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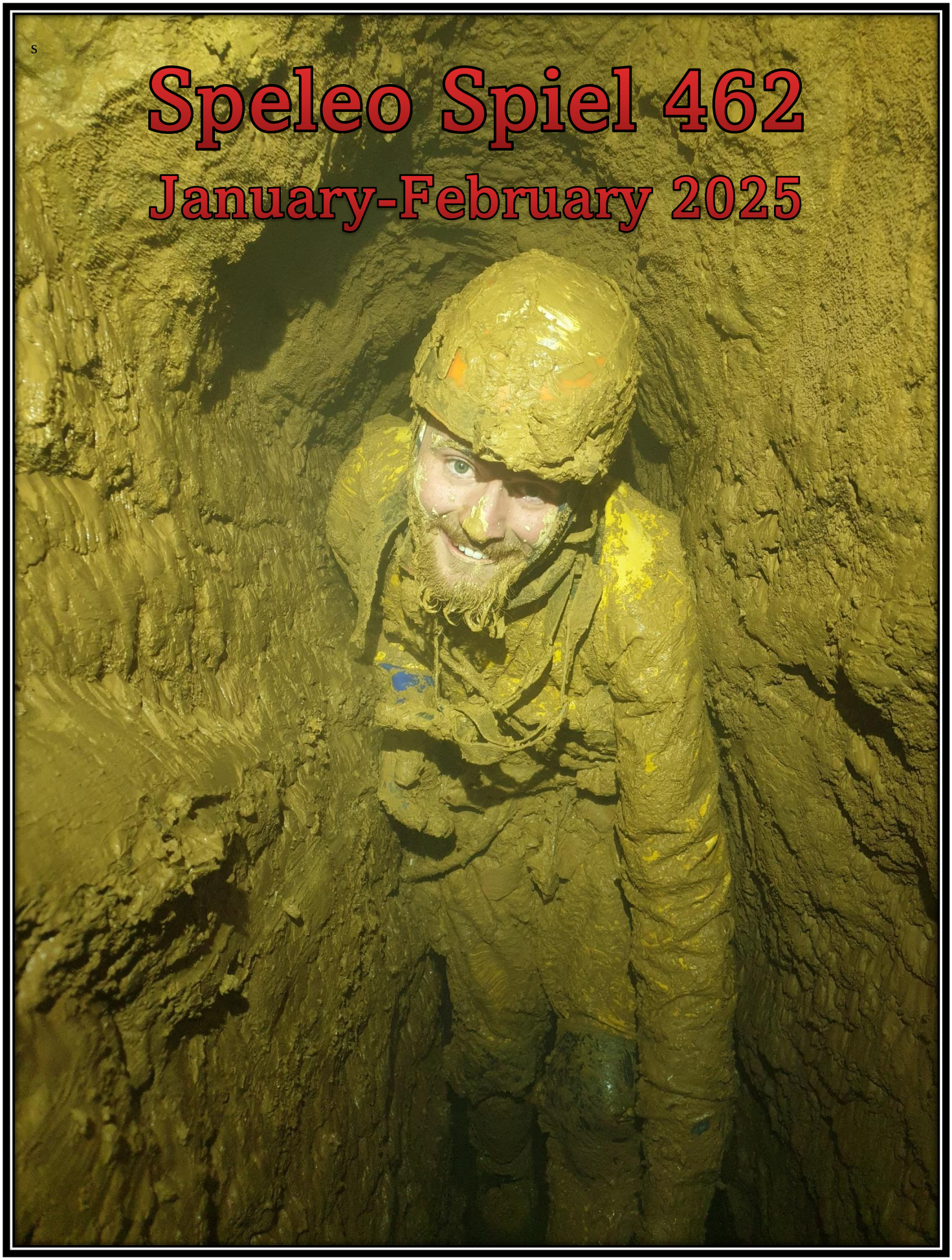
Speleo Spiel 462

January-February 2025



Newsletter of Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc. ISSN 2208-1348

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Front Cover: Henry Garratt being reborn from The Gurgler in JF-237 Niggly Cave. Image: Brendan Moore.

***Back Cover*:** The Hairy Goat returns. Image: Stephen Fordyce.

Speleo Spiel *462 was prepared by Ciara Smart, with subeditorial assistance from Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney and Alan Jackson.*

Speleo Spiel

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Issue No. 462, January-February 2025

Contents 2

Regular Bits
Editorial — Ciara Smart — 3
Stuff 'n' Stuff — Ciara Smart — 3

Trip Reports
JF-237 Niggly Cave — Fordyce et al. — 4
IB-10 Mystery Creek and IB-4, 5, 6 Bradley Chesterman Cave — John Oxley — 10
JF-36 Growling Swallet — Alan Jackson — 10
JF-40 — Henry Garratt — 11
IB-11 Midnight Hole — Alan Jackson — 11
IB-158 Promising Hole — Janine McKinnon — 11
IB-11 Midnight Hole — Henry Garratt — 12
Growling Swallet Area Surface — Stephen Fordyce — 12
JF-15 Hairy Goat Hole Discovery — Stephen Fordyce — 14
Chairman Track Reconnoitre — Janine McKinnon — 17

Other Exciting Stuff
Letter of Nomination — Ciara Smart — 18
Office Bearer's Reports — Various — 19

The Last Page 23

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

Welcome to the first issue of 2025. The AGM has come and gone, conducted in perhaps a record time of 8 minutes. The executive has been shuffled up: Karina Anders is now President with Janine McKinnon switching to Vice President. It seems I am still *Spiel* editor, so welcome to another year of questionable colour combinations.

Yep, it had to happen, this is my first late issue. And properly late at that. Sorry… After being unshackled from my thesis I spent most of summer gallivanting underground across a few landmasses. I'm still playing catchup on everything, especially cave admin. But I don't regret it one bit.

What a summer of caving we've had in southern Tasmania! By now, you may have heard two items of HUGE news. After many decades in the archival wilderness, JF-15 Hairy Goat Hole, has been relocated after being last seen sometime in the 1970s. See the report of the discovery on page 14. And if that wasn't enough, on Valentine's Day, the rockpile at the end of Australia's deepest cave was finally bypassed, opening a can of worms that might just consume STC's current generation of push cavers. As hoped, barrelling mastercave of stupendous proportions has been discovered on the other side of the rockpile. As I write, the lead remains wide open. It's terribly exciting and represents the next era of deep cave exploration in this country, but alas you'll have to wait for the next *Spiel* to read about it. This issue contains the report of the preceding trip though (page 5).

Two of our members received significant awards at the recent ASF Conference. Read more below. From what I've heard, the ASF Conference was a hoot. Well done to the conference organisers! It's no small thing to organise an event of that magnitude.

Stuff 'n' Stuff

ASF Conference & STC Awardees

Stephen Fordyce: The ASF Conference in Buchan was a great time, with 130 cavers from around Australia attending for nearly two weeks in January 2025. Among other things, awards were presented at the Cavers' Dinner (80s-themed!) to those who have made significant contributions to caving in Australia.

STC's (outgoing) President and venerated tribal elder Janine McKinnon was awarded the Edie Smith Award for outstanding service to Australian Speleology over a long period of time. This the highest award given out and a very big deal in the ASF world. Congratulations Janine! The citation reads: 'For her service to the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers, holding various committee roles including President, Editor of *Speleo Spiel* and Training Officer; training new members in caving techniques including SRT and cave rescue; exploration of caves and cave diving in Tasmania including Exit Cave, Khazad Dum, Sesame, Cauldron Pot and The Letterbox; and to the Australian speleological community as a member of the ASF Executive during which time Janine updated many ASF Codes and Guidelines.'

Following this award, Janine gave an interview to ABC Radio Hobart on 5 February. Janine joins a short but notable list of STC members to have received this award: Kevin Kiernan (1983), Albert Goede (1985), Arthur Clarke (2005), Ian Houshold (2007) and Greg Middleton (2011).

Janine receiving her award at the STC AGM, presented by incoming President Karina Anders.

Fellow STC member Deb Hunter was also given an Award of Distinction for recognition of especially notable contribution to speleology. Congratulations Deb! The citation reads: 'For rescue preparedness in Tasmania, including the rewriting of the Minimum Impact Cave Rescue Code for the ASF in 2019 and the development of cave rescue plan templates; and also for her commitment to the conservation of caves and karst in Northern Tasmania.'

Trip Reports

JF-237 Niggly Cave 'Teenage Dirtbag'

(Four day camping trip)

12-15 December 2024

Stephen Fordyce (unless noted otherwise)

Party: Kynan Bonnice, Stephen Fordyce, Henry Garratt, Brendan Moore, Ciara Smart

Introduction

(Steve) Another Niggly trip, and another Niggly trip report – both seem to be getting harder. With two teenagers along and a bunch of dirtbags, 'Teenage Dirtbag' by Wheatus did good service as the trip theme song. Hopes were high that access to the Chrysalis Streamway would be drier, and that we could bag kilometres of master cave. The weather and the cave had other ideas, although we were at least productive in making Weightwatchers Squeeze a bit friendlier for people without a deathwish (or Ciara's build) and doing a bunch of resurvey and sketching.

With Brendan and me on an impromptu but important Nullarbor trip (returning three days before Niggly) and Ciara consumed by her PhD, Henry took on many of the annoying little admin jobs that make these trips run smoothly. He did a good job and learned some things, good stuff.

