

## REMINISCENCES OF CAVING

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I came to caving through Scouting and Captain J. Maitland Thomson's proposed trip to the Nullarbor Plains at the end of 1954. David Taylor, who was studying geology, had found reference to Correll's cave, presumably in some Mines Department report, and it was decided that a trip should be made to Curramulka to give the Nullarbor participants some experience underground. I missed the first trip there, but attended a second on 27–29 August 1954. In the event I was unable to get leave to go to the Nullarbor, and instead went on a marvellous trip to the South-East. I kept a logbook of outdoor activities from April 1954 until July 1956, and this has allowed me to be fairly precise about caving experiences during this critical period.

My working life began in 1951 as a Cadet Draughtsman with the Electricity Trust, studying for my Mechanical Draughtsman's Certificate at the School of Mines. As an intermediate step between school and work, however, I went on the 'Senior Scout Adventure' to Fraser Island, now a much-sought-after tourist destination but then a largely untouched wilderness. We were towed out to the island in a hulk used to transport logs, but one of my older colleagues remarked he had visited the place as a commando during the war and arrived the easy way—by parachuting into Lake Mackenzie. We travelled by bus all the way from Adelaide, and found that the road signs had all been removed in Queensland to confuse the Japanese—now they would be written in Japanese—but they certainly confused us as well. On return I commenced work in one of the Trust's Hilton workshops, and never have I felt so tired due to having to stand at the repetitive physical task set me! It must have done good as I coped with strenuous hiking and later caving activities without, as I recall, any undue discomfort.

I was a member of the Linden Park Scout Group, graduating to a Rover, but found that work and part-time studies did not allow me the time to undertake leadership of the junior sections. There was a general push to eliminate Rovers, who were considered to be 'free-loaders', and I joined in with others from the Gilberton Rovers in particular to establish an informal Rover Ramblers Crew to draw the dwindling numbers together. We increasingly felt the cool draft of headquarter's displeasure and embraced the opportunity to go on a Scout trip to the caves on the Nullarbor Plains at the end of 1954. This expedition was to be conducted by Captain J. ('Jack') Maitland Thomson, a master mariner who had been an apprentice on the now-restored sailing ship *James Craig*, later ship's pilot, and finally Harbor Master of Port Adelaide. He had become interested in the Nullarbor and its caves while stationed at Thevenard in the 1930s, being appointed to the permanent staff of the Harbors Board in November 1932 at the age of thirty, and had even learnt to fly in order to be able to spot caves from the air. He developed the technique of burning magnesium powder for taking photographs underground, and on one trip took Harbors Board surveyor Fred Ellis with him to map Koonalda Cave. His exploits were written up in *Walkabout* magazine in 1947 and the

*Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia* in 1950. When eventually formal membership forms for the Group were produced, Doctor was crossed out, Mister was crossed out, Mrs was crossed out, Miss was crossed out, and Captain written in.

As already mentioned, a perceived need for some previous experience led to a visit to Correll's cave at Curramulka. I am not sure of who was involved other than Dave Taylor, Elery Hamilton-Smith, Noel Mollet and, I gather, Cec Giles. I fancy it was a fortnight later when I went on a second week-end trip, on 27–29 August 1954, and this time those present were Noel, Elery, Dave, Cec, geologist David Pegum, and Les Walton, with certainly at least me, Arnold 'Burly' Wright and son Peter on our first venture underground. 'Burly' was a very popular and respected Scout leader, and as might be expected from his nickname was both short in stature and of slender build. We left at 6 p.m. on a Friday and camped in the Minlaton Scout Hall, this being in fact the ticket office of the local showgrounds. General exploration of the cave in the morning was followed by an attempt at survey by Dave Pegum. Our hosts, the Corrells, joined us for tea and at their house afterwards put on a slide show from a recent trip to the Northern Territory. On Sunday morning Dave Taylor found a 'spider beetle' and old flowstone containing bones. However, the notable feature of the cave was of course the skeletal remains lying on the surface, amongst which were the skulls of the locally-extinct *Bettongia leseuri*, with their very distinctive teeth.

The usual pattern of going into recess for the lead-up to the exam season meant that it was 3–5 December 1954 before I went on my next trip, to examine the Town Cave at Curramulka. The other people involved this time were Mollet, Hamilton-Smith, Taylor, Scouts Des Hurcombe and Roger Textor, and Gordon Gross from the South Australian Museum. I am pretty sure we descended the 100-foot deep vertical shaft using Captain Thomson's rope ladder, which had to be first assembled by passing thumb knots under each wooden rung in true nautical fashion. Then finally dis-assembled! The shaft is a bell shape and at that time had a wooden lining for the first ten feet and rotten pump supports and staging all the way down to the water-filled sump. There was a feeling of precariousness in gaining the side passage near the bottom, and even more so in reaching out for ladder and safety line when returning. Numerous small bones, a *nototherium* tooth, and a several natives chippings of a stone possibly originating from the Cooper Creek area were found in the cave, and good decoration was still to be observed despite vandalism. Saturday night's entertainment was a showing of Tex's European slides, and next day Correll's cave was again visited.

As commented, I was unable to get leave from work to go to the Nullarbor, and instead made a ground-breaking trip to the Mount Gambier area with Elery Hamilton-Smith, Scout Shop manager David Gerner, and Dave Taylor in Elery's 2-cylinder Bradford van.

We left in late evening on Christmas Day and were able to do our good turn for the day by extinguishing a burning doormat at the Ki Ki garage, possibly the result of a carelessly thrown cigarette butt. Arriving at the Mount at first light, there was a brief inspection of the Town Cave before we found the Scout campsite, a very pleasant block of saplings and

bracken on the back of the Mount itself, and caught up on a little sleep. A lazy afternoon was occupied in a tour of the crater lakes and swimming.

