

# The Very Latest

Volume 19 No 3

November 2014

2000s

1950s

1970s

# CSS turns

1990s

# 60

1980s

2010s

1960s

# Special Issue



# The Very Latest

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## Contents

	Page
Introduction	i
What CSS has been doing over the past decade ( <i>John Brush</i> )	51
The early history of CSS (1954-1964) – as revealed through the pages of <i>The Canberra Times</i> ( <i>John Brush</i> )	53

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## Introduction

In October 2014 CSS celebrates the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding with this special issue of TVL, a function at the Yowani Country Club in Canberra and also a weekend in the recently refurbished Caves House at Yarrangobilly. Many members, former members and friends of the Society are participating in the formal celebrations. Sadly, several foundation members who had joined in previous anniversary celebrations are no longer with us. However, a few people who joined CSS around fifty years ago have been able to participate and it is worth noting that three of them (Andy Spate, Roger Curtis and Neil Anderson) are still members of the Society.

As the key event that led to the founding of CSS took place at Yarrangobilly, it is most appropriate that Yarrangobilly Caves House is the venue for the major 60<sup>th</sup> celebrations, given the link between Yarrangobilly and the founding of CSS, as revealed (again) in this issue.

The history of CSS has been told before, such as in the special TVLs produced for the 25<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> anniversaries, and the pictorial history on CD-ROM produced for the 50<sup>th</sup>, but there is more to tell.

In this issue, the retrospective is in two parts. First, there is an overview of what the Society and its members have been up to over the last decade. And there is also an account of the first ten years (1954-1964) as seen through the pages of *The Canberra Times*. A narrative such as this would have been, in practical terms, almost impossible to compile without the digital on-line resources of the National Library's Trove. What a wonderful and ever-expanding research tool it is. It is important to gratefully acknowledge the work of Kim Van Dyk, a caver with the Victorian Limestone Caving Team who is an avid reviewer and corrector of Trove pages. Kim pointed CSS in the direction of many old newspaper articles in Trove, some of which were previously unknown to the Society.

Enjoy.

John Brush

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*Front Cover: Montage from photos by Dave Purchase (1950s), Bluey Thomson (1960s), Andy Spate (1970s), Annette Robertson (1980s), Neil Anderson (1990s), Greg Middleton (2000s), John Brush (2010s & background).*

*Back Cover: Photo montage showing recent activities of members (pics by S March, L Petrovic and J Brush).*

## What CSS has been doing over the past decade

John Brush

Since the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2004, CSS and its members have participated in a broad range of cave and karst-related activities across Australia and overseas. We have:

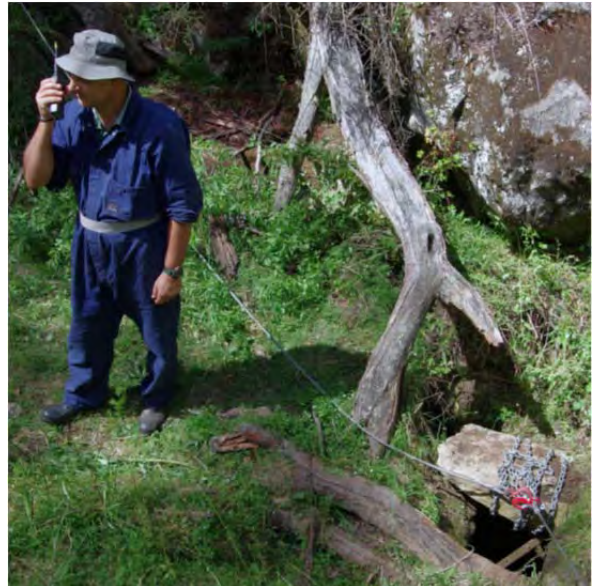
- Conducted caving trips once every 2-3 weeks, on average;
  - covering karst areas in all Australian states and mainland Territories and overseas;
  - quite a few trips were purely for recreational caving, but a good many were to progress the Society's documentation, surveying and management initiatives.
- Continued cave discovery, exploration, documentation and mapping activities at:
  - Black Perry/ Jounama Creek, Cooleman Plain, Deua, Kybean, Lobs Hole/ Ravine, London Bridge, MacPhersons Creek, Marble Arch, Michelago, Paddys River (Cotter), Taemas, Warroo, Wee Jasper, White Rocks and Wyanbene; and at
  - Yarrangobilly, in support of SSS efforts;
  - but not at Rosebrook or Cave Flat, largely because of access difficulties (for example, Cave Flat is usually submerged beneath the waters of Lake Burrinjuck).
- Undertaken and/ or supervised major engineering works, coordinated by Dirk Stoffels, to:
  - design, build and install a gate in Dogleg Cave, Wee Jasper;
  - design, build and install a bridge in Fossil Cave, Bungonia;
  - design and build an improved RDF unit for enhancing accuracy of cave surveys; and
  - design, build and launch a radio-controlled video camera on helium balloons in the Gunbarrel Aven, Wyanbene, preceded by extensive trials in Dip Cave, Wee Jasper.



*Dirk Stoffels, assisted by Marjorie Coggan, Rosemary Nicholson and Steve Pearce, makes final adjustments to the aerial surveillance gear, Gunbarrel Aven, Wyanbene (D Stoffels pic).*

- Worked with ACT Parks and Conservation staff in Cotter Cave to remove damaged and partly burnt wooden infrastructure and a considerable amount of rubbish.
- Produced maps of some 300 caves, including 160 at Wee Jasper and 50 at Cooleman Plain.
- Removed several cubic metres rubbish from an active inflow cave (Y47) at Yarrangobilly that had once been used as a rubbish dump.
- Participated with NPWS staff in weed removal campaigns at Cooleman and Yarrangobilly.
- Explored and mapped some very long and deep caves in Thailand and Laos.

*Joe Sydney supervising rock winching operations at Grill Cave, Bungonia (J Brush pic).*



- Participated with other clubs (and in cooperation with NPWS) to remove unstable rocks from two cave entrances at Bungonia using a combination of brute force and chemical persuasion.
- Participated in committees and reference groups to further cave access and management objectives.
- Initiated cleaning and/or track marking projects in caves at Wyanbene, Wombeyan, Yarrangobilly and Wee Jasper.
- Under contract to NPWS, supplied cave/ karst information and management advice on karst areas in the Deua National Park.
- Provided management advice to authorities through formal and informal communication channels on the Coleman, Deua, Indi, Marble Arch, Mt Eccles (Vic), Paddy's River, Wee Jasper, Wyanbene and Yarrangobilly karst areas.
- Negotiated access to caves on private land at Burra (ie London Bridge), Kybean, Mt Fairy, Taemas, Warroo, Wee Jasper and to a number of lava caves in Victoria.
- Reactivated *The Very Latest* in 2007, after a long period of dormancy;
  - 28 years since the previous regular issue and 13 years since the last special issue.
- Provided speleological services and 'expertise' to scientific expeditions in Flores, Indonesia (Neil Anderson) and Timor Leste (John Brush).
- Supported the Wee Jasper Community by organising and/ or participating in several events during the *Wee Jasper Naturally* weekends.
- Members have participated in a range of national and international cave / karst conferences.
- And a steadily growing number of members have joined the Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association (ACKMA) and have been participating in its activities, for example:
  - 4 members attended the 10-day AGM and field trip at Mulu Caves, Malaysia in 2010;
  - 7 members attended the 2013 Biennial Conference at Waitomo (NZ) in 2013;
  - 8 members attended the AGM at Yarrangobilly in May 2014.
- Undertook a project to map, track mark and selectively clean Nice Cave, Wee Jasper;
  - a spectacular but very delicate cave on private property.
- Successfully applied for grants to assist in funding:
  - the gate project in Dogleg Cave (thanks to the ASF Karst Conservation Fund);
  - cleaning work in Wyanbene Cave (ASF Karst Conservation Fund and NPWS);
  - upgrading the Society's SRT, lighting and safety gear (Volunteer Grants Program).
- Continued to study the inter-relationships between limestone and fine fermented grape juice.

## The early history of CSS (1954-1964) as revealed through the pages of *The Canberra Times*

John Brush

The CSS archives contain very little original information relating to the formation and early years of the society. However, it is possible to reconstruct a reasonable account of the early history of CSS from the pages of *The Canberra Times*. This is now a relatively easy task, thanks to the ever-expanding resources of the National Library's Trove. The Trove collections of digitised records, include many early Australian newspapers, are accessible on-line and have searchable text.

That so much material on CSS made it into newspapers of the day is remarkable and points to the existence of a very efficient public relations machine within CSS. It was not unusual for *The Canberra Times* to report on a forthcoming CSS trip in the lead-up to a weekend and then, early in the following week, to publish an account of the Society's weekend activities.

The events leading to the establishment of CSS were recounted in *The Very Best of The Very Latest*; the special issue of *The Very Latest* (Volume 11) published at the time of CSS's Fortieth Anniversary celebrations in 1994, but are repeated here to present the story from the very beginning.

