

SCOUTING AND CAVING

Dean Da Costa *

The object of the Boy Scouts Association presenting a paper at this conference is to make clear our reasons for promoting caving as an activity and also indicate where we hope various speleological societies can assist us.

It may be of interest to those present to learn a little of the history of the Cave Exploration Group in South Australia and its association with scouting.

In 1954, Elery Hamilton-Smith, a Scout Commissioner, and Captain J. M. Thomson prepared for a caving trip to the Nullabor with a party of Rover Scouts. As a preliminary "breaking in" exercise, the group arranged a trip to Curramulka Caves with another identity Dave Taylor. Further trips to Curramulka were subsequently arranged by the Rovers together with some Bushwalker Club members. As a result of this, it was decided to hold a meeting at Boy Scout Headquarters attended by those interested parties such as Dr. Hossfeld, Elery Hamilton-Smith, the Rover Crew, Bushwalkers and university students. The Cave Exploration Group (S.A.) was formed at this meeting. Scouting people have maintained an interest in this Group and I am sure a similar interest is maintained by scouting with societies interstate.

The section of the Scout Movement which can benefit most from caving activities is the Senior Scout Section which caters for boys aged between 15 years and 18 years. This is the age where a boy is adventurous and is looking for challenging activities. The scope for these today in the framework of scouting is tremendous. Rock climbing, scuba diving, caving and gliding are but a few. Throughout all adventurous activities we are very mindful of our Association's aim which is "to develop good citizenship among boys by forming their character - training them in habits of observation, obedience and self-reliance - promoting their physical, mental and spiritual development". We try to achieve this aim by the use of the Scout Method which, guided by adult leadership, presents activities largely in an outdoor setting which gives the boy an opportunity to accept responsibility and acquire competence, self-reliance, character and qualities of leadership.

* Assistant District Commissioner, Senior Scout Section, Boy Scouts Association (South Australian Branch).

Associate Member Cave Exploration Group (S.A.)

Caving is an ideal "tool" for us to use in the Scout Method since it presents situations which can develop most of the characteristics the Movement fosters. Competence and self reliance certainly figure prominently in caving activities and given the right guidance, character development comes from an appreciation of natural beauty and a desire to conserve this beauty.

Basically, the caving which Senior Scouts will be involved in will be "sporting" caving as distinct from the more serious "scientific" caving. There is however, a place for more serious caving in Scouting particularly in the field of mapping. An example of this was demonstrated recently when a Rover Scout conducted a comprehensive and accurate survey of Sand Cave (S29) at Naracoorte for his Rover Project Badge and the resultant map has received high praise from experienced Cave Group men. With the general increase in the education standard of young people, the geological aspects of cave exploration also holds appeal for many boys.

However, it would still appear that the main motivation for caving as an activity is the spirit of adventure and this has unfortunately led some inexperienced young men into trouble.

Ill trained and sometimes unsupervised groups have attempted caving with unfortunate results. In an effort to combat this in the field we are talking about, and also in a number of other fields, it is the current policy of the Senior Scout Section to approach outside experts for assistance.

With the wide range of activities available and the specialised skills involved, the Senior Scout leader cannot hope to be expert enough to competently lead his troop in every activity. The answer as we see it is to approach groups and societies who are well trained and experienced and either associate ourselves with them on particular activities or else seek their help in training our leaders. Taking caving as an example, it is realised that the training could not hope to make a speleologist of either the leader or the boy but it would make him aware of the factors involved, both in regard to safety and conservation.

The speleological societies can assist us in a number of ways with mutual benefits. Perhaps training could be given by the societies to our leaders up to the "sporting" caver level and certain caves set aside for this type of activity. Providing these caves were non tourist but still challenging, the adventurous spirit could be satisfied and caves which are of scientific value could then be avoided and thus preserved for further study by the "scientific" caver.

At the present time, a large number of Senior Scouts are involved in caving activities and most are being guided in their caving by speleological society members. For example, in New South Wales an estimated 250 Seniors and Rovers went on caving trips in 1968 and the speleo society ran six speleologist courses during the year. It is quite possible many more boys than this were engaged in caving but due to the area organisation, it is not possible to accurately assess the total number. In South Australia, the interest is perhaps even greater. We have been informed of at least 18 troops who have been caving this year and the total number of boys represents 10% of our Senior membership.

