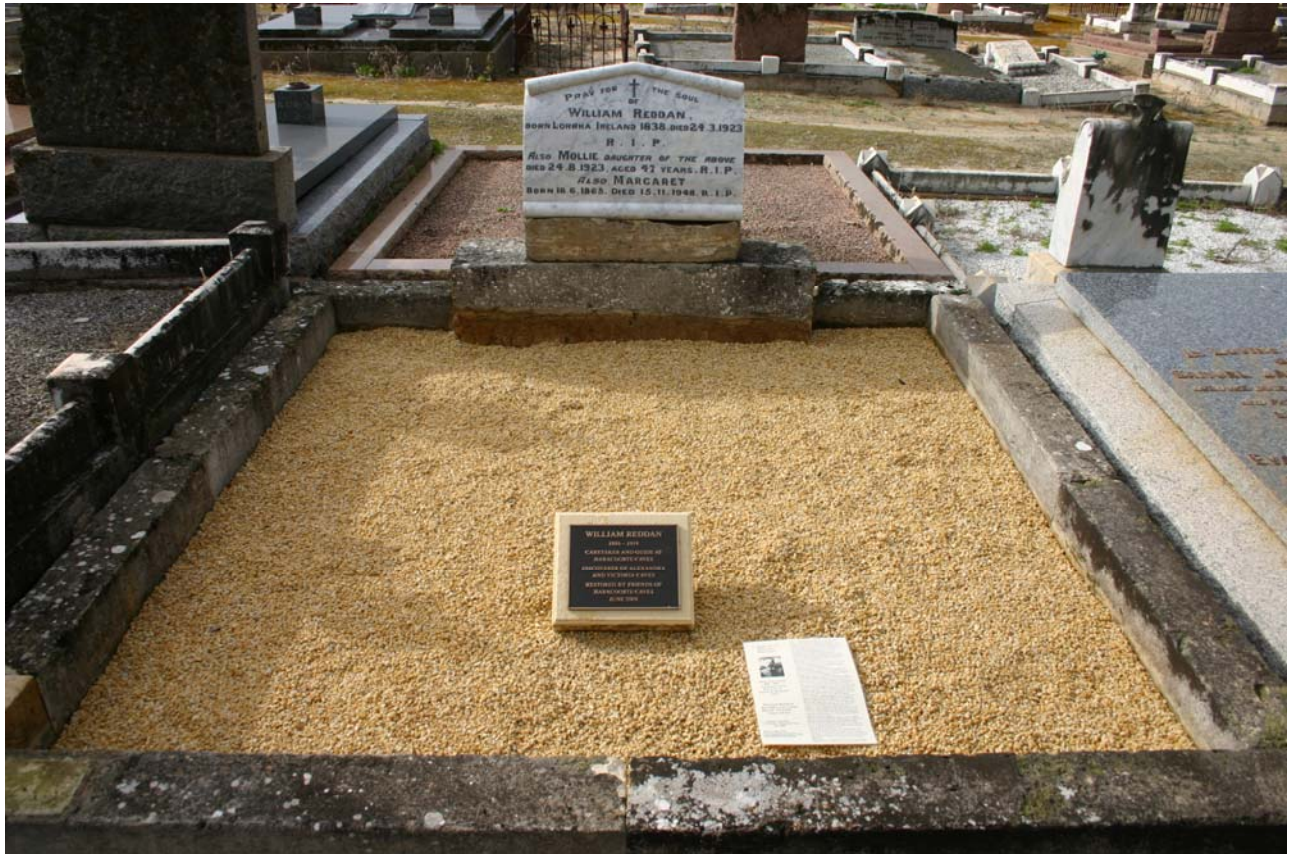


The restored grave of William Reddan



## A FLYING VISIT TO NARACOORTE

– Kent Henderson

Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith addresses the Friends of Naracoorte Caves on William Reddan



Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith and I made a 'flying visit' to Naracoorte on Sunday 16 May, driving over from Melbourne and back in the day!

The main purpose of the visit was to attend the unveiling of the restored gravesite in the Naracoorte Cemetery of William Reddan, the first manager of Naracoorte Caves.

The gravesite was restored by the Friends of Naracoorte Caves (FNC). The grave was 'discovered'

sometime ago by Scott Lobban, husband of FNC President Barb Lobban (who is also a guide at Naracoorte Caves). The site was very decrepit, with the writing on the headstone barely legible. FNC promptly took on the project of restoring the site.