In December 1953, Brian O'Brien, a member of the Sydney University Speleological Society (SUSS) became separated from Fred Stewart, his caving companion, and failed to return from a trip into East Deep Creek Cave at Yarrangobilly. Fred made it out of the cave and raised the alarm. Many people soon joined the search efforts, including six members of the Canberra Alpine Club (Jim Webb, Vic Pickering, Dennis Robinson, Jack Leslie, Clive Pritchard and Graham Young). According to *The Canberra Times*, all six were experienced speleologists, but none of them had previously visited Yarrangobilly. After spending nearly 3 days in the cave, O'Brien was found in a previously unknown section by Jim, Vic and Dennis.

### Student Found Unhurt In Hitherto Unknown Cave

SYDNEY, Thursday 17 December 1953.

**Brian O'Brien, 19-year-old University science student, missing since Monday in a network of caves at Yarrangobilly, was found alive to-day.**

O'Brien was found by a search party in a passage of the caves not previously known.

He suffered no ill effects, but was ravenously hungry.

O'Brien and a companion, Fred Stewart, of Burwood Road, Burwood, went to the caves on Monday afternoon. They are both members of the Speleological Society which studies cave formations.

The youths became separated. Stewart found his way out of the caves and went for help when he discovered O'Brien was missing.

#### MOTHERS THANKS

O'Brien was found in dramatic circumstances at the bottom of a 900ft cave.

The boy's mother, Mrs O'Brien, who was staying at the Caves House at Yarrangobilly, collapsed when she heard the news. After she recovered, she said: "Thank you so much everybody."

O'Brien walked out of the caves in a mud-spattered pair of overalls and a beret.

He had been without food, water or light for three days.

His first action on walking out of the cave with the search party was to fall on his knees to drink his first fresh water from a running stream.

There was a happy scene when the boy and his father met at the mouth of the cave.

Both embraced and Mr. O'Brien said: "He is a good boy and I knew he would not do anything silly."

Young O'Brien told searchers: "I was pretty cold down there and my acetylene light became exhausted, so I wandered round in the dark to keep warm."

He added that he was following his friend, Stewart, on Monday when they suddenly separated in one of the arms of the cave.

"I saw an opening and walked further into the cave to try to find a way out," he said.

"I knew Fred would get out and go for help. In the meantime I tried to find a stream which runs through the cave and would have followed it to the open."

O'Brien's first words when found were: "I'm sorry for the fuss I've caused, but I think I have found a new cave."

He thought it was Wednesday when he was found, and told searchers he had probably had only about half an hour's sleep.

He kept awake in case he heard searchers exploring the cave.

O'Brien's main feeling was of being locked in a dark room, but he said he was not particularly afraid, as he felt it would not be long before he was found. He had no means of telling the time.

To-night, at the Caves House, O'Brien is catching up on much needed sleep.

Canberra Times Friday 18 December 1953

*The Canberra Times*, 18 December 1953

# YARRANGOBILLY EXPLOIT BY CANBERRA PARTY

The Canberra Times, 21 December 1953

Members of the Canberra Alpine Club who found Brian O'Brien, of Sydney, in a previously unknown cave at Yarrangobilly, said he had climbed in darkness over a route which was almost impossible with light.

The party comprising Jim Webb of Mulwala House, Vic. Pickering of Forrest, Dennis Robinson of Reid House, Jack Leslie of Yarralumla, Clive Pritchard of Gorman House, and Graham Young, of O'Connor, returned to Canberra at the weekend.

All were speleologists, but had no previous knowledge of Yarrangobilly.

Mr. Pickering said they had been in the cave only two hours before they found O'Brien.

He and Jim Webb were checking the route of other searchers in an ancient watercourse when they discovered a very small "squeeze" hole that had been missed in an intensive search of the original cavern.

Laying a paper trail as they went, they squeezed through the aperture and proceeded along a passage when they saw the mark of a crapon and a single foot-print.

### PINNED BY ROCK

At one stage Webb was pinned by a falling rock but he managed to free himself.

With a single trail confirmed, Webb and Pickering turned to bring other searchers to the cavern. They had not gone far when they met the N.S.W. Superintendent of Caves, Mr. Finney, Mr. P. McGregor, of Sydney, and Dennis Robertson, who had followed the paper through the passage.

The larger party then followed the trail, which at times went up steep formations. At times the cave was 60 to 80 feet high and varied in width of 100 to 200 feet.

The cave sloped down from its entrance, but the tracks led up crevices towards higher levels, indicating that O'Brien had been trying to find his way out.

The party called until there was a response above the echoes. Mr. Pickering said members of the party was amazed that O'Brien had reached such a position without a light.

He told his finders that he climbed into the cave in his search of a river and was about to return when his light gave out. He had previously marked the entrance, but could not find it in the dark.

He was surprised to discover how many searchers were looking for him. He had expected to be found by his friends.

On the way back to safety, the party discovered the mark that O'Brien made to indicate the entrance. O'Brien was found 600 feet away.

Mr. Pickering said that Mr. Finney described the cave as one of the most beautiful he had seen.

The party from Canberra suggested that if developed, it should be named after its discoverer, O'Brien.

Mr. Pickering said that many fine marsupial fossils were noticed in the new cave.

The rescuers' suggestion for the cave to be named after O'Brien, should it be developed as a show cave, did not come to pass. However, the search and rescue incident did start them thinking. It sparked a deeper interest in caves and in the following months, the Alpine Club cavers and a few others discussed the feasibility of forming a separate caving group in Canberra. Their plans came to fruition at the end of October 1954, when the Canberra Speleological Society was established during a weekend trip to Cleitmore and The Big Hole, as noted in *The Canberra Times* the following Tuesday (*below, left*). Two weeks later, the 17 December issue noted (*below, right*) that the Society's second outing would be a trip to Coolman, with some members planning to walk in via Mt Gingera (a tough walk) while others would travel by jeep (a rough ride in those days).

### CAVE EXPLORERS FORM SOCIETY

Canberra, whose clubs and associations cater for a great diversity of interests, gains yet another organisation with the formation last weekend of the Speleological Society, for the purpose of exploring, mapping, and preserving information about the limestone caves areas in the Southern Tablelands. Isolated groups of caves explorers and speleologists have carried out work in caves systems in this area for many years, but inadequate records, or no records at all, have reduced the value of the work already done. Office bearers elected are: President, Mr. J. Webb; vice-president and secretary, Mr. E. A. Lane; records officer, Mr. H. Black; treasurer and equipment officer, Mr. J. Leslie. All caving information and

enquiries should be sent to the secretary at the Hotel Acton. The society's maiden venture last weekend was an investigation of the Cleitmore Caves system and the "Big Hole" at Kiwarree. Members plan to descend the hole, 300 feet deep and 225 feet across, to discover whether it connects with any underground cave or river system. The society is seeking information about cave regions and limestone outcrops in the area so exploration trips may be planned. Members believe at least a dozen important and only-partly explored caves exist within a radius of 100 miles of Canberra.

Canberra Times Tuesday November 2 1954

### Cave Exploration Trips Planned

The recently-formed Canberra Speleological Society will have its second outing this weekend, when members explore the Coolman Caves area.

About six members will split up into two parties, some walking in from Gingera and spending four days on the expedition; others going by jeep for the weekend.

A number of caves in the area has had only preliminary exploration and members plan to map the area in detail. They will also take flashlight photographs of the caves as the foundation for a reference photographic library.

At the New Year week-end, the Canberra society will combine with the Sydney Speleological Society for a trip to the Wombeyan Caves, near Goulburn.

The N.S.W. Government Tourist Bureau has granted them access to some of the caves normally kept closed. Although they will strike underwater streams or both expeditions, the speleologists are not taking any special equipment. Their gear will include, however, wire ladders and ropes, acetylene lamps and shovels.

The activities of that first Coolaman trip were covered in two issues of *The Canberra Times*. The first, published on 23 December within two days of returning to Canberra, reports the discovery of what was thought to be a blind cave fish (*see below, at left*). It also noted that the discovery was made almost a year to the day since the Brian O'Brien incident and that O'Brien had given his rescuers a Christmas present, though what this might have been was not revealed.

The Canberra Times Thursday 23 December 1954, page 2

## CAVE EXPLORERS FIND RARE BLIND FISH

**The Canberra Speleological Society believes it has discovered a rare cave-living blind fish. The find was made while members were examining a cave in the Coolaman area on Tuesday.**

The fish, about 6ins. long, perfectly white and cylindrical, was seen as members were swimming across a deep pool about 300ft. from the cave entrance.

The fish came to the surface several times when the water was disturbed, but evaded attempts to capture it.

The club is seeking the advice of a Sydney scientist before making a second attempt to catch the fish.

It is possible the fish may be new species, although cave-living fish are known to exist in caverns under the Nullabor Plains.

Its capture alive could have scientific value for geneticists.

During the same trip the party, comprising Messrs. J. Webb, T. Lane, H. Black and M. Provis, found a new cavern with outstanding formations. It is about three-quarters of a mile from the Coolaman Caves reserve.

The entrance to the cave would admit only a head, but the next party will widen the entrance so that a detailed examination of the cave system can be made.

