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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The following is an abbreviated version of the A.S.F. President's address at the opening of the annual committee meeting in Sydney in January.

In the last few weeks I have heard criticism of A.S.F. from a number of sources. Some claim that A.S.F. has done very little while, strange to say, others claim that it is trying to do far too much! These conflicting views arise not so much from misinformation as to what has been done, but rather from a misunderstanding of the aims of A.S.F.. The third Biennial Conference affirmed the role of A.S.F. as a loose affiliation of caving clubs, when it failed to pass S.U.S.S.' amendments designed to make A.S.F. a stronger, more centralised organization.

Therefore, A.S.F. exists simply to promote co-operation between the clubs and to carry out their wishes. To those who criticise A.S.F. for insufficient activity, I wish to point out that A.S.F. has performed the wishes of the clubs as expressed at A.S.F. meetings. The executive are ready to do more

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than previously, if you wish, but the executive are not prepared to spend money on projects without prior approval of the clubs. The financially disastrous "Caving in Australia" publication of some years back, initiated without even the clubs' knowledge, has blighted the finances of A.S.F. ever since.

When your present executive assumed office, it inherited debts of £50, largely the result of the "Caving in Australia" fiasco, and £30 of unpaid back subscriptions owed by various clubs. The third Conference felt that, for twelve months at least, the executive should concentrate on two projects: firstly, stabilization of the finances and secondly, the maintenance of the Newsletter. This has been done, and it is good to know that for the first time in nearly four years, A.S.F. has sufficient funds to pay off all outstanding debts. This is ample vindication of the high capitation fee of 3/- approved for 1961. A smaller fee should be adequate for 1962 now that A.S.F. is out of the "red."

What does the future hold for A.S.F.? In addition to current activities, I feel it should assist and co-operate with that new body, the Australasian Cave Research Association, which has initiated valuable scientific research and proposes to publish a national journal of cave science, which will, inter alia, considerably enhance the reputation of Australian speleology.

Finally, I note a considerable decline in the membership of some A.S.F. clubs. I feel this can be ascribed, in part, to insufficient publicity of the clubs' activities and aims. I don't advocate a crusade to swell the ranks of spelcologists, but interested people can hardly be expected to join a club that they have never heard of!

Warren Peck,
President, A.S.F.

Note for Club Secretaries.

So that the June issue of the Newsletter can reach everyone on time, please have reports, etc. to me by May 31st.. Also advise if you are receiving insufficient copies or too many.

A.S.F. CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Elery Hamilton-Smith was appointed convenor of a Standing Committee on Conservation of Caves by the recent committee meeting, and he says :

Conservation is a burning subject with many of us. It involves many problems, and the first of these which we want to look at is the problem which arises out of our own activity as speleologists. Our actions as cavers are not always in the best interests of conservation; the publicity resulting from our activity leads to visiting of caves by non-cavers with further undesirable effects; our opening of new sections or making caves easy to enter render caves accessible to those who were previously unable to enter.

So we have here a problem and a responsibility. Not only are our caves of interest and value to the future, but they offer a storehouse of knowledge to even the present. Bad practices can destroy this knowledge.

Can members consider some of the following questions and let me have ideas or opinions ?

How can we try to ensure that our own members are not guilty of damage to caves ?

Is a conservation code, to be made known to all new members (as in the N.S.S.) likely to be of much practical value ?

What should be in such a code ?

Are we ever justified in making a cave easier to enter ?

Are we ever justified in seeking publicity for our efforts ?

Why ?

Should we publish or otherwise make available cave locations?

Any suggestions on how caves can be protected more effectively than at present ?

Details of damage to caves in your areas, with details of how this has occurred ? Could any of it have been prevented ? How ?

Address : E. Hamilton-Smith, C/- Vict. Association of Youth Clubs, Gisborne Street, East Melbourne, Victoria.

TENTATIVE CONFERENCE ARRANGEMENTS

A.S.F. KEMPSEY, 1962/1963

26th December 1962 + Commencing day.

First day to be spent in meeting delegates and visitors and taking them to billets, hotels, camping grounds, etc. as they so desire - arrangements having been made earlier.

A central spot will be selected - such as the Post Office - where K.S.S. will have members waiting to meet arrivals and show them to their digs. After visitors have settled in perhaps private arrangements may be made for personal visits to homes of K.S.S. members?

"Stickers" will be made available to all people coming to the Conference to place on their cars -- this will assist in helping to identify A.S.F. members, and give publicity to the Conference.

27th December 1962 - First day of Conference.

Venue to be the Memorial Hall, Kempsey. Conference to start with the official welcome to Kempsey and Macleay District by the President of Macleay Shire Council, supported by the Mayor of Kempsey, Chairman of Macleay County Council and state member for Raleigh - all speeches to be SHORT. Starting time suggested is 11 am.

At the end of the welcome, a short reply by President of A.S.F., followed by a buffet lunch served by K.S.S. ladies.

After lunch, Opening of A.S.F. Conference by A.S.F. President or Deputy and welcome to delegates and observers by President of K.S.S.

About 2 pm. -- Business .. in hands of A.S.F. executive.

5 pm -- Break for tea. Business again at 7.30 pm.

28th December 1962 - Second day of Conference

10 am to 12.30 pm -- Conference
12.30 pm to 2 pm -- Dinner break.
2 pm to 5.30 pm -- Conference and guest speakers
5.30 to 6.30 pm -- Free time, to freshen up, etc.
6.30 pm -- Assemble for "Cave Man's Dinner" (at same place as Conference) to be followed by a social and entertainment arranged by K.S.S..

