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CALCITE

Newsletter of the Highland Caving Group

ISSUE

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EDITORIAL

Most publications herald a new year with lots of predictions, so pray forgive us for submitting our share. It would appear that the year gone by saw the first breath of winds of change in caving in Australia, leading to the maturing of the relatively simple sport and science that we knew.

Recent incidents caused a general tightening up, or awareness at least, of safety standards in societies. Currently, cavers are participating in or planning expeditions of increasing magnitude - to the Nullabor, to New Caledonia, to the Kimberlys, even our own diving plans at Cooleman. Obviously, as the number of participants increases, as we push into even more remote areas, and the duration of trips is extended, so we must become more adept at avoiding injury, and more self reliant in regard to medical assistance.

On the scientific side of caving, there has always been a wide gap between those doing work of a scientific nature, and the average member of the caving societies. The reasons are many and varied, but 1966 may see lines of communication open between the "boffins" and the cavers; understandable abstracting of papers produced at academic level should motivate observation of phenomena and physical assistance by those at lower than Ph.D level.

We can also foresee a great deal of discussion, possibly resulting in updating of early policies, in respect of the rapid growth of a large number of small speleo societies in N.S.W., particularly in the Sydney area. Tangential to this will be another look at our actions in regard to conservation.

Finally, we predict more beards than ever in the caving world.

NEW REGULAR FEATURE - "WHAT IS ----?"

WHAT IS "CALCITE"

"Calcite" is the official publication of the Highland Caving Group and as such is our major means of contact with the various Australian Spelio Societies.

Because of this, "Calcite" is probably one of the few means these societies have of forming their opinions of us.

Before we go into print with our magazine, we should decide on what we wish to accomplish, then how we should go about it. One way that has occurred to me of doing this is to ask the following set of questions:-

What control, if any, should the executive committee have over the editor?

Should the editorial strive to be controversial?

Should we only report on our club activities or attempt a wider field of reporting?

If we happen to have internal troubles, is it right to put

them into print?

Should we try to take the initiative in such matters as conservation&safety? - or should we follow older groups in these matters?

There are probably a lot more questions that could be asked, but before anybody starts to ask them, what are the answers to those already asked and who is going to ask them.

I suggest that there are no permanent answers possible, that they will vary with time and that it is up to us - the members of the Highland Caving Group to try to obtain the best answers for the current conditions. If we can successfully do this, then "Calcite" will be a publication worthy of sending to all caving societies in Australia.

Bob Russell

COOLEMAN TRIP - 1st, 2nd & 3rd January.

Preparation for this trip began some time before the weekend, with checking of gear, practice dives, etc. Finally, on Friday 31st December, the first car left Sydney for Cooleman, containing Eddy Powell and all the Crabbs. A stop was made at Canberra to visit Joe Jennings; then on to Cooleman, arriving at dusk. J.J., with two C.S.S. members, breezed in at about 10.00p.m. Saturday morning saw the arrival of Alan Moule, Bob Smith, Gay Harrison and Frank Scott. They reported that John Allan had sunk his Chev. (Biscayne!) in the Goodradigbee River, near Brindabella. Next to arrive was a V.W., containing Denis Robinson, Alex and Sylvia, followed by a waterlogged Chev containing John Allan and Bob Russell.

With sleeping bodies draped around the camp, Evalt Crabb and Bob Russell went for a short walk around the Clown Cave and Frustration Cave area. Methodically working back toward the river, (and lunch (ED)) they stumbled across a tiny hole in the ground, and promptly earmarked it for attention. In the middle of the afternoon, well after lunch, the L.R., containing Robby Scheffer, Marian Booth and everyone's lunch, arrived. This was a massive feat of navigation, which all others achieved in four hours less time.