The discovery coincided almost to the day with the anniversary of the rescue by the Canberra Speleological Society of Brian O'Brien, university student, who was trapped in Yarrangobilly Caves last December.

Mr. O'Brien has this year sent each of his rescuers, Messrs. J. Webb, V. Pickering, and D. Robinson, a Christmas present.

The Canberra Times 27 December 1954

## CAVE TOURING WITHOUT A GUIDE



TED LANE, secretary of the Canberra Speleological Society, inspecting a forest of young stalactite formations in the Murray Cave, the largest known at Coolaman on the upper Goodradigbee River. During the expedition a cave was discovered and penetrated a considerable distance, partly by swimming. Further work will be done in March to enlarge a "squeeze hole" to permit entry to a large cavern containing spectacular formations coloured a bright orange.

The second article appeared four days later and included a photo of Murray Cave (*above, right*). Both issues mention discovery of a new chamber filled with spectacular decorations that could be viewed through a small hole. This was in what later became known as White Fish Cave.

The party also visited River Cave. This fact became evident in January 2010 when Jenny Street noticed a small lead tablet tucked into a narrow fissure above the stream in River Cave. The tablet was inscribed on one side with the date of the CSS trip and on the other with the participants' names: (Jim) Webb, (Joe) Jennings, (Vic) Pickering, (Harry) Black, (Ted) Lane, (Mike) Provis and Barr (*see photo on the next page*).

*The inscribed tablet, recording CSS's first visit to Coleman was found in River Cave in 2010*



The 23 December report of the blind fish discovery captured the nation's attention – or perhaps it was just a slow news period in the days leading up to Christmas, because news of the discovery was published in many regional newspapers across the eastern states, including in Goulburn, Wagga Wagga, Newcastle, Adelaide, Burnie, Maryborough, Rockhampton and Ipswich.

Two weeks later, the fish story returned, with *The Canberra Times* noting that scientific interest in the discovery was high and suggesting that a trip to attempt capture of a specimen was on the cards:

*The Canberra Times* Thursday 13 January 1955

#### **A.C.T. Party Finds Blind Fish In Coolamon (sic) Caves**

The discovery of blind fish in the Coolamon (sic) caves was of great zoological interest, the Curator of Fish at the Australian Museum, Mr. Gilbert Whitley, informed the Canberra Speleological Society yesterday.

The fish was observed by a party when it discovered a new cave in December. It could not be caught, but its description was forwarded to Mr. Whitley.

Congratulating the group on its enterprise, Mr. Whitley said there had been rumours of blind fish in the Nullarbor Plains caves, but the only blind fish recorded were two-inch long gudgeons he captured in a well in Western Australia in the North-West Cape area where oil exploration is now taking place.

The fact that the Coolamon fish was six-inches long was of great interest and may be a new variety.

Mr. Whitley forwarded the Society advice on how to capture the fish. He said there would probably be only a few of these fish in the cave, and asked that only one or two fish be caught.

Indiscriminate killing would be criminal in view of the value the find might be to science, he said. The society has also been asked to attempt to observe the habits, or secure eggs of the fish.

He plans to revisit the cave as soon as possible, and is now collecting netting equipment. The location of the cave is not being disclosed in case it may be disturbed. There are about 30 species of cave-dwelling or blind fish in Kentucky and other parts of the world.



CSS was soon in the news again, this time after running a combined trip with the Canberra Bushwalking club to Wyanbene, where low water levels enabled the party to progress further into the cave than previously:

*The Canberra Times* 18 January 1955

#### What people are doing - BUSHWALKING NEWS

Canberra bushwalkers have not been idle over the Christmas New Year period. Two parties from the club went on walking tours in New Zealand, and four parties represented the club in Tasmania. As well, a party did an extensive trip at Christmas in the southern A.C.T., climbing Mts. Kelly and Scabby, and returning over Mt. Gudgenby, with a detour to take in the aboriginal rock painting in the valley of Rendezvous Creek. As a result, a number of social evenings are to be arranged in the near future to give walkers an opportunity to exchange stories and show colour slides of the places, they have visited. Two one-day trips have been organised since Christmas. Last Sunday the club combined with the Speleological Society in an interesting trip to Wyanbene. Cave, and since the creek running through the cave was extremely low, members of the party were able to penetrate more deeply than previously. On the previous Sunday, a large party enjoyed a pleasant trip to Pierce's. Creek and Vanity's Crossing on the Upper Cotter. Next week-end ...

A little over a month later, another article noted that a return trip to Coolamon was planned to attempt the capture of a white fish - which was to be netted, killed, preserved and conveyed to the Australian Museum for study. There were also plans for explorers to "cut their way into" a chamber full of beautiful speleothems.

The article also reports on the discovery the previous week of a new deep cave at Wyanbene that was unable to be explored because of a lack of equipment. This minor inconvenience was soon sorted. Just nine months later (well, things did move more slowly in those days), the Society having obviously obtained the required equipment was able to explore and produce a map of the cave which by then had become known as Ridge Mine Pot.

*The Canberra Times*, 25 Feb 1955

## To Explore Cave At Coolamon

Further exploration of a new cave at Coolamon will be made within the next few weeks, the secretary of the Canberra Speleological Society, Mr. J. Webb, said yesterday.

Last December the cave was discovered when four explorers, Messrs. J. Webb, H. Black, T. Lane, and M. Provis, entered a hole in limestone and found a cave with an underground river and pool.

In the pool a white fish was sighted. Scientists are anxious to examine the fish, which is expected to be a new species.

At the next exploration an attempt will be made to net the fish, which will then be killed, preserved and sent to the Australian Museum for study.

Explorers will cut their way into an adjoining cave which contains beautiful stalactites, stalagmites, and limestone formations.

Last week-end Speleological Society members discovered a new cave at Wyanbene, near the Shoalhaven River, but exploration was impossible, due to lack of equipment.

Ladders were needed to reach the bottom of the cave, which was 120 ft. beneath a hole in the limestone roof.

In April 1955, the paper reported that CSS members returned to Coolaman for that fishing expedition and were successful in netting, killing and preserving a fine specimen (*see below*), as had been planned. However, even before the specimen was dispatched to the Australian Museum in Sydney, members appear to have had suspicions that the fish was only a trout that had become trapped in the cave and slowly lost its pigmentation. The suspicions were later confirmed when the museum identified the fish as a Rainbow Trout.

After dealing with the fish, the "men" (and they seem to have been almost exclusively men in those early years) set about enlarging the hole into the decorated chamber found on the trip the previous December. After two hours of work they were able to enter what is now known as the upper level of White Fish Cave.

## CAVE EXPLORERS CAPTURE "UNDERGROUND FISH"

**Exploring a new cave in the Coolaman region on Saturday, five members of the Canberra Speleological Society caught a white fish, believed to be a trout which became trapped underground by floods and had lived in darkness for many months.**

The fish, which is 6ins. long, had the appearance of a trout, with small eyes lacking pigment.

It was preserved in formalin and sent to the Australian Museum for further study. The fish for a few minutes when the initial discovery of the cave was made last December.

A party, comprising Messrs. Jim Webb, Harry Black, Jack Leslie, Mike Provis and Ted Lane, returned to the cave on Saturday to catch the fish with nets.

Entering through a tunnel in the limestone plains, they saw the fish in 5ft. of water in a crystal-clear pool fed by an underground stream.

After an hour of unsuccessful attempts, the fish was caught and examined.

The president of the society, Mr. Jim Webb, said that under the lights held by the men, the fish gradually changed colour from dead-white to a creamish colour, before it died.

Mr. Webb said it would be interesting to learn what food the creature lived on in the pool.

Another member of the party, Mr. H. P. Black, said the fish may have been washed into the pool during a heavy flood and had remained there ever since.

As trout were presumed to live by sight, it was surprising that it had lived by smell in the darkness.

After catching the fish, the men spent two hours cutting through rock to enter an extension of the cave 200ft. long and 30ft. high.

Beautiful 6ft. straw stalactites, pencil-thin, were glistening on the roof in colours of salmon-pink, white and orange.

Mr. Webb said the formations were possibly the best in the area.

The cavern contained many other fine limestone formations, including an 8ft. orange folded "shawl," and crystals sparkled in small pools.

A further 50ft. extension of the cave will be explored on the next expedition.

*The Canberra Times, 5 April 1955*

With the Cooleman white fish proving to be nothing more than an ordinary, if somewhat pallid, Rainbow Trout, media interest waned and it was not for another five months that CSS rated a mention in the local paper. Perhaps, this was because members had been engaged in other activities during the winter months and it was simply not the caving season:

*The Canberra Times* Tuesday 20 September 1955

### What people are doing – CAVE EXPLORING SEASON HERE

The cave exploring season is here. Warmer weather and good conditions mean that the Canberra Speleological Society will start its activities. Last weekend club members went to Michelago, where they examined a series of small limestone caves on a ridge overlooking the Murrumbidgee. An interesting aspect of the trip was the examination of a deposit of the fossilised bones of extinct marsupials. The fossils, discovered several years ago, include those, of giant kangaroos and water rats which once roamed the A.C.T. districts. Future trips are planned to Yarrangobilly and Coolamon (sic) in search of new caves.

