

Yorkshire # Rambler



Photos by John Whalley with detail from expedition sweaters and Harvey Lomas

这是一个中国与英国合作的
 广西岩洞研究计划。
 这是一个在过去八年多彼此
 共同制定并实行的“中
 英岩洞计划”。

www.guangxi-caves2000.co.uk

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Foreword

Rather later than normal, with apologies for the delay from the editor, comes this issue of the Yorkshire Rambler.

Pride of place goes to the highly successful and widely acclaimed Club caving trip to China. For this detailed report we are indebted to the team's hard work in processing and writing up their data on top of their fieldwork.

Walking, climbing and caving on British hills have, over recent months, been brought practically to a halt by the precautions against the spread of Foot and Mouth Disease. Several meets have had to be cancelled. Thankfully, as this goes to press, footpaths, crags and caves in our home ground of the Dales are now being re-opened.

The Club's creativity came to the fore once again in dealing with the situation and some novel meet reports await your perusal.



Albert Chapman, President

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Copy for next issue by September 2001.

The opinions expressed in this publication are not
necessarily those of the YRC nor its Officers

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The YRC Guangxi Caves 2000 Expedition

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The expedition to Guangxi was extremely successful having discovered and surveyed seventeen kilometres of cave in just three weeks. The caves were comprehensively photographed and a film was made by the Chinese for television. Our biologist discovered many new species of cave life and a wider chemistry project was completed on Shadong. In all the team undertook over 1,000 hours of work. Vital new contacts were made in China that will provide a platform for further expeditions. The next expedition planned for this area is scheduled for April 2002. The international caving world is interested in our work in China and we have been invited to speak at the Ninth International Congress of Speleology to be held in Brasilia.



Cone Karst on the Li River Photo: John Whalley

Why China?

The karst of China, over a million square kilometres, covers around an eighth of the country's landmass. Spectacular dolines, karst towers, and canyons dwarf similar features elsewhere in the world.

Chinese Universities and British cavers have worked jointly for nearly twenty years under the title 'China Cave Projects'.

Andy Eavis, doyen of Chinese cave exploration, has fostered strong links with various Chinese institutions, advancing the science of speleology both in and outside China. Andy was the principal guest at the YRC's annual dinner two years ago and he helped the club select a suitable area to explore, which would normally be off-limits to travellers in China. With his knowledge and contacts we were fortunate to secure the necessary permission from the authorities.

Guangxi province probably has the greatest potential for new cave development in South East Asia. Indeed much of the exploration in the region is still in its infancy.

Expedition Members

Ged Champion, Expedition Leader

John Riley, Deputy Leader

Alan Fletcher

Bruce Bensley, Photography

Graham Salmon, Survey

Arthur Salmon, Water Chemistry

Alister Renton, Electronics

John Whalley, Photography

Stewart Muir

Harvey Lomas

Shaun Penny

Tony Penny

Mike Pitt

Bill Hawkins

Pascale Bottazzi

Arthur Clarke, Cave Biology

Chinese Members

Professor Zhu Xue Wen

Mr Cai Wutian

Mr Han

Cheiry Echo-Savager (Xue Huaw)

Mr Chen Lixin

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.
But Oh! That deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place!



Anyone, who has visited Guangxi in China and is familiar with the work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, would find it difficult not to draw parallels with the rich imagery of Kubla Khan and the evocative scenery that abounds in this incredible province. Though Coleridge travelled extensively in his age, even to the glaciers of Mont Blanc, he never visited China, but if he had done, I have no doubt that he would have realised the dream of Kubla Khan.

During the dark days of Ian Crowther's presidency, it was felt, especially by the President, that the YRC should mark the Millennium Year with a suitably impressive expedition to an exotic far off place with promise of caverns measureless to man. Where better for that than southern China?

I had been in negotiation with Andy Eavis for almost twelve months and he had identified an area in Guangxi that would provide the basis for an expedition and an additional area further north where reconnaissance work for further China Cave Projects Expeditions could take place. Andy and Kevin Senior had visited Lingyun over a four-day period in 1999, and had identified a number of sites that required a more thorough approach. So it was that the YRC assembled its best cavers, some even returning from retirement and, ever mindful of the Club's strong patriarchal traditions accompanied by a slight lack of caving manpower, recruited a female French caver from the Savoie region.

When all the necessary formalities were near completion, including the all-important permission from the Ministry of Land and Resources in China, which only arrived in the nick of time, visas were collected from Manchester and flight arrangements were confirmed.



With a foothold in China, we left behind the smog and skyscrapers of Shanghai to be captivated by the beauty of the tall karst towers and gentle mists of the Guilin Low Lands. This much-eulogised scenery cannot fail to impress even the most seasoned traveller. Just a few kilometres outside the bustling city of Guilin, a trip down the Li River gives a wonderful opportunity to feast one's eyes on cone karst of an incredible scale and abundance.



Our centre of operations for the first few days was to be the Karst Institute in Guilin. The expedition quickly began to build up momentum. The China Caves Project store at the Institute provides a veritable Aladdin's cave of equipment, which we eagerly bagged and packed in preparation for our journey north. Our host, mentor and cuddly uncle, Professor Zhu, was finalising all the formalities needed for us to meet dignitaries and officials in the Lingyun and Leye Counties. Protocol and preparation in China are vital for any expedition to be successful. It was decided that we would travel via Nanning, the Provincial Capital on public bus and meet the Lingyun County Officials in the City and they would escort us north. It took approximately twelve hours to get to Lingyun with a few obligatory stops for food and water. We arrived on a rainy evening, not really what we had expected, since we were visiting the

Glossary of Terms

Doline	- Large crater in sedimentary rock with or without an outlet at bottom
Dong	- cave
Fossil cave	- an old, now inactive cave system
He	- river
Hua	- leaf
Japara	- proofed raincoat jacket (Aus)
Karst	- Limestone area
Lian	- lotus
Lianhua	- Lotus-plant
Liu	- flow
Long	- dragon
Niu	- buffalo
Sha	- sand
Shang	- upper
Shen	- deep
Shui	- water
Suidao	- tunnel
Tao	- peach
Wan	- that specific locality
Uvala	- joined dolines
Xia	- lower
Y hang	- belay using bowline (or eight) on the bight knot
Yan	- rock
Yuan	- source

area in the dry season. Our accommodation was not the Government rest house as we had originally planned, but a hotel, which by our standard was luxurious; never before had we had such a comfortable base camp.

Exploration in Lingyun Area

Lingyun is a lovely promenade style town along the side of the Chengbi River, the water of which was to provide us with the source of our exploration for the next three weeks. About 2km north of the town the river is fed by a major tributary, the Shiyui River, which emerges in spectacular fashion from a show cave a short distance from the confluence, having sunk some 16 km further north. The objective of our work was to try and

locate the Shiyui River between the sink and the resurgence. From Lingyun the Chengbi River flows south and intermittently sinks and rises until it is finally harnessed by a hydro-electricity project in Xiagia.

At first we directed our attention to two main features, Xiashuidong and Shadong, which seemed to give some promise of locating the elusive river. Xiashuidong was explored over a two week period and a considerable amount of sizeable passage was found, but the active river could only be heard and not reached.

Xiashuidong Shaun Penny

This was my first visit to China, and wow what a place, on this short but memorable trip I've fallen head over heels in love with it. Caving in China is very much more than just the exploration of endless virgin passage; it's as much about its culture, the unbelievable scenery and the incredible warmth of its people, I'm hooked.

Ged had spent a great deal of time and effort assembling our little group together. We were for the most part

known to each other, mainly as close friends. It was I think because of this special chemistry that we were able to accomplish a lot, and really just enjoy it as a holiday; it also helped in that there were no prima donnas. Anyone who would dare to poke their head above the parapet in such a way would have been setting themselves up to be ridiculed.

Our first day in the caving region was akin to a field trip; we were all piled into a bus and driven around the area to be shown the potential sites. It poured with rain all day. I made a mental note that the rivers were swollen, but that didn't seem to matter as there were loads of dry fossil cave possibilities to go at.

That same evening, Ged posted the teams on the wall, together with the areas we had to cover the next day. We, each in our separate groups, prepared noisily both our personal and group equipment. I thought privately, it was going to be a complete washout. Our selected area was the wettest site shown to us that day, with one of the biggest rivers in the district flowing, no rushing, into a limestone cliff, with surely no chance of us

finding a way through. At my most optimistic, I couldn't conceive of anything other than death by drowning. None of the others seemed unduly worried so like a true martyr I kept it to myself, had a few beers and slept soundly that night.

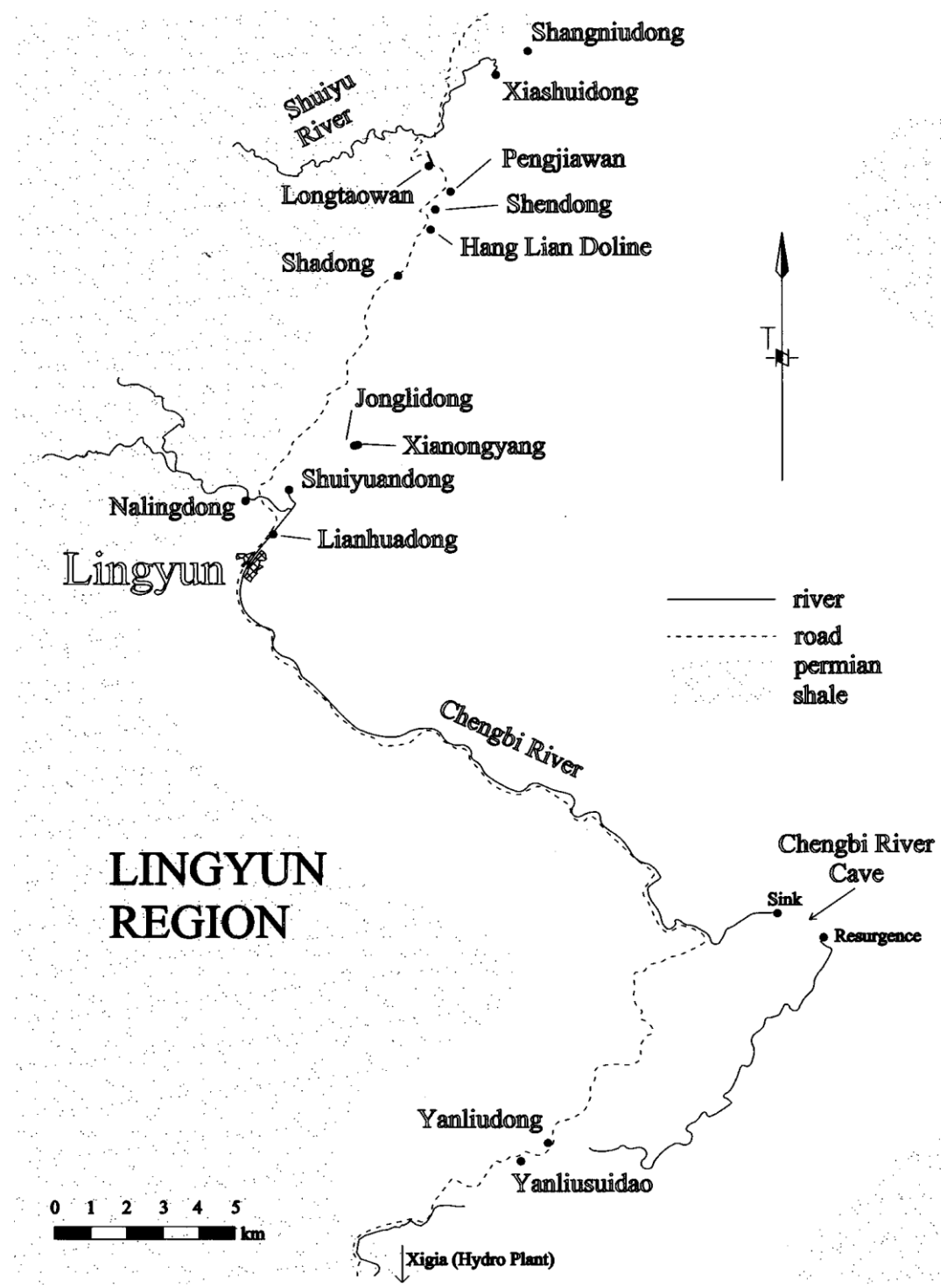
Next morning the rain continued, not at all like the showers of yester-



day, but literally bouncing off the roof of the minibus. We were forced to a halt; locals were working hard to clear a mud landslide that almost closed the road ahead. When we finally arrived at our drop off point, none of us was keen to venture out into the rain. We waited and waited. Eventually after an hour had passed, we decided it was now or never and started out along the

muddy track that would become so familiar to us all.

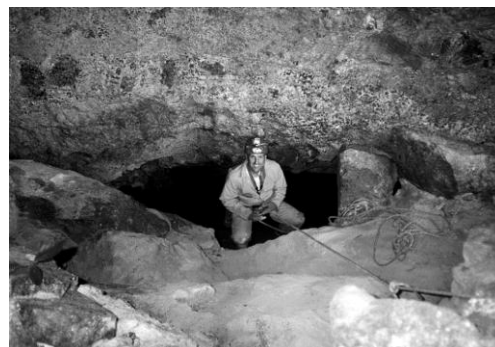
Our little group of four, Stewart, Jon, Pascale and I, soon became the centre of attention. We had to pass through two small villages; this must have brought the whole population out, a good many of whom followed us down the track. I felt a little like the



pied piper; our little troop was now thirty or forty strong, all curious to know what we were doing and where on earth we were going? I've always been keen to keep a low profile when approaching caves; things often go wrong and no embarrassment can then be felt. No chance on this occasion, it was a circus and I found myself playing to the crowd. The whole atmosphere was surreal and exciting. Some, once they knew we were looking for caves, were eager to show us their entrances. No, that's not quite true, they were all keen to show us. We were directed to a place in the river where it was safe to cross. It was fully 4ft deep that first day and the current was strong. Once across, the crowd shot up the steep bank. We struggled to keep our footing, that didn't seem to matter to our new friends, we were almost revered by them and I was certainly grateful. The entrance they were showing us was well above the water, completely in the dry. It was better than that, it was a pitch; they had not been in there and couldn't follow down a rope.

We changed in full view of the crowd; they weren't going to miss a thing. All giggles and chatter, children jumping from rock to rock, natural athletes all of them. They looked on in awe, amazed at our colourful equipment. Jon rigged the entrance pitch for me to descend. Seven metres down and the pitch became a sloping dusty mud bank. I followed it to a natural stalactite belay where we each dumped our rucksacks. This was the one and only time we took them into the caves as you could leave anything and it would still be there when you got back, unlike home. The others joined me; Stewart taking the lead now took off down the short slope, which once more became vertical. We were now in a smaller

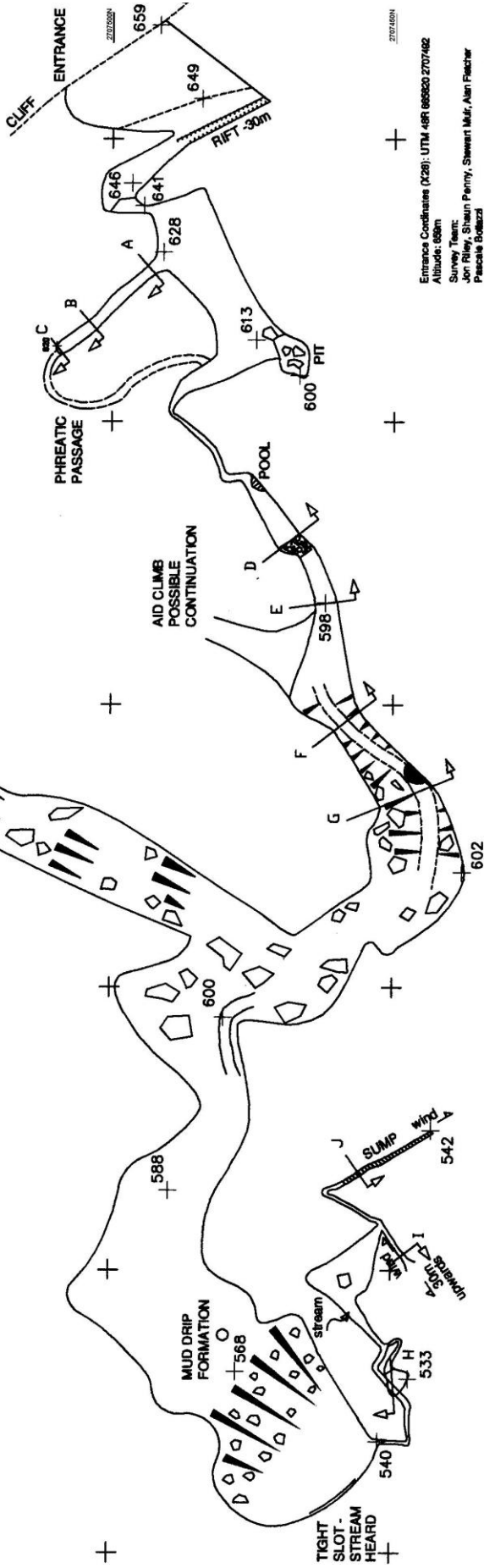
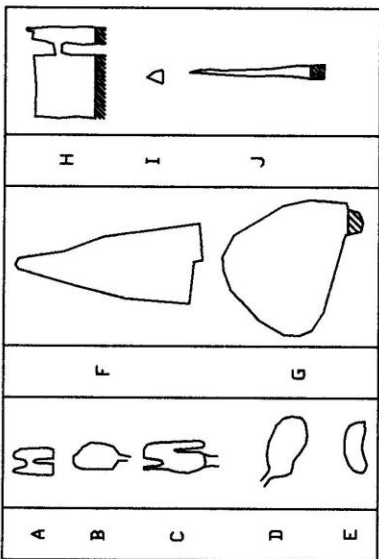
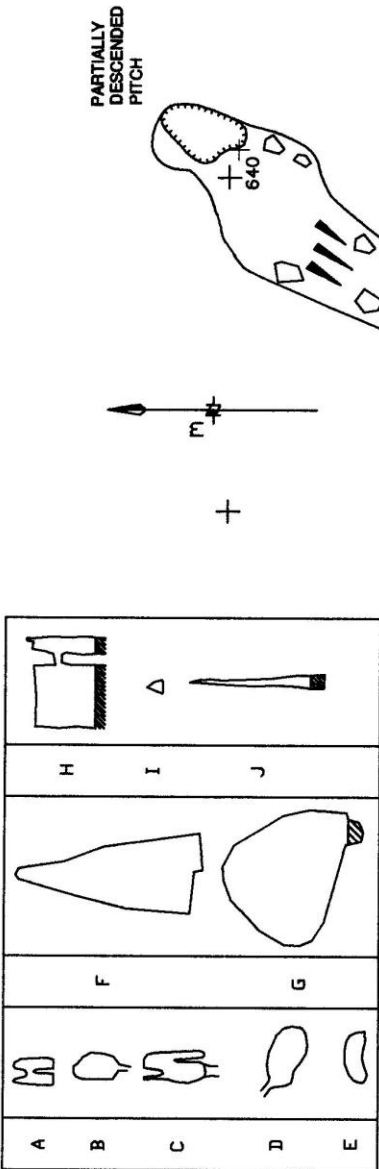
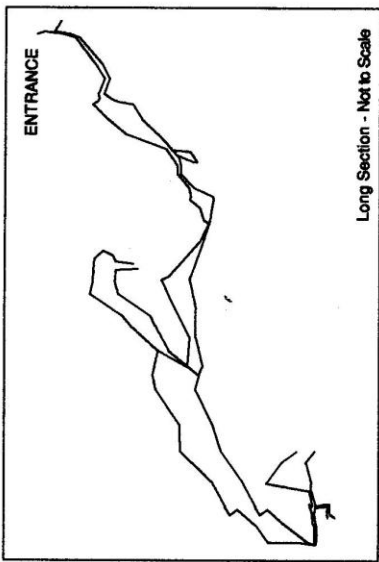
rifting section of passage, which we followed over the top of some quite considerable drops (not investigated), to the head of a 15m pitch. Once at the bottom, the cave then opened out once more and was, perhaps, 20m high by 20m wide with the virgin mud floor sloping away into the distance. Setting off down that muddy bank felt truly wonderful, our first Chinese cave, and we were the first ever in it.



Shaun starts Xiashuidong's entrance pitch only to be followed by the local children going hand over hand down the rope

It wasn't long before we were stopped again by another pitch. We contrived to rig this one on natural belays. Bad choice, I had only got down 4m when the walls, which resembled pebbledash, started to drop apart and crash down into the void below. Not to be fazed, a natural thread was found and Jon performed the most incredible acrobatics, worthy of a perfect ten and gold medal had it been marked in the Olympic games, to get to the bottom. Unfortunately, no way on was found so we decided to call it a day and surveyed out. At least we still had plenty of side passages to explore.

Next day saw us back again with our friendly local escorts leading us across the fields to the entrance once more. We quickly descended to the first of our chosen sites. Frustratingly, after a pitch and a winding crawl, this joined into the next side passage lower down



Entrance Coordinates (X28): UTM 49R 68820 2707482

Altitude: 698m

Survey Team:
Jon Riley, Shaun Penny, Stewart Muir, Alan Fletcher
Pascale Bonazzi

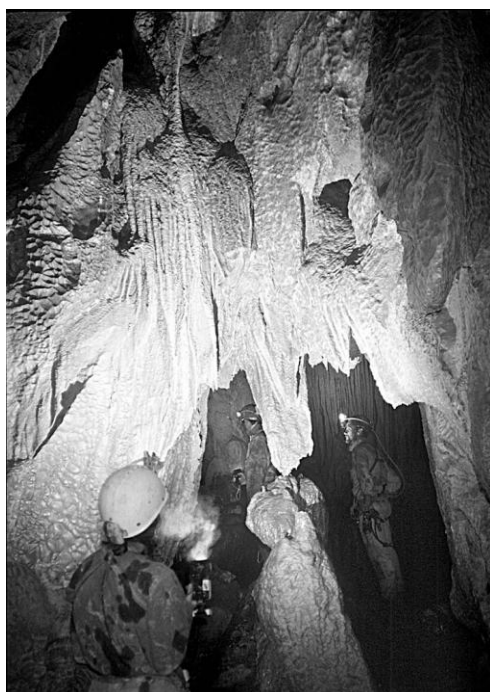
Xia Shui Dong
Guangxi, China

Scale: 1:1000

Yunnan Rawlinson Club
GUANGXI CAVES 2000
China Cave Project

the cave. Our attentions now focused on that next way that was to lead us to explore a further blind pot. Soon after, a traverse was found to the head of another pitch. This was to turn out to be the key to the way on.

Moving around the sump pool at the bottom and up through a squeeze took us into the big stuff; massive mud covered passages whose floors sloped away steeply. We were all caught up in the excitement of the moment. For the remainder of the day it was difficult to stay disciplined and actually set about taking the survey data. Now we really did have something to go at.



The amazement of finding a new passage

It doesn't take long to reach your furthest point in the cave when you get used to it. We could hear the roar of water that must be the main collector, but were unable to find a way down to it. We did, however, find a couple of siphons and short pitches, but never the source of that noise. In another direction we found a pitch that we estimate was close to 200m deep, but after about 80m it was too unstable for us to descend any

further. So that too is still there waiting for someone foolhardy enough to tackle the pitch that requires a full armoured suit, and maybe some 600mm bolt anchors.

Our time was up on this cave. Maybe at some future time I'll get a chance to go back, but with so much to go at, and so little time, I think someone else will have to finish what we started.



Xiashuidong Work Pascale Bottazzi

Jeudi 5 octobre: départ 9h30, quatre équipes se répartissent le long du parcours. Le groupe dont je fais partie est composé de Jonathan, Stewart et Shaun. Nous traversons la rivière pour atteindre un porche en hauteur, repérable par ses très vieilles stalactites et des blocs de rochers. On équipe le long pan incliné d'entrée avec une main courante, puis un petit puits nous amène dans un volume incliné au sol de terre humide parsemé de rochers.

Nous arrivons sur une conduite forcée, le premiers puits à gauche est descendu sans succès, la suite, à droite, aux parois couvertes de belles cupules, nécessite plus de cordes. On peut soupçonner une étendue d'eau à sa base.

Deux passages ont été repérés, un criquet dépigmenté est remonté en surface. On lève la topo en sortant. On déséquipe la corde d'entrée, bien qu'il soit clair que les enfants ne s'en encomrent pas pour descendre.

Dehors, Jon a sympathisé avec la troupe d'enfants, ce sont eux qui ont ressorti nos sacs; et de grands éclats de rire accompagnent les remontées successives. En repartant, nous empruntons un gué et lavons notre équipement passablement boueux. Nous sommes restés 5h30 sous terre, nous reprenons le bus à 18h30.

Repas à 20h, chacun est content de sa journée. Quelques ennuis de santé: sinusite ou gastro, sans plus.

Vendredi 6 octobre: Lever à 6h. Après le déjeuner à 7h30, nous embarquons dans un plus grand bus. Sherry nous accompagne, en vue de traductions; nous entrons dans la grotte à 10h30, quelques pétards annoncent la fête du village. Jon emprunte le 1er passage à droite et équipe un bout de corde... pour retomber rapidement sur la petite arrivée avant notre objectif; il s'agit d'un passage parallèle, visiblement connu des Chinois (traces). Dans la petite galerie de jonction coule un filet d'eau dont le débit a bien diminué. Le puits de la veille est descendu par Shaun, à sa base une petite laisse d'eau semble correspondre à un siphon suspendu ou temporaire. Néanmoins, la suite est juste à côté, dans une conduite forcée remontante, tapissée de galets de toutes sortes. Les cupules semblent attester que lorsque la laisse d'eau se met en charge, l'arrivée de la crue peut se faire violemment, bloquant le passage. Courbés, nous remontons ce boyau pour déboucher dans un espace plus large et plus haut, le sol est boueux mais peu glissant, jolie galerie parfois encombré de blocs. Nous arrivons ensuite à un toboggan nécessitant une corde, et un volume de belles dimensions. Stewart et moi levons la topo pendant que Jon et Shaun reconnaissent et équipent la suite...qui les amène sur un puits et

un bruit de rivière! Je ramasse quelques échantillons de roches, on ressort à 16h15. Sherry nous attend devant l'entrée. Après un pointage au GPS, nous reprenons le sentier en évitant les bouquets de haricots lancés auparavant depuis le haut du plateau. Lavage du matos dans la rivière qui a bien baissé, arrivée au bus à 17h15.

Nous fêtons l'anniversaire de Mike dans la salle de danse, puis nous allons à la rencontre d'une délégation touristique officielle qui achève sa réunion. Installés en bord de rivière, dans une ruelle piétonne, nous dégustons toutes sortes de brochettes plus ou moins classiques: (serpents, oiseaux, pattes de volailles...)

Minuit à l'hôtel, pointages GPS et topos. L'équipe télé dont fait partie le mari de Sherry, est disposée à filmer la "grande salle".

Samedi 7 octobre: Le temps se stabilise au beau. Départ 9h30. Professeur Zhu, Jed et Stewart visitent la cavité en bordure de chemin, en rive ouest. De notre côté, nous descendons à trois, suivis de près par un jeune homme particulièrement motivé, (peut-être le fils du chef du village), jusqu'au tout début du 1er passage réellement technique... Il remonte seul, une sandale en moins et pratiquement sans lumière; sa prouesse est impressionnante. On emprunte un passage bas, on descend le puits et on enchaîne jusqu'à un terminus (provisoire?); un courant d'air s'infiltré dans sorte de diaclase étroite; arrêt sur niveau d'eau élevé, j'utilise le marteau afin de laisser un repère. La zone est propre, et le haut de la galerie garde une jolie forme d'œuf. On capture une grenouille et un insecte volant avant de remonter. On topographie, on lève les cordes et on se retrouve dans le grand volume certainement filmé peu avant, au pied

d'une longue pente argileuse. Un rapide casse-croûte, et on grimpe le pan incliné. Derrière, on débouche dans une très grande salle parsemée de gros blocs, des concrétions sont visibles en hauteur. Sur la droite s'ouvre un puits estimé à plus de 100m de profondeur... On laisse les cordes en se promettant de revenir. Sortie vers 17h, nettoyage du matos avec l'aide des enfants hilares, sous la directive amusée de Shaun. Ils se précipitent même pour porter nos charges le long des rizières à sec; on dirait des sacs à pattes... Les villageois sont réunis au cœur du village, et on s'échange des bonjour dans une ambiance très détendue.

Nouveau banquet, en présence d'un directeur touristique... Professeur Zhu reconnaît que l'un des objectifs que l'on attend de nous est bel et bien de trouver une grotte susceptible d'être aménagée. Quelques reports topo avec survex sur les portables.

Dimanche 8 octobre: On a décliné l'offre d'un jour de repos et on se rend sur le terrain bien qu'il soit déjà 10h30. Les enfants nous interpellent depuis le porche. Un cameraman filme nos derniers préparatifs. Midi, on commence à descendre. Arrivés à la salle, on réalise que les visées sensées permettre le raccord sont restées dans le haut de mon sac à dos. Bon, pas grave, on grimpe la colline de boue sans trop glisser et on arrive dans la salle où l'on s'aperçoit que les feuilles topo se trouvent dans les kits laissés au début de la dune; zut !

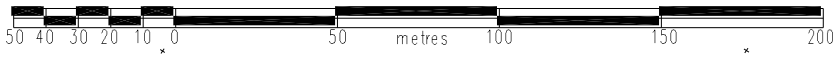
Bon, Jon commence à installer les spits au perfo pendant que j'explore la partie gauche de la salle passant de blocs en coulées ; c'est raide et je suis près de 25m plus haut. Je scrute sans trouver d'ouverture. Par contre, j'observe de très vieilles stalagmites en place contre les parois, toutes les

autres ont basculé avec les blocs et ont subi une nouvelle phase de calcification.

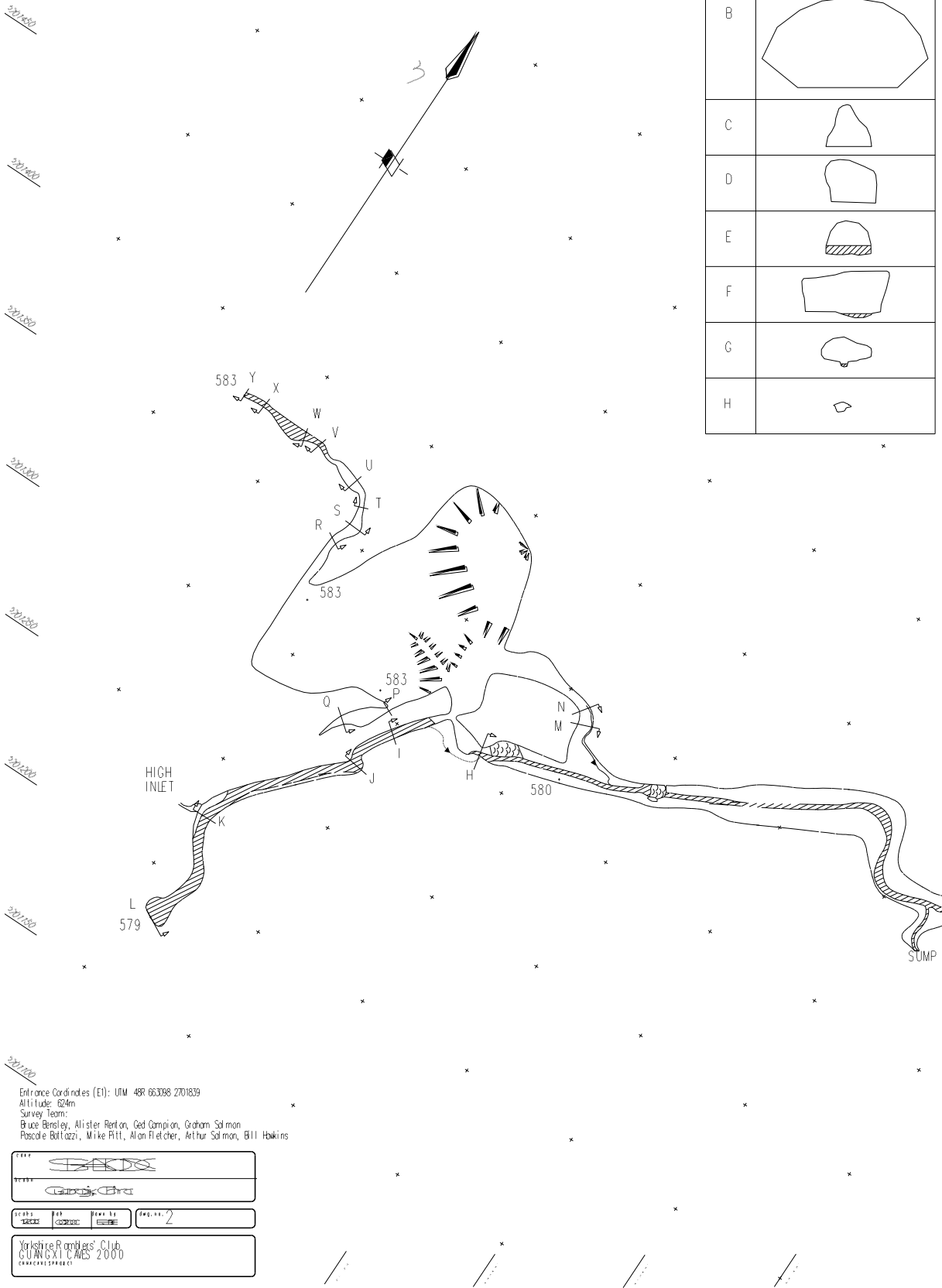
De son côté, Jon fait de son mieux pour trouver comment équiper sous et entre des blocs gros comme des camions... sa situation est acrobatique et plutôt limite côté sécurité, d'autant plus que les parois, en se resserrant, sont recouvertes par une couche de glaise de plus en plus importante. Il annonce qu'il estime le puits à près de 200m de profondeur... Il en a parcouru une bonne trentaine mais préfère renoncer: " mieux vaut une souris vivante qu'un lion mort " déclare -t- il avec philosophie... On revient en tirant la topo avec Shaun et on collecte même quelques échantillons de faune dans l'eau du " siphon " dont le niveau se trouve plus bas. On est dehors à 17h, on nettoie le matos, on est au bord de la route une heure après.

On fête à l'hôtel les 35 ans de Graham.

Jeudi 12 octobre: Dernière visite à Xiashuidong avec Jon et Allan. On prend un itinéraire plus discret en longeant la rivière. Nous allons directement à la salle du grand puits/faille pour fouiller le fond et le côté droit du volume. Il y a effectivement une galerie fossile (redonnant en lucarne à l'aplomb du début de la salle), et dont l'autre extrémité permet un regard sur ce qui est vraisemblablement le même puits. L'accès est boueux et quelques prises sont taillées dans la glaise à coup de descendeur, mais nous n'avons pas de quoi se faire une idée plus précise. On revient sur nos pas en déséquipant et en prenant quelques photos et bestioles. Surprise dans la dernière verticale avant la main courante: un serpent lové se trouve en mauvaise posture, on le laisse à son sort, et on



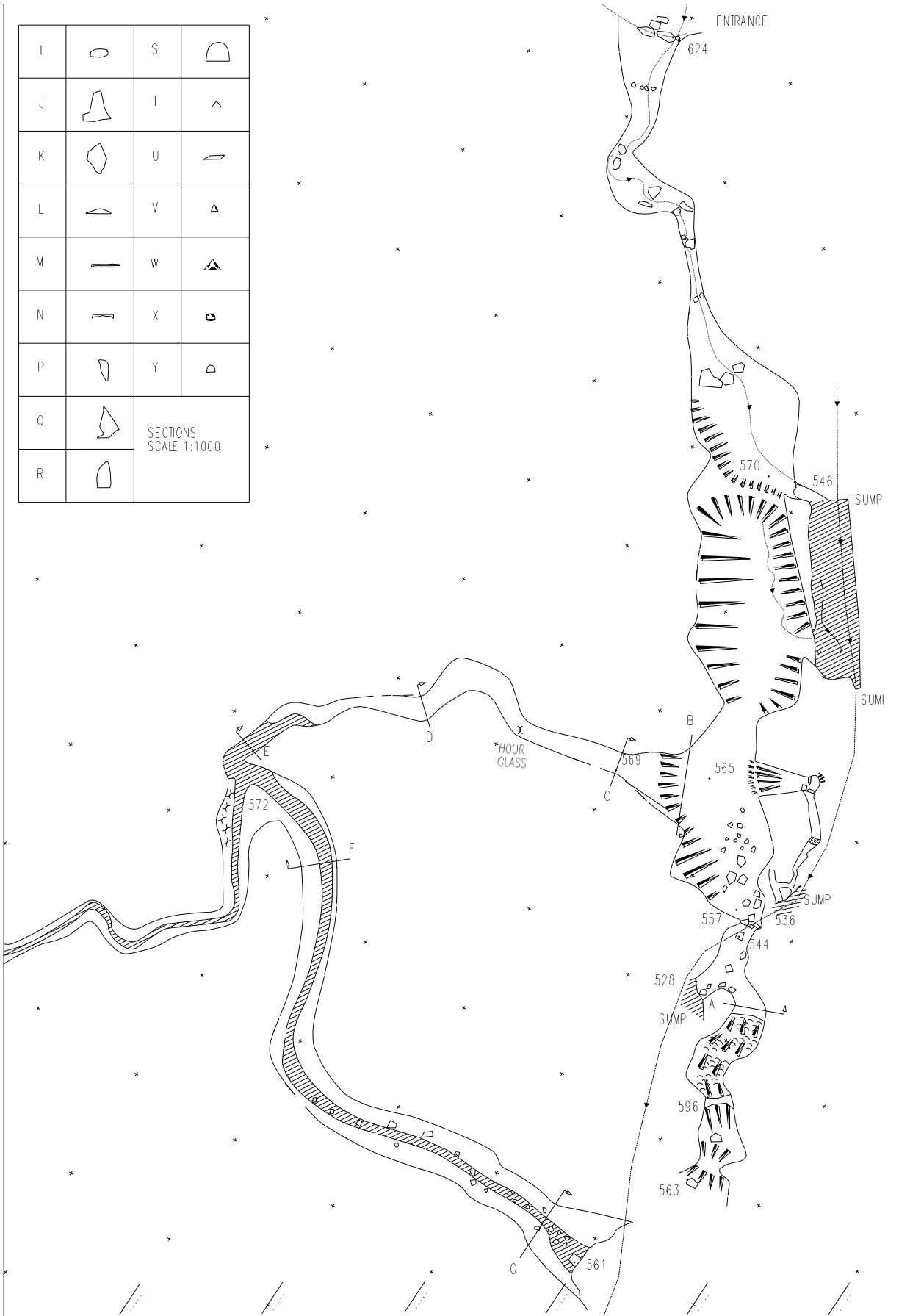
A	
B	
C	
D	
E	
F	
G	
H	



Entrance Cordindes (E1): UTM 48R 663398 2701839
 Altitude: 624m
 Survey Team:
 Bruce Bensley, Alister Renton, Ged Campion, Graham Salmon
 Pascale Billozzi, Mike Pitt, Alan Fletcher, Arthur Salmon, Bill Hawkins

DATE	2000
BY	Graham Salmon
SCALE	1:5000
REVISED BY	ESB
NO. OF SHEETS	2
Yorkshire Ramblers' Club COUNCIL'S CARE 2000 <small>© YORKSHIRE RAMBLERS' CLUB 2000</small>	

I		S	
J		T	
K		U	
L		V	
M		W	
N		X	
P		Y	
Q		SECTIONS SCALE 1:1000	
R			



parvient à signaler sa présence aux deux jeunes gens que l'on rencontre à l'extérieur. Dernier pointage GPS

Temps passé sous terre: trois heures.

Le vent a tourné et l'air devient plus frais alors qu'on lave le matos. Les paysans achèvent les brûlis des dernières parcelles.

Retour à l'hôtel à 18h, quelques envois email.

