

Cave History Presentations

Karakorum Mountains, from which, alone and in disguise, he reached Yarkand in what is now Xinjiang. His health destroyed by these privations, he died in Ludhiana, between Delhi and Lucknow, on 12 March, 1836.

Mitchell, of course, went on to lead some of Australia's most successful journeys of discovery. On his instructions, his Assistant Surveyors recorded numerous limestone occurrences throughout NSW. His Wellington cave maps published in 1838 are models of surveying. He did eventually publish on the bones, whereas Henderson's were lost to posterity.

History, it's often said, belongs to the victors, or at least to the last man left standing. Mitchell survived Henderson and Governor Darling, both of whom were highly critical of his administration. Because he foresaw Darwinism, Mitchells' views on the bones prevailed over Henderson's outdated, antediluvian explanation of their origin. He was eventually knighted.

John Henderson deserves a place in the history of cave science, and indeed of science generally in Australia. But Major Mitchell was the greater explorer, he was closer to the truth on the bones, his writings attracted more influential attention, and he rose to greater honours. He was our first speleologist.

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Early Maps Of Tuglow Caves: The Bracewell Collection

John Dunkley

A manuscript collection of previously unrecorded maps of Tuglow Cave and other items has been located in the State Library of NSW, donated by Professor R N Bracewell. A more complete report will be presented at the next ASF Conference in January 2005.