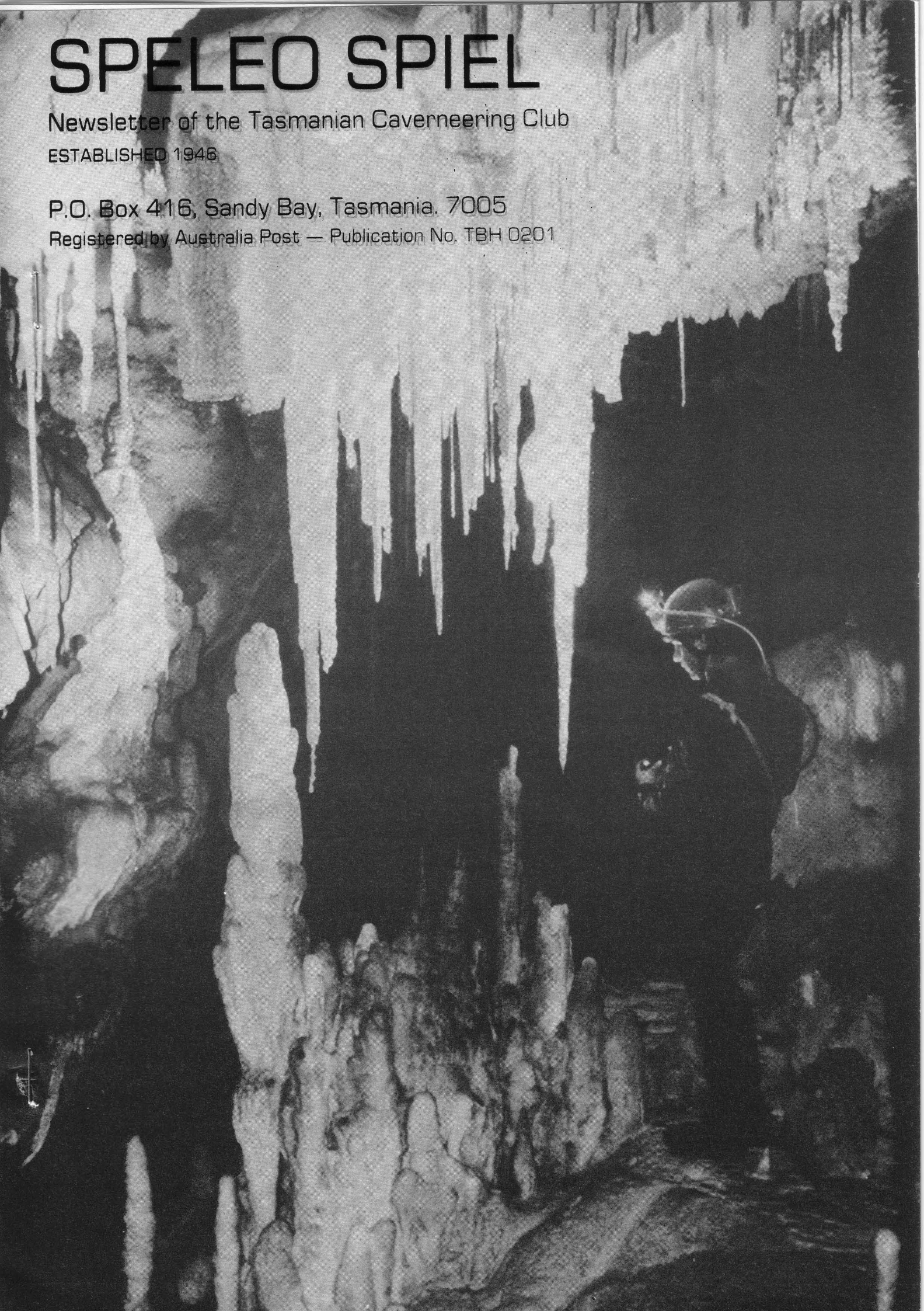
SPELEO SPIEL

Newsletter of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club

ESTABLISHED 1946

P.O. Box 416, Sandy Bay, Tasmania. 7005

Registered by Australia Post — Publication No. TBH 0201



SPELEO SPIEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB, Inc.

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

****

PRESIDENT:
Rolan Eberhard — 697 Huon Road, South Hobart, Tasmania 7004 — Ph 391535

SECRETARY:
Trevor Wailes — 214 Summerleas Road, Kingston, Tasmania 7050. — Ph 291382

TREASURER:
Simon Morgan — 88 Strickland Avenue, South Hobart, Tas. 7004. — Ph 237466

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

EDITOR / TYPIST:
Stuart Nicholas — 7 Rupert Avenue, New Town, Tasmania 7008. — Ph 283054

****

CONTENTS

****

FORWARD PROGRAM

Late August or early September - possible KUBLA KHAN trip. Contact Jason Hamill for info and listing of your name on this official TCC trip. Phone 445369 (ah).

September 12/13 - ASF Executive meeting in Adelaide.

FRIDAY September 25 - The TCC Annual Dinner. Wheatsheaf Hotel - good food & low cost!. Even a room to ourselves... Contact Trevor Wailes for info on this all important social event... Phone 291382

January 4 -> 8, 1993 - TAS TROG 1993 - The 19th Biennial Conference of the ASF. See below for more information.

1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month: TCC gatherings at the Wheatsheaf Hotel...

EDITORIAL

The Benders Quarry / quarry relocation epic issue lumbers on... Caving as a sport seems to have dropped from favour in TCC at the moment... Politics is in favour... Caving used to be a fun recreational sport - now it seems to be just another example of disgruntled political wrangles and hassles. There is nothing else to say...

Stuart Nicholas

****

Access to Limited Access Caves

In order to facilitate the processing of permit applications for limited access caves (as defined by PWH), a list of TCC members has been sent to Ian Houshold at PWH. It was suggested also that the signature of a least one member of the TCC executive should appear on access applications forwarded on club letterhead to PWH.

Where permits are issued for trips to limited access caves with a limit on total number of trips allowed annually (at present only Kubla Khan), it is particularly important that permits be only issued for bona fide club trips. In order to verify the permit application, a member of the TCC executive will be contacted by Ian Houshold should any doubt exist.

****

TAS TROG 1993

The Northern Caverneers Inc will be hosting "TAS TROG 1993", the 19th Biennial Conference of the Australian Speleological Federation in Launceston from Monday 4th to Friday 8th January 1993.

As an important forum for discussion, exchange of ideas and presentation of research on caves and caving, "TAS TROG 1993" is an event NOT to be missed by any Tasmanian, Australian or international caver.

Tasmania is acclaimed world-wide for its abundance of caves; their variety and beauty astound even the most trogged-out caver. Guided field trips will extend the duration of "TAS TROG 1993" to three weeks. Social events include a New Year Eve's party, bushwalks, mystery bus tour and a visit to the Launceston Casino. Of course there is also "SPELEO SPORTS", a photographic competition and the infamous CAVERS DINNER.

The Conference will be held at 'GLENARA', Youngtown - halfway between the airport and Launceston City. A selection of three "Package Deals" ARE BEING OFFERED - which ALL include 3 morning and afternoon teas, Conference Registration, satchel, hand-book, papers, welcome BBQ, "Do You Know Tasmania" slide presentation and FREE CHILDCARE (just what we all need! - Ed.) during the conference.

Transport for transfers, field trips and social events is being organised by the "TAS TROG 1993" committee. Dinners may also be pre-booked at $10 each. The Cavers Dinner is $25. Lunches are included in the deals. T-shirts, stickers and extra copies of the papers are available for various costs.

OPTION "D" includes everything the package deals offer except bed and breakfast - ie it is aimed at those organising their own accommodation in Launceston.

PACKAGE DEAL "C" includes a serviced camp-site for your tent or campervan at Glenara; the cost for the duration of the conference is $160 per person.

PACKAGE DEAL "B" includes hostel accommodation at "Glenara"; $180 per person.

PACKAGE DEAL "A" includes accommodation at the "Abel Tasman Motor Inn"; $220 per person.

Non-participating partners are cheaper (ie their registration is cheaper!); day tickets are also available for the conference.

Expressions of interest in presenting a paper or conducting a workshop are invited and should be sent to the organisers as soon as possible.

