

CEGSA NEWS



Newsletter of the Cave Exploration Group of South Australia Inc.

Volume 41 Number 4

Issue 164

NOVEMBER 1996



Season's
Greetings

CAVE EXPLORATION GROUP SOUTH AUSTRALIA Inc.

PO Box 144, Rundle Mall, Adelaide , South Australia, 5000.

Meetings held on the fourth Wednesday of each month, except December, at 7.30 PM in the Royal Society of South Australia meeting room, Natural Science Building, South Australian Museum.

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	to be filled	(h)	(w)
	to be filled	(h)	(w)
S.A. Speleological Council (two positions)	Graham Pilkington	(h) 8396 3044	(w) 8396 3044
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Caving Leadership Standards	Peter Kraehenbuehl	(h) 8278 4531	
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Cover Picture: The Army and CEGSA members in Wombat Cave. **Photo:** Marie Choi.

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The deadline for copy or background material for Volume 42 Number 1 (Issue 165) must reach the Editor by Wednesday 15th. January 1997. Material not meeting this deadline may be retained for possible use in a following issue.

The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of individual authors and not necessarily those of the Cave Exploration Group (South Australia) Inc. nor its Committee.

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the final edition of CEGSA NEWS for 1996.

I find it most disturbing that the last two General Meetings have not been able to be officially conducted due to the lack of a quorum. It makes it very difficult for the committee to carry on the business of the Group if they cannot obtain guidance and approval for the many tasks it is charged with carrying out.

What is the problem? Are there too many meetings? Do you not want to have a say in the running of the Group? Are the meetings held on the wrong night? Are the business meetings too boring? Are the social meetings not interesting enough? Or is it the old Australian apathy taking place? (It will be OK, someone else will do it) Whatever it is could you please let the committee know so that an attempt can be made to correct the situation.

It is coming up to that time again when the new committee for 1997 will have to be elected at the AGM in February. If you are willing to take on a position on the committee or know someone who is could you please let the President know so that they are not forgotten on the night. There will be several positions available as several of the existing members will not be seeking re-election.

Now that we have got rid of the official bits we can get on to the more lighthearted items.

At the August meeting Ruth Lawrence gave a very interesting talk and slide show on a trip that she had been on to the Sarawak area, Borneo. The size of some of the chambers in these caves are enormous. If you could get them in there you could fit several Boeing 747's inside.

The October meeting saw the participants split up into several small groups and each group had the opportunity to participate in different methods of surveying techniques. This was done with the lights out and using helmets and lamps.

Please be reminded that the End Of Year BBQ will be held on Saturday 14th December at the Gartrells Blueberry Patch, Nankita Rd. Mt. Compass from 4 P.M. onwards. BYO everything.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy an Prosperous New Year.

May all our caves be Longer and Bigger.

Athol

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LETTERS

THE CONSTITUTION - LETS USE IT.

Why have a constitution. It sometimes appears that its main use is to disrupt meetings. You hear statements like. "There is no quorum present so we can not hold our meeting, instead this meeting can only be an unofficial one" or "There is no quorum present so CEGSA business can not be conducted".

Is that so?? Where does it say that in the constitution??

Actually, the constitution spells out what a quorum is, but it does not offer any suggestions (and nor should it) on protocol where a quorum is absent.

It is the writers view that CEGSA business can be conducted, and indeed CEGSA meetings can be held, WITHOUT a quorum being present.

I think I can hear some reactions from indignant members from here!?

"sounds like anarchy".

"What nonsense, anyone knows that if no quorum is present, you can not hold a meeting, much less conduct business".

Well let us start by reflecting on why it is we have a constitution. One reason is to lay down a set of guidelines under which CEGSA operates. Then, if some activity occurs, that is seen to be outside those guidelines, such activity can be declared 'unconstitutional' and halted.

Clearly we need a mechanism as a 'fall back position' that we can invoke should undesirable events be occurring.

The constitution is the safeguard mechanism that any member can use to halt activities that 'breach the constitution'.

But one needs to also have a little common sense. (a rare commodity it seems). As there is no point in halting unconstitutional activity, if that activity IS in the best interest of CEGSA.

Anyway, exactly what constitutes 'unconstitutional activity'???

That is easy, I hear you say, - "anything contrary to the constitution".

Well that is not quite correct.

'Unconstitutional activity' occurs when:

1. A CEGSA member formally objects to some activity, AND,
2. A CEGSA meeting holds a vote on whether the activity is unconstitutional, AND
3. The activity is 'voted' as unconstitutional by that meeting.

Yes that's right, 'unconstitutional activity' can be voted on and be declared as being 'legal'.

What that means is, activity can be contrary to the constitution, but, unless a CEGSA member formally objects, there will be no vote, and hence, by default, the activity will be legal.

Take the following case to illustrate this:

A meeting (a monthly meeting duly held under the provisions of the constitution) fails to have a quorum present. Now provided that no member present objects, the meeting can proceed. And normal CEGSA business can be conducted, including the holding of an election to resolve issues of various kinds, as would occur at any meeting.

Someone present at this 'unconstitutional' meeting could, rightfully object to any or all such elections being held, as indeed they could object to the holding of the meeting itself.

