

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

Welcome to the **10th Anniversary Edition** of the ACKMA Journal. Inserted in this edition you will find the **Brochure and Booking Form** for the **13th Australasian Conference on Cave and Karst Management** to be held at Mt. Gambier, South Australia, next April, centering on Naracoorte Caves and the karsts of the Lower South-East of South Australia. Also included are details of the **Post Conference Study Tour**. Both are going to be fabulous, to say the least. Get your booking in early! As you'll note, the Conference fees are about \$100 less than those of the previous (12th) ACKMA Conference at Waitomo, New Zealand. In addition, a sponsorship has enabled us to remit the Registration Fee component to bona-fide full-time students.

In order to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of our Journal, upon Elery Hamilton Smith's suggestion, I have prevailed upon chosen individuals to write independent reviews of management developments at selected karst areas in Australasia. Contributions, at least, from Ruth Lyons, Grant Gartrell and Jill Rowling appear in this edition, and one or two others may make the publishing deadline. In any case, other such contributions are likely to follow in the September edition. I am grateful to these contributors, and between them they provide a good synopsis of progress made over the past decade.

For those with ACKMA members with internet access who haven't yet done so, check out the **ACKMA Homes pages**. The URL is: <http://www.netserv.net.au/cwork/ackma99/index.html> All the latest information on our 1999 Conference is on the website, which will be regularly undated. Another coming feature will be links to various other cave management and cave-related web sites in Australasia and worldwide. These will be added when Peter Bell, who authors and manages the site on ACKMA's behalf, returns from overseas. Many thanks go to Peter for work in this area on ACKMA's behalf, and to *Caveworks*, to which our web site is attached. As just noted, Peter is currently in America on an extensive private study tour of many cave and karst locations, and we can look forward to his report, plus numerous photos, in the next Journal edition. In addition to accessing our web site (open to all), financial ACKMA members who are "on-line" can readily subscribe (it's gratis!) to the **ACKMA List** email newsgroup. The URL to achieve this at: <http://wasg.iinet.au/form-ackma.html> Many thanks to Rauleigh Webb, who manages and maintains this facility for ACKMA.

Recently, a new colour brochure crossed my desk jointly promoting Jenolan, Abercrombie, Wombeyan and Wellington Caves. In describing the latter, one visits to "see the awesome grandeur of the World's Largest Stalagmite". Sigh... I think it is high time this "accolade" was firmly discontinued! At least the *fine print* in the brochure states "The Cathedral Cave (at Wellington) contains *arguably* the world's

largest stalagmite". That is some advance on previous propaganda, I suppose... Perhaps a trip through Kubla Khan Cave at Mole Creek would help the brochure writer??

Buchan Caves has a new District Ranger, following the move of Alan Oldroyd to the Northern Territory. He is Mark Krause, who was appointed on 19 January. Mark has extensive experience in the management of recreation and conservation parks in the local government arena. One of his initial tasks is to review the business management practices of the Buchan Caves Reserve. We wish him well in his new appointment, and hope to see him at the ACKMA Naracoorte Conference next year. Dale Calnin remains as manager of the Caves Reserve itself. In other Buchan news, a battery-operated emergency lighting system has recently been installed in both the Royal and Fairy caves.

Big news from **Jenolan Caves**. Steve Reilly has been appointed as Jenolan Caves Manager, in succession to Andrew Fletcher. Evidently, he was up against a strong field of applicants. Warmest congratulations, Steve, from all your fellow ACKMA members! There have been a few other recent personnel changes at Jenolan. Former Head Guide, Nigel Scanlon, has moved to the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust's Head Office in Bathurst to handle its computer systems. The new Head Guide is Geoff Lang. In addition, John Callagan has become Assistant to the Caves Manager. Again, congratulations to both. Actually, barely had Geoff Lang ascended his new position when he was whisked off to Naracoorte Caves on a *guide exchange* for six weeks. Naracoorte Head Guide, Rachael O'Connor, is at Jenolan for same period.

The article on "New Tourist Arrangements at Wombeyan?" in the last Journal, and its accompanying *centrefold*, created a great deal of interest, to say the least. I am advised that the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust has absolutely no intention on turning Wombeyan Caves into a Naturalist Resort, and that the information contained in the article was incorrect. I also advise that the rumours of Ruth Lyons and Mia Thurgate both offering to be the next ACKMA Journal *centerfold girl* are also incorrect. At least, I think so? What I am going to do with all the scantily-clad photos of both that I have been sent, I really can't say. Yet.

The articles by Ron Poulton and Nick Andreef in the last ACKMA Journal also aroused a good bit of controversy. I did receive some correspondence on the matter, but frankly I see no value in prolonging the discussion *ad nauseam*. However, perhaps the comments of Kevin Kiernan can be used as a *final word*, which I print without editorial comment. Kevin wrote: "I wouldn't lose too much sleep about the Andreef letter discussions. The bottom line is how caves fare, not which class of exploiter (cavers vs. entrepreneurs) gets to win in the resource consumption stakes. But it was perfectly appropriate that someone respond to the original

(Poulton) criticisms. If any harm has been done I suspect it is mostly by the commercial operator to himself, but then you have got to know the local scene and personal dynamics/styles to fully evaluate that. Anyway, its probably useful to have extreme views like that expressed occasionally so that the caving community can maybe realize just how moderate the vast majority of cave managers are, and also to remind managers of some of the costs that accrue when cavers feel excessively restricted".

While on the last Journal, I must apologize for the non-appearance inside it of the article "Moses on Limestone" as flagged on the front cover. Evidentially, Andy Spate is still writing this autobiographical piece which, hopefully (?), will appear in a subsequent Journal..... As we all know, Andy has a long-held reputation for "parting the waters"!

Princess Margaret Rose Caves, Western Victoria, has a new management regime. As flagged in my Editorial in Journal 28, *Parks Victoria* has leased the tourist cave itself to concessionaires (three cave guides), while retaining control of the cave environs. The new lessee/managers, who officially took over on 20 April, are Karen Mackereth, and Bob & Viv Peters. They look forward to being involved in ACKMA, and to meeting everyone at our Conference early next year. I am certain all ACKMA members will join with me in wishing them well.

Moving to Queensland, the **Mt. Etna National Park Draft Management Plan** has recently been released. Unfortunately, it has a number of flaws, and Elery Hamilton Smith has circulated comments to a number of ACKMA members with the suggestion that they send in comments to Queensland Department of Environment, which undoubtedly many have done. Hopefully, the final management plan will be significantly improved as result of ACKMA's efforts.

I have recently received correspondence from the new concessionaires of the **Hastings Caves** Reserve in Tasmania, Ian & Sue Hall. Their plans for Hastings seem good, and they are very environmentally aware. They are also joining ACKMA. We certainly wish them well.

Good news from the **Augusta/Margaret Caves** in Western Australia. Mammoth Cave will be fully *self-guided* by the end of July. Robyn McBeath advises that the new boardwalks in the cave are now complete, and the new lighting is presently being fine tuned. An article on these new developments will appear in the September ACKMA Journal.

By the time members receive this Journal, the ACKMA Inc. **Annual General Meeting**, to be held at Jenolan Caves on Saturday 6th June, will have passed. Reportedly, virtually all current ACKMA Committee Members will be present, including those from New Zealand. A goodly attendance by ACKMA members is also predicted. A full report will appear in the next Journal.