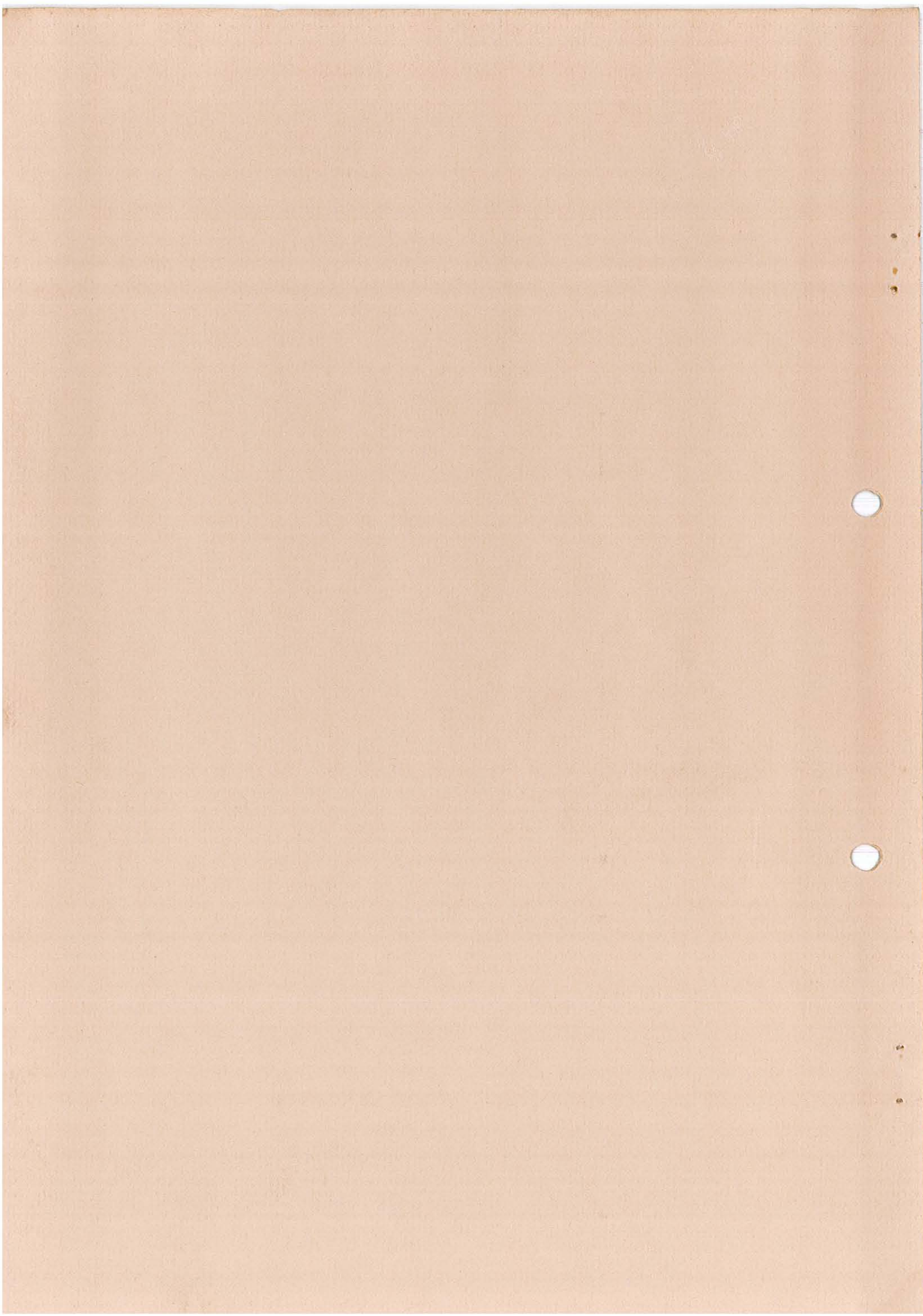


CALCITE

33





NEWSLETTER
OF THE
HIGHLAND CAVING GROUP
(Founded 1957)

PO Box 54, Liverpool, 2170

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EDITORIAL

Welcome back 'Calcite'!

This is the first normal 'Calcite' for several years, and actually contains some current material. We have made it a mix of the serious, the recent past and a couple of recent trip reports, a lighthearted look at what's happening on the social scene, plus a report on HCG's contribution at Jenolan.

I'm not about to promise the regular appearance of 'Calcite', but let's see if we can't make that a fact. After all, the Club is far from inactive. The next 'Calcite' will contain some more articles, a few more recent trip reports, and more 'gossip'.

Still in preparation is 'Calcite 32', which will summarise HCG's activity for the past several years. Writing up trips has not been one of our strong points, but hopefully the re-appearance of 'Calcite' will spur us on in this area.

Chris Dunne

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The following paper was presented by Evalt Crabb at the Kanangra-Boyd Karst Seminar in August.

COLONG CAVES - A PERSPECTIVE

by Evalt Crabb

INTRODUCTION

This paper on Colong Caves attempts to deal with two aspects of significance: the uniqueness of the cave itself is one factor, particularly its length and complexity; the other factor, of at least equal significance, is the relevance of the mystical or spiritual value of the area.

The area can still be regarded as having "wilderness" value, despite the localised scarring of the landscape. Human experience of such wilderness shapes the attitudes of any perceptive visitor by developing a special feeling of being as one with natural processes. This attitude reflects into the broader society in the assuming of greater responsibility for preserving essential ecological systems. Perhaps the most outstanding person to have experienced and enjoyed the magic of Colong, and in fact the broader Kanangra region, was the late Myles Dunphy. Without his concern and persistence, the area may have become so modified that its essential value and character would have been lost.

