



CAMBRIDGE 2024 UNDERGROUND

Journal of the Cambridge University Caving Club

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Title Page Picture: OFD by **Alice Ball** - date 30/12/23. a drawing inspired by our end of term trip to SWCC from OFD bottom led by Joel

Editorial / Introduction

It's been well over a decade since the last Cambridge Underground in 2012 (Aiora's beautiful issue (1)), and the discovery that 2024 was our 75th Anniversary year motivated me to corral the cavers into a new edition. There were many a mumble of 'that's a good idea', but much poking and proding was needed for results to materialise - inevitably much of the promised articles came in after the deadline - I'm sorry to everyone I pestered! Yet it was worthwhile: my inbox filled slowly with many delightful and fascinating articles, and hopefully readers will agree it was worth the wait. It has been such a joy and I sincerely hope another journal follows on from this - 2025, 2029, or 2038? - as Aiora said 'We cannot predict when the next journal will happen, but we know it will happen'.

This was quite a lot of work to bring together and edit while I have been doing my master's project so please forgive me [spell-correct] for missing spelling errors (I have never been good at spelling), and for not managing to make this beautifully formatted. In comparison to the 2012 issue it is terribly dull, but it is the content and the words of these articles that bring this journal to life.

A 75th anniversary is certainly prestigious; however, some might argue we are underselling the club, perhaps we should be celebrating 102 years - The Introduction to the 1972 edition of Cambridge Underground; 'Half a Century on' (2), a trail or research brought to life the extraordinary story of Barton, John Churchill, Christopher Long and The Troglodytes. Do read the article! Some things change, some do not: I don't know if anyone these days would be determined enough to dig for 48 hours, but they still rarely wash. But a happy 102nd birthday to caving in Cambridge University!

The last decade has included peaks and lows in club membership, as can be picked out in the following articles. The club happily survived the black hole of the Covid years, to boom back with record membership numbers, settling into an excellent position with lots of regular trips, dedicated members, and connections across the student caving community, picking me up and changing my life along the way. The least I could do was to produce something to capture a hint of the goings on over these years.

Thank you again to everyone who contributed, and Will Kay and Aiora Zabala for help with editing. It has been a pleasure to read your articles, and they truly are fascinating. Special mentions go to Julain Todd's [Story of the Department of Speleology](#), and Wookey's [35 years on Student Caving](#). For more surrealism, see Ruairidh's [Expo trip report 2018](#). And my favourite reports are Jana's The History Day, I hope everyone else enjoys them as much as me.

*See you underground,
Lucy Hyde*

(1) Cambridge Underground 2012:

https://issuu.com/aiora.zabala/docs/cambridgeunderground2012_royalsize

(2) Half a Century on - Cambridge Underground 1972: <https://cucc.survex.com/jnl/1972/50yrs.htm>

Contents

Editorial / Introduction	2	Expo Reports.....	66
Contents.....	3	The Kraken Wakes: Development of Tunnocks on Expo - <i>Anthony Day</i>	66
Committee list	4	Expo trip report 2018- <i>Ruairidh Macleod</i>	72
President’s reports	7	Expo 2022 Summer adventure Part 3 – <i>Lucy Hyde</i>	75
Lucy 2023-2024	7	Expo T Shirt 2022	79
Alice 2022-2023	7	The Tempest Diaries – Expo 2023 – <i>Joel</i> <i>Stobbart</i>	81
Harry 2021-2022.....	7	Art break - Joseph Duxbery	86
Wassil 2020-2021.....	7	ExCs bit	87
Charlie 2019-2020	8	The Story of the Department of Speleology – <i>Julian Todd</i>	87
Radost 2018-2019.....	8	Fifty Years under the Earth - <i>Michael</i> <i>Perryman</i>	90
Ruairidh 2017-2018	8	Troggle - the software older than most cavers - <i>Philip Sargent</i>	92
Tackle master report, 2024 AGM.....	10	South Nordland Caving Expeditions – <i>Trevor Faulkner</i>	94
Members Section.....	11	Hot Caves - <i>Nick Thorne</i>	106
35 years of Student Caving - <i>Wookey</i>	11	Digging in Mendip - <i>Nick Thorne</i>	109
Flooded in in Daren Cilau – <i>Wassil Janssen</i>	15	From <i>Phil Dennis’</i> Archives	112
Peterson to Mistral (with a little help from cave rescue) - <i>Alice Kirby</i>	19	Annual Dinner 2022.....	114
Cambridge’s Underground – <i>Lucy Hyde</i> .23	23	Pictures	114
'Lets camp in a Martello Tower' - <i>Wookey</i>	27	Annual Dinner 2023.....	114
In South Wales – <i>Joel Stobbart</i>	31	Annual Dinner 2023 menu	114
Trip to the Mendips – <i>Romarc Masson</i> .32	32	Photography Competition winners	115
Soggy Socks, Sough Surprises, and the Great Mince Pie Heist - <i>Jon Lester</i>	35	Performance 1: True love underground, by <i>Chat GPT</i> and <i>Harry Kettle</i>	116
Caving in the Chalk - <i>Will Kay</i>	39	Performance 2: Shakespeare near the sump – <i>Lucy Hyde</i>	117
Caving... in Space! – <i>Christopher Holt</i>	43	Food Section	119
Poland	49	Craving Crumbles Underground: - <i>Jon</i> <i>Lester</i>	119
Poland 2018 Trip Report - <i>Radost</i> <i>Waszkiewicz</i>	49	Poem	122
Berger and Vercors 2022	51	Ode to a drunken caver – <i>Joel Stobbart</i>	122
Afflicted in the Gouffre Berger - <i>Lucy</i> <i>Hyde</i>	51	Songbook - from the editor.....	123
Ardeche 2023	57	Postscript.....	125
The History Day – <i>Jana Podbelsek</i>	57		
Ardeche T-shirt	60		
Ardeche : An Ode to Grotty Estevan - <i>Will</i> <i>Kay</i>	61		
Slovenia 2023	62		
Slovenia & Najdena Jama - <i>Maria</i>	62		
Kačna Jama: an epic campaign – <i>Lucy</i> <i>Hyde</i>	64		

Committee list

Year: 2024

President: **Joel Stobbart**
Senior Treasurer: **James Hickson**
Junior Treasurer: **Alice Kirby**
(Membership) Secretary: **Rene Chang**
Tackle Master: **Russell Woodger**
Meets Secretary: **Buck Blake**
Social Secretary: **Kitty Knight**
Training Secretary: **Russel Woodger**
Webmaster: **Christopher Holt**
Librarian: **Alice Ball**
Lamp Post: **Charlie Rayner**
Welfare: **James McAllister**
Other committee: **Katie Bird, Ben Lloyd, Harry Kettle, Jacob Chuck, Ruiraidh Macleod**

Year: 2022

President: **Alice Kirby**
Senior Treasurer: **James Hickson**
Junior Treasurer: **Harry Kettle**
(Membership) Secretary: **Joel Stobbart**
Tackle Master: **Vilhelms Cinis**
Meets Secretary: **Janis Huns**
Social Secretary: **Lucy Hyde**
Training Secretary: **Ruiraidh Macleod**
Webmaster: **Rokas Urbonas**
Librarian: **Oakem Kyne**
Lamp Post:

Year: 2023

President: **Lucy Hyde**
Senior Treasurer: **James Hickson**
Junior Treasurer: **Alice Kirby**
(Membership) Secretary: **Joel Stobbart**
Tackle Master: **Russell Woodger**
Meets Secretary: **Harry Kettle**
Social Secretary: **Joe Stell**
Training Secretary: **Joel Stobbart**
Webmaster: **Wookey**
Librarian: **Will Kay**
Lamp Post: **Ruiraidh Macleod**
Welfare: **Natalie Rose**

Year: 2021

President: **Harry Kettle**
Senior Treasurer: **James Hickson**
Junior Treasurer: **Zac Yee**
(Membership) Secretary: **Wassil Janssen**
Tackle Master: **Zephyr Verwimp**
Meets Secretary: **Marta Grzelak**
Social Secretary: **Janis Huns**
Training Secretary: **Ruiraidh Macleod**
Webmaster: **Tom Crossley**
Librarian: **David Walker**
Lamp Post: **Alice Kirby**

Year: 2020

President: **Wassil Janssen**
Senior Treasurer: **James Hickson**
Junior Treasurer: **Zac Yee**
(Membership) Secretary: **Chloe Crossley**
Tackle Master: **Ruairidh Macleod**
Meets Secretary: **Harry Kettle**
Social Secretary: **Sophie Draper**
Training Secretary: **Ruairidh Macleod**
Webmaster: **Tom Crossley**
Librarian: -
Lamp Post: -

Year: 2018

President: **Radost Waskiewicz**
Senior Treasurer: **James Hickson**
Junior Treasurer: **Aidan Marks**
(Membership) Secretary: **Ruairidh Macleod**
Tackle Master: **Tom Crossley**
Meets Secretary: **David Walker**
Social Secretary: **Max Sinclair**
Training Secretary: -
Webmaster: **Radost Waskiewicz**
Librarian: -
Lamp Post: -

Year: 2016

President: **Felix Stahlberg**
Senior Treasurer: **James Hickson**
Junior Treasurer: **Michael Sargent**
(Membership) Secretary: **David Walker**
Tackle Master: -
Meets Secretary: **Aidan Marks**
Social Secretary: **Roshni Gohil**
Training Secretary: -
Webmaster: **Sam Wenham & Wookey**
Librarian: -
Lamp Post: -

Year: 2019

President: **Tom Crossley**
Senior Treasurer: **James Hickson**
Junior Treasurer: **David Walker**
(Membership) Secretary: **Ruairidh Macleod**
Tackle Master: **Wassil Janssen**
Meets Secretary: **Harry Kettle**
Social Secretary: **Sophie Draper**
Training Secretary: -
Webmaster: **Tom Crossley**
Librarian: -
Lamp Post: -

Year: 2017

President: **Ruairidh Macleod**
Senior Treasurer: **James Hickson**
Junior Treasurer: **Aidan Marks**
(Membership) Secretary: **Radost Waskiewicz**
Tackle Master: **Sam Wenham**
Meets Secretary: **David Walker**
Social Secretary: **Elaine Oliver**
Training Secretary: -
Webmaster: **Sam Wenham & Wookey**
Librarian: -
Lamp Post: -

Year: 2015

President: **David Walker**
Senior Treasurer: **James Hickson**
Junior Treasurer: **Michael Sargent**
(Membership) Secretary: **Felix Stahlberg**
Tackle Master: **Sam Wenham**
Meets Secretary: **David Walker**
Social Secretary: **Aled Elmore**
Training Secretary: **David Walker**
Webmaster: **Sam Wenham**
Librarian: **Dávid Molnár**
Lamp Post: **Adrian Horrell**

Year: 2014

President: **David Walker**
Senior Treasurer: **James Hickson**
Junior Treasurer: **Stuart Bennett**
(Membership) Secretary: **Michael Sargent**
Tackle Master: **Xian Jie Tay** and **Michael Sargent**
Meets Secretary: **Sophie Draper**
Social Secretary: **Bela Dimova**
Training Secretary: -
Webmaster: **Sam Wenham**
Librarian: **Dávid Molnár**
Lamp Post: **Adrian Horrell**

Year: 2013

President: **Bela Dimova**
Senior Treasurer: **James Hickson**
Junior Treasurer: **Stuart Bennett**
(Membership) Secretary: **David Walker**
Tackle Master: **Xian Hie Tay**
Meets Secretary: **Anya Emakova**
Social Secretary: **Jessica Chatwin**
and **Cormac Doyle**
Training Secretary: **Alex Crow**
Webmaster: **Aiora Zabala**
Librarian: **Dávid Molnár**
Lamp Post: **Adrian Horrell**

President's reports

Lucy 2023-2024

My entry into the world of caving was quite sudden; I was offered a position on committee before I'd even been underground (I had to ask what tackle master meant), but within a few months I found myself zooming across Europe to bottom the Berger and stare in awe at the sunset at Expo's Top Camp. A year of organising socials, and before I knew it I was president of the club, excited and nervous to bring in a generation of new freshers. Those novices have been fantastic this Michaelmas, and I am very excited to see them gain confidence. Even more, I am looking forward to the 75th Anniversary weekend to get together new and old members.

Alice 2022-2023

My year as president kicked off with a memorable annual dinner at Fitzwilliam College. Outgoing

president Harry Kettle ensured we will not be hosting another annual dinner there until 2025 at the earliest, but some things are worth getting banned for

All three Michaelmas Term novice trips were oversubscribed, and we saw a good number of returners throughout the year, many of whom went on to take up positions on committees. New Years was a raucous event with much caving and celebrating done by all, and the end of term North Wales trip was once again dominated by pool noodle fights, inflatables and the entire club down Croesor Rhosydd.

The highlight for me was the Easter trip to Ardèche and completing the infamous Grotty Estevan crawl. Thank you all for an excellent year!

Harry 2021-2022

Wassil 2020-2021

My engagement for the caving club started long before my presidency. I joined CUCC in October 2018, having just started university. My first trip was the novice weekend to Derbyshire, where I met some of the now familiar faces that populate the club. I didn't go on my second trip until March of the next year, followed by the president's trip to Croatia.

My engagement didn't even start when I was elected Tackle Master in June (there was a severe shortage of people willing to take on committee positions). It started the following academic year, when something clicked, and I went on every caving trip (except the one when my dad was visiting me, but in hindsight, he should have just come caving with us).

That is when I also started taking on different organisational responsibilities for the club. I ran my first caving weekend, I organised the Easter trip to Bulgaria (which never took place). I was pretty engaged with the club and was hoping to take on even greater responsibility.

For the 2020 AGM I even prepared a speech outlining why I should be elected president (the minutes say "Wassil gives extensive list of personal achievements"). Not that the competition was very serious, I was only running against Harry, but I really wanted the job. And I had great plans for the club.

My first act as president was running a joint weekend with the Hillwalking Club, hoping to get some of their members to join the dark side. A social was also organised. Then came the first lock-down, and caving was no more. With the whole country (world?) forced to socially distance, my grand presidential caving dreams died. I tried to resort to other forms of caving, namely getting another edition of Cambridge Underground out. It didn't work out, either because my expectations were too high, or I couldn't quite do what Lucy is doing now to motivate people.

The next paragraph should be interpreted as a figment of my imagination and none of the events described actually occurred. Not wanting to give up, I ran two secret trips during Michaelmas 2020. Both of them were to the Mendips, the thinking being that the temperatures are least extreme there because it is furthest south. While we avoided encounters with cave rescue, by sticking to caves we were very familiar with, we didn't quite manage to avoid the police. On the way back, our driver was giving off very distinct drunk driving impressions, despite being perfectly sober. The greatest achievement from these trips was that I got Alice Kirby on board, who has been an absolute blessing for the club. There was also a (hypothetical) Martello Tower trip, which is covered in a hypothetical report by Wookey.

The rest of my presidency was pretty uneventful. I went into hiding in Chile, where I spent my days cycling through Patagonia, instead of sitting out lock-down in the UK. I did hold an online AGM from a tiny Chilean village, the most entertaining part of which was my walk to the supermarket. Despite not having fulfilled all promises from my five-year plan and there being a precedent for two-year presidencies, I decided that it was time to allow Harry to try his luck at presidenting.

Charlie 2019-2020

I was president from the AGM in 2019 to the AGM in 2020, having been tackle master the year before. During my presidency, we enjoyed a much needed surge in numbers with the 2019/20 freshers intake taking us from approximately five active student members to between ten and twenty.

Things were predictably chaotic, but we got plenty done!

The trip list shows plenty of activity from the time:

<https://camcaving.uk/Blog/Trip/2019>

Highlights were certainly the 70th Anniversary meetup (featuring a failed attempt at the Ease Gill Traverse with Radost) as well as the Croatia holiday and an enjoyable joint weekend with the Hillwalkers at The Farm. This was also the year we nearly burnt down the Orpheus hut (though I can accept neither credit nor liability for this incident).

The best trip of the year was definitely the infamous Ogof Daren Cilau camping trip during the wettest weekend of the winter... Wassil wrote a [fantastic report](#) of it [*Published here*]

Looking forward to catching up with everyone at the 75th anniversary weekend!

Radost 2018-2019

Ruairidh 2017-2018

It was a cold night in February and the AGM was scheduled for 8pm. Having been recruited to the club in Michaelmas term a few months before (by Wookey after getting lost in Queen's college), and greatly enjoying the handful of trips I had been on, I was

thinking that I might try and run for a junior position on the committee. I dutifully turned up at the Elm Tree at 7.55pm, bought a pint of beer, and occupied a nice big table, expecting a rowdy load of cavers to show up. I had even bought a box of chocolates for the purpose. I sat and waited. What the hell was happening? - It got to 8.50pm and I was pretty certain that the entire thing was an elaborate prank, and of course, a chao-crazy like the caving club would never actually have committee meetings. I had just made my way out of the pub and back towards my bike when some other cyclists started to pull up, greeting me. Sam Wenham loudly shouted congratulations - even though I had failed to turn up to the committee meeting in James' office in Pembroke, I had been successfully elected president. So began my term as President of CUCC...

All in all, it was a reasonably successful term as president, as far as things go. We had an excellent Easter trip to Ardeche organised by Elaine, and then in Michaelmas 2018, I organised a president's trip to Paris, where Thom Starnes ably guided us through the catacombs. I survived expo in the summer (despite some traumatising encounters with ticks, and borrowing a cursed light from Wookey), and we recruited a very keen young fresher by the name of Crossley. Radost and I got chips after the pub on most Tuesdays, and sometimes persuaded David or Aidan or Wookey to join us. In comparison to the giddy heights of post-covid, recruitment to the club was somewhat lacklustre (despite the reliable annual initial influx of freshers). Various amusing or disturbing stories were accumulated, but altogether, it didn't seem like that onerous a job running the club (and Aidan was a truly excellent Junior Treasurer). So after handing over the presidency to Radost at the next committee meeting (which I actually succeeded at showing up to the right venue for), I volunteered as Expedition Leader. How hard could that possibly be, right...?

Tackle master report, 2024 AGM

Dearest members of CUCC,

It has been a magnificent year for Tackle. Our deepest gratitude is owed to the members of the current, and previous committee, who put their hard paperwork hours into securing substantial grants for the club, and in winning us the impressive accolade of 'sport status'.

As a result, we were able to purchase approximately three-thousand pounds (sterling) of essential Tackle. It is some of the finest Tackle the Tacklemaster has been fortunate enough to master yet. This new Tackle in hand, we have embarked on numerous, well-attended trips with enough complete SRT kits for everyone, and caves – we could rig many.

The Tacklemaster is also grateful, on behalf of the Tackle and all its beneficiaries, to the committee for organising such successful sewing socials, rope washes, and the like. Without these vital occasions, there would be nothing left

Finally, thank you to all our members and leaders for taking good care of the Tackle. Long may this continue.

*R. G. Woodger
Tacklemaster, 2023-24*

to master but threads and a load of ~~rusty old crap~~ artefacts.

Now, to the Tackle of the future. The Tacklemaster has thought deeply, and spoken widely with the committee about the store's immediate needs and believes they are comprised of the following (not necessarily in the order conveyed):

- Buying new rope;*
- A thorough rope washing after several trips and not doing any;*
- Throwing away all of the rope;*
- Buying a big oversuit for someone big;*
- Buying a Daren drum for someone small (maybe a couple of drums);*
- Buying adjustable footloops;*
- An inventory refresh and relabelling of Tackle;*
- Finding all of our Tackle (mostly karabiners);*
- Buying secure boxes for our first aid kits;*

Members Section

35 years of Student Caving - Wookey

I joined CUCC in 1987. It's now 2023 and I'm still caving with students, and in the pub most weeks. As a result of this peculiar behaviour I have an unusually complete view of the last 35 years of CUCC and the 75th anniversary seems like a good time to write that perspective down.

Firstly perhaps we should address the question of why anyone would do this to themselves. There's only so many times one can lead a novice trip down P8 before it gets a bit tedious, and I reached that stage a couple of decades ago. The short answer is 'expo'. I got the exploration bug quite thoroughly and with survey-drawing and website-fetdling did little else in the early 1990s, with involvement only somewhat leavened by getting a house and a DIY habit for the 2nd half of the 1990s. So far I've been to expo 22 times and (as I wrote in the last CUCC journal) it's great, although all that carrying heavy shit up mountains does get to be noticeably harder work over the years.

Also I stayed in Cambridge (plenty of work) and whilst there was an 'adults' caving club (the four-Cs) it was mostly climbing so I never really felt the need to join. It wasn't until I was about 50 that it even occurred to me that maybe I was a bit old to be a student caver. Ultimately, I think it's largely a matter of attitude and tolerance whether one finds hanging around with students fun or tiresome. Someone did ask me a couple of years ago

'are you ever going to grow up Wookey?'. I'm not sure yet - I might be getting there. Ask me again at the 80th.

ONE DOES NEED A VERY HIGH FAFF AND INCOMPETENCE TOLERANCE,

as there are always new people who don't know how to shop or cook rice for 20, and nobody organises anything more than 30 seconds in advance these days. But in exchange for that is the marvellous spontaneity of youth, where it suddenly seems like a good idea to go skinny-dipping at midnight (and lose your glasses in the lake so we all freeze to death looking for them (Ruairidh!)), diverting to Avebury Ring on the way back from Swales to burn paraffin-rag-on-a-stick torches, camping in a pigeon-poo soaked Martello Tower, or visiting the beach after a trip even though it's already way past dinner time.

This sort of thing can be tiresome, infuriating, or marvellous, depending almost entirely on one's frame of mind. As the driver I thought the Avebury idea was ridiculous, as it was going to get us home 2 hours later, just to satisfy some completionism about all the World Heritage sites in the UK. But despite the massive detour, sneaking around looking at stones and lighting slightly illicit torches was great fun. And the trip to the beach just happened to co-incide with the filming of a drone-based formation

lighting advert for Wales so we got to join in. I find this serendipity entertaining.

CUCC is in rude health in the 2020s, with an influx of keen cavers over the last few years. This has not always been the case, with some thin periods, and there have been a couple of years when we could barely fill the required 3 student committee posts. This is partly because the club had members, but barely enough were actual students. CUCC has always had some non-student members: recent leavers, post-docs, old lags, ARU and nursing students, even the occasional 'townie'. Which is good - it lets anyone who wants to, come caving, it adds some diversity to the club, and it lets people still hang around with their mates after they've officially left. But you can have too many older members. If people come to the pub and all the talk is of house-buying, DIY and computers, that's not going to encourage (most) students to keep coming back. Things were a bit like that in 2016 when Ruairidh arrived. The pub might be me (software nerd), Matt Watson (Bio post-doc), Mark Shinwell (software engineer), Sam Wenham (University IT employee), all well past 25. Fortunately Ruairidh was middle-aged at 18 so fitted right in, but was also enthusiastic enough to get some youth members, and things have been on the up ever since.

There are patterns over the years and whilst things change, things also stay the same. A new caving house (Enniskillen Rd) was established in 2022 (echoing the famous Spalding Way which was full of cavers from about 1991-1994)

The Annual ebb and flow of caving competence has not changed at all: In October a horde of numpties turn up and we take as many people caving as we

have gear, transport or hut-space for, and hope that some of them will like it and stick around. A few do every year. Some experience is acquired in both actual caving and the caving 'way of life' (silly games and communal activity). By the end of the year people are doing harder trips. The dedicated cavers are ready for expo. There might be a president's meet. And then the cycle starts again.

One pattern to notice over the years is that the club particularly thrives when a critical mass of mates arrives. Due to all the people who are only here for one, two or three years the club is never far from suddenly ceasing to exist should insufficient new people show up. A lot of people don't join in their first year (because they thought they needed to work, and couldn't possibly go away for a whole weekend), so they only have 2 (or maybe 3) years remaining. The dynamics of who sticks around and who doesn't is complex,

**BUT ULTIMATELY, WHILST
CAVING ITSELF IS IMPORTANT,
IT'S THE FRIENDSHIPS THAT
FORM THAT KEEP PEOPLE
HERE.**

Some of us are still hanging out with cavers we met in this club many decades ago. Caving makes lifelong friends.

Some things have changed: Communications has altered radically from weekly gestetnered or photocopied newsletters in the 1980s and early 1990s, through email, and now Signal and Whatsapp (a most unfortunate lapse from the previous 40 years of open protocols). Along with this the methods of meet-organising have also shifted.

Caving Lunches were a big deal when I started. Food was bought and we gathered in someone's room on Thursday to eat and organise. It could be hours before everyone went home. These were needed as without email you needed to get people in a room to arrange the weekend's trip: sorting leaders, gear, transport and payments (cheques back then). Lunches were always a big imposition on whoever's room it was and whoever did the shopping, and only really worked if a sufficiently central room was available. They were a fine institution, but faded out by sometime in the 2000s, because everything could be done by email, pigeonholes and bank transfer instead. There was a short revival using the Pembroke cafeteria in 2012.

The pub meet has remained almost unchanged in this time, always on a Tuesday, although the venue moves around. Here's a list for the last 40 years:

Granta 1983-1989
 Panton 1990-1997
 Castle 1998-2006
 Granta 2007
 Red Bull 2007
 Castle Oct 2007-2012
 Mill Oct 2013-2015
 Elm Tree Oct 2016- present (end 2023)

Drinking culture is not the same in 2024 as it was in 1987. Students do not drink anything like as much as they used to (on average, some individuals are still enthusiastic partakers!) - some barely drink alcohol at all. Some people never come to the pub - it's not the ideal venue if you are a teetotal Muslim for example, and perhaps we lose some people who are not really pub-goers by remaining pub-centric? *[Editor's note: we are trying to introduce more alternatives, with*

fortnightly socials during Michelmas and Lent, including pancakes, a film night, and the very useful sewing social for repairing overalls!- and find that many who wouldn't come to pub suddenly appear]

One thing we get more of than we used to is 2nd-generation cavers, who are joining at least partly because their parents were potholers. There are at least a couple in every year's intake now.

Another thing that is new (well not that new anymore, it started in 2002) is CHECC, the national student collective body. Their events are now a staple of the annual calendar. CUCC was not an early adopter and got something of a reputation in the early years of being too aloof to turn up. But we have since fixed that and have had various heavily-involved members. CHECC has calmed down somewhat from the famously rowdy early years, with a more useful training to partying ratio, and the ability to use a venue more than once, and maybe this suits CUCC better. In recent times joint CUCC meets with another club have become common and there is generally dramatically more co-operation between student clubs than there used to be, which is good for everyone. This particularly affects expo which now has people from 5 or 6 clubs every year.

We've had to move the tackle-store a couple of times in 35 years. Back in the 80s it was in the cellar of L staircase, Harvey Court (off West Road, Gonville and Caius). Warm and dry due to adjacent boilers, but not quite high enough to stand up in, and with an admonition not to use it after 10:30pm for reasons of noise, which was often inconvenient.

**IT DID ALSO HAVE A HANDY
SECRET COAL-HOLE
ENTRANCE FOR WHEN YOU
HAD FAILED TO ARRIVE
WITH A KEY FOR WHATEVER
REASON,**

which could also (quietly!) be used to solve the 'not after 10:30' problem. When Caius wanted to build the Stephen Hawking building L staircase was due to be demolished so we had to leave in 2003. Caius kindly gave us a room behind the Porter's Lodge but only for 3 years, so in 2006 we had to find somewhere new again. James Hickson sweet-talked Pembroke into letting us have a somewhat dilapidated garage at 6 Grange Road, which we fitted out and secured (quite cheaply). It's done sterling service for over 17 years now, being shared with the hillwalkers since 2016.

I guess the other thing that has changed is the club gear offer. When I started the club did not have that much gear to loan out. There were lights and wellies, a few (6?) oversuits, undersuits and helmets, and cell-belts but it was often up to members to loan out their personal gear for novice trips. A lot of caving was still done in wetsuits back then, with the fleece (as opposed to fibre-pile) undersuit being a brand-new invention. I did the first year of trips in my windsurfing wetsuit - which was mostly bloody freezing! If you wanted to do SRT you had to buy your own gear, so there were a lot more ladder trips, until people were committed enough to spend proper money.

These days we have loads more gear and can take novice trips of 20 people without half of it being scrounged.

And 6 SRT kits. And of course lights have got several hundred times better over this period. The 80s was all belt-mounted lead-acid batteries, with Nicads for the 1990s (FX2, FX5). But all cabled. The modern potholer doesn't know how lucky he/she/they is not to be forever getting their cable caught on pointy rocks. It was also totally normal for several people to have light failure on a trip. For backup light one mostly relied on the rest of the group.

**THE CLUB MADE AT LEAST 3
BATCHES OF DIY LAMPS FROM
ABOUT 1997,**

worthy of a whole article in themselves, putting NiCads in battery boxes, then LEDs in headsets, and finally making helmet-mounted batteries, until we decided to buy commercial lights from around 2013. It's impossible to overstate just how much better lights have got since the age of the bulb: dramatically more reliable, lighter, smaller, brighter, flexible modes, more realistic cave colours, safer, more convenient, and cheaper to boot.

The club trip itself has not changed much at all, apart from going entirely veggie. We drive 100-220 miles on Friday night, often including a shop. Go caving for two days, putting Cambridge entirely out of mind, then return, often rather knackered. There have been occasional one-day meets over the years, but it's really not the same and never been very popular. Whilst the set of huts we use has barely changed in 35 years, said huts themselves have got quite a lot nicer with fancy stuff like central heating, drying rooms, stainless kitchens, and these days even Wifi being pretty standard. Perhaps the most notable

change is North Wales being added as a regular venue since about 2017.

One thing that has gone by-the-by is the minibus. Up to 15 people going to Yorkshire in a minibus was normal, especially in Michaelmas Term, but died out completely after licencing changes in 1996 meant that getting a driving licence didn't give you minibus-driving by default and you had to be at least 21, and in practice the hire companies required 25 so it just became impossible to find drivers. The collective minibus-party en-route was a fine thing, which it was a shame to lose, but only having one vehicle for everyone to cave from was very limiting, so it was a mixed blessing. The minibuses were somewhat unreliable and

**I REMEMBER ONE TIME WE DID
ALMOST THE WHOLE RETURN
JOURNEY ON THE BACK OF A
RESCUE LORRY,**

which meant the minibus driver could join the party too. The only catch

was that there was no way to tell the recovery man that people would like a piss, so it was necessary to fill couple of coke bottles as we travelled.

I could talk about the advent of risk assessments, and finally being made to reclassify as a sports society in 2023, holiday trips and the first international president's meet (Paris Catacombes) in 2017 and wax lyrical about some of the characters who have come and gone, but I have gone on more than long enough at this point. Perhaps some of those things are covered elsewhere in this journal.

I hope that this retrospective is interesting in parts, or at least serves as a useful historical summary. I will finish by remarking that CUCC is a fine institution and I have greatly enjoyed my time in it. Many others have found it a boon too; I recall more than one newish arrival saying 'this is amazing - I have found my people!'. So thank you to a great many people I have had the pleasure of potholing, drinking, and holidaying with over the years. It has been a privilege to know you all.

Flooded in in Daren Cilau – *Wassil Janssen*

Spending 28 hours in Daren Cilau was one of the most memorable caving trips I have done until now.

**IT WAS TYPE II FUN, LIKE ALL
QUALITY CAVING. ANY TRIP
THAT DOESN'T MAKE YOU
WISH AT LEAST ONCE YOU
WERE TUCKED IN YOUR BED IS**

**BARELY WORTH
REMEMBERING.**

What follows is a story of friendship, courage and growth.

