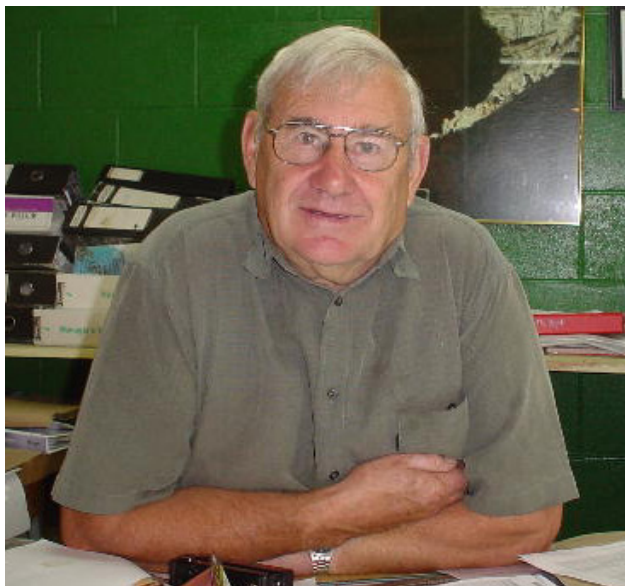




EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS



*The late Peter Dimond, QSM, JP,
President of ACKMA Inc. 2001-2002*

The Australian and New Zealand cave world has suffered two sudden deaths in recent months.

The first was that of our President, Peter Dimond, who died of a heart attack on 22 December.

Personally it was the greatest shock I have suffered for some time as it was, I know, for a great many others – especially in the Waitomo community. A very great friend of mine, Pete was one of the nicest guys you'd ever met. He has stayed with me in Melbourne in the past, and I at his home whenever I was in Waitomo.

He was a gentleman in every sense of the word, and his passing is a massive loss to caves and karst in general, and to Waitomo in particular. His funeral, which was held in Te Kuiti, had over 700 people in attendance – a diverse range of friends and people from all walks of life – a tribute to Pete and the type of person he was.

The ACKMA Committee was officially represented by Peter Chandler and Dave Smith, and many members were in attendance. An ACKMA wreath was arranged.

Former New Zealand Prime Minister, Jim Bolger, a close friend of Pete's, spoke; as did John Ash and Glen Bailey. Several reflections on Peter are to be found elsewhere in this Journal.

I am certain all members join with the ACKMA Committee in extending their sincere sympathy to Peters' sons and his family.

I would like to sum up Pete's life with a poem, which could easily be re-titled *The Life of Peter Dimond*, as it completely describes him. It reads as follows:

THE MEASURE OF A MAN

Not 'how did he die?'
But 'how did he live?'
Not 'what did he gain?'
But 'what did he give?'

These are the units of a man, as a man,
To measure the worth, regardless of birth.
Not 'what was his station?'
But 'had he a heart?'
And 'how did he play
His God-given part?'

Was he ever ready, with a word of good cheer
To bring back a smile, to banish a tear?
Not 'what was his church?'
Nor 'what was his creed?'
But 'had he defended
Those really in need?'

Not 'what did the sketch in the newspaper say?'
But 'how many were sorry when he passed away?'

*from Philosopher's Scrapbook, compiled by Monty
Blandford (Hallcraft Publishing, 1950).*

As a result of Peter Dimond's death, pursuant to ACKMA's Rules, the Committee has appointed our New Zealand Vice-President, Peter Chandler, to serve as ACKMA President until our next Annual General Meeting in May.

The second very sad death was that of Pete Roberts, a long-term guide at Mole Creek Caves in Tasmania. I only met Pete on a few occasions, but he too was a great bloke. Again, our deepest sympathy to his family and friends. A eulogy by Cathie Plowman is elsewhere in this Journal.

.....but life must go on, and so to more cheery news...

Following the closing of applications at the end of December, one award has been made from the ACKMA Life Member's Fund, for funded attendance at our next Conference at Chillagoe/Undara in May.

Congratulations go to Jay Anderson of Perth, Western Australia! Life Member's "Chairman", Elery Hamilton-Smith, comments: "Jay is currently undertaking the CSU Course in Cave and Karst Management.

She is one of the most outstanding students in what is an incredibly strong group. Moreover, she has achieved this while carrying an incredibly heavy load of other responsibilities.



*Jay Anderson,
ACKMA Life Member's Fund Award Recipient*

Jay is President of the Western Australian Speleological Group, and has also succeeded Rauleigh Webb as the Convenor of the Conservation Commission for W. A. She carries out both these responsibilities with immense commitment and hard work – and in my judgment, very wisely and effectively.

Although not a cave management professional, her work on conservation is unquestionably of very high professional quality. Further, she is looking towards a career change, moving into cave and karst management at some time in the foreseeable future when the right job comes along.

Currently, Jay is working as a professional psychologist in a senior position within the Child Protection Program of the Western Australian State Welfare Department. The Life Members believe an award is totally justified by her performance in karst conservation matters and her quality of work on the course".

