

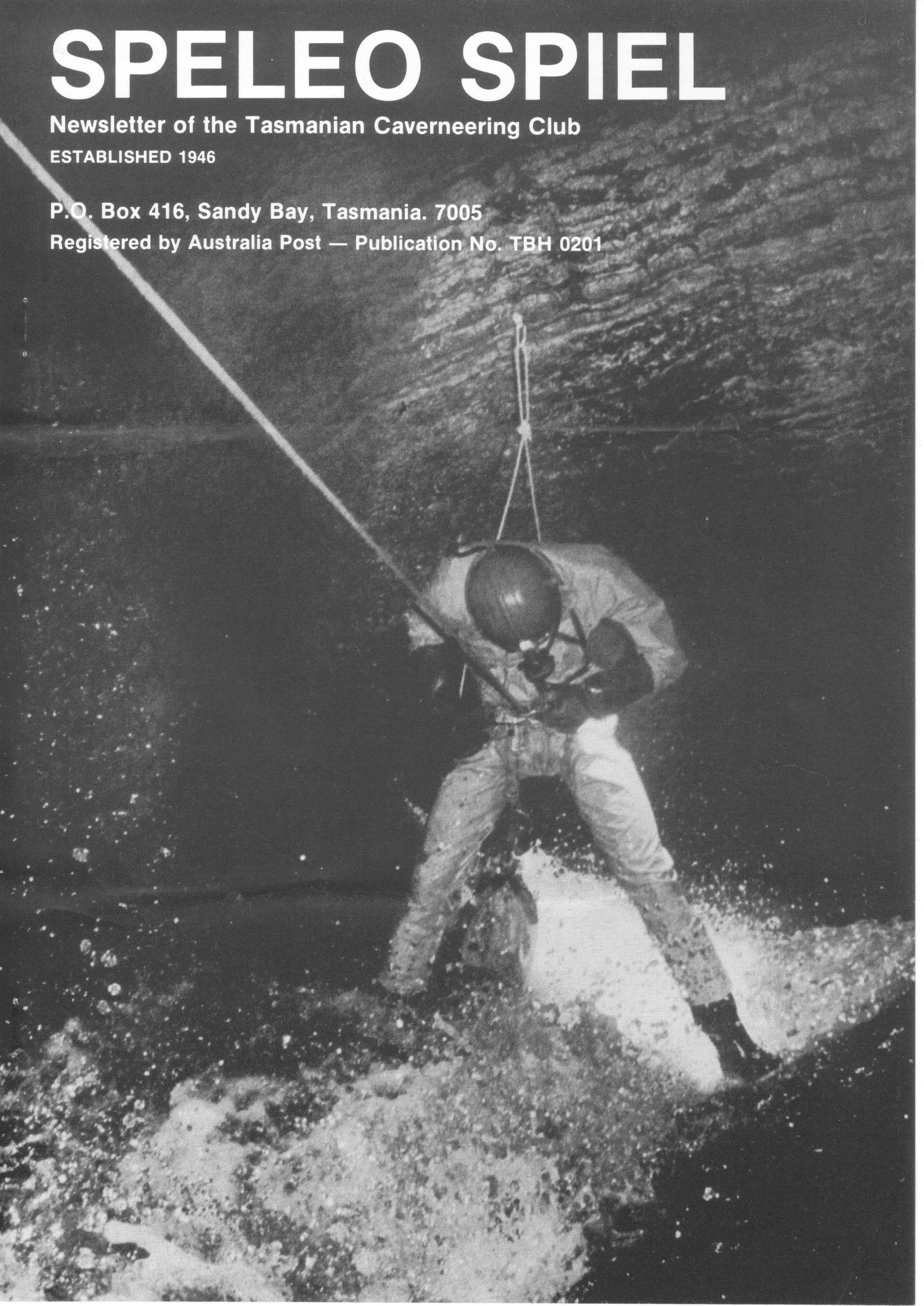
SPELEO SPIEL

Newsletter of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club

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*** * * IN THIS ISSUE * * ***

FORWARD PROGRAM:

SMAPS & Slides	1
Ida Bay F/Up Meeting	2

<i>FROM THE EDITORS DESK:</i>	2
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SPECIAL FEATURE:

Minutes of the Ida Bay Karst Management Meeting	3
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*** * * FORWARD PROGRAM * * ***

SMAPS & SLIDES...