The scene is set on a rainy weekend in South Wales back in February, on which CUCC had the brilliant idea to go camping in the famous Hard Rock Cafe in

Daren Cilau. We were a party of five keen, slightly overconfident students and graduates, none of whom had the good sense to check the weather prognosis.

The cast is, Tom Crossley, a disillusioned student, Chloe Crossley, Natasha Wilson, second-time caver to whom the appeal of camping in a cave was very much greater than any of the dangers such an activity could entail, Harry Kettle, whose main character trait for that weekend was his hatred for his oversized tackle bag, and me.

As is typical of student caving, we woke up at 12:00 after a night of intense partying with Kent. By 15:00 we were ready, we'd had the famous caving breakfast, packed our sleeping gear, cooking gear, alcohol, and all other things you could need in the darkness below.

The first sphinx that barred our way was the entrance series, a 517m meter long, half-flooded tight crawl, the pleasure of which was increased tenfold by having to drag tackle sacks, that seemed to get stuck in every crevasse. Very quickly did Harry realise his mistake in taking the largest bag, I was very relieved that I'd arrived at the tackle store after Harry, because I had planned on taking that exact bag. Passing the Vice was as bad as expected, resulting in lots of swearing and lots of tugging on tackle sacks. I have a distinct memory of being stuck between two people, half submerged in water, and to top it off, cold water was dripping on my face. Just thinking about it makes me want to repeat the whole experience.

By the end of the entrance series, we were completely chilled to our bones from the cold water, but this is not where the pleasures of Daren stooped. We went

around the Loop Route 3 times, before the combined power of the survey Tom had and the fact that he'd been here already helped him remember which way we were meant to be going.

How can a ladder be upside down? That is what I asked myself before arriving at the 20-meter pitch and seeing that monstrosity for myself. And you, my dear reader, are doomed to ignorance on the subject of the ladder, unless you visit that cave. At the top of the pitch was a collection of clay figurines so abstract and varied as to put the Tate Modern to shame. One theme was predominant among the exhibits, the phallic looking argil statuettes.

The next segment of our odyssey was the Time Machine, the largest underground chamber in the UK, so large that caving becomes a 2 dimensional exercise, instead of the 1D we are used to. To help the poor souls erring in those God-abandoned regions, the path had been marked by reflective tags. It is at the end of the Time Machine that we passed KUCC, who seemed to be in no hurry and was casually exploring some side-passages.

Some more caving got us to the Bonzai streamway, which is renowned for its many helictites. Curiously, it is still not known how they form. Ruairidh Macloed, a famous academic (you heard it here first), who sometimes likes to partake in the thrills of potholing, believes the process forming them to be one the few truly random ones found in nature, akin to Brownian motion. The last bit before reaching the Hard Rock Cafe entailed some mild wading in water, which was supposed to be only knee deep, but on this blessed day was chest deep. Ah, the joys of caving!

We arrived at the cafe at 11pm, tired, but very satisfied with the last 8 hours of caving. We were greeted by some diggers who were smoking a certain plant with a distinct smell under the light of the discoballs that had so tastefully been hung from the ceiling. We cooked some couscous curry in the stove I had brought, drank the port Chloe had heroically dragged along, and were ready to go to bed.



This is when the first (un)pleasant surprise revealed itself. My sleeping bag was damp, bordering wet! The drybag, at least so I had presumed, wasn't very watertight at all, and thus, all of my belongings had been soaked. The sleeping bag had been spared a bit, because I had wrapped with in many layers of plastic. So off to bed I went, in a soggy sleeping bag. Off to bed, but not off to sleep. Tom, who was sharing a sleeping area with me, seemed to feel the same way, and thus we engaged in a conversation, the topic of which shall stay between Tom and me until the ends of time.

At 2am the shuffling and rattling by the Kent Uni Caving Club started. There was some talk of rising water levels and other nonsense which was stopping a grumpy and sleepless me from getting some rest.

At 3am, I had definitely given up on the idea of having a good night of sleep as the babble was getting more intense. Tom, again, shared the sentiment, and we had both realized that the water level was actually rising and were aware that if the trend continued, that could be it.

TOM WAS ODDLY AT PEACE WITH THE PROSPECT, SAYING THAT WHILE IT WOULDN'T BE THE MOST PEACEFUL WAY TO GO, IT WOULDN'T BE THE WORST EITHER.

On the other hand, I realised that I wasn't! I still had so much to live for. I had never enjoyed life as much as I had in the last few months, and the prospect of losing it all, made me appreciate it, alas, too late!



We decided to get up, and see what was keeping the Kent cavers so entertained. By that point, the main chamber of the HRC was starting to fill with water, where we had most unfortunately hung our gear to dry. A courageous KUCCer was saving any kit that he could reach. Slowly everyone else started getting up and helping with getting as much stuff to higher and drier land. And so, 14 cavers, instead of faffing, were producing some actual results by jointly moving caving kit, sleeping bags,

bivies, food to the island that would prove to be the last bastion of dryness in that display of Welsh weather in the nethers of Gaia.

**BY 4AM WE WERE ALL
HUDDLED ON THAT TINY
ISLAND IN OUR SLEEPING BAGS,
SIPPING HOT DRINKS, EATING
CHOCOLATE THAT HAD
EXPIRED IN 2013, AND SINGING
CAVING SONGS, AND I COULDN'T
HELP BUT THINK THAT THERE
WERE FEW PLACES I WOULD
RATHER BE AT THAT
PARTICULAR MOMENT.**



Despite the chaos and danger, I was happy. Slowly, we all started to make ourselves comfortable and started going to sleep, now properly exhausted.

Around noon (again!) it was decided that it was time to go, which required many steps, such as finding the kit that had been washed away, putting on very wet oversuits and helping with general camp chores. Needless to say that the gear that had been hung up to “dry” was even more wet than when we arrived.

The way back was occasionally accentuated by the deep and genuine love shown by Harry to his tackle bag.

Enthusiastic about sharing his euphoria, he proposed a Faustian bargain to the four of us, where he would buy three pints to whoever was ready to be liberated from any remaining trace of self-respect and carry his bag to the exit of the cave. Tom, all too eager to play into the devil's trap, took the bait. This changed nothing much for the rest of us, except for the source of the swearing.

The little mentioned champion of this trip was Natasha, who not only had thought that this whole sleeping-in-a-cave business was a good idea before doing it, but seemed to not mind the cold and wet of the entrance series too much and was singing from the bottom (or in this case, from the point furthest away from the entrance) of her lungs while the rest of us were engaging in the caver's favorite activity, second only to faffing, complaining and wondering what exactly it was about this whole caving business that made us come back every time.

We were greeted by nothing less than a snow storm when we came out, and Harry and me, being the cheeky chaps we are, decided to run to the hut, instead of walking with Tom, Chloe and Natasha. The only problem with our brilliant plan was that we had no idea where Whitewalls was actually located. And so, cold and tired, we had to run around to find the hut. In the end, we did, but long after the others had. Remember, slow and steady win the race.

That hot shower was arguably the best I have had in my life. Tom was having some slight problems with his body temperature regulation mechanism and had to be undressed by Harry and me and pushed into the warm shower. The breakfast leftovers from 33 hours ago tasted so good, rarely have I enjoyed cold

beans, cold eggs, cold hashbrowns and cold bacon so much. After some faff, but less than usual, we were back on our way to Cambridge, where we arrived at 1:30 in the morning, craving only one thing, some sleep to consolidate the amazing memories we had just made.

In conclusion, if you happen to find yourself in South Wales on a rainy weekend, and have a group of kind cavers nearby, I would highly recommend you go visit the Bonsai Streamway to see the helictites, and you

might be surprised by a sudden feeling of appreciation, happiness and friendship!



Peterson to Mistral (with a little help from cave rescue) - Alice Kirby

Author's Note:

After much consideration, I have decided to include the complete and unabridged trip report, written 2 years ago for my own personal records and originally destined to never see the light of day. However, I do not support the majority of decisions made on this trip. They were the actions of a novice caver who still thought she was invincible and I would like to reassure the reader that I would approach the situation very differently today.

This trip takes place on a club weekend in Yorkshire in late January 2022

Present: Wassil; Alice (author); Vilhelms (+ 40 CRO members)

Over breakfast on Sunday morning, the name Peterson was being thrown around. Wassil hadn't done the trip before and I'd been wanting to do it ever since an aborted attempt on CHECC weekend. Harry and Charlie both tried to talk us out of it

(“PETERSON IS A HORRIBLE CAVE, I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'D WANT TO DO IT”)

and suggested we join them for a far more pleasant trip - maybe Sunset or perhaps Dolly Tubs?

After a failed attempt to persuade the rest of the group to join us (too much common sense for their own good), Vilhelms, Wassil and I set off for Peterson. We had ambitious plans to exit through Pippikin, with Mistral as a backup option if we took longer than expected, and were feeling confident about the trip. No, we didn't have a survey but we'd read the description. We'd be fine! What could possibly go wrong? Oh how naïve we were...

The first challenge, as is often the case in this sport (and especially this combination of cavers), was simply that of finding the cave. Somewhat embarrassing as Vilhelms and I had been

to the entrance only a month earlier. But almost an hour later, we stood inside, looking at the uninviting entrance to the crawl. Being the shortest, and theoretically least likely to get stuck, I was volunteered to go first. A short distance in, there would be a small chamber that marked the last option to turn back. I was to wait for the others here before we committed to the remainder of the passage.

The first corner was unpleasant enough that retreat was contemplated. We could already see how the name of roly-poly passage had been earned. However, it was decided that the feeling of failure would be far worse than the pain of carrying on. So onwards we went, into the crawl.

The tunnel seemed endless and the corners got tighter with every turn. And I was the lucky one. Wassil and Vilhelms, both being considerably taller than my five foot, were finding it almost twice as difficult. Just as I was beginning to wonder if it would ever end, I twisted around a final tight corner and caught sight of a rope that marked the end of the passage into the empty space above a 2.5m drop.

Unwilling to launch myself head-first over the pitch, I decided to clip into the rope. The sensible option would've been to use cowstails. But, for some reason, I decided to use a stop. Which I almost immediately dropped down the rift whilst attempting to attach it to my harness. After a quick swear, I reached back into the bag to find the cowstails. Following much struggling, as my current position wedged sideways made reaching my harness very difficult, I eventually had the cowstails attached to

both me and the rope and was able to half-fall, half-climb out of the crawl.

At this point, I settled down to wait. The complaints of the other two were still distant and muffled so I knew I could be here for some time. Eventually Wassil arrived, rolling out of the passage in a matter of seconds and not even bothering to hold the rope with both hands. I wondered if I should've tried a similar technique but realised I certainly wouldn't have been as graceful, and would've most likely landed on my head so, on balance, the cowstails weren't the worst idea.

The four pitches down to Hall of the Mountain King were enjoyable, despite being slowed by only having two stops between us. It was mainly just a relief to stand upright again. Once in the Hall, we headed up the muddy slope, as per Charlie's instructions. A passage was selected, based on the vague recollections of myself and Vilhelms. Shortly afterwards, a potential candidate for dusty junction was identified. We continued onwards, but the passages became increasingly unfamiliar the further along we went. Wassil kept asking if we remembered it, which was a question surprisingly difficult to answer. It soon became apparent that both Vilhelms and I had been blindly following the rest of the group on our last trip through Mistral and had no idea whatsoever which way to go.

We returned to the junction. Despite the looming call-out, now a little over an hour away, a chocolate break was proposed.

THE LEMON, WHICH FOR SOME BIZARRE REASON HAD BEEN

DEEMED MORE ESSENTIAL THAN A GROUP SHELTER

or first aid kit when culling unnecessary kit, was fished out from beneath the srt kits and shared too.

Our continued passage hunt was leading nowhere and, with nothing to base the search on, an alternative plan was required. We found the entrance to Pippikin, but the streamway was high. As we were already cold and tired, trying to exit this way, especially without a survey, seemed a foolish move. A return trip through Peterson was mooted but Wassil and Vilhelms were quick to reject that option. The third suggestion was to split the party such that I would exit via Peterson while the other two waited in Hall of Ten. Once out, I would run back to the farm to let the rescue know that everyone was safe, ideally before too many people arrived then return with a survey and hopefully an assistant to the entrance of Mistral to retrieve the others. Much debate was had about the safety of this option but it was eventually decided that the risks of a solo trip were at least partially outweighed by the potential benefits of preventing a full-on cave rescue operation. So with twelve minutes before our 20:00 call-out, I set off for Peterson.

Ascending the four pitches warmed me up and I was pleased to have a clear goal after several hours of aimless searching. I soon made it back to the crawl entrance. And so began a cycle of climbing up, attempting unsuccessfully to force myself into the squeeze and then climbing back down to catch my breath before the next attempt. Repeat for half an hour. Just as I was about to admit defeat, my main light died. That was a

deal-breaker. I was fairly confident the batteries in the backup light hadn't been changed in the past month, and

THE THOUGHT OF SQUEEZING MY WAY THROUGH PETERSON IN THE PITCH BLACK WASN'T ONE THAT FILLED ME WITH ENTHUSIASM.

Time to turn back and rejoin the others.

Or so I thought. Turns out we'd been so confident in the success of our plan that a stop hadn't been deemed a necessary part of the kit I had taken with me. Getting back to the others wasn't going to be as easy as I thought.

Teaching myself to down prussik, based only on a very hazy understanding of what the technique involved, hadn't been top of my list of plans for the trip. [*author's note: PLEASE teach your novices to downprussik when teaching basic SRT. It IS a useful skill to have*]. However, the prospect of sitting alone at the top of the pitch, waiting for my light to die was motivation enough to learn. After the final pitch through a small waterfall, I ran to rejoin Wassil and Vilhelms, who were pleased to see me despite my return committing us to waiting it out for cave rescue.

If I'd ever imagined being involved in a cave rescue, I guess I would have expected to be scared. Turns out, for Wassil and I at least, the overriding emotion was one of extreme embarrassment. Vilhelms was too busy seeing and hearing things that weren't there to join in

OUR CHORUS OF “THIS IS SO EMBARRASSING”

but was all too happy to suggest the telling of horror stories, an idea we quickly shut down.

By about 22:00 the cold was starting to set in. We mostly kept our lights off to conserve battery. Every so often, Wassil would rally us to join him in some warming jumping jacks before we returned to our huddle. 23:00 came and went. We debated eating the first of our emergency chocolate bars but decided against it. By 23:30, I was hearing imaginary voices too. Midnight approached. Wassil left the huddle to go for a walk. Just as he was setting off, I looked back over my shoulder and saw a light. I blinked. It was still there. Vilhelms had seen it too.

“Wassil, Wassil, come back, it’s the rescue!”

“Hello! We’re alive! Thank goodness! Thank you!”

We stood up, still shouting with excitement as the rescue team emerged from the cave. We rushed over to greet our rescuers, who looked almost as relieved to see us as we were to see them. We introduced ourselves through mouthfuls of mars bar . Then we were on our way, with our rescuers leading us out through Mistral, less than 10 minutes further down the passage we had explored 3 times, adding to the embarrassment of the whole situation. We headed back to the farm to shower and apologise profusely to the 40 volunteers who had given up their Sunday evening to come and save us.

Thank you so much to all the volunteers at CRO for coming to our rescue – many lessons have been learned, and I, for one, will be sure to take a survey on my next caving trip

Cambridge's Underground – *Lucy Hyde*

From a geological perspective, and looking at the history, Cambridge would not seem like a good place to hunt for the underground. The old buildings were specifically designed to guard against the annual winter flooding of the fens: fellows and students lived downstairs while the precious books took the top floor. But as any respectable caver would, I had a need to know if there were any local underground secrets in the area and this journal was the excuse I needed to find out.

I sent emails to the archivist at every college and the stories came in:

SUBTERRANEAN SHELTER:

From JESUS COLLEGE I was shared an excellent article on the 'Subterranean Mystery' from CAM Issue 60, Easter 2010 which I am happy to pass on. It brings up a memory of grim times when the underground became a place of fear, and of safety. In Jesus' grounds, an old wine cellar became a WWII air raid shelter, became the gardeners' tool shed, and now stores the canna plants over the winter. It is now "a dark, dank and empty place". The removal of ventilation post war has left condensation pooled along the 100 foot corridor and "five mysterious coloured tiles decorate the shelter's wall; their purpose hard to fathom". The article's judgement is that the shelter was "little used during the war, ...little remembered afterwards."

PUNTER'S RUMOURS:

If you can believe the tales told by punt guides - which you probably shouldn't:



Jesus shelter, Cam issue 60

"There was rumoured to have been a tunnel running from Abbey House in Barnwell under the Cam to Jesus College. This tunnel could well have passed under Trinity Hall college. The Tunnel was supposedly a means for monks to escape from the black death." (1)

This is supported by the venerable website 'Hidden East Anglia' (2) adding that

"Legend says that a nun often used the tunnel to meet her lover, a canon from the priory, and her ghost now haunts Abbey House in the form of a 'grey lady'."

.....so must be true.

(1):

<https://www.scholarspuntingcambridg>

e.co.uk/blog/hidden-tunnels-under-the-river-cam/ .

(2)

<https://www.hiddenea.com/cambsc.htm>

SUBWAY:

EMMANUEL'S entry is unlikely to be a surprise: its subway tunnel one of the most known in Cambridge. Constructed 1910-12 to avoid the busy horse drawn bus route, the tunnel is lined with green and white glazed tiles. I refer you to this accurate report on its 2020 usage:

<http://theporterslog.com/michaelmas-2020/secret-tunnel-emmanuel-college-illicit-guests/>

THE BIRD CHAMBER:

Deep beneath the museum of Zoology, to those in the know, can be found The Bird Chamber, a subterranean space dedicated to the superterranean. This bright and smelly cavern is filled with *about 10,000 dead birds*, and many more eggs, preserved in an artificial cave like environment. Highlights included the feathers of mummified moas, found in caves of New Zealand, described by Professor Daniel Field, as "The dumbest bird ever to live.", an egg that Darwin that the Royal Mail broke; a humming bird that weighted 2g when alive (very good for pushing small cave passages with a tiny camera attached), a stuffed great Auk: an extinct relative of the puffins who acts like a penguin, the spangled Cortinga: described as "nature's prettiest blue": , and many ridiculously pretty birds, as reported by our investigative journalist Will Kay



The Bird Chamber. Daniel Field

SHADOW TUNNEL:

The librarian at QUEENS' brought up a fascinating item: a bricked up tunnel from the river near the mathematical bridge under Cloister Court. From the college website: *"The large arch at water level to the right of the bridge is believed to be a blocked entrance to an underground tunnel across Cloister Court which led directly to the cellars under the Hall. Presumably it enabled supplies arriving by river to be taken directly to the cellars. It must have exposed the cellars to flooding whenever the river was high. At some stage, the tunnel was blocked and replaced by the current entrance to the cellars in the south-east corner of Cloister Court. The tunnel was re-discovered in 2014 while digging for a new electric*

cable in the south-west corner of Cloister Court.”



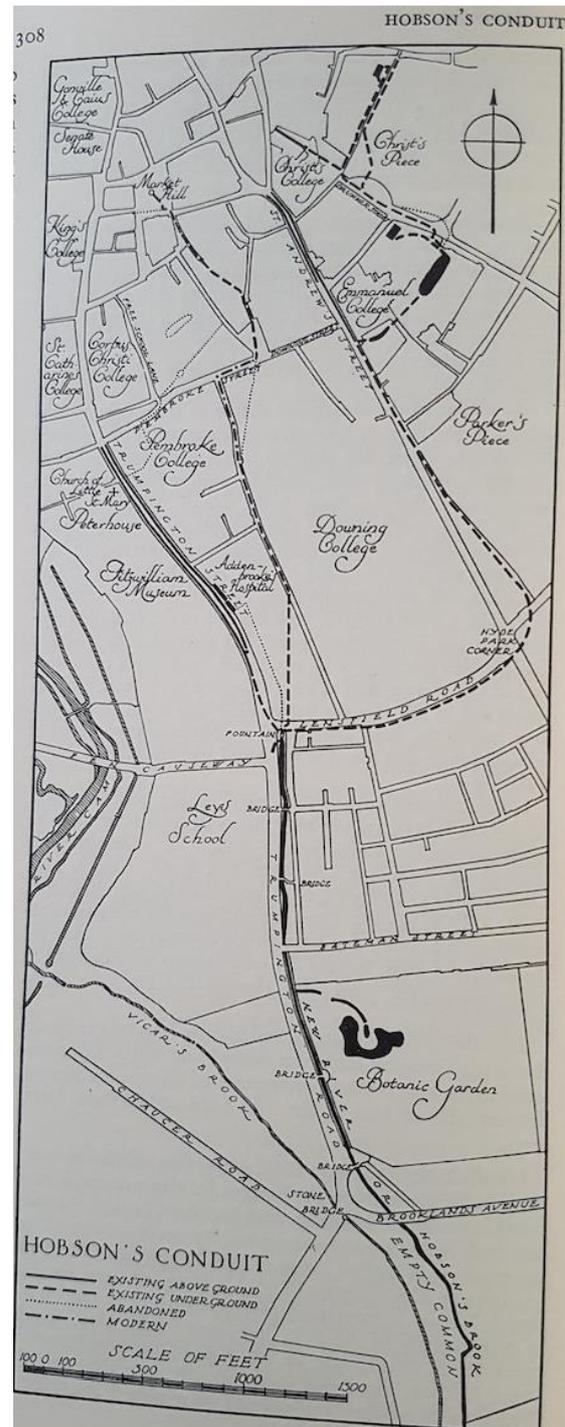
Queens' tunnel, Queens' College website.

ANCIENT CELLARS:

The cellars in ST JOHN'S date from the 16th to the 20th century, with the classic wine cellar and some student storage. Boring except for this tantalising rumour that never was resolved: *“One person told me they were given an article by a Fellow a while back, about cellars that pre-date the College, and said I could have it, so I asked him to leave it in my pigeonhole and when I have it I'll let you know the details.”*... but never did hand it on.

MORGUE RUMOURS:

CHURCHILL claims only two subterranean storerooms one a wine cellar, however my enquiry there brought to light something much more fascinating. The archivist's husband unveiled rumour of something fantastical: the abandoned morgue in the basements of the former ADDENBROOKE'S Hospital. *“Apparently it's spooky as anything”*. Yet, despite many emails, I have been yet to achieve access - perhaps they are hiding something.



Early 20th century map of Hobson's Conduit's course (thanks to Dr Lucy Hughes)

CRYPTIC CRYPT:

Finding information about the crypt in KING'S COLLEGE Chapel is suitably cryptic. The archivist had little to offer and the internet no more.

BOO:

The best that SELWYN could present was a bit of graffiti in a basement and MEDWARDS has NO underground spaces

THE GREAT HOBSON'S CONDUIT:

CHRIST'S to my great delight supplied more information on the venerable Hobson's Conduit. As members of the Hobson's Conduit Secret Appreciation Society (HC SAS) will know, this world famous water course brings spring waters into the city from Nine Wells flushing out plague and pestilence.

A water channel once brought the sacred waters to feed Chrsit's outdoor swimming pool in the Fellow's Garden. The archivist sent me two pages from the 1937 college magazine, and invited me to the 'Muniments Room'. How could I, a proud HC SAS member turn down an opportunity to learn about the Holy Conduit.

So off I headed accompanied by Buck. The article in question, written by a Charles Fox, (which I am happy to pass on) regaled the history of the college bathing pool, based off an older manuscript in the Town Library (HC is a never ending search for the truth). In 1574 the plague was raging through Cambridge caused by "our synnes" and Londoners, who come "to Midsoer fayer and dye of plage in Barnwell" but also a product of the "excessively foul" airs of the, then 300 year old King's dytch. In 1606 along came E. Wright who made the plans for a new and longed for waterway to "perpetually scouringe" the King's ditch "for the healthsomenes both of the Universitie and of the Towne.". By 1610 the works wear complete, and the gentry and University signed an indenture to

convey waters from Ninewells to the city for 1000 years. Explaining a mystery I have long pondered I learnt why there are not actually 9 wells, "nine denoting an indefinite number. This nomenclature is ancient and was employed amongst the Greeks". The waters travel as a brook from Ninewells past the Botanic Gardens and diverge at the end of Lensfield Road: towards Coe fen, and as s along Trumpington street under the two large overflow gutters (which many a student including our last president have tumbled into) before it joins with the old King's Ditch at Mill Lane. Another branch used to feed the fountain in the Market (the seventeenth century market fountain monument was moved in 1855 to its present position at the Lensfield /Trumpington road junction. Hobson himself erected the fountain and

**"LEFT TRUST LANDS IN HIS
WILL TO MAINTAIN THE
CONDUIT FOR EVER".**



Hobson's Conduit fountain in market square

In one of the many crimes to historical integrity of the 60s this branch

was cut off with the building of Lion Yard, and water ceased to flow.

The article focuses on a branch that travels across Parker's Piece through Emmanuel (feeding its pond) and Christ's Piece, to the college, eventually joining the King's Ditch on Jesus Lane. This was dug during a hot April in 1631 according to the diary of J Mead tutor at Christ's. Mead must have been an early member of the HC SAS, as a memorial urn is placed beside the pool for his memory, presumably in honour of his appreciation for the conduit's waters. The article's author certainly thinks the pool deserves such appreciation: "Those select Christ's men who love to cleave the glassy wave with pliant arms, and there is no joy can match this, will find it hard to choose a pleasanter spot than the College pool Here clothed as nature intended they rise from their header and if capable at that supreme moment of anything but pure delight, are amazed at the fantastic illusion that there is any other way of starting a summer's morn"

I am grateful to learn that throughout the centuries protection of the conduit has been reaffirmed. In 1807 an Act to preserve the water course for

ever was confirmed, and the land around Nine Wells and 6 feet either side of the watercourse to Cambridge was protected by University and Town. The article all in all is superb and I would recommend it to all HC admirers. May its waters flow for ever and ever.

ROCK SAWS IN THE DARK:

Finally I have to give a mention to the EARTH SCIENCE Department's. I am sure investigating other departments would unveil many more fascinating locations - perhaps a future article - but I know this one well. If you depart from reception and the tea room and wander down an uninviting narrow corridor a narrow blue spiral stair is reached. Ascending turns you round and round: in light for a bit, in pitch dark for a while straight to a boarded up dead end. Retreat and head down instead. Down and down into the dark and seemingly abandoned rooms of the rock cutting workshop, full of tools and saws, and mysteriously quiet. The perfect place for a murder and most unsettling place to choose for hide and seek as I discovered.

'Lets camp in a Martello Tower' - Wookey

[Editor's note: this should be considered a piece of literary fiction]

'Lets camp in a Martello Tower', said the ever-enthusiastic Ruairidh. Thus started the tale of an unconventional CUCC weekend.

Actual caving was more or less impossible due to covid restrictions so we had to make up some more local entertainment.

So off we set in 2 cars on a Saturday afternoon (halloween, October 2020).

NOW, CAMPING IN THIS TOWER WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT ALLOWED,

but it was also in a field near the coast, quite a long way from anywhere so in practice no-one was going to care. A few of the team had found it on an earlier walk, and shinned into the doorway 3m up to discover that it was campable.

The Martello Towers were built in the 19th century as defences against Napoleon. They are very robust round brick buildings you can put a cannon or two on top of, about 12m diameter and similar height. Most have been converted into houses (some are rentable as holiday homes) or demolished, but a few remain more or less in their original form, including 'ours', Tower Z, Alderton, Suffolk.



Martello Tower - openverse

The plan was to walk the 3km to the tower such that we arrived near dusk, overnight there discreetly, then return and go for a walk on Sunday. We were well-equipped with beer, camping kit, water, warm clothes, food, stoves and even paraffin/torches for a procession on the beach.



Photo cred: Wasssil

The first part of this went well, and we schlepped all our gear to the tower, passing some night-fishermen near the parking (Bawdsey WWII Bunker). The entrance is a doorway about 3m off the ground and the walls are 1.5m thick so getting in is a bit of a game. A few footholds have been cut making the ascent only about V.Diff to Severe, so Wassil shinned up and installed a rope for the rest of us. This gets you in to the 1st floor of the tower, which still has its joists but some of the flooring is gone and much is in very poor condition, so only a couple of sheets of plywood made it reasonably safe to get to the stairway within the wall. The pigeons had taken up residence here in a big way so it was very mucky and stinky.

The stairway led up to the top of the tower where the guns would have been. The battlements are ~2m high so we were well-hidden on the top and that seemed like a dramatically nicer place to camp than getting histoplasmosis with the pigeons, even if it was cold, less spacious and potentially wet.

We were somewhat nervous about being spotted so were quite discreet to start with. There were a couple of houses visible from the tower. We sat on the far side behind the WWII-vintage additional pillbox and watched the sea as it went

properly dark. No-one seemed to have noticed us. So we cracked out some beer and unpacked camping kit. We got a little more comfortable in our trespassing, stopped whispering, and turned on our headtorches.

It wasn't that long before Wassil remembered that he'd bought a torch for the beach, and now he'd had a couple of beers, and putting the rope back out to actually climb down and walk out 300m to the beach seemed like a faff, so he lit the torch where we were, and ran around within the battlements. This was fun of course but didn't seem very discreet.

And indeed, at this point things started to get interesting. We were just starting to settle down to kip, as it was pretty chilly outside one's pit due to a cold wind, when

**WE HEARD A LARGE
VEHICLE APPROACHING, AND
SOON OUR TOWER WAS
BATHED IN VERY BRIGHT
LIGHTS, AND SOMEONE WAS
YELLING THAT HE KNEW WE
WERE IN THERE AND WE
SHOULD COME OUT.**

Oh dear!

We did nothing of the sort of course. Just turned our lights off and stayed quiet. We were in a fortress and had pulled up the rope... The yelling and lights went on for quite a while, and we couldn't get a view of our inquisitor without giving ourselves away, but he sounded quite annoyed. Eventually he said he was going to get a ladder and drove off. The nearest house was about

1km away so it would take a few minutes to get a ladder and return.

**THE BEST PLAN SEEMED TO BE
TO MAKE OUR ESCAPE
SHARPISH SO THERE WOULD BE
NO-ONE TO FIND.**

We packed up quickly, lowered the rope, shinned down it and derigged. No-one had come back yet. We dashed (with rucksacks) for the edge of the field towards the sea. This is where the vehicle track was. Beyond was a berm, and a lot of shingle and lakes and marsh. It was dark, but with just enough light to move about without a headtorch.

We nipped over the berm and then spent the next hour or so playing quite an exciting game of hide-and-seek with a very angry man in a Hilux who soon returned to the tower with his ladder. Of course he quickly determined that there was no-one there, but didn't give up like you might expect and continued to drive up and down the track searching for miscreants, whilst we tried to head homewards, hiding and moving behind shingle banks and shrubbery. It was hard to tell in the dark if a route would take you home, or onto some dead-end spit, or into a pool, or exactly where Hilux man had got to, and soon we were split up.

I hid for half an hour behind a shingle step close to the sea until things seemed to have calmed down, then made my way back to the cars. The night fishermen were still there and when we mentioned being chased by Mr Angry they said 'Oh yes - that guy is nuts - he's shot our tyres out in the past'. Which wasn't too encouraging.

We were relieved to find no-one waiting at the cars and decided that we

should travel separately and go somewhere else. David went first and found a tractor blockade a little down the road, but they weren't looking for posh middle-class people in a nice car so that car was able to claim no knowledge and escape. By the time we got there Mr Angry had finally given up and gone home, so we escaped too, and could relax.

All good fun!

