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ARTICLES

CAVING IN CHINA

CLIMBING IN KALYMNOS

MOUNTAINS OF MOURNE

LOZÈRE, FRANCE, CAVING

BULGARIA - SCOTLAND - CUMBRIA

BRECON BEACONS AND CAVING, WALES

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CHINA CAVES PROJECT

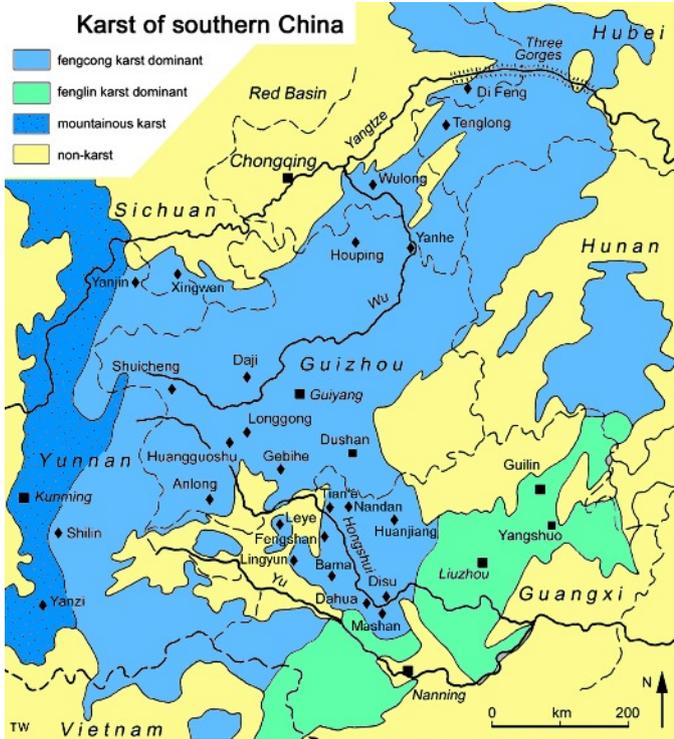
Details of the discoveries made by the expeditions, their achievements in Geomorphology, Biology, Archaeology, Expedition Medicine, Conservation, Construction and Development from the paper reproduced in part in our last journal journal. Written by GED CAMPION and TONY HARRISON

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The Project's discoveries

Carbonate rocks in China have an outcrop area of about 910,000km², and including areas covered by insoluble rocks they extend beneath more than 3.4 million km² (about one third of the country's land area). Given these statistics it is not surprising that both the number and the size of caves in China are staggering. Most are within the almost continuous karst outcrop of 0.5 million km² underlying Guizhou and Guangxi and their neighbouring provinces. According to current statistics there are 657 and 564 caves respectively in the provinces of Guizhou and Guangxi alone, and of these 13 have more than 10km of surveyed passages and 7 are more than 400m deep (Zhang, 2010). Most large caves with more than 5km of mapped passage have been explored by international teams since 1985, a significant proportion of these by cavers of the China Caves Project. The following accounts of the main explorations of the Project are listed (in alphabetical order) by Province, and within those, by County or region. Details are sparse for some areas for which expedition reports are yet to be written.



Chongqing Municipality

Prior to 1997 this major administrative region formed part of China's Sichuan Province. The China Caves Project has mounted expeditions to the region in 1994, 1996 (supported by a short reconnaissance visit during 1995), 1997, 1999 and 2002 with another trip now planned. The Hong Meigui Cave Exploration Society has also been highly active in Chongqing.

Province County/District/etc	Expedition date	Approx. number of caves located and explored	Approximate number of caves surveyed	Approximate total length of cave surveys	Main caves explored (with surveyed plan length/vertical range)	Notes	References
Chongqing							
Ba County (Ba Xian)	1994	4	2	1.4km	Lungci Dong; Wu Lu Keng Dong		Senior, 1995
	1994	18	6	7.8km	Xiaozhai Tiankeng (5.2km); Shrang Fong Dong (1km)		Senior, 1995
	1995				Reconnaissance trip		
	1996	6	6	11km	"Green Eyed Monster Cave" (c. 220m deep)		Lovett and Garman, 1996
	Dec 1997	?	?	?	Di Feng ("The Great Crack")	Too wet to make significant progress	
	Oct 1999	?	?	>10km	Di Feng ("The Great Crack" and "Great Doline")		
Fengjie County (Xin Long)	June 2002	?	?	?	Di Feng ("The Great Crack")	Very wet conditions	
Fuling District	1994	4	3	2km	Fu Lin Dong; Hei Long Dong		Senior, 1995
Hon Chi Ba region	1996	4	-		"Cold Wind Cave"		Lovett and Garman, 1996
Nanchuan District	Dec 1997	?	?	?	Caves on Yingfo Mountain		
Tongjin County	1994	2	2	0.7km	Rufu Dong		Senior, 1995
Wulong County (Jiang Kou)	1994	13	10	5km	Furong Dong; Xin Lou Kou Dong; Qikeng Dong; Dong Ba Dong		Senior, 1995
	1996	8	8	10km	Dong Ba Dong (to -400m); Dan Wan Dong; Da Dong; Mi Dong (to -200m); Chin Da Dong		Lovett and Garman, 1996
	June 2002	?	?	?	Qikeng Dong (to -550m)		
	Aug-Sept 2002				Qikeng Dong (to -707m)		
	Sept-Dec 2002	?	?	?	Qikeng Dong (to -920m); Dongba Dong (to -655m); Da Keng (to -100m)		Drake, 2005
	Sept-Oct 2003	c. 8	c. 8	?> 3.5km	Dong Ba Dong; Yan Feng Tuo Dong (2.5km); Da Keng (to about -560m)		Drake, 2005

Ba (Xian) County

Three members of the 1994 expedition team briefly visited this county to examine a series of cave features reported by the local government. One of these, Wu Lu Keng Dong, was quickly surveyed to a sump after 300m, but on the whole the area appeared to hold little of interest to cavers (Senior, 1995).

Fengjie County

At the town of Xin Long (also transliterated as Xing Long) the landscape reflects a geological structure dominated by asymmetrical folds and by continuous lowering of the base level dictated by the Chang Jiang (river). The rivers in the area have therefore incised spectacular gorges, and about 15 caves in the Tian Jing Gorge, many of which were also surveyed, were studied by the 1994 team.

A highlight of the expedition was the descent and exploration of the nearby Xiaozhai Tiankeng, believed to be the largest tiankeng in the world (Senior, 1995).

The subsequent 1996 expedition to the area was inhibited by very heavy rainfall and lack of gear, and new exploration was necessarily fairly modest. Nevertheless a number of caves were pushed further than their 1994 limits, including the Tau Yuan He Dong resurgence which was explored for a further kilometre to a sump, and the *Green Eyed Monster Shaft*, bottomed after 3 pitches, two of around 100m each (Lovett and Garman, 1996).

The main focus of effort in Fengjie over the years has been on *The Great Crack/Great Doline* system, a hydrological feature of world-class importance near Xin Long. "*The Great Doline*" is about 660m deep with, at its foot, a river flowing from an upstream cave and now diverted into a hydro-electric scheme. The upstream cave leads to a sink, Di Feng, beyond which is *The Great Crack*, a massive gorge.

The 1996 expedition had limited success in *The Great Crack*, flushed out by bad weather, and in 1997 water levels were also such that little progress was made. In 1999, however, despite tough conditions, *The Great Crack* was fully explored and 10km of surveys completed, including explorations upstream from *The Great Doline* and downstream from the surface end of *The Great Crack*.

A team was back in 2002 to attack Di Feng, the underground connection between *The Great Crack* and *The Great Doline*, but wet weather again prevented progress. An expedition is now in hand to complete the exploration of this area (following which a report of all the explorations around Xin Long over the years should be published).

Fuling District

The cone karst hills of the Huangcao Shan near Fuling, a major city of 1.6 million people on the Chang Jiang, were visited in 1994. Four caves were briefly explored and noted for further study (Senior, 1995).

Hong Chi Ba Region

This area was visited briefly by 5 members of the 1996 expedition who concentrated on two valleys cut in the 2000m-high karst plateau that covers the region. The caving potential of the area was assessed, including two shafts both descended for over 100m with promising depths below left unexplored (Lovett and Garman, 1996).

Nanchuan District

The 1997 expedition moved to Nanchuan for a few days after its time in Fengjie County for an exploration over a few days of the caves on the high limestone of Jingfo Mountain.

Tongjin County

The 1994 Ba Xian team spent only a day or so in this county, just west of Chongqing city, to explore a recently discovered cave. Disappointingly it was found to be only 260m long with little of interest (Senior, 1995).

Wulong County

The landscape around Jiang Kou is dominated by two major rivers, Wu Jiang and Furong Jiang. Jiang Kou village is on the east bank of Furong Jiang, and the major cave in the area is Furong Dong, part of which has been made into a show cave.

The 1994 team explored this beyond the show cave section for 550m to blockages, and also explored several shafts and caves near Tian Xing village, notably Qiken Dong and Dongba Dong, later found to be entrances to the massive Tianxing Dongxutong (Tianxing Cave System).

In 1994, perhaps the most interesting of the shafts explored in the Tian Xing area was Xin Lou Koyu Dong, 215m deep with an unbroken 143m pitch. A very brief reconnaissance was also carried out of caves nearer to Wulong city on the banks of the Wu Jiang; 5 caves were discovered, two of which (unnamed) are major resurgences with potential for further exploration (Senior, 1995; Lovett and Garman, 1996).

In June 2002, exasperated after thwarted attempts on Di Feng (*The Great Crack*) in Fengjie County, Brian Judd and some colleagues turned their attentions to the potential of the Tian Xing area, and a small team descended Qikeng Dong to a depth of -550m. Realizing that this cave had the potential to be the deepest in China, a small team returned in August of that year and pushed the cave to -707m, returning again in late 2002 to reach a final depth of -920m (Drake, 2005).

Since these visits, the Hong Meigui Cave Exploration Society has devoted a tremendous amount of attention to Tianxing Dongxutong, of which Qikeng Dong is a part, achieving a depth of -1020m in 2007 and connecting 7 separate entrances to the system (Lynch and Collis, 2003; Drake, 2005; Wade, 2007).

Guangxi Province

Province County/Prefecture	Expedition date	Approx. number of caves located and explored	Approximate number of caves surveyed	Approximate total length of cave surveys	Main caves explored (with surveyed plan length/vertical range)	Notes	References
Guangxi							
Bama County	1987/1988	c. 20	12	17km (of which 16km was in the Pan Yang cave system)	Hou Dong (3.5km); Qian Dong 1 and 2 (3.1km); Beimo Dong–Ren Xiang Dong (3.3km); Qiao Ban Dong–Limo Dong (3.4km)		Fogg and Fogg, 1988; Gill <i>et al.</i> , 1990
	1989	c. 15	c. 11	c. 19km	Da Yang Dong (1.2km); Xiao Shui Dong; Feng Dong (3.8km with 250m shaft).		Waltham and Willis, 1993
	Oct 1998					Recce by A Eavis and K Senior	
	Oct–Nov 2005	11	4	c. 3km	Hao Dong; Da Shan Dong; Lao Hu Dong; Long Wali Shaft		Campion, 2006; Bensley <i>et al.</i> , 2007
Duan County	1985	–	–	–	–	Mostly surface examination of hydrological sites	Waltham, 1986
	1987/1988	?	?	22 dives, with 5 to depths >7.5m	Da Xing resurgence; Bao An; Nong Nao		Fogg and Fogg, 1988; Parker and Newman, 1990
Fengshan County	1989	4	4	c. 15km	Gantuan Dong (4km); Ma Wang Dong (9.4km)	Explored from a base in Yueli village in Bama County	Waltham and Willis, 1993
	Mar 2004	15	4	10.7km	Jiang Jia Tao (250m deep); Jiang Zhou Dong (to 7.5km)		Bensley <i>et al.</i> , 2005
	Oct–Nov 2004	> 50	7	29.7km	Jiang Zhou Dong (to 29km); Green River Sink or Lu He Dong (3.1km); Mayo Li Dong (1.6km); Si Fang (1.5km)		Bensley <i>et al.</i> , 2005
	Oct–Nov 2005	c. 15	9	c. 17km	Jiang Zhou Dong (to 38.5km); Zhong Ting Shaft; Da Dong, Long Shi Shaft; Maquai Dong; Long Luo Tiankeng		Campion, 2006; Bensley, 2008; Bensley <i>et al.</i> , 2007
	Oct 2010			c. 5km	Jiang Zhou Dong (to about 39km); Long Shi Dong (2.4km)		Harrison, 2011; Bensley and Harrison, 2012
	Spring 2012	2	–	–	Ma Wang Dong; Ban Dong	Prime objective: to assist National Geographic and ITV Anglia make a film	
	Mar 2013	5	5	c. 4km	Long Shi Dong (to 3.7km); Lu He Dong (to 4.4km); Jiang Zhou Dong (to 39.8km)	Objective: to seek links between Ma Wang Dong and the Jiang Zhou system	
Guilin Prefecture	1985	c. 20	14	26.6km	Guan Yan (3.8km); Xiaoheli Yan (2.8km); Chuan Yan (3.8km); Maliu Kang (2.6km); Hanzhu Yan (c. 2.5km); Shibangiao Dong (2.7km)		Waltham, 1986
Huanjiang County	Oct–Nov 2009	> 25	23	5.1km	Niao Yao Dong; Hu Tiane Dong; Ma Shan Dong; Dong Tan Dong; Gan Mei Shaft (321m deep); Shen Long Gong Dong	Most caves explored were vertical shafts	Bensley <i>et al.</i> , 2012
Leye County	2000	c. 15	7	9km	Dashiwei Tiankeng (1.1km); Fong Yen (1.0km, 407m deep); Xionajia Dong (east cave 1.6km, west cave 1.3km); Nupin Dong 1 (1.2km)		Campion, 2001
	2001	?	–	–	Bai Dong; Dacao Cave		Campion, 2003a
	Mar–Apr 2002	> 80	> 15	30km	Dashiwei Tiankeng (to 4.8km); Si Kow and Ai Dong (5km); Fong Yen, Tiankeng Dong, Labai Dong (all over 300m deep); Feng Dong, Da Ping Dong, Xin Dong (all over 100m deep); Fu Gui Dong (2.5km); Jia Guan San Dong, Lao Ying Dong (both over 200m deep)	Many horizontal caves and shafts explored, near the Dashiwei Tiankeng and its resurgence, and in 8 nearby areas. Outlying karst of Ma Dong also explored	Alker, 2003; Campion, 2003a; Campion, 2004a; Campion, 2004b
	Sep–Oct 2010	17	11	> 2km	Dashiwei Tiankeng; Ye Zhu Tuo; Di Shui Dong; Zhi Zhu Dong	Most caves explored were vertical shafts	Harrison, 2011; Bensley and Harrison, 2012
Lingyun County	2000	c. 15	12	8km	Shadong (2.9km); Penjiawen (1.7km); Xiashui Dong (0.7km)	Heavy rainfall hampered exploration	Campion, 2001a; Campion, 2001b
Mashan County	1988	4	3	15km	Jin Lun (7km); Gang Lei (7km); Nei Gang Dong		Fogg and Fogg, 1988; Fogg, 1990
Tian'e County	Feb–Mar 2004	22	11	8.5km	Ba Dong (2.0km); Cemetery Cave (1.3km); San Gui Shui Tiankeng (1.5m)	Exploration of a mix of vertical and horizontal caves	Bensley <i>et al.</i> , 2005

Bama County

The Bama karst, between the You and Hongshui rivers, comprises massive Devonian to Permian limestones in five broad domes separated by tight synclines of Triassic shales and sandstones. One of these domes, northwest of Bama town, drains from north to south to the Beimo resurgence. A second dome to the west (largely in neighbouring Fengshan County) drains from south to north to the San Men Hai resurgence where a short surface river across the shale outcrop carries the water just north of Yueli village before sinking into Da Yang Dong within the main Beimo catchment.

Bama, at that time one of the most remote parts of Guangxi Province, was a focus for a team from the 1987–1988 expedition that also visited two other counties in the province. In Bama the caves of the Beimo drainage system (also known as the Pan Yang system, from the river that flows south from Beimo into the massive Hongshui River) were the centre of attention, with 16km of passages surveyed in 8 caves, including Hou Dong, Qian Dong 1 and 2, and the extraordinary Beimo Dong (linked to Ren Xiang Dong) with its 200m high passages. The mapping and survey

work (both above and below ground) carried out by the team, which at the time had little or nothing in terms of Chinese topographical maps, provided an excellent framework for later visits by China Caves parties in 1989 and 2005 (Fogg and Fogg, 1988; Gill, *et al.*, 1990).

The China Caves Project team that returned to Bama in early 1989 was based in Yueli village, well north of the county town of Bama. Many of their explorations were in Fengshan County, and these are recorded in the appropriate section below. In Bama County the team concentrated on a series of caves along a fault zone in the limestone dome draining to Beimo. These were the Da Yang Dong river cave, the short Chushui resurgence cave, Xiao Shui Dong, which drains to the Weipo doline, and Dasuo Dong on the far side of the doline. Farther south, the expedition explored Feng Dong with a 250m-deep shaft dropping into 3.8km of passage linking to Chuifeng (Waltham and Willis, 1993).

Bama County was next visited by the Project in October 1998 in a short reconnaissance trip by Andy Eavis and Kevin Senior, and then again by the 2005 Guangxi expedition, which stopped in Bama town for just 4 days prior to moving for a longer visit to

neighbouring Fengshan County. Two of the caves explored during this stay were in or very close to Fengshan County, residing in the same limestone block as the Jiang Zhou Cave System, and so are covered in the Fengshan section below. The remaining time in Bama focused largely on the relatively small karst area to the west of Bama town where Bama's tiankengs (Hao Long and Jiaole) are situated. Both tiankengs were visited, as was the river entering Lao Hu Dong, which is believed to link to the river system under the tiankengs. This cave was surveyed for 4km to a sump (Campion, 2006; Bensley *et al.*, 2007).

Duan County

The karst catchment region of the Tisu River in Duan County (with an area of approximately 1000km²) was the scene of a short reconnaissance by 3 members of the 1985 China Caves expedition (Waltham, 1986). They examined a number of potential diving sites in the numerous flooded conduits draining the massive Tisu hydrological system to the Chiu Shui resurgence that were subsequently followed up by the 1987–1988 expedition in early 1988. This team, equipped with 2 compressors, 25 cylinders and 5km of diving line, visited a total of 15 sites and made 22 dives in 9 sinks or resurgences characterized by massive depth and extremely low visibilities (less than 4 metres being typical). Their finds included the Da Xing resurgence, dived to minus 76 metres, and many dives into potential passages between Bao An and Nong Nao, which are 9km apart (Fogg and Fogg, 1988; Parker and Newman, 1990).

Fengshan County

Fengshan County is extremely rich in karst, dominated by massive limestone of Devonian to Carboniferous age spreading from Fengshan town in the north into Bama County in the south. A cave-bearing sector in the east – the Qiaoyin and Xialijing drainage area – is separated from the Ma Wang and Jiang Zhou sectors in the west by a tight syncline, cored by Triassic sandstones and shales, with its axis trending directly north–south.

The 1989 expedition, based in Yueli village in northwestern Bama, spent much of its time across the county border exploring four caves in Fengshan west of the Triassic shales: Gantuan Dong, Ma Wang Dong, San Men Hai, and Chuan Dong (Waltham and Willis, 1993). Gantuan Dong, an ancient phreatic trunk route, stretched for almost 4km in a single large passage. The San Men Hai resurgence now provides an excellent show cave experience in boats or bamboo rafts, but above it lies the massive and intimidating Ma Wang Dong, the related relict series. This was explored for 9.4km to a small, remote, draughting exit in the south, Hei Dong. The team sensibly returned through the cave, rather than attempt an unknown, overland journey back to base. (The late 2004 expedition retraced much of this exciting through trip, attacking the system from both ends).

In 2004 the China Caves Project returned to Fengshan almost by chance. The February–March expedition was based in Tian'e County, north of Fengshan but, towards the end of the stay, the leader noticed characteristic cave symbols drawn on a Chinese map, in an area about 25km south of Fengshan

town. Two cavers went to investigate and literally walked into one of the entrances to the Jiang Zhou system with its vast passages seemingly going on for ever. About 7.5km of these were surveyed during the final few days of the expedition, with many leads left untouched.

When the Project returned in October 2004, Jiang Zhou was at the top of the agenda. A further 14km of mainly large relict passage were discovered and four entrances to the system located in 20 days of caving. Sporadic shafts gave access to the river system below but progress at that level was invariably blocked by mud sumps and collapses.

With so much still unexplored the Project was back in Fengshan within a year, in October 2005. Again the Jiang Zhou system, then thought to be the third longest in China (after Shuanghe Dong and Teng Long Dong), received much attention, especially the far reaches of Hijack Passage, the most remote part of the system, several hours from the closest entrance. By the end of the trip the system's surveyed length was 38.5km, making it the second longest in China at the time (Bensley *et al.*, 2005).

Effort on these 3 expeditions to Fengshan was not, however, limited to the Jiang Zhou system. In a few days in March 2004 the team explored about 15 other caves in the county, most of them close to Fengshan town, including Jiang Jia Tao (to the north of the town) with a 180m shaft and a total depth of 250m. Later in the same year the returning expedition also examined caves near Fengshan town including the series of sinks and resurgences of the Qiaoyin–Pan Yang river system, which runs from east of the town towards Jiang Zhou in the south, and a group of caves (including Dong Li Dong, Mayo Li Dong and Green River Sink) that lie between Ma Wang Dong and Jiang Zhou and which might eventually be key to connecting these systems. The late-2004 team also re-explored Ma Wang Dong including its southern entrance, Hei Dong. Similarly the 2005 expedition to Fengshan, although focusing on the Jiang Zhou system, gave some attention to other areas of the county. This included exploration (from Bama town as they are just in Bama County) of Hao Dong and Da Shan Dong, two well decorated caves which are very close to the southern sections of Jiang Zhou Dong; unfortunately no links were found between the three caves. Long Shi Shaft, first explored in 2004, was again visited and more passage surveyed. This important cave might eventually be part of a future connection between the Ma Wang Dong and Jiang Zhou Dong systems.

Maguai Dong, in the west of the county, was similarly extended, and Yu Long Dong (east of Paoli village), which has been almost completely desecrated by the "mining" of speleothems for sale by locals, was surveyed. A further "tiankeng" was discovered and descended: Long Luo near Pingle village. More correctly termed a "youthful tiankeng" or very large doline (as it fails to meet the formal tiankeng size definition), this shaft disappointingly closed down at its foot (Bensley *et al.*, 2007; Campion, 2005, 2006, 2008). The short visit to Fengshan by the 2010 expedition also focused on Long Shi, pushing its passages to a length of about 2.4km. A short period was also spent in the Jiang Zhou system, but very little was added to its previously explored horizontal length (Harrison, 2011; Bensley and Harrison, 2012).

Two years later, in 2012, China Caves Project members were back in Fengshan with other cavers and scientists helping the National Geographic organisation and ITV Anglia (a UK commercial TV franchise) to make a film about the development of the spectacular karst features of Fengshan and Leye. The China Caves team focused on Ma Wang Dong, and made efforts to explore the downstream section of the river which had not been visited previously; however, only 300m of river cave was conquered due to lack of time and logistical difficulties. A four-day underground camp was also set up in Ban Dong (midway between the entrances of Ma Wang Dong and Hei Dong) where a high-level cave was accessed by abseil but found to close down after 50m.

The Chinese-dominated March 2013 expedition to the county aimed to close the gaps between the 38km Jiang Zhou cave system and Ma Wang Dong (now about 12km long following recent diving and other extensions), that will eventually create a system of more than 60km. In a period of only a week the team made considerable progress, extending Long Shi Dong by over 1km southwards to a point very close to Terragoata Doline in the Jiang Zhou system, and also northwards towards Lu He Dong, which itself was extended still farther north and east towards Hei Dong, the southern entrance of Ma Wang Dong.

Guilin Prefecture

The first China Caves Project expedition in 1985 spent much of its time in the Guilin Prefecture. To the east and south of Guilin town is a sequence of north/south-aligned carbonates dating from the Middle Devonian to Lower Carboniferous, now much deformed and worn into remarkable fenglin and fengcong landscapes. As described in the “**Genesis of the Project**” section in our last journal, the expedition concentrated on three areas in the prefecture: around Haiyang in the east, the extensive Guanyan Cave system between Caoping and Nanxu, and the Xingping area in the south; the most important finds of the expedition there are outlined above (Waltham, 1986).

Huanjiang County

China Caves visited this county, some 200km from the Karst Institute in Guilin, just once, in 2009. The aim was to explore lower and middle Carboniferous limestones in and surrounding the Mulun Karst National Nature Reserve in the northwest of the county, adjacent to Libo County in Guizhou Province. Eight specific areas in or close to the reserve were explored, along with two other karst areas, the Wenja area to the east of the reserve and Nuan Hecun in the south of the county (close to Huanjiang town, the expedition's base).

Some 23 caves were surveyed, most of them vertical shafts. The Mulun, Xia Rong and Wenya areas were particularly productive. Wenya yielded its tiankeng (130m deep) and the superbly decorated Niao Yao Dong, Xia Rong the isolated Hou Gan Dong shaft with a large chamber at its foot, and Mulun the shaft of Xia Tan No.2 with a 132m, slightly off-vertical, pitch. The expedition highlight, however, was the descent over two days of Gan Mei Shaft, some 320m deep, in the far northwest of the county and approached by a long journey from Huanjiang into Guizhou and then back to the village of Gengba, close to the provincial border (Bensley *et al.*, 2012).

Leye County

Leye was first visited by the China Caves Project in October 2000, when some members of the Guangxi 2000 Expedition moved on there from Lingyun, a short distance to the south. The prime aim was to explore the Dashiwei Tiankeng and its underground river. The team was extraordinarily successful, exploring about 1.5km of the cave (and mapping 1.1km of this) in very wet conditions before being unable to proceed further due to the volume of water. The exploration involved numerous river crossings tackled by a mixture of swimming and Tyrolean traverses. The expedition also explored several other karst features in the region, including the descent of Fong Yen, an open shaft that proved to be 407m deep, and Xionajia Dong East and West caves that together were 3km long. The Nupin Dong river cave was also explored to just short of Hong Meigui Chamber (entered the following year). Other features examined in the limited remaining time available were the Luoja, Dacao, Shujia and Baidong tiankengs. A skylight just east of Dashiwei, Macqi Dong, was discovered and this was thought to lead to the Baidong underground river (Campion, 2001b).

A small China Caves team was back in Leye in 2001, and made notable discoveries in tiankengs adjacent to Dashiwei, including Bai Dong where the 260m pitch of Maoqi Dong was descended, and Dacao Cave with its world-class chamber was surveyed (Campion, 2003a).

Dashiwei Tiankeng itself had to wait until 2002 when the Project put together a strong team of 21 overseas cavers under the leadership of Andy Eavis to undertake a comprehensive review of this 500km² area of limestone and to attempt to follow the Dashiwei underground river to its resurgence. The expedition was extremely successful, and blessed by low water levels for much of the 2 months in the field. Down the Dashiwei Tiankeng river, the 2000 limit was soon reached and the water followed to its disappearance under a chamber wall. High-level passages beyond here led eventually to a shaft into the *Turbine Room* where the water was met again in an impassable waterfall. The survey indicated that 4776m of cave passage with a vertical range of 557m had been explored.

Attention then switched to the resurgence area, 20km to the north, where a number of truncated river caves and shafts were examined (including Si Kow and Ai Dong, together about 5km long), all ended in sumps and impassable risings. Eight areas around Dashiwei were then selected for examination; Yun Lai, Labia, Hua Ping, Homei, La Lai, Da Ping, Lao Shah and Pin Za. The latter two proved slightly disappointing, but the other 6 areas produced a vast array of mainly vertical shafts, most between 100m and 400m deep, unfortunately with little or no subsequent horizontal development.

The list of descents is too long even to summarize here, but notable among them were Labia Dong, with a depth of 400m, Tiankeng Dong near Hua Ping with a 172m free-hang, and Feng Dong near Da Ping, about 230m deep. Towards the end of the expedition a small team of 6 cavers made a 3-day exploration of a stand-alone limestone inlier well to the northeast of the Leye massif, called Ma Drong. Six caves were surveyed here (and more located), including Fu Gui Dong, a big sink cave 2.5km long (Alker, 2003; Campion, 2003a, 2004a, 2004b).

Leye County was again briefly visited by the China Caves Project in 2010, on the 10th anniversary of the Project's first visit to the area. Celebrations were the order of the day for much of the time but some caving was managed in between banquets and concerts. The small team focused on an area just to the south of the famous Dashiwei Tiankeng, which had not been visited by the earlier China Caves Project or other western expeditions to Leye. In total 13 caves were explored. The bulk of these were vertical shafts, some exceeding 100m in depth, but regrettably most had little horizontal development at the bottom. The most exciting find was Ye Zhu Tuo, a multi-shaft series of rifts that was not bottomed in the time available and which becomes a key target for a future team in the area (Harrison, 2001; Bensley and Harrison, 2012).

Lingyun County

Lingyun was visited by the Guangxi 2000 expedition for a period of four weeks or so in October of that year (some of the team moving on to Leye County, slightly farther north, about half way through the expedition).

