

1972 U.S.A.



Hawaii '91

Canaries '94

Kenia '98

Catania '99

Iceland 2002

Azores 2004

Mexico 2006

Korea 2008

Australia 2010

Jordan 2012



Xth



Catania 1983



International Union of Speleology

Union Internationale de Spéléologie

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Commission on Volcanic Caves



59

Commission on Volcanic Caves

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Note: Harry Marinakis will soon issue the newsletter in digital form. Please send information BOTH to Jan-Paul and Harry.

This Newsletter is send free to members of the Commission, and others who are interested in lava-tube caves.

It is not possible to subscribe – but news and information are always appreciated ...!

The 14th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology
Australia - August 2010
pre-symposium 7-11 August around Hamilton (Victoria)
main-symposium 12-17 August at Undara

This symposium, organized by *Greg Middleton* and many co-organizers, was a big success. Around 25 participants from 3 continents, 7 countries (Aus, U.K., Iceland, Germany, Hungary, U.S.A., & Netherlands). This symposium was the still 'missing' continent, Australia. Now this commission had finally symposia on all 5 continents!

The first part was in the South of Australia with sometimes cool but nice weather. Most participants started here. For many of us cave gear and overalls were supplied, since we were encouraged NOT to bring own cave gear unless decontaminated, but still boots had to be very well cleaned before moving on.

Here we visited, sometimes in different groups, e.g. Byaduk Caves, The Tunnel, Natural Bridge, The Shaft. Around Mt. Eccles we had a nice walk to look at a line of craters and associated lava canals.

Then we moved to the North, where temperatures were much higher. Here we lodged in a luxurious bush-camp at Undara. Here the real symposium started. Compared to previous symposia several countries did not show up, as the Azores, Japan and Korea. The caves in the Undara National Park are well guarded, and none was visited without a park-guide.

The lectures were, as always, very diverse. We started with *Anne Atkinson*, who dedicated most of her life to study the Undara Caves. Now in her 80ties she still can tell many stories about the explorations which started some 40 years ago.

Diane Northrup is still investigating 'slimy stuff' - her bacterial mats. *Árni Stefánsson* told us about a lava cave cleaned, repaired and made into a show cave. Certainly the repair of (and with moulds of 'new') speleothems was impressive.

From Hungary we got an overview of all caves formed in volcanic rocks by *George Szentis*. Impressive, but the (small) size of some of this cavities did not impress everybody.

Really beautiful was the presentation of the *Mill's* about an expedition to Fingals Cave, very well known, but not well explored. All of Staffa was shown, with accompaniment by the famous music of Mendelssohn.



of not a symposium in Jordan (2012) he suggested Galapagos. However, Jordan was already in full preparation. Maybe 2014?

- an new proposal for the future: by Kenneth Ingham (U.S.A.) for a symposium in New Mexico.

- Although in general commission decisions are supposed to be taken at the U.I.S. congresses, actually most commission members are present during our symposia, which take place (nowadays) every second year, contrary to U.I.S. congresses which take place once every 4 years.

More New(s) about the Kilimanjaro Expedition (2011)

In the previous newsletter (# 58) an expedition to the lava-tubes on the Kilimanjaro was mentioned. The original (Dutch) expedition was cancelled due to lack of participants. I myself had not much interest due to the clearly needed physical condition, and the fact some participants had more interest to reach the top than finding caves.

However, here the latest information.

The Dutch originator, Sjoerd van der Schuit, contacted Clive Ward.

Clive is a professional guide on Kilimanjaro, and now it seems both are combining their efforts to make this a success. Clive is known to the participants of the 8th symposium on vulcanospeleology in Kenya (1998). He had a lecture 'Lava Caves of Kilimanjaro, Mawenzi Lava Tubes' (Int. Journ. of Spel. 27B, 1998, p. 53-56).

So now:

The idea is to go in September/October 2011, and be some 10 days on the mountain.

It should be clear a certain condition is needed - the exploration will take place on a level of 4000 meter high (around 12.000 ft).

Permission of the government and park authorities is already established (so no costs for this ...). But there will be costs: guides, cook(s), porters and of course the flight to get there.

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Commission Meeting during 14th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology Monday 16 August 2010 , Undara -Australia

At the end of the symposium the traditional commission meeting was held.

Most of the participants attended (some 20 from 6 countries).

- Status of the commission. No news (= good news). The commission has no problems.

- Information (to report since the commission meeting in 2008):

- no news about the book to be issued by Chris Wood, but he delivered a lecture (read by Martin Mills) about lava-tubes in China,

- no news about the WoMoVoc-project. No participants of the Azores attended the symposium, so no information.