Regrouping after all that excitement we now needed a plan B, which was to go and put up tents on a quiet bit of beach a few miles away (near Shingle Street). So we did that (ignoring some 'no camping' signs as we are sticklers for not doing what we are told: we were also 7 people when the covid rules said max 6). It was very cold and windy, so not really conducive for sitting around drinking, so we soon retired to bed around 2am. Unfortunately the dog-walkers come by before 7am so in the interests of not getting hassled a second time we got up quite early, packed away the tents (which were rather more obvious in the daylight than they had seemed when we picked a spot at night), and had breakfast by the cars. Local dog-walkers seemed a lot more tolerant of itinerants than crazy farmers.



Photo cred: Wassil

Sunday consisted of a very nice (if wet and windy) 13km walk from Sizewell Nuclear Power Station up the beach, round the Minsmere RSBP reserve and back through the woods, finishing with fish and chips in Aldeburgh. This included Wassil climbing a haystack, onions to take home, cute pics, Ruairidh trying very unsubtle matchmaking for David, kite surfers getting a long way out of the water, damp fun in an adventure playground, a ruined church with an interesting art installation, and an annoyingly flooded section so several of us got very soggy feet.

So, there you have it: one of CUCC's most notable not-caving weekends.



Photo cred: Wassil

**IT TURNS OUT THAT PEOPLE
DO CARE IF YOU TRY TO CAMP
IN THEIR TOWERS, SO DON'T GO
WAVING FLAMING TORCHES
ABOUT.**

October 31st/Nov 1st 2020

- Cast: Marta Grzelak, Paul Fox, David Walker, Wookey, Ruairidh MacLeod, Wassil Janssen, Emily Tilby
- More tower info at <https://martellotowers.co.uk/>
- Video of the tower: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19PSWfd4hu4>

[there are lots more photos in the Wookey file but need to decide which to use and where']

In South Wales – *Joel Stobbart*

Caving Report – South Wales 3-5/12/21 by Joel Stobbart (back when I was a baby fresher)

After an incredibly long and foggy journey, we arrived at the remarkably well-equipped South Wales Caving Club hut late on Friday evening. Games included the novel squeeze through a church pew, which Wassil managed to take a step further by upending said pew and performing an inspiring vertical slot, provoking some appreciative creaks from the centuries-old wood.

RISING EARLY AT 2PM,

a group consisting of myself, Wassil, Campbell and CUCC photographer-in-chief Rudi first tackled bridge cave, a fifteen minute drive from the hut. The cave begins with some crawls leading to a boulder choke before dropping to a streamway. It then opens into a sizeable cavern with an upper ledge running to the eponymous bridge, which looked like an absolute death trap. Further into the cave we discovered a squeeze which Wassil insisted we all insert ourselves into feet-first, “for the experience”. Having firmly established that this went nowhere, and even if it did that none of us would be getting there in a hurry, we followed the ever more constricted streamway to its terminus at a sump before returning to the surface.

Having explored the nooks and crannies of the surrounding valley, containing a river which passed

underground via a large waterfall, we decided to pass on the other local caves – including the uninvitingly-named Town Drain – and head back to the hut to attempt Ogof Ffynnon Ddu (The Cave of the Black Spring). Having finally reached Bottom Entrance after an unnecessarily long schlep which was mainly the result of our atrocious navigational skills and inability to follow the most basic instructions from several bemused passers-by, we spent the remaining few minutes before our call-out expired exploring the reaches of OFD I. Descending several flights of ladders, we progressed along lovely long, wide and walkable passages which run to a beautiful streamway with walls of black stone laced with white quartz(?) veins. The stream itself rarely reached above the waist, yet contained several deep pots which were crossed using a fixed metal bar. Attempts at traversing usually ended in soggy disaster. After passing the “Step” and reaching the “Dip Sump”, which provides one route into the rest of the system, we returned along the streamway, pausing for several photo opportunities before climbing back out of Bottom and returning to the hut.

On Sunday morning me, Rudi and Campbell actually did wake up very early to accompany a small group of Bristol cavers headed by Ash on a through trip from Cwm Dwr to Bottom Entrance. The Cwm Dwr series begins with a pretty

hairy descent through an almost vertical concrete pipe before immediately constricting into a set of crawls and squeezes which eventually lead to some deeper chasms headed off by the Boulder Choke. The many diverging routes within this frustrated attempts to find the correct path for quite a while, but we eventually managed to continue down to the main streamway, passing some impressive rock formations and entering the “lake”, a muddy passage whose ceiling-height water marks displayed the former extent of the reservoir which once supplied the local farmhouses until the 1960s, when a group of cavers drained it and single-handedly

depopulated the valley. Our journey ended once more at the main streamway, which we followed back along the route of the previous day’s expedition into OFD I. After ascending into the brilliant sunshine of late afternoon, we returned to the hut to shower and pack kit before hiking up to the ridge above the hut to catch a brilliant sunset. Once the other group had returned from their OFD trip, we finished the final few kilograms of pasta and crumble before loading the cars and returning to Cambridge for a stunning 10:30pm arrival – props to Alice for some insane driving. Thanks all for another excellent trip!

Trip to the Mendips – *Romaric Masson*

24th-25th October 2020 – Wassil, Marta and Ro

What a weekend! The kind when you start off the morning NOT wanting to get any more cold after spending a miserable, freezing night camping in the wood, and NOT feeling particularly inclined to spend the day exercising like crazy and getting wet, and YET once you’ve done it you realise how much fun it was, and how stupid you would have been to shy away and miss the opportunity. Seriously, this was one of the best weekends of my life.

Ahoy, people! Break your routine of disconnected, disembodied urban screen addicts and rediscover what it feels like to live life to the full by going caving! It is an exhilarating, life-affirming experience that vivifies you, reconnects you with nature and grounds you back into your body for a refreshing, resetting week end.

A Subjective Summary of the weekend, by Ro

Participants:

- Trip organiser, encouraging journey navigator, excursion leader, and (white) spirit booster: Wassil
- Trip facilitator, senior journey pilot, caving near-casualty and priceless presence: Marta
- Trip reluctant-enthusiast, sleeping gear manager, Sump 2 first-timer, and evening entertainer: Ro

Saturday 24th - Day 1:

a day of (wishful) sleeping, (hopeful) waiting, (outstanding beauty) hill walking, (bilingual) chatting, (persistent, yet fruitless) door knocking, and, fortuitously, caving.

Lionel's Hole (not the one you think of, you perverted spirit!): **Going down (literally and figuratively)**

Soon after entering the cave, I remembered what it was like to be caving: not simply strolling around underground flat galleries like you would in a touristic cave – no, sir/madam - but twisting your body in all possible directions to the point of putting to shame any fitness class that boasts to provide the best work-out in flexibility/motricity/coordination.

IT IS UNBELIEVABLE WHAT A USUALLY COMPUTER-BOUND CREATURE CAN ACHIEVE IN TERMS OF KINAESTHETIC VARIETY,

happily sliding oneself down rocks without really knowing what the landing will be like, relying on a carefree assumption that the magic power of wet-socks-reinforced Wellies can protect us from this constantly moving, ever-changing rock topography we dash through.

Unexpectedly, to what seemed the first time in my long caving career of 5 previous trip (but simply due to being tired, I later realised) I quickly felt like I couldn't be bothered to crouch under low rock formations to have to crawl through uncomfortable narrow tunnels. Yet my sense of shame and confusion quickly led way to a sinking spirit as we got bogged down in a proper maze of iterative dead ends, not least soul-dampening that the rocks became jagged and full of sharp edges... What was the point, the revelry, in this self-inflicted endeavour? Why was I subjecting myself to this allegedly enjoyable physical exertion? Luckily, we got out after 90 minutes, during which my normally enthusiastic self had

seemed to have aged so much that the thought of not ever having to go through this again came to his mind.

Goatchurch Hole: Going up (only figuratively, and all over the place literally)

Now, that cave reconciled me with the joys of caving: jumping and scrambling around, sliding down slopes, exploring chambers and potential passageways, and even crawling through claustrophobic, water-carved tunnels while singing. Fortunately for my self-respect, and to my relieved delight (or my delighted relief?), my usual fun-loving, adventurous spirit had returned in this easy, diverse and (Covid-unsafely) highly populated cave.

An evening to remember

While both caves were dry (as we wanted it), an unfortunate stroke of weather (surprising for this country...) ironically drenched us to an unpleasant cold state as we walked back to the car at night. Oh, that

CAR, THAT MODERN-ERA COMFORT TOOL THAT TRANSFORMS OUR SPECIES INTO LAZY WEAKLINGS, THAT ADMIRABLE RAIN-SHIELDING COLD-REPELLING COCKPIT,

the cheating artifice that made three mother-earth-craving creatures rejoice in the warm space it provided, without which we would never have enjoyed a blissful hot meal all the more deserved that it had to be cooked with poor equipment (N.B. to future self: never go camping without a bowl and a knife). Resourceful as we are, we made do with makeshift bowls, and thanks to

our herb-provider Wassil, discovered the bliss of basil and salt-sprinkled whole raw tomatoes.

And while we really felt like drifting to sleep upon digesting, cosied in the car as we were, we ended up having a tremendous time speaking and bantering in the changing colour atmosphere provided by Marta's camping light. And once we had walked back to camp, while we could have gone to bed, instead we created amongst our best memories of the whole week end. Wassil had made torches and we had a lot of fun playing with them in the middle of the night. Then we looked at the stars, pretend-smoked pot and held a pretend séance round a (working) fire, before revelling in a time-warp episode borne out of the winter-time-shift hour that belongs both to today and yesterday.

Sunday 25th – Day 2

Swildon's Hole

After visiting the nearby church, we found the picturesque entrance to Swildon's Hole, nested in a meadow hollow where a river plunges underground. We got wet rather quickly, but didn't get cold until we did the bit underwater – Sump 1, lasting about 5 seconds, which provides sensations as it involves hauling yourself horizontally underwater using a rope to go through a hole in the rock. The easy part is actually doing the thing. The difficult part is the apprehension as you have to immerse yourself into really cold water which forces you to ventilate while you try hard to keep your calm (if not your cool, even though that would be fitting). When we had all gone through it, we took pictures in front of the famous Wookey hole road sign before proceeding across flat river bed under an often very low ceiling that had us on our fours. When we reached

Sump 2, I decided to do it. This was my chance. After some psychological and cold adaptation, I rope-swam the 6 metres of the water-filled tube, which takes about 15 seconds. Upon arriving, I was proud of the achievement and was reminded of yet another life lesson: keeping composed in the face of adversity can go a long way – in fact, it keeps you alive. But then again, Sump 2 is not so much of a big deal if one is relaxed about it. As often, the real war is psychological, and we are our worst enemy.

What else was fun in the cave? Sliding down a long, smooth rock slab after lying down in a clay puddle to make us slippery (and having fun with the clay, too); shaking like never before, while the cold started submerging me upon passing Sump 1 again; singing, enjoying the beautiful rock formations; meeting a sleeping lone bat; sharing all these experiences with Wassil and Marta; going down and up the ladder along the waterfall; carrying/dragging/shoving forward the tackle bag – what a work out!; lying down on the grass in relief and a sense of accomplishment upon exiting the cave; finally getting warm after getting changed in the car; finding Wassil again after getting lost in the cave.

An ode to caving

I cannot overstate how worthwhile the experience of caving is. It is simply empowering in how it pushes both body and soul to challenge themselves every moment as one constantly has to adapt to difficult terrain, develop their imagination and confidence by always finding a way forward (or upwards, most of the time), teaching a valuable philosophy of life along the way,

***AND MAKING OURSELVES
STRONGER THROUGH FACING A
COLD SO INTENSE IT EATS AT
THE EDGES OF CONSCIOUSNESS –
THAT WAS AFTER I IMMERSSED
MYSELF COMPLETELY INTO
WATER POOLS.***

Speleology is a unique experience of survival and testing one's limits, one of constantly avoiding injury by appealing to our most primordial ability to sense our surroundings (lest we fall and crash) or even presenting us with the prospect of dying (by having to move holding breath along cold, immersed tunnels).

This flowing physical journey of moving into confined, irregular spaces and experiencing the elements makes us truly alive.



Figure: Romantic trip to Mendip

Soggy Socks, Sough Surprises, and the Great Mince Pie Heist - *Jon Lester*

A Caving Chronicle of Train Troubles, Discount Delights, and the Quest for Dry Feet in the Depths of Derbyshire

A grand day out... It started like any other morning, a gentle 6 am message from a very upset and fiery Lara, who discovered the train station wouldn't open until 9. As we all know, London has extremely bad public transportation compared to the rest of the country, especially the north.

My journey, however, began at 9 in the picturesque beauty of Grimsby, opting for the amazing and reliable train network which sees a train every 4 hours. This departure with a train, however, was due to my Land Rover taking time off to be broken again and do Land Rover things. As I relaxed, savoring the majestic views of Scunthorpe and Doncaster, I tuned in to 'Dune,' letting my imagination wander about orchestrating

a drug-fueled uprising in the desert, playing the role of a false divine entity, and how I could make this become a reality. Meanwhile, news arrived that Charlotte had arrived on time to steal the Nottingham cave gear.



I received confirmation that Charlotte was on time to steal the

Nottingham uni caving gear, via utilizing our brand new friendship tools called stalking, this is allowed by us having 24/7 location access on Google maps to each other's locations; an incredibly useful tool for cavers and the NSA. I provided her with clear instructions on where to pick me up since the Londoner had failed to get the said public transport. I assured her that finding the station would be easy: 'You know it's right because there will be trains there and probably a few Ket users.'

The 3 hours of sleep across the past week were slowly catching up with me. However, despite the UK being under about 24cm of water in the past few hours, I was under the strong assumption that the very reliable 1700s Sough (OF RETRACTED NAME BUT THE ELDON LIKE IT A LOT) would be able to hold the ever-increasing rate of water being dumped upon the majestic Derbyshire landscape and that of the fact that this historical marvel of engineering also fed by other soughs and

HOW THE 1700S SOUGH (OF RETRACTED NAME BUT THE ELDON LIKE IT A LOT) IS DESCRIBED AS HAVING "ROOF-HIGH WATER IN THE BEST OF CONDITIONS..."

Surprisingly, this legendary Sough revealed to not have just one but two entrances—three if you count a daring 'sporting' free dive... Our mission? To explore the (UNNAMED MINE, ALSO HELD DEAR BY THE ELDON) for potential surveying and unraveling archaeological mysteries, following ancient mine workings and speleothem growth—a treasure trove for my ongoing list and backlog of never-ending projects which may never ever be finished. With

the crack team I'd assembled, or rather, strongly convinced to join me, the plan should have unfolded smoothly...

Having encountered some YouTube and TikTok personalities who recently explored the (UNNAMED MINE, THAT THE ELDON ALSO LIKE A LOT) via the 1700s Sough (OF RETRACTED NAME BUT THE ELDON LIKE IT A LOT), I assumed that with two veterans and the caver in training, we could navigate the workings easily and delve into history for the next 8 hours, whilst I bored them with fact after fact... every day is a school day?

At this point during my journey on the small TransPennine train, it was getting more and more full; reminding me of the men's only hostel I inhabited in New York's Chinatown, but instead of various characters from 'The Sopranos' and 'Stuart Little,' this was filling with all sorts of Lincolnshire personalities; as a Somerset/Wiltshire man myself, I could instantly recognize that half of the people on here were probably related in some way and have webbed feet. Useful for sump swimming or maybe even for attracting a mate.

I eagerly awaited Charlotte's reliable car to pick me up. I stood in the mighty Sheffield station with the pigeons greeting me, I admired how the Burger King and M&S were as far apart as you could put them inside a building. However, it was at this point that Lara decided to text me saying she didn't have her wellies with her...

Myself and Charlotte went back to my house to gather the remainder of kit. We then decided to plod down to Asda and to our amazement discover that all the Christmas shit was on discount!!! So

INSTANTLY PICKED UP 5 BAGS OF FREE BRUSSELS SPROUTS AND 10 PACKS OF MINCE PIES,

capitalism at its finest. We then digested some minces and hurried back to the station.



At the station, Lara decided to wander off on her own little adventure until she noticed the two frantic cavers waving at her.

With Lara now in the car, we headed to Go Outdoors for wellies... so one pair of wellies and Lara's 10 new blanket later we were finally, finally ready to go caving!!!

We got to the car park at 4:30 after quickly checking the exit of the sough.... One barbed wire fence later and a bit of blood alongside nearly impaling Charlotte with a tree branch, I boldly proclaimed that the 1700s Sough (OF RETRACTED NAME BUT THE ELDON LIKE IT A LOT) looked fairly dry.... As about 59 gallons a second of water

purged out of it slowly filling the field and looked like a sense from an Anglian Water poop facility dumping into a river.



We drove up to Eyam and discreetly tried to get changed into our wetsuits in the picturesque village and then headed on our merry way. We reached the adit entrance eventually, set our rope down, and Charlotte proclaimed she would go first as she was cold... as she descended down the rather intimidating pitch Lara's go was next. Despite asking why she could just drop into the shaft and bounce on her cowstails I delicately described the consequence of those possible actions and why it may be a bad idea.



As Lara descended down into the pitch and hit the first rebelay, a message was passed up disclosing the utter shocking and unexpected news to me that our way on at the bottom was actually sumped! Myself and my frozen fingers were shocked at the news expecting it to be rather dry down there but alas no!!

The two adventurers slowly started to ascend one by one while I offered moral support and utter shock from the top. We packed up and walked to the car to go get chips whilst I went for a little explore in my wetsuit up the curvature under the chippy. How can you make potatoe taste so damn good? What magic do they put in these potatoes?! Maybe it's all the lead.

**ALL IN ALL, OUR ADVENTURE
TOOK 2 HOURS TO COMPLETE
WITH 30 MINUTES OF THAT
BEING CHIP EATING.**

We will head back when maybe it is a little less wet.

Caving in the Chalk - *Will Kay*

Will Kay (CUCC), Lara Bartleet (MUSC)



Picture1: Me enjoying the cave

BEING SOUTHERN IS A COMMON AFFLICTION AMONG CAVERS,

one of its leading and most distressing symptoms is a near-total lack of any caves within a convenient driving distance*. And yet there have been rumours of a cure, some relief from this most awful symptom, there are caves in the chalk they whisper.

I first came across such a suggestion about a year ago, while perusing a very dry BGS (British Geological Survey) karst report on the South Downs, I found an appendix of 70 pages of detailed meticulous notes, photos and surveys of a bunch of small holes in the Chalk cliffs and quarries of Sussex. Including, dare-I-believe, a description and survey of a proper cave!

According to the notes of Terry Reeves, the Chelsea member who is the

originator of all this information and all other information on caves in the chalk, there exists a 354m long cave called Beachy Head Cave, inside the iconic Beachy Head, not far from the lighthouse, just West of Eastbourne.

Despite consisting almost entirely of flat-out crawl, this cave is purported to contain all the hallmarks of a cave: Formations! A sump! (perhaps even a salty one!!) Mud! Scallops!

I raised the prospect of such a gem of a cave to Lara, a fellow caver afflicted with a similar strain of southernness at New Years and a plan was afoot: we would seek out this mighty cave and finally prove that it is possible to cave in the South.

After a suitable break from New Years to let the urge for the underground rise again, we converged on Eastbourne to begin our caving quest. After meeting we drove to Birling Gap and made our preparations for a day of serious caving, donning our wellies, packing our oversuits and set off down to the beach. It was a surprisingly sunny and calm day for mid-January and it was oddly warm in the sun, perhaps too warm and too big and too exposed. If only there were some kind of place opposite to that to take refuge.

**BEFORE LONG WE WERE OFF!
LARA SPOTTED A PERSON-SIZED HOLE BEHIND US, IT HAD TRIED TO EVADE OUR LOOKS BY HIDING BEHIND A CORNER,**

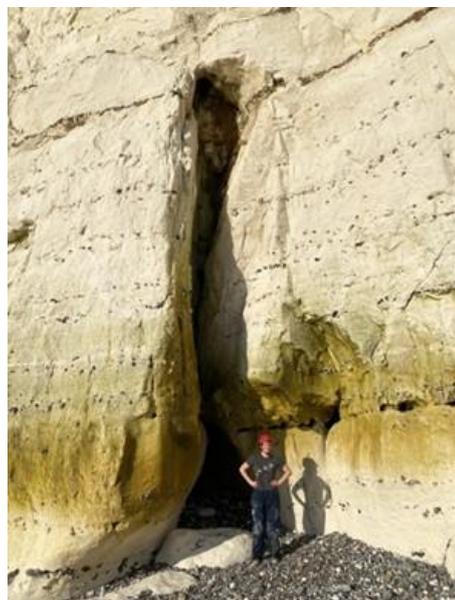
but luckily we were eagle-eyed enough to spot this deception. Wanted to build ourselves up to this surely magnificent find, we started off by grovelling around in a pebble-filled tube at floor height discovering it goes surprisingly far, but then ends all-too-quickly in a fishing net choke. The entrance to the larger and more promising hole was a metre-and-a-bit off the ground so was a slightly awkward step up and then back down to enter, but luckily the designers of this magnificent cavity saw fit to include nature's most perfect scaff-bar, a very long flint, as a perfectly-placed step down into the rest of the cave, which continued on for at least 2 more metres before ending!

The entrance of this natural wonder even contained some strange secondary-looking mineral formations which were fairly unusual for the rest of this chalk.



Picture2 Nature's perfect scaff-bar

With our hearts racing and hopes buoyed by this magnificent find, we eagerly set off down the beach, careful to check behind us, searching for more such caverns and before long we were in luck! Finding an extremely tall (more than 3 Laras) entrance to a fairly tall cave, we got very excited. After a walk-in entrance there is an in-situ rubber hand line (purely to mark the way, of course) leading up to a narrower walking bit and a step up into a chamber! This chamber isn't especially big but it easily fit 2 people and is lovely and tall, featuring some fun reaction patterns on the walls, a very impressive family of live insects on the ceiling and most importantly: a ceiling consisting of mud/dirt/terrigenous sediment, not chalk! Those wiser than me (the BGS and Terry Reeves) are very insistent that this kind of sediment means that this cave at least is a proper karstic cave, formed by groundwater flow which must've left some amount of surface mud/silt, rather than one just eroded by the sea! Which was very exciting to find, we were in a proper cave and not even just a sea cave.



Picture 3:: Lara and the >3-lara-tall cave.



Picture 4: terrigenous sediment in the roof of that cave



Picture 5: fun pattern in the wall of this cave



Picture 6 view out from inside this cave, with in-situ handline demonstrating the way

Continuing on we found several more exciting holes in the cliff with exciting mud and had a great time poking around them and groveling around in the more pebble-filled tubey ones.

After a while the frequency of caves dropped dramatically and we kept plodding along, knowing that Beachy Head Cave was getting closer and closer.

Once we'd got quite close and were in view of the lighthouse, we glimpsed darkness up on a ledge ~2m above the ground. Knowing that Beachy Head Cave was similarly an awkward climb up we decided to go up there and have a poke around. As it turns out that is much easier said than done, as the chalk there, while somewhat grippy, was pretty featureless and smooth, making any climbing pretty holdless and mostly contingent on strength and hope. Lara did manage to climb up to the same level as the ledge but was unable to traverse the featureless, smoothed section of chalk between where she climbed up and the actual ledge, leaving it still

inaccessible. We knew that the climb up to actual Beachy Head Cave was even more awkward and a good 4-5m, so we decided that this was the wrong place and kept going.



Picutre7dissappointment. Photo of the cliff fall with me for scale, top of cliff fall is the little green shrubs living on top

To our indescribable dismay, we approached where Lara's map indicated Beachy Head Cave's entrance was to find an absolutely colossal cliff fall. There had been whisperings of such a fall, but I had no idea the magnitude. The pile was easily the size of several houses and our dear, hoped entrance was buried right behind the centre of it. It would take A LOT of digging or a lot of years to uncover that.

After a hopeful poke around on the other side of the cliff fall we knew our goal was concealed, hidden from us by the cruel, possessive Earth. The deliberate intent of this obstruction is plainly obvious by how targeted the fall was. On the several miles of cliff we'd covered leading up to this point we had seen just one cliff fall, which was easily less than half the size of this one.

SOMETHING OUT THERE VERY CLEARLY DID NOT WANT BEACHY HEAD CAVE NOR ITS

POSSIBLY SALTY SUMP TO BE MESSED WITH.

The hope of regaining access is not totally lost. There are several points in Beachy Head Cave where the survey reports seeing daylight as the passage approaches the cliff face from inside, we believe one of these places is at the ledge me & Lara failed to get up on. These spots haven't been checked up on in decades so may have been enlarged into person-sized entrances by cliff retreat since the last visit, allowing access into the system. Though even if access can be gained by this ledge, access to the deeper parts of the cave and the sump may require significant digging or be completely impossible as reportedly Beachy Head Cave has of recent years become two caves as cliff retreat has split one bit of passage in two (and sealed the gap with that cliff fall, requiring some kind of digging effort to regain access to the second half :()



Somewhat disheartened me & Lara sheltered behind a large rock to eat our sandwiches. It had suddenly turned cold and everything seemed a lot greyer.

We were now starting to lose daylight so we headed back across the beach, having decided not to go back for the sturdy wooden ladder in the boot of

Lara's car, enjoying some of the rockpools and their limpets and tasty seaweed along the way. This stretch of coast was quite fruitful for both the above cavey discoveries and non-cave discoveries including: green sea anemones! really pretty seasnails! bizarrely, lots of rusted components of very small trains! An abundance of lighthouses (you can see 2 from one spot!), definitely an aspect most caving regions could do with improving, you'd never get lost coming back over the fell again if the farm installed even one lighthouse. And weird crystalline-looking iron nodules which were very cool.



Picture8.Picture9 (both lighthouses)

Slightly disappointed, but overall satisfied at a nice day out, we got back to the car around sunset, enjoyed the view and got out of our wellies.

Epilogue

Those of you living in Cambridge will be saddened to hear that such highs and grand caving adventures are more difficult in this part of the country. As the hot, new BGS karst report for East Anglia shows, the only whiff of cave in the region is one very small cave in the cliffs at Hunstanton. Although those digging-inclined will be interested to hear about a stream sink/swallow hole just to the SE of Cambridge and some Dolines reported halfway between Cambridge and Duxford, which are sadly the best available leads nearby. They haven't looked everywhere though! Chalk is a mysterious rock and cave could be lurking around any corner!

*those who might object to this statement are reminded that there are NO caves in Mendip, and that propagating such lies is seriously harmful. The lucky few to live near the glittering caving mega-hubs of Portland, Devon and the Forest of Dean are sorely envied.

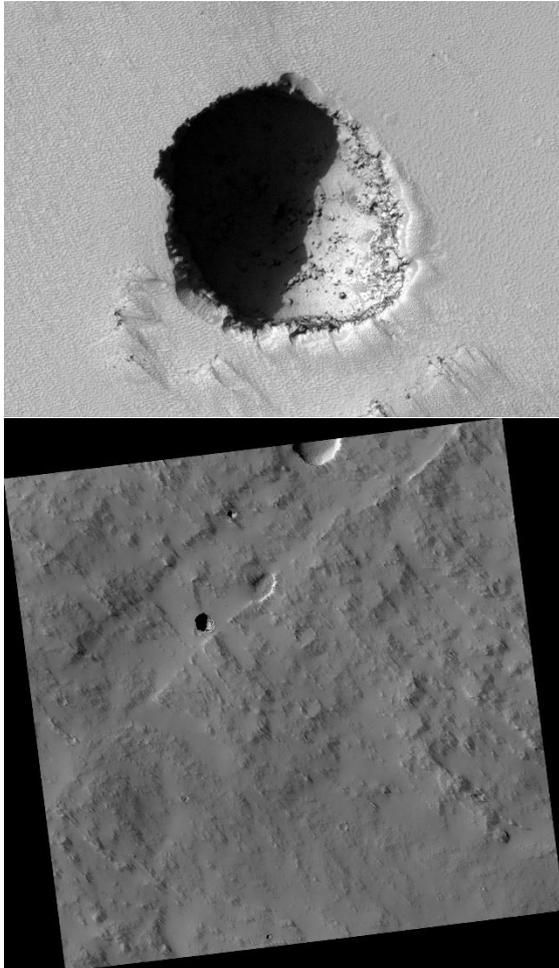
Caving... in Space! – *Christopher Holt*

This is a favourite ranting topic of mine at the pub, and it is high time that I put it in writing. In many academic circles, in popular science reporting and in science fiction across all media people have failed to realise the importance of caving as a core astronautical skill for the coming century.

The presence of caves has been speculated, calculated and observed since the Apollo era - we know some do exist and

plans for robotic exploration are afoot. In the past 5 years a veritable explosion of scientific literature has occurred, but none have yet been confirmed beyond tantalising photographs, from orbit, of open skylights - "Subsurface Access Points" in the jargon. This dearth of illustrative images has led to a chronic failure of imagination among science fiction writers in every medium, and translates into an almost complete lack of awareness in the general public about what the reality of human-

operative space exploration is going to look like - in case you hadn't guessed, it's going to look a lot like caving.



*A 180-metre-wide pit on the eastern flank of Pavonis Mons, photographed with the HIRISE camera. The volcanic feature of which it is a part stretches for many kilometres in both directions. Author NASA / Jet Propulsion Laboratory / University of Arizona
http://hirise.lpl.arizona.edu/ESP_019351_1795*

The basic Lunar Base and Martian Habitat consisting of modules landed or erected on the surface is a mainstay of concept mock-ups and near-future SciFi, and indeed these will be essential for the first expedition. However, they are

profoundly unsuited to long-term occupation. Our own Sun throws out very lethal storms of charged particles and radiation on a predictable 11-year cycle, which means that with no magnetosphere or Ozone layer to protect us, cancer and death are an inevitable consequence. Human exploration of the surface will be limited to a few years in each solar minimum, as will both outward and return journeys, and occupation of any orbiting station. In the much longer term, the common trope of “domes” under which humans can live just as freely as they might on earth is simply never going to happen. Even growing crops under such damaging sunlight is not certain - far more reliable to use photovoltaic solar panels to power electric lights. Concerns about the radiation dose over an astronaut's career are one of the reasons the average age of NASA astronauts keeps creeping upwards; it's a workplace hazard and in lieu of minimising exposure, the next best thing is to minimise the consequences by ensuring the subjects are already nearing old age by the time medical issues present themselves. As in many genres, Hollywood needs to cast much older actresses for these heroic roles - they seem to have the actors sorted already.

The first priority of any human setting foot on Mars is the establishment of a radiation shelter, and some of the more outlandish concepts using a thick shell of ice do indeed look pretty cool. But why would you go to the effort of building such a thing when you could simply build a ladder into one of the open skylights? Descending from the shield volcanoes of Tarsus, through the relatively low-altitude plain of Noctis Labyrinthus towards the deep canyon of the Vallis Marineris, lava has flowed in vast pahoehoe flows fed by a lattice of pyroducts (“lava-tube” is a bit of a misnomer). Their full extent is a matter of debate, but if the proverbial “Life on Mars” survives

anywhere, it will be in these pyroducts. They have been shunned by current attempts at robotic exploration due to the general inadequacy of rovers to do anything useful in such terrain, and the fear that a fumbled exploration would merely contaminate the ecosystem with minimal scientific gain. That concern, not to fumble, will also be present in the first human explorers but they will be better equipped to assess the situation, and overwhelmingly motivated to do so. If there is life, well that's literally the whole point of going to Mars in the first place - hooray. If there is not, that drastically reduces the quantity of construction material required for any settlement because we can build a lightweight shelter under the natural roof. Inflate a giant plug at either end of a nice tube, seal the edges, pump in some air and make yourself at home. The ideal location would be a section between two natural openings, in case some unknown lifeform further inside is reliant on the circulation of gas. Igneous rocks being impermeable, you can make the space as large as you want and at a temperature of only -20°C it's really the most comfortable place for many millions of kilometres around.



