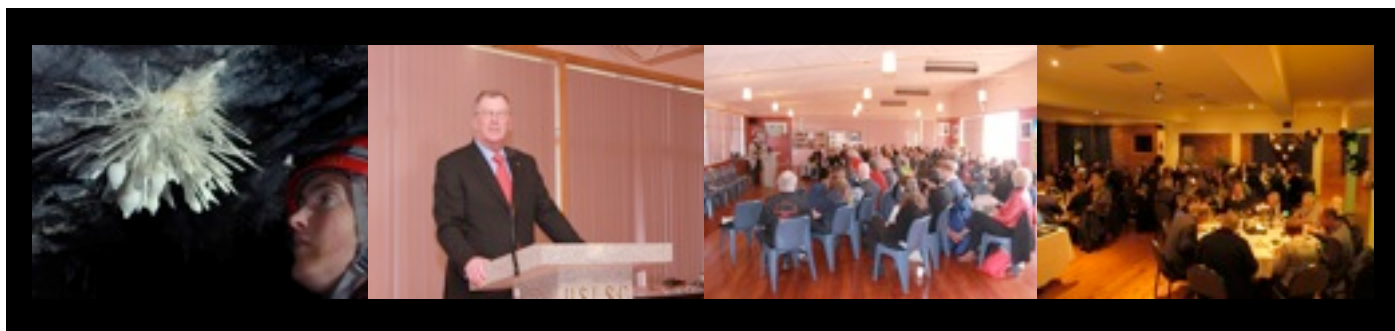


THE 19TH CONFERENCE on CAVE and KARST MANAGEMENT ULVERSTONE, TASMANIA

Steve Bourne



The 19th Conference was held in Ulverstone Tasmania from 8 May to 13 May 2011. Approximately 60 delegates gathered from around Australia and New Zealand, plus overseas guests Prof Arrigo Cigna from Italy and Peter Gazik, accompanied by wife Zuzanna and daughter Katarina, from Slovakia. Some pre conference caving was enjoyed by a few including Prof Cigna who managed a trip into Genghis Khan, his first wild cave for over 10 years.

An evening welcome was held at the conference venue with special guest Paul O'Halloran MHA, a Greens Member for Braddon. Paul addressed delegates and made himself accessible for a chat during the evening. He had a good knowledge of the environment and issues in the local area and his comments were warmly received.

The conference was opened by His Excellency Peter Underwood, The Governor of Tasmania. Cathie Plowman had written to Government House inviting him to do so, and he accepted. While quite a formal affair, he was relaxed and certainly helped us do the same. I was honoured to do the introductions and spoke of various

Governors' cave visits which His Excellency expanded upon. After the opening he enjoyed his first ever cave visit to Gunns Plains with Geoff and Trish Deer. I am not sure Geoff followed all of the usual protocols of a Vice Regal visit. While researching vice regal visits to Australian caves I was amazed at how often this has happened, perhaps an opportunity for a historian to prepare a paper addressing this topic?

Prof Cigna delivered his keynote address *State of Show Cave Management in the World* and stimulated some discussion with the International Show Cave Association (ISCA) Show Cave Management Guidelines, which have previously been published in this journal.



L-R Cathie Plowman, Prof Arrigno Cigna, Tony Culberg, His Excellency The Governor and Councillor Jan Bonde and Steve Bourne at the microphone
Photo: Ross Anderson

Steve Bourne thanks Prof Cigna for his address
Photo: Ross Anderson

Chris Sharples followed this with *Tasmanian Wilderness for the Armchair Explorer*, a brilliant synopsis of karst within the Tasmanian World Heritage Area and the potential for more caves and even karst areas to be found. Andy Spate delivered the third keynote, *An Overview of the Mole Creek Karst* which had been expressly commissioned by the conference organisers. Andy's presentation showcased some of the superb Mole Creek caves and karst and discussed Mole Creek's significance. The photography of David Wools-Cobb was outstanding and certainly whetted the appetite for the Tuesday field trip.