This large number of people heading for traditional speleologist territory must naturally concern all societies and I can assure you it also concerns us. We realise that excellent relationships have been established with landowners and responsible Government departments by societies and abuse of privileges by uninformed groups could easily jeopardise these relationships. Consequently, we feel it is in the societies' interest to not only know who contemplates visiting caves they have an interest in, but also have some control over who goes where.

Our movement is quite prepared to co-operate with all speleological societies in this regard and consequently would like consideration to be given to these suggestions.

If courses in cave safety, leadership and conservation could be arranged by our Association for Scout Leaders and run by speleo society members, the speleo society point of view in regard to conservation etc. could be accurately presented. Along with this, the societies could suggest suitable caves for the type of activity which suits us thus avoiding to a great degree the likelihood of jeopardising landowner relationships. With well informed leaders and, if the occasion demands it, speleo society volunteer guides, worthwhile caving can be undertaken. This could easily result in a lasting interest in speleology in some lads. Although we don't anticipate our caving activities would make speleologists of anyone, we certainly encourage any lad who shows interest in it to join a society or group when he leaves Senior Scouting at 18 or even while he is still a Scout. Over the last two years in South Australia five new CEGSA members have joined as a result of scouting caving - not a great influx but sufficient to indicate caving had enough appeal for some to want to pursue it beyond the scouting level.

In an effort to co-operate further with speleo societies, the movement is prepared to have a permanent liaison with them and attempt to channel all proposed scout caving trips through

it. This would mean we would advise the societies of dates and locations etc. and be guided by your opinions as to the desirability or otherwise of the trip. In this way, you can exercise indirect control by either advising us of your wishes or advising landowners or government departments of your wishes.

A combination of these things should produce an arrangement which would be to our mutual advantage - a challenging and useful training medium for the scouts and an assurance of cave conservation for speleo societies.

The Scout Proficiency badge system caters for a Speleologist Badge, the requirements being:

- (1) Have taken part in at least five caving explorations under the guidance of an experienced leader, comprising a minimum of 20 caving hours. Produce log books of exploration.
- (2) Discuss kit, including ropes and rope and metal ladders, belays and belaying and personal kit including clothes, boots, lights, food and best method of carrying food.
- (3) Show a knowledge of normal safety precautions and of rescue organisations in own area. Demonstrate method of removal of injured person.
- (4) Know the main principles of cave formation and describe two of the better known systems.
- (5) Discuss geological and mineralogical aspects of fossilisation and formation of stalactites and stalagmites.
- (6) During a caving exploration demonstrate:-
 - (a) Making the head of a rope ladder fast.
 - (b) How to climb up and down a rope ladder not less than 25 feet long.
 - (c) How to join two lengths of rope ladder.
 - (d) How to belay himself and work a lifeline.

From this, it can be seen that although a high standard is not required, the lad who does qualify for this is a fairly useful caver. It is also realised that some of the requirements may not be very realistic and there are probably some obvious omissions. Perhaps the updating of this award could be another helpful contribution by societies.

It is probably worthwhile considering using Senior Scouts who have qualified for this badge as major expedition helpers. There is certain to be some support role these boys can perform and will add some meaning to their caving. I am certain there is a role for these boys in activities such as digging and mapping. A major expedition such as Mulla-mulla needs a reliable support crew and capable sherpas. Boys trained along the lines as suggested and given encouragement from qualified speleologists could fill the bill.

I would like to leave you with these thoughts.

Is there a place in caving activities for groups such as ours on a sporting level initially?

Is there a place for selected Senior Scouts who show a greater interest in caving than the average and express a desire to do more serious work?

Finally, what is our potential if we encourage Scouts to go caving?

DISCUSSION

Ian Wood, U.N.S.W.S.S.: I'd like to ask you where you got your information regarding the New South Wales section. For example you state that in N.S.W. an estimated 250 Seniors and Rovers went on caving trips in 1968 and the speleo societies ran six speleologist courses. Which speleo society in N.S.W.?

Alan Hill, C.E.G.S.A.: I must warn you Dean, Ian is on a N.S.W. Co-ordination Committee for N.S.W.

Dean Da Costa: What I was going to do before I presented my paper was mention that I contacted my counterpart in each of the States and they sent me information. The information from N.S.W. was sent by a little better than my counterpart, he was the Headquarters Commissioner for Senior Scouts, Graeme Mitcham.

