S P E L E O G R A F F I T I

The Newsletter of the National University Caving Club

Volume 6, Number 5. September, 1969

EDITORIAL

As everyone in this club should know by now, NUCC has discovered a new and very beautiful cave at Yarrangobilly. If some members of this club aren't more careful in future, we will also have credit for marring its beauty. I was in the first party to explore this cave, and realise that in some places it is impossible to avoid walking on rimstone pools, etc. Here we followed each other's bootmarks. The party on the next day also did this. After seeing Y58 on Sunday (14th) it appears that people have decided to do some exploration of their own. This is fair enough, as long as they DON'T walk on pure white flowstone - at least half a dozen dirty boot marks were seen; muddy handprints were also found on formation - these don't add to the beauty of the cave. Also the path through the most decorative section is now a foot wide, thanks to the carelessness of members. At least half of this damage could be eliminated if people would be more careful.

For the benefit of those who don't realise the damage tricounis do to rimstone pools, these are now banned from Y58.

The Editor.

Rapid Grwoth of Calcite Speleothems forming in a Concrete Tunnel:

Over the last year I have observed the growth of various speleothems inside the twelve foot diameter overflow tunnel from the Corin Dam.

Those speleothems present are:

(1) Flowstone - 1 to 2 centimetres thick.

(2) Straw Stalactites - up to 20 centimetres in length.

(3) Shawls - up to 50 centimetres long, 2 centimetres wide.

All of these forms have grown to these dimensions within slightly more than one year. The conditions within the tunnel are obviously very favourable for clacite deposition and perhaps a study of the feedwater would prove interesting.

Byron Deveson.

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CHANGES OF TELEPHONE NUMBERS

David Christie (Equipment Officer)	Old Number 70.3253 (home) New Number 30.3253 (home).
Michael Webb (President)	Old Number 49.9066 - 219 (work) New Number 49.0246 (work).

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EXPLORATION REPORT - YARRANGOBILLY

Y59 - BRUISER POT

Discovered McNee April, 1969. First explored Webb 5/7/69.

The entrance to the cave is situated in a bluff within 300 yards of the Yarrangobilly Ranger Station (KNP). In a small area there are many small holes, most connecting to the one chamber (Y59).

The cave is entered through one of these holes which opens into a small antechamber very near the surface. Access from here is down a 40' pot to a steeply sloping rock shelf 25' above the main rockpole floor. Another ladder is necessary to reach the floor by most of the possible routes. The best is between boulders to the right of the pitch and then down a short difficult climb to the rockpile slope. A ladder makes this much safer.

The chamber is 120' deep and 150' long with a floor sloping at 45°. The average separation of floor and roof is 40'.

There are some quite good formations in this cave, and some very good prospects for digging, especially on the western wall where the rockpile is loosest. There is a tunnel about 20' under the rockpile which may be a good prospect for digging.

The cave does not connect to the Upper North Glory. The entrance of Bruiser Pot is at approximately the same level as this latter cave. It is also unlikely that it connects to North Glory itself, as N.G. is 100' to the east of Y59. Consequently, the possible extensions beyond the chamber could open up a new system parallel to the North Glory.

Parts of the rockpile are very loose and treacherous, but provided due care is taken, accidents do not occur. The cave was named from the first descent, during which three people were slightly injured by falling rock in the shaft. The shaft has now been throoughly swept.

Michael G. Webb,
N.U.C.C. 3/8/69.

HOLE 23

The tripleader is my shepherd, I shall not stop,
He maketh me to lie down in Wyanbene waters:
He leadeth me not beside said waters.
He destroyeth my trog suit: he leadeth me in the paths of grottiness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I climb in the shadow of Big Hole,
I will fear no slipknots, for he went before me
My belay line and my bash hat they comfort me.
He prepareth a pitch before me in the presence of much mud; he annointeth my head with gibbers,
My blood runneth over.
Surely madness and folly shall follow me all the days of my strife:
And I will dwell in the abode of the Trog forever.

Anon.
(Name withheld to protect the innocent.)

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THE TASMANIAN WOLF OR THYLACINUS CYNOCEPHALUS

On a recent trip to Y58, a skull which was later identified by the CSIRO as that of a large thylacine was found.* The thylacine is not a well known animal, so the following information may be of interest.

The thylacine is a marsupial resembing a short-legged wolf. It has about sixteen black/brown stripes and for this reason is often called the Tasmanian Tiger. Other names given it by the early settlers of Tasmania include "Zebra Opposum", "Zebra Wolf" and "Hyaenia".

