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The Newsletter of the National University Caving Club.

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EDITORIAL

The National University Caving Club is entering its fourth year. During the last three years the club has grown from little cluster of people who like crawling around in the mud to an organization of considerable size. Each year about thirty 'tyros' are introduced to Our Favorite Sport, and many of them remain to become experienced cavers.

As the club increased in size, more organization and more equipment became necessary. We learnt about both by experience. The main innovation was the cave rescue system, discussed on page 3 of this Newsletter. We hope it will never be necessary to put the scheme into action, but the possibility is always there.

Over the past two years the club has been building up its equipment stock. It started from humble beginnings, by building a 20' rope ladder, which did heroic service before it was condemned. Then we moved on to wire ladders, and started talking in terms of 100 foot lengths. The committee is in the process of building another hundred feet of wire ladder which may, one day, see the muddy floor of some cave.

Whether the club continues to grow and flourish depends on the members. We have the example of the first three years before us. Let's better it!

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'Speleograffiti'

The History of Caves: Jenolan Cave Area

Although not the first cave system in N.S.W. to become known to white man, Jenolan Caves have become the main tourist caves in the State.

The first white man to visit Jenolan Caves was an escaped convict, McKeown, who used a small cave as a hideout for his bushranging activities, during 1841. Later, he built a rough hut on the bank of a watercourse, still known as McKeown's Creek.

A settler, James Whalan, discovered McKeown's camp when tracking stolen cattle and, aided by a policeman, captured the convict. Upon his return to Fish Creek township, Whalan told the settlers what he had seen: the Grand Arch, Devil's Coach House and Carlotta Arch, declaring that he had been to the end of the world.

In 1856, the area was made a reserve, and a caretaker, Jeremiah Wilson, appointed a year later. He built a small residence which was destroyed by fire in 1895. Work on the present Caves House commenced shortly after, local limestone being used as the building material.

That the caves were known to the aborigines is certain. An aboriginal skeleton was discovered embedded in the limestone floor of one cave. The area still bears its aboriginal name 'Jenolan', meaning a high cliff or mountain.

A recent discovery in the caves is the skeleton of an extinct species of Tasmanian wolf, which was found in Pleistocene earth deposits.

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Cave Rescue Systems*

In our club, though not many realise it, we have a cave rescue system. This system may not be very efficient at the moment, but I feel that it is a worthwhile part of the organization and some effort should be made to improve its standard for the good of the club and the safety of all members.

There is one good reason for a cave rescue system.

On November 18th 1964, a group of young folk set out for a caving trip. The caves were only one and a quarter hours out of town. Its official name is Yonggamugl Number 3 (commonly called Queen's Cave). The cave itself consists of several levels comprising rather a large system with the main chamber over 400 yards long. Two experienced members went into a squeeze about 200 yards from the entrance in a side passage. After pushing this squeeze for about sixty or seventy yards, they were forced to turn back. They had left the main party to carry on to the main chamber under a third experienced guide, with instructions to leave the equipment belonging to the aforesaid two at the entrance of the squeeze. The equipment consisted of two lights, one rope and a bag filled with food and extra clothing. When these two arrived at their starting point, they found no equipment waiting. Unable to continue their journey into the cave, they started back to the entrance. While in the squeeze one torch had been broken. The other was now fading fast so they were forced to sit and wait for the return of the rest of the party, who went out the other entrance! Lesson one, of course, was never to split a party in a cave. Lesson two lay in the equipment. Always carry your own equipment and never take off with anyone else's. All very easy to see with hindsight!

The time was now 5.30 p.m. on the Saturday night, both cavers were lightly clad as their extra clothing was in the bag. I shall now let one of the party describe the incident:

'I suppose that I should have taken notice of my desk calender for last weekend, which blandly warned 'Solitude at length grows tiresome'.

'We made a couple of attempts to get out on Saturday afternoon, but they were unsuccessful. Clambering over

* Article is presented with apologies to the author who

rocks in pitch darkness is not my idea of fun.

'At one stage we came upon a large hole in the floor. We could hear the sound of a river through it. It was at least 60 feet deep. I felt rather sick!

'If you are motionless for any length of time coldness comes very quickly. We had to get up and exercise to keep warm - running on the spot, slapping ourselves to restore circulation, jumping up and down ... any warmth we gained soon disappeared.

'Once, I believe, I slept for a continuous six-hour shift; and on awakening was practically frozen stiff.

'The whole incident had developed into a nightmare. At 6 a.m. on Sunday we made another attempt to get out. I felt sick, helpless and discouraged. It seemed we had all the time in the world.

