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C A L C I T E

ISSUE 1

The H.C.G. Magazine

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EDITORIAL

At long last Calcite makes a reappearance, but unfortunately the catalyst to this has been a tragedy. In this issue is the full report on a weekend trip to Bungonia, with only a few comments on the affair as a whole. It is left to the individual readers to analyse whichever portion interests them - any further information will be supplied on request.

One side issue from this affair was the bad press - a prominent Sydney newspaper screaming out "Cave Explorer Killed!". In an attempt to rectify this, the safety standards of caving societies was stressed, the fact of the existence of a National body was stated, etc. But - Is there a National body representative of ALL active cavers? Safety standards - where? SEARCH & RESCUE - is ours a lone voice in this State? Or must we all degenerate to the standard of a well known society, who stated "We don't need S & R, we never get lost."

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H.C.G. PUBLICATIONS DEPT.

Due for release within two weeks-

Investigation of Limestone at Buckaroo. 6 Pages. Details the structure of the deposit, with a very full report on the work carried out. This report includes an illustration of a very interesting fossil. However, there is no mention of other, adjacent deposits which, it is assumed, will be the subject of further reports.

Foul Air in Caves. 6 Pages. A preliminary report, detailing what is foul air, its effects, how it is formed, suggested lines for research safety methods and standards, with emphasis on Bungonia.

Other material on hand, in the course of editing, includes a preliminary report on Tuglow (both areas), and a full treatise on the practise and organisation of cave search & rescue. All of these will be on our standard quarto format to facilitate binding and indexing. The constitution, and safety code and code of ethics, will shortly be reduced to quarto size, to permit the inclusion in the manual, also to facilitate indexing, and to control updating.

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BUNGONIA TRIP 15-16th. August 1964.

PROLOGUE: This trip was planned to provide search and rescue training for members of H.C.G. both from the point of view of search and rescue practise, and organisation of teams and timing. To this end, it was assumed that two inexperienced cavers were overdue, necessitating a complete search of the area, and it was intended that if the "bunnies" were found, that minor injuries had occurred. It was also to arrange for members to cover unfamiliar caves where possible.



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MEMBERS: Evalt Crabb, <sup>(T-1)</sup> Robby Scheffer, Gerald Hopkins, Joan Crabb, John Rose, Arthur Rose, Roger Booth, Eddy Powell, Jim Kerr, Neil Hunter, David GantThompson, Barbara Kaye, Margaret Kaye, Eric Kaye, Mrs. Rita Kaye, Chris Rheynolds, Bill Bryant, Bob Russell, Kay Speechly, John Morgan, Tim Taylor, Frank Clark,.

Early Saturday morning, a list was taken of participating members, together with a full list of equipment available on the site. Some C.M.W. members in the area were contacted, but did not show any interest in the scheme. The fundamentals of search and rescue practise were explained to the members, with instructions to rest until assigned to a working party. As this was only a practise members were instructed to not descend beyond 15 CO2. and the Powell Pot was out of bounds for conservation purposes.

The sixteen members available for search were split up into four parties of four, the "bunnies" slipping away during this confusion. The total time elapsed from gathering to departure was 20 minutes. Jim Kerr leading party to Beck's Gully area, the Dinosaurs, and B33-4-5 etc.

Eric Kaye and party No.2 to part of first ~~xxxx~~ in the Drum, then cover the high level section of the B31.

The other two parties led by Robby Scheffer (No.3) Margaret Kaye (No.4), were despatched to the Grille Cave, to converge from the top and bottom of the cave respectively. The search began at 9-0am. All parties were to report back to camp, (near B31 sinkhole,) when tasks were completed, while those remaining at camp generally tidied up, and prepared to provide food for the searchers.

A group of U.N.S.W.S.S. members, camped at B31, were contacted, but when it became known that four of their party were due to return home in the afternoon, and that they had some pre-determined activities, no attempt was made to involve them in the search.