Arthur Clarke delivering his paper
Photo: Ross Anderson

Arthur Clarke started proceedings after lunch with *Lost in Tasmania's wilderness karst*, a paper that dampened my enthusiasm for traipsing around Tasmania looking for caves after learning of a number of people who have never returned from doing just this. Dr Nic Haygarth's paper *Dan Pickett, Pioneer Cave Guide* explored the facts and myths surrounding one of early Tasmania's characters. *What turns glow worms on?* was Michael Driessen's contribution. Michael has been monitoring glow worms for a number of years and presented his findings. Arthur Clarke followed this with his paper asking the question, *Bioluminescence in glow worms: do tours have an effect?* Glow worms certainly attract a great deal of research interest as well as capturing the public's imagination.

Deborah Hunter presented *Landslides of January 2011 in part of the Mole Creek catchment*, yet another example of the extreme weather Australia has been subjected to in recent times. I was part of a group Deb led to Honeycomb Cave field trip the following day and was able to view first hand the damage. It is clear Parks Tasmania has an incredibly energetic and valuable volunteer who greatly assists with managing this area. Nicholas White concluded the first day's papers with *Karst in the Mid-Proterozoic dolomite, Pungalina Station, Northern Territory, Australia-its significance and management*. There is no doubt caving in this remote part of Australia is tough going.

On day three we journeyed to Mole Creek Karst Area, one of my favourite Australian cave and karst areas. In King Solomon's Cave, Neil Kell explained the rationale behind his lighting system installed in 2005. The linear nature of the cave makes it a lighting challenge but Neil has created a nice experience, although it was difficult to view as he intended with our large group moving through the cave. Some path lighting was quite low and Neil explained that the lights were now less effective than when first installed. The same lights are now more than twice as bright and only 60 % of the cost of six years ago. Such is the rate of advance in LED technology.



Deb Hunter speaks to a group at Honeycomb Cave,
Mole Creek



Prof Cigna, Andy Spate, Derek and Deb Mason

The time allocated for Marakoopa Cave was greatly exceeded and put the schedule way behind. Marakoopa is rated by a number of people, including myself, as perhaps the best show cave in Australia. Other caves have more spectacular speleothems, more glow worms, bigger streams and a longer history, but for its all round interest and diversity this cave is right up there. On our visit to Circular Ponds, the farm of Glen Anderson, we were shown the changes that have occurred since the January 2011 floods. Dolines are growing in size and beginning to coalesce.



Dolines at Circular Ponds, Mole Creek

We split into groups to visit either the Trowunna Wildlife Park, a hit with our international guests, Alum Cliffs State Reserve or the Honeycomb Cave surface walk. Our guides for the day, Chris Sharples and Andy Spate, with contributions from Deb Hunter, David Butler, Nic Haygarth and others made for a rewarding and informative trip.

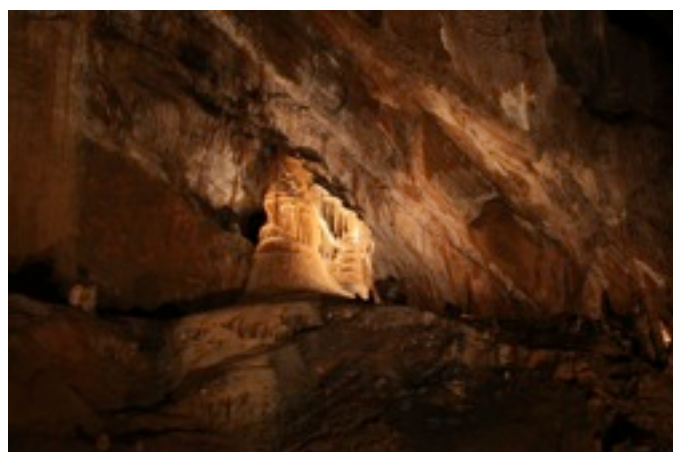
Three papers were presented in the Mole Creek Hotel late in the afternoon. Deborah Hunter presented *Tourism micro-business, Mole Creek, Tasmania*. She has played a significant role in introducing visitors to responsible caving and filling a niche in the tourism market. Stuart Brownlea, the Natural Resources Management Officer for the Meander Valley Council, presented an excellent piece of work in his paper *Planning in a Land Use Mosaic-Innovative Approaches on the Mole Creek Karst*. I look forward to seeing this paper written up and its possible application to other karst areas. Rod Pearse of the Tasmanian Land Conservancy presented *The Mole Creek Karst Forest Program*. This program was funded by the Australian Government and resulted in a further 376 hectares of karst being added to the reserve and 201 hectares being protected through conservation covenants on private land.



