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ASF

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NEWSLETTER

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ASF NEWSLETTER

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Dear Sir,

At the general monthly meeting of the Orange Speleological Society I was requested to bring to the attention of A.S.F. Members, conditions appertaining to the entry into caves in the Cliefden Area, near Mandurama, N.S.W.

In recent weeks, C. S. S. have received several 'phone calls made from Cowra, Mandurama, and also from Mr. Dunhill's home requesting the keys of the locked caves on Mr. Dunhill's property. These 'phone calls we are told are from members of A.S.F. Societies.

In most cases they are from persons we have not heard of before or since.

To avoid inconvenience, especially to Mr. Dunhill, would it be possible to make it known through the A.S.F. Newsletter that in future introductory cards, to be presented to Mr. Dunhill can be obtained by writing or 'phoning O.S.S. prior to the trip, but in sufficient time to enable the cards to be forwarded to the trip leader of any such trips.

Mr. Dunhill, in agreement with O.S.S. will refuse entry to these caves without such identifications.

Hoping you can find space in the Newsletter for this to be made known.

J. KEENAN,
Hon. Sec.

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MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA
NULLARBOR EXPEDITION 1965-66

C.E.G.S.A. are planning a full scale Nullarbor expedition with an emphasis on surveying. The prime purpose of the expedition will be continued exploration and surveying of Mullahmullang. The need to dwell on the possibility of new discoveries in this cave is unnecessary, the very name 'Mullahmullang' inspires enthusiasm across Australia.

Other caves on the plain will not be neglected however for those wishing to gain a knowledge of this vast expanse of limestone.

Even though the primary aim of the expedition will be surveying this is no deterrent to persons wishing to undertake other fields of study.

The proposed duration of the trip is three weeks, from 26/12/65 to 14/1/66, leaving from Adelaide. Total cost should not exceed £35 per head.

For further details contact CEGSA either direct, or through your club..
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WESTERN AUSTRALIA
NULLARBOR EXPEDITION.

For those with large amounts of spare time, Bruce Robinson of W.A.S.G. plans to lead a smaller expedition to The Madura district of the Nullarbor during the months of September-October, 1965.

The major purpose will again be surveying and exploration. Bruce would welcome any easterners who are interested. He can be contacted at Kingswood College, Univ. of W.A. Nedlands, Western Australia.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE PRACTICE

The N. S. W. Search and Rescue Committee held its inaugural practice at Bungonia Caves, 130 miles South West of Sydney over the weekend 17th-18th July, 1965.

Due to the combination of drought conditions and the lambing season, the advertised location, Cliefden, was changed to Bungonia. This alone could be the contributory factor which reduced the active participants from the expected 60 persons to 40.

Representatives from six N.S.W. Societies were present; there being; C.S.S., H.C.G., I.S.S., S.S.S., S.U. S.S., and U.N.S.W.S.S. The practice being organised by Sydney Speleological Society.

GENERAL NOTES:

The caves at Bungonia are mainly vertical in nature, most entrances being vertical pitches ranging in depths of up to 130 feet. Several exceptions exist in which horizontal development precedes the vertical pitches.

Bungonia is basically a plateau cut by extensive dolines up to 80 feet deep, bounded on three sides by deep gorges containing the Bungonia Creek and Shoalhaven River.

THE SEARCH:

It was assumed that the lost party, consisting of two women, were in the caves and not in the surrounding mountainous country.

Each person arriving in the area was registered as a searcher, and by 10 a.m. Saturday, sufficient cavers had arrived, and a search was instigated.

The area had been partially mapped topographically by the Sydney Speleological Society previously, most of the cave entrances being contained by the surveys.

Six groups of six persons comprised the search parties, each group equipped with rope, ladders and two-way radio. The radios were used to maintain contact with the central control base.

The base, containing the radio control centre and mapping board was situated at the "Lookdown" overlooking the Bungonia Gorge.

To each party, a group of six entrances and / or dolines was allotted. As each cave or doline investigation was completed, the two-way radio was used to report the findings to base. A coloured pin was then placed on the map to signify this feature had been satisfactorily investigated. Further groups of caves and dolines were issued as the search progressed.

