

SOME RECOLLECTIONS of ELERY

Andy Spate

I first met Elery in my mid-teens (maybe I had a crush on him like another teen – but that one a lady!) Elery had been recruited by Joe Jennings to attempt a traverse in Punchbowl Cave from the Entrance Chamber to the Loxin Chamber. Sensibly Elery retreated from the traverse ...

But then Joe suggested that I take Elery several hundred metres into Dogleg Cave to look at the stygiobionts recently discovered by Edgar Reik. Not the first to be discovered in Australia but, like many others, still not described in the scientific literature. If many taxonomists had got off their backsides there would be many more animals with the specific name *hamilton-smithii* or, indeed, *eleryi*.

Several years later I went to Melbourne University and got distracted by the Melbourne University Mountaineering Society. Failed uni but passed mountaineering! But then I spent some years shuffling backwards and forwards between eastern Victoria and Naracoorte banding bent-wing bats with Elery.

I moved back to Canberra and stopped doing things with Elery although we kept in close contact. In 1986 I got myself involved in organising the 6th Australasian Cave Tourism and Management Conference which up to then had been largely organised by the Australian Speleological Federation. Elery and I realised that the Federation did not, and could not, adequately represent the views of cave and karst managers and others interested in this field. Thus he and I created the Australasian Cave Management Association (ACMA) at Yarrangobilly in May 1987, which became ACKMA two years later when “*and Karst*” was added to the organisation’s name.

ACKMA has been a remarkably successful organisation with membership from all around the world. Much of this membership has been a result of the charisma and encouragement from Elery Hamilton-Smith. His contribution to the Australian Speleological Federation, the Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association and the Australasian Bat Society cannot be over-estimated!

One error that I have unthinkingly promulgated recently that needs to be corrected. Elery was not the founder of what has now become the IUCN/WCPA Caves and Karst Specialist Group – the energy behind this group was the inimitable Dr John Watson.

I guess I should add my bit to all the wonderful testimonials that are flowing in from around the world.

I have had a series of fabulous mentors through my career. The most obvious are my geographer father, Oskar Spate, Joe Jennings and, of most relevance here, Elery Hamilton-Smith. Others in CSIRO and NSW NPWS have been wonderful.

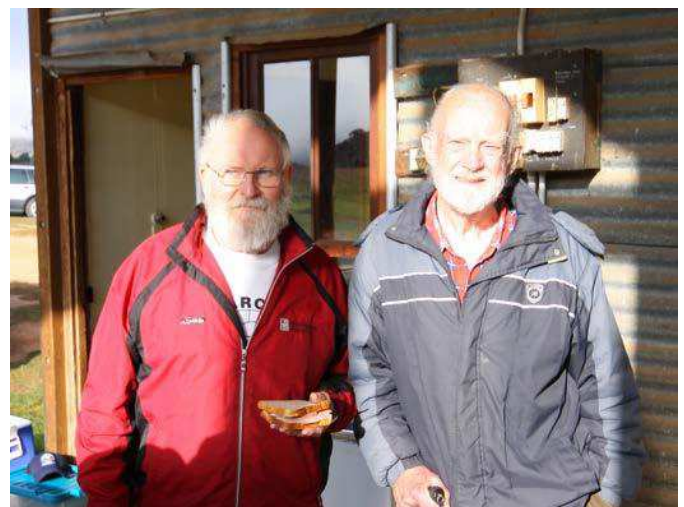
I have known, caved with, been bitten by bats with, researched with, reported with and written with this most remarkable man, Elery, for over 50 years. A polymath, a gentleman and such a sincere friend and colleague.

In closing, I would like to slightly paraphrase a paragraph from the Preface to John Tyndal’s delightful *Hours of Exercise in the Alps* (Longmans, Green, and Co., London and Bombay, 1871, p viii).

To the name of a friend who taught me in my boyhood how to handle a theodolite and lay a chain, and who afterwards turned his knowledge to account on the caves of the world... Of the firmness of a friendship, uninterrupted for an hour, and only strengthened by the weathering of 50 years of companionship, both physically and in spirit, he would need no assurance. Still, for the pleasure it gives myself, I connect this statement with the name of Elery Hamilton-Smith.

Angela - Kirsty and I are thinking of you and your whole wonderful extended “village”.

Andy Spate and Kirsty Dixon (Taroona, Tasmania)



*Andy and Elery at Wee Jasper 2012. The AGM weekend celebrated 50 years since Elery and Andy met.
Photo: Steve Bourne*