CALCITE

Newsletter of the Highland Caving Group.

ISSUE 17
August 1969

P. O. BOX 154
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EDITORIAL

Due to circumstances WELL beyond our control 'Calcite' seems to have become a yearly affair.

However the silence of 18 months has now been broken..

During that time we have lost and gained a few members, invited another society to join our ranks, generally wandered around the state, had a change in leadership, attended the A.S.F. conference in Adelaide, coming home with members filling three positions on the executive, developed a safety harness and organised a demonstration of a stretcher that, despite its cost seems very well suited for cave rescue..

Norm Poulter

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CAVE RESCUE CONTACTS

Norman Poulter

21 Collins Crescent Yagoona West 2199

(H) 701634 (W) 6630321 extn 454

Evalt Crabb

121 Hoxton Park Road Liverpool 2170

(H) 6077038

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FROM THE GRAPE VINE

Once upon a time there was a doline; it was a lonely doline with potential going spacxe underneath,so we bared our backs to the sun and unpluggedit. Then we mozied in and around and joined it in a few places to whatever it would joint to.. It went down some 60ft. and when it started to rumble we showed discretion and choofed off back to the surface..

To get in after being the only ones bothering to bare our backs on and off from 1960 to 1966 was one thing, to have it literally falling down around us was another, and

we have learnt over a period of years to accept this in good grace as part of our lot. But to find out that the brass is now talking about moving in on our efforts 'to start excavating' is quite a different cup of cuppucino.

Now we aren't any different from most speileos, that is we're quiet by nature, curious by instinct and hard working only by necessity. Our ire cannot be aroused - no matter how hard you try - EXCEPT BY THIS.

Just one word of advice - H.C.G. knew about the collapse in this cave and could have done something about getting around it before any more loosening of the surface was done..

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CAVE IDENTIFICATION DURING EXPLORATION

At the February meeting of the Group the desision was reached to erect a temporary structure at the entrance of a cave in which exploration was in current progress. This originates from occassions in the past when late arrivals have had difficulty in locating the rest of the group because no one but those underground knew where they really were. Also it may provide a deterrent, if properly worded, for potential or proven gibberologists from practising their stupidity.

The sign would take the form of a broom stick type pole, driven into the ground near the cave entrance. Stickers and other defacing methods, being contary to cavers philosophy, were naturally discarded in preferance to the stake idea. On this stake, loosely hung so as to flap freely in any breeze and act as an attraction for the sake of locating in scrub-land, would be hung slats, (venetian blind slats) each bearing the name of a member in the exploration team. As each member emerged so they would remove their slat. The last person emerging would also remove the pole.

The top piece of the pole would be surmounted by a spherical sign for warning those other than cavers what was going on. The whole structure would be battered and pitted as well as unpainted so that its souveneir value would be nil.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE BUNGONIA JUNE 1968

Despite mishaps such as multiple flat tyres and trees running out in front of cars, the June practice search and rescue weekend, jointly held by U.N.S.W.S.S. and H.C.G. was reasonably successful.

It was a shame that most societies did not attend but this was due to late notification on our part and previous engagements on the part of individual societies and their members. Societies that were represented are as follows: M.S.S. - S.U.S.S. - U.N.S.W.S.S. - H.C.G.

The purpose of the weekend was devoted souly to the treatment and transport of ijured persons underground.

During the weekend, test were carried out on newly acquired "Air-Splints" and were found to work very well within certain limits. Although they were covered with a tough protective sleeve,- to protect them from punctures- one did develop a leak, in a SEAM, due to very rough handling, bringing to mind another piece of equipment that is urgently needed - a caving stretcher. "Air-Splints" will continue to be used in caves so long as they are used in conjunction with a cave stretcher - where applcable.

In refering to what I said about the Cliefden search and rescue in 1967, about the need for more emphasis on the transport of injured persons underground, the statement still stands even after seeing the results of ours.

A totally collapsable stretcher for underground rescue work is URGENTLY required. The specification of such an item is as follows:

1 Fully collapsable for underground transport.
2 Able to go round corners with a patient straped to it.
3 Capable of strapping or tying the patient in, in sunh a way that he will ride comfortably no matter what position the stretcher is in.
4 Have pulley anchors so that the stretcher and patient can undergo a vertical or horizontal lift.

