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Southern Tasmanian Caverneers

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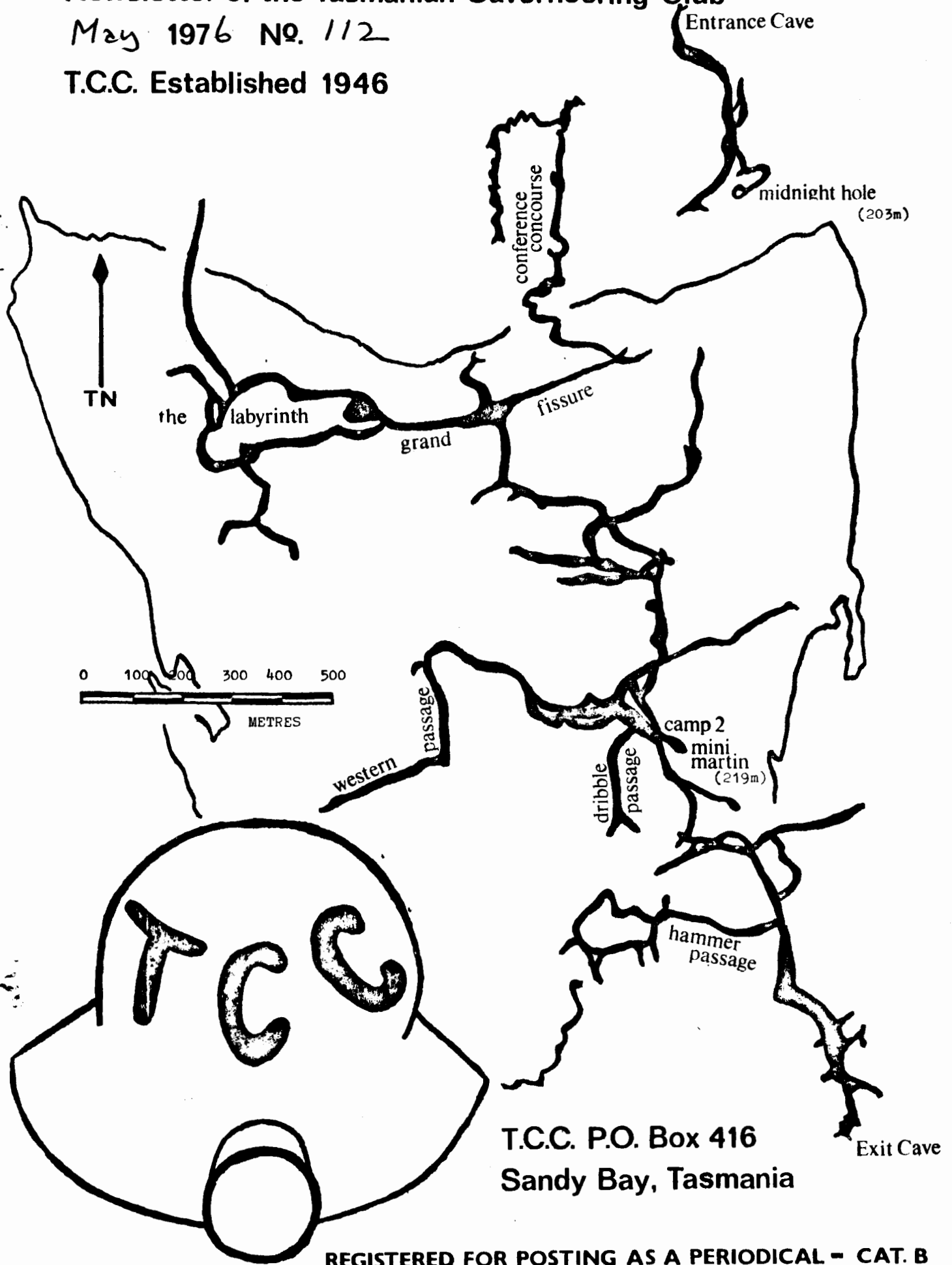
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SPELEO SPIEL

Newsletter of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club

May 1976 No. 112

T.C.C. Established 1946



T.C.C. P.O. Box 416
Sandy Bay, Tasmania

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FORWARD PROGRAMME.

- May 8 - Florentine Valley:- Leader: Laurie Moody.
 May 15 - Florentine Valley:- Leader: Laurie Moody.
 May 16 - Ida Bay:- Entrance Cave - Leader: Anthony Culberg.
 May 23-27 - Maria Island Trip:- Moody & Skinner.
 May 29-30 - Mole Creek:- Leader: Tony Culberg.
 June 2 - General Meeting:- Laurie Moody's, 13 Mason Street, Claremont.
 June 5 - Junee-Florentine:- Leader: Laurie Moody.