'About midday we tried to find our way back to the floor of the cave but had no luck. So I curled up, shivering on a small ledge to sleep.

'That night we made a further attempt at reaching the exit - by following the bats out - but we came to a large cleft which we could not cross in the dark, so we left it till morning.

'About 11 a.m. on Monday we were back on the floor of the chamber. Bob had figured that we would be found by midday - Thank God we had a luminous watch! Then we started whistling and shouting.

'Suddenly a faint glimmer appeared in the roof of the Chamber - they were here! It didn't take us long to get to the search centre in the main chamber and down a couple of mugs of hot tea and a sandwich. Then we were off back home!'

(Excerpt from an article by Mr. K. Jackson in the Kundiawa News, November 1964.)

It must be called to mind that this was a large cave, several miles in extent over five different levels, with two underground rivers in it. For this reason, and this alone, did the rescuers take so long to find the cavers. Actually the team had been searching since about 8 a.m. on Sunday morning as soon as they failed to check in at the police station. But for the rescue system, people might not have bothered to look till Monday morning when the

people concerned would have failed to turn up at work!

Caving isn't always as exciting as that unfortunately, but people do get lost in caves or stranded without a light as in this case. Without the rescue system we are courting disaster. So please remember it is there for your sake. Use it.

The System.

Trip leaders shall obtain equipment from equipment officer and enter into the book the names of all persons on the trip; where they are going and when they shall return. This book is then left with a committee member who shall then be responsible for it. If the committee member is not contacted within a reasonable time of the proposed return, he shall a) ring the police local to the caving area and alert them

b) organise a group in Canberra and go straight to the caving area to institute a search. In the event of NUCC being short-handed, then CBS shall also be called in, although I myself feel that this should be done anyway.

Remember one thing - this system is a proven one and as long as you use it you are safe. That may sound trite but it is also true.

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TRIP REPORTS

1. Tuglow Caves, 28th October, 1966.

Peter Aitchison, Jim Coulton, Lester Walters and girlfriend went to visit this interesting cave. We left Friday night and camped on the Abercrombie River near the road where there are very good campsites. The route to the caves is: Canberra-Goulburn, then turn north through Taralga, cross the Abercrombie, and 15 miles further turn sharp right on road towards Mt. Werong. At the 'T' junction three miles on, where Mount Werong is signposted to right, turn left for one mile and then right on the first obvious turnoff and continue about 11 miles straight along this road, taking a left fork, down some very steep hills (which were too steep for a Volkswagen to return up owing to lack of power), crossing a ford. At the top of the second rise about one mile beyond the ford, just before the Kowmung River valley, a rough vehicle track leads off left up over the hill and down to the caves about half a mile. This track can be negotiated by some vehicles to the cave mouth.

The cave has been cut by the stream to a very high and narrow cross-section. The entrance is in fact a narrow chimney close to 200 feet deep which in itself is very interesting. Since the whole cave is in a quite small piece of limestone, there are not likely to be any other big caves near by, though there is a large hole between the cave mouth and the river which was not investigated. The stream has an efflux in the valley below, while the influx can be found to the west of the cave in a flat area where a stream disappears through gravel and mud. There are several holes blocked with soil near the influx and many dolines.

We did not do very much in the cave since we had some trouble in the slippery entrance chimney, and our lights soon ran out. We followed the stream towards the influx, past several interesting waterfalls until the tunnel became very low but not impassable. There is one cavern with interesting formations well worth photographing. This is definitely a severe cave, not for beginners.

Peter Aitchison.

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2. The Big Hole, Wyambene, 18th December 1966.

David Moore, Anne Felton, Joanne Fisher and Ian Raine left Canberra at about 7.30 a.m. for the Big Hole. After a minor struggle all of us made the Hole in various states of repair but only one (the intrepid, fearless, idiot leader) made it down the 90' of ladder, mounted on the Southern side of the Hole, the last 15' of ladder carefully over an overhang. Many photos were taken, both of and by the leader. The bedraggled and uncaved troupe returned to Canberra at about 6.30 p.m. after the traditional stop at Braidwood.

David Moore.

3. The Dog Leg Cave, Wee Jasper, New Year's Eve.

The trip leader may be selected at random from David Moore, Joanne Fisher, Ian Raine and Robert Orreill, (we were all partially there). A non-member, Miss B. Schult, from Sydney, came along to watch.

The first three of Dramatis Personae plus one mosquito turned up about 11 p.m. the previous night. The remainder arrived about 2.a.m., and we finally went caving. The cave was fairly dry and quite good going. At the top of the sand trap there is a fine swimming hole. The sand trap has been lost. 'Easiest trip I have ever had into Dog Leg' - R.E.O.

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