If anyone has any ideas as to how such an item could be constructed I would be pleased to hear from them, for until this piece of equipment is available in club stores any genuine or simulated rescue will be severely and painfully hampered..

Norm Poulter

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H.C.G. has lost Bob Miller for 2 years. The National Service got him..

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Trips run during 1968

A.S.F. post conference Aust. Day Weekend Cliefden

Easter Weekend Cliefden
Attempt to proove Warreemba-Lock connection theory by extensive digging. Excavation has added another chamber to the Lock Cave. Visits to Transmission,Trapdoor,Gable and sundry crevices.
Attendance 10

Queen's Birthday Weekend Cliefden
Joint trip with O.S.S., U.N.S.W.S.S. and M.S.S. CL32, unnamed, mapped to grade 4, joined to surface in 2 places. Visits to Main Cliefden, Boonderoo,Warreemba,Transmission; extensive surface investigation. H.C.G. attendance 5

Bungonia 8 trips throughout '68
Main project B39 excavation & extension; extensive digging in Beck's Gully. Visits to most caves in the area. Attendance ranging from 3 to 15.

November exploration, photographic. Cliefden

OFFICE BEARERS 1969-70

President:
Norman Poulter 70-1634 (W) 6630321 ext. 454
Secretary:
Bob Russell
Treasurer:
Bill Bryant 729829
Committee:
Ev Crabb 6077038
Howard Dengate
Norman Poulter 701634

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EDIE SMITH AWARD?

Short of a period of deep lament there is precious little we ~~can~~ can do about the Kybosh put on our suggestion at the Adelaide conference re this merritorious idea (wherever it came from).

Our scheme to produce and donate an efigy which epitomised the greatness of this wonderful pioneer and at the same time had the earmarks, at least, of a lasting tribute to the efforts of the recipiant, was chortled about like a bandicoot in a fowl yard and eventually considered too big a decision to be definate about.

And so for another two years there will be no Edie Smith Award simply because it can't be decided in which form the award should be presented.

So why should we worry? Our Federation, who are our leaders, who are the last to be consulted on caving issues by any responsible body (be it Government or Mining), if indeed they are consulted at all, know best. Surely they don't believe that everyone will come to respect the A.S.F. as a wealth of speleological knowledge, gained and pooled by the combined efforts of intelligent and interested adults with insatiable appertites for knowedge in their specialised field, when it is observed how we acknowledge the contributions of our more esteemed collegues?

And what started off as a truly touching acknowledgment to Edie Smith.....

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Highland Members Elected To A.S.F. Executive

At the A.S.F. conference at Goolwa, South Australia three members of H.C.G. were elected to the executive.

They are:

Evalt Crabb
Newsletter Editor
Howard Dengate
Secretary
Norman Poulter
Newsletter Manager

A QUESTION OF SAFETY.

I should imagine that at some time or another everyone has been worried about falling off a caving ladder.

My main concern is that of fatigue on long ladder drops.

It has long been known that when a caver becomes tired while ascending (or descending) a ladder he seems to use more energy stopping to rest than he would by continuing his climb.

This is a dangerous move in itself as the caver, through fatigue, can lose his climbing co-ordination or his grip and thus fall. With this in mind I felt that it was time a ladder harness of some sort was devised.. At the National Falls field day held by U.N.S.W.S.S. in March I tried several methods using waist ropes and abseiling slings. The waist ropes cut into the body when weight was applied while the abseiling sling slipped down the legs during climbing therefore interfering with the climb. However, if the sling did not slip the snap link would, making it too difficult to reach with complete safety. It became apparent that a combination of the two method mentioned would be needed to design a safe and comfortable harness..

The materials used in my design are as follows:

1 LAP/SASH SEAT BELT 1 FLIP LOCK ~~9R~~ (RD30756)

1 STUBAI 'D' type SNAP LINK.

The design of the harness is very simple (see Fig. 1). The main belt is worn around the waist with the (seatbelt) buckle at the side of the body. Next, a length of belt is sewed to the centre of the belt, passed between the legs and then attached to the rear of the belt in the same fashion.

A double thickness of seatbelt webbing forms the loop (F2) which will hold the snap link. This is then sewed to the belt, the centre of which passes over the webbing that goes between the legs. It should be noted that this length of webbing is not adjustable and should therefore be custom fitted to one person and not manufactured on the Ø 'average person' basis.

