

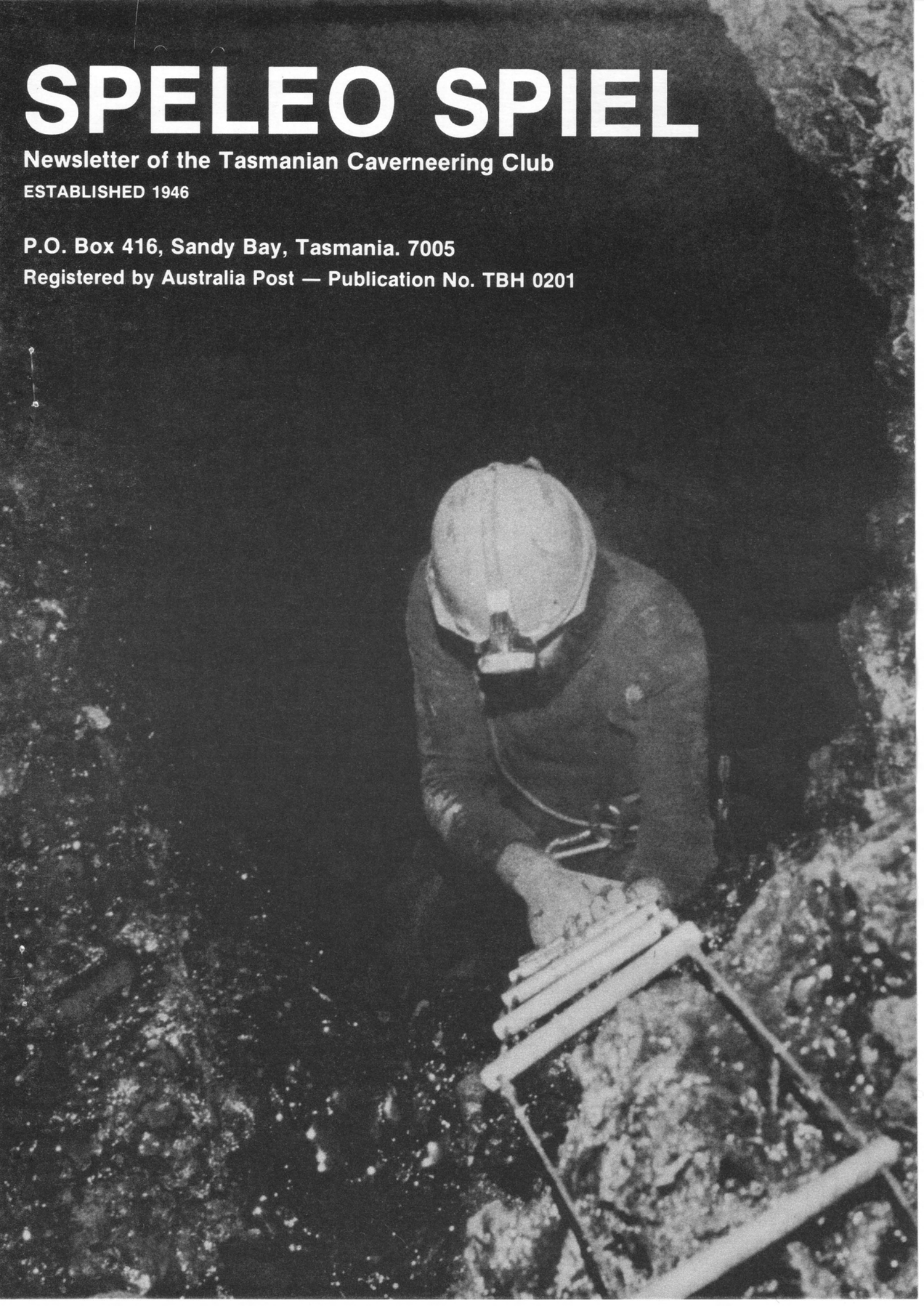
SPELEO SPIEL

Newsletter of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club

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SPELEO SPIEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB, Inc.

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FORWARD PROGRAM

Weekend November 13 - 14: Cave rescue exercise. Growling Swallet in the Florentine Valley. Will probably involve both an underground search plus a rescue exercise. See Stuart Nicholas for info.

First & third Wednesday nights every month: Meetings / gatherings at the Wheatsheaf Hotel in Davey Street, Hobart. Occasional slide shows, chatting and so on.

SOME BITS FROM THE EDITOR, and OTHER NEWS, NICETIES & NUANCES

No doubt you, as one of our trusty readers, have noticed the paucity of Speleo Spiels in your mail box of late. Well, we're back, I hope with a vengeance! Maybe not with me as the editor, but some suitably keen person.

General Happenings

Over the past year (yes, that's how long its been since the last proper edition of Speleo Spiel), much has occurred. The implementation at a national level of some sort of cave leader accreditation or recognition scheme is nigh. Conservation issues continue to sap the energy and time of many people. At Ida Bay the Benders Quarry / Exit karst conservation battle was successfully concluded - a major victory indeed.

The 14th biennial conference of the Australian Speleological Federation was held in Launceston with great success. The 10th biennial conference of ACKMA (the Australasian Cave and Karst Managers Association) was held in Rockhampton, Queensland, again with great success.

Caving Happenings

People have also been underground! Much caving was done before, during and after the ASF Conference. One of the more notable trips was a double exchange trip in Niggly Cave (JF237) in the Florentine Valley. Something like 16 to 18 hours of effort, one broken belay point and much sweating and shivering saw a Sydney group rig, descend and ascend the two vertical routes (the 190 metre etc. pitch as one route and the 85m, 103m etc. as the other). Good effort.

An ongoing effort at Ida Bay is the (re)surveying of Exit Cave. This is being done for and as part of the management plan being drawn up by Ian Houshold at Parks (what is the name of that Department this week??). The work is being carried out by a final year surveying student from the University of Tasmania, Glenn Young. He has completed GPS determinations of the locations of the main entrance of Exit and also Valley Entrance entrance. Underground, high precision electronic surveying instruments are being used to establish baselines and datum points to properly tie the cave position and basic skeleton to the Australian Map Grid. Further survey work in side passages and so on (with normal Suunto instruments) will be carried out in January next year under the auspices of the ASF Exit Cave Survey Project.

Recently, another trip to Niggly Cave produced a major horizontal extension of something like a kilometre in length downstream from the huge bottom chamber. Apparently the far end of the passage is 10m diameter railway tunnel disappearing into the distance, complete with big stream.... The people concerned (Rolan and Stefan Eberhard and Vera Wong) did not run out of passage, only time and energy! Previously only a short section of large streamway was known at one end of the large main chamber. This is believed to be part of the main drainage connection between Growling Swallet (or beyond) and Junee Cave.

A cave discovered during the late seventies has also revealed a little more of itself. Threefortyone (JF341) has been pushed downstream to a point under or very near the Junee Quarry and hence not far from the big dolines just below the quarry and about 800 metres from the Junee Cave entrance. Upstream in this new section, it is not far from Rift Cave. Maybe with the combination of these discoveries, a really big discovery is just around the corner. We can only wait and see (or better yet, go and do it).

Overseas item - record vertical relief

A small American team has determined the depth of Sistema Cheve in Oaxaco, Mexico. A visually positive dye trace was performed between the Cueva Cheve entrance in the upper part of the system and Agua Fria de Santa Ana in the Santo Domingo Canon, some eighteen kilometres distant, in 1990.

The actual relief between the two sites has been shown to be 2363 metres through the use of GPS work carried out over the last winter and spring. A higher entrance, Cueva Escondida adds 144 metres to the vertical range. Adding this figure and the depth of the resurgence passage (surveyed in 1984 during dives by Bill Stone and John Evans), the total proven depth of the Sistema Cheve is 2525 metres. That figure makes the system the deepest (albeit not yet fully explored) cave in the world. Exploration depth to the upper part of the system stands presently at 1386 metres. The explored lower part of the system, now over seven kilometres long and of mostly dry passage, has insignificant (vertical) relief thus far.

[from: Cavers News Group on the Internet network and reproduced with permission of the author, Louise Hose, Geology Department, University of Colorado]

*** You may receive several Spiels soon - we have just assembled a couple that have been hanging around awaiting final printing & assembly of a few pages, so don't be surprised if your mail box suddenly collapses from the shock...

*** TCC's magazine (the thing you are reading -> Speleo Spiel) has been receiving some rave reviews in overseas publications. Fame (?) at last. A recent edition of

the British journal *Caves and Caving* (Summer 1993), reviewed two Spiel editions - one, the Vanishing Falls expedition report and the second containing Frank Salt's historic report on the British 1962 Berger expedition.

