

A delegate from Slovakia casts his vote for the next ISCA Congress
– Andre David (Aven Armand, France) is scrutineering.



WHERE EXACTLY IS BERMUDA? AND WHY DID I GO THERE?

– Andy Spate

Most people, including myself place it near, if not in, the Caribbean. Well – its antipodean point is about 100 km southeast of Perth and it lies well out into the Atlantic Ocean about 1200 km southeast of New York with London 5,600 km away.

It is a small island of only 63 square kilometres very reminiscent of our Lord Howe Island in shape and geology – but very densely settled and with an interesting history going back into the early 17th Century with many historic towns, buildings, forts and so on.

Unlike Lord Howe, it has little trace of its volcanic origins but it is made up of calcareous aeolinite just like all our syngenetic karst areas. Up to seven caves have been shown as tourism ventures with two still operating. More on the caves later.

Some months ago I got the idea of attending the Sixth International Show Caves Association (ISCA) Congress at the urging of Renata Marinelli and others – mainly to try and find out what ISCA is, as I am an Associate Member and their website is not terribly informative.

A very long-term member of the ACKMA executive suggested that Australasia make a bid for the next ISCA Congress to be held in 2010. Some

railroading eventuated and Pete Chandler, Greg Martin and myself put together a bid on behalf of Waitomo. I then discovered that the USA's National Caves Association (NCA) was holding its annual conference in Bermuda.

The NCA is an association of largely commercial show cave operators. So I threw caution and a lot of money to the winds and decided to go and take part in both meetings.



Judy Smith (Marengo Cave, USA) viewing the base of the Admiral's stalagmite.



Owing to various natural disasters (an earthquake in Hawaii) I did not arrive until midday of the second day of the NCA Conference so I missed out on a series of business and sub-committee meetings. Whilst missing this sort of meeting might well be considered a blessing it would have been interesting to eavesdrop on some of the gatherings. The NCA meetings have a much greater emphasis on Association business – and on the business of making a profit – than our meetings do. Consequently there were a lot fewer of the more technical papers that we are used to. There were also many more excursions, receptions and social events than we expect with Bermudan Rum Swizzles featuring prominently!

As an example of the conference proceedings one day consisted of the following sessions (some were parallel):

- q *The Gift Shop and The Gift Shows* – panel presentation with Q&A.
- q *Admission Prices* – panel presentation with Q&A.
- q *Internet Ticketing* – panel presentation with Q&A.
- q *Digital Photography* – panel presentation with Q&A.
- q *New thinking on cave lighting from the far side of the Pacific* – Andy Spate and Neil Kell.
- q *The New Gurnee Guide to American Show Caves* – Jeanee Gurnee.
- q *Countering the Downturn* – Steve Fairchild.
- q *Managing the Risk of a Show Cave* – Brad Wuest.

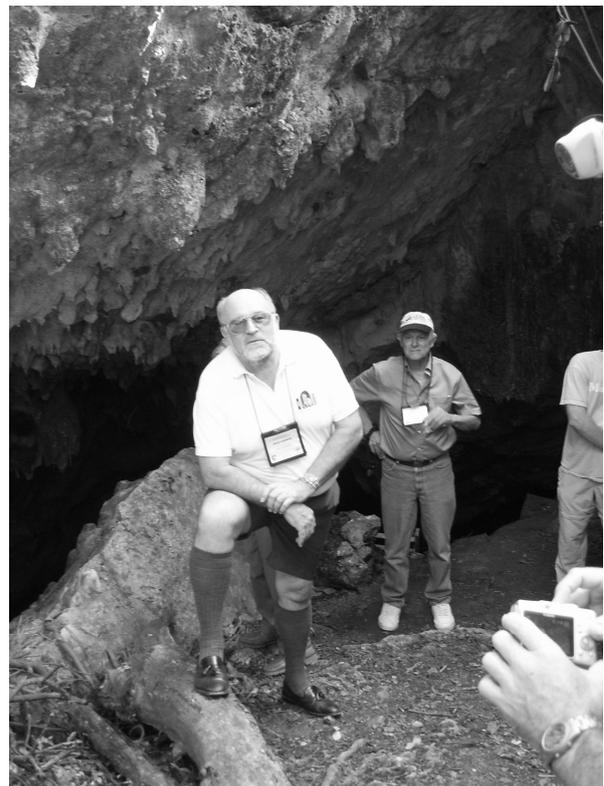
And then a departure by boat for 'Pirate Night' at Hawkins Island with lots of scantily clad limbo dancers – might not be many of those at Buchan next year (hint for Robyn Calnin?).

Just a quick comment on those events – the digital photography session was about making money from taking photos of cave visitors and then selling them immediately after the tour. Apparently this is a great money-spinner even if the visitors are allowed to use their own cameras in the cave. Given the fact that show cave visitor numbers seem to be trending down I was very interested in hearing what Steve Fairchild had to say – but it seems numbers are holding up quite well in the USA.