In this presentation no attempt has been made to discriminate between Colong the cave, and Colong as a "place". The relationship between the cave and its surface surroundings is entwined through geomorphic, hydrological and biological interdependence. No apology is offered for freely shifting discussion between cave and landscape.

NOMENCLATURE

The name Colong is derived from the aboriginal "cul-long" or "cool-long". The pronunciation is relevant, the different spellings are merely various English interpretations.

The "long" component is understood to mean "valley", or "stream in a valley". The same origin applies to Adelong, Megalong, etc. Hence, it is wrong to have ascribed "long" to the naming of Mt. Colong. The "cul" or "cool" component is the aboriginal word for native bear. This is applicable to place names such as Coolac, Coolangatta and many others. The word is further corrupted into "koala".

McCarthy (Australian Museum) ascribed the word to meaning "wombat"; Trickett, in describing the origin of the name, regarded it as meaning "bandicoot". However, because of the "koala" derivation, "native bear" is the most likely.

THE 19TH CENTURY

Research by R. H. Cambage, and much later by R. E. Mitchell and E. Moxley, interpreting "Historical Records of N.S.W.", indicates that the expedition led by Francis Barrallier in 1802 established a base camp at "Coolong". It was from this base camp that the expedition was finally aborted, at Barrallier Falls, on Middle Christys Creek in the Tartarus Deep.

The area was first settled in 1827, when Samuel Blackman leased an area of 1,000 ha. While establishing this lease, Surveyor Dixon officially named Mt. Colong.

It has been generally understood that the Key, Lannigan's and Onslow Caves were discovered by Lannigan about 1880. Considering the widespread local knowledge of the caves and the extent of damage by the time of Trickett's visit in 1899, it is more likely that the caves were known before this time.

Oliver Trickett presented a report on the caves and the area in the Department of Mines Annual Report, 1899.

His quite descriptive report mentions that the limestone outcrops "more or less continue for 5 miles [8 km], caves occurring at intervals throughout the entire length, the width of the beds being from a quarter to a half a mile [4-800 m]".

He recommended naming the caves "Colong Caves" - locally, they had also been known as Bindook Caves.

The Key Cave is reported as having two entrances, and being 100 ft [30 m] deep, 200 ft [60 m] wide and 70 ft [23 m] high. It contained tinted stalactites and stalagmites; there were four large pillars, which had sunk as the floor subsided, leaving a gap of 2 ft [60 cm] at the roof.

Personal observations over the period 1952 to 1959 revealed a massive change to Key Cave; from a closed cave with two entrances in 1899, it had become an Arch due to collapse of part of the front wall. A report by Barnes (1928) implies that this collapse was recent. During massive flooding between 1956 and 1958, the front wall collapsed a further 2 m and Cave Creek was scoured approximately 1 m deeper.

Reverting to Trickett's report, he described Onslow Cave as a series of narrow passages with water up to knee-deep, and numerous bats. (Trickett's report is dated May 1899; his bat sightings support recent reports that Colong is a significant wintering site.)

In describing Lannigan's Cave, he estimated the length at 600 ft [200 m] and mentioned large accumulations of bat dung. The speleothems are well described, particularly King Solomon's Temple and the Pride of the Valley. Of the Terraces, some 10 ft [3 m] wide and 80 ft [25 m] high, he writes "... consist of a series of crystalline basins enclosed within white-frilled and delicate rims, some of which are a foot [30 cm] in height. A beautiful group of stalactites and pillars serve to enhance the beauty of the steps. Taken as a whole, the formation is surpassingly beautiful."

After some comment that generally Colong does not compare favourably with show caves at Jenolan, Wombeyan and Yarrangobilly, he adds "... although the Terraces in Lannigan's Cave are more extensive and beautiful than any similar formation in any other cave in the Colony, as far as I am aware."

He describes the Red and Coral Caves and then mentions Lyttleton Cave at Church Creek, which he did not visit as he had been informed that it was not particularly interesting. There is also mention of the abundance of birds, fish and "game".

On the 2nd September 1899, Reserve No. 29837 for the Preservation of Caves, was gazetted, covering the whole of the limestone deposits. It is presumed that this was on Trickett's recommendation.

The Reserve was later proclaimed a Bird and Animal Sanctuary.

THE 1900'S

About a decade after Trickett, a new figure emerged, Myles Dunphy. He was to become the most significant activist for the protection of the mountain environment he so loved, particularly the Kanangra-Colong area.

Responsible for forming the Mountain Trails Club of NSW in 1914 (the forerunner of the Sydney Bushwalking Club), he first visited Colong in October 1913; he drew his first map of the area in 1914; his last trip to the caves was Christmas, 1932.

After many submissions, Reserve No. 67062 for the Preservation of Fauna and Flora, an area of 37,500 ha adjacent to the Caves Reserve, was proclaimed in October 1937.

In September 1939, the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council (Secretary, Myles Dunphy) lodged an objection with the Department of Mines to proposed granting of Mineral Leases at Mt. Armour. A similar objection was raised with the Department of Lands, where there had been previous discussion proposing a Bindook-Colong Marsupial Park. These submissions also proposed the area be proclaimed for public recreation. In the period previous to this, all cedar trees on the limestone had been removed and the timber-getters blamed for shooting out the native fauna. It was felt that a Management Trust, as required for Public Recreation Reserves, would offer more protection.

The original Reserve, No. 29837, was replaced by Reserve No. 68800 in November 1939; this new Reserve was for Public Recreation and Preservation of Caves. Soon after, the mineral leases were refused.

