

DIRECTIONS

After the inaugural Conference, the first communication from ASF, a letter from the President to members was sent via founding member clubs outlining some of the directions already undertaken. It was followed in June 1957 by the first Newsletter.

AUSTRALIAN SPELEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

School of Physics, University of Sydney,
Sydney, 20th March, 1957.

CIRCULAR

The President and Members,
Dear Speleos,

At the Inaugural Meeting of the Australian Speleological Federation, held in Adelaide in December, 1956, I received the great honour of being elected by the assembled delegates to be President of the Federation. It is my feeling that in this letter, my first one to you since my election, I should set out briefly what, in my opinion, are some of the benefits to be derived by you from your membership of the Federation.

Those of you who were fortunate enough to be able to attend the Adelaide Conference will have realised already one of the finest things resulting from the formation of the Federation - that is the opportunity to "meet the other blokes". About eighty-five speleologists from seven Australian states gathered at the camp at Adelaide, and this resulted in an extraordinary exchange of opinions, news, techniques and general information which, by itself alone, would justify the whole meeting. Add to this the informative talks at the meeting, and the very successful Nullarbor and Kangaroo Island expeditions afterwards, and I feel certain that everyone is looking forward with eagerness to the 1958 Convention, when the Tasmanian cavers will be the hosts.

The two expeditions I just mentioned, with all their successes also indicate the potential role for the Federation of "sponsoring" such general expeditions. The experience of overseas groups, particularly of the C.R.G. of Great Britain, has shown that it is wise for one Society to be the sole organising body for these joint expeditions, and the South Australian group has proved already that this can be a very successful method.

The inauguration of the Federation may be deemed one of the decisive factors influencing the formerly loose-knit groups at Cooranbong, Newcastle, Victoria and Western Australia to become officially constituted Societies. This we may claim with some justification that the A.S.F. has led to an important advance in Australian speleology even before its own formal birth and christening.

The very important matters of research coordination, the activities of the sub-committee investigating cave terminology and an A.S.F. Information Centre will be dealt with fully by your Secretary and Librarian, and I will content myself with commending them to your attention and consideration.

One last matter. Over the past half year or so I have received (and complied with) a number of requests by several overseas speleological groups, notably in Great Britain and the U.S.A. for articles on various facets of Australian speleology - on certain cave areas, Australian caves in general, on the Federation and its formation, on Australian caving, and on some cave research projects of my own. All these requests point up the fact that overseas groups are interested in our activities, and now that we have a National organisation I have no doubt that we shall soon bring Australian caving to the position where it can participate with pride in world speleology.

With very best wishes,

Brian J. O'Brien
President

Joe Jennings was a founder and second President of ASF, our Trustee until his death in 1984, our representative and the face of Australian speleology at international meetings, a strong supporter of lay as well as the professional study of caves, mentor to many and one who was a remarkably active exploratory and expeditionary caver as well as a distinguished scholar of caves and karst. The main content of Australian Caver 161 (March 2004) was given over to a tribute to Joe compiled by Andy Spate, a long-term Vice-president of ASF. Among the 25 or so published, we have included here some particularly apposite reminiscences of Joe's inestimable contribution to the corporate life of Australian speleology.

WITH JOE: Australian caving, cavers and Joe Jennings

Andy Spate

Australian Caver 161 (2004)

It was with very great pleasure that I accepted an invitation from the Federation's Executive to act as Guest Editor in this edition of Australian Caver that is largely dedicated to the memory of Joe Jennings. This year marks twenty years since Joe's untimely death skiing on the mountains above Eucumbene Dam in the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales. Last year the University of New South Wales Press published *Beneath the Surface: A Natural History of Australian Caves* under the editorship of Brian Finlayson and Elery Hamilton-Smith. A copy of this excellent book should grace the shelves of every Australian caver.

The Executive felt that this issue of the Australian Caver should mark the publication of this book, dedicated to Joe. John Dunkley and I sought contributions via ASF Clubs across Australia and from Joe's past scientific and caving colleagues across Australia. I thank all of them for their contributions. John Dunkley, in particular, deserves thanks for keeping me to the task and for performing editorial and layout suggestions.

I met Joe within a few days of his arrival in Australia in January 1953, started caving regularly with him in 1959 or '60 and was last with him in a cave within a week of his death nearly 32 years later. Scarcely a day goes by when I don't think of him somehow... He crammed an enormous amount into those years as a caver, explorer, scientist and lover of the Australian environment. As you will see when you read the contributions below Joe left different impressions on those he met – some found him a diplomat and others somewhat less so! Which reminds me of his mildly 'dirty' joke about the difference between a diplomat and a lady ...

Joe was a wonderful mentor for me and many others as can be seen in many comments made below. Yes, he could be loud, almost belligerent (I well recall a bellowing Joe charging up a steep hill near Blue Waterholes toward a group of cavers - I won't identify their club - who were rolling boulders down the slope toward our group. They scattered!). But he was also wonderfully helpful and patient toward those groping to an understanding of any aspect of Australian environments. He didn't suffer fools gladly!

