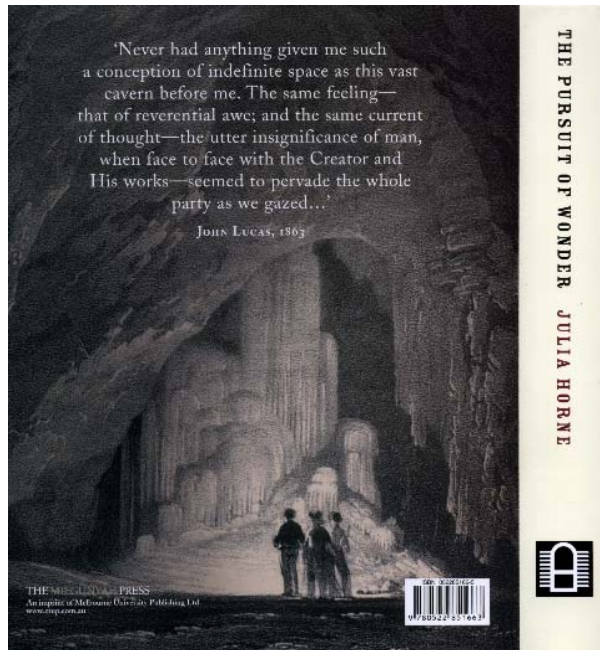


## BOOK & CD REVIEWS

*The Pursuit of Wonder: How Australia's landscape was explored, nature discovered and tourism unleashed.* Julia Horne. Miegunyah Press. Melbourne Univ. Publishing Ltd. Carlton, Vic. 2005. **Reviewed by Greg Middleton.**



Not the front cover in this case. Mitchell's drawing of a cave at Wellington graces the back cover of Horne's *Pursuit*...

Julia Horne, University Historian at the University of Sydney and a former president of JCH&PS, will be known to many of our readers for *Jenolan Caves: When the tourists came* (1994). In view of her researches into the history of Jenolan, it is hardly surprising that when she came to write a history of tourism in Australia – which is what *Pursuit of Wonder* is – it should include significant references to caves.

But this book is not about “the commercialisation of Australian travel and the development of a local tourism industry” – it is “concerned with the nineteenth century before the age of mass tourism” and it shows how the realisation of the beauty in the Australian landscape led not only to a tourism industry, but also to “an enduring interest in the natural environment.”

Horne carefully traces Australia's interest in travel and tourism directly from the European exploration of the continent. Navigators became explorers and as knowledge increased and dangers lessened, explorers became travellers. They became tourists in the latter part of the 18th century when the journey became a purpose in its own right, not just a means of reaching a destination.

While the book seeks to provide a national overview – and there are many examples provided from as far afield as Mount Wellington and the Kimberleys – its emphasis is inevitably on the south-east corner, especially the Blue Mountains of New South Wales and the Dandenongs of Victoria. This is where, after all, most of the people, and the action, were.

Caves get a mention very early in the book (p. 7) where Wellington, Jenolan and Naracoorte are cited as popular attractions because of their “beautiful underground displays of shimmering or glistening limestone deposits.” Interest in visiting caves began as early as the 1840s when “rough tracks took tourists into the valley of the Fish River Caves” (p. 151) but information on how to get there, how to organise a guide and accommodation relied largely on word-of-mouth for many years (p. 57). The celebrated journey to Jenolan in 1886 by 3 ladies, 4 gentlemen and a pack horse on the new bridle track from Katoomba is described and illustrated in detail (pp. 77-81) and mention is made of other similar trips in the 1860s and in 1886 (pp. 86-87). The early popularity of caves is demonstrated by the large investment in infrastructure which was made in the 1880s and 90s (£2500 for the bridle track to Jenolan and more to improve access within the caves, pp. 157-160). Early perceived difficulties for women visiting caves are discussed (pp. 165-169) while the prowess of Jeremiah Wilson as explorer was equated with Columbus and Cook. Among early guidebooks Cook (1889) and Foster (1890) are cited as popular examples (pp. 188, 195).

The chapter devoted specifically to caves, ‘How limestone caves became wonderful’, commences with a “partially fictionalised account of George Webb's excursion to the Maidin Cave (later Yanchep) in Western Australia” in 1841, a fortnight after an account of John Septimus Roe's visit was published. These “both drew attention to what would interest an educated public: the possible discovery in caves of fossils or other organic remains to help the advancement of science, and the appraisal of limestone formations as beautiful objects in impressive settings. Cave touring itself was not new, but there was a relatively new appreciation of caves as wonderful”.