The reviewer puts our magazine in a class of its own as being "... possibly the tattiest of the Aussie journals. It is however the most readable and informative." I think we've succeeded!

*** The publication of the Australian Speleological Federation, *The Australian Caver* also is reviewed - the particular edition contains articles on, among other things, conservation at Mole Creek in Northern Tasmania and the provision of cave rescue here in Tasmania. Why don't you subscribe now?? It's only \$15.00 per year for an individual membership of ASF which includes the quarterly publication *The Australian Caver*.

*** Steve Bunton and his partner Kathy are moving up in the world. Shortly they will move from the lowlands of North Hobart to the lofty heights of Mount Stuart. There will be a BIG house warming event at some stage (BIG because its a BIG house...).

For those who don't know Steve, he's a patron of all things good in life, has been in holes all over the world, goes underground here occasionally and with Rolan Eberhard has even co-authored a book - *Vertical Caves of Tasmania*. It is now out of print, but there may be a new edition in the not too distant future.

Good luck Steve and Kathy - we look forward to the house warmup event....

Members anew

Yes, they just keep on coming along. Of late the TOC has been inundated with desperate people, many of whom are keen to join and venture through the jungle green into the blackness beneath. Some have even parted with a few samples of the remains of Australia's currency to officially become members of our club.

Some names are: Kelly Miller
David Nicholls
Garth Cornelius

I think there are more than that, but three is enough in one issue of Speleo Spiel.

Stuart Nicholas - Editor

TRIP REPORTS

Junee Ridge
Trevor Wailes, Chris Davies and Dean Morgan

Labour Day - March 1, 1993.

Two years ago three pothole type entrances were discovered some 300 metres west of Rift Cave on the Junee Ridge. These finds were marked with pink tape, labelled with the date and numbers #1, #2 and #3.

Shortly after, Chris Davies, Bob Reid and Dean Morgan returned and enlarged a restriction some 20 metres down in #2. During that process, a lump hammer escaped to do some exploratory work of its own further down.

Our aim for the trip was to try to push through the enlarged section and if possible recover Chris' hammer. I had been assured of the huge draught and the spacious continuation beyond the constriction. The cave was finally found by contouring about 300 metres west of Rift Cave after the obligatory wander in the bush, first too high then too far east.

Cave #2 is a round, sheer sided clay pot leading down to a steep sided ramp in solid rock about half a metre high. Rope was belayed to a tree and the cave rigged with a rebelay at the end of the ramp, then onto a pitch of 15 metres. A re-direction was placed and the base of the pitch attained. A short climb down brought us to the work face. The downward rift was too narrow but a squirm and wriggle bypassed this and

dropped is via another down climb of eight metres to a mud and calcite choke. Dean and I both dug for a while but without much enthusiasm. A slight draught was present but it looked pretty uninspiring. A return to the surface was made via the squeeze where double jointed legs are handy. Chris derigged and tidied up after Dean emerged. It wasn't a very productive day, but another question mark was cleared up, albeit in a somewhat disappointing way. The lump hammer was retrieved, so all was not lost.

Trevor Wailes

ThreeFortyOne (JF341) & Niggly Cave (JF237)
Stefan Eberhard, Rolan Eberhard & Vera Wong

August 1993

A fly, drive, climb, cave one week trip to Tassie had to have a vague schedule. Monday (23 August) was a trip to the new "341" extension - only been looked at once previously. It was a good trip but neither Stefan, Rolan nor myself found anything of significance, but we remain tantalised by that breezy downstream passage.

Tuesday - rest, recover and wash and dry gear in preparation for Niggly Cave tomorrow, Wednesday. Rolan is to put some Rhodamine into Growling Swallet and Stef and I are going to take water samples in Niggly to see if the dye shows up. I suppose the other "attraction" of Niggly is the 200 metre pitch (Ed. - actually slightly shorter at 190m...) - but actually the prospect of prusiking this far in one hit doesn't hold much appeal to me. Any leads? I quiz Rolan & Stefan and they mutter something about a rock pile but don't make out that it is very promising.

Thursday will be rest and relaxation and that just leaves Friday. What to do? I've unfinished business in Warhol? Another poke in 341? I pick Stefan's brain over dinner - I want to hear rumours of drafting holes, squeezes, whatever. He is full of ideas but none that excite the neurons enough to make me want to go out and have a look for a day. Most of his ideas would be long term projects. I'll have time to think about it.