Joe was a caver - potholer - in Britain before the war and took up recreational caving in the mid-1950s. This soon stimulated his intellectual interest in karst. He was active in caving clubs and in the development of the Australian Speleological Federation - although the exigencies of speleopolitics enraged him! One measure of Joe's support of amateur speleology is that he organised the meeting room for the Canberra Speleological Society in the tearooms of the Old Hospital Building around 1960. When he moved into the new Coombs Building in 1963 he organised the use of a room there. CSS still meets in that building.

Like many of us in caving and other outdoor pursuits, he changed with the times in that the activities of his youth, such as digging and the burying of rubbish in the bush, evolved into a more responsible approach to the environments we were enjoying. A similar pattern can be seen in the development of the Federation itself.

The following is an edited and supplemented version of material recently supplied to the Australian Dictionary of Biography

JENNINGS, JOSEPH NEWELL (1916-1984), geomorphologist, was born at Leeds, Yorkshire, United Kingdom, the only child of Joseph Newell Jennings, confectionary salesman and radio mechanic, and his wife Alice, née Rhodes. He was educated at the Oldershaw School for Boys, Merseyside. Known universally as Joe, he studied at Cambridge University and was awarded both Bachelor and Master of Arts. War service, largely in Iceland with the Royal Artillery, interrupted his doctoral studies in the Department of Botany at Cambridge and, nearly, his personal relationships.

Following the war, he accepted a lectureship at the University of Leeds but regulations inhibited him from resuming his doctoral studies but a grant from the Royal Geographical Society allowed him to continue the work on the origin of the Norfolk Broads. Although the work was meticulous and the conclusions valid from the data obtained, further work with Dr Joyce Lambert demonstrated that his earlier ideas were invalid. This allowed him, with Lambert's assistance, to publish an able self-refutation. This was characteristic of Jennings in that he was able to accept new data and ideas that ran counter to his earlier opinions.

In 1952, he was appointed to the Department of Geography at the fledgling Australian National University where he was to spend the remainder of his career. He arrived, with his family, in January 1953 and became a naturalized Australian in 1963.

His academic career blossomed in Australia and covered a wide range of Australian landscapes – from changing sea levels to the highest peaks and from deserts to coral reefs. He commenced caving as a recreational activity in Canberra but soon became immersed in the science of caves and karst eventually became a world authority on karst geomorphology publishing two monographs on subject (the last posthumously). He also edited the Australian National University Press' seven volume *An Introduction to Systematic Geomorphology* as well as the long running series 'Australian Landform Examples' in the *Australian Geographer*. Ultimately his publications numbered over two hundred monographs, book chapters and papers with about 120 devoted to caves and karst. He was an Associate Editor for the prestigious journal *Zeitschrift für Geomorphologie*; held the Clarke medal of the Royal Society of New South Wales and the premier award of the Royal Geographical Society of London, the Victoria Medal.

His research was not confined to Australia but ranged from Britain to Iceland and Jan Mayen in the Arctic, and onto New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Malaysia. As well as geomorphological studies, he also published in the fields of zoology, European exploration and land use in Australia and in climatology. He enthusiastically accepted new ideas, methodologies and technologies to the very great advantage of his science.

In 1972, Cambridge University awarded Jennings a Doctorate of Philosophy by Letters. At his insistence, this was in Botany rather than Geography marking the culmination of his research commenced before the War in that Department. It was recognised that Jennings' achievements should have been at a Doctor of Science but again he insisted that he be given the lesser degree appropriate to his original enrolment. Again this was a mark of his character in that he sought only appropriate recognition.

Jennings was a remarkable mentor for his students, co-workers and the caving community making his time freely available to many across the world. A considerable number of Australian and overseas landscape scientists owe much to his unflagging friendship and advice. He had an enormous influence on Australian and New Zealand cave science and exploration with particular emphasis on the Eastern Highlands, the Nullarbor and the Kimberly as well as sandstone karstlands across northern Australia. He was perhaps the first to publish, worldwide, on the unusual young karst landscapes in carbonate dunes of southern coastal Australia – the so-called 'syngenetic' karsts.

He was a Founder and President of the Australian Speleological Federation and its Trustee from 1956 until his death. He played an active role in Australian recreational caving and promoted the study of caves in a number of caving societies lending his support and research in a number of significant local publications such as the Bungonia and Wombeyan books and journals such as Tower Karst. He had a very long-time role in supporting both the Speleological Research Council, Ltd, and its long-running journal, Helictite: the Journal of Australasian Cave Research. He was one of very few people, not American citizens, on whom the American National Speleological Society bestowed honorary life membership.

Jennings was fascinated by, and revelled in, the Australian 'bush' in all its manifold entities and was an active camper, bushwalker and skier as well as an enthusiastic lover of Australian red wines. He died on 24 August 1984 of a heart attack while skiing in the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales where he had conducted so much of his research into Australian landscapes. His devoted wife Betty, son Guy and daughters Sarah and Judy survive him. Judy continues to be involved in the science and management of Australia's natural resources.

