



ASF Guidelines for Cave Names and Naming Features

by Albert Goede
Department of Geography, University of Tasmania

Adopted in January 1979 Replaces ASF Nomenclature Code of 1968

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1. **Identification.** A name provides a means of identification which serves to distinguish a feature from all other features. The more widely known the name, the better the purpose is served but also the more difficult it becomes to substitute another name. Identification does not require a name. The purpose is also served by an identification system of codes usually consisting of combinations of numbers and letters. Such a system has grown up piecemeal in Australia and was formalized by Matthews (1974) as a requirement for cave documentation. An important and well-known cave system is much more readily identified by a name than by a number (e.g. JF-4 - Khazad dum, etc.). On the other hand small caves of little or no significance are much better left un-named to prevent undue proliferation of names.
2. **Description.** A good name often embodies an element of description. Triviality in naming should be avoided. Names suggested by some peculiarity or outstanding attribute of the feature to be named are generally acceptable. Even names such as Croesus Cave and Kubla Khan are in a sense descriptive as they hint at the richness of formations found in these caves.
3. **Commemoration.** Names may commemorate historical events or a prominent person. In caving, historical events are not necessarily remote in time as most of the country's caves have been explored in the last thirty years, e.g. Rescue Pot in the Junee Florentine area commemorates the rescue of two novice cavers who came to grief here in 1968. Names such as Good Friday Cave (S.A.) and Easter Cave (W.A.) are other examples of commemoration.

Names of prominent persons still living are generally acceptable to official nomenclature boards only if the features are names after royalty or representatives of royalty (e.g. in Australia a State governor or governor-general). Politicians most definitely do not come into this category.

Recommendations

We must consider two sets of guidelines. The first set is concerned with the procedures which ASF should consider adopting in order to formalize naming of caves and related features and to provide formal communication channels with the appropriate State and federal statutory authorities for geographical nomenclature. These will be referred to as procedural guidelines.

The second set of guidelines is concerned with the actual naming process and is designed to ensure that new names will be generally acceptable if the need should arise to submit them for formal approval. They will be referred to as naming guidelines.

Procedural Guidelines

1. Speleological societies in each State and territory should establish formal procedural bodies for the naming of caves and karst features and the recording of existing names together with adequate descriptive and locational details. Such bodies should also have the task of maintaining liaison with the ASF Documentation Convenor and with the relevant State and federal nomenclature boards.

Comment: Where State co-ordination councils exist as in N.S.W. they could take on this responsibility. In States where more than one society exists but where there is no co-ordinating council, a representative inter-society organisation should be established. In States with a single caving society, that society should take the responsibility.

2. The ASF Karst Index should be regarded as the standard reference on the nomenclature of caves and karst features unless the entry indicates that a particular name has not been accepted or is not generally acceptable.
3. Individuals, societies and nomenclature bodies associated with the ASF should do all within their power to limit the submission of names to official naming bodies to the minimum necessary for the sake of cave conservation.

Comment: Official acceptance of a name will inevitably result in its publication in Government Gazettes with grid references indicating its location. Once approved, names may be indicated on official maps.

Naming Guidelines

The following set of naming guidelines were developed from the following sources: Anon (1968), Wilcock (1968), Hamilton-Smith (1967) and Middleton (1978), together with comments from a number of individuals.

1. Persons assigning names to caves, cave features or cave related features should try to be descriptive, constructive and original in their choice of names.
2. New names should be used or published only where the location and nature of the feature have been accurately recorded in society records.

Comment: All too often in the past, names have been approved without adequate descriptive and location data. This causes lasting problems if a cave is subsequently 'lost' - a not uncommon happening in the dense Tasmanian bush or the wide expanse of the Nullarbor. When rediscovered years later, the identity of such a cave may be almost impossible to establish with certainty.

3. The same name should not be assigned to more than one feature, particularly in the same region. Where duplication is discovered it may constitute adequate grounds for changing one of the names.

Comment: See Comment after Rule 18.

4. It is preferable to create a new name for an un-named feature rather than to adapt an existing name of a nearby feature by addition of 'north', 'south', 'central', 'no. 2', etc.

