

again straight away but you never know till you go. It's back on the 'maybe' lead list.

On our way out I joined the Psychopomps and surveyed their interesting finds. The others returned to camp and did some tidy up surveys of minor bits and pieces in that vicinity.

The 15<sup>th</sup> was going home day. I filled in the time waiting for slow prusikers by drilling holes for the impending p-hanger installations.

It wasn't the most productive trip in terms of metres surveyed (something like 800 m all up) but it was productive in the sense that several leads and jobs were ticked off the list. Hopefully the end is nigh?

---

## JF-237 Niggly Cave: Psychopomp

12-15 December 2019

Ben Armstrong

Early on day two Alan showed Gabriel and me one of the remaining leads in Atlantis. He described the ease in which we'd be able to free climb to a comfortable ledge, before stepping leisurely across into the new passage which opened tantalisingly 8 m above the floor (*ah, the gullibility of the young – Ed*). Gabriel cajoled me into leading the climb, so armed with his drill (which possibly had an undersized bit), bolting gear, sky-hooks and assorted cumbersome paraphernalia, I surmounted a big detached block and started drilling. I had a lot of difficulty getting the bolts in but assumed this was due to general ineptitude. The climbing was not quite as easy or free as I had been led to believe, but four shallowly placed bolts (and one dubious DBZ) later, I was standing in the new passage. I rigged a pitch and the others came up.

**The passage went about 15 m then dropped over an awkward mud wall (which is now equipped with an etrier), took a right turn up a tricky climb, then ended in an aven.**

Alan scrambled part of the way up this aven to a point where he thought another short aid climb could access a continuation above. We left it for later and proceeded on to other business.

After the aborted tourist trip to Mother of God on day three, Gabriel and I headed back to the potential climb. I tried to repeat the unprotected scramble to Alan's highpoint, but baulked at the last few meters of non-trivial and disturbingly exposed chimneying. Gabriel made an attempt and fared no better. Alan (who had dropped by to visit on his way to somewhere else) rightly abused us for being useless, climbed it and put a rope up. He had a similar struggle getting the bolt in but was slightly less reluctant to blame his tools. Alan left and we headed up. Gabriel put me on belay and I placed a bolt, stepped in an etrier and made a precarious mantle onto a huge chockstone that was wedged airily across the aven. I looked back and noticed that the quickdraw (my only protection) had somehow unclipped itself from the rope, meaning a fall would result in a horror factor 1 pendulum, which would have splatted me into the wall (assuming Gabriel's thighs of steel were strong enough to hold my fall, and if not, the single bolt that he was attached to didn't pull out). After traversing the chockstone, the continuation Alan

had seen was easily gained and I rigged the aven as a 10-ish metre pitch.

Gabriel seconded across and we pushed excitedly up the passage, which ascended steadily upwards through rockpile with some squeezes and climbs (the trickiest of which now has an etrier). I popped out into a large black space, which (with very depleted headlamp batteries) seemed like it was definitely going to be Mother of God #2. Further exploration revealed this was slightly optimistic, but it still had a series of fairly impressive 50+ m high avens.

We continued steeply upwards across the base of these avens until it terminated in rockpile. On the way back, we found a rift passage that ran in a similar direction to the way we had come. We returned to the bottom of the pitch and waited for Alan to return with survey gear.

Alan returned and we surveyed the new discoveries. I decided to call it "Pyschopomp" (an entity who guides souls to the afterlife), for no particular reason. We pushed the rift passage to a short drop, which Alan enthusiastically jumped down. He reported that it continued in a promising fashion (heading vaguely down towards Red Rocket's Revenge/Ninja). Given that Alan had some considerable difficulties climbing back up, we figured it would be sensible to come back and rig it as a pitch.

All up we found 300+ m of new stuff, which ascended 100+ m of vertical from Atlantis.

