



Editorial Ramblings

So! ACKMA at Mulu has come and gone. Wow! There is plenty written elsewhere in this Journal on the event, plus the odd (sic) photo!! – so I will not iterate here – other than the collateral comments below....

But is onwards and upwards!! – to the **19th Australasian Conference on Cave and Karst Management**. The 19th ACKMA Conference will be held at Ulverstone, Tasmania from **SUNDAY 8 MAY 2011 to FRIDAY 13 MAY 2011**. Only about eleven months to go! It will be fabulous!! Full Details AND the Booking Form will appear in the next (September) ACKMA Journal.

I again remind members of two important upcoming events in particular. **The 13th Cave Guides Gathering** will be held at Wellington Caves, New South Wales, from **25 to 27 July**. This biennial event is a great professional development (not to mention networking and social) event for guides, and I again strongly exhort all managers to send as many of their staff along as possible. The Booking Form and full details were inserted in the last Journal.

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON VULCANOSPELEOLOGY



The other big event in Australia this year is the **14th International Vulcanospeleology Symposium**, at Undara Lava Tubes, Queensland – from **12 to 17 August**. Full details, and the booking form etc, can be found at the following web site: <<http://ackma.org/14VSC/>>

New Zealand continues to bubble! The new multi-million dollar infrastructure at the Glowworm Cave at Waitomo marches towards completion, and the Official Opening by the New Zealand Prime Minister is muted for early September (but not yet confirmed...). Steve Bourne is likely to attend to officially-represent ACKMA, with me in tow for the photos!

On the wonderful West Coast of New Zealand's South Island, ACKMA member Phil Schramm has a new 'mine and cave based' adventure tourism operation on the go, which recently excited the local press, and prompted a quixotic cartoon to go with it! Additionally, Mt. Arthur, in the Takaka Karst near Nelson in the north-west of the South Island, has seen the recent discovery of New Zealand's deepest cave, by noted Kiwi Caver Kieran McKay and his team – again attracting considerable press interest. Kieran has been caving for many years – I well remember him literally abseiling out of the ceiling into the *Waitomo Museum of Caves* auditorium at the Opening of the 12th ACKMA Conference at Waitomo in 1997! These press reports follow below...



A group of Mulu guides (with a 'ring in'...)

A few weeks prior to ACKMA's appearance at Mulu, Brian Clark went back to Vietnam to view various caves therein – particularly, I understand, to check out news of new cave discoveries purportedly bigger than 'his' caves at Mulu (which, thanks to Brian's creative mathematics – he advises they are not....! Hmm...). He was, shall we say, a tad unimpressed with the quality of Vietnamese cave management and guiding, and intimated as much to me in a subsequent email.

Now, the average person would sigh, and that would be that – 'what can one do'? But Brian is considerably above average (don't tell him I said so...). He promptly decided to do what he could to significantly increase guiding and management standards in Vietnam. As ACKMA attendees at Mulu all noted, four cave guides from Vietnam were hovering where ever most us went – they were at Mulu for several months of training under Brian's tutelage. Brian says: *'The Vietnamese connection came about through my participation in a workshop in Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park (PNKB) in early 2009 followed by a study tour by regional and park management people from the Phong Nha area to Mulu in late 2009.*

'The Federal Republic of Germany through GTZ (see: <http://www.gtz.de/en/>) provided the funding for planning and management capacity building in PNKB and they asked me how to go about an improvement of guiding. The four people here are being trained as trainers to go back – accompanied initially by Brian – to set up a training program similar to ours.'

Marvellous! – and as every ACKMA attendee at Mulu will readily attest, the Mulu Training Program is just about as good as it gets. The Mulu guides are outstanding and wonderfully trained. And that really is the greatest ‘wow’ of all!



The ACKMA Mulu invalid, and her ‘infamous’ ankle!



Phil Wood – and his ‘nasty’ leg...

If ACKMA ever goes to Mulu again (*‘Pig’s might fly’*, says Brian...), a hospital ship has been promised to be parked in the river for the duration... Based on our recent experience, such would be very useful. The wild caves at Mulu are, to say the least, a tad slippery – although to be fair, with about ninety people caving heavily for a week, statistically injuries would surely occur just about anywhere. And we had them. The ‘worst’ was that of Australian Vice President, and ACKMA Fellow, Anne Wood – who severely ‘strained’ her ankle and was

committed to a wheelchair. Most unfortunately, when she got home and the foot was X-rayed, they found a break in her ankle, so she is now in plaster. Buggar! The ‘worst-looking’ was undoubtedly that of ACKMA Fellow Phil Wood. I’ll avoid the obvious pun about wood and Mulu not mixing... I, myself, was not immune to the dropsy either – being called low in Fruit Bat Cave, and doing minor damage.

