



Australian Speleological Federation Inc. (A.C.T.)

ABN: 15 169 919 964

2015 Annual Report

(Financial year 2014-2015)

(Adopted 9th January 2016)

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Executive Members

President	John Cugley
Senior Vice President	Jim Crockett
Vice President	Colin Tyrrell
Vice President	Graham Pilkington
Vice President	Deb Hunter
Treasurer	Grace Matts
Executive Secretary	Phil Maynard
General Secretary	Joe Sydney
Membership Secretary	Bob Kershaw
NEVP UIS 2017 Conference Convener	Denis Marsh (appointed October 2013)

President's Report

John Cugley

Firstly, let me say thanks to all for your support during a difficult year for me during my health issues. This past year saw a great conference held at Exmouth. It was pleasing to hear that so many people make the journey to a remote location. Unfortunately due my health issues I could not attend the Conference. The WA team did an excellent job!

It is now time to look forward to our next conference which is the UIS conference in Sydney in 2017. Dennis Marsh is leading a dedicated team, but as we get closer it is time for more spots to be filled.

As always there is pressure from government and political parties, land managers and developers on karst environments. The local area caving clubs all take an active role in protecting and looking after their patch.

The ASF library has been bequeathed various personal libraries over the past few years, which has led to the question on how we store these items and also make them available to all our members for loan or review. Gone are the days of being able to store this at someone's home.

The ASF and Karst Fund have received some generous donations through the year. Please think about including the ASF or the Karst Conservation Fund in your will. Also if you need to lighten your tax burden, donations to the Karst Conservation Fund are tax deductible.

A few items that will be on the Executive agenda over the next year or so are succession planning, review of commissions and commissioners.

2016/17 is the 60th anniversary year for the ASF and our next council meeting will be held in Adelaide as part of the celebrations, so start your planning to make your way to SA during January 2017.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer: Grace Matts
Presented and accepted at meeting

Insurance Report

Phil Maynard
The ASF maintains two insurance policies; the Association Liability policy and the Adventure Activities Combined Liability policy. The two policies are designed to cover liability for:

- 1) The ASF, the corporate member clubs and their executives against claims for Wrongful Acts, eg libel.
- 2) Participants on a trip and the landowners against negligence suits.

Cross-liability is included, eg a member of ASF suing another member of ASF. Coverage is world-wide excluding North America. The policies are not accident insurance, medical insurance or travel insurance. The activities included in the Adventure Activities policy are "Cave, Karst & Mine Research, Exploration, Surveying and Recreation, Equipment Testing, Canyoning and Bushwalking, Publishing and Photography, Caving (inclusive Diving) together with training and practice for the above activities as declared; property owners and/or occupiers, trades and services incidental thereto."

The landowners' cover is a vital part of the Adventure Activities policy for ASF and its members - it's the difference between access and no access for many clubs already. In future, we can expect more and more landowners to be concerned about the issue of liability caused by allowing trips on their land.

The normal insurance exclusions apply, the most relevant of which is that illegal activities are not covered. Trespass or caving without a permit will leave the cavers exposed. All trips must have approval from the landowners. Travel to and from a trip is not covered, because compulsory third party motor vehicle insurance covers the same liability locally, and travel insurance covers longer trips.

There were no claims against either policy in 2015, and no claims are pending as negotiations commence for the 2016 renewals.

The ASF Karst Conservation Fund

Nicholas White – ASF Karst Conservation Fund Commission, Manager.

A very active year with a number of projects winding up and a number started. These covered a number of projects, in a number of States and with a variety of objectives. A new feature of applications this year was that a number of applications were received for studies to be undertaken in tertiary institutions.

A submission to the Standing Committee on the Environment was made about the Inquiry into the Register of Environmental Organisations. This Inquiry arose because of claims that organisations which employ tax deductible status (ASF is on the Register of Environmental Organisations) were using donations for political purposes. No results of the Inquiry have been released. The Inquiry was probably just a beat up but such assaults on the environmental movement should not be taken lightly. ASF argues for the protection and better management of caves and karst and does so without involving itself in direct politics.

The Commission could not operate without the support of its members and that of the Fund Directors to properly discharge the responsibilities which are specified for ASF having a tax deductible Fund.

The Fund has been very active this year and a summary is provided below. At the present time expenditure has exceeded donations and this needs addressing in the coming year if we are to continue to provide funds for a wide variety of projects.

Activities Supported by Fund in 2015

Mt Etna Ghost Bat Project "Tracking and Tracing Central Queensland's Macroderma" (QLD)

The Mt Etna Ghost Bat population is in jeopardy. It is isolated and does not interbreed with other ghost bat populations. The genetic analysis confirmed the counting evidence from the field that the population is now below sustainable numbers with very low genetic diversity. Further funding was provided to analyse scats instead of biopsy samples from captured individuals. This methodology will be vital for further study of the ghost bat that is being considered for listing as a threatened species under the EPBC Act (1999).

Scrubby Creek Cave Property Acquisition Project (VIC)

The Fund initiated this project in January 2012 at the behest of Rimstone Cooperative Ltd. The property was purchased in May 2012. At the end of 2014 Rimstone Cooperative was in a position to acquit the personal loans that together with the donations from the ASF Karst Conservation Fund allowed purchase. The Fund provided some \$83,000 of targeted donations to enable the purchase to proceed. The Fund will now provide smaller amounts to support the conservation and management of the cave and associated karst.

This project could not have proceeded without the Fund support. The purchase of a cave property for conservation reasons by Rimstone Cooperative Ltd as a Community Advancement Society was a good way of the Fund supporting the purchase of a cave property. Rimstone Cooperative Ltd now manages the property together with a lessee. The next initiative on the property is to fence out the tufa terraces to allow them to recover from stock trampling during periods of extended drought.

Honeycomb Cave Entrance Stabilization Project and Kubla Khan Cave Infrastructure Replacement Project (TAS)

This project has now been completed. The project was managed by Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service with support from Karstwatch. Honeycomb Cave is used extensively by school groups, recreation groups and others. A flood event seriously eroded the entrance surrounds. The project provided stone steps to gain access to the cave entrance thus avoiding an erosion prone soil bank.

