

THE NEWSLETTER

OF THE AUSTRALIAN

SPELEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

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It was decided at the A.S.F. committee meeting in Melbourne earlier this year, that the Newsletter should be issued quarterly to all members of every member society. It was suggested that the contents should include a summary of society activities, abstracts of literature received by the librarian, a correspondence precis by the secretary, and progress reports from sub-committees. This first issue of the Newsletter in a re-organized form does not completely fulfil the wishes of the committee, as there has not been enough time for member societies, and other persons, to submit their contributions. I appeal to all concerned to send in material for the June issue as soon as possible (closing date May 1st.).

A.S.F. Business:- The Melbourne Committee meeting of A.S.F. was well attended, with delegates from the Canberra, Coorangbong, Kempsey, Newcastle, Ryde, Sydney, Sydney University, South Australian, Victorian, and West Australian societies. Elery Hamilton-Smith was elected president, succeeding Joe Jennings who was forced to resign because of his periodic journeys to the "back of beyond". Peter Aitken, of South Australia, replaces Elery as Secretary. Please note that all A.S.F. correspondence is to be addressed to the Secretary, and the new address is c/- South Aust. Museum. However, material for publication should be sent directly to David Taylor who was elected Publications Officer.

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The Kempsey and Katherine Speleological Societies were admitted to the Federation. The Katherine Society, though a small one, has been active in the impressive caves of their district for some time, and of course this is the first society in the Northern Territory. There are now recognised societies in all States and Territories of the Commonwealth except Queensland and New Guinea. But there is an interested group in Brisbane who are hampered by the terrific distances of caving areas from their homes. The whole question of the existence of small societies was discussed. It was pointed out that it was undesirable to have small groups operating in one area. As there are already three societies active in the Sydney district, the application of the Ryde Speleological Association for A.S.F. membership was deferred, and that they should consider affiliation with one of the well established N.S.W. groups. As there are now ten societies operating in N.S.W. the need for co-ordination is obvious. It was suggested that a N.S.W. Central Caving Body be established, and G. Parfitt of the Ryde society is to act as convenor.

The Third Conference of A.S.F. is to be held in Canberra at the end of December this year. Now is the time to decide whether you'll be there. At this conference as little time as possible will be spent on business and constitutional amendments, thus giving way to discussions, delivery of papers, and social activities. Post conference field trips in southern N.S.W. are planned. One trip will be possibly in a remote area which can only be reached after several days walking. It is hoped that some representatives of overseas societies will be able to attend. Any overseas society members who may be visiting Australia at the time of the conference are asked to contact the Secretary of A.S.F. It should be noted that persons who are not members of recognised societies, are not eligible to attend the conference or take part in the related field trips. David Drummond of S.U.S.S. will be present at the International Symposium of Speleology at Varenna 1960.

Sub-Committees Progress Report:- The Terminology Sub-

Committee was active during the Melbourne Committee meeting, as Joe Jennings used all spare time for discussion of his latest list and definitions of speleological terms. The discussions were lively and long, and many societies were able to air their own opinions. As a result the final suggested list and definitions will be circulated shortly. This is an important task well done, as now we may be able to achieve a uniform usage of words and terms amongst members of A.S.F.

The Publications Sub-Committee has been galvanised into activity. At present the primary concerns are the production of this Newsletter and the ambitious project of having a series of articles and photographs on caving published in "Walkabout" (a magazine published by the Australian National Travel Association.)

In subsequent issues of this Newsletter it is proposed to have a more comprehensive review of caving activities in Australia; not only exploration, but scientific investigation and development of new caving techniques. This can only be realized if contributions come to hand. We will be pleased to publish requests for information and material from Australian Scientific organisations and Overseas interested bodies. Any important overseas speleological news will be included. Remember this Newsletter has an overseas

have taken place with the Editor of "Walkabout"; Mr. G. W. L. Tucker. It is not the policy of "Walkabout" to devote an entire issue to one subject (eg. caving), so it was decided to submit three articles, and one will be published in each of three issues at two monthly intervals commencing December 1960. Thus the original proposal to have an article from each state has had to be modified and condensed. The plan now envisaged will enable participation by all States, and will outline numerous aspects of caves and caving. The titles, form, and methods of contribution for the three articles are outlined below:-

Article 1 "Underground Adventure in Australia", to be published in the December issue, will be compiled from information supplied by member societies of A.S.F.