A few application forms are available at TCC meetings, or contact the organisers as follows:

TAS TROG 1993
C/- Northern Caverneers Inc.,
PO Box 315
Launceston 7250

Phone: 003 341885 or 003 444486 or 003 342518

****

ASF Membership

Yes folks, the Australian Speleological Federation Inc. does still exist. It is out of its doldrums and is replete with a new constitution now well in place, active vibrant executive and even cheap membership! Many people work very hard on a voluntary basis to ensure that ASF prospers and improves. However, the general membership (both clubs and individuals) contributes the most - without them, ASF wouldn't exist!

TCC is an Associate Member: the club receives one copy of the quarterly journal Australian Caver and has the full support of the ASF in all issues. We do not however have a vote at Council meetings. Corporate Membership enables a club to vote - the number of votes is dependant on the membership of the club concerned.

However, YOU can become an Individual Member by paying the very meagre fee of $13.50. The benefits to you include the delivery of the very professionally produced Australian Caver four times per year - the AC has an active editor, is a worthy publication and improving with every issue. The ASF is an active body - much of its function unfortunately occurs "behind the scenes", but without the ASF, caving in Australia would not be as easy as it presently is.

Joining information: Send $13.50 to ASF Treasurer
PO Box 888
Kew
Victoria 3101

and you will receive the next issue of Australian Caver, as well as being able to be proud of the fact that you are helping Australian caving and speleology. Do it now!

Minimal Impact Caving...

In years gone by, TCC had a reputation for "maximum impact everything". Things have changed - minimal impact everything is the preferred option these days. The concept is bound to provoke considerable debate amongst some / many cavers, but as a starter, FUSSI recently published an ideas list for minimal impact caving. It is reproduced below (without the permission of FUSSI, but I am sure they won't mind!).

Go slow - look where you are placing yourself
Follow the same path - stick to marked paths or trogged areas
Small groups
Take a map - and use it
Armchair caving - enjoy other caver's photographs
Forget the Aeroguard - and the kneepads
Remove foreign material from the cave
Through trips are preferred to in-out trips
Wash cave gear between trips and between caves
Cave with an aim in mind
Can you justify the trip?
    Can you justify the damage you will do?
    What is damage?
Be aware of what others are doing
Use the back of your hand for leaning against things
Urinate and defecate before going underground
Think: cave first - desires second.

The list above may not be particularly good, but being aware of the problems is half the battle. Think about it - letters to the editor welcome.

****

KHAZAD-DUM etc - A FEW MORE NOTES

Following Rolan's article in the April Spiel, the following notes are from my experiences of the original explorations.

JF5 - In the original exploration in 1971, we descended the 13m pitch mentioned by Rolan that ends up in the main streamway and then returned to the head of the pitch. Here we found a bypass by climbing up the wall for several metres and then laddering down a narrow rift on the downstream side. This led to a ledge which overlooked the streamway between the 25m and 30m waterfalls. Before this pitch could be descended to the stream, the Flattener route was discovered and the pitch was never descended.

Dwarrowdelf - Directly below the second pitch is a chance of an extension. On the original exploration, the slot through to the third pitch was discovered while the continuation downwards was being explored and all subsequent attention was directed down the main route.

Niagara Pot - At the foot of the vertical section, the stream sinks into talus. On the original exploration, I descended through the talus to a short dry pitch against a solid wall. While rigging a ladder in a confined space, several large blocks moved and I retreated to change my trousers. At this point, the route through to the horizontal passages was discovered and the talus route was neglected. The map subsequently indicated that the stream sink trended away from the horizontal passages.

Peter Shaw

A few of our members have caved in Europe. Among them is Frank Salt, an ex British caver now living on the NW Coast. Below is an article by Frank of a most important trip in the development of European caving. Thanks to Frank for putting pen to paper and sending the article in to us. Most inspiring stuff!

****

MEMORY LANE - THE 1962 BERGER EXPEDITION

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the successful British Berger Expedition of 1962. Prior to this, the Gouffre Berger - a major vertical cave system on the Sonnin Plateau in the Pyrenees in SW France - had only ever been bottomed once before by the French organised International Expedition of 1956.

To record the occasion some of the original 38 members of the British expedition will be retracing their steps to the cave for a reunion.