The walkway stairs in the Kubla Khan Cave lower entrance doline protect the ferns, mosses and associated biota from visitor damage. The stairs were destroyed in a windstorm event by trees falling onto them. Replacement stairs were installed in this project.

Report published in Caves Australia.

Save Cliefden Caves Campaign (NSW)

Proposals by Water NSW for a dam on the Belubula River in the Lachlan Catchment of the Murray Darling Basin would flood caves and karst at Cliefden and other associated

areas. Funds are provided for research and investigations to inform this campaign to oppose the building of such a dam.

Funding was provided for three dimensional mapping of caves at Cliefden for use in the campaign.

Funding provided for Differential GPS locations of river levels, notches and karst features:

Assessment of both cave dwelling and forest bats is being undertaken. So far, over 10 species of bats have been shown to be present at Cliefden.

Campaign will continue into 2016 and beyond, as necessary.

Britannia Creek Cave Project (VIC)

This cave is a granite boulder cave with a stream through it. The cave is close to Melbourne and is extensively used by recreational cavers. The cave has glowworms (*Arachnocampa gippslandensis*), numerous other invertebrates and a platypus is sometimes observed in the cave.

The project will study and identify the invertebrate biota of the cave. This knowledge will then be used to better manage the cave. The project is being undertaken by a final year ecology student.

The project has been completed and will be published.

Stockyard Gully National Park and Beekeepers Reserve, WA Speleogenesis Project

This is being conducted by Matej Lipar. Funds for the project provide for sample collection and mineralogical analysis and dating. This study builds on Matej Lipar's previous studies of the Pinnacles at Nambung, WA and the Petrified Forest at Cape Bridgewater, Victoria.

Population dynamics of the critically endangered Southern Bent-wing Bat, PhD project of Emmi Scherlies of Latrobe University (Bendigo).

The Southern Bent-wing Bat is critically endangered and is dependent on Bat Cave at Naracoorte, SA and Starlight Cave at Warrnambool, Victoria as maternity sites. This cave dwelling bat has significantly declined in recent years. The funding has provided state of the art equipment to monitor the population at Bat Cave. The use of this equipment will provide answers to critical questions identified in the national recovery

plan for the southern bent-wing bat. This will include the movements and survival rates of females, males, adults and young of year. Is one of these cohorts contributing disproportionately to the decline? Emmi will provide updates as the study progresses.

Conservation Commission Reports

National

Nicholas White
Introduction

Cave and karst conservation in Australia is a very broad charter. It spreads from classic big picture cave conservation conflicts with development proposals such as a dam on the Belubula River which might flood the Cliefden Caves to the problems of high usage of particular caves and what we can do to minimize the damage to caves from use. Necessarily the ASF has a number of Codes of Practice which espouse caving ethics and minimal impact caving. Should these need changes then the ASF should hear of it.

State governments apply various measures to protect the resources they are responsible for. In 2015 Western Australia issued a new Corporate Guideline No. 16 "Guidelines for the Protection and Management of Caves and Karst" together with a Policy Statement No. 80

Protection and Management of Caves and Karst. Such frameworks provide protection for caves and karst. They provide the mechanisms for protection together with access conditions to cave areas. As cavers we need to abide by the access conditions but equally it is our responsibility to give timely notice if conditions are not adhered to or there is inadequate monitoring of the effects of recreational caving. Similar controls exist in various forms in other states.

There is a rejuvenated proposal to prepare Adventure Activity Standards including Caving as a single National standard. These standards have an important part for conservation of caves in Australia and ASF should take an active part in their development.

Necessarily the Commission involves itself in Nationally important matters brought to its attention.

Proposed Dam on Belubula River to Flood Cliefden Caves

Water NSW currently has funding to investigate four proposed sites for dams in the upper Lachlan River and tributaries with a preference to detail the sites at Cranky Rock on the Belubula River. These investigations are in a preliminary stage but will require the preparation of engineering design parameters, an environmental effects investigation and a business case. It has become apparent that a dam if built will become a public private partnership based on user pays for the water.

The Save Cliefden Caves Campaign is now made up of two main groups: the ASF campaign is coordinated by OSS with the NSW Speleological Liaison Council and the Save Cliefden Caves Association which has affiliated with the NSW Nature Conservation Council. A strategy meeting was held in December 2015 at which a set of objectives and communication policies were agreed to.

Quite a deal of research and cave mapping is being undertaken and the Karst Conservation Fund provided support for Robert Zlot to prepare 3 dimensional representations of Cliefden Caves with his Zebedee laser scanning instrument and OSS plus Ian Household hired Digital GPS equipment to prepare accurate position and elevation points along the river to provide information on the evolution of levels in the Cliefden Caves. The bat studies have shown as well as the cave bats that there are as many as 12 – 14 other species in the Belubula River valley in the vicinity of the caves. Further investigations of cave fauna are underway.

Should the dam proposals proceed then this campaign will have to get much bigger!

Southern Bent-wing Bat (Miniopterus schreibersii bassanii) Recovery Plan

This is the bat species (SBWB) based around Naracoorte and Warnambool. It is classified as critically endangered under the EPBC Act (1999). A recovery plan has been prepared. The Commission made a comprehensive submission on the Plan. The Plan's intent is very good but requires considerable money to enact to protect the habitat and caves on which the bat depends. This may prove to be its weakness.

The Karst Conservation Fund has provided support for equipment to monitor “microchipped” bats as part of a PhD study of the Population Dynamics of the bat by Emmi Scherlies. Another project is under consideration studying for the presence or evidence of the White Nose Syndrome fungus (*Pseudogymyces destructans*) and viruses in the *Miniopterus* populations of the SBWB and the *Miniopterus schreibersii oceanensis* of Eastern Victoria. The Victorian population of this species has also had a dramatic decline in population size.

