

# South African Spelaeological Association

Cape Peninsula Spelaeological Society

Po Box 4812 Cape Town



## March 2011 Newsletter

### Table Mountain 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> December

Ever packed anything totally superfluous for a trip? I did – sun block. The three day meet was spent in a pumping South-Easter and thick cloud. Fortunately we had the pleasure of the People's Trail hut and the company of Parks volunteer ranger, Vito Viglietti. Twenty three met at Constantia Nek on Monday morning. Parry and I ferried the gear and some of the members to the hut and offloaded, waiting for the hikers. Not everyone was caving though. Steve and Jayne just came for an outing and walked down again while Veronique and her two sons, Hugo and Romain enjoyed the break. Once settled in we headed for our first adventure – Bats Giants. But let Sinead tell the story.

#### Bats & Giants Cave on Table Mountain

*Sinead Hattingh*

Cave team :Alf Alfreds, Ron Zeeman, Stefan Baumann, Karli Blitmetsrieder, Parry Pavlis, Charl & Jason Souma, Rudolf & Sinead Hattingh, Jaques Du Toit, Emilie Galley, Maxine, PJ Carstens, Raymond & Tarryn Maclean & Wayne. Eventually time broke and it was time for the annual table mountain year end meet, for me it was the first time joining the club to Table Mountain's caves. The first caves on the menu for day 1 was to explore Bats and Giants cave. We were a group of 15 cavers, included in the group were 2 German men, Stefan & Karli, also very keen cavers. We then went in to explore the caves, luckily we were not a bigger group otherwise it would have taken much longer, not that it matters. Bats and Giants cave is really quite a big cave, how long precisely I don't know, but long, especially because it has quite a few side passages. The cave had a few tricky spots and squeezes. In the one spot we went through Karli could not get through the squeeze and decided to turn around, but Rudolf said let he see if he can panelbeat the rock, and he indeed did. Then Karli tried again and he managed to get through and move on, luckily because I wasn't sure if he will find the way back on his own, we were a long way in already. In a stadium we thought we got lost, but Alf knew all the time where we were going. He wants us youngsters to explore the caves, it is much more interesting than just to do the same route every time. The cave didn't have a lot of bats, in the beginning there was bats and also sometimes during the cave you could hear them. It was a very cool cave to kick off our caving. After about 2 and a half hours we exited Bats and Giants cave. It was a misty outdoors that awaited us. We took a lunch break and after that decided to do Hangmans and Dungeon caves as well. Unfortunately Raymond, Tarryn, Wayne, Pj and Maxine had to leave us and walked back down to Constantia Nek, they still needed to work the next day.

The rest of us explored Hangmans and Dungeon caves. The caves are not as big as Bats and Giants, but they are also very interesting to see and explore. We then decided to call it a day. It was a very Lekker first day of caving. Thankx to all the cavers that were part of the first day's caving.

Fourteen people slept over the first night, enjoying an evening braai. Tuesday the party split, five going with Alf to Helm's Deep while the rest were to explore the Metro System. Passing Hangman's we encountered a juvenile owl on the ground with a broken leg. In an attempt to escape it flopped down one of the holes into the cave. Parry retrieved it and carried it back to the vehicle. It was the intention to meet back at Inukshuk for lunch after which Alf was to take the group to The Cavern while Darryl and I dug at the 3m obstruction. However the Helm's party decided to exit via Giants again and then unsuccessfully wrestled the ladder, this taking five hours, by which time the others were browned off and had walked back, Parry carrying the owl snug and warm inside his jacket. Darryl and Rudolf attacked the obstruction with gusto for over an hour but only achieving another 50cm.

Here is Jacques story.