Then began the ultimate in circus acts. It was decided to carry out preliminary exploration in the River Cave. As only one L.R. was available, Ev Crabb and Bob Russell set out on foot, intending to guide the walkers and the vehicle, which were to approach from different directions. However, the walking party did not go far enough, and gave up. Likewise, an unsuitable route was chosen for the vehicle, so that party gave up. Meanwhile, upstream, E.C. standing at the entrance of the River Cave, declared that he couldn't find the cave; so he gave up. The remaining party at camp decided that E.C. & R.R. were lost, so a small party went out to search, leaving a few minutes before the "lost" party returned. Diving was abandoned for that day.

Saturday evening-Sunday morning was spent in a visit to the Left Cooleman Cave, a dive of about 10' into the efflux, and excavation of the new cave - "New Year Cave". In the latter cave, a few hundred feet of passage was explored, with ceiling up to 25 feet, and a running stream encountered. Exploration etc. is by no means complete.

Finally, on Sunday morning, we were ready for a dive. With Joe Jennings leading the way, we drove by an easy route to the River Cave. Here, the party divided; some going into the River Cave for familiarisation, while the remainder started setting up ladders, dinghies, etc. in the recently discovered Glop Pot.

In the River Cave, a short siphon was forced (downstream end), proving the connection previously assumed through an impossible squeeze. The Glop Pot, consisting of a drop of approx. 50' to water, with a 40' horizontal extension half way down also dropping into water, was assumed to connect to the River Cave, as the two entrances are only 200 feet apart. John Allan and Bob Smith elected to dive in the 1st shaft, with John taking first turn in the water. Slowly he worked down the walls, feeling for a gap, until he was down to 25 feet. This was not pushed any further, as the water was absolutely opaque; originally thought due to cavers stirring the mud in the River Cave, it is now suggested due to dirt falling during the excavation of the cave. As John and Bob returned to the surface, Alan and Denis prepared to dive in the other extension. Here, Alan dived first, descending without finding a horizontal extension, finally touching a sloping floor at 60-65 feet. No further diving was attempted, so the very cold (despite wet suits), very tired cavers deflate the dinghies, and withdrew the ladders.

Sunday night was spent in general exploration and photography in the Right Cooleman Cave; a further 6 feet being traversed in the upward extension directly above the squeeze through to the Main Cooleman Cave. However, it appears certain that a scaling pole will be necessary for further progress. Late that night, the traditional celebration "scrog" was cooked, much to the horror of new cavers.

Monday morning saw the remaining healthy ones walking through the gorge, the whole trip wrapping up by 11.00 a.m. There was a reasonably uneventful trip home via Adaminaby.

WYAMBENE TRIP - 4th-5th November, 1965.

Present: R. Russell, M. Kaye, A. Moule, Rick ?? (SUSS)

The purpose of this trip was simply to see and photograph a cave which we had heard a lot about from various sources.

We arrived on Saturday morning, had breakfast and then decided to see all of the main cave that we could and then return later to any photographs of things we thought interesting. After entering the cave via that gated entrance, we worked our way

upstream until a point was reached where going any further meant getting completely wet. Margaret Kaye volunteered to do just this and push on to see if it was worth all of us getting soaked.

She splashed her way for another 50 feet or so but finally could not go any further because of lack of air space between the roof and the water level.

We emerged from the cave about 1 p.m. and then searched the hill behind the gate for any entrances but were unsuccessful.

Later in the afternoon, we wandered around in the rain looking for likely holes and found a couple on a ridge further up the valley.

On Sunday, we returned to the main cave for our photos and to try to link up the efflux with the main section of the cave. With both these activities complete, we set off toward Sydney, only to find that the Shoalhaven River had risen due to rain.

This caused some inconvenience when we tried to ford it, because the back wheels of the vehicle floated off the ground, causing lack of traction. This meant that we got soaked pushing it out and that the car finished up with about a foot of water inside it, but no damage was done.

SUMMARY OF H.C.G. EXPLORATION IN THE MUDGEE DISTRICT.

Introduction.

