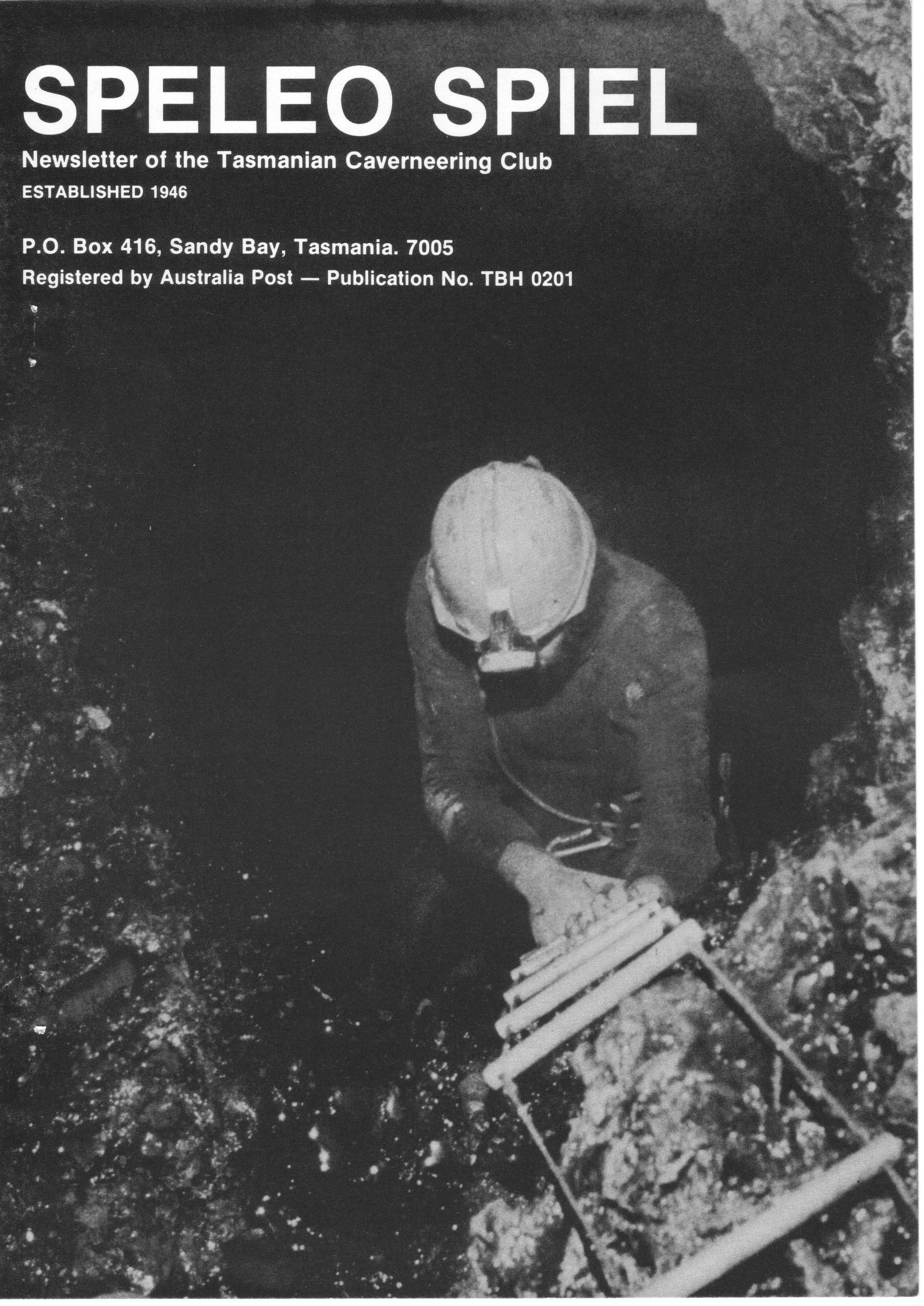
SPELEO SPIEL

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... ISSUE # 283

NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN CAVENEERING CLUB INC

Newsletter Annual Subscription: $18.00, Each: $2.00 Non-Members: $3.00

PRESIDENT:
Dean Morgan 15 Bellhaven Avenue, Taroona, Tasmania, 7043 **Ph:** 27 9318