Party No.2 (Drum Cave) was visited, when it was noticed that by 10-15am the first drop had been inspected, but the ladders, etc ~~xxxx~~ were not packed ready to move until 10-35am. Consideration should be given to spooling the ladder required for long pitches from the surface, where practicable.

At 11-15am, parties 3 and 4 returned from the Grille Cave, to be met with refreshments at base camp.

By 11-25am, party was away to cover B15 and B8. Party No. 4 after minor ~~xxxx~~ was despatched to B16 and B42 at 11-30am. At 12-30pm, party No. 1 returned, for a cold lunch, and a mug of tea provided by the base staff. At 12-40pm, Barbara Kaye (from party No. 3) rushed into camp to report that Bob Russell was stuck in B8, in a situation.

This was investigated immediately, after asking for No. 1 party to be available as soon as possible at the cave; Bob was, indeed, in difficulty, in a "waist" about 12' down the second drop in the cave; unfortunately there was no room for another person below the top of this drop.

Initially, efforts were made to raise him by a life line, while Bob was persuaded to completely relax, but no avail. It was then suggested that a loop of rope could be passed down, to provide support under Bob's feet. This was somehow accomplished; then began the slow inching up, synchronising the pull on both ropes with the victim relaxing. The rescue was completed at 1-30pm.



As parties 2 and 4 had not yet returned from their assignments, this was investigated; party 4 being met on their way to B42, after having found B16 completely free of foul air. Party 2 were emerging from B31 at 1-55pm, after a very full investigation of high level dry passages.

At 2-10pm, party No.4 returned to camp, and party No.1 was sent to investigate B5,6 & 30, and adjoining area. At this stage, the weather looked like becoming dirty, and so it was decided to ignore many possibilities west of the road, to keep parties within easy reach.

The original intention was to cover the more remote caves in daylight hours to converge to the area adjacent to camp after dark.

Party No.2 returned to camp at 2-25pm, just as No.3 and 4 were leaving for B3 and B1 respectively; 35 minutes later party No.2 went to investigate B2 and B10.

By 3-30pm, the sky was becoming very dark; within the next 20 minutes parties 2,3 & 1 returned and were immediately despatched to the Fossil cave; on a previous occasion we had seen a storm result in a complete blocking of this entrance. The last party into the cave was contacted just inside the entrance, the position of the victims was released, with a request for everyone to withdraw from the cave. By 4-45pm all members had returned to camp—with not a cloud in the sky.

Although the programme was not completed, resulting in no further experience in rescue work, all principles applied in the early search appeared to work smoothly. One slight discord was the fact that to high a proportion of frog lights became unreliable under arduous conditions.

Sunday morning, after a "refreshing" night around the fire with U.N.S.W.S.S. and C.M.W. members, saw the members disperse over the area to follow their own interests. Three parties went to the Grille Cave, one to the Fossil cave, and one to Hogan's Hole, leaving a few people at camp.

At approximately 12-30pm, a young man staggered into our camp, saying "My mate's gone over the cliff.", and collapsed. Present in the camp at the time were Joan Crabb, Bob Russell and Tim Taylor. Tim and Bob took the stranger to the top of the hill to determine the location, while Joan went to the Grille cave to contact myself. This contact was made at 12-50pm. Meanwhile, John Morgan and Frank Clark had returned to camp, then Tim and Frank drove to Bungonia township to ring for assistance.

I immediately returned to camp, leaving two to pick up our gear, and two to contact the parties lower down the Grille cave. (POINT: the latter two were instructed to state that there was a emergency, and everybody was required at camp, due to hazy detail at that stage. This was found to cause some distress due to the conviction that our members were involved, in a result that a vague report ~~xxxxx~~ to camp that a second emergency had arisen in the Grille Cave.)