The evolution of the thylacine provides a remarkable example of parallel development, being often allied to certain fossil marsupial carnivores of South America, due to its dentition. (The result of having similar habits, especially that of preying on other mammals.) The thylacine, however, is probably the largest flesh-eating marsupial ever evolved, the length from head to tail averaging around 5½ feet. It also has a kangaroo-type rump and tail and is reported to hop about like a roo when desperately pressed. The necessity for speedy movement causes it to run more on the tips of its toes than any other marsupial, so that it has a dog-like stance; the skull is also dog-like, but longer than a dingo's, giving a much wider gape to the jaws. The presence of eight, instead of six, incisors identifies it as a polyprotodent marsupial, and with the large openings in the palate, readily distinguishes its skull from that of a dog.

The skull and dentitition indicate a gradual evolution through the native cats, the muzzle ears and paws in these animals and the thylacine are essentially alike in structure. The thylacine pouch is comparable to that of the Tasmanian Devil, usually containing four young.

The thylacine is mainly nocturnal and is now almost certainly confined to the more isolated areas of Tasmania, if it exists at all. Its lairs are usually caverns and rock-shelters. There is a very remote chance that it survives in the rain forests of Northern Queensland, as there are often reports of large, cat-like, striped animals from this area.

Evidence found in caves indicates that the thylacine once ranged widely over Australia, and was even present in

New Guinea, during the last Ice Age. Bones have been found in NSW at Jenolan, Wellington, Wombeyan and now at Yarrangobilly; it has been found most recently (except for Y58) on the Nullarbor, where an extremely well preserved specimen, with skin and hair was found. The Nullarbor finds indicate a fairly recent extinction from the mainland. Some fossil thylacines in Tasmania have been found alongside the giant, long-extinct marsupial fauna, so the thylacine has been present in Australia for a very long time.

The reasons for the decline of the thylacine are rather speculative at the moment. It appears that the population dropped drastically around the turn of the century. From 1888 a bounty of £1 per head was paid by the government, in addition to that paid by the various property owners (the thylacine was a blood feeder and reportedly only ate fresh meat, e.g. sheep). Since thylacines were never plentiful, this obviously contributed to their demise. Studies of the numbers claimed in various years, however, show an interesting trend. The number of bounties claimed was fairly constant at about 100 per year until around 1900, when it decreased sharply. It has been suggested that since the number of bounties claimed dropped off in all areas of Tasmania simultaneously, an introduced disease, such as distemper, must have hastened their decline.

A combination of factors, such as a deteriorating climate and competition with dingoes, probably caused its extinction from the mainland, and I think it is significant that the thylacine, which did so well in Australia during the last Ice Age, are now confined to the coldest areas of Australia.

Mick Alting.

* References.

E. Guiller The Thylacine, Australian Museum Mag. 12 353-4

" The Former Distribution and Decline of the Thylacine. Australian J. Science 23 207-10
also 20 214

" Vic. Nat. 70 86

Traughten, Furred Animals of Australia

Gould, Mammals of Australia, Vol 1.

Australian Encyclopaedia 495-6.

Caves of the Nullarbor.

A.S.F. Handbook.

OBSERVATIONS OF THE BLACK FLOWSTONE IN JERSEY CAVE YARRANGOBILLY

Black flowstone occurs extensively in Jersey cave and the colouration has been attributed to mangenese staining.

From observations of cross-sections of the flowstone it was found that the black colouring occurs only in the upper 3 m.m. of the section.

A ten gram sample of the black flowstone was dissolved in A.R. hydrochoric acid and the resulting solution filtered. Numerous dark grey flakes - one to three millimetres square and approximately one hundredth to one tenth of a millimetre thick were obtained.

The solution was analysed for manganese and iron with negative results - less than 10 ppm. each. Attention was then turned to the insoluble material. This proved insoluble in boiling nitric acid and then boiling aqua regia. However, when heated to red heat in an ignition tube the flakes decolourised, leaving a white ash. The white ash was identified as silica. An attempted quantitative carbon analysis on the remaining sample was bungled, but carbon was qualitatively identified.

It would thus appear that the colouring of the flowstone is due to small flakes of carbonaceous material.

Microscopic examination proved inconclusive in determining the identity of the material. Any hypothesis would be appreciated.

Byron Deveson.

TRIP REPORTS

Wee Jasper, 15th - 18th August.

Those present on this trip included the following: John Furlonger, John Brush, Maurice Bell and myself.