SECRETARY:
Trevor Wailes 214 Summerleas Road, Kingston, Tasmania, 7050 **Ph:** 29 1382

TREASURER:
Garth Cornelius 11 Berea Street, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000 **Ph:** 34 2817

QUATERMASTER:
Trevor Wailes 214 Summerleas Road, Kingston, Tasmania, 7050 **Ph:** 29 1382

EDITOR/TYPIST:
Garth Cornelius 11 Berea Street, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000 **Ph:** 34 2817

CO - EDITOR:
Peter Verwey **Ph:** 34 7531

* * * IN THIS ISSUE * * *

* * * FORWARD PROGRAM * * *

TCC Does Waitomo-

Expressions of interest are requested from Club memebers for a 10 day Caving Trip to Waitomo on the North Island of New Zealand..

The trip will take place over Easter '95, and the cost, including airfare, will be around $1,200.

More info and positive bookings can be made by contacting:
Trevor Wailes on (002) 29 1382.

* * * FROM THE EDITORS DESK... * * *

GENERAL HAPPENINGS:

Obituary

The Australian Caver # 136 reports of the death of veteran American underwater cave explorer Sheck Exley, during an exceptionally deep "mixed-gas" cave dive in Mexico on the 6th of April 1994...
His body was found at considerable depth, several days after he failed to surface during an attempted dive to around 300m. Rumour suggests he exceeded a depth of 270m, but had problems with his gas supply during ascent.

Sheck Exley was the stalwart of US and International deep cave diving, and was regarded as one of the most experienced, safety-conscious and responsible cave diving pioneers the world has ever known. His writings over many years in various journals, papers and books set the standard for many techniques and equipment design used in the deep and long Florida sumps.

Worst Nightmare:

Whilst in morbid mode, the December 1993 issue of American Caving Accidents reports of the death of an extremely unfortunate individual whilst abseiling a 2600 foot drop on El Capitan in the Yosemite Valley, California.

Apparently this guy lost control of his rack about 10 feet from the top and plummeted the remaining 2500 odd feet before firstly a rock bulge and then the ground broke his fall !...

!! ANNUAL DINNER... SHIPWRIGHT ARMS, 30TH SEPT @ 7.30PM !!

Apart from the horrible thoughts that must have been going thru his mind, "(he) fought to get control. He apparently was able to get the rope looped across his body, perhaps like the old body rappels. Unfortunately he had gained too much speed. The body was found with a *six inch deep groove cut up into the crotch and everything from the shoulders on up missing*". !! Jesus !!

Other Stuff:

Australian Caver # 136 also contains an article on Tasmanian Cave and Karst Issues by Arthur Clarke...

Arthur reports that:

> ..."the most disturbing threat to a Tasmanian karst area is the proposed tourist development at Lake Lea"...

Lake Lea lies in the Vale of Belvoir, a glacial fill-covered limestone area north west of Cradle Mountain. It is a unique lake which drains both north and south, and the limited karst research undertaken so far indicates that it is possibly a massive drowned doline, uvala or polje *(uvala is a Bosnian term for a large depression, commonly covering a few acres, formed by the collapse of extensive roof sections over an underground watercourse; a polje is also a Bosnian term for an elongated basin with a flat floor and steep enclosing walls resulting from the solutional modification of downfaulted/folded limestone blocks - now you can impress your friends at parties- Ed)*

The proposed development includes the construction of a "wilderness lodge" and there are concerns regarding a range of environmental impacts, in particular, the potential impacts due to the disposal of waste and sewage effluent in this area. It was originally planned to release effluent into the lake itself or into the north draining Lea River, but it is now proposed to pipe it south along and then into the south draining Vale River (which flows through the Vale of Belvoir, over Reynolds Falls, and into the Mt. Cripps karst area which so far has yielded over 60 caves).