Next morning an attempt was made to penetrate the Town Cave, but whether or not there was an extension, as reputed, it appeared to be now silted up and a foray was made towards Mount Schank. Water-filled sinkholes marked on hundred plans and geological maps to the west of the Mount Schank pub such as the Little Blue Lake, Wurwurlooloo, Ela Elap, and another around which the road actually deviates [Goulden's] and in which we had a swim were easily found. Continuing in this direction next day we found the inevitably-named Hell's Hole in the Caroline Forest after a delay helping a motorcyclist who had come off at high speed on the Port MacDonnell road. This large sinkhole which is 90 feet deep to the water has overhangs preventing access to the bottom, and although a pump had been installed at the bottom at some time, it was obvious from the large number of artefacts found both on the general surface and together with foodscraps—bones and emu eggshells—in the rockshelters in the side of the hole that aboriginals had found some way of obtaining water. Names dating back to 1860 including that of Mawson were scratched in the side of the rockshelter, some evidently incised by a stonemason.

That night Elery and I inspected a cave within the town area at Mount Gamber that had been filled with rubbish including broken glass, reputedly from a nearby brewery. So at midnight we found ourselves at the bottom of Engelbrecht's Cave viewing a remarkably transparent and still pool of water whose temperature discouraged further investigation. Next day we visited Port MacDonnell and continued across to Donovan's Landing, where the Glenelg River sweeps briefly into South Australia. A motor boat was hired but soon broke down, so a rowing boat was instead obtained for five shillings instead of the original twenty-five! Various cavities in the limestone cliffs just above water level were investigated.

On the fifth day we proceeded to Naracoorte, and immediately investigated a cave for the Tourist Bureau. After negotiating a narrow bottle-neck at the bottom of a 50-foot vertical shaft, killing a snake on the way, it was found that the rest of the cave was extremely dangerous, with loose rock and piles of soil from surface openings. A Glenelg Scout [Peter Wyld] whose father was assistant curator showed us through the Alexandra cave next day, and visits were made to the Bat and Big Caves. A niche in the latter is proudly pointed out as the place from which the 'petrified aboriginal' was stolen in, I fancy, the 1860s.

The return to Adelaide was made through Tantanoola, investigation of the Three Sisters Cave there being discouraged by a considerable depth of butcher's offal in the entrance. On a day of searing heat (114°F) and north winds, the Bradford had a struggle to make its way home up the Coorong, but the engine being air-cooled, the van continued while flasher and more modern cars speeding with the wind had to stop and let their radiators cool down.

During the long weekend in January 1955 the Bottomless Blowhole at Mount Remarkable was located by the Rover Ramblers Crew. Taylor, Sexton, George Grachanin and Errol Smith went up by train, the excursion return fare being the princely sum of 32 shillings and ninepence. To put this cost in context, I commenced work in 1951 at three guineas a week, with school fees paid by the Electricity Trust, and one of the apprentices from the Barossa

with whom I worked got £2.15 but had to pay £2.10 board in the Big Smoke. The following year there was a change of policy, and while my wage went to seven pounds odd, I had to pay my own fees, which the Trust evidently considered would lead to greater application to studies. At this time however there were still returned servicemen studying under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme (CRTS) and they were both widely experienced and deeply motivated so that they were an example to the rest of us as well as being very stiff competition and setting a high standard. Many work colleagues had indeed fought in the Great War, an experience which still left its mark. In 1951 I was challenged to name the ex-servicemen amongst perhaps twenty-five workmates and was a hundred percent correct in my assessment.

In the evening, following a hike across the ranges from Port Germein to the campsite on Mount Remarkable Creek opposite Gibraltar Rock, we met Noel Mollet, Cec Giles and Ian Dunlop, who had come up by car. Ian was an experienced English caver who was now working for the ABC. The next morning was spent finding the Blowhole, but my notes merely say that it appeared to be at least 120 feet deep and that cave crickets were observed, so a plumbline was evidently used without a descent being made beyond the opening. Perhaps the well-known method using an aneroid barometer was used—the barometer is tied on the end of a length of string and lowered to the bottom, then hauled up and the length of string measured. In the afternoon the bridle path was followed up the Creek to Grey's Hut. This is or was an intriguing slab house rather than mere hut, and it is said that the Grey children used to cross Mount Remarkable itself to go to school at Melrose. The Grey's Hut Cave is nearby and was seen to be about fifty feet long and contain old decoration. Nevertheless the cave yielded a bone spear barb evidently brought in by a wounded animal. An excess fare of eight shillings and sevenpence was required to cross from Melrose by rail to join the train to Adelaide at Gladstone!

I see from *CEGSA News* 51.1 that the inaugural meeting of the Group, at which the name Cave Exploration Group of South Australia was adopted, was held on 19 April 1955, a Tuesday. The 'minutes', which are little more than an agenda nevertheless succinctly set out the principles that have guided caving since, and are in the hand of Elery Hamilton-Smith, the first president. He was not even recorded as being present although there were apologies from H.M. Hale of the S.A. Museum, S.B. Dickinson of the Mines Department, and Alex Baker of the Tourist Bureau. The membership of the committee was also vague although the names of Textor, Dunlop and Sexton were mentioned, and there was certainly no announcement of the inaugural field trip that was held at the end of that very week.

Whatever doubts there are about the achievements of the first trip to Mount Remarkable, there are none about the second made on the Anzac weekend, 22–25 April 1955. The party comprised Jim Porter, Cec Giles, Tom McIntee, Taylor, Ian and Rosemary Dunlop, Darryl Morgan, Dave Chinner, Sexton, and Mollet. In later years, after an ignominious end to his studies at Roseworthy, Darryl admitted that he was a fertiliser salesman and was asked by Taylor if he manufactured it himself.

The party members were lowered the 125 feet to the crest of the rockpile on a single rope, descending the last forty feet or so however via a parallel secondary shaft which has three windows across into the main shaft. There were frogs at the bottom, and one would expect snakes, and there was certainly a deeper crevasse to one side of the rock pile. As a result of this exercise I produced my first cave map—very much a sketch map—and one consisting of vertical profiles and cross sections rather than the more usual plan supplemented by the other views. On the second day we again visited Grey's Hut and the nearby cave, then climbed Mount Remarkable. Later in the day we spoke to a storekeeper in Melrose and said we had been down the blowhole: 'You can't have been, its bottomless!'. We were also amused to see that rather than advertisements for fizz made from spring water, there was one for 'F.C. Grubb's First Prize Pure *Rainwater* Drinks'.