The second major feature to be explored simultaneously with Xiashuidong was Shadong, an impressive cave entrance cutting away massively beneath the road north of Lingyun.

Shadong

Alan Fletcher

The system of Shadong (Sand Cave) is one of the most easily accessible of the caves undertaken during the expedition. The entrance, which lies at the head of a valley, is some 15-20 minutes walk from the road, firstly via a path then a dry streambed (the valley carries water at times of heavy rainfall).

The entrance is truly memorable, it being a large porch estimated to be some 25-30m in height and 20-25m in width. It certainly gives anyone descending for the first time an inkling of the sheer size of the cave beyond (Shadong was the most extensive system we found during our explorations).

The initial passage leads off and opens up into a sizeable chamber with huge mud banks to the right, stretching to the roof. Following the left-hand wall will eventually bring you to a pitch, over which any entrance stream would flow down to the cave's main river. This pitch can easily be bypassed by climbing over

the right-hand mud banks and descending to the sloping floor of the chamber beyond.

Dropping down to the left here brings one to the main river, which over several visits was shown to rise and fall with great alacrity, with at one time the level rising some 10-15m overnight. The river can be followed up and down stream, for a short distance, but in both instances sumps are reached.

Heading away from the river and up the chamber's slopes will bring you to the "upper level main chamber" from which point there is a choice of three ways on, the least obvious route being to the left over the top of a small mud bank. Here a steeply descending passage leads down via a mud ramp to a rock-floored right-hand bend where can be found a narrowing solution-slot that drops down, possibly to stream level, and directly in the corner is a possible aven.

Continuing over some boulders and down the passage, one comes to a calcite flow that must be climbed with care. The main stream is then encountered again. However, it soon flows under a rock screen, which can be bypassed to the right by a passage containing some shingle-filled solution-holes. Beyond the bypass, the stream re-emerges very powerfully and then flows over a series of cascades before again forming a sump that prevents further exploration in this direction.

If, back in the upper level main chamber, one chooses to move directly ahead, a passage begins to descend and after progress is made down a boulder-strewn slope another sump is reached. Just before reaching this point, however, a way on to the left can be observed.

A rising passage can be followed by means of some very tricky clambering over mud, flowstone and loose debris. This eventually opens up, levels out and soon begins to descend sharply. Due to lack of time and rope (the slope being steep enough to justify the placing of bolts), we were only able to make limited progress downwards before turning back.

The third and final way on is to the right, in a westerly direction, and leads by way of a mud-set, cobble-floored passage and some gour pools into a much more aqueous section of cave.

A large inlet passage soon appears and this can be followed downstream for around 280m until a pitch is reached, from the top of which the sound of the main stream can be heard below. Attempts to descend this pitch were to prove fruitless, as the rock is of such a poor nature that the use of bolts merely shatters it. Around five or six placements were tried in various locations, without success, before the task was abandoned.

Following the inlet upstream is a very different story and yields more positive results. The way on is easy going walking, both in shallow water and on the muddy embankments, until a breakdown area is reached where the passage appears to be obstructed by fallen blocks with the stream issuing forth from their base.

With a little investigation, however, a way on over the top can be found to a point where there is a deep pool. A short traverse on the left-hand wall leads down to a large broken stalactite, which bridges the pool, and crossing this leads to a further blockage with a way on visible over the top. Although a little awkward to climb over due to its greasy nature,

access is soon gained to a chamber with ways on to the left and right.

Moving to the left here, the chamber (which hereafter for want of a better name is referred to as "Junction Chamber") descends to the continuation of the inlet. This can be followed upstream for around 160m until progress is halted due to the appearance of a sump pool.

One point of interest is that, just prior to the sump, a dry section of passage on the right (not shown on the survey) can be followed for a few metres until a 5m high wall is reached with what looks promisingly like a further way on over the top. Once climbed (care must be taken as the rock, as in the downstream pitch, is of very poor quality and flakes away in the hand), however, the expected way on does not materialise and the passage comes to a disappointingly sudden end.

Back in Junction Chamber, if you move to the right, i.e. to the north, a small climb down is found which leads to a lower section of the chamber where one is again faced with the option of heading to the left or to the right. To the right a passage gradually swings around becoming increasingly lower in height until a horizontal slot ("Bill's Bypass") of around ½m in height is reached, through which the sound of flowing water can be heard. Crawling through here, through an initially unobserved slot, brings one back into the inlet, in the pre-breakdown area, and so provides an easier method of access to the areas beyond.

If instead one advances to the left you will find yourself climbing a mud slope at the top of which one looks out into the void of an enormous chamber. On entering, descent is made to the chamber's fine mud floor,

where several comments were passed regarding the fact that it appeared, to a large extent, to be perfectly flat. With this in mind and coupled with the perceived shape of the roof (estimated at 40m in height), the chamber was soon dubbed the

Millennium Dome after London's centenary fiasco.

A perimeter survey was carried out and formations were found to be sparse. Those found were mainly lying hidden away in the chamber's recesses. Of more interest was the



Pengjiawan's massive formations dwarf the human figures in these scenes



discovery of two minor passages leading off, though these ultimately led nowhere. The longer of the two especially held some interest due to its floor initially having a very distinctive appearance resulting from a mesh of comparatively large cracks. Also discovered at this point were signs of previous visitation, by presumably some of the local populous, i.e. footprints both barefooted and sandled.

Although one of the most, some would say the most, impressive spectacle in Shadong, the Millennium Dome is certainly not the only sight worth seeing here. From the impressively large entrance passage onwards there are many sights, which captivate the attentions of the explorer.

On the whole, Shadong is certainly a must-see cave if one is in the area, especially as it contains areas still unexplored and remaining to be surveyed. A final word; It is a cave, I think, for lovers of mud and large rooms!

Shadong, with its very impressive network of passages, mud formations and array of cave life was also chosen as a subject of Arthur Salmon's water chemistry project, which is to be published later on this year. Although the river in Shadong was located quickly on the first day, it soon sumped in spectacular fashion. Its capacity to ebb, flow and rise was quite incredible and over one night the river rose by the sump almost ten metres! Although no further river passage was located in Shadong, a number of sumps were discovered and towards the end of the expedition, a lead was found, but time was not available to pursue it. Its promise

was the noise of water in the distance...

A number of other caves were explored in the Lingyun area, very notable of which was Pengjiawan. Arthur Salmon described some of the work carried out there

Pengjiawan	Arthur Salmon
UTM: 48 664567	2704236
Altitude: 708m	Length: 1712m

The cave is situated east of the 'New Road' close to the village of Nongyin and ½km southwest of peak 1023.7 on the Chinese 1:50,000 series map (6-48-130-B). Exploration, surveying and photography of the system involved five trips and 140 man-hours.

A major surface feature consists of a steep-sided, cliff-walled collapsed doline which is roughly oval shaped, approximately 80m long, 35m wide and 35m deep, with the long axis running roughly N-S. The surface crater is situated in almost level cultivated fields. Descent is affected at the SW corner of the doline and involves a zigzag descent of the south wall through a bamboo thicket, followed by a descending traverse of the east wall to the floor, which is composed of large boulders. The northern wall of the crater has a high level fossil cave of limited extent. A lower level entrance, which was deliberately blocked by rubble in 1998, lies under the overhanging west wall.

The Local Government was anxious that the cave should be fully investigated and surveyed since it was thought to have potential as a show cave. The blocked entrance was cleared by local workers in an operation that took two days and on completion of this Tony Penny, Cai

Wutian and a local guide made a very hurried trip through the system and returned with news of a large passage, which was well endowed with cave formations, but with floors of very slippery mud. The major feature of interest was a huge chamber, which was a veritable Alladin's cave, so richly was it decorated with formations.

Thus, the serious work of exploring, surveying and photographing the lower series began. As mentioned above, this was certainly not a virgin cave and may have been entered many generations ago by the local villagers. There certainly was evidence of this and, indeed, some, fortunately not a great number, of the cave's unique formations had been damaged.

Entrance from the open crater was by a 3m pitch through the boulder choke and was facilitated by a hand-line from a hanger placed in the wall above the entrance. The pitch was followed by a steeply descending boulder slope for around 150m in a roughly westerly direction to a junction with an almost horizontal passage. This passage was a major feature of the system and varied in width from 15 to 30m. The floor was generally made up of mud banks, with no sign of any stream flow, but with occasional small pools. The roof of the passage is well adorned with stalactites and the mud floor has some stalagmite bosses. Although there was little water in the cave during the period of our exploration, it seemed that it must flood from the bottom up, from time to time, but it was impossible to estimate the frequency of this flooding.

From the junction, the cave extends about 160m to the south. The right-hand leg of the passage swings gently towards the west, then turns sharply

north for 100m and then east-northeast to easterly for some 300m.

After a small ascent, followed by a descent, the character of the passage changes markedly, becoming a sizeable chamber. An acute turn to the north leads one up a steep slope at about 45° for about 80m to a larger chamber, which extends about 100 x 100m. Initially the slope is of mud, but then becomes a calcite flow which merges into a huge pillar. The decoration of the chamber is very varied, with large pillars and a slender ~15m column of pure white crystal, which was named 'The Wellington Boot' because of its unusual shape. The height of the chamber could only be guessed at and could be in excess of 50m. The survey indicates that the floor of the chamber is approximately at the same elevation as the fields surrounding the surface crater, suggesting that the chamber is very close to the surface. Further surveying of the surface topography is needed to clarify this.

The quality of the formations in the chamber do suggest that Pengjiawan could, indeed, be developed as a show cave, provided due attention was paid to environmental considerations. This may be facilitated if the chamber is, as looks probable, close to the surface thus permitting a gallery to be driven directly into it from the surface.

The cave of Shendong was explored over a period of one day and was the scene of Harvey's accident.

Shendong **Arthur Clarke**

October 5th 2000

After we had explored Shendong (Deep Cave), and reported its dimensions back to Mr Cai, he

thought we should probably re-name it, perhaps devising a name based on the two villages it was located between: Nongying or Nongyin (to the north) and Nongfeng (south).

Back tracking a bit. This was *Day One* in the field for us – a rainy day with our umbrellas and japaras. There were four of us searching for caves in Zone Three, north of Lingyun: Arthur Clarke, Alan Fletcher, Harvey Lomas and John Whalley with Cai Wutian acting as our guide. Being mindful that the previous day a villager had told Prof. Zhu and a few of us that there was a large cave near a bamboo grove “...over in that direction...” where 300 people visited on one day in 1998, we thought we were going to possibly have a good day. After a fruitless search amongst some roadside karst outcrops, only locating an ancient grave tomb with ornate figures and statues in sculptured limestone (now desecrated with faceless heads), we were looking more like “drowned rats” with nowhere to go. We could see the rooftops of Nongyin village houses in the distance beyond the mauve-topped maize flower heads, so Mr Cai suggested we look for a track leading to the village where we could seek some directions or a village guide to assist us.



In the village of Nongyin we secured the services of a young man and our cavalcade of umbrella wielding cavers headed off south along village paths through village gardens. Some ten minutes later our guide advised Mr Cai that we would soon have a steep descent; we descended a 50-60° sloping side of a doline (part of a uvala) finally coming to an overhanging cliff wall where we thought our cave was going to be. There was no cave here, just lots of bundles of maize stalks stacked up on shelves of rock to dry out – being dried for future use as fire-burning fuel. It was an interesting site for two other reasons: there was a quite good example of tufa deposits and phytokarst, plus a massive exposure of palaeokarst: the fossil evidence of an old cave chamber or cave passage that had been infilled with cave sediment and boulders during a previous cycle of karsification and since re-cemented to become part of the present day rock structure. (Present day caves sometimes form as complete or partial exhumations of these old palaeokarst deposits that are often highly calcified and more readily susceptible to dissolution.)

After a brief respite from the rain, we continued along the lushly vegetated “valley” bottom floor into another section of this uvala, stepping down the short limestone boulder walls separating the outlying village garden areas. Some “step-downs” were quite slippery or greasy; Harvey Lomas discovered this and injured his buttocks and shoulder in a fall. We continued on, descending further and near the base of this uvala complex, there was a circular flat-bottomed silty mud floor garden area where we were told that there were sometimes “up-welling” pondings of water. In 1993 (or 1983?) this whole lower

garden area had been flooded to a depth of 5-6m. Our cave was under a nearby cliff with dripping tufa near the entrance.

As we stood outside the entrance, sheltering from rain, the guide and his mother told Mr Cai that the cave was known as Shendong which at first sounded more like “shentang” to our western ears. It was named as such because it has a passage that sometimes takes (and issues??) water – a passage going into the hill for a short distance, and then descending down to depths unknown. The villagers assumed these unknown “depths” to be the source of waters that sometimes emerged and flooded the lower sections of the uvala. While Arthur tended to Harvey’s injuries selecting a gauze bandage from the Tasmanian First Aid kit as an arm sling, Alan Fletcher donned his 3mm wetsuit and brand new orange “Stanley Brown” overalls and ventured in for a brief reconnaissance. Alan emerged about ten minutes later saying that “...it goes, it’s a little bit crawly but it opens up...” John Whalley, clad in his new tight fitting “Stanley Brown” overalls, followed Alan into Shendong, with Arthur behind... and just to be different, Arthur was dressed in the more spaciouly proportioned “Graham Salmon” grey-coloured overalls! It was indeed a quite “crawly” (I would have called it “grotty”) passage that you entered after slithering over boulders and the dry dusty substrate that soon became a muddy-floored passage with a small trickling streamway. I was already starting to think that if this is what Chinese caves were all about, I should have stayed home in Tasmania!

The cave did in fact open up, enlarging from a chest-wetting belly

slither to a more respectable crawlway with only your hands and knees in the muddy water, so Arthur started looking for cave invertebrates. About 10-15m further on, Alan reported seeing a cave beetle in a small “stand-up” chamber (a small aven) and John also mentioned seeing a “spider”. While edging my way to this aven site, Alan reported that they had located the “drop” further on – where the trickling stream goes down a greasy mud slope of unknown depth leading to the sound of more rushing water below. Alan returned to the surface to fetch a 25m length of 11mm rope and subsequently with John’s assistance rigged the “pitch” from a convenient jug hold in the small aven. Arthur looked for bugs, locating a small tan-brown carabid cave beetle, some small flies and a cave cricket that John had thought was a spider.

The handline pitch was actually just a 7-8m long greasy mud slope with mud-covered flowstone banks which connected to a small 0.6m wide 0.2-0.3m deep streamway which funnelled down a 60-70° slope waterfall channel into a narrow 1.8m wide x 1.2m “hole” of darkness. Being the most suitably attired, Alan drew the short straw and descended reporting that the stream disappeared into a low roofed deep sump pool with silt and sand – perhaps only



worth exploring further if there was no rushing water or threat of more rain.

We opted to follow the main passage upstream – it meandered through a few small chambers with decoration and then into a very large chamber with guano piles and numerous guanophiles: the myriad of small cave invertebrates that devour bat (or bird) guano. On one of these guano banks we saw our first “Hairy-Mary” (scuterigid centipede) with a body length of about 6-7cm. Following the stream passage – now with a 1-1½m wide x 20cm deep stream in a 2½-3m high flat-roofed passage, we found dozens of roosting bats. These bats were quite large, clinging tenuously to the fossil rich bedding plane ceiling of the stream passage. The cave passage continued upstream through sections of cave decoration with mud-cracked floor or mud banks.

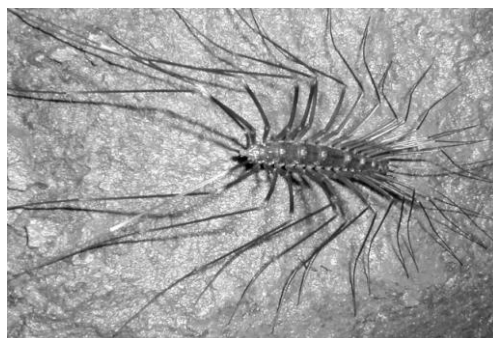


We continued exploration upstream to a point where the cave narrowed and became blocked with speleothem formation around a small pool of bluish tinged water. We decided to survey out and retreated to a small side chamber for a snack break.

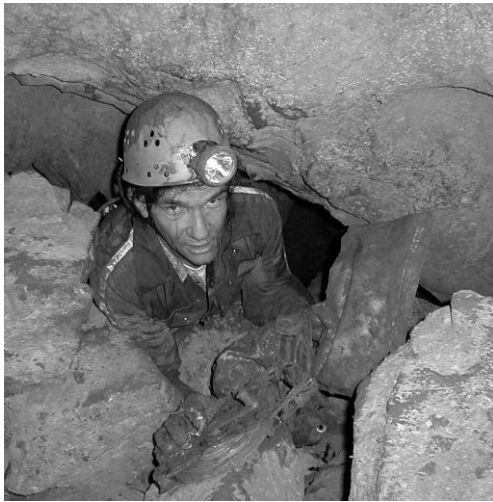
John took some photographs while Alan and Arthur took some water samples and measured water temperature (19½°C) and took two pH readings at two separate sites (7.76



and 7.83). When we caught up to John, he was still smiling with camera in hand and we continued to survey out. The cave was quite short (see survey) and relatively pleasant apart from the entrance passage series of crawlways. Near the junction with the entrance passage – on the headwall above where Alan had descended the short waterfall – we found our next surprise: our second “Hairy-Mary” (scuterigid centipede), by far the largest specimen I had ever seen with a body length of about 11-12cm.



Apart from its 15 pairs of menacing long slender legs, it had tremendously long (20cm plus) antennae. Time to make an exit!



The exit was a bit painful (without knee pads) – along with the frustration of short survey legs in dampness and mud; mud that eventually plastered both the plastic survey book folder and tackle bag by the time Arthur emerged at dusk. We were happy to be out after our first day's caving in China and even managed to crack something of a smile for Harvey Lomas when we were photographed beside a very clean and respectable looking Mr Cai.

Even Harvey, bandaged arm in sling, cracked a smile. With fading light we ascended the steep sided doline via what seemed like a goat track from



the cave to the road – and were actually overtaken by a herd of horned mountain goats en route.

Jonglidong Bill Hawkins

The cave is in the valley bottom close to the village of Xia Nongyang, north of Lingyun.

The entrance is three to four metres up a cliff face in a small rock amphitheatre. It is best approached from the left.

A simple climb leads to a short entrance passage, which ends in a tight, steeply descending rift. Large cavers may have to traverse awkwardly up into the rift in order to get through. A handline may be useful here.

The rift leads into a small clean chamber with interesting gour formations. The walls are completely encrusted with stalagmite deposits. The chamber ends in a short crawl behind a stalagmite, which leads to the small final chamber. This slopes upwards and ends in a small hole. It is impossible to see if this hole leads anywhere without seriously damaging the formations. It seems unlikely that it does.

Like the first chamber, the final chamber is well decorated and completely covered in deposits.

Total length about twenty metres first explored 5th October 2000 by Tony Penny, Arthur Salmon, Mike Pitt and Bill Hawkins.

Jonglidong means “Presidents Cave” named in honour of the then YRC President, Ian Crowther.

Nearby was an interesting cave called Xianongyang...

Xianongyang

Bill Hawkins

Two small boys pointed out this cave to Tony Penny on the day we visited Jonglidong. The entrance lies some sixty metres up a steep wooded hillside and is well hidden by vegetation. On first examination Tony thought the small entrance passage led to a pitch, but without the luxury of a light at the time it was difficult to tell!

Several days later Tony and I returned with the necessary equipment to explore and survey the cave. The small entrance passage actually led to a steep slope of debris into a small chamber with an eyehole at the bottom. Slipping through this we found ourselves in a dry well decorated chamber of some size, being roughly circular and about twenty metres in diameter. The floor consisted mainly of fallen boulders covered in stalagmite deposits, but lacking in any lustre or brightness. A short pitch was noted close to the entrance and left until later.

On the far side of the chamber, opposite the way in, we found a rift going upward, but also accessible at floor level. Tony took the low route and I tried the one above, uniting after a few metres. The way on lay through another small hole. Surprisingly this led to a much larger and impressive chamber, again well decorated.

At the far end of this second chamber, high up in the roof, was a small window to the outside world. This was at the top of a massive stalagmite covered wall, and after a few abortive efforts we gave up trying to climb up it. The whole impression of the place with the daylight creeping in from above reminded us of Gaping Gill Main Chamber, without the water. There was no further way on.



After looking in some short side passages and surveying the cave, we dropped a rope down the small shaft near the entrance to the first chamber. This lead only to the true floor of the chamber, again with no way on.

The Chinese had obviously known the cave for generations. Everywhere were the remains of burnt rushes and the rock was polished by the passage of many bodies. We wondered what the cave had been used for, but there was no archaeological evidence to answer our queries. We did not even find a magic lamp.



Because this had turned out to be a short day in the field, we decided to try to hitch hike back to the hotel, after leaving a message with the minibus that we would not need transport back. After having our photographs taken at the local school we found ourselves back on the roadside, thumbs at the ready. A police car spotted us, pulled up and gestured for us to get in the back. On the back seat were two prisoners, one handcuffed to the side of the vehicle and one slumped unconscious across the seat. The latter was unceremoniously jammed upright against his colleague and Tony thrust

in beside him to keep him vertical. I was squeezed in between Tony and the door and the journey to Lingyun resumed. We wondered exactly where we were being taken (we didn't even know if hitch-hiking was legal in China) but we were driven directly to the hotel where we made a grateful escape. An interesting end to a pleasant day's caving.

The remaining caves explored in Lingyun area can be found in the summary of cave discoveries later in this report.

During the final week of exploration in Lingyun the expedition moved South to a limestone area where huge dolines and solution pits abounded. One of particular interest was the Yanliudong Doline, a huge crater 100m by 200m across at its base. Descent into this was by a 150m free-hanging abseil.

Yanliudong

Jon Riley

At the beginning of the trip we had been driven to the rim of the Yanliudong doline. I had the distinct feeling that it was being used as a carrot for all the keen SRT practitioners and it certainly was incredibly impressive. We had scientifically studied the depth by throwing rocks over the edge and counting until they went bang. We estimated that the hole might be approaching 200m deep. At the bottom of the shaft was a raging, brown river and a carpet of lush green vegetation. Professor Zhu seemed certain that it had not been descended and so, standing on the lip of the rim ten days later, there was a feeling of excitement and trepidation amongst the group.

First off, we walked the entire rim of the doline. Bruce was trying to find the best camera angles and Graham and I were looking for the best hang. Initially we were tempted by the black slightly angled rock on the south side of the rim, but in the end we decided to be audacious and go for the clean rock and completely free hang from the lip of the main overhang on the north side.

We hacked our way down through the spiky bushes and bamboo and proceeded to put all our kit on. Funny how a large drop like this means that everyone suddenly wants their buckles checking, that is except for Pascale, who in typical French-style, just smiled, shrugged and pulled on her home made French style lightweight harness...no buckles just knots! We checked the big rope very thoroughly and packed it carefully. There were no more stalling tactics that I could think of, so we made a start.

Two very large bolts were placed in some exposed limestone pavement and a Y hang rigged. I then started down the slope pulling weeds out and throwing them all down the hole.

After about twenty minutes we had completely cleared the start slope and so the time had come for me to gently lower myself over the edge. The rock was solid, but as is usual with a new area of limestone, it was incredibly sharp with occasional loose flakes of rock. After applying a bit of persuasion, I pulled some of the larger pieces off and threw them down the pitch. Just after launch there was about seven seconds of surreal silence followed by an ominous, low, thumping explosion noise as the boulders touched down below me. Very sobering indeed!



Several Y hangs later and following a slightly diagonal line, I found myself perched on the lip of the overhang where it was marked by two enormous hanging formations. By this point, I had been hanging in my harness for about 45 minutes and was beginning to get pins and needles in my feet and calves. I placed the final bolts and dropped down into thin air, the tackle bag spinning below me and the rope creaking as it fed slowly through the stop. Looking up at the two small bolts and down at the green vegetation that didn't seem to be getting any bigger and with the heat of the rope burning through my gloves, I prayed... But eventually, several minutes later ... touch down. The world stopped spinning and the blood rushed back to my feet. I let out a big cheer and was replied to by a group of locals and the TV crew that had turned up to video the occasion. I shouted the loudest "rope free" that I could summon and saw Graham start his descent. Whilst he was coming down I took the opportunity to look around.

The base of the doline is about 300 metres square. Where there is daylight, there is a thick layer of fern and lush green vegetation. Under the overhang, the mouth of the cave, there is a thick layer of very sticky mud and a stream about 15 metres across that shows signs of flooding the base of the cave in the wet season up to the level of the vegetation. I started to walk down the mud slope towards the river and spotted a familiar sight, small Chinese footprints! Whilst abseiling, I had seen a makeshift ladder arrangement, that came down a ramp on one wall of the doline, but I could not see any way that the locals could have come down to the bottom from the ledge that it rested on a third of the way down the height of the pitch. As I walked further on I began to see many more footprints, positively a path! Then on the west wall I spotted a square passage leading off into the distance.

Once Graham had touched down we set off down the passage. About 100 metres in we came across an 8-inch pipe that seemed to be carrying water under pressure. The floor of the passage was natural, but the walls and roof were too uniform to be the originals, so we concluded that the passage had been enlarged using explosives. Later we spied telltale shot holes in the walls, which confirmed our conclusion. We walked through pools and along ledges following this pipe for about a kilometre and then eventually saw daylight. We emerged in between two limestone cones in the middle of some paddy fields! Completely confused and disoriented we walked back to join the others and give them the interesting news!

By the time we got back, Alan and Pascale had touched down and Bruce

was just in sight. We spent around an hour taking photographs and looking around the base of the cave. Another passage was found on the southern wall of the chamber. Graham and Pascale quickly checked it out and could see daylight, but did not follow it out. We did not have time to cross the river and to do so we would have needed the dingy. The water flows out from under the rock on the south wall of the chamber then sinks under the north-eastern wall. The opposite bank of the river rises steeply into the darkness and could be worth checking out if you had time.

Graham and Alan volunteered to walk out of the cave rather than go back up the pitch and between them they kindly carried all our heavy kit out. As they set off we hoped to see them later as we had no idea where they were actually going to come out! Pascale set off up the rope first, followed by Bruce, each of them taking about half an hour to climb the pitch. Before setting off I checked the amount of rope left in the bag. There was about 20 metres, which puts the length of the pitch at about 170 metres. The climb back up the pitch was long hard work and we all commented on the tortured noises that the core of the rope seemed to be making and how it was best just to try to ignore it! Eventually, just before dark, I dragged myself and the end of the rope back over the rim. We stuffed the rope in the bag, climbed the loose slope of the doline and collapsed in the back of the van for the journey back to Lingyun and the prospect of another large banquet!

We had found that the little Motorola radios had been

incredibly useful on a pitch of this size and would definitely recommend them in the future. Similarly, the Hilti proved invaluable and drilled into the rock as if it were pine! All the expansion bolts were left on the pitch, so to repeat the descent you would simply need about 12 hangers and 200 metres of rope, or alternatively just walk in at the bottom! Later we found that the tunnel had been blasted in preparation for a hydro scheme and that the pipe in the passage at the moment is used as irrigation water in the fields and by the small village in the next valley. It was in this tunnel that Arthur Clarke and Arthur Salmon spotted the cavefish. Arthur Clarke was particularly impressed with the flora and fauna in this short section of passage.



Some Conclusions from the Lingyun Area Exploration

It is interesting to note that the limestone area that was explored around Lingyun was bordered by Permian shales and, because of extensive drainage from these shales, it is likely that considerable silting has taken place in the caves. Evidence of this is particularly seen in Xiashuidong and Shadong, where, despite finding several kilometres of large passage, only truncated sections of the River could be accessed.

Between Lingyun and Xiagia, where the very large dolines were found, the now much larger River was only located momentarily before disappearing again. Shale infill and ponding back from the hydro-electricity scheme was much in evidence and sections of a very large cave passage in the area are now totally inaccessible.

The other caves explored were entirely of a fossil nature, often well decorated, notably Pengjiawan, which the Chinese now feel has considerable commercial potential as a show cave.

One of the most promising leads in this area is possibly the passage in Shadong where the River could be heard again. A lot more work needs to be done in the doline area south of Lingyun where geological maps have revealed a number of very interesting features.

Exploration in Leye County Ged Campion

Halfway through the expedition, a team was dispatched to an area forty miles North of Lingyun, called Leye County. Westerners had never prospected this area and a team of six from the expedition were invited to

make a reconnaissance there. Leye County boasts a massive area of limestone, considerably larger than Lingyun. Arrangements had been made between Professor Zhu and the local government officials in Leye for our visit to take place. As in Lingyun we were particularly impressed by the level of hospitality that was afforded to us, including the use of the Mayoral four-wheel drive and the entourage of officials, which reminded us of how important our visit was to this region of China.

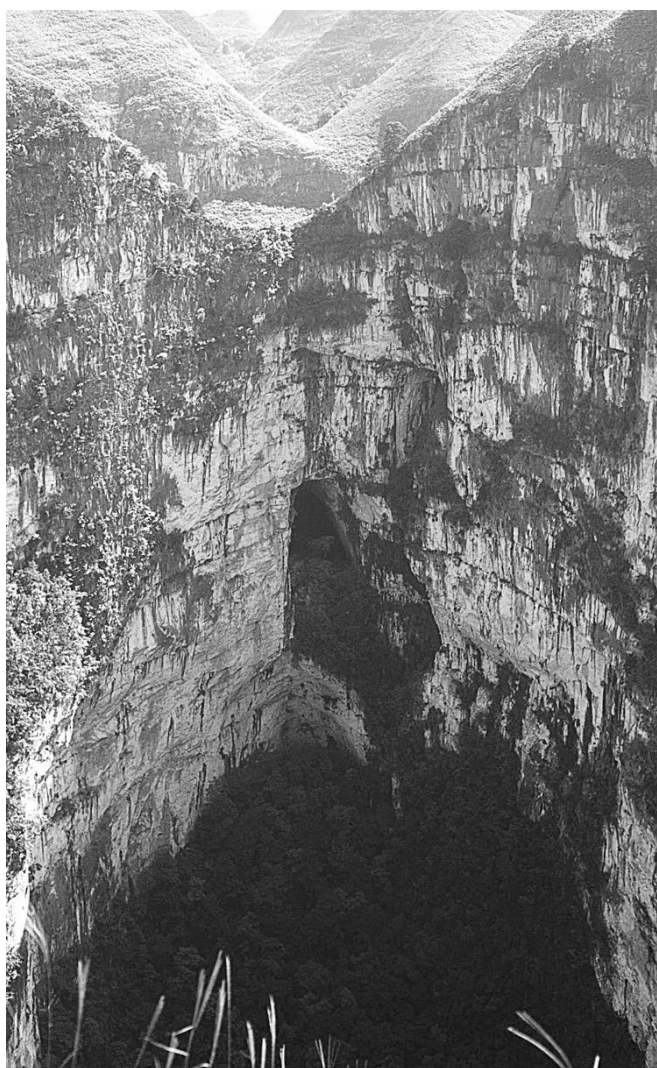
A suitable, and indeed the only, hotel in Leye, was to be our base for operations over a period of one-and-a-half weeks. After the usual meetings with dignitaries, and a number of banquets, followed by a thorough inspection of geological and topographical maps, we visited a number of features that Professor Zhu had selected on a previous visit to Leye some months earlier.

One of the most significant and celebrated limestone features of Leye is the great doline of Dashiwei. This spectacular doline is said to be the second deepest in the world, the deepest, of course, being the Xin Long doline in Sichuan Province, the focus of a number of China Cave Projects visits during the last few years. By no means did Dashiwei disappoint us. As we stood high on its perimeter, rays of sun light vanished into its awesome depths. The doline supports its own primeval forest and eco-system virtually undisturbed by humans. We had planned a three-day stay in the doline to give us an opportunity to explore the cave hidden in its lowest recesses. The Doline itself has an intricate entrance, a large cave with a small hole at the bottom providing a slot onto a ledge system and terrace on the

walls of the Doline. From a cliff face position, an abseil down for 50 metres allows access to the huge Bivouac Cave before a 70 metre free hanging descent to the bottom.

Looking up the walls of the Doline gives the impression of four or five Malham Coves stacked on top of each other. There were truly clouds, 'Will o' the Wisp' like, in the crater above the bamboo glades. Poor logistical organisation meant that Stewart Muir, Alistair Renton, Shaun Penny and I arrived at the bottom in the late evening. Radio communication and

the work of our Chinese interpreters complicated matters even further. Mr Chen, a Chinese caver, so quite a rare breed, had visited us from Nanning and had previously descended the Doline. He could speak no English whatsoever, but managed to help us find a way through the dense forest in the dark to the mouth of the cave. We tumbled, slipped and clawed our way through the darkness until at last we could hear the noise of running water, the cave entrance. The sweet smell of incense bearing trees and a visual display of fireflies made the magic of the Doline even more vivid.

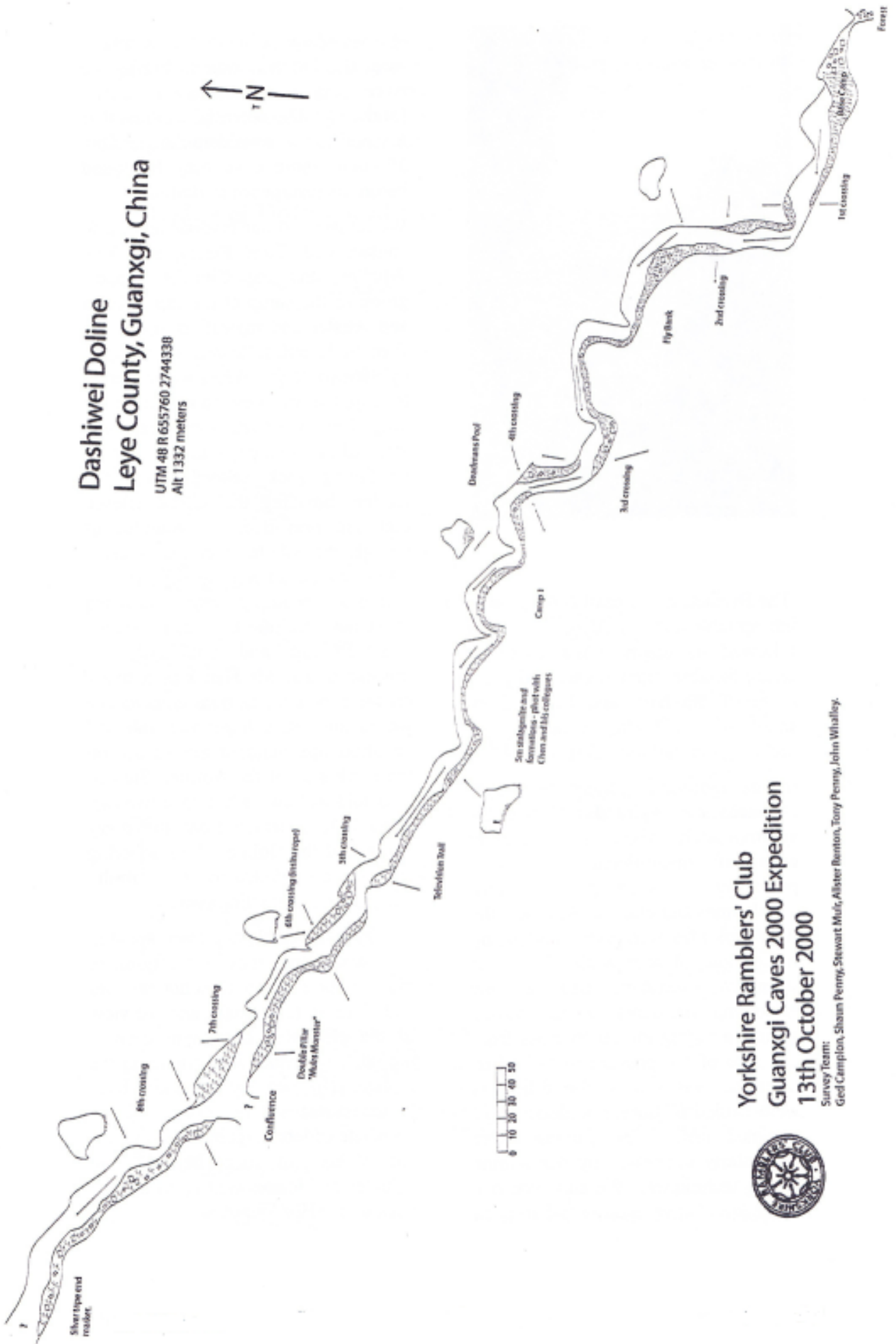
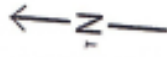


The cliffs and primeval forest of Dashiwei doline. The tunnel in the centre of John Whalley's photo was the location of a stage camp.

Mr Chen had visited the cave the previous year and had joined a Chinese Army Expedition to chart its depths. Unfortunately, however, the expedition resulted in the loss of one of the soldiers who had been washed away after only penetrating the cave for half a kilometre. This trip, therefore, held great dread and awe for our Chinese colleagues, who were reluctant to enter it again given the high water levels we found in October. Mr Chen, working for Nanning TV wanted to make a film of our exploration in Dashiwei. Communication proved extremely difficult, especially when setting up the action shots! Rather amusingly, when we arrived at the bivouac site at the entrance to the cave, Mr Chen radioed back to the interpreter at the camp far above and the message came back that the water levels were rising. What it really meant was that the water was considerably higher on this occasion than it had been when Mr Chen first visited the cave last year.

Dashiwei Doline
Leye County, Guanxgi, China

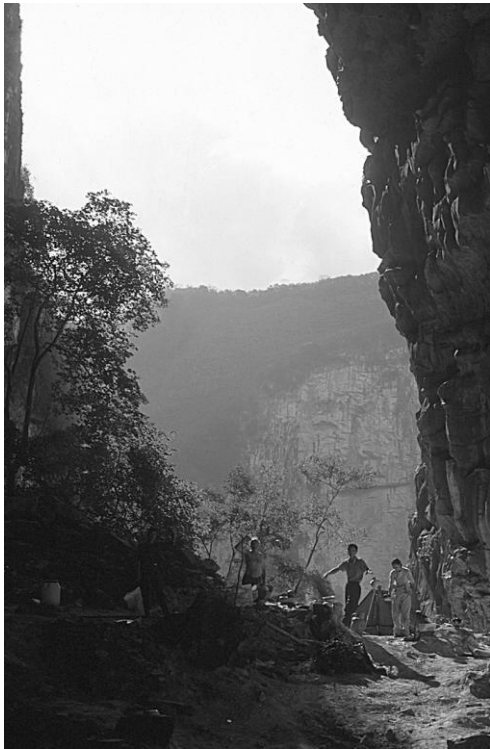
UTM 48 R 655760 274433B
 Alt 1332 meters



Yorkshire Ramblers' Club
Guanxgi Caves 2000 Expedition
13th October 2000



Survey Team: Gred Crompton, Shaun Penny, Stewart Muir, Alister Beanton, Tony Penny, John Whalley.



The Bivouac in the cave entrance was inhospitable and our supplies had not followed us down. We spent an uncomfortable night deafened by the noise of the river and harassed by small insects taking great joy in mobbing our carbide lights.

In the morning, entirely on empty stomachs we explored the cave for approximately 1½km. It was a river cave of magnificent proportions providing sporting swims, Tyroliennes and climbs. At times, the river crossings were very challenging indeed and Stewart Muir, voted our strongest swimmer, had a few harrowing moments as he battled against a raging torrent to cross from one side of the passage to the other. Once he was across, the followers were hauled in unceremoniously like drowned rats. The Chinese were particularly impressed by our Alpine caving techniques. We surveyed one kilometre of cave passage and stopped

at a very large tributary that appeared from the left and was as big as the river that we were originally following. The potential for this river to continue is considerable; possibly 30-40km more cave may be found before its resurgence at Bailong.

