



Editorial Ramblings

Well, our wonderful Margaret River Conference is behind us – it is now onto Mulu next April! Of course, the Screed and Booking Form was inserted in the last Journal, but if you have lost it, you can download it from the ACKMA Web Site. Over SIXTY-FIVE members have already registered for Mulu – if you plan to attend and would prefer not to sleep under a tree, I suggest you **QUICKLY** copy their example...

Speaking of our Margaret River Conference, I have published herein selected papers delivered thereat. More will appear in the December Journal. While they will appear on our CD Rom *Proceedings* in the fullness of time, those I have selected do have an immediacy – hence their Journal inclusion.

Members may recall my article on the Pre-Conference Study Tour Day at Yanchep Caves in the last Journal. A couple of members have suggested I was a bit 'tough' on Crystal Cave in particular, as indeed I was. As I suggested in the article, I am not one for mincing words. That said it does need to be added that the current staff are in no way responsible for the 'sins of their predecessors' – but they are to the extent of their influence responsible for the future...

Undoubtedly what they need to focus on, and push upon the 'powers that be' – as I am sure they will – is that plan for the future, and the necessary funding to see it through. I am advised that a management plan for Yanchep is long overdue. It has been in the 'not yet draft – about to be released to the public' stage for over five years, and the 'old' Management Plan is now over ten years past its end date. This is clearly totally unacceptable.

One could understand, perhaps (even with the lack of 'resources' issue that governments always plead they have), that 1-2 years over the expiration date of a plan may be understandable. But ten years overdue? This is absolutely appalling. It needs to be noted that this does not just apply to Yanchep – two major karst areas in Western Australia are without up-to-date management plans.

I am aware that many involved with Yanchep are acutely embarrassed about this. Yanchep, most unfortunately, has suffered considerable staff turnover and ongoing lack of finances to devise and implement a management plan – particularly in relation to karst management objectives.

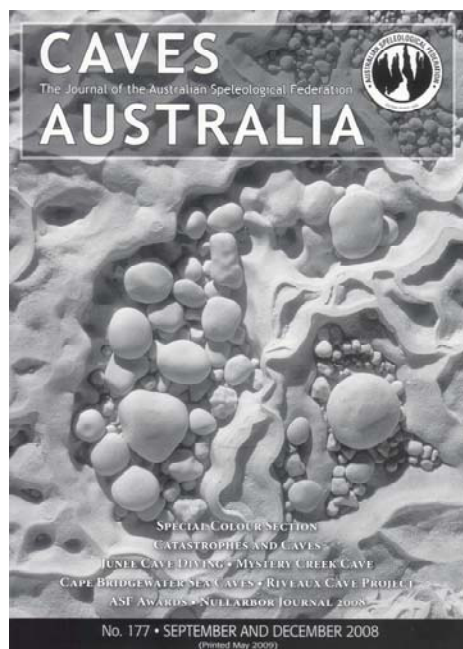
Needless to say, the management plan does need progressing as soon as possible, with the widest possible input. It is urgently needed, and must be the first focus. Let's have the horse, then the cart. And very soon.

I must add that WA is not alone in the 'absent Management Plan' league. The Mt Etna Caves NP, near Rockhampton, is also devoid, and it has not had an up-to-date Plan for about ten years, I am advised. It is urgently needed, particularly given the recent additions to the NP of the Cammoo Caves area, and now a significant slice of the Mt Etna karst from the mining company...

Did you know that Andy Spate has a secret? Indeed he has! I have been recently advised that Andy has in the past 'starred' as a yodeler in Switzerland. The proof follows...



The latest Edition of ASF's *Caves Australia* is out, and excellent it is – they have even emulated the ACKMA Journal with a full colour centre spread! It is 44 pages, and features a number of interesting articles, including *Conversation on Conservation: Catastrophes and Caves* by Nicholas White; *Cape Bridgewater Sea Caves* by John Webb, *Junee Cave Diving* by Richard Harris; *Mystery Creek Cave – An exercise in exploring vertical caves from the bottom up* by Alan Jackson; *A Year in the Life of a Cave* by Stephen Blanden, and *the Riveaux Cave Project: A history* by Stephen Bunton. All are a very good read.



An ACKMA icon has celebrated a milestone birthday! The following article appeared in the *Buchan & Gelantipy Times* on 13 July 2009:

Ranger celebrates birthday in the Caves

Ranger-in-charge of Buchan Caves Reserve Dale Calnin has 'lived and breathed' his workplace since he went to work in the caves kiosk at 15. Recently, his workmates surprised him with a 50th birthday party in the Royal Cave.

Staff at the caves decided to honour Dale's commitment to his work at the park by holding a celebration underground. One staff member said planning to arrange the party without Dale's knowledge took, 'lots of conspiracy and underhanded dealing'.

After a birthday morning tea with staff in the reception centre, Dale was lured down the caves by a call from chief ranger, Will McCutcheon, who arrived with business manager, Penny Middleton. To distract Dale, Will said, he had a, "major issue" to discuss and wanted to show Penny the recent improvements.

