



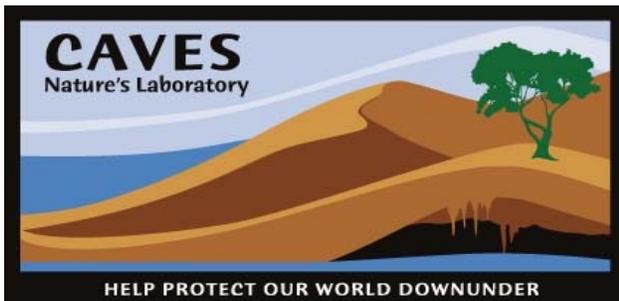
Editorial Ramblings

The **18th Australasian Conference on Cave and Karst Management** approaches – to be held at Margaret River, Western Australia on **3–9 May 2009**. The Registration Form is again enclosed herewith. **NOT TO BE MISSED! See YOU there!** The Rego Form is also on the ACKMA Web Site at: <<http://www.ackma.org/conf2009/index.html>>

Let's start with Buchan. Dale Calnin advises he's been rather frantic of late – spending \$700,000 in his caves! Both Royal and Fairy Caves now are almost entirely re-lit with LED fittings – only a few small sections of old 32v remains, and that will disappear soon. All Emergency track lighting has been replaced, and considerable stainless steel railing has been installed. ...and that's only Stage One (of four...). He after another \$ million... The above ground infrastructure has not been ignored either. \$80,000 has been spent on a new bridge near Fairy Cave, and \$60,000 on heritage rock walls in the Caves Reserve. A complete renovation of the toilet block near the Swimming Pool at the Dukes Cave efflux has also been accomplished. Wonderful stuff!

Some news from New South Wales. The job as Manager of Wombeyan Caves (vice Mick Chalker, retired) has been advertised internally, again without success, and thus advertised externally. Applications closed on 7 November. Finally, the position of Operations Manager at Jenolan Caves was also advertised. Applications closed on 19 September. It is a bit unusual that three of the most important Australian caves and karst roles have come up at the one time. Doubtlessly I will be able to report on appointments in the next Journal.

So – lots of Western Australian stuff in this Journal. Hopefully you are all salivating for the trip to our Margaret River Conference next May. Get you regos in quick, and grab the best accommodation. Don't say I didn't tell you! As you'll note, Jayme Hatcher gives us a run-down on the great happenings at Margaret River, and Jay Anderson on other WA stuff. The 'sticker' below was prepared for Science Week (see Jay's article).



Noted ACKMA members Miles and Rhonwen Pierce were on New Zealand's South Island recently (See Miles' article herein). Mary Traves reports: 'We had an ACKMA *Outreach Meeting* here on Friday 17 October. It was most convivial – helped along by the good food and wine at Franks Cafe in Greymouth. Miles and Rhonwen stayed with me and next night we had another convivial dinner at my place with Paul Caffyn, one of the original protestors at Mt Etna (ex Queensland University Caving Club).

'Miles and Rhonwen had been on tour over here to catch up with their daughter Wendy and ACKMA friends including Neil Collinson down at Te Anau, Deborah Carden and I. We didn't go caving on the weekend they were here – instead Miles and Rhonwen went exploring old gold mine tunnels'.



At the ACKMA 'Outreach Meeting' – L to R: Rhonwen Pierce, Mary Traves, Miles Pierce and Deborah Carden. Photo: Les Wright (Deb's partner).

Our resident cave lighting guru, ACKMA Fellow Neil Kell, has been a tad busy of late. He has been tracking around various Australia cave sites with Mr Novomesky, a cave lighting expert from Czechoslovakia. Neil reports: 'The experience of having the company of a professional lighting engineer who has lit fifteen Czechoslovak caves in two decades up to the most recent in 1998 was quite valuable for me.

It was reassuring to accept his comment on the lighting in Jersey Cave (Yarrangobilly), King Solomons and Gunns Plains Caves (Tasmania) as having very good lighting and electrical systems. He gazed again at the view in King Sols and said 'you have done a very good job...with much love'.

'We somewhat amateurish cave lighters here in Oz have in reality much that we could learn from Mr Novomesky and his colleagues. Mr Novomesky has compiled an amazing spreadsheet of data on cave lighting systems as an assessment of what works and does not work so well...

'He has started on an Australian page. I suggested that he should prepare a Power-point paper for the upcoming ACKMA conference, but he seemed to side step the idea...the distance!'

After Czech visit, Neil was rushing off to Korea. Onward and upwards! I was hoping to have a report from him for this Journal, but he's obviously rather frantic. Hopefully, I can pin him down long enough for an article in the next (March 2009) edition...