The cost of doing so came in at \$2000, of which \$1000 was donated by the local council, with the balance coming from the FNC trust fund. FNC members weeded the site, removed the headstone and sent it to Adelaide for restoration, as well as putting new pebbles in and having a plaque made.

At 11am, about twenty FNC members gathered at the site for the 'unveiling'. Elery gave a short speech on Reddan, before unveiling the plaque (he gave members a longer talk on Reddan at lunch).

After the brief ceremony, Elery and I motored off to Victoria Fossil Cave to join Steve Bourne on a quick visit to the Fossil Chamber – to view the 'work in progress' in re-modelling the viewing area. Much has been done, mostly with volunteer labour.

A very large amount of rock has been removed, lowering the old viewing area significantly. Pavers have replaced the concrete pathway. The viewing area is now in two tiers, with permanent seating to be installed soon – 'benches' along the walls.

Imminently, steps will be installed to take visitors down to a small viewing platform at the head of the fossil bed, allowing them, for the first time, to see up the actual fossil bed itself.

New lighting will then be installed. The project should be finished within the next couple of months. It is all rather wonderful! Steve has foreshadowed a paper at our Margaret River Conference next year.



Steve and Elery in the remodeled Fossil Chamber in Victoria Fossil Cave

Steve Bourne at the heap of debris removed from the Fossil Viewing Area during the re-modeling



We then headed back to Caves Reserve proper for a picnic lunch with FNC members, before driving back to Melbourne. The Friends of Naracoorte Caves (an ACKMA member!) do a wonderful job – they are a very enthusiastic bunch indeed! I encourage ACKMA members to join. The cost is a mere \$10 per year, and they put out a regular newsletter of quality. If you wish to join send your \$10 and details to the FNC Secretary, Alison Rowe, P. O. Box 134, Naracoorte. S. A. 5271.

## A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM REDDAN

- Barb Lobban

Barb Lobban with Steve Bourne



William Reddan arrived in Australia from Lorrha, Ireland, in 1857 on the ship Tallyho. He settled in the township of Kapunda, north of Adelaide. On arrival he worked as a gardener at Moorooloo and developed a vineyard, then bought a farm at Kapunda in 1862. He married Rose Glasgo and together they had eight children with only Margaret, Mary and Agnes surviving until adulthood.

He left Kapunda to find a position at Naracoorte and with his gardening experience he found employment with the Woods & Forests Department. It is said that under Reddan's

management there where up to 180,000 trees planted including *Pinus radiata* and *Pinus insignis* in the Caves Range area. With the planting of so many trees it gave ideas to Naracoorte residents and the first trees were planted in the streets of Naracoorte.

Under William's management the caves became a place of interest and a venue for locals to use as a picnic area. Stoney Point Swimming Hole in the Reserve became a popular destination. He made every effort to publicize the caves to attract visitors from around the region.

The *Big Cave* (Blanche Cave) became a place of interest and a venue for local meetings, picnics and the occasional party. In the cave today we see evidence of these occasions with some of the wooden tables and benches in the first chamber, which are believed to have been made in William's time.

In 1886 William Reddan was appointed as guide and caretaker and he continued in that position until 1919. Within this time he discovered many new caves in the Reserve. In 1894 the government allocated him funds to search for caves in hope of finding new guano mining sites. A cave was found but unfortunately for guano miners there where no bats inhabiting the cave.

The restored headstone  
at William Reddan's grave.



What he had discovered was another wonder underground. The cave was developed with pathways and opened in 1897 as Victoria Cave.

There was no 'formal opening' of the cave but an announcement from Reddan himself was that visitors should call at his residence on the way to secure admission as the door was under lock and key.

Then in 1908 while walking through the Reserve he discovered a depression in the ground. After digging into the depression William, daughter Agnes and James Mason found that it led them through a pipe in the limestone and when more

soil was cleared access was gained further into the cave. The cost to construct a visitor access, wire netting to protect cave formations and steel piping was about three hundred pounds.