Zuzana and Katarina Gazikova in King Solomons Cave

My promise to our Slovak visitors was fulfilled when they spotted platypus in the creek behind the Mole Creek Hotel. After a pleasant meal it was time to return to Ulverstone.

Wednesday, day four, was a marathon day of papers kicked off by Anne Musser with *Palaeontology and Cave Tourism: Opportunities for Engagement*. Anne has commenced work as a guide at Jenolan Caves and is looking to use her training and experience in palaeontology to research and develop ideas for new products there. This paper was a fine introduction to the next, Sasa Kennedy's *Children's and youth activities at Jenolan - an evolutionary tale*. Sasa gave an overview of how these activities have been developed, but most importantly some really useful lessons learnt through trial and error, success and failure and the responses implemented. Dan Cove and Peter Austen completed the first all Jenolan session with a paper outlining Jenolan's approaches to marketing. As a follow up to this, they have offered to coordinate a project investigating improved marketing of Australian caves. I encourage all show cave operators to get involved with this important piece of work.



Marakoopa Cave

The second session moved away from Australian examples. After the Mulu meeting in 2010, Tim Moulds had visited Phong Nha-Ke Bang Karst area in Vietnam and provide a report with recommendations for improved management of the area to protect cave fauna. His paper *The Biodiversity and Management of the Phong Nha-Ke Bang Karst, Vietnam* outlined this work. The current management as Tim described requires significant improvement and it would be hoped that recommendations Tim, (and ACKMA Life Member Brian Clark in a separate report), have made will be implemented. Peter Gazik, whose role is Head of Cave Research and Cave Protection in the Slovakian Caves Administration gave an *Overview of Caves and Caving in Slovakia*. His presentation contained many excellent examples of cave protection through gating, some of the restoration works they have been undertaking and concluded with a series of brilliant images of the spectacular Slovak caves.



Ross Anderson took some exceptional photos on pre and post conference trips - this one in Croesus Cave, Mole Creek

Pat Culberg presented Arni B. Stefansson's paper *The Vatnshellir Project - a first for Iceland*, a remarkable tale of one man's determination to open Iceland's first show cave. This small lava cave remains unlit and is guided with visitors using helmets and headlamps. I found a number of websites with further information on this cave that are worth a look, including www.pbase.com which has a number of images of the installation of cave infrastructure.

Greg Martin gave us another excellent presentation that completed the story of the Waitomo Caves visitor centre. At previous meetings we had seen the fire that destroyed the centre and then plans for the replacement. This offering showed the finished product with *Waitomo Glowworm Cave Visitor Centre Rises from the Ashes*. It is a remarkable architectural design and Greg's paper discussed the trials and tribulations of the construction phase and how the centre is received by visitors. Unfortunately, visitation to the caves has taken a big hit with the Christchurch earthquake, which we heard more about in the next paper, by Moira Lipyeat, *The Impact of Earthquakes on New Zealand caves*. Moira is fitter now than I had seen for years and her presentation was a

remarkable tale of survival of the earthquake and the impact it had on the landscape around her house. Moira fell into a crack when the road suddenly opened beneath her feet, and later she told me a car had run over her while she was in there, but she was below the road surface and the car missed her!



