

# CAVE GUIDES WORKSHOP 2004

## "It was Heaps and Heaps & Lots and Lots of...Fun!!!"

- Scott Melton, Jenolan Caves

A session in progress  
- Cave Guides Workshop 2004



When I heard that the 2004 Cave Guides Workshop was going to be held at Mole Creek in Tasmania, I thought it would be an opportune time to revisit Tasmania after an absence of 17 years. It would also allow me to visit some show caves I had yet to see as well as 'put faces to names' of people I had only heard or read about in various publications. With that in mind, the organising began...

The first task was how to get there. Although flying is my preferred method of travel, I thought I would give the recently commenced Spirit of Tasmania III service from Sydney a go as this allowed me to take my car with me. While the ship was comfortable and the food great, all I can say is "b---y" waves!!! Arriving eight days before the start of the workshop allowed me the chance to explore Tasmania, catch up with relatives and friends and see sights such as Cradle Mountain, ABT Wilderness Railway, Cadbury and Port Arthur amongst others. I think the highlight of the trip however, was a light aircraft flight around the Freycinet Peninsular to see The Hazards and Wineglass Bay. My wanderings saw me arrive in Mole Creek on Sunday 23rd May for the start of what would prove to be a memorable week of fun, fellowship and activities.

The first activity was a two-day workshop presented by Professors Sam Ham and Betty Weiler. The theme of the workshop was "Thematic Interpretation and Guiding". It was certainly a very full-on presentation and enabled us to approach guiding in an alternate way. We divided into groups with each group having to develop and present a themed interpretation of a section of Marakoopa Cave. Our group "The Flakers" comprised of Kelli (Mole Creek), Dale (Chillagoe), Barbara (Naracoorte), Geoff (Gunn's Plains) and myself (Jenolan). Why "The Flakers"; well it had something to do with the large quantity of miniature flakes consumed by all, particularly me.

Each group's presentation was unique and showed that there was a variety of ways to develop and

present different themes in the same cave. Who could forget however, Barry's "*heaps and heaps and lots and lots and heaps and heaps of*" which somehow I think became the theme for the whole week at Mole Creek!

Wednesday saw the start of a variety of presentations on different aspects of guiding or cave related topics as well as visits to Marakoopa and King Solomon's Caves. At this point I must apologise if I do not mention the names of all who presented a topic or omit a presentation as I am working from memory. An informative talk was given on the life of Tasmanian glowworms, which certainly allowed us to appreciate those found in Marakoopa Cave. Another talk filled us in on the history of the local area from a tourism point of view with particular focus on the various caves in the district. While most visitors tend to think of caves at places like Naracoorte or Chillagoe or Buchan, for example, Ian Eddison from Jenolan gave an interesting talk on getting to know the surface features of your karst reserves. Ian was also one of three presenters in Marakoopa Cave, giving a talk on story telling as a means of interpreting caves. Mole Creek's resident artist Lila had some of us using musical sounds as a medium in the cave while others engaged in some creative writing.

Jay Anderson from Western Australia gave an informative talk on the problems of living on karst in Western Australia and the associated issue of ground water extraction, which is depleting caves in karst areas such as Yanchep. Jay, who is also involved with the ASF, informed us of their latest doings. Having visited numerous government and privately run caves in the United States, I gave a presentation on the different styles of cave interpretation and management that I encountered as well as my time spent as an exchange guide at Mammoth Cave National Park.

At one morning tea we raised over \$200 for the 'Big Morning Tea' which will aid cancer research. Well done to all those who made bids for the various items to help support this worthy cause. Being an aviation buff, I ensured that my bid was high enough to get Robyn's commemorative Jet Star First Flight pack. On Friday morning, Penny Davidson and Rosemary Black from Charles Sturt University utilised our collective knowledge to endeavour to come up with a set of vales that cave guides could use in plying their craft.

At the conclusion of the workshop, we were asked to vote on our favourite presentation. For myself, it was the one by Sarah Li (who introduced herself as 'Cheesecake') highlighting the differences between western and eastern ways of presenting cave tours. For those of us from Jenolan Caves, it certainly afforded us an insight into the 2:45pm Chifley Cave tour! I hope to visit China in the not too distant future and look forward to seeing the Chinese method of cave interpretation.

Sarah Li of the University of Tasmania  
presenting *Cave Interpretation in China*  
– Cave Guides Workshop 2004



One of the many highlights of the workshop was a visit to the Trowanna Wildlife Park, which allowed us an opportunity to observe and pat a Tasmanian devil. Lets all hope that a cure is found for the debilitating disease that is affecting devils in the wild and that they don't become extinct like the Tasmanian tiger. Another interesting field trip was to Circular Ponds to see the numerous sinkholes that fill up with water each winter as the water table rises. I think the theme for that particular visit was wet wet wet! There was also an opportunity for questions and answers with Andy Spate, which was well received by all.

Events wrapped up on Friday afternoon with many people departing for various points however, with

the ACKMA AGM the following day, new faces replaced the old. I won't describe the AGM weekend as that was aptly done by Kent in the June issue of the Journal.

As a first time attendee at a workshop (Gabfest), what did I get out of the week? Well, it was certainly a chance to make new acquaintances as well as renewing old friendships; it was beneficial to be exposed to new methods of guiding and presentation as well as being afforded the chance to see some stunning caves. The hospitality shown by the proprietors of the Mole Creek Hotel and the Mole Creek Guest House was legendary and above all, top marks to Cathie Plowman for organising a thoroughly entertaining week of activities. Thanks also to the many Mole Creek guides who made us all feel most welcome during the workshop. If you have yet to experience a workshop, may I suggest you sign up for the 2006 workshop in the equally stunning south west of Western Australia? Over to you Robyn!!

**A Postscript from Cathie Plowman:** At Thursday morning tea \$239.00 was raised in 30 minutes for the Cancer Council's "Biggest Morning Tea". Thanks to Andy Spate for counting the number of Tasmanian Tigers in the lounge of the Mole Creek Hotel for the guessing game. Thanks also to the very energetic Ian Eddison for auctioning off the quickly assembled donations that included items from possum-fur socks to bath bombs.