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Obtainable from:

The Grampian Speleological Group  
8 Scone Gardens  
EDINBURGH EH8 7DQ  
(0131 661 1123)

Web Site: http://www.sat.dundee.ac.uk/~arb/gsg/

E-mail (Editorial) goon90@hotmail.com
EDITORIAL:

My, but time flies by when you don’t really think about it. To me the flowing story of the Grampian Speleological Group kind of compresses in my mind so that I assume and expect that everyone knows who or what I am talking about when some of you have hardly been in the club five minutes! For example, amazing to reflect that the Newsletter - younger than the Bulletin - is now forty years old. It’s probably why I talk about deep pots effortlessly bottomed in the early 1960s, of 30 metre ladders regularly climbed without lifelines and other routine caving exploits which today I find hard to replicate, conveniently forgetting the 40-odd intervening years that have taken their toll. My mind is willing but the battered flesh (what’s left of it!) is weak.

Even so, a lifetime editing this Bulletin and remembering most of what I have written in it did not prepare me for the revelation that there are long-standing members of the GSG who are unaware that I founded the club. I thought I had sufficiently bored people with the story but, this being the end of the silly season and me with no particular rant to declaim, I shall indulge myself by rehearsing matters once again.

My interest in caving derived first and foremost from reading epic accounts by Casteret, Guy de Lavour and Jean Cadoux. As a penniless school leaver I could not get to real caves easily but having a girlfriend in South Wales resulted in a trip into Agen Allwedd with Cardiff University in 1959 (while the system was still fresh and under explored). Next, chauffeured down to Settle by my father, I made my first forays into Yorkshire pots with the British Speleological Association. This was real rope ladder and goon suit caving, but inconveniently expensive as I travelled to and from the Dales by train.

Back in town, a solid, non-cavernous landscape led to my pretending in all sorts of stupid places, attics, cellars, sewers, virtually anything underground. Friends were dragged along until suddenly the light bulb switched on in my head. A group possessed of driving licences, if no car, could hire transport and share costs. Brilliant!

I thought the whole thing through, filched a constitution from the B.S.A. and called some friends round to my house. Moved by my deathless rhetoric they agreed to my ‘big idea’ and on Wednesday 14th June 1961 the G.S.G. was born. There were five of us: myself, George and Michael Alden, Alec Conner and Frank Kenyon. Only I remain associated with the club. I even chose the name. Why ‘Grampian’ when there are few caves there, I hear you cry? Because (a) it sounded suitable rugged and Scottish, avoiding naff titles like the Edinburgh Caving Club or the Scottish Speleological Society, (b) GSG makes for a balanced monogram which I then hoped could be drawn in a bat shape (never happened) and (c) no other caving club had these initials. I believe this is still the case.

Of course, like all clubs, the GSG has passed through doldrums, times when I felt like a one-man army, and others when I seriously contemplated leaving. But I stuck it out, sustained by a pride in my creation. As soon as it could run without the wheels falling off I stepped back from executive office and it is due to the astute stewardship of others that we now occupy the high ground in British caving.

I hope newer members will appreciate my pride and sense of history. Even if I have seen it all before, I do care, passionately. Most of all, I love a dedicated club person because the future lies in their hands. Whatever technological developments come along, I like to think we are a team, a community of kindred spirits. I also like to picture some members, well into their dotage, celebrating our centenary in 2061. Naturally I won’t be there, but where-ever I am, I hope you’ll raise a glass to me! Cheers.

ALAN L. JEFFREYS, Editor
It has been a busy half year, with members caving in a widespread number of locations. Although we have not been rewarded with any large discoveries, quite a few caves have been visited for the first time, and certainly much digging has taken place in Argyll and Sutherland.

**ANGUS**

In Glen Clova in July, Jim Salvona explored a fissure cave - the Witches Cave - above Loch Brandy and also spent a wet half hour looking, in vain, for the ‘Laird’s Chamber’ and ‘Hole of Weems’.

**ARGYLL**

Work in Appin commenced in April with an attempt to dig further in Albion Pot, Glen Duror but the weather was so atrocious that little was achieved, apart from partial forays into Albion Pot, Draught Caledonian and Hibernian Hole and a spectacular fluorescein dye test which revealed a very fast flowthrough to the rising by the road, encouraging for further work.

In May, John Crae undertook the sea trip to Fingal’s Cave and the same month Jim Salvona checked out sea caves at Dunollie and Kerrera near Oban. At the end of the month some progress was made in Albion Pot resulting in four metres of narrow rift choked with rubble.

July witnessed three members toiling up the hillsides of Lochgoilhead looking for a ‘Uamh Mhor’ which turned out to be an insignificant overhang. The same month there was a descent of Chamber Pot and the following month it was bottomed yet again, along with Uamh Coire Shieleach and Draught Caledonian as Prof. John Gunn and Trevor Faulkner, guided by Ivan Young, checked out Dalradian limestone systems. There was also a trip into Tyndrum Lead Mines.

**AUSTRIA**

June saw two members taking a tourist trip round the Eisriesenwelt.

