

## Trip Reports

### Mole Creek Weekend

8-9 November 2014

Janine McKinnon

**Warning:** This trip report imitates a mainland caving report. Lots about what was for lunch and the cafes on the drive, and little about the caving itself [*Does it?! - Ed.*].

The annual STC Kubla Khan weekend had rolled around again. We were staying at the Northern Caverneers (NC) hut again too. Ric and I were the only two who had been there before. This is relevant because we arrived several hours before the others and set up camp in the Possum Shed, leaving plenty of room for others to join us in there. The rest of the Hobart party arrived in one car around 11 pm. We had told them the layout of the hut, and the two bunk room sleeping options. They arrived, and promptly all disappeared into the back (tiny) room of the main old house. Ok, they all got on so well together on the drive up that they want to bunk together, I thought. Sweet, we get this (very large) room to ourselves tonight.

MC1 Kubla Khan

8 November 2014

**Cavers:** Natalie Brennan, Milos Dvorak, Ben Lovett (NC), Janine McKinnon, Michael Packer (Pax) & Ric Tunney (Kubla Guide).

As usual, the Kubla trip was on Saturday. Ben, a recent arrival from the UK now living in Launceston, is an experienced caver. We had had a spare spot so he had jumped on board.

Ben volunteered to write this trip report, but it appears the pressure of two toddlers and a full-time job, whilst setting up a new home, has proved somewhat distracting from the task. So, rather than an interesting and amusing account of a trip through Kubla as seen through new eyes, you get me again.

So, from me you get ... the party was an excellent one. Competent cavers, fit, fast when moving, efficient when taking photos, and always having fun. It was a great trip.

The cave is the same as always, and water levels were quite low. All went well.

MC13 Croesus Cave

9 November 2014

**Cavers:** Natalie Brennan, Milos Dvorak, Janine McKinnon, Michael Packer & Ric Tunney.

After a very pleasant social evening at the hut, and a room to ourselves again, we were up for a moderately early start to do Croesus Cave before driving home in the afternoon. The early start was destroyed when we discovered, as we went to drive away, that we had a flat battery on the Subaru. Jump starting didn't work, the battery was really flat (from charging video lights). After much amusement and false starts we managed to do a tow start with Pax's 2WD.

Finally we were off for a late start caving trip.

The cave is as beautiful as ever. I took video and Pax took lots of still photos. We went all the way up past the Golden Stairs, to where it stops being a pretty cave. The only point of note is that the platypus stools on the sand banks all look very old, so I surmise he/she isn't living in there any longer. The trip took 4 hours.

We were rolling home by late afternoon, after picking up our gear from the hut.

P.S. Do you want to know the real reason we got the very large bunk room to ourselves for two nights, whilst the three others stayed in the very small room? Surprisingly enough it wasn't because they:

1. Got on so well together they wanted to sleep with each other's feet shoved up a nostril, or
2. They had some threesome organised.

Just as we were leaving the hut to drive home on Sunday afternoon, and while closing the doors, Pax decided to look inside the Possum Shed. Apparently for the first time all weekend. He exclaimed in amazement at how big it was. He called in the others. They squealed in amazement. None of them had looked in at any time. They had assumed all rooms were the same size. Such lack of curiosity (or being polite) has its consequences. Because we are such nice people Ric and I only chuckled to ourselves for half the drive home.

If you are interested in viewing the short videos of our trips, they are on Vimeo. For Croesus go to <https://vimeo.com/117770777> and for Kubla go to <https://vimeo.com/117142443>.

### JF11 Rainbow Cave

Sump dive

12 November 2014

Janine McKinnon

**Cavers:** Janine McKinnon & Ric Tunney.

This was yet another of the small, grotty, sumps scattered about the JF that needed looking at. It is the furthest upstream cave that feeds the resurgence at Junee (JF8). It has never been dived. Of course I didn't expect to get quite that far, 14 km (by flying crows) is a bit ambitious. Actually, I didn't expect it to go at all. The cave is shallow and short, and the sump very unprepossessing. However, the pool, or puddle really, did have open passage visible for the first 1 m, so, nothing ventured, and all that.

We had all the gear packed into two Aspiring packs and made the short trip from car to sump by 10:30 am. This has to be one of the easiest access sumps in Tassie; a five minute walk from the car to the cave entrance, and 10 minutes to the sump, if that. There isn't a lot of room to kit up, but luckily I don't need much.

