

## **AUSTRALIAN CAVES AND KARST ON POSTCARDS**

An annotated catalogue, prepared by Ross Ellis,  
Elery Hamilton-Smith and Trevor Shaw

(Work commenced on this listing many years ago, then as the size of the resulting lists grew, it became apparent that the cost of publication was not compatible with the inevitably small and specialised market. But technology has come to our aid. This version, designed for CD-Rom, has been completed in 2005)

## **About the Authors**

ROSS ELLIS has been collecting cave literature for about 30 years and cave postcards form just part of his extensive collection. He commenced caving in 1957 and has explored caves all over Australia, and in New Zealand and the U.S.A. He has held several positions in the Sydney Speleological Society, of which he is a life member, and has been editor of their publications for some 30 years. He has also been convenor of the Longest and Deepest Caves Commission of the Australian Speleological Federation. As all of this would suggest, his major caving interests are documentation, history and photography.

ELERY HAMILTON-SMITH started caving in the early 50's, and helped to establish the Australian Speleological Federation in 1956. He has served the Federation as Secretary and President at various times since then and has also played a major role in the establishment and administration of the Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association. His interest in postcards has its basis in a wider interest, namely the history of Australian Caves, and he has been Thomas Ramsay Scholar at the Museum of Victoria conducting extensive studies in this area. During the last 50 years, he has explored and studied caves in all parts of Australia and some 30 other countries. He is currently convenor of the Task Force on Protection of Caves and Karst within the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas.

TREVOR SHAW is another antique, who has explored caves since the 1940's. He is a British engineer and sailor, which gave him the opportunity to visit several Australian cave regions in 1959 and 1963. At one time he was Vice-President of the British Speleological Association, but since then has steered clear of caving politics. Real caving in many parts of the world included new discoveries, but he is best known for his work on the history of cave exploration and cave science (1979). It was for this that he received his doctorate in 1975. His collections of cave engravings, early cave photographs (from 1866) and early cave books (from 1659), as well as postcards, are widely used by others and he is always pleased to hear from people with similar interests.

## Introduction

Images - whether drawings, engravings or photographs - are important source material for the history of caves. Postcards, nearly all of them reproduced from photographs, are one of the major sources in Australia from 1900 onwards. Postcards provide pictures of caves as they were in the past, with the tourist paths and lighting of the time, and with the gradually developing or subsequently destroyed buildings at or near the entrances. Even the caves themselves may be lost, as Blackboy Hollow Cave in Western Australia was for many years. Detailed study of the postcards increases their usefulness by making the approximate dates of the photographs known.

Examination of postmarks and written messages on many cards of a particular issue, together with the printing style and the period during which the publisher flourished, often allow the cards themselves to be dated fairly precisely, but the picture may, of course, be earlier. Identification of the photographer, and this may have to be established for many cards where it is not self-evident, and the subsequent search for the details of his working life, can help here, as can recognition of the same photograph being used in successive series. Much of the dating is inexact at present, though new information will gradually refine it.

The subject of cave postcards as a whole, as distinct from their use as historical evidence, is a part of the social history of caves, and particularly of tourist caves. Besides giving publicity to individual caves, they have served to make the public more aware of caves in general - just as engravings, photographs and stereo views did earlier and as television does now.

Australia is unique among the cave countries of the world in the extent of state ownership and management of many of the tourist caves from very early times. Thus, not only do descriptions and plans appear in official government geological or mining reports, with the particulars of arrangements made for tourists, but it was often government surveyors and geologists who wrote the guidebooks and the government printer who produced them. Similarly, some of the early postcards were published by the Caves Board of Western Australia, the Department of Lands and Survey of Victoria, various state tourist agencies, and a number of other government authorities.

Finally, postcards provide a good field for collecting for its own sake, whether by cave explorers or others. They give an authentic atmosphere of the past, linked with it particularly by the contemporary stamps or messages on the back, and they can make a satisfying display. They, or slides made from them, can also keep lecture audiences awake. It is only because of collectors that the cards survive at all.

There must inevitably be Australian cave postcards not yet known to the authors. We hope that information about these will be sent to us, together with any corrections and new evidence for dating or any other aspects of the cards and their history. Such additions and changes can be readily incorporated in the database and will thus be automatically included in future editions.

Trevor Shaw

## **The Historical Context**

Photography entered Australia at a remarkably early date. The Frenchman, Daguerre, announced details of his photographic process in August 1839, and by May of 1841, the first Daguerrotypes were produced in Sydney. The first continuing photographic business was established by Goodman in 1842, and photographers have been a part of the Australian scene ever since.

Significant in this development was the wealth that came as a result of the discovery of gold. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Australia was one of the richest nations of the world, and so the luxury of having one's photograph taken became commonplace. The wish to send photographs home to one's relatives in the United Kingdom, or elsewhere, doubtless also gave a particular impetus to the industry here.