29th December 1962 - Third day of Conference

10 am. to 12.30 pm -- Conference
12.30 pm to 2 pm -- Dinner break.
2 pm to 5.30 pm -- Conference and guest speakers.
Night -- being Saturday night, delegates and visitors will be taken to various places of entertainment around town by K.S.S. members.

30th December 1962 - Fourth day of Conference

To be arranged -- If the A.S.F. Executive prepares a lot of business, Conference goes on - if not, a picnic to a beach that has a cave!

Following this intensive programme, delegates and others at the Conference will have the opportunity to visit many of the caving systems known to K.S.S.. Details of these trips will be given later this year.

The Kempsey spelecos are going to no end of bother to make this Biennial Conference the best yet. By publishing these details early in the year, the organizers hope to attract overseas visitors as well as good representation from all over Australia.

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We regret to announce the death of Eric Simpson, founder, secretary and mainstay of the British Speleological Association. He took an active part in caving from his first trip in 1903 until 1948 and retained his interest in the work of the B.S.A. until his death.

WHAT THE SOCIETIES ARE DOING

As is the usual case, reports have been received by a small number of societies. The value of this section of each A.S.F. Newsletter depends entirely on the reports received from each club. Unfortunately, the Publications Officer cannot create news -- it is entirely up to the clubs to send the material.

MORE RIVER EXTENSIONS IN BUCHAN AREA

Christmas trips of Sub-Aqua S.S. of Victoria have seen significant advances in both the systems in which the society is working, that is, the Pyramids system and the Scrubby Creek system.

At Scrubby Creek, parties passing through the sump have pushed exploration along the underground creek course almost three quarters of a mile through rockfalls, vast halls and narrow passages, and are now temporarily halted at a difficult rockfall. Numerous side passages have scarcely been looked at. One interesting section of the creek course has been aptly named "Trog's Wallow"; three hundred yards long and unavoidable, it consists of heavy, hip-deep mud lubricated with not enough water to swim through. A promise of further extensions yet is the stream, which rises wholly underground and seems just as strong at the far rockfall as it does at the cave entrance.

In the Pyramids area, exploration in the cave known as Dalley's Sink Hole has led to two new sections along the underground course of the Murrindal River. However, a squeeze through unstable rock makes entering and leaving the cave fairly hazardous.

W.A.S.G. EXPEDITION TO NULLARBOR

During Christmas 1961, four members of the West Australian Speleological Group spent two weeks examining cave areas in the W.A. section of the Nullarbor Plain. Using two Volkswagens, the party attempted to reach the limestone cliffs at the coast. This attempt failed, but en route a number of small holes with narrow solution-pipe entrances and small chambers were explored.

Later, at the Cocklebiddy Cave, two members tried out an aqua-lung at the end of the cave's 300 ft. long lake, and continued underwater for 80 feet into an unexplored section.

Further east near Madura, two shallow caves were visited. In one of these, some excavation resulted in removal of some bone and artefacts. In the other cave, some holes blowing strongly were found, but no entry could be made.

Climax of the trip was a visit to the Weebubbie and Abrakurrie Caves near Eucla. In the well-known Weebubbie Cave, one of the party dived beneath the terminal wall of the lake, and thirty feet beyond this point he could see the roof rising into a further chamber. A limited amount of lifeline prevented further exploration here. Members of the party believe that the trip gave them a good general look, as well as making them aware of problems for future trips.

QUEENSLAND SPELEOS AT KEMPSEY

In December 1961, a party of speleos from the University of Queensland visited caves in the Kempsey district under the guidance of the Kempsey S.S. Main entry explored was the rugged Stockyard Creek region, and a number of pot-holes were descended, including Wall's Cave.

It was in the vicinity of Wall's that an interesting discovery was made. A small cave was accidentally found, and followed till it ended abruptly in a large drop at least 80 feet deep, and impossible to descend without a ladder. The area was wet, and the party felt that it could lead to a creek bed.

Another cave of much current interest in the area is the River Cave, which is considered to be a drainage tunnel from a system further up inside the hill. The river passage is difficult to negotiate because of cold water, siphons, and two series of small terraces. Near the end of the passage, entry can be made up into a chamber and branch passage leading to a crevice choked with formation. In February, this crevice was broken through, and the next formidable barrier is what seems to be an almost-impossible siphon.

UNSWSS AT WEE JASPER

After considerable work at Bungonia, it is a change to read of a visit to Wee Jasper by a small party from the University of N.S.W. society. On this occasion, the Goodravale Caves (downstream from the settlement) were visited, and reported to consist of many levels and series of mazes. Incidentally, the owner of the caves property charged the party two shillings per head for inspecting the caves.

Undoubtedly, we will hear much more about the Wee Jasper district in the near future, as this area has been chosen by the new Cave Research organization as a region of special investigation.

AUSTRALASIAN CAVE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

At the annual A.S.F. committee meeting in Sydney last January, Dr. Aola Richards was present, representing the newly formed Australasian Cave Research Association (A.C.R.A.), whose members are scientists interested in special aspects of cave research. The publicised aims of the Association are threefold :

1. To stimulate high-grade research into caves.
2. To publish the results of such research.
3. To foster an appreciation of the wider importance of speleology.

A.C.R.A. has been invited to complete formalities so that application for A.S.F. society membership can be made at the Biennial Conference of A.S.F. next December.

Unfortunately, there has been some delay in having the A.S.F. Newsletter registered for cheaper postal transmission. We had hoped that this issue would be available for cheap postage, but arrangements for registration are now under way with the G.P.O. in Sydney.

Note. Those who met Trevor Shaw on his last visit here will be pleased to hear that Trevor is now Lt.-Commander Shaw and has been posted to H.M.S. Lion as Senior Engineer Officer. (Thanks, B.H.-S.)