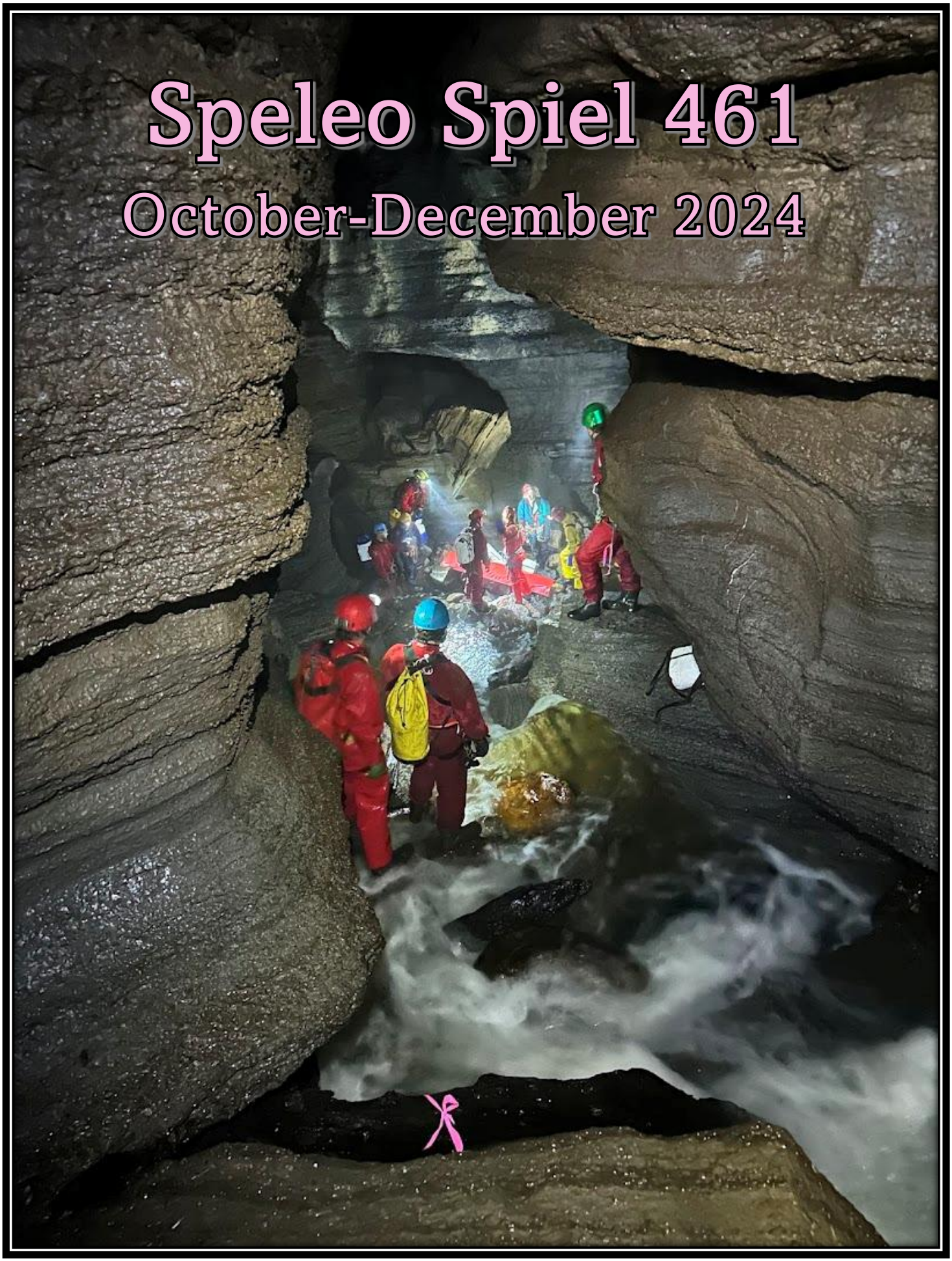
Speleo Spiel 461

October-December 2024



Newsletter of Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc. ISSN 2208-1348

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Front Cover: JF-36 Growling Swallet during the rescue exercise. Image: Michael Glazer.

***Back Cover*:** Left to themselves in the dark, the bags have begun to multiply. Image: Alex Motyka

Speleo Spiel 461 was prepared by Ciara Smart, with subeditorial assistance from Alan Jackson, Janine McKinnon, and Ric Tunney

Speleo Spiel

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STC was formed in December 1996 by the amalgamation of three former southern Tasmanian clubs: the *Tasmanian Caverneering Club*, the *Southern Caving Society* and the *Tasmanian Cave and Karst Research Group*. ***STC*** is the modern variant of the oldest caving club in Australia.

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Editorial

Another three months, another issue. Season's greetings to all and I hope everyone gets some caving in over the summer. If not, at least you have the *Spiel* for holiday reading. From next issue we'll be back to the more regular schedule of publishing bimonthly, rather than trimonthly. Hopefully this means the end of 50-page issues - not that length should be any disincentive from voraciously reading the *Spiel* from cover to cover.

I must say that this *Spiel* was composed under particularly chaotic conditions. I think submitting a PhD thesis, heading into a 4 day Niggly trip the next day, navigating Christmas, leaving on expedition in New Zealand and compiling the *Spiel* within a fortnight was possibly a bit ambitious, but I got it done with some significant help from subeditors. So for those of you complaining that you lack time to write trip reports… Thankfully, for the most part, everyone in this club is fantastic at submitting trip reports.

Thanks to all my caving friends who have listened to me moan about my thesis for four years. If it wasn't for caving, I would have gone mental. I might also have finished my thesis faster, but who knows! I've really enjoyed doing the *Spiel* as a bit of light entertainment on the side. As an historian (if I can call myself that after 8+ years of university education), the *Spiel* is a phenomenal example of community history; keeping. STC's archive, supported by the *Spiel*, is pretty special!

This issue, as usual, is full of good bits and bobs. Will Grant's account of a *long* day trip into Niggly is a particular highlight, as is Bill Nicholson's reflection on five decades of caving involvement. I'm also pleased to publish a 'guide' to classic caves of southern Tasmania. I'd love if more mainland cavers came down to enjoy some of the best caving in the country. This 'guide' is designed to make things a bit more accessible. Enjoy!

Stuff 'n' Stuff

Upcoming Annual General Meeting

The first meeting of next year (4 February 2025) will be the AGM and the GBM. The AGM will start at 7 pm, followed by the GBM at 7:30 pm at the Civic Club. Nominations are now open for office bearers for 2025. Anyone can be nominated for a role. Just send an email to the STC email list with your nomination/s. Each nomination requires someone to second it, again someone sends an email to the STC email list stating they second a nomination.

Letter of thanks received from TASPOL

Tasmania Police Learning and Development services have sent STC a thankyou letter of appreciation for assistance with caving, both techniques and safety on their 2024 Basic Search and Rescue Course. They commended our competence, professionalism and dedication, and foreshadowed future opportunities for collaboration.

Janine McKinnon

STC 78th Anniversary

Back in October, we had a BBQ at Waterworks Reserve to celebrate the 78th anniversary of organised caving in Australia. The event was well attended by cavers old and new.

Standing: From left to right,

Chris Sharples (TCC), Jeff Watson (SCS), Trevor Wailes (TCC), Philip Jackson (SCS), Ron Mann (SCS), Adrian Herington (SCS), Arthur Clarke (TCKRG), David Green (SCS), Greg Middleton (TCC), Ric Tunney (TCC), Russell Fulton (SCS), Graham Bailey (SCS), Alan Jackson (STC), Henry Garratt (STC), Geoff Wise (STC), Paul Darby (SRCC), Henry Shannon (NC), Lindsay Hawkins (SRCC), Kevin Kiernan (SCS), Matt Cracknell (STC), Fred Koolhof (SCS)

Sitting: From left to right,

Janine McKinnon (TCC), Kathy Bunton (TCC), Karina Anders (STC), Ciara Smart (STC), Jemma Herbert (STC)

Behind the camera: John Oxley (STC)

Present at the time but nowhere near the camera: Stephen Bunton (TCC)

Late arrivals: Rolan Eberhard (TCC), Jeff Davies (SCS).

Image by John Oxley.

Trip Reports

IB-158: Promising Hole

Not the day we'd planned

14 September 2024

Janine McKinnon

Party: Michael Glazer, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney, Raelene Watson

Michael has a whiz-bang new surveying device that he has built. It is very clever. He has done some in-cave testing but never actually surveyed a cave with it. Michael hasn't actually done any surveying yet. So learning to survey and giving his new toy its first proper job at the same time seemed like a fun idea.

I sent Michael scouring the archive for a cave suitable for the job. It had to be not too hard to get to, not too large, and unsurveyed. He found the Goldilocks answer in IB-158.

This cave was found in 1981/2 and first partly descended in 1993 by ladder. The brief, scrappy, hand-written record says they got to a ledge with a pitch below them and turned back. No one seems to have been there since. We planned to drop that pitch, probably be at the bottom, and survey out.

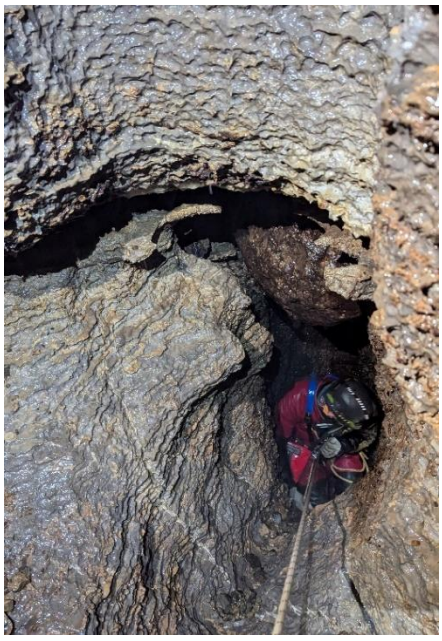
Yet another severe weather warning was out for the day. Snow to 200 m, hail, rain and wind were forecast, and we got it all. The temperature was only a couple of degrees and the Exit track (which our cave was uphill from) was VERY, VERY slippery and muddy.

Snow on the ground. Image: Janine McKinnon

Still, we got there without incident and got organised to go caving. The cave was recorded as having been tagged on the left-hand side but we couldn't find the tag and didn't want to strip the lovely moss off all the walls to find it IF it was under there somewhere. No worries, we had come prepared with a replacement tag, which Ric affixed whilst Michael rigged the entrance climb/pitch, with Rae's help and my oversight. Lots of cooks. The tag is now on the right-hand side on bare rock under a small overhang, so shouldn't get covered in growth.

Happiness is a bolting drill.
Image: Janine McKinnon

Anyway, we all gathered at the bottom of the slopey and muddy entrance pitch and found ourselves in beautiful solid rock. The cave continued down a short 5 m climb/pitch to a ledge. Below the ledge it could be seen to drop about 8 m to another ledge, or maybe the floor. This fitted the description of the old record, with that party probably stopping where we rigged a rope down the 5 m drop.



Clean rock! Image: Janine McKinnon

It was very wet; very wet and freezing water. The whole cave was leaking but there was also a small stream coming down from above the ledge. We were soaked within a few minutes and we were all wearing Cordura suits, having expected a relatively dry cave. We needed to place concrete screws to drop the next pitch, plus whatever else happened down there, and survey out. We decided that this was all going to take much too long for the cold, wet conditions and our lack of movement doing the job. We were getting very cold, very fast. We would have to come back anyway, so we may as well do it better dressed and in more conducive conditions. They certainly weren't great for testing new equipment and learning to survey.