**BERWICKSHIRE**

Over two weekends in July, sea caves at Petticowick were entered, as a start to a proper study of the group.

**DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY**

Sawney Bean’s Cave north of Ballantrae was explored in March. Although an imposing site and well concealed, this narrow cave was only titled in the 1970s, so has little legitimate connection to Sawney Bean (who never existed anyway!)

**EAST LOTHIAN**

Some fresh attention has been paid to caves and tunnels on the south east coast of Scotland. In March two members went into the Cove tunnels.

**FIFE**

A ‘paper chase’ practice rescue took place in Cults Mine in May. Ten members participated but the methodology proved less than satisfactory.
FRANCE

During a non-caving holiday in the Pyrenees in June, Dick Grindley visited Grotte de Niaux, Grotte de Lombrives and Grotte de Labouiche. In July, Fraser Simpson went into the Riviere Souterraine de Labouiche and Grotte Grandes Canalettes.

HEBRIDES

Dan Harries searched out Prince’s Cave near the mouth of Glen Corodale on South Uist in July, and also checked out some small caves on Eaval, North Uist (see this issue).

INVERNESS-SHIRE

Another of the club’s sporadic visits to Kishorn took place in March when Kate Janossy (GPS-less) went for a gorge walk up the river which meets the A896 at Tornapress by the junction with the road over Bealach na Ba. A few small, muddy holes were noted in attractive limestone scenery, not known if new to speleology.

On 1st June, three members carried out work at High Pasture Cave on Skye to support Steven Birch’s archaeological investigations there (see this issue).

ITALY

In March Mike O’Driscoll carried out an enjoyable cave dive in the Grotta Giusti, guided by local cavers. Warm water, four course lunch, kit of T-shirt, shorts and trainers. Well, someone’s got to do it.

KIRKCUDBRIGHT

In April three members went to Barlocco Bay in order to sort out differing lengths given in literature to the imposing caves there. (see this issue)

MIDLOTHIAN

A stroll round Vogrie Country Park near Pathhead in July revealed an interesting small hole and this was properly explored at the end of the month along with a full investigation of Monk’s Cave, a rock tunnel opposite Newbattle Abbey. Two sea caves on Inchkeith Island were entered in July, but both are only 5-6 metres in length.

PEEBLESHIRE

A proper survey of Jeanie Barrie’s Cave commenced in May. Three members managed to map as far as the slope up to the chute before unanimously voting to evacuate the system.

PERTHSHIRE

In May, Fraser Simpson carried out a (rare) solo visit to Foss Cave I and II, finding them just as wet and tight as remembered.

SOMERSET

Descents of Longwood Hole and St Cuthbert’s Swallet took place in March and in May, once again taking advantage of Easyjet flights to Bristol, a large GSG contingent invaded Mendip. There were trips to Shatter, Fairy, Hilliers and Withyhill Caves, Hunters lodge Inn Sink, Swildons Hole, St. Cuthberts, Rhino Rift, Templeton Pot and GB Cave. A good weekend all round.
SUTHERLAND

In mid-March digging continued at Rana Hole despite some self-inflicted ponding, resulting in 121 skips removed to the surface. Also in March, Dan Harries commenced a series of dives from the pool in Landslip Chamber, to try and fully understand the hydrology of this puzzling extension.

More digging in Rana in April and May saw 215 skips removed and some attempts made to direct falling water into the dig face.

At the end of June, in dismally cold weather, a practice rescue was conducted at Rana, to test the retrieval of a casualty from an awkward vertical site. A bag of rocks was substituted for a person and once the stretcher surfaced, everyone legged it back to civilisation. The next day, some filming was achieved in Claonaite, more digging carried out at Rana and an examination of Pretty Pol (see this issue). The following three days were taken up with a series of guided tours round Cnoc nan Uamh for pupils and teachers from Ullapool High School.

There was a tourist trip round ANUSC in July and another into Cnoc nan Uamh in August, followed by another dive in Landslip Chamber sump. August also saw more tourist trips into the Bone Caves, ANUSC and a sandstone rock shelter noted on Stac Pollaidh. There was a near do at Cnoc nan Uamh when a newcomer slipped on the path down valley and broke a leg rather badly. There was yet more digging in Rana in early September.

WEST LOTHIAN

In March there was a trip into Bowden Hill Mine to investigate the Chicken Run collapse, which established that said collapse is fairly long and would be a mammoth job to clear. Fortunately there are alternative routes.

Also in March, Derek Pettiglio made a solo video of Cundie Tunnel at Ratho Park. June saw Roger Galloway and Annie Audsley exploring Craigenbuck Mine, a modest pillar and stall working south of the Grangemouth refineries.

YORKSHIRE

The season in the Dales has been quite stimulating, and for the first time in many years, meets have out-numbered other areas of the UK - quite like old times!

March saw a descent of Rowten Pot and later in the month both Jingling Pot and Sell Gill Holes were bottomed.

In April, Goon undertook solo trips down Manchester Hole and Goyden Pot in dry conditions and a few days later his family strolled through How Stean Tunnel and Ton Taylor’s Cave. The same weekend there were club trips down Rift Pot and County Pot. April was rounded off with a swift pull-through down Swinsto and visits to Heron Pot and Long Churn.