The Tasmanian Government has given "fast track" approval to the project, and a road has already been bulldozed into the development site. Despite court action by the Tasmanian Conservation Trust (acting on behalf of caving, recreational fishing and environmental groups), the proposal is set to go ahead, although it is unclear whether an appeal will be lodged. Municipal approval for the development is still to be gained, however, which could take 6 - 12 months and Arthur suggests that the "ASF, cavers and all others opposing the project should direct their attention to lobbying local shire councils or the regional Deloraine Council".

Additional Sources: Tasmanian Cave and Karst Research Group- Journal # 6

Also included in the article is an update on the rehabilitation of Benders Quarry...

!! ANNUAL DINNER... SHIPWRIGHT ARMS, 30TH SEPT @ 7.30PM !!

> ..."Benders Quarry has been transformed into a patchwork quilt of garden plots which represent a number of separated runoff or drainage sites on backwall faces or quarry benches... Following the use of machinery to excavate, transport and dump masses of topsoil onto quarry benches, along with other mulching materials, and intensive programme of late autumn seeding and laying of slash (seed and flower heads) was instigated"...

Species seeded include various Euclaypts, Acacia (Prickly Wattle), Gahania (cutting grass), Cassinia (Dogwood) and ti-trees (such as Melaleuca and Leptospernum). This was followed up with the hand planting of 15,000 odd seedlings of Eucalypts and Acacia around the quarry benches and on accessible slopes or faces. Apparently photo-monitoring and vegetation quadrants are being used to determine progress.

Within Exit Cave itself, rehabilitation is also being monitored by using seasonal checks on cave fauna (particularly aquatic species), and numerous electronic instruments are being used to monitor water quality. A fixed monitor has been placed in Eastern Passage to monitor stream turbidity, water temperature, conductivity, pH, etc, and water samples are taken regularly for analysis. A control site is located in Western Passage. The cost of the rehabilitation programme is expected to exceed $500,000.

CLUB MATTERS (P.S. Annual Subs are still due !):

For those of you who were wondering whatever happened about the much mooted merger of the TCC and SCS (see Spiel # 281), Dean Morgan provides the following update:

Amalgamation and the Common Caver:

Earlier in the year the subject of amalgamation was bought up between the TCC and SCS. A lot of you are probably wondering what happened about it. Well I can assure you that you are not alone...

Everybody that I have spoken to about it seems to think it would be a good move for the caving scene in Tassie as there hasn't been much of a following over the last few years. Personally I can only see positive benefits if it happens, as there would be more people to go caving with, a bigger gear store and a bigger financial base for us to buy gear with. The only disadvantages would be a lack of friendly rivalry between people trying to find bigger and better stuff than the other club.

The biggest stumbling block seems to be the (post merger) name. Understandably the SCS don't want to just fold up and merge with the TCC, they want a genuine amalgamation. Also understandably the TCC don't want to change their name, especially as their 50th anniversary is about to happen (1996) and they have the status as Australia's oldest caving club.

!! ANNUAL DINNER... SHIPWRIGHT ARMS, 30TH SEPT @ 7.30PM !!

There were also problems with the name of the caving magazine. The best suggestion was put forward by Rolan Eberhard who suggested that the Speleo Spiel becomes a monthly *(not a problem if people write stuff - Ed)* newsletter and have the Southern Caver as a yearly journal. This seems like a good idea to me. Obviously life members of either club would still retain their life membership...

Where do we go from here ? My suggestion is to get along to the other club's meetings.

The TCC hold their meetings on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month, usually not getting started until about 9pm, whilst the SCS hold their meetings on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month usually starting up after 8pm. Both clubs meetings are held at the Wheatsheaf hotel in Macquarie Street, so you should try and get to the Wheatsheaf every Wednesday of the month.

At least if the amalgamation does not go ahead I would like to see some more caving and socialising between the 2 clubs.

Notes From The Quatermaster...

The Club has 3 sets of SRT rigs which represents in monetary terms at least $600. These rigs are for use by newer members to get a feel for vertical caving without the up front expense. It is assumed (always a foolish supposition) that once the newer member decides to "get into it", they will make the effort and buy their own.

The sets are rented out clean and complete for $10 each - if trips are absiel through-trips, and parts of the sets are not used, TOUGH !! Sets rented out are to be promptly returned complete and clean (and paid for !).

