



Editorial Ramblings

Wow! And double Wow!! Wasn't the 17th ACKMA Conference at Buchan wonderful!! I must say that I, and more than a few others I suspect, went home after it for rest. Full reports are elsewhere in these pages. The quality and quantity (35 papers – a new record) was stunning! Several of these papers are published in this Journal, and others may well follow in the September Edition. I will remind paper presenters that their full papers are due into our Executive Officer, Dave Smith, by 30 June (that is this year, not next...), so they may be included in the Conference Proceedings. Your assistance would be much appreciated.

I must say it was absolutely great to see so many "first timers" at our Buchan Conference – 38 in all, nearly half of all attendees. Interestingly only 8 delegates were second time attendees. Perhaps we are scaring people off coming on subsequent occasions!?! More probably it has more to say about the fluidity of employment in caves and karst, and in some cases the funding (or lack of it) to get to our conferences. Still, we had a new attendance record, so we can hardly complain!

We now look forward to the 2008 ACKMA AGM Weekend at Capricorn Caves in Central Queensland in late April next year – which should be fantastic! The Draft Program is as follows:

Friday, 25 April

Attendees arrive, welcoming BBQ

Saturday, 26 April

9am ACKMA Committee meets
11am ACKMA AGM
12 noon Lunch
Early afternoon Tour Capricorn (show) Caves
Mid afternoon Tour Cammo Caves area (Mt. Etna Caves National Park), and possibly Ballroom Cave
Evening: Dinner at Capricorn Caves

Sunday, 27 April

Morning Visit Mt. Etna and Bat Cleft, and selected cave/karst sites within the Mt. Etna Caves National Park
Afternoon Attendees depart, for those staying over – other options.

It is hoped ACKMA will have access to the famed Resurrection Cave on Mt. Etna (not certain at this stage), and it is likely that for those staying over we will visit the Fire Clay Caverns at nearby Mount Morgan, with its stunning fossilized dinosaur footprints, on the Monday morning. Full details of the 2008 ACKMA Weekend, and a Booking Form, will appear in the next Journal.

I must issue an abject apology to Jay Anderson. Somehow, her article "Sharing Australia's Stories at Yanchep" (page 18-19, last Journal) was ascribed to Van Watson. It was certainly ascribed

to Jay on the proof – how the change occurred I still have absolutely no idea, despite inquiries at the printers. My sincere apology Jay.

A bit of unfortunate news. Geoff Schurr, manager of Norwest Adventures (South Island, NZ) had a heart operation in early March to correct an arrhythmia that had evidently been with him for many years. As a result, given the recovery time, he was unable to attend our recent Buchan Conference. I am advised the operation was most successful and that Geoff will be fine – which is great! – and he has faithfully promised he will be at the 18th ACKMA Conference at Margaret River in two years time!

Greg Middleton advises that Southern Tasmanian Caverneers (STC) has recently published *Southern Caver* #63 - which is entirely devoted to a reprint of Household & Bradley's (TPWS) 1994 "Newdegate Cave Rehabilitation Plan". This was a singularly fine piece of work when originally published (and still is!). The magazine can be downloaded FREE from the STC website: www.lmrs.com.au/stc (for a limited time; probably a couple of months). It's a pdf file about four Mb in size (due to quite a few colour pictures and plans).

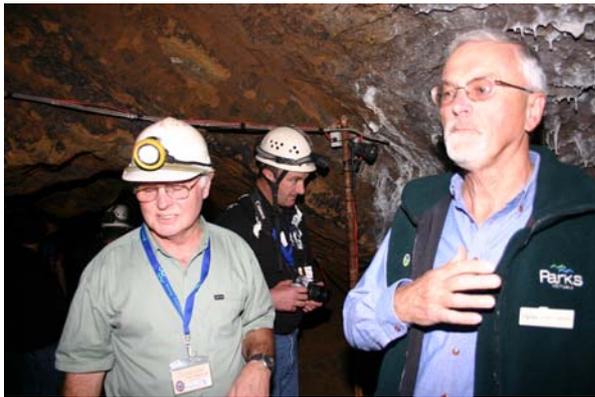
A bit of news from Joe Sydney of ASF he has asked me to pass onto ACKMA members. Joe advises that "The NSW Cave Rescue Squad has increased its potential yet again with the purchase of three French Nicola deep cave communication units. The NSW Cave Rescue Squad has always identified communications as a vital role in any successful rescue. These units compliment the Michie phone communication system the Cave Rescue Squad also has.

"In early March squad member Joe Sydney along with Australian National Cave Rescue Commission Chair, Ross Anderson, attended the New Zealand deep cave rescue exercise at Ellis Basin – Tomo Thyme cave. Their aim was to strengthen ties and increase regional support and logistics. Some caves on mainland Australia and Tasmania are deep too. As the NSW Cave Rescue Squad has been called to offer assistance in two major regional rescues, it saw the need to increase its communications effectiveness with the French Nicola deep cave communications units".



ACKMA member Joe Sydney with the Nicola Unit

Parks Victoria's John Senior (right), a Conference Organising Committee member, praying all will be well; with Steve Bourne (centre) and Peter Robertson, in Federal Cave – Conference 2007



The vagaries of living on karst (Part One)....

GUATEMALA CITY, Guatemala - A 330-foot-deep sinkhole killed at least two teenagers as it swallowed about a dozen homes early Friday and forced the evacuation of nearly 1,000 people in a crowded Guatemala City neighborhood. Officials blamed the sinkhole on recent rains and an underground sewage flow from a ruptured main.

The pit emitted foul odors, loud noises and tremors, shaking the surrounding ground. (Sounds like an ACKMA Conference! – Ed.) A rush of water could be heard from its depths, and authorities feared it could widen or others could open up. Rescue operations were on hold until a firefighter, suspended from a cable, could take video and photos above the hole and officials could use the documentation to decide how to proceed.



And Part Two – Speaking of that sinking feeling, the following article appeared in the Western Australian *Sunday Times* on 9 March 2007, entitled “Pool sinks out of sight”.

Mike Pilkington woke on Wednesday morning to find that half the pool in his Woodvale back yard had disappeared. Mr Pilkington said it was a close shave – his eight-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter were swimming in the pool the night before, and could have been killed. His daughter was sleeping in a back room near the pool at the time of the collapse.

“When I look at that and see how the water rushed over that sand, that would have created one hell of a suction and I don't believe anybody would have got out of there,” he said.

The chasm is growing. Yesterday it was a 15m by 7m ditch which was threatening to destroy the Pilkingtons' house and their neighbours' properties. Cave expert Lex Bastian believes it was probably an underground cave that caused the subsidence because the home was near a limestone ridge and there were small caves just 4km away.

“The property is positioned low enough to have been built on a hidden cave that might have fallen in,” Mr Bastian said. Mr Pilkington, a real estate agent, said the cavern's appearance was a mystery, and neither the City of Joondalup, the Water Corporation or insurance companies wanted to take responsibility. He fears he could lose his \$650,000 house, which was now unsaleable, and have to spend more money if his neighbours' properties were affected. His insurance company is refusing to pay for the \$100,000 damage. A structural engineer has braced the edge of the pool, but Mr Pilkington fears rain could collapse it.

The following old photo of Andy Spate, with a female companion, was noted on a wall at Homeleigh, the caver's house at Buchan, during our recent Conference. The photo is captioned below with his name, providing indisputable proof of its providence (!?).



Endnote.... In the last Journal I published a “Prize” Karst Crossword. I am still waiting for “the first neatest, correct entry” to arrive (or indeed any entry)! Clearly, it foxed more than some! Here is the crossword solution:

