

TEN YEARS OF THE ACKMA JOURNAL

A Personal Retrospect

- Kent Henderson

Early in 1988 as I recall, not that long after the 7th Conference on Cave & Karst Management in New South Wales (the first I had attended), I had a telephone call from Ernst Holland. Ernie was then the inaugural president of the Australasian Cave Management Association (ACMA, as it then was), which was formed at the 7th Conference. Previously, conferences had been organized by the Cave Management Commission of The Australian Speleological Federation. He asked me if I was interested in editing a Newsletter for ACMA. After giving Ernie a “why not?” response, I started on what has thus far been a ten year road, in which I have seen both our Newsletter (subsequently Journal) and the Association itself, blossom and develop.

While I had some experience in publishing, and was already a published author, I had never edited a Newsletter before. Secondly, at that time, my knowledge in all things cave and karst, while probably *better than the average bear*, was certainly considerably less than it arguably is today. Not unnaturally, I turned to where that knowledge was – our then Executive Officer, Elery Hamilton-Smith. Elery's support was then, as it continues to this day, marvellous.

Thus, in June 1988, the first edition of The ACMA Newsletter, what was to be a twice yearly publication, was unleashed on an unsuspecting audience! I recall that at the time there was some brief discussion as to a title for it, but as no consensus was forthcoming it was named generically, which it has effectively remained every since. The initial edition was a *massive* 12 pages! Aside from a brief report by Ernie Holland, and a few paragraphs about then upcoming 1989 (8th) Conference at Punakaiki, New Zealand, Elery effectively contributed all four articles: *An Executive Officer's Report*, *Life before ACMA*, *Lighting Australian Caves*, and a *Review of Past Proceedings*. I also published a list of Australian members, which then numbered 49 – individual and “corporate”. As an aside, all but four of the original “foundation” Australian members remain so till this day. The first edition consisted of only two photos, the front cover – an historic shot in Wilson's Caves at Buchan, and a photo of the delegates at the 7th Conference.

The second edition came out in December 1988, now up to a staggering 18 pages! Elery was still, at this stage, *de facto* editor (which he remained until about Edition 4 or 5). He supplied another historic shot for the front cover (the 1st extant photo of an Australian Cave – Blanche Cave at Naracoorte). The edition contained details and booking form for the Punakaiki Conference, a draft ACMA Constitution, and list of NZ ACMA members (then a mere 7, now about 40), plus a few new Australian members. Total membership had now rocketed to 61! (ACKMA

membership today approaches 200). This edition also contained an article on the *Re-discovery of the Water Cave at Wellington*, a piece on Blackwater Rafting and also on the closure of Ruakuri Cave, and an interesting paper (our first published) on *Mud Speleothems* by Ernst Holland. My then lack of knowledge came home to me with Edition 2. Elery gave me a brief article on Cave Shields in Lehman Caves, which I dutifully published. I then spend some months wondering where in Australia Lehman Caves were, until I finally woke up they were in America! Oh dear! I promptly decided I should start heavily reading up on caves and karst, which I have been doing ever since....!!

Edition 3, published after the Punakaiki Conference in June 1989, saw the Newsletter really starting to develop. I chose my first cover photo (moa sub-fossils in Honeycomb Hill Cave, NZ), and wrote my first full article – an anecdotal piece of the Conference. The Newsletter was now the *ACKMA Newsletter*, with the word “Karst” having been added to the Association's title at the Punakaiki General Meeting. In order to underscore this change, Kevin Kiernan suggested to me that we should run a series of articles on “Current Karst Management” in all States of Australia and New Zealand. Thus, I got early practice at “brow beating” contributors, a skill which, I comment immodestly, I have honed rather well over the years. To this day, I am not quite sure why members almost invariably contribute to the Journal when I prevail upon them. It could be fear of subsequent editorial (and pictorial!) reprisals for those not obeying the call (not that I ever would, *of course!*) or perhaps that somehow we have between us managed to uphold a high standard publication which warrants quality contributions. It may be a bit of both, perhaps. In any case, almost from the start I determined to be a proactive editor, and as long as I keep getting elected to the job (more fool, you lot), my benign (?) “Reign of Terror” will continue. And you elected a Sicilian as Treasurer as well! ACKMA members are clearly a masochistic lot!

