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CONTENTS

Number Forty Two - December 1968

EDITORIAL.1
EDITH SMITH.2
EDIE SMITH AWARD.3
BARBARA DEW MEMORIAL LECTURE..4
TREVOR WRIGHT, OBITUARY..5
SPELEO HANDBOOK Peter Matthews.6
ASF 7th. BIENNIAL CONFERENCE..6

AVAILABLE BACK ISSUES OF THE ASF NEWSLETTER.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Edition Number</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
1958	3	6
1960	7	8
1960	9	22
1961	11	28
"	12	30
"	13	29
1961	14	26
1962	15	27
1962	17	27
1964	23	37
1964	26	4
1965	27	12
"	28	28
"	29	23
1965	30	13
1966	31	2
"	32	8
"	33	25
1966	34	10
1967	36	28
"	37	20
1967	38	6
1968	39	29
"	40	30
1968	41	10

CAVING IN AUSTRALIA

Produced by the ASF

22

Number Forty Two - December 1968

A.S.F. NEWSLETTER

AUSTRALIAN
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Editorial.Vale - fellow cavers.

AS WE ALL KNOW, CAVING IS A PURELY PARTICIPANT, NOT EVEN PARTIALLY SPECTATOR, SPORT. WHATEVER OUR MOTIVATION FOR CAVING - BE IT TO ESCAPE THE HUMDRUM OF THE IDIOT BOX ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON, THE NEED TO BE BROUGHT DOWN TO SIZE BY THE IRREVERSIBILITY OF NATURAL PHENOMENA, TO PERSUE ALLIED INTERESTS, OR BECAUSE WE ARE DOING RESEARCH WORK IN A CAVE'S PECULIAR ENVIRONMENT, WE ARE FORCED TO PARTICIPATE.

AND IN PARTICIPATING, WE JOIN WITH OTHERS HAVING A MUTUAL INTEREST; JOINING, WORKING CLOSELY, ESTABLISHING A BOND DEEPER AND CLOSER THAN NORMALLY ENCOUNTERED IN EVERYDAY LIVING. THERE IS A COMRADESHIP IN OUR SPORT, SELDOM MENTIONED OR PROBED AT CONFERENCES OR MEETINGS, WHICH? PERHAPS, IS THE MAIN REASON WE TROG. SO THE DEATH OF A FELLOW CAVER, EVEN IF WE HAVE NEVER MET HIM OR HER, INEVITABLY LEAVES A GAP AT THE CAMP FIRE.

IN THIS ISSUE WE RECORD THE LOSS OF THREE CAVERS. EDIE SMITH - A PIONEER OF CAVING IN AUSTRALIA; BARBARA DEW - BEST KNOWN IN HER PUBLIC IMAGE AS "BAT WOMAN"; AND YOUNG, EXUBERANT TREVOR WRIGHT, A MEMBER OF U.N.S.W.S.S.. FROM OUR ANONYMITY, WE DO WELL TO SILENTLY SAY "THANKS, FOR WHAT YOU WERE."

NOTICES

7 th. BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

The A.S.F. 7th Biennial conference will be held at Graham's castle, Goolwa, South Australia on the 26th. to the 30th. of December 1968. All details from C.E.G.S.A., c/o S.A. MUSEUM, North Terrace, Adelaide..

EDITH SMITH

Eddie Smith was born at Forth in north-western Tasmania and was the granddaughter of James (Philosopher) Smith, an early pioneer who became famous as the discoverer of the Mt. Bischoff tin deposits. She was educated in Launceston and during World War II she joined the Women's Australian Air Force. After demobilisation she commenced a science course at the University of Tasmania majoring in geology. The Geology professor, S.W. Carey, had founded the first caving club in Australia - The Tasmanian Caverneering Club - in 1946, and a number of staff and students of his department were active cavers. So Edie became interested in caving and joined T.C.C. in August, 1948. She took an active part in caving being interested in it not only as a sport but also as a science. At Hastings she was the driving force behind the tunnelling project to provide a wet weather link between Newdegate Cave and the Binney Cave. This project was highly successful and opened up much new ground for exploration. Edie also had an interest in fossils, cave bone deposits and cave fauna. As well she took an active part in the running of T.C.C. She was on the Club committee for six years in succession, including one year as vice-president and three as treasurer. In August 1955 she was made an honorary life member of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club, the first member of the club to be so honoured.