Clearly, votes on controversial or unusual topics would best not be taken at meetings where a quorum is not present. But certainly, normal business items can and should be dealt with.

Of course, any vote adopted at an 'unconstitutional meeting', could also be objected to at the next CEGSA meeting. And here I will assume that the next meeting does have a quorum present. But again, if no CEGSA member objects, any such vote would remain valid. It is only after an objection and subsequent vote, that the motion carried at the previous meeting could be overturned. And this is the way that constitutions were designed to be used.

As a last step, a motion, adopted at an 'unconstitutional' meeting can be ratified at a subsequent meeting where a quorum is present. This would remove any possible question of doubt on legality.

And having said all that, I could mention ANOTHER reason for having a constitution. That could be to exhort members to attend meetings, so as to ensure a quorum is present. By attending meetings, each member can ensure that what takes place is politically correct (whatever that is).

I could waffle on like this for hours, believe me the topic is not used up yet. But I'll stop now. And I'll wait to see if there is any reaction.

But in the mean time, please, use your constitution, don't let it use you.

Max G Meth - Oct 1996

TRIP REPORTS

A Tourist goes Cave Diving in the Lower South East

5 to 7 October 1996

Features 5L9, 5L11, 5L13, 5L40, 5L61, 5L67, 5L72, 5L158 and 5L238.

Party Graeme Elsby, Ian Williams, Peter Horne, Joo-Chul Son and Mark Thiselton.

This trip was originally organised to provide the opportunity to dive in the Shaft 5L158 which requires a guide to be present during the dives. Fortunately for us Peter Horne was available to act as our guide for the dives. Peter took the opportunity to show his flat mate Joo-Chul another part of Australia in the process (the non diving tourist in our party).

Ian, Peter, Joo-Chul and Mark packed the vehicle and trailer just as a thunder storm hit Adelaide. This made the going a little damp. Once packed we followed the thunder storm from a distance most of the way to Mount Gambier where we met Graeme around 1 am at our accommodation.

On Saturday morning we met another group of divers at the designated meeting point prior to contacting the land owner and filling in the necessary paperwork allowing us to enter the property to dive.

Having carried our dive gear by hand over the paddock to the cave entrance, we kitted up and lowered our gear through the 1m diameter entrance to the lake 8m below. Once the gear and divers were in the water we commenced our first dive to the maximum depth of 40m. We descended to the introduced rockpile and swam along to Saw Tooth rock before ascending clockwise along the cave wall to the surface.

Leaving our dive gear floating in the water, we exited the cave, went back to our vehicles and headed to Allendale East for lunch during our 3 hour surface interval. While in Allendale East we showed Joo-Chul the entrance to Allendale Sinkhole 5L11.

Returning to the cave we re-entered the water and commenced a second dive this time to a shallower depth around 35m. This time we ascended the cave wall in the opposite direction.

Having completed our dives in the Shaft we removed all our gear and headed off to fill our tanks for the following days activities.

Sunday saw us sleeping in as we had arranged a late morning dive in Piccaninnie Ponds 5L72. It was here that Peter had decided to test if the water discharging out to sea from Piccaninnie Ponds is actually being sourced from the slot in the main chasm or from another part of the ponds. So armed with a roll of Glad Wrap we dived to the sign at a depth of 36.5m and unrolled enough Glad Wrap to extend the length of the slot. We then observed the Glad Wrap gently bellow upwards with the water movement. Interestingly it is not possible to feel or see this slight flow of water in a wetsuit during a dive.

It has been suggested that either the uprising water from the slot or some form of tidal inflow may contribute to degradation of the vegetation within the ponds. All of our party commented on a slight saline taste to the water in the ponds that had not been noticed on previous dives.

On the way back to the Mount we stopped off to show Joo-Chul another large feature of the lower South East, Hell's Hole 5L40.

It was brought to the attention of CEGSA members during a general meeting last year of the need to gate the entrance of Glendene Park Cave 5L238 as the owner was considering filling in the entrance to prevent livestock from falling in. It is a shame that this task seems to have been forgotten. Maybe we burden a few members of the group to perform duties which could be easily shared between

many. It will be a shame to lose access to yet another cave when it would be so easy to take some action to ensure access and keep the land owner on side.

While in the area Peter arranged for us to call in and have a look at the cave entrance to gain a better idea as to what was required in order to maintain that the cave remain available for access and not filled in. The temporary gate which was placed across the entrance a number of years ago is in a poor condition and needs urgent attention. While in the area we visited Mooraa Cave 5L67 and Glendene Park Cave.

On the way to Glendene Park Cave we stopped off to show Joo-Chul Little Blue Lake 5L9.

Monday saw Ian, Graeme and Mark returning to Piccaninnie Ponds to perform a similar test in the Bath Tub at the bottom of the Cathedral. This time we attempted to use the Glad Wrap as a giant streamer to test for water movement. Unfortunately no movement was obvious as either this method didn't work or there was no flow. Future trips will be needed to perform similar or improved tests to confirm where the water is or isn't sourced.

