

Finding your Voice—and keeping it!

A voice training manual for cave guides

Cathie Plowman

The above is the title of a voice training kit that I prepared with Alan Andrews in 2007. Alan is an actor and drama coach, who worked as a tour guide at the Port Arthur Historic Site in Tasmania, where his work included voice coaching work for the tour guides

Why voice training for cave guides?

Show cave experiences in Australia are largely focussed on the guide to show and interpret the cave. If you're a cave guide, how often have you raised your voice to reach the 'back of the group'? This is neither good for your voice, nor does it contribute to an engaging and effective presentation.

Good use of the voice requires learning and on-going practice. Voice work is an established and integral part of the theatre and performing world where voice warm-ups, relaxation, posture, breathing exercises and facial exercises are as much a part of performing as learning a script and being on stage.

Singers, actors and news readers all work with their voices to communicate well and reduce the risk of strain and laryngitis. Why not cave guides?

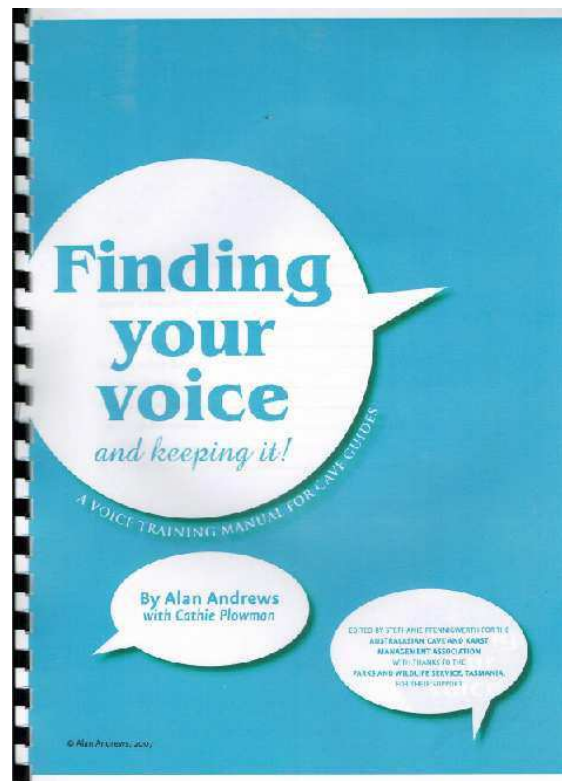
Cave guides who use their voice for work every day without being taught how to use it are like ballet dancers going onto the stage without first warming up: their performance will suffer, and the audience will leave feeling unsatisfied.

'Words carry approximately 7 per cent of the message, while the voice carries 38 per cent,' voice coach Lorraine Merritt quotes in her book, *Talking the Talk*. If guide health and effective visitor interpretation are important, then cave guides, and their managers, need to ensure that guides are equipped with good voice skills.

Finding your Voice contains four groups of exercises to help get started on voice health and enhanced communication. These are breathing awareness, articulation, projection and resonators. The manual can readily be accessed at the ACKMA website. Print off a copy and give it a go. Voice work is easy, fun, will enhance your tours and reduce your risk of voice strain and laryngitis.

Voice work is not just for cave guides. It's a useful skill for anyone who does public speaking.

In my presentation at the ACKMA conference in May 2018, I discussed some options for taking voice work further, but using the *Finding your Voice* manual is an easy place to start. I would love to receive feedback from cave guides who are using the manual.



Recovery of fossil bones from Elephant Hole Cave, Mount Etna

Dianne Vavryn

After reading Scott Hocknull's excellent paper in the September 2017 Journal - "The Ghosts of Mount Etna" - I thought I would write a bit more about the fossil bones from Elephant Hole Cave that Kerry Williamson and I recovered in 1986 and finally, after many years, led to the studies of fossil bones in the area - studies which continue today.

Elephant Hole Cave was situated on the west flank of Mount Etna in Central Queensland. It had three middle level entrances, all with vertical pitches. It was well known to me, my husband Josef and other cavers to contain large quantities of fossil bones.

Some of these bones were cemented in calcified mud and large quantities of the calcified mud had weathered into a powdery soil freeing its bone contents.

In 1970, Central Queensland Cement, who were mining the eastern end of the southern flank of Mount Etna, began preparing a haul road around the base of the mountain and began mining a small limestone hill adjoined to the main cavernous face approximately a third of the height of the main mountain. It contained many huge fig trees with massive roots disappearing down solution holes. We felt confident that there must be caves in this hill but there were no holes large enough to enter.

Josef and I, along with our caving companions, checked the mining operations regularly to see if any caves had been opened by the mining operations.