



**THE 1997
TONGASS CAVE PROJECT
SOUTH EAST ALASKA**

EXPEDITION DAILY REPORT

SIMON DILLON

The 1997 Tongass Cave Project

Participants

UK	Simon Dillon (DCC, GLACIER GROTTTO) Steve Murphy (ELDON)
Japan	Shunichiro Go
Canada	Margaret Drummond (Island Underground) Jennifer Lawlor (Island Underground) Clay Hunting (Island Underground)
USA	Dan Montieth (Glacier Grotto) Rob Notts (Glacier Grotto) Dave Love (Glacier Grotto) Eron Gissberg (Glacier Grotto) Steve Lewis (Glacier Grotto, Expedition Leader, TCP Director) Zach La Perriere (Glacier Grotto) Amy Russel Kris Esterson David Morris Josh
Camp Cook	Phyliss Le Rue

Front Cover: Margaret Drummond in Piss Pot

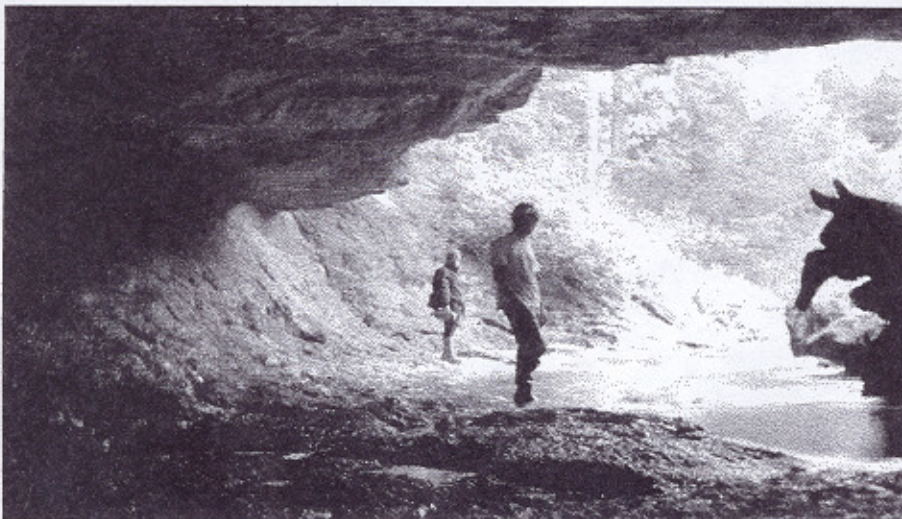
History

Since 1988 the Glacier Grotto had been working with the United States Forest Service in one way or another, however, the Tongass Cave Project Came to life in 1991, and was formed by, Kevin Allred, Pete Smith, and Steve Lewis.

The Cavers have since donated over 40,000 man hours to the forest service and have contributed around \$750,000 to cave conservation, this includes cost of travel to Prince of Wales Island, equipment, and free time to organise the expeditions. Whilst the forest service have donated around \$2-300,000. The USFS contributed \$17,000 towards this years project.

The TCP has discovered nearly 500 caves and mapped 300 throughout the Tongass, and in 1988 El Cap Pit was explored and surveyed, The deepest single drop pit in the USA at 598 feet. Karst is now a common word in the planning of the Tongass National Forest. Kevin and Carlene Allred were the first cavers to do much real work in the Tongass (see February 1995 and April 1993 NSS News for more history).

The TCP has had expeditions on Prince of Wales Island, Dall Island, Etolin Island, Heceta Island and on Chichagof all of which are in South East Alaska. This Years project was carried out on Heceta, a total of 50 caves were found, and 1888 meters was surveyed.



Steve Lewis & a USFS employee in the Entrance to Cavern Lake Cave. This Cave is used by salmon to migrate through to a lake further up stream.

17th July 1997 Day 1

The day started at 7.00am at the United States Forest Service District Rangers Office, at Thorne Bay. Although the 16 strong team was not yet at full strength, a few members still had to arrive.

A large amount of equipment now had to be moved to Heceta Island, this years location for the TCP, however with Steve L and Chris, being in Thorne Bay for a good few weeks already, quite a substantial amount of equipment had already gone. This included the real heavy booney barns that were used as the kitchen, drying room, and mapping room. All the food and cookers had already gone out with the camp cook.

An advance team consisting of myself, Zach, Jen and Margaret met with the first sea plane, this was a small sea otter which carries six people. We took off at 8.00am, our destination was an area on Heceta known as Camp Island, this is a small USFS landing dock. The rest of the team were to follow later that day, by plane and skiff (a small boat).

The only people on the Island at the time are a small team of US Fish a Game people, doing a survey on the deer and wolves, and a small logging team due to leave the Island in a week.

We arrived at Camp Island at 8.45am to be met by Chris, in a large off road minibus that had been provided by the Forest Service along with enough fuel to last the expedition. The road on Heceta are in quite bad condition in most places, especially near camp with large holes in them, around 3 meters deep.

Our camp for the duration of the expedition is based on the opposite side of the island from where we landed, around an hours drive. Upon arriving it was straight to erecting the booney barns, which was quite a feat, due to them getting a good hammering on last years expedition, when one was totally destroyed in a storm and had to be rebuilt.

The weather for the day was really heavy rain and a low cloud base of around 30 meters.

18th July 1997 Day 2

Early to Rise

Camp is woken at 7.00am, Phyliss the camp cook has already been hard at it cooking for 16, she soon found out most ate like horses. Everybody is raring to go, but one small problem, the weather! We have had really heavy rain and winds all night, the rain gauge says 1 inch, but Chris reckons more like 2 inches in 8 hours as most of the rain been blown past the gauge. This leaves us with one small problem, we know that most of the caves we are going to push this year, do flood.

Myself and Eron plan a trip into Arabica the main cave on the Island, and one that responds to flood the quickest. The main idea is to see what the river is doing at the bottom of the main pitch.

We arrive at Arabica at 11.00am, a massive sink entrance not 25 meters from the logging road.

The cave is fed by a stream a stream coming off a muskeg, and also a river insurgence at the bottom of the main pitch, this is fed by the caves in the alpine.

We tie off to a huge spruce tree and descend 15 meters down into the sink, to the top of the main pitch, which is a very large boulder slope, with a few very large dead trees perched on it.

We are greeted by a very unstable slope, it has loosened off considerably from last year. As we are walking on the slope rocks rattle off down the main pitch, we have no option but to bypass the old main pitch, and find a new one. After a few minutes Eron locates a new area to descend, it's still not great but it's a better option than the old one, and it needed a good cleaning before we could even attempt to descend.

With the rain starting to increase and the waterfall starting to pick up, it was time to call it a day and return to camp. As we were on our way out a large amount of rocks decided they wanted to see what was at the bottom of the main pitch, so off they went, making one hell of a noise.

Back at camp people are having trouble trying to keep gear dry due to the heavy rain and it's only day two!

19th July 1997 Day 3

Steve Murphy and myself returned to Arabica at 11.30am, the waterfall was still flowing strong due to another nights heavy rain. Murph started to rig the new bypass route found by Eron, he managed to get a traverse line rigged, then without warning the slope I was on gave way and rattled within inches of Murph. Luckily I was already clipped into the traverse line.

We decided to beat a hasty retreat and wait till the rain had slowed somewhat.

After leaving Arabica and with lots of time to kill, we thought we should go in search of new caves around Arabica.

Even though the area had been looked at many times before, due to the heavy forest growth it is quite easy to miss an entrance, so away we went.

Within 15 minutes Murph found a large vertical entrance, it was within 75 meters of Arabica and was being fed by a stream running off the same muskeg that fed Arabica. We flagged the area and moved on. Within another 12 meters another entrance was found, again being fed by the same muskeg and also as large as the first entrance around 10 meters long and 6 meters wide, we again flagged this for the following day and returned to camp.

Clay and Margaret had paid a visit to 'Icy Fate', another large system that was found 3 years ago by the TCP. This cave has 2 entrances but access can only be made through one, as the other one is too dangerous. As you drop into the main entrance you pass some astounding ice formations, and in the main entrance chamber a vast ice crystal chandelier some 15 meters round, there is no other cave on the island with this kind of ice formations and what makes it even more unique is, it is in the bottom of a valley and not in the alpine where the rest of the ice caves are, nobody can quite explain why this is the only cave out of around 50 in the valley that has ice in the entrance.

Not long after passing the beauty of the ice formations, you then enter a mud hole, which then makes this already freezing cave even more of an arduous trip.

There are around 50 ongoing leads in this cave, but the main push is down a very large passage, again with mud on the walls, floor, and roof, showing that in major flood it backs up into the main cave. Clay and Margaret managed to rig to the last known survey point, and due to the cold after around 7 hours call it a day. Zac and Jen were also in 'Icy Fate' pushing a few side leads trying to pass an area known a 'Miami Beach' which large under ground lake that can back up to the roof, and has leads beyond it, that have great potential, however they also had no success and emerged some 7 hours later looking like they had gone 10 rounds in a mud wrestling contest.

Upon Clays return to camp he professes to hate the cave, but over the next 4 weeks it develops into a love hate relationship and some what of a challenge to him. After 2 trips in the far reaches of the cave most people want to call it a day, not Clay!

20th & 21st July 1997 Day 4 & 5

I return to the as yet unnamed first pit that Murph found on the 19th, along with Margaret, we had a look around, to try and find the best way down the cave, which due to the heavy undergrowth around the entrances can be a feat unto it's self. I rig to a large spruce tree with a 30 meter rope and start to descend down the waterfall which turns out to be the best route down, as the rest of the vertical sides are to unstable, which was a shame because the bloody freezing.

We dropped the first pitch throwing loose rocks down and surveying as we went, it is usually a strict rule that no scooping the caves you must survey as you go, but this is the most broken rule on the expedition.

After around 17 meters I landed on a rock ledge, and on either side a pit dropped away, both looked blocked with rubble. I descended down the left hand pit landing on a boulder strewn floor, in the corner of this small room was a 15cm hole in the floor. I started to dig and thirty minutes it was just big enough to fit through. I threw a rock down and it sounded like another good 10 meter drop, but to progress I was going to need climbing chocks and friends as the rock was to fractured to bolt, and the hole I was digging was also under the water fall, and I was starting to turn a funny colour blue, as was Margaret. We had a quick look at the pit to our right but this was fully blocked with large amounts of rubble. We decided to leave this cave which we had now named 'Bottomless Wet Surprise'.



Margaret can just be seen at the bottom of a short crawl before entering Margaret's thrutch

One of the only good ways to get warm back at camp is to have a sauna, which we built out of tarpaulin sheets, plastic drain pipes, and an old beer barrel that had been converted into a wood burning stove, it was the only small luxury we had for the next month. Steve and Eron

Rigged the New main pitch on Arabica which took almost a day as they had to clean the top of the pitch and place a lot of bolts. They did not have time to drop it and for some reason, the cave seems to be spooking people this year and a lot are giving it a wide berth, Eron is one of them and he is one that does not spook easily.