Chillagoe Karst Region National Heritage List Assessment

The Commission together with the Chillagoe Caving Club provided submissions supporting the National Heritage listing of the Chillagoe Karst Region. Listing of this area would give the area acknowledgement of the karst which is the best example of tower karst in Australia. The boundaries proposed are minimal and restricted to the towers i.e. the National Park area as well as towers in the Mitchell Palmer karst area. The listing is objected to by the local government Shire as well as mining interests in Chillagoe itself. At this stage the results of the assessment are not known.

Ghost Bat Listing

The Commission provided comment to the Department of Environment on a recommendation to put the ghost bat (*Macroderma gigas*) into the vulnerable category under the EPBC Act (1999). Such a categorization would assist in the management of the ghost bat. Listing the species as vulnerable is warranted. The population at Mt Etna has now been shown to be less than 50 individuals with only 27 being present 2 years ago. The ASF Karst Conservation Fund contributed to the genetic research which showed the very restricted genetic base of the population. This population is genetically isolated and presumably will become extinct although the Taronga Zoo captive colony is based on this population. Captive breeding could be considered to extend the continuity of the population. The deliberate blasting open of the cave used by the bats as the over-wintering site put this population into decline. There may be other factors to do with climate, barbed-wire fence casualties or deaths from eating cane toads which have contributed to the extinction of populations of the ghost bat. Recognition of the vulnerable status of the species is an important step which may lead to

a better understanding of the bats decline in range and number.

EPBC Act (1999)

The present government is intent on modifying the environmental provisions of the EPBC Act to prevent large projects being blocked by objectors arguing development would have adverse effects on the biota or the environment. This has arisen because of the proposed Adani coal mine in the Galilee Basin, Queensland.

It was in Queensland where the Central Queensland Speleological Society with ASF support established by appeal to the High Court that members of the public had a right of access to the courts when they were aggrieved by actions that affected the environment. This was a very hard fought battle but it established the right to argue an environmental case for protection even if as in the case of Mt Etna it was beyond the financial resources of the objectors to continue the argument.

We should not take lightly proposals to reduce environmental protections at Federal or State levels in the name of progress and development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Commission cannot do everything such as get involved in machinations about Jenolan privatization or for similar questions regarding the Wellington Caves.

The development of National Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) including Caving deserves ASF's full participation. ASF cannot accept that there are “sacrificial caves”. All caves need care and respect by users. It is particularly beginner and introductory caving groups which inadvertently damage caves through tracking mud on formation and so on. This can only be kept to minimal levels by adequate leadership and restricting party sizes when beginners or dependent groups are involved. It is why we have the Code of Ethics, the Minimal Impact and Caving Code and also why a Caving AAS if it is to be National needs careful consideration and not a watering down of the conservation and minimal impact responsibilities of cave leaders.

It is difficult for a Federation to achieve its aims. If there are better ways for the Commission to function then let me know.

Karstcare

David Wools-Cobb

We've clocked up just over 100 hours of work over the past six months.

Projects have been:

1. Construction of a deer fence in the Baldocks Cave block as an experiment as part of our re-vegetation of the area.
2. Cleaning out a Pot Hole of rubbish.
3. Cleaning and marking a route to the base of the Begum in Kubla Khan Cave, and servicing all boot wash stations in Kubla ready for a busy summer period.
4. Weeding/re-vegetation around the Honey Comb entrance.

We face a pretty busy year for 2016 as PWS (Parks) have secured \$10,000 to replace the bottom Kubla gate with a stainless steel construction, hopefully enabling the passage of a stretcher and opening from within without a key. This will involve some technical and environmental challenges in getting equipment to and from the work site. Removal of many of the clay bags in the upper section of Kubla is also planned to commence shortly

Speleological Council Reports

NSW Speleological Council

President: Colin Tyrrell

On behalf of the NSW Speleological Council Executive and Federation Members in ACT and NSW, I present the following report on the affairs of this State Speleological Council for 2015.

The Council met twice during the year in May and October.

Meetings were well attended with around 11 corporate members represented at both meetings. During the year the ASF in NSW was represented by caver delegates at meetings of Kosciuszko NP Speleological Reference Group (KNPSRG) and Bungonia Reference Advisory Group (BRAG)

As President, I have had meetings with the Landforms Team, NPWS on several matters relating to access and issues relating to caves on the OEH estate, and keeping a good relationship with NPWS.

An increasing number of clubs in NSW have run joint caving trips with other clubs during the year and this is seen as a positive action by all concerned.

Kosciuszko NP Speleo Reference Group (KNPSRG)

This committee, established as a requirement under the Kosciuszko NP Plan of Management, Meet at least once this year.

NPWS Reference groups

After representation from the ASF General Secretary, Karst Management Advisory Committee (KMAC) is back on the agenda. In June nominations were required and Chris Norton's nomination was accepted. However, the committee still hasn't been finalised awaiting representatives from a couple of other bodies. Sophia Meehan, NPWS, has put forward that the current nomination be for a 5 year period. I am still waiting to hear the result

Jenolan Caves: All quiet on the Jenolan front. Rob Conroy issued a brief in mid-October advising that the long awaited Plan of Management is about to be released. It has been in various states of hiatus for well over 10 years.

Save Cliefden Caves

Whilst it has been relatively quiet this year – the NSW Government is still pushing ahead with a \$6m study of feasibility of putting a dam on the Belubula River downstream from Cliefden Caves. There have been some public meeting through the year that have not been organised by ASF/NSWSC but have been attended by members of Orange Speleological Society.

There is strategy meeting proposed for early December 2015 that will be by invitation from all players opposing the dam. ASF/NSWSC will be represented by Nicholas White, Denis Marsh, Ian Curtis, Colin Tyrrell and perhaps Chris Norton.

Donations to the fighting fund through the Karst Fund have been disappointing this year

Tasmanian Speleological Liaison Council

Report by David Wools-Cobb

- Cave Rescue exercise in south Tasmania.
- On-going issues cave access & cave access policy.
- Tas Parks issue with incorporated Council.

Speleological Council of Western Australia

Greg Thomas

The 30th Biennial ASF Conference, Ningaloo Underground, was hosted in Exmouth, Western Australia from 21-26 June 2015. The conference attracted approximately 80 delegates and more than 35 people participated in pre-conference caving run out the town and we had over 40 people camping together up on the range for post conference caving. The Conference finished with a small financial surplus which was returned to organising groups and the ASF.

