



Editorial Ramblings



So! It is now only ten months until the **16th Australasian Conference on Cave and Karst Management!** The West Coast, New Zealand, Conference will be a stunner! **NOT TO BE MISSED!** Organisation for it continues apace! The Booking Form, with full details, will be inserted in the next (Sept.) Journal. Check out the Conference Logo:



Members will recall my comments concerning the (now ex) Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust in the last Journal. In his March 2004 Newsletter the new Administrator of Jenolan Caves, Alan Griffin, announced the transfer of Abercrombie and Borenore Caves to the Western Directorate-Central West Region of National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Wombeyan is officially located in the Southern Directorate-South Coast Region. The Reserve around the Jenolan commercial area will be located within the Central Directorate-Blue Mountains Region.

It is proposed to form a group to be called the *Karst Management Policy Unit*, which will be staffed initially by Stephen Meehan, Steve Reilly and Nigel Scanlan. The Unit will be responsible for developing guidelines and frameworks for managing all Karst areas under the jurisdiction of the Department, and providing specialist advice to all regional areas with a concurring role for all proposals impacting on Karst areas. A business entity will be created unifying Caves House and the Tourist Caves operation and leased to a private operator. A government regulator will be employed to safeguard the environmental responsibilities of the private operations within the Caves.

Yes, well.... So, it is unfortunately very much the case of "Back to the Future" – almost a rewind of the clock to twenty years ago when the management body was the old *Tourist Commission of New South Wales*. Certainly, the hopes I expressed in the last Journal for a consolidation of New South Wales Karst Management are largely dashed. Just the reverse has, effectively, occurred – with on-ground management fragmentation. The only saving grace, perhaps, is the *Karst Management Policy Unit*. We will have to wait and see what resources it will have, together with a number of other obvious issues. It is fair to say that my expectations, and those of many others to whom I have spoken, are not high. Time, as always, will tell....

On Jenolan itself the Administrator, Alan Griffin, addressed a meeting of the Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society on 17 April, and committed the Government to conserving history of the caves. Good. He also announced that \$4 million will be spent on infrastructure at the caves, and \$1 million on developing the Nettle & Arch Cave as a self guided tour. As a cynic, we all now about 'government promises', and I'd certainly like to see 'cash in the bank' before the champagne corks are popped.

That said, both are most welcome, and if the 'government takeover' does mean significant dollars are given to Jenolan, that would both be excellent and long overdue. The Nettle & Arch Cave funding is especially significant – a facility long needed. If indeed all does come to pass, just perhaps Jenolan will again be able to legitimately claim it is Australia's top Show Cave System. We live in hope.

In late March I was again in Hobart on business for a week, and again stayed with my great friends Arthur Clarke and Robyn Clare. During my sojourn I attended a social meeting of Southern Tasmanian Caverneers – STC (of which I am a member). At the gathering Arthur gave us a wonder image tour of his last Madagascar trip. A presentation also occurred on the upcoming Riveaux Karst Project being undertaken jointly by Tasmanian Parks, STC, and the local Aboriginal community. During the week Arthur and I were invited to dinner at the home of our good friend Dr. Kevin Kiernan. A highlight (!) of the evening was Kevin's exposition (not unexpected...) of the battery-powered "pig" which he was so famously awarded at ACKMA's Chillagoe-Undara Conference last year. Sigh...

At dinner in Hobart: Kent Henderson, Kevin Kiernan, Arthur Clarke, and the ACKMA "pig".



An interesting scientific web site recently graced my computer screen, namely 'Speleogenesis and Evolution of karst aquifers - Virtual Scientific Journal', and it is well worth a look. A recent addition to the many karst scientific papers thereat is *Partitions, Compartments and Portals: Cave Development in internally impounded karst masses*, by ACKMA member Dr. Armstrong Osborne. It is definitely worth checking out! - <<http://www.speleogenesis.info>>

In New Zealand news, ACKMA Information Officer, Dave Smith (being, of course, informative) advises that the New Zealand Government has bought *Canaan Downs* farm on top of Takaka Hill for \$NZ 1.8 million in a move that could eventually see the Southern Hemisphere's deepest cave system added to Abel Tasman National Park.

Takaka Hill, with two show caves in the area (both ACKMA members), is located in the north-west of the South Island. An explanatory article by ACKMA Member Ian Millar, the local NZ Department of Conservation Karst Officer, is herein.

Conviviality in Hobart: Ian Houshold, Arthur Clarke and Rolan Eberhard.



A new Draft Management Plan has been released for Ashford Caves in northern New South Wales (March 2004). The area is best known for its "Main Cave", which is approx. 580m in length, has about seven entrances, and a significant bat colony. The closing date for comments on the Plan is 28 June 2004. It can be downloaded as a .pdf file. Go to: <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/> - click on

"Conservation Plans for Public Comment", and toggle down to "Kwiambal National Park - Draft Plan for Management". The document is 46 pages.