Interest in the Mudgee District began when a Mrs. Archer was seeking publicity centred around a limestone deposit on her property at Buckaroo. Many old legends were quoted as fact, resulting in an aura of excitement about the "caves" at Buckaroo. From here, we gradually expended our potential areas in the district, following C & J "Limestone Deposits of N.S.W." published reports, local legends and pub gossip. To simplify this report, the areas are dealt with in H.C.G. chronological sequence.

Buckaroo.

This area has been popularly known as "Buckaroo". However, although the outcrop is located to the North East of the range of mountains of which Mt. Buckaroo is the main peak, the "Buckaroo" referred to by Carne & Jones in their "Limestone Deposits of NSW" is located some 250 - 300 ch. to the South East. Early photographs published by C & J do, however, bear a striking resemblance to the outcrop with which we are concerned, therefore it could be that a slight mix-up has occurred here, or possibly that this area was also known as "Buckaroo".

The presence of limestone was first noted here over 100 years ago. Following this discovery, lime was burnt for some time, a total of approximately 100 tons being removed. The area was also mined for pipe-clay, silica and talc.

From a very early stage, it was reported that there were caves in this block of limestone and several reports have been found, giving an overall impression that far greater romanticism exists than truth. Some of the more exciting ones give details of how farmers have lost implements to the dark abyss of the underground and how the cave entrances were finally filled in at great expense by an owner who feared that his children might become lost in the long passages. The limestone extends in a N.W. direction for a distance of 50 chains in a series of disconnected outcrops, approximately 6 chains wide. A great deal of overburden, quite often interspersed with pipe-clay is present. The limestone is predominantly grey in colour but variations of from light red to pink have also been noted. The surface of the main outcrop is riddled with holes ranging in size from 3" up to 18". Most of these have been filled up, either by siltation or by property owners. The area is also rich in fossils.

Excavation was undertaken at 6 places, 3 of which had received local attention beforehand. After several hundred man hours had been expended, one "cave" had extended to about 30 feet; a second water filled entrance (thought locally to be a spring) went about 20 feet, while yet another, near the edge of the exposure, was a vertical drop of about 25 feet. Inside the first entrance we uncovered a quantity of fossilised remains not identified.

We were beset with reports on peculiarities in the behaviour of underground and surface water, the sites of the legendary caves were regularly varied; this, together with lack of positive results, brought interest in the area to a low level. On a later visit it was noted that the uncovered fossils had been badly mutilated since our excavation.

However, at the present time, it is thought that there is still some possibility in the area, but possibly not enough to justify the amount of excavation required.

"Blue Rocks Limestone".

Situated between Capertee and Glen Davis, C & J reports an extensive deposit of limestone. This has only been visited twice, each time for a short period, but in this time, one "possible" has been excavated and about 50 feet of passage negotiated. At the end of this cave, live formation was found in silt filled passage. There does not appear to be any reference to known caves in the area.

Apple Tree Flat.

Situated between Mudgee and Cudgegong, known caves exist in a dolomitic limestone deposit high in the mountains. The exposure consists of three radial ridges, at the foot of an escarpment at the top of the range.

The first cave encountered, known to H.C.G. as the "Lemon Tree Pot", is at the foot of a 30 foot bluff, near an unusually large lemon tree. Little more than a wombat hole, its

significance is in a large colony of wetas found some 30 feet from the entrance. Although it is possible to see some distance, it is only possible to negotiate approximately 30 feet.

