

Caves Australia article

*Vale Lloyd Robinson
1927-2013*

After a battle with cancer, Lloyd passed away quietly on the morning of 20th November 2013. He recently visited WA with Dorothy to be a participant in the Australian Photographic convention in Bunbury and managed to catch up with a few mates in WA. He had returned to Wollongong for 3 weeks before passing.

ISS had the privilege of his company at its recently held 50th Anniversary celebrations where he gave a spiel about 50 years of caving with ISS of which he was a co-founder. The great talk was captured on video by members of the Wollongong Camera Club of which he was a long time member.

A bit of pre ISS history that Lloyd was involved with.

Speleology in Australia in the early 1950's had become quite popular with a number of clubs operating. The local group decided to form an unofficial club called "The Wollongong Speleological Society". They had no office bearers, fees or regular meetings. During 1955 / 1956 two members (one being Lloyd) purchased a Landrover and made an extensive inland trip through Queensland, Central Australia and South Australia. They spent considerable time at Camooweal Caves with the now defunct Mt Isa Speleological Society.

"By 1956, there were three groups operating in the Illawarra District and making fairly frequent visits to non-tourist caves. Late in 1956, the three groups held a combined meeting and joined forces in the one club called "The Wollongong Speleological and Expeditionary Society." Three office bearers were elected (one from each group), a constitution was drawn up, membership fees fixed, regular monthly meetings programmed and organised caving trips planned.

"Some of the more notable achievements of WS & ES included a cable ladder descent of the Big Hole, and many exploratory trips around Bendethera and Wyanbene and an expedition to the Nullarbor and Western Australia. The WA trip resulted in the exploration and development for tourism of the now well-known Augusta Jewel Cave.

"An application was made to become affiliated with the ASF but no member was in a position to attend the ASF Committee meeting to present a case and the Society had to rely on a proxy. The application failed: the ASF meeting objected to the "Expeditionary" in the name of the society.

"After the failure to gain affiliation with the ASF, the WS&ES started to peter out. Some of the active leaders, including the president left the district. This caused the remaining members to lose interest and trips and meetings became infrequent until towards the end of 1960, the closure clause in the constitution became effective and a final meeting was held to wind up the affairs of the club.

“On looking back, very little in the way of scientific or exploration was achieved locally. One such discovery at Bungonia by three members of WS&ES rates a mention: the Bottle Cave. This cave has an entrance that could easily be mistaken for a wombat burrow situated in a flat grassy plain with no doline. Six feet inside, there is a fifty-five foot pitch which on descending, one has the impression of descending a large bottle. Further in there is a twenty-five foot pitch with a good digging prospect. Unfortunately, the cave has been lost ever since. One major difference to today's club is that WS&ES was always in the limelight with a member working at a local newspaper, the club was never short of publicity.

“After the final meeting of WS&ES, the keener members of the defunct society made periodic trips to Bendethera; some became members of the Sydney Speleological Society and attended their meetings and trips. As time went on, these trips became more frequent until Jim Goold convened a meeting on the 13th of February 1963 to set the "Illawarra Speleological Society" underway.”

The basic idea of re-forming a caving club in Wollongong arose from an incident in Bendethera when Lloyd Robinson and Jim Goold attempted to drive a Landrover in from the east. The vehicle unfortunately took a shortcut down the mountain and came to rest on its side). The rescue exercise was carried out under difficult conditions, but with so much enthusiasm, it was decided that a caving club in Wollongong may be viable.

And that is the commencement of the last 50 years of ISS with Lloyd actively involved since 1963.

Lloyd's contribution to speleology in Australia and to the ASF is exceptional.

Lloyd was the ASF Safety Officer from 1966 to 1976, an ASF Vice President from mid 1977 to end 1978 and the ASF President for 7 years from January 1986 until the January committee meeting in 1993.

Lloyd received a Certificate of Merit in December 1982 for the exploration and documentation of the caves of Western Australian, for contributions to cave management and tourism, and for contributions to cave safety.

Lloyd received a Fellow of the Federation in 1995

“in recognition of outstanding service to the Federation and to Australian caving and speleology.

Lloyd has been actively involved with Federation over many years. He gave distinguished service as president of the Federation from 1986 to 1992, the longest continuous term of any previous incumbent. During this time he presided over a major restructuring to improve the executive and increase the responsiveness of the Federation.

Apart from his term as president, Lloyd has served on various ASF Commissions and Committees to which he contributed both hard work and wisdom. He continues to support the ongoing work of the Federation”

He was the Convenor of the Awards Commission until late 2012 and always attended the biennial conferences and ASF Council meetings.

Lloyd and Dorothy were made Life members of ISS in the mid 1990's.

I had the privilege of caving with him, as did many other Australian cavers, and learning from him for many years but especially so for 2 weeks during his last expedition to Bullita in July 2012. Lloyd not knowing that it would be his last time caving enjoyed himself immensely at 85 years young. His first time caving was around 1939 when he was 12 years old at Bungonia!

More of Lloyd's exciting Life of exploration, not just caving, can be read in the article by Peter Ackroyd and himself and is found on the bottom of the <http://www.illawarra-speleological-society.org/projects2> page as a pdf document.

*May you have many wondrous adventures wherever you are Lloyd, as we celebrate a great Australian explorer's life.
You have created a void in Australian speleology and you will be sadly missed!*

*on behalf of members of ISS speleos Australia wide
Bob Kershaw*

References

*Ackroyd, P. and Robinson L., This is your life-Lloyd Robinson"
<http://www.illawarra-speleological-society.org/projects2> and
VSA's NARGUN: Vol. 22 no.10*

ISS history- <http://www.illawarra-speleological-society.org/isshistory>

ASF Honour Roll of Award recipients