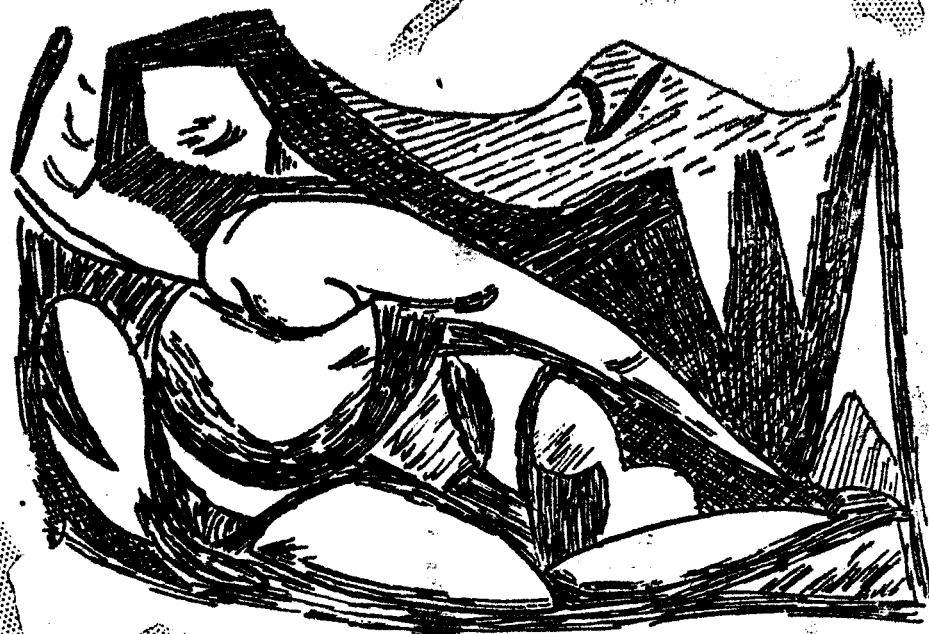


**ASF**

**AUSTRALIAN  
SPELEOLOGICAL  
FEDERATION**

# **NEWSLETTER**



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**A S F NEWSLETTER**

AUSTRALIAN SPELEOLOGICAL FEDERATION  
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Editorial . . . . .

TEXAS ...

COLONG ...

MT ETNA ...

... WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?  
. . . . .

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NOTICES

**A.S.F. COMMITTEE MEETING**

The next Committee Meeting of the Australian Speleological Federation will be held in Melbourne on 24 - 25 January, 1970, the Victorian Speleological Association being host.

**EIGHTH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE**

The Eighth Biennial Conference of the Australian Speleological Federation will be held in Hobart, Tasmania, in December 1970, with field trips to follow. Joint hosts will be the Tasmanian Caverneering Club and the Southern Caving Society. Details will be available later.

## CONSERVATION ACTION

## COLONG - THE GOOLWA CONFERENCE AND AFTER

by Greg. Middleton,  
Observer on the Colong Committee  
for the ASFNSW Co-ordination Committee

## Action at Conference

At the Seventh Biennial Conference of ASF at Goolwa, S.A., I presented a paper on "The Case for Colong". This was intended to inform delegates of the situation, both political and speleological, at this stage in the Colong mining controversy.

Following on this, a motion was proposed by S.S.S. and subsequently adopted, deploring the action of the N.S.W. Government, calling on the Premier to protect the caves, expressing support for the Colong Committee and endorsing a proposal to name the 13 caves so far discovered after members of the N.S.W. State Cabinet. Subsequently the Federation sent the following letter to the Hon. R.W. Askin, Premier of N.S.W. :

" At its recent national conference the Australian Speleological Federation gave careful consideration to the situation at Colong where a number of caves within the Caves Reserve appear to be endangered by a proposal to mine limestone, for which your Government has granted a lease.

As a result, the Seventh Biennial Conference of the Australian Speleological Conference resolved

- a. That it deplores the decision of the N.S.W. Government to allow the mining of limestone within Reserve No. 68,800 for Public Recreation and Preservation of Caves at Colong.
- b. That it calls on the Premier of N.S.W. to give an assurance that no limestone caves in the Colong Caves Reserve will be permitted to be damaged, should mining commence.