The following article appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 26 April 2004, under the title - *Let there be lights, says cavemen*: "How many speleologists does it take to change a light bulb? In the case of the Lucas Cave at Jenolan, the one with the biggest and highest chambers, it takes three guides-cum-labourers-cum-electricians and hund-reds of back-numbing hours wedged between stalagmites and stalactites.

"For the first time in more than a century, the cave's complete lighting system, featuring ugly exposed cabling and household bulbs in antique brass casings, has finally been replaced with a more efficient and less obtrusive system. In the process of restoring some of the Lucas Cave's lost beauty over the past few years, 500 lights, 250 circuits and 20 kilometres of wiring have been installed. And almost all are hidden.

"With sensors automatically switching chamber lights on and off, and guides carrying remote controls, the new system will create a dramatically more natural presentation of the cave's beauty, providing a model for Jenolan's eight other show caves.

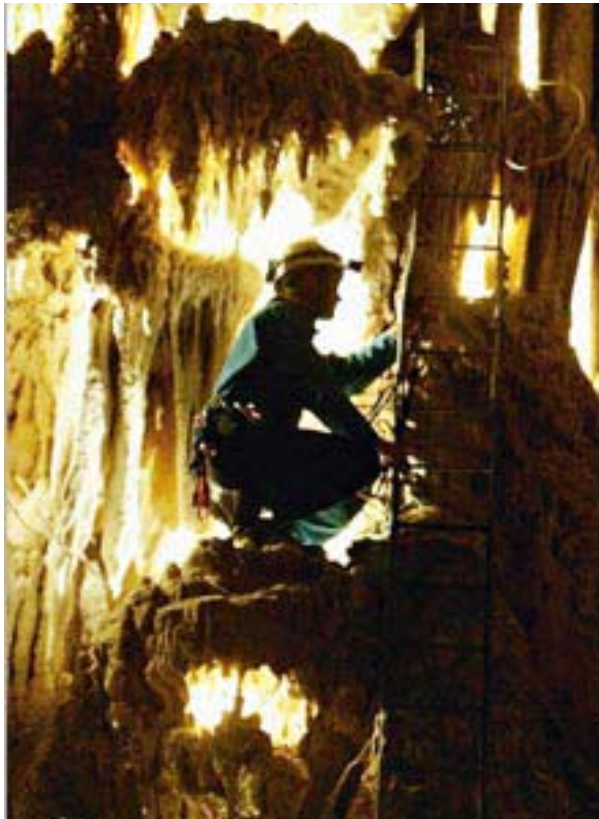
"During the work Russell Commins, a 26-year-old guide and speleologist, and his colleagues found a series of crystal-filled chambers that are not included on maps. Theatrical lighting has also been introduced to the Lucas Cave, which is Jenolan's most visited. Many of the ancient fittings removed during the work, including a light bulb from the 1920s and KB beer and pineapple tins used as light-bulb covers, have been denoted to Jenolan's museum.

"But the lighting project wasn't undertaken merely to make the cave look prettier. The new system means the bulbs need to be changed less often and, more importantly, that only about half the previous wattage is used.

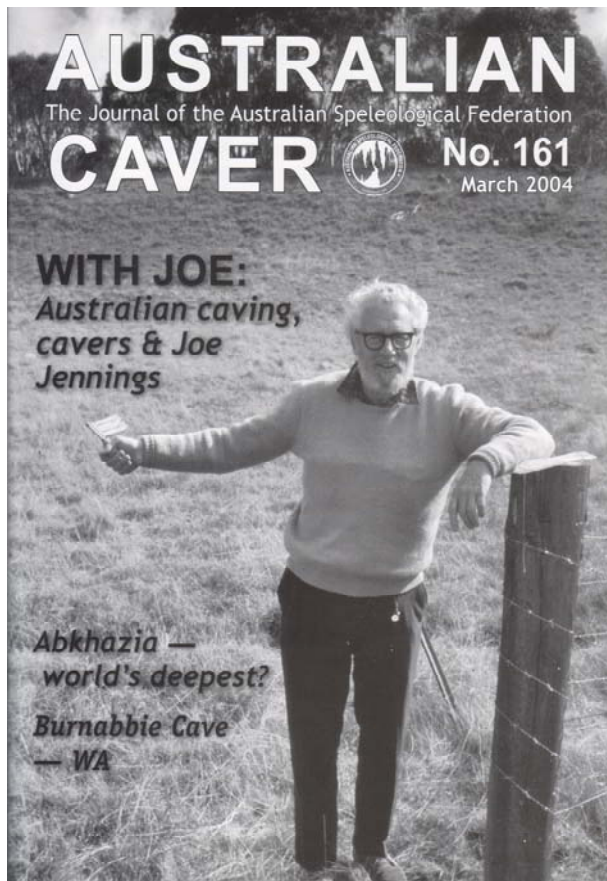
"It means that there will be far less chance of moss growing in the cave," Mr Commins said. "If you leave the lights on for too long the moss will break down the crystal, causing it to die. "The great thing about the Jenolan staff doing all the work [rather than external contractors] is that we're all in love with the caves and we're going to make sure that we do it in the best possible way."

