

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

Elery Hamilton-Smith is just back from a visit to the **USA National Karst & Cave Management Symposium** in Washington State, as his article herein testifies. He has secured the attendance of Tom Aley, possibly America's foremost cave and karst expert, at our 1999 Naracoorte Conference. Tom will deliver a keynote address on karst & groundwater. Great news!!

While Elery was away, I too had a (three week) September adventure in other climates. I visited four caves in Ireland, two in England, and two in Oregon, U. S. A., which have generated four reports/papers - two of which are inflicted upon you herein, while the remaining two will await your pleasure (?) in the next (March 1998) edition.

A bit of management-change news. Alan Oldroyd, the Ranger-in-Charge at Buchan Caves since early 1995, left in mid October to take up a Parks appointment in The Northern Territory. We wish Alan well in his new position. Of course, Dale Calnin remains as Caves Manager at Buchan.

Speaking of Buchan, the caves have had some scrutiny recently. Its management authority, *Parks Victoria*, has convened a series of "stakeholder workshops" to look at ways of increasing the business efficiency of the Buchan Caves Reserve, with the aim of developing a Business Plan/Marketing Plan *to improve visitor services, increase income and to decrease recurrent expenditure*. Two meetings have been held thus far, with an "Options Paper" to be discussed at a subsequent meeting. We will watch developments with interest. Cynics may think the exercise is a strategy *to fatten the lamb for the market*. Time will tell.

The recent **International Union of Speleology (UIS) Congress** in Switzerland was evidently a great success. As I mentioned in a *Stop Press* in the last Journal, Australia lost the vote to hold the next (2001) Congress to Brazil by two votes. Mind you, there are more than a few Australians quite happy with the prospect of visiting Brazil in four years time! A large number of Australians attended in Switzerland, and the good news is that four of our number gained prominent positions in the UIS organization. Dr. Julia James, who was elected as UIS President, is the first woman (and first Australian!) to hold to the top position in world speleology. Ernst Holland, ACKMA's Foundation President, was elected Chairman of the UIS Commission on Show Caves of the World. Grace Matts was appointed as Vice-President of the Commission on Cave Rescue, and Peter Mathews retained his position as Chairman of the Informatics Commission. Warmest congratulations to them all.

I wonder how many ACKMA members (outside Jenolan) are aware of **The Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society Inc.**? This worthy organization has recently celebrated its

Silver Jubilee. It is fully supported by the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust, and its membership includes many cave guides but it also has a substantial membership amongst the general public. It meets regularly, and runs a large range of Jenolan-based activities, including looking after the *Jenolan Caves Museum*. Membership is a paltry \$10 per year, and the JCH&PS do put out quite a good Newsletter, entitled "Binoomea", on a periodic basis. If any ACKMA member is interested in parting with \$10, anyone at the Jenolan Caves Guides Office will assist you.

Hopefully, all those planning to attend the **Cave Guides Gabfest** at Margaret River, Western Australia (15 to 20 March 1998) will have advised Robyn McBeath and Peter Bell by now. For those who missed it, full details were published in the last two Journal editions. Registrations have reportedly flowed in freely, with attendees coming from as far away as Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales. An interesting edition to the program will be a workshop on the Clipsal CBUS lighting system. For those few (?) yet to register, the **Gabfest Home Pages** (with full program details and on-line registration) can be found at: <http://www.netserv.net.au/cwork/gabfest/index.html>

Also happening early next year is the **4th Australian Karst Studies Seminar**, at Mole Creek, Tasmania (10 to 13 February 1998). All the details concerning this happening are published herein. Unfortunately, the dates of the two events are again quite close together as happened two years ago. While the clientele of both is essentially different, there some who would otherwise go to both, which the closeness of dates will probably mitigate against. Hopefully, when these events reoccur in 2000 their dates can be separated somewhat.

Recently, Naracoorte Caves Chief Guru, Brian Clark, spent a day or two assessing the Augusta/Margaret River Caves in general, and *Caveworks* in particular. He was reportedly "mildly impressed" with the latter. Brian's currently-under-construction Interpretation Centre at Naracoorte, however, will be somewhat different, by all reports, and we await its completion with great anticipation. Evidently, Brian also called in at Ngilgi Cave at Yallingup, but missed its manager, Liam Kinsella. I hear a rumour that Brian's thoughts on the cave's current state may subject him to similar *fate* to myself following my published comments a few Journal editions ago.... Ah well, keeps the facial reconstruction surgeons employed, I suppose!

While on Augusta/Margaret River, Robyn McBeath reports that the 1st Chamber of Mammoth Cave now has all its new walkways installed, with universal access provided as a result. 12v lighting now extends right through the cave, with only a spur area to be completed. Arrangements for the high-tech self-guiding system planned for Mammoth Cave are yet to be finalized, but I expect a full

report to appear in the next Journal edition. *Caveworks*, since its opening, has proved highly successful and popular, with visitation to the Lake Cave site up approx. 40% over the past six months or so.

New Zealand caves and karst continues to tick along. The big news, as Greg Martin reports herein, is that Ruakuri Cave at Waitomo finally looks set to re-open. I understand that Peter "a girl's best friend" Dimond has escaped to Brazil - Rio, of course. Of course, I was only a matter of time till Peter skipped to South America, as we all know!! I am certain the rumour that he is attending some Conference or other, and will be coming back, is pure fiction.

The ACKMA (email) List has proved successful, with most *computerized members* being members of it. Of course, one must be a financial ACKMA member to join it. Newest members of the list are Greg Martin, Dave Smith, and Mick Chalker, all of which have recently come "on-line".

Finally, a look ahead. All Journals leading up to the next Conference will feature background articles on the South East South Australia karst area. The June 1998 edition will be the 10th Anniversary edition, the first ACKMA Journal (then called the ACKMA Newsletter) being published in June 1988. A special edition is envisaged, quite possibly with a full colour cover. If any member has any ideas for the special edition, please feed them to me!