At the beginning of May Pete Ireson and Dan Harris bottomed Nick Pot and crawled around Ibbeth Peril I. June saw descents of Bull Pot, Kingsdale and most of the stream caves of the Birkwith area examined and Roger and Annie joined SUSS for a trip down Penyghent Pot and another pull-through in Swinsto Hole. Goon took part in an MCG meet to Pool Sink in very dry conditions.

In July there was a meet in Swaledale, with trips into Thackthwaite Beck Cave, Scrafton Pot and Windeg Mine Caverns, and later the same month two members went to the sump in Alum Pot.
ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY (to 10.9.04)

1. BOOKS


2. CAVE SURVEYS

Hawthornden Castle, Midlothian, Underground passages
Approx. scale
Hawthornden Castle, Midlothian, Underground passages
3/5” = 1ft
(negative)
1cm = 2ft
Newbattle Abbey, Midlothian, Sewers (negative)
1” = 4ft

3. CAVING JOURNALS

Axbridge Caving Group, Journal Nov, 2003
BCRA Transactions, Cave and Karst Science Vol. 30 No.3
Vol. 31 No.1 (2003-4)
BCRA Member’s Newsletter June (2004)
Cave Diving Group, Newsletter Nos. 151,152 (2004)
Chelsea Speleological Society, Newsletter Vol. 46 Nos. 4,5,6,7 (2004)
Craven Pothole Club, Record Nos. 74,75 (2004)
Descent Nos. 177,178,179 (2004)
Die Hohle Year 54 Nos. 1,2,3 (2003)
Mendip Caving Group, Newsletter Nos. 117-126,130,131,146-8,209,210,262,274-8
(1976-1999)
Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland ‘Casbag’ No.3 (2004)
Orpheus Caving Club Newsletter Vol. 39 Nos. 1-6,7-10,11/12 (2003)
Speleologia (Italian Speleological Society) Year 24 No. 49 (2003)
Speleo‘Zin, Speleolosko Drustvo Karlovac No. 16 (2003)
Subterranea Britannica, Newsletter No.4 (2004)
4. MAPS

[The club has recently been donated a small collection of old OS maps of Scotland which may prove interesting when following up references to cave sites which have been altered by subsequent developments. A 1940 revision series of 1” maps has been held for some years, and this has been supplemented by new additions. All maps on cloth.]

OS 1” to 4 miles

Sheets 1/2: Zetland (1901)
Sheet 6: Caithness and Sutherland (1901) - with parts of sheets 3,5,8
Sheet 8: Inverness District (1903) - with parts of sheets 9,11,12 (2 copies)

OS 1/2” to a mile 1909-1910

Sheet 1: North Shetland Isles
Sheet 2: South Shetland Isles
Sheet 3: North Orkney
Sheet 4: South Orkney
Sheet 6: Tongue and Lochinver
Sheet 9: Dornoch and Cromarty
Sheet 10: North Uist
Sheet 12: Stromeferry
Sheet 13: Inverness District
Un-numbered, c. 1908: Aberdeen District
Extract, un-numbered, 1914: Kinross

Bartholomew Tourist Maps (no date)

Sheet 6: Jura and Islay
Sheet 18: Uist and Barra (2 copies)
Sheet 22: Peterhead and Banff
Sheet 23: Lewis and Harris
Sheet 27: Caithness
Sheet 28: Orkney Islands
Sheet 29: Shetland Islands

Bartholomew 1/4” Maps (no date)

Sheet 4: Glasgow and Oban (2 editions)

OS 1” to a mile, 1940 revision

Sheets 1-11,13-26,28,30-36,38-44,46,50-54,56-61,64-72,76-79,81-92

OS 6” to a mile, photo-copies of sheets dated 1900-1909

Argyllshire: Sheets: XIV N.W., XVII, S.E., XLVI, N.W., LXXIII, N.W., LXXXVI, N,W & S.W., LXXXVII, N.W., XCVII, S.E., XCVIII, S.E., C, N,E, CXXXVII, S.W., CXLI, S.E., CXLVIII, N.W.,
5. **CAVING ABSTRACTS, GUIDES ETC.**

Hamer, John L. (1951) The Falls and Caves of Ingleton
CRO: Rescues of 2002 (no date) No. 949
Cave Leaflets:
- Les Grottes Isturitz et Oxocelhaya
- Les Grottes de Sare
- La Grande Caverne de Bedeilhac
- Grotte Prehistorique de la Vache
- Riviere Souterraine de Labouiche
- Balankanche, Yucatan
- Lotun, Yucatan
Guide: Les Gorges de Kakuetta (no dtae)
France Pays des Grottes. Tourisme Souterrain (no date)
Abstract: Twenty-first Century Troglodyte. A. Breward.F.T. Magazine No. 59 (12.6.04) No. 953

6. **SLIDES, FILM ETC.**

Video No.
41. Ace in the Hole (Film based on Floyd Collins Rescue. Kirk Douglas etc. 1951)

DVD

CD-ROM

MEET REPORTS:

CAVES ON NORTH AND SOUTH UIST

Prince’s Cave, South Uist. NF 8335 3130

Sunday 18th July 2004. Potential candidate for the record for the highest ratio of time spent walking to the entrance in relation to time required to reach the end of the cave - surpasses even the impressive record set by St George’s Cave in Assynt. The walk to the entrance takes around two and a half hours over peat bogs, marshes and a low range of hills and time required to reach the end of the cave is of the order of one or two seconds.

