



Niggle Cave

(au -> qld -> camooweal)

Home

Cave Diving

Wreck Diving

Site Updates

How to add info

Articles & Trip Reports

Credits

Website Index

Mailing Lists

The 'Search by keywords' box is temporarily out of action. If you use 'Website Index' you will find every page on this site.

Search by keyword(s)...

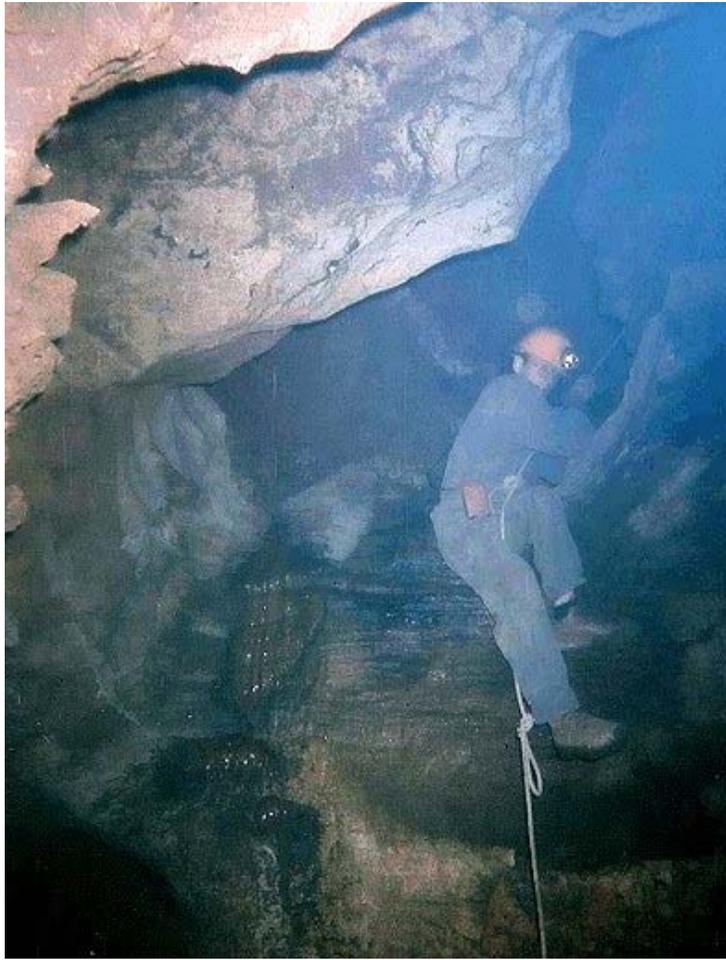
Niggle Cave is one of the most difficult caves to dive in the Camooweal area. After a 500m crawl through mud tunnels, a lake is entered which has not been fully explored.

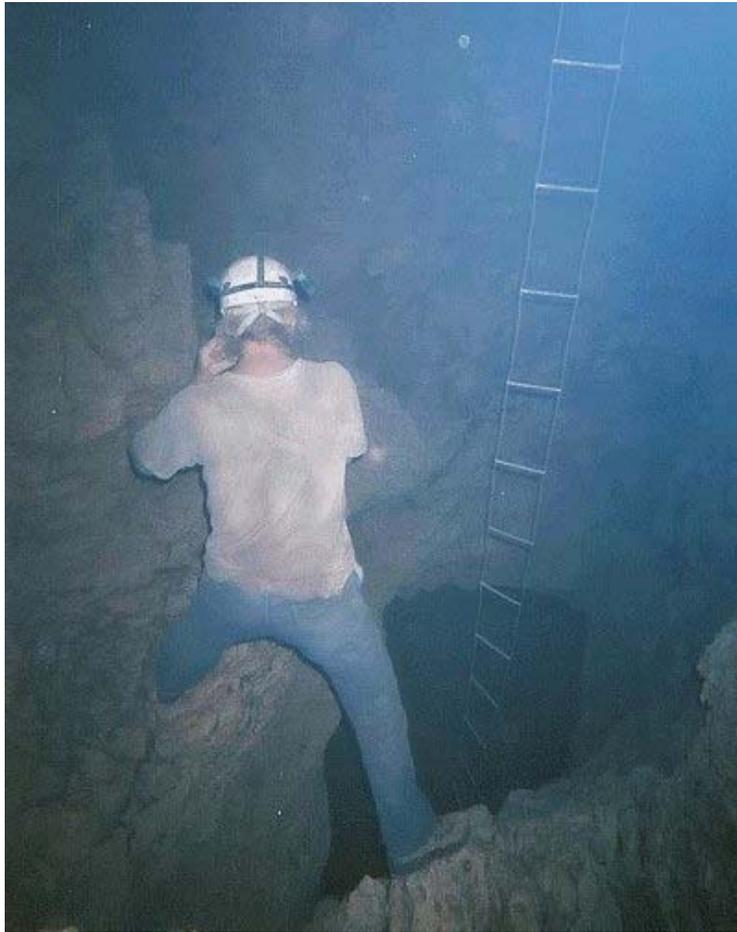
This is a cave for the adventurous and physically robust. Niggle has excellent potential for the discovery of additional underwater passage and the survey requires completion.