The following day Murph, Margaret, Eron and myself return to 'Bottomless Wet Surprise'. The plan for today, Murph and Eron rig whilst Margaret and myself follow surveying. The rig team descend first, and then we follow dropping down the blind pit to survey it, by the time we have completed the survey the riggers have dropped through the dig down a 15 meter shaft and off they went, the beauty of being a rig team means that you can scoop the cave. We pop through the small dig into a stunning and stable 15 meter shaft as we hit the bottom the cave breaks off in two direction, a passage running on a down wards trend and one running up. We take the downwards route as there was a good draft coming up it, after 20 meters or so we come across Murph and Eron, the passage has a large clay plug in it but running across the passage are two leads.

Murph drops the lead to the right and Eron takes the left, and yes we survey! After 5 minutes Eron returns, informing us that it is a no go without rope as a tight vertical passage drops away and the walls are covered in clay, so Margaret pops down to have a look.

After some 20 minutes Margaret returns saying she went past the vertical tight piece and found a small pitch beyond. 45 minutes later Murph returns with tales of extreme tightness, plenty of mud and a very dead end. I decide to have a look a Margaret's lead, which was easy going down to the top of the pitch, there was nowhere at all to rig at the top of the pitch, the only option was to rig off a natural jug back in the tight piece.

It took me half an hour of thrutching and swearing and head butting the wall to get out of the tight vertical passage, it turned out that Margaret was the only one who could make it out with ease, it helps when your pretty dammed small. We named the passage in honour of Margaret, 'Margaret Thrutch'.

Clay and shun returned to 'Icy Fate', they had a good day's caving but are having trouble adding survey distance to the cave because the mud makes it such hard going. Most of the rest of the team are out walking units to see if they can find any new caves, and Chris was dye testing the main resurgence and had placed dye trap in the main resurgence. It turns out at a later date that the information obtained from the dye testing may be invaluable, and help save the caves from the dreaded logging companies destruction.

22nd July 1997 Day 6

A further visit was made to 'Bottomless Wet Surprise', with Margaret we survey the up passage which was highly decorated with stalagmites and soda straws and mini gour pools. On the floor were hundreds of dead beetles. There were also large amount of guano in the cave, showing that it was a winter roost for bats, it is very rare that the caves are used in the summer by the bats as they tend to use the forest canopy to roost in, however occasionally the odd male will return during the summer days to roost. Females do not return to the cave as they need to keep warm to develop young, produce milk or to keep their newly born pups warm, so the females need to stay in warm places. Males may just go into torpor if the foraging for bugs is poor.

BOTTOMLESS WET SURPRISE

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
HECETA ISLAND
ALASKA

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TONGASS CAVE PROJECT
JULY 1997

Brunton & Tape Survey
20th August 1997
Surveyed by:
S.Dillon, M.Drummond
Drawn by: S.Dillon



SCALE IN METERS

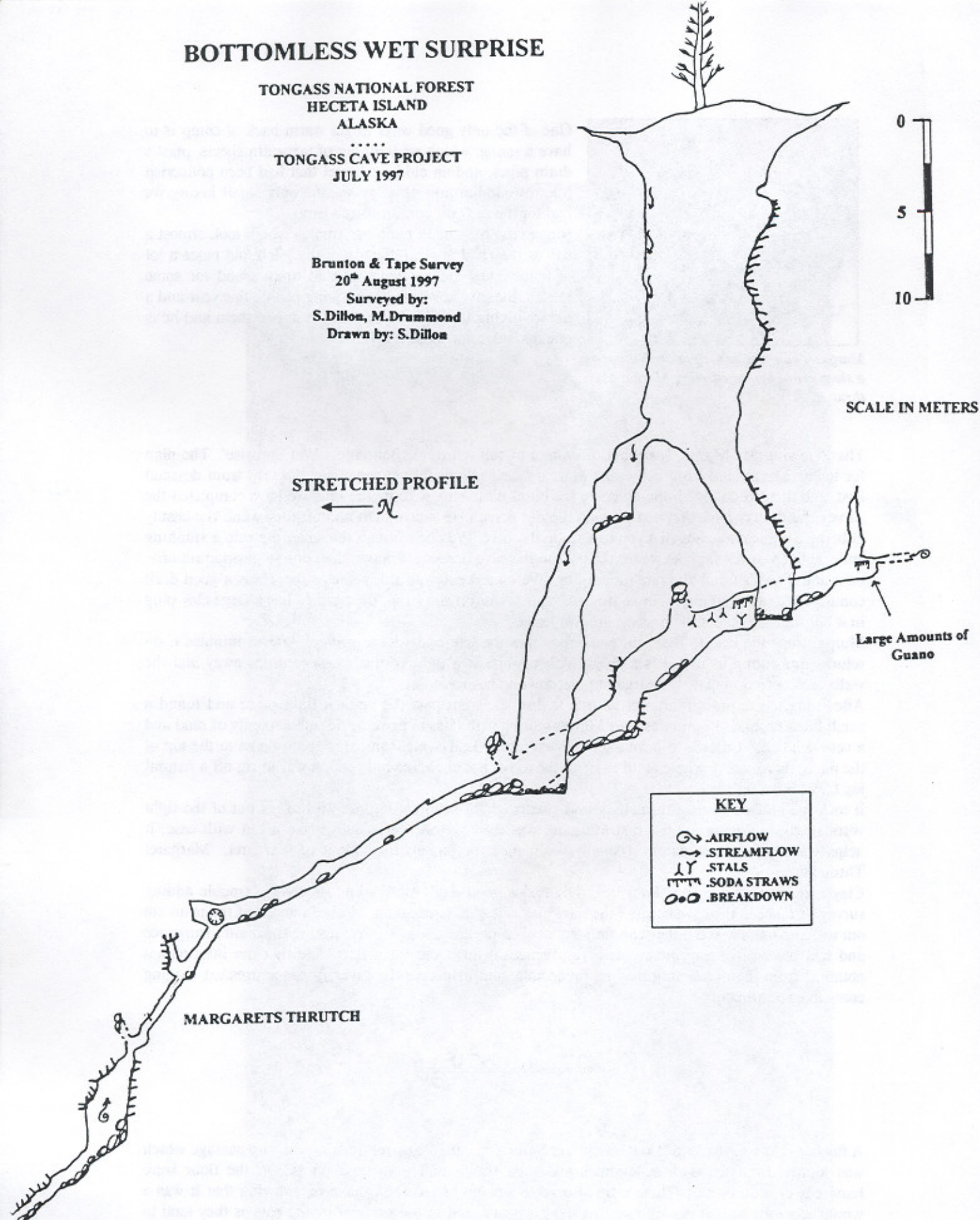
STRETCHED PROFILE
← N

Large Amounts of
Guano

KEY

- ⊙ → AIRFLOW
- STREAMFLOW
- ∧ Y STALS
- TTT SODA STRAWS
- BREAKDOWN

MARGARETS THRUTCH



The top end of the upward sloping passage had a small aven , which was covered in blood red flowstone, there was also a small passage running off that had a gail forced wind coming from it, it was just large enough to fit through. However, the passage had hundreds of soda straws through its full length, if we had gone through these all would have been smashed, so we decided to leave it alone, even though there was a large echo coming from the other side of the passage. We made our way to Margaret's Thrutch, we rigged a rope, and dropped the pitch beyond Margaret's Thrutch. It entered a small chamber which had a good draft source coming from a passage that was dropping away at a 45 degree angle, there was only one problem.

The walls going down the passage were highly unstable, and as you dropped down this tight vadouse passage you had to use the walls to help you descend, and parts were peeling off as we moved. Margaret waited in the small chamber, it was now my turn to do some scooping, and I followed the meandering passage down some 35 meters. It got much tighter and now had some water seeping in from the side wall, I held onto the side wall as I descended on my side. I then felt the whole wall move inwards towards me threatening to close of my exit, and any rescue from this point would have been hopeless. It was time to call it a day, and go to a new cave and leave this one to the NGC (next generation caver).



Margaret descending the entrance pitch to Bottomless Wet Surprise

Murph and Eron went up into the alpine, after quite a few hours they came across a new entrance. Not a great deal of rope is carried when you go into the alpine looking for new caves, just in case you do not come across any, so they only had one 37 meter rope. They dropped the pit but soon found out that 37 meters was far to little, and with time running out to get back to base camp they called it a day. Keeping in line with cave names being called weird things, they have named their new find 'Fetish Pot'. There is still a team of 6 in 'Icy Fate', pushing as many leads as possible and the trips are becoming more of an endurance test day by day.

23rd July 1997 Day 7

Today's plan, take it easy, went along to 'Arabica', with Chris, still quite a large of amount water going down the entrance, but we need to get to the bottom whilst it was still in flood, to place dye bags. Chris is ready to drop dye in the alpine caves, and we believe that the water resurges in the entrance of 'Arabica'. I drop down the main pitch first which Murph rigged, flying down at a rapid rate of knots, I hit a knot some 12 feet of the floor and jam it straight into my descender. I have one hell of a fight trying to get the knot out of my stop. In the meantime as I am well away from any wall I start to spin around, the speed starts to increase and this makes things even harder, and to make matters worse, I am directly under the waterfall. After I reach the bottom Chris follows, he told me that I looked like a flashing light on top of a police car when I was spinning around.

A short walk later we arrive at the usually dry passage which is now in full flood, down stream is sumped to the roof and any attempt to walk down stream is just asking to be washed away. Chris has



Chris Esterson upstream in the Arabica insurgence

his dry suit on, so off he went for a wander upstream. Due to the extreme cold of the water it is not advisable to enter it, as hypothermia would not take long to set in. Chris had gone to see if it was possible to enter a high lead upstream, however on his return he said it was not possible. The lead is a tube that runs up on a 60 degree angle and was greasy to say the least, if you slipped back down the chances of getting washed under a deep ledge when you hit the water were too high. Another cave out of the game for a while, the dye bag was placed and out we went.

The rain on the surface was now falling harder than ever, Steve Lewis called a halt to all caving in the main valley. There are large muskegs surrounding the valley, and the likelihood of a bog burst was now at its highest! This will give us time to catch up on drawing the surveys which are now starting to build up.

24th July 1997 Day 8

Margaret and myself returned to the as yet unsurveyed pit next to 'Bottomless Wet Surprise'. Even though this was taking water off a muskeg, the danger was not that great. The water was absolutely pouring in at one end, and yet again it was the end that was the safest to descend down, so we gave it the name 'Piss Pot'. The entrance was once again very large, and seemed that it had great potential.

I dropped down a 15 meter pitch and landed on a ledge with two leads, one to the left and the other to the right. The right lead was obviously blocked, so off to the left, I dropped another 8 meters to land on a boulder strewn floor, with a large pool at one end. It did not take us long to survey the cave so we started to dig in the floor, in no time at all we had managed to open a small hole. There was a lot of soil in the bottom so this was holding the pool above the boulders. As soon as we moved the soil, the water drained away in seconds. Which meant something big was underneath and it may link to 'Bottomless Wet Surprise', even though it was still high above the bottom of the first pitch of 'BWS'. After 1 hour we had managed to open up a fair sized hole, but with no lifting gear we had no option but to kick boulders down the hole which rattled off into the distance. As we worked the top end of the dig which was now high above us was becoming unstable, and much water was landing on us. It was time to call it a day and leave, we would call back in a week and see if the water had worked for us to clear more of the hole or if it would close it up again.

