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Jenny Whitby

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BINOOOMEA

The Newsletter of the Jenolan Caves Historical & Preservation Society.

Issue 129 February 2007

ISSN 0310-7248.

President's Column February 2007

This report was received from our President who sent it from on board ship in Antarctica on a "voyage of discovery" trip. (Editors note: I am so jealous!)

He wrote this message to us all: "Over the past few months I've taken a couple of overseas trips as a tourist, and it's interesting to see the different approaches taken to preserving the physical nature and the habitat of wildlife that tourists come into contact with. In some places the main concern is commercial, with intrusive facilities and local sights "prettied up" to enhance the spectacle. In others, such as the Antarctic Peninsula the emphasis is very much on not disturbing anything; no souvenirs can be taken - not even a pebble. Wildlife have the right of way over human movement. Visitors are supervised closely at almost every moment.

At Jenolan we, together with other stakeholders, have responsibility for ensuring that a balance is kept between competing interests in visiting the caves and surrounding areas and preserving its nature. But we can only do this if we are seen to be active in our aims of preserving and recording the natural and development history of Jenolan caves. We need to have our own "house" in order, and to do that we need active members, not all doing the same thing, but helping where they can.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held in February - please come along, take part in electing our team for 2007, and make your presence felt by speaking your mind. See you at Jenolan!



Arthur Gray 2006 President

WHAT DID YOU MISS ?????

Numbers were a little down last meeting, as several regular members were on annual leave. A report was given on the successful John Lucas tours at Jenolan, and the associated activities that were also on to celebrate the 140th proclamation of Jenolan Caves being declared a reserve. Grant Commins spoke about the official launch of the Nettle Cave 23/10/2006, which has now opened to the public (on 18 December 2006). He bought along an Acoustiguide for us to all listen to. David Cook made a donation of some old framed photographs he bought at an antique fair. We also received a membership application from David Hay (a casual guide at Jenolan) who we welcome to the Society. To finish the evening, Scott Melton showed us his cave brochure collection.

Jenolan's Lost Cave Re-Opens After 74 Years.

Jenolan Caves has re-opened its Nettle Cave after 74 years behind closed doors, introducing a new digital audio tour that allows visitors to explore on a self-guided basis for the first time. The new Nettle Cave tour represents the first cave opening at Jenolan since the Ribbon Cave in 1931 and offers the chance to see rare, prehistoric life-forms known as stromatolites.

The cave officially opened to the public on 18/12/2006. Together with the adjoining Devil's Coachhouse the Nettle Cave has been incorporated into a trail that can be followed using a digital handset developed by Acoustiguide. The device allows visitors to hear explanations of geological features and historical aspects in as much detail as they choose, while exploring at their own pace. This new tour has involved a \$1.2 million investment in pathways and infrastructure and is aimed at encouraging visitors to get more from their visit to Jenolan.



The Nettle Cave features formations like stalactites and stalagmites and is home to wildlife including Sooty Owls. The bones of the owls' prey have given researchers an insight into tens of thousands of years of natural history. The cave is also one of just a few sites in the world where stromatolites grow. Shaped like the tail of a crayfish and named 'craybacks' by early visitors, the stromatolites are among the most ancient life-forms on earth, formed by colonies of cyanobacteria bonded with layers of calcite crystal. Both the Devil's Coach House and Nettle Cave have been prepared for the self-guided audio tour with a series of pathways, boardwalks and railings, all designed to have minimal impact and protect the cave environment. Relics from past tours conducted in the Nettle Cave have been preserved for historical interest, including old ladders and early electric lighting. This article was reproduced from the website www.jenolancaves.org.au Photo below is Felicity Rowling in the acoustiguide collection point in the ticket office.





Remember that our headquarters for archives at Cottage 17 has a security system. If you are planning a visit, please ensure you call the guides office first, and make arrangements for access.

And don't forget to advise JCH&PS your new address if you move.

CONTACT DETAILS: JCH&PS Locked Bag Jenolan Caves 2790

DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR AN
ARTICLE FOR THE BINOOMEA?

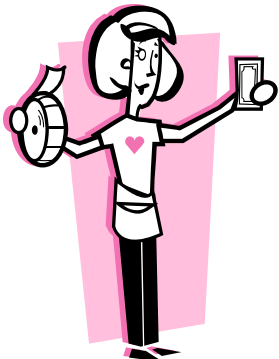


You don't necessarily have to write the article, just tell me what you would like to read about. Articles, suggestions, letters to the editor, complaints, stories are welcome, and can be forwarded to the editor.

Please contact:

Jenny Whitby at: 48 Park Street
Charlestown 2290 Ph (02) 49432265 or
send your email to:
jwhitby@iinet.net.au

POOL OF CEREBUS POSTER RAFFLE.



