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THE NEWSLETTER
OF THE AUSTRALIAN
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RENDEZVOUS AT KEMPSEY

Since the last A.S.F. Newsletter was published, interest has quickened in the forthcoming Conference at Kempsey, N.S.W.. The organizers at Kempsey have distributed to every society many application blanks together with Conference details and an introduction to the cave areas of interest in the Macleay valley. Also, Elery Hamilton-Smith has been appointed Conference Secretary, and has circulated a proposed agenda and other details to societies.

Provided that there is good representation from member-societies all over Australia, this Conference could be a healthy step forward in the history of the A.S.F.. From the point of view of organization and preparation, the Conference would seem to be a guaranteed success. But a great deal depends upon the attitude of each delegate and speleo who comes. Many people over the years have expressed the thought that these Conferences are too full of demi-political wrangling. The Conference Secretary is endeavouring to set a programme which concentrates on caving, and which works in an atmosphere of harmony and common effort. But everything depends upon the delegates who come, and the feelings of the societies who will send them.

The survival of the A.S.F. depends a great deal upon the success of these biennial Conferences. The A.S.F. is, after all, a federation of societies, and it can fulfil its purpose only to the extent that societies support and take an interest in it. And the extent to which societies support the A.S.F. is dependent upon the attitude and interest of you and me, the members of those societies. Our presence at Kempsey this December will greatly influence the immediate future of Australian speleology. We will also get much help and enjoyment ourselves.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME - latest edition.

- Dec.26th. Opening Day, mainly taken up with meeting delegates and fellow speleologists attending the Conference, and "settling in." For those who will arrive early, a start on some near-at-hand caves might be possible.
- Dec.27th. 2.00 pm. (SHARP) Conference opens. Committee business during afternoon. Business to continue in early evening, followed by slides and reports on recent discoveries.
- Dec.28th. Morning - Committee business.
Afternoon - Papers on caving technique and other matters of general interest.
Evening - "Party Night" - members of K.S.S. will entertain visitors around town or in their homes.
- Dec.29th. Morning - Papers on cave areas visited.
Afternoon - Papers on cave science.
Evening - Caveman's Dinner, followed by an address by Professor Voisey of the University of New England on the geology of the area which we will be visiting. End evening with films.
- Dec.30th. Wind-up session of Conference.
If business is finished early, a barbecue picnic to Big Hill on the coast has been suggested by K.S.S.
- Dec.31st. To the Caves!

The Victorian Cave Search and Rescue Organization

Recognizing that caves can be a source of danger, not only to speleologists, but also to members of the public, particularly children, who wander into them, the members of the two Victorian speleological societies, V.C.E.S. and Sub-Aqua S.S. have joined forces to form a search and rescue organization (VCSR).

When an emergency occurs, police or other persons immediately contact any one of four VCSR leaders, whose phone numbers both at work and home are well publicized in appropriate quarters. Each of these four leaders is provided with a list of instructions, and knows what to do when a call is received, and the steps in organizing the rescue procedure. He also has a complete contact list of VCSR members.

The first of the four VCSR leaders to arrive at the emergency area automatically becomes the leader of the rescue operation. Here another set of detailed instructions guides him in dividing the searchers into parties, each with a party leader and definite instructions. The leader must keep a complete register of all those engaged in the operation, and keep notes thereon of the current duty or position of each helper. Only the leader may give information to press representatives, etc..

Each individual member of the VCSR has a list of instructions telling him what to do and what not to do, where the meeting place is in emergency, a detailed list of equipment which must be taken and ready for use, rules governing general conduct in the emergency, recognized signals, etc..

Other societies desiring more details of this organization, may contact the secretary -- Graham D. Shaw, 14 Nicole Avenue, Dandenong, Victoria.

KEEP THOSE APPLICATIONS ROLLING IN !

The organizers of the A.S.F. Kempsey Conference are anxious to receive completed application blanks as soon as possible. Col Carter, 4 Albert St. Kempsey would like to have all forms in by 15th. October. Additional applications are available.

