



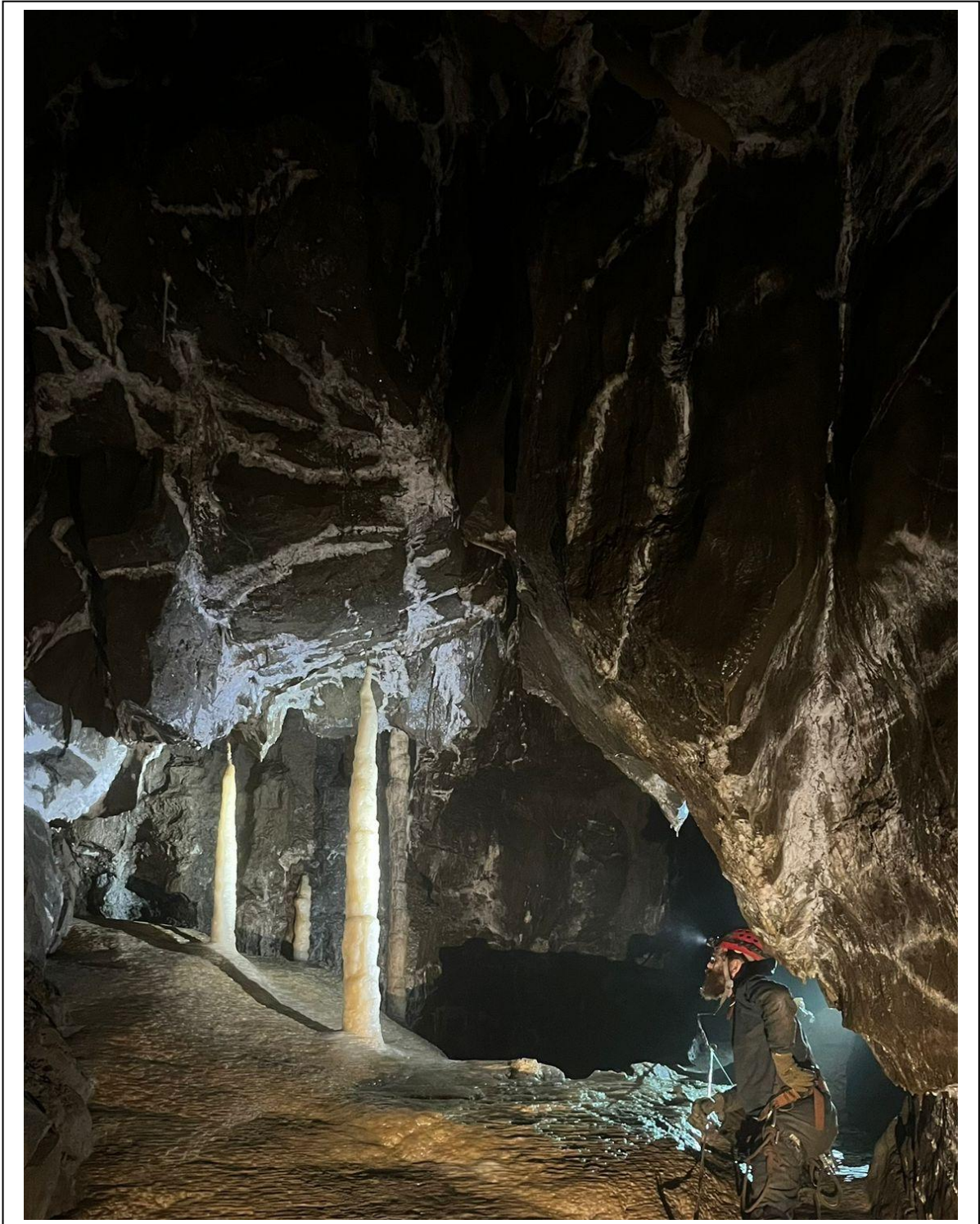
RED ROSE CAVE AND POTHOLE CLUB

NEWSLETTER



Vol 62 No 3

Autumn 2025



Christopher Chapple Holt at the Colonnades

Photo Credit – Ollie Davenport

Contents

Your 2025 Committee	2
Editor's Note.....	2
Club News.....	3
Ease Gill Open House Event	3
UK Trip Reports	6
Wretched Rabbit through to Lancaster Hole	6
Heron Pot	8
Gale Garth Alternative to Swinsto Hole.....	10
Snailbeach Lead Mine - Shropshire.....	13
Digging Reports.....	17
Gale Garth Pot.....	17
Hazel Sike Cave Birthday Bash Clear Out	18
Reviving Sodoff.....	19
Caving Abroad	21
An Introduction to Caving in Andalusia.....	21
Riesending 2025	24
Blasts from the Past	32
50th Anniversary of the RRCPC Taurus Mountains Expedition	32
Ogof Draenen	35
Ogof Draenen: Gilwern Passage Extensions.....	36
Ogof Draenen: The Round Trip	36
The Potholer of Mulu.....	37
Library Additions: February 2025 – July 2025.....	38

Your 2025 Committee

President: Sam Lieberman
president@rrcpc.org.uk

Chairman: Steve Gray
chair@rrcpc.org.uk

Secretary: Gwen Tawy
secretary@rrcpc.org.uk

Membership Sec: Emma Key
membership@rrcpc.org.uk

Treasurer: Dinny Davies
treasurer@rrcpc.org.uk

News-Sheet Editor: Lara Bartleet
news@rrcpc.org.uk

Newsletter Editor: Gwen Tawy
newsletter@rrcpc.org.uk

Hut Warden: Philip Withnall
hutwarden@rrcpc.org.uk

Booking Secretary: Alice Shackley
bookings@rrcpc.org.uk

HQ Engineer: Colin Jones & Alan Martin
engineer@rrcpc.org.uk

Librarian: Sandra Wilkinson
librarian@rrcpc.org.uk

Web Site Administrator: Dinny Davies
website@rrcpc.org.uk

Conservation Officer: Aila Taylor
conservation@rrcpc.org.uk

C.N.C.C. representative and Ease Gill Project Officer: Sam Lieberman
cncc@rrcpc.org.uk

Tackle Master: Toby Speight
tackle@rrcpc.org.uk

Meets & Permits Co-Ordinator: Nat Dalton
meets@rrcpc.org.uk

Training Officer: David Brown
training@rrcpc.org.uk

Journal Editor: Mike Appleton
journal@rrcpc.org.uk

Social Secretary: Lucy Hyde
social@rrcpc.org.uk

Editor's Note

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the RRCPC Newsletter. This summer has been busier than usual at Bullpot Farm, with many members and visitors descending to celebrate birthdays and get underground to escape the hot weather. In June, we also held the inaugural Ease Gill Open House event, which brought new and familiar faces to the Farm. This week-long caving extravaganza was well-attended and has received very positive feedback. Thank you to everyone who volunteered for the event, especially Alice Shackley, who proposed and planned it. Congratulations Alice! A report of the Ease Gill Open House is featured in this Newsletter, but if you would like to share your own experience of the event in a future Newsletter, please do get in touch. In keeping with previous Newsletters, this edition also includes recent club trip reports, updates on digging projects, and some blasts from the past. We also have our very first AI-generated poem! Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this Newsletter.

If you'd like to read something else after finishing this Newsletter, follow this link to read an interesting sketch on Bullpot Farm:

<https://www.castertonparishcouncil.org.uk/a-sketch-about-bullpot-farm/>

Thank you to Dick Ellwood for drawing my attention to this and sharing the link with me.

Gwen Tawy
Newsletter Editor

Club News

Ease Gill Open House Event

20-30th June 2025

It was a real treat to “work remotely” and travel up to the Farm to do some proper caving with friends, old and new. Ollie Devenport and I travelled up from Manchester (with a cheeky Inglesports detour of course) very early on the Thursday, which to our delight when we stumbled in at 11am, found the farm was not a ghost-hut but full of faffers who still hadn’t figured out which trip they were doing that day. Both Ollie and I are quite inexperienced in Ease Gill route-finding, so this was a great opportunity to learn more of the system. Sioned, Toby, Dalek, Ollie and I united and decided to do a trip from Top Sink to County pot, with some detours. There is something tortuous about wearing caving attire and seeing sunlight that makes walking across the fell feel endless and tiring, especially when you have to bimble all the way to Top Sink. However, we finally made it to the entrance, which had an interesting scootch across traverse to get onto the first pitch. We whizzed down the entrance pitches and meandered through the tunnels before reaching our first detour to Limerick Junction. This included a sketchy electron ladder which we climbed up into a small tunnel where there were some delicate orange straws, and of course, an obligatory photoshoot had to take place here.

After chancing death getting down the ladder, the trip continued to Easter Grotto, a chamber that has been on my list for quite some time from admiring the print of Dalek in the upstairs corridor of the Farm. The divide in the group between the members who had been to the grotto before and Ollie and I was quite evident, as those of us who hadn’t been there before were gawping at the decorations as we snapped our cameras. It would be unsporting to allow our team to deteriorate with hypothermia, so we were pressured to leave the grotto to continue our trip. We continued our trip into straw chamber. Dalek and Toby kindly pointed out important navigational points such as confusion corner, Holbeck Junction and Spout Hall, which helped us climb up Poetic Justice and pop out of County. This trip conveniently cut our walk back to the farm by 10 minutes.



Ollie and Dalek in Limerick Junction
Photo Credit: Rachael Pajak



Rachael descending in Cow Pot
Photo Credit: Ollie Davenport

The weather had declined on the Friday, slightly limiting some trip options. However, Ollie and I teamed up with Christopher Chapple Holt to go down Cow Pot and out via Lancaster Hole. Cow pot was beautifully lush with flourishing ferns and foxgloves. The eagerness to get underground was accompanied with a desire to get out of the way of the midges that loitered around the entrance. My first experience of Cow Pot was epic and was also a practical reminder that my cowstails might have been too long, so I had a good arm workout unclipping them on the rebelay, however, all was worth it to descend into Fall Pot. We had a fun explore to places I do not know and cannot recall. Christopher took us to the Graveyard Series, and I took Ollie to the colonnades. Christopher and I allowed Ollie, a colonnades virgin, to proceed first while we giggled as his "WOW!'s" crescendo as the colonnades got bigger and bigger. Of course, a photoshoot had to take place. We then had a drippy ascent up Lancaster Hole, where we returned to the farm to see it slowly fill up with more cavers.

