulted in considerable impact on the cave, including speleothem breakages and the transport of mud onto flowstone surfaces. Issues that need to be addressed include the following:

- (1) In the past the surface environment around Welcome Stranger has been subject to forestry activities. The cave itself has been used primarily for recreational caving. It also has important scientific values and at least some potential for tourist use in future. What are the most appropriate future uses of the cave and immediate surface environment?
- (2) Is it possible to cut down on the damage being done to Welcome Stranger by visitors, or should access to Welcome Stranger be limited by gating or other means? If it is desirable to limit access, what criteria should be used to determine to whom access is granted and under what conditions?
- (3) What are current levels of usage of Welcome Stranger? Are caving clubs the principal users, or do other members of the public also visit the cave?
- (4) Is Welcome Stranger a suitable venue for trips by school groups, scouting organisations or adventure type tours? If so, what conditions, if any, should apply?
- (5) What conditions, if any, should apply to scientific research that may be conducted at Welcome Stranger?

- (6) In what way can the impact of recreational usage of the cave be minimised? Are measures such as defining routes, signs or making "no go" areas, which have been used in caves elsewhere, appropriate in the case of Welcome Stranger.
- (7) Is it desirable to undertake clearing of muddied areas? What level of support is a cleaning operation likely to attract from user groups?

The views of your organisation on these and any other issues relating to Welcome Stranger would be appreciated. If more information is required on Forestry Commission plans for Welcome Stranger, please contact either Kevin Kiernan or myself on (002) 30 7727.

Yours sincerely

**Rolan Eberhard**  
**FOREST PRACTICES UNIT**