

ED: How far away from the end of that traverse was the zipline?

LUKE: We circled around the second room and got to the zipline. It was probably, I don't know, 50 metres or so of traversing, but there was also probably 50 metres of walking on rocks as well.

ED: Did you have to do any crawling or squeezing?

LUKE: There was no crawling, but you couldn't walk at full height in that part of the walk through to the second area.

ED: How long was the zipline across the cave and how far was the drop below it?

LUKE: The zipline was probably, in length of the rope, 10 metres maybe, maybe a bit more, and in height, across the cables, probably 10 metres, maybe a bit less.

ED: And what did you do after you got off at the far end of the zipline?

LUKE: At the end of the zipline, there was a walking down some rocks, may be a little bit of climbing. Just down rocks, not anything really, and then we joined in with the guided tour at the very end.

ED: And did that mean you made your way back up to the surface using the lift?

LUKE: Yeah, we made our way back up just using the lift.



Two small red figures in centre of traverse. Photo: Tim Moore

Remembering Alan Costigan – Buchan Caves Reserve

Dale Calnin

Alan Costigan sadly passed away in October 2019. He was one of the early Life Members of ACKMA and was a much loved and respected Cave Manager at Buchan Caves Reserve between 1973 to 1987.

Alan was my first Caves Supervisor when I first started work at the Buchan in 1974 as 15-year-old casual guide and then later when I became a full-time cave guide in 1978.

It was Alan or "Cossie" as he was affectionately called who first introduced me to the intriguing world of Cave and Karst Management and the importance behind it.

Alan was a funny man and there was never a dull moment.

He was an integral member of the local Buchan community and a very passionate supporter of the Buchan football team "The Cavemen". He was never short in letting the opposition know what he thought of them and umpires certainly copped their share of his advice.

He was well known for his wicked sense of humour but behind all the fun and laughter was a very clever mind and a pioneer in many environmental management initiatives.

Alan enthusiasm for caves was contagious that flowed through to his staff and the many visitors to Buchan Caves Reserve.

During Alan's time as manager, he forged a strong relationship between Victorian Caving Clubs, a growing interest in wild caving and the idea of opening less explored caves within the Buchan district.

He was instrumental in the offer of Adventure Cave Tours for visitors through the Murrindal, Lilly Pilly and Federal Caves.

He played a key role in the introduction the cave watering filtering system into the Buchan show caves system to enable cave restoration and treatment of decaying calcite surfaces.

Cave visitation was over 80,000 visitors per annum and growing and the Buchan Caves campground often packed with visitors particularly during the peak holiday periods.

In the early 1980's he was instrumental in overseeing one of the first Waste Water Sewerage Treatment Plants being used by Parks Victoria. He fondly referred to it as the "Shit Machine" and would often humour his family when he regularly went to check the "bugs". Again, in an era when sustainability was not a key focus, he was ahead of the game for environmental preservation.

Many of Alan's initiatives can still be recognised today at Buchan which is a living testimony to him and his extraordinary vision in environmental protection.

May he long be remembered.

Andy Spate adds his memories of Alan:

I have three very fond memories of Alan Costigan. I am not sure which memory comes first. He had a remarkable sense of humour – perhaps a little warped at times. The first story relates to Buchan – when you drove into the Buchan Caves at that time you encountered a sign saying “Motorists – please read the next sign”. The next sign directed to you to the ticket office in the manager’s house above the road. This may be apocryphal, but it is said that Alan put up a second sign that said “Motorists – please ignore the previous sign” – what evolved is open to conjecture.

My other main interaction with Alan was at the 1981 Cave Tourism Conference in Western Australia. I was met off the plane by Joy ‘My Smith’ Smith from the Bussellton Tourism Association – and introduced to Alan – who denied ever knowing me in spite of many meetings over the years. Minutes later the manager from Cutta Cutta arrived – who denied knowing either of us. Much laughter ensued over the next few days.

The third interaction was camping beside Cossie’s ‘shit machine’ – no odours or other issues – but other campers kept on asking what the green ‘shit machine’ was and why did we camp near this unsightly green brick – it was the quietest part of the campground but most didn’t understand why but avoided that site for some unexplained reason. Good for us then ...

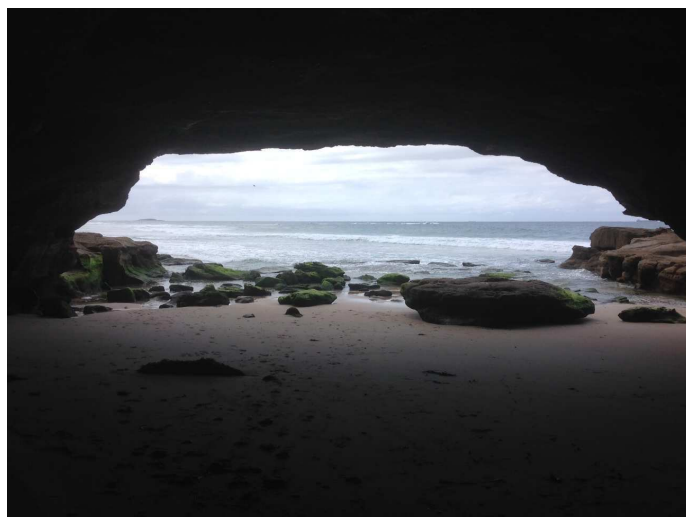
Caves Beach (south of Newcastle)

Kent Henderson (story and photo)

Recently I was in the Newcastle region of New South Wales - for only the second time in my life. Driving up the Pacific Highway, I noted a sign to 'Caves Beach'. Intrigued by the name, I diverted.

Caves Beach is a locality on the Swansea peninsula south of Lake Macquarie. It is named for the large number of sea caves on its nearby coastline, adjacent to a popular surf beach. There is a lookout at the top of the cliff face, offering excellent views over the caves below. A walking track brings you down to the beach to left of the field of sea caves which, not surprisingly, are best accessed at low tide.

My luck was in - low tide greeted me. There are a substantial - well over a dozen - sea caves in the cliffs, some of quite reasonable size. I spent a pleasant hour rambling between them. And I was not alone; maybe a dozen other people were 'wandering around' (on a Monday morning - hardly a peak tourism time!). Clearly, these sea caves are very well-known locally. The geology is fairly straightforward. The cliffs are conglomerate, dumped by fast-flowing rivers about 250 million years ago during the Permian period. The caves probably began forming about 6,500 years ago, after the last glacial period when the rising sea stabilised at its present level.



View out from the largest sea cave

Management of the area, if you can call it that, is interesting. Happily, many sea caves at various Australian locations are largely protected by their relative inaccessibility. Not so here! Of course, the name itself is something of a magnet. Given that people will go regardless, the local council response has been to make it as safe as possible, with an excellent lookout at the top of the cliff and proper tracking down to sea level. Other than that, appropriate interpretative signage at the lookout would be useful, but was sadly absent. That said, if you too are passing at some stage, a stop at Caves Beach will not disappoint!