#### Helm's Deep

*Jacques Du Toit*

Team: Alf, Jacques, Emilie, Rudolf, Sinead, Vic  
Early morning the group headed towards Helm's Deep with the stormy weather approaching rapidly, bringing mist and a fine rain that clung to our overalls. Ron had voiced his concern regarding the danger of this cave and recommended that only the confident cavers approach it. As we got to the entrance Vic and Alf fastened the 14m wire ladder to a tree hanging over the mouth. The ladder was then extended with 2 more 7m ladders, which were just long enough to touch the bottom of the cave. At first we had some problems getting the ladder to roll down the mouth, but eventually it unhooked and fell, and fell, and fell. Alf was first to squeeze through the narrow entrance which at its end sandwiched your chest between 2 large flat pieces of rock. The only way to pass was by exhaling, and each time the air escaped you could move your chest that extra centimetre. After Alf I squeezed my way through making sure not to get caught up with the ladder through the narrow section. Sinead seemed to glide through the squeeze and didn't seem too phased by its tightness. Emilie followed and had the expression of relief after she had conquered the squeeze. Shortly after her it was Rudolf's turn but he eventually had to turn back after realising his chest was just not going to fit through the gap. Vic was last to push through and by that time Alf and I were already heading down the ladder to the floor of the cave. There were lots of little stops along the way down where you could rest your back against the cave wall and wedge yourself, relieving pressure off the ladder. We all gathered and recouped after reaching the cave floor and set out via Bats and Giants again, vaguely remembering some of the sections from the previous days exploring. Near the end Emilie, Sinead and I added some clay to our faces and posed for our underground camouflage shoot. By the time we reached the exit everyone was glad to see light even though it was cloudy and cold. We all headed back to the area where the bags were and tried retrieving the ladder, but nobody seemed to keen to enter the cave again so the ladder was left there for the next day's fun.



**The underground mob**

Later that afternoon

Jason and Ron delivered our feathered patient to the World of Birds.

Tuesday night we were down to twelve.

Wednesday it was the turn of Wynberg to entertain us. Alf led eight through the cave, in the reverse direction, while Darryl and I did a spot of surveying. After lunch it was back to Helm's Deep to recover the ladder.

Alf slipped down the narrow slot with Sinead in the small upper space acting as voice relay. Once the ladder was freed getting Alf out was the mission. Lying on your side in a 25cm slot there is no way you can bend your knees. Hooking his feet in the ladder the guys above hauled slowly, pausing whenever his helmet or feet got stuck. Weary, we ended the day early.

Wednesday evening was cold which called for an inside fire for the ten remaining to enjoy.

Guess what. While packing up and cleaning the accommodation Thursday, the cloud lifted and the sun appeared. Now the road down from the hut to Constantia Nek is nearly 10km and Charl elected to run down, but he can take some shortcuts. The pocket-rocket was waiting for us at the bottom!!!



**Parry and his bosom friend**

Veronique paid a visit to World of Birds two weeks later for a follow-up. Unfortunately the broken leg meant the bird could not stand or improve and was put down.

## **Shower Cave - Table Mountain**

*Anthony Hitchcock*

Shower cave is another discovery by Mario and Evelyn Fedele. It is located in the valley adjacent to Wynberg Cave. It is immediately to the right of the path to Wynberg entrances 1&2, before it descends into the forested depression not far from the New Year-Crossroads system. Shower cave is found amongst a complicated jumble of highly weathered boulders and tangled forest trees. The depression runs from south to north below and parallel to the Wynberg Cave system and is covered by a band of forest trees.