Ropes owned by the Club may be borrowed free of charge. Less experienced members will not be allowed access to 9mm ropes for obvious reasons. Ropes go out clean, and it is expected they are returned in the same state. One of the best ways of washing rope is to un-coil it and throw it in the shower or bath, trampling it with bare feet whilst continually rinsing it.

Lamps owned by the club have a hire fee of $4. They are fully charged on "pick up", and are guaranteed to give 10 hours useable light. They should be returned promptly so the charge/flatten cycle can continue to preserve the life of them. Lamps should have the thick mud scraped off - immersing in water is discouraged when cleaning, as water could enter the vent holes and lower the pH of the acid...

Any problems or faults with gear (especially rub-points or snags with ropes) should be brought to the immediate attention of the Quatermaster.

Trevor Wailes

!! ANNUAL DINNER... SHIPWRIGHT ARMS, 30TH SEPT @ 7.30PM !!

Congratulations...

Firstly to Stu Nicholas, who recently celebrated the beginning of his 5th decade on this planet as well as a rumoured quarter century of caving. He was actively involved in many of the TCC's discoveries during the 70's and 80's, produced this newsletter for many years, helped edit and produce the TCC Exploration Journal, and is still tapping away for the Tasmanian Cave and Karst Research Group editing and producing their Journal. Stu was recently made a Life Member of the Club.

Also to be congratulated is Trevor Wailes, our Yorkshire 'Dales expat, who was presented with an ASF award at our AGM in recognition of his exploration efforts in the Florentine Valley over the last decade or so. Anyone who has read the old trip reports from the 80's will be familiar with Trev's "push at all costs" style of caving, which was instrumental in opening up new areas of the Florentine especially in the Growling Swallet System. Still a very active caver and Club member, this National recognition is more than well deserved.

Both Stu and Trev have dedicated countless hours to the TCC as well as to the caving scene in general... we all hope that they continue to be actively involved in caves and caving for many more years !

Lost Gear... Lost Gear... Lost Gear...

Stu Nicholas, after going through his gear the other day, advises that he is missing:

1. Two racks - one short and one really long. These were taken for use at the SAREX by "one of the young generation", and haven't been seen since,
2. Three screw gate krabs - two went with the racks and the other just went,
3. One medium sized gear bag - yellow with red/orange straps, a bit tattered.

We all know how bloody expensive gear is to replace, so if anyone knows the whereabpouts of Stu's gear, a prompt return would be appreciated !! - Ed

So Long, And Thanks For All The Fish...

On a final note, if you're wondering why our meetings seem a few members short it's because a few of them have tripped off to remote corners of the Globe for one reason or another -

Stefan Eberhard and his partner Julie are off climbing bloody great giant bits of rock in the Karakorum Himalaya region of Pakistan for a few months. Apparently they are climbing in the same area as the Torango Tower, which was the scene of that totally incredible base jump.

Rumour also has it that Rolan Eberhard is off to Nepal to do some high altitude trekking/seducing of Yaks for a couple of months - lucky sod.

Last but not least, Dave Nichols is off for a stint in Wales for 3 months researching single cell orgasms, er, organisms as part of his Phd studies...

We wish them every success, and a safe journey home !

Garth Cornelius, Editor

!! ANNUAL DINNER... SHIPWRIGHT ARMS, 30TH SEPT @ 7.30PM !!

!!! SCS WAREHOUSE SALE!!!

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE SCS HAS ALL THIS GEAR FOR SALE?