17th May, 8 pm (ish)

A night is to be held at Stu's place to have a look at the cave surveying and plotting program, SMAPS. This an excellent opportunity to have a look through Stu's comprehensive database of cave/system surveys, especially of the JF, and to get to know the fabled SMAPS over a few beers.

As a double feature, epic slides of all things speleo will also be screened... great stuff !!

IDA BAY FOLLOW-UP MEETING...

TBA

Ian Household is keen to get together with all of us around the end of May to discuss our thoughts/ideas on the Ida Bay Karst Management Plan. This follows from the Exit trip/Dover meeting on the 25 & 26th March, the minutes of which can be found later... This will be a great opportunity to provide input on the future management of the Ida Bay Area, and ensure that both the Karst and cavers' interests are protected. Shane Hunniford (Esperence PWS Ranger) and Stuart Graham (PWS Track Expert) will also be along, and all are keen to get comments and ideas from as many people as possible - definitely not to be missed !

*** * * FROM THE EDITORS DESK... * * ***

This Special Issue of the Spiel deals with the future management of the caves and karst at Ida Bay...

It is extremely important that we as cavers and as a club make the time and effort to make our views and ideas known !

To this end, the un-edited minutes of the meeting held in March are printed below (thanks to Ian Household for making them available for the Spiel) - it makes for very interesting reading, so make sure you bloody well do (just the thing for those trans-Tasman flights) !!

Everybody will have the opportunity to comment, either by returning a questionnaire that Ian plans to send out to each club, or by attending a follow-up meeting planned for late in May (see forward program). You can also phone/fax/write to Ian, care of 138 Macquarie St, Hobart, phone (002) 33 3868, fax - ring up and ask.

O.K., by the time you read this, our intrepid expeditioners will most likely be plumbing the depths of the land of the long white cloud - we wish them happy hunting, and a safe journey home.

The back page of this issue contains details of a new book being published on the Undara Lava Tubes. This definitive work is a must for all lygophilian libraries (look that one up !), and is offered at a special pre-publication price for a very limited time. To secure your copy, contact Arthur Clarke.

A quick thank-you to all who turned up at the AGM, especially Deane and Jason who came up from Ida Bay. We actually managed to start on time (ish) !
A full report of the meeting will be in the next action packed issue of the Speleo Spiel.

Out very soon. Promise !!

Garth Cornelius, Editor.

*** * * SPECIAL FEATURE ... * * ***

IDA BAY KARST AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

**MINUTE OF MEETING HELD AT FRANCISTOWN
AND EXIT CAVE : 25-26/3/95**

Present: Garth Cornelius (TCC), Dean Morgan (TCC), Arthur Clarke (TCKRG), Jason Hamill (TCC), Deane Hicks (TCC, Lune River Hostel), Michael Lichon (MCCC), Rolan Eberhard (FT), Shane Hunniford (P&WS), Phil Bradley (P&WS), Ian Houshold (P&WS)

Apologies: Rosie Shannon (NC), Jeff Butt (SCS). (Both of these organisations sent written responses to the agenda which were tabled.)

25/3/95 10:30 Meeting opened at Francistown and introductions

Agenda issues were briefly discussed in preparation for the Exit fieldtrip.

12:30 Exit Cave fieldtrip.

The group (8 people) walked into Valley Entrance via the Southern Ranges Track, noting the position of side routes to various caves, cultural remains etc. Valley Entrance was entered around 3:30 pm. The route through the cave traversed New World Streamway, Southern Passage, Camp Pie Circuit (N branch), Western Creek, Broken Column Chamber, The Labyrinth, Grand Fissure, Damocles Passage, Grandpa's Sewer, Inner Basecamp, the Rockfall, the Ballroom and exit via the Wind Tunnel.

Management issues were discussed relating to the agenda in preparation for Sundays meeting. The cave was left approximately 11:00 pm

26/3/95 11:00 Reconvene at Francistown

A detailed discussion of agenda items. All items marked ** require further discussion.

