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Speleo Spiel

Southern Tasmanian Caverneers

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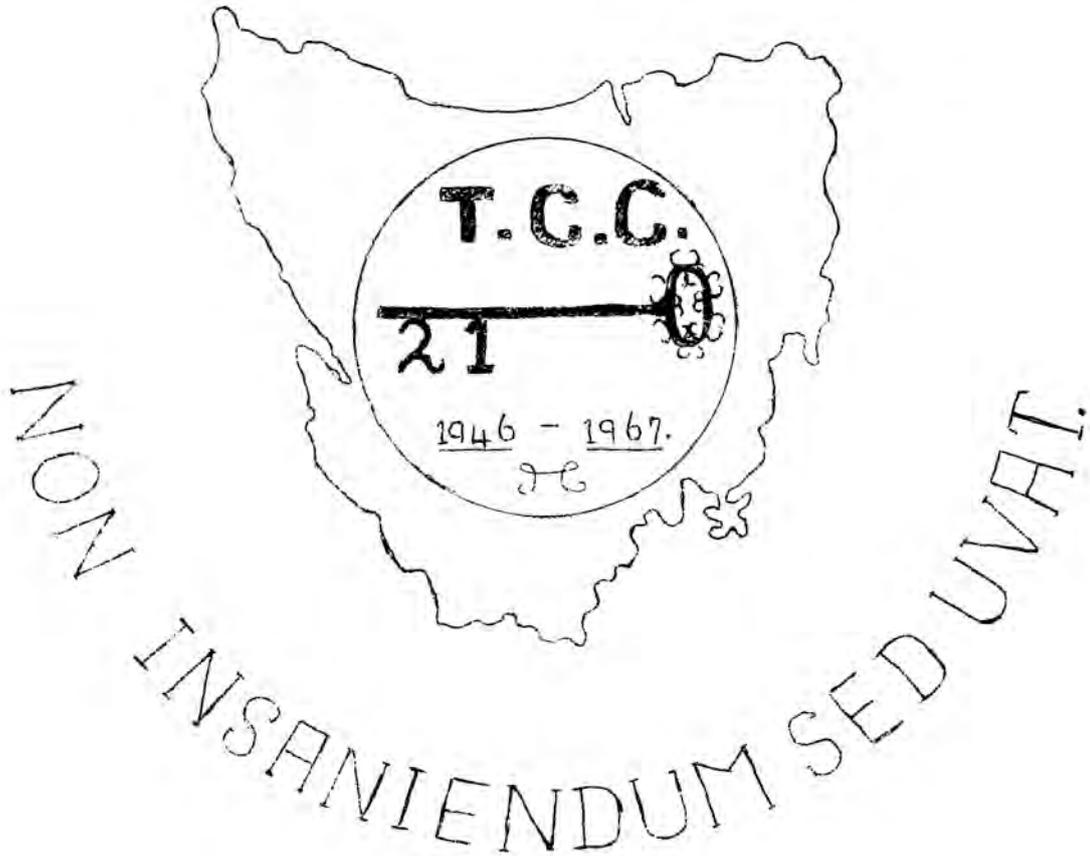
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President: A. Goede, 8 Bath Street, Battery Point, Hobart. 7000
Secretary: Mrs. J. Brabon, 122 Augusta Road, Lenah Valley. 7008

TWENTY - ONE YEARS OF CAVING. 1946 - 1967.

This month our club has come-of-age as it has now been in existence for twenty-one years. There have been many changes in this time and few of the original members are still around but the spirit of exploration and adventure on which it was founded is still with us and we are looking forward to many more years of caving.

The club was founded by Professor S.W. Carey and the inaugural meeting was held in the Tasmanian Museum, Hobart on the 13th September, 1946. Thirty people were present.

The first caving trip was a training camp in the Maydena area where Junee and adjacent caves were explored. Several early trips were to Hastings where King George V and Newdegate Caves were investigated. A detailed map of Newdegate Cave was produced which is still a cave surveying classic. As our club was the first caving club to be founded in Australia considerable interest was aroused by its early activities. Many newspaper reports are preserved in our archives and make interesting reading.