Some more great news! Noted Western Australian Caver, Lex Bastian received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Australia Day Honours list on 26 January, "for service to speleology in Western Australia as an explorer and surveyor, and to the protection of caves". Warmest congratulations, Lex!

The Chillagoe/Undara Conference is upon us – just a few short weeks away. Registrations have been excellent, and the Conference will be stunning, to say the least! If you haven't yet registered, you still have time – just, so be very quick! The Agenda for the 2003 ACKMA Inc. Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Conference, is inserted herein.

ACKMA now has a new web site! Unfortunately, due to his work commitments, our existing Webmaster, Rob Whyte, found it necessary to discontinue in the role. He did a great job, and I am certain all ACKMA members will join with the Committee in thanking Rob for his excellent efforts.

Subsequently, the Committee is delighted to advise it has appointed ACKMA Fellow Rauleigh Webb as new Webmaster. Rauleigh is a professional computer guru, and has already brought great skill and enthusiasm to the role. A brief article on our new web pages is to be found elsewhere herein, and the website itself at: <http://ackma.org>

Very disastrously, a very intense and horrendous bushfire burnt out much of the Yarrangobilly karst in New South Wales in mid January. The fire was started by lightning (amongst many, many others across the Australian Alps – over one hundred) in the headwaters of the creek immediately to the south of the Caves Exit road. The fire remained uncontrolled for many days. Overall, it extended over approximately a massive 45,000 ha, extending from near Talbingo Mountain south to Cabramurra and beyond.

Happily, all the buildings and other infrastructure (except for signs etc) were saved by the heroic and desperate endeavours of over one hundred fire fighters. However, the damage to the karst, vegetation, animals and soils was very severe indeed.

Additionally, the Wee Jasper karst, west of Canberra, was largely torched, but fortunately it was stopped just short of Carey's (tourist) Cave. Of course, the fires occurred at the peak of the tourist season, necessitating all tourist caves to be closed. A full report by Andy Spate is elsewhere in the Journal.

Fires also raged in the Northern Victorian high country, and burnt across the Limestone Ridge karst. Happily, they did not reach the Buchan karst, being stopped at Gelantipy about 25 kms north of Buchan Caves. However, at the time the threat was very real, and many cavers descended on Buchan to assist in fire fighting, and prepare the caver's house, *Homeleigh*, for the then-oncoming inferno.

Elery Hamilton-Smith has been quite ill recently. Shortly after returning from a trip to Vietnam in January, he was stricken by what he described as "a very strange and complex fever", and thereupon spent a week in hospital. Finally, tests revealed he had typhoid. He is recovering well, happily.

On 20 January, James Purtill, Director-General of the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, visited Bat Cleft at Mt. Etna, and in his following published report, noted: "....I want to congratulate some outstanding achievements. Firstly, to Dianne Vavryn who has worked tirelessly for many years taking the Mt Etna Bat Cleft tours. This is truly one of the world's outstanding natural phenomena and is presented professionally and expertly by Dianne...". Tremendous and much-deserved recognition, Dianne – great stuff!!



An ACKMA Conference delegate differentiating between food and emergency rations...

I have just returned from a month in India – fascinating place! I managed to visit four rock-cut cave sites, two of which are world heritage listed and outstanding, to say the least. You will find a few words (!) from me concerning them elsewhere in this Journal.

My absence overseas means this Journal will unavoidably be received by members in late March as opposed to early in the month as would normally be the case. I trust members found the full colour cover on the December Journal to be to their liking – thanks to the generosity of our printers – though don't expect it too often... I must say, in view of Peter Dimond's untimely death, it was appropriate that he featured on that cover, and it was great that (I am told) he received his copy the day before he died...



An interesting sign near the entrance area to Ajanta Caves, Western India.

After reporting in the last Journal that the Proceedings of the 14th USA National Cave & Karst Management Symposium (NCKMS) were available, I can now also advise that the Proceedings of the 15th Symposium (Arizona, 2001) have also been published – edited by ACKMA member, Tom Rea. Both Proceedings can be ordered from the NSS Bookstore – www.caves.org

They are available in both Hard Cover and CD ROM versions – see my Book Review elsewhere in this Journal. AND, Cheryl Jones tells me not to forget to remind you again of the 2003 NCKMS in Gainesville, Florida (13-17 October): “Protecting the Aquifer in Karst Regions”. Go to <http://www.nckms.com/> for details and to register.

Parks Victoria has reintroduced its *Caves and Karst Advisory Group*, which held its first meeting on 13 November last.

This group was disbanded some years ago under the previous Liberal Government, and it is great to see it final back in operation. Several ACKMA people are members of the Advisory Group, including ACKMA Fellow, Nicholas White.

Members will recall that I made a ‘splash’ in my *Editorial* in Journal No. 48 (September 2002) about the fact that actor Mike Myers (aka Austin Powers) was booked in to do Black Water Rafting at Waitomo in the December following

I can advise that a Mike Myers definitely did turn up last December and did Black Water Rafting.