Much of the time in Lingyun was spent trying to locate sections of the underground course of the elusive Shiyui River, which runs to the north of Lingyun town. Two caves in particular, Xiashui Dong and Sha Dong, yielded considerable lengths of passage. Some time was also spent south of Lingyun town, where large dolines dominate the landscape. Despite their successes – the expedition's surveyed plan length in Lingyun totalled about 8km and deep shafts had to be negotiated in many of the caves – the team felt that their explorations had been hindered by the fact that the erosion of Permian shales surrounding the karst area has caused considerable silting and blockages in many of the caves (Campion, 2001a, 2001b).

Guizhou Province

Province County/region/etc	Expedition date	Approx. number of caves located and explored	Approximate number of caves surveyed	Approximate total length of cave surveys	Main caves explored (with surveyed plan length/vertical range)	Notes	References
Guizhou							
Anlong County	1988	?	2	probably 22.6km	Ban Dong-Xinu-Chu Yan Dong (17.6km); Dragon Cave (c. 5km)		Lewis, 1988; Dunton and Laverty, 1993
	Mar–Apr 1989	?	3	c. 3.7km	Ran Jia Wan Dong-Chang Sha Dong (2.2km); Guo Jia Dong (173m deep)		Dunton, 1990; Dunton and Laverty, 1993
Anshun Prefecture	1985	5	4	c. 3.8km	Gan Dong (1.1km); Xian Ren Dong (1.1km)		Waltham, 1986
Guiyang Prefecture	1985	relatively few	1	-	Longtan Dong (275m deep)	Shafts explored	Waltham, 1986
Shuicheng County	1985	4	4	2.7km	San Cha He Dong (1.1km)		Waltham, 1986
	1987–1988	> 20	c. 14	probably c. 25km	Saguo Dong (3.4km); Wujia Dong (1.5km, 450m deep); Mu Cheng He Dong		Fogg and Fogg, 1988
Yanhe County	Oct–Nov 2008	57	23	26.4km	Chuan Dong (4.6km); Gan Dong (6.3km); Long Qiao Dong (3.3km)		Bensley <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Hubei							
Lichuan County	Oct 2006	c. 25 (including several sections of TLD)	23	18.5km	Teng Long Dong (TLD) system (7.5km); Gan Dong (3.0km)		Bensley <i>et al.</i> , 2008; Campion, 2011
Jianshi County	Oct 2006	4	4	2.3km	Xie Pan Dong (1km)		Bensley <i>et al.</i> , 2008
Jiangxi							
Wannian County	Nov 2006	c. 8	4	4.4km	Shen Nong Gong Dong (4.2km); Bian Fu Dong		Bensley <i>et al.</i> , 2008
Sichuan							
Xingwen County	1992	> 15	13	> 26km	Zhucaojing (8.8km); Tiencuan Dong (8.1km); Xia Dong (2.2km); Yanzi Luo Shui Dong (1.8km); Heping Dong (1.8km)		Waltham <i>et al.</i> , 1993; Waltham and Willis, 1993
Tibet							
Central Tibet	1992	"relatively few"	1?	"a few hundred metres" (longest cave: 50m)	Small caves found at 3 locations (Nam Co, Nilong and Perochi)	All caves found at greater than 4500m altitude	Waltham, 1993; Waltham and Willis, 1993
Yunnan							
Luxi County	Spring 1991	"limited"	at least 2	?	Alu Dong; Maoyin Dong		Waltham and Willis, 1993
Mengzi County	Spring 1991	c. 10	at least 5	> 6km	Nan Dong/Taoyuan Dong (2.5km); Shi Dong (3.3km); Zuomeidi Dong (208m deep)	Expedition involved cave diving	Waltham and Willis, 1993
Yanjin County	Nov 2013	6	3	c. 4km	Huangshan Dong (2km)		

Mashan County

Mashan County, lying on the right bank of the massive Hongshui River just south of Duan County, was visited by the 1987–1988 expedition. Areas explored south and southeast of the Mashan county town are fengcong karst with a maximum vertical range of 300m, and the expedition concentrated on two extensive caves – Jin Lun Dong and the Gang Zei River Cave. The former is a fascinating multi-entrance system some 7km long, with interconnecting passages on several levels and an immense chamber of 14,000m² in area. Gang Zei proved to be of a similar length, but of a very different character, with six entrances and much of the surveying carried out in boats (Fogg and Fogg, 1988; Fogg, 1990).

Tian'e County

Tian'e was visited in February and March 2004 by a small expedition of just 5 UK cavers, who spent 10 days based in Tian'e town (Bensley *et al.*, 2005). The county is dominated by the Hong Shui River, which cuts down through Triassic shales at Tian'e town, on the edge of a long chain of Devonian-to-Carboniferous limestone extending from a few kilometres north of the town into Fengshan County to the south. About 22 caves were explored (11 were surveyed), but only a few were able to deliver significant length or depth, with sumps or sediment infill commonly preventing progress. Two specific finds, however, are worthy of note. The first was Ba Dong, a relatively short cave about 2km in length, with a magnificent, decorated chamber over 200m in diameter (containing a huge 38m-high boss), which took several days to survey. The second was a new "tiankeng", the San Gui Shui Tiankeng near the village of Lao Pung, 226m deep. (When a formal list of all China's tiankengs was published later (Zhu and Chen, 2005), San Gui Shui's volume of 0.46Mm³ just failed to qualify and so strictly it is now termed a "large karst doline").

Anlong County

Anlong is about 220km from the provincial capital of Guiyang, with the Doshan area of the county comprising a sloping plateau of Triassic limestone with impressive collapse dolines and vadose shafts, including the An He closed depression with a number of cave entrances. Subterranean water courses in the area resurge at Si Fang in the east. The 1988 and 1989 teams focused initially on the Ban Dong–Xinu–Chu Yan Dong system, accessed from the An He Doline, which proved to be 17.6km long. Other caves surveyed include (in 1988) Dragon Cave, and (in 1989) Guo Jia Dong, with a 100m shaft leading to a large sloping chamber with no obvious way on, and Ran Jia Wan Dong – Chang Sha Dong, another relict system some 2.2km long (Dunton and Lavery, 1993; Lewis, 1988; Dunton, 1990).

Anshun Prefecture

Anshun Prefecture, which lies to the southwest of Guiyang, the provincial capital, contains outcrops of massive limestone of Triassic age. The area was visited by the 1985 reconnaissance expedition; details of their findings are listed in the “**Genesis of the Project**” section published last edition and are not replicated here (Waltham, 1986).

Guiyang Prefecture

As well as visiting Anshun and Shuicheng, the 1985 reconnaissance expedition spent a short time in the Longtan plateau region of Guiyang Prefecture. The main caving achievement in this area was the descent of Longtan Shaft, an unbroken vadose drop of 275m (Waltham, 1986).

Shuicheng County

This county lies on the Guizhou plateau to the west of the provincial capital Guiyang and is dominated by outcrops of Carboniferous age limestone hundreds of metres in thickness.

The area was first visited by the reconnaissance expedition of 1985, whose explorations are summarized in the “**Genesis of the Project**” section (Waltham, 1986); they are thus not repeated here. In 1987–1988 a China Caves Project expedition team of 9 British cavers returned to Shuicheng with the objective of trying to follow the underground course of the Fala He (River) between a sink near Fala village and its resurgence near Pan Long village 8km to the south. Saguo Dong and Mu Cheng He Dong, two of the links in the system, were discovered and surveyed, but fast-flowing unexplored sections of the massive river remained to be explored. Team members also tackled Wujia Dong, a short distance towards the west and part of the same drainage system, which was surveyed for one and a half kilometres, reaching a depth of 450m at an impassable syphon (Fogg and Fogg, 1988).

Yanhe County

The Project's expedition in 2008 was initially planned to be in Bijie County, in the west of Guizhou Province. However, at the last minute, Guilin's Karst Institute suggested changing the venue to Yanhe, a county in the far northeast of the same province. Not previously visited by a Western expedition, this proved to be an interesting choice, although the expedition's activities were commonly hampered by particularly persistent rainfall. The team explored about 50 caves spread throughout the county, which

borders the massive Wu Jiang (river) to the north and is endowed with several bands of Triassic and Ordovician limestone running the length of the county from southwest to northeast. The main discoveries of the team were two extensive, largely horizontal cave systems: Chuan Dong, on the banks of the Wu Jiang, and Gan Dong, in thick Ordovician limestone near the middle of the county. Lack of time prevented the full exploration of these caves, although more than 10km of passages were surveyed in them. Several species of cave fauna were examined in numerous caves in the county, including at least one species of beetle that is new to science (Bensley *et al.*, 2010).

Lichuan County

The China Caves Project was not the first overseas caving organisation to visit Lichuan. In 1987–1988 a large and strong Sino-Belgian expedition had explored the massive Teng Long Dong system, part of which is now an important show cave. In the early 2000s the system was regarded as the second longest in China with 33.5km of surveyed cave. However, in reality the Belgian team had explored a series of truncated active and relict sections of the underground river, not all of which had been connected to other parts. When the China Caves Project was invited to re-explore the area in 2006, the objectives were to link sections of this massive system if possible, and to expand knowledge of the area to support its possible designation as a geo-park. In the event, the 2006 cavers resurveyed and discovered about 7.4km of passage in Teng Long Dong, and made several more connections. The caving commonly involved often spectacular traverses along the vertical sides of the raging underground river, but the system remains one of largely unconnected sections with many sumps and impassable lengths of river between them.

Equally important was the team's exploration of nearby caves, mainly to the east of Teng Long Dong. These included Gan Dong, an essentially horizontal relict system explored for over 3km, and numerous caves around the Xiaoxi River, about 20km to the east of Lichuan town, the expedition's base. About 24 “new” caves were explored and more than 18km of passage surveyed (Bensley *et al.*, 2008; Campion, 2011).

Jianshi County

During the 2006 expedition to Lichuan County, the Guilin Karst Institute and local officials asked a small team of 3 British cavers to carry out a short reconnoitre within the neighbouring Jianshi County. Four caves were briefly explored during the course of four days, and the potential of the area for future exploration was assessed (Bensley *et al.*, 2008).

Jiangxi Province

Wannian County

At the end of the 2006 expedition to Lichuan County, six of the expedition's cavers travelled eastwards to Wannian County in the neighbouring Jiangxi Province to meet some old caving friends from Nanning, and to explore the Shennong Gong cave system. Part of this cave had already been opened as a popular show cave and, in a visit of only a week, the team were able to survey an additional 2km or so of passages beyond the show cave section and also explore two other entrances to the system (Bensley *et al.*, 2008).

Sichuan Province

Xingwen County

In 1992 the China Caves Project visited Xingwen County in Sichuan. The karst scenery here is dominated by a dramatic limestone scarp, riddled with caves (Zhu *et al.*, 1995). Many caves were explored and surveyed including Zhucaojing, a vast system comprising the remains of two relict trunk passages, now linked by a later streamway. Nine kilometres of cave were surveyed here, but lack of time and bad weather meant that many open leads remained. Tiencuan Dong, part of which had already been opened as a show cave, was also surveyed by the team, with a final mapped length of 8.1km.

Among many finds, Xia Dong was of particular geomorphological interest, because it comprises classic parallel rifts connected by dissolutionally enlarged phreatic tubes. Of equal interest was the exploration of the Xiaoyanwan Tiankeng (which holds one of the entrances to Tiencuan Dong). The team also examined nearby factories that produce sulphur by processing pyrite contained in Permian rocks that overlie the limestone; proposals were made to reduce pollution emanating from the factory waste heaps (Waltham and Willis, 1993; Waltham *et al.*, 1993).

Tibet

In 1992 a small team of 6 Project members made a brief survey of the limestone of the Tibetan Plateau but with only limited success in terms of finding karst features. Limestone in Tibet occurs just as thin bands or fault slices, most of it complexly deformed, and karst features are minimal because of the low rainfall, low temperatures and reduced chemical activity. Small caves were found at three locations in central Tibet, all at altitudes of over 4500m. These were at Nam Co, a lake to the north of Lhasa (where caves of up to 20m are found along joint weaknesses), at the village of Nilong, west of Lhasa (where Chagong Chimu with a 15m high entrance – but only 50m long – was examined), and farther south near the village of Perochi, where again small fissure caves exist. The most exciting cave prospects in Tibet probably lie in the far west of the region, around Rutog and Shiquanhe, but the area has not yet been visited by western cavers (Waltham, 1993; Waltham and Willis, 1993).

Yunnan Province

Luxi County

Yunnan Province has been visited by the Project only twice. In 1991 the karst features of Luxi County were examined briefly, including Alu Dong, in which a sump was dived beyond an extensive tourist cave (which includes a boat ride), and Maoyin Dong, with an impressive, impenetrable 80m water-filled shaft and river passage (Waltham and Willis, 1993).

Menzi County

In 1991 the main area explored was the Mengzi karst, just north of the Vietnamese border, where massive Triassic limestones form large plateaus around three broad basins. Nan Dong and its related show cave of Taoyuan Dong were visited on many occasions, resulting in a survey totalling 2.5km. Unfortunately for the team's diving members, the sump at the northern end of the

system had zero visibility; bad air also restricted exploration elsewhere in the system. The main plateau sink of Shi Dong was also explored through sumps into previously unentered open passage, followed for 3.3km to a second sump. A number of shafts were explored on the same plateau, one to a depth of 208m; unfortunately all proved to be choked (Waltham and Willis, 1993).

Yanjin County

Yunnan was visited again in late 2013 by a very small team that went to Yanjin County in the far northeast of the province. The expedition was only in the field for 10 days and so underground exploration was necessarily limited, but several caves were found and explored, including Huangshan Dong (Eel Cave), a through cave initially explored at both the sink and resurgence ends, which were subsequently linked and the cave surveyed.

The achievements of the Project

Geomorphology

Perhaps the most important geomorphological research to which the China Caves Project has contributed has been the identification and characterization of tiankengs. Tiankengs are giant collapse dolines, generally round or oval in plan, with diameters of 100 to 1000m and very steep (vertical or overhanging) walls greater than 100m deep (Zhu and Waltham, 2005; Waltham, 2005a). These were first identified in China by Professor Zhu of the Guilin Karst Institute, who has studied them intensively over many years. Forty nine tiankengs have now been found in the southern provinces of Guangxi, Guizhou and Chongqing, and many more similar features that are between 50 and 100m wide have also been located (Zhu and Chen, 2005). These latter features are also widely known as tiankengs, but are better referred to as "*large collapse dolines*". The most important tiankeng discoveries have been since 1994 when, while searching for a new exploration site for the China Caves Project, scientists from the Guilin Institute found Xiaozhai Tiankeng near the Yangtze Gorges, the largest tiankeng yet discovered in China. Dashiwei Tiankeng in Leye County (China's second largest tiankeng) and its surrounding group of 25 tiankengs were also discovered ahead of a China Caves Project expedition in 2001 (Zhu, Huang, Zhu and Chen, 2003). Descents of these and similar features elsewhere in Guizhou, Guangxi and Chongqing by Project cavers, and in some cases the exploration of their underground rivers, has enabled Professor Zhu and other geomorphologists to determine their probable mode of formation, identify their development environment, and speculate on their likely age (Zhu, Zhu and Chen, 2003).

China Caves Project members have also contributed more specifically to geomorphological queries arising from visits to China's tiankengs and other features of its karst scenery (Eavis, 2005). An example of these is the study of the collapse processes at the tiankengs of Xingwen, explored by the Project's expedition there in 1992 (Waltham, 2005b). Another is the use of water chemistry on samples from the Xingwen caves in Sichuan to determine the influence of sulphuric acid (from nearby pyrite deposits) on limestone dissolution and cave development (Bottrell, 1993). The development of caves in Fengshan County, Guangxi, has also received the attention of the Project, particularly after the discovery of the massive Jiang Zhou Cave

System in 2004–2005. Geological studies involving the analysis of water and rock samples (involving, in part, x-ray micro-analytical techniques) suggest that the large size of the horizontal cave passages in this system is a function of the favourable climatic conditions in Cenozoic times on relatively pure calcitic limestone, and not related to any influences from dolomitic limestone, gypsum, anhydrite or aragonite, as had previously been surmised (Campion, 2008; Dale and Harrison, 2008).

An interesting analysis carried out as a result of a China Caves Project expedition, which has contributed to scientific studies with a wider geographical range than China alone, was the 1992/3 examination of speleothems from Xingwen as recorders of palaeomagnetic secular variation over the last 10,000 years (Openshaw *et al.*, 1993). Palaeomagnetic studies of speleothems in the caves of Duan County, Guangxi were also carried out by the 1988 expedition, but samples were found to be only very weakly magnetised, proving it difficult to establish polarity magnetozones for use in geomagnetic dating (Noel, 1990).

Finally it is noted that nearly all China Caves Project members arriving in the country from overseas have been privileged to see fine examples of both fenglin (“tower karst”) and fengcong (“cone karst”) scenery. It is therefore fitting that the most authoritative paper on the definitions and modes of formation of these karst features has been written by one of the founders of the Project (Waltham, 2008).

Conservation

Conservation of karst landscape and of caves has always been high on the agenda of China Caves Project expeditions, and can be a real challenge in a country like China that is undergoing rapid economic development and infrastructure expansion. The issue is compounded in some regions by the fact that the “mining” of speleothems for hotel, restaurant and domestic decoration in parts of China, Japan and other parts of East Asia has been one of few reliable sources of income for local peasants (Price, 2006). Examples of this activity have commonly been seen by expedition members, such as the discovery, at the foot of a 170m vertical shaft (Long Shi) in Fengshan County (Guangxi), of a pile of cut stalactites wrapped in cling film and ready for transportation out of the region.

The solution is to persuade local authorities that preservation of caves and karst environments in their original state can lead to more reliable, long-term sources of income as show caves or related attractions for the growing domestic tourism industry (Zhu, 2001).

China has a vast array of show caves and the number is expanding all the time. The Project has worked for many years with the Guilin Karst Institute and other authorities to ensure that these are developed in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Since about 2000, China Caves Project expeditions have had an additional objective of providing data (in the form of cave surveys, geomorphological reports, etc.) to enable national and local authorities in the karst areas visited to obtain more formal protection of their environments by designation as international, national or provincial nature reserves, heritage sites or geo-parks. The most important and impressive achievement in terms of

conservation of karst areas was the June 2007 designation by UNESCO of South China Karst as a World Heritage site.

South China’s karst scenery spans half a million km², mainly in Guangxi, Guizhou and Yunnan provinces. The formal UNESCO designation is what is called a *coherent serial property* with 7 *components* in 3 *clusters*, these being in Libo County (Guizhou), Shilin Yi County (Yunnan) and Wulong County (Chongqing). Each “component” is a magnificent example of a specific type of karst scenery, including the Naigu Stone Forest in Shilin Yi, Xiaoqijong and Dongduo in Libo, and Furong Cave in Chongqing. Explorations by the China Caves Project between 1985 and 2005 played a not inconsiderable part in this important UNESCO designation. During 2013 the designation was being expanded to cover more regions, and China Caves Project discoveries are again an important background data source.

The geo-park concept – originally developed in Europe and given international recognition in 2004 when UNESCO launched its “**Global Geo-Park Network**” initiative – was quickly embraced by China, and several Project expeditions since 2004 have been geared specifically towards objectives of national or international geo-park designation for given karst areas. The most successful outcomes were the designations, in Guangxi Province, of a large area of Leye County as a national geopark in 2004, followed in 2005 by the same designation for part of Fengshan County, and subsequently the designation by UNESCO in October 2010 of a combined area of the two counties as a global geo-park encompassing 930km² of magnificent karst scenery including the Dashiwei Tiankeng and the Jiang Zhou cave system. Not only does this provide an incentive for the development of responsible tourism, which at the same time will raise local standards of living, but it puts in place an administrative framework within which the region’s outstanding karst scenery will be protected. Project expeditions to Lichuan County (Hubei) in 2006 and to Huanjiang County (Guangxi) in 2009 had similar objectives of obtaining or expanding geo-park or national park designations.

Biology

Since its inception in 1985, the China Caves Project has regarded cave biology as an important area of study. Indeed, the summary report of the Project’s early expedition to Guizhou and Guangxi in 1987–1988 has a section describing many cave-dwelling invertebrates observed, including centipedes, spiders and beetles (Fogg and Fogg, 1988). This was followed up by an extensive scientific paper on the troglomorphic and troglophilic species observed by the expedition in Guangxi caves, including a quantitative assessment of the effect of flooding, humidity and human impact on the number of various cave dwelling species (Fowler, 1990).

Surface species including mammals, birds, and reptiles have also featured prominently on various expeditions. Of particular interest was the discovery, by the 2002 Hidden River Expedition to Leye County, of two red-and-white giant flying squirrels (*Petaurista alborufus*) deep in the impressive shaft of Fong Yen Dong, the lower one being about 200m below the surface. These mammals, which glide from tree to tree in the tropical forests of eastern Asia, must have approached too close to the edge of the shaft and parachuted inescapably into the depths. They are an endangered species, on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and as

such were duly rescued by team members, after a difficult time when trying to get the furious animals into tackle sacks for the long prussik out of the cave (Campion, 2003c). Reptiles have also featured frequently in China Caves Project explorations, examples being the discoveries of a 3m-long python (*Python molurus bivittatus*) several kilometres underground in Fengshan County and of a couple of nasty-looking rat snakes (*Elaphe moellendorffi*) down a 130m shaft in Huanjiang County, occasions that provided tense moments for some expedition members. The discovery of linsangs, porcupines and catfish in Tian'e and Fengshan counties in 2004 were also interesting expedition highlights, and numerous similar examples can be found scattered throughout virtually all expedition reports.

The Project's biological studies took a leap forward in 2000 with the recruitment to the Project of a biologist from the School of Zoology in the University of Tasmania, who specializes in the biodiversity and ecology of subterranean ecosystems. Nearly all of the reports of expeditions since 2000 include detailed appendices covering the troglomorphic biological studies of the expedition. Typical of the expeditions' discoveries are two new species of trechine beetle, one found in Bianfu Dong, Jiangxi Province, in 2006 (Ueno and Clarke, 2007), the other described from Gan Dong, Guizhou Province in 2008 (Tian and Clarke, 2012).

Archaeology

Caves in all parts of the world have attracted people for many thousands of years, providing permanent or temporary refuge and sites for burial or ritual. This is particularly evident in the caves of southern China, and the 1988 expedition to Guangxi Province studied archaeological remains in many caves in Duan and Bama counties. Striking features noted included an abundance of dry stone walling, the designs suggesting a defensive purpose (Roberts, 1990). Palaeomagnetic studies were carried out by the same expedition on archaeological fired sediments in some caves in Duan, and these gave indications of the period of use of the hearth areas and so of the occupational timescale of the caves (Noel, 1990).

Proposals for more systematic studies of the archaeology of caves during expeditions have been published (Roberts, 1986) but this has been a relatively neglected area of study on many China Caves Project expeditions. The 2005 expedition to Fengshan, however, also noted defensive walls in one of the entrances to the Jiang Zhou cave system, believed to date from the period of communist/nationalist conflict during the late 1920s (Bensley *et al.*, 2007, pp73–74). Numerous China Caves Project expeditions have found evidence of mineral extraction (including guano, saltpetre and coal) in China's caves, and several journals record details of such finds (see for example: Bensley *et al.*, 2008, pp70–72). However, a systematic analysis of mining in caves explored by the China Caves Project expedition teams has yet to be tackled.

Construction and Development

Prior to the establishment of the China Caves Project, cave studies in China were almost wholly devoted to economic requirements, particularly related to the harnessing of cave water for domestic and industrial supplies, irrigation and generating

hydroelectric power. One of the early – and still continuing – anticipated outcomes of Project's expeditions was an increase in knowledge of the hydrology of the karst areas explored, and over the years the Project can be said to have made a very acceptable contribution to this topic.

A typical example is the Project's expedition to the Mengzi karst of southern Yunnan in 1991, where exploration and survey of the caves helped to provide data to support the work of civil engineers in sinking wells (Waltham and Willis, 1993). Another typical example is the study of Guizhou's geomorphology by Zhang, Yang and He of Guizhou Normal University, and its implications for engineering in karst terrains, which built in part upon the observations of the 1985 China Caves Project expedition to the province (Zhang *et al.*, 1992).

During the past 20 years or so, China has enjoyed an unprecedented period of economic development. This has been supported by rapid expansion of its basic services and transport infrastructure, and the need to understand the geomorphology of karst areas to assist construction projects related to these activities continues to be important. Consequently the China Caves Project expedition teams have continued to recognize a primary or secondary objective of collecting and providing such information. A recent example, in this case of assisting local mining activities, took place on the Yanhe 2008 expedition, when the team was asked to examine highly contaminated water emerging from the partially mined (coal) Lao Yin Qin cave in the south of the county (Bensley *et al.*, 2010). Many similar examples can be found within the expedition reports and related papers.

Expedition medicine

Very few of the China Caves Project expeditions have included a qualified medical practitioner as a team member. The 1988 expedition to Guangxi was a notable exception, allowing a brief study of the incidence of histoplasmosis, a health risk commonly faced by cavers in tropical regions (Frankland, 1990).

It is perhaps relevant here to comment more generally on medical issues affecting China Caves Project expeditions. It seems that expeditions during which the presence of a doctor would have been beneficial usually did not have one on the team, but some of the expeditions without a medical presence did have some team members who suffered from various ailments and injuries! In these cases the Chinese medical service has usually stepped up to the mark.

One of the present authors recalls incurring, in 2005, a leg wound from a fall underground that became severely infected, and which was subsequently treated by daily injections of antibiotics at a local cottage hospital in western Guangxi. This treatment was completely effective, the only downside being that medical treatment in China is not free; at the end of the course the patient was presented with a bill for a total sum equivalent to just one pound sterling!

It is perhaps significant that the most serious mishap to occur on a China Caves Project expedition was on the surface, not in a cave. This was in Huanjiang in 2009 when a car containing four Chinese and British cavers overturned *en route* to a cave, with significant injuries to all the occupants. All made full recoveries.

The complete article in *Cave and Karst Science*, Volume 41, Number 2, August 2014 contains a wealth of photographs, far more than we can reproduce here. These are amongst the photos taken on these expeditions by YRC members.



The classic 120m-deep entrance shaft of Xin Dong in Leye County, Guangxi, which was descended during the spring 2002 expedition.
(Photo: Bruce Bensley)



The celebrated Dashiwei Tiangkeng in Leye County, Guangxi, photographed during the 2001 expedition to the region.
(Photo: Ged Campion)

Pools and speleothems in Hei Dong (Dark Cave), in the Datuo Tiangkeng area of Leye County, Guangxi, in 2010.
(Photo: John Whalley)





A group of team members at Dashiwei Tiankeng during the expedition to Leye County in Guangxi Province in spring 2002. (Photo: John Whalley)



Above the river in Teng Long Dong, Lichuan County, Hubei Province, in 2006. (Photo: John Whalley)

Below left Part of Chuan Dong (Through Cave) in Guizhou's Yanhe County, explored and surveyed in 2008. (Photo: John Whalley)

Below - A member of the 2006 Lichuan Expedition crosses the underground river in Teng Long Dong, Hubei Province. (Photo: Dave Williams.)



DALES DAYS & SEASIDE SAUNTERS

We all like to wander the Dales at will but many people rather than tackle very long day walks like to spend a week or so, following long distance trails. New ones seem to be being created all the time these days although many are existing series of rights of way being linked together and badged for marketing purposes. People with a little imagination could always have walked these.

They do however give a focus and purpose to a walking holiday and are becoming increasingly popular. The downside of this is that you find little by way of solitude as you are constantly bumping into people. These are often like-minded souls and pleasant company for a brief respite but the get-away-from-it-all attraction is being lost and what wildlife is about has invariably been scared away. For those of us who cherish wild places the best option these days is to wander little known informal paths in open access land.

The other option with some chance of having the landscape all to yourself, is to try one of the newer trails before they become well known and to do so midweek at short notice when we get a break in poor weather.

One problem with a number of the 'contrived' newer trails is that they wander all over the place between attractions the sponsors wish to promote and as they often do not even closely resemble a straight line you never seem to be getting anywhere. These are better explored as a series of day walks.

This suits me better these days as I am no longer keen on carrying the means to overnight en route and the logistics of wandering off each night to pre arranged accommodation is a bore.

One recently created route does look attractive although over the years I think I have walked most of it. The Dales Way has always been a favourite of mine for many reasons not least that I lived near its start for 12 years.

We now have a Dales High Way. As they say, the name is on the tin. This route keeps high rather than following river valleys and takes you from Saltaire near Shipley to Appleby in Cumbria, and allows you to come back or go to your start on what I consider one of England's most beautiful train rides, the Settle-Carlisle line.

This long distance route goes over Lanshaw Lad, Rombolds Moor, Addingham High Moor and Skipton Moor then Sharp Haw, Weets Top and Kirkby Fell to end up in Settle. This alone is just short of 36 miles and would make a good long days walk, taking in about 3,000ft of ascent.

From there it carries on via Smearset Scar, over Ingleborough and Blea Moor into Dent and then Sedbergh. This is a section of just under 30 miles with about 4,500ft of climb.

The last section adds a further 24 miles and approximately 3,500ft more ascent and finishes in Appleby via The calf and Great Kinmond.

