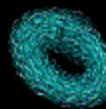
A group of people, including adults and children, are walking on a metal walkway with railings through a cave. The cave walls are covered in large, brown, textured stalactites and other rock formations. The lighting is warm and focused on the walkway. The title text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

CROWDS, COMMUNICATION AND CONSERVATION Geotourism in the 21st Century

DAN COVE

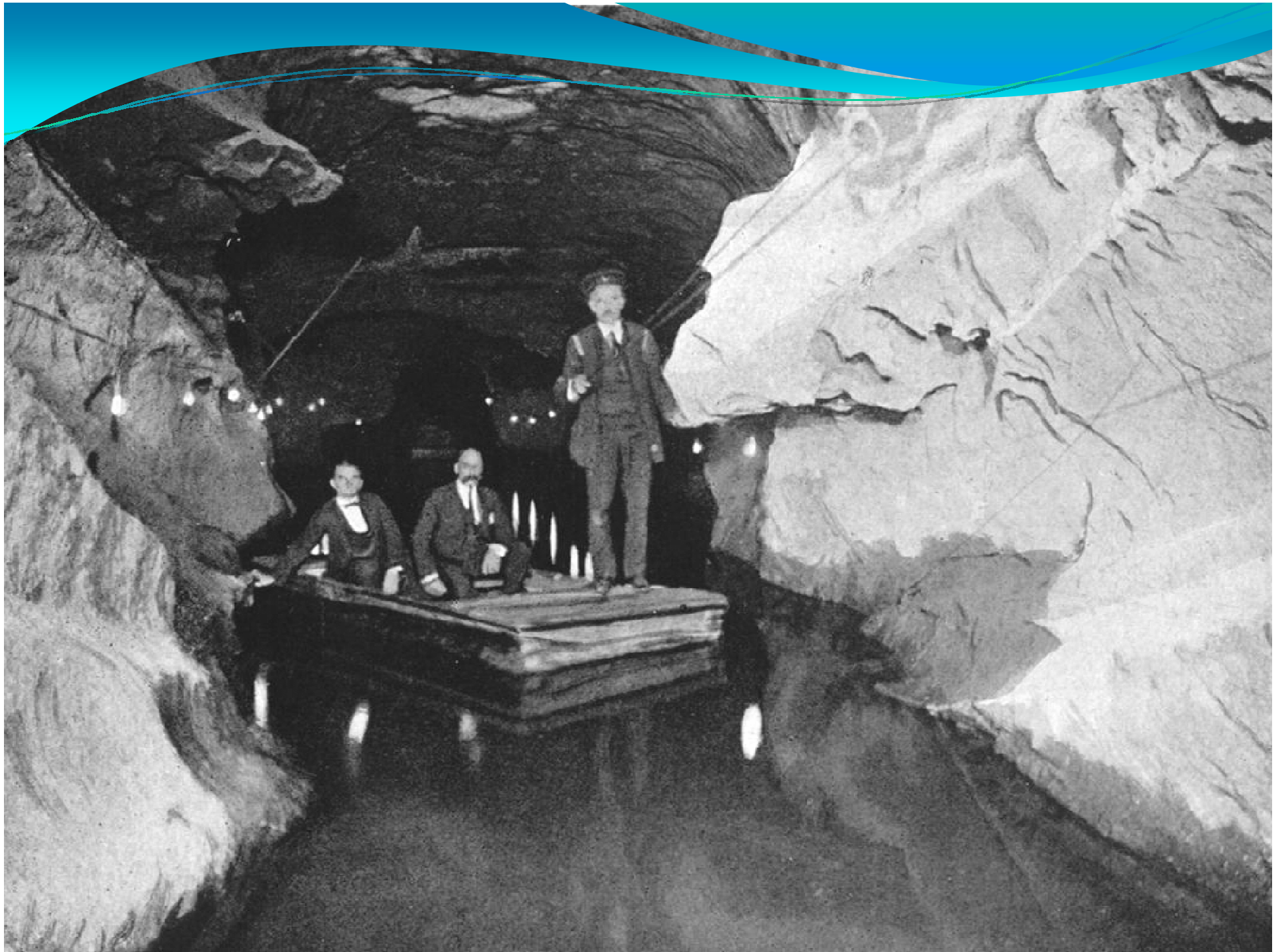
Assistant General Manager
Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust

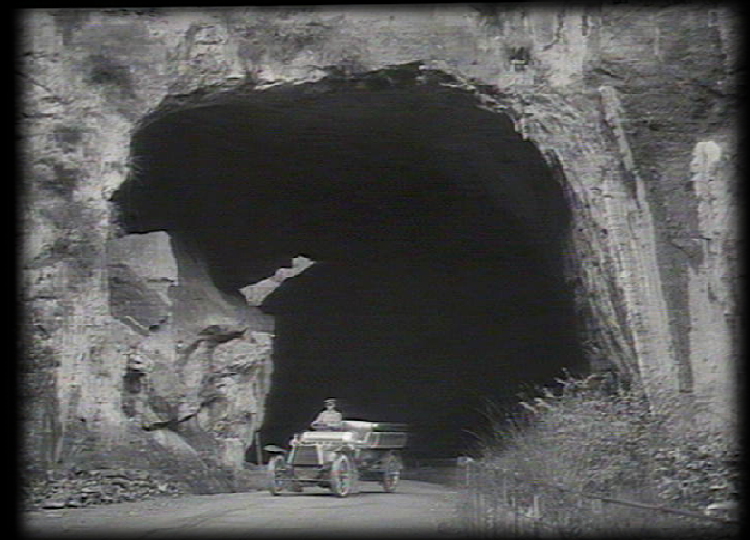
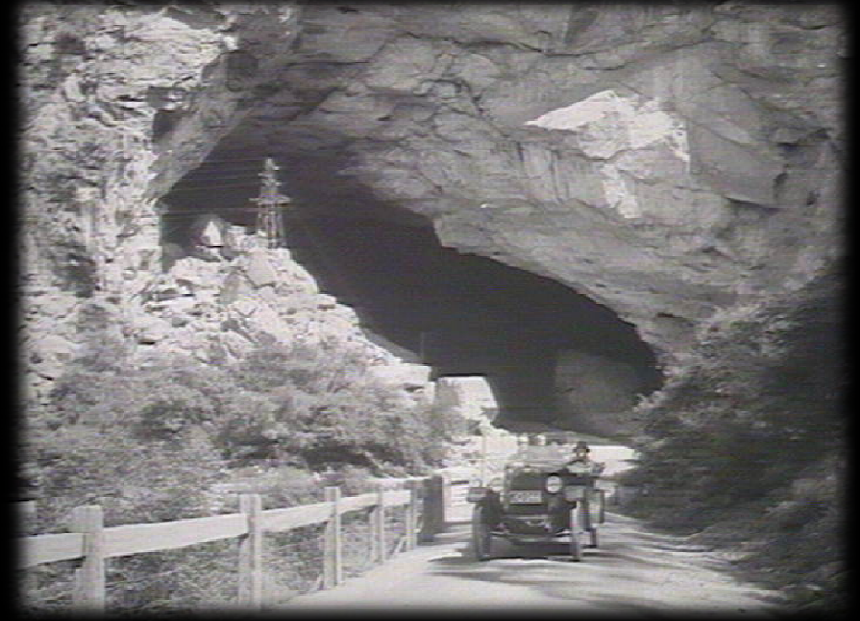


jenolan caves
explore marvel stay



GEOTOURISM - ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S
EARLIEST FORMS OF TOURISM







MODERN “GEOTOURISM”

- Must recognise that visitor expectations have changed
- Important to recognise a growing need for information and authentic experiences
- Is competing with more diverse recreational activities
- Important to provide a Spectrum of Opportunity
- Important not to narrow the definition

GEOTOURIST SITES MUST RECOGNISE VALUES

- What are the intrinsic values of Geosites?
- Are some values “more important” than others?
- Who decides?
- Should we manage visitors based on our perception of which values are most important?



SOME VALUES ARE NOT ALWAYS
SELF EVIDENT...





THE JENOLAN CAVES EXPERIENCE

- The underlying and enduring strength of nature based tourism
- The need to provide accurate information
- The importance of 'flagship' sites
- The ability to interpret science to a broad and general audience
- The importance of quality interpretation to establishing conservation values and advocacy

Sensible management planning
making requires a synthesis of
knowledge from many fields



INTERPRETIVE GUIDING IS VITAL FOR SUCCESSFUL GEOTOURISM



WHAT IS INTERPRETIVE GUIDING?

- Genuinely provides “guidance” – not just commentary
- Is reactive to the varying needs and demands of each individual and group
- Interpretation is NOT just education
- Presenting a theme, rather than a set of subjects
- Works at delivering a take-home message that will not be forgotten



THE IMPORTANCE OF SCIENCE TO INTERPRETATION

JENOLAN TRAILS

Shaping Waters
Healing Waters
Working Waters





THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERPRETATION TO SCIENCE

- Interpretation as public education
- The allure of the unknown
- Science on the edge of discovery
- Generating public support, without which science is an impotent force for change
- Integrating values into a coherent story
- Connecting with the younger generation – the next group of scientists

WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT TO BROADER CONSERVATION?

The supreme importance of achieving an ***EMOTIONAL CONNECTION*** and thus a conservation ethic.



GEO TOURISM IS VITAL FOR LONG TERM CONSERVATION



THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE TO GEOSITES

- The “hierarchy of conservation principles”
- Are sub-aerial stromatolitic stalagmites as lovable as pandas?
- You can't hurt rocks...



THE 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGE

- Creating an emotional response in an age of media saturation and instant gratification
- Access - at the expense of the experience?
- Conservation at the crossroads
- The uncertain social future of tourism...



IN SUMMARY...

- Geotourism is one of the earliest forms of tourism
- Geosites have great 21st Century potential
- Authentic experiences with “bragging rights” are vital
- It is the emotional response that endures
- Science will always struggle without popular support
- Quality of Interpretation is critical
- Innovation is essential to confront modern challenges
- The casual can become the converted, and provide the support vital for long term conservation efforts



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- The scientific community that has assisted Jenolan Caves Management for so many years