Now up to 28 pages, Edition 4 in December 1989 continued to break new ground. Andy Spate contributed his first ANDYSEZ column, a distinguished feature that has run without remission ever since! I also started a regular “Editor's Contribution” column (now *Editorial Ramblings*), in order to bring members up to date with more immediate happenings across the Australasian cave & karst scene. I have continued my practice then commenced, prior to each edition, of doing a “strategic ring around” the caves for news briefs. Other key contributions published in this edition were Kevin Kiernan's two opus articles on Tasmania's World Heritage Area, and its management, as well as a continuation of the Current Karst Management series. This edition also saw the first couple of *fascinating* photos of Andy

Spate, a habit I have largely followed ever since. The one of Andy “*proving the Thylacine was not extinct*” was, to my mind, quite memorable, although probably outdone by his *bath scene* photo in Edition 23!! Andy has always *cowed* when I come near him with a camera. I don’t know why really, as every now and again he sends me a *compromising* photo of himself which I unhesitatingly publish!

Edition 5 somewhat focused on Queensland-related articles, and I again published a list of members, now exactly 100. Issue 6 (December 1990), still at 28 pages, saw more of the *Current Karst Management* series, and focused on Buchan Caves, together with details of upcoming Western Australia Conference. Interesting articles in Edition 7 included a piece on the 2nd *Cave Guides Gabfest* in March 1991, the Jillabenan Cave (Yarrangobilly) re-opening, and various news items. Issue 8 (December 1991) reported expansively on the WA Conference. I was thereafter ACKMA Publications Officer, and officially on the Committee. Sigh.... I was now using more cartoons in the Newsletter, and the layout was coming together more satisfactorily too, I felt.

Edition 9 focused on the Jersey Cave Centenary, and the Exit Cave Issue. It also contained an anecdotal article on the first *Australian Karst Studies Seminar/Workshop*, held at Buchan, an event which has happily continued biennially since. I found Edition 10 (December 1992) particularly interesting from my point of view. It featured the first (and thus far only) cartoon on the front cover – a *political* cartoon from a Tasmanian Newspaper on the Exit Cave issue. It reported on Neil Kell’s award of his Churchill Fellowship, and first published Ernst Holland’s seminal paper *Away with the Wires*. By this stage, I had made a conscious decision, as an “editorial policy” to ensure (as far as possible) that all Australasian cave and karst areas “got a mention” over time – a practice I have tried follow ever since.

Edition 11 (June 1993) followed the massively successful Rockhampton Conference in May. It was great to have Olsen’s Caves involved in ACKMA. More than two years previously on a visit to Rockhampton I somehow managed to convince Ken and Ann Augusteyn not only to attend the 1991 WA Conference but to bid for the next one – which, happily, they got. And it was most memorable – I doubt if the final Conference Dinner at the Crocodile Farm will ever be bettered. In my view, ACKMA somewhat came of age at that Conference, with about 80 delegates attending – an attendance factor maintained at all subsequent Conferences. I know some “older” members lament the passing of the smaller, *more intimate* Conferences of the early days. Certainly as an organization, to this extent, we may be considered victims of our own success, but personally I feel the more people, professional and otherwise, involved in promoting the Aims of the Association, the better. And looking back at the progress Australasia has made in cave and karst management over the last ten years, at least, I think it would be hard not to agree with that view.

Historically, I think Edition 11 was probably my favorite issue thus far. It saw the first double-page post conference photo spread, a feature which has subsequently been maintained. It also contained some classic individual photos and cartoons, such as Elery next to a water trough, John Watson’s rabbit ears, Peter Dimond and the wallaby, and Kevin Kiernan on the toilet in Flogged Horse Cave. Yes, there were several serious articles too...! On a matter of trivia, this issue also saw the demise of the speleothem corners on pages, following ongoing complaints from Kevin Kiernan, as noted in his well known (unpublished, 1993) seminal paper: *The Horrors of Speleothem Border Drawings in Cave & Karst Newsletters*. I don’t know if he was too happy with new *bat borders* either.... No pleasing some people...!

Edition 12 was something of a *wind change* in some ways. The Committee had now agreed that ACKMA was financially strong enough to go to four editions of the Newsletter per year. Two newsletters were to be “full” editions, while the remaining two were to be minor “desktop” editions. Edition 12 was the first of the latter. I structured *Minor Editions* as containing Committee reports, and a section called *Around the Caves*, basically an expanded editorial.