It was hailing when I got out, and we were all very wet and cold as we started the slippery stumble back to the cars. Despite the conditions, it was still an enjoyable and useful day.

It certainly does look promising and we will return to complete the jobs in summer

"That is the way out." Image: Janine McKinnon

JF-40

21 September 2024

Alan Jackson

Party: Alan Jackson, Ben Jackson

Jemma and Henry were heading to Splash Pot and I was keen to get them to have a look up the far back end of MEAD (Mad Englishmen And Dogs) to see what they thought of the scary uphill dig. I'm not up for minor epics in Splash Pot anymore, but I could handle a trip to JF-40 to see if a dye, smoke, light, voice or radio connection could be made. Ben seems to think that caving isn't totally the stupidest thing you can do (he's only young, after all), so he was in on the mission.

Ben, just about filling out that suit.

Image: Alan Jackson

Stage one was clearing all the fallen trees from the Junee Quarry Road. No one had been up there since the big late-August storms and it took us an hour or so to carve a path through three large fallen eucalypts. Henry and Jemma set off for their suffer-fest while Ben and I lounged in the car and snacked while the others commuted. The plan was to be at the bottom of JF-40 from 2 pm to 3:30 pm and do a radio check every 15 minutes. At about noon we toddled along the track to KD and removed some fallen wooden obstacles to pass the time. KD was raging. JF-40 had a healthy flow. It wasn't going to be a nice trip. I felt for the others.

JF-40 was as gloopy and slippery as I remembered from my one previous trip many years prior. Ben handled the ick and the dicey climbs well. The (what used to be) final squeeze to the end of the cave didn't look enticing – it had a minor stream racing through it. We soldiered on, only getting a bit of water through our outer defences. I was impressed with the work the Irish had done to open up what used to be a tiny draughting hole. Ben waited at this point while I checked out the awkward climb through the slot down into the new chamber below. It was pleasantly spacious but in addition to the main stream, there was also an abundance of water falling out of the ceiling and it wasn't a very nice place to be. I checked the rift off to the left and managed to take a micro swim when my chimneying failed over the pool. Henry later told me this was dry when he was last there. The water backs up then runs under the clay and rockfall-lined passage heading the other direction. I could hear the water running fervently under the talus and felt a cool breeze issuing forth. A slightly scary dig with much hanging death rock overhead, but worth a try (in drier conditions).

We made the water go pink, made some 'smoke' and called on the radio lots. By 3 pm we were cold and over it and abandoned for the surface. The draught was

going the wrong way (out of the cave), so our exit was stymied by a general paucity of visibility. Caving by brail, we negotiated the climbs and mud slopes and emerged on the surface for hot soup and hot chocolate, then went home.

Henry and Jemma reported lots of pink water coming from the right spot but they didn't get there until 3:20 pm, so the handheld radio checks were a fail. They also bailed on the scary uphill dig. They then were broken physically and mentally by Close to the Bone on their exit. It's a lovely cave.

A return to JF-40 is worth it, but ideally when it's a bit drier!

JF-10 Splash Pot

21 September 2024

Henry Garratt

Party: Henry Garratt, Jemma Herbert

This was our third trip to Splash Pot this project. The weather was sufficiently soggy to scupper Alan's Abel plans, so he had volunteered to go to JF-40 to have a go at a connection attempt. While Alan and Ben had a lovely picnic in JF-40 we went to Splash Pot.

There was a promising number of trees over the KD road, we were optimistic we might have to call off the day for track clearing but alas we made it to the car park in time to go caving.

Alan and Ben relaxed at the car park and did some track work to kill time while Jemma and I commuted.

It was WET, and Close to The Bone was rather exciting. I smashed my knee in the first horizontal section, with my knee pad having slipped down to protect my shin not my patella; first injury from this Splash Pot campaign.

Even the first pitch, which is normally reasonably dry, was concerningly wet; and the two post-CTTB were proper abseiling and prusiking under a fire hydrant.

We had planned to meet Alan and Ben at the connection front at 1500 at the latest, so we rushed through Tip Toe Passage (without breaking anything!) and into Mad Englishmen and Dogs (MEAD). MEAD is a complicated bit of cave, with lots of inlets coming in and forming a rabbit warren of interconnected passages.

Jemma and I followed the map, without getting too lost and arrived at the connection site at 1530, having just missed Alan and Ben who had gone home at 1520, sick of waiting in the cold and wet. We missed them, so failed to make a voice light or radio connection but did make a positive dye connection!

We had a look at the underside of the rockpile, and ultimately agreed with Alan's previous assessment. There is a tantalising void that looks like more cave, but is blocked by a perched boulder. This boulder is perched atop a hanging scree field of death. So we got the aiding gear out and Jemma placed a few bolts in the ceiling, the idea being that she could hang from the bolt, and then dislodge the boulder and it would fall down without hitting her as she is safely sitting on the roof. However, in order to be far enough away from the hanging death we then couldn't reach the problem rock with the crow bar. And the drill died after placing the second bolt so we couldn't re adjust our position. I took one look at Jemma's hanging position and decided it was still death if it moved and so didn't volunteer to be on poking duty. So we headed for home.

The boulders in question, it's steeper than the shitty photo looks. Image: Henry Garratt

We decided we were done with Splash Pot and would start our derig, carrying all our stashed aid climbing gear out meant we had three bags between the two of us and CTTB was particularly unpleasant. This was by far my worst trip out of Splash Pot to date, with my knee being annoyingly ouchy. Prusiking up through waterfalls also sucks.

JF-10 Splash Pot: "Derig" Trip

28 September 2024

Jemma Herbert

Party: Henry Garratt, Jemma Herbert

This was my last free weekend before February, and people keep whinging that too much club rope is tied up in projects, so we figured we'd better derig Splash Pot. Our attempts to recruit extra manpower for the derig failed, with weak excuses like "gardening", "writing a PhD" and "injury" being spouted. So once again it was just me and Henry and the heavy knowledge of just how much shit we had to lug back up Close To The Bone.

As we drove up Junee Quarry Road we were quietly praying for some more downed trees on the road, like the previous weekend, that would prevent us from doing the trip. We were rewarded with a very tiny pine tree across the width of the road. We did some half arsed pulling and decided we definitely couldn't move it by hand. We established that we brought no rope nor anything we could use to pull the tree with the car. As I started to get excited that maybe we really didn't have to do this trip, Henry reluctantly admitted to having a rusty $3 tip shop bow saw in the boot. The tiny tip of the tiny tree was removed so we could drive around, and we were only slightly relieved not to have to admit to being turned around by such a piddly obstacle.

An insurmountable obstacle. Image: Jemma Herbert

On the walk in we took a small scenic detour to look at the Cauldron Pot track for a little while. But eventually we did make it to the cave by like 11 am. By 1 pm we were back down at Harrow The Marrow and kitting up to derig the tyrolean.

A couple of trips ago we'd started a traversing climb across the top of HTM with big plans to pop into high level fossil passage. We got a (chopped) rope length across, then left it as a tyrolean to be continued. We didn't have time to push the climb, but we wanted to leave a string on it so we could easily get back to the far point and push it in the future. We also figured we'd better actually drop the pitch, at least as far as we had rope for.

I scootched over the tyrolean and dropped the pitch. It definitely maybe probably looks like there is fossil passage, just like 10 m below our traverse. I couldn't get into it from our anchor, but if you pushed the traverse just another 3 or 4 meters past the end of the very steep ramp, you'd be able to swing into it and walk/climb (probably still on rope) from there. The rift continues at that height around the corner as far as you can see (~20 m) at a consistent ~2 m width. Below the level of this passage is solid-looking wall, with just a very tight rift, and some pretties, on the climber's RHS, which eventually craps out further down. I only dropped our remaining rope length, so about 50 m, but it looks like it's all solid wall from there down.

I came back up, frothing, as Henry was coming across the tyrolean. We then worked on re-rigging, rebuilding the anchor (that we were hanging on) to use a different rope, threading and unthreading a rap ring multiple times, and generally trying to set up the tyrolean to pull through and leave a string so it can be re-rigged without climbing the pitch. We hadn't done that before, but Steve had told Henry who'd told me how it works, so it'd totally be fine, right? For numerous varied reasons this took a long time.

Sad post-tyrolean clusterfuck. Image: Henry Garratt

At some point in this re-rigging process, I was pulling up and untangling the 50 m of muddy extra rope and when Henry joined in to help, the extra power catapulted a bight of muddy rope directly into my eyeball. Stuck at a hanging belay, with no water, muddy everything and on the far side of a 110 m pit, with a de-rigged tyrolean between us and the mainland, I was an unhappy chappy. I furiously blinked, cried, squinted and whimpered for the next several hours whilst Henry finished off the rigging around me, describing tangles and problems to me as they evolved. Eventually we had it all perfectly rigged and scootched back to the mainland side, with a successful test pull. I took the string and was extremely careful not to get it tangled, keeping good track of pull sides and right and left sides of loops. It was really definitely not tangled.

Anyway, we went to pull it and it didn't pull. We pulled really hard and it moved a couple meters then stopped. We pulled really, really, really and it didn't budge anymore. Must have got tangled I guess ... Maybe this knot block string loop shenanigans just isn't cut out for a 20 m tyrolean kinda setup. Or maybe we just suck.

We stopped for lunch to reassess our options and found it was 6 pm. Somehow, we evaporated 5 hrs on that derig and it didn't even work. We considered a lot of options, contemplated the long way out of Close To The Bone, and decided to cut the string. Cutting the string lost our hopes of leaving the tyrolean as re-riggable but would hopefully get our rope back. But it still didn't pull, so we still didn't have the rope back. Eventually Henry decided that actually he was really keen to come back another time and re-aid the pitch and retrieve the rope and de-rig the rest of Splash Pot - another time that wasn't right now. And also, the connection to JF-40 will totally go, so he'll just derig through JF-40 whilst I'm away.

So we left unsuccessful, but quietly happy with empty bags, and all the ropes in place for Henry's next trip. The way out was uneventful and we were home late, but not hideously so.

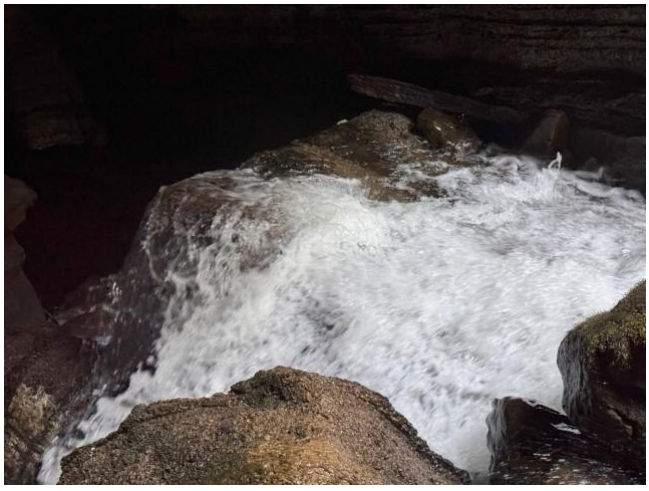
JF-36 Growling Swallet Porter Trip

28 September 2024

Kynan Bonnice

Party: Kynan Bonnice, Stephen Fordyce, Alex Motyka

The Growling Swallet system was once again exposed to a concoction of multi state mainland faffing and northern Tasmanian nonsense. With the team of four now down to just three, there was a bag to human ratio of 1.6. After waddling to the main entrance and having a look at the gauge rock at the Growling main entrance (it was at brown pants level), the three of us concluded that it was best for us to go in via Slaughterhouse Pot. After some small talk about crickets and spiders we began dropping down the pitches with Steve and Alex leading the charge and myself following along behind.



