

# Hastings Cave and Thermal Springs



## Focus Topic - The Forester's Way Grades: 5-8

### The Forester's Way

The rain forests around the Newdegate Cave area have been harvested for over a hundred years, even before the cave entrance was uncovered in 1917. In those early days, before the development of chain saws and tractors, the timber workers pushed further and further into the southern forests searching for stands of sassafras, huon pine and stringy bark. The axemen took only out selected trees, leaving the rest behind.

We can still see evidence of their activities as we walk through the forest to the Newdegate Cave entrance, evidence of the way they cut and felled the trees and of how they got them out to be transported by horse and cart. At its peak the little town of Hastings had a port, a sawmill and there were considerable numbers of timber workers living in the area.

### The Road

The road was only started in 1932 and access previously was by rough, muddy, forest tracks. The old she here used to house a generator that provided power for the lights in the cave.

### The Stumps

Can you see the massive stumps with series of holes cut up the side? To cut down the tree above the very wide base, the axemen had to get higher, where the trunk was narrower. To do this the axe man cut a small pocket in the side of the tree and jammed a wooden jigger board with a metal shoe on the end of it into the hole. The shoe is designed to grip into the wood when pressure is put on it from the top. After the axe man climbed on to his first board he then cuts another pocket and so on, sometimes 3 boards high



Tree felling, Geeveston Forest 1911-1915  
Photo: National Library of Australia

### Recolonisation

Look at the rotting fallen logs on the forest floor. Is plant life on the fallen trunk the same as the forest floor? Why? See if you can think of a couple of ways that young seedlings benefit from living where they do.

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Can you name some of those earlier colonisers?

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### The Bridge

A bit of detective work! If you look at the stream from the bridge, you can see there actually two streams but they are different colour. Can you think why?

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### Getting the logs out

The only cheap material around for the loggers to use was, of course, wood! No iron or steel or concrete and of course there were no bulldozers around to cut good roads to the logging areas. The ingenious way the loggers developed to get their logs out was to build wooden tramways. There is an old logging platform where logs were hauled from the surrounding forest and loaded onto trolleys which ran along tram tracks to the sawmill in Hastings where it was cut and prepared for export. Further along the walk are stumps of trees which were cut down and, by some accident or oversight, there is a huge stringy bark which is 68.7 m high and estimated to be 450 years old.

The brochure also offers a guide to the flora of the area and the visitor can easily identify the tree ferns, kangaroo ferns, musk, silky fan ferns and myrtle which grow in abundance on either side of the track