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THE NEWSLETTER

OF THE AUSTRALIAN

S P E L E O L O G I C A L F E D E R A T I O N

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Publications Officer : Keith H. Clouten,
Australasian Missionary College,
Cooranbong. N.S.W.

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THE PURPOSE OF A.S.F. NEWSLETTER

At the A.S.F. annual committee meeting last January, there was some discussion as to the purpose of the A.S.F. Newsletter and the type of material which it should contain. On this point there has been, and always will be some differences of opinion. However, the general feeling expressed at the committee meeting (and for that matter, at other A.S.F. meetings) was that the Newsletter should contain the following :

1. A Summary of the activities of each A.S.F. society.
2. A Summary of A.S.F. business matters as they concern the various executive officers of A.S.F.
3. Abstracts of useful periodical articles received by the A.S.F. Librarian.
4. Progress reports from the A.S.F. sub-committees.

If all of this could be included in each issue of the Newsletter there would, presumably, be no complaints, and this publication would be fulfilling its purpose admirably. But the needed information is not always forthcoming. For example, during 1961 not one report from any A.S.F. sub-committee was received

by the Publications Officer.

With regard to the summaries of society activities, these have become very rare commodities indeed. Numerous club newshoets, etc. are received, but these do not often supply reports in sufficient detail, and in any case they are usually circulated to most Australian societies. It is, therefore, entirely up to societies to send the information which they would like to see included in each issue of the A.S.F. Newsletter.

With regard to abstracts of articles, we have had a little more success, and as the Library is now becoming organized properly we expect that there will be no lack of this type of material.

The editor would be pleased to hear from member societies or individual spelees who have constructive ideas or suggestions in connection with the A.S.F. Newsletter. Although we will never please everyone, this will assist us in producing what at least the majority would like to see.

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POSTAL REGISTRATION OF A.S.F. NEWSLETTER

As indicated previously, we had high hopes that this issue of the Newsletter would be the first to be posted as a registered periodical, with accompanying savings in postage. But departmental red tape has more knots in it than we at first thought, and an amendment to the A.S.F. rules will be necessary before registration is effected. Unfortunately, this will mean a delay until the next A.S.F. Conference next December.

Meanwhile, the Post Office informs us that each A.S.F. society should include the following minute in its club rules, viz.:

"The Society will subscribe to the quarterly publication, A.S.F. NEWSLETTER, on the basis of threepence per issue. The annual amount of one shilling shall be included in the capititation fees paid by this society to the Australian Speleological Federation."

Until the conditions are fulfilled, A.S.F. Newsletter will have to be forwarded in bulk packages to each society as before. We regret inconvenience to clubs who have forwarded envelopes.

A.S.F. CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Following a few enquiries, here is a copy of the N.S.S. Conservation Code. It is attached to the membership form which is completed by all applying for membership.

THE National Speleological Society believes that caves have unique scientific, recreational, and scenic values; that these values are endangered by both carelessness and intentional vandalism; that these values, once gone, cannot be recovered; and that the responsibility for protecting caves must be assumed by those who study and enjoy them.

ACCORDINGLY, the intention of the Society is to work for the preservation of caves with a realistic policy supported by effective programs for the encouragement of self-discipline among cavers; education and research concerning the causes and prevention of cave damage; and special projects, including co-operation with other groups similarly dedicated to the conservation of natural areas. Specifically :

ALL contents of a cave - formations, life, and loose deposit - are significant for its enjoyment and interpretation. Therefore caving parties should leave a cave as they find it. They should provide means for the removal of waste, limit marking to a few small and removable signs as are needed for surveys; and, especially, exercise care not to accidentally break or soil formations, disturb life-forms or unnecessarily increase the number of disfiguring paths through an area.

SCIENTIFIC collection is professional, selective, and minimal. The collection of mineral or biological material for display purposes, including previously broken or dead specimens is never justified, as it encourages others to collect and destroys the interest of the cave.

THE Society encourages projects such as : establishing cave preserves; placing entrance gates where appropriate; opposing the sale of speleothems; supporting effective protective measures; cleaning and restoring over-used caves; co-operating with private cave owners by providing knowledge about their cave

and assisting them in protecting their cave and property from damage during cave visits; and encouraging commercial cave owners to make use of their opportunity to aid the public in understanding caves and the importance of their conservation.

WHERE there is reason to believe that publication of cave locations will lead to vandalism before adequate protection can be established, the Society will oppose such publication.

IT IS the duty of every society member to take personal responsibility for spreading a consciousness of the cave conservation problem to each potential user of caves. Without this, the beauty and value of our caves will not long remain with us.

Do you think such a Code is useful ?

What portions of the above Code would you delete ?

What else should be added ?

