

ASF NEWSLETTER

AUSTRALIAN SPELEOLOGICAL FEDERATION



Number 60 ,

WINTER (june) 1973

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS : MEMBERS \$1-20 : NON-MEMBERS \$1-50 : SINGLE COPIES 50¢

Registered in Australia for transmission
by post as a periodical - Category B

ASF NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE

Australian Speleological Federation

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(assisted by member societies of the Federation)

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A.S.F. SUBSCRIPTIONS: Forward annually, with membership addresses, to the Treasurer.

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Editorial Awards 1972

Best Club Newsletter

This year's award goes to Spar, the Newsletter of University of NSW Speleological Society. Spar meets all the necessary and essential elements of a functional newsletter: regularity, uniformity of page size, consistency of layout, pagination, departmentation, acceptably good printing and relevant, interesting contents. It has several outstanding features - notably the technically excellent presentation of maps containing a wealth of detail. The articles and trip reports are interesting with no pseudo-scientific pretensions, the typing is consistent and of course there is the added bonus of a different double page wrap-around photographic cover with every issue. The Editor, Andrew Pavay, is now editing Australian Speleology 1971, a digest of Australian caving in 1971 (see note within) and we can certainly use his talents

Best Article in ASF NEWSLETTER

This was again a difficult choice especially as some articles were extensively edited for publication and some also appeared in other newsletters. The three best were:

Caves of New Britain by R. Michael Bourke (57: 3-6)

Conservation of Fanning River Caves by Andrew Grahame (57: 7-11)

Glacier Caves in New Zealand by C. Henry Shannon (56: 5-6)

It has just occurred to me that these authors, along with the chief 'pusher' of the cave of the year, and most prolific correspondent, Mike Bourke, are all members of UQSS. Perhaps the 'output per caver per annum' is inversely proportional to the number of caves available. A fertile field for study by another member of UQSS, Kathy Hurricane, perhaps? (" . . . more useless statistics . . .")

Cave of the Year

The award goes to Ora Cave, New Britain (see e.g. ASF Newsl. 56: 3 and note within). This cave at the bottom of a doline 800ft deep, though not very large, was altogether more awe-inspiring than Bibima Cave, the runner-up which took out the Southern Hemisphere depth record. Our man in New Britain, R. Michael Bourke, has my congratulations as the most prolific correspondent, but many thanks also to Kevin Kiernan and Fred Aslin among many others for keeping up the news flow.

N O T I C E S

Forthcoming Federation Activities

GATING OF TUGLOW CAVE - The ASF NSW Liaison Council, in cooperation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, has agreed to assist in gating Tuglow Cave. A site inspection has been held and all local clubs are invited to assist when the date is announced.

FIRST AUSTRALASIAN CONFERENCE ON CAVE TOURISM - To be held at Jenolan Caves House from 10-13 July, 1973. Organized by ASF with the assistance of NSW Department of Tourism.

ASF NSW LIAISON COUNCIL - A meeting of the Liaison Council will be held at Bungonia on 21 July, 1973 at 1.30pm. Contact your club delegate for particulars.

SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF SPELEOLOGY - September 1973 in Czechoslovakia. At least 5 ASF members are understood to be attending. Contact Commission on International Relations if interested, or Ian Wood, Joe Jennings, Julia James or Jeanette Dunkley.

YARRANGOBILLY SEMINAR - Tentative date: October long weekend but contact your club delegate to Liaison Council meeting after July 21 for information.

ASF COMMITTEE MEETING - The next Committee Meeting of the Australian Speleological Federation will be held in Melbourne on 26-27 January, 1974. Details later.

SEMINAR ON CAVES AND KARST OF NEW GUINEA - To be held in mid-1974, probably in Sydney, sponsored jointly by Australian Speleological Federation and the Speleological Research Council Ltd. Programme will be announced shortly.

TENTH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE (DECAVECON ?) - The Tenth Biennial Conference of the Australian Speleological Federation will be held in Queensland late in 1974, hosted jointly by UQSS and CQSS. Details are anticipated shortly.

Sundry Notes

ADDRESS CHANGES - Correspondents are asked to note the following amendments to the address list shown on the inside front cover:

KEMPSEY SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, 2 Albert St, Kempsey, NSW 2440

ASF Librarian, Mrs S. Halbert, 19 Nicholson St, Chatswood, NSW 2067

COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY: THE NATIONAL ESTATE - Newspapers throughout the nation in late June carried advertisements inviting submissions to a Committee of Inquiry established by the new Federal Government to consider what it called "The National Estate". Included in the terms of reference of the Committee are caves and other geological features. The Commission on Conservation of the ASF, under chairman Warwick Counsell, is preparing a submission on behalf of the Federation.

BUNGONIA INSPECTION - To raise support among the public, SSS is organizing another public inspection of Bungonia area on 25-26 August. Details were not available at press time,

"HELICTITE" - Correspondents who have asked for or paid for current or back issues of Helictite and have not yet received them are asked to contact John Dunkley at 22/53 Alice Street, Wiley Park 2195.

CORRA-LYNN CAVE - Formerly known as Corrells Cave, this little hole in South Australia does not even appear in the latest list of longest 65 caves in Australia (see ASF Newsl. 59:19). Without much publicity anywhere really, it has recently been quietly announced that the length is not less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles, probably over 4 (making it 3rd longest in Australia). CEGSA is compiling a report for our series 'CAVES OF AUSTRALIA' for the next issue of this Newsletter.

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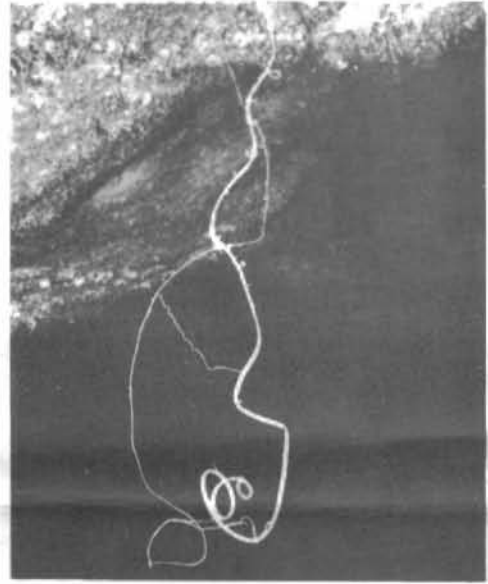


CONSERVATION OF AUSTRALIAN CAVES
A REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION
OF THE AUSTRALIAN SPELEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

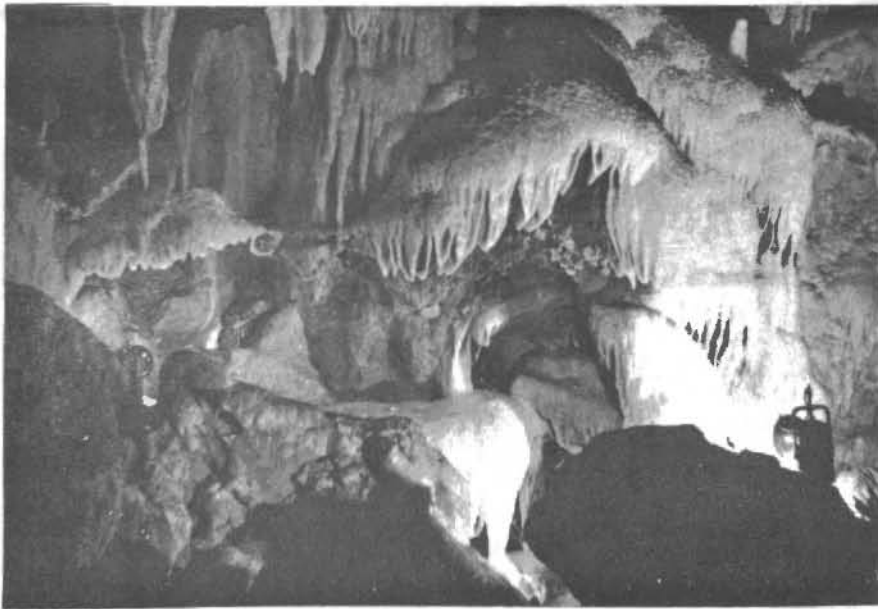
OR...

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With growing affluence, mobility and leisure time, an increasing number of people are using Australia's caves for recreational and scientific purposes. Many caves, located close to population centres in the finest scenery of the Eastern Highlands, are threatened by limestone mining and other incompatible forms of exploitation, and by visitor pressure on the caves themselves. Both are symptomatic of the antiquity of our mining legislation and of the need for proper planning of recreational demands.



1. Introduction

The Australian Speleological Federation is the only body in Australia which can present a national outlook on matters pertaining to the caving world. As such the ASF member societies and executive should therefore accept a unified and rational approach to conservation matters of both local and national interest. This document presents the attitude of the Federation to the conservation of caves throughout Australia.

The growing public usage of caves for recreation and the increasing demands of society for limestone as a basic industrial resource have led to fundamental conflicts between casual cave users, industrial organisations, public authorities and "speleologists" creating an atmosphere, in some cases, of mistrust and dislike. Such emotions will never lead to solution of any conservation issue. What is needed is rational examination of the values and conflicts surrounding the resource values of areas in which caves are found. All sides of the argument must be considered and solutions satisfactory to the long term benefit of society must be found. It is, of course, easy to suggest that this should be done; the difficulty lies in acceptance of the ASF point of view by public authorities, industrial concerns and the general public and in assessment of the resource values of any one area. A consistent and rational approach to conservation issues will assist in producing a respectable and acceptable image for ASF.

There are two distinct facets of cave conservation. The first, that of quarrying of limestone and/or the destruction of amenity value of cave areas by inappropriate land use, is probably well understood by caving organisations. Destruction of the cave and cave environment by cave users has received relatively little attention; a situation which must be rectified to prevent the "sterile" environment such as is found in Punchbowl Cave at Wee Jasper which is practically polished by over use. The second problem is probably the most critical long term difficulty facing the Federation and much discussion and effort to produce responsible attitudes toward caves is required in order to reduce this rather more insidious form of cave destruction.

