

SPELIOGRAFFITI

The Newsletter of the National University Caving Club.

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'Speliograffiti' has a new editor. NUCC's committee accepts no responsibility for its heresies.

E D I T O R I A L

Preserving Our National Heritage.

We have had this sentiment, in various forms, thrown at us for so long we are immune to it. I cannot think of a more offputting title for an article.

The subject rears its unwelcome head because of a storm about Punchbowl Cave. This is a national issue, but is a personal one to NUCC-ites, many of whom cut their caving teeth on this cave. A proposal to seal off the Signature entrance sparked off violent controversy. Two main reasons put forward for the action were: i) to protect the formation; ii) to protect the bats.

Counterarguments that both were non-existent in Punchbowl Cave were thrown up. An ugly rumour has reached our ears that if it wasn't true before it certainly is now. We have good reason to believe that the cave has been completely stripped.

People concerned about the fate of Punchbowl have been asking 'Will other caves go the same way?' It is the wrong question. Other caves - ultimately all caves will be completely destroyed unless drastic action, in the form of legislation or private enterprise on a vast scale, is taken, and in the near future.

The important question is: does it matter? Does it matter whether our grandchildren are denied the chance to get bruised, cold, wet and exhausted, to risk injury or panic in an alien world, depending on the frail assistance of a flickering carbide lamp or dim torch? Thousands of people have never been caving and do not seem to be neurotic, paranoic, depressed or schizophrenic because of it. Alternately, can we talk of the inviolability of nature in a world that is so unnatural as to defy death, a world where life itself can be created out of sterility? What are we saying if we say 'It must be preserved'?



Punchbowl Cave is a small issue but it is also the symptom of a larger one. For NUCC the next symptom to appear will be concern for The Dip caves. We are already arguing the merits of opening Dog Leg Cave. But do we have the right to prevent, for example, permanent ladders in caves because the people who use them will abuse the privilege? Privileges are always abused but they still exist. Perhaps we are being selfish, trying to limit the number and types of visitors to caves.

Questions of policy are always difficult and controversial, and often obscure. But an official organization has to face up to such questions, and I think NUCC has to decide whether it is concerned with 'the preservation of our national heritage for future generations'.

Does NUCC care about Punchbowl?

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#### CAVE FAUNA

You have heard of bats in belfries; we are bats in caves,  
Seeking a foretaste of the exciting life in graves,  
We are only really happy when we're cold and sore and damp,  
As through the mud and water we slither, slide and tramp;  
Through the squeezes rocky, Fearless Leader out in front,  
We wriggle, writhe and wrench, with pant and groan and grunt.  
Onward ever downward, never stopping till we've found  
A dead end or a river and we have to turn around.  
Onward ever upward, Fearless Leader shows the track  
And the rope that I am carrying is sculpting out my back.  
At last we reach the exit which is where we entered in  
This paradise of devils that we wet out to win.  
The sky is blue, the sun is warm, birds sing, but best of all  
Is that I can stand up straight. I no longer have to crawl.

\* \* \* \* \*



## TRIP REPORTS

### 1. Wyanbene, 25th June.

Michael Webb, Byron Deveson and non-member Peter Dalhenty went on an unofficial trip and reported the state of the cave. The trip leader reports that 'four-wheel drive is not strictly required'.

"First time in we were stopped at the ladder 50' past the blowhole, which has been shortened to something like half the length it ought to be, and also found that the ladder to the upper reaches of the mud chamber has been removed; making that climb slightly dangerous. Many formations in this chamber have been badly vandalized in the six months since I last saw the place.

"Came out for lunch, then went back in with a 30' ladder, going in as far as the wet stretch. Just about 30' north of the beginning of the aforementioned wet stretch, on the western side of the tunnel, is a small hole, leading to the largish chamber with numerous formations, much of it helictite, one even being a nine inch diameter Moebius Strip. This is a pretty typical example of the size of the formations in this chamber. At the western extremity of this chamber is a narrow fissure, some 12" wide, and at 70° inclination, in which some exploration might be profitable."

Michael G. Webb

\*noted by I Raine, Vol 3, No 4.

### 2. Weekend Trip 6 - 7 August.

A round trip of 150 miles embracing Wee Jasper, Goodradigbee and intervening countryside was undertaken by R. Orreill, D. Moore, D. Nicholls and P. and C. Aitchison.

On Saturday the party visited the Wee Jasper area and investigated potholes labelled WJ 17 and WJ 27. In the afternoon they peered in Anemone, and called in at Goodradigbee on Sunday on the way home. This added up to ten hours underground.

This trip report sets a new record for brevity, and is composed mainly of two pictures. Apparently there are good opportunities for shutterbugs.



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3. Wombeyan Tourist Caves. 31st July.

Graeme Chapman, Ian Raine, David Nicholls and non-members Elizabeth Chapman and B. Tisdell spent three hours examining the potential of these tourist caves.

"Caves entered were dry. Most of the formation in the caves was dead but with the aid of well placed lighting and good commentary from the guide (Park Ranger) the dead formation appeared fantastic. The price of 6/- per cave or two for 10/- seemed rather excessive especially for caving club members who normally enter caves for no outlay at all\*. However all present enjoyed the 'arachair' trip."

Graeme Chapman

\*this is a verbatim report: - Ed.

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'Speleograffiti' needs articles. Anything appropriate or inappropriate will be accepted. Write an article for the Christmas edition and show mummy and daddy how clever you are. Please. 'Speleograffiti' needs YOUR support if it is to continue to publish.

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