

THE NEWSLETTER  
OF THE AUSTRALIAN  
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Correspondence to the Secretary: Peter Aitken,  
South Australian Museum, Adelaide, South Aust..

Publications Officer: J. David Taylor,  
23 Westbourne St.; Prahran East, Victoria.

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Although the appearance of the last Newsletter was sudden and unexpected in some quarters, it was well received; so well that we ran to a second edition. The appeal for material was met with an overwhelming response. As there is too much for publication a lot of editing has had to be done and more space has been allotted to the newer societies.

Many cave explorers coming to this country to settle are not aware that there are extensive societies or even worthwhile caves in Australia. Usually it is only by accident that we come in contact with this valuable "new blood". Therefore we appeal to our numerous overseas readers to publicize our activities and to suggest that intending Australia-bound travellers contact the Secretary of A.S.F. for further information. Active groups are now established in all capital cities and some country centres.

A.S.F. Business:- The Secretary, Peter Aitken, is at present collecting insects on Mornington Island (Gulf of Carpentaria). But expects to return to Adelaide by the end of this month. Please be patient if you are expecting a letter from him.

It is vital that N.S.W. cavers intending to visit the Clifden Caves, note that the owner, Mr. Dunhill, on whose property the caves occur, does not want each



party to be of more than 20 members. Now that the first revision of the A.S.F. Code of Ethics, prepared by Peter McGregor, has been circulated to all societies, every caver should familiarize himself with the contents of the code, especially in regard to co-operating with owners (or governing bodies) of the land on which the caves occur.

3rd Bi-ennial A.S.F. Conference - Canberra - 27th-30th December. See enclosed supplement. We need YOUR help.

Sub-Committee Reports:-

- (i) Ethics - already dealt with.
- (ii) Terminology:- List of Speleological Terms (Part I) has also been circulated to societies. This is the result of exhaustive work by J.N. Jennings of the Australian National University, Canberra, and discussed at length at the last executive meeting. Joe wants comments from everyone. Look at the list, start ruminating.
- (iii) Publications:- Main complaint is the expense of having to install a larger letter-box! However, the projected "Walkabout" articles have not met with the desired response. The ultimate fate of the project will be announced in the September issue, but all material received will be used.
- (iv) Safety:- The following terse communique has been received from Des Lyons (T.C.C.), convenor of this sub-committee:-

"A lot of Australian cavers know little or nothing of cave water. Even those who fail to accord it with the respect it deserves. Let me strike while the iron is hot!

Scene: Exit Cave (Ida Bay, Tasmania). It is raining heavily and three tentless cavers are cosily camped inside the cave mouth - plenty of wood and tucker, and a good fire going. One is in his flea bag and the other two are conversing learnedly about many things, including running water and why sounds of it are changing. Changing! Better have a look. Yes, the creek was rising but didn't look dangerous.

"Return to camp. Conversation resumed. Quite interesting, the sound of water. Funny how it has suddenly stopped. Let's see, that could be because the whole of the air space has been filled - What am I saying? .... Lull in conversation; race to creek: the passage gone, along with six feet of air space: no dry retreat, none at all soon: frantic rush: sleeper uprooted, gear flung together: splash, jump, clamber, out; fire left forlorn."

Des estimates that at a minimum the creek rose 6' in 15 mins - their best estimate was 8' in 10 mins. Behind this rise was  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of broad open cave! Des goes on to describe a trip to Marakoopa Cave in North Tas., when conditions within the cave were dry (unusual) though it was raining without. After debate the party turned back at an empty siphon (never empty before). Exploration next day, when it wasn't raining, revealed that the creek beyond the siphon could overflow into the siphon.

Many mainland cavers will say that this warning is for Tasmanian conditions. But, last summer was very dry in Tasmania, and it's often the sudden storm that breaks the drought.. Des concludes by saying:- "Turn the figures over in your mind. Eight feet in ten mins; an inch between you and disaster. Then if you still find life worth living, TAKE NO RISKS WITH CAVE WATER." And in dry areas don't take risks drinking cave water.

Society Activities:- New societies have been formed or probably will be formed in Port Moresby, Brisbane, and in Victoria. This will mean that we now have caving groups in all States and most territories of the Aust. Commonwealth.

