

Jenolan Show Caves: Origin of Cave and Feature Names

KATH BELLAMY¹, CRAIG BARNES²

¹226 Rankin Street, Bathurst, NSW 2795, Australia, dbellamy@tpg.com.au

²The School of Chemistry, F11, The University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia, cbarnes6@bigpond.com

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The Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society researchers and surveyors worked together to place cave and feature names on maps being produced by the Jenolan Caves Survey Project. Their sources for these names were guidebooks, newspaper articles, tourist publications, postcards, and photographs. Valuable contributions also came from the oral history supplied by past and current guiding staff. From 1838 to the present day, guides have striven to acquaint visitors with the “exotic” cave environment, resulting in a tradition of giving features familiar names. To the informed, names of caves and formations can take on a hieroglyphic character that can guide you through the history of the caves. Being aware of the feature names can give a glimpse of the discoverers, prompt interest in the adventures of early visitors and even recognise the work involved in making the caves accessible. The result is that over a thousand names have been found that link historically and culturally the discoverers, management and visitors.

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In 2005, as part of the Jenolan Caves Survey Project, the authors started to work on names for the maps. The Jenolan Show Caves are made up of “caves”, sections of a system that have been given specific names to facilitate them as cave tours (Figure 1). The naming project immediately expanded as some cave and feature names provided an historical and cultural record of the Jenolan Show Caves. The result is an important record of the tradition of naming at Jenolan from the discovery of the caves to the present day.

The early years

The first recorded descriptive names commenced with the discovery of the arches in 1838 (Ralston 1989). Samuel Cook (1889) suggested that an arch known as the Devils Coach House was so named for reasons that had led to similar names for numerous Devils Pinches and Peaks for surface features around the world. Captain Cook had given the name Devils Basin to a harbour because of its gloomy appearance, being surrounded by savage rocks. For a brief period, the Devils Coach House was renamed Easter Cave, although the name never became popular.

The cave system has been known by various names: McKeon’s Caves in 1856, Binda Caves in

1867, Fish River Caves in 1879, and finally on 19th August 1884 the name Jenolan Caves was approved (Havard 1933).

By the 1860s names had been established for the New Cave (Ralston 1989). Visitors began their tour to this cave by hiking through the bush to Wallaby Hole, entering the cave through the Sole of the Boot to reach the Cathedral. They had to negotiate The Slide by sitting on a bag and descending further into the cave. In the Exhibition Cave they climbed over rocks, lunched on Picnic Rock and drank water from the Hidden River. In Lurline Cave those familiar with William Wallace’s opera Lurline, first performed in 1860, could see “...the coral bowers and cells to which Rudolph was transported” (Cook 1889). In an area of the Bone Cave called the Irish Corner there was an interesting formation known as the Potato Patch, and further along Bone Cave were Snowball Cave and Crystal Fountain. Returning to Irish Corner, visitors were astonished to find they had to ascend a wire ladder to return to Cathedral and thence the cave entrance. Although this route is not used today, many of these names are still in use on the Lucas tours.

Some names became enshrined with the advent of guidebooks; “English visitors see in this stalagmite the features of Lord Salisbury” (Trickett 1905).

