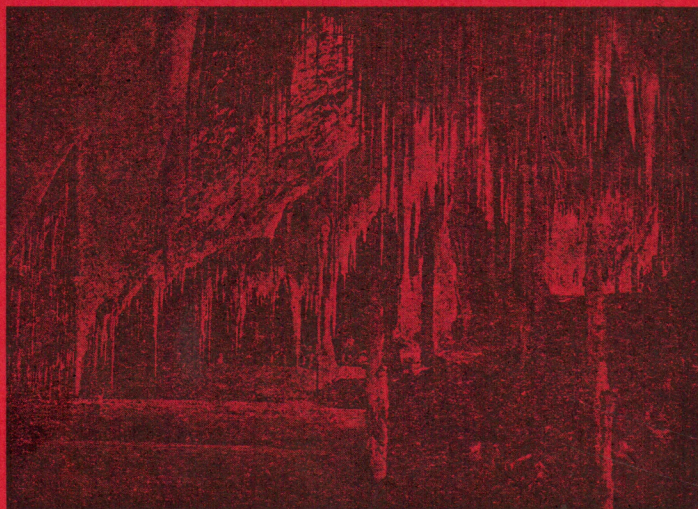


SOUTHERN



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■ VOL.5 NO.2 ■

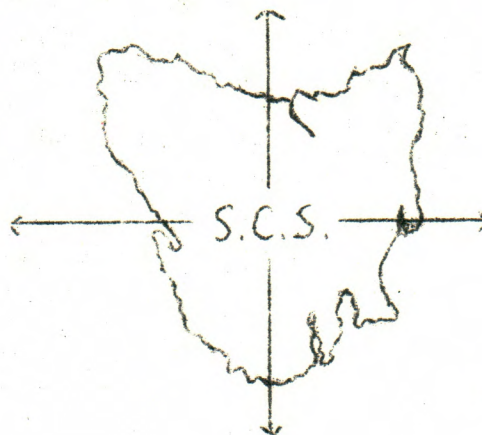
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THE SOCIETY NOTCHES 200TH

by Dave Elliott

In August the Society celebrated in appropriate manner the occasion of its 200th General Meeting.

President John McCormack took the chair and formalities were quickly disposed of. An excellent attendance of members and friends then settled down to the real business of the evening, that of enjoying the excellent fare provided by the Social Committee, Delia and Margaret.

Time flies, and we realised with a jolt that the Society is well into its nineth year. This prompted us to look out the minutes of the Inaugural Meeting held on April 7th, 1965. Only four of the Foundation Members listed are still active in the Society, although several others currently interstate or overseas remain in contact.

In its early years, the Society concentrated its efforts on the Wet Caves System at Mole Creek, with fund raising being the main social activity. With the descent of Tassy Pot and its entry into A.S.F. after co-hosting the Eighth Biennial Conference with T.C.C., the Society came of age.

It is interesting to note that in 1965 we functioned with a three man exec. - President, Secretary and Treasurer. The last edition of "Southern Caver" lists no less than fifteen office bearers!

That the club has endured, going from strength to strength, is a tribute to its founders and the basic soundness of its structure.

... FREEWAY PROPOSAL MAY MENACE CLUB ROOMS

by Kevin Kiernan

Remiss of me though it may have been, I decided for survival purposes to refrain from getting involved in the row over Hobart's proposed North-side Freeway. Consequently you may imagine my horror when hurled at my seat in the comfortable anonymity of the middle masses of the town hall was a picture of the beloved old clubrooms. That preposterous manifestation of the great Tasmanian inferiority complex and its desire to prove Hobart is a "grown up" city by establishing the problems of the megalopolis, is to pass through the lovingly cut sandstone blocks of the peaceful little cottage in which this Society is housed. Not that I am suggesting that this fact is likely to arouse the slumbering members of this Society and precipitate them into joining a conservation group, rather I just thought it might be a nice idea to let you know, just in case one of you has some sense of social responsibility, or even just passing curiosity.

THE ETHICAL BASIS OF S.R.T.

by Kevin Kiernan

I find myself unable to refrain from comment upon the abhorrent and increasing utilisation of the vertical caving method of single rope technique, or as the so-called cavers who utilise it prefer to call it, S.R.T. (presumably in the hope that no-one will understand what hideous acts of speleo-perversion they are up to).

In the name of fair play I suppose I must concede that S.R.T. has certain advantages over the use of the traditional ladders, most prominent of which are simplicity and speed. Its proponents justifiably argue this point, suggesting that S.R.T. expedites exploration and caving generally, resulting in the ability to do more "work" in a shorter span of time and with less effort, either in terms of incident exertion or reduced call upon general stamina over extended periods. Certainly there can be little doubt that in a deep cave, say Example Pot, with 36 ladder pitches, a very major proportion of the time involved in exploration is spent rolling, unrolling, rigging, de-rigging or transporting with some effort that cumbersome device, the caving ladder. Exertion overall is thus very largely stamina based, and S.R.T. obviates this.

