

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

It is with great sorrow that I report the **death of Keith Tritton** from a heart attack, on Thursday 14 November, at the age of 43 years. Keith, of course, was a foundation member of ACKMA, and was the manager of the Augusta/Margaret River Caves for many years. He was the convenor of the 1991 ACKMA Conference at Margaret River, which will be long remembered by all those attending, not the least because of Kieth's superb organisation of the event. He was also a long-standing caver, having been a member of the Western Australian Speleological Group for over 16 years. Upon retiring as cave manager, he brought a tourist shop in Augusta, and during my recent trip to the area I spent some time with him. The adjacent photo of the two of us was taken outside his shop. However, even in "retirement" as a cave manager, Keith maintained a keen interest and as of his death was a member of several cave-related committees, and a member of the August/Margaret River Tourist Bureau Board, the managing authority of the caves. Keith's loss to cave and karst management is immense, but the lasting tribute to him will be his great contributions, in ways large and small, to our cause over many years. I am certain all members will join with me in offering our sincere condolences to his wife Kathy and children Tammy, David and Jason.

How does one stop the indefatigable Ernie Holland! "Flipper" is recently back from a month of completing the **Great Nullarbor Bike Ride!!** Of course, during the trip he ducked into a few caves, including running at least one "guided tour" on the Nullarbor. The adjacent press article appeared in the *Western Advocate* on 15 November. Ah, sweet fame!!!

While vaguely talking Jenolan, The Australian Institute of Engineers has declared Jenolan Caves an **historic engineering landmark** in recognition of its century engineering expertise. The AIE cites the engineering works at Jenolan over the years as having been important in minimizing human impact and preserving the natural caves environment. A plaque (yet another one) was unveiled at Jenolan on 28 September by a representative of the NSW Minister for the Environment.

Well, I did make my threatened visit to the Augusta/Margaret Caves in mid-October. Peter Bell, forewarned, escaped to the Eastern States, leaving poor Robyn McBeath to handle the incorrigible likes of me. *Caveworks* is almost completed and will be open by Christmas. And isn't it wonderful. See my article elsewhere in these pages!

So, have YOU booked for the **Waitomo Conference??** I understand bookings are already heavy, and the cheap backpacker-type accommodation at the Waitomo Caves Hotel is filling fast. Get your booking in quick, is the word...

The **Conference Booking Form** is again inserted in this Journal.

The **Phosphate Mine** development at Wellington Caves was officially opened on 15 November by the NSW Minister for Mineral Resources. A large number of ACKMA luminaries were present, as noted in Dave Hearn's article elsewhere in these pages. Speaking of Wellington, I am advised that the forthcoming (December, No. 45) issue of *Australian Geographic* magazine features a major article on Wellington's "McCavity" Cave. Evidently, this article has been a long time coming, but according to Dave Hearn it is worth the wait. Dave has sent me an advance copy. My advice - get it!!

The hot issue amongst cavers in November was the closure of **Weebubbie Cave on the Nullarbor**. Following an inspection report, compiled by a Dept. Minerals and Energy mining inspector, the cave has been "permanently closed" to all public access. At this stage, no exceptions to this policy are envisaged. Permanent signs are to be made up and erected on site, and the ladders into the cave will be removed. The decision was taken after extremely heavy rain in the area of the cave which, in the Department's view, made entrance to the cave extremely hazardous, with the stability of the cave entrance rim being a particular concern. Of course, the Department's primary concern is liability from any accident. I understand cavers will be attempting to convince the Department that suitable qualified speleologists could have access without any risk, given that ASF members have full insurance cover. Time will tell if this strategy is successful, but it raises access issues which will undoubtedly occupy the minds of cave managers in various places as time elapses.

The **Cathedral Cave** at Abercrombie was officially re-opened on Saturday, 7 September in ceremony held in the Archway. Happily, after 25 years, the cave, located high in the roof of the Archway at Abercrombie Caves, is once again open for public inspection. Visitors were heralded into the opening ceremony by The Bathurst Melody Makers choir. The Chairman of the Jenolan Caves reserve Trust, Mr. Warwick Bennett, declared in his opening speech that it was an honour to be invited to open a cave as it is an opportunity that has seldom occurred in modern times. Celebrations continued with special tours of Cathedral Cave throughout the day. After lunch, visitors were treated to an afternoon recital performed inside the caves by the Macquarie Male Voice Choir. An additional treat was provided by a solo performance by Domino Costa. Well done, Andy Lawrence and staff!!

In the next issue of the Journal, we will feature an last minute reports on the Waitomo Conference, several further lead-up articles to the Waitomo Karst, and much more!!!