Nostalgia aside, the cave still remains a classic even if it is no longer the deepest in the world. Because of this a few facts on the original British expedition are worth remembering.

The roots of the original expedition lie in youthful arrogance and tragedy. Up until the late 1950's British cavers had always regarded themselves poor seconds to their French counterparts. That the French were infinitely better was reflected in the caving literature of the day, which of course was 80% French.

The first cracks appeared in this edifice in 1959 during a cave rescue in England. During the weekend before Easter a young caver called Neil Moss became trapped in a tight vertical tube in Peak Cavern, Derbyshire. The scene of the accident produced a logistical nightmare being nearly 3km from the surface, in an exceedingly tight location and the wrong end of a muddy sump.

The attempts at rescue were protracted and unsuccessful. They were also disrupted by the arrival of French caving expert, in the form of Jo Berger, flown over to show the English how to do it.

He was borne into the cave by a mass of newsmen and Police officers, like a talisman, to cure the problem. However it quickly became apparent to those having to work with him that he had no magic to offer, in fact if anything he was a liability to the party.

I was amongst a number of aggressive and spotty faced young cavers who assisted him out of the cave. In giving his thanks afterwards he casually said "If you come to France, look me up - I'll organise a trip for you.".

Having realised that the gods had feet of clay a few of us jumped at the idea and the Combined Clubs Speleo Expedition of 1960 came into being. This was a small group of about 10 people from three southern clubs who in September 1960 attempted to descend the Berger to the original French Camp One at -500m.

Initially a series of heavy storms produced impossible water conditions in the cave. (I can remember coming up one pitch and being greeted by a 600mm wall of water rolling down the passage towards me. We both arrived at the head of the pitch at the same time...) In addition, towards the end of the expedition, the sudden early arrival of snow resulted in our having to abandon the cave and our camp.

The expedition had failed, we had only made it down to the river gallery (-240m) but it was the conditions, not the cave which had beaten us.

In 1961 planning got underway for the 1962 expedition. This consisted of 38 members drawn from clubs all over England. This was necessary not for the manpower but to call upon the combined tackle stores of the clubs involved. Requests were made to various Trusts and companies for food, money and equipment with fair success. If I remember rightly the cost to each member was only £25 with a later reimbursement of £15 after articles were sold to the press.

One of the unsuccessful attempts for support was the Royal Geographical Society. This body didn't actually give money but if one had its blessing the number of companies that would help greatly increased. I still recall sitting in front of the grants committee and being told that 'caving had little place in the quest for geographical knowledge' and that they had no wish to be associated with such a foolhardy project. Obviously they also believed that world depth records were the sole property of the French.

The expedition got underway in August 1962. An advance party arrived at the cave two weeks prior to the main group. In this first two weeks an almost holiday atmosphere filled the camp and the cave with spells underground being interspersed with parties, good food and sessions lying around in the sun. Despite this, the cave was laddered down to -700m. Camp One was established at -500m and nearly a ton of food and equipment stockpiled throughout the cave.

With the arrival of the main party, the cave was laddered to the bottom with two parties visiting the final sump. For the first time this was examined below water level (mask and snorkel only) and the basis for future diving expeditions made. To make the most of the cave, a time and motion study was made with parties fitting onto a kind of critical path. This enabled us to make maximum use of the underground facilities at the two camps.

As one party climbed out of their sleeping bags another would climb into them, thus saving on the amount of gear in the cave. Camp One in fact was only set up to accommodate 8 people but for a period of 5 days at the peak of the expedition handled 3 times that number with parties seldom meeting each other.

Not all the parties were dedicated to the bottoming of the cave. A large balcony had previously been noted above Camp One which it was believed may have lead to a dry upper network (later called the Pegasus Bridge). The expedition had brought with it enough steel scaffolding pipe and clamps to make a 12 metre mast to gain access to this area.

We also had a number of heavy batteries and lamps to provide lighting for a short cine film whilst one team of eight was totally dedicated to photography and remained based at Camp One for five days. All these activities took place each with its own party and with almost military precision.

With so much equipment underground its removal required almost as much effort as its placing. Realising the problems of team motivation in the final stages we developed the 'Gourmet Drive'. This saw the quality and quantity of food increase the deeper one went into the cave. Thus one could be in the sun on the surface and eat only Complan (an invalid diet food), or go underground to get the gear out and eat well. The system worked well but did cause some resentment with the parties involved.