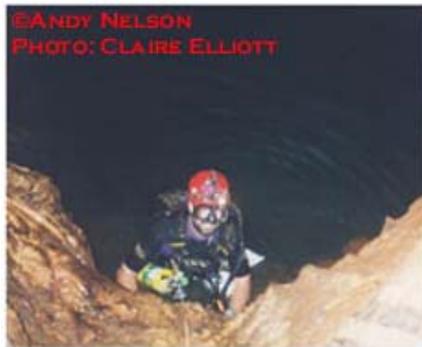
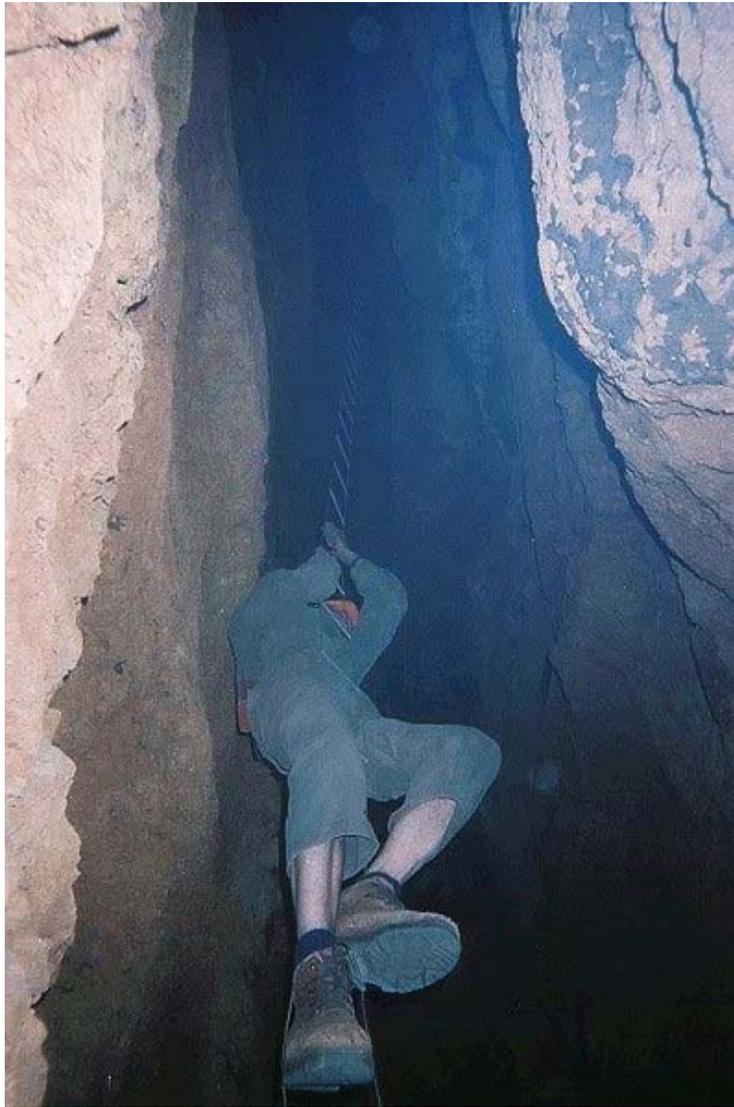
[Links to;](#)

[Datasheet](#)

[Trip Report March 2001](#)









[Back](#)

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Niggle cave

Feedback:

Please review the information for this cave/wreck here at www.trimixdivers.com when you return from your trip and help improve the quality of the data by sending in your corrections.