Speaking overseas jaunting, ACKMA Fellow Arthur Clarke has been junketing around China again. He is on a caving expedition in Yanhe (northeast Guizhou) and was also attending the 14th National Speleological Congress of China – this year being held in the World Heritage Wulong Karst Area of Chongqing Municipality, the next provincial area north of Guizhou Province.

He says: 'It is a spectacular area with four of the world's highest natural bridges, 300m deep limestone gorges with spectacular waterfalls and massive 400m deep tiankengs (cliff-walled collapse dolines), in an area where the limestone rises up to a 2000m elevation, giving the potential for a 1700m deep cave. Other westerners here include Derek Ford and Stephen Worthington from Canada, plus two British cavers and a German caver'.

I'd imagine we will hear more on Arthur's trip in the next Journal...

Did you know that Waitomo Caves has its own choir? I didn't, until now! What's more, Martha Ash, the choir's maestro, advises it is about to go global, with an international trip next July! Through members in the choir, they have a number of musical contacts with similar groups in England and America.

They plan to share a program of mainly New Zealand music by taking it into small rural and town communities overseas. Not surprisingly, they are busy fund raising. Martha advises that a proportion of funds raised in their overseas concerts will be donated to charity.

All good stuff – perhaps they could perform in the Grand Arch at Jenolan at some stage? Maybe ACKMA should look at its own choir too!?? I am sure loud voices such as those of Andy Spate and Steve Bourne, et al, would come across well from the front row.... (!?). Hmm – maybe not...



The choir performing in the Waitomo Glowworm Cave

Portal to Mythical Mayan Underworld found in Mexico – Miguel Angel Gutierrez

Mexican archeologists have discovered a maze of stone temples in underground caves, some submerged in water and containing human bones, which ancient Mayans believed was a portal where dead souls entered the underworld. Clad in scuba gear and edging through narrow tunnels, researchers discovered the stone ruins of eleven sacred temples and what could be the remains of human sacrifices at the site in the Yucatan Peninsula.

Archeologists say Mayans believed the underground complex of water-filled caves leading into dry chambers -- including an underground road stretching some 330 feet -- was the path to a mythical underworld, known as Xibalba. According to an ancient Mayan scripture, the Popol Vuh, the route was filled with obstacles, including rivers filled with scorpions, blood and pus and houses shrouded in darkness or swarming with shrieking bats, Guillermo de Anda, one of the lead investigators at the site, said on Thursday.

The souls of the dead followed a mythical dog who could see at night, de Anda said. Excavations over the past five months in the Yucatan caves revealed stone carvings and pottery left for the dead.

'They believed that this place was the entrance to Xibalba. That is why we have found the offerings there,' de Anda said.

The Mayans built soaring pyramids and elaborate palaces in Central America and southern Mexico before mysteriously abandoning their cities around 900 A.D. They described the torturous journey to Xibalba in the Popul Vuh sacred text, originally written in hieroglyphic script on long scrolls and later transcribed by Spanish conquerors.

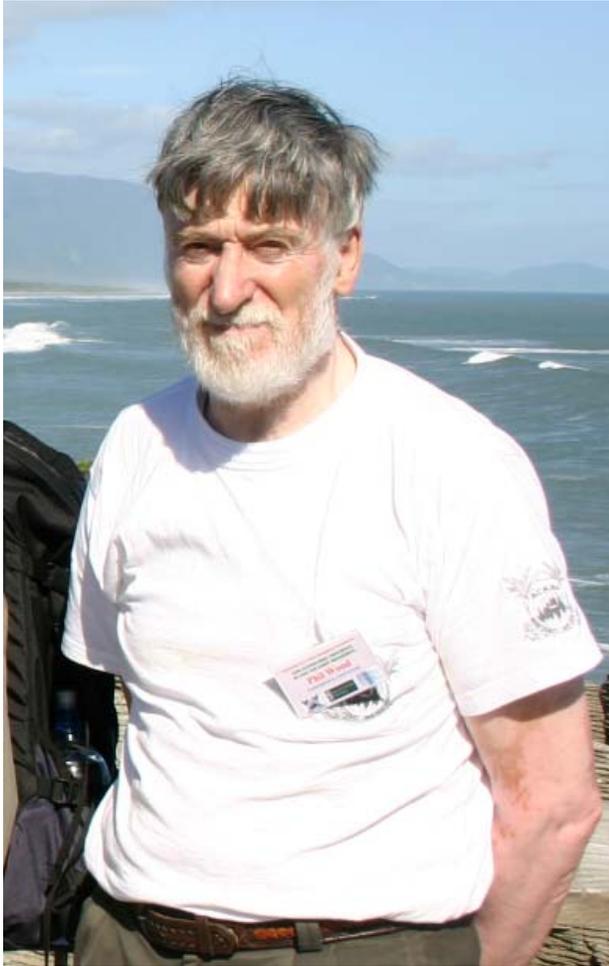
'It is very likely this area was protected as a sacred depository for the dead or for the passage of their souls,' said de Anda, whose team has found ceramic offerings along with bones in some temples.