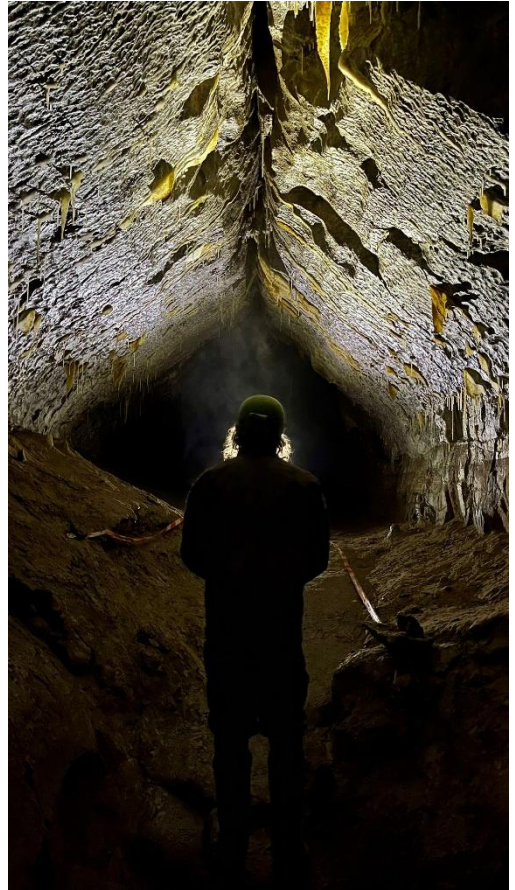
Saturday was a tad drizzly but not enough to put one off caving. For this day I wanted (with the aid of a responsible adult that is Toby) recreate my infamous Lancaster Hole – Wretched Rabbit trip and put all my long hours route-finding practise to good use. Alongside Toby, Ollie and some novice day trippers from MUSC joined us. This trip really consolidated my knowledge of Ease Gill, and we travelled through some of my favourite passages such as the Minarets and Painter's Palette, where of course, a mandatory photoshoot had to take place. Before finding the passage onto the Minarets, the group smirked and giggled from the higher ground as they watched me do a full 360° before shouting I had found the way on, which was the way we come from. Thankfully Toby stepped in to help guide me 180° to the way on. Some 'hard' lessons were learned in the approach to Wretched Rabbit when not going through an obvious slot but instead looking up for a climb over a hole which was onwards, I instead fell onto a sharp penetrating rock (hence forth be known as Rachael's rock for route finding purposes). After a few moments recovering from the trauma, the correct route was taken out. On the return to the farm, the fell was a swampy bog as we waded through to get back to the farm for a "BBQ", which for some reason had to be indoors. Let's just say I did not need to wash my kit following that trip as I had a time-efficient walking shower.

At this point I was not sure if Ollie was sick of caving and yapping with me or just really relied on a lift back to Manchester as Toby, him and I embarked on a short trip from Pool Sink to Wretched. We had an explore of Magpie Chamber, passed the Bacon Slicer and returned to

familiar territory. I was of course very careful around Rachael's rock and did not become their victim for a second day in a row (I did however have a tumble down another bit of the cave). We came out of Wretched to glorious sunny skies, so Ollie had a refreshing dip in the stream. This was quite a contrast to popping out of Wretched the day before to tempest-like conditions. The weekend was finished off with superb fish and chips in Kirby Lonsdale before the drive back to Manchester.

An extra special thanks to the organisers of Open house, I hope to come up for longer next year.

Rachael Pajak



Toby in the Minarets
Photo Credit: Ollie Davenport



Ollie in Easter Grotto
Photo Credit: Rachael Pajak

UK Trip Reports

Wretched Rabbit through to Lancaster Hole

5th July 2025

Neil Carter, Harry Cowan, Colin Jones, Sam Lieberman, Steve White

This was a trip I'd had in mind for a while though never got around to doing it. Previously I had been down Wretched Rabbit with Sam Lieberman and then on a solo excursion. But I'd never got around to sorting anything out. Prior to which the RRCPC had hosted the Open Ease Gill Event, and I had been basking in ridiculously hot temperatures in Southern Spain.



Wretched Rabbit Entrance
Photo Credit: Colin Jones

While I was on holiday I'd kept in touch with Harry about a possible outing once I got back. Steve White also messaged me asking about organizing something. And so, I thought we would have a look at the Wretched Rabbit/Lancaster Hole route. Although I have ventured into this part of the system before it was not exactly fresh in my mind. Harry had however been rampaging through Ease Gill during the Open Event so a lot of it was quite fresh in his mind. With this in mind, I sent an invitation to Sam Lieberman to join us as he is a mind of information and route finding where Ease Gill is concerned. Harry contacted Neil, who in turn contacted me. And so,

a happy bunch of wanderers gathered at Bull Pot Farm.

It had rained over the previous few days prior to our outing, and Ease Gill was in very modest flow near to the Entrance pipe. With that in mind we set off down the ropes and the meandering passage towards Four Ways Chamber. Along the way Harry had disappeared at various points to have a wriggle through the tighter or wetter spaces. We all gathered at Four Ways Chamber before heading off to Stop Pot where Harry could indulge himself in the waters and I could get a few pictures. On leaving Stop Pot at the top of the ladders we met a party coming the other way. By now the rocks were extremely slippery and the mud was like grease, it just made the going hard work at times. I was still feeling a bit jaded from the heat and dehydration of Spain, and Steve was feeling a bit tired.

At various times we stopped and gathered ourselves whilst Sam explained where we were and what possible route options were available at that point. It's not often Sam does the pedestrian trips, being more involved with the digging and exploration side of caving. So, his knowledge and eagerness to pass it on was truly appreciated.



Exploring Ease Gill
Photo Credit: Colin Jones

Cornes Cavern and Oakes Cavern were notable stopping points, as was the Painter's Palette and the rather large loose boulders at Stake Pot (not a place to be if they start to move) all passed by with interest, and clocking the various features for later trips.

Onward to Fall Pot and by now I was getting quite frustrated with the lack of grip my wellies afforded. Climbs became absolute obstacles at times especially at places like the 'Crap Trap'. We eventually all got to Lancaster Hole which Harry had rigged the previous night. It was a chance to wash off some of the mud and crap from our boots and clothing before the long climb out. There is something to be said for being 'Cave Fit' a condition not to be taken too lightly. This was apparent with me feeling jaded from Spain and the heat, and Steve with the long gap between caving trips. Harry and Neil had been busy caving in previous weeks, and Sam is naturally 'Cave Fit'.

A superb outing in excellent company followed by a long drive home and a well-deserved beer!!



Sam at the Painter's Palette
Photo Credit: Colin Jones

Colin Jones

Heron Pot

19th July 2025

Dalek, Harry Cowan

It was after 7am, and I was woken up by the deluge that incessantly hit the Farm for an hour. Going back to bed I was again woken up, this time by Harry. He said that it'd rain until 3pm but it didn't! I decided that the trip was still on, and I took the liberty of doing both routes as a mini-exchange to gain variety and rigging practice!

Parking up at the Yordas Pot layby, we'd gotten across the beck and up the hill, to be greeted by two cavers returning from Heron Pot! They said that they'd gone only as far as the pitches and that it was a long crawl to the exit. One of them recognised me from a trip I'd organised (or rather Adele had) for my 60th birthday down Illusion Pot! It was Jeff Croston from the BPC. After a short bit of banter and confirmation of where the entrance was, we continued and found it nearby.

The climb down and crawling to regain the stream canyon was a little irksome. This was compensated for by the lovely narrow passage and bends to reach the pitches. I chose to rig the high-level route while Harry did the traditional one. A wide and slippery climb up using the bit of rope tat that hung there helped a bit. After the first 2 hangers the rift opened out quite considerably and now I was faced with a wide yawning chasm with little to brace myself for confidence and support. The next 4 hangers were only gained by abbing down slightly and trying to bridge across the void and reaching out with the krab and knotted rope! This procedure got me to the final Y hang, where I had to use my own extra krab, as the CNCC 2009 topo had only depicted 7 krabs that were required on this route!

Harry of course had less of the acrobatics than I had and was already down and waiting for me. Taking a photographic record of us perched on a rock we then climbed and stooped to gain a short crawly bit. Here, Harry wanted to take a look at the phreatic stuff on the left-hand side by climbing up to reach passage with gour pools in it. Back down and yet another climb up to gain the same passage.



Harry and Dalek in Heron Pot
Photo Credit: Harry Cowan

The main passage continued in pleasant walking/climbing/stooping fashion until gradually it got lower and lower over cobbles and slimy, yet slippery bedrock. I was glad that I had stuck to my idea of using Scruffs kneepads held on with cable-ties; that gave more protection than the standard neoprene kneepads, over the infernal cobbles! The exit was a simple corkscrew motion onto one's back through a half metre low duck. The water level was only a few inches at that! A short climb up and we were out. It was about 3:15 now and we chatted and munched over a piece of lovely Kendal Mint Cake.

Back down and good going to the pitches when I noticed the much discomforting feeling of a bowel movement coming on! Harry went up when I had to go down!

Harry was well into derigging the high-level stuff when I started up the shorter rope. Getting off now presented a problem. The shared Y-hang was, in part, from a hanger on the opposite wall, higher up and out of reach on a well-polished and curved wall. There was, of course an intermediate knot on the rope that I could clip into, but it was still a very exposed move and my legs wouldn't reach any decent footholds that gave me confidence in security while unclipping the belay. I had visions of slipping and then it just happened! I sort of slithered down at speed and pendulumed under the other belay, bouncing around a bit from wall to wall, and I fell about 5 to 10 feet.

I hung there, in space, dazed and winded!

Realising that I'd just survived my first slip-up with free-space below my legs! I'd gashed a finger that looked worse than it was. Blood was on the tackle bag. My left temple hurt and felt delicate to the touch under my helmet. My left shoulder blade really ached a lot when trying to use my left arm to move things. Harry shouted down to me. He'd heard the commotion! I said I didn't know how bad I was, yet.

Derigging to the next pitch, Harry offered to finish the derig while I dekkitted. Getting out wasn't that bad. Walking down the valley, was!

Our call out was 5pm. It was 5pm when we got to the car. We'd been in for about 3h+. No reception until we got to the top of the hill where the microwave transmitter was and called the Farm. Toby had just got back from Garstang and took the call. It was about 5:15. There were only the 4 of us that night, including Johnny.