We returned to our bivouac and made contact with Tony Penny, and John Whalley and the Chinese support group in the camp at the top. Shaun and Alister and myself ascended the 70m pitch first, followed, we thought, by Stewart Muir. When we arrived at the top, tea was brewing and, after the long climb, we relaxed and drank our tea. All of a sudden, a mighty thunder of falling rock echoed round the Doline, breaking the surreal silence that had prevailed. It sounded as though the whole pitch had peeled away, taking all and sundry with it. Anxious shouting and frenzied movement followed. Radio contact was difficult and muddled. It transpired that Mr Han was actually on the rope and, as pure coincidence would have it, a huge rock fall had occurred one hundred metres out on the north side of the Doline. Stewart later told us how he had seen two car-sized blocks detach from the dizzy heights of the Doline. This sobering experience reminded us of our frailty and nature's prevailing power.

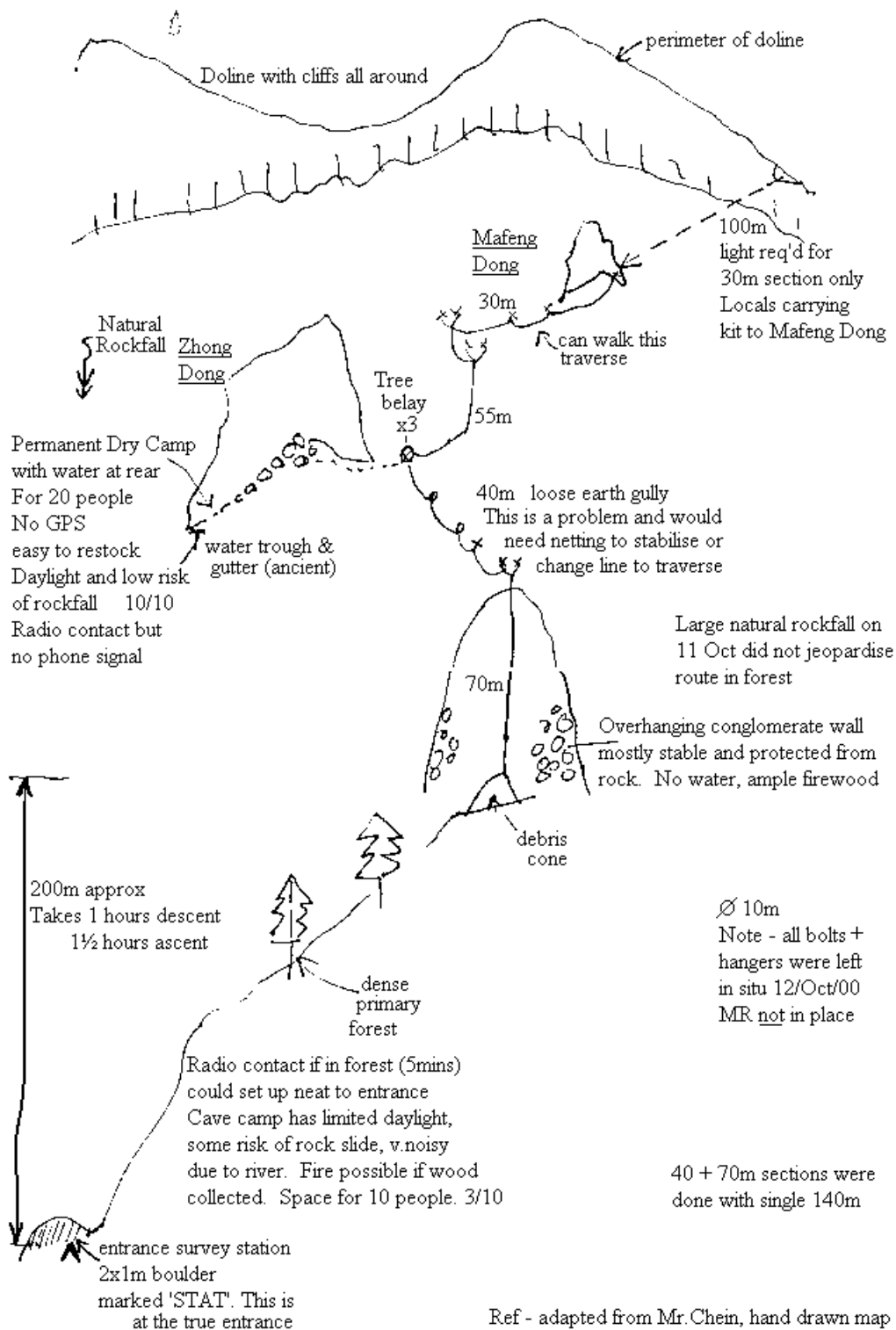
A very comfortable night was spent in the caving camp above the fifty-metre pitch, with a warm fire, hot noodles and Chinese folk music, and the view of the glistening firmament through the tall cave window overlooking the Doline. The next day we headed back to the surface to be greeted by the spectacle of local dignitaries, villagers and a host of four-wheeled drive vehicles and lorries waiting to take us back to our Headquarters.

The next two days were spent exploring an interesting fossil system, the Xionajiadong Caves (East and West Caves). The actual cave is separated by a huge doline caused by

the collapse of part of the cavern. This discovery provided us with over three kilometres of huge and beautifully decorated cave.

Dasheiwei Doline and cave

11/12 October 2000



**A Visit to West Cave
and Smoking Cave John Whalley**

The 15th October was damp and drizzly. After picking up our packed lunches we boarded the assorted jeeps and headed out past the Gold Mine. We were soon off the good roads and driving on rough tracks. Professor Zhu at one point indicated a column

of rising and spiralling vapour issuing from the ground just to the left. This was the Smoking Cave, or “Madqidong”. Stones were dropped and there was silence for over eight seconds, indicating a depth in the order of 600 metres. This was not a shaft but rather a collapse feature into a massive cave passage that could be entered from a nearby doline and



which apparently descended steeply and contained a large underground river. Clearly, this was a must for any future expedition. However, our objective for the day was to investigate West Cave, or “Xionajiadong”, one of two caves comprising the fossil cave system of East and West Caves.

After perhaps an hour of driving on rough roads, the four-wheel drive vehicles stopped at a place where we could look down through the trees on to a farmstead. Our Chinese colleagues lost no time in scrambling down a stony track to enlist porters to carry our tackle bags to West Cave. A very pretty, young teenage girl wedged my heavy photographic case with a melon into a large wicker basket, which she carried “rucksack style”. She and her friend were referred to as The Spice Girls and were obviously brightening up the day for our “hunters”.



Leaving the road, we followed steep, rocky footpaths through shrubby vegetation, which included many species more familiar to us as garden plants, such as Cotoneaster. It was a colourful procession: the porters sporting open umbrellas. Our objective lay at the base of a

limestone scar. Not a large entrance, but a vegetated boulder slope led immediately into a massive cavern, dwarfing the advance party on the floor below. We set off through the cave, climbing across the massive calcite deposits, which in places almost filled the enormous passage, reducing the cross section to squeezes between knobbly stalagmites. This made it all the more spectacular when we broke out into the large halls comprising the clear sections of the cave. Another feature of the cave was the ascending traverses across flowstone inclines, impressive gour floors and huge sentinel stalagmites.

It was to be a once only visit, with the surveying team setting the pace and the photographic team attempting to keep up. It is doubtful whether many of the locals, including the porters and the Mayor and other dignitaries, had ever been through a “wild” cave before, but they took it in their stride with excellent humour and an initiative, resourcefulness and attentiveness that seems characteristic of the Chinese.

Roughly halfway through the cave, we came across a huge stalagmite with steps cut into the sides. At the top was a timber spout carrying the clear water of an inlet into a small trough. The whole was encrusted in calcite and obviously of considerable age. As to the purpose of these artefacts, be it ceremonial or practical, we could only guess. Certainly it was a long way underground.

We emerged from the “through trip” after a surveyed distance of about two kilometres. Some distance away we could make out one of the entrances to East Cave, which was to be the next day’s objective. After fixing the entrance on GPS, we proceeded to a local farmhouse. These were hill

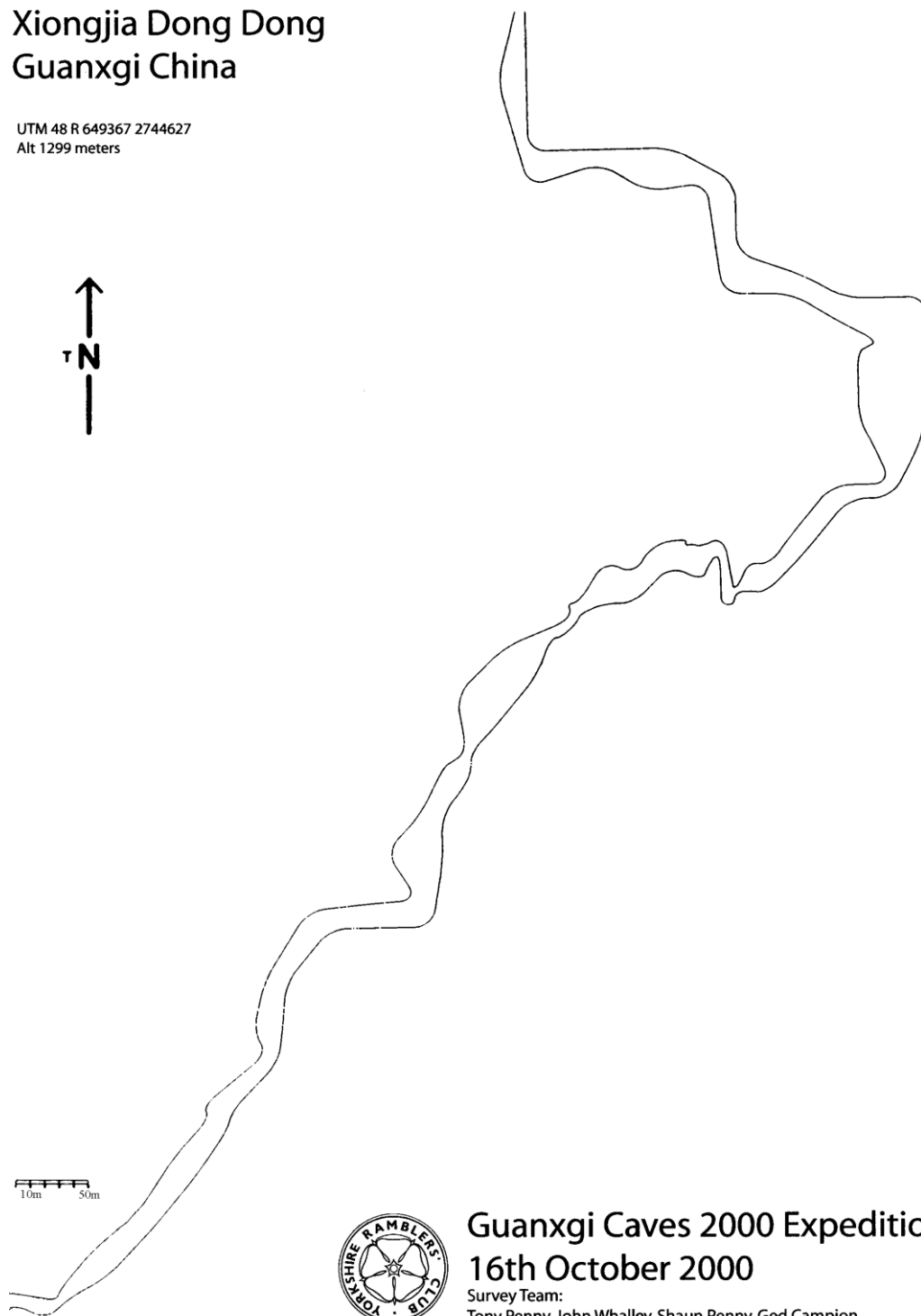
farmers: so-called minority people who are shorter in stature than the Han Chinese and whose agriculture is self-sufficient. We were sat round a fire to warm ourselves. The hearth was in the middle of the floor with a huge wok sat on top and the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof. On the veranda outside we ate a meal

of country chicken, beans, pumpkin noodles etc., with lashings of boiled water, tea and rice wine and finishing up with pieces of fresh honeycomb: ample fortification for the rugged trek back to the road.

I am sure none of us will ever forget the hospitality and heartfelt welcome of these simple people.

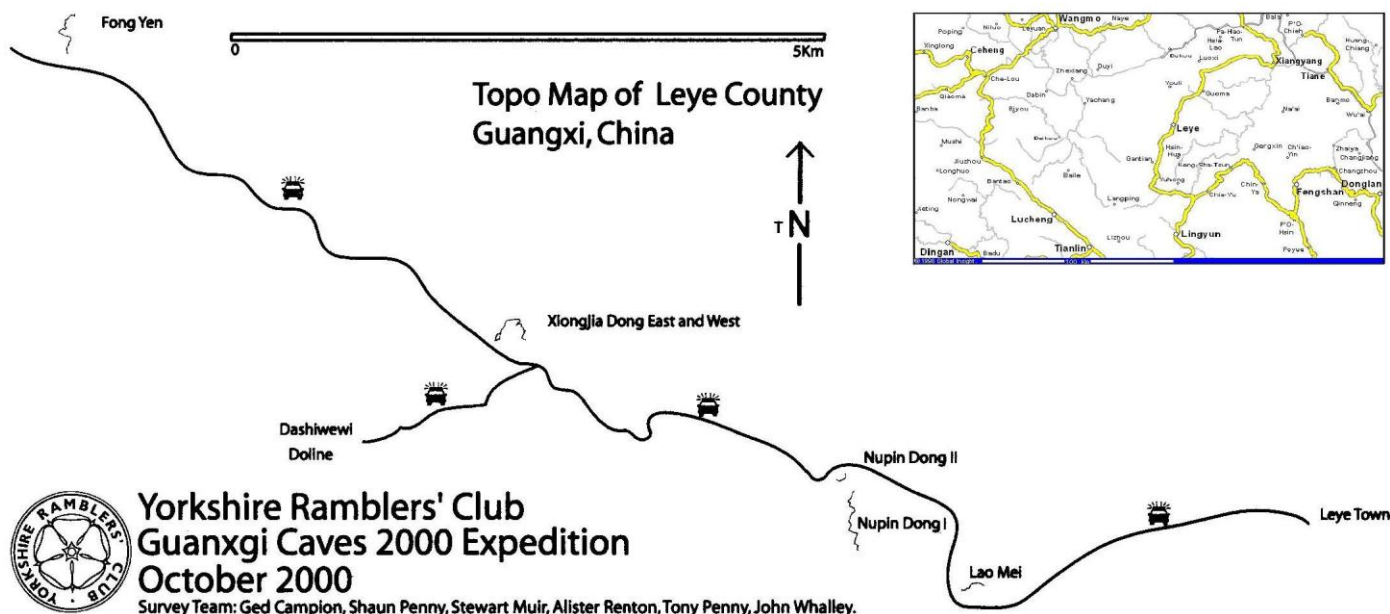
Xiongjia Dong Dong Guanxgi China

UTM 48 R 649367 2744627
Alt 1299 meters



Guanxgi Caves 2000 Expedition 16th October 2000

Survey Team:
Tony Penny, John Whalley, Shaun Penny, Ged Campion.



**Xionajiadong, East Cave
Leye County Tony Penny**

Down in the Dong Dong

Rain fell heavily on our mixed party as we trudged up a narrow three-kilometre track to search the top of the doline containing East Cave.

We had spent three weeks following up leads, gleaning information from locals, rigging pitches, surveying new finds across two counties and I was beginning to flag from sleepless nights, an abundance of banquets, and an excess of “cambehing.” or “Cambeh”¹

We had driven up to the start of the trail in a four-wheel-drive off-roader, which nearly lived up to its name shedding a track rod end and swerving towards a one hundred metre drop.

¹ Cambeh, pronounced Cambay; horizontal display of an emptied glass (as in bottoms up). A challenge from one drinker to others normally followed by immediate refilling of glasses and leisurely consumption continued until the next person shouts “Cambeh!” Can cause headaches and a loss of focus on the next day’s objectives and consequently is much frowned upon by expedition leaders.

The quick reflexes of the Chinese driver saved the day and with a length of string and several kicks to the affected wheels, we pushed the truck out of the way and crowded into the second vehicle.

The usual recruitment of porters at the nearest farm to our destination produced two fourteen-year-old giggling girls dressed in their best finery. They promptly seized on John Whalley’s camera boxes and jammed them in their baskets between enormous melons.

It was in vain that I offered them my rucksack, which was beginning to feel as heavy as my spirits. Everyone else in the party looked like extras from Madam Butterfly with their gaily-coloured umbrellas, which nevertheless kept them very dry, whilst I, in traditional cagoule and headgear, was soaked to the skin.

We waded through cotoneaster type bushes, were ripped by thorns and occasionally tripped up by hidden roots on the path, but eventually sighted our objective from the rim of the shakehole.

A delightful classic opening, not unlike the exit from Calf Holes, was visible to view. It was called “Dong Dong” by our Chinese guides, being a through trip leading to an adjoining doline.

Pushing aside the tall ferns as we descended, we began to survey towards the mouth of the cave, checking the GPS for our position. We made up an incongruous party, six of us in bright orange oversuits and carbide lights, and as many again of our Chinese hosts with mainly hand torches, dressed in ex-army battle fatigues, not forgetting our two small helpers giggling and swaying under the weight of their panniers.

The first hundred metres inside the entrance sloped steeply, and in bending over to secure a footing, the contents of the porters baskets shot out over their heads - melons, camera boxes, spare water, batteries - all echoing down the incline in front of us.

Fortunately, no damage was sustained and, order being restored, we proceeded with the business of surveying. A bewitching series of large dry chambers followed, with glistening stalagmite pillars throughout the one-and-a-half kilometre length of the system. Now and then small mud banks led up and over to reveal sparkling delights that would be the envy of any show cave back in England.

The purpose of visiting this previously known cave was to measure and assess its potential for future tourism in the region. The rural economy with its self-sustaining farms scattered about, nevertheless needs an injection of visitors’ dollars to fund schools, hospitals, and good roads to access them.

It is the dilemma of all small communities. No-one wants a Shanghai in every valley, but kids need education and families want modern comforts like electricity, affordable health schemes, and transport for their produce to markets.

There is presently no danger of tourists making much impact in the area of East Cave because of its remoteness and lack of supporting infra-structure (airfields, bus depots, hotels, shops, etc. being far into the future).

We photographed as we proceeded through the cavern. The exit, when we reached it, partially sealed up with dry stone walling to prevent the ingress of water buffalo, and through it we made our way to the nearest smallholding. We were invited inside from the incessant rain, and plied with green tea and questions from at least four generations of the family within. There followed a sumptuous meal of soup, chicken, rice, potatoes, bamboo etc. washed down with a nip of rice-wine, served from an old style petrol can!

The interior of the farmhouse was lit only by the flames of a centrally-placed fire, which had no chimney. The smoke drifted upwards through the loose fitting floorboards which formed the ceiling, and served to dry large sacks of rice, corn-on-the-cob etc. stored overhead. The constant wood-fire kept a stock pot simmering and very low stools were arranged around it, on which perched small grinning kids, great grandmothers, toothless old granddads, and a core of active sons and daughters.

On the blackened walls could be made out faded posters of Bruce Lee type characters, and under our feet scuttled numerous dogs, cats and

chickens all squawking in turn at each other and at us. A very warm and cosy womb for temporary visitors, but obviously no Shangri-La for year round occupation.

Eventually we forced ourselves back out into the rain and dripping vegetation to complete a circular route-march to our waiting truck. Making sense of our maps and measurements was all that separated us from more “cambehing” back at the hotel base.

Whilst John Whalley and Tony Penny concentrated on the Xionajiadong, the rest of the reconnaissance group were guided to the Fong Yen cave, an entirely vertical system, almost Alum Pot like, in a forest south of Dashiwei. Stewart Muir describes the exploration of this cave, which took place over a three-day period.

Fong Yen - the first 100 metres!

Stewart J Muir

13-15 October 2000

I am left with memories of a mysterious place, which has, after thousands of years of formation, only now started to give up its secrets. The attraction is to the unknown, to something that extends us beyond our normal self-imposed bounds. This exploration takes us as close to the experience of visiting another planet as any of us will ever achieve!

With our brief encounter, I can hardly claim to be that knowledgeable of this cave. But then again who else is there to say anything, other than members of the team in October 2000? This makes me feel excited; to be the person who is tasked to record the first exploration of this foreboding place.

Yes, it is true that we only explored 100m into Fong Yen, and we took three days and almost 500m of rope to do that. So what sort of place is this? This question should be answered in the following account.

It was Professor Zhu who instructed the Leye team to first push the Dashiwei Doline, and it was also the Professor who took us to Fong Yen. This was a very different atmosphere. Dashiwei was a starkly exposed doline that was clear to see and photograph and had a record of a previous descent. Fong Yen¹ was just a name to us and a finger on the map. Even the Professor, who up to now was the possessor of all knowledge, didn't really give us much warning of what to expect. We knew that it was forested and probably not as deep as Dashiwei. The knowledge of the fact, that there were so few facts, excited me, as we hurriedly prepared for the unknown trip. Three large bags of rope, the Hilti drill, thirty bolts and all the slings we could find. This would have to do. I made sure we had a knife to cut the longer ropes if necessary and two radios that Mr Chen provided.

Ged was keen to push the unknown and he chose Shaun and myself with Mr Chen to provide a professional filming service. After the 40-minute journey out of Leye Town, we stopped on the off-road highway and met our porters, who were to carry for us. After the GPS reading was taken by Professor Zhu on the road, we were led by the locals across a level

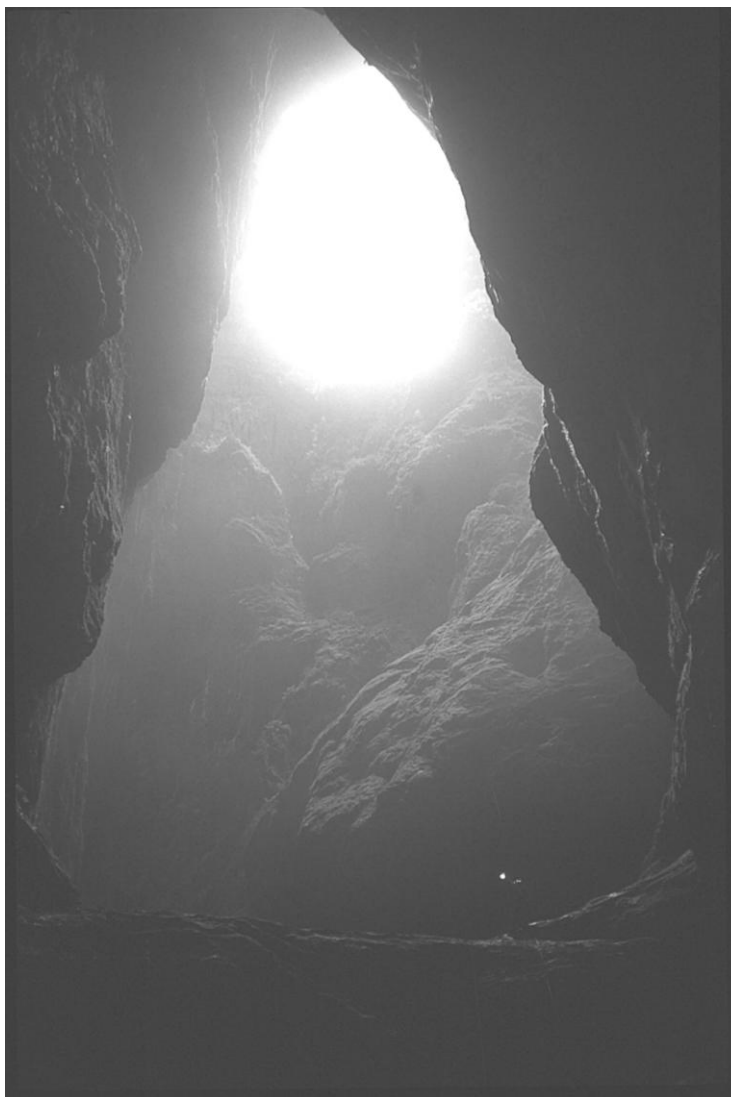
¹ One of the hunters told us the name Fong Yen means windy way. This is unconfirmed.

scrub area and into mixed woodland. This gradually descended into dense woodland, still on a worn path for a further 10 minutes. There was some discussion amongst our guides, before breaking right into thicket, which was penetrated with a machete. Even so, as the team descended slowly, I took a special regard of the inch long thorns, any one ready to give a nasty infection.

At this point, I couldn't really believe that we were being led to a doline. Professor Zhu had remained on the road, and it was probably all a scam by the locals to earn some cash by taking us to a Mendip-type cave in a wooded depression. How wrong could I be! The professor had stayed back because it was awkward terrain, with greasy limestone chutes and ledge systems poised above 70-degree jungle. The entire caravan came to a decided halt on a ledge and everybody stared into the jungle. Through the tree canopy, on the opposite side of an abyss, I could make out a rock wall capped by a complex roof system. The large jutting roofs were higher than our viewpoint. So they blotted out the territory beyond them. But one could just guess we were on one side of a canyon, rather than a doline depression. We really could not get a fix on the depth of what was below us, as it was a convex slope as well as being entirely vegetated. Because of this, it was

debatable from where the depth would be measured. Also we had no idea in which direction to look for a cave entrance. Fong Yen's secrets were held for a good while yet!

A succession of rope hangs and deviations from trees were used to reach a shaded col at -25m. The col was created by a prow of shattered rock that seemed to block the way forward and down into the canyon. I decided to go to the right of it, for no particular reason, other than there seemed to be better trees to abseil from. I fought my way down layers of



sodden fern banks, working the rope between saplings and bushes. At -40m

I found myself perched on the lip of an overhang. I attempted to drill a bolt for a re-hang, only to find that it wasn't rock but rotten calcite instead. I prussiked up 5m and avoided this overhang by traversing to reach a tree, which allowed a direct drop to -50m (120m length of rope required to reach this point). Here I managed a Y hang and descended a short groove, to reach the bed of a 5m wide gully.

I thought this is not the best place to be running an SRT rope, but I was being guided by where I could reach good rock for drilling bolts. The gully had collected debris such as fallen trees, rotten vegetation and jammed boulders, but I rigged across to the far side. From there I followed that side of the gully down over jammed boulders to land on a comfortable ledge, 4m wide and 8m long. I really needed a break from this scrappy terrain, and now at -87m things started to look better. We were on the edge of the canyon now, with the roofs, which we had spotted earlier, almost directly overhead. We could see a tortuous deep cut river passage coming in from the south. It was impossible to see the way directly down from the ledge; so I threw a rock over the edge...it fell unchecked for 2 or 3 seconds, before smashing on a solid floor. Excellent!

Satisfactory rock could be found at the outside edge of the ledge to secure a Y hang, which dropped 7m to clean rock under a bulge. Three re-hangs followed to avoid abrasion. This final free drop reached the base of the canyon at -140m.

On my own for a few minutes, I was glad to get the circulation back into my legs by unloading my harness and walking about. Looking around, the grandeur of this water-washed environment, took my breath away.

There were vertical walls both sides. Immediately upstream from where I had landed, was a house-size chock stone. Downstream, green mossy walls rose up for more than 100m. Most of the sky was blocked by the overhangs above, however, the filtered light painted an eerie scene, similar to the depths of Alum Pot.

Ged, Shaun and Chen regrouped at the base of a chute into a pool. We all shared the concern that this passage is not the place to be caught in a storm, even though at present there was only a trickle flow. We pressed on and after a short pitch in the base of the canyon, we completed our rope at -181m at the head of a 6m pitch. There was no question, we would be coming back the next day. A slow exit, due to a communications mess up and poor teamwork, meant we didn't get to Leye town until 10pm.

Next day, Ged had responsibilities to go with another part of the team to East/West Cave. Alister took his place and joined Shaun, Chen and myself for our second day in Fong Yen. We quickly reached our furthest point. The passage light changed as we passed through a roofed section and then back out into a 150m deep rift. It definitely had cathedral qualities. Very tall, drawn out features, with a religious calmness, broken only by our footsteps and gasps of awe and the occasional bird cry, way above us.

From the foot of the previous short pitch, that was notable by its jet-black shattered rock, we could easily walk and scramble down the watercourse. It led to a bowl on a tight right-hand bend. This had been fashioned by the water, which in times of flood would carry rocks that had pummelled the limestone. Close to this, in a small pool, we found a live snake that must have been washed in. Immediately

beyond this bend the passage narrowed to 4m width where chock stones had jammed tightly. Perched on these we all looked down into a further dimly lit rift, the bottom of which could not be made out. It surprised us and frustrated us, as we had all assumed that most of the depth had been gained and we had not carried any long lengths of rope. From our estimates it seemed there was at least a 60m drop, and if we tied all our rope together, it would only get us down the initial slabby section. All we could do was survey out from -202m. I drilled a single bolt ready for the next trip, and this proved to be more significant than expected.

On the third day the same team arrived fresh at the head of the pitch. That is all except Shaun, who had shot down the pitches and got himself trussed up at the last free hang into the canyon, and was complaining of feeling knackered. Light rainfall had made no difference to the trickle in the riverbed. The big setback came when I prepared to rig the pitch. We had a 100m rope and plenty of bolts to really make a big push and a few short lengths of thin rope. But the battery was completely dead. We discussed our options, and I was prepared to abseil as far as possible, to see if I could find a route down that would give least abrasion. After 10 minutes, having descended a fluted wall, I landed on a water-washed slab. Half way down a slippery water shoot, I reached the end of the rope above a pool. I tied a sling around a conveniently jammed length of wood, and radioed up that someone must come down with a rope. Then I let the end of the rope whip through my Stop. If necessary, I thought we could tie on an extra length to reach the pool. It is in this situation, that you think "that was stupid!" ... but I was

drawn by this exploration. We hadn't even entered into the cave passage proper, as there was still distant daylight way overhead.

Shaun and Chen came carefully down, trying to reduce the rope rub and the team grouped together on the far side of the chest-deep pool. I reminded Shaun of all the snakes that would be washed into this pool, just as he immersed himself. He let out great yelps and screams, as you would expect from Shaun, as he splashed his way across. Alister and one of the hunters had volunteered to man the radio at the head of the pitch, just in case of flood. The lack of bolts had meant the rope was directly down the watercourse, and it would be desperate to get back up even with the slightest water flow.

The pool marked the true start of the cave passage, and at -264m we needed to use our lights. Chen filmed the two of us making our way between boulders and the blackness beyond. With a height of 20m and width of 5-10m this was the type of passage that would lead into an active river system. The boulders had a damp mud layer and debris was trapped everywhere. Was this the result of a recent flood coming down into Fong Yen? Or was it from water rising from a river further down the passage? The latter seemed unlikely, as there was absolutely no sound of running water.² Neither was there any safe refuge in case of a flood, such as side passages or lateral banks...it would be wall to wall water, boiling up between piles of boulders.

Only 60m further down the passage, a short drop blocked our way. With no

² Bear in mind the 30m rise in water levels that had shocked the expedition in Shadong, in Lingyun County.

drill, I fixed a rope for Shaun by acting as the anchor myself, backed up by a pebble chock stone. I held as Shaun abseiled on our two last ropes tied together! This was somewhat limiting to our exploration, because I now had to stay where I was. For some reason Chen decided not to go down the pitch, so we just waited for news from Shaun. He returned and reported that he reached another short pitch of about 20/24m but the passage continued as a similar rift passage.

We would have to leave this exploration for another time, having only been 100m into the passage. We had already decided that we would de-rig the complete cave that day, so we surveyed out from -289m. We found Alister was still within radio contact, so we told the hunter to start moving out. The task of de-rigging was greatly aided by the hunters, but it was made worse by the rain that started in earnest that evening. The vegetated banks turned to mud and darkness fell. I can't forget the camaraderie that welcomed me on the final ledge that night. A fire had been kept alight all-day and smoky beef on a stick tasted just wonderful.

Heavily loaded with bags of rope, it took a full hour to reach the road, and still our spirits were high with our success. However, I could not help thinking that we have just had a glimpse of Fong Yen's full glory.

Some additional exploration of the river caves just outside Leye Town itself was undertaken, revealing an interesting river passage and large truncated sections of cave, seemingly hydrologically quite separate from the Doline systems explored earlier.

Further Potential for Caving in Leye County

The Leye County block of limestone has considerable further potential for exploration. It covers almost 520 square kilometres of limestone with many cone karst features. The river system between Dashiwei Doline and the resurgence at Beilong is estimated to be somewhere between thirty and fifty kilometres long, with a flow rate of 3 - 121 m³/sec. Important features, upon which information was gained, provide material for a further expedition. These are as follows:

A large Doline group east of Dashiwei itself.

1) Baidong, just east of Dashiwei, which is said to be a river cave with a sky-light. There is a good draught and steam rising from the orifice. It has been explored by Mr Chen to a limited extent. It is approximately 300m deep.

2) Yanzhi Doline. Estimated to be approximately 180 metres deep with a small cave at the bottom. It may have been explored by local people and it was filmed by Mr Chen last year.

3) Shenmu Doline is close to the former and has a sloping bottom. It is believed that SRT is not required. It may have been explored by local people.

4) Huangjing Doline to the far west of Dashiwei. It is believed to be 100 metre deep and has been descended by local people using ladders. There may be a small cave at the bottom.

5) Chuandong and Jiameng Dolines. These are deep Dolines approximately 100 metres in depth.

6) Luojia and Shujia Dolines. These are only 200 metres away from Dashiwei and Shujia has not been descended as far as we know.

7) Datus and Dengjua Dolines. The first of these is 150 metres deep and the second 80 metres deep. They may not require SRT for a descent. It is believed that there are caves at the bottom.

8) Dachao Doline. Thought not to have been descended and will require SRT. It is approximately 50 metres deep. There is said to be a dry cave at the bottom.

9) Luohuasheng Doline. This is west of Dashiwei and has collapsed on three sides. It is believed to have a cave at the bottom.

Considerable work will be needed at the Beilong Resurgence to the north of the limestone block. This is a major feature that eventually joins the Hangshui River. A link up between Dashiwei Cave and Beilong Resurgence would provide the longest caving trip in China.



Cave Fauna Arthur Clarke

The material collected was listed in a preliminary draft of field notes pending further study. It would be tedious reading to include that here, however, observed (but not necessarily collected) species included the following.

Spiders, Mites, Moths, Ants,
Harvestman, Termites, Springtails
Beetles, Frogs and Bats

Rhaphidophorid or Cave cricket.

Small carabid beetle

Millipedes including white (cave limited?) and pigmented species

Scuterigid centipedes - 6-7cm long
and 11-12cm long

Various flies including Yellow-backed flies, Diptera and Guano flies

Grey coloured, soft-bodied, scaled isopod-like species with cerci and wings (hemipteran? or lice?)

White moths like starfish on walls

Depigmented carabid beetle 2cm long

Mosquito larvae or similar

Staphylinid (?)

Unknown dark coloured aquatic species with claw-tip legs, possibly insect larva (?)

Non-glowing mycetophilid (fungus gnat or glow-worm type) larvae

Mycetophilid larvae

Decapod shrimps

Mycetophilid larvae

Slug 3½-4cm long

Hemipteran (or possibly a pseudoscorpion)

Unusual elongated land snail.

Staphylinid beetle

Tapeworm length flatworm

Uropygida (whip scorpions)

Dermaptera (earwigs)

Arthur suffered an enforced rest day in a Lingyun Hospital bed possibly as a result of sucking up too much guano dung or dust when using his cave fauna aspirator to collect small specimens.

A full report has been prepared on the cave fauna but is too specialist for this publication.



Analysis of Daytime Person-Hours in the Field **Bill Hawkins**

This is a day-by-day analysis of the man-hours spent in the field, or other caving related activities, for the daylight hours from Thursday, 5th October to Monday, 16th October 2000. It does not take into account a day involving the whole team spent on reconnaissance in the Lingyun area, or the many hours in the evenings when some expedition members spent time entering survey data into computers, downloading photographs onto PCs, preparing and cleaning equipment, or organising activities and duties for the following day.

Thursday October 5th

1. Tony Penny, Mike Pitt, Arthur Salmon, Bill Hawkins. Exploring valley for swallow holes. Exploring Jonglidong. (Reconnaissance trip) - 6 hours

2. Ged Campion, Bruce Bensley, Alistair Renton, Graham Salmon. Shadong. Exploration and surveying. - 8 hours
3. Alan Fletcher, Arthur Clarke, John Whalley. Shendong. Exploration. - 5 hours
4. Shaun Penny, Stewart Muir, Jon Riley, Pascale Bottazzi. Xiashuidong. Exploration. - 7 hours

Friday October 6th.

1. Graham Salmon, Arthur Salmon, Bruce Bensley, Bill Hawkins Shadong; surveying. - 6 hours
2. Shaun Penny, Stewart Muir, Jon Riley, Pascale Bottazzi. Xiashuidong. Exploration and surveying. - 7 hours
3. Arthur Clarke, Alistair Renton, John Whalley, Alan Fletcher. Pengjiawan Doline and fossil cave: exploration & surveying - 4 hours. Longtaowan. Exploration and surveying. - 4 hours
4. Ged Campion, Tony Penny, Mike Pitt. Exploration of large doline (No way on found) - 8 hours.

Saturday October 7th.

1. Tony Penny, Bill Hawkins Xianongyangdong. Exploration and surveying. - 5 hours
2. Arthur Clarke, Alan Fletcher, Alistair Renton, Graham Salmon, John Whalley Longtaowan. Exploration and surveying. - 8 hours
3. Shaun Penny, Stewart Muir, Jon Riley, Pascale Bottazzi Xiashuidong. Exploration and surveying - 7 hours
4. Arthur Salmon, Mike Pitt, Bruce Bensley Surface exploration to find stream sink. - 7 hours
5. Ged Campion. Dealing with the Chinese media and film crews.- 7 hours

Sunday October 8th

1. Arthur Clarke, Arthur Salmon, John Whalley, Alan Fletcher, Mike Pitt, Bill Hawkins. Shadong. Exploration, photography, and surveying.- 8 hours
2. Tony Penny (with Cia Wutian) Pengjiawan (the potential show cave) Exploration.- 5 hours
3. Shaun Penny, Jon Riley, Pascale Bottazzi Xiashuidong. Exploration/survey.- 7 hours
4. Graham Salmon, Stewart Muir. Upper Buffalo. Exploration and surveying.- 6 hours
5. Alistair Renton, Bruce Bensley. Drawing Surveys.- 5 hours

Ged Campion. Preparation for Leye County Expedition. - 5 hours

Monday October 9th

1. Arthur Clarke, Bill Hawkins, Bruce Bensley, Pascale Bottazzi, Alan Fletcher, Jon Riley. Pengjiawan; exploration and surveying.- 7 hours
 2. Ged Campion, Shaun Penny, Alistair Renton, Stewart Muir, Tony Penny, John Whalley. Travel to Leye County.
 3. Graham Salmon. Checking survey details. - 5 hours
- (Arthur Salmon, Mike Pitt, Harvey Lomas. Non-caving day)

Tuesday October 10th

Lingyun team

1. Arthur Salmon, Graham Salmon, Jon Riley, Pascale Bottazzi, Alan Fletcher, Bruce Bensley, Harvey Lomas, Mike Pitt, Bill Hawkins. Pengjiawan. Survey, photography and exploration. - 7 hours
2. Arthur Clarke. Sorting and classifying fauna specimens.- 4 hours; Shuiyuandong 2-3 hours.

Leye County Team

1. Stewart Muir, Alistair Renton, Shaun Penny, Ged Campion, Tony Penny, John Whalley . Descent into Dashiwei doline.

Tony and John to base camp part way down, others to camp by river at bottom.- 10 hours

Wednesday October 11th

Lingyun Team

1. Harvey Lomas, Pascale Bottazzi, Mike Pitt, Graham Salmon, Alan Fletcher, Bill Hawkins, Jon Riley Shadong. Exploration and surveying. - 8 Hours
 - Arthur Clarke (solo) Shadong. Fauna specimen collecting. - 5 hours
 2. Arthur Salmon. Surface reconnaissance to find sink for Shadong inlet. - 7 hours
- (Bruce Bensley unwell -virus)

Leye County Team

1. Stewart Muir, Ged Campion, Shaun Penny, Alistair Renton. Exploration of Dashiwei doline river for one kilometre underground. Climb out to base camp. Surveying. - 12 hours
2. John Whalley, Tony Penny Archaeological work in base camp cave (Zong Dong) Photography.- 6 hours

Thursday October 12th

Lingyun Team

1. Jon Riley, Pascale Bottazzi, Alan Fletcher. Derigging trip.- 5 hours
2. Bruce Bensley, Arthur Salmon, Arthur Clarke, Graham Salmon, Harvey Lomas.



