

# RESCUE of CAVER from IB-11 MIDNIGHT HOLE, IDA BAY, SOUTHERN TASMANIA 13 JULY 2017

Janine McKinnon

*This is a very brief abstract of a full report in the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers (STC) club newsletter - Speleo Spiel.*

Ola and Isabelle were visitors from Europe, here to attend the UIS congress being held in Sydney in late July. They had come to Tasmania for some pre-congress vertical caving with Janine and Ric Tunney. This was the first of four planned trips.

Both Isabelle and Ola are experienced cavers. Ola is Swedish and Isabelle is a French woman living in Switzerland for 20 years. They both do vertical caving and came with all the necessary personal equipment.

Janine had planned to start really easily, with a simple Midnight Hole (MH) pull through trip. MH has 6 pitches, and almost no horizontal development. Pitches are: 19 m, 11 m, 39 m, 8 m, 34 m, 49 m. A short crawl leads to a horizontal system with walk in (or out, in this case) entrance.

Ric observed Ola and Isabelle attach to the rope correctly on the first pitch, and descend. Isabelle was the fourth in the line of six. All went smoothly until the fourth pitch; the 8 m pitch. This is where Isabelle fell. She was in great pain and it seemed almost certain that she had broken her right femur. Ola and Ric arrived at the accident site at 12:57, about 10 minutes after the accident. It was decided that 3 cavers would stay with Isabelle and two go for help. Ola would accompany Ric out to raise the alarm.

Alan Jackson was the designated emergency callout for the trip and was aware of caving location and party. Alan received a text message from Ric Tunney at 13:30 which read:

*"Broken femur pitch 4 Start call out Reply Calling police"*

Alan mobilised other cavers and liaised with Tasmanian Police (TasPol) search and rescue (SAR) to facilitate the rescue. Helicopters were used to transport to the nearest suitable landing site, 20 minutes fast walk from the cave.

## Summary

- Isabelle fell approximately 5 m of the 8 m pitch 4 of Midnight Hole.
- She fell at 12:47pm on 13 July 2017.
- Her medical training (a nurse), experience as a cave rescuer, and calm manner enabled the assessment of her injuries and initial treatment to be accomplished effectively and efficiently.
- Isabelle had sustained a simple fracture of the right femur. This was the only major injury. Bruising was a secondary injury.
- Ric and Ola proceeded down through Midnight Hole and out Mystery Creek Cave to seek rescue.
- The first paramedics, and relief cavers, both arrived at the accident site within minutes of each other, and after 4½ hours from the time of the fall. This was at 17:30.
- Paramedics had experience as SRT cavers with STC.
- TasPol SAR have experience in SRT caving.
- Isabelle was lifted back up through Midnight Hole to the surface. She reached the surface at approximately 00:30.
- Both SRT caving and TasPol SAR lifting rescue techniques were used.
- TasPol SAR SKED was used as the stretcher in-cave.

- Isabelle experienced severe pain due to the discomfort of the SKED
- Isabelle was lifted into the helicopter at approximately 02:00 on 14 July 2017. This was 13 hours after her fall.

## Postscript

Isabelle arrived safely at the Royal Hobart Hospital approximately 20 minutes after leaving the rescue site. She was operated on at approximately 10:00am on 14 July 2017. The operation was successful with a pin placed inside her right femur, with no complications. She remained in hospital until Monday afternoon, 17 July. She was discharged to the care of Janine McKinnon and Ric Tunney, with whom she stayed and recuperated until Friday afternoon 21 July, when she flew to Sydney. She continues to recuperate well and even managed to attend two days at the UIS congress.

The full report can be found here:

<https://southerntasmaniancaverneers.wordpress.com/spiel/>

## Notes

A good working relationship with Police SAR is vital to efficient cave rescue. Current, active, vertical caver STC members of many years standing have an excellent relationship with the current members of TasPol SAR team.

This was the second rescue from this cave this year. The previous one was a visiting caver from NSW, who was uninjured but unable to get himself out of the cave.



# SOUTHERN TASMANIAN CAVERNEERS Inc

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## CROWD FUNDING APPEAL

Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc (STC) is the oldest caving club in Australia, having been established in 1946. Since then it has systematically explored caves in many regions of the state, and has concentrated its recent efforts in the two major karst regions in southern Tasmania, Ida Bay and Junee-Florentine.

STC has organised a number of conferences for ASF and will be assisting in the running of field trips for the next ASF Conference, scheduled for Northern Tasmania in December 2018, with field trips extending into January 2019.

STC members are very aware that the deepest caves in Australia are located in our two primary areas of interest and that many cavers based on the mainland of Australia will take the opportunity of an ASF Conference to visit one or several of the deeper and more challenging caves.

Our members are also aware that there have been two rescues in southern Tasmanian caves in 2017, both reported in Caves Australia. Both rescues were successful – the cavers involved, neither of whom was a local, returned to a normal life!

The rescues were pleasing to STC members, as they showed that our regular training has paid off. The rescues also showed that we really need specialised equipment, specifically a Petzl cave rescue stretcher, and enough spare rope and hardware to be able to parallel rig our deepest caves.

So, we have launched this direct request to you as an Australian caver to donate to STC so we can buy the specialist gear we may need to rescue you! Our target is over \$8000 and a budget can be sent to anyone who asks. Email your request to the STC Treasurer, Tony Culberg, at [culbergf@bigpond.com](mailto:culbergf@bigpond.com)

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### DONATION FOR CAVE RESCUE EQUIPMENT

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Suggested donations are \$10.00, \$20.00, \$50.00, \$100.00, other larger amount \$.....

Make cheques payable to Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc and post to the club at PO Box 416, Sandy Bay Tas 7006.

If paying by direct deposit send to BSB 067000 account 10162123 and send an email to the Treasurer, Tony Culberg, so he can identify and acknowledge your gift.

*All donors will be listed in Speleo Spiel*

