



## CONFERENCE MAGIC!!

– Kent Henderson

Mr. Craig Ingram, Member of State Parliament for Eat Gippsland officially opens the Conference.



Wow! WHAT a stunning Family Gathering (also known as an ACKMA Conference!)....if exhausting! It is amazing how quickly five days goes when you are flat out like a lizard drinking! The 17th Australasian Conference on Cave and Karst Management hit new heights, and a new attendance record – 87 registrants (95 if you count accompanying persons) and well over 100 if you add in various *Parks Victoria* people. Stunning! My Conference effectively started on Friday 27 April. I had dinner that evening with a gaggle of Kiwis (who

had started on Melbourne’s finest ales early in the afternoon...). Those who weren’t overly ‘happy’ were asleep at the table, but a fine Chinese meal and considerable bon hommie were enjoyed by us all.

The next morning our Kiwi cousins set out in the “Peter Dimond Memorial Bus” for a leisurely two day ride to Buchan, via Wilson’s Promontory National Park and most pubs en route...

I raced down to Buchan on Saturday 28 April, with ACKMA Fellow Dianne Vavryn in tow, who flew in the previous day. We met a few other early arrivals in the Buchan Pub (which was destined to double its annual turnover during the coming week!) that evening for dinner – Nick White, Andy Spate and Kim Ryeon...

So, it was onto **Day One – Sunday 29 April**. A good part of the morning was spent filling Conference Satchels with various niceties, followed by setting up the Buchan Hall for the coming onslaught. Registration started at 2.00pm, and a steady stream of delegates followed, the biggest intake being late afternoon arrival of the ‘Conference Bus’ which left Melbourne at 9.00am that day. Typically, the “Peter Dimond Memorial Bus” arrived too late for registration, so our tardy Kiwis had to wait until the next morning to receive their Conference goodies.



With all settled into their accommodation at various venues around Buchan (not many spare beds left...), and the town's population effectively doubled, it was onto the *Official Opening and Welcoming Barbecue* that evening in the Buchan Recreation Hall.

It was to have been staged in the Caves Reserve, but inclement weather threatened (though it turned out to be mostly fine for the week, happily). Much back slapping and catching up with old friends ensued – as well as with many new ones – nearly half the attendees were “first timers”.



Dignitaries at the Opening of the Conference,  
with ACKMA President, Steve Bourne  
– Conference 2007

The *Official Opening* was performed by Mr. Craig Ingram, the Member of State Parliament for East Gippsland, and he was preceded by Uncle Arthur Mullet, a local indigenous Elder, with a *Welcome to Country*. Aside from the aforementioned, dignitaries in the Official Party were David Thorpe (Moogji

Aboriginal Council), Mendy Urie (Mayor, East Gippsland Shire), Steve Kozolowski (CEO, East Gippsland Shire Council), Chris Rose, *Parks Victoria* (Regional Manager, Victoria East), and Dennis Matthews, *Parks Victoria* (Chief Ranger, Victoria East).

Were delighted to have them all present, and greatly appreciated their support of the Conference. I must make special mention of Dennis Matthews, whose support of our Conference was fantastic, even to the point of him traveling especially to Melbourne to attend an Organising Committee Meeting.



Enjoying morning tea. L to R: Derek  
Mason, Peter Chandler and Phil Wood  
– Conference 2007.

**Day Two – Monday 30 April**, saw us all gather for breakfast at the Buchan Recreation Hall (where each day's breakfast and lunch was held), thence the short walk to the Buchan Hall for the first paper session. After housekeeping from our Conference Convenor, Dale Calnin, it was over to our President,

Steve Bourne, as Chair of the First Paper Session. First up was Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith, whose brief paper *Introducing cultural heritage.*, proved an excellent scene-setter for our main conference theme – *Indigenous and European Cultural Landscapes*.



At dinner in The Caves Main Street Café – L to R: Andy Spate, Nick White, Dennis Rebbechi and Geoff Rebbechi – Conference 2007

Elery's paper was followed the Keynote Address, delivered by Robert Bednarik, entitled *Australian Rock Art*. Robert is Australia's pre-eminent expert in rock art, and his profusely illustrated power point presentation was outstanding and a real highlight of the Conference.