5 cm Flat Tape - (ideal for harnesses, rigging, battery belts, etc)	*$1.40 / m*
2.5 cm Flat Tape - (handlines, rigging, battery belts, etc)	*$0.80 / m*
9mm Bluewater Dynamic Rope - (cows tails, safety loops)	*$4.50 / m*
Carbide in rock form for carbide lights - (must be used responsibly)	*$2.50 / kg* *$2.00 / kg in bulk*
Yuasa 6.7 Gel Cells - (6V, 7 Ahr, Weighs 1.3 kg)	*$26.00 ea*
6 volt bulbs to suit the above Gel Cells - (1, 1.5, 2 & 3 Watt available)	*$1 & $2.50 ea*
Female spade connectors to suit the Gell Cell terminals	*$0.20 ea*
4.5 Volt Duracell batteries - (Petzl Zoom type)	*$6.00 ea*
Metal light brackets for helmets	*$5.00 ea*
Plastic light brackets for helmets	*$3.00 ea*
Plastic caving helmets - (with brackets)	*$20.00 ea*
Petzl "Kaboom" 21 litre carbide jets	*$5.00 ea*
2nd hand charging clips for caving lights	*$8.00 ea*
8mm Alloy Maillons - ideal for harness 'krabs'	*$16.00 ea*
Metholated spirits stove fuel - (fill your own containers)	*$2.50 litre*

If you need any of these things please contact:
Jeff Butt on (002) 32 5302 work, or 23 8620 home;
Dean Morgan on (002) 27 9318 home,
or you can write to the
SOUTHERN CAVING SOCIETY, P.O.BOX 121, MOONAH, 7009

!! ANNUAL DINNER... SHIPWRIGHT ARMS, 30TH SEPT @ 7.30PM !!

* * * BITS AND PIECES * * *

SELLICKS HILL (S.A.) - Benders Quarry Revisited ??

A battle has begun between cavers of the Cave Exploration Group of South Australia and Southern Quarries Pty Ltd to preserve a cave discovered in Sellicks Hill quarry which, according to CEGSA, has significant cultural and heritage values (sound familiar ?)...

The cave, aptly named "Sellicks Hill Quarry Cave" (5A20), was discovered in 1981 and exploration has found that it contains very rare aragonite crystal speleothems and wind blown silt which may contain significant fossil material. The extent of the speleothems in the cave is rare for South Australia and the fact that there is 1km of known cave makes it the longest in the Adelaide Hills karst area (the next longest is 120m, and has been extensively damaged by mining).

Initial exploration was at the invitation of Southern Quarries Pty Ltd, after they broke into the cave whilst blasting. CEGSA spent a total of 40 hours underground (over 9 trips) after which they sent a comprehensive report, complete with photos and map information to Southern Quarries. It appeared that the biggest threat to the cave was damage to the Big Room, which according to the survey lay approximately 5-8 m under the quarry's haulage road.

The Company then closed off further access to the cave (late 1991), citing liability if a caver was injured during exploration as the reason. They also placed a number of large rocks on the road in the vicinity of the Big Room so as to prevent trucks driving over it.

The shit really hit the fan in December 1993 when the Company attempted to implode the Big Room, claiming this was necessary to maintain the safety of the quarry. This seemed ridiculous given that the existence of the Big Room was known for two years and the Company had taken prior steps to protect it...

The Government finally acted on the issue in Jan 94 by holding an independent "Review into the Facts" between involved parties. Six weeks on, the report presented to the Minister stated that:

> ..."the cave is considered to have had considerable significance. It was the largest and most complex cave in the region, with geomorphological and mineralogical features of scientific interest, definite recreational significance and good potential for development as a show cave. Significant damage has occurred; 35% of the southern end has been quarried away, and the dome at the northern end of the Big Room has been collapsed... a moratorium on mining within 15 m of its present outlined is recommended..."
>
> *Grimes.1994.1 & Moore. 1994. 4*

Surprise, surprise - when the Government made an announcement on the

!! ANNUAL DINNER... SHIPWRIGHT ARMS, 30TH SEPT @ 7.30PM !!

11th of March concerning the future of the cave the recommendations of the review were largely ignored:

..."the extent of damage caused to the caves both prior to, and after the implosion... could have... made them unsafe... (and finally) the likelihood of finding fossils of large animals was not considered to be high, and micro fossils in the caves claybeds could be examined while mining operations continue..." (!!!!!!!!!)

Baker and Wotton. Sellicks Hill Quarry. 1994

A week after this announcement, the SA Heritage Council unanimously voted to place a Stop Order over the site and provisionally list the cave on the State Heritage List. The following day, the Minister over-rode the decision, removing the Stop Order and provisional listing.