In 1956, there were new applications for mineral leases for the Church Creek-Mt. Armour area. Again, following widespread objections, the leases were refused.

The story was repeated: in 1963, a group from the Sydney Bushwalking Club found core samples, evidence of prospecting, at a camp at Colong Swamp; again, an application for mineral leases. By 1965, the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs was raising objections, and the architectural firm, Loder and Dunphy, spearheaded the now well-known "Colong Campaign" - fortunately, a successful campaign.

But Dunphy did much more than campaign against mineral exploitation; between 1922 and 1932 he developed the concept of a Greater Blue Mountains National Park: from near Rylestone at the northern end to Bindook near the southern boundary. This scheme was submitted to the Surveyor-General and the Blue Mountains Shire Council in June 1932. The Blue Mountains National Park, the central division of Dunphy's Scheme, was proclaimed in October

1937. The northern and southern divisions were later to become the Wollemi and the Kanangra-Boyd National Parks.

From the 1920's until the mid 1950's, Colong was visited mainly by dedicated bushwalkers; sometimes as a feature along their route and sometimes it was their destination. During this period, squeezes were opened, expediting access between Onslow and Lannigan's Caves; also at this time, it is understood that the guano was mined. No substantive record appears to exist of these things, but folklore abounds. The most recent of the cavers from this period was Bill Woof, who played a role in the present author's finally finding the way to Colong.

During the 1950's, caving clubs started to develop, usually based on a dominant bushwalker. This led to a significant rise in the usage, but not necessarily protection, of the caves. Until 1958, access to Colong was via Burragorang Valley; with the completion of Warragamba Dam, the only access was via Oberon and Mt. Werong. Unfortunately, it would appear that the more demanding journey led to vehicles pushed closer and closer to the caves - thrill of the journey gaining pre-eminence over leisurely interest in cave phenomena. It is this behaviour which causes such dilemma in establishing management principles today.

COLONG CAVE

Turning at last to the cave itself: although there are many caves in the area, it is reasonable to describe the main cave and ascribe its features to the remainder. The main cave is formed in a bed of Silurian limestone, the bedding being tilted to a near vertical position, the strike bearing about 340° . The lens is about 2-3 km long, average height 150 m above Lannigans Creek, but rising to a maximum height of 210 m. It is divided into three sections by the intrusion of Lannigans and Cave Creeks. Analysis of this lens indicates CaCO_3 99.1%, MgCO_3 0.4%; at the northern end of the deposit at Mt. Armour it becomes CaCO_3 98.1%, MgCO_3 0.6% with a corresponding higher impurity rate.

The cave has developed largely along the strike, on at least three levels; these levels are not distinctly separate and there is no simple sequence of development; interlinking occurs between levels by both collapse and stream effect. Throughout the cave there is evidence of phreatic origins and stream development.

There has been a recent proposal by Osborne (1985) that a more complex development has occurred in a few locations due to intrusive dykes. He proposes that the Amber Cave-Landslide Cavern, The Cleft and the Rockfall Chamber near Woof's Cavern display development inconsistencies which are compatible with the influence of dykes, and relates the position of surface features to these same dykes. Although not previously mentioned in reports on the Colong Karst, the proposal sits comfortably with the present author and it offers an explanation for some personal observations.

The cave is decorated with speleothems throughout its length and on all levels; at the higher levels and near the entrances they are inactive and vandalised, but towards the more inaccessible northern section most of the speleothems are active and damage is limited. The Terraces, mentioned by Trickett, are now very muddy but there has not been too much physical damage. An encrusted wallaby skeleton is in a crystal pool near Woof's Chamber - this is believed to be of fairly recent origin.

Although there are extensive sediments throughout the cave, it is possible that no research work has yet been done. Certainly, no work has yet been published on the sedimentology or palaeontology of the cave.

Similarly, there have been many random observations of the hydrology of the main cave, but no substantive work. For example, the main stream (?) through the cave has a shallow gradient; it is contacted at several points but has not been followed continuously; variations in flow rate and levels are not great on a seasonal basis, and inflow or inflows are not identified. Does the cave drain Lannigan's Creek, Cave Creek, both, and/or is there a plateau level aquifer draining through the cave?

BIOLOGICAL

A survey of bat populations in NSW (Dwyer and Hamilton-Smith, 1965) reveals that Colong main cave is a major wintering site for the Bent Wing Bat (Miniopterus shreerbersii). This is supported by bats being mentioned in virtually every report on visits to the cave since the earliest times and by the extensive guano deposits previously mentioned. Effects of increased human visitation on bat usage of the cave have not been studied.

The Eastern Horseshoe Bat (Rhinolophus megaphyllus) and Miniopterus shreerbersii have been reported at a cave at Church Creek, but these are random sightings only and no inference should be drawn on the regularity or nature of bat populations in that area. Certainly, the guano deposits suggest a regular or long-term habitation.

Glenn Hunt has reported two species of Harvestmen from the family Triaenonychidae from Colong. One of these species, Holonuncia spp., is also found at Isaacs Creek, Tuglow, Cliefden, Bungonia and Wee Jasper, and shows the cavernicolous adaptations of long and thin legs and depigmentation. The other is Holonuncia sp., endemic to Colong, which has much smaller eyes than other cave or surface species in the genus and is the only Australian Harvestman to have undergone eye regression. The eye mound is also relatively low in the Colong species.

Two species of cave spider from the Aranesmorph group have been reported by Mike Gray from Colong: Pholcidae physocyclus and Amaurobiidae Stiphidion facetum. Both are troglophilic but it would appear that neither are endemic species.

