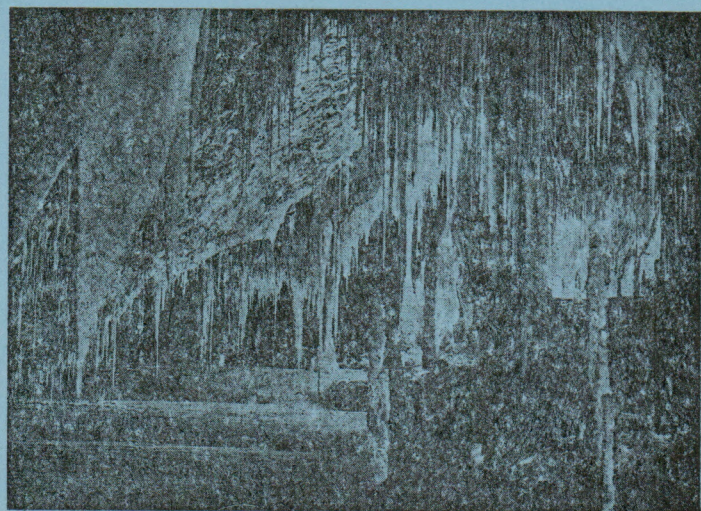


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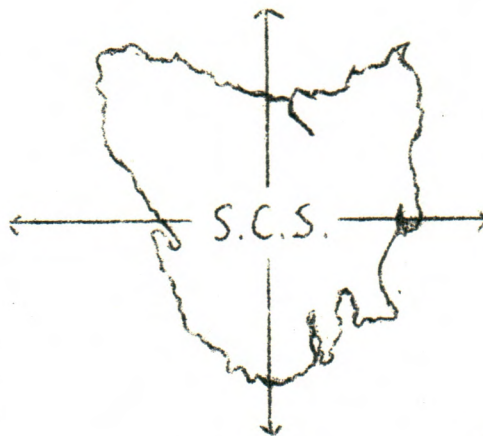
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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

In the last edition of "Southern Caver" (Volume 6, No. 1) brief mention was made of the position regarding cave reserves in Tasmania. Press statements by the Society's President, Steve Harris, and A.S.F. President Elery Hamilton-Smith calling for action in the matter were summarised.

Kevin Kiernan has closely examined the situation, and this issue is devoted largely to the results of his investigations. We make no apology for this because, after years of neglect and indifference to the important aspect of legal protection, time is running out and initiatives must be taken before it becomes too late.

Kevin's assessment will prove of cold comfort to speleologists. A deplorable situation is shown to exist, and with the present State Government's well known mercenary and materialistic attitude of commercial exploitation at any cost, the way ahead to the establishment and protection of adequate cave reserves will not be easy.

During the quarter a copy of the report of the Australian Government's inquiry into the National Estate was received. It is encouraging to note that the submission made by the Society was well received and drew favourable comment. Indeed, the cavers' case was considered the best documented of any submitted. Some hope may lie in this direction but nothing concrete has so far emerged.

Speleologists owe Kevin Kiernan a debt of gratitude for his labours in compiling the following article, and it seems opportune to suggest that the work must not be left to a dedicated few. We must all make a contribution. The time for action is now.

Dave Elliott

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF TASMANIA'S CAVE RESERVES

Kevin Kiernan

To anyone with even the most elementary comprehension of Tasmanian speleology it is obvious that Tasmania's system of limestone cave reserves is completely inadequate. Apart from the lack of new reserves to match continuing discoveries over the past three decades, reserves which do exist are inadequate on a number of grounds.

Environmentally, all but one limestone cave reserve in Tasmania are insufficient to afford full protection to the cave they exist to preserve. Any regard to the direction and extent of the caves involved appears to have been quite secondary, while no attention at all has been paid to aspects such as reservation, or at least management, of catchment.

Legally, almost all reserves appear quite inadequately protected. Reserves to protect caves exist under a variety of statutes not all of which would appear to protect the caves involved from all possible destructive agents. Many reserves indicated as such on published topographic maps have never even been gazetted. In at least one case the gazetted boundary definition is imprecise and inaccurate.

Logically, there should be far more cave reserves. With the exception only of the Croesus Cave Reserve proclaimed in 1972 there have been no new cave reserves declared in Tasmania for over thirty years. Croesus itself was discovered in the 1890's, hence the situation is simply that there has been no attempt whatsoever to keep pace with the dramatic discoveries made in Tasmania since the advent of organised speleology with the formation of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club in 1947. Today Tasmania is known to possess the largest and most spectacular caves in Australia, the vast majority totally lacking in any form of statutory protection.

While the 'Mt Field Caves' (presumably Growling Swallet) appear to have been considered in siting the boundaries of Tasmania's first national park in 1916, caves generally have not been considered in siting major reserves, their protection rather being left to small mono-purpose reservations.

That since 1947 a few of the hundreds of new discoveries made in Tasmania have lain within the confines of that existing national park can be considered no more than a fortunate accident. Less accidental was the revocation, in the 1950's, of a large part of that park, where subsequently major caves have been discovered in the Florentine Valley, and lie unprotected.

Other national parks, such as that in the South-West wilderness area of the state contain caves, but again only by accident. Even so, the major caves of this region lie just outside of the boundaries - at Mt Anne, Weld River, Precipitous Bluff and the Cracroft River - such was the consideration of them when delineating the boundaries.

Thus it is the small reserves - the cave reserves per se - which are potentially perhaps the most important protective agencies in the long term, inadequate and neglected as they may be at present. That is not to say that broader measures such as well produced and applied management plans are not of paramount importance in guiding the human development of karst areas.

Presently cave reserves extant in Tasmania appear to have been gazetted solely for the purposes of tourism, current or future, with no consideration of other recreational uses to which caves might be put. Nonetheless, at least they are more easily isolated and evaluated than other forms of reserve protecting caves.