However, it is the desirability of such a situation which I consider most heavily in doubt. My case rests upon the answer to one simple question, and its attendant implications. Is it the easy trips that are the most memorable, or the hard ones? S.R.T. is used predominantly in Tasmania by the more active explorers, the very people who by their actions one would expect to appreciate harder, deeper, exciting trips. I would suggest that while S.R.T. may be more pleasant during the actual trip, the real inner enrichment that stems from caving follows some time after the trip. Hardship imprints longest. An easy trip is soon forgotten, a long, difficult, wet, cold, miserable trip lives on, enjoyment of it increasing as accuracy fades into a general aura of bulldust. Such is the stuff of caving.

But what do these S.R.T. people do? They race down one cave then race down another, patting themselves on the back in consideration that they master the cave, not vice versa. Well do I remember the early days of Khaza-Dum, with ladder hanging off all over the party. The trips lasted hours. The great 21 hour classic lives on. Then came the psuedo-cavers and the seeds of speleo-decay were sown. This strange species of troglodytic invertebrate, too vain to become armchair cavers but too weak to take it on undebilitated, befouled the cave with

their eyebolts. A road now pierces the S.W. Tasmanian wilderness. To those dismayed, are directed the thoughtless words that one is quite at liberty to walk along it rather than drive. With similar neglect for the spirit of things the rebolting S.R.T.-ites answered, and Khaza-Dum was ravished.

The whole situation is somewhat analagous to knocking down a fine old sandstone cottage, rock shaped with loving care and its form nurtured as art. In its place rises the multi-story glass and concrete monstrosity which is S.R.T., looming grotesquely sky-ward, in a hydroistic bigger-so-better fashion. It may be more comfortable, but it is an intrinsic wasteland.

And would you argue that at times the thrill of exploration is not deeply rewarding? It is immensely satisfying. Let us then consider ten unexplored caves. With ladders todays cavers may explore one, leaving nine for tomorrow and the next bloke. But the S.R.T. fanatics only concern is to "get more work done", to explore two, or three or seven, or eight or all, unthinkingly depriving the next bloke of his sport. For too long this situation has been unwittingly fostered by those who would suggest that there are "too many caves and not enough cavers" in Tasmania, without stopping to dwell upon the implications of their assertion. Let us forget such verbal diarrhoe, and remember that the future may last a long time, that Tasmania is a part of Australia, and that even now there are many mainland cavers who long for a bit of decent exploration such as the average Tasmanian takes in overdose and without adequate appreciation of the act itself or its ramifications. Certainly let us continue to explore, but with appreciation and with thought.

My whole basic point is a simple ethic which I am bigotted enough to believe all cavers should follow: We gave up the horse in favour of the car because it was easier and more comfortable. There is a constant effort to make this rat-race life easier. If that be the wish of the people then, perhaps grudgingly I must accept their efforts to make the lot they are stuck with more acceptable in their eyes. But caving is an optional extra. It is an escape from that rat-race. Its benefit is in its primitive challenge.

Once we reach the lip between inability and ability must we try to extend beyond it? Once we have a ladder, a basic means of access from the overhang, must we then try to make things easier or faster? Once we have an electric light so we can see climbing waterfalls must we then develop plastic capsules to wear so we don't get wet?

The joy of caving is its primitiveness. If people want to make things easier let them go and live out rat-race life, indulging in some easier pastime. But may all the curses on earth fall upon those who would pervert the beloved art of caving, by bringing the very attitudes from which it escapes down the caves with us.

And bring back cheap carbide lamps too!

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

By John McCormack

As all members should know, the objects of our Society are to further Caving as a sport and speleology as a science, also to preserve and conserve caves, cave scenery and natural contents both animate and inanimate.

Have you assisted in these objectives?. Looking back over the past year it appears that very few have contributed.

"To further Caving as a sport"? Yes, we had quite a number of tourist trips, but is this all we really wish to achieve? "To further speleology as a science"? We are falling down badly here. It is time to get out of those arm-chairs and do something towards this objective.

"To preserve and conserve" -- This is also an important facet that is being left to too few. It is becoming increasingly obvious that such a small group as ours cannot alone cope with the ever increasing work load. I feel the Tasmanian Council of Speleology is the ideal vehicle to handle Conservation, thus allowing the work to be shared by all three speleo groups with the extra advantage of greater public impact.

I will not list things to be done as these should be obvious. Let us get moving again before the flowstone sets and calcite rots our knees. We must complete all the half finished projects and get new ones under way so that the last half of the year can be remembered in future as one of great achievement.

ENGAGEMENT ANNOUNCED:

Members of the Society were delighted to learn of the engagement of Michael Cole and Delia Maloney. Congratulations and best wishes for the future. We guarantee you both a rousing sendoff in the best traditions of the Club!