1. Access/permit system

After discussion the previous day the following policy on recreational access to Exit Cave was agreed on:

- i) Recreational use was agreed to be a legitimate use of Exit Cave, if carried out in an environmentally responsible way
- ii) All horizontal entrances to the system are to be gated. This will include IB 14, 86, 87, 161 and 120. Keys are to be uniform for all entrances.

Further discussion** In the event of it being necessary to leave the cave via a side entrance should the gate be made openable from the inside without a key?

For: In case of key not working in lock a quick escape will be possible in the event of a flood. People illegally entering via a vertical entrance can get out (To alleviate this should signs be installed warning of locked gates on horizontal entrances?)

Against: Illegal and unreported through trips would be possible from vertical entrances.

A possible solution is to have lock maintenance as part of regular ranger patrol work to ensure locks work. This would make the proposal unnecessary but will involve rangers time.

iii) Access by all potential user groups, both recreational and commercial, should follow a common permit application system. This system should involve the following elements:

- All standard permits (recreational or commercial if approved) should have a fast approval time and easy standardised access to the cave key.
- Special purpose permits, for scientific, survey, management related trips require more notice as applications will need to be vetted by departmental specialists.
- For standard permits:
 - Automatic entry available only to ASF affiliated organisations or guiding businesses if approved
 - Application to be made to Esperance district by fax, on club letterhead, signed by an authorised officer of the club/business. Information to include trip leader, proposed party members, proposed routes, nature of visit
 - Mainland clubs to apply through local clubs (agreement reached)
 - Club/business to forward annually updated lists of authorised officers to Esperance
 - For recreational trips at least half the party to be full club members
 - No more than one party in the cave at the one time
 - Esperance to fax applicant to acknowledge receipt of application and confirm dates, party members etc
 - Key to be left in locked key drop at Dover along with permit/report form. Key to this to be held by clubs. Key to be returned here immediately after trip.
 - Report form to be completed and returned within one month of the trip. Failure will result in loss of access privileges to that club/business.
- For special purpose permits
 - Application to Esperance at least four weeks in advance to allow consideration by specialists
 - Each application to be assessed on the merit of the project balanced by potential environmental degradation

Cave classification

Other than restriction of access to Exit Cave no other caves were discussed.

** How should Little Grunt, Hooks Hole etc be classified? Mystery Ck Cave Plan discusses internal gating of high level passage.

** At present it is difficult to assess number of trips per year. This will need further research and discussion.

2. Gating.

It was agreed that IB 14, 86,87,120 and 161 should be gated.

** Other caves on the hill; March Fly Pot?, Upper level Mystery Ck Cave?

It was agreed not to gate no-go areas in Exit Cave for a trial period. Signs and a monitoring system were thought appropriate at this stage. No discussion on upper Mystery Creek Cave gate, however P&WS see this as necessary.

3. Surface tracks/ routes.

It was agreed that the bushwalking track to the Southern Ranges be marked by standard P&WS triangular reflectors for both access and return. These should be used for Mystery Creek Cave for return only. The Exit track along the plains should be similarly marked for return only.

Presently informal routes leading from these main tracks to cave entrances to be re-taped using colour coded tape provided by P&WS.

A register of these informal routes is to be kept and maintained by cavers and P&WS.

** How can the start of spur routes to caves be concealed from bushwalkers

** What is the status of Skinner track?

** Access through Benders Quarry?

** Who is responsible for track maintenance etc?

** It was thought that many further issues relating to tracks needed input from P&WS track rangers. It was agreed that a further meeting with Stuart Graham from Esperance was necessary. IH to co-ordinate.

4. Environmental monitoring

The group agreed that environmental monitoring was necessary and that photomonitoring, track erosion monitoring, water quality monitoring and movement sensors in no-go areas were all appropriate in Exit and Mystery Creek Caves.

Monitoring programmes will be developed by P&WS and based at Esperance district office however input and assistance was offered by recreational cavers.

A proposed monitoring system will be detailed in the Ida Bay management Plan.

