

ACKMA AT BUCHAN

- Miles Pierce, with Kent Henderson *

The ACKMA Annual General Meeting for 2000 was held at Buchan over the weekend 17 – 18 June. The meeting and associated activities, plus great catering, was hosted by Parks Victoria with the Buchan Caves Reserve Manager, Stephanie Finn and Caves and Karst Ranger, Dale Calnin, being responsible for most of the organisation.

About forty people attended the AGM itself at the Buchan Valley Log Cabins Conference Centre on the Saturday morning. These included members from New Zealand, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Queensland, as well as Victorians. The meeting was also privileged to have present Stuart Ord, Parks Victoria Regional Manager for Eastern Victoria, together with Dennis Matthews, Chief Ranger for East Gippsland. Allan Costigan, a life member of ACKMA and former manager of the Buchan Caves Reserve was another notable attendee.

Early in the meeting, Stuart Ord formally welcomed ACKMA to Buchan on behalf of Parks Victoria, and spoke positively about the future for the Buchan Caves. He also indicated that Parks Victoria would like to host a future ACKMA biennial conference in Buchan. Of particular interest was Stuart's announcement of the intention to re-activate the *Victorian Caves Advisory Committee*, to provide advice to the Department and Parks Victoria on cave and karst management issues statewide. He also indicated that his Department was battling for substantial capital funding to upgrade Buchan Caves.

The meeting elected Dianne Vavryn a Fellow of ACKMA in recognition of her long-term work in relation to the protection of the caves at Mt Etna in Central Queensland, and in particular Bat Cleft cave. Dianne conducts guided public tours to Bat Cleft in summer to observe the evening flight of the bent wing bats from the large maternity colony in this important cave. This is a well deserved recognition of her sustained efforts in cave and fauna preservation.

The election of ACKMA office bearers for 2000/2001 was uncontested. Brian Clark was re-elected as President, as were all other officers, with two exceptions. Arthur Clarke was elected as ACKMA's ASF Liaison Officer (following the retirement of Ernie Holland), and Mia Thurgate became ACKMA Information Officer (Australia). In addition, the AGM appointed Dr. Grant Gartrell as Assistant Treasurer to support Dennis Rebbecki in his increasingly heavy role. As a result of the implications of the new Australian Goods & Services Tax (GST), the AGM approved a \$5 increase in ACKMA membership fees to \$45 per annum.

Our Karst Science Officer, Andy Spate made a presentation on the about-to-be-launched educational kit "Discovering Caves", which is separately reported elsewhere herein. Members from both ACKMA and ASF Clubs have contributed to the information presented in the kit *Fact Sheets*, and both organisations have their respective logos on its impressive promotional material. The formal launch of "Discovering Caves" will be at Yarrangobilly Caves on 11 October during Earth Science Week. A number of other matters were discussed at the

AGM, as recorded in the minutes, and inserted in this Journal.

On Saturday afternoon, tours were conducted into Federal, Royal and Fairy caves in the Caves Reserve, with management issues and future development plans and options raised and discussed en route. This was an excellent opportunity for Stephanie and Dale to tap the thoughts, experience and expertise of other cave managers and sundry cave and karst experts in the context of the Buchan Reserve and its show caves.

On emerging from Federal Cave, ACKMA members were able to see a number of the *Friends of Buchan Caves* in action erecting some new signs in the Reserve. Glenn Baddeley, the current president of the *Friends* group, explained the set up and range of work that the group has undertaken at Buchan. In a reply, Brian Clark praised the efforts of the *Friends* and their voluntary contribution to improving the interpretation of cave and karst values at Buchan.

The AGM dinner on Saturday night was at the Willow Cottage in Buchan. It passed with much conviviality, helped along by some good vintages. Notwithstanding any 'kicking on' after the dinner, the program for Sunday called for an 0830 start. The first stop was at the Pot Holes Reserve where members inspected the newly constructed concrete retaining wall, at the entrance to Honeycomb cave, to contain erosion. The issue of unstable rocks at the entrance to Razor Cave – currently closed by Parks Victoria for this reason – was discussed with a range of ideas and suggested actions put forward.

After an outdoors morning tea of scones and other goodies (overeating being its usual hazard when ACKMA meets), members inspected Murrindal cave and then Lilly Pilly cave – both former show caves – that are now used from time to time for special guided tours from the Caves Reserve. Another well-catered lunch in the Caves Reserve Guide's Room concluded the formal activities. In the afternoon, several members visited Moon cave in the Buchan Caves Reserve – again, a show cave early last century, and long since disused as such. Moon cave contains an active steamway emptying into the Buchan River, and contains what appears to be a large colony of platypus. As a result, this cave requires particularly careful management.

In total, it was very successful ACKMA Annual General Meeting which provided the opportunity for Parks Victoria and the staff at Buchan to show interstate and New Zealand members what Buchan has to offer, both in terms of caves and karst and local hospitality.

* adapted from an article by Miles Pierce that recently appeared in the Victorian Speleological Associations's magazine "Nargun".