

for me to catch up with old friends and rekindle relationships. CaveMania also introduced me to many new friends and put names to the faces that I read about in Australian cave literature.

I would also like to say thanks to the many people who stepped up on the spur or the moment to help in the day to day running of the conference, the self-starters, those with initiative that see the work to be done and then pitch in to do it. Most notable in my mind are the Western Australians, Greg Thomas, Ian Colette, John Cugley and Darren Brooks for setting up and running the Speleosports and prusiking competition, Jay and Ross Anderson, particularly Ross for his IT support, Cathie Plowman and Dave Butler for the raffles (one for the victims of the tsunami disaster appeal) and numerous other odd jobs, Steve Blanden who was always there to help and in particular his assistance with the Photo Competition entries, Joe Sydney for amongst many other things, capturing most of the conference in photographs. Julia James from whom I learned so many of my organisational skills quite some time ago, was always there to offer good advice to pitch in with the less glamorous tasks like washing up, Matt Cracknell was a great go-between for CaveMania and the Hastings Experience where he works. These are just the people I noticed in a big way. No doubt I have forgotten many helpers and for that I apologise and thank you despite your having to remain anonymous. Thanks also to my darling wife, Kathy and delightful daughter, Grace who helped immensely. I was not sure what sort of Christmas holiday I could promise them but in the end they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Likewise I was not certain what I could promise my friends the Evans family Brian, Ruth, Dane and Rhys. They trusted

me when I said it would be a good time. As is turned out, it was great and so were they!

I would like to thank those members of Southern Tasmanian Caverneers who could not be persuaded to attend the conference but were willing to run fieldtrips, most notably Ric Tunney, Janine McKinnon and Phil Rowsell. They believe that caving is to be done and not just talked about. I think that deep down we all think that and without the fieldtrips, visiting Tasmania would have been much less enjoyable for all CaveMania participants. The other Tasmanian clubs: Northern Caverneering Club, Mole Creek Caving Club and Savage River Caving Club also ran a plethora of fieldtrips which enhanced everyone's experience of The Caving State. Thanks to the enlightened members of the Tasmanian Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts who relaxed permit restrictions so that a few more people could enjoy Tasmania's iconic caves. Specifically thanks must go to all those cavers who helped with the cleaning of Kubla Khan and thus making the world a slightly better place. Dave Wools-Cobb is to be particularly thanked in this regard.

When I next attend an ASF conference I promise that I will attend all the sessions, listen to all the presenters, enter the photographic competition, participate in the Speleosports, attend the fieldtrips, drink less responsibly at the BBQs, relax, let what is left of my hair down and generally do all those things that I was too busy to enjoy doing at CaveMania.

I would also like to thank all the people who presented papers, posters, workshops or seminars without whom there would be almost no point in coming. Here is your published work, I hope we have done it justice.

Thank you all.

RODNEY DILLON'S WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Stephen Bunton

Over recent years the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers has worked closely and harmoniously with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

Much evidence of Aboriginal occupation has come to light in some very significant cave sites. Cavers and Forestry Tasmania have worked co-operatively to ensure that these places are well managed into the future.

As a sign of co-operation and respect the organisers of CaveMania felt it entirely appropriate to ask a member of the local Aboriginal community to welcome us to this place.

Rodney Dillon expressed his concerns about the treatment of Aboriginals in the past and Stephen Bunton reaffirmed the willingness of Australian cavers to work with indigenous Australians to preserve their culture.

Stephen replied that cavers were likely to be much more aware of the Aboriginal occupation of this continent than the community at large, since they are constantly reminded of the Aboriginal presence, through the physical evidence they encounter in caves.

POSTSCRIPT

Rodney Dillon was declared Aboriginal Person of the Year during NAIDOC Week 2005.



PHOTO: JODIE RUTLEDGE

Rodney Dillon during his welcome.