5. Commercial and educational use

This is probably the most politically sensitive issue on the agenda. Some clubs were happy to accept commercial operators in Exit Cave as long as they could prove their environmental credentials and were not given preferential treatment over recreational groups in applications for permits.

Others were not happy for the cave to be used for commercial purposes. All agreed that school trips and social club trips were inappropriate in Exit Cave but acceptable if carried out in an environmentally sensitive manner in Mystery Creek Cave.

All present agreed that commercial use of Mystery Creek Cave is acceptable as long as impacts could be contained to an acceptable level. There was some support for P&WS to co-ordinate adventure tours in the cave by directly employing guides/rangers.

Because of the differing views on this subject it was agreed that a personal response to questionnaires would be the best way to assess opinion.

5. Aboriginal and European Heritage

It was agreed that sites of archaeological significance should be avoided by recreational cavers; for this reason it was agreed that the IB 87 entrance should be avoided in favour of others. At the southern end of the cave it was agreed that IB 14 should be used wherever possible.

Within the cave certain relicts exist of the early exploration of the system. Materials left at the old base camp and track markers in the northern section of the cave were highlighted as culturally significant.

The plaque in Edies Treasure Chamber was discussed at length; its role in attracting people to a particularly sensitive section of the cave, its relevance to the present generation of cavers and to older cavers who knew Edie Smith. Suggestions ranged from leaving the plaque where it is, coating the plaque with an environmentally benign material, to moving the plaque to a less environmentally sensitive location near the passage entrance, to removing the plaque from the cave altogether.

Given the agreement that Edies Treasure Chamber be made a no-go area for environmental reasons (see below) it seemed logical to shift the plaque to near the passage entrance where a sign indicating no further progress could be installed. People could then view the plaque without entering the chamber.

** There was no unanimous agreement on the Edies Treasure plaque. This needs further discussion and will be addressed on the questionnaire.

7. Introduced plants and animals

Weeds in Benders Quarry and Lyrebirds disturbing forest litter (and possibly spreading phytophthora) were raised as potential issues here. Introduction of fungal spores to the cave by cavers was also seen as an issue to discuss further.

** Further research into the lyrebird population was thought to be necessary before any recommendations could be made.

8. Fire

It was agreed unanimously that control burning on the karst was unacceptable and that liaison between P&WS and adjoining land managers was necessary to avoid the effects of escaped regeneration burns or control burns.

9. In-cave zoning for biological/geomorphological protection.

All parties agreed that in-cave zoning was appropriate for Exit Cave. Possible zones were thought to include no-go areas, delineation of particularly sensitive areas to be avoided if possible, and areas of general access.

Although we now have a reasonable idea of the areas necessary for geological/geomorphological protection, the cave fauna of Exit has had surprisingly little study. A major component of the plan will include the recommendation that a full fauna study and the assessment of significance and vulnerability of certain areas is to be made as soon as possible.

Given present knowledge the following no-go areas were accepted by the group:

- Edies Treasure Chamber
- Far end of the Lost Squeeze
- Far end of Damocles Passage
- Basecamp Tributary
- "Balls and Udder Passage"
- Kellers Squeeze
- the high level passage connecting Old Ditch Road with The Ballroom

At present it is proposed that these areas should be stringlined off and a small sign indicating access restrictions installed at an appropriate place. In some areas it was thought to be appropriate to install movement sensitive counters to assess compliance.

As the use of Kellers Squeeze will reduce pressure on the geomorphic values of the Broken Column/Lost Squeeze area it was agreed that a priority of the plan should be to assess the true distribution of the troglobite *Goedetrechus mendumae*. If other viable populations of this species can be documented it may be possible to re-open this area to cavers to reduce damage to sediments and speleothems in other parts of the cave.

Access to certain sensitive areas was accepted as permissible if traffic could be restricted to a small area through the use of track marking. It was agreed that stringline trackmarkers should be installed in:

- New World Streamway to divert people from sediment banks,
- Broken Column Chamber to avoid trampling calcite flowstone,
- Lost Squeeze to avoid damage to gypsum formations,
- the Labyrinth and Damocles Passage to protect calcite speleothems, the small western side passages to protect gypsum crystals
- Parts of the upper levels in Eastern Passage to protect speleothems and palaeokarst deposits
- Parts of the Western Passages to protect gypsum speleothems
- Stringline paths to be made narrower in the Ballroom, Colonnades and Hammer Passages to restrict track widening

Preferred routes along the main through routes may be delineated with sparse reflectors or plastic markers. An alternative is to indicate preferred routes on a plan of the cave to be included with a notesheet issued with each permit.