Any motor trimmer should be able to manufacture this item in less than an hour, MAKING SURE he uses NYLON thread.

If the original type seatbelt buckle is used then a safety catch should b e included in the design so that the buckle cannot be triggered accidentally while still being able to undo it quickly. A flip lock (F3) as used on canopies of sports cars proves to work very well. This is screwed, rivetted and soldered to the buckle and passes through a hole in the actual buckle, (soldered to prevent snagging with webbing).

There are various other uses for this harness. When worn in reverse it can be used as an anchor point for belaying or hauling up the ladder as a person is climbing. One way it really proved its worth to me was at Wee Jasper during our Easter trip to that area. I was descending a 70ft. drop and when about halfway down I looked down and noticed that about 20ft. of ladder had gone through itself. Under

normal conditions the only way to remedy this situation would be to ascend the ladder, pull it up, running the risk of further fouling, untangle it, then letting it down again.

With the aid of the harness however, I was able to descend to the tangle, clip myself to the ladder just above it and sit suspended in space while I untangled the ladder in complete safety. After disconnecting the snap link I continued my descent. Another use of this harness is in the trouble experienced with safety ropes becoming fouled between ladder and rocks in regards overhanges (F4) when the belay points above the overhang and the climber unable to help in rectifying matters. A third person can descend to the overhang, clip himself to the ladder, and with his hands free, he can keep the rope from becoming jammed again, take charge of the rope from the belayer and throw it down to the person who is climbing next.

I feel sure that piece of equipment could become an important part in caving practise and safety..

N.Poulter

Note

The flip lock is also known as 'Stay Put' and can be purchased from Ships Chandlers as it is mainly a nautical commodity. There are several different lengths but the one that I used was the short one RD30756.

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WANDERERS CAVING GROUP JOINS HIGHLAND CAVING GROUP.

During a caving trip to Bungonia in September last year, H.C.G. bumped into the entire membership of the Wanderers Caving Group, instant friendships were made and have continued to mature. So much so that from Easter this year mutual enquiries were voiced for some sort of affiliation. At the June meeting of H.C.G. it was resolved to invite the members of W.C.G. to join Highland while still retaining their Canberra identity of the Wanderers. This move by Highland is in keeping with the wishes of the A.S.F. in encouraging unaffiliated clubs to join established A.S.F. societies.

This offer was subsequently accepted by the members of the Wanderers and now the Highland Caving Group has a Southern Division.

So that they can take an active part in the affairs of this society, it has also been resolved to hold quarterly meetings during caving excursions. The first such meeting will be held at Bungonia on the 6th. of September.

The January AGM has been bought back to early December so that we can combine our Yearly Meeting, Election of Officers and Christmas Party.

We hereby welcome the members of the Highland Caving Group Southern Division into our fold and look forward to many more happy caving trips together...

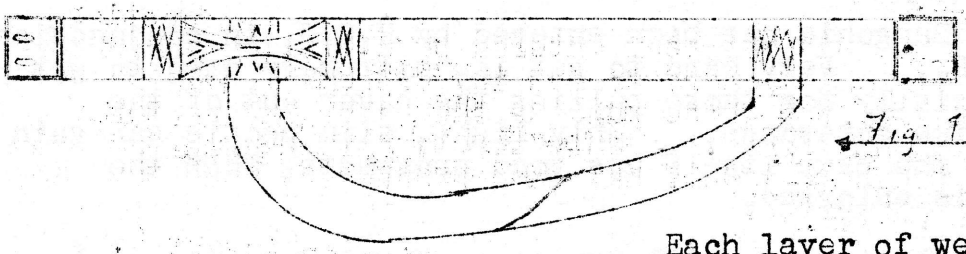
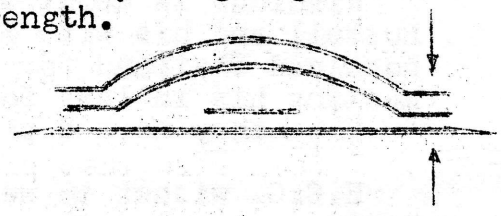


Fig 1

Each layer of webbing (F20) is sewn to main belt seperately to get greater strength.