- Most important: the committee of the Commission will be extended:

Harry Marinakis will be vice-chairman!

harrymarin@gmail.com

he wants to bring the Newsletter in digital form via E-mail

- Next symposium!!

Jordan/Amman March 15 - 22 2012

By Dr. Ahmad Al-Malabeh of the Hashemite University of Zarka

He could not be at the symposium/committee meeting, but the introduction-presentation done by Prof. dr. Stephan Kempe was unanimously accepted by the complete audience. More a.s.a.p.

- Future proposals for commission symposia:

- not accepted for 2012: Argentina. Carlos Benedetto had already proposed a commission symposium in Argentina, this in combination with an U.I.S. Bureau meeting, and the national Speleological Congress. However, he could not be at Undara/Australia to give a presentation and details,

- still open: a proposal by Dr. Theo Toulkeridis of Galapagos. In case

A lecture send by *Chris Wood* described his work (very recent) in China. Only locations of volcanic caves, but no pictures yet. China, a country for a future symposium?

Greg did a fantastic job on a Guidebook for Undara, while *Ken Grimes* did the same for the Guidebook of 'the Volcanic Caves of Western Victoria'.

Two CD-roms were issued: One 'Karst in Australia' produced by *Ken Grimes*, with a chapter on Volcanic Caves.

The other one, 'Reprints of papers relating to McBride Volcanic Province and Undara Lava Caves, North Queensland' by *Greg*. However it has a remark: For private study or research. Not for sale or reproduction....

Some misc. notes on participation and other things about symposia

In *Australia (2010)* there were no participants from the *Azores*, while since a long time they came as a group of at least some 5 persons.

When asking for the reason: the 'crisis'. So, no financial support from *Gespea*, their organization.

Also from *Japan* no participation. Reason: this period in August has a big festival, which interfered. Moreover, their amount of holidays is not as large as in some other countries. They worried about the extra travel from South to North Australia.

Some notes for the future:

Galápagos is mentioned for a future symposium. But flights from Europe are (as far as some travel guides claim) very expensive. First to Ecuador, than another expensive flight.

Also a proposal came for a future symposium in *New Mexico*. In 2009 there was the U.I.S. congress in the U.S.A. Some (Dutch) speleologists not me) skipped this due to the period (July) when there were (it is high season) no cheap flights offered. Also (but maybe this is just me) the extreme high temperature for field work is not attractive.

There will of course always be problems, certainly with symposia of our commission which are scattered all over this planet. Travel will be expensive, data might be very convenient for one, but not for another ...

A visit to (in)

Þríhnúkagígur

Jan-Paul van der PAS

Those who participated in the Korea Symposium (2008) might remember the lecture by Árni about the project to make the 'Threenookageegur' (Three Peaks Crater) a part of a tourism project. This crater was mentioned again in N.L. # 57, page 15 .. 17.

Just after the Australia Symposium (2010) Árni invited some commission members to have a look in this crater for their meaning and opinion of this feature and possibilities as World Heritage project. The entry possibility was possible due to a National Geographic project, which would include a hauling system, making access easier than going up and down a 120 meters with SRT.

No pictures please

No jeans please

Just after the Australia Symposium an e-mail arrived from Árni to come to Iceland and have a look IN the Þríhnúkagígur Crater. Actually some other commission members were also invited but had to excuse due to condition, lack of money or lack of time. So just me. It was supposed to give an opinion about this feature, which Bill Halliday had already stated to be 'the most important vulcanospeleological phenomenon on earth'.

Due to a project by National Geographic a hauling system would be installed to make access easy. To get the possibility to have a visit into this crater must be a dream of each caver, so of course I accepted immediately.

On my first visit to the entrance of the crater a huge construction had been built. Above the entrance, which is actually pretty small, a heavy metal beam, over 10 meters, long had been installed with the help of a huge Coastal Guard helicopter. 'Smaller items' were flown in by a smaller helicopter which must have made many flights. To the heavy beam a smaller construction, forming a "T" (functioning as a bridge) gave access to the hauling system, a basket big enough for 4 persons, driven by electric motors.

This first trip was in good weather, and it was impressive to see the solidity of the whole set-up. A very sturdy tent had been erected to give some shelter, a 10 kW generator hummed friendly. Going up to the crater I had already been told that my jeans were a 'no-no'. Besides the N.G. crew all work was done by members of Icelandic rescue teams. They were very experienced climbers, and had experience with both climbing expeditions in Pamir, Himalaya and so on and serious rescues. Jeans in their eyes get to wet and will give hypothermia problems, of which they have seen fatalities. Taking pictures was also not allowed, since all material had a copyright by N.G. Later, probably February all this material, after being shown in Iceland, will be donated to the Icelanders.