The issue of preserving Australia's massive cave and rock art heritage, particularly in Western Australia, is a very real one. Andy Spate was next on his feet, presenting Dr. Jo Flood's paper, *The Archaeological Significance of Buchan Caves*. Unfortunately, Jo could not attend the Conference, but her paper – focusing particularly on her past excavations at Clogg's Cave at Buchan East, was excellent.



A group at work during the Interpretation Workshop – Conference 2007

A brief interregnum – I must at this stage say something about Andy Spate. Andy's contribution to the Conference (amongst many – more on them later), both before and after, was immense. Prior to, we probably spoke daily on the phone for several

weeks, as he organised the Conference Papers Program and gathered the abstracts (not without some headaches...).

At the Conference he organised and ran all the IT and AV, and spent most afternoons putting together, technically, the presentations for the next day. I, for one, know how much time Andy put into the Conference, and without him it would not have been anything like the success it was. MANY thanks Andy, from us all.

Morning Tea followed, allowing delegates their first opportunity to peruse the expansive display of books and other cave-related stuff by Emily Davis and Mike Warner, of *Speleobooks*. We were delighted that both had especially travelled from the USA to be with us.

The Second Paper Session, chaired by Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith continued on the Cultural Heritage theme. Associate Professor Ian Clark presented two concurrent papers, viz: *The abode of malevolent spirits and creatures – Caves in Victorian Aboriginal social organization*, and *In Quest of Narguns & Nyols: a history of indigenous tourism at the Buchan Caves Reserve*. Ian is an academic expert in indigenous culture, and we were most grateful that he kindly agreed to come to Buchan to present his two excellent papers.



West Australians all – L to R: Jayme Hatcher, Candace Williams, Renee Mouritz and Ann Wood – Conference 2007

The morning finished with Dr. Bob Haldane, a noted historian and Buchan resident, who delivered *A Caving Pioneer: Frank Moon and the caves of Buchan*. His paper was fascinating and well delivered, a highlight being his display of a facsimile of a recently-discovered original map of the Buchan Caves System.

The afternoon, as with every afternoon of the week, featured the availability of a workshop, cave visits and field trips. The Day Two workshop, in the Buchan Hall, was conducted by Ken Grimes, on *Cave & Karst Survey Data – collection and use*. The object of the workshop was to discuss the collection of cave and surface data and its analysis, use and management.

Delegates enjoy morning tea – Conference 2007



I personally did not attend this workshop, but quite a number did, and the reports I received after the event suggested it was most successful and useful. Reports on this, and the other Conference Workshops, will appear in the ACKMA Journal as they come to hand.

Another option was a bus tour, lead by Graham Parkes & Matt Holland, to the stunning Snowy River National Park to the north of Buchan. This proved extremely popular, and departed with a full bus.

A brief word about Graham Parkes. Graham, a long-time ACKMA member, was Ranger-in-Charge at Buchan in the late 1980s, prior to him moving to become Ranger-in-Charge of the Grampians National Park in Western Victoria.

He is most justly regarded as one of Victoria's best land managers – who has often knocked back high promotion to stay at the “coal face”. Graham came “Back to Buchan” especially to assist our Conference in leading tours, and he also spent a good deal of time cooking and washing dishes – a more modest, unassuming and respected man would be hard to find.

We were absolutely delighted that he took a week away from his heavy responsibilities to be with us at Buchan. MANY thanks, Graham.



Ian Household (right) accepts the President's Award for Rolan Eberhard from Professor Elery Hamilton Smith – Conference 2007

Other options for the afternoon included visits to Buchan's three show caves – Royal, Fairy and Federal; and to three wild ‘adventure’ caves – Wilsons Cave; Childrens Cave & Spring Creek Cave; and Dicksons Cave. These trips also proved popular, and to varying extents were repeated on other days, enabling probably all delegates to visit the show caves, at least. The Dicksons Cave trip was lead by ACKMA member Dave Chitty, who runs an adventure tourism business in northern Victoria. Dave also kindly arranged the Public Liability Insurance for the Conference – a necessary evil – and we were most grateful to him for this (at modest cost...) and for coming to Buchan to assist with the week. A final option for the afternoon was a self-guided walk of the caves reserve and Buchan area. This option was available very day, and a number availed themselves of the opportunity.



L to R: Mick Chalker, Alan Costigan and Andy Spate – Conference Dinner 2007

The evening saw dinner at the Buchan Pub (an often used facility by delegates over the week!), in two sitting – there were too many of us for one. I well recall that human whirlwind, Dr. Claire Baker, arriving two days late for Conference (as she would..) attending her first paper session on the Wednesday and immediately adjourning to the pub (conveniently next door to the Buchan Hall) as soon as the speaking was over! Typical!