Thigh-deep water in Mother of God. Image: Stephen Fordyce

Day 1a: Entry #1

(Steve) Team Youthful (Henry, Brendan and Kynan) made an earlier start, after a briefing that was mostly me pointedly saying that Henry was definitely in charge. Nobody got into a spiderweb, some faffing was done, and water levels were found to be too high to reach the DIY Sump. It turned out that 38 mm (a record for December) of rain had been recorded at the Tim Shea BOM station in the 24 hours to 10 am that morning, with very little warning in the forecast. Eeek.

Day 1b: Entry #2 - Team Post-PhD had a leisurely start and achieved reaching camp.

(Ciara) The evening before this trip I submitted my doctoral thesis for examination. The months before had been intense and unpleasant, and I hadn't had much sleep for an extended period. After clicking 'submit' and delivering 100,000+ words into the academic aether, I felt less like cracking a bottle of champagne and more like crawling into a very tired ball. I had enough manic energy to get my packing done that night, but Steve kindly offered to walk separately up the hill with me to give me enough time to attempt some shut eye. We had a late start and weren't plodding up the hill until late morning. Just before Daily Cases I suffered a bout of fatigue-induced nausea. That was lame, but not entirely unsurprising. After I managed to just about keep my breakfast contained, Steve took my pack off me for the pitch, and I enjoyed the one-off luxury of doing Daily Cases without a bag: it was glorious. We made it into camp in less than three hours, arriving only a few minutes after the others who had been off doing jobs.

Day 1c: Lightbulb Climb

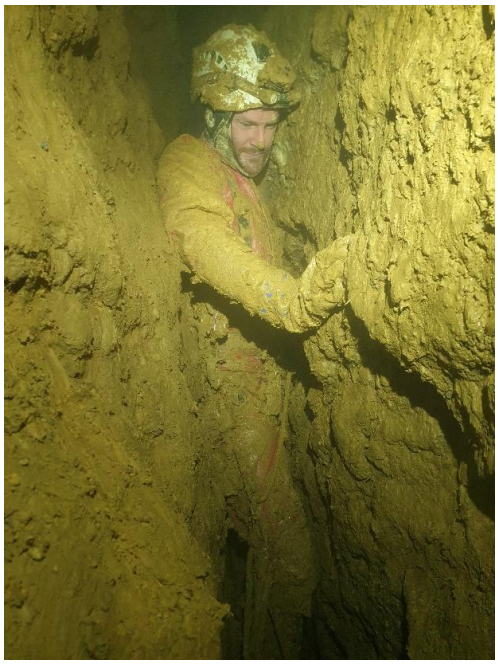
(Henry) We decided to de-rig the light bulb climb. Steve wanted his rope back and we were unlikely to continue it, especially if we move camps in the future. The climb has been left with a loop of orange string going up through two stainless steel maillons attached to stainless steel hangers on a single 6 mm non stainless concrete screw and an 8 mm stainless through-bolt. In theory a rope could be pulled up through these two maillons.

Day 2a: A return to The Gurgler

(Henry) Brendan and I went off to drop the pitch on the other side of The Gurgler. We'd been told it was a nasty tight thrutch up through mud to an uninspiring tight pitch head, which Steve and Alan had written off (after one-upping Gabriel and Petr by pushing a bit past where they had also written it off). But given the exciting location being in Atlantis, and maybe connecting to Growling, we were keen to drop it. [Steve: there's very little chance it was going to connect to Growling, not sure where Henry got that from, but I guess whatever works to get that motivation happening.]

We made our way to The Gurgler very quickly, thanks to Alan's excellent map and the adequate route marking.

The Gurgler itself was rather awful. Brendan and I worked together to get a bag up it, containing the drill, 10 m rope, rigging gear, etc. A thrutchy squeeze chimney up and across through the worst gloopy base level mud. Still not as bad as Close To The Bone though!



Brendan thrutches in The Gurgler. Image: Henry Garratt

Brendan had a break halfway up and wasn't sure if he would make it at all. I continued and began rigging. I was faced with the proposition of being on the other side of The Gurgler by myself. We had a discussion: I didn't want to go down the pitch on the other side alone, without Brendan at the top to offer emotional support/assistance getting back up the improbably tight-looking pitch-head. So, I would place two 8 mm stainless bolts and not drop the pitch – the idea being that a future generation could come back and drop the pitch, without having to lug a drill up the nasty climb. In hindsight I could have drilled 6 mm holes for concrete screws as that is more standard practice. However, without parsnips there is no way a future caver would find the holes in such thick mud.

The new Gurgler veterans, complete with thousand-yard stares. Image: Stephen Fordyce

In the end Brendan finally made his way up to join me, so I headed down the pitch. The pitch head was… tight. Brendan made some progress energetically digging it so I would fit, scraping mud off and smashing the rock with the geo hammer. I managed to slip down the pitch-head just… There was very little room between my pubic bone, Petzl Stop and the rock. I was apprehensive about getting back up. The pitch head opened up a bit further out, so there was potential to place a bolt further out to be able to get up and sideways in the wider bit.

At the bottom of the pitch there was a small streamway. Upstream quickly crapped out as too tight. There was a window above the stream, in the upstream direction, that could potentially lead to more upstream passage but I could not climb into it. Apprehension of getting back up and a general feeling of remoteness led me home.

Getting back up the tight pitch was difficult. It involved some high energy aid climbing to get up to the wider bit off to the right, avoiding the tight part that I had slipped down. This resulted in using the rope to make etrier steps to hang off a higher and wider bolt, which was irretrievable once I was back up. Unfortunately, that means the rope is stuck - or just rigged for the next generation. It was a good lesson in being careful to not commit to something so tight that it is unreversible.

<u>Day 2b: Sketching and photography bonanza</u>

(Kynan) Waking up on day two our plan was very much dependent on the water level in Mother of God (MoG). The water was putting up a pretty strong fight and the levels hadn't lowered much since we had checked the evening prior. With Brendan and Henry off having a great time in The Gurgler, Ciara, Steve and I opted to do some surveying from the MoG streamway back to the base of the main pitches with Ciara conducting a detailed survey sketch, Steve on the Disto and myself finding survey stations. After reaching the Base of Pitches, Ciara expressed her longing to warm up and return to camp so she could fully process the thought of her PhD being finished. Steve and I (both PhD-less might I add) thought we still had a little more mojo to keep going and decided to cross the tyrolean to see how Brendan and Henry were going with The Gurgler. While I was crossing the rope Steve managed to get some nice photos with some help from Ciara.

This half of the tourist couple towards the end of his modelling career. Image: Stephen Fordyce

Steve and I ventured on like a tourist couple at Cradle, stopping every 30 m to look at stuff and take lots of photos. After we had wandered through Atlantis and Vietnam, we eventually arrived at the infamous Gurgler to the sounds of Henry and Brendan laughing and in high spirits (or delirious) despite the gruelling task. After a quick wash in the stream, Steve and I returned to camp closely followed by Brendan and Henry. Again we crossed the tyrolean. I had some difficulties getting unattached which were eventually solved after I realised that the tyrolean couldn't hear my frustrations [ed: it's not just you, that anchor was set optimistically high!].

A nice photo of Kynan on the tyrolean. Image: Stephen Fordyce

Day 3a: Weightwatchers Squeeze and Chrysalis

(Henry) The water level in Mother of God had dropped sufficiently for us to get out to the Meru rockpile. With great excitement we headed down Butterfly Effect to get to Chrysalis Streamway.

We stopped at Weightwatchers Squeeze to continue the de-obstruction efforts. We split into two teams, Ciara and Kynan heading through to tie in the survey while Steve, Brendan and I stayed back to knock off some pokey bits and make the squeeze more pleasant.

Brendan tried to go down, overcommitted and became quite stuck, he was able to get out with some assistance with Ciara pushing from below and Steve supporting from above. I then headed down to join the other two on the far side while Steve continued work on making Brendan fit. Whilst doing this Steve had a scary moment, having a large rock move and pin his hand. Brendan had to assist to free it. Thoughts of *127 Hours* flashed through my mind as I heard them discussing it, all while being positioned on the wrong side of the squeeze with a Steve-shaped plug in the way. After this incident we all returned to the home side of the squeeze and re-assessed.

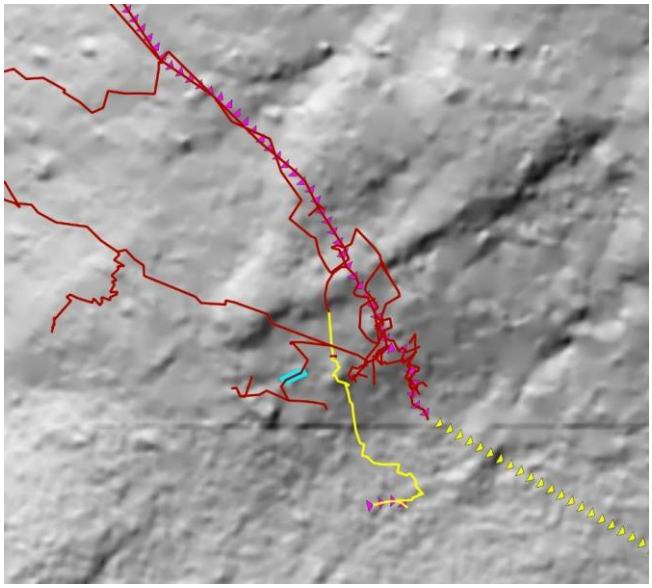
Brendan having a bad time in Weightwatchers Squeeze. Image: Henry Garratt

Ciara, Brendan and Kynan decided to head off and do other productive things (see report below) while Steve and I would continue to dig and the survey in Chrysalis Streamway. We headed into Chrysalis without much drama, noting the fresh flood debris on the ceiling. We elated in joy that this might be the flood bypass we've been looking for!