The council continues to facilitate activities between the State Cave and Karst Numbering Co-ordinator and various Area Co-ordinators for work on the Karst Index; although this has had less attention this year because of work on the Conference. Attempts to reach out to the Cave Exploration Group of WA, who we believe have located a number of features in areas north of Perth; have to date been unsuccessful. Since this group have failed to publish any of their findings any work they have done will go unacknowledged and features and caves found will be credited to whoever re-locates them and publishes. This group have failed to pay their ASF fees for the last two years and their membership was in fact revoked at the ASF Council meeting held at the above Conference.

Proposals for a Caravan and camping area in Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park in the South West were addressed via member club representation to the local Caves Management Advisory Committee. The preferred location was in a catchment area surrounded by caves and by presenting area maps and suggesting our concerns we were able to persuade the authority to re-examine their proposal and move the location to a less karst sensitive area.

Bob Baker has stepped down from acting in the Cave Managers role at the Department of Parks and Wildlife at Leeuwin-Naturaliste and scowa - via CMAC continues to encourage the appointment of a full time permanent manager with Karst qualifications and/or experience

South Australian Speleological Council

By Graham Pilkington

- SA Parks new management plan and are liaising with cavers

Commission Reports

Australian Cave Rescue

Convener: Ross Anderson

- Bungonia/NSWW-Feb 2015: Joe briefed the meeting about the Feb 2015 Bungonia B4-5 sump rescue.
- Wee Jasper/NSW Family got lost after rope through Rat Hole was pulled through. Binalong VRA called to assist. Family were safe.
- Tasmania: Deb received a call whilst at Exmouth re a woman falling into doline in Tasmania. Woman was successfully rescued.

Awards

Convener: Miles Pierce

At the close of nominations for 2015 ASF Awards, 31 March, three nominations had been received. An ad hoc awards selection committee was subsequently established by the President, John Cugley, comprising himself and past presidents, John Dunkley, Stan Flavel, Miles Pierce and Nicholas White.

The selection committee determined that Rod O'Brien (SUSS) should receive the Jeff Butt Award of Distinction for Exploration (particularly for his technical penetration cave diving) and Ian Collette (WASG) and Michael Bradley (SRGWA) to receive Certificates of Merit.

In addition, the Council at its meeting in Exmouth in June resolved to confer Fellowship of ASF awards to Grace Matts and Susan White.

The respective awards were formally announced, at the Exmouth Cavers' Dinner, 26 June, by Jim Crockett as acting president. Grace and Ian were present to receive their awards in person. Representatives of individual clubs/societies were charged with conveying the physical awards to the non-present awardees.

Write-ups of all of the 2015 Awards for publication in Caves Australia were prepared by the Convener and sent to the Editor in July.

Expenses incurred in relation to the Awards Commission are limited to costs for the physical award items as arranged by Grace Matts.

Bibliography

Convener: Greg Middleton

While I have expressed my doubts in previous years as to the value of continuing to produce abstracts as we have known them, IUS retains its Bibliography Commission (of which I am a member) and continues to produce Speleological Abstracts, albeit tardily, and as a consequence I have continued to contribute at least a token number of abstracts from Australia. Speleological Abstracts 51/52 (for 2012-13) was published in January 2015 (though it states it was printed Jan. 2014); I contributed 190 abstracts. The financial support of ASF is acknowledged though this has not been the case for some years. This is probably the last issue that will be printed. For the forthcoming issue I have contributed 538 abstracts but have had no indication of when, or how, this will be available. As at November 2015 the IUS Commission's website gives no information as to future issues.

I will try to continue to contribute at least a token number of Australian abstracts while the IUS continues to publish them.

Cave Diving

Conveners: Tim Payne and Peter Kraehenbuehl

No report received

Cave and Karst Numbering

Convener: Peter Dykes

Over the last 6 months the commission has been working on the following matters:

ASF Code for Cave and Karst Numbering:

A draft revised ASF Code for Cave and Karst Numbering was provided to the Exmouth meeting in June. The code has been extensively rewritten to facilitate a more comprehensive documentation of Australia's karst heritage; the essential components being;

- Expanded feature numbering by separating surface and cave feature numbering and documentation
- New karst outcrop and exposure numbering and documentation
- Defined minimum documentation requirements and obligations to provide information to cave area numberer; state cave and karst numbering coordinators and the national cave and karst numbering commission

The code is an early draft and to date I have received only a few responses with the main

criticism being the changes to the numbering format to accommodate surface and cave feature numbering. What was not made clear was that current numbering system is compatible with that proposed and can continue to be used. The proposed refinement will enable a clear distinction to be made between a cave and its entrances instead of the implied one currently used. There also appears to be some confusion over the placement of "metal tags" on features to record the feature's number; the new code does not preclude the use of "tags" however cavers must be aware that some management authorities regard it as akin to vandalism and were it is done on any Aboriginal site or within the boundary of an Aboriginal Place it may bring prosecution for defacing an Aboriginal site/place. If in doubt - don't tag.

OzKarst:

During 2015 Graham Pilkington and I have continued to work on OzKarst developing and refining both the software and its applications to karst documentation. Graham will be staying at my place "Tricketts Arch", Jaunter for some weeks following the Council meeting and I am hoping to run an OzKarst training secession for those interested in learning how to use its full capabilities either in Sydney or at my place on the weekend of the 23-24 January 2016. To date over 30 cavers from NSW, Vic, SA, Tas and WA have signed OzKarst Software Licence Agreements with most also signing OzKarst Data Exchange Agreements. OzKarst software is free for all members of any club holding Corporate Membership of ASF; members DO NOT have to agree to exchange their data with the OzKarst Administrators however in the interests of developing both state and national karst databases they are encouraged to do so. Members can also be assured that having given data to OzKarst Administrators that it is not exchanged with other ASF members unless the originators have first agree to it.

State Roundup for 2015:

NSW: Documentation is happening in the Lithgow-Mudgee Region and for the Cliefden Caves Campaign.