This 90 mile walk can be split into six legs fairly easily if you want to take your time over it but it does offer three potential long walks for the club to consider. We could be dropped off north or south of Lowstern and walk back.

If you do find yourself walking the traditional Dales Way there is also change afoot.

The derelict Pepperpot on the Sedbergh section is to be done up. This six sided building will employ lottery funding to achieve some form of visitor centre and exhibition. It promises windows opening up superb panoramic views.

For those who do like long continuous walks of a different kind there is good news on coastal walking in Yorkshire. Proposals have been tabled to improve access to a sixty-eight mile stretch of coastal path from Yorkshire through into Teeside. This length from Filey Bridge to Newport Bridge runs through the North York Moors National Park including part of the Cleveland Way and will be part of the England Coast Path. It will also be the longest continuous stretch to be developed to date.

Parts of this route are of course subject to erosion but the legislation covers this as it allows the route to roll back inland.

The Cleveland way is also to receive some financial support from a source close to my heart (or should that be belly?). A local brewer is to produce a special beer and every pint sold will bring a donation towards the upkeep of the path. 'Striding the Riding' will hopefully take off and be available along the route.

Roy Denney

POSTCARDS FROM GRINDELWALD ARCHIVES REVISITED

In the YRC archives there are several files of letters from eminent people from earlier centuries. Between 1986 and 1992 I had the enjoyable task of reading through these and making an attempt to put them into order. Searching through my paper files recently, I found sheets of typewritten notes from the time before I had word processing capability. Amongst them was an index of post cards sent by W.A.B. Coolidge, one of the foremost of Victorian Alpinists, to Thomas Gray, the first editor of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club Journal. They are dated between 1896 and 1915.

The typewritten blue cards were brief and cryptic. The typed index contains the gist of his comments to help someone else in the future to know if they were of significance to them. It is quite possible that none of Coolidge's biographers has read these post cards. Since finding the typewritten index I have attempted to put it into a form that may help a reader to understand Coolidge's cryptic comments, as given below.

Jeff Hooper

The original typed index is with the post cards in the North Yorkshire Archives at Northallerton.

The YRC Centenary Journal Volume XI Number 40 contains an article 'I Know the Beggar' that uses some information from these post cards. Anyone wanting to read the article should use the internet version as the printed version has paragraphs out of order.

In the YRC library Ronald Clark's book, 'The Victorian Mountaineers' has a short biography of Coolidge.

In Volume 1 Number 4 of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club Journal is Coolidge's 'Run through the Dolomites in 1876', and Volume 2 Number 6 contains Mrs. Jackson's 'Winter Mountaineering in 1888', both referred to below. See also YRC Journal Issue 16 Series 13, 'Who was Mrs. Jackson?'.

William Augustus Brevoort Coolidge.

Postcards to Thomas Gray.

9 February 1896
(To H.H. Bellhouse) Regarding an 11th edition of Murray's Switzerland.

9 February 1896
Regarding his book collection.
Also, on 15 March 1896 he is going to Switzerland to live for several years as he is unable to recover from a severe attack of influenza in the winter of 1894-5.

15 February 1896
Regarding books: some of them for the Y.R.C. library.

18 February 1896
Regarding books: he considers that Gray is one of the few people in England who would really appreciate them.

9 June 1896
Opinions on Conway's and Mummery's books - the cost of Whymper's illustrations.
He leaves Grindelwald with his guide for the summer on 15th. June.

28 November 1897
Remarks on Gray's recent holiday in Switzerland.
He - Coolidge - regards the hills around Lake Lucerne as hills not mountains.
Gray climbed a 10,000ft. peak by a new route for his first excursion in the Alps.
Would deny the title of Mountaineer to rock clamberers!
June to September spent in the region between the Bernina and Stelvio passes.
Health improving.

22 January 1898
Cannot see the connection between Caving and Mountaineering.
Criticism of others' mountain writings.
Where Shelley stayed.
The Jungfrau railway work is halted, the resident Engineers have resigned.

30 April 1898
Has been hard at work finishing Vol.1 of the new 'Ball' 650 pp. with fine new maps.
Climbing in early June is nearly impossible in the high Alps.
Amused about the 'Climbers' Club' he believes that there can be no mountaineering where there is no eternal snow. Scrambling in the British Isles not a form of mountaineering.

His ice-axe used for 20yrs. was made in Airedale Foundry. Very little probability that the Jungfrau railway will get beyond Eiger Glacier.
Working on Vol 2 of 'Ball' and other Alpine books.

12 September 1898
Thanks for No. 1 of Y.R.C. Journal.
Editorial moan that people will not write papers. Criticism of Alpine writings.
Has been ill all the Spring with rheumatism and influenza.
Writing 'Simler' in French; a monograph on climbing up to c.1600.
Also writing for Encyclopaedia. Britannica.

15 November 1898
Regarding the Grands Mulets hut and Mr. Mathews writing.
Brenva route - he reached the upper ridge direct from the snow-fields above the Brenva Glacier 15.7.1870. He was very late and took this way as a short cut. Mathews writings prone to mistakes.
Sharing of Almer as a guide with Kitson.
'I hope someone will have the courage to speak out about O.G.Jones' folly and madness. It was proverbial out here among the guides and the end was foreseen long ago'.

20 December 1900
Personal notes: Ill most of the summer.
In very bad odour with the Alpine Club because last year (1899) he had said in his German 'Life of Almer', that Almer had told him that he had never made the kind of leap shown in Whymper's picture in ('Scrambles amongst the Alps'), this led to Coolidge resigning from the A.C. after 30yrs. membership. Mr.F.Gardiner of Liverpool holds the British record for the most Alpine peaks climbed, he, Coolidge has done more (1698) 'But I am a New Yorker'.

18 April 1901
Thanks for Y.R.C. JI.
On 2.3.01 the Jungfrau railway people opened the Grindelwald Gallery in the face of the Eiger.

23 June 1901
Going away in Switzerland for 2 months but no high climbing.
Promises article for the Y.R.C.JI. on the Dolomites. Instructions to Gray for climbing from Grindelwald. 'I write about the Alps now but cannot climb them.'

24.6.1901
Re: climbing guides.

5.10.1901
From Oxford: Has come to England for a few days to get books from his rooms and to buy a new typewriter. Has brought his guide young Christian Almer. Alarmed by the number of women on bicycles.

7.10.1901
Rejects Gray's invitation (to visit York).
About article for J1. (It later appeared in his 'Alpine Studies')
'Young' Chris. Almer has been his guide for 26 yrs.

8.11.1901
Details of rural Swiss life and comparisons between Swiss peasants and Yorkshire labourers. Details of land sales and system of inheritance. Diet etc.

2.2.1902
Very cold the real winter much snow; most peaks have been climbed including the Schreckhorn by the N-W. Anderson arete, by a German lady.

4.2.1901
To say that he is posting the Dolomite article.

15.3.1901
The article proof has arrived for checking. Re: ascent Grand Muveran 1896

14.6.1901
He appears to be enquiring about his article in the Y.R.C. JI. but the post card. has been mutilated.

21.6.1901
Thanks for the return of his manuscript and photographs. (See above)
Weather atrocious deep snow in the Tyrol!

23.8.1901
Thanks and compliments for reprints of the Dolomite article.
All in Grindelwald saddened by the repeated Wetterhorn accidents. Six killed in the space of a few days, previously only 2 since 1882.

13.12.1903
Enquiring about Gray.
During summer non-climbing journey he, Coolidge, has had gout. He is too old and stout to climb now. Details of his Alpine literary work and what he is editing.
Thanks for a reprint of an Alpine Paper, and his poor opinion of its author.

18.7.1904
Thanks for No. 5 Y.R.C. JI.
He has been seriously ill.
Has given up his rooms in Magdalen College and all things have been sent out to Grindelwald. When arranging his books his legs gave out and he has been down for weeks with gout and rheumatism. Review of Oberlanders Climbers Guide. £200 to engrave only, the maps in the Dauphiny so such maps cannot often be given.
The Glarner Alpine Guide has infringed his copyrights.

12.10.1904

Has been very unwell.

Re: publication of guides etc.

The Jungfrau railway is not yet through the Eiger.

20.11.1904

Apologies for not writing more often but is often ill.

Although he can now get out for a long walk each day.

'Simler' is finished after 9 yrs.

Many articles and books in mind. St. Nicholas Gabelhorn only scaled by unfair means - ropes and ladders - small band of men bringing disgrace on Alpine climbing.

Remarks on the early days of climbing.

Does not have any interest in Norway.

Guides etc. - which are to be published.

Glarus book was written for those who go alone without guides by reason of expense, mainly young clerks and apprentice boys from Zurich they have only Sunday free, not real mountaineers - a higher kind of excursionist.

Enclosed: a reprint of his biographical note from 'Who's Who'.

20.11. 1905

Thanks for Y.R.C. JI. No. 6. - not so interesting to him as Mrs. Jackson's winter climbs were edited by him in the A.C. J1. in 1889.

Has left Swiss A.C. after they published the Unteralpen Führer which was sheer robbery from his book.

10.6. 1907

Invitation to Gray to be his guest when visiting Switzerland later in the year. Instructions on how to get there, how to find the house etc.

26.7.1907

Further plans for the visit but warning that he will be unable to do even the smaller tours planned by Gray. Details on hotels and huts.

There is now an hotel at the Eismeer station in the South wall of Eiger on the Jungfrau railway.

Recommends Christian Almer as guide (Christian iii, the son of his guide and grandson of the great Chris. Almer.)

Asks if Gray could bring with him two of the newly invented Thermos Flasks; 21/- or 31/6 each. (£1-10p. or £1-55p.).

18.8.1907

Refers to Gray's traverse of the Schilthorn and heavy snow the next day.

13.2.1908

Regarding not having engaged Christian Almer for next summer.

7.2.1909

Thanks for panorama of the Schilthorn.

Remarks on publications.

'has had dreadful illness, two months in bed followed by an operation in Interlaken, between life and death for a week but recovering'.

23.3.1909

Thanks for No. 6 Y.R.C. JI.

Considers Winthrop Young as a first rate climber but his article rather foolish with mistakes of fact. He proceeds to attack other authors and the reviewer for errors.

Still very poorly.

29.12.1909

Condolences to Gray for the loss of both parents close together, and other troubles.

Wengen has just started as a mountain resort,

The weather is mild all over Switzerland only warm wet snow.

He goes out very little now, only once out of the house in 2 months. He has now bought a new house with 25 rooms.

20.10.1915

Thanks for photo. of Gray's house. ' You must remember that in my big house I have to shelter some 23,000 books'.

Very bitter about the way he was treated by the Almers and Mr. Yeld.

German speaking Valais including Saas possibly even Zermatt is to be boycotted by English climbers in the future.

Does not feel much interest in the Bronte family and their works.

His nieces' English husband was killed in Flanders after 10 weeks of Marriage.



Harvey Lomas

We've all been there, the car is packed, everything that you have written down on your list to the best of your knowledge you hope is in that car. With the car full or so I thought whilst pondering such a possibility of forgetting anything,

I was well down the A1. The rucksack, spare car key and cycling helmet were still at home and since I was heading further down the A1, the return to Settle would have been just too much and as my first night stop at the YHA at Medway was getting ever closer, there they stayed,

The evening spent at the hostel was enjoyable, going for a walk through woodlands and the fields high with crops, quite the contrast to the rocky elevated limestone skyline of where I live. In the sweet restful air I walked the paths.

The following morning as planned, a pleasant drive down to the channel ports, through the Kentish sunshine and arriving with enough time to walk the Promenade. The sound of the sea, the bathers and yachtsmen, sellers of ice cream, huts offering cups of tea, beech gear, and people like me with a little time to spare waiting for their crossing, it was a pleasant sight, the chalky white cliffs of Kent standing over the blue grey of the English Channel,

The plan was to go straight round Paris, no messing about; it would be as the French say 20.00 to 21.00 hrs. I knew if I followed signs for Bordeaux or the E 15, I would be okay and there would also be less traffic that time of night. However if I made the slightest mistake I would be condemned to drive round Paris for ever.

Except for the odd bouchon or (traffic jam), there were no problems going round the mad crazy Parisian roadways. Eventually my junction or sortie came, and I headed south to Fontainebleau which was to be my first stop lasting three days, and feeling proud or full of myself I missed my sortie and had to take the next one, then having to pay for the short return journey back up the motorway. I came off the slip road and through the Gare de peage where two or three, very bored police-type looking men pointed to me to stop. They were in fact the Douane or Customs I said I'd just come from Calais, to this they replied (perfectly reasonably) why I was coming from the south? Whilst this very stuttering conversation in broken English/French was happening the other Douanes were scanning all four corners of my car and he asked if I had anything to declare, I thought of the two bottles beer I had in the back but look at him straight in the eyes and held my nerve and said 'no'.

Next morning, still with feelings of guilt for not declaring my bottles of beer, I was heading for the rocks to do some bouldering in the forest of Fontainebleau. The previous night's sleep coupled with the guilt of the undeclared beer was a bit cool with only my thin summer sleeping bag, I needed to buy another so a trip to the very large sports store called Decathlon (they are all over France) I purchased an additional sleeping bag and thermo-rest. Then with rock boots and a recently purchased helmet, I cycled over the bridge of the River Loing through the village of Grez Sur Loing with its shuttered windows, narrow cobbles ally ways, and medieval ruined tower. The river was fast and clear with long reeds swaying in the fast current which further downstream joins the Seine.

Having my rock boots in my satchel and crude map I headed into the trees. The road wound pleasantly and after further directions from a village boulangerie headed

finally down a steep hill to the climbing spot, and it being lunch time a rather heavier than wished for meal ensued.

The places to climb were not very obvious but after a quick look round through the woods, boulders soon appeared out of the forest. Dame Joan was the name of the place, with boulders of all heights and shapes. The floor was covered with fallen branches and stumps; it was not what I really expected. I soon started to tackle some boulders and since being on my own and with no crash mat and helmet, I decided not to push anything too much. The rock, I thought, did not have good friction and the fact that I was wearing rock boots should have given me an advantage but it certainly didn't feel like it.

I would climb a metre or so and delicately reverse and occasionally picking a particular climb that could be completed. There were little arrows painted in blue to give hints to routes, and I did moves here and there and returning to problems which I thought could be solved, and this is what I did on consecutive days cycling in the fine weather though the quiet and amiable French countryside. The holds were gritty and the surface of the rock was layered with lichen and where the rock was polished I really treated it with caution.

Two afternoons were spent in this delightful valley glade, but my real destination was the Lozère and the Gorge de Tarn. The road south, down the pencil-straight auto route to Clermont Ferrand, the Puy de Dome which, with its summit in the clouds, dominates the city as does the huge Michelin tyre factory. Finally the deep wooded valleys of the Auvergne came and swept past the car window. The landscape changed into the vast ups and downs of the auto route over a thousand metres in altitude to the Lozère my ultimate destination.

After leaving the Auto route the road immediately swooped down beneath a great viaduct which carries the



motorway eventually to Montpellier (a city which will unfortunately feature later on) its brilliant towers high up to the blue of the sky.

Florac was where the group with whom I was to spend ten or eleven days were staying. The campsite was by the side of the river Tarn, but the drive down from the heights of the central plateau into the depths of the Tarn was

long, winding and wonderful. After surveying the pitch and requesting a more suitable one, I made camp. Finding the lay of the land I scanning the wooded hills and the high walls of the gorge, where pinnacles of rock broke the skyline of the gorge rim. The following day, the first caving trips were taking place high up on the plateau, however I decided to explore the surrounding area and do some resting and exploring on my bike. Shortly after mid-day one of the wives rushed up to me and broke the news that one the team had fallen forty metres down the second pitch.

She said that the news was that he was alive and walking round. My cave-rescue mind started to ponder the consequences of such a fall. That was a big distance to tumble down. The news kept coming in with French speakers making phone calls and soon it was decided that the doctor and two surgeons that were with us should go up there with one of them being an excellent French speaker. All the time reports came in that the French rescue service was on the scene and effecting the removal of our injured friend out of the cave. We could only wait on reports and try not to speculate about any turn for the worse.

The injured man's wife was keeping busy phoning and their daughter with the other children, we could only keep a watch and let events unfold and as the afternoon passed the news got better and finally his extraction from the cave was achieved. He's not sure what happened, save that a cow's tail flipped out before he put a second one in. He slipped and grabbed hold of the rope and slithered down the first two thirds of the pitch which was against the wall with the final one third free to a ledge. At the ledge he despite his injuries managed to crawl back from the lip and secured himself to the rope. He suffered multiple fractures to one leg and a fracture to his kneecap and deep cuts and burns to both hands.

He was rescued from the cave and taken to a waiting helicopter which flew him straight off to Montpellier hospital where he underwent several operations. The shock was still evident in the camp but everything settled down with frequent visits to the hospital by close friends and his wife and daughter.

The rest of us wrestled with the frequent heavy showers and fewer sunny periods and we all decided to go and visit one the grand show caves of the Tarn, *Avon Armand* which was very spectacular and was extended by an Hon. Member, Robert de Joie. I did some cycling for several days climbing up out of the gorge to search for some dinosaur footprints and on the following day I cycled up to *La Pont de Montvert*, a lovely village set tight beside a tributary of the Tarn. A prominent feature was a narrow bridge over multiple streamlets flowing across a chaos of boulders which poured down into a pool below the bridge and, it being

a sunny day, children and adults alike swam in its no doubt cool and refreshing currents. There were streets on the thin side for wide cars and wobbly cyclists like me, and for a while I rested my arms upon the parapet of the quaint bridge with its small stone tower set to one end. I drank a cool drink on this beautiful day observing *les baigneurs* and preparing my limbs for the near twenty kilometres return to camp.

However I still wanted a caving trip (by the way we invited the rescue team for a BBQ several days after the rescue) and there had been trips going off to various caves since the incident. There was a cave being talked about and it went like this: "it's about a three hours trip, a bit of traversing round pools and exit via a door at the top, oh by the way cows tails will be needed'.

I liked the idea, a bit of fun. A good jolly sporting trip I thought, just my kind of cave with a little difficulty so I signed up on the dotted line, so to speak. The trip was planned for the following day Friday with a 10 am start and the trip had now somehow been altered to one five hours long. It was also advised to bring full SRT gear (rope climbing equipment) I increased the amount of food I was going to take and also made sure my light was fully charged just in case things took longer than planned.

On the morning a sunny one at that, I gathered all my gear and checked everything I could. No one really took the 10 am start seriously but eventually cars were assigned to groups of people and tackle carefully packed in tackle bags with 15 in the party and a vague knowledge of the cave (one of us had done this cave before and it had been rigged for him) we were to rig forwards and the rear of the team pass the rope forwards to us. The cave was called the *Avon de Malaval*, (the cave of the bad valley) in the commune *Les Bondons* it was on the same road that I had cycled for a short distance only, the previous day. This convoy of vehicles drove through the colourful countryside winding up to the cave. The narrow roads caused some problems but eventually we all gathered to clothe ourselves in caving gear and head up a dry rocky valley. A small stream trickled underfoot as we brushed through the undergrowth to the cave entrance, which was small and insignificant.

We left the burning rays of the sun to the cool of the dark and immediate traversing above a stream some 10 metres below. Rigging as we progressed from corner to corner and at different levels with varying degrees of difficulty though some of the moves were a bit of a stretch. The stream below us twinkled in the reflection of our many lights and that was the problem, as there were just too many of us, so time was spent on getting very body forwards.

Eventually a sizeable chamber was reached to a pitch

of 12 metres down to the stream. At last we thought no more traversing, just a fun trip up a stream way, up a lovely wind well decorated canyon, but one could only wish, for just beyond lay what was going to test us for many hours. The passage narrowed up stream to a pool, deep enough to want to avoid. The gap which the stream crashed out of was elliptical in shape and looked deeply painful to squeeze through, but there was little choice as we had pulled the ropes down behind us so no way back.

Not wanting to tackle the wet route eyes were cast up high and it was noticed that there was a route which seemed much easier than the stream. So a climb of some delicacy was needed to gain the height necessary which was four metres with more traversing, and this was the cave in general, constant descents and regaining height sometimes on ledges across boulder bridges which when the rescue team that came in later knew the easier way through.

We all were making steady progress and were nearly half a kilometre in and having yet again climb up over more constrictions, I found myself at the front on a traverse when I heard a very painful gasp further back in a chamber (which was well decorated and with the luxury of floor albeit a calcite one) there followed silence and we waited for people to come up from the rear and meet up with us. Nothing happened, so returning I found a male member of our team on the floor and doing no moving and quite still and tense. He was clutching his left leg which was stretched out and looked very serious.

With us we had several professional medics and they were treating him. I went back to make room and to get out of the way, there we waited to see whether he could cave, until we heard a yell, apparently he had tried to stand up.

It was decided by the doctors that he could not be moved by us (they diagnosed a ruptured ligament below the knee). The G.P. and one other person was to stay behind whilst we carried on to the top entrance. All space blankets and spare foods were donated and then we pressed on. This was about 17:30 so the vanguard of the team did not reach the surface until 20:00 hrs as some climbs had to be rigged which was sensible considering the exposure encountered in places. We climbed and descended many times in a very well decorated passage squeezing through flowstone arches and awkward chimneys for some hours.

A pre-rigged pitch round a corner appeared but it was of no consequence as we were by now oblivious to obstacles coming at us. Not wishing to inspect the rope too much we SRT the 5 metres and since it avoided several cascades we were only too pleased to climb it, and so our path lead crossed bridges and ledges round pools of brackish water who's depth could not be seen. Eventually the passage widened, the floor smoothed into a large chamber with a cascade which was rigged. This was where we were instructed to look, to the left for a boulder slope leading up to the way out.

One of the team which had been ahead returned and gave the news that the entrance was nigh, which was up a loose rocky slope. With the noise of the main cave behind us the roof lowered into a muddy crawl, eventually the temperature rose and the fragrance's of plants and grasses took dominance over the subterranean environment which had been so for the last nine to ten hours. A breeze-block lined entrance shaft of one and half metres was all that was left of the Avon de Maleval.

Upon surfacing I immediately tumbled over into the long wheat grass in which the entrance was situated.

The struggle through it was over, though every step a challenge, now the wide sky of the evening, gentle textures of shadows and hills and our lights climbing up to a saddle between two peaks and down into a steep wooded valley following a G P S to the cars.

The returned was to a full rescue call out. We took a low profile and changed in the cooling air and since all the roads were blocked we could not move our own vehicles and we thought it was going to be a long night but then it came apparent to the rescuers that we were best away, and they transported us to the local village hall to some basic refreshments and then back to camp.

The following morning broke to clouds and threatening rain, half expecting the rescue to be still in progress the sight of the subject of the previous night's rescue sitting in front of his tent drinking a cup of something was a surprise to say the least, all be it supporting a splint, he was in good sprits. His rescuers had tackled the cave with great skill and forethought and extracted him and the others from the Avon Malival.

With all of what had happened within the recent days, actives were a little subdued I visited a show cave and even did another caving trip down on the side of the Gorge du Tarn. Feeling a little ruffled up and wanting a nice easy trip I found myself traversing over deep pools and although easy climbs I felt a little bit tender and my heart was not doing justice to a very fine cave with great formations and passages.

We returned to the blazing sun (a rare feature this holiday) and the many people canoeing down the clear gleaming waters of the river.

I would have liked say the journey home was pleasant but it poured down in Chartres and the grey clouds occluded the sky. From Dover the rain poured down and blackened the light of evening out. I slept in the back of the car amidst the gear and pans by the side of the A14.

Arriving back in Settle in brilliant sunshine the items which were left behind awaited me. Soon my head was on my pillow and with the homely sun streaming through the window.



NATURAL HISTORY

WILDLIFE, ECOLOGY AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



RECOVERY OF SOUTH GEORGIA

Not the military taking it back from Argentines but local nature taking its rightful place after the disastrous affects of man's early presence.

Bad enough the whaling stations killing thousands of seals and whales but early visitors introduced rats to the island and with no real predators they multiplied and multiplied etc. Not long ago it was estimated that they ran to millions.

Rats wiped out 95% of the bird population but a concerted and expensive effort has got rid of them. At a cost of £7.5 million, poisoned bait was dropped all over the island and it did the trick.

Bird populations are recovering; the wandering albatross is successfully breeding there again and the South Georgia pipit is returning.

DANGEROUS PLANT

I would like to give a warning - we all have care by nettles, brambles and blackthorn but there is another plant which is a bigger threat and can cause a long term very painful condition. The Giant Hogweed can reach over 20ft tall; a very impressive plant introduced into gardens but now spreading in the wild. It is highly invasive and has spread throughout the whole of Great Britain, normally along water courses but also other areas such as parks, cemeteries and wasteland.

The sap of Giant Hogweed contains toxic chemicals which react with sunlight and when they come into contact with the skin, they cause a reddening, often followed by severe burns and blistering. The burns can last for several months and even once they have died down the skin can remain sensitive to light for many years.

It is easy to identify when fully grown by height, size of leaves and size of flowers, but it can be confused with native hogweed when not fully grown. The leaves are sharply divided with serrated edges which are clustered like a giant hand. They also have bristles on their undersides. Each cluster can be as much as 10 feet across. It looks very much like giant cow parsley

This invader is out-competing native flora, and is causing river bank erosion and increase in flood risk.



It is now an offence to plant or otherwise cause this species to grow in the wild.

DANGEROUS CREATURE

It is often said that going for a hike or even a gentle ramble is good for a person's health and wellbeing. I increasingly wonder how true this is. We are seeing aggressive species of hornets, bees and wasps coming into Britain from the continent and surviving as our climate warms. I, like many gardeners, have installed water butts to collect rainwater off my greenhouse and garage but this also may put me and mine at risk. Because of the increasing popularity of these, we face an increased threat from tropical diseases like malaria and West Nile virus such homes and conditions have seen a greatly increased mosquito population. Mosquitoes in the UK are so far free of diseases that can infect humans but it is only a matter of time.

Of even more concern are the diseases carried by ticks. We have been warned from time to time about Lyme Disease (LD) but it was only found in southern areas but it is now spreading throughout the country. Worse still the ticks are now carrying two other serious problems for us.

The most prevalent is still LD which was a fairly rare illness, but it has recently started to become much less so, and the risk of infection should not be ignored. We are not only at risk when wandering woodland and moorland areas as cases spread into gardens in the suburbs.

It is now thought over 3,000 people a year are being infected, possibly tens of thousands. Many people are unaware of the risks of this little itch that goes away after a couple of days. It can eventually be life-changing or even fatal. People who walk in the countryside through rough vegetation are still most at risk.

Ticks are found in any moist, rough vegetation in woodland, heath and moorland areas including deep vegetation such as bracken and often in others that are decaying in mats such as sedges, grasses etc. growing in also in leaf litter within deciduous woods and at woodland edges, in glades and by paths. The disease is caused by bacteria carried by the ticks.

Most organisations whose members are active in the wider outdoors do issue some advice which is just as well as there is a widespread lack of knowledge and awareness regarding tick-borne diseases. Many people with typical symptoms will not actually be tested for the presence of even the most common of the diseases. For those who are tested for one or more of the possible diseases, a negative (and thus inconclusive) test will generally result in further investigation being abandoned. Few people will be lucky enough to see a G.P. with sufficient knowledge to give a clinical diagnosis, i.e. based on symptoms, knowledge of a tick bite event, etc.

LD symptoms can develop within weeks. They may include tiredness, chills, fever, headache, muscle and/or joint pain, swollen lymph glands and blurred vision. A characteristic skin rash may appear which often appears circular and may clear in the centre, resulting in a "bull's eye" appearance. It can expand and move around the body.

If early symptoms are not recognised, serious complications can develop weeks, months, or even years later. It is likely that infected ticks need to be attached to the body for several hours before they can transmit the bacteria to us so diligence is very much needed to remove them carefully before any damage is done. When fully fed they can increase to the size of a grape pip, but unfortunately the larvae are smaller than a pin head and often difficult to spot.

Later stage symptoms include arthritis in the large joints, which can recur over many years. Nervous system problems are common, e.g. numbness, meningitis (with fever, stiff neck and severe

headache), Bell's palsy (paralysis of the facial muscles) and memory problems. Some people experience irregularities of the heart rhythm.

LD should be diagnosed by a physical examination and medical history. This clinical diagnosis may in some cases be supported by laboratory testing. Diagnosis based on tests alone is not reliable - a negative result does not mean that the disease is not present. Symptoms can mimic those of other diseases. Diagnosis is easiest when there is a skin rash but this occurs in less than half of sufferers.

It is very difficult to avoid ticks because they can be found in urban parks and gardens, as well as typical countryside locations. It is possible for you or your pets to bring ticks into your home. Ticks have been found in most London's parks and their numbers are increasing all the time. Housing developments in what were countryside areas are adding to the problem. Climate change bringing warmer and wetter weather, which prolongs the life of infected ticks, is not helping

The best strategy is 'awareness'. Check yourself for ticks whenever you have visited a place where they may have been present. Do this both immediately and for up to three days after any outdoor visit. Carefully examine their favourite locations; behind the knees, under the arms and on the scalp. Your groin area is also at risk. This may allow you to see any adult tick that has attached. Once it has started to feed, its blood-engorged body will make it very visible. If you find a tick, remove it as soon as possible. This is all very well but for those of us involved in outdoor sports and activities this means daily inspections all the time. You should also carefully inspect all clothing, brushing thoroughly when in any doubt because ticks can crawl on clothing to reach their favourite meals.