The purpose of the present discussion then, is to examine those public reserves extant in Tasmania specifically for the protection of limestone caves.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROTECTIVE LEGISLATION

Cave reserves in Tasmania exist not only under the administration of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, but also under the Departments of Lands, Forestry and Mines.

Land first appears to have been set aside as "reserve for public purposes" under the early Crown Lands statutes of the colony. The 1890 Act provided under Section 24 for the exemption from sale and reservation to the Crown of "places for the recreation and amusement of the inhabitants of any town or village" by the Governor of the colony. The same Section provided for revocation. This power appears to have been maintained under subsequent Acts.

The Scenery Preservation Act of 1915 made provision under Section 7 for the establishment of scenic reserves, but there appears to have been no provision for any reserve previously declared under Crown Lands administration to receive automatic status under the new Act. This was a stronger form of protection as revocation demanded, under Section 16, a resolution of both houses of state parliament.

But not strong enough however. Lake Pedder demonstrated the weakness of existing protective legislation, such that the 1967

Legislative Council Select Committee of Enquiry into the Pedder flooding proposal recommended in its final report the establishment of a new National Parks and Wildlife Service, amalgamating the functions of the previous Scenery Preservation Board and Animals and Birds Protection Board.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970, provided under its transitory provisions contained in the second schedule to Section 53 (part 1c) for reserves under the Scenery Preservation Act to become State Reserves. This Act provided for two categories of reserve, of which State Reserves (which include all National Parks and Scenic Reserves) are the stronger. State Reserves can again be revoked by resolution of both Houses of State Parliament.

Other existing cave reserves exist under the exemption clauses contained in the Acts governing the administration of Forestry and Mining in the state. These would appear to protect the areas involved only from alienation for the purposes relative to the particular administration. That is, a reserve existing under the Forestry Act would prevent the occupation of the land for forestry purposes, but not from mining or other forms of exploitation.

To worsen matters, some appear to have failed to gain official gazettal, apparently existing only by virtue of the concurrence of the relevant department head, and accordingly their sanctity is very much in question.

GUNNS PLAINS

Gunns Plains Cave is a small outflow cave several hundred yards in length located in an outcrop of Gordon Limestone (Ordovician) on the eastern side of the Forth River 10 miles south-west of Ulverstone in the north-west of the state.

Sometime after its discovery around the beginning of this century tourists were conducted through the cave then in an unimproved state. It has since been fitted out with sufficient equipment to enable greater ease of access, although much of this is now quite old. The tourist operations are run by a local farmer, on lease.

An area of 24 acres, 3 roods and 4 perches (County of Devon, Parish of Castra) surrounding the cave was declared a Caves Reserve under the Crown Lands Act 1903 on 29 September 1910, and gazetted on October 4.

Subsequently it was declared a Scenic Reserve under the 1915 Scenery Preservation Act by proclamation dated 14 February 1918 and gazetted 5 days later.

It became a State Reserve under the second schedule of the National Parks and Wildlife Act in 1970.

Rumour has it that at one stage doubts arose as to whether the cave entrance was actually within the confines of the reserve, and this is perhaps supported by a map in the files of the Lands Department in Hobart dated 1951 which indicates only the northern portion of the reserve and the relative positions of the actual outflow point of the cave stream, the dry tourist entrance and the reserve boundary.

Some 200ft, of the tourist section of the cave may extend beyond the present boundaries of the reserve, though in the absence of an accurate recent survey it is not possible to confirm how much more of the undeveloped cave lies unprotected. It may be presumed however that the area of dolines lying to the east of the reserve forms part of its catchment. Recent reports are that woodchip operations have commenced in this area, with the dolines having been filled with wood and debris. The possible affects of this are naturally difficult to evaluate at this time.

The Gunns Plains Reserve then represents a case of inadequate consideration of directional extent and catchment.

HASTINGS

The Hastings Caves Reserve exists principally to protect Newdegate Cave, a tourist cave, though the development of its boundaries indicates that it was also intended that King George V Cave, once also thought to have tourist potential, be protected as well.

The Hastings Reserve first came into existence as a Reserve for public purposes (Caves Reserve) by proclamation dated 29 May 1919 under Section 11 of the Crown Lands Act, 1911. It was gazetted on 3 June 1919.

Subsequent to the passing of the Scenery Preservation Act, 1915, it was proclaimed a Scenic Reserve under that Act and gazetted on 24 June 1919.

Both these proclamations encompassed the same area, of 131 acres 2 roods.

Under the second schedule of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970 the Scenic Reserve became a State Reserve.

An extension of the Hastings Caves State Reserve, comprising 1 acre, 1 rood 25 9/10 perches under Statutory Rule 1972 No. 153 was proclaimed on 6 June 1972 and notified eight days later. Investigation, however, revealed it to in fact be an extension, not of the Caves Reserve at all, but of the Chalet Reserve adjacent to the Hot Springs Reserve some 3 miles (5 km) distant. A map published by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Tasmania) in 1972 of Tasmanian reserves under its Act clearly indicates three separate reserves-Caves, Chalet and Hot Springs. Yet the misrepresentation was compounded by a claim in the subsequent Annual Report of the Service that the Caves Reserve had been extended at the expense of an area of State Forest.

It appears a significant portion of the tourist cave protrudes beyond the reserve boundary, though it is likely that for as long as this cave is used for tourism it would not be seriously threatened, though it is possible that logging activity in the State Forest area immediately adjacent to the boundary may have detrimental consequences.

King George V Cave suffered extensively from the deprivations of vandals before being gated with financial assistance from the Tourist Department in the early 1970's. A number of small caves exist in the area between Newdegate and King George V, at least one of which (Beattie Cave) has been badly vandalised. Outside the reserve, however, lies Wolfhole, unquestionably the cave in the Hastings area most heavily utilised for sporting pursuits not only by spelcoos but also by scouts and National Fitness Council Adventure courses.

IDA BAY

Most topographic maps of the Ida Bay area indicate a caves reserve surrounding the entrance of Mystery Creek Cave (otherwise known as Ida Bay Caves or Entrance Cave). This cave is of course one of the principal points of inflow to the Exit Cave system, entered from the other side of the same hill, which with some 10 miles (16 km) of passages is by far the longest cave known in Australia.