Dalek

Gale Garth Alternative to Swinsto Hole

26^h July 2025

Dalek, Harry Cowan

It seems like the expected hordes won't materialise for the big trips like Aquamole and Swinsto/Simpsons exchange trips. Again, Harry turned up and saved the day. Ray and Sam were of course at the dig. Digging down the other side of the scaffolding to where the fixed ladder was secured. Going down a climb we reached a squeeze in a low awkward bendy section. I was told not to touch the loose left-hand wall. Soon after we got to a large chamber with various ways on. Octopus Chamber had several ways on up in the roof. Here, Harry back-and-footed it up and climbed round a bit until a bridge of loose looking boulders stopped his progress. Climbing and crawling round to another large passage, Harry insisted on going down a 20-foot drop with an awkward take-off. Using his rope and SRT kit he succeeded, and was gone for some time. On his return he struggled to get back up at the top of the pitch. More flat-out, down and up climbs led us into The China Shop and Dracula's Altar. Glistening grey-like calcite adorned all the walls and roof, with many straws and some helictites. Soon after it closed down and we headed off back. Not long after Octopus Chamber, we climbed down a wide shaft and progressed backwards down a narrow rift into a 45-degree hading rift. A low streamway led to a tight constriction, said Harry. On the way back Harry noticed a side passage and presumed that this one led to the other end of where he'd got stuck on his solo exploration! On exit, Ray and Sam had gone.

A nice 2-hour scamper around in crawls and interesting side passages to see at least some fine formations at the other end, for our endeavours.

Dalek

Accompanying Material by Dalek from the RRCPC website:

Gale Garth Pot Exploration by Ian Jopson

https://easegill.rrcpc.org.uk/text/Early_G-garth.htm

The serious attention of the Red Rose was focused on this sink during the August Bank Holiday deluge, when quite a large volume of water was observed disappearing. The following weekend a strong digging party was organised with J. Newton in charge. Some five or six feet of glacial fill was cleared and the sides shored with "Acrows" and wooden planks, before signs of a break-through occurred.

A week later the "dig" went and rapid progress was made until we were checked at a narrow rift approximately six inches wide at the base and tapering vertically to close. This led off from a small circular chamber some three feet in diameter by five feet in height and entered from the top. It was decided to lower the bottom of this little chamber, in the hope that the rift would widen and so two teams of three were arranged. One digger filled a bucket, a second man lifted it up from the chamber and passed it back to the last man who emptied the spoil down the passage. The two teams worked alternately for a shift of an hour at a time before returning to the surface for tea and soup supplied by the "back up services".

Towards the end of the day the rift had been enlarged sufficiently to permit the injection of our thinnest "volunteer" whose report was not encouraging.

D. Creedy, P. Whiteside and H. Rothwell returned mid-week to the rift and succeeded in breaking through as far as Octopus Chamber.

The following Friday found us exploring the vicinity of this chamber which included a twenty foot scale, at the end of which a few members were persuaded to dig. D. Creedy and myself scaled a six foot wall of sand and found the continuation along a phreatic passage much of it crawling to avoid damage to the many straws and formations. This gained us around 250 feet extension to Dracula's altar, where we were stopped by a sand and calcite choke.

Meanwhile the stouter members who could not force the tight rift near the entrance, concentrated their efforts at the adjacent sink which we estimated to be over Octopus chamber. This of course was named "Fat Man's Dig".

Attention was next paid by C. Bargh, H. Rothwell, P. Whiteside and D. Creedy to a twenty foot pitch which led to a chamber from which a small stream sumped. This has yet to be dug, but there are hopes of a connection with Lancaster Hole. A connection was achieved with the stream sink just beyond Octopus chamber.

Several weeks work was expended on digging at Dracula's altar before Bill Mitchell was allowed the honour of "first man in".

A very tight flat out "Z" bend, followed by a straight, but still tight, crawl for 15 feet is undertaken before the roof lifts to reveal the passage continuing. The formations again appear and soon lead to the largest chamber in the cave discovered at the present time.

Explorers

*D. Creedy, P. Whiteside, C. Bargh, V. Unsworth, W. Mitchell,
P. Llewellyn, I. Jopson, G. Bosnyak, H. Rothwell.*

*Diggers Only (over 36" chest)
J. Newton, R. Bliss, J. Sheldon.*

Gale Garth Pot - Speleological Notes

D. P. Creedy

A positive correlation of Gale Garth Pot with Lancaster Hole and Bull Pot of the Witches is difficult due to the involvement of upper levels containing much fill. Gale Garth consists essentially of a major phreatic phase modified by a lowering of base level to form a lower, now abandoned streamway. The present day active stream is a minor invader which has bisected the system and cut its own path to base level, presumably Lancaster Hole main sump.

A comparison of levels with Bull Pot of the Witches indicates two possible points of connection.

(a) Burnett's Great Chamber inlet. (Probably a continuation of the '32 extension.)

(b) Far Gallery - this is the most likely. This passage has a cross-sectional area comparable with Gale Garth upper level. (refer to Bull Pot of the Witches survey by D. Baldwin.) A 1 in 7 slope for a distance of 300 feet from the northern end of Gale Garth Pot would ensure a connection with Far Gallery.

Still dreaming of an overland route from Bull Pot to Lancaster Hole consider the lower abandoned streamway of the new Pot. Could this be the upstream end, or at least a tributary, of Montague South passage in Lancaster Hole which lies about 550 feet to the S.S.E.

The immature active stream passage beyond Octopus chamber is a mystery. One possible destination is a minor inlet in Waterfall passage (Lancaster Hole). A dye test would be worthwhile. Numerous small boys have been lured into the tight streamway to no avail. The stream has cut three or four different routes before establishing its present course. It is possible that within a few yards of the tight section the phases unite to present a navigable passage.



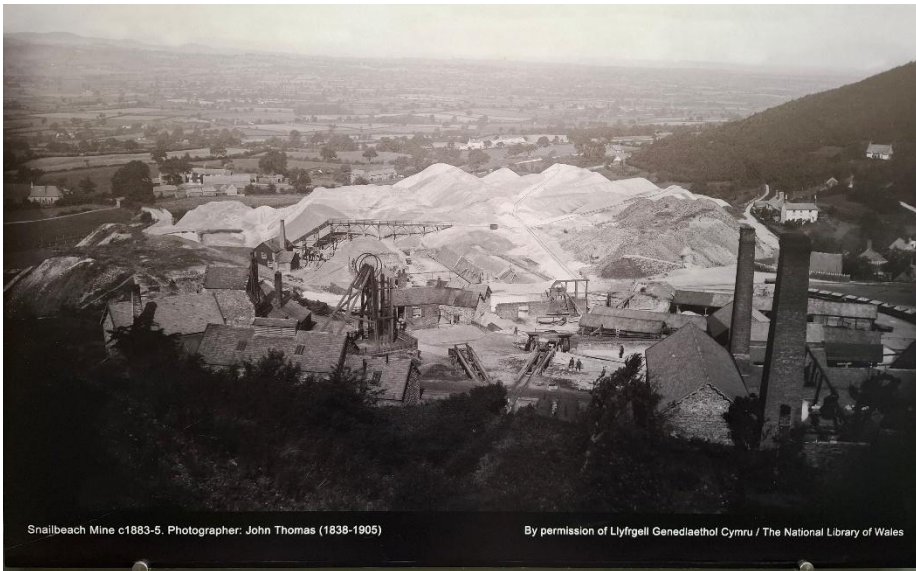
Relaxing at the Ease Gill Open House Event
Photo Credit: Phil Withnall

Snailbeach Lead Mine - Shropshire

3rd August 2025

Andy Hall, Colin Jones

I first got interested in this mining area many years ago when youth hosteling in the area. More recently during my research into my family tree I discovered that my Second Great Grandfather James Luther (1811- 1887) was from a family of lead miners from the Minsterley area of Shropshire. Several generations seem to have worked in the lead mines in the area. They lived in and around Lady Oak within walking distance of the Snailbeach Mine. On a trip back from mid Wales a few years ago I dropped into the visitor centre at Snailbeach, which lies a few miles southeast of Minsterley and the west slopes of the Stiperstones hill. The visitor centre was closed but I had a wander round the derelict mine buildings and also looked for the cottages where my ancestors live. I vowed to return.



Snailbeach Mine

Photo Credit: John Thomas (by permission of LIGC/NLW)

The unfenced site is owned by Shropshire Council and managed on a day-to-day basis by Shropshire Mines Trust. In its heyday it was one of the biggest and richest lead mines in the country. A few weeks ago, I came across an advert on social media for one of the open days giving access to the underground workings, but you needed to book in advance. Colin Jones also came across

the same advert and on the same day we independently emailed a booking for two people for the visit of Sun 3rd August. I also had the added motive of dropping into a few local churchyards around Minsterley to see if I could find any graves belonging to my ancestors. The booking was soon confirmed, and we decided to drive over in Colin's camper van. The booking included trips underground into Perkins Level and Landing Level

Generally, Shropshire Mines Trust look after the Tourist Mine and visits by members of the public and they leave visiting caving/mine exploration clubs to Shropshire Caving and Mining Club, although many of Trust members belong to both groups. There is a lot at Snailbeach that can be visited using SRT. They don't organise club SRT trips on the same days as taking the public underground.

On behalf of Shropshire Mines Trust, we booked 2 places for a guided tour into Perkins Level starting at 12:00 noon The Trust are constrained for public tours by what is expected by the Mines Inspectorate, and these were the last two places remaining for that day.

We were sent the following information....

There is a 10-minute walk, uphill, to access Perkins Level from the visitors centre and the entrance section is wet such that we recommend wearing Wellington boots (we have some pairs that can be borrowed). Underground, the floor is rough and there are some crude steps to climb - this tour is not suited to anybody with walking difficulties. There is a minimum age limit of 7 years for Perkins Level tours. From leaving the main mine buildings to return, takes about 80 to 90 minutes.

We charge £10/adult but this includes the option of also going into Landing Level afterwards (add another 20 to 30 minutes).

If driving, park at Snailbeach Village Hall Car Park (donations requested) and walk up the hill on the footpath to the main mine buildings. Tours will start from these buildings and you need to be there before the scheduled start time. We can provide helmets and lights.

We arrived in plenty of time at the village hall after a visit to the local village church for a brief fruitless search of the gravestones for Luther ancestors. They all postdated my ancestors! We met one of the trust volunteers who made us welcome and allowed us into the chained off reserved spot for parking for booked in visitors. Walking up the hill with our own lights and over-suits and we spotted several remains of mine working including tips. We were also able to look into the restored blacksmith's workshop preserved as it was left in the mid twentieth century.

Bit of History



The mineralised vein, which is at a very steep angle of 70 to 80 degrees, runs roughly from the Village Hall up the valley to the top of the hill and lead ore, galena, was the main mineral mined. At depth zinc ore, sphalerite was found and a small amount of this was extracted. In the last days of the mine some barites was also mined.

With the vein being at a steep angle it was easy to mine but as the workings got deeper shafts were sunk and levels were driven along the vein at roughly 40 yard intervals. The miners worked up the vein, so the ore was brought down to the level, loaded on to trucks and pushed to a shaft where it was lifted up for processing. Originally there was a smelter at Pontesford and this was replaced by a smelter built some 1/2 mile North of Snailbeach.