Ian Wood: I'd like to point out that the scouts now seem to think that they have now got enough information out of the N.S.W. societies and they're now running their own

training trips and taking off into the wild blue yonder, and not worrying about speleos any longer. We are getting the reverse action to you people in South Australia where they're moving towards a society. Here the Scouts want to get as far away as possible from the societies.

Dean Da Costa: If this is an official comment from N.S.W.

I'd certainly present this back to Graeme Mitcham. This is one of the purposes for which I was told to come along here anyway; to find out whether there were any complaints and where the troubles were originating. If this is general in N.S.W., that Scouts having got what they want are then drifting away and going out on their own, then this is contrary to what we intended the whole thing to be. If it will do any good I will certainly relay this information back.

Elery Hamilton-Smith: I have a number of separate points again. Firstly, I can remember

talking only a few years ago to Laurie Grenham of the New Zealand Boy Scouts Association. He has been both a speleo and a Scouter in, I think, every continent in the world now. I can remember him making the comment that in every continent no group is in such disrepute or does so much harm to caves as Scouts do. It strikes me that we're very lucky that so many positive moves are being made here by some of our own societies and by the Boy Scouts Association. Although N.S.W. has had its problems, like Victoria has had its problems, perhaps some other States too, very good progress has been made towards overcoming this. There has been some very close co-operation between the two parties concerned. So I'm particularly pleased with Dean's paper today as a pretty formal expression of the view-point of the Boy Scouts Association and like Roly's. I feel it's a particularly positive and valuable one.

Secondly, the information in the third paragraph is to my memory basically correct. I can comment on the first trip to Curramulka which was a trip of six people, four of whom were Rovers or Scouters, another was a very famous ex S.U.S.S. identity, David Pegum, who may be known to some of the older members of S.U.S.S., at least by disrepute.

The next comment I would like to make is just to toss in a few points on the badge requirements which might be of some value as a starting point. The first of these is the reference to rope ladders, which is obviously an inheritance from Britain. I doubt if any of us seriously countenance the use of rope ladders in Australia. Secondly, in section (4) the choice of this word "cave formation" is a pretty unfortunate one. We have tended to get rid of this word out

of our own terminology and thinking, in that it's quite ambiguous. Some people use it as a term for decoration - stalagmites and all that, and some people use it as a term, and this is clearly the sense in which it is meant here, to signify the genesis of caves and the patterns of origins which develop. So this probably needs to be replaced by a term such as cave origin or cave genesis. I personally see only two major omissions. It's very easy to build this thing up of course but it is quite unreal as it is basically an introduction to the game and I wouldn't like to see it built up too much. However I would want to see the words "conservation" and "ethics" make an appearance in it somewhere. These are quite fundamental.

The last point, climbing up and down a ladder: I think this should always be in terms of climbing up and down a free-fall pitch, and a pitch where the ladder hangs against a wall. There's a very great difference, we all know, between these two operations.

The last comment on this whole paper is that I would like to see us look at this when the Federation Committee reconvenes, to look at what in fact can be done in terms of follow-up action by the Federation in an official way, and perhaps we might even be able to have some discussion on this with Dean while he is here. Secondly, I hope that from that Committee Meeting we will see copies of this paper get into the hands of all societies, including the ones not personally and directly represented here, and that it be drawn to their attention for discussion at society level. I think it's a very valuable step forward.

Andrew Spate, V.S.A.: In Victoria recently, and in A.C.T. some years ago, it has been said to me that there is a serious breakdown in liaison between Headquarters and local groups. Is this improving nowadays?

Dean Da Costa: I can only speak for South Australia of course, but it is quite good in S.A. due to the Headquarters Commissioner we have for Senior Scouts who makes it his business to be in contact with the troops and with the boys: they would almost all know him personally. This is almost impossible in other States where the numbers are so much greater.

Andrew Spate: Even the local districts don't seem to know what their boys are doing.

Dean Da Costa: I think this happens in a voluntary organisation where a Scout Master, say, decides to say "to hang with Headquarters". There is nothing much we can do about it if we don't hear about it. If we do hear about it, well, fair

enough, we can deregister them or something like this. This is our contribution to things, we can try to straighten out our side of things - this is obviously an internal problem we've got. If we can straighten this out we would like to get your co-operation in the other side of things such as advice on where we can go and so on.