Comment: A particularly bad example of this practice is found in the Mole Creek area of Tasmania where we have Honeycomb 1, Honeycomb 1 1/2, Honeycomb 2 and Honeycomb 3. Less extreme examples can be found in most States.

5. A name should be concise, euphonious and not such as might give offence.

Comment: This may rule out some apt and witty names. Names such as Lillians Rift and Devils Earhole (Mole Creek) sail close to the wind and a name such as Sharlands Organ (a formation in Kubla Khan, Mole Creek) is definitely not acceptable to any nomenclature body - even allowing for a sense of humour.

6. Names should not be applied to trivial or insignificant features.

Comment: If in doubt err on the safe side. It is easier to apply a name at a later stage than have to withdraw a name applied in haste.

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8. Caves should not be named after living persons unless in very exceptional circumstances. On no account should a cave be named after a caver or speleologist during his or her lifetime.

Comment: In recent years a number of caves at Colong in N.S.W. and along the Gordon and Franklin Rivers in Western Tasmania have been named after contemporary State and federal politicians. I am personally strongly opposed to this practice which I believe to be a means of attracting cheap publicity for the cause of conservation which might be better served by a proper evaluation of the scenic, sporting and scientific values of the caves and limestone areas concerned. However, the viewpoint has been put to me by one well known caver that the phrase 'exceptional circumstances' in the above guideline should include the possibility of "the naming of a cave which is in imminent danger of destruction after a politician who could act to save it, so as to draw public attention to the cave's existence".

If the above guideline is accepted, ASF will have to interpret the term 'exceptional circumstances' in relation to this practice.

9. Caves should be named after deceased persons only when they have made some major contribution to the community **or** have some link with the cave or area **or** have played a significant part in exploring, conserving or researching a particular cave or area.

Comment: In Australia, features with personal names are often given the name of the person to whom the original grant of the land on which the feature occurs was made.

10. Where features are named after persons, it is customary not to involve the use of both Christian and surname or a combination of the two.
11. Where personal names are used, the possessive 's' is omitted unless this destroys the euphony or descriptive application of the name. If the possessive 's' is used, the

apostrophe should be omitted, e.g. Scotts Cave **not** Scott's Cave.

12. Use of hyphens should be avoided in new names.
13. Names composed of a large number of words should be avoided.

Comment: An official nomenclature body might take a dim view of a name such as 'Tower of London Cave' at Chillagoe, Queensland, although they would probably approve it if it were well established. 'The Cave with the Thing that went Thump' at Mt. Etna would definitely **not** be approved.

14. Combinations of unrelated words, anagrams or words which are too close in spelling or phonetics, should not be used.

Comment: At Mole Creek, Tasmania, three originally separate caves were subsequently linked by further exploration. The combined system has been referred to as the Spider-Pyramid-Cow System by combining the three names. In this particular case such a combination groups unrelated names and seems undesirable.

15. Long and difficult aboriginal, botanic or scientific names are best avoided. If an aboriginal name is used, it should be in the language or dialect appropriate to the region and should follow the standard spellings now in use by aboriginal linguists.
16. Corrupted or modified names should not be used unless such forms are well established by local usage.
17. Names that can be construed as advertising a particular commercial or industrial enterprise are not acceptable.
18. If more than one name is available for a cave or feature, the historically earliest name should be accepted unless either (a) another name is well established in local usage or (b) a change has to be made to eliminate confusion.

Comment: An example of (b) is Federal Cave at Murrindal, the name of which was changed to Anticline Cave to eliminate confusion with Federal Cave at Buchan, only a short distance away.

19. Changing an already accepted name should be avoided unless there are very compelling reasons for doing so. Where an existing name has been used in a scientific description, e.g. to name a geological formation or as the type locality of a new species of cave fauna, the name should **never** be assigned to any other feature.
20. Where two or more caves, originally thought to be physically separate, are subsequently connected the use of different names for parts of the linked system should preferably be discontinued.

Comment: In the naming of caves a problem often arises in that two or more caves, regarded as distinct and named as such, may subsequently be linked to one another by further exploration. One possible solution would be to assign the name of the longest component cave to the whole of the system unless there are compelling reasons for not doing so, e.g. if one of the smaller components is a type site for geological or biological description.

References

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