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SOUTHERN CAVER

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"SOUTHERN CAVER"

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"IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE" ... or "LIFE WASN'T MEANT TO BE EASY"

These infamous phrases have definite application to the unfortunate tendency to apathy apparent in the Society. The immediate past President, Michael Cole referred to this trend in the last issue of "Southern Caver".

The active Society membership is not increasing, but is in fact declining owing to members working in various remote areas of the State being unable to participate in trips. New members to fill the vacuum are not being recruited.

Attendances at meetings have fallen off to the stage where it is at times difficult to get a quorum. Activity by the members is erratic - with new areas being checked out and caves found in one quarter while only an occasional 'tourist' trip can be mustered during others.

An overall programme of work is needed, but first we need enthusiasm and sufficient active members.

Come along to meetings and discuss current issues that affect the Society, and you - as a caver; don't sit at home or stay in the background at meetings. Be constructive towards your Society, - not destructive.

A programme to recruit new members must be entered into immediately, and party leaders must realise that they have a responsibility to lead regular field trips.

IT'S TIME TO STOP THE ROT!

RON MANN
DAVE ELLIOTT

EXIT CAVE TO BECOME STATE RESERVE

Exit Cave, near Ida Bay in South West Tasmania has at last been granted official recognition and is to become a State Reserve.

The Hobart "Mercury" newspaper of July 22nd carried this account:

"AUSTRALIA'S longest cave - Exit Cave at Hastings - is to be made a State Reserve.

The Minister for National Parks and Wildlife, Mr. Batt, said yesterday the decision followed discussions with the Forestry Commission and Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd.

Agreement had been reached for an area surrounding Exit Cave to be released from forestry rights.

Mr. Batt said negotiations over the future of the cave had followed the presentation last year of a report commissioned by the State Government on the need for ecological protection of Exit Cave. The report had recommended that the cave be reserved.

Mr. Batt said that few people were aware that Exit Cave, with a surveyed length of over 16 kilometres, was the longest cave in Australia, being some six kilometres bigger than the nearest contender, Mullamullang, on the Nullabor Plain.

He said that apart from its size, Exit Cave was also outstanding because of its very large glow-worm population, unique species of insects and interesting mineral and geomorphological features.

There were no immediate plans for development of the cave but a lease had been granted to Mr. Roy Skinner, an experienced cave manager, to conduct visitors to the cave on "adventure excursions".

The move was welcomed by the Liberal Party spokesman on tourism and by the Tasmanian Wilderness Society, as the report quoted below from the "Mercury" of July 23rd indicates.

"THE Liberal Party spokesman on tourism, Mr. John Beattie, yesterday welcomed the Government announcement that Exit Cave is to be made a State reserve.

"The decision on this matter has been left far too long but I am pleased that the Government has now seen reason and declared the area a reserve.

"Exit Cave could become one of the State's leading attractions and I trust that the Government will make an adequate arrangement with the licensee, Mr. Skinner, to provide the necessary facilities to develop it properly".

Mr. Beattie said Mr. Skinner has long been pressing for such a move.

"The Exit Cave will be another outstanding attraction with the Hastings Caves and when the proposed motel is built at Dover, will provide an excellent drawcard for tourism", Mr. Beattie added.

The Tasmanian Wilderness Society yesterday also congratulated the State Government on its decision.

The director of the society, Mr. Kevin Kiernan, said that Exit Cave, with over 16 kilometres of known passages was the longest as well as one of the deepest caves in Australia, and contained unique invertebrates adapted to an underground existence, including spectacular glow worms.

"The society hopes the proposed reserve will in due course give at least some protection also to the surface catchment area, upstream from the cave, so as to give some protection to the underground environment from certain surface activities.

Mr. Kiernan said that the Exit Cave reserve was an encouraging first step towards protecting some of the most outstanding of the many magnificent caves which have been discovered in Tasmania since the advent of organised cave searching and exploration since the 1940s!

QUOTE

Think of Australian Speleology as a (w)hole.

Dave Elliott

CAVES AT BUBS HILL

by Kevin Kiernan

The Bubs Hill area consists of a small outcrop of Gordon Limestone which has received little attention from speleologists although the access route between Hobart and the West Coast, the Lyell Highway, actually traverses the deposit. Although the potential for large caves appears fairly limited, a number of interesting smaller systems are known, and considerable surface exploration remains to be undertaken that would undoubtedly bear fruit.