There is still time to buy your raffle tickets for the Jimmy Lim, Pool of Cerebus compilation photo poster, but you better be quick. At present it can be viewed in the guides office at Jenolan.

Tickets are \$2 each or 3 for \$5, and the raffle will be drawn at the AGM in February 2007.

If you want a chance to win this great prize, and add this to your collection, send your money to JCH&PS today.

SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT

This month's spotlight is focussed on new member, Isabella Grace Cove. She is our youngest member.

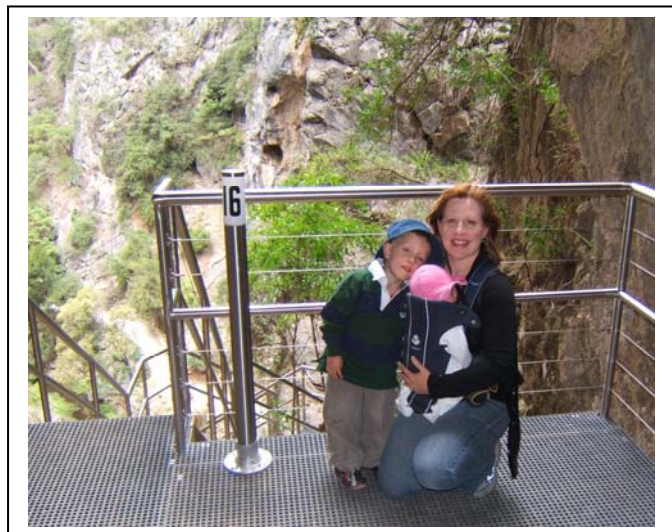
Isabella was born on Monday 6th November 2006 at 2.55am (2 hrs and 55mins past her due date!) .Weight 3.56kg or 7lb 13ozs (3 times heavier than her brother Isaac). Length 51cm or 20 inches.

She is the daughter of Dan & Domino Cove whom both work at Jenolan, and sister to Isaac.



Domino, Isabella, Dan and Isaac Cove enjoying a day at Jenolan.

Isabella's first visit to the caves was 11th December 2006. She only got as far as the Grand Arch as her mother was marking out the stage for carols. Since then she also attend the Jenolan Staff Christmas Party, and the Carols, so that's three trips in her first 6 weeks of life! She has now been into the Nettle and seemed to enjoy it (well she slept through it rather than screamed!).



Isaac, Domino and Isabella in the Nettle Cave.

Would you like to be in the next Society Spotlight? Send your picture and story to the editor. Whether it's a photo of your first visit to Jenolan or a recent visit, or just a picture of yourself it doesn't matter. It would be great to get a profile of all members, and include their interest in Jenolan. There are over 80 individuals on the mailing list, so this column if supported by you all, it can run for some time!

Past and present- Nettle Cave.

By Jenny Whitby, Rob Whyte and Kath Bellamy. Photos by Jenny Whitby unless noted.



The original entrance (2002).

As speleologists, Gary & I were fortunate to have been able to visit the Nettle Cave back in 2002, well before its redevelopment.

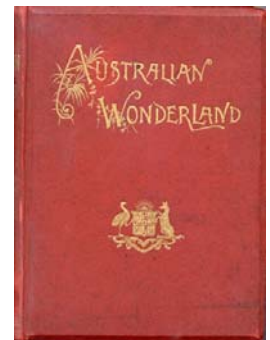
It was just like what it would have been like when Wiburd showed it. In 2002 there was no electricity, just some relics of old switchboards and lights, dirt paths, wire railings, just as it was the day it was closed to the public back in 1932, and had rarely been visited since. The Sooty Owl being the guardian and sole inhabitant of the cave.

But things all changed in 2006 with the redevelopment of the cave, and as you have previously read, the cave officially opened to the public on 18 December 2006. Whilst at Jenolan over New Years January 2007, we took the opportunity to revisit this picturesque cave, 5 years since our last visit to see the changes.



Cave closed to the public (2002).