Areas for general access will be left unmarked.

10. Development works

Discussion centered around the issue of structures such as bridges, bolts, fixed ropes and ladders in the caves and whose responsibility they were for maintenance. Of particular concern were the bolts in Midnight Hole which are now used by many more people than recreational cavers and will need replacing in the near future.

Other issues include the preparation of a strategy for bolting of vertical pitches. It was suggested that guidelines for bolting be prepared in consultation between P&WS and cavers and a register of bolted caves be kept by P&WS.

It was agreed that any fixed ropes or ladders left in restricted access caves would be the responsibility of the club that installed them and that a register of these be kept with P&WS.

A fixed rope ladder for Valley Entrance was mooted.

A replacement bridge over the lower D'Entrecasteaux in Exit Cave to replace the now rotted log bridge was also suggested.

Opinions varied widely on these two suggestions - hopefully individual questionnaire responses will be valuable here.

11. Interpretation and Education

All present agreed that safety warning signs as well as karst interpretation were desirable around Mystery Creek Cave. Although brochures were suggested as a means of imparting information experience suggests that these can often be difficult to maintain at remote locations, are a source of litter and fire and that fixed signage was more appropriate.

Fixed cave etiquette and flood warning signs will be installed at Mystery Creek Cave this year. In future it is hoped that a karst interpretation board will be installed along the cave track between Blayneys Quarry and the cave entrance.

A cave information leaflet will be produced to accompany all restricted access cave permits for Exit Cave. This will include information on no-go areas, preferred routes and minimal impact caving.

It was thought that a summer ranger should spend part of the time in the vicinity of Mystery Creek cave to educate visitors about karst processes and caving etiquette.

12. Cave cleaning

It was pointed out that only limited opportunities exist for cleaning in Exit Cave as compared with, say Mole Creek caves which contain a far larger proportion of solid calcite speleothems. Most speleothems in Exit are extremely fragile; composed of gypsum or chalky calcite, and therefore unsuited to cleaning by brushes and water.

However, some areas such as parts of Damocles Chamber and Broken Column Chamber would respond well to cleaning. Offers of assistance in any cleaning program were made by club representatives.

13. Acceptable routes/ routemarking

Most of these issues have been discussed under 9. above.

The issue of the style of trackmarking centered around the use of reflectors versus stringlines. The most common view appeared to be that unobtrusive fishing line style lines were preferable, although a marker disk could in some cases be used to attract attention to the start of a stringline if this was not obvious.

14. No-go or reference areas

These issues are discussed under 9. above.

15. Research

It was felt that non destructive or management oriented research should be encouraged. Other forms of destructive or manipulative research should be carefully considered by the Cave Management Advisory Committee and relevant experts before a permit is issued.

Applications should be made as for special purpose permits (see 1, above)

16. Search and rescue

Traditionally P&WS have not played a role in cave rescue in the Ida Bay area; however a commitment to future involvement was made.

Because this involvement is a complicated process and neither party has had much time to consider the best path to follow it was agreed that a further meeting involving the Esperance search and rescue officer Albert Thompson should be convened. IH to co-ordinate.

17. Code of ethics/minimal impact caving

The P&WS minimal impact caving strategy was outlined indicating that a draft document has been produced and that comment from the caving community will be sought in the near future.

Ian Houshold
Karst Officer Parks & Wildlife Service
28/3/95

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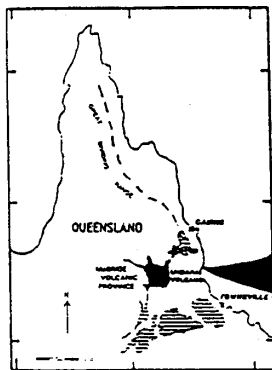
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