THE SURPRISE BAY AREA

by Kevin Kiernan

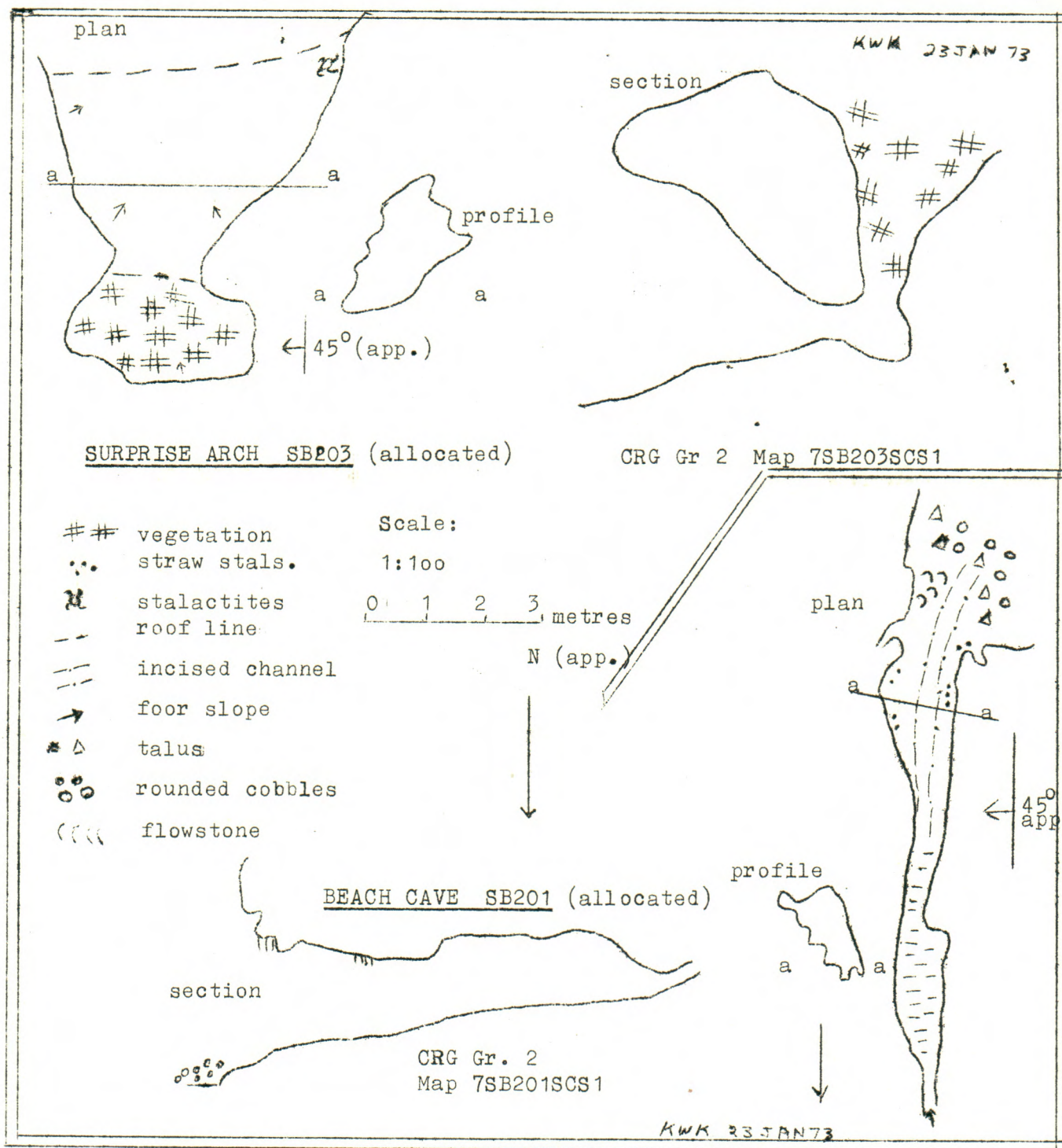
Between Cockle Creek and New River Lagoon on Tasmania's rugged southern coastline lies Surprise Bay, one of the most scenic parts of the South-West wilderness. It is Australia's most southerly karst.