While delegates “kicked on” after dinner, the ACKMA Committee retired to the Buchan Hall for its meeting. We were delighted to welcome our incoming Conference Convenor, Jayme Hatcher, to the meeting, and as an observer Jay Anderson in her capacity as ASF President. As expected, the meeting was most successful. The Committee received various reports, and formulated recommendations to the Annual General Meeting, including no rise in the annual membership fee, and that the new proposed “Rules” of the Association be approved.

The Committee also agreed to cross affiliation between ACKMA and the Jenolan Caves Historical & Preservation Society, and to pursue cross-affiliation with the British & Irish Association of Show Caves and ANECAT (France). Finally, the Committee agreed to discontinue printing hard copies of Conference Proceedings. Over recent years

only a handful has been sold, and even now we have not insubstantial stocks of past proceedings. In future, all Conference Papers will be included in the ACKMA CD ROM.



Poster display at the Buchan Hall  
– Conference 2007

**Day Three – Tuesday 1 May**, saw the Third Paper Session in the morning, with yours truly as Chair. First up was John Hawker with his *Linaker landscape*. This interesting paper dealt with the historic planting of exotic trees in the Reserve. The second paper was an offering from Nic Haygarth & Arthur Clarke (presented by Nic) entitled *Ozone-whetted appetites and hearts devoid of care: cruising to caveland in 19th Century Tasmania*. It dealt with the fascinating early history of show cave tourism in Tasmania. Neil Kell & Andy Spate (presented by Andy) followed with *Lighting for Darkness*. The work of both in cave lighting was amply highlighted.



Brian Clark (left) chats with  
David Head – Conference 2007

The last paper for the session came from Dan Cove & Dave Rowling (presented by the latter). *Cave Lighting in the Early 21st Century* illustrated the excellent re-lighting and re-development work recently carried out at Jenolan Caves, particularly in the Temple of Baal Cave. In my view it was one of the best papers presented at the Conference – amongst very many!

After morning tea, Andy Spate chaired the Fourth Paper Session, and introduced David Head speaking on *High Intensity LED Lighting*. Dave's

address was marvellous, accompanied by a myriad of LED lighting props and demonstrations. Recent advances in LED technology, and lighting intensity, have already made a great impact in cave lighting, and are set to do so well into the future.

Dave was followed by Grant Commins, Scott Melton & Ian Eddison (with all three sharing the presentation) with *Jenolan Looks at Challenges of Interpretation into the 21st Century*. This paper most usefully further highlighted all the wonderful work currently happening at Jenolan.

The last paper of the session was delivered by Dr. Warren Peck, a former ASF President, entitled *Non-Entry Inspections to Conserve Tourist Caves*. This offering dealt with the idea of using external audio-visual to show caves, citing the example of the Bat Cave Televue Centre at Naracoorte. It was a very interesting paper, although I doubt if the idea will gain much traction except, perhaps, in very specialised circumstances.



ACKMA President Steve Bourne (right) presents  
a gift to the Keynote Speaker, Robert Bednarik  
– Conference 2007

After lunch back at the Recreation Hall, the afternoon “options” program ensued. The workshop offered this day was the popular *Lighting and infrastructure Workshop* convened by Andy Spate in the Buchan Hall. It was a very practical induction into cave lighting in general and LED lighting in particular.

Later in the afternoon participants adjourned to Federal Cave for a hands-on look at the LED Lighting installed therein by The Friends of Buchan Caves – who have achieved much on a shoestring budget. At this stage we must thank Friends Group members who attended during the Conference and assisted with field trips, particularly Glen Baddeley and Peter Robertson, both of whom have been mainstays in the work in Federal Cave.

Another popular option taken by many was a field trip to the nearby *Pyramids Karst Area*, led by ACKMA Fellow, Nick White. I understand the trip it was thoroughly enjoyed by all its attendees – even if Nick became navigationally challenged, and then geographically embarrassed, on a couple of occasions!

