

Chillagoe

In 1887-88, William Atherton established a station at Chillagoe, North Queensland. He commenced exploration of the many caves which occur in the spectacular limestone towers of the district, and had certainly discovered the Donna Cave by 1891. He took many parties of visitors to see the caves.

In the next few years mining commenced in the region, and townships grew up at both Chillagoe and Mungana. In 1901 a smelter commenced operation at Chillagoe. The resulting population growth led to still more visitors entering the caves, and in 1930, the Mungana Caves Trust commenced operating formal tours. These were associated with day trips by rail from Cairns, and parties were taken to caves which were close to the railway, particularly Spring Cave.

However, the best known and most visited cave was then known simply as the Chillagoe Cave and now as Royal Arch Cave. Then in 1940, small were gazetted as National Parks. As the mining came to an end and the smelters closed, so the popularity of the caves diminished, and they were almost forgotten. No active management of the caves for public purposes was undertaken until 1964 when conducted tours were again commenced.

Speleological investigation also commenced at about this time. As a result, many hundreds of caves, many of which are of considerable scientific or aesthetic value, have been explored and mapped. (Wilson 1977; Pearson 1983)

QUEENSLAND POST OFFICE SERIES [1910]

Pu Queensland Post Office

F Four small photographs placed within decorative scroll-work; impressed 1d. stamp on back.

Interior of N.Q. Caves V [pm. 25 Aug 1927]

(This was the only cave postcard issued by an Australian Postal service until 1982, when Australia Post issued a card depicting the Skeleton Cave, Jenolan.

QUEENSLAND INTELLIGENCE AND TOURIST BUREAU PICTORIAL SERIES

Pu Queensland Government Intelligence and Tourist Bureau

Pr Government Printer

F Four small photographs placed within decorative scroll-work exactly as above

Interior of N.Q. Caves V

(with the B4 back - see Collas 1983 - printed in sepia)

Interior of N.Q. Caves V

(with the B4 back - see Collas 1983 - printed in green)

"SHELL" SERIES. QUEENSLAND PICTURESQUE SCENERY. SERIES 1.

Pu Shell (Cook 1986, pp. 149-50)

F Full-frame view with superimposed title, printed in subtle colours

Chillagoe Caves H (horse-drawn vehicle in front of Royal Arch Cave) [pm.1906]

Chillagoe/Caves/(Interior) V (B & W print; man seated high on wall of 'Picnic Chamber',
Royal Arch Cave) [pm.20 Apr.1906]

Needle Rock, Chillagoe V (towerkarst) [pm.13 Jul.1906]

CRAIG'S CENTRAL POST CARD SERIES

Pu Craig (?)

Pr Card has Harding & Billing logo

F Full-frame picture with superimposed title

Freestun's Corner/ Chillagoe Caves, N.Q. V (Title is inverted relative to the picture)
[pm.19 Sep.1907]

Chillagoe Coy's Dam/Chillagoe, N.Q. H [depicts surface scenery only]

FREESTUN SERIES

Ph J. Backwood

Pu J.P. Freestun

Pr J. Collis, Sydney

F Full-frame view printed by Collotype with superimposed (and hard-to-see) title.

Temple of Edols (?), Chillagoe Caves, Qld. V

Giant Stalactite, Chillagoe Caves, Qld. V

Figtree Cave, Chillagoe, Qld. V

ATKINSON SERIES

Ph?, Pu Atkinson, Cairns

F Collotype print with title in wide lower margin; undivided back

Limestone Caves, Chillagoe, N.Q. V [ms.7 Dec 1904]

Limestone Caves, Chillagoe, N.Q. V

(also has superimposed title in white, 'Cave Interior Chillagoe/No. 6')

WILLMETT'S POST CARD SERIES.

Pu T. Willmet & Sons, Printers & Stationers, Townsville and Charters Towers.

F Full colour view with superimposed title.

Hanging Rock, Chillagoe, North Queensland/(About 60 ft. in Height) V [pm.20 Jul.1907]

(Hanging Rock, now known as Balancing Rock, is an immense egg-shaped boulder of limestone separated by erosion and balancing in a vertical position.)

CARDS NOT IDENTIFIED TO EITHER PHOTOGRAPHER OR PUBLISHER

F Picture printed in sepia with superimposed title and margin on lower edge only
Chillagoe Caves, Cairns Ry. Queensland V [pm.10 Sep.1906]

F Real photo cards. Superimposed title in italic caps.

Interior of/Chillagoe Caves H (two men, one of whom is Aboriginal, both holding
cattlemen's hats and standing in the 'Picnic Chamber,' Royal Arch Cave)

Empire

Donnah Caves, Chillagoe V

Empire

F Real photo cards with superimposed title in underlined Roman caps.

Chillagoe/Caves Entrance H

K-

D(V)

(Depicts entry area of Royal Arch)

Picnic Cave /Chillagoe H

K-C

F Real photo cards without caption

11.1 [Balancing Rock] V

K-D

11.2 [The "Polar Bear" Rock] H

K-D

11.3 [Dome Rock] H

K-D

F Real photo cards without margins; generally with superimposed title in neat block
capitals.

Entrance to Royal Arch Cave, Chillagoe H

K-D(4)

Cave Interior, Chillagoe H

K-D(4)

Cave Interior, Chillagoe V

K-D

Cave Interior, Chillagoe V

K-B

Cave Interior V

K-D

(untitled - also a cave interior)

K-D

(These views all appear to be in the Royal Arch Cave, but are difficult to describe in
enough detail to facilitate recognition.)

Donor's Cave Interior Chillagoe V

K-D(Y)

Piano Cave, Mungana V

K-C(Y)

G.K. BOLTON FULL COLOR SERIES

F Full color Full frame cards with title and other information on back

One of the Blaanciung Rocks, Chillago /District, North Queensland H

The "Stagecave," Chillagoe Caves, Atherton /Tableland, Nth. Qld. H

Chillagoe Caves H

Signing the Visitors Book at fabulous /Chillagoe Caves, N.Q.

PEER SERIES

F Full Color Full Frame cards with title and other details on back
Picnic Chamber, Royal Arch Cave, Chillagoe H

CHILLAGOE TOWNSHIP CARDS

Cards that depict the township during the heyday of mining are of interest, as the fortunes of caves tourism at Chillagoe were inter-related with the size of the town.

F Hand-tinted, rightly colored card
Chillagoe / Nth Queensland H RP-1
(Depicts town view in a floral frame with a handshake at the top]

F B & W real photo with superimposed hand-lettered title in underlined capitals
State Smelters - Chillagoe. H K-B

F Real Photo with wide margin and handwritten title; probably a personal
photograph
Chillagoe H Empire
(Smelter chimney in background