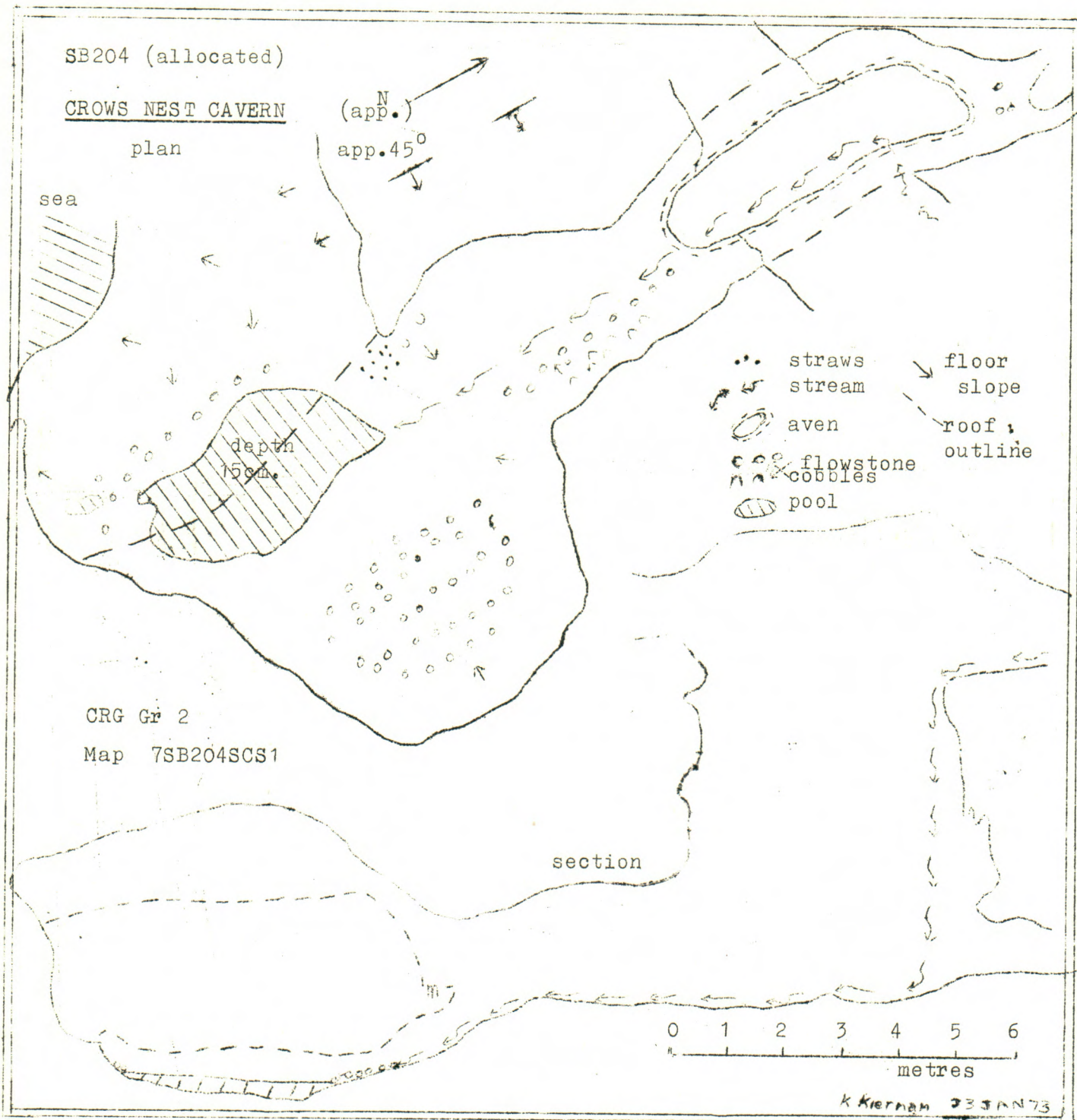
A strip of sand 0.6 km long and up to 50 m wide is backed by a heavily vegetated dune system attaining an elevation of around 30 metres, behind which at the eastern extremity there exists a placid little lagoon near the mouth of the Surprise Rivulet. Upon the sand of the main beach breaks surf from the Southern Ocean, usually of impressive magnitude. The bay itself is roughly square in shape bounded by two prominent features of the southern coast. Pretty's Point to the west is an elevated headland 1 km long and 70 m in height with spectacular cliffs and small stacks worn into long jagged forms. Eastwards lies Shoemaker Point, an elongate ridge extending southwards from the foot of Pindars Peak (1260 m) 8 km inland, which reaches outwards into the bay for 1 km parallel to Prettys Point before swinging away towards the south-east.

Gordon Limestone (Ordovician) occurs at the eastern end of the beach as a large reef, the top of which roughly approximates to high tide level, extending several hundred metres into the bay transverse to the beach. A gap sufficient to act as discharge point for the Surprise Rivulet lies between the reef and the main outcrop along the foreshore of Shoemaker Point.

The limestone is dark coloured and well jointed, striking roughly 10 degrees east of north with a strong dip towards the east of some 50 degrees. Maximum relief near the beach is of the order of 20 m at which level the limestone is obscured by the vegetated sands of a fossil marine terrace. Eastwards Shoemaker Point rises to a general elevation some 100 m above sea level.

Twelvetrees (1915) states that the limestone overlies Owen Conglomerate (Ordovician) and that the Surprise Bay occurrence probably represents the western limb of the next syncline to the east of that where the limestone outcrops near the mouth of New River, 4 km to the North-East. (The Precipitous Bluff area is the northern extension of the latter outcrop.) He includes a geological sketch map indicating the limestone to occur over almost the entirety of Shoemaker Point,





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with a maximum extent of 1.2 km X 0.8 km. This map may be rather misleading in view of the apparently rather low level at which the limestone is obscured. The covering sands include some Permian rubble, and it may be that the higher relief areas on the point consist of Permian sediments, with the limestone occurring only around the coast.

The karst surface is an interesting exposure of limestone subject to the action of the sea. The rock is generally exposed over a width of about 30 m with an average gradient of the order of 30 degrees, and developed into a schichtfugenkarren surface with strike ribs averaging 0.4 m in width alternating with strikes of average 0.2 metres width and up to 1 m deep.

The area has been investigated from a speleological standpoint only once. In February 1973, by a party from the Southern Caving Society. The reason for such infrequent exploration lies both in the paucity and small size of the area's caves, and in its remoteness. Access is possible only on foot -- a 3 hour walk from an amphibian aircraft landing at New River Lagoon, a $1\frac{1}{2}$ day walk from Cockle Creek or 4 days from Port Davey.

Surface exploration in search of caves has extended over only a few hundred metres along the coastline from the beach. From the furthest point reached the limestone could be seen to extend at least another 1.5 km along the coast and in view of 'Twelvetrees' report it seems likely it extends for quite some distance further.