The gauge rock at brown pants level.

Image: Alex Motyka

Alex experienced the rather unique 11 mm muddy rope that Slaughterhouse Pot has to offer as we descended deeper. After passing the bags through the rockpile with minimal casualties, we then went past an active Trapdoor Streamway before venturing on towards Destiny. Passing though BYO Skateboard left me wondering if anyone had completed such an endeavour before? According to Steve's knowledge at the time, nobody has ever skated it. Next trip maybe I'll bring a small board into Growling to see that the passage lives up to its reputation.

Kynan about to climb up into the rockpile from the bottom of Destiny Pitch. Image: Alex Motyka

After descending the Destiny pitch and climbing over the rockpile (with no dropped bags this time) we got to the wet feet section. Steve and Alex did some pretty techy bouldering style moves to keep their feet dry (and to their credit they stayed dry) while I floated the bags through the water and waded on through having gotten wet feet at the Trapdoor Streamway. After that we made a LEFT turn at the junction (now cairned) popping out into the streamway - unlike previous trips where we had gotten lost, we made sure to properly mark it this time. We then arrived at the racetrack which indicated very minimal if any flooding. This was a good sign.

We then ventured downstream to the "new dive base" which provide better head room when getting changed into wetsuits unlike the old area (see photo *SS*459, p.24). Steve and I returned with a handful of gear before Alex broke out a block of chocolate and I tucked into some Shapes. Steve prepped his dive gear as Alex and I unpacked the gear and secured it to the cave using some Telstra rope. Steve and Alex then surgically transferred the sleeping bags making sure no dirt or water got inside bags before then storing them on a rock shelf above the racetrack on the same wall of the cave as the other gear.

The bags then became surprisingly light (for once!) as we retraced our steps and began to leave. The trip out was less eventful, leaving Alex time to take the occasional photo. It was a faster pace than usual thanks to the ultra-light bags and lack of a waterlogged wetsuit weighing the bags down.

We exited the cave with daylight still lingering; with the past two trips resulting in 4 am and 2 am exits respectively, the feeling of seeing the twilight was welcome. The sunlight quickly faded though as we began walking back to the Growling Swallet carpark where we began clearing the access road, with Steve manning the chainsaw and Alex and I ensuring the car lights didn't turn off (very important). After the road was clear, we then drove back to our campsite at Voltera, ready for the joys it had in store for us the next day.

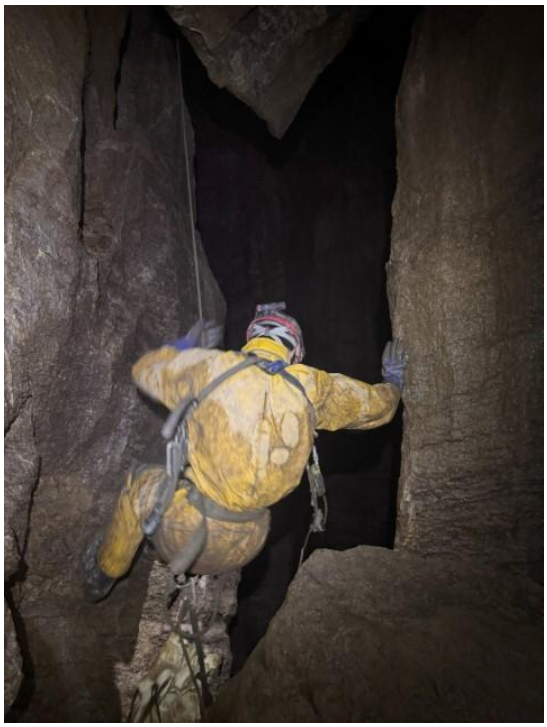
JF-207 Voltera

29 September 2024

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Kynan Bonnice, Stephen Fordyce, Alex Motyka

After stashing dive gear in Growling the day before, if Kynan and Alex could survive a Voltera digging trip, they'd probably be good for anything. Wouldn't want to make it too easy, so we carried in a drill and some other heavy kit.



Kynan starts up the big pitch. Image: Alex Motyka

It was wet - JF-206 was taking water for the first time this project, and although Voltera wasn't noticeably wetter, the stream to the Mud Bath dig was also flowing. The spoil pile was now clean of loose pebbles, many of which were now back in the dig. Fortunately the Mud Bath bit of the dig wasn't sumped, just a bit too wet for us to play in on day two of caving. We didn't try to get through to The Horse. Good to know for the future. We drilled 2 x 6 mm holes for the new handline a bit before Mud Bath and left hardware there for it (we forgot a spanner). We stickybeaked the Ram Raid Streamway to the big aven; it was impressive. We didn't go beyond the big chamber.

The view into the Mud Bath dig. Image: Stephen Fordyce

Our last job was at the base of the 30 m Date of Release pitch – we wanted to try to enlarge the small hole (shown as 1.5 m deep hole on the map) leading to the 6 m pitch and make a shortcut into Turn the Other

Cheek and to the dig. We made it a lot nicer to get into the chamber at the head of the 6 m pitch, but got overexcited and blocked the pitch head with a large rock in a tricky spot. It would need more persuasion than what we had with us, and the pitch head would still be pretty ordinary, with the rock a bit questionable. At least it's pretty easy to assess now. We spent about an hour working on this rather than the dig, but it's probably not worth spending the last dregs of Voltera enthusiasm on.

Kynan and Alex survived and were pronounced ready for pretty much anything, and we got out after only about nine hours underground.

JF-14 Dwarrowdelf

5 October 2024

Karina Anders and Janine McKinnon

Party: Karina Anders, Jemma Herbert, Janine McKinnon and Ronnie Sammut

Karina: Thinking I was being super-efficient by sorting all the gear at Jemma's house into neat bundles in the morning, we left a very sunny Hobart and headed towards the JF. Upon arrival we realised Ronnie didn't have a headtorch, not to worry, he could borrow one of mine. Walking along the track, I managed to remember just as we had started the Dwarrowdelf turn off track to start recording the GPS track requested by Steven Fordyce, luckily Ronnie had an app on his phone to do this.

We had neat piles of gear and organised who and what, and what order we were going to rig in. I thought it would be like the recent trip to Cauldron Pot, which worked very well but it wasn't quite the case. Jemma rigged pitch one and the pitch head of Pitch 2. Then I was going to leapfrog her, go down Pitch 2, rig the pitch head of Pitch 3 and tie in the third rope at the first rebelay of Pitch 3. This is where I went wrong, I didn't see the bolt placed at the bottom of Pitch 2 (facing the direction of Pitch 3). Instead I followed the flow of water and the hole in the ground. I climbed down a bit and found a tunnel, crawled through it to a squeeze which had a 3 m drop on the other side. I couldn't find the bolt head so I was starting to get confused. When Jemma came down behind me I asked her to look for the bolt in the ground at the base of Pitch 2. She found it but also didn't notice the gap in the wall that was the real route to Pitch 3. Instead, looking at the way I went she decided it needed a rebelay because of rope rub, and rightly so. So while she was fixing that, I decided to go down the squeeze and the climb and investigate further. At the bottom of the climb was a small chamber with another even smaller squeeze. I found a survey marker but again no bolt and now we had run out of rope. I yelled to Jemma this isn't making any sense, we shouldn't be running out of rope before Pitch 3. By this point Janine had made it down to us, had a good laugh and pointed out the gap in the wall next to the base of Pitch 2, where the bolt in the ground was and that just behind it was Pitch 3. We all had a very good laugh. Janine did mention that she had made this same mistake in the past. I think I will update the rigging notes of this.

I kept rigging Pitch 3, because we had random lengths of rope (whatever was available in the gear store), I had quite a lot of rope for the rest of Pitch 3. Thinking I wasn't at the bottom of it, I kept rigging into Pitch 4, using a redirect which looked fine on the way down but which didn't work so well on the way up, the rope got caught on something and when it got un-caught swung you out. Jemma on the way back up was doing this section in the dark as her headtorch was a little temperamental and had a big, unexpected swing in the dark.

This meant that when I got to the top of Pitch 5, I thought it was Pitch 4. Janine was commenting on how her memory must have faded, she just couldn't remember Pitch 4 looking like that. So I rigged the 37 m pitch with a 27 m rope. When I got to the second rebelay I realised I wasn't going to make it, I checked the rigging notes and realised I must have been on Pitch 5! Easily fixed, I had the Pitch 5 rope in my bag, I tied both ropes into the rebelay.

At the top of Pitch 6, Ronnie made the call, being in Cordura, not to go down Pitch 6. (Pitch 6 was pretty wet so he made the right call.) Janine and Ronnie had lunch there and turned around at this point.

Janine: We were all impressed by how far down the cave Ronnie had come on only his third caving trip, and with no apparent effort. However, it was getting very wet and cold by this depth and Ronnie was soaked. The next pitch was going to be very wet and a slow prusik under the water. It is a 67 m free-hang remember. It was the right call to head out from here. I had planned to bottom the cave and turn back from the top of the rockpile - sending the girls wandering off towards the sump to give me a head-start on the pitch. We had expected a few more cavers along on the trip who would only go part-way down the cave, however that hadn't eventuated, unfortunately. So it was now either send Ronnie up alone, get him to wait for about an hour whilst I did my preferred thing, or for me to turn with him whilst the girls went on. Prudence won out and I headed up with Ronnie.

We had a smooth and event-free ascent. Ronnie did comment at the top of Pitch 5 that he had gotten even more soaked going up that and was getting colder, so proof of our sensible decision. Prusiking warmed him up somewhat, he moved at a very respectable prusiking speed, and he passed all obstacles easily, so we had a not-too-slow exit from the cave. It was so nice going up without heavy packs, although I did feel a (very

small) twinge of guilt about the girls having to do the complete de-rig.

We were back on the surface before 3 pm. Ronnie was very cold so we decided we couldn't afford to sit at the entrance and wait for the girls and walked back to the car to change into dry clothes, and sit in the car with the heater on.

Karina: Jemma rigged Pitch 6 and away we went. What a beautiful pitch. Janine had given me instructions on how to get to the sump, I remember it as tunnel, chamber with waterfall, rockpile to the left, sandbanks, smaller passage with squeeze, sump. Jemma and I are notorious for finding the right way, so off we went full of optimism straight down the wrong track, lucky we noticed pretty quickly and tried again. Second time lucky and we found a very obvious path which led straight to the waterfall chamber. Then next challenge: navigating the rockpile slope. We found one track and attempted it but after a couple metres bailed because it got scary. We headed further around to the left and found a better route. Still kinda scary in one or two places, we were prepared to spear tackle each other into the side of the wall in case one of us slipped, luckily that didn't eventuate. Would consider bringing that handline next time. We had a good look at the waterfall which is the wet route in from KD. Beautiful pitch. We then followed the streamway, walked along it across the sandbanks to where there was serious flood debris from the recent rain. Not feeling an immense urge to see the sump we decided to turn around there.