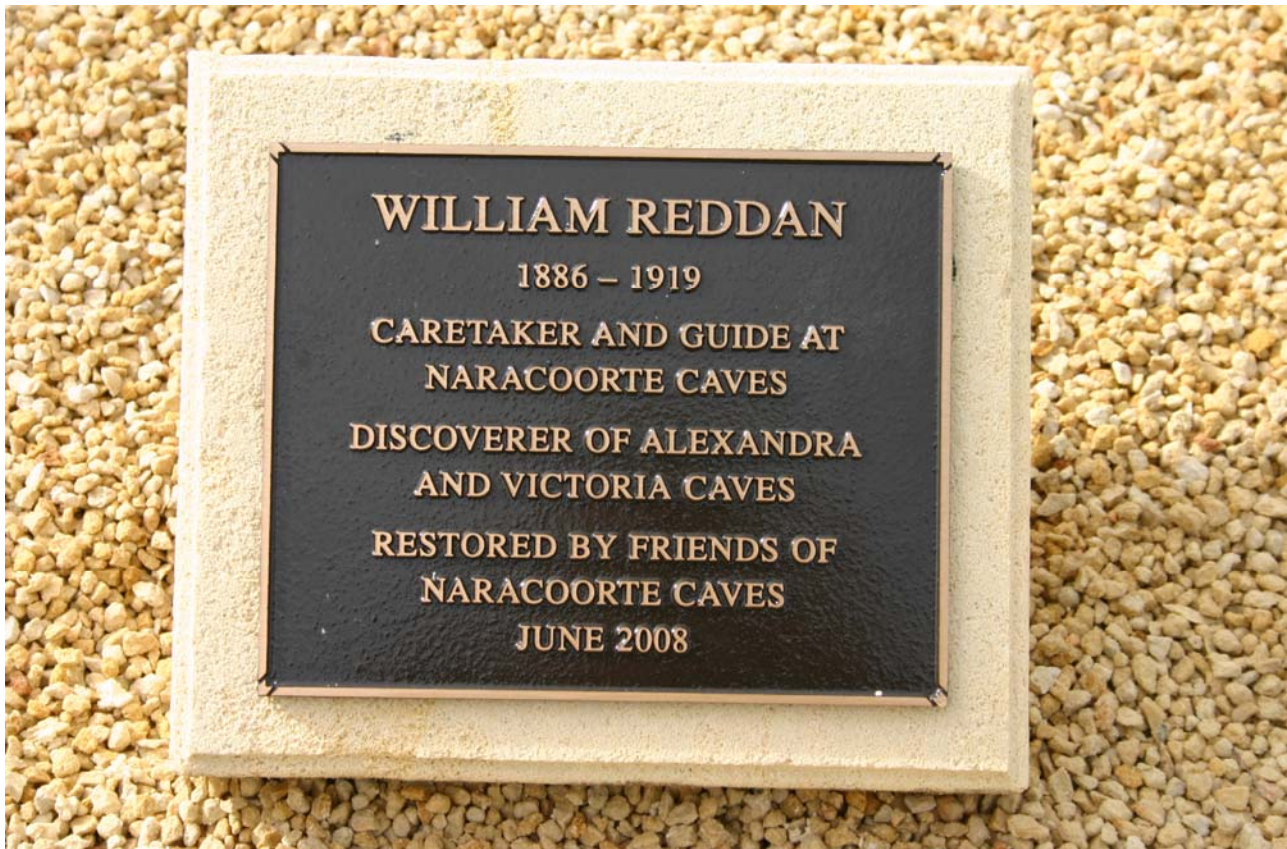
William was also responsible for the artificial pools in the cave as we see them today (as the *Fairy Castle*). Alexandra Cave, as this newly discovered cave was named, opened on 7 April 1909 with an official ceremony.

William himself used magnesium lamps to show the official party through. This was then followed by a walk through The *Big Cave* (Blanche Cave) that had been lit with six hundred candles.

In 1917 the South Australian Tourist Bureau took over the Reserve and it was known as a 'Public Pleasure Resort'. William Reddan remained caretaker until his retirement in 1919.

Unfortunately he did not enjoy a long retirement due to his death on 24 March 1923. He was buried in the Naracoorte Cemetery. In an obituary he is recorded as being 'a raconteur of great skill, his original and witty stories of the caves passed many a pleasant hour, a general favourite and being one of nature's gentlemen.'

William Reddan's early management of Naracoorte Caves established a site of world renown which is maintained as such to this day – a great legacy.



The plaque at the gravesite