### **Survey and description**

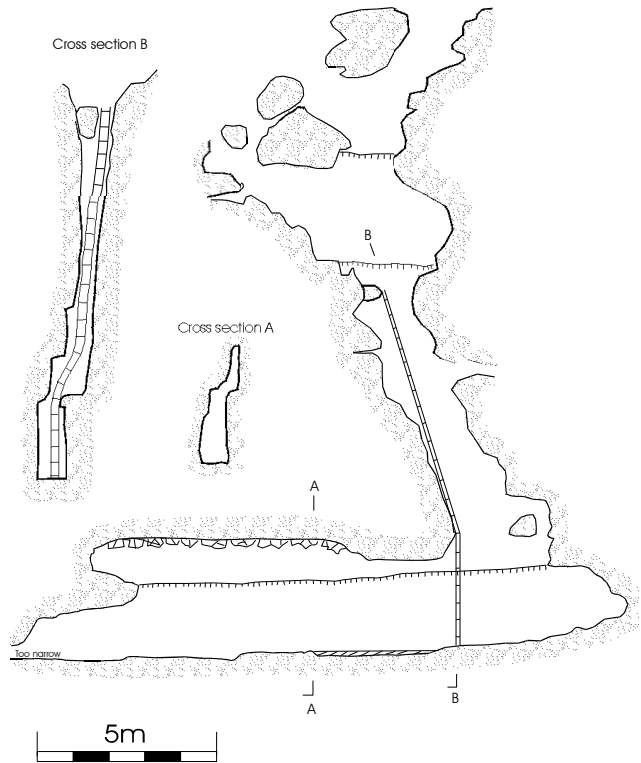
Darryl Holland, Eugenie Bahlsen and I took a break from the Wynberg-Metro system and decided to survey Shower Cave in December 2009. The main entrance is a vertical drop into small chamber, but we used a smaller slot to one side where it is possible to slide down into the chamber without equipment. We surveyed the chamber and then looked down into a steep, almost vertical slot on the southern end of the chamber. We had a brief look down the slot, but it looked impassable. We retreated because there was still a fair shower of water dropping into the slot. I decided to do a surface survey southwards to New Year Cave as I thought that the cave drained towards the Metro system.

In December 2010 I heard from Ron Zeeman that Mario and friends had been back to Shower Cave and managed to remove a boulder in the vertical slot and to enter a lower passage. Darryl and I returned to survey the new section on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2011. The ladder was still in place and we found our permanent beacon from which we surveyed down the slot. The passage slopes down at an angle of approximately 60 degrees for about 6m and then drops vertically for 2m to a ledge. The last drop is about 1.87m deep to a stream passage. The cave is about 14m deep in total.

The stream passage is narrow and heads back under the upper chamber in a northerly direction. The floor slopes gently towards the north and is covered with well washed white sand and smooth quartz pebbles. It is clear that a lot of water washes this passage in winter. We mapped along the slot towards the south, but this narrowed and closed after about 3m. The passage extends for 14m towards the north where it also becomes too narrow. The walls are wet even in summer and there is a slight breeze and we became cold quite quickly.

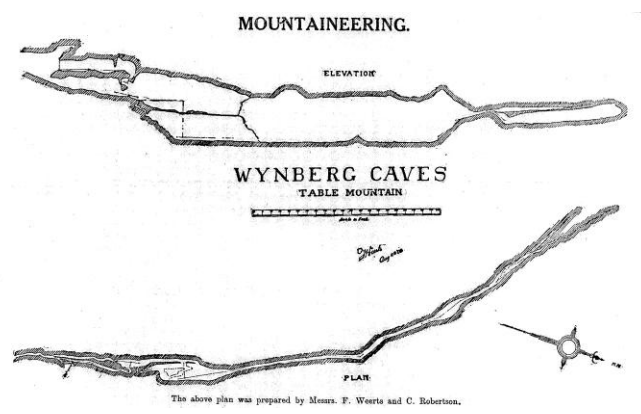
We are now faced with the exciting prospect of exploring in a northerly direction in Redfern Cave and other holes that might link with the stream passage in Shower Cave.