The ASF (as parent body of the South Australian Speleogical Council) stepped in and lodged injunctions in the SA Supreme Court for a judicial review. The injunction was granted, returning the status quo (ie: Stop Order, etc).

The case went to trial on the 30th of May and J. Bollen is considering his verdict. It appears that no matter what the verdict, an appeal to the Full Bench (three judges) will be lodged.
If the first round of the battle is won, the State Heritage Authority will then follow the process of calling for submissions and other evidence to asses the heritage values of the cave. The ASF believes, like the independent review, that the only way to ascertain the impact of the "Big Room" blast and the significance of the cave is to obtain access and carry out independent scientific investigation. It is also hoped the legal action will reveal the reasons as to why the Government acted the way it did.

To support the cost of the court case and the possible appeal to the Full Bench funds are urgently sought...

Donations can be sent to: Mark Sefton
36 Norman Street
ST MARYS 5042
Ph: (08) 277 9086

Source: Australian Caver # 136

Ed's Note: The Club has donated $250 to the appeal - I will try to keep you all posted as developments unfold.

USING BRAKE KRABS WITH RACKS:

To my knowledge there are very few, if any, cavers who use a brake krab in conjunction with a rack, perhaps feeling that the addition/removal of brake bars and/or increasing/decreasing the distance between the bars provides enough control during descent.

This is probably true, however I have found that by using a brake krab (located below

the rack on the harness krab/maillion), descending is made a lot smoother and additional friction can be easily clipped in when required.

Literally by accident, I recently discovered another reason why brake krabs are beneficial...

A few weeks ago, I rigged a rebelay loop too short with the result that I had to un-clip my rack from my harness to get off the loop.

I decided that with 3 other people waiting above it would be better to continue my descent and let Dean, who was using a "Stop", re-rig the rebelay. Having threaded the rack back on the descent rope, I clipped into my brake Krab, stood up to un-clip my cow's tail and sat down ready for the leisurely descent.

I suddenly found myself 3 odd feet below the rebelay, with my right hand jammed up into the brake krab, staring up at my rack dangling happily from the rope - I had forgot to re-clip the rack to my harness !

Certain words whizzed through my mind as I contemplated the 15 or so metres of space beneath me, and visions of multiple fractures and dead bodies flashed in front of my eyes. I knew that to descend at all I needed friction, and in a hurry, so I clipped a couple of loops of rope into my brake krab, another one in my pack-haul krab and gradually descended the pitch holding the ropes with both hands above my head. The rest of the trip was without incident.

I still can't believe the habit of clipping into a brake krab saved me from major pain or worse... Apart from learning the basic lessons "<u>always</u> check yourself before un-clipping from a rebelay" and "don't be in a f...ing hurry", the use of a brake krab on any descent is a practice I thoroughly recommend.

Garth

P.S. By the way, the Petzel catalogue shows a brake krab clipped into the top of the rack, before the first bar. I have tried this method and have found it gives more friction than necessary (it is also hard to vary) as well as adding jerkiness to the descent. Also, in the event you become detached from your rack, it won't stop you falling !

HARNESS INDUCED PATHOLOGY:

In recent years, a number of deaths have occurred in Europe due to hypothermic exhaustion. *Fifteen of these were cavers using the "Frog" system of ascent.*

Subsequent studies indicated that a different cause may have been responsible for the deaths - simply the act of *hanging in a sit-harness.* Tests have shown that hanging inert in a sit-harness can cause fainting in only six minutes, and that even a healthy caver could die very quickly if left hanging totally inert (ie: no muscular movement) in a sit-harness.

!! ANNUAL DINNER... SHIPWRIGHT ARMS, 30TH SEPT @ 7.30PM !!

Further research was undertaken under strict medical supervision and controls. Three scenarios were used:

1. Totally inert, with head in hyper-extension and legs hanging below heart level (the most realistic for an unconscious victim)
2. With head upright, supported by a brace. Legs as in 1.
3. With feet suspended horizontally by foot-loops (as in the "Frog" system. Head hyper-extended.

