

Box 35,  
The Union,  
Sydney University.



Edited by the  
Hon. Secretary

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### EDITORIAL

Apparently serious cave accidents just don't happen to S.U.S.S. members. Is this the result of safe caving practices or exceptionally good luck? Reports from overseas speleological groups tend to support the latter concept. For example, New Zealand speleological groups have recently suffered two serious cave accidents within a period of six months. As we have been fortunate enough not to have experienced such unpleasant occurrences, we can learn a lot from the experience of others.

One New Zealand speleo was seriously injured while caving in Papamaru in June last year. "...Her foothold was a substantial looking piece of formation which suddenly broke away. She fell in a sitting position for about six feet, hitting the lumbar region of her spine on a large block of limestone, and slid down on to a patch of sandy mud." The subsequent rescue took 14 hours, even though the fall occurred about a half mile, or 20 minutes trogging, from the entrance. Despite a determined effort a doctor could not reach the scene of the accident, so after an all too brief instruction course one of the rescuers was able to give the patient a morphine injection to relieve the intense pain. "Progress along the stream passage depended on the stamina of those underneath who crawled in the stream on hands and knees, or walked doubled over at the waist, depending on the height of the roof, while those who could steadied the stretcher from any available position." "The patient was persuaded to have a warm drink, but it was not long before she shared it with those below." "Meanwhile up top the newspapers were certainly having a field day. Always avid for any sensational news about caving, this little episode had additional elements of drama and human endurance." "Underground the rescuers eventually reached the short 'cat run' that led to the second tomb..." "In places it was only two feet wide and thirty inches high. The transportation of a six foot inflexible load seemed almost impossible and man could hardly be distinguished from mud in that purgatorial passage." The patient was lifted to ground level at 4:45 am.

The other cave accident occurred during an expedition to the Mt. Owen area in January this year. The scene was the 125 feet 'Shower-bath Pitch' 600 feet down the 'Giants Staircase'. The caver was being belayed from below using a lifeline and pulley. "The rope was running through John's hands steadily, and he could see Lee's light coming nearer down the shaft, until just before halfway..." "John had begun to call

upward when there was a cry and Lee came crashing down the shaft like a falling star. There was not even a pull on the lifeline - it just went slack. John rushed forward with the idea of breaking Lee's fall, but arrived only in time to stop him falling backwards into the pool. Lee said that he could not feel his legs, and thought they were both broken". Lee apparently tied a correct bowline round himself, but used a faulty knot to tie the waist loop to the lifeline."

What can we learn from these experiences? The first incident shows that serious accidents are not restricted to long pitches or difficult ladder climbs. Also this was an accident in the true sense of the word, in that no amount of skill or experience could have prevented it. Obviously then, it is important to be prepared, with a practiced and properly equipped rescue team available. The second case indicates that even skilled and experienced cavers, using proper techniques, are not immune from errors. It would seem that the odds are against those who do not understand and practice correct caving techniques. Also we should note that the second trip was well prepared, with a stretcher and medical supplies included in the essential equipment list. By some mysterious means S.U.S.S. has enjoyed 15 years of caving without a serious accident. But the number of near misses, which each of us has probably experienced at some time, are uncounted. If these close shaves are insufficient to show us that our luck won't hold for ever, surely we can't overlook the message contained in the experience of others, which is so heavily underlined with pain, utter physical exhaustion, and mental anguish of all concerned.

#### ERRATUM

Newsletter Vol 3 No 2  
Page 1, Item 3. Delete  
"...one shilling per  
day..." and insert  
"...five shillings per  
trip..."

#### 99TH COMMITTEE MEETING

Several proposals from the A.S.F.N.S.W.S.C.C. were discussed by the meeting. The first, a suggestion that a hut be erected at Jenolan for the use of speleos, was rejected. However the idea of a combined N.S.W. or Sydney search and rescue organization was well received, and the matter is being investigated further. Also matters of general policy relating to Speleo Societies visiting Yagby were decided. Harley Wright was admitted to full membership of the Society.

#### 49TH GENERAL MEETING

Highlights of the G.M. on 12th Sept. were improved attendance (30), extreme brevity on the business side, and some excellent films. A move to abolish the S.U.S.S. Code of Ethics arose from discussion of the opposite intention, and once again demonstrated that raising such debatable matters - no matter how good the intention - only serves to stir up fruitless reiteration of old arguments. To facilitate the writing up of accurate minutes, the proceedings were recorded on magnetic tape. As the Society insists on narrative minutes, this should make the Assistant Secretary's job easier. Two films were shown; "Faune Cavernicole" and "Pierre St Martin". The latter originally had a French soundtrack, with commentary by none other than Casteret. A translation was made and a

complete soundtrack of our own was recorded on magnetic tape and run in synchronism with the film.

