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Introduction

1.1 Background

Yarrangobilly Caves is located in the South Eastern Highlands within the northern half of Kosciusko National Park. The Yarrangobilly Caves House Precinct is an area of approximately six square kilometers located between the Snowy Mountains Highway and the Yarrangobilly River, south of Tumut and north of Adaminaby and Cooma. See Figure 1.1.

The Walgalu [also referred to as the Warrigals or Wolgals] Aboriginal people occupied the region on the western side of the Snowy Mountains between the Murray River and Tumut. They are part of the larger Wiradjuri tribal grouping.

Need to mention aboriginal use of area

European discovery of the Yarrangobilly area occurred around 1834. Local Aboriginal people's occupation of the region was so disrupted by the influx of Europeans from the 1830s that much of their recent history and associations with places in the vicinity of Yarrangobilly is thought to have been substantially lost. The association of Aboriginal people with the area has yet to be fully understood.

From ~~the~~^{is} time that Europeans moved into the area ~~the area~~^{it} was used for grazing and later for timber getting. Miners from Kiandra used the Caves as a picnic destination in the 1860s and the Yarrangobilly Caves House Precinct was developed for public visitation from about 1879. Parts of the Rules Creek valley were cleared to construct buildings, to allow pasturage for stock and to provide crops to supply the caretaker and accommodation houses. The rugged nature of the landform has meant that clearing has been restricted to the flatter parts of the valley and natural vegetation remains through much of the Precinct.

Yarrangobilly Caves House is located on a flat above Rules Creek, a minor tributary of the Yarrangobilly River. Protection of the ~~karst and caves and development of the Sshow Caves~~ and construction of accommodation for caves visitors ~~and development of the show caves~~ was an early Government enterprise. The Yarrangobilly Caves area was the responsibility of the Lands Department ~~u~~^Until 1879 when the Department of Mines took over the responsibility and most of the early development work took place during the next twenty eight years while they administered the site. On 1st July 1907 control of the caves was transferred from the Mines Department to the Intelligence Department¹ of which the New South Wales Government Tourist Bureau was a part.

Building of the Caves House complex in the vicinity of Rules Creek expanded rapidly from the 1880s to 1938. The expansion of the complex included the relocation of the three original

¹ Annual Report of the Department of Mines, New South Wales for the year 1907, p174.

caretakers cottages from near the Creek and their re-use; construction of the one storey Caves House building in ~~1902~~1901; between 1912 and 17 [construction of](#) the two storey wing that was interrupted by the First World War and [construction of](#) the present dining room, bar and rear staff lounge ~~constructed~~ in 1938.

The Caves Reserve passed to the Kosciuszko State Park Trust in 1944 but continued to be administered by the Department of Tourist Activities.² However, the 1930s Depression had caused the NSW Government to rely more on lessees to maintain the facilities. By the early 1960s the derelict state of the Caves House complex was such that it was seen as no longer viable as a guesthouse. Additional problems for the viability of the enterprise were the poor state of the Kiandra-Talbingo road and a series of disputes, extensions, delays and problems with the lessee's tenure and a lack of interest in redeveloping the resort.³

~~In 1963 The Kosciuszko State Park Trust The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Kosciuszko National Park Trust assumed control of the caves and Caves House in 1963 as part of Kosciuszko National Park took control of the land and received a grant of £20,000 to carry out upgrading works.~~⁴ It constructed and staffed a Ranger Station, with the rangers replacing the caretaker and guides previously employed by the Tourist Bureau. The Caves were closed in 1966 to a strong public outcry and prison workers were used to restore and improve the resort. The Yarrangobilly Place of Detention was gazetted on ~~the 30th June -6-1967 and in the same year control of the area was transferred to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.~~

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~~Control of the area was transferred to the New South Wales, National Parks and Wildlife Service [NPWS] in 1967??? See above.~~ The following year saw the re-opening to the public of the Jersey and Jillabeanan Caves and the Thermal Pool, but work was still required on the Glory Caves. Prison workers were used to develop the Glory Hole as a self-guiding cave and to complete the renovations on the other three 'show' caves.