It was further resolved that the Federation would support the activities of the Colong Committee in its efforts to have the mining lease revoked and the area included in the proposal Kanangra - Boyd National Park, and to endorse the proposal to name recently discovered caves at Church Creek after members of your Cabinet.

In accordance with the wishes of the Federation I am writing to you to ask for your assurance that no limestone cave in the Colong Caves Reserve will, in fact, be permitted to be damaged. We are aware that there are conditions in the lease which would allow the Minister for Mines to give the caves protection. We seek your assurance that this will be done."

(signed)

R. P. Webb,  
PRESIDENT

No reply has yet been received.

There has been no official comment from any of the Cabinet Ministers after whom caves have been named but the Geographical Names Board of N.S.W. has questioned the right of S.S.S. to name caves and expressed concern at not being consulted. This matter is currently the subject of correspondence between the two parties.

Attach from within.

On a different tack, a group of 200 individuals, mainly students at Sydney University, last year purchased one share each in A.P.C.M., the cement company holding the Mt Armour lease. This allowed them to receive the Company's 5th Annual Report and to allow its Annual General Meeting on 16th April, 1969. The events at this meeting were well reported in "The Australian" of 17th April. Apart from harassing the Directors, the principal outcome of this confrontation was the passing of two motions, with the Directors' consent :

"1. In view of the fact that Southern Portland Cement has approached APCM and/or its subsidiaries with regard to the sharing of a common pipeline from Marulan and/or joint working of the Marulan leases, that the question of operating Special Lease 444 in the Clong Caves Reserve, within the boundaries of the proposed Kanangra-Boyd National Park, shall be reviewed by the Board of Directors.

2. That representatives of the Board meet with the Director of the National Trust, the President of the National Parks Association and representatives of the Clong Committee to discuss the various estimates of the Murrumbidgee Creek limestone deposits."

#### Interest Shown by the William Pengelly Cave Studies Association

This worthy British body offered to publish a paper on the Clong question in its journal, Studies in Speleology. The offer was accepted and a paper with maps and photographs will appear in the issue, Vol. 2, No. 1, later in 1969. A limited number of reprints will be available for a small charge (about 25c.) from the Clong Committee, 18 Argyle Street, Sydney, 2000. Further donations towards the work of the Committee will also be gratefully received.

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#### PROCEEDINGS OF THE SEVENTH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF ASF

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In accordance with a decision of the Committee at the last Conference that Conference proceedings would in future be published by the host society the Transcript of Proceedings of the Seventh Biennial Conference of the A.S.F. is now available. 12 papers on conservation, science and technology caves and their visitors and travelogues, totalling 150 pages, including maps and diagrams. Well printed and bound with semi-hard cover. Price \$1 from CEGSA, c/o South Australian Museum, North Terrace, Adelaide. Worth it!

NULLARBOR 1969

by Alan Hill, C.E.G.S.A.

The Nullarbor Field Trip following the A.S.F. Conference at Goolwa set out at the beginning of 1969 with 17 cavers and 6 vehicles under the leadership of Peter Hewkes, with a general objective of extended tourism. The private transport arrangement was favorable to individual objectives of catching up with recent work and general knowledge of the Plain, and the trip was actually a large number of small trips. The following assemblage of comparatively unrelated pieces of information is offered as the more useful results obtained from the trip, and will help to bring up to date information published previously on caves of the Nullarbor.

### "Blind White Fish"

A newspaper article in the Adelaide 'Advertiser' headed "Rare Fish in Desert", and commencing "Tiny white fish have been discovered by Adelaide 'potholders' in pools in caves under the Nullarbor..." sparked off interstate interest in a search for more positive information. Everything so far has been negative - there were no fish collected and C.E.G.S.A. was not involved. The non-caving informant claims he was led to a shallow cave with a laraby an aborigine a year or so ago, where he only saw the fish. The cave was supposed to be between Mundroo and Nullarbor (100 miles apart) and several miles north of the Eyre Highway. Cuddy's Well (493107) the 1:250000 Nullarbor sheet marked "underground" on the old maps seemed a good place to start but this proved to be an old dug well, now over 100' deep and dry, now used as a dump. Discussion with the staff at the Yalata Mission Reserve, which extends to within a mile of Nullarbor Station, and their questioning of the Mission aborigines, gave us a totally negative response.