NT: Gregory and Pulungia remain the main areas of documentation with annual trips to the areas.

SA: The Nullarbor is a constant area of interest with a large numbers of trips from SA and interstate cavers.

WA: There is some conflict over access to cave location data with a need for reconciliation to occur.

Grants

Convener: Fiona Beckwith
No Report Received

Helictite

Convener: Susan White

The Helictite Commission is separate from the Publications Commission. When ASF received Helictite from the Speleological Research Council (SRC) it was agreed to form a separate commission to enhance the chances of continuation of the journal. The Commission currently consists of Susan White (Chair and joint editor), Ken Grimes (Editor), Stefan Eberhard (Editor), Grace Matts (ASF Treasurer), Glenn Baddeley (Business Manager) and John Dunkley. The ASF President is an ex officio member. I have chaired the Commission since ASF took over Helictite in 2000 and Ken Grimes and I have been editors since 1998. The Commission is run in tandem with the Publications Commission but is a separate Commission.

The good news is that Greg Middleton has volunteered to take over my position as editor. This should make the continuation of Helictite more feasible. I will make the transition in early 2016 and hand over this component. Whether I stay as Chair will be decided by the Commission in consultation with the Executive.

There has been no issue published in 2013. The last printed volume to produce (Volume 42) has made some progress and articles have been sent out for review is back. All further publications will be Open Access (digital) as agreed a few years ago. Volume 42 is in editing mode and it is intended that it be published as soon as possible. Pre-publication on the website of finalised articles will occur.

There are about 20 copies of Volume 41 (Bullita special volume). We have now one spare complete set due to donations from Elery Hamilton-Smith's library. Limited copies of some other volumes are available from the Chair of the Commission.

We have been trying to scan back copies but this is still stalled due to time constraints. RMIT and the Karst Portal (based at the University of South Florida) have both expressed interest in being involved in this but I have not had sufficient time to engage in the detailed discussions with either institution. I do not want this to become a serious problem because of not doing the necessary background work on such matters.

No further action has occurred on the matters discussed at the UIS meeting in Brno in 2013, but this is still on the agenda. The main issues are to do with time constraints by volunteers. Moving Helictite to Open Access after the production of Volume 42 will hopefully mean it will survive for some time, especially as it is still the only refereed specialist karst journal in the Australasian region.

Thanks to the other members of the Commission, especially Ken Grimes who has attempted to keep me up to the mark.

International Relations

Convener: Nicholas White

The UIS initiated a proposal to have UNESCO declare the year 2021 as the International Year of Karst. ASF voted for the proposal. ASF will need to plan ahead if this proposal is accepted.

I have provided assistance with connections for people proposing overseas caving travel.

There has been a lot of communication with UIS Bureau Members during the year associated with Congress planning. The Bureau members are assisting with advice and ideas on planning. Joe Sydney represented the ASF at the 50th Anniversary of UIS in Postojna in June 2015 and during proceedings promoted the Australian Speleo 2017 IUS Congress..

In November 2015, Andy Spate and Tim Moulds attended the First Asian Speleological Conference and presented papers and Tim acted as ambassador for our Speleo 2017 Congress.

The UIS website provides information on UIS, access to the UIS Bulletin, the Karst Portal and the International Journal of Speleology <http://www.uis-speleo.org/>

Karst Conservation Fund

Convener: Nicholas White
See page 4.

Library and Archives

Convener: Cathy Brown

Many thanks to John and Jeanette Dunkley for continuing to house the library and archives collection in their basement, and to facilitate access for the librarian and others.

Receipt and accessioning of ASF publications, Australian club and international journals continues. We also continue to receive offers of, and acquire club and personal archival materials from time to time. John Dunkley is currently managing the archival materials.

Cataloguing of the 'Elery Hamilton-Smith' collection has continued this year, with Carol Anderson's help, but Penny Whitten and I have had some unexpected work commitments. This has resulted in less progress than we had forecast last year.

In the absence of progress to any better system yet, updated library catalogue files will be available at the Council meeting, or by email request to the librarian

Membership

Secretary: Colin Tyrrell/Bob Kershaw

Membership

Memberships as of 30th September 2015 according to one report from the database were 698 members spanning 27 corporate member clubs with 5 Individual members outside the club framework. But further investigation of the database shows that the total membership is 939 which include all family members. Of this 939 figure there are 156 university O-Week members, 19 Inactive Life members and 51 Introductory memberships. The database records 128 family memberships but digging deeper finds that when family members are included there are 371 members. The ASF has 8 Fellows of the Federation.

There are a couple of clubs still experiencing difficulties in getting their members properly recorded on the membership database. For example a couple of clubs have two single members registered when they should be family members!

However, it should be noted that some clubs have not correctly updated the member database so the number of members could be higher. Some clubs have indicated increased numbers but this is not being reflected in the database.

This year, again, has seen a number of individuals enquiring about Individual membership – these are referred to nearby clubs in the first instance.

There is currently 3 Associate and one Complimentary Associate (ACKMA).

There are currently no Caves Australia subscribers

Membership Database

Its primary use is for ASF to record members. The email lists operating through the membership database is used for all official ASF correspondence. As such it acts as a vehicle for communications (to club contacts (asf-admins), to individuals (all-comms).

The Membership database is also used for sending the eSpeleo newsletter to those who have their email address recorded.

It is also the distribution list of Caves Australia, which comes as part of ASF membership.

A secondary use is to validate if a person is an ASF member and covered by insurance. Parks Tasmania is the only known non-club user of this facility.

Several clubs use the facility to confirm whether a visiting member is actually a financial club.

The main issue to arise this (again) year continues to be that some clubs have been slow in updating their member records and keeping member details current. This will have an increasing impact with the move to an electronic version of Caves Australia as well as members missing receiving a copy of Caves Australia, and not being covered by insurance. Clubs should update membership data as members pay their fees.

It should be noted that it is not the responsibility of either the ASF Treasurer or Membership Secretary to update members on the database for clubs. If, as a club, you are experiencing problems updating members please ask for help from the Membership Secretary.

