

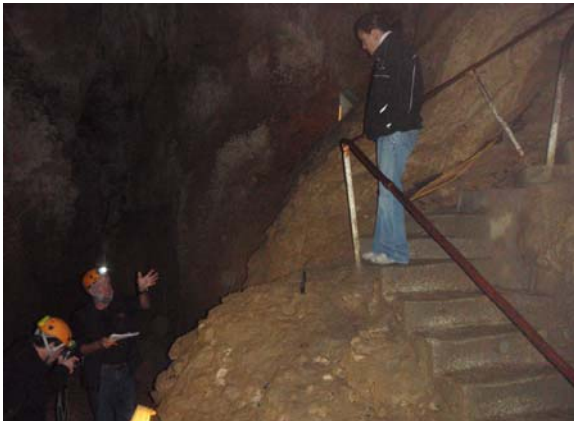
The new Aranui Cave stairway – the final result.



ARANUI CAVE – WAITOMO Upgrade of Structures and Lighting

– Van Watson

The Aranui stairway before upgrading.



At THL Waitomo we are into the first year of a five year upgrade plan for Aranui Cave. For those unfamiliar with Waitomo, we have three show caves – the Glowworm Cave, Ruakuri Cave, and Aranui Cave. Aranui the only none left to upgrade.

There are five sets of steps in the Aranui Cave with varying height differences. The risings and goings were not uniform at all and as they were all constructed sometime between 1910 and 1970 they are now all worn, uneven and slippery. Yuk! The handrails are of the rusty, wobbly pipe variety. Double Yuk!

The main set of stairs have been replaced by meshing and plastering an unstable pile of rocks into an unstable rock-pile that now has a stepped concrete slab with a galvanised steel platform/landing mid way, to catch a five metre

and six metre run of stairs. These came in a welded run of Aluminium treads and stringers that we have beefed up with fibregate treads – for grip and to take the ‘boom’ out of them. They are bolted down on 5mm plastic spacers for washing down.

Elsewhere we have some rising walkways and platforms similar to the Ruakuri construction. The cave roof is faulted, the walls are encrusted and loose and there is four metres of silt depth on the floor. We are attaching our structures to the other part of the cave so the anchors/piles/brackets are all different and very creative.

It is a veritable symphony of concrete, galvanised steel, fibregate, plastic and aluminium giving an overall finish of something resembling a Space Shuttle, Planet of the Apes and Nature in the Raw. You know – typical cave business! Come and see it sometime!



The Aranui stairway – work in progress.