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Editorial.

Apologies again are due for yet another late issue. However, I have been extremely busy and due to one thing or another, have not been able to settle down and start typing. It's been quite a month for speleology. Since the beginning of May, a good amount of work has been done in the Florentine. Four new caves have been discovered, one of which has been surveyed to a length of nearly 400m. Another important piece of information was also released this month - it concerns Beginners Luck Cave, also in the Florentine. Carbon dating has confirmed that this particular cave is an important archaeological site in as much as it was an aboriginal shelter cave some 12,000 years ago. This makes it the oldest aboriginal site on the Tasmanian Mainland. Albert Goede has provided us with an article dealing with this information and it can be read on page 2.

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Full Member

Jean Thomas was voted in as a full member at the May general meeting and on behalf of TCC, I would like to say welcome to the mob! Jean has already proved how keen she is by travelling from Burnie to take part in a recent trip to the Florentine. Her address is :- 2/582 Bass Highway, Heybridge. 7321

Meetings

The May general meeting was rather poorly attended and it is hoped that this does not occur in future. Thanks are extended to Hank and Mrs. Moording for an enjoyable evening and the supper.

Film Evening

Two films dealing with Iceland, with an introduction by Bob Holderness-Roddam, who has travelled extensively throughout the country, will be shown at the Domain House on Thursday, 10 June at 8.00PM. Admission is \$1.00. The films are highly recommended and members are advised to see them.

Subscriptions - quite a number are still outstanding. If you are one of these people, please contact the secretary and get him off my back!

OLDEST KNOWN ABORIGINAL SITE ON THE TASMANIAN MAINLAND.

Beginners Luck Cave (JF 79-83) in the Florentine Valley has recently become the oldest known archaeological site on the Tasmanian mainland when charcoal from a deposit containing archaeological material was recently dated at 12,600 years before the present. It shows that Tasmanian aborigines were present in inland Tasmania at least seasonally during the last Ice Age which came to an end about 10,000 years ago. Dating of bones of an extinct species of browsing kangaroo (*Sthenurus*) from another deposit in the same cave gave an age of 14,450 years ago. It may be that this animal was hunted to extinction by aboriginal Man. A paper on the site was presented at the Hobart ANZAS Conference this month by Peter Murray and myself.

Albert Goede.

TASMANIA'S LONGEST CAVES (May, 1976)

The caves are listed in order of surveyed length in metres. Where the estimated total length of a cave system appears to be significantly greater, it is shown in brackets behind the surveyed length. All caves with an estimated total length of 400 metres or more, are included regardless of the length of passage actually surveyed.

In contrast to the deepest caves, the longest caves of Tasmania have been very poorly documented and estimates have frequently been sheer guesswork. Despite considerable efforts by Ross Ellis, his latest published list (Ellis, 1975) is based on very poor information because nothing better was available. This has spurred me on during the last year to attempt to obtain more accurate information on our longest caves.

I am grateful for information and assistance from Andrew Skinner of TCC, Leigh Gleeson and Steve Harris from SCS and also Bill Tomalin (formerly of NC) who supplied information on Kubla Khan and Pyramid Caves, Mole Creek.

The list is as follows:-

| | | | |
|------|---|--------|----------|
| (1) | Exit Cave, Ida Bay | 13,000 | (16,000) |
| (2) | Herberts Pot, Mole Creek | 5,322 | (5,730) |
| (3) | Kubla Khan, Mole Creek | 2,507 | |
| (4) | Kkazad-dum, Junee | 1,774 | |
| (5) | Croesus Cave, Mole Creek | 1,758 | (2,050) |
| (6) | Judds Cavern, Cracroft | 1,721 | (2,000) |
| (7) | Wet Cave-Georgies Hall, Mole Creek | 1,554 | |
| (8) | Pyramid Cave System, Mole Creek | 1,455 | (2,000) |
| (9) | Welcome Stranger, Florentine Valley | 1,291 | |
| (10) | Newdegate Cave, Hastings | 1,207 | (1,600) |
| (11) | Lynds Cave, Mole Creek | 1,081 | |
| (12) | Wolf Hole, Hastings | 1,056 | (2,000) |
| (13) | Honeycomb Cave, Mole Creek | 1,024 | |
| (14) | Damper Cave, Precipitous Bluff | 990 | |
| (15) | Quetzalcoatl Conduit, Precipitous Bluff | 950 | |
| (16) | Narakoopa Cave, Mole Creek | 910 | |
| (17) | Mystery Creek Cave (Entrance Cave), Ida Bay | 902 | (1,200) |
| (18) | Mostyn Hardy Cave, Loongana | 695 | (800) |
| (19) | Gormenghast, Florentine Valley | 582 | |
| (20) | Mersey Hill Cave, Mole Creek | 540 | (1,000) |
| (21) | Frankcombe Cave, Florentine Valley | 520 | (980) |
| (22) | Un-named Cave, Heka, Gunns Plains | 500 | |
| (23) | Kellys Pot, Mole Creek | 457 | (610) |
| (24) | Loons Cave, Ida Bay | 411 | (1,000) |
| (25) | Niagara Pot, Junee | 410 | |
| (26) | King George V Cave, Hastings | 381 | (590) |