Indian Tunnel in Idaho, USA exhibits many landforms similar to those observed from Martian orbit. Photo source - Craters of the Moon National Monument & Preserve. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indian_Tunnel_entrance_%26_skylight_\(16271180818\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indian_Tunnel_entrance_%26_skylight_(16271180818).jpg)

Rovers and sample-return missions will continue to be used even when human geologists and mobile laboratory facilities are present, but it's a lot easier to have a human managing the robot from Martian orbit than from Earth with a communication delay of between 4 and 20 minutes. One of the most important jobs that humans can do on Mars is driving the robots. Space agencies try to limit the whole-career radiation dose of their employees to "as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA)", and caves, once discovered, will provide a better shelter than those already built. Surface work can continue to be performed by rovers, managed in real-time by humans present at Mars. Picture our intrepid Martian explorer, Working From Home in a tent inside a cave. This job could also be done from orbit, but would require a tunnel inside Deimos to safely continue through the solar maximum when missions become longer - caves are probably easier. The current system of semi-autonomous robots receiving instructions every few minutes from Earth is about as efficient as it can be made, but the reduction of the transmission delay to zero will be a significant improvement.



Similar volcanospeleological features exist on the Moon (though fewer), as does the same dangerous radiation environment, so naturally this will be the test venue for any Mars-bound technology. Cliff-crawling robots, flying robots, hopping robots; tethered, autonomous or leaving a Hansel-and-Gretel trail of relay stations; all very clever ideas, but are machines going to be worthwhile when a human can already do this job in a fraction of the time? All of which begs the question - what clothing and equipment will Extraterrestrial Speleologists be wearing? How will they move through the cave? What procedures will they follow?

Logistically, there are more similarities to cave diving than to regular caving. One's supply of air is of mortal consequence so the rule of thirds applies. Laying line will be prudent even where visibility is good. The integrity of the vacuum suit cannot be risked, and any damage or malfunction is cause for turning around. Terrestrial pyroducts are characterised by extremely abrasive surfaces, and there is much research to be done if we are to anticipate similar or worse conditions on Luna, Mars and asteroids.

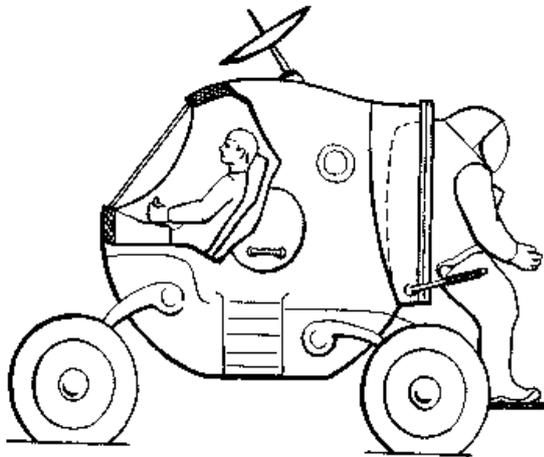


The Z-2 EVA suit will be used for the Artemis program. Photo Credit: (NASA/Joel Kowsky) <https://www.nasa.gov/image-detail/amf-nhq201910150007/>

In terms of the joints and reach of the suit, NASA's Z-2 could be as good as it gets. Being surrounded by a near-vacuum, the suit must exert pressure on the body and the internal volume of the suit must remain static - easier done with a hard, inflexible shell. Imagine caving in a suit of armour! In order to increase the manoeuvrability of the suit, a lower pressure can be used, with a more oxygen-rich gas mix, but this requires the astronaut to pre-breathe oxygen in order to flush saturated nitrogen from their blood and avoid getting bent (decompression sickness) when starting their Extra-Vehicular Activity - a little like cave-diving, but in reverse. These new suits can begin being used immediately and slowly increase in mobility as they approach the target pressure. Gloves in particular have been a source of frustration for all spacefarers to date, and I expect a near-continuous stream of improvements over the next decade as new materials, and new tasks, are tested on the Moon. Perhaps some of these will filter down into terrestrial glove manufacture? - A man can dream. For deeper exploration, should these pyroducts be proven to "go", a purpose-designed suit prioritising flexibility at the joints and tough panels on the exterior, at the expense of thermal insulation. All of the design constraints I have described will apply to Chinese taikonauts as much as NASA and commercial astronauts.

In the interest of xenobiology and being good neighbours to the universe, we have to consider contamination with microplastic, dead skin cells, oil and hairs - even on the outside of suits, if they have

ever been taken inside the airlock. Using a vacuum suit that engages directly with the wall of a habitat or vehicle (you enter through the back of the suit) can minimise but not eliminate this source of pollution. Robotic expeditions have so far been held to scrupulous standards of cleanliness, but as soon as manned missions set foot on the planet this becomes a lost cause. On the surface we can hope that contaminants are fried by radiation, but underground they will linger and spread further on the shoes of the explorers.



The “suitport” concept greatly reduces cross-contamination of human detritus into the environment and dust into the habitat, but does mean that explorers are saddled with a bulky hatch on their back. After Artemis, I expect a redesign to make the life-support backpack more snugly integrated in this hatch. Picture source: znanie.podelise.ru

Rope - thus far, the only potential entrances that have been identified are all vertical pits. Many pyroducts on earth also have horizontal or otherwise traversable entrances which would not be visible from orbit, but if we are to use lines of string, tape or cable then the advantages of reduced gravity are far outweighed by the extreme

temperature fluctuations such ropes will have to endure. Nylon certainly won't be adequate.

One last consideration that rarely gets any attention is the conservation of speleothemata. Even on Earth, an in-situ “lavatite” is inestimably more precious than a calcite stalactite, because once the lava has cooled it will never reheat - they are created in a single instant and not by a continuous process. Novice cavers are often told that the pretties have been there for “tens of thousands of years, so be careful!” How careful should we be around formations that are billions of years old? In addition to this, it's an open question as to how the chemistry and $\frac{1}{3}$ gravity will change the behaviour of magma (the interior of Mars has never experienced pressures as high as that of Earth) - and even terrestrial lavatite formation is a nascent science.

There's absolutely no guarantee that any of these caves will “go”. Many expeditions will get “Ghar-Parau-ed” [verb]. But if even one single cave proves to be extensive, it will be the most commodious place known beyond Earth. An environment that has formed by natural processes which are common across the entire universe; which has been sheltered from the hazards of the cosmos for billions of years and is likely to remain so for billions more. The robotic and human technologies pioneered here in the next three decades will be equally valid in any solar system no matter how hostile the radiation, and the working habits formed will embed themselves as the norm for future practice even when safer environments are found. My attention has focused on rocky pyroducts for which we have rough analogues at home, but within our own solar system the ice worlds of Titan and Pluto cycle Methane and Nitrogen in three states of matter, analogous to the

water cycle of Earth. Could their strange chemistries produce something similar to classic karst topography? Both are far enough away that solar radiation is attenuated, and Titan benefits from Saturn's magnetosphere and the density of its own atmosphere. Notwithstanding the above-mentioned solar storms, the cloud-tops of Venus might even be rather comfortable for humans with some minimal breathing apparatus, slathered in factor 50 sunscreen and travelling by zeppelin. Who knows what may be found in the salty oceans of Enceladus, Europa or Ganymede. To venture further into wild speculation we can imagine the vast microgravity gas torus of Larry Niven's *The Integral Trees* or whatever long-abandoned alien craft one might stumble across. But what we can already say with relative certainty is that pyroclastic caves are widespread across the Universe and are likely to provide the most common habitat for human existence in the coming centuries and millennia. Luna and Mars are just the start - cryovolcanic and glacier caves in the outer solar system, rock shelters in the asteroid belt, and all of it multiplied and exaggerated across the stars of Taurus and beyond. For as long as humans require shelter, caves will be explored and exploited. By the time that anything remotely "Earth-like" is discovered, humans won't need it.

Further reading - because I couldn't be arsed to source everything properly.

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Poland

Poland 2018 Trip Report - *Radost Waszkiewicz*

Radost Waszkiewicz (writing), Elaine Olivier (photos) 2023-12-26



Figure 1: Left to right (with increasing wading stoke level): Very cold Elaine dreads the return wade in Długi Chodnik inside Jaskinia Kasprowa Niżnia, next the author, finally Jakub delighted that he gets to cool down.

1 President's Trip 2018 – Tatra Mountains, Poland

In a true expat fashion, I rallied the CUCC for a caving escapade in Poland, admittedly knowing just a smidge about it. Joining forces with the crew from Wrocław Speleoclub (Jakub Grzęda, Andrzej Żak, and Mariusz Robak) — Elaine Olivier, Haydon Saunders, and I dove headfirst (or rather, rappelled) into the frosty embrace of the Tatras.

Activities of any Polish speleoclub are a curious blend of hiking, caving and climbing. Picture this: about a 3-hour trek to the 'winter' caves lower in the valleys, and an extra hour for the 'summer' ones.

Having entered Jaskinia Czarna after a mediocre cramponing performance, the Wrocław crew was caught off guard by our British prowess in SRT. Unfortunately, their awe was short-lived. Yours truly was swiftly nominated (or maybe "volunteered") to

lead a 50m climb, equivalent to a VDiff in British terms, with a grand total of... two prior lead climbs under my belt. But hey, we made it out, relishing a picturesque sunset surface abseil, with truly the best viewpoint in the valley. Polish underground style is rather different — everything is rigged with bowlines, and let's just say, fixed lines for ascents? Overrated.

Next up was Jaskinia Kasprowa Niżnia, where we discovered less climbing (see technical sketch) but found ourselves

SPLASHING AROUND IN A 2°C WATER

(See picture). A tad shocking for us, but par for the course for the wrocław bunch.



Figure 2: Syfon Danka – our desintaion inside Jaskinia Kasprowa Niżnia.

Our grand finale led us to Jaskinia Miętusia, a trek through a pristine valley (see picture), reserved solely for cavers and wildlife. The biggest perk of a caving permit? The freedom to roam off the beaten path in the national park. Trust me, a short detour from the bustling trails reveals a whole new world.



Figure 3: The approach to Jaskinia Miętusia offers excellent views of Czerwone Wierchy. Inside them are the premier caves of Poland, including the Wielka Śnieżna system. Typically, those caves are frequented in the summer due to the higher altitudes of their entrances.

2 Caving in Poland – practical guide

Getting There:

It takes roughly 24 hours by train to reach Poland from the UK. You can opt for a night train journeying across Germany or break your trip halfway. Your final stop is Zakopane, a small town that serves as a mountain resort.

Access:

Non-Poles have an advantage: the Tatra National Park provides guest permits. However, be prepared for a wait of about 3 months for processing. Make sure to compile a list of your recent cave visits to demonstrate your SRT proficiency. Conversely, Polish residents must undergo a year-long process to obtain a caver's license, which includes participation in both winter and summer bootcamps and training in trad and multi-pitch climbing.

Gear:

Connect with a local club, such as the Warsaw Speleoclub through me, for equipment needs. They have gear comparable to CUCC's. If you're coming in winter, anticipate snow conditions. Crampons are nice but not essential. Fortunately, given the lower altitudes of most cave entrances, avalanches not a concern.

Cave Highlights:

During winter, visit Jaskinia Czarna, known for its supreme through trip, as well as Jaskinia Kasprowa Niżnia, Jaskinia Miętusia, and Jaskinia Zimna. All of these offer alpine caving, each requiring some lead climbing. Expect a typical trip to take 6-9 hours underground, and 2 hours of walking each way.

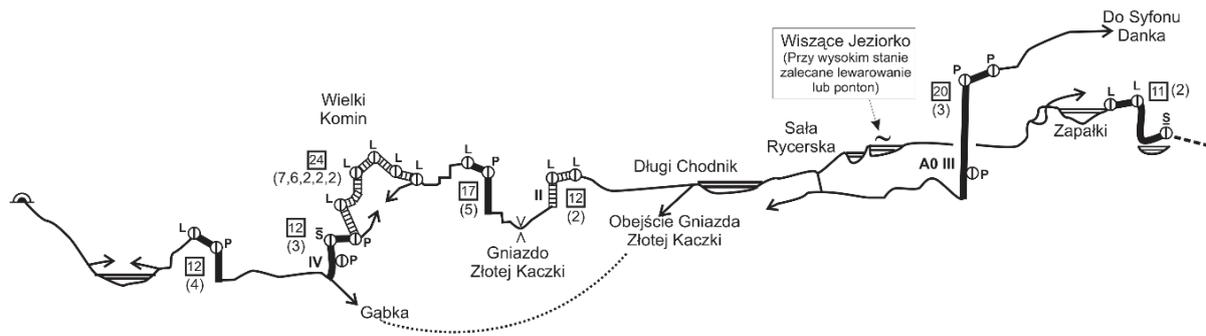


Figure 4: Szkiec techniczny (lit. technical sketch) – a great polish invention combining rigging topo, map and elevation into one artist's impression. Numbers in squares are rope lengths (ropes shown as thick lines), roman numerals are lead climbing grades. (sketch author: S. Kotarba)

Berger and Vercors 2022

Afflicted in the Gouffre Berger - Lucy Hyde

Summer Adventure Part 1

Intro

Having returned from a drizzly field trip in Skye at the end of second year, I set off on the 10th of July in a packed car with Harry, Alice, and Oakem to drive to France. The drive was long, but accompanied by a lot of singing.

AFTER A NON-CONSENSUAL SAMPLING OF EVERY PERFUME ON THE FERRY, THE CAR SMELT STRONGLY OF CHEMICALS.

We camped in woods in the middle of France on the way. Most of the drive travelled through flat agricultural land, so the contrast, arriving into the Vercors, was stunning. Seeing the Alps rising higher and higher as we got closer.

The Gouffre Berger, for a time, held the record of the world's deepest cave (now 37th deepest), and was considered to be a dangerous cave, with its quick response to rainfall. Improvements in rope, lighting technology, and weather forecasting, have reduced the risks involved in caving the Berger, but it is still an intimidating cave at 1.2km vertical depth.

We joined an expedition with the South Wales Caving Club (SWCC), taking part in their 10 day permit in exchange for lending the 'Cave Link' – a remarkable piece of technology that uses Very Low Frequencies to allow communication between those inside the cave and the surface through solid rock. We joined SWCC at a campsite near Autrans, on the high Vercors Plateau above Grenoble, and picked up Wassil along the way to make a team of five intrepid CUCC cavers.

Access to the Berger involves a zig zagging drive up from Autrans to the car park at La Moliere, with views across the Alps, including Mount Blanc,



Fig1: At La Moliere carpark

then an hours walk through the most lovely woods I had ever seen before you reach the entrance. We ran a vigil system at the entrance, with two people assigned to entrance duty at all times, to log people into and out of the cave, and be ready in case any help was needed.

We were incredibly lucky as the French had offered to rig the cave for us, with UIS upcoming, so shiny new rope and double rigging, allowed fast ascent. A joy not to faff around with the drudgery of carrying rope into and – worse – out of the cave.

We were also lucky to have exceptionally low water levels which made the cave very safe & some of the pitches easier.

Berger- Bounce trip to Camp 1

My first trip into the Berger was a bounce trip to Camp 1, in the CUCC team of 5. Situated at - 500m, and about a third of the distance into the cave, camp 1 is an important staging post. The descent was fast and fun, and seeing the unbelievably huge caverns inside the Berger for the

first time was an experience I can never relive.

THE SCALE OF THE PITCHES, THE TWISTS AND TURNS OF THE NARROW MEANDERS, THE ETHEREAL BEAUTY OF STARLESS RIVER,

the immensity of the Great Rubble Heap. But nothing can compare to the beauty of the Hall of Thirteen at Camp 1. This giant cavern is floored with huge calcite pools, and at the far end, 13 monolithic stalagmites. No picture can do it justice, and capture the experience of the echoing dripping, the moving air that lets you know how vast the cavern is, the darkness beyond the reach of head torches, and the sense of smallness in this ancient place.

On this first trip we took lots of pictures, before heading back out.



Fig 2: In the Hall of the Thirteen – Harry Kettle

I found the journey very difficult. I was no way near peak fitness, having only recovered from COVID a week before, and this was the most prusking I had ever done by a LONG way, (the most I had done before the Berger was JH in Derbyshire, at 191m deep, which I had made a right mess of). Looking back I

realised the Berger was my 10th trip underground;

**CUCC DOES HAVE A
REPUTATION OF THROWING
NOVICES IN THE DEEP END -
THE KILOMETRE DEEP END IN
MY CASE.**

The heat and overexertion of prusiking set off my illness. However, cavers, like the three musketeers, stick together, and I feel so much love for them for sticking with my slow pace.

This is the reason I love caving: the caves are gorgeous, the experience is challenging and wonderful, but really it is the support & friendship of other cavers that makes it exceptional. Caving is fundamentally non-competitive - someone may be a faster or more experienced caver, but at the end of the day you stick together and support each other: cavers have to trust their teammates to be there when they need each other, in a way very few other situations require.

Arriving back into the glorious sun, I was exhausted, and the one hour uphill walk back to the car was an unaccounted challenge. But then we were back at camp, enjoying the sun and the swimming pool.

The weather over this period got hotter and hotter. Though our elevation helped, it was at least 40°C, and often I longed to be back in the cool 7°C of the Berger. After my Camp 1 trip, I had decided I wasn't going to cave with the Cambridge lot again, as my pace was very different to theirs. We took a day relaxing, then the rest of the Cambridge lot set off to do their bottoming trip.

I had been planning a nice day walking in the area, when that night, at the daily camp meeting, Paul Mccarron managed to persuade me to join him on a Berger trip. Like me he had just recovered from COVID, and so had found his Camp 1 trip difficult, so promised that our pace would be slow. We were clear that we did not AIM to reach the bottom, but left the possibility there.

Berger - Bottom trip

Therefore the next day I tested my health with a walk and found myself rushing to the small Autrans shop before it closed for Bastille Day, to buy lots of sweets and chocolate for the trip. I headed to bed early, but was awake to see the Cambridge lot arriving back from their Berger bottoming trip - having completed it in 14 hours!!!

Me and Paul, alongside Ali and Becks, got a lift to the car park early the next morning, walked to the entrance, and got changed. We gave Ali & Becks some time to get ahead of us, before me and Paul said goodbye to the sunlight and headed in. We made it down to camp 1 in good time, where we had some food, left some stuff, and decided that our aim would be to reach camp 2, then see how we were feeling (very aware that it is much easier to go down than up). The passages behind the Hall of Thirteen were even more beautiful than I could have imagined - caverns full of calcite straws, the clattering sound of water pouring through the 'Hosepipe', the slick calcite floor of the German Hall, which looked like it had been formed on the surface of bubbles.

Then we reached the Cascades and the Canals. I can't remember the difference between the two sections, but

the nature of the cave changed here – less large caverns full of calcite, more rift like. And it become difficult for me technically. With horizontal rigging set to keep you up out of the water, almost like via ferrata, I often couldn't find any footholds to traverse on, and had to swing myself sideways, clip in then hang and rest before I could repeat the process, inching along. The tension traverses were fairly fun on the way down – like a zip line, but oh how I would come to hate them on the way back.

We met a lone French caver down here, who was part of the French expedition pushing a different part of the cave. We had said that we would stop at Camp II and reassess, but failed to find camp II. Given that we were probably passed it, and feeling fine, we decided to push on anyway – it's a hard game to play, predicting what you can take on the way back.

Finally we were at Hurricane pitch – this immense pitch involved an awkward crawling traverse along a tiny ledge to get onto it, and even in very low water conditions the sound of water flowing down it deafened any attempts to communicate & we had to resort to whistle commands. From Hurricane it was almost simply a matter of plodding on to the end. But soon we saw lights and heard sound up ahead: it was Ali and Becks, who had just reached the bottom and were taking a rest. Me and Paul left them to go see the pseudo syphon – the deepest point in the Berger you can reach without swimming, at -1100m. We took the necessary photographs, and I ate my squished jam sandwich, and we had bottomed the Berger.



Fig3: Bottom of the Berger – Paul Mccaron

BUT WE HAD TO GET OUT.

After a rest to let Ali and Becks get ahead of us, we began the ascent. We saw the remains of the tent from the 1960s camp, with a neatly arranged pile of echinoid fossils. The first snag came on Hurricane pitch. I made a big mess up on the first rebelay, completely tangling my kit in the ropes. Having overcome that, and with my heart fired up on the adrenaline, I made it to the top, and the awkward (and now much more scary) traverse off the pitch. The canals were as awful as on the way down, but this time more so; by this time it was the early hours of the next morning (my mental clock still suggested it was 6pm), and exhaustion made everything more difficult.

AND THE TENSION TRAVERSES BECAME MY MORTAL ENEMY.

On the first one, I watched Paul do it, it looked okay, and so I gradually inched

my way up by pulling my weight up the rope: hard but okay. But I can honestly say that the tension traverses in the canals were some of the hardest things I have ever done – whether I didn't have the right technique, or my cowstails were too long (likely), or I was simply too weak, it was hell: I would haul myself overhand up my cowstail till I could grab the rope above my ascender, swing to shove it 10cm up the rope, then drop back down in exhaustion. Rest, Repeat, little cry; on and on, and it never seemed to end. My sugar levels had got low, and I was running purely on determination to get out of this cursed area. And I did, eventually.

Paul however, who had gone in front, had grown very cold waiting for me. We were both exhausted, and Paul wanted to get on. But I knew that I desperately needed to stop and get sugar. So we brewed a quick cup of hot 'energy squash' taken from an army ration back.

**IT WAS MIRACULOUS STUFF –
FROM BEING AT AN ULTIMATE
LOW, I WENT IN 10 MINUTES TO
A SUGAR RUSH – LIGHT AND
SOUND RETURNED TO THE
WORLD,**

and even the way I perceived stuff felt different. I tried to keep up a pace as we pushed on up. Soon we had caught up again with Ali and Becks, and had to wait to follow them up the pitches.

The rest of the ascent is all a blur in my memory – scrambling up calcite slopes. Prusiking fuelled on determination alone. Slipping, teeth gritting, and carrying on up.

Then to my surprise, the huge stalagmites around us were the stalagmites of the Hall of Thirteen. A whoop, a sigh and a final scramble, and we had made it to Camp I.

Camp 1 was two 'tents' made from reflective silver blankets, hung on string, and a rock circle where we ate. Paul, Ali, and Becks were wonderful and caring – I hadn't expected to be sleeping in the cave so hadn't brought food. Paul gave me a freeze dried curry, and they insisted I took their puffa jackets to keep warm. The tents were surprisingly effective at keeping in the heat.



Fig4: Camp 1, before IT hit – pic Paul Mccaron

However, In the night I started to feel incredibly ill. The overexertion of the trip (and possibly eating something I couldn't a few days before) had triggered illness, and I sat shaking, huddled in my sleeping bag in immense pain, getting up many times in the night with diarrhoea (and the knowledge that bags of human waste have to be carried out). In retrospect I also find it quite funny; of all the places to have diarrhoea, being crouched over a (very well lined!) Daren drum, wrapped in a sleeping bag to keep warm, isn't quite so bad when you are looking out over the epic gour pools and stalagmites of the Hall of the Thirteen: quite a privilege to stare at the view for

so long really!)). Five hours later everyone else was awake. **When I admitted my situation, the others were very kind**, insisting that they take some stuff out of my bag, and reassuring me to go at my own pace.

And so began the final part of the trip: getting out. Once I got moving things were better than I thought they would be – the pain faded to a manageable level. Setting off up the Great Rubble Heap, it was still a long slog, though not as hard as on the first Camp 1 trip – I knew what to dread, and I knew to pace myself. Becks was struggling a bit so we kept the pace slow. By the time we reached the base of Aldo's we had another break and a brew of hot super energy army squash, and picked up the Red bull we'd left at the base of Aldo's on the way in.

The long series of pitches began at Aldo's, but they had all been rigged with two ropes which allowed us to get up them much faster as a group of four. We also began to see a lot of other people here, as the French who had been pushing the cave beyond Camp II began overtaking us. The pitches were the usual level of hardness but doable. I was kept going by the ever reliable fuels of adrenaline and determination .

The final incident occurred during the Meanders – I had gone on ahead, and just as Paul caught up with me he slipped, seriously injuring his leg and leaving him shaken. Ali – a member of Cave Rescue – checked him over before the entrance series pitches, we all had some sugar, then we headed on up.

I caught sight of the glow of light above me before coming round a bend. The sky was above me, and light reached down into the cave. I could see the face of

Wassil (who had been on entrance duty) looking out over the drop; bringing a mountain of joy. The last pitch became slippery, as lichen began to coat the rock. We greeted the top with hugs, in the glorious light of the sun – and crisps to satisfy a strong craving for salt.

I CRIED A BIT AND LAUGHED A LOT, UNSURE WHAT EMOTION I SHOULD BE FEELING AFTER 30, RELATIVELY TRAUMATIC, HOURS UNDERGROUND.

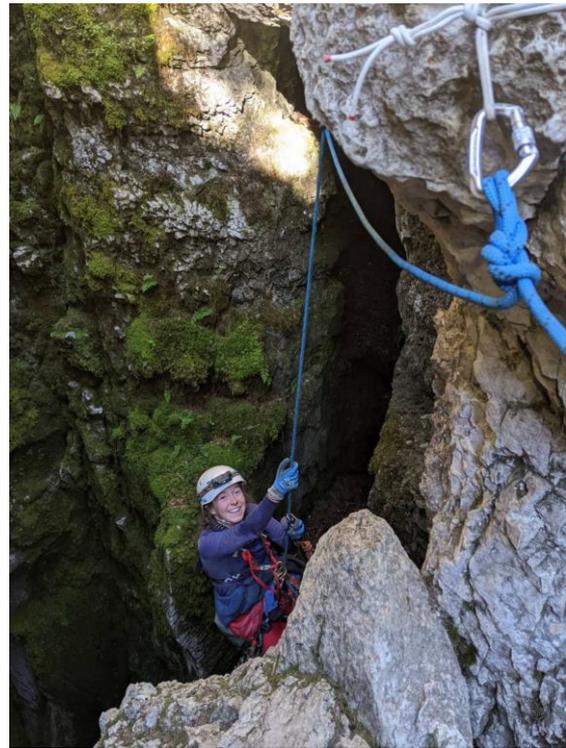


Fig5: Emerging a different person – pic Wassil

Is it worth all this effort, pain, fear? Yes – the beauty is. **And the pain and fear proved again, what the mind can overcome.**

This time I had been sure to keep in mind I still had the walk back to the carpark to overcome, and the four of us – all pretty knackered, took it nice and slow with plenty of breaks. Another

SWCC member was waiting to give us a lift down to Autrans. Sitting Dinner in the gentle and happy company of Wassil (the others now on entrance duty) and then finally, sleep.

Summer Adventure Part 2: Canyoning

The Cambridge band left Autrans late the next day to move to a new campsite slightly deeper in the Vercors. This campsite was in a beautiful location, surrounded by cliffs of limestone. We met Brendon, Hannah Walker, and [???????], and used this time between the Berger and Expo to go canyoning. I had never canyoned before, but found it to be caving in the sun, with more water. I only did two of the canyoning trips as I was quite ill throughout this period, still recovering from the Berger, but the stuff I did was great. I jumped some bigger

jumps than I thought I would be brave enough to. I had another bad experience with illness in Grotte de Gournier, so afterwards spent my time walking on the hills near the campsite, and feeling incredibly lucky to be out among these awe inspiring views, and so privileged to be among amazing friends.



Fig6: The Vercors

Ardeche 2023

The History Day – Jana Podbelsek

After several days of meandering adventures, daring caving escapades, and a "rest day" that involved a 30-kilometer rafting expedition, an eclectic mix of history buffs and nature enthusiasts, comprising three history students (Aila, Joel, Jana) and two earth scientists (Lucy & Buck), collectively decided that

**THE WEATHER WAS SIMPLY
TOO SPLENDID TO SPEND
UNDERGROUND.**

Led by the self-declared leader of historical exploration, El Strobbaro, who claimed fluency in French (to varying

degrees of credibility), we hopped into the generously loaned and somewhat notorious Kirbymobile, aiming explore in the historical wonders of the region.



Pic: Joel Stobbart

Our first destination on what we fondly dubbed "History Day" was the quaint town of Vallont-Pont-d'Arc, where we indulged in a leisurely stroll through the bustling farmer's market and embarked on a mission to hunt down the perfect gelato spot. Aila, our resident gelato aficionado, meticulously scrutinized the offerings of several ice cream parlours before bestowing her seal of approval upon one, leaving us all delighted and excitedly awaiting the adventures ahead. We whiled away the next thirty or so minutes lounging on a picturesque bench in Vallont's main square, waxing poetic about the beauty of life and inadvertently eavesdropping on a German family's domestic saga.

Buoyed by the delightful start to our day, we piled back into the Kirbymobile and set our sights on the highlight of our itinerary: CHAUVET (II).

Chauvet, a spectacular cave renowned for its exceptionally preserved cave paintings, would be amongst our most anticipated sights to visit. However the cave poses a slight predicament: it remains inaccessible to the public, preserving its ancient artistry from contemporary interference. However, a meticulous replica had been constructed nearby, nestled within the contours of a nearby hill. The proposal to visit this captivating site sparked lively debate among the cavers on the Ardeche trip, with dissenters questioning the allure of paying to see a facsimile when one could explore authentic caverns for free. Undeterred by such pragmatic objections, the history buffs championed the pursuit of knowledge in the name of history and eagerly embraced the opportunity to delve into the past, albeit in simulated form.

Thus, we arrived at the site around noon, dutifully paid our admission fees, and prepared to be captivated by the intricate (albeit replicated) cave paintings. Despite

our oversight regarding the cave's limited visiting hours, which necessitated a brief interlude before our scheduled tour, we enthusiastically explored the expansive theme park surrounding the cavern. The initial twenty minutes were dedicated to an immersive visual exhibit showcasing prehistoric fauna, tantalizing us with glimpses of the dynamic cave paintings awaiting within. Our excitement reached a crescendo upon discovering a magnificent stoat among the myriad creatures depicted—a discovery that prompted an impromptu encore for those who initially missed it, and allowed others to take a dance break to the spirited folk music soundtrack of the exhibition.

As hunger pangs began to assert their presence, Joel, our esteemed head historian, cried famine shortly after the exhibition, prompting a trip back to the car, complete with a whimsical impromptu paper trumpet concert. Following this short interlude, we embarked on a leisurely stroll through the Chauvet II park, regaling ourselves with tales of the cave's discovery and contemplating Lucy's slightly improbable infiltration into the exclusive ranks of cave-exploring scientists allowed entry into Chauvet. We took our lunch at a picturesque viewing spot, where we eagerly anticipated our impending foray into the simulated depths of Chauvet II. Lucy and Jana, in a playful nod to their interchangeable stature, even swapped personas, demonstrating the ease with which tiny women could assume each other's identities.



Finally, it was our moment to explore the renowned faux cavern, aptly named Chauvet II. Undeterred by the lukewarm enthusiasm of our French tour guide, we revelled in the immersive experience of traversing an exquisitely crafted replica in our Crocs and casual attire. We had to admit,

THE FAKE-CAVE ITSELF WAS A MARVEL OF CRAFTSMANSHIP,

with meticulously orchestrated light and sound installations enhancing the ambiance. The vibrant cave paintings depicted scenes of primal vitality, from wildcats in pursuit of their quarry to endearing cave bears. We were intrigued to learn of the seasonal cohabitation between humans and bears, with the latter hibernating in the cave during winter months while humans sought refuge during warmer seasons. The tour guide regaled us with tales of speculative theories, including the notion of a cave bear cult, dismissed due to lack of corroborating evidence—a decision that left us bemused, considering the awe-inspiring presence of the bears themselves.