This extensive and intricate system, despite representations to the state government, has no reserve to protect it apart from that at Mystery Creek Cave.

By notice of the Department of Mines gazetted on 3 July 1917 an area of "40 acres on Mystery Creek, surrounding the cave into which the said creek flows" was exempted from the provisions of the Mines Act, and thereby from occupation for mining purposes, under Section 16 (2) of the Mining Act 1905, "to preserve the caves situated thereon".

The 1929 Mining Act provided in Section 4 that:

"all ... authorities in force at the commencement of this Act shall continue in force, and shall be subject to, and be deemed to have been granted under the provisions of this Act."

Section 6 (2) of that Act maintained the ability to exempt noting:

"Any land so exempted shall cease, to the extent specified in such proclamation, to be subject to this Act, so long as the proclamation remains in force."

However the circumstances under which the Governor would proclaim or revoke such an exemption under this Act do not appear to be specified in the Act, so in the absence of contrary information it might be presumed that he would so act upon the recommendation of the Director of Mines, conveyed through the Minister, or at the request of the Minister himself.

Thus while it may be presumed that this reserve remains in force at the present time, and one might hope will be amalgamated as part of an Exit Cave State Reserve declared under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, the present extent to which the area is inviolable is very suspect indeed. Potentially the reserve exists purely on the concurrence of the Minister for Mines.

Tasmania's present Minister for Mines is the Premier, Mr Eric Reece.

The proposal for an Exit Cave reserve is of course not having an easy passage. The proposal as put forward envisages a 1200 acre reserve, involving the revocation of this area from a State Forest dedicated in 1937 and subject to a special licence issued to Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd, in February 1960. Some saw-log has been removed but the area has not yet been clear-felled for pulp. The Tasmanian Government has heavily committed the state's forests to the wood-chip industry.

According to the Minister for Forests "the practice of forestry on the surface is not incompatible with the commercial development of the caves (assuming that this itself is not a threat to their natural assets). If necessary land adjacent to the entrance could be set aside for essential purposes, such as car parking." One might have hoped the onus of proof would rest upon those conducting a potentially detrimental activity rather than the conservation proponents. As it stands, it appears lack of research is providing the Forestry Commission with a case by default. Note again too the Minister's preoccupation with the purely commercial aspects of cave conservation.

JUNEE-FLORENTINE

Junee Cave

A cave reserve of 50 acres is indicated upon the county chart as surrounding the entrance of Junee Cave at the eastern end of the Junee-Florentine limestone belt adjacent to the Mt Field National Park, though the writer has been unable to ascertain either its legal status or the department responsible for its administration.

Junee Cave is an outflow stream cave penetrable for some 50 metres to a sump from which the water rises from a depth of at least some 20 metres. A connection with the stream sinking into the entrance of Khazad-Dum, some 3 km. distant has been established and it is likely that this resurgence accounts for much of the water sinking in the Junee area.

It is noted simply as "Resd. for Junee Caves" on the county chart. Those public charts of the Mines Dept and Forestry Commission shed no further light on the matter. The reserve is clearly not under the administration of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The failure of the Lands Department to respond to, or even acknowledge in any way correspondence seeking to ascertain the administering authority makes establishment of the true status of this reserve difficult.*

MOLE CREEK

Maracoopa Cave

Maracoopa I Cave is an extensive outflow stream cave on two independent creeks and presently open to tourists. It was found by Harold and Jim Byard who gained a lease covering the cave and opened it to tourists around 1912. It was sold to the Tourist Department after the first world war.

An early lot chart from the Department of Lands indicates an area of 41 acres 3 roods 21 perches to have been involved.

By proclamation under the Scenery Preservation Act (1915) dated 10 August 1939 and gazetted on the 16th of that month an extended reserve of "140 acres or thereabouts" came into being.

* But see appendices.

However, grave difficulties exist in the interpretation of the boundaries as gazetted in 1939, for the boundary description does not close, the margin of error being of the order of 920 ft.

To the south of the reserve proper, higher on the slopes of the Western Tiers, the Westmoreland County Chart bears the notation "Cave Country Reserved". In 1970 the Tasmanian Caverneering Club (Northern Branch) submitted that "part of the cave country reserved is of little value from the point of view of cave conservation" and recommended that areas to the north and west of Maracoopa, and the catchment to the south, should be given protection.

The TCC submission appears to have been made upon the basis of the reserve as then defined on Lands Dept maps. However, these do not indicate the boundary anything like correctly.

On the basis of the information then available to TCC it appeared that Maracoopa I Cave (the tourist cave) Maracoopa II cave, Maracoopa III cave and Kiwi Pot lay within the reserve, with such spectacular and extremely important caves as Devils Pot and Devil's Earhole lying outside the reserve.

In reply to the TCC(NB) submission, a letter from the Lands Department dated 26 September 1971 and signed by W.S. Hannon, (Inspector, Scenery Preservation) notes "I am happy to inform you that your labours have been successful, I have been advised that all your suggestions have been accepted." However, there appears to have been no subsequent modification to the county chart to suggest any follow up action by the Lands Dept.

King Solomons Cave

King Solomons Cave is a comparatively small cave at the western end of the Mole Creek limestone belt near Liena. It extends to a depth of around 100 ft. and contains no permanent stream.

King Solomons was found by a paling splitter named Peachin while hunting, and may have initially been developed for tourists by a Mr W. James. The present entrance was put through by W. Marchant and Jabez Byard in the 1930's.

The Westmoreland County Chart indicates an area of 32 acres 2 roods 5 perches adjacent to the southern side of the Mole Creek-Liena road to be a caves reserve giving no hint of its status but noting that it had been leased to private individuals under Section 128 of the Crown Lands Act (1903) for 14 years from 21 December 1909. One might presume the reserve existed either under Crown Lands legislation or simply by the "protection" of the Lands Dept. without legislative backing.