*Peter Gazik presenting his work from Slovakia
Photo: Ross Anderson*

Ted Matthews' paper *Structural Control in Limestone Cave Formation* drew on many years' observations of Jenolan Caves and his interpretation of factors that influenced their development. Julia James' presentation, *The Enigma of Bellholes*, should have us all out looking for these features and attempting to understand their genesis. Andy Spate presented *Caves and Ruiniform features in Sandstones of Northern Australia*, a synopsis of the two and a half a month journey across the northern part of Australia preparing a report to the Australian Government on pseudokarst of Australia. Simon Ambrose, CEO of Augusta Margaret River Tourism Association was in Tasmania for other work and briefly attended the conference to report on the work being undertaken at Lake Cave, Margaret River in an attempt to save stygofauna at risk due to the drying of the cave. A paper summarising this work is presented in this journal. The final paper for a marathon day was Denna Kingdom's overview of the Vale of Belvoir, a significant purchase by the Tasmanian Land Conservancy.

Chandler was elected unopposed as President. An election was held for the ACKMA Publications Officer with Steve Bourne replacing Kent Henderson. Kent had held the position since the formation of ACKMA and has produced each of the 82 journals to date, bringing the publication from a 12 page newsletter to the publication we have today. Budget pressures will require some thinking to how we maintain the high standard Kent has set without exceeding our income. I congratulate Kent for his 24 years and 82 journals and look forward to building on his experience. All other positions were filled without election after Rauleigh Webb withdrew his nomination but later agreed to continue as a seconded ex officio committee member as ACKMA webmaster.

Dianne Vavryn was elected a Life Member of the association by acclamation and was truly moved by the honour. Rauleigh Webb delivered her citation which appears elsewhere in this journal.



Chris Sharples points to North Cave at Rocky Cape



North Cave at Rocky Cape

Thursday was another field trip, this time heading west with the first stop at Rocky Cape. Here Chris Sharples interpreted the geology of the coast and we viewed North Cave from a viewing platform. This cave is an important archaeological site and may be the first ever cave for which a map was drawn, with a plan of the cave drawn in 1827. From here we headed across the dolomite plains to Togari Hall for the presentation of three papers to set the scene for our Dismal Swamp visit.

Here we heard from Chris Sharples on *The Plains Karsts of the Smithton Basin*, Dr Nic Haygarth's historical perspective on the development of the area and Dean Tuscon on the Dismal Swamp development. Dean was kind enough to respond to some questions after the conference saying the development cost \$4.7 M and the visitation is around 17,000 visitors per year.

The visitor centre at Dismal Swamp, now marketed as Tarkine Forest Adventures, was excellent and certainly met the objectives of sitting discreetly in the landscape.

The Annual General Meeting was held at the Ulverstone Surf Life Saving Club at the conclusion of the day's papers. The usual AGM business was transacted. Peter



The toilets are a work of art, very few places have toilets placed with an amazing view across the top of a blackwood forest! The cafe serves excellent food and coffee and replenished the barely diminished reserves of delegates. ACKMA had previously visited the Dismal Swamp polje in 2004 at the AGM weekend meeting and I recall some concerns about the development. The 600 hectare Blackwood polje is one of a kind and it is of concern that 200 hectares is potentially still available for logging.

ACKMA members enthusiastically lined up for their turn to slide. It was fast and fun, although most people did not quite make it to the bottom due to condensation on the end of the slide and the very cold weather. Ross Anderson took Sam Webb's teddy bear Seymour for the ride of his life, showing the action packed video at the conference dinner. The maze on the polje floor is interesting and very well done, a nice blend of landscape interpretation and art with a surprise at virtually every turn. Being a fossil nut, I especially enjoyed the skeleton of *Zygomaturus trilobus*, an extinct cow-sized marsupial.

I thought the development was very well done, blended nicely with the landscape and that the slide did not detract from the overall presentation. I suspect though it



Zygomaturus trilobus

will always struggle financially, it is off the beaten track, away from the main tourist routes and requires significant staff input to operate. It has been moved from public operation to the private sector and I hope the concessionaires can make it work for them.

All too quickly the last day of the conference arrived. The last day of papers commenced with avid Wools-Cobb, with an overview of cavers' contributions at Gunns Plains, followed by Anne Wood with *Managing Access to Caves in the Digital Age* and Prof Cigna with the *Use of Chemical Methods for the Control of Lampenflora*. The last two papers stimulated significant discussion. The final paper was Rauleigh and Sam Webb's new template for producing the ACKMA Conference proceedings. Rauleigh demonstrated how the template works live by processing Ted Matthews' completed paper. It will greatly reduce the time required to compile the proceedings and Rauleigh is seeking all papers to be submitted soon to enable the compilation.