I was pretty excited to tandem prusik up the 67 m free hang, thinking it would be quicker and give me little breaks in between. Oh boy was I wrong, I went up first with my single foot loop technique, Jemma meanwhile was rope walking and was so fast I barely got a break! While I was huffing and puffing, she didn't even break a sweat. Maybe I need to upgrade my set up? I did notice after this pitch that going up first caused a lot of rope drag over my Omni and I believe this is how my first Omni got worn through, most likely on the Black Supergiant. Maybe I'll have to go second next time.

The derig was thankfully more efficient if a bit slow because of heavy bags. Since Jemma was well rested after going up Pitch 6, I left her to derig. I started up Pitch 5 with a lighter bag. At the top of Pitch 5 we swapped bags, I kept going up slowly all the way out while Jemma derigged and filled my bag behind her. We were out by 4 pm and met up with Ronnie and Janine at the car. A delightfully funny day.

Jemma at Pitch 1. Image: Janine McKinnon

JF-36 Growling Swallet 2024 Sarex

19-20 October 2024

Jemma Herbert

Attendees: Al Warild, Alan Jackson, Alex Motyka, Allie Fenton, Ashlee Bastiaansen, Bo Muresan, Brian Evans, Callum Herbert, Ciara Smart, Dave Taberner, David Butler, David Rueda Roca, Greg Tunnock, Henry Garratt, Janine McKinnon, Jemma Herbert, John Oxley, Karina Anders, Kenny Yap, Liam McArthur, Michael Fraser, Michael Glazer, Nadine Muresan, Phil Croker, Ric Tunney, Ronnie Sammut, Ruth Evans, Thomas Andrews

The intent of this sarex was to practice some more difficult logistics than usual, and also enable a mad rescue sufferfest for those who wanted to. I designed the event to run overnight, with enough obstacles to keep us entertained for a good 30 hrs. I also planned to have people coming and going, so teams and tasks would need to be dynamically allocated. It didn't all play out like I imagined, and we only moved the casualty about halfway, but it worked well enough to be useful. Here are some things we learnt along the way.

Jemma briefing. Image: Michael Glazer

Conditions

The weather forecast earlier in the week had been for a lot of rain on Friday and Saturday. It didn't actually get as much as forecast, but the water was definitely up. We had designated commuter rigging teams and the ability to rig the high-water obstacles for safety, but it wasn't always easy or efficient. I expect we lost a couple people to the expectation of bad conditions, and some more people participated less actively than they otherwise might have. The difficulty of the cave (including conditions) obviously matters a lot to who can participate/be useful in a rescue or exercise.

Image: Alex Motyka

Teams

The week before the exercise we had 39 participants pencilled in. In that week we lost six. Some might have been scared off by the bad weather forecast, some fell afoul of my unclear RSVP request and never actually intended to come. So, our 33 participants met in Maydena at 8:30 and split into pre-allocated teams. If Janice was here we would have a sign-in sheet and immediately realised we only had 29, and which four people we were missing. I didn't do that, so we only figured out who was missing when some people couldn't find the rest of their teams. A bit of rushed rejigging and disbanding of teams was done to get everyone sorted. The resultant teams were OK but not as ideal as the original plan. Lesson is to do the damn paperwork, send all those confirmation emails and bring a sign in sheet (but improvising is not a terrible fallback).

Navigation

The only people on the exercise that knew their way around the cave were Alan and Janine. That's probably fairly realistic, but we didn't handle it well. Janine was tied up in the comms team laying wire. Alan was prioritised to getting the hasty team into the casualty asap. Everyone in between, including the 'route marking team' got stalled when they couldn't find the route, or actively went the wrong way. In retrospect it would have been better to delay the hasty team a tiny bit by getting them to mark the route, and be able to keep everyone else moving in the right direction. With so few people familiar with the cave, route marking needs to be prioritised even above getting the hasty team in.

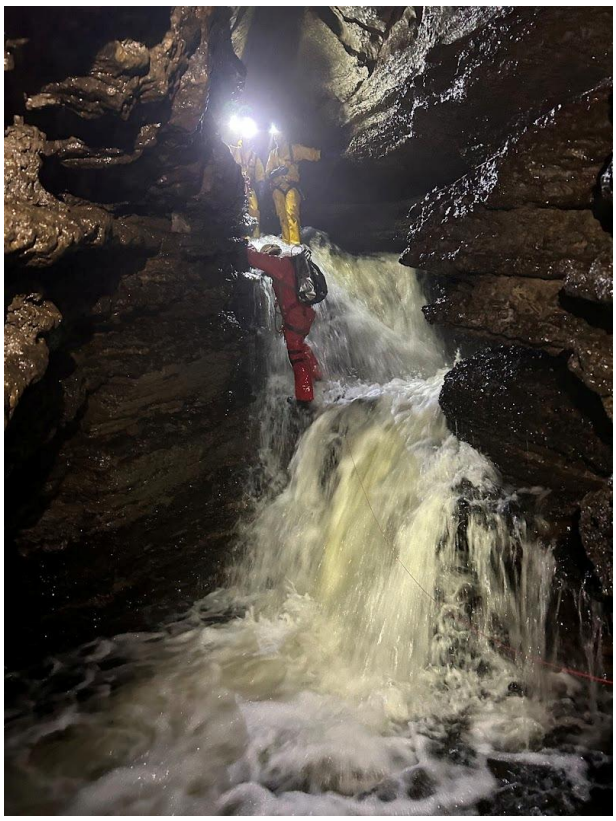


Image: Michael Glazer

Comms Line

Laying the comms line took a long time, as it always does. It's just a slow, fiddly job. I hadn't quite appreciated how long that takes. By 4 pm the comms had reached to the Glow Worm Chamber. General enthusiasm for comms was waning, the next reel of wire was hidden in somebody's bag, somewhere in the cave, and there were rumours that the rigging was already pretty much complete up to this chamber, so the patient would be here "soon". The call was made to stop rolling out the comms line at that point. In actual fact, whilst the rigging had started into that chamber, the casualty didn't make it there until the next morning. A lot of comms were missed because the wire didn't go far enough. We got lazy and sick of it, but should have done better.

Image: Alex Motyka

Using comms

As always, some teams were really good and tried hard to meet comms schedules and give relevant updates, even when the wire wasn't immediately available. Other teams never even saw the wire and didn't bother. If we want messages from beyond the end of the comms line (e.g. runners back to the line), we need to establish that beforehand. Nobody ever wants to take time out of their very important activity that they're working on right now to go run a message to the surface which feels like it just goes into a black hole. We talked about this at the debrief, maybe it's because in a training scenario it feels unimportant, but maybe it will always feel that way, even when it actually is important, and we need to keep practicing. We were lucky to have Ruth and Brian (reluctantly) on Saturday, and Ashlee and John on Sunday, on the surface to man surface command and comms, but it's a lame boring job and nobody wants to do it in training.

Base stations

We had heaps more base stations than usual with Vic and NSW bringing extras. Audio was always really good, loud and clear. Nobody wanted to use a little actual Michie phone when a base station could be found. We should commit some money, get the other clubs to do the same, and make it worthwhile for that guy to build a big batch of them.

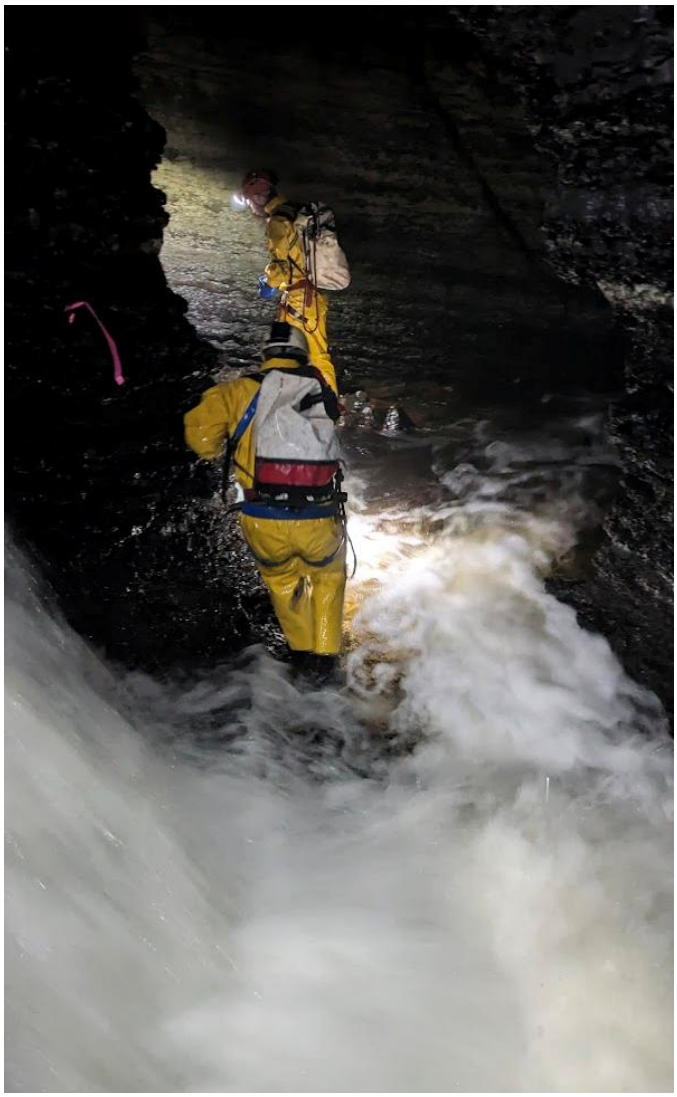


Image: Ken-Gene Yap

Maps

We had a marked-up map of the relevant section of the cave each (thanks John), but it wasn't on waterproof paper. I promptly chucked mine into the bottom of a dry bag and never saw it again. It seems that others did too. It wasn't used for communication of locations (hence everybody calling the "Glow Worm Chamber" the "International Chamber"), and it seems it wasn't used (or at least wasn't sufficient) for navigation since people got lost anyway. Lesson is that if people need to use a map, the map needs to be waterproof enough to live in a chest pocket.

Fatigue Management

The briefing of the exercise was that we'd run overnight and anyone who wanted could keep operating, but anyone was also welcome to just leave and go get some sleep. Of the five locals I spoke to,

everybody was heaps keen to keep going overnight, so I assumed we'd have a solid overnight contingent. I was concerned that people might be a bit gung-ho, but actually our fatigue management was spectacular. Turns out those five were not representative of the group as a whole, and they were in fact the only five who wanted to stay overnight. There weren't enough people to effectively move the stretcher, so everybody got a good 8 hrs sleep instead. It seems that most people are quite conservative about their fatigue management and won't push too hard, at least at an exercise. If we really want people in the cave overnight we'd need to allocate time slots and give people less freedom and more structure. More structure could also allow for staggered entrance times and fewer bottlenecks at the start.