---

## JF-237 Niggly Aborted Bossland Dive

13 December 2019

Stephen Fordyce

*All photos by Stephen Fordyce*

### Introduction

It seems like the rest of the December 2019 Niggly trip has been covered in other reports (with the possible exception of a Gabriel-led survey/sketch attempt of the Pissoir Streamway). Here is my account of the 15-odd hours I spent on the dive push, on the auspicious day of Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>.

This was a much-anticipated dive – having been on the cards since the discovery of a bypass to the Business Class Lounge on the Niggly/Growling Swallet connection trip in May 2019. Our previous attempt at the dive was aborted due to high water levels, and indeed this trip we were lucky to pick the correct day.



*A full reel and beckoning tunnel*

The dive gave the opportunity to extend the upstream reaches of Niggly, which was making a beeline for a point where Living Fossils in Growling Swallet, and the downstream end of Porcupine Pot might conceivably come together. The distance to this point was a potentially achievable 500 m.

### Getting Back to Bossland

Thursday afternoon I had spent prepping and setting up all the dive gear at the DIY Sump, so minimal faffing was required and maximum time could be spent pushing the cave on Friday. After some contemplation, I did the push dive in a wetsuit towing a caving bag containing food, a water bladder (for the likely possibility I would be overheating up in a dry rockpile), dry survey kit in a drytube, a crowbar and a length of rope – all under the assumption the cave would go dry. Turns out I was right, and all the items were put to good use!



*Gear on and gear off and much linework was required*

I left camp about 9 am and started to make the now familiar dive through the DIY Sump (sump 1). My dive computer records the DIY Sump dive start time at 10:46 am – I'm a bit shocked that I fuffed for that long, but maybe 9 am is incorrect... However the DIY Sump guideline was broken near the start, and being a little sceptical of the thin white line under JF conditions, I replaced all of it with 3 mm orange line from my primary push reel, hoping I wouldn't regret this later (I had about 500 m of guideline for the push, optimistic even by my standards).

The traverse up and over the short dry section to the Lateral Hire Sump (sump 2), then through the Bossland streamway passage were straightforward although time-consuming with taking kit off and transporting it in pieces for each dry section. Eventually, I began my Bossland Sump (sump 3) dive at about midday – doesn't time fly, etc.

### The Push Dive



*The visibility was 3-5 m – it was enough to find the way on*

The Bossland Sump turned out to be short, with a surveyed length of 25 m, and shallow (my dive computer did not register the depth), low but open and fairly clean, with no serious restrictions. A short section of knee deep streamway passage was negotiated (with tanks off) and another dive encountered – I submerged here at 12:40 pm. This 4<sup>th</sup> sump was similar in character but a little more serious, with a surveyed length of 60 m, and a maximum depth of 3.7 m. A good-sized airbell with a large rock fallen out of the ceiling in the middle broke up the dive, and also provided a moderate restriction/line trap to negotiate on the far side. This was later named the “Bin Juice Sump” (sump 4).



*A classic in-sump pile of organic matter and anaspides*



*A classic JF current against gravity slope. Loose gravel at angle of repose on the floor, roof steps on the ceiling. Fortunately at this point, there seems to be enough flow to keep the passage open.*



*The Bin Juice Sump airbell*



Surfacing from the Bin Juice Sump, I was in large streamway passage with shallow water flowing over gentle rapids – it seemed that the sumps were over, at least for now. The passage was clean, square, without breakdown, and the roof sloped up to give impressive proportions of 5 m x 5 m. But all too soon (60 m from the dive line tie-off), the lovely passage ended in mud-encrusted rockpile with the stream squirting through the base of it. The rest of the days pushing efforts would be spent crawling through mud and squalor. In honour of the Ibis Song (“A Song About Birds - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mO-OpFjHRbE>) which has been a recurring theme for Niggly trips, I named this remote and squalid place the “Bin Chicken Haven”. Maybe it’s a better alternative for the Ibis than migrating to the giant garbage patch in the Pacific as the song suggests.