LOCATION:

Bubs Hill itself is a residual limestone hillock bordering on hum-form situated on the divide between the King and Franklin Rivers. It lies some 30 km. E.S.E. of Queenstown, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours drive from Hobart. The nearest karst localities known are in the Nelson Valley 8 km. to the west, and Mt. Ronald Cross 28 km. E.S.E.

Drainage from the northern and eastern slopes of Bubs Hill enters the Franklin via the Collingwood River, while to the South the Raglan Range, from which Bubs Hill is separated by a low saddle, forms the divide between the Collingwood and drainage directly into the Franklin. The Nelson River rises from the western slopes to join the King. The saddle between Bubs Hill and the low range to the north is known as Victoria Pass, and is the route taken by the Lyell Highway.

Annual precipitation rates exceed 250 cm. Vegetation is principally scrubby due perhaps as much to the combined effects of fire, timber extraction to fire the old Queenstown copper smelters, and its location downwind of the smelters peripheral to the massive air pollution which has totally denuded many square miles of vegetation further west, as to natural factors. The summit of the hill is some 760 m. above sea level.

GEOLOGY:

The outcrop consists of a few square kilometres of generally fairly flat lying Ordovician marine limestone occurring as an up-faulted block between quartzites of Precambrian age. The rock is composed of inter-bedded limestone and dolomitic limestone with chert fragments. Sulphide mineralisation is present with veins of galena and sphalerite averaging around 100 mm. in width visible in some of the caves. These are too small to mine individually but the possibility of open cut development has been considered from time to time. The limestone itself has been quarried for road metal from a subsidiary fault block on the northern side of the highway. Bubs Hill itself is capped by some 16 m. of crotty sandstone which gives a flattened top to the generally conical hill, and forms summit cliffs up to 10 m. in height.

EXPLORATION:

In addition to the proximity of the Lyell Highway, the presence of a transmission line clearing across the northern flank of Bubs Hill, and an extensive network of tracks cut for mineral exploration activities, offers easy access for surface exploration.

It is significant that virtually the only holes explored to date are those lying actually on these routes, or the western peripheral creek. Distance from the principal population centres, and the closer proximity of areas of known major caves such as Mole Creek and Ida Bay, have limited exploration while the penchant of the generally rather sedentary Tasmanian speleos to avoid the scrubby and the steep has probably also played a role. Exploration has been spasmodic and unco-ordinated.

In view of the disorganised nature of exploration to date, it may be as well to disregard any areas supposedly previously covered and start again from scratch. Existing prospecting track networks lend themselves to division and localisation of effort.

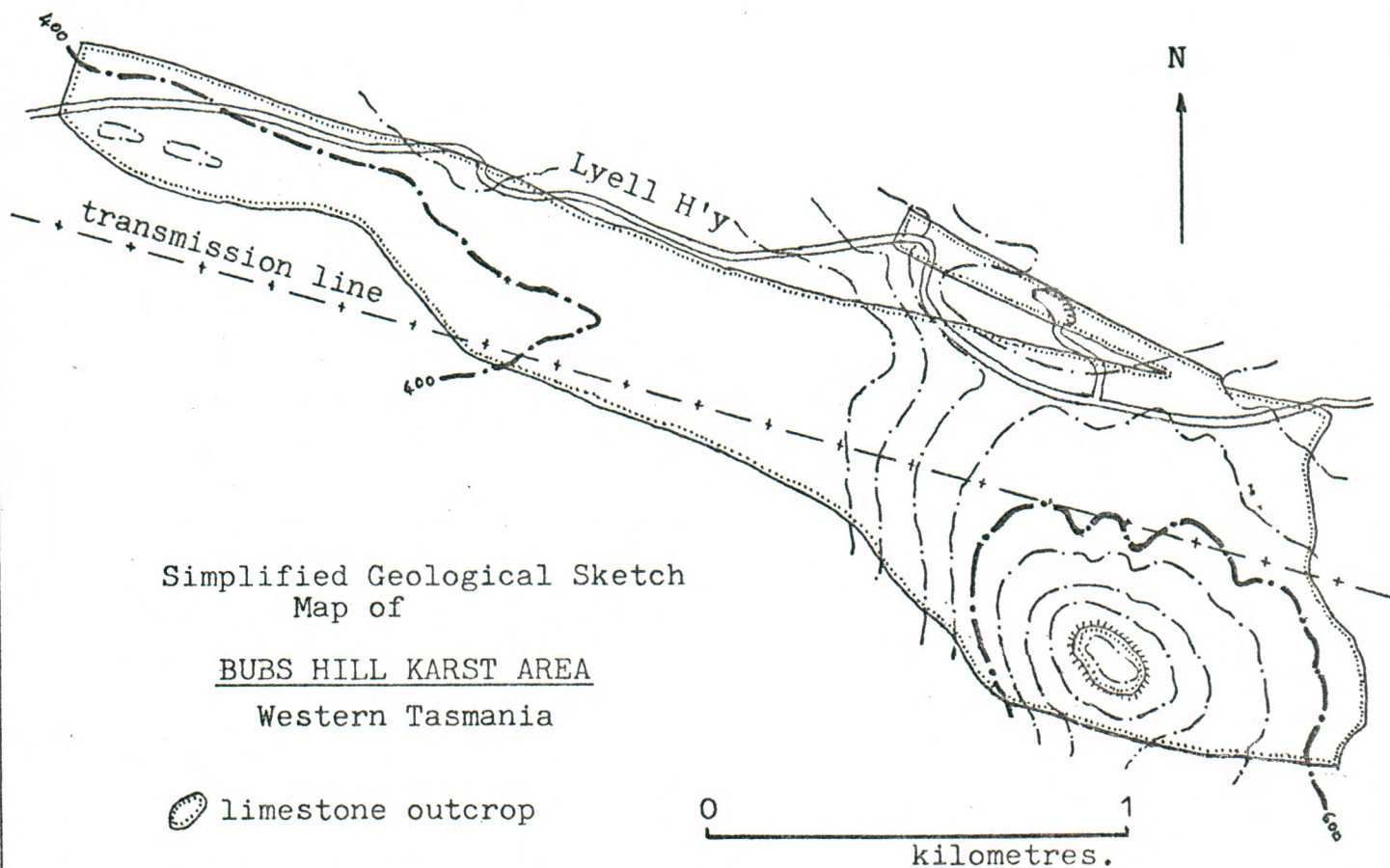
CAVES AND KARST:

The limestone occurs over a vertical range of around 300m between the sandstone contact and the most westerly extremity of the outcrop. In contrast to the steep terrain of Bubs Hill, to the west the limestone forms a broad valley floor close to the water table and broken only by two small residual hillocks, surface drainage is the norm west of the base of Bubs Hill proper, fed by resurgences about 220m below the summit.

The karst surface itself^{is} rugged, with an extraordinary number of holes, most of which extend only a few feet before being blocked with vegetation debris. Clefts and crevices up to 10m deep occur in some areas, with a multitude of small holes and fluting features. The caves themselves appear of quite recent origin.

The size of the outcrop mitigates against the existence of large horizontal systems, although moderately substantial caves could exist. The longest cave found to date has less than 300m of passages.

The deepest caves explored to date penetrate no more than 30m before being blocked, although the potential for deeper holes is probably substantial. The local limestone relief is fairly high even though catchment might be limited. The presence of a series of resurgences at a common level close to the foot of the hill, discharging into the western peripheral stream suggests a general base level reducing the theoretical depth potential which might be anticipated from the total limestone relief. The generally horizontal attitude of the limestone beds has promoted development of vertical potholes, some quite high towards the summit.



Simplified Geological Sketch
Map of

BUBS HILL KARST AREA
Western Tasmania

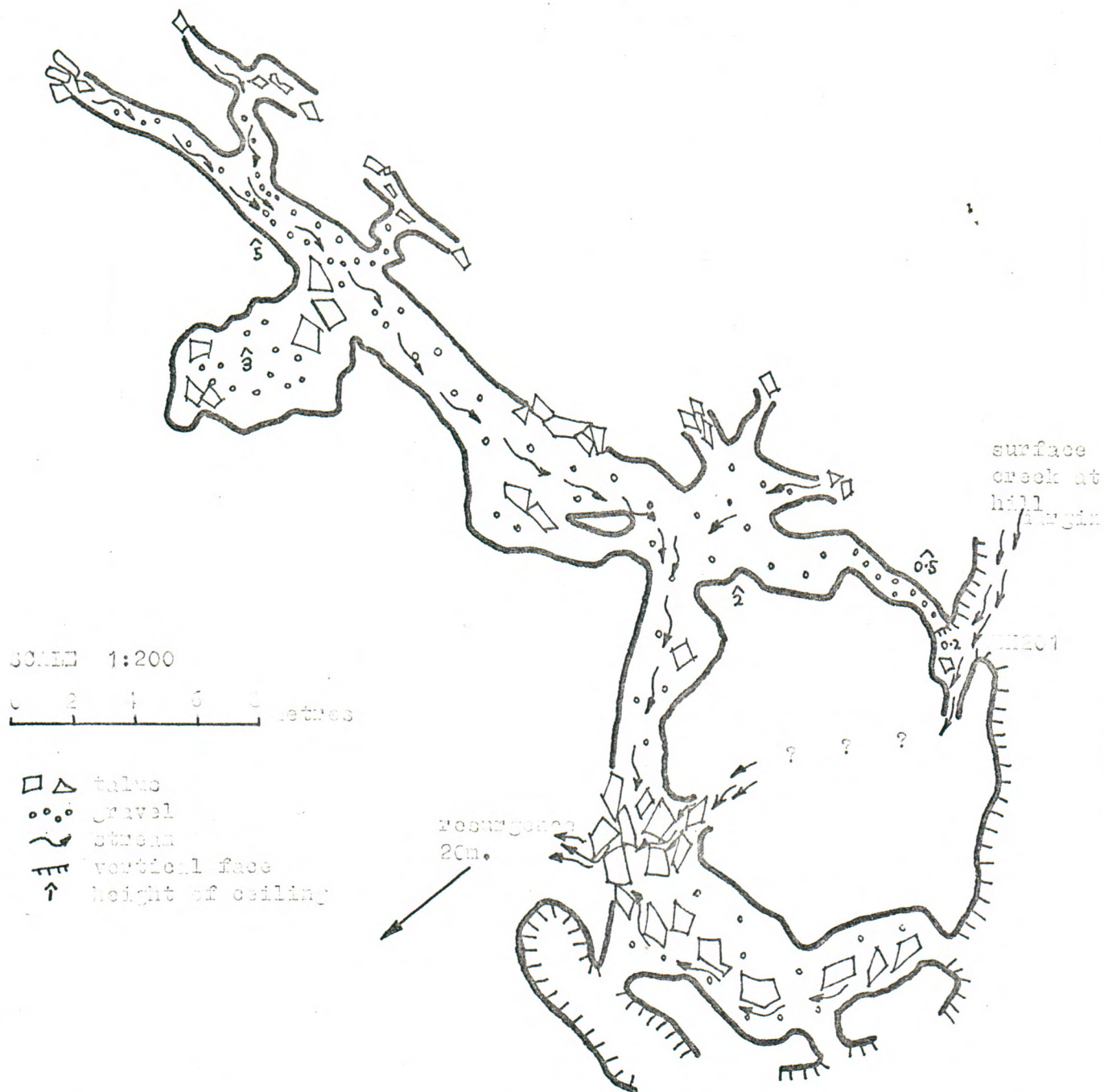
Adapted and modified from
Groves (1973) and Tas.
Dept. Lands Franklin Sheet.

Contour interval 40m.
(approx. only)

BH 202

minim ri :

BUBES HILL AREA , WESTERN TASMANIA.



POSTSCRIPT:

A few years ago the first threat to a cave area as a result of increasing pressure on natural resources posed by man's quest for ceaseless growth startled Tasmanian speleos. Today the list of areas not threatened in some way is very much shorter than those which are.