Most people are out walking units that are to be logged later on in the year in hope that they can find new cave entrances, if they do this may help to save a small section of the unit from the dreaded

27th July 1997 Day 11

Steve Lewis had found a new cave entrance a few days ago whilst walking a unit, so along with him Murph, Shun and Myself off we went to survey it. The usual test before going into the cave, is to drop a rock down it, so as we can get a rough idea how deep it is. The sink was very large and it sounded quite deep, so the plan of action Murph and myself to rig, whilst Steve L, and Shun survey.

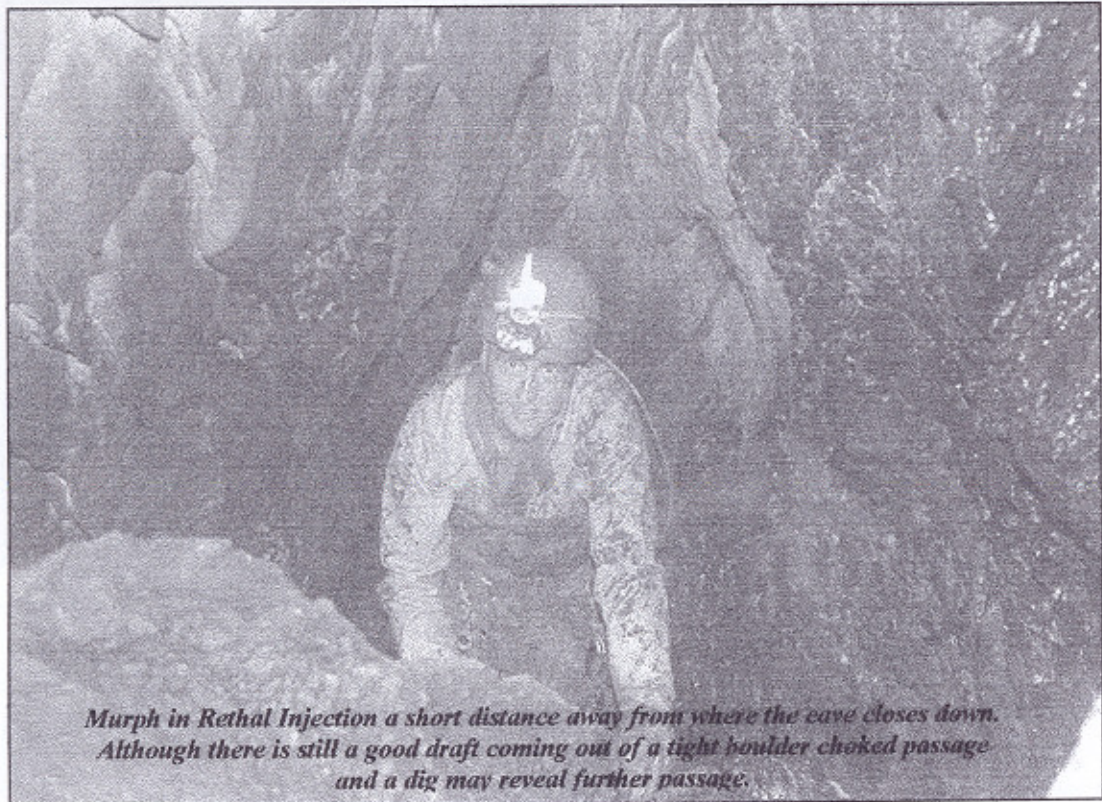
The top of the entrance was a little bit hairy as we had a large amount of boulders pinned in above our heads, and Murph had to bolt underneath them to get a good hang down the pitch. There are many cave entrances like this on Heceta and we referred to them as 'hanging death'.

Whilst Murph Bolted the top Steve L and Shun surveyed the surface area, and named the cave. The Cave was named 'Lethal Injection', the name was taken of Amy's remark whilst she was in the far reaches of 'Icy Fate', she said, 'I wish I could end it here with a lethal injection'. I think that is what most people though about the far reaches.

The funny thing was that Shun wrote the name how he pronounced it 'Rethal Injection', so the name stuck.

The cave was a meandering vadouse canyon with a waterfall at one end of the entrance, which Murph rigged well away from. It took Murph and myself only 2 hours to bolt and rig to the bottom. Unfortunately the cave did what most caves do, from being a huge entrance and shaft after some 10 meters it closed off to almost nothing. Steve and Shun surveyed in behind us, whilst we looked at some side leads, which turned out to be of no interest. The whole of the cave was black and white marble and this took one hell of an effort to bolt. The ironic part about dropping these caves is that it is highly unlikely that anyone will ever descend them again, so we all feel privileged that we are able to explore these new systems, which may if the logging carries on be destroyed, and destroyed they are! You do not have to walk far on the island to see what a devastating impact logging has on the delicate cave eco system.

Clay and Margaret were doing a dig in a cave found by Chris named 'Moon Probe', Clay was sat on a ledge attached to a life line and Margaret was stood behind him, he was moving some rubble when he heard a rumble, he threw himself backwards and at the same time Margaret pulled on the life line. Within seconds the whole of the ceiling caved in along with massive logs, there was now a very large amount of car sized boulders sitting where Clay was seconds before. Clay said that if it wasn't for Margaret's quick thinking he would have been dead. The first near miss of the expedition and not the last. Chris is spending most of the time placing dye traps and dropping dye in caves.



Murph in Rethal Injection a short distance away from where the cave closes down. Although there is still a good draft coming out of a tight boulder choked passage and a dig may reveal further passage.

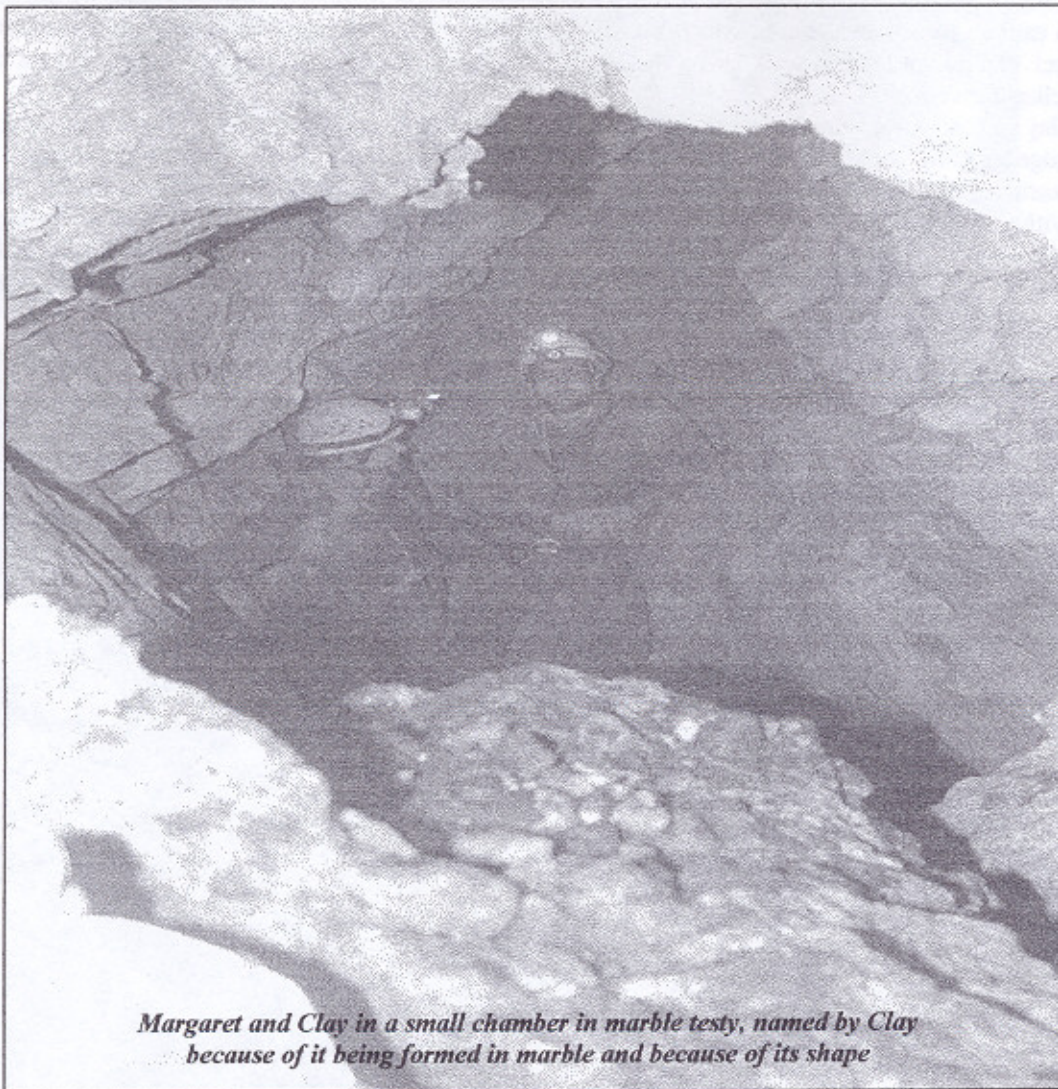
loggers. Steve and Eron made another trip to fetish pot, and did an over land survey from base camp to the entrance. All the caves on the island are tied into base camp via an overland survey, unfortunately due to the dense forest canopy it is impossible to take a GPS reading.

26th July 1997 Day 10

After having the 25th as a rest day and cleaning up my equipment it was back to looking for new caves. Even though most of the caves that we have already found have possible digs in them the main object is to find as many as caves as possible, and any more than an hours dig is abandoned, unless we believe that the potential is very high.

