

21 YEARS OF THE ACKMA JOURNAL

– Kent Henderson*

Early in 1988, not that long after the 7th Conference on Cave & Karst Management in New South Wales (the first I had attended), I had a telephone call from Ernst Holland. Ernie was then the inaugural president of the Australasian Cave Management Association (ACMA, as it then was), which was formed at the 7th Conference (previously, conferences had been titularly organized by the Cave Management Commission of The Australian Speleological Federation). He asked me if I was interested in editing a Newsletter for ACMA. After giving Ernie a 'why not?' response, I started on what has thus far been a twenty-one year road, in which I have seen both our Newsletter (subsequently Journal) and the Association itself, blossom and develop.

AUSTRALASIAN CAVE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION Newsletter

No. 1

June, 1988



While I had some experience in publishing, and was already a published author, I had never edited a Newsletter before. Secondly, at that time, my knowledge in all things cave and karst, while probably better than the average bear, was certainly considerably less than it arguably is today. Not unnaturally, I turned to where that knowledge was – our then Executive Officer, Elery Hamilton-Smith. Elery's support was then, as it continues to this day, marvellous.

Thus, in June 1988, the first edition of The ACMA Newsletter, what was to be a twice yearly publication, was unleashed on an unsuspecting audience. I recall that at the time there was some brief discussion as to a title for it, but as no consensus was forthcoming it was named generically, which it has effectively remained every

since. The initial edition was a massive 12 pages! Aside from a brief report by Ernie Holland, and a few paragraphs about the upcoming 1989 (8th) Conference at Punakaiki, New Zealand, Elery effectively contributed all four articles: An *Executive Officer's Report*, *Life before ACMA*, *Lighting Australian Caves*, and a *Review of Past Proceedings*. I also published a list of Australian members, which then numbered 49 – individual and 'corporate'. As an aside, the vast majority 'foundation' Australian members remain so to this day. The first edition consisted of only two photos, the front cover – an historic shot in Wilson's Caves at Buchan, and a photo of the delegates at the 7th Conference.

The second edition came out in December 1988, now up to a staggering 18 pages. Elery was still, at this stage, *de facto* editor (which he remained until about Edition 4 or 5). He supplied another historic shot for the front cover (the 1st extant photo of an Australian Cave – Blanche Cave at Naracoorte). The edition contained details and booking form for the Punakaiki Conference, a draft ACMA Constitution, and list of NZ ACMA members (then a mere 7, now over 40), plus a few new Australian members. Total membership had now rocketed to 61. This edition also contained an article on the Re-discovery of the Water Cave at Wellington, a piece on Blackwater Rafting and also on the closure of Ruakuri Cave, and an interesting paper (our first published) on *Mud Speleothems* by Ernst Holland. My then lack of knowledge came home to me with Edition 2. Elery gave me a brief article on Cave Shields in Lehman Caves, which I dutifully published. I then spent some months wondering where in Australia Lehman Caves were, until I finally woke up they were in America! Oh dear! I promptly decided I should start heavily reading up on caves and karst, which I have been doing ever since...

Edition 5 somewhat focused on Queensland-related articles, and I again published a list of members, now exactly 100. Issue 6 (December 1990), still at 28 pages, saw more of the *Current Karst Management series*, and focused on Buchan Caves, together with details of the upcoming Western Australia Conference. Interesting articles in Edition 7 included a piece on the *2nd Cave Guides Gabfest* in March 1991, the Jillabanan Cave (Yarrangobilly) re-opening, and various news items. Issue 8 (December 1991) reported expansively on the WA Conference. I was thereafter ACKMA Publications Officer, and officially on the Committee. Sigh... I was now using more cartoons in the Newsletter, and the layout was coming together more satisfactorily too, I felt.

Edition 9 focused on the Jersey Cave Centenary (Yarrangobilly Caves), and the Exit Cave Issue. It also contained an anecdotal article on the first *Australian Karst Studies Seminar*, held at Buchan, an event which continued biennially for some years thereafter. I found Edition 10 (December 1992) particularly interesting from my point of view. It

featured the first (and thus far only) cartoon or the front cover – a political cartoon from a Tasmanian Newspaper on the Exit Cave issue. It reported on Neil Kell's award of his Churchill Fellowship, and first published Ernst Holland's pivotal paper *Away with the Wires*. By this stage, I had made a conscious decision, as an 'editorial policy', to ensure (as far as possible) that all Australasian cave and karst areas 'got a mention' over time - a practice I have tried to follow ever since.

Edition 11 (June 1993) followed the massively successful Rockhampton Conference in May. It was great to have Olsen's Caves (as it then was – now Capricorn Caves) involved in ACKMA. More than two years previously on a visit to Rockhampton I somehow managed to convince Ken and Ann Augusteyn not only to attend the 1991 WA Conference but to bid for the next one – which, happily, they got. And it was most memorable – I doubted if the final Conference Dinner at the Crocodile Farm would ever be bettered (although the one at 16th Conference in 2005 came close!). In my view, ACKMA somewhat came of age at that Conference, with 62 delegates attending – an attendance factor maintained and exceeded at all subsequent Conferences. Perhaps 'older' members lament the passing of the smaller, more intimate conferences of the early days. Certainly as an organization, to this extent, we may be considered victims of our own success, but personally I feel the more people, professional and otherwise, involved in promoting the Aims of the Association, the better. And looking back at the progress Australasia has made in cave and karst management over the last twenty-one years, at least, I think it would be hard not to agree with that view.