Staff members then closed the kiosk, disappeared into a chamber in the cave and hid

until the three made their return journey. The team surprised Dale with the light from 60 big church candles, lots of little cupcakes with candles and live music.

A guitarist and clarinet backed the singing of happy birthday and local musician, Billy Abbott played the clarinet classic 'Strangers on the Shore', which resonated through the chamber.

The entire staff at Buchan Caves Reserve stress their loyalty and sense of ownership regarding this spectacular local attraction. They wanted to give Dale something very special to remember and by his reaction they are sure he will not forget this birthday.

The party was a history-making event because it was only the second time in almost a century an occasion like this had been held in the caves. Fairy Moon was married in the Fairy Cave in 1920. Dale had a full week of celebration sharing a big party with his father Bob on Saturday, June 20, Bob's 80th and Dale's 50th. The group enjoyed a barbecue lunch in the park after the surprise party.

Well done Dale – and warmest birthday wishes from all ACKMA members. He doesn't look a day over ninety, either!



Ranger-in-charge of Buchan Caves Reserve, Dale Calnin, was surprised by caves staff and community members with a special venue to celebrate his 50th birthday.

Some great news from Yarrangobilly Caves in New South Wales. Caves Manager, George Bradford, and his partner Nicola Beckett, were delivered a bouncing baby girl – Zoe Isabela – on 16th July. Mother and baby are well, and George is starting to sober up... Warmest congratulations George and Nicola!

While on New South Wales, there is still no appointment of a new Manager at Wombeyan Caves, vice Mick Chalker, retired. This matter, to say the least, is getting very 'long-in-the-tooth'... Unfortunately, two of Wombeyan's show caves – Kooringa and Junction – have been 'off-line' for quite some time following electrical problems. This is a serious cause for concern – hopefully all these matters will be fixed very soon....

Still on New South Wales – Jenolan continues to blossom. A few \$ million more has reportedly 'hit the kitty' for updating Caves House, and work on it is happening apace. Doubtlessly, when Caves House is up to par, attempts will be made to once again put it in the hands of the Private Sector. The administration of the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust is imminently to move from Bathurst to Jenolan, and offices behind Caves House are being prepared. This obviously makes economic sense.

The Orient Cave is now fully re-lit, and all reports are that it is great (as you'd expect!). Evidentially, the original plan to do Ribbon Cave at the same time didn't happen (unfortunately), although the Ribbon lighting isn't that much out-of-date. The next lighting challenge is to finish both River and Imperial Caves. Of Jenolan's ten show caves that will, effectively, leave only Jubilee Cave not up to scratch – a great effort considering the sorry state of most Jenolan show caves only a few years ago.



A view inside the Mirra Mirra 'cave'.

I have very often found that fact is stranger than fiction... There is a new 'show cave location' in Gippsland, Victoria. First you'd heard of it, eh? Here is the blurb:

Mirra Mirra is located 90 minutes from Melbourne on 22 acres of bush land, and is a collection of three self contained, two bedroom fantasy retreats where guests have an opportunity to 'Live in Art'. On entering the retreats, the colours and beauty will take your breath away. Each retreat has been

designed to set your imagination wild and to capture the light, views and beauty of the natural environment that surround. The perfect setting for total relaxation, rejuvenation and romance.

By entering the doorway in the mouth of Magog (the cave entrance) and descending the winding steps lit by fire lanterns, you will find yourself in an underground world of intrigue and surprises. Detail is everything with colored up-lights creating the beautiful patterned glow and look of natural stone whilst the sound of water has also been added to truly enhance the feel of living underground. Cool in summer and yet warm in winter, the Cave has magnificent views of the ranges from its picture windows that have been carved in to the hillside and is the ideal place for a relaxing or romantic weekend away.

Facilities include large living area with TV, DVD Player, and stereo; Log Fire and Gas Heater, generous kitchen, two feature bedrooms – each truly unique with the unusual "Bedwomb" (double bed) or the "Master Bedroom" (aka "The Naughty Room"), (queen size bed), with its chains and leather is a little bit naughty...

All this can be yours for \$490 for a weekend, cheaper during the week! So, I have no doubt they will be inundated with bookings from ACKMA members. Can't wait to book, can you? The chains and leather and the 'Naughty Room' sounds particularly exciting...(!?)

See: <http://miramira.com.au/the_cave_house>



The Magog or cave entrance – Mirra Mirra

And finally.... Some members may be aware that the name 'Jenolan' was used in one of the episodes of the TV series – *Star Trek The Next Generation*. This came about, I understand, when some of the writers of the series were in Sydney for a Star Trek convention and took a trip to Jenolan. Later when writing up an episode they chose the name for a spacecraft – the *USS Jenolan*. Details can be found at: http://memory-alpha.org/en/wiki/USS_Jenolan

You can also, if you wish, download a PDF and make a paper model of your very own USS Jenolan! I have no doubt many members will be onto this (!?)
See: <http://www.mediafire.com/?3zjdiymdmyh>