Elery Hamilton-Smith will write the actual article. We want the facts about your exploration activities put together in an interesting style and confined to one foolscap page typed. Photographs will be required which illustrate exploration methods (eg. ladder work, rope work, scaling poles, surveying, rafting, search and rescue methods, cave diving, etc.) and new caves and caves in interesting places. Would each society please appoint a contributor to work on this material immediately.

Article 2. "Man Finds a Cave", which will deal with the early history of exploration and exploration in certain caves. Alan Hill, C.E.G.S.A. has been asked to contribute material on the fossil marsupial remains and guano mining in the Naracoorte Caves in South Australia, and to gather photographs as illustrations. Margaret Innes (S.U.S.S.) and Ben Nurse (S.S.S.) have been asked to provide information and photographs on the early exploration and development of the tourist caves at Jenolan in N.S.W. A contribution by Dr. A. Gallus summarising his archaeological findings in the caves under the Nullarbor Plains may be included.

Article 3. "Why are there Caves?"; The question will be answered briefly and generally by Joe Jennings or myself. Robin Bailey (V.C.E.S.) will discuss the form features of some typical (in Hard limestone and wet) cave system open to the public at Buchan, Victoria, whilst Lex Bastion (W.A.) will discuss form features of the caves in the Pleistocene Dune Limestone at Margaret River (?) Western Australia. The decorations in caves will be discussed by Frank Brown (T.C.C.) who will no doubt illustrate his contribution with the fine examples at Mole Creek, Tasmania.

By this scheme all States are participating although Queensland and Northern Territory will receive attention only in article 1, as they do not have tourist caves. The contributors for article 2 and 3 have already been approached. This Newsletter will act as notice to societies to contribute information for

article 1. The Queensland group are included in this request as well as people who have caved in out of the way places. Outstanding photographs are needed in abundance, so everyone is invited to send them in for selection. Not only will photos be required to illustrate articles, but also for the Camera Supplement in the centre pages of "Walkabout". The preference will be for 8" by 10" (black & white, prints showing as much contrast as possible. Attach information to each photo submitted, to document it and to identify the photographer. It is probable that a caving shot will be used as a coloured cover photo for a "Walkabout" issue. Naturally it must be outstanding and for preference be on 4" by 5" Ekta Chrome, though smaller sized Ekta Chrome may be considered. All contributions and photos must reach the publications officer (address on title page) by April 15th as the articles must be submitted to "Walkabout" by the end of June.

It may be possible to combine reprints of the three articles into one booklet which could be distributed to interested bodies in Australia and overseas, as well as having copies available for sale. But the possibility of selling these reprints is subject to further investigations. It is felt that because of the combined effort involved in this "Walkabout" project, that all remunerations received from the publishers of "Walkabout" should go into A.S.F. funds.

The production of a Manual for Tourist Cave Guides has been postponed temporarily, though it is felt that this would be a worthy contribution by A.S.F. towards increasing knowledge of Australian Caves.

Exploration Activities:- Despite the lack of direct contributions we have gleaned some news of recent exploration in Australia. After the A.S.F. Conference in Hobart in December 1958, mainland cavers accompanied the Tasmanian "Caverneers" to many of the spectacular caves on that island. It was not only sight seeing, but the mainlanders helped the Tasmanians to continue their systematic cave exploration which they commenced over 14 years ago. The thick scrub and rain forest make caving in Tasmania

tough. The deep pot holes in the Florentine Valley were visited, Philinger's Cave with its mobile land-slides was mapped, and Growling Swallet which is believed to be over 500' deep (deepest in Aust. so far) was partially mapped. Meanwhile a party was fighting through thick scrub in Ida Bay area in order to reach the Exit Cave which is apparently linked with the Entrance Cave forming a very large system. It took them nearly 2 days to cover the $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles, so they had less time to cave. By now a more successful expedition may have returned from this cave. In the Mole Creek area Joe Jennings (Canberra) and Dr. Margorie Sweeting (Oxford University) carried out limestone geomorphological work which of course included cave investigation and were assisted by many of the A.S.F. party. A notable contribution was the mapping of the Honeycomb system by Bob Sexton (C.E.G.S.A.) and helpers. This complex system certainly taxed the South Australian Surveying methods, but they emerged with an impressive series of maps. Bob says that the job is by no means complete as they found more cave than they had time to map. A more complete summary of caving after the Tasmanian conference appears in the September 1959 issue of "Outdoors" in which Harry Frauca writes up information given him by Frank Brown.

