

# BUNGONIA NATIONAL PARK: CAVE INSTALLATION

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## THE FOSSIL-HOGANS BRIDGE SAGA

Foreword by Andy Spate

I think it was Armstrong Osborne who suggested to me at least two or more decades ago that potentially important sediments in Fossil-Hogans Cave at Bungonia were being damaged by cave users. Gravel deposits such as the ones in this cave clearly have a story to tell – but we don't necessarily have the keys to understanding such deposits. So we need to keep them intact so that future workers can possibly find ways to unravel this aspect of cave history.

The Fossil-Hogans Cave sediments in question are an approximately 2-3 m deep sequence of well-rounded stream gravels in a fine silt/sand matrix – suggesting both a flood deposit and a long transport period for the rounded gravels. Strange ...

To the saga – there were many discussions and inspections over many years – many ideas were tossed about. But eventually Dirk Stoffels from the Canberra Speleological Society took charge of the project – and assisted by others – took it to fruition.

My thanks to them all – but especially to Dirk! And hopefully his efforts with his colleagues will mean that this sedimentary sequence will be preserved – and maybe ultimately add to our understanding of the Bungonia karst system.

## BUNGONIA NATIONAL PARK: THE INSTALLATION

A team of 26 experienced cavers spent a weekend installing a bridge and ladder system to prevent visitors

from inadvertently damaging a cave in Bungonia National Park in New South Wales, Australia. The cavers worked with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to carry out the delicate task of installing the bridge and ladder structure to protect the fragile ecosystem.

NPWS Area Manager, Graham Bush, said today that the job of designing and installing a bridge and ladder in a cave was a difficult operation.

“The B4-5 cave system, also known as Fossil Cave and Hogans Hole is popular amongst recreational cavers, taking two to three hours for a group to navigate. Unfortunately, constant usage was taking its toll on some of the more important values of these caves resulting in degradation.

However a team of experienced cavers came up with the solution, which was to install a specially designed bridge and ladder to reduce the erosion caused by people. Members of the Highlands Caving Group, Canberra Speleological Society and the NPWS collaborated on the design and fabrication of a final bridge structure.

A mock PVC pipe side section of the structure was made within the cave system to see how it would work and fit. It was then removed in sections and later helped with the fabrication of the final bridge sections.

Once the bridge and ladder were constructed, a team of twenty six experienced cavers installed the bridge over a weekend. The cavers were from six different Australian Speleological Federation caving clubs. It was a difficult job in really cramped conditions.”



*Cavers working to instal the bridge and ladder (left) and the completed installation (right).*