J.F. left with me on Friday morning to set up camp and do a little preliminary work. A magnificent campsite was found downstream from the Wee Jasper creek crossing and on the Southern side. After spending a couple of hours erecting "La Hutte", we decided to finish exploration of the 1st down the hill from the Dip cave, no new discoveries were made and we returned for lunch. After lunch, and with the land owner's permission, we examined the 1st between Dip and P.B. Hill, caves found included a couple of fissures and an abandoned influx which looked promising. Since we had not brought any equipment with us, we decided to wait for the others and explore them on Saturday. Darkness came and a frugal meal was consumed, this being backed up with a considerable quantity of assorted Victorian beer. Later that night, we were aroused from our gentle slumber around the campfire by two sober young gentlemen, who had just arrived and had demanded a roaring fire and some hot coffee. After they had built up the fire, we had some coffee and started to sober up, although not before I told them to "go and blow up your Eskys", (air beds).

Saturday morning started well, the influx proved to be silted up, one passage was blocked with a bit of flowstone but a rock fell about 15 feet on the other side. Signature inside, "George Bridle 1870", we decided to call it Bridle's Cave and numbered it WJ63. We numbered WJ's 64, 65, 66 and 67; WJ67 consisted of series of vertical fissures with several entrances, one was a 60' ladder pitch. Later in the afternoon, we decided to inspect the 1st up as far as Carey's Cave. Mrs. V. Carey bluntly told me she didn't want anyone looking for caves on her land. The owner of "Goodradigbee" homestead said we could only examine the 1st down to the lake. At the third attempt, the owner was reluctant, but allowed us.

We then walked a couple of miles before being told by a bloke on a horse to get off the land before nightfall. This area was particularly promising, a few sinkholes and large fissures were scattered about. On the way back to the car Maurice explored what looked like an active influx and

reported that it contained a sump, he came out of a different entrance, one which was covered with about 2' of assorted sharp and prickly, compact blackberry bush. J.B. and M.B. examined every inch of Punchbowl Cave that night, even the climb from Loxin to Pitch chamber. They reported seeing a mouse somewhere in the cave (wearing a tiny, red bash hat, tricounis and carrying a highly polished carbide lamp).

Sunday got off to a slow start; we decided to take a look at Church Cave. On the way there, we met Maurice's family and Mary, who were driving around for the day. WJ31 was hot and humid, but there was no CO_2; there were no bats either. Found tight squeeze, which could be widened to extend the cave. Returned to camp and had lunch before driving down to Micalong Creek, we couldn't be bothered walking up the gorge, so we just drove around. J.F. left for Canberra that night.

On Monday, decided to take some photos in Dogleg, the water was really pouring out. Went up to the first sump, pretty smooth going, the gibber patch was covered in mud. We packed up camp about elevenish and returned by the Doctor's Flat road, stopping to collect some quartz crystals on the way.

Ken Palmer.

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FOR SALE

Kodak Instamatic Camera. Latest Model 233, used once in Y58.

Plus Small army pouch, which clips on any belt. Pouch holds camera and 3 flashcubes.

All for $15.00

See Ken Palmer.

YARRANGOBILLY TRIP REPORT

August 23, 24

Saturday

Because of the rather large group present, the party was split into two. While M.G.W. and others continued exploration of Y59, together with other work in the tourist area, the other half of the party went up to the plateau to further explore Y58, a cave recently extended by the club. Those present were Noël Call, John Brush, Roger Curtis, John Furlonger, Ken Palmer, Jeff Bloye and Mick Alting.

After reaching the previous limit of exploration, we followed a fissure downwards. This proved very unstable (on the return trip, a rock struck John Brush on the cheek, fortunately only marring his beauty with a minor cut). After throwing a ladder off a ledge, we followed a parallel fissure; at this stage, I was at the rear of the party and was somewhat intrigued by the strange noises coming from the bods up front. Another twenty feet and my questions were answered. The fissure enters a chamber of roughly the same size as Caesar's Hall at Wyanbene, with the added attraction of the best decoration ever seen by those present. Pure white flowstone, shawls, oolites, moonmilk calciferous streams - you name it - decorated the chamber. The roof, walls and floor were simply packed with live formation. While walking around this chamber, several holes in the floor were seen. By dropping goolies, these were estimated to be about thirty feet deep - one of the more obvious downward routes was followed and Ken Palmer managed to drop down about fifteen feet by pushing a squeeze. From this position he could see downwards to what looked like a railway-type tunnel passage. He also saw a calcified animal skeleton. As we had no more ladder, this is where exploration stopped.

