



RGSQ Bulletin

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From the President

My first "From the President" was something of a reminiscence about my association with the RGSQ. This leads me to talk about my ongoing interest in Antarctica and connections that our Society has with Antarctica.

Our original Society, Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, Queensland Branch (RGSA Qld. Branch) was active in promoting Antarctic Exploration, especially in the 1890s and then on into 1930s. In recent years Antarctic themes have been presented in the Lecture Program by Antarctic Explorers such as Dr Phillip Law and our Member, Syd Kirkby. Current Members of the Society have also served in the Antarctic with Australian National Antarctic Expeditions (ANARE) – Kevin White, as a Scientist wintered at Casey Station, and my job was as Surveyor. Neville Collins, Diesel Mechanic, was a Member of the Society and was involved in wintering four times from the earliest days of ANARE work. In 1997 the Society made the Auditorium of the Brooke Street premises available for the "Our Frozen Frontier" display celebrating the Jubilee of the establishment of ANARE in 1947. That is just a brief summary.

In June of this year, Kathryn, my wife, and I travelled to Hobart for an Antarctic Midwinter Dinner, a tradition of Antarctic Explorers. It is now fifty years since I undertook a tour of duty in the Antarctic, and was taken up with what were traditional exploratory activities as 'Surveyor Mawson 1962'. Our Party was the eighth ANARE to occupy Mawson Station. The fifty-eighth Party is now incumbent.

Hobart was chosen by our group of expeditioners because the accent in Hobart in 2012 is "One Hundred Years since Sir Douglas Mawson" and his Australian Antarctic Expedition at Commonwealth Bay. Hobart and Australia have celebrated the work of Mawson and his men with a series of features through the year.

Mawson was the first Australian Station on the continent since Sir Douglas Mawson's Commonwealth Bay establishment 1912/1913. So fifty years was also a nostalgic event for our 1962 Party. Out of twenty-four expeditioners in 1962, eight were able to attend our Reunion. Nine have died and others were not able to travel. With six dedicated Antarctic wives to complete the gathering we were a significant group and had a wonderful time. There were a number of activities organised by the Antarctic Division, the local ANARE Club and several by our local 1962 Expedition Member.

The present expedition ship, *Aurora Australis*, was in port and a very visible reminder of the reason we were there. Our party had toured the *Aurora* on a previous occasion and this time did not include the

organised tour of the impressive facilities available for exploration and science.

Aurora Australis is something like four times the size of the expedition ship in 1962. We had the interest and honour of being on the maiden voyage of the *Nella Dan* for our travel south. Sadly, we were to hear of the demise of *Nella Dan* in December 1987. It lies on the ocean floor at Macquarie Island, after being blown onto rocks at Macquarie Island and subsequently scuttled nearby.

The Antarctic Division, which is the Lead Organisation for Australian Research Program, organized a tour, for ANARE people visiting Hobart, of their headquarters at Kingston. Here we saw Scientific Laboratories and store rooms not normally open to the public. Old Snowtracs, and Caterpillar D4 Tractors, now replaced by modern vehicles, were just one highlight. We completed our tour in a conference room with a live video discussion with the present expeditioners at Casey Station and then with the Station Leader at

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Mawson. Such communication was not possible in 1962. Telegrams, frequently involving morse code due to atmospheric disturbances, were the order of the day then.

The week long visit brought back many memories of our time spent together fifty years ago. We relived the traverses we did to previously unvisited territory. Church Mountain and the Amery Ice Shelf Traverses were the principal exploratory achievements. We were the first party to establish a route and take vehicles on to the Ice Shelf, three hundred miles out from Mawson. For the Church Mountain trip we were planning to take vehicles; but a direction from Head Office in Melbourne told us that vehicles may be too dangerous; so we travelled with three men and two dog teams. For a young Surveyor leading these Traverses, this was marvellous experience, going places that had never been visited before, defining and putting names on the map.

The Antarctic Research Program has moved on from what I have described as traditional exploratory activities. The accent now is to enable scientific study and this is being achieved in many important spheres of geography. Helicopters and satellite navigation have changed the methods of field work and modern communication has extended scientific endeavour.

The outstanding result of seeing and hearing of the modern work being achieved is an overall sense of satisfaction with having been involved. The huge change and advance in the performance of the expeditions of today was highlighted. Yes, there is still exploration and there is danger in field work and difficulty in maintaining life and work on the comfortable stations now established. The expeditioners are still dedicated people achieving important work.

I came away from the visit impressed and satisfied with the ongoing research being carried out by Australia, the manner in which it is promulgated throughout the world and the international cooperation which has built in the Antarctic.

David Carstens

Lecture: Koala Habitat Atlas

The lecture on 6 November, will be delivered by Deborah Tabart, on the topic *The Koala Habitat Atlas: How Good Mapping can Save Koalas*.

