

FROM THE EDITOR



Your editor having some fun on the Plug Hole tour at Jenolan Caves during ISCA.
Photo: John Brush

Time flies when you are producing the ACKMA journal. As one journal hits your mailboxes, the next one starts – always trying to source good material for ACKMA members. If I earned a dollar for every time I heard, “When is the deadline?”, I would be very well off. I do like to have all material by the middle of the month preceding the issue, i.e. November for the December issue, but these deadlines seem to fly past. Your assistance in writing articles and sending them to me anytime will ensure we always have a quality journal. And a reminder, if you would like to continue receiving the journal, please ensure your membership fees have been paid.

The journal is a great read thanks to the contributions provided by members (and others at times) and is really a great forum for sharing information. I recently attended the International Show Caves Association (ISCA) Congress at Jenolan Caves and took a box full of back issues to try and attract some new members

and increase available storage space at home. The copies were snapped up very quickly and the feedback was that the ACKMA journal is one of the best cave journals in the world. It may be hard work, but comments like that give me a boost.

A report on ISCA will appear in the next journal. Dan Cove and his team put on a great week that I will long remember for the food, fun and hospitality. When I paid the registration I will admit that I thought it was a high fee for a conference, but after a few days I wondered how Dan and his team managed to put on such a great event for the price. Although there were quite a few Australian representatives (plus Peter and Libby Chandler from New Zealand) who I knew, there was an excellent spread of delegates from across the world. I made lots of new friends and hope one day to be able to travel and see some of the caves that I heard about.

It was great to catch up with Hein Gerstner from Cango Caves in South Africa, although the struggles he is having are quite disturbing. I won't write anything further in this column, but invite members to type “Cango Caves corruption” into your search engine for media on the issue.

Three delegates attended ISCA from Postojna Cave, Slovenia. They had seen and heard about the “Stampgate” issue (see page 37, this issue) and were amazed to come to Australia and meet the person who had taken the image in question. They gave me a small souvenir (pictured below) from Postojna, coincidentally another stamp. This one commemorates the world's only underground post office that was used inside Postojna Cave until 1942. Also part of the souvenir are two coins, one celebrating 800 years of visitors to Postojna Cave. The anniversary is based on the earliest known signature in the cave from 1213 – astounding!

EDINI
PODZEMNI
POŠTNI URAD NA
SVETU THE ONLY
UNDERGROUND
POST OFFICE IN
THE WORLD

Skupna izdaja Slovenija – Avstrija
Postojnska jama – Adelsberger Grotte

800.
OMLETNICA
OBISKOVANJA
POSTOJNSKE JAME
1213 – 2013 800th
ANNIVERSARY
OF VISITS TO
POSTOJNA
CAVE

Številka vrednost /
Nominal value: 2,000 €
Teža / Weight: 8,50 g
Premer / Diameter: 25,5 mm
Sestava / Alloy: Ni / Cu
Ni / Cu / Zn 90 / 10 / 0
Ni / Cu / Zn 90 / 10 / 0
Črna / Black
Kovinski del / Metal part
Kovinski del / Metal part
1.800.000 kopij / Copies

Številka vrednost /
Nominal value: 0,10 €
Teža / Weight: 4,40 g
Premer / Diameter: 18 mm
Zlota / Alloy: 90 % Au – 10 % Ag
1.000.000 / 10.000.000

Postojnska jama se ponosa z edim podzemnim poštnim uradom na svetu, ki je od leta 1858 do 1942 in je vključen v svetovni seznam poštnih uradov. Največje zgodovinsko območje lokacije jame, razpisanih in upodobljenih inki sta goščava jama Postojna Slovenija in Postojna Avstrija.

Postojna Cave boasts the only underground post office in the world, which used to operate between 1858 and 1942 and was included in the worldwide list of post offices. Its history is commemorated by means of a postage stamp with one stamp featuring the post office itself.

V Postojni jami postojna Postojnska jama so podpisali papirniški žetoni 13. stoletja, najstarejši nedvomni je leta 1213. Republika Slovenija je leta 2013 praznovala obkroževanje Postojnske jame od leta 1213. Za praznovanje obkroževanja Postojnske jame od leta 1213. Za praznovanje obkroževanja Postojnske jame od leta 1213. Za praznovanje obkroževanja Postojnske jame od leta 1213.