The Port Moresby Speleological Society (c/- Dept. of Health, Port Moresby) was formed in January this year. So far the main scene of operations has been around the Javaree Rubber Plantations, some 45 miles by rugged mountain road from Port Moresby. Quite a lot of walking through rain forest is a prerequisite to caving here. To date about 10 caves have been investigated. Interesting stream passages have been encountered, so that



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surveying and water tracing is planned before in order to investigate the hydrology of the area. The caverniferous rock is a highly contorted dense limestone. It is unfossiliferous and speculations on its age have varied from Proterozoic to early Tertiary. Bats are in abundance, thus bat banding if projected. Human remains have been found in one cave. This society, though small, appears to be very active. They are building up contacts throughout the Territory of Papua-New Guinea, and are planning trips further afield from Port Moresby, in areas which are speleologically "Terra Incognita".

Cave diving has not been restricted to N.S.W. During the last two years members of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group have been delving into darkened water in the Buchan area. Their perseverance was rewarded last Xmas when they dived into the resurgence of the Murindal River (which flows from under the Pyramids) and found a high impressive chamber beyond the siphon. At Easter they continued to explore the cave assisted by a New Zealand Speleo., a Pennine Caver, and a C.E.G.S.A. member. Up stream progress was halted by a mighty boulder choke - just waiting to be mobile. The roof of main chamber is some 60' above the stream, but an inclined shaft was ascended to 120' above the stream. Surface air holes were found, though spasmodic drafts of air have been observed. With this achievement behind them, the more cave-minded members of the group together with several experience cave explorers have formed the Sub-Aqua Speleological Society of Victoria (just call them SASS). The emphasis will be on cave diving and exploring what lies beyond, but "semi-damp" caving will not be neglected.

By now a caving group has probably been formed in Brisbane. Interest seems high. Members of the Uni-bushwalkers, the Underwater Research Group, and Scouts have been caving for some time. Duncan McPhee the spokesman for some of these people has outlined the activities. Geographically they have ranged far; from Gamowool (near N.T. Border), to well into North N.S.W. Seeing caves in such a variety of climates, gives scope to study of the climatic influence on

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cave development. They have visited caves along the N.S.W./Queensland border, at Texas, and a small relatively unknown system at Riverton; into N.S.W. to Ahnford Caves and have searched the limestone outcrops at Tabulan and Glen Lyon without success. There are promising reports from the Rockhampton area but they have not been fully investigated. At present they are concentrating close to Brisbane. Duncan (15 Carmody Rd., St. Lucia, QID.) is anxious for information of the Timor Caves near Tamworth. Can you help?

V.C.E.S. has been active lately with quite a few trips to Buchan, mainly to the "Trog Dip". As the name indicates, the complexity of this cave includes several small siphons. At Easter 2 potholes were bottomed at 120ft and have lateral extensions at several levels. Three trips were made west of Melb. to Warrnambool district. 145ft direct descent was made into the Starlight Cave, which has connections to the sea. This cave has vast colony of bats, and accumulated guano. A very complex system at Grasmere Hill also near Warrnambool has been investigated.

Over Easter a C.E.G.S.A. party traversed the wild and magnificent cliffs along the western coast of Kangaroo Island, in search of caves in the consolidated dune limestone. The stream passage (only one in S.A.) draining West Bay Hollow and the big sea caves at the Bay of des Cascares were visited. The cave further inland from Cape Borda gives promise of further discoveries in this area. Penguins, after this trip, can be added to Arct Cave fauna, and rock climbing seals. C.E.G. still goes on caving at Carramulka on York Peninsula. The last trip was to excavate material from the Pleistocene bone beds for carbon dating. Several new caves have been discovered in the Naracoorte area and at Mt. Gambier (when a chap lost a stick of gelignite down a small hole - when digging his septic tank!)

T.C.C. took advantage of the dry summer to do some work in the Mole Creek area where even the Creek that flows through the Honeycomb Cavern was dry. The Upper Marakoopa Cave (discovered by Joe Jennings) was investigated, and after 300yds daylight. Noted already, cave



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beyond Terrace Chamber in Marakooopa entered for first time and a large creek was found. The Xmas trip along the rugged Gordon River was magnificent, caves paltry. The access "track" into Exit Cave has been cut. Using this new "Kokoda Trail" it takes less than 1½ days to cover the 6½ miles, so this large and spectacular cave will now be properly investigated. "The Exit from the Exit Cave" has already been graphically described.

Members of the Coorangbong Society joined forces with the Ryde Society over Anzac Weekend - to Cliefden Caves. They spent some of the time surface surveying as there appear to be entrances other than the well known one, which is padlocked (Key from Mr. Dunhill). Coorangbong have been cave searching around Trickett's Arch in the Tuglow area (south of Jenolan) and have high hopes.