These troglophiles are regarded as an important, if fluctuating, component of cave faunas, particularly in the twilight zone. They are the primary invertebrate predators of this zone and their activities affect the energy regime of the whole cave.

There does not appear to be any other systematic biological work carried out and recorded. This has been confirmed by discussion with Graeme Smith. However, close examination of the cave should reveal much more: with a low gradient stream, inflow of humic material at many points and a high rate of bat visitation providing a high level of energy input, conditions are ideal for an extensive biological system.

A surface species reported from the area is the extremely rare Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby (Petrogale Penicillata). Originally reported from the Colong area, it appears that the colony has migrated to Church Creek, where there is less human disturbance. Although it has been suggested that this species prefers limestone terrain for the shelter provided by small caves, the present author suggests that its limestone habitat is based more on a

preference for grazing on plant varieties natural to limestone-based soils. The other known colony, of about 40 adults, has been reported by Keith Oliver (pers. comm.) to exist in the upper Jenolan valley.

Billys Creek and Church Creek

It was not intended to detail the caves at Billys and Church Creeks, but instead to present an extremely brief summary. At Billys Creek there are three known caves, and at Church Creek 19 caves are identified, the largest being 360 m long and well-decorated. In both areas there is evidence of bat visitations as previously mentioned and there have been random reports that the caves may be biologically significant. Also reported from Church Creek are extensive fossil exposures and deposits of subfossil-skeletal bones.

POTENTIAL

From the foregoing, it is obvious that little work of a speleological nature has been undertaken at Colong. A fuller programme had been in vogue at Church Creek, gathering material for the Colong Campaign in the late 1960's, but this has not been pursued. Due to the difficulty of the terrain and the long travelling time involved, most visitors opt to re-visit familiar caves. This also applies to "walking-through" visitors. Potential for many further discoveries certainly exists, but this could only be realised by disciplined programming of trips by people with specialised skills.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

In proposing some criteria to be assessed for priority in any management plan (ie. for a National Park or Wilderness Area), I would like to detail a personal attitude on values. I completely reject the arrogant concept instilled over centuries of Western religious teaching, that dominion over earth and all other living things is humanity's "God-given right". It is just this anthropocentric approach that has created the need for areas to be excluded from exploitation by the creation of National Parks or similar. As an extension of this statement, simple compassion should recognise the individual rights of all species.

In a more scientific sense, it is recognised that all living species are components of vital ecological systems. Extinction of one species removes a link in the closed chain of an ecosystem, endangering the integrity of that ecosystem. This extinction abruptly halts or negates any future evolution of that species and decreases the diversity of the genetic pool on which all ecological systems are dependent. Although extinction of a species may not be the deliberate intention of mankind, nevertheless man is the only living causal influence, by selfish destruction of habitat.

Relating this attitude to Colong - the karst area of the Kanangra-Boyd National Park covers a minute portion of the whole park, making the limestone-based soil and its dependent life forms a very small component of the total landscape. The combination of latitude, altitude, climatic pattern, hydrological conditions and slope-induced light/shade and temperature conditions, make the Colong karst absolutely unique. Because of this uniqueness, relationships with adjacent ecological systems are also unique. That we have very little knowledge or understanding of these ecological systems, which may well have many endemic species, is our weakness. It is essential that whatever is done to "manage" the area, the fragile environment is not further endangered.

Within the caves, the most fragile phenomena are fossil bone deposits. Any such deposits are of extinct species - therefore unrenewable. They are of very limited quantity, because only a cave environment offers protection from weathering forces. Apart from their academic value, an understanding of extinct species and their subsequent evolution can by inference relate to the evolution of man and his effects. This longer scale understanding of the human role will lead, hopefully, to increasing wisdom in man's behavioural patterns.

In a similar manner, inorganic sediments should have a high order of protection - they provide an accessible record of past landforms and geological/hydrological changes. This data can be correlated to studies of biota from the same periods, greatly adding to our understanding.

Deep concern for preserving these fragile phenomena should not overwhelm the need, in a National Park, for preserving the integrity of the visual landscape. The purpose of human usage of these areas should be enrichment of human experience by being part of an unspoiled (un-modified) landscape. Opportunity for this is constantly being diminished. Vehicular use, car camping and picnicking should be kept well away from natural, fragile areas - there should not be directional signs or any other encouragement to visit these areas.

A management plan is a tool to resolving conflict and not a protective device in itself. It is merely a means of extending the time base before irreparable damage occurs. The conflict arises between public demand for unrestricted usage and the need to preserve our ecosystems. The most common compromise is to control the quantity, and in an imprecise way, the quality of visitations. To this end, a permit system for access to caves is in force in many areas. Unfortunately, this has seldom been effectively policed due to manpower limitations.

Visitations can be lessened by increased difficulty of access; presumably only the more dedicated and, by inference the more careful, would bother trying to reach Colong-Church Creek. During discussions held by the New South Wales Speleological Council, almost all member societies favoured the closing-off of vehicular access beyond Bat Camp (note spelling!) on the Oberon Stock Route and at Tonalli Gap on the track from Yerranderie to Church Creek.

One of my personal activities recently has been to improve the safety and quality of caving undertaken by members of the Scouting movement, changing the motivation from using caves as a site for activity to observing and understanding cave phenomena. This has been quite successful in its so-far limited form. The greatest improvement has been achieved by cutting party size down to a minimum safe number, allowing the participants to concern themselves with the cave rather than the party.