The next full Edition (#13, December 1993) focused on New Zealand, with a important paper by Elery on Future Planning for Waitomo, and various other NZ articles. Also in this edition my *Editorial* moved to the centre pages for the first time, where it has mostly remained since. Kevin Kiernan (yes, him again) reckoned that my editorial was too lowbrow for a quality Newsletter, but that if it was in the centre pages he could remove it before giving a copy to important people. I have always tried hard to humour Kevin, so such was done, although he never has told me how often, if at all, he has dismembered his copy....

Following another minor edition (#14), edition 15 (June 1994) saw the Newsletter permanently renamed as *The ACKMA Journal*. This change was originally envisaged as a way of distinguishing between the two major (journal) editions per year, and the two minor (newsletter) editions. However, Editions 16 and 18 were to be the last minor editions, with a full Journal published quarterly since Edition 17. Amongst other matters, Edition 15 reported on the Victoria Cave Centenary Celebrations at Naracoorte, on Neil Kell’s *Churchill Fellowship* experiences in America, on the ’94 Cave Guides Gabfest at Jenolan, and on the 1994 ACKMA Committee Meeting on 14 May in Sydney.

Edition 17 (December 1994) contained two definitive papers – one by Tom Aley entitled *Some Thoughts on Environmental Management as Related to Cave Use*, and Elery Hamilton-Smith’s *Carrying Capacity in Social Context*. It also featured Tasmanian-related articles in the lead up the Tasmanian Conference. Edition 19 was largely a retrospect on the Tasmanian Conference, with anecdotal articles and a post conference centre page photo spread. It also featured an outstanding paper

by Dave Gillieson on the *Rehabilitation of the Lune River Quarry*, near Exit Cave, Tasmania.

Edition 20 contained an important paper by Ernie Holland – *Development Why, How and What For?* and a range of other articles. Edition 21 (December 1995) saw Ruth Lyons write extensively on Radon, then a hot (or at least radioactive) issue. It also contained a report on Naracoorte’s newly opened *Bat Cave Televue Centre*, and an extensive interview with Brian Clark. Edition 22 dealt with Elery’s *Peregrinations*, reported on the Naracoorte Karst Studies Seminar, and contained a classic photo of Mick Clalker in the arms of “three beauties”. Edition 23 featured Stefan Eberhard’s definitive paper on Cave Fauna Management, a report on the new Phosphate Mine “Cave” at Wellington, as well as an excellent paper by Mia Thurgate on Stromatolites.

Edition 24 was a bumper 44 page edition and focused on Waitomo, Queensland bats, ACKMA’s *Position Paper on Radon*, Bungonia Caves, and the important issue of *Cave Guiding Accreditation and Competencies*. Edition 25 saw a somewhat controversial article on the Augusta-Margaret River caves and karst, amongst others, and Edition 26 featured several lead-up papers (to the Waitomo Conference) on NZ karst, and a report on the Official Opening of *Caveworks* at Margaret River.

Edition 27 (June 1997) was a voluminous 52 pages, and reported extensively on the just-happened Waitomo Conference and Post Conference Study Tour – another triumph for ACKMA. It also featured important papers by John Ash on Cave Development, and the definitive *Best Practice in Visitor Management* by Elery Hamilton-Smith et al. Edition 28 contained a report on the *Redevelopment of Junction Cave at Wombeyan* by Terry Matts, an anecdotal article on Te Anau Caves, and a

interesting contribution by Dennis Rebbechi on the *Privatization of Caves*, amongst others.

Edition 29 (December 1997) was other favorite issue of mine, I suppose mostly because I enjoyed seeing my extensive paper on Irish Cave Management in print. Edition 30, the penultimate to the present time, was possibly the most controversial to date (about which I will say no more!), and featured a report on the 4th Karst Studies Seminar at Mole Creek Caves, amongst several other articles.