The Koala Habitat Atlas is the spearhead that encapsulates the Australian Koala Foundation's (AKF) prime objective – conservation of koalas in the wild – using GIS technology to identify, map and rank koala habitat and to give land-use planners this vital information in a practical format.

The Atlas uses a combination of sound science and sophisticated Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to identify the tree species and the areas of habitat that koalas need to survive. The bottom line with conserving any species in the wild is the protection of its food and shelter resources, yet to translate such a basic premise into reality is always a battle.

The Koala Habitat Atlas is central to the AKF's multi-pronged strategy to effect the conservation of wild koalas. It provides the information and the means to argue and sometimes fight more effectively for conservation. The Atlas also complements the AKF's other activities of pure research, education, information dissemination and the establishment of koala conservation zones.

The Atlas has been designed to illustrate the results of enormous amounts of data collected from tens of thousands of trees. It has made the process of mapping such huge areas far simpler and quicker than by using traditional survey methods because of the GIS's ability to predict and model data.

Deborah Tabart has been leading the Australian Koala Foundation since 1988 and is recognised around the world as an advocate for koalas or simply as 'the Koala Woman'. Her passion is palpable and via the koala she casts her imagination and creative vision towards promoting sustainable land-use and the regeneration and restoration of environments around the world.

Under Deborah Tabart's direction, the Australian Koala Foundation has

grown into an internationally recognised scientific organisation which has won a Computerworld Smithsonian Medal for excellence in mapping koala habitat, brought 'saving koalas' to the world's consciousness, and funded over 8 million dollars worth of pure research and conservation biology projects.

Deborah's vision for the koala is that Australians will make positive and collective contributions to koala conservation by learning to live in harmony with koalas via incentives, encouragement and information. The AKF works to provide maps and management tools to help people look after the koalas in their back yards and help governments and planners create forward thinking strategies to protect koala habitats.

In 2008, Deborah received one of Australia's highest accolades, an Order of Australia Medal.

☆☆ Retirement Lunch ☆☆

We are organising a lunch to celebrate the outstanding and long-term contributions of Keith Smith and Paul Feeney to the work of the Society. Keith was Secretary and Business Manager of the Society for 26 years, and Paul served on Council for 25 years, including two stints as President, and a long period as Chair of the Scientific Studies Committee.

When: 12.00 noon Tues 20 Nov
Where: Broncos Leagues Club,
98 Fulcher Rd, Red Hill
What: buffet lunch with over 50 hot and cold dishes, including dessert
Cost: \$24.50 (drinks extra)
Book: with the office by Mon 12 Nov, including payment

All members and friends are invited to share this celebration.

Office Hours

Kath Berg (the Society's Administrator) will be on holidays till 18 November. During this period, the office should be open every day, but is likely to open later and close earlier than our usual operating hours. Please ring and check that someone will be here before coming to visit.

Society Staff Restructure

With the imminent resignation of Keith Smith from the position of Business Manager, Council is taking the opportunity to restructure the Society's staffing. Council is planning to change to two full-time staff, at least for the period leading up to Kath Berg's retirement from full-time work. If the person appointed proves suitable, s/he may then move into the Administrator's role, hence the higher-level criteria in the job advertisement below.



Position Vacant: Geography Coordinator

We are seeking a new staff member to make a significant contribution to the Society's promotion of geography in schools and the wider community, as well as providing an administration resource to the Society.

Criteria

The successful applicant will have:

- a passionate commitment to promoting geography
- a degree in geography
- experience teaching geography in secondary and/or primary schools
- high-level organisational ability
- advanced communication skills, including writing and editing
- experience using a range of computer applications (e.g. word processing, databases, graphics, MYOB accounting, web authoring)
- demonstrated initiative
- time management skills
- ability to work independently or in a small team

Key responsibilities

Education

- write questions for the Australian Geography Competition
- assist with the logistical organisation of the Competition and its related events
- prepare submissions on school geography curricula
- draft letters relating to advocacy for geography

Publications

- produce a monthly newsletter
- keep the Society's website and facebook page up to date
- edit the Scientific Studies report, including liaison with researchers and referees

- produce/edit other publications as needed, e.g. promotional posters
- Administrative
- maintain membership and other databases
- perform basic book-keeping tasks using MYOB
- organise lectures and occasional other events
- undertake basic library tasks
- deal with routine correspondence and other office tasks

An appropriate salary and starting date will be negotiated. Some work outside normal office hours is required. The successful applicant will report to the Society's Administrator. Email any enquiries to secretary@rgsq.org.au.

Applications, addressing the above criteria and including a CV and the details of two referees, should be emailed to secretary@rgsq.org.au by **9 November**.