25 August: "...fuck, shit, bastard, cunt, prick ...". Stefan is tirading about on the rope, only 20 metres down from the top of the Big Pitch. It looks like he's struggling with his rack. He clips ascenders on, prusiks up, pulls the rope through the rack then descends a short way and starts swearing again. This whole process is repeated many times down the long length of rope. I can only see him as a tiny dim glow by the time he reaches the bottom. Its my turn - my Petzl Stop descender gives no problems but I still had to work to feed the rope through the device. Stefan had especially brought a rack along for this pitch because he thought that it would give him more control than a Stop. Unfortunately the sheath of the brand new Bluewater super static 9mm rope was bunching up under the rack so he couldn't move.

The streamway runs clear. We take a water sample then scoot off to check out the lead. It's a draughty rock pile, there are not too many trog marks in and about it and best of all, it goes! We are at the river again but beyond the downstream sump that had stopped people before.

A bit of climbing over boulders, squeezing between them and wading in the stream water and I notice that the river is running red!! Its Rolan's rhodamine - the Growling Swallet water -> this is the main drain. Further downstream it even looks like it. "The Dunes" is an upper level passage that's big; our footsteps are left in the mud in a track that winds along the spine of these muddy hills. Boulders replace the dunes and we slide back down to the river.

The water is from calf to crotch - aaargh - deep, fast flowing over a pebbly floor. It has taken us eight hours to get here and the Big Pitch is creeping further forward in my mind as I get colder and more tired. We decide to leave this huge borehole barrelling off into the the darkness and head for the moonlight. The 190 metre pitch is not too bad - we prusik it in tandem.

Nearly twelve hours underground, and another two and a quarter hours getting back through the bush to the car owing to dimming lights and the poorly marked trail.

It's Friday and now there is no question as to where to go. Stefan and I are back for more, this time with Rolan and survey gear. We re-marked the track through the bush on the walk up from the car. From our underground turn-around point on Wednesday, its another half a kilometre or so to a large rockfall. Four hours of surveying has left us chilled to the bone. Surveying really takes all the excitement out of exploration. Things are still fairly draughty and a bit of poking around reveals the river again

barrelling off in its borehole into the darkness. We leave it doing just that, as once again cold and tiredness dictate a retreat.

About ten hours underground, 1165 metres of passage surveyed with more waiting. Niggly Cave was originally surveyed at -373 metres - just two short of the deepest cave - but now we've almost certainly got a new Australian depth record!!

Stefan and Judy Clarke returned the next weekend (4 September 1993). An additional few hundred metres of big river passage was surveyed to another rockfall.

Vera Wong

"Oh what thum.."

Thun Junction (IB 20) - Ida Bay.

Some info., exploration notes, and breakthrough into Exit Cave.

Thun Junction is an obscure cave for a number of reasons. It used to be in the middle of nowhere until Valley Entrance was discovered. Now it is still in the middle of nowhere, difficult to find on a relatively featureless heavily wooded slope. The number of obscure red and white taped tracks crossing this slope add to the confusion and obscurity.

However, after being found some 20 years ago by a few of the early 70's activists (Peter Shaw, Phil Robinson et al), it was pushed and bottomed at about -130 metres. An old trip report indicated that a strong draught blew through the cave and came from a narrow passage at the lowest point of the cave. Interesting....

Those bold enough to suffer the walk of an hour or more to the old quarry, up the hill to the Moonlight Flats track and then off into the bush to try to find the obscure entrance, all thought the same thing - "With a bit of effort it might go..." Well, the entrance wasn't always found and quite often something else was, eg Great Ex(pectations), Western Creek Swallet, Dismal Hill Pot and many other lesser karst holes and features. Stories from the past few trips to the bottom of Thun Junction all said that the draught got bigger and the cave smaller.

Over the years, Exit Cave was visited, explored and surveyed, Valley Entrance was discovered (lucky VSA) as were many other entrances, often leading into Exit Cave. With some conjecture, the Thun Junction draught could well also come from Exit.

Dean Morgan and party in 1989 (re)found Thun Junction and later surveyed the cave, found a bigger than huge draught and a very small rift from which it came. Later Dean related to Trevor "... but with a crow bar and hammer and chisel, I can move this rock and drop down into a lower passage and it looks like it opens up!" Trevor thought about this for a while and decided that the worst part of the day would be the walk in...

