

Canterbury Hill Cave, Collingwood

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This is but a brief description of a cave which, although well known to local inhabitants, appears to be unknown to the N.Z.S.S. It is reputed to be one of several caves in this region, but we have so far been unable to continue our prospecting here as fully as is needed.

The cave is in no way unique nor of an outstanding nature ; being within an isolated remnant of a much younger limestone which appears to have once extensively overlain the old Paleozoic basement rocks of the Aorere valley region. It seems probable that it is in the same limestone as the well-known Te Anaroa tourist cave, at Rockville near Collingwood, and that of the Brown River caves south of Bainham.

Canterbury Hill cave is approximately 5-7km S.E. of Te Anaroa Cave, and is quite prominent in so far as the limestone remnant is a distinct hill with a more lush vegetation cover than the surrounding pakihi plateau.

On 7.5.72 Roger Newman and I visited this cave, after having been directed to it by an old gold prospector we chanced to meet. The nearest point by road is about 1.5km south of Te Anaroa Cave and The Devil Boots. We then walked for about one hour in a S.E. direction, climbing gently all the while across the marshy pakihi land. Finally we came upon the stream shown in the locality sketch. By following up this stream yet always remaining on its north bank, we followed around a small hill to a small depression filled with bush. This is the most accessible

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entrance. After a climb down about 5m we were in a stream passage cave, that seemed to finish in a rockfall after about 70m. However a tight squeeze through a pool of water let us go into a continuation of the same big stream passage. Presently the main passage forked, and we followed on down the stream. This involved climbing around several deep pools. Later daylight could be seen; we came out into the bottom of a deep bush-filled gully. This lower entrance is about 20m high, with large strands of moss hanging in it; very reminiscent of the large entrance of the Metro system, Charleston.

As we had not looked at side-passages we returned back through the cave. Going up the western fork we came upon areas of live formation and low roof. Up here we were surprised to find a large panel of slate forming one wall section, and upon it a multitude of carved signatures. Some of these names dated back to the 1870's; many gave dates prior to 1900; and many were done in very beautiful Gothic script and decorative italics. Contrary to the usual vandalistic effect produced by most graffiti, this panel of carefully carved names and dates is actually very interesting and aesthetic.

A notable feature of this cave is that the floor has been cut down to the base of the limestone. In several places the black slates (typical of the Ordovician basement rocks in this region) are well exposed and steeply-dipping. This cave has yet to be surveyed. N.S.G. has since visited it and done prospecting in this area.