At midday, the overcast and cold weather developed into light but increasing showers of rain.

By 3 p.m., as the search neared its completion the rain began to alternate with light snow falls, mixtures of rain and snow and eventually one medium fall which melted rapidly producing damp underfoot conditions. Fortunately an absence of wind made the situation not too unpleasant.

By 4.0 p.m. all known caves had been investigated without trace of the missing party.

A quick meal was partaken as the next phase of the search was instigated. This comprised of the assumption that "the cave containing the missing party was unmapped or alternately the party has discovered and entered a new cave".

A "line abreast" systematic search of the area was now undertaken

As the line of walkers traversed across the limestone, each cave and doline was reported to base. If it was identifiable, the pin indicating its position was removed from the board. Unidentified holes were investigated, the line formation halting until the hole was declared unworthy of investigation or devoid of the lost party.

Eventually, the lost party was located in an unmarked cave in the vicinity of the Grille Cave.

During the subsequent evening camp fire, the advantages, disadvantages and complications of the search were discussed. It was generally agreed that the search procedure had been adequate for the area, although minor revision of technique and further practise was necessary. The need for contact between base and the search parties at all times was apparent.

Also tendered for general discussion was the topic "should injured cavers be moved out of a cave rather than seeking medical assistance first". Being a more volatile subject a greater variance of ideas were presented.

Two major trends developed; those in favour of moving injured persons and those against. A common conclusion indicated that the final decision rested upon the trip leader.

General caving activities were held over the remainder of the weekend.

ERRATA

Bruce Robinson will be near Madura, W. A. during November, not September - October as stated on page one.

DOWN UNDER -- ALL OVER

CANBERRA (CSS)

Activity in the thermal pool caves, Punchbowl and Dogleg at Wee Jasper.

At Narrangullen discoveries include crayfish and small fish suffering from loss of pigment. In the same cave water wading produced some results, with prospects of further exploration.

SYDNEY (SSS)

A return to the rarely visited Church Creek caves in the Burragorang Valley brought little success. About twelve holes were entered, mainly vertical shafts, none leading to any cave system. However they report extensive outcropping to be further looked over.

The only incident in a quick trip down Argyle Pot (B 31) at Bungonia was the dislodgement of a slab of limestone at the top of a 40' pitch. Fortunately nobody was standing in the way and the rock fell harmlessly.

CONSERVATION ACTION

Canberra Speleological Society is expressing concern at the increased vandalism at Wyanbene Caves.

They suggest the removal of the steel ladder immediately within the entrance in order to reduce entry by vandals and poorly trained cavers.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
THE EDITORS, "STOP PRESS",
Sydney Speleological Society
July, 1965

"I have only tonight received the latest issue, and would like to commend the views and comments expressed in your editorial. You have both highlighted a key medical problem in Cave Rescue and also directed the eye of caution towards synthetic ropes in caving practice. Perhaps I might be permitted to comment upon these points and to draw attention to some of the interesting points already published in literature which may have escaped notice.

Firstly, on the medical problem. Bob Chapman in a short article in the Bull. T. C. C. suggested that in almost all cases, the patient should be moved out of the cave as soon as possible. Thornber, in British Caving (P.544 in second edn.) makes the same point and quotes a doctor experienced in Cave Rescue as saying 'Pothole victims die from exposure, only rarely from their injuries.' Lloyd should also be consulted on this matter in his Edward Long Fox Memorial Lecture, published in the Medical Journal of the South-West, 76 (2), 280.

Clearly, however, there can be no set rules in this matter. The leader of a party must always make an on-the-spot decision, and his decision should be supported. However, a leader with a knowledge of wider experience has more chance of making the right decision.

On moving to the matter of synthetic ropes. There are some very useful references on this, although caution is necessary here -- some papers have completely missed important points. For instance, Hart-

well (see below) suggests that all synthetics are stable at low temperatures -- a completely erroneous statement and a most dangerous one. Some useful references are:

Fisher, L.C. & Pace, N.R. (1961) The Spelunker's Rope. Bloomington Indiana Grotto Newsletter, 3 (5), 34 - 42. Also in Speleo-Digest (1961 edn) pp. 3/27-3/33.