2. The Conservation Ethic

Conservation as a word and concept is, perhaps, becoming over used and in consequence there is confusion in many minds. Its definition is rather more subtle than the conventional "the wisest use of resources over the longest possible time". It is certainly not preservation only without any use; it should probably be thought of as continuous management for whatever use(s) man may make of the resource(s) in question to optimize the resource value(s) over time. Conservation is an ethical policy and relates man's attitudes to resources to his society. The conservation ethic should take into account the following points:-

a) Resources should be available for use; that is no person or body should deprive the community of a resource for which that community has a value - economic, recreational or aesthetic. In theory all members of the community should have equal rights to the resources;

b) Non-renewable resources should be available to future generations for such use(s) as they determine. We should therefore set aside, unchanged, some areas for future use(s).

c) Competing uses should balance the values that society holds for each and adopt the use that holds the highest long-term value. Compromise will often be necessary to resolve conflict between uses.

Caves are a resource which hold several values to society:-

a) Caves are a valuable wilderness recreation resource when in their wild state;

b) Caves have great scientific and educational values as "warehouses" of flora, fauna and geology;

c) They have value for "tourist" recreation and education both in the developed and undeveloped state;

d) They may act as "warehouses" to rock-hounds, as shelters and;

e) They act as channels for readily usable groundwater.

Areas in which caves are found may also be subject to some form of surface development; for example, agriculture, afforestation, urbanisation all affect caves in Australia. These developments may injure caves directly or may change cave entrances or cave environments; they may be considered highly exploitive uses of cave areas. Most caves are found in limestone - a rock which holds an economic value to the community being used chiefly for portland cement manufactures, as a flux in steel production and as a building stone. Areas in which caves are found are often scenically attractive and may have a larger recreational value than that conferred by the presence of caves themselves; Bungonia Gorge is a fine example of such an area.

Values placed by individuals or society on caves and cave areas are not necessarily assessable in direct economic terms, however, it appears that society is needing other than direct economic evidence when evaluating the conflict between resource uses. The environmental impact statements now required for certain developments are an example of other methods of assessing cost. ASF has responsibility to weigh the competing values of cave areas and as an organisation greatly concerned with conservation it must adopt certain policies and attitudes towards the resources that its member societies use. It must be recognised that compromise, forward planning and evaluation of all resource values is necessary before proper conservation measures can be formulated.

3. The Two Faces of Cave Conservation

Basically the damage that may reduce the resource value of caves falls into two categories. Firstly there is the large scale total destruction which accompanies quarrying and other exploitive land uses. Secondly the more insidious damage wrought by speleologists, sporting cavers, casual visitors, development for tourist activities and by pollution of air and water streams that may move into caves. Destruction of habitat around cave entrances may result in unfavourable conditions for troglodyte fauna such as bats and cave crickets. Such destruction may result from agricultural pursuits, forestry, recreation pressures, engineering works, fire and so on.

In order to prevent damage to caves the user must assess the effects of his actions on the cave and on the cave environments. Vandalism can either be direct as in the case of intentional breakage and removal of speleothems and by the widespread and completely unjustifiable habit of writing on walls and formation. Indirect vandalism caused by the caver who walks, booted, over calcite surfaces or who rubs his mud contaminated hands and overalls along walls and floors. Less evident perhaps is the destruction of the environment brought about by littering, by using caves as toilet facilities, smoking and by introduction of moulds, fungal spores and other organisms on clothes and boots. Such sources of energy, toxic substances and perhaps diseases and competitors may disturb the food cycles and energy networks in the cave ecosystems or affect the balance of cavernicolous populations. External pollution and siltation of streams running into caves may have similar effects. Introduction of eggs or cavernicolous animals from other caves or areas on contaminated equipment might well upset food webs, predator-prey interactions or other faunal community relationships. Over collecting may similarly upset the ecosystem. Widening of entrances and passageways, destruction of "false" floors and stactite barriers in the name of exploration may affect dramatically cave micro-climates resulting in conditions unsuitable for cavernicoles and allow movements of predators and competitors into previously uncontaminated and stable areas.

Handling of bats, especially during the colder months, should be avoided so as to prevent metabolisation of the bats' food reserves. Visitation to maternity caves during the summer months should be curtailed so that undue disturbances to females and young is avoided.

Members of ASF must therefore be prepared for conservation action on two fronts; firstly the caves and cave areas themselves must not be destroyed. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly in these times of increasing recreation pressures, speleologists must exercise considerable care and restraint in their attitudes to the interiors of the caves they visit.

The values that society places on cave resources can be divided into three categories; when exercising these resource values damage is likely to occur, inconsistent with the aims of cave conservation. These values and the possible damage can be summed up as follows:-

a) Exploitive uses, where whole caves may be removed, covered or otherwise destroyed;

b) Recreational and/or educational uses; where cave micro-environments, speleothems and flora and fauna may be disturbed or destroyed by injudicious actions;

c) Scientific uses, where over collecting and bad experimental design may alter cave micro-environments and remove flora and fauna.

4. Methods of Cave Protection

a) Protection from surface exploitation and quarrying.

Destruction of caves by quarrying, agricultural practices, road construction and the like may appear to be potentially the greatest threat to caves but the total number of caves is likely to be few and it is usually possible to have some warning before the cave(s) are destroyed. There are two methods of reducing the danger of destruction by government departments, statutory bodies, local government authorities and private land owners. The first is to provide the relevant user with information about the value and importance of caves for recreation, science, groundwater flow and so on. For example a farmer preparing to fill in a cave entrance may well be influenced by knowledge of the insectivorous habits of bats. It must be remembered that the vast majority of the population know nothing whatsoever about caves, many in fact will fear caves and their inhabitants. Much can be achieved if the full facts are elucidated in such a manner as to point out the importance of the resource to the user and the community as a whole.

The second and most important measure is to legislate to reserve notable and valuable areas so that changes in land use decisions have to be debated in public. An Act of Parliament is the best form of legislation because of the guaranteed public debate. Speleologists, together with many others, should be pressing governments to undertake full resource surveys to plan for proper land use and management decisions in order that the values of all resources can be conserved. To legislate for complete protection of cavernous areas requires that the governments of the States are informed of the values of caves for wilderness recreation, science and aesthetics. Local member societies must liaise closely with the ASF and with their administration and with their legislature. The support and sympathy of departmental officers, parliamentarians, the media and the public must be obtained. Considerable tact and careful preparation and presentation of data and arguments is needed in order to prevent dismissal by government departments and courts of law.

b) Protection from the cave user.

Cave users should fall into three broad (and interchangeable) categories as follows:-

- a) those who use developed "tourist" caves;
- b) accredited members of societies which have speleology/caving as their aim;
- c) "psuedo"-speleologists, that is, those who are fringe members of speleo clubs, casual cavers and members of various outdoor organisations such as scouts, bushwalkers and so on. It is this last category who probably do least for continued cave conservation. Tourist caves are often the best preserved, except perhaps from the biological point of view, of caves presently known. Speleologists (defined here as those who belong to ASF member societies) should be setting an example to all other cave users of enlightened conservation practice; in some cases this is not happening.

This lack of respect is probably due to inadequate knowledge of the delicate nature of cave environments and of ecosystem dynamics; much more could be done to educate speleologists to the effects of their actions of the dangers of over collecting and of the complexities of community ecology especially in the low diversity cave situation. However the first priority must be to educate all cave users so that all will respect the value of caves as a resource. A broad approach embracing all possible methods of cave conservation is necessary to produce effective and sustained yield of resource value and education must be an essential early part of this approach.

Perhaps the best method of protecting caves is to restrict to the general public any knowledge of their location, only allowing those who are demonstrably responsible in their cave "craft". However in many areas such an approach is not practicable because of the ease of finding caves because of natural features or because visitor pressures have already produced tracks to the entrances. It is also impossible to prevent knowledge leaking out from the society. In very densely used areas caves will be rediscovered by chance anyway. Speleological societies, however, have a responsibility to restrict widespread publication of cave entrance locations and descriptions so that the more irresponsible elements of the caving fraternity have reduced scope for causing damage. Societies also should be extremely careful to instruct visitors and probationary members in effective conservation attitudes.

Physical methods of preventing access to caves will not keep all people out. Those determined enough will break in sooner or later and the presence of a gate implies that there is something behind it and it may act as a challenge. It is probably better to design a structure so that it will keep out most people but can be forced and repaired with ease. There may be scope for more ingenious devices such as artificial boulder chokes, pools and similar deterrents to be used on a wider scale. Gates in areas closely supervised, as in National Parks and other intensively patrolled areas will work much more effectively than those in remote areas.

Restriction of access to caves and caves areas by private land owners, statutory bodies and government departments may lead to fair protection of caves but patrols and enforcement of some sort is required if the system is to continue effective. The permit system operating in some NSW areas is generally working well, especially where the areas are close to the controlling centre.

A method of cave conservation related to concealment of caves is that of zoning. Under a zoning scheme some authority (not ASF as an efficient legislation and enforcement system is necessary) would survey and inventory the cave resources and assess what use may be made of each cave or cave area. Decisions and compromise as to what use(s) are to be made of each cave are then made. Once a use for each cave or area is reached the authority will allow only that use. The decision must be made in the light of available evidence and present use patterns but some appreciation of future changes in values and needs must be part of the decision making process so that similar options are available to future generations.

The use decisions would result in some caves or areas being open to all legitimate uses, others to scientific uses only, others completely closed and so on to produce a zoning of cave resources. The complexity of the zoning scheme will be a reflection of the number of values and of the number of uses that society puts on the resources of the particular area. A zoning scheme should probably be approached from a State level so that uniform legislation and enforcement and so that a minimum of subjectivity is allowed in the decision making process. However it is probably more immediately practicable to institute zoning schemes on a more localised basis so that it can be instituted more quickly and so that administrative hang-ups are reduced. Local resource managers may have a better idea of problems and cures which are found in the local area. However zoning, to be most effective, must be part of a total resource management scheme. (A fuller discussion of zoning as applied to caves can be found in a paper by John Dunkley, "Environmental Cave Conservation", 6th ASF Conference, 1966, unpublished).

Each ASF member society should adopt, as a matter of policy, an ethical code toward conservation of the cave resource applicable to their local areas and conditions. A suggested code is outlined below; mention of such codes is made here because they are perhaps the best method of preventing destruction of caves if cave users understand the reasons behind the code and believe in such courses of ethical policy. A measure of enforcement is also required.