### N2 - Weebubbie Cave

The best access road to N2 is now via the new radio tower road west of Eucla. The cave is now equipped with pump units from which 1,500 gallons of water are taken 5 times daily for the new Eucla Hotel. Water level remains within an inch of the 1957 and 1960 measured levels and the cave seems to be unaffected by the pumping operations.

### N4 - Koonalda Cave

This cave has been closed to the public (including cavers) under the South Australian Aboriginal and Historical Relics Preservation Act 1965. The only way to get access now is with written permission from the South Australian Museum.

### NI6 - Claydon

The Cave was bottomed by a ladder from the north-west edge and is 90 deep, not 75' as previously recorded. It has a loose rubble and silt floor with a small cave 10 - 15' long leading south which was tight and dangerous. Redback spiders and wetas were present.

## N37 - Mullamullang Cave

No new discoveries were recorded. Three live cockroaches were collected in the Dome together with an unidentified live spider. The spider is reported separately in these notes. Camp One was occupied for two nights by one party travelling to the Dome and Ezam, and another camped at the Sand Chute doing continuous water level measurements at Oasis Valley. New fencing work on Madura Station and new fire breaks have changed the access route to the cave. The manager of Madura Station, Mr Brian O'Connor should be contacted regarding permission and access to the cave.

## N61 - White Wells Blowhole

Located 100 yards north of sign post on the highway and five miles east of Nullarbor turnoff. A six feet diameter shaft drops 20'; no equipment is needed, opens into a chamber 100' x 60' x 4' high with a rough floor. A dry water course leads to a 15' diameter by 12' high chamber within the main chamber. Cave heads in WNW direction and wetas, bones and large birds eggs were seen.

## N68 - Madura Pass Blowhole

Now located on the old pass. There are three entrances in the road-side, one of which was entered for about 40' and was tight and rough. Breezes were noticed, as well as fossil shells, redback spiders in the entrance, and other unidentified bones.

## N73 - Unnamed Blowhole

This was relocated with difficulty and a traverse made back to Mullamullang Cave (N37). A reduction of the traverse shows N73 is located at 8590' E, 6730' N in reference to the map published in "Mullamullang Cave Expeditions 1966". This places N73 close to Camp One.

A blind doline known since 1966 and identifiable by a dead tree in it, was also relocated but not fixed, and is about half a mile slightly west of north from N73 and this would place it close to the Dome. The surface survey needs checking further.

Levels were taken on this traverse and the entrance to N73 was found to be about 20' above the level of the plain surrounding N37. On the latest information the plain level at N37 is 415' above sea level, and N73 would thus be 435' above sea level.

## N116 - Biduna Blowhole

In previous lists this has no description. More correctly termed a cave, it is located 110 yards east of the fence intersection shown on the Nullarbor sheet at 406125 and is 9 yards north of the fence. A ladder is needed as the 3' diameter hole drops 15' into a small broken rock chamber. Further drops in this chamber were not explored.

## N136 - Unnamed Cave

Located at Madura 458047, it is immediately east of the new fire break track leading north to Madura Station and is 2 miles from the highway. A 5' circular opening 2' deep drops 6' into a 10' diameter chamber on the north east side, with a further 6' of passage.



## NI47 - Wigunda Cave

This is a partially overhanging doline 200' in diameter and 75' deep. Entry is by a rock slope and there is small cave at the western base of the doline, which heads to the north and east for 110'. There is a dry dust floor in the cave with some bones and animal carcasses.

## NI60 - Dingo Donga Cave

Located at Madura 476060, it is found by following the Moonera-Madura boundary dog fence for 6 miles north of the highway to a stone cairn, and thence 3/4 mile due west. The highway turn-off is at a large stone pit with a loading ramp on the north side between the 39 and 40 mile posts to Cocklebidy. It is understood that David Lowry has a description and location of NI60 in print in the "Western Caver".

## NI61 - Ivy Tank Cave

Several cave occurrences marked with the survey maps, but not yet confirmed, were investigated. Ivy Tank Cave (Nullarbor 432124) proved to be a large collapse doline 125' in diameter with a floor sloping to the southwest approximately 35' deep where it overhangs with a small 29' long tunnel. It is about 25 yards to the west of the track in the centre of the open plain about a half mile in diameter.

## NI62 - Unnamed Cave

This was located in the completely treeless area as shown at Nullarbor 409129. The cave consists of a three doline entrance system. The north doline slopes down to the north for about 80' and is 15' deep. The cave is entered under a 30' wide arch and trends to the west for about 80'. It is 30' wide and up to 40' deep. 200' south of the first entrance a second doline is below the surface. North east of the second entrance there is a small third doline which enters vertically through a slot type entrance which was not explored. The cave was sketched to CRG Grade 2.

## NI63 - Unnamed Doline

This was an obvious oversight in previous cave lists. It is located at Nullarbor 350107 and is 200 yards north of the highway at the Wigunda gate. It is an old doline 250' x 100', very shallow and at the north end there is a 6' drop to a greatest depth of 15'. Wombat warrens and fossil shells were seen and there are two empty underground tanks, one of which is lined with stone, 15' x 10' x 8' deep.

## NI64 - Caiguna Rockhole Cave

Located at Culver 346009, it is 10 yards right of the track, 0.4 miles south of the end of the Caiguna Airstrip. There are two 2' diameter holes, one blocked, the other dropping 12' to a 10' diameter circular chamber 2' high. Three holes lead off at the bottom.

### N165 - Water Truck Cave

Located 1.8 miles south of N3, and 150' west of the new road. It is on the north west side of a clay pan. The 3' diameter entrance hole opens to 6' diameter at -10', thence a further 8' vertically to a chamber 40' x 20' x 10' high. A 20' ladder is needed. The cave develops to the south-east in two levels through very narrow passages to 60' from the entrance. The cave is an animal trap and contains unidentified bones. Small salt crystals were seen, probably sodium chloride, and the cave was breathing strongly.

### Nullarbor Reference 404134

This could not be located. The road shown running north follows an old fence line and the crossroad at 401135 could not be found. The area near 404134 was systematically searched by Landrover without results. The previous cave N162 should show clearly in air photographs and if there is a cave at 404134, the air photos should be checked before the next search.

### Sea Caves near Wilsons Bluff

A party descended the cliffs for 400' on a hand line to the beach from a point just east of the second visible large cave opening from the trig. cairn. The arched sea cave was then entered from the west. The cave was 150' wide, 100' high at the entrance and tapered back 100' deep with a beach level floor filled with seaweeds at the end. There was no other cave development. The smaller sea caves were inspected east of this. They were impressive but there was little potential for further cave development.

### Koonalda Cliffs Cave

250 yards west of the road turning circle at the Koonalda cliffs, south of Koonalda Station, a large crevasse cave was inspected. It is 200' long, 2' - 5' wide and 60' below the cliff tops. This has been formed by a partial separation of part of the cliff and has no real cave potential. The cliff was descended to sea level but no other caves were observed.

### Nullarbor Spider

An unidentified spider was found by P. Hawkes and party in the Dome chamber of Mullanmullang Cave on 10 January, 1969. It was found on an open rocky floor 6' from the Dome rock cairn, and showed no fear as it walked over Hawkes' hand before being captured. The accompanying sketch is drawn full size with all limbs fully extended. A brief description follows:

Cephalo-thorax : Tan in colour, head detail not clear as covered in dark hair.

Abdomen : Round section, unsegmented but elongated. Off-white in colour, covered with many fine white hairs.

Legs : 8 clearly segmented, tan colour. Each segment has 4-6 strong dark hairs with other finer white hair much shorter in length. Legs have more hair towards outer ends. Ends of two back legs appear to end in small claws.

Palps : Darker in colour (brown) and more hair covered than legs. Unusual last joint that appears to be very strong. Last segment bulbous at joint with a small black protuberance on outer side.

Dr M. J. Mackerras during examination of the dead cockroach Trogloblatella nullarborensis (also found in Nullamullang Cave about 2 years ago) found fragments of a spider. The fragments were sent to Dr Barbara Main, and it was thought to be a previously undescribed new species (from pers. comm. E. Hamilton-Smith).

It appears to be eyeless and the palps are unusually long. Whereas the diet of the Nullarbor cockroach has been suggested to include fungus and rotten wood, a spider is normally a predator and would have to subsist on young cockroaches. The spider would certainly appear to be troglotic and no doubt a formal description will follow in due course.