Ticks can locate their prey by detecting host body heat, carbon dioxide and ammonia. They may crawl towards a stationary host or stretch out their front legs, equipped with tiny 'grappling hooks' ready to attach to a passing host. So anything you can do to thwart these tactics may help you to avoid tick bites. There are many suggestions about how to stop ticks reaching your skin but there has been little measurement of their effectiveness. Awareness still remains the best strategy.

You can make it more difficult for a tick to reach your skin by wearing shoes rather than sandals and tucking long trousers into socks. Keep to the middle of paths and do not sit on the ground in suspect areas. Full body cover is a must in suspect locations which means anywhere where livestock grazes particularly deer but is a pain in good weather. Ticks can be more easily seen on white or light-coloured clothing.

You should check your pets for ticks when they come

into the house and especially before letting them onto carpets bedding or near soft furnishings. Consider using anti-tick pesticides for them.

Removing ticks without making the situation worse takes some care. Don't squeeze or twist the body of the tick, as this may cause the head and body to separate, leaving the head embedded in your skin and making the creature disgorge the contents of its stomach into your bloodstream. It is highly advisable not to use your fingernails to remove a tick. Infection can enter via any breaks in your skin, e.g. Close to the fingernail. Do not try to burn the tick off, apply petroleum jelly, nail polish or any other chemical. Any of these methods can cause discomfort to the tick, resulting in regurgitation, or saliva release.

The best way to remove the beastie is probably to use tweezers dipped in antiseptic grasping the tick as close to the skin as possible without squeezing the tick's body. Pull the tick out without twisting - there may be considerable resistance. Another method is to tie a single loop of cotton around the tick's mouthparts, as close to the skin as possible, and then pull gently but firmly, upwards and outwards

Wash your hands after any such work and in case you develop symptoms later, save the tick in a container although sticky tape or a folded tissue should suffice, making a note of the date and location. Taking it to your G.P. will help him to arrange tests for the problems. Also if possible, ask the doctor to return it to you after it has been analysed and send it, in the interests of research, to the Institute of Virology and Environmental Microbiology, Mansfield Road, Oxford OX1 3SR, saying where the infection occurred.

Insect repellents containing Permethrin or DEET do supposedly protect against ticks for several hours if you wish to be really confident.

As if LD was not bad enough there is another problem associated with ticks with similar symptoms and prognosis. Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is a viral infection with initial symptoms similar to flu and can include a high temperature (fever), headache, tiredness, muscle pain. These symptoms usually last for about a week, after which point most people make a full recovery. Some people however will go on to develop more serious symptoms caused by the virus spreading to the layer of protective tissue that covers the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) or the brain itself (encephalitis).

This can lead to changes in mental state, such as confusion, drowsiness or disorientation, seizures (fits), sensitivity to bright light (photophobia), an inability to speak and paralysis (inability to move certain body parts)

If TBE reaches this stage, you will usually need to be admitted to hospital. These symptoms tend to get slowly better over a few weeks, but it may take several months or years to make a full recovery and there is a risk you could experience long-term complications). Unfortunately around one in every 100 cases of TBE is fatal.

Further to this they have now discovered another nastie carried by ticks. This also causes headache, fatigue, muscle aches and a recurrent fever but is feared to be less responsive to antibiotics than similar illnesses. *Borrelia miyamotoi* has just been found to be present in ticks in the UK and has not yet been given a common name. There are it will lead to confusion in the diagnoses of LD and TBE.

These can all be mistaken for flu, leading to a delay in proper treatment being received.



WINNERS AND LOSERS

The summer may have been wet and windy and some species suffered but it saw a dramatic restoration in the fortunes of the Holly Blue butterfly with numbers up 187% compared to 2014.

Its life cycle is often cut short by a parasitic wasp which inserts an egg into a living caterpillar and the larva develops within the caterpillar eventually killing it inside the chrysalis. With wasp numbers down due to the weather the Holly Blue made a comeback.

Another creature the weather must have suited is the Bee Eater. There had previously only been five breeding known attempts in the UK by this bird of southern Europe and though it is seen occasionally in the south of England a pair this year successfully set up home in a quarry in Cumbria.

This bird is introducing itself into Britain but periodically noises are heard arguing for man to reintroduce species he has driven to local extinction.

CALL OF THE REWILDERS

Over centuries, Britain has lost many key species including most of our important top predators. Creatures such as beaver, wild boar, wolf and lynx have a bigger impact on their environment than their numbers would suggest, as they drive ecological processes and are crucial components of flourishing ecosystems. We now know that top predators, such as the lynx, play a pivotal role in healthy ecosystems. They drive ecological processes from the top of the food chain to the bottom. Strangely they might well help with road safety as deer cause many accidents each year and lynx would keep the deer population in check.

Many wonderful British species have declined catastrophically over the past century. We have apparently lost more of our large mammals than any European country except Ireland and we have eight species on the list of the birds most highly in danger of extinction.

Well functioning ecosystems help provide us with clean air and water, they help with preventing flooding, storing carbon and helping us to adapt to climate change. Experiencing the magic of wild nature reconnects people with the living planet improving their mental health and general wellbeing and we owe it to future generations to try and preserve what is still with us. Beyond this, increasing numbers of people and organisations are calling for rewilding. Where rewilding has been tried it usually boosts local economies with nature tourism. We need natural habitats growing instead of shrinking; with green corridors linking populations rather than small pockets of reserves.

We can't build ecosystems to undo harm we have done in the past but we can help nature re-assert itself by projects like creating reedbeds 'cleaning' heavy metal contamination from the Parys mine outflow or by reintroducing species which should be there anyway. We can reduce large populations of grazing animals to help woodlands grow. More woodland leads to more insects, more plants, more birds and more animals.

Many species we have lost are our responsibility - We have often hunted them and have destroyed their habitats. Lynx probably died out over 800 years ago, with wild boar not long afterwards. Beavers and wolves were lost far more recently probably during the eighteenth century. Could we safely reintroduce them? Wild boar have been reintroduced inadvertently and should be welcome as they can increase biodiversity, through rooting and wallowing. They are highly effective bracken destroyers, creating space for trees and other plants to grow. Robins appear to have evolved to follow boar. As always there is a downside as they can cause damage to crops and gardens. Some people have concerns about public safety, but they appear to be unfounded. In France, Germany and Poland almost everyone lives very happily alongside them and there's no reason why we can't do the same.

I am not aware of any reports of injury to visitors to the woodlands but several dogs have been hurt by their slashing razor-sharp teeth and campers in the Forest of Dean have seen their tents damaged by these beasts but in both cases they have probably been startled by dog - wild boar are inherently nervous and shy of humans and will run away almost always.

Wolves would be a much more contentious creature to reintroduce. Ecologically there is no reason why wolves can't live in Britain; we have enough habitat and plenty of wild prey. They do need a huge range of habitats and could only thrive in our wilder areas away from human habitation. They present a very low risk to people, however as has been demonstrated elsewhere. Wolves have re-established themselves across most countries in Europe where they are a tourist draw despite being shy creatures that prefer to avoid people where possible.

Livestock farmers would have to manage beasts in different ways if wolves were present, as people do around the world. There would need to be compensation schemes for the small number of livestock losses that would result. Arable farmers would benefit as wolves are likely to reduce the loss of arable crops by reducing the numbers of wild herbivores. By keeping deer on the move they cannot overgraze sensitive tree seedlings which can turn grassland into woodland and scrub creating habitats that numerous species can use. Rewilding isn't an alternative to farming; far from it, rewilding can be farming's greatest ally. Rewilding helps restore nutrients to the soil, provides for pollinating insects, purifies water, reduces flood risk and helps resist droughts. It's about helping nature, and that can help all of us.

Any compensation scheme would need careful management though; a release programme in the Alps to reintroduce wolves a few years ago seemed to have been too successful and it was feared that hundreds of young had rapidly expanded the population. They were claimed to be killing of almost 1000 sheep each year. A recent survey however suggests that there are still only about 30 wolves at large and rather than accept that each must eat dozens of sheep each year the figures had more to do with the introduction of a compensation scheme by the EU.

The lynx is an excellent candidate for reintroduction. These shy, elegant animals inhabit woodland and would have ample tree cover in parts of Scotland and the north of England. They live throughout Europe and have been successfully released into Switzerland. They help woodlands regenerate by controlling smaller deer species deer and can also reduce fox numbers which are at epidemic levels due to the lack of predation.

Beavers are also being reintroduced on a trial basis. They create habitats that allow hundreds of other species to flourish by slowing the flow of rivers; preventing flooding. Surprisingly, young salmon and trout grow faster and are in better condition in areas where beavers live. They have been successfully reintroduced to Knapdale in Scotland. Unofficial populations are also thriving in the river Tay area and they have also become established in the River Otter in Devon. The re-establishment of beavers has widespread public support. Anglers had raised some concerns fearing the blocking of rivers and the prevention of sea trout and salmon from reaching their spawning grounds. This is based on a flawed perception of the habits of these vegetarian animals. These creatures rarely cut down trees for dams unless in very rocky terrain where they are unable to make nests in river banks. This more normal practice actually helps slow water run off in hilly areas but beaver can speed it up by eating vegetation in slow moving more lowland waters and as a side product in both circumstances, they make changes the local habitat providing refuges for many other creatures. They feed largely on herbs and soft grasses when available but will feed on bark when other food is not available. Given our comparatively short winters this will rarely arise

There are other species which could be considered. Bison disappeared about 20,000 years ago probably due to climatic changes; a shame as they help to maintain a mosaic of habitats: a mixture of woodland, scrub and glades that creates a wide variety of niches for other species. They have already been released into a wide range of climatic zones in northern Europe. Moose (Elk) could live happily in many parts of Britain and did so till about 3000 years ago. I don't imagine we could release additional herbivores though, until we got deer number well down and there had been a widespread recovery of trees and scrub in this country. These larger creatures also pose a particular hazard to traffic, so the idea of restoration would be difficult

The countryside of Britain and Ireland is very different now from the mostly natural terrain that would have been found here 6,000 years ago. Since that time, people have farmed the land extensively and intensively, with dramatic effects; swathes of forest were cleared for cultivation, and upland areas have become dominated by heavily managed moorland. The result of these changes, as well as other human interventions such as hunting, is that many native species have vanished from the nation, or from large areas of it.

We need to do something about this before it is too late (it already is for an alarming number of smaller creatures we don't really notice). The RSPB has been involved with the reintroduction of red kites, white-tailed eagles, curlew buntings and cranes amongst other bird species and where climate change has encouraged

other species to return to breed here they have afforded them protection.

Some landowners and gamekeepers have voiced concerns about the reintroduction of predator species such as white-tailed eagles, and are equally worried by proposed reintroductions of mammalian predators.

Otters are making a come-back as we clean up our waters and some translocation has helped this process

Other native species are expanding their range. The Polecat is on the comeback trail. This elusive creature was thought to be only surviving in Scotland and part of mid Wales but a number of road casualties and sightings have shown that it has re-colonised woodlands in much of central and southern England.

With suitable habitat these creatures quickly fill any environmental niche as they are prolific breeders having large litters of kits, often of a dozen or even occasionally more and they are voracious killers which should help keep the population of rabbits down and perhaps more importantly the rapidly expanding population of rats.

The equally elusive Pine Marten is also staging a recovery. Having been thought to be down to not more than 1000 a few years ago their population is thought to have trebled.

WHAT'S IN A NAME

The elephant shrew got its name because of its long snout making it resemble a tiny elephant at a glance.

It now transpires with one of those strange coincidences that it is actually a relative of its bigger namesake. These creatures are of the same animal group as elephants and they are in fact more closely related to them than to other species of shrew.

It makes you wonder about other possibilities, rhinoceros beetles? ant lions? leopard tortoises?

Highly unlikely links but not as unlikely as some birds with odd names. The buffalo weaver is one odd ball. Apparently it rides on buffalos to catch insects disturbed by their host. I have recently seen rooks riding the backs of deer presumably for similar reasons.

Less welcome are New Zealand parrots which perch on the backs of lambs and rather unfortunately, eat them alive.

These are protected birds much to the dismay of the local farmers.

THE PIRIN MOUNTAINS, BULGARIA

ABODE OF THE THUNDER GOD

13th - 27th June

Introduction

The YRC meet to Bulgaria came about after a chance communication from Lizzie Alderson, who runs Pirin Adventures, a company which provides mountaineering, trekking and walking holidays in the Pirin Mountains of Bulgaria. Further conversations with Lizzie in Leeds and some research on the internet confirmed that it would be a novel and extremely interesting location for an overseas meet, with plenty of scope for a fortnight's hut-to-hut trekking, taking in ridges and summits as we pleased.

Named after Perun, the Thracian god of thunder and lightning, the Pirin Mountains are crystalline and located in southwest Bulgaria within the western part of the Rila-Rhodope massif. The Pirin massif slopes southwards and has a width of 30-35km.



The main axis is oriented NW-SE with an approximate length of 70km. The northern part of the range comprises the Pirin National Park of 232 square kilometres, which has UNESCO status. The geology is complex but the mountain ridges are mostly granite. The Koncheto ridge and its continuation over Kutelo and Vihren summits are different and comprise marbleised karst with remains of the granite intrusion and some limestone. Limestone is also present around Mt Orelyak to the east. There are over 180 glacial tarns and lakes in Pirin. The Alpine zone scree and rocks are replaced by sub-alpine meadow-bush areas around 2300m and mountain forest between 1000-2000m. This ecological diversity was enhanced by the rapidly ablating snowfields present in June, providing us with an amazing display of flora and fauna.

The range has over 50 peaks above 2500m rising to Vihren at 2914m and access is supported by waymarked trails and a mountain hut network which had just opened. An itinerary was planned that would minimise duplication between the two weeks and maximise the amount of the massif to be visited during the hut-to-hut treks. This naturally included a traverse of the famous Koncheto ridge planned for the second week.

Lizzie and her partner, Lukasz, at Pirin Adventures arranged accommodation for us nearby in a house in Bansko and provided all our catering needs except for meals provided by the huts. Lizzie's meals and muffins are now legendary! They also booked the huts and drove us to the trailheads and collected us at finishing points. They freely provided their detailed knowledge of the routes and gave us a stress-free holiday.

Mick Borroff

Summary

Sat 13 Arrive: Sofia - Bansko
 Sun Vihren Hut - Todorina Porta - Malka Tordorka - Tordorka - bottom ski lift station
 Mon Bezbog Hut - Dzhangalska Porta - Mozgovishka Porta - Valyavishki Chukar peak - Tevno Ezero Hut
 Tue Tevno Ezero Hut - Mozgovishka Porta - Chairska Porta - Tipits Ridge - Bashliyska Porta - Vihren Hut
 Wed Vihren peak or rest day
 Thu Todorova Ornitza - Demyanitsa Hut - Chairska Porta - Banski Grob - Begovitsa Hut
 Fri Begovitsa Hut - Prevala col - Zabat peak - Bashmandra - Pirin Hut - Malina Hut
 Sat 20 Malina Hut - Senoto - Orelyak peak - Popovo Livadi Hut / second group arrive
 Sun Vihren Hut - Demyanitsa Hut / mountain biking / white water rafting or rest day
 Mon Predel - Ushitsite Porta - Dautov Vrah peak - Yavarov Hut
 Tue Yavarov Hut - Koncheto Ridge - Kutelo I and II peaks - Premkata - Vihren peak - Vihren Hut
 Wed Vihren Hut - Banderishka col - Spano Pole Hut - Banski Grob - Begovitsa Hut
 Thu Begovitsa Hut - Solishteto col - Rozhen village
 Fri Rozhen village - visit to Rozhen Monastery - Melnik pyramids - Melnik
 Sat 27 Depart: Bansko - Sofia

Detailed Itinerary

13th June

Arrived in Sofia and were transported to Bansko, a town on the northern side of the Pirin, a journey of just under three hours.

14th June

We drove up to the Vihren Hut (1955m) in sunny weather and walked up towards Banderishka Porta to enjoy the massed crocuses near Muratovo Lake where the party divided.

Mick, Mike, Tim and Lukasz walked up to the Todorina Porta and then enjoyed a scramble along the granite ridge over Malka Tordorka (2712m) and Tordorka (2746m). A chamois herd was encountered at the top of the ski lift and after a swift descent down a couple of ski pistes, we finally waited out a thunderstorm at the bottom lift station and returned to Bansko.

Helen, Ken, Phil and Evelyn and Lizzie meanwhile continued up the valley, ascended a snowfield to gain the Banderishka Porta to admire the extensive views and then returned the same way back to the waiting cars at the hut.

15th - 16th June

We were all driven to the Gotse Delchev Hut above Dobrinishte, where the Bezbog chairlift whisked us up to the Bezbog Hut (2236m) to begin a two-day trek, with an overnight stay at the Tevno Ezro Hut. The delightful valley passing below Bezbog summit was followed to a trail junction just before Popovo Lake.

Mick and Tim headed west over the Dzhangalska Porta into a beautiful little-visited valley with a dozen or so tarns and lakes nestling in the granite which is part of the Demyanitsa Circuit route. More late snow fields were ascended to gain Mozgovishka Porta, where a traverse over Valyavishki Chukar (2664m) led to another col and a decent to the hut, delightfully situated beside the partly frozen waters of the Tevno Ezero lake at 2512m.

The rest of the party headed south on the main route passing Popovo Lake making steep snowy ascents over the Demirkapa and Krlev cols before descending west to the hut at the Tevno Ezro. This roundabout route to the refuge was reportedly easier but given the snow accumulation was not.

Valentina, the charming hut warden, spoke English and provided us with an excellent dinner of lentil soup, meat and potatoes, baked sausage, salad washed down with beer and tea. The hut is only provisioned by pack-horse and despite this, Valentina loved it so much she has been there every year from May to November for the past 16 years!

Fortified by omelettes next morning, we all set off together climbing up to Mozgovishka Porta to the west,

contouring to the Chairska col and then followed the red-marked E-4 path northwest along the undulating ridge over Prevalski Chukar (2605m), Malak Tipits (2644m) and Golam Tipits (2645m). We passed through lots of dwarf pine, known locally as cleg, which was impenetrable unless cut back from the path. Ken slipped on a boulder on the ridge and badly bruised his thigh, but he soldiered on slowly. A final steep descent to the Bashliyska Porta then down snow slopes to pass the Banderishki lakes took us down to a well-earned beer at the Vihren Hut.

17th June

Rest day for some! Ken decided to rest his leg and opted to go white water rafting with Lizzie and Lukasz. As it was his first experience of rafting he was pleased that the river level was end of the season 'lowish'. Even so, the 12 km run had plenty of thrills including a stop to climb onto a river side rock to jump into the river - fortunately he had been provided with a wet suit.

As Tim was only here for the first week, he wanted to climb Vihren and have a go at continuing to the Koncheto Ridge. However, having climbed to Vihren's summit, it was clear that a major thunderstorm was approaching forcing him to return to the Vihren Hut. Everyone else enjoyed the morning sunshine leisurely exploring Bansko's old town church and museums. The church bell tower had a substantial stork's nest complete with residents. Michael and Helen also visited the thermal mineral pool in Dobrinishte for an afternoon dip. We all enjoyed our evening meal in a fish restaurant - trout or carp!

18th - 21st June

With Ken staying in Bansko, the summits were wreathed in cloud as the rest of us set off south in the drizzle from the trailhead at Todorova Ornitza following the Demyanitsa River valley towards the Demyanitsa Hut (1895m) where we stopped for a mug of tea and admired the substantial stream-fed washing tub outside. The previous afternoon's thunderstorm had washed away the bridge over a side stream but some awkward boulder-hopping got us across dry shod (except for Tim who used the Wellington boots provided, but found that the water over-topped them)! At the bottom of the steep climb to the Chairska Porta, Phil and Evelyn decided to return to Bansko and on their way back waded the stream. At the col, Tim, Mick, Michael and Helen stayed on the green marked trail down through the meadow-bush zone, instead of taking the Tipits ridge. In increasing drizzle, we followed overgrown and poorly waymarked paths through the dwarf pine and juniper scrub around Banski Grob and then down to the pine forest, negotiating a couple of very dubious bridges on the way to reach the track to the Begovitsa Hut (1750m), where we saw three fire salamanders evidently enjoying the damp conditions. Lizzie and Lukasz joined us for dinner, having come up from the trailhead to leave our lunches for the next day and a massive cake.

Fortunately the weather was better the next morning as we left the hut heading east to the Prevala col where Mick and Michael ascended Zabat (2688m), the higher of the two peaks guarding the pass. Lush meadows then led down to the pine forest where a small herd of wild boar with six piglets was briefly observed before they took refuge in the woods. The forest became deciduous lower down as we reached the Pirin Hut (1640m) where we stopped for some tea - architecturally different and well overdue for some renovation work. Tim then left us to drop down a track to the roadhead above Pirin village to be collected and returned to Bansko ready for his flight home the next day. Sandy tracks led the remaining three of us east to our beds for the night at the Malina Hut (1560m), where we met Phil and Evelyn who had walked up from the Pirin village track. Despite the arrangements Lizzie made with the hut manager, the warden didn't seem to be expecting us, but after some hasty phone calls he did manage to feed us with omelettes, tomatoes and bread (accompanied by some of Lizzie's excellent cake and muffins).

After a breakfast of bread and home-made raspberry jam, cheese, cucumber chunks and tea we set off through the forest east then south to join the E-4 trail accompanied by two friendly dogs from the vicinity of the hut. After resolving a few navigation challenges with non-existent paths and deficient waymarking, we reached the path leading over Senoto to the flower-decked limestone ridge heading to Orelyak peak. The orchids and gentians and multiple other alpine flowers were amazing. Unfortunately Orelyak was now in cloud and we decided not to bother with the remaining hundred metres or so to the summit as there was no chance of a view. It then rained steadily as we passed two large flocks of sheep and their shepherds on our way down the track down to the Popovo Livadi Hut (1500m). Our two dogs then disappeared with another group! Fortunately the sun came back out allowing us to sit outside to enjoy another well-earned beverage. After a hot shower, a splendid dinner was enjoyed followed by a short karaoke session in English and in our honour. This was followed by some folk singing by a group of Bulgarian ladies. They were staying in the hut for the weekend and were appreciative of the carafe of the local red wine we had donated to them.

On Sunday we collected the car left for us in the hut car park and descended the main road to the town of Gotse Delchev which was briefly explored before driving back to Bansko.

Meanwhile on Saturday, Ken decided to get to Sofia by taking the railway from Bansko and had an incredible train journey. Initially a five hour thrill of a ride on a narrow gauge railway through remote beautiful wooded valleys and countryside to link up with the main line to Sofia in Septemvri. Remnants of Bulgaria's era of Soviet domination were evident and the price was equivalent

to a cheap bottle of wine. It was an unforgettable experience.

Lizzie had recommended that Ken stay in the Hostel Mostel in Sofia - a short walk from the station. Again, it was very good value with an inclusive eat as much as you like (or are able) breakfast and a beer and pasta supper. He estimated that he was three times the average age of the other occupants. That said he found it to be a wonderfully friendly place meeting a new person every time I sat down, and for us lucky Brits, everyone was communicating in English! Ken spent one day looking round Sofia with its interesting churches and museums. On his second day he joined a hostel trip to the Rila Monastery 'the one thing you must see in Bulgaria' - some 74 miles from Sofia. It certainly was a splendid spectacle.

After orientating themselves on Saturday, four of the six new arrivals Chris, Dave, Fiona and Richard decided to try out the local mountain biking around Bansko on Sunday. This excursion was partially inspired by the well-documented routes found on a local website, with easily enough in the local area for a full week of off-road mountain bike riding.

With the four of them clearing out all of the adult stock of bikes in the shop, they set off in the rain along the "Dead Dog" route, the oldest MTB trail in Bansko. Although the party set off the correct way round the track, a mountain biking race happened to be under way in the opposite direction, leading to a number of perplexed riders thinking they had taken a wrong turn.

The well-marked "Dead Dog" route initially headed up the hill from Bansko towards the Vihren Hut before breaking off left into the forest and contouring around the hillside. If the low cloud hadn't been clinging to the trees, they might even had a decent view. Where the forest track started to turn significantly uphill, "Dead Dog" dropped into a steep decent to the old church of St Nicola (renovated with a fund from the EU). While there were no official obstacles, the muddy ground and stream crossing provided interesting terrain.

It was about this point the riders discovered that their rim breaks were ineffective due to a combination of wet pads and new cables stretching. Some consolation could be taken in that at least the flooded tracks from the torrential rain helped slow their decent. After that excitement, "Dead Dog" followed a series of pleasant tracks back along the valley bottom to Bansko. Thoroughly drenched and muddy, the only way to suitable recover was to ride to the thermal spa pools for a swim and refreshing beer.

The other two Kjetil and Richard Taylor elected for a 'warm up' walk with Lukasz on Sunday. Leaving the Vihren hut in torrential rain, which turned into a

snowstorm, they crossed the Premkata col and descended to the Demyanitsa Hut where they were rewarded with a beverage and an examination of the water driven washing machine outside.

22nd - 26th June

We all drove up to the trailhead above the Predel pass that connects the Pirin with the Rila Mountains to begin our five-day traverse across the Pirin to Melnik.

This route started with a steep climb up through the woods and dwarf pine to the Ushitsite col. Mick and the two Richards took a path hacked through the dwarf pine to reach Dautov Lake and ascended Dautov Vrah (2597m) before returning to the col. We then followed in the rest of the group's footsteps down through the meadow-bush and forest to reach the large Yavarov Hut (1740m) with its friendly guardian. Hot showers and another good dinner were enjoyed. The hut warden could not understand why we wanted a 2-bed room and a single instead of the cheaper 3-bed option until Michael gave an impressive impersonation of a sonorous snorer to the warden's great amusement.

Phil and Evelyn descended to the roadhead to be collected by Lizzie. The morning had brought a good forecast for our traverse of the Koncheto ridge and Vihren. Another stiff climb through the forest and dwarf-pine zone passing the small Suhodolski Lake frozen at the margins brought the rest of us to the Suhodolski Preval saddle on the main ridge. Richard Taylor was not on form and decided to go back to the hut with Booker, who was not really enjoying the prospect of increasingly exposed terrain. The mist steadily began to reach the ridge from the Greek side as we made steady progress along the ridge. A few snow fields were turned or crossed. One had slipped and severely buckled at a short wall but fortunately was now stable as it was well below the overnight freezing level which had been above the summits. This was crossed as quickly as we could!

Further ascending traverses brought us to the Koncheto shelter (2760m) where we had lunch. This stop nearly proved expensive for some. Fiona, fumbling for water from her sack, dislodged a stuff-sack containing two new duvet jackets. This rolled then bounced down the convex slope uncaught by Helen and Kjetil in the 'slips'. It vanished out of sight into the rising mists/clouds and was not to be seen when peering down the slope. As we left the shelter, Richard decided to investigate further down and disappeared from view.

Another climb then took us to the start of the Koncheto Ridge proper, with the mist melting away on the northern Bansko side. Soon after starting on the ridge a voice from the mist called "Are you up there?" It was Richard on a lower traverse returning to us from hundreds of

metres below, where he had recovered the split stuff-sack complete with intact contents, having seen marks where it had bounced on the snow patches. He promptly set off back to the start of the ridge to be sure he had done it all!

The famous marble crest is about 400m long and some 50-100cm wide. The exposed traverse is protected by a substantial wire cable and was all over too soon! The ridge was then followed over less exposed terrain up to the summits of Kutelo I and II (2908m and 2907m) before dropping to the Premkata col before final 250m rocky scramble to Vihren's summit (2914m). After enjoying the views, made more atmospheric by the mist periodically melting away on the north side and constantly changing the visibility, we began the long descent via the Kabata corner passing a herd of chamois seen the week before by Tim. We finally arrived at the Vihren Hut after some ten hours to enjoy an even more well-deserved beer and return to Bansko.

Suitably fortified by another of Lizzie's excellent dinners and breakfast, all of us except Chris, Michael, Helen and Evelyn returned to the Vihren Hut for the next stage, a climb over the range back to the Begovitsa Hut. The weather was warm and sunny as we ascended to the Banderishka col and turned south following the pole-marked route across the damp meadows to the Spano Pole Hut (2050m), where we stopped for lunch, enjoying delicious home-made chicken soup. Further meadows were crossed and eventually the correct trail in the dwarf pine down to the Begovitsa Hut was located after an interesting river crossing. The mosquitos were troublesome here with Mick sustaining some 30 bites through his T-shirt! Lukasz and Lizzie joined us again for dinner at the hut, accompanied by the rest of the party having walked up from the Begovitsa roadhead. Later, Kjetil's enquiry regarding the distinction in English between a mug and a jug led to an entertaining description of all the different uses of those words and of the word brace.

In fine weather Philip and Evelyn descended to the roadhead to drive the spare car directly to Melnik and the rest of us set off on the trail towards the Pirin Hut, heading southeast as we climbed up through more of the meadow-bush zone to the Solishteto col. The pole marked route led down through extensive meadows with wonderful flowers being grazed by herds of horses and cows. We then entered the pine forest which was bedecked in Spanish moss before emerging in much drier grassland accompanied by lots of butterflies. The precariously perched church of St Elias was visited before we descended a dry streambed to Rozhen village and Blagoy's hotel. Just before the village Michael saw a 30cm+ black snake, probably a Caspian whipsnake. After refreshments and a welcome shower, a delicious traditional Bulgarian dinner was enjoyed.