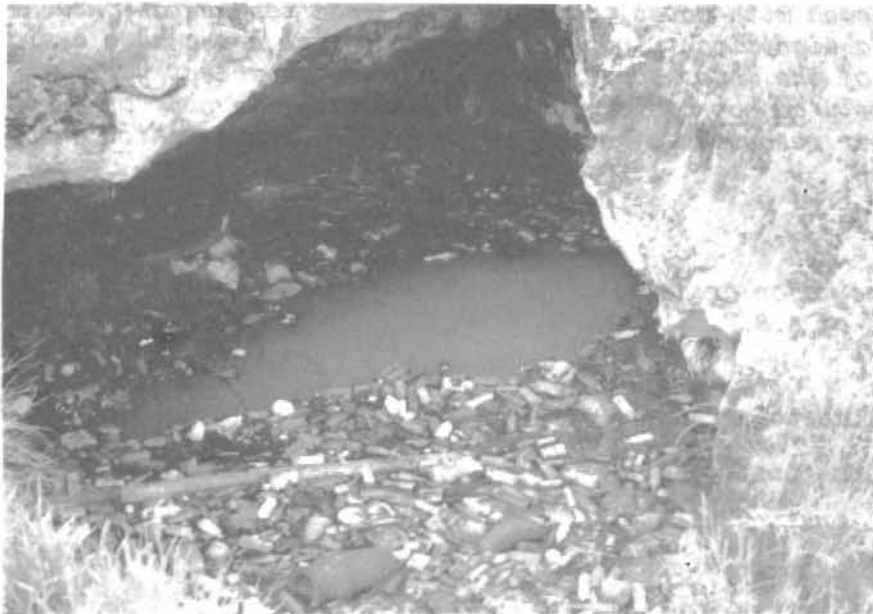
5. The Role of the Australian Speleological Federation

One of the functions of ASF, as a national body, should be to provide a national perspective to problems confronting caves, cavers and their contact with society. Although ASF does not hold official powers it can act at advisory and consultative level to provide information and attitudes for decision making by the relevant authorities. As a practical use for the data collected by ASF member societies it is considered that the ASF should formulate policy that relates the national cave resources to their various values. The overview obtained by ASF, if applied objectively, uniquely fits the organisation for the master planning required for the conservation of the total cave resources within Australia.

Master planning is a three stage process; inventory, analysis and policy formulation. Much of the inventory and analysis is already undertaken by ASF and member societies; material in the "Speleo Handbook" is well adapted to this use. ASF, through its conservation commission, should formulate national policy objectives for consideration by the relevant Commonwealth and State authorities for both specific cave areas and for the total cave resource of this country.

Assessment of values of specific areas and/or caves is necessarily subjective at this time but a careful objectively planned and open approach to the evaluation will ensure that the cause of cave conservation is carried on in the most ethical and unemotional manner possible. It is probably necessary to avoid comparisons between caves, cave areas and so on to prevent "trading" of values. Only when the community and governments accept that ASF is not a "bleeding heart" type of conservation organisation which is capable of offering constructive suggestions to reduce the conflicts between resource users. ASF should act as a clearing house for conservation problems and actions so as to ensure an adequate perspective of the conservation issues facing the caving world.

The second major role of the ASF is to provide an understanding of the reasons behind conservation ethics and practices to the rank and file of member societies. This role is partly fulfilled by ASF guideline documents and partly by the newsletter. However societies should place more emphasis on producing better educated speleologists as opposed to transient cavers. This is particularly difficult as most people are quite content to exploit the resource without accepting the responsibilities conferred by their use of caves. Far greater contact between member societies and other organisations which are directly or indirectly using cave resources; church groups, outdoor organisations, industries and so on must be made aware of their responsibilities and ASF is the only body which can do this, through its member societies, objectively.



This cave in the south east of South Australia is used as a rubbish dump. Not far away, the town water supply of Mt Gambier, which comes from ground water, was found polluted. Too many people regard caves as convenient holes into which to dispose of waste materials

6. A Conservation Code

It is suggested that a code of conservation ethics similar to the example below be adopted by member societies. More than mere adoption is required, however, and societies should bring such a code to the notice of new and old members alike and should be prepared to enforce the requirements of the code.

1. Exploration and investigation of each cave should be consistent with the continued existence of the cave in its natural state. Any alterations by digging, diversion of water, blasting, gating and so on should be avoided until careful consideration of possible effects has been made.
2. Specimens of flora, fauna, rocks and minerals shall not be collected except for specific, recognised research projects. Any action which may interfere with the continued livelihood of cave fauna, either individuals or colonies, must be avoided.
3. Permanent markings shall not be used except when essential for survey or other purposes. Cave numbers and tags must be kept small and relatively inconspicuous.
4. Members of societies must, when visiting cave areas, avoid all actions which may result in environmental degradation of any sort. Rubbish should be taken home, vehicular tracks kept to a minimum, flora and fauna must be protected consistent with local legislation.
5. No wastes of any kind must be allowed to remain in caves. Noxious substances such as tobacco, spent carbide and food scraps must be removed in all circumstances. Pollution of external streams must be avoided.
6. Member societies should avoid unnecessary dissemination of cave localities to the general public.
7. Member societies have a responsibility to educate others in the correct use of the resource that they are using.
8. Member societies should take part in and supply information to the Conservation Commission of ASF so that effective conservation action can be taken to protect the total resource.

7. Summary

1. Speleologists must realise that the resource they are using holds legitimate values to other users as well as the value conferred by the speleologists.
2. A two part approach to cave conservation is required:-
 - a) cave use policy decisions should be made in the light of the competing demands and values in a well planned and objective manner;
 - b) speleologists have a responsibility to protect the caves they use from any damage, intentional or otherwise.
3. ASF member societies have a great and continuing responsibility to educate their members and the general public in ethical conservation practice and in the reasons behind such practice.
4. ASF should play a major role in helping to formulate national and state policies on cave conservation matters.

Andrew Spate

The Australian Speleological Federation and its member societies and individuals throughout Australia are currently parties to 5 major and many minor conflicts of land use interest involving limestone caves. By comparison with other countries, Australia is not well endowed with caves, particularly close to population centres, and because limestone is a significant industrial raw material, caves have attracted a disproportionate share of the major conservation problems in recent years. Each has been fought on a largely ad hoc basis, but the Federation is now preparing a comprehensive survey of our resources of caves and karst landscapes which should be of great benefit in future.

This map shows some of the major areas of conflict in which members of A.S.F. are currently engaged:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Mt Etna | (limestone mining) |
| 2. Texas | (dam construction) |
| 3. Colong | (limestone mining) |
| 4. Marulan/Bungonia | (limestone mining) |
| 5. Precipitous Bluff | (limestone mining) |
| 6. South-east of South Australia | (pollution of ground water) |



Further information about these may be obtained from the A.S.F. Commission on Conservation, P.O. Box 388, BROADWAY, N.S.W. 2007.

CAVES OF AUSTRALIA

No. 7 : CAULDRON POT

by Peter Shaw

"Will Cauldron Pot be Australia's deepest cave? Four hundred feet and still going strongly"

That was the scribbled note we left for fellow TCC caver, Brian Collin, after a breakthrough trip, which had turned Cauldron Pot from a forgotten cave, into the leading contender in the depth stakes.

Cauldron Pot is one of the major known feeders to the Junee resurgence near Maydena, Tasmania. Seeking a way to enter the system feeding the Junee resurgence, TCC searched the forested slopes of the Mt Field National Park, discovering the major swallets of Cauldron Pot, Khazad-Dum (Australia's deepest cave, and the uninviting Niagara Pot (see ASF Newsletters 53 & 56 - ed.)

Surrounded by pleasant rain forest, Cauldron Pot has an impressive entrance, with a 150ft waterfall, crashing on to a log jam partway down the entrance pitch, and spraying out across the shaft. Initial exploration of the pot was deterred by the prospect of a long, free, wet pitch. Descent of the entrance pitch had to wait until the 1970 A.S.F. Conference, when John Taylor found the pitch to be 140ft. The chamber was seen to be blocked lower down.

With exploration supposedly complete, Cauldron Pot was neglected until February 1972, when some doubt arose in TCC as to exactly what was blocking progress in the cave. In a quick trip, Phil Robinson descended the entrance pitch and reported that the end of the chamber was blocked by talus. Although there was a strong draught, digging was considered to be suicidal. Again, Cauldron Pot faded into the background. Exploration commenced in Dwarrowdelf (JF14) which was pushed to a depth of 700ft with the final pitch incomplete. Harrowing trips with mountains of ladders were the impetus required to force TCC into finding improved methods of exploring such deep caves.

Single rope techniques of abseiling and prusiking were accepted as the means of cutting down on gear. Up to this stage, deep caving trips had required a large amount of planning, to ensure that everyone would be available for the trip. With the outdownt in gear, much smaller parties were possible, with the attraction of organizing trips on the spur of the moment.

As soon as several members were proficient in practice, several known caves were visited to try the techniques out underground. Midnight Hole, Niagara Pot, Devils Pot and Khazad-Dum were visited. Ladders were gone from deep caves forever! Cauldron Pot's entrance pitch was suggested as being worthy of a visit. The realisation, that there had been never two cavers at the bottom at the same time, added some spice to the prospect.

Bill Lehmann and I dropped down the entrance pitch and examined the chamber at the bottom. At the end of the chamber, the roof dropped to meet the boulder strewn floor. With the draught luring us on, we began to kick away the talus around the largest opening. A closer examination revealed that what we were trying to kick away, was holding up what we were standing on! Phil was right - it was suicidal! As we turned back towards the pitch, Bill noticed a small hole in the side wall and crawled into it. Down we went, in a passage not much larger than body size, at a

fifty degree slope for three hundred feet. At every turn, it looked as though it would close off, but still it kept going. Then came the sound that is music to every caver's ears - water. We emerged at the top of a fifteen foot drop into the stream. Without gear, we could go no further and returned enthusiastically to the surface. The way onward was clear.

The following weekend, we were back with Brian Collin and a mountain of rope to make a big push downwards. Putting in eyebolts as we went, we descended two short cascades and then the 45ft Chute Pitch, which resembled a laundry chute at the top. Two more pitches, and we took shelter in a small alcove up out of the stream, where we brewed up out of the flying spray. A short cascade followed, and then the water dropped out of sight down a wide shaft, estimated to be 150ft. There was no way out of the water. To have descended an unknown pitch in that much water would have been very risky. It was time to go home.

