

REFLECTIONS ON ELERY HAMILTON-SMITH, AM

- Lloyd Robinson & John Dunkley

Elery Hamilton-Smith is was awarded *Membership of The Order of Australia* (AM) in the Australia Day Honours List on 26 January 2001 “for service to conservation and the environment, particularly in the areas of national parks, wilderness, cave and karst management, to the development of leisure and recreation activities, and to the community as a contributor to social policy development and through programs dealing with youth issues.” He is the fourth caver has become a Member of the Order of Australia,

While cave-related activity is only one of Elery’s wide ranging interests, nevertheless it has played an important role in his life. Elery is one of the founders of Australian Speleological Federation (ASF), Cave Exploration Group of South Australia (CEGSA), Victorian Speleological Association (VSA), and ACKMA. He played a major role in the formative years of the ASF as founding Secretary, guiding it through periods of difficulty. While many ASF presidents have lined up for successive presidential terms, Elery is the only one to return as president after a break, in all, for three separate terms over a span of fifteen years between 1960 and 1974.

Elery was among the first to highlight conservation as a fundamental objective of all speleologists, has been tireless in promoting this ethic, and is the person largely responsible for the outstanding, world-class record in this field achieved by Australian speleologists. For many years he chaired the ASF Commission on Cave Tourism and Management.

His professional career is equally diverse, ranging across social work, social planning consulting and academia. Elerv tells us he’s recently branched out into gerontology, hopefully not simply with eye to the future! He is one of that very rare breed who not only become an academic without a formal university degree, but rose to the rank of Professor.

Elery is a Member of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas and Chair of its Working Group on Cave and Karst Protection. He has been involved in preparation of management planning projects in many of our cave and karst areas including Mt Etna, Jenolan, Naracoorte, Tantanoola, Nullarbor Plain,

Yallingup, Cutta Cutta and Cape Range, along with several overseas.

In an earlier life Elerv edited this newsletter for ASF and over the years his name has appeared on numerous articles, as recently as the last issue. Elsewhere, of course, he has written hundreds of articles and books on a wide range of topics and diverse disciplines. Retirement has not slowed him, indeed our impression is that has it enabled him to become even more active and visible!

The ASF recognised Elery’s services by electing him is its first Fellow in 1974, followed by an Edie Smith Award in 1976, making him the only person to be honoured with both of ASF’s highest honours. Elery is still very active in cave related activities, and is looked on as today’s father-figure of Australian caving.

Additional Comments by Kent Henderson:

In terms of ACKMA, Elery was a prime mover in its creation in 1987 (along with Ernst Holland, Andy Spate and a few others). He became its first Executive Officer, and served as such until 1995, whereupon (upon ACKMA’s incorporation) he became its Public Officer –in which position he still serves. He was instrumental in the creation and early development of the ACKMA Newsletter (later the ACKMA Journal) and remains a regular contributor to this day. While he is the father-figure of Australian caving, he undoubtedly the *Father of ACKMA*.

Elery recently went to Government House, Melbourne, to receive his AM from the State Governor, His Excellency Hon. John Landy. As (bad) luck would have, the Government House investiture was called for Friday 4 May – the Friday of the Wombeyan Conference!! Thus, poor Elery had to fly back to Melbourne from Canberra on the Thursday Night (missing the Wee Jasper day and the Conference Dinner), and then back to Canberra (and thence to Wombeyan) on the Saturday for the coming weeks CSU Karst Management Course student workshops. Sigh.... The adjacent photo of Elery and his “gong” was taken at his Melbourne home after his return.