With the cave exploring season back in full swing, caving activities were once again back in the news. Notices of forthcoming meetings started to appear regularly in *The Canberra Times*. In those days the monthly meetings rotated around members' houses or hostel rooms, a practice that continued until mid-1964 when the Australian National University granted access to a seminar room in the Coombs Building. This was to become the meeting location for just shy of 50 years. When increased overnight security measures made use of the Coombs building impractical, the ANU took pity on us when informed of this long association with Coombs and promptly found and offered the Society another room in an adjacent building. But I digress.

In the Spring of 1955, the paper reported on CSS's AGM and noted there would be a practice day on local cliffs the following day:

The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), Friday 7 October 1955, page 2

## Cave Explorers To Practise On Cliff Face

Speleological Society members would practice rope work and cave safety measures on a cliff face near Canberra next Saturday, it was revealed at the annual general meeting of the society.

The testing and training would brush-up on safety measures for older members and introduce new members to cave methods.

Members, this year, will continue to map three caves which they did not complete last year.

They will make a trip to the Micalong Creek caves on October 15 and 16.

The following Monday, the paper duly reported on the field day:

The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), Monday 10 October 1955, page 1



Despite the heavy rain and the “precarious ascent” of the rugged cliff face, there are no records of any untoward safety incidents.

Early in 1956, *The Canberra Times* reported extensively on the Society's efforts to explore and map a 'new' Cave at Wee Jasper. This was Dip Cave and it was not until 1957 that the surveying task was completed. The map, which was published in *Helictite* in April 1963, set a new standard in Australia for cave cartography.

Imagine what it would have been like for those early explorers of Dip and imagine also, how horrified they would be if they were able to return to Dip today and slither their way along the passages on a busy Saturday!

The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), Friday 3 February 1956, page 2

# Vast Cave System Near Wee Jasper

A vast new cave system has been discovered by the Canberra Speleological Society near Wee Jasper. It is the biggest known cave system in this area.

It was found last November, when members probed a hole in a hillside of a known cave.

Members of the society ventured into the hole, two feet square, and lowered themselves on ladders 60ft. before reaching the floor of the cave.

They landed at the side of the chamber, which measured 200ft. long, 50ft. across, and 60ft. high.

Society members flew hydrogen-filled balloons to determine the height of the ceiling.

Around the sides of the chamber were numerous passages, most of which have now been explored.

The total length of passages surveyed by compass, clinometer and steel tape now totals more than half a mile.

The society has been preparing a map of the cave for use by the Superintendent of Caves of the N.S.W. Tourist Bureau, Mr. Finley.

## WORK IN DARK

Parties of up to nine speleologists have devoted six week-ends on the task.

It has meant as much as 12 hours underground, working by acetylene lamp, torch, and candles.

Candles have proved great assistance underground by indicating air currents, foul air, and for instrument reading.

The system is dry, although the walls bear evidence of former streams.

Temperature inside the cave is about 55 degrees, enabling the explorers to

work in a certain degree of comfort.

During the heat wave, spelologists searching for sink holes on the surface complained of the heat, while their companions deep below were working in sweaters.

## FORMATION

Every known type of formation was seen in the cave.

Some were unique for Australia, including cave pearls, small limestone marbles formed by constant dripping in small pools, and spongy formation, similar to cream cheese, known overseas as "moon milk."

From the amount of formation, it is believed the cave is considerably older than other caves in the Coolamon Plains areas.

Some of the formations are in very fine condition, glistening and colourful while other sections of the caves are dull, lack sparkle and are chalky.

Some of the larger formations have been damaged by earthquakes.

## CAVE FAUNA

The several scientists interested themselves in cave fauna in the cavern.

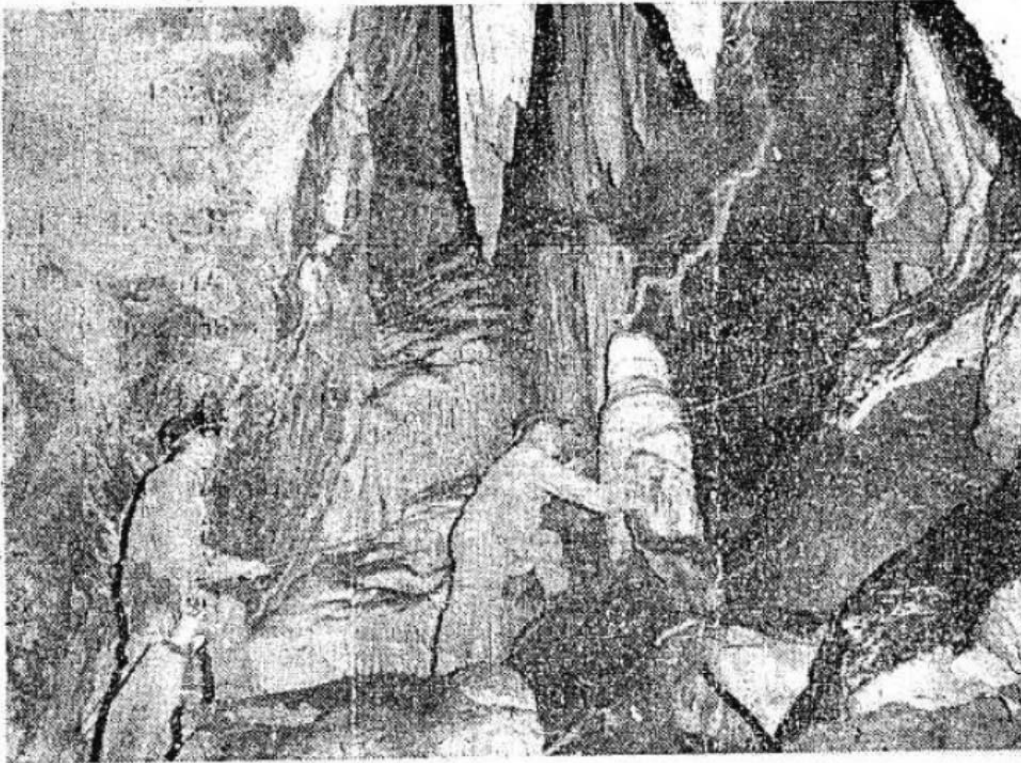
The floors of some parts of the cave were covered deep with bat dung, although few bats were observed at this time of the year.

Many types of insects were collected, several of which were sent to the Australian Museum, Sydney, for identification.

The Australian Museum has requested larger collections to be made to enable positive identification by overseas experts.

One of the groups of spiders has already been despatched overseas.

## EXPLORING VAST NEW CAVERN



THREE MEMBERS of the Canberra Speleological Society (left to right), Messrs. D. Moore, J. Jennings and W. Lucas, meet with all the hazards of mountaineering in almost complete darkness as they make their way up a bridge of rock to an upper corridor in the new cave they discovered in the West Jasper area. This and the photo on page 1 was taken by another society member, Mr. F. Douch.

### Programme For Investigation On Origin Of Caves

A new exploration programme in the Wee Jasper caves system to determine the factors responsible for the formation of the system, was mapped out at a meeting of the Canberra Speleological Society.

Members said the information would be of world-wide interest.

The caves were most unusual and had unique geological features.

They had now been completely mapped by members of the society.

Work on the Cooleman Caves had been deferred by wet weather. Most of the caves had underground streams and these had been swelled by heavy rains.

Underground flooding had also caused cancellation of a joint exploration with the Sydney University Speleological Society at Easter.

The society is seeking medical advice on methods of medical aid to those injured underground in places of difficult access.

It has a stringent code of safety measures and an accident-free record.

On 12 April 1956, *The Canberra Times* reported on a CSS meeting (*see at right*) where a new program to explore and study the caves at Wee Jasper was set out. It seems that Wee Jasper was chosen because wet weather (and 1956 was a record year for flooding in southeastern Australia - *Ed*) had forced the postponement of work at Cooleman. The research component of this work was driven by Dr Joe Jennings and resulted in several papers in *Helicite*.

If the lack of articles in local newspapers articles is any guide, 1957 appears to have been a quiet year for the society. Maybe it was simply a case of the media relations officer being on sabbatical, or perhaps was exploring caves somewhere. It not until mid-1958, that CSS was again mentioned in *The Canberra Times*. And then it was all about the Cotter (Paddy's River) Caves. First, it was announced that the society planned a meeting there and this was to include classes in laddering and belaying, surveying, photography and also bat catching and banding, both now lost arts in CSS. This was an ambitious program for a single meeting and suggests CSS members were very fast learners back in those days.

Several months later, there was controversy within the society over what access control and safety measures should be implemented at the Cotter Cave – this battle was fought, at least in part, through the pages of *The Canberra Times*, as the following clippings show. The arguments raised seem remarkably similar to those advanced in the 1970s, the 1990s, the 2000s and no doubt will be again at some time in the future.