Amidst discussions and mesmerized gazes at the ancient artwork, we inadvertently did what caver do best and strayed from our group, only to find ourselves locked in and unable to exit. Undeterred, we seamlessly assimilated into another tour group, executing a flawless rendition of "We were definitely part of this group all along" to evade potential reprimand by the French. With our escape from the faux depths of Chauvet II secured, and a brief visit to the nearby Chauvet II Museum to satisfy our historical curiosity, the history lovers bid farewell to the expansive Chauvet premises, setting their sights on the next adventure.

In the early afternoon, Joel threw a curved ball our way, suggesting we actually go caving in Grotte Esteban. After deliberation, the group opted instead to stick to above-ground adventures for the day and admire a colossal trebuchet near Roure castle. Despite the castle's closure, we enjoyed the panoramic views, with Lucy and Jana getting lost in the day-deam of powering the inner workings of the giant siege engine like hamsters in a wheel. Plans of strategically getting lost into the castle premises to be able to view the trebuchet from up close were unfortunately foiled by high fences and security cameras. However, the charming town itself provided ample entertainment as we meandered through its labyrinthine cobblestone streets, attempting (with varying degrees of success) to capture a "cool" group photo and witnessing Joel's impromptu conversations with local elders.



Our final destination of the day was the iconic stone arch spanning the river, lending Vallont Pont d'Arc its distinctive name. Here, we indulged in a refreshing dip and a leisurely stroll along the riverbank, savouring the last vestiges of sunlight. With reluctance, the history buffs bid adieu to the scenic vista and got into the Kirbymobile to return to the hut, Joel's daredevil driving accompanied by the melodious strains of "On Days Like These" from "The Italian Job."

As we retraced our path back to the caving hut, reminiscing on the day's

exploits, it became abundantly clear that our History Day had been an unmitigated success—albeit tinged with a hint of trepidation courtesy of Joel's adventurous driving antics.

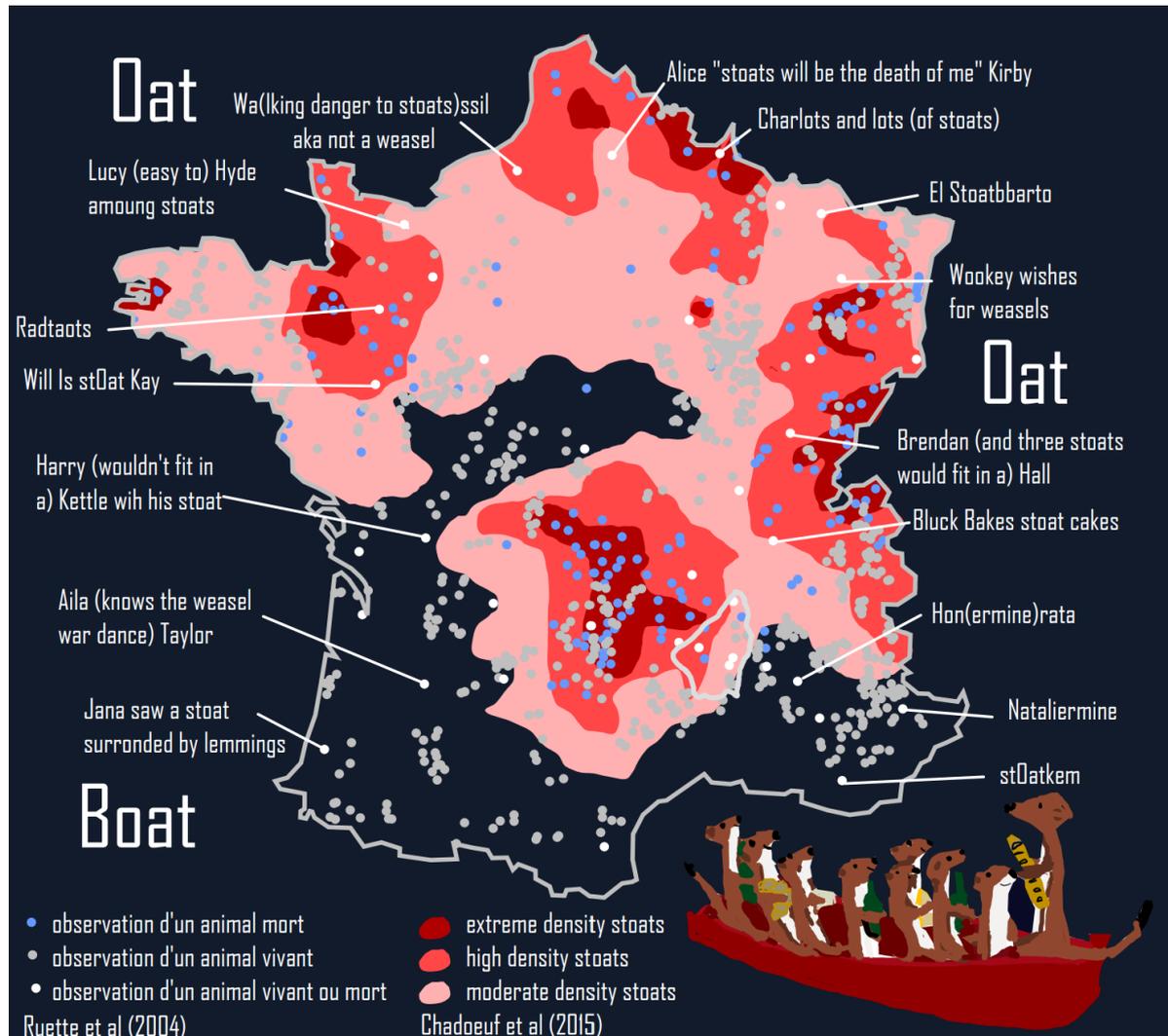


All photos: Joel Stobbar

Ardeche T-shirt



Picture: Front of the Ardeche T-shirt (LH)



Picture: Back of Ardeche T-shirt (LH)

Ardeche : An Ode to Grotty Estevan - *Will Kay*

*Oh Grotty E you are so full
Of stals and helictitse.
Your roof, your floors, your walls, your doors;
All are gleaming bright.
So full are you of wonders new,
There's scarcely room for me.
But I don't mind how tight you bind,
In wonder I am free*

Slovenia 2023

Slovenia & Najdena Jama - *Maria*

A trip to Slovenia was organised as a way to end, for some, the expedition in Austria this past summer, and I was lucky to tag along. We stayed at Speleocamp Laze in the Karst region and it was a week of thunderstorms, goats and many caves. Indeed, the region boasts the highest density of caves in the world, the source of this fact being a pamphlet from the hut. For this report I will focus on the first cave I explored, Najdena Jama, along with Aila, Jana, Oakem, and Wassil, which was located just a short drive away from the hut. It was not large like most of the caves in the area yet still had plenty of potential for exploration and wonder. The promise of human fish awaited but we had to face the first challenge: finding the cave.

As soon as we got into our caving gear and began to head in the direction of the marker on Wassil's map, a torrent of rain descended on us, some of us more lucky than others to be clad in new, waterproof oversuits..

I, FOR ONE, WAS SOAKED TO THE BONE. AND SO BEGAN A QUESTIONABLE PROCESS OF BUSHWHACKING AND TRIANGULATION

in order to find the entrance, complicated by the fact that the rain made it difficult for Wassil to access the map on his phone without getting it wet. Jana offered to take control of the phone and the map, using her hood as protection, but god forbid anybody but

Wassil might gain access to the sacred knowledge that was his phone passcode.

And so we continued to head in a vague direction towards the marker until we came across a tree where adequate cover was provided and then recalibrated. Once we finally came across a hole, there was some disagreement about whether it truly was the cave entrance since it didn't correspond to the mark on Wassil's map, but once it was concluded that there were no other good cave opening candidates nearby, Jana began to rig the entrance at which point the rain promptly let up. Luckily, a survey within the cave near the entrance assured us that we had indeed descended down the correct hole.

The group that had gone the previous day had suggested it would be a dry cave, but the newly fallen rain presented us with a much different experience. While I was attaching my descender at the top of the second pitch, a stream of water was perfectly positioned to trickle down my neck and under my oversuit. This fresh onslaught of water was not very welcome but did add a bit of excitement to the experience. The second pitch also allowed me to practice a hanging rebelay for the first time.

At the bottom, we were met with a relatively large chamber where two mini houses lived, constructed with little bricks fashioned out of mud, one which belonged to a little mud wizard. We were later to find out that one of the houses

had been constructed by the group on our trip that had explored the cave the previous day and were hoping that perhaps we might contribute to the burgeoning village. But alas, after a few photos with the sculptures were snapped, we continued on. As it turned out, these little houses were not the end of the artistic delights we would encounter. Later in the cave, we came across a pregnant woman, a small boy and the face of a shocked caver. All were very impressive but also quite eerie. The interior of the pregnant woman's womb was partially visible, revealing cave formations within, evoking reflections on our maternal motivations for caving.

Although there was not much climbing or crawling, I found this allowed more time to reflect on our surroundings, which at times felt like being isolated on another planet. We were just a few faint lights amidst expanses of dark and gloomy monochrome mud and rock. And so we trudged to the sound of our squelching wellies, having opted to take a right after the first main chamber, and eventually found ourselves at the sump. As we were approaching,

OAKEM ENSURED WE WERE ALL AS QUIET AS POSSIBLE SO AS NOT TO NOT DISTURB THE OLM, ALSO KNOWN AS HUMAN FISH,

who would shy away from noise. We were lucky to be able to observe their pale little bodies and cute arms and legs dotting about as long as we did, perhaps 20 minutes. It was definitely one of the more unique sights I have observed while enjoying a sandwich for lunch, an unusual phenomenon for the fish who

can survive for up to 10 years without food.

On our way back, the impressive mud slides that lined the passages beckoned us to climb and slide down them in a language only the shenanigan hungry caver could understand. The first technique employed, which was to simply run up as fast as possible, proved futile and so other techniques had to be explored including a front crawl digging boots and fingers into the mud and a sort of backwards scoot, digging the heels of the boots into the mud, pioneered by Wassil and eventually leading to his successful summit of the slope. Jana, Oakem and I were soon presented with

A NEW CHALLENGE: WASSIL PELTING MUD AT US IN ORDER TO SABOTAGE OUR EFFORTS.

We then had the idea to form a human ladder where we would each climb and stand on each others shoulders, an idea excellent in theory but awful in practice. I'm not entirely sure what went wrong since I was at the bottom of this ladder, but I ended up with a very muddy face afterwards.

With these childish delights exhausted, much to Alia's relief, we decided to return and explore a passage to the left of the first chamber before calling it a day. Wassil was quite keen to rig what could have been another pitch that descended into a large dark hole by using a natural formation since there was no bolting in sight. However, once the necessary rope was retrieved, the pitch rigged and Wassil descended, we were all getting quite cold. Enough time had elapsed at this point and we were ready to leave so thanks to Jana's authoritative

shouts for Wassil to return, we were soon prusiking up and out into the vibrant colours of the forest and the rich smell of pine, caked from helmet to wellie in mud. The contrast of the eternal cold of the

damp rock to the warmth of the summer forest felt like entering another realm, which seemed to have remained quite sunny for the duration of our underground journey.

Kačna Jama: an epic campaign – *Lucy Hyde*

The campaign began with

**THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:
MAJOR STRUGGLE, GENERAL
FAILURE, SIR (CHEESE) CAVE,
AND OAKMAN ALEXANDER
KYNE.**

Additionally they were accompanied by baby cam and baby paign. Small tackle bags remain nameless.

It Started under starlight the night before as the noble team discussed possibilities, scouring the internet for any hint of how this 250m 'entrance abyss' was to be rigged. With only a video of the approach rigging. a plan of the ginormous system and a profile view from 1888, they had very little hope of making it to the bottom. But after dawn had broken, the brave knights set of on the noble steed in the direction of the cave.

Parking and dressing and then they found the cave entrance, redolent with a well made sign marking the deaths of three souls in this cave, and lovely beach and hazel trees.

Fearless they continued to approach and the rigging began under the well practised hand of Oakman

Alexander Kyne (aka Wassil). The entrance abyss is a vertical tube, 30m across at least and coated in moss at the top. Rain drops glittered in the moss, fracturing light into rainbows.

As we headed down the cave conjoined and split again so that one became two with light flooding down both into the depths. It took an expectedly long time to rig but to everyone's shock we made it to the bottom with 130m of rope and a lot of metal work left. The light from far above made a faint grey glow on the floor, spectacular from the overhang above.

From the pre reading we knew the cave was huge, over 20km - Years of expeditions have pushed it further and further with dives and boats. We knew we couldn't afford much time to explore but headed down the rubble pile then up slope.

Stalagmites two men tall glittered as calcite faces sparkled in our lights, stalactites decorated the walls, and the ceiling was so high as to struggle to be lit. Flat topped stalagmites so tempting to lick.

Reaching a beautiful arch decorated with speleothems we knew it was photo time,

UNFORTUNATELY THE VALIANT TEAM HAS NOT EXPECTED THE GREAT CHALLENGE OF THIS TASK.

Oakman Alexander Kyne took direction requiring perfection, and 40 minutes of photography setting up. After time the remaining crew mutinied, and they headed on for a little before Jana and Wassil headed back to begin ascending.

Me and Lawrence (aka General Failure) continued over a few more hills of rubble and stalactites. Before descending a hand lined slope where the way on continued into a deep abyss. Water drops booming from the walls could be heard at intervals, and another way of ascending up a wall to a hanging tunnel.

We headed back to finish the tale with the epic 250m ascent. Back under the pools of light, a log had grown shoots which had calcified into ghostly forms. Lawrence went up and I followed. I had never derigged something this big and struggled with the challenge. I was so very grateful for Lawrence's support, helping to haul up rope and reaching the bits I couldn't.

The light was still up when we reached the first bits of moss above the squeeze but the stars had arrived when I pulled my way off the last rope. Lawrence, being a star himself, carried the heavy rope up the wired traverse line out of the doline.

And we found Jana (aka Major Struggle) and Wassil (OAK) snoozing in the noble steed.

Expo Reports

The Kraken Wakes: Development of Tunnocks on Expo - *Anthony Day*

The Beginning

Once upon a time, CUCC found a cave called Tunnockschacht. It isn't on the way to either FishFace or Homecoming, so post-covid expo-goers probably think it a myth – but I assure you that it definitely exists. Our story starts in 2013 by which time Tunnockschacht was firmly established as an integral part of the Schwarzmooskogel cave system. There was a tantalising lead at the bottom of a 90m pitch heading down from the main horizontal level. The pitch goes by the name

PROCRASTINATION POT, A MONIKER THAT REFLECTS A CERTAIN DESIRE TO LOOK ALMOST ANYWHERE ELSE TO FIND NEWPASSAGE.

The reason for this reluctance stemmed from an incident some years previously when a team endured an uncomfortable evening waiting out a flood at the bottom of a different big pitch. By 2013, this flood-prone pitch had been bypassed by String Theory, the neighbouring 90m pitch named not just for rigging quality and quantity but because it surprisingly appeared to land in a parallel universe. Nevertheless there was more than a passing suspicion that any flood water would find its way down Procrastination.

Having largely run out of better leads, 2013 saw concerted pushing at the bottom of Procrastination. By the time I got involved, a continuation had been found along a traverse and up a roped climb called Bring on the Clowns reflecting the fact that all the good hangers had been used somewhere else. We had also conclusively proved that the flood water did indeed go down Procrastination as Becka Lawson got caught in a flash flood on her way out.

The way on certainly looked promising: a big pitch with a significant draught. It fell to Chris Densham and myself to carry out the push-survey-derig-everything-must-go trip at the end of expo that ended up taking 20 hours. We managed to cobble together enough gear to get down the 60m pitch, which was christened Number of the Beast after we recorded a survey leg of length 6.66m and inclination +66 degrees. At the base were multiple continuing shafts, most of which looked quite nice. Unfortunately the wind was coming out of the mankiest looking lead, and we part free-climbed, part rigged our way down a chossy rift before eventually running out of gear and time. The lack of equipment and the lateness of the hour contributed to a rather sub-standard rig, which is the main reason that it later became known as Widow Twankey's Knicker Elastic. There was still plenty of wind to encourage a return.

Following the breeze

2014 saw only limited progress as understandable concern about the

flooding risk encouraged most of the expo to look elsewhere. Chris and Andy Chapman managed to get down the choss heap with a disconcerting amount of boulder surfing. This culminated in a piano sized rock trundling over the edge of the next pitch only to become wedged in a less-than-convincing fashion, which encouraged the placement of a lengthy bolt traverse across a blank wall to stay out of the line of fire. The next pitch was dropped and that was that.

When 2015 rolled round, I had the rare luxury of being able to spend an entire six weeks in Austria, so set my stall out to have a good go at pushing the deep lead. The pushing front was already 450m deep, and I had hopes of encountering another phreatic level similar to the Subway and Forbidden City that had been found in Steinbrückenhöhle some years previously. Any doubts about the potential of the lead were dispelled by a visit to the pushing front. The head of the next pitch was slightly constricted, and the draught was absolutely howling: while bolting, David Walker reported that the drilling dust was blown up the pitch.

The pitch descended in three stages until a big black space hove into view: our first sight of what came to be known as Kraken chamber. This vast breakdown chamber turned out to be 60m long and 30 m wide on two levels separated by a 65m pitch. This took two trips to rig as it was quite tricky to steer clear of the loose soil and rocks that wanted to follow us down - but we eventually found some decent rock for a fine 40m free hanging descent to the floor.

The ongoing leads at the lower level of Kraken chamber didn't look all that

promising, so there was a brief diversion while we took a closer look at the upper level. A traverse round the wall led us into another large chamber named Anthemusa, which is apparently the island home of the Sirens of Greek mythology. There were a few leads: a couple of pitches and a climb up that needed bolting, but nothing that was draughting or that looked especially promising.

It seemed that we were running out of leads, so Chris and I headed off to the lower level of Kraken to tick them off on another push-survey-derig-everything-must-go end of expo trip...Except it didn't quite pan out that way. The one lead we had left looked like little more than a gap behind an enormous fallen flake. We thrutched our way up and around the back of the boulder, went round a corner and found ourselves staring down a 5m round phreatic ramp heading down at 30 degrees. We tied on our one remaining rope and headed down Octopussy as it became known, but the rope wasn't remotely long enough to reach the bottom.



Octopussy PHOTO CREDIT: Ian Peachey

It was at this point that

**CHRIS REMEMBERED THAT HE
HAD PACKED A LENGTH OF**

6MM CORD INTENDED FOR DEVIATIONS.

Having diligently checked that his jammers and descender would grip, he fastened it on and headed off into the unknown whilst I perched on the sandy floored tube completely unattached to anything trying not to follow him. Needless to say the cord didn't reach the floor and we were forced to admit defeat before our luck ran out. Any new cavers who have had their ears bent by either Chris or myself concerning lax attitudes to safety will now appreciate that such admonishment is very much a case of "Do as I say, not do as I do."

Camp Kraken

We clearly had a very promising lead on our hands, but getting to it was starting to become hard work. The pushing front was some 650m deep, and pushing trips in 2015 had been taking around 15 hours. Happily, the lower level of Kraken chamber sported an alcove with a flat mud floor and a water supply, which made it an obvious choice for a campsite. We spent much of the next year planning how we were going to do this, and Andrew Atkinson kindly provided us with a custom built tent.

At the start of the 2016 expo, Chris, Nathan Walker and myself went in to establish "Camp Kraken". The flat mud floor of my memory turned out to be not quite so flat in reality, so

SOME LEVELLING WORK WAS PERFORMED USING SUB-NEANDERTHAL DIGGING IMPLEMENTS THAT WE FOUND LYING AROUND.

We managed to set up a more than serviceable camp; then it was time to go pushing.



Luxurious accommodation at Camp Kraken PHOTO CREDIT: Chris Densham



Your narrator with the well-appointed Camp Kraken toilet facilities, featuring a bog roll that I found particularly satisfying to use. PHOTO CREDIT: Chris Densham



View of Kraken chamber from the campsite. Note the figure in the top right who is ascending a rope. This is a very useful aid when the route out from camp

involves ascending a 65mpitch. PHOTO CREDIT: Becka Lawson

I admit to a certain degree of trepidation at this point. We basically only had one lead: what were we going to do if it crapped out? I was mentally preparing a sales pitch for why people should come to camp to push the uninspiring leads in Anthemusa some 65m higher up the cave. In the end, I Needn't have worried. I got to go first and, equipped with a longer rope than the previous year, I got to the bottom of Octopussy, and was relieved and delighted to find fossil phreatic passages heading off in multiple directions.

The find sparked something of a feeding frenzy as happy potholers headed to camp to get their share of the action. The area became known as Hydra since, for a while, it seemed that, for every lead we managed to kill, three more popped up. After a while we started running into sumps, which did not come as a surprise since pretty much all other deep leads in the vicinity had a tendency to end the same way. What was unusual was finding cave life in the form of

PSEUDOSCORPIONS RUNNING AROUND ON THE WALLS,

which I don't think any of us had seen before or since – though when we excitedly reported our finds to Robert Seebacher, he seemed to suggest they were common as muck.

My second camping trip, in the company of Mark Dougherty and Luke Stangroom, turned out to be rather eventful. We had a reasonable couple of days ticking off leads, and on the morning

of our third day prepared to leave, at which point Mark declared that he couldn't find the rope. I wandered over to show the senile old sod where it was, but it rapidly became apparent that the rope really wasn't where it was supposed to be. When we shone our lights up the pitch, we made out a coil of rope sitting on a ledge some 20m or more up the pitch. We were left to ponder who had managed to get the rope caught up in their gear, prusik up a 40m free hanging pitch oblivious to the extra weight, and then fail to notice when 40m of rope deposited itself on the ledge near the top*.

We now knew that there was going to be a call out in 19 hours time, but there wasn't much we could do about it as we had no means of communicating with the surface. However, we had plenty of food, light and drill battery power, so had a bonus day of pushing, rigging a pitch that we called Indian Rope Trick. Meanwhile, on the surface, our call out inevitably expired and the expo rescue machine whirred into action. Rob Watson and Nat Dalton were the fast team sent in to find out what had happened, a second and third wave of rescuers were dispatched at intervals and the Austrian Rescue team were alerted. Rob and Nat were amused and relieved to find that we were merely marooned, and the message that we were ok made it out of the cave pretty much as Robert and others landed at the Tunnockschacht entrance in a helicopter, which promptly left again denying the rescuers a lift down the hill.

Indian Rope Trick turned out to be a very significant lead indeed. The next camping party pushed down and soon they could hear the sound of lots of water. Rob's log book entry reads:

“After coming out through the slot, what I saw was just incredible - the absolute essence of why saving is such an amazing exploratory sport. An absolutely huge passage, at least 15x20m width for height, and sloping steeply down at around 45 degrees. For those who have been to Octopussy, think slightly less aesthetically pleasing in terms of true borehole shape but overall far more impressive. The roar of the water was by this time was truly impressive - similar in size to Penyghent’s streamway. Caught up with exploration fever, Chris and myself climbed a long way down the boulder ramp until Chris got a hold of himself and decided we were being unnecessarily silly.....After [rigging] this ramp, we headed down through the slippery boulder slope below the master cave only to find the most amazing development at the bottom: an upward ramping phreatic borehole 4x4m and certainly getting bigger!”

This team also had an interesting time escaping from the cave as a flood pulse turned up when Rob was part way up Procrastination. A quick change over to descend and several hours cowering in a bothy bag later they made it out of the cave and down the hill with the survey notes.



Not-so-luxurious accommodation for waiting out a flood at the bottom of

Procrastination. PHOTO CREDIT: Ian Peachey

It was expo dinner day, and I remember typing the data into the computer that evening with the party in full swing to discover that the new passage –

SONG OF THE EARTH – WAS WELL OVER 800M DEEP. MOST SIGNIFICANTLY, IT WAS WELL BELOW THE LEVEL OF THE SUMPS.



Song of the Earth PHOTO CREDIT: Ian Peachey

1000m depth beckoned, but alas it was not to be. The final camping trip made it to a depth of 903m before bottoming out at a dried out sump, the stream having sunk into a pile of rocks some wayback up the passage. With 3500m of passage surveyed, including the deepest pushing CUCC have ever done in Austria relative to the entrance, it was hard to be too disappointed.



Katey Bender exploring the draughting mud sump at the bottom of Song of the Earth. Let it not be said that we didn't put significant effort into finding a deeper continuation. PHOTO CAPTION: Chris Densham

The End

There were still plenty of leads left after the 2016 expedition, and Camp Kraken was occupied during both the 2017 and 2018 expeditions. Whilst there were plenty of interesting new discoveries, in practice these years did not match 2016 for excitement. The expedition's attention turned towards Balkonhöhle and other new caves and, faced with diminishing returns and dwindling interest, it became clear that 2018 would be the last year of pushing in the depths of Tunnockschacht.

There was an interesting epilogue however. Exploration in Balkonhöhle in 2018 yielded a 200m pitch dropping into a huge, draughting phreatic trunk passage. Heading south, the explorers eventually came across some existing

survey stations. These turned out to be in Anthemusa: they had dropped down the climb deemed unlikely to go anywhere in 2015. Maybe those Sirens had a point. The apparent lack of draught is assumed to be because the air flow is primarily at ceiling level, with the air heading up Number of the Beast, Procrastination and friends and ultimately to one of the many lower exits to the Schwarzmooskogel system.

To put the deep finds in context, we have to go back to 1982. In that year, a major streamway in Stellerweghöhle draining east from the Schwarzmooskogel ridge was pushed to a sump at the same altitude as the Alt Aussee lake (about 750m) where the water is presumed to resurge. Since that time, all attempts to push deep have been thwarted: very few stream passages have been discovered and those that have been found tend to terminate in sumps at altitudes between 1150 and 1300 m. Given the lack of water spouting out of the side of the mountain at these altitudes, these sumps must be perched. The streamway in Song of the Earth drains west from the Schwarzmooskogel ridge down to altitude of 960m and heading.... Who knows where. So the moral of the story is that, speleology as in all things, perseverance will pay off in the end; but you shouldn't be surprised if it takes 34 years.

FOOTNOTE

* It was Becka.

Expo trip report 2018- *Ruairidh Macleod*

I was lying tightly but comfortably on the small mattress bed in the back of Wookey's van; we were on our way back from Bad Aussee, and being the last to leave, the van was pretty cramped with accumulated crap abandoned by other cavers. As the other passenger seat had been fettled into a toilet bowl and seat (complete with flushing cistern), my role was mostly to doze on the bed in the back. I had just received Elaine's tasting notes for the caves of the year, and was perusing them exhaustedly, to the gentle distraction of Wookey's American podcast on civil rights for cyclists in the 1870s, playing from the radio in the front.

Lost John's: a sharp, steely though not unpleasant first taste, with dark depths and a long-lasting, entertaining, slightly desperate aftertaste.

WOULD PAIR WELL WITH A LASAGNE, OR EGG AND CHIPS.

Grotte de St Marcel: a heavy, deep luxurious honeyed mouthfeel, with notes of new wood and coprolite. A velvety, grand taste, full of playful little intricacies and christmassy notes, with a deeply satisfying aftertaste.

Swildons: a playful, easy drink at first, but soon reveals an underlying depth of maturity and sincerity. Pleasant farmyard aroma, though with a slight greasiness to the mouthfeel. Preferable in the spittoon; a perennial favourite.

Aggie: a long, dry white, with a challenging complexity greatly appreciated by the connoisseur. The reward is in the final notes of soft crystal

sharpness, before the long, drawn-out aftertaste.

...a fine taste of wet slate... will leave you light-headed... with notes of apricot and *Drosophila*...

Slowly, Ms. Oliver's ebullient prose lulled me to sleep...

I'm in Tunnocks, all alone near the bottom of Procrastination, the vast wet pitch invisibly looming up above me. We had been coming out of camp in a staggered retreat, but a sudden flow of water meant I now had to wait it out before carrying on with the prusicking. Silently, I was glad it was only Jon who would be coming up behind me, rather than the wrath of Becka for having caught up sooner than expected. I put on my polythene raincoat insulation layer over my oversuit and check my watch - 18:09, but it's cold and feels like it's been an age already, staring at the light grey rock and listening to the water. But at least it's dry, and I'm not drowning on a pitch head with two pendulous tacklesacks swinging me around from beneath.

19:00 now and still no sign of Jon; part of me is panicking, as the water shows no signs of abating, and I'm pulling out my thick synthetic warm coat to keep warm, from the drybag in the smaller camping-kit tacklesack. Another 20 minutes passes. And then another 25 minutes. And another 30 minutes. And then suddenly there's sounds of scuffling and a person coming along the passage behind me.

'Jon?' I shout. 'Is that you? What's happening? Why have you taken so long?'

'Hullo!' says the cheerful voice of Wookey. 'Is that a Rory ahead of me? I'm not Jon I'm afraid. I haven't seen him yet, actually.'

I'm both massively relieved and also now slightly panicking in a different way. Wookey was meant to leave a whole hour after me, half an hour after Jon had left. Where the hell was he?

'You definitely didn't see anything of Jon on your way here I guess?'

'No, I was a bit confused to find you here, and not Mr Toft.'

'Shit, I guess he must have got lost somewhere between here and camp.'

'Ah, sounds like a bit of a fuck up then. What are you still doing hanging around here? I didn't expect to see you until we got back to top camp.'

'I'm just waiting for it to stop thundering down Procrastination'

Wookey wanders out of the tunnel I've been sheltering in, into the hall at the bottom of Procrastination, then returns.

'Oh yes. Ah. Waiting seems like the sensible thing to do.'

'What should we do about Jon? Should we both go back and find him? Or one of us wait here until the water stops to get out and let people on the surface know? It's nearly two hours since I would have expected him to get here.'

'Uuh, yes. That would be the sensible thing to do'.

I notice that Wookey's oversuit is completely soaked. This puzzles me as it would be quite awkward and wilfully stupid to get yourself that wet at the bottom of Procrastination for no reason.

'Uuum, Wookey; why the hell did you get so wet?'

Wookey turns away and doesn't say anything. As he turns around, I see that his usually tattered oversuit has strange vertical tears in the back. As he was closer to me, I also notice the strong, unexpected smell of iron, like tasting pennies, filling my nose and in the back of my throat.

'Are you ok Wookey?'

He stands completely still, with his back still turned to me.

'WHY DO YOU THINK I ONLY HAVE ONE NAME, RORY?'

Did you really think it was because I was some kind of fucking hipster individualist, too cool for a surname, some kind of obsessive nerding computer geek who only wanted to be known by his goddamn internet handle?'

He turns his head around to look at me slowly. But in a terrifying Exorcist-style full 180° turn, slowly and smoothly, without moving his shoulders at all. His face is deathly white, and his irises red.

I stumble back across the rocks on the cave floor.

'Or is it because I've only ever had one name, one name which in ancient times mortals feared to say, one name that conjured terror in the hearts of cave-dwellers, a name soaked in blood and cider? My *name* is Wocig, and I have been

here long before you lanky students showed up.'

He has completely transformed from a jolly, grotty little old man to a demonic monster in oversuit and harness. He's turned his body round to face me as well now, and I can hear something cracking and ripping the fabric of his oversuit behind him.