Bordering the eastern end of this reserve is an area of 28 acres 2 roods 8 perches on which the notation "Cave Reserve" has been altered to "Cave Site", perhaps an implication of private ownership. There is no indication of any reserve gazettal.

On 10 August 1939 an area of 500 acres, incorporating these two allotments and a large area on the northern side of the road and to the west was declared a Scenic Reserve under Section 7 of the Crown Lands Act (1915) and gazetted as such six days later. In theory the Scenic Reserve became a State Reserve under the transitory provisions of the National Parks & Wildlife Act 1970.

However the legality of the Scenic Reserve as gazetted in 1939 seems open to question. It would appear that the notation "Temporarily Reserved" appeared on the Westmoreland County Chart sometime prior to 1920. On 21 December 1926 a State Forest was declared over all the area not reserved at that time. The extended reserve then existed only as lines drawn on a map, and had not been gazetted. The writer has been unable to locate any revocation notice for this State Forest and it seems unlikely that such exists. In view of this it is quite possible that the present legal status of the area may in fact be as a State Forest and not as a Caves Reserve. Despite the 1939 proclamation the Westmoreland County chart still bears the words "Temporarily Reserved" while the adjacent county chart, which also covers the area shows it as State Forest.

While King Solomons Cave is located on the southern side of the road the area of reserve to the north undoubtedly protects a number of minor caves, including possibly the attractive Diamond Cave.

Croesus Cave

Croesus is an outflow stream cave about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length, with excellent decoration. Discovered in the 1890's, its tourist potential was quickly recognised.

Eventually it was vested in the control of the Forestry Commission as part of a State Forest. In recognition of the damage being done by occasional visitors and deliberate vandalism, a gate was erected by members of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club in the early 1960's with financial assistance from the Scenery Preservation Board.

Despite the gate on the main entrance, two other entrances remained open, though probably accessible only to organised and experienced speleological society parties.

In 1970 major floods in the north of the state resulted in the entrance gate being washed out. The cave laid unprotected and was again subject to vandals' attention and, so rumour has it, the removal of speleothems for sale in curio shops.

By Statutory Rule 1972 No. 88 an area of 114 acres 2 roods (land District of Westmoreland, Parish of Loatta) was declared a Conservation Area under Section 14(1) of the National Parks & Wildlife Act 1970, and simultaneously a State Reserve under Section 15(1) of that Act.

The reserve so proclaimed appears quite inadequate to protect all of Croesus Cave, or even the greater part of it. Another major cave, Lynds Cave, is also partially included. No consideration seems to have been given to catchment of any of these caves, which is occupied primarily by State Forest that could at any time be exploited by the woodchip industry, and which could well promote detrimental effects underground.

Subsequent to the reserve declaration, a new gate was erected by persons unknown, but was not sufficient to prevent access. Some decoration was apparently removed and sold via retail outlets in Launceston. Some modification of the gate was subsequently undertaken by speleos. The key is held by the Northern Wildlife Officer of the National Parks & Wildlife Service, though concern has been expressed by some speleos that it appeared too readily available as damage and litter continue to appear within the cave. The situation has now hopefully been rectified.

It is perhaps also unfortunate that since becoming a State Reserve the reserve has been sign-posted on the main road. Although the fact that it is a cave reserve is not revealed by the sign, it may sufficiently inform people who have heard of its existence though not its location, and this may be damaging while Lynds Cave in particular lies ungated.

Baldocks Cave

An area of 63 acres 0 roods 26 perches was proclaimed under the Crown Lands Act on 30 November 1906 and gazetted on 4 December 1906. It was subsequently incorporated in an area of 105 acres "permanently reserved as a scenic reserve" under the Scenery Preservation Act 1915, by proclamation dated 6 August 1939. The reserved land was gazetted as three separate areas. All three of the areas are separated by a significant distance. The third section of 5 acres surrounds the Sassafrass Resurgence.

The area became a State Reserve with the passage of the National Parks & Wildlife Act 1970. By this time this former tourist cave had been closed to tourists and vandalised.

Since its closure as a tourist cave, after parts of it had been extensively damaged by soot from the old carbide lighting plant, the failure of any authority to lock both entrances of the cave has resulted in considerable damage by vandals. This is a commonplace event - it has also occurred at Scotts Cave in the same area and at the old tourist cave at Loongana - and further illustrates the extent to which the value of cave for any purpose other than the financial return of organised intensive tourism has been ignored by state legislators.

Part of what appears to now be reserved land has at some stage been cleared for pasture, while recently some large trees have been felled, apparently to enlarge the pasture area, and the appearance of heavy tracked vehicles parked on the reserve adjacent to an old saw-millers track into forests to the south and west suggest vigilance should be maintained against possible encroachment by woodchip interests which are very active in the general district.

Sassafrass Creek

By proclamation under Section 24 of the Crown Lands Act, 1890, dated 2 November 1894 and gazetted four days later, an area of 300 acres was excepted from sale and reserved to the Crown "for the preservation of the Caves thereon and for reserving access thereto".

The area covered by the reserve lies immediately adjacent to the present Baldocks Cave Reserve, to the north-west. The reserve extends generally up the valley which may have been thought to form the catchment of the Sassafrass Creek resurgence.

The resurgence gives access to a small cave (Sassefrass Creek Cave) but generally the area covered by the reserve would seem to contain little negotiable cave development.

Again the uncooperative attitude adopted by the Lands Department makes elucidation of the present situation difficult. It is possible that at some subsequent time this 300 acre reserve was revoked, for on 25 April 1911, by proclamation dated five days earlier, a further reserve was gazetted under the Crown Lands Act 1903 covering 100 acres and 22 perches, within the confines of the original reserve.

The precise reason for this is unknown to the writer, but it may be that in the light of subsequent exploration and knowledge the paucity of caves was appreciated and moves made to protect primarily the Sassefrass Resurgence, which is certainly a most significant karst feature. Alternatively, presumption of a relationship to Baldocks Cave further upstream in the same valley may account for the reservations.

