



VALE ROY SKINNER

The Grandfather of ACKMA

– Elery Hamilton- Smith

ACKMA members, in particular, will be very saddened to hear of the death of Roy Skinner, former Superintendent of Hastings Caves in southern Tasmania (1954–1974), who died peacefully in his sleep at Dover on Sunday morning, 15 February 2009. He was in his 83rd year.

It was back in November 1963 when I first met Roy Skinner, who was then manager of the Hastings Caves.

I remember well my surprise at finding a cave manager who was not only doing a great job, but who was actually genuinely interested in caves! Such managers were a rare species back in those days.

So, I kept in touch. Later on, Roy decided to apply for a Churchill Fellowship and I did what I could to encourage him and to support his application. He was successful in 1971, and so was able to visit New Zealand, Japan, U.S.A., Europe, Lebanon and South Africa.

On his return, the Tasmanian Government remained lukewarm about his proposals for improving cave management in Tasmania, and so he eventually resigned, but then operated adventure tours in Exit Cave for a few years. However, John Dunkley and I convinced the Australian Speleological Federation that we should convene a conference for cave managers, with Roy as keynote speaker.

So, the first Australian Conference on Cave Management took place at Jenolan, with the support of the then N.S.W. Department of Tourism.

This laid the foundation for the series of conferences, which in turn resulted in the establishment of ACKMA.

Roy had not only set a pace for others to follow in cave management, but he could genuinely be seen as the grandfather of ACKMA.

His vision and inspiration might have fallen on somewhat barren ground in Tasmania, but he did help to fire a whole generation of cave managers with new enthusiasm.

He also undertook the management of Exit Cave at Ida Bay and thus established the first cave adventure tours in Australia.

We owe Roy a great deal, and so it was with great pleasure that I was able to announce at the recent conference dinner that he had been unanimously elected as a Fellow of ACKMA in recognition of his founding role.

He was ACKMA's special guest at the Conference Dinner in Southport during the 11th ACKMA Conference in 1995.