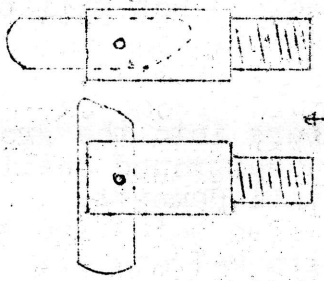


Fig 2

Fig 3 Exploded View

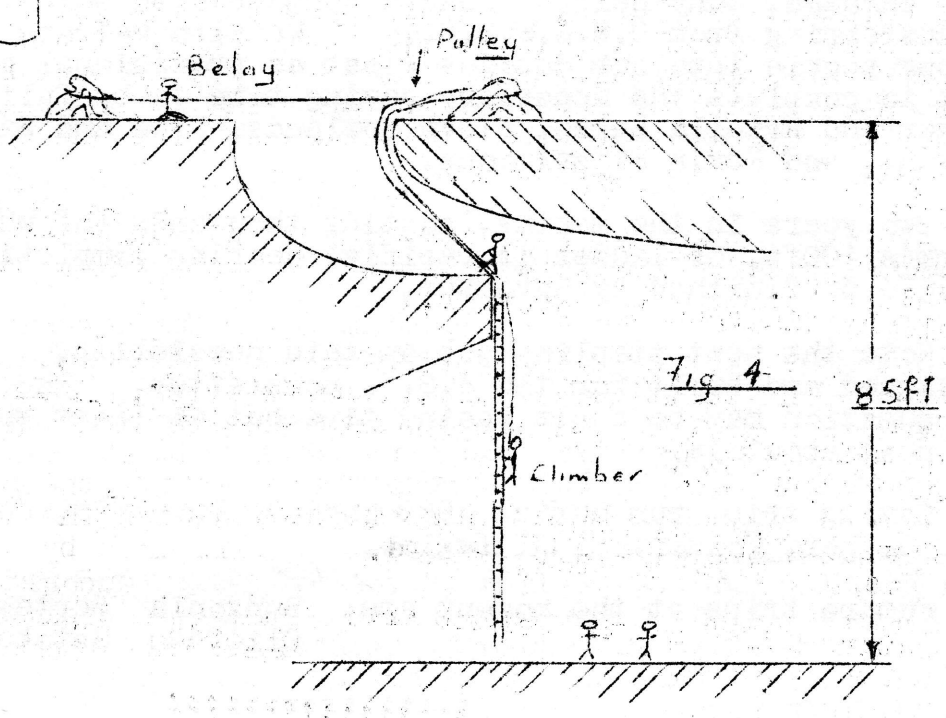


Fig 4

This harness is extremely strong in construction, however it was designed to have the load applied slowly (within Reason) and evenly and would therefore be apt to fail if used for such things as abseiling that puts high loads and ~~stitch~~ stresses on the stitching....

Further information can be supplied to anybody who may be interested.

BITS AND PIECES.

B39 at Bungonia has been entered by H.C.G. in conjunction with M.S.S.. Very hard to get in, extremely hard to get out, especially for those pulling the caver out of the fissure-like enterance. Only light, slim people can gain access. The cave itself has good prospects, WHEN the entrance is enlarged.

Congratulations to Bill Bryant. Married on August 8.

Highland is about to lose another long time member, Bob Russell and his wife Sawana. They are going to Sawana's homeland Thailand for an indefinite period. Bob will be meeting his in-laws for the first time. Ha Ha.
Hope they have a pleasent trip and come back soon.

H.C.G. wishes to welcome some new members into the group having completed the necessary 30 hours underground qualif--ication for membership. They are: Laurell Bennett. Bob Caruana, Tony Hele. Howard Dengate also joins the clan, transferring from U.N.S.W.S.S.. We also welcome six other people into our dubious midst as provisional members yet to complete the necessary caving time to be full members. Roger and Ariella Bance, Steve Bowlands, Mike and Sandra Bryant, and Kevin Fitzsimmons.

Two years in the making, costing thousands (of what?). Norm's 100ft. of ladder is rapidly? nearing completion. Should be finished by November,

Note the neat stapling job on this newsletter. Specially designed and built for the A.S.F. newsletter. The newsletter in question may be a bit behind time but at least they'LL be neat about it.