Nupindong, Buffalo cave 1 Photo: Alister Renton

Pengjiawan. Photography.- 8 hours
(Bill Hawkins and Mike Pitt - non-caving day)

Leye County Team

1. Ged Campion, Alistair Renton, John Whalley, Tony Penny, Shaun Penny, Stewart Muir. Climb out of Dashiwei doline. Survey and measure. - 10 hours

Friday October 13th

Lingyun Team

1. Bruce Bensley, Mike Pitt, Jon Riley, Graham Salmon, Pascale Bottazzi, Alan Fletcher, Bill Hawkins Shadong. Surveying and photography.- 9 hours

(Arthur Salmon, Arthur Clarke, Harvey Lomas; non caving day). Arthur Clarke spending 5-6 hours sorting fauna and labelling specimen vials

Leye County Team

1. Shaun Penny, Stewart Muir, Ged Campion Fong Yen; to big dry river bed.- 9 hours
2. John Whalley, Tony Penny, Alistair Renton Buffalo Caves 1 and Nupindong 1.- 8 hours

Saturday October 14th

Lingyun Team

1. Mike Pitt, Bill Hawkins. Chengbi River cave; reconnaissance.- 3 hours
2. Arthur Clarke, Arthur Salmon, Harvey Lomas. Lotus Cave with Deputy Mayor of Lingyun.- 3 hours
3. Pascale Bottazzi, Alan Fletcher, Jon Riley, Graham Salmon, Bruce Bensley. Abseiling 180 m. deep doline to north of Lingyun. - 8 hours

Leye County Team

1. Stewart Muir, Shaun Penny, Alistair Renton. Fong Yen to top of big pitch. - 8 hours
2. Ged Campion, John Whalley, Tony Penny. Buffalo cave 2. Exploration/ survey. - 8 hours

Sunday October 15th

Lingyung Team

1. Arthur Salmon, Mike Pitt, Bill Hawkins Re-checking GPS for Jonlidong; exploring adjacent shaft. - 4 hours
2. Bruce Bensley, Pascale Bottazzi, Alan Fletcher. Shadong; exploration of mud slope and passages. Survey - 8 hours
3. Graham Salmon, Jon Riley. Shangnuidong exploration/survey - 8 hours

(Arthur Clarke unwell) Cave fauna sort 2-3 hours.

Leye County Team

1. Stewart Muir, Shaun Penny, Alistair Renton Fong Yen entered to 500m plus. Survey - 10 hours
2. John Whalley, Tony Penny, Ged Campion. Xionajiadong (West cave) exploration. - 6 hrs

Monday October 16th

Lingyun Team

1. Mike Pitt, Pascale Bottazzi, Bruce Bensley Chengbi River Cave through trip. - 8 hours
2. Graham Salmon, Alan Fletcher, Bill Hawkins. Exploring and surveying small unnamed cave near Chengbi River. - 3 hours
3. Arthur Clarke & Arthur Salmon: Exploration and fauna collection in Yanliusuidao, plus exploration of side passage & fauna collection in Yanliudong (Support for team 1) Jon Riley; tackle sorting. - 4 hours

Leye County Team

1. Ged Campion, Tony Penny, Shaun Penny, John Whalley Xionajiadong (East Cave) Exploration, photography . - 6 hours
2. Stewart Muir, Alistair Renton. Preparation for return to Lingyun. - 6 hours

Count of hours contributed in the field by individual members

Shaun Penny	93
Stewart Muir	92
Ged Campion	89
Alistair Renton	89
Pascale Bottazzi	88
Graham Salmon	84
Jon Riley	84
Bruce Bensley	81
Alan Fletcher	80
John Whalley	79
Tony Penny	78
Mike Pitt	68
Bill Hawkins	66
Arthur Salmon	56
Arthur Clarke	52
Harvey Lomas	26*

*Injured arm on the first day in Lingyun

Count of Activity Days

	Caving days	Non-caving activity days
Alan Fletcher	13	
Pascale Bottazzi	13	
Graham Salmon	12	1
Stewart Muir	12	
Tony Penny	12	
Shaun Penny	12	
Bill Hawkins	12	
John Whalley	12	
Ged Campion	11	1
Alistair Renton	11	1
Jon Riley	11	1
Bruce Bensley	11	1
Mike Pitt	11	
Arthur Salmon	10	
Arthur Clarke	9	1
Harvey Lomas	5	

The final days: Monday October 16th was the last day of field activity. Tuesday the teams reunited at Lingyun and made preparations for the transport of tackle back to the Karst Institute store in Guilin. A meeting with the Chinese Authorities discussed the expedition's achievements and we officially took our leave of Lingyun.

On the Wednesday we returned to Guilin where some expedition members spent several hours checking the tackle inventory, washing ropes, and returning equipment to the tackle store. Their names and times were not recorded. On Thursday we flew back to Shanghai for an overnight stop before returning to the UK on Friday October 20th.

The information in this report is taken from my own diary of events, Arthur Clarke's journal, and the records of Ged Campion and Stewart Muir. These have been crossed checked, and the report should give a fairly accurate picture of the hours and effort put into the expedition whilst actually in China. If there are any inaccuracies then it will be because some non-caving activities may not have been recorded at the time. For example, I have no record of time spent on the analysis of water samples, or work on equipment by anyone injured. For any such omissions I apologise.

Outline Report of the Survey of the caves in the Lingyun and Leye Areas

Graham Salmon, Alistair Renton, Stewart Muir and Ged Campion

1. Introduction

This report details only locations, length, depth and general nature of the caves, which were explored by members of the expedition between 4-17 October 2000. All the caves were surveyed to BCRA Grade 5 standard (i.e. Bearings to within one degree and measurements within 10cm of the survey stations) using Sunto Compasses and Clinometers and Fibron tape, except for a few exceptions. No completed surveys are published in this report as they are currently being finalised, the cave lengths and depths are taken from the centre-line surveys which were produced during the course of the expedition. For Lingyun, the majority of our time was spent in the northern region and only two days were given to the Southern area. For Leye, a smaller team spent a week carrying out preliminary research, descending two of the major dolines.

Initial cave surveys can be found at www.yrc.org.uk/china_caves.zip. These are in PDF format and read using Adobe Acrobat® which can be downloaded free of charge from www.adobe.com/acrobat

None of this would have been possible without the support of Lingyun and Leye County governments, and the co-ordination of Professor Zhu Xue Wen from the Guilin Karst Institute. Also the financial support of the UK private and public sector, especially the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club, is gratefully acknowledged.

2. Northern Area of Lingyun

2.1 Jonglidong

UTM: 48 661872 2697074

Altitude: 596.5m

Total plan length = 87.04m

Vertical range = 14.55m

This cave is situated a few hundred meters ESE of the village of Nongyang some 2½m up an overhanging limestone crag. This is a small fossil cave, which showed no evidence of having been previously explored. From the entrance, the cave descends a little and takes on a rift character and is well decorated with formations. Access to the far reaches of the cave involves a tight squeeze between formations.

2.2 Xianongyang

UTM: 48 661969 2697097

Altitude: 598m

Total plan length of survey shots = 60.34m

Vertical range = 12.65m

Small cave with two connected chambers.

2.3 Longtaowan

UTM: 48 663959 2704955

Altitude: 729m

Total plan length of survey shots = 58.08m

Vertical range = 57.77m

This cave appears to follow a fault, which has an average angle of about 45°. The rift is 4m across. However, this becomes increasingly narrow towards the limit of exploration, where one must descend through a precarious boulder choke. The cave contains no formations and possesses only a very small stream. It is possible that this shaft continues but it was not pushed.

2.4 Lianhuadong (Lotus cave)

UTM: 48 659607 2694574

Altitude: 461m

Total plan length of survey shots = 466.47m

Vertical range = 10.55m

The entrance to this cave is situated close to the E. bank of the Chengbi River near the northern limits of Lingyun. A dirt road passes immediately past the entrance and probably its construction was instrumental in breaking into the cave. This is by no means a virgin cave and there is much evidence of all parts having been explored, and to some extent damaged, by local people.

A short rubble slope from the entrance leads to a considerable, more or less horizontal, fossil cave system with passages of a substantial size which are well decorated with formations.

The local government asked us to consider its potential as a show cave. Although it is well decorated, it does not compare either in scale or quality with the existing show cave just to the NW of Lingyun and therefore would probably not be worth developing. It could, however, be valuable as a very accessible "adventure" style cave.

2.5 Pengjiawan (potential show cave)

UTM: 48 664567 2704236

Altitude: 708m

Total plan length of survey shots = 1712.54m

Vertical range = 104.64m

Pengjiawan is a major cave, which has obviously been known to the locals for some time. The entrance is situated beneath a rock face in a large vegetated depression (40m x 70m) and had to be excavated to gain access. The cave was re-sealed following the exploration, hopefully to preserve the features of this cave.

From the entrance a boulder slope descends about 70m to a large passage, which reaches up to 30m wide and 10m high. This passage is mud floored with occasional formations. It would appear that occasionally the water wells up from below, however, no lower passages were discovered. This passage ends in another boulder slope at the top of which is an impressive chamber 100m x 100m and 40m high. Two large stalagmite bosses that reach the ceiling dominate this chamber. However, the whole of the chamber is adorned with formations and gour pools. We suspect that this chamber is near to the surface, but this could only be proven with a surface survey.

2.6 Shadong

UTM: 48 663149 2701965

Altitude: 649m

Total plan length of survey shots = 2855.13m

Vertical range = 120.75m

This is the most extensive cave that we found during our explorations. It was obvious that the local people have visited this cave though to what extent they have gone beyond the main river chamber is unknown.

The entrance is a large porch 25m wide and reaching over 25m in height, which is situated at the head of a valley, which at times of heavy rain carries a stream. A boulder stream passage leads off and eventually reaches a pitch down to a river. This pitch can be bypassed by climbing over mud banks and then descending to the river. This chamber with its roosting bats is vast, the roof being 20m high, the river itself is about 10m wide and can be followed upstream to a sump; downstream also leads to a sump. The whole of this chamber must at times fill up with water (explaining the silt backs) during our explorations the level of the water in this chamber rose 10m! Following on from the chamber is a high level passage which leads, after a few gour pools, to a more aqueous section and an inlet passage. The high level passage must at times act as an overflow for the inlet. The inlet is on average 10m wide and 8m in height and was followed downstream to a pitch where the river could be

heard. Due to the nature of the rock, this pitch was not descended. Continuing upstream a sump is eventually reached. A short distance before the sump is another passage, which leads to an unexpected dome shaped chamber. This chamber reaches 40m in height and is about 100m x 100m. The floor is of fine cracked mud, but there are few formations. A couple of minor passages lead off this chamber.

2.7 Shendong

UTM: 48 664138 2703729

Altitude: 670

Total plan length of survey shots = 173.59m

Vertical range = 19.16m

Entrance in large doline at the base of cliff on east edge. The passages in this cave average 3m high and 4m wide, except for one chamber which reaches 15m in height. The banks of the river are predominately mud, though there are occasional formations and gour pools. The passage ends in a choked pool.

2.8 Shangniudong

UTM 48 666654 2708277

Altitude: 700m

Total plan length of survey shots = 750.43m

Vertical range = 75.03m

The entrance to this cave is situated in the side of a valley and is a porch (7m x 7m). The entrance passage which draughts strongly leads to a pitch, 20m, down which a sizeable passage (15m x 10m) leads off. Beyond another pitch is a series of confusing passages, which are fairly well decorated. More development needed. There were numerous other entrances along the same cliff face that we briefly investigated, all of which ended abruptly. The lowest one, just above a sink, was descended to a depth of approximately 15m, where the way on was completely blocked by flood debris.

2.9 Xiashuidong

UTM: 48 665831 2707527

Altitude: 681m

Total plan length of survey shots = 668.25m

Vertical range = 154.34m

This is a predominately vertical cave with numerous sumps, blind pits and a muddy nature. This was explored over a 4-day period and numerous leads were pursued. There is one large chamber into which it was not possible to descend due to loose rock. This is estimated to be 80m deep. Another

lead is a small climb that would give access to more large passage. A tenacious cave that gave up its secrets slowly. Although the entrance was not far above where the river sinks, we were surprised that this cave did not break into a river.

2.10 Hang Lian Doline (doline near Shadong)

UTM: 48 664008 2703161

Altitude: 843m

Vertical range = 300m

Hang Lian Dong is a large vegetated doline 300m deep. This doline was descended via two vertical descents, the longest of which was 70m. Although there was evidence of massive cavern collapse, no cave passage was discovered despite an extensive search.

3. Southern Area of Lingyun

3.1 Yanliudong/Yanliusuidao

UTM: 48 667275

Altitude: 432m

Yanliudong is a massive cliff-walled collapse doline 100m x 200m at the bottom of which the main river is encountered. This entrance was descended by a 150m free-hanging abseil. Yanliudong is part of the hydroelectric scheme and an artificially enlarged passage leads off for over 1½km to Yanliusuidao, where an irrigation pipe follows a branch passage leading out into a muddy-bottom doline that is actively farmed in the dry season.

3.2 Chengbihedong (river cave)

Resurgence

UTM: 48 674960 2683193

Altitude: 363m

Sink

UTM: 48 673674 2683874

Altitude: 367m

This is a meandering river cave with mud banks whose upper slopes are of boulders and mud set cobbles. This cave was entered at a resurgence dam and after about 400m there is a large boulder chamber where the river flowed through some minor rapids. Following this is a section with more rapids and meanders before the river breaks out into daylight and a large doline. After a further 200m the sink is met. Throughout the cave there are possible side passages leading off. Due to time constraints no detailed survey was produced of the cave. However, a BCRA grade 1 sketch was made. Local fishermen make use of the cave.

4. Area of Leye

4.1 Lao Mei (show cave)

Zone 48 - 656540 2740915 Alt 970m

Survey contains 18 survey stations, joined by 17 shots.

There are 0 loops.

Total length of survey shots = 456.00m
(456.00m adjusted)

Total plan length of survey shots = 451.84m

Total vertical length of survey shots = 19.80m

Vertical range = 17.13m (from \lao_mei.m17 at 970.37m to \lao_mei.m2 at 953.24m)

North-South range = 125.68m (from

\lao_mei.m13 at 2740951.70m to

\lao_mei.m1 at 2740826.02m)

East-West range = 350.99m (from \lao_mei.gps at 656540.00m to \lao_mei.m1 at 656189.01m)

1-nodes (qty 2)

2-nodes (qty 16)

The entrance is above where the main river disappears into the hillside. It overlooks the town of Leye. It is almost horizontal and is gated at the far end before it joins the main river. The entrance is also gated and does not seem to have had much traffic. The characteristic feature of this cave is the lotus formations, like islands in the large shallow pools. There are no large chambers, but the cave is consistently beautiful. Separate to the show cave, the main river seemed feasible, but was not explored

4.2 Nupindong (Buffalo cave 1)

Zone 48 - 654602 2742303 Alt 944m

Survey contains 41 survey stations, joined by 40 shots.

There are 0 loops.

Total length of survey shots = 1244.20m
(1244.20m adjusted)

Total plan length of survey shots = 1234.60m

Total vertical length of survey shots = 51.75m

Vertical range = 23.76m (from

\nupin_dong.c6 at 958.71m to

\nupin_dong.c10 at 934.95m)

North-South range = 871.63m (from

\nupin_dong.c11 at 2742305.58m to

\nupin_dong.a2 at 2741433.94m)

East-West range = 166.82m (from

\nupin_dong.a1 at 654678.11m to

\nupin_dong.a29 at 654511.29m)

1-nodes (qty 2)

2-nodes (qty 39)

A river through cave.

4.3 Nupindong 2 (Buffalo cave 2)

Zone 48 - 654496 2742561 Alt 940m

Survey contains 11 survey stations, joined by 10 shots.

There are 0 loops.

Total length of survey shots = 243.20m
(243.20m adjusted)

Total plan length of survey shots = 241.29m

Total vertical length of survey shots = 17.04m

Vertical range = 8.74m (from

\nupin_dong_2.c6 at 948.74m to

\nupin_dong_2.gps at 940.00m)

North-South range = 105.24m (from

\nupin_dong_2.c10 at 2742561.97m to

\nupin_dong_2.c3 at 2742456.73m)

East-West range = 164.96m (from

\nupin_dong_2.gps at 654496.00m to

\nupin_dong_2.c1 at 654331.04m)

Lao Mei - Guangxi China

UTM 48 R 656540 2740915

Alt 970 metres

Leye Show Cave



1-nodes (qty 2)

2-nodes (qty 9)

A river cave that needs a boat to continue.

4.4 Fong Yen

Zone 48 - 642946 2748748 Alt 1114m

Survey contains 46 survey stations, joined by 45 shots.

There are 0 loops.

Total length of survey shots = 1120.80m
(1120.80m adjusted)

Total plan length of survey shots = 967.51m

Total vertical length of survey shots = 410.60m

Vertical range = 407.67m (from
\fong_yen.gps at 1114.00m to \fong_yen.r1 at 706.33m)

North-South range = 592.86m (from
\fong_yen.r1 at 2749340.86m to
\fong_yen.gps at 2748748.00m)

East-West range = 239.60m (from
\fong_yen.r2 at 643054.73m to \fong_yen.p22 at 642815.14m)

1-nodes (qty 2)

2-nodes (qty 44)

This is essentially a 400m deep canyon that could be a tributary of a large river system. It starts by descending heavily vegetated slopes and walls before joining the huge canyon, which is shadowed by jutting roofs. There

was very little water present other than pools, but this is clearly an active system judging by the clean water-washed walls. No obvious camp or safe area found so far, that would provide a refuge in flood conditions. It was explored over a 3-day period, to a point where daylight was lost and we ran out of rope. 500m of rope is required to this point. The way on is open apart from a small pitch, but given the hostile nature of the passage, future exploration will be very committing. There was no evidence of previous exploration.

4.5 Dashiwei Doline

Zone 48 - 645760 2744338 Alt 1332m

Survey contains 71 survey stations, joined by 70 shots.

There are 0 loops.

Total length of survey shots = 1189.45m
(1189.45m adjusted)

Total plan length of survey shots = 1142.44m

Total vertical length of survey shots = 210.21m

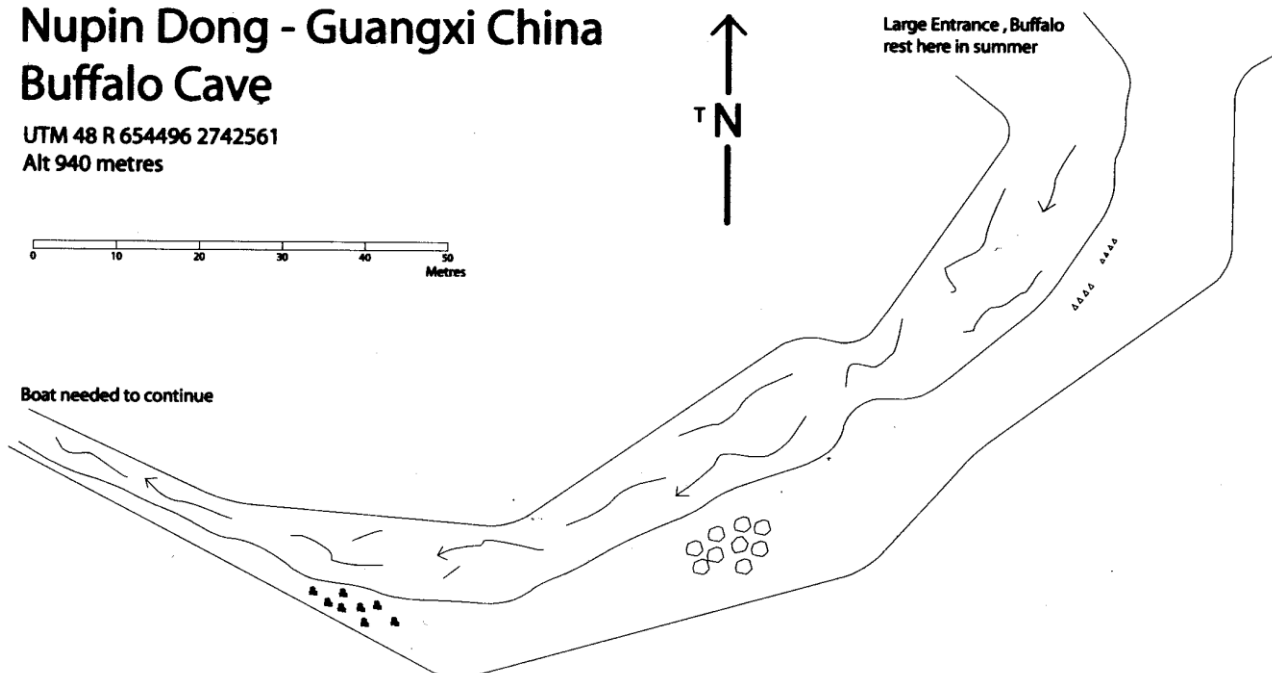
Vertical range = 50.57m (from
\dashiwei_doline.70 at 38.88m to
\dashiwei_doline.25 at -11.69m)

North-South range = 426.66m (from
\dashiwei_doline.1 at 8.98m to
\dashiwei_doline.67 at -417.68m)

East-West range = 822.11m (from
\dashiwei_doline.70 at 805.75m to

Nupin Dong - Guangxi China Buffalo Cave

UTM 48 R 654496 2742561
Alt 940 metres



Yorkshire Ramblers' Club
Guanxgi Caves 2000 Expedition

13th October 2000

Survey Team:
John Whalley, Tony Penny, Alister Renton

\dashiwei_doline.1 at -16.36m)

1-nodes (qty 3)

2-nodes (qty 67)

3-node (qty 1)

A spectacular feature believed to be the 2nd biggest doline (by depth) in the world. This was descended over a 3-day period to a large river cave. It was followed for 1.1km downstream to just beyond the confluence of an equally large river. Progress was made out of the water most of the time, but was only possible by many river crossings. Explored previously by Chinese cavers in July 2000, when there were lower water conditions, but no survey data were taken. Even in those conditions, it is possible for cavers to be swept away.

The water is believed to resurge 30km away at Beilong, so there are significant development possibilities. A daylight camp was made in Zhong Dong, half way down the wall of the doline, and another camp just beyond the cave entrance where it meets the river. It must be noted that the forest area deep within this doline has an isolated and special existence and is very vulnerable. All exploration to this cave needs to take measures to minimise its damage.

4.6 Xionajiadong East (East cave)

Survey contains 59 survey stations, joined by 58 shots.

There are 0 loops.

Total length of survey shots = 1773.10m
(1773.10m adjusted)

Total plan length of survey shots = 1630.67m

Total vertical length of survey shots =
481.90m

Vertical range =
94.31m (from
\dong_dong.20 at
80.35m to
\dong_dong.56 at -
13.96m)

North-South range =
931.39m (from
\dong_dong.59 at
920.80m to
\dong_dong.3 at -
10.59m)

East-West range =
641.31m (from
\dong_dong.47 at
629.10m to
\dong_dong.1 at -
12.21m)

1-nodes (qty 2)

2-nodes (qty 57)

Large fossil cave with considerable formations and volume. Takes the same line as West cave, separated by a doline. There was evidence of previous exploration by local people. Consider potential as a show cave, although inaccessible.

4.7 Xionajiadong West (West cave)

Zone 48 - 649367 2744627 Alt 1299m

Survey contains 50 survey stations, joined by 49 shots.

There are 0 loops.

Total length of survey shots = 1358.70m
(1358.70m adjusted)

Total plan length of survey shots = 1282.02m

Total vertical length of survey shots =
360.98m

Vertical range = 158.27m (from
\xiongjia_dong.s2 at 1299.00m to
\xiongjia_dong.s35 at 1140.73m)

North-South range = 324.74m (from
\xiongjia_dong.s36 at 2744843.62m to
\xiongjia_dong.s6 at 2744518.88m)

East-West range = 458.21m (from
\xiongjia_dong.s55 at 649742.34m to
\xiongjia_dong.s6 at 649284.13m)

1-nodes (qty 2)

2-nodes (qty 48)

Large fossil cave with considerable formations and volume. Takes the same line as East cave, but is separated by a doline. There was evidence of previous exploration by local people. Considerable potential as a show cave, although inaccessible.



Impact of Chinese culture (with a very small c) on the Expedition
Arthur Salmon

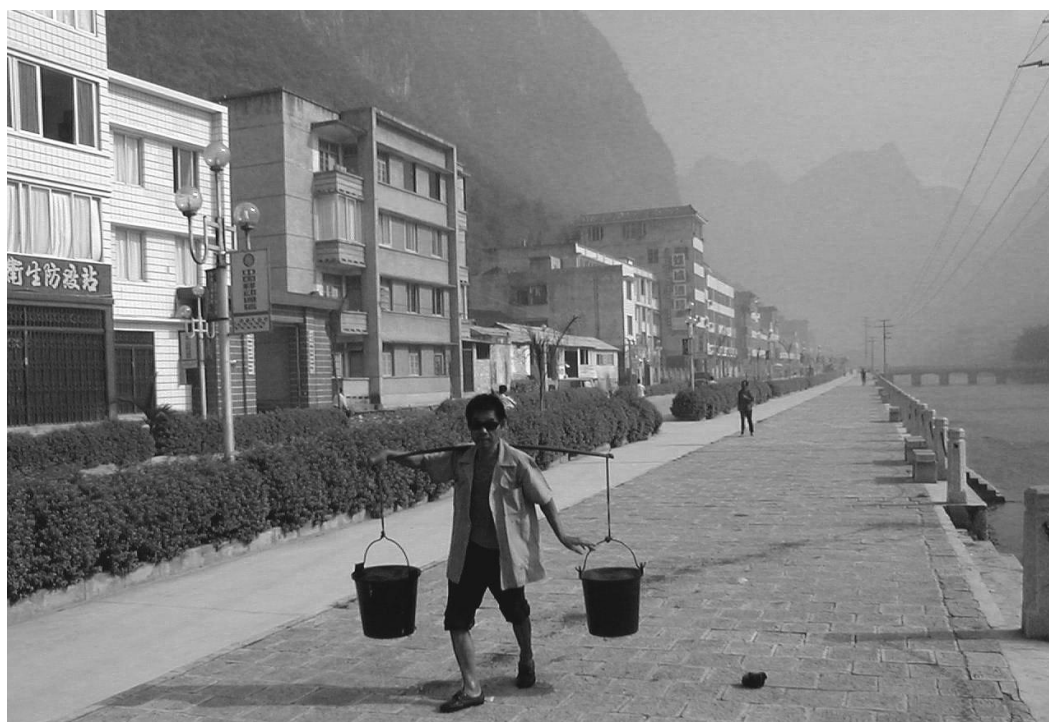
Everyone knows that the Chinese have a rich culture that extends back to when we Europeans were in the Stone Age, but here I will only comment on a few aspects of the Chinese way of life and its impact on the Expedition.

An expectation, which, perhaps, each of us held before our trip, was that Chinese officialdom would exhibit the overpowering bureaucracy that was so reminiscent of that which existed in Eastern Europe in the days before The Wall came down. Any such fears were quickly dispelled on our first meeting with officialdom in the form of the security guards at the main domestic airport in Shanghai. There we were queuing up with large rucksacks and almost impossible to lift hand baggage and a large degree of apprehension as to what they'd make of the contents –ropes, SRT gear, drills, batteries, boxes of flash bulbs, carbide lamps and all the paraphernalia of caving, plus several

lap-top computers. Much to our relief, after a cursory examination and with a broad grin on her face our officer waved us through and we were now really in China. The grin was probably inspired by our Guangxi Caves T-shirts. These had our logo on, but also had a brief description in Chinese characters, which had been prepared by the local Chinese take-away in Wolverhampton, of the objects of the expedition. For all we had known, it might have described us as “western imperialist spies”!¹

This cheerful, friendly and helpful approach was typical of all our meetings with officialdom, and there were plenty of them, meetings I mean, during our stay. Nowhere did we meet any of the arrogance that many Chinese are supposed to have and which is epitomised by the view that non-Chinese are inferior barbarians. Well, if this view exists in China, then it was certainly hidden from us. Everywhere we went we were always met by real friendliness.

Returning to officialdom, one of the biggest surprises to me was the degree



of importance with which the Expedition and its members were treated by the Local Governments of Lingyun and Leye Counties. In fact, for a group of lowly potholers, it was rather staggering, not to say, embarrassing. Several meetings were held with senior officials of both districts and we were also entertained to lavish banquets by the authorities and also by individual senior officials. On the day before our departure from Lingyun, the Minister for Land and Resources of the Provincial Government of Guangxi travelled the 450 km from Nanning, the Provincial capital, to Lingyun to meet us for a briefing session and again to treat us to yet another banquet.

The meetings generally involved all the Expedition members sitting round a large conference room table together with the senior local officials and Professor Zhu and Mr Cai of the Karst Institute. Early in the meeting tea would be served Chinese style in large pot-like china cups and could be sipped quietly throughout the meeting. Speeches were made on both sides and, depending on the timing, the Chinese were briefed either on what we intended to do or what we'd already done. Clearly, the Chinese believe that Expeditions such as ours are able to contribute to the economy of these poor regions by assisting in opening up some of the caves as show caves or by providing information needed to develop hydroelectric power schemes.

Returning to banquets, what about Chinese food and seating arrangements? Dining tables are usually round with a rotating stand in the middle on which the multitude of dishes are placed and replaced by the attendant waitresses when emptied. Western cutlery was not available and

one simply had to become adept at quickly picking up the tastiest morsels from the gyrating dishes with one's chopsticks as the dishes were rapidly whisked away.

I'm sure the local people didn't enjoy either the quantity or variety of food we were provided with. Staples were rice, which was more glutinous and sticky than how it's usually served at home, deep fried chicken wings, duck, sweet and sour spare ribs, often rather lacking in meat, and generally excellent vegetables. Delicacies included deep fried wasps and wasp larvae, roast leg of dog and whole baked carp. All was washed down with copious quantities of China tea or the local beer that we all consumed in large quantities. By British standards the beer was essentially non-alcoholic, so drunkenness wasn't a problem.

During the receptions numerous toasts were drunk preceded by a phrase which sounds like "cambay", and which can be loosely interpreted as "down in one". It was said that the Chinese like to see Westerners make fools of themselves by getting drunk. However, considering that the toasts are drunk from thimble sized porcelain goblets, they would have needed to work hard to have succeeded with our bunch of typical potholers.

One evening the group was invited by the local Chief of Tourism to a barbecue held on the promenade on the banks of the Chengbi River in the centre of Lingyun. This was a superb setting; the evening temperature was like Greece in summer, the full moon rose behind the tall limestone towers and cone karst that surrounds the town and a short distance upstream was an interesting arched bridge illuminated by green floodlights.

Again we were treated to huge quantities of food that included such Chinese delicacies as grilled snake, barbecued starlings and barbecued pigs' penises or, as the team members preferred to call it, "barbecued pigs' dick".

One aspect of Chinese culture I must mention is their fondness for karaoke. After many of our evening meals, our hosts would find an excuse to have a party in which karaoke featured prominently. This was generally led by our hosts, but usually wound up with team members being pressed into action, much to the individuals' embarrassment and the delight of the Chinese. Two of our team had birthdays during our stay and again parties were thrown by our hosts with birthday cakes, much karaoke, and ballroom dancing with the waitresses on hand to partner us.

To conclude, I should put the record straight; although receptions and parties featured prominently in our schedule, on most days caving and travelling to caves took up about eleven hours and a further two or three were involved in planning the next day's activities, inputting survey data into computers, receiving and sending e-mail and writing reports and diaries. Some of these tasks often extended into the early hours, especially if your name was Arthur Clarke.



Photography Report Bruce Bensley

Producing quality photographs in the cave environment is not usually the simplest of tasks. First attempts with a standard compact camera will probably produce very poor results. This is how we started, and it wasn't surprising when 5 acceptable shots would result from a 36-exposure film. It wasn't long before we were experimenting with additional flashguns using simple slave units that slotted onto their hotshoes. These crude units, probably designed for studio use, weren't very sensitive. Due to their limited working range they proved to be unreliable triggers resulting in many wasted shots.

A far more reliable slave was soon found, namely the Firefly 2.



Firefly2

This is a very sensitive unit that can be triggered instantaneously by a camera's flash over a distance of up to 500 metres! Although a direct line of sight would be required to achieve this range, the units can be used around cave corners over shorter distances. Photographic range could now be extended along cave passages by a series of Firefly slaves attached by hotshoe connection to standard flashguns.

The unit shown was treated with a waterproofing circuit board spray to

give extra protection from damp cave environments. Care must be taken to avoid coating the battery contacts. Silicon sealant can also be used or electrical insulation tape to seal the seams and oversized grommet. The thin wire to the hotshoe is vulnerable to snagging if stuffed down a caving suit and we have chosen to re-route the wire and bolt the hotshoe onto the casing with an M8 flat-headed screw.

If picking up second hand flashguns, it's a good idea to take a Firefly, flashgun and batteries to test with. Fireflies tend not to work with dedicated flashguns which have multiple pin layouts. Despite these points, this small unit is invaluable and functions reliably.

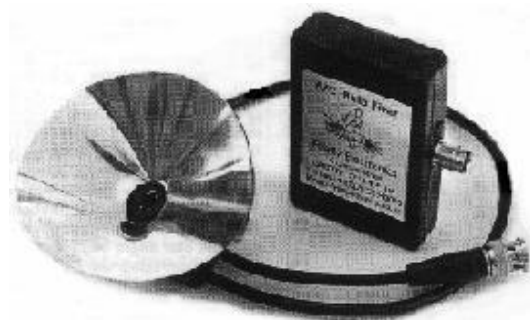
Fireflies are ideal for use with compact cameras in cave passage and on pitches. A length of cord can usually be threaded into the battery compartment through a drill hole providing a leash. A section of car inner tube makes a durable rubber band that can be tied to the other end. The Firefly should be secure if clamped by the flashgun's locking nut.

The Need for Bulbs

In preparation for our trip, we realised that we would need more effective lighting for the huge passage and chambers typical of Chinese caves. Bulbs were the obvious solution but two months before departure we knew nothing about their usage, availability and method of firing. Although most bulbs will fire when connected to a 9V battery, the discharge from a capacitor based circuit seemed to be the recommended means of triggering bulbs.

Simple Bulb Firer

The first line of enquiry was the internet and the BCRA website from which several contact names and links to other web sites were obtained. From the BCRA Events Diary page, I discovered that the formation of a BCRA Photography Group was being considered. For a number of years, field meets have been held between members of the Underground Photographer magazine and the Cave Radio Group and as a result a series of articles had appeared in the CREG (Cave Radio and Electronics Group) Journals. After browsing this site I decided to contact Richard Rushton who pointed out the existence of a ready-made bulb-firing unit from Firefly, the BF1.



BF1, bulb-firing unit

The unit features a BNC socket to which a fly lead connects terminating in an AG bulb holder. It is possible to make your own adapters for other small size bulbs that may be of a screw or bayonet type connection.

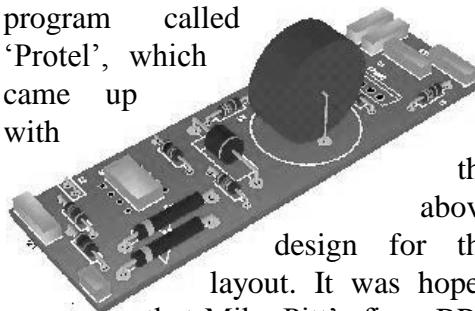
Alternatively, a domestic ES (Edison Screw) bulb holder can be wired to the fly-lead version of the Firefly to take larger bulbs of this type. The unit is based on a David Gibson design for the Firefly2 slave unit, and features a bulb-OK LED to indicate good bulb connection. The device is deliberately kept simple and has no on-off switch.

Kits and Published Bulb-Firing Circuits

To stretch our budget further, we decided to look at the possibility of building our own units. Indeed David Gibson's pages on the BCRA website revealed that kits existed for IR slave units and RALF units (mentioned later). Unfortunately at this time a combined slave and bulb-firing unit was not available. I contacted David Gibson who kindly sent a copy of an early article "Flashgun Slaves for Flashbulbs". This mentioned two circuits based around the Gibson flashgun slave kit. The first of these bulb-firers used power from two 1.5v alkaline batteries to the bulb and was triggered by the Gibson slave unit. The second was capacitor based, with push break switch and LED's to indicate when charging and when fired. Also mentioned was an alternative circuit by Steve Clark with a slave unit capable of removing the effect of ambient light. Both of these circuits were developmental and required suitably valued components to avoid their slave units latching on. In this situation, the slave unit enters a continuous cycle of charge and discharge. A later article "An Improved Circuit for Firing Flashbulbs" contained additional improvements such as manual firing, bulb 'correctly seated' indicator and rotary bulb isolation switch for safety. It should be remembered that bulbs generate a lot of heat and can also shatter when triggered. We eventually obtained a copy of this final circuit, which was repeated in a later article "A Practical Flashbulb Firer" by Richard Rushton.

Our first thoughts were to design and build this PCB for the bulb firer in preference to constructing it on Vero board in order to make it as reliable as

possible. Alister was able to feed the circuit information into a computer program called 'Protel', which came up with



the above design for the layout. It was hoped that Mike Pitt's firm, BPC Circuits would manufacture the boards but time was unfortunately not on our side and, as a prototype was thought necessary, we opted to use Vero board instead.

Bulb-Firer With Firefly2

As we already had a couple of Firefly2 slave units in our arsenal, it seemed possible that we could build some flexibility into our photo kit. If the Firefly2 units were used in conjunction with a simple bulb-firer then these units could be split up if required. The bulb firers could be used manually allowing the Fireflies to be used on a separate flashgun trip.

A prototype circuit was soon rustled up and successfully tested.

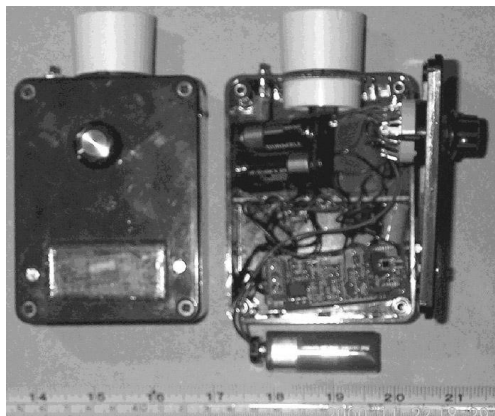


Bulb Firer with hotfoot connection, manual fire button, bulb isolation / on switch, power on LED and bulb correctly seated LED

Combined Slave and Bulb-Firer

In addition to the Firefly/bulb-firer combination, three combined bulb-firer and slave units were also

planned. Alister reckoned that these could be built by linking the slave part of the RALF kit to the improved version of the bulb firing circuit, whose parts we would supply ourselves through Farnell and Maplin.



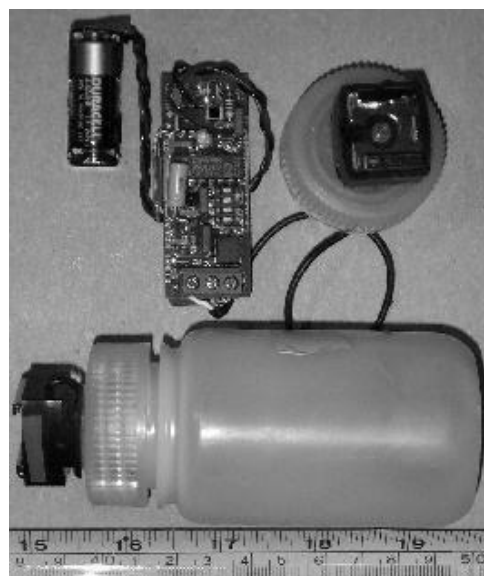
Combined Slave and Bulb-firer

At the same time, RALF PCBs were ordered in and we could begin looking for suitable project boxes to house all the components for our two projects. Apart from the circuitry itself, the bulb-firer box had to house a PP3 9v battery, a bulky three-way rotary switch, and the base of an ES bulb holder. In addition to these, the combined unit required a larger box to house the RALF PCB and its two MN9100 batteries. It should be noted that the RALF PCB uses smaller 0.2" components which are not readily available. The RALF circuit is designed for use with flashguns and because it is electrically separated from them, it requires its own power supply at a reduced voltage.