#### DISTINGUISHED MEMBER

Brian J. O'Brien, inaugural president of A.S.F., and Honorary Life Member of S.U.S.S., who was honoured by N.S.S. in 1960, is once again in the news. A lengthy article of his, on the earth's magnetic field and radiation in space, was published in a recent issue of "THE SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN".

#### YEAR BOOK 1963

Members may obtain this invaluable publication free, from the Secretary.

Errata Steve James, mistakenly placed in the Prospective Members List, is an Associate Member.  
Graham Fraser's telephone number is 952209, (not 852209).

Alterations & Additions Harley Wright; transfer to Full Members List.

Peter Knowland, 204 Beccroft Rd. Cheltenham, 862756; include in Full Members List.

Jeanette Partridge; postal address, 7 Mears Ave., Randwick.

NOTE Please notify the Secretary of any further errors or omissions.

#### SUSS JOURNAL

Dave Drummond, editor, reports that the next issue of the Journal - which will be available shortly - will be an extra giant, ("...get 'em all drab clean in no time..."), king-size, packed chock full of nourishing morsels of speleological information. Tom Landecker has resigned as editor of a second journal, so publication of the material already gathered is temporarily held up. Are there any takers for the editorship?

#### TRIP REPORTS

Jenolan, 3rd-4th August, 1963.

Leader: Jeff Hinwood.

Calcite formations in Imperial and Temple of Baal caves were photographed using ultraviolet irradiation, wavelength 3500 Å. White, green and yellow fluorescence and after-glow were observed. Photography was unsuccessful as insufficient filtering allowed uv-radiation to reach the film. The Lucas Cave rockpile was checked for movement and gauge readings were noted.

Jenolan, 3rd-5th August, 1963.

Leader: Tom Landecker.

Wiburd's Lake Cave was further investigated, and it was found that

#### S.U.S.S. FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1963

Celebrating the founding, in 1948, of the Sydney University Speleological Society

HOLME AND SUTHERLAND ROOMS  
6.30 pm.

Charge: 21/-

Please pay the Treasurer

Dress: Reasonably Formal

(Please contact Tom Landecker, FL4931, immediately, so that numbers can be determined)



the lake had virtually disappeared, leaving a flowing stream which would be difficult to reach because of the slippery mud slope leading to it.

Wombeyan, 10th-12th August 1963.

Leader: John Lotz

This trip included Biology in the Fig Tree, photography in the Palace, general exploration of Bullio, and the discovery of a new cave. Batting was very successful as 108 recoveries were made. Also, 82 blood slides were prepared to check for haemoparasites. John Lotz found the new cave while searching for Bouverie cave. It consists of a 200 feet long, almost horizontal, dry, calcitised stream bed running approximately NE - SW. This passage, up to 20 feet high and 10 feet wide, is entered roughly at its mid point through a 60 feet deep chimney which opens out at the surface into a circular sinkhole. A cross-section of the cave resembles an inverted "T". Showing wonderful imagination, and with appropriate University flavouring, the proposed name for the cave is "THE OVAL TEA ROOM". (Please, no "Cave" on the end!).

Bungonia, four trips.

Leader: Ian Williams

A small party of wombats, thinly disguised as S.U.S.S. members, have recently spent 4 weekends digging in B31. Enthusiastically following an air draught, they dug a total of 40 feet at a rate of about 2 feet per hour only to find that the small cavern at the end of the dig had been previously entered via a flattener. However from the experience of this dig came the idea of using a coal scuttle, with ropes to pull it to and fro, for shifting earth along the narrow passage to a convenient dump.

Wee Jasper, 30th Aug. - 1st Sept. 1963.

Leader: John Diment

Three S.U.S.S. and two Canberra trogs joined forces to explore Mr. Greg Ward's property about a mile south of the General Store on the west bank of the Goodradigbee River. The latest on thermal activity at Wee Jasper is a report of a sudden increase in the temperature of an efflux. The property owner said that this had occurred after heavy rain. Several holes were investigated, and one was found to contain a warm lake which is about 25 feet wide. The group would like to express their thanks to Mr. Ward for his co-operation and hospitality.

#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Erik Halbert has changed his address. New address: 26 Third Ave., Epping.

#### NOTICES

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1963

Concrete pouring at the Knowland Block, Lot 1, Sagars Rd., Kenthurst. The usual Knowland hospitality, in the form of a barbecue conforming with the best S.U.S.S. traditions, will be provided for the workers. Please contact Peter Knowland.

NULLARBOR EXPEDITION 1963-4.

Leaving Adelaide 28th December 1963 and returning 18th January 1964, the expedition will visit all the known deep caves on the Plain, and will travel as far west as Oocklebidy in Western Australia, covering a total of 2500 miles. Full cost will be £35, and a deposit of £8 with application form, will be required by 1st November, 1963. For further details contact the Secretary, Ted Anderson (933157).