



TO BOLDLY GO WHERE NO CAVE SYSTEM HAS GONE BEFORE...

– Dan Cove

One thing I have long known about Jenolan is that it is a place with an enormous capacity to surprise you. However, I have to confess that this year is shaping up as truly one for the record books and we have only just hit August! A very brief outline of recent events follows.

In the last journal I alluded to a new development in the planning phase concerning the Nettle cave self guided tour, suggesting that the plan was to create a tour experience unlike any other. This plan was simply to add a new language to the 'Acoustiguide' digital audio guides provided to visitors taking this tour. Italian and Arabic had already been selected to join the eight other languages already available, but I was casting about in search of a good choice for a third addition.

In a casual conversation with James Brady, Jenolan's Food and Beverage Manager and Deputy General Manager of Caves House, discussion turned to the possibility of adding a more unusual language – how interesting could a cave tour be in Latin perhaps, or Ancient Greek, or perhaps even something even more unusual...like, say, Klingon?

As happens, this idea captivated us, and we dropped the casual conversation in favour of a serious think about this. Klingon, the language of

the great warrior race from 'Star Trek', is a real language, albeit an invented and constructed one. It has an extraordinary sound and, as our research revealed, a staggering following. In terms of popularity, it is considered the second most successful invented language in history (Esperanto is first).

There was even a genuine Jenolan connection – a famous Star Trek TNG episode ("Relics") features the USS Jenolan, a 'Sydney Class' Starship. Was a translation possible? Not easy, certainly, but with persistence we found ourselves a professional Klingon translator in Indianapolis – Michael Roney Jr who accepted our challenge.

Our narrator became Tracy Canfield, an academic and professional linguist who was fluent in the Klingon tongue. Acoustiguide of Australia threw their support behind the project and on July 14th I found myself in a Sydney recording studio with Tracy and Michael, and the world's first ever tour in Klingon was recorded.

The objective of this exercise? Tourism is all about providing ever new reasons for prospective visitors to choose your destination over others. Hordes of fluent Klingon speakers desperate for this product? Not a chance. But a great number of the curious,

who would be as captivated by this whole notion as we had been? We believed so. It was different, original, and it was fun!! There is a whole separate article involved in the rationale behind this project, and in our motivations and aspirations, but for the time being it is enough to state that it has provided an absolutely unprecedented boost to Jenolan's profile.



The Klingons' at Jenolan Caves.
Photo: Domino Houlbrook-Cove.

The story has been run on ABC, CNN, BBC and circulated through Reuters. It has shown up in newsprint from the Sydney Morning Herald to regional Central American tabloids. Jenolan Staff have handled 20 media interviews (TV and radio) over the past fortnight.

A quick Google search for 'Jenolan + Klingon' brings up over 250,000 hits. And the tour has not even launched yet! It does so on August 22, when James and myself, standing next to Michael Dorn (the actor who portrayed 'Worf', Star Trek's most famous Klingon), address a Star Trek convention in Sydney. Quapla! buy' ngop!

In other, more Earthly news, Jenolan has also had great success at the Blue Mountains Regional Tourism Awards winning in four categories – Tourist Attractions, Adventure Tourism, Festivals and Events (for 'Carols in the Caves') and Tourism Restaurants and Catering for Chisolms Grand Dining Room, Jenolan Caves House. Jenolan is now a NSW State finalist in these four categories, which is a significant achievement and a pleasing recognition by industry of the hard work and

innovation that is an ongoing feature of Jenolan Caves.

The relighting of the River Cave is also underway – a full report for the next Journal. This will be a massive effort, and in many ways the culmination of a decade long effort to relight and network the entire Southern show-cave system at Jenolan.

We are also hard at work preparing our bid to host the International Show Caves Association (ISCA) Congress in 2014. Peter Austen and I will be travelling to Slovakia in October to lobby for this honour, and it is marvellous that we will not be alone but have the combined muscle of Kent and Andy also in attendance to attempt to bring the conference to Australia. Again, more for the next journal – hopefully, good news.



Dan Cove, James Brady, Michael Roney Jr and Tracy Canfield in the Nettle Cave.
Photo: Domino Houlbrook-Cove.

The EOI process seeking private sector engagement in the hospitality operations is also ongoing at Jenolan, and we have moved into a second stage. There is nothing new to add at this time, but the process is moving forwards on schedule. Meanwhile, work is to commence on the refurbishment of the Kitchen in Caves House next week. This will also be a major project, and will provide a fine base for future operations of the Food and Beverage department.

So, all in all, it remains an interesting time to be at Jenolan. TwlIj jachjaj.