'This body's human disturbed me 33 years ago, when he violated my chamber deep beneath the ground, and for the first time in centuries, I had matter, flesh and blood again, that I could control.'

Huge thin spider legs have split out of his back, shiny black and covered in black hairs, and ending in needle points.

'Caving is a dangerous sport. Every so often, someone meets with an *accident*. Such delicious pain.'

I'm paralysed with fear now, this has got to be a nightmare. What the fuck is happening?

'Jon barely lasted half an hour when I peeled his skin off. He died far too quickly. I'm going to take my time to torture you.'

He scuttles round to block the way back towards Number of the Beast, moving instantly fast on a combination of his four human limbs and the four spider limbs sprouted from the centre of his back. He looks up at me and I can strongly taste the overpowering metallic smell of blood from his mouth now. I start retching to throw up.

Suddenly, his eyes explode. A pair of black, sharp, hairy pedipalps burst out

of his eye sockets, coated in blood and vitreous eyeball fluid. I snap out of it, and

PULL OUT MY ICE-AXE FROM THE TOP OF MY TACKLESACK.

The others had laughed and made fun of me for bringing it up to topcamp, and I had leaned into the joke, bringing it down to camp Kraken with me. Three times I bring the pick of the ice-axe into his head and shoulders, and then use the adze to chop the base of one of the spider legs at the joint in his back, severing it clean off.

The thing that had been Wookey topples back and shrieks inhumanly, then scuttles back down the passage. I clip the ice axe and leash to my harness, and stagger/run across to the rope at the bottom of the pitch and attach my hand jammer, pull the rope down, then chest-jammer and panton, and begin ropewalking as fast as I can. My brain was exploding with adrenaline, and whether I clipped in at rebelay or not was a blur. I hardly feel the fact that I'm soaked through from the water on Procrastination. String Theory, Usual Suspects, Caramel Catharsis, the ice ramp, and then the entrance series. I'm still clipped to my personal tacklesack, and having taken it up Procrastination, decide to keep it with me. By the time I'm past the free-hanging rebelay and can smell the surface, I'm still fixated only on getting back to top camp, and being among other people. I sprint across the plateau in the twilight, panicking whenever I have to stop to look for the reflectored cairns. At last, I'm up the slope of stone slabs to top camp, and coming into Stone Bridge bivvy again, and can hear all the voices of cavers festering around and the smell of curries and instant noodles.

The first person who comes forward from the stove is Wookey, completely normal now. I gasp and freeze.

‘Hullo Rory. It was kind of you to leave that tacklesack full of rope abandoned for me at the bottom of Procrastination. I guess you’re ok? We were a bit worried about you, taking a while coming out behind me.’

He reaches over to touch me on the neck, and then everything goes black.

I woke up sweating and confused. What the hell was that dream? It was so fucking vivid and realistic. Jon had left the expedition a week earlier than expected, and come to think of it, it was a bit strange. He had just disappeared, Wookey telling everyone at top camp

that he had to get back to Norway for a family emergency. And no one had seen him go; he apparently just got the train from Bad Aussee. The outside of my left arm ached sharply, just below the bicep, a pain which I’m sure hadn’t been there before; like a vaccine injection. Suddenly, I realised I couldn’t move at all, and began really panicking. I could move my eyes, but nothing else; I was completely immobilised, lying in the back of the van.

A VAN WHICH I NOW REALISED HAD STOPPED SOMEWHERE, AND WAS IN TOTAL SILENCE.

Suddenly, I can smell/taste the overwhelming metallic tang of pennies in the air around me, coming from behind my head.

Expo 2022 Summer adventure Part 3 – *Lucy Hyde*

Stoney Bridge Kresh and Retirement Home

Continued from ‘Diarreaoh in the Berger’ The next part of the adventure was Expo in Austria.

To get to Austria, Alice, Harry, Oakem and I drove through Italy. We spent a night in the ruins of an old paper mill in the hills above Lake Garda, and held our breath through road tunnels.

We arrived in Austria singing Helikopter 117, and reached Bad Aussee in the afternoon of the second day, where we found the expo basecamp at ‘The Gasthof Staud’n Wirt’. The wonderful

Hilde made us very welcome, with lots of homemade schnaps. On the campsite the ‘potato hut’ is a lovely wooden building that we have to use – with the beers stored in the Potato Hut, and the frying of immense amounts of potatoes in the Bier Tent.

We set up our giant group tent, and enjoyed a dinner at the Gasthof. I took my first trip up to top camp two days later, to

deliver a load of caving gear. Half of the walk is on lovely paths, surrounded by alpine meadows and cows with ringing bells, but then you leave all paths behind and head out onto the Limestone pavement. The terrain is rugged, spiky and full of cracks. The way to top camp is guided with cairns, though it is very easy to miss them and go off route. Carrying heavy loads over this terrain was tough & I found it intimidating to start.

After the long trek, we finally arrived at top camp, where ‘Stoney Bridge’ came into view: the large limestone arch that gives it shelter (as well as a complex set up of tarps). The sleeping area has been terraced over the years, and at the bottom the ‘kitchen’ is set up with gas stoves, big sealed tubs full of food and goods, and at night, lit by the glow of candles.

A few days later I was up at top camp to stay.

Top Camp is, I believe, the most beautiful place I have ever seen in the world. The sun sets over the mountains on the horizon, filling the whole sky with colour. And when the weather changes you can sit out, watching the storms roll in across the distant Dachstein glacier.

The limestone plateau stretches out, spotted with mini pines.

**THE SKY AT NIGHT IS FILLED
WITH SO MANY STARS YOU CAN
NO LONGER SEE THE
CONSTELLATIONS.**

I slept beside friends, listening to rain filtering through the rock, breathing the clear cold air.

Caving in Austria was again different to any I had done before. Unlike France, the caves are not beautiful or filled with calcite formations (though there are some interesting though rarer calcite formations to be found). Additionally it was cold. The caves were a constant 2°C, and some passages had strong breezes that made it even harder



Fig11: Sunset with new friends – pic: Joel Stobbart

to stay warm when you were waiting on someone rigging or surveying the cave.

I was involved in surveying in Balcony cave and in Happy Butterfly Cave. Some of my highlights from Expo are:

- Sleeping out under the stars on the limestone plateau. Some nights at top camp I carried my camp bed out from under the tarp onto the flat limestone before top camp. Under the moon the limestone would glow a gentle silver. Shooting stars fell regularly. I woke to the warm sunrise over the distant Dachstein glacier
- The Kresh. The group of young first timers on expo became known as ‘the kresh’ (aka creche) for our constant giggling and silliness. There was so much fun, games, gossip, and singing. It was so special to live amongst these wonderful people.



Fig8: Inexplicable behaviour is a symptom of the kresh – pic Joel Stobbart

- The beauty of top camp.
- The food. It was certainly not a culinary masterpiece, but the joy of custard porridge, or the morning's third packet noodle, or a big portion of boil in the bag curry, is a very special thing, when all you eat on a 10 hour caving trip is sweets and chocolate. And a big pile of salty & oily chips with salty & oily egg on return to base camp was the perfect thing. –



Fig7: Dinner on the plateau – pic: Joel Stobbart

- Caver songs. Though most are terrible parodies of bad pop songs, singing together in the caves brings so much joy.
- Surveying. I really enjoy the systematic rigour of cave surveying, particularly being on 'book': recording the measurements taken by the teammate with the laser & drawing out 2d plans and elevations of the cave passage. It is very closely related to the geological mapping of my degree (though I never enjoyed how cold you get surveying in a 2°C cave).
- Finding a new cave. I was able to name a huge chamber we found at the bottom of Happy Butterfly Cave. It was a 60 m pitch (which feels ginormous when you are descending into it from a tiny crack in the roof), with a bolder choke at the bottom. I called it 'defying gravity' for the absurdly large boulder that was

suspended, as if by magic, in the middle of the chamber.

- The 'no spanner' trip – one of my early caving trips was so full of mistakes it became very funny. It started with Mealy forgetting her over suit and having to walk all the way back to top camp to get it. Then Frank lost me and Oakem in the cave deciding, inexplicably, we had gone to get water. Then having regrouped and finally reached the spot we were meant to rig, we all realised that no one had remembered to bring a spanner, so we wouldn't be able to tighten any bolts! Me and mealy decided to start digging out the mud in a blocked up tunnel like moles with our hands – completely unnecessary given the amount of unexplored passages on expo, but good fun.
- Digging Matilda. Me and Mealy learnt to survey in another tiny passage we had aimlessly decided needed digging. We came armed with shovels. By 'digging' this meant lying horizontally in a narrow passage and singing "Don't come a digging Matilda with me" for quite a time before deciding we'd tested Martin's patience quite enough.
- The geology. The Austrian limestone was full of fascinating fossils, weak interbeds, faults, and interesting hydrological features. Descending down the entrance series in Balcony Cave, there are Megladont Bivalves 30cm across, and some huge corals that cause the surface to look pockmarked. One of the teams that camped in the Balcony cave found a vertebrate spine fossil.

- The gryke



Fig9: Grikey!

My last day on Expo, was the day of the expo dinner. I was very sad to leave top camp for the last time and enjoyed a final night out under the stars. Expo Dinner involved lots of food, lots more Schnaps, lots of speeches, and lots of fun, with the Kresh table plotting ways to keep everyone entertained, including throwing the expo leader into the river at the Gasthof. The next day I set off in Luke's car for the long drive back to the UK.

I had had a remarkable time I will always remember, visited cave no human has seen, learnt so much and saw such beautiful sights.



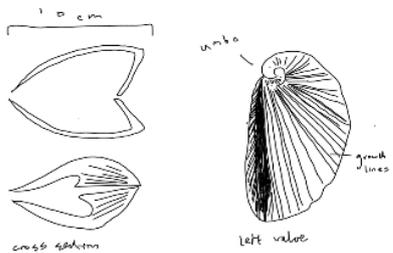
Fig10: On the Losser Plateau – Pic: Jonty Pine

Expo T Shirt 2022

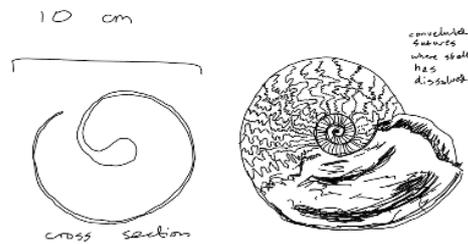
Expo t-shirt 2022 front (LH)

UNCC EXPO 2022

A Bunch of old fossils



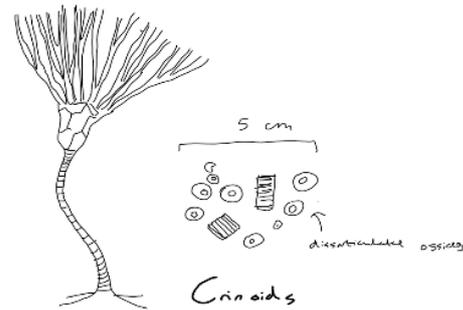
Bivalve 'Meglodon' - Triassic
 'cow step'
 - shallow marine
 - eurytopic zone



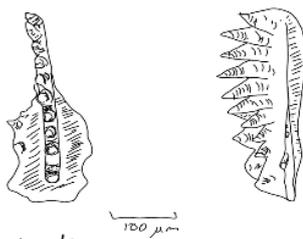
Ammonites
 - marine
 - predatory



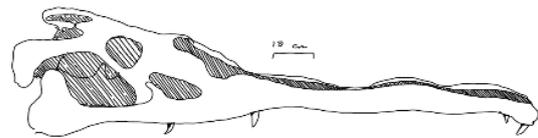
Homo caveians
 - sub terrestrial
 - omnivorous



Crinoids
 'sea lilies'
 - pentaradial symmetry
 - attach to substrate
 - filter feeders



Conodonts
 - both structure of jointless eel-like vertebrates
 - marine



Mystrosuchus 'spoon crocodile'
 - Late Triassic
 - fish eating

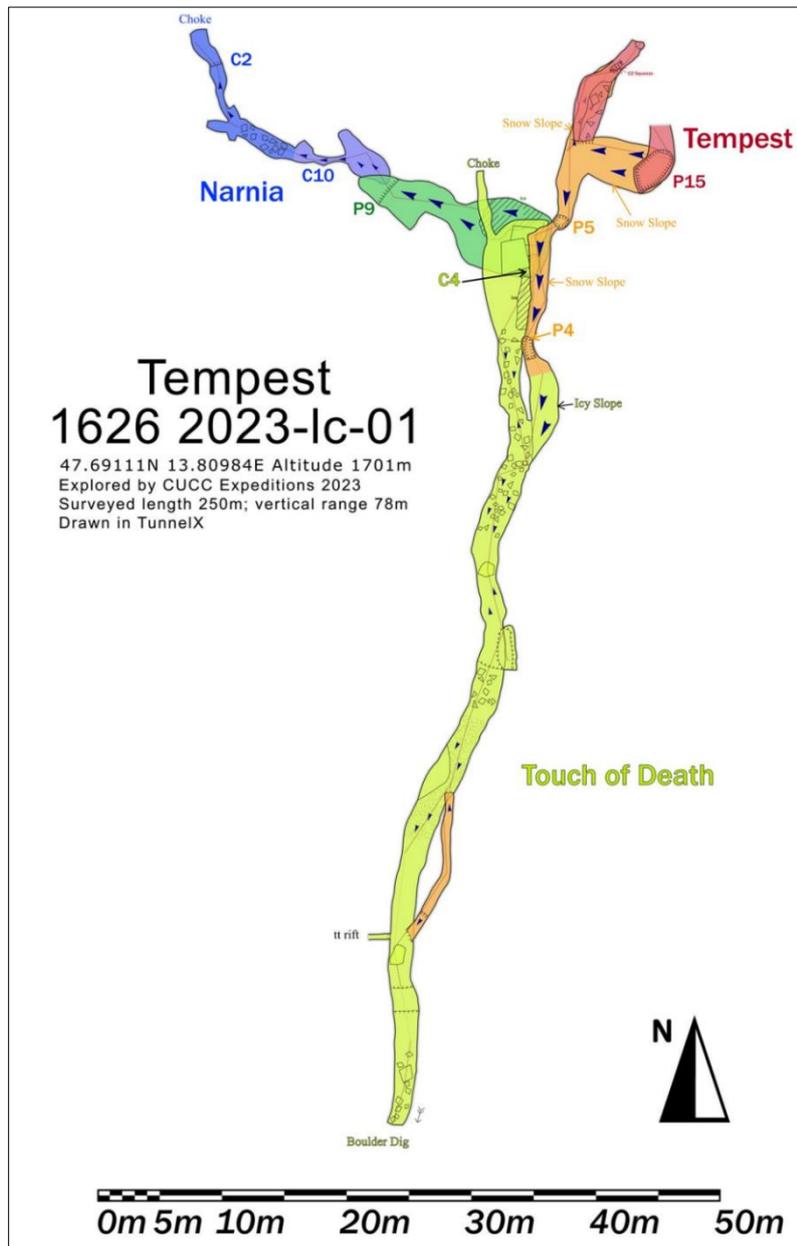


The Lösser Plateau, Austria



Expo T-shirt 2022 Back (LH)

The Tempest Diaries – Expo 2023 – Joel Stobbart



Tempest Survey (Credits: Ash Gregg/Lizzie Caisley)

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a new cave for Expo! Admittedly one that only kept us occupied for a grand total of five days, but an interesting development nonetheless. Before crapping out, this felt like a very promising cave – a large initial entrance pitch sheltered by the peak of a small hill, with promising leads both to the left and right of the base

unobscured by fallen rock. Given that much of the caving this year has revolved around deeper leads, it was helpful to have a shallower project for less-experienced/lazier cavers to take the pressure off those leading deeper trips. It was a significant point of pride for me that

THIS PROJECT WAS ALMOST CONDUCTED IN A LARGE PART BY FIRST-TIME EXPO-GOERS – EVIDENCE, IF IT IS NEEDED, THAT INEXPERIENCE DOES NOT EQUAL INCOMPETENCE.

The bolting, rigging, surveying and pushing all felt like a showcase of what those involved had learnt in the past three weeks.



Fig1: The entrance to Tempest. Note the rather sharp deviation (definitely not rigged off a bit of baler twine Ely found in his bag), which was fortunately later adjusted.

Situated around 100 metres south of the entrance to Fishgesichthöhle, in a depression at the centre of a tiered limestone knoll, Tempest was discovered by myself, Emily, Lizzie, Tom and Merryn at the end of a delirious day of prospecting under the hot hot Styrian sun. Stumbling blindly into a dense patch

of bunde, we discovered an impressive-looking crack in the side of the rockface in a patch of lush vegetation reminiscent of the Lost World. Mabbett began bolting a traverse but we were chased off by impending weather, and were discouraged from continuing by a multiple-day stint festering at base camp.



Fig2: Initial bolting of the entrance to Tempest. Everyone looking very serious. Lizzie “helped”.



Fig3: Big Tom and myself in Narnia. Chossy death to the left, and sexy ice formations to the right. (Photo credits: Lizzie)

Returning to our efforts on Monday, a small team comprising myself, Lizzie, Tom and Ely completed the traverse but

were halted in further efforts by Tom exploding the drill. Successive efforts pushed the more promising lead down a 45° slope of scree and snow which reached a choke that again continued in two directions, a short downwards pitch and a chossy ledge to the left. The team installed a short traverse and dropped on a single bolt into a chamber which became known as Narnia due to the sizeable frozen waterfalls and other ice formations dotted around.

The following day we were joined by Ash and Zac, who began surveying a horizontal passage reaching out from the base of Narnia while the original team began surveying the sloping chamber surrounded by ice formations in the opposite direction. The former group had considerably more success, bagging a grand total of 100 metres of horizontal walking phreas before Ash, true to form, promptly killed the lead. Meanwhile, Team Narnia made excruciatingly slow progress surveying down to another pitch around 30 metres away from the main chamber, which they then bolted (excruciatingly slowly). I was dealt one of the biggest disappointments of my entire life when Big Tom eventually dropped down this hole of choss, frozen waterfall and ice chunks to announce that it was completely choked at the bottom. After days of telling ourselves it surely wouldn't go anywhere, with this latest discovery we had dared to dream only to be crushed a short while later. But at least we had found some nice ice formations.

However, the saga did not end there... determined not to let this be the end, I descended down next to Tom and began casting wildly around for some continuation in this latest bit of cave, a



Fig4: An example of said formations. Some even survived Tom's crowbar-assisted efforts at improving pitch safety. (Photo credits: Lizzie)

vertical tube roughly two metres in diameter floored with fallen rock. I discovered two small holes to the left and right,

BARELY BIG ENOUGH TO FIT A HEAD IN BUT DEEP AND ECHOING WHEN ROCKS OR PRIMAL SCREAMS WERE CAST INTO THEM.

Lizzie by this stage had decided any further effort was futile and, abandoning the hapless males to their desperate scrabbling, prusiked gracefully out of the cave. Not to be dissuaded, I managed to haul enough rocks away from the left-hand entrance to reveal a squeeze just large enough to accommodate a caver. Tom tried it first and quickly decided he didn't fancy it, so I stripped off my SRT kit and wriggled in



Fig5: The "hopeless" squeeze, sans SRT kit... (Photo credits: Lizzie)



to ascertain that the floor of the chamber

Fig6:which widened into this promising stretch of rift. (Photo credits: Lizzie)

was in fact a wedged boulder over a large rift. I got no further as Lizzie was waiting for us on the surface and another storm blowing in, but we left feeling vindicated; Tempest was continuing, and Tomb Raider was born.

Our final day in Tempest was also conveniently our last day on the Plateau before leaving Expo. Having espoused the virtues of our baby to the others at Top Camp, we managed to convince a small tourist team to come and visit while we beavered away at Tomb Raider. We had it in our heads that a rope was needed to get down the rift, and throwing caution (and cave conservation) to the wind, we planned to extend the opening with hammer and chisel to enable entry on-rope. After Ely and myself had blasted away for an hour, we realised that it was actually quite possible to down-climb the rift safely without needing the rope.

ALL OUR EFFORT WAS FOR NOTHING, BUT AT LEAST WE'D HAD FUN, I TOLD MYSELF THROUGH GRITTED AND GRITTY TEETH.



Fig7: Merryn doing unspeakable things with a disto at the end of Tomb Raider rift.

Having assembled a crack surveying team of the smallest members of the party, we clambered into a deep and narrow rift with another impressive frozen waterfall at one end. I bounded



Fig8: More ice formations in Tomb Raider. My desperate prayers to the gods of cave conservation went unanswered.

ahead, squeaking excitedly about drafts and continuations, before sadly discovering that the lead crapped out in every possible direction. Disappointed but content with what we had achieved, we whipped round with the disto and collected photographic evidence before hauling out the ropes and saying goodbye to Tempest for the last time.

All in all, this was a fun project to have for our last week. It was a shame not to leave further leads to be explored on the



Fig9: Returning to the top of the rift, we were greeted by Tom "frozen wizard" Phillips. He was only mildly hypothermic.

second half of Expo, but we still left satisfied; I felt especially pleased to have found the rift in Tomb Raider, demonstrating that blind obstinacy sometimes bears results. Ultimately, the whole escapade goes to show that prospecting can be just as fun as deep caving, and provides a good environment for expedition newcomers to hone their skills.

All photos mine except where credited.

Art break - Joseph Duxbery



'The Laughing Caverlier', by Frans Stals



'The Meanderlisa', by Speleonardo da Vinci



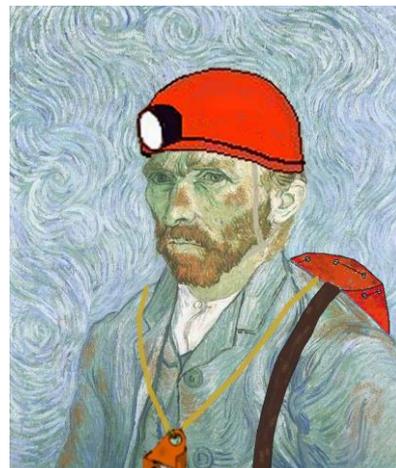
A self-portrait by Krembrandt (You'll know, of course, that 'krem' is the word for 'cave' in Khasi, one of the languages of Meghalaya)



A warrior, one of the Terracaver Army.



Henry Twlldwr is by Hans Holebein



A self-portrait by Vincent Van Ogof.

ExCs bit

The Story of the Department of Speleology – *Julian Todd*

The Mother of all Tunnels was discovered by Lord Plater of Gog Magog while his workmen were bulldozing test trenches in preparation for a proposed emergency trans-Anglian aqueduct. There was a dark hole in the ground that he instantly recognized as a cave. Lucky one of the top universities in the world (according to QS Consulting) was nearby. As a consequence of this ranking he knew that

CUCC (CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY CAVING CLUB) MUST LOGICALLY BE ONE OF THE BEST CAVING CLUBS OF THE WORLD.

One wonders if this story would have turned out differently had he not settled for second best and reached out to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's caving club instead. Nevertheless, being local had its advantages in that the explorers could visit the site straight after getting out of bed. It also made it easier to keep the project discreet.

MOAT, as it was known, began with a 60m pitch before going horizontal. Then, beyond the first few hundred metres of gloopy mud, began the most spectacular, scintillating stalactites ever seen in all the world. Your eyes had had enough of them by about ten minutes, and you were

HEARTILY SICK TO DEATH OF THEIR EXASPERATING PRETTINESS AFTER AN HOUR.

The problem with nature from an artistic point of view is it doesn't know when to stop. These decorations didn't look good in photographs either where they turned out like cheap plastic icicles no matter how expertly they were lit. If there had been a secret vote on what to do about them, the overwhelming result would have been to smash the fastest way through all the curtains. But everyone is oh so pious about preserving our rock heritage that cumulative months of tedious caving was wasted squeezing past them like they were hooked up to a 10,000 Volt A/C power line. The passage was named The Road to Abilene, and it was scanned by 3D laser.

Exploration and surveying went on obsessively throughout the year until the 40km mark (which necessitated 5 day camping trips for mere mortals). Over the course of numerous updates the map, which had started as a recognizable passage, had evolved into a thin spindly hair line traced across a blank white sheet of paper.

THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH THE ORTHOGRAPHIC NON-PERSPECTIVE PROJECTION: IT'S NO GOOD FOR DETAIL AND LACKS A SENSE OF SCALE.

At this point the cave passage encountered an electromagnetic anomaly that destroyed all semiconductor activity brought within its range. The first team to reach it were rescued six days later by rescuers, most of whose LED lights had also failed except for two at the back who had proceeded slowly enough to notice the difference between cries of warning and cries of help.

Nobody could ascertain what caused the phenomenon since it broke any and all the scientific analytical equipment carried to the front. It also clouded black-and-white camera film as though it was some kind of ionizing radiation. Luckily, since cancer was a completely curable disease, nobody was concerned about the consequences of taking their bodies into the zone.

ELECTRIC LIGHTING, HOWEVER, HAD TO BE EXCHANGED FOR CARBIDE,

of which there were tonnes remaining in the store-rooms of the poorer caving clubs who had been given it as unwanted gifts by their richer colleagues when they dumped this obsolete smelly technology the moment that white diodes came onto the market.

The pace of exploration proceeded more slowly beyond the Anomaly using appropriate tools of reeled tape measure, oil filled floating compass and clino, notebook and pencil, but the futility soon became apparent. The bottom (or end) was not going to be reached this way, if that was indeed the point. Once you have mapped 60km of procedurally generated passage, it all looks the same, like measuring the position and angle of

every single twig in a huge oak tree. So a system of mechanical stopwatch, step counting and compass watching was devised and calibrated in known cave. The passage followed a vaguely spiral path heading southeastward and keeping within 16km of the entrance for all its immense length. Regrettably, none of the predicted self-intersections that would have created at least one shortcut were found. To go further required speed caving.

Now, a fit caver can cover around 20km in a day. The problem is getting trained up in this specific kind of ground-traversing calisthenic exercise in an efficient laboratory controlled manner. Following discussions with a professor at St Catherine's College, who had an obsession with the subject,

THE PROPOSAL WAS TO FABRICATE A GIANT HAMSTER WHEEL

that looked like a crumpled mountain bike tyre, with a balanced degree of crawling, walking and thrutching sections. Depending on the angle between the vertical axis and line from the caver standing inside to the centre, as maintained by an axial servo motor, he or she could be worked through a horizontal, steadily up or steadily downhill journey. Utilizing this machine, a crack team of speed cavers were trained to peak performance in less than six months, resulting in ugly ill-proportioned sets of bodily muscles on their frame. They were tested with races to and from the 60km mark to drop off advanced food and carbide dumps for the big push to the record-breaking 123km mark (longest cave distance from the closest available entrance competition).

The Turd Ring, as it came to be known, was also host to a brutal pursuit race where the two contestants began in vertical sections on opposite sides of the ring and raced around and around until one caught up with the other, usually after an injury caused by speed slithering in the down section. This so-called game had to be stopped, but it was unfortunately not before it had been filmed for a Japanese reality TV show and clips of it had appeared in the inflight entertainment on the corporate jets doing their laps around a dying world on which there are never less than seven lucrative war zones blowing up at once.

Before anyone knew about it, the UK Government with assistance of the University Vice-Chancellor had helped Lord Plater sell a 99 year lease to the Magog Estate, including the totality of the Mother of all Tunnels, to a Texas oil tycoon for a cool five million dollars. Once they had cleared all the tedious local government planning regulations using an Investor-State Dispute Resolution clause, it was developed into a leading carbon capture and storage facility yielding 20 permanent jobs on the site, not including those in catering and cleaning. But that wasn't the end of the good news. When Magog Services won the billion dollar contract to dispose of the UK Government's waste carbon dioxide down this bottomless natural hole, the Texas billionaire's private philanthropic foundation

GENEROUSLY DONATED THE FUNDS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE FOR A PERMANENT CHAIR AND A NEW BUILDING FOR ITS NEWLY ESTABLISHED WORLD LEADING DEPARTMENT OF SPELEOLOGY.

It is a most magnificent building. Its entrance is made from five massive natural stone columns imported from the caves of Borneo, it has rows of matching stalactites representing every cave region in the world in its decorative gables, and it has six giant polished gour pools in the atrium in which you could sit and have your coffee.

Postnote: Some readers have enquired as to what became of the caving club in this story. Their archives and samples of used equipment can be seen in the display cabinets on the second floor of the Department during office hours. It is on record that a small vocal minority of its members were not happy when the club was disbanded owing to the fact that none of the officers had the relevant qualifications in research and safety management, and they refused to transfer their studies to one of the five excellent courses offered by the Department of Speleology where they could have gained the necessary proficiencies to carry on with their chosen activity with the support of the institution. A follow-up study of the members involved in this acrimonious dispute established that they all performed statistically above average in their earnings post-graduation and are on schedule to pay back their loans to the University 7.2% sooner compared to the rest of their cohort.

Fifty Years under the Earth - *Michael Perryman*

Michael Perryman, St John's (1973-79)

Some years ago, I exchanged a few words with Paddy Ashdown, the Lib-Dem politician and one time SBS officer, who was furtively dragging on a cigarette outside Bath's Toppings bookshop where he was about to speak about his life, and I was about to listen, shortly before his death. "I get very nervous before talking in public," he explained. "Have you ever been caving?", I segued, "for there is a fine cave near here called Swildons, on Mendip, and I should like to take you to the top of the twenty foot pot there". Sadly, he does not mention that unusual trip in his autobiography, *A Fortunate Life*. Largely because it never transpired. And that, in turn, because I never in truth actually asked.

But in the postscript to his autobiographical reminiscences, he made a couple of observations that resonated with me when I read them at the time, and which I went back to when formulating my thoughts for this little contribution. "Looking back", he said,

"I HAVE TAKEN A LOT OF RISKS, SOME OF THEM VERY FOOLISH. BUT IN THE END THEY SEEMED TO HAVE WORKED OUT AS WELL, OR BETTER THAN, I HAD ANY RIGHT TO EXPECT."

Is there anyone of us who has bottomed Juniper or survived Sleets Gill, who cannot honestly say otherwise? But some other of his closing words resonated even more. "Looking back", he said, "I cannot work out where it all went.

How did it all happen? Where has it all gone?" Amen to that. Laozi, author of the foundational text of Taoism, phrased the sentiment more poetically "A man's life passes before him with the speed of a galloping horse".

I will be 70 this year. Where has it all gone? What was it all for? How did it all happen? I had done some caving before rocking up to the society's fair in Cambridge in 1973 where, I half recall, the lugubrious Bob Matthews (not to be confused with the fine passage in OFD of the same name, by which I mean Lugubrious, not Matthews) welcomed me to the club with open arms and, with Steve Perry and Phil Dennis and Evan France, took me under their collective wings, so beginning a wonderful few years of caving mainly in Yorkshire, and occasionally in South Wales or Mendip or even County Clare, and on those idyllic summers in the Pyrenees, where the sun always shone, the brilliant white limestone pavements were always mysterious but endlessly enticing, the baguettes were always generously crammed with paté, and the Pelforths were always cold.

The first chapter of my caving career came to an end more than 200 trips later, on 14 July 1990 when, aged 35, I was suffering from (but trying to struggle on with) a five year period of ME. I was, foolishly, planning to tackle Marble Steps with Jack Upsall, Vic Brown, and Julian Griffiths, but I had second (and much wiser) thoughts - and jacked - on the entrance pitch. So began a 20-year

hiatus, broken only when, in semi-retirement and now living in Bath, I tagged on to a Swildons trip in 2011. Twelve years on, and almost another 500 trips later, I sometimes feel that while science has been my profession, caving has often dominated my life.