Although the caving fraternity is partially self-regulatory via the mechanisms of the Australian Speleological Federation, there may be much gained by NPWS playing a role by increasing our awareness and understanding of ecological needs.

An even greater need may exist for the community at large to be better informed about the fragility of ecological systems, the importance of preserving habitat and similar aspects of conservation. I see the NPWS as having the appropriate terms of reference and the expertise needed to enhance such public awareness and understanding. I suggest that such an endeavour be considered.

A feature of many management plans is the provision to monitor the rate of decay or damage to a place. This is an admirable concept, but unfortunately it has not been developed. Having a reference cave is fine, but what are the criteria to be measured? Muddy/not muddy, broken/unbroken, may not be a good choice of criteria; rate of extinction of biota is totally wrong - obviously, monitoring and assessment procedures need to be further developed.

One development which may influence the drafting of a management plan for the Kanangra-Boyd National Park is the proposed Proclamation of "Wilderness Areas and Wild Rivers Act".

The Minister for the Environment, Bob Carr, formed, and last year received the final report from, a working party to investigate and prepare a draft of such an Act. In the proposed Act, one of the 36 proposed Wilderness Areas is called Kanangra, from Jenolan River at the north and the Oberon Stock Route as the southern boundary, taking in Colong and Church Creek but excluding Tuglow. At the time of writing the status of this proposed Act is not known, but it is believed to be ready for presentation at the next sitting of State Parliament. The defined area is almost identical to that proposed by Myles Dunphy in 1932. Under this Act, proclaimed Wilderness Areas would be managed as such by NPWS, but with appropriate guidelines. Implementation of this Act would satisfactorily answer the thrust of my personal attitudes, and I look forward to that event.

In closing, I would like to propose a restoration project in Colong Cave, and I am confident that a large number of volunteers would be found to participate. I refer to the Terraces: they were so highly regarded by Trickett and subsequent visitors, and the mud coating is fairly recent. I do not think that there is much physical damage to the formation. I, at least, am prepared to participate.

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TRIP REPORT: HCG IN TASMANIA, December 1986/January 1987

Participants: Greg and Lyn Tunnock, Mark Laurendet, Dirk Stoffels, Sue Cade (from New Zealand).

Between the 18th December and 5th January 1987 a contingent of HCG visited the sunny shores of the Apple Isle, Tasmania. The five of us travelled to Melbourne on Thursday, 18th December in Dirk's vehicle. We spent the night in a caravan park at Coburg in Melbourne's northern suburbs.

The following day, Friday 19th, was spent window shopping around Melbourne's outdoor equipment stores and sightseeing around Melbourne, including a visit to the Science Museum and the Zoo. In the afternoon Dirk, the vehicle and all our gear went to join the sea ferry "Able Tasman" for the trip across Bass Strait, while the remainder of us made our way to Melbourne's airport for the flight to Devonport. We arrived in Devonport in the evening and found a suitable beach to camp on for the night.

In the morning after meeting Dirk at the ferry terminal we proceeded to Hobart via Launceston. Whilst in Hobart we stayed with friends at the inner suburb of Newtown.

Sunday 21st was our first day of caving. The five of us, together with Steve Bunton and Hugh (the visiting Pommie), travelled to the Junee-Florentine area to explore and photograph a section of the Growling Swallet cave system. A higher than normal flow of water made progress through the cave quite sporting. The party travelled in as far as the first sump before retracing our steps back to the surface.

On Monday, 22nd we were off to the Ida Bay area to visit Exit Cave. After receiving permission from the limestone quarry manager to drive to the top of the quarry we commenced the walk from there. The water level in Exit Cave was higher than normal, as it was the previous day in Growling Swallet. We found the bridge had been swept away. Most of the time was spent photographing the front sections of the cave, such as the Colonnades and Pendulum chambers.

With a need to replenish our food supplies, the next day was spent doing just that. The remainder of the day was taken up with a tourist trip to historic Port Arthur and some of the coastal landforms in that area.

Back to Ida Bay area on Wednesday 24th to complete a trip through Midnight Hole/Mystery Creek Cave ("Entrance" Cave). Entering the cave system by Midnight Hole, we abseiled the six pitches, pulling the ropes down behind us and passing through the squeeze at the bottom into Mystery Creek Cave. We left the system by its entrance, with a few stops along the way for photos.

Christmas Day was spent eating, bouldering on the walls at Hobart High School and having a very close inspection of Tasman Arch.*

On Boxing Day the group plus Steve and Hugh travelled to the Freycinet National Park to traverse the Hazard Ranges - an excellent walk, though the weather was closed in, limiting the viewing of some magnificent scenery.

On Saturday 27th we were on the move, leaving our friends in Hobart to set up camp at Mole Creek Caravan Park.

On Sunday 28th we visited Croesus Cave in the morning, returning to the lower gated entrance after reaching the Golden staircase. After lunch we walked down the river to Lynd's Cave and spent the evening exploring it.

Monday 29th saw a day of photography of the pretties in Ghenghis Khan. Later that evening Mark and I rigged the pitch in Kubla Khan's lower entrance in readiness for our through trip the following day.

Tuesday 30th - now in Kubla Khan, making our way along the man-made path of reflective trail markers and sandbags. The path, a controversial issue, had been installed to stop mud being walked through the cave. The trip through started at the top gated entrance and continued down the first three pitches into the Opium Den, on to the Forbidden City, a side trip into the Silk Shop, on through to the Khan where the trail markers stopped, then down through Sally's Folly, abseiling another pitch to the stream passage. From there a side trip into the Pleasure Dome, afterwards continuing upstream till meeting the lower entrance chamber, to complete the trip by prussiking out its pitch. We had spent a total of 13 hours underground, much of which had been camera time.