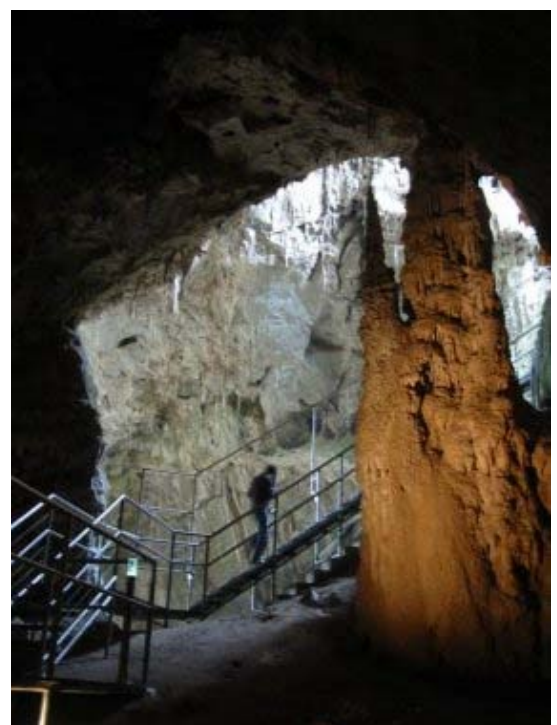
In Samuel Cook's "Australia's Wonderland" (1898) he wrote "The Nettle Cave is for the most part a place of twilight. If visitors are incautious in approaching it they will soon come to the conclusion that it has been properly named, for all around are fine clumps of herbaceous weeds with sharp tubular hairs upon vesicles filled with irritating fluid. The sting of a nettle and the sting of an adder resemble each other, but are yet dissimilar. The adder strikes his tubular fang into his prey, but the nettle victim impinges upon the tubular hair which communicates with acrid vesicle."



O Hughes in *Pioneers* Hughes and Whalan, 1949 wrote "We first entered the Nettle Cave. It has obtained this name from the fact that the approaches to it are covered with Nettles of sharper stinging properties than I have ever before met with... "the deuce that the nettles!" ejaculate the gentlemen. 'Oh my hand!' 'Oh my ankle!' "Oh the abominable nettle!" cry the ladies of the party. Yes, and I can assure my readers they are no joke: for the pain and irritation of the sting lasts for two to three hours."



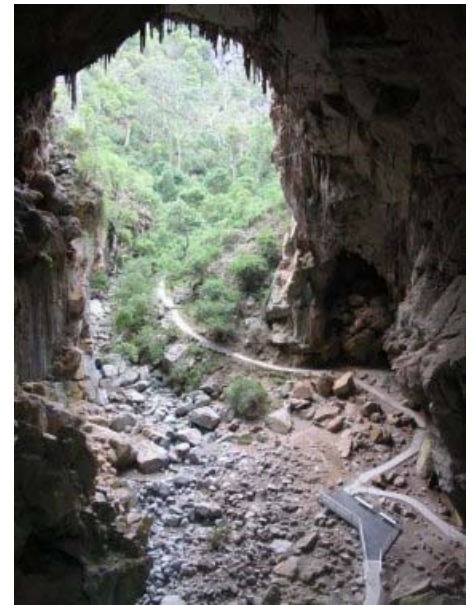
A classic Frank Hurley photo of the Nettle Cave.



The Nettle today, note the old stairs underneath.

Rob Whyte wrote this brief history about the Nettle Cave.

“The Nettle Cave was one of the first caves found at Jenolan. Foster is the only document from the 1800's (published 1890) to cite a discovery date of the Nettle, that being 1845. Dunlop gives the discovery of the Arch Cave, located above the Nettle as 1846 and we can be reasonably certain that the Nettle would have been entered before this cave as it is generally easier to climb up to an entrance than to descend. Havard indicates it was before 1848. Suffice to say that after the discovery of the Grand Arch and Devils Coachhouse, the Nettle would have been the next most obvious entrance. Back then, as today, the approach to the cave is distinguished by a large number of Nettles that must be passed through in order to reach the entrance. The reason for the cave's closure is an interesting part of the history of Jenolan. It is said that James Wiburd insisted that all caves that had been developed to show to visitors should be shown. The cave though was not popular with guiding staff, most likely due to the long climb up to the entrance. So it was that it is told, the day after Mr Wiburd retired the cave was closed to the public, never to appear on the list for the public again.”



View from Nettle Cave down into the Devils Coachhouse.

Until 2006 that is!

Well you will be pleased to know that the Nettle experience no longer comes with the stings, thanks to a raised stainless steel stairway! Although the nettles are still there. The new tour into the Nettle Cave is via the Devils Coachhouse, and back out the original entrance, which is the one you see to the right as you drive in the Grand Arch. The tours used to enter via this steep entrance, go through the Nettle Cave, then a stairway was climbed into the Arch Cave, and groups exited coming out at the base of the Carlotta Arch stairway. (a through trip)



The old exit from the Nettle was a ladder into the Arch Cave.
Photo Frank Hurley.



The exit out of the Nettle now. Note the stairs on the right hand side, the original path in/out of the cave.



The Nettles still rule, BEWARE!



The new exit stairway, southern side Grand Arch.

Now here's Kath Bellamy's impressions from her first self guided Nettle visit, which she did with her son.