A.S.F. LIBRARY CONTRIBUTIONSGrottes des Romarie (Rumanian Caves)

A review by Mihai Sorban, Iosif Vichmann, and Dan Coman; published by Meridians-Editions, Bucharest, 1961.

This publication consists of an Introduction to Rumanian speleology (29 pp.), terminology (9 pp.), and a bibliography of 3 pages, followed by 143 monotone photographs illustrating the various aspects of speleology in Rumania. The various sections of photographs are grouped under such headings as : Karst regions; Surface Karst formations; paths of underground water; underground Karst formations; exploration of the depths; stalagmitic formations; cavern ice; aspects of speleological study; and From one cave to the other. The photographs are, for the most part, 8" by 10" in size and are of excellent quality. The text is in French, but as the publication is composed mainly of photographs this is not a major drawback.

Following is an abstract of the Introduction, prepared by Miss Diana Murphy of S.U.S.S. : --

This book traces the history of scientific speleology in the light of the life of Emile G. Racovitza, a Rumanian professor in zoology. The following rough translation gives some idea of the first part of the book.

"The progress of science, to the end of the last century, had given birth, by opposition to the older analytical disciplines, to a series of empirical disciplines, having as their aims the establishment in biology of the most general laws which would be able to make understood and explained the apparent dissimilar phenomena of the living world. One of the men of science, who contributed to this new mode of research and study of nature, was the Rumanian scientist Emile G. Racovitza. It was he who participated in a decisive manner in the foundation of a new empirical science, the science of caves, called 'Speleology.'

"The life of Racovitza is outlined with special reference to his work dealing with underground cave zoology. In 1920, largely due to his efforts the Institut de Speleologie at Cluj (the first in the

world) was founded. It encouraged the scientific research of caves and employed zoologists primarily. These were professional speleologists but he also paid homage to the work of amateur speleologists."

The latter part of the book deals with present day Rumanian speleology. Eight cave systems, including an ice-cave system are described. The physiography of the areas, hydrology researches (contemporary and fossil), and research on formation of caves and cave formations are dealt with, as well as the fauna, fossil, "living fossil", and living of caves. This is all amply illustrated by photos, so that even if the worthwhile effort of translating is not undertaken, the photos are instructive and interesting in themselves.

ABSTRACTS FROM N.S.S. NEWS

Winter Cave Indicator. Conrad, L.G. NSS News, XX, 1 (Jan. 1962) pp.5

A short paper describing air currents observed issuing from an abandoned aqueduct. A cubic capacity of approx. 8,000 to 10,000 cubic yards was estimated, and wind issuing from this entrance during winter measured at 20 m.p.h. Temperature within the aqueduct was 50° F. while the external temperature was -15°F. The wind was no longer observable when the external temperature rose to 15°F.

Some Old and New Techniques for Vertical Caving. Perera, T. NSS News, XX, 2 (Feb. 1962), pp.12-16; ibid. XX, 3 (Mar. 1962) pp.29-31.

A paper which deals with American techniques of vertical exploration, dealing primarily with rappelling and prusik knot methods. A simple seat is described, and three methods of rappelling - using a carabiner with brake, using two carabiners as an emergency system, or using three carabiners. The classic prusik knot is detailed, along with the Bachmann and "ultimate prusik". Several methods of ascent using prusik slings are described and attention paid to the safety measures in these techniques.

News from all over.

A party of five members of Tasmanian Caverneering Club hiked from Maydena (Derwent Valley) in June to examine a hole found the previous summer. The hole was relocated and penetrated to a depth of forty feet. The cave goes further and enlarges but time and lack of equipment prevented further exploration. A number of other promising holes were noted in this region, so further reports may be expected.

From Darwin, the newly instituted Darwin Speleological Group is proposing to prepare for issue a publication dealing with caves and caving in the Northern Territory (Bless their hearts!) Production of this depends very much on cost, and the Group would like to get some idea as to how many people would be interested in purchasing copies. If you are interested in the venture, contact the society, C/- Bill Walsh, 4 Manton Street, Darwin. N.T..

The A.S.F. Librarian has for some time been preparing a punch-card system for the abstracting and subject index to articles and publications. This is a bigger job than most of us realise, but when complete, it will be very valuable for locating articles, as punch-cards offer many advantages in information retrieval.

