

## “Around the show caves”

### Wellington Caves

#### The new Visitor Experience Centre

##### Ian Eddison

The Wellington Caves team moved into the new Visitor Experience Centre on the 22 November 2019. It was not an easy task to move the temporary operations office from the Caravan Park including caravan park reception as well as souvenirs, tour ticket systems and the kiosk kitchen. We gathered together a small team to make it all happen. The building is so roomy compared to what the team is used to and there is considerable open space which is yet to be filled such as the Megafauna room, a Fossil Store and Discovery Lab. Some of these have furniture on order, some are yet to have interpretive concepts to be developed into reality.

The room for the Fossil Store may yet have some other interpretive space included.

We are at an exciting stage for development of these things including new activities for schools in the Discovery Lab. We also have recently installed a new ticketing operation with 123Tix including the ability for visitors to book online. Our meet and greet, ticket scanning and new entry to and exit from tours has also meant some changes for staff to adapt to. There are numerous changes being implemented.

We look forward to the next holiday period with enthusiasm and hope our ACKMA members will be able to call by sometime.



Above—The new reception area

Left—The new building (both photos—Ian Eddison)



### Call for conference papers and posters

Abstracts of papers and posters are required for production of the Conference Handbook so that participants are aware of what is on offer. To enable Scott and his colleagues to produce the Handbook in good time, abstracts must be received by 23 March. Presentations are welcomed from all members. Management-oriented presentations and posters are preferred but, of course, others are welcome.

There will be a mix of two 45-minute plenary presentations and 20 or 30 minute presentation slots as well as workshops on the ACKMA strategic plan development.

Jenolan will make a room available for your posters. There is a time slot in the program for viewing and discussions of your wonderful posters.

Abstracts of papers and posters should be in 11-point Times New Roman, otherwise un-formatted and no more than 500 words. The abstracts should be sent to me at [president@ackma.org](mailto:president@ackma.org) as soon as possible. But certainly, no later than 23 March. The earlier I get the abstracts the sooner Julia James, Jacob Hartley and I can organize a sensible program. If you are thinking of a presentation or poster it would be good if you sent a draft title to give us an idea of what subjects might be covered so that we can start thinking about the arrangement of papers. Obviously those titles could be changed when you submit your abstract.

Presenters should be aware that written papers will be needed immediately after the conference for production of the valuable Conference Proceedings. The papers will need to be produced using the ACKMA proceedings template and instructions – both can be found on our website. Poster abstracts should also be provided for inclusion in the Handbook.

# Shades of Death Cave Reopening

**Nicholas White**

Rimstone Co-operative Ltd purchased the Shades of Death Cave from the original developers in 2017. Since then Rimstone members have spent effort in two directions. The first was to raise the funds to cover the purchase. The purchase has been facilitated by the ASF Karst Conservation Fund which agreed to have the project tagged so that donations for the purchase were remitted to Rimstone. The second direction was to renovate the infrastructure. Metal steps and rails needed rust treatment and painting. Wooden steps were replaced with recycled plastic planks. Many protective panels were replaced. The work on the cave infrastructure was undertaken by Daryl Carr and co-operative members. The entrance lobby to the cave has been reroofed. Miles Pierce corrected a faulty voltage regulator in the generator and checked through all the cave lighting. As yet there is no intent to make any major changes to the lighting or the infrastructure.

An Open Day was held for members and community on 2 November 2019. This was to celebrate the change in ownership with the original developers and the community. The cave was first discovered in 1900 by Ernst Henham. The entrance pitch was first descended by Frank Moon with Ernst Henham's sons, Bill and Tom. A number of Henham relatives attended the opening. The East Gippsland MLA, Tim Bull, opened the cave and led the first tour of the cave, admiring both the size of the cave and the prolific formations.



**Sign from 1990s tours (Robert Brain)**

Present were the past owners who were pleased that Rimstone was taking over responsibility for the cave. These were Geoff Rebbechi and Graham Shaw. Also present were a nephew, Darren Camp, as well as Dennis and Carol Rebbechi's daughter, Sylvia Rebbechi. Dennis Rebbechi was unable to extract himself from his Queensland island. Kent Henderson, who wrote a guidebook to the cave, was overseas and apologised.

Currently, there is an intense program of exploration of the cave which is over one kilometre in length. This survey is building on the Van Dyk's original survey. The

major interest in the survey is to establish the relationships to an inflow cave, M-2, and an outflow cave, M-4, near the Murrindal River. The survey will also identify areas needing track-marking or cleaning. Speleothem samples from the cave are currently being analysed to establish their age. This will enable a better understanding of karst processes in the Buchan-Murrindal karst area.



**Perspective over rift with formation and painted railing (Robert Brain)**

Rimstone intends to conduct periodic Open Days and educational use of the cave, as well as providing opportunities for adventure caving.

A special edition of the Rimstone Newsletter with some of the cave history was produced for the Opening. It is available at [http://rimstone.org.au/fi.../RimstoneNews-30-M3-OpenDay\\_v2.pdf](http://rimstone.org.au/fi.../RimstoneNews-30-M3-OpenDay_v2.pdf)



**Decoration at bottom landing with plaques recognising early developers (Robert Brain)**