The Canberra Times Tuesday 29 July 1958

**MEETING TO BE HELD IN COTTER CAVE**

The next meeting of the Canberra Spelcological Society will be held in the "Cotter Cave," Paddy's River, at 8 p.m. on Thursday, July 31. In addition to usual business it is proposed to have several classes operating for old and new members. These will include laddering and belaying, bat catching and banding, cave photography and an actual survey of the cave as a mapping lesson. Those intending to take part in the meeting are advised to proceed to the Cotter Kiosk, take the Tid. binbilla Road turning left behind the kiosk. They should then follow the track towards the swimming pool for half-a-mile and a fire will be lit in front of the cave entrance.

The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), Saturday 4 October 1958, page 3

**CONTROVERSY ON COTTER CAVE**

**Members of the Canberra Speleological Society are not agreed on what safety measures should be adopted at the Cotter River cave.**

They say the Department of the Interior has taken some action after receiving complaints that the cave was dangerous and that the only ladder leading into it was rotting and broken away in parts.

In the last few weeks workmen from the department have partially boarded up the cave entrance, making it is less likely that anyone would fall into the cave, but not impossible that even a child could clamber over the makeshift boards.

Some members of the Speleological Society think that the cave should be made inaccessible by covering the entrance with a concrete slab.

These members, most of them parents of small children, feel that the advantages of the cave are small, but that the hazard for young children who wander without supervision near the mouth of the cave is great.

The mouth is a sudden and dangerous drop of about 20ft. Previously there was a ladder to the rocky bottom of the cave, but this has been removed since the waist-high boards were erected.

Other members feel that the cave is a definite tourist attraction and an exciting place for young ex-

plorers. It is unlikely, they claim, that any very young child would be in this remote area without his parents.

People were attracted to the cave because they "liked poking around holes in the ground," although the cave was not, in any sense, a "natural marvel."

The stalagmites and stalactites which lined the cave had mostly been broken off, and the only thing actually to look at in the cave was the limestone crust of which it was formed.

Another cave in the vicinity did not constitute any hazard since it was very small, and the slope leading into it was gradual. It was also lit by natural daylight, and there were no passages leading from it into darker recesses.

The doorway to the cave had also been reinforced with concrete slabs against crumbling and against rock falls.

The majority of members of the society think the big cave should be made as safe as possible with concrete steps and, perhaps, a gateway. The local and natural interest in the cave, they feel, would justify this expense.

The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), Friday 10 October 1958, page 2

# Letters To The Editor Cotter River Caves

Sir,—I was happy to learn that the Department had taken suitable action about the Cotter Cave. However, I am alarmed at the loose thought and the irresponsible talk publicly aired since my original letter.

Mr. Lang feels the ladder should have been renewed, but for whose benefit Mr. Blissett re-lives the past without justifying his opinions about the future, and "Orpheus," who presumably knows all the answers after his experiences below, tells us to do nothing at all. Indeed, extending his logic we should either take to our beds as a precaution against premature excursions to the shades or wherever, or possibly blow the universe up at once and get it all over and done with for everybody. In this matter we should not need to carry logic beyond sensible compromise.

The real experts, the Canberra Speleological Society, have been caught on the hop and are in confusion. They may possibly decide on principle that the cave should be preserved, but in practice I suspect they could hardly justify the expense and effort required, considering the safety margins involved.

To date, all opinions and arguments have been

arguments have been rather trivial. Everyone has avoided the heart of the matter, that prevention is better than cure. To me, this is axiomatic.

I wrote my original letter with memories of the warning notice proposed for Lake George (has this been attended to yet?) after the tragedies, the safety fence at the sawdust pit, after the tragedy, the daily deaths and injuries on the roads, bitter memories to many, and regretted by all. These tragedies were born of human neglect; the neglect to prevent them by physical precaution or mental training.

To my mind, such neglect is inexcusable if potential danger is readily apparent, and precautionary measures can be simply applied. In the case of the Cotter Cave this has been done, thank goodness. I rejoice that those responsible for the cave are more sensible than to be affected by "Blow-you-Jack"-ism, sectional interests, and irresponsible chatter.

Are "Orpheus" and his listeners so wrapped up in the master's music that they have become deaf to the cries of the injured and unaware of the departure of the dead?

Turner. "ALARMED."

Sir,—From the publicity given to the Cotter Cave has emerged the heartening fact that people still exist who are aware of our greatest heritage, the natural scenery and wild life.

Although very little appreciated by the majority, it is our responsibility to future generations to see that at least some features

that at least some features of our unique landscape remain untouched and unspoiled by human hands.

This principle should apply even to the Cotter Cave, although not of great significance as a limestone cavern.

Admittedly, the Department of the Interior has not done irreparable damage. However, the boarding up of the Cotter Cave entrance is ugly in the sensitive eye and mind of the nature lover. Before long the woodwork will rot and as a result create a danger it was designed to prevent. Let us consider the matter unselfishly and restore the cave to its original state. Let us also, before considering such drastic measures as sealing a cave or interfering with any natural feature, take heed of the following words displayed in a very well-known American national park: "Let no one say and say it to your shame, That all was beauty here until you came."

"HOMO SPELAEAE." Turner.

The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), Wednesday 15 October 1958, page 2

# Letters To The Editor The Cotter Cave

Sir, — The recent crop of letters upon the subject of the unpretentious Cotter cave impels the Canberra Speleological Society to make the following brief comment:

1. As an organisation interested in conservation of natural assets, the C.S.S., as a matter of principle, does not favour the sealing of any cave.

2. Concerning the humble Cotter cave itself, the society feels that the interests of public safety would be adequately served by the erection of a fence to prevent people inadvertently wandering into the cave mouth.

3. The society considers that, by reason of eventual decay, the wooden platform and boarding recently erected will in time become more dangerous than the cave in its former unprotected state.

E. M. SMITH,  
President.

After the Cotter controversy died away, all appears to have been quiet on the caving front until late 1960 when the big news was the ASF conference (ASF's Third Biennial Conference), which was held out at Sturt Island on the Murrumbidgee (see following pages).



The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), Saturday 24 December 1960, page 2

## CONFERENCE OF CAVES STUDY GROUP

The Australian Speleological Federation will hold its third biennial conference at Sturt Island, near Canberra, from December 26 to 30.

Speleology is the scientific study of caves.

Members of the Canberra Branch of the Society will be hosts to nearly 40 visitors from all parts of Australia.

A series of field trips to caves in surrounding districts will be made in the New Year.

Canberra members will supervise the excursions with the assistance of the Sydney Speleological Society and the Sydney University Speleological Society.

The speleologists will explore and survey new caves and study the fauna and flora and the water found in them.

Several members who are experienced skin divers intend to explore the depths of many of the caves with underwater equipment.

The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), Friday 30 December 1960,

# Underground Explorers In Conference

**Canberra residents probably would be surprised to learn that a group of genuine cavemen are living less than 10 miles from their front doorsteps.**

These cavemen—and some cavewomen—are at the Y.M.C.A. camp, Sturt Island

Between 20 and 30 of them have travelled from all parts of Australia to attend the third biennial conference of the Australian Speleological Federation.

Speleologists are people who study and explore caves.

One conscientious member rode his motor cycle from Western Australia.

Others travelled over Christmas to be here for the beginning of the conference last Monday.

The majority of the members belonging to the Federation are connected with some scientific organisation, such as the C.S.I.R.O.

On the field trips speleologists study particular aspects of the caves.

For instance, one member of the Canberra Speleological Society, Mr. D. Purchase, studies the types and habits of bats.

Another, Dr. Jennings, also from the C.S.I.R.O., analyses the water found in caves.

Some of the more daring members are skindivers, who explore the depths of the caves with underwater equip-

ment.

Successful speleologists require steel nerves, and no wonder!

Many of the caves they examine have never been entered before, some are several miles long and all are cold and damp.

Maybe the need for protection explains the reason why so many of the "cavemen" wear beards.

In the New Year the speleologists will make a series of field trips to caves in the surrounding district.

Caves visited will include Bungonia, Wee Jasper, Coolamon and Yarrangobilly.

The speleologists are intrepid but not reckless.