Death of Edith Smith.

It is with the deepest regret that we announce the death of our first honorary life member, Edith Smith, in Launceston on August 29.

Edith joined the club in 1948 and was associated with many early explorations including the digging of the Binney Tunnel. She served as a committee member for a number of years and held the offices of vice-president and treasurer. In 1955 before her departure to Canberra she was elected as the first honorary life member.

While in Canberra she became a foundation member of the Canberra Speleological Society and played a large part in the early exploration and mapping of the now well known caves at Wee Jasper.

In recent years her caving activities have been restricted by ill health but until the last she continued to take an interest in caving. Those of us who had the pleasure of her company will remember her not only for her caving exploits but most of all as a very sincere person and an invaluable friend. In honour of her memory the gypsum grotto in Exit Cave has been named Edie's Treasure.

A New Australian Depth Record.

On August 19 two of our members backed by a large support party descended Mini-Martin and linked it with Exit Cave to set a new Australian depth record of 720 feet. The previous record of 560' was also set by your club in February 1957 in Growling Swallet, Florentine Valley. A detailed account of the record descent is given in our trip reports.

We are very grateful to the T.C.C. (Northern Branch) who came down all the way from Launceston and whose support in men and equipment was indispensable. We are particularly thankful to Dick Porch, who volunteered for the difficult task of belaying the other two members at the bottom of the 360 ft. ladder pitch and then climbing back to the surface. Also many thanks to the two members of the Tas. Uni. Mountaineering Club who assisted by acting as sherpas to carry up some of the gear. Finally we must pay tribute to all our members who formed the support parties and carried up the mountain of gear (600 feet of ladder and nearly 1,000 feet of rope) that was required for the descent. It's not every day they get up voluntarily at 5.30 a.m.!!

CLUB NEWS.

+ Donald Fraser has changed his address to 3 Cromer Street, Lynwood, Perth, W.A. 6155. The latest news is that he is about to try his first West Australian cave.

+ The following names should be added to the membership list published in the July issue of the *Spiel*.

Ferris, John - 273 East Risdon Rd., Lindisfarne. Ph. 43 7296.

Latham, Del - 35 Balaka Street, Rosny. Ph. 44 1672.

+ At the last meeting it was suggested that we should seek closer co-operation with the Southern Caving Society and this was agreed to unanimously. Since the best way to get to know your fellow

cavers is to take them underground it was decided to approach them about a combined trip to Exit Cave on 14 - 15 October.

+ The first aid sub-committee has made a good start. The old first aid kit was sorted out and a list of requirements drawn up. The committee is also making up ten personal kits in sealed plastic bottles which can be easily carried by exploration parties. These kits will soon be for sale to members at a nominal price.

+ On Sunday night, 20th August, an informal meeting was held at Albert's place to see Bob Woolhouse's slides of Kubla Khan and Execution Pot. They were so good that he had to show them 3 times. It just goes to show what you can do with PF1 flashbulbs, a Leica, fast colourfilm, a wide angle lens and a faithful companion.

+ Congratulations to the Farleys. Their stork has arrived and they are now blessed with sleepless nights and piles of dirty diapers. The stork intended for the Goedes seems to have been held up in the work to regulations strike.

Trip to Central Australia. July 1967.

by Joan & Peter Brabon.

Joan and Peter have written a detailed report on their recent trip for the benefit of anyone who wants to follow in their tracks. They left Adelaide on 18th July for Alice Springs on a three weeks trip. Highlights of the trip included a journey to Coober Pedy where they visited the Opal Cave, and trips to Ayers Rock, Stanley Chasm, Mt. Connor and other hot spots in Central Australia. Their advice is to take plenty of water, plenty of money and a spade to dig yourself out of the sand. They are now planning for their next trip which will be in about 18 months. This time they will put the car on the train to Alice Springs then drive to Darwin and back down the eastern side of Australia. Any takers?

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TRIP REPORT.

The Descent of Mini - Martin - 19 August, 1967.

(or How to Make Caving History the Hard Way.)

Underground party: Brian and Jeanette Collin, Bob Woolhouse (TCCNB), Peter Gourlay (TCCNB).