Lambert Centre Trek

Aug/Sept 2013

The August 2012 *Bulletin* and flyer gave some details of the proposed Lambert Centre, NT, Trek in August/September 2013 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the RGSQ trek there in 1988 which marked the centre point.

Coach Section

Stonestreet Coaches of Toowoomba will provide their well-appointed, spacious outback touring coach for a 16 day, 15 night trek from Brisbane to the Lambert Centre and return. The coach will depart Brisbane on Saturday 7 September 2013 and return on Sunday 22 September 2013. Overnight stops are planned for Mitchell, Longreach, Boulia, Harts Range, Alice Springs (2 nights), Yulara (2 nights), Lambert Centre, Coober Pedy, Marree, Birdsville (2 nights), Windorah, and Mitchell – an exciting round-trip itinerary!

7 nights will be in twin-share tents and 8 nights in shared cabins or bunkhouses. Tent camping will feature stretcher beds; no more inflating mattresses! Almost all meals – breakfast, lunch and dinner – morning teas and Happy Hour nibbles will be included in the cost of the coach trek.

In Alice Springs and at the Lambert Centre, we will meet up with the 4WD trekkers.

The **total cost for this coach trek is \$2995 per person**. A deposit of \$300 is required with your booking; the booking deadline is 28 February 2013. The balance of \$2695 is to be paid before 31 May 2013. The deposit is non-refundable, unless the trek is cancelled.

Numbers are limited on the coach and it will be a case of preference given to those who book early. Please contact me to record your interest in the coach trek, and to answer any of your queries.

Brian McGrath 3378 5960
brian.mcgrath@bigpond.com

4WD Section

The 4WD Group will assemble in **Broken Hill** on **28 August 2013**, and disperse from **Alice Springs** about **18 September**. A Simpson Desert Group will break away after 16 Sept. Travel will mostly be on established roads, although some parts will be very rough, such as sections of the West Macdonnell Ranges and the Chambers Pillar Leg.

Camps will be mainly at caravan parks, some with cabin options, but at least **3 bush camps** (no facilities) are planned. Members will appreciate that this Trek is long and arduous, total time away from home could be **4 to 5 weeks**.

A **registration fee of \$250 per vehicle** has been set. A \$100 deposit is to be paid with your booking. The booking deadline is 28 February 2013. The balance of \$150 is to be paid before 31 May 2013. The deposit is non-refundable, unless the trek is cancelled.

Full details (itinerary, accommodation options, etc) will be available in March 2013.

Please contact me if you need an early copy of the itinerary, and/or to record your interest in both the 4WD Trek and the Simpson Desert Crossing.

Brian Mealey 3379 2783
bsmealey@bigpond.net.au

Council/Committee Roles

Due to ill health in the family, John Quantrill has resigned from his position as Councillor. Council has the power to nominate a member to fill this vacancy.

Much of the Society's work is carried out through its committees. No-one has yet volunteered to chair the Treks and Activities Committee or the Education Committee for 2012/13.

Please give serious consideration as to whether you would be willing to serve the Society in any of these roles. If so, ring or email the office, or talk to a Councillor at a meeting.

Lion Encounter

On the final morning of the Society's Cape Town to Victoria Falls Trek, some of our members took part in a 'lion encounter', an active conservation program that is passionate about ensuring a secure future for the African Lion. It is estimated that in the past 30 years the African Lion has declined by 80% to 90%. Lion Encounter operates the African Lion Rehabilitation and Release into the Wild Program. If you are at all interested in African conservation log on to www.lionencounter.com.

I had to ask myself did I really want to take part in this exercise! This was a full-on walk with lions in the African

bush. The first cubs we encountered were 6 months old and by the look of their paws, claws, and teeth, were quite capable of inflicting quite a bit more than just superficial damage. Even at 6 months old they were quite large. The second pair were a full 13 months old and could definitely have proved quite lethal. It was rather reassuring to glance further back into the bush and see one of the keepers had some protective firepower on hand, or maybe that was just wishful thinking on my part as he would have to have been an incredible shot to miss me and dispatch the lion if things turned nasty. There had been "accidents in the past. We did, however, all survive – wow, what an experience!"
Leo Scanlan

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November 2012

Day Trip, Thurs 1 Nov

What: Cruise on the Brisbane River

Lecture Meeting, Tues 6 Nov 7.30pm

Speaker: Ms Deborah Tabart

Subject: The Koala Habitat Atlas: How Good Mapping can Save Koalas

Social, Tues 20 Nov 12.00 noon

What: Retirement Lunch for Keith Smith and Paul Feeney

Where: Broncos Leagues Club

Members' Meeting, Tues 4 Dec 7.30pm

What: Christmas Party

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