With the increasing interest in caving, we were now equipped with miner's lamps but the question arose of where we could obtain supplies of calcium carbide. The obvious place was a big hardware store like Harris Scarfe's, so in went a stalwart. 'Try the plumbing section.' Nothing. The lamp section drew a blank, but at least the cycle department brought forth fond reminiscences from the older assistants about the use of carbide lamps in their youth. 'Try the plumbing section.' 'But we've been there.' 'What, the heavy plumbing in the basement?' There it was, in two-pound tins ready crushed to a suitable size. In later years a iron cask containing large chunks of carbide was given to the group, as I remember it, by Crapp & Hawks, an engineering supply firm less reverently known as 'Shit and Eagles'. I had by this time transferred to the Burnside Council and after hours could make use of a road roller and an old concrete floor to attempt to break down the pieces. Not a hope in life, and I don't recall how we managed reduce the carbide to a manageable size.

An early innovation was the replacement of the hempen rope and heavy wooden rungs of our earlier ladder with steel wire and aluminium, in which Noel Mollet and Fred Sanders took a leading part. Working parties were held in Crippen Lane, at the rear of Fred's premises in Hindley Street, in the days before the family business originally known as 'Austral Elevators' but by now 'Chains & Accessories' shifted to Torrens Road. Soon we were equipped with light and compact ladders, and the bruising of the inner part of the arms was a thing of the past.

In May 1955, I went bushwalking with Sanders and Taylor to Kanangra Walls, in the Blue Mountains. We then continued to Jenolan, on the 28th meeting up with Sydneysiders Tim Kirkpatrick, Laurie Bishop and Tom Draper, who were to be longstanding caving friends. They first took us to the Mammoth Cave, but the earlier heavy rains that curtailed our walking had raised water levels underground and restricted access. Other caves visited included the Roe Hole, Blackberry Cave, Aladdin Cave, and the Glass Cave, which was once a tourist cave but one must assume there were means of access other than coming out of a flattener in the side of an aven and swinging out onto a wire ladder with 40-foot drop below. Made them tough in those days.

We returned from Jenolan on 5 June 1955 and I commenced work with the Burnside Council on the 14th as an engineering assistant. With the Draughtsman's Certificate completed that year, I continued working towards an Associate Diploma in civil engineering, later transferring to the course leading to a Bachelor of Technology degree, then awarded jointly by the University of Adelaide and the Institute of Technology, née School of Mines, and now the University of South Australia.

There is something of a mystery about the end-of-year trip to Kangaroo Island from 24 December 1955 to 2 January 1956, which is said to have been the second to Kelly Hill. What was the first? However, tucked away in my notes is the comment that we were 'directed to [the] E H\_S pothole' from which I surmised that Elery had made a reconnaissance earlier in the year. Doug Seton, Curator at Kelly Hill from 1953, has subsequently confirmed this, and agreed that as Elery was at that time a master at Prince Alfred's College, the trip was no doubt run during the September school holidays. He was sure that Graham 'Stooge' Kelly, resident at the College, was one of the party and thought that Daryl Morgan was another.

The second party was under the leadership of Dave Taylor and comprised Alan Hill, Noel Mollet, Tim Kirkpatrick, Bob Varney, Roger Textor, Dave Chinner, Darryl Morgan and myself. Visitors included Des Hurcombe and H. Jenks. The presence of Alan Hill indicates that already members of the Adelaide Bushwalkers who were looking for new experiences had joined the Group, but I am unsure quite when he joined.

We travelled to the island by the steamer *Karatta*, the return fares being a modest two pounds fifteen shillings each but no doubt augmented by the fact that the bar never closed, and were picked up by Doug Seton, the curator at the Kelly Hill reserve. After a tourist run with electric light laid on, we investigated the Midnight Chamber, looking at the crevasses in this area before working across to the twin solution tubes [K1] which were the original tourist entrance. Later we were taken through the scrub, in which 'bugger-bush', *Acacia armata*, is prominent, to see numerous sinkholes. Next day the Crevasse Cave [K2] was visited even before breakfast and a wire ladder had to be set up to make the dangerous descent to retrieve a dropped trog lamp. The rest of the day was spent surveying the track up to the artificial tourist entrance and back around the path to the kiosk to provide a base traverse. On the next day surveying underground began in earnest, starting with the passages behind the 'Christening Font'. The route through to the Crevasse Cave [K2] was found and one party directed towards the Hamilton-Smith pothole was unsuccessful while I was with others who discovered what proved to be Bell's original entrance [K3]. Because of the lateness of the day we decided to return overland from this, guided to the tourist entrance by the sound of the generator which was fortunately running at the time. A long bash through the scrub might otherwise been the result as we were somewhat embarrassed geographically. There were twin problems in the evening: underground again finding the K2-K3 connection to lay down a guiding string, and on the surface managing to find K3 again!

After dinner the next evening, following a strenuous day of surveying and then plotting

the results, Dave Taylor was idly playing with a pair of handcuffs Doug had obtained for use in an earlier life. Dave was a very clever person in many ways, and had even built a mud hut as his home on a Scouting friend's large and scrub-covered property at Belair, but a mechanical skill was not amongst them. Each handcuff comprised two side-plates with a closing arm which passed between the plates and ratcheted past the lock. Click, click, click. Click, click, click. But if you inserted your wrist in the opening, click, click, then the closing arm came to a full stop with nowhere to go except through the unlucky player, with unlocking the only option. Doug was thunderstruck: he had no idea where the key might be. Alan set to work with a pair of bent nails and eventually picked the lock. 'Gee,' said Doug, 'if I knew it was that easy, I wouldn't have paid twenty pounds for them'. Alan kindly left the nails for future use.

Surveying continued, and an evening was spent giving talks on our work to the local 'Mutual Assistance Association', and in turn being given a demonstration of rather inconclusive water and other divining skills after supper. It is not for nothing that the world headquarters of the Cooney-ite sect is based on the Island, or that in 1939 meetings in the local hall led to dire threats then a Declaration of War on Herr Hitler. It is not clear whether an Armistice has yet been concluded. It is understood that in the unhappy expectation of invasion, explosives were secured to the long jetty at Vivonne Bay. As a local member of Dad's Army is reputed to have said, if the Japs landed all you had to do was press the button, like that. Boom!