By the time I had reached camp, the party at Hogan's Hole had returned, prepared for the rescue and had obtained a rough location. From the statements, it was believed the accident had occurred at the side of Bungonia Creek, probably directly below Adam's Lookout. It was also stated that David Hancock (the victim.) was alive, and caught in a tree. This first party led by Arthur Rose, left immediately. The C.M.W. members, and a group of four independent cavers/walkers were contacted, and immediately made themselves available. Eric Kaye was asked to supervise over the teams down in the valley; and a system of visual communication was established. By 1-15pm three parties had left the camp, the latter parties carrying a few torches, blankets etc. One party of three was retained at camp to provide assistance for the



CONTINUED.

One party of 3 was retained at camp to provide assistance for the ambulance men, yet to arrive; while the womenfolk started preparing food, soup etc, for supplies raiding rucksacks. ~~RM~~ Robert Hyde (victims companion) was moved into a sleeping bag in a tent, and given some food. It was apparent that he had suffered no injury greater than slight cuts, but was suffering from exhaustion and shock. His story pieced together from incoherent statements, told of two people arriving at Bungonia at approx. 10-0am, and descended somewhere upstream of the Gorge. They were using a rope, later found to consist of short lengths to form a 100' length. The victim, carrying a rifle and bayonet, appeared to find some difficulty climbing due to his riding boots. Contrary to his mates advice, he retained his rifle, bayonet and riding boots "but untied the rope." Hyde said. HE fell about 50', crashing through a tree at the foot of the bluff. Hyde climbed down and later claimed that "Hancock was alive." And then ~~rm~~ went for assistance via the Gorge and the scree slope at the downstream end. Names and addresses were given, together with the statement that they were due home at Goulbourn at 6-0pm.

Meanwhile, two of the U.N.S.W.S.S. members had been packing their gear ready to leave when the task was over, and a girl member of C.M.W. was similarly clearing their camp. As soon as the U.N.S.W.S.S. members were available, the party held at camp set off to the search, carrying rucksack frames for stretchers, lights, etc.,

Two police cars arrived at 1.45pm., with Senior Constable Col. Hanson (ex Cliff Rescue) and two constables. They questioned Hyde, were told of the arrangements made up to that stage, then relaxed until the first signal was received from the search teams. No attempt was made by the police to contact any ambulance or other medical assistance at this stage.

At 2.00pm. a signal was received from Eric Kaye, indicating that everything was under control down in the valley.

One of the local farmers drifted up shortly after 2.00pm., and offered some suggestions to the police about the best routes into the valley. A police car went to fetch the other local farmer, and to radio for an ~~amb~~ ambulance. Fortunately, the police viewed the advice of the locals with little faith, as this advice displayed an alarming lack of knowledge of the area.

A constant watch was kept from the top of the ridge for a visual signal from the valley - none was forthcoming. At 3.15pm. Dave Thompson ran up the slope to report that the victim had been found, and was dead. All search parties were together at the site, which was actually on a pile of rock, right hand side, a few yards in from the upstream end of the gorge.

At 3.18pm., an ambulance arrived. While the police were being fitted out with boots, etc., from the camp, arrangements were made to provide a trail if lights up the accessible route from the gorge. The police request for a pulley and additional rope was also met. Finally, at 3.50pm., the police, accompanied by Bob Chapman and Bob Edwards of U.N.S.W.S.S. left camp for the gorge. Eddy Powell, Barbara and Margaret Kaye went off to Goulburn at 4.00pm. to pick up cigarettes, etc., and to contact Sydney to arrange for parents to be notified.



At approx. 4.15pm., a press representative appeared, but no detail was released at this stage. It was suggested that he return at 8.00pm. or later. A few tourists came into the the area but no attempt was made by any to come into the camp area.

Between 5.00pm. & 5.30pm. our car returned from Goulburn. Dave Thompson and Elaine ? (C.M.W.) were despatched to meet the rescue team where the route left the creek bed, taking with them some warm clothing and additional lights. At about this time, or a little earlier, John Sharp (U.N.S.W.S.S.) returned to camp, being upset by finding the victim and helping recover the body from the rockpile.

At approx. 5.45pm., the press car returned. This time, it was requested that he return to Goulburn to obtain some provisions, such as soup, etc. Fortunately, he went.

