

Members reading the excellent interpretative signage at the entrance to Kelly Hill Cave



THE ACKMA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WEEKEND 5 – 8 May 2008

– Kent Henderson

Members on the beach at Seal Bay



After a very long car trip from Melbourne on Friday 5 May, with Pete Chandler, Libby ('white knuckles') Chandler and Arthur Clarke in tow, we arrived at Cape Jervis about ten minutes late for the 6pm ferry over to Kangaroo Island (KI). By mobile phone, Steve Bourne promised to lie down in front of the ferry so we'd catch it. I am sure he got very wet (!?), but all we saw on arrival was the ferry sailing into the distance. Sigh... Fortunately, there was another ferry one an hour later, so we finally made it to KI, if somewhat late... We were warmly welcomed at Penneshaw by Michael Kidd, the Kelly Hill Cave Manager and organizer of the weekend, who had kindly stayed behind to pick up us stragglers.

Thus we piled into Michael's vehicle and about an hour later traversed the 100+ km across the island to Flinders Chase National Park for the welcoming BBQ. It was 'old home week' as usual, catching up with a great many old friends and meeting a few new ones.

We were then shuttled off to various accommodation venues in the area for a needed good nights sleep. For me personally, it was great to be back on KI after about a fifteen year absence.

In a non-conference year, an ACKMA Annual General Meeting, historically, attracts the Committee and few others – rarely more than about twenty-five. This year we had over forty present, and with local KI National Parks people thrown in we reached well over fifty! Wonderful stuff! Of course, one great attraction was that many had never been to KI before.

For the record, the following attended: Brett Farquharson (NSW), Lesley Farquharson (NSW), Barry Richard (ACKMA Fellow – NSW), Robyn Richard (NSW), Miles Pierce (Vic), Rhonwen Pierce (Vic), Steve Bourne (Naracoorte Caves Manager, President, and now Fellow – SA), Decima McTernan (Guide, Naracoorte Caves – SA), Frank Bromley (Guide, Naracoorte Caves – SA), Gemma Sneddon (Guide, Naracoorte Caves – SA), Chester Shaw (Life Member – Tas), Dianne Vavryn (Fellow – Qld), Dale Calnin (Buchan Caves Manager, Conference Convenor, and now Fellow – Vic), Ian

Houshold (Karst Science Officer, Aust. – Tas), Jenny Drying (Tas), Greg Martin (Past President & Fellow – NZ), Dave Smith (Executive Officer, and Fellow – NZ), Kent Henderson (Life Member & Publications Officer – Vic), Rauleigh Webb (Webmaster, & Fellow – WA), Sam Webb (WA), Derek Mason (NZ), Jill Mason (NZ), Deborah Carden (Karst Science Officer – NZ), Paul Flood (Mole Creek Caves Manager – Tas), David Butler (Tas), Cathie Plowman – (ACKMA ‘Almoner’ – Tas), Pat Culberg (Tas), Tony Culberg (Tas), Neil Kell (Fellow – NSW), Rolan Eberhard (Australian Vice President – Tas), Robyn McBeath (Fellow & Immediate Past President – WA), Peter Bell (Augusta-Margaret River Caves Manager, & Fellow – WA), Merv McKillop (WA), Andy Spate (Past President & Life Member – NSW), Dr. Grant Gartrell (Treasurer & Fellow – SA), Arthur Clarke (Fellow – Tas), Michael Chalker (Wombeyan Caves Manager, Past President & Life Member – NSW), Thirza Kemp (Englebrecht Cave Manager – SA), Brian Kemp (SA), Pete Chandler (Past President, NZ Vice President & Life Member – NZ), Libby Chandler (NZ), Mary Trayes (NZ), and most importantly Michael Kidd (Kelly Hill Caves Manager, and weekend organizer) – plus many staff members on KI.

A pretty impressive list! The entire ACKMA Committee was present. Many had come from very far afield, including eight from New Zealand! It was particularly pleasant to welcome ACKMA first-timers Thirza and Brian Kemp from Englebrecht Cave at Mt. Gambier, and Paul Flood from Mole Creek Caves.



Grant Gartrell desperate to enter a cave on our “bush bash” at Kelly Hill Cave. Photo: Rauleigh Webb.