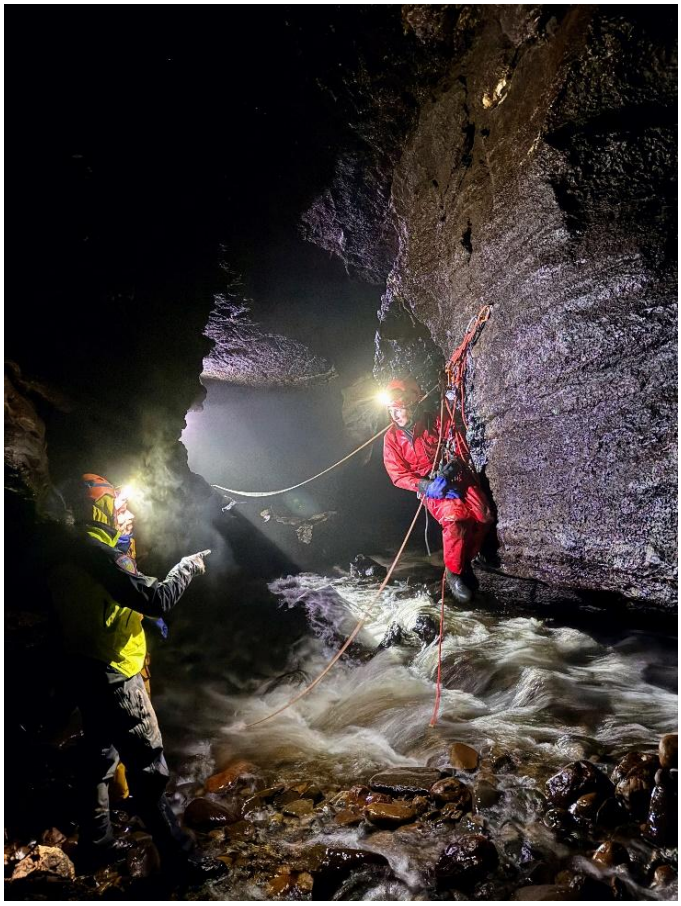


Image: Alex Motyka

Logging

People were generally really good at logging themselves in and out of the cave and track. So we had a log on the surface of who was in the cave, but once the surface command went to bed the remaining cavers didn't know who else was left in the cave. That could have been solved with better comms to the surface, or better communication with the UGC by departing cavers.

Image: Alex Motyka

Ambulance Tasmania

We had a paramedic to come along to the exercise, and he was awesome! There's been loads of work going on behind the scenes trying to make this happen for literally years. Recently some legends have been really pushing it within AT, and getting the paperwork that needs to happen done. We were totally stoked to have Kenny from AT along on Saturday. He wasn't allowed to go on ropes (there's more paperwork to do there), but was super competent and capable of getting all the way to the patient without needing ropes. He hadn't done any proper caving, but was really comfortable and interested. We're stoked to know there are such capable individuals in AT, and also for the milestone in policy this represents. For next time we'll need to think about how we package and transport all the gear a paramedic needs to bring into the cave. Kenny had a full 100 L pack, which we didn't manage to get in this time. It was also cool to get feedback from him that our casualty movement strategy is generally appropriate and even pretty cruddy stopping spots are workable for them.

Police

We also had a couple of police, Callum and Thomas. They were great as always. Thomas is a machine and can carry about five times as much gear as any mortal person. Callum was given the lead of the route marking

team, which was a bit harsh given he'd never been in Growling, but he managed admirably. Unfortunately they were both subject to their own fatigue management requirements and had to leave before we really got any rigging happening. They seemed happy to get to spend some time underground and we're always grateful to have them along and to get to stoke that relationship.

Image: Alex Motyka

Rigging

All the rigging I saw was excellent. Everything worked, safe and efficient. Tas and NSW are pretty consistent in rigging techniques. Vic does some things differently, and it was good practice for everybody working with others who do things in an unfamiliar way. If we have interest and time we could consider a basic skills refresher on the Friday before the exercise next time. Some things our crew can take away to practice:

- 3-pulley transitions past tyrolean corners. Avoids the risk of dropping the head end of the stretcher a full cowstail length.
- Releasable (e.g. munter) main attachments. Trades off a little height for easy transitions.
- Hauling vertically from feet. This gains some range when extra height for a transition is unavailable.
- Avoiding transitions altogether by hauling direct off tyrolean.
- Hand signals for comms across a pitch. An illuminated person giving hand signals is much clearer than yelled instructions over distance.

This write up is all the learning points, which are naturally the bits that didn't go well. To just read this, it sounds like a total shit show, but overall I think it was still fairly successful. People got to mingle and build trust in each other. People got to practice rescue rigging, comms and logistics. We got lots of lessons to take away. 6 out of 10, would try again with some mods.

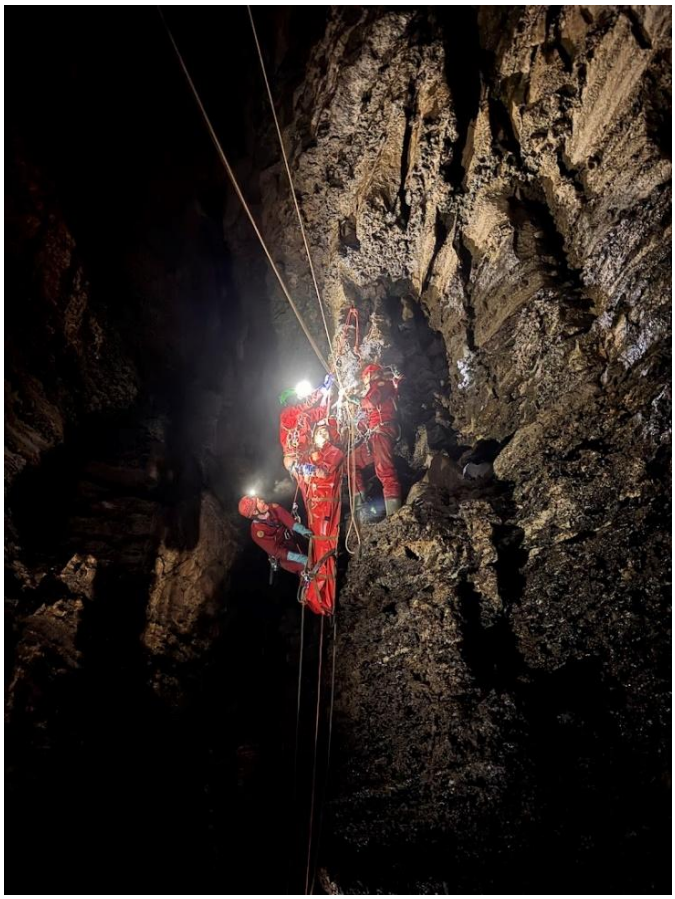


Image: Alex Motyka

Image: Alex Motyka

10 Minutes in JF-4 Khazad-Dum

24 October 2024

Jemma Herbert

Party: Lisa Harvey, Jemma Herbert

My parents were visiting from Sydney. We went for a nice little walk through the forest along the KD track. Turns out mum is still frothing on our trip to Mystery Creek almost two years ago, so I took her into the entrance of KD since we were there. With a sandwich in hand, and one phone torch between us, we ventured down the serpentine passage for maybe 50 m. With the articulacy my blood line is known for, mum was all like "wow!" "amazing!" "wow!" "wow!" "I'm going to remember this forever" and of course, "wow!". Needless to say, she enjoyed it. Apparently 10 min in KD was the highlight of their weeklong Tassie trip.

JF-761 Delta Variant

23 November 2024

Will Grant

Party: Henry Garratt, Will Grant

With the memories of suffering in last year's JF-40 dig fading into positivity and the allure of 163 metres of pitch height in Daily Cases growing, Will thought it was about time for his next trip. Concurrently, Henry was thinking it would be good to pre-stock the Dunes campsite ahead of the upcoming Niggly camping trip. Despite Ciara's doubts about my caving abilities, Henry convinced her that I was tough as nails and would be fine (lot of expectations there, Henry), and she, along with Henry, packed bags of camping gear to be brought down. She unfortunately could not come on the trip, so was fully trusting Henry's words.

With bags packed, Henry and I departed for what Henry described to me as being 'a straightforward trip – since you are ok with lots of jumaring.' With Henry's estimate of "four hours down, four hours back", I was hoping that if we didn't faff around too much, we might even be back for late dinner.

Making decent time on the drive out and the walk up the hill, we were suited up and ready at Negative RAT-Hole at approximately 10:30. Henry, having descended RAT Hole many times in its different levels of development, opted to free climb down. Me, having never seen it before - and even at the entrance, still unable to see it - opted to abseil down. Where Henry slid though like a bar of freshly wettened soap, I slid about as well as a bar of pumice. After much awkward abseiling, cursing, and doubts about how the rest of the day would go, I made it through after about twenty minutes, with only a smidgen of doubt about my ability to reascend. It was concluded that the main causes of issues were my inexperience with abseiling in tight spaces, as well as using a fresh abseil device which was yet to be adequately worn in. And the comically long handle on my ISC AB descender not being conducive to operation in tight spaces [Henry: Long live the Petzl Stop].

The trip to the top of Daily Cases was uneventful, with excitement growing as the sound of the waterfall increased. Henry led the way, zipping down swiftly. My abseiling woes continued temporarily, moving though the first couple of rebelays very slowly and jerkily. After thirty metres of mud impregnated cave rope, my abseil device wore in quickly and I was soon zipping down swiftly also.

Daily Cases is a curious pitch from a sightseeing perspective. The extensive spray thrown out by the waterfall makes it rather difficult to see much of the surroundings, making the pitch initially a little disappointing. Venturing downward into the spray, out of sight of both the roof and floor, an atmosphere of mystery develops. Through the mist, you catch glimpses of the backwall, you see deep shadows and your mind can't help but wonder 'is that an unknown window? If we could just get over there, could there be virgin tunnel to be explored?' Before you known it, you have reached yet another rebelay, and your attentions is forced back into the world of ropes and rebelays, only to once again wonder as you continue the descent.

The trip through Close Contact was as awkward, loud, and annoying as usual, but overall, uneventful. I had to agree with Henry that it is probably the most annoying part of the day. The very exposed traverse to the top of Freedom Day added a bit of excitement, but it too was negotiated safely and uneventfully. Freedom Day is rather an unfortunate pitch. In many other caves it would likely be the highlight. In Delta Variant however, it is rather forgotten about, being the Lhotse to the Mount Everest which is Daily Cases.

The descent down the waterfall was again uneventful. Moving out of the water into the dry open passages of base level was relieving. Suddenly, the roar of moving water was replaced by peaceful tranquillity, and the sharp edges of exposed rock were now covered in thick cushions of mud. After a bit of food, we continued on, to what was unexpectedly, the crux of the whole day – an unnamed mud climb (that mud climb at the bottom of the rock scree of Mount Niggly, before you get to the crawl way mud path).

Henry had a little difficulty with the climb, slipping down on the first attempt, but made a quick ascent on the second. I, however, had immense difficulty. Every attempt at the climb ended with me sliding right back

down again. No individual moves seemed to be especially challenging, with slips occurring everywhere. Soon, the bag was off and thrown up to Henry. Still the mud was insurmountable. Just as Henry was unclipping the bag tether to turn into a hand line, I made it the top. In contrast to Negative RAT Hole, I had no doubts about my ability to reverse this obstacle.

After only minor amounts of contortionism and rock humping, the rockpile was also successfully navigated, and we found ourselves at the Dunes. With much care not to get Ciara's camping gear muddy, camping gear and unnecessary food was stashed at Rockhampton, ready for the upcoming camping trip.

Despite already being a little later than we hoped, we decided that since we had come so far, we may as well have a look at Mother of God. It is quite a sight to behold. Despite being however many hundreds of metres beneath the ground, the stream calmly bubbles along, completely unaware of its surroundings. In the foreign world of mud and darkness, such a stream seems somewhat out of place. Looking up at the roof, you are clearly in a cave, but looking at the stream, you could easily mistake yourself for being in a mountain brook.