I should fess up to the fact that this past decade of caving has not at all been at the same level of sporting challenges as my first two. Many of my renaissance trips have been digging in (can we be honest here) minor and grotty places like Grebe Swallet. At 300m long and 60m deep, Grebe is hardly up there in terms of world ranking, of anything. But we hold out hopes that it will connect with (and provide an easier route into) the remarkable system of Upper Flood. Yet Grebe is known territory, and it offers a reasonable - and regular - all-body workout without excessive intimidation. The 60m climb up through boulders and negotiating simple free climbs on the way out is always something I enjoy, for reasons nonetheless difficult to articulate: the pleasure of the fluency of the climbing movements perhaps, or the technical challenge that sits nonetheless well within one's comfort zone, the company of course (in this case of my caving buddies Nick Thorne and Chris Binding), and even

**THE FEELING THAT ONE IS
DOING SOMETHING WITH A
PURPOSE, ALBEIT A
SINGULARLY FUTILE ONE.**

Or maybe it is merely the return to daylight, or even just the beer afterwards, that gives it some meaning.

I have done some moderately challenging trips in this second phase of my caving journey that today occupy a privileged place in my memory, and that I am grateful to have experienced: amongst them Upper Flood and Thrupe Lane on Mendip, Otter Hole in the Forest of Dean, and some repeats of the South Wales classics such as Pendulum Passage and the

2-to-1 through trip in OFD, the 'round trip' in Dan-yr-Ogof, and Turkey Streamway in Agen Allwedd. I played a small part in the discovery of Ogof Marros in Carmarthenshire which I could not have predicted. Yet, when I read of my past trips into Daren Cilau, or down Blue Pencil in Swildons, or any of those Yorkshire classics, I know that I will not experience their like again.

But I remain grateful that they seemed to have worked out as well, or better than, I had any right to expect! I can recall clearly enough in my mind the beautiful Yorkshire Dales, with its endless dry walls, our long tramps over limestone pavements or across brilliantly green sunlit fields, accompanied only by the sounds of curlews, and the clanking of ladders and krabs. I have no need, I think, to contemplate doing them again. But I can try to reflect on where it has all gone.

[Since 2014, Michael has been writing his irregular and irreverent "Letters from Mendip", circulated to subscribers of the ExCS Newsletter]

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Troggle - the software older than most cavers - *Philip Sargent*

In 2017 I came on expo in a hurry, and unprepared. My Med. sailing plans had been thrown into confusion by an unexpected medical test result, and I was at something of a loose end for a few weeks. So obviously I packed my rucksack and came out to Austria - I had been before, so I knew what kind of weather to expect. That had been in 1982 and 83, but even so I was looking forward to the Germknödel and Gösser which I had been assured were still unchanged.

While I was enjoying the splendid delights of the new potato hut (new to me anyway), Wookey approached me and asked if I could update and refresh the somewhat elderly (5 years or so) short python script which kept track of which cave survey wallets, which hold the raw survey data, had been properly turned into pretty cave surveys.

I had last used python, and then only briefly, back in the previous century, but it's easy to pick up. Lots of bits of me ached and hurt so an excuse to sit in the hut for a bit was a good way to be productive during recuperation. Little did I realise what I was getting into.

THE HISTORY OF EXPO CAVE DATA MANAGEMENT IS LONG AND ONLY OF INTEREST TO THOSE BRAVE SOULS WHO LIVED THROUGH IT.

The first proper record is AERW's "Taking Expo bullshit into the 21st century" (Cambridge Underground 1996). Astute readers will realise that this was a bit anticipatory as the 20th

century still had 4 years left to run, but the world wide web had been launched only 3 years earlier and Andy was busy using this new hypertext thing to record cave description of the branching passages in Kaninchen Höhle (1623-161). Wookey managed to find a server (some things don't change) and an unexpected adventure began.

"Why should I care?" I hear you ask, indeed, there is a deafening number of expressions of disapproval, annoyance, frustration and despair. Well most people don't, but I have these words in front of you now so I am going to make you suffer too - misery loves company.

A turning point came in Spring 2020 when Sam Wenham became unexpectedly busy trying to convert an entire University to distance-teaching in only a couple of weeks, and my new sailing plans were foiled by an inconvenient global plague. Sam, Wookey and Paul Fox had been struggling with the undocumented baroque and complicated edifice that 'the website' had developed into. Time had run out in getting the various bits of the thing to use versions of infrastructure software which the University Computing Service was willing to get anywhere near even smelling distance of any of their machines, so I lent a hand. Soon the others (sensing a mug) gently faded away and I was left alone wrestling with the muti-armed thing monster. Still, the weather was nice in April 2020, so I began desultorily documenting everything I came across in the handy

'handbook' part of the website (integrated into the behemoth by Martin Green some years earlier).

Troggle in its current incarnation was designed by Aaron Curtis in 2006: troggle is the software which runs the expo cave survey data management and the handbook to expo habits and procedures. Also all the gossip and whingeing in the logbooks. The actual cave survey data is managed by a different piece of software 'survex', maintained now by Ollie Betts in New Zealand but originally put together by him and Wookey in the potato hut in 1991.

Some of the data managed by troggle includes the surveys I did in 1982, and some survey data comes from expo 1976. Managing technical data over more than 40 years is an unusual software project; ripping it all out and starting from scratch isn't really an

option when the data has to be preserved - in all its various and idiosyncratic forms. So we have a process of continual replacement and incremental restructuring. Mugs volunteers welcome!

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South Nordland Caving Expeditions – *Trevor Faulkner*

South Nordland Caving Expeditions and the Cambridge connection

Abstract

The southern part of Nordland in Norway lies between Grong in the south and Mo i Rana in the north and extends from the coast to the Swedish border, an area >20,000km². It is in the thrust belt of the metamorphic Caledonides and contains 728 individual marble stripe karst outcrops, which are commonly aligned north to south and parallel to some major valleys. About 28 'South Nordland' type expeditions visited the area from 1974 to 2011, involving 64 participants around a nucleus of six cavers who attended ≥10 times. The expeditions explored or surveyed >760 out of 826 known marble caves, with a total passage length of c. 53km out of c. 63km. The longest cave found is Toerfjellhola, nearly 2km long and 101m deep. Studying these caves enabled a model for their later Quaternary speleogenesis to be derived. This article starts with a summary of British caving expeditions to Norway, including those from Cambridge, to provide context. The logistics, methodologies and motivations of the South Nordland expeditions are then described, together with an abbreviated index of results for each expedition and a list of main references.

Early CUCC expeditions

Following the publication about caves in Nordland by Gunnar Horn (1947), British caving expeditions to Norway started in 1951. Lewis Railton (1954), of the South Wales Caving Club

and the Cave Research Group, drove to Rana with his wife and Jean Corbel, the French karst geomorphologist. After visiting other local caves, they descended the unexplored shaft at the end of Larshullet, which became one of the world's deepest known caves at 326m. The Corbel (1959) studies in Scandinavia were discussed by Faulkner (2009a). Rana is in the northern part of Nordland county, which straddles the Arctic Circle. The caves have formed in many separate stripe karst outcrops of Cambro-Silurian metamorphic limestones (marbles). Oliver Wells (1957) then led the first recorded overseas CUCC expedition in 1956, to Norway. They extended Larshullet and doubled the length of Horn's survey of Lapphullet. Another expedition followed in 1957 to Rana and the nearby Pikhaug, which does not appear to be reported separately. A third successive CUCC expedition focussed on Pikhaug. It was led by Jenkins (1958), and Renwick (1962) did some early hydrological studies at the Glomvatn Underground Outlet. Dick Kirkland (1958) was on all three expeditions and recorded his findings in his degree dissertation. Three years later, David Heap (1962) led a combined CUCC and Kendal Caving Club expedition in 1961 to a new area at Glomfjord. They found only short caves, which Heap found discouraging, although they did report 11 caves with 2.3km passage length (Hansen, 1962; Holden, 1963). I had the opportunity to join this expedition, but was also a member of another CUCC, the CU Cycling Club, and decided instead to cycle to Vienna with a friend. This took

six weeks at 70 miles per day, with a return over many alpine passes, and was highly memorable. However, I did join the combined CUCC/KCC expeditions to NW Greece in 1962 (Mercer, 1963; Woodford, 1963) and to the French Pyrennees in 1963 (Heap and Cowle, 1963; Branson, 1965). The CUCC expeditions to Norway in 1956, 1957 and 1961 were mentioned briefly by Bowler (1970) in his review of early Club history, but not the 1958, 1962 or 1963 expeditions. The 1300 feet shaft of Provatina, near the village of Papington, was found in 1962 (with insufficient ladder to bottom what later temporarily became the world's deepest), together with smaller shafts near the village of Monodendron. I made a nostalgic return to these places after the UIS Congress near Athens in 2005. The villages and landscape had changed considerably in the intervening years. This arose from the demise of shepherding, causing the growth of forest and the depopulation of some villages, and the influx of tourism, causing the expansion of other villages. Many shafts appear beside dolines and probably result from tectonic openings (Holden and Faulkner, 2007). The 1963 expedition bottomed Gouffre Martel, but failed to make a connection to La Grotte de la Cigalère, a magnificent resurgence cave, which we ascended as far as the foot of the ninth waterfall. Both these expeditions and their journeys were full of incidents that still leave a lasting impression.

Later British caving expeditions to Norway

Ainger (1965) made a short tourist caving visit to the Rana area in Norway in 1963, as a member of the Cambridge Svartisen Expedition to the local glacier. Although Heap was disappointed with

the Glomfjord area, he did recommend that SWETCCC, the London-based South West Essex Technical College Caving Club, should visit Gråtådal, north of the Arctic Circle. They had a most successful expedition there in 1963, returned in 1964 and 1965, and produced a comprehensive report (St. Pierre, 1966). In a serendipitous moment, I met members of this club in Swildons in 1964 and started caving and driving minibuses with them, as I was then living in Hertfordshire. Heap returned to Norway in 1965 and made a total of 15 visits until 1987, mainly to northern Nordland. He explored many of Norway's longest and deepest caves and reported 119 'new' caves with a total explored or surveyed passage length of >32km. These expeditions no longer involved CUCC. They commonly combined KCC members with boys from grammar schools, where Heap was a teacher or a young headmaster. In a unique 1965/1966 New Year visit, they travelled north by train, which

THE GUARD WAS RELUCTANT TO LET THEM LEAVE AT A REMOTE STATION IN DEEP SNOW, BECAUSE IT WAS SO COLD (HEAP, 1966).

The 1960s and 1970s saw an explosion of 65 British caving expeditions to Norway, peaking at nine such separate visits in 1977. That was during a 20-year period that also saw 18 Norwegian-reported trips and 6 by other nationalities. Since then, explorations in northern Nordland have increasingly been done by members of Norsk Grotte Forbund, sometimes supported by visiting cavers, who also enjoy sporting trips to known caves. Northern Nordland was usually reached from Newcastle by a

North Sea ferry crossing to Bergen and by driving north across the Jotunheim mountains to the initially narrow E6 road, a journey taking about four days. By the mid-1960s, some British expeditions also targeted sites in southern Nordland between Grong and Mo-i-Rana, an area >20,000km² that extends from the coast to the Swedish border. This was where Heap (1968; 1975) found the 1860m-long Stor Grubblandsgrotta and the 180m-deep Ytterlihullet, and surveyed the well-known Øyfjellgrotta near Mosjøen.

South Nordland expeditions

My first visit to Norway was to Gråtådal in northern Nordland in 1972 with SWETCCC, in a trip organised by David and Shirley St. Pierre (Faulkner and St. Pierre, 1973). A similar trip farther north to the Bonnelv valley followed in 1974 (Faulkner and St. Pierre, 1977). (Tjoarvekrajgge, the longest cave in Scandinavia, was discovered there in 1993, after the publication of a 1:50,000 map that showed an unexpected underground flow route: Doj, 1995). We also made a fleeting but important stop en route at Laksfors in southern Nordland. A similar team concentrated on southern Nordland in 1978. We found the long and scientifically-important Sirijordgrotta (Faulkner, 1980; St. Pierre and St. Pierre, 1980) on the last day of a trip marred by having to drive back to Bergen in top gear only, after the gear box disintegrated on the drive north. Its exploration was completed in 1979. Following another serendipitous meeting, with Geoff Newton of the Wessex Cave Club at the 1981 UIS Congress in Bowling Green, USA, a new team was recruited for 1982. This was finding many short caves until we free-dived a short sump in

Kvannliholta and entered a large and long upstream passage (Figure 1; Faulkner, 1983). After surveying it, we left our cameras beyond the sump to use on our last day, but it rained heavily that night, raising the sump level a foot and making it impassable. Luckily, we were able to free-dive through it again after the rain stopped and after we had restored its level by removing sediments.

There were c. 28 South Nordland type expeditions with 64 British and Scandinavian participants, almost all led by David St. Pierre, Geoff Newton or myself, as summarised in Table 1. This lists 78 caves surveyed to $\geq 160\text{m}$ long or $\geq 36\text{m}$ deep, by the year of their last visit. The expeditions, usually at two-year intervals, went to more areas than can be shown on one page. Some areas were visited several times to extend caves further, as reported in the main references. The years 1997, 1998 and 2000 were different, because I spent 9, 9 and 7 weeks recording the geology and GPS coordinates of many cave sites in central Scandinavia. The research area was extended east to the Caledonide thrust front in Sweden and south into part of Nord Trøndelag, to include Vallerdal. This total area has over 1000 separate stripe karst marble outcrops that are randomly distributed in altitude. My study derived a model for the later Quaternary speleogenesis of the caves and demonstrated that geomorphology and glaciology are more important than structure and lithology in explaining their existence (Faulkner, 2005d; 2018). Indeed, the phreatic passages were formed by tectonic inception of fractures and their dissolution during deglacial speleogenesis. Those three years also included cave prospecting with visiting British teams and Scandinavian cavers. Although >50 visits by separate groups

occurred over the years to southern Nordland, there are only a few reports of local cave discoveries since about 1985. These include caves found east of the E6 by Torbjørn Doj, a Swede who told me about his unpublished findings in 1997, and sumps dived since about 2010 at Velfjord, Favnavtn and Vallerdal. From the nature of the typically linear and narrow marble outcrops, most caves are short when compared with those in broad sedimentary limestones. Nevertheless, Toerfjellhola, the longest found by South Nordland expeditions, is nearly 2km long and is 101m deep (Figure 2; Faulkner and Newton, 1995), but only four are >1km long and only 16 are ≥36m deep.

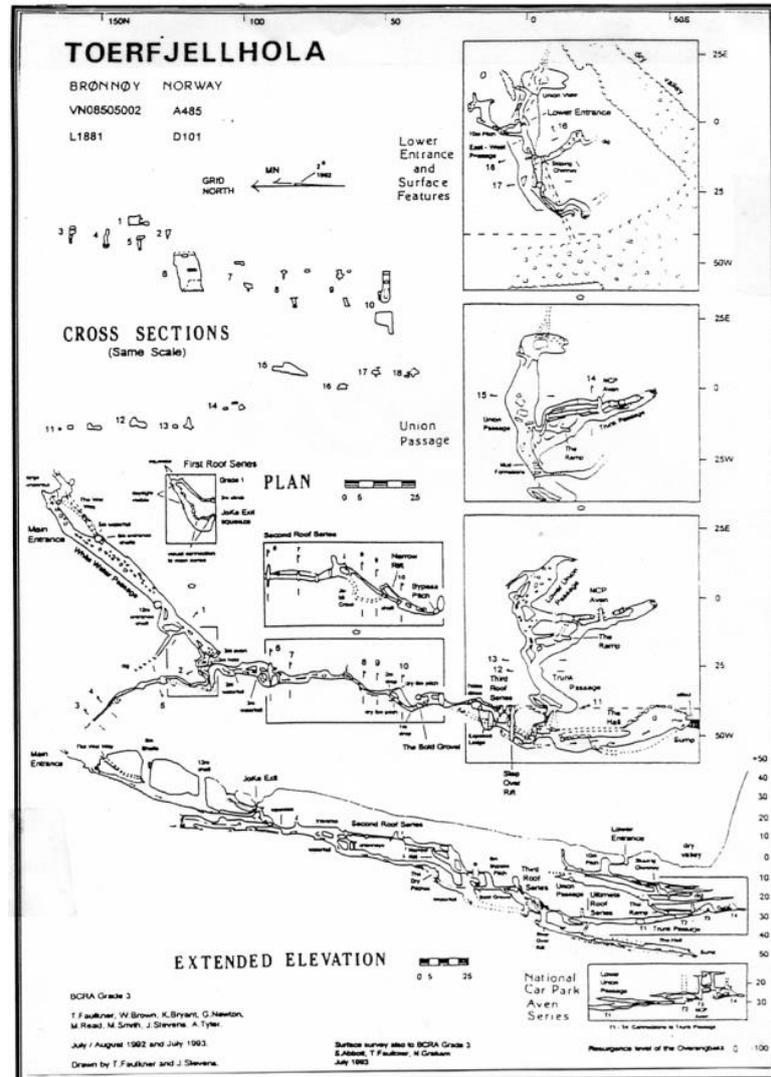


Figure 1: The magnificent streamway in vertical stripe karst in Kvannliholta 2.

Figure 2 (right) Toerfjellhola. From Faulkner and Newton.1995..

Expedition logistics

A few early expeditions received a small amount of funding from the Ghar Parau Foundation, but most were entirely financed by participants. Travel was commonly with three or four people in each of one, two or three private cars, so that the inconvenience of owning or hiring a separate off-road vehicle was avoided. The largest 'British only' expedition was in 1992, with 14 cavers in six cars. By persuading employers to allow a three-week holiday plus a Monday, we sometimes obtained up to 18 useful field-days. Exploration was restricted to southern Nordland, where no members of NGF lived, and which was reached in only three days, with the roads and tunnels steadily improving each time. All equipment and most food were pre-purchased in England, with only petrol, bread, milk and fruit bought whilst travelling. That saved both time and money in Norway, where food cost twice much. The cars were necessarily packed full, often with a roof rack. With four people in my car, we made a tower of food boxes in the middle of the rear seat, meaning that the rear passengers could not see each other until much of the food was eaten. A test drive was needed before departure, with

UNNECESSARY ITEMS REMOVED UNTIL THE SUSPENSION PERFORMED NORMALLY.

Camping was either at camp sites or at favourite roadside spots. After long walks in bad weather, we sometimes treated ourselves to the luxury of hiring a campsite cabin. Many expeditions were also joined by Norwegian and Swedish friends, some new to caving, for part of the time, and I met up with 15 others at

different times in 1997, including 11 from Scandinavia.

Cave prospects were mainly identified by checking for sinks, risings, intermittent stream courses and unusual topography on local maps, and checking coincidence with marble outcrops on geology maps (although many caves are in unmapped outcrops of various sizes). Local farmers also provided information about cave entrances. Very few potential sites are situated close to roads or ungated tracks, so that finding caves involved lots of walking, perhaps after a hired boat trip for coastal locations. For sites within c. 6km of the car and camp spot, it was invariably better to walk there every day, perhaps with a height gain of 300m, until its caves had been explored and surveyed. We then drove to the next place on the pre-planned itinerary. The valleys and lower slopes are forested with pine, spruce and silver birch, leading eventually to tangled birch scrub at the tree line, so that these walks would take one or two hours in each direction. For longer distances, a mountain camp was essential. For the first visit to Elgfjell in 1988, the 14km walk-in took about 5 hours, when carrying everything needed for the first six days. We then spent a day returning to the car to collect enough food for another six days. My pack was so heavy for our final camp on Kappfjell in 2011 (Figure 3) that it gave me plantar fasciitis in one foot. However, we usually remained healthy, with few injuries. Because there are few deep shafts, we descended pitches using the ladder-and-lifeline method with natural belays, frequently duplicated as a safety precaution. We never used SRT to explore caves in southern Nordland, which remain unspoilt by bolts or drill-holes.



Figure 3 The author near the start of the walk up to Kappfjell in 2011.

It follows that South Nordland expeditions were uniquely different from most caving expeditions. There were no single 'base camps', and we were constantly on the move by car. No helicopters were used, even for remote sites. The local alcohol restrictions meant that no time was spent in bars, although we often enjoyed instead the hospitality of old and new Norwegian friends.

THREE SEASONS IN NORWAY WERE COMPRESSED INTO ONLY THREE MONTHS:

June was spring, without night, when up to 10m of winter snow melted, making many rivers and caves impassable. July was summer, when plagues of sand flies, mosquitoes and horse flies appeared at lower altitudes: all flying insects sting or bite. August was autumn, when the temperature fell and campsites closed. Everything else was winter, which we avoided. Late July visits were rewarded with patches of golden ripe cloudberry to enjoy.

We were never bothered by wild animals, although we occasionally came across reindeer, elk, wolverine, lemmings and even brown bears. The

weather varied from hot sun at 34°C to near-freezing rain, but we were usually quite fortunate, with relatively dry conditions. Surprisingly, there were few storms or high winds. We commonly walked in our fleece suits, except if it was really hot, and also in our outer caving suits if it rained. Thus, we were prepared to go underground immediately when we came across unexpected entrances.

Map and survey information

Suitable maps improved considerably after the first expeditions. Initially, we relied on informative but somewhat inaccurate 1:100,000 topographical maps, produced by land surveying after about 1900, on which some solid geology maps were based from the mid-1970s. These used latitude and longitude coordinates. A great advance occurred in the mid-1980s with the publication of 1:50,000 maps prepared from aerial photographs, which commonly indicated different karst possibilities. These provided coordinates using the ED50 (black grid) system in Zone 33, on which some solid and Quaternary geology maps were published in the 1990s. However, the coordinate system was changed to WGS84 (blue grid, which is similar to EUREF89) on topographical maps published after about 1990, without changing the map detail. Five-figure coordinates give locations to the nearest metre and the differences between the two systems are significant, because coordinate conversions are typically: EWGS84 = EED50 -75, NWGS84 = NED50 - 200. This means that great care is needed when setting the coordinate system for GPS measurements and when taking coordinates from older reports: assume ED50 if the grid system is not mentioned. Large sheets of black and

white “economic maps” at 1:10,000 or 1:5000 were obtained at some local government offices. These provide more detail, but use the ED50 coordinates. Although they do commonly indicate extra karst features, this can be a trap, because many, but not all, are trivial in practice. Topographical data is now commonly available online at various scales. Maps showing the solid geology for Norway at 1:250,000 were completed in the 1990s, a great achievement by the NGU. This data is also available online (without a grid), but some marble outcrops are represented too wide or are omitted. A study of all available geology maps revealed 728 individual marble stripe karst outcrops in southern Nordland and part of Nord Trøndelag. These are commonly aligned north to south and parallel to some major valleys, with a total length of 2565km and area of 753km², indicating great karst potential.

CAVE AND SURFACE SURVEYS WERE MAINLY PRODUCED BY RAPID PRE-DIGITAL BCRA GRADE 3 TECHNIQUES,

where an assistant chooses the next station, which is commonly a cairn or an unmarked point on the wall. He then holds the free end of the tape at this station, whilst the surveyor records the distance to his own, previous, station. The surveyor reads the magnetic bearing by rotating the bezel of a horizontal orienteering compass that is aligned along the tape until the needle points to 0o. Vertical ranges are estimated by surveyor and assistant agreement. The surveyor writes all this data, together with Left, Right, Up and Down (L, R, U, D) estimates and passage sketches in a “Rapid Cave Survey Notebook”, which was specially designed for the purpose

and printed in quantity on water-proof paper. Both people then move forward one station. If a solo survey has to be done, the free end of the tape is left under a stone whilst the surveyor moves forward to the next station and records the length and back-bearing along the tape. He then pulls in the tape and repeats the process. If the survey has to be continued on another day, previous stations can be found from the L, R, U, D data in the survey book.

Survey calculations initially used a computer program and later a simple Excel spreadsheet. The Excel chart facility was used to provide at least initial plots of survey stations. Both a plan and a vertical elevation were always produced. A vertical representation is essential to understand speleogenesis, and should be provided for all cave surveys. This process enables the surveyor to keep control of all stages of the survey drafting and commonly gives horizontal misclosures of 1–2%. Vertical misclosures and altitudes were corrected from water levels and from map contours, with gross checks for entrance floors by altimeter or GPS readings.

Total cave lengths use a convention devised by David St. Pierre and equal the sum of all underground survey legs plus oxbows, side passages and the heights and depths of shafts, avens and pits, minus duplications. The cross-section area at each station = (L+R)(U+D), so that each leg volume can be estimated.

The total cave volume then provides the minimum amount of marble dissolution and erosion that created the cave, to which could be added the volume of any clastic sediments. The advantages of the rapid survey method are that South Nordland caves are not disfigured

with survey markings, and up to 12 stations could be recorded per hour.

Time was also frequently saved by surveying during exploration, either into unexplored passage, or by surveying outwards on the return. In practice, caves up to about 1km in length could be surveyed on just one visit (e.g., Figure 4).

Cave and location names follow those used locally where possible, or were chosen by the explorers, mainly from local features. Place names are commonly given various spellings on Norwegian maps and the same name can also be used for several different features, which can be confusing. For example, there are several “Jordbruelv”s (Rockbridge streams) in southern Nordland.

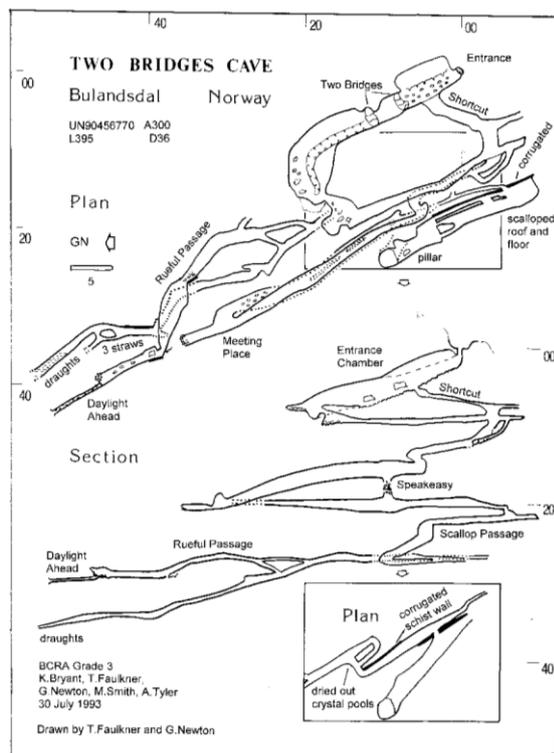


Figure 4: Two Bridges Cave, Bulandsdal. From Faulkner and Newton (1995).

Highlights and conclusion

Previous summaries of South Nordland expeditions were by Faulkner (1987b; 1992; 1996; 2000). Although there have been some disappointing expeditions that only surveyed c. 500m of ‘new’ passage, most were extremely memorable within a generally declining trend from c. 3km of new passage surveyed, as we exhausted the obvious sites. For me, the highlights have been finding many interesting caves along the Jordbruelv valley in 1984 and 1986 and exploring >5km of cave passage in >100 caves at the high-altitude (600m) plateau of Elgfjell in 1988 and later years, especially when camping beside Central Lake below the 1000m-high back-wall of Jordhulefjell (Faulkner, 1987a; 2009b; 2011; Faulkner and Newton, 1990). It is pleasing that all these caves have been given some protection by the creation of the Lomsdal-Visten National Park in 1999. Blåfjellgrotta in 1990 provided hard sporting caving for over an hour to reach its upstream end (Newton and Faulkner, 1992). Toerfjellhola was discovered in 1992 and its survey was completed in 1993 (Figure 2; Faulkner and Newton, 1995; Faulkner, 1996). It is a wonderful cave whose stream is often too powerful to follow. Fortunately, it has several upper series of passages that can be used, enabling a sporting through-trip if a shaft near the lower end is laddered first.

The 1997 expedition, led by Geoff Newton, surprisingly found deposited elk bones and marine shells, with barnacles attached to bedrock, in Neptune’s Cave, about 100m above sea level (Faulkner and Hunt, 2009). Representative specimens were donated to the museum in Mo I Rana for archiving in 2008.

More recently, the large passages in Nordlysgrotta and Marimyntgrotta (Figure 5) were explored (Faulkner, 2005b). These were probably part of one system, with connections possibly severed by tectonic movements caused by deglacial earthquakes. They contain sand deposits from a time when they were below sea level. The caves at Hellfjell (Faulkner, 2019) were often difficult to locate, and to re-locate, but well worth the effort. The deepest underground pitch of 30m is in the dry JOBshullet in the remote Klausmarkdal (Faulkner and Newton, 1995). My very final expedition to Norway in 2011, at the age of 69, descended the 27m-deep ladder pitch in Kappfjellhullet on a wet day, when waterfalls entered 10m and 20m down (Graham, 2013). The narrow immature stream outlet at its base was blocked by a section of roof that has fallen down within the vertical foliation, perhaps fortunately for an ageing team of only three, because the sumped resurgence is 1km to the north and 100m lower.

In later years, it became more difficult to justify the expedition motto of “New cave every day” and the journey became less practical when ferry sailings ceased from Newcastle, so that 2011 marked the end of a splendid era. It was also the last independent British caving expedition to Norway.

We explored or surveyed >760 out of 826 known marble caves in southern Nordland, with a total passage length of c. 53km out of c. 63km, and a total volume >350,000m³. About half are longer than 80m and deeper than 9m. However, the 28 South Nordland expeditions walked along only c. 400km of marble outcrops, c. 14% of the total length, so that

**THERE MUST BE MANY MORE
CAVES TO BE FOUND:
FAULKNER (2007) ESTIMATED
A TOTAL NUMBER >5000.**

Because the caves in southern Nordland are relatively young, they contain few large speleothems, but the striped marble in clean-washed streamways, sometimes with many flow scallops, can be extremely beautiful (Figures 1 and 5).

In addition to enjoying the excitement of exploring sporting caves in virgin areas, even at advanced ages, the walks themselves were often magnificent. Above the forests, they gave splendid views of distant mountains and glacial valleys, whilst walking easily across bare, glacially-eroded, bedrock. The powerful spring melt shifts both internal and external sediments, so that previously explored caves and passages might not be found again.

Because of this, and our doctrine of leaving no survey markings or SRT bolts, the only lasting record of our visits will be in published reports, for which several are still outstanding. These are now better published for groups of karst areas, rather than by reporting the many sites visited during each individual expedition. Some of the South Nordland methods have been transferred to look for caves in the Dalradian marbles of Scotland. These caves share similar geology and deglacial speleogenesis, but are commonly much younger and shorter.



Figure 5: The streamway in low-angle karst in Marimyntgrotta, Brønnøy. From Faulkner, 2005b.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful for his introduction to caving and to Norway, as provided directly and indirectly by CUCC. He wishes to thank the 63 friends from Britain, Norway and Sweden who took part in the South Nordland expeditions. Although the final expedition was 13 years ago, hopefully the memories of all the great trips and interesting caves will remain for many more years to come. This article expands a talk presented at the 18th Congress of Speleology in France on 29 July 2022.

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Hot Caves - *Nick Thorne*

I guess most people reading this – yes, both of you – will have mainly caved in cold or temperate climates. For the thick end of 10 years I lived and worked in Thailand, and whilst not undertaking lots of caving, I did manage to get out of sight of daylight on a few dozen occasions. With excursions to Nepal and Costa Rica, where I also ventured underground, I feel qualified to expound on the peculiarities of caving in hot, and particularly humid, climates.

Visitors new to Thailand often expect the sun to shine pretty well all the time and the weather to be correspondingly hot. At the risk of pointing out the obvious to them, I explained that Thailand is very green. And it's green for a reason. And the reason is, it rains.