The caves area was officially reopened on 3rd November 1973 and the Department of Corrective Services vacated Caves House in 1974. In order to reduce maintenance costs associated with redundant structures NPWS [demolished the smaller buildings east of the main complex in 1972](#). Those demolitions resulted in the present form of the Caves House complex. The Precinct was closed [again](#) in 1982 for a short time due problems with power generation.⁵

² Architecture Design Group, *Yarrangobilly Caves House Precinct Conservation Plan*. (October 1989), p14; Freeman, Collett & Partners, *Yarrangobilly Caves House Precinct Conservation Plan*, (August 1992), p4.

³ Yarrangobilly Caves History, General. Held at Yarrangobilly Caves.

⁴ Sheets: History of Yarrangobilly Caves, A.S. 12, p3. Held at Yarrangobilly Caves.

⁵ Pers comm Gary Bilton 10/9/00 The Caves were closed in 1982, again with a strong public outcry. The closure was due to the hydro generator being inoperative and the diesel back-up being unreliable. Terry Sheehan, the local member exerted pressure on the State government and money eventually became available to purchase two new diesel generators. In the interim the caves were open only on weekends. Later with the employment of a temporary ranger they were open seven days a week. The hydro scheme was subsequently upgraded.

Public use of the area is currently restricted to day use. ~~However,~~ but the single storey Caves House building has recently been restored and re-painted, various infra-structure has been upgraded and/or its replacement is in process; the 1919 Caretakers Cottage is used as a Visitors Centre and Cave Tours are conducted by NPWS staff. The Thermal Pool is a local bathing facility and together with the picnic grounds and bush tracks is popular with visitors.

A Conservation Plan for the Precinct was first prepared in 1989 by **arch design group** and that plan was reviewed and up-dated in 1992 by Freeman, Collet and Partners. This Conservation Management Plan builds on the earlier studies and introduces consideration of Aboriginal [values](#) and a more detailed approach to natural values. It also considers options for the viable future operation and public accessibility of the Yarrangobilly Caves House Precinct in the light of the NSW NPWS 2000-2003 Corporate Plan, and other recent planning documents and considers the local community interests.

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1.2 Study Area

The Yarrangobilly Caves House Precinct is the study area for the purposes of this report. The Precinct is bounded by the Yarrangobilly River to the west, Mill Creek and a minor tributary to the north, the flanks of the Fiery Range below 1100 metres to the east and a line through the valley of Little Glory Hole Creek to the south. See Figure 1.2.

1.3 Report Objectives

This Conservation Management Plan [CMP] is to:

- Identify the philosophy and set the direction for the overall conservation of the Caves House Precinct within the context of its ongoing role in public use.
- Set parameters that identify opportunities and constraints to guide the introduction and management of compatible adaptive re-use of the site, buildings and other features including the cultural landscape.

It must address: Conservation issues;

Interpretation of the historic values;

Archaeological management;

Cultural landscape;

Development control and design guidelines.

1.4 Methodology

This Conservation Management Plan includes consideration of European and built heritage, natural heritage and Aboriginal Heritage.

This Conservation Management Plan has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines of the *Burra Charter of Australia* ICOMOS [Revised], and the methodology outlined in JS Kerr's *The Conservation Plan* (3rd edition, 1990 published by the National Trust of Australia [NSW]).

The study of European and built heritage values, natural heritage values and Aboriginal heritage values of the Yarrangobilly Caves House Precinct includes: a review of relevant literature; a field assessment of the Precinct and the Yarrangobilly Caves catchment; discussion with participants of the public-stakeholders meeting at Yarrangobilly Caves House conducted on 9th February 2000; discussion of issues with other team members and those relevant experts and members of the community who could be contacted and the project Steering Committee.

It must be noted that the historical background included in this plan is not a definitive history of the Yarrangobilly Caves House Precinct or the Karst area and reference to features and events in the plan are not the only important features and events from a historical perspective.

Aboriginal Heritage

The Aboriginal heritage component of this study included a review of existing literature on Aboriginal archaeology of the region, a search of the NSW NPWS Register of Aboriginal sites and catalogue of Archaeological reports, and a short reconnaissance survey of selected areas within the immediate precinct. Consultation with members of the local Aboriginal community took place during the workshop held at Yarrangobilly Caves House on the 9th February 2000 and in follow up telephone conversations.