It is near the mouth of Glen Corodale, a couple of hundred metres from the eastern shore of South Uist. There is a ruined settlement of ‘black house’ style buildings close to the cave and there is a broken down dry stone wall part way across the cave entrance so it was presumably used for storage or as an animal shelter when the settlement was inhabited. The cave is set in the base of a low (~ 5m) rock cliff and consists of an approximately circular alcove some 3m in diameter. The rock within the cave seems to contain some iron mineral as it is very rust stained. There were three decomposing sheep within the alcove so I did not enter because all parts can be seen from the entrance.

Cave on Eaval, North Uist. NF 9057 5967

Sunday 25th July, 2004. The cave is on the eastern flank of Eaval in North Uist. It is in a gully that runs approximately south-east down the slope of the hill. The south side of the gully is formed by a small rock cliff (~5-10m high) and the cave is set into this cliff. The entrance is 3 to 4m wide and several metres high. The entrance is surrounded by nettles and the floor of the cave slopes up steeply from the marshy gully to the rear of the cave some 6 or 7 metres from the entrance. There are various other small alcoves in the cave walls and in the area close to the entrance. It has obviously been used as a roost site for pigeons for many years and several pigeons flew from the cave when I entered it. There are nests in the alcoves, the walls are coated in guano and the cave floor was composed of thick deposits of dry guano. Two pairs of Peregrine Falcons were seen in the area and the cave probably provides a good refuge for the pigeons from Peregrine predation.

Dan Harries

-------oOo-------
After ten months of daydreaming, research and planning the moment had arrived. I tied off the dive line to a convenient rock on the bed of the small, clear stream and inched my way into the underwater passage beyond.....

I had first seen the small rising at Beinn an Dubhaich, located in the Allt nan Leac Valley, during a caving and walking holiday on Skye in the summer of 2003. I was immediately interested in the resurgence and when I discovered that it had not been pushed to a conclusion I decided to return with my diving gear.

In fact, the rising had been dived twice before by Trevor Faulkner in 1974(1) and by Alan Jeffreys in 1980(2) and these were the only two recorded cave dives on the island. Both divers reported finding a large underwater passage and one diver mentioned a side passage. For various reasons both dives had been terminated before the sump had been passed.

Laying face down I wriggled feet-first down a low, bouldery slope trailing the dive line behind me until, after a metre or so, I felt that the passage was large enough to turn around. Now facing the right way I found myself in a passage about a metre high and a couple of metres wide. The ceiling and walls were coated in a layer of fine silt, which quickly reduced the visibility when disturbed. I finned slowly forward examining the walls as I went and after just 5.5 metres I found a passage coming in from the left. I followed this passage and sensed that it was heading upwards. A couple of metres later I surfaced in a low airspace continuation. Ducking under a lip of rock I emerged into a bigger passage and to my right a low, dry tunnel could be seen leading off.

Immediately in front of me was a mud bank rising from the sump. Unfortunately, I was laden with large diving bottles and fins and I was unable to climb out of the sump and into open passage. Disappointed, I slid back into the water and followed my dive line back into the main underwater tunnel. I penetrated this passage, in increasingly worsening visibility, to a point some 23 metres from the dive base. A quick squirm forward reduced the visibility to nil and I turned for the surface in water the colour and consistency of liquid chocolate.

Safely back on the surface I pondered what I’d seen. Where did the side passage go, and more importantly had I made the connection to Beinn an Dubhaich Cave?

I dived the rising again a short while later, this time without fins and wearing one, smaller, tank. I quickly regained the airspace and this time I was able to climb the mud bank into the passage beyond. Removing the tank I crawled along the low passage until it enlarged to hands and knees proportions.

A short distance later a larger passage with deep water was encountered. Named the Caledonian Canal, it was a straight passage formed along a joint and contained thigh deep crystal clear water. To the right it closed down almost immediately but left (upstream) it continued for 10 metres until another sump was reached. Using my legs I located a large underwater passage however, the smooth walls meant that there was nothing to belay the dive line to. I headed back to the surface.

I next visited the terminal chamber of Beinn an Dubhaich Cave. Here the sump was found to be similar in nature to the sump discovered at the end of the Caledonian Canal and I felt confident that a connection could be made. I fetched my tank, tied off the dive line and plunged in.
Although short - only 6 metres - the dive proved ‘interesting’ without fins and with the thick deposits of mud on the floor removing the visibility instantly to nothing. I fumbled my way through and emerged, relieved, back in the Caledonian Canal, completing the connection between cave and resurgence.