AND WHEN I SAY, 'RAIN', I MEAN BIBLICAL.

Even in the so called 'dry season' it can rain. In the wet season, regular thunderstorms can unleash enormous grey sheets of rain, lashing down, often reducing visibility to little more than 10m. This leads to the first two characteristics of caves in tropical climates: one, the entrances are often concealed in thick jungle and two, many have streams that respond quickly to rain, by which I mean, to the roof.

Typical of this type is Tham Nam Thalu Cave in the Khao Sok National Park in the province of Surat Thani. This cave gained notoriety back in 2007 when flash floods drowned eight people. Being in a national park, a guide is obligatory. And it's just as well, as to reach the cave one

needs to take a long tail boat across the Ratchaphapha lake (actually a reservoir) which takes about an hour, and goes past some magnificent karst scenery. This is then followed by a trek of around 3.5km through the rain forest to the resurgence entrance of the cave. The cave itself is 800m of fabulous, clean washed river passage. It starts off very large before narrowing to a hading rift. When I say 'narrowing', it was still a good metre or so wide. Progress involved occasional wading in water up to neck deep before reaching the sink entrance. A return can then be made to the boat via a shorter, 1.5km jungle trek.

Caving clobber for such a jaunt is basically T-shirt and (swim) shorts, some sort of deck shoes/sandals, the temperature being typically never less than 28oC, and of course, a helmet and light. Well OK, sometimes just a light then. For the walk in through the jungle, long trousers help keep sundry biting/stinging creatures at bay. Some of these you'll not be surprised to learn, even venture underground too. One such trip I did with my daughter, Jessica, down Tham Nam 1 in Phang-Nga province. (In case you're wondering, 'Tham' is Thai for 'cave', and 'Nam' is Thai for 'water', hence there's quite a few 'Tham Nam' type names in Thailand.) The first challenge was finding the entrance. This was greatly aided by Martin Ellis, (of the Shepton Mallet Caving Club but normally actually resident in Thailand), who sent me a Google Earth file with all the known Thai cave entrances marked. The cave itself was a pleasant stomp through 700m or so of large stream passage, all



Figure 1: Many caves in Thailand are finely decorated as exemplified by this, the entrance chamber of Tham Khao Kriap in Chumpon province.

the way from the resurgence to the sink and then back again.

**THE MAIN OBJECTIVE
DANGER CAME FROM THE
OTHER OCCUPANTS. ONE WAS A
6' PYTHON,**

nestling on a ledge at about head height, and further upstream was a similar sized mangrove cat snake. 'Dad, is that one poisonous?' 'Dunno. Just keep moving.'

Still on the fauna front, cave entrances in Thailand often seem to be where monkeys congregate. One cave, Tham Phanthurat 1 back in Surat Thani, has an entrance that is perhaps 70m up a sheer cliff face, accessed by several sets of steps bolted onto the cliff. I suspect originally built to harvest swift nests, time has taken its toll on the ironmongery. Rickety isn't the word. From above about halfway up the climb, one is accompanied to the entrance by the largest troop of monkeys I'd ever come across. The alpha male, clearly concerned I might fancy one of his hareem, was eventually bought off with a

banana. Just inside the entrance I had to step over numerous spiders, lizards and a metre long green snake. There then followed 300m or so of large and finely decorated fossil phreatic tube, all considerably less dangerous than the cliff steps, and filled with thousands upon thousands of bats. Top tip: do not stand in the cave entrance at dusk.

Staying with bats, but moving to Costa Rica, I visited Cavernas del Venado, just north of the Arenal Volcano National Park. It's actually a tourist attraction, but think less show cave, more guided wild cave. And if one explains to the guide that one has 'done a bit', then the wildness quotient goes up, with the trip including excursions to side passages, various climbs and even a bit of a squeeze. Nicely decorated,

**MY ABIDING MEMORY OF
THE PLACE HOWEVER WAS THE
BATS. VAMPIRE BATS.**

The first thing one notices is this thick, black, gooey tar like substance on the floor. It's guano, but given this particular bat's diet, it's not like any

guano seen otherwise. Look up, and there they all are, hundreds of them. Not as huge compared to say, a fruit bat, but they have a distinctive toothy smile.



Figure 2: And this is a show cave? Cavernas del Venado, Costa Rica.

Then there is Nepal. I've visited a couple of times. The Pokhara region in September still very much qualifies as tropical, being still very warm and humid. The surface shaft of Patale Chango or Devi's Falls is well worth a visit, comprising of a huge torrent pouring 30 meters down into the blackness below.

After visiting the nearby show cave at Mahendra, I got talking to the guide, a splendid chap by the name of Yam Bahadur Sanur. As before, when I said I'd made a bit of a habit of this caving lark, he offered to take me down his personal discovery. The eponymous cave is approached through rice paddies, crossing a large river via a classic Himalayan rope bridge, and 45 minutes of sweaty jungle bashing. Given the dense undergrowth, the entrance is well nigh invisible from three yards away. How did he ever find it in the first place? A muddy, quite steep sided shake hole gave onto a series of good sized connected chambers and maybe 500m of passage, some nicely decorated. There was a small stream in the bottom ending in a sump, which Mr.

Yam told me lowers to a duck in the dry season, giving onto a further 700m of passage. We exited via a second entrance, passing a chamber with literally thousands of pipistrelles, many in flight providing a cauldron of wing beats.



Figure 3: The huge river pouring into Patale Chango or Devis Falls, Pokhara, Nepal.

Shortly after making our exit, I remembered why, on balance, I prefer mountain expeditions to tropical ones, as I pulled off a number of leeches, nine at the final count.



Digging in Mendip - *Nick Thorne*

When it comes to cave digging, the Mendips must see the most intense such activity of any of the caving regions in the UK. Probably make that the world. The days of easy wins are long gone. One cannot stroll over 'The Hill', move a few boulders, shovel a bit of mud and reveal extensive passage. Mendip digs are sieges. They last years, even decades. Dedicated groups of cavers regularly assemble at many sites in the area and toil away underground for a few hours, slope off to the pub to discuss progress, or lack of, and the next week, do it all again, and again. I write as one of these dedicated - or should that be deluded - individuals. Why do we do it?

First and foremost, we're cavers. And for any caver, the thrill of finding new passage is pretty well unmatched. I guess many readers will have experienced this, but most likely in foreign parts where discoveries require considerably less sustained effort. I suppose the huge effort required to find new passage in a place like the Mendips makes any discoveries all the sweeter.

There is of course the usual camaraderie amongst digging teams, borne of collective ambition, shared risk and so on, common with sporting cavers. It's physical exercise, and since a lot of cave digs, by their very nature, tend to be on the small size, at least to start out, suppleness is maintained. This is significant. Somewhat subjectively, I note that diggers tend to be older chappies. At 66 I often find I'm actually the youngest of any given digging team. Digging isn't the exclusive preserve of ageing cavers, of course, we just seem to predominate. Why is this? It would be arrogant to

assume we've done all the sporting trips in the locality. Perhaps we're just comfortable with what we've done in the sporting arena, and want to put something back. Noble, huh?

AND HERE'S THE THING. DIGGING IS COMPULSIVE. SOME WOULD SAY IT'S OBSESSIVE.

Once one starts to dig a particular site, one soon becomes reluctant to give up. Slowly but surely a fear of missing out grows. The thinking is that if you give up but the rest carry on, they'll make the big breakthrough within weeks and you miss out. Abandoning a dig has to be a collective decision, likely based on some overwhelming hopelessness. In 2023 I did 142 caving trips. (That's what retirement can do for you!) Of these, 129 were digging trips. Obsessive? Moi? And I'm by no means the most preoccupied by this digging malarkey.

I'm involved in three digs on Mendip. There's Templeton. That's just 'Templeton', not Templeton Pot, no matter what the guide books say. Situated on land owned by Lower Pitts Farm in Priddy, it's been dug for 23 years now and must be the most heavily engineered dig... ever. The cave starts as a splendid surface shaft down to the 166' level. (Sorry, but in accordance with the oldie pioneers, all levels were nominated in feet.) The shaft is split into stages with fixed ladders in between. At the 166', the cave then divides into South Pot and North Pot. The former descends a couple more pitches but was abandoned as a dig a few years ago, mainly through lack of personnel as much as anything. North

Pot plunges on down more fixed ladders, some free climbs before a thrutchy bit enters a chamber, Weston Beach, at a depth of around 360' (110m). There's percolation water coming in through the roof of the chamber, and also a small, wet weather stream that comes in opposite the entry point. Weston Beach therefore fills with water, but not to the roof, the level being limited by an overflow into a side passage - Over The Hill.

Swimming in Weston Beach is avoided by the use of a submerged pump. The pump is mains fed by one of three generators on the surface. Of course it is. One member of the team rather heroically turns up early, starts the generator to get the pump going before retiring to The Hunters for pie and a pint, so that by the time the rest turn up at Weston Beach, the tide is out, so to speak. The pumped water is discharged into Over The Hill. This route was dug for a while before becoming tight and partly choked. Now efforts are concentrated on digging the mud and rock infill of the floor of Weston Beach.

Get this. All of the spoil is taken to the surface. This is done initially with manual hauling lines and kibbles. At the fixed ladders, there are a series of electric winches, and at the 166' there is a hydraulically powered skip winch that lifts 300 Kg of spoil at a time right to the surface where it's dispensed into a dumper truck. So, with all the fixed aids, power generation, winches, comms cables, firing wires, etc., this is a somewhat sophisticated set up, I'm sure you'll agree.

Further up the track past Templeton field is Higher Pitts Farm. Four years or so back, the farmer there had the floor of one of his cow sheds

subside. Knowing the Templeton diggers, he invited us along to have a look into the hole, literally. Today we're over 80m down in a boulder filled rift all in Dolomitic Conglomerate. I'd be lying if I said digging down through boulders isn't occasionally nerve wracking. Some boulders have required blasting with a firing point on the surface, whilst some of the smaller ones have been 'popped' locally. (With any digging team it's always handy to have a least one of the team with an explosives certificate.)

The Cow Shed dig has had to be stabilised with scaffold bars and enormous quantities of cement. The farmer is so interested and keen to help that he actually dry mixes our stone dust and cement on the surface, bags it up and helps manually winch it down the entrance.

The cave itself has little horizontal development, and whilst nowhere is tight, it consists of squirming in and around muddy cemented boulders. I've often said to my digging colleagues, if this were one's first caving trip, it would be one's last. The place has few real redeeming features... bar one. It has a draught. And it's a belter too. And to be fair, digging through boulders has some advantages. Half of what needs to be dug is fresh air, and the void spaces between them allows for plenty of spoil storage. Nothing needs to be hauled to the surface, and hence progress has been rapid, at least by Mendip standards.

Given the draught, the tantalising goal is an eventual connection either with Ebbor Gorge or Wookey Hole's Land of Hope and Glory. Both are still some 600m horizontally distant, which could take some while to get through, but who knows? If there is ever to be a through

trip from the Mendip plateau to the resurgence levels, this dig is probably the most likely to deliver. And if such a momentous trip ever becomes possible, come on guys, we have to give the cave a better name than 'Cow Shed'.

Last but not least in my regular digging portfolio, is Grebe Swallet Mine over at Ubley Warren. Originally a Willie Stanton dig, opened up as a consequence of the floods of July 10th '68, the cave intercepted old lead mine workings. It's a veritable museum of artifacts from that era, all neatly cordoned off and labelled. The current dig is exploiting a natural passage, Perdition, which currently ends in a choke that floods in wet weather.

As a consequence, lots of physical effort at the dig face results in elevated CO2 levels. The actual digging is therefore sporadic, interspersed with water and air management, and sometimes waiting for bang fumes to clear. Dealing with the water is subject to ever more ingenious syphoning, bailing, draining solutions.

**AIR MANAGEMENT SIMPLY
RELIES ON TAKING DIVING
CYLINDERS DOWN THERE. I'M
NOT REALLY SELLING THIS, AM
I?**

Why do we pursue it in the face of all these difficulties? The end of Perdition is enticingly close (circa 75m) to passages in Upper Flood Swallet. A connection would make a through trip possible, and we all know cavers like a through trip, don't we? It would also

make the further reaches of Upper Flood easier to get to and enable digging there to be rather more accessible than it is currently.

So three ongoing digs, all with exciting potential. Digs are often jealously guarded, which is slightly ironic, as a lack of active cavers is often the reason for the demise of many a dig. All the digs mentioned here are on private land and are locked, so anybody interested in helping out, do get in touch and we can see what can be arranged. As is the way of these enterprises, the trips are not tourist ones in the sporting sense of the word. They're still very much physical challenges in other ways, and often require lots of problem-solving ingenuity. And they quickly become compulsive! You have been warned.



Photo: Digging in Mendip, photo credits with kind permission of Chris Binding

From *Phil Dennis' Archives*

I caved with CUCC from 1971 to 1974 with the occasional trip with ExCUCC. From 1980 to 1983 I used to go caving in the Peak but had to be pulled out of Sell Gill in 1983 after a fall. After that I only did a few descents of the copper mines on the Great Orme Llandudno as they were literally on my doorstep. I edited the Journal in 1974.



1 Brackenbottom, Horton in Ribblesdale with various members sitting on the wall



2 Geoff who used to live at Brackenbottom. Warden?



3 Steve Perry (with the beret) and Bob Mathews



4 Rob Shackleton (left) and ?

Annual Dinner 2022

Pictures



Figure 1: Having been banned from The Hall, and The Bar, The covers were shortly thrown out of their Host's Bedroom by The Porters, for the crime of overloud sock wrestling. Shortly thereafter the public were also scampering away from Magdelene bridge where the covers swam. Photo Credits: Alice Kirby

Annual Dinner 2023

Annual Dinner 2023 menu

the
ANNUAL DINNER
of the
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY
CAVING CLUB

Wed 26th April 2023

Appetisers: Olives, Nuts, Crisps

To Start: Leek and Potato Soup

A Comedy: Shakespeare in the Sump

The Main: Harissa Spiced Aubergine with Hummus and Brown Rice

Presentation of awards

Pudding: Crumble Buffet and Vegan Meringue

A Tragedy:
The cheese course

Music, Dancing,

Photography Competition winners



Harry
Large Caves



Oakem
The punch



Performance 1: True love underground, by *Chat GPT* and *Harry Kettle*

Of █████ and █████, a tale of love I tell,
Whose flame did burn in secret, lest it fell
To judgment of the caving club's cruel gaze,
And force them into shadows of a daze.

Yet, passion oft will not be kept at bay,
And so it was that █████, one fateful day,
Did loudly groan █████ and name in sweet delight,
Unknowing of the ears that heard that night.

The cavers learned of their forbidden love,
And judged them harshly, as the cruel hearts oft shove.
But love, like fire, will never be contained,
And in their hearts, its flame forever reigned.

Then, fate did strike a deadly blow to █████,
Whose untested simple did cause his fatal luck.
He fell to his death, his life so quickly taken,
Leaving behind his love, so deeply shaken.

"O █████, my love, why did you leave me so?
Without you, how can I face the depths below?"
Cried █████ and , as she lay beside his tomb,
Her heart, which beat for caving, now filled with gloom.

In grief, █████ and could not her heart sustain,
And joined her love in death's eternal chain.
Her car, it crashed into a hedge at speed,
And left the cavers in sorrowful heed.

And so, █████ and █████, in death they lay,
Their love, a bond that death could not betray.
For in their hearts, its flame will ever soar,
And burn eternal, like the love they bore.

Performance 2: Shakespeare near the sump – *Lucy Hyde*

Narrator

I tell a tale of expedition love,
That touched on tragedy and escaped alive.
A tale of hope and pain
Where all the world's a cave
And all the men and women merely cavers
drumroll

Two techniques, both alike in dignity.
In fair austria where we lay our scene.
Will ancient grudge cause a new mutiny,
Where Austrian mud makes caver's hands
unclean?
Come forth, the Simple bearer, and the
Stop!
A pair of star- crossed lovers brought to
strife
And here to misadventure doom their life!
Enter Juliet with her Simple
Romeo with his Stop
Narrator holds up sign 'Balcony Pitch'

At Balcony pitch we find our lovers
Here's Romeo, he makes his slow ab-sail,
And Here is Juliet. Though she be but
little,
She is fierce!
Juliet: grumpy: at the bottom of the pitch

O Romeo, Romeo wherefore art thou
Romeo?
Deny thy stop use and you'll hurry up!
If if thou wilt not, i'll give you heavy rocks,
To weight your bag and get you down this
pitch!

Romeo, descending VERY SLOWLY
To himself, dramatically
Ah me! For all that i have ever caved
The stop has always been the choice for me

But the rope on Balcony never did run
smooth!

To juliet
I'm only halfway down this bloody pitch
If hands had lungs mine would be out of
breath!
I'm out of breath myself

Juliet aside
If his hands had lungs they'd tell a pretty
tale
To romeo
How art thou out of breath when thou hast
breath
to say to me that thou art out of breath?"

Romeo
What you egg?

Narrator
When Romeo had made it to the ground
And stepped into the pool of Jullie's light
The bickering words faulted on his tongue
A rushing noise about the chamber rung
Juliet

What sound is this!
Rumbling and banging!
Narrator

O twas a din to fright a monster's ear!
Twas an earthquake sure! It was the roar
Of boulders as they fell!

The lovers, hand in hand, jumped to the
side
And rolled and tumbled as the cavern fell!
Their hands were torn asunder with a yell!
Then all was quiet

Juliet and Romeo separated. Romeo
unconscious,
Juliet
Romeo? Romeo? Can you hear me Romeo

Narrator

Silence

Juliet

The air grows heavy and my heart grows faint

Is this the place that we were doomed to die
IS this the end? This dark beneath the earth?
To cave or not to cave that was the question
Whether was nobler in the mind to suffer,
The lonesome life, without my caves or him.

Or to take up caving against the sea of risk,
And risk the beauty and the boulders both

To die, to cave; to cave perchance to love!
Ay -there's the rub, for in this cave of death
what can love do?

Narrator

As Juliet pondered the end in store
Romeo stirred under the boulders
Across the chamber floor

Romeo, overdramatic
Oh wow is me! and all my world has caved!
Here trapped between the boulders and the floor
I cannot move to find where she might lie

I wasted time, and now will time waste me.
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
Will creep time's sickle slowly inch by inch
As death crawls closer far beneath the earth
Oh Slay me quick! I fear her not,
But rather fear the wait for dusty death!
Out out brief candle!
The love was but a waking dream, a poor illusion
We talked and played our hour under the sun
But now i'll know no more. Love was a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and whispers
Signifying nothing.

Juliet

Hark! What sound from yonder Boulder breaks?

She Runs over

Romeo

It is the day and Juliet is the sun!
How far your little candle throws its beams
It beams back hope of life and of the sun,

General exclamations of happiness

Narrator

Through the boulder's chink they
whispered there true love
They both still lived, but Romeo was trapped,

Rescuers

We heard the crash and thought to see the matter
Though it was three hours before your call out

Juliet

Better three hours too soon than a minute too late
Words are easy, like the wind;
faithful friends are hard to find.
Come help me.

Remove the rock together and carry romeo out

Narrator

Though Death looked on that day,
She had not time to take them on her way
And romeo and Juliet made it out
To live on many years and pleasant days.

Though life will pass through joyful times and pains

Still, This above all else remains:

To thine own self be true.

Live well, love much, cave too.

Exit pursued by a bear

Food Section

Craving Crumbles Underground: - *Jon Lester*

A Journal of Two Recipes Explored in Caves

In the mystical realm of culinary caving adventures, Jono and David, esteemed guardians of the sacred crumble recipes, unveil our secrets to creating indulgent delights that transport taste buds to food much more interesting than the dried vegetarian sausages we serve up on freshers' weekends.



CUCC Crumble Recipe, courtesy of the esteemed crumble office of CUCC – David

You will need:

For the Filling:

- Apples, ideally cooking (Bramley) apples, but any apple or apple-adjacent (pears, blackberries, etc.) will work.
- A handful of sultanas/raisins, often available from porridge supplies, can impart a sense of strudel to aid reminiscence of Austrian Expos.
- Cinnamon to taste (exercise caution; it is likely to be ignored, leave it in the supermarket if in any doubt).

For the Topping:

- Plain flour
- Sugar (normally caster, but good results achieved with other varieties; experimentation encouraged)
- Butter (if you've made the mistake of shopping with vegans, substitute for margarine)
- Oats if available
- Flaked almonds to indicate decadence

Method:

1. Recruit as many willing or unwilling volunteers as possible; prior crumble experience to be considered a bonus but not required. This will enable topping and filling preparation to be parallelized – a money-saving life hack in lieu of management consultant fees.
2. (Efficiency note: Normally, recipes tell you to heat the oven; depending on the state of the available appliance and efficiency of your recruits, apply appropriate handicaps. Aiming for 190C/170 fan/gas 5, but the tolerance band is pretty wide.)

3. Find one or more large, deep trays; exact sizing and material selection are left as an exercise for the reader.
4. Measure out the flour into a large mixing vessel (bowl, pan, digging bucket (washed!), whatever you have to hand). 200 grams of flour is about enough for 5 portions. Substitute up to a quarter of the flour for oats for added sophistication.
5. Measure out half as much sugar as flour. At this point, you may need to engineer a rudimentary set of scales; those physics lessons have a use after all! Or you can eyeball it as your cave-dwelling ancestors used to.
6. Measure out half as much butter as flour. Cut the butter into cubes to make the next bit easier.
7. Using your hands, rub the butter into the mixture until it becomes uniform and crumbly!
8. Preparing the filling, peel the fruit if appropriate (don't try to peel a blackberry!). There is much to be said on the art of peeling, with various schools of thought having established themselves and then split into sub-schools and warring factions, as so often happens with religious groups.
9. Fruit of an apple-like nature should be sliced into 2-3mm thick slices. There are conflicting opinions on this, but those are, of course, all wrong.
10. Arrange the fruit in the trays and add any cinnamon, raisins, and if using cooking apples, a sprinkling of sugar to counteract the tartness. Some lemon juice has from time to time made an appearance at this step. Mix it all together into a uniform base ready for the topping.
11. Spread the topping onto the filling; this should really go without saying. If you'd like to add some extra personality, keep back a fraction of the crumble mixture and add a little water; stirring will cause the mixture to partially ball up.
12. Sprinkle a healthy amount of flaked almonds over the topping, a topping for the topping if you will.
13. Place in the oven for roughly 30-40 minutes until browning; keep an eye on it, don't burn it!

Do You Even Crumble – Jono

You will need:

For the Adventure-Seeking Apples:

- 575g of Bramley apples (3 medium ish apples) or be super lazy and buy tinned apples....
- 2 tbsp golden caster sugar, for sweetening up those adventure-seeking apples

For the Crumble:

- 175g plain flour, to leave a floury trail through the crumble caves



- 110g golden caster sugar, the treasure we seek at the end of the crumbly pitch
- 110g butter

For the Optional Topping:

- 1 tbsp rolled oats
- 1 tbsp demerara sugar

[Editor's note: Julian, are those crisps???

- To Serve:
- Double cream, clotted cream, or custard.....

Method:

1. Preheat and Prepare:
 - Heat the oven to 190C/170 fan/gas 5, or open a portal to the realms of hell.
 - Toss our brave 575g of peeled, cored, and sliced Bramley apples, or a can, but of course not the can but the apples inside because that would be silly wouldn't it? with 2 tbsp golden caster sugar. These apples are ready for an epic cave exploration.
2. Crumble Creation:
 - In a bowl, embark on the floury journey with 175g plain flour and 110g golden caster sugar, adding a pinch of salt for good measure, or lots of salt if you are making it for DUSA/NUCC.
 - Slice in 110g cold butter, and rub it in until the mixture looks like a survey map. Use a fork to ensure no crumbs are left behind!
3. Decorate and Bake:
 - Pour the crumb mix over our brave apples, forming a mound that even the most daring spelunker would be proud of descending
 - Sprinkle 1 tbsp rolled oats and 1 tbsp demerara sugar for that extra dazzle; at this point you must say out loud "wow".
4. Cool and Enjoy:
 - Let the crumble cool for 10 minutes, giving the flavors a chance to mingle and share their cave stories before serving.

Recipe Tips:

- Peeling Apples:
 - Use a knife for peeling or leave them unpeeled for that "just emerged from the depths" look.
- Make it Your Own:
 - Spice things up! Add ½ tsp mixed spice, cinnamon, allspice, or vanilla pod seeds when tossing apples. Because every cave needs a little flavor adventure.
 - Throw in a handful of blackberries for a berrylicious twist. It's like finding hidden gems in the crumble cave!

Poem

Ode to a drunken caver – *Joel Stobbart*

*Twas a new year's morn, so bright and brisk,
When I awoke, brain soaked in whisky,
An error grave I had committed,
And now a punishment befitted.*

*To tumble through the earth's deep reaches,
And try to not shit in my breeches,
From tented lair I did emerge,
And promptly threw up on the verge.*

*In the kitchen, the sobered number,
Did bash their pans to disturb slumber,
They came cavorting up the stairs,
What a bunch of twats.*

*After food, kit to remember,
Croll, pantin, basic, descender,
Outside the cave, companions well met,
Oh bugger, I forgot my helmet.*

*And so the ropes we toss down pitches,
"There's no knot in this, you daft bitches!"
Thrutching mournfully through the sloppy,
Stomach groaning, plippy ploppy.*

*"Why oh why do you go caving?
You must be mad, completely raving!"
Speak thus if someone asks you this:
"I said I'd go when I was pissed"*

Songbook - *from the editor*

The CUCC songbook has been a great success since I pieced together some songs from other clubs with the ones I head regularly sang, and added a cover on 2022 expo. It has now taken on a life of its own with many contributions from members & non-members, and singing has become an integral part of club meets.

At 63 pages and growing, it is too big to include here so follow the link to the active file:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VNbWEh3WCQI03KX4u1-Ilwypi8g0LAc1wOWx2mBurmA/edit?usp=sharing>

Contents of the CUCC Song Book. As of spring 2024:

The Hard Cover - A Classic, disputed authorship but purported to be from Cambridge's 1968 Ireland expedition (1)	5
Caving Matilda - Probably the national anthem of cavers and the first caving song I personally learnt. I do remember Alice Kirby teaching me this on the Daren crawl	6
A Rare cave, a Rattling cave - Marmite of songs: Loved by some, hated by others (me)	7
Bring Back My Ladders To Me - Another, slightly ungrammatical, classic	8
A Caver ain't a caver - I first heard the chorus of this, written by Maddie Kirby, during the Famous 37 Meter Crawl in Grotty Estevan, and so wrote versus for it later, picturing grumpy old cavers found in the corner of certain huts mumbling about the students these days	9
Lord of the Faff - Much required in our club	10
South Wales/The Dales - An early and much loved song in the present clubs singing era	11
The diggers song - Some say that the tune of this song is capable of driving cavers to the utmost edge of delusion. In the small hours cavers can be found staring at ingredients lists and fire exit warnings, chanting words to its rhythm	12
Down to Mendip in Somerset - Fantastic song discovered from a now extinct club, even if the final verse required editing	13
Captain Seddon - Will Kay's words took the student community by storm, capturing the nefarious, mysterious, and much loved Tony Seddon in tune	14
Boulder have a crunch	15
A Reblay - Emma Caspers words emerged on Expo and truly capture the glorious relief felt as a reblay approaches	16
The Caver's Complaint	17

- New to canon, but I already find myself regularly humming this addictive tune	
The Battle Hymn of the Underland//Yorkshire Underground	17
- Another classic, with some new versus, best sung at sprinting pace	
The Welly song	20
- No changes needed to this perfect song, where would you all be without yer wellies?	
Oh my cavers CUCC committee	21
- Sadly outdated as committee turns over so quickly	
He ain't gonna cave no more	22
- The joy of caving songs has spread to Birmingham and Manchester	
'SRT' (Let it be) (RN)	23
- Very useful song to sing when reminding novices that they really shouldn't be unclipping over a 30m drop	
I'm a Caver.	23
Time Flies by.	25
The SRT Song	26
Speleology	27
- Required learning to censor a certain song to the same tune	
Caving Tackle Store	28
Yesterday	29
Tankard's Hole song	30
The twelve CUCC trips	31
Cave Oddity	32
- A true classic, written by an older generation of CUCC cavers and still loved by the young	
Carbide with me	34
Speleorhapsody	35
Caver (Human)	36
O you take the high route..	37
- I've had two too many close calls from Lancs to County so will be sticking to the high route	
My Favourite Things	38
Cave necessities	39
Far over the misty mountains cold	40
Northwest Passage	41
The Skye Cave song	43
- A melancholy but lovely tune for when caves and caving is far away	
Wild mountain thyme	44
Auld Lang Syne	45
Can you hear the people sing?	45
The Hippopotamus Song (Mud, Mud)	46
- The song for Mistral	
Byker Hill	47
Cruel Cursed Fishface	48
- Far too many jokes for a universal audience, but Jonty's piece well captures the happening of recent Expos	

Home to top camp - For the rainy top camp days when not everything is exciting, and melancholy thoughts stray in	50
The Idiot Caver - In the opposite tone, we are all fools to do what we do, so lets do it anyway!	51
A Poor Wayfaring Caver - For singing in echoing chambers, alone, waiting for a pitch	53
Caver Man (Piano man)	54
Simple on his Hip	55
I'm Just Warmbac - Specially for Harry Kettle	56
Come listen all ye cavers to how the moral goes	57

(1) <https://cucc.survex.com/archive/song.htm>

Postscript

Thank you, dear cavers, for reading ... there's more to all these stories, and many more tales from the Underground, wating to be written.

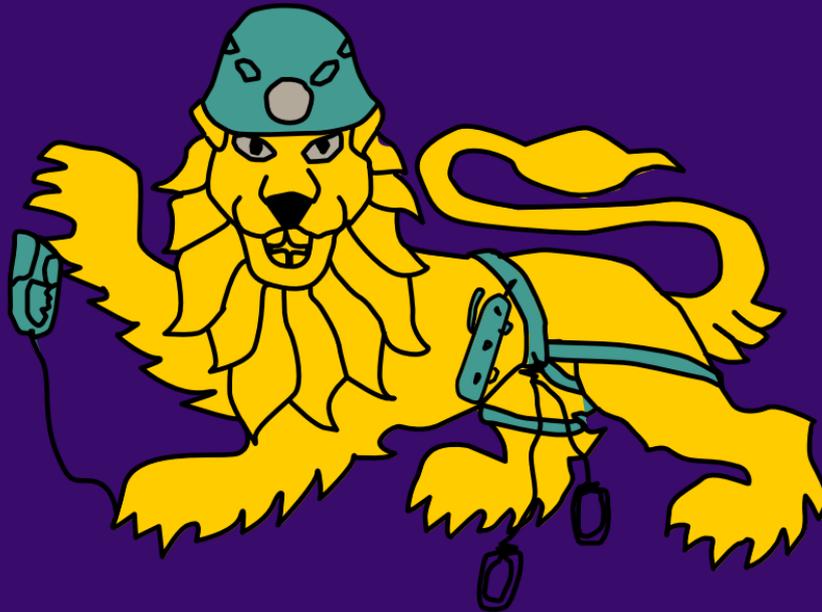
Present and future committee members, if you've made it this far, please can I beg you to pester for trip reports – so many memories to capture, and one day, make the next journal.

Remember to join the ExCs list once you leave the University Club!:

<https://survex.com/excs.html>

Keep caving, and keep bringing new people into caving

Back cover image: adapted from CUCC lion **by Jon Lester**



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY
CAVING CLUB

ONWARDS TO THE FINAL SUMP