Several weekends were spent at the club hut carefully soldering, drilling, filing, gluing and bolting-on components to make the finished articles. Not all units worked first time when tested but with perseverance we ended up with all units working.

RALF Redundant Array of Little Flashguns

RALF is a modification of the Gibson slave unit. The idea is to use several flashguns fired in close succession to produce an extended period of illumination, similar to that of a flashbulb. By using a longer exposure, moving water and airbourne droplets do not get frozen. The effect of motion is therefore maintained. The circuit incorporates a switch that can be preset to delay triggering of the flashgun. The delays range from 2ms to 32ms in approximately 2ms steps.

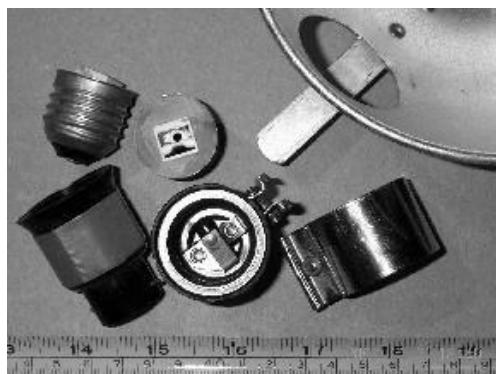


RALF Unit, housed in Nalgene bottle, complete with hotfoot connector

The circuit for RALF is published in an article by David Gibson entitled 'A High-Performance Flashgun Slave Unit'. It should be noted that the terminal block, to which the flashgun connects, has three contacts. There are two connection possibilities to these which bring into play different components and is supposed to allow the unit to work reliably with differing makes of flashgun. Unfortunately, during our trip, we experienced problems firing our Jessops flashguns with RALF. The resistor used to protect the opto-triac from the high voltages produced by certain flashguns, is probably responsible for

de-sensitising the RALF unit. The problem was corrected by adding in an SCR (Silicon Controlled Rectifier) and a bridge rectifier as suggested in the Problems and Further Work section of David Gibson's article. The Firefly2 appears to use these components between the opto-triac and the output.

The housing provided with the kit was a plastic medicine bottle with push-on lid. It seemed almost impossible to fit all components into this, especially since we had chosen to bolt on a hotshoe adapter. The search for an alternative eventually settled on a small opaque Nalgene bottle which was robust, not brittle and had a watertight screw top lid. A bolted bracket on the lid held the pcb and battery holder attached to prevent the components rattling around and easing their removal from the bottle.



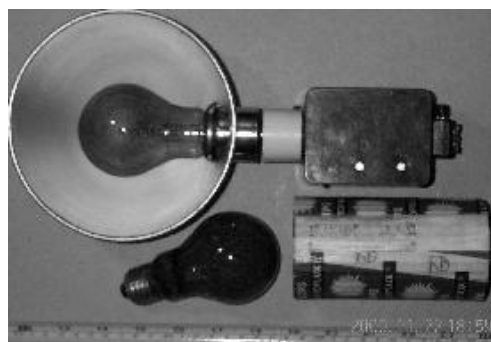
ES to AG1B adapter, BS to ES adapter,
5" Reflector with collar

Reflectors And Bulbs

Although excellent results can be obtained by using aluminium disposable baking trays for bulb reflectors, it is preferable to locate purpose built versions. If you trawl second hand photographic shops, you should be able to pick up reflectors and bulbs that were used in the days before electronic flashguns. I was put in touch with a gentleman after ringing a shop in the Yellow Pages who dug out and dusted down some

old Bowen flashbulb equipment which he used in his days as a professional photographer. He now specialises in the manufacture of world class Ely studio equipment and his own design of giant flashguns.

The 5" reflectors were ideal, being light, fairly robust and stackable. I preferred to replace the push fit Bowen bulb holders with an Edison Screw (ES) holder, but those found encroached too far into the project boxes. Instead, a standard bayonet bulb holder was



Blue-coated PF60 fitted to Bulb-firer

chosen. The thread of this passed neatly through a hand cut hole in the side of the project box. Its cowl was retained as a locking nut and cut down to minimal size thus exposing the contacts for wiring to the circuitry. A bayonet to ES adapter, with flange cut down, was fitted with the collar for the reflectors. Our supply of PF60 and PF100 type bulbs could then be screwed in and the reflector height adjusted to centre the bulb within it. We were initially in contact with Meggaflash Technologies Ltd, who sent us a sample box of PF200 bulbs that they manufacture. Because PF200 are now a specialist bulb, they are not particularly cheap. However, if you are looking to light up a large chamber, they are certainly worth considering, having a guide number of 143m (100 ASA, open flash). As these are clear bulbs, you will need a

blue filter (e.g. 80C) to compensate your daylight film for tungsten light.

Our smaller AG1B bulbs were sourced from Firefly Electronics and proved to be very useful. Because of their smaller size, they were less likely to be confiscated on the plane and were easy to carry in the cave. The output from three bulbs sellotaped together proved very satisfactory for large chamber shots.

We needed an adapter to fit them into the ES bulb holder. The first of these was made from the base of a domestic light bulb. A wedge base PCB lampholder from Farnell was wired to the ES base, but needed some modification to accept our push fit AG1B bulbs. A reasonable fit was achieved by snipping off a couple of unnecessary contacts. Araldite was used to fix it in its place. Later versions used lighter, less messy plastic padding for this purpose and ES bases donated by Meggaflash Technologies.

Prior to the trip, we sent out a test package by UPS which contained twenty or so large flashbulbs. Within five days, these had reached their destination in China. It was possible to track their progress on the internet. Feeling confident, we carefully packaged up about 140 bulbs into two boxes. Plenty of bubble wrap was used and care was taken to maintain weight and package size restrictions. We even persuaded the girls from the Chinese medicine shop to write safety notices and label them as expedition equipment. These were sent by Parcel Force but never reached their final destination. The internet tracking service was not updated and later enquiries revealed that they had been held up at Chinese customs. Perhaps a commercial invoice would have eased their passage, or a more realistic value stated for their worth. With a bit of

leverage, I was able to secure a refund and the safe return of our bulbs. Hopefully these can be put to use on a future trip. Fortunately we were able to obtain favourable results using our smaller bulbs on the trip.

Some advice, which turned out to be extremely useful, was to acquire some cheap radios. With cave photography, co-ordinating several people over distances of up to 100m can prove extremely difficult. Indeed, confusion can ruin a carefully setup picture and waste valuable bulbs. Alister managed to get hold of two Motorola TA-200s from the States and I supplemented these with a couple of my own.

A silky-tongued Mike Pitt secured a donation from Pathfinder-Fox of two waterproof camera boxes. These were very robust, as we found out when a porter jettisoned one down the hillside. The contents were unharmed. The waterproofing was also tested in the huge river systems found in several of the China caves.

We decided that there should be two photo kits since the team would be caving in more than one region at a time. Also, some redundancy was necessary should one kit be lost or damaged.



Pathfinder-Fox Kinetics Case

The following kit list was drawn up:

SLR Kit1

Large Waterproof box (with foam cut out lining)
Pentax P30 SLR
Cable release
Tripod (JCW)
58mm filter 80C
3 x bulb firers (with manual fire option and hotfoot connection to Firefly IR slave units)
3 x ES to AG1B adapters
3 x BS to ES adapter fitted with 5" reflectors
2 x small radios (BJB to finance)

SLR Kit2

Large Waterproof box
Nikon SLR
Cable Release (JCW) BJB can supply if necessary
Tripod (JCW)
52mm filter 80C
3 x combined IR slave/bulb-firers (with manual fire option)
3 x ES to AG1B adapters
3 x BS to ES adapter fitted with 5" reflectors
2 x radios (AR to supply from USA)

Bulbs

250 x (PF60, PF100) clear and blue bulbs (Selection to be sent by UPS)
288 x AG1B bulbs (hand luggage)
Large Nalgene bottle (280mm high, 150mm diameter, 87mm diameter neck) bulb carrier
4 x RALF units (Redundant Array of Little Flashguns). Mimick flash bulb exposure)

Compact Kit 1

1 x 6 ltr 'waterproof' bag
1 x sealable bottle (for fireflies) (140mm high, 75mm diameter, 53mm diameter neck)
3 x Firefly IR Slave units (hotshoe connection to flashgun)
3 x Jessops (rotate,swivel) non-dedicated flashgun (280 ABZ)

Compact Kit 2

1 x 6 ltr 'waterproof' bag
1 x sealable bottle (for fireflies)
3 x Firefly IR Slave units (hotshoe connection to flashgun)
1 x Jessops (rotate,swivel) non-dedicated flashgun (280 ABZ)
2 x Second hand flashguns (Zoom,swivel)

Misc

2 x 8-battery NiCd, NiMH chargers
24 AA NiCd batteries (6 flashguns x 4 batteries)
24 AA Spare batteries

References:

'Images Below', a book by Chris Howes
'Flashgun Slaves for Flashbulbs' by David Gibson CREG Journal 14 Dec 1993
'An Improved Circuit for Firing Flashbulbs' by David Gibson CREG Journal 23 1996
'A Practical Flashbulb Firer' by Richard Rushton CREG Journal 31 Mar 1998
'A High-Performance Flashgun Slave Unit' by David Gibson Nov 98 (Modified May'99)

The photographic development team would like to thank the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club for its generous support. The photographic kit was also significantly enhanced thanks to contributions from a number of firms that we approached.

Special thanks to:

Peter Moss, Elys Photographic Equipment Ltd, Studio Lighting, Units 11 and 12, Gun Barrel Centre, Haysech Road, Cradley Heath, B64 75Z Tel: 0121 5856068

Rachel Markham, Marketing Department, Jessops, Jessop House, Scudamore Road, Leicester, LE3 1TZ. Tel: 0116 2326000

David Gibson, 12 Well House Drive, Leeds, LS8 4BX Fax: 0870 1640389 david@caves.org.uk

Richard Rushton

Nigel Jennings, Firefly Electronics, 10 Darran Street, Cardiff, CF24 4JF Tel: 029 20340078

Ben Lyon, Lyon

Pathfinder Fox Ltd, Clifton Technology Park, Wynne Avenue, Clifton, Manchester, M27 8FF. Tel: 0161 7948137 Fax: 0161 794 0157 www.pathfinder-fox.co.uk

Meggaflash Technologies Ltd, Clonroad Business Park, Ennis, County Clare, Rep of Ireland Tel +353 65 6828677 Fax +353 65 6822688 www.meggaflash.com

Useful Websites and Contacts:

Cress Photo www.flashbulbs.com
www.dhios.demon.co.uk/flashbulbs

Photography Development Team:

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Bruce Bensley,
Beldon Bensley,
Mike Pitt,
Richard Sealey,
John Whalley.

Evidence of Cave Occupation in South-West China

Tony Penny of the Wolverhampton Caving Group

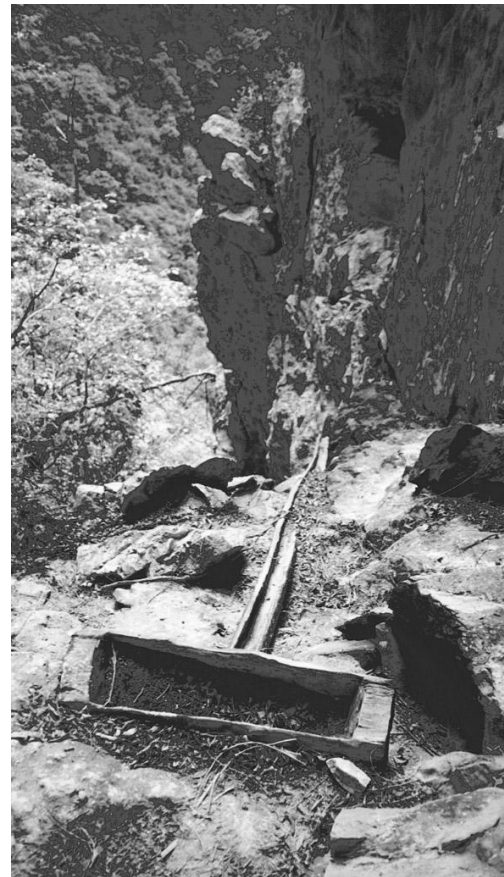
There is a reference In “British Caving” (Cullingford) to a fissure at Caslemartyr in Count Cork, Ireland, which yielded a human skeleton covered with gold plate. I lived tantalisingly close to this area in my teens and spent many hours wading through mud and slime hoping to repeat such a find, alas, to no avail.

Not until descending the Great Doline of Dashiwie in South-West China many years on, did I find a man-made artifact used by cave dwellers. Our abseiling party of six, accompanied by various local hunters and Cherry, our interpreter, had split into two groups for speed and ease of movement. John Whalley and I were to be the support team encamped some 60m down the cliff face, in an old fossil cave set back in the rocks.

The entrance to this cavern was guarded by lush vegetation, mostly bamboo and large ferns. During daylight hours there was very good visibility, due to the large classic entrance. From here the second descent rope was belayed and, having seen off the “shock troops”, we lowered all necessary tackle bags, hammocks, drills etc. to them. Night was just creeping in as we erected our tent and set about gathering wood for the obligatory cooking fire, which soon expanded to a bonfire, accompanied by Chinese folk singing. This was a haunting and evocative series of dirges by one of the hunters in our party, who had collected these songs from village ancients in his spare time.

The crackling of the radio-phone at 6am the next morning outlined our

orders for the day. We were to stand by to retrieve all equipment and await the return of the advance guard as the lower river was in spate and therefore too turbulent for further exploration. This gave John and me an unexpected day’s grace in which to examine and photograph our surroundings.

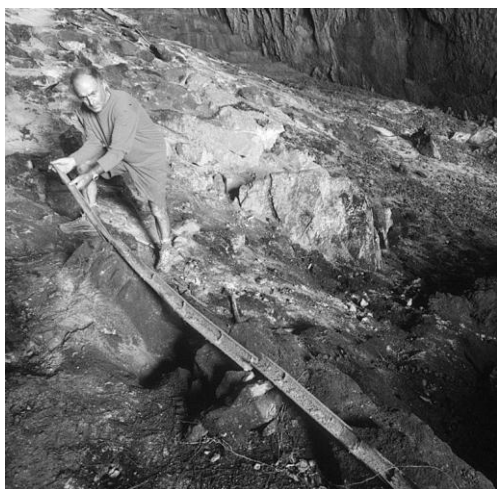


Not far from our tent was a man-made hollowed-out log about 1 metre long and 400mm in diameter containing what looked like spent food pellets. This log was positioned over a steep drop and was obviously a drinking trough for small animals, possibly chickens judging by the pellets within. It was fed with water by means of a split bamboo conduit and contained a drain bung for discharging spent liquid. Overlapping lengths of bamboo were packed on stone wedges and secured with creeper. I had seen such logs in front of a farm dwelling in Lingyun when looking for cave entrances there, but I thought it very

odd to come across one in such an inaccessible position. The Dashiwei Doline is remote from the nearest town and is approached on narrow tracks after steep climbs up from the valley and our own camp site was 55m from the rim.



Further in to the 350 metre long cave, we noticed three large dry-stone walled circles, again fed by split bamboo conduits from the overflowing gour pools in the far recesses of the cavern, these in turn filling up from water dripping slowly off the roof. The construction of these dry-stone “butts”, each one feeding the other, led us to speculate that people had dwelled here in the cavern for long periods, possibly using the series of interconnected pools for drinking water, bathing, clothes washing etc.



The other surprise was discovering two straw baskets, in reasonable condition, nestling among the boulders. The boulders themselves, which were considerable in number, had been collected in giant spoil heaps towards the centre of the cave, leaving paths all around the walls. The Chinese hunters in our party told us about local guano gatherers who used to climb down into the cave about 60 years ago by means of a tree which has subsequently decayed and died. With the tree gone, they could no longer descend into the cave. It seems unlikely that, with the abundance of bamboo in the cave and the evident skills of the people in erecting wooden scaffolding, that the death of a tree would have stopped the occupation and collection of guano if used solely for the fertilisation of crops.

The most likely explanation for this industry was nitrate production. Natural organic nitrates are still sometimes used in the manufacture of gunpowder and modern nitrate based explosives, and still mined today in many parts of the world for use in the manufacture of agricultural and



Female

quarry workers

horticultural fertilisers. The series of water butts could have been used for the washing out of impurities in the natural product. Limestone quarrying was very much in evidence in this area, used for road building and, in past years, as a flux in iron smelting, so gunpowder for blasting was an essential and constant requirement. I expect that more modern means of producing TNT had caused the decline in guano gathering from inaccessible caves.

Below is another example of a hollowed-out log fed by a split bamboo conduit. This one was at the top of a steep slope, embedded in the rock and covered by a calcareous deposit. It was pointed out to us by one of our Chinese companions whilst surveying East Cave and in an area

remote from daylight. Steps had been cut into the rock to facilitate access to a higher section of aven where, presumably, guano had also been previously gathered, the log again possibly serving as a water source for tethered chickens, one of the region's staple diets, accompanying working parties everywhere.

Much further work remains to be done to establish the exact reasons for the fixtures that we found, the explanation given here seeming most logical. Gold-plated skeletons they are not, but these structures added an interesting adjunct to our main tasks of cave hunting, surveying etc. Needless to say, nothing was disturbed or removed, the only things taken were the skilful photographs by John Whalley.

Acknowledgements

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Mount Everest Foundation

National Geographic

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Jessop's Photography

Westmoreland Gazette

Virtual Access, Skipton

Express and Star

University of Tasmania – School of
Zoology

Wolverhampton Metropolitan
Borough Council

Pathfinder Fox

University of Leeds

Stanley Brown Construction
Company

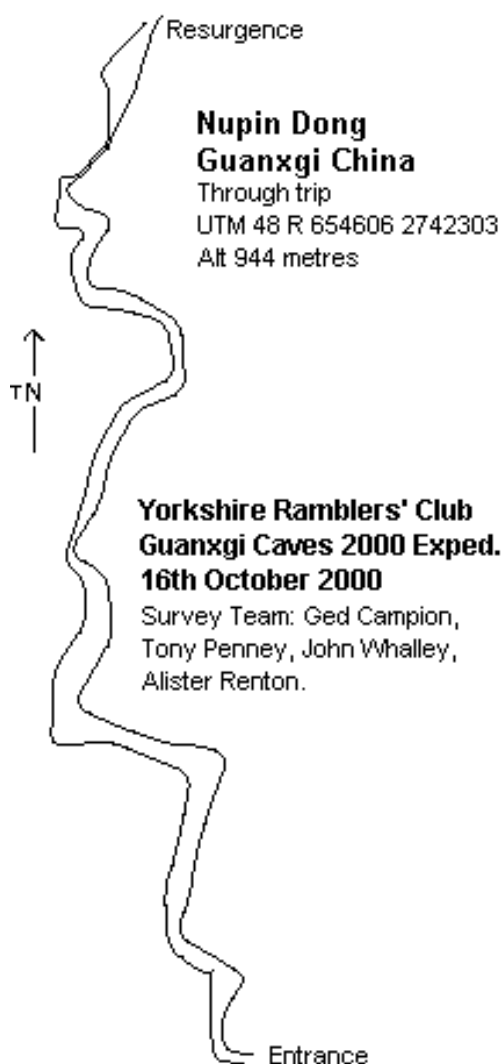
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One Cave on Palawan

John Middleton

A unique cave system and the longest in the Philippines is to be found amongst the spectacular tropical karst of northern Palawan. A recent, but too brief, visit is summarised here.

The Setting: Palawan is the westernmost island of the great Philippine archipelago. It is easily identified on any map by its unusual shape, some 480km long and just 30km across, and its northeast to southwest orientation. Carboniferous limestone, usually blackened by algae and exhibiting impressive karst features, is to be found in many areas of the north. Surprisingly, much of the region has had little investigation by speleologists. The largest of these areas is to be found within the Saint Paul's National Park which adjoins the west coast just above the village of Sabang. This massif covers around 30 sq.km. and reaches a maximum elevation on Saint Paul's peak of 1028m. Its name originates from early sailors who likened its shape to that of the famous cathedral's dome. The surface of the massif is virtually impenetrable due to its hostile terrain of razor edged pinnacles and karren, abrupt depressions and poljes, and forest. Vertical walls up to 300m high surround most of the area whilst impressive fenglin (tower) karst rears up from the surrounding rice fields and out of the forest.

The Australians, who extended the already known Saint Paul's Underground River Cave to 8km, initially carried out serious cave exploration in the early 1980s. From 1986 until 1992 expeditions by Italian cavers added a further 13km and also found several other caves. Only one of these exceeds one kilometre in length, this being the rather unpleasant Little Underground River Cave at 1100m. The potential for new discoveries is considerable but access is a major problem.

St Paul's Underground River Cave

This 21km system deserves its unique status not only because it has a 7800m long main river passageway but that the first 4400m of this

is tidal. Entry is by boat across a resurgence pool which connects directly to the sea. The entrance measures around 10m wide and 4m high with this and the first 100m of passageway showing impressive erosion features. From here, the streamway varies between 2m and 60m wide, and 5m to 50m high. Reasonable formations are to be found throughout but, the best, which really are exceptional, occur in the Gypsum Galleries, an upper series of fossil passageways situated about 3km in. Fourteen hundred metres past this point there is a massive choke, "The Rockpile," which requires considerable exertion to pass. At this point, access is also gained to the extensive and large Balingsasayow Galleries which include one chamber 250m long, 140m wide, and 70m high. After descending the Rockpile the streamway continues straight-forwardly to its 7km choked limit beyond which the "Daylight Exit" can be seen almost 100m above. For much of the system's final 2.5km a further series of upper fossil passageways, known as the "Halo Halo" system, parallel the river.

A permit is needed to visit the cave and these can currently be obtained at a small kiosk in the idyllic beach village of Sabang. It is either a twenty-minute boat ride past superbly eroded sea cliffs to the cave or a ninety-minute walk and scramble through forest. As a tourist, small boats with a guide can be hired and these normally visit the first 2km of cave. If they are not too busy then they can often be persuaded to go as far as the Rockpile (this was unfortunately the extent of my visit). To reach the upper "Daylight Entrance" it is necessary to return to the village of Cabayugan, follow the stream for around 1500m until it sinks beneath messy boulders, and then scramble precariously over these and through dense undergrowth until the 60m by 30m chasm appears. Nearby the superbly striated 150m high walls of the massif rise dramatically from the forest.

Our visit lasted just two full days, but had we realised how beautiful and exciting the area was we could happily have been occupied much longer.

Three Caves in Laos John Middleton

A recent visit to Khammoun province revealed an incredible karst landscape honeycombed with enormous caverns and populated by colourful people. A brief summary of the area is given here with accounts of three classic caves visited, including one previously unreported.

The Setting: Half way down the southern leg of Laos lies one of the world's greatest and least explored regions of carboniferous limestone. It extends for roughly 200km by 30km and then overlaps into Vietnam to form the renowned Quang Binh karst. The geomorphology is one of multiple karst massifs similar to the dense fengcong (cone type) of China - often with seemingly unscalable walls over 500m high. The tops and edges are riddled with fissures and pinnacles and exhibit spectacular karren. Wherever possible vegetation clings precariously and many unexplored fossil cave entrances can be seen tantalisingly out of reach. Interspersed in and between the massifs are numerous dolines and poljes. To the west and south of the main massifs the fengcong karst has been eroded still further to form attractive plains dotted with (almost) fenglin type towers.

Access, albeit adventurous, is invariably difficult and time consuming and often necessitates river travel. To date, the majority of cave discoveries have been those found near to, or part of these rivers.



Most areas close to the cliffs are protected by dense scrub or forest whilst the tops of the massifs would seem to be totally inaccessible. Cliff climbs to the many gaping entrances have rarely been made. Many of the larger enclosed depressions resemble "lost worlds" harbouring virgin forest and a profusion of wildlife which includes leopards, gibbons, parrots, etc.

Cave exploration has principally been carried out by Claude Mouret and other French speleologists who, up until 2000 had surveyed over 100km of passageways. These discoveries are still ongoing and reports are frequently made in the French caving journals. One British team, under Adrian Gregory, made modest discoveries in 1996. So far there are some twenty caves known over a kilometre in length with almost all being characterised by rivers and enormous passageways (30-40m square not being uncommon). The longest cave, and the major French

objective for 2001, is an unfinished system of more than 23km.

Tham Nam Hinboun

This amazing system of over 12400m in length and +80m in depth is to be found up the Hinboun river just past the riverside village of Ban Konglo. The cave has been known to the villagers for many years and is used by them as an easier means of crossing the mountains even though it involves an incredible 6300m underground river traverse by boat! Recent French explorations have revealed a further 6km of large upper fossil passageways.

Just to reach the cave entrance is a worthwhile adventure with this commencing as a three hour long 4x4 dirt road to Ban Longphat (impassable in the wet season). There then follows a three to four hour longboat ride to Ban Phongheng through sensational karst scenery and here it is thankfully possible to stay at a small, idyllically situated guest house. Two further hours upstream in a smaller boat lead to a 40m wide by 30m high cave entrance mysteriously situated at the base of a steep forested cliff. The next 6.3km through the cave almost defy description. The passageway is never smaller than 6m high and 20m wide with the entire 5km central section averaging 40m square including one substantial length up to 150m wide! In just three places the narrow motorised longboat needs carrying over small rapids and at several points it is possible to get out and walk on the shingle and silt banks. Giant Scutigermoth centipedes and equally large Huntsmen spiders are common on the floors and walls. Formations are few. The river emerges from the base of another high cliff and then continues past more superb karst scenery. The

walk back over the mountain apparently takes a full day with a good guide so we returned, again spellbound, through the incredible Tham Nam Hinboun. A world classic indeed.

Tham Nathan

This second through trip cave is to be found not far from where the Pathen river emerges from its own spectacularly karstic valley. Access is again exciting with our 4x4 negotiating muddy dirt roads, through dense forest, past small rickety villages, and around scenic rice fields until the very friendly village of Ban Nathan is reached. It is just a twenty minutes walk from here to the 40m by 30m wide cave entrance which suddenly materialises from the thick forest. The entrance chamber, around 80m long, then develops into a mighty canyonway rarely less than 30m wide and 50m high for almost 1700m until, after an 80m boulder climb, an exit reveals the densely forested and sparsely populated Ban Boumlou depression. Villagers from Ban Boumlou who wish to sell their goods have first to trail through this forest for 4km, traverse the 1700m of cave and then walk a further 8km to the nearest small market! We had the amazing experience of meeting a villager half way through the cave carrying, balanced on a long shoulder pole, two large loaded baskets together with a lit bamboo flare and he still bounded over the rocks faster than we could. This cave is not described in any of the French accounts so we must assume that our visit, amazingly, is the first to report the cave.

At this point the Pathen valley itself is well worth a visit as not only is it scenically stunning but it houses a multitude of caves and a fascinating

tin extraction plant with local panners working on the river sediment.

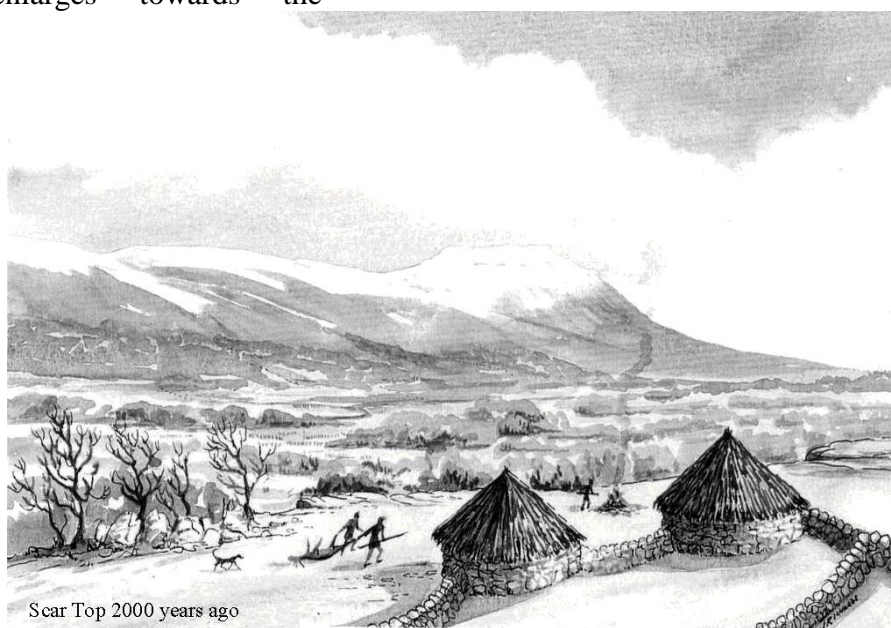
Tham En

Not too far from the provincial capital of Thacket close to the road to Mahaxai is this fine Show Cave. We never actually saw any tourists but the impressive entranceway is electrically lit for the first 150m of abandoned passageways found above the stream. The French had surveyed the rest of the cave but it was because we simply could not believe their survey, that this visit was made. Just 80m in from the entrance progress is by swimming for some 500m through deep but delightfully warm water beneath great caverns and past steep silt banks. As the river finally becomes shallower a beautiful shingle floored swirl type passage ensues to the base of a massive boulder pile down which daylight streams. This issues from an entrance still some 260m away and 110m higher up. Before climbing skywards we found (possibly unrecorded) excellent examples of tropical phytokarst on the top of several large blocks. The passage at the base of the boulder pile is roughly 150m wide and 30m high, this gradually enlarges towards the entrance

which then measures an astonishing 220m wide and 30m high!! Whilst climbing up the boulder pile hunters poles for the Swiftlet nests could be seen

whilst. at the exit, beneath a 200m high cliff, we looked down onto the tops of a sensationally beautiful forest within yet another enclosed and uninhabited depression. The cave may have been barely 2km in length but for me, at least, its finale was perhaps the most memorable that I have experienced in some forty years of world wide caving!

Our Trip: Our small team was composed of myself and my wife Valerie and Tony Waltham (well known to YRC members) and his wife, Jan. During November 2000 our visit extended from the Nam Hinboun to the Se Bangfai rivers and included many excursions up little, if ever, visited valleys and into many caves. It is intended to produce a full report for Cave Science. We planned the trip ourselves but it became obvious early on that assistance would be needed with the logistics of such an excursion where there was no tourist infrastructure and little transport. The highly efficient Sodetour in Vientianne came to our aid and it is thanks to their help that we managed to achieve so much in such a short time.



Scar Top 2000 years ago

The Little-Known Bradford Caving Community a Century

Ago: Why Did It Remain Aloof From the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club?

S.A. Craven.

In the days of the late Queen Victoria, before radio and television had been invented, people had to amuse themselves. This was the heyday of the amateur learned societies which thrived in every northern industrial town. Bradford was no exception and boasted, *inter alia*, the Bradford Scientific Association founded in 1875¹, the Bradford Naturalists' Society², the Bradford Natural History and Microscopical Society³ and the Bradford Historical and Antiquarian Society⁴.

The first Bradfordians to explore caves were probably the Hastings brothers, Geoffrey and Cuthbert, and William Ecroyd. One Saturday in August 1885, Ecroyd and Geoffrey & Cuthbert Hastings met at Melling Station with an iron ladder, a rope ladder to facilitate the descent into Gavel Pot, and other equipment. Hastings' father was a woollen manufacturer in Bradford. Ecroyd's father had an office in that city; and this may explain how the three men became associated. The following day they used the iron ladder to scale the waterfall pitch without incident, continued upstream until the passage became uncomfortably narrow, then returned leaving the ladder in place. They got to within a few metres of Short Drop Cave - but did not realise this until many years later⁵.

The Hastings brothers were also rowing men, and competed successfully in the Bradford Amateur Rowing Club's third annual regatta on 22 August⁶. Assuming that they were training for the event, it is reasonable

to assume that the iron ladder was placed on Sunday 30 August 1885.

This was Cuthbert Hastings' first caving trip. He was elected to the YRC in 1900, and retained his membership until he died in 1943. Geoffrey Hastings was elected to a three-year membership of the YRC in 1894⁷, and became well-known as an Alpinist. Ecroyd disappeared from the caving scene; by marriage he was related to William Cecil Slingsby of the YRC⁸.

This period also was the beginning of the outdoor movement which reached great popularity between the First and Second World Wars. Most of the northern industrial towns and cities had their rambling clubs whose members were content to walk and climb established routes. The larger cities also supported clubs which were more active in the sense that the members pioneered new routes, and published journals which recorded their activities. Bradford never had a club comparable to the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club of Leeds, the Rucksack Club of Manchester, the Wayfarers Club of Liverpool and the Kyndwr Club of Sheffield. The nearest that city came to such a club was the Straddlebugs about which very little is known because it published no journal and did not feature in the newspapers.

The members of the Bradford Scientific Association visited Elbolton Cave on 14 June 1890, the object of the exercise being to inspect the archaeological excavations which were being conducted by the Rev. E. Jones⁹. Having contributed £5 to the Reverend's expenses¹⁰, the members no doubt wished to ensure that their money was well spent.

Bradford may not have had a club, but it did have an informal group of friends who did some technically

involved cave exploration. Their leader was Harold Dawson; assisted by his brother-in-law William Townend; Charles H. Wood, the Bradford City Gas Engineer; John E. Wilson, the local Secretary of the Yorkshire Geological and Polytechnic Society; and Robert Fieldhouse Dawson, a monumental mason. Wood and Wilson married sisters of William Harbutt Dawson of “*History of Skipton*” fame. There is no evidence to suggest that these three Dawson families were related.



Fig. 1. Robert Fieldhouse Dawson; photographer unknown.

Dawson and friends were technically better equipped than the YRC. in that they used flexible wire rope ladders. They descended Alum Pot at least five times in the late 1890s, and may have descended Hunt Pot in 1897 and Gaping Gill at about the same time. One of their photographs came into the possession of the YRC, this being their only and tenuous connection with the Club¹¹.

Charles Wood also caved with the members of the Bradford Scientific Association in 1898 et seq., suggesting that the Dawson quintet had ceased activity. On 09 July 1898 Wood led 30 – 40 members of the Association to Gatekirk and Great Douk Caves, travelling by the 1253 train to Ribbleshead, and returning to Bradford about 2300 hours the same day¹². Members visited Hurtle Pot, Jingle Pot, Weathercote Cave, Bruntscar Cave and Gatekirk Cave on 14 July 1900¹³. By 1901 Wood had “*personally explored a large number of caves and potholes in the district*”¹⁴, and on 13 July that year explored Capnut Cave for an exaggerated half mile¹⁵. At that time Cuthbert Hastings, John Wilson and Charles Wood held high offices in the Association¹⁶.

The syllabi of the Bradford Scientific Association record only four cave meets between 1897 (the first) and 1905, the next being on 22 June 1925 to Settle, when at a joint meet with members of the Bradford Historical and Antiquarian Society, a “Mr. Simpson” took the party to Victoria Cave for archaeological purposes¹⁷. This may or may not have been Eli Simpson of British Speleological Association fame. At that time he was poultry farming near Ripon and not known to be involved with caves.



Fig. 2. “Cave Hunters” [near Ribblehead] 13 July 1901” photo by W.J.P. from the archives of the Bradford Scientific Association

The Hastings brothers descended Alum Pot in 1893¹⁸. In April 1911 Cuthbert collected cave spiders from Kelcow Caves, Kingsdale and Chapel-le-Dale¹⁹. On 7 November 1908 he lectured the “Bradford

Scientific Society” on “Yorkshire Caves and Potholes”, and mentioned the activities of the YRC in Scosca Cave, Rowten Pot and Gaping Gill²⁰. In 1926 he again lectured, this time on Alum Pot²¹.



Fig. 3. “Ribblehead Caves 13 July 1901” photo by E.H. from the archives of the Bradford Scientific Association



Fig. 4. "Ribblehead Caves 13 July 1901" photo by E.H. from the archives of the Bradford Scientific Association.

By the turn of the nineteenth century the members of the Bradford Scientific Association seemed to have declining interest in cave meets. On 15 July 1905 they met at Ingleborough, but no cave exploration was done²². In late 1917 Blackburn Holden II of the YRC lectured on "Caves and Potholes in Yorkshire"²³.

Discussion

It is clear from the above somewhat disjointed record that some Bradfordians with appropriate backgrounds were well aware of the existence of the YRC and of the caves and potholes under the northern Pennines. Yet with few exceptions they were not attracted to the YRC and did not take the trouble to organise a club until 1922 when the Gritstone Club was founded²⁴ with Cuthbert Hastings a prominent and enthusiastic member²⁵.

In 1902 the YRC boasted 66 ordinary members²⁶ with a further 24 during the next nine years²⁷. Of these only six (i.e. 6.7%) gave Bradford addresses even though that city is only 16 km. away from Leeds with good railway connections. Members were elected from other Yorkshire towns, and from elsewhere as far away as London.

There is no indication in the available evidence why those Bradford residents who had the necessary intellect and financial resources did not either form a club similar in scope to the YRC, or join the YRC. They were well aware, both from their scientific society lectures and field meets, and from the Bradford newspapers²⁸, of the existence of the YRC. Does any member have any ideas on the subject?

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Fantan B

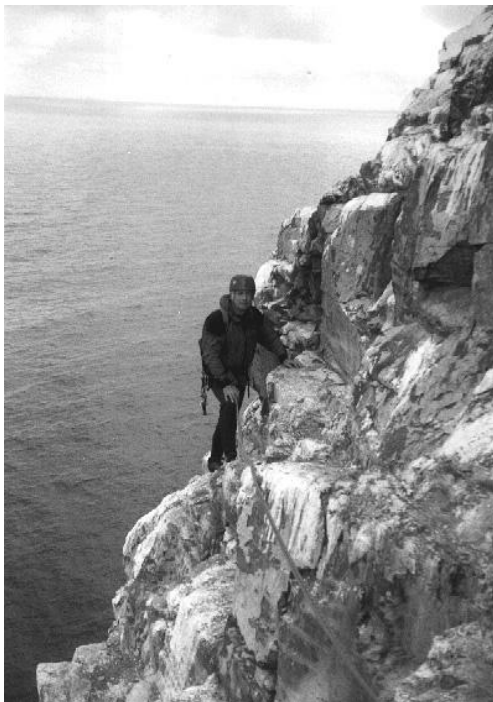
Adrian Bridge

Climbed 28th August 2000
with Tim Josephy



3 - My stance (above) was on a prow above 100m of concave rock down to the sea – quite an exciting spot

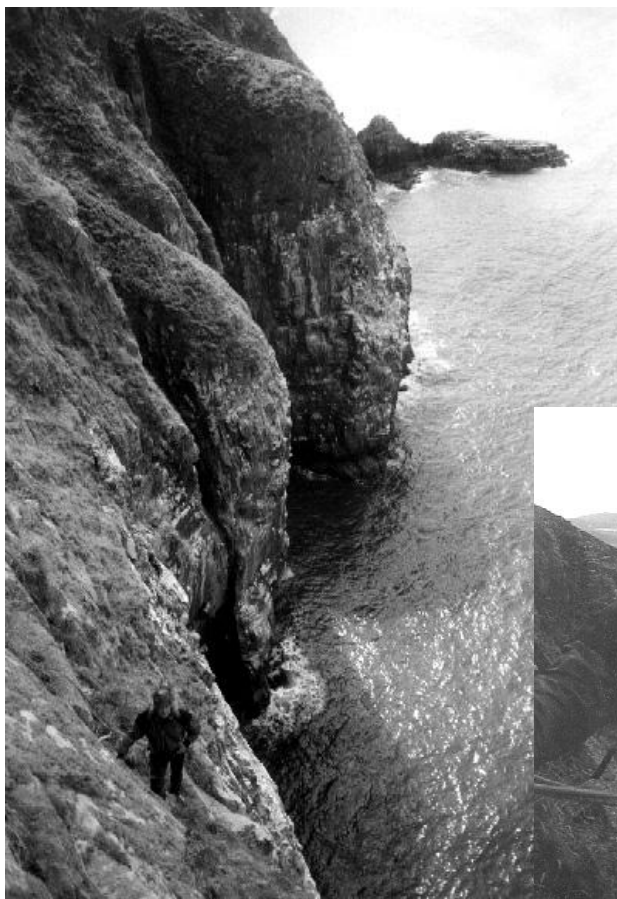
2 - Through these two sections it got steeper and switched to more of an upward line, thankfully with some protection worth the name.