"We followed the tourist path to check out the new hi-tech application on this tour. Firstly we went to pick up our digital hand sets. These are housed in wall units in the alcove next to the old cave display in the ticket office. The units are charging in these cabinets and with all the lights showing, it gave the effect of Christmas decorations. The handsets are simple to use and look just like TV remotes. Tourist information is stored in these hand held computers which you operate as you go along the tour route. There are numbered posts commencing outside the ticket office which correspond with the info on the hand set. So number 1 gives information on the Jenolan precinct including Caves House and 6 Foot Track. Number 2 situated at the entry to the Grand Arch gives a description of the Arch and the history. And so it continues along the whole tour. Once inside the Coach House there is seating at stages where you can relax and take in the view and listen to the history of the area. Getting into the Nettle Cave itself comprises a turnstile where visitors swipe their tickets to gain entry.

The improvements include stainless steel railings with walkways which consist of a material that deadens the sound of footsteps. There is special "chicken" wire at spots where there is a drop into the coach house. The lighting is subdued which compliments the natural light coming into the cave. The hole in the roof is really good especially as it was raining while we were there. The views throughout are wonderful and, as Rob has said, the different times of day will produce different effects. The view up McKeowns valley in the rain and mist was particularly good. Exiting Nettle is quite an experience as the steps going down to the Grand Arch give a great view of the Blue Lake and surrounds.

The Nettle Cave is an example of "historical evolution". There are the old electrical fittings still in place along with the video surveillance of today which is unobtrusive and may not be noticed at all. The old ladder which once connected the Nettle and Arch Caves is preserved also. The cave formations and, of course, the owl are of great interest. At one place on the tour there are three distinct sets of steps from different eras ascending the same area.

I am very happy that Nettle is open to a new generation of visitors, although, I will miss having a guide along. The view from the Balcony has changed now with the Nettle steps being visible. I think most visitors will ask "where do they go?" and hopefully many tourists will find out.



Another Frank Hurley photo of "The Willows".



Note the three generations of stairs.
Carved rock, concrete and stainless steel.

Lifting the lid on Nettle Cave

Ancient wonder reopens after 74 years

By PETER TRUTE

IT was once the introduction to the underworld wonders of the Jenolan Caves for wide-eyed holidaymakers.

Nettle Cave, a winding cavern distinguished by unique rock formations and illumination of its pastel-toned walls through a natural skylight, was a must-see for visitors to the caves west of Sydney since tours began in 1846.

But 74 years ago Nettle Cave was closed off and abandoned in favour of the more exotic limestone caves discovered nearby.

Now this forgotten piece of Jenolan's history will be returned to the public when next week it opens for the first time since 1932.

It is a sign of the beauty of Jenolan's other magnificent caves that Nettle could remain closed for so long, Jenolan Caves historian Rob Whyte said.

"It was pretty much a stock-standard part of every visit to Jenolan in the 1800s, you had to do Nettle Cave," he said.

Nettle is distinguished from others, such as the striking Orient Cave, by being partly open to the elements. It runs off Devil's Coach-house, a giant stone arch named after a terrified camper who had a vision of Old Nick steering a horse and carriage through the opening.

Jenolan guide Ted Matthews said the exposure to wind and light meant Nettle's ancient stalactites and stalagmites were more weathered than the delicate white and pink crystals of fully enclosed limestone caves.

"But just look at it, it's fantastic and has such a spooky feel to it," he said while taking *The Daily Telegraph* on a preview tour yesterday.

"There's such a variety of structures and expressions by the calcium carbonate that creates them over such long periods of time."

Among the 400 million-year-old formations in Nettle Cave is a feature found nowhere else in the sprawling Jenolan system.

They're known as stromatolites but visitors to the caves called them craybacks for their resemblance to the curved back of a crayfish.

Stromatolites' ridged surfaces are formed by an interaction between the calcium carbonate and the bacteria which thrive in the light and moisture.