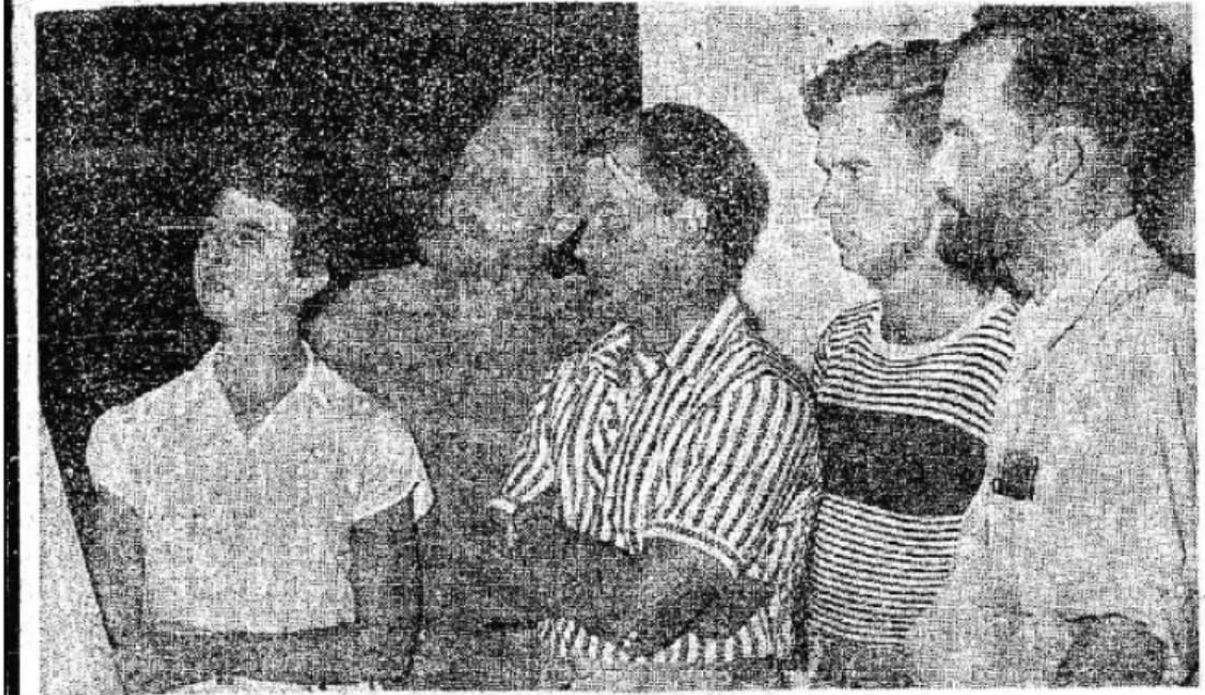
They are proud that in the whole history of the society in Australia not one serious accident has occurred.

The "cavewomen" are equally enthusiastic.

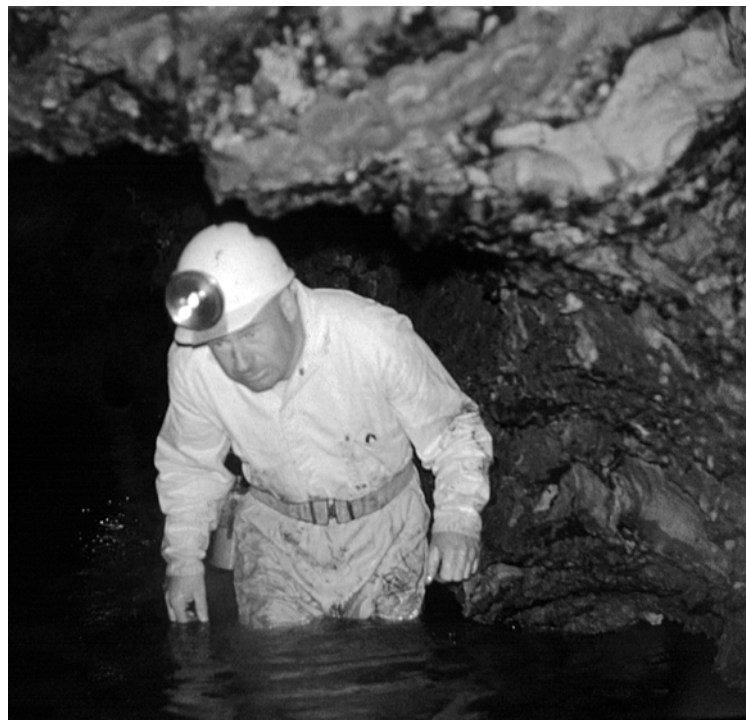
Some are scientists, others are wives of members or university students.

The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), Friday 30 December 1960, page 3

## FRIENDLY GROUP OF CAVEMEN



Cavemen (and women) at the Australian Speleological Conference at Sturt Island this week (left to right): Miss Barbara Kent, Secretary of the Canberra Speleological Society; Mr. D. Jennings, geomorphologist from the A.N.U.; Mr. Ted Lane, Secretary of the Australian Speleological Federation and the Sydney S.S.; Mr. Warren Peck, President of the A.S.F. and the Sydney University S.S. and Mr. Ellery Hamilton-Smith, from Melbourne.



*Ced Pratt at Coleman  
(Dave Purchase pic).*

In mid-1961, there were 'exciting' trips to Dogleg Cave at Wee Jasper and to The Big Hole in what is now the Deua National Park. Dogleg had been a major focus interest since 1958 and continued to be so through to the mid-1960s as efforts were made to pass the three sumps and explore the inner reaches of the system. Of course, the efforts were often thwarted by the notorious sand trap at the first sump and by high water levels at the inner two sumps.

According to the paper, three members made it to the bottom of The Big Hole and their efforts were filmed for Television. The trip is also mentioned in the June 1961 issue of *The Very Latest* and names the three climbers as John Wanless, Bob Galloway and Mike Melbourne, supported by a surface party of 20. There is no mention of the TV crew, but it does note there was a complex telecommunications system with four headsets worn by key personnel, including the telephone technician (Ced Pratt - Ed).

Meanwhile, back in less-exciting Canberra, monthly meetings continued to be held at members' houses, as duly advised in *The Canberra Times* each month.



**CAVE EXPLORERS  
IN T.V. FILM**

Members of Canberra Speleological Society have had two exciting week-ends. Last week-end they continued their search for a lost cave at Wee Jasper.

Three years ago they investigated the cave but were unable to make a complete survey. Then the cave entrance filled with water and sand. Now the water level is falling and members hope to complete their survey.

The previous week-end three members starred in a television film at The Big Hole, near Wyenbean. They descended 300 feet to the bottom of the hole. Others spent most of the day transporting equipment up and down.

The Canberra Times Wednesday 23 August 1961

18 6- p.m.	<p><b>CANBERRA SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY</b></p> <p><b>NEXT MEETING at 13 Ducane Street, Forrest, on August 24, at 8 p.m. Interest- ed persons are invited to attend.</b></p>	T  S M
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The Canberra Times Thursday 28 September 1961

<p><b>John S. EATS &amp; PALMER</b></p> <p>FRIDAY, OCT. 6 FRIDAY NIGHT FRIDAY, OCT. 7 Examinations for Eye Test, call at EYES PHARMACY, Kingston. N1146.</p>	<p><b>MONTHLY MEETINGS</b></p> <p>To-night at North Canberra R.S.L. 8 o'clock.</p> <p>Come along to welcome the National report of branch progress.</p> <p>10 I. CARS</p> <p><b>NOTICES OF MEETINGS</b></p> <p><b>MONTHLY MEETING</b> Canberra Speleological Society, to-morrow night, Thursday, September 28, 20 Piper Street, Ainslie. All Welcome.</p>	<p>PUB CANB Six H</p>
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In 1962, the Coppermine system at Yarrangobilly attracted the interest of members – and the attention of *The Canberra Times*. An attempt was made to push Y10 (Old Inn Cave) towards the stream outflow at Y12 (Coppermine Cave), but to no avail. A rough map, recording their exploration efforts was drawn up and is published for the first time on the next page.

*The Canberra Times* Tuesday 23 January 1962

#### **What people are doing - Cave Study**

Ten members of Canberra Speleological Society recently spent a weekend exploring the Yarrangobilly Caves.

The purpose of the trip was to explore the underground stream which members believe runs into Coppermine Cave.

Mr. Vic Pickering led the expedition.

Members did not complete the trip and hope to return to the caves next month.

*The Canberra Times* Thursday 25 October 1962

#### **What people are doing – Wide travel by Society**

Canberra Speleological Society travelled widely on field and exploration trips in the last year. The annual report presented by the president, Mr. Graham Young, at the annual meeting last night showed the association ran trips to Yarrangobilly, Wee Jasper, Wyanbene and Cliefden. Club members also visited caves at Buchan, Jenolan and the western district of Victoria in private excursions or with other clubs.

One of the club's main efforts was at Yarrangobilly, where it concentrated on one cave in the search for the Coppermine Cave link. The society made a compass and estimate sketch of the cave and plans to continue to explore it and make a more accurate survey.

The society finished a survey of Punchbowl and Signature Caves at Wee Jasper.

Club member, Mr. Dave Purchase, continued his work with bats and with the assistance of several other society members banded about 3,000 bats in the year.

The C.S.I.R.O. has recognised the society's work and is following its work with interest.

