

At the 'ACKMA Dinner' in Hobart. L to R: Greg Middleton, Ian Houshold, Colleen Vanderstaay, Jenny Dyring, Chris Shaples, Keith Vanderstaay, and Kent Henderson.



A TRIP TO TASMANIA

- Kent Henderson

Chester and Kay Shaw at home in Mole Creek



Recently, I found myself in Tasmania for ten days on business, and was very kindly accommodated during my stay at the home of Jenny Dyring and Ian Houshold, in Hobart. On one day, while up Launceston way, I called into see Neil Kell's re-lighting efforts in King Solomons Cave at Mole Creek. I actually paid for the tour (!), as I wanted to hear the interpretation incognito. It was \$13.00 well spent – my guide, Barry, did an excellent tour, and was very enthusiastic throughout. One would expect no less, of course, but one doesn't always get it..... Well done, Barry!

And Neil's handiwork? Great! Some criticise him for under-lighting, but in my view that is considerably better than the reverse. And no, I didn't think King Solomons was under lit, either, but rather very well lit. Neil puts incredible thought into any cave lighting project. Just one superb example is a smallish water-filled pool recessed into the wall about halfway through the cave with a small spotlight under the water. Most effective, and wonderful!

The cave has had a complete infrastructure update to, with stainless steel rails, and excellent tracking. Not to mention Neil's track lights – understated, just bright enough so visitors can see their feet, as track lighting should be. I've been in some caves where the track lighting is the main feature of the cave, simply because it is so bright you can barely see the decoration.

After King Sols I called in to visit ACKMA Life Member Chester Shaw, and his lovely wife Kay, at their Mole Creek home – they were recently back from one of their wanderings around Australia.

Both are fighting fit, I am happy to report! They'll be caravanning off again about next May, with the promise they'll be at the ACKMA AGM weekend on Kangaroo Island. Good stuff!

New infrastructure and fittings
in King Solomons Cave, Mole Creek



After departing the Shaw's I heading into Mole Creek proper for a picnic lunch with Cathie Plowman and David Bulter, to which they'd kindly invited to me when they heard I was again descending on the Apple Isle. It was fun! We picnicked at the Wet Cave Reserve just south of Mole Creek. Also present were Trish Deer (her husband Geoff was absent as he had to run tours through Gunns Plains Cave – poor excuse!), Geoff and Trish's young son Benjamin (a close pal of Andy Spate!), Ian Gadsby (A Gunns Plains Cave guide), and Ian's three teenage children and a teenage mate of their's.



Ian Household navigating past sea caves on the Tasman Peninsula

After lunch, we all visited Baldock's Cave, which is an old show cave. It was operated as such from about 1910 to 1930. It contains lots of old artefacts, which Cathie and others are in the process of cataloguing. As it had rained long and hard over the previous few days, the cave had several flooded sections, which made touring it rather wet, to say the least. I'd been in this cave once before, during the 4th Australian Karst Studies Seminar at Mole Creek in February 1998, but Cathie led us to a few sections I hadn't seen previously, which was great!

In Hobart, I was well looked after by Ian and Jenny, staying at their home in Collinsvale, in a delightful valley about fifteen minutes drive inland. They are on several acres, with lovely gardens, and with stream running through their property below the house. Quite idyllic, really! On the Saturday night before I flew home, we convened yet another 'ACKMA Dinner' at a very pleasant restaurant in Hobart. Present were most local ACKMA notables – Keith Vanderstaay (Hastings Caves Manager) and his wife Colleen, Greg Middleton (who has recently been 'karsting' around in East Timor with Nick and Sue White – more on that in the fullness of time), Chris Sharples, plus Ian and Jenny and myself, of course.



About to enter Baldock's Cave. L to R: Ian Gadsby, Trish Deer (with Benjamin), Kent Henderson, Cathie Plowman and David Butler.

ACKMA Vice-President Rolan Eberhard was supposed to be present, however, he was out sailing that afternoon to again display his reputedly unsurpassed yachting skills – but he managed to ground his boat! He had to await high tide to re-float it (so the story goes...), and didn't get home till midnight. A very lame excuse for missing dinner, I thought! We also had apologies for non-attendance from Arthur Clarke, who is in China on a caving expedition (of which we will undoubtedly hear about in this Journal in due course) and Dr. Kevin Kiernan who had just arrived back in Hobart that very day from a trip to Alaska, Spain and Morocco – with a dose of gastro – and he reportedly had many hundreds of exam papers to mark before he got back to his desk at The University of Tasmania on the Monday! Both mildly passable excuses, I suppose. A very happy night was had by all attending!

I had a free day on the Sunday, before I flew home the following day, so Ian asked me if I wanted to go sea caving and fishing. Of course! So we headed off to the Tasman Peninsula (almost to Port Arthur), and launched Ian's small aluminium motor boat. The sea was a bit choppy (as my 'bouncing bum' testified to...), but not too bad. We viewed the famous Tasman Arch from the sea, and noted at least a dozen other sea cave entrances. Ian hadn't been there before (from the sea), and he is determined to return, survey gear in hand, in calmer weather. We then motored around to the quieter waters of Pirate's Bay to drop in the fishing lines. But alas, an Easterly wind was blowing, and according to Jenny, fish only bite in a Westerly. Well, sounds good, and a convenient excuse for the fact we had roast lamb for dinner that night! Many thanks to Ian and Jenny, and Cathie and David, for looking after me so well!