The following day I investigated the sumps at Uamh Claon (Slant Cave) and Uamh Sgeinne (Cave of Knives). Disappointingly, all sumps were found to be choked with loose material and no progress could be made.

My final dive on the island took place in Uamh an Ard Achadh (High Pasture Cave) and produced some unexpected results. My intention was to dive the downstream sump, however when I reached it I discovered an 0.15 metre high puddle obstructed by a flake and I headed out.

As I strolled up the streamway I noticed a pool of water formed on a corner of the stream. Splashing around I noted that the water was making an interesting gloopy noise, suggesting that the pool was in fact a sump (or duck). I slid into the pool feet first until I was chin deep in water. I located an underwater continuation and excitedly I ran back to the entrance ladder to collect my diving gear.

The dive line was belayed to a rock in the streamway and I pushed my way into the sump. Initially the passage was constricted but shoving some large rocks aside made progress easier and I found the passage to be a small tube that meandered around. After seven metres I turned round, conscious of the fact that I only had a single tank and that the sump was constricted. This was not a place that I wanted to have an epic in!

The interesting thing about this final dive is that the sump is not shown on the survey and is heading away from the main body of the cave. It is my intention to return to Skye in the Autumn when the midges have disappeared.

---oOo---

References:

TWO TINY SUTHERLAND CAVES

By Alan L. Jeffreys

1. Pretty Pol.

During research for the new ‘Caves of Assynt’, my literature trawl led me to re-visit caving reports from the 1950s. One in particular threw up some interesting information - so relevant in fact that I reproduced it in the last Bulletin but one.(1)

Apart from pre-empting Bob Batty’s work in Uamh an Jedi (nee Spider’s Squeeze) the report also mentioned ‘Pretty Pol’, a small hole on the opposite bank of Allt Poll an Droighinn, upstream of Jedi. It was first explored in 1959 by J. ‘Spider’ Hawthorne who pronounced it some 26 feet long and christened it, regretfully, Pretty Pol. During the intervening decades I doubt very much if this cave has witnessed more than a whisper of caving traffic.

I first noted the entrance in July 2003 while examining Uamh an Jedi and was not surprised to find only one member (Martin Hayes) who knew of it, but most surprised that it had not been noticed during all the digging trips in 2003. Accompanied by Boffin-the-dog I returned fully kitted on Sunday 27th June 2004, determined to explore all it had to offer.

Lying in the long grass some two thirds up the steep river bank, the hole is only visible from the north side of the river. Fortunately said river is easily fordable at this point. The entrance is a comfortable triangle beside a young birch tree, opening straight into the side of an angular passage to form a cavity about a body size long and wide. Thin flakes of breakdown litter the floor. To the left (upvalley) a two metre long tunnel, liberally strewn with flat blocks, appears to be choked off with smaller debris. No progress seems worthwhile. Some flowstone decorates the wall opposite the entrance.

To the right a large slab, whose presence on the floor explained the entrance, lay across access to an inclined passage disappearing into the gloom. To pass this constriction, via a tight triangle, proved a trifle committing. In stages, I divested myself of battery and belt, then tape waist length and just managed to force the short obstacle before having to remove my oversuit.

Beyond, I slid to the bottom of an inclined, wedge-shaped tunnel containing a damp dirt floor and some primitive flowstone and stalactites. Four metres on a boulder choke sealed the cave. Any voids (and they are small) dipped to the right and might be clearable given sufficient motivation. However, at river level outside - perhaps five metres below - a choked joint suggests there is a connection.

After struggling back to a quizzical dog, I pronounced the cave to be eight metres in length. No surface features indicate a swallow point and the system seems to have formed tectonically, perhaps by undermining of the limestone beds by Allt Poll an Droighinn.
2. Bernie’s Bolt Hole.

This extremely small hole was happened across by Bernie, a Jack Russell belonging to John and Erica, caretakers of Glenbain Cottage. By them it was drawn to Ivan Young’s attention in April 2003 but he did not enter, being dressed in surface gear. It was not until Monday 28th June 2004 that a full examination was achieved.

This cave too is a small grassy hole located by descending the steep slope directly opposite the west end of Glenbain Cottage until a single tree is reached. Just to the left of the trunk (looking upvalley) a trickle of water issues from an entrance about half a metre in diameter. This lies about 10-15 metres above the Traligill River.

Four of us, Dave Warren, Ivan Young, the author and guest Martin Grass descended through thickets of bracken, whereat I made the first entry. Lying full length I discovered I was more or less the same length as the passage. It extends at the same dimensions to a clean-washed choke, water dribbling from a tiny, impenetrable triangle on the right at roof level. All the others took a look, Ivan bringing out a boulder from the end as a contribution to future digs.

Ivan Young outside the entrance to Bernie’s Bolt Hole, June, 2004. Photo: A. Jeffreys
A word to readers whose speleological inclinations compel them to visit sea caves: tide-tables. Consulting a set of these could have been useful preparation for this expedition to the shores of the Solway Firth but, as it turned out, would probably have made little difference to the outcome.