Geoff and Trish Deer hosted delegates at the Gunns Plains Caves. Geoff gave an overview of the struggles through the January floods which closed the cave for seven weeks. It was the first time that most had seen Neil Kell's lighting of the cave, which in Neil's usual creative style creates mystery, great scenes and allows the cave to keep a few secrets. Once again, the field trip was excellent although a little rain dampened the end of the day. Many thanks to Geoff and Trish for their hospitality.

The conference dinner had a Friday the 13th theme and delegates responded with an amazing array of costumes. ACKMA newcomer Celina Yapp from Waitomo Caves deserves a special mention for her red outfit, purchased at the last minute! Joy Wools-Cobb had done an outstanding job in preparing the venue, highlighted by a supersized inflatable black cat. Cathie Plowman had asked me in Mulu to be the dinner speaker and I prepared a presentation of six years as ACKMA president, reflecting on the highlights, conferences and people who have contributed during my time. During this, Andy Spate presented Prof Arriga Cigna with the ACKMA *Outstanding Contribution to Cave and Karst Management*, as agreed at the AGM.

Arrigo was given a framed David Wools-Cobb photograph with his image superimposed into one corner. New president Peter Chandler presented Peter Gazik with a framed Cradle Mountain image. Both Arrigo and Peter responded with kind words and deep appreciation for everyone who made their attendance possible.

A number of post conference caving trips were held as well as an excursion of the Vale of Belvoir. I visited Croesus Cave with Paul Van Nanyntan, Phil McGuinn and Dan Huth. Croesus is quite a simple trip, except the wading in cold water, but you are rewarded with some of the best scenery in an Australian cave. Other trips visited Kubla Khan, Genghis Khan and Marakoopa. Tasmanian cavers were extremely generous with their



Prof Arrigo Cigna "in" Genghis Khan Cave

time taking ACKMA delegates to some of their special caves and I acknowledge and appreciate their generosity, which extended to Paul and his wife Jeannie hosting me and other cavers over two nights.

ACKMA conferences are always full of highlights. For this author, the quality of presentations was outstanding, from the key note addresses to those covering a wide range of topics from delivering activities for children through to thought provoking presentations on cave development and the genesis of bell holes. I also appreciated the high quality of presentations of local people who provided background to the sites we visited. Congratulations to all speakers and I look forward to the proceedings publication.

The conference team of Tony and Pat Culberg, Cathie Plowman and David Butler, Chris Sharples, Serena Benjamin and Greg Middleton quite simply got it right. A nice balance of papers and field trips to suit their location, excellent food and a high quality guide book produced by Chris Sharples. A number of delegates commented how relaxed the week was, a tribute to the organisers given the full nature of the program. On behalf of those who attended I extend my appreciation to the team and their efforts and advise everyone to watch for the proceedings CD ROM.

After the conference I sought some feedback from first timers.

Regina Roach Interpretative Officer Yarrangobilly Caves

I enjoyed immensely the ACKMA Conference held in Tasmania. The conference, caving trips and bushwalk,...well,...snow walk, were memorable and well organised. Having locals commentate on the bus trips, and lead the caving trips added an extra local dimension to the events. Interspersing the large variety of cave related topics presented in the session papers with relevant karst trips allowed me to appreciate fully the

Tasmanian landscape. Probably I was most impressed with the other attendees' friendliness and willingness to share their knowledge and expertise. I left Ulverstone thinking "Wow, Tassie has really great caves", "I learnt so much this week" "Why aren't we actively promoting this type of learning to all cave guides?"

Peter Gazik Slovakia

First I must mention our pre-congress trip in south-eastern Australia invented by Kent Henderson (our compliments). We started with meeting Julia James – our host in Sydney, then went with our friend Barry Richard to Jenolan, met there Dan Cove and Peter Austen who arranged many things for us, as well. Then the relay was taken over by Andy Spate – Wombeyan (thanks to Mick Chalker) , Wee Jasper (with excellent Geoff Kell) and Yarrangobilly Caves. Deborah Craven-Carden looked after us in Naracoorte, where we met also Steve Bourne. Then Kent Henderson took us to the Great Ocean Road, hitting some caves, history and wildlife on the road to Melbourne. A great thanks to all.