Hartwell J.M. (1962) Comparison of Synthetic Ropes Suitable for Caving. C.R.G. Publ'n. no. 11, pp. 103--126 (excellent bibliography)

Rosst, W.E. (1964) Leave you 'poly' in the cave?

N.S.S. News, 22, 10.

Smith, R. (1964) Polypropylene Rope N.S.S. News 22, 39.

From these and other references, it appears clear to me that some very clear principles emerge for caving practice:

1. That conventional knots as used with manila rope cannot be relied upon with synthetics - anyone using synthetic ropes should master the specialized knots which have been developed.

2. That the low melting point of polythene and even lower point at which it loses considerable strength makes it a most unwise choice. In addition to this, it is perhaps the most difficult of all synthetics to knot safely.

3. That polypropylene is also highly temperature -- sensitive, it loses strength rapidly when warmed and becomes brittle at low temperatures.

4. That nylon should only be used in caving with great caution because of its sensitivity to abrasion and loss

of strength when wet - certainly it is probably the ideal climber's rope but this is no criterion for caving use.

To my mind, this leaves terylene as the only synthetic worthy of consideration, and that in any case, probably one of the best caving ropes is probably still manila--provided that it is not left wet after trips and is replaced regularly. Its lower cost is such that this is probably no more expensive than buying a synthetic, even though the synthetic is rot-proof.

Perhaps a rope worthy of investigation is the continental sheathed rope or 'kermantel' comprising full length synthetic fibres contained in a woven sheath. However, its cost is probably high enough to scare most speleors.

Sincerely,
Elery Hamilton-Smith."

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FINDING OF THE OFFICIAL INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF JOHN BRYANT.

from the GOULBURN EVENING POST
Thursday, June 3, 1965.

.."The Coroner, finding that death had been accidental, said he was satisfied that the equipment used had been adequate, and that the instructions given to members of the party had also been satisfactory.

'For some reason or other, the deceased in using the equipment did not use it effectively', he said.

'Whether this was due to a mistake in tying the knot or whether he had some reason for untying an effective knot whilst on the ladder we do not know', he said.

'However, from the thumb knot in the rope it would appear the more probable explanation is that he made

a mistake in tying the knot in the safety rope before he commenced to ascend.'

'This was a most unfortunate accident, and I extend my personal sympathy to the relatives of the deceased,' he said."

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NOTE ON A NEW DEEP CAVE AT COCKLEBIDDY, W. A.

B. T. Pratt,
University of New South Wales
Speleological Society.

Early in January, 1965, Bob Chapman from UNSWSS and the writer were led to a small steep sided collapse doline about two miles eastsoutheast of Cocklebidy Motel by John Carlyle of Cocklebidy. The collapse, which has a diameter of 30 feet and a depth of almost 50 feet, was negotiated to the west through a very precarious rock fall. This led down to a fairly large chamber in the space between the rock pile and the doline wall. From the floor a short squeeze opens up further down on the rock pile forming the eastern flank of a northerly trending cavern. This cavern with a salt water lake on its floor is of moderate dimensions being about 400 feet long by 200 feet wide with little possibility of extension. Fallen blocks are thickly covered with guano though no bats were observed.

Previous to its exploration the cave's doline had been identified by J. N. Jennings[†] at his reference point C 2.15/3.75 from air - photographic interpretation. The identification of this relatively small sized doline in a region noted for more spectacularly sized examples of this land form is a clear indication of the precision and usefulness of air-photographs to speleologists in their explorations of the Nullarbor.

[†]Jennings, J. N., 1964. Air Photographs and the Nullarbor Plain Caves. A. S. F. Newsletter, 23, 4-6.

REPORT ON A ROCK FALL IN THE "MAIN"
CAVE AT CLIEFDEN, NEW SOUTH WALES .

This Report Is Adapted From
The Surveys and Records Of
The Orange Speleological
Society.

History:

The cave has a known Speleo-
logical history of approximately
fifteen years.

Previous characteristics have
been ascertained from local reports
and records, and from persons ass-
ociated both Speleologically and to
a lesser degree, technically with
the cave's prior history. These re-
ports invariably identify it as a
moving cave, i.e., subject to minor
movement and fall, this generally
occurring during the cave's average
peak dehydration period December, to
February.