In all the expedition was a fantastic success having achieved all of its many aims. For two weeks the actions of the expedition were covered daily by the press, radio and TV services of both France and the UK. With the success of the underground parties the visitor level at the camp increased with the big names of French caving turning up by the hour, waving bottles of wine and celebrating with the English cavers. (They even gave me honorary membership of the Speleo Group of the French

Alpine Club). British cavers were suddenly the flavour of the year and our sense of inferiority had gone forever.

With the main party on its way home, four of us remained on the Sonnin Plateau for a couple of days. Round the camp fire and over a bottle of wine, we planned our next expedition.

We had a report from a BP exploration team in New Guinea. It referred to vast areas of limestone and vanishing rivers. Nothing would ever be the same again....

Epilogue

In late 1963 I sat once again before the grants committee of the Royal Geographical Society. This time I explained a proposal to run a 4 month / 16 person caving expedition to the Star Mountains in New Guinea.

Their reaction was openly hostile with the expedition described as a wild daydream by those seated round the table. The remark made was that it would be 50 years before New Guinea had opened up enough to permit such a trip.

Two years later the Australian Star Mountains Expedition, which was a direct offshoot of these day dreams, arrived in New Guinea. The seeds from the Sonnin Plateau had germinated.

Frank Salt

****

JUNEE RESURGENCE CAVE DIVING

29th March 1992

This was an acclimatisation dive in preparation for a push in Sump II. I dove Sump I (220m long, 18m deep) with twin back mounted tanks but breathed off a stage bottle mounted on my chest. I carried out some line work on the way through so the dive took 28 minutes. In the airspace ("For Your Eyes Only") I dumped the stage bottle and commenced the dive in Sump II with full twins. I made my way down to 21 metres depth where the line ended - beyond here the line had been cut and was trailing along the ceiling. I pulled the loose end in and removed it. On the way back out I found the line nearly cut through in one spot - I had to swim back and forth between rebelays a few timed in order to loosen enough line to tie-off the nick.

I did some more line re-arrangement further on and ended up with about 5 metres of slack line which I slowly worked towards the surface. This was tedious work given the poor visibility and danger of entanglement. I had breathed fully two thirds of the air in one tank (one third being kept in reserve), so switched regulators to breath the last third in the other tank (which was two thirds full). As I did this the regulator began to free-flow vigorously but try as I might I couldn't clear it. I attempted to turn off the valve but couldn't reach back enough behind my head. I kept breathing off my reserve third whilst making my way out. I had been underwater for nearly an hour now and the cold water was affecting my dexterity and ability to think clearly. I was still trying to manipulate the loop of loose line but then I got cramp in both legs at once!

The situation was getting serious - I was beginning to feel "task loaded", augmented by the crashing noise of air escaping uncontrollably from one of my tanks. I released the loop line and made for the surface. All this had happened in just a

few minutes - one tank was completely empty and I was swimming on my reserve third. A sobering experience which convinced me that cave diving is dangerous!

The learning curve was not over yet however. In the airspace I unzipped my drysuit in order to relieve myself. Getting the suit zipped up again proved difficult because the zip is located across the back of the shoulders. To do this I had a long piece of cord tied off to a stal (this worked at the entrance) but the zip jammed and I spent an hour struggling with it before finally getting it zipped up. Nevertheless, I ruined the zip in the process and the suit flooded on the return dive through Sump I!

10th April 1992

The plan for this dive was to lay some line further into Sump II. The last push here by Ron Allum and Peter Rogers had reached -35 metres depth and they reckoned this was the bottom of the sump and it was starting to ascend from here.

Vera Wong came through Sump I to support. I reached the end of the line at -21 metres depth but it didn't feel right - fine silt and no current (the visibility is too poor to see anything much of exactly where you are!). I returned to -18 metres and clipped on my line reel, exploring out to one side but this wasn't right either, so I tried the other side. Hey presto - I hit the main current which I followed down a steep gravel slope passing a line weight left by Nick Hume.