We then returned to our accommodation to pack up and head home. Graeme stayed on in Mount Gambier with friends for a couple of days while the others traveled home via the Coorong to show Joo-Chul more features of the area. This included the entrance of the Pines 5L61 where we observed that a large pine tree had recently fallen over the entrance. We continued past Fossil Cave 5L81 and the entrance to the Three Sisters Cave 5L13.

Our last site seeing on the way home included Woakwine cutting near Beachport. This 30m plus cutting through the range was made by a local land owner to drain his field.

Mark Thiselton

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Upper Southeast

S102 (5U47), 14 September 1996

Party: Graham Pilkington, Ruth Lawrence, Ron Simms

This was a special one-day trip to S102 for Ruth to down-load water-level measurements from the data loggers. I tagged along to check out the condition of the cave along the entry path to the chambers beyond the lake. The cave had been declared unsafe and off-limits by Kevin Mott about a year ago because of a collapse in the rockpile beyond the lake.

The rockpile is now in a more stable condition than it has ever been and entry beyond the lake is allowed. However, never forget that care should be taken in negotiating any rockpile.

The entrance lake has fluctuated in depth over the last year (see Ruth for the water-level measurements) and had a coating of calcite rafts on the surface and nearby rocks. I have never seen the lake so well covered. The lack of visitation (combined with a gentle breeze) has probably contributed to a more stable vertical stratification in the water with the resultant rafting.

It will be interesting to see the effect of increased visitation on the rafting. I left a "trail" of open water on top of each stepping stone which I used to cross the lake. The trail was exactly the same on return several hours later.

Graham Pilkington

THE ARMY GO CAVING

Trip dates: 4-8 November 1996
Areas: Naracoorte & Monbulla
Caves: Blackberry (U8), Wet (U10), Cathedral (U12), Robertsons (U17), S102 (U47), Wombat (U58), SOS (U132), Monbulla (L5)

CEGSA: Graham Pilkington, Athol Jackson,
and for 6-8 Nov - Marie Choi, Pam Alvaro.
9th Brigade, Australian Army: 8 members who were all called "Nigel", or so they told us.

The 9th Brigade Headquarters holds yearly outings to challenge its' people by pushing their personal limits in stressful situations having actual and perceived physical danger. Somehow they considered caving to fit that definition. I did not argue but took the opportunity to have a weeks restful holiday away from the office.

The Army wanted the trip organised down to each half hour of each day. I'm not used to planning in such detail but did my best to comply with a suitable itinerary. Of course, when it came to the actual trip, best caving practice came into play and we "adjusted" our caves and timings to suit the mood.

Monday 4

Athol and I set off half an hour after the Army was due to leave and from further north. That way we hoped to avoid doing any of the camp setting up at Naracoorte Caves Reserve. We got there about 3½ hours before them. We still missed out on setting up camp because the Army "knew what to do" with their gear. Besides, we were so far behind in our schedule that one member stayed behind to complete the camp while the rest of us went to Robertsons Cave to have a look around as an introduction to what caves are like.

After dinner we toured Wet Cave to get used to smaller darker wetter caves.

Tuesday 5

The only female Nigel (sometimes known as Vicky) stayed back at camp while the rest of us went to Monbulla Cave for the day. Each day it was the practice to leave someone at camp - "losing" Army gear is not recommended.

After a brief exposé on cave safety, the party was split into two teams to explore the eastern arm of Monbulla Cave. Many passages in this area are of the walking variety with plenty of daylight roof holes. This kept them happy. They had the idea that daylight meant safety and exit. Little did they know that being below an entrance pitch was the most dangerous place in the cave while exit out of nearly all holes is as good as impossible without a ladder or rope.

In the afternoon I took all but one member (who said something about resting an injury) on the through trip from Wrecked Car cave (L21 entrance) to Monbulla Cave. It took four hours with sightseeing side trips along the way. Well it was 20 years ago when I last went through! The cave had been recently flooded and still had pools of water and much mud. This was definitely novel to our Army friends since most of the cave is crawling. The last section was the most flat and wet/muddy but the combination of me sopping up the worst of it before them, the loss of their guide for a return back and the hint of daylight before them, all oozed their way out.

Because they only had one pair of overalls each, after the required washing the Army guys decided to take them into Naracoorte to have a proper clean and drying. I had a spare pair for Wednesday! For the rest of the week I heard comments like "the next cave's not as muddy as Monbulla is it?"

Wednesday 6

Marie and Pam arrived during the night. In the morning the Nigels decided to call them "Bob". For clarity they were B2 and B1. However, by this time most of the Nigels were failing in their "no ranks on this trip" decision and had reverted to calling each other by name or the occasional "Sir" (which incurred a one beer penalty).

In preparation for the days caving, a ladder was rigged up a tree to give instruction on how best to climb them. Nigel (Carl) did the rigging and had great fun doing it. After all had had a go off we went to S102 and SOS Caves.

The late start made it difficult to do both caves in one day but some got to see both caves if not fully. The exit out of SOS held us up somewhat as the ladder novices learnt that you sometimes have to climb a ladder with no feet on the rungs. The lower section of the entrance tube is snug. One Nigel had to be hauled out when his arms got too tired after the third attempt to ascend.

