



EDITORIAL

John Gunn and David Lowe

As we write this Editorial, we are looking forward to the celebrations to mark the first UNESCO *International Day of Caves and Karst* (IDCK) on 13 September. As many readers are aware, the IDCK proposal was developed by the International Speleological Union (UIS) and submitted formally to UNESCO by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. Many international and national bodies, including BCRA and BCA, supported the proposal, which was co-sponsored by more than 60 UNESCO Member States. At the General Conference of UNESCO in Samarkand (12 November 2025) the proposal was accepted, and 13 September was proclaimed officially as the *International Day of Caves and Karst*, to be celebrated every year. In summary, the objective of the IDCK is: “to help people better understand why caves and karst matter and why they deserve protection”. An inaugural international celebration will take place in Postojna, Slovenia, from 10 to 13 September 2026, organized jointly by the Karst Research Institute (IZRK ZRC SAZU) and the UIS, with the support of the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO and numerous partner institutions. For further information visit [<https://uis-speleo.org/>], but the programme will include the international scientific conference “*Explore, Understand and Protect: Towards Sustainable Management of Caves and Karst*”, bringing together researchers, cave explorers, managers of protected areas, educators, and conservation specialists from around the world. Keynote lectures will address cave and karst protection, sustainable management of karst water resources, geoparks, indigenous knowledge, and the role of science in conservation. As Nadja Zupan Hajna, the UIS Treasurer and Past President has said: “*The proclamation of the International Day of Caves and Karst by UNESCO was a remarkable achievement, but it marks only the beginning of a long-term global initiative. Its future success depends on the enthusiasm, creativity, and commitment of the global cave and karst community*”. Our hopes and expectations are that BCRA members, and the wider British caving community, will make an important contribution to IDCK events both in 2026 and in the future.

Just two weeks after the inaugural IDCK there will be another significant event, this one highlighting the best of British Caving – the annual BCRA- and BCA-sponsored *Hidden Earth* meeting at Llangollen in northern Wales. For more information visit [<https://hidden.earth/>]. Three weeks later, the 37th annual BCRA Cave Science Symposium will be held at the University of Salford. For more information see page 88 of this Issue.

As Editors, we like to believe that there are *pearls of wisdom* in every Issue of CaKS, but this is undeniably the case in the present Issue, because we have a *Photo Feature* devoted to the eponymous pearls that reside – sadly now buried under a mudflow – in a New Zealand cave. Cave pearls also feature on the Issue’s covers and, most notably, in a paper by Garry Smith: “*Cave pearls: origin, morphology, growth and mobility*”. As Garry points out, correctly, cave pearls have commonly been overlooked by speleologists, compared with the attention paid to more-prominent speleothems such as stalactites, stalagmites and flowstone. Hence, further contributions of papers, reports or photo features relating to them would be welcomed.

The contents of this Issue comprise two “longish” and one shorter papers, two reports, a *Forum* section and a *Photo Feature*. Whereas two of the papers are of world-wide applicability, the other Paper and the two reports are focussed specifically upon topics related to Ireland and Britain (considered historically as a geographical entity), to Jamaica, and to Puerto Rico. As mentioned above, Garry Smith has provided an overview consideration of cave pearls that, in addition to the aspects already described, investigates and makes recommendations about the nomenclature of cave pearls and of other geological entities that can appear similar to them. Max Moseley has added to his series of papers related to the history of “*cave biology*”, by examining aspects of related scientific development in “the British Isles”, focussed upon significant related Irish and British activities. In a rather shorter, but concentrated, Paper, Trevor Faulkner revisits ideas about zero and pre-Darcy flow, and considers the implications of what he discusses with regard to ideas about speleogenesis. Though one of them includes some wider issues, two closing reports relate to the Caribbean region. Abel Méndez and Ángel Acosta-Colón analyse the significance of localized cave-art/graffiti in a cave on the main island of the Puerto Rico archipelago, but also looking at issues related to fear that was felt around the world prior to the predicted arrival of Halley’s Comet in 1910. Also in the Caribbean area, Stephen Donovan provides a summary of the history of investigations in the Red Hills Road Cave on Jamaica, and the potential future value of research into the fossil-rich sedimentary deposits within what remains of the cave; a bibliography covering related publications is also presented. The Issue’s *Forum* section opens with brief details of this year’s (37th) annual BCRA Cave Science Symposium and Field Meeting, as mentioned above. Finally catching up with an editorial oversight during 2025, two additions to the occasional “*Notes for Authors*” series (by Stephen Donovan) are presented, alongside a listing of previous series contributions intended to inform new readers or those who might have missed them previously. We are also pleased to report a welcome return of a *Photo Feature* in its traditional, closing-page, position; this feature adds an intriguing lateral aspect to the already plentiful words and images related to cave pearls in this Issue. As several times in the recent past, we point out here that a *Photo Feature* is a simple way for authors from any cave- and karst-related background to publish brief thoughts on a potentially wider topic... perhaps leading to follow-up discussions and “*the shedding of light*”!

With great sadness we end this Editorial by reporting the recent death of Dr J C (John) Frankland. John was one of the “founding” Honorary Life Members of the BCRA and, among his many contributions to speleology, he served as BCRA President from 1997 to 2001. His other contributions to the BCRA included several publications in our forerunner journals, the *BCRA Transactions* and *Cave Science*. He will also be remembered as a caving doctor, who made his knowledge and skills available, not only to expedition cavers (in, for example, Papua New Guinea and Guangxi), but also in his role as part of the *Cave Rescue Organization* in the “Yorkshire Dales” and adjacent areas. Our expectation is that John’s contributions to the sport of caving, and to “speleology” in general, will be described and celebrated by more-detailed and specific appreciations in the cave-related media. He will certainly be remembered by many, of various generations, across the breadth of UK caving... and beyond.