Natural Heritage

The development of this Conservation Management Plan [CMP] for Yarrangobilly Caves House Precinct followed the practice detailed in the Australian Natural Heritage Charter (Cairnes 1996) in relation to natural heritage assessment and conservation.

The literature review assessed available information on the natural ecosystems and vegetation units of Yarrangobilly Caves House precinct and the surrounding natural environment, including information available from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Australian Heritage Commission, The National Trust of Australia, speleological and bushwalking clubs and other relevant authorities.

The field assessment involved recording of natural features of the Yarrangobilly Caves House Precinct, observations on management issues relating to the natural environment and recording of cultural heritage items such as plantings.

The literature review, discussions and field assessment constitute the first two conservation practice steps in the Australian Natural Heritage Charter, namely obtaining evidence and contacting people or groups which have an interest in the place. This draft report seeks to complete the remaining conservation practice steps.

1.5 Report Structure

A fundamental requirement of the Burra Charter and Kerr's approach is that any work on a place, which may be of cultural significance, should be preceded by a professionally prepared study. It should consecutively consider historical, physical and documentary evidence, establish the significance of the place and arrive at a policy consistent with that significance, the structure's condition, client requirements and other constraints. That structure has been followed in this report and is reflected in the report format and layout.

1.65 Authorship

A specially assembled team who has contributed their individual expertise to all aspects of the project has prepared this report. Jill Sheppard has co-ordinated the project and with primary responsibility for built heritage, heritage tourism, significance assessment, conservation policy and implementation recommendations. Beverley Johnson has assembled and prepared the historical background [and contributed to the contextual synthesis](#), Roger Lembit has prepared the natural and cultural landscape analysis while Mary Dallas has been responsible for the liaison with the local Aboriginal community and Land Council, site survey and analysis and the Aboriginal archaeology sections.

1.7 Documentary Sources

A broad range of documentary sources was consulted. Footnotes are provided throughout this document and a [Bibliography](#) is provided in Section 9.0.

1.8 Acknowledgements

The study team has benefited enormously from the on site assistance, local knowledge and management expertise provided by Jo Ingarfield, the Manager of Yarrangobilly Caves. Miriam Stacy has been the [Project Manager](#) for the project and has provided insightful suggestions and assistance throughout the project. Brian Johnson has added invaluable expertise in issue assessment.

The study team also wishes to thank all of the people who attended the [Stakeholders Workshop](#) held at the site on February 9th 2000. We are very conscious that local people and local business people took time in their busy schedules to contribute toward the future planning of the

site.- The list of individual people and the organisations or interests they represent is provided in Appendix A. Everyone who attended the meeting provided information about the Precinct and insights into their particular interest and association with the Precinct and freely gave ideas about its potential future development.

The process and outcomes of the Workshop are provided in Appendix B.