The surface of the pond is covered in debris but after



JF11 Rainbow Cave: Janine returns from the dive.



pushing that aside I got a good view of clear water for 20 seconds, or so, before the dirt I was lying on side down the slope and obscured all visibility. I managed to get myself into the water and about 2 m down slope before I lost visibility. The underwater part, instead of continuing along the trend of the above-water cave, turns sharply back to the left, as if it were making a bee-line to Junee. The passage was tending steeply downwards, at about 45°. It was wide, arm width wide, and I was briefly surprised and optimistic. Rapidly, it choked off to a hole I could just fit my gumbooted foot into. I felt my way the length of the wall/floor interface but found no other way forward. I returned to the

surface to report. Ric said no light was visible at all until just before I surfaced. I submerged again for another feel around.

Ultimately, I spent half an hour in the sump, carefully checking, and rechecking, for any way through, with no success. I am sure I have exhausted all possibilities for diving here. The water goes where humans cannot follow. We counted knots on my dive line and measured the length penetrated to be 8 m. We were packed up and back at the car for a midday lunch. It doesn't get much easier than that.

## JF337 Slaughterhouse Pot Replacing the Permanent Ropes

15 November 2014

Janine McKinnon

**Cavers:** Janine McKinnon & Ric Tunney.

The top two ropes in Slaughterhouse Pot were installed in March 2007 by Ric and myself (McKinnon 2007). The bottom rope was older (Butt 2002). We had been talking for a year or so of replacing them. Some months ago, Geoff Wise allocated us three ropes for the purpose. I understand these were donated to STC by Tony Veness before he left for the mountains of Holland, and they are in excellent condition. Thank you, Tony.

One forgets how pleasant an easy caving trip can be. We entered at 9:30 am and were out by 3:00 pm and there was, perforce, lots of sitting.

P1 – We knew from previous trips that the rope was labelled as 32 m and that there was about 3 m in the bottom bundle. This meant a 29 m rope should do, so we were happy when Geoff gave us a 30 m rope. The rigging is on two p-hangers, with an approach line around some formation about 4 m back. We pulled up most of the old rope and installed the new rope, making sure we didn't waste excessive rope on the approach line; we didn't want the rope to be too short as we only had 1 m spare! We put Loctite on the maillons as the pitch is accessible from the entrance.

Janine went down, releasing the old rope and its bottom bundle from the redirection as she went. "The rope's too short!" she reported. She was able to get off on a ledge about 4 m above the traditional bottom of the pitch and easily climb back and underneath to reach the bottom.

The old rope is labelled "R82 32m", written on green and white striped tape. At home, we measured the rope at a little over 36 m, but it's hard to get a precise measurement as the rope is very stiff and kinky. So it could be closer to 37 m.

So, we have been stuffed by bad measuring by someone some ten years ago. However, the rope was usable; it's an easy, safe climb from the end of the rope on the ledge, and a climb down through a hole behind the rope.

Note: Alan has saved everyone else from having to do this in the future by re-jiggering the approach line at the pitch head to give extra length at the bottom (Jackson 2014).

The old rope was badly damaged 4.5 m below the lower knot, with a small amount of damage 0.3 m higher up. This is one of the worst rope damages I have seen. All of the sheath has been damaged and the core was showing. The damage is so great that it is easy to form an acute angle in the rope. I cannot confidently work out how this may have happened. The rope is not lying on anything here, so I can't see how a falling rock could cut it. It is roughly at the redirection, but no one has reported damage.

P2 – The pitch is rigged from two p-hangers. A 22 m rope was the perfect length. We did not use Loctite as the pitch is only accessible to cavers. We installed a short approach line as one climbs down above the drop to reach the pitch head.

P3 – The pitch is rigged from two p-hangers. A 24 m rope was about 3 m too long. Again, we did not use Loctite. As it is necessary to lean out over the pitch to reach the rope, we installed a short approach line. The inner end of this is a bit low, but there was only one satisfactory natural anchor.

### References

BUTT, J. 2002. Slaughterhouse Pot (JF337) Logbook Installation: 23 August 2002. *Speleo Spiel*, 332:5.

JACKSON, A. 2014. JF36 Growling Swallet. *Speleo Spiel*, 405: 8-9.

McKINNON, J. 2007. JF-337 Slaughterhouse Pot - Growling Swallet Thru Trip (Changing the Ropes). *Speleo Spiel*, 359: 7.



Damaged rope removed from P1 in  
JF337 Slaughterhouse Pot.