Does your area have any problem of deliberate dumping of rubbish in caves ?

Correspondence to the Convenor : E. Hamilton-Smith, C/- V.A.Y.C., Gisborne Street, East Melbourne. Victoria.

CONSERVATION IDEAS DISCUSSED

In addition to the above article, E. Hamilton-Smith also presented a talk to the V.C.E.S. recently on the same subject. The following summary of the talk is reprinted from the V.C.E.S. Newsheet, and may stimulate further thought.

"A few of the dangers to the life of a cave are - specimens of scientific importance are unwittingly destroyed (e.g. indiscriminate digging), rubbish (e.g. sweet papers & flashbulbs) strewn around give the cave a sordid appearance, marks (especially of boots) left on formations, bats driven out, and the publicising of beautiful caves so that they are more likely to become the victims of vandalism. It was considered a bad idea to publish locations of caves to the public as this attracts inexperienced and thoughtless people.

The idea of closing down caves either permanently or temporarily was considered. There is a considerable deterioration in

tourist caves due to dust coming to the system. The notion of putting gates or telescopic bars on worthwhile caves was pondered, but the question of who should keep the key of the gate would need careful thought. Other ideas put forward were the setting up of a Conservation Code which could be mass-produced on cards, and given to new members; and erecting mass-produced cards inside the entrances of caves to remind people to be careful.

NEW SOCIETY IN DARWIN

Recently, the A.S.F. Secretary received a letter from the newly formed Darwin Speleological Group. Already a number of trips have been conducted by this Group to caves in the Darwin area, including Katherine, and the Group contemplates publishing a "Review of Territory Speleology". The address of the Group is 4 Mantou Street, Darwin.

The members of the Group have visited numerous cave systems with some interesting and promising results. In the Douglas River, for example, eleven cave entrances were discovered within an area of about 60 acres. One of these is a live stream passage which appears promising, but contains foul air. Another hole requires diving, and arrangements were being made with the local spearfisherman's club to assist in this.

IN BRIEF ...

President W. Peck is still in Darwin most of the time, but now goes by a new title and address. Forward mail to Flight Lieut. W. Peck, Base Squadron, RAAF, Darwin. N.T.

Graham Wallis, A.S.F. Librarian and also Acting Treasurer, has been busy and with this Newsletter is enclosed a copy of the Treasurer's Report as well as a report on the state of the Library. Each club has been separately informed of its financial status with respect to the A.S.F., and club treasurers are requested to forward amounts to the Treasurer right away.

Incidentally, the minutes of the January A.S.F. Conference are at last on the way from the Secretary, and should reach clubs this month.

INDEX OF SCIENTIFIC & SPELEOLOGICAL ARTICLES

from the "SPELEO DIGEST", 1958.

The Speleo Digest is published by the Pittsburgh Grotto of the National Speleological Society, and is a collection of writings taken from the publications of the Chapters of the N.S.S. Below is a list, in numerical order, of 35 selected articles which seem applicable to Australian speleology. It is hoped to supply abstracts of these articles at a later date.

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32. Cave Diving at Martin Springs. Jerry Miller. 3-23
33. Spedunking - the Art of Cave Diving. R.C.Black. 3-25
34. An Unusual Cave Diving Accident at Swuirrel Chimney. 3-31
(An account of an unusual form of diver's
disease - Thoracic Squeeze).
35. Notes on Cave Mapping. Jay Edwards. 3-32
(A comprehensive treatment of cave surveying,
including calculations and symbols)

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AROUND THE SOCIETIES

At Buchan, V.C.E.S. is paying special attention to East Buchan, which has been neglected previously. Some members have been experimenting with explosives for abolishing impassible squeezes and entrances. Up to date the results have been very successful, and with the use of plastergel the shock area is confined locally, and it has been noted later that fragile formations, a matter of feet from the blast remain intact. Another advantage of plastergel is the absence of poisonous gases, and it does not take long for the dust to clear.

Most other societies have been active, but unfortunately no useful reports have been received. Both S.U.S.S. and U.N.S.W.S.S. have visited Coolman Caves (south of Canberra in the Alps) with apparently interesting results. U.N.S.W.S.S. has also visited Bungonia again and Timor Caves (with Newcastle society members). Cooranbong S.A. is in the midst of installing an iron grille in a portion of Colong Caves to protect it from vandals.

Over in Papua-New Guinea, the local society has made some progress. A considerable amount of surveying in the Art Gallery Cave (near Musgrave River?) has been carried out. The President, Gordon Bain, has proposed an expedition to the Chuave area in the Eastern Highlands at the end of 1963. He hopes members of Australian societies will be able to join this expedition, and plans to work out details at the A.S.F. Kempsey Conference later this year.