

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

– Steve Bourne

Steve Bourne (right) chats with Cathie Plowman and Michael Kidd – ACKMA AGM Weekend 2006



The big news at the moment is the bid being compiled by Andy Spate, Greg Martin and Pete Chandler plus others from Waitomo, to attract the next ISAC (International Show Cave Association) Congress.

An ISCA Congress is held every four years with the 2006 Congress in Bermuda in October. Andy, Pete and Greg are planning an Australasian presentation and I wish them every success in bringing this event to Waitomo.

I had a brief visit by Peter Mooney, General Manager of *Parks Tasmania* recently, while he was on leave on the mainland. We had a pleasant afternoon discussing issues in karst (and funding!). His knowledge of the Mole Creek karst was extensive and he spoke highly of one Ian Houshold!

Some other recent visitors were descendants of Robert Leitch, caretaker at Naracoorte Caves in

the 1920s and 1930s. After a flurry of information sharing, a family photo was taken on Robert Leitch Drive, the road from the main visitor precinct to Victoria Fossil Cave (see below).

Leitch was an athlete of note and set several Australian records. I cannot see the current manager walking 110 miles in 23 hours or running 10 miles in 54 minutes!!

Andy Spate brought ANU researcher Pauline Treble to Naracoorte in June. Pauline's research involves detailed analysis of stalagmites that have been actively growing in very recent times (geologically speaking) and correlating rainfall records with growth rate variations of the speleothem.

This research will provide valuable information regarding climate change driven by natural cycles and those which may be anthropogenic. We managed to visit a large number of caves, including Princess Margaret Rose and Tantanoola, before collecting a couple of stals from Victoria Fossil Cave and one from a small cave on my own family's land.

The new management arrangements are now in place for N.S.W. caves and nominations called for the Karst Advisory Committee. I have yet to see the final makeup of this committee, and although ACKMA does not have a designated membership, I feel sure there will be several ACKMA members on the committee elected for other stakeholder groups.

I hope everyone is surviving the cold, dry winter and we see lots of rain and visitors in the near future.



The family of Robert Leitch, caretaker at Naracoorte Caves in the 1920s and 1930s – grand daughter Shirley Chuck, Great grand daughter Vicki Thompson and great great grandsons Mitchell and Ryan Thomson.