The caves are small but interesting, apparently of marine origins but with subsequent karst type modification. Most lie some 4 m above present high tide level with development strongly strike controlled. Similar openings may be seen at present high water level in offshore stacks and further south along the coast in the main limestone mass. Since evacuation by the sea, which has left piles of rounded limestone pebbles near cave entrances, drainage from the higher areas has invaded, depositing small patches of flowstone and small straw stalactites. A small stream enters the far end of Crows Nest Cavern through an aven, at the top of which further passage may exist. Collapse of a sea cave linking a very large doline to the sea at one point has left a geo 3 m wide and 18 m long. An apparently similar feature is evident on the Lands Department map of the area 1 km further south.

The caves occur frequently along some sections of the coast and unexplored entrances may be seen from any reasonably elevated position.

The rather small size and considerable degree of exposure probably accounts for the lack of obvious fauna within the caves. A lone Cave Spider has been seen in Beach Cave.

This then is one of the most idyllic spots in which any speleologist could spend his time, unpolluted, unspoilt, wild. It has rapidly become a favourite spot with bushwalkers venturing along the South Coast Track.

It has long been proposed for inclusion within the South-West National Park, to date without success. However, one interesting development has been the disclosure by the Examiner Newspaper that State Cabinet approved in principle its protection, and that of nearby Precipitous Bluff, in December 1972. A subsequent statement by two Cabinet members claimed the report was partly true, but that the Government did not intend to go ahead until the outcome of Mineral Holdings' application for an Exploration Licence at Precipitous Bluff was known. It is to be hoped that the area gains such protection, for even though the caves are small, the area's beauty is very great indeed.

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SOUTHERN CAVERS IN EXIT

by Leigh Gleeson.

Exit Cave situated in the Hastings area of southern Tasmania with its 10 plus miles of horizontal passage ways offers a welcome change to those cavers amongst us who spend most of their time in the basically vertical systems of the Junee and Florentine areas.

It was this attraction together with the well known potential of Exit for extended underground camping that prompted a three man S.C.S. team (Graham Bailey, Stewart Wilson and myself) to organise a six day trip to the cave.

Our original aims were to explore the system thoroughly, revise exploration in the Western Grand Fissure sections and to study time concepts in extended underground activities. We set ourselves a daily programme which would have enabled us to systematically cover all the major passages of the cave. Unfortunately, high water levels were to throw this programme into disorder.

We arrived at the cave entrance at about 1.00pm on Friday. The water level was such as to force us to use the rope traverse and the upstream bridge. Graham, thinking he would set a precedent for smart caving on the trip, decided to walk the narrow two-pole bridge rather than crawl along it however his subsequent near fatal wipe out changed his mind and gave Stewart and myself a good laugh.

Just below camp site I (1000 ft from the entrance) the creek was flowing at a depth of only 2 ft however, such was the strength of the current that we could only risk crossing while on a belay and this was the case for all subsequent creek crossings (which occurred every 100 yards) on the trip. We found ourselves very early on being unduly cautious not to get our clothes wet for once wet they remained that way for the six days and it was not an uncommon sight to see three cavers wearing nothing but belay slings, helmets and boots tediously pushing their way upstream (this arrangement can be bad news in a section of rough talus).

We had pushed solidly for 12 hours from the entrance just to reach the Dribble system where we made a forced camp up in the talus and sand well above the mainstream passage. In those twelve hours we had only gone about 2000 ft and were short of our destination (Camp II) by approximately 1000 ft. Our 80 lb. packs proved cumbersome in the talus and although they helped to keep our feet on the bottom when crossing the rapids they made balancing awkward.

A somewhat tired team cooked tea and prepared for bed on the first night but a cassette tape recorder, that I had packed unbeknown to my mates, was produced with enough batteries to give us a music ration of three hours per day. It proved to be such an instantaneous morale booster that it is now considered an essential for future caving jaunts of extended duration.

We awoke for our second day after 11 hours sleep, breakfasted and packed our gear for an upstream push. Such was the location of our campsite high in the talus that we were unable to see the main stream and on reaching it fully loaded with gear found it had risen some 18 inches overnight.

Initially this was regarded as a mere challenge and an attempt was made to cross further upstream. This resulted in one team member (fortunately on a belay) being hauled from the water like a wrung-out cat.

A quick reconnaissance of other likely spots showed that crossing the creek with packs was out of the question and we found ourselves confined to a talus corner of the stream (50 yds long by 30 yds wide) unable to push upstream or downstream.

The party agreed at this point that the situation was somewhat rude and that we had better make the most of it by occupying ourselves bashing the talus behind camp and hoping that the water level would drop in 3 or 4 hours.

We enjoyed several hours of sporty caving with Stewart deciding he would add a touch of drama to the already precarious situation by attempting a very narrow squeeze in which he was stuck for a short period. This did not seem to worry him unduly and in fact he enjoyed every minute of it.

On returning to the main stream we found to our horror that the creek had risen another 12 inches. I was mentally selecting positions on the roof some 30 ft above us where we might hang from bolts and slings if the worst came to pass and the creek continued to rise.