Late in 1955 she moved to Canberra to work with the Bureau of Mineral Resources. Here she became the first woman member of the recently formed Canberra Speleological Society. They soon discovered her qualities as a caver as well as a person and in 1958 she became president of C.S.S. - the only woman ever to become president of an Australian caving society. While in Canberra much of her caving was concentrated in the Wee Jasper area. She made her mark as a cave surveyor as well as a keen explorer. She was one of the first to pass through the water traps in Dogleg, but her best known exploit was the great link-up between Signature and Punchbowl Caves by what is now known as Edie's Tunnel.

In 1963 she returned to Hobart. Already her illness was beginning to take its toll but with her characteristic courage she continued to take an active interest in caving. Her best known effort during this time was the digging of a tunnel in Junee Cave near Maydena to by-pass the water-trap. Unfortunately this was not successful. She also took the lead in beginning the construction of a new low-level track to Exit Cave in 1965. Although grey in the face and utterly exhausted by the effort she headed the party in thick scrub. She was unable to take part in later trips to this area but had the satisfaction of seeing the project finished and sharing the excitement of new discoveries in Exit Cave before her death. Even a few months before her death she took a party of scouts to King George V Cave in Hastings to introduce them to the fascinations of caving. She died on August 29, 1967, at the home of a friend in Launceston. Edie will be remembered not only as an enthusiastic caver but also as a sincere and dependable friend by those who knew her. She

had an inner strength of character which more than made up for her limited physical strength.

Perhaps our feelings are best reflected in the words of Joe Jennings who said of her "The other thing we shall always remember in Edie was the warm kindness of her character which reached everyone but most of all young children and animals. Conservation of nature and natural beauty was another expression of the loving care she had for all around her. She was very firm but never fierce with anyone who looked like leaving a dirty campsite. The world is a lesser place without her and we shall not meet her like very often."

THE EDIE SMITH AWARD.

This award is intended as a tribute to a lady of high personal ideals who gave much of her life and energy to Speleology. However, the method of administration of the award has been designed to achieve far wider benefits for the cause. It will, for example, ensure that those who follow in Edie's footsteps will gain some recognition for their work. The award will carry her name but it will also act as a stimulus to those who work for speleology and reward them in a small way for their efforts.

But, most importantly, the Award will help to put Speleology on the map. It will help to give a proper status to caving and identify it with other similar endeavours which have already instituted similar awards.

Suitable publicity will attend the presentation of the award and will help to put Speleology in the public eye.

The greatest difficulty we have in gaining public approval of our aims is public ignorance. Most people have never heard of Speleology. Publicity, provided it is good publicity, will help to dispel public ignorance and establish the Science of Speleology in its rightful place. There will in due course be a more formal treatise on the Award and its mechanism but here is a quick run-down as things stand at present:

The 1967 Committee Meeting at Orange, N.S.W. took the following decision:

That an Award be established by the Federation to perpetuate the name of Edie Smith and to give recognition to outstanding contributions to Australian Speleology.

Pattern of Implementation:

Name: The Award be known as the Edie Smith Award, or, if any other name is felt to be more appropriate, the name of Edie Smith could well appear on the physical emblem of the Award.

Purpose:

1. To perpetuate the memory of Edie Smith.
2. To give recognition to those who have made an outstanding contribution to Australian Speleology.

Establishment: An appeal to be opened for special donations from member societies or from individual Speleologists, such donations to be paid into a special account for the purpose. At the closing of the appeal (say within 6 months) the committee appointed to implement the Award should, with consideration to the amount available, determine an appropriate physical emblem of the Award.

Implementation: A committee consisting of the Trustees of the Federation and the President of the day shall administer the Award. The Award shall be presented to persons, whether members of member societies of the Federation or not, who have in the opinion of the committee made a truly outstanding contribution to Australian Speleology. In general this should be a long-term contribution, say over 10 years. However, the contribution may be in any field of Speleology.