All three produced considerable difficulties for the subjects after 12 - 13 minutes of hanging. Despite medical controls, one subject fainted (fainting is described as "perturbation of the cardio-vascular system, leading to head blood failure, quickly followed by death"). The research concluded that this was the cause of death in those cavers suspected of dying of exhaustion and that no matter what type of harness, motionless suspension leads to very serious blood problems.

These conclusions led to the following advice...

a) A caver in difficulty on rope, due to exhaustion or technical problems, must be helped very quickly .
b) A caver hanging completely inert must be unhooked with all speed.
c) If tired, a caver should not attempt a long or difficult rope ascent before adequately resting, especially if the pitch is wet.

Another condition has since been identified as being potentially fatal to people who hang in harnesses for long periods of time. Apparently this is similar to "Crush Injury Syndrome" which occurs when victims who have had significant muscle mass (eg: thighs, chest, etc) crushed are released. Upon release, toxins which have built up in the blood below the crush site come back into circulation, causing shock which can lead to death. Intravenous normal saline and other drugs are used to treat C.I.S.

(As an aside, car accident victims have been found to develop C.I.S. in under 3 minutes. I believe Tas Ambulance Service protocol recommends that all patients who have had blood circulation severely restricted should be treated for C.I.S. regardless of the time "crushed" - Ed).

So it appears that if the hanging in the harness doesn't prove fatal, and you have hung for a long period of time, your release can. In any case, be aware that a harness hang is a life-threatening situation, and needs to be dealt with very quickly. If someone has hung for a long period of time their release must be supervised by equipped medical personnel.

American Caving Accidents - December 1993

!! ANNUAL DINNER... SHIPWRIGHT ARMS, 30TH SEPT @ 7.30PM !!

* * * C. L. A. G. NEWS * * *

Over the last couple of years some of you may have been aware of the formation of the CAVE LEADERSHIP ACCREDITATION GROUP (CLAG).

In the near future there will be a need for accredited leaders for caving. This shouldn't affect recreational caving but mainly school groups, commercial operators, and people regularly taking groups of novices caving. Without waiting for bureaucratic intervention (as has happened in some Mainland States), Tasmania formed the TASMANIAN OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (TOLC), whose brief was to develop leadership accreditation courses for outdoor activities including caving, bushwalking, rockclimbing, cross country skiing and canoeing.

At this stage by the end of 1994 leadership courses for all of these pursuits should be up and running. The courses will be held over week-ends where practical and will cost money. However, don't think that you can go away for an easy weekend and come home with a leadership certificate... the courses will be very comprehensive.

For more information please ring Bruce Morley at the Department of Sport and Rec on (002) 33 3942.

Dean Morgan

(A more comprehensive report on CLAG's progress will be in the next Spiel -Ed)

* * * TRIP REPORTS * * *

***GUNNS PLAINS - North West Tasmania* (23 & 24th July, 1994)**

Participants - Tanya, Dean, Jim, Trevor, Garth.

The mist hung low and thick across the valley, and the heavy frost looked like light snow-fall...

This is what greeted us as we arrived at Wings Farm Park, Gunns Plains on the coldest night of the year.

Our small group had come in search of long, deep systems of un-explored, virgin cave. Armed with spare lamps, 200 odd metres of rope and a determined attitude, we settled into our timber chalet late on Friday night.

Morning dawned to see us packing caving gear, food and high expectations amidst an incredible frost. The previous night the caretaker, Rick Smith, had pointed out directions to Dinky Die Drop (GP 48), and we set off eager to "plumb the depths"

!! ANNUAL DINNER... SHIPWRIGHT ARMS, 30TH SEPT @ 7.30PM !!

So it was that we trudged up the paddock opposite the Caravan Park and as directed, turned right at the top and into the bush.
Two and a half hours of scrub bashing later (definitely no worse than the Florentine or Ida Bay), after locating and investigating a couple of disappointing holes, Jim, Dean and I regrouped and managed to find the entrance to GP 52 *(meanwhile I was bashing around further up the hill in search of Limestone - Ed)*. This cave was situated in the steep side of a valley above the creek which flows through the Park and after much discussion, Jim was finally cajoled into having a solo look...