By the same proclamation that established the Baldocks Cave Reserve, on 6 August 1939, an area of 5 acres surrounding the resurgence was set aside as a Scenic Reserve, and became a State Reserve with the passage of the National Parks & Wildlife Act in 1970.

It seems probable that the 100 acre reserve may also have been revoked. Certainly it appears that the entirety of the 300 acres, including of course the more recent 100 acre area and part of the 5 acres has been cleared for pasture with only isolated pockets of original vegetation remaining. It also appears that woodchipping activity may be occurring in a forest remaining adjacent to, and possibly partly on, the reserved areas.

Honeycomb Area

An area of 99 acres 1 rood 36 perches was set aside as a caves reserve under the Crown Lands Act 1890, by proclamation dated 2 November 1894, and gazetted 4 days later.

The reserve appears to include the entrances to Honeycomb Cave and Wet Cave once used for tourist purposes in an undeveloped state.

Correspondence forwarded to the Director of Lands seeking elucidation of its present status has been ignored.

An annotation on the Westmoreland county chard (Parish of Poatina) "Deloraine Mun. Reserve" is explained on the chart of the lot which indicates it to have been "Leased to the Warden, Councillors & Electors of the Deloraine Municipal Council for 99 years from 26.4.95". A further notation reads "R.E. Martin ... Temp. Lic. 29.9.66," and presumably explains why the reserve is now subject to grazing!

What appears to comprise a part of the reserve, including that area utilised as a campsite by the Southern Caving Society, has actually been cleared of its forest cover.

This reserve covers an integral part of the proposal put forward by the Southern Caving Society for a State Reserve over the very complex and extensive Mole Creek System, and is a useful foothold towards securing this reserve, the submission for which is apparently being ignored by the Tasmanian Government.

TROWUTTA

Trowutta Arch

An area of 225 acres surrounding the Trowutta Arch is noted as being a "caves reserve" on the county chart. Although no major caves are known to occur at present the arch is a very spectacular karst feature. In 1972 a Southern Caving Society party noted a passage leading to a vertical shaft within one doline which does not appear to have been explored.

A letter from the secretary of the Scenery Preservation Board to the Tasmanian Caverneering Club dated 14 July 1953 notes:

"The area is now a Crown Lands Reserve of 225 acres ...
... but before deciding to proclaim it a Scenic Reserve my Board desires to know more about the caves which it contains, but which few persons apparently have inspected."

An undated reply to the Board notes:

"viewed from the crest of the arch, or along the accessible lake shore the formation presents a most remarkable and uncommon sight quite unique in Tasmania. The additional attraction of the excellent rain-forest scenery makes this end of the reserve an excellent tourist spot ... (which) ... should be opened up to the public as a scenic reserve."

It was indicated that a more detailed report would be subsequently forwarded. By letter dated 3 November 1953 the Board advised:

"we shall await with interest receipt of your club's fuller report with photos and a detailed description."

It would appear they were still waiting at the time the Board disbanded about 1968. Hence this may be one instance in which speleos themselves are to blame, though the absence of follow up action by the Board is also lamentable.

An article by H.A. Lane, a Circular Head Municipal Councillor, appearing in the Hobart Mercury on 17 February 1971 indicated that the rain forest of the reserve had been burnt out.

A local farmer who escorted a party from the Southern Caving Society to the reserve in 1972 expressed concern at apparent encroachment onto the reserve by pastoral interests, which has occurred right up to the edge of the northern doline, into which some logs have been deposited.

After two attempts to confer with the Lands Department regarding this, both of which were thwarted by appointments being broken by the Director, Mr W. Caldwell, an appointment with his assistant, Mr Ray Thompson led to a five minute discussion in the corridor. Mr Thompson advised that the reserve had never been gazetted or proclaimed, but was simply the product of an internal decision by the Lands Department not to sell it.

NEW RESERVE PROPOSALS

Apart from the previously mentioned submission by TCC(NB) with respect to the Maracoopa area the decades of organised speleology in Tasmania saw little in the way of initiatives by participant organisations in pursuit of new reserves until representations concerning Exit Cave were commenced by TCC in 1971.

These representations, to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, have been strongly supported by other relevant bodies. Similar proposals for the Mole Creek system have been made by SCS, and the need for a Kubla Khan Cave reserve also stressed. While an officer of the service has had a cursory glance at the subject areas the previously noted comments on the Exit Cave proposal by the Minister for Forests are disconcerting, while there appears ample evidence to suggest that the Mole Creek proposal has been shelved for fear of the land tenure complications.

It is the view of the writer however that there is every reason to expect that resumption of the private land on the Mole Creek system would be far easier to accomplish than to prise a single acre out of a gazetted state forest or indeed any area where the Forestry Commission has heard rumours of the existence of a tree. This hard and uncompromising line by the Commission makes even more alarming recent high level departmental leaks which suggest that woodchipping operations on the hill containing Kubla Khan Cave may occur.

Representations have also been made to the National Estate Committee of Enquiry seeking reservation of these caves.

Perhaps because of the outstanding nature of these three features little interest has been shown in advocacy of reserves for numerous other caves of great merit in national terms but overshadowed in local eyes.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The foregoing is the product of considerable investigation by the writer in mid 1974 but should not be considered by any means an all-embracing discussion. Working outside the relevant government bureaucracies, and in an antipathetic climate has provided considerable difficulties, particularly in regard to access to information, and legal interpretation.

However, such facts as have been assembled are certainly sufficient to arouse considerable concern, and permit a few preliminary conclusions to be drawn.

The only possible conclusion of anyone considering Tasmania's present system of reserves over karst areas in the light of current and more importantly, future needs, is that it is woefully inadequate. It is the unplanned and illconceived product of disinterest, lack of competence, weak protective legislation and maladministration, and represents a classic case of the worst that is offered by the ill-informed parochial ad hococracy which characterises so much of Tasmanian life and governmental planning.