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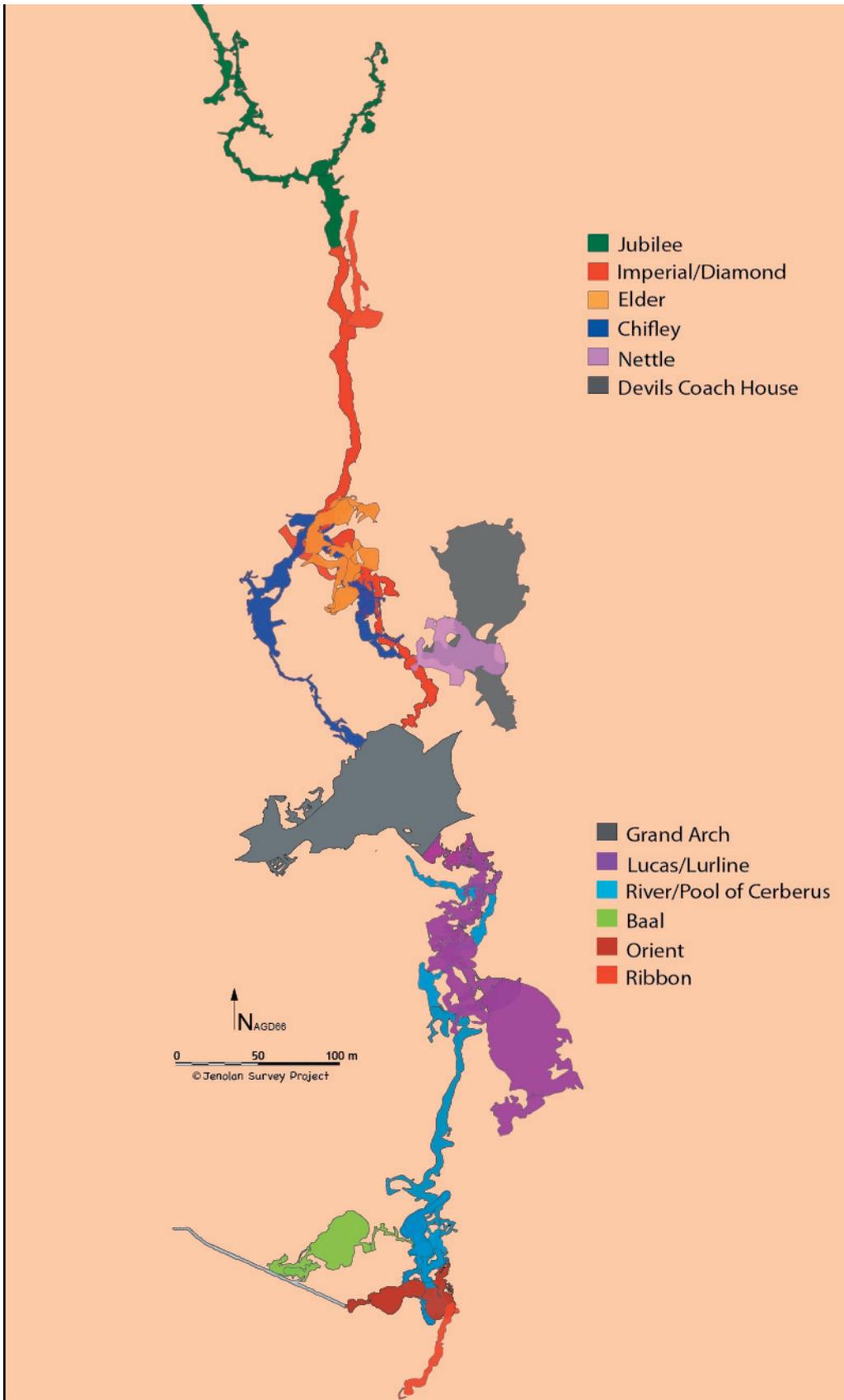


Figure 1. Jenolan Show Caves



Figure 2. The Old Curiosity Shop.

According to the 1924 Orient guidebook, visitors “...one and all will recognise uncanny imitations...” and decorations seem “...veiled in a film of suggestion where more is meant than meets the eye and depends to a certain extent upon the imagination” (Havard 1924). Figure 2 shows the Old Curiosity Shop where such a process has resulted in 13 named features amongst the mass of helictites. The names for the features in this figure can be found in Figure 3.

At present the Orient (Figure 3) contains 134 named features, by far the most of any cave at Jenolan. Many of the features have been renamed over time, with some features like the Dome of St Pauls renamed as many as 5 times (so far), to give a total of 206 names for the Orient alone. There are only 119 of the 206 names on Figure 3; it was not possible to fit any more on!