Stope
Photo Credit: Andy Hall

We are almost certain that the Romans were extracting galena since a Roman pig lead was found nearby and that mining was taking place almost continuously and until mining ceased in 1955. During the Industrial Revolution demand for lead increased and with the advent of steam engines working the mine became more efficient. In the 1850s, when the mine was in full production, there were some 500 men employed in this mine. In 1877 the narrow gauge Snailbeach District Railway was constructed from the main line at Pontesbury to Snailbeach so as to facilitate the transport of coal needed for the steam engines and to take the ore away for processing. Towards the end of the 18th century most of the lead mines in the ore-field closed down, due mainly due to cheap imports, and Snailbeach mine soldiered on until 1911 when they stopped pumping causing the mine to flood. After that a small number of men mined Barytes from the unflooded areas until 1955.

The main rock in which the minerals have been deposited at the Snailbeach Mine is called Mytton Flags. These are grit/shale sedimentary rocks laid down in the early Ordovician times, approximately 450 million years ago, and now make up most of the rock types that lay at the base of the Stiperstones range of hills.

The Visit

The visitors centre has a museum with lots of detail about the mine's history and a DVD about Snailbeach along with bookshop. You could easily spend hour or so here. Once we had paid our £10 we were able to walk up to the Perkins Level with eight other visitors and our guide in our wellies and over-suits passing the old double walled explosives store on the way. The trip starts with a stooping walk along a level with a floor covered in several centimetres of water. After about 100m we reached a junction with a level off to the right. This right-hand level gave access to stope where the hading mineral vein of barytes could be clearly seen. The stope headed up to our right almost beyond the reach of most people's lights but not ours and we had brought extra for photographic purposes. Some SRT ropes and a fixed ladder were in place to give access to other levels for caving trips by SCMC. Beyond a wooded wagon the level continues beyond the stope but there is no regular access as the passage is poorly ventilated and has excessive radon gas levels.



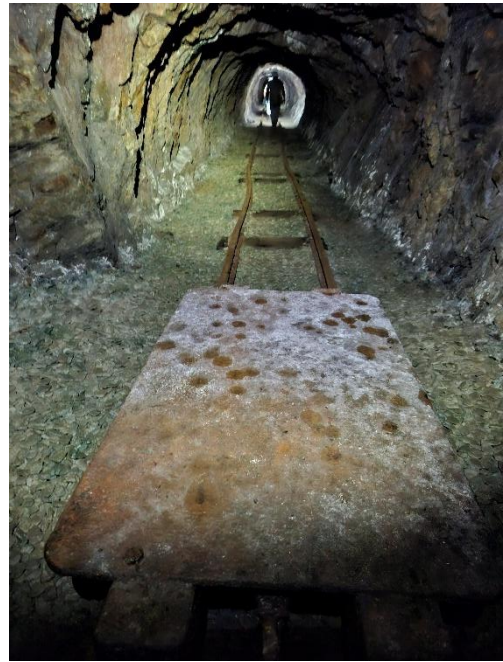
Perkins Level
Photo Credit: Andy Hall

We returned to the junction and turned right into more workings. These were a bit larger and lead on over a bridge looking down to lower workings, again with fixed ropes for caving access. At the end was a large chamber with a manakin at the top illuminated with a timed light to give the scale of the chamber. Some large blocks of barites and galena had fallen from the roof here and the boulder pile looked a bit unstable. We took more photos here.

From here we returned to the surface. The trip had lasted over an hour. On the way back we were shown the 20th Century barites crushing area with large kibble buckets. We also passed the reservoir that fed the mine as there is little surface water in the valley. Next was the visit to the Landing Level. This is only short, and you only need a light and helmet as the level is dry. Even so it is well worth a visit. It leads to a chamber with a metal screen floor over a 100m deep shaft down to water. The rest of the mine is flooded at this depth down to a depth of over 600m. Above is a daylight shaft of just over 30m. This one of the main winding shafts for the mine in its heyday. That was the end of our trip, and we returned to the visitor centre. We made enquiries about a club trip and location of possible campsite. If there is interest, then we could arrange a RRCPC trip in the next few months or early next year. No winter access as the mines are a bat roost. Let me or Colin know if you are interested. SRT will probably be involved.

On return back to Lancashire we stopped off at the parish church in Minsterley, where I spoke to the curate in the church and we were able to locate a grave to two of my ancestors Hannah Luther and her mother Martha, who both died in the 1860's. So, it was a worthwhile visit on a number of counts.

Andy Hall



Landing Level
Photo Credit: Andy Hall

Digging Reports

Gale Garth Pot

After much hard work, the team of Ray, Sam, Chris, Andy, Harry *et al*, have finally sorted out the entrance (see before and after photos). We've also sorted out the crawl through to Octopus Chamber with some epic walling work by Sam, Chris, Colin and Ray so that's a bit safer but still requires care to keep it stable. There's now a ladder on the very awkward climb near the entrance so that's a lot easier to negotiate. The old way in at the bottom was to the left at the base of the shaft (facing the Lancs path) and went first down through a nasty sharp climb and then a slide to the left through an unstable and flat-out mess to gain the larger cave passage. Now you can climb down a nice ladder and go right at the bottom into the larger part without any difficulty, bargain! It's taken us many months to get to this stage so that this little esoteric gem can be enjoyed by all. Thanks go to Johnny and Colin for providing the material for the work to be completed so cheaply.



Before (left) and after (right) shots of Gale Garth entrance
Photo Credit: Ray Duffy

Ray Duffy

Hazel Sike Cave Birthday Bash Clear Out

12th July 2025

Johnny Baker (Braindead), George Bosnyak (Boz), Dinny Davies, Andy Hall, Alan Martin (Starkers), Tony Rooke, Toby Speight, Mike Thompson

Hazel Sike Cave is a small cave which attracted my interest a few years ago, when, on a very wet day, I heard a roar of water from below the boulders in the bottom chamber. One of the reasons that I'd not dug at the bottom, is that there are a couple of short climbs which have deads held back by rusty scaffold and rotting shoring. The plan for the day was to remove the deads to the surface, thus eliminating the need for any shoring at all.

We arrived at the cave in glorious sunshine, which unfortunately wasn't good news for the surface team, as there was little shade for them to stay cool. Meanwhile, at the front, Johnny threw rocks a few metres back to Dinny, who loaded the drag tray, which was pulled to the surface by Toby, Tony, Andy and Mike... I'm not sure how much hauling was done by Boz and Starkers, but their presence was welcome.

About 10m in, at the top of the first climb down, the original diggers had made a hopper which was built up a metre higher than the top of the actual climb, this precarious pile of tons of deads was the initial target for removal. After about two hours the ramp of deads above the hopper had been cleared, so that actual progress could begin. The team were curious about progress and were dismayed when I said we were barely five percent of the way. Dinny, Toby and Tony came to the front to see the state of play and were not impressed.

We went out for a drinks break and discussion about the project. The overwhelming verdict was that it was going to be a huge long-term job, and that a far more sensible approach would be to just install fresh scaffold and shoring in front of the old stuff. The removal of the deads was taking far longer than I had anticipated, and I agreed that we were, in effect, wasting our time.

Toby and Dinny were keen to see the actual dig in the boulder choke at the bottom, and their consensus was that it is a scary place. I too was reminded of how difficult it would be to safely dig there, and we all agreed that there are better options elsewhere.

On the way back to The Farm, I decided to have a look down Floodgate Sink. This sink is about 50m upstream from Hazel Sike Cave, and a probable source of the roaring water I'd heard a few years ago. Floodgate was found by Hugh St Lawrence and Tom Clayton about fifteen years ago, the entrance is a tight 5m climb down a rift. Indeed, on my only previous visit there two years ago with the Dark Lord, he had to cap the entrance wider so that I would fit. I managed to squeeze down to investigate. There are a couple of possible leads at the bottom, but it would be virtually impossible to dig down there without initial widening and clearing out. I returned a few days later with Dalek, and commenced capping the entrance wider, to enable buckets to be hauled up.

So, the actual Hazel Sike "Clear out" didn't quite go as hoped, but if that farce means that Floodgate Sink is pushed, then perhaps it was worthwhile. I think it was.

Johnny Braindead

Reviving Sodoff

23rd July 2025

Charlie Frankland, Hugh St Lawrence

No, not an attempt to bring abusive language of the 80s back into vogue. Sorry if that disappoints readers who were hoping for an article that was tastier, even salacious in nature. But this is a family publication, and I don't want to get in trouble for inappropriate behavior – not that club members and cavers at large have been strangers to inappropriate behavior down the decades, no sir. Periodic shortages of crockery at Bull Pot Farm have been testament to such episodes. But those antics are nowadays only whispered in select circles, and rightly shunned by the moral majority. Anyone who thinks otherwise can sod....

So back to the story, about a cave.

Sodoff is a hole in Barbondale which we discovered back in 2013. So named because a large sod had fallen off the bank of a small stream valley revealing a hole behind it. It took a bit of work by Bill Sherrington and myself to get in, but beyond the entrance we found about 50 metres of varied and interesting cave – it's all described in Journal 11. Fifty metres doesn't sound much, but nonetheless the trip is interesting, with a novel takeoff onto a short entrance pitch, followed by a steep little canyon, a crawl through a choke, a delicate climb down the side of a large block and a roomy walk to two inconclusive ends.

Those inconclusive ends had been popping into my head now and again, and twelve years after exploration I decided it was time to have another look. Sodoff is up-valley from Crystal Cave, and on a line of small caves and sinks which head towards Short Gill Cave, even further up-valley. Some 'collector' or main drain is missing from the equation in this section of the valley – could Sodoff hold the key to it?



Charlie clearing the entrance
Photo Credit: Hugh St Lawrence

I tapped Charlie Frankland for a trip, and he was up for it (he lives in Barbon so kind of handy!) – it would only take two or three hours, so we had coffee at his and then set off for the cave. The walk from the road is only ten minutes or so, but we were at the height (literally) of 'fern season' and had to wade through six-foot fronds most of the way. I'd carefully covered the hole with slabs back in 2013, and for a new visitor there was no sign of an entrance anywhere. Charlie stomped around a bit and soon gave up in despair. "You're standing on it", I said. The telltale sign was one inch of scaffold pole poking through the streambed, easily missed! We started clearing the ferns and undergrowth, and then removed the slabs, accidentally dropping some of them down the entrance climb – this created another twenty minutes of hard sweaty work as Charlie 'rescued' the fallen stones from the narrow rift ahead.

Finally cleared, I slid down with ladder and lifeline and tackled the pitch head, a feet-first slide onto a 6m drop that is too tight at the top– you have to squeeze into an enlargement to one side and then swing back underneath to get on the ladder (this is not an ideal pitch for SRT!).