Newspapers dating from 1925 and 1926 as well candle packets and the pencilled names 'Ivy Burgess and Mary Bell 1926' were found in the 'Trog's Delight' area which showed that Harold Bell had visited it during his exploration of the caves, and a reading of the glowing report he gave in *Glorious Kangaroo Island: its caves and beauty spots* inspired us to look yet further at all the wonders he discovered and on which he bestowed fanciful names.

During the trip we consumed half a gallon of shellite—for stoves, not drinking—and nearly forty pounds of carbide. When finally on our way back to Kingscote and a return by the *Karatta*, the evening meal was eaten in the sandhills at Vivonne Bay. A small boy from a nearby picnic party went careering past and flung sand over the last of our food. 'You little bastard' yelled Alan Hill, 'You've made me spoil my New Year's Resolution—to give up swearing!'.

The new ladders showed their worth during a second trip—according to the first annual report, so the first must have been during the 1955 examination period—to the Buckalowie Creek caves on 27–31 January 1956. The party comprised Taylor, Mollet, Hill, Sexton, Varney, Textor, Sanders, Hamilton-Smith, Bill Taylor, June Marlow, her friend Anne Lisle from Western Australia, bushwalker Rosalind McCandless, and Burly Wright and family. It was late before we departed due to attendance by all at an unavoidable CEGSA meeting addressed by Professor King of South Africa, but we arrived at first light next morning. The flies were so thick that sleep was impossible and a party descended into the main cave, Mair's, by ladder. Others entered the lesser Clara St Dora Cave through the adit driven in to reach the guano deposits, but found the air so cool compared to the 92°F outside that at least

three were 'lost' for a time through sleeping in it. A survey was made of this cave, and in the evening a walk to the top of the nearby ridge showed the moon rising over the distant Mount Victor Range, with a sharp peak otherwise invisible silhouetted against it. The owner of the property was conducted underground, and the value of a safety line was shown when somebody fell from the ladder. Later a bumblefoot fell in an aven and was saved from injury except to pride by their helmet. The person is unnamed in my notes and no doubt the trip report, but from recollection it might have been Textor, Flies again encouraged an early start on the survey of this spectacular cave with its vertical wall, but the surveyors were soon in disarray when it was realised that there was a great more to the cave than what is immediately apparent. The journey up had been via Port Augusta and Cradock but the return was through Carrieton and Jamestown.

The consolidating Annual General Meeting of the Group was held at the Museum on 29 February 1956, with Elery as president, and according to a CEGSA newsletter ten years after the event an official program of events was produced for the first time.

With some experience now of sleeping in caves, a trip was made from 2–5 March 1956 to camp underground in the Curramulka Town Cave, thus saving time that could be devoted instead to exploration. The party underground for the whole weekend consisted of Taylor, Hill, Textor, Sexton, Hamilton-Smith, Lanyon, and as a very successful innovation, journalist John Carey, while later visitors were Hurcombe, McCandless, Marlow and Varney, with the invaluable support of Noel Mollet on the surface. Seventeen others including Marion Cory, John Dick and Molly Burford visited Correll's Cave. Camp was set up in 'The Peoples' Palace', and survey and exploration undertaken during which cave pearls were found in the area reached through a squeeze beyond the 'flowstone chamber'. As a result of having a resident journalist, a presentable illustrated article appeared in the press, and readers have to decide for themselves whether Hamilton-Smith was wearing anything when pictured without his boiler suit.

A further expedition to the Glenelg River was made at Easter, 29 March–3 April 1956. The party comprised Taylor, Hill, Sexton, Errol Smith, Ern Hogben, Marlow, Howard, and Burly Wright and family. I am not sure when Tony Mead visited the river, but it would seem it was not this occasion. Tony, a medical student, was a member of the university rowing crew and I have vivid memories of how it was impossible to steer a straight course in a two-oared dinghy when he bent his back to the job on one side. The other vivid memory, certainly of this particular trip, is of Alan Hill lazily swimming along behind the three boats and just keeping up with us until, that is, we shouted out that there was a snake also gliding along in the water and Alan showed a swimming technique that would have done the Olympic team proud.

While the boats set off from Donovan's Landing, the cars were taken around to our base at Dry Creek. Adjacent to the creek and well away from the river we found the '1885 Cave', nicknamed for the obvious reasons and the home to a large number of bats, and the Snowflake Cave, which although lacking decorations did have a covering of some form of



amorphous carbonate. Skulls in the this cave were recognised as dingo, and one had dragged in a rabbit trap. The Sleeping Cave, again named for the obvious reason and just downstream of Dry Creek, was found to be a joint enlargement well above river level and ending in a sand cone from the surface. The party visited the Princess Margaret Rose tourist cave, with its irrepressible guide Bunny Hutchesson. Long before 'Some Mothers do have 'em', Bunny proclaimed that sometimes there was a misfire in a large family, and he was it! A non-official look at the river entrance to the cave system showed that it too had ended in a sand infill.

The usual meeting in April 1956 was on the eve of Anzac Day, and was—according to the newsletter produced in May 1966— notable for the adoption of Ian Dunlop's design for an emblem for CEGSA. At its conclusion it was announced that there would be a practice search and rescue scramble that night. Hamilton-Smith and Glen Bone from the St John's Ambulance Brigade went across to Curramulka early and ensconced themselves deep in Correll's Cave where they promptly went to sleep to await our arrival. We left at 0100 and arrived at 0500, immediately starting a systematic search and finding the pair two hours later. It turned out that the Beard had awoken to find his lamp flickering, and in giving it a good shake the flame went out. For some reason or other spare torches or matches could not be found so it turned out to be a real search and rescue after all. The Burnside Council's wartime 'Clark' stretcher, a canvas-covered pipe frame fitted with body straps and carrying ropes, was used to bring Elery to the surface via the Crevasse. Those taking part were Hill, Marlow, Lanyon, Giles, Errol Smith, Mollet, Sexton and Graham Kelly.