Cave touring is traced back to visits by the upper classes to Pooles Hole and Peak Cavern in the English Midlands in the 18th century, though scientific studies in caves go back a further century in Slovenia. Buckland's *Reliquiae Diluvianae* (1823) is identified as inspiring interest in underground exploration (especially for fossil bones) by the British and presumably this transferred to the colonies. Wellington Caves felt the impact of this interest after Mitchell's discoveries of bones there in 1831 but Horne is more interested in the fact that subsequent visitors such as Hamilton Hume described the caves as “very large and beautiful” and James Backhouse referred to speleothems there as “stupendous and remarkably beautiful”. She claims accounts of caves to that time had not praised the calcite decorations and that “it is possible the idea of the beauty of stalactites and the like developed in Australia”. This idea seems to be based on the fact that not much was made of the ‘limestone features’ of Mammoth Cave in

Kentucky until the 1850s (p. 236). Horne seems unaware that Mammoth Cave is almost devoid of speleothems and ignores, for example, details reported by Shaw (1992, p. 176), that Berthold Buchner in 1535 described a cave in Germany as “lined at the top very handsomely with grown stones”; in the early 1700s, Shaw reports that “the speleothems in the cave of Antiparos in Greece were famous for their magnificence and extent” and he reports Tournefort in 1717 describing a “pyramid” [of calcite] as “perhaps the finest Plant of Marble that is in the world” with cauliflower ornaments “more masterly described than if a Sculptor had just given them the finishing touch” (p. 181). The suggestion that Australians were the first to appreciate the beauty of speleothems is simply fanciful.

Horne traces both early interest in depicting limestone caves in Australia in art and the growth in interest in visiting them. Her quote from Tenison-Woods (1858) reveals a true cave aficionado:

*Of all the natural curiosities a country can possess, none tend so much to render it famous as the existence of large caves. There is such an air of mystery in the idea of long subterranean passages and gloomy galleries shut out from light and life—so little is known of their origin, and they are generally accompanied with such beautiful embellishments of Nature—that one is never tired of seeing them, or of hearing the description of those that cannot be visited.*

With the growth of interest and knowledge, Horne notes that by the late 1880s a cave visit “had become a lesson in geology, an example of the wonder of nature and a statement about the almost unimaginable age of the earth” (p. 241). A detailed account is given of the development of facilities and staffing at Jenolan Caves in the

period 1866 to the 1890s. Other state governments engaged in similar development at Naracoorte Caves and at Yallingup and Yanchep. While Horne suspects that government funding for cave development was intended to have spin-offs for the local population, she also insists that the motivation was at least partly –

*colonial altruism – a public investment in providing opportunities for the edification of the people through inspiration in response to the wonders of nature.*

Other chapters address the [Blue] mountain resort, the development of nature tourism infrastructure, travel writing, mountain landscapes and the beauty of ferns. The text is, for the most part, well researched and the numerous sources well cited. But the text is also unusually well crafted, with each chapter being introduced by an explanatory note which would not have been out of place in the writings on which it draws. For example, the main chapter on caves is introduced with “In which the attractions of caves are explained and their development as public asset is discussed”.

The book is very well presented – Miegunyah Press strives for, and achieves, ‘beauty and quality’ – and the illustrations are well chosen, of the highest quality and carefully credited.

This is a book with much for cave-lovers – and especially those interested in people’s responses to visiting caves over the past century and a half.

#### Reference:

SHAW, Trevor R. 1992 *The history of cave science: the exploration and study of limestone caves, to 1900*. (2nd edition) Sydney Speleological Society: Sydney

***Bits of Buchan – 18th March 2007.* CD Rom. Elery Hamilton-Smith. Reviewed by Kent Henderson.**



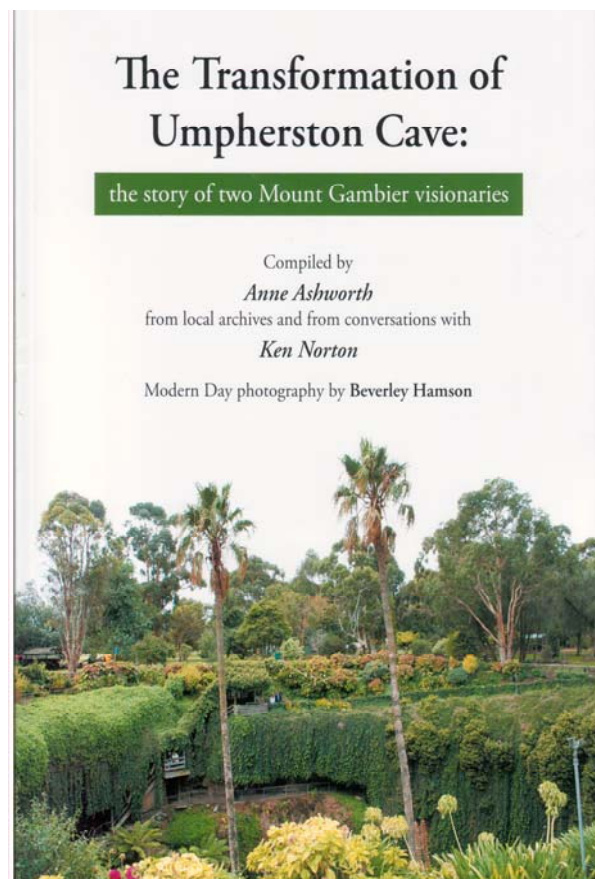
This presentation is based upon an exhibition that was mounted as a one-off event in the course of celebrating Frank Moon’s discovery of Fairy Cave on 16 March 1907. The exhibition was held

in the Buchan Caves Visitor’s Centre, and ran until the end of the 17th ACKMA Conference on 5 May 2007. It includes a variety of memorabilia from the collection of Elery Hamilton-Smith, but was developed in partnership with *Parks Victoria*, with Catherine Bessant of that organization being responsible for the production and presentation of the actual exhibits. Rauleigh Webb provided some of the photographs used in this presentation and the staff at Buchan Caves kindly assisted with the set up of the exhibition.