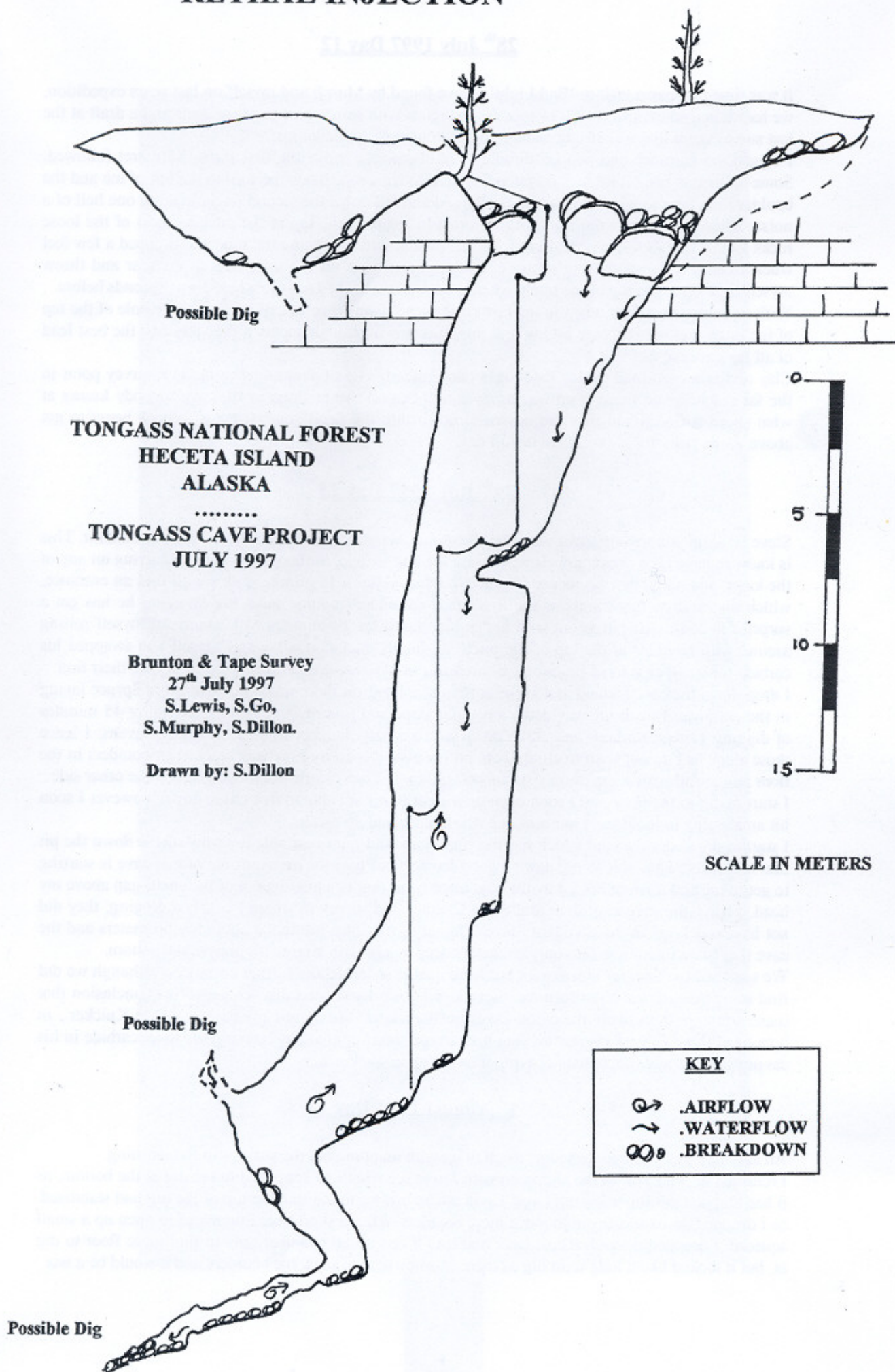
Myself, Margaret, Steve L, and Shun went to a unit known as 'Unit 14', this was slated to be logged and also to have a logging road driven through it, and this area was known to be of high vulnerability karst. Our objective was to find as many caves as possible and as many insurgencies, significant karst features so we could try to protect the unit.

The way that a unit is walked is in a line and we are spread out so we still have voice contact, sometimes visibility can be down to only 10 feet. We spent most of the day walking the unit and found 5 caves, although not of any great size they were all taking water. The largest of the caves we called 'Marble Testy', a lovely little cave containing many speleothems. All the locations of the caves were noted and tagged, and the information was to be passed on to the Forest Service at a later date.



Margaret and Clay in a small chamber in marble testy, named by Clay because of it being formed in marble and because of its shape

RETHAL INJECTION



28th July 1997 Day 12

It was time to repay a visit to 'Bad Light' a cave found by Murph and myself on last years expedition, we had managed to push it to -114 meters, and left it with some great ongoing leads and a draft at the last survey point that was strong enough to blow out our carbide lamps.

I rigged the entrance and popped through a tight squeeze above the first pitch, Margaret followed. Some 30 meters later at the second pitch, I started to rig a rope when the wall to the left of me and the boulder floor near to where I was stood collapsed and fell down the second pitch, making one hell of a noise. After recovering from the shock I started to clean up the top of the pitch as most of the loose rocks looked like they had peeled away of their own accord. I got onto the rope and dropped a few feet when I heard the wall starting to move, I managed to push off the solid wall to my rear and throw myself back up to the top of the pitch, when a huge slab smashed near to where I was seconds before. With no other way to get down to the last known lead it was time to call it a day, the whole of the top of the pitch had now become highly unstable, this was a great shame as it probably had the best lead of all the caves so far.

Clay and Shun returned to 'Icy Fate', it is taking nearly eight hours to get to the last survey point in the far reaches, and there is no way an over night camp can be done in the cave, nobody knows at what speed it floods and they are now well down into the flood zone. It takes some 3 hours to get above it, the risks are high just caving all day.

29th July 1997 Day 13

Steve L, Shun and myself pay a visit into the alpine, we go to an area just below Bald Mountain. This is know to have been above any glacier during the last ice age, as there is no glacial scarring on any of the karst, and much more evidence to prove this fact. After a 15 minute walk we all find an entrance, which one to drop first? Steve is the first ready so off he trundles down his cave, but he has got a surprise to come. After fighting with his carbide lamp for 20 minutes with Shun and myself rolling around with laughter at the top of the pitch, he finally clicks on, Clay and Myself had swapped his carbide for small chunks of limestone. Shun drops in with Steve and off they go surveying their find.

I drop down the cave I found and at the bottom of a large pit there was a massive Sitka Spruce laying in the entrance. I work my way down a boulder slope and find my way on blocked, after 45 minutes of digging I break through and climb down into a small chamber that has two large avens, I leave these alone as I do not wish to climb them on my own. I soon find my way blocked by boulders in the floor and a wall with a gap of only six inches, although I can clearly see it opens up on the other side.

I start to dig in the floor and I soon open up a shaft that I am able to free climb down, however I soon hit an ice plug in the floor, I am now at a depth of around 30 meters.

I start to dig under the wall which has the small gap, and I am now able to throw rubble down the pit that is blocked. I am able to dig down a good few feet but now the extreme cold of this cave is starting to get to me and it is not helped by the gale force wind that is whistling out of the small gap above my head. I leave the cave and Shun and Steve L, enter and survey to where I was last digging, they did not have much joy in the cave that Steve L found as they also hit an ice plug after 30 meters and the cave that Shun found was also only 20 meters deep, again with a large ice plug in the bottom.

We searched the area for more caves but were unable to locate any further entrances, although we did find some magnificent karst features. Steve L, who is a karst specialist comes to the conclusion that these are more than likely the oldest caves on the island. We named my cave 'Carbide Knicker', in honour of Steve L, who after us nicking his carbide ended up that day carrying his spare carbide in his caving suit and after a few hours caving it ended up in his knickers.

1st August 1997 Day 14

An easy day was planned for today, to catch up with mapping out the surveys in the morning.

I returned to 'Piss Pot' in the afternoon with Jen to see what had happened to the dig at the bottom, as it had stopped raining a few days ago. Upon our return we found that the top of the dig had stabilised, so I dropped down and began to move more boulders. After a short time I managed to open up a small squeeze. I dropped through the squeeze and into a very small chamber only to find more floor to dig at, but it looked like a long term dig as there was nowhere to stack the boulders and it would be a wet

dig at that, as there was a large amount of water pouring in from the side of the boulder choke. Murph and Eron have returned to 'Fetish Pot' along with Clay, the cave was going well and they were gaining good depth for an alpine cave, as most seem to end in a snow plug. Murph rigged a new pitch and dropped to have a look what was at the bottom, he landed on a boulder strewn floor, he walked a short distance to the top of another pitch, when the floor started to collapse into the void below him. Murph started to run as fast as he could back towards the rope but the floor was collapsing behind him as he ran, he just managed to get to the rope and attach himself, when the whole of the floor gave way under him. Murph later described it as a terrifying thing and he thought he was going to die. Eron thought Steve was dead when he heard the floor collapsing, it was not till he felt Murph coming up the rope that he knew he had escaped from the thousands of tons of boulders that crashed down the pitch. Eron said that they did not have to worry about the floor stabilising, as it had now completely gone. With Murph nearly in a state of shock they left the cave with the speed of a thousand gazelles.

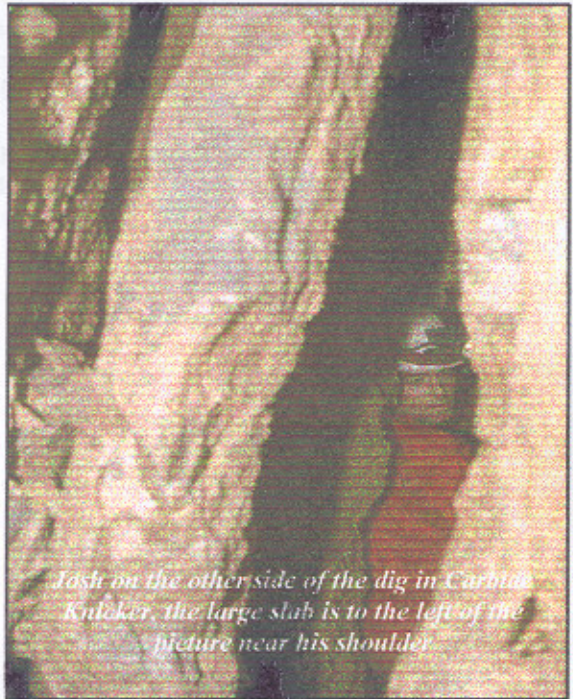
2nd August 1997 Day 15

I returned to 'Carbide Knicker' with Margaret, Dan and Josh. Dan and Josh survey the cave that was only 20 meters deep, even though it is only small all caves entrances that we find must be surveyed, this will help protect the area as then the cave is protected by law and also a small radius around the cave becomes protected. After they have surveyed and because it is hunting season, Dan went further up into the alpine to see if he could get a deer.

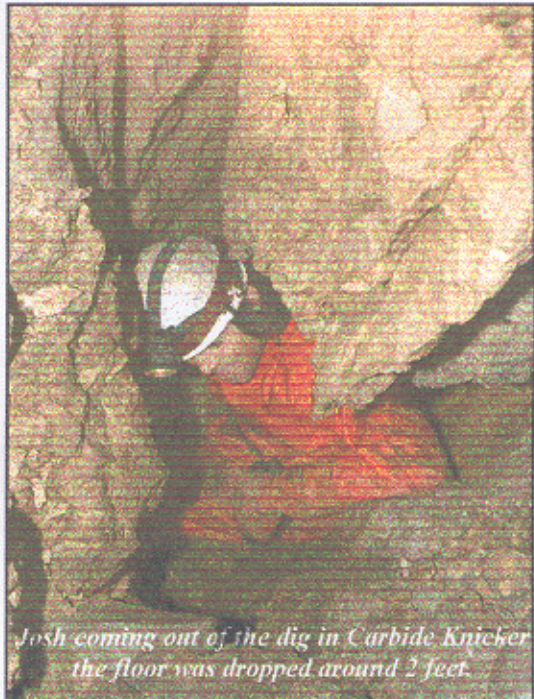
Margaret and myself drop down 'Carbide Knicker' and return to the dig, we had more thermals on this time to keep us warm. After around an hour or so we had managed to drop the floor low enough for Margaret to get through, it would be a further hours dig before I was able to fit through the squeeze. When we got through we were greeted by a vertical shaft some 14 meters deep and then it kicked away at the bottom., I dropped a rock down and it rattled away. It sounded like it could be up to 50 meters deep. We could not continue on for a few reasons, the shaft was heavily fractured and very unstable, there were huge boulders teetering halfway down the shaft and in the squeeze that we had just come through was a huge slab of rock that had peeled away from the wall, this was being held apart by a rock that was balancing on the edge of the shaft, if this fell down the shaft the slab would close like a rock door.

We do not carry large amounts of equipment for digs in caves, and definitely no jacks to keep rocks apart there is no need really, if we hit a hard dig we move to the next cave along. Maybe when we run out of caves to find we will start to dig the ones that look the most promising.

Our pick up for return to camp was not for 6 hours, so it was time for a play and photo session in the other caves.



Josh on the other side of the dig in Carbide Knicker, the large slab is to the left of the picture near his shoulder



Josh coming out of the dig in Carbide Knicker the floor was dropped around 2 feet.

3rd August 1997 day 16

Today is a unit walking day there is a team of 9 covering 6 units. Dan, Margaret and myself cover a



Margaret descending the 20m deep cave near Carbide Knicker which Shun named Nice Shot Pot.

10 acre unit we only found 1 cave, but managed to find 23 significant sinks all over 12 feet deep. We surveyed the small cave which we named 'Deer's Demise', due to the fact of the dead deer in the bottom. Dan who is a Doctor of Cultural Anthropology and an Archaeologist thinks that the remains may be quite old, they are marked on the survey and a special report is wrote about the cave back at camp later that day. A total of 10 caves are found in the 6 units. Eron and Steve L, find a large cave entrance in a cliff face, no time was left to start a survey of the cave but a quick look around revealed quite a promising cave. The weather has took another turn for the worse today, and we have just found out that it had been the wettest July in Alaska since records started!

Murph and Clay are setting up a cave rescue practice that will last 2 days, other members of the Glacier Grotto will be flown in for the practice. One day will be done the American way and the other will be done the British Cave rescue way. Most of the American Rescue equipment is neandertholic they still use prussic knots. and the rope they use for rescue is 15mm. On the time they set themselves for the rescue they have never got anyone out alive.

4th August 1997 Day 17

Today is a bit of a sore point for me, I can not go caving as I have been bitten by a spider in the night, bitten 9 times to be exact and on the backside, it is very painful and I am unable to put a harness on or sit down come to that. I am told by the Alaskan Americans that it was probably a Wolf spider as they tend to bite people quite a lot, I end up sat most of the day with my backside in a bath of Epsom salts to try to soothe the pain. Also a lot of people are coming down with Giardia, this is a parasitic protozoa that is caught from beavers urine, the reason we are getting this is because the beaver dams are bursting due to the high rain fall and it is contaminating the streams that we get our drinking water from. It is not a pleasant condition with severe stomach cramps, very bad runs and burps that smell like sulphur and knock anybody out that is stood close by.

Murph and Eron returned to 'Fetish Pot', they got past the part which collapsed the other day and the cave kept going for some good few hundred feet, Murph came to the top of another pitch which this time was stable, he bolted it and descended some 30 meters, unfortunately he was unable to get off the rope as below him was a large underground lake with no sign of a dry spot. If any progress was to be made in this cave it would be down to a cave diving team.

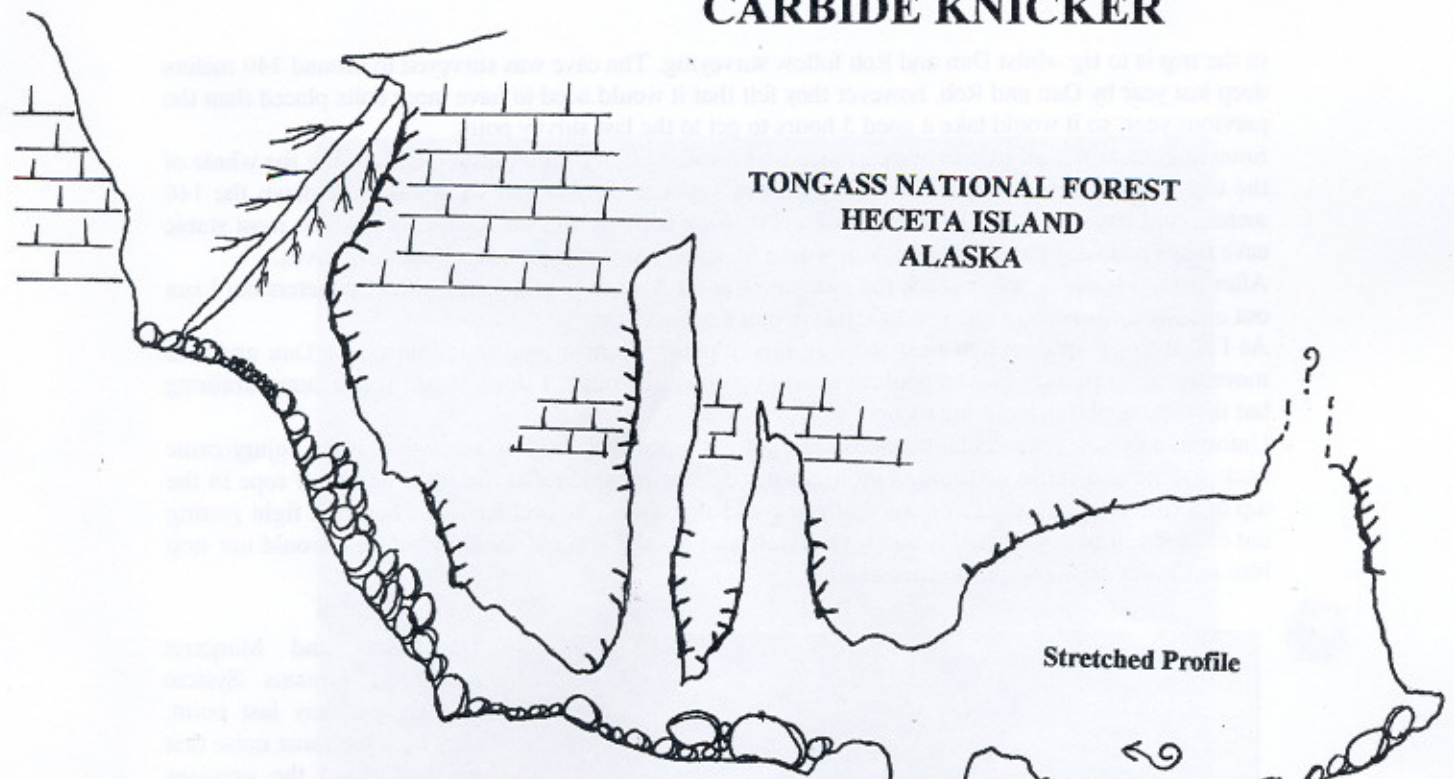
5th & 6th August 1997 Day 18 & 19

5th, Murph and Clay are out again setting up the cave rescue day, they are trying to find 2 suitable caves. The weather is very bad again, so caving is off, most of the people went out unit walking but had no success today in locating new caves, I still lying up with my spider bites, and I have now been nicknamed Moolu Arse. Dan who is a man of many talents and who studies the local Tlingit Indians and knows lots of herbal remedies has been down to the beach and pick some seaweed for me to put on the bites. The seaweed has small sack on it which you pop and it contains a jelly called mucus fucus.

6th Well the mucus fucus has worked so it's back to caving. I join Dan and Rob and we head off to a cave found last year called 'Sinuous System'. This cave I am told is the best on the island, my role in

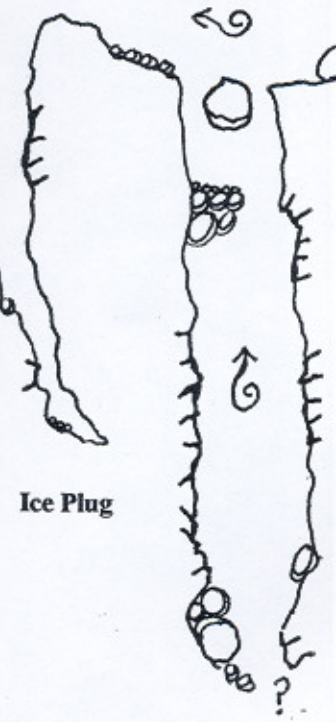
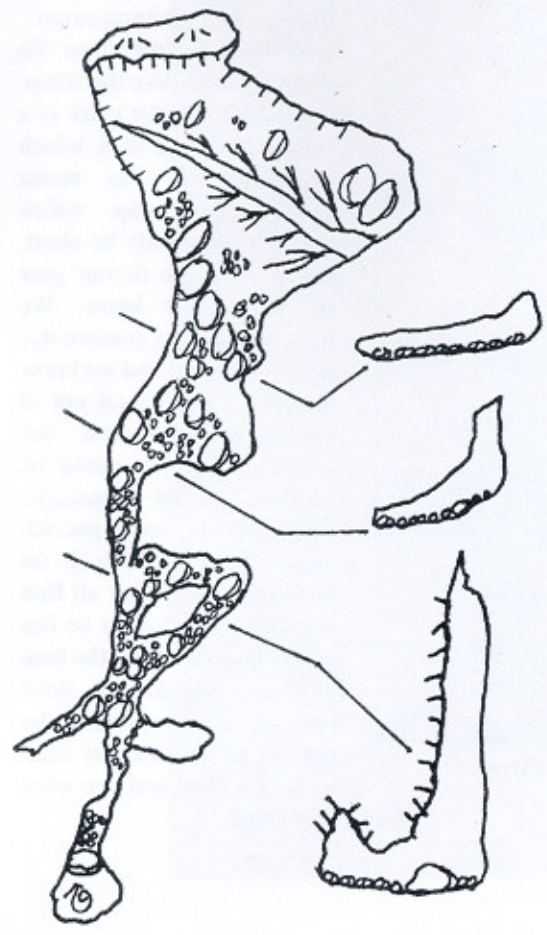
CARBIDE KNICKER

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
HECETA ISLAND
ALASKA

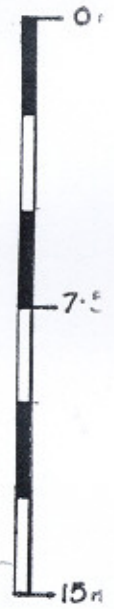


Brunton & Tape Survey
29th July 1997
S.Dillon, S.Lewis, S.Go

Drawn by: S.Dillon



KEY	
	.Airflow
	.Breakdown
	.Possible lead
	.Fractured rock



in the trip is to rig whilst Dan and Rob follow surveying. The cave was surveyed to around 140 meters deep last year by Dan and Rob, however they felt that it would need to have more bolts placed than the previous year, so it would take a good 5 hours to get to the last survey point.

Sinuous System has an impressive entrance that is taking water off a muskeg and during the whole of the trip you are in the water. It is a very narrow vadouse canyon that wind's its way down the 140 meters, and has some tight technical sections that are both on and off rope, it is also the most stable cave that I had seen on the Island and it would fit in with any of the classic Yorkshire caves.

After some 5 hours or so we reach the last survey point, I manage to drop a further 20 meters but I run out of bolts so its time to call it a day and we make our way out

As I start to go up the pitch near the last survey point I hear a loud thudding noise, Dan and Rob move for cover thinking that a boulder is coming down the pitch, I think that it was a sump draining but they are doubtful about my theory.

Unfortunately some 2 months previous Dan got a slipped disc, and on the way out the injury came back and we had yet to go through the tight pieces, one of which was a tight squeeze off rope in the top of a rift, There were a few parts that you could slip down into and have one hell of a fight getting out even if you were fully fit. It was a very slow and painful trip out for Dan but this would not stop him returning to his favourite cave again.



*Steve Lewis at the bottom of the final Pitch
in Rethal Injection*

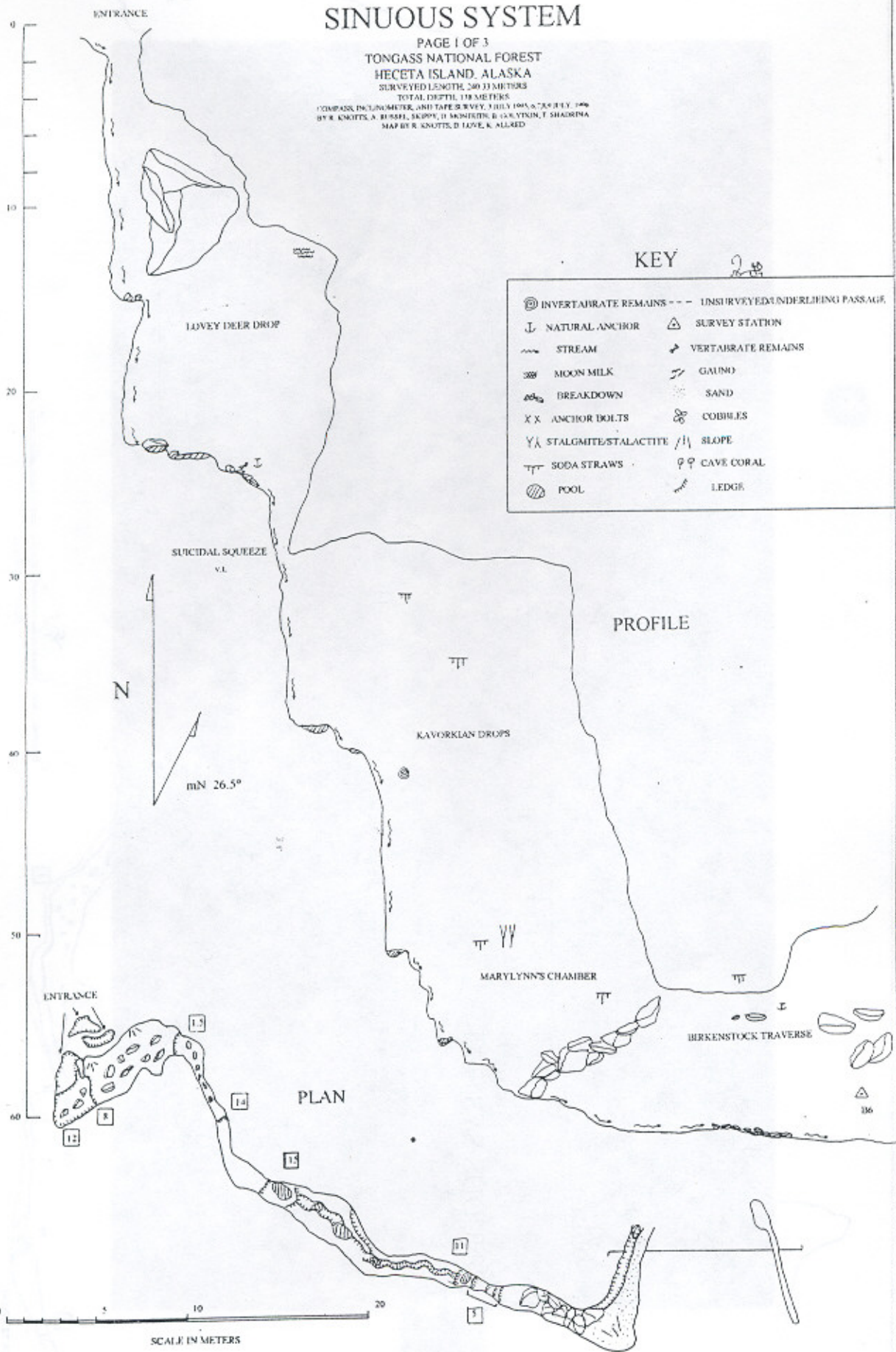
Dan, Rob and Margaret return to Sinuous System and rig past my last point, they hear the same noise that we had heard the previous day.

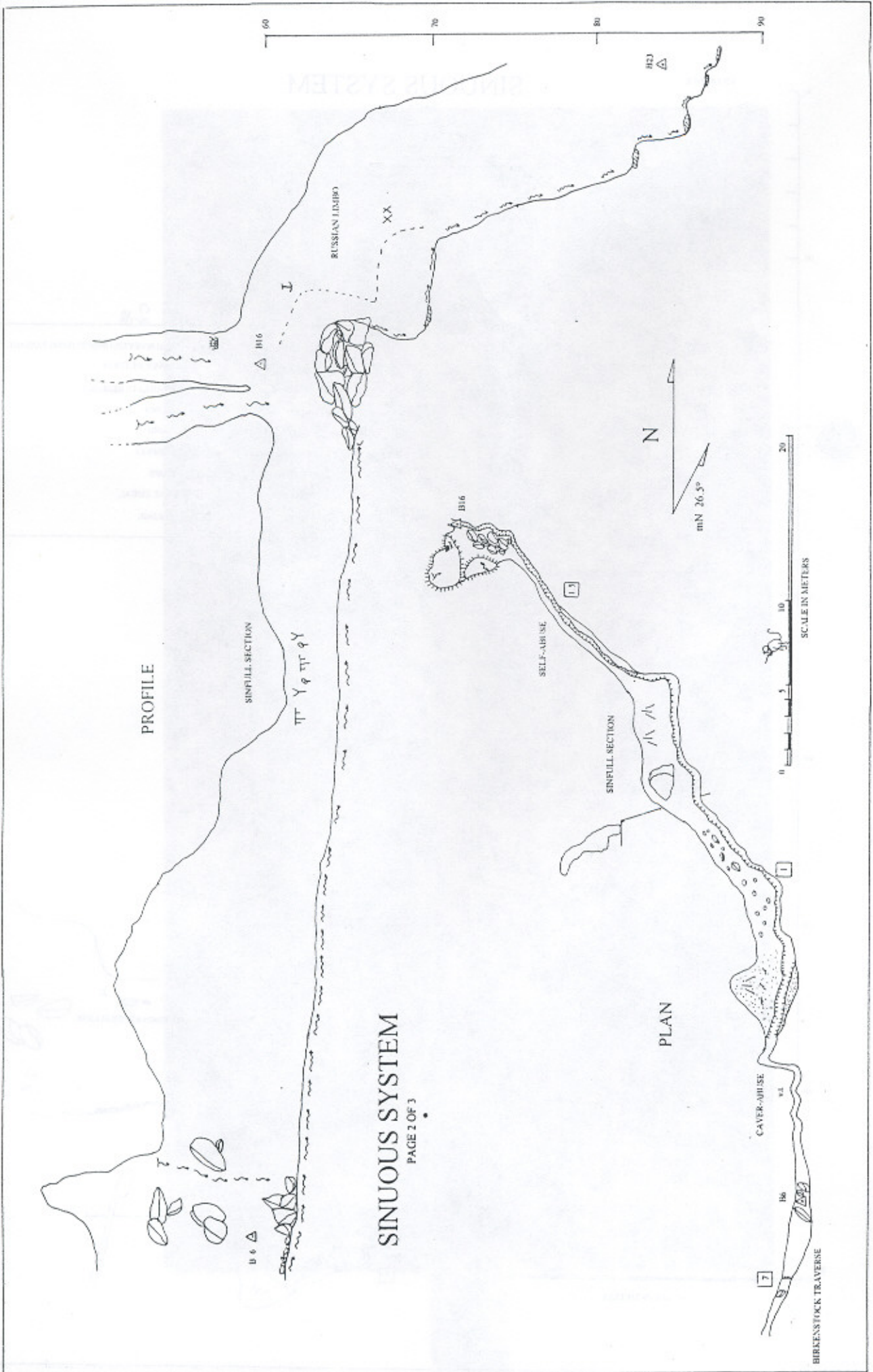
After some 2 hours of surveying they came to a sump that was quite low, on the wall was a high water mark and they soon agreed that it was a draining sump. Unfortunately we have no diving gear to dive the sump. On the high water mark is a very large dead toad which looks like it has swam through the sump, which means it may only be short, but without the diving gear we will never know. We have also done a positive dye test on the cave and we know that the water comes out at the main resurgence, but beyond the sump could be good walking passage. Everybody is really peeved, maybe we will push it on another project, after all Rob is a commercial diver he has all his tanks back on the boat at Camp Island but none with air in. They leave the cave rigged for another team to have a look and see what they think.

SINUOUS SYSTEM

PAGE 1 OF 3
TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
HECETA ISLAND, ALASKA

SURVEYED LENGTH 200.33 METERS
TOTAL DEPTH 118 METERS
COMPASS, PLUMB LINE, AND TAPE SURVEY, JULY 1965, 27 AUG. 1966
BY R. KNUTTS, A. BAKER, S. RYAN, D. MCNEIL, R. L. K. YIN, T. SHADRINA
MAP BY R. KNUTTS, D. LAVE, K. ALLARD





SINOUS SYSTEM

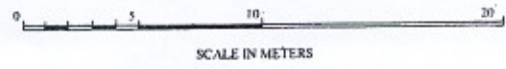
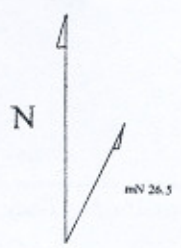
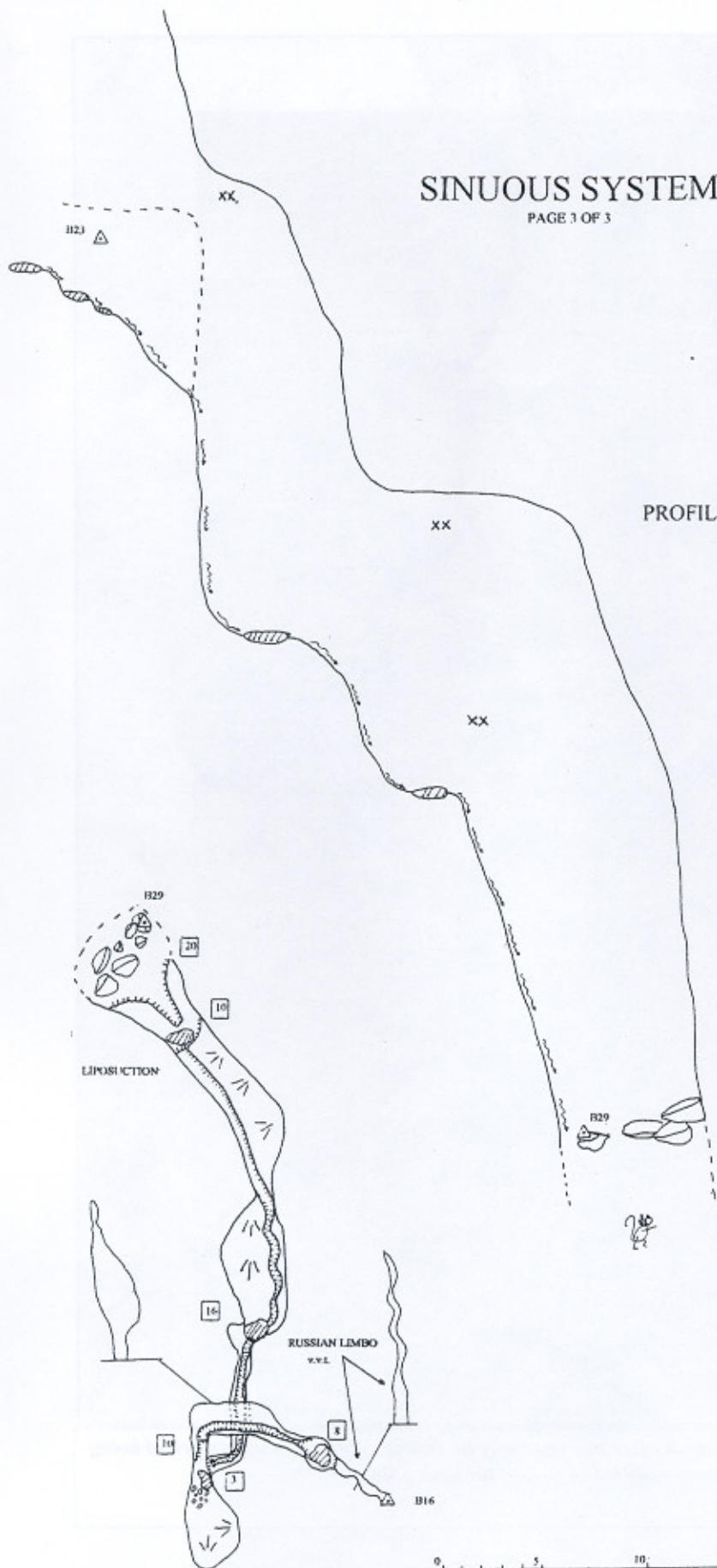
PAGE 2 OF 3

Sheet 1-1-1

SINUOUS SYSTEM

PAGE 3 OF 3

PROFILE





The entrance to Marble Testy, which after this year may be destroyed due to a logging road being driven within 100 foot of the sink hole.

8th August 1997 Day 21

I have a solo trip into 'Bottomless Wet Surprise' to retrieve a bat detector that Steve Lewis placed in the bottom of the cave near all the guano, and also to remove some bones which look like bat remains, but on more detailed inspection back at camp they turn out to be a shrew skeleton. Unfortunately there were no bats detected on our equipment. The cave was also derigged, and it is very unlikely that anybody will ever return to this cave.

Murph, Clay and Margaret are doing well planning the cave rescue scenario. Clay is going to be the casualty on the first day and Margaret on the second, they should have some fun trying to move Clay, he weighs around 15 stone and is a very big chap. We are keeping everything secret from the rest of the group so they do not have a clue that a rescue is going to be called tomorrow, they believe that it is in another two days.

Eron returned to the cave that he found in the cliff face, it has a large phreatic tube entrance and it is one of very few horizontal entranced caves on the island, although Eron was not able to survey the cave on his own he did spend quite some time playing in the cave. Eron is probably the hardest caver in the team, on the 1996 expedition when he was in the alpine region with Steve L, Eron started to descend a cave named 'Sublime Stoned'. As he got some 20 meters down the pitch a huge slab of rock came loose from the wall above him and smashed against his leg, he made his way back out and then Steve went to get help and a vehicle to get him back to camp. Eron made his way on his own back to the road some 2 miles down hill on his backside through a clear cut, which is hard enough to walk through when you are fit. His leg turned black within hours but it was not broken, this did not deter and him with only 1 day off he returned to caving, he is the only person that any of the team knows that laughs when he is in pain.

9th & 10th August Day 22 & 23

Cave Rescue Practise

At 08.00am everyone is sat around the camp fire eating breakfast, when all of a sudden Margaret bursts into camp shouting and screaming, "help help Clay had an accident in a cave he has fallen and hurt himself and I can't make contact with him".

Everybody stares in disbelief, so the full show goes on, screaming and shouting, she should have won an Oscar.

In the meantime nobody had noticed that I had slipped away and was already changed into my gear, however my input for the day was to be nil, I had to do everything the American way, Murph's role was to take notes and later that day tell them where they went wrong. (Murph is on the Derbyshire Cave Rescue Team, and is a medic).

Things now become totally disorganised, even though the cave was only around 800 yards away it would be around a full hour before a full team was at the cave entrance.

I was designated to go to the cave with Eron and to rig the first pitch into the cave, on Murph's instructions I could only do what I was asked, and I could not give any advice except if anything was being done dangerously, which on a few occasions I had to point out. Murph took note of these for the debrief later on.

The cave was only a 20 meter deep pit with an aven heading up from the bottom of the pit, Clay had placed himself in the aven which was fairly tight and around 5 meters high, Murph estimated it should take 2 to 2 ½ hours to get clay out. After 4 ¾ hours Clay was brought to surface, and in the scenario was pronounced dead with hypothermia and severe back injuries. Yet again another not brought out alive. The pulley system at the top of the pitch was diabolical, the people hauling up the stretcher had a lot of problems, and it did not make my life easy as I was jockey of the stretcher.

Back at camp we have a debrief and everyone is very unhappy with their performance, so we take them to a wall that Murph and Clay had prepared yesterday. We showed them how to do a hauling system using their own SRT kit with the addition of 2 small pulleys, and how to get a stretcher past a reelay using Italian Hitch Knots, all went well and they are all amazed how well a 3 to 1 works when hauling a person up a pitch.

Cave Rescue Practice Day 2

It's 08.30am everyone is waiting for the inevitable shout of 'help help', 15 minutes later Clay walks into camp and informs us that Margaret has had an accident in 'ICY FATE'! and in the far reaches.

All the faces hit the floor, except mine she's only at the bottom of the first pitch in a small crawl.

Things are more organised today Chris is the Rescue Co-ordinator, myself and Eron are appointed to rig, Rob who is a qualified medic is obviously the medic along with Amy as assistant. Dave Love along with Pete (who has flow in just for the rescue practice) are to assist at the bottom of the cave. A camp co-ordinator is appointed and also someone to keep log of who and what equipment is in the cave. We also have 3 radios, 2 for in the cave one for surface.

Eron and myself leave for the cave with rope for the entrance and a radio, we check with Clay if the rope at the entrance is safe to use and has no damage to it. I am the first down the pitch, followed by Eron. There is one rebelay and a deviation on the way down. When we reach the bottom of the pitch which is the freezing cold ice room we make our way up the small crawl to the main passage and we soon come across Margaret. She is unconscious and not responding, I get on the radio and inform surface where she is, I'm sure I could hear the sigh of relief from where I was. Even though she was not far into the cave it was still going to be a hard rescue, we had an ice wall to contend with and confined conditions to get Margaret into a back brace and stretcher. As soon as the medical team arrived myself and Eron flew back up the rope, we both had bolting kits with us. Eron started to put in two Italian Hitches and pulleys, one for the stretcher hauling rope and one for the life line for the Stretcher. I was at the deviation lower down but it was going to need a rebelay for the stretcher. I had to place in a new bolt before I was able to place my Italian Hitches and pulleys.

Every thing was going well, Margaret was now in a full brace and was ready to be hauled, we just had to wait for confirmation that all was ready at the top. It took only 3 ½ hours from Clay contacting us to getting Margaret out. The first live casualty on a cave rescue practise in Alaska, thanks to Steve Murph and Clays training. All the American team are on a high and they love the British style cave rescue, they are now updating their cave rescue equipment to mirror ours.

11th August 1997 Day 24

Well today is major de-rigging day, I return to 'Sinuous System' with Clay, Eron and Rob, we decided to take four people to make it a sporting trip, and also there are a few places where it is a nightmare to get tackle bags through vertical squeezes. It turns out that we would have to make a human conveyer belt in the squeezes, it took some 8 hours to do the full de-rig trip.

People are still out unit walking and the odd cave is still being found but we are running out of time to map them, it is now just a matter of logging their location.

12th August 1997 day 25

Dave Love, Doctor of Marine Biology and Palaeontology, and Dan and myself head to the coast in search of lateral caves and any cultural sites that we can find. Quite a few had been found over the past few years, in particular Dan and Rob found a pictograph high on a cliff face back in 1995.

After a 2 hour hike through some of the most beautiful rain forest on the island we arrive at the coast.

We had to time our arrival to coincide with the low tide, as there is a 15 foot difference between high and low tide. We were off to look at a cave that was found in 1995, but had not been looked at and we needed low tide to get to it. Unfortunately upon our arrival the tide was still too high, we waited for some 3 hours but it did not lower any, and we were only 300 foot from the cave entrance. We were unable to swim to it as hypothermia sets in in only a few minutes in the Alaskan waters. The tide heights change every few days, unfortunately we would not be able to return again this year.

We did however find some good archaeological sites. One high on a cliff found by Dan, this was in the form of cultural modified trees (CMT's). A CMT is one that may have had bark strips removed, this would have been used as a small shelter. Also the native Indian's had an ingenious way of removing planks from the trees without chopping them down, the tree did not die or get blown down as they only took enough to build their shelters. Some of these trees can easily be found today, and most are around 400 years old. While making our way back to camp, we were traversing a 50 foot

When I slipped down it backwards, luckily for me Dan had quick reactions and grabbed me before I fell any further. The weather has taken a turn for the worse heavy rain and a very low cloud base, the next two days are to be spent breaking camp, the bear boxes will go out on Robs boat and everything else is flow out, back to Thorne Bay.

14th August 1997 Day 27

All the camp is now dismantled, and at the dock at Camp Island Rob and Dave made a visit to Dave oyster farm and have brought back about 500 oysters and a lot of beer.

Rob, Dan, Dave, Murph, Eron, Clay, Josh and myself are to leave in Robs boat the 'Carter Bay', the rest leave by plane, the only reason we are going by boat is so we can get to the pub in Craig before 3.00pm. If we go by Plane we would then have to drive from one side of Prince of Wales Island to the other.

At 9.00am both planes have left with all the equipment and people not going on the 'Carter Bay'. We start the boat up, well we try to start the boat up and we try again and again, Dave dips the fuel tanks, " SHIT we're out of fuel!"

This was going to be fun, we were in the middle of nowhere and stranded. Rob got onto the marine radio and managed to get someone to bring 50 gallons of fuel to us, only just enough to get us to Craig, and that was if the weather stayed with us. At midday the fuel arrived, we put it in and try again, still no joy Clay comes to the conclusion that we had sucked dirt into the injectors, so he and Rob strip the engine down, he was right!

We try again after the rebuild, still no joy, Rob finally finds the last fault the fuel pump is broken, and we didn't have a spare one, the was only one thing to do. Pass the fuel through a small demand pump, but this was only designed to run a cooker not an engine, however it was our only option otherwise we would have to wait till morning to get flown out.

At 9.00pm we finally pull away, it is a six hour sail to Craig and the pub shut at 3.00am. It looked like we would not make it. We were now sailing in the dark and in the dangerous waters with lot of small out croppings we had to use satellite navigation, depth sounder and large search lights to look out for logs that had broken away from the barges when they were being towed to the saw mills.

All of a sudden at midnight all the electric's fail except for the engine, this is bad news, we have now not got a clue how deep the water is and the navigation system is out, and worst of all we can not see any floating logs. Murph and Dave sit at the front with Mag Lights, looking for markers and logs and everyone else is trying to fix the fault. Rob struggles to sail in total darkness, the fault could not be found, I decided the best thing to do was get out my sleeping bag and get up on deck.