The change of the year was spent in Herbert's Pot, exploring the stream passage upstream from the surface connection. This trip proved to be somewhat less eventful than Dirk's previous, when Steve Bunton had had an accident in the downstream section of the cave. On the way out Lyn was on the top of the pitch near the entrance when we welcomed in the New Year.

New Year's Day was spent buying walking food, touring around the Tasmanian Devil Park and a visit to King Solomon's Tourist Cave. An inspection of the caving hut at Mole Creek showed that it is in a state of disrepair, with very little signs of recent use.

After cleaning and packing our caving gear away on Friday 2nd, we switched to bushwalking mode to do some walking in the Walls Of Jerusalem/Cradle Mountain areas. Dave Colburn also joined us for the trek. Dirk, Mark and Sue turned around on Saturday 3rd as planned, to return to Sydney to the ordinariness of work, or in Sue's case, Speleotec 87; Lyn, Dave and I continued walking through to Lake St. Clair. Lyn and I returned to Sydney on Saturday 10th, while Dave flew off to New Zealand to take in some mountaineering.

Greg Tunnock

* via SRT

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TRIP REPORT: WEE JASPER, 30-31 June 1987

Participants: Cathy Brown, Chris Dunne, Paul Garling and Loretta (CCOG),
Chris Lown (CCOG), Ian Lutherborough, Lindsay Matheson, Ann McLaren

After the usual arrival in the wee small hours of Saturday morning and a couple of hours sleep (in the rain), the consensus was to "hit the Dip", with the intention of fully exploring the whole five series.

Entry to the cave was made via the Rubbish Tip - a new fixed steel cable made the climb down a lot easier than usual. We proceeded through the Slab Chamber (Series 2) to the Daylight Hole chamber, where Ann and Chris took a sample of moonmilk from the wall in the Mezzanine Level. Meanwhile, Ian set up a ladder to the Rat Hole and began feeding bodies through to Series 3.

It was decided to head through to the Series 3 Extension via a nasty 6m climb (which Lindsay decided was easier to drop from - luckily, no damage). At this point Cathy and Paul opted out and decided to wait for our return. When we eventually did, they had become quite cold (from waiting around in the draught) so they and Lindsay headed out of the cave. Ian, Chris and Ann finished exploring the Extension and took a few more moonmilk samples, one of which was taken from a very interesting little chamber near the roof. This chamber is mostly lined with crumbly red clay, but the bedrock walls are covered in thick moonmilk with clusters of aragonite appearing to "grow" out of it.

We then did a bit of scrambling and climbing through a rock pile and on into Series 4. Exhaustion (Ann's) finally took over and we withdrew without seeing Series 5.

After the usual late start on Sunday morning (noon); an examination of wet, cold and yukky overalls from the day before; and a general complaint of tired, aching muscles, there was a unanimous (well, almost) vote not to go caving but instead do a bit of bushwalking. The Lands Department have taken over the management of the area and the camping area at Micalong Creek has been overhauled, probably owing to the construction of the Hume and Hovell Walking Track. We followed the creek along upstream for a short stretch and then headed up the slope to a bluff which overlooks the Micalong Creek area. (Actually, caving would have been easier!)

Smoked oysters, salami, cheese and crackers on the bonnet of Lindsay's car (sorry about the smell Lindsay) seemed a fitting finish to an enjoyable weekend, even if we didn't accomplish a lot speleowise.

Ann McLaren

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TRIP REPORT: BUNGONIA, 11/12 July 1987

Participants: Ian, Ann, Cathy, "Flash" O'Driscoll, Sunny, Jenny (Ian's niece), Nicole (Ian's niece's friend), five fellow workers of Ian's (names forgotten), and three passers-by who were waylaid by Flash.....

Ian and his "harem" (Ann, Sunny, Jenny and Nicole) arrived Friday night after a minor embarrassment in the Marulan traditional-raisin-toast shop. Camping under the stars having proved a rather wet experience, we awoke late on Saturday morning and almost abandoned any hope of our troops of beginners making an appearance.

Cathy and Flash eventually showed up and so we trogged up regardless, only to have the hordes begin arriving before we could make a get-away. An hour or so later we had everybody suitably equipped with helmets, lights and overalls and proceeded to lead our nappy-brigade into the "bowels of the earth" (well, Grill Cave, actually).

All went well until we got to the low-crawl-with-the-mud-puddle-in-the-middle; it took a bit of persuasion to get the girls to dirty their overalls, but it was quite amusing to watch them coming through one by one on their fingertips and toes (just like we showed them, so they wouldn't have to get wet). Unfortunately females are not renowned for arm strength and more than one ended up flat on her face in the puddle! (Great stuff!)

Actually, we did very well, getting down as far as "Safe from the Russians". The boys went on a little further, while the girls opted to exit under the leadership of "Wrong-Way" McLaren, who did, unfortunately, go the wrong way yet again. Luckily, Jenny must have her uncle's genes, as she remembered the way out and put us more "experienced" cavers to shame. We were still on our way out when we met up with the boys, who had taken a short-cut, and we all headed out together.