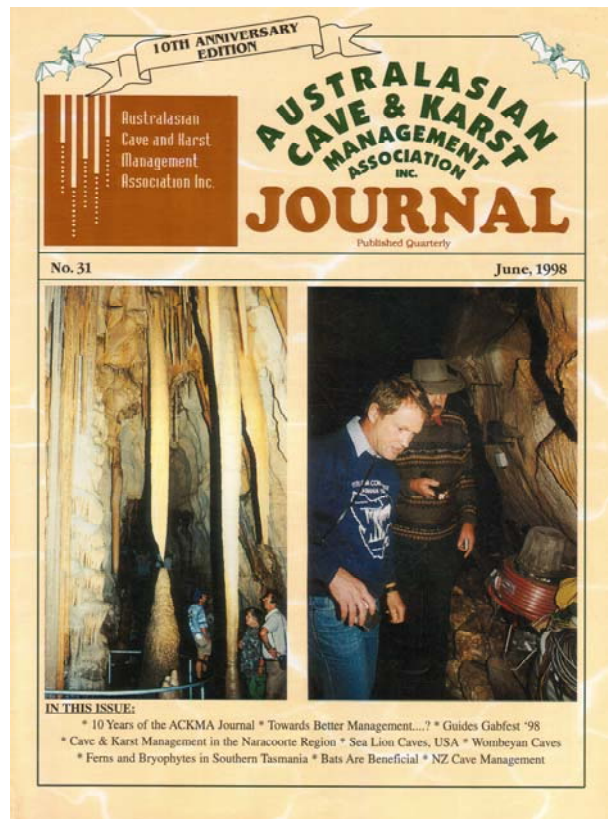
Historically, I think Edition 11 was probably one of my favourites. It saw the first double-page post conference photo spread, a feature which has subsequently been maintained. It also contained some classic individual photos and cartoons, such as Elery next to a water trough, John Watson's rabbit ears, Peter Dimond and the wallaby, and Kevin Kiernan on the toilet in Flogged Horse Cave. Yes, there were several serious articles too! On a matter of trivia, this issue also saw the demise of the speleothem corners on pages, following ongoing complaints from Kevin Kiernan, as noted in his well known (unpublished, 1993) seminal paper: *The Horrors of Speleothem Border Drawings in Cave & Karst Newsletters*. I don't know if he was too happy with new bat borders either, which I have maintained ever since. No pleasing some people..!

Edition 12 was something of a wind change in some ways. The Committee had now agreed that ACKMA was financially strong enough to go to four editions of the Newsletter per year. Two newsletters were to be 'full' editions, while the remaining two were to be minor 'desktop' editions. Edition 12 was the first of the latter. I structured Minor Editions as containing Committee reports, and a section called *Around the Caves*, basically an expanded editorial.

The next full Edition (#13, December 1993) focused on New Zealand, with an important paper by Elery on *Future Planning for Waitomo*, and various other

NZ articles. Also in this edition my Editorial moved to the centre pages for the first time, where it has mostly remained since. Kevin Kiernan reckoned that my editorial was too lowbrow for a quality Newsletter, but that if it was in the centre pages he could remove it before giving a copy to important people. I have always tried hard to humour Kevin, so such was done, although he never has told me how often, if at all, he has dismembered his copy.

Following another minor edition (#14), Edition 15 (June 1994) saw the Newsletter permanently renamed as *The ACKMA Journal*. This change was originally envisaged as a way of distinguishing between the two major (journal) editions per year, and the two minor (newsletter) editions. However, Editions 16 and 18 were to be the last minor editions, with a full Journal published quarterly since Edition 17. Amongst other matters, Edition 15 reported on the Victoria Cave Centenary Celebrations at Naracoorte, on Neil Kell's Churchill Fellowship experiences in America, on the 1994 Cave Guides Gabfest at Jenolan, and on the 1994 ACKMA Committee Meeting on 14 May in Sydney.



Edition 17 (December 1994) contained two definitive papers – one by Tom Aley entitled *Some Thoughts on Environmental Management as Related to Cave Use*, and Elery Hamilton-Smith's *Carrying Capacity in a Social Context*. It also featured Tasmanian-related articles in the leads up to the Tasmanian Conference. Edition 19 was largely a retrospect on the Tasmanian Conference, with anecdotal articles and a post conference centre page photo spread. It also featured an outstanding paper by Dave Gillieson on the *Rehabilitation of the Lune River Quarry, near Exit Cave, Tasmania*. Edition 20 contained an important paper by Ernie Holland –

Development Why, How and What For? – and a range of other articles.