No more than Award would be presented at a time, and presentations made only at the Biennial Conference of the Federation. However, the committee may refrain from making an Award at any specific conference.

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THE BARBARA DEW MEMORIAL LECTURE

Speleology in Australia suffered an untimely loss with the death of Miss Barbara Dew, in December 1968. Miss Dew was particularly interested in bats and their parasites and had been an active member of SUSS and the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia for a number of years. SUSS resolved to establish an annual Lecture in memory of Barbara Dew as being a most fitting way of remembering her long years of membership and assistance to the society.

It was resolved:

"That a Barbara Dew Memorial Lecture shall be established, to be held annually to commemorate the great contributions Barbara Dew made to speleology. As well as her well known interest in and study of bats, she did much of the tiresome but essential tasks of running the Society during her membership of SUSS from 1963 to 1968. Her membership gave a stability and continuity to the Society, the loss of which is sadly missed. The lecture shall be given by a person prominent in the

field of speleology or other closely allied field, and the lecture will be open to all interested persons."

It is hoped that other Societies will be interested not merely in attending the lecture, but may wish to suggest suitable speakers. Within reason, it is proposed that speakers expenses will be paid and to defray this, a small admission charge may be necessary. Arrangements regarding each Lecture are to be made by the SUSS Committee.

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OBITUARY. - TREVOR WRIGHT, UNSWSS

Probably one of the most difficult and unpleasant tasks I have ever been required to undertake is the preparation of these few words informing cavers of the death of one of the best known members of UNSWSS, that of Trevor Wright.

Trevor was 20 years of age and had managed to pack a lot of living into his life. Apart from his excellent qualities as Caver and Speleologist, he was well known for his bush-walking, scouting (he was a Queen Scout) and socialising on his many trips overseas to Europe. His 'voice' around a campfire was a legend.

To add to this he had spent three successful years at the University, undertaking a full time course in Surveying.

In the two years he had been associated with the Society I cannot remember any instance when he lost the infectious grin and the cheerful attitude to anything he undertook. On top of this he also maintained the Society's financial records and led many caving trips, evidence being the nearly 'All Wright' issue of SPAR dated September 1968.

Trevor died of pneumonia after two days of exposure to a severe blizzard at Watson's Crag in the Snowy Mountains NSW, during preparations for his New Zealand Christmas Venture.

The only consolation I can accept for his death is that he had lived his life to the full and died in the company of his Friends.

To all of us, Trevor was a "damned nice guy" ..

Ian Wood.

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SPELEO HANDBOOK

A note from the Editor: Bound copies of the Handbook have now sold out for the time being, although there are still twenty loose-leaf editions in stock. These are pre-punched for a standard two ring binder. I hope to be able to make up about another forty bound copies in the next couple of months by reprinting the missing pages from the leftover sheets. Twenty of these have already been paid for (ordered).

Summerising: Twenty looseleaf editions are still available, but if you want bound copies you will have to wait a couple of months before receiving them. First in first served, and only prepaid orders can be accepted.

Peter Matthews

5/277 Mitcham Road, Vermont, Victoria, 3133

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ASF 7th. Biennial Conference.

The 7th. Biennial Conference of the Australian Speleological Federation will be held at Graham's Castle, Goolwa South Australia, 26-30 December 1968.

The official opening will take place on the morning of the 27th. the remainder of the day being allocated to presentation of papers around the theme of 'Man and his effect on caves.'

On subsequent days, the programme consists of committee conference each morning, presentation of papers in the afternoon, with slides and film demonstrations each evening. Also included is the traditional 'Caveman's Dinner.'

Following the conference, there will be field trips to the Nullarbor Kangaroo Island and to the South East (ie. Naracoorte & Mt. Gambier).

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The back issues listed on the page opposite are available to members at the single copy rate ie. 25c plus postage. The cost of postage will be 5c for two issues. Anyone wishing to purchase back issues should contact the;

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2007