The President speaks! – AGM dinner



After an expansive breakfast on the Saturday morning at the Flinders Chase NP Research Centre, the ACKMA Committee met, followed by the 2006 AGM. All went swimmingly.

The Committee members Annual Reports were presented (which are already on the ACKMA web site at: http://www.ackma.org/members/AGMCommitteeReport_s06.pdf), and Dale Calnin reported on our Buchan Conference next year – all is looking good for another stunning event!.

The outgoing Committee was re-elected, and Steve Bourne and Dale Calnin were elected as Fellows of ACKMA. Our Treasurer, Dr. Grant Gartrell, produced his usual comprehensive financial report, and recommended (endorsed by the Committee) that ACKMA Annual Fees rise by a modest five dollars per year. This was accepted. Grant and Tony Culberg reported on their work in updating ACKMA’s ‘Rules’, and such will be completed and put for endorsement at next year’s AGM.

Saturday’s weather was inclement, but of course, nothing stops ACKMA! After lunch it was off to visit Kelly Hill Cave. The group split into two, with half joining Micheal Kidd to tour the cave; the other viewing the surface karst on a ‘bush bash’ with Grant Gartrell – swapping over later. As most will be aware, Kelly Hill has been completely re-lit recently, using optic fibre technology. It has been well done, and is a considerable improvement on its previous lighting installed over twenty years ago by Herb Stichel and Roger Collins (although, that said, the previous lighting was ‘state of the art’ at that time).

The new technology was described in an article in a recent edition of this Journal by Michael Kidd, so I will no enter into repetition here. Personally, I thought that the lighting, while well done, could have been even better in places – the technology is, perhaps, a little bit limiting in some areas, compared say, to the CBus system used at Wombeyan and Jenolan, as examples. This is only a minor criticism, and Michael Kidd and all those involved merit maximum congratulations on there excellent efforts.



Neil Kell (left) and Michael Chalker at a new lighting control box in Kelly Hill Cave

The 'bush bash' with Grant Gartrell was fun! Grant's passion for caves and caving is enormous (he is not alone, of course!) and he charged through the scrub, from one doline to another, very much like a man possessed. It was quite hard to keep up with him at times. The karst was, well, great!

While the show cave is beautiful, the rest of the Kelly Hill system is especially stunning. I saw much of the undeveloped areas fifteen years ago, and thus did not venture forth on this occasion. However, some of our number went on two separate caving trips for a few hours after the show cave viewing and 'bush bash'.

The undeveloped areas of the Kelly Hill system are incredible and contain, in particular, some of the biggest and best helictites one will ever see.



Members about to caving at Kelly Hill

Whilst the cavers were caving, the rest of us bused off to look at other sights including the wonderful Hanson Bay – a truly stunning beach and coastline. That evening we all converged back at the Flinders Chase NP Research Centre for the AGM dinner. A wonderful feast, wonderful company, and a most pleasant evening were had by all.

We were up bright and early on the Sunday morning, and after breakfast it was off to visit two of the great surface features of KI. However, first we trotted over to the nearby by Flinders Chase Visitor Centre, which features superb interpretative displays. We were given a most informative talk by Interpretation Officer Ellie Lamond, whereupon we braved a few rain squalls and visited the nearby Black Swamp Fossil Dig – a veritable 'Victoria Fossil Cave' without the cave. Fascinating!

We then boarded our buses, and it was off to *Remarkable Rocks* – and they most certainly are. This collection of granite boulders is, to use an 'Elery-ism', wondrous! – set as they are just above coastal cliffs. The wind force factor, particularly on the seaward side, was incredible. You had little chance of falling off simply because of the wind blowing up and into you. I have rarely, if ever, felt stronger winds! Our second destination was *Admiral's Arch*, at the base of Cape du Couedic. This is an incredible feature, formed by eons of wave action biting right through a then existing cave – and replete with remnant stalactites on the ceiling. Wondrous again!

After lunch back at the Research Centre, we then traversed back across KI from whence we came towards Penneshaw, to visit Seal Bay. This unique site is the top tourist attraction of the island (amongst many), and is world famous. It is the home of a large colony of sea lions, and it was marvelous to walk in their midst (on excellent board walks) through the dunes, and then to see others lounging on the beach. Wondrous again!