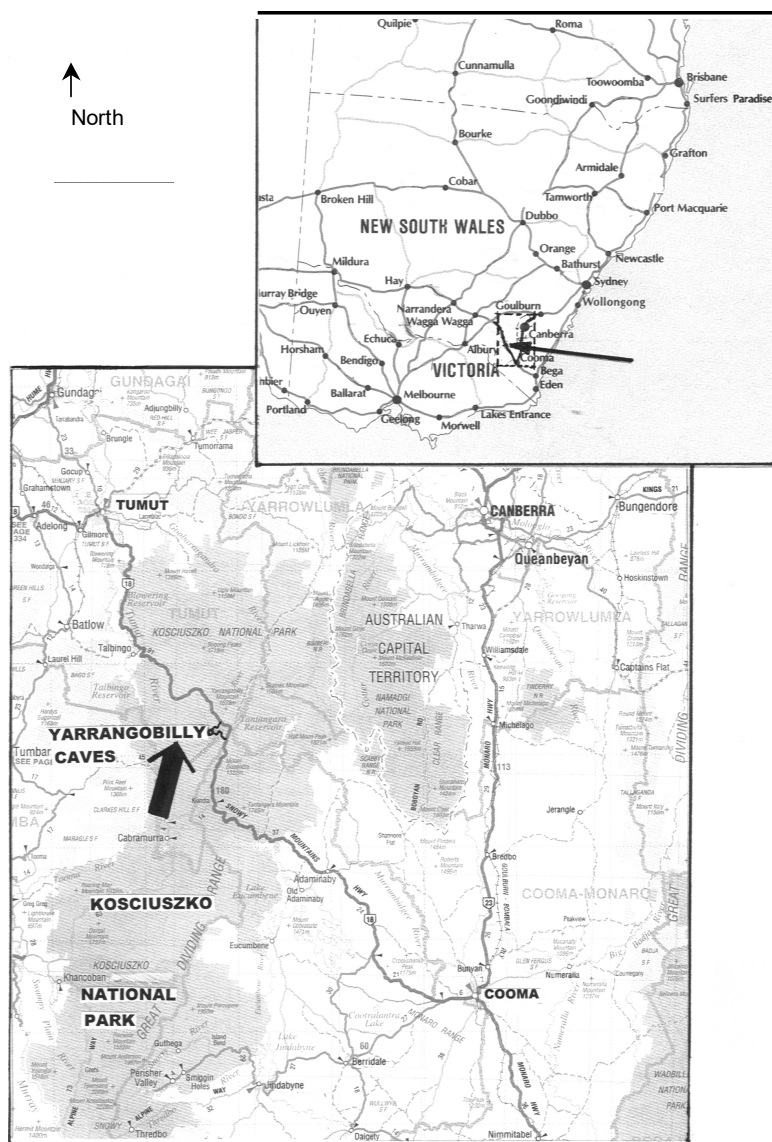


Figure 1.1 Yarrangobilly Caves House Precinct location and context plan.