The last day of this trek began with a visit to the very peaceful Rozhen monastery founded in the 13th century before taking the relatively short path to Melnik village. This threaded itself through the famous conglomerate sandstone pyramids at high level before dropping down to another dry riverbed that emerged in Melnik. After exploring the village and lunch, we returned to Bansko.

27th June

Return to Sofia airport for return flights, a journey soon to be shortened by the completion of an EU-funded new motorway from Greece to Sophia.

Participants

Week One: Mick Borroff (Meet Leader), Evelyn Dover (guest), Philip Dover, Tim Josephy, Helen Smith, Michael Smith and Ken Roberts.

Week Two: Dave Booker (guest), Mick Borroff, Phil Dover, Evelyn Dover (guest), Chris Luby (guest), Fiona Smith (guest), Helen Smith, Michael Smith, Richard Smith, Richard Taylor and Kjetil Tveranger.

Sources of Information

Domino Map - Latin spellings are taken from the Domino 1:50,000 map of the Pirin. This map was found to have variable accuracy locally, but it was generally good enough to be used for detailed navigation (but aided by our GPSs particularly in the southern part of the Pirin, which is less visited).

The Pirin Mountains - Kingdom of the Thunder God. Jerzy W Gajewski.
The Alpine Journal 1991-2; 96: 155-9.

Walking in Bulgaria's National Parks. Julian Perry.
Cicerone Press, Milnthorpe, 2010.

360° panorama from Mount Vihren 2914m. ISKAR Tour. <http://www.iskartour.com/en/panorama360/vihren-summer>

Pirin hiking trails, maps and hut information.
Pirin National Park Directorate.
<http://pirin.bg/eng/tour/huts.html> also at the tourist information office in the centre of Bansko.

Mountaineering in the Pirin Mountains
<http://www.summitpost.org/pirin/151879>

Mountain bike trails round Bansko
<http://bansko-mtb.com/en/>

Conclusion

The Pirin Mountains were a great place to visit and have many similarities with more familiar parts of the Pyrenees, such as the Aigüestortes National Park and Andorra which are also glaciated granite sprinkled liberally with tarns and lakes. The mountains were glorious in June with patches of wild flower colour, luminescent lakes and snow flanked mountains - a beautiful wilderness.

Flights to Sofia were not expensive and members arrived from Turkey, Manchester, Gatwick and Oslo (via Moscow). With two weeks, we had the opportunity to sample some of the best trails and make a number of ascents and traverses, but there is plenty of scope for more.

We had arranged a series of hut to hut treks this time and typical days were 20+km and 1,000+m ascent. Several long mountain ridgelines on the granite caught our attention and a future visit could incorporate several days exploring these from a hut base such as the excellent Tevno Ezro Hut.

Our choice of going in late June was aimed at arriving late enough for the huts to be open but before the crowds that appear in the July holidays. This strategy worked in that we rarely saw anyone else in the hills, other than at a hut or working herders with their animals. This year had heavy late snow in April and this had not all ablated. Late snowfields covering the marked trails often had to be crossed or ascended adding interest, but crampons were fortunately not needed. Only once did the condition of the snow cause us real concern. The Koncheto Ridge was not accessible from the Yavarov Hut during the first week due to avalanche-prone snow remaining on the approach and on the ridge itself. Fortunately this had cleared sufficiently for our later successful traverse.

The huts are generally not of the same standard as in the western Alps but some had been renovated. Their staff were invariably friendly and welcoming, being very tolerant of our almost non-existent Bulgarian and difficulties reading Cyrillic. We ate well - the food provided was plentiful and appetising. The herb tea and local beers were excellent!

Bulgaria is still a comparatively inexpensive place to visit. Flights were under £200 and Pirin Adventures charged us £450 pppw on a fully catered/transported/housed basis, so day-to-day expenses were just pocket money.

We are very grateful to Lizzie and Lukasz at Pirin Adventures who tirelessly supported our trip and adjusted plans to our often changing requirements. They can be warmly recommended to any future visitors. Their advice and local knowledge was invaluable in route selection and in highlighting unmarked routes to summits etc., which we would otherwise have missed. After two weeks of the YRC with days often starting before 7am and finishing around midnight, Lizzie and Lukasz were going to take a couple of days off to recover! Returning to England, Wales or France, we also needed a day or two to recover from our exertions.



The Melnik Pyramids



**Contouring to the
Chairska Col and the
Tipits Ridge**

**Carpets of crocuses
by Muratovo Lake**





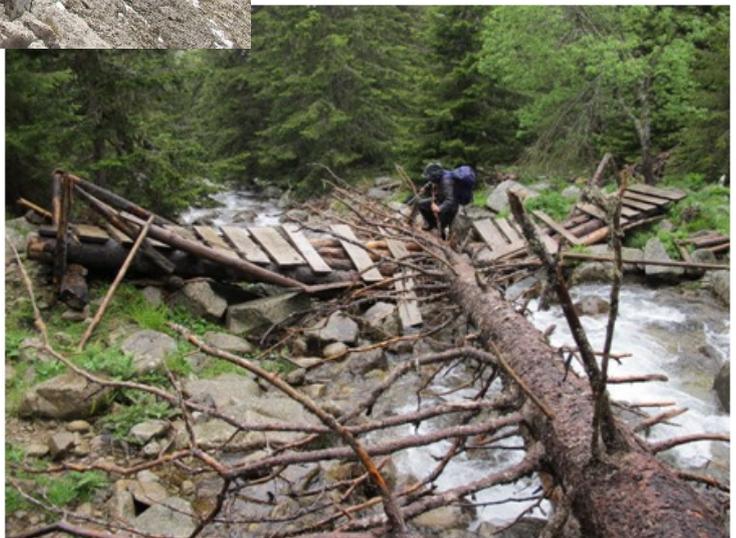
Frozen waters of the
Tevno Ezero lake

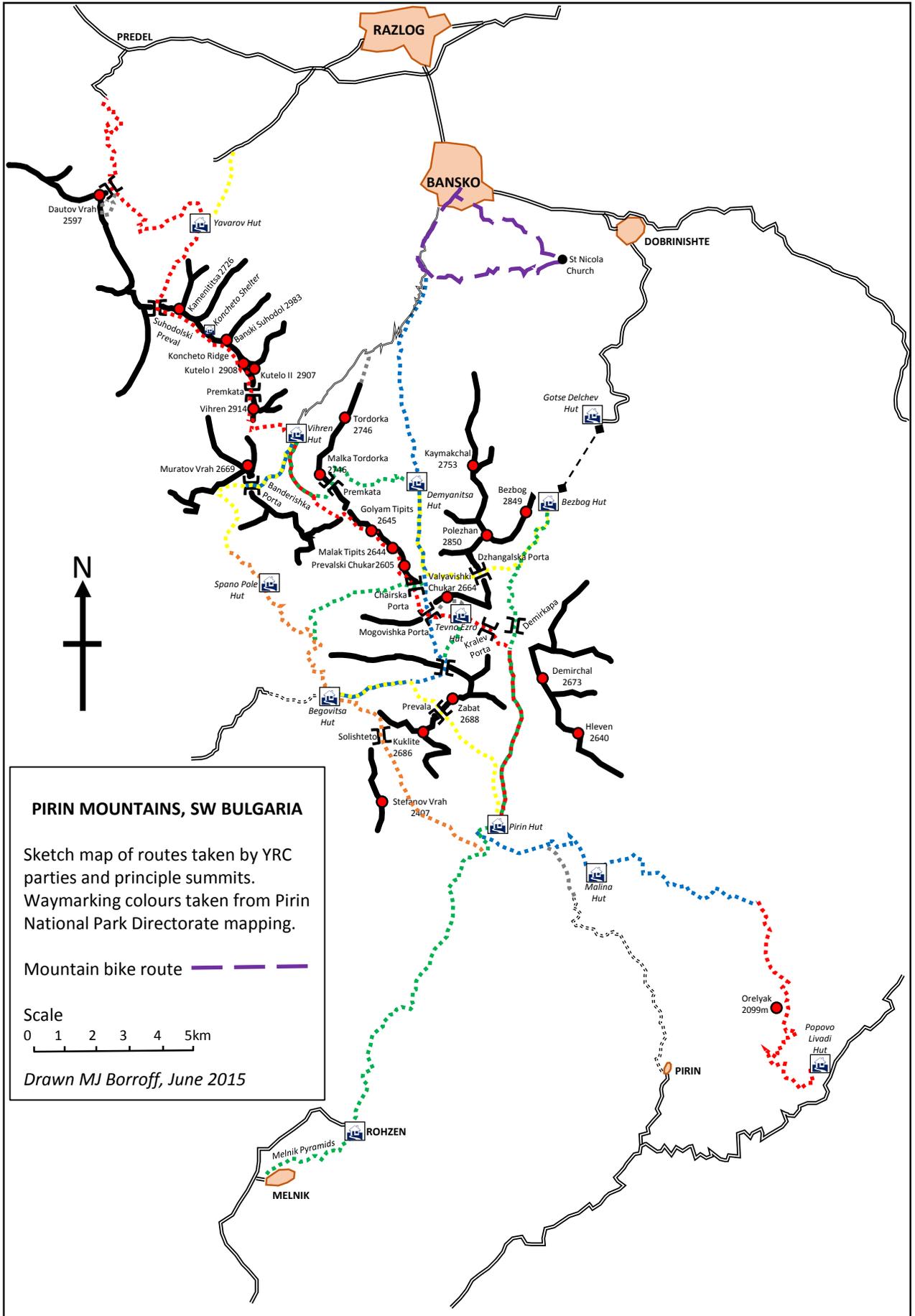
View from Tordorka to
Vihren and Kutelo peaks



The Koncheto Ridge

An interesting
river crossing





PIRIN MOUNTAINS, SW BULGARIA

Sketch map of routes taken by YRC parties and principle summits.
Waymarking colours taken from Pirin National Park Directorate mapping.

Mountain bike route ————

Scale
0 1 2 3 4 5km

Drawn MJ Borroff, June 2015

CHIPPINGS



CAVERNE DU PONT D'ARC

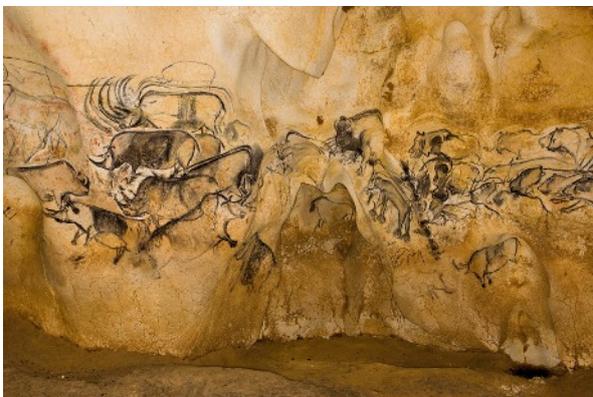
36,000 years ago people created numerous superb artworks on the limestone walls of the Chauvet Cave in the Ardèche, preserved by a shield of calcite and clay. Undisturbed since, this enormous natural cathedral was discovered in 1994 at Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, by cavers, Jean Marie Chauvet, Éliette Brunel, and Christian Hilaire.

Ten years later it was designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO - Its 1000 drawings include 425 animal figures of fourteen different species, most of which were dangerous animals such as cave bears, woolly rhinos, mammoths and wild cats. To protect this pristine environment reflecting the distant past, the public are excluded permanently but it has been replicated meticulously and can now be enjoyed in a visitor facility opened early this year. It is the world's largest replica of a decorated cave and members of the CPC who visited it recently thought it well worth the €13 admission fee.

There is a comprehensive report on their visit in the October edition of the Craven Pothole Record to be seen in our library. It was written by Andy Haytor and includes numerous photographs.

For more information see the web site <http://en.cavernedupontdarc.fr/discover-the-pont-darc-cavern/the-pont-d-arc-cavern-site/>

Do look at the English version not a translation as Andy points out that the main site gives no information about English language guided tours.



I am grateful to the CPC and Andy for bringing it to my attention; next time I visit the area to see my daughter I will certainly be booking a visit.

DO WE NEED STILE

Many County Councils are adopting a policy of getting rid of stiles wherever possible, replacing them by gaps or gates. As I get older and my legs seem to get shorter I welcome this. I was pleased to read that the Yorkshire Wold Way is the first National Trail to have no stiles.

Another welcome innovation which I hope catches on was reported from Nottinghamshire. The top bar of the stile pivoted from one end so that it could be lifted out of its socket when going over and returned to prevent animals getting through.

CAVES AND A CURIOSITY FROM THE CAPE

Our long time friend and contributor Steve Craven has often told me that the objectives, aims and interests of the Mountain Club of South Africa are very much the same as our own with the exception of any wish to go underground. I had wrongly assumed from that, that there was little by way of caves in that country.

I don't know the depth or details of them but it appears there are quite a few.

One of them hit the headlines recently when the bones of our earliest ancestors were found there. In 2013, some local cavers found some fossils inside Rising Star cave which were clearly primitive hominid remains .

To get into the cave chamber, cavers had to climb a steep, jagged rock fall known as the Dragon's Back, then struggle through a narrow crack under eight inches wide in places.

These were the remains of creatures these shorter than five foot and very slim with a mixture of Ape like and human features completely new to science. They have been christened Homo Naledi, meaning star man in a local language.

The latest bulletin of the Grampian Speleological Group tells of a couple of their members going out there and meeting up with members of the Speleological Exploration Club of South Africa (SEC) and hearing the story of the discovery first hand.

After visiting some local caves with this group they flew into Capetown and met with Steve who introduced them to the Congo Cave, basically a show cave but with

a surprisingly challenging route for a public cave. It included a crawl and a chimney descending at 45 degrees

It also includes large stalagmite columns and early bushman drawings.

All in all, whilst not spectacular caving, it seems they had a remarkable trip.

The SEC is a founding member of SASA, the South African national body for caving. The other founding member was the Cape Peninsula Spelaeological Society.

This organisation publish a bulletin and I have a copy of the latest but for reasons of economy not to mention an unreliable postal system it is only in electronic form.

It contains much of interest and can be found at the SEC web page <http://www.sec-caving.co.za>

It contains a detailed history of the cave where our early ancestor's remains were found and for those into such things, an article on a new troglotic ideoroncid pseudoscorpion.

Steve has also asked members to see if they can identify a mystery object which turned up in South Africa.



He wonders if any member can throw any light on the this 8 cm. plaque which has turned up in the Cape. It was bought some years ago at auction, and has no provenance.

The style of dress of the climbers suggests an English, rather than South African, origin, perhaps of the 1960s or before. And the rucksack is a Bergan or Karrimor of that era.

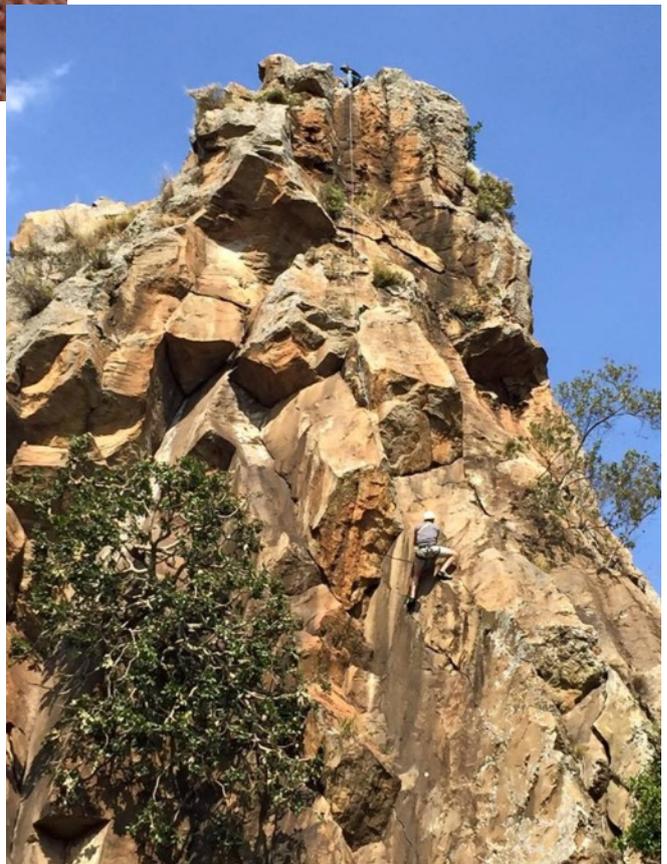
Any suggestions to the Editor please

SAFE CLIMBING ENVIRONMENTS?

Peter Chadwick's son Tom recently did a little climbing in Kenya.

He summed it up with a few pointed remarks:

“The vegetation is prickly and the animals hostile!”



POSSIBLE LONG WALK?

The long term ambition of pushing the Speyside Way through to Newtonmoor is getting closer to fruition. It has just been extended and now is at 65 miles long a bite sized walk to take on over two days.

Starting at Buckie, on the shores of the Moray Firth, it wanders its way to Aviemore, on the edge of the Cairngorms. The new extension takes the route on to the village of Kincaig, following the course of the River Spey.

NOT SO BLEAKLOW

New life has been given to Bleaklow. It has changed quite dramatically in the last 15 years with exposed peat being given a new lease of life with thriving vegetation, and increased insect and bird life. Conservation work has been carried out part funded by the, funded by the EU . Thousands of moorland plants have been introduced and untold numbers of sphagnum moss fragments have been spread across these areas.

This can only be good for the wildlife, and ultimately for walkers enjoying these natural sights and also for water quality, carbon storage and flood mitigation.

In the short term however, not for other than very experienced walkers. Over the last six months a number of apparently fairly experienced walkers have been encountered on the Bleaklow Watershed in some difficulty. The tall vegetation (mainly grasses and willow herb) have almost obliterated the faint signs of the path in several areas lacking any clear landmarks. Members have reassured them saying that the navigation had changed completely up on the plateau and was now much more difficult. Beware.

THE REAL THREE PEAKS CHALLENGE

Replanting is not the only way to restore upland areas to how they should be. The RTPC is a now annual project where volunteers are removing rubbish from the slopes of Scafell Pike, Ben Nevis and Snowdon. This year they cleared a ridiculous 205 kg from Snowdon, with 156 collected on Scafell Pike and 153 from Ben Nevis. It included all manner of things not least a catheter bag.

Unfortunately hundreds of people with little respect for the mountains climb these peaks every year for the best of charitable reasons but they must be taught to not leave any trace of their passing.

LIGHTS OUT AT LOWSTERN

As part of the UK's network of Dark Sky Discovery Sites, Bowland is coming under the microscope. They are looking for sites that offer good public access, low light pollution and excellent sight lines of the sky. We have all seen wonderful skies as we wander back to Lowstern on

dark winter evenings so this comes as no surprise to many of us. I recall walking back after a meal at Austwick and stopping on the track and laying back on the bank in sub zero temperatures marvelling at the night sky.

Forest of Bowland officials have identified several local locations including the Crook O' Lune, Harris End Fell, Barley Green, Lisburn Forest Hub, Slaidburn, Rowland Knotts and Beacon Fell as places of particular value in this regard. If they are accepted for status under the project it should encourage more people to experience what we have been enjoying for years

PYLONS UPDATE

We recently reported on a scheme to reduce visual intrusion in protected landscapes and it is now beginning to make a difference. The Visual Impact Provision project has targeted the removal of 45 pylons funded through a £500 grant from Ofgem. Two upland sites will benefit in this first phase, Longdendale in the Peak District and a site in Snowdonia, west of Penrhyndeudraeth. Several of the pylons running west from the tunnel mouth down Longdendale! Have already gone!

In addition other locations stand to benefit from this winter as the Landscape Enhancement Initiative will provide up to £24 million over the next six years for smaller local visual improvement projects.

Unfortunately whilst they are spending money to remove unsightly pylons in beauty spots planners are still permitting the erection of more. National Grid's plans to bring power from the new Moorside power station in west Cumbria into the grid includes erecting large pylons across part of the the Lake District National Park, ruining views of and from the Western Fells. Given that they have agreed to sink the cables under Morecambe Bay to protect that special area is it unreasonable to ask them to take similar steps to protect the National Park.

KALYMNOS CLIMBING UPDATE

In the winter 2009 journal John and Valerie Middleton wrote an article extolling the virtues of sports climbing on the sun drenched Greek island of Kalymnos. That article includes a map of the island and further information. They now advise on the latest situation and findings and exceed the superlatives used at that time so that any rock climber who has not yet visited this destination should consider doing so as soon as possible!

The much awaited KALYMNOS ROCK CLIMBING GUIDEBOOK 2015, the sixth in just 15 years, arrived on the shop shelves towards the end of September 2015. It was an instant success with many retailers selling out in the first couple of weeks in spite of digital route updates also being available online! But this is a 'must have' guide for bedtime reading, for drooling over, for dreaming about, for planning from and for using in the field.

Aris Theodoropoulos, the editor, has produced all the editions so far commencing with the first one in 2000 which contained just 200 routes. This guide definitely excels all the previous ones. The number of routes on Kalymnos and its satellite island of Telendos now totals a staggering 2,700 spread over 65 different crags or sectors. Photographs, maps, route topos and well written descriptions in English cover 414 gloriously glossy pages. Additional information includes details of how to get there, a brief island and climbing history, accommodation, transport, general climbing advice and suggestions for local sightseeing. It even has a 'Crag Planner' which instantly lists all the crags, details all the route grades, says how long the walk-in is, states for how long the cliff is shaded and even gives the best months for climbing. This attention to detail and quality of presentation must certainly nominate the 2015 edition as probably one of the finest Climbing Guidebooks ever to be published anywhere. Congratulations are definitely in order for Aris Theodoropoulos.

This will certainly not be the end of guidebook writing, hard copy or digital, as any short walk on the rugged hills reveals many cliff faces as yet untouched. Equally, many of the recently bolted sectors have space to include more routes. Kalymnos is destined to remain the world's premier destination of choice for many years to come. Within three weeks of its arrival it was inevitable that John & Valerie should be on their way to Kalymnos too!

WHAT IS NEW? It was difficult to imagine how any improvements could be made when we previously visited the island in 2011. But there are many. All the 10-12mm bolts are now either EU-certified stainless steel or EU-certified titanium. Almost every double lower-off is of the quick clip carabiner type. The bottom 3 bolts are placed close together for safety and higher bolts are rarely more than 4 metres apart. Signage and access to the crags has been made even easier from the nearby roads. The range of route grades remains roughly the same - 4a to 9a - but the quantity of each has doubled so that the previous excuse that there are not enough routes of a certain grade is no longer valid. One particular change of importance to note is the length of new climbs. On our first visit a 60m sports rope sufficed as few routes exceeded 30m. For our next trip a 70m rope was considered standard whilst this time, in order to take advantage of the many new climbs an 80m rope became essential! With these longer routes up to 20 quick-draws may be required instead of the previous 16. In the unfortunate and very rare event of an accident a well-trained 'Kalymnos Rescue Service' is now in existence.

ACCOMMODATION, FACILITIES AND COSTS. The principle places to stay remain as either Masouri or Armeos and probably always will due to their convenience for the climbing. It is possible to spend 14 days here and still be able to walk to another new venue in under 40 minutes. Places renting bikes, scooters and small cars for excursions further afield can easily be found when needed.

There is a multitude of accommodation to choose from and surprisingly, because of the political eruptions the Greeks have been through recently, the cost has changed little since we last visited. Perhaps 60% of apartments are still in the 20-30 euro per night category, 35% in the 31-40 euro category and then a few more luxurious places are available at whatever level you wish to pay. It is normal practice to eat out in an evening and the number of restaurants has definitely increased - expect to pay on average around 10-12 euro for a 'substantial' meal with wine. Extra wine and sometimes a desert are frequently offered for free! There did also seem to be an increase in small 'Tavernas' around the island, mostly run by a family and all serving deliciously different local food together with plenty of liquid to refresh any weary climber. With the current economic problems it is not surprising that cash rather than cards is now the preferred method of payment.

ARE THE NEW CLIMBS AS GOOD AS THE OLD? On this short trip they only climbed for eight days but in that time they managed to visit six new or extended sectors. Apart from some holds being rather sharp they would definitely consider them to be probably the finest crags that they had ever climbed upon. Their number one favourite was 'Gerakios' just a short walk above Masouri. They did 14 routes here from 5c to 6b, each worthy of the 3 stars given, each between 30 and 35metres in length and each requiring interestingly varied techniques. Their second favourite was 'Prophitis Andreas' even though it did necessitate a 30 minute walk-in. Here the routes were just as good but 37metres in length and sensationally situated 350m above the sea.

Their other new experiences were on 'Paradise Beech', 'Palionisos Bay' and 'Spartacus', all still in the three star category. On the latter cliff they did a 6 pitch route named '3 Stripes'. This would make a superb introduction to anyone wanting to experience multi pitch climbing as the bolting was almost excessive. It is 175m long and the pitch grades are 4a, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5c+ and 5c. The final three sections are particularly good on steep rock. The equally challenging descent path takes almost 45 minutes to return to the base of the climb.

This leaves John & Valerie at least 10 new sectors for a further visit! And there definitely will be a next time! Kalymnos is still addictive!

As confirmation of that last sentence they came across several climbers who had now surpassed 20 visits and almost every other person had been more than 10 times. In addition the number of international climbers that we met was really amazing. They climbed next to Canadians, Brazilians, from the U.S.A., Australians, New Zealanders, Chinese, Thai, Russians, South Africans and from virtually every European country imaginable.

It is really like a sociable 'World Gathering' of like-minded friends - maybe our politicians could learn something!

Don't you miss out!

OBITUARIES

Major Desmond “Roy” Homard, who has died aged 94, was a Royal Engineer who played a vital role in two of the most important British polar expeditions of the post-war era, the British North Greenland Expedition (BNGE) of 1952-54 and the 1955-58 Trans–Antarctic Expedition led by Dr Vivian Fuchs (2200 miles 99 days).

His father was a disabled former bicycle repair mechanic and after enrolling at the Army Technical School Roy went to France with the British Expeditionary Force as an Ordnance Corps fitter, attached to the Royal Tank Regiment but was sent home when he was found to be underage.



After serving in a Coastal Defence Maintenance Unit, he was posted to North Africa in 1942 as a sergeant with the Royal Electrical & Mechanical Engineers and went on to serve in Egypt, Sicily, Italy and in occupied Austria.

The 30–man BNGE was a geographical survey led by Commander James Simpson RN, aiming to carry out scientific studies and conduct a detailed survey of Dronning Louise Land, in northern Greenland, and to give military personnel experience of Arctic conditions and polar travel.

While on service in Germany, Homard applied to join the BNGE and ended up with the job of maintaining the expedition’s tracked vehicles, used to navigate the ice cap. With blizzards and temperatures lower than -50C they were notorious for breaking down.

The BNGE was a series of well documented disasters (one team member killed when he fell into a crevasse and a crashed supply). Homard himself twice narrowly avoided disaster, once setting fire to himself by igniting petrol fumes and again when he had carbon monoxide poisoning.

That did not put him off though, he had the polar bug. In 1955 when Vivian Fuchs announced plans for an expedition to cross Antarctica from the Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea, he immediately volunteered to join. The challenge had previously been attempted by Wilhelm Filchner in 1911 and Ernest Shackleton in 1914.

Homard was the ideally qualified for a massive expedition which involved a convoy of heavy tracked vehicles. He was on both the advance party to Antarctica in 1956, and the crossing group, traversing the 2,000 miles from the Filchner Ice Shelf to McMurdo Sound between November 1957 and March 1958.

During the crossing, the vehicles regularly fell into crevasses and it was a bit of a miracle that they were rescued and kept working. Despite the heroic efforts and long hours spent Homard and the Chief Engineer many did have to be abandoned en route and the group finished the journey with just four Snow-Cats by then patched up and held together with wood and rope.

Homard was only the second serving British soldier after Captain Oates, to reach the South Pole. He was also one of fewer than fifty people to be awarded the Polar Medal with both Arctic and Antarctic clasps.

Mt. Homard, in the western section of the Shackleton Range, is named after him.



Another holder of the Polar Medal has also died.

ARTHUR RICHARD CECIL BUTSON (Dick) has died aged 92 - I have not included his title and honours in the heading to this appreciation as there is not room. Amongst many, he was awarded the George Cross for saving a member of a research team who had fallen into a crevasse in the Antarctic in 1947.

In 1947, The Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey and an American team set up two meteorological stations to provide better weather forecasts for the Antarctic; one at 5,600ft on the Graham Land Plateau.

Two of the team had been left on the plateau when the rest of the group went for supplies but when bad weather damaged their tent they set out to return to base on foot.

One of the Americans fell into a crevasse and the other went for help after marking the spot. He made the last six miles alone arriving after dark and a team then went out to rescue their colleague weaving their way over the heavily crevassed glacier in semi-darkness and the moon had made a rare appearance.

At 4.00am they found the spot and Butson, the FIDS medical officer, volunteered to be lowered down over 100ft and found the casualty in a poor state; barely conscious and with his pelvis and legs trapped in the narrow part of the crevasse. Butson had to work upside down to free him, and he got stuck several times as the ice was moving and at one point it closed in to leave Butson with just centimetres clearance either side.