The Sydney Speliological Society has been examining the Wombeyan Caves in great detail. By using a multi-scaling pole (up to 60') in the Fig Tree Cave they have satisfied themselves that there is little hope of a "High lead" connection with Olympian Cave; the only one is underwater. They are distressed that a lease to mine marble has been granted, though the area applied for has been reduced. Their main concern is that blasting may cause damage in the caves. S.S.S. have placed their views before the appropriate government bodies. By using scaling poles and involved techniques S.S.S. have found something new in the much looked at Drum Cave at Bungonia. They have investigated a hole (in the side of the main shaft), which is some 90' vertically above the floor and 50' below the entrance; and leads into a 30' shaft, at the bottom of which was a passage inclined at 45°. This they followed for 50' when progress was halted by a concentration of foul air.

With the start of a new Uni. year, the Sydney University S.S. have an influx of new members. On one of the "freshers" trips they came on a new extension, of the Mamouth Cave (at Jenolan), ("the Northern River"),

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which is on the central level, but has not been fully investigated. New Caves or extensions are still turning up at Jenolan. S.U.S.S. reports of a cave north of the Serpentine which they didn't know about, though a chap called Hennings carved his name there in 1888. Surface mapping has been carried out at Yarrangobilly, and eighteen miles at Cave Creek they have found caves but not on the scale of Yarrangobilly, and thus were not suitably impressed.

Little news has filtered through from Canberra, save that they are preparing for the conference. There was talk that they were walking into Bendithera at Easter, as there are reports of mighty chasms in that area. Maybe some of our cavers are missing!

In the last issue it was announced that a speleo group had been formed at Katherine in N.T. Well they have now called themselves the Northern Terr. Speleological Society. Bob Wren has sent in a very informative introductory report on their activities. Limestones in the area are fairly extensive and are of Lower Cambrian age though in places are covered by siliceous Cretaceous sediment. As caves are handy to Katherine they are not going far afield. Foul air is a major problem - and heat. These cave temperatures illustrate the difficulties: - Dry season - minima = 65°F; Maxima = 78°F;

Wet season - minima = 86°F; Maxima = 98°F. Caving during the Wet season is pretty well nil, unless they want to stew in their own caves; and then of course, there is the danger of flooding. Two cave systems contain evidence of Aboriginal occupation: - numerous artifacts; long linear marks, which are from sharpening artifacts, or actual designs; and paintings.

The Western Australian Speleological Group reports the discovery of a new cave which they refer to as "Deeondecup". They rave about it's magnificence - but say little else. This group is exploring the coastal area both to the north and south of Perth. They report excellent prospects in many areas.

If your society didn't get a mention in this issue it's because we didn't hear from you. Don't forget we want a summary of activities by beginning of Sept. for the next issue.



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Notices:- It is with regret that we announce that we have been informed of the death of M. Jean Petrochiles president of the Greek Speleological Society.

Stop Press! News has just come to hand that Brian J. O'Brien, inaugural president of A.S.F. is being honoured by an award from the N.S.S.

Recent Literature on Australian Caves:- Daily B, 1960: "Thylacoleo, the Extinct Marsupial Lion", Aust. Museum Magazine Vol. 13, No. 5. This paper by Brian Daily (of South Aust. Museum & a C.E.G.S.S.A. member) outlines present knowledge of this Pleistocene marsupial, commonly called "Cave Lion", whose bones are found in caves, although it was not a permanent spelian inhabitant.

Recent Literature on the use of chemical tracers in

Speleology:- John Haas in the July issue of the National Speleological Society discusses methods of detecting fluorocene. Visible detection is chancey as it is difficult to calculate the dilution factor between adding point and observation point. Then it has been found that  $\text{CaCO}_3$  can act as a colour inhibitor. Haas then suggests exposing the water to ultra violet light. If fluocene is present it will transmit light. His other suggestion retains the dye as it passes through it.

Many suggestions have been made recently for using inorganic substances (isotpic or non-isotpic) for tracing, as only small amounts are required. Simple chemical tests or a Geiger counter are the means of detection. However take No. 79 & 80 (1959) Newsletter, (CRO) heed the paper by Miss Ann M. Williams. She points out that many inorganic substances are toxic to aquatic life (both animal and plant). For example 0.14 parts of  $\text{CuSO}_4$  in a million parts of water are toxic to trout.

In Feb. 1960 issue of the "D.C. Speleograph" (Vol. 1, U.S.A.) they discuss the use of Ethanethoil ( $\text{C}_2\text{H}_5\text{SH}$ ) for tracing air movements in order to find connecting passages between two caves. This is a very odourous compound.