Grant Gartrell: One of the chief problems we have come across is that we would like to look after the Scout groups but we are so few in number and they are so many that we can't really make a significant contribution all at once. They are going to have to be patient with us. We have found that if there is any attempt at helping scouts out, its not one or two scouts, its the fifty or one hundred who are suddenly very interested in coming along, and obviously no caving trip can be run on decent sort of lines with this type of thing. Fair enough for a lecture, but not for a caving trip. We got around this to some extent by changing the Constitution so that the number of visitors coming on a trip could be no greater than the number of members attending. This means that we can only keep a few of the scouts happy within the framework of our own organisation so it seems natural that they would want to choof off by themselves anyway, they wouldn't have the patience to hang around for a few years. If we can train scouts who come along and join the Group and actually be bound by our own Constitution, & who can go back and run their own trips under our Constitution, then we are getting them to help themselves. Of course this obviously breaks down if it grows too fast.

Just to change the subject while I'm standing up, regarding "sporting" caving: I notice we have been changing this word to amateur in one of the other talks, however I think that sporting caving is a valid type of thing and it is distinct from this amateur sort of thing in science. Casteret was a sporting caver and anyone who started caving from reading Casteret and who holds his breath for three minutes and plunges on single-handed into a syphon might get the wrong idea of caving, but this does seem to be one of the initial aims of caving as a recreation for scouts, the idea of taking up caving as a scientific pursuit seems to be quite separate. I think most of us do sporting caving at the weekends for relaxation, but while we are there we don't waste our time completely (not always), we try and do something useful while we are engaged in the sport, and if we carry it on long enough we get absorbed in these other interests and then when youre too old for the sporting side you carry on with these other things.

Dean Da Costa: On your first point Grant, one of the things that we hope to be able to do if we could is

to just train leaders to be competent to do cave leading and cave safety, and if you people could put aside certain caves, and I can think of a few off-hand down in the South-East like Brown Snake Cave - I doubt whether anyone would be using such a cave for scientific purposes, so if we set our lads loose on that to get rid of this exuberance and kept them away from any other cave of any value, would this take away the problem of having to supply cavers?

Grant Gartrell: If I can just reply to that, I don't think anybody, or at least I certainly wouldn't be game to, despite the nice way you said it, it does sound like signing the death warrant of that cave in that particular context. I don't think anybody would be game to do that. Even if the cave at present is suitable for scouts to choof through for a while it doesn't necessarily mean that it will always be so; there may be something turn up.

Alan Hill: I think Grant thinks your trying to knock a brick out of our walls.

Elery Hamilton-Smith: I think this is a pretty realistic suggestion, at least in some areas. I don't think I would go along with Grant's statement in this specific example, but in Victoria in particular we're very lucky, we have got a few good, really interesting, little caves that have been so wrecked that no-one can do any more to them; so, O.K., we can line up such a group of caves for this sort of thing. Perhaps its more difficult in other areas which haven't been bashed about quite so thoroughly, but nevertheless, I think the principle is a pretty good one because, sure, perhaps this means we give up five caves for sporting caving and training - it is better than having the whole damn lot used in the same way - which is what is likely to happen if there's not some sort of cave classification system adopted for cave use. This is in line with conservation policies in other fields - classification is a recognised principle of conservation of all kinds now, and I think this is therefore a suggestion that is well worth consideration. I think one of the slight dangers here is that if you train a guy to be a leader in one of these caves - OK - its not long before he makes the transformation himself that he's a leader for caves, stop. This I think would require pretty tight control because you can't in a short time train an experienced speleologist with the judgement which is involved in taking a moderately raw party into a tricky or dangerous cave. It's something where one develops judgement by experience not by a "pressure cooker" course. So I would hope that, sure, this scheme would be adopted, that it would be fairly tightly controlled, and that the people who were trained in this way would be encouraged to also become speleos themselves and develop this kind of

judgement through long experience. This would enable them, where it was appropriate, to move off into other fields of caving or other fields of cave leaders.

Mike Shepherd: It is dangerous to make the distinction as I think you have done here between caves of scientific value and non-scientific caves. I think all caves have some scientific value and if you do classify some as non-scientific it's more or less another way of saying "anything goes".