Caving trips run during 1969 include Bungonia, Jenolan? Wee Jasper, Tolwong Mine, Tuglow.

Future trips at the moment are: Bungonia September 6-7
Cliefden October 4-6

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JOINT TRIP TO TOLWONG MINE.

A sucessful hiking expedition was staged with members of W.C.G. to the abandoned Tolwong Mine near Bungonia during the weekend March 8-9.
We were able to drive to within a short distance from the mine. Next followed a slithering descent 1500ft. into the Shoalhaven Gorge. After wandering about the ruins of the smelters and having a welcome dip in the river it was decided to have lunch before inspecting the mines themselves.
The mines are to be found up a blind canyon,the access

being along a precarious path. Upon entering one horizontal mine shaft it was found that the shoring timbers had become extremely rotten for its entire length, in fact the first five feet of this particular mine had collapsed creating a dam which flooded the floor of the mine to a depth of 8". Using this particular shaft as a yardstick it must be considerd that all the other mines in the area are equally unsafe. However, from a historical point it is well worth the effort to visit this area.

EFFORT is right. It took a heck of a lot of effort to get back up that hill.

On Sunday a successful descent of B22 was achieved, but it was all in vain as foul air was detected just past the lower junction. Approximately 2½ hours were spent in this cave. We left the area at 3 o'clock and all had an incident ~~trip home~~ ... free trip home....

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REPORT ON DEMONSTRATION OF G.Q. RESCUE STRETCHER.

The Highland Caving Group spent the June long weekend at Wee Jasper. During this period Roy Grinham of our Southern Division handed me a pamphlet he had come accross regarding a specialty stretcher. Highland has always being interested in cave safety and so it was decided to make enquiries with the manufacturer and explore the possibility of borrowing a demonstration model for evaluation. This was subsequently confirmed by the manufacturer and a date was fixed for a demonstration weekend, the date set was August 23-24. This date was arranged more than a month beforehand and invitations were sent out to all ASF affiliated societies an unaffiliated society(NSW Baptist C.S.), and one bushwalking society, all this representing 16 societies. An RSVP was included with the invitation so that we would have some idea of how many societies were coming. Only 7 societies had the ~~coutesy~~ courtesy to reply, giving a poor indication of safety minded clubs.

Distance no doubt precluded some societies from attending but this would not have stopped them from replying to our communication

Rain probably helped in discouraging attendance. The number of people who did attend this weekend was 29 representing 6 societies including our own. The attending societies were: BMSS(10) UNSWSS(1),SUSS(2),SSS(3), ISS(3), HCG(10).. These people who did attend were treated to a highly successful weekend (despite the rain), the results of which appear below...

DESCRIPTION of STRETCHER

The design of the stretcher is such that;

The patient is totally enveloped in foam-filled pads and held in place by retaining harnesses.

The patient is carried in normal manner OR in special circumstances, upside down.

Because patient is strapped in he can be lifted in a horizontal or vertical position. In regards vertical lifting, patient can be raised either head or feet first, depending on circumstances.

Design includes First Aid Pocket and position for oxygen bottle.

The metal support bars have unlocking centres which enables the stretcher to negotiate awkward corners with the minimum of difficulty.

The stretcher folds in half and is carried in a rucksack valise weighing 20 lbs. and measuring 36"x 10½"x 6". Assembled dimensions are: 6'x 10".

Opional extras are: Skids for uneven ground, Wheels for even ground and a four point lifting sling for horizontal lifts.

The price of this stretcher is $130.00 including the valise. Further information can be supplied from the,

R.E.D. Company (Aust.) Pty. Ltd.
Keys Road
Moorabbin
Melbourne
Victoria 3189

RESULTS of WEEKEND.

First order of business was a surface demonstration to show everyone the potential of this stretcher. A slight trouble occured when a person was hoisted vertically, feet first. Because there is no provision for a sholder restraint a large proportion of his weight was bought to bear on his head indicating that a shoulder restraint would be applicable for these situations.

After this initial demonstration was completed, the party then moved off to the main cave for the real test, an actual rescue,simulated of course..

Colleen Ward of BMSS kindly consented to be the patient and although she spent more than two hours strapped in the stretcher and was placed and hoisted into some mighty queer positions she never complained and was quite comfortable for the duration saying that the only objects that the stretcher bumped into were the legs of the stretcher bearers.