This journey was instigated - as are so many to Scotland’s lesser known cavities - by Jim Salvona. He wanted to follow up a reference to vast 75m long sea caves at Barlocco (1), and with abandoned barytes mines nearby it was a trebly tempting area to investigate. He soon persuaded Peter Ireson and me to join him on another day trip to Dumfriesshire and Galloway. On the previous occasion we’d searched for and found three mines one of which was still open (2). This time we had one set of sea caves and two mines to locate.

There Comes a Tide...

One Thursday in early April, Peter drove Jim and I past Dumfries and through Dalbeattie and Auchencairn to park at a small public car park near the shore at Roscarrel Bay (NGR:- NX 801492). To both east and west along the shore are clusters of holiday homes ranging from dilapidated corrugated iron huts to bijou bungalows.

Our first goal was to find the sea caves. A walk westwards, past the holiday chalets then along the cliffs, arrived at the rubbish-strewn Barlocco Bay. Here the rising tide prevented progress at beach level, and we realised that it might baulk exploration when we did reach the caves. We continued along the cliffs for a kilometre and descended to the beach when we reached the stream just before Orroland Lodge. Despite nearing high tide it was easy to walk over the rocks almost all the way back to where ‘Caves’ is marked on the 1:50,000 Landranger map (3). Here we found a wide overhang over a shallow indentation that possibly almost qualifies as a shelter cave (NX 78710 46660). Steep cliffs and deep water prevented any further progress at sea level, so Pete and I fought our way through sprouting brambles along what possibly almost qualifies as a path to the top of the cliff. Jim returned more circuitously finding a short (5m) inconspicuous sea cave en route.

After lunch and the shocking discovery by Peter that the electrified cliff-top fence we’d just clambered over was live, we walked east alongside the fence and above the presumed location of the caves. We came to a stile over the cliff-top fence, and, using it, found easy grass slopes leading down to several rocky spits. These allowed us to walk out to sea and view the cliffs from a position about 50m offshore. To the west of the spits were two large semi-circular entrances I estimated to be about 30m wide and 15m high. The nearer cave (NX 78710 46660) stretched into the gloom with no beach visible to the eye. I took a digital photograph which with a little enhancement back home was encouraged to reveal a pebble and rubbish-strewn beach. Total length of the cave is unknown - we’d have needed a boat to see directly into it - but about 20 to 30m could...
be seen. The other large entrance (estimated NX 7862 4662) was floored by inclined strata which could be
seen rising for about 15 to 20m. Between the two large entrances there is a smaller sea cave (estimated NX
7865 4663) that appeared to be about 5m wide.

Peter had descended the next spit to the east and
found two more openings, one to either side and
both with deep water swirling into them. When I
got there the cave to the west (NX 7879 4669) had a low triangular opening about 3m wide at sea
level, that to the east (NX 7081 4672) was about
12m high and 4m wide, though from my viewpoint
the roof appeared to descend rapidly to about 4m.

The OS Landranger map (3) marks the positions of three
caves. These were reasonably in agreement with the measured (GPS) positions of the two large semi-circu-
lar entrances and this last cave (Figure 2). We did walk back along Barlocco beach to examine an opening
in the eastern end of the cliffs where a vertical joint has been eroded. High tide stopped us getting to it, but
it didn’t appear to be deep. It heads back towards the
sea but no daylight was visible and a connection to the
previous cave is unlikely.

![The White (left) and Black (right) Caves of Barlocco](image1)

Photo: I. Young

![Enhanced view of inside of Black Cave](image2)

Photo: I. Young

![Peter Ireson outside easternmost cave](image3)

Photo: I. Young

![Figure 2: Comparison of cave positions with those marked on Landranger map](image4)
Black or White?

After our perambulations we had seen five entrances in the Barlocco Heugh (heugh = cliff); two large and semi-circular, two small and low, and one rectangular at the head of a deep channel. But which was the Black Cave and which was the White? Searching out references using Caves of Scotland (1) and the internet found several accounts. The most detailed is included in the report of a field meeting to Rerrick Parish on the 7th May 1881 by the local Scientific, Natural History and Antiquarian Society (4). I found a copy in the National Library of Scotland:

On the wild wave-beaten coast the remarkable Caves of Barlocco were visited, the party being let down the cliffs by means of ropes and ladders furnished by the tenant of Barlocco, whose sons assisted in the process. The Black Cave, which is 256 feet long, 90 wide and 40 in height, was first entered. It is a vaulted chamber, floored with shingle, and huge boulders are strewn about it. At the extreme upper end there is a little space above high-water mark whereon numerous rock pigeons breed. The Rerwick shore is now almost the only place in Galloway where these birds nest and bring forth their young. The White Cave was next entered. It is perhaps the most wonderful natural formation in Galloway. The “gateway” is a vast Gothic arch through which you pass into a magnificent temple “not made with hands.” The flooring of the cave is composed of pieces of granite rounded to pebbles by the attrition of the tides, and the roof, which rises gradually, was decorated with the luxurious fronds of Sea Spleenwort. The length of the cave is 252 feet; the greatest width, 190 feet; height, 60 feet. Nobody who has not visited these caves can form any idea of their grandeur. They are not inferior to Fingal’s, we are told, in any particular, except that of the regularity of the strata forming the sides of the latter.