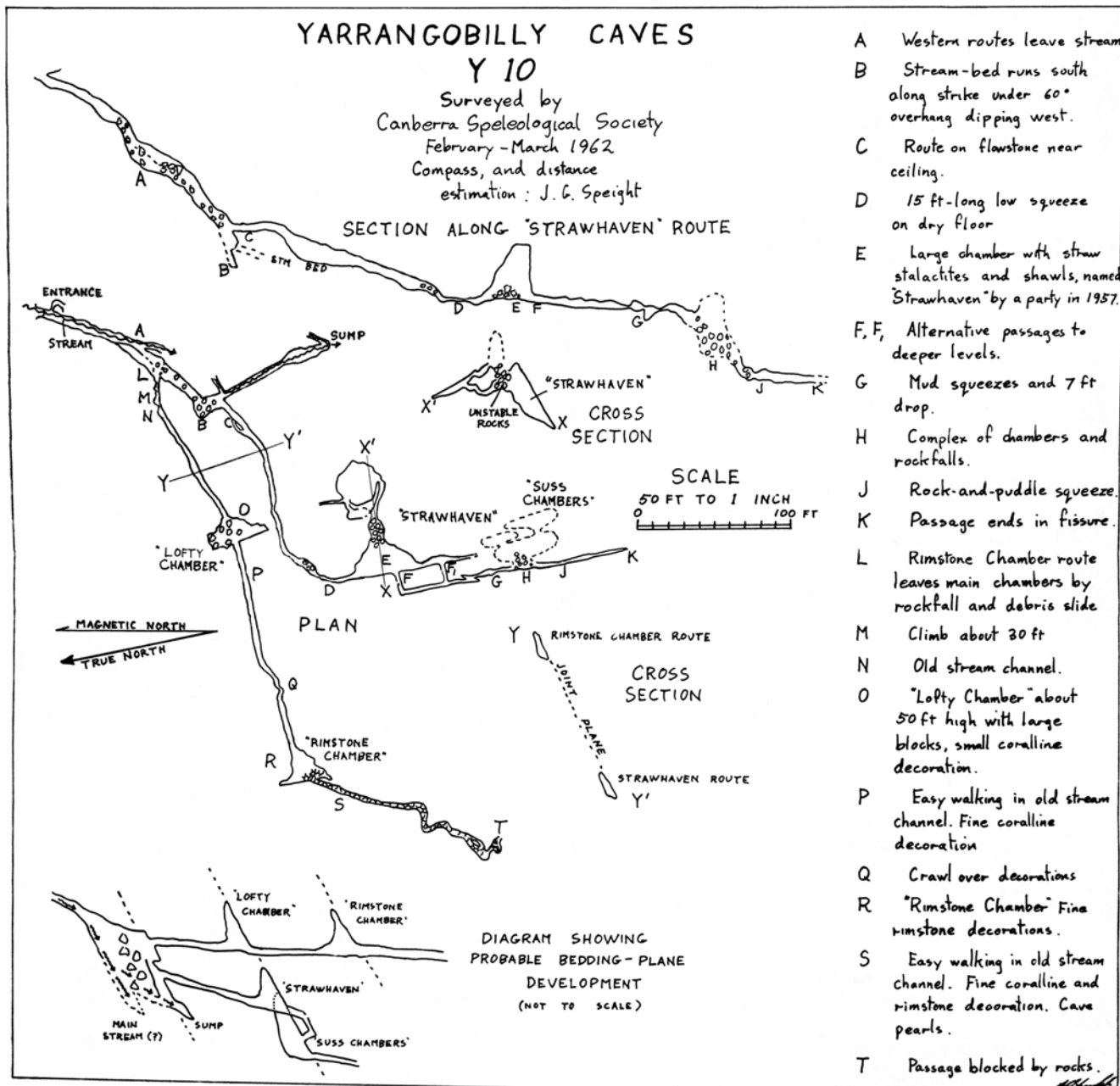
The society met to discuss the formation of an organised search and rescue group in the A.C.T.

Representatives from eight clubs and associations attended the meeting and decided to establish a rescue group with official recognition.

Two members are studying the needs and demands for local rescue work.



*Joe Jennings in Cave Creek, Cooleman  
(Dave Purchase pic).*



A copy of the 1962 map of Y10 that was recently donated to CSS by former member Ced Pratt.



Straws in Strawhaven Chamber, (Y10), Yarrangobilly (J Brush pic).

The 25 October 1962 issue of *The Canberra Times* (see page 68) mentioned the efforts of CSS members and other local outdoor groups to establish a bush rescue group in the ACT. It was to be the first of such articles over the ensuing years and was followed up with a more comprehensive piece just a few weeks later:

Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), Saturday 17 November 1962, page 2

# Does A.C.T. Need A Bush Search Group?

By A Staff Reporter

**If Canberra were a coastal city, a vigorous surf club would have been formed many years ago to protect residents from the common danger—the sea.**

A force of surf "commandos" would be ever-ready to aid swimmers against the menace of shark attack and drowning.

But the mountains which slope down into the Federal Capital melt into sunburnt flats, not salt water; and young men pass the time in the sports of landlubbers.

In spite of apparent security, however, those who dwell in the Southern Tablelands face the possible danger of becoming lost in the bush when they venture too far from settled areas.

## Lagging

Why, in the face of this constant possibility, is there not a corps of dry-land "lifesavers," ready to search for a missing child or adult at short notice?

Why does the A.C.T. lag behind several States in having an experienced band of men accustomed to the bush and readily available to lead a search through the most rugged country?

Those are questions that have been exercising members of Canberra outdoor clubs for some time. Recently several clubs met with the aim of forming such a search group in the A.C.T., thus to bring Canberra into line with other large cities.

other large cities.

Fifteen young men, representing the Canberra Speleological Society, the Skin-diving Club, the Aero Club, the Walking and Touring Club, St. John Ambulance Brigade, Rover scouts, the Y.M.C.A. Ski Club and the Alpine Club attended the meeting.

The organisation, which is still in process of formation, will be called the A.C.T. Search and Rescue Organisation Bush Search Group.

A detailed questionnaire is being sent to all members of outdoor clubs, seeking information on their health and

experience in the bush.

The president of the Speleological Society, Mr. Graham Young, said the scheme for a search group had been evolving for a long time.

The large-scale search for eight-year-old Nicky Summers, of Reid, from September 2-4, had accelerated the need to form such a group, he said.

"Nearly 600 people answered an emergency broadcast to search for the boy," he said.

"Without detracting from their willing response, it was felt by many that this huge

felt by many that this huge number of people, mainly inexperienced, hindered the search."

The clubs which were moving to form the search group believed that 60 men experienced in the bush and its ways would have been more effective than the "keen and green" 600, he said.

## System

A spokesman for the Walking and Touring Club said the danger of such a large number of searchers was that the inexperienced themselves could become lost.

"Members of bushwalking clubs would be accustomed to travelling fair distances in a day," he said.

"They also know how to feed themselves in the bush and are accustomed to staying outdoors for three or four nights."

However, the untrained usually were unable to walk far in one day of searching and were unable to maintain themselves in the bush.

System and efficiency were keywords in any effort to rescue anyone lost in the bush, he said.

Such a group of bushmen would be able to work in smoothly with police and Army and Navy volunteer searchers, Mr. Young said.

searchers, Mr. Young said.

Experienced "footsloggers" had greatly aided official search groups, particularly in rugged areas of Tasmania, Victoria and N.S.W."

Search groups had also been established for many years in New Zealand, and in overseas countries where the unwary wanderer often fell victim to snow and rugged terrain.

Mr. Young said the A.C.T. Commissioner of Police, Mr. Richards, had been told of the projected formation of the group.

Mr. Richards had asked for more detailed information on the methods of the group before giving it his blessing.

"The group would not go into action in a police search without the sanction of the police," Mr. Young said.

"It would be supplementary to police, and go wherever directed."

The main justification for the group's existence would be that it could begin the search within hours after a person was declared missing.

"There has been plenty of thinking and talking about such a group—now is the time to form it," he said.

In 1964, CSS President Graham Young continued his push for a rescue organisation with an impassioned plea in the Letters to the Editor column in August 1964.

The lobbying efforts seem to have paid off, as a bush rescue service was indeed established in the ACT, but it was several years later, in November 1970.

The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), Thursday 27 August 1964, |

### Search and rescue

Sir, — The publicity accorded to the editorial article in the current issue of the Y.M.C.A. Ski Club's journal once again points up the need for a properly organised search and rescue organisation in the A.C.T. No one, and the editorial makes this quite clear, doubts the sincerity of the police, and in the situation where no formally organised search and rescue group exists, perhaps their solution is the only one.

The fact remains, however, that the police do adopt a "go-it-alone" policy in search and rescue operations. Offers of assistance made by outdoor clubs and individuals are only accepted when it becomes obvious that the police lack either the man power or the skills necessary to prosecute the search efficiently. In many cases, early acceptance of an offer to help would save hours or even days in the successful completion of a search operation.

In the case in question, a party of experienced skiers could have ascertained within hours whether the marooned students were in either of the huts at Mt. Franklin or Mt. Ginini and you will recall that it was, in fact, skiers who established contact over the last two or three miles with the students. Had the students been in neither of these huts, the road grader and jeep approach would have been useless; a highly mobile team of searchers on skis would have been the only search technique applicable.