Robert Tahí (left) dances with Samantha Webb at Karoonda Park – Conference 2007



Further options for the afternoon were show cave inspections, and a tour twenty minutes drive north of Buchan to visit three former show caves at Murrindal, namely Shades of Death Cave, Lilly Pilly Cave and Murrindal Cave. Lilly Pilly was briefly a show cave prior to the First World War, and Shades of Death Cave and Murrindal Cave intermittently between the 1960s and 1980s. The tours were led by *Parks Victoria's* Phil McGuinn (Lilly Pilly & Murrindal) and Geoff Rebbechi (Shades of Death). Geoff who owns Shades of Death, came down especially from Melbourne for the week to lead groups through his cave, and we are most grateful to him for his efforts.

Two other walking tours were undertaking also. Graham Parkes led a group over the Potholes Reserve at Murrindal – an area replete with wild caves, while Dr. John Hawker led a small group through the main Caves Reserve to look at the Linaker Plantings and flora he referred to in his paper. Reports back from both groups were most positive!



ACKMA illuminati at the head table,  
ACKMA AGM – Conference 2007.  
L to R: Dave Smith, Steve Bourne,  
Peter Chandler and Dr. Grant Gartrell.

The evening saw all delegates bussed north forty-five minutes to Karoonda Park for dinner. Karoonda Park is a lodge used for large groups such as schools for camps programs, adventure tourism, and the like. Its large hall comfortably

accommodated ACKMA! A superb dinner was enjoyed by all, followed by a musical night organising by the wonderful Robyn Calnin, sister of Dale. Music, quizzes and considerable mirth were the order of day. Many thanks Robyn, and Karoonda Park staff, for a memorable night!

ACKMA 'Almoner' Cathie Plowman also ran a raffle (swindle!?), with a large number of donated prizes, which realised about \$600 for the ACKMA Life Member's Fund. Excellent – many thanks Cathie! Another highlight of the evening was a display around the hall of historic figurines, made by Buchan Primary School children, representing various people who have made a significant contribution to the history of Buchan and the Buchan caves. Each of the figurines featured a description of the person it represented and the role that they have played. Wonderful stuff!

The morning of **Day Four – Wednesday 2 May**, saw us back in the Buchan Hall for the Fifth Paper Session, this time chaired by Jay Anderson. Our initial presenter was Dr. Susan White, whose excellent paper was entitled *Karst and pseudo-karst in Victoria: An Overview*. It provided a superb summary of the subject, particularly for those from outside the area. She was followed by Ian Lewis, whose paper *Mt Gambier's Cenotes – Management and Interpretation of a Unique Feature*, was amply illustrated and very well received.



Conference Convenor Dale Calnin (left)  
talks with Brett Dalzeal – Conference 2007

Next up was Alan Griffin & Peter Austen's joint paper, *Evolution of Management Models at Jenolan Caves, New South Wales, Australia*. It gave a most interesting summation of the development of management processes at Jenolan over more recent years. In continuing the present "NSW Theme", Steve Reilly and Russell Commins (presented by Steve) gave us *The Conservation of Karst Environments in New South Wales – issues, directions and unassessed values*. In it they highlighted future directions and plans for the new NSW Parks & Wildlife Service Karst Management Unit in their State.

After morning tea, the Sixth Paper Session began, with Dave Smith in the chair. Three papers were offered in this session, beginning with *Celebrating*

*Planet Earth: UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian-Pacific Region* from Dr. Joanne McKnight, Dr. Susan Turner & Dr. Susan White (presented by Susan). It highlighted the growing worldwide trend towards GEOPARKS, and the good possibility of the Western Victoria/South East South Australia Volcanic and Karst Area become Australia's first. Ian Lewis followed with *Umphy and The Man* – an excellent paper on the development of *Umpherson's Sinkhole* at Mt. Gambier, South Australia, as a local tourist attraction. The final paper of the session was Arthur Clarke's *From bones to beetles: Tasmanian caves as biological repositories*, wherein he discussed the underground biota in his State.



Levity all around! L to R – Van Watson, Greg Martin, Rauleigh Webb and Samantha Webb – Conference 2007

After lunch, the workshop option this day was *Responding to Change of Cave Management*, convened by Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith and Andy Spate. Held in the Buchan Hall, it had a large attendance, and addressed a myriad of issues on what was right with cave management, what was wrong, and responses and strategies for the future. Elery's thought-provoking address and comments, plus feedback from a great many attendees, made it a most worthwhile and useful session.