The regular trip later in the week, 27–29 April, was to Mount Remarkable and involved Taylor, Markham, Sexton, Elizabeth Sexton, Ian Hogben, Roger Welbourne, Burly and Peter Wright, Fred Sanders, Mollet, Lanyon, Hill, Marlow, Howard and Cory. The Blowhole and Grey's Hut Cave were visited and a fruitless search was made for other caves.

At this time my particular responsibility on committee was to maintain preparedness for search and rescue. The matter was discussed with the Police, who appointed Gordon Barry Higgs as their liaison officer, and the Adelaide Bushwalkers, amongst others, and a circular was sent out to all members in June 1956. This has been recently re-printed in *CEGSA News* 51,1. A list of personal gear required, useful in the rush of an emergency, and a map of the meeting point at the Gilberton Rover Den was included.

The final trip recorded in my logbooks was another underground-camping expedition to the Town Cave at Curramulka on 6–8 July 1956. Underground were Taylor, Lanyon, Kelly, Marlow, Harris, Peter Love, Errol Smith, Sexton and Wyld, while at Correll's there were Hamilton-Smith, Vic Linke, Jack and Dulcie Love, son David Love, and Alan Hill, who was involved in searching for other caves. Work seems to have revolved around photography of the cave pearls and exploration in this area. Vic and Dulcie were brother and sister, and Vic was to do sterling work not only as treasurer of CEGSA, but in particular in handling the complex finances of the forthcoming ASF expedition to the Nullarbor. Peter and David were brothers, David more recently associated with the University and called upon from time to

time to make pronouncements on earthquakes.

From here on, my memories are a blur. Two terms interspersed with regular meetings and a monthly trip were the norm, with a focus on long weekends, and the Easter and Christmas breaks. The other event, or rather non-event, was the end of the examination season, and I can still feel the lovely warm sunshine in which we basked at Hell's Hole, in the Caroline Forest, on one such occasion when not much caving was done but a good and relaxing time was had by all.

The end of 1956 saw preparations for the first conference of the Australian Speleological Federation in Adelaide, which was followed by a major expedition to the Nullarbor Plains and a further trip to Kelly Hill for those unable to get sufficient time off work.

The organisational work must have fallen heavily on Elery as president and Vic Linke as treasurer, and my input was in mapping and survey. Needless to say Vic's accounts balanced to the penny since he paid everyone by cheque and even refused to accept money unless a receipt was issued there and then. As to my part, all available maps were collected and even Delisser's original survey of the western areas of the Colony and dating from 1866, during which he discovered Eucla, was examined and a composite plan prepared. It was felt that control points should be established by astronomical observation and, at the suggestion of the then Surveyor-General, H.L. Fisk, licenced surveyor John McQuie was approached and agreed to come along. The Lands Department provided a Wild T2 theodolite and a chronometer which John nursed carefully all the way. The Surveyor-General commented that he had been involved in establishing the margins of the scrubland marked on the pastoral plans and said that they had used compass and the rate of their camels' march to locate the details in this remarkable terrain where you seem to be in a bowl rising to eye level with just the perception that some parts of the horizon are closer than others to indicate that there are in fact considerable undulations. Such an assessment was essential if it were necessary to be 'hull-down' below the horizon from the rest of the party with the minimum of effort. Prints of my drawing provided to each of the three trucks and to the utility meant that at least we were able to compare notes in an intelligent manner. Eventually the input from the various parties resulted in a re-drawn map.

The one obligatory stop on any trip to the west was at the Bedford's Kyancutta Museum. The founder was the first on the scene at the site of the Henbury meteorite, and much to the disgust of the South Australian Museum came back with a truck-load of fragments. These were swapped for an eclectic range of items from around the world so that the premises were an absolute Aladdin's Cave of curiosities. A suit of armour and Egyptian antiquities jostled with Australian fossils and Aboriginal artefacts. The museum had a serious intent however and Robert and other Bedfords published descriptions of *archaeocyathinae* from the Lower Cambrian at Beltana in the *Memoirs of the Kyancutta Museum* between 1934 and 1939. During a final visit some time between 1963 and 1966 I heard that the museum was being dispersed but the holotype specimens had been secured by the South Australian Museum.

Another diversion was to go out to Tourville Bay from Ceduna. Something that would not

now be tolerated, very properly, bones including skull material were taken from a huge aboriginal burial area exposed in the sands of St Peters Point. After the trip spare pistons carried for the trucks could not be found for return and refund, and it was some time afterwards that our archaeologist Alex Gallus reported that he had some very strange specimens amongst his collection. Alex, who around the campfire one night admitted that he had been a cossack in his youth, discovered that there were native campsites deep in Koonalda Cave which must surely have involved the use of fire for lighting and led to him organising a series of further expeditions to the area.

One of the party, George Grachanin, reminded me recently that it was he who became ill (appendicitis?) but was fortunately able to hitch a ride back to Adelaide and thus avoid disrupting the expedition.

As one of the results of the Nullarbor trip, Joe Jennings from the Australian National University wrote *A Preliminary Report on the Karst Morphology of the Nullarbor Plains*, and this became CEGSA's second Occasional Paper in August 1961.

The 27th of February 1957 saw the presentation of the first annual report of the Group. This was prepared by Alan Hill as Honorary Secretary and recorded that a first official visit had been made to the Arcoota and Good Friday Caves in the northern Flinders Ranges. This must have been conducted late in 1956, possibly the October long weekend to judge from the usual pattern of things when I was out of circulation, but I was certainly at Arcoota in 1958, being photographed in the main chamber by Ian Hogben.

Soon afterwards, Elery Hamilton -Smith went to Melbourne with the Brotherhood of Saint Laurence and Roger Textor to the Northern Territory Police. Dave Taylor had already left to take up a position with the Australasian Petroleum Company in Port Moresby, and his place on the committee was taken by June Marlow, who it should be noted here eventually married a fellow caver from Victoria, Ken Lynn.