Cont. On Page 3.

TASMANIA'S LONGEST CAVES Cont;

| | | | |
|------|-------------------------------------|-----|----------|
| (27) | JF 88-89, Florentine Valley | 377 | |
| (28) | Gurns Plains Cave, Gurns Plains | 291 | (?500) |
| (29) | Growling Swallet, Florentine Valley | 207 | (600) |
| (30) | Tailender Cave, Mole Creek | 200 | (1,000) |

It can be seen from the list that there is considerable scope for surveying, as many of our long caves have only been partially surveyed.

The most exciting prospect is Herberts Pot which appears to be Australia's fifth longest cave on surveyed length. Some surveying remains to be done and there are good prospects of extending the cave even further.

Exit Cave was the longest cave in the Southern Hemisphere until recently. It has now been surpassed by Selminum Tem in Papua New Guinea, which has over 20 kms of surveyed passage.

On a world scale, Exit Cave does not rank all that high. A recent list of the twenty-five longest caves in the world (Blanchard, 1976) shows that for a cave to be included in this list it must have a surveyed passage length of 24 kms. The world's longest is Flint-Mammoth (U.S.A.) with 286 kms, followed by Hollock (Switzerland) with 123 kms while third place goes to Optimistitscheskaja (U.S.S.R.) with 109.1 kms of passage.

Our caves are not likely to reach such exalted lengths but at least we can document what we have got. There's a long way to go!

Albert Goede.

References:

Blanchard, H.W. 1976: The Twenty-Five Longest. NSS News 34 (2), 29-30
Ellis, R. 1975.

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TRIP REPORTS

GENGHIS KHAN, MOLE CREEK - 10-11/4/76.

Party: Therese Goede (A/L), Peter Watts & Bill Nicholson (TCC).

A trip for shutter buggers only. Six and a half hours were spent underground, many photographs were taken & a Polaroid Colourpak 80 Camera was used underground to see if reasonable photographs could be produced with same. There are some problems but once the technique was acquired some good pictures were taken. No further damage was noted since the previous trip with Ross Bridges.

Therese Goede.

GENGHIS KHAN, MOLE CREEK - 25-26/4/76.

Party: Therese Goede (A/L), Graham Rowling & Steven Nieuwendyk from S.S.S.

A quick trip for the benefit of two Sydney cavers, one of whom had partaken in the assault on Khazad-dum, Cauldron Pot, Tassy Pot & Dvarrowdelf over the Easter vacation. Five hours were spent below. Fresh and extensive damage was noted which dampened the pleasure of the trip. Elaboration would serve no purpose, but those who have previously admired the cave would be sickened by what has occurred. Enough said.

Therese Goede.

JUNEE-FLORENTINE - 10/4/76.

Party: Tony Culberg (L), Max & Tim Jeffries, John Miller, Phillip Voss, Steven Annan, John Parker, Pat Fullerton. (TCC/TCCMB)

TRIP REPORTS Cont;

The party assembled at the A.M.N. gate at 10.00am and made it's way to Nine Road where John Miller led the way to a hole that he had discovered. It went - 6 metres vertically. We then went to another hole further round the base of Mt. Field West, it was even smaller. Tim & Phillip explored another nearby hole, which started well. I took a ladder down and rigged a short pitch. The cave slopes steeply, about 50 degrees for 50 metres, with some formation. The tube is about .85m diameter, with very sharp rock on the sides. The pitch was 6 metres and ended in a choke. There were numerous bones in this part, probably of animals that fell in recently. About 1-5 metres down, a horizontal passage led off to two chambers with mud floors. I suspect that there is a similar cave sloping in from the other side giving a Y cross-section.