Other options taken by delegates this afternoon included a local *Karst Geology and Landscape Development* tour led by Dr. Susan White, further trips to the three show caves, and trips again to Wilsons Cave; Childrens Cave & Spring Creek Cave; and to Dicksons Cave.

The ample dinner that evening was held in the Buchan Recreation Hall, which was followed by a presentation by Jayme Hatcher on the next (18th) Australasian Conference on Cave and Karst Management, to be held at Margaret River, Western Australia, in May 2009. Planning has already commenced! Additionally, we viewed the Parks Victoria DVD, *Dancing with the Devil Fire*, which told the story of indigenous archaeological discoveries and excavations in the Victorian High Country following the 2003 bushfires in the area.

As so to **Day Five – Thursday 4 May**. The Seventh Paper Session was chaired by Travis Cross (a Kiwi

appropriately), with the subtitle of “All you ever wanted to know about Ruakuri Cave”! We were to be blessed with five papers across the morning from our Kiwi cousins on the subject. First to his feet was Dave Smith with *Ruakuri – environmental management & development*. It was something of scene-setting paper which set out the background surrounding the \$4.5 million Ruakuri show cave development at Waitomo. Van Watson followed with *Ruakuri Walkways*, the story of the infrastructure within the cave. John Ash was next with *The Big Step from Carbide to Electricity: Cavers Re-Light Ruakuri Cave*, which looked at the processes and results of lighting the cave. Van Watson followed with an ‘encore’ second paper, *Guiding the Ruakuri Product*, dwelling on the interpretation of the cave.

After morning tea, with Mike Warner now in the chair, the Eighth Paper Session continued the Ruakuri theme initially. Not to be outdone, John Ash re-appeared with *From 44 gallon Drums and Cavers to Concrete, ‘Caissons’ and Engineers – Creating an Entrance Shaft into Ruakuri Cave, Waitomo, New Zealand*. In his entertaining dissertation he traced the history of the development and construction of its massive entrance infrastructure. The Session now moved well overseas, with the next offering being *Spaet Cave, British Columbia, Canada*, by Paul Griffiths & Carol Ramsey, delivered by Paul's wife, Karen. It was great to have Karen present at the Conference all the way from Canada. The paper told the story of the a small cave which has huge indigenous cultural significance, but which is severely threatened by private developers, located near the heart of Victoria, the Capital City of British Columbia.

Our final paper of the morning was from Albin Debevec, Director of Park Management at Škocjanske Caves, Slovenia. It was truly wonderful to have Albin at the Conference, together with his wife Doroteja, and Tomaž Zorman, the chief ranger at Škocjanske. Andy Spate, Steve Bourne, Neil Kell and I experienced their warm hospitality when we visited their cave about eighteen months ago, and it was wonderful to at least attempt to repay their kindness on this occasion. Albin's paper – *Škocjanske Caves, Slovenia* – was a fantastic treatise on his superbly-managed world heritage-inscribed cave site.



Our Korean delegate, Kim Ryeon, with Cathie Plowman – Conference 2007

At the Karoonda Park dinner – Conference 2007.  
L to R: Robyn Calnin, Xiao Shizhen and Steve Bourne. Note the Buchan Primary School figurines in the background.



As usual, the afternoon options included a workshop, this time an Education Workshop – *Who are we educating, what for and how can we do it?* Convened by Dr. Susan White, it had a good attendance, and all reports were most positive.

Also available were show caves tours, and another opportunity to visit Shades of Death Cave, Lilly Pilly Cave & Murrindal Cave – which I personally took. I had been in them all before (more than once...), but not for some years. It was great to have Geoff Rebbechi show us through Shades of Death. Graham Parkes hosted one group through Lilly Pilly, while Phil McGuinn hosted the other – we swapped over later. Lilly Pilly Cave in particular, in my view, is a wonderful “show cave” – it is a pity it is twenty minutes drive north of Buchan, which will most probably prevent it ever being fully developed.

The evening saw dinner at The Caves Main Street Café, again in two sittings. This dinner saw a most pleasant surprise – the appearance of ACKMA Fellow and former ACKMA Treasurer, Dennis Rebbechi! Dennis lives on the Gold Coast in Queensland. He was in Melbourne for a business meeting during the morning and once over he promptly hired a car and drove to Buchan to join us for dinner and spend the night with his brother Geoff.