Top of Daily Cases. I am excited for the big pitch to come. You can tell it is on the way in due to the smiles and comparatively clean equipment. Image: Henry Garratt

Mother of God. Image: Henry Garratt

Again, despite the time, we agreed that since we had come so far, we may as well have a look at the Tennis Court rockpile. Henry told me there was some very pretty mud to look at – we just had to see it. After consuming the traditional lunch of caving champions – Shapes – we decided that we'd really better turn back.

Tennis Court. The mud is indeed pretty. Image: Henry Garratt

The return trip through the rockpile and the Hume Highway was enjoyable. The slide down the mud climb was enjoyable, but I'm not sure it quite made up for the difficulty it proved on the way up. After a bit (a whole block) of chocolate, the ascent of Delta Variant commenced. Much like on the way down, Freedom Day was unmemorable except for a bit of excitement

on the exposed traverse line. Despite being extremely awkward on the way down, Close Contact was somehow able to be even more awkward on the way back up.

I led the jumaring up Daily Cases, smoking the first couple of rebelays with ease. The fatigue gradually began to set in, with the speed dropping off. About eighty metres up, I began thinking I must be about 140 metres up, my brain began to wonder how much further I had to go. Just as I was thinking this, I came upon the next rebelay, this one had two ropes joined together. With great excitement, I realised I could work out exactly how much further I had to go by simply looking at the tag on the rope and seeing how long it was. Expecting something in the range of twenty or thirty, I was disheartened to read eighty metres. It was at that point that I realised that the remaining eighty metres of jumaring was going to be rather challenging. Knowing there was only one thing to do, I passed the rebelay and continued on.

Top of Daily Cases on the way out. I am questioning the decisions that brought me to this point. Image: Henry Garratt

On the next few rebelays, the pace dropped significantly as the pain set in. I would look up and see glinting hangers. ‘Surely this is the top?’ No, Daily Cases has another rebelay for me. The suffering was getting real. I found myself having to gee myself up for each stroke of the jumar. Rest for a few seconds, do a squat, rest a bit more, do another squat. My mind has blocked out the top thirty metres or so of the pitch, so I don’t really know how long suffering went on for. I just have vague recollections of burning thighs and the full body fatigue that only caving can provide. Somehow, I must have made it through the last section of the pitch, because my memory starts again with me lying at the top with Henry offering another block of chocolate.

With such a slow pace up the splashy waterfall, the cold was beginning to set in. With a bit more chocolate (yes, another whole block), we were reinvigorated enough to continue up Superspreader to Negative RAT-Hole. It is amazing how a day of caving can change things. On the way down, this section has been a breeze, taking no time at all. With our fatigued bodies, we slowly crawled our way back up. At long last, we could see the rope marking Negative RAT-Hole.

Now came the question that I had been putting off all day, ‘how to get back out of this bloody hole’. Now knowing where the holds are, I decided the best course of action would be to climb out. If it didn’t work, it would be easy enough to simply downclimb and try with the jumars. With remarkable ease, I was able to ascend the hole. It was at this point the balmy evening air greeted me and my ability to cave began to leave me - with Henry still down there with two bags to drag up. In the awkward confines of the ledge, I was able to hand over hand one bag up and clip it to the anchor, without much regard as to where the best spot would actually be to put it. At that point, however, my mind must have said enough is enough, because despite my best desires to help Henry out, I was able to do little more than to sit down and breath in the fresh air.

Henry decided the best course of action to get him and the remaining bag out, would be to jumar and trail it beneath him. This worked well, until he came close to the top. Here, the bag which I had so haphazardly clipped to the anchor became a roadblock for him. With absolutely no assistance from me, Henry was able to use a stream of profanities to headbutt this top bag up and out of the way whilst simultaneously dragging the lower bag through the tight chimney beneath him. With Henry struggling the most I had seen him all day, he was finally able to get him and both bags up, and out of the hole. Checking the time, it was already 0100.

Doing a packing job which would get you turned away from walking the Overland Track, (just clip the cave pack to the outside of your rucksack. As long as it isn’t dragging on the ground, it’s good enough. Weight distribution? Pack stability? Who cares!), we set out on the walk down the hill. The fatigued body is a curious thing. The walk felt surprisingly easy, however, we were forced to sit down and rest at all the major log crossings.

Most of the track was followed easily, being well marked. Although I had though there were perhaps a few too many tapes when we were walking up in the morning, I was thankful for them now. Entering the thicker forest of the landslip, navigation became much more challenging. At some point, we realised the track

was becoming substantially more overgrown that we remembered it being in the morning, we had also not seen any tapes for a hundred metres or so.

'Do you reckon this is the track, or are we just following the creek?'

'Yeah, nah, I reckon we're just in the creek.'

We turned around and began to walk back the way we went. After finding a tape, we tried again to follow the track, and again found ourselves in the creek. There is nothing quite like getting lost in the middle of the night, it has quite a different feeling to being lost in the daytime. Henry pulled out his phone, hoping he had downloaded a map of the area. He had not. Despite Henry's plan to walk back up the hill to get reception and download a map, I thought that given we could find the track, we should have one last go at trying to follow it. Going slowly, sticking our heads down any opening in the forest that could possibly be the track, we found some more tapes. Wearily, we continued on and dragged ourselves out to the road. Three o'clock, two hours to walk down the hill, not great time.

We arrived back in Hobart, just as the sun was beginning to rise. Henry had promised me a hard day. I don't think either of us had envisaged it being quite this long or hard, however. I was completely flogged, but in a good way.

JF-4 Khazad-Dum

1 December 2024

Ashlee Bastiaansen

Party: Ashlee Bastiaansen, Henry Garratt, Michael Glazer, John Oxley, Rae Watson

A lovely walk from the carpark to the cave entrance, in warm sunshine despite the weather reports. The waterfall at the entrance was pounding at full force after all the rain the previous night.

Image: John Oxley

The headache-inducing sound of the waterfall was soon replaced by the quiet serenity of the cave as we slithered our way down the Serpentine route. Rae graciously accepted the role of rigging the first pitch for the group and did a wonderful job doing so! After some meandering through the cave, the rumbling sound of moving water started to echo in the cave. We came to a junction at the creek where we decided to leave our bags and go see the waterfall.

As we neared the waterfall, the sound of falling water drowned out all conversations. The water spray and wind draft from the waterfall brought looks of pure joy and excitement to everyone's faces. We all sat around watching the water falling from the roof of the cave, mesmerised like we'd never seen a waterfall before! Sticking your hand in the waterfall, you could feel the shear force in the water that was plummeting down.

Returning to our bags for lunch, Michael decided he would set the new standard for day caving. Cracking out his stove and pot, he kindly made a hot chocolate for everyone and offered around some TimTams. This should be the new normal for any group doing a day trip to the caves!!

Note, the false floor in (I don't know what section) did not seem very stable and care should be taken.

Image: John Oxley

Other Exciting Stuff

The Needle and The Damage Done: A Metaphor

Bill Nicholson

1976 JF-110, hammering in a star drill to bolt the 55 m ladder pitch. Bill on the hammer as always with Stuart Nicholas supervising. Image: Laurie Moody

Yep the AGM is upon us soon and this one will be my last as a member; this will roughly mark 50 years of caving on and off for me. I decided to call it quits earlier this year to follow other interests, particularly social justice and psychology/behavioral science.

1975 and it was woollies under cotton coveralls, these days it's rainbow thermals under spacesuits. Harnesses were lengths of seatbelt webbing knotted together. Descenders were crossed krabs then whaletails and racks, those pretty French thingies came later along with a new style of SRT. Figure 8 and its variants became popular up on that island to the north of us but not here, our caves are different. Lights were cumbersome, miners' lamps and carbide flame throwers and then a combination of the two. I liked carbide as you could blow things up.

Tony Culberg OAM introduced me into this frolicking about with holes in the ground; thank you Tony. I found the Tasmanian Caverneering Club was quite conservative back then, I felt at home with the Southern Caving Society as there were a good bunch of deviants as members. That Karst Research Group was a lot of talking and not doing much, academia does just that and often kills individual thought processes.

Caving clubs here, and (according to a prestigious leading global study that I just made up) clubs elsewhere are made up of very strange and weird people, misfits if you like. But apart from the obvious we all have one thing in common, let me know when you figure it out.

Keep an open mind, use stimulants if you need to and I wish you all well.

Tassy Cavers Do It Deeper and We Do It In The Dark.

Cheers. Bill Nicholson

JF-2 Cauldron Pot Rigging Guide

Updated: March 2023 by Ric Tunney

P1: Entrance Pitch (41 m) [55 m rope (this is an estimate)]:

Walk around lip of doline to broad ledge at cliff line beside waterfall. Belay with tape around tree on LHS of waterfall, with backup to upside down bolt underneath small ledge about 1.5 m above ground level. Rebelay off two bolts immediately above lip 8 m down, LHS of rock slab about 3 m to left of fall line. (Use a maillion rapide on the lower of the two bolts as a standard size carabiner is a little too long in the spine and creates a bit of bad leverage on the bolt due to its proximity to the edge. Maillon left in situ March 2023.) (Rock here was clear when bolts were installed in 2005, bolts were hidden under moss 2013, and were visible March 2023; bolts are on smooth rock just above lip.) Rebelay off bolt at rub point on projecting rock about 6 m further down. Rebelay off bolt LHS in corner about 10 m further down above final free-hang to bottom.

Bill's Bypass

There are two concrete screws with hangers above a short, tricky climb near the bottom of the Bypass. A 4 m tape handline would help the climb. These screws are not stainless and were installed by unknown person(s) around 2020.

P2a First Cascade (14 m): [36 m rope for P2a & P2b if tape is used around natural.]

Belay from excellent natural LHS with backup to eyebolt.

P2b Second and Third Cascades (2 m & 4 m):

Two bolts on LHS.

P3 Chute Pitch (15 m) [22 m rope]:

Belay on eyebolt on LHS at top of pitch. Tie in to previous pitch rope to back-up. Rebelay on bolt RHS around corner 5 m down

P4 Eleven Metre Pitch (11 m) [15 m rope]:

Bolt on LHS 2 m back from lip. Rebelay on bolt on RHS 1 m past lip.

P5 Diagonal Pitch (14 m) [30 m rope will reach to P7]:

Belay on eyebolt 2 m back from edge on LHS. Rebelay on bolt on LHS at lip. Second rebelay bolt in roof approx. 8 m further down to left gives free-hang to bottom.

P6 Four Metre Cascade (4 m):

The P5 rope can be rebelayed with a 5 m tape around the "extremely dangerous-looking boulder" at the top of P6 to reach the top of P7. Or the pitch can be free-climbed (wet).

P7 Bolt Traverse Pitch (35 m) [43 m rope]:

The top of this pitch is exposed and is best approached on the P5 rope. Belay off eyebolt in floor on RHS with back-up from previous rope. Descend and traverse around right hand wall; 5 m round and 3 m down (away from waterfall!) to two bolts. The top one is an old carrot and hanger with some tape - do not use. Rebelay from the bottom bolt, an 8 mm stainless throughbolt with stainless hanger and a hero loop. Rebelay on bolt about 10 m further down at lip of free hang. Drop to bottom is not totally dry!

Pitch 8 Au Cheval Pitch (5 m up, 15 m down) [18 m rope]:

Fixed 5 m rope in situ on up climb. Rig descent rope off same natural as fixed rope

P9 Firehose Pitch (15 m) (Downstream.)

Not dry! Use naturals.