Gordon Bain, president of Port Moresby S.S., reports that the Society has not been very active during the first half of this year. However, a society member who is also a teacher at the Port Moresby High School has organized a Trail Club to encourage school students to enjoy bush-walking and caving. The P.M.S.S. has taken some members of the Trail Club on two caving trips, and hopes that when they leave High School they will become active members of the Speleo Society. As most of us know, Gordon Bain visited most of the Australian states earlier this year, and he wishes to pass on his sincere thanks to all Australian speleologists who helped to make his caving holiday interesting and beneficial.

(A.S.F. Library abstracts are continued on page 7).

Although these techniques are not favoured here, and appear to offer no advantage over our normal ladder methods, a knowledge of the prusik technique may well prove valuable in emergencies, and so these very detailed articles repay full attention.

Anderson Cave Rescue. Cram, M. NSS News, XX, 3 (Mar. 1962) p.27

After a member of an exploring party had dislocated an arm while chimneying, an attempt was made to leave the cave without calling outside help. This was unsuccessful, and resulted in extreme pain to the victim. A doctor was able to be called to the cave, injected an analgesic, corrected the dislocation and taped the arm to the victim's body. He was then able to climb out of the cave with little assistance.

A Micro-Velocity Anemometer. White, Thomas H. NSS News, XX, 4 (Apr. 1962) pp.46-48.

One of the problems encountered with measuring air movements in caves is that it has not been possible to accurately determine the velocity of the very slight movements occurring. Conventional hand anemometers not only lack the sensitivity and wide range, but are not sufficiently rugged for cave use. The author describes a circuit using a bead-type thermistor coupled with a Wheatstone Bridge circuit and using a micro-ammeter to measure the change in voltage as the resistance of the thermistor changes with the air movements.

(Note - This circuit has already been built and tested in Victoria, and it is planned to use it in a forthcoming study of cave climates.)

Moulis Subterranean Laboratory. Moore, George W. NSS News, XX, 5 (May 1962), pp.58-59.

A brief description of the famous underground laboratory at Moulis, France, with photographs and a plan of the layout.

The above abstracts from NSS News were prepared by Elery Hamilton-Smith (V.C.E.S.)

CAVE CONSERVATION IN QUEENSLAND

In a recent issue of "Down Under", the University of Queensland Speleological Society supplied a brief report on a problem of cave conservation in the well-known Mt. Etna cave region close to Rockhampton. During a one-week visit to this area, society members saw quarrying operations which are endangering caves. Approaches to the Queensland National Parks Association and to the state Mines and Lands Departments are being made. The society would appreciate support from all possible sources.

During the visit to Mt. Etna, the society conducted a preliminary survey for later work, and a summary of the report appears in "Down Under." Incidentally, Miss Tesch of this society is conducting an introductory survey of "the attitude towards caves and caving" by speleologists, and personal questionnaires have been distributed to many societies in this connection. Miss Tesch would like to have these blanks back as soon as possible, and she hopes to have a report on this survey for the A.S.F. Conference in December.

NEWS FROM THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

The new Darwin Speleological Group has produced its third newsletter, which includes a report on the caving potential of the Fenton area near Darwin. While the caves of the Katherine district have often received attention and investigation during recent years, there has been little previous investigation of the caves near to Darwin. The Group's first trip to Fenton led to the discovery of the Gas Cave, containing much Carbon Dioxide, and a subsequent visit has revealed possibilities provided that a dangerous earth-roofed squeeze can be safely negotiated. A number of other holes in the area have been indexed on a surface map, and one of these is rich in bone material. The Group is taking steps to procure a flexible ladder before making another trip to Fenton.

The present attempt by three people (originally four) to break the recently-set world record for staying underground has received much publicity. Unfortunately, newspapers give the impression that the members of the party are recognized speleologists, but this is not so. Only one of the party, leader Bill Penman, has ever been in a cave previously. They have chosen one of the hottest, humid, and most unpleasant caves in the world - the Sixteen Mile at Katherine - for the endurance test.