Names and name changes

The reasons for names and name changes for caves, parts of caves and features are multitude, and the following paragraphs outline just a few examples. The shapes that prompt a person to choose names are usually explained by culture, history and, sometimes, even profession. The chambers in the Orient (Figure 3) have names from that part of the world which is now known as the subcontinent.

The imagination of guides and tourists

From the very beginning, cave guides and tourists used names to describe formations, in part to make the strange more familiar. It is a tradition that has evolved and continues even to the present as new cave is discovered. For example, renamed by young visitors, the Unicorn’s Horn has become ET’s Finger and The Minaret has become The Ice Cream Cone. The cave divers have named a stalagmite as the

Upside Down Ice Cream Cone. A medical person was probably responsible for describing the helictites in the Dragon’s Throat in Baal as Diphtheria Symptoms.

The beautiful and small

There are many sparkling calcite crystal decorations at Jenolan, such as stalactites, stalagmites, flowstones and helictites, that have been named but some of the most intriguing formations are obscure. Old publications and photographs have enabled identification of these treasures. Among one mass of tangled helictites, named The Battlefield, is the minute Leaping Stag. The Diminutive Horse Head is one of the smallest examples of named features at Jenolan (Figure 4).

The ambience of the environment

George Rawson (1882) wrote of a visit to Fish River Caves that “...one is bought into a silent and reverent attitude...” hence it is no surprise that many names of religious significance were used. There is an Organ Loft and Pulpit in the Grand Archway, a Sanctuary in Nettle, a Cathedral and Bishop in Lucas, Twelve Apostles in Orient (Figure 5), with Imperial and Chifley both having a Vestry. Biblical names include Elijah’s Retreat, Tower of Babel and Lots Wife

Historical events

Historical events have also played a part, particularly in renaming features. The Terraces in Exhibition Chamber became the Pink and White Terraces in remembrance of those in New Zealand destroyed by the 1886 eruption of Mount Tarawera (Cook 1889). Mafeking was besieged during the Boer War for 217 days, from October 1899 to May 1900. The relief of Mafeking by the British from the Boer

