

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

Firstly, just a note for those who presented papers at the Wombeyan Conference back in May. I will need final versions to me by 1st October 2001, please. Unfortunately, any paper not received by that date will not be included. The aim is to have Proceedings, both hard copy and CD ROM version, out prior to Christmas. I will remind those concerned individually, and the cooperation of all concerned would be greatly appreciated. The previous disagreement with the ASF concerning the CD ROM is resolved, and when re-issued late this year, appropriate acknowledgements to ASF will be included.

There are quite a few hot news items this quarter! After 35 years at Mole Creek Caves, Tasmania, ACKMA Fellow Chester Shaw has retired (on 19 July) due to ill health. Last January while collecting water samples from the *Walls of Jerusalem* area, Chester sustained an injury to an existing health problem, and he has been unable to work since then (it's nothing life-threatening, happily!).

Chester began his career with Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife at Mole Creek caves as a cave guide, when he was a teenager. He later became a ranger and subsequent caves manager. He is highly respected by the local community and by everyone he came in contact with during his many years at Mole Creek caves. His retirement is a great loss – as his knowledge and experience in caves is immeasurable. Lighting systems in both Marakooa and King Solomon's Caves were designed by Chester, and in 1991 he was taken to Sarawak as a guest of the government there, to advise on the lighting of Mulu Caves.

For Chester, it has always been caves and cave management, and I am sure during his retirement, caves will always remain his passion. Chester has always been very active in ACKMA, having attended the past six ACKMA Conferences, and acted as Conference Convenor of the 11th Conference (in Tasmania) in 1995. I am sure all ACKMA members will join with me in wishing him well in his "retirement", but I am equally certain we'll see him contributing to ACKMA for a great many years to come.

Quite some news from Jenolan Caves. Mia Thurgate (our Australian Vice President) has resigned as the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust's Karst Resources Manager, effective as of 19 October. Mia has decided to travel overseas for the next twelve months (she'll be leaving in December). Initially she'll be in the Americas (she has a sister in New Orleans). She intends to visit lots of cave and karst places while away, and has promised articles for the ACKMA journal from various exotic locations! I am sure all ACKMA members will join with me in wishing her well, and we look forward to her safe return in due course.

As seems to be entirely usual, Elery Hamilton-Smith will be spending much of the remainder of year overseas. In early September, he is off to Thailand to advise on a capacity building program for the Thai park network. He will be in Vietnam at the Phong Nha world heritage area for more consulting for two weeks from late September. In October, he'll be in the USA to attend the 15th National Cave and Karst Management Symposium in Tucson, Arizona, followed by five days in Mexico. Then in late November he will be in Slovenia to present a paper on monitoring karst environments. Back in Australia, he'll be at Margaret River in WA for the Lake Cave Centenary Celebrations on early December. Phew! I'm told he

may be home for Christmas, although it's also possible he'll be in China in December!! Phew!! Oh, and in mid January he'll be in Hawaii. Hopefully, I can pin Elery down long enough (wish me luck!) to gain a report on his doings for the December Journal....

Speaking of overseas travellers, Andy Spate is off to Korea in October to present a paper at a cave management conference therein. Andy is also recently back from a "holiday" in Queensland, where he spent some time at Olsen's Caves amongst other places. He also attended Lana Little's Bachelor of Science graduation ceremony. Lana has been slaving away at her course part time for quite a few years – warmest congratulations for finally getting there!! An article on Andy's jaunt is herein.

Everyone's going to Mulu! ...well, a lot of ACKMA types, anyway. Recently back from a Forum on Karst and World Heritage thereat is Mia Thurgate, Brian Clark, Elery, and Andrew Fletcher – to name just some of the OZ cave people present. Mia's report is herein. Also just back from Mulu (they went after the Conference) is Mick and Annette Chalker. They had a three-week holiday to Kuala Lumpur, Singapore...and Mulu, amongst other destinations. "Bloody big caves at Mulu", says Mick!

Mick also advises things are afoot at Wombeyan Caves (as if hosting an ACKMA Conference is not enough)! The long-awaited new sewerage system at Wombeyan is nearly to the tender stage. This likely \$500,000 plus project is currently scheduled to be completed prior to Easter next year. More news as it comes to hand. While on Wombeyan, three of the old on-site caravans there are due to be replaced soon with en-suite cabins. The remaining three will hopefully be similarly replaced next year. "Up the road" at Abercrombie Caves, Senior Guide and ACKMA member Barry Cubitt has just started three months long service leave, and is off to the USA and Europe – a well deserved break indeed.