Signatures discovered in Postojna Cave date back to as early as the 13th century, the oldest of them being from 1213. To mark the 800th anniversary of the first recorded visit, the Republic of Slovenia issued a commemorative coin, depicting a stylised spiral which represents the anomaly and the age of the cave.

Nicholas White posted a media article titled "SA Farmer has a big restaurant idea to sink your teeth into" on the ACKMA mailing list. The image (see below) included the farmer Graham Kilsby, and chef Kirby Shearing, who I happen to know. I called Kirby to find out more detail on what was proposed. Kirby's wife Biddie is the Regional Tourism Manager. I worked alongside her for many years when I was chair of the Limestone Coast Tourism Board. Biddie is an innovative thinker and always exploring new ways to attract media, and the concept of a restaurant inside one of the great natural features of the region is a good way to get publicity, even if it's highly unlikely to ever happen. It just makes good media! Kirby and Biddie have been discussing ideas for an innovative eating place, and the cave fitted the bill. So rest easy cave conservationists – this was little more than a tourism publicity stunt for the region, although Kirby is still looking to create a unique dining experience in the Limestone Coast region.

THE AUSTRALIAN

SA farmer has a big restaurant idea to sink your teeth into

VERITY EDWARDS THE AUSTRALIAN NOVEMBER 15, 2014 12:00AM



Mount Gambier chef Kirby Shearing and Graham Kilsby at the sinkhole in South Australia where he wants to open a restaurant. Picture: Kelly Barnes Source: News Corp Australia

Arthur Clarke posted a story on the list relating to the proposed development of a cable car in Son Doong Cave in Vietnam. An online petition against the proposal <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/956/103/062/> had reached 68,000 at the time of writing. The following is an excerpt from a website outlining this outrageous proposal.

A Vietnamese resort company has been granted approval to begin surveys to build a 10.6 kilometre long cable car in the world's largest cave, the UNESCO-listed Son Doong in north-central Quang Binh province in Vietnam. If completed it would make it the longest cable car ride in the world, ahead of Tianmen Shan in China.

Vietnam has a fondness for cable cars. They pop up in many tourist spots, from the Ba Na hills in the centre of the country to provincial spots popular with

domestic tourists such as Nui Ba Den (Black Lady Mountain), south of Saigon. However, the prospect of this cable car, to be built by the large Sun Group (which owns the InterContinental Hotel in Danang and built the Ba Na hills cable car system), has upset environmentalists, the cave's original discoverers and inspired an online petition.

The proposed \$212 million cable car system would travel through Tien Son and Phong Nha caves (the latter was formerly believed to be the largest cave in Vietnam) and then Son Doong cave, with three of its seven stations in the 9 kilometre long Son Doong. Son Doong was discovered by local Ho Khanh in 1991 and explored by a group from the British Cave Research Association in 2009, led by Howard and Deb Limbert. The UNESCO-listed cave receives under 250 visitors a year who all trek with the one travel company licensed to offer tours, Oxaxis Tours. Those doing so have to trek and camp, with porters carrying baggage and food.

Whilst Son Doong still hosts few visitors the other caves, such as Phong Nha, within the Phong Nha-Ke Bang national park are far more touristed. The area has received 2.5 million visitors this year so far and this may rise to three million in 2015, according to Vietnamese news sources. The impacts of mass tourism are already being felt and experts worry that extending that to the pristine Son Doong, which is so large it contains a jungle and could fit skyscrapers within it, would be reckless at best.

Dang Minh Truong, Sun's CEO, told Saigon-based Tuoi Tre News that the project will involve foreign experts and satisfy UNESCO's criteria for sustainable development. He also noted that 80 UNESCO-listed sites already have cable car systems (though it should be noted that none of those are in remote cave systems within national parks).

Howard Limbert, who first explored the cave in 2009, has explored hundreds of caves in the area, is one of those staunchly against the idea of a cable car system. "The damage to Son Doong cave would be irreversible, and the cable cars would rob the cave of its pristine charms and the adventure thrills it has to offer," he told Tuoi Tre News. "The construction would also take its toll on the cave's surrounding areas."

An online petition has been organized against the venture. It states, "This project is suicidal and have an infinite damaging impact on the Son Doong Cave and the ecosystem of the entire region at Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park.