The simulated rescue was started from the Russian Chamber in the Grill Cave some 200ft. below the surface. The major obstructions to be overcome in getting the stretcher to the surface were; rock chokes, flattener, narrow angular spiral passage, narrow passageway, 15ft. and 30ft. vertical drops.

Due to the large number of participants the party was able to be broken up into two groups. The first party stayed at the drops to rig the pulley points and then await the arrival of the stretcher party. The second party, consisting of patient,bearers and photographers descended to the Russian Chamber. It was hoped to go deeper into the cave but so as not to put too much strain on everybody, especially the patient this move was not adopted.

Originally, there were enough participants to form three bearer parties consisting of four bearers and two guides(one forward-one aft.) to control the raising and lowering of the stretcher, guiding round corners and obstructions as wellas acting as shock absorbers for the jerkiness caused by the main bearers. Negotiation of the flattener was particularly difficult as the bearers were on their knees as well as having their backs bent double. While in this area the stretcher could not be moved more than a foot at a time. The guides were invaluable during this period as they were able to take most of the load and control all necessary movements.

The angular spiral passage connecting the Crystal Palace to the top of the muddy slope came next. It was expected to have the most trouble here(recalling the July search and rescue 1968)

There were minor organisation troubles to begin with but these were ironed out quickly. The trouble experienced was cojestion.

This was caused by the stretcher requiring support in places where there was not much room for people to manouvre between stretcher and walls. At this stage, the guide at the head of the stretcher was assisted by two others and they took all of the load while the bearers, now reduced to two maintained guidance, stability and clearance from obstructions. Negotiation of this passageway was much easier than anticipated and was accomplished in about 15 minutes, the passage being approx. 45ft. long, varying from 2-3ft. wide and a 60 degree angle.

Upon reaching the top of the muddy slope the party stopped to rest and change some of the bearers although most were quite fresh and content to maintain their position. There is not as much physical effort involved in the transport of a stretcher as there is in manhandling a ~~pre~~ person. That is why some of the bearers maintained their position from start to finish.

While the party rested, a runner was sent to inform the rigging party of the stretcher party's location and its ETA at the point of lift. Transportation of the stretcher along, long horizontal passageway with various angled corners was carried out without difficulty. No trouble was experienced in negotiating over acute angled rocks below the pitch chamber.

THE LIFTING

It was planned to make a 15 and 30 ft. lift. The 15 footer failed. It was first attempted with the stretcher in the horizontal position, but could not be positioned correctly to pull the unit over the overhang. Operations were suspended while the position of the pulley was changed. At this time the patient (Colleen) stated that she was experiencing a comfortable ride except for dirt getting in her eyes and trouble with the head restraint, it was continually slipping. The pulley repositioned, the lift was again attempted, this time, a vertical lift. However, this was abandoned due to too much strain being put onto the pulley anchor points. An easier access was located and the stretcher was lifted up and over without too much difficulty. The next lift, 30ft., went off perfectly.

The 4 point lifting sling (optional extra) was used as a stabiliser. A rope was tied to the lifting ring, the other end tied to the suspension strop attatched to the base of the stretcher. With a lot of muscle up top, the stretcher shot up swiftly and evenly. The ease with which the stretcher was handled during this lift was amazing considering the fact that only three of the party had previous experience in cave rescue.

FINAL STAGE.

Now that the worst was over it was a simple matter to carry the stretcher over the rock chokes to the entrance. Before gaining the entrance chamber one last corner had to be negotiated.

This could only rectified by undoing the removing the sliding centre sleeves thus allowing the stretcher to become flexible. The stretcher went round the corner with little difficulty. The major test over we ceremoniously carried the stretcher and Colleen back to camp, she was mighty glad it was all over..

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS.

From the evaluation of this stretcher we make the following recommendations to the design of this item.

HEAD and MOUTH RESTRAINT.

An improved head and mouth restraint is needed to prevent the head from floating about during transport. The chin restraint at present is inadequate for use in cave rescue. The present head restraint is also inadequate. A head and chin harness similar to that worn by racing cyclists would be more appropiate.

ARM RESTRAINT.