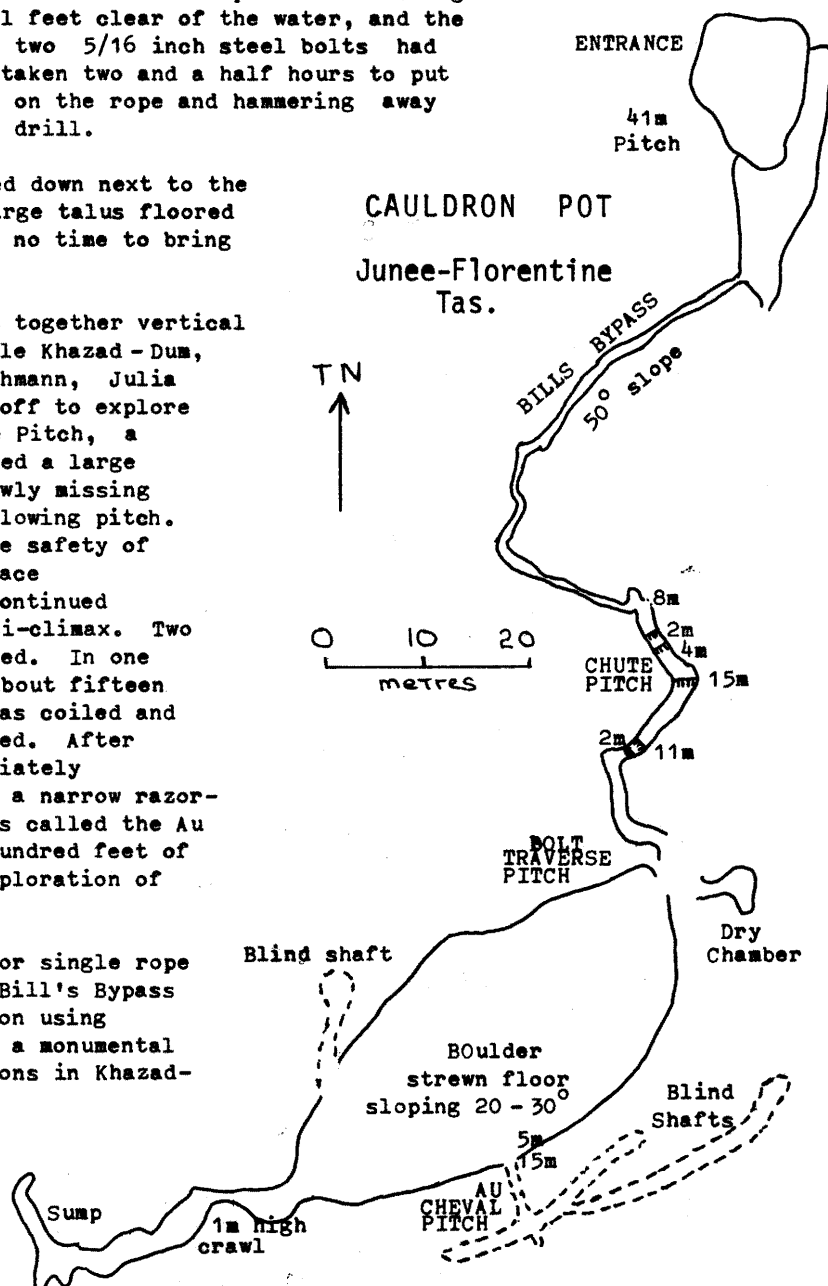
Christmas interrupted progress, and it wasn't for several weeks that we could return. Having practised horizontal bolt traversing in the meantime, we were confident of descending that final pitch. Three and a half hours and several brew-ups after reaching the pitch, the rope was hanging several feet clear of the water, and the way onward was clear. One eyebolt and two 5/16 inch steel bolts had been placed. The two small bolts had taken two and a half hours to put in; leaning out horizontally, hanging on the rope and hammering away alternately at my fingers and then the drill.

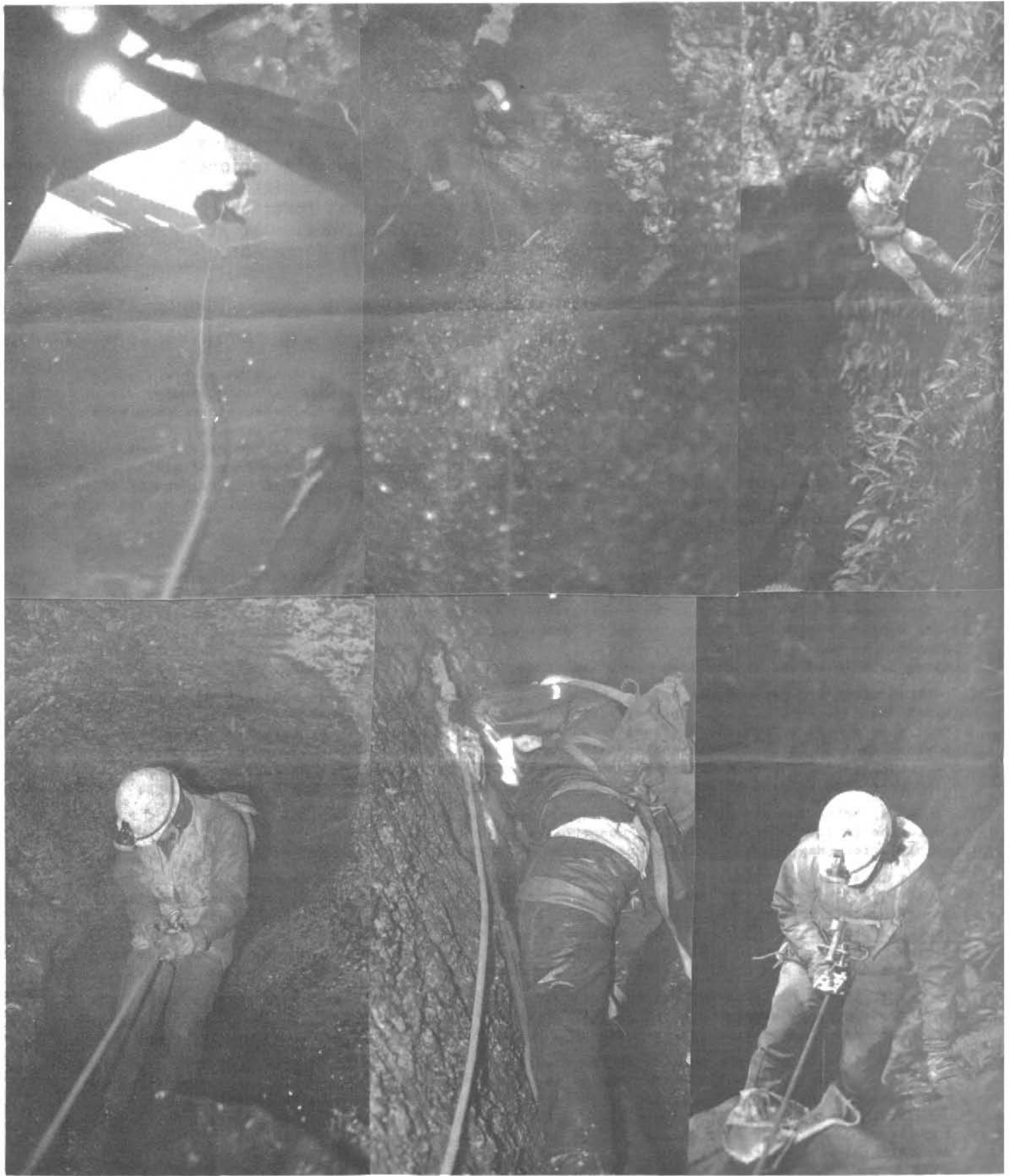
Time was running out. I rappelled down next to the waterfall for a hundred feet into a large talus floored chamber. No obvious leads onward, and no time to bring someone else down, so back out we went.

The Australia Day weekend brought together vertical cavers from all over Australia to tackle Khazad-Dum, Dwarrowdelf and Cauldron Pot. Bill Lehmann, Julia James, Laimonis Kavalieris and I set off to explore that final chamber. Just below Chute Pitch, a major upset occurred when Bill dislodged a large boulder, which slid five feet, narrowly missing him, and chopping the rope for the following pitch. After an exchange of opinions as to the safety of continuing, Bill returned to the surface accompanied by Julia, and Kav and I continued downwards. The big chamber was an anti-climax. Two small streams were found but both sumped. In one wall, a passage was found going off, about fifteen feet from the floor. Half of a rope was coiled and tossed into the passage, where it jammed. After prusiking up carefully, we were immediately confronted by a fifty foot pitch, with a narrow razor-back between the two pitches. This was called the Au Cheval Pitch. From its foot several hundred feet of passage were discovered, before the exploration of Cauldron Pot was declared complete.

Cauldron Pot has been a triumph for single rope techniques. With the difficulties of Bill's Bypass and the Bolt Traverse Pitch, exploration using ladders would have been protracted and a monumental undertaking beside which the explorations in Khazad-Dum would pale in comparison.

With the large number of shafts overlying Exit Cave waiting to be explored, Cauldron has been the forerunner for a new era of vertical cave exploration in Tasmania.





C A U L D R O N P O T

CONSERVATION ACTION

Two major caving areas containing limestone mining operations are featured on this and the following page. They form an interesting contrast: one in which a longstanding situation began to deteriorate before public support could be mustered, and which led to bitter court action, the other a case in which one hopes that foresight and good sense will enable such a situation to be avoided. It is regrettable that most of us are familiar only with the former case.