From these dimensions only the two largest caves seen would qualify as the Black and White Caves, though both entrances appeared similar in size to my eye rather than one being double the width of the other. Perhaps the White Cave widens once inside. Another report (5) describes the use of the Black Cave by a smuggler (date unspecified but probably late 18th century):

...the Barlocco caves include the vast but well-hidden Black Cave and White Cave; the Black Cave was used by an intrepid smuggler called ‘Wild’ Wat Neilson. The mouth of the cave is vast - a hundred feet wide and fifty high - and though constantly filled by the sea even at low tide, sailing into it is a simple matter only on a calm day. Watt was renowned for his ability to enter the cave in any weather...

Taking these two accounts together identifies the more westerly of the two largest caves as the White Cave with that to the east the Black Cave, since deep water runs into it. It would also appear black from a distance unlike the other cave which has a steeply rising rock floor and might appear light by comparison. Another old description can be found in the New Statistical Account of Scotland (6):

Two caverns upon the Barlocco shore, called the White and Black Coves, are particularly worthy of notice. The entrance to the former is as lofty as the mast of some great Ammiral, and its vast extent reminds the spectator of the airy and echoing halls of Fingal in Staffa. The Black Cove is of an opposite and gloomy character, and its dark caverns would form no unfit habitation for the Spirit of the Solway.

This could be read to confirm the other accounts with the deep water in the Black Cave definitely lending it a different character to the White. So far all appears to be in agreement; however one apparently contradictory positioning appears on the 1854 map of the area (7). Both Black Cove and White Cove are named on it, and they appear further east than the two large entrances. There is also a Black Neuk on the map that may refer to the last cavity we saw: it’s certainly in the right place. I superimposed the modern and historical maps and transferred the cave symbols to the 1854 map. While both names appear nearest to the circle marking the easternmost cave, is it possible that Black Cove refers to the narrow entrance at the head of the channel and White Cove to the large entrance over deep water? Or, more likely, did the surveyors just misplace
I mentioned that the day’s agenda also included two abandoned mines. We finished with just enough time for Jim to find the nearer mine completely blocked. Some later research discovered that the other was similarly sealed and we hadn’t missed anything by cutting short our itinerary. (8)

So a day of mixed fortune: we found the caves, but couldn’t get close enough to enter them. A return trip either with ropes or with a boat in calm weather is needed to explore them and verify their dimensions. While the measurements quoted in 1881 might be right, I’d like to see them confirmed by a modern survey. Do we have any sailors in the GSG who would like to volunteer?

References

(1) Oldham, T. (1975) *The Caves of Scotland*
(3) Ordnance Survey *Landranger 84 - Dumfries*, 1:50000 scale
(4) Dumfriesshire & Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society; *Transactions*, Series II, Volume 3, page 61 (Vol 3 is 1880-83)
(5) Platt, Richard (1991); *Smugglers Britain*; Cassell (out of print) full text and some pictures and maps available on the Internet at:-
  http://www.smuggling.co.uk/web/text/smug65.htm
(6) *New Statistical Account of Scotland* (1845) available on-line at http://edina.ac.uk/statacc/
(7) Digital historical map archive; http://www.old-maps.co.uk
(8) Young, I. (2004); *More Mine Hunting in Galloway*, Bull GSG 4th Series 2(2) p.36

FAVE CAVES

It is an advantage having access to the complete club archives if I require something futile to fill up an odd half page of the Bulletin. Here is just such an item. I fancied finding out which caves have been the most popular since proper records commenced in 1963 (excluding Sutherland where choices are narrower). So here are the top fifteen (as recorded in logbooks and bulletins):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cave Name</th>
<th>No. of club visits 1963-2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kingsdale Master Cave</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swildons Hole</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanie Barrie’s Cave</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancaster-Easegill System</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninelums Mine</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uamh nan Clag-ionn</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireby Fell Cavern</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swinsto Hole</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calf Holes/Browgill Cave</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunset Pot</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar Pot</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogof Fynnon Dhu</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marble Steps Pot</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Cuthbert’s Swallet</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpsons Pot</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alan L. Jeffreys
A BEC/GSG member's view of this year's expedition to NE India. Refer to Belfry Bulletin 115 and GSG bulletin October 2003 for background information.

"U Ramhah died on the hill-side alone and unattended, as the wild animals die, and there was no one to regret his death. When the members of his clan heard of his death they came in a great company to perform rites and to cremate his body, but his body was so big that it could not be cremated, and so they decided to leave it till the flesh rotted, and to come again to gather his bones, but it was found that there was no urn large enough to contain them, so they piled them together on the hill-side until a large urn would be made. While the making of the urn was in progress there arose a great storm, and a wild hurricane blew from the north, which carried away the bleached bones of U Ramhah, and scattered them all over the south borders of the Khasi Hills, where they remain to this day in the form of lime-rocks, the many winding caves and crevices of which are the cavities in the marrowless bones of the giant"

Rafy, 1920 (Pinched from Daniel Gebauer's magnificent South Asia Cave Registry, without his permission but with grateful thanks.)