"Later this year the master switch will be flicked and the Lucas Cave will be illuminated in white light, replacing the old yellow. And it may provide a ray of hope for Jenolan Caves, where annual visitor numbers have fallen by 50,000 over the past decade."

It is good to see Jenolan getting some favorable press. As for Lucas, while I haven't personally seen the upgrade as yet, all reports are most positive. The following image appeared with the article....



So, did you get the last edition of *Australian Caver* (No. 161 – March 2004)? It was mostly a tribute edition to the late doyen of Australian Caving, Joe Jennings. Wonderful stuff! It looks like this:



The next *Australian Caver* (No. 162) will also be a bumper issue. Do not miss it! Its contents include:

- Ningbing karst – Western Australia
- Al Warild's deep push in a Mexican cave
- Samoan karst
- Old magnesium illumination
- Copyright on cave maps
- Legends of Hibashi caves
- Mount Etna update
- Locating Barralong – Jenolan cave dive and more....

A new caver is born! Warmest congratulations to ACKMA Member Jo Vincent, and husband Jason, on the birth of Jessica Louise, on 28 April! As members will recall, Jo (nee Ingafield) is a former manager of Yarrangobilly Caves, and still has significant karst in her new NSW NPWS patch. The bouncing babe is below...!



A bit of Buchan Caves news. The complete relighting of the *Princess Royal Chamber* in Royal Cave has now been completed. I haven't yet been down to see the finished project, but I certainly intend to at some stage. The challenge for Stephanie Finn and Dale Calnin now is get the funding to relight the rest of the cave! Hopefully, having the 17th Australasian Conference on Cave & Karst Management locked in for Buchan in 2007 will provide a great spur for the money to materialise!



Libby Chandler, Mary Traves & Barry Richard
– ACKMA AGM weekend

The 2004 ACKMA AGM in progress



So! I bet you are sorry you missed it. The ACKMA Annual General Meeting weekend was held over 29/30 May at Mole Creek, preceded by the Cave Guides Workshop. I could only get to part of the last day of the latter, but what I saw was excellent and I am told it was a tremendous week with about 35 guides from around Australia present. A full report on the Guides Workshop will be in the next Journal.



Andy tells "The Story of the Frozen Chook"
at dinner – ACKMA AGM weekend

And the AGM Weekend itself? It was a huge success, – brilliantly organized by Cathie Plowman et al. At the Annual Meeting the current officers of the Association were re-elected, except that Ian Houshold joins the Committee (welcome Ian!) vice Andy Spate who did not re-nominate. Andy's contribution to ACKMA (he's been on the Committee in one role or another for fifteen years!) is legendary – we owe him a very great deal. Still, he hasn't 'disappeared' – I am told there is life after the ACKMA Committee – and we can look forward to many more ANDYSEZ's in these pages, and a solid contribution to ACKMA from Andy for many years yet! My report on the AGM weekend is elsewhere in these pages.

The following tidbit appeared in *USA TODAY* on 12/1/04: Tennessee – "Rep. Harry Brooks plans to introduce legislation imposing mandatory penalties on anyone who uses a sinkhole as a garbage dump. Brooks has worked with state environmental officials to craft revisions to Tennessee's solid waste disposal

laws. He's reacting to controversy over 800 truckloads of debris (my emphasis) from a Knoxville redevelopment project dumped into a sinkhole. Citizens claim that the pollutants contaminate their well water." Indeed!



Rauleigh Webb in photographic mode in
King Solomon Cave – ACKMA AGM weekend

And finally, for those (doubtlessly many) who consider me totally humourless (though never rumour-less!), I offer the following:

THE YEAR'S BEST [ACTUAL] HEADLINES OF 2003

Crack Found on Governor's Daughter
Something Went Wrong in Jet Crash, Expert Says
Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers
Iraqi Head Seeks Arms
Is There a Ring of Debris around Uranus?
Prostitutes Appeal to Pope
Panda Mating Fails; Veterinarian Takes Over
Teacher Strikes Idle Kids
Miners Refuse to Work after Death
Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant
War Dims Hope for Peace
If Strike Isn't Settled Quickly, It May Last Awhile
Cold Wave Linked to Temperatures
London Couple Slain; Police Suspect Homicide
Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges
Man Struck By Lightning Faces Battery Charge
New Study of Obesity Looks for Larger Test Group
Astronaut Takes Blame for Gas in Spacecraft
Kids Make Nutritious Snacks
Chef Throws His Heart into Helping Feed Needy
Local High School Dropouts Cut in Half
Hospitals are sued by 7 Foot Doctors

And this one has to be my favourite....
Typhoon Rips through Cemetery; Hundreds Dead



Members chatting in the Mole Creek Hotel
– ACKMA AGM weekend