We were forced to spend the rest of the day back in the side passages of the Dribble system, the dimensions of which are relatively small compared with those in the main stream passage, (the word small is purely a Tasmanian adjective and our mainland comrades would probably describe the Dribble system as bloody vast). Nevertheless an enjoyable afternoon was had with some beautiful formation observed, particularly many gypsum flowers.

A check of the stream level just before tea showed that the waters although not subsiding were rising slower and this gave us confidence that maybe on the following day the water would be low enough for a second attempt at an upstream push. After some 20 hours of being up and about the party cooked dinner (a billy of stew and a bucket of rice) had their music ration and bedded down for the night.

Overnight the creek dropped to the level it was when we entered the cave so we proceeded upstream after breakfast on our third day on the assumption that reaching Camp II was now only a formality. We did not know that we would work flat out for three hours tediously crossing the freezing creek many times only to reach an impassable section of deep rapid flowing water and vertical sides a mere 300 yds up from the Dribble system camp. (Camp 1 $\frac{1}{2}$)

A discouraged, wet and cold team wandered up onto a damp sand bank to have a billy of tea, lunch and time out to consider their pathetic situation. The inevitable decision to return to Camp 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ was a blow to morale, however we managed to read humour into our predicament by mocking ourselves as cavers for organising such jaunts and by taking delight in each others misfortunes.

Our return trip to Camp 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ took us no time at all, firstly because we knew the best places to cross and how deep they were and secondly we were decidedly colder than on the way up and we wanted to warm up. The remainder of the afternoon saw continued work in the Dribble system. We all agreed that there is at least 2 days solid caving to be had in the system of interconnecting dry and wet passages and complex upper levels.

We found ourselves differentiating between work in such side passages and work in the main stream passage. The former we called caving but the latter we did not, for such are the dimensions of the main stream that it is more like canyon walking in the dark with the glow worms on the ceiling above so far up that they appear as stars on a clear night.

The party arose on the fourth morning after 18 hours in bed. Some qualification is needed here however, for this does not imply that the three of us slept continuously for 18 hours, but rather that Stewart, by force of habit tended to wake up after 6 or 7 hours sleep and seeing that no one else was awake he would go back to sleep. Graham tended to wake after 8 hours sleep and the same thing would apply to him, that is he would see that Stewart and I were asleep and go back to sleep himself.

Similarly I would wake after 9-10 hours of initial sleep and reason the same way and so the system perpetrated itself until two team members awoke together and so made moves to get up.

The morning of the fourth day (underground time) saw a big drop in water levels, not enough for us to confidently proceed upstream but enough to allow us to go downstream to Camp I and Hammer Passage.

We had been marooned at our talus campsite for three nights unable to move any significant distance either way. Water levels in the talus sections between Camp I and the Dribble system had been high enough to totally flood sections of the usual route reassuring us that the decision to remain at Camp $1\frac{1}{2}$ for the previous three days was a wise one. At Camp I itself the waters had been within several feet of the top sandbank (Note - see T.C.C. trip reports for how the water levels can come above the top sandbank overnight while one is camping there).

Several hours were spent in Hammer Passage sight-seeing and photographing. Full credit must go to those cavers who took the initiative and marked a track through the formation chamber.

The following day (cavers time) we were informed by Stewart that we would have to leave the cave and our arrival at the surface fortunately coincided with daylight (11.00am in fact).

One of the principal aims of the trip was to see how well cavers could estimate the time without reference to watches and to this end only Stewart carried one. He alone had access to it throughout the whole trip and was obliged to refer to the time only on going to bed and upon waking. The purpose of this was twofold: Firstly it meant that he could not bias decisions such as when to stop for lunch or when to go to bed by having some prior knowledge of the actual time. Secondly it spared his frustrations in that he would have found it difficult to abide by the decisions of Graham and myself knowing that they were based on a totally ridiculous time concept.

The latter point was well illustrated at about tea time on the third day when Graham feeling a little enthusiastic, suggested we do several hours of serious side passage work. Stewart had just checked the time and realised that we had been up and about for 17 hours or so and undoubtedly did not view the suggestion with the same zeal but nevertheless came along and enjoyed himself.

Looking through Stewart's trip notes, I find that we had not developed any basic pattern between the number of hours we were up each day and the number of hours we slept. That is we were not working to a 24 hour cycle as we would have been on the surface but by the same token we had not stuck to any other pattern. A summary of our time table is below:-

	<u>Up and About</u>	<u>Sleep</u>
Day 1	20 hours	11 hours
Day 2	20 hours	6 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours
Day 3	16 hours	18 hours
Day 4	19 hours	9 hours
Day 5	5 hours (to reach entrance)	- Hobart
Day 6	Lost in the other five days	

Similarly there appeared to be no correlation between the severity of the day's caving and the number of hours slept. An explanation for this fails me. The most surprising revelation of the trip came on our fifth day underground (estimated time) when we had all just woken. Stewart was starting to cook breakfast, Graham and myself were discussing the proposed days caving in Hammer Passage while still in our sleeping bags. Stewart interrupted and casually told us that we would be doing no such thing, that our time was up and we had to leave the cave.

We had lost one day in six by underestimating the actual time and most of it was absorbed in our first three days. The news had taken us totally by surprise for we had suspicions that, if anything, we were overestimating.

