

Andy Spate at gours in XXXXXXX Cave.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

– Steve Bourne



Congratulations to Jenolan Caves for securing the 2014 International Show Cave Association (ISCA) Congress. Dan Cove was also elected to the Board of Directors. Andy Spate was also nominated, recognition of the standing Andy has in the international cave and karst community, but with each country allowed one representative and Dan the next Congress convenor, Dan is Australia's representative. It is a great effort from Dan, well supported by Andy, Barry Richard and Kent

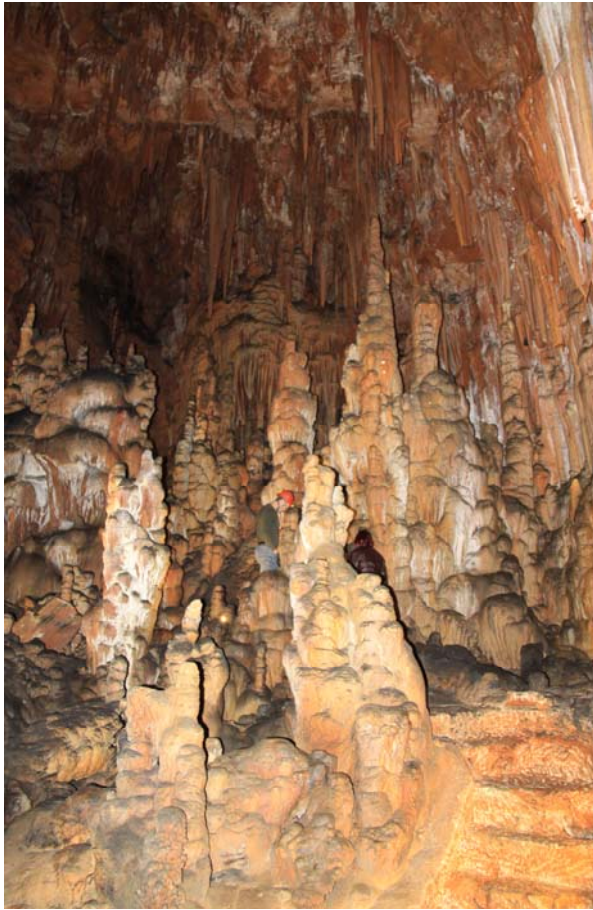
Henderson, to bring this important event to the Southern Hemisphere for the first time. A comprehensive report of the 2010 ISCA Congress appears in this journal. I was disappointed not to be there but did travel through Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia a month before the Congress on holidays.

There are many cave highlights in that part of the world. One I particularly enjoyed was Divaska Cave in Slovenia. We were at Skocjan Caves speaking to staff when we were introduced to Borut, a senior guide and local caver. His group has received funds from the European Union (EU) to restore Divaska Cave and (re) develop it as a show cave.

As it turned out, the inspecting commission of EU representatives was the following day and Borut kindly asked me along. Liz spent the day with at Lipica, the home of *Lipizzaner* white horses and I had a day caving! Borut and his group have done an excellent job installing pathways and cleaning speleothems.

The cave sits high in landscape, an early route of the Reka River which now flows through Skocjan Cave. It is very heavily decorated, like most Slovenian Caves and when the work is completed, will offer a pleasant, intimate tour with small groups. It is open to visit now, but only on Sunday afternoons.

## Speleothems in Divaska Cave, Slovenia.



Visitation at Skocjan Caves has more than doubled since Andy, Kent and I visited six years ago, with over 110,000 visitors last year. The tour groups have greatly increased in size increasing the pressure on the cave, which should be alleviated when they open a second cave in December this year. I was really disturbed with our visit to Postojna Cave. The pressure on this cave is huge, with over 500,000 visitors each year. Postojna is a 5 km cave tour, 3.2 km on a train and 1.8 km on foot. Our tour was a little over 400 people (700 is a 'full' tour), 160 or so in the English speaking group.

The guides do their best but the behaviour of visitors was deplorable. Cameras are not permitted, yet many people continually took photos and video, even as guides asked, yelled at them, threatened them and even plunged the entire cave into darkness twice to try to achieve compliance. But the weight of numbers just wore the guides down.

I stopped one visitor trying to push a stalagmite over and managed to walk in front of a few dozen photos. The complete lack of respect of visitors towards the cave, the guides and the *Proteus*, the cave-adapted amphibian, in their aquarium was frustrating for visitors like us who wanted to enjoy the cave.

It was the last tour of the day and we were out in 75 minutes –15 minutes under the scheduled tour length! There is no easy solution to this but it was a pity to see visitors treat one of the great caves of the world and its staff with such disrespect.

A few months back, Mary Traves contacted me advising Moira Lipyeat was ill in hospital in New Zealand. I sent a card on ACKMA's behalf wishing her a speedy recovery. Moira is now out of hospital and responded to me that she intends to make it to our Tasmanian Conference next May. I am not sure what her doctors think of this but with Moira's determination I think we will see her there!

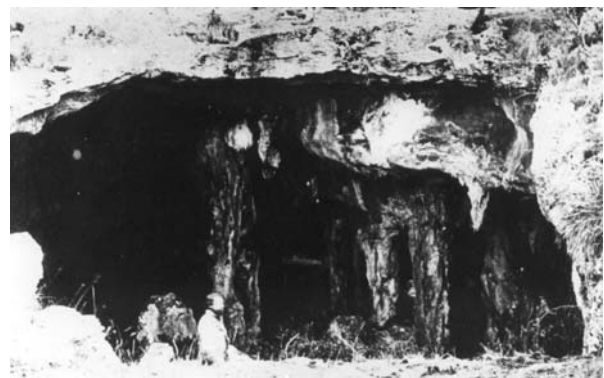
17 October was a big day in Australia especially in Penola, near Naracoorte, when Mary MacKillop became Australia's first saint. There is quite a link to Naracoorte Caves with Mary. Father Julian Tension Woods was a priest in the region and co-founded the *Order of Josephites* with Mary.

Woods visited Naracoorte Caves several times and recorded his observations in his book, 'Geological Observations in South Australia.' He was Naracoorte's first palaeontologist and his interpretations on fossils in Naracoorte's caves appear in this book. Mary accompanied Woods on one of his visits to Naracoorte along with other Catholic hierarchy and recorded her thoughts in her book of Woods' life. There is a really interesting story there and Naracoorte staff are currently developing a tour of Blanche Cave around Woods, MacKillop and these early visits to Naracoorte. With thousands of pilgrims expected to visit Penola, Naracoorte Caves could contribute to the story and receive all important extra visitors.

Our webmaster and IT guru, Rauleigh Webb, has done some terrific work developing a template for conference papers, to improve the efficiency of producing the conference proceedings. If you intend to present in Tasmania, please ensure you use this template when writing your paper, it will help Rauleigh immensely.

I must also publicly and sincerely thank Rauleigh and Sam Webb for the outstanding job they did with editing and producing the 2010 ACKMA CD Rom, which was inserted in the last Journal. Many thanks indeed to both!

Our Tasmanian Conference looms closer; the organising committee produced an eye catching conference flyer with an excellent program (which is inserted, again, in this Journal). It appears that the good work by our ISCA attendees has promoted the conference well and we should see some international delegates. As always, this conference will be one not to miss!



An early photo of Blanche Cave, Naracoorte.