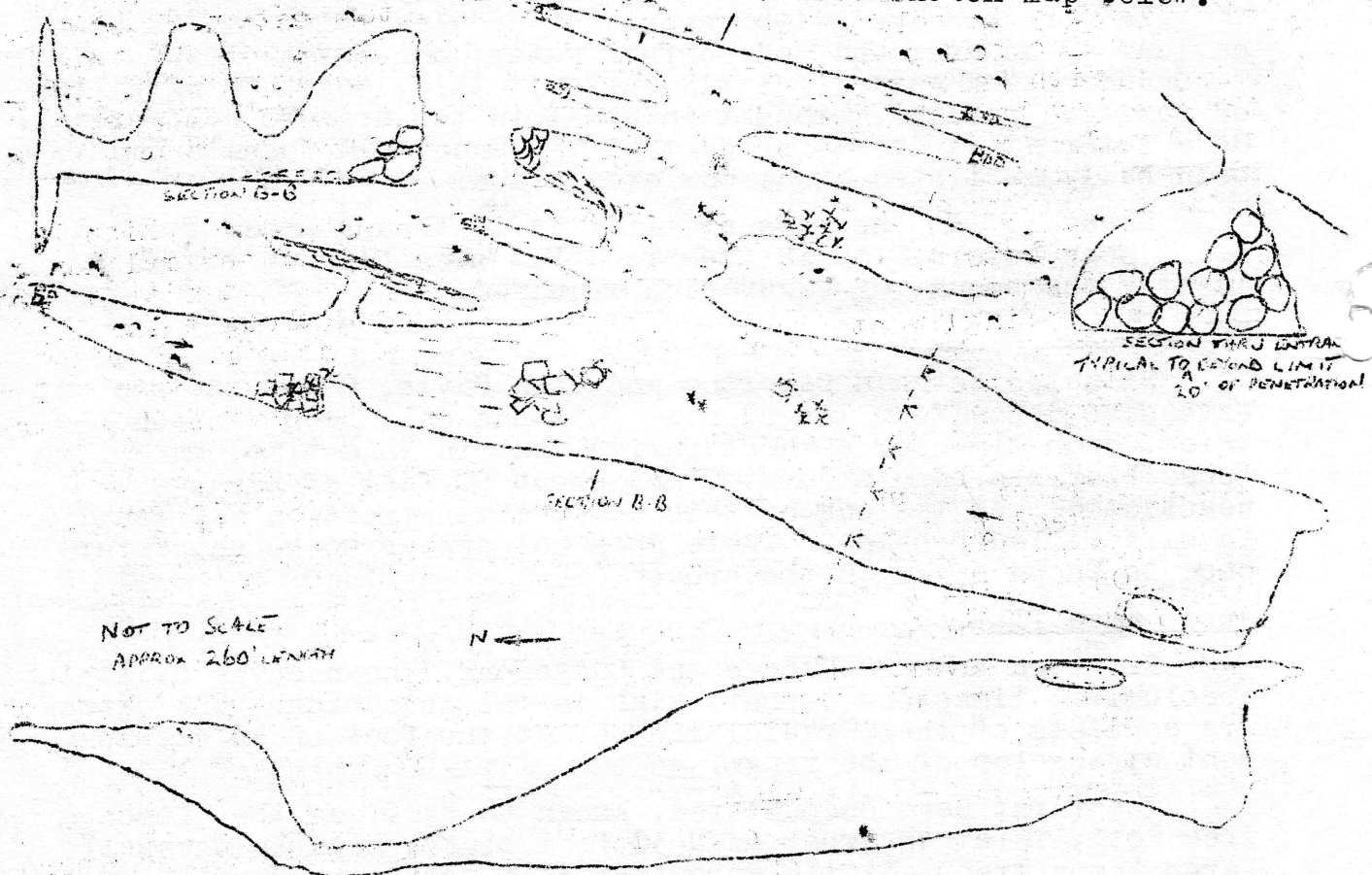
The largest cave is situated on the top of the centre ridge and consists of a hole some 6 feet diameter at the top of a bell shaped chamber approximately 50 feet deep. There are several well decorated passages leading from the bottom of this chamber, flattening out at their extremities. In places, these passages lead to collapsed shale.

The other known cave is some 150 yards along the ridge from the aforementioned, directly above the Lemon Tree Pot. It is approx. 70 feet deep, descending in a series of drops. An excavation at the entrance uncovered a deep vertical hole, not yet explored as ladders were not available at the site at the time of excavation.