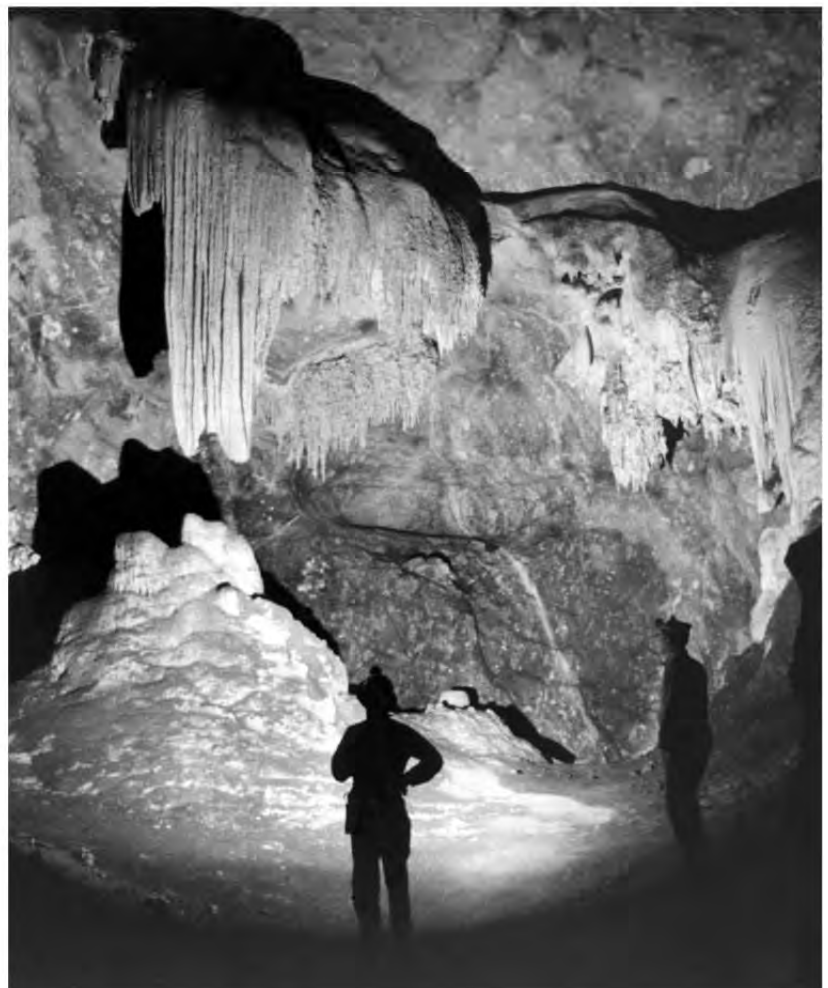
I note with interest Mr. Richards' statement that the

establishment of a search and rescue group has been under consideration for some time. I wonder whether he recalls that about two years ago he was offered a ready made plan for

about two years ago he was offered a ready made plan for a volunteer search and rescue organisation. All the organisers sought from the police was recognition, but Mr. Richards' attitude at that time was that the police organisation was adequate to deal with any search and rescue emergency which might arise, and that the kind of organisation suggested would be of limited value.

Police in other places apparently do not agree with Mr. Richards on this point. New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and notably New Zealand all have volunteer search and rescue organisations which are recognised, and more importantly, used to good effect by the police.

GRAHAM YOUNG  
Canberra Speleological Society.



Loxin Chamber in Punchbowl Cave, Wee Jasper (Bluey Thomson pic).

In the 1950s and early 1960s, CSS had strong scientific underpinnings. Several members worked in institutions such as the ANU and CSIRO and were highly respected in their chosen fields of scientific endeavour. As the 1960s progressed, the Society developed an arguably more sophisticated role and, if *The Canberra Times* is to be believed, came to regard itself as a cultural institution. It even affiliated with the ACT Council of Cultural Societies and maintained that affiliation into the Society's second decade of activities under the stewardship of Mr Neil Anderson.

The Canberra Times 15 October 1964

## Canberra Speleological Society

This is the second of a series of weekly articles dealing with clubs and societies affiliated with the A.C.T. Council of Cultural Societies.

The Society was established in 1956 to provide facilities for cave exploration and research in the southern tablelands.

Most of the society's caving is carried out at Wee Jasper, Yarrungobilly and Coleman Plain, but visits have been made to caves at Wyanbone and Bondethern, at Bungonia, Orange and Wombeyan.

As well as purely exploratory work, members of the society are carrying out a number of serious research projects on the geological and biological aspects of caving, cave photography and cave surveying.

Full membership is open to anyone aged 18 years or more who, after participating in three underground caving trips with the society, is elected to membership at a general meeting.

Junior membership is open to people in the 14-17 group, who must also fulfil the 3-trip qualification, but whose activities are restricted to caves considered to be reasonably safe for inexperienced people. The annual subscriptions are £1/10/- and 10/- respectively.

Meetings, to which visitors are welcome, are held on the fourth Thursday of each month. The Society issues a monthly news sheet to members. Further information may be obtained from the Secretary. The society's mailing address is P.O. Box 530, Canberra City. President: Mr. G. Speight, Lawley House, Barton; 71551. Secretary: Mr. G. M. Young, 7 Boobialla Street, O'Connor; 42029.

The Canberra Times 10 June 1965

## ACT cultural organisations

As a service to readers, especially newcomers to Canberra, here is a list of organisations affiliated with the ACT Council of Cultural Societies.

The secretarial telephone numbers marked (b) are for use during business hours only.

ACT Council of Cultural Societies. President, Mrs O. H. Frankel; secretary, Miss G. M. Spencer, 45761 Alliance Francaise de Canberra: Miss V. Smith, 492735 (b).

Arts Council of Aust. (ACT Div): Mr B. E. Butler, 72282.

Artists Society of Canberra: Mr H. R. Hegarty, 813973.

Australian Gothic Society: Mr C. H. Cull, 491725.

Aust. Nat. Eisteddfod Soc.: Mrs W. H. March 92927 (b).

ACT Bridge Association: Mr I. R. G. Morris, 90608.

Burns Scottish Country Dance Gp.: Mrs S. Barritt-Eyles, 813398.

Canberra Archaeological Society: Mrs D. Gregory, 46461.

Canberra Art Club: Miss B. Alnsworth, 41363.

Canberra Chamber Music Society: Mr M. Sawyer, 493039.

Canberra Chess Club: Mr L. Albrecht, 40455, ext 350 (b).

Canberra Children's Theatre: Mrs M. Styles, 45536.

Canberra Choral Society: Miss M. Newport, 71770 (b).

Canberra Orchestral Society: Mr H. Berry, 92088.

Canberra Philharmonic Society: Mr B. Davis, 45618.

Canberra Photographic Society: Mr I. Steele, 40455 ext 301 (b).

Canberra Radio Society: Mr J. Weatherley, 25 Millen St, Hughes.

Canberra Recorded Music Society: Dr P. B. Carne, 42894.

Canberra Society of Singers: Mrs J. White, 45987.

**Canberra Speleological Society: Mr N. Anderson, 49062.**

Civie Chess Club: Mr H. Groeneveld, 811296.

Dante Alighieri Society: Senor G. Veriato, 91090.

Humanist Society of Canberra: Mr R. R. Harding, C/- Bureau of Mineral Resources.

Military History Society of Aust: Mr K. White, Queanbeyan 125.

National Parks Assn of ACT: Miss M. Hamilton, 492898 (b).

Philatelic Society of Canberra: Mr J. Hay, PO Box 294, Manuka.

Phoenix Club, Group 4: Mrs N. Clingan, 48876.

Society for Growing Australian Plants: Mrs N. Brown, 46572.

Spanish Latin-American Society: Mrs E. Ras, 40005.



How to end an account of the first decade? Unfortunately, the CSS media machine must have run out of steam as there was no appropriate article – in fact no caving article at all - in *The Canberra Times* during the closing months of 1964. Possibly, cultural activities were not as newsworthy as underground exploits. Maybe a new angle was needed and perhaps CSS should have adopted the approach of its caving neighbours over at the National University Caving Club, who in 1965 made it into the social pages of *The Canberra Times*. How tragic it must have been for a disappointed Ms Joanne Fisher to discover that a planned trip to Wyanbene had been cancelled because the trip leader, who was also President, had been hospitalised following a laboratory explosion.

*The Canberra Times* Monday 5 July 1965

**Weddings, people and parties**

**JOANNE FISHER** was only one of 40 members of the ANU Caving Club who were disappointed when a trip to the Wyanbene Caves near Captains Flat was cancelled yesterday.

The trip was abandoned as president and organiser Michael Henry was hospitalised following an acid explosion in the university laboratory where he was working.

The club arranges two caving trips every month, many of which are in conjunction with the Canberra Speleological Society.

"Members have just finished making a 70 foot wire caving ladder," Joanne said.

"We plan to christen the ladder by using it in a 70 foot hole in the caves at Wee Jasper, which we will explore at the end of this month.



**Is this the last printed issue of *The Very Latest*?**

It is becoming increasingly costly to print and distribute TVL to members and other clubs. As a consequence, CSS is looking at options for distributing TVL in 2015 and beyond.

How would you prefer to receive your TVLs in the future?

Options under consideration are:

A printed copy, distributed at meetings or by the postal service,

(ie as before, but this option has cost implications);

A PDF version that is emailed to your preferred address;

or

A PDF version that is posted on the CSS website (for a limited period) for you to download.

These options will be canvassed at meetings in coming months, but please feel free to contact the Editor or a member of the committee with your views



The Very Latest