However, he was not the Austin Powers version! Evidently Black Water Rafting has been visited by several ‘famous’ people, such as Rowan Atkinson (aka Mr. Bean), none of whom turned out to be the “real” thing! Sigh...

However, I'm advised that current NZ Prime Minister, Helen Clark, did do BWR and was the real person! – albeit some years ago before she assumed New Zealand's top job.... Perhaps they'll get a REALLY famous person one day – Andy Spate perhaps...!?!

Members will also recall that in my last *Editorial* I reported on my then-recent encounter with ACKMA Fellow and former Vice President, Dr. Kevin Kiernan, in Hobart.

I can now report that following his departure as Senior Geomorphologist with Tasmania's Forest Practice Board, he has been appointed (as of 1st January) as Lecturer in Conservation Geomorphology at the University of Tasmania. Congratulations, Kevin!

A few news snippets:

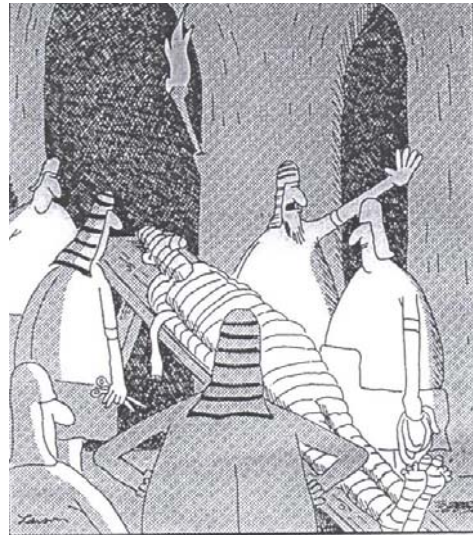
- The Wellington Shire Council has called for “expressions of interest” for tendering out the guiding operation at Wellington Caves (New South Wales). It will be interesting to see what transpires....

- The two historic swing bridges at Abercrombie Caves (New South Wales) were closed in January for essential maintenance, to be reopened at a later date (unadvised).
- Interviews for the position of Manager of Yarrangobilly Caves (New South Wales) were scheduled for early March 2003, and similarly interviews for Manager of Mole Creek Caves (Tasmania) are also due soon. I'd expect to be able to advise these appointments in the June Journal.

And finally, a story filed on 25 November 2002 – *Hermit to stay in cave despite 75th birthday. A hermit who has spent 35 years in a cave after says he has no intention of going back to "civilization" after reaching his 75th birthday. Dane Banovic from Konjic in Bosnia burnt his house down in 1967 after discovering his wife was having an affair. He went to live in a nearby cave saying he was disgusted with humanity. Celebrating his 35th year in the cave, he told Croatian newspaper 'Arena': "I have burned my past and I have nothing besides the cave. I have no intention of going back to civilisation."* Mr. Banovic, who sleeps on a bed of leaves in his cave, said he has lived off a diet of beans, potatoes and onions for more than three decades. I could make lots of

comments about various ACKMA people living in caves, but I'll resolutely resist the temptation!!

As an amateur Egyptologist friend of mine recently remarked to me that caves and tombs share much in common (psuedokarst!?!), I'll finish my ranting with a rather trite euphemism...



"OK, folks! ... It's a wrap!"

FAREWELL 'BLOKE'

- Cathie Plowman *



Pete Roberts (centre) with visitors in Marakoopa Cave 2002. Photo: Lee from *Tiger Wilderness Tours*

Staff at the Mole Creek caves were shocked and saddened at the sudden death of Pete Roberts, a long-term guide at Mole Creek Caves, on 19 November 2002.

Pete had uncharacteristically taken the day off sick and late at night suffered a fatal heart attack. He was at home with his beloved wife Bev at their bush property at Liena, nestled beneath Western Bluff.

Kind, humorous and generous are words that are perhaps a little overused in general life, but they don't go far enough to describe these qualities in Pete. Ever generous with his time and energy he gave generously to cave visitors with patience, time, information and tips for enjoying their holiday. He made every visitor welcome and 'at home' and

engaged them in interesting conversation. He didn't have a general term for addressing women, but all men were called 'bloke'.

While I receive continual positive feedback from businesses in Mole Creek about the caves and guides, Pete always stood apart from the rest of the team with regards to the number of people who talked about a particular guide. He made a lasting impression on the people on his tours.

Pete guided at Marakoopa Cave and King Solomons Cave for the best part of ten years. Always ready to step in to attend to maintenance or cleaning, renowned for leaving his sausage rolls on top of the heater to warm (a cave feature often captured on video camera through the ticket office window), a great guide and a wonderful person, he is being missed.

Pete's funeral was held at his bush sawmill on his property with many members of the Mole Creek community attending. His coffin was covered with sprigs of silver wattle.

Mole Creek guides appreciated the generosity of our colleagues from Hastings Caves who came and ran the caves for the day, so that all Mole Creek guides could farewell Pete.

Our condolences to his wife and soul-mate Bev, his sons Jeb and Russell and parents and brothers.

* Manager, Mole Creek Caves, Tasmania