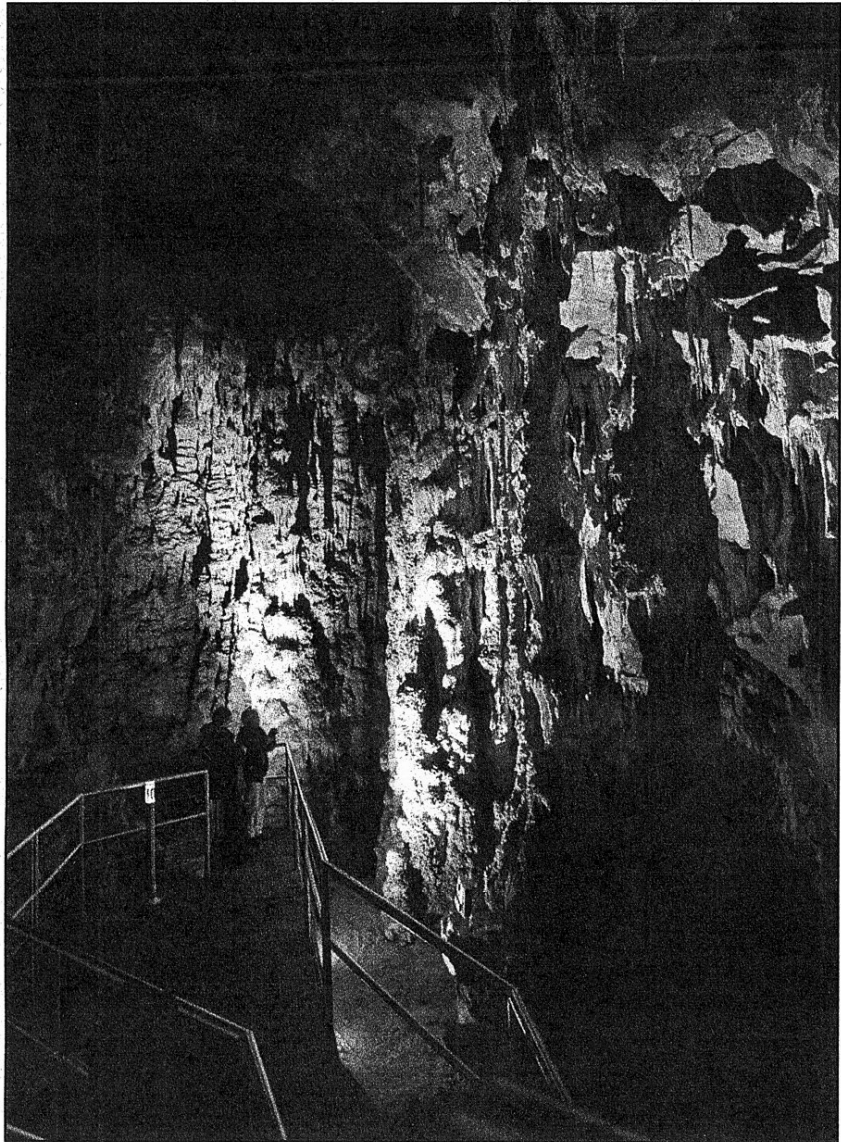
Nettle Cave took its name from the thick covering of stinging nettles which still grow on the hillside around its entrance. It's that sting in the cave's tale which put it out of business, Mr Whyte said.

Tired of battling the painful plants to show the cave, guides eventually abandoned it in favour of its more spectacular neighbours.

When visitors return from next week they will see the cave as it was left all that time ago — even with some original light fittings in place.

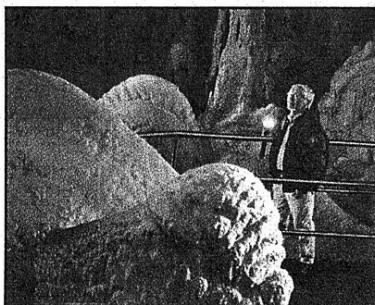
With \$1.2 million spent on walkways, lighting and audio guides, touring is an easier prospect today.

"It's so good to be able to show this to people after it's been hidden for so long," Mr Matthews said.



Dark mystery ... the cave west of Sydney is 400 million years old.

Picture: BRAD NEWMAN



Guide ... Ted Matthews in Nettle yesterday

History of attraction

- ❑ **Discovered** in 1846 and immediately popular with tourists
- ❑ **Named** after the stinging nettles which grew abundantly around it
- ❑ **Nettle Cave** features stromatolites: unique to caves, they are structures formed by bacteria interacting with calcium carbonate
- ❑ **Called** "craybacks" for their resemblance to a crayfish's back
- ❑ **Nettle Cave's** limestone structures are weathered because it is open to the elements
- ❑ **Guides** closed it to the public in 1932

140th Proclamation weekend at Jenolan 14/15 OCTOBER 2006.

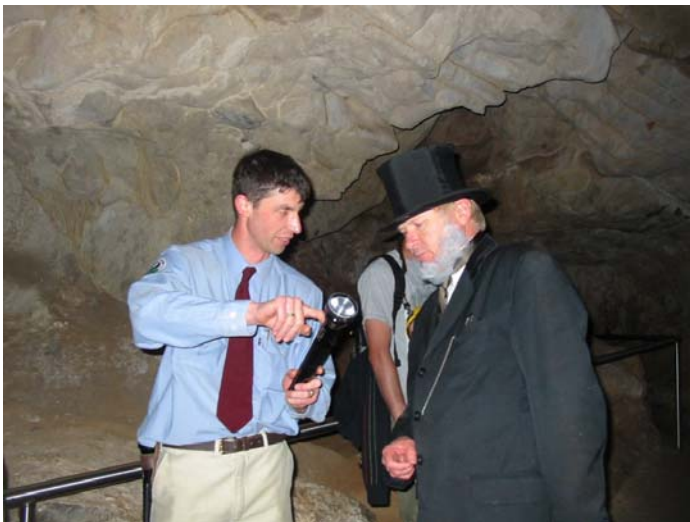
By Jenny Whitby.