The sheer number of pieces of legislation under which reserves have been established to date has created confusion and uncertainty in the public mind as to the sanctity and status of different areas, as has the practice of unofficial "reserve" establishment purely on the basis of the administrative decisions and policies of acquiescent officials who are of their very nature impermanent in any long term sense, and whose decisions might well vanish with them.

One might also, of course, regard the hotch-potch of confusion which now exists as simply the result of empire building public servants not being content to leave conservation in the hands of the appropriate authority, and deplorable neglect of the financial and personnel needs of that authority by a succession of state governments.

The seriousness of the situations described with respect to particular reserves should perhaps not be gauged so much solely against subjective responses to the significance of the features involved, but viewed in the light of the implications for all present and future reserves if they are only of a loose administrative nature, or are established under weak legislation whereby boundaries may be altered, interference permitted or entire reserves extinguished without public knowledge or participation in the decision.

Environmental neglect in the past has often been excused on the basis of ignorance, but the history of karst conservation in this state shows a rather converse line of development. A fairly high proportion of specific known features gained protection up until about 30 years ago, but then, perhaps in recognition of the difficulties involved in keeping apace in a field where frequent discoveries reduced the relative significance of earlier known caves, official protective measures were curtailed, and with only one typically ill-considered exception have effectively never been resumed.

One most blatant shortcoming in government action to date has been the failure to appreciate karst for anything other than the immediate or potential value of specific caves in monetary terms as tourist drawcards. That karst may have its own intrinsic values and be important in other directions seems a concept completely alien to government decision makers. In this regard speleological interests might be considered as having a long way to go comparative to say, bushwalkers, in as much as a national park system, albeit inadequate, has been established for the more active personal recreative pursuits of this interest group rather than simply the speleological situation of total and absolute government obsession with only the mass commercial approach.

Yet the fault does not lie entirely with government, for the participant organisations themselves must also shoulder a large share of the blame. Their failure to make forceful representations, or even inform relevant authorities of discoveries of the utmost national speleological importance, represents deplorable neglect and must inevitably be regarded as a major factor contributing to the present abysmal level of cave protection in this state.

In political terms, one might hope that the new (1970) National Parks and Wildlife Act might prove stronger than other legislation under which reserves have previously been established, at least requiring the concurrence of both Houses of State Parliament for revocation of a State Reserve. Yet politicians in this state have proven themselves remarkably amenable to unhesitatingly satiate the demands of large scale commercial resource exploiters, and unable or unwilling to rationally consider conflicting demands for parts of the Tasmanian landscape, knowing only too well that most espousing conservation are mild mannered and trusting citizens readily placated by a nice smile and a handshake. As has been seen only too recently in the representations of speleological interests, such political niceties seldom terminate in a flurry of genuine governmental concern and initiatives.

Yet to bask in the cynical claim that one can do nothing against the collective wills of the political and bureaucratic machinations of the state government is all too often merely an excuse for laziness and apathy. Determined citizens can effect changes, but only if they are prepared to make genuine efforts to do so.

It is certainly indisputable that in the past Tasmanian speleologists have pursued a low key, conservative and moderate line in conservation, occasionally with apparently productive results, when viewed in isolation. Yet it is surely also important to consider the overall result of such an approach. While speleological groups may have made no enemies, the level of past success in general terms raises the question as to whether they have gone too far, in attempting to appear "reasonable" in their representations, such that the approach might be considered counter-productive, and whether perhaps a reassessment is not overdue. Might the odd advance on one front mean the loss of the overall war?

It may well be time to learn from past mistakes. It is suggested that speleological interests have gone out of their way to compromise in their submissions, but that it is now patently obvious that they can expect no similar reciprocal gesture from the vested interests who, rightly or wrongly, see their interests threatened, or any gesture of good faith from present state politicians beyond pseudo-committal stances. Perhaps it is simply the case that by making these compromises, out of the public gaze they have lost bargaining power against intransigent politicians who are moved only by the threat in electoral terms which accompanies public exposure of their inadequacies.

Moreover, there exists the very real possibility that this compromise has also been excessive in excluding from submissions features which should not be excluded. Tasmanian speleologists are asking for very little indeed, probably too little, particularly in view of the role Tasmania has to play in national terms, as the location of Australia's biggest and finest caves.

In contrast to the comparative mildness of the past the last few months have seen change. A more aggressive approach effectively on behalf of speleological interests by outside conservation groups almost immediately gained a commitment from quarry operators at Ida Bay not to proceed with a plan to divert Mystery Creek from the Entrance-Exit Caves system. Threatened legal action has three times gained immediate agreement from different mining companies to avoid these caves. Taking a stronger stand has shown results, and further, may well have raised the status of speleologists, in the eyes of their "opponents", from that of a bunch of befuddled

and annoying nature lovers to that of people who really do have something to say and are prepared to back up logical and factual argument, with firm and decisive action. Perhaps the National Estate Committee of Enquiry's praise of the speleological groups as having the best documentation of their subject part of the National Estate of any who made representations to that Enquiry is significant in that sense.

Effective karst protection in this state, however, will not be achieved unless Tasmanian speleologists are prepared to initiate a major re-organisation of their priorities and approaches. Only conservation oriented field activity to provide a sound factual base, political initiatives, constant vigilance, and genuine personal commitment and involvement will allow a more satisfactory situation for those who follow. The sort of threats which now face vital areas like Exit Cave and Kubla Khan will undoubtedly reach fruition if this does not occur.

No longer is it reasonable to expect a small nucleus to shoulder so much of the conservation workload. In any organisation where not all members may be primarily interested in a particular aspect of its operations there tends to develop an information and experience gap between the spearhead and the bulk of the membership. As a consequence voting power and decision making tends all too often to rest with an ill-informed, inexperienced or disinterested majority (who still have a stake in the outcome), the members of which may themselves feel subject to pressures (real or imaginary) resulting from employment in the public service or similar. Such may well have contributed to past failures and should not be permitted to continue to do so. It is perhaps this ignorance of such things as prevailing political and environmental realities which tends to perpetuate excessive conservatism.

