

## JF-232 Udensala – re-visiting the JF's loosest cave

27 October 2018

Andreas Klocker

**Party:** Serena Benjamin, Andreas Klocker, Petr Smejkal.

I have had my eye on Udensala for a while – it is in a great location, being one of the main stream sinks upstream of Porcupine, and there are not many other caves around in that area. Nevertheless, previous trip reports did not do well at selling this cave, which is probably why nobody has been back there since its original exploration in 1984. And the trip reports were right.

Nevertheless, during a moment of brain malfunction, Serena and myself decided to head back there and have a look, and Petr agreed to come along without having ever read any reports on the cave ... and then forgot his undergarments on his porch in Chigwell ... not a good combination. So on a nice sunny day we drove up the Nine Road and, using the GPS, bush-bashed our way towards the cave. On the way we briefly stopped at an X-cave in the huge doline you walk past to see if there's anything interesting there. At first it looked like a nice cliff face on the bottom of a large doline where one would expect a cave, and the mud there definitely suggested that it takes a lot of water, but we found no proper cave entrance. A bit further up the doline we then found a little entrance, with a little draft, which, if we were in the UK, would be the next big dig, but luckily we are not in the UK.

Shortly after we found Udensala, with even the entrance being filled with lots of loose stuff – what a good start. It then continues small, wet, sometimes tight, and always loose. We slowly found our way through tough and probably rigged slightly more ropes than the initial explorers since this allowed us to at least avoid some of the loosest rock piles, and hence immediate death (*there was a different attitude to risk back when this was explored-Ed*). On the positive side, most pitch heads randomly had some OK limestone sticking out under the pile of loose stuff which made rigging doable.

On the bottom of the main 35 m drop (Communication Breakdown) we all waited for each other and then looked at the way on, which apparently was through a wet (and guess what – loose) slot with quite a stream flowing through it. For some reason I pulled the short straw and went first to make sure it goes, and the others followed. On the way out through this slot Petr commented “Well at least you won't overheat in this squeeze” ... something positive. The main positive thing I noted though was that there was a very good draft blowing into the cave, which is the main reason I pushed on.

We then rigged another two small pitches, and Petr did a funky climb until he ended up in what we think is the Culture Bunker. By that time, being happy that we survived until then and slowly getting colder since we all got much wetter than expected, and having run out of

rigging material, we turned the trip and soon after emerged, happy to have not been killed by rock fall, into sunshine! But feeling that much draft in the cave we'll have to return....

Luckily with this cave the gear was pretty clean after, with no point of cleaning any of the ropes we used!

## JF-387 Porcupine Pot

10 November 2018

Stephen Fordyce

**Party:** Serena Benjamin, Stephen Fordyce, Alan Jackson, Andreas Klocker, Petr Smejkal, Andy Terhell

A much needed win for the flagging Porcupine project. In a joint effort, push divers Andreas and I successfully dumped 300 m of line into virgin underwater passage at the far upstream end of Porcupine Pot - heading vaguely towards Burning Down the House. It was a 5 hour trip to the sump (and 14 hours total underground, emerging at midnight).



*Spot the pretty orange line. photo: Stephen Fordyce*

Andreas went in first while I filmed him - even swimming a short distance into the clear water before turning back. He laid a good chunk of the first reel in a couple of goes, and reported silty ongoing passage. I was pretty cold but with a good 7 mm semi-dry decided to grab the gear (150 bar left in each of the 9L carbon fibre tanks) and have a "quick look". The passage was big enough to swim at full flutter kick speed (deliciously bad cave diving technique), and as a result I was not quite utterly freezing for the whole exercise.

Our two reels (of combined capacity about 300 m) ran out just as the passage (average depth 9 m, max 16 m) surfaced into a small dry chamber named the "Room of Correct Terminology", the inspiration for which is not suitable for the public domain but makes for a very good pub story. The RoCT had a shallow section about knee deep, and a few deep sections which were checked but didn't do anything. A hefty tie-off was made to the ceiling but a secondary should be made next time. A quick check revealed similar ongoing passage heading back down into the murky depths. It'll be even more of an epic, but we will be back...

My dive to the RoCT used about 100 bar from the 9 L CF cylinders, with a calculated RMV of 28 LPM. 23 minutes to get there, 11 minutes to get back, swimming hard with stiff OMS Slipstream fins and in a wetsuit.



*Stephen and Andreas. Note the empty dive reels (black on black) Photo: Andy Terhell*

Of interest, the passage was in solid rock (not rockfall) and relatively small (approx. 1 m x 1.5 m) but of fairly consistent proportions and with no restrictions - my 300 m swim home from the Room of Correct Terminology took 11 minutes! The character was a bit different to the Niggly and Dreamtime sump dives previously undertaken. With limited gas, thermal reserve and sherpa patience I elected not to survey out, figuring that was something best done next time in a drysuit.



*Gollum imitation #365. Photo: Serena Benjamin*

## Junee Dolines Surface Bashing

11 November 2018

Stephen Fordyce

**Party:** Ben Armstrong, Dave Bardi, Stephen Fordyce, Sandy Varin,

Ever since the last surface bashing day (5/2/17, a report coming in a subsequent *Spiel*) I'd wanted to get back to check the last doline which hadn't been reached that day. There are about four giant dolines in a line roughly above where Junee Cave ends, and apart from being highly spectacular, I wanted to see if they had opened up or had anything indicating cave, since previously checked (by Rolan, in the Z-caves era?).

With sufficient exuberance from the successful dive in Porcupine Pot the day before, sleep and recovery were pushed aside, and it turned out this was also a good chance to catch up with Ben before he disappeared overseas for 10 months (thanks for the ride Ben!). Dave and Sandy were picked up from the Giant's Table after an epic of their own the day before in JF-341 and we (actually) enjoyed a moderate walk to blow the cobwebs out.

We crossed a shallow saddle and went for the summit of the low hill nestled between dolines - following a vague memory of the bush being less dense here (it was moderately dense). Then dropped down to the next saddle and followed the gully down until reaching the doline. A hole choked by rotting wood may have been some kind of drain and Sandy enthusiastically said it "might" go, but was resoundingly outvoted by everyone else. A similar thing happened when we reached the indeterminate bottom of the target doline - although this hole had actual rocks visible.

A retreat was beaten up the north-western gully to the saddle where we managed to find the view I had promised to everyone of the quite spectacular main dolines (you think it's just a steep valley, but then there is nowhere for the water to get out!). We headed back the way we came, via one of the dolines I'd checked last time and fortunately remembered enough not to save ourselves the trouble this time. Navigating by photos-of-laptop-screen-on-phone and GPS did the job until the GPS went flat, but luckily Ben had brought a compass and was trained on how to use it.

The cars were successfully reached after a pleasant couple of hours out in the bush, with no annoying caves to have to crawl into. I would assume (but can't find any record) that it's been done, but an interesting exercise would be to continue from where we got to, down the next gully to Junee. There may be some features there.