

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

- Greg Martin

This 10th Anniversary edition of the ACKMA (Inc.) journal is indeed a milestone for our Association to celebrate. Kent Henderson, our Publications Officer, needed no encouragement to mark this achievement and has revelled in the opportunity retrieve photographs and reflect on occasions of the past decade and to wrap it all in a colour cover as well. It is appropriate to once again pay a special tribute to Kent for his enthusiasm, motivation, and tenacity, which ensures that the journal remains the main communication artery for all members. A vote of sincere thanks must go to you Kent on behalf of all members for your meritorious efforts. The Journal will continue to play a key role through informing members and enhancing the vitality of the Association to the Millennium and beyond.

The journal is often full of surprises. The last edition almost resembled a tabloid in places with the unclad human form adorning the pages along with the inclusion of the article by Ron Poulton and the response from Nick Andreef. The e-mail ran hot after publication of the journal in respect of the latter.

ACKMA(Inc.) AGM / COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee members will be meeting at Jenolan Caves over the Queen's Birthday long weekend for the Annual General Meeting and Committee meeting. Three members from New Zealand will be attending and the next edition will provide information and coverage of the gathering.

PROGRESS WITH RUAKURI CAVE

Following on from John Ash's item in the last edition, the developers of the resource have been consulting various stakeholders with their proposal and have indicated to the Department of Conservation that they intend to apply for the right of access to develop the Drum entrance. This project remains in the planning and consent phase and a meeting is to be convened with the statutory and regulatory authorities to explain the proposal and develop an integrated approach to working through the numerous consents and requirements.

OPERA IN THE CAVES

The Waitomo Cave Management Committee sanctioned a one-off opera event in the Glowworm Cave at Waitomo on the evening of ANZAC day. The concert was organised by Friends of Opera New Zealand and featured Tenor Simon O'Neil and Dame Malvina Major. The ticket price was \$225 per seat, which included a tour of the caves and a dinner at the hotel afterwards. The event created an opportunity to monitor the cave under some unique circumstances. Kate Banbury, Tourism Holdings Ltd's Karst Resource Officer, Dave Smith, Karst Resource Officer - Department of Conservation, and Dr Chris deFreitas, Climatologist - University of Auckland, were on hand to use the newly installed monitoring system to measure conditions in the cave before, during and after the concert.

The interest in monitoring the event was twofold. Firstly, a group of more than 160 visitors in the cave offered a "spike" of activity which was well defined. The guests left rapidly and the cave was then empty. During normal use, activity peaks at midday, but measurements of parameters is clouded by following tours of smaller numbers until 5pm or so. Secondly, at this time of the year the cave is in upflow. The only other event like this for which there is data for comparison is the annual Community Christmas Carols, which also take place in the Glowworm Cave with similar numbers and at the same location. This is generally in summer "downflow". The difference is that in summer the cave generally flows downward, (air passing the upper entrance is cooled). In upflow, cold air flows in from the resurgence and warms, absorbing moisture. This is what happened when the upper entrance was left open throughout the winter of 1979, the cool air warmed and sucked moisture from the glowworms leaving only 4% of them with "lights turned on". So the interest was in how quickly the cave relaxes in upflow conditions.

About 6-8 sites in the cave were recorded before, during and after the event, measuring CO₂ (both infra red and draeger analysis), and wet & dry bulb temperatures (for calculating humidity). When the door was opened to exit the choir, air flow was measured intensely. All the normal on-line equipment was downloading throughout the event. CO₂ levels were recorded from the computer screen on a minute by minute basis to give a high resolution record not normally available.

The operational Licence for the Cave provides for a limit of 2400ppm of CO₂. The highest level recorded for the Opera event was 2000ppm. This was recorded on the Vaisalla permanent sensors. Data from all the intermediate stations still has to be adjusted and worked on. A full report is being prepared and should provide some interesting insights for a future article in the journal.

CAVE CREEK - ANNIVERSARY

April 29 was the third anniversary of the Cave Creek Tragedy when 14 people plunged to their death from the failure of a viewing platform in the Paparoa National Park on South Island's West Coast. A television documentary was screened reviewing the whole event from the time of the tragedy through to outcome including the effect on the lives of survivors and the families involved. The documentary filmed a replica of the fatal platform constructed at Auckland University to demonstrate the cause of the failure. The programme was a sobering reminder to those authorities who hold responsibility for public safety of the ever-present risks associated with designing, constructing and then maintaining facilities for the public.

That is about all to report for now. I hope that you all enjoy this 10th Anniversary Issue!