Descent party: Allan Keller, John Marshall, Dick Porch (TCCNB).

Surface party: Albert Goede, Peter Brabon, Sib McIntyre, Rae Allsop, Dick Chuter (prosp.), John Cunningham (prosp.), Frank Brown (TCC NB), David Bates (TUMC), Bob Tyson (TUMC).

We all made our way down to the Hastings Hut on Friday night. The last to arrive were the four Northern Branch members after a long trip from Launceston. The hut was packed full of people and at least it kept us warm as there was a heavy frost outside. Allan's alarm clock failed to do its duty but fortunately (?) Albert woke up at 5.30 a.m. and raised the alarm. After an hour of chaos in which 14 people tried to cook breakfast in a very confined space we were ready for the road.

After arriving at the usual parking spot we were standing around a huge pile of gear when someone remarked "where are the northern bods?". Brian and Jeanette went back to look for them while most of us shouldered our packs and started the long march along the Brooker. Meanwhile the missing party was located on the wrong

forestry road as a result of following directions obtained at Ida Bay. Finally we all met at the Exit camp site and after a brief rest said farewell to the underground party. The remaining twelve of us then struggled up the Kokoda Trail carrying some 600' of ladder, nearly 1,000' of rope and other assorted hardware required for the descent. It was 11.10 a.m. before we were all gathered around the edge of Mini-Martin. Thanks to our experience of four weeks earlier it did not take us long to let down 390' of ladder for the first pitch while the descent party had a rest and an early lunch. Allan was the first to go down and when he was 60' down someone who shall remain nameless accidentally kicked down a rock which missed him by three feet. After a pregnant silence we were glad to hear his voice again. The further descent was uneventful and Allan was quickly followed by John and Dick. By 1.30 p.m. all three were down.

After they had made a reconnaissance of what lay ahead they asked that the remaining ropes and ladders be sent down and three rucksacks followed each other in quick succession. Then followed a period of radio silence until Allan came through loud and clear to announce that he had gone down another 100' drop and after walking 12' along a ledge could look down yet another shaft at the bottom of which he could see Brian's party. Cheers at the top as this meant that it was now only a matter of time before the two parties met.

Another long period of silence followed. Finally we could stand it no longer and made some urgent enquiries through the radio. Dick briefly informed us that he was busy belaying and the line went dead. As turned out later the descent party had their troubles.

(The following is a report received from John Marshall and gives more details about the descent.)

"Following the able laddering of the initial 360' pitch by the surface party, Allan, John and Dick descended. Glow worms and a large fissure were noticed during rests on the descent. A large tree resting upright on the relatively horizontal platform at the base of the 360' ladder pitch was selected as a suitable belay point, ladders and equipment were then ordered by radio from the surface.

From the belay point there was a mud slope approx. 30 degrees and 35 ft. long followed by a 100 ft. free vertical drop. Dick then belayed Allan down this 100 ft. pitch so that more ladder could be joined and lowered over the next pitch. At this stage Allan was able to see the underground party. The water worn limestone at the base of the 100' pitch sloped at 20 degrees and was approx. 25 ft. long; this was followed by a vertical 80' pitch into the main Exit chamber.

A few anxious moments occurred when the join in the rope caught under the ladder at the beginning of Allan's 80' descent, however, this was freed without having to take Allan off belay. John then descended the underside of the 5 degree angled ladder which had jammed on the 80' pitch; the 80' ladder was then descended and the lower 180' of ladder lowered into the main chamber, coffee and appropriate additives were served.

Dick then climbed the 360' pitch supported by the surface party

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while the underground party moved out to the entrance to capture the new descent record of 720 feet.

Observations: The use of a continuous length of safety rope on an extended ladder pitch appears to be imperative, on several occasions during our rope work joins in the ropes became caught in the ladder. Two way radio on 27 megahertz proved invaluable during descent of the 360' pitch and for directing operations from the base of this pitch, however, once line of sight was lost the radios became useless. The 100' high fissure observed during the descent of the 360' pitch would require equipment and man power similar to that used for the descent of Mini-Martin. The second hole in the main Exit chamber may have its origin in this fissure: exploration should prove interesting."

