

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SYDNEY UNIVERSITY SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Box 35,
The Union,
Sydney University
N.S.W. 2006

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Edited by Ron Murray

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Volume 9, Number 3

August, 1969

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

AUGUST	23-24	SKIING	Rick Crowle 44-7415
OCTOBER	4-5-6 (Long Weekend)	YARRANGOBILLY	Ron Murray 649-8620
JANUARY, 1970		NULLARBOR PLAINS	Rick Crowle
		NEW ZEALAND	Ron Murray
SEPTEMBER	4	GENERAL MEETING Top Floor, Geography Building	7.30 p.m. Details p.14
OCTOBER	2	GENERAL MEETING Same Place	7.30 p.m.

The next meeting of the Sydney University Speleological Society will be held on Thursday, September 4, 1969, on the top floor of the Geography Building, Sydney University, at 7.30 p.m. It is hoped to show some films of European Caving.

X MARKS THE SPOT. If a cross appears in the box below, it means that you are now considered unfinancial by the Society and this will be the last Newsletter you will receive unless you pay your subscription to the Treasurer without delay. (\$2.50 for Full and Associate members; 50¢ for Prospectives).

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Also a note to those Prospective members who joined at the beginning of the year: Your membership expires next month and you must pay another 50¢ if you wish to continue membership. ALSO at the next meeting an auction of gear formerly belonging to Barbara Dew will be held. If you need a new pack, trog-suit, etc, this will be a good chance.

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ENDS AND ODDS

Old SUSS Journals are in the offing. Those available are: 1:1, 1:2, 1:3, 2:2, 3:1, 4:1, 4:2, 5:2, 6:2, 7:1. Cost of these is 15¢ except for 7:1 (50¢).

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Alison Jessup is back from a grand tour of Hong Kong and Japan, lasting 1½ years.

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WHY not take a trip somewhere so that the front page won't look so naked?

In response to numerous requests, we here reprint an article which appeared in SUSS journal 4:2 (December, 1957).

40,000 GROTTOS

(The after effects of reading an entire gift set of Casteret in one afternoon)

Five kilometres from the village of Essuy-Porc, the torrent of X..... disappears in a hillside. It reappears 500 metres further up the hillside and flows into the Garonne. The reasons for this curious behaviour are based on hydro-speleological laws which it is not in the nature of this work to include. Although no-one had actually succeeded in following the underground river, or indeed, even entering the cave, I established the course of the river by emptying 3 tons of fluorescein into the disappearance point. The magic green colour soon spread all over the south of France, across the English Channel, and is reported in at least two caves in Cuba. The suggestion, however, that Greenland derives its name from this is, of course, false.

I was very determined to enter this cave somehow and to explore its mysteries. Its very inaccessability was a challenge to me, and like every natural athlete who sees a challenge, I constantly dreamt of conquering it. (I used to dream of some other interesting things too, most of which lie outside the scope of this book.) It happened that one day I was sheltering from a blizzard in a draughty shepherd's hut in a valley, eating some cheese sandwiches and candles (things which I always carry with me), when I noticed a small hole high up in the cliff face. The climb was arduous as the hole was 400 metres above the valley floor and the rock face was smooth and overhanging, but 30 minutes' climbing saw me at the top.

I paused at the entrance to light my carbide lamp, and entered the cave. The passage narrowed down to a cat-hole, which, cat-like, I soon negotiated. The scene that awaited me on the other side was both awe-inspiring in its splendour and fascinating in its beauty. I was in a cavern of enormous size full of the most beautiful calcite deposits I have ever seen. It was a veritable fairy bower, which words cannot describe. I collected twelve oolites and demolished a forty-foot straw for setting up in my private museum and pressed on, spellbound. A surprise awaited me. On the floor I found a large stock of pure gold potsherds, plates and stone axes, definite proof of the caves having been previously occupied. I passed these by for I had

decided to explore all of this remarkable cavern in the few hours I had to spare.

I soon found the underground river and followed it for 3 5/8 miles (this guess was proved correct by subsequent survey) to a siphon. After hesitating for about five seconds I decided to force this siphon. I stripped off and plunged in. The water, supercooled to 28° F., took my breath away. The current was fairly strong, but I negotiated the 50 yards underwater and emerged.

The cave here was dull and uninteresting, and my progress was soon stopped by a huge waterfall. I stood at the top of this terrifying blackness and tried to guess how deep it might be but the river seemed to be falling into the bowels of the earth and the chasm had all the appearance of being bottomless. My exploration was halted here, so I made my way back to the surface, well pleased with my day's work.

Two months later I returned with my wife and she lowered me 1000 feet down a rope. Still I did not reach the bottom. It is a credit to her wonderful fortitude that she could carry the 1000 feet of rope up the cliff face outside and then belay me up and down the chasm. Since then the bottom has been reached at 1010 feet from the top of the waterfall.

The cave is now very popular and is constantly being explored, however nothing new has been added to my original exploration. It is tragic that three young speleologists have been drowned in the siphon. Swimming this siphon without the proper gear is foolish and dangerous. I find it hard to have sympathy for anyone who indulges in this kind of folly. The crystal cavern is not as good as it used to be because vandals and souvenir hunters have removed most of the formation. Something should be done to stop this wanton desecration.

-Anon.

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REVIEW

C. Fieldhouse

"The Weathering of Limestone, with Particular Reference to the Carboniferous Limestones of Northern England" by M.M. Sweeting, in "Essays on Geomorphology", edited by G.H. Dury. (London, Heinemann)

This is an excellent article on types and rates of weathering of limestone in Northern England. The article centres on the surface weathering with excellent descriptive and quantitative details. Interesting interpretation is given on present landforms in relation to past glacial conditions. Also not often seen readings on the pH values of water in karst areas. Well worth reading.