Thursday 7

In the morning we reused our tree rig to teach single rope ascents. The Army had pre-trained to do descents but had never considered having to go back up a rope. This would be necessary for the afternoon abseil down Cathedral. After the laddering of the day before it was felt by most that learning to prussic was preferable!

Most enjoyed having done Cathedral but as an accomplishment not to be repeated.

Later on I took Nigel (Mike) on a trip to the non-gated section of Blackberry but we did not do much more than the between entrances trip. It took me at least 15 minutes to get through the tight bits to enter the Butterfly Extension (the real one - it seems that NPWS have the mistaken belief that beyond the gate is the Butterfly Extension). Mike could not get through so I had to return. The squeeze is getting too tight for me, I had to get Mike to pull my overalls to speed up my exit. My chest was sore for an hour or so afterwards. And to think that only a few decades ago it was just another fun slot to move through.

Friday 8

A morning trip into Wombat just to show that not all caves are devoid of pretties. Just the ones that we take novices into! They definitely enjoyed this cave. A group photo was taken (see cover) with the speleothems as a backdrop. This will be a memento for most who will never (unless ordered) be going caving again.

Graham Pilkington

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Other Trip Reports

There are no other trip reports for this edition of CEGSA NEWS.

If a report of a trip that you have been on does not appear in this or past editions of CEGSA NEWS then it is because no one has bothered to submit a report of it to the editor for publication. Looking through the list of trips that are scheduled I find it hard to accept that most of them do not get off the ground so there must be another reason for them not to be recorded for the other members of CEGSA to be able to appreciate the work that the Group is doing.

It also occurs to me that if reports are not being submitted to the editor that they are not being submitted to the records either. If the record are not kept up to date then there is no point in having the records at all. Any one wishing to perform work in a cave is hampered by the lack of information available and in a lot of cases work is duplicated due to the lack of good records keeping. Also without the information available in records it is very difficult for the Group to justify any dealings with land managers when the need arises. Please get your reports into the records at least and if you can get one to the editor as well it would be very much appreciated.

Athol Jackson.

TECHNICAL and OTHER ARTICLES

CEGSA Unsafe Cave Policy

CEGSA Committee has decided that the following policy should be adhered to by CEGSA members:

"In order to meet duty of care responsibilities the Committee expects members who discover an unsafe condition in a cave to notify the land manager and cave liaison officer (if any) as soon as possible. The recommendation will be to temporarily close the affected cave or section of cave pending further investigation. NO time limit should ever be quoted. CEGSA Committee needs to be notified of the closure and they will organise the investigation in conjunction with the SA speleological Council. All recommendations should use the phrase "until further notice" or an equivalent. CEGSA will distribute notification of the closure to all relevant persons and organisations."

Graham Pilkington

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Nullarbor Update

Did you know that Nullarbor caving is changing? The fruit and veg checkpoints of Ceduna and Norseman have been moved to Eucla. They are not letting ANY stone fruits into WA, and you need a permit and inspection by Dept of Ag to get anything else across (approx. \$21 plus time, could mean buying days before needing to - they don't last as it is). Makes long-term caving very difficult. We may need to leave our SA F&V on the SA side and pick up WA F&V for caving "over there".

Another point of interest is that Bob Eglington is now charging (? \$5 per person per day) "camping fee" for being on Mundrabilla. This is to pay for track maintenance. All trips now need to call in at the Homestead.

Graham Pilkington

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LIBRARY AND RECORDS UPDATE

Records received a monograph from Neville Pledge *Speleogenesis: the evolution of the Castleton Caves* by Trevor D Ford. *Geology Today*, May-June 1996.

We also received very promptly from Ken Boland VSA a copy of Goat Cave 6N745 surveyed 1996. Thanks Ken.

Received from Peter Horne some "declassified" personal trip logs on Lower South East adventures and discoveries. This includes reports for 1981, 82, 83, 84, 87 and 88. In Peters own words "They are by no means a complete copy of my files....., but at least they are a bit more than nothing at all". There are many gaps in our records due to sensitive issues, this cannot be avoided for various reasons. Its nice to see that someone has tried to overcome this to a certain degree. Well done Peter.

We have received from Fred Aslin and Kevin Mott many items on caves from the archives from Newspapers, magazines and Regional Newspapers. They have all been catalogued and many copies obtained for our files. Although quite a lot of this research has been carried out, there is still much to do. Well done.

Many folders received from Mark Thistelton for records. Mark has also been quite busy cataloguing Hellicite. Many thanks Mark. Many back issues of Hellicite missing from our files were kindly lent for copying from Fred Aslin and a few from Mark Sefton. Thanks Fred and Mark.

Many thanks to Kevin Mott for his continuous work collecting cave data locations of latest findings. Pleasing to see young Dave Glowacki of Naracoorte contributing towards this body of work.

The last working bee for 1996 will be held on the Saturday 30th November 1996. For those intending to show up, lets have a mini celebration for Xmas. Please bring a plate or drinks.

GEORGE MACLUCAS
LIBRARIAN AND RECORDS OFFICER.