Below the pitch we scrambled down some short climbs in a high canyon with avens above. This ends at a short muddy crawl onto the top of some large blocks. Down to the side substantial bigness can be glimpsed, and is reached by a 2m climb down the end of the final block. A slope of rubble descends into a roomy walking passage floored with large cobbles. Sadly, this is short lived and the two inconclusive ends now present themselves.

Up a sand slope ahead is a sharp corner into a continuing passage which looks passable if the initial corner can be enlarged slightly. This requires capping but should be a relatively easy job. It's uncertain whether the passage ahead is an old inlet or old outlet. Only one way to find out!

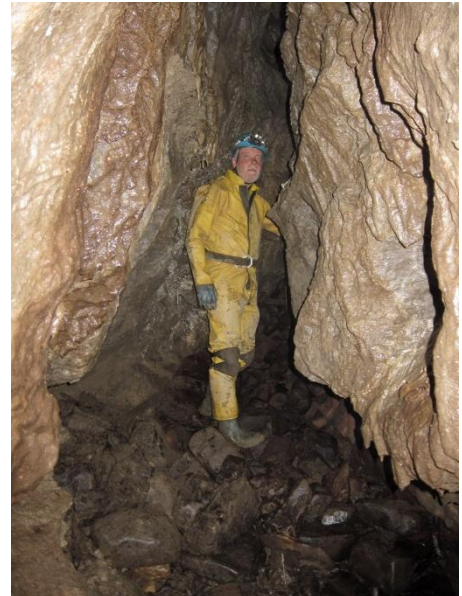
Below the sand slope the main passage falls away down over large cobbles into a smaller continuation which we didn't have time to inspect (teatime at Chateau Frankland called!) But the small stream goes this way.

Tackle was left in place, and we covered the entrance as best we could, but a proper lid needs making to avoid needless slab-dropping and blocking of the slide down to the pitch head. A return will be made when both fern and midge seasons have ended!

Before the trip I'd told Charlie that the cave was only short but contained a lot of interest. I asked him his opinion now he'd been down; he agreed, it was short but it was interesting. As most caves are when you're a fan!

Ref: RRCPC Journal No.11, page 115

Hugh St Lawrence



Charlie in the main passage
Photo Credit: Hugh St Lawrence



The lead at the top of the sand slope
Photo Credit: Hugh St Lawrence

Caving Abroad

An Introduction to Caving in Andalusia

June 2025
Colin Jones

As a family we have been holidaying in the South of Spain for a good number of years. Initially we used to base ourselves in the area near El Chorro, which is about a one-hour drive North of Malaga. El Chorro itself is well known within the climbing fraternity, and also with the now famous Caminito del Rey (The King's Walkway), which is a much more sanitised and safer pathway than the one I originally trod rather gingerly back in 2001.



Caminito del Rey
Photo Credit: Colin Jones

More recently we have taken ourselves off to the area on the fringes of the Grazalema Natural Park, which lies to the Northwest of the town Ronda (which in itself is spectacular). To the East of Ronda lies the equally spectacular Sierra de las Nieves, an area of mountains, deep gorges, pine forests and very deep caves.

Four years ago, whilst looking for somewhere to stay I stumbled across a small villa in a town by the name of Montejaque. I did my research and looked at the area for walks etc and also noted that it was well known for caves and obviously caving. In Montejaque itself there was an information centre devoted to caving and speleology (Centro de Interpretacion de Espeleologia). Needless to say, the holiday was booked and off we went.

The area is extremely mountainous and extremely rugged with a good network of paths, but not excessively over run in the area around Montejaque. The most obvious and best-known cave system in the area is the Cueva del Huididero which is an enormous opening at the foot of a valley (easily accessed). The valley was dammed in 1924 to provide a reservoir. However, the engineers did not take into account the local geology and it leaked. At certain times of year it is extremely dangerous to access the cave system as it takes a large amount of water into its river system. When conditions allow and once permission has been sought and granted it provides a 5km through-trip to the Cueva del Gato (Cave of the Cat).



Caving in Andalusia
Photo Credit: Colin Jones

Since our first visit to the area we have returned on numerous occasions. And on each visit, I've made enquiries about caving and the availability of going with a group or club. Access to caves in Spain is very much different to the British approach, and they can be quite precious when it comes to sharing information. I was quite lucky that Isabel, who managed the house we originally rented, was also the curator at the interpretation centre and also local tourist Information officer. She did impart some information about caves and caving, but it was sparse.



Above ground with the AAES
Photo Credit: Colin Jones

Eventually, I made contact with the AAES (Andalusian Association of Underground Exploration) and their president Javier. We shared information about caving and as we were due to go out in June of this year, he made arrangements for me to meet up with some of the members and visit the Sima de Republicano cave. This was a working trip as they were replacing the old hangers with resin secured hangers, and also the fixed wire ropes. It was an interesting and worthwhile trip, which gave me an introduction to a couple of local (?) Seville clubs (Espeleo Karst & Pluton). The members were extremely friendly and really couldn't do enough for me.

One of the members asked about the 'English Guest' and was told I'd be looking for a tight tortuous passage full of mud (something quite alien to them).



The following Friday I received a call at 21:00 from Angel Martinez (local contact) asking me to join him and some friends for a drink in the town square. I was introduced to members of another caving club and invited to join them the following day for an exploratory trip down a newly discovered entrance.

So, we spent around 90 minutes tramping about in caving gear and 38 degrees looking for this entrance. Eventually we found it and holes drilled and hangers placed, and we took our turns at descending into it all - 10 metres and two chambers which closed down to nothing except a few animal bones. But at least it was cooler down there!!

One group had gone off to look at another possible cave only to get inside and find it full of midges. Quite literally millions of them which only moved once everyone was inside and disturbed them. I think we got the better option?

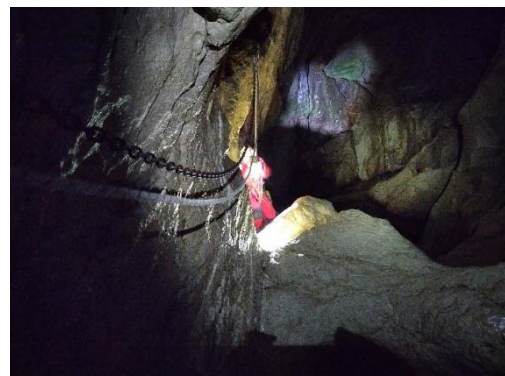
Back to Montejaque and a couple of beers and the chance to nod in agreement.

I spent quite a bit of time looking for cave entrances during our time out there. In total I made four finds of which only one had been recorded previously. I've since written up my findings along with co-ordinates and forwarded them to the local club Espeleo Karst. It is a very interesting part of Spain with a large number of deep and extensive caves. I am hoping to try and organize something for the RRCPC in the next couple of years. It's not quite straightforward as it is in the UK as permits have to be obtained and park authorities informed etc.

Colin Jones



Sima de Republicano cave (above and right)
Photo Credit: Colin Jones



Riesending 2025

July 2025

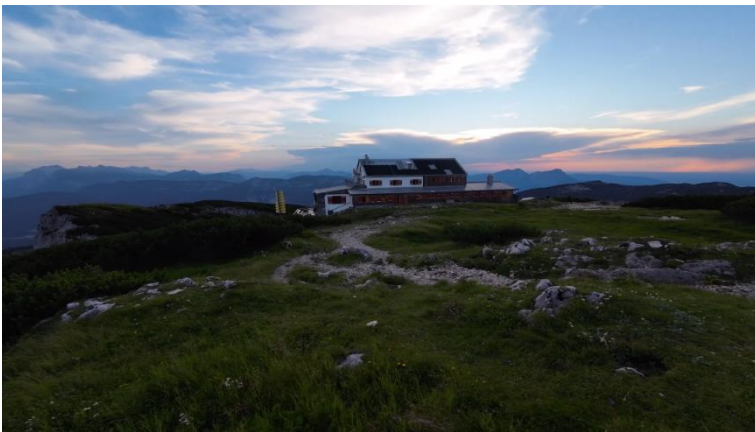
Nat Dalton, Becka Lawson, Sarah Parker

Some Context

After pestering Becka about non-Loser (sometimes known as the CUCC expo) Alpine caving she suggested I might be interested in Riesending. A few emails later (where we were told as long as there was enough bed space and we could climb the 1000m out of the cave, we'd be welcome) and we were on for a July trip. We discussed some key info (bring own food but don't need to bring sleeping bags) but perhaps didn't discuss the actual caving as much as we should have! Uli (Riesending legend and caving superhuman) sent over some reports, and we managed to get hold of Decent 261 which had an article about the cave by Dave Rose.

Riesending is located in the Untersberg mountain, just south of Salzberg. It's tantalisingly close to Kolowrathöhle (another deep cave) and both drain to the same resurgence. Riesending is over 1000m deep with most of the elevation being lost immediately from the entrance in a series of pitches, broken up by a "horizontal" meander section with compulsory soaking on a damp traverse. At 900m, close to bivouac four, you gain a horizontal level where most of the development is. For this trip, Becka, Sarah and I would be joining three Germans, Uli, Ingolf and Rainer, aiming to push leads in Maulwurfstunnel-Seitengang [Mole Tunnel side passage] (to try to connect to Kolowrat) from bivouac 6 and then leads in Schöner [Beautiful] Canyon from bivouac 4.