*I've heard on the grapevine that they had discovered another vertical hole in that area leading to a small cave called Oh My Hat. (ed)*



Cave Name	Shower cave	BCRA Grade	5D
Instruments	Compass, Clinometer, Tape	Survey Date	Dec 2008, Jan 2011
Survey group	A Hitchcock, D Holland, E Bahlsen	Extension	45 m

Cartographer: Rijn Zwaan



## Exploration of Echo Halt, Echo Halt extension en Take breath

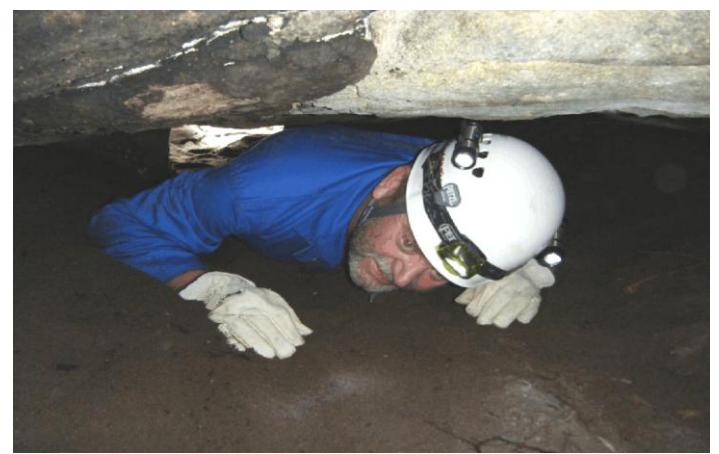
Theo van Eeden

Op 30 Januarie 2011 het ek op my eerste amptelike meet as lid van cpss gegaan. Ek was vergesel van Rudolf, Sinead en Llewellyn, ook lede van CPSS en ou geharde cavers.

Ons het na grotte in Echo valley Kalkbaai gaan soek, Llewellyn was 'n jaar gelede by die grotte nl Echo halt, Echo halt extension en Take Breath, maar het hulle nie op GPS nie. Ons het om 08h00 begin loop. Rudolf, Sinead en Llewellyn het voor uit geloop en ek het op my tyd geloop. Met my aankoms by Kroon se bos het ek opgemerk dat die cavers al besig was om in die berg te soek. Ek het sommer dadelik af geskop met boendoe bashing en by hulle aangesluit. Dit was nie lank toe het hulle al die eerste een nl Echo halt gevind. Dit was n interessante grot. Die grot het 'n klein ingang, nie soos die grotte in Namibie wat groot ingange, het waaraan ek gewoond is nie. Llewellyn, Rudolf en Sinead het voor my ingekruip en ek was no 4. Ek het my kop reggekry en daar gaan ek vir ongeveer 5m se kruip toe kom ek in n groot kamer wat vir my interessant was, dat die grot baie koel is en dat jy maklik asem kan haal. Ek het baie grotte in Namibia gedoen nl.Gamkarab, Aigamas, Ghaub.Harasib en Dragons Breath. Hulle is baie warm binne en die CO2 is so hoog dat dit voel of jy wil flou raak. Toe het ons Echo Halt extension gedoen, ook n baie mooi grot en daarna Take Breath. Daar het my oë groot geraak toe ek sien waar die cavers deur gaan. Ek het ook opgemerk dat hulle n groot mate van veiligheid gebruik. Toe ek weer kyk toe was dit 14h30. Dit was n interessante dag gewees, en ek het baie geleer by die 3 cavers.

Ek wil net baie dankie se aan die 3 cavers. Hulle doen n hoë standaard caving en is baie goeie cavers, ek was in goeie hande. Baie dankie vir die lekker dag van caving!