Accepting this need for a re-vitalised approach there remains a need to plan the overall rationale. A widely based, general integrated plan of needed reserves, founded upon sound karst management policies and clearly defined objectives is basic. This should consider karst as a landscape type which demands protection, the advocacy of which is as much the implicit responsibility of speleologists as is the advocacy of individual cave reserves. Upon that foundation can then be laid the day to day vigilance and effort which the situation demands.

APPENDICES

Frequently in the foregoing article reference was made to the failure of the Director of Lands to respond to questions put to him regarding Tasmanian cave reserves.

Since the article was submitted and typed for publication, a letter has been received from the Director of Lands, albeit after a delay of some 5 months. Despite the delay, in fairness to the Director, his answers, together with the original questions, are appended here.

However, in some instances these answers are only sketchy, in some cases even inaccurate, often failing to fully answer the posed questions and, deliberately or otherwise, ignoring basic issues and situations which in the circumstances should not be ignored. In view of this, a comment upon these answers has been added by the present writer.

Note however that in the case of question 7 it was an error by the present writer that paved the way for an inaccurate response though it is interesting that this obvious error was not detected by the Director.

QUESTION:

1. King Solomons Cave Reserve (near Liena)

- (a) What is the legal status of that portion of the reserve lying generally to the north of the Mole Creek-Liena road, marked as "temporary" on the county chart?
- (b) What is the implication of that notation?

ANSWER:

I have attached a copy of the Land District chart showing the boundaries of the reserve. The caves were proclaimed 18th August, 1939. The chart showing the word temporary is the adjoining chart to that used for recording the reserve. It appears that it was not altered when the reserve was gazetted. It will now be done. A copy from the chart on which the whole reserve is recorded is attached.

COMMENT:

Irrespective of any correction to the county chart which may be effected by the Lands Department, if the original State Forest gazettal has not been revoked then the legal status of a large part of the reserve may still be as State Forest.

QUESTION

2. Maracoopa Cave Reserve (near Mayberry)

- (a) What is the legal status of the area lying generally to the south of the Maracoopa State Reserve as noted as "cave country reserved" on the county chart?
- (b) What was the date of gazettal of this reserve, if it has been gazetted?
- (c) What department is responsible for its administration?

ANSWER:

The area south of the existing reserve is Crown Land administered by this Department. It is not a proclaimed reserve.

COMMENT:

Without formal proclamation the area "reserved" would have little chance of remaining so if seriously challenged. It is interesting that no mention is made of the changes which were supposed to be forthcoming following the (TCC NB) submission on this area.

QUESTION:

3. Cave Reserve at Sassefrass Creek (near Mole Creek)

- (a) What is the present status of this reserve, which was gazetted under Section 24 of the Crown Lands Act, 1903, on 25 April 1911, as a cave reserve of 100 acres?
- (b) What are the implications of the notation "surrendered 16.1.35, Corr 501/34" present on the chart of this reserve?

ANSWER:

This area of 100 acres 0 roods 22 perches was previously leased to the Devonport Council but the lease was surrendered in 1935. The area is Crown land administered by this Department.

COMMENT (See also Question 7 re Baldocks Cave)

Whether the land is simply Crown land administered by the Lands Department or whether it is still subject to formal reservation under the Crown Lands Act is not clarified by the Director's letter. Irrespective, most of it has certainly been cleared for pasture anyway.

QUESTION:

4. Wet Cave-Honeycomb Cave Reserve (near Caveside)

- (a) What is the present status of this 100 acre caves reserve, which was gazetted under the Crown Lands Act, 1890, on 6 November 1894?

ANSWER:

This area of 99 acres 1 rood 36 perches is at present leased to the Deloraine Council for 99 years from 26th April, 1895.

COMMENT:

The reply appears to disregard the apparent subsequent lease to a local farmer and the impingement of a part of the reserve area by clearing for pastoral activities.

QUESTION:

5. Trowutta Caves Reserve (near Trowutta)

- (a) What is the present legal status of this reserve?
(b) Which department is responsible for its administration?
(c) Have the boundaries been altered in any way in recent years?
(d) Is the Lands Department aware that forest clearing for pastoral purposes has occurred right up to the edge of the first doline of the Trowutta Arch System?
(e) Does the reserve presently protect the area from:-
 (1) sale
 (2) forestry operations
 (3) forest clearing
 (4) mining activity
 (5) any other activity which may prove detrimental?

(Your ref. corr. 1105/20 and 308/53).

ANSWER:

Trowutta Caves Reserves

This area is Crown land reserved for caves and is administered by this Department. The boundaries have been altered in recent years as an area of 32 acres 1 rood 19 perches was recently sold to H.F. Beattie. This Department and presumably the Forestry Commission who control the adjoining land are aware of clearing activities.

COMMENT:

The failure of the Director to advise more specifically the formal status of this land and any gazettal date of reservation suggests that this area too is more an administrative rather than legal reserve. In view of detrimental consequences to the Trowutta Arch of forest clearing of which the Assistant Director has been made aware personally by the writer, one might ask why the Lands Department has not acted. A pity too that questions 5 (e)(1-5) have not been answered.

QUESTION:

6. June Cave Reserve (near Maydena)

- (a) What is the present legal status of this reserve?
- (b) Which department is responsible for its administration?
- (c) Does the reserve presently protect the area from those activities outlined in 5 (e) above?

ANSWER:

This area is Crown Land reserved for caves and is administered by this Department.

COMMENT:

Again a pity the question has been by no means fully answered, and again the failure of the Director to nominate precisely such things as gazettal dates suggests this to be more an administrative than legal reserve, and hence by no means inviolable.

Refreshing though to at last find a government department prepared to admit responsibility for this reserve.

QUESTION:

Would you please advise me as to the status of that area of land surrounding Baldocks Cave near Mole Creek, gazetted as a cave reserve under the Crown Lands Act 1890 on 6 November 1894, but not subsequently incorporated in the reserve declared under the Scenery Preservation Act 1915 by gazettal notice dated 6 August 1939.