Gary and I were fortunate to be at Jenolan on the weekend of the 140th anniversary. After a long day of hauling diving gear into Barralong Cave for the Sydney University Speleological Society on Saturday, we decided to have a day above ground on Sunday, but ended up on one of the special themed Lucas Tours. This tour was a little different than normal, having two guides. The tour started just like any Lucas Cave tour does, and Dan Cove led us to the Cathedral chamber. Then an elderly gentleman donned in his Sunday best clothes, joined us appearing out of the darkness high above the path. He announced himself as the Hon Mr John Lucas. He had time warped from the early 1900's. Mr Lucas was amazed at the magnificent lighting of the cave, compared to his previous visits that were by candlelight. Dan tried to explain the modern day equipment used to show the cave, being the remote control for the LED lighting, but even the concept of a torch was all a bit much for Mr Lucas to comprehend.



The modern day John Lucas MLC aka David Hay.

Mr Lucas accompanied the group throughout the tour, and told us of his early journeys to the caves, recollections from over 100 years ago. We thoroughly enjoyed the tour, which was most entertaining, and the historical theme went down very well with all the visitors. The role of the late Hon John Lucas was actually played by Jenolan casual guide, and JCH&PS member David Hay, who did a great job. Also on that day, historic cars from Bathurst Car Club were on display at Jenolan and were parked opposite the ticket office, which created a lot of interest from the public.



Dan Cove trying explain the modern day torch.



The Hon Mr Lucas and those modern cars at Jenolan .

Another somewhat amusing incident as related by Jerry Wilson was that on one occasion, while exploring with the Hon. John Lucas he got through a hole and Mr. Lucas tried to follow. Mr. Lucas was an immensely big man, some twenty odd stone in weight, and the result was that he got wedged in the hole, and Wilson always asserted that he had to procure a chisel and hammer to extricate him.

This further piece of interesting information was supplied by Basil Ralston. This is an excerpt from the Sydney Morning Herald dated 2 March 1929.

I am happy to report no such incidents occurred on this tour, and that time has been kind to Mr Lucas, as he has lost a considerable amount of weight since this visit in 1929.

DID YOU KNOW www.jenolancaves.org.au is the official website of Jenolan Caves.

It includes full details of all cave tours, prices, and upcoming events at Jenolan. Now you can also download the new "Welcome to the wonder of the wonderworld" guidebook, that visitors receive. It has details of the cave tours, and a page on the history and geology of Jenolan. The pricing structure of the tours has changed slightly, now you purchase a Jenolan Pass when you visit the caves. This includes .

- admission to any show cave tour (or theme tour) of your choice
- admission to our new self-guided tour of the Nettle Cave & Devil's Coach House
- a souvenir guide (the same as the downloadable one except for an aerial map in the printed version)
- **50% off all future show cave tours (or theme tours) for 12 months.** This means that if you see lots of caves over 12 months, it can actually cost you less than before, because you only pay full price for your 1st show cave tour.

So tell your friends that now is a good time to go, with all these great savings.

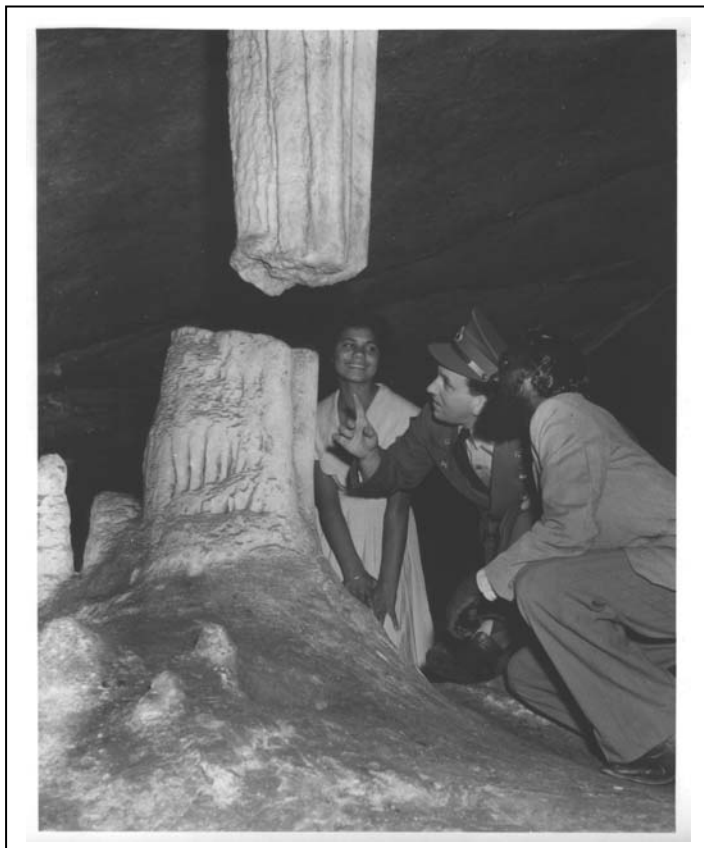
JEDDA PHOTOS ON EBAY

Recently a series of photographs from the film Jedda (see related article in Binoomea no 126) were sold in a number of auctions on ebay. In each group of 6 photos, there was one taken in the caves at Jenolan. Several members collaborated as to not outbid each other, however all were well and truly beaten. The winning bidder had very deep pockets, paying \$120 - \$215 for each set of photos. (all up they spent around \$1500 for a series of 48 original photographs!)