Exploration of any cave in this area is not yet complete. No fauna has yet been observed, other than the colony in the Lemon Tree Pot.

The "Swallow Cave" Cudgegong.

Situated about 5 miles south of Cudgegoing, at the head of a dry creek, this cave has apparently been known to a few local people for a long time. The entrance is about 6 feet diameter, about 50 feet up from a creek bed in the side of a conglomerate ridge. The main passage is about 260 feet long, width up to 35 feet and ceiling varying up to 35 feet. See sketch map below.



At each extremity, the passages grade off into shale collapses. There is still some quite good formation but much has been mutilated in the past. Observations over a number of trips indicate an unusually high temperature, the rock temperature being measured at 70° F. At the lowest point of the cave, we encountered very high humidity.

The cave was named by H.C.G. from a flock of swallows inhabiting the entrance area, there being an estimated 50 birds nesting in the cave.

Guano deposits were noted on the floor and a very active colony of bats, numbering 30-40, was found in the second parallel passage. During an overnight vigil, it was noticed that both bats and swallows were active at the one time in the main chamber, even late at night.

A colony of wetas, harvestmen and beetles was found in the extremity of the main chamber.

An early published report on a cave at Oakey Creek bears reasonable similarity to this cave, but according to most maps and existing road signs, Oakey Creek (One of many?) is a few miles to the east. However, we have a map showing Oakey Creek as being the one near the Swallow Cave.

A second similar cave has been reported, but not investigated in the locality.

"the Pink."

Investigated when we were following the old report on Oakey Creek, "The Pink" is a mountain of pink marble situated on the present marked Oakey Creek. Unfortunately, quarrying has taken place on both side of the mountain, leaving a 50 foot thick slice of marble. There is evidence of large quantities of flow-stone in the rock.

Further investigation showed that "the Pink" is really "The White" - "The Pink" being roughly a mile to the east and similarly quarried. There has been a further local report of "The Black" not yet quarried, a few miles further east.

Queens Pinch.

Caves, known to the locals, were found on the top of the range adjacent to the Windeyer road. Altogether, 5 shafts were discovered, two of which linked at a depth of about 25 feet, in a reasonable chamber. There was some decoration, some of which went below the silt floor. Another shaft was descended for about 50 feet, to a block up of dumped fence posts. Due to time limitations, nothing further has been done in this area, but excavation is intended at the earliest possible date.

Other Areas.

Visits have been made to many other areas, including two deposits on the Windeyer Road, the quarries at M. Frome and at Mt. Knowles. Following a report on a cave behind a peppercorn tree in a quarry, we found no less than three quarries with peppercorn trees, but not the right one. "Limestone Areas of N.S.W." lists limestone deposits down to a few feet square, but misses out on major cave bearing areas. Every night brings a variation on the "man and dog enter together, man and dog emerge at separate places" there. It is hoped that cavers can retain their objective outlook when working in this area.

We would dearly love to acknowledge the continued assistance and support given by many Mudgee people - however, in the interest of property protection, etc., we wish that no publicity be given the cave areas.

Bits and Pieces.

Our sincerest best wishes to members Arthur Rose and Kay Speechley, married at St. Ambrose Church, Concord West on 11th December, 1965. The couple's attendants, and the guest list, was very strongly H.C.G.

The Christmas rort at the president's home featured a pipe band!! A sheep roasted on a spit proved inadequate - next year a bullock.

Dave Gant-Thompson dropped in from New Zealand, sporting a beard, showing colour slides.

Off in February - Bob Russell to Tasmania, Roger Booth to the ARMY.

Congratulations to Roger Booth attaining his majority - party 22nd January.

Wedding bells are really hitting the old gang - there will be best wishes offered to Barbara Kaye on 8th February, marrying Simon Chapman of Gulgong.

A future trip programme will be organised at the A.G.M. on 23rd January, but two certainties are Bungonia on Australia Day weekend and diving at Cooleman at Easter.