Henry for scale in Chrysalis Streamway (the biggest bit we could find). Image: Stephen Fordyce

We took some survey legs and generally assessed Chrysalis. It is less exciting and less big than I remember from our first visit but still a good lead. Steve noted that there were inward-moving draughts

from Heavy Lifting and from upstream Chrysalis – presumably both travelling into downstream Chrysalis (and thus quite exciting). The puddles and wetness on the way to Chrysalis in the Heavy Lifting crawlway were still there, I got wet as per the first trip, but Steve managed to stay mostly dry! By being slightly acrobatic and more sensible than me you can stay dry, except for one arm.

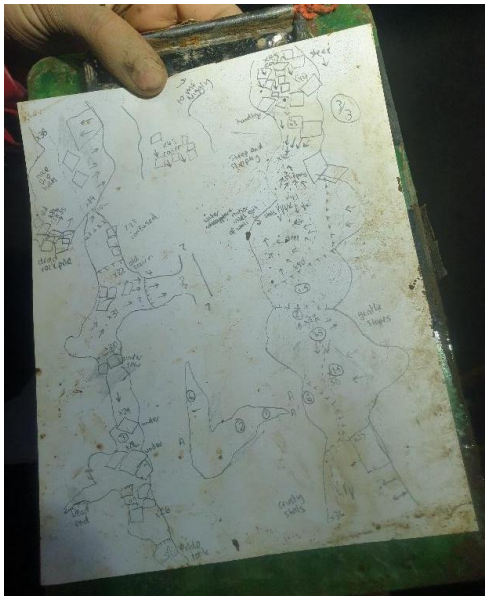


The end of the cave, with Heavy Lifting in yellow, magenta arrows over Chrysalis Streamway

On the way back out of Weightwatchers, Steve got moderately stuck again. I was able to aid him from below by building a cairn of rocks for his feet to stand on. Weightwatchers needs some more work to be normal-sized-person friendly. It is extremely key-holey and tight. The rockpile itself also doesn't look fantastically stable and we may have moved as much as we can without destabilizing it.

Day 3b: The Tennis Court gets some love

(Ciara) Brendan, Kynan and I separated from the others and headed back to the Tennis Court rockpile. Although we were tired, I was keen to get a bit of surveying in, and the others agreed. We climbed up the massive sloping ramp opposite the Tennis Court. This area was surveyed years ago, but we didn't have sketches for it, so we resurveyed and sketched the entire area. At the top of the ramp there is a massive aven, similar in visual dimensions to the Black Supergiant aven. The Disto couldn't get a proper fix on the ceiling, so we don't know how high it is (at least 50 m, probably more). The area is somewhat unstable, with huge boulders perched precariously on a steep slope. The 'Grandstand' seems like an appropriate name seeing that it is looking down onto The Tennis Court. We didn't see any leads, and it would be an unpleasant aid climb based on the chossy quality of the walls.



Some sketching was done. Sketch: Ciara Smart

After reconvening at The Tennis Court, Brendan and I ducked off to check off a nearby dig started by Petr. I'd never actually seen this dig, and I assumed it would take no more than a moment to inspect. Instead, after sliding down a steep mud slope, we turned a corner and entered a chamber of very significant proportions. I had no idea that behind the Tennis Court is such a large, attractive chamber. It's about 20-30 m wide, and at least 70 m long. Petr's dig is at the far end. We didn't resurvey this but I did a quick sketch. It could benefit from a more thorough look.

Day 3c: Entertainment and culinary review

(Steve) Back in January on Kynan's first JF caving experience, Brendan and I sang a duet of 'Everybody' from *The Blues Brothers*. Kynan was only moderately traumatized and admitted to not having seen the movie – I made a mental note, and it was a cool thing to be able to pull out nearly a year later when he had become a fully-fledged caver on his first Niggly trip. It was a bit long and Henry succumbed to Gurgler-induced slumber, but the songs and car chases were still great, and Kynan was suitably impressed.

Gurgler-induced slumber. Image: Stephen Fordyce

Group dinners were had, and camp was enjoyable. A notable experience was Steve spilling an entire billy of pasta on the mud, with associated complicated cleanup efforts to achieve both minimal impact caving and eating of dinner. The fortune cookie said something fortuitous, I can't remember what. Kynan on his first camping trip was notably in the anti-faffer category – possibly the only one come to think of it.

Anti-faffer man. Image: Stephen Fordyce

Day 4a: Team Youthful exit

(Kynan) For the final time the group was awoken to the sweet sounds of Wheatus and after having breakfast we all began packing up our gear. Steve, Henry and Ciara completed their stocktakes and we began consolidating our bags. Ciara and Steve decided to get a start on the pitches as Henry led Brendan and me back over Mt Niggly to visit the DIY streamway. After leaving camp we made steady progress brainstorming future theme songs as we went (anything would be better than 'Teenage Dirtbag' at this point)

The strategic escape required considerable team faffing. Image: Stephen Fordyce

After arriving at the stream, we were glad to see a much lower water level than Day 1. Henry did some faffing for Steve, and Brendan and I decided to take a peek at the DIY Sump. We found about six lead weights and a tank strap. They were in usable condition but the snap hook on the tank strap has begun to rust.

Kynan posts with mud-encrusted stals, enjoying 'Teenage Dirtbag' running in his head. Image: Stephen Fordyce

Day 4b: Team Post-PhD exit

(Steve) Ciara made a strategic escape from camp to make a leisurely way out. I went to Atlantis to faff briefly while the other three went to the DIY Streamway. Ciara found some rope damage on the bottom section of Freedom Day and tied two alpine butterflies to isolate the damage and give everyone some knot-crossing practice. I went past and concurred, and hoped the other three wouldn't get too hung up (they didn't – good work team). The rope was labelled 40 m and had about 5 m spare, but an extra rebelay to split the bottom hang wouldn't hurt to get people moving up out of the waterfall spray at the bottom and reduce rope bounce.

I caught up with Ciara at the top of Daily Cases and finally finished de-rigging Vaccine Strollout as the other guys showed up below Daily Cases – good timing. Well good-ish – Ciara and I spent quite a while enjoying the sun on the surface. We used this time to sit around, eat lollies, chat and wander off to a nearby surface target (that didn't do anything).

Vaccine Strollout Rigging Notes

- Shorthand:
  - CS: concrete screw hole, marked by screw hanging out (no parsnips, no hangers)
  - TB: 8 mm SS316 throughbolt with SS316 hanger, left in place
  - LH: Left Hand
  - RH: Right Hand
- Start from Daily Cases top Y-hang (2xCS), traverse ~2m
- 1x CS on RH wall*, traverse ~2m
- 1x CS on RH wall*, traverse ~3m
- 1x CS on RH wall*, traverse ~1.5m
- 2x CS on RH wall*, then do the sketchy bit – chimney along (~10 m, pretend the rope might catch you if you fall) on choss with 160 m drop to a ledge RHS, then step/jump across to a chossy slope LHS and go up it. Look above for the anchors in the overhanging good rock. Fortunately for future visitors there is a loop of orange string you can very carefully use to pull a rope through. Anchors on far end are…
- 2x TB on LH wall very high up (if you messed up the orange string you may need to repeat a short aid climb) with short length of rope to a central maillon.
  - This is the home side of the tyrolean, with at least 1x CS spare if you want to rig a triple load share.
  - Unrecorded, but there should be a few more CS holes – we SRT'd up a short rope to comfortably get on the tyrolean.
  - There is a loop of orange string running across (~15 m) the 160 m pit so you can (very carefully!) pull a rope across.
  - The idea is to at least initially leave the tyrolean super loose (ie. a J-hang) so you can get to and inspect the far anchors and rig a triple if you want to do it as a tyrolean. If you are at all worried, do it on a dynamic rope.
  - If you tangle the orange string and have to re-aid across, there should be concrete screw holes going up past the home side anchors and part-way across the ceiling canyon in good rock - may not be marked.
  - Far side of tyrolean has…
- 2x TB with a short length of rope to a central maillon, plus 1x CS spare for triple load share
- *Probably at knee-level – the rock dictated it

Miscellaneous Extra Notes

(Steve) We've been doing a bunch of resurvey and sketching in aid of progressing the Niggly map, and sorting out some discrepancies in aid of a revised depth: i.e. at least two independent surveys in reasonable agreement to the Pool of Promise (start of sump to Growling, which has the current deepest point of the system) and the downstream end of Mother of God (which is very close to being the deepest point).

Unfortunately, Ciara's disto was found to be sufficiently out of calibration that we will need to resurvey Mother of God a third time before this can be finalised. The loop closure from Breakfast Jelly to Sliding Doors is also pretty obscene and slated for a resurvey if anyone can be prised away from Chrysalis. Apart from that, there's pretty good agreement between the various generations of survey.

Meanwhile, I've done a major cleanup of the Compass survey project, with lots of flagging of shots so the display is much simpler, and worked up sketches so the map can progress.