However, this was just a trip to the top of this crater. View from this top is staggering, some 30 kilometer away Reykjavik is clearly visible.

Visitors will have to wait till N.G. is not filming - we might interfere with lights, or sounds. We have to dress on this crater for very special weather. As some visitors of Iceland know, Icelandic rain seldom comes down vertical, you are better prepared for horizontal rain. Here however you are warned for rain coming vertical upwards due to the wind on the slopes. Wind is sometimes heavy - the really very sturdy tent has to be taken down before it blows away. Later I am informed the very first trip down had some problems, but all solved.

The first day of filming the project-leader is down, but has to sit six hours without light and making no sounds due to the filming. At the same time the dome is measured again for better accuracy.

But than, finally, the day is there: 'visitors' are allowed down. No filming will take place, so we can not disturb the action of N.G.

Árni, Gunnhildur, myself and the controller enter the basket an slowly go down. First the entrance throat has to be negotiated, but than the vast space under us opens up. The basket sinks slowly with a friendly sound, and due to big lamps attached to it we have breathtaking views of the walls around us, and also the bottom is visible due to other big lights. The walls are very colourful, from gray to orange-brown and red.

After some time we are 120 meter deeper, and land on the top of the immense heap of debris.

It sure is due to all the heavy lights that this unique vast hall can be appreciated. We are sitting on the top of the heap which slopes down in all directions, and on some places goes down for another 80 meters. Some persons are there, the void is remapped and everyone goes around. I myself am completely overwhelmed and just sit down to observe this phenomenon. Later some other visitors are coming down, this is a group officials from Icelandair who are hoped to become sponsors for the project to raise this to World Heritage status and tourist attraction. They

are lucky, they do not have to climb the mountain - they are flown in by helicopter. After a time - I completely lost any idea of that - we have to go out. In the meantime it is nearly dark, but visibility good, and far away we see all the lights of Reykjavik.

The possibility to visit this volcanic feature was unique. The invitation by Árni for this event is a once-in-a-lifetime possibility. Actually more persons from the Commission were invited, but had to cancel for several reasons. The best person to give a professional opinion, Bill Halliday, had regrettable to skip due to health reasons.

It was also supposed to get an opinion from the Commission about the feasibility of this crater to make it a World Heritage Site, and a tourist attraction.

I think anyone of the Commission would be impressed by the work done till now. Árni is working on this for nearly 20 years, and has collected (as witnessed on the spot and seen from publications) a group of dedicated and professional co-operators that hardly have their match in the world.

After the visit to the crater Árni and the chairman of this commission had an interview with the Icelandic Minister of Environment, Svandís Svavarsdóttir. Proposals for making the area a national park with supervision, a proposal for W.H. were very positive received, and meetings for the future with government officials proposed.

(Afterwards Árni told me he was surprised this meeting indeed could take place, as at the same moment some riots in Reykjavik took place and probably government officials had 'other' things to than receive visitors).

Than as personal note: a huge thanks to Árni and Gunnhildur for the immense hospitality they offered - it felt like being 'at home'.

There are several publications about this crater and project, e.g. in:

Newsletter of the Commission on Volcanic Caves - June 2010 - # 58

NSS News - August 1992, Vol 28, #3

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Undara Volcano and its Lava Tubes



ANNE AND VERNON ATKINSON

A GEOLOGICAL WONDER OF AUSTRALIA
IN UNDARA VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK, NORTH QUEENSLAND

Undara Volcano and its Lava Tubes

by Anne and Vernon Atkinson

A fascinating book (I, editor, knew about it, but did still not have it ...). During the 14th Symposium of Vulcanospeleology (Australia, August 2010) a fascinating fact happened: The author, somewhere in here 80ties, attended this meeting. Anne also had a lecture during this symposium. The symposium took place at Undara, an area she (and her husband) had studied in detail so many years ago. As it turned out new opinions were issued due to the symposium, but no way to get around this basic work.

Also: **most**, very important!! This book is still available

Name of the publication: Undaro Volcano and its Lava Tubes.

The authors: Vernon Atkinson and Anne Atkinson.

The original version was issued in 1995, with revisions it was reprinted in 2001.

It is in the English language.

Size: A-4, 21x29½x1 cm, 86 pages, weight 530 grams, the amount of pictures enormous - several on each page.

The price will be around A\$ 30-40.

ISBN 0 646 24580 5

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