For any additional help or advice on this cave/wreck diving site or any other, please email trimixdivers and we will put you in contact with someone who has dived the site recently.

If you have any corrections or would like to suggest alterations to the information given here, please email trimixdivers and you will be credited with any additions made.

Disclaimer

The information presented here has been provided by a range of people 'In Best Faith'. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and completeness, no guarantee is given nor responsibility taken for any error or omission by Trimix Divers. Cavers and divers using this information do so at their OWN RISK.

Site Access:	Permission to camp on-site and permits to enter the cave are not required as it is on Crown Land. The Camooweal Police and local caver Hank Coppus hlcopp@bigpond.com should be contacted prior to and after your visit as a matter of safety and courtesy. They can also be of invaluable local area assistance.
Cave Maps:	A detailed underwater map is not available at present, as it has only been dived once that is known of. Just when passage was found, the dive was terminated. Dry cave map available on request from www.trimixdivers.com Paul Boler will be happy to help with up to date site information for Niggle Cave.
Time to Visit:	Around August (dry season) to avoid heat and tropical rain
Suggested Rigging:	1x50m, 1x20m and 2x10m rope plus tapes full abseiling and ascending equipment required associated rigging for gear lower/hauling
Cave Conservation:	Be careful of White crabs, in the mud tunnels and in water. Be careful generally as there is heaps of life in this cave. (lots of crawlies) Look out for snakes in the doline area ! Please adhere to the ASF Minimal Impact Caving Code (1995) to protect this cave and it's inhabitants
Foul Air:	The dry cave has no foul air
Turn Around Time:	4 + hours from start of abseil descent to arrival at Lake (with gear pack)
Water Temperature:	Constant 21C
Fixed Line:	The cave has no fixed line (yet !).

Gear Configuration:	Sidemount 55 cuft tanks Stage tanks or larger capacity sidemounts may be needed for exploration depending on length of passage found. Typical Dive Profiles (from the Entrance Lake): Unknown, though passage from lake drops straight down to 30+ metres depth.
Dive Profile:	To do a single dive in Niggle, lowering gear, carrying, setup, dive Lake and exit cave will take no less than one full day (12 to 14 hours).
Other Comments:	<p>Be prepared for a long hard slog as this cave has LONG and very low mud tunnels that tend to go on and on and on and then some more.</p> <p>Please review the information for this cave here at www.trimixdivers.com when you return from your trip and help improve the quality of the data by sending in your corrections.</p> <p>For any additional help or advice on this cave diving site or any other, please email trimixdivers and we will put you in contact with someone who has dived the site recently.</p> <p>If you have any corrections or would like to suggest alterations to the information given here, please email trimixdivers and you will be credited with any additions made.</p> <p>Disclaimer The information presented here has been provided by a range of people 'In Best Faith'. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and completeness, no guarantee is given nor responsibility taken for any error or omission by Trimix Divers. Cavers and divers using this information do so at their OWN RISK.</p>



Home

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Wreck Diving

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Search by keyword(s)...



Trip Report by Andrew Nelson

OK, here's the full story! Fri 0500 Claire Elliot and I (cave divers) and Sherrie (dry caver) departed Darwin for the 1400 km drive to Camoweal, just across the border in sunny Queensland, meeting Hank Coppus (dry caver) that night.

Sat morning short drive to Niggle Cave just off the highway commenced with a multi stage 25m abseil and lowering of our gear, including two side mount 55 cu ft tanks, a pony and a common set of dive gear, plus water, food, etc for the expected 12-14 hour trip. The body squeeze on abseil served as a sobering reminder of how hard it would be to exit the cave in good health, let alone with any injuries. Walking, dragging and crawling for two and a half hours saw us at the final sump, after having negotiated a further 6m pitch hand over hand with a body belay for safety. Claire and I then prep'd the dive gear, discovering to some dismay one of the 55s having emptied all it's contents at some stage, the mystery remains as to where and when. This enforced the use of our backup pony tank as one of the two sidemounts, ensuring fairly conservative diving.