## Theo squeezer



## Oudtshoorn

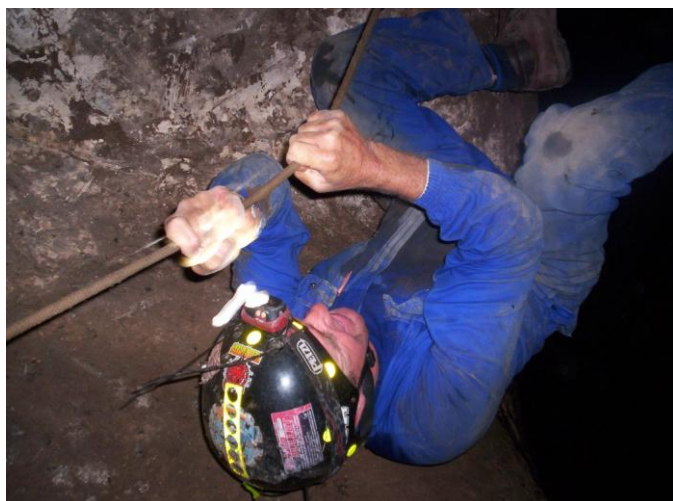
Llewellyn Bietjie

Clint and I went caving at Oudtshoorn. We wanted to cave at Efflux, Fred's Cow Pot, Stroom Water. Due to late arrival we on 28th December only went into Efflux. Nice to go to caves where you don't need to spend an hour hiking to get there. We spent about 3hrs in there. Clint took his camcorder and recorded our exploring. I took loads of pics as usual and every once in a while Clint had to wait for me. This cave has some amazing formations. As usual there was lots of jokes and laughter. The overall I used was torn at one knee, so I took some broken stalagmites and let them stick out like some broken bones.

Day two we went to De Hoek Resort where we found some caves against a cliff. This was not part of original plan, but the description from a staff member whetted our appetite. I however don't know the name of cave, maybe it can be called Zipline cave. There is bushman paintings in entrance. We had to climb down a chimney. The next section we used a rope that was in cave to climb up, which led to a large pool of water. Another rope was above the water. The only way to get across dry was to slide for 5m on rope. Both of us crossed with only our backs touching a bit of water. Again we saw some amazing formations and large number of bats. On exiting cave both Clint and I slipped off the rope and ended up in water.

We came across about ten entrances. Both Clint and I think that this area should be explored and can be a possibility for a trip.

*They came across Glittering Grotto and this is a picture of Clint crossing Satan's Sinking Sands. Ed*

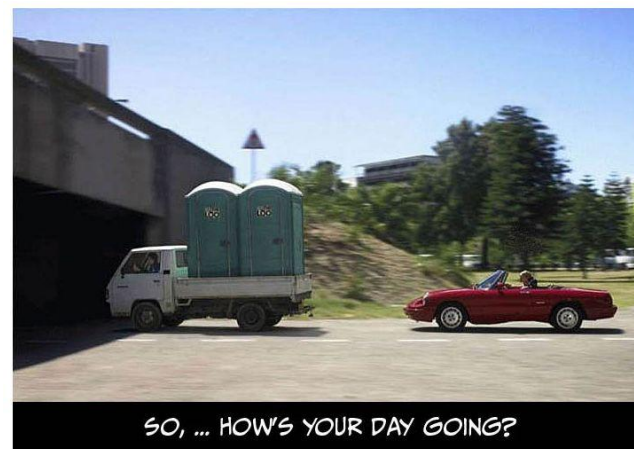


## February club meet

As this was the opening meet of the year we had a new cavers introduction on the 6 caves route on Kalk Bay. We hit the jackpot – 37 participants. Splitting into three groups, Emilie and I took the first, Tarryn and Raymond the second with Parry and Charl the third. A welcome return to the scene was Peter and family. Four visitors called it a day at half time but otherwise all went according to plan. While waiting for the groups to get together before Boomslang Alf and Vic paid us a fleeting visit. Alf had introduced Vic to the joys of Robin Hood, Ronan's Well and the dreaded Narrows. As usual, a pleasant day.

## February 13<sup>th</sup>

The Durbanville Catholic Church youth group had requested a caving trip from as early as December and it eventually came together. I was informed that the one man, (mid twenties), had only one functioning arm and could he at least come along for the walk. Well!! On the level all was normal but uphill produced rickety legs and poor sense of balance which shook us all. It took two hours to reach the caving cliff line. Leaving him at Aladdin we did Clovelly whereafter two leaders took him back down to the cars. The rest of us had lunch and Jayne joined us for Oread, White Dome and Boomslang. Arriving back at the cars later the other three had still not made it down. Taking extra water I met them 15 minutes from the bottom. Surprisingly he was in good shape and not at all exhausted.



Editor: Ron Zeeman