Armed with crowbar, chisel, hammer, Vera Wong, ropes and other accoutrements, the party went looking for TJ. The impressive entrance was found where it should be. We descended the entrance climbs to the short 6 metre pitch - the mudstone cobbles were very slippery and the pitch that looks free climbable, isn't. The passage leads on horizontally at stooping / crawling height for perhaps 100 metres until the floor drops away to a 40 metre pitch. Here, the horizontal passage must be followed at its uppermost level until a climb down via a squeeze is found. Not a lot of room here at the pitch head which is denoted by a single bolt. The rope is backed up to a chock stone some 10 metres back down the rift passage. With our cunningly marked ropes, Dean was able to see the bottom of the pitch from the end of the rope... He was also able to stand on a ledge until Vera and I had shortened the backup rope and lengthened the rather lumpy Russian main rope. This just allowed Dean to descend to the bottom of the pitch. Letting go of the rope, it sprang back to its unloaded length some 3 metres above the floor.. oh well, these things happen. I'm sure Dean felt proud of making an easy descent into an epic. Vera descended next while I sorted out what I might need to cross the knot. Free hanging knot crossings always bring into question the comfort of one's harness. Adrenalin kicked into gear the necessary brain cell and all the memories came flooding back - "Mini Martin '81" that was a 30 minute knot crossing epic some 70 metres off the deck with Chris Davies describing the finer points of not falling off the rope. At least this pitch was dry (today) and the harness fitted reasonably - only 4 or 5 minutes to cross the knot this time. Finally letting go of the rope at the bottom allowed it to settle a metre above my reach. We'll worry about that later!

Ten metres horizontal, then the next pitch. It was rigged high, down an impossible slot. To get onto the rope requires a belly crawl out over a ledge with little room to thread the rope into a rack. A re-direction 2 metres down hangs the rope free on this 18 metre pitch. A shallow pool at the bottom reflects light and signifies the existing base of the vertical section of TJ.

The only sign of life was a pile of discarded SRT rigs and the distant rumble of bodies grovelling in what sounded like confined passage. Dean was infected with exploration fever although I didn't like the look of what he was forcing his body into. Vera had found an obvious high level where I joined her. The musical tinkle of bruised straws signified the passage of new ground.

I followed Vera through the upper level, not tight but quite confined. A turn to the left and a 3 metre drop into a small chamber gave room to breathe. Vera had passed this way and was now following the narrow continuing rift to where she reported a 10 metre pitch. Waiting in the small chamber, I could hear Dean trying to reverse from his impossible situation. He was obviously in trouble. After relating his position to Vera, we retraced our crawl back to him. The 3 metre reverse climb was particularly difficult.

Dean was stuck fast and unable to reverse himself out and slightly uphill in narrow low serpentine rift. He'd already been in there for over an hour. I tried pulling his legs but no go - he was stuck. He wriggled forward. Vera entered the narrow space above him with a lump hammer. I entered the space where Dean's legs had been and acted as "Chinaman", holding the chisel while Vera placed it and struck it with the hammer. We managed to remove a substantial corner of serpentine wall. Dean edged back and with extra pulling on his legs, finally and slowly, inch by millimetre, freed himself.

He didn't seem greatly interested in what we had found and I didn't actually see much of him until at the top of the short pitch near the entrance. Getting back to and onto the short rope was no problem, although the tackle bag containing pinch bar, chisel, hammer and other SRT and ancillaries weighed heaps by the time I caught up with the other two. The return bush bash was uneventful apart from the weight of my pack, but I enjoy a good whinge and the cramps in my legs later that night attested to the day's exercise.

With a going lead and an undescended pitch, we all felt the same urge. Two weeks later, the Thun Junction saga continued - literally. The cave was traversed to the previously known "end" and the new section traversed to the "short relief chamber" between the two sections of narrow canyon before the undescended pitch. Vera was out in front through the squeezes and overlooking the pitch. Neither Dean nor myself had seen which section of the rift canyon Vera had used to push on from our chamber. Dean was keen to keep moving so did a mental flip of the coin and set off down the lowest level. This proved interesting after a few metres as Dean's call of the coin was a loser. How he changed position and prized himself into the upper level is not known, but must have been a contortion trick learnt from his incarceration of two weeks prior. Even in this higher level his problems were only just beginning. In the confined space Dean managed to hook his sit harness on a protruding rock spike while thrutching through the next squeeze. With him hanging almost vertical, I managed to free him after a lot of thrashing about. Vera had rigged the next pitch from a wedged block, but felt it needed a backup as getting onto the rope would be a real novelty. I tied a backup in the rift where I was and Dean followed the rope through to Vera.