### The Bin Chicken Haven

I dumped dive gear and reconfigured for dry caving. It was to be a day of overheating in my wetsuit, with occasional interludes of frenzied activity, frustrated swearing, and eyeing of questionable leads.



*Nice stream passage before hitting the Bin Chicken Haven rockpile*

The base of the rockpile had the stream coming out in multiple places, which immediately put me off. I had a couple of looks at the start and end of the day, but it didn’t look promising. Above the rockpile was a large upward-sloping void, which could be accessed by carefully kicking steps in steep and exposed mudbanks, giving access to the



*Discarded push diving gear, and the bag of dry caving equipment*

only leads on the eastern side of the rockpile. These, and the upwards sloping leads, much like the Business Class Lounge, got smaller and smaller until choking out in mud.

I retreated a little and found a flood bypass passage on the western side, perhaps 5-10 m above water level and following a solid west wall. With some clean washed rocks, and dimensions big enough to crawl and wriggle through, this seemed promising, and indeed went for what felt like a long way but was surveyed to be a mere 60 m. This main lead ended just as excitement was building – in a dead end, with the water path seeming to be from a slot above. In two places near the end, what might have been a void was seen up through small cracks, but these were at least 80 cm away, through some large rocks that didn’t have any obvious chance of moving with anything I had on hand (I tried). Compounding the scariness was being in a small passage with the requirement to move large rocks overhead.

Giving up on this lead, I gingerly got out the dry survey kit and started surveying back, and checked a few other leads going up. Station “BLX5” was labelled with tape, and above this was a sketchy climb leading to a pinching nothing lead. Having expended a lot of energy (both physical and mental) to scale this slippery beast, I was enormously glad of the rope, which I used to get down (retrieve via a short sacrificial section of a knot wedged in a crack, with a loop the other end). Having the forethought to bring a knife to cut it was useful too. This lead is not worth revisiting! I don’t remember much of the up lead at BLB16, but that probably just means it wasn’t very exciting.



*Reel 1 was satisfyingly emptied (re-lining the DIY Sump helped though)*

### Surveying back, and the return

I was prepared, with a DistoX and miniature phone in a drytube, to do a proper survey, and mentally prepared for it to take a while. Lumping bag, wearing wetsuit and juggling instruments through the squirmy bits took some time, but the job was done. I’d put markers on each end of the dive lines to tie the wet/dry surveys into and that went well. The decision to vacuum seal the phone since it was too small to fit any waterproof case was... questionable, as it made for a tendency for buttons to automatically press themselves – next time, less vacuum! Shear bloody-mindedness got me through that, and the survey gear was painstakingly removed and replaced in the drytube 3 times. I re-did the survey of Bossland and found it disturbingly similar to my previously estimated version.

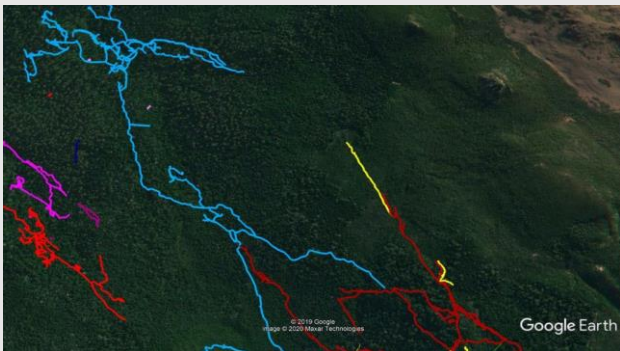
It was a slow process getting out – each dry section required removal of dive kit, multiple portaging trips and a surveying trip. I put my tanks on and took them off eight times that day! The first return dive (through the Bin Juice Sump) began at 7:31 pm, and the final return dive (through the DIY sump) began at 10:08 pm. Enough motivation was left to break down the dive gear and pack it into caving bags at the sump, before heading back to camp in my wetsuit to arrive just before midnight.