As expected, there was a fairly big flood in September – not the biggest we've had, about 20 m at the Tennis Court, but not enough to submerge the tyrolean to Atlantis. Glad we weren't at the end of Mother of God for that (we would have been there for about 10 days)!

Brendan's birthday was celebrated with a glowstick and 'shit-in-a-bowl'. Image: Stephen Fordyce

IB-10 Mystery Creek Cave and IB-4, 5, 6 Bradley Chesterman Cave

26 January 2025

John Oxley

Party: John Oxley, Raelene Watson

This was originally going to be an Exit Cave trip for some members who hadn't been there but I left it too late to get the permit, so we decided we'd go to Rocket Rods Pot instead. Then when one of the intending participants was struck down with some sort of lurgy and another was occupied with farm duties, we decided that we'd save Rocket Rods for another day and instead have a look around in parts of Mystery Creek that we don't normally see when doing the through trip from Midnight Hole.

I'd walked into the old quarry near Mystery Creek Cave one week earlier and I noted that the creek itself was very low. This week it appeared to be even lower and was certainly at the lowest level I've ever seen.

Rae and I headed straight to Cephalopod Creek and down the canyon. With the water so low it was easy going and we only climbed out of the canyon at the top of the small 2 m waterfall. We continued back to the Broken Column and took some photos before heading out of the cave.

Before leaving for home we went into Bradley Chesterman Cave for a quick look. Although it is quite short, the cave has some very nice photogenic stream passage.

Cephalopod Streamway. Image: John Oxley

JF-36 Growling Swallet

26 January 2025

Alan Jackson

Party: Imogen Furlong, Alan Jackson, Anna Jackson

A caving friend from the UK was out escaping the horrors of the Scottish Highlands winter. Imo had first come to Tasmania in 2005 and did trips to Tachycardia, JF-341, Kubla and Croesus and then I'd tagged along on expeditions she organised in China (2011) and Thailand (2018). I'd also joined her on a trip to Rana Hole in Scotland on our 2016 European holiday. Our original plan for a longer hike tackling more Abels with Anna didn't eventuate due to poor weather, so we mixed it up with some shorter hikes, climbing and a couple of caves. We enjoyed a lazy toddle down to the first sump/start of Windy Rift and back out again, regaining the entrance at that perfect time for glorious sunshine pouring in. We also popped up Tim Shea for a view and the Styx Tall Tree Reserve for a big tree or three.

Growling Swallet entrance. Image: Alan Jackson

JF-40

27 January 2025

Henry Garratt

Party: Henry Garratt, Petr Smejkal, Lawrence Wonhas

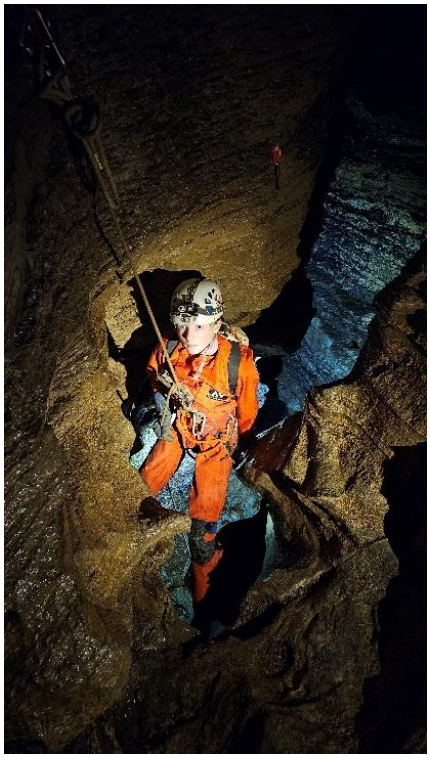
With some new toys to play with Petr was keen to go digging. In continuation of my tradition of hazing my climbing friends who express interest in caving, I took my friend Lawrence digging in the rain at JF-40. As I'd explained to Lawrence on the walk to the cave, the dig is situated under some very annoying and very persistent drips. The draughty wet chamber is quite akin to standing in the rain and wind on the surface. Perfect conditions! We spent a few hours at the boulder choke, no major breakthroughs. Fun was had.

IB-11 Midnight Hole

29 January 2025

Alan Jackson

Party: Imogen Furlong, Alan Jackson, Benjamin Jackson



Ben at the top of pitch 5. Image: Alan Jackson

A second caving instalment in Imo's Tasmanian sojourn – a timid trip through Midnight Hole. It was all surprisingly dry, with possibly the least water I've ever seen in Mystery Creek. To save on weight/pack size I trialled using my 4 mm dyneema canyoning pull cord for rope recovery on the three long pitches and only took a single 50 m 9 mm rope. It worked delightfully.

Imo in the Railway Tunnel. Image: Alan Jackson

IB-158 Promising Hole: Second time lucky

1 February 2025

Janine McKinnon

Party: Karina Anders, Michael Glazer, Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

The carpark was full, the track bone-dry. It must be summer in Tasmania. This was definitely a more pleasant experience getting to the cave than the last trip (*SS*461, p.4). Similarly, the cave was also dry. Delightful.

The plan had been to (hopefully) explore to the bottom of the cave and survey out with Michael's FCL survey marvel. Sadly, the marvel was doing a toddler tantrum, and he couldn't get it to cooperate with calibration, so it was a last-minute return to (almost) old-school Disto and pen and paper. Not to worry, I thought I could probably remember how to do this… it's been a while.

Michael rigged down, with Ric instructing on bolt placement on pitch 2. We had hoped for maybe a good four pitches as the cave is in a good location hydrologically but, alas, she bottomed out at pitch 2.

Not to worry, at least we had made it to the bottom and were on-target to complete the job this trip.

Karina and Michael were keen to survey, which was great because I had been terrified I'd have to do book. Have you seen any of my sketches? They are an insult to chicken scratchings. Some of us just can't, can't

draw. After a few instructions on how to find the best balance with survey points, and a few other tips on getting good readings, and clear communications, they were off. Karina did book and Michael wielded the Disto. I stood as far out of the way as was possible in a small cave and tried to mutter sage (but usually unnecessary) comments every now and then. They did a smooth and efficient job.

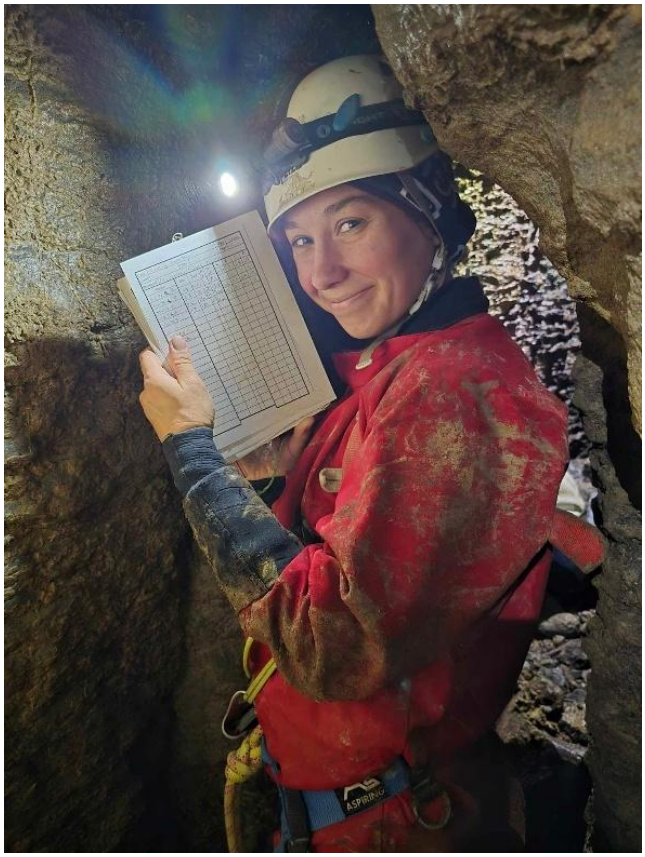


Image: Michael Glazer

Ric headed up as soon as the survey started to get out of the way. I ambled up between them, helping find survey stations.

We were done and out of the cave after about 2.5 hours underground. It was still within the lunch-time range.

We started walking out about 1.30 pm. It was looking like a very, exceptionally, early return to Hobart. What would we all do with all this spare time? We delayed with a half-hour beer at Dover. Still really early… Early-return disaster saved by a multi-car crash near Franklin. After sitting in the stationary queue for more than an hour we turned back to the Kermandie pub for dinner and got home at 8 pm.

Phew, that was a near-miss. I don't think I could cope with being home from a caving trip by 4.30 pm.

Oh, did I say we were finished with the cave? Michael wants to compare this survey data with his FCL baby. So we left the bolts and hangers in-situ and will return to do another survey when he gets the toddler tamed.