DEVELOPMENTS AT BUNGONIA TO 10 JUNE, 1973

by Warwick Counsell

You will recall that in November 1971 APCM (A) applied for a Special Lease to enable them to mine a large part of the view north from Bungonia Caves Reserve. A Mining Warden's enquiry was convened to enable objections to be heard, as a result of which the Warden rejected the Company's proposals in favour of: "that the public interest in preservation of scenic aspects and recreational uses outweighs the public interest in the mining of the area, having regard to the everlasting impairment of the environment as compared with the short term benefits of mining . . .". A compromise (between mining and no mining) put forward by Dr D.F. Branagan of the University of Sydney received favourable comment . . . "I find that any mining in the area should not extend beyond the limits proposed by Dr Branagan"

Five days after the Warden delivered his recommendation to the Minister for Mines, State Cabinet referred the matter to the State Pollution Control Commission (the advisory body to the NSW Department of Environment). The Commission refused to divulge its terms of reference, or to advise whether further submissions from objectors would be admitted. The Environmental Impact Statement has been available for limited inspection only at the Department of Environment but no copying is allowed and it has been effectively kept from expert scrutiny.

The Commission secretly accepted a new proposal from APCM (A) and on 13th April recommended against the company's original Q3 proposal, but in favour of this new proposal Q8 (closed). In response to pressure from the National Trust and others, an advertisement in the newspapers on May 2 advised that Q8 (closed) existed, and although it had already been recommended by the Commission, it was available for public inspection and comment. The Bungonia Committee produced a pamphlet urging people to comment prior to May 18 although NO CLOSING DATE FOR COMMENT WAS MENTIONED.

On May 18th, I wrote to Mr Jack Beale, Minister for Environment Control, saying: . . . " (as) no deadline is given for lodgement of comment I shall endeavour to submit my comment as soon as possible after (May 18) but would appreciate your ADVICE SHOULD A DEADLINE EXIST".

The Commission met again on May 25th and endorsed their original recommendation in favour of Q8 (closed). On May 28th Mr Beale wrote to me: "I note that your (The Bungonia) Committee is still considering this matter. It would be appreciated if your comments in this regard could be forwarded as soon as possible." No mention was made of the fact that the Commission had already reached a decision. Now the State Pollution Control Commission has come out and claimed that Mr Beale has misrepresented them and that they in fact never recommended the Q8 (closed) proposal

Maybe, then, they have had a change of heart but in the interim they will have to suffer the brunt of the conservationists' attack. This was evidenced at the ASF NSW Liaison Council's recent Barbara Dew Memorial Lecture, when a resolution moved by Miss Mary Gaudron was carried unanimously:

"This meeting condemns the actions of the State Pollution Control Commission in overriding the decision of the Metropolitan Mining Warden in relation to Bungonia Gorge and deplores the secrecy and haste with which the Commission reached its decision. This meeting demands that a Royal Commission be set up to investigate all aspects of mining at Bungonia Gorge and further demands the immediate establishment of a qualified environmental tribunal free of ministerial or departmental control for the public determination of environmental issues."

C O N S E R V A T I O N A C T I O N - T A S M A N I A

M O L E C R E E K L I M E W O R K S

by Frank Brown

On 24 February, 1973, I took a party from the local branch of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute to visit the David Mitchell Estate Ltd Lime Works at Mole Creek. In making arrangements for the trip I had let it be known that I was also a member of TCC. I had paid two visits to the site; one in May 1972 and the other in January 1973. On both occasions I was treated with courtesy by everybody I spoke to on the site, even though I arrived at a rather busy time on the first occasion. The manager, Mr Mike McBain, was quite keen to show our party around and arrangements for the inspection were made with a minimum of bother.

The first view of the site is very impressive. I consider quarries generally to be about the biggest eye sores in the country, on the level with rubbish dumps and billboards. At this site however the minimum number of trees has been removed and some poplars have actually been planted. There are sound reasons for this conservation, if you will excuse the pun. Also there is the practical aspect that the trees help protect people and property by often stopping the odd flying rock, which is a hazard in limestone mining. Naturally the vegetation helps reduce erosion and aids in maintaining the roads and tracks in the area and reducing the sloppy mud which is a feature of quarries. Lastly, as Mr McBain pointed out, it is much nicer to work among the gums. There is one glorious example of conservation, where a tree has been left very close to a conveyor belt. In a high wind the belt is threatened and the installation of more plant will necessitate the removal of this tree. The whole site is a marvellous example of practical, working conservation.

The company is primarily interested in the high quality limestone i.e. high percentage of CaCO_3 to produce high percentage CaO . This type of rock occurs in a pocket on the site in an anticline. The low quality rock, mixed with clay, is being used by the Forestry Commission on the Mersey Road. This means that there is little wastage and dumping and also that the Commission has not had to quarry in the Mersey Valley limestone area. Of the CaO produced, 80% is being used in pollution control work, mainly neutralisation of acid waste. What is being done with the resulting calcium salts is another story, and I would appreciate any information regarding this aspect! This quoted figure of 80% has had a greater influence on my way of thinking. Personally I would rather lose a couple of caves than have my food and air supply contaminated. The company is also supplying ground limestone to farmers and lime for the paper mills. The latter have closed down some of their plants as a result of the building of the Mole Creek plant. Transport of the lime is by tanker and trucks.

The kiln is a vertical oil fired model with the lime being ground and piped to a silo for storage. In my estimation the process is remarkably clean, with a minimum of dust and smoke. The plant employs 15 men and of course supplies work for several lorry drivers.

C o n c l u s i o n s

In the above few words I have tried objectively to report on the limeworks at Mole Creek and I believe that a sincere attempt is being made at this site to run a tidy operation. Unfortunately for cavers, limestone is a very important material in our society. I would be only too happy if there was no operation of this type at Mole Creek but I feel we must be pragmatic. I can see nothing to be gained by waging a campaign against David Mitchell Estate and A.P.P.M. to halt mining. I believe that the best way to handle the situation is to make friends with the management now, and in 10, 20, 30 years when they require another hill, we can say "Please don't go here, here or here" and I believe that they will listen and co-operate. If we wage in waving machetes, piton hammers, "Save Mole Creek" banners and single shares, we will get nice expensive court actions and we will upset the local people. I consider the latter to be very important. We probably have the

best working relationship with local farmers and caving guides in the whole of Australia. I would hate to foul it up and lose their cooperation in cave finding, camping and rescue operations. Also I would believe that any company that makes an effort to practise conservation should be praised to the skies, just as any foul, polluting factory should be damned.

The situation exists. A million dollar operation is in operation. Let us act in such a manner that the company has to treat us in a gentlemanly fashion and not accuse us of being "those caving ratbags".

TWO CORRECTIONS, AN APOLOGY AND A WARNING

by Warwick Counsell

In my somewhat vague note about UQSS's recent publication, "The Case Against Pike Creek Dam" (ASF Newsl. 59, p. 11, also this issue), the omission of three words in the first paragraph implies that Ashford Caves (NSW) would also be flooded by Pike Creek Dam - this would be one hell of a dam!! It should read: ". . . in fact all that part of the caves and limestone in the Border Rivers belt (District) . . .".

The statement that Viator Caves would be flooded is of course wrong anyway as they are some distance from the others and above the high water level of the proposed.

I apologise for this attempt to mislead.

While mentioning Ashford Caves I will offer a warning about a new development. The main cave has been ravaged by guano mining and I am led to believe that this operation is to start again. Would anyone knowing anything about the new mining program (or about the old one) please drop me a line.

R E V I E W : *The Case Against Pike Creek Dam.* University of Queensland Speleological Society & Queensland Conservation Council. 41pp., 1 map, roneo with cover, Brisbane 1973.

The most recent effort by UQSS to stop the inundation of the Texas Caves is a publication, 'The Case Against the Pike Creek Dam' (41pp, 1 map, roneo with cover). The publication gives a brief background to the issue; the value of the caves for scientific and recreational purposes; and details of difficulties in obtaining reports from the three governments involved until after tenders for construction of the dam had been called. However, the strength of the 'Case Against Pike Creek Dam' lies in its comprehensive reassessment of the economics of this irrigation project and the proposal that underground water would be an alternative supply.

Though not basically a speleological publication, this report's sole purpose is to stop the destruction of the Texas Caves. This is not an issue confined to one state only. The N.S.W. Government is an equal party with Queensland in construction of the dam, and the Commonwealth is contributing $\frac{1}{3}$ of the costs. This report is a prerequisite for national action to preserve the Texas Caves.

Published jointly by University of Queensland Speleological Society and the Queensland Conservation Council.

AVAILABLE FOR \$1 + 30c. postage from

UQSS
The Union, University of Queensland,
ST LUCIA, Qld. 4067

L A T E F I N A L E X T R A - Decision on Precipitous Buff

Just as this issue was going to press the news was received that the Supreme Court in Tasmania has upheld the appeal by Mineral Holdings Ltd, reversing the decision of the Mining Warden who had refused the company a lease in the area. The Federal Government shortly afterwards announced a policy of aid, financial and otherwise, to conservationists fighting such cases. More news will be squeezed into another page if the opportunity permits before the printer actually prints this issue.

CONSERVATION BRIEFS

Notes on conservation problems currently pursued . . .

SOUTH-EAST S.A. ASF Vice-President Warwick Counsell visited the area at Easter in his capacity of Convenor of the Commission on Conservation, and had discussions with Fred Aslin as well as viewing some of the sinkholes etc. first hand. A submission to the relevant authorities is being prepared and will be forwarded as soon as possible.

PRECIPITOUS BLUFF Judge Nettlefold has reserved his decision after a 2-day hearing "of dreary solicitors drearily arguing about whether or not an interest based on amenity was sufficient or whether it must be a proprietary interest" . . . "the only highlight occurred when a mouse emerged from the press box, causing the Judge to nearly lose his wig in finding out why the Court was making those for-gods-sake-don't-laugh-but-how-not-to-grunt-snort noises".

LAKE PEDDER According to the Launceston Examiner of May 30, the Pedder enquiry report, to be handed to the Federal Government in about a month, will recommend draining of the lake before next summer, and a 3 to 5 year freeze on further development.

WILLI WILLI ASF and several members some years ago protested about proposals for guano mining in this cave. These threats have been removed effectively when the area containing the caves was acquired for a Nature Reserve by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in March this year. Access is now only by permission of the Director of NPWS.

TEXAS ASF fired off a long official letter, and many members sent telegrams to Parliament House in May when it was found that the question of Pike Creek Dam was to be considered by Federal Cabinet. An ASF submission on the matter is being rushed to completion and in view of the change in government, there may be a fair chance of winning this one, which looked quite hopeless only a few months ago.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR, "The Sydney Morning Herald"

Senator Wriedt, Minister for Primary Industry, claims (Letters, June 7) that the NSW Minister for Conservation, Mr Freudenstein, is using scare tactics to hasten commencement of work on Pike Creek Dam.