And a ‘final word’ on Mulu. The holy grail for visitors to Mulu (not to mention ACKMA attendees!) was/is to visit the Sarawak Chamber – at 800 metres long the biggest cave chamber in the world. It is a 10-12 hour round trip hike from Mulu NP. Several of our more athletic members got there. As a result, I would like to share with you the best photo of the chamber they took:



Now, a bit of administrivia. Since our Margaret River Conference just over twelve months ago, ACKMA has picked up about thirty new members. Some joined after experiencing the ‘ACKMA Magic’ in Western Australia; while others came on board in expectation of the delights of Mulu. Welcome one and all!

New members (and even some not so new...) may not be aware of the ACKMA Email List. All financial ACKMA members can join this List. It is not hugely active (...it will not clog your ‘in-box’), but on occasions some useful information comes through it. Members who would like to join the ACKMA List need to email our Webmaster, Rauleigh Webb <webmaster@ackma.org> and he will fix! Similarly, the ACKMA web site has a Member’s Only Section – containing past Journal articles, Reports, Forms, and many other delights! Again, members need to email Rauleigh for the Username and Password.

And finally, a cartoon which superbly illustrates the vagaries of being your Publications Officer (no names mentioned...):



Thrills of a long drop

Giles Brown

Adventure-seeking tourists will be able to leap into a disused mineshaft and float along an underground river at a new West Coast tourism venture.

The Wild West Adventure offers a 13-metre drop into a 19th century mine near Nelson Creek, 25 kilometres from Greymouth.

Director Paul Schramm said the Greymouth-based company held the Australian and New Zealand distribution rights for the British-designed equipment used in the leap.

The Powerfan technology uses a rope linking people to a system that lets them drop at high speed, yet gradually restrains the fall so they can land safely.

"Currently, the equipment is used in the UK for descending from platforms which are part of high-rope experiences," Schramm said.

Thrillseekers would drop for about two-thirds of the fall before being lowered to a "fairly gentle" landing.

Mine shaft jumping

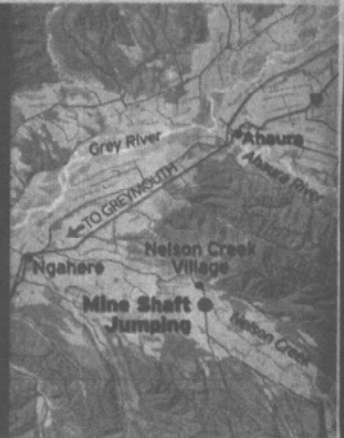
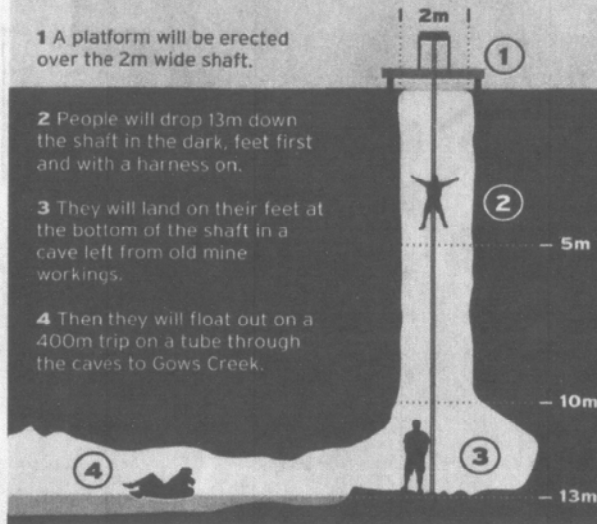
Wild West Adventure plans to transform a disused 13m-deep goldmining shaft at Nelson Creek into New Zealand's first 'Powerfan jump' experience.

1 A platform will be erected over the 2m wide shaft.

2 People will drop 13m down the shaft in the dark, feet first and with a harness on.

3 They will land on their feet at the bottom of the shaft in a cave left from old mine workings.

4 Then they will float out on a 400m trip on a tube through the caves to Gows Creek.



"When you land at the bottom, you get released and you are in a cavern with a whole load of glow worms," he said.

Jumpers would then float out of the cave on a tube to Gows Creek.

The company was considering marketing the adventure as a "goldminer's jump", Schramm said.

"Some people are suggesting we don't go that way and make the structure a big toilet which you get flushed down.