The location of the main limestone consumer at Mole Creek, Tasmania's best known cave area, away from known major caves, left a breathing space and perhaps a false sense of security. Other threats have latterly been met with contempt bred of familiarity. Minor areas are passing almost without notice. Moina and Lorinna beneath hydro-electric reservoirs, Flowery Gully to limestone quarries. Because no major areas have to date been affected, few realise the extent of this insidious encroachment. Small areas like Loongana, Nelson River etc., seem likely to vanish in the next few years, perhaps also some major ones like the Franklin, the Gordon, parts of Mole Creek and elsewhere.

There are some areas in Tasmania, particularly remote ones, which can and probably should remain as wilderness karst, unexplored and unrecorded, to leave at least some largely virgin ground to excite speleos a little further into the future: a few of the many not fortunate enough to have been in on the exploratory good fortune and over-indulgence of this generation, with its Herberts Pots, Exit Caves, Khazad-Dums and Kublas.

There are others for which time may be too short. Bubs Hill is one minor area which, although overshadowed by Mole Creek, Ida Bay and Junee-Florentine, offers an opportunity for fairly complete examination in a comparatively short time with definite promise of new caves, if not large ones. It could be most desirable to leave as wilderness some of the remote unknowns which for the present at least, seem to face no threat; to abandon the preoccupation/obsession with the known elysiums of our underworld; and to recognise that there exists a number of lesser though interesting areas with a dim future that ought to be examined thoroughly to record what may be lost or perhaps reveal what should not be. A Secondary benefit would be a little less traffic in our major caves and a slowing in the pace at which they are being loved to death. Such a project would seem admirably suited to visiting mainland contingents, who could work right through an area from scratch, or to locals whose tastes no longer embrace the deep and difficult or who are prepared to deny themselves the indulgence of the major areas.