CEGSA implementation of the ASF Caver Leadership Scheme

Many members have indicated their concern with the apparent lack of action by CEGSA in implementing the Leadership Scheme. The major delay has been the establishment of an Australia wide agreement on the requirements of Cave Leaders. The agreement had to be by not just the ASF but also by all the other major organisations involved in cave activity such as Tourism and National Parks.

Some of our members have been the driving force behind the establishment of the requirements. Special thanks must go to Alan Jevons and Peter Kraehenbuehl. This means that cavers such as our members are not going to be disadvantaged by bureaucratic bundling.

Now that the scheme requirements have been established, CEGSA can progress on the implementation. Your Committee has decided to leave the full "Leader" approval to the SA Speleological Council training sessions (that is, the usual joint club training). And that membership and leadership within CEGSA will be independent of the possession of a "Leader" qualification. However, the Committee has recommended that persons seeking approval for Full Membership are competent in the PHYSICAL SKILLS of caving Leader. Even so, such a requirement will not be mandatory.

To help our current members to note any gaps in their caving skills that they may not realise they had, CEGSA will produce a check-list for them. It will be up to each member to see if they lack any knowledge and even if they consider it appropriate to fill in those gaps. A "Peer review" sub-committee has been formed by the Committee to prepare and assist members in completing the check list. Graham Pilkington is coordinating the review with the help of Peter Kraehenbuehl, Frank Hankinson, Chris Hales, Marie Choi, and Simon Kendrick. Members filling in the checklist can use them as part of the Leadership Scheme completion requirements if they wish.

Now to answer some questions raised by members.

- Established CEGSA members will not be affected by the Leadership Scheme UNLESS they wish to lead a group of novices AND into a cave where the Cave Manager (e.g. probably National Parks) requires novices to have a "Leader". In all other cases members can cave as they do now.
- Novices are considered to be those cavers/persons who have not yet acquired the skills needed for the cave being entered. For instance, ALL persons who have never been in any cave before. But also someone like myself going into a cave that requires lots of SRT.
- If the novices are in the minority, then whether a trained Leader is required or not is more common sense than regulation. If each novice can be "looked after" by a non-novice then a Leader would not be needed, but sometimes a non-novice is not able to look after anyone else. In such cases, the ratio of novices should be adjusted.
- No one will have to do a training course but access to some caves could be restricted IF you wish to take a group of novices.
- Since no-one needs to do a course, it won't cost anything. If a Leadership Course is done, then only cost recovery will be involved for CEGSA courses (including joint club courses).
- "Older" members can still train newer members like they always have. The checklist will enable newer members to keep track of what they still need to learn.
- If TAFE courses become available then members would have the option of taking them INSTEAD OF CEGSA courses. I expect CEGSA courses will be better! But remember, CEGSA members run these courses voluntarily at their own expense and time.
- The main reason for "Leadership qualifications" is that government bodies such as the Dept of Environment and Land Management have problems deciding who is capable of safely caving. They are expected to hand out permits to enter caves but have no idea what skills the person applying has. Normally they can just say "are you an ASF club member" but occasionally they get requests from others such as school groups and need to know if the "leader" can handle such a group.
- Instructors and Assessors of the ASF Leadership Scheme will be appointed by CEGSA for its own members. However, these persons are approved by the SA Speleological Council under the SASC sub-committee on joint club training that encourages each club to raise their members' skill level. This sub-committee ensures that SA cavers declaring to have a particular skill will have the same actual skill by whichever club that they were taught.
- First Aid training will be required for completion of the Leadership Course. However, there is no fixed first aid course because not all States have the same course and first aid within caves is not the same as outside. Consideration of a first aid course designed specifically for cavers is being considered. BUT it is advisable that ALL cavers undertake some first aid training because it will be useful for the rest of their lives. For those members who do not want a piece of paper that tells them they can lead novices, then no first aid training is required BUT still advisable.

Graham Pilkington

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NOSTALGIA CORNER**NEWS FROM PAST NEWSLETTERS****10 YEARS AGO**

- Dec 1986, Graham Pilkington announced the publication of the Nullarbor Atlas edition 2 (with 343 karst features).

20 YEARS AGO

- Nov 1976, Ed Bailey reported that work has started at Victoria Fossil Cave to open up the southern extension.

30 YEARS AGO

- Athol Jackson is newsletter editor. (From Oct 66 to Nov 67).
- A 'nostalgia corner' segment appeared in the CEGSA newsletter from Oct 1965 through to Feb 1967.

40 YEARS AGO

- 1 Dec 1956 a vacant house on the cave reserve at Naracoorte is being investigated as a possible field station for the group.

Max G. Meth

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MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to the new Associate:

Damian GRINDLEY 9610, 22A Huges Street, UNLEY SA 5061, 8373-4623

Change of Address:

Graham WOODWARD 8106, 15 Vagnoni Avenue, PARADISE 5075, 8365-3076

Anne-Marie HUBYCZ 9419, Unit 2, 35A Hounslow Avenue, COWANDILLA SA 5033, 8443-6791

Pam ALVARO 9503, PO Box 2135, PORT ADELAIDE 5015, 8522-6095, (M)041-210-0671

Change of Phone Numbers:

Steve MILNER 9004, 8270-5078, (W)8303-8904

Gary Woodcock 8109, (W)8226-3950

Congratulations to CEGSA's new Honorary Life Member!