Different Mayan groups who inhabited southern Mexico and northern Guatemala and Belize had their own entrances to the underworld which archeologists have discovered at other sites, almost always in cave systems buried deep in the jungle. In the Yucatan site they have found one 1,900-year-old ceramic vase, but most of the artifacts date back to between 700 and 850 A.D.

'These sacred tunnels and caves were natural temples and annexes to temples on the surface,' said de Anda.

15 August 2008 – Reuters Online.

Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith advises that the German Speleological Federation is campaigning to get a resolution through the Parliament of Europe to support cave protection. You can view their wonderful campaign materials online. See: <www.cavedeclaration.eu>

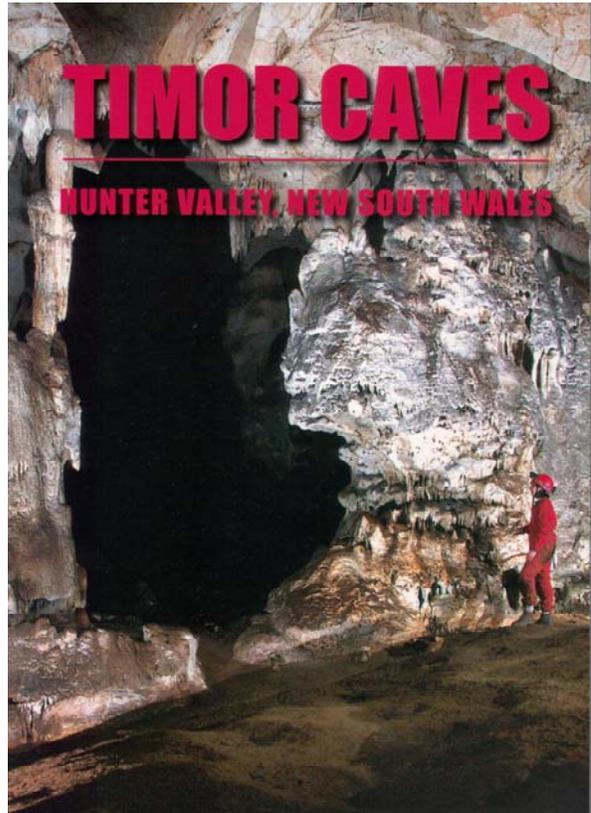


ACKMA Fellow Phil Wood

Some excellent news from New Zealand's South Island. ACKMA Fellow Phil wood was recently awarded the Paul Harris Fellowship by Rotary International for his service to the Westport Community (he got a nice medallion). Thereupon followed a large write-up in *The West Coast Messenger* (30/7/08), which I quote in part:

In 1965, Phil started mapping caves in the Nile Valley that subsequently led to the discovery of new caves in Karamea. He has served twelve years on the West Coast Conservation Board and was instrumental in getting the internationally important caving systems into the control and under the protection of DOC, as there are still important discoveries being made today.

'Organising the recent Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association's International Conference in Westport has been another highlight in Phil's life. This showed the world that Westport could host an event such as this, and, as well, Phil was made a Fellow of that organisation'. Well done Phil!



An excellent new book has recently been published by the Newcastle & Hunter Valley Speleological Society, entitled *Timor Caves, Hunter Valley, New South Wales*. At a glance – A4 size soft cover 112 pages, 93 colour photos, 8 tables, 15 figures and diagrams, 80 cave descriptions and 57 cave maps (37 of which are published for the first time). Chapter subjects include; geology, invertebrates, bats, karst specific vegetation, birds, palaeontology, cave surveying & mapping, education opportunities, and minimal impact caving. The book includes a cave glossary and geological timeline for the Timor region. The cost is \$A35.00 (plus postage). I understand it is close close to sold out, so if you want a copy I suggest you hasten. Enquiries to Jodie Rutledge at <jodie@rutco.com.au>



And finally, yes – it is Committee Nomination time again. Comes up every year... The Nomination Form is inserted in this Journal – let's have yours! We actually had an election last year – good stuff. More please!