A visit to the broader area of the Gambier Basin in association with the Victorian Cave Exploration Society was a notable new venture during 1957. Even during this brief survey the potential of the entire region extending beyond Portland became quite apparent. A bat cave thereabouts was inspected, and I managed to get bitten by one of the inhabitants. The only disinfectant the landowner could produce was 'Pine-o-Clean' but evidently the bat had cleaned his teeth that morning. Other notable trips in the South-East during the year were to Naracoorte, when the Sand Cave was discovered, Tantanoola, where the spectacular Lake Cave was found, and the Monbulla Caves, shallow solution caves in the Cave Range produced by water escaping from the swamps caught behind it.

A first trip across to explore the caves in the vicinity of Lake Hamilton on the West Coast was conducted over Easter 1958. Graham Kelly's people lived not far away and, he said, had the best orange grove in the area thanks to Mr Nobel. We camped beside the water-filled Round Lake, at the northern end of the main portion of the lake, which as I recall was largely a dry

salt pan. The Flinders Highway skirted west of the lake and there was a rough track down the eastern side. As an alternative to this, the smooth surface of the pan was too tempting. Fortunately I had a Holden which was fairly light and was eventually pushed out when, as was inevitable, we broke through the hard surface crust. The lakes nestle behind a gently rising line of hills that give no hint that they are ancient sand dunes being eaten into by the sea and forming one of the most spectacular lines of cliffs in the state, as irregular in height and form as those of barely greater height south of Koonalda are regular.

On alternate fortnights a meeting dealing with a scientific or technical topic was held at the South Australian Museum, our official address, and a business and social evening, held for a short time at the Adelaide Bushwalkers' rooms upstairs at the corner of, I think, Pirie Street and Hyde Street. When this venue became unavailable we all shifted down the new National Fitness Council rooms at 69–70 South Terrace, an old house that had been extensively altered inside to create a large meeting space. Committee meetings were always held in the Gilberton Rover den, the hay loft above the old stables of the Menz property, 'Balig', on the North East Road.

Annual dinners were held at Fred Rigoni's restaurant, located in an old house in Moonta Street, City, now long demolished. There were private rooms aplenty, and Fred would come around as the convivial host and play his guitar.

After meetings at the Museum, or any other time when there was the slightest excuse people would make for one of the earliest Italian restaurants, what was to become Carlo's 'Open Gate' in Gays Arcade. The *scallopina bolognaise* with its tomato-based sauce and the *scallopina milanaise* with baked cheese on top of a slice of crumbed veal were both beautifully cooked and presented, and Carlo kept a very tight rein on the cooks. The *cassata*, a marbled icecream containing cream, glacé cherries and a touch of rum was out of this world, and I don't think this is mere nostalgia as the cost of ingredients must even then have been high. 'Swiss-Ice' in Melbourne Street and later 'Flash' in Hindley Street were the only ones that could have competed for quality. One had to be careful, however. Brian Daily one night mistakenly ordered a *scallopina* instead of a *cassata*, and got rather more than he intended.

As light relief the cavers went on one occasion to hear Professor George Adamski give an account of his visit to the planet Venus, or was it Mars? No fool George, he filled the Freemason's Hall on two nights at five quid a head. The local flying saucerers were the ushers and the audience was most attentive in hearing him explain with great seriousness how the Venusians called and picked him up for the flight. Comes question time on the other hand there was not a dull moment, with jokes or outrageous statements deflecting all questions so that a great time was had by all except Dave Lanyon, who was at the end of the row and got a dig in the ribs from a True Believer when our laughter got too loud. 'Can you tell us the origin of your Professorship?'— 'Certainly, I once got a letter from the State Department addressed to "Professor George Adamski", and you'd prefer to get your degree from them rather than a mere university, wouldn't you?' 'Professor, how did the Venusians overcome acceleration effects when blasting off?'— 'No trouble at all, the space ship was pressurised'. And so on

and so on.

Mention might be made here of one who encouraged not only CEGSA but all members of the public interested in the work of the South Australian Museum: Norman Barnett Tindale. There are several interesting stories that went the rounds. He trained as an entomologist and I gather was employed by the Museum as a lepidopterist, although this cannot be checked from the Public Service List because employees of the Board of the Museum, Art Gallery and Public Library did not transfer to the Public Service until 1 February 1940, when Tindale was classified as an anthropologist.

In his earlier days, the regular salary ceased for field workers and they were instead paid for the specimens collected. I think it was in Arnhem Land that Tindale nightly set up an efficient collecting system using a bright light and nets, with such success that he is said to have bought a house and got married on the proceeds. The system was then changed!

During the Second World War Tindale was in intelligence and became the expert on Japanese aircraft factories, having a wider perspective than even they did because he got reports from a variety of sources. After the war he went to Japan and was shown over the various factories. What his interpreter did not know was that Tindale was the son of missionaries and had spent his childhood in the country. He was able to hear the instructions to the interpreter about what should be passed on and the reasons why other matters should be kept secret, and only on the last day did he thank his interpreter in perfect Japanese. A matter of which I became aware in later years is that before the war Tindale gave lessons in Japanese to the WEA or some such. One student was Lenny Marquis, another great encourager of researchers, who later was in charge of the newspaper collection at the State Library. He joined the air force but when the authorities learnt that he had studied Japanese he was transferred to a special section and given further lessons, sufficient to translate the surrender document into Japanese for the signature of the commander of the occupying forces on Nauru at the end of the war.

My particular interest in caving lay in surveying, and I wrote *Cave Surveying in South Australia*, which was published as Occasional Paper No. 1 in December 1958. Alan Hill, I think it was, owned a very sophisticated miner's dial which could be mounted on a ball joint screwed onto an aluminium camera tripod. It was quickly and easily levelled, and the instrument was fitted with a telescope which was provided with stadia crosshairs so that distances could be read optically by sighting onto a measuring staff. Fred Sanders purchased some similar 'Tamaya' compasses in the course of one of his business trips to Japan. Another innovation devised by Alan was a circular protractor with a slot in it by means of which the line of sight could be plotted immediately and the true horizontal distance marked by referring to a graphical ready-reckoner engraved on the protractor. In publishing this report it was felt that the procedure in using these instruments, the principle of plotting the results in the field so as to be able to sketch in the detail to scale on the spot as well as to check for completeness and detect any gross errors, and the method of preparing the final drawings would be of benefit to others. As it turns out, we were following the approach established by Matthew

Flinders with his running surveys along the coast in the *Investigator*. I might add that I have few copies of my cave maps other than those from Tasmania as they were always readily available to me for reference and I did not bother to get prints.