Dave Smith joins the Funny Hat Club!  
– Conference 2007

He drove back to Melbourne “at dawn” the next morning, and was at another meeting back on the Gold Coast that afternoon!! Amazing! It was wonderful to have Dennis with us, albeit briefly!

Dinner was followed by the **ACKMA Annual General Meeting** in the Buchan Hall. The AGM went swimmingly! The updated ACKMA “Rules” were adopted – the result of much work by Tony Culberg and Dr. Grant Gartrell (many thanks indeed to both). As nominations did not exceed vacancies, the current committee was re-elected for the ensuing year, with the exception that Jayme Hatcher became our new Conference Convenor. The Committee at its meeting earlier in the week decided to co-opt Andy Spate as ACKMA’s International Relations Officer. The “new” committee’s details are located on the penultimate page of this Journal. The AGM accepted a submission to hold next year’s AGM Weekend in at Capricorn Caves, Rockhampton, on the weekend of 26/27 April 2008. More on that in due course. It was also resolved to grant the 2011 (19th) ACKMA Conference to Tasmania. Of course, our 18th Conference will be held at Margaret River, Western Australia in May 2009.

Financially, our Treasurer, Dr. Grant Gartrell, reported ACKMA to be in fairly good shape (although Treasurers, by definition, are never happy!), and recommended no increase in membership fees. Not surprisingly, this recommendation was not opposed! The proposals to create two new ACKMA Awards, namely *Outstanding Show Cave Presenter of the Year*, and an *ACKMA Outstanding Contribution Award*, were adopted. Rolan Eberhard won the *President’s Award* for the best paper(s) published in the ACKMA Journal over the past two years. Richly merited – and perhaps some compensation in that Rolan could not attend the Conference due to the current illness of his wife, Adrienne. We all wish her a speedy and full recovery.



L to R: Nick White, Ian Eddison, Cathie Plowman, Brett Farquharson and Steve Bourne ‘take a bow’ in the Buchan Hall – Conference 2007

The BIG NEWS from the AGM is that it was resolved, following Brian Clark’s invitation, to hold the 2010 ACKMA AGM weekend at Mulu Caves in Sarawak, Malaysia (in May)!!!! Wow!!

The “Heroes of the Conference” after receiving their Certificates of Appreciation.  
L to R: Geoff Rebbechi, Allison Marion, Leanne Hodge and Matt Holland – Conference Dinner 2007



We do not normally set AGM Weekends three years ahead, but we have done so on this occasion to give everyone plenty of time to save up!!

The Mulu AGM “weekend” will more likely be an “AGM week”...more on it in due course! Currently the return air fare to Mulu is about \$A1500. However, Brian will cut us a very cheap deal on accommodation, etc, once we are there. NOT to be missed! Start saving now!!!

The other great news from the AGM was the election of Greg Martin and Brian Clark as Life Members of ACKMA, and John Ash and Ian Household as Fellows of ACKMA. Each award was most richly merited, as the AGM agreed by sustained acclamation. More on this elsewhere in this Journal!



The Conference Award recipients show off their prizes – Conference Dinner 2007

The Thursday evening after the AGM was particularly huge in the Buchan Pub - typically ‘Conference Thursday nights’ often are big affairs! The last person to be ‘kicked out’ – at around midnight – (I reliably informed as I was well in bed by then...) was Mick Chalker, who had a few choice words to say to the publican too! There were a great many delegates who went home after the Conference Week severely sleep deprived....!

**Day Six – Friday 4 May:** the last day of the Conference. Phew! Like all Conferences, the week goes by in a flash – most probably because we are all so frantically busy! As usual, the morning was taken up with papers. The Ninth Paper Session was chaired by Dr. Susan White. First up was Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith with *Saying What we Mean: Comments on the Vocabulary of Tourism*. As always, his paper was most thoughtful and thought-provoking. It will be published in the September ACKMA Journal.

The next paper was Tomaz Zorman’s offering : *Škocjan Caves Park, Slovenia – Visions*. It was a wonderful powerpoint presentation (as most papers were) on the management of his truly wondrous cave site. This was followed by Andy Spate presenting Greg Middleton’s paper: *Grande Caverne - a new show cave for Rodrigues, Mauritius*. Unfortunately, Greg could not make the conference personally on this occasion. It was a wonderful paper, detailing the efforts and processes of putting up a new show cave on the Indian Ocean Island of Rodrigues, near Mauritius. The next paper was a real treat. Our very special Chinese attendee, Xiao Shizhen, delighted us with her paper *South China karst and Libo World Heritage Nominated site*.