I continued on to -35 metres and the supposed bottom of the sump, but it turned out to be just a low sandbank. On the other side it kept going down a narrow passage with a gravel floor and a strong current. The dive computer was flashing a warning "Decompression Required". I paused just after passing through a constriction. The current was blasting into my face and the passage barrelled off deeper downwards! The depth gauge read -44 metres - I was narked and it was time to get the hell out of here! For a moment I became stuck in the constriction. I wound in the thin exploration line; I had laid 55 metres of it.

By the time I reached shallow depths the computer said it was OK to surface but I did a 20 minute safety decompression stop at -6 metres anyway. The dive time was 60 minutes.

We waited two hours in the airspace (we carried in a stove for brews) before exiting through Sump I where I did an additional 15 minutes of decompression for safety.

An excellent trip - thanks to Vera for support.

Stefan Eberhard

****

IDA BAY - WEST OF WESTERN CREEK

Over the last few months, Brian Collin and I have been looking at the area west of Western Creek at Ida Bay. We were curious about the source of the water in North West Creek passage in Exit Cave. Brian and Jeanette surveyed from Valley Entrance up to Western Creek Swallet and determined that Western Creek was not responsible for any of the water.

On following trips, we discovered old blue tapes left by Nick Hume several years ago that head westwards from the top of Western Creek Swallet. We reached the end of

Nick's tapes which finish at a small outcrop of limestone with a few very small holes. The tapes were surveyed and we explored above and below the tape line.

On the next trip, we headed west from the end of Nick's tapes, laying our own line of orange and then light blue tapes. After four hundred metres, we came across an outcrop of good looking limestone with several dolines and holes in it, including a long attractive rift. We continued the tape line westwards for several hundred metres until we reached the major creek which is marked on the map a kilometre west of Western Creek. This creek continues all the way down to the D'Entrecasteaux. We followed the creek down for two hundred metres and then followed the slope back parallel to our tape line. At this level, the scrub was much worse. No more limestone was discovered.

We returned several weeks later with Stuart Nicholas. The first hole we looked at was the rift which is a hundred metres below the taped route at the lower extremity of the outcrop. A 10m hand line was rigged down the initial drop. At the far end of the rift, a hole under a block led to a 20m pitch. After much to-ing and fro-ing looking for a belay, a rope was rigged and Stuart descended. The rift continued back under the entrance for a further 20m and then closed off. Back up near the tapes, a doline contained a narrow rift with a slight draft but it was too small to enter. The final hole was in the main doline just above the tapes. A metre wide promising looking passage led to a 5m pitch with a further 5m pitch almost immediately below. After rigging a rope, we reached a small chamber with a few formations. The passage continued for a short distance but narrowed. After a short grovel, I emerged in a small chamber. The trickle of a stream disappeared into a narrow rift. Around the first bend in the rift, it became too narrow to follow. We retreated to the surface and then home.

After finding such an attractive piece of limestone, it was disappointing that both holes closed off so quickly. In both caves, the passages trended southwards. There is no indication whether this outcrop connects with the Marble Hill limestone.

Peter Shaw

****

GOING TO THE BOTTOM AT THE TOP... or CAVING IN THE TERRITORY... **June 1992**
PARTY: Karen Magraith, Guy and Peter Bannink (TESS), Stuart Nicholas (TCC).

For the uninitiated, TESS is another of those dreadful acronyms describing the name of a caving group, in this case the Top End Speleological Society. I am sure you know about TCC, although discussion was had re a name change to BESS - Bottom End Speleological Society...

The opportunity arose to go north for a week or two, so I did! The aim of the expedition was to continue exploration of a karst area some 600km SW of Darwin, known in this article by its Aboriginal name of Jalaman.

Normal underground garb for "top end" caving consists very simply of "Volley" (you must get the correct brand!) sandshoes, socks, cotton overalls, light weight gloves, helmet and carbide light! Yours truly had to buy some new gear - a waterproof suit and fibre pile was definitely not de rigeur for this trip. The other absolute essential is a small gear bag containing at least a couple of litres of water in wine bladders or whatever. Certainly a different scene to Tasmania. Caving is civilised - lunch, ie real food, rather than just a few jelly beans and chewy bars was taken underground. Camping at a rarely used picnic ground is civilised as well - no tents, just a sleeping bag and mat and (for our group) a tarpaulin large

enough for four bods provided the necessary nesting facility. Typical nightly minimum temperatures were a few degrees above zero. Sleeping under the stars with such clear skies and no fear of rain was a rather awesome experience. Cooking was primarily on Trangia stoves, with some additional capability being provided by a nearby fireplace and Andrew, a visitor for one weekend. His (work) vehicle had everything from folding chairs to a watertank and a fridge!