My first encounter with ACKMA was via paper and electronic form – newsletter and proceedings. That gave me a basic idea on what is it about. However, the real feeling can only be obtained by personal encounter. If I start from the beginning – the official opening ceremony looked very formal the day before – everybody was expected to come quite early, no cameras were allowed. And when I heard fanfares it made me feel very "official". But then, when listening to the "official" opening address by Steve Bourne, which made everybody laugh, followed by the Governor of Tasmania, who also added some spice to his speech, I realised that the matter is not so hot. The whole conference and stay in Tasmania showed up to have really very friendly and almost familial atmosphere. I must praise the very high level of papers presented in all fields – from scientific to interpretation one. We were allowed to have a look inside your "kitchen", which is quite rare. The organisation work was a first class one – thanks to all the team headed by Cathie Plowman and David Butler, including preparation of the excursion guide and abstract book, which helped a lot in general orientation.

And last but not least: the people, I and my family met there were just excellent – no matter where they came from: Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand. We felt open hearts, helpfulness and all surrounding sense of humour, which makes the life much easier. Thanks a lot, friends.



CONFERENCE AWARDS

Steve Bourne

ACKMA Journal President's Award 2011

The Presidents Award is given at each conference, recognising what the judges consider the most meritorious and informative papers presented in the previous two years journals.

It is never easy to choose among the number of excellent papers submitted to the Journal over any two-year cycle. Elery and I considered a number of excellent papers and decided to try and focus on the extent to which a paper would be of high practical value for members of the Association.

We decided to recognise John Brush as the most appropriate nominee for the award. He contributed two different papers in the same issue of the journal and both are valuable.

Track Marking – The Yarrangobilly Experience

This is a very thorough case study of the diverse approaches to track marking which have been used in un-guided (“wild”) caves and a critical analysis of the effectiveness of each method.

Cave Exploration in Timor Leste

Trip Reports are one of the most prevalent kinds of speleological publication, but John provides an example which might be utilised as a useful model for any trip report on an unfamiliar site. The description of the karst is based in a summary of the geographic and cultural context and also highlights the wide range of features worthy of scientific inquiry. John is also gently critical of the on-site management and points to issues which demand attention.

We would also like to highlight the quality of John Watson's paper titled “Simply being there”, which gives an alternative view to the need and desire we have to provide visitors with interpretation and key messages.

A New ACKMA Life Member

Dianne Vavryn was made a life member of ACKMA at the conference and her citation follows.

Dianne Vavryn has made a truly outstanding contribution to cave and karst management in Australasia in general, and to ACKMA in particular.

She has been running tours to Bat Cleft on Mt. Etna for 33 years, and is a walking expert on the caves – and particularly the flora and fauna of the central Queensland karst. She has been largely responsible for growing the native plants that have been used in re-vegetating Mt. Etna and the Mt. Etna Caves National Park. She was a guide at Capricorn Caves for some years also.

She played an extremely important part in fighting for both recognition of the values of Mt Etna, and even more importantly, the proper protection of the Mt Etna Caves. Her very persuasive negotiations with conflicting interests and the government agencies involved were a major factor in ultimately achieving success in the campaign to save Mt Etna.

She has been a massive contributor to ACKMA. She has attended the last ten ACKMA Conferences in succession and every intervening Annual General Meeting – a period of over twenty years. She was a key member of the Organizing Committee of the 10th ACKMA Conference in 1993.

She has presented papers at ACKMA Conferences, and been a not-infrequent contributor to the ACKMA Journal.

She has been the senior sub-editor of the ACKMA Journal since Issue 31 in June 1998 – 51 issues over the last thirteen years.

She was elected a Fellow of ACKMA in 2000, and we now propose, in 2011, that she be elected a Life Member of ACKMA.

Proposed: Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith
Seconded: Kent Henderson.