Sunday

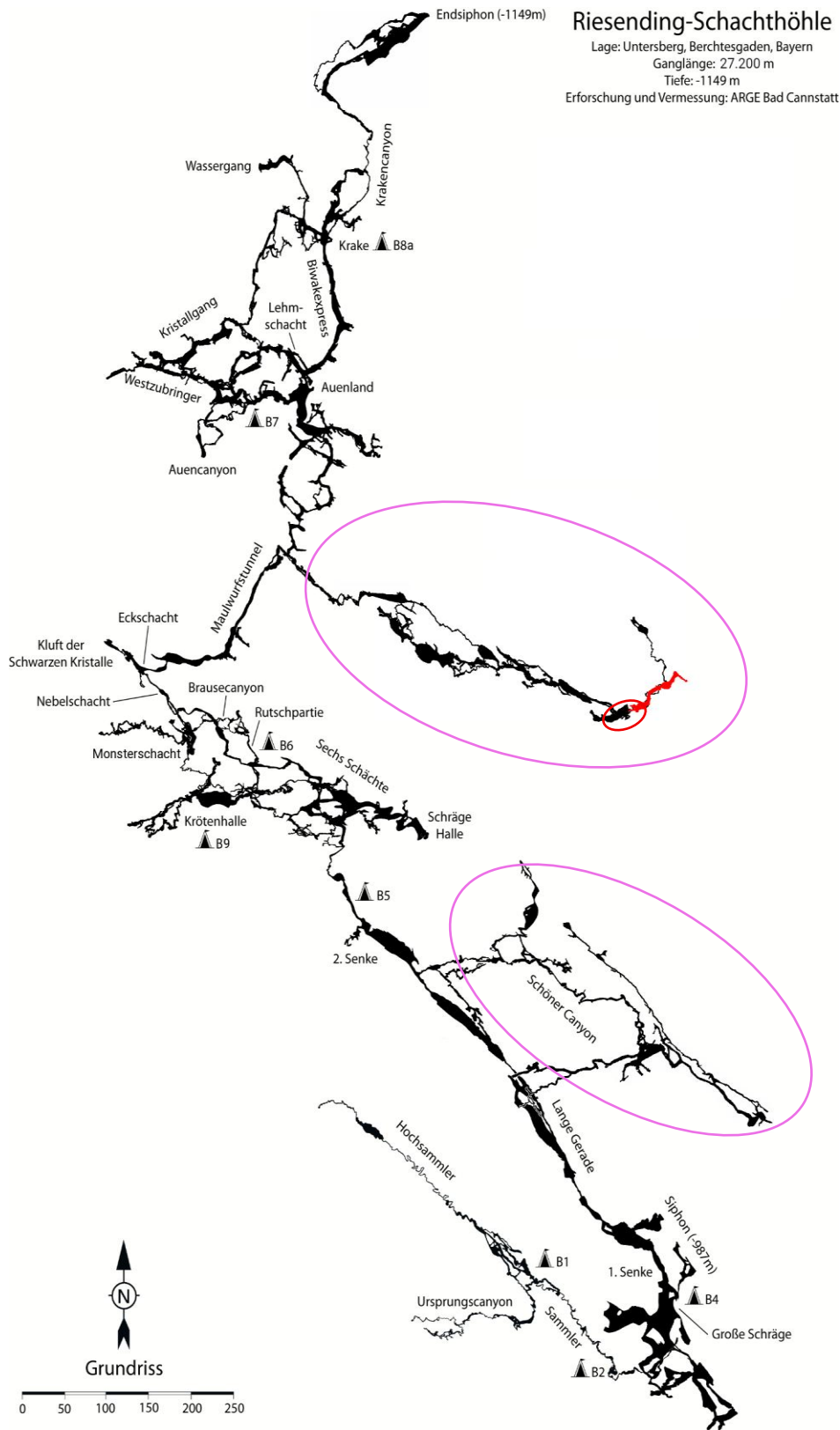


The Störhaus, just an excellent place to be
Photo Credit: Nat Dalton

Sarah and I arrived at the cable car station some time before Becka, who had just been camping underground on the Loser expedition. This gave us plenty of time to sort bags and go through communal gear. We'd made our own dehydrated meals (would recommend if you have the time) and brought smash, noodles, soups and snacks. Once Becka arrived we had a quick picnic and packed bags, Becka insisting that they were weighed. At this point sugar-mummy Becka made her first appearance, paying for the cable car with some of the thick wad

of Euros she had. Once up the cable car we had a ~6km walk to the Störhaus, the mountain hut we'd be staying at. Fortunately, we'd chosen to do the walk in the middle of the day, so we weren't too cold (we were far too hot...). On the walk, Becka got a bit grumpy as I kept saying we'd done over half the distance when, in fact, we had not. A while (and some bickering) later, we were joined by Uli who seemed to skip along and a while (and yet more bickering) later we arrived at the Störhaus, where we met Ingolf and Rainer. The hut was

excellent, with great food and beer – what more do you need? The presence of a load of Dutch scouts talking in the dorm did lessen the pleasure, as did a 2AM fire alarm.



Riesending (plan view); pink marks planned area for the trip, red marks where new passage was found this trip (Survey drawn up by Ulrich Meyer)

Monday

After Becka had sent me outside to cook porridge in the drizzle, we packed our ridiculous bags (with obligatory weigh-in by Becka), and Sarah, Becka, Uli and I were more or less ready to go by 8AM. Reiner and Ingolf were still packing but said they knew the route. The route from the walker's path to the cave is not straightforward (foreshadowing...) but with Uli's expert guidance we got there with no issues. The cave is protected by an impressive metal cage, with the key collected from the local police station.



Team keen (almost) ready to set off into the mist
Photo Credit: Ingolf Bocksch

Uli rigged the entrance pitch, and we were off, efficiently dropping down the entrance series to ~120m depth. We soon were at the p180m which opens up to a ~150m shaft with two 60m hangs on the way down (with an alternative route with many more rebelay to go upwards). More pitches followed and eventually we arrived at the meanders. This is a slightly tedious section of traverses and small pitches up and down that went on for a while – enjoyment of this section was aided by the ridiculous bags we all had. Partway along, a trot along a traverse underneath a waterfall got us a little damp but due to relatively low water levels only hoods (rather than macs) were required. Many more pitches later (about 300m worth) and we arrived at bivouac 3, "The Camp of the Mutes" - named for its noisiness due to its proximity to the streamway. Yet more pitches, an excellent 150m downwards sloping ramp and a little horizontal caving saw us arrive at bivouac 4. Here we had a hot meal. Becka complained that she wasn't given enough hot water in her meal (a running theme), and we waited a little for Ingolf and Rainer who had entered the cave after us.

It was at this point that Uli informed us that we'd hit the horizontal level (hooray!), with three hours of "horizontal" caving left to reach bivouac 6. Unfortunately, the horizontal caving still had a multitude of pitches (both up and down), a feature I was getting slightly tired of. From here, Uli and Becka caved almost entirely with bags on their backs – up pitches, through constrictions and along traverses, an impressive demonstration of core strength and willpower. Uli pointed out Schöner canyon, which looked obvious and easy to find (more foreshadowing...) and after a fair amount of caving we arrived at some silly acrobatic traverses interspersed with cautious rock straddling next to some very large holes (see photo on p27).



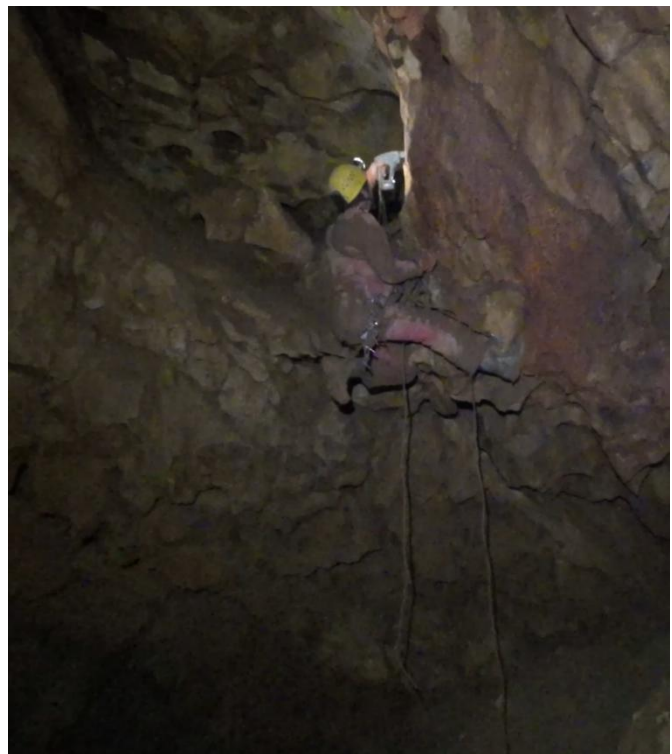
Nat undertaking an acrobatic traverse whilst carrying a silly bag (in the foreground is one of the ridges which is crossed a cheval)
Photo Credit: Ingolf Bocksch

After this acrobatic section, we were rewarded with the boat and a beautiful pool, crossed in a slightly leaky boat. After this we quickly arrived at bivouac 6; a fine set-up in a wide, flat passage. Unfortunately, it had some drawbacks, with dubious toileting and water facilities. The weeing area was walked through on the way to collect fresh water, and the pooing area was a knee-high poo mountain (with suspicious flies) and the water was collected from a static pool with dead flies floating on the surface ("they have not proven to be so terrible yet" said Uli). Ingolf and Rainer arrived as we were settling down to sleep, having failed to find the entrance on their first attempt and having to return to the hut to get a phone with the cave's location.

Tuesday

We got up early to head to the leads around Maulwurfstunnel. To get here took about three hours, with more acrobatic SRT, a mildly irritating tube down and some crawling. It was here that my bag decided I'd been rather spoilt by having two shoulder-straps and that I should only be allowed one ... FFS... Meanwhile Sarah introduced whooping to our German friends, with varying degrees of enthusiasm (from "woo hooo" to "we don't do that here"). Very close to the pushing front we left Rainer behind to catch up, which turned out to be quite a large mistake.

Uli had his eyes on some leads off a newly discovered chamber that he would bolt up to, whilst we (Becka, Sarah and I) headed to a canyon explored this year by Dresden cavers. Whilst Sarah bolted a pitch down (initially attempting to go the wrong way into surveyed passage), Becka and I attempted to calibrate our SAP6. The SAP hadn't been used before, and I hadn't had time to test it before



Uli bolting up into a promising lead in the Maulwurfstunnel-Seitengang area
Photo Credit: Ingolf Bocksch

coming underground so there was a little nervousness as to whether it worked. After Becka kept turning off the SAP mid calibration, I had a go and managed to get it to play ball after a few goes – great success. In the meantime, Sarah had managed to get down the pitch. She

sacked off using our reusable Petzl Pulse bolts that spun alarmingly (I found out later that this was normal) and just used bog-standard through bolts. Becka and I got to work surveying and, after a bit of bickering (caused by me doing silly things with SexyTopo), we surveyed to the bottom of the rift and along the canyon to the bottom of a loose boulder choke. Becka wasn't keen on this, so we did a quick sketch and called it a day.

Becka initially set off by herself to find the others, whilst Sarah and I finished packing up, managing to bodge my bag to have two shoulder straps (another great success!). We headed up a little pitch to the chamber to find a couple of shiny bolts up Uli's lead and a grumbly Becka who had taken the wrong way and gone up an interminable horrible muddy climb. Becka recovered and we heard Ingolf coming back to us. He was a little hungry as his snacks had been in Rainer's bag. Mysteriously, Rainer hadn't turned up, despite several attempts to find him, so we presumed he'd gone back to bivouac 6, having had enough after a long day the previous day. In the meantime, I fed Ingolf some trail mix, only checking after that he wasn't allergic to nuts. Fortunately, he wasn't allergic to nuts.



