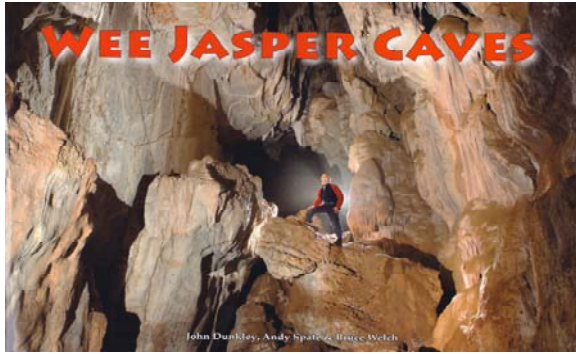


# WEE JASPER CAVES BOOK LAUNCH

- Kent Henderson



On Saturday 21 August 2010, leaving Melbourne at 6.00 am (!), I drove up the Hume Highway to Wee Jasper in New South Wales. I had been invited by the Australian Speleological Federation (ASF) to be part of the 'Official Party' at the launch of a new book on the Wee Jasper Caves, at Careys Cave.

Firstly, a bit about the Wee Jasper Caves book... It is actually up update of an original long-since-out-of-print version. It is written by John Dunkley, Andy Spate and Bruce Welch, with photos by Alan Pryke and Geoff Kell – most in full colour. Being an ASF publication, it features all the significant caves in the Wee Jasper karst, including the show cave (Careys Cave). A full book review will appear in the next (December) ACKMA Journal. In the interim, those desirous of obtaining a copy (\$15.00, plus postage) can usefully email: <publications@caves.org.au>.

I arrived about Careys Cave at about 1.30pm, and joined about seventy other invitees (representing, I was told, fourteen ASF-affiliated clubs) for a light lunch of soup and bread. While many faces were new to me, quite a number present were familiar – there are a significant number of cavers who are also ACKMA members – such as Jodie Rutledge (ASF Senior Vice President), John Wylie, Joe Sydney (ASF's ACKMA Liaison Officer), Dr Mike Lake, and Jill Rowling. Also present were Dave Smith ('sometime' manager of Wombeyan Caves) and his wife Corinn, and Rob Whyte from Jenolan Caves. I was particularly delighted to see along erstwhile Jenolan Caves Manager and ACKMA Life Member, Ernie Holland – whom I had not seen for some years, and also Adrian Carey – the original owner/lessee of Carey's Cave – whom I had not seen since he retired twenty years ago! It was great to catch up with them all.

At 2.30pm, all guests entered Careys Cave for the official festivities. The requisite chairs had been arranged in the first chamber, and a wooden stage – crafted around various speleothems – had been installed (most skillfully). There to greet us was the manager/lessee of the cave, ACKMA luminary Geoff Kell – who was, not surprisingly, in fine form! He advised me that the stage is now a 'permanent' feature of the cave which will be used in the future for concerts, weddings and the like. Upon being

seated, after a brief warm welcome from Geoff, guests were first treated to an excellent musical recital featuring a violinist, flutist and Geoff himself on guitar. Wonderful!

Jodie Rutledge, in her ASF Senior Vice President capacity, then took to the stage as 'Master of Ceremonies' to introduce the rest of the 'Official Party' who sequentially took part in proceedings. First, she introduced Andy Spate, who was not actually present – as we know Andy now resides several thousand kilometres away in Western Australia. A projection of a short video of Andy was shown, speaking about the karst geology of Wee Jasper. It was actually projected on an area of (conveniently) white cave wall, and while the undulations thereof slightly distorted his image, it worked quite well!

Next up, Jodie introduced Roger Curtis, of the Canberra Speleological Society, who spoke on legacy of the late Dr. Joe Jennings and his research at Wee Jasper in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, Joe is copiously and appropriately referred to in the book. Jodie then introduced Adrian Carey, whose delightful brief address centred on the early history of the show cave, and his many years as the owner, later lessee when he sold the cave to the NSW Lands Department, and guide.

Jodie then introduced Mr. John Flarrety, Program Manager of the NSW Land & Property Management Authority, who officially launched the book with an excellent speech, in which he paid tribute to the authors of the book, and to the many people who had been involved with Wee Jasper Caves over the years. The last (and undoubtedly the least) person to be introduced was your current interlocutor. My task was to 'auction off' the No. 1 autographed copy of the book in aid of the ASF Environment Fund. Much animated bidding ensued, and the book was 'knocked down' to Joe Sydney for \$110. An excellent result!

Upon the conclusion of the festivities, Geoff Kell thanked all those attending, and led guests on an extensive tour of the cave. Indeed, a significant percentage of those present had never 'dawned the door' of Careys Cave before! Of course, the audience was mostly cavers and on their many previous visits to Wee Jasper their focus was largely on the area's wild caves... A most successful afternoon was topped off by a BBQ at a local shearers' quarters and shed – where many of the cavers attending stayed – prior to much planned caving the next day.

I would like to warmly compliment ASF (and event organizers John and Jeanette Dunkley and Joe Sydney, and their many helpers) for putting together such a great event – and for inviting me to attend and participate. As I said in very brief remarks before auctioning the book, ACKMA and ASF have a close and most cordial relationship, which has been further strengthened yet again.





## THE WEE JASPER CAVES BOOK LAUNCH

**Clockwise from top left:** Rob Whyte and Ernie Holland outside Careys Cave; Kent Henderson presents Joe Sydney with the 'No. 1 copy' of the book following the auction; Adrian Carey addressing the gathering; Kent Henderson auctioning the book – note the new 'permanent' wooden stage; attendees touring Careys Cave; the Andy Spate video projected on the cave wall; Mr John Flarrety officially launching the book; the 'Geoff Kell Trio' (Geoff is at the right) entertaining guests.