Max METH 7101, 1 Morrison Avenue, CEDUNA 5690, 08-8625-2700

Graham Pilkington

WHY DO WE CAVE ?

Is it scientific,
mineralogy, geology,
hydrology, paleontology.

Is it Entomology,
the troglobites, the troglaphiles,
the troglloxenes or just a visitor.

Is it the flora,
the ferns, the weeds.
or tree roots in the cave.

Is it the Fauna,
four legged or winged,
the birds, the bats.

Is it the adventure,
the abseil, the prusik,
the climb, the crawl.

Is it the survey,
the mark making is the worth,
the pushing of the cave the goal.

Is it the exploration,
around the corner, beyond the wall,
across the hills, the plains, the latest find.
All a new surprise.

Is it the socializing,
around the camp fire,
or at the meet.

Is it the art,
photographs, or the brush
to document or just to show.

These things can be the all,
or one can be the reason for it all.

GEORGE MACLUCAS 1996.

%%%%%%%%%

LABELING MATERIAL COLLECTED FROM CAVES

During the past years, the South Australian Museum has received several parcels of bone material collected from caves for identification and research purposes. Unfortunately, most of the labeling and general information regarding from where and when the material was found is frequently brief and sketchy and lacking basic details. This has hindered further research when some material has proven to be significantly unique.

Whenever the need arises to remove material from a cave, it has to be correctly labeled to be of practical use for research and storage at a recognised research establishment. The label attached to the material has to be brief and precise with the information it contains following the international recognised format. Accompanying the label, there should be a brief general description.

The label should contain :-

1. Country or state where found
2. Cave number and name
3. Cave location, preferable as latitude and longitude. If not available
 - (a) Topographical reference giving full grid reference and name of map, or
 - (b) Distance with compass bearing to a prominent location, e.g. township, hill.
4. Date when collected.
5. Name of collector.

The general description should include the same information specified on the label plus:-

- (a) Brief description of the locality where the cave is found.
- (b) Name and address (if known) of the property owners.
- (c) Description of the location within the cave.
- (d) Cave map showing the position where the specimen was found.
- (e) Name and address of the collector.

The removal of material (especially bone material), should only be undertaken if the material is in danger of being damaged or destroyed by general usage of the cave, e.g. next to or in the direct line of people passing through that section of cave.

Remember that the removal of material from a cave under the control of the National parks Authority requires a research permit. It is also good public relations procedure to inform the owner / property manager of the removal of material from a cave on private property.

All information received regarding the location of a cave is treated as confidential by the research establishments and unless stated by the person depositing the material, no information would be given to private individuals.

Ron Simms

MULLAMULLANG CAVE 6N37, NULLARBOR, ONLY HAS ONE ENTRANCE.

An article 'Skeletal remains in Mullamullang Cave' written in 1991 by Bob Coopsⁱ upon the finding in the cave of 'Skeletal Remains' adjacent to White Lake raised the possibility of a second entrance for Mullamullang Cave.

Mr M Lofgren, of the WA Museum Anthropological Department wrote a report concerning this, in which he referred to the likelihood of another cave entrance closer to where the remains were found. Mr Lofgren expressed doubts that the victims would have ventured so far into the cave (from the known entrance) - and postulated the existence of a closer entrance to where the remains were found.

At the inquest, the Coroner said: "...The date of death was between 10 and 100 years ago. The cause of death is unknown but ... having lost what was likely to have been a very primitive light source, (they) lost their way in the darkness, ... and unable to escape from the cave, died." I am pleased to say that the Coroner did not hypothesise on a 'second entrance' in his findings. Bob Coops in concluding, then asserted that "I tend to believe Mr Lofgren that there was another entrance to this cave some time ago, and maybe due to the elements it has sealed over."

I AM AMAZED THAT CAVERS HAVE NOT TAKEN ISSUE WITH THIS HYPOTHESIS.

Robert Wrayⁱⁱ, in 1992 took up the point but remained somewhat neutral. Wray stated, "If (a second entrance) did exist it must have been easily accessible for the Aborigines. The idea of an entrance closing is not ... totally unbelievable¹."

A reprint of Coops' article appearedⁱⁱⁱ in 'The Cavers Chronicle', thus giving the article tacit support from the editor of that publication, though no editorial comment was appended.

In the absence of other opinions in the caving literature, the foregoing opinion is given great credence.

However, a second entrance is totally UNBELIEVABLE. There can not possibly have been another entrance to Mullamullang Cave. (This is not meant to be a question, merely the statement of a fact).

Let us examine the situation. Some details are admittedly based on conjecture:

1 The coroner states that the deaths occurred² from 10 to 100 years ago. This means 1891 to 1981. This means that only 100 years (maximum) is allowed for the obliteration of the 'second entrance'.