Constructional conditions:

The recent fall and fracturing
occurred between October and Decem-
ber 1964, (the effected areas are
shown on the accompanying map). The
central point of this disturbance
appears to be the Clown Room, the
shock wave effect tapering to minor
fracturings at the Cave's northern
and south-eastern extremities.
Cracks have opened to a width of one
foot and vary in depth from six feet
to visual infinity. It is possible
that the initial movement originated
in a subsidance causing a split and
tilt of the western wall; the result-
ant ceiling fall being thrust for-
ward into the room reducing the
original floor area by at least one
quarter.

Estimated weight of the fall is
fifteen tons.

A deep, narrow crack has opened
adjacent to the second entrance

accompanied by slight web fracturing.

Flaked and slab fall from the
western wall and ceiling of the Main
Room (reported to have occurred
approx. 15 years ago) shows fresh
signs of movement and fine web
fracturing has occurred in the
vicinity. This sector is particular-
ly prone to falls, however its next
movement will probably be a further
breaking up of existing collapse.

Cracking and fracturing in the
Laurel Room may not be concurrent
with the recent fall.

Formations:

Since the installation of a
gate in the second entrance, the
cave has undergone a gradual drying
out, with consequent deterioration
of formations. Some are becoming
crustular whilst approximately 80%
appear to be losing lustre. Whilst
no pronounced visual sign of
decadence is noticeable in the Jewel
Room extension there appears to be
lack of spontaneous growth or
activity.

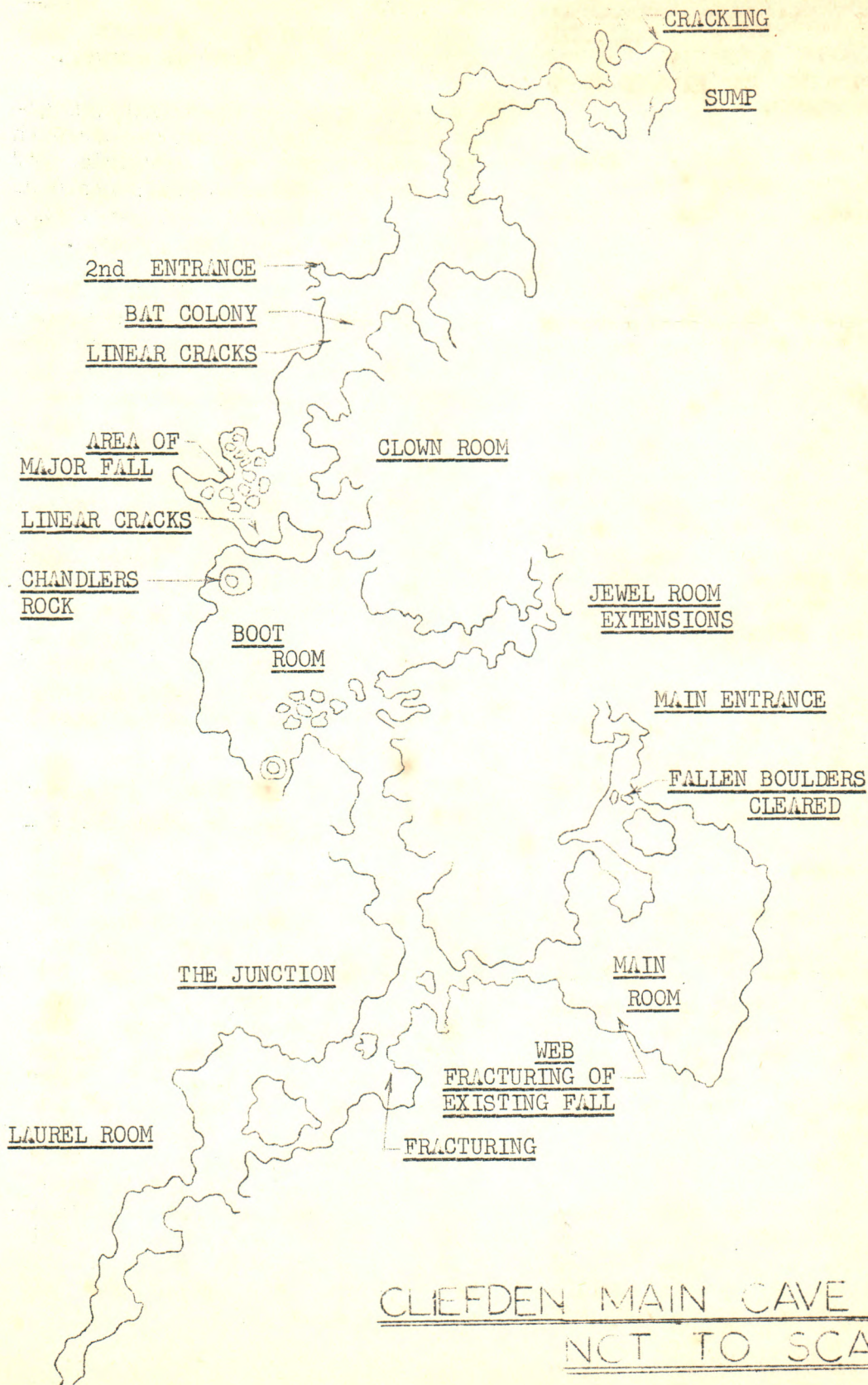
Increased moisture has promoted
an active cycle in the southern
sector, whether this is spasmodic or
long term would be merely speculat-
ive.