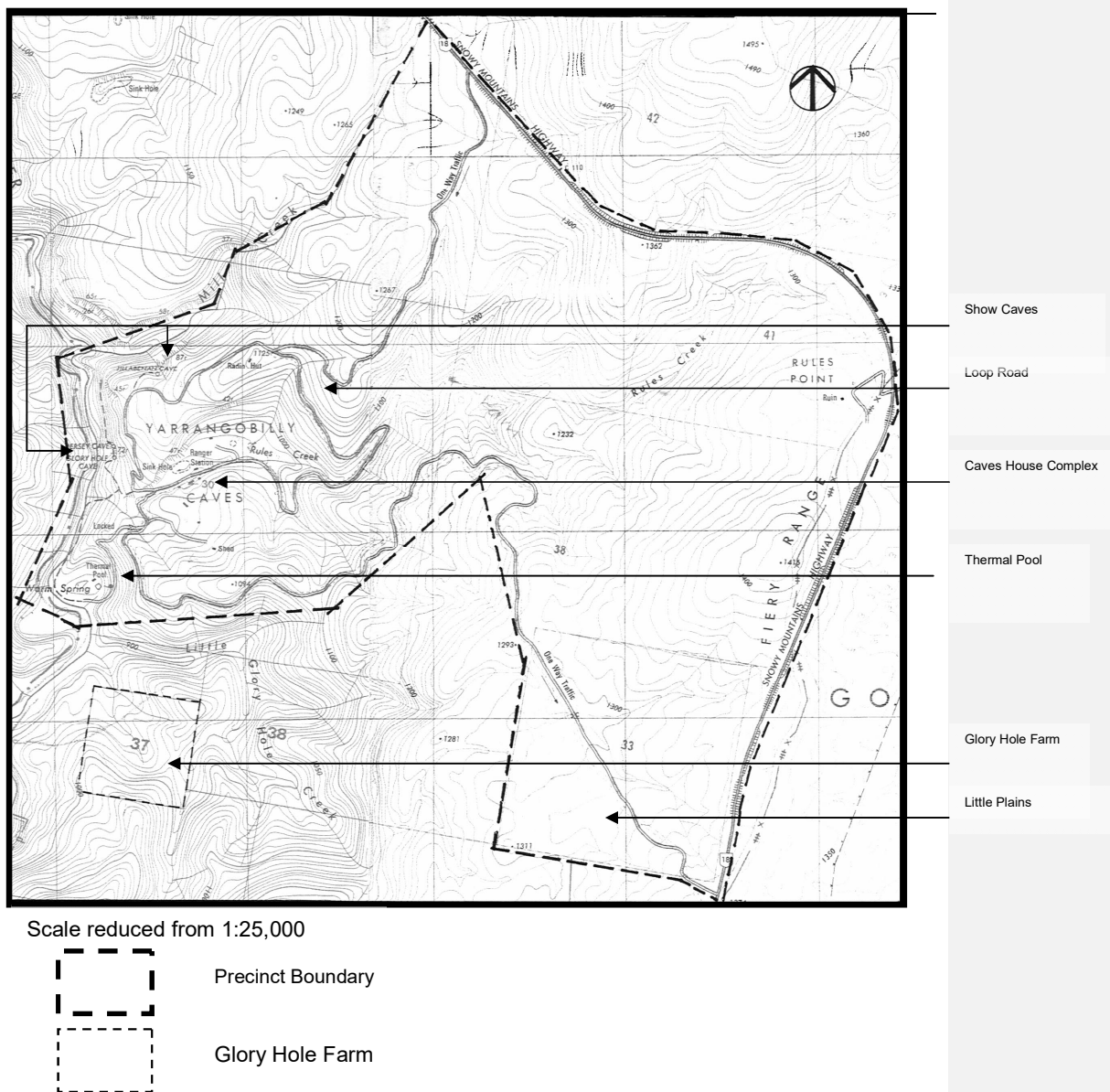


Figure 1.2 Yarrangobilly Caves House Precinct, which is the subject of the study with the main features located.

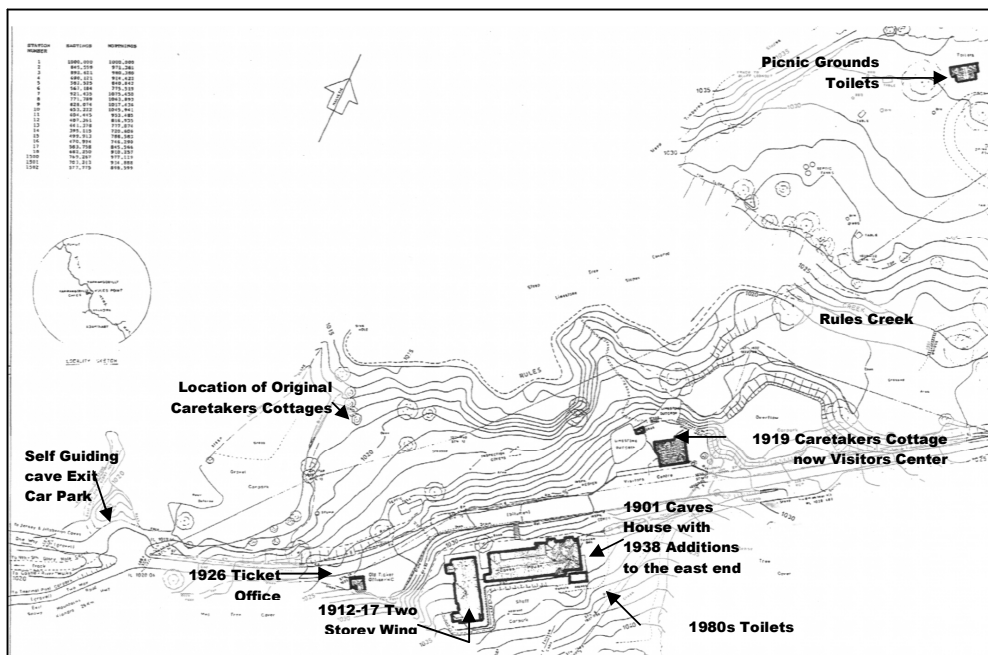


Figure 1.3 The west end of the Rules Creek Basin showing Caves House building complex.
 [This plan is a reduced and relabelled copy of the Stadia Survey of Yarrangobilly Caves prepared for NPWS in 1985-6]

