

# **SAMCHEOK INTERNATIONAL CAVE EXPO KOREA 2002 HOJU AND SOJU!**

- Andy Spate



Approaching the West Gate of the Cave Expo site.

Well, the World's first Cave Expo has come and gone. I have recovered and it is now time to take a little stock of what ACKMA did, what it should have done and whether it was worth while?

I am not going to address these questions comprehensively in this issue of the Journal. They will be discussed more adequately in the next issue – hopefully with input from those who helped me in Korea.

Andy Lawrence, Robyn McBeath and Lana Little joined me in Samcheok City and prevented me from going quite mad running the ACKMA booth. It would have been very difficult without their help and friendship. We had some fairly trying times – but a great deal of fun as well.

The Expo ran for 32 days from 10 July until 10 August – about one million people visited the site with an unknown – but very large – proportion who visited the International Cave Pavilion.

This number was about a third more than expected. Almost all visitors were from Korea – perhaps only a few dozen Caucasians were sighted over the whole period.

With Australia and New Zealand in the Pavilion were Slovenia, Brazil, Spain, Italy, Bulgaria, Belgium, Lebanon, Malaysia, South Africa, India, Japan, Korea, China, Greece and Russia together with the International Union of Speleology and the International Show Cave Association.

Not all of these were manned throughout the whole Expo period – in fact some were only there for a very few days and some displays were virtually content-free.

ACKMA's display featured:

- The Discovering Australian Caves education kit map – with red LEDs showing the show cave locations
- A map of New Zealand with attention being drawn to Waitomo and Te Anau
- A series of large posters especially prepared for the Expo. Topics covered were:
  - Australian cave life
  - The Nullarbor
  - The Tropical karst areas
  - Syngenetic karsts
  - Australian World Heritage and karst
  - Education and ACKMA
- A large last-minute poster provided by Jenolan
- A nice poster from Ngilgi
- A series of postcards, small posters and pamphlets filling up various blank spaces.

As well as these static displays, we had a computer-based slide display with about 135 images from Australia and New Zealand (and Antarctica!) and a series of videos. My idea for a daily prize pack did not turn out very well so we handed out our pamphlets and free tickets – trying to target people who indicated that they were about to visit either set of islands. The fact that many of our free tickets had an expiry date of 31 December 2002 did not add to their value!

Both countries are well known to Koreans – but we generated some confusion by using the word “Australasian” to describe Australia and New Zealand. I am sure some have decided that we are one country (which seems sensible to me – although I am not sure that I want to visit our current crop of politicians on my colleagues to the east...).

The other national or organisational displays were basically similar – although a number of Japanese and Chinese sister-city booths had very limited relevance to caves.



Robyn McBeath & Andy Spate, with student friends.

The numbers of visitors, their lack of English and the fact that many were not at all cave-oriented meant that people had to be enticed to enter the booth, very few watched more than a few seconds of either slide show or video so the impact of ACKMA may not have been terribly great.

I would be very interested to receive any feedback from operators of any mention of our display and freebies from amongst your visitors over the next six to twelve months.



Andy being interviewed by Korean Radio

The effect was relatively cluttered – but we received many compliments on the booth. I also did a couple of radio interviews and 5-6 TV interviews – at least one of which went to air. We were also photographed with an endless succession of small children, bigger children, mums and dads and grandparents!

I had the signal honour of having meeting, and being photographed with, the Gangwon-do Province Garlic Queen for 2002 – and the three runners up in this significant event!



Andy Spate with the Gangwon-do Province garlic queen, and her princesses.

Once our freight had finally arrived (on the evening before the opening – in spite of it having been in Korea for nearly three weeks!), some Dehli belly

episodes and torn tendons, and various problems with the weather most things went very well. We all enjoyed Korea and its wonderful food although Robyn and I, in particular, went through phases of fantasising about corn beef sandwiches and bacon and eggs...

As well as the International Cave Pavilion there were four other display areas – some excellent, some of less interest – and series of various ‘concert’ activities and other entertainments, a multimedia theatre production on caves and cave life – unfortunately all in Korean so I was unable to fully understand it – but it did seem to have a cave conservation message.

Many souvenir shops – with pretty predictable, and initially expensive, items. At one stage there was an Australian souvenirs stall selling “traditional” Aussie items such as bows and arrows (made in Thailand!).

There was also the First International Phallus Carving Contest... and a remarkable flood! Your special correspondent, Ms Robyn McBeath, will report in detail on the Contest in the next issue!

As well as holding the fort in the Pavilion we all had the opportunity to visit some show caves – and in Lana and Andy’s case, some wild caves as well. One show cave that Lana visited became a wild cave experience as the cave was flooded chest-deep!

The experience in Hwanseongul (cave) with perhaps as many as 4,000 people in this 1.8 km long self-guided cave at the one time was particularly taxing... Only 14,900 in the cave on that one day!

There are many people to thank: Samcheok City Hall and its staff, the volunteers and interpreters in the International Cave Pavilion, our international colleagues, the many people of Korean who extended such warm and happy hospitality to the bewildered, non-Korean speaking cave people from around the world.

In addition all those cave operators and managers, national parks people and others who provided material deserve thanks – you are too many to list individually - although I will list Dr Woo Kyung Sik of the Korean Cave Research Institute, Gary Lewis of Geoscience Australia, Keith Collin of GreenGrub Productions and Flynn Dovey who helped with the videos.

Peter Bell, Robyn McBeath and Stefan Eberhard of Cave Works, and Jane Gough from the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, worked wonders in the production of the major posters which formed the basis of ACKMA’s display.

Much of the display will be recreated at the next ACKMA conference in Far North Queensland. I purposefully developed the poster content in a very general way so that the major posters can be used on other occasions – so if you are having an opening or some similar event ACKMA will make the posters available if you pay the freight charges.