On the way back, many bones were collected in the main chamber. These included three bat skeletons, a skull of a rodent type animal, and some other bones. On the way back, we found an interesting skull in the mud slope chamber, which at the time no-one could identify (it turned out to be a large thylacine).

On meeting the other party, we decided that on Sunday M.G.W. would take his party, together with Noel Call and extra gear down Y58, while we would do some work on the northern limestone.

Sunday

Armed with a sledge hammer, we set out for a drafting slit about 30 feet from Y38. This was found on the way back from Coppermine on a C.S.S. trip earlier this year. Dave Gibson and myself spent about an hour trying to dig it out then, but a sledge hammer was needed, not the g-pick we had.

After an hour's toil, we made a reasonable entrance which dropped about 8 feet into a small chamber. This had mud sumps at the end of two small downward sloping passages, and a squeeze (impassable) behind which a passage could be seen sloping away. The draft was coming from here. We gave this and went on to Coppermine for a tourist-type trip. The decoration seems to have been damaged somewhat since we were last there in January.

Mick Alting.

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September 13, 14.

YARRANGOBILLY

Present: M.G.W. (Leader), David Christie, Dick Price, Jim Curtis, Mick Alting, Byron Deveson, Ken Palmer, John Furlonger.

We left Canberra at various hours between 5.15 pm Friday and 7 am Saturday. The Friday types checked in and went to bed. Saturday it snowed. Undeterred, the gallant speleos headed for Y58, and went caving. The trip down to Rawlinson Chamber was much the same as usual, but this time we threw some ladder down to 60' pitch the Ken Palmer found last trip. It contains a lot of very loose rubble - reminiscent of Bruiser Pot. At the bottom is a largish chamber with pretties galore, and a fissure in one side with watery noises issuing forth. We descended to a stream. Dick and I followed the water upstream, then left it and started going into wind, to eventually find our way out of North Deep Creek. We went back down to tell the others of the discovery, then went home. Sunday it snowed. Undeterred ..... etc. to collect the hardware left in Y58 overnight. This chore completed, we again headed up the hill to the cries of "Mush, mush!" and other appropriate noises in a half-blizzard.

Michael Webb.

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CONSERVATION CLOSE TO HOME

Below is a copy of a letter to the Secretary of NUCC on the subject of the recently extended cave, Yarrangobilly 58.

Dear Sir,

On my first trip past the flowstone wall of Y58, the cave was white and clean, with tracks through the prettier parts of the cave narrow (about one boot wide) and well defined.

On the second trip into Rawlinson Chamber on Saturday September 13th, I was upset to notice that the tracks had in most places grown to over 8" wide and that much of the pure white flowstone was now a muddy brown. On the Sunday, the damage had grown to alarming proportions. If this rate continues, the cave is likely to end up as dirty as Dip 2 by the end of the year.

In view of the above, I would like to make the following suggestions:

(i) Next trip, the cave should be cleaned up.

(ii) Because of the damage they cause, tricounis should be banned in Y58.

(iii) Narrow tracks should be made through the cave and people made to stay on them.

(iv) If there is an alternative to a pretty route, use it, even while exploring.

Unless something is done to repair the damage, Y58 will get NUCC the reputation of being nothing better than a group of determined vandals with initiative.

Yours faithfully,

Michael G. Webb.

COMING TRIPS

WYANBENE — 18-19 October, 1969

Leader: Michael Webb
Radio Detection Experiements.

YARRANGOBILLY — 25-26 October, 1969

General Exploration.

TALBINGO — 22-23 November, 1969

Leader: Michael Webb
Cave Hunting, beautiful scenery, good walking.

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If you want to go on these trips, contact the leader by the Wednesday previous. Remember also that impromptu trips are fairly frequent, so keep an ear to the ground.

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NUCC COMMITTEE FOR 1969

President	Michael Webb 1/74 Ainslie Avenue, Reid A.C.T.	49.0246 (Work) 4.2970 (Home)
Vice-President	Noel Call, 11 Renwick Street, Chifley, A.C.T.	49.3009 (Work)
Secretary	Ken Palmer, 30 Earle Street, Lyneham, A.C.T.	48.0412 (Home)
Treasurer	Jim Atkinson, 58 Jacka Crescent, Campbell, A.C.T.	49.7352 (Home)
Equipment Officer	David Christie, Federal Highway, Sutton, N.S.W.	30.3253 (Home)
Committee Members	Paulette Call Norm Stokes John Brush	 51.1053 (Home) 9.4610 (Home)

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