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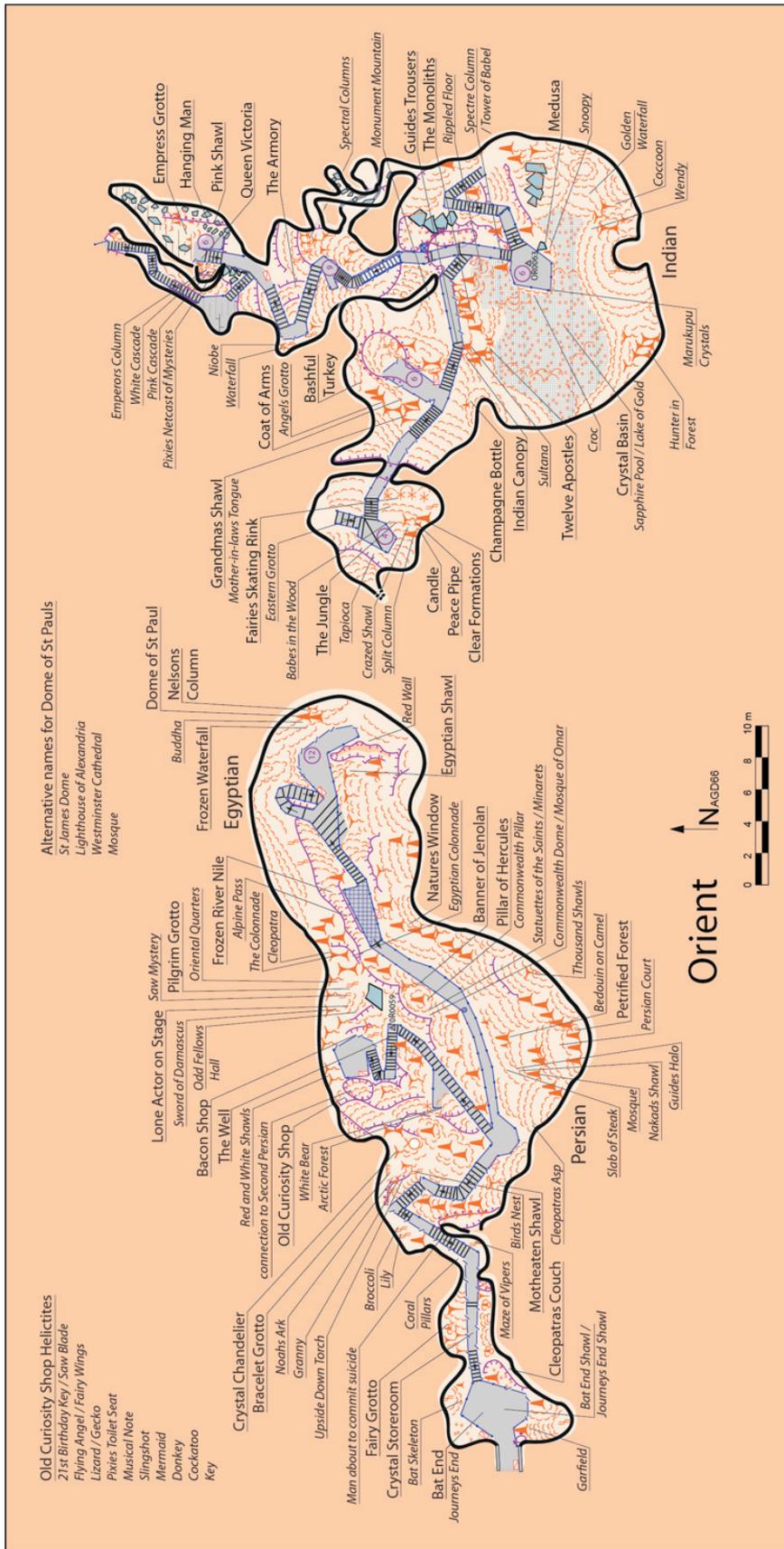


Figure 3. The Orient Map.



Figure 4. Diminutive Horse Head.

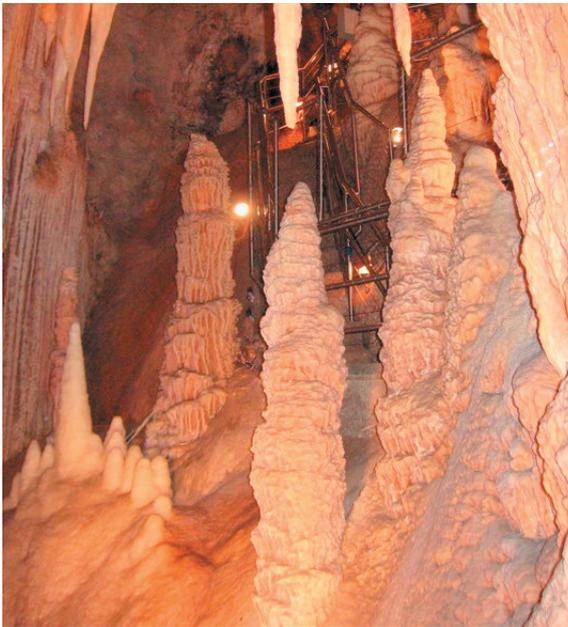


Figure 5. The Twelve Apostles.

coincided with the discovery of a high level passage in the Exhibition Chamber, hence its name and the names of some features in it (Figure 6).

Currently, there is a proposal to commemorate the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee with a named dome and arch in Jubilee and Imperial respectively.

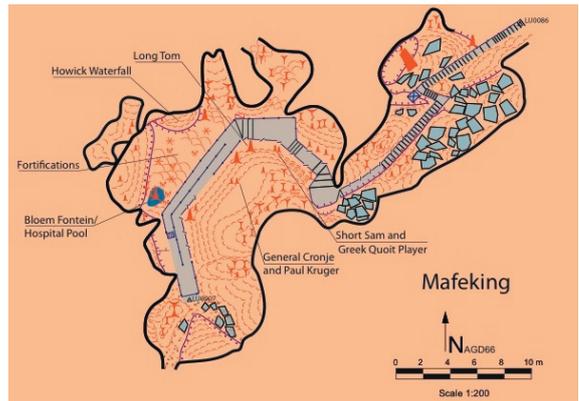


Figure 6. Map of Mafeking.

Honouring Australian dignitaries

In 1878 the New Cave was named Lucas after John Lucas, M.L.A; “In consequence of the great interest I displayed, and by the publication of my paper, which first drew the attention of the public to them, the Surveyor-General and other high officials made an official visit, and named the largest cavern The Lucas Cave” (Rawlinson 1976). One formation was named Judge Windeyer’s Couch “...because it is said that the learned judge sat on it when he visited the caves” (Cook 1889). In 1952, the Left Branch of Imperial was renamed Chifley Cave in honour of J.B. (Ben) Chifley, who represented in the Federal Parliament the region that included Jenolan. The name change attracted some criticism; “The gesture, however well intentioned, will not give much pleasure to Mr Chifley’s admirers, for the sake of the memory of a highly regarded man, I hope some more tactful Chief Secretary changes the ludicrous name of Chifley Cave back to what it was before” (Anon. 1952).

Cave incidents

Jeremiah Wilson, exploring Jubilee in 1893, described the dreadful experience of having his candle go out and believing he had no matches. Fortunately he found some in his pocket, but he ensured the event was not forgotten by naming the place where he was at the time Wilson’s Despair. In Imperial, Ridleys Short Cut was named after “...a visitor who stepped back to allow a lady to pass and fell through (to a cave below)...” (Leeder 1994). The guides describe the incident as a “...rambling visitor who strayed from the fold, put a foot in the wrong place, and descended fifty five feet without the benefit of the rope. He landed on a coil of netting and bounced off” (Ralston 1989).

The influence of lighting

Different lighting can influence what can be

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Figure 7. Queen Victoria.

recognised in the caves. Scenes lit by flickering candles, and at times augmented by magnesium lamps, delighted early visitors. However, the Stopping Lady could "...be seen only by candle light, the magnesium flare being too penetrating for this particular effect" (Foster 1890). Harry Potter's Scar was visible in the Exhibition Chamber until the lighting system was recently upgraded. The new lighting did however result in a perfect representation of a Terracotta Warrior appearing in shadow on the wall over the River Styx in Lucas.

After ladies

In Lucas, Queen Victoria is unmistakable as she looks out over the Royal Chamber (Figure 7). Other ladies have figured in naming Jenolan features, at times being substituted as their prominence wanes. Queen Esther still has a chamber, Margarita Cracknell, Selina Webb and Lucinda Wilson have small caves, Katie Webb and Edie have their bowers, while Josephine, Ethel and Minnie each still merit grottos. Helena Hart cave was initially renamed in favour of Lady Cecilia Carrington after her visit to the caves, but this chamber is now called Madonna Cave. Matilda's Retreat, however, has become the more mundane Marble Grotto. The provenance of these names occasionally causes some dispute too. A grotto attributed to Nellie Webb was challenged by a visitor in May 1976 who stated the grotto "...was named in honour of Nellie Carruthers..." (McIver 1976) (Figure 8).

Conclusion

As part of the Jenolan Show Caves Survey, the naming project has and will continue to assist in providing accurate information on names and

locations, but it is an evolution. This is no better reflected than in the words of a visitor who, in September 1911, wrote on a Jenolan postcard "It is wonderful how many shapes and images are suggested to your imagination and I could have added hundreds more..." (Anon. 1911). This discussion of the names of Jenolan features and their sources has been illustrated with only a few selected examples; it could have been many more as the Excel spread sheets for the Survey now contain more than a thousand names. The Jenolan Show Caves can therefore be thought of as the "Caves of a Thousand Names".

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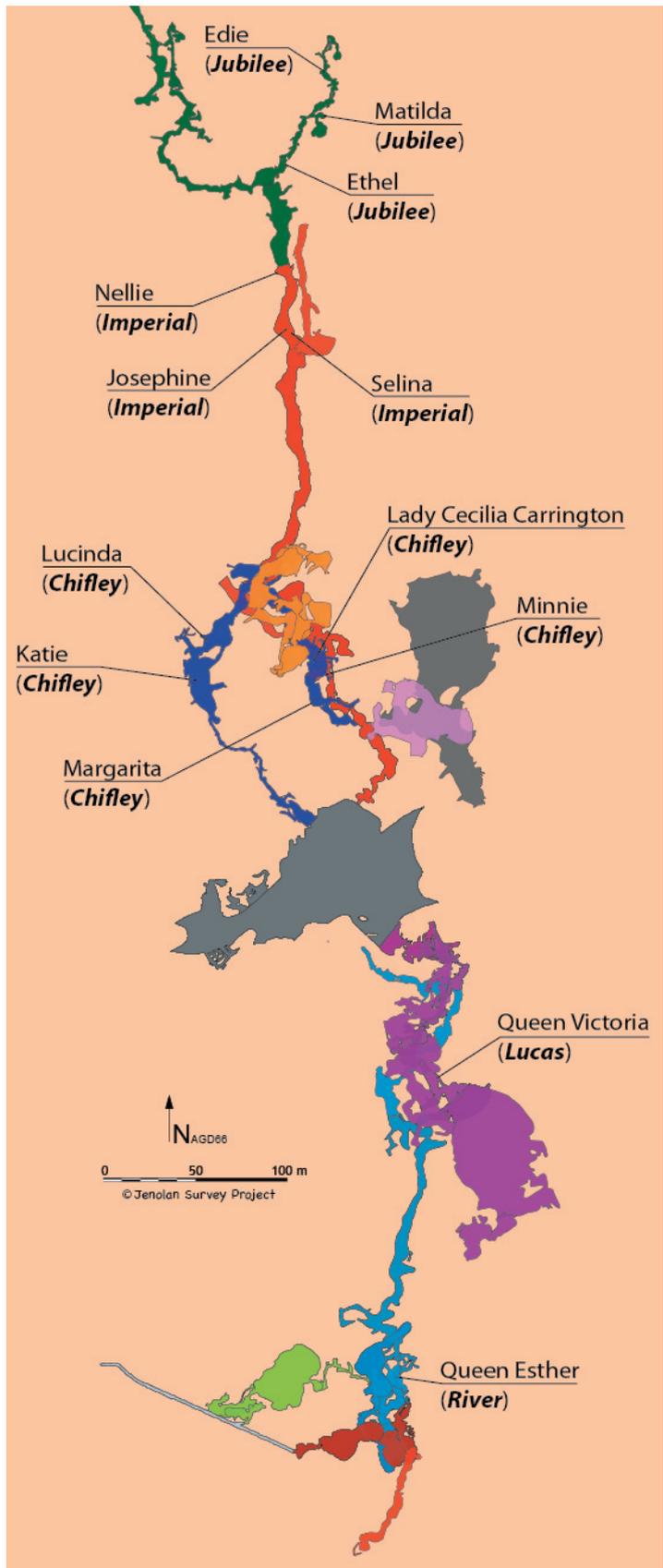


Figure 8. Location of features named for ladies.