It took an hour to chip the ice away and free the American who miraculously was not seriously injured. Butson placed a rope sling under his thigh and called to the surface for him to be pulled out. The casualty suddenly became free and shot upwards. The rope was lowered again and the equipment hauled out and then Butson was retrieved.

Butson was presented with the Albert Medal by King George VI and when the Albert Medal was revoked by royal warrant, he was reinvested with the George Cross in 1972.

Dick, was born to British parents in China but went to school in Reading, before going to Cambridge and then University College Hospital. After postgraduate studies in surgery he emigrated to Canada in 1952 where he practised as a surgeon. Later he was given a clinical professorship and eventually chief of staff of St Joseph's hospital in Hamilton, a 600-bed teaching hospital, where he was head of general surgery for many years.

In 1956 he joined the Canadian militia as medical officer and ultimately became commanding officer with the rank of lieutenant colonel winning trophies for the best militia medical unit in Canada. Even that was not enough and at the age of 55 he qualified as a parachutist and on one occasion he commanded a Canadian field surgical team on a Norwegian Army field hospital exercise.

He was President of the Defence Medical Association of Canada and represented Canada in medical issues on the NATO Reserve Officers Association and in 1977 he was appointed honorary surgeon to the Queen.

Amongst his many awards, he got the Polar Medal for distinguished service in Antarctica and in 1982 he received the Order of Military Merit of Canada.

Colonel Butson, GC, OMM, CD and Bar as he became, has an extensive honours list in full, in the George Cross, Order of Military Merit (OMM), Venerable Order of Saint John, Defence Medal, Polar Medal, Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Medal, Canada 125 Medal, Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal, Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, Service Medal of the Order of St John Canadian Forces Decoration (CD)

He was not however just a brave and proficient medic, he was keen mountaineer, climbing extensively in the Canadian Rockies, Baffin Island and the Antarctic. He was also a regular visitor to the Alps and led a climbing expedition to the Hindu Kush.

A remarkable man and a full life.

Harold Drasdo, one of the original 'Bradford Lads', has died aged 85. He was at the forefront of British mountaineering in the post war era.

Drasdo was born in Bradford, son of a town-hall clerk and went to Thornton grammar school, then furthered his 'education' using the Youth Hostel Association and Bradford's public library.

He trained as an English teacher before becoming an instructor at an outdoor education centre in Derbyshire.

Drasdo and a younger lad, Dennis Gray, met in Ilkley Quarry and were to become the nucleus of this group including Arthur Dolphin. They were friends and rivals with another newly formed group of climbers from Manchester, with its top performers, Joe Brown and Don Whillans.

Harold is thought to have introduced a deeper, more thoughtful perspective to the climbing experience.

His climbing career was extremely successful with the Bradford Lads creating new routes in most British climbing areas, especially Yorkshire and the Lake District.

They were akin to climbing gypsies travelling around on cheap motorbikes or hitchhiking and dossing down anywhere they could. Their ambitions eventually saw them wandering around the Alps.

Drasdo's best known personal contribution was North Crag Eliminate on Castle Rock in Thirlmere, which he climbed in 1952. What he lacked in technical ability he made up for by being incredibly determined on a rock face.

Unfortunately Dolphin was killed on the Dent du Géant in the Mont Blanc range and a year later Drasdo saw the death of a climbing partner André Kopczynski, which events dented his appetite somewhat. He continued climbing though, and made significant contributions in Donegal, e.g. Berserker Wall on Ballaghageeha Buttress and the Direct on Bearnas Buttress.

In the early 60s Drasdo became chief instructor and then chief warden at the Towers Outdoor Education Centre near Capel Curig, where he stayed until his retirement.

He wrote an influential work, 'Education and the Mountain Centres' a thoughtful analysis of the role played by risk and the experience and enjoyment of nature for the development of young minds.



Two other renowned climbers have been killed recently whilst doing what they loved best.

One of the top Russian mountaineers of his generation, **Alexander Ruchkin**, has died while climbing on the south face of Huandoy in Peru. He was 51 years old.

Also a casualty was a legend of Austrian rock climbing, **Albert Precht** who was recently killed with his climbing partner while they were descending from a route in the Pervolakia Gorge, Crete. Albert was 67 years old.

MEETS REPORT

Lowstern

19-21st June

This was primarily a maintenance meet and coincided with the Bulgaria meet, so numbers were somewhat depleted. Nevertheless, there were sufficient willing hands to work through Richard's list of jobs to be done.

Catering was by Richard plus a couple of bags of chips which Albert contributed for those remaining on Sunday.

Not for the first time, Richard was congratulated for the excellent condition in which he keeps Lowstern and its surroundings.

In Attendance:

Richard Sealey, Hut Warden

John Whalley, President

Alan Linford

Ian Crowther

Robert Crowther

Eddie Edkins

Carol Whalley

Mike Godden

Harvey Lomas

Albert Chapman

Dorothy Heaton

Northumberland Meet, Seahouses

3-5 July

Northumberland holds many attractions. Usually we head for the higher hills, say, Cheviot or Kielder, and some quiet accommodation. This meet was a real contrast being on the coast and staying in a busy bunkhouse in the middle of a large caravan and campsite in the high season (Springhill Farm Bunkhouse). This departure from the norm provided new opportunities and plenty of entertainment despite mixed weather.

On Friday those arriving assembled on the large first floor balcony with its grand view of Bamburgh Castle and the Farne Islands both bathed in warm sunshine. Mick had been active in Cheviot on the way up ... and Michael had explored Low Newton-by-the-Sea that afternoon. When most were assembled a move was made into Seahouses for a fish and chip supper then a stroll around the harbour before finding the Presidential couple on the high street.

Overnight the weather deteriorated but the wet and windy start did not dampen our enthusiasm. Apart from Derek who nobly agreed to finish off the shopping for the evening meal and then be on standby to pick up any stragglers, the rest caught the 9am bus down the coast to Craster. From there we could tackle the a coastal section of the St Oswald's Way walk up to Bamburgh.

Craster to Dunstanburgh Castle is a popular short walk but not in the conditions we had. Sodden grass, wind and rain discouraged others and we had a peaceful walk to this impractically large castle dating from 1313 built for Thomas Earl of Lancaster as a symbol of his power as he opposed his cousin Edward II - unsuccessfully as he was captured and executed.

Beyond the impressive castle we explored the whale-back folding a little further north likening them to a modern skate-park feature.

The next sandy bay had hazards - large dunes and a stream swollen from the heavy overnight rain.

Jumping and switching to sandals were all tried but most had wet feet by now and most paddled through. Respite was soon reached when we reached the Ship Inn, Low Newton, spot on 11am as it opened. Hot drinks were in order and there was no great rush to leave.

Richard the Elder had lagged behind wringing out sodden socks but was just ahead of the rest as we emerged from the Ship. Together we continued north past a small bay by High Newton then towards Beadnell where the river and nesting arctic terns pushed us inland a little to cross by a substantial bridge. The net section was the least inspiring as it was through a caravan park and the roads much of the way between Beadnell and Seahouses where we took to the golf course. By way of compensation there were opportunities for some to supplement their lunch packs with sausage rolls, ice creams or gingerbread men. This makes the walk sound like a bit of a jolly but we were keeping a good pace and still not half way through. The weather though was gradually improving and the forecasters promised sunshine at 1pm.

A Seahouses rendezvous with Derek allowed Evelyn to call it a day and the rest of us to reappraise the next section. Officially the way is inland on an old railway track but we decided that as it was low tide we would stick with the beach. The sea roak kept us cool and only really cleared as we reached Bamburgh Castle.



More holiday crowds and another chance to have an ice cream. The castle on its dolerite pedestal has seen it all: the Votadini in the iron age, the Romans' beacon, the Anglo-Saxon fort, the Norman one, the first artillery defeat of a castle during the Wars of the Roses (at the hands 'our lot'), Armstrong's restorations, and now the coach trips. More modern but still interesting were the many wartime pillboxes and extensive anti-tank installations along this coast.

Hearing we were there, Derek jumped in his car and drove to us and straight past us before realising his error and doubled back to take three back to the bunkhouse. Richard the Younger continued along the coast to Bundle Bay and returned by inland rights of way to Springfield Farm (a mile or so inland from Seahouses). Two other pairs took a more direct route back from Bamburgh along paths and tracks to complete the round. Altogether about 17 miles but with little ascent compared to our usual routes.

It was another lovely evening inland and after a meal and some wine those wishing to chat moved outside leaving others to doze in the bunkhouse's comfortable chairs. Several of those attending had returned from Bulgaria just a week earlier so there were plenty of tales to tell from that trip. As on the night before, our group was earlier to bed than most others on the site and much earlier to rise. After the day's exercise all slept well.

The forecast was for a good morning and worsening afternoon weather so a 730 breakfast was called for.

It was 753 when King Oswald gave Lindisfarne to St Aidan for his monastery and it soon became a place of pilgrimage.



It was 950 when many of us set out on the Pilgrims' Way route across the sands from that Holy Island back to the mainland. A 1245 low tide should allow ample time for the crossing following the poles.

The President chauffeured some to the start and lingered to snap our departure. Removing footwear at the start we heard a persistent low moaning noise and thought it might be the wind over the sands but it turned out to be a couple of colonies of seals on a sandbank. Half-way across, we met lain going the other way. He turned to join us but declined to climb the refuge tower as we passed it. Other 'pilgrims' were wallowing in the silty hollows and getting 'clarted up' but with firmer footing we sidestepped the problems and remained unbesmirched. The 'sensible' advice is to join the 1954 motor causeway when you reach the South Low River at Beal Sands but we decided to give it a try and it 'went' at knee-depth rinsing the silt off our legs. Less than two hours for the crossing even at our leisurely pace.

The President and First Lady elected to stay on firmer ground, walking past Lindisfarne Castle to visit Gertrude Gekyll's

walled garden, then continuing to the impressively tall pyramid at Emmanuel Head passing a profusion of wild flowers along the way, including wild orchids, and striking black and red five-spot burnet moths pupating among the plants. Meanwhile, Mick had headed south for a walk over Windy Gyle in the Cheviot and Richard the First was visiting the Alne Valley Railway, just outside Alnwick, then mounting the recumbent giant lady Northumberlandia working from head to toe before going to George Stephenson's birthplace cottage near Wylam. Derek was checking that part of yesterday's route around Low Newton. Later Dotti was going mountain biking before camping in wet conditions. Richard and Michael checked out the view of Holy Island from Lowmoor Point hide then visited Druridge Bay for a stroll and a cuppa.

Certainly a different type of meet.

One of our Club characters and senior member, WCIC, is fond of saying "There's nothing so ex as an ex-president." I appreciated the truth of this when I was designated meet leader for this meet and realised I was Club's the third choice. The previous two having had to withdraw on account of work commitments.

MS



Part of the crew near Bamburgh

Attending:

John Whalley, President	Dorothy Heaton
Carol Whalley	Richard Gowing
Mick Borroff	Derek Smithson
Philip Dover	Michael Smith
Evelyn Dover, Guest	

Mourne Mountains

24th -26th July

By Friday evening 12 members and guests had arrived for the Club's annual long walk, at the Mourne Lodge in Attical using a variety of routes. The Whalley's and Hick/Marriotts took the ferry from Stranraer to Belfast.

Dover/Horn/Boroff and Taylor flew from Leeds to Belfast and hired a car. The Smiths also rented a car but flew into Dublin from Robin Hood. The arrangements were less complicated for our Northern Ireland member and meet organiser, Tim, who simply had to navigate from Ballycastle.

The Mourne Lodge (Cnocnafeola) is a community run hostel with, as its Director, volunteer Mairead White MBE, a retired cookery teacher. It seemed an onerous job requiring great commitment to run such a business as a volunteer. The Lodge does employ a small number of locals and was providing work experience for two young French girls.

We had a warm welcome albeit only in the friendly sense (it was distinctly chilly temperature-wise) but it was a idiosyncratically run. One returned from walking to find previously cast aside dirty walking trousers and T shirts neatly hanging in the wardrobe and suitcases re-packed, zipped and relocated: whilst the bathroom was left untouched.

The focus for the long walk was the Mourne Wall Walk. The wall was constructed to prevent incursion by sheep and cattle into the catchment area of the Silent Valley reservoir. It also provided employment during hard times in the early 20th century. The wall is impressive and in parts looks like a military installation with turrets. On average the wall is about 1.5 metres high and nearly a metre thick.



It is 22 miles (35 km) long and passes over fifteen mountains including Slieve Donard the highest in Northern Ireland. However this was insufficiently challenging for our member from Dacre who proposed a variation - the Eastern section which only skirted one mountain should be dropped and the central ridge which included four more tops should replace it! In fact this proved to be an excellent suggestion as the scenery was superb.

The first party of Smiths, David and Beth were dropped off at the Silent Valley car park at 7.00am and immediately set off to do the walk anti clockwise. They didn't hang about because although it was clear and sunny there was a brisk wind and it was chilly. The second party of Mick, Richard and Roger set off clockwise. After an hour or so party 1 were puzzled why they couldn't see the others. Perhaps we should have had a discussion before we left. Typical YRC!

The clockwise route is described by Mick:
"Mick, Richard, Roger left the car park at 0715 and with no sight of the previously dropped-off party, headed across the reservoir dam to commence a clockwise round of the twelve peaks over 610m along the High Mourne Ridge. The Mourne wall was quickly reached and after some gymnastics to cross it, we negotiated a wide section of blanket bog with just one pair of wet feet. Roger had a near-miss after a large granite boulder detached itself at a hole in the Wall. The first summit of Slievenagloagh followed soon after.

The Wall was then followed over Slieve Muck, Carn Mountain and Slieve Loughshannagh to a switchback over

the first three 700m peaks of Slieve Meelbeg, Slieve Meelmore and Slieve Bearnagh.



Richard Taylor and Roger Horn on Slieve Muck

The latter is topped by a large tor reminiscent of the northern Arran ridges necessitating a scramble to stand on its summit. After another bite to eat at Hare's Gap, Roger decided to ease his foot cramps and descend to return via the Ben Crom and Silent Valley reservoirs.

Mick and Richard continued, passing Michael and Helen on the slopes of Slievenagloch (the second one!) on their anti-clockwise route. The long ascent over Slieve Corragh to the watch tower on Slieve Commedagh was completed, bringing Slieve Donard into our sights. Richard elected not to follow the Wall up Donard, but descended to follow the path beside the two reservoirs back to the car park. Mick ground his way up the steep flight of steps beside the Wall to the Donard summit with its trig point unusually sited on top of the watch tower. Numerous school children were passed again on the descent back to the col before heading southwest to tackle the remaining third of the circuit, leaving the Mourne Wall at this point.

A somewhat gentler traverse below The Castles crags following the old smuggler's trail of the Brandy Pad led Mick to another col and then up to the summit of Slieve Beg and the Devil's Coachroad over to Cove Mountain. The sixth 700m peak of Slievemagan was brought underfoot before a long descent to a col overlooking the Ben Crom dam. Another long climb up to the final 700m summit tor on Slieve Binnian passed a group of boulderers at The Back Castles (at this point Mick could have happily borrowed their climbing mat for a well-earned snooze). The Mourne Wall was regained and followed steeply down to Wee Binnian and Moolieve which was bypassed to access the track close to the dam.

Mick thankfully reached the Silent Valley gates at 2115 where Tim was waiting to whisk him back to the Mourne Lodge for a late dinner. For the statistically minded the GPS data for Mick's Mourne: were 36.1km distance, 3,033m cumulative ascent, overall time 14 hrs with 11.5 hours moving at an average speed of 3.1 km/hr."

The anti-clockwise team initially moved together. We didn't meet many people at all until bumping into the Presidential party. After the Devil's Coachroad, David and Beth chose to

traverse the Brandy Pad to Hares' Gap and return via the Silent Valley as did Helen after climbing Slieve Donard, Commedagh and the ridge to Hares' Gap. The view of the Mourne Wall climbing (again!) Up Bearnagh was a step too far. In fact all but two of the seven who set out for the long walk and 11 walkers in total returned by the three hour Silent Valley 'shortcut'.



Richard Taylor and Roger Horn following the Mourne Wall towards the summit tors of Slieve Bearnagh

Michael continued anticlockwise and was rather miffed at getting his feet wet descending from his final summit - the aptly named Slieve Muck. He arrived back at the hostel at 19.10 - a 12 hour day.

Everyone had a long day out. The Presidential party as Carol writes, " ... left the Mourne Lodge in Attical very early on Saturday morning. Paul Dover, Tim Lofthouse, John and I were in Tim's car as we arrived at a very windy Silent Valley Mountain Park. No-one was around, except the gate keeper, who informed us that the park wouldn't open for a couple of hours, but he let us in and wouldn't accept any money.

We took the road that led us past the Silent Valley Reservoir and up to a granite dam marking the bottom of yet another reservoir, this one by the name of Ben Crom. There we ascended a very steep path immediately on the right which took us up to intercept the Slieve Binnian path. That's where we bumped into Helen and Michael; closely followed by David and Beth who joined us for the next stretch as Helen and Michael disappeared ahead of us.

The path was rocky and indeterminate but after a hard slog we reached the top of Slivelamagan, followed by Cove Mountain, which is where we stopped for a quick look over Devil's Coachroad, before ascending Slieve Beg and our long awaited lunch. The weather was much improved by now and we'd all got rid of our heavy winter clothing and looked almost summery.

As we descended the path towards Slieve Donard, we stopped at the old smugglers route (Brandy Pad) to marvel at the magnificent granite tors: the Castles. It was there we decided, as we happily chatted and basked in sunshine, that we'd make our way back along Brandy Pad towards Hares' Gap and the Mourne Wall. As we approached the Wall we

caught sight of Michael and Helen coming off the ridge - Michael disappeared onwards whilst Helen and Roger joined us for the last leg of our journey.

After a quick greeting, we set off traversing the edge of Slieve Bearnagh, gradually descending towards Ben Crom Reservoir, pausing only to cross the River Killeel, then back down to the Silent Valley and our awaiting car."

All but one of the party (and we did save him some dinner) assembled at 7.45 for a veritable feast of a meal provided by Mairead and her team. She certainly put the skills from her early career to good use. Wholesome soup; homemade bread: salad followed by a main course choice of fish pie or pork - not forgetting the dessert of ginger/kiwi cake and raspberry trifle with "4 tablespoons of Napoleon brandy" - just the ticket after such an energetic day.

There was some hobbling as people moved very capily to the dining table and it was quite reassuring that even our youngest guest by at least 40 years was not moving easily!

All had taken advantage of the opportunity to extend their visit to Ireland. On Friday the Leeds fly drive team had completed an 18 km walk in the south west Mournes including the heathery dome of Eagle Mountain (638m) and the summits of Shanlieve (627m) and Finlieve (579m). It provided a rather intimidating view of what was to come on Saturday's long walk route.

A bog road led back towards Attical where Paul according to Mick "happily investigated a combined potato farm and microbrewery". The Smiths on Monday did the three 'bird' tops (Hen; Cock and Pigeon) of the Western Mournes. The President and Carol drove off to Connemara to visit friends. Two parties visited the Giant's Causeway and other attractions of Antrim and the Sunday washout 'forced' visits to the Bushmills distillery and a pub in Belfast.

Prior to arrival in the Mournes the Smiths had visited Skerries and stood in the exact spot where Percy French was inspired to write 'The Mountains of Mourne', ".....he's wishful like me, To be back where the dark Mourne sweeps down to the sea."

Clearly our President fully intends to be back as Mairead was muttering that he had left with his room key!

The scenery is good. It's a super area and well worth a visit. Our thanks to Tim for organising the meet and for his ferrying of people to the start and finish of the walk. Also thanks to Tim and his wife for accommodating four members when they moved north to explore the delights of County Antrim.

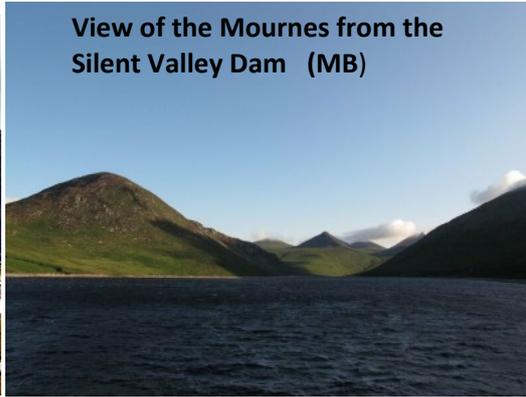
This is your scribe's first meet report since Saas Grund in 1987. I guess it was OK for female guests to be in Switzerland because it was 'foreign'. Nevertheless publication of the article in the club journal was described by some as 'the thin end of the wedge' The wedge must have been a bit thicker than they feared because it's taken another 28 years to make my second contribution as a now fully paid up member of the YRC!

HJS

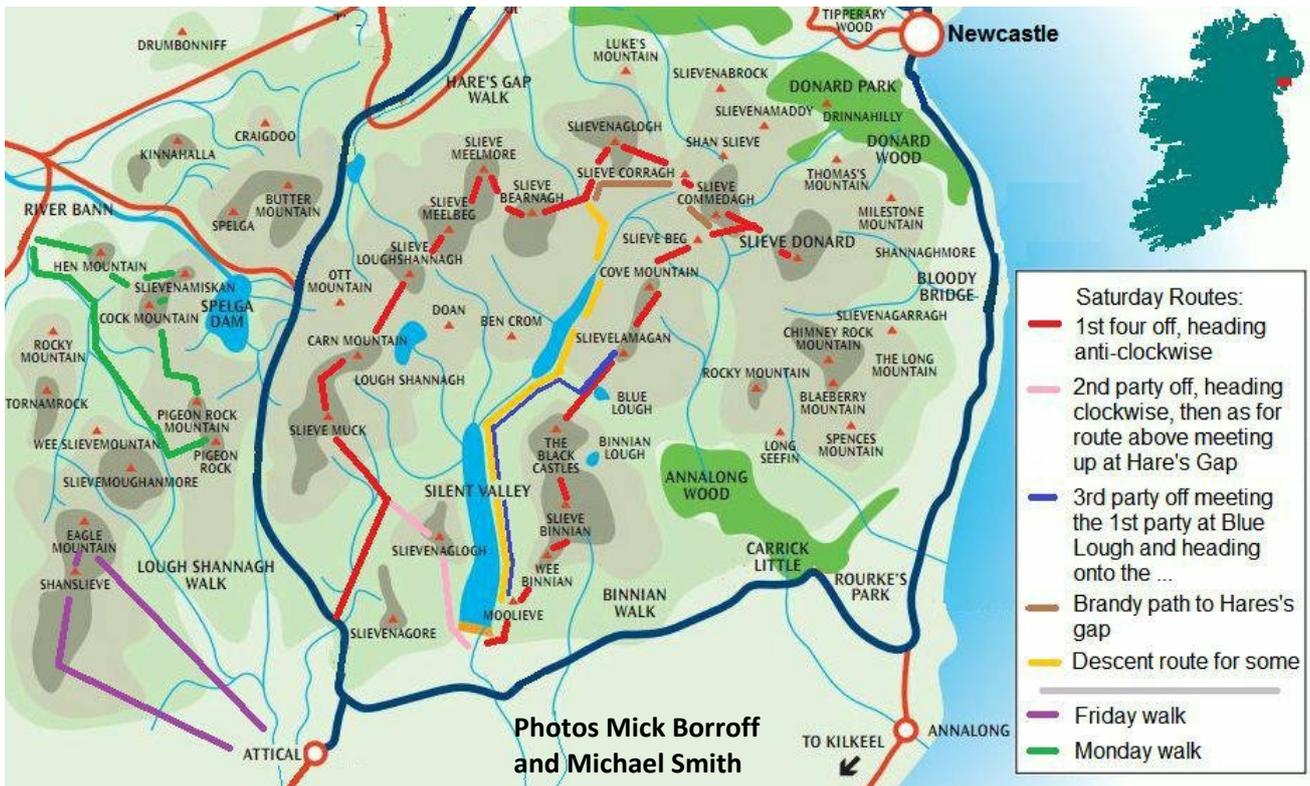
Slieve Bearnagh (MS)



View of the Mourne from the Silent Valley Dam (MB)



- Attendance
 John Whalley - President
 Carol Whalley
 Mick Boroff
 Paul Dover
 Roger Horn (PM)
 Richard Taylor
 Beth Marriott (G)
 Christine Marriott (G)
 David Hick
 Tim Lofthouse
 Helen Smith
 Michael Smith



INTRODUCTORY MEET, LOWSTERN

Aug 28 -30

The meet began on Thursday evening with the arrival of contingents of Dovers and Devenports.

On Friday, a day of increasing showers, they all ascended Ingleborough via Gaping Gill, reaching the summit in cloud and rain. They descended in two parties by various routes to Newby and then back to Lowstern, a total of 13.5 miles.

By Saturday morning the rest of the meet had arrived, representing an age span certainly over 65 years. Excursions onto the local hills were made; one intrepid pair of mature mountaineers made a direct assault on the SW face of Ingleborough, reaching the summit after much travail.



Photos John Whalley



A party of five descended Bar Pot, taking advantage of the CPC's gear and after exploring Mud Hall with its spectacular traverses resurfaced via the winch. After strolling back through the Estate, the Reading Room exercised its usual attraction, as it had on many other meet attendees. Albert arrived with his dog, causing some mayhem (the dog)

The largest contingent went to Ingleton climbing wall, expending large amounts of energy and demonstrating considerable improvements in technique and standard. Most continued until fatigue forced a halt in the afternoon.



Michael Smith and Dorothy Heaton walked back to Lowstern over Ingleborough, stopping at Gaping Gill where it transpired that Dorothy had never seen the Main Chamber. A descent was immediately arranged and she was suitably impressed.

On return to Lowstern, Bev Champion was to be found in the kitchen, constructing a splendid meal which was enjoyed by all in convivial fashion. The President thanked her for her efforts, a sentiment applauded by all.

After the meal we were treated to guitar music from one of the younger members of the meet.

Sunday dawned sunny and a large party went to Castlebergh Rock above Settle where Glyn Edwards (erstwhile YRC member) and other local climbers have cleaned the crag of loose rock and installed bolts to provide an excellent sport climbing venue in a charming situation. An enjoyable morning's climbing was had before people began to wend their way home.

Many thanks to Ged Champion for organising the meet and to Bev Champion for the catering.

Attending:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| John Whalley, President | Oliver Devenport |
| Martyn Trasler | Alan Linford |
| Matthew Trasler | Dorothy Heaton |
| Ged Champion | Mike Smith |
| Aaron Champion | Richard Smith |
| Bev Champion | Tim Josephy |
| Billy Sarakun | Arthur Salmon |
| Tom Carwithen | Frank Wilkinson |
| Katrina Devenport | Harvey Lomas |
| Albert Chapman | Paul Dover |

**JOINT MEET with WAYFARERS CLUB
LOWSTERN**

Sept 11-13

With the best laid plans Roy Denney, Martyn Trasler and PM David Green travelled on Thursday to avoid Friday traffic on the M1. As it happened they encountered a series of accidents and the trip took twice as long as usual and found three members already in situ. It proved a good move as Friday weather was good for a trip via Norber over Ingleborough to Gaping Gill and the ever popular Reading Room, Clapham.



Dorothy Heaton had also seen Sat weather forecast, arrived early Thursday, and enjoyed a circular walk from the hut to Norber, Crummockdale, Wharfe, Austwick, Clapham and the Reading Room. This route, with many possible extensions and variations, is the best walking from the hut. Dorothy also completed the Three Peaks. (over three days but who cares?) proving she had recovered from excesses on Inglesport rock wall three weeks earlier. Considering the grossly underestimated local timing offered Dave Carpenter made a very respectable trip over Ingleborough and back in time for Friday evening hash. The President reached the Reading Room via Austwick to find the meet in residence.

Campers set up before the promised deluge of rain arrived which continued in stair rods until mid morning on Saturday. The arrival of Tim Josephy, from Anglesey, galvanised a large group, Wayfarers and YRC, to Pen-y Ghent via Norber and return via Helwith Bridge. Bar Pot had been booked but not a practical proposition this time.

The Cafe at Frizor and Skipton Highland cattle butchers benefited from the bad weather. The closing down sale at Daleswear attracted attention, Sadly it will be gone two weeks after the meet.

Saturday early evening dinner, vegetable soup with hot rolls, steak pie and bramble crumble, provided enough energy and the necessary time for the planning of a Sunday caving trip.

Sunday the YRC assembled the necessary tackle, and after a check of who had abseil gear and experience Bruce Hassel, Dave Carpenter, Steve Crossley, Bob Fergusson, were taken to Bernies Cafe, Ingleton, to be kitted out with wet gear helmets and lights. The rest of the underground team, Tim Josephy, Ged Champion, Bruce Bentley from the YRC and Dave Mathews from our friends the Bradford PC. Entered the cave at 1130 and out by 1600.

Swinsto Hole, Kingsdale was selected as permission was not needed the pot well drained if a little damp and easily accessible. The plan was for a pull through trip, abseil down the 7 pitches, some doubled or trebled, pull the abseil rope down and exit in the valley bottom. The longest pitch is 70ft and not climbable.