This is not surprising because Mr Freudenstein's statement "we cannot afford to delay commencement of the Pike Creek Dam" reflects the alarm which must be shared by the majority of Government politicians in this state and in Queensland.

The first independent economic assessment of the dam project, by Dr A.J. de Boer of the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Queensland, condemned it and claimed that previous reports contained "gross errors and unjustifiable assumptions (and that) the costs are seen to far outweigh the benefits."

The Australian Government's enlightened approach to agriculture and the imminent publication of another independent (not Queensland or NSW Gov't) economic appraisal by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics may foreshadow refusal of Commonwealth finance for the dam.

It is to be hoped that the Queensland and NSW Governments, if forced to foot the whole bill, will abandon the project, save the Texas Caves from inundation, and preserve the area for the national heritage.

REVIEWS

Bungonia Caves. Produced by an editorial committee of Sydney Speleological Society. (SSS Occas. Pap. No. 4, Sydney, 1972. 230pp., 24 plates (8 colour), numerous maps, diagrams. Letterpress & offset, har cover, \$6-50

By the time this brief review appears, it is unlikely that many readers will not have bought, seen or heard about "the Bungonia book". Trite as such statements are, this does represent a singular landmark of achievement in publications on Australia's caves. A complete set of surface and underground maps, 17 comprehensive chapters on all aspects of the caves and their environment, 8 pages of full colour photographs, and 16 black-and-whites, a painstakingly researched bibliography - all these and more. It represents a good \$6-50 worth all right.

Especially in the conservation context, it seems rather nit-picking to find faults in a task of this magnitude, and indeed they are hard to locate. The maps show all the signs of haste, including non-standard scales (and no metric scale at all), inconsistent symbols and a general lack of planning. Many of the 'scientific' papers are in fact collations and reviews of otherwise inaccessible literature, or unanalysed data collections. On a less tangible but no less important plane, more generous acknowledgment might have been given to the inestimable contribution of outsiders, both clubs and individuals, for whose benefit the caves need saving.

These criticisms, however, are the traditional prerogative of a reviewer, and they are explainable in the context of an urgent deadline and a transcending purpose. A glance at the plates on page 194 should convince you as to whether it was worthwhile in the long run.

In the light of the actions of the responsible Minister (see this issue of ASF Newsl. - ed.) read page 197 and ask yourself whether this time, as so often, it was not a problem of too much, but too late, in the hope of never again.

EDITORS NOTE: The reviewer expressed a wish to remain anonymous.

Submission to the Minister for Environmental Control and the State Pollution Control Commission on Marulan South / Bungonia Limestone Mining. National Trust of Australia (New South Wales) and the Bungonia Committee, Sydney, 1973. (41pp., 14 plates, 4 fold-out figs. 3 appendices), \$2 from Trust or Committee.

Recent developments, wheelings and dealings in the Bungonia Mining issue are related elsewhere in this issue of the Newsletter. This submission was compiled to refute the secret submission made to the State Pollution Control Commission by A.P.C.M. (A), following rejection by the Metropolitan Mining Warden of their earlier proposals. The outrage is that the Minister having failed to advise a closing date for objections (the need was not apparent until May 1973), proceeded to announce his decision knowing full well that this submission was in preparation. One has the feeling that he fears the weight of evidence.

The publication is, quite frankly, of little direct interest to speleologists as such. It is of inescapable indirect concern, though, for it on the results of such actions as this that decisions are made regarding your future rights to go caving. However, it is well printed and illustrated, and I urge you to buy it for these reasons:

1. It illustrates the extraordinary wealth of detail which it is necessary to amass these days in order to fight a conservation case.
2. It offers useful methodological guidelines in the presentation of such material.
3. Sales will help defray the high costs of production of such submissions.
4. You will be again offering tangible evidence of your support for the enormous energy expended by the objectors in this case.

Copies can be obtained from the National Trust of Australia (NSW) or the Bungonia Committee.

DOWN UNDER ALL OVER

... NEWS FROM AROUND THE SOCIETIES

CEGSA

The electric jackhammer entrusted to the Group by the National Parks and Wildlife Service has been initiated at Victoria Cave, and has proved to be more than able to deal effectively with the hardest rock the cave can provide. The May Newsletter (we are assured, by the way, that Newsletter is the complete title of the quarterly newsletter issued by CEGSA) - the May newsletter, to get to the point, contains a fascinating trip report on Corra-Lynn Cave entitled "Where does it end?" details the relative ease by which thousand foot segments are being tacked on to this cave. (a late note from Ian Lewis mentions that this cave is now nearly 3 mile long) The same issue of Newsletter contains a supplement by Ed Sangster on proposals for a standardised cave mapping system (see elsewhere in this issue of the ASF News.)

NUCC

In his President's Report John Brush reports 35 trips to 13 areas for the year. Projects completed included 6000ft Wyanbene Cave map, 1000ft Mt Fairy Cave map, mapping and tagging at Michelago and Bunyan, and a large extension to North Deep Creek Cave, Yarrangobilly. The March Speleograffiti contains a short note systematizing nomenclature and numbering in cave areas near Burrinjuck Dam. There is also Parts 2 & 3 of a series providing descriptions and maps of caves M16 - M29 at Michelago. Although this is a relatively minor area, this article is a real lesson on systematic documentation of our caves. A similar series on Rosebrook (Bunyan) Caves began in April issue.

HCG

Work has continued mainly at Cliefden and in the Tuglow River area. In the latter, a number of caves up to several hundred feet long have been explored in the last year or so and work is progressing. At Cliefden, work has begun again on NIBICON Cave and on radio direction finding work in Main Cave and Taplow Maze. Enquiries are under way on how to increase the effective maximum depth of the RDF equipment from 200 to 500 feet, in anticipation of some further work.

SCS

reports 19 trips in the quarter ended April, mainly to Hastings, Junee-Florentine, Mole Creek and Ida Bay. At Mole Creek the Easter trip teamed up with VSA but no details are to hand yet. Another party went to Exit Cave and was stranded inside by floods for several days. At Junee-Florentine a new limestone ridge has been discovered with several entrances and a total of perhaps 400ft of passages. The April Southern Caver contains a short outline of the Sage of Richmond Wells, whereby the Society was paid \$100 to clean out a farmer's convict-dug well. They seem to have worked for their money, both the

SSS

The May Journal contains two articles proposing new numbering systems for non-limestone caves in NSW. A decision on this will be taken at the next meeting of the NSW Liaison Council of ASF. The need is becoming apparent following a quite remarkable upsurge in interest in sandstone and sea caves in NSW among a number of clubs in the last year or two. The same issue has a note on the renaming of Goodradigbee Cave at Wee Jasper, claiming that the new name Careys Cave is historically not well documented.

SUSS

With 51 members this year, SUSS is at its most active for a decade, with the activity centering around Jenolan as usual. Wiburds Lake Cave is still receiving plenty of attention following discoveries during NIBICON and elsetime in the last year. The Society's large map of the cave (over 6000ft mapped) is being redrafted to metric scale with a view to publication later this year. Elsewhere in recent SUSS Bulletins there are other useful maps and information, including at enolan: Chifley (tourist) Cave, Block Cave, Twiddley-on-Pom (Mammoth Cave) and caves and karst north of Wiburds Lake Cave; surveying of Frustration Cave, Cooleman Plain. The Easter Cooleman trip did extensive geomorph. surveying and augering was done, and the June Bulletin also has long articles on Exposure,

T C C

Pressure of traffic is becoming a problem in Tasmania's caves too, and it is heartening that there are already intelligent cavers with foresight, moving to contain the situation. Speleo Spiel for April has an article by Andrew Skinner who says "Many mainland cavers to Exit Cave have commented on the inadequacy of marked tracks. The deterioration is primarily caused by the widening of trails on fragile gypsum and moonmilk floors. Accordingly a programme of trail delineation has been initiated using reflectorised markers placed at intervals of about two metres. With a headlamp, the reflectors contrast well with the surrounding floor and the trail is easily followed." The article goes on to describe several forms of markers developed, together with a programme of track marking proposed at Ida Bay (Exit Cave), Hastings, Junee-Florentine and Mole Creek. Three small sea caves were located on Maria Island by UQSS visitors in January. Another well known sea cave, the Tasman Arch was abseiled in March to the accompaniment of noises from tourists, attracting a photo spectacular in the Hobart Mercury. The 200ft free fall in Devils Kitchen nearby was also done.

U N S W S S

The April Spar has two long articles. The first, on caving lights offers an excellent outline of the range, cost and availability of all forms, including the Cyalume chemical light which is a very useful emergency light which will last as long as 12 hours or so. The other is a very long (25 pages) account of the Precipitous Bluff Expedition in January, which was attended by 13 cavers from 7 societies, including New Zealand SS. Cave maps and cover photographs accompany the article. The P.B. maps in fact are only one example of the many which appear in Spar, which undoubtedly produces the finest examples of any Australian serial publication, of the art of speleocartography. Included in Spar 25 are maps from Wyanbene, Yarrangobilly, Tuglow. The same issue reports the first connection by diving of the two parts of Narrangullen Cave, and there are reports of diving at Bungonia also.

U Q S S

Texas, of course, is now THE WORD in Queensland, and the Society's caving in the last year or so has concentrated on proper documentation and surveying of all caves. Several maps have appeared in Down Under and a few more discoveries are reported. The Society has also guided members of Queensland Conservation Council through the area. Once again the first post-vacation Down Under has long reports from itinerant members all over Australia - Jenolan, Torres Strait, Bungonia, Mole Creek, Maria Island and even the New Guinea Highlands. The March issue contains possibly the first reports from sea caves in sandstone and volcanics on Albany and Mai Islands, Torres Strait. From New Guinea, Lex Brown reports on Mebile Cave (160m - 520ft deep and still going) in the Highlands, and on some caves in the Morobe District, off the Lae-Bulolo road. Awarida Cave (inspection of which cost 50c. - even remote villagers are going commercial!) proved to contain a river of the order of a torrent. However, the readily accessible parts of the cave are dry. The stream was about 0.3 m³/sec - 10-30 cusecs. Some nearby burial 'caves' are reported to feature red ochre paintings of interest particularly to followers of the theories of Von Daniken

V S A

Has been active in Tasmania, in fact seem to have done as much there as they have in Victoria. 5 members were on the Australia Day push on Khazad-Dum, while another party flew across to Mole Creek for aster. Not surprising when you consider that flying and driving from Melbourne to Mole Creek takes somewhat less time than the Easter Holiday snail race from Melbourne to Buchan. Another aster trip by 4 wheel drive vehicles searched the Mitta Mitta area for caves. Several were located, although blackberries proved a major hazard.