February 6th saw the Mendip contingent - Tony Boycott (BEC, GSG) Jayne Stead (GSG) and the writer joining Simon Brooks (OCC, GSG) for the flight from Heathrow to Calcutta via Amman and Bombay. In Calcutta we met Joe Duxbury (GSS) and Jonathan Davies (GSG) before flying on to Guwahati where we were met by Gregory Diengdoh (MA). A Sumo ride to Shillong followed and here we found Peter Ludwig (LVHOO-Austria), Thomas Arbenz (SNT-Switzerland), Brian MacCoitir, Robin Sheen and Quentin Cooper (BC-Ireland), Damien Linder (SCJ-Switzerland) and the Meghalayan Adventurers; Brian Kharpran Daly (MA, GSG), Shelley Diengdoh, Dale and Ronnie Mawlong, Brandon Blein and others, plus their relatives and friends. Beer, Chinese/Indian food and more beer set the seal on the start of the expedition.

On the 9th several of us hired a Sumo jeep and headed for the village of Shnongrim in the Jaintia Hills of eastern Meghalaya - scene of past glories and with more to come in the next three weeks. Tents were set up on arrival as our purpose-built bamboo camp, like a Spanish hotel, had yet to be constructed.

Our caving started in earnest next day with the discovery of an extensive pothole system only some four minutes walk from camp! Krem Krang Wah (Lower Sloping Ground Cave) was a fine series of Yorkshire-style pitches and canyon passages with a miserable streamway at the bottom. Brian M. and Quentin undertook the rigging and did a grand job, their skills being honed to perfection by the end of the expedition. The adjacent Krem Krang Riat (Upper Sloping Ground Cave) was tied into the system and the impressive 80m deep Tiger Mouth Pot - part of Krem Krang Wah - also connected to eventually yield 2252.22 metres of sporting and attractive cave. Thomas and Peter, later in the week joined by Simon and anyone else that they could "press", recommenced work in Krem Synranges Labbit 1 and 2 (Bat Shelter Cave) eventually surveying 4332.56 metres to give a combined system length of 5986.45 metres.
During the next few days more of the team arrived at camp including Imogen Furlong (SUSS), Andy Harp and Nicola Bayley (RFODCC), Mark Silo (OCC) and Danny Burke (BC).

On the 14th some of us had a "rest day" and were driven to the base of the ridge to visit an ancient, dry resurgence cave recently discovered near Lamyrsiang village by the locals and featured in the Meghalayan media. Krem Bam Khnei (Rat Eating Cave) was surveyed for 738 metres to a massive and impenetrable boulder choke. Many of its beautiful flowstones and gours were covered in Hindi graffiti and rubbish was strewn everywhere as, due to its ease of access and lengthy, roomy galleries, it has become a subterranean religious shrine for immigrant coal miners working nearby. It must once have been a stunning system of deep and clear canals but now, alas, it is doomed. We were glad that the terminal choke was impassable but were very impressed by the speleological potential in this area. Despite the mess we were filmed and interviewed in this cave by a team from Doordarshan Kenora - the Indian government cable TV network - and so I had the dubious privilege of appearing in both British and Indian caving documentaries filmed just a few weeks apart.

With Krem Krang Wah finished we dropped the impressive 20m pot of Krem Bir (Mud Cave) in the hope of entering the continuation of the ongoing Krem Synrang Ngap (Bee Shelter Cave - see BB 115 & GSG Bull. Oct. 2003). This latter, extremely promising cave never got visited this year due to other projects so has been left for the 2005 Grampian contingent. Krem Bir unfortunately dropped into an enormous, unstable boulder choke - part of which was pushed into a short section of ancient fossil tunnels ending in more awesome chokes which were left well alone. A strong, misty draught indicated big cave below but
there was no safe way to reach it. This was a muddy, gloomy, uninspiring and quite frightening cave which we were glad to leave. One of its few redeeming features is a mini gypsum chandelier. The surveyed length was 332.4 metres.

The 18th was spent in glorious sunshine on a reconnoitre of the ridge and catchment area above Krem Wah Shikar and the finding of Krem Mulieh 1-4 (Soft, White Rock Which Cures Diarrhoea Cave!). 1 and 2 were connected via a 40m pot but the promising passage below degenerated into a wet crawl which even the redoubtable Quentin was indisposed to push, even with his helmet off. In this cave I was climbing a large rock pinnacle to establish a good survey shot when the top 1.5m started to topple backwards. By a miracle I managed to regain balance and avoid falling for 4m, feverishly embracing half a ton of spiky limestone! This was a sharp reminder of the perils of virgin cave. The other Krem Muliehs also bottled out but at least we could now write them off. On the walk back from these a local showed us several caves in the Um Im (Living or Permanent Water) area which were later to provide the main focus for the expedition. With no local names they became Krem Um Im 2-5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. The previously partly explored and locally named Krem Um Im became number 1. This latter cave was soon to be connected with the 9km long Krem Liat Prah which the main explorer and surveyor, Michael Laumanns, had written off as "finished". Absent from this year’s trip he was destined