



14th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology, West Victorian Field-trip, August 2010

Back: Árni Stefánsson (is), Steve Holden (au), Ken Ingham (us), Gerhard Noss (au), Jan-Paul Van Der Pas (nl), Greg Middleton (au), Harry Marinakis (us), Stephan Kempe (de), Martin Mills (uk), Kirsty Mills (uk), John Brush (au), Nick White (au).

Front: Diana Northup (us), Janeen Samuel (au), Susan White (au), Gunnhildur Stefánsdóttir (is), Marjorie Coggan (au), Ken Grimes (au).

Standing on Turtle Cave (3H-90), a "lava blister" at Byaduk.

KG100584jat K.G. Grimes, 8-2010

WESTERN VICTORIA LAVA PROVINCE AND UNDARA, MCBRIDE LAVA PROVINCE The Fourteenth International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology

– Nicholas White

In August 2010, the International Union of Speleology Commission on Vulcanospeleology held its 14th Conference. This was organised by Greg Middleton with assistance from Ken Grimes and Susan White for the Victorian Western District Volcanic Province pre-conference field trip, which was followed by the conference itself at Undara.



ACKMA Fellow, Lana Little, in the Bayliss Cave entrance, Undara. Photo: Nicholas White.

August is not the best time for visiting Western Victoria but we had fine weather for visiting Mt Hamilton Lava Cave, the caves in the Byaduk lava flow, the Blisters and the caves alongside the

canals of Mt Eccles National Park. Several visitors descended 'The Shaft' – a volcanic vent at Mt Eccles. On the return day we visited Mt Widderin Cave, south of Skipton.

There were some eighteen participants including the organising team and members of the Victorian Speleological Association and Victorian Scout Caving Team. Diana Northup from New Mexico was impressed by the microbiological colonies on the walls of several caves and will obtain sampling permits to investigate them further.

After the Victorian trip we flew to Cairns and met the other participants. Next day we travelled via crater lakes on the Atherton Plateau to Undara where we were met by Gerry Collins. The conference had talks in the morning followed by cave visits each afternoon. I was extremely lucky to go to Bayliss Cave.

This cave has a rich fauna which Diana Northup had arranged microbiological colony collecting from; however, it is notorious for foul air. The cave atmosphere has a high carbon dioxide-low oxygen regime.

Lana Little had been measuring the oxygen levels and declared them too high to visit. I suggested she check earlier in the day and the reading was close to the expected 20% and so we went just after lunch.



Lava tube, Undara. Photo: Nicholas White.

We had nearly completed the sampling when Lana started detecting lower oxygen levels (17.5%) which necessitated a rapid retreat. This trip would not have been possible without Lana having established an occupational health and safety protocol for access to the cave. This visit to Bayliss Cave was perhaps the highlight for me, however, it is the large size of the tunnels at Undara which remain in the mind long after the visit.

A day trip on the Savannalander, a railcar, from Mt Surprise to Einasleigh and back allowed a visit to 'The Wall', near the end of the lava flow; the hot mound springs at Tallaroo; and the Copperfield Gorge at Einasleigh.

Mornings were taken up papers from participants. These included Peter Whitehead's perspectives on the McBride Basalt Province in Queensland and

Ann Atkinson's studies of Undara itself. Other presentations included Diana Northup's study of bacterial diversity from lava tubes in the Azores, New Mexico and Hawaii; Sefan Kempe's studies of pressure ridge caves; and the development of a show cave in Iceland from Arni Stefansson.

The small size of the symposium (Western Victoria 18x and Undara 27x) allowed lots of good time for ideas exchange and comparisons of lava caves around the world.



Lavicles, 'The Turk', Byaduk, Victoria. Photo: Nicholas White.

COMING EVENTS

This list will simply list events of special interest to cave managers and cavers. If you are interested in any listed events, contact Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith for further details at <elery@alphalink.com.au>.

2011: Apr 17-22	Australian Speleological Federation Conference, Chillagoe, Queensland
2011: May 8-13	19th ACKMA Conference, Ulverstone, Tasmania
2011: June 8-10	Karst Hydrology and Ecosystems, Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA
2011: July 16-24	Asia-Pacific Geoparks Network Symposium, Vietnam
2011: July 20-27	INQUA Quaternary Sciences Congress, Bern, Switzerland
2011: 23-25 Sept	Middle East Speleology Symposium, Lebanon
2011: 22, 25-26 Nov.	Centre for Gippsland Studies, Churchill, Victoria (Workshop and Conference)
and Looking Ahead:	
2012: May	ACKMA Annual General Meeting. Venue & dates – to be advised.
2012: June 25-29	NSS Convention, Greenbrier Valley, West Virginia
2012: Sept 6-15	World Conservation Conference, Jeju Island, S. Korea
2012: November	ISCA Conference – Greece and Turkey
2013: May	20th ACKMA Conference, Waitomo Caves, NZ
2013: 21-28 July	International Congress of Speleology, Brno, Czech Republic
2014: November	7th ISCA Congress, Jenolan Caves, NSW

