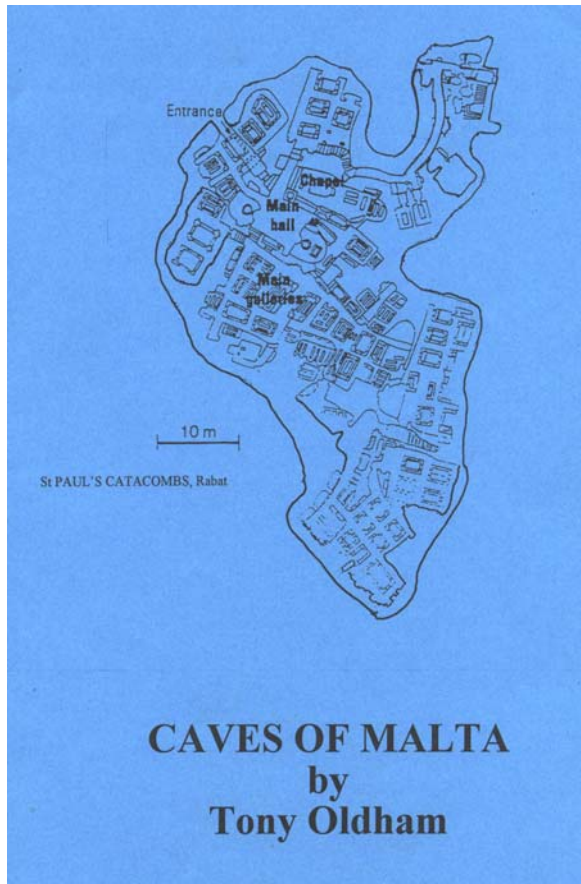


BOOK REVIEWS

CAVES OF MALTA by Tony Oldham. 29 pp illus. A4 size. GBP £3.00 or 5 Euros. Post free. \$Aust 8.00 surface mail. \$Aust 12.00 air mail. Orders to: Tony Oldham, Riverside Mews, Cardingan. UK. SA43. 1DH. If it is wished to pay in Australian dollars, remit cheque (payable to Ross Ellis) to: Ross Ellis, 11 Arkana Street, Dundas, New South Wales, Australia. 2117. **Reviewed by Kent Henderson.**



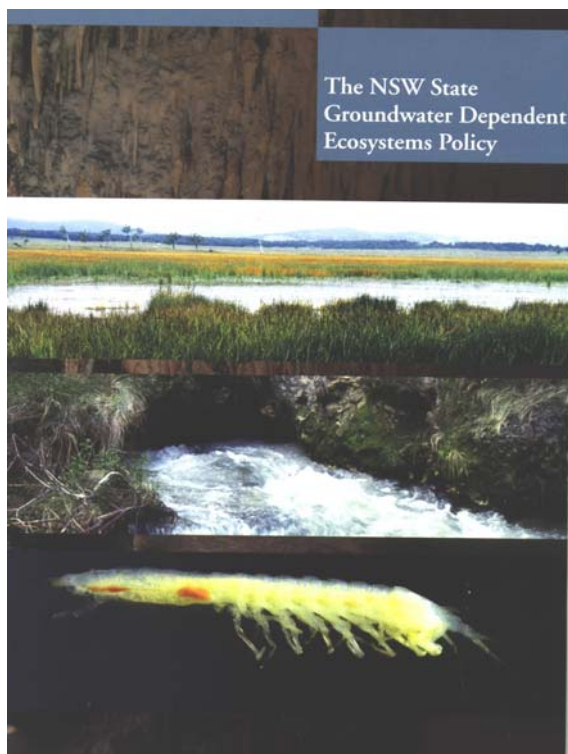
I've always wanted to visit Malta, and now I know why – it's completely cavernous! Well, almost.

For those geographically challenged, Malta is an island of 67 square kilometres, pretty much in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sicily and north of Libya. And, most interestingly, it's largely limestone. British Caver Tony Oldham's new book, *Caves of Malta*, tells it all. He deals with a bit of history, geology, hydrology, cave diving, cave fauna, notes for tourists, and describes all the major (and many minor) caves (with many maps), and there are a lot, a number of which are tourist caves.

These include the *Blue Grotto* (I thought it was on Capri in Italy...actually it is, another one), *Ghar Dalum* (Ghar is cave in Maltese) with its attached bone museum, the self-guided *Ghar Hasan* at a goodly 387 metres in length, *Hypogeum*, restored and re-opened in recent years (and limited to 200 visitors per day – not many by European standards...), St. Paul's Catacombs (largely man-made), and St. Paul's Grotto, where the saint reputedly spent several weeks preaching on his way to Rome.

All fascinating stuff, in well put together book. Even if you never get to Malta, this book will, cavernously-speaking, take you there in big way. Get it, you wont regret it.