Shizhen was funded to our Conference with an Australian Government grant, and she was a real hit! What a delighted young lady. Her wonderful smile (and excellent English) was infectious! Her paper was also a delight; a brilliant presentation on her karst area in China and its world heritage nomination.

After morning tea, we entered upon the Tenth (and last) Paper Session of the Conference, chaired by new ACKMA Fellow, John Ash. The first presenter was Emily Davis, who actually delivered two papers concurrently – *The History of Cave Conservation; New York State, USA*, and (co-authored with John Sagandof) *Conservancies and Show Caves in Partnership: A Case Study of the Evolution of a Relationship*. Both gave a fascinating picture of the state of USA cave and karst management in general, and in her State of New York in particular. Many thanks Emily!



Delegates the Royal Cave exit – Conference 2007

Two papers to go! Our penultimate paper was by Dr. Susan White, Greg Middleton & Nicolas White (presented by Susan), entitled: *Karst Issues in a Hydro-electric Power Proposal: Iralalero-Paitchau Karst, Timor-Leste*. This was yet another most interesting offering highlighting the author's investigation of the proposal and their advice to the East Timor Government. It demonstrated the almost complete lack of knowledge of karst processes by all involved in the proposal, and highlighted many significant problems if the proposal was to go ahead.

The final paper of the conference was an introduction to the Interpretation Workshop to be held that afternoon, namely Steve Bourne and Cathie Plowman's *If you've seen one cave, have you seen them all?*

The first part of the "paper" was role plays on how not to present a show cave tour! The latter half featured Geoff Kell expounding on how he presented his tours at Carey's Cave (Wee Jasper, New South Wales). Geoff's presentation was outstanding, amusing, and undoubtedly a highlight of the conference. Needless to say, his show cave presenting is about as good as it gets! Oh that he was a trainer for all cave guides in our region!!

And so the papers were over – in all thirty-five were presented, easily an ACKMA record. Both the quality of the content and the presentations themselves was absolutely outstanding. Without any doubt, every attendee left the Conference much better informed, educated, and wiser than when he/she arrived. Fantastic stuff!

The afternoon program offered the fifth and final workshop of the Conference – on Cave Tour Interpretation, entitled: *Varied cave tours with powerful messages can be created with thematic interpretation*. It was convened in the Buchan Hall by Steven Bourne & Cathie Plowman. It was heavily attended, and after initial presentations the gathering broke into various groups to map out a cave tour on a selected theme, coming back together later in share their thoughts. It was a most useful workshop indeed.

The other option for the afternoon was a final chance to visit Shades of Death Cave, Lilly Pilly Cave & Murrindal Cave, which a number took. There would have been few who did not visit these caves, plus the three show caves in the main Buchan Caves Reserve, over the Conference Week.

So, what remained? Only the famed ACKMA Conference Dinner!! Attendees bussed off to Lakes Entrance, about 45 minutes away on the coast, to a truly sumptuous dining experience at the Bellevue Hotel. I had the doubtful honour of again being the Master of Ceremonies for the evening.

I went separately in my own car, so as to be present when the throng arrived. Arriving delegates were met by a dubious fellow in formal Mexican attire, replete with a very large Mexican hat. Mick Chalker has for about twenty years accused me of being a Mexican (south of the border), so I finally proved him right!



Delegates applaud the action at the Official Opening – Conference 2007

We were particularly delighted to have Alan Costigan with us at dinner. 'Cossie', as he is affectionately known, is an original ACKMA Life Member. He was Manager of Buchan Caves for many years until he retired to Lakes Entrance in the mid 1980s.

Rauleigh Webb 'the man in the funny hat'  
- Conference 2007



He was renowned for his innovation to cave management, and his legacy at Buchan (and wider a field) continues to this day. Cossie regaled us with his many stories of his cave management past, and had us almost constantly in stitches!

After dinner, someone sang a song of great cultural significance to educate our overseas visitors (enough said...!), and there was an also a surprise appearance by "superman" no less. Well, my name is Kent, after all...

