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SOUTHERN CAVER

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"SOUTHERN CAVER"

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

I consider that although 1976/77 was a quiet year, many debit and credit entries have been added to our ledger.

The following credit entries have been made:

1. 150 ft. of old ladder was "pensioned off" and replaced with 130 ft. of new ladder comprising one 30 ft. Bonwick produced ladder and 100 ft. of ladder made by S.C.S. members. My thanks to Ron for the invaluable work and time he spent on this project.
2. Membership remained at the constant level it has reached over the past few years.
3. Exploration and surveying continued at a high level. Once again new caves were discovered in the Florentine and of course the regular trips into Herberts Pot forced her to raise her skirt and show a little more leg.
4. My thanks are extended to Bob for the wonderful working relationship he has developed with the Police Search and Rescue Squad. The highlight for the year being the successful exercise held at Mole Creek in May.
5. With the aid of \$102.00 from the raffle the financial position of the Society was very rosy, with an inflation-defying no increase in subscription.
6. Another vintage volume of the "Southern Caver" was produced, thanks to Dave and Ron for a sterling effort.

The debit entries are harder to define, although the largest is the so-called "amalgamation" issue with the Tasmanian Caverneering Club. The ensuing argument that erupted over this issue threatened to dis-unite the Society. The successful formula of co-operation between members developed over the past decade was broken and emotional incidents occurred. I consider this period as the blackest in the Society's history. It is indeed very fortunate that "all's well that ends well" applies and I hope that perhaps a lesson has been learned.

It is quite clear that future policy of the Society should be aligned towards a low key approach to the T.C.C. with an emphasis on retaining close links on a "behind the scenes" basis. The invaluable knowledge which for instance, Albert Goede can provide should not be lost. Likewise co-operation is important to ensure the safe exploration of large systems and, perhaps, once again the possible co-hosting of a future A.S.F. Conference.

The other blot on the ledger was the overall lack of interest shown by the majority of members at meetings. It is easy to be critical, but it was also very easy to chair meetings of apathetic members. It is quite evident that the team spirit and enthusiasm of the past decade has disappeared. Apart from the minority doing the work, most members seem prepared to show interest only when a contentious issue arises. Perhaps it is time to introduce a "committee" style of leadership for the club with regular general meetings only each quarter.

At April 30th, 1977 the ledger balances. Next year lets see the credit side demolish the debit.

Michael Cole.

TREASURER'S REPORT 1976/77

The Society began the year with a balance of \$2.70 and has carried \$13.65 to next year.

Although this appears to be a reasonable effort, this would not have been the case had it not been for the raffle organised by Michael Cole, and the sale of SRT rope to members.

Expenditure on some items will have to be looked at and very careful consideration given to proposals such as subscriptions to other organisations, the purchase of books and possibly the insurance of club equipment.

I recommend an increase in subscriptions to \$15.00 Full Membership and \$10.00 Student Membership for the next financial year, but would like to impress upon members that subscriptions alone will not be sufficient and some form of fund raising will be necessary to cover expenditure commitments.

Ron Mann.

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 1976/77

<u>INCOME</u>		<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
	\$		\$
Balance forward	2.70	Southern Caver	140.00
Subscriptions	146.00	Rent	104.00
Southern Caver	80.75	A.S.F. Fees	60.00
A.S.F.	57.00	Subscriptions	36.00
Raffle	102.56	Insurance	33.41
Sale SRT rope	56.00	Cheque Book	2.00
Bank Interest	3.38	Advertising	2.44
Miscellaneous	62.26	P.O. Box	15.00
		Library Books	22.75
		Equipment	37.40
		Miscellaneous	44.00
		Balance Forward	13.65
	<u>510.65</u>		<u>510.65</u>

SOCIETY FUNDS

Credit Bank Balance	13.65
Interest Bearing Deposit	304.36
(Invested @ 9%)	
	<u>\$318.01</u>

QUARTERMASTER'S REPORT

At the 30th April, 1977 the Society owned the following major items of equipment.

LADDERS

2 x 50ft.
3 x 30ft.
1 x 20ft.
1 x 10ft.
1 x 8ft.

HEADERS

3 x 30ft.
3 x 10 m.
3 x 5 m.
1 x 8ft.

ROPE

1 x 360 ft.
3 x 120 ft.
4 x 60 ft.
1 x 20 ft.

SURVEY EQUIPMENT

2 Suunto Compasses
1 Suunto Inclinator
1 100ft. Tape
1 50m. Tape
1 Compass/Climo Holder

MISCELLANEOUS

2 pairs Cloggers
Duplicator
Rope protectors

Ladder bags
Number punches
Helmets

Five of the Society's 30ft. ladders were destroyed this year because of rusting of the wire rope and there are now only two of the older ladders in existence. These will have to be written off next year.

Funds will have to be provided next year for the purchase of at least four new ladders and possibly six, to replace those written off to bring the club's available ladder length up to near that held a few years ago. At last the new 50ft. ladders have been finished after concerted efforts by a few of the members.

I recommend that all future ladders be purchased rather than made as I consider the effort involved in construction is far greater than the cost of purchase.

The Society voted to sell its SRT rope to individual members as it was agreed that personal rope is looked after much better than club rope. An amount of \$56.00 was realised from the sale.

Ron Mann

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS 1977/78

The Society elected the following office bearers to represent it for the year 1977/78.

<u>PRESIDENT:</u>	Leigh Gleeson
<u>SECRETARY:</u>	Mieke Vermeulen
<u>TREASURER:</u>	Ron Mann
<u>MAGAZINE EDITORS:</u>	Dave Elliott & Ron Mann
<u>RECORDS OFFICER:</u>	Graham Bailey

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HONORARY MEMBERS ELECTED FOR 1977/78

Mr. R.E. Martin	Caveside
Mr. G. Linger	Caveside
Mr. T. Richardson	Mole Creek
Mr. D. Frankcombe	Maydena
Mr. & Mrs. Pat Kelly	South Mole Creek
Dr. J.N. Jennings, M.A.	Canberra
Inspector M. Massie	Hobart
Messrs. Fowler, England & Newton	Davey Street, Hobart
Mr. R.L. Graue	Hastings Caves
Mr. J.N. Howe	Mole Creek

It was resolved by the Society that all Cave Guides would be accorded the status of Honorary Members of the Society.

FLOWERY GULLY - AN AREA FOUND TOO SOON

By Kevin Kiernan

The Flowery Gully area is perhaps the most readily accessible of Tasmania's karst areas to any major population centre, lying to the west of the Tamar River estuary only about 30km. from Launceston. It is a pleasant pastoral valley with the hill tops to either side cloaked in bushland. Due to its proximity to early settlement, it rapidly became known for its caves but today receives little attention.

Ordovician limestone (Gordon Limestone) of shallow marine origin underlines an area of about 5 sq. km, outcropping over perhaps half of this. It has a stratigraphic thickness of just under 700m. and dips generally easterly at about 45°, trending N.E. at the same angle towards the northern end. It is overlain by Permian marine sediments, predominantly sandstones and conglomerates. Maximum limestone relief is less than 100m. (1)

Karstic features are well developed in some localities, though alluvium and other deposits often mask subsidence. The strike-oriented bed of the principle stream is dry but for flood times, with underground drainage the norm. About half way along the outcrop, the entire flow of the stream, even in winter, passes underground for some 400m through the main Flowery Gully Cave.

The limestone is of fairly high grade, and the deposits are close to the major industry, such as Comalco's Bell Bay aluminium smelter. As a consequence, it is or has been quarried at a number of locations for metallurgical purposes, to produce quick lime for mortar, for road metal, and for agricultural lime. Johnston (1888) indicates that even then the limestone was "worked to a considerable extent". (2)

The Flowery Gully Caves:

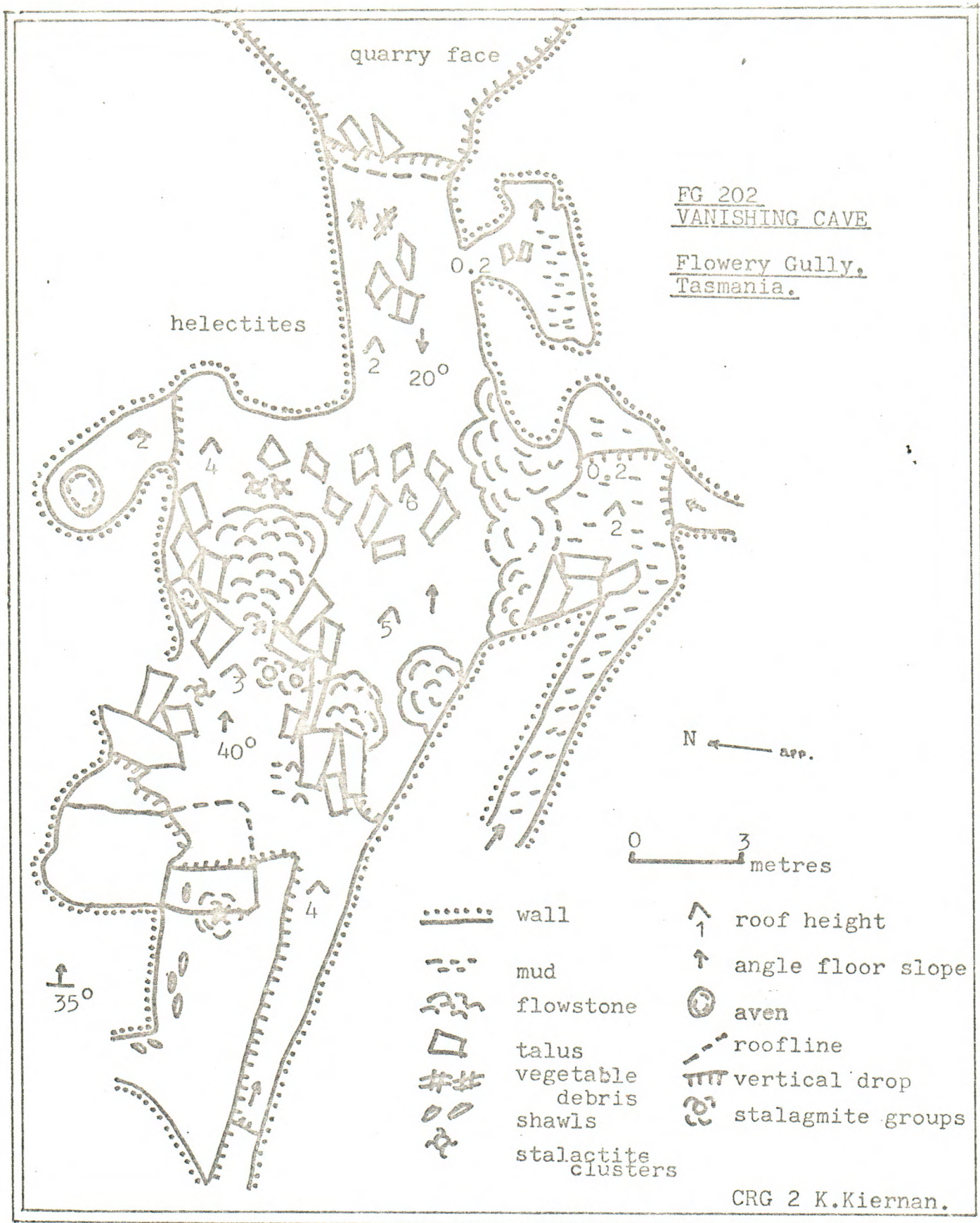
The main cave in the area is situated approximately half-way down the valley where the surface form of the Flowery Gully stream is interrupted by a ridge. The Flowery Gully Caves, which have also been known at various times as the Ilfacombe Caves and the Winkleigh Caves, rapidly became popular with visitors, after their discovery.

Johnston provides a contemporary account:

"At the extreme limit of the old wooden tramway there is a magnificent series of caves, which are approached by a hole in the hillside. I visited these caves in the year 1871, when they were in a perfect state of preservation, so far as the modern Vandal was concerned.

A steep tortuous passage leads us downwards to a shingly floor, evidently the bed of an ancient water course. It is remarkable that the general direction of this old subterranean stream seems to be at right angles to the Fern Tree Gully, through which the present stream runs, and, so far as I could judge, at a higher level. It would appear, therefore, that the rocks in this neighbourhood have been much dislocated, probably during the period when the recent tertiary basalts were everywhere disturbing the surface of Tasmania by their intrusions. Like the Chudleigh caves, the channels are very tortuous. Here we abruptly enter a vaulted chamber of great height, glittering with crystals of carbonate of lime, and adorned with stalagmites and stalactites of every possible size and description. From this chamber there are many smaller ones branching off in various directions, and the passage to still more extensive chambers is frequently obstructed so much by stalagmitic formations that it is necessary to crawl on hands and knees at times for a considerable distance. In one or two cases the entrance to large chambers resplendant with snowy white crystals opens out upon the floor of a similar chamber at a higher level. Some of the pillars formed by the union of stalactites and stalagmites are exceedingly beautiful. Many of them are several yards in circumference, and these usually are surrounded by myriad snow-white "icicles of lime", forming a wonderfully charming scene. The extinction of the candlelights, or their concealment under a ledge of the stalagmitic floor discloses the pale blue glow-worms in clusters along roof and walls, as at Chudleigh."

The extreme limits of one of the old water channels are now completely closed by the development of stalagmitic formations. (3)



However, by 1917, souvenir hunters and vandals had made their mark to the extent that Tasmanian government geologist W.H. Twelvetrees, remarked in a letter on Tasmania's caves to N.S.W. speleologist Oliver Tricket:

"The Winkleigh ones are at Flowery Gully, adjacent to the main road from Winkleigh, easily accessible by motor or carriage. Visitors have from time to time committed deprivations and there is now nothing spectacular about them, but it is a good spot for pic-nics, and the caves can be followed into the body of the limestone by exploratory works, with a good chance of their developing into something better."

(4)

In 1949 the fledgling Tasmanian Caverneering Club visited the cave with members of the Launceston 50,000 League, a Launceston group keen to see it re-opened for tourism, but the extent of damage mitigated against it. None the less, the Chairwoman of the League, Alderman W. Gellie, told the Launceston Examiner the cave was still of use to those seriously interested in caverneering, and that

"a large scale map has been prepared.....if explorers lose their way in the caves the map will make it easy to find them..... To reduce to a minimum the risk of becoming lost, however, the League has had a series of arrows painted on the cave walls". (5)

And so misplaced civic-mindedness added to the vandalism. But the final indignity had not yet assailed this once magnificent cave: Sulzbergers quarries subsequently developed an operation over the outflow entrance, rendering the cave inaccessible. Since the closure of this quarry a few years ago entry has been possible via an unstable upper level entrance in the quarry wall, but blasting has added to all that has gone before, and little remains of the fine speleothem development. The glow-worms too have vanished, due presumably to the reduction of the cave stream to intermittency, perhaps as a result of forest clearing and conversion to pasture.

OF QUARRIES AND CAVES:

Few other naturally open caves of significance are known in the area, although cavities are fairly frequently opened by quarrying operations. One such was opened in a Beaconsfield Lime Works quarry a short distance south-east of Flowery Gully Cave, which revealed vertebrate remains, including Thylacinus(6) and aboriginal implements, including the tip of a bone awl. (7)

One of the most significant of these accidental finds was Vanishing Cave . . . opened by one of the Sulzberger quarries providing limestone for A.P.P.M's Burnie Paper Mills, from a site a short distance downstream of the main cave on the Western bank. It became famous for a few brief days in 1959, when its discovery was front page news in the Launceston EXAMINER, which described it as "considered by experts to be among the most attractive in the world". (8) Although an overstatement photographs from that time (9)(10) lend support to the Hobart "Mercury's" description of "scores of stalacities 10ft long". (11) and general enthusiasm.

The owner of the property, Mr. R. Beams, indicated that the company could readily quarry another site on the other side of the hill, while the Beaconsfield municipal council were eager to develop the cave, and an approach by a Beaconsfield resident, Dr. Suerth, brought an assurance from the state Tourism minister that its potential would be assessed.

Three days after the discovery was announced The Examiner reported that the minister himself would visit it. Mr. Beams reiterated the threat posed by quarrying, and that he was seeking a halt, noting that "it won't affect the operators because there is enough limestone elsewhere on the property to keep them going for a lifetime"(12). All this seems to have been too much for the quarry operators for the same day the cave was "severely damaged by a gelignite blast" and rendered "unsafe" (13). This was only a little over two weeks after its discovery.

Remaining photographs, and the small section of cave remaining unvandalised suggests this must have contained some of the finest decoration in Tasmania, including sparkling goured flowstone, stalactite - stalagmite displays, intricate helictites, and beautifully formed shawls ranging from the purest white through a variety of ferruginous shades.

Destruction of caves by quarrying is by no means a rare event, but it is difficult not to contrast the whole sorry story to an Austrian incident, when a cave was breached in a quarry in similar circumstances. Under cave protection legislation the Ministry of Science immediately called a permanent halt to the quarrying, and the cave was gated within 48 hours of discovery (14). It is fashionable, often just, to excuse environmental misdeeds of the past on grounds of ignorance, though the present writer takes a less charitable view of this particularly vindictive action at Flowery Gully.

Overall, Flowery Gully is not an area in which further remarkable finds are likely, but the possibility of something worthwhile being breached by quarrying cannot be totally discounted. Today the main cave offers a place where scouts and similar fringe-speleos may risk damage only to themselves, while a visit to Vanishing Cave provides a hint of the glory of what once was, and could be still, but for this area having suffered the misfortune of substantial settlement and its industry too close, of careless and insensitive individuals, and the gross depreciations of the corporate vandal.

CAVE LIST

Adapted from Goede, Kiernan, Skinner and Woolhouse (15)

Named Caves:

FG 201 FLOWERY GULLY CAVE: medium size cave with intermittent stream; extensively vandalised; entrance in Sulzbergers quarries

FG 202 VANISHING CAVE: small cave partly quarried away; good decoration; no running water

Unnamed Caves:

1. Tiny cave in Beaconsfield Lime Products quarry North-west of Sulzbergers quarries.
2. Small cave adjacent to (1).
3. Pothole 6m. deep; medium sized chamber; talus slopes; descends another 9metres; located in same quarry as (1) and (2).
4. Small, well decorated cave in quarry on eastern side of Beaconsfield-Winkleigh road close to R. Beams' house.
5. Narrow fissure blocked by large rock requiring tackle for removal; in Beams Bros. No. 1 quarry; local sources claim existence of sizeable cave system beyond 13m. entrance pitch.
6. Stream-sink near (5) containing 10 metres of narrow, twisty phreatic passages
7. Small pothole; 6m. pitch; uphill from (5) and (6); small muddy chamber, several short passages.
- 8.-9. Two small potholes behind Beams Bros. No. 2 quarry; used as toilets by local quarrymen; unexplored.
10. Small cave with prominent entrance; small chamber with short pitch at bottom requiring rope; south side of **isolated** limestone outcrop; halfway between R. Beams house and Beams Bros. No. 2 quarry.
11. Small pot; 9 metres deep; close to (10).

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AREA REPORTS

by Ron Mann.

The period covered in this report is from the beginning of May to July 10th, 1977.

Junee - Florentine: (Two Trips)

On May 8th a party consisting of L.Gleeson, R.Mann, G.Pickford and D. Devitt looked at a section of Khazad Dum. Because the barrier along the Junee Quarry Road was locked, a long walk of $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours took its toll before the cave was reached. The party spent two hours underground going as far as the top of the 90 ft. pitch.

The following weekend Leigh Gleeson, Bob Cockerill and Alex Terauds visited Growling Swallet with four members of the Ambulance Board who had requested the trip to give them an idea of what would be involved in a cave rescue. Contrast was later provided by a trip to Welcome Stranger. The visitors were appreciative and indicated a desire to see other caves.

Mt. Weld; (One Trip)

In May Kevin Kiernan and others laddered the large pot on the S.E. flank of Mt. Weld mentioned in the April Area Reports. The cave terminates at about 60 m. in muddy rifts leading out of a chamber. They explored a number of smaller holes in the area but nothing of interest resulted, although good potential remains. According to Kevin the forest scenery is superb.

Upper Lodden River; (One Trip)

Leigh Gleeson and Peter Russell returned to this area in the June long week end. This time the doline was reached after $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours of solid walking, and is approximately 200m. across and 100 m. deep. The sides are very steep in places and thick vegetation covers the entire doline. Only one cave entrance has been found and it does not look promising. A thorough search of the doline was not possible on this trip and Leigh says a return trip would be worthwhile as there are some small streams in the doline, but it is not known what happens to them. He says it is still a gamble as to whether any significant caves will be found.

Hastings; (One Trip)

Two of the Ambulance Board members who attended the Growling Swallet trip visited Wolf Hole with Leigh Gleeson early in July. They spent five enjoyable hours exploring the cave and found some small extensions beyond the lake that did not appear to have been explored.

STOP PRESS; EXIT CAVE IS TO BECOME A STATE RESERVE -- More details in the next issue.