For more information on Joe see the following:

Spathe, A.P., and Gillieson, D.S. (1984) Joe Jennings - an obituary and karst bibliography, Helictite 22(2)35-42

Spathe, O.H.K. and Spathe, A.P., Obituary: Joseph Newell Jennings 1916-1984 (and comprehensive bibliography), Australian Geographical Studies, 23(2)325-337

In closing my remarks I would like to slightly paraphrase a paragraph from the Preface to John Tyndal's delightful Hours of Exercise in the Alps (Longmans, Green, and Co., London and Bombay, 1871, p viii).

"To the name of a friend who taught me in my boyhood how to handle a theodolite and lay a chain, and who afterwards turned his knowledge to account on the caves of the world ... Of the firmness of a friendship, uninterrupted for an hour, and only strengthened by the weathering of 50 years of companionship, both physically and in spirit, he would need no assurance. Still, for the pleasure it gives myself, I connect this volume with the name of Joseph Newell Jennings".

With Marjorie Coggan at London Bridge and Yarrangobilly (CSS)

One of the most amazing things about caving (working?) with Joe was that you never knew what you were letting yourself in for. There was always a theory to be put to the test. One day we would be slamming a sledgehammer into a metal plate lying on the ground in an attempt at low-budget seismic surveying. Another we would be lugging generators to the bottom of deep gorges or wheeling barrows through dense bush to enable the construction of stream-gauging weirs. This would be followed by sitting in the rain at some remote point of the Yarrangobilly River taking hourly water samples hoping to pick up the odd lycopodium spore to prove a link from a distant sink. On other occasions we fiddled with fluorimeters trying to detect the presence of optical brighteners (used for stream tracing) against high background levels of natural fluorescence. Then there was the time we wandered about the Yarrangobilly Plateau with very expensive and delicate pH meters. Around the same time, Joe's micro erosion studies at Yarrangobilly and Cooleman were in full swing. How fast does limestone erode when it is sitting in a cave stream, buried in the soil, or just sitting on the surface? Just set up the experiment and sit back and wait for 20 years.

From Steve Bunton(STC)

I once asked Joe if he'd come and look at a cave I knew about. At this time Joe had a heart condition and this trip involved a long walk up a steep hill. He replied that his specialist didn't mind him climbing any mountains – it was the committee meetings he had to avoid because they really got his blood pressure up!

Following a suggestion by then President Peter Berrill, the ASF Executive resolved in 1998 to apply for registration as an Environmental Organisation to strengthen our ability to support cave conservation endeavours, including an ability to receive tax-deductible gifts through its Public Fund (often referred to as the Environment Fund). The full implications of this directional change for ASF have yet to be realised, but the Fund's tax-deductible status was critical

to discussions in 2006 regarding the proposed transfer to ASF of title to certain parcels of land and property at Mt Etna in Central Queensland containing caves and karst. Also in 2006 the Fund was able to make its first grant to a member society for environmental purposes.

ASF REGISTERED AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATION

(amended and updated to 2006)

John Dunkley

Australian Caver 157 (2002), 161 (2004)

ASF was formally registered as an Environmental Organisation (EO) on 6th June 2001 by the then Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Robert Hill. This was the culmination of three years work by the Executive and strong support from the clubs making up the ASF Council, which approved significant changes to our Constitution to meet the registration requirements. Registration brings significant benefits as well as obligations.

Benefits

As an EO, ASF and speleologists generally are perceived more positively and ASF enhances its corporate image and reputation.

Donations to the Public Fund are tax-deductible.

ASF is eligible to apply to Environment Australia for funding as an Environmental Organisation.

Obligations

The primary obligation is that we must ensure that the Fund is managed in accordance with the Constitution, and that everything on which it expends money must be consistent with, and be seen to be consistent with our environmental aims

Other Activities

Registration does not fetter us from carrying out the kind of activities which we have for many years. We can continue to offer insurance, to promote safety standards, to be an advocate for reasonable access conditions, to publish magazines and books, to hold conferences and seminars, and to represent Australian speleology nationally and internationally

Management

It is a requirement of registration (and now of our Constitution) that a majority of the Management Committee must be "*persons who because of their tenure of some public office or their position in the community have a degree of responsibility to the community as a whole as distinct from obligations solely in regard to the environmental objectives of the Federation*". Appointed by the Executive, the Directors of the Fund Management Committee are

Anne Atkinson OAM, MSc
Retired consultant, Cairns
(resigned due to ill health 2003)

Peter Berrill
Self-employed businessman, Rockhampton

Maria Comino LLB
Solicitor, Brisbane

Anthony Culberg, BCom, DipEd, TTC
Accountant, Hobart

John Dunkley, MEd, BEc, DipEd
Consultant & Company Director, Canberra

Kevin Kiernan, PhD
University Lecturer, Hobart

As well as considerable experience in speleological matters, all bring their professional expertise to the task. Founding Director Anne Atkinson received her OAM and MSc for study, publications and advocacy of the Undara Lava Caves system in north Queensland. As an environmental lawyer Maria Comino worked on the culmination of the Mt Etna epic. Kevin Kiernan is an authority on Tasmanian caves and karst and founded the Tasmanian Wilderness Society. Peter and John have both been President of ASF, while Tony is a former Secretary.