Finally Dick was ready to come up but, unknown to us, he still had some gear - a 30' ladder, a 120' rope and a 30' rope. In order to save time he tied this on the end of the safety line and rather than asking us to haul it up he tied himself on 15' higher. He had just started climbing and was about 20' from the bottom when the ladder suddenly dropped 4 ft. giving him a nasty shock. An urgent series of whistle-blasts and he was down in a flash as he thought that one of the ladders had failed. After a careful inspection from both top and bottom of the hole we decided that nothing was wrong and that the ladder had probably been pulled up a few feet and become snagged when we hauled up the rucksacks. Dick resumed the climb but he was still shaken and it was a very slow trip with numerous rests. Three quarters of an hour after leaving the bottom he reached the top. We were rather pleased to see him but he was even more delighted to see us.

Then we discovered the tangle of gear which he had dragged along behind him. It was a perfect imitation of a ship's anchor and we could only thank our lucky stars that it had not snagged on anything on the way up. Next we spent a busy half hour hauling up and coiling a seemingly endless string of ladders. At last, at 5.45 p.m. when it was just beginning to get dark, we staggered away from the hole with our loads of rope and ladder. At the Exit camp site we met the underground party with Allan and John who had emerged from the cave 20 mins. earlier. We had set a new Australian depth record of 720' but were too tired to appreciate our success. Finally at 9 p.m. we all reached the cars and returned to Hastings for a good meal.

Last but not least we would like to thank the Northern Branch for coming down in force to give us a hand and for supplying the additional 200' of ladder as well as ropes which made the record attempt possible. Special thanks are due to Dick who had the thankless job of going down the 360' drop to assist Allan and John to go all the way and was then faced with a very difficult climb back to the surface. A fine piece of work Dick!!

We are also grateful to David Bates and Bob Tyson of the Tas. Uni. Climbing Club who came down to give us a hand. We hope it hasn't put them off caving!

A.Goede.

ADVENTURE CAMP.

The National Fitness Council has asked us if it would be possible for one of our members to assist at their Adventure Camp as an instructor in the activity of caving from the 13-27 January, 1968. The camp will be based at the N.F.C. site on the Esperance River near Dover.

To date this has been a voluntary position but there seems to be a possibility of some form of payment being offered. At least the Council will listen to suggestions along this line. Anyone who thinks that they may be able to assist should contact Albert as soon as possible or write to:

Mr. Iain H. Barnes,
G.P.O. Box 440E,
Hobart, 7001.

or phone him at 30 3054.

A.S.F. Handbook.

The handbook will be available from about the middle of October. All the material in the handbook is up to date and of great interest to all cavers. A summary of what is contained in the handbook may be obtained from Albert. You may order your copy of the handbook now upon payment of \$2.00 which is a very reasonable amount for 200 pages of extremely useful information. To make it even better you have a choice of binding so get in early and order your copy NOW.