Notes: All directions are facing downstream. (Opposite direction to that when abseiling.) Eyebolts are originals from early exploration. All other bolts are 8 x 90 mm Powers SS Throughbolts. Leave all hangers in cave. Rope lengths will just reach bottom, depending on size of loops and knots

IB-1 Revelation Cave via IB-233 Chorale Cave Entrance - Rigging Notes

Original Rigging *Speleo Spiel* 356. Updated *Speleo Spiel* 434. Updated 2021.

Updated August 2024 by Janine Mc Kinnon

P1 (7 m) Mud Cake: 12 m rope. 3 m tape around horizontal fallen log above pot. It is a bit rotten, and broken off, but works, for now. Back-up to large tree 4 m back from lip. 3 m tape around tree. There are a few glancing rubs down the pitch. These can be mitigated with a rope protector. Alternately, use tree beside lowest point of side and back up to nearby tree.

P2 (The Baguette): 19 m from bolts, 16 m from take-off ledge. 22 m rope, plus approach lines. Belay from 2 x 8 mm bolts on LH wall level with top of large boulder. A 5 m approach line from a boulder on the floor protects the rigger when reaching the bolts; 3 m tape around boulder.

It is much easier to take-off from ledge 2 m down-pitch, approached from underneath the boulders on RHS (obvious way forward). Again, a separate 5 m approach line would be helpful for beginners/very cautious cavers. However, it is easily possible to safely approach the ledge and reach the rope without a safety line.

Redirection from knob, 2 m below bolts, level with take-off ledge, and opposite take-off ledge on opposite wall. 2 m tape required, 4 m if doubled. This holds the first metre of the rope away from the wall.

This is not strictly necessary though and needs to be on a long line to allow cavers on the ledge to reach the rope. It can be safely omitted.

P3 (18 m): 25m rope. Back-up to 8 mm bolt about 6 m vertically above pitch head on RHS (this is not easily spotted; look out and around corner when climbing down to pitch head). Do NOT abseil on the single bolt; use it as a handline for the downclimbs. Then, tie in to 2 x 8 mm bolts LHS on last platform at pitch head. Finally, use one of the two 8 mm bolts above the pitch on LHS as a rebelays.

Note: there are two bolts at the rebelay as it was originally the pitch head, but is not now.

All bolts have had hangers left in-situ.

Notes:

Rope lengths are approximate. All directions looking down. Bolts are 8 mm Powers Throughbolts, installed 12/2011 and 04/2021 (last pitch-head).

A Guide to Classic Southern Tasmanian Caves for Visiting Cavers

Version 1 (December 2024)

Ciara Smart

The following has been written as a guide for cavers visiting southern Tasmania who fancy some classic trips. Southern Tasmania is home to the best vertical caving in Australia. Over the years STC has set up various beginner and intermediate caves with permanent anchors. Many caves have been p-hangered and other caves have more archaic but functional forms of fixed anchors. Most of these caves have published rigging guides.

There are two main caving areas in southern Tasmania: the Junee-Florentine and Ida Bay/Hastings. The Junee-Florentine is about 90 minutes west of Hobart, adjacent to Mt Field National Park. Ida Bay/Hastings is about 2.5 hours south. The caves in the Junee-Florentine are wetter and more vertical than those in Ida Bay or Hastings. Caves in the Junee-Florentine do not require a permit or key, except for Welcome Stranger. The 8 Road and the Junee Quarry Road require a key to save a longer walk. Keys can be borrowed from the Parks office at the entry point to Mt Field National Park. STC also has keys to these gates which can be borrowed by other caving clubs (give plenty of notice).

Several popular caves in Ida Bay/Hastings require a permit and may be physically gated. Cave gate keys can be collected from the key box at the Parks Office at Hastings out of hours provided you have an approved permit. Give Parks plenty of time to process your permit applications and call ahead to confirm they have left the correct key out.

Cave locations are not disclosed in the following guide for obvious reasons. It is strongly recommended that you contact STC prior to your trip. Reach out to the club president (president@southerntasmaniancaverneers.com) if you don't know anyone. You may even find some local cavers who want to join you. STC can give location details and provide any updates on the cave conditions, access routes, logs over the road or changes to rigging. Ropes can be borrowed from STC by ASF-affiliated clubs with sufficient notice for a nominal fee.

STC is pretty good at keeping rigging notes updated and published in the *Speleo Spiel*, or occasionally *Caves Australia*. Nevertheless, be prepared for discrepancies in anchors or rope lengths. Sometimes rigging notes are not publicly available so you will need to contact the club for a copy or for someone to tell you the details. Published references for rigging guides are included below. Several years of *Speleo Spiel* issues are hosted on our website, but for older references you will need to contact the club to get a copy from our archive. See:

https://southerntasmaniancaverneers.com/spiel/

The 'difficulty' of the below caves is utterly subjective but considered with average mainland cavers in mind. PVC suits are not generally necessary for the following caves, but some are wetter than others, especially in winter. The star refers to the overall 'wow' factor.

Abbreviations:
SS###: Speleo Spiel number #
P#: Pitch number #
JF#: Junee-Florentine Cave number #
IB#: Ida Bay cave number #
H#: Hastings cave number #

Junee-Florentine

Welcome Stranger JF-229

Completely horizontal, short but beautifully decorated cave. A half day.
Difficulty: very easy
Local guide not necessary
Permit and key required
✸

Owl Pot JF-221

Classic easy vertical trip down a short cave. 4 pitches, maximum 30 m. It's a blissfully short walk from the car. It is a half day if you are efficient.
Anchors: naturals and p-hangers
Difficulty: easy
Rigging guide: *SS*329, p.14. [but note a single p-hanger is placed on P1 to replace the 'small tree' anchor]
Local guide not necessary

Cauldron Pot JF-2

This is a great sporting cave with strong appeal to photographers. It is worth visiting for the first pitch alone. In total, there are 9 pitches, the longest of which is 41 m (P1). The cave is rarely descended past Pitch 7. Some may find 'Bills Bypass' challenging. This is a longish steep meander. Beyond this there are a series of fun, mostly short pitches alongside the streamway. Avoid after heavy rain unless you are prepared to get wet.
Anchors: Naturals and permanent anchors of varying age, style and quality. No p-hangers.
Difficulty: intermediate.
Rigging guide: *SS*461
Local guide not necessary.

Key required for the Junee Quarry Road.
✸✸

Dissidence JF-382

An attractive cave with 8/9 pitches, the longest of which is 55 m. The cave doesn't contain any major obstacles, but it is a reasonably big day out to go down all the pitches and is a long walk from the road. The cave has an extensive base level that is rarely visited. P7 Vertical Euphoria (55 m) is a recommended side trip as it is a quality pitch.
Anchors: p-hangers and naturals
Difficulty: intermediate
Rigging guide: Caves Australia 226, p.41.
Map: *Caves Australia* 226, p.42.
Local guide not necessary.
✸

Tassy Pot JF-223

Very vertical cave with 4 pitches, longest is 71 m. Muddy in spots but typically dry throughout, even in winter and located very close to the road. Can be done in half a day if you are efficient.
Anchors: mostly p-hangers (one 10 mm expansion bolt) and naturals
Difficulty: intermediate
Rigging guide: *SS*341, p.7-8. Note that there is now a bolt added on the first pitch since that guide was written.
Local guide not necessary

Khazad-Dum JF-4

A classic trip down what was once the deepest cave in the country. There are three separate vertical routes down this cave to the lower streamway level, each with different difficulty levels: the traditional route, serpentine route or the wet route. The traditional route is most visited, and the wet route is the most technically challenging. The traditional route has 6 pitches, the longest of which is 28 m. The 7 pitches below this are often not descended as they are wet. If you have a large group, you can consider a cross-over trip via different routes, or even via the neighbouring JF-14 Dwarrowdelf. Moderate walk from end of road.
Anchors: all routes have p-hangers plus a few naturals
Difficulty: Intermediate. Easy if you only go partway. Advanced for the crossover with Dwarrowdelf
Rigging guide: *SS*447, p.11-12.
Local guide not necessary
Key required for the Junee Quarry Road
✸✸

Niggly JF-237

Given the opportunity, the traditional vertical entrance series to the deepest cave in the country is a 'must-do' for an ambitious caver with the right skills. At the moment it is not seeing any visitation as the adjoining Delta Variant is rigged. Once Delta Variant is derigged, this will likely revert to its former status as the main route in and out of the cave. This is a serious undertaking that is not worth installing ropes for a one-off trip. The longest abseil in the traditional route down Niggly is 103 m. Alternatively, you have the option to do the longest free-hanging pitch in the southern hemisphere, the outrageous Black Supergiant (191 m). It's a 1.5-hour uphill walk to reach the cave.
Anchors: p-hangers and naturals
Difficulty: hard, or very hard if you take the Black Supergiant
Rigging guide: not available (yet), ask STC for information.
Local guide recommended
✸✸ (traditional route)
✸✸✸ (Black Supergiant)

Dwarrowdelf JF-14

Very vertical cave with 6 pitches, the longest is 67 m. Lower half of cave can be unpleasantly wet in winter and after heavy rain. Moderate walk from end of road. A classic advanced trip is to do a cross-over with Khazad Dum if you have the numbers.
Anchors: p-hangers and naturals
Difficulty: intermediate, or advanced if you do a crossover trip up Khazad Dum
Rigging guide: *SS*412, p.11
Local guide not necessary
Key required for the Junee Quarry Road

Slaughterhouse Pot JF-337 into Growling Swallet JF-36

This is a classic trip. Slaughterhouse has 3 short pitches, the longest of which is 30 m. The pitches are permanently rigged. A nice introductory trip is to go down Slaughterhouse and back up. You can do a superb through trip by going down Slaughterhouse and out Growling Swallet. If you continue through Growling Swallet you will need to pass through Windy Rift which has a series of short pitches rigged with permanent ropes. Growling Swallet streamway has no pitches but several scrambles and committing freeclimbs. The through trip is a moderate/long day.Avoid Growling in high water conditions. Short to moderate walk from end of road.
Anchors: permanently rigged with fixed ropes in Slaughterhouse and Windy Rift.
Difficulty: intermediate, or intermediate/advanced if you do the through trip out Growling
Rigging guide reference: NA. Further in-cave route descriptions available in STC archive.
Local guide not necessary if 'bouncing' Slaughterhouse. Local guide handy if you are exiting up Growling to save you time route-finding.
Key required for the 8 Road.
✸✸✸ (for the through trip)

Ice-Tube JF-345

This is a classic hard trip combined with a long walk from the road. This is generally done as a pull-down trip with an exit through Growling Swallet. There are 11 (mostly wet) pitches, the longest of which is 48 m. The through trip is a big day with complex route-finding, mud, free-climbs, exposed traverses and squeezes, including the notorious Fallopian Tube. Avoid Growling in high water conditions.
Anchors: 10 mm expansion bolts with fixed hangers and rings suitable for pull down (or SRT)
Difficulty: hard
Rigging guide: *SS*346, p.16-17. Relevant updates in *SS*441, p.29-30.
Local Guide recommended for the complex route-finding through to Growling Swallet. Not necessary if you are bouncing
Key required for the 8 Road
✸✸

JF-761 Delta Variant

This is the new entrance series to the deepest cave in the country. As of late 2024, all pitches have ropes installed on a medium-term basis for commuting to base level via the Negative-RAT Hole entrance. The cave will not remain rigged forever at which point access to base level Niggly will probably revert to the p-hangered 'traditional' route above. Delta Variant is not set up for recreational trips in the long-term, but at the moment, as the ropes are likely to remain rigged throughout 2025, it is an excellent day trip for advanced visiting cavers. If you just want a taster, there is the option to go only as far as the biggest pitch, Daily Cases (163 m), which is the second pitch and less than 1 hour of (fast) caving from the entrance. The route to Daily Cases is mostly horizontal and reasonably straightforward. The cave begins with a squeezy pitch right at the entrance that will prevent visitation for oversized cavers. It's a 1.5-hour uphill walk to reach the cave.
Anchors: temporary anchors with ropes currently installed on a temporary basis
Difficulty: hard
Rigging Guide: not available, speak to STC about anchor conditions
Map: *Caves Australia* 228, p.18-19.
Local guide optional. Route finding in the cave is relatively straightforward (follow the ropes), but the cave is a serious undertaking so a local guide may be reassuring.
✸✸

Hastings

King George V H-214

Decorated short horizontal cave. Unbelayed 'builders ladder' on short entrance pitch. A half day.
Difficulty: very easy
Local guide not necessary
Permit and cave gate key required.