My personal feeling is that the date would be about 1880. In Coops report, the name of an Aboriginal that went missing about 1880 is actually given. " an Aboriginal named Buddon who had gone into the cave looking for water and never came out. ... the story ... dates back to the 1880's to 1890's". Why this was ignored by the coroner and others is a complete and utter mystery. Details of this Buddon, corroborating Coops' account, were given to me by Mr John Carlisle in 1992 (pers comm).

2 Assume there was a second entrance. This in fact raises two problems, not one:

2(1) There is no known second entrance on the surface.

2(2) There is no known passage in the cave leading upwards.

Mullamullang is essentially a flat cave, with dips and rises, that are mainly due to rock collapse processes. It is one thing to assume an entrance could be blocked on the surface, but the passage within the cave, leading towards the surface would still exist. There is no evidence of such passage within the cave. Nor is there any known recent infill or recent (100 years old) blockage in the cave in the vicinity of White Lake (or anywhere else either).

A breeze is evident in the main and side passages of the cave right up to the known limit. The breeze reverses direction every 12 hours on average. In each case the observed breeze blows

¹ But it is clear that Wray finds it hard to believe.

² Simple logic should have meant the deaths would not have occurred after 1964. After this, with fairly frequent visits to the cave by cavers, the stench from the decaying remains would surely have been reported.

toward (or away from) the known entrance. If a side tunnel led to a second entrance, a breeze, blowing toward the 'second entrance' would be evident in this also, however no side passage with such a breeze has yet been detected. If this passage does exist, but is very convoluted, the likelihood that the pair could have found and negotiated it is very problematical.

3 If one goes to the point on the surface of the Nullarbor, above White Lake, (as I and others have done), what does one see? Is there a huge doline, capriciously blocked off by nature, No!! Is there a very small doline or blowhole? No!! Is there perhaps a slight depression 10cm deep? No!! There is not the slightest deviation from a uniform plane surface to be found, even within a 500m radius. This raises 2 points:

3(1) The time scale for this 'second entrance' to disappear is only 100 years. So are we to believe that in less than 100 years, an entrance that was large enough to enable 2 aboriginals to descend 100m to water table, has been blocked off with out leaving the slightest trace?

3(2) If this 'second entrance' is further away than 500m, then the original distance problem of Mr Lofgren comes into play, namely, 'how the victims would have ventured so far into this hypothetic cave'. The problem of the distance of the bodies so far from the entrance of Mullamullang cave, was the reason the 'second entrance' was invented in the first place.

4 The distance from White Lake to the (one and only) entrance is 1820m radial, or 2160m as the caver caves. There are at least 7 other lakes between the entrance and White Lake, so if water had been the object of the quest, the 2 victims had not been very observant.

5 It is in fact VERY EASY to traverse the 2.1km from the entrance to where the remains were found. Apart from the initial descent at the entrance, and the descent at White Lake, the rest of the way is rather flat and easy going. And the strong breeze that blows along the main tunnel, can be followed, almost like walking toward a light.

6 The Coroner described the light used by the Aboriginals as "a very primitive light source". I think a few things need to be said about this.

6(1) 'Primitive' does NOT mean that the light source was ineffective or feeble in some way. Aborigines used fire brands, (bunches of sticks held together), and they were very skillful in their use, and could keep them burning indefinitely.

6(2) 'Primitive' does NOT mean that the lights were unreliable, These men doubtless had the ability to make fire from scratch, given a supply of wood, even in total darkness.

6(3) And a modern electric torch can easily be rendered 'primitive' or worse, by dropping it etc. or the globe or battery becoming defective. As such, no single light source should ever be depended upon as the sole means of finding one's way.

In going 2km into the cave, the time required would have been fairly great, and it seems, that the pair exhausted all the fire brands that they had.

7 One problem that may well have doomed the pair was the reversal of the wind flow. Smoke (and the flames) from their fire brands would have been blown by the strong breeze that blows through the cave. And the steady direction that the smoke took, in following the breeze, would be a comforting sign as to which direction led back to the entrance. People using electric torches would perhaps be unaware of this.

The pair may well have ventured to the first lake near Oasis Valley, to get then headed for home following the breeze. There is actually no written or oral evidence that Aborigines knew of the existence of water in this cave. It seems probable that this ill fated expedition was an exploratory trip. The pair presumably carried enough fire brands to get out safely. But at some point, perhaps while drinking, maybe the breeze changed direction. The breeze in the cave (as in all caves) can change direction swiftly, then continue to blow just as strongly in the opposite direction. So, they then followed the breeze further into the cave, and ran out of light. They had no intrinsic way of telling which way led to the entrance.

8 Remains of fire brands were found near the bodies, though not by the investigators in 1991. The fire brand remains were found in 1964. E G Anderson^{iv} on the first documented entry into the cave, conducted a survey of the main passage on 9.1.1964, and wrote in his report, "A few pieces of

wood and charcoal discovered near section 34 remain unexplained." And section 34 was located at the top of the rockpile, that leads down to White Lake, which is near where the remains were found. It happened that Anderson ran out of time and that his survey ended just past White Lake. Both bodies were found within 30m of section 34. So there is no mystery as to how the pair got to where they were found. They walked there from the main entrance, using fire brands as torches. And this undoubtedly shows that the bodies were in the cave in 1964 already. Many people including Anderson and myself, have no doubt walked very near the bodies in the period between 1964 and 1991, but missed seeing them.