David Carpenter of the Wayfarers makes this contribution to the meet report: The YRC/Wayfarers joint meet is always a high point of the calendar, and this year's event looked as if it would be, for me, better than usual. For despite trying had never quite managed to get to Lowstern, and having had it described with great fondness I was intrigued to find out what could possibly complete with RLH. But there was more in prospect than just making acquaintance with the hut. There had been some talk of caving at the last joint meet at RLH and Alan Linford had promised to 'sort something out' for the next meet at Lowstern. My last potholing trip had been in 2002 and I had either lost touch with the people I went with then or they had lost interest in the game. So it was with some hesitation that I said I would like to go. I was not sure if I would enjoy caving or not.

Lowstern turned out to be everything that had been promised and I can well understand why people count it among their favourite huts. There I renewed my acquaintance with Tim Josephy and met Ged Champion who Alan had roped in to organise the trip. Something turned out to be Swinsto Hole, by coincidence the first proper pothole I ever went down in 1992. I well remember the excitement of that first trip, scrambling along streamways and abseiling through waterfalls in the darkness. Swinsto is an ideal introduction to potholing for those with some experience of abseiling and without much caving gear. Unlike many Yorkshire potholes it is a through trip so you slide down ropes that you do not have to get back up again. (SRT gear and technique is needed if you do).

Saturday was very wet, much too wet for potholing, but the rain eased off overnight so Sunday found four Wayfarers at Bernie's in Ingleton hiring some gear. I only needed helmet and lamp but Bruce, Bob and Steve needed the full outfit. I was pleased to see Steve was still running the place, a little greyer after thirteen years but still as friendly as ever. Steve however seemed a little less pleased to be still in residence. Perhaps a nice early retirement number for someone.

Tim and Ged, with two other cavers Bruce and Dave, led us up to the entrance to Swinsto, high above the road through Kingsdale. As we made our way up the hillside Tim pointed out another entrance not to be confused with Swinsto for after a couple of abseils it comes to a dead end and if you have pulled the ropes through there is nothing to be done except wait for a rescue party. At the entrance to our pot, a shallow stream flowing along the 'long crawl', about of 1,000ft of low work, stooping or crawling. It was not long before we reached the first abseil.

I was not sure how much I would enjoy the trip but by the time I was down the first waterfall and watched the others come down, their head torches making small pools of light in the blackness, water slashing round the I realised I was enjoying Swinsto as much as I had on my first trip.

There are 8 pitches in all, some short, others about 60ft. Some way in we came across another party who had come in a different entrance, descending from the blackness some 80ft or so above us (Kingsdale Master Cave). I would not have noticed the roof of the chamber was so high if the had not been there. A little further on the route arrives at the Kingsdale Main Drain, the underground river into which all lesser streams run. The main drain soon disappears down a sump, the route however ascends a ladder and follows another streamway. The ladder climbing was a bit of a shambles. It is very difficult to describe how to climb a caving ladder, you just get on with it but four of us had never known or forgotten how to do it. Some more wet work along the streamway to the exit after something like four hours underground. I had enjoyed the trip immensely but there is nothing quite like emerging into sunlight after it is all over.

Huge thanks to the YRC for arranging the trip, particularly Alan for starting the ball rolling, and Tim and Ged for taking us, not forgetting Ged's friends Bruce and Dave. Bar Pot next time I wonder.

Access to Swinsto is from the A65 to Mason Gill to the Turbury Road (actually a lane) GR SD 694 775, if you wish to locate where the pothole is, but it is better to use GPS as Kingsdale is home to many holes and it is easy to get in the wrong one with serious consequences. The President reports getting very cold after three pitch abseil down the waterfall and needed a longcrawl but found the exit into the valley spectacular, worth the wet!

For the future, ladder climbing can be done in the trees at Lowstern and SLR technique practised on Inglesport Rock Wall. It just needs time and commitment to fix.

Paul Dover, Mike Allan and Bill Gibbs apparently managed a traverse of Wherside AFTER enjoying the hospitality of Albert and Sammy at Scar Top Farm

The President concluded the meet by thanking Alan Linford for his excellent catering and organisation, a sentiment endorsed by all present.

A warm welcome to Mike Allan, not seen for some time, and Barry Cheetham from South Africa slowly moving home back to UK. Ken Aldred sent his best wishes for a successful meet. Welcome to Steve Crossley, Wayfarers newest member, hope the caving experience has not put him off!

A L and D C.

Attending:

Wayfarers

Mike Allan
Steve Auty
David Carpenter
George Chambers
Barry Cheetham
Steve Crossley
Bob Fergusson
Bruce Hassel President
Gary Mellor
Sue Mellor
Colin Smith

Yorkshire Ramblers

Ged Champion
Albert Chapman
Alan Clare
Derek Clayton
Ian Crowther
Roy Denney
Paul Dover
Bill Gibbs PM
David Green PM
Dorothy Heaton
John Jenkin

Alan Linford
John Lloyd PM
David Moore PM
Martyn Trasler.
Tim Josephy

SOUTH WALES, PENWYLLT

Oct 2 -4

The meet was held at Penwyllt, a terrace of ten former quarrymen's cottages now the club hut of the South Wales Caving Club and headquarters of the South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team. The huge quarry is long since abandoned as a working quarry.



Sugar Loaf from Table Mountain - Photo Michael Smith

Paul, Richard, Roger, Mike and Bill rendezvoused at the Craig y Nos Country Park in the Tawe valley below Penwyllt on Friday afternoon for a warm up walk before arriving at the meet. They walked the southern flank of Cribarth to Pen-cribarth then returned along the ridge which provided magnificent views looking north west into central Wales. A steep descent returned them to their cars in the valley below.

Friday evening saw the assembled group descend into the valley to find some much needed refreshment and the Ancient Briton at Pen-y Cae with its array of hand crafted beers fitted the bill admirably.

Saturday dawned another fine warm autumnal day and the meet split into three sub sections, two to go caving and one to explore further the wonderful terrain above ground.

John, Carol and Harvey did the OFD1 main streamway up to Boulder Hall. It was a really enjoyable, sporty trip with lots of scrambling; when Carol couldn't span the traverse a little swimming was involved. The streamway was beautifully marbled with white against the almost black limestone: Ogof Ffynnon Ddu means the Black Spring. John and Carol splashed their way up the river to Boulder Chamber whilst Harvey did a little exploration and practised his climbing skills. On leaving the streamway Carol was given help when Harvey set up a handline as her little legs couldn't reach the holds. The only regret was that they didn't have a camera with them as the place was screaming for a go-pro.

Mike Smith, John Brown and Tim Josephy set off for the 4km trek across the moors to Pant Mawr Pot. They dropped a rope down the 15 metre entrance pitch into the huge stream passage below. Progress was slowed initially by photography but luckily for the others, Tim's camera battery soon ran out.



The team followed the stream passage for over a kilometre through a couple of boulder chokes which were easily passed once the correct route was found.

A couple of high level chambers were visited, Straw Chamber and the Chapel, both of which are beautifully decorated, the latter with masses of intricate helictites. Continuing downstream the cave became more and more decorated until it opened out even more into the Great Hall before narrowing down to a high foam covered vadose canyon leading to the terminal sump.

On the way out a couple of short side passages were investigated before a return to moor level and a weary trudge back to Penwyllt.



Paul, Richard, Roger, Bill and Mike drove a little way up the Tawe valley to start an ascent on to the Fan Hir ridge. An hours gentle climbing was rewarded by breathtaking views over the east facing escarpment. The ridge runs south to north for 3 miles high above Llyn Fan Fawr with views back into the Brecon Beacons. On reaching Fan Foel they left the ridge and headed south west to find the bridleway which returned them to the Tawe valley. A most enjoyable 12 mile route ably navigated by Bill which still left a little time to return to the Ancient Briton to sample a few more of their excellent beers.

In the absence of our meet leader Harvey, who was involved in a committee meeting of the host club, Carol and John stood in as cooks and prepared the excellent meal that Harvey had provided for us all to enjoy.

Sunday again dawned a beautiful day and keen to make the most of the fine weather a general agreement was made to scale Pen-y Fan, at 886m the highest peak in South Wales. The car park in the Taff Fechan Forest was the starting point. Tim, not wishing to hold anyone up due to his impending hip operation, led off on the clockwise route (never to be caught up). The route, after clearing the forest, crossed the embankment of the now disused Lower Neuadd Reservoir to ascend the Craig Fan Ddu ridge. Heading north along the ridge it meets the main access from the A470 for Pen-y Fan just south of Corn Ddu. Some marked climbs and descents over Corn Ddu, Pen-y-Fan and Cribyn lead to the major bridleway link at Bwlch ar y Fan back to the Taff Fechan forest.

Michael Smith and John Brown completed the same route in reverse and as if by arrangement met the main party right on the summit of Corn Ddu. It was a wonderful circuit of Pen-y-Fan made all the more enjoyable by the clarity of the atmosphere highlighting the topography of these mountains.

RD

ATTENDING	Paul Dover
John Whalley, President	Richard Dover
Harvey Lomas	Roger Horn
Carol Whalley	Bill Gibbs
Tim Josephy	Mike Hacker
Michael Smith	John Brown

ROSTHWAITE, CUMBRIA – 30 Oct-1 Nov

The meet was based on the Fell & Rock cottage, Salving House and we had fully booked all the spaces allocated to us, dribbling in from about three o'clock Friday afternoon until late in the evening. Most dined that evening at the Scafell Hotel where the bar seemed to cater for all our needs. A sumptuous breakfast was served and eaten reasonably early and the mist laden hills studied for any sign of a break. The day continued as it had started with mist on the hill tops and occasional drizzle. Enough rain to make sure we all got wet to varying degrees. However by Sunday the weather had cleared to give us blue skies with big clouds and magnificent views with all the lovely autumn colours.

Saturday saw two or three parties heading for Scafell and two or three parties heading into Langstrath.

To refer to them as parties is an exaggeration when one recognises that the parties in Langstrath were three separate individuals. Richard fulfilled an ambition to scramble up Eagle Crag but allowed the misty/wet conditions to stop him attempting Sergeant Crag, it also ensured he was in time for dinner. The presidential party stayed more or less in Borrowdale and presumably out of the worst of the rain by walking to Watendlath and then up Castle Crag. Staying low on this weekend gave the best views of the autumn colours though the cloud/mist made Saturdays views less inspiring than Sundays. Our only guest, Pam Hanson, was unaccustomed to these autumn colours saying that most trees in New Zealand were evergreen.

One party heading for Scafell changed their intentions at Sty Head, because of the weather conditions, and returned to Salving House via Sprinkling Tarn and Stockley Bridge and got back in time to get changed and see the rugby on the hotel television set. A report on the rugby is not part of a meet report regardless of how many members watched it.

Sunday had the usual desperate struggles to clear up, pack up and still have an outing. We were lucky because we knew Helen and Michael were staying another night which left them having to do the final cleaning. They did however manage an outing to Dale Head where they saw a large flock of fieldfares but failed to spot Harvey who went to see a mine entrance.

A low cloud base stopped an ascent of Helvellyn but the party enjoyed the lovely colours walking from Skelwith Bridge to LHG and back which gave them wonderful views of autumn colours.

This was written with the help of individual reports requested from some of the attendees, which seems like a good way to do it. My ignorance made me shout for help and I think all meet reports could benefit from this approach.



Helen Smith on Sharp Edge

Outside the official time of the meet two or three members managed short outings on the Friday and Helen

and Michael managed a walk up Blencathra on the Monday whilst waiting for a replacement tyre.

D.A.S.

Attending:

John Whalley, President
Arthur Salmon
Carol Whalley
David Hick
Derek Smithson
Frank Wilkinson
Harvey Lomas

Helen Smith
Michael Smith
Pam Henson (G)
Richard Gowing
Richard Taylor
Ged Campion
Aaron Campion (G)

DINNER MEET, WHOOP HALL, LANCASHIRE 21-22 November

The Club's cottage near Clapham, Lowstern, was about half full by Friday evening. Those who had been on the hills had returned wet having endured cold winds and a low cloudbase. Despite this Ingleborough and Great Whernside had been topped. The evening in front of the log fire was convivial and several were late to their bunks. The overnight forecast was stormy and Richard Josephy, kept awake in his tent by the wind howling through the trees, retreated to the cottage about 4am.

Saturday morning dawned much better and a cold clear day was enjoyed by the early arrivers. It was not to stay that way. We effectively had three seasons in one weekend; heavy rain, gale force winds, snow and clear blue skies.



**Moughton Top and River Lune,
both taken on the Saturday**

There were more ascents of Ingleborough and also Moughton besides tours of the dales around Austwick before 95 members and guests made their way to the Whoop Hall Hotel a little north of Cowan Bridge.

Following the AGM, principal guest, Paul Everett gave an entertaining illustrated talk covering three topics: signposting Swiss footpaths, alpine mountain huts and the Swiss Alpine Club's slow acceptance of women as members. Paul was a cutting edge Dales caver as a member of ULSA and, more recently, President of the Geneva section of the SAC.

Members retired to the bar and welcomed our official guests. On display were photographs of recent meets, members own trips and a helicopter following a nearby emergency landing besides videos of recent meets. Later, following the first announcement by the evening's Master of Ceremonies, David Large, we took our seats for the Dinner at 7:30pm. Treasurer, Martyn Trasler, led us by saying the Grace. This year the nine tables were named for Dales potholes in honour of the President's and principal guest's interests. After the meal, at 9pm, Vice President Robert Crowther proposed the loyal toast followed by Tony Dunford proposing the toast of Absent Friends.

After a short break, there were short speeches from the principal guest and the President, John Whalley, before they respectively proposed the toasts of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club and the Kindred Clubs and Guests. John paid tribute to John Middleton's contributions to caving, exploration and the YRC over many decades and his consequent elevation to Honorary Membership. Arthur Salmon had expanded the usual choir of himself, Dennis Armstrong and Gordon Humphreys (Ian Crowther being absent in the antipodes) to include David Hick and Peter Chadwick. Conversations and commitments in the bar afterwards included Membership Secretary and President-Elect, Mick Borroff, successfully recruiting for next year's Moroccan Jebel Sarhro trek to the maximum supportable numbers.

About 20 members and their partners chose to stay at the hotel overnight filling the place. Sunday's weather was again good and most were soon down for breakfast. Richard Josephy again catered for those staying at Lowstern. Arthur Salmon had planned a walk over the Barbon Fells but the recent wet weather caused a switch to the limestone plateau above Hutton Roof. Despite the departure from the hotel being delayed by the receptionist's confusion over who had paid deposits, the walk went well and is described in a report which follows this one.

Three went underground using the Club's permit to explore Shuttleworth Pot on Leck Fell which, having been found by divers in the late '90s, was dug out only by 2010 so has decorations in near pristine condition. It proved to be a good SRT trip.



Harvey Lomas, in full CRO gear, walked over to the engineered entrance to welcome them as they regained the surface.



Almost twenty assembled at Lowstern after their exertions to enjoy ham, eggs, peas and chips prepared by Rachel Evans, showing that this recently re-established tradition is certainly appreciated.

Another year is almost over and the Club remains as sociable and active as ever. Some of our absent friends this time were in New Zealand, Jamaica, Argentina and the Galapagos.

MS

FARLETON FELL & HUTTON ROOF CRAGS

Figure-of eight walk, distance: approximately 10 Km (6 miles) and 300m (1,000ft) ascent.

During November, in the run-up to the Dinner, the weather over most of the UK had been particularly wet with heavy rain resulting in widespread flooding, especially in Cumbria and the North-west. As a consequence, as organiser of the walk, I decided it would be wise to abandon my first two choices, which I thought might prove problematic on the day, and to settle on the safe option of the walk from the small hamlet of Hutton Roof (GR SD 570783) to Farleton Fell. Hutton Roof Crag and Farleton Fell constitute an area

of upland limestone tucked away in the corner between the A65 Skipton-Kendal road and the M6 and separated from the main limestone fells to the north and east by the A65.

In contrast to the weather of the previous weeks, the weather on Sunday dawned bright and cold, with a light sprinkling of snow on the fells. The departure by car from the hotel involved the usual measure of confusion, but the party got away reasonably promptly, hopefully with some idea of how to get to Hutton Roof which lies to the SW of the A65 along very narrow country lanes. In fact, our group of 22, which included the Principal guest, Paul Everett, three official guests from kindred clubs and four octogenarian members of the YRC with ages ranging from 82 to 86, was at the starting point by the appointed time of 10:30 am, ready to start the walk. Two of our octogenarians, who know the area particularly well, led off along the route which climbs gently and skirts the northern edge of the limestone pavements of Hutton Roof Crag, at times passing through sparsely wooded areas, to emerge after about 2km on the open fell where the path crosses a small country road before continuing onto Farleton Fell. Here one climbs in a generally northwest direction through broken limestone pavements to arrive at the summit which lies on the northern corner of the crags which form the top of the escarpment that falls steeply on the western side to the M6, which is about a kilometre away. We were extremely lucky with the weather and from the summit had stunning views over Morecambe Bay with a backdrop of the Lakeland fells to the north west and to the north the very impressive fells skirting the River Lune, all made more impressive by their light covering of snow.

Although the edge of the crag was somewhat exposed to the cool breeze, the decision seemed to be taken collectively that this was the ideal spot for lunch, after which we descended to the somewhat lower top, Farleton Knott, which lies to the northwest of the main summit, but also provides fine panoramic views. From here we descended in a south-south-westerly direction to the foot of the crag that forms the western edge of the summit plateau and then continued to skirt the fell on its southern flank to head back eastwards, initially uphill, towards Hutton Roof.

One of the difficulties of walking in a group of this size is that members can easily become detached from the main group without this being noticed. Thus it was with some consternation that I realised that, on this part of the route, one of our octogenarians was missing. What was to be done? The main group was pressing on, unstoppable, like the peloton in the Tour de France. I was joined by a lady member and we waited, anxiously peering back down the slope in the hope that he would appear following behind us. It was a relief, and some surprise, when, after what seemed an age, we saw two people appear, one of whom was certainly our octogenarian; but who was the other person? Shock! Horror! As they approached I realised that it was Paul Everett. We had, at least temporarily, managed to lose our Principal Guest! The two arrived quite unconcerned, having simply stopped to engage in conversation with a couple of dog walkers.

Returning to the country road already mentioned, the party regrouped and wended our way back to Hutton Roof by the lanes arriving in good time to return to Lowstern for the high tea of egg,

ham and chips, ably provided by Rachel Evans and Albert Chapman, to whom we offer our heartiest thanks.

The walk seemed to be enjoyed by everyone and one member went so far as to say it was the best for some years.

AS

The Walkers

John Whalley, President.
Paul Everett, Principal Guest.
Tim Edwards, M.A.M, President.
Bruce Hassel, Wayfarers, President.
Neil Hutton, Gritstone Club, President.
Mick Borroff
Derek Bush
Peter Chadwick
Andrew Duxbury
Sue Edwards, G.
Iain Gilmour
Dorothy Heaton

John Lovett
Conrad Murphy, G
Arthur Salmon
Helen Smith
Richard Taylor
Carol Whalley
Frank Wilkinson

The Covers

Richard Smith
John Brown
Michael Smith

NIDDERDALE 11-13th Dec The Christmas Meet

Folk began to arrive early on Friday afternoon, some to enjoy walks around the local attractions including Brimham Rocks, dodging the short but rather sharp showers on the way. All 24 were assembled at the Studfold Farm Activity Centre by the evening. This facility is set up mainly for youth groups; some of our more hedonistic members bemoaned the lack of a nice log fire surrounded by easy chairs, but in fact the place is entirely adequate with spacious sleeping accommodation and a big common room. Some went out to eat and some ate in, walking up to the Crown Inn in Lofthouse, a most welcoming village pub, for a post dinner drink.

Saturday dawned dry but rain set in before breakfast. It looked miserable, then the rain turned to sleet and it didn't just look miserable - it was.

Ideas of going underground in the notoriously flood prone caves of this area had been long abandoned. Parties set out on various circuits around Nidderdale; it didn't really matter where one went, the vista, stretching at times to 100 yards, was exactly the same.



Underfoot the recent heavy downpours had turned the moors into morass and yet people claimed to have gained pleasure out of the day. When the weather is this bad the only place to go is the summit of Meugher, considered by the Gritstone Club to be a mythical centre of misery.

Three parties claimed to have gone there but none of them saw the others' footprints in the snow. In these days of GPS we cannot doubt that they all got there, perhaps Meugher was exercising its strange influence that day.



Most people were back early to enjoy mince pies provided by Robert Crowther (his wife actually). Derek Clayton and Alan Clare returned having met a large party of Gilmours at Middlesmoor, celebrating Ian's 80th birthday. I am sorry to report that tea and mince pies were overtaken by beer at an unseemly hour and by dinnertime the company was in festive mood. Last to arrive were Ian Crowther and John Jenkin; they had decided to go over to Ravenstonedale to check on Ian's cottage. They had a terrible journey, getting stuck on the A66 in the snow and suffering a minor accident. Nevertheless they soon cheered up and enjoyed the evening.



Despite a rather capricious oven, a four course dinner was produced with roast beef and Yorkshire pudding as the main course. It seemed to go down well with everyone and not much was left over. John Whalley stood up and asked us to raise a glass to the memory of Sammy Chapman who had died a few days earlier. He said she was a good friend to the Club and many of the members, a wonderful hostess and a lovely person. He also toasted Ian Gilmour for reaching his 80th birthday.

Sunday dawned a much better day and after another of Robert's signature full English breakfasts, people set off to make the most of it. Some visited How Stean Gorge, Tom Taylor's Cave and the village fete at Middlesmoor; one ex-president's wife won the star prize in the tombola - a £5 voucher for the local farm shop. In the interests of charity (and personal safety) she insisted on returning the prize to be redrawn whereupon she was rewarded with a chocolate orange.

Other parties ventured up onto the moors, most sticking to the lanes because of the awful going underfoot.

This was a disappointing final meet of the year as far as getting anything worthwhile done, yet everyone enjoyed themselves and the evenings were as convivial as the Christmas meets always are.

Attending

John Whalley (President) Carol Whalley, John Jenkin
Ian Crowther, Robert Crowther, Alan Linford
Arthur Salmon, Frank Wilkinson, Dorothy Heaton
Helen Smith, Michael Smith, Jim Harrison (G)

Chris Harrison (G), John Sutcliffe (G), Alan Clare
Derek Clayton, Philip Dover, Paul Dover, David Hick
Bill Gibbs (PM), Mick Borroff, Peter Chadwick
Richard Gowing, Tim Josephy

MEETS MONTAGE



Frank and Arthur taking time out on introductory meet



Roy and Martyn doing likewise on the joint meet



Northern marsh-orchid (Dactylorhiza purpurella)



Common Spotted-orchid (Dactylorhiza fuchsii)



Five-spot burnets

Northumberland meet - photos John Whalley



En route to the Yavarov Hut, Bulgaria Meet



The meal, Joint meet



Maintenance meet, Lowstern. Work and some play.



Preparations at Shuttleworth Pot

**Those ruddy sheep
Halls Fell, Blencathra.**



**Above,
Howstean Gorge
and left,
Brimham Rocks.**

**Taken on the
Nidderdale meet.**

CLUB PROCEEDINGS

ANNUAL DINNER & AGM

The formal dinner was held at the Whoop Hall Hotel on 21st of November preceded by the AGM and a presentation by our Principal Guest, Paul Everett.

THE AGM

47 members present.

After a minutes silence to remember David Holmes who had passed away since the last AGM, John Whalley, the President, addressed the meeting and proposed John Middleton for Honorary Membership.

The President spoke about John's lifetime of expeditions, climbing and caving all over the world. John joined in 1962 and has always been loyal to the YRC, his only club He has made great contributions to British exploration overseas for many years, particularly with regard to caves.

After much activity in the British Isles, and on the Continent, John mounted expeditions to Turkey and Lebanon and led the 1971 Expedition to Ghar Parau, in the Zagros Mountains of Iran which was a milestone in British caving abroad. For several years he served as Foreign Secretary of our national cave research body. More recently he was doing pioneering exploration in Laos, with Tony Waltham, with whom he co-authored books on the subject of caves and karst.

He is still 'flying the flag' and says he has just returned from Turkmenistan, and rock-climbing in Kalymnos.

The proposal was seconded by Roy Denney and was enthusiastically accepted by all members.

The President went on to say

"Our meets this year have been successful and well attended. As always they have been very sociable affairs, often filling the available accommodation. This should be born in mind when we worry about not attracting enough members.

It is true however that we could do with more young members The Introductory Meet was very enjoyable and hopefully such events will bear fruit over time.

The YRC is not alone in having an aging membership. This is a general trend, with other clubs reporting difficulties in attracting younger members. At one time we learned our skills by joining a club whereas youngsters today often do so by going on courses, using climbing walls and venturing out with small groups of friends.

Also of course they may start within Scout or University groups etc, and this is where our huts could provide an excellent base for their activities; in time they may want to join us and discover what we are all about. I think this is how the club has been re-invigorated on occasions in the past.

Overall I still feel very confident about our long term sustainability.



John Whalley, YRC President

The Meets list for next year is being finalised, ready for the Handbook. We will be returning to the Alps, and there is also an overseas meet to the Anti-Atlas Mountains of Morocco. As you know, the Nepal Trek this year had to be cancelled, but we are watching developments there and hopefully will be able to organise something in the not too distant future.

There are a few other things in the pipeline which we are working on: a bumper journal for 2017, and also an exchange with our Norwegian counterparts”

Officers' reports were debated and adopted and the President, officers and committee were elected for the year 2016.

The appointments were:

President	John Whalley	Other committee members:
Vice President	Robert Crowther	Rachel Evans
President Elect & Membership Secretary	Mick Borroff	Harvey Lomas
Hon Secretary	Tim Josephy	
Hon Treasurer	Martyn Trasler	Officers not on the committee
Huts Secretary	Richard Josephy	Honorary Editor Roy Denney
Meets Secretary	Peter Elliott	Hon. Auditor Richard Taylor
Lowstern Warden	Richard Sealey	Hon Librarian Arthur Salmon
LHG Warden	Alister Renton	Hon Archivist Alan Linford
Webmaster	Andy Syme	Hon. Tacklemaster Ged Campion

At last year's AGM we had 158 Members and Honorary Members. Since then, we have gained five new Members and have lost four - one died and three resigned. We therefore end the year with a headcount of 159 and we have also increased the number of Prospective Members currently on file to eight.

Roy Wilson became a life member.

GUEST SPEAKER

Paul Everett is the President of the Geneva section of the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) and a past president of the University of Leeds Speleological Association (ULSA). He gave a very interesting and amusing talk on the overly meticulous way the Swiss authorities provide waymarking and signage for routes in the Alps. He also discussed the history of women alpinists in their fight to become full members of the SAC.

As places were being laid for dinner people had a chance to look at a display of photographs by members and videos of past meets and areas to be visited shortly.

Members and our guests then sat down to an excellent meal.