Edition 21 (December 1995) saw Ruth Lyons write extensively on Radon, then a hot (or at least radioactive) issue. It also contained a report on Naracoorte's newly opened Bat Cave Television Centre, and an extensive interview with Brian Clark. Edition 22 dealt with Elery's Peregrinations, a report on the Naracoorte Karst Studies Seminar, and contained a classic photo of Mick Chalker in the arms of 'three beauties'. Edition 23 featured Stefan Eberhard's definitive paper on *Cave Fauna Management*, a report on the new Phosphate Mine 'Cave' at Wellington, as well as an excellent paper by Mia Thurgate on Stromatolites.

Edition 24 was a bumper 44 page edition and focused on Waitomo, Queensland bats, ACKMA's *Position Paper on Radon*, Bungonia Caves, and the important issue of *Cave Guiding, Accreditation and Competencies*. Edition 25 saw a somewhat controversial article on the Augusta-Margaret River caves and karst, amongst others, and Edition 26 featured several lead-up papers (to the Waitomo Conference) on New Zealand karst, and a report on the Official Opening of Caveworks at Margaret River.

Edition 27 (June 1997) was a voluminous 52 pages, and reported extensively on the just-happened Waitomo Conference and Post Conference Study Tour – another triumph for ACKMA. It also featured important papers by John Ash on Cave Development, and the definitive *Best Practice in Visitor Management* by Elery Hamilton-Smith et al. Edition 28 contained a report on the Redevelopment of Junction Cave at Wombeyan by Terry Matts, an anecdotal article on Te Anau Caves, and an interesting contribution by Dennis Rebbechi on the *Privatization of Caves*, amongst others.

Edition 29 (December 1997) was another favorite of mine, I suppose mostly because I enjoyed seeing my extensive paper on *Irish Cave Management* in print. Edition 30, was possibly the most controversial to date. It contained an article entitled *New Tourism Arrangements at Wombeyan?* – written by a 'Team of Special Correspondents'. It was a spurious article suggesting Wombeyan was about to become a destination for nude tourism!

The actual authors, I can reveal – 11 years on from the event – were Dave Gillieson, Mike Lake and myself, and it was concocted during the *4th Karst Studies Seminar* at Mole Creek Caves, which was also reported upon in this issue. The article was controversial, to say the least. Many tried to identify the location where the accompanying photo was taken – there were many theories that came to my ears, the most popular being a cave at Abercrombie. Actually, it was lifted from a French caving book that featured a large number of nudes in caves. While I am tempted to re-publish it herein, I will bow to prudence, and resist the urge.... Newer members, without a copy of Journal 30, who are desperate to read it, can contact me – I may be able to help...

Edition 31 (June 1998) saw the 10th Anniversary of the Journal, and our first full colour cover. It featured Elery's important paper *Towards Better Management*, and Reviews of Cave and Karst Management in South Australia and in Tasmania, and New Zealand (by Grant Gartrell, Chris Sharples and Dr Ruth Lyons, respectively); a Chronological History of ACKMA to that point, and our first-ever definitive paper on cave guiding – *A Methodology for Developing Theme Tours* – by Rob Whyte.

The next eleven years saw the Journal go from strength to strength. I could continue my dilation on the contents of each edition, but this article would become overly long, and even more tedious to read than it currently is! The size of the Journal has usually remained in the 44-48 page range, with the odd 52 page edition. Colour covers have been occasionally used – often for an edition immediately after a Conference.

Editions 49 (December 2002); #51 (June 2003); #59 (June 2005); #67 (June 2007), #71 (June 2008) and of course this current edition, all feature colour covers – and occasionally a colour centre spread as well.

In conclusion, I must say that I have greatly enjoyed editing the ACKMA Journal over the last twenty-one years. I have been particularly pleased to see the expansion of our Association over that time. Clearly, the membership growth of ACKMA and its positive influence have been tremendous, and the source of a great deal of personal satisfaction. I would like to sincerely thank those people who have assisted me in my role over the years – the members of ACKMA.

A Journal cannot exist without support and contributions, and I have always received both in great abundance (even if I regularly terrorize some of you!!), for which I am extremely grateful.

I must particularly thank Elery Hamilton Smith, Andy Spate, Steve Bourne and Grant Gartrell for their unfailing support over the years, not to mention my main sub-editor for over ten years, Dianne Vavryn (assisted by her husband, Joe).

Finally, I must also thank the management and staff of Rowick Printers, at Geelong, who have been with us from the beginning. In particular, I would like to thank Tanya and Jodie Carroll, Rowick's proprietors. Over the years we have come to understand each other's production needs very well, which makes publication easy and a pleasure.

So! Let's hope the next twenty-one years (at least!) of the ACKMA Journal is as fruitful as the last – I am certain it will be. Should members be silly enough to continue re-electing me as their Publications Officer, I suppose I shall continue (God willing) for a few more years yet...

* This article is an updated version of my article *Ten Years of the ACKMA Journal*, which appeared in Journal No. 31, June 1998.