W A S G

Has undergone something of a revolution in Committee this year, including a new President, Paul Caffyn (ex-UQSS and NZSS) who was leader of the 1971-72 Mt Arthur Expedition in New Zealand. If the latest issues of Western Caver Vol. 13 Nos. 1 & 2 are any guide, great things can be expected. One sign of the renewed vigour of WASG is that 10 people attended the inaugural meeting in March of the Augusta-Margaret River Speleo Group, a subgroups of WASG. As well as large numbers of trip reports, the March-April issue of Western Caver has articles on studies of cavernicolous fauna north of Perth by Jacky Lowry, Notes on Geology of Strongs Cave by Paul Caffyn, Notes and a map of LW8 by Kerry Williamson, water flow measurements in the south-west, and a note on a heavy mineral sample from Crystal Cave. The Club has initiated a series of seminars and practical caving sessions both in Perth and in the field, covering basic skills and information in scientific and sporting caving. The previous issue of Western Caver 13 (1) is given entirely to a really excellent article by Bob Shoosmith on the South Hill River cave area, around the Nambung River. For cavers all over Australia whose work in a particular caving area is nearing completion, this is an excellent reference on methodology of an area report. Topics covered include the history, present status, geology and palaeontology, phosphatic minerals, brief notes on 54 numbered caves and longer descriptions of 25 of them, hydrological notes on the Nambung River, 25 references, 6 pages of maps, a number of trip reports and extracts from the literature. All things considered, a vigorous year seems assured.

p.s. A long outline of the work of WASG arrived on my desk just before deadline date for printing this issue. It will be published in the next ASF Newsletter.
Thanks to Kerry Williamson, WASG.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NULLARBOR CAVE DIVING EXPEDITION, January 1974

In January 1972, I led an expedition to the Nullarbor Plains to dive in selected underground lakes at Weebubbie and Cocklebidy (see ASF Newsl. 55 p. 6 - ed.) The trip had a basic party of 32; 7 divers and 25 dry cavers, wives, scouts etc. and our efforts produced 4000ft of new cave, all surveyed, in the various holes visited. Large discoveries were made in both wet and dry sections.

The same sort of expedition is being planned for the end of this year, with dates approx. December 26 to January 14, and I am at present asking for applications from anyone interested. Chances of success are ENORMOUS - new cave everywhere.

The expedition will take place in three stages, revolving around the diving. The plan is to camp for one week at each of three deep caves, to permit thorough diving exploration and survey, and dry cavers will be needed to help carry tanks, wetsuits and survey gear down to the lakes for each dive and back again, for refilling and drying out. You will appreciate that the diving teams will need all their energy for exploration.

However, I want to divide the 30 or so dry cavers into, say, 3 teams to explore and survey to high standards large caves within the vicinity of the base camp. These will include Murra-el-elevyn, Pannikin Plain, Tommy Grahams (if we can find it!), Warbla and extensions in Weebubbie. We will also be visiting Mulla-mullang for a few days for work purposes and there will be several days set aside specifically for photography in the big caves. A MAGNESI Diprotodon may be available but Hillii versions will certainly be used.

Cost per person from Adelaide would be approximately \$50. No divers are needed - we've got enough. Interested trogs are asked to write to:

Ian Lewis, 12 McLachlan Ave, GLENELG NORTH, S.A. 5045.

Please give some idea of your caving experience although single rope techniques will not be needed. Past Nullarborophiles are particularly welcome!

Ian Lewis, CEGSA

CLIEFDEN HISTORY

I am writing to you in the hope that you will be able to reprint the letter in the ASF Newsletter.

During the past 4½ years I have been on speleological trips to the Cliefden Caves, and during that time I have developed an interest in the history of the caves.

Over the past 42 months, I have been compiling information from references found in the Mitchell Library, and a few pieces of information given to me by other interested persons, but unfortunately the information is somewhat limited.

What I am asking is this, if there is anyone having any information on the area, particularly the early discovery of the caves, and would like to pass this information on, I would be only too happy to hear from them. Certainly all such assistance will be gratefully acknowledged.

I can be contacted by either writing to me at 44 King Street, ST MARYS, NSW 2760, or by ringing 623 1768.

Keith Oliver, HCG

FLOGGING OFF BITS OF BUNGONIA FOR A SACK OF CEMENT

"A mighty fog of confusion is filling New South Wales' Bungonia Gorge, where conservationists fear the State Government is about to flog the national heritage for another sack of cement.

"Jostling in the fog: the Minister for Environment Control, Mr Jack Beale, the State Pollution Control Commission, the National Trust, Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers (Aust) Ltd, and the Australian Speleological Federation" . . .

Under this title and introduction, the national newspaper, the Australian carried a long illustrated article on Monday, June 11, 1973. Chairman of the ASF Conservation Commission, Warwick Counsell has played a major role in prosecuting this important case (see articles in this and recent issues of ASF Newsletter). Although it had earlier declined further submissions by announcing a decision in the matter, the State Pollution Control Commission late in June announced that further submissions would be received. This was also an occasion for the SPCC to claim that the Minister for Environment Control, Mr Beale, had misrepresented the original SPCC recommendations. Certainly there appears to have been some pressure on the SPCC to reopen the case, and the National Trust and Bungonia Committee presented a detailed joint submission (\$2 a throw from either or see Warwick Counsell etc. and help the cause along).

SPELEOS IN PRINT

Speleos have had a field day in the newspapers recently, and not surprisingly so, considering the major conservation battles we have to fight. 5 major cases for a group of barely 800 people! Just in the newspapers perused by the editor, there have in the last month or so been articles or Letters to the Editor on Pike Creek Dam, Texas (Warwick Counsell, SMH, 15 June), Bungonia (Albert Renshaw & Harley Wright, SMH 31 May), Cave Conservation generally (John Dunkley, Australian 18 June) Financial Review 14 & 15 June, Nation Review 15-21 June, Australian 15 June, 11 June.

YOU can play your part in this. Politicians take particular notice of two things: money and public pressure. Keep up a barrage of Letters to the Editor of every significant newspaper in the country. The material on pages 3-8 of this ASF Newsletter should give you something to write about, but you will not have much trouble finding a multitude of minor conservation problems to write about. Stop them assuming the proportions of a Bungonia or a Precipitous Bluff.

Speaking of Precipitous Bluff, the latest news was an announcement that this was to be the first case in which the Federal Government might make funds available to conservationists to help them fight in courts of law. A very significant development. At the time of writing the Report on Lake Pedder was expected from Canberra, and is tipped to recommend a 'moratorium' i.e. draining of the lake pending further investigations.

ANOTHER DROWNING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CAVE

Another three men and one woman were drowned in a water filled cave in the South East of South Australia late in May (see newspapers about 29 May). Our correspondent in Mount Gambier, Fred Aslin has no further information than was in the papers but is giving evidence at an enquiry. The divers were in the Shaft, a famous hole over 250ft deep in which a magnificent colour film was made by BP a few years ago. Like the other deaths last year (see ASF Newsletter 58 : 5-6), they did not have a shot line i.e. line to the surface, and probably suffered nitrogen narcosis or rapture of the deeps. If space permits, a longer report will be published in the next issue.

SO YOU DIDN'T GET THE MARCH NEWSLETTER, eh?

The reason was quite simple - your society was unfinancial. The ASF Committee decided not to send the Newsletter to members of unfinancial societies in future. Fees were due on February 28, 1973 and 4 societies (CEGSA, CQSS, SSS and one other I think) were still unfinancial 3 months later.

denial . . .

It is not true that Spar obtained the award in order that its Editor, Andrew Pavey, could be attracted to be Co-editor of this Newsletter, and no money changed hands. However, I welcome Andrew and know his expertise will boost ASF Newsletter

- John Dunkley

A D D R E S S C H A N G E S

ASF SECRETARY, Miles Pierce, 1 Grange St, Mont Albert, Vic 3127

ASF TREASURER, John Taylor, c/o D.M.R., P.O. Box 399, Bega, NSW 2550

I think Assistant Secretary Ailsa has changed her address and name too, but do not have details at the moment.

N.S.W. L I A I S O N C O U N C I L

The new chairman of the Liaison Council is Andrew Pavey, c/o School of Physics, University of NSW, KENSINGTON, NSW 2033.

G A T I N G O F T U G L O W C A V E

The gate on Tuglow Cave will be installed on the weekend of 22-23 September, 1973. Materials will be supplied by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and all clubs are asked to send a few people to assist.

Y A R R A N G O B I L L Y

A meeting to discuss future research work in the Yarrangobilly area will be held in Physics Lecture Room 8, Australian National University, Canberra, commencing around lunch time on Saturday October 20. For further details contact John Brush on 149 Muuga Way, REDHILL, ACT 2603. A further announcement will be carried in the next issue of the ASF Newsletter. This function replaces that alluded to on p. 2 of the current Newsletter.

B A C K I S S U E S O F N E W S L E T T E R

Sales Manager Keith Oliver has asked me to let it be known that he will be attending to orders for back issues of the ASF Newsletter at the end of each month only. So if you do not receive your order promptly, please do not panic. There are now no copies left of issues no. 30 & 49, and only one copy left of nos. 27 & 44, and two copies of no. 41. If you wish to build up as complete a set as possible, time is running out. Please make cheques out to A.S.F.

L A T E C O N S E R V A T I O N N E W S

TEXAS CAVES - The Australian Speleological Federation has prepared a submission to the Australian Government on the effect of the proposed Pike Creek Dam on Texas Caves. Including 2 maps and a full page photo, this publication may be obtained from UQSS for about 30¢ plus postage. You should read it in conjunction with the book reviewed on p. 14 of this newsletter.