The landscape consisted of extensive tropical tower karst areas and the biology (to my untrained eye) of many small but remarkably persistent flies. I understand from Peter Bannink that the biology of the area is most interesting and somewhat unknown. Our trip collected quite a number of specimens for later examination, and in many case., initial description.

The daily aim was to be underground before about 10am and not re-emerge until after about 5pm. Such tactics avoided the heat of the day and the majority of the flies. Before the evening repast was prepared and eaten, a swim in the nearby water hole was the order of the day - and most pleasant it was to!

Typical underground temperatures in the area were in the low to mid 20's with a reasonable relative humidity of around 50%. One could sit down for hours without shivering - quite pleasant in fact! Interestingly, the cave meteorology differs quite considerably between various areas in any one cave. Typically, the lower sections and areas more remote from entrances are hotter and more humid. Much discussion took place re the possibility of establishing an electronic cave meteorology monitoring and data logging system. Such a system is being worked on and may be implemented next year.

The caves are typically dry during the winter - the "dry" season - but obviously take considerable volumes of water during "the Wet". Semi-dry cracked mud floors, gravel banks and passage forms attest to that. At several points we did manage to get down to still water - the "water table". A couple of members of the party managed to get quite wet and muddy!! Much of the cave of prime interest that we visited, explored and mapped was large in cross section. In parts the passages were quite surreal - huge ancient fig tree roots hang from the roof and disappear into the floor; occasional daylight holes provide illumination of ethereal form. The daylight holes exist in the roof as the passages are basically horizontal and very shallow relative to the heavily jointed and eroded surface karst.

The vertical range of the cave in question would be around 40 metres - survey calculations will reveal a more precise number - and passages occur on about three levels. Vertical linking of the levels is via big pits and small formation lines rifts. Some of the climbs are quite interesting. Dust can be a real menace in low passages - a dust mask would be useful in longer crawls! The complexity of the cave system has to be seen to be appreciated - there is a significant risk of getting lost underground! A number of entrances exist and no doubt there are more to be found, but even when on the surface, one could still be lost and/or not be able to traverse the karst. A short visit to a couple of other caves in the area enabled some further specimen collecting and tagging to be done before we departed. An intriguing (dry) surface streambed was shown to us by the park ranger - fifty or more metres of white tufa dams. Although damaged by donkeys, it was still somewhat impressive.

Following our work in that area, we packed our enormous amount of gear into and onto Peter's long suffering Gemini and headed to Katherine. The Cutta Cutta cave reserve was next on the list, some twenty odd kilometres south of the town. Underground was a different scene to Jalaman - very hot and humid. Temperatures in parts of Cutta Cutta cave would have been around 30°C with relative humidity of something like 90% or more. Sitting still, sweat was running off my face and body! A conscious effort was needed to breathe in the remarkably oppressive atmosphere. Definitely not the

place for vigorous exercise. Overheating (hyperthermia) is a major risk for cavers not acclimatised to the conditions. An article in Australian Caver 130 details one such an incident. The occasional snake wrapped around a stal or two also added something to the atmosphere of the place!

The surface karst area in the Cutta Cutta Cave Reserve has been developed with the construction of a "Karst Walk". This takes tourists around some of the other cave entrances and karst features to be found in the area. Ghost bats were sought and noted in another nearby cave, parts of which have also been "developed" for (reduced to??) commercial purposes, albeit with fairly disastrous structural problems at one (now closed) entrance. The unfortunate macho renegade nature of much of the top end population does nothing to contribute to cave conservation, with hitherto pristine stals being desecrated forever by muddy hand prints and breakage. Formation is mainly dry and dead, so no water action will occur to enable some natural recovery of the damage. During the early sixties a Katherine local attempted to set an underground endurance record in Cutta Cutta. Rather, he merely contributed to the pollution and destruction of this popular cave and brought ridicule on himself after his somewhat controversial effort.