*Maybe the song about birds was more apt than we realised: the fully-grown David and Alan feed chicks Gabriel and Martyna. Steve wonders whether he should attempt to feed Ben (out of frame).*

### Survey Results

About 265 m of new cave was added, and about 80 m of Bossland was surveyed properly. The new cave was very straight, still bee-lining for the projected junction with Living Fossils, but alas still a fair way away. As things currently sit, it's 350 m to the projected junction and 580 m to the nearest point of Living Fossils.



*The current state of play: the straight yellow line is the survey I completed on this push. Note the parallel maroon section which is the old estimated survey off Bossland. Niggly is in Maroon (and yellow), Growling Swallet is in light blue. Dissidence and Serendipity are in red and purple respectively.*

### If anyone ever goes back...

Another dive attempt hasn't been completely written off, but at least for the moment, it seems like the effort required is better spent elsewhere (i.e. Pushing from the Living Fossils side). A second set of eyes, or at least a second look may be all it takes to make a breakthrough – just like in the Business Class Lounge.

I have plenty of archived GoPro footage of the day, and some of the leads. Ask me for it.

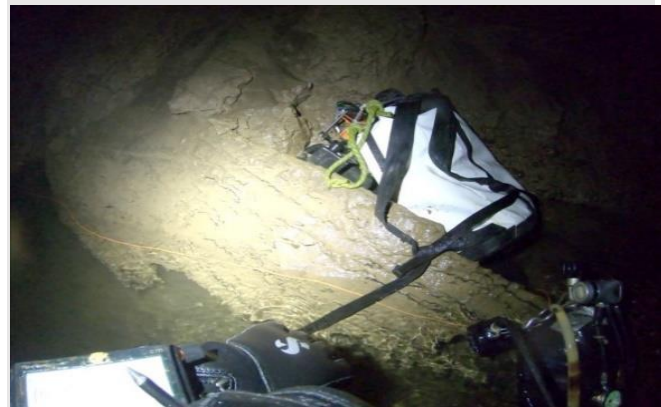
### Regarding the Bin Chicken Haven:

- In general, my feel is that the top levels are choked with mud, and if there is a way through, it's low enough to be kept clear by normal or flood water.
- Double check and do some hard squeezing at the base of the rockpile where the stream comes out. This worked in the Business Class Lounge.
- Maybe try harder to get back down to stream level in the rockpile.
- I felt like I did a reasonably exhaustive check for leads, but perhaps less so in the downwards direction, where the stream emerges from the rockpile, and in the initial section of crawlway in the rockpile.



*The stream emerging from the base of the Bin Chicken Haven rockpile*

### Dive data



*Recording dive data in-situ*

This might be useful for anyone else looking to visit the Bin Chicken Haven

- Exposure protection: 7 mm Seatec Semi-Dry, 7 mm hood, 5 mm wetsuit gloves, 5 mm wetsuit boots over wetsuit socks and explorer socks. Coldest place (predictably) was the deepest - the bottom of the DIY sump. I barely felt the cold in the shallows, and had to frequently stop to cool off while pushing dry leads.
- Weights: weightbelt with 6x weights (~1.3 kg each), rigging kit on each cylinder with 4x weights (~1.3 kg each)
- Gas pressures:
  - (Using 2x 9L carbon fibre cylinders)
  - Start: 245bar/205bar



- @Business Class Lounge: 190bar/205bar
- @Bossland: 195bar(?!)/200bar
- @Air bell in Bin Juice Sump: 190bar/195bar
- @Bin Chicken Haven (before return): 190bar/180bar
- End gas: 185bar/95bar
- Note that the left cylinder was deliberately left full so it could be left in the cave and still be useful.

### Gallantry Sump Dive Mask Checkout

Alan made a passing comment about this in his trip report. It was good to stick my head into the sump with a mask and actually see what it looked like without GoPro distortion. It was a bit less enticing – still low, wide enough but only just, and with hard ceiling and gravel floor. Would need much grovelling to get through, but a determined diver could probably do it with enough effort. I doubt I'll feel the need to try though.