The picture postcard must also be put into context along with other popular uses of photography. During the nineteenth century, photographs were not only purchased as family portraits, but were affixed to small cards as visiting cards (Cartes De Visites, or C.D.V's); displayed in studio showcases as a sort of public news service; sold as decorative art, with landscapes and other pictures being sold as framed views to hang in the drawing room; collected in albums; and finally, the stereographic process was developed, and thousands of stereographic cards for family viewing were produced.

Caves were popular stereographic subjects because of the depth of view effects that could readily be obtained. Amongst many others, Kerry, Bulmer and Rose, all of whom appear below, produced many thousands of Stereographs. So, although this catalogue provides the basis for access to one set of photographic records of Australian caves as they were, it will hopefully be supplemented in due course by equivalent treatment of photographic prints and stereographs.

Interestingly, the development of the picture postcard, subject as it was to governmental regulation, lagged behind the pace of other countries. The first formal acceptance of the postcard by postal authorities was in Austria in 1869, and although New South Wales commenced the use of postcards (without pictures) in 1875, other states were relatively slow to follow suit, with Tasmania only permitting postcards in 1882, after the publisher Walch had forced the issue by publishing a privately produced card.

However, these cards were not illustrated (other than an infamous Victorian card which carried advertisements for beer and tobacco) and served merely as a post office form to convey simple messages at a lower cost than letter rate. In due course, as privately produced picture postcards flooded into the country from overseas, and finally, in response to public demand, the postal authorities determined in 1898 that private publishers might produce picture postcards. Few private operators responded immediately, although many postal authorities and some other government departments did produce picture cards from 1898 onwards.

In 1905, the regulations, which until then had permitted only the address on what was then the face of the card (and which we would see today as the back), were amended to allow the familiar divided back, with space for a message on the same side as the

address. This not only gave greater scope to the use of photographs or other illustrations, but also seemed to foster the interest in cards. Literally thousands were published; one only needs to consider the listing below for Jenolan as a single resort to realise the massive flood of cards that occurred.

Elery Hamilton-Smith

## **Some Conventions and Abbreviations.**

- \* All cards are printed in black & white unless otherwise specified. Photographic prints originally in black and white are often faded to sepia, but others may have been sepia-toned at the time of printing.
- \* Unless otherwise noted, cards have divided backs.
- \* Words enclosed in square brackets, [], in the title of either a series or an individual view are ones that do not actually appear on the cards but have been inserted by the editors for clarity or even identification of the view. Round brackets ( ) enclose editorial notes and further details)
- \* Dates given following card descriptions denote the earliest use known to us.
  - pm. = postmarked
  - ms. = manuscript
  - n.e. = not earlier than
  - n.l. = not later than
- \* We also give, where possible, a series date in brackets following the series title which indicates the date or likely date of publication.
  - n.e. = not earlier than
  - n.l. = not later than
- \* H = horizontal  
V = vertical
- \* Ph = photographer  
At = artist  
Pu = publisher  
Pr = printed  
F = format, i.e., the style of printing and layout used
- \* s.n.a. = same negative as
- \* L.H. = Left-hand ; R.H. = Right-hand  
/ is used to indicate start of a new line in a printed title or text.

## Acknowledgements

A work of this kind owes a debt to an immense number of people. Some of them we do not even know, such as those enthusiastic collectors of the Edwardian years, whose very industry served to preserve so many cards from the "golden age." However, there are many we can name.

Some assisted with quite specific topics, others with information about or access to cards in their own collections; still others were dealers who kept an eye out for items which may be of value to us. Staff of the Mitchell, LaTrobe, Mortlock and Battye Libraries all provided very significant support and advice.

But then, we must recall the individuals who have helped us in a multitude of ways:

Michael Aitken, Don Aplin, Graham Aslin, Sandy Barrie, Gary Bilton, Ron Blum, Don Burden, Don Catterall, Phil Collas, David Cook, Peter Crabb, Don Darbyshire, Gene Dundon, Helen Ellis, John Etkins, Jeff & Leo Fitzgerald, John Fitzgibbon, Barry Francis, Dr. Bill Halliday (U.S.A.), Walter Heiron. Ernie Holland, Lloyd Holyoak, David Irwin (U.K.), Shirley Jones, Phillip Kay, Anne Keating, Kevin Kiernan, Paul Kornan, Mike Kouwen, John Layburn, Greg Middleton, David Millar, Bob Milne, Kevin Mott, Harold Mower, Keith Oliver, Nicolas Peterson, Robert Peterson, Derek Pocock, Graham D. Price (Radstock, U.K.), Alan Scheknecht, Gordon Smith (U.S.A.), Jim Smith, Ron Smith, Andy Spate, Peter Stalley, Nick Vukovic, Gary Watson, Rauleigh Webb, Rob Whyte and John Williams.

All gave generously of their expertise, access to cards in their possession, or in some other way, either big or small, assisted and encouraged us. We sincerely thank them all and hope they will feel the end result justifies their input.

Finally, our families have long endured our various obsessions, and tolerated with equal patience the hours spent on this one. We deeply appreciate their love and support.