In January 1959 came the second ASF conference, this time held in Tasmania. Unfortunately I had to work over Christmas but set off as soon as possible to the Apple Isle for the field trips. While there were certainly other cavers on board the plane, it was amusing to see how many passengers were wearing heavy boots rather than pack them in their rucksacks.

Those attending the field trips were divided into three parties depending on the time available to them, and I went first down to the Maydena area, to the far south, then up to the caves in the Mount Field National Park, and finally to Mole Creek.

Survey again loomed large, our first effort being Growling Swallet, in the Florentine Valley, in which I was assisted by Frank Brown of Tasmania, Paul Rose and Doug Miles from New South Wales, Dave Taylor (by now living in Victoria), and Peter Love and my old strand-by, Dave Lanyon, from South Australia. We entered the cave at night, and were able to see glow worms in what would normally be the full daylight and disprove the theory promulgated at such places as New Zealand's Waitomo Caves that silence must be preserved. In fact the louder the noise, the more the worms glow in the belief that food is approaching and might get caught in sticky thread if attracted to their light.

On its way north to Mole Creek, our large party stayed in Launceston overnight. The evening meal was at a prestigious hotel in the main street, and it was felt we should have some wine with it. Did they have any Barossa Pearl, a fizzy drink popular at the time? 'Ah, I know where the Barossa is, in South Australia, but no, we don't have any'. We finally settled on some bottles of McWilliams white, which arrived opened, on a tray with glasses and a jug of ice, and the wine waiter's cheery cry, 'Fly into it, boys'. The evening was then spent watching *Around the World in Eighty Days*, a most memorable film—with suitable priming beforehand—which provided ample catchwords for the rest of the trip.

I accompanied Dave Taylor and his wife Yvonne to Gippsland on a bushwalking and geological excursion to the upper reaches of the Buchan River in 1961, and over Easter 1962 my future wife Rae and I went down to the South-East and met up with Dave and two of his friends who were prominent divers. They examined various sinkholes in the Mount Schank area, amongst other discoveries finding freshwater sponges, while we took soundings and mapped the surface features. But for me the highlight of the trip was to follow in the tracks of Governor Grey's expedition of 1844, described by Thomas Burr in a report published in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* in London the following year. They saw Baudin's Cap Morard-de-Galles, black granite rocks just beyond the surf which Flinders took to be Cape Bernouilli. Once this error was made, he continued to misplace the French names along the coast. Continuing on, Grey's party left the coast beyond Rivoli Bay after visiting the whalers there in the Hobart schooners *Isabella* and *Prince of Denmark*, and a small party including the Governor, Burr and George French Angas made their way directly towards Mount Schank. On 4 May they found a huge sinkhole which was given the name The Devil's

Punchbowl by Grey. The water was 28½ feet below the crest of the overhanging cliff and the depth of water 103½ feet. Shortly afterwards what he described as a 'twin well' and now known as The Sisters was passed, and at the time of our visit deep cart tracks in the bare limestone made by the party and those who followed could still be seen. Just short of Mount Schank they crossed a dray track and fresh sheep tracks, and came to the head station of Messrs Arthur beside another sinkhole similar to The Devil's Punchbowl. A windlass had been placed on an overhanging rock which appears in Angas's drawing of the scene and can still be recognised at Ela Elap. Arthur knew of several such sinkholes in the area, one of which he had converted to a sheep-wash by cutting a ramp down to the water's edge, and the Governor accompanied him to several caverns in the neighbourhood from which very large teeth were recovered. The return to Rivoli Bay was made via Mount Gambier and the Mount Burr Range.

My life revolved around caving, study and work from the age of twenty until I married, at the beginning of 1963, when I got a degree, a wife, and a new job with the Highways Department. For a start I was in the Asphalt Section and was required to travel over many parts of the state inspecting work in progress. I got used to travelling long distances, in daylight, which rather took the icing off driving around tired at all hours of a weekend to engage in caving. Cave exploration had been a great outlet with excellent companionship from people with a range of interests and background, and on whom you trusted and relied in what can be a dangerous activity for the careless or unwary. Not least of the fascinations of caving was the off-the-beaten-track countryside our explorations took us into. The tourist visiting the Flinders Ranges follows the bitumen all the way to Wilpena in his 'Toorak Tractor' without thought for the country either side of the straight and narrow for which his vehicle would be ideal.

In April 1965 my article on 'Caves of the Coastal Areas of South Australia' appeared in *Helectite*, a journal published by Ted Lane and Aola Richards. Several years later a complete schedule of caves was prepared as a basis for a contribution Alan Hill and I made to the *Speleo Handbook*, not published by the ASF until January 1968. The caves were listed for each region, with an introduction and a bibliography for each separate locality. The *Speleo Handbook* also included my brief introduction to cave surveying.

While my actual caving activities were largely curtailed, I maintained close contact with the Group until 1966, when I was transferred to the Port Lincoln Office of the Highways. I had been give a 'Leather finger to keep in touch with' at the previous annual dinner, and my 'obituary' appeared in the next newsletter, the first I still hold. At this late stage I assume there must have had a general clean-out when making several shifts about this time, although I have most but not all of the annual reports.