Towards the end of pitch three the guano reached its maximum depth. Surprisingly it was not slippery when dry.

1 - The early stages: about eighty feet above the sea level after a traverse with pathetic protection from the start of the route.

Feeling rather nervous here in case it continues in the same vein.



4 - Pitch four was over a small overhang and onto the beginnings of suspect loose rock and steep grass – a little worrying.



5 - Tim's satisfied stare and the thought that "we can go and get a wash now!"

6 - Just after that last snap we were picking our way up steep grass and loose rock, still roped together, and saw a goat running down where we'd picked our way up. It disappeared from our view – presumably not into the water.

Not a route to do again but still quite an adventure. After a cuppa, we went to Tremadoc and climbed Meshach in amongst loads of folk – there were none to be seen on Fantan B.

Adrian's year 2000 routes in North Wales shared with friends – all good, some superb!

Super Direct	Milestone Buttress		
Cemetery Gates	Cromlech	Wall Climb	Bochlyd
Super Direct	Dinas Mot	Gollum (½ of)	Dinas Mot
Bluebell Babylon	Cwm Cowarch	Pentathol	Gogarth
Diagonal	Dinas Mot	Scavenger	Gogarth
Spectre	Grochan	Brant Direct	Grochan
The Strand	Gogarth	Fantan B	Lleyn
Blanco	Gogarth	Meshach	Tremadoc

Gondogoro La, Karakoram

Martyn Wakeman

These excerpts from the full account on Martyn's website give a flavour of this recent Himalayan Kingdoms ten-person trek.

Arrival

Getting off the plane was like walking into a Kew Gardens' tropical greenhouse - a wave of hot and humid air. We fought for our bags amidst a swathe of Pakistani faces and a Spanish mountaineering team. Strangely, they x-rayed our bags before letting us into the country, but passport and visa checks were uneventful. Pushing trolleys laden high with gear, we were greeted by an almost overpowering sea of faces straining over the barrier.

Our sirdar, Ali, met us at the airport. He seemed respectful and organised and indeed had faked all of our signatures to get our trekking permits early from the ministry of tourism and saving us their standard lecture. Our hotel door was guarded by a guy, with a dark brown and orange streaked beard, holding a Kalashnikov.

Transport out

The Karakoram highway was blocked due to recent heavy rain. Apparently, a lightning strike had weakened a whole hillside causing an internal collapse. The army were clearing it, but more kept tumbling down. We had a one-way air ticket for Skardu - Islamabad ready for the return leg so we decided to exchange this for a flight out to avoid wasting time. The old 737 took us past Nanga Parbat on our right, and mountains steeper and loftier than the Alps on our left. High



hanging glaciers twinkled in the sun between intermittent cloud cover. As we started to descend, the pilot was banking between the much higher surrounding mountains and flying over ridge crests and lines to find a way through this maze of rock towards a flat patch of land near Skardu. At times, ridges were only 1000 feet below us and could be seen in far too much detail

given the possibility of wind shear. We dropped from a col (remember this is a commercial airline flight not a climbing day) into a bowl with the huge meandering river Indus, also in brown, below. Huge walls of rubbly mountains boxed in the landing strip which could only be seen at the last minute. The tarmac started at the edge of the Indus flood plane and was surrounded by sand dunes and more rubble.

To the Baltoro

This was the dry, hot, dusty trek, a bleak approach through the 'lower' hills (many over 5000m) and up the side of the river carrying melt from the main Karakoram glaciers. A monochrome world in subtle shades of brown.

The next morning I was stricken with a stomach bug and endured seven hours walking on an empty stomach. Feeling a little delicate, we started on our way to Korophon following the riverbank. Gentle rain for the first half of the morning was cooling, refreshing and much more amenable to my stomach than sweating at 40°C. We reached a little village, a rambling array of stone and mud huts with wood and straw roofs, looking pretty soggy in the rain. The ground was boggy and the whole place had a pretty ripe smell about it. Women

were working fully covered in traditional dress. There was no glass in the windows and the only sign of modern civilisation were trekkers' sweet wrappers.

Continuing we reached a bridge perched across two huge boulders. Steel cords held wooden planking in place and for a home brew affair it was reasonably stable. Porters were sheltering in a rough building on the other side. By this stage I was feeling a little better as we continued across a vast rubble plain comprising the old terminal moraine of the Biafo glacier.

After 6½ hours of walking we arrived at the end of the Biafo glacier where we used the melt stream as drinking water. Biscuits and tea were laid out ready. The campsite was by a small military camp and photographs in that direction were not permitted. Steep rocky mountains surrounding our camp rose high above us with occasional glimpses of yet higher mountains beyond through the clouds.

The porter who carried my sac was probably fired that day as he was over an hour later than us feeble westerners and way behind his mates. All this carrying of our stuff and having food prepared for us seems a little strange,



and almost unfair. Normally I like to survive under my own steam and initiative in the mountains. Here though it is the only reasonable way we can make any progress at all.

Two goats arrived and started nibbling the rosemary plants. They were not for milk but our dinner. For the moment though they looked happy just eating away.

After a dose of Imodium and a night of alternating high body temperature, with legs glowing red hot, and then cold periods buried deep inside my sleeping bag I awoke knowing I had to eat to carry on. I managed one bowl of porridge having been purged of whatever was swimming around. Half a Neurofin tablet later we were off.

There were three notable sections while walking generally alongside the river that day sometimes traversing very loose steep ground. At the first, a rocky river bank traverse, locals were looking for a shepherd fallen into the river somewhere upstream while taking a short cut. Another particularly fine section was a traverse high up a cliff along a path blasted from the rock: steep, narrow, and exposed making a good change from the flat paths. After that we crossed another suspension bridge with wooden planks near the bank thinning to round logs in the middle. The bridge twisted and flexed as we crossed singly. Of course the porters crossed together.

Lunch followed shortly afterwards at a place called Jola

Camp and was most welcome, especially the hygienically packaged French 'belle vache' cheese and crackers. Then tinned sardines came out. I ate far too much and was slow walking for about thirty minutes but picked up when the sugars made it to my bloodstream.

Skumbosok, our original campsite for that night had been washed away. The new camping location was much nicer apart from the cloudy water which, when left to settle, formed a mud layer at the bottom. What would Nestlé say if they knew what happened to their bottles?

Dinner was good that night, roast potatoes together with rice and dhal; must have been something to do with eating on full form again.

The next day was to take us from our wild camp area to Paiju. I had awoken slightly before the alarm and had only had a mild temperature that night. Four slices of toast made a sound breakfast. Filtering the water took twenty minutes (maybe 3 to 5

minutes when the filter was clean) due to the silt in the water starting to clog up the works so I was late for breakfast. This did prove to be a wise move, because the water at this 'new' campsite caused stomach cramps with several of the others and also some of the porters. Chris said that suspended mica particles strip the lining off the gut wall as microscopically they are very sharp. Despite being a little heavy, the filter was worth its weight in gold.

We continued to follow the river, but with yet bigger mountains growing beyond the monotone 'brown' rubble piles and rocky peaks - some with apparently good rock. The stream crossing described fearsomely in the trek guide was a little tame: just a quick leap across. Four hours after leaving, we arrived at Paiju to camp for the night. Here the Masherbrum range was first glimpsed as an unearthly white monster through the clouds, tantalisingly close to fully revealing itself, big and white, clothed in seracs and shinning in the sun.



From the campsite the first few peaks of the Trango range peered around the corner as high granite spires, watch towers guarding the entrance to the Baltoro glacier and then the throne room of the mountain gods.

Anticipation grew as we approached the big monsters. The Trango towers put familiar Chamonix in its place. What will be really impressive is to reach an altitude where, gasping for breath, the mountains still rise above me.

We named the goats that evening, and rumours spread about when they would meet their demise. Pinky and Perky were eating long wet grass, a stark contrast to the rock and rubble of the landscape, just below our tents. Upon discovering that Jo also did not have glacier glasses, we suggested that he: cut holes in cardboard for a 'pin-hole' camera effect; made a goat's stomach water bottle; and goat skin gloves. His laissez-faire attitude was irritating to those who'd saved, trained and planned this for ages.

Up the Baltoro to Concordia

The Baltoro glacier is one of the wonders of the Karakorum, 58km long and meeting two other glaciers at its higher end to create the largest concentration of ice outside the polar regions. We were to walk along its whole length. From alpine experience this might be imagined as a dirty, stony tongue merging into a dry but white glacier that becomes snowy and wet as the higher part was reached. Not here, as two continental plates are in full-blown head-on collision and nature is still building this wonder as the glaciers try to clean up and move some of the building materials away.

We left Paiju to start a longer day. It would take us out of the dry dusty heat of the river valley to the start of the mighty Baltoro glacier. Leaving the smell of the campsite behind, we knew that today would see the start of the real mountains. As we approached the glacier snout, I tried to take a photograph. Even some distance away, and with a 28mm lens, it was difficult to fit it all in the frame.



Here, as John called it, the arse of the Baltoro could be found, where the glacier melt water accumulated and ran into the river, forming its source. We were all photographing the snout when a group member (I wonder who) realised that he'd left his water bottle behind about thirty minutes away. He was dispatched back with a porter to retrieve it and finally caught us up again as we ate lunch, more cheese and pasta, at Lillige. This used to be a main camp area until being eaten by the mighty Baltoro.

The Baltoro was like nothing I had ever seen before, distinct from both Iceland and the Alps. Rather than being snow covered or even rambling dry white-grey ice, it is a tangled mass of ice with smashed rock and van-sized boulders. Not a smooth surface or even distinct icefall steps, but a contorted confused surface of hillocks and ridges. There was a layer of fine dirt that was generally dry, but difficult to walk on away from the narrow path. From a distance these hillocks look small but were actually quite large and people were lost between them.

Our lunch spot that day was most spectacular. Having rounded the corner to see Payu Peak (6621m), which is a whole area of granite mountains culminating in a sharp snowy cone, we could see the glorious Trango Towers: watchtowers should the mountain gods need to check the visitors treading towards Concordia. The slabs of granite stretch up 2300m above the glacier (3842m) as if a cathedral wall. Great Trango, Trango tower and the isolated block of the Nameless Tower. Impressive as fluted and rough carved sides stretched up continuously to the tops. The glacier at Lillige, where we were resting for lunch, used to close in a large glacial

lake but this broke out one night to leave one side of the Baltoro partially exposed adjacent to the lateral moraine. The Baltoro seemed to move continuously, a latent dragon snoring in the night, as rocks perched on its scaly icy back periodically fell with mighty crashes. Far bigger boulders than these were perched on the edge and some looked house-sized. The first of these tumbling off caused several of us to leap up from our lunch cloth spread across the ground and scatter away from the cliffs. These cliffs were a melange of boulders and mud and looked as though they really could fall on our heads with a shout from a mountain god. So the noise of the glacier rocks falling echoed straight back from the mud-rock cliff with such effect that I imagined a stream of rock descending towards our lunch cloth. Our leap for safety gave the porters a quick laugh. We continued on our way along the moraine towards Khoburtse. Our path crossed the Lilige Glacier that previously had been a separate entity, but in the last few years has moved forward half a mile to merge with the Baltoro.

This was one of the better campsites so far. Perched on the edge of the glacier with the tents in a line on a small ridge with the mess tent below. There was not the usual turd littering here making it a much nicer place. A glacier pool of aquamarine blue water set amidst the moraine made for a refreshing wash amidst dirt covered stones. Cleaning the nether regions proved most invigorating. The previous camp area had a small waterfall where I had washed from my hair the dust from the jeep ride. Not such a nice experience due to my knowing that the water was contaminated with undesirables, smelling dodgy even though running

clear. After the wash, we ate tinned corned beef, potatoes mashed with cheese and the local green vegetable, okra.

That evening the clouds cleared and the whole range of mountains on the north side of the Baltoro were lit by moonlight, the rock glowing slightly as it reflected a soft light. A darkening blue-black sky framed this, with a sprinkling of stars as the icing to the spectacle. Surprising amounts of depth could be seen in the mountain features, with shadow and light depending on the angle to the moon. Paju was free of cloud for the first time. I sat atop a large rock for more than an hour just soaking up this spectacle. In our modern lives we rarely free up time just to stand and stare. Here was something simple, yet utterly complex and unique, captured in space and time; simple and unchanged, yet so majestic and beautiful that surely if God himself seems unknown, then this shouted the name of the great sculptor, here reaching extravagant proportions in His master piece of the Karakorum. Surely, how great Thou art!

I went to bed with eager anticipation of the days to come. With a bounce now in my step, the Gondogora La was now a tantalising prospect and my engines were ready for battle.

The next day we were 'permitted' an extra half-hour in bed followed by a second luxury, French toast, comprising bread fried in milk and egg with a little sugar. Most ate two slices, while I managed five, eating while the going was good. Feeling on form, we made it at porter pace (2½ hours compared with an estimated 4) to Urdukas at 4015m. Quatre mille metre at last. This was to be my highest camp yet I was already acclimatised to that height and feeling

good. This was not the case for all. Marc and myself, amidst the porters, were first to reach the shelves dug many years before by the Duke of Abruzzi's men. Again, from a new perspective, excellent views were had of the Trango massif and Cathedral peak beyond it further up the glacier.

We had seen a peak gleaming high above us with fluted snow slopes (fluted being where, due to the amount of snow, vertical snow crests run down the face of what in the alps would be a plain snow bank) and tumbling serac bands. This was nearly the same height as the Gondogora La and showed that what we were intending to do was indeed a worthy challenge.

We had arrived at 10am, so it was effectively a rest day. Following the rules of acclimatisation, the following day was also to be based at Urdukas. No more than 300m average height gain per day and a rest day after 1000m cumulative altitude increase, starting at 2500m. This is distinct from climbing in the Alps where acclimatisation to higher heights is accompanied by sleeping low. At that time I felt as acclimatised as when I'd bivied outside the Gouter hut (3800m) prior to climbing Blancy. I'd gained this conditioning in a similar time frame but with less physical stress and here we were approaching the roof of the world.

Below Urdukas campsite was one of several Pakistani army camps that we had passed. They seem to be maintaining a highly tenuous MSR to the front line of the conflict between Pakistan and India on the Siachen glacier. Soldiers spend six months at 6000m in the disputed zone where more die of altitude sickness and avalanches than bullets. The soldiers have to walk up to acclimatise but

over sixty are packed into one labouring helicopter for the flight back. We had been following a telephone line for days, and together with these bridges, made for what indeed seemed a tenuous supply line. Perhaps this route up the Baltoro is taken due to the natural shelter offered by the huge mountains each side, located well inside the Pakistan border. It seemed that a suitably equipped force of elite soldiers could play havoc with the helicopters and camps - war is a crazy game.

While I was initially reluctant to have a rest day at Urdukas, having arrived at early the day before, and would have preferred to go on, it benefited the group as a whole and would increase the chance of us all getting over the Gondogora La. After a later breakfast, I helped train the inexperienced in moving up and down a fixed rope. Here three turns of a French prussik seemed to work best.

After an excellent lunch including vegetable samosas, Marc and John set up an abseil rope off of a rock. Crevasse rescue practice with four turns of a French prussik gave all except Steve (who had done it before) a refresher on self-extraction from icy jaws should the unexpected happen.

Later in the evening a tribe of Spanish climbers arrived also crossing the La.



They had chosen to take the Karakorum highway, taking them four days to cover the ground that was just a hairy flight for us. Two had already dropped out leaving two dozen. They have been marching double days to catch up. We all hoped that we would not end up crossing the La on the same day.

After dinner, as we were sitting in the mess tent and chewing the cud, an almighty thundering crash instantly terminated all conversation, seeing us dive out of the tent and looking up. One of the giant seracs at the end of a small glacier above our general camp area had broken off and was smashing its way down the stream gully that was our water supply (thankfully a few minutes walk way). A white tongue could be seen in the moonlight advancing down the gully. Stones were then dislodged and, smashing into others, gave off giant sparks.

Bed tea with a call at 5:30am as usual; some kind of throw back to the colonial days. Starting out along the glacier, we passed a porters graveyard with coloured flags of cloth and emaciated horses owned and abused by the Pakistan army as beasts of burden. The views again were amazing, with a clear blue sky. Masherbrum unfolded to our right, a heavily snow featured peak as would be expected of 8000m mountains and a joy to behold after the lightly snow dusted granite towers lower down the glacier. Continuing on, another Pakistan army base smelled of the preverbal as donkeys carried fuel cans on sore-covered backs.

Forming a wall terminating the east-west path of the Baltoro was the towering truncated triangle of Gasherbrum IV and its sisters. This formed a strange but very convincing optical illusion. The glacier from our

feet leading to Concordia appeared to be running downhill, whereas in fact it is uphill all the way. Mitre peak, at 6000m, also did not look much lower than the 8000m Gasherbrum and Broad Peak ranges immediately behind. The thin clean air gave fantastic clarity. The significance of the endless 4km high wall of mountains reaching above and around us could only be felt when breathing the already thin air at 4000m, with mountains still rising the height of the Alps above.

After a night where John had some Cheyne Stokes breathing, we started the final days walk that would take us to Concordia. John also managed, with great pride, his first normal shit since arriving in Pakistan. Many photographs have been taken of the Muztag Tower through the last decades (Muztag meaning 'Mountain' in Balti) and as we walked past this imposing mountain we also stopped to wind some film through our own cameras. Winding its own way over the glacier, the path took us towards Mitre peak, now incredibly foreshortened and a local Matterhorn.

We approached the throne room of the mountain gods.

To Ali camp and the casino

We left after lunch, an hour after the Spanish, with a leaden grey sky threatening to dump more snow on us. It had the feeling of a Scottish winters day as snowflakes started to fall and we walked across a now white giant moraine and boulder field towards the

Vigne glacier. As we rounded the corner, fleeting glimpses through the cloud revealed the Gasherbrums. We crossed several glacier melt streams and smeared on sun cream as the snow fall lapsed and a hazed sun started to burn off the cloud in places. The walk to Ali camp (5100m) was at a vigorous pace because everyone was fresh after the rest day. We made this in four hours which I thought was faster than necessary at this stage.



Jumping some smaller crevasses, Ali camp was reached - a couple of platforms on the moraine under some block granite cliffs. The Spanish porters had "beach towelled" most of the space for their three mess tents, although we did have a spot for our mess and cooks tents. We had overtaken the Spanish who were generally less well prepared, less fit and less acclimatised. Our smaller group made us more flexible. The surroundings at Ali Camp were more what I had expected in terms of glacier scenery. We were surround by a huge cirque of white snow-runnelled

cliffs, impressively sharp and steep. The glacier just below us was white, revealing some, but not all, of its crevasses. We were in a wild and lonely place.

Ali decided that we were going to cross the Gondogora La come what may that night. The limited space at camp meant we all had to sleep and eat in the mess tent. After first sorting our gear and packing for the next day, the duffle sacs were stowed at the end

of the mess tent where I was going to sleep. While initially a disadvantage, where snow and wind could wriggle their icy fingers into my sleeping bag, the wall of duffle bags both sheltered me and offered more personal space.

The mess tent was not particularly large, and we all wedged into an uphill line of 6 people and 4 others making do with their heads on rucksacks and feet uphill on the other side. Camping on the glacier itself might have solved the space problem that necessitated all sleeping together. Colder perhaps, but that had not been a real problem thus far. We dozed the late afternoon away trying to store up energy for the big day. I tried really hard to rest and managed some sleep to get ready for our planned 2am start.

Fortunately, I did not seem to have any symptoms of high altitude except rapid breathing and a fast pulse due to the thin air despite sleeping higher than Mt Blanc. I was a little concerned about my rapid breathing.

Dinner was served just a little after dark with us all snuggled into our sleeping bags as yet more snow fell ominously outside. By Petzel head torch beams cutting rising steam we ate platters of rice, hot soup, curried goat and soggy pasta to refuel muscles for the day, or night, ahead. After eating I went to find a boulder in the allocated area to avoid the urge of untucking nether regions and fiddling with my harness while half way up the pass. I took Imodium prophylactically, as often practised by Himalayan climbers, to ensure that the urge could be banished for the following day.

Why Ali camp and the casino? Well, a travelling casino is well known to move randomly around this region of Pakistan and our local guide had intimate knowledge of its delights in

this harsh area. Apparently it should have been at Ali camp that night, but we missed it as on all the other nights when we were supposed to find it.

It was then about 8pm so we had hours to wait, or possibly sleep, until our 12:45 alarm call and the start of the big day. Some slept a little, while others tossed and turned, jammed between others. The weak bladdered made trips to the toilet.

On crossing the Gondogora La

The wake up alarm sounded and it was time to pack the sleeping gear, drink tea, eat porridge and put on clothing. Some could not eat or drink anything or only a little, probably due to the altitude and the fact that it was the middle of the night. I just managed one bowl of porridge but the all important hydration procedure was via three mugs of green tea. Ice lined the inside of the tent.

The Spanish had agreed to leave at midnight, but were still annoyingly messing around at 2am. The separation of the two groups was planned for both aesthetic and safety reasons. Several dark comments were passed about the Spaniards.

The morning was perfectly clear and fresh (-8.6 °C) with a star studded sky. Everything was nicely frozen in place and the moon reflected off the snowy basin and surrounding ice falls leading to steep, fluted, snow faces leading to corniced ridges. This was more like it: whiteness rather than the boulder and scree of Concordia.

After standing in the cold for about 20 minutes waiting for the porters to pack, we were off. While we were carrying only the essentials and wearing often the best of high-tech gear, the porters were carrying all the camp gear and our duffel bags while

wearing minimal clothing (often traditional Pakistani dress, a blanket under the 'rucksack' rope straps and a piece of clothing that a previous climber had left behind. Footwear was not plastic boots and Yeti gaiters with crampons, but plastic moulded tennis shoes with two pairs of socks! These guys did indeed work hard for little money (by western standards £1.50 a day) and they were doing all that they could to help us.

We started off along the moraine and continued for about an hour, by which time we had split into two groups, with John having an altitude headache, Jo plodding along in second gear and Steve staggering along trying not to lose his balance.

Marc and I guided the others onto the glacier and along the path across the ice and snow of the upper Vigne Glacier. Here a rope was really needed as we jumped across several crevasses and avoided putting our feet into others but the rope was back with the other half of the party just when we needed it. All the Spanish, plus both their and our porters, had just taken the very same line, so either the crevasse bridges were tried and tested or fatally weakened by all the traffic.

We crossed without problems and attached crampons, with considerable faffing from some in the group, before gaining the start of the steep snow. Earlier on, while still on the moraine, Ali had pointed out the Gondogora La to Chris who had then described it to us. A case of Chinese whispers, because the snow and glacial ramp leading to the ridge line between the 'two bright stars' was steep and imposing. I compared it to various Alpine glacial routes, like the North face of the Barre des Ecrins that I had climbed two years earlier, and decided that the very steep top section must be

foreshortened and it could not be as hard as it looked. Midway across the upper Vigne Glacier we could see a line of porters ascending a different and easier looking snow ramp to the left of the imagined way over giving a sense of relief, especially to those without snow experience. Today was going to blow their minds.

As we reached the first fixed rope, we had caught up the Spanish group making very slow progress. Marc I, accelerated past the line of struggling Spanish. Previous to this we had been encouraging the inexperienced front group of our party through the first challenges of this snowy giant. We would take forty paces and then stop to breathe, or for Denis, gasp, for air as he fought off nausea and a headache. Alan was also struggling a little at this point.

Marc took to the fresh snow at the edge of the fixed rope and kicked steps until he had overtaken half the Spanish party. I followed, kicking a few more steps until I had a clear path ahead and rejoined the fixed rope. The top of this first rope was at 50° and culminated with the edge of a large crevasse. Just before this, one of the porters from the Spanish party was having an epic and on the verge of rolling and then bouncing back down the fixed rope to the glacier below. Two people held him while he rested, adjusted his load and regained his footing. Climbing 50° snow with a 30kg load in trainers never was going to be easy for these guys.

The crevasse was 4m wide, with the way across requiring either Abraham's faith or tip-toeing across a bridge made from two long wooden poles lashed to cross poles with old rope and also needing perhaps the faith of Abraham. A safety line was also provided which Marc and I

pulled tight and hooked our ice axes over in case of a slip, snagging of crampon points, or the whole lot collapsing into this chasm of unknown depth. My eyes and brain were focused 100% on each step and placement of the feet, rather than peering down into the icy void below.

After this the route ascended between fantastic, heavy, glacial scenery. Big crevasses and bergschrunds to each side, icy blue and then black inside; jewel like icicles set at the lips of beauty and the beast incarnate. Seracs higher up had collapsed, tumbling down the face leaving a tangled mass of giant ice blocks. The route passed very close on a 40° slope to another gapping crevasse. One slip here and glacial potholing would be the order of the day. A rope was fixed here to safeguard the way. A flatter portion then followed, objectively dangerous underneath the huge seracs above, before the route traversed left above another, steeper slope, again with a fixed rope.

By now the sun was up, but still a while before its rays would heat and loosen this frozen mass of ice and snow. The first signs of dawn when crossing the upper Vigne glacier had, as expected, lifted the hearts of the trekkers, but also revealed more of the challenge ahead.

The traverse then turned into an upward climb over steep ground towards our objective, the col. From there I was nearly at the top of the Gondogora La, the final step over the lip of another crevasse with a helping hand from the cook and Marc and I'd a view from the roof of the world.

Elation. I shared the top with three Spanish, Marc and a couple of porters before the masses arrived and almost turned it into a tourist attraction. The

other porters had descended already. The celebratory Toblerone, carried all the way from Switzerland, was unwrapped, photographed on top of Marc's ice axe and then a piece given to each member of our group as they arrived at the top until the bar had run out. K2 herself was slowly revealed, standing high and lofty above the ridge opposite. An outrageously big hill. The Gasherbrum range to our right and Broad peak were now much closer and this created the feeling of indeed standing on the roof of the world, as we were nearly mid-way up the huge faces of these mountains compared with our base at Concordia.

Looking the other way across the Gondogora La, Trinity peak (6700m) was a white monster with hanging glaciers and giant seracs banding their way down towards a nameless glacier. A string of snowy peaks, with glaciated faces descending to merge in a tangled confusion of crevasses into the main glacier itself, leading down the valley towards the beautiful and graceful Liada Peak. This was a curvaceous granite rock triangle with a sharp snow arête formed on the edge of the granite slabs.

Before we descended, Jo arrived on a sling being towed up by one of the Hushe guides. John paid off the guide who carried his rucksack (due to some altitude problems) and Jo was also encouraged to "thank the guide appropriately".

The delay in our final members arriving was not only good for seeing the view of K2 evolve, but was also of major benefit for safety during the descent. It allowed the Spanish party and the porters to descend ahead and so not shower us with stones.

The ice slope was thankfully still snowy, but we kept our crampons on

for extra purchase on the thin path that was a mix of gravel and frozen snow. This was precarious, as any slip would have been fatal being on the edge of a 900m crumbling cliff and secondly because dislodged stones would accelerate to free fall speeds and bounce down the couloir below. The reason why this descent was so dangerous could now be seen. If this were descended by oneself or with a couple of others, it would not be anywhere near as much of a problem. The reason was that the descent route basically headed down steep ground, up to 60°, down the edge of and across several couloirs that channelled falling rock at a great speed to the glacier below. A party who had descended first would therefore be shelled by anything dislodged or kicked off by those above. The upper area was all loose and each time a foot was placed on the path intense care had to be taken to avoid knocking off stones.

We let the Spanish group descend around the sheltering corner of a buttress and then started our way down. The narrow path led to a faded fixed rope anchored at a couple of

points. Jo waited at the top with Ali and the Hushe guide because they were going to be slower; in reality he should have been first being one of the most likely to dislodge stones. Walking very carefully and placing rather than shuffling our feet, we descended. Some sections we could scramble or just walk down while others were slippery slabs sometimes covered in loose rocks. For the later we descended one at a time, placing the fixed ropes over our rucksacks and shoulders and abseiling down. Denis, being a little hasty, went head over heels but landed in one piece and was fine.

Midway down the first fixed rope, Alan looked very ill and complained of feeling sick and having a very strange sensation before starting to puke up. We encouraged him down, but he kept retching without bringing anything up. We continued down and when we had reached a safer section had a good look at him. He couldn't keep water down and was feeling really bad. It was now important to get him down the hill, but as we were doing so, it started to snow fairly hard. We stopped underneath a



granite outcrop that offered some protection. Chris (our trek leader and doctor) had a look at Alan and decided that he did have acute altitude sickness. I strapped his pack onto mine and Alan descended as fast as he could with Ian and Alex. The problem was not just Alan, who was considered to have mild cerebral oedema, but Steve had not yet reached us. He had wanted to take his time, but with Ali and the Hushe guide appearing out of the snow shortly before the rock without Steve, we had another problem.

We needed to make sure that Steve returned down safely because he had refused help from both Ali and the Hushe guide, who were both irate and saying that Steve would not return from the mountain until midnight. We left an extra down jacket with Ali and agreed that Ali would wait for Steve. If Steve still did not make it down in reasonable time, we would send up water and a tent. The Hushe guide ascended again to look for Steve. Jo caught us up but was descending really slowly. I continued with Jo, while Chris first caught up Ian, Alex and Alan and then myself and Jo. Chris gave Alan two Diamox tablets I'd been carrying for emergencies. Alan's balance was badly affected and he couldn't remember much of the descent at the time. However, his condition rapidly improved as we descended. Ian and Alex went ahead while Chris and I stayed with Jo and Alan. Photography was now forgotten.

The final part of the descent was a traverse along an exposed mud, moraine path requiring care. By the now Alan was recovering having lost 900m since the Gondogora La. Jo was incredibly slow. Wandering



down the moraine for some while, I stayed with Alan while Chris walked with Jo. Thankfully, we soon arrived at the start of a stream valley next to the moraine where Razza and another porter were waiting. They insisted on carrying my pack of two day sacs. Thinking that camp was just around the corner, I agreed. We plodded on but the campsite was not to be seen until a little while later. Alan was overjoyed, and I was relieved.

Upon reaching the campsite, Alan dived head first into his tent and just lay there, barely able to express how he would like his tea. I sat in the mess tent, tired but elated, eating the rice and corned beef that magically appeared. My vision was a little blurred in one eye - a sure sign of hyperglycaemia due to 12-14 hours on the move with only Tracker bars and at an altitude of over 5000m. Some chocy biscuits soon fixed that. Steve appeared later with Ali and all the party had made it down. We had all made it!

The stars that evening were glorious: myriad upon myriad of countless gems, some bright, others faint with the Milky Way wafting across the sky.

Village life in northern Baltistan

I walked into the village of Hushe feeling like an alien. I did not belong, both from their looks and how I felt. We have so much and they have so little, we looked so strange to them, yet here they were normal and not us.

After walking through the village feeling embarrassed to be here on holiday free to come and leave when we wanted. Many locals do not leave the area at all during their lives, lacking the means to do so. They treated us as superior beings, which we

were not. The misery that people back at home can get into striving for more seems very hollow when compared to the village of Hushe.

Hushe is a simple place, round stones from the river held together with mud to make buildings and homes. Dirt floors, either wooden logs and branches as a roof or some iron sheeting. The school was a modern building, funded by trekkers who have passed through. Little children playing in the street with dirty but smiling faces were running around through the barley crops. Amazingly, a few could speak English and asked our names, others called out "Hello sweet" as we walked past. A couple of little girls let us take their photograph. The streets were dirt paths; polluted water ran in channels by the road side. Some buildings had plastic windows, others mesh screening. Karakorum Experience sponsored both water and power for this village, so standpipes were installed around the village and our campsite area had a fluorescent light.

In the summer, jeeps can get out to other villages, but in winter the village is cut off, with no radio or telephone. They have a nurse with some medicines, but if someone is really ill, then during winter when they cannot be taken to hospital, they often die. The nurse cum doctor cum pharmacist came to our campsite to explain this to us. As little as four rupees can buy some medicine, and they vaccinate against some common diseases, but not all. He collects all the children together for when the doctor visits. As happened most days on trek, and especially as we were in a village, Chris had his outpatients again, with one guy being given anti-spasm drugs for a bowel area problem, possibly cancer.

The schoolteacher also came to see us for a while. He teaches ages 5 to 18 from 8am to 2pm, every day except Sundays with Friday as a half day. This costs parents 10 rupees a month. Some of the children looked fine and malnourishment did not appear to be a problem but there were some distinct mongoloid features. The children were all dirty, but many had smiles to melt any heart.

The nurse guy came back with a donation book and we were able to give individually to support health, education, campsites or rubbish clearance from the mountains. \$25 should pay for 250 doses of medicine.

The local people were open and friendly, eager to talk and shake hands. A strict Muslim village with a sign in English next to the police station, where trekkers must register in the summer informed us that taking photographs of women was strictly prohibited. Women were scarce in the streets, with a few seen in the fields carrying huge mounds of hay on their backs.

We had camped in a field inside the village walls. After lunch it was time to say goodbye to our trusty band of porters. They all lined up and Chris called out their names to give them about 500 rupees or about a three-day bonus. We had each given 3400 rupees into the kitty. They shook all of our hands, expressed thanks and some even seemed sad to leave us. I think that we as a group had tried to share some of our humanity with them, and they in turn had opened to us and shared what they could of their ways and culture. They had gone the extra mile for us, working diligently and really treating us better than we deserved. Some of us gave clothes to them in appreciation. We'd had a good time together. The end of the

trek was reached, and now we had the long ride back to Islamabad and our ticket to the West.

Awaken at 4am by, to us, the wail of the call to prayer, this was the start of a day of wonder, leaving the Hushe behind and bouncing our way towards Skardu in Jeeps. We started out with three jeeps, as the sun shone on Masherbrum, crowned in white, and glowing brown with countless rock spires higher than the Alps yet dwarfed still by the mighty giant beyond. I hopped into the back of the jeep carrying our duffle sacks and stood holding the tarpaulin frame with Alan, Ian and Ali for the first section of our ride. I felt so alive. This gave a real birds eye view of the mountains that form the high boundaries of the river Hushe and our road.

The road twisted and turned alongside the river, a winding line traversing the side of the mountain, until we reached the next main village, Kande. Here a flash flood had washed away not only our 4x4 track, but also much of the village, forcing them into wood or iron sheet covered heavy cotton fabric tents. A crowd of male villagers swamped us wanting to carry our duffle bags across the boulder slope and three river crossings via wet and slippery poles. They charged 40 rupees for each bag. We found our way across the landslide and then walked through the village, twisting and turning between apricot trees, irrigation channels and villagers homes. People were sitting on the floor, children running around, women dressed from head to toe in brightly coloured fabric.

Looking down from the area where the road started again, fields of corn stretched down to the river and apricots were drying on house roofs ready for winter. The sudden flood had wiped out a large proportion of what had looked like a prosperous village in terms of fields and crops.

The track passed through a gathering centre for hay, collected together into huge bundles ready for ferrying to a of local distribution centre. Some buildings here had machined and painted wooden doors and most plots, gardens and houses had small Chinese padlocks. Passing up around a corner, we reached a larger village, with a brightly coloured Mosque. Terraced buildings, with mud and stick flat roofs for drying grass and apricots, climbed their way up the hillside



towards the mosque. An amazing jumble of near geometric shapes, man made but still hand made.

Continuing towards Skardu, the jeeps bounced their way in a straighter line between tall trees and stone walls. These villages had primitive electric systems, often donated by foreign organisations, notably climbing clubs. Children waved at us through the windows of one long school building.

Khapalu was our lunch stop, an oasis of flowers amidst this high desert world. We walked into a room with a carpet, sofas: a shock after so long in the wild. After so much green tea and water, it was a delight to slowly drink a bottle of coke.

From here, the dirt road continued 190km to Skardu, passing initially through some more populated areas with a string of villages before a long hot drive (42°C) through near desert scenery amidst high mountains, endless scree and broken, rubbly cliffs rather than towering granite walls. We passed through an army checkpoint for foreigners where our

details were recorded. Thoughtfully, we left the cameras in the jeep to avoid any risk of confiscation. All very relaxed as they just wanted the boxes ticked, just like functionaries everywhere.

The road improved a little and we crossed several suspension bridges. One of these was 400 feet in span, held by six one-inch diameter steel wires on each side linked to decking of wooden sleepers via vertical ties. Some side cords stabilised it a little to reduce side swing. Only one bridge had a steel structure. All of flexed and pulsated when crossed.

Generally tarmaced roads now enabled faster passage but also some hairy moments when oncoming vehicles were on the wrong side of the road or we dropped two wheels off the tarmac to avoid crunching metal. When we had first looked out from the K2 motel, the view to our right was our return approach. Turning back into the motel, the main part of our adventure had ended. Things had run very smoothly while also being

the experience of a lifetime.

Ali accompanied us into Skardu bazaar to look for a few bits and pieces. After our simple life in the mountains, it was an almost overpowering wave of noise, smell and colour, even to the extent of being stressful. After washing my face, I lay on my back and went to sleep. Apparently, here I started to moan during dinner and be negative after, they say, having been positive all through the trip.



Cycling with the Tour de France

Dennis Armstrong

It was Mark my son who had the idea. He is into biking and has passed on his enthusiasm to his son, Robert, my grandson.

“Why not,” said he one day in August 1999, “why not three generations of Armstrongs, aged 10, 40, and 70, go to France, and cycle up some of the big climbs in the Alps with the Tour de France? After all it was an Armstrong (Neil) that went to the moon, and Armstrong (Lance) that won the Tour de France in 1999.”

As I say, I knew Mark was into biking, and anything with the word “alps” in it will get my attention, but all this remote family linkage took me back a bit. So what with the glow from the word “alps”, and our ancestry, it slipped my mind that what was being proposed was that I should be cycling (ere too long) up some very big mountainous roads. Bigger than anything round Balsall Common, that’s for sure. Still a challenge is something I find hard to pass by. And Three generations doing something worthwhile together, well that has to be something to go for.

The first hurdle was getting the *nihil obstat* from my wife. That would have been no problem left to myself but Mark went straight into it.

“Look Mum,” he said as we sat round the kitchen table finishing off a bottle of Rosemount, “I don’t want to be blamed if I bring Dad back in a box.. I want your permission to do this, and you’re responsible if anything happens.”

I could not believe my ears! My young whippersnapper, drinking my



wine, in my house, implying that twiddling a few pedals on a French hill would have dire effect upon me, a member of the YRC. I almost exploded with indignation, but I was told to calm down. Slowly I began to see that his business training had taught him to make sure his back was covered. Someone else would be blamed. He could then plan a more vigorous trip with a clear consciousness.

In October via the Internet (www.letour.fr) we received full details of the 87th Tour in 2000. It would consist of 21 stages, making a total of 3630km of cycling, and there would be five stages in haute montagne. We wanted to find hills that the Tour would come over late in the day, to give us all morning to cycle up the hill before them, We would camp at the foot of the climb, and set off early, and when all the cavalcade had gone by, we would freewheel all the way back down to the campsite to open a celebratory bottle of something (cheap and) good. Etape 15, Dimanche 16 Juillet: Briancon – Courchevel 168km. The route consisted of five climbs: Col du Lauteret (2060 m), Col du Galibier (2645 m), Col du Telegraphe (1566 m), Col de la Madelaine (2000 m) and the final ascent to Courchevel (2004 m). With the maps spread all over the

floor, we chose Col de la Madelaine, an 8% climb 20km long, a climb of the première catégorie. We chose the village of La Chambre at the foot of the Madelaine, in the valley of L'Arc, some 10 km NW of St Jean-de-Maurienne for our campsite.

