

Conference Sneak Peek

While most people are still making their way home and undergoing recovery from what we hear was a fabulous conference in Takaka, I think it unreasonable to expect conference reports in time for this journal – but I hope to have some more detailed impressions and descriptions of the conference and associated activities for the September journal!

In the meantime, to whet your appetite, I have received the following photos and comments:

The field trip to the disused Te Anaroa show cave on private property owned by Aaron McLellan in the Aorere Valley, midway between Takaka and Collingwood (photos used with permission of owner)



Figure 1:
10,000-year-old penguin bones (left),
photo Arthur Clarke

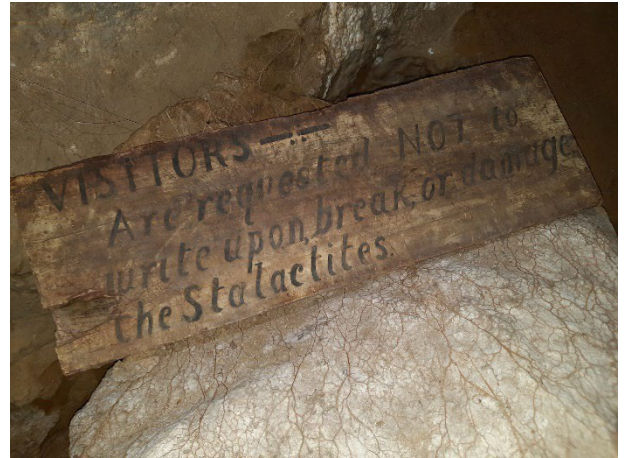


Figure 2: Old signage in Te Anaroa Cave (above),
photo Arthur Clarke

Figure 3: Arthur Clarke and Dave Merritt in Te Anaroa Cave (below right),
photo Neil Collinson

Figure 4: Harwoods Hole (below left),
photo John Brush

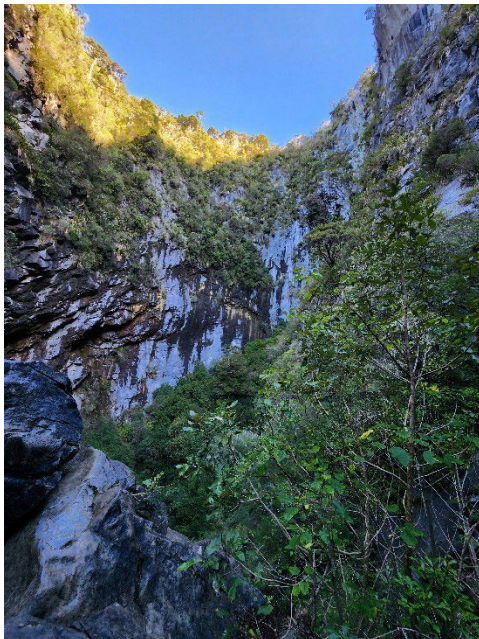
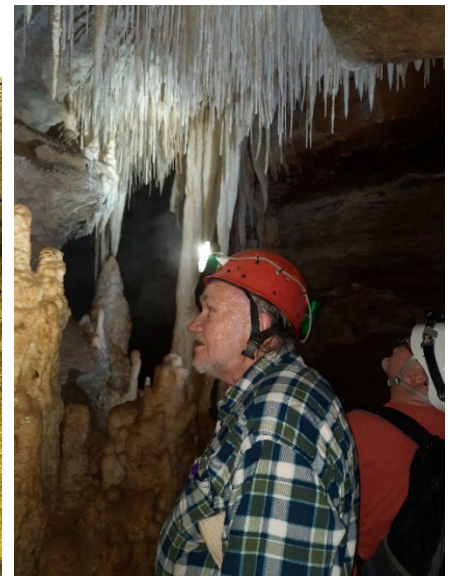


Figure 5: Conference delegates in Te Anaroa Cave (above middle), photo Neil Collinson



The best response I have seen so far comes from John Ash and so perfectly describes the feeling I am getting from everyone, that I have asked him for permission to reproduce it here.



“Kia ora all

Struggled home from the south driving through spitting rain and a rather long and tedious trip - but with lots of time to reflect on the wonderful job that you all did with regards to organising the Takaka ACKMA Conference. Andy and Elery would have been very proud to attend such a gathering - in a far-flung corner of South Island karst, and enjoyed the superb scenery, wonderful texture and taste of the caves, karst and food and to have mixed with the 40 or so delegates.

It was a privilege to participate in the Mihi Whakatau led by the Ngati Tama and become immersed in the 10-year battle to acknowledge the region's taonga - the Waikoropupu Springs and their ancient aquifer. ACKMA has adopted a position of acknowledging First Nation People and this was a fine example of genuine respect between people and the imperative to embrace kaitiakitanga - the guardianship of our natural resources.

It was so rewarding to find characters, who served us our cafe lunches or took us on high tech LIDAR flights of fancy over the local karst, also starred in videos like "The Exploration of Ironstone" - thereby enhancing the connections between community and cavers. To appreciate the longer distance links when cavers associated with the initiative to purchase and preserve land above the 40 km Greenlink-Middle Earth system proudly stood on site and acknowledged the \$10,000 contribution that ACKMA had made to their cause.

It might have felt like "a fine balancing act" for you at times, but everyone appreciated the relaxed and fluid nature of both the presentations and the field excursions, and your warm and inclusive "marshalling". All delegates would have noted that the organisation was in a sense "remote" as Takaka the venue is situated almost at the halfway point between Te Anau (Neil) and Waitomo (Pete, Libby, Kieran) - almost 2000 km apart!! WELL DONE!

Whoever "massaged" the unpredictable weather projections did a superb job, and more importantly, the weaving of the organisational 'threads' throughout the community made everyone feel like, and leave feeling like, "locals".

If I remember rightly, David Gillieson's "ACKMA Strategic Plan- Where to from here?" included "belonging to something that you felt was worthwhile".

This conference achieved that goal.

Ngā mihi nui

John A”



Geoff Melbourne's Retirement

An ACKMA friend was visiting Jenolan Caves and just happened to be on Geoff's last tour before retirement.



Well done Geoff – we hope you really enjoy yourself and thanks for all the dedication and energy you put into your many years of guiding!



Photos from Kevin Kiernan