Noises of his descent were lost in our coversation until he suddenly called out for a rope ! As Dean and I had only one cave suit between us, it was decided that I should go down with the rope to see what the fuss was about. From the "letter-box" type entrance, the cave drops steeply over large blocks coated liberally with thick, sticky red mud. I caught up with Jim at the bottom of a climb, in an area of flow-stone and cloying red mud. Taking care to avoid spreading the mud, we achieved the lowest possible point where numerous bones adorned the floor, and claw marks covered the walls. It was a sad place, and one could imagine the terror and frustration of an in-escapable death by an unfortunate kangaroo or wallaby.

After finding no way on, Jim and I had more success after retracing our steps up the climbs to a benched calcite level. Here an alternative but tight descent was possible, and we continued along the rift in search of a larger access point. The rift led int a small chamber with a high level ascending passage. Formation was abundant in this lead, so we decided to leave well enough alone and go in search of a downward way on. The only possibility seemed to be what we had first looked at, so a 17m rope was anchored and lowered ready for Jim's descent.

He finally forced himself through the slot into a more spacious rift and abseiled the 15 metres to more bones and claw marks but no continuation. Meanwhile, Dean had joined us and was poking around in the lower levels. Jim's first attempted exit via a climb proved too tight, and he was forced to use his " Stop" as a makeshift ascender. After a bit of difficulty (thanks to his lamp battery) and after using the usual words and phrases needed for escape, Jim finally managed to squeeze out. Not seeing any way to add more depth to the cave, but pleased at finding some new ground, we de-rigged and headed out. With no sign of Garth, we made our way back to the Park for lunch *(I think at this point I was enjoying a leisurely cuppa from the Trangia somewhere up-stream - Ed)*.

After lunch, Dean and Tanya headed off to Leven Canyon for some day tripping, whilst Jim, Garth and I headed off with Steven, the care-taker's son and impromptu guide, to find the elusive GP 48...

This vertical entrance was more to our liking, and the 20 metre shaft was rigged and descended to a short section of passage (Steven was kitted out with SRT rig and given a "crash" course in abseiling - a heavily worn rack, with 5 bars on a stiff 11mm rope made for a slow but safe descent !).

!! ANNUAL DINNER... SHIPWRIGHT ARMS, 30TH SEPT @ 7.30PM !!

From the base, a short section of horizontal rift passage and a 3m down-climb brought us to another pitch of about 18m. A long tie-back necessitated protection at the lip of the pitch proper, and here a cave pack was used. At the base of the pitch was more of that red, sticky mud... again, more bones and claw marks attested to another slow and desperate death. This chamber obviously fills up with water and looks very sump prone; only a low, narrow exit continues which is much too small to be pursued. A narrow passage enters the chamber from the top of the mud bank, but to continue would need digging.

Steven was given uplifting instructions on how to prussik, and was soon back up the pitch struggling with the 3m free-climb. At the top of the pitch, Jim followed another inlet for 20 meters to a possible dig. I found a by-pass to the 3m climb via a tight upward squirm through copious amount of rotting vegetation, and found myself at the base of the entrance pitch (Jim had pursued another lead to the left from here, which also terminates in a dig). By seven o'clock we had all exited and we headed back to the cabin as another cold night set in.

The evening saw healthy appetites sated with Jim's Spag Bog and Tanya's Thai Chicken, washed down with a few beers and wines.
The following day saw Jim and Garth looking for limestone on the hill behind the Park, a quick visit to some of the valley entrances and then off to Leven Canyon for photographs before heading home.

All up it was a good week-end... the Caravan Park is in an area of exceptional beauty - friendly people and caves close at hand. I was pleasantly surprised by this beautiful well kept secret corner of Tassie. Many thanks go to the owner of the Park, Colin Wing and Rick Smith, the care-taker for their hospitality, and to Steven for showing us the location of the caves.

Trevor Wailes

!! ANNUAL DINNER... SHIPWRIGHT ARMS, 30TH SEPT @ 7.30PM !!

GUNNS PLAINS

DINKY DIE DROP (GP48)

GRADE 2 MEMORY SKETCH

DRAWN T. WAILES

3. AUGUST 1994.