As noted above, the Centenary of the Lake Cave at Margaret River, WA, is to be celebrated on 1–2 December. A committee is working on finalizing the program, which will include wide community involvement. A report will miss the December Journal, but will be included in next edition in March 2002.

The Augusta-Margaret River Tourism Association (AMRTA) has called for public submissions (which close on 14 September) for the re-development of the Jewel Cave precinct, at Augusta, specifically in areas of tourism product, and infrastructure development. Interested ACKMA members can gain a copy of the relevant documentation by emailing Robyn McBeth at [Caveworks: mcbework@netserv.net.au](mailto:mcbework@netserv.net.au)

The Jewel Cave is currently undergoing infrastructure and boardwalk improvements, cleaning operations, and is the main focus of a three-year cave hydrology, biology, and cave climate monitoring project by Stefan Eberhard. Hopefully, the results will shed light on why the once water-filled Jewel Cave has dried up, and what can (if anything), or should, be done about it.

The New Zealand scene continues happily, under the benevolent gaze of our erstwhile President, Peter Dimond. John Ash has been holidaying in the USA for a month, so the "fiss" has gone out of Waitomo, temporarily! No more news on the

possible re-opening of Ruakuri Cave – maybe we'll know more by the end of the year?

It's official! The 24th Australian Speleological Federation (ASF) Conference – "Under WY" – will be held at the Cathedral Grammar School, Bunbury, from 2 to 7 January 2003. Whilst on ASF, many ACKMA members will be aware that ASF's insurance of cavers has expired, and it has been having difficulties in arranging a new insurance arrangement. Clearly, this matter is important to cave managers who, clearly, will not be keen to grant access to cavers not covered by appropriate insurance. Current official advice (mid August) from the ASF is as follows:

1. The ASF has exhausted the possibility of obtaining Public & Product Liability insurance from an Australian Underwriter, but it has received an offer for Public & Product Liability from an overseas underwriter.
2. The ASF is in receipt of a copy of a policy and is awaiting the receipt of a formal offer for Professional Indemnity & Director's & Officers Liability insurance.
3. The ASF is awaiting a response from the Broker to questions about the policy offered to ensure that the ASF obtains insurance cover to the level it has had in the past.
4. The ASF is attempting to seek a second quotation in order to provide a comparative policy and quote to that received.
5. The ASF recommends that no affiliated caving club undertakes any caving trips until the insurance issue is resolved.

Pen ultimately, just a reminder of the next ACKMA AGM, to be held at Yarrangobilly Caves, NSW, on 11-12 May next year. Place those dates in your diary now!

And finally, much has been written in the last two Journal editions about Elery's award of *Membership of the Order of Australia*. As a final word on his happy matter, adjacent is the official photo of him receiving his gong from the Governor of Victoria, Hon. John Landy, at a ceremony at Government House on Friday 4 May.

NEW ACKMA WEB SITE

<http://au.geocities.com/ackmacaves/>

The ACKMA Committee is pleased to announce that it has appointed Rob Whyte as ACKMA Webmaster, and we are most grateful to Rob for very kindly agreeing to act as such. Rob is well known in cave circles, particularly at Jenolan where he is a casual guide and a stalwart of the Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society. Happily, Rob is also possibly the foremost computer expert at Qantas, and he is currently involved in reporting to the Qantas management team on the critical IT issues affecting the airline.

Rob is in the process of preparing ACKMA's new web pages. **PLEASE NOTE THE ACKMA WEB SITE IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION**, with much content is still to be inserted. Cave links to all OZ and NZ that exist (as far as we know) have been added to the site. If you note any existing Oz or NZ Show Cave link we don't have, please advise us!

We would also like to include any link that members feel will help visitors improve their understanding of karst or their appreciation of their region. For instance, if someone has a site they know of that explains karst conservation in China, let's include it in Cave Science links. Alternatively, if there is a site that helps a person plan their travels in New Zealand which in turn helps someone visit Waitomo, we can include that in the travel links area. In that way the site encourages people to return to it.

We would ask members to assist in content for our web site, particularly with images for inclusion, extra text, comments, and/or corrections on fact. The ACKMA Committee is of the view that as our Web pages are primarily for our members, all members should have the opportunity of input. Take it! **PLEASE ASSIST!** If you have ANY suggestions, criticisms, or opinions on our web pages – they will be warmly received.