The next day had the following technical presentations:

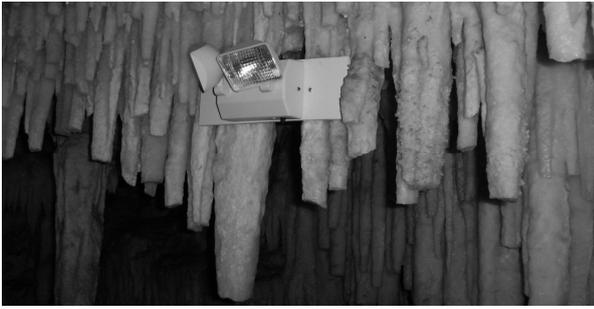
- q *Alpha Radiation Final Report* – Tom Aley. This dealt with the way the NCA has dealt with the bureaucracy over the radon issue. Interesting but the approach wouldn't help us much here even if radon were a greater OH&S issue.
- q *Appraising the Value of a Show Cave Property* – Hank J. Wise – again fascinating because it is so outside of our experience but of little relevance to our situation although it might be appropriate in New Zealand.
- q *The Control of Lampenflora* – Arrigo Cigna from Italy. Very interesting in that when I used the word 'lampenflora' the previous day I was interrupted to explain the term! The American just refer to all that horrible green as 'algae'. Nothing new here – use hypochlorite. But nowhere near enough emphasis on lamp placing, substrate conditions etc.

Those talks were almost all of the presentations at the Conference. However, there were some ideas that I will write about in the next Journal – remind me, Kent, about geocaching).



David Summers outside Admiral's Cave

Emergency lighting in Crystal Cave



One idea that I found very interesting (and which was repeated in the ISCA Congress) was a report from each of nine regions across the USA on the happenings at each of the member show cave operations.

And so to the ISCA Congress. There were 55 delegates (Kent's word) from the western and northern hemispheres and a solitary one (me) from the east and southern! Delegations of Koreans (from Samcheok City) and China were unable to attend at the last minute.

This article will be too long if I list all the business meetings, excursions, functions etc as well as the presentations so I will just provide you with an abridged version:

- q *Panel presentation on Alpha Radiation (radon) – Arrigo Cigna, Tom Aley, Andy Spate.*
- q Presentations by applicants to host the Sixth ISCA Congress in 2010. Slovakia and Australasia presented.
- q *A New Look at an Old Problem – The Reconstruction Work at Baradla Cave, Hungary – Zsuzsa Tolnay.*
- q *Introduction to the Geology of Bermuda – David Summers.*
- q Visit to Admiral's Cave, which is being developed as an adventure cave.
- q *Cave Lighting for the Future I – Daniele Traferro, Italy.* Dealt with cold cathode lights being specifically developed for caves.
- q Demonstration of Lighting Techniques in Prospero's Cave – Roy Davis, USA.
- q *Around the World – each Full Member of ISCA was given three minutes (stopped with a well-rung bell – no going over time!).*
- q *Cave Lighting for the Future II – Serge Krasko, Germany.*
See <www.cavelighting.com> for more details. Hi tech use of LEDs.
- q *New thinking on cave lighting from the far side of the Pacific – Andy Spate and Neil Kell.*
A New Solution for Cave Pathways – Margherita & Arrigo Cigna – this presentation dealt with the use of plastic composites for cave paths and stairways. Another set of products that we will see much more of in the future.

As you can see there was less technical talking than we are used to. Neil's and my presentation was well received which is always pleasing. I also gave a couple of showings of my cave and karst

images of OZ/NZ – thanks to all of you who contributed images.

So what about the caves? The Crystal Caves of Bermuda has three show caves – Crystal, Fantasy and the soon to be opened adventure tour of Admiral's Cave. In the grounds of the Grotto Bay Beach Resort (where the meetings were held) there are two further caves Prospero's and Cathedral Caves. These have been used as show caves in the past and are now lit during daylight hours to allow resort visitors to view them at their leisure – i.e. self-guided in our parlance. There are also some fine collapse dolines in the resort area reaching to the watertable. Swimming is allowed in Cathedral Cave and you can get a certificate to prove you have done so!

They are very similar to our syngenetic caves – lots of white and yellow speleothems and very well worth seeing. They all reach down to the brackish watertable. I thought the lighting was considerably overdone and unsympathetic. One of the major features of Admiral's Cave is the stump of a huge stalagmite removed at the behest of an admiral in the early 17th Century. It was ultimately transferred to a Royal Edinburgh Museum in Scotland and destroyed by renovation contractors within the last few years! It must be the largest stalagmite ever removed from a cave and probably weighed well in excess of five tonnes!

One feature of the meetings was the need for a dress code in four classes – Jackets and Ties, Smart Casual Dress, Casual Dress and Field Dress. This generated a need for a strict definition of what, and what aren't, Bermuda Shorts. I hope this doesn't catch on at ACKMA. And in case you ask I wore long pants throughout – and a tie from time to time!

Although expensive with two very tedious trips to and from Oz it was well worthwhile and I learnt (again) that we can well hold up our end cave management-wise. I met lots of new friends and old ones from Europe (as well as Jeanee and Tom from the US). In particular I would like to thank Brad Wuest (President of the NCA) and David Summers (and the ladies of his organising committee – Dahlia, Lisa, Crystal, Debbie, Susan, Melinda – better not leave out Henry Laing!) in particular. David is the new President of ISCA – we look forward to a rejuvenation of the organisation. And no we didn't get the next ISCA Congress by a vote of 40 to 4!



The ISCA Conference dinner table in the Commissioner's House, Royal Naval Dockyard, Bermuda

