

## EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

I am delighted to advise that our Executive Officer (with whom I have recently spent several most pleasant days at Cooleman and Yarrangobilly – see my article herein!) has recently been appointed Professor of Geography at James Cook University, Cairns. He takes up the appointment in June. While his move north will be a great loss to the southern karsts, it will be a huge fillip for Chillagoe, Undara, etc, etc!!! Warmest congratulations, Dave!!

Well, it happened, of course. After expunging Robyn McBeath's countenance from the last edition of the Journal, I received countless complaints. "How could I ???" was the common thread. How could I, indeed! So to make amends, adjacent is the said cave icon re-instated as a *centrefold*. Sorry about the groper next to her....(but she does *appear* to be enjoying herself...?!). I hear she has a new friend who *may* be jealous, too...!! Sorry, no name, even this *scandal column* has its limits!! Indeed, she is imminently to spend a few weeks holidaying in Tasmania to visit the said friend (oh dear, that may be a identifiable hint...?)

On the way home from the late December ACKMA Conference Committee meeting, Ken Grimes and I called into Princess Margaret Rose Caves to coordinate plans for ACKMA's visit thereto in April. It was most pleasant to catch up with Karen Mackereth and Viv Peters. They are greatly enjoying the challenge of their transformation from cave guides to cave managers. And indeed, success already abides with them! On 25 October they received the 1998 *Tourism Award* from *Tourist South-East*, and the TV show "Getaway" filmed a segment on PMR late in October, which was subsequently screened in January this year.

Moving onto Western Australia, Neil Taylor advises Giants and Caddarup Caves at Margaret River reopened to the general public on 3rd December, and that CALM's cave manager position will be filled sometime in February.

Still in the West, Stefan Eberhard was appointed in January as Research Officer at the Augusta-Margaret River Caves, on a three year contract. He takes up appointment on 1st July. His major task will be to undertake both a hydrological and biological study of the karst area and its catchment. I am sure all ACKMA members will join with me in congratulating Stefan on his appointment and wish him well! An article concerning this *Hydrobiological Management Study* appears in this Journal.

Prior to moving to WA, Stefan has an appointment with *Parks* in Tasmania to do cave fauna (invertebrate) inventory studies in two separate Tassie karst areas. He is fulfilling a three month contract to look at cave fauna in the Mole Creek Karst National Park; and he will also be completing his work and report on the cave fauna in the Ida Bay karst area (as part of the management plan for the area), including reviewing the conservation status of rare species, inclusive of continued

monitoring of the cave fauna refuge sites in Exit Cave.

Noted ASF identity Norm Poulter was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day Honours List on 26 January, "*for service to conservation and the environment, particularly through the Speleological Research Group of Western Australia*". Our warmest congratulations to Norm!

The next Conference Organizing Committee meeting is on 21st February. All is coming together extremely well. It looks quite possible we have up to ten USA and Canadian cave management heavies attending, too!! Attendance at the Conference may well approach 70-80 delegates! The Organizing Committee has (tautologically-speaking) organized at least one VERY pleasant *surprise* as well... **DO NOT MISS THIS CONFERENCE!!**

Speaking of the Conference, and more specifically the ACKMA AGM thereat, inserted in this Journal is the AGM agenda, and Nomination Form for the Committee. Certainly, all interested members are encouraged to nominate. We haven't had an election for the Committee since Tasmania in 1995 – at subsequent AGM's nominations haven't exceeded vacancies. If you feel you have a contribution to make, put your name forward!

News from Hastings Caves, Tasmania. Phil Bradley ceased to be manager of the caves last year, but is still attached to the Dover Office of the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service (P&WS). A Board of Management now controls the Reserve, consisting of Ian & Sue Hall, the lessees of the Thermal Pool area, and P&WS. New caves manager is Keith van der Staay, who controls Newdegate Cave and its staffing. The big news from Hastings is that funding has been obtained for a new \$1.2 million Visitor Interpretation Centre in the Reserve. To be located adjacent to the Thermal Pool, it is hoped to be completed by July next year. Other great news from Hastings is the work done over the last year by cave guides Roger Griffiths and Peter Price (in collaboration with ACKMA's Arthur Clarke) in rehabilitating the paths, drainage systems, speleothems and clastic surfaces in the cave, and documenting cave fauna and bone deposits potentially affected by the rehab. Arthur Clarke has been employed on an open-ended two month contract to complete a fauna inventory of Newdegate Cave - specifically looking at the fauna (and identification of species) in those habitats where the cave rehabilitation is continuing (as well as other "natural" habitats associated with the undeveloped parts of the cave) and in addition to prepare an interpretation sheet for use by cave guides and National Parks interpretation officers to describe the range of cave fauna (and habitats) in the Hastings tourist cave.

Elery Hamilton-Smith has recently returned from attending a Karst Conference in Vietnam, which included a brief sojourn to Thailand, where he

inspected an environmentally-acceptable cement factory, amongst other things! Articles concerning his latest peregrinations are herein.

Pete Bell and Robyn McBeath are working feverishly to have the ACKMA CD ROM finished in time for the Conference. Fingers crossed. It will feature all papers from all past Conference Proceedings, articles from past ACKMA Journals, and much more. It will be an incredibly useful resource!

The Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust *Karst Resources Department* is now putting out a Newsletter called "Karst Out". Published twice per year (in January and June) and edited by Mia Thurgate, it highlights Caves Reserve Trust karst happenings, and news from its Scientific and SEM committees. Three issues are published to date, and all are a most absorbing read. Interested cave & karst managers

can readily "get on the mailing list". Contact Mia or Ernie Holland at the Cave Reserve Trust Office in Bathurst, NSW.

And finally, we all held our breath in January when Kieran McKay did damage to himself and was trapped several hundred metres underground in the *Bulmer Cavern* on New Zealand's South Island. Happily, he was expeditiously rescued, but not before the press has a field day. I even had a email from a caver in America advising the rescue was reported in her local newspaper! Of course, Kieran is well known to many ACKMA members, having been prominent at our Waitomo Conference two years ago (remember, he was the guy who abseiled out of the ceiling during the "Opening Ceremony"). An article on the rescue by NZSS's Lindsay Main is herein.