It was believed that the police had informed Hyde that his mate was dead; however, this was not so. John Sharp was trapped into breaking the news by Hyde.

From 6.00pm. on, the members at camp were pressed into service to complete the route marking up the scree slope, and before long the rescue party was sighted. However, we had no voice contact, and the rescue team seemed to ignore the lit trail, and chose instead to ascend by a very dangerous route up a loose scree spine. Later it was learnt that the police had chosen this route despite our members imploring that they should follow the lit trail. Some of the rescue team did, in fact, follow the easy route, and it was assumed that these people had taken part in the early part of the rescue.

We returned to camp and checked that the catering system was working smoothly. An advance party came in requesting assistance on the slope, and an ambulance man requested a lit trail to some accessible position at the top of the climb. The few people who had drifted back to camp were again pressed into service, easing the load up the last stages of the ascent.

The recovery method used appeared to be quite simple. A pulley was lashed to a tree, and a rope through this pulley ran down to the stretcher. The victim's body, wrapped in a blanket, was lashed to the stretcher, which was then supported off the ground by four people. Forward motion was provided by the team pulling on the long rope, leaving those at the stretcher to keep it off the ground.

At approx. 7.45pm., the body was in the ambulance, and by 8.00pm. all people had been accounted for; the press rep. had also returned. By 8.45pm., after soup, cross-compliments, etc., the non-H.C.G. participants were preparing to leave for home (our members were staying in the area, as most were incapable of driving safely) when Hyde's relatives appeared on the scene, due to his being overdue. Immediately the camp became the scene of almost incredible hysteria on the part of the female relatives.

When the party finally returned home, at various times up to 1.00pm Monday, it was found that the contact system had broken down, and no word had been received by some parents until at least six hours after radio and newspaper reports of a fatality at Bungonia.



#### COMMENTS.

(1) There is no doubt that every civilian involved performed magnificently. It is considered that the elapsed time in the search was the minimum humanly possible.

(2) Radio gear, though available, was left at home so that the practise would not have an additional complication. Sunday proved that any communication that depends on line of sight is absolutely useless.

(3) Had the victim been alive, but seriously injured, the policy of the police in not calling for medical assistance until the victim was found would have had much more significance. Well over two hours was wasted due to this. The victim's relatives were to be informed after the body was returned to Goulburn. Surely it would be better for this to take place as soon as possible after the facts are known, to minimise apprehension, and to prevent incidents at the site of a tragedy.

(4) It is suggested that the trip leader issue a statement for a press report. The misreporting that occurred was due to the Sydney newspapers receiving a second-hand police report.

(5) It would be desirable to have a complete and reliable home contact list covering every person on every trip, regardless of which society they may be from.

There is at the moment, a large gap in this report; covering the activity of the search parties. At the time of writing, Eric Kaye was not available so his report must follow.

E. Crabb. Trip Leader

#### BY THE WAY ---

We have run out of space; we are a fast-moving society; by next issue then, reports on a slide night at the Warrens', the perpetuation of the president at another party, on a trip to Cliefden, etc, will be stale.

And finally, from this week's reading -

"Listen, my young friend, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, half so much worth doing, as simply messing about in caves "



# AUSTRALIAN SPELEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

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P.O. BOX 198  
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24th. May, 1965.

The Secretary,  
Highland Caving Group,  
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N.S.W.

I have been dismayed to have heard this morning of the unfortunate death of John Bryant.

Probably all of us in Australian Speleology have known that we must one day see an accident occur in Australian Caving - it is an inevitable price which we pay for the adventure of exploration. However, this does not ease the shock or pain when it occurs.

I am certain that I speak the feelings of every sincere speleologist in Australia when I extend to your Group and to John's family, very sincere sympathy on this unfortunate occasion. Inevitably there will be those who criticise, and who say that people should not take such risks - but I am quite convinced that society would be the poorer if there were not people willing to take risks in the quest of exploration.

Very sincerely,



Elery Hamilton-Smith.