Publications

Convener: Susan White

The Publications Commission had another extremely busy year in 2015.

Caves Australia

CA continues to thrive and we have moved into digital publishing as well as archiving digital (scanned editions). Most of the earlier copies of CA and its predecessors are scanned and we are still negotiating the scanning of volumes 1-25 of ASF Newsletter at the appropriate price ie free. Please make sure clubs are aware that the link will be sent via the email addresses listed in the membership database and that clubs have a responsibility to keep this as up to date as possible. The cost of printing and posting hard copies is prohibitive and digital publishing does mean that if our subscriptions can go to furthering the needs of speleology in the 21st century. Nevertheless those who want hard copy need to make sure that this is indicated by their club.

We have fallen behind in the production schedule and only 2 editions have been produced in 2015. We have only sufficient material for one more issue. However keep those articles coming; we are very short of articles after CA 202. The number of people who write for CA is still far too narrow. The regular columns continue to be successful.

Unfortunately Alan Jackson has resigned from the overseeing production of CA. Alan has given about 7 years to this job and moved production to an excellent team based in Hobart. However he has decided to move to greener? muddier? pastures. At the moment I am overseeing this and as a result CA will not be as prompt due to my work load. I am therefore URGENTLY seeking a volunteer who is able to oversee production of CA. The actual production is still able to be done in Hobart; the team there of layout (Fred Baker), Trevor Wailles (printer) and TadPac (mailout) are able to be managed from a distance with these days of good email.

I thank Alan for his work with production and he has been very generous with his time and energy. Ian Curtis has continued as editor and I thank him for his time and hard work correcting caver's grammar.

ESpeleo

Ian Binnie has continued to be a good editor and has generated 3 ESpeleo in 2015 with another one planned for early 2016. Please

keep the information flowing to him on activities, notices, ads etc. Please email material to espeleo@binnie.id.au but please do not include large files as these are unsuitable for ESpeleo and clog his mail box!

Website

The website has performed well and continues to be well visited. We have gradually been getting upgraded material especially on the various commissions and other areas of ASF work. The Publications email continues to be successful and really helps with management of the Commission. The use of the website to provide information depends on the updating of material. As we need to be careful that we do not breach copyright, privacy, our own codes or defamation law etc., Commissioners are asked to send information to Susan White. Some editing of material is sometimes needed as spelling mistakes, typographical errors and grammatical horrors cannot always be seen by the authors. It is important that these are picked up before information is uploaded.

Other publications

David Rueda Roca has moved to Sydney from Melbourne but will continue to be the publications sales officer. The PayPal facility is generally working well. We still have some problems with stock control. The order form and sales notice on the website under Publications has largely solved the problem of supplying the small number of sales enquiries. The issue of storage of large quantities of printed material continues to need attention. Not everyone has space for the storage of large numbers of boxes of books. I would like to thank John and Jeanette Dunkley for wearing the bulk of this for the past few years. David has now

The sales of the Wee Jasper book continue to be a success and we have plenty of stock. The Jenolan book is virtually out of print (we only have few copies left) and we do not intend to reprint. The New South Wales Karst Atlas (The Documentation System) has sold steadily and we have less than half the stock left. Caves, People and Land: Sandstone Caves of the Blue Mountains and Sydney Region by John Dunkley has moved rather slowly. The protocol set up to oversee the process of the production of subsequent volumes in the Atlas project worked well for this volume and will stand us in good stead and the Commission looks forward to new volumes. These are all available through the Publication Sales officer. The various publications available from ASF are listed on the website Publications page and

can be purchased from the publications sales officer.

The Conservation Book is still stuck. We need to work out what is happening with this and it is still "in the queue" of things I have not had time to deal with this in 2015 and it is not an easy project. I would very much like to hear from anyone who is interested in being involved in regenerating this project! However I think that the project is not viable.

I would like to reiterate that good editing is a very real component of publication and the Commission is not prepared to back the publication of material we have not had professionally edited. As well, I periodically hear of errors in book X or Y. If errors exist the Commission needs more than just a 'there are serious errors' statement. A much more detailed list with pages and explanation of why it is incorrect is needed. Errata can be printed and inserted if necessary.

We have some potential publications under consideration. Some of this includes assisting with the publications issues which arise out of hosting the UIS congress in 2017.

The small profits from these books will be available to publish new material which will further our aims. There is great potential in publications to further the aims of ASF in the general public but more people need to be involved with writing stuff. We still get stuff where people have spent a lot of time on layout that is stripped out anyway as layout programs generally need plain text. Photos and diagrams need to be high quality, sources acknowledged and grammatical mistakes corrected.

Copyright

There are several issues about copyright the executive needs to be aware of and maybe assist with.

ASF is a member of the CAL, and CAL is holding a little bit of money us for copyright fees, mainly of the codes by schools. TAFE etc. The copyright statement on the website for material is now appropriate. We want people to use our codes not be put off by overly legal language, whilst still acknowledging our copyright. On a related matter, it is my considered opinion that ASF members should not have to seek formal approval to use the codes; they are their codes after all. They should include the copyright statement with anything printed/published but permission is

gratuitous. On the other hand outside organizations that wish to use our codes should seek permission if it is being incorporated into their material and this includes government agencies.

Publications is a big commission and it does take quite lot of time and effort but it is a rewarding task, especially when we see the finished results out in the public arena. It is a Commission which requires time to do the various jobs of overseeing the various tasks and finding people to do them including succession planning.

I would like to thank all the members of the Commission for all the work they have put in this year, especially Alan Jackson and Ian Curtis, both of whose acerbic senses of humour continue to keep me sane.

Safety, Leadership and Risk Management

Convener: Caroline Forest
Nil report

Speleo2017 ICS Organising Commission

Convener: Denis Marsh



17th
International
Congress of Speleology,
Sydney 2017

This update is presented to the Federation on behalf of the ICS Organising Commission. In the past year meetings of the Commission were convened in February, June and September, with several important milestones achieved, including establishment of the Congress website and Facebook site.

