

TONY CULBERG OAM



In the 2013 Queen's Birthday Honours list, announced on Monday 10 June, Tony Culberg was awarded an Order of Australia Medal. The citation is "for service to the community of Tasmania".

Tony adds that his service has also been to the world of caving in Australia.

An early event was the cave-in at Church Creek Caves, in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney, in August 1969. This area, close to the better known Colong Caves, was subject to a mining lease, to quarry limestone to make cement, in a factory at Maldon, on the then outskirts of Sydney. Church Creek is a tributary of the Kowmung River, at that time the only unpolluted river flowing into Warragamba Dam, the main water supply for Sydney.

The cave-in was a variation on a sit-in, a popular form of protest in the late sixties. Tony led a group which occupied the site for 9 days. The story made the TV news on all 4 Sydney stations. At the end of this trip he met Ian Wood, a member of UNSWSS and keen on ASF.

At Ian's invitation, Tony attended the ASF Conference in Tasmania at the end of 1970. This conference, incidentally, saw the first discussion of single rope techniques in Australia. All vertical caving up till then had been done with ladders and safety ropes – Mini Martin, Midnight Hole, Khazad Dum, Argyle Hole and Keller's Cellar on Mt Anne.

In the early seventies, Tony was involved in the Bungonia Caves campaign. Church Creek was saved, but at the expense of Bungonia, where the existing quarry was to be enlarged.

At the end of 1973 Tony became Secretary of ASF and moved to Tasmania in March 1974 for the caving. He continued as ASF Secretary for 6 years and also took on the role of managing ASF Newsletter, including addressing and posting and selling advertising. In this time ASF ran the Second Conference on Cave and Karst

Management in Tasmania. Tony was part of the organising committee, together with Roy and Andrew Skinner and Greg Middleton.

Tony also had a role in the Tasmanian Education Department, which was developing guidelines for Outdoor Education, including bushwalking, canoeing, rock-climbing and caving. The recommendations of the caving sub-committee were gazetted by the Education Department. Tony led school based caving trips for several years.

Tony represented TCC at Tas Police Search & Rescue liaison meetings and led some S & R Training exercises in the Ida Bay area with Tas Police in the eighties.

In 1990 Tony started Exit Cave Adventure Tours, to show the ordinary public the beauty of Tasmanian Caves. Arising from this he also became Treasurer of the Tasmanian Licensed Guiding Operators Association, an industry pressure group. This sought to improve standards for the public which participated in what is now called extreme sports – rafting the Franklin River, Cradle Reserve walks, caving etc.

Tony's present involvement in caving is at the administrative level, rather than active. He is a Director of the ASF Gift Fund, was treasurer for the 14th International Symposium on Vulcano Speleology, held at Undara in 2010, convener of the 19th Conference on Cave and Karst Management, held at Ulverstone in 2011. He is currently helping STC revise its constitution as well as keeping an eye on the statutory obligations of ACKMA.



L-R Cathie Plowman, Arrigo Cigna, Tony Culberg, His Excellency, The Governor of Tasmania at the opening of the 2011 ACKMA Conference in Ulverstone.

Photos: Ross Anderson