It is interesting to hypothesize as to the factors that determined the length of our underground day and their relative importance. In all cases the day was considered to be over when we had eaten three meals and so it is the factors that determined when we stopped for lunch and tea that are of interest.

These were:-

- (a) The situation in which we found ourselves;
- (b) Our hunger and exhaustion level;
- (c) Our mental condition.

All three factors are dependent upon one another and all affected to varying degrees any decision to stop for a meal.

In all but a few cases the situations in which we found ourselves appear in retrospect to have been the most dominant factor. We tended to canyon walk until some obstacle impeded our progress or we reached a given destination and so it was that we worked without a meal for 12 hours on one occasion, down to only three hours on another. Initially we were so pre-occupied with trying to keep to our schedule (impossible due to water levels) that we forgot about time and pushed until the situation became hopeless.

Indeed the other factors were relevant in all cases and in a few they were dominant however the one mentioned appeared to be the most important and accounts for our underestimating the time.

On looking back it was a good decision to appoint Stewart timekeeper because he had that ability to keep a straight face and 'not bat an eyelid' while Graham and I were making hopeless estimates of the time.

In fact he played his role so convincingly that I tended to use this as evidence that our estimated time was reasonable. When planning the Exit trip I had envisaged a somewhat larger team and would have liked to have had a few more club clowns along such as Messrs, Ward, Cole and Harris but as

it turned out S.C.S. cavers were scattered all over the State, principally at Mole Creek (with our V.S.A. friends) and attempting to reach Vanishing Falls (S.W. Tas.) which left only Graham, Stewart and myself.

Nevertheless the small team proved to be advantageous firstly in manoeuvrability and secondly in that a decision which suited one generally suited the whole team. Despite the extended nature of the trip the small party was extremely compatible for with characters like Bailey and Wilson along you're never short of a laugh.

Indeed it was an enjoyable trip despite the severe conditions. Southern Cavers will return to Exit in the not too distant future on a somewhat longer expedition when it is hoped that more can be learned about underground time concepts and to encourage further exploration in Exit's many extremities.

TASMANIAN COUNCIL OF SPELEOLOGY

by Ron Mann

On Saturday morning, July 21st, twelve interested members from the three Tasmanian A.S.F. affiliated clubs met at the Society's clubrooms to discuss the formation of a speleological council.

Those present were John McCormack, Bob Cockerill, Dave Elliott, Ron Mann, Kevin Kiernan, Albert Goede, Andrew Skinner, Roy Skinner, Richard & Lorna Schmidt, Bill Hardman and Peter Dowde. An apology was received from Frank Brown (Jr.).

Albert Goede was designated Acting Chairman and Bob Cockerill Acting Secretary.

After much discussion it was agreed that the council would be known as the Tasmanian Council of Speleology (T.C.S.) with membership open to all A.S.F. member societies in Tasmania.

Each society will be represented by the President and two elected delegates although each society has only one vote.

The functions of the Council are:-

1. When appropriate to represent the societies in particular fields of interest and/or speak on their behalf.
2. To enable member societies to discuss items of mutual interest and to take such action as agreed upon.
3. To act as a centre point for the exchange of information between societies.
4. To co-ordinate joint activities between societies and other organisations as required.
5. To undertake other functions or actions agreed to by member societies.

No action is to be taken regarding matters outside the geographical area covered by the Council.

A Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer are to be elected from the delegates.

A levy may be charged, to provide finance but only if approved by all societies.

• (The profits obtained from the A.S.F. Convention in Hobart (1970) will be made available by member societies).

The Chairman may convene meetings of his own volition, at the request of two member societies or as determined by the Council, provided that the Council must meet at least twice in each year.

No decisions are to be made unless all member societies are represented.

Sub Committees

Three sub-committees were suggested, these being Cave Documentation, Conservation and Search and Rescue.

Rules

All Ad Hoc committees are to be chaired by a delegate to the Council and are to contain at least one member from each society.

NO TRAGEDY LIKE TOO LATE

by Kevin Kiernan

To achieve a society as concerned for its quality of life as for dollars, television sets and other artifacts which are seen to illustrate its standard of living, is a great task. To attain a world in which caves and other parts of our natural environment will be safe from unwarranted destruction calls for great social re-organisation and establishment of a new sense of social values. The obvious means, by educating the young, is a useful though slow process, taking some years. By way of contrast, the blasting of a cave may take only a few minutes. Prolonged campaigns such as that for Lake Pedder, which take sufficiently long to allow a concurrent evolution of social concern are rare indeed.

If social change is slow, administrative or legislative change is not, as anyone who witnessed the rapid parliamentary approval of politicians salary increases in Tasmania will testify. This at least stands some chance of being faster than destruction.

Although it may be a nasty side of life, some sense of politics is inherent in everyone of us (in cavers probably more than most!). Further, it is our only chance to act in time to protect much of our heritage. Your vote is important, cast for a candidate in any election, (municipal, State or Federal) who is fully committed to conservation. If none are committed to conservation, then it is up to us to get in among the pigeons and change things, by joining political parties and helping formulate their policies. It is not hard or expensive. Politicians after all are only people, and are there only to do our bidding. If they don't do it we should throw them out, but if they don't do it because we don't tell them what to do, the fault for the drowned valley or quarried cave is entirely ours.