The date for the Congress has been adjusted to make more efficient use of the venue and save cost. The new dates for the ICS is 23rd – 29th July 2017 (previously 23rd – 30th July). Under the coordination of Janice March a sponsorship solicitation 'Pack' has been developed with significant financial support opportunities already identified, including a major deal signed with Business Events Sydney (BES). The Commission is also currently inviting additional supporting partners to come on board with the Congress, including Parks and Wildlife Services, Penrith City Council and SSS. Our current partners include NZSS, ACKMA, CDAA and BES.

A full program of pre and post conference field excursions are currently being finalised under the coordination of Cathie Plowman, with details of packages to be available soon.

Ann-Marie Meredith has taken on the promotion portfolio with the important job of marketing the Congress. A number of promotional resources have been designed, including a Bookmark, advertising flyer and a promotional poster. Also, an early PowerPoint is being revamped for presentation at upcoming international conferences. Ann-Marie is also keen to develop a promotional video if a volunteer can be found to assist.

The full range of accommodation options for all tastes and budgets has been identified in close proximity to the Congress venue.

An interesting program incorporating papers, poster sessions and workshops, coordinated jointly by Nic White and Jill Rowling, is taking shape. Cave diving will feature a special seminar and the many Commissions within the UIS will have seminars and meetings around their specific interests. Competitions for photographic, film and art are being planned, together with SpeleOlympics with categories for all ages and athletic ability.

The next major milestone and current focus of the Commission is gathering information for inclusion and production of the ICS Second Circular under the coordination of Sue White as Publications committee chair. This Circular must contain all details for participants to register for attendance at the Congress.

Financial planning is being guided by David Butler as the ICS treasurer, with policies determined for early registration discounts and refunds. David is working with the other Commission members to develop the ICS budget and determine the Congress registration charge. The \$35,000 seed funding advance, allocated to the Commission in January 2014, has been taken up with deposit payments on the venue together with other Commission expenses. The Commission currently has an outstanding liability owed to ASF's general funds of more than \$10,000 which needs to be settled. With no incoming revenue expected before early 2017 the Commission will need additional financial support for the year 2016 to cover further anticipated expenses such as advance booking deposits, meeting expenses, printing costs and insurance, etc.

The Commission's next ICS planning meeting has been scheduled for late February 2016.

The Commission has grown over the past year, however to avoid overloading the existing volunteer members with an unrealistic workload we are desperately seeking more help with the organisation of the Congress. Of urgent need are additional volunteers to coordinate tasks including a Photographic Competition, Speleo Olympics, Campground management, Accommodation options and a Social Program.

The ICS is a significant undertaking for ASF and needs the full support of the Executive and broader membership.

Recommendation to Council:

To ensure the Commission has surplus funds on hand to cover existing liabilities and carry it through 2016 it is recommended to Council that a further refundable seeding advance of \$35,000 be allocated to the Commission.

Special Interest Groups

ASF Cave Diving Group

No report received

Judbarra-Gregory Karst Research SIG of the ASF – 2014

Mark Sefton

The July expedition to the Judbarra-Gregory National Park in the Northern Territory, which involved 11 members of five ASF clubs, continued the work of the previous year. As well as eight kilometres of hitherto unexplored passages being surveyed, the expedition was marked by two major connections between cave systems being achieved. As a result, and as foreshadowed previously, the Judbarra-Gregory National Park now contains what are probably the three longest cave systems in Australia.

On the first day of this year's expedition, a link was found between Two Fishes and Claymore Caves on the west side of the East Baines River. This connection traversed below a valley and is the first such connection in the park that is not beneath the Supplejack karst. Claymore Cave was surveyed circa 1990 by a British group but this survey was incomplete. A resurvey of Claymore was therefore commenced and completion of this will contribute several kilometres further to the total length of the Prometheus System (comprising North and South Prometheus, Atlantis, Two

Fishes and Claymore caves plus several smaller caves).

Two smaller caves further west were mapped this year and connections were achieved between another two smaller caves (found in 2011) and Atlantis Cave which is part of the Prometheus System.

Several kilometres of newly discovered passages were mapped in various other parts of the Prometheus System.

Work was also continued in the area to the west of the Prometheus System. Further mapping was conducted in the BAA29 area that resulted in all the caves here being joined to form one single system of 14 km. Mapping of a complex and extensive upper level in this area was also completed. It is possible that this group of caves might ultimately be connected to the Prometheus System but this is unlikely to happen in the immediate future.

This year, a considerable effort was put into the caves north of Limestone Gorge and on the last day of the expedition, a connection was found between the Dingo Cave System and a group of interconnected caves immediately to the east. In addition, further mapping was conducted further east of here as well as in BAA5 and "Snake Cave" which was joined to BAA47, a small cave south of here.

In the Bullita Cave System, an additional several hundred metres of new passages were mapped in the BAA34 part of the system.

Following this year's expedition, the three longest cave systems in the Judbarra-Gregory National Park are presumably also the three longest in Australia. These are:

- The Bullita Cave system in the central karst block, currently 123km. This cave is among the top twenty longest in the world.
- The Prometheus System in the southern karst block, which includes North and South Prometheus, Claymore, Two Fishes, and Atlantis caves, currently 46.5 km.
- The Dingo System of the northern karst, currently 38.5 km.

The length of all three systems is expected to increase over the coming years - substantially in the case of the Prometheus system and possibly also in the Dingo System. Prospects for further discoveries in the Bullita System are more limited. The total length of surveyed cave passages in the park is now 282 km.

In addition to our work in these caves, an Aboriginal art site that was hitherto unknown to us was found west of the East Baines River.

At the Annual General Meeting, held at Bullita on the last day of the 2015 expedition, Mark Sefton (CEGSA), Megan Pryke (SUSS) and Bob Kershaw (ISS) were re-elected to the SIG Committee as Chairman, Secretary and Mapping Coordinator respectively. Phil Maynard (SUSS), Kevin Moore (SUSS) and Peter Freeman (VSA) were also re-elected as Committee members.

As always, we wish to express our thanks to the Park staff at Bullita for allowing us to work in the park and for all their support during our activities earlier this year.