Buchan Caves were probably discovered very soon after white settlers arrived in 1838, but attracted little notice until the later part of the 19th Century. Elery’s wonderful exhibition is fully documented on the CD Rom, which lays out the complete European History of the caves and Caves Reserve, accompanied by innumerable images of old scenes, postcards and other memorabilia. To use a classic ‘Eleryism’, it is ‘wondrous’. This is a ‘much have’. Copies are obtainable direct from Elery at \$A15.00, including postage. To obtain your copy contact Elery at: <elery@alphalink.com.au>



*The Transformation of Umpherston Cave – the Story of Two Mount Gambier Visionaries.* Anne Ashworth. Printed Privately, 2006. A4, 86 pp, with colour cover. **Reviewed by Kent Henderson.**



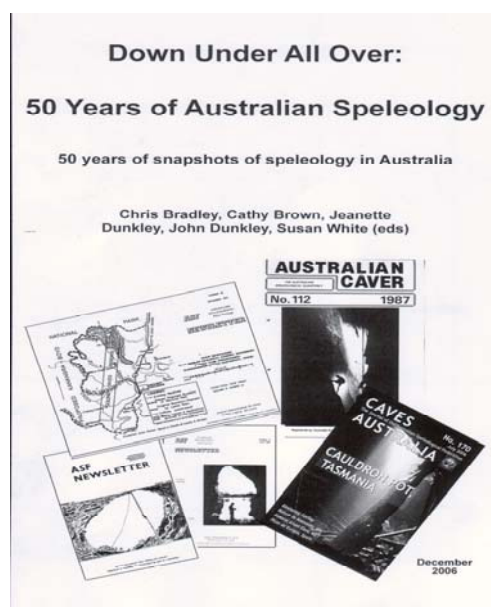
Umpherston's Cave (more correctly a cenote) is a cultural and tourist icon in Mt. Gambier, South Australia. Its modern European history is largely that of one man – Ken Norton – who was the driver in restoring the cave from a waste dump into the visual delight it is today.

In her excellent book, Anne Ashworth tells the story of cave through its original usage, dilapidation and final restoration by Ken Norton – who was Mt. Gambier's Citizen of the Year in 1989, and who in 2006 received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for this work.

The book covers the story of Ken Norton and of James Umpherston, the Scottish immigrant, who developed the 'sinkhole' in the 1880s and 1890s as a garden and boating lake. In that era the cave was indeed part-lake, but the 20th Century saw the lowering of the local water table, and the 'lake' disappear. To a fair extent Ken Norton restored the cave in accord with Umpherston's original vision. The book is replete with anecdotes, many historic photos, and is a joy to read.

Very limited copies are available. Enquiries can be addressed to ACKMA member Ian Lewis at <ian.lewis@centrelink.gov.au>. Ian presented an excellent paper entitled *Umphy and the Man* (on Umpherston Cave and Ken Norton) at our Buchan ACKMA Conference last May.

*Down Under All Over: 50 Years of Snapshots of Speleology in Australia.* Chris Bradley, Cathy Brown, Jeanette Dunkley, John Dunkley and Susan White (Eds). Australian Speleological Federation, December 2006. A4, 94 pp. **Reviewed by Kent Henderson.**



The book was is basically a history the Australian Speleological Federation and caving in Australia, published to mark the 50th Anniversary of ASF – pretty much 'everything you wanted to know'. It begins with *An Overview of the History of ASF* by John Dunkley, and then through successive articles tracks the strands of Australian caving history over the years.

Many of the articles and papers are reproduced from past editions of ASF's *Australian Caver*, and track significant cave discoveries and explorations over the last fifty years, and well as ASF's efforts (mostly successful, happily) in various cave conservation struggles. Some articles focus on the discovery exploration and protection of specific significant caves or caves systems, such as Resurrection Cave at Mt. Etna, the Bullita Cave System in the Northern Territory. Additionally, some articles deal with various issues that have arisen over the years.

One paper of particular interest (at least to me), written by Andy Spate, is *With Joe: Australian Caving, Cavers and Joe Jennings*. It expounds on the incredible contribution of Joe Jennings to Australian Speleology.

The rear of the book usefully lists ASF award recipients, ASF publications, and other statistics. In short it excellently achieves what it claims for itself – *50 years of ASF snapshots*. My only criticism is that the Table of Contents could well have been much broader, and the book would have benefited from an index. Still, the content is excellent, and this book is a must for anybody interested in Australian caving. I understand a few copies (only) remain. Inquiries to John Dunkley: <john.dunkley@effect.net.au>