I conducted the first short dive down the fixed line to 6m left I assume by Paul Boler. After tying in a our line, I turned right and headed down to a depth of 18m, following the left hand wall which slopes down at about 30 degrees along a fairly silty bottom. Visibility was a milky 2m. Tie offs were rare and incredibly chalky, with one breaking off and needing re-tying on a subsequent dive. The passage was wider than the limited visibility would allow us to determine. Water temperature was a lovely 28 degrees.

Claire then took the reins and checked bearings, revealing the line from 6m to 18m runs along a bearing of 180 degrees. She obtained a depth of 22.5m and found a lack of any potential to the East and South. I conducted a final dive and confirmed line distance at a mere 25m, but also conducted a sweep into the West side of the cave and found it to be at least 8m wide in most parts, and appears to continue in a south-west direction. We then repacked our gear and commenced the exit, photographing some crabs in the process, and noted a vast number of green and brown frogs throughout the cave system. Total caving duration 10 hours.

[Ed: The frogs and crabs seen by Andy and their group are troglaphiles which means they prefer to live in caves but are not completely confined to that environment (a bit like us !). They are probaby washed into the caves during floods and survive down there while food & water lasts. In the Sept 2002 visit, most of the frogs were dead or dying, there having been no major rains in the area for the past two years.]

Sunday (Hassel Cave) We headed to Rocklands Station and met the manager, signed the waivers then headed West until turning off the dirt road and following our GPS to the mark 3.5km cross country, trying to avoid the proliferation of rocks that little this area. This took over an hour to negotiate and find the cave. The cave is described as a rift heading East-West, consistently narrow between 1m and 2m, very high rockfall danger

necessitating disciplined movement within the cave at all times. It is also quite hot and stifling, even near the bottom at 32 degrees. First multi pitch abseil was 25m using a long tie-in to the 4WD on the surface. A steep walkdown the rift led to the final pitch of about 18m, rigging proving difficult through the large boulder chokes and loose footing. Claire and I only abseiled down to about 5m above the water, then swung right 5m to a small boulder choke platform 1.5 x 3m. This offset below the abseil/lowering point caused considerable challenges when lowering gear through a narrow crevice, and required the diver to enter the water on abseil, gear up with the support of the other diver on the platform, then don prussicking gear to return to the platform post dive. Next time a different approach with a ladder and gear hanging slings will improve business. The offset did however prove effective protection from the constant rain of rocks from above which would otherwise have proven fatal. Owing to the lateness of the start, it was decided to only do a quick drop on a pony bottle and avoid the challenges of the gear lowering for the 55s (two new tanks, both full!).

I conducted a quick dive down the fixed line (yes, despite advice to the contrary, someone has dived this site before, bugger! Who? How far? How Deep? Map??) to 12m, observing a tie off at 13m then the line continuing further down the rift into an abyss. Visibility was better in the open rift section at about 5m, however quickly deteriorated due to the high amounts of silt lying on all sloped surfaces. The length of the surface of the pool is 25m, thus any number of accesses vertically downwards could be possible - this place could go!

After a difficult gear extraction, we finally exited the cave 7 hours after entry, then negotiated the cross country drive in rapidly failing light. A long and boring drive home was had on the Monday!

Thanks must go to Hank Coppus and Paul Boler who both contributed masses of information before the visit. Hank's efforts in the cave were exemplary and tireless, and his lack of water consumption was truly camel-like. Sherrie's contribution as a dry caver was also pretty impressive for someone not gaining the benefit of a refreshing dive at the end of a hard day's struggle, although Hank and Sherrie expressed no such regrets at not diving the sumps! Claire and I certainly appreciated the assistance. Anyone (dry or wet cavers) interested in joining us for future exploration trips to the area are encouraged to email us here at trimixdivers. Good caving and SRT skills are vital. There is huge potential in this area just waiting for the right masochists to bust it open !

Regards, Andy



[Back](#)

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