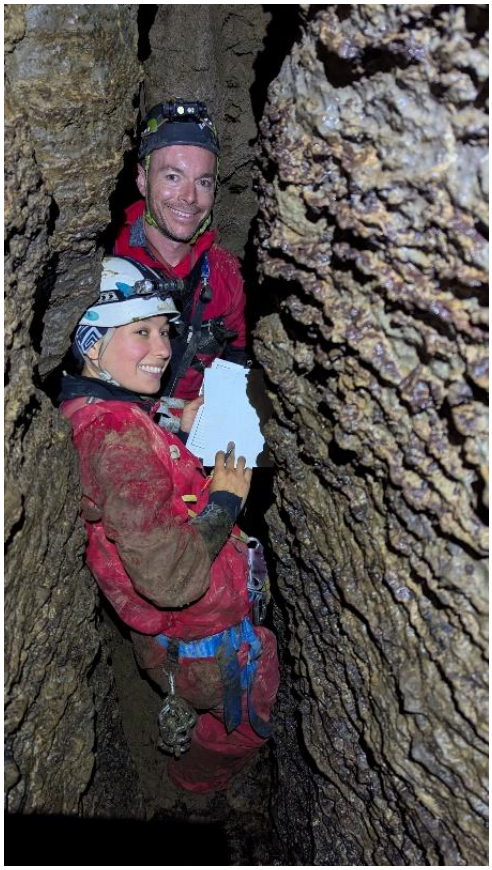


Image: Janine McKinnon

IB-11 Midnight Hole

1 February 2025

Henry Garratt

Party: Tom Galindo, Henry Garratt, Emily Giles, Josh Greenhill

With three keen beans new to the club an introductory trip was needed. IB-11 Midnight Hole was still there, fun was had by all.

Growling Swallet Area Surface

5 & 10 February 2025

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Stephen Fordyce

The November push beyond Coelacanth Sump in Growling Swallet had led to a decent-sized waterfall dropping into a large chamber from a high aven (report is tardy, hopefully in this *Spiel* [*ed.* alas no]). The base of the waterfall was strangely lacking in dolerite and there were no known swallets that could conceivably

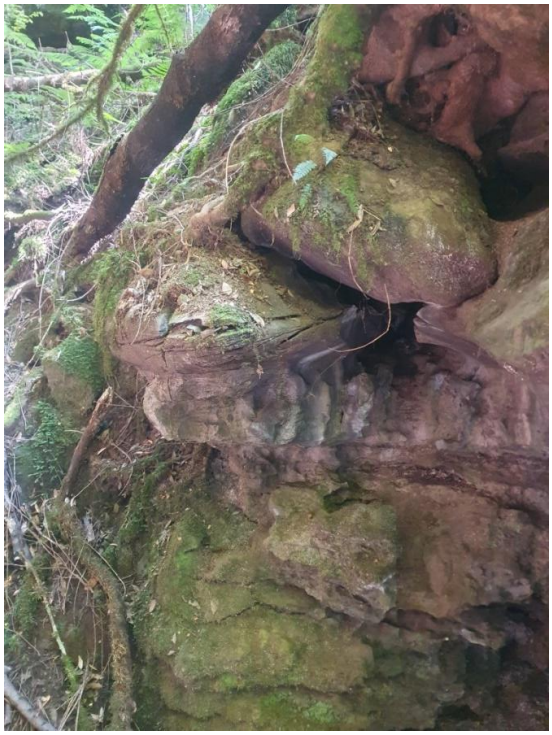
provide the source of the water. The surface in this area was thought to be covered in dolerite (i.e. smothering any cave entrances) and LiDAR was lacking any spectacular targets. I knew of only one documented visit (*SS*439, p.11) to the area - in 2020 while I was stuck in lockdown in Melbourne.

Having had the Delta Variant discovery since then, I was keen enough to dedicate two days to wandering about on a high effort/high reward basis. Sadly, while I did a pretty comprehensive audit of streams, I didn't see any limestone or indication of a new swallet – the streams (with one exception) all went to known swallets in the Ice Tube valley or went all the way down to Garths Creek. I'm satisfied no particularly embarrassing stone was left unturned, and the dive effort can be renewed without any nagging suspicion that a dry way in might exist.

On Friday 7th Feb, I walked roughly up the Ice Tube track, with detours up each stream that I crossed to confirm matches with gullies visible on LiDAR. I verified co-ordinates for JF-265, JF-418, JF-400, JF-470, JF-359, JF-360 and JF-471, and noted a cool bit of outcrop near JF-471 Ice Lake with different kinds of rock (not necessarily THE contact, when I asked Russell).

JF-470 Munted Tag Cave, anyone know why it's called that…? Image: Stephen Fordyce

Then I followed the Ice Tube stream uphill until reaching 760 m ASL to make sure I was definitely above the contact (JF-401 nearby is about 750 m ASL) and headed north at that elevation doing the stream audit. A point was recorded any time I crossed a gully, streambed or stream, noting the stream size or dryness – these are all in QGIS. The going was a bit slow and painful. The hint of a LiDAR target close to the good spot was a 10 m waterfall but in mudstone. I got excited and a bit confused with three large streams when there should be one (feeding the big Trapdoor Swallet stream), but after flogging about trying to follow them all at once, they joined together, and it was devastating. There was quite a lot of this business - the streams split and merge, don't always follow LiDAR gullies, flow down ridges, sometimes disappear and reappear. The amount of water was surprising, considering it was high summer and conditions had been very hot and dry.



Interesting geological stuff in the JF-471 doline. Image: Stephen Fordyce

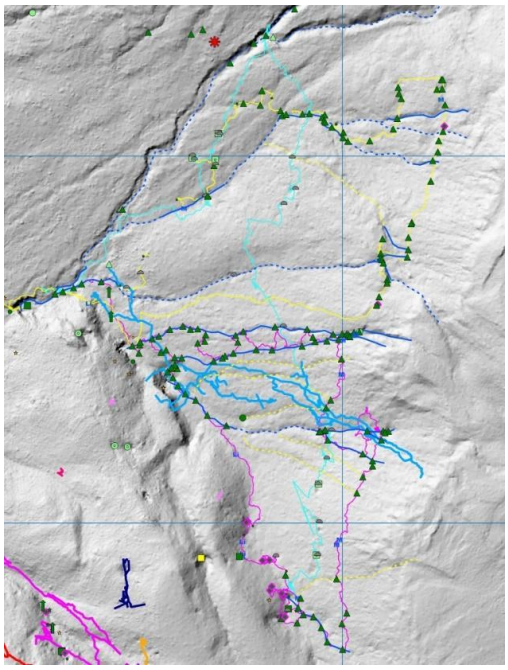
I continued north on the contour to the next hint of a target and found another pair of streams close together. I'd had enough by then, so followed them down (zigzagging from one to another), confirming that they fed into Trapdoor Swallet and Pendant Pot. I hadn't seen limestone or anything cavey since leaving Ice Tube, which wasn't all that surprising as I'd been high deliberately to make sure I would be above any new swallet.

On Monday 10th Feb, I reluctantly dragged myself back to the area to put the final nails in the coffin. I left the track as soon as it climbed out from Garths Creek, and headed north at lower altitude, revisiting most of the targets the 2020 crew had to get a feel of things. They definitely felt karsty but there was no limestone anywhere. Then I went up the hill back to 750 m ASL, to see whether some knolls and rough patches visible on LiDAR had any outcrop. They didn't, and I headed south along the contour across a painful series of small gullies and mostly dry streambeds. There was some mudstone and some dolerite – recorded on QGIS along with the stream details. I eventually linked up with my previously searched area and headed down the ridge and home.

Across the two days I collected about 150 GPS points, and in QGIS I used those with my recorded tracks, LiDAR and generated 2 m contour lines to draw in confirmed and theorised paths of the significant streams (anything with a trickle or more). All streams went to known swallets or to Garths Creek, with one

exception. This is a stream with unconfirmed drainage somewhere between where I crossed (JF-P3151) and a 2020 target I didn't visit (JF-S0340 – no record of whether it was a stream or dry gully). It probably joins a nearby surface stream, but it theoretically could still be a new swallet - about 750 m north of the underground waterfall in Growling, but right above missing master cave.

Given the lack of any limestone and the distance from where we want to be underground, I'm pretty pessimistic about there being much prospect, and I'm happy to forge ahead with all the effort of dive access. It's a cop-out which I hope someone proves wrong one day, but my only theory is that water seeps through from who knows where and forms the underground stream we found. And some quirk of this explains the absence of dolerite under the waterfall.



QGIS screenshot with LiDAR background, confirmed/almost-certain/theorised surface water (dark blue and yellow), Black River/Coelecanth (thick light blue) survey, GPS tracks and my various waypoints.

JF-15 Hairygoat Hole Discovery

9 February 2025

Stephen Fordyce

Party: Kynan Bonnice, Stephen Fordyce, Henry Garratt

We went out yet again to find JF-15 Hairygoat Hole. On the way to our search area, we randomly found it! So we called it a day and went home. The end.

It was pretty much that simple, but here are a few extra details. This was my fourth attempt searching for the mythical Hairygoat Hole (lost since 1970, despite the best efforts of many people over the decades), and Henry/Kynan's third. See *SS*460, p.18 for details of the last trip, and *SS*458, p.15 for more comprehensive background. That last trip, we had found a vital clue (a nearby cave shown in a contemporary photo) and narrowed the search area but failed to find the cave.

So, a brute force approach was planned for this trip (and many future trips), with a metal detector borrowed from my uncle (thanks Tom Burrowes) so that we could find the tag even if it was buried or incorporated into a tree. And/or Arthur's crowbar. To ensure we covered all ground systematically, we also had 4 kg of flour in a garden sprayer to show the detector coverage and kit to mark each tree. It was to be thorough, exhaustive, painstaking, and probably spectacularly boring. It was also destined to be in the wrong place.

