

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Peter Chandler

Somewhere, over the rainbow

In these southern regions of the globe, the traditional Christmas is superimposed on the summer holidays! This has always made for a slightly crazy end to the year, and start of the new year.

Of course many of you take a break at this time, and many many more descend into the natural attractions that are our caves. Let me copy here David Summers Christmas greetings :-

Let all our incredible show caves

Be the source of great enlightenment

So that all people of the world

Will cherish our subterranean wonderlands

Of course this brings us to the consideration of what sort of enlightenment these people get. Although I did not attend the first Waitomo conference, Elery Hamilton Smith's *Improving the Visitor Experience* (1985) has long been an inspiration for our working in cave tourism. And as is described and as we know, so much is dependent on how the cave is presented. Certainly now with the information age in full swing, expectations of the travelling public have been raised somewhat.

There has been some excellent content in recent journals, thanks to those contributors, and we look forward meeting many of you at Wee Jasper soon.



The evening view across the Waitomo Caves

As a recce for the upcoming Waitomo 2013 post conference tour, and while Libby was holidaying in Hawaii with my sister, Dave Smith, Celina Yapp, and I took part in a Nikau cave tour operated by ACKMA members Phillip and Anne Woodward.

The Waitomo limestones of the Te Kuiti Group extend northward to Port Waikato, 28 km by road from Nikau

Cave, being based at Waitomo its easy to forget about the Karst in these northern areas although the flaggy limestone outcrops are visible in the tide, across from the Kawhia and Raglan harbour settlements.

The area is Cattle Sheep and Dairy hill country, with the characteristic volcanic ash covering and original rainforest remnants. On the map Waikaretu looks like a tiny place, but the road west from highway 22 is sealed and so is a popular scenic drive for Aucklanders.

What is different about this area from Waitomo karst, is that there has been a history of adjacent basaltic volcanic activity around 1.65 Ma, the northwards younging Ngatutura basalts (1)

What originally started as diversification during a rural downturn and then seeing the business potential no doubt was the reason for investing in a purpose built Reception/Licensed Café/ Operations base and Art Gallery. Philip and Anne have operated out of this for the last 4 years, it is easy to see that it is well used and it works!

We joined a cave tour group - a fit Grandmother's 70th birthday outing with son, grandchildren, the first cave experience for them. The tour is promoted as a cave in its natural state, the bump cap, torch and old shoes - perhaps this meant expect an easy 'wild' cave?

Geographically it's a walk over the road up a hillside, some recently retired from grazing, there are now 3 blocks on the farm under Queen Elizabeth II covenants(a), through a paddock into a fenced off tree filled doline, we head upstream the pace is easy going, the commentary chatty and personal with Philips rural sense of humor- not too rural! There is a wet squeeze, 3 dry bins are stashed in the cave for emergency back



L-R Peter Chandler, Anne Woodward, Phillip Woodward and Dave Smith

up. There a number of small populations of NZ Glowworms, *Arachnacampa luminosa* and the cave is well decorated. The last chamber providing a wow here as well the closeness to outside providing for a larger number of glowworms.

Around the corner, daylight, some simple steps and the green of the rainforest, the first Nikau palm *Rhopalostylis sapida* seen by me here. The cave was originally named Mannering's Cave after the farmers owners, and surveyed by Peter Crossley, T. Smith and M Reynolds in 1970, having come to NZSS members attention for a search after the infamous Crewe murders in that district at that time.

As recorded in the bulletin –“ In all a nice little cave, suitable for beginners & close enough to Auckland for a day trip” we thank Philip and Anne for their hospitality and look forward to visiting their Cave and the surrounding Karst areas in May 2013.

REFERENCES

Geology of the Waikato Area, S.W Edbrooke (ed) Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences 2005

Mannering's Cave NZSS Bulletin Vol 6 P166 September 1978

Further Info (a) <http://www.openspace.org.nz>



L-R President Peter Chandler, Dave Smith and Celina Yapp in Nikau Cave