We found that the Tour had a jour de repos on the following day, so that would allow us to move our camp and to the foot of the next hill we selected. Étape 16, Mardi 18 Juillet: Courchevel – Morzine 196 kms. This consisted of five climbs: Col des Saisies (1650 m), Col des Aravis (1498 m), Col de la Colombière (1618 m), Col de Chatillon (733), and Col de Joux-Plane (1700 m). We selected the Col de Joux-Plane, 12km long but a 8.4% climb. This was off the scale for French Mountain Cycling, so it was described as hors catégorie. We planned to drive to a camp site at Verchaix in the valley of the Giffre, north of Chamonix, and climb Joux-Plane.

We set off on Thursday 13 July, in Mark's wife's Volvo, the back stuffed with gear, and three bikes upright on the rack on the roof. Our start was delayed by the Coventry Telegraph photographer turning up to record this beginning for the good citizens of Coventry, and further delayed because I then forgot my bumbag with my passport and all the French francs in it. But without further mishaps, we reached Dover, for 13.30 hrs, crossed by ferry, and spent the first night at a B&B Hotel in St Quentin. The next day, France's Day of Celebration, was wet and windy, in fact distinctly depressing. We reached our village of La Chambre at 17.30 hrs, and found the campsite up the hill. We were extremely surprised to find the campsite full! We had never dreamt of booking ahead – after all two small

tents...surely no problem. The good lady, on hearing that our name was Armstrong (and perhaps a relation of Lance's?) was kind to us, found us a spot in a nearby field, uncut thick wet grass, on a slope. But that did not matter, we were here, and we were in. We cooked our supper in thin rain, and young Robert was beginning to revise his impression of camping, downwards!

The Météo was more favourable for the next day. It would not rain all day. So having bought supplies for the next few days, we had a training run up the valley and back to get our legs going and pedals turning. There was more rain as we cooked our supper, and less conversation as we realised that the next day was IT. Something new for us all. Even Mark had not cycled up a 12 mile hill before.

Next morning, we set off at 0800 hrs, early to allow for contingencies. It proved to be a mistake. The road up the Col de la Madelaine was frantic with cars and Romavans trying to get to the Summit for the best view. There were vans of police, and vans loaded with steel barriers, being ferried up to control the crowds. There were concessionaires, full of their T-Shirts and baseball caps, klaxonising their way up the hairpin bends. It was noisy and unpleasant, like cycling on the M25. Once the road was closed however things calmed down. In French fashion, the people were already installed for the day, tables out, glasses at the high port, bottle already looking well used. Everyone was in a great mood. There were national banners: German and Belgium, with their Black, Yellow and Red, the Netherlands with Orange, Italy with Green and White, and France with Red White and Blue.



A few solitary Brits with a Union Jack, and an odd American, cheering Lance Armstrong. We had a Union Jack on the back of our bikes, and we were gaily cheered (“Euro, Euro, Where is Tony Blair?”) as we slowly pedalled up the endless hill. Occasionally we were offered a quick snifter from the crowd, that put some fire into our tummies for a while.

By late morning, it was clear that the summit was already full and there would be no room for us when we got there. So at about 13.30 we settled for a point about 5 km below the summit, as the furthest we could get. It offered a reasonably view of the riders coming up and they would be going slow (for them) because they would already have climbed three other huge climbs and surely must be feeling it. The sun was beginning to shine palely through the clouds. Things were looking up. We had something to eat and settled down for the tour to arrive. I had a sleep.

The first sign of the impending cyclists is the vehicles of Tour Official Sponsors, dressed overall in various fantastic outfits: an elephant, a Co-Co Cola bottle, a Michelin tyre, and goodies of all kinds are tossed willy-nilly into the crowd, a shower of freebies: baseball caps, key rings, samples of coffee and of saucissons, drinking bottles, and so on. The crowd became wild with excitement, seeing who could grab the most. The atmosphere quickened. Team cars

come through with spare bicycles, Official cars and then a pause... a long pause...and the first cheer goes up, the tour is at La Chambre, they are beginning the climb up our hill. We begin to imagine them cycling round and up the bends we had cycled. How fast are they going? Our 3.9 mph seemed pitifully slow compared with their 15-20 mph. Then they arrive, young men, sun glasses mostly over their forehead, in brightly coloured, polyester high-wicking shirts, articulating with the team colours of the bicycles: Pink for Festina, Blue and White for US Postal Services, etc. A look of absolute determination on their faces, some off the saddle to get a bit more leverage on the pedals, grateful for all cheers and encouragement but concentrating so hard on getting the bike and themselves up the next five kilometres. It was hard to imagine the pain they must be feeling, even the fittest. The crowd had their individual favourites: the French for Richard Virenque, the Italians for Marcel Pantini, known as “The Pirate”, the Germans for Jan Ullrich. Lance Armstrong in the maillot jaune well placed in the first group and a young Colombian cyclist, Santiago Botero, wearing the maillot à pois, as King of the Mountains.



When the last competitor had gone by, we gathered our things together and set off to cycle up the last five

kilometres to the top. It was quite hard starting again and we were cycling against the tide. The crowd was streaming down from the summit. I got my head down, the summit cairn (so to speak) was in sight and nothing was going to stop me now! The banner across the road – “1 Kilometre” – and I knew I was almost there... three more minutes and I would have done it. I was not going back in box. It is interesting to note that we free-wheeled back down to the valley, to our camp site at 15 mph, about the same speed at which the Tour came up!

Two days later we were back at the same game, this time faced with the Col du Joux-Plane, shorter but steeper than the Madelaine. Also, whereas at La Chambre, the Tour route came past the camp site's gate, at Verchaix, we had 4km to cycle to start the ascent from the old town of Samoens. Learning from our experience we did not start as early, but waited for them to close the road at 10.00. The cycling was calmer, but the route was definitely steeper. We all had to ‘dig in’ to get up some of the bends on the hairpins, particularly if because of traffic you could not take the outside line. The weather had improved greatly, and it was a lovely sunny Alpine day, snow from the recent storms on the peaks around us. Again we found that there was no way we could get to the col, “complètement bloqué, Messieurs!”, and had to settle for a point 3km below the summit. Again the long wait, the news filtering from the people in the Romavans with TVs of the position of the Tour to the expectant crowd: who was in front, and where X or Y was in the peloton. I had used the previous day to buy the sporting paper L'Equipe and studied the field: which rider was which, what was his number, who the experts

were favouring and who out of favour. We knew who to look for: for us, No 127, David Millar, the Scot riding for CONFIDIS.

When the Tour was over, we completed the cycling to the col, once more against a vast crowd, and there had drinks, took photographs of ourselves looking suitably macho and impressive. Mark looked the part, insisting on having his expensive bike in all the pictures, Robert looked unimpressed and ready for more, and I did my best, thinking that at least I had earned the right to be a poseur this once.

Was it difficult? You had to get stuck in, like going up Corbetts, unrelenting but if taken at a reasonable speed, within your limits you could keep going. We made sure we drank lots of water, laced with ‘Powersport’ drink, and Dextrosols were on hand for every stop. The atmosphere made it. To cycle up through the throng of cheering crowd, along with many other cyclist doing the same thing, on all kinds of bikes, but mainly mean-lean machines, was something new, something great and something I will not forget. Maybe not like topping a 4000m, but very close.

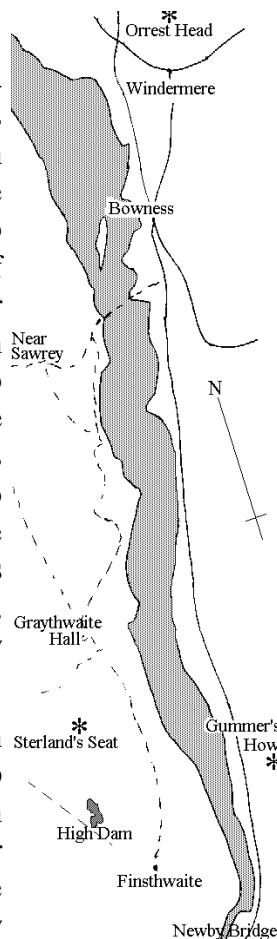


In Praise of Sterland's Seat

John Sterland

Most guide books advise readers that if they wish to have an excellent view of Lake Windermere they should climb either Orrest Head just north of the town of Windermere or Gummer's How, approached from the road from Newby Bridge to Bowland Bridge, map reference 390883. Orrest Head is recommended if one wishes to look south down Lake Windermere, while Gummer's How is a popular vantage point, particularly for motorists, to enjoy the lake view to the north.

Both these viewpoints, marked on the Lake District Tourist map with red stars, suffer from disadvantages. Orrest Head is far too popular to be enjoyed to the full, except possibly in the early morning, while Gummer's How, the height of which is 321 metres, is the haunt of motorists who can park their cars at the official car park at about 160 metres, and a mere six or seven hundred yards from its summit. One cannot guarantee that it will be free of visitors even in the early morning: the last time I "climbed" Gummer's How was at 7.30 in the morning, and I met a young couple coming down. Then



on the top there were about six people camping, who were still abed: not an ideal place for camping, but no doubt they would enjoy the view when they woke up.

However, some years ago I discovered a much better viewpoint of Lake Windermere, if only for the fact that I have never seen anyone else there. It is situated on the west side of the lake at map reference 364900. It is not named on any of my Ordnance Survey maps and so I call it "Sterland's Seat". It is about one mile north-east from High Dam, and can be approached from a little-used path, also not marked on the OS map, from High Dam to the Lakeside road. I have climbed up to my Seat on numerous occasions when staying at my cottage near Finsthwaite, and over the years have spent many hours admiring the view, or just resting. I recall that I wrote the draft of two meet reports while sitting in the sun on the large rock at the top, from which the view to the north is

magnificent. One can see Fairfield and the Kirkstone Pass, while to the west there is an excellent view of the Coniston Fells, and southwards on a fine day the views seem almost limitless over Morecambe Bay and as far as Ingleborough.



View north up Lake Windermere from Sterland's Seat

How it Really Used to Be!

Number Three by a "Has Been"

Mooching round Carlisle one day in 1958 after University exams I came across Joe Moody, an old school friend. I knew he climbed a bit and had a rope so a trip was fixed up. We duly met at the railway station and finally ended up threading the Needle on a lovely June morning.

I had been thinking about Eagle's Nest Direct ever since I read of an early attempt where the leader fell six feet and the rope snapped. He was, I think, G. A. Solly. We kitted up in the Dress Circle - rubbers, two medium weight ropes and three line slings with karabiners. For younger members, rubbers were cheap and therefore thin soled, gym shoes. Climbing in them was a special technique whereby a series of moves were figured out and then the climber moved smoothly over the rock, using footholds just for moving over. At its best it was a truly elegant form of rock climbing. Even falling off was relatively elegant.

The two ropes, the old No. 2 weight, were due to muddled thinking on my part. I had seen people using two ropes threading first one then the other through protection karabiners, to reduce drag and I felt, mistakenly, it must be safer.

The first pitch was no problem though the two ropes, each knotted round my waist and tied with a bowline, were a considerable nuisance but they did make me feel I must be on a hard climb. Joe came up and I set off on the top pitch of seventy or more feet.

The shape of the pitch is a traverse left onto the ridge and then smoothly up on sloping holds. That was the way the stars of the day did it anyway. Getting to the ridge was comfortable

but on looking down I could see several spectators in the Dress Circle watching me. There are lots of spiky rocks about there and I would hit them if I fell. Not good so I continued and soon came to the floor of the Eagle's Nest. One of my precious line runners went on there and I felt much better even though I was no more than forty or so feet from Joe.

Getting into the Nest was the work of a moment but getting out was far more complicated.

I tried this way and that, all the while aware of the spectators. It was not difficult, I just could not figure out the moves so I could flow smoothly over the rock! I was able to move up my sling runner about two feet. That helped but not a lot.

Finally I started talking to myself. Usually I use my surname on these occasions but found I was arguing on Christian name terms. In the end I moved tentatively into layback moves. They did the trick and I was on the top twenty feet of truly sloping holds over which, I like to think, I moved elegantly. It was quick.

The route meets the Ordinary route in a large corner with a crack at the back where you belay. Somehow an eighteen year old lad had got into the crack and he watched in disbelief as I came over the final bulge. "What course are you on then?" he asked. Plainly he did not believe me when I replied "I do it for fun".

I spoiled the effect by making a pig's ear of climbing the crack behind him. Our day finished off fairly painfully by running the Great Hell Gate screes in the aforementioned rubbers. I did once run those screes five times in one day in rubbers, which ruined them, but Fred Dowlen owned them!

I have not used two ropes since.

Eccentricity and Munros

or, a view from the circumference

Jeff Hooper

Note: Similarity to any person living or dead is intentional and the contents of the following article should not be taken as fact.

I cannot quote him as I did not have my tape recorder there, and I have never learned shorthand, but, at the 87th Annual Dinner, the retiring President, in his speech said something like this:

When I became President some members looked upon me as ever so slightly eccentric. Well, you are now going to enjoy the pleasure of the Presidency in the hands of a real eccentric.

I have long held the opinion that the greatest accolade that can be conferred upon a YRC man is that he shall be named as an eccentric.

Back in 1983 I invited a young, hard, walker to join the Club on the Long Walk. As well as thinking that he would enjoy it, I had other motives. I had decided that my only hope of finishing the Welsh 3000s (to obliterate the memories of the 1967 failure), was, that if in addition to buying some Walsh lightweight fell-running boots, I had someone with me who could provide a tent, to ensure a quiet night's sleep (or what few hours would remain of one, when rising at 3 a.m.), and then would drag me along; do the route finding; generally smooth the way and keep me going. I also thought that he had the makings of an excellent member. The weekend went well, we both finished the 3000s, his tent was commodious and there were fewer disturbances, the night before the walk, sleeping in it, than in the hut. (The morning following the walk,

after sleeping on the hard ground, I felt as though I needed a block and tackle to raise me to an upright posture). My friend even got on well with Stanley.

Sometime later, when I broached the subject of membership the only reply that I got was that he did not want to join the YRC as it was club of eccentrics. Obviously, either he thought that he had not reached the required eccentricity to fit in; or that I was not a true eccentric and so should not invite him to join. He carried on regularly walking locally at weekends and then his Scottish ancestry came through. On his way to and from visiting relatives in the north of Scotland he began to go up mountains selected from Munro's Tables, keeping the book well out of sight when staying in Youth Hostels. As time progressed, he linked up with a fellow spirit, who also had Scottish ancestry and there was quite a battle as to who could bag most Munros. Not only did they go together, but each would try to gain an advantage by fitting in one or two without the other noticing. A quick trip to grandparents here and a solo drive on New Years Eve there, and an odd summit would be claimed. But yet, if ever I mooted the idea of membership the reply would be 'No, it's a club of eccentrics'.

I have memories of one glorious September weekend in 1988 when the two of them dragged me along and we claimed six Munros the first day, and more the day after. Towards the end of the first day, when I looked across to the other side of a rocky glen, from what I believed was the last summit of the day, to a craggy looking defile with an immense height loss between me and it, I said, 'Thank goodness we are not including that one today',

silence for a while and then ‘Er, well, actually we are’. It was a grand weekend.

Before long my friend’s fellow Munroist was elected a member of the YRC and was able to introduce the one who had an aversion to eccentrics as a guest on YRC Scottish meets. This way he built up his quota of attendances to qualify for membership, and no doubt at the same time observed how to be an eccentric. We all know the eccentrics; each member has his own catalogue of them.

Almost fourteen years after the Welsh 3000s, on another Scottish meet his fellow Munroist, now an eminent and respected member of the YRC, persuaded him to fill in the application form; another one or two Munros were added to the tally that meet and in the course of time he was elected a member. I think, by this time, he believed that having done about 200 Munros he was entitled, at

the least, to be considered as an embryo eccentric. Or, perhaps it was that the member who persuaded him to join, was proved to be of greater eccentricity than me, and therefore a more worthy proposer. When our new member realised to what he had committed himself, he immediately fled the country and as far as I know has been unable to attend a meet since. He must come back someday; he cannot leave the score at around 200 indefinitely.

The point about eccentricity is that it all depends on where you are standing. If you stand on the circumference of a revolving disc you rotate around the centre, the centre is normal and you are eccentric to it. By the theory of relative motion, the centre of the same disc appears to rotate around the viewpoint on the circumference, which then becomes the normal fixed point—I have always known that the YRC view of the world was right!

A *Stop Press* Chipping received from Steve Craven...

I have just received my copy of “A Passage to Himalaya” published in 2001 by the Oxford University Press for the Himalayan Club to celebrate the new millenium. It contains in its over 350 pages reprinted selected articles and lesser items from the 56 issues of the Himalayan Journal.

Of particular interest to members of the YRC is “The Founding of the Himalayan Club” written by G.L. Corbett originally published in the 1929 Himalayan Journal and reprinted in this new volume. We are told that following the formation of the Mountain Club of India on 23 September 1927, “I took an early opportunity to meet Mr. W. Allsup, its moving spirit.” Following this meeting the Mountain Club of India merged with the Himalayan Club, after which the combined Club has

never looked back.

William (Bill) Allsup joined the YRC in 1919, became a life member in 1950 and died in 1969. He spent much of his life in India and Assam (J.YRC. 10, (35), 387) where he contributed to mountain literature by writing his “Notes on Walking around Shillong” - a rare booklet of which a copy is fortunately in the YRC library. Allsup devoted three pages to cave exploration in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, thereby becoming one of the first people in India to explore caves for their own sake. Indeed, now that that part of India is no longer a politically sensitive area, it has become a popular caving venue for foreign expeditions working with the locals.

Bill Allsup therefore deserves to be remembered for his contributions to the founding of the Himalayan Club, and to the development of cave exploration in India.

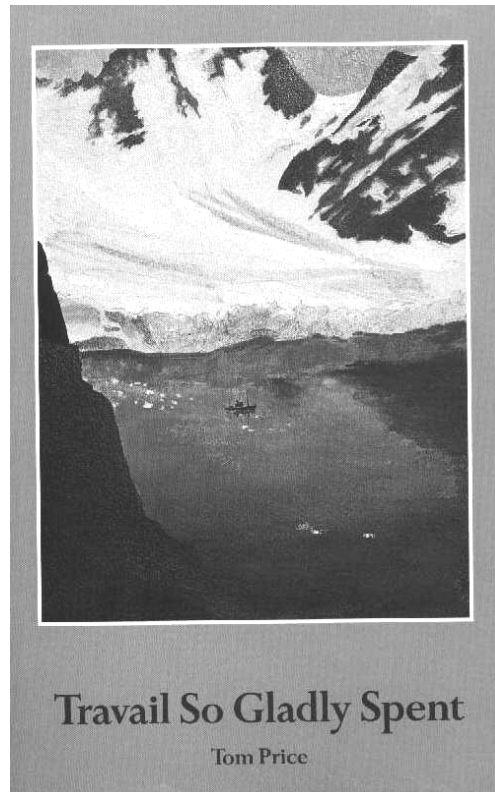
Travail So Gladly Spent

by Tom Price

Published by The Ernest Press, price £17.50

The second half of the twentieth century has seen climbing and hill walking change from being a kind of private game or hobby, akin to fishing or gardening, into an institution. In the 1940's we lads went off to the hills to do our thing, with whatever tackle came to hand, (father's Home Guard boots, a Gas cape, and an ex-paratrooper's anorak, 15/- from Edgingtons, and a hemp rope if you went on the rock faces) and we enjoyed a freedom from restrictions that today we have forgotten about. This world-at-your-feet (literally from the Milestone Buttress or Gashed Crag on Tryfan) was a wonderful feeling. It was just good to be alive, and perhaps we were conscious that others were less fortunate, lying in some foreign field that is for ever England. During the 1970's all this began to change. The motorway network made access to the hills so much easier, child-centred education eroded enthusiasm for team games to win honour for the school, and in its place encouraged youngsters 'to seek adventure', through school parties and scouts. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award was their goal. The result is the social scene on the mountains that we know so well today.

Tom Price has seen these changes at first hand. He started climbing before the war and continues to do so still today. I met him at LHG in October and found a kind of hobbit figure, with twinkly eyes and an infectious youthful grin. His book is not an autobiography in the usual



sense. There is little of his personal life. It is rather a series of vignettes, an episode here, a happening there, all told in a delightfully light, gentle way. The illustrations are his own drawings. He served in the navy during the war and then went back to Liverpool University to take his degree in English. He knows of what good style in writing consists, there are scores of little literary quotations scattered here and there, and his whimsical humour and appreciation of the female sex are never far beneath the surface. So here are the recollections of a man who (to quote Roberts) has 'been', has done things, not always wisely, but with a joie-de-vivre that is infectious. He has done these things over fifty years, not to impress others, not for money, not for PR, not for sponsors, but because he is what he is. Tom Price's writings have an integrity and an honesty that is refreshing.

He taught at Workington Grammar School, then Warden of Eskdale

Outward Bound Centre and Leader of the Eskdale Mountain Rescue team. Many of his stories are therefore about the Lakes. But of course he goes further afield. I think my favourite is his first tale "Short of the Folding Stuff", recounting how he climbed Pic de Midi d'Ossau in the Pyrenees immediately after the war, greatly helped by a French army detachment. Scotland, Wales, Skye (with the YRC), the Alps, the Dolomites, are all there, and further afield, in South Georgia in 1955 with George Spenceley, and later canoeing with George in Canada in 1976. In the 1980's he led a mixed party of rich American tourists and poor young Africans (few spoke English, but one brought a "ghetto-blaster") on behalf of the Outward Bound organisation in Lesotho in South Africa. But he keeps coming back to his favourite place the Lakes: Dow Crag, Gimmer, Scafell, Borrowdale and of course his favourite, the 'Grand Steyn', Pillar Rock.

In these activities he show himself worthy of Kipling's ideal man: he treats "those twin imposters" triumph and disaster alike. When his good friend Keith Warburton and a young protégé, Harry Stephenson, disappear on the ill-fated 1959 Batura Mustagh expedition, Price is left to pick up the pieces. His heart goes out to Warburton's newly wedded wife and to Stephenson's father and girl friend, but he sees an objectivity to the tragedy, that offends the relatives. Price feels that the tragedy was "a terrible misfortune and an accident that made no sense", which must have seemed hard for the bereaved. But his triumphs are treated with the same equal objectivity, just another day out, feeling good that body and spirit had been taken to the limit. He stresses that he started climbing in the days when the leader just did not fall. Period. He takes great care, he sometime turns back defeated (but not very often), and will take help in what ever form it comes. On one trip in the



South Georgia

Alps he writes: “Shaving on this trip I find is good for me; it brings a sense of well-being, persuading me I am coping with things and keeping on top.” Yes, there is fear, yes, he is often glad to be back at base, the dangers behind him, but there is no flag-waving, neither at full nor at half mast.

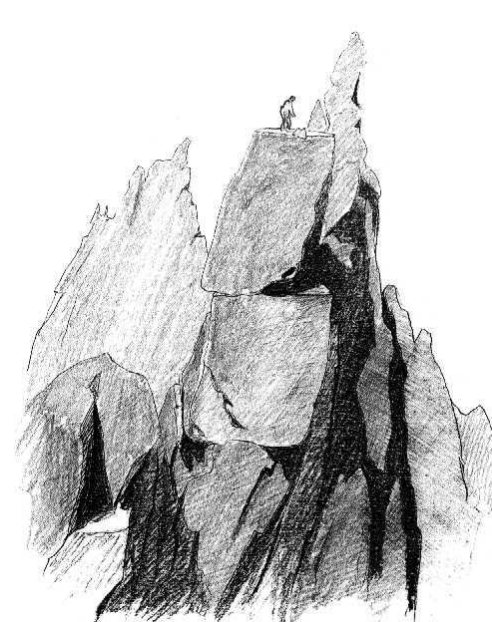
People we know, or know of, flit across the pages, creating the feeling that the reader is also a friend of Tom Price’s. Great climbers like Andre Roch, Bill Tilman, and Walter Bonatti, stalwarts like A.B. Hargreaves, Graham Macphee, Harry Spilsbury, Dennis Grey, Bill Peascod, Sid Cross and our own Crosby Fox and George Spenceley. Even the eponymous Monsieur Tricouni himself, plays a cameo role, presenting Price with a tie pin in the shape of No 1 Tricouni. (What is the difference between a No 1 and a No 6 tricouni? Answers on a postcard please to the Editor.) But no mention of Bonington, Joe Brown and only a fleeting reference to John Hunt and Don Whillans. He admits that he never wanted to be a star, “like Colin Kirkus or Maurice Linnell”. He seems indifferent to the world. It is not for fame that he wins laborious days.

Alongside these tales are some philosophical essays: why do we climb, what is the difference between ‘recklessness’ and ‘adventure’, what on earth does ‘adventure’ consist of in these days when safety has to be ‘bomb-proof’. One of our members has said to me that he found this chapter the most discerning explanation of our sport that he has ever read. Adventure for Tom Price was the eight months in South Georgia in 1955, (£100 bonus on return to England), and above all canoeing in the North West Canada,

down the 500 miles of the Hanbury and Thelon rivers, through the wind-swept vastnesses of the Beverley, Aberdeen and Schultz Lakes to Chesterfield Inlet which runs into Hudson Bay. Price writes: “This journey was one of the most significant and memorable adventures of my life and I can say with Pascal: *Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m’effraye.*”

My final thoughts are twofold: I fear a hard back copy priced at £17.50 may prove to be a difficult book to sell, lacking any of the essential ingredients of sex, drama of cut ropes, or hypothermia at 28000 feet: and this would be a great pity for the book is a delight to read. While reading this book I had lived with a good person whom I have come to know. Tom would appreciate it perhaps if I say that he reminded me of Chaucer’s knight:

*“He nevere yet no vileinye ne sayde,
In al his lyf, unto no maner wight,
He was a verray parfit gentil knight.”*



Grand Gendarme on the Grépon, Chamonix

Craven Pothole Club Record

April 2000 No. 58

July 2000 No. 59

Oct. 2000 No. 60.

Due to the Leeds Library having been closed I have recently taken the above three CPC Records for deposit in our room.

As usual there is a wealth of good reading. I was particularly impressed by the public relations exercise mounted at Horton in Ribblesdale. This consisted of talks and a buffet and must have done some good for relations with the local people.

On the same lines in the following Record No.59 is a note that permission had been obtained from Lord Shuttleworth and English Nature for a dig on Leck Fell, much better than just tearing in with your J.C.B.

The highlight of No.60 concerns the rescue of three experienced cavers from a place called the "Font" in Gaping Gill. Apparently they had gone through this place in low water on the outward journey but on their return the water had risen over the exit passage.

The procedure was to bail out, I'm not clear where to, and lower the water while the C.P.C. got the successful rescue going.

The Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal 2000.

Once again a feast of first class writing and photography, all of such a uniformly high standard that is difficult to single any out for praise. I particularly enjoyed the articles on W.H. Murray and on Harold Raeburn.

The photographs, from all over the world, are very good. By the time you read this the journal will be available for your delectation in our room at the Leeds Library.

The Fell and Rock Journal 2000

This issue of the Fell and Rock Journal is well worth a read. It is funnier than usual; see "Pour Madame le Dortoir" by Paul Roberts and "Caring for the Lake District National Park" by Derek Lyon. I wonder whether Derek was responsible for Lyon's Crawl on Gimmer but thinking again it was more likely his Dad or indeed Grandad. It is a good name anyway.

In spite of, or perhaps because of the lighter touch which pervades this issue it is still a wonderful evocation of the climbing and walking experiences of the contributors who include Harry Griffin and Tom Price who were guests on George Spenceley's meet last October at Low Hall Garth. Harry Griffin's article is wide ranging over personalities as well as adventures. George Basterfield, Lord Chorley and Colonel Westmorland feature as well as the "ghostly" appearance of Siegfried Herford at Hollow Stones when he was supposed to be in France. I believe it, perhaps because I believe in mountains.

Tom Price's article in contrast centres mainly on a youthful attempt on the Eskdale Horseshoe. A major fell walk at Christmas is a serious undertaking and it comes as no surprise to learn that Tom's party decided not to ascend Scafell but scrambled down the rocks at the side of Cam Spout. In good conditions they make a fun scramble but in a dark December evening only the youth of the party kept them out of trouble. Though I expect they thought they were in

enough trouble Betting soaked in Silvery Bield

Leslie Shore's "Splendour and Squalor" came a mite nearer to my own experience there. Both of us chickened off Broad Stand (solo and getting late). But he used the Foxes Tarn route while I, in 1951, used Lord's Rake to get to Scafell Summit. We both came back over Slight Side he to the Woolpack and I to Mrs. Cowman's at Wha House. I can still see the gathering rain squalls.

But of course the journal does not confine itself to Lakeland. There are two articles about the Alicante area of mainland Spain. The one which will strike a chord with YRC deals with the Bernia Ridge; the other describes an adventure in Barianco del Infierno of which the nearest translation must be Hell Gill. This one is a lot more serious than the Hell Gill up Edendale which some of us know and love. Apart from the question of size, the photograph is most impressive, there is a whiff of burnt boats in the description of the normal route. The author and his son had to climb out or stay for good.

Climbs on Arran, in Arabia and Colorado are also described and the details of new climbs make the Journal a mine of information. It is in the club library for your delectation.



Club Proceedings

2000

The Meets were

7-9Jan, Low Hall Garth;

28-30 Jan, N.Wales. Glan Dena;

25-27 Feb, The Smithy, Thirlspot;

4-11 Mar, Brandseth, Norway. Nordic Skiing;

16-19 Mar, The Smiddy, Glen Etive;

31 Mar-2 Apr, Backpacking, Cairngorms;

5-7 May, LHG Working Meet;

12-14 May, Bosley Cloud, Congleton, Ladies Weekend;

27 May-4 Jun, The Corbetts, Spring Bank Holiday;

23-25 Jun, Rhinogs, Long Walk, Joint Meet with Grits & Wayfarers;

6-9 Jun, Inchnadamph, Grampian Spelio Hut;

4-6 Aug, Saddleworth Boarshurst Centre;

25-27 Aug, Lowstern working Party;

October, Guangxi Caving Expedition;

6-8 Oct, LHG 50th Anniversary Meet;

27-29 Oct, Alston, North Pennines;

18-19 Nov, AGM & Annual Dinner, Whoop Hall, Kirby Lonsdale;

8-10 Dec, Lowstern Christmas Meet.

The highlights of the Clubs activities were the YRC Guangxi Expedition to South China where massive new caves were discovered, and the Corbett Meet when 93 members and guests ascended all the 220 summits over the Spring Bank Holiday period. October 6th marked the 50th Anniversary of our tenancy of Low Hall Garth. Our special guests were, Harry Griffin, a well know Kendal journalist and former member and Tom Price a mountain man and explorer of distinction. George Spenceley, the first warden of LHG was the meet leader. The Christmas Meet at Lowstern attracted 46 for dinner, filling the Downham room to

capacity. Excellent slides of the China Expedition showed the magnificent formations in the gigantic caves visited and a view of life in the Guangxi province. Two members fulfilled a dream visiting the Nanda Devi sanctuary, the first westerners for nearly twenty years. The start of regular Tuesday walks and climbs making it a very successful Club year.

The 109th Annual General Meeting was held at Whoop Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale, on the 18th November 2000.

The following members were elected for the year 2000/2001: -

President: A. R. Chapmam

Vice President: D. J. Handley

Hon. Secretary: R. G. Humphreys

Hon. Meets Secretary; J. H. Hooper

Hon. Treasurer: G. A. Salmon

Hon. Editor: M. Smith

Hon Librarian/Archivist: W. N. Todd

Huts Secretary: R. D. Josephy

Hut Wardens: Low Hall Garth, D. English
Lowstern, R. D. Kirby

Hon. Auditor: C. D. Bush

Committee: G. Champion, I. D. F. Gilmour,
M. Hartland, A. Renton

Representatives to National Committees:

Council of Northern Caving Clubs
H.Lomas

BMC Lancs & Cheshire

Lake District: K. Aldred

Yorks & Humberside: W. N. Todd

The 87th Annual Dinner followed at the same hotel. The President W. I. C. Crowther, was in the chair. The Chief Guest was our Honorary Member, Dr John Farrer. The Kindred Clubs were represented by Doug Scott, President of the Alpine Club, Bryan Fleming, President of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, David

Bateman, Past President of the Gritstone Club, Frank Walker of the Northern Pennine Club. The attendance was 83.

Entertainment was provided by Dennis Armstrong, Derek Bush, Darrell Farrant, Alan Linford and Arthur Salmon with a musical sketch by Dennis comparing YRC Committee meetings past and present. Dr. Farrer proposed the health of the Club. The health of our Kindred Clubs and our guests was proposed by Alister Renton, the response was by Bryan Fleming. The singing of the Club song 'Yorkshire' was lead by Arthur Salmon with music by Neil Renton.

Membership comprised:

110 Ordinary Members,

68 Life Members,

4 Honorary Members, totalling
182.

New Members, Resignations & Deaths

New Members

2000 Alan Clare
Michael Ellacott
William H Hawkins
Richard Kirby
Martyn Thomas
James Whitby

Resignations

2000 Ian R. Hunt
Jon Laing
Neil Pomfret

Deaths

2000 Robert Everard Chadwick
Andrew N. Laing
Maurice Frederic Wilson

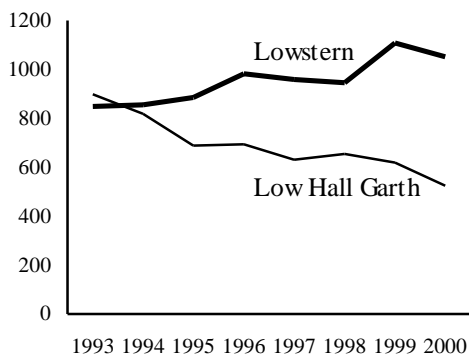
F.D.Smith

Chippings

The Club's principal agent for both the 1995 Jugal Himal trek and 1997 Rowaling trek, Motup, recently made his first visit to our country. A visit to our Yorkshire Dales was something he made sure he fitted into his schedule and though the hills were shrouded in mist he relived earlier trips browsing photographs while staying at Scar Top with **Albert Chapman**.

Motup has since returned to join an Indian Mountaineering Federation expedition conducting an environmental assessment in the Nanda Devi Inner Sanctuary.

The eight-year summary of bed-nights at the Club's two huts was presented at the last AGM by our Hut Secretary, **Richard Josephy**, and is charted below.



Alessandro Gogna was in Derbyshire this spring describing a few of his many achievements in the Alps told a tale of his youth. Camped by an Italian hut climbing huge rock walls

day after day their food supplies consisted of two jars of jam. They were grateful for a donation of 10kg of dog biscuits to supplement their diet and munched these while climbing. After one long successful day in the sun they descended to a shepherd's hut and when offered a drink of milk, downed two litres each, they were so dry.

Echoing **Dennis Armstrong's** report of cycling in the alps, three generations also went to Svalbard: **Kjetil Tveranger**, his son and his father. Kjetil asks if the YRC has been there and says it would make a great place for us to visit. He says, "You can walk for weeks without seeing any people, and Longyearbyen is easy to reach." And he reports:

"The summer has passed and a warm autumn has come. I still have Spitsbergen in my mind. The Svalbard tour was great. My father, Andreas and I spent about twelve days there. The first day we had a walk around Longyearbyen on the Platå Mountain because the boat to Cape Line was postponed that day. Andreas and I arrived at 3am, and we camped under open sky the first night with the midnight sun and one midge: the only one I saw or heard.

The second day we took a three-hour boat voyage out to Cape Line, where we visited Isford Radio. My father worked there from 1959 to 1960. I think it was strange for him to come

back. We stayed one night there and then had two nights outdoors. We walked around in the area and saw Svalbard reindeer and many birds. The landscape was flat moraine with mountains up to 700 metres. Geologically the landscape was very interesting. We had a beautiful view at the coast. The first day we walked about 25 km and camped by the sea on a lonely beach and made a fire from driftwood. We did not see any people on the trip. To be out there, so far from people and only your own skill to trust was very special.

After the Cape Line tour, we took a three-day cruise with an old Hurtigrute ship up to 80°N. The idea was to reach Moffen Island, but we were stopped by fixed solid ice. In a fjord in the very north at the end of a huge glacier front we saw a polar bear swimming. It is a big and great country where the distances are very large. I have already booked a tour up there for March and April.”

Proof reading has failed again in the last issue. In Steve Craven’s article "Cave Box" should have read "Cave Book" and "B. HARRISON", "H. HARRISON".

Member Chris Bird was incorrectly marked down as prospective member on the South Pennine meet report. Apologies.

From **Roy Denney**...

David Handley's book review talks of walking warding off madness but many years with the Club would seem to discount this premise but then again it is all in the definition. Perhaps we do just have more than our share of eccentrics.

As I jot these notes down in bleak midwinter I cannot help but think that there is a more appropriate start to the poem in the last bulletin

I leave tonight from Euston
by the seven-thirty train
I may get there tomorrow
Those damn repairs again

As my ire gets ever deeper
I hear an announcer's dross
'This is the o'ernight sleeper
platform seven for Kings Cross'

C.E.Benson in 1930 wrote six very amusing pages entitled *About Nothing in Particular* starting...

“At the last General Meeting our honoured and Honorary Editor, commenting on the reluctance of members to supply him with accounts of their holiday doings, suggested that they should remedy this deficiency, if not by writing up their own experiences, by stimulating others to send in theirs.”

This is a thinly veiled plug from **David Smith** for Bulletin material.

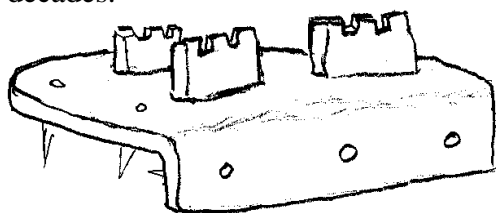
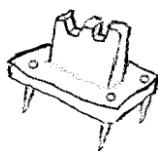
Adrian Bridge entered the London Marathon in April 2001 finishing in 3hrs 41mins, 6006th out of some 32,000.

The training took up a lot of time from Christmas onwards; a silver lining to the Foot and Mouth Disease situation was that it freed up time he would usually have spent in the hills for training on flat roads.

The organisers had a phrase this year ‘marathon runners have one less thing to do in life.’ Adrian can go along with that!

Elsewhere in this issue **Dennis Armstrong**

poses the question “What is the difference between a No 1 and a No 6 tricouni?” and requests answers on a postcard. Well, though not on a postcard, Tom Price himself responded to a draft of Dennis’ review with these sketches. They show the general idea behind the differences though the precise details may have been lost with the passing of so many decades.



The smaller version is the number one tricouni.

David Handley picked this up in the Craven Herald...

“Walker Rescued

A walker on Ingleborough was saved by his mobile phone when he became lost in thick mist on Monday afternoon. Denis Wyatt, 37, of Sheffield, contacted the police when he realised he had taken a wrong turn. He told the police he was standing next to a wall, in a boggy area and in thick mist. The Cave Rescue Organisation was called out and by 7pm Mr Wyatt had been found.”

If you have read **Martyn Wakeman’s** report on his Blatoro trip in this issue you might be interested to know he glanced through the e-mailed proof copy at Zurich airport on his way to Beijing for a conference and then two weeks exploring in northwest China. For details of his Himalayan trip see: www.martynwakeman.com.

Evidence of the dramatic changes in water levels caused by a downpour in the mountains is provided in these two photographs taken last year within a few hours of one another by **Derek Smithson** in Glen Nevis.



Above is the warmly sunlit scene in the morning, tempting the unwary and ill-equipped into the mountains.

The second shot from much the same viewpoint is threatening.