The rest of the day was spent looking at a hole that Laurie and Max had explored the previous week. (JF 88-89).

Tony Culberg.

FLORENTINE - 8/5/76.

Party: Laurie Moody (L), Andrew & Ros Skinner plus Ailsa, Max & Tim Jeffries.

After the usual slow-type start, we arrived at Maydena, collected Max & Tim and headed off into the Florentine: The purpose of this particular trip was to survey the latest of our finds in the lower Cashion Creek area. The cave was duly reached and numbered JF 88-89. The length of passage surveyed exceeded our expectations - approx. 377 metres. This makes JF 88-89 the fourth longest cave in the Florentine Valley. After lunch, we did some scrub-bashing along the burnt-out ridge north of JF 88-89 and located a large shelter cave and another cave with a rather tight entrance which was blocked with rocks. After some digging by Tim (who said TCC doesn't do any digging?), access was gained and inspection proved that it was well worth a number. There is some good formation, flowstone and rimpools. After exploration of this cave had been completed, we drove to an area on the opposite side of the road to Beginners Luck and inspected a cave which had been noted on a previous trip. This proved to be another worthy of a number and also sports a bit of formation. As it was now approaching nightfall, we decided to call it a day and return to Hobart.

FLORENTINE VALLEY - 15/5/76.

Party: Laurie Moody (L), Louise & Richard Moody, Jean Thomas, Tony Culberg, Pat Fullerton, Andrew & Ros Skinner plus Ailsa, (TCC), Max Jeffries and Phillip Voss (NB/TCC).

The party arrived in dribs and drabs at Maydena and most everyone met at the shop, which I noted has now changed hands. The new owners appear to like cavers and this is a good sign. We also ran into Albert Goede and Peter Murray who were taking a party of archaeologists out to Beginners Luck for a look. I had also mentioned to Albert about the discovery of a shelter cave in the area of JF 88-89 and agreed to show them where it was. After this had been accomplished, we left the archaeological party and proceeded to another hole which was close to JF 88-89 and thought to connect with same. Two 9m ladders were needed and Phillip and I descended. The bottom of the pitch was found to contain a collection of bones and two skulls. At this point the cave was found to have a higher level and by chimneying, we were able to make our way to where a further pitch of 5-6m metres was encountered. After an assurance by Phillip that we could get out again, this pitch was chimneyed and we then found ourselves in a large chamber. Two daylight holes were noted in the roof and there were two leads. We chose the bottom one for a start and after some crawling, it was found to choke off. We retraced our route back to the main chamber which contained some extremely good flowstone and again chimneyed up the other lead and made our way through some well-decorated passage which eventually terminated with no way on. Again we made our way back

TRIP REPORTS Cont;

to the main chamber and Phillip (don't ask me how?) managed to pull off a very tricky piece of chimneying to emerge on yet another level. Despite his assuring statements of how easy it was, yours truly could not be coaxed into giving it a go! Even his comments regarding how the Maydena Branch needed more training did not entice me to follow suit! From his perch, Phillip then described what was there - more passage and a daylight hole which he could see out of. It was then decided to emerge and see if we could gain entrance via the surface. I stood below and prayed that his return trip was without mishap - it was! After gaining the surface, the daylight hole in question was located and excavating began. I might also add that work is still in progress. Work was abandoned in favour of lunch and I proceeded to JF 88-89 where Max had taken my youngsters on a tour. I entered the cave to find them emerging but as Jean had not seen the cave, we proceeded in again minus Max. Thanks to his efforts, the pitch can now be bypassed via the "squeeze". We finally emerged and it was then that I discovered that my watch had stopped. Due to this, a prior arranged meeting with Albert to show them another bone deposit, was foiled. A trip to this same area on June 5 will be principally to number other recent discoveries.

Laurie Moody.

JUNEE - date unknown (sometime in April)

Party: Tony Culberg (L), Pat Fullerton, Jean Thomas (P) (TCC), Heather Symes and Stephen Gilbert (GBHS), Adrian Davey, Rudi Frank, Reece Wellington, Marg ? (VSA) Max and Tim Jeffries (IBTCC) (Sat. only)

Laurie Moody was running this trip but his car went on strike. As Jean Thomas was keen to go caving, I took over the trip. We met at Max's at about 10.30am and proceeded to the ANI gate, collected Adrian and Co. and went to K.D. with a large (partly unfit) party. We only went as far as the 90' pitch, an exercise which took quite a deal of time. We also looked at the Serpentine. The Victorians were suitably impressed.