BUNGONIA - The Minister accepted the APCM 'compromise' lease plan a few weeks ago, all protests to no avail. Longer story in next Newsletter

OPEN LETTER TO MEMBERS OF A.S.F. SOCIETIES

DEAR MEMBER,

The enclosed letter is being circulated to all member societies of A.S.F., and is reproduced here so that you, the individual caver who pays for the Newsletter, will have the opportunity to express your opinion if desired. It is heartening that at least one society has expressed such deep concern about A.S.F. and its officers.

There is here neither sufficient space nor time to refute or challenge the statements in the enclosure, but we would like to point out that none of us was consulted at any stage in its preparation, none of us was sent a copy of the letter (which has several errors), we do not endorse it and we are quite happy to continue in our present capacity.

Whether or not you wish to see the Newsletter abandoned (and this proposal was unanimously defeated at the 1970 Committee Meeting of A.S.F. - a Committee which includes your Society), we would be glad to hear your views, and all letters will be answered promptly.

There are, of course, some significant matters in the letter and we have suggested to your society that it might be appropriate to raise them at the next A.S.F. Committee Meeting for a decision.

Yours in caving,
for the Newsletter Commission

JOHN R. DUNKLEY	(Editor)
KEITH OLIVER	(Sales Manager)
IAN D. WOOD	(Subscriptions Manager)
PAUL MURPHY	(Distribution Manager)
EDWARD G. ANDERSON	(General Factotum)

(Note: The co-Editor, ANDREW J. PAVEY) is absent on a caving expedition in New Guinea)



Founded 1954

THE SYDNEY SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 198, BROADWAY

N.S.W. AUSTRALIA, 2007

The Secretary,
Highland Caving Group,

Dear SIR<

We invite you and all the members of your society to give serious consideration to the following proposal concerning the A.S.F. Newsletter.

No doubt you will remember quite well that at the ninth biennial conference the per capita fees were raised from \$1.00 to \$1.50. One of the consequences of such a steep rise was that many people, including the majority of S.S.S. members, began to question whether their money was being spent wisely.

In February of this year we appointed an ad hoc committee to look at the question. Its findings have been endorsed by the society and the purpose of this letter is to set out the position as we now see it, and to suggest means by which the A.S.F. fees might be greatly reduced.

1. Examination of the budget shows clearly that the greater part of A.S.F. costs are occasioned by the Newsletter, so this seems the obvious item to investigate.
2. There seems to be little reason to doubt the reality of the Newsletter production costs. Our Journal Editor, Ross Ellis, has said that although he believes the Newsletter cost could be reduced, the percentage would be nowhere near the figure for which we are looking.
3. If point 2. is correct, then substantial pruning of the Newsletter budget must result in loss of quality or size. We have rejected this course of action since the Newsletter could hardly stand loss of either aspect.
4. Postage and envelopes comprise a substantial part of costs. These could of course be eliminated by a method of distribution previously used, i.e. bulk delivery to member societies for handing out at a general meeting. However we feel that the reasons for discarding this system in the past are still valid — anyone absent from the meeting at which they were handed out would probably not get a copy — and any material handed out at a meeting tends to be treated casually and left on the floor of the meeting hall, to the detriment of whatever image it might have had.

5. Then there is the proposal that the Newsletter be abandoned completely. To more than a few people this idea presented a dilemma. On the one hand, not being happy with the cost or the contents, they found the idea attractive. On the other hand, they did not like to advocate a course of action which would stifle the flow of information about A.S.F. matters almost completely.

We believe that this dilemma can be resolved by the following proposal.

It present each issue of the Newsletter comprises some 800 copies, 650 of which are posted separately to each individual member of each member society.

We propose that only one copy of information on A.S.F. matters be sent out in the form of a press release to each of the member societies for publication of all or part thereof in their respective journals.

This is of course a radical proposal and we ask you to consider the following arguments carefully.

It should not be assumed that those supporting this proposal consider the Newsletter to have been a waste of time. But it must be kept in mind that certain changes have occurred. When the A.S.F. Newsletter was first published and for a long time afterwards there were only a few societies producing their own Newsletter, and during this period the ASF Newsletter served a valuable purpose in keeping individuals informed of the existence of other societies and more or less what they were up to.

Now that virtually all member societies are producing their own publication (and a society that does not produce any publication seems hardly worthy of being a member of A.S.F.) we suggest that this proposal is not only feasible, but desirable on many counts.

The exact nature of the change would need to be worked out in detail later on, but our thinking is along the following lines:-

The position of Newsletter Editor would be replaced by that of Press Officer. Broadly speaking, the person holding this position would be expected to collect news of A.S.F. matters and disseminate it among the member societies. In its simplest concept the work would be almost secretarial - collecting reports of office bearers, minutes of meetings et cetera, and sending a copy to each member society. However, the job could be expanded into a very responsible one, e.g., preparing and issuing press releases not only for member societies but to keep other interested bodies and the public informed of A.S.F. policy on important issues as they arise.

He would be expected to issue such information as he can get hold of at least quarterly - no frills - simply stapled together, dated and preferably including a list of the information not appearing on the inside cover of the Newsletter. If an important matter comes up requiring the close attention of individual members of member societies, then he should prepare a statement for publication in all society journals.

The Press Officer's duties would involve reciprocal duties on the part of respective Society journal editors. Once again, these could be varied to suit demand. As a minimum, they should be expected to publish a list of items received from A.S.F. and this should involve very little extra work. If some people were interested in a particular report they could ask that it be tabled, or read out to a meeting, or published in full, or pay for their own photo copy.

Supporting Arguments

- i. Cost At the recent conference the Newsletter Editor asked for and received \$750.00. Without going into details, it should be clear to anyone that the cost of sending twenty or so copies of information without frills will be only a fraction of producing and distributing 800. Of course there would still be the cost of publishing whatever A.S.F. news each society decided to put in its journal, but we suggest that it would be minimal compared with publishing it separately and posting it separately.
- ii. It should be kept in mind that the monetary cost is not the only one. Most of the manhours spent on the Newsletter are spent, not on getting information, but on the mechanical details of publication. If the publication problem were eliminated, many of the people involved would be released to apply their skills and knowledge more effectively in other directions.
- iii. The high markup content of the Newsletter has caused numerous issues to come out many months late. Under the alternative proposal there would be no excuse for delays. No time need be wasted weighing up the pros and cons of what to publish, what to leave out against cost per page of letters. Even lengthy reports could be sent out at little extra cost. Urgent material could go out immediately.
- iv. Cost is not the only basis on which the Newsletter has been criticized. The contents or lack of them has been a continuing source of wrangling throughout its existence. While some of the trouble could be attributed to particular editors, the situation is probably such that any editor would be trying to please a large number of people of diverse views and would end up only pleasing a few.
- v. With the cost barrier substantially removed by the alternative proposal, much more material could be made available to member societies and they could select and publish as little or as much of it as they wished. Even if they decide to publish very little, the material would still be available for sighting by individual members as mentioned before. Furthermore, the members of these societies are in a much better position to grab their own editor by the ears and tell him what they want than the A.S.F. editor who is for most people both geographically and politically remote.

- vi. The Newsletter is at present sent only to full members of member societies. Prospective members and other subscribers remain largely unaware of its existence. The proposed change would mean that every subscriber to a society journal would read something about A.S.F.
- vii. In the September 1972 issue of the Newsletter the problem of keeping track of 700 odd addresses, which always seem to be changing, was raised. This problem would of course cease to exist for A.S.F. The member societies are in a much better position to look after their address lists and they are already doing this in any case.
- viii. A common problem which small societies face when trying to get their own publication off the ground is copy. A supply of A.S.F. material would help them fill their own journal until they had an adequate supply of their own work.
- ix. The Newsletter is really a subsidised publication; consequently there is little or no feedback from sales to indicate reader response. While the same argument might be relevant to society journals, we believe it would be less relevant for the reasons given at the end of (v) above.

Putting the Newsletter on a voluntary individual subscription basis would be more businesslike but would also expose it to the cold winds of competition. We doubt its chances of survival.

Arguments Against

The fact that we can only think of two arguments against the proposal will have to be put down to him.

- i. It will mean extra work for member societies' editors. This will be especially true in those societies which do not provide additional assistance to their editor in proportion to the extra material they expect him to publish.
- ii. The Federation would no longer be producing a publication giving an overall picture of caving in Australia. We agree that it would be nice to have everything about Australian caving between two covers. However, once again attention must be drawn to the fact that since the early days of caving in Australia changes have occurred which make such an ideal almost impossible to achieve.

In recent years there has been a proliferation of societies, journals and articles on an ever expanding variety of caving topics. Since the A.S.F. was not set up as a caving society it does not originate information: such material as it does publish must be at least one point removed from its source. A large part of the material available must be watered down and an even larger part must be simply left out.

Furthermore, we ask you where should anyone look if they want the best overall picture of some particular aspect of Australian caving? We suggest not the Newsletter but the Australian Speleo Abstracts. We believe this publication is achieving the abovementioned ideal far more effectively and thoroughly than the Newsletter ever could and deserves all the support it can get.

Conclusion

We believe one's attitude to this proposal will be coloured by what one expects of A.S.F. There are clearly some people including regrettably some members of our own society who seem to regard A.S.F. as some sort of super caving society. Most of our members repudiate this concept and we feel that the Newsletter's problems are largely brought about by its attempt to emulate and compete with member society journals. A.S.F. is not a group of individual cavers - it is a Federation of societies and as such its primary obligation is to communicate with the executive of its members societies and not individual cavers.

In support of this view we quote the President of A.S.F., Elery Hamilton-Smith from his summing up of the role of A.S.F. in the Speleo Handbook. Quote: "Perhaps it is also important to stress what the Federation is not - it is not a controlling authority, nor is it a National Society. It purely provides for liaison between and joint action by its members societies, all of whom retain their own autonomy."

Finally, as we intend putting the proposal to a postal vote, we invite your early reply enclosing:-

1. any comments on the arguments presented,
2. further arguments for or against,
3. an indication of whether your society would support and/or second the proposal.

Yours in Caving

(John Compagnoni)
Honorary Secretary

P.S. We realise that should this proposal be adopted, certain other questions will arise but we don't believe these need to be discussed at this stage.

J.E.C.