In conclusion, I must say that I have greatly enjoyed editing the ACKMA Journal over the last ten years. I have been particularly pleased to see the expansion on the Association in that time. Clearly, the membership growth of ACKMA and its positive influence have been tremendous, and the source of a great deal of personal satisfaction. I would like to sincerely thank those people who have assist me in my role over the time – the members of ACKMA. A Journal cannot exist without support and contributions, and I have always received both in great abundance, for which I am extremely grateful. I must particularly thank Elery Hamilton Smith, Andy Spate and Ernie Holland for their unflinching support over the years. Finally, I must also thank the management and staff of Rowick Printers, at Geelong, who have been with us from the beginning. In particular, I would like to thank Barb and Ross Carroll, and their daughter and No. 1 typesetter, Tanya. Tanya and I in particular have, over the years, come to understand each others publishing needs very well, which makes publication easy and a pleasure. The fact that, effectively, Rowick Printers has not increased their printing charges over the last ten years has also been of tremendous benefit to ACKMA. So! Let’s hope the next decade of the ACKMA Journal is as fruitful as the last – I am certain it will be!

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF ACKMA AND AUSTRALASIAN CAVE & KARST MANAGEMENT 1987–1988

It is both interesting and satisfying to reflect on the progress of caves and karst over the last decade. Certainly, there have been disappointments. However, when one surveys the incredible list of achievements, noted below, I think all ACKMA members can be proud of the results. The list is not exhaustive, and not all items are entirely ACKMAs,

but almost invariably ACKMA members have played essential roles in the outcomes. Indeed, I believe ACKMA has played a pivotal part, both as an effective organization and as a facilitator of crucial interpersonal linkages, in these achievements. Long may it so continue...

10–17 May 1987

**7th Australasian Conference on Cave & Karst Management,
New South Wales**

16 May 1987

ACMA Founded, Yarrangobilly Caves, New South Wales

October 1987

Blackwater Rafting, Waitomo, New Zealand, opens for business

June 1998

Edition 1 of the ACMA Newsletter published

10–14 April 1989

**8th Australasian Conference on Cave & Karst Management,
Punakaiki, New Zealand**

14 April 1989

ACMA becomes ACKMA – Biennial General Meeting, Punakaiki.