There are hundreds of thousands of people active in community conservation groups in this country far more than any political party. What an enormous amount could be achieved if we all worked together in the field in which we can achieve most.

During the past few years I have been a member of three political parties. I hold no candle for any beyond their better conservation policies. They are a means to an end, and provided we don't let them become an end in themselves there is nothing terribly sinister about belonging to them. For conservationists certainly have a long way to go.

In 1969 the Tasmanian Labor Government which had introduced the Pedder proposal fell from office amid a groundswell of disapproval, one of the components of which was conservation. The new Liberal Government showed sincerity predictable of an established political party, for when it left office in 1972 it had implemented only a fraction of its promised conservation policies. The determination of the two major parties to disregard conservation led to the formation of the United Tasmania Group, which fielded candidates in the last State election and after only three weeks to campaign came within a couple of hundred votes of taking seats in two separate electorates. Although its electoral impact was derogated locally the Review made the point:-

"Neither (major party) was prepared to take any chances. First the Liberals and then Labor offered a ministry for the environment, and almost anything else that sounded good"

while the Adelaide Advertiser commented:-

"that this group was not conspicuously successful in winning seats at its initial bid was perhaps less remarkable than the appearance for the first time of a conservation group in the forefront of politics. Other parties were forced - some reluctantly - to declare themselves"

That initial campaign was funded by donations of several thousand dollars from individual conservationists throughout Australia. I would contend that only by each one of us continuing this support for the U.T.G. can we hope to win any conservation battles. If we wait, relying upon the authorities to approach us as the "experts" to be consulted on cave issues, we will be waiting a very long time.

Many Tasmanians, aware of the actions of the present Federal Government on the Pedder issue wonder why U.T.G. continues when such an environmentally pure government is in office. The answer is simple. Even Conservation Minister Moss Cass, who spent much of a recent visit to Hobart telling conservationists they could only succeed by joining a major party, (only to be sabotaged shortly afterwards by the Tasmanian A.L.P. expulsions, indicating what happens to those who would challenge the entrenched hierarchy of the major parties) could not deny that the reason Tom Uren came to Hobart in the first place to make promises on Pedder was in an attempt to win the conservation vote from the U.T.G. in Denison. U.T.G. had no chance of

winning the seat, but at the State election had shown it could capture 5% of the vote. At the previous Federal election the margin by which the seat had been won was 2%. The potential for the U.T.G. to upset the final outcome was obvious. That is why Pedder is alive at Federal level.

While most who have met him regard Moss Cass as very sincere and a good bloke generally, how deep is environmental concern in the party overall? Make up your own mind from the Bulletin's coverage of the 1973 A.L.P. Federal Conference:

"It was not just the voting but the tone which was most significant. That most devastating weapon.....sarcasm, was used mercilessly to attach environmentalists.....Moss Cass was subjected to mocking interjections.....the whole "environmentalist thing" was (said to be) "pious and absurd"....."irresponsible and fanatical".....And so in this atmosphere the major environmental proposals went down one after another."

Conservationists who have spent years campaigning in this State have come to realise that they are bashing their heads against a wall. To get our case across we must act to get at the root cause of the trouble, and instate politicians with a genuine rather than vote-catching concern. We must better the tweedledum (A.L.P.) and tweedledee (Liberal) system of politics by our own initiatives. There is simply no point going on campaigning on individual issues, P.B., Pedder, caves, or anything else.

To a recent letter from a conservation group seeking the U.T.G.'s policy on P.B. the following reply was directed:-

"It is by the existence of a political organisation for which earth care is the sole care pervading philosophy that other political organisations might be persuaded to most immediate action. Otherwise all we can expect is a gradual change -we have not got time for such luxuries. I suggest that our aims are identical. The U.T.G. is the means of putting them into practice"

To me the U.T.G. is not just another remote political party. It needs to be more widely realised that its whole *raison d'être* is conservation, to carry the fight to the ballot box. Its policies are not rigid, they are formulated by its members and changed as required to meet any conservation need. I would like more people to pitch in and help. I do not seek the commitment of the S.C.S. itself, merely the vote and active membership of all its members. Such a unified thrust is our only chance. If we are not prepared to act, then we may as well forget the whole conservation thing.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I feel I ought to put the historical record straight. Conversley to what was reported in 'Southern Caver' Vol. 5, No. 1, I did not originate the idea of a Tas. Speleo. Federation, that came from somebody or some people down your way. All I did was to suggest having a symposium to discuss the idea. I have also had a few thoughts about the structure and I have outlined these to Albert Goede. Whether the Federation or Council or whatever does get started or not I still hope to arrange occasional meetings of S. & R. leaders.

I have been re-reading Alek's editorial and the letters which it inspired. I think one of the problems - common in many similar situations - is the lack of definitions of conservationist, preservationist and environmentalist. The dictionary is no help as the first is defined as the second. However usage has changed the meaning and I believe conservation is making the best use of our resources while preservation is to allow no change in any way. The last beast is the bloke who measures, studies and reports on the environment. Now I think cavers can be all three - except in the case of caves where we are predominantly preservationists. With Karst we should be conservationists. Maybe this is the sort of thing a Caving Council could work on - definitions, etc.

Regards,

Frank Brown,
Launceston.