The evening was topped off with the Conference Awards, always the source of considerable hilarity! As a matter of record, the following were honoured (!?!?) on this occasion:

- The Come back again Award - Albin, Tomas, and Doreteja from Slovenia (3 boomerangs)
- The Cuddly Award - Mike Warner and Emily Davis (2 toy koalas).
- The Dog Training Award - George Bradford (toy puppy)
- The Smelly Old Man Award - Geoff Deer. (a plastic finger which made a dubious noise...)
- The Needs a Hand Award (as he runs a cave by himself) - Geoff Kell (a back scratcher)
- The Not Remembering the Way home Award (she fell in the river) - Veronica Pfitzner
- The Rauleigh Webb Funny Hat Award (for being the happiest and silliest delegate) - Clare Baker (a funny hat)
- The Hair Cut Award - Dave Smith (a pink bow)
- The Eye Popping Award (his LED lights) - Dave Head (a squeeze ball)
- The Always Correct Award - Andy Spate (a T shirt)
- The Monkeying Around Award - Candace Williams (a toy monkey)
- The Frilly Bird Award - Pat Culberg (a frilly bird pen)
- The Foot in Mouth Award - Mick Chalker (a stuffed toy with many legs)

- The Problem Solving Award - Nick White (a T shirt).
- The Beautification Award - Van Watson (Dame Edna glasses).
- The Not Noticed Award - Chippy Wood (a demon mask).
- The Insanity Award - Dale Calnin (self explanatory if you are a conference convenor! - a T Shirt).

And finally our two most prestigious awards:

- The Dr. Kevin Kiernan Perpetual Gluttony Award - Shizen (a toy pig).
- The Brett Dalzeal Perpetual Drinking Award - Nick Heath (plastic ears).

A truly stunning family gathering (aka ACKMA Conference) came to an end with breakfast the next morning and very fond farewells all around. The appellation "best conference ever" has probably been used before, but certainly our Buchan Conference will be very hard to beat in the future. It was indeed truly memorable. Bring on Margaret River!!! As a Past President of ACKMA once said, perhaps in jest (?), "Life is but one ACKMA Conference to the next"! No argument from me, at least!



Graham Parkes (left) with Glen Baddeley -  
Conference 2007

I cannot conclude this article without thanking a large number of people, some of whom I have already mentioned in the text. Any Conference such as this does not just happen - it is the combination of a lot of work by a lot of people. The Conference Organising Committee met regularly over the at least the past eighteen months, and they have our grateful thanks.

For the record the committee comprised: Dale Calnin (Convenor), Steve Bourne, Professor Elerly Hamilton-Smith, Kent Henderson, Andy Spate, Nicholas White, Miles Pierce, Dr. Susan White, John Senior (*Parks Victoria*) and Allison Marion (*Parks Victoria*).

I particularly want to pay tribute to four people. Dale Calnin (whose hair is considerably greyer and thinner than when he began...!), did an outstanding job as Conference Convenor, as did the wonderful Alli Marion as our Conference Secretary.

In the Buchan Pub. L to R: Mark Gahan, Dr. Claire Baker and Brett Dalzeal – Conference 2007



They were particularly supported two of *Parks Victoria* staff members – Leanne Hodge (who looked after conference finance, accommodation, registrations, etc, etc) and Matt Holland (who largely ran the Conference logistics). Without these people in particular, the Conference would not have happened. Alli, Leanne and Matt all received Certificates of Appreciation at the Conference

Dinner, along with Geoff Rebbechi (whose virtues I espoused earlier).

Indeed, ACKMA is eternally grateful to *Parks Victoria* in general. Its provision of countless hours of staff time and logistical support was fantastic. A large number of *Parks Victoria* staff assisted the Conference in varying ways, and we gratefully acknowledge the following: Dave Harper, Scotty Graham, Robyn Calnin, Carole Young, Phil McGuinn, Gail Wright, Dennis Matthews, Graham Parkes, Ricky Mullet, Yas Aley, John Rogerson, Maree King, Daryl Burns and *Friends Group of Buchan Caves* group members, together with the following staff members at Buchan Caves: Gail Calnin, Annemarie Henderson, Robyn Benton, Kate Kenyon, Keith Greenwood, Heather Johnson (Daly), and Dean Phelan. We would also like to warmly acknowledge our Conference sponsors: the East Gippsland Shire Council (who provided the funding for our conference satchels) and the Wyanga Park Winery. Finally, we thank the local indigenous community for their support, led by Uncle Albert Mullet. A sincere thank you to you all.



The ACKMA Committee in session – Conference 2007



In way all too much for some! – Conference 2007