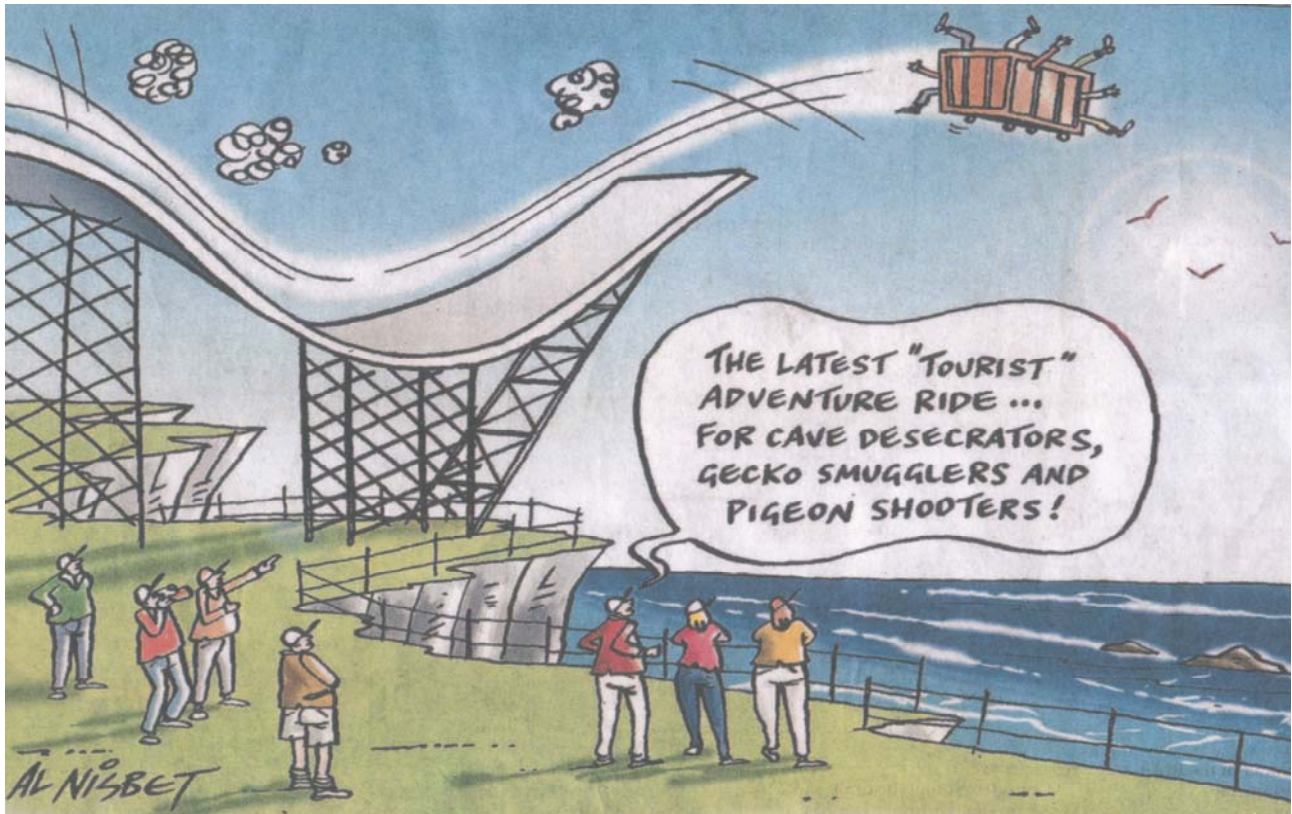
"There are all sorts of off-the-

wall ideas going around," he said.

The device could work at heights up to 110 metres and was similar to Auckland's Sky Tower system, but Schramm said the West Coast attraction would be the only underground one in New Zealand.

It would be developed on Grey District Council-owned land.

Schramm said the council had given approval for the proposal, in principle, subject to lease and licence agreements.





Deeply moved: The caving world is in a spin after the discovery of New Zealand's deepest cave system during a descent by Kieran McKay, left, Aaron Gillespie and Troy Watson in the Ellis system on Mt Arthur near Nelson.

NZ caving sinks to new depths

The discovery of the country's first kilometre-deep cave, south of Nelson, has been hailed as the biggest piece of news in the history of New Zealand caving.

The team of three made the connection between two known caves in the Ellis Basin, on Mt Arthur. Its discovery gives New Zealand its first recorded cave deeper than 1000 metres and could rocket it into the top 10 of deepest caves in the world, said expedition leader Kieran McKay, of Waitomo.

"It's a huge discovery, the biggest piece of news in the New Zealand caving scene ever. It has sparked a lot of interest internationally as well, cavers

that had dismissed New Zealand for deep caves are already talking about coming out here," he said.

The gruelling journey to link up several caves in the area ended on the last day of the caving season, using the last few metres of their 1km of rope. While the trio endured beaten bodies, squeezing through tiny holes for up to 30m at a time and temperatures as low as 2 degrees Celsius during the 10-day mission, McKay said it had been generations of cavers who laid the foundation that had led to the momentous occasion.

"We finished the project but it was started in the 1960s by cavers who first

explored the area and the groundwork that they laid has really helped us. Hundreds of cavers and thousands of hours have been involved in this discovery," he said.

Nelson Speleological Group president Andrew Smith said the connection was certainly a milestone for caving in the region.

"As cavers we don't like to get too excited until we see it on paper, and the survey is yet to be done. But we are really excited; it puts it up there as far as deep caves, certainly a big discovery. Cavers have been trying to get to that kilometre milestone for some time... so we are happy about that." Fairfax