I contacted the winner asking if a scanned copy could be obtained for the JCH&PS collection, which to my surprise we were fortunate to receive. All we know of this person is their eBay username, so thankyou whoever you are.

A copy of this scan of the photo was printed A4 size, and donated to the JCH&PS collection. If anyone else would like an electronic copy of this photo, please contact the editor.

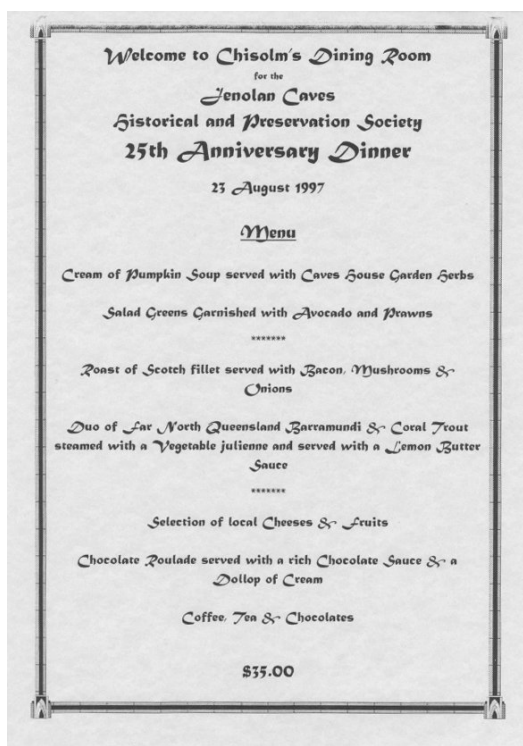
We are very interested in establishing the identity of the guide shown here with "Jedda" & "Marbuck" in the Lucas Cave, so if anybody recognises him, we'd love to know.



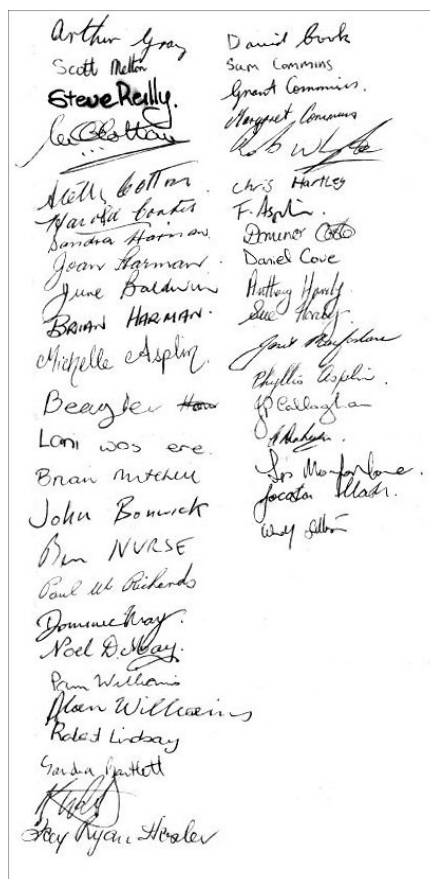
35th ANNIVERSARY OF JCH&PS IN 2007.

In 1997, JCHPS held a dinner at Caves House to celebrate the 25th anniversary of JCHPS. Whilst at the archives one visit, this signed menu was found and it shows all those members who attended. Well another 10 years has passed, so let's have another anniversary celebration.

Come along to the AGM to help discuss and plan it. We hope to organise another get together, this time in conjunction with our meeting in August, to give you all plenty of notice. The proposed dinner date will be 11 August 2007, so put this in your calendar, and watch out in the next Binoomea for further details.



Did you attend back in 1997?
Hope you will in 2007.



CAROLS IN THE CAVES 2006

By Dan Catchpoole - JCH&PS member, Casual guide, and Head of the Tumour Bank at The Children's Hospital at Westmead, (also known as Dr Dan).