February 1989

Ruakuri Cave at Waitomo closed to the public

June 1989

Water Cave re-discovered at Wellington Caves

July 1989

Ruakuri Cave Karst Walkway at Waitomo Caves completed

August 1989	ACKMA team prepares a Report on Cutta Cutta Caves, Northern Territory
September 1989	New Zealand ACKMA team advises on cave management in Tonga.
Early 1990	Jillibenan Cave, Yarrangobilly, re-wired & given universal access
13–14 May 1990	1st Cave Guides Gabfest, Yarrangobilly Caves, NSW
June 1990	Eastern Chamber Extension, Fairy Cave, Buchan, completed for opening
9–15 September 1991	9th Australasian Conference on Cave & Karst Management, Margaret River, Western Australia
1–2 August 1990	Severe flooding of Wombeyan and Abercrombie Caves, NSW
3–5 March 1991	2nd Cave Guides <i>Gabfest</i> , Wombeyan Caves, NSW
8 January 1992	Jersey Cave Centenary Celebrations, Yarrangobilly Caves, NSW (following complete re-wiring and re-development)
12 December 1991	National Parks & Wildlife (Karst Conservation) Bill and the Wilderness (Karst Conservation) Amendment Bill pass through the NSW Parliament
8–9 February 1992	1st Australian Karst Studies Seminar/Workshop, Buchan, Victoria
17–18 March 1992	3rd Cave Guides Gabfest, Naracoorte Caves, SA
February 1992	International Network on Cave Protection and Management, established under the commission on National Parks & Protected Areas (CNPPA) with significant Australian involvement
March 1992	New Entrance Tunnel and re-development of Gaden Coral Cave, Wellington Caves, NSW, completed
April 1992	Olsens Caves, Rockhampton, Qld, universal access constructed and opened
17 April 1992	Cammoo Caves, Rockhampton, Qld, becomes self-guiding
31 July 1992	Benders Quarry near Exit Cave, Tasmania, closed by the Federal Government
9 August 1992	Undara Volcanic National Park, North Queensland, officially opened.
August 1992	Neil Kell awarded Churchill Fellowship to study cave lighting in USA
3 September 1992	ACKMA Committee meets in Melbourne
November 1992	Glowworm Cave at Waitomo, New Zealand, re-lit
Nov–December 1992	Waitomo Museum of Caves extended
26 December 1992	Moondyne Cave, Western Australia, re-opened as an Adventure Tour cave.
1 January 1993	Peter Dimond, Waitomo Museum of Caves Director, received <i>the Queen's Service Medal</i> , in New Zealand New Years Honour List
24–26 March 1993	4th Cave Guides Gabfest, Buchan Caves, Victoria
17–23 May 1993	10th Australasian Conference on Cave & Karst Management, Rockhampton, Queensland
24–29 May 1993	Post Conference Study Tour to Undara and Chillagoe Caves, Qld
20–22 November 1993	2nd Karst Studies Seminar/Workshop, Wombeyan Caves, NSW
October 1993	Wet Cave, Naracoorte, SA, opened as Self-guided tourist cave
13 November 1993	Jubilee Cave Centenary Celebrations, Jenolan Caves, NSW
11 December 1993	Grand Arch self-guided Tour officially opened, Abercrombie Caves, NSW
December 1993	Tinted Cave (self-guided), Wombeyan Caves, NSW, completed & opened
14–18 March 1994	5th Cave Guides <i>Gabfest</i> , Jenolan Caves, NSW
8 April 1994	Newly-constructed <i>Education Centre</i> at the Waitomo Museum of Caves officially open by Rt. Hon. J. B. Bolger, Prime Minister of New Zealand
10 April 1994	Victoria Cave Centenary Celebrations, Naracoorte Caves, South Australia
14 May 1994	ACKMA Committee meets in Sydney, NSW
15 May 1994	Joint ACKMA – ASF Executive Meeting
10 July 1994	2nd Australian Seminar on Spelean History, Sydney University, NSW
July 1994	Rehabilitation Plan for Newdegate Cave, Hasting Caves, Tasmania, released
December, 1994	Naracoorte Caves inscribed on the World Heritage List
10 January 1995	New Lighting & Re-development of Princess Margaret Rose Cave, Western Victoria, officially opened.
29 April–7 May 1995	11th Australasian Conference on Cave & Karst Management, Tasmania
4 May 1995	ACKMA Incorporated inaugurated
19 June 1995	<i>Determining an Environmental and Social Carrying Capacity for the Jenolan Caves Reserve</i> document officially launched.
11 August 1995	ACKMA officially incorporated
October 1995	ACKMA's <i>South East Karst Province of South Australia Report</i> published
7 October 1995	<i>Bat Cave Teleview Centre</i> officially opened, Naracoorte Caves, SA
December 1995	<i>Blackwater Café</i> (new Blackwater Rafting headquarters) opened, Waitomo Caves, New Zealand
January 1996	New Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust building opened in Bathurst, NSW
February 1996	ACKMA Cave Guide exchanges
13–15 February 1996	3rd Australian Karst Studies Seminar/Workshop, Naracoorte Caves, SA
4–8 March 1996	6th Cave Guides <i>Gabfest</i> , Kelly Hill Caves, Kangaroo Island, South Australia
20 May 1996	New Ticket Office opened, Jenolan Caves, NSW
9 June 1996	ACKMA Annual General Meeting, Taralga, NSW
1 August 1996	<i>Directory of Caves in Australia & New Zealand</i> published
7 September 1996	Redeveloped Cathedral Cave, officially opened, Abercrombie Caves, NSW

13 November 1996	Mole Creek Karst National Park, Tasmania, proclaimed
15 November 1996	Phosphate Mine "Cave" officially opened, Wellington Caves, NSW
16 January 1997	New day-use facilities officially opened, Royal Arch Cave, Chillagoe, Qld
21 February 1997	<i>Caveworks</i> Interpretation Centre officially opened, Lake Cave, Margaret River, Western Australia
Early 1997	IUCN <i>Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection</i> , edited by an ACKMA team, is published.
27 April–4 May 1997	12th Australasian Conference on Cave & Karst Management, Waitomo Caves, New Zealand
4 May–8 May 1997	Post Conference Study Tour – Takaka Karst, South Island, New Zealand
18 October 1997	Junction Cave Centenary Celebrations, Wombeyan Caves, NSW
26 January 1998	Anne Atkinson becomes a <i>Member of the Order of Australia</i> for services to geology at Undara in Australia Day Honours List
10–13 February 1998	4th Australian Karst Studies Seminar/Workshop, Mole Creek Caves, Tasmania
15–20 March 1998	7th Cave Guides <i>Gabfest</i> , Augusta/Margaret River Caves, WA
March 1998	ACKMA Report on Cape Range karst released by the WA Government
March–April 1998	ACKMA team undertakes management study on Christmas Island