The kitchen (middle) and sleeping area (top and bottom) in bivouac 6
Photo Credit: Ingolf Bocksch

We set off back to camp, with Ingolf trotting ahead, only to find that Rainer wasn't there. Oh dear. A quick discussion and it was decided that Becka and Uli would race back to where he'd last been seen and check some of the more obscure passages that had been explored on previous trips. Sarah, Ingolf and I would go to bed and get up early in the morning as the second search and rescue party.

Wednesday

Becka, Uli and Rainer returned at 4am, with Rainer having gotten quite lost shortly after he was last seen. They had a lie in, and Sarah kindly experimented with an artificial sun in camp by priming our petrol stove in an enthusiastic manner. After the slow start, we packed up, sorted any gear that was to be left at bivouac 6 and headed back to bivouac 4 with a plan to go to leads in Schöner Canyon.

We retraced our steps back past the boat (see figure on next page), the silly traverses (see figure on top of last page) and all the "horizontal" passage we'd done on day 2. It ended up being Becka, Ingolf and I in the first group on the way back with Rainer and Sarah in the middle, whilst Uli brought up the rear.



Becka "I don't like this" Lawson concentrating on not scraping the boat on the rocks, whilst definitely not thinking about the lack of buoyancy aids
Photo Credit: Ingolf Bocksch



Discussing the plan; "the pitches do not get dangerous, but you will get wet on many of them"
Photo Credit: Ingolf Bocksch

Unfortunately, we could not find the obvious entrance to Schöner Canyon that we'd been shown on the way in, and we ended up all the way back at bivouac 4. After dropping some things off, we turned around to catch the others. Eventually we caught up with Uli (having already caught Sarah and Rainer) who had been in Schöner Canyon, ensuring we weren't in there. Sub-optimal. Here we discussed the poor weather forecast (>20mm per day for Thursday and Friday) for the next few days. Given how late in the day it was now and the rain forecast, along with the fact that the leads in Schöner canyon were wet, we decided to head back to bivouac 4, to get an early night and then an early start to be out of the cave before the water levels got too bad. Bivouac 4 has much better toileting/water facilities than bivouac 6 (the drinking water is from a flowing source, and it doesn't have bum flies in it), but the toilet area (a precise drop through some boulders) is rather public. I had an awkward moment whilst Ingolf brushed his teeth while I had my evening shit.

Thursday

After an early start - midnight for Uli and Rainer, 3AM for Becka, Sarah, Ingolf and I - we packed up bivouac 4 and started our long journey to the surface. The long ramp was a joy to ascend and was climbable for almost it's entirely. After this the pitches merged into one as I followed the nylon highway upwards. At some point, Sarah admitted that she only had nuts to snack on, as Becka had confiscated her sweets and chocolate to leave at bivouac 4 (nuts go off, whereas sweets and chocolate do not). I had not allowed this to occur to my treats so shared my sugary stash with Sarah. Eventually we got to the meanders which were mildly irritating with an irritatingly large bag and then more rope up. It was at this point that I noticed Becka's flatulence, echoing around the magnificent pitches, at one point confusing it for a "rope free".



Competitive muesli eating at bivouac 4 (at 3 AM!) to avoid carrying it out (naturally Becka won; Sarah and I felt sick)
Photo Credit: Ingolf Bocksch

Once at the p180m, Becka left Sarah and I in the dust (leaving only a fading flatulence), whilst we continued up the p180m; broken by 13 glorious rebelayes on the way up. At the top of this I had a minor crisis, as I'd misremembered Dave Rose's descent article and thought I still had many hundreds metres of prusicking to do – fortunately I was wrong, and I only had ~100m to go until the entrance. Thus, I was quite surprised to hear Becka and see daylight rather soon. I manhandled my bag through the Yorkshire-eque slot and was soon up with Becka and Ingolf. Sarah followed me shortly after and we were all out ~10 hours after leaving bivouac



Ingolf's bag (attached to Inglof) waiting for us (we are the specks of light at the bottom of the pitch) on one of the many pitches
Photo Credit: Ingolf Bocksch

4. The entrance pitch was derigged and the cage closed and after a short discussion about the way back to the walkers' path, we were off, enjoying lovely Austrian/German (depending on which bit of the walk we were on) weather. After yet more discussions about the route, we eventually got to the walkers' path where some much-needed rehydrating and refuelling took place. A bit more stumbling saw us back to the Störhaus, in time for more refuelling and rehydrating. We stayed the night (going to bed at 7pm) and then back to the cable car in the morning after an efficient breakfast.



An inefficient walk back to the walkers' path in claggy conditions
Photo Credit: Nat Dalton

Thanks to Becka for putting up with mine and Sarah's occasional comedy moments and comments, Uli for being willing to have us, Ingolf for allowing me to use screengrabs from his video for this article, Rainer for being entirely imperturbable and Sarah for putting up with putting up with my company (and driving us across Europe).



A Gämse next to the hut in foggy conditions (they're normally very shy)
Photo Credit: Nat Dalton

Nat Dalton

Blasts from the Past

50th Anniversary of the RRCPC Taurus Mountains Expedition

16th August-12th September 1975

George Bosnyak, Dave Creedy, Frank Hardy, Dave Hodgson, Carol Iddon, Pete Llewellyn, Jackie Newton, Jim Newton, Hazel Hewitt, Hugh St Lawrence, Vernon Unsworth, Tony Walton

2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the expedition that put the first British climbers on the summit of Everest. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the RRCPC caving expedition to Turkey from 16 August to 12 September, 1975. The latter was unusual in that it was organised (by Jim Newton) as an adventure, an expedition, a holiday and a honeymoon. Expectations of exploration, discovery, travel and culture varied among the motley crew. Hardened expedition experience was mixed with newcomers to the international caving scene. The hard cavers were mission focussed; Boz and Vernon had trained themselves into finely honed, toned athletes. Friendships grew and frictions waxed and waned as purposes and egos merged and diverged. Jim was the anchor.



The trusty expedition vehicle with Hodge posing
Photo Credit: Dave Creedy

The mode of travel was a rented minibus. Caving gear was lashed to the roof rack. Those with driving licences were rostered and off we went. Cramped into the vehicle in addition to tents, personal gear, cooking stoves and boxes of Compo rations were Jim Newton, Jackie, Jim's new wife and daughter Hazel, Dave Hodgson (Hodge), Dave Creedy, Hugh St Lawrence, Pete Llewellyn, Vernon Unsworth, George Bosnyak (Boz), Tony Walton, Carol Iddon and Frank Hardy.

The drive through western Europe was uneventful but the journey became challenging on entering the former Yugoslavia. The autoroute from Zagreb to Belgrade was decorated by posies and crosses marking the fates of those whose brave attempts at overtaking on the narrow, ill-paved road failed. The intention had been to pass through Bulgaria, but a swinging bond put paid to that. Instead, we routed southwards through Greece to the Turkish border. Once across the Bosphorus, the van was no longer covered by insurance. The coast was followed to Cannakkale (Troy) where we saw little



Travertine hot spring pools, Pamukkale
Photo Credit: Dave Creedy

as it was dark. A memorable camp site was in Pamukkale, where magnificent white travertine surrounded warm springs in which we bathed regally. The ruins of the nearby ancient Roman city of Hierapolis were explored. Young Turks tried to sell us genuine relics which looked a few days old. It was hot and the ladies in our team were less covered than is the culture in Turkey, leading to some near road accidents as over-excited bus and truck drivers shouted their appreciation and offers of marriage.



Hierapolis
Photo Credit: Dave Creedy

The first target caving area adjoined the Manavgat Gorge, and we were welcomed by the elder of the village of Dikman who allowed us to camp there. Various caves were explored and surveyed (Table 1), mainly at the behest of the villagers anxious to identify new water sources. They brought fruit to us, refusing any payment. Eventually, we were asked to leave to help preserve their food and limited water resources.

Table 1. Summary of caves explored by expedition members in Turkey

Area	Cave	Distance from village	Explored by	Brief overview
Dikman village	Big crater	5km, +2000ft	Anon	Massive natural crater-like depression (collapsed doline)
	Kelebekli	50m from access road	YRC; Italian group 1973; RRCPC 1975	See RRCPC survey
	Mehmet shaft	1km away	RRCPC 1975	80ft shaft
	Slug hole	20m from access road	RRCPC 1975	90ft shaft
	Gule Gule	Close to Dikman	RRCPC 1975	See RRCPC survey
Kizildag National Park	Pinargozu resurgence	10km from Yenisarbademli	First entry 1964 by Temucin Aygen; French team in 1965; Franco British 1968; Chelsea Speleo Society 1968, 1969, various French/Turkish groups; RRCPC 1975	Windy duck, ascend waterfall and cascades. Some 16km known passage but length disputed. New discoveries and entrance series surveyed by RRCPC

We drove past the large inland lake of Beysehir Golu to Yenisarbademli to reach the next target, Pinargozu, a resurgence cave. Camp was set up near the portal from which cool, clear water issued. The entrance led to a narrow-flooded arch with a howling gale rushing through the small airspace; air velocities approaching 100mph have been reported. Pete set up a candle at the inbye side to relight carbide lamps which were predictably extinguished on passing the restriction. Pete, aided from below, climbed the first waterfall and dropped a ladder. After the preliminary tour, explorers divided into day and night shifts depending on their aptitude to the heat of the day. Tight wet crawls and heady high-level caverns were explored and new passage discovered.



Expedition camp at Pinargozu
Photo Credit: Dave Creedy



Jim with flotation aid ready for Pinargozu
Photo Credit: Dave Creedy

A shock theft of passports and valuables from the Newton tent caused a crisis. The problem was reported and a lorry load of trigger-happy soldiers descended onto our site to investigate. A wacky young guy who lived in a shed in the woods was arrested when the documents were found under his mattress but not before he had started a forest fire. We were given a crash course in firefighting and temporarily joined the fire brigade. The blaze was extinguished before it could spread too far.

All too soon we left Pinargozu to start the long trek home after a brief stay in Istanbul for shopping and sightseeing. Jim introduced us at the Karst Institute at Postojna, and we were shown a remarkable cave with a strategic WW2 history. The spectacular Postojna tourist cave was also visited. Werfen in Austria could not be passed without a climb to the spectacular Eisriesenwelt cave – some on foot, others by cable car (the one featured on “Where Eagles Dare”). We cockily landed in the UK only for customs to insist the vehicle had to be totally unpacked for inspection of the van and its

contents. The moaning and grumbling by the now tight-knit team did not help our cause but made us feel better.

Unfortunately, many of the expedition members are no longer with us to remember those halcyon days 50 years ago. There are many unwritten stories yet to tell.

The details of the cave exploration are published in RRCPC Journal No. 7 (July 1977).

Dave Creedy

Ogof Draenen

8-10th April 1995

Robert Bialek, Mike Cooper

8th April

Mike came to my house and drove the 230 miles to The Lamb & Fox on Gilwern Hill by 9pm. Put my tent up and to the pub for a pint or 2.