Mark Sefton (Chairman)
November 2015

Report compiled from data supplied by Bob Kershaw

Committee Reports

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Committee

Peter Dykes has drafted 2 docs that will be circulated later:

- 1 statements of acknowledgement
- 2 ASF Fundamental principles on which ASF will engage Australia's first peoples

Conference Committees

Karstaway 2009

Chair: Margaret James

ASF Server and Karst Index Database

Mike Lake

Karst Index Database

Greg Middleton updated some Tasmanian cave data in 2015.

ASF Servers and Club Hosting

The clubs that have hosted sites on the ASF server are: BMSC, CWCG, ISS, OSS, SUSS and VSA. In addition we are hosting the state based New South Wales Speleo Council site and a site for "Save Cliefden Caves".

At a national level we host a site for the ASF Executive, Caves Australia Magazine and Helicite (Journal of Australasian Speleological Research).

The UIS Congress site speleo2017.com is also hosted on our servers.

This has a mailing list which persons can subscribe to.

We also provide a number of private, password protected, areas for some hosted clubs. They control who has access and the passwords. Private or public wikis are also available for clubs.

Other services that the ASF provide are the Karst Index Database, the Membership database, email aliases for the ASF Executive and [Speleo2017](http://speleo2017.com) Committee.

A service for SUSS to manage their cave survey data has now been operational for a year. The CAVE is accessible at <http://suss.caves.org.au/cave/>

This is a revision control system and provides archiving of survey data, version control, collaboration (so multiple persons can work on the survey data), distributed storage (so there are multiple copies just in case) and access control. Most importantly basic metadata like description, authors, license etc is also being stored for every file.

The above sites and services are hosted across three servers; one is a newer machine that hosts most of the clubs, an older machine hosts the major applications like KID and the membership database and the third is a test machine for rolling out updates and testing software.

Backups are done as snapshots and by nightly duplications across machines.

A configuration change management system is being rolled out and this will enable us to bring up a new bare server and have it setup and running most ASF sites and services within 30 minutes. This is part of an IT strategy to have a robust IT infrastructure and to be prepared. The ASF has IT requirements similar to that of a small sized business.

Summary of Hosted Sites:

<http://bmsc.caves.org.au>
<http://casm.caves.org.au>
<http://cwcg.caves.org.au>
<http://iss.caves.org.au>
<http://oss.caves.org.au>
<http://suss.caves.org.au>
<http://vsa.caves.org.au>
<http://nswsc.caves.org.au>
<http://savediefdencaves.caves.org.au>
<http://exec.caves.org.au/cavesaustralia>
<http://helictite.caves.org.au>
<http://kid.caves.org.au/kid>
<http://membership.caves.org.au>
<http://speleo2017.com>



Contact List of ASF Corporate Members 2014

ASF is incorporated in the ACT
PO Box 388 BROADWAY NSW 2007

Corporate Members

Australian Capital Territory
Canberra Speleological Society Inc.
PO Box 156
Curtin ACT 2605

New South Wales
Blue Mountains Speleological Club
PO Box 551
Hazelbrook, NSW, 2779.

Cavers and Adventurers of the Snowy Mountains
Contact- Email Alan Beck:al-shiva@hotmail.com

Central West Caving Group
605 Jaunter Rd
Jaunter NSW 2787

Highland Caving Group
PO Box 54
Georges Hall NSW 2194

Hills Speleology Club Ltd.
3 Heights Place
Hornsby Heights NSW 2077

Illawarra Speleological Society Inc.
PO Box 94
Unanderra NSW 2526

Kempsey Speleological Society
PO Box 31
Kempsey
NSW 2440

Queensland
Chillagoe Caving Club Inc.
PO Box 92
Cairns Qld 4870

South Australia
Cave Exploration Group South Australia Inc.
PO Box 144
Rundle Mall
SA 5000

National University Caving Club
c/o ANU Sport and Recreation Association
ANU Building 19,
North Road
Acton, ACT 0200

Metropolitan Speleological Society
PO Box 178
Thornleigh NSW 2120

Newcastle and Hunter Valley Speleological Society Inc.
PO Box 15
Broadmeadow NSW 2292

Orange Speleological Society
PO Box 752
Orange NSW 2800

Rover Speleological Society of NSW
c/o 22/102 Crimea Road
Marsfield NSW 2122

Sydney University Speleological Society
PO Box 3318
Redfern NSW 2016

University of Technology Sydney Speleological Society
c/o ActivateUTS Sports
PO Box 3210
Broadway NSW 2007

Flinders University Speleological Society
Alan Mitchell Sports Centre
Flinders One
Flinders University
GPO Box 2100 Adelaide SA 5001

Tasmania

Mole Creek Caving Club Inc
PO Box 209
Mole Creek TAS 7304

Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc.
PO Box 416
Sandy Bay TAS 7006

Northern Caverneers Inc.
PO Box 315
Launceston TAS 7250

Victoria

Victorian Speleological Association Inc.
GPO Box 5425CC
Melbourne Vic 3001

Western Australia

Cavers Leeuwin Inc
P.O. Box 1192
Margaret River WA 6285

Western Australian Speleological Group Inc.
PO Box 67
Nedlands WA 6909

Speleological Research Group of Western Australia
PO Box 1611
East Victoria Park WA 6981

Cave Exploration Group of Western Australia
PO Box 1821
Wangara DC WA 6947

Provisional Members

Victorian Limestone Caving Team
c/o 39 Esdale St
Blackburn VIC 3130

Associates

Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association
PO Box 36,
Carlton South, Vic 3053

Landforms and Rehabilitation Team
(NSW NP&WS, OEH)
Level 2, 203-209 Russell St,
Bathurst NSW 2795

NSW Cave Rescue Squad
PO Box 122,
Bankstown, NSW 2200

ASF Special Interest Groups

ASF Cave Diving Group

ASF Judbarra-Gregory Karst Research Group
Cl- Chairperson, Mark Sefton
Cl- PO Box 144,
Rundle Mall, SA 5000

Karst Conservancies

KarstWatch (Mole Creek)