While no longer active, I have maintained an interest in caving and over time several matters have come to my attention. Perhaps the most important is the Curramulka Cave. It is in only

the last few years that I have been given a copy of *The Life and Adventures of Edward Snell* [Edited and introduced by Tom Griffiths & Alan Platt, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1988] and became aware of the diaries of this railways engineer, who arrived in Port Adelaide by the *Bolton* in 1849 and proceeded overland to Victoria in 1852. In late 1850 he made a trip to Yorke Peninsula in the course of which he visited the caverns already known to be on Anstey's sheep run at 'Curry Murka Cowey' [Curramulka]. Thus we have not only his description of the cave but an annotated cross section and views of the entrance and what he termed the first, second and third chambers. The diary entry for the day reads:

*Friday Sept 5th 1850*

Started with Bob for a guide for Curry Murka Cowey, the place where the caverns were to be found. Penton [Anstey's overseer] overtook us on horse back and lent us a couple of candles. We went into the cave leaving Bob outside. He wouldn't go in, alledging [*sic*] as a reason that 'Muldappy' (the devil I suppose) plenty sit down there—we left our gun coats and supply of grub in the first chamber C and crawled on our faces into the second chamber E, explored E & G and then descended through H into a breakneck sort of a place, the roof of which I estimated at about 80 feet high. In this place we found numerous skeletons of various animals, Wild dogs Kangaroos, Kangaroo rats, Bandicoots, Wallabys, Hawks, and parrots, out of this was the entrance into another cavern K also full of skeletons. They had the skin dried on them and from the look of their faces appeared to have died in great agony. At the narrow passage L, Hastings gave in and wouldn't go any further. Penton and I proceeded and found another chamber M, the floor of which was knee deep in salt—this salt was rather remarkable being chrystallized in the form of white hairs about 6 inches long, I brought some of it away with me. Another chamber N led out of this one and another narrow passage O, so low that we could barely squeeze through it, led into a chamber P out of which was another narrow passage, but the roof was so ticklish that the slightest touch brought down lots of rubbish and as we had been in an hour and 3 quarters and the atmosphere was insufferably hot we returned, taking with us some of the smallest of the skeletons as curiosities. We found Bob had deserted on our return to daylight, and G Penton took us to a hut where we got some tea, mutton and damper and after that we returned to Anstey's head station where we had very comfortable quarters for the night. Penton's black boy had knocked down a very curious web footed bird which I should have kept alive if I had not already had too much to carry.

The annotations on 'Section of the Caves at Curry Murka' are not easily read and so have been transcribed here:

- A        Entrance
- B        a narrow tunnel ending in nothing
- C        the first chamber
- D        Passage leading into
- E        the second large chamber
- F        A passage choked with rubbish
- G        a passage like F leading to nothing
- H        narrow passage leading to



I & K the 3rd & 4th chambers. In them we found a great number of skeletons.  
L passage leading to 5th chamber, here Hastings funk'd going further (too fat)  
M & N 5th & 6th chambers, the floor of these was knee deep in salt  
O Passage leading to  
P 7th chamber full of skeletons. Here Penton & I funk'd & declined exploring further

Thus what seems to have been one of the earliest caving trips, undertaken by Edward Snell, George Penton and Thomas M. Hastings seems to have been conducted in an exemplary manner complete with a rather belated trip report.

The second is Vansittart's or Engelbrecht's Cave, which I visited with Elery Hamilton-Smith in December 1954 in the course of our first trip to the South-East.

In 1985 my reconstructed plans of the brig *Lady Nelson* were used as a basis for a tourist mock-up in Mount Gambier and I visited the city on 6 December to advise on its construction. After my official duties were complete, Assistant Town Clerk Greg Muller very kindly lent me his car and the keys to enter Engelbrecht's Cave. It was described by the Rev. J.E. Woods in his *Geological Observations in South Australia* [London, 1862, pp. 357–9]:

The next cavern worthy of notice is that which here goes by the name of Vansittart's Cave. It is a round opening in the ground close to Mount Gambier, about forty feet across, with a very long sloping precipitous path leading to the bottom, covered over with ferns and rank vegetation. The cave is not, properly speaking, entered until the pit is descended to a depth of some seventy feet; then there is a semicircular opening or arch, which goes slanting under the limestone for forty feet more, where water is reached. At the edge of the water there is scarcely light enough to perceive anything, especially the water, which is so wonderfully clear that its interposition between the observer and the floor is not for a long time perceptible, so that one runs imminent danger of walking into it without knowing whence the moisture proceeds. Up to the water's edge the width of the cave is about twenty feet, but there it suddenly narrows to a mere low passage, which is seen by torch-light to go a great distance farther. The water prevents its complete exploration. This latter deepens rapidly from the side, which, at the distance of about twelve feet, is five-and-twenty feet deep, and yet, even here, such is the clearness of the water, that every object on the bottom is clearly seen. A gentleman who visited the cave a short time since was very anxious to ascertain what might be the length of the aperture, but, after swimming a short distance, the intense cold compelled him to return, without much more information than he could have gained from the side. I imagine the water to belong to the general water-level of the whole district, as the wells are all about ninety feet deep here. At one time, however, it must have been lower for those passages to be hollowed out, and very likely the cave was occasioned by a drainage from the small hills at some little distance from the mouth of the cave.

There were no bones here at all perceptible. The entrance is surrounded with an abundance of the small fern, *Asplenium laxum*, an acrogen which is not found anywhere in the neighbourhood, though the *Pteris esculenta* and *Adiantum assimile* abound here. There is

also a cave at no great distance, and which is so small as to demand no further notice, in which the fern-tree grows. There is no other of the kind (*Cibotium Billardieri*) in the neighbourhood, and yet one of the plants reaches from the foot of the cave to the summit, and seems to reach its mouth.

While the date of Woods' visit is unknown, another other observer about this time left a precise record: Eugene von Guérard, who visited a 'cave east of Mt. Gambier' on 11 December 1857 [Alison Carroll & John Tregenza, *Eugene von Guérard's South Australia*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide 1986, pp. 94–5]. He made a sketch of the arched entrance from below, a feature being a huge slab of rock leaning against the roof which Fred Aslin, when viewing the scene with drawing in hand, considered to seem 'larger in volume and form than reality'. It is certainly not Umpherstone's cave, which is east of the town, while Engelbrecht's is to the north-west beside the present Jubilee Highway. The second view, of the interior, depicted the water-filled chamber as described by Woods and is still recognisable, allowing for the fact that the water level has dropped considerably and the cave been a dumping ground for broken glass and soil.