Wolf Hole H-8

Classic photographer's trip. One pitch to enter the cave. The highlight of the cave is the beautiful Lake Pluto. The trip takes 3-5 hours depending on photos.
Difficulty: easy
Anchors: naturals and one 10 mm expansion bolt with fixed hanger
Rigging Guide:
Permit required
✸✸

Ida Bay

Revelation IB-1

A classic, easy vertical trip with a short walk. 3 pitches, the longest of which is 18 m. 3-4 hours. Don't forget to make a token poke at the eternal dig.
Anchors: naturals and through-bolts with hangers
Difficulty: easy
Rigging Guide: *SS*461
Local guide not necessary

Midnight Hole IB-11 / Mystery Creek IB-10

This is a classic through trip. Excellent bang-for-your-buck for an easy day out. There are 6 pitches, the longest of which is 49 m. The pitches end at the Matchbox Squeeze where Midnight Hole joins Mystery Creek cave. The Matchbox Squeeze is a very easy squeeze, but it does present an obstacle to abnormally large humans. If you're efficient and you know the way, it's a half-day trip.
Anchors: p-hangers with chains and rings for pulldown
Difficulty: easy
Rigging guide: Not necessary for the pull down, longest pitch is 49 m so you need at least two 50 m ropes.
Local guide not necessary, but don't get lost on your way-out Mystery Creek. That would be embarrassing.
✸

Milk Run IB-38

Moderate to easy vertical cave but plenty of loose rock which presents a hazard to non-cautious cavers on the consecutive pitches. Moderate walk to entrance from end of road. 8 pitches, the longest of which is 49 m.
Difficulty: intermediate
Anchors: p-hangers
Rigging Guide: *SS*349, p.20-21

Big Tree Pot IB-9

Very vertical cave of mostly short pitches which culminate in a spectacular free-hanging pitch. 6 pitches, the longest of which is 90 m. Great and relatively easy cave to negotiate, but rigging is sub-optimal and only suitable for people with confidence at rigging off naturals and very old bolts. Moderate walk to entrance from end of road
Difficulty: intermediate
Anchors: naturals and spits, except for two throughbolts on P5.
Rigging Guide: *SS*317, p.9. see also *SS*353, p.6-7.

Exit Cave IB-14

Exit is famous for a reason. It's a long and spectacular cave. It is entirely horizontal if you enter and exit via the resurgence. It's a pleasant day out to stroll up Exit via the resurgence and take in the sights as far as you feel comfortable. There are options to do more challenging through trips and enter Exit via various vertical entrances described below. The walk to/from the cave is over an hour.
Difficulty: easy
Permit and cave gate key required
✸

Old Ditch Road IB-131 into Exit Cave

This is usually done as a through trip exiting via Exit Cave. 4 pitches, the longest of which is 35 m. The walk to/from the cave is over an hour.
Difficulty: easy
Anchors: p-hangers
Rigging Guide: *SS*457, p.10.
Local guide optional.
Permit and key required for Old Ditch Road and Exit Cave.

Valley Entrance IB-120 into Exit Cave

This is a fun, almost entirely horizontal trip. There is one 7 m pitch which has a permanent ladder. Less confident ladder users may appreciate a belay from the fixed rope. This trip takes in many of the sights of the Exit system. The walk to/from the cave is over an hour.
Difficulty: intermediate (the caving itself is easy, but the cave is long and the route-finding is not that obvious)
Anchors: p-hangers for the laddered pitch

Rigging Guide: NA
Permit and gate key required
✸✸

Mini Martin IB-8

Classic trip. Three pitches, the longest of which is the spectacular free-hanging entrance pitch at 110 m. The walk to/from the cave is over an hour.

Difficulty: intermediate
Anchors: naturals and p-hangers
Rigging Guide: *SS*330, p.3.
Local guide not required
✸

Official STC Correspondence with Department of Natural Resources and Environment regarding Lyrebird impacts

Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc.
PO Box 416, Sandy Bay, Tasmania, 7006

Mr Jason Jacobi
Secretary,
Department of Natural Resources and Environment
Jason.jacobi@nre.tas.gov.au

09 May, 2024

Dear Sir,

Concerns about the impact of lyrebirds on the karst environment in southern Tasmania

The Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*) was introduced to Tasmania in 1934 when a group was released at Mt Field National Park. Further birds were brought in later and released at Hastings Caves. The main purpose of introducing the birds was to preserve the species from predation by the English fox on mainland Australia (Sharland, 1981[1])

In the 1970s lyrebirds would be heard only once or twice a day in winter (the mating period) and were very difficult to find and were (apparently) confined to the Hastings Caves area and lower eastern slopes of Mt Field National Park, especially the Russell Falls – Lady Barron Falls area.

However, lyrebird numbers have increased substantially in the fifty years since.

Now, lyrebirds range from South Cape Bay to the northern wet gullies of the Wellington Range. They have spread west to at least as far as Mt Riveaux and from Mt Field into the Florentine valley. It could be reasonably assumed that the spread westwards has continued, and will continue, through the favourable wet forest environment.

The Southern Tasmanian Caverneers club is concerned about the deleterious effects of lyrebird activities on the karst environment. In areas where lyrebird numbers now abound, the very moist, undisturbed forest floor that was completely covered in bryophytes, lichen, small ferns, and the seedlings of trees and shrubs has been severely scratched up leaving soil exposed, loose and much dryer.

These effects can be most clearly seen in areas such as the track into Mystery Creek Cave. Areas of several hundreds of square metres of totally denuded understory are clearly visible from the track. Even the Ghania (cutting grass) has been decimated in some sections.

Some of the issues arising from lyrebird activities that concerns cavers are:-

1) *Ground water acidification*.
   Changes in the acidity of the soil through loss of vegetation will affect the growth or dissolution of speleothems in the caves. It may also affect the stability of underground breccia, calcified soil and clay deposits.

2) *Silt load in run off*.
   Without the plant understory to hold soil in place heavy rain will result in increasing erosion and increased deposition of silt into cave systems.

3) *Loss of habitat for marsupials, birds and invertebrates*.
   The cave flora and fauna is dependant for food and nutrients on the health of the surface flora and fauna, How will this affect the food and nutrient supply for the cave dwelling flora and fauna?

4) *Exposure of roots*.
   With the understory destroyed continued scratching by the birds is exposing more of the root mass of larger trees. What is the long term effect on these trees?

Southern Tasmanian Caverneers (STC) is very concerned that observations of environmental change in areas of high lyrebird populations may indicate that the sensitive karst environment is already being affected.

We would like to know if there is any action being taken, or if there are any plans to investigate this issue and remediate the problem.

STC would be happy to help with any investigation to better understand the effect of lyrebirds on the karst environment and which explores options for reversing such effect.

Yours sincerely,

Karina Anders

Karina Anders
Secretary, Southern Tasmanian Caverneers.

[1]Sharland, M. 1981. *A guide to the birds of Tasmania*. Drinkwater Publishing, Hobart, Tasmania.

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Tasmanian Government

Ms Karina Anders
Secretary
Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc
PO Box 416
SANDY BAY TAS 7006

Dear Ms Anders

Thank you for your letter of 9 May 2024 regarding the effect of lyrebirds on the karst systems of south-west Tasmania. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I share your concern regarding the effect of the various introduced animals which have become established in Tasmania, including those now extending their ranges into remote areas within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA). I appreciate also that Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc (STC) is in a unique position to observe lyrebird-karst interactions and to infer how interactions may impinge on ecosystem health in the specific context of karst caves.

I am aware of two studies which have investigated the effect of introduced lyrebirds on forest environments in Tasmania. The first, an honours thesis by Zoe Tanner (2000), showed that the abundance of ferns and saplings may be reduced in areas subject to foraging by lyrebirds, but suggested that this was not accompanied by observed impacts to forest litter-dwelling invertebrates. The second, a PhD study by Sarah Tassel (2014), found that lyrebird activity did not result in lasting changes in biotic communities within the timeframe of the experiment. It appears that lyrebirds can cause intense localised impacts, but these impacts are not reflected at the landscape scale over longer timeframes.

Outside of Tasmania, Maisey et al (2022) investigated the role of lyrebirds as ecosystem engineers in wet forest in Victoria where the species occurs naturally. They showed that lyrebird activity strongly conditioned forest understorey and forest litter-dwelling invertebrates in ways which the authors considered positive for ecosystem health in that environment. Another Victorian study, Nugent et al (2014), concluded that foraging by lyrebirds reduces surface fuel loads, mitigating the frequency and severity of wildfires.

Tanner's fieldwork was conducted at Hastings Caves but did not examine the effects of lyrebird specifically on karst systems. However, the research by Tanner, Tassel and others provide context for evaluating how lyrebird impacts may impinge on karst systems and the processes occurring in caves.

The lyrebird is listed on Schedule 4 of the *Nature (Wildlife) Conservation Regulations 2021* as Restricted (Special purpose) wildlife. A permit is required to buy, sell or possess this species in Tasmania. Like all introduced species occurring on land reserved under the *Nature Conservation Act 2022*, an authority is required to take or disturb lyrebirds.

The *TWWHA Biosecurity Strategy 2021-2031* (DPIPWE 2021) is a non-statutory document that provides guidance for management of introduced species in general. The Strategy establishes goals and actions for responding to the presence of introduced species within the TWWHA and is informed by an earlier risk-assessment report on introduced animals in the TWWHA (Mallick and Driessen 2010). An action item in the Strategy calls for a review of the risk assessments.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas)'s Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) is the lead area responsible for implementing the strategy. This very challenging task is undertaken with finite resources and, as such, demands a strongly prioritised approach. Eradication of lyrebirds is problematic given their current extent and the inaccessibility of much of their range. However, management has and will continue to respond to situations where important values are known to be directly threatened by lyrebirds. This approach has been applied in mitigating the effect of lyrebirds on the critically endangered myrtle elbow orchid (DPIPWE 2007).

Thank you again for your letter. I appreciate your offer to help better understand the effect of lyrebirds on the karst environment. NRE Tas is not presently proposing to coordinate such an investigation. However, if STC wishes to pursue this independently as a citizen science initiative, specialist staff at NRE Tas are available to provide input to assist in developing an appropriate methodology. Please feel free to contact the NRE Tas Karst Officer Rolan Eberhard at Rolan.Eberhard@nre.tas.gov.au in the first instance. I have attached a list of the references referred to above.

Yours sincerely

Jason Jacobi
Secretary

7 July 2024

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