Most of the beginners were impressed - a few not so impressed. Back at camp for lunch, Ian had a temporary attack of amnesia (forgetting what a b..... of a cave the Bunny Room is) and persuaded Ann, Cathy, Flash and "Stew-bones" (a Rover friend of Flash's) to join him in the most masochistic display of insanity ever to hit HCG:

The Bunny Room is aptly named - you'd have to be a "bunny" to want to do it! There surely isn't one spot in the entire cave bigger than one metre in diameter. (Mostly much smaller. Anyone needing proof, just get Flash to "flash" his wounds - he got stuck half-way down and spent an hour or two lying there like Winnie-the-Poo, waiting to get thinner.) We eventually dropped down a small pitch at the end of the cave and actually got to stand upright! Several leads running off this pitch were thoroughly explored - Ann pushed a pressure tube leading up-stream towards Solar Cave, which proved interesting, as a slight breeze was coming through. Ian squeezed through a hole higher up in the wall, which unfortunately didn't go. He did, however, manage to dislodge a nice sharp rock which bounced off Stew-bones' head and then hit Ann in the chest and flattened her. (Ian was becoming more popular by the minute!)

Going out took a lot longer than going in, as the whole cave drops on a sort of thirty degree slope downwards, so that entering one has gravity to help progress. Exiting was a sort of "grunt, groan, swear, and

get-the-guy-behind-to-push" type of affair. (And all the time threatening to do unspeakable things to Ian as soon as we got out of there.)

Get out we did, and stumbled back to camp. Our poor beginners were having a wonderful little soiree round the camp-fire when we straggled out of the bush, looking like death warmed up - no, not even warmed-up. One look at us and I think they were having second thoughts about caving.

Sunday - Plan A: Do some abseiling practice, then a B4-5 through trip. At this stage, a couple of starters were a little apprehensive, but we soon had them running down the cliff wall in the B5 doline. Actually, they were having so much fun that it got too late to go caving. Plan B: A bit more abseiling, then back to camp for a cup of tea, pack the cars, and off home.

All in all, a very sociable and enjoyable weekend.

Ann McLaren

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TRIP REPORT: COLONG, 16-18 October 1987

Participants: Chris Dunne, Mimi Humphries, Ian Lutherborrow, Ann McLaren, Lindsay Matheson, Michael O'Driscoll, Brian Race, Tony Gardener and Karen, Mick and Jenny Kelly (CCOG) and 3 of their Venturer boys.

Friday, 16th October dawned overcast with inclement weather forecast for that day and Saturday.

Arrangements were made to meet Ann and Chris at the orange 'Meccano Set' near the end of the F5. What hadn't occurred to me was theft by persons unknown - only the concrete bases remained!

Neither driver was fooled.

The remainder of the journey to Batsch Camp via Wombeyan Caves proved uneventful. The third vehicle in the troupe had arrived earlier in the evening. A billy of tea was brewed and quickly drunk; then sleeping bags rolled out and entered, so that the required three hours of sleep could be obtained before the sun rose above tree level.

The fourth and final vehicle, carrying Ian, arrived at about 9 am with Ian insisting that we had camped in the wrong spot. Rightly or wrongly, the argument was won by the majority. Thirteen people were at least at the right location to start the walk to the caves by about 10 am.

All the stories relating to the infamous 'Acetylene Spur' were soon to be confirmed. Five minutes into the descent I considered turning back, but to admit to my lack of resolve would be an embarrassment I couldn't live with, so down I strolled (slithered), landing on my tail at least once.

Camp was set up in the large cavern, claims being quickly staked on the flattest spots that could be found.

The entrance to Colong Cave was located and enthusiastically the entire group dived underground. After an hour of searching for the correct route we returned to camp for lunch and to consider the afternoon's attempt. With a quick lunch eaten, we returned to the cave, this time with greater success.

After passing through 'Kings Cross' we arrived at the 'Crystal Pool', via the longest route - naturally. The gate was located soon after and we were on our way, the cave becoming wetter and the formations more plentiful. The final chamber (Woofs Cavern) has many excellent formations which, surprisingly, remain relatively undamaged by visitors.

Returned to camp; prepared and consumed dinner; crashed early.

One member, who shall remain nameless, ventured out of the cavern entrance in search of a comfortable log - that person's torch, if it worked at all, giving a very feeble light. As a result, said person missed the entrance altogether. By sheer luck, another person ventured outside for a similar reason, but with a stronger light. This light was seen by the first party, who was then able to locate the entrance, saving himself (or herself) a certain embarrassment.

During the night strange sounds could be heard from the direction of the campfire - for example, billies and utensils being knocked around. Could it have been a party member with the late night munchies or something more sinister? After a short investigation, a small rat-like animal was found enjoying the leftovers. It eventuated that several people had been visited by those creatures as well. With the arrival of daylight at the cavern entrance the early risers were inspired to rebuild the fire, obtain more water and produce the first billy of tea (Venturers CAN be handy to have around!) After a short discussion it was discovered that more than one species of nocturnal thief was busy during the night - maybe one of them knocked off my knife!

With breakfast completed, the campsite was cleaned and packs loaded ready for departure. On arrival at the base of Acetylene Spur most members mentally prepared themselves for the climb ahead. Ian and Chris, having much excess energy, decided to explore the area around the bottom of the spur for an hour or so (searching for 'Red Cave', which they never did find). Did they really think they could lose excess weight in just one hour?

The day had turned out to be a hot one, just perfect for the climb ahead! After puffing, panting, groaning and much cursing, the party made it to the top.

Walking from here back to the cars was a breeze. Ian and Chris soon caught up with the tail-enders and lunch was then taken. Soon after, all vehicles split the scene and headed for home.

The weekend was enjoyed by all who participated.

Lindsay Matheson

EXTRACURRICULAR.....