In ACKMA journal 95, I published short article on the Aboriginal body found in Blanche Cave in the middle of the 19th Century. Mary Traves and Deborah Carden reminded me of a story they had previously raised with me about an Aboriginal body mentioned in New

Zealand media. Mary kindly searched for information on this and provided me with a series of newspaper articles dated from 1903 to 1920. The New Zealand story related to a female body rather than a male, although there are similarities with an injury to one leg mentioned. Most media claimed the body was “of great antiquity”, which conflicts with the bullet injury of the male body. Local Naracoorte historian Judy Murdoch has heard of this second body, but no evidence other than these media articles is yet to surface. Clearly there was something on display, but is the same individual, a second body or a fake? Perhaps even more tantalising is two separate visitors to Naracoorte Caves mentioning the remains they had seen in a museum in Utah. There is an exhibition currently travelling the United States called “Mummies of the World”, so it seems probable this is where these visitors saw a petrified body and made the link.

Journal 95 featured Cliefden Caves on the cover and an article by Garry K Smith, alerting members to the threat of flooding from a proposal to build a new dam on the Belubula River at Needles Gap in the Central West of NSW. This dam will flood many of the highly significant caves. Orange Speleological Society and the NSW Speleological Council, in conjunction with the ASF Karst Conservation Gift Fund, have launched an appeal to raise funds to support the campaign to save Cliefden Caves and foster further scientific research on the caves. The Help Save Cliefden Caves information flyer can be downloaded from <http://www.caves.org.au/resources/internal-resources/finish/9/180>. This has details on how to donate to the ASF Karst Conservation Gift Fund. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Further information on Cliefden Caves is available at <http://savecliefdencaves.caves.org.au>

I have had a few weeks of media exposure over an issue where one of my in flight bat images was used without permission on a stamp in Slovenia. It was fun, and I used the media to highlight what I think is a real issue, the illegal use of images so easily downloaded from the

Internet. I think we have all done it and used an image or two for a presentation and we try to attribute the image correctly, but using an image for profit is an entirely different matter. Annoying for amateur photographers but far worse for those who try to make a living from their photography.

Ross and Jay Anderson promoted their “*Caves of the World*” website and business at the ISCA Congress. Ross’s photography is top shelf and he is offering an excellent service for cave operations. More information on this service is provided inside back cover.

Naracoorte Caves was inscribed on the World Heritage List at the December 1994 meeting of the World Heritage Committee. Naracoorte Lucindale Council hosted an event to celebrate the 20 year anniversary attracting 250 school children, along with the key players who took the site to World Heritage. Presentations at the 2015 conference will include 20 years of Naracoorte World Heritage.

This journal has a strong Naracoorte flavour as we head towards the 2015 conference. Michael Curry is about to start his PhD studies on the Marsupial Lion *Thylacoleo carnifex*. Michael spent two weeks with Liz Reed and myself looking over material that we had excavated from Komatsu Cave in Henschkes Quarry at Naracoorte. As part of his preparation for his studies, Michael reviewed the history of *Thylacoleo* at Naracoorte and we have traced the discovery of fossils, how knowledge of the animal has grown, the iconic nature of the species and its role in the marketing of Naracoorte and megafauna in general.

As part of your conference information, I suggested each of the Naracoorte guiding staff write a short piece on themselves, a Naracoorte tour and a personal highlight, similar to what the Waitomo organisers provided for the 2013 conference. This is presented along with booking details. I look forward to seeing you all at Naracoorte in May 2015.

Coming Events	
2015: 2-9 March	Karstology in Arid Regions, Abu Dabi http://abudhabi.zrc-sazu.si/
2015: 10-15 May	ACKMA Conference, Naracoorte Caves, South Australia
2015: 15-20 June	International Karstological School and 50 th anniversary of the International Union of Speleology, Postojna, Slovenia
2015: 21-26 June	30 th Australian Speleological Conference, Exmouth, Western Australia
2016: May	ACKMA Annual General Meeting and Cave Guides Workshop, Rockhampton, Queensland
2017: 23-30 July	International Union of Speleology Congress, Penrith, NSW, Australia
	Do you know of an event that may interest ACKMA members? Please send to publications@ackma.org