Finally a return to Darwin was made. Dinner at an ethnic restaurant, a visit to the Museum and markets, a party and a very early flight had me back in Hobart only to encounter an air temperature around twenty five degrees lower than that in Darwin at the time I left!! Such is the wonder of nature, I guess.

Thanks to Karen Magraith, Guy Bannink and Peter Bannink for putting up with me during the trip, and everyone else who helped this aging speleo gain some insight into caving TESS style. I hope my meagre efforts were of value to the expedition. A great deal of enjoyment was had and satisfaction gained - when's the next trip??

Stuart Nicholas

****

And now for something completely different: some trip reports which are not exactly current but at the same time not in the "memory lane" category...

ICE TUBE (JF345) **April 1, 1991**
PARTY: Rolan Eberhard, Stuart Nicholas, Glen and Dave (HSS) and Dean Morgan.

I had planned to go to Ice Tube and prusik out with the mainlanders, but thankfully Stu and Rolan were coaxed into coming along. As I didn't know the route into Growling, this enabled a through trip to be done with their guidance. It looked like a rushed trip as Rolan had to be home for a dinner party that night and rain was forecast for late afternoon - I wasn't keen to spend yet another night sitting in Necrosis...

The entrance was reached after 45 minutes. It was a large doline as I had pictured in my mind. We soon trogged up and headed into the aptly named Ice Tube. None of the bolts had hangers so Stu's home made disposable hangers came into use. With the exception of one bolt at the top of Fabulous Spangly pitch which had a small rock jammed in it, they were all useable. Much time was thereby saved as we thought that some new bolts would need to be placed.

The trip was done with a 110 metre 8mm rope and a 50 metre 9mm rope for the shorter pitches. The 8mm rope is definitely the way to go in caving as it is so easy to pack and light to carry. It must however be rigged absolutely free with no rub points at all - our rope was getting cuts in it just from abseiling. Once at the bottom of IT, Mothers Passage was passed through and turned out to not be as much of

a Mother as I had expected. Once into Mainline, it took us only 1½ hours to reach the surface where rain was just starting to fall! By the time we had changed and started the drive back, it was pouring down... The trip was quick at less than 7 hours, which probably saved us from yet another flood entrapment.

A very enjoyable trip was had by all and thanks to Stuart and Rolan for coming along and saving my feeble body from the punishment of prusiking out of Ice Tube.

Dean Morgan

****

NIGGLY CAVE (JF237) **28 March 1991**
PARTY: Rolan Eberhard, Trevor Wailes, Glen and Dave (HSS) and Dean Morgan.

As reported in a previous trip report (ages ago! - Ed), there was a lead still going in Niggly Cave that Rolan, Stuart and I had looked at a month ago. We went in today armed with what we thought would be enough rope and Trev in particular bounding with his usual enthusiasm.

Once into the newer part the others went on ahead with Trev and I hanging in behind doing the survey. The previous limit of exploration at the top of a 20 metre pitch was soon reached. This pitch was descended into a short passage leading straight to the top of another pitch. The old throwing-a-rock-and-guessing-the-depth method showed us that this was rather a big pitch... With one bounce on the wall at the top, stones were taking 7 seconds to reach the bottom! The survey showed us that we were in aven at least 70 metres above the 104 metre pitch. We only had a 100 metre rope with us, there were no belay points so bolts would need to be placed. A couple of members of the party were getting cold also, so a decision was made to leave the pitch for another trip. In retrospect, Rolan or myself should have gone down a far as the 104 metre pitch entry point, but to avoid an argument (ahem...) over who would be "lucky" enough to go down we left it as the biggest undescended pitch in Australia. It looks like it would only need a rebelay over the edge and it would hang free to the bottom some 170 metres below. Time will tell no doubt.

[Editors note: the rest, as they say, is history - the pitch went to 190 metres free hanging and was first descended by Dean a few weeks later]

Dean Morgan

****

ANNUAL DINNER - September 25
Wheatsheaf Hotel

Information and RSVP's - Trevor Wailes 291382

BE . . . . . THERE