Left to right:

- Paul Everett, Principal Guest**
- John Whalley, YRC President**
- Andy Eavis,**
co-founder of China Caves Project,
President of UIS, Chairman of BCA
- Alan Hinkes, OBE**
- Robert Crowther, YRC Vice President**
- Tim Edwards, President, Midland Assoc.**
of Mountaineers
- Sue Edwards, MAM**



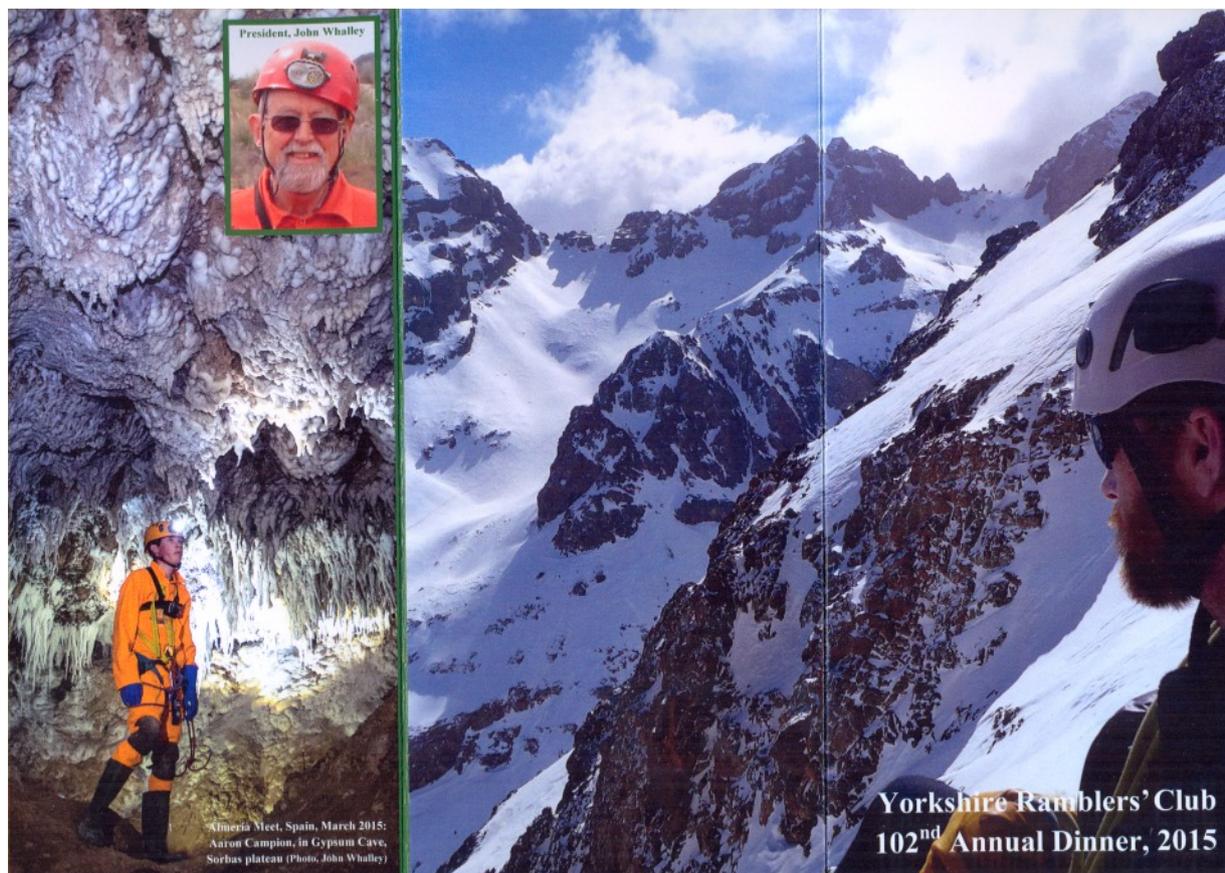
Members and guests attending

Aaron Campion (G)
 Alan Hinkes OBE
 Alan Kay
 Alan Linford
 Albert Chapman
 Alexa Whiteman (G)
 Alistair Renton
 Andrew Duxbury
 Andy Eavis (G)
 Andy Syme
 Angie Linford (G)
 Ann Salmon MBE (G)
 Anne Chapman (G)
 Anne Dover (G)
 Arthur Salmon
 Bill Lofthouse
 Bruce Hassall (G. Wayfarer)
 Carol Whalley
 Caron Ferguson (G)
 Chris Rhodes (G)
 Christine Marriott (G)
 Claire Chapman (G)
 Cliff Large
 Conrad Murphy (G)
 Dave Booker (G)
 David Gamble
 David Hick
 David Large
 Delores Horn (G)
 Dennis Armstrong
 Derek Bush
 Dorothy Heaton

Fiona Humphreys (G)
 Fiona Smith (G)
 Frank Wilkinson
 Garry Chapman (G)
 Gordon Humphreys
 Harry Robinson
 Harvey Lomas
 Helen Smith
 Iain Chapman (G)
 Iain Gilmour
 Ian Ferguson (G)
 Ian Laing
 Imogen Campion (G)
 Jane McOuat (G)
 Jason Humphreys
 Jo Chapman (G)
 Joan Armstrong (G)
 John Brown
 John Hemingway
 John Jenkin
 John Lovett
 John Farrer (G)
 John Whalley
 Judy Humphreys (G)
 John Middleton
 Lillian Eavis (G)
 Liz Holmes (G)
 Martyn Trasler
 Michael Smith
 Mick Borroff
 Mike Godden
 Neil Hutton, (G. Gritstone Club)

Pat Halliwell, (G. CPC Pres.)
 Paul Dover
 Paul Everett (Principal Guest)
 Peter Chadwick
 Peter Moss
 Rachel Evans
 Rebecca Humphreys (G)
 Ric Halliwell (G)
 Richard Gowing
 Richard Josephy
 Richard Sealey
 Richard Smith
 Richard Taylor
 Rob Ibberson
 Robert Crowther
 Roger Horn
 Rory Chapman (G)
 Rory Newman
 Ros Brown (G)
 Roy Denney
 Sammy Chapman (G)
 Sue Edwards (G)
 Sylvie Nickels (G)
 Tim Edwards, (G. MAM Pres.)
 Tim Josephy
 Tim Lofthouse
 Tony Dunford
 Tony Penny
 Tony Smythe
 Trevor Salmon
 Una Laing (G)
 Valerie Middleton (G)

57 Members, 39 Guests



ROLL OF HONOUR

PRESIDENTS

1892-93 Geo T Lowe
 1893-03 Wm Cecil Slingsby
 1903-06 Alfred Barran
 1906-09 Rev LS Calvert
 1909-12 Lewis Moore
 1912-19 Walter Parsons
 1919-22 WA Brigg
 1922-23 JC Atkinson
 1923-25 EE Roberts
 1925-27 F Leach
 1927-29 HH Bellhouse
 1929-30 TS Booth
 1930-31 T Gray
 1931-32 AE Horn
 1932-34 WV Brown
 1934-36 A Rule
 1936-38 JM Davidson
 1938-46 C Chubb
 1946-48 H Armstrong
 1948-50 CE Burrow
 1950-52 Davis Burrow
 1952-54 J Hilton
 1954-56 HL Stemberidge
 1956-58 S Marsden
 1958-60 TH Godley
 1960-62 FW Stemberidge
 1962-64 RE Chadwick
 1964-66 WPB Stonehouse
 1966-68 EC Downham
 1968-70 EM Tregoning
 1970-72 AB Craven
 1972-74 BE Nicholson
 1974-76 JB Devenport
 1976-78 FD Smith
 1978-80 JP Barton
 1980-82 WR Lofthouse
 1982-84 WA Linford
 1984-86 JD Armstrong
 1986-88 PC Swindells
 1988-90 AC Brown
 1990-92 DA Smithson
 1992-94 GA Salmon
 1994-96 CD Bush
 1996-98 TW Josephy
 1998-00 WCI Crowther
 2000-02 AR Chapman
 2002-04 TA Kay
 2004-06 K Aldred
 2006-08 FM Godden
 2008-10 AD Bridge
 2010 -12 PRP Chadwick
 2012 -14 M. Smith
 2014 - JC Whalley

HONORARY MEMBERS (PAST)

1892 Edward Whymper
 1892 Wm Cecil Slingsby
 1892 Clinton T Dent
 1892 8th Duke of Devonshire

1892 Charles E Matthews
 1892 The Earl of Wharnccliffe
 1893 Charles Pilkington
 1893 Charles F Tetley
 1893 Gerald W Balfour, MP
 1893 Sir W Martin Conway
 1900 Horace Walker
 1907 Sir Alfred Hopkinson
 1907 EA Martel
 1907 G Winthrop Young
 1909 Dr Norman Collie
 1909 James Anson Farrer
 1921 George Yeld
 1921 George T Lowe
 1923 Charles Scriven
 1925 Canon AD Tupper-Carey
 1939 Sydney J Farrer
 1939 Walter Parsons
 1946 Robert de Joly
 1949 Ernest E Roberts
 1955 Sir R Charles Evans
 1956 Harry Spilsbury
 1959 Fred Booth
 1959 Davis Burrow
 1965 Clifford Chubb
 1965 Jack Hilton
 1968 E. Cliff Downham
 1968 Stanley Marsden
 1968 HG Watts
 1977 HL Stemberidge
 1985 A David M Cox
 1988 Dr John Farrer
 1998 Major W Lacy
 1990 F David Smith

HONORARY MEMBERS (CURRENT)

1997 Derek Bush (m. 1968)
 2001 Alan Brown (m. 1955)
 2003 Alan Linford (m. 1957)
 2008 Iain Gilmour (m. 1990)
 2008 Gordon Humphreys (m.1951)
 2008 John Lovett (m. 1950)
 2008 Motup Goba (m. 2008)
 2010 Albert Chapman (m. 1955)
 2012 Arthur Salmon (m. 1951)
 2014 Alan Hinkes (m. 2014)
 2015 John (JR) Middleton (m.1962)

VICE PRESIDENTS

1892-93 H Slater
 1919-22 EE Roberts
 1892-93 G Arnold
 1921-23 F Constantine
 1893-94 G T Lowe
 1922-24 P Robinson
 1893-94 L Moore
 1923-25 JF Seaman
 1898-00 Rev LS Calvert
 1924-26 M Botterill
 1899-01 JC Atkinson

1925-27 L Moore
 1900-02 A Barran
 1926-28 W Villiers Brown
 1901-03 Dr Tempest Anderson
 1927-29 CE Benson
 1902-04 Dr FH Mayo
 1928-30 CE Burrow
 1903-05 W Parsons
 1929-31 WA Wright
 1904-06 JA Green
 1930-32 C Chubb
 1908-10 F Leach
 1931-33 GL Hudson
 1909-11 C Hastings
 1932-34 FS Smythe
 1910-12 A Rule
 1933-35 JM Davidson
 1911-13 JH Buckley
 1934-35 GA Potter-Kirby
 1912-14 CA Hill
 1935-37 J Hilton
 1913-19 AE Horn
 1935-37 H Humphreys
 1914-19 H Brodrick
 1937-46 A Humphreys
 1919-21 CRB Wingfield
 1938-46 H Armstrong
 1946-48 D Burrow
 1946-48 AL Middleton
 1948-49 GS Gowing
 1948-50 GC Marshall
 1949-50 HG Watts
 1950-52 S Marsden
 1950-53 J Godley
 1952-54 FS Booth
 1953-55 FW Stemberidge
 1954-56 RE Chadwick
 1955-57 GB Spenceley
 1956-58 CW Jorgensen
 1957-59 JA Holmes
 1958-60 JE Cullingworth
 1959-61 J Lovett
 1960-62 WPB Stonehouse
 1961-63 MF Wilson
 1962-64 EC Downham
 1963-65 BE Nicholson
 1964-66 JA Dossier
 1965-67 FD Smith
 1966-68 MD Bone
 1967-69 AR Chapman
 1968-70 JD Driscoll
 1969-71 J Hemingway
 1970-72 EJ Woodman
 1971-73 WA Linford
 1972-74 AJ Reynolds
 1973-75 JG Brook
 1974-76 JP Barton
 1975-77 WR Lofthouse
 1976-78 J Williamson
 1977-79 N Newman
 1978-80 J Stuttard
 1979-81 GA Salmon
 1980-82 PC Swindells

1984-86 GR Turner
 1985-87 AC Brown
 1986-88 R Cowing
 1987-89 CR Allen
 1988-90 DRH Mackay
 1990-92 WCI Crowther
 1992-94 H Robinson
 1994-96 K Aldred
 1996-98 IFD Gilmour
 1998-00 DA Hick
 2000-02 DJ Handley
 2002-04 G Champion
 2004-06 FM Godden
 2006-08 RA Kirby
 2008-10 M Borroff
 2010 -12 PA Dover
 2012 -14 HA Lomas
 2014 - RM Crowther

MEMBERS ELECTED TO THE ALPINE CLUB (CURRENT)

MB Borroff
 G Champion
 AR Chapman
 PRP Chadwick
 R Gowing
 DA Hick
 A Renton
 M Smith
 CM Goba

LIFE MEMBERS

Aldred, K
 Armstrong, JD
 Bush, CD
 Casperson, JD
 Chadwick, PRP
 Clayton, WD
 Crowther, WCI
 Denney, RJ
 Elliott, PA
 Ellis, JR
 Errington, RD
 Farrant, DJ
 Gowing, R
 Hamlin, JF
 Handley, DJ
 Harben, R
 Hemmingway, J
 Hobson, MP
 Hooper, JH
 Humphreys, H
 Humphries, RG
 Ince, GR
 Jones, G
 Josephy, TW
 Kay, TA
 Kinder, MJ
 Laing, IG
 Large, C

Lee, Richard
 Lofthouse, TR
 Lofthouse, WR
 Lomas, H
 Mackay, DRH
 Marr, AM
 Middleton, JI
 Middleton, JR
 Middleton, RM
 Oxtoby, DM
 Pomfret, RE
 Renton, K
 Roberts, PD
 Robinson, H
 Rowlands, C
 Salmon, RT
 Salmon, TW
 Short, J
 Smith, M
 Smith, SH
 Smith, TH
 Smithson, DA
 Stemberge, DW
 Stemberge, SW
 Sterland, JH
 Sykes, PW
 Tallon, A
 Tetlow, DM
 Thompson, MJ
 Varney, JA
 Whalley, JC
 Wilkinson, B
 Wilkinson, F
 Wilson, R

TREASURERS

1892-93 HH Bellhouse
 1893-99 H Slater
 1899-04 J Davis
 1904-21 AE Horn
 1921-24 C Chubb
 1924-51 BA Bates
 1951-78 S Marsden
 1978-83 D Laughton
 1984-90 JD Armstrong
 1990-98 TA Kay
 1998-12 GA Salmon
 2012- MB Trasler

AUDITORS

1967-83 GR Turner
 1983-90 JH Sterland
 1990-93 JA Schofield
 1993-97 D Lawton
 1997-14 CD Bush
 2014- RM Taylor

SECRETARIES

1892-93 JA Green
 1893-98 HH Bellhouse
 1898-09 L Moore
 1910-20 F Constantine
 1920-24 CE Burrow
 1924-29 J Buckley
 1929-46 D Burrow
 1946-52 FS Booth
 1952-56 JE Cullingworth
 1956-57 CR Allen
 1957-66 EC Downham
 1966-68 FD Smith
 1968-79 EC Downham
 1979-83 J Hemingway
 1983-93 CD Bush
 1993-96 JA Schofield
 1996-08 RG Humphreys
 2008-12 RA Kirby
 2012 - TW Josephy

ASSISTANT SECRETARIES

1894-10 F Constantine
 1910-12 JR Green
 1912-19 L Moore
 1919-24 J Buckley
 1924-26 AS Lowden
 1926-46 FS Booth
 1946-52 FW Stemberge
 1952-53 O Stonehouse
 1953-54 CIW Fox
 1954-57 EC Downham
 1957-62 J Hemingway
 1962-64 TW Salmon
 1964-68 WCI Crowther
 1968-73 FD Smith
 1973-79 J Hemingway
 1979-83 CD Bush
 1983-85 J Hemingway
 1985-92 M Smith
 1992-95 MJ Kinder

TACKLEMASTER

2010 - G Campion

EDITORS

1899-09 T Gray
 1909-20 W Anderton Brigg
 1920-49 E E Roberts
 1949-70 HG Watt
 1970-83 AB Craven
 1984-90 AC Brown
 1990-93 DJ Atherton
 1993-03 M Smith
 2003- R J Denney

HONORARY ASSISTANT EDITORS

1947-58 RE Chadwick
 1958-59 RB Whardall
 1959-60 HL Stemberge
 1960-70 AB Craven
 1970-77 DP Penfold
 1985-92 EC Downham

MEETS SECRETARY

1996-09 JH Hooper
 2015 - PA Elliott

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

2008- M. Boroff

HUTS SECRETARIES

1955-57 GB Spenceley
 (Low Hall Garth)
 1957-59 JD Driscoll
 (Low Hall Garth)
 1958-62 PR Harris
 (Lowstern)
 1959-66 FD Smith
 (Low Hall Garth)
 1962-66 FD Smith
 (Lowstern)
 1966-67 AR Chapman
 1967-82 WA Linford
 1982-91 K Aldred
 1991-96 DM Martindale
 1997- R Josephy

WARDENS

LOW HALL GARTH

1952-55 GB Spenceley
 1955-59 A Tallon
 1959-73 JD Driscoll
 1973-76 FD Smith
 1976-78 GP Postill
 1978-84 N Newman
 1986-89 WA Linford
 1986-98 FD Smith
 1998-01 D English
 2001-02 M Edmundson
 2002-07 IFD Gilmour
 2007-08 G Dootson
 2008-12 RG Humphreys
 2012-14 GA Salmon
 2014- A Renton

WARDENS LOWSTERN

1958-64 J Lovett
 1964-67 J Richards
 1967-72 CG Renton
 1972-74 JTM Teasdale
 1974-76 A Hartley
 1976-78 JA Varney
 1978-79 GP Postill
 1979-82 WCI Crowther
 1982-86 C Bauer
 1987-88 J Lovett
 1988-90 H Robinson
 1990-93 FM Godden
 1993-96 GR Salmon
 1996-00 FM Godden
 2000-05 RA Kirby
 2005-09 J Lovett
 2010-12 DB Wood
 2012- RJ Sealey

WEBMASTERS

2001-08 CG RENTON
 2008-09 A Renton
 2009- A Syme

LIBRARIANS

1899-03 F Constantine
 1903-24 JH Buckley
 1924-27 C D Frankland
 1927-29 JK Crawford
 1929-30 W Allsup
 1930-35 J Buckley
 1935-39 R Rimmer
 1946-48 HS Booth
 1948-49 DS Blair
 1949-58 HL Stemberge
 1958-62 JG Brook
 1962-71 AB Craven
 1971-79 JG Brook
 1979-96 R Harben
 1996-98 MP Pryor
 1998-03 WN Todd
 2003-12 AR Chapman
 2012-14 RG Humphreys
 2014- GA Salmon

ARCHIVIST

2009-11 JH Hooper
 2012- WA Linford

CELEBRATION JOURNAL – Progress report

Since this idea was floated about four years ago I have managed to read every journal the club ever produced. Fascinating and a story well worth retelling. When the suggestion came up for a keepsake book we decided to make this a project to celebrate the Club being in existence for 125 years. Of necessity any précis of our activities will cover matters that most members will already have read of, or heard older members relate and as such the intention is to contain text to as little as is necessary and make this more of a pictorial record based on photographs taken by our members and guests.

Over the last two years I have discussed the content with many members especially contributors and have taken a number of their ideas on board. After discussions with the committee we are to reduce the height of this edition so that it can sit on a bookcase shelf. It will not go into detail about who did what or went where, but will highlight the exotic places we have been to as a Club and as groups of members on informal meets, given very few clubs give the same emphasis on exploration and expeditions. The book will not include any routine administrative matters or meet reports which will be accommodated by adjusting the timings of the ordinary journals to be issued either side of this 'special'.

Quite obviously there are cost considerations and it has been decided that this will not be a cloth-bound hard back and it will replace two normal editions of the journal. It will come out on the exact anniversary of the founding of the Club.

However unlike our normal productions we will use digital printing as this allows photographs to be in colour and alongside any text referring to them. This has additional benefits as that allows us to do reprints if we identify a need, and would allow us to provide an E-book version if we so wish.

I was asked to include a précis of our history as this would go to other organisations and libraries.

The celebration journal will therefore have opening chapters on our history and there is a bit on our archives at the rear. The bulk of the content will be in chapters based on geographical areas and I must thank the many members who have sent in old photographs many of which have either not been published before, or not in colour. Unfortunately a lot of these have faded beyond being useable but there are plenty of good ones to go at. A number of other members have promised further material but I would point out that I really need these by next summer, preferably earlier. 2017 seems a long way away, but there is a lot of work to do. I have to get it into some sort of shape by next autumn and I will be looking for

members with particular knowledge of given locations to review chapters. I will be looking for more than a check on technical facts and typos, I will be looking for ideas to improve the commentary as I cannot start to claim to be as knowledgeable as other members on distant parts.

Michael Smith has agreed to proof-read the final publication after I have finalised the compilation bearing in mind this input, and this all takes time.

I am hoping that really good pictures with good captions will tell the story and sell the club more than words can, so the commentary will be kept as brief as reasonable to tell the story.

Index of recent articles/reports which can provide reference material for future trips.

Issue 20, Series 13
Winter 2015 includes:

Lozère, France
China caving
Bulgaria
Climbing in Kalymnos
Mountains of Mourne

Issue 19, Series 13
Summer 2015 includes:

China caving
Bulgaria, climbs & caves
Morocco, snow and ice
Almeria, Spain
Haut Languedoc, France

Issue 18, Series 13
Winter 2014 includes:

Turkmenistan
Greenland
Peru
Biancograt, Switzerland

Issue 17, Series 13
Summer 2014 includes:

Chamonix to Zermatt
Cycling in Keilder
Malta & Gozo
Calp, Costa Blanca
Walking the length of Pyrenees

Issue 16, Series 13
Winter 2013 includes:

Baya California, Whales
Mulanje Mts, Malawi Trekking

Trekking in Haute Savoie
The Mysterious Mrs Johnson
Ironman Eventing

Issue 15, Series 13
Summer 2013 includes:

Chachapoyas, Peru
Pontasina, Switzerland
Walking on La Palma
Early caving
Ilkley Moor

Issue 14 Series 13
Winter 2012 includes:

Oman and its Karst
Treks in the Écrins
Mera Peak, Nepal
France, The Vercours

Issue 13 Series 13
Summer 2012 includes:

Turkey, Rock climbing
Ireland, cycling & hillwalking
China, caving

Issue 14 Series 13
Winter 2011 includes:

Oman Kirst
Treks in the Écrins, France
Mera Peak, Nepal
The Vercours, France

Issue 13 Series 13
Summer 2012 includes:

Rock climbing in Turkey
Activities in Ireland

Caving in China
Three Counties Pot

Issue 12 Series 13
Winter 2011 includes:

The Monte Rosa Circuit
Climbing in the Haute Savoie
Use of redundant quarries
Cecil Slingsby (background)

Issue 11 Series 13
Summer 2011 includes:

Rock climbing in New Zealand
Bolivia Expedition
Trekking in the Khumbu
On snow shoes in France
Climbing in Spain

Issue 10 Series 13
Winter 2010 includes:

Canoeing across Canada
Yosemite, California
Bolivia, Quimsa Cruz Range
Britain's three peaks from
Barmouth by boat
Bom Jesus de Lapa , Brazil
Yorkshire Three Peaks by Ski

Issue 9 Series 13
Summer 2010 includes:

The Vercors, France
Caves & Karst of Brazil
Trekking in Sikkim
Australia, walking & wildlife
Pulking on Svalbard
Condors, Peru

Issue 8 Series 13**Winter 2009 includes:**

Caving in the Levant
(Lebanon & Syria)
Ice climbing in Norway
Kalymnos Rock Climbing
Tramping etc New Zealand
Stubaital, Austria
El Chorro, Spain

Issue 7 Series 13**Summer 2009 includes**

Images of Lhakang
Socotra Island
The Snow Leopard
New Caledonia
Morocco, Anti Atlas

Issue 6 Series 13**Winter 2008 includes:**

Early Gliding
Southern Iran
Images of Bhutan
Fengshan, China –Caves & Karst
Lhakang Expedition
History of caving in N Pennines

Issue 5 Series 13**Summer 2008 includes:**

Mapping of South Georgia
The early days of Skiing
Climbing Saint-Jeannet, France
Ice pack crossing Spitzbergen
Caves & karst in Libya
Trekking in Bhutan

Issue 4 Series 13**Winter 2007 includes:**

A history of Yorkshire Rock
Telemarking with Pulks, Norway
Gunung Ledang, Malaysia
Jade Dragon Snow Mountain China
Skye
Oparara Basin, New Zealand
Costa Blanca rock
Trekking in northern Pakistan

Issue 3 Series 13**Summer 2007 includes:**

19th century caving in Nidderdale
Jotenheimen, Norway
Fauna of Gran Paradiso
Bosnia
Loengpo Gang, Himalayas
China Caving
Flora of Ladakh

Issue 2 Series 13**Winter 2006 includes:**

Tafraoute, Morocco
Jamaica
China
Spitzbergen
Venezuela
Austria
California, High Sierra
Isles of Scilly
Annapurna Sanctuary
Ladakh
The Langdales, a history
Valnontey Aosta, Italy

Issue 1 Series 13**Summer 2006 includes:**

Monte Rosa
Madagascar
Skiing in Austria
Arêtes du Sapey, Lake Annecy
Japan
Ladakh
China Caving (56p. supplement)

Issue 24 Series 12**Winter 2005 includes:**

China, Great Wall
Mauritania
Skye
Kibo, Kilimanjaro
The Dolomites
Lakeland 3000s
Newby Moss Cave
History of the Lyke Wake Walk
Nepal
The Monroes

Issue 23 Series 12**Summer 2005 includes:**

Demirkazik, Turkey
Yosemite
The Sudetenland
Paine Circuit, Chile
China caving expedition
Walking in Nidderdale
North York Moors
Wanderings in Scotland

Issue 22 Series 12**Winter 2004 includes:**

The US High Sierra & Appalachians
Caves in Ethiopia
Early exploration of Alum Pot
The history of Carabiners
Caving Tian'e, Guangxi, S W China

High level walking in Scotland

The Lakes

The French Alps

Issue 21 Series 12**Summer 2004 includes:**

Caves & Karst of Madagascar
The History of Dunald Mill Hole
Erta Ale & The Danakil
Sailing off Croatia
Walking Morecambe Bay
Climbing on Clogwyn
Sardinia

Issue 20 Series 12**Winter 2003 includes:**

Activities in Mongolia
Crete
Galloway
Ireland
Switzerland
The Prehistory of Saddleworth

Issue 19 Series 12**Summer 2003 includes:**

Drakensberg Trek
Fong Yen, China
Alderley Edge Mines
Sardinia
Ben Alder
The Haute Savoie

Issue 18 Series 12**Winter 2002 includes:**

Hidden Valleys China Caves
Project
Pic Du Midi D'Ossua,
Activities in Wales
The Scottish Highlands
Dartmoor.
The John Muir Trail
Sailing a Square Rigger

Issue 17 Series 12**Summer 2001 includes:**

John Muir Trail full report
Morocco Expedition Report
Madagascar caves
Lundy
Newby Moss Sink
La Meije

Issue 16 Series 12**Summer 2001 includes:**

Nanda Devi Inner Sanctuary
John Muir Trail
Skye
Sinai
Scafell

Issue 15 Series 12**Summer 2001 includes:**

Guangxi Caves 2000 Expedition
A cave in Palawan and 3 in Laos
The Bradford Caving Community
a century ago
Fantan B
Gondogoro La
The Karakoram

Issue 14 Series 12**Winter 2000 includes:**

The Corbetts Spring Bank 2000
Svalbard
Ingleborough Cave Box
and Giggleswick School
Mount Kinabalu in Rainy Season

Issue 13 Series 12**Summer 2000 includes:**

Valleys of the Assassins, Iran
Rambling Australia, 1975 to 1999
Hiking in the South-West USA
Kohl Larsen Plateau, South Georgia
Orion Face Direct, Ben Nevis

Issue 12 Series 12**Winter 1999 includes:**

Cordilleras Cocapata
Real, Bolivia
Table Mountain,
Weissmies
The Lagginhorn
The Julian Alps
Lundy
The Cullin
Kanchenjunga
Seana Bhraigh

Issue 11 Series 12**Summer 1999 includes:**

Catamite Hole
Macedonian Caves
Blue Mountain Peak, Jamaica

Issue 10 Series 12**Winter 1998 includes:**

Iceland Expedition Report
Cycling in the Dolomites
Goyden Pot, Eli Simpson &
Pudsey Rambling Club

Issue 9 Series 12**Summer 1998 includes:**

Climbing in Wales
The Cullin
Knoydart
Bulgaria
South Africa
Australia
The Himalaya
Life and times of E E Roberts
Gaping Gill

Issue 8 Series 12**Winter 1997 includes:**

Telemarking on Piz Bernina
Andalsnes, Norway
Bungle Bungle Massif,
N W Australia
Volcanoes, Sulawesi, Indonesia
Mountain of God, Tanzania
Caving in the Dales
The Eastern Cairngorms
Trekking the Khumbu, Nepal

Issue 7 Series 12**Summer 1997 includes:**

Roumania in winter
Irish potholes
Caving in Oman
Monte Baldo, Italy
Cave exploration, Trou de Ver
France
Exploring Iceland

Issue 6 Series 12**Winter 1996 includes:**

Roumania
Easter Island
The Tatras, Poland
Exploring Chile
Hill walking in the Canaries
Darien gap, Panama/Colombia

Issue 5 Series 12**Summer 1996 includes:**

Dorje Lakpa, Nepal
Eastern Greenland
Cueva del Gato, Spain
Paragliding over Tenerife

Issue 4 Series 12**Winter 1995 includes:**

Hardangervidda, Stoltostinden
and Hurrungane, Norway
Swedish Lapland
The English Lakes
The Mönch, Switzerland
Rock climbing, S E Spain
Elidir, N Wales
Caving Guatemala

Issue 3 Series 12**Summer 1995 includes:**

Annapurna & Langtang
Kamchatka, Russia
The 'Moon' Gogarth
Newfoundland

Issue 2 Series 12**Winter 1994 includes:**

Lofoten, Norway
Mont Blanc
Fisherfield & Letterewe trek
Dorje Lakpa Expedition, Nepal
Sea cliffs climbing, Cornwall

Issue 1 Series 12**Summer 1994 includes:**

Climbing the Geita, Norway
Descent of Gouffre Berger, France
Bolivia Expedition
Sulphur mines, Java
Nepal Expedition



The Club's rules and bye-laws are printed in issue 11 of series 13 of the Journal, Summer 2011

The aims of the Club are to organise walking, mountaineering and skiing excursions; to encourage the exploration of caves and pot-holes; to conduct expeditions to remote parts of the planet; the pursuit of other outdoor activities and to gather and promote knowledge of natural history, archaeology, geology, folklore and other kindred subjects.

Additional copies of the journals can be provided at cost whilst stocks last.

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The current series 13 of the journals goes back to Summer 2006. Series 12 was published under the title of the 'Yorkshire Rambler' and goes back to summer 1994. Both these series are held in electronic form.

Earlier journals can be accessed for information and go back to the formation of the club in 1892

Articles and items appearing in Chippings, Natural History and Obituaries are written and / or compiled by the Editor unless otherwise attributed.

The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the YRC or its Officers.

Deadlines for material for the journals are June 15th & December 15th

THE YRC

**The Yorkshire Ramblers Club
Established 1892**



The Mountaineering, Exploration and Caving Club

www.yrc.org.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/yrcuk>

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Tim Josephy
Secretary@YorkshireRamblers.org.uk**

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