As the weather was lousy we retreated to the Homestead and a warm fire. On Sunday, we tried to find Beginners Luck-Wonguano and drove past it. It is amazing the difference a bushfire and a bulldozer can make! I have now a better idea of how the area is put together!

The Victorian contingent went mad at the sight of all that limestone and the fact that most of it is unexplored. About an hour after arriving, we assembled the party and had a look at the system. Adrian and Rudi collected bugs, while the rest of us toured the cave.

As the VSA mob had to catch a plane and Jean had to drive to Burnie, we wound up at this point. No new work was done but the VSA members have a better idea of the Junee-Florentine area.

Tony Culberg.

TCC MEMBER ON WORLD TOUR

Ruth Stephenson has advised us that she is having a great time. A letter was received from Ruth and is dated 29 April. Places that she has visited so far are Singapore, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Kashmir and New Delhi. Anyone wishing to read this letter can do so by contacting the Editor.

"The best caves are those without entrances"

- - - Murphy, 1885 (?)

OPERATION "FERRET" or PLEASE DON'T GET STUCK IN A CAVE!

1-2 May, 1976. Hole Creek.

Organisations concerned with Search & Rescue in caves, converged on the small township of Hole Creek on the weekend of 1-2nd of May. This long-awaited event was run in conjunction with the Police Search & Rescue Unit, St. John Ambulance, Tasmanian Climbing Club, National Parks & Wildlife, and other representatives from three of Tasmania's four caving bodies. It was rather disappointing to note that one particular club was conspicuous by its absence. One of the main functions of this exercise was to test the Police Search & Rescue winch, and the feasibility of the Neil Robinson stretcher and other equipment under cave conditions.

The cave in question, was Herberts Pot. I personally thought that this particular cave was a dubious choice as far as caves go. It is renowned for being a hard and difficult cave to negotiate. However, after seeing the operation being carried out and participating in same, perhaps Herberts Pot was not a bad choice after all.

The large party, consisting of approx. 30-40 cavers and police, descended on the cave, thanks being due to Inspector Massie and the Police Land Cruiser. Prior to entering the cave, a brief discussion and delegation of various tasks were allotted. This was one particular point, where I feel that more time could have been spent as it became obvious that some participants had not received enough, for want of a better word, "familiarisation" as to caving procedure underground.

An advance party, consisting of the more experienced abseilers (both police and cavers) proceeded down the 30m entrance pitch and made its way to the far end of the cave where it experimented in the usage of rubber drag mats. These proved to be quite adequate for the purpose of which they were designed. A second party also followed down the pitch and experimented with the Neil Robinson stretcher. This particular stretcher also proved successful to a degree but warrants further modifications to make life just that little easier. A third party then proceeded into the cave to rig the winch and by this stage congestion became something of a problem. This winch also proved successful but was operated by police and climbers only. Familiarisation for cavers is being planned.

One problem, which was only to be expected, was the extrication of the 24 bods who reached the bottom of the pitch. This proved to be a long and slow process. After being in the cave some eight hours and being the third last up the ladder, one must realise that a minimum number of people must be considered in future exercises where a pitch of any renown is concerned. The long wait in wet and cold conditions can be rather disconcerting and exhausting as was shown. Another thing of note was the inevitable disturbance of loose rocks from the top of the pitch. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured although one person was known to have been struck on the leg. An SCS ladder, however, did not escape unscathed as the buckled rung at the bottom of the pitch testified.

All in all, a very successful exercise. A de-briefing was held on the Sunday morning and a lot of useful ideas were forwarded and should make the next exercise which, I understand, is to be run in the near future, a piece of cake! I would like to thank the Police for their valued assistance and co-operation and I'm sure that all of us who participated learnt something from the exercise. Members of TCC who participated were as follows:- Brent Nightingale, Bill Nicholson, Stuart Nicholas, Shane Garlick, Andrew Skinner and Laurie Moody. If I have missed anyone, please let me know and I will acknowledge you in the next Spiel.

Laurie Moody.

AUSTRALIAN SPELEO ABSTRACTS - 1974.

Are now available from Greg Middleton, 9 Nixon Street, Sandy Bay. 7005
If you have not yet ordered a copy, get in touch with Greg. I am not yet sure of the price but this will be advertised in the next Spiel.