The latter reserve appears only about 35% of the size of the original reserve. I would be grateful for any background information you are able to provide, such as the reason the size of the reserve was reduced and the date of gazettal of the revoking of the original reserve if such has occurred.

ANSWER:

7. Baldock Cave near Mole Creek

The original area of 300 acres was proclaimed cave reserve and gazetted 6th November, 1894.

The area was leased to the Deloraine Council but the lease was surrendered in 1915. From the original proclamation of 300 acres an area of 89 acres 3 roods 27 perches was sold to A. & A. Blair and a further area of 100 acres 0 roods 22 perches was leased to the Devonport Council. This lease is now cancelled and was previously described in (3) Cave Reserve at Sassafrass Creek. The balance of approximately 100 acres is still Crown land reserved for caves and is under the administration of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

COMMENT:

This question was posed early in the investigations of the present writer and is inaccurate. The 300 acre area did not cover Baldocks Cave at all, but the area adjacent, upstream of and including the Sassafrass Rising. However it is interesting that the Lands Department did not note this fact. The suggestion by the Director that "the balance of approximately 100 acres is under the administration of the National Parks and Wildlife Service" is quite erroneous. In fact only 5 acres of the original 300 acres is included in the present Baldocks Reserve of 105 acres, and that surrounds the Sassafrass Rising, the rest of the Baldocks Reserve actually lying outside, and immediately adjacent to the 300 acres.

At one stage then, cave reserves in the Baldocks-Sassafrass area totalled 400 acres, but today only about 26% of that area is reserved.

In the circumstances it is lamentable that the Director failed to answer those parts of the question seeking the rationale behind the reduction in size and the date of gazettal of the revocation notice which would presumably be necessary to legally extinguish the reserves.

AREA REPORTS

This report of the Society's recorded activities over the period July 1st to September 30th indicates a marked decline in caving this quarter due partly to a lack of interest in documenting details of trips. Without this documentation these reports cannot be as complete as we would desire.

MOLE CREEK: (1 Trip)

A four day trip was undertaken to familiarise Greg Middleton with caves in this area. Caves visited included Georgies Hall, Herberts Pot and Honeycombe.

HASTINGS: (2 Trips)

The popular Wolf Hole was visited with the aim of showing a South Australian visitor a Tasmanian cave, and two Americans were conducted through King George V.

JUNEE: (1 Trip)

An attempt to survey Satans Lair was abandoned because of high water levels and the collapse of part of a ledge half way down the first pitch.

MOINA & LORINNA: (1 Trip)

A party of four made what is believed to be the Society's first trip to Moina. Weather conditions were most unpleasant so only a few hours was spent in the area. A swallet, numbered M201, was entered to a depth of thirty feet, and was still going, but only just. The caves in the bank of the Iris River were found to have been flooded by the H.E.C.

At Lorinna the swallet by the graveyard was in flood from heavy rains and the caves by the Showground have also been firmly flooded by the H.E.C. A night long storm caused the party to lose much of the available time removing several trees that had fallen across the road in the night.

IDA BAY: (1 Trip)

A detailed report of a trip to this area was submitted to us too late for inclusion in the previous edition. It appears on the following pages.

FIVE DAYS IN EXIT CAVE

by Graham Bailey

Team: Graham Bailey and Stewart Wilson.

The aim of the trip was to orient ourselves with the vast Exit system at Ida Bay.

1st Day: The entrance was reached at 11.25am on May 21 and at 12 Noon we pushed through the wind tunnel. Camp 2 was reached in two hours, but thinking there was still some distance to go, we pressed on. After some thrashing a spot was chosen opposite the Entrance Creek passage.

2nd Day: The Team pushed upstream checking side passages but all were short until finally a long passage was located to the left over some talus. We pushed this but no side sections were explored as the carbides were getting low. It was thought this passage might be the western extension. We then thrashed the talus at the end of the main stream without success before returning to camp.

3rd Day: Stewart and I went upstream again and continued to work the talus. After two hours we pulled out for a snack. Stewart then hit on the idea that we could be in the Grand Fissure area and from this point the cave was quickly grasped. Conference Concourse was located and visited to its upper and lower limits by a team now in high spirits. Track marking in this section by TCC seems to be working well. The passage visited on the previous day was now known to be the Western Grand Fissure. We then returned to camp.

4th Day: Entrance Creek passage was the first side passage to be visited and was pushed to the end marking. A small fish was spotted in the still waters near the main stream and a trip is planned in the near future to obtain a specimen. The Eastern extension was next to be visited with the small passage at the end of a huge fissure making a pleasant change from the main stream. Camp 2 was then located and lunch was had amongst this messy site. A small passage was then visited below Camp 2. After we negotiated a wet squeeze it opened out slightly and the word "fool" was seen burnt onto the wall. This was a source of much amusement. Nevertheless one of us pushed on and returned soaked after running out of air space. The Dribble system was then visited as was the Western Extension which almost refused to end and which contained some good formation. The team then located Mini-Martin and returned to camp.

5th Day: We pushed off for the entrance, visiting formation in Hammer Passage and taking a long look at the brilliant glow-worm display before being greeted with rain on the surface at 3.00pm to wind up a very enjoyable trip.

Feature of the trip was the cassette player as a cup of brew with a dose of heavy music was a real morale booster after a days caving and also acted as an excellent sanity keeper.

No attempt was made to make a time experiment due to the size of the team and constant reference was made to the clock throughout the trip. This tended to save time at the campsite, but it still remained at a high level. Times fairly consistently averaged 9 hours working, 9 hours sleeping and 3 hours each for breakfast and tea.

REALLY, MR EDITOR !!

Readers of ASF Newsletter might be forgiven for thinking that the Society has gone out of business, as no news of our activities has appeared since September 1973.

In case you were wondering, copies of "Southern Caver" are forwarded regularly to that publication.

We hasten to confirm the accuracy of the only published comment, attributed to Andrew Skinner. Our subs, (better value than ever) are indeed \$10 this year, and that does not include ASF fees.....