IN CONCLUSION:

I believe the above disproves the existence of a second entrance to Mullamullang. I do believe that theories regarding cave evolution and morphology should be based on observations of nature, not on hypothesis.

I certainly welcome constructive criticism of my article.

POSTSCRIPT:

I will now point out, that the 'single entrance' of Mullamullang Cave does in fact have at least 4 discreet cave entrances within the single doline!

On the generally flat surface of the Nullarbor Plain, there is a collapse doline, in which is the entrance to Mullamullang Cave. This doline is 80m long 50m wide and 21m deep at the deepest point. Its walls are mainly vertical to overhanging cliffs, but walk access is possible. The central portion of the doline is a 'saddle' or 'col' of rock that has only collapsed about 2 or 3m below the surrounding plain. To the south and north of this are 2 distinct portions, the 'north' and 'south' dolines. And these contain 4 separate entrances, where there is access to underground passages. These 4 caves have previously all shared karst number 6N37, but according to numbering convention, they should be given individual numbers. HENCE:

South doline (10m deep) contains 2 caves:

6N1330 **'Refrigerator Cave'**, an irregular opening in the collapsed blocks of limestone on the west side of the south doline. This leads to in excess of 50m of passages. This cave does not form part of Mullamullang cave, there being no known physical connection. NOTE: This is not a blowhole, although air does issue from the entrance, as it does from EVERY collapse doline on the Nullarbor. There has been no survey of this cave, though I have drawn a sketch map of a portion of it.

6N1331 **'South Col Cave'** named (by me) because it extends from the south doline beneath the 'col' of uncollapsed rock in the doline. And it does connect to the 'Everest' of Nullarbor caves. This cave starts at the deepest part of the south doline, but it does not head south. Instead it heads east then north and connects to the main 'Mullamullang Cave' of the north doline^v. This is therefore a part of Mullamullang cave.

There has been no complete survey of this cave. The best map of it I 'unearthed'³ only recently. It is a sketch map done by Alan Hill^{vi} on 3.1.1967. The finding of the sketch map precipitated the writing of this article.

Alan Hill died^{vii} on 21.6.1972. He was of course editor of the book^{viii} 'MULLAMULLANG CAVE EXPEDITIONS 1966'.

The 'north doline', (21m deep) also has 2 caves:

6N1332 **'unnamed cave'** leading from a small hole in rockpile^{ix} has a 23m long cave which extends under the rock pavement area on the west side of the doline. The entrance to this is about 2m short of being under the main overhang. Therefore this cave is technically not part of Mullamullang cave. There has been no survey of this cave.

6N37 **'Mullamullang Cave'** which starts from the point where one first proceeds under the main overhang of the north doline. Part way down the initial entrance slope, in the twilight area, the main passage is 'blocked' by many huge boulders of 5m or more in length. These do not prevent

³CEGSA records contains things that have been closeted away for years.

access, but present vertical 'pits' which must be negotiated. In the area above the boulder choke is a passage that leads to the 6N1331 entrance in the south doline. This passage is a part of Mullamullang cave as it commences well beneath the overhang of the north doline.

Beyond the 'boulder choke' area the main passage then continues for 4.3km to the Dome. This is the furthest distance from the entrance that the cave attains.

About 12km of passages in this cave have been surveyed, though a great deal more is known, and awaits survey. Persons interested in this survey work are encouraged to contact CEGSA.

Away from the doline of Mullamullang cave, the surrounding Nullarbor Plain is not exactly flat and level. There are 2 noteworthy deviations:

(1) There is a drainage depression surrounding the doline. This is defined as the area that is currently being actively eroded and is 190 x 160m and 3m deep. Beyond this there extends a yet larger depression, the boundary of which is ill-defined. But its size is closer to 500 x 300m (possibly even larger) and this adds another metre or so to the overall depression depth. This huge depression indicates that the Mullamullang doline has existed for a long period of time, probably at least 10,000 years⁴. Enough time, in fact, for rainfall to cause the weathering of this huge depression.

And the material has been washed into Mullamullang cave. The main north passage as far as the Southerly Buster, over 300m from the entrance, is a streamway, active after heavy rain. This part of the cave is currently filling up with debris that is washed into the cave. At the Southerly Buster there is at present little more than 1m of passage height.

(2) There are a succession of ridges with intervening claypans. In the vicinity of Mullamullang many ridges show a NE to SW trend. And Mullamullang Cave, underground, follows this trend. In a NE direction 2.9 and 3.3km radially from the Mullamullang entrance are Camp One Blowhole 6N73 and Dome Doline 6N519. Neither of these provides any human access into Mullamullang cave, nor does this appear to have ever been the case. They are more than 1km radial from White Lake, the location of the finding of the skeletal remains. If there were further dolines or blowholes anywhere near the line of Mullamullang Cave they would surely have been found years ago?

The author would be happy to receive comments on the above article.

Max Meth - Nov 1995.

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⁴ Pure speculation on my part.