An extract from letter to **Jeff Hooper** from **Stuart Thomson**, in Vevey, Switzerland written February 2001

I have been rather busy travelling but at the moment. Most of my time is either in Perm, Samara or Barnaul — on the map it is below Novosibirsk in Siberia close to the Altai Mountains. If you are interested in reading about the areas there is a good book by Colin Thurbron called 'In Siberia'.

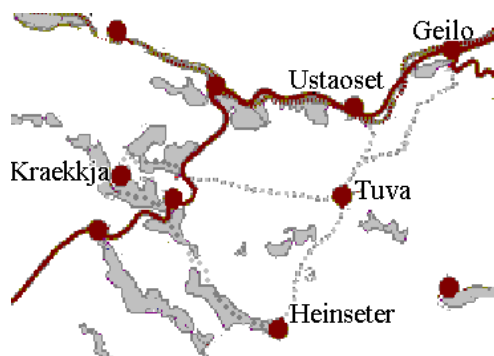
We are installing new equipment for production in the old Eastern block. They are, as you might guess, having problems getting the necessary people to volunteer to work in places like Russia. I work there but live in Switzerland, which I think is a perfect compromise, (but then I would with all the walking and skiing). In my spare time I am having fun as this is a great place for motorcycling in the summer (and sometimes in the winter). I invested in another bike, a small 650 vee twin Susuki.

The skiing is good but it gets a bit boring just going up and down so I have looked for something with more interest. I have bought some snow-shoes this year and have been out a few times. The next step is to do a winter walking tour and maybe carry the skis up. I have not tried ski touring yet, as it would mean investing in yet more expensive equipment, (I try to keep it to a minimum — the last pair of new skis I bought cost 50 SwF although the snow-shoes were expensive). Fortunately I have found some like-minded souls here and we managed last year to complete two long weekend tours — the Tour de Dents du Midi and the Tour de Derborence both of which were superb staying in the cabanes. We hope to complete the winter tour at the beginning of March if the weather is good and I can arrange to be here.

Stuart is not the first YRC member to work in Siberia, S.W.Cuttriss was there in 1908. Both of the following accounts of his make excellent reading: In Northern Siberia YRC Journal No.9 Vol.3, p17-30 and Siberia in Winter YRC Journal No.13 Vol.4, p45-156.

Easter 2001 saw **Peter Chadwick** and his teenage son, Thomas, with **Michael Smith** and his, Richard, cross country skiing in Norway's Hardangervidda for fifty miles over five days starting from Ustaoset.

Glorious sunshine, some new snow and cold weather gave good going on "blue special". After a short day's travel from Hein to Tuva they excavated a snow hole and two spent the night in it.



“LITTLE LANGDALE:
PROPOSED WRYNOSSE AND
HARDKNOTT ROAD:-

Those who know-and-love the grass-grown road leading from Little Langdale over Wrynose to Cockley Beck at the headwater of the Duddon and thence over Hardknott into Eskdale will not welcome the proposal to make it fit for coaches and motor-cars. Our Lakeland sanctuaries are not so many that we can afford to lose even one of them.”

From the 1930 YRC Journal

Glen Etive Meet

9-11 March 2000

Adrian Bridge reports his and Euan Seaton's Sunday ascent of Raeburn's route, Observatory Ridge, on Ben Nevis.

"I made a mistake. At the time, it seemed reasonable to unrope and trudge up the last 300 feet of snow slope, kicking foot holes in the snow as we had on lower sections. After all we both had crampons and ice axes; it was just that Euan's kit was modern and mine was not. What I hadn't foreseen was that the slope got steeper and became icier as it got higher. I found it harder and harder to get my crampon points and ice axe pick to do enough to feel safe.

I kept telling myself that the guys that put this route up had gear no better than mine and to keep a cool head. It worked, at least enough to get me to the top! Euan was there, moved forward with outstretched hand and "great route, thanks..." etc. I was a shaking jelly.

We'd set off from The Smiddy before 7am and started up the Ben from the YH at 8.30. It was dry, with cloud around the 2000 ft level. As we ascended, the cloud lifted and as we gained the CICC hut, we could see the bottom of Observatory Ridge. Started on the route at 11 am. The ridge itself was fairly free of snow; we kept the rock pitches quite short, so we could see each other most of the time, leading alternately. Difficulties were restricted to a few moves per pitch, but some

moves were awkward in boots and all of it was wet. This meant cold hands, not much feeling (Are my fingers going to keep this grip or not?)

The Orion Face (which I'd last seen in the winter when Derek Bush and I climbed Tower Ridge) was completely devoid of snow. Previously, it had been covered and we'd seen a chap soloing a face route on it.

It was always cloudy, and we never got good views - just glimpses of below and Tower Ridge for a few seconds at a time. There was a party on Tower Ridge that we could hear; we seemed to have our route to ourselves, which was fortunate since there was quite a lot of loose rock not frozen in place, a few bits of which were dislodged. Near the top of the rocky part, the angle eased and we began to see the edge of the summit plateau, and blue sky above.

The guidebook says it is usual to move into the upper part of Zero Gully for the last section, as the ridge deteriorates into scrappy rock, and this looked the obvious thing to do. After a couple of roped pitches, we/I made the mistake. Euan took the hardware, I carried the rope. Euan eased ahead, I got slower and into a position which caused me some concern. By moving back to the rock I escaped the ice, but was slow and of necessity, very careful getting up it. It might have been less steep than lower down, but more icy.

I've learnt a lesson.

On top we were in breezy, sunny, clear conditions, looking down on the cloud covering the “rest of the world”. At the cairn there were some chaps digging and pitching tents for the night; we shared their windbreak and ate. It had taken us six hours to do the route. We ambled down, through the cloud and had moonlight for the last 1000 feet or so.”

The nightmares stopped after two nights.

Attendance

The President, Ian Crowther
Adrian Bridge
George Burfitt
Derek Bush
Albert Chapman
Roger Dix
Iain Gilmour
David Handley
Dave Hick
Gordon Humphreys
Howard Humphreys
Alan Linford
Dave Martindale
Euan Seaton
David Smith
Barrie Wood

The Editor apologises for the late publication of the above account.

North Pennines Meet, Alston

27-29 October 2000

On a cool but pleasant evening, members of the Club began to appear from sundry directions at the Hillcrest Hotel, Alston, including a hardy few who were camping, although it was rumoured that one member was in a camper van. Two members settled for a bunkhouse in Alston, named ‘The Mission’, and reported it to be warm and comfortable, including the free sauna. A glance at the attendance list shows that most had travelled considerable distances. Several members in the parent hostelry, the Cumberland Hotel, enjoyed an evening meal across the road.

On Saturday morning the predicted rain and wind appeared. Alston itself stands several hundred feet above sea level and the surrounding fells, are wild and bleak with little shelter. The landscape is marked by numerous abandoned lead-mine workings and scattered farm holdings. Some ambitions were tempered to the weather either before or after leaving Alston, but others achieved their objectives despite the wind and rain. Two lone venturers went their single way. One to Garrigill along the South Tyne Valley, and the other, a most senior member, achieved the summit of Round Hill. He explained that he was the near completion of his project to climb all the ‘2000 footers’ in England and Wales, of which there are 408, but that he was saving Snaefell for his 90th birthday and might even contemplate some form of transport to the top. Three members went to Gregg’s Hut where they met Dick Philips of Iceland fame. They then returned by what is described as

a northerly route. Two members followed the route to Garrigill but then branched north by Ashburn Gill and Flinty Fell to Nenthead, where the former activities of lead mining are everywhere to be seen, and from there back to Alston. A group of three made for Green Castle and three quarters of the way to Cross Fell when wisdom prevailed and a return was made. The Cash Force waterfall was visited with Shiel Burn. Two members and their dog (Meg a Springer Spaniel) followed a route which took in Cow Green Reservoir, Cauldron Spout and Falcon Clints, High Cup Nick and part of the Pennine Way. At Cow Green Reservoir they had a sighting of a black grouse. They reported the weather as somewhat wet and windy with swirling fog. A group of six made their way to Hard Rigg on the boundary between Cumberland and Northumberland, then to Whimsey Hill, followed by a descent to Nenthead and a return along the river to Alston. Others made their way along the Pennine Way to Garrigill and by a return route on the other side of the valley to Alston. It can be reported that the pub at Garrigill has a sensible division between a carpeted lounge area and a flagged public bar where no objection is raised to dripping garments and squelching boots. A large open fire adds to its attraction.

All enjoyed the evening meal at the Hillcrest Hotel when the President Elect joined the President for the evening. Sunday morning was again cold and wet with the promise of more rain to come. It seemed that the whole meet was dispersing homewards or to similar venues without intention of further ventures on the fells. The torrential rain later in the day proved how wise the

decisions had been. Despite the weather it had been a very enjoyable meet and the area was noted down for further exploration, perhaps in kinder weather.

J P Barton

Attendance:

The President, Ian Crowther,

Ken Aldred
John Barton
Chris Bird
Albert Chapman
Alan Clare
Derek Clayton
Roy Denney
Roger Dix
Stuart Dix
David Hick
Alan Kay
Richard Kirby
David Laughton
Gerry Lee
Keith Raby
John Schofield
David Smith
Derek Smithson
John Snoad (G)
George Spenceley
John Sterland
Martyn Thomas

87th Annual Dinner

**Whoop Hall Hotel,
Kirby Lonsdale**

18 - 19 November 2000

Once again we were at Whoop Hall for our Annual Dinner. It was also our Millennium Dinner. The venue is becoming a fixture, as it was the sixth successive year we have been there.

The “China Party”, using all the latest techniques, had set up a video display of their successful expedition which proved an added attraction to all present.

An EGM and an AGM preceded the Dinner and these are reported elsewhere.

During the interval before the speeches, entertainment was provided in the form of two mythical sketches of Committee meetings in the years 1900 and 2100. This seemed to be well received, at least no missiles were thrown at the participants and the author and principal actor Dennis Armstrong, quite rightly took a bow at the end. The others taking part were Darrell Farrant, Alan Linford and Derek Bush.

Our Principal Guest for the Millennium Dinner was appropriately our Honorary Member Dr John A. Farrer. He gave us a very interesting speech of his “life and times” as the landlord of the Clapham estate. We are very fortunate to have Dr Farrer as our landlord at Lowstern.

The President replied to Dr Farrer in his own individualistic style and one of our youngest and most active members, Alister Renton, proposed in a most erudite manner the toast of “Kindred Clubs and Guests” Bryan



Thornton Force

Fleming of the Scottish Mountaineering Club replied. Tim Josephy, the Immediate Past President, proposed a vote of thanks to Ian Crowther for a most successful term of office as President of the Club.

The Dinner concluded as always with the singing of “Yorkshire”. Our thanks go once more to Neil Renton for his accompaniment on the keyboard.

Cheesepress





The After Dinner walk on the Sunday was around lower Kingsdale initially on the Turbary Road and then across to Braida Garth finishing at Twistleton Scar End and back to the cars. It started in miserable wet weather but finished in glorious winter sunshine and was a fitting end to another successful Dinner weekend.

Once again the event was organised by George Postill with, as always, the assistance of David Smith. It is worth recording our thanks to George and David.

Derek Bush

Attendance, 83 members and guests:

President, Ian Crowther
 Ken Aldred
 Dennis Armstrong
 John Barton
 David Bateman (G)
 Bruce Bensley
 Alan Brown
 Andrew Bull (G)
 David Bull
 George Burfitt
 Derek Bush
 Ged Champion
 Albert Chapman
 Iain Chapman
 Alan Clare
 Derek Clayton
 Clifford Cobb

Sean Collins (G)
 Robert Crowther
 Roger Dix
 Andrew Duxbury
 Eddie Edkins (G)
 Arthur Evans
 Darrell Farrant
 Adrian Farrer (G)
 Dr John A Farrer
 Bryan Fleming SMC
 Alan Fletcher
 David Gamble (G)
 Iain Gilmour
 Mike Godden
 David Handley
 Mike Hartland
 John Hemingway
 David Hick
 David Holmes
 Jeff Hooper
 Gordon Humphreys
 Howard Humphreys
 Jason Humphreys
 Raymond Ince
 Richard Josephy
 Tim Josephy
 Alan Kay
 Mike Kinder
 Richard Kirby
 Ian Laing
 Cliff Large
 David Large
 David Laughton

Gerry Lee
 Alan Linford
 Bill Lofthouse
 Harvey Lomas
 John Lovett
 David Martindale
 Peter Moss
 Rory Newman
 A Penny (G)
 Shaun Penny
 Mike Pitt
 George Postill
 Alister Renton
 Chris Renton
 Neil Renton (G)
 Leigh Rickett (G)
 Jon Riley
 Harry Robinson
 Jim Rusher
 Arthur Salmon
 Graham Salmon
 Doug Scott AC
 Richard Sealey
 Jack Short
 David Smith
 Michael Smith
 George Spenceley
 David Stembridge
 Arthur Tallon
 Trevor Temple (G)
 Frank Walker NPC
 John Whalley
 Frank Wilkinson



Jack Short presses a point on the President, Albert Chapman, whilst Hon.Sec Gordon Humphries and David Smith look on aghast!

**Lowstern,
Christmas Meet
8-10 December 2000**

A weekend of very wet and windy weather did nothing to deter the forty-seven members who attended the meet. Friday evening was enhanced by an Atlas Mountains slide show presented by Hamish Brown for members interested in exploring the area. This was followed by a night of wind roaring through the trees. Perhaps such wind noise induced a past president to arise at 5.00am and walk over Ingleborough and Pen-y-Ghent before using bush telegraph to get someone to return him to Lowstern. Other members explored the familiar area appreciating becks in spate and spectacular waterfalls.

The Christmas spirit got underway by late afternoon and was followed by a splendid supper. If this was not enough, the evening was rounded off by a spectacular slide show covering the 2000 caving expedition to the Gauangxi Province of China.

Sunday was still beset by poor weather. Members settled for short walks and early departures home.

David Handley

Attendance

The President, Albert Chapman

Dennis Armstrong
David Atherton
Denis Barker
John Barton
Bruce Bensley
Alan Brown
Hamish Brown (G)

Derek Bush
Ged Campion
Derek Collins
Ian Crowther
Robert Crowther
Roger Dix
Iain Gilmour
Mike Godden
David Handley
Mike Hartland
Bill Hawkins
John Hemingway
David Hick
Gordon Humphreys
Howard Humphreys
Tim Josephy
Alan Kay
Richard Kirby
Gerry Lee
Alan Linfoord
Bill Lofthouse
John Lovett
David Martindale
Frank Platt
Alister Renton
Chris Renton
Harry Robinson
Arthur Salmon
Graham Salmon
John Schofield
David Smith
Michael Smith
Derek Smithson
Tony Smythe
John Sterland
John Whalley
Frank Wilkinson
Peter Wood (G)

The Old Hill Inn Meet 12 – 14 January 2001

Your chronicler was not party to the choice of a return meet to the Hill Inn (now the Old Hill Inn) for the first time in ten years, (and for many more than that since it was: the regular January venue), but perhaps the fact that it is the new president's local had some bearing. With the benefit of hindsight, the meet may have been more cohesive if catering, apart from the Saturday dinner, had been arranged at the old school which the club booked for the weekend. The club used the school ten years ago, but in the meantime it has been given a make over, and is more than comparable with Lowstern for twenty people. In actuality, only twenty bed-nights were used over the two days, many members either attending only for the Saturday or even staying at Gearstones.

One thing that could not be faulted was the weather. Within a small limit of error, the sky was cloudless from arrival to departure, but thick fog was waiting back over to the east for those returning home there.

Friday evening saw bar meals being taken at the Inn, with a reminder to avoid the Lamb Shank which was booked for the Saturday. There were no escapades on the low beam upstairs, or in the barn, or even out on the moonlit mountains as of yore. There were no young members on which to inflict these tortures.

If caving had been on the agenda for Saturday, there were no takers. One member set off early to attempt and achieve the three peaks (counter-clockwise), but the rest took a fairly normal breakfast in the Inn before



starting. Quite a number, in at least two separate parties, drove to Mallerstang and did Wild Boar Fell. The group I was with also visited the strange 'Millennium monument' on the other side of the valley beyond Aisgill summit before refreshing ourselves at the Moorcock at Garsdale Head. As a point of interest, on arrival, we were thought to be part of a group from the Leeds Bradford area on a days walk using the Settle Carlisle railway to make it all possible. Another group set off for Ingleborough with the intension of visiting Horton, and some went on to add Whernside, and at least one of these accomplished the three peaks during the meet by doing Pen-y-ghent on the Sunday.

The Inn put on an excellent dinner for the Saturday, held in the lounge and must have stirred many memories of meets and members in the past. We were subsequently enthralled by views of the exploits of the caving group in China.

Sunday saw some activity. The Salmons nearly circumnavigated Ingleborough at the clints level to visit the club dig coming back over the top. Others took advantage of the sparkling weather to keep their muscles in tone. Three went over to Great Knoutberry Hill and back via Dentdale and the slopes of Whernside finishing the casting long shadows

while striding out over the frozen ground.



A good meet, but being so close to the club cottage and following two other meets in the same area, a little disappointing especially to the treasurer/organiser who otherwise did a fine job.

Frank Wilkinson



Moon lit Ingleborough Hill, first of the three

Pen-y-ghent, the second



Attendance:

President, Albert Chapman

Dennis Armstrong

Denis Barker

Alan Brown

Alan Clare

Derek Clayton

Cliff Cobb

Ian Crowther

Robert Crowther

Michael Edmundson, DS's guest

Frank Walker, AC's guest

David Handley

Gordon Humphreys

Howard Humphreys

Jason Humphreys

John Jenkin

Gerry Lee

Harvey Lomas

John Lovett

George Postill

Chris Renton

Arthur, Salmon

Graham Salmon

David Smith

Michael Smith

John Sterland

Frank Wilkinson

Low Hall Garth Meet

2 – 4 February 2001

After a number of attempts to change the date of the Winter meet at LHG in order to achieve those memorable conditions of twenty years ago it looked as though the President had hit the jackpot this year. On the way to the cottage on Friday the fingers of snow in the gullies descending from the clouds on Blencathra, Clough Head and Whiteside promised well for the weekend. A fortnight earlier the conditions on Esk Pike and Bowfell had been crying out for crampons and ice axes and once above the valley mist we had enjoyed a typical Alpine day. However, back to reality. About half an hour later the approach to Little Langdale was accomplished in drizzly fog with no

one reported out on the hills, but a lone member justifying his early arrival by chopping up sufficient fuel to last the evening.

By the time the cottage began to fill the room was warm and comfortable and the usual division of meal venues was sorted out; some preparing their own with others preferring the delights of the Three Shires.

On Saturday morning the conditions had not improved. Breakfast was eaten slowly, with regular weather reports coming from those sat nearest to the door. Eventually the various groups got under way. Derek B., Arthur and Frank were taken round to Borrowdale by Richard to return via Langstrathdale, Angle Tarn, Bowfell and Crinkle Crag. Derek S. and Mike S. went over Wetherlam to Brim



Grey or Kennel Crag and Coniston Coppermines' disused workings with Levers Hawse behind

Fell and then did some sort of a traverse under some crags above Levens Water. A number of groups chose to visit the Grisedale area, one party taking in Hawkshead and Tarn Hows while another made a round of the Silurian Way to take in Satterthwaite and Boggerthwaite. All parties reported back in good time to find that the Presidential Palace next door had been booked by him and the Vice President, et al and was available for Presidential Punch, ordinary members being admitted after six o'clock.

The evening meal was up to the usual high standard, in this case any mystery being removed by the provision of menus on the tables.

On the road home on Sunday morning, snowploughs were seen on the opposite carriageway as a report came over the car radio that the A66 at Brough was closed. A sharp turn north avoided this but I hope that the snow was the wet slushy stuff of the day before and not the crisp, dry, delightfully packed material that we enjoyed twenty years ago. That would be too much.

Ken Aldred

Attendance:

The President, Albert Chapman

David Handley

Ken Aldred

Dennis Barker

Derek Bush

Mike Edmundson (G)

David Hick

Richard Josephy

John Lovett

David Martindale

Frank Platt

Chris Renton

Arthur Salmon

John Schofield

David Smith

Michael Smith

Derek Smithson

Bill Todd

Frank Wilkinson

Alan Wood

Peter Wood



Derek Smithson in the Halls of Silence near LHG

North Wales, Oread MC hut

Tan – Y – Wyddfa

23 - 25 February 2001

In the previous week members had great expectations of excellent conditions on the tops. An anticyclone over Wales, deep frosts and regular, if thin, snowfall reported and catering by Richard Josephy: a weekend of note was possible. YRC epics in these conditions are well known.

Members arrived early to get in an extra day testing the conditions fitted out with winter mountain gear and clothing. In anticipation Derek Bush only packed plastic boots and hut slippers. Then the great anticlimax: notices were placed on all entrances to the Park and Nantlle ridge

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE PLEASE KEEP OUT.
--

Members were aware of the outbreak in Northumberland but the committee had not anticipated the rapid spread of the disease. No restrictions were in force when members set off to join the meet, it was school half-term and holiday makers from many areas were expected in the Snowdon National Park. Some members will remember the 1967 outbreak, Cliff Downham was President, when all Club meets for Oct, Nov, Dec 1967 and Jan 1968 were cancelled. Restrictions were lifted in January and at very short notice the Hill Inn meet resumed Club activities.

Following this meet all Club meets were cancelled until further notice.

Here are a few (all in true YRC style) of the alternative thoughts and activities taken to recover the situation. Catch the 3.30 ferry to Dublin, cook the meal on Friday evening, have a double breakfast on

Saturday and go home, bird watching and cliff walking on Anglesey; check on progress on the narrow gauge railway being built from Caernarfon to Rhyd-Ddu; a walk unfenced roads from Pen-y-Groes to Rhyd-ddu which gave excellent views of Snowden the Carnedds and Anglesey, forest walking at Beddgelert and Capel Curig; cycle tracks alongside the Menai Strait; and a visit to Telford's canal and structures. Derek Bush had difficulty remaining upright on the waterlogged grass in his hut slippers. Roadside crags were available but only the locals had rock gear.

Richard's excellent meal of venison sausage (from Oxford market) was consumed on Saturday evening and three engineers repaired a vacuum cleaner. The hut given a through clean and members departed home in fine weather. Alan Linfoord

Attendance.

President, Albert Chapman-
Dennis Armstrong
David Atherton
Derek Bush
Alan Clare
Derek Clayton
Derek Collins
Ian Crowther
Roger Dix
Iain Gilmour
Mike Godden
David Handley
David Hick
Tim Josephy
Richard Josephy
Richard Kirby
Alan Linfoord
John Lovett
Jim Rusher
Arthur Salmon
David Smith
Frank Wilkinson
Barry Wood.

Lowstern

1 May 2001

The inaugural meet of the YRC was held on May Day in glorious sunny weather. After much unloading of cycles from roof-racks and out of the backs of cars, followed by tyre checks with electrically driven compressors the peleton moved away from Lowstern through the daffodils; leaving the gardening section hard at work squirting weeds with toxic fluid, cutting the grass and planting snowdrops. A variety of cycles were pressed into service with saddles of all degrees of hardness. All six of the team crossed the first hazard — the dual carriageway — without any being mown down by speeding four-wheel drives, to reach Clapham where regrouping took place. The first hard drag of the day was met before Helwith Bridge and seat adjustments were called for. The team were delayed at Helwith Bridge by promises of a steam train coming through to celebrate the 125th Anniversary of the opening of the line. After fifteen minutes surrounded by rough looking types wearing cloth caps and covered in cameras and sound recording equipment it was decided that the group had rested long enough and the Chef du route called for progress. After all, all the group had seen steam trains before — there was no other sort for major part of their lives. The scenery was magnificent, the conversation scintillating, when breath could be spared and Ribblehead arrived none too soon. At Ribblehead station after examining the museum the steamer arrived, forty minutes late keeping up the traditions from the era to which it belonged. A bit of a drag up from Ribblehead gave a view of the

Presidents residence before the long downhill swoop past the Hill Inn. One rider with a cycle computer recorded 40 mph on this section. From Ingleton the back road was taken to back to Clapham with the hardest climb of the day at least 1 in 5. Dropping down into Clapham at speed gave the impression of coming off Alp d'Huez with the Chef du route showing the way. A grand day out and good training for the Long Ride in June.

Jeff Hooper, the Club's Special
Cycling Correspondent

Riders:

The President, Albert Chapman

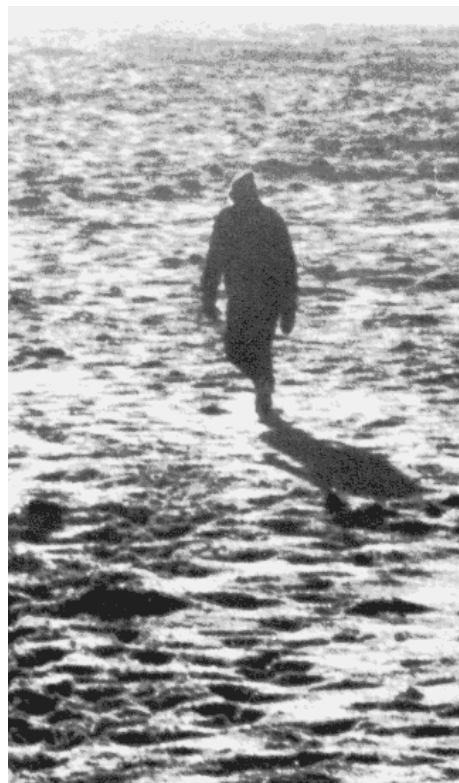
Alan Brown

Derek Collins

David Handley

Jeff Hooper

David Smith



The Very Long Bike Ride

23rd June 2001

Lowstern, 05.10 hours. By mutual consent a gaggle of riders and bicycles trundled down the track to the road, where the President was waiting – with his video camera, not a starting-gun. A few brave souls challenged the chill morning air with a few weak jokes. Then bottoms settled into saddles, wheels wobbled into motion, and we were away. The Club's dramatic response to the 2001 foot-and-mouth crisis, which had wiped out the June Long Walk, had begun.

Were the years of training, the relentless mileage month after month, in wind, rain and darkness, the rigorous diet, early nights and total abstinence from all bodily pleasures, about to pay off for your correspondent? They were! Later that day he was to be the proud recipient of the Award for the Best Dressed Competitor – an honour entirely due to the generosity of his son who, embarrassed by the flapping T-shirt he habitually wore, had given him for Christmas a special cycling top, a colourful lycra creation designed for one of the teams of the Tour de France.

But back to those crucial early moments when there was everything to play for. It is uncertain who had taken pole position, and a peleton did not appear to arrange itself in any measurable way. Participants (we had been strictly warned not to think of ourselves as Competitors) soon got into their own speeds and rhythms and settled to enjoy the first Stage to Kirby Lonsdale, which seemed to be largely downhill with the wind behind us. One did not like to dwell on the disturbing thought that this, by Newtonian law, would mean that later

that day we would be going uphill and into the wind.

Some of the latest technology to die for was on the road that day. As is appropriate to a group more at home in the hills, mountain bikes were popular, equipped with map holders and saddlebags – the latter containing spare clothing, mobile telephones, and possibly bivouac equipment – old habits die hard, and Tan Hill, looming ahead, was after all, a sort of cyclist's equivalent of an 8,000 metre peak. Dress was in most cases strictly practical, no one was intending to die of exposure on this unusual outing – but this of course meant that they gave themselves no chance of scooping that Best Dressed Rider award.

Your correspondent, to his great surprise, arrived at Kirby Lonsdale in second position (“surprise” meaning that he was amazed not to be last, not disappointed not to be first). The pit stop, masterminded by Harry Robinson with his van full of nutritious things, was situated at Devil's Bridge beside the public conveniences. Your correspondent gingerly rescued a cockchafer from the urinal - perhaps believing that this benevolent act would, in the eyes of the Tan Hill gods, earn him enough brownie points to reach the top. Then he thundered or swooshed on towards Sedbergh.

The organisers of the race, sorry ride, do need to be praised for their choice of route, certainly in this early part. After the soft post-dawn Monet landscape around the Benthams the sun was now rising over Casterton and Barbon with outlines of hills behind to remind us of sterner tasks to come. Down in the Lune valley it was all smooth flat surfaces inviting speed in the cool still air. It was still early

enough for the lanes to be completely empty except for an occasional frightened rabbit – rushing across in front of an even more frightened cyclist.

The route followed the line of the Lune towards Teebay but in the later stages began switch backing on the western flank of the valley, finally making a gut-wrenching climb in the general direction of Whinell Beacon. Around here your contributor decided to divest himself of his windproof jacket and leg-warmers (for the uninitiated these are specially for cyclists - comfortable stretchy tubes, that cling like suspenders and would get you arrested if worn in any other context). In the gateway to a field a farmer questioned him, not about his sexual preferences fortunately, but his opinion on the future of sheep farming.

After Teebay and mile forty, the ten miles or so to Kirkby Stephen along the A685 was a pain. The road, flat at first, began to rise and the wind was in front. The route description said that heavy lorries had been banned; plenty seemed to be ignoring this. As for the “long lengths of new dry stone wall to admire”, it seemed better to concentrate on not getting killed! At last the Second Feeding Station hove into view at 51½ miles – exactly half way in distance, though severely less than this in “real terms” with the Pennines to cross.

And so to the dreaded Tan Hill. He actual climb was less horrific than expected, your reporter having cut his teeth on Lake District excrescences such as Shap and the Kirkstone Pass. But once on top, the moorland humps and bumps seemed to go on for ever. Whether the Tan Hill pub was open is not known – it seemed better to head straight down towards the oxygen-rich

valley at Keld, although in the true spirit of mountaineering the real dangers loomed in the descent where phalanxes of motorcycles were busy ascending.

Some wall builders in Thwaite advised your correspondent about the route. (There was an old waller in Thwaite, who said, “Urry oop lad, or you’ll be late.” So I belted on through, to Muker, and – PHEW! The Buttertubs Lane was my fate.)

And it was here that well, a confessional box is needed. Your writer GOT OFF AND WALKED. While riding, his computer indicated a groundspeed of between one and two miles per hour and falling, while the engine temperature was rising dangerously. Once dismounted, overall speed actually increased to three miles per hour, while the risk of a piston failure or a con rod through the crankcase diminished. This happy state continued to a point higher up where the road had so eased in angle that a passing pedestrian called out, “got a puncture, mate?” a stern reminder that it was back to work.

Life thrives on contrasts. The other side of the Buttertubs pass was like a precipice down to Hawes and the computer, later switched to its Maximum Speed mode, indicated that a record 41mph had been reached on this section –obtained less from desire than by inadequate brakes.

Following a Lotus car rally in the cobbled streets of Hawes, feeding station number three appeared, a very welcome sight indeed, where your reporter felt strong enough (just) to tackle a cheese sandwich. He was foolish enough to believe Arthur Salmon who said that Ribbleshead was ‘just up the road, you’re nearly there, and then it’s all downhill after that.’

But mind prevailed over matter, and that psychological game eventually proved effective ('I may have the dentist/interview/firing squad coming up, but in three hours' time it won't matter any more')

The road from Ribbleshead was downhill to Horton, but by this time, with ninety miles clocked cramp was becoming a problem. All sorts of tricks came into play – shaking, stretching, relaxing and just plain wishing. But as fast as it could be shifted from one muscle it popped up in another. The steam train chuntering up the valley was a welcome scenic diversion.

The section from Helwith Bridge to Wharfe and Austwick looks terrible on the map, but mercifully it seems to slide round the hills in the north, and the wind was now benignly behind. Entering the home stretch, the A65 past Clapham, your correspondent now succumbed to a moment of vicious competitiveness. Aware that by a miracle (or sheer indolence on the part of the rest of the Field) he had not been overtaken since arriving at the first feeding station in second place, he now cast a furtive glance backwards – actually a furtive glance sideways, since his neck had seized up like a rusty hinge – just to see how the others were doing, of course. He remembered the humiliation of once running a marathon backwards, or at least it felt like that when almost every other competitor poured past him in the final stage of the race.

It was OK. There was not a soul in sight. Thankfully he eased up on the pedals and enjoyed the imminent prospect of tea, shower, and flake out on bunk. It wasn't supposed to be a race after all – just a jolly day out on the bike!

Tony Smythe

Alternative Perspective

The Long Bike Ride (substituted for the Long Walk which could not be executed owing to Foot and Mouth disease), got off to a good start with participants arriving from early afternoon Friday.

Routes and general information were studied eagerly and our host for the weekend provided pie and peas plus an assortment of drinks for our evening repast.

Saturday reveille was early, with the aim of a 0500 hours start — or thereabout. Amazingly, most cyclists seemed to have set off by 0515, and seventeen riders were on their way. Meal halts had been arranged at Kirkby Lonsdale, Kirkby Stephen, and Hawes; on a clockwise route of approximately 103 miles, including 4,800 feet of up hill riding (or walking). Two shorter alternatives were available of 93 and 60 miles. The weather was excellent for cycling, and some riders took the opportunity to visit various hostleries for food and drink during their ride.

The first two riders to return to Lowstern, having completed the full route, arrived after 8 and 8.5 hours. The last arrival was some 14 hours after starting. A suitable and most welcome meal was received at two sittings in the evening, and together with the 'Presidents Punch' facilitated much lighthearted discussion.

Such was the importance of this premier occasion that it was deemed that five prizes should be awarded to celebrate notable achievements by members. All were T-shirts bearing the words "YRC The Long Bike Ride - 2001 - Prize Winner".

The prizewinners were:

a) Roger Dix for being the youngest and most improved rider of any age.

b) Messrs. Renton A, Bensley B, and Salmon G for contributing the most to the local economy on this day i.e. breakfast at Tebay and three pub stops en route.

c) Tony Smythe who was judged to be the 'best turned out man and machine'.

d) Derek Collins for having the inspiration to propose and organize the ride.

e) Richard Gowing being the last member to finish the ride.

Thanks go to all who organized and catered for the event. It was an excellent weekend and another first for the YRC, showing initiative in adverse circumstances.

Sunday dawned fine and sunny with members dispersing to various locations. One member, no doubt inspired by his prize, decided to cycle home to Lancaster. A glutton for punishment some say!

Mike Godden

Routes.

Primary Route. Lowstern, Bentham, Gressingham, Kirkby Lonsdale (food). Thence — Tebay, Kirkby

Stephen (food), Tan Hill, Hawes (food), Horton in Ribblesdale, Austwick, Lowstern.

1st Alternative — after Kirkby Lonsdale, then Barbondale, Dentedale, then as primary route.

2nd Alternative — after Kirkby Stephen, Garsdale Head, Hawes, then as primary route.

Attendance

President, Albert Chapman

Ken Aldred

Denis Barker

Bruce Bensley

Ged Champion (dinner)

Derek Collins

Ian Crowther

Roger Dix

Mike Edmundson

Derek English

Iain Gilmour

Mike Godden

Richard Gowing

Dave Handley

Mike Hartland (dinner)

Jeff Hooper

John Jenkin

Richard Kirby

Harvey Lomas

John Lovett

Tony Penny

Alistair Renton

Harry Robinson

Arthur Salmon

Graham Salmon

John Schofield

Matthew Schofield (G)

David Smith

Tony Smythe

Bill Todd

It takes a long time to cycle over a hundred miles so some members engaged in bird watching on the way.

Birds identified (heard or seen) are listed below.

Blackcap

Black-headed Gull

Chaffinch

Crow

Cuckoo

Curlew

Golden Plover

Goldfinch

Greenfinch

Heron

House Martin

House Sparrow

Jackdaw

Kestrel

Meadow Pipit

Oystercatcher

Pewit

Redshank

Robin

Rook

Skylark

Snipe

Song Thrush

Swallow

Swift

Wheatear

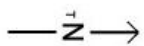
Willow Warbler

Wren

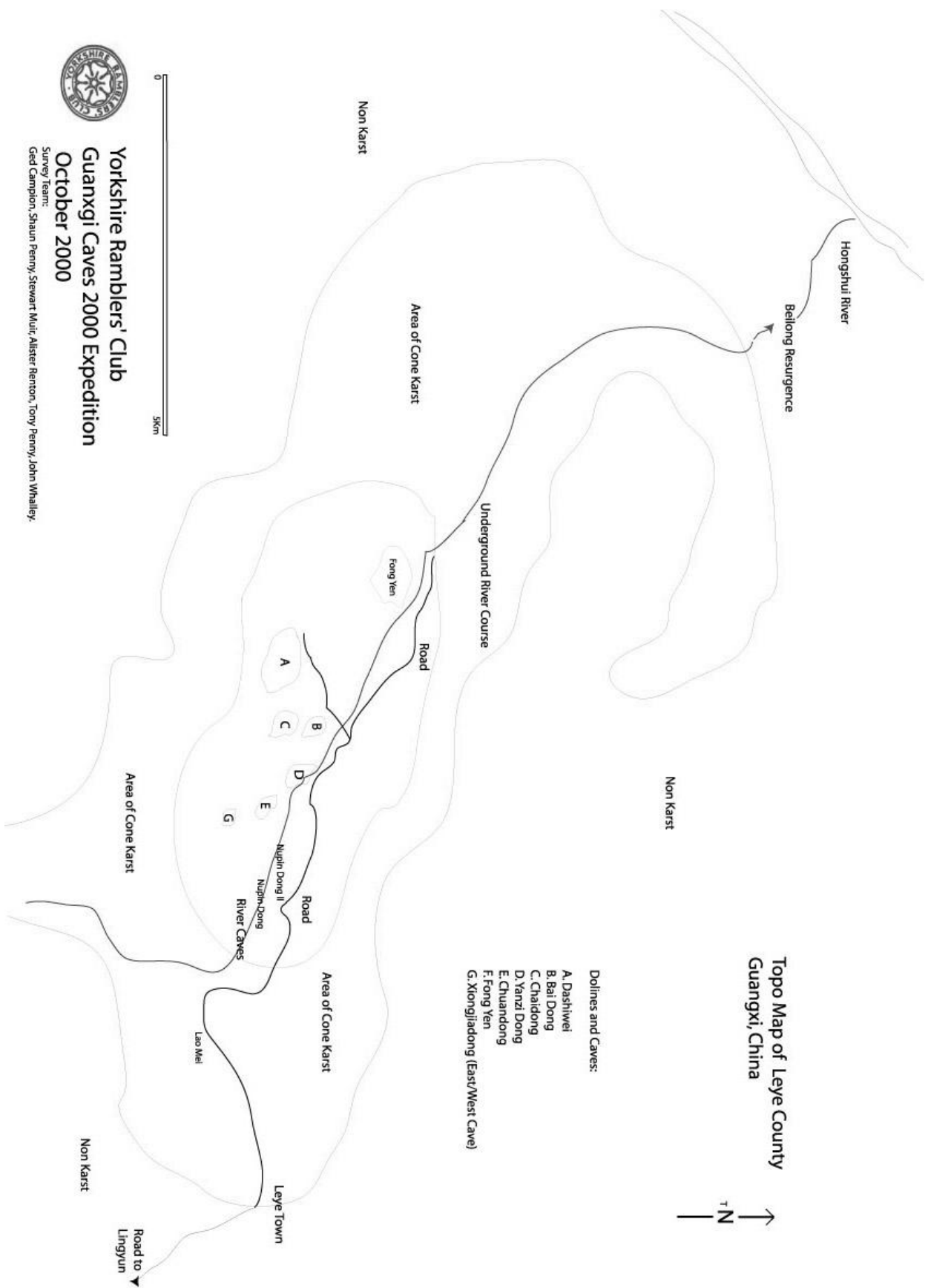


David Hick launching his Drascombe Coaster on Ullswater – no walking available due to the Foot and Mouth restrictions

**Topo Map of Leye County
Guangxi, China**



- Dolines and Caves:
- A. Dashiwei
 - B. Bai Dong
 - C. Chaidong
 - D. Yanzi Dong
 - E. Chuandong
 - F. Fong Yen
 - G. Xiongjiadong (East/West Cave)



**Yorkshire Ramblers' Club
Guangxi Caves 2000 Expedition
October 2000**

Survey Team:
Ged Campion, Shaun Penny, Stewart Muir, Alister Ranton, Tony Penny, John Whalley.