

BUCHAN CAVES

The lower valleys of the Buchan and Murrindal Rivers in the Eastern part of Victoria both run through extensive areas of Devonian limestone. An immense number of caves are found in the region. The presence of these was recognised by the first white settlers, probably as early as the 1840's, and tours were conducted as early as 1885, but it was not until the beginning of the present century that any official interest was taken in them.

Visits by early surveyors, explorers and geologists, including Howitt, Stirling and Kitson, resulted in some interest, and the first of a series of caves reserves were established as a result of Kitson's reports. However, a local prospector, Frank Moon, made the first of a series of major discoveries in 1906.

The local Presbyterian home missionary, John Flynn, later to become famous as the founder of the Flying Doctor Service, accompanied him in at least some of his investigations. Flynn was an enthusiastic photographer, and often presented lantern slides to meetings. It is said that his presentations were largely responsible for the government of the day taking a more serious interest in the caves. As a result, Kitson was sent to further examine the area, and he secured Moon's employment by the government to continue exploration.

Comparison with some of Flynn's photographs in Melbourne newspapers (e.g., *Australasian*, 27 October 1906: 991) demonstrated that various of the views shown on postcards are by Flynn, and are listed as such here. Flynn's sister Rosetta is said to have made many of his photographs into postcards and sold them for 9d. each. (McPheat 1963: 37) Given this, and other comparative assessment, we identified those which we believe represent her work.

Then, on the 16th March, 1907, Frank Moon discovered Fairy Cave, and this resulted in a major interest being taken by both the government of the day and the tourism industry of the region. F.J. Wilson, formerly of Jenolan, was appointed to commence development of the caves in order to make them accessible to the public. In due course, Frank Moon succeeded Wilson as manager, and remained at Buchan for the rest of his life.

Both before and after the discovery of Fairy Cave, Moon and Wilson discovered other caves in the region, and several of these were opened to the public. The Moon family were closely associated with the caves for many years, and in 1930, Fairy Moon, daughter of Frank, was married in Fairy Cave.