

:: GARY BOTTOMLEY

Iddlebidy Life:
 Traversing the liquid mercurial host
 Wallowing in translucence
 Always on borrowed time
 Always having to leave
 Always returning to the other life
 Always having to find
 The rhythm is disrupted
 Dispersed with
 But I still retain the rhyme

IDDLEBIDDY

ON A SOFT PATH OF PINE NEEDLES, A FEW WEATHERED ROOTS REACH OUT OF A SMALL HOLLOW TUCKED INTO THE SHADOWS OF A LARGE PINE FOREST. ON A CLOSER APPROACH, THE HOLLOW REVEALS A VERY SMALL HOLE DISAPPEARING BENEATH THE EARTH. IF YOU WEREN'T LOOKING FOR IT, YOU COULD EASILY PASS BY THIS SECRETIVE LIMESTONE CHIMNEY. BUT AS I PEER DOWN INTO THE DARKNESS WHERE IT COMMUNICATES WITH THE SUBTERRANEAN BELOW, IDDLEBIDDY CAVE BECKONS.

This page top to bottom:

Jurgen checks out 'The Dust bowl'

Jurgen in the Main Passage

Next page, top to bottom:

Jurgen Gehrler in Main Passage; 'Tabular Clay'

Jurgen Gehrler in Main Passage; Jurgen exits 'The Orange Room'



The climb down is about four metres, and with a tripod over the top and a cave ladder dropped in, this seems the best way to get you and your equipment downwards. There's not a lot of room for gear, but with two it's manageable. With a slightly larger group you would simply stagger the process of lowering equipment and gearing up.

Tree roots like fine cobwebs, catch the soft light. But it's the glance across to Iddlebidy's entrance pool that really takes your eye. Like an emerald it refracts the torch light and its clarity cries out to you. I clip on another gauge, but my eyes wander yet again to the pool. Now geared up, I can wait no longer. Its enticing and it draws us in as we quickly slip beneath its surface.

There's a little bit of Nullabor and a little bit of Tank cave, but it's all Iddlebidy. Its

one passage is straight and runs about 250 Metres. Once submerged you can kick back and enjoy this aqua-coloured water which enhances the all-so-very-nice tunnel.

Not far from the entrance, clay tablets perhaps dropped by some Phoenician scholar lay fixed to the top of a mound. Or maybe they're loose tiles on a forgotten remnant of space shuttle. Maybe not; I guess tabular clay from when the cave was once dry will have to do.

At times the ceiling dips close to the floor, and oblong rock collapses mirror their original places in the ceiling like fallen pieces from a jigsaw. Half way along I check out an undercut. I get a body's length in before having to withdraw. Picking up my camera left at the line in order to avoid damage on my little foray, I catch up to Jurgen my dive buddy. He's

momentarily poised before we both continue on our way.

At the end of the gin clear passage you can run a jump line into a small 'Orange Room' which appears to be a clay deposit. Its very nature gives way to a similar coloured silt. It's less travelled here, very silty and contrasts with the previous beautiful white walls. We carefully fossick around before it smudges out too badly. And then we exit as the walls of our liquid host shepherd us homeward down its translucent artery.

Arriving back beneath the entrance pool, we glide over a mound which rises to form a small dirt cone. Here bits of debris litter the top and stand testimony to Nature's offerings from the outside world above. Nearby, we lay down another jump line, and Jurgen pushes through a squeeze leading into a small clay chamber. Disturb this, and it's more akin to a dust bowl.



While Jurgen carefully pokes around, I linger mid water with my trusty Nikonos V and flip off another few shots in this very delicate environment, before the theme song of fine silt floats magically past my ears. As the 'music' gets louder, we make our way back through the squeeze and head up to Iddlebiddy's emerald pool and our other life.

Legend has it that when it was first dived, Iddlebiddy was deemed similar to Cocklebiddy Cave, which is way out on the Nullabor Plain. It was likened to a 'Little Cocklebiddy'. And from that sprung forth the endearing name of Iddlebiddy.

I guess I really enjoy Iddlebiddy. It's just got that special something about it, which for me is hard to define. And so that's where I'll leave it.

It must be noted that Iddlebiddy cave is a delicate environment. Divers must be careful not to disturb or interfere with the Mud-cone or Tabular Clay as they may contain important scientific information. In particular, the deposition of various sediments in caves in the Mt Gambier region.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Tripod, Pulley And Ropes - For lowering and hoisting gear.
 Cave Ladder - 10 metres is way more than enough.
 Extra Ropes - if needed for tripod support belaying divers and tying off gear in the surface pool whilst exiting the water
 Climbing Tapes - to loop around gear for lowering and hoisting
 Safety Harnesses - for divers
 Carabiners - for equipment, tripod and diver's harnesses
 Above water torch/ light

DIVING IDDLERIDDY

In general, a CDAA (Cave Divers Association Australia) Penetration qualification is needed in order to dive Iddlebiddy. However you may apply to the CDAA if you have other suitable qualifications and experience.

SITE ACCESS INFORMATION

Iddlebiddy is owned by Forestry South Australia. For all information, permits and access contact the CDAA www.cavedivers.com.au or P.O. Box 290 North Adelaide

Iddlebiddy is open every Saturday. Maximum of 4 divers, 1 dive per day.

No diving on Total Fire Ban Days. Forestry SA may apply Forest Work Bans if forest fire danger is expected to reach extreme.

Such bans exclude the public from entering the forest. If in doubt, check with Forestry Ranger or Forestry Office, although signs are generally erected at diving sites to indicate such bans.

A Permit is also required to run compressors during fire danger season and a fire extinguisher is required. Keys for Iddlebiddy can be obtained from Lady Nelson Visitor Centre.