Kynan and Henry with Hairygoat Hole (at base of tree, tag visible next to Henry's face). Image: Stephen Fordyce

Before getting into that, we had a stupid little cave we hadn't bothered tagging on a previous trip (the one in June, with Chris and Kynan). It was sort of on the way, so we made a slight detour and fanned out as usual. As we neared the target, I saw a little black hole at the base of a small tree, about 10 m straight up the moderate slope with sparse vegetation. I went to have a look and was confused to see a fairly obvious tag – I knew there wasn't any known tagged cave here. The penny didn't drop until a few seconds after I read '15' on it (there is no 'JF'). There was much excited yelling as the young dudes converged and it became apparent that we'd finally found it – for better or worse, Henry recorded a video. Everyone was very glad they had resisted the temptation to bail that morning!

The cave and tag were surprisingly obvious – easily visible from downhill, but completely obscured by the small tree from uphill, and not very visible from the sides. Myself, Kynan and Chris had walked within 3 m of it in June; the July team with Hugh and Liz 30 m south of it; and the January team with Ciara and Brendan 25 m north of it. We were deliberately taking different paths each time, so perhaps we were still destined to find it eventually by design rather than dumb luck. It is below the contact, roughly parallel with three other small karst features (JF-791 and two untagged small dolines) in a line 60 m long. Not on the crest of the ridge, but on a gentle slope.

The tag, in original state. Image: Stephen Fordyce

The tag was only slightly obscured, but one of the fasteners had rusted out. So we replaced that with a new stainless one and some flagging tape, and left the old one. Henry went in to the top of the first pitch to verify it was still there (it was) and we remarked that while the draught was significant (shorts and hairy legs without gaiters were applied) it was not of the epic proportions we had perhaps expected.

The new cave we'd fortuitously come to tag was 15 m away, we applied JF-791 and named it Six Red Bulls because an un-named member of the party had got a bit enthusiastic with the freebies at a mountain bike event the day before. It was a 3 m deep pot which Henry climbed into – reporting a dead echidna at the bottom and no prospects.

This is what Six Red Bulls looks like. Image: Stephen Fordyce

Despite having left the car about 1 hr ago, we were all a bit the worse for wear after adventures the previous day, so a unanimous and very fast agreement was made to rest on our laurels and go home early. That was almost as welcome as finding Hairygoat Hole! A return will be made to rig, survey and push the bottom of the cave with modern technology – but ideally not until some other projects are finished.

I think I've had my fill of wandering about in the HGH area but for anyone wanting another mystery - JF-16 remains undiscovered, and is the only one of the first 20 JF numbers which is unvisited since tagging.

A review of clues now the mystery is solved:

Several important clues were gleaned from people who were there and trip reports of the day. Here is a wrap up for anyone that dived deep (or put up with my pestering – particular thanks to Albert Goede and Peter Shaw). I'll put a copy of my research notes in the archive, with lots of quotes and references.

Contemporary descriptions 'on the next ridge around from Splash Pot, in open terrain'

The ridge is a red herring, with Hairygoat Hole being 85 m from the ridge crest and to me it doesn't feel like being on one (perhaps it would feel different approaching via the original way from the side). The ground slope matches the 1970 map by PW Henley, and the 'open terrain' descriptions match well.

Peter Shaw's photo of a nearby cave

We agreed the only candidate for the photo was JF-500, and we're pretty certain. JF-500 is close to the crest and the bottom of a small but well-defined ridge and Peter remembered Hairygoat Hole being a short walk (approximately 100 m) uphill from there. The distance to Hairygoat Hole is 130 m in easy terrain, and Hairygoat Hole is uphill, although also quite a bit of contouring around. This was the main clue that gave us hope and a concrete anchor point for the search, and it served us well.

Yellow track

References in trip reports indicated the 'yellow track' went past Hairygoat Hole and was one of the ways to access it. I recently read further back in *Spiels* and found that in 1969 (*SS*38, p.1) Albert Goede made the yellow track, and then it was subsequently used because it unwittingly led right past Hairygoat Hole. We had previously noted a possible blaze tree on the crest of the nearby ridge (JF-P2961) and I think that's probably part of the yellow track.

Significant tree

A 'significant tree' is mentioned in recollections by Stuart Nicholas (*SS*225), and a report in *SS*51 mentions that Hairygoat Hole was found (multiple times) by stepping the wrong side of a track marker tree. Well guess what – there's a weird little tree right next to the

Hairygoat one and it has a blaze on the uphill side! Ties up that one very nicely.

The old track marker tree with blaze (HGH tree in the background). Image: Stephen Fordyce

Arthur's crowbar

Arthur Clarke reported that he had left a short crowbar with orange paint over one third its length by the entrance. The metal detector was pressed into service and the ground all around the entrance (and all the nearby trees) within a 15 m radius was checked – no crowbar.

The cairn sandwich

A limestone cairn on a large fallen tree first reported by Dave Rasch, noted by Alan Jackson (another tree had fallen on and sandwiched it) and GPSed by us last July. It's quite high, on the crest of the ridge, and some distance from Hairygoat Hole. It appears unrelated, I don't think it's very consistent with the yellow track (which more likely crosses the ridge lower down at a blaze tree), I would theorise it's just a remnant of old wanderings.

Pictures in the archive

These were added in recent years and of unknown provenance. They appear NOT to match Hairygoat Hole.

This picture (and one other) from the archive appears not to be Hairygoat Hole. Photographer unknown.

The metal detector search area

This was from JF-500 up the ridge to the contact (approx. 170 m) and about 100 m wide centred on the ridge crest. Hairygoat Hole is about 35 m outside this search area. Maybe it would have become part of an extended search area using a radius around JF-500… eventually.

A reprise of the original 'hairygoating' technique (from* Speleo Spiel *51: October, 1970)

A NEW SPELEOLOGICAL TECHNIQUE.

A number of people from other clubs have expressed their surprise at the apparent ease with which we keep on finding new caves. Dark hints have even been made that this is due to some secret scientific knowledge as a result of the fact that our membership includes several geologists, one geomorphologist, and a hydro engineer.

Rather reluctantly we have therefore decided to make public the powerful technique we have evolved for the location of entrances to new caves. This technique, which involves close teamwork, is known to its initiates as "hairygoating". A promising area of limestone should be selected on the basis of geological and geomorphological characteristics and a large party induced to go there. From amongst their members they should elect a "hairygoat" who should have the following qualifications: a degree in the earth sciences, an unbalanced mind, and a guardian angel (prepared to work overtime). It is also very important for the "hairygoat" to wear shorts. It is equally important to appoint another member of the party who is not affected by mass hysteria to be given a large roll of marking tape and to be appointed as "keeper of the trail".

The "hairygoat" so appointed then casts his eye over the landscape for promising geomorphological signs of holes and starts running about excitedly screaming at intervals at the top of his voice "I've got another one! I've got another one!" This so affects most of the remainder of the party that they follow his example as they gradually reach a state of mass hysteria.

Scientifically controlled tests have shown that large numbers of holes can be discovered in a very short period of time while the "keeper of the trail"

ensures that their location will be safeguarded for future reference. Readers of our journals may be puzzled at this stage by the necessity of having a "hairygoat" with shorts, but this is essential to ensure quick selection of the most promising holes, which indicate their presence by inducing a cold breezy feeling up the legs.

Like all new techniques the method has some disadvantages. The life of an active "hairygoat" tends to be rather short, as fallen logs and unseen holes demand a heavy toll. It would be a good practice to appoint a deputy "hairygoat" who can take over immediately at the untimely incapacitation or disappearance of the principal '"hairygoat" and maintain the desired level of mass hysteria necessary for the maintenance of a rapid discovery rate of new holes.

Since it is desirable for a "hairygoat" to have a degree in the earth sciences, and in view of the fact that there is already a critical shortage of trained geologists in Australia, there is a desperate need to step up the rate at which earth scientists are turned out by our universities. Karst morphology should also be given a much more prominent place in undergraduate syllabuses (syllabi?) than is the case at present since the value of a "hairygoat" is much increased by an intimate knowledge of karst terrain.

A(nonymous) H. Goat. B.Sc., F.M.H.S. (F.M.H.S. - foundation member of hairygoat society.)

Chairman Track Reconnoitre

10 February 2025

Janine McKinnon

Party: Janine McKinnon, Ric Tunney

I was pondering running a trip sometime this autumn to drop the entrance pitch of The Chairman. It is a lovely scenic doline, and I haven't been there for a decade or more. I try to remember the lessons I have learnt by experience through life, and one of them is to check the status of a caving track before lugging huge packs along them to an infrequently visited cave.

Thus Ric and I went for a wander along this track to see what state it was in.

We did find it very hard to follow in a few places, but so as not to keep you all in suspense I will say that we did manage to find the cave.

As we had reminded ourselves of the route, we had a significantly quicker trip back to the car, only taking a little over an hour to walk the 4 km.

Image: Janine McKinnon

Other Exciting Stuff

ASF Award Nomination Letter for Janine McKinnon

In June 2024, the following letter was sent to the ASF Awards Commissioner as part of the process of nominating Janine McKinnon for an ASF Award. At the 2025 ASF Conference, Janine received the Edie Smith Award (see details on p.3).

Dear Awards Commissioner,

I am writing as a representative of Southern Tasmanian Caverneers to nominate Janine McKinnon for consideration for an ASF Award. This nomination recognises Janine's nearly fifty-year involvement in organised speleology at a local and national level. It acknowledges her efforts in various exploration projects, her extensive work in karst administration and recognises her pioneering status as a woman in the early caving community.