Although Bubs Hill is accidentally included in South-West National Park boundary proposals by some conservation interests (as part of the basin of the Franklin, temperate Australia's last major wild river) its future looks bleak. The Lyell Highway State Reserve, a 40 chain strip to either side of the road gazetted to protect roadside vegetation but ignored in recent road widening operations to the extent that it has joined the H.E.C.'s south-west roads and storages as the only man-made features discernable on a recent satellite photograph of the State (and is for some miles paralleled by a transmission line swathe - thus effectively adding several thousand apparent hectares to the State's park area but protecting nothing) extends in theory to Victoria Pass, but in reality falls a few hundred metres short, to leave room for a Forestry Commission test plot of pines, and a lime-stone quarry. The State Government hasn't exactly recognised the conservation value of the area as part of the South-West landscape. As for Bubs Hill itself, large scale open cut mining could conceivably develop as resources become in shorter supply and the economic viability of marginal deposits increases. If it does enigmatic little Bubs Hill could vanish and take its secrets with it. One of many.

Scale 1:300

0 3 6 9 12 15 18
metres

simplified strike
section

BH205

QUARRY CAVE

Bubbs Hill area, western
Tasmania.

- ◊◊◊ talus
- ~ creek
- vvv flowstone
- ooo gravel
- ... stalactite

unexplored hole
6 metres up from
quarry floor

limestone
quarry

tight squeeze

daylight visible

40° app.

plan

approximate location access road to quarry

KNOWN CAVES AT BUBS HILL

- BH201: Swallet on transmission line track, not far from saddle; entrance 1m in diameter to 6m waterfall shaft and 6m passage; ends in sump.
- BH202: Minimoria: Outflow cave 80m long; two permanent streams and two others ephemeral or intermittent; talus; low roofed.
- BH203: Thylacine Lair: Outflow stream cave 80m long; two levels; three entrances; well developed rock sculpture; remains of carnivore den in upper level.
- BH204: Elongate rift 20m by 1-2m wide and 3m deep; no passages.
- BH205 Quarry Cave: Cave in face of disused limestone quarry on northern side of Lyell Highway; dry entrance to steeply descending permanent stream; depth 35m (possibly deepest known in area); talus.

UN-NUMBERED:

- (1) Tinys Watch Hole: 30m entrance pitch to 270m of passages; sizeable chamber; some decoration; small ephemeral stream; muddy; longest cave known in area.
- (2) Hole on ridge a short distance from (1) with which it probably connects; unexplored.
- (3) North west of summit close to cliffs; entrance in chasm 1.6 by 6.3m; entrance in nettles at S.E. end; no details.
- (4) South-south west of summit in deep chasm; pothole 1.3m in diameter and 34m deep.
- (5) South east of (4); unexplored hole just above saddle connecting Bubs Hill to Raglan Range; thin slab blocks entrance.
- (6) East of summit on same level as (4); wide pothole 6.5m deep; appears to open out at bottom of northern side; two big logs across entrance.
- (7) Small hole in northern side of residual limestone hillock downstream from Bubs Hill.
- (8) Short stream cave; swallet unnegotiable; efflux gives access to 10m of passage.

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the direction of
north is not known

Scale 1:300

0 3 6 9 12 15 18 metres










grass lined depression

BH203

THYLACINE LAIR

Bubbs Hill Area, Western Tasmania.

CRG Gr.2.

-  vertical drop
-  stream
-  ceiling height
-  water depth
-  mammal droppings
-  stalactites
-  sand floor
-  depression
-  talus

surface
opening
12m. above
stream

K. W. Kierhan 20 AUG 73

AREA REPORTS

by Dave Elliott.

This report covers trips made by the Society during the period July 10th to October 9th, 1977.

Ida Bay: (Two Trips)

Leigh Gleeson and Peter Russell visited Entrance Cave on August 22nd. This was Peter's first visit to the cave. They spent several hours underground finding water levels low and the glowworm display spectacular.