The forearms and hands were able to move about during the test. The hands at one stage obstructed passage of the stretcher to the extent that operations were stopped while the hands were repositioned. The arm restraining harness should include a method of holding the hands together. A shoulder restraint of some description for supporting the weight of the body while the patient is being lifted feet first should also be included in this design.

CARRYING HANDLES.

Carrying handles as in a normal stretcher are needed for general unobstructed transport. These handles could slide inside the support tubes when not in use. This suggestion does not mean that the flexible carrying handles are not efficient, but merely as a better way to carry the stretcher for long distances.

ACCESSORIES REQUIRED.

Shield or glasses to protect patients eyes from dust and rocks.

Shoulder harness for stretcher bearers and attatched to stretcher for ease of handling while carrying over rough ground (above and below)

To gain greater stability in raising the patient up a pitch a harness should be designed so that the stretcher could be worn as a backpack while the while the wearer climbs a ladder, the stretcher being hauled up from above matching the climber's rate of ascent.

CONCLUSION.

The conclusion of this author is that this stretcher is

idealy suited for general cave rescue. Admittidly it has shortcommings, but then so have most other things.

Fears were expressed as to the ability of this stretcher to negotiate tight squeezes and corners, but it must be remembered that there is a limit to what one thing can do. the GQ Stretcher was primarily designed for air-sea and industrial rescues and lend itself towards cave rescue, however, there are design limitations. Special stretchers must be designed for specific applications such as tight corners and sqeezes. It would be very difficult if not impossible to design a stretcher to perform perfectly in all situations while still maintaining maximum rigidity and patient comfort.

The best method for cave rescue would be to have a variety of specialty stretchers for specific conditions. This particular stretcher is a start -- a very good start, and therefore should be in the store of any club before that club can say that they are equipped for cave rescue.

It was hoped to purchase one(or more) of these stretchers in association with the other societies of this state(NSW) but we feel that this is now not possible so we have decided to attempte to purchase one ourselves. All donations towards this venture will be thankfully received.

N.Poulter

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Specifications of G.Q. Paraguard Rescue Stretcher.

Tubes	Aircraft quality duralumin
Corset stiffeners	High grade rigid PVC sheet
Covering material	Hypalon coated nylon fabric
Corset straps	5,000lbs. x2" nylon webbing
Carrying handle	5,000lbs. x 2" webbing with PVC grips and S/steel rod stiffeners
Head & foot lifting straps	Twin thickness of 5,000lbs. x 2" webbing
All lifting 'D' rings	2,500lbs. min. breaking strength
Corset buckles	Stainless steel 500lbs. breaking strength
4 point lifting sling	1"x 5,000lbs. webbing on each leg
4 point main lifting ring	10 cwt. S.W.T. Steel
4 Point snap links	'Stubi' 5,000lbs. snap links
Valise	Polyurethane coated nylon fabric.

NOTE..
Slides and photographs taken during this weekend will be available for loan at a later date...

HIGHLAND CAVING GROUP.

MEMBERSHIP LIST. 1969-70.

Miss Laurell BENNETT 5227360

2 Terrace Ave. Sylvania Heights 2224

Mr. William BRYANT 729829

114 Gurney Rd. Villawood 2162

Mr. Robert CARUANA 383585

5/172 Carington Rd. Waverly 2024

Mr. Evalt CRABB 6077038

121 Hoxton Park Rd. Liverpool 2170

Mr. Howard DENGATE

c/o Hawkesbury Agricultural College Richmond 2753

Mr. Tony HELE 6027735

167 Memorial Ave. Liverpool 2170

Mr. Robert MILLER 856419

14 Milton Ave. Eastwood 2206

Mr. Norman POULTER 701634

21 Collins Crescent Yagoona West 2199

Mr. Robert RUSSELL

29/3 School Rd. Dulwich Hill 2203

SOUTHERN DIVISION. Canberra A.C.T.

Mr. Peter BECK
9 McGowan Place Dickson A.C.T. 2602

Miss Trudy BIANDENBUG
28 Currong St. Reid A.C.T. 2602

Mr. Roy GRINHAM 491668
28 Gilbert St. Hackett A.C.T. 2602

Major William PATRICK 491556
Mrs. W.(Bess)PATRICK
Mr. Noel PATRICK
85 Melba St. Downer A.C.T. 2602