The backup rope was about 30 metres and after securing it to the pitch rope sling, it hung down the pitch and reached the floor. Vera descended and reported yet another pitch. Dean was losing patience with both the rift and his pack, but eventually made it onto the rope and joined Vera below. This last section of rift onto the rope was a real bastard. Packs have to be moved forward in front of you, but tend to slip into the rift below and snag continually. The haul cord on my pack slipped below and the knot snagged firmly. I couldn't go back and to go forward I'd have to let go of the pack and allow it to slide into an irretrievable position. With room in the rift for only one arm forward, I laboriously worked at undoing the crab to free the pack. After some time and with cramping fingers, the pack was free leaving the pull cord hanging in the rift by the snagged knot. Moving forward to manoeuvre onto the rope was very awkward. I actually put the rack on the rope and then crabbed myself to it. There was some apprehension about reversing this move but the grip of exploration fever was upon us and the return could be tackled later...

The two below had no other rope for the next pitch. My rack was on the backup rope which was anchored at a sling over the drop, so the original pitch rope was dropped to enable the next pitch to be rigged. Abseiling down this roomy 15 metre pitch I joined the others looking apprehensively at the continuing pitch / slot. Looking down, the

slot was about 200mm wide and dropped to a pool about 15 metres below. Scratching around, a wider section of rift was found and a handy belay tied onto. Vera descended first and on freeing herself from the rope was asked "Vera, where are you now?". She wandered off as Dean descended and moments later returned with whoops of "Footprints!, footprints!". I followed on down the pitch of some 15 metres. Finding the widest section of rift allowed the rope to hang free of the unprotected protrusions, although it did mean pulling it some 3 metres horizontally. Freeing myself from the rope at the bottom, I felt strangely at home. This was Exit Cave.

After congratulations all round and with much relief at not having to reverse the confined pitch head and the "Wong Way" back to Thum Junction, we wandered spacious passage into the large Valley Entrance junction chamber. Surveying was forgotten and we exited Valley Entrance well satisfied and quite elated. On the surface, the question of the location of the TJ entrance arose. Various packs and odds and sods were waiting there from our descent earlier in the day. Subsequently the route out was followed and the TJ entrance found. The surplus gear was picked up and carried back to the car. A very eventful trip.

A follow up trip was planned to survey and derig. Fortunately I managed to avoid this first reversal - Exit to Thum Junction. Rumour has it that Dean did to. Vera and Dean made up the party that entered Valley Entrance and surveyed through to the pitches of Thum Junction. The bottom pitch was no trouble but Dean could not get off the rope into the "Wong Way" section. He had to drop back down, retrace his steps out through Valley Entrance, and take with him the ropes and gear for the two new bottom pitches of TJ. Vera had the Herculean task of derigging the remainder of Thum Junction on her own and carrying all the gear out of the cave and up the hill. Vera also has the dubious distinction of being the only person to do Thum Junction both ways...

Gear List for Thum Junction (IR20)

In order of pitches from the entrance, the pitch length / gear list following is an approximate guide to rigging this cave. Take spare slings and so on. Bolts and hangers are in place (at time of the last trip - mid 1993). Be warned - sections of it are **SMALL & may be NOT REVERSIBLE**.

- 6 metre rope - natural anchor at top of pitch;
- 40 metre pitch from bolt with tie-back of about 5 metres;
- 18 metre pitch, plus 2 or 3 metre tie-back to bolt;
- 15 metre pitch with wire trace or tape, plus a 10 metre tie-back;
- 15 metre pitch with poor natural belay - no back-up.

Trevor Wailes.

THE TASMANIAN CAVERNEERING CLUB EXPLORATIONS JOURNAL

Tasmanian Cave Exploration in the 1980's - volume 1

Edited and produced by Nick Hume, Stuart Nicholas and Trevor Wailes

Have you got your copy yet?? If not, why not?? The publication of this journal is a milestone for the Tasmanian Caverneering Club and definitely a valuable addition to your library. Get one now - see below for ordering details.

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DEAN MORGAN, SIMON MORGAN, VERA WONG

(DRAWN D. MORGAN, T. WAILES)

DEPTH -170m

VIEW ANGLE 235°

