



A. Jackson

JF30: Anna in the "Letterbox".

JF8 Junee Cave

For Your Eyes Only (FYEO) – trafficking tobacco

Janine McKinnon

12 April 2015

Cavers: Janine McKinnon & Ric Tunney.

There has been a rather unsightly gear stash shoved in behind a very nice formation, a short distance into FYEO, for a couple of decades. The bright blue tarpaulin is very colourful, but not really a good first impression of the chamber.

This was pointed out to me by recent cave diving visitors from the mainland.

I have looked at this eyesore every time I have been in there, but did not know (maybe that is remember) who had put it there, or for what purpose, although I did know it had been there a long time. Anyway, I did not feel that I should unilaterally decide to remove it, much as I may have wanted to. Over many trips, I must admit that I have stopped really noticing it, or thinking about whether I should follow up ownership and/or discuss removing it with Rolan. It became a blind spot to me in that respect, although I still always noticed how ugly and inappropriate it was.

Call me blonde, or maybe senile would be more accurate.

The visitors mentioned it to Rolan and he commented that it was a cache put in by Nick Hume when they were pushing the second sump. I did a search of the archive and could find no trace of a report about taking it in, however I did find a trip report by Stefan (Eberhard 1991) which mentioned, in passing, the weights left near the second sump. The cache would have to have gone in at around the same time as those weights, as the purpose of both was connected. So, it was sometime in the 1980s, probably around the middle of the decade. It has been in there a long time.

Anyway, I offered to remove it. Today was the day.

We arrived at the car park via Junee Quarry Rd at 9:45 am, noting that the old gate 50 m from the car park was now locked with a shiny new padlock. The JF gate key fits the lock.

We organised fairly slickly (after all, we have done this many times), and I was at the dive site ready to go by 11 am.

Interestingly, there were no footprints on the beach at all, which means that the water levels have been very high, enough to cover the whole beach, between now and when the mainland divers were here on 22 March.

I was carrying an Aspiring pack, which I hoped was large enough to get all the gear out, and was trying dry gloves for the first time in the cave. They would certainly keep my hands dry and toasty warm, but I was unsure how well they would work with all the manipulating I would need to do out of the water. One doesn't have a lot of feel or dexterity with them.

The plan was that Ric would go out and return at 12:30 pm. I anticipated that 12:30 – 1:00 pm was my return window. Ric wouldn't start getting nervous until 2 pm. Panic would be after 3 pm.

The flow in the river was not particularly high and I had a pleasant swim through to FYEO, taking 17 minutes for the run. I checked the line as I went and all looks good.

The removal of the stash went pretty quickly, but getting it all into the pack was an achievement I am quite proud of. The blue tarp was huge, and the orange one wasn't petite either. That achieved, I went for an enjoyable wander up through the chamber to the weights near the second sump.

I always enjoy being in FYEO by myself. It is a whole different experience than when others are there.

So, there were three sets of weights on the bank. Two were each a pair of 1.5 kg ingots tied together and with a carabiner. The third was a single, large weight of 4 kgs. I clipped the two with crabs to my harness and carried the third in my hands. It was a somewhat less easy stroll back down the stream way with these (plus the 3 kgs on my harness) extra weights. I also noticed a suspicious dampness in my left hand (still in dry gloves, remember) as I progressed down the stream.

Back at the start of sump one (FYEO side), I decided that bringing all the weights out would be too much, so I put the loose one in the pack and left the others on the bank, out of sight but near the start of the sump.

All sorted, I put my tanks etc back on and started out. It was 12:25 pm; nicely on target. It had all been too easy, hadn't it? I managed to drag the pack under the lip of the start but it was so, so buoyant that it was jammed on the ceiling. I couldn't move it no matter how I pulled. Damn. Back to the chamber. Kit off, go

get the other weights, attach them to the handle of the pack, re kit, and try again.

It is now 12:45 pm.

Did I mention that my left hand was feeling very wet? That's one dry glove down. The water was leaking past the pressure equalisation cord in my cuff and making my arm wet but warm.

Even with 10 kg of weights the pack was still a little buoyant, but I could drag it down, and behind me.

All goes tolerably well (hard work pulling/pushing the pack but manageable), until I get down around 10 m depth. Then buoyant becomes weighted. Very weighted. It sank like a stone. It was now very, very heavy. I assumed that the air trapped in the bag had now been expelled, after compressing, plus some waterlogging of the materials inside. I couldn't lift it with one hand. Lifting and shoving it over rocks in the floor was a pain. I was very slow, churning up clouds of silt as I dragged it along. I was making very slow progress, breathing very hard, now in zero visibility, and not really enjoying myself very much. I struggled along like this for a while and then decided this was not going to work. I was going to run out of air before I struggled all the way back like this.

Why didn't I bring a lift bag for the job? Very good question. Stupidity pops to mind as a possible answer.

So, I decided to leave the two weight packages with clips. I had a use for them in the sump anyway, repositioning the line by a little bit. I removed them and attached them to the line at a line anchoring weight about a third of the way out; should be easy to find.

Progress was still slow, heavy and painful from here, but manageable, which was the important thing.

My only other problem came as I ascended towards the end of the sump. Once I reached around 3 m I now had the problem that I had started with at the other end, before I retrieved those extra weights for ballast. The pack very rapidly became buoyant as I ascended, and at around 4 m shot to the roof (which was fortunately only 1 m above me), dragging me with it. So the air had not been ejected from the pack as I had descended back at the start of the sump, just compressed by pressure. Oh joy. It took me several minutes to battle it down from the roof, and get it up the last 10 m along the cave passage.

What a pain of a trip, literally. I had a thumping headache from CO₂ build up from the exertion. Still, it was done. It only had to be done the once. If I have to do anything like that again I will have to come up with a better plan.

The time was now 1:15 pm. It had taken me 29 minutes to get out. 12 minutes SLOWER than the inward leg. This is an outflow cave (hence "Resurgence"). It has a significant current. I thank god (figure of speech, I wish to emphasise) I wasn't coming out against the current.

I had used 40 bar from each tank going in, and 70 bar each coming out; almost twice the air. Usually I use about a quarter on the outward leg. An example of the value of the rule of thirds/quarters.



J. McKinnon

JF8: Anthropocene gear stash.

Ric was waiting, and started helping with packing (as usual), whilst I wandered out with the gear I was wearing and the Aspiring pack. He ferried two packs worth to the entrance and I returned to pick up one once I had dumped the gear cache.

Time for lunch. Tea and a Jackman & McRoss Easter bun fixed everything.

Postscript

We weighted the pack when we got home and it was 10 kg, without any lead weights. We cut open the tyre tubes used to keep gear dry and found:

- The gear wasn't dry; it had gotten wet on the trip into the cave (some twenty-five years ago) and been sitting, sealed and wet, ever since.
- An interesting mix of spares, including 2 packets of very wet tobacco, but no food. Fascinating, isn't it, what people's priorities can be.

The leaking dry glove was found to be due to a small tear near the plastic ring fittings. But wet dry gloves are warmer than wet, wet gloves.

References

Eberhard, S. 1991. Cave Diving: June Resurgence & Lawrence Rivulet Rising. *Speleo Spiel*, 269: 11.



J. McKinnon

Anthropocene artefacts.