

EDITORIAL

Well, wasn't the ACKMA AGM weekend at Buchan a massive success! ...and a great turn up too!! Dale Calnin tells me the event has given the caves a new focus in many directions, which was one of main reasons we were there, of course. A highlight of the AGM itself was Dianne Vavryn's election as a Fellow of ACKMA (see reports elsewhere herein).

So! It is now only about eight months to the **14th Australasian Conference on Cave and Karst Management** at Wombeyan Caves, NSW. The organisation is now largely complete. It will be fantastic – **DO NOT MISS IT!** Full details, and the Registration Form, are inserted in this Journal. Get **your** registration in without delay!!!

Great news came out in the Queens Birthday Honour List in June. Our President, Brian Clark, was awarded the Public Service Medal. A fantastic and thoroughly served honour, as I am certain all AMCKA members will agree. Warmest congratulations Brian! A press cutting is adjacent.

From good news to some bad news, I'm afraid. The manager of Careys Cave, Wee Jasper (NSW) – Geoff Kell – had a severe accident on 4 August. He was changing lights at the rear of the show cave and fell, breaking his leg severely. He spent several days in Canberra hospital, but is now home. However, he will be out of action for about three months. I am certain all members will join with me in wishing Geoff a speedy recovery. Cheer up messages can be sent to him at: geoffkell@telstra.easymail.com.au

Things move ahead at Jenolan Caves. Work to upgrade the Lucas Cave continues apace. By September, all railing in the cave will be replaced by stainless steel, and the mains lighting and external lighting to the cave and Grand Arch precinct replaced. Thereafter, re-lighting of the cave itself will proceed. Jenolan Manager, Steve Reilly, tells me they are experimenting with LED lights, which offer no heat emission, never burn out, and technologically are now as bright as the 12 volt dichroics used in many caves re-lightings in recent times. The Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust (JCRT) is also currently seriously looking at self-touring possibilities, with Chifley cave (a current show cave) and the Nettle & Arch Caves (former show cave) as the options. In my view, while Chifley would be the cheaper option, I have more than some concerns about its suitability. Nettle & Arch, on the other hand, would be ideal, in my view. The JCRT has also put out a "call for proposals" for development of a cable way to the caves, with expressions of interest due in by October.

Still in New South Wales, Abercrombie Caves have been in the news recently – in "Aussie Post" magazine to be exact. A few months ago a reporter/photographer turned up, and a double page feature (see adjacent) was the result. Good stuff!!

ACKMA's ASF Liaison Officer, Arthur Clarke, has enrolled full-time in the School of Zoology at University of Tasmania doing a Master of Science Degree in cave fauna - looking at factors affecting the distribution and biodiversity of invertebrate cavernicoles in separate cave ecosystems within caves and between caves in the

Hastings and Ida Bay karst systems of southern Tasmania. We wish him well!

Arthur is also joining a caving expedition to China over October – being the only person from southern hemisphere (and outside Europe for that matter) as part of twelve person team to investigate a "new" area of tower karst in a remote region rarely visited by Westerners. It's in the western part of Guangxi Province in southwest China (near the North Vietnam border). He will be the cave biologist for a British-based China Karst Project expedition working under a IUCN/UNESCO sponsored IGCP (international geological/ - and ecosystems - correlation project) through the Guangxi Normal University in Guilin. After the expedition, he will be joining Nick White and our President, Brian Clark, presenting ACKMA at the International Show Caves Association (ISCA) conference near Hangzhou, South West of Shanghai, in early November.

While on Tasmanians, ACKMA Fellow & former vice-president, Dr. Kevin Kiernan, is imminently off overseas to Iceland, Turkey and Heard Island, getting back early next year. Plenty of volcanics, glaciations, and karst afoot!! I will endeavour to wangle an article on his peregrinations out of him when he returns. In other Tasmanian news, cavers from Mole Creek - along with Debbie Hunter and her "Wild Cave Tours" operation - have now been excluded by landowners at South Mole Creek from entering Wet Cave and Honeycomb Cave, or at least from getting much past the entrance daylight zone. Although these caves have entrances within land parcels that are part of the Mole Creek Karst National Park, the caves extend well beyond the park boundaries and under private land – under land that landowners now claim to have "Centre-of-Earth" titles for – barring access to the majority of the caves passages and internal chambers. Some landowners are even talking about developing the caves themselves as tourist attractions!!

Speaking of Conference attendances, Ebery Hamilton-Smith will be back in Europe soon. After some lecturing duties in The Netherlands, he will be attending a Conference on "Sustainable Mineral Resource Management in Karst Areas" (aka Mining in Karst Areas), in Slovenia, towards the end of September. He will give us report in the next (December) Journal. Ebery has prepared a list if Conferences happening worldwide over the next two years, noted elsewhere herein.

Naracoorte Caves recently had a successful evening at the South Australian Tourism awards, winning the *Significant Regional Attractions* Category. Brian Clark accepted the award and paid credit to all staff and those who helped make the Wonambi dream a reality. Thanks also went to *Tourism South East*, the regional marketing board, which have assisted in some many ways in promoting the Naracoorte Caves. This board is so successful they won Tourism Associations and Visitor Centres Category for the 4th time in a row. And of course, Naracoorte recently hosted the Olympic Torch (again, a report elsewhere herein).

In mid August, Ebery Hamilton-Smith and Andy Spate flew to Perth, to join Rauleigh Webb, Bill Humphries (WA Museum) and others, to attend the appeal hearings against the proposed limestone mining in the Cape Range karst in Western Australia. A report is elsewhere herein, and the outcome will be noted in the December Journal.

I like to remind members about the ACKMA **Life Member's Fund**. This was set up a couple of years ago to receive monies to assist in sponsoring a karst student(s) to attend ACKMA Conferences. Many life members (who aren't obliged to pay the normal annual membership fee) donate the equivalent to the fund every year. All other members are encouraged to make what additional contribution to the Fund that they feel able, when they pay their own annual fee. Invoices will be going out soon (we are still awaiting our GST Australian Business Number...sigh..). When you receive your invoice, please give this matter some thought.

The annual "fun time" to visit Bungonia Caves in New South Wales occurred recently. The Park was closed from 14 to 25 August for feral goat shooting. Goats were targeted from a helicopter. Several people have commented that some cavers could be confused with feral goats! Evidently, plans by some others to dress up as goats and indulge in a few satanic rites at that time were conveniently cancelled...

And finally, Andy Spate has just discovered why many people in his organisation (NSW NPWS) always put karst in capital letters. They thought it was an acronym based on Kaves And Rocks and Stones and Things!! Oh dear....