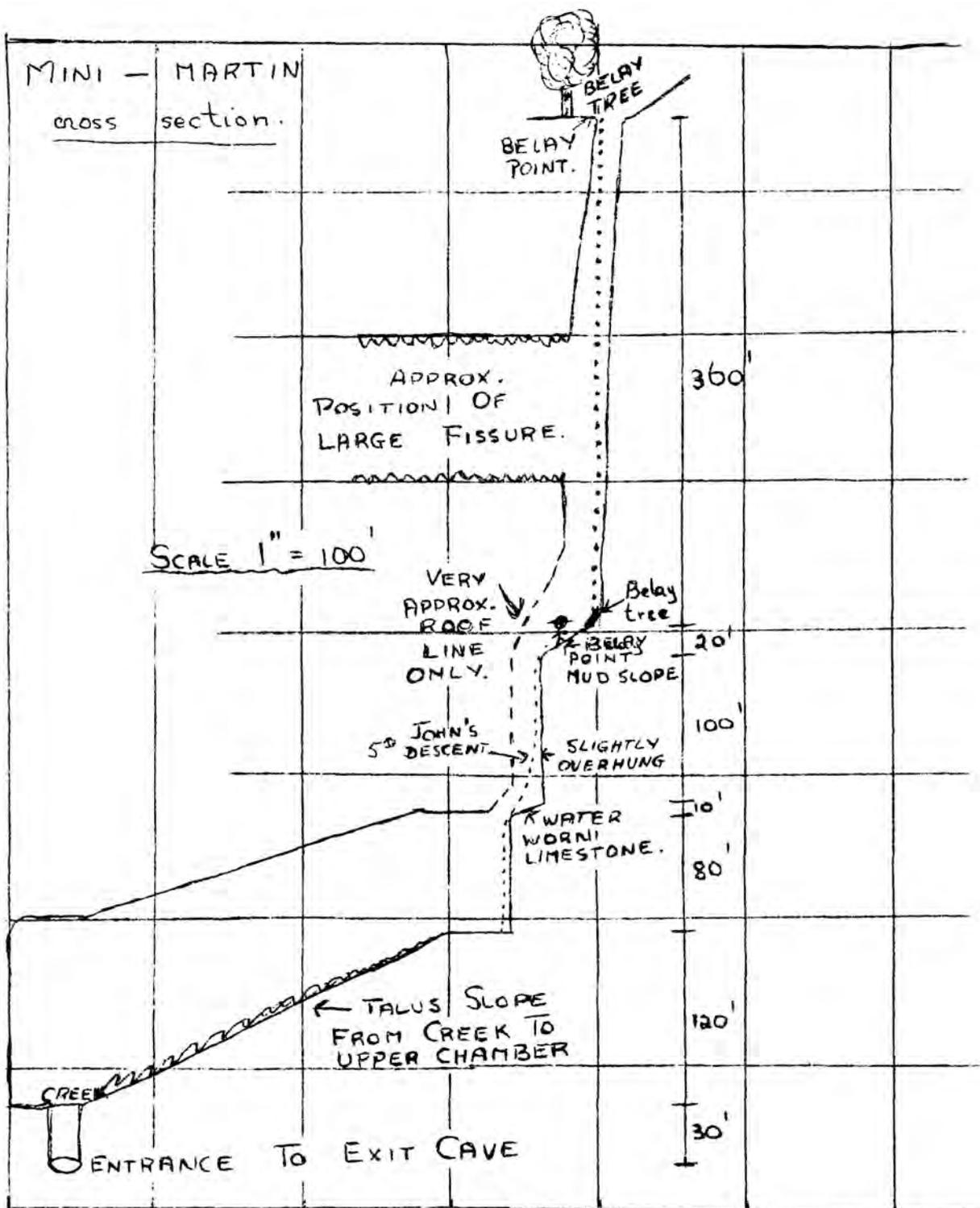
[The following originally appeared after the Mini-Martin cross section on page 5]

FORWARD PROGRAMME.

- Sept.24 - Sunday. Ladder practice at Sphynx Rock. Leader: B.Hodge.
- Sept.30-Oct.1 - Maydena - Florentine. Day or weekend trip. Will include a visit to Frankcombe Cave. Leader: P.Brabon.
- October 3 - Tuesday. General meeting at 8p.m. Flat 9, Grosvenor Flats, Sandy Bay.
- Oct.14 - 15 - Combined trip to Exit Cave with the S.C.S. Leader: John Marshall.
- Oct.28 - 29 - Mole Creek. Probably including a visit to Kubla Khan. Leader: P.Brabon.
- November 7 - Wednesday. General meeting at Doug Turner's, 79 Riawena Road, Rose Bay.
- November 11 - 12 - A visit to Exit Cave with members of the Scenery Preservation Board on Saturday. A weekend trip for those willing to stay.
- November 25 - CHRISTMAS - BIRTHDAY DINNER!!!!!!!
- December 26 - 31 Christmas trip to Loongana. Leader: A.Goede.

Stop Press.

Rod Hughes' battle with fate still continues - and fate is winning. His latest misfortune is a badly cut face caused by being a passenger in a car involved in a head-on collision.



[In the original the Forward Programme and Stop Press appeared here – see previous page]