*In case you'd already forgotten, the Gallantry Sump entry is fricken' small!*

### JF-29 Niagara Pot

#### Bolting trip

14 December 2019

David Rueda-Roca

**Party:** David-Stephen Myles, David Rueda-Roca

As Sandy and David had organised some international trips for the beginning of 2020, I have decided to start going to Tasmania alone and do so in the following months. Therefore, I convinced my good friend David-Stephen Myles to come to NP in December 2019 and to help me with the bolting and rigging of the cave: David is an experienced caver and canyoner, amongst many other things. I wanted to organise everything in advance as much as I could. I developed a spreadsheet to request material, ropes, gear, road keys and so on to Alan Jackson in an organised way. I also developed another spreadsheet to review all the gear, clothes, etc. to go caving in Tasmania. David and I purchased extra gear (new bolts, drilling bits, hangers, maillons, etc.) and booked extra bags in our flying tickets to Tasmania for this coming trip.

David had spent the last two weeks canyoning and paragliding in NZ, when I met him at the Sydney airport on our way to Tasmania. However, the trip did not start very

well. The weather forecast told us that it had been raining the whole week and that it would be raining the whole weekend too. Anyway, the trip was finally a success, as we will see now.

It had been raining so much that we could hardly leave our rental car at the JF-341 carpark. I had never seen it before, but a water stream was falling through the dirt road at the same time we were walking uphill. We had to walk to the KD carpark and from there to NP with our huge packs (all the gear divided by just two people: 8 ropes, drill, bolting gear, hammer, overalls, caving gear, etc.). We were bending ourselves as much as we could, to be able to carry all the weight of the gear.

As soon as we reached the NP turn, we started adding some tape to the track. As some of you know, I have macular degeneration and therefore I cannot see very well. So, I started to add more tape to the track considering that the way in with daylight can be much easier and visible than the way back at night through that thick bush. Anyway, we added so much tape to the track that I think that no one can get lost now on the way to NP (*excellent work guys; that should last a few years – Ed*). David said that it was brighter than VIVID Sydney!

Once we arrived at the waterfall entrance, we discovered that the waterfall was pumping a lot of water to the boulders of the cave entrance. We prepared all the gear, sorted it and divided between the two of us. We descended to the entrance boulders and turned slightly to the right. We saw the log between the boulders that marks the entrance to the cave. This is the spot where we descended into the darkness, sliding down between the boulders. As it was raining so heavily and it had been raining during the previous days, there was a water curtain there (here is where people usually start getting wet, so it is highly recommended to visit this cave when the weather is dry).

Once inside, we could see water falling from everywhere. We went to the end of the entrance chamber and turned left through a squeeze that is one meter above a ramp, where the water slides down (do not use this ramp in your trips!). We rigged the first pitch setting a previous handline (3 bolts LHS) above a hole to reach the second hole that goes down to the same chamber than the first one and the waterfall ramp (? *You had to be there, maybe, to understand this description! – Ed*).

The first rope (first pitch) that we used (12.5 m) finished one meter above the floor, so we had to land vertically at the spot and to stop abseiling the slope of the chamber. If we had continued abseiling, as the rope finished just one meter above the floor, we would fall to the bottom of the chamber once we had lost the rope through our abseiling gear.

Once there, we continued walking down the chamber and looking for a continuation at the bottom left of it. We decided to ignore the new chamber and pitch that Sandy, David B and I found on our previous trip.

Finally, we found a second chamber that was more like a cove. We followed the water downstream and headed to the left. The water was falling from everywhere, so we tried to go as far to the left in the chamber as we could. After climbing down a small 2 m pitch, we discovered that the continuation of the cave was a little bit of a squeeze but it was fine (other visible continuations before this 2 m pitch