THE NSW STATE GROUNDWATER DEPENDENT ECOSYSTEMS POLICY. NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation, 2002. **Reviewed by Elery Hamilton-Smith.**

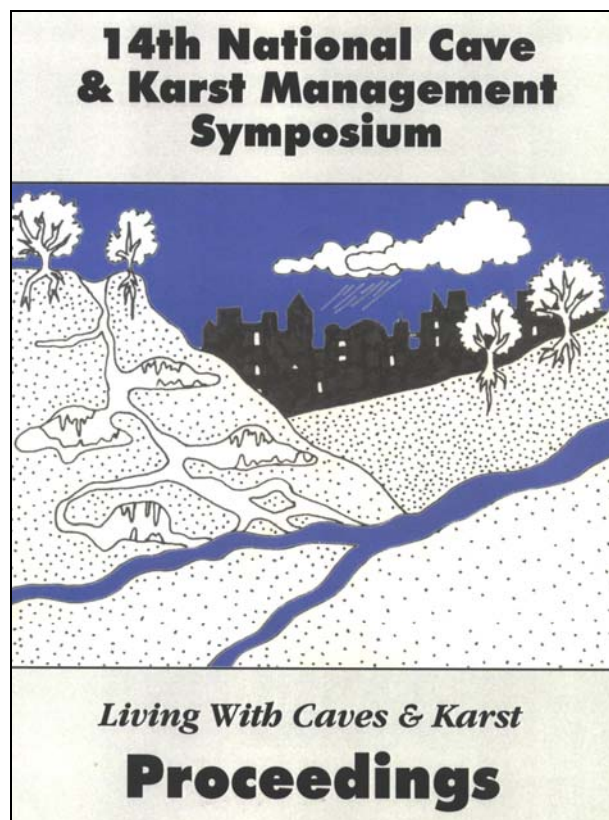


This is a truly welcome document. It is only one in a series of policy statements that have followed upon the 1997 State Groundwater Framework Policy, all of which are of significant quality. But, as it is focused upon what is often the least visible and most ignored component of the groundwater system, it is virtually a world first.

It spells out five very clear and explicit principles in the management of groundwater ecosystems. These key principles are, in fact, probably the necessary and sufficient principles, which, if competently applied, would safeguard the integrity of all groundwater systems. They are not necessarily novel, but their appearance as a formal government policy certainly is. The report deserves the attention of all land and/or water management agencies.

The big question, of course, is how it might be implemented, and how the various barriers to its effective application might be overcome. The current document certainly lays down the basis for a strategic plan, but it is not that. My judgement is that in so clearly defining principles, it is a great improvement on the many strategic plans developed without an equivalent examination of underlying assumptions, evidence and principles.

LIVING WITH CAVES & KARST. Proceedings of the 14th National Cave & Karst Management Symposium, Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA, October 1999. Published by the Southeastern Cave Conservancy Inc. Edited by Tom Rea. **Reviewed by Kent Henderson.**



The Proceedings of the 14th NCKMS is a weighty tome of 221 pages, and features over sixty papers presented at the Chattanooga in 1999. Most of the papers are relatively short, but nonetheless meaty. They cover, as you would expect, a broad range of interests. A few are pretty much American-endemic, on such matters as local histories, or on what I would term purely caving matters. However, most have widespread interest, and are very useful or applicable to the Australian and New Zealand scene.

THE REKA RIVER FROM MOUNTAIN SNEŽNIK, SLOVENIA TO THE SEA, ITALY: REPORT OF THE PHARE PROJECT. Debevec, Vanya. 2002. Park Skocjanske Jama, Slovenia. **Reviewed by Elery Hamilton-Smith.**

I cannot resist sharing my reading of this very fine project report. It describes in detail an education program applied to six primary schools in the watershed area of the Reka River – the classical *kras* of Slovenia.

Both the report itself and my own recent visit to Skocjanske community suggest that it has indeed been a successful program which has not only been a very positive and satisfying experience for the young people, but has extended through them into the wider community.

This brings me to ask myself why it has been so effective, and from that, what can we take with us and try in other communities. My own judgement is that there are at least three major factors that contribute to its success:

- The project treated the children as mature and responsible people. It did not talk down or over-simplify; nor did it set out to turn the

The theme of the Conference, *Living with Caves and Karst*, called for papers to address a wide range of issues, particularly the enormous planning problems facing US caves given the accelerated rates of residential, commercial and industrial development in many areas of North America. Many papers, in area specific or broader terms, highlighted the impacts and threats to caves and karst in metropolitan areas in particular, as well as generally, considered the implications for cave and karst resulting from land use and development, and examined strategies and techniques for conservation and management in those environments.