Ventilation:

Cave ventilation has noticeably
decreased in all but the southern
sector. The prior & obvious air flow
through the cave has practically
ceased, causing a slightly acrid
and musty atmosphere. Air fouled by
carbide operated lights and cig-
arette smoke takes approximately 24
hours to clear as against 3 hours in
the past.

Chiroptera:

A marked increase in the bat



population has been observed in the northern section, these being predominantly Rhinolophus megaphyllus, though several Myotis schreibersi were present. A new colony appears to be forming near the second entrance.

A ratio of 8 males, 2 females and 2 young was averaged from the sectors where specimens were classified.

The Jewell Room extension shows a slight increase in population as does the Southern section.

Recommendations:

S.U.S.S., in a report on this cave in 1957 stated it to be both dangerous and well into its inactive cycle; this was generally disregarded at the time, but the recent deterioration probably brought on by drought conditions warrants acceptance and attention to their report.

It is suggested that a minimum number of caving parties enter the cave until further investigation determines the safety of this obviously inherently unstable cave.

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ABSTRACTS AND REVIEWS.

Studies in Speleology--a new journal of considerable interest and a very high standard of production. Subscription 25s. (stg), or distributed free to members of the Association of the William Pengelly Cave Research Centre (sub. 20s. stg.).

The first issue discusses caves and aspects of cave science from Britain, Africa, Borneo, New Zealand and U.S.A. Aspects covered include archaeology, biology, geology and

conversation. This journal is planned to interpret the findings of cave scientists to non-scientists and is well worth the attention of any serious caver.

The Speleologist--a bi-monthly magazine well--printed on art paper with many photographs and articles of good general interest. Subs 24s.6 d. stg. to Circulation Manager, 24, Southernhay West, Exeter, Devon.

Aimed at the caver of general interests--plenty of interesting material in short articles, none of which go too deeply. Articles in the first two issues include descriptions of caves in England, Germany, Wales, New Zealand, and Spain. Other articles cover such matters as synthetic ropes, movie-making, photography in general, stay-down attempts (for and against), the Dead Sea Scrolls, water analysis, air flow measurement, cave-pearls, feeding underground, hydrology, and an exhibition on caving. News items, letters, humour and reviews of books round out the journal.

Although a less serious publication than Studies in Speleology, (or perhaps because of this) most cavers would find this an excellent investment. One serious matter which deserves comment is that the paper on synthetic ropes comes out with a strong recommendation for ulstron (or polypropylene) rope. The author completely ignores the problems of safe knotting which this rope presents and also appears completely ignorant of the weakening of this rope at low temperatures. It would appear that in British caves the latter point would be of considerable significance. My personal recommendation would be that this rope should never under any circumstances be used in Caving.