Janine's humility and tendency to downplay herself belies her incredible contribution to caving in Australia. Janine joined the NSW caving scene in the 1970s. She has witnessed significant social and technological change, including the development of modern SRT and major changes in the demographics of the caving community. Notably, Janine became a caver at a point in which women's involvement was far from what it is today, and female cavers faced significant misogyny. She described this struggle with typical frankness, noting that 'battles have to be fought by someone' (*Caves Australia:*215, p.9). Janine became a trailblazer for women in speleology, outlasting most of her early male contemporaries.

Today, Janine is still an active caver and cave diver while also being heavily involved in the administration of caving affairs. At a local level, she is the current president of the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers and has only recently handed over her position as editor of the *Speleo Spiel* after producing no fewer than 27 issue. Janine has also had multiple stints as club Training Officer. Dozens of new cavers have benefited from her SRT training and the time she has sacrificed to run beginner caving trips– an undervalued but crucial aspect of maintaining a successful club. Janine has also held multiple ASF positions, including an executive role in 2019-2021. During that period, she undertook the mammoth task of updating ASF procedures and policies. Janine has shown particular support for the continued upskilling of rescue capabilities at a club and state level and is an important cog in the relationship between cavers and emergency services in Tasmania. Janine took a major role in the 2019 rescue of a caver from Midnight Hole in southern Tasmania.

Arguably, Janine's tendency to be a steadfast, reliable member of dry exploration projects, rather than the 'face' of a project has meant that that her extensive involvement in dry project caving has been somewhat overlooked. In Tasmania, Janine faced opposition to her involvement in some of the larger exploration projects of the 1980s because of her gender, but she has made up for lost time in the decades since. Janine particularly contributed to major resurvey projects in Kubla Khan and Exit Cave. She has also taken a smaller role in exploration projects in several iconic Tasmanian caves, including Khazad-Dum, Sesame and Cauldron Pot. Notably, in 2012-2014 Janine spearheaded a diving project in Exit Cave which added more than a kilometre of new passage to the system. Across all these historic projects, Janine has been a capable, proactive project member. She is a skilled surveyor and mapmaker (despite what she will tell you).

Today, in her fifth decade of speleological activity, Janine is still making an impressive contribution to exploration caving in Tasmania. As recently as this year, Janine has continued exploration in JF-30 The Letterbox. This ongoing project is a demonstration of Janine's impressive technical sump diving skills.

Aside from active caving activities, Janine's ongoing contributions have included the more mundane but vital aspects of karst administration. This has included developing management and rigging guides, assisting in conservation projects, liaising with Parks officials, and generally greasing the wheels of bureaucratic officialdom. Although she has not been directly involved in the exploration of JF-761 Delta Variant, this major project has coincided with her stewardship as president of the club and has benefited from her guidance. Janine keeps a careful eye on the current generation of exploration cavers in Tasmania, providing tactful mediation when required. It should also be noted that Janine has benefited from the unwavering support of her husband Ric Tunney over several decades who himself has played a part in the development of speleology in Australia.

Today, Janine is a highly respected mentor within STC. She provides background support and the guided level-headedness that can only come with decades of experience. She is a proud spokesperson for speleology and a great supporter of younger cavers. An ASF award would be fitting recognition for her extensive, and often thankless, contributions to organised speleology.

Ciara Smart

Janine McKinnon, c. 1979. River Cave, Cooleman Plain. NSW. Image: Ric Tunney

Office Bearer's Reports 2024-2025

President (Janine McKinnon)

It has been another very active year for the club on several fronts. Caving trips have occurred most weekends, and mid-week too occasionally. These trips have covered the spectrum of physical hardship from gentle, short and relaxed affairs to hard multi-day underground camping trips, and everything in between. The purpose of trips has been varied as well; exploration, beginner, introductory and training, basic rigging and advanced rigging training, recreational, photographic, scientific, surveying, infrastructure placement and rescue practice.

SRT training occurs regularly, rescue practice training runs frequently, and the annual rescue exercise just keeps getting bigger and grander each year as our skills improve and the motivation of the organising team expands.

We again aided to Tasmanian Police Search and Rescue recruit training scheme by taking the 25 'students' underground for a day of familiarisation, practical experience and assessment. This is an invaluable collaboration between the two organisations.

We continue to liaise with 'Parks' on various matters, including permit access, zoning, Kubla Leader's issues and infrastructure in wild caves.

We again provided cave expertise for the University of Tasmania (UTAS) Extreme Sport Medicine course for the underground component of the practical day. We also provided a cave guide for a college caving trip. Neither of these could have occurred without our attendance.

The executive has been contacted on a couple of occasions by government organisations requesting data from our archive. After careful consideration by the executive and archivist, specific information has been made available to them. We have a steady influx of new members and enjoy a healthy social calendar. The club is in a good place. As I have completed my three years as President I am ineligible to stand again.

Vice President: (Chris Sharples)

In this role I was called upon several times during 2024 to be the substitute meeting Chairman or the substitute Minutes Secretary when the real ones were away either living the dream or otherwise engaged. This occurred at several meetings in each case, however the year did not present any other opportunities to display my skills as Vice President. Although it was a fascinating

experience, I do not wish to stand for the Vice-Presidents role again in 2025.

Secretary (Karina Anders)

This year four letters were written on behalf of STC. Somewhere between 5-10 permits were applied for to visit permit caves. I collected the post once (probably should have checked it more often, alas) and I took minutes of the GBMs throughout the year. Thank you to the VP and Treasurer for stepping in and taking minutes for any meetings I did not attend.

Social Secretary (Philip Jackson).

This year there were three official social functions, the 78th reunion of past and present members, the Christmas drinks and a trip to Rock It. The 78th reunion was well attended and there is strong support for this event to become a regular feature. Several members enjoyed Christmas drinks at the Hobart Brewing Company. I can't provide any detail on the Rock It excursion because I was unable to attend. I am happy to continue in this role

***Speleo Spiel* Editor (Ciara Smart)**

My first year as *Spiel* editor went relatively smoothly after a crash course in column formatting. Four issues went out, totalling 166 pages of reading and pretty pictures. Alongside trip reports, they also featured all sorts of fascinating feature pieces. These issues have been submitted to the national e-depository. All issues went out on time. Thanks to Janine, Ric and Alan for their efforts as subeditors, particularly with the last issue which I produced in quite a rush. Just about everyone in the club has been superb at providing trip reports and other fascinating reading. The club as a whole deserves commendation for its thoroughness. I think we take the consistency of our documentation a little for granted but most other clubs would kill for the positive culture of report-writing that we've got going on. I would like to comment that the *Spiel* isn't an academic journal aiming to provide ground-breaking reading; it's a community journal and all articles are welcome. 'Boring' or straightforward trip reports that record zero issues are also of importance. From next year, provided I am still editor after the AGM, we'll go back to the more regular scheduling of six issues a year.

Equipment Officer (Alan Jackson)

The club has miscellaneous bits of equipment. It lives in my shed. Members come and borrow it from time to time (the gear, not my shed). It seems to be a pretty good arrangement. Let's keep doing it.

Librarian (Greg Middleton)

Since February 2024 the Library has received only 8 paper journals/newsletters (9 last year, 11 previous, 22 in 21-22). Six of these were *Stalactite* from Switzerland. The library doesn't seem to have received any printed *Spiels* since #454. [*ed*: We don't do printed *Spiels* anymore]. Our total holding is now 5,108. Hard copies of speleological periodicals are effectively no longer being exchanged. Digital copies of journals and newsletters are stored on a 1 TB hard disk which is backed up to another and most are now available to all members through our digital archive. Additions in the last 12 months include:

- *ACKMA Journal*: #134 - #137
- ASF Annual Report: 2023
- *Caves Australia*: #226 - #230
- *CEGSA News*: Vol. 69(1)-(3)
- *Helictite*: Vol. 49
- *ISS Newsletter*: Vol. 30(1)-(3)
- *J. Sydney Speleo. Society*: Vol. 68(2)-(12), 69(1)
- *Speleo Spiel*: #458 - #461
- *Speleopod* (SRCC): #94 - #95
- *Trog* (KSS): Vol. 58(6-7), 59(1) - (2)
- *NSS News* (USA): Vol. 82(3) - (12), 83(1)
- *J. Cave & Karst Studies* (USA): Vol. 86(1-2), (3-4)
- *Cave & Karst Science* (UK): Vol. 51(1) - (3)

Thirteen new books were added to the library this year. Nine of these were the 9-volume *The Darkness Beneath: Mole Creek Karst* by Lyndsey Gray (built largely on the work of the late Steve Blanden); others were donated, in particular, a copy of Jean Cadoux's *One Thousand Metres Down* (1957) which had been the property of Edith Smith (donated by her niece). A list of major books is on the website; a digital catalogue of all 472 books is available. No new CDs or DVDs were added. Our CD/DVD collection stands at 67. I have set up a series of binders to hold loose papers and articles; I filed another 46 this year, bringing the number to 898. Many more remain to be accessioned. No new issues of *Southern Caver* were produced.

I'm prepared to continue in the position but as this would be my 27th year I'm more than happy to hand the position – and the considerable volume of books and papers – over to someone else.