To top off a delightful day, en route back to Penneshaw, we all stopped off at the Sunset Winery, where we were hosted with considerable quality wines and eats. Of course, most ACKMA members are not unknown to enjoy considerable imbibing, and this occasion proved no exception! Back in Penneshaw, we had a great pub dinner at the Penneshaw Hotel, after which many embarked upon the ferry for the mainland. Fourteen of our number moved onto the Cape Willoughby Light House Cottages for the night – they had booked in to do the Monday 'extra day' on the island, including visits to sights around Kingscote, a eucalyptus distillery, a sheep dairy visit, and much else. I am told this day went very well, too!

For myself, I stayed overnight on the Sunday at Penneshaw, as did Andy Spate, Mick Chalker and Neil Kell. We enjoyed a relatively late night, and great conviviality, in the local pub (of course!). The next morning, we all took the ferry back to Cape Jervis. Andy, Mick and Neil took a bus back to Adelaide for their flight home, while I drove back to Melbourne.

A final comment. One thing that impressed us all was the incredibly high standard of visitor infrastructure on the island. The Flinder Chase NP Visitors Centre, and Seal Bay Visitors Centre, are both outstanding, not to mention the excellent boardwalks, and interpretive and other signage, at every site we visited. A great deal of money has been spent in more recent years, with maximum effect. Indeed, the Kelly Hill Caves site has a new Visitors Centre very much in the wind, along with other above ground improvements. Indeed, we were invited to view, and comment upon, the plans of several options. I have absolutely no doubt when completed the incredibly high standards of the other visitor facilities aforementioned will be met. The South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage, and their staff involved, deserve the highest praise for their efforts. Indeed, some other cave and parks locations in Australia could very well take note...



Grant Gartrell (foreground) leading members on a merry chase over the Kelly Hill karst

All in all, the ACKMA AGM weekend was a tremendous *family gathering* (aka ACKMA event)! All those attending would most sincerely like to thank the following for all their efforts. First and foremost, Michael Kidd, who anchored the whole weekend, and whose superb organization was self-evident. The whole weekend was a real team effort, and Michael was assisted by the following:

- Jacqui Wright, Site Manager Seal Bay and Kelly Hill Caves – who assisted in planning, logistics and was a huge help in the general running of the event, including arranging the BBQ dinner on the Friday night.
- Dr. Grant Gartrell, who assisted with banking of all monies received, running the *Woop Woop* caving trip and taking the karst walk on the Saturday.

- Don Duffy, Interpretive Officer Kelly Hill Caves/Coach Driver – who assisted with expert commentary, cleaning and general running of the event.
- Phil Arthur, Interpretive Officer Kelly Hill Caves/Coach Driver – who assisted with expert commentary, cleaning and general running of the event.
- Alison Buck, Site Manager Flinders Chase National Park – who assisted with planning, logistics and preparation of the Friday night BBQ dinner.
- Nick Heath, Mary Perkins and Luke Jansons, Interpretive Officers Kelly Hill Caves – who assisted with table waiting and cleaning for the AGM dinner. Nick also assisted with the *Trog's Delight* Adventure Caving trip.
- Robert and Rose Benny of "Tucka on the Run" – who did a fantastic job of catering for the AGM Dinner.
- Christine Wrench, Manager Commercial Operations – who assisted with planning for the event.
- Simone Muir and Meredith Heard, Administrative Officers Flinders Chase – who assisted with costings/quotes /menus/accommodation.
- Ellie Lamond, Interpretive Officer – who gave us an excellent talk on fossils at the Flinders Chase Visitors Centre.
- Bea Chuan-Ellson and Cameron MacPhee, Interpretive Officers, who guided us superbly at Seal Bay and Cape Willoughby, respectively.
- Colin Hopkins and Emma Fulwood – our hosts at Sunset Winery.
- Desley Whisson, Wildlife Management Officer KI – who gave us a presentation on the local koala management program on the Monday afternoon.
- Finally, thanks go to *Sealink* for giving members a 10% discount on their ferry.

The ACKMA committee and members thank all of these wonderful people who contributed so much to making ACKMA AGM weekend such a success.



Members at Remarkable Rocks