Some of the papers I read with particular interest included: Construction Relative to Reducing Visitor Impact in the Historic Section of Mammoth Cave; New Advances in the Study and Management of Arkansas Caves; The Role of Research and Education in Cave and Karst Management; Site Conservation Planning for Caves and Karst Features; Cave Restoration and Conservation – Topics, Methods, and Discussion; Misconceptions About Caves and Karst – Common Problems and Educational Solutions; and Successful Cave Management Strategies at Carlsbad Caverns National Park.

Amongst the more than 150 attendees at the Symposium were two Australian ACKMA members. Arthur Clarke presented: Disturbance Threats to Karst Faunas in Tasmania, Australia; while Dr. Neville Michie delivered: An Instrument and Method for Measurement of Dust Fall in Caves. American ACKMA members present included Kriste Lindberg, Cheryl Jones, Lee and Paul Stevens, and Tom Rea (the Proceedings Editor). This is indeed a must publication for any cave library. Contact Tom Rea <tomrea@ccrtc.com>, who will speedily arrange your copy!

project into an amusement program as so many so-called educators try to do.

- So, it provided the schools with scientific equipment and taught the children how to use the equipment to gather data on water flows and water quality, then to analyse their data and report their findings. Thus they were engaged in utilizing good science in the genuine and important monitoring of their own environment.
- Their project was also placed in context and they were made aware that they were sharing in the continuing assessment of a World Heritage site and so making their small but nevertheless valuable contribution to the world-wide environmental stewardship of UNESCO.

MYSTERIES OF THE DARK WORLD OF CAVES, Dr Woo Kyung Sik, Director, Cave Research Institute of Korea. (8,000 Won = ~\$A13). Reviewed by Andy Spate.



This slim (64 page) 'coffee-table' book was produced by my friend and colleague, Woo Kyung Sik, for the Samcheok International Cave Expo Korea 2002. It is a compilation of about 120 images from about 20 countries around the world including a number from Australia. It covers karst, lava, sea and ice caves, speleothems, cave fauna and prehistory. Most of the images are of very high quality and there are a number of diagrams illustrating various aspect of cave and speleothem development.

Unfortunately the captions and text blocks are in Korean and thus I am not able to judge this aspect of the book (although each image has a caption in English listed on the final page of the book). Some of the pictures have been attributed to other cave areas (for example, Chalker's Blanket, Junction Cave, Wombeyan, has been transported to Waitomo, New Zealand!). Some of these errors are not the fault of the compiler but they lie at the feet of those who supplied the images – complete with the wrong caption!

It is possible that an English-language edition of this nice little book will appear in the future. Even in its present form it is suitable as resource material for schools, for broadening the horizons of cave guides and to show the world of caves to anyone who thinks that "all caves are the same" and "are just holes in the ground".

WEE JASPER CAVES FUNDING CRISIS

- Geoff Kell

Doubtless you are aware of the karst area of the Wee Jasper valley. Those of you who made it here during the 2001 ACKMA conference had the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the area. The wild caves such as Dip, Signature, Punchbowl and Dogleg are popular destinations for both novice and experienced cavers.

While there is some accommodation available in the valley most cavers camp on the reserves adjacent to the caves. These reserves are managed by the Wee Jasper Reserves Trust which is responsible to the Department of Land and Water Conservation. The Trust employs two rangers who, with some part-time assistance, take care of 5 reserves in the valley. These rangers perform far greater functions here than just keeping the reserves clean: they virtually function as sheriffs, ambulance officers and so on in dealing with matters such as road accidents, medical situations and anti-social behaviour. They are greatly responsible for the feeling of safety that day visitors and campers enjoy here.

The Trust has been hit with increasing costs and static or declining government grants. This situation has reached a critical point, with closure of the reserves being discussed as an option.

Any of you familiar with the valley will realise what a disastrous effect this would have on the local community: there would be a rapid downward spiral of available services such as the store,

tavern, then school. Although the valley population is small there is little employment on rural properties, probably 50% of locals depend on visitor trade for survival.

Without adequate funding to maintain the reserves, a pattern would occur which has already happened in other locations. Weed growth proliferates, fire danger increases, vandalism increases, water quality polluted, visitor numbers plummet, less money available.....another piece of rural Australia consigned to the trash heap.

Community meetings have now been held, resulting in a strong vote of support for the Trust and forming of a community action group. We feel that public awareness and action are our best approach. To this end, we ask anyone who has enjoyed what our valley has to offer in the past or present to support our cause by writing to any of the people on our list (see the website, or email Geoff Kell at: geoffkell@bigpond.com) telling them of your concern and urging a review of the funding situation.

While it is easier to do this by email, it is also easier for the receivers to delete them with a push of a button. A growing pile of paper is a little harder to ignore. If possible we would also appreciate a copy to the Wee Jasper Community Action Group (Address: Wee Jasper, NSW. 2582) as it will give us our own big pile to point at! Check out our website at: www.weejaspercommunity.org