Jenolan and the Great Quest for Kudos

Just in case you don't read the Minutes every month, here's a run-down:

Six members of HCG (Chris, Ann, Greg and Lyn Tunnock, Mark Laurendet and Helen) have been disappearing around the 20th of each month to Jenolan to help with the re-survey of the Show Caves under the supervision of Julia James. There has always been a lot of speculation about just how large Jenolan is and in an attempt to settle the issue and provide solid basis for further scientific work on the geology, geomorphology, hydrology and sedimentology of the caves, a comprehensive survey began last May. So far, about 7 km of the system has been surveyed, but the project could take as long as two years to complete.

Chris is using his expertise as a surveyor (and Lands Dept. equipment) to establish a main surface traverse from which the cave surveys can be linked. (And Ann is becoming a first-class "chain man", carrying tripods up and down hillsides and following Chris around jotting down data.)

Greg, Lyn, Mark and Helen are luckier - they get to go underground! While Mark and Greg juggle with forestry compasses and clinometers and the like, Lyn and Helen are becoming excellent recorders and draftswomen, following the boys up and down not only the nice cemented pathways, but also into the grotty, tight, side passages of the Show Caves.

The intrepid six put in long hours measuring, writing, drawing and occasionally caving, but it's not all hard work. Around 9 or 10 pm on a Saturday night, Julia gives the team a reprieve and back they tromp to the Cavers' Cottage, where all indulge in the camaraderie created by 10 or 20 enthusiastic cavers (from several different clubs), all involved in the same project.

As well as the weekend once a month, much work is being put in on Thursday night "workshops" at Sydney Uni, where the data is being collated and the entire survey being "pulled together" and finally plotted on paper.

And the kudos? Well, it's like this: somebody asked Julia what the team hopes to "get out of it". In her inimitable style, Julia replied "Why, the kudos of course!"

(She HAS promised that EVERYONE will get their name in the credits...)

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Craig Chung has returned from his extended overseas trip - welcome back, Craig! He reports that the caving scene in **Greece** is very unorganised and he had no success in making contact with any cavers. The caves he visited were not very deep and fairly 'dead' - maximum depth around 100m. Says Craig, "Never trust a Greek bus driver!" He also says that it costs 40 'dracs' to enter a cave and for that you get lights and a cement path. (Not bad value I reckon!) **Yugoslavia** apparently has lots of caves, but Craig didn't have a light. He didn't do much caving because he "didn't want to be a dead wally!" Good onya Craig!!

'Speleoslops' 1987 - Held at Yagoona Bowling Club and hosted by Cave Rescue Group. Guest speaker was Prof. David Branagan. Ann, Chris, Evalt and Joan added to the 'upmarket' image of HCG (???) by appearing in formal attire ("Gee, they scrub up well, don't they?"), and the bat bow-ties added a certain something to everyone's attire (even CRG's grubby overalls).

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Mark Laurendet and Helen have announced their engagement. Helen is sporting a rock on her finger almost the size of the 'Khan', but neither are saying whether they've set a date yet.

Must be the year for it - anyone who knows **Jim Mahood** of NSWITSS will be interested to know that he has also taken the plunge with a lovely girl by name of Akivra.

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The Mt Etna Fight - Again, for those who don't read the Minutes:

Very briefly, at Speleotec in January, Josef Vavryn (from Central Queensland Speleos) gave a report on the situation at Mt Etna karst area, in Queensland. Apparently, even though the area and caves were proclaimed a Reserve, the Central Queensland Cement Company has been bulldozing its way into the caves for some years. Each time they want a bit more limestone, the Government up there simply changes the laws to suit, and crunch goes another cave! They have already destroyed a particularly beautiful cave, 'Crystal Palace', and now two important bat roosting and breeding sites (Bat Cleft and Elephant Hole) are in danger of being mined as well.

CQSS (through ASF) have requested donations from all caving clubs to help in the fight to save Mt Etna, and HCG were one of the first clubs to rise to the occasion. Pat Larkin (ASF Conservation Commission) has been to Mt Etna to see the damage first-hand and collect information and contacts. (The legality of some of the leases has been questioned). Ann has been co-opted as unofficial 'Task Force secretary' and, thanks to the Volvo word processor, fax machine and photocopier, not to mention the downturn in the car market (and so lots of spare time at work), the Fight continues...

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Heard on the grapevine recently - caves on private property in the **Mole Creek** area in Tasmania have been closed to cavers by the farmers. This is because there are moves afoot to propose the area for World Heritage Listing, and Tasmanian farmers being Tasmanian farmers, I guess they have panicked and (incorrectly) assumed that their land would be resumed or made into National Park. Kubla Khan, Croesus and Lynds are safe because they are not on private land, but caves closed include Herberts Pot, Wet Cave, Honeycomb and Skishkebab.

There's trouble a-brewing!!

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HCG MEMBERSHIP LIST, 1987

BOGNAR, Frank/Felicity	26 Adamson St, Dundas Valley, 2117	(H) 638-3749
BROWN, Cathy	64 River Road, Earlwood, 2137	(H) 789-1078 (W) 240-4128
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HODGE, Philip	c/- Police Station, Forbes	(P) 771-5992
HOPKINS, Gerry & Jenny	Wedderburn Rd, Wedderburn, 2560	(H) (046) 34-1316
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RACE, Brian	2 Tracey St, Revesby, 2212	(H) 77-7601
SMITH, Graeme	7/21 Sproule St, Lakemba, 2195	(H) 750-4072 (W) 666-9841
STOFFELS, Dirk	14 Parthenia St, Caringbah, 2229	(H) 525-9184 (W) 337-0420
TUNNOCK, Greg & " Lyn	20 Kareela Cres, Greenacre, 2190 as above	(H) 708-5262 (W-G) 406-6177
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