The annual 15th annual Christmas Carols in the Cave was held on 16 December 2006, a concert set in Mother Nature's auditorium, the wonderful Grand Arch. This year was different to other years, as the production was organised by the guiding staff at Jenolan. Also the funds raised were donated to the charity Kayaking & Cycling 4 Kemo Kids. (KC4KK)
The 2006 Carols in the Caves can be summarised by the 4 C's



1. **Caves** - Jenolan Grand Arch is a magical venue for such an event. Performers sing from rocky ledges high above the audience, in among the stalactites, stalagmites and columns with lights dancing across the roof of the cave. The weather had turned on a more wintry mood so the audience got to snuggle together under blankets and rugs - most appropriate as they got to sing Jingle Bells, Frosty the Snowman and Walking in a Winter Wonderland.

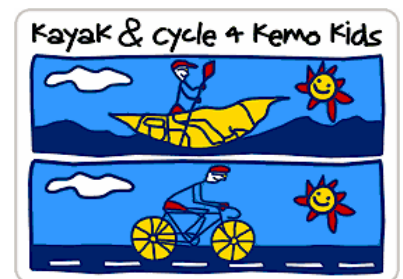
2. **Community** - All performers, musicians, stage crew, lights and sound personnel donated their time and expertise to the carols concert. The singers and dancers were from nearby Lithgow and Oberon: there was a local bank manager, a HSC student, a maths teacher from Lithgow High School, a Qantas pilot, mums, dads and Jenolan's singing guides. The swing band Zyppaklubb came up from Sydney to play soothing jazz, foot tapping swing, rhythmic blues and some grunty rock and roll. Everyone was willing each other to perform well and despite a few technical glitches, a professional and enjoyable show was put together which had a happy spirit. KC4KK patron Benita Collings was the star of the show who, with Bandage Bear from The Children's Hospital at Westmead, delighted the children with their rendition of Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer - BB changing species to play the part!



3. **Charity** - in the spirit of Christmas for the first time in Jenolan Caves Carols in the Caves history, the event was held to support a major charity - Kayaking and Cycling for Kemo Kids. All proceeds from the event went to KC4KK. Their team of volunteers which included staff from the Children's Hospital Westmead's Tumour Bank, set up a display of kayaks, bikes, t-shirts and hats in the caves precinct and sold souvenirs, KC4KK merchandise and raffle tickets. Toyota donated a number of items to KC4KK - the Ipod and Digital Camera were raffled before and during the concert. The number of tickets sold were of such a volume that a Kayak was used to hold them during the draw at the end of the concert. At the end of the day \$1000 was raised through raffles and merchandise sales.

4. **Children with Cancer** - At the end of it all, everyone who came to Jenolan Caves for the Carols concert learnt about Kemo Kids and the need for funds to support research into the cause and cures of cancer in children. The KC4KK cause received tremendous publicity and the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust Division should be applauded for getting behind it. Thanks go to the Jenolan's guides,

especially Domino Cove, Charles Degotardi and Grant Commins, for getting behind KC4KK and showing a lot of Christmas spirit. The KC4KK Team would like to express their sincere thanks to the Jenolan caves team and community for such a wonderful warm spirited night, despite the 4 degree night in the caves!



For more information about this great charity see their website www.k4kk.com.au

Photos of some of the Jenolan staff participants. Above the beared Bandaged Bear Grant Commins.



Singing guide Domino Cove (left)



Scott Melton & Benita Collings



The multi talented Dr Dan.

A SPECIAL INVITATION TO JCH&PS MEMBERS & FRIENDS TO JOIN US ON 10TH February 2007.



Caves House will be hosting a BBQ for us on Saturday 10th Feb 2007 at 6pm and all members are welcome. In conjunction with the free BBQ, they are offering some fantastic accommodation specials, so do join us.



The JCH&PS annual general meeting will also be held after the BBQ, so here is your chance to come to a meeting, catch up with old friends and meet some new, see the Nettle Cave for yourself, and have a weekend at Jenolan.

Denis Winchester Manager of Caves House is offering members some great accommodation deals. You can stay in a traditional room at Caves House (shared facilities) for only \$20pp, or in The Gatehouse (bunkhouse style) for only \$10pp!! These are unbelievable prices!



Traditional room



Gatehouse facilities

You need to let us know if you are coming to the BBQ for catering purposes, and you'll need to contact Caves House to book your accommodation. Just mention that you are coming for the JCH&PS BBQ to receive these great deals.

**Jenolan Caves House phone and fax: (02) 6359 3222 or
E-mail: jenolan@lisp.com.au**



The AGM will be held on **SATURDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2007 at Jenolan .**
Meeting held after the Caves House BBQ which starts at 6pm.

MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE 2ND SATURDAY OF FEBRUARY, AUGUST AND NOVEMBER. THE MAY MEETING IS THE FIRST SATURDAY, DUE TO MOTHERS DAY.

JCH&PS PROPOSED 35th ANNIVERSARY DINNER
11 TH AUGUST 2007 AT CAVES HOUSE. More details next newsletter.