I was woken at 2.50am as we arrived in Craig, it was then a sprint to the pub for last orders.

What a great end to a great expedition!



The remainder of the team awaiting fuel to be brought to the ill fated Carter Bay

What Is The Reason For The TCP

The main objective of the TCP is to protect the Karst regions of the Tongass National Forest, the largest temperate rain forest in the USA. The Forest Service are obliged by the 'Cave Resources Management and Protection Act 1988', to protect the caves and the Karst areas. Also the Forest Service as of this year now has its own guidelines, the 'Tongass Land Management Plan' (TLMP), this is also meant to mirror the Cave Protection Act.

When we find and map a cave the forest service place a 100 foot buffer zone around the entrance of the cave, this means that they cannot cut any trees within the buffer zone. Although when they have cut to the buffer you get what is called wind blown, and the buffer zone usually gets blow over and lands in the cave entrance anyway, so we are trying to get what is known as a wind firm buffer. This is two full tree lengths, and when you see the height of the trees that is one large area, this would have the dual effect that the more caves we find close together the greater the area we would be able to protect.

In the TLMP the karst is divided into three categories, Low, Medium and High Vulnerability, the latter receiving greater protection, although the TCP are trying to make the Forest Service understand that just because there are no visible karst features on the Low vulnerability areas, it does not mean that when the trees are cut that this will have no effect on the high vulnerability areas. Over the years we have collated much evidence to prove that when they log on LV karst the soil wash off will effect the cave environment in HV karst areas, also with the trees gone there is nothing to take up the rain fall, and the Tongass gets between 150 to 200 inches rain fall a year.

Last year the Forest Service told us they were going to log some units and that they would only be small. When we arrived this year we found out that they were logging 21 large units, and a large part was on HV Karst, so our main effort this year was spent walking the units looking for new caves and locating any significant karst feature that fell within the TLMP.

Many features were found in around 60% of the units, and the Forest Service were in clear violation of their own guidelines. It was time to force our evidence down the big tree eating monster and try to choke it, however we knew that this would not be easy.

Five days after the expedition was over Steve Lewis and myself returned to Heceta Island with five of the top people from the Thorne Bay Forest Service and showed them clear violations they were making, and for want of a better expression we might as well have pissed into the wind, for what use it was having. They could only see as far as the next tree that they wanted to cut down. We left the Island dejected but with still enough ammunition to fight.

Stage 2 would come into effect all TCP participants would write to every top dog in the Forest Service. Also Jim Baichtal, the Forest Service Geologist was due to give a talk at the Karst Symposium later in the year saying how good the Forest Service were doing protecting the karst areas. Steve Lewis had managed to get a slot as well, speaking after Jim, and was going to discredit the Forest Service unless a drastic 'U' turn was made, this was not a plan that had been revealed to them. It was to be a surprise attack!

The dye tests that were carried out on Heceta this year were all positive tests and all caves resurge at the same point. This is amazing as some of the caves are on the opposite end of the island, we are coming to the conclusion that the Island is just one massive cave system. The potential of this island is still yet to be revealed to us fully and we only work on small sections every year, and for any diggers it is a place to visit although at the moment access is restricted, and as you can see from the surveys no locations are allowed to be printed. The forest service also have some weird guidelines in the TLMP you can not name a cave after anything that will reveal its location, or after a living person. Although we have broken this one on a few occasions (Simon Says Ouch!, named by Jim Baichtal after I was hit by a boulder last year and made some weird squealing noise). Also the best of all, no domestic cats are allowed in the caves!

After we all write our letters to the Forest Service it turns out that we seem to have had some effect, and they are reviewing the 21 units that are slated to be logged.

O pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth that I am meek and gentle with these butchers!

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Mr Simon Peter Dillon
14 Bodmin Crescent
Brinnington
Stockport
Cheshire
SK5 8AT

3rd September 1997

Tel: 0161 494 9195
email: Simon@dcccaver.demon.co.uk

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express my concern about the sawfly salvage on Heceta and the impact that this will have on this unique karst land. I have been a Tongass Cave Project participant in 1996 and 1997 and have worked in karst areas around the world. During this years expedition I was totally aghast to find how many units which are to be logged are in high vulnerability karst.

I would like to express my concern over two units, these being 2 and 14 both of which I have walked with other members of the TCP, and in my opinion are HV karst.

Unit 2, has at the top end near the road two known caves, 'Where Have All The Sawflies Gone' and 'No Bufferin'. Although these 2 caves have a 100' buffer it is not wind firm, (2 tree lengths) which in the opinion of the cavers it should be. Both of the caves are taking water, also in this unit is a high water insurgence, and in low rain fall water can be heard running subsurface. There are also numerous dry water channels in this unit which in high rain fall will become active. All of the evidence shows that this is a high water carrying area with many insurgence points and a resurgence point at the lower end of the unit this is called 'A River Runs Through It'.

Whilst walking this unit with a Forest Service employee, I was at a loss for words when I heard him say "logging will have no effect on the soil wash off in this unit". May I suggest that this person visits other karst areas around the world, to see what irreparable damage is done when trees are cut on such thin soiled karst areas.

Opposite unit 2 is unit 3 and although it does not contain as many features as 2, if this is cut water run off will be greater and thus will enter unit 2 which will not be able to cope, as this will be cut and the soil erosion will be greater, this means soil will be washed into the insurgencies, causing irreparable damage to the cave environment. It is my opinion that the whole picture has to be looked at not just one unit as you now may see one unit can affect the other, and I am sure you know the domino effect that this can have, you do not have to walk far on Heceta to see this effect.

Unit 14 a definite HV karst unit contains numerous features caves and insurgencies, this unit also drains into HV karst basin and overlies the HV karst system between the main resurgence. As you know this unit has a road being forced through it and this will be within 100' feet of many of the caves and features, and looking back at what other road building has done in the past on other parts of the island, you can not tell me that no other damage will be caused to the karst in this unit. You only have to go to triangle unit to see what disregard the loggers have for HV features. This which has only been cut this year, you do not have to look for long to see logging practices have not changed at all. The triangle unit was sold and laid out 4 years ago, (before TLMP) and does contain many features. It was noted this year by a forest service employee, that it may be better if the drag lines were reduced from 6 to 2 and moved to a different part of the unit, this part of the unit contains two very large sinks one with a visible cave in the bottom. A shovel yarder was driven down the drag lines and over the edge of one of the sinks, and a large log removed from the edge of the other sink. Both sinks are now collapsing on the edges and in a short period of time without doubt will fall in. The TLMP was not in effect at the time of laying this unit out, but the 'Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988' was, so it is my opinion that section 2 subsection b1 & b2 were broken. Although I do not wish to belittle the forest service employee that laid out this unit, he blatantly ran the drag lines across 2 large unmissable sinks and was heard to say by myself and another member of the TCP that, and I quote "I would do the same thing again".

Without wishing to question the Forest Service employees intelligence most of the people walking these units do not know what low vulnerability karst is, let alone HV karst. Therefore I find it hard to understand how you intend to follow TLPM or FCRPA 1988. Units appear to be laid out first then when other people come along, eg TCP we are finding caves and features that have been missed by forest service employee's.

May I suggest that people who know HV karst walk the proposed units first, and I believe cavers are best employed for this purpose.

I only hope that you will learn soon what a unique and valuable karst system you have on you back door step, one that attracts caver from all over the globe at this moment in time.

BUT WILL THEY KEEP COMING?

People are loosing heart in the way the forest service seems to be managing the peoples forest. Please do something before it is too late!

If I can be of any further assistance to you in any matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Peter Dillon

- cc: Brad Powell, Forest Supervisor, Tongass National Forest.
- Steve Lewis, Karst Specialist.
- Al Murray, President Glacier Grotto.
- Steve Kimball, District Ranger Thorn Bay.
- Phil Janik, Regional Forester, USDA.
- Mike Dombeck, Chief, USDA.
- James Baichtal, Forest Geologist.

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Alaska Region

Thorne Bay Ranger District
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File Code: 1600

Date: September 17, 1997

Mr. Simon Peter Dillon
14 Bodmin Crescent
Brinnington
Stockport
Cheshire SK5 8AT

Dear Mr. Dillon:

I received your letter of concern about the Heceta Sawfly Timber Sale and potential impacts on caves and karst resources on Heceta Island. I appreciate your contributions to the Tongass Cave Project and interest in management of the cave and karst resources.

Jim Baichtal, geologist and caves and karst specialist, will re-examine the Heceta Sawfly Sale this fall. Jim will be on the ground relooking at the caves and karst protection and harvest design. After Jim's review we will notify you of his findings and any adjustments in the sale or program procedures we feel are necessary to meet the TLMP standards and guidelines.

I have discussed your concerns with Brad Powell, Forest Supervisor, and have shared with him our intention to spend more time on this sale reviewing protection of cave and karst resources. Again, I appreciate your interest and will get back to you when Jim has re-examined the sale.

Sincerely,



STEPHEN J. KIMBALL
District Ranger

cc:B.Powell

The picture on the rear cover is of Steve Lewis, myself and the tour guide to the cave which is known as 'El Capitan', the largest cave so far in Alaska.

The cave was first mapped in 1989 and is now a tourist cave, although only six people at a time are guided around the cave, and they have to book in advance. As you can see from the photograph there are wooden steps leading to the cave entrance, around a thousand in all from the base of the valley.

The cave is not like any normal tourist cave, it is not floodlit, there are no hand rails inside or concerted floor, the cave environment has had no changes made to it by man.

Some 10 minutes into the cave there is a small chamber, to which nobody is allowed to enter. In this chamber was found human remains and the remains of the largest brown bear ever found, and it was dated to -45'000 BP (before present).

After around 1 hours tour guide you come to a huge steel gate, this is restricted access, and unless you have been on the TCP you go no further, even the tour guide had not been beyond this point, until today that is.

We opened the gate and away we went, the cave is spectacular and washed clean, the river that cut this cave must have been impressive, there is also not SRT in the cave, however there are some very serious areas not for novices, one known as 'Shelob's Lair' a tight vertical rift that leads down to the river which this cuts through the lower levels of the cave.

The cave ends at a very large chamber known as the 'Alaska Room' this is about half the size of Gapping Gill main chamber. In the bottom of the chamber are huge logs that have been carbon dated to 4000 bp. It is still a mystery how they got onto the cave, and it is without any doubt not the way we have come.

The cave is still being explored by Peter Aldred and it has great potential.

Higher up the hillside is 'El Capitan Pit' the largest single drop pit in America to date, it has a single drop of 598.3 feet and a total depth of 624.9 feet, all leads in this cave have been pushed and end in passages that are to tight. Maybe it does link to 'El Capitan Cave', if it did it would make one of the most spectacular through trips in America.

Unfortunately I am not allowed to print the surveys of these caves to put in this report, but I do have copies if anyone wishes to see them. If you ever find yourself going on a caving trip to America or Canada my contacts are now wide spread and I can put you in contact with some of the friendliest cavers you could ever wish to meet.

I am also planning an expedition to Canada and Alaska with Clay for 1998 and the offers are open to everyone, the Canada trip is for the beginning of August, Alaska dates are still being worked on.