Map Archivist (Ric Tunney)

This job covers the custodianship of the 'real' maps and map-related stuff, in contrast to the "unreal" maps and stuff existing 'somewhere' on the interweb and looked after by the Archivist. It consists of printed material, photocopies, original in-cave survey sheets and other items we'll classify as 'stuff'. There is a large set of

map drawers, a filing cabinet, some mailing tubes (remember those?) with maps rolled up in them, and a few storage boxes with karst index forms inside.

There has been almost no activity with this during the year as, fortunately, most of our survey and mapping is now unreal. (On a recent map, I saw a word containing the letter 'i'. Q.E.D.) Except: Ron Mann, a VERY active member of TCC and then SCS in the 60s and 70s, recently donated a pile of real stuff. We now have originals of maps published in *Southern Caver* but not in the Archive, and some maps of Mole Creek Caves from 1959. Also, most interestingly, there were a lot of newspaper cuttings from the 60s and 70s about Tasmanian caving. These cover various cave rescues and searches, gee-whiz articles about pretty caves, publicity articles about Tassie's heroic cavers and typical Tasmanian cargo-cult proposals like a railway to a limestone quarry at Precipitous Bluff. (Not to be confused with a railway to the Stadium.) I'll be scanning all this (and making it unreal) for the Archive. Maybe we can get something for *Southern Caver*.

I'm willing to continue in this role but it's time for a generational change. Any takers?

Digital Archivist/Karst Index Officer (Stephen Fordyce)

This is a good role for me as it's cloud-based and practical to do from my home in Melbourne. Thanks to Ric and Janine for providing a storage location for the physical records, to Ric the Physical Archivist, to Greg the Librarian (both of whom add and tidy things) and to Michael for managing the Ida Bay folder. Also to Jemma, who is briefed on relevant stuff in case I get hit by a bus.

The shared JF QGIS project continued to grow in content and complexity, and Michael has been working on a similar thing for Ida Bay. Some archival digging was carried out in response to external requests by Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania. The Digital Archivist role was found to include 'State Karst Co-ordinator' and it was delightfully ironic to have a mainlander as the one for Tassie. A new area (Lamprey Creek) was given a prefix, and that hat was put back in a dusty cupboard.

Remember that the spirit of the data agreement and archive is 'you show me yours, and I'll show you mine' - data and information need to flow in both directions. STC would rather have messy half-finished stuff now than wait forever for a tidied complete version. Please send anything and everything you want included in a specific cave folder (publishing in the *Spiel* isn't a guarantee it will get filed) organised and ready to put in. You can submit your data to me, Ric, Greg or Jemma.

Science Officer (Chris Sharples)

Although I was quite busy helping with organising and field-assisting the German *Anaspides* researchers during 2023, with the departure of Christoph Höpel and his PhD supervisor Stefan Richter at the end of February 2024 there has been little call for my official capacities as Scientific Officer since then. I expect that Christoph will have spent most of 2024 finishing his research at the University of Rostock (Germany) and writing up papers on the genetic relationships of Tasmanian *Anaspides* varieties for most of 2024. I assume that we will in due course be able to read Christoph's conclusions on the biology of Tasmanian cave-adapted *Anaspides* in the scientific literature!

Although the ongoing progress in cave exploration and mapping during 2024 can from some perspectives be regarded as a scientific endeavour, the Scientific Officers role has not been particularly relevant to the ongoing exploration, and there have been no other scientific undertakings of note under the Scientific Officer's purview during 2024.

I am happy to be nominated for the Scientific Officer role again in 2025.

Search and Rescue (Jemma Herbert)

Search and rescue had a happily uneventful year again. Good job everybody not needing rescue! STC did some local training at Fruehauf and the Organ Pipes and the Lost World and Waterworks Reserve. And we did some training with the Northern crew up at Mole Creek, in the trees, and in Honeycomb, and some First Aid. And we did a big exercise at Growling Swallet. And maybe some other stuff. I'm happy to go again as Search and Rescue Officer.

Web Wizard (John Oxley)

The website continues to perform well. We have had several enquiries regarding membership and trips as a result of people finding our website. Two new pages have been added to the website: a videos page where short videos are hosted and an events page where upcoming club events are shown.

Public Officer (Ciara Smart)

A handful of data agreements were processed.

Training Officer (Karina Anders)

There were many people trained this year. So many that we decided to get the gear reviewed and upgraded where need be. Really great to see so many new people interested. As always, many thanks to the people who helped out training beginners, it was definitely a group effort and made it a lot more fun. Very happy to assist the new training officer next year.

ASF Google Forum Representative (Ric Tunney)

Australian Speleological Federation has a Googlegroup; each club has one or more reps. ASF sends out information for circulation, requests for club input to ASF decisions and club votes on ASF policies. The club reps process this. For STC, some stuff is sent to the club executive, some is discarded, and some is circulated on the STC Listserver. The job also involves checking that STC members have received *The Cave Cricket*. I haven't kept detailed information about what went on during the year. However, I received at least 92 emails this year; around two a week. But I doubt I sent out more than one email a fortnight. I'm not standing for this position this year but, fortuitously, Janine McKinnon is standing and I endorse her candidacy.

Treasurer (Russell Fulton)

Income and Expenditure Statement:

Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Incorporated

Financial Statement for Year Ending 31 December 2024:

	2024	**2023**
Income		
Membership fees	$4,866.50	$4,448.30
Speleo Spiel subscriptions	$0.00	$15.00
Gear hire	$230.00	$120.00
Donations (to STC General Funds)	$25.50	$28.00
Grants	$0.00	$0.00
Interest	$427.98	$263.24
Sundries	$0.00	$400.00
Total income	$5,549.98	$5,274.54
Expenditure		
ASF fees	$3,031.65	$3,307.00
Gear purchase and repair	$467.70	$430.28
Spiel & *Southern Caver* production	$0.00	$66.30
Website hosting	$0.00	$0.00
Google 2 Tb subscription	$43.99	$43.99
Equipment officer honorarium	$135.60	$0.00
Annual return fee	$71.20	$68.00
PO Box Rental	$245.00	$235.00
Civic Club membership	$50.00	$50.00
Bank fees	$6.60	$4.95
Sundries	$264.65	$0.00
Total expenditure	$4,316.39	$4,205.52
Net surplus (loss)	$1,233.59	$1,069.02
Balance Sheet		
General Account (bank balance)	$12,435.53	$11,201.94
Fixed Term Deposit (bank balance)	$10,000.00	$10,000.00
Plus, receipts to be deposited		
Total cash position	$22,435.53	$21,201.94

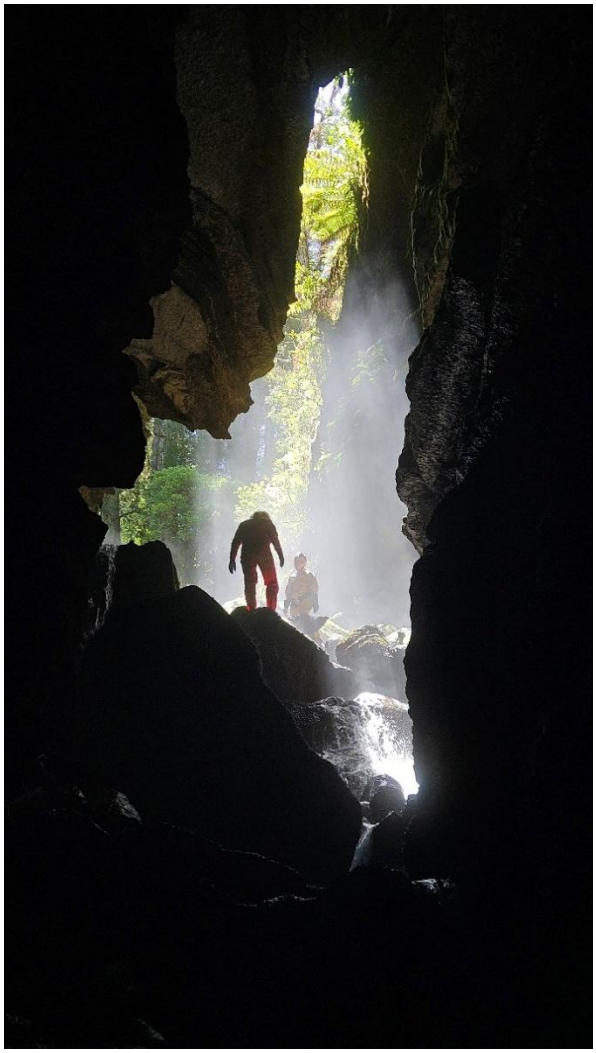
NOTES

1. Expenditure sundries comprised site hire for 75th anniversary BBQ and overpaid membership refunds.
2. Invoicing for website hosting has not occurred for several years and it is anticipated that between $300 to $500 will be due for payment in 2025.
3. Accounts will be audited internally.
4. Membership breakdown as of 31 December 2024:

CATEGORY	NUMBER
Single	20
Single – less ASF	7
Household	20
Concession	10
Introductory	5
Life – Active	3
Life – Active (Retired)	1
Life – Inactive	3
TOTAL	**69**

COMMENTS

The club operated with a gain of $1,233.59 this year. The club's bank balance of $22,435.53 is the highest for any year in the club's history. Higher interest rates for the term deposit gave the club a boost in income and again gear purchases were relatively modest. It is anticipated that a significant increase in gear purchases will occur in 2025 with the planned acquisition of rope and SRT gear for training and hire purposes at an estimated outlay of $2,000-$2,500. The club is in a sound financial position.



JF-36 Growling Swallet entrance. Image: Alan Jackson