A 7am wakeup call and a healthy breaky. There were two BEC members who had arrived after midnight; Ivan Sandford and Becky Campbell. Mike took 'em to Pontypool for breakfast. A 7-hour trip ensued with these 2 cavers. Entrance was down a steep grassy slope and loads of scaffolding and boulders to climb through. Down through a gate, streamway and a handline climb to a large bouldery passage. Up left with Mike and Becky while Ivan waited. Up a ladder to check the way on. Back down again to a climb down and immediately a climb back up again. At a T junction we went left to White Arch passage. Then Lamb & Fox chamber, and up a new route to Indiana Highway. Several canyons with taped up sections were met before we back tracked. They were similar in size to the huge passage which led to Mega Drive way. Onto the Nunnery and choke, then Windy Junction, which involved 2 squeezes and loads of crawling. We called it quits after 4pm and got out by 6:35pm. We had got lost in the entrance climbs!

9th April

After our farewells to Ivan and Becky we got down the entrance at mid-day. Up Gilwern Passage to Old Illtydian's Chamber. It was half hour each way but worth it to see the very impressively decorated passages and chambers along the way. Going to The T Junction and Beyond a Choke streamway it was a bit like Ankleginder but didn't go on for long. Two chokes were passed, and we left the tackle bag at Agent Bloreng. It was another half hour to Rifleman's Chamber and choke. A rope was seen going up. There were some deep pools, nearly chest deep but the passage continued in a monotonous fashion for 1.2km so we turned back to go to Agent Bloreng. Here we went up a nice climbable passage to The Crystal Maze. Turned back after 5pm. It took us nearly an hour to get back to the T Junction. At the gate we found that we had problems with the lock; 10 mins to 'shut the gate' with padlock in to lock it. Out just before 7pm, and to the pub for beer and some Schnapps.

10th April

Today was an early start as we had to get back home later on. 7:15am and breakfast of a doughnut with custard, tea and peanut butter sandwich. Down at 9:20, we wouldn't exit until 6pm, making it the longest trip this time round. Opened the gate without too much bother this time. 25 mins to Cairn Junction and 10 mins more to White Arch passage. Bombed along to Mega Drive with the tackle sack. Up Perseverance to Arms Park Chamber. Took the large tunnel to Players Tunnel and eventually reached St David's Hall. Mike reckoned to look at bottom directly opposite, to poke around in for 2 hours to no avail! I got up in climb to boulders. Back in David's Hall we discovered Squirrel Rifts. About 30 junctions were marked and Mike left paper markers at more junctions. This facilitated our return after our discovery of a long chute followed by a climb down to gain a slow moving and wide streamway. There was no way on from here! Back to our exit and now there were two more entries in the

logbook. They'd not left a time of entry or even their key. We left at 7:30 and got home for midnight.

Dalek

Ogof Draenen: Gilwern Passage Extensions

20th May 1995

Robert Bialek, Mike Cooper, Steve Duckworth & Others

Leaving Bradford with Mike, we picked up Steve in Stalybridge and did the drive down to Crickhowell for 8:30. A couple of pints at The Bear and we were greeted by Tim Guildford and Andy Tyler. Pete Bolt arrived later. We booked into Whitewalls for 2 nights for £5 each.

Mike gave us a healthy breakfast while Pete and Tim wanted a fry-up in Crickhowell. We got down the entrance at 10:10. Mike took down two Darren Drums in his tackle bag to keep us fortified for the next 12 hours! Going up Gilwern passage and into extensions from a plank we got to a choke and walking along a muddy fissure to a fork in the passage. The streamway was ahead but we took the left and not long before we reached a muddy duck tube, about 50' long. Going forwards on our fronts. It would be horrible on our return, as one eye would be in the mud/water! Nice walking passage to a choke. The next big passage was climbing over huge blocks like in the Time Machine of Darren Cilau, culminating at a drop at The Lamb & Flag. Onto the end to The Pretties. I looked up a narrow passage and back into a low passage to a squeeze. Pete and Andy left us to do their own dig/thing.

At a small dig going up into a squeeze to a chamber and more passage and a chamber, we got into The Pretty Wiggles. We surveyed back 96 metres and dug out 3 square metres on our way back. The others had found 33 metres of passage. As expected, we were knackered upon our exit and my back now ached a lot!

Dalek

Ogof Draenen: The Round Trip

21st May 1995

Robert Bialek, Mike Cooper, Steve Duckworth

A late start for us at 12:00. Steady going and climbing down via Wunder Bra Passage. Got through Square Rifts, a hole and back under to reach FAB 1. Looked at Pete Bolt's choke and ventured upstream. Reached a waterfall and drop from a roof climb to gain previous point in Crystal Maze. It was a half hour further to go to same point in Main Drain. I shot off with the bag and didn't stop until I was almost half-way up a climb near the Cairn/Wunder Bra junction. Mike and Steve were just 5 mins behind and back at the T junction. The trip took 5 hours. There were 3 Chelsea members who'd been to Rifleman's. One had a 6' fall onto their knee/thigh. A quick bite to eat by the car and the long drive back home.

Dalek

The Potholer of Mulu

Beneath the emerald canopy, where shadows softly play,
A potholer treads in silence, at the break of day.
In Mulu's ancient caverns, where time itself is still,
He seeks the hidden wonders, with a climber's iron will.

The 1980s whispered softly, through the vines and limestone walls,
As rivers carved their stories, in subterranean halls.
With helmet light aglow, he ventured deep below,
Where stalactites hung like chandeliers, and crystal rivers flow.

The air was thick with mystery, the darkness vast and deep,
Yet onward pressed the potholer, through secrets earth would keep.
Through Deer Cave's grand cathedral, where bats took to the skies,
He marvelled at the echoes, as daylight met his eyes.

In Clearwater's hidden chambers, where sapphire waters gleam,
He waded through the silence, as if lost within a dream.
The Garden of Eden waited, with its ferns and mossy throne,
A paradise of shadows, where he stood, yet not alone.

For Mulu's caves are timeless, and their whispers never fade,
They speak of ancient rivers, and the paths that they have laid.
The potholer, a pilgrim, in this underworld of stone,
Carried not just ropes and harnesses, but a heart that sought the unknown.

And when he rose to daylight, with the jungle's humid breath,
He left behind the darkness, but not the call of depth.
For Mulu's caves had claimed him, in their silent, sacred way,
A potholer of the 1980s, who found where shadows play.

Dinny Davies (and a little help from AI)

Library Additions: February 2025 – July 2025

Journals:

- Bristol Exploration Club: Belfry Bulletin No. 587 (*Autumn 2024*)
British Cave Research Association: Cave & Karst Science - Vol 52 No. 1 (*April 2025*)
CREG Journal Issue 129-130, (*March-June 2025*)
Cave Diving Group: *Newsletter*: No. 235-236. (*April-July 2025*)

Chelsea Speleological Society: *Newsletter* Vol. 67 Nos. 1-3, 4-6 (*Jan-Jun 2025*)

Council of Northern Caving Community: Northern Caving. Issue Nos. 15, 17 (*2024-2025*)
Craven Pothole Club: Record Nos. 157-158 (*Jan-Apr 2025*)
Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club: *Newsletter* (*February 1997*)
Descent: Nos. 303-304 (*Apr/May 2025*)

Federation Francaise de Speleologie: Spelunca No. 50 (*June 1993*)
Grottes, Gouffres & Caverns: (*pamphlet*).
Terre Sauvage – Speleologie La Terre Vued'en Bas.
Compte Rendu d'Activites No. 7 (*1998*)
Grampian Speleological Group: Bulletin. Fifth Series Vol. 5 No. 3 (*March 2025*)
Leeds University Union Speleological Society: Trogazette (*1958-1963*) (*bound volume*)
Mendip Caving Club: News Issue 390 (*January 2025*)
National Speleological Society: News. Vol. XI Nos. 1-2, 4-6. (*Jan-Jun 1953*)
Vol. 24 No. 4 (*1966*): Vol. 26 No. 7 (*1968*)
RRCPC: Newsheet: Nos. 404-407. (*Dec 2024-Jan 2025*)
Newsletter: Vol. 62 No. 1 (*Spring 2025*)
SWETC Caving Club: Speleo Vol. 13 No. 1 (*1974*)
Union Internationale de Speleologie: Congress Programme. (*2009 & 2013*)
Wessex Cave Club: Journal 365-366 (*February-May 2025*)
William Pengelly Cave Stu. Grp: Studies in Speleology Vols. 2, 4-13. (*1975-2008*).
Reprint from Vol. 1 Part 5 – Batu Caves (*1967*)
Index: Studies in Speleology – Vols 1 & 2 (*1964-1975*)

Other Publications:

- Speleologia Marina (*Italian*) Fabio Barbieri (*1999*)
Cuevas de Sorbas, Almeria - Aventurate. - *Flyer*
Exploration of Nidderdale Caves. Chris Fox, Ian Lloyd & Tony Cook (*2025*)
Mallorcan Caves (*folder of 20 surveys*) – Donated by Dave Elliotts estate)
Spanish Caves (*Folder of many cave descriptions and surveys (as above)*)
Lascaux Pantings and Engravings, Annette Laming (*1959*)
The Double-Decker Himalayan Adventure, Conway, J; Creedy, D; Hewitt, H (*2019*)
The Caves of Kintyre and Mid Argyll, Tony Oldham (*2004*)
Caves of South Western Scotland, Tony Oldham (*2005*)
The Caves of Fermanagh and Cavan, Gareth Llwyd Jones (*1974*)

Guide to the Sporting Caves, Potholes & Mines of Derbyshire, *Jim Ballard (1974)*
Caves and Caverns of Peakland, *Crighton Porteous (undated)*
Coming to South Wales Caves, *Bill Little (1970)*
Mendip Underground- A cavers guide: *David Irwin & Antony Knibbs (1977 & 1987)*
Caves of Mendip- The complete: *Nicholas Stanton & William Stanton (1972)*
China Caves Project: *Guangxi 2005 & Lichuan 2006.*
Expedition to Tien Shan, China Lancashire Polytechnic *(1988)*
Cave Flyers – large collection from Czech Republic

DVD:

Lechuguilla *(updated version provided by Dalek).*

*Changes to enable easier access to the club library are now in place:
Members wishing access to the library room should contact the librarian direct, who will brief them on current access arrangements and then issue the member with a key. They will then be able to view on site, or log out any publication they either borrow or wish to browse in the Reading Room.*

The library is an excellent reference facility, please respect it - but above all please use it. When returning items please place all items in the returns basket – Do not replace back on the shelving.

Thank you

Sandra Wilkinson - Librarian: *m.wilkinson@btinternet.com*