Another place where vegetation makes caving difficult is in the hills of the Great Divide in Northern N.S.W. where the Kempsey Cavers operate. Not only have they to penetrate jungle-like growth but it always seems to rain when they go out. And apparently when it rains it really rains. Further south where the Great Divide gets higher around the N.S.W.

- Victorian border there are several patches of caverniferous limestone in the Limestone Creek-Quombat Flat area (headwaters of the Murray). This area was visited last Easter by both the Victorian and Snowy Mountain Societies and many small but interesting caves were explored. The caves are relatively young. Access to this area is difficult, but the mountain scenery is most impressive, and for those who like to combine caving with bushwalking, this is an ideal area.

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Another successful trip to the Nullarbor was accomplished last Christmas, although on a smaller scale to the 1956 epic. C.E.G.S.A. once again organised the trip which was led by Peter Aitken and attended by 18 cavers including some from N.S.W. and Victoria. Several good ethnological finds were made by Dr. Gallus of Melbourne, and nine new caves were discovered. Much work is still to be done under the Nullarbor Plains, and it is suggested that an area director be appointed to assist in the organisation of future Nullarbor trips. A C.E.G.S.A. member is suggested as the South Australians have accumulated much information and experience on these Plains. Another trip may eventuate early in 1961.

A C.E.G.S.A. party revisited Kelly's Hill on Kangaroo Island at Easter last year. They made several new connections between caves, showing once again that this hill of Pleistocene Dune Limestone has a pretty well continuous undulating sheet of caves. By its very nature much of the rock is very friable and even a blow fly can cause a minor roof collapse in some places.

As already mentioned, Joe Jennings and Margorie Sweeting conducted limestone geomorphological studies at Mole Creek. In the middle of last year they headed north by west and worked in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Joe tells some hair raising stories of caves in this area which are inhabited not only by snakes but also by the small fresh water crocodiles. No doubt the scientific work done will be published and will describe these caves especially those which are tunnels right across a range of limestone "storm-water drains" for the creeks during the "wet". They also visited the Katherine area in the Northern Territory and made contact with the local cavers. The caves in the area are most extensive although some of the extensions are blocked by foul air.

Recent Australian Literature:-

Jennings, J.N. & Sweeting, M.M., 1959 - The Underground Breach of a divide at Mole Creek, Tasmania, Aust. Journ. Sci., Vol.21, No.8, p.261. By use of fluocene the authors have shown that an underground stream crosses a limestone divide, although they are unable to trace this stream

from its suggested surface origin. The presence of coarse gravels (relics of glacio-fluvial outwash fans from the Pleistocene) in the valley of suggested influx of the stream, has led the authors to believe that the breaching of the dividemay be more a case of diversion by alluviation rather than by stream capture.

Paddy Pallin, 1959 - Bushwalking and Camping, 6th edition. This latest edition of Paddy Pallin's handbook contains a chapter on caving for the inexperienced. This chapter, "Venture Underground", written by Ron Wardrop (S.S.S.), is a pleasing addition to this book of information and advice on Australian outdoor pursuits. As bushwalking and camping are a prerequisite for caving in Australia, the handbook would be worthwhile reading even if it did not mention caving.

Overseas Literature Received:- The following publications have arrived and will be forwarded to the librarian:-

Acta Geographica, V(1959) of the Yugoslavian Academy of Science. (contains no papers with direct bearing on speleology).

Bulletin of the Greek Speleological Society, Vol v. pts. 2&3. Papers mainly relating to cave morphology; most are in Greek, so translation is necessary before abstracts can be given.

Bulletin of the South African Spel. Soc. Part 1, 1960.

Papers - suggest close similarities between conditions in S. African caves with those in Sth. Aust. The paper, "Geology of the Makapan and Sterkfontein Caves" by Prof. L.C. King outlines his methods of stratigraphic correlation of cave deposits. It should be read by all who collect bones in caves, as the implications of where a fossil comes from is often more important than the fossil itself. His sequence of deposits is similar to that found in some of the caves in drier parts of Australia. The paper, "Bat Banding" tells of Sth African procedure, and "Snakes for the Speleologist" is interesting reading. An article on the De Hoop caves mentions guano mining, whilst "The Exploration of the Sinoia Caves" (Sth Rhodesia) describes diving in sink holes partially filled with water.