A return trip to Exit Cave was made on the weekend of August 28/29. The party consisted of Leigh Gleeson, Lin Wilson and Steve Street. The team left Hobart on Friday night stopping en route to visit Mike Cole whose hospitality they enjoyed until 11.30 p.m. The start of the Exit track was reached at 1.00 A.M. It took two hours to reach the cave entrance, and the team finally bedded down at Camp 1 about 4.30 A.M. on Saturday. The team spent thirteen hours investigating the Labryinth area and camped again at Camp 1.

Hasting s: (One Trip)

Three prospective members were taken by Kevin Kiernan and Dave O'Brien on a tourist trip to King George V Cave on September 1st.

Junee-Florentine: (One Trip)

A party led by Leigh Gleeson bottomed Growling Swallet on October 9th. Leigh was very enthusiastic, describing it as "an excellent cave."

Blackman's Bay:

S.R.T. practise was held at Blackman's Bay on September 11th and 18th.

ADVERTISEMENT:

C A V E S O F N E W C A L E D O N I A

The report of the 1975 Australian Reconnaissance Expedition has at last been produced. Sixty-eight pages of articles, maps and black and white photographs give a good idea of the caves of this French Pacific island and may be obtained for \$3.50 posted within Australia. Included are articles on Anthropology, Conservation, Geomorphology and future caving potential. A copy of this publication would be very helpful and enlightening for any future trips planned to this beautiful island. Every speleologist will want a copy of this interesting report.

ONLY 200 COPIES HAVE BEEN PRINTED

Make remittances payable to Stephen Harris, and forward to:

Stephen Harris,

44 Clydesdale Ave.,

Glenorchy, 7010,

Tasmania.

REPORT ON SEARCH AND RESCUE MEETING,
LAUNCESTON 1/10/77.

by Aleks Terauds.

A meeting of the parties most concerned with cave search and rescue was convened at the State Emergency Centre at Launceston on 1st October, 1977. Present were S.E.S. members representing the North-West, South and Launceston branches, Police Search and Rescue officers from Burnie, Launceston and Hobart and representatives from T.C.C., S.C.S. and Northern Caverneers. Additionally, there were non-affiliated cavers from other parts of the State.

The theme of the meeting was that cave rescue is a particularly specialised field demanding specialist knowhow and equipment not normally available outside caving clubs. At the same time, there were within the State the resources, both in manpower and the equipment, to cope with all but the most severe of emergencies underground. All that needed to be done was to prepare an up to date index of these resources and facilitate the exchange of this type of information between the different areas and organisations.

The modus operandi of a cave rescue was seen to be as follows: It was the responsibility of the Police to initiate an alert or call out. The S.E.S. was there to provide the ancillary services and back-up. The Police would get in touch with their caving contacts (search and rescue officers of the various clubs) who in turn, would assemble the cavers and equipment deemed necessary.

While all of the above appears fairly straight forward and simple the unfortunate fact is that a major cave rescue might not necessarily utilize the best nor the full potential of the resources available.

This is a direct result of the existing Police S. & R. structure, namely that the responsibility for cave rescue organisation rests with three individual police officers stationed in three areas, each concerned primarily with his own Division. A call out in the North West or North would thus presumably be under the control of the police at Burnie and Launceston respectively, with a similar situation existing in the South. And, only in the South, at Hobart, is there a well trained Police S. & R. squad consisting of two full time search and rescue officers plus other personnel with recognised cave rescue experience.

Members of S.C.S. and T.C.C. who cave in all limestone areas of Tasmania cannot be happy with this state of affairs. Cave rescue in this State could well be under the control of an officer of the calibre of Inspector Massey, the officer in charge of the Police S. & R. squad

at Hobart, who, with up to date information on the availability and location of all resources, could most efficaciously and selectively deploy manpower and equipment exactly how and where required. The State is small enough to enable this to be done with the urgency necessary while ensuring at the same time that there is no wastage from the movement of excess equipment or personnel.

Meanwhile, back at the meeting...

The participants commended the quarterly Police S. & R. and Federation club liason meetings at Hobart and decided that there was a need for similar regular meetings in the other "rescue" regions. The dates of the Hobart meetings are known well in advance and it was agreed that meetings in the other regions would precede the Hobart meeting and minutes from the former would be available at the latter. At the very next meetings there would be an updating of the list of potential rescuers and preparation of equipment lists. These would be provided to each police headquarters.

It was suggested that cavers would be involved in the rescue of the general public trapped in mining shafts while on the other hand miners were a hitherto largely untapped source of manpower for cave rescues.

The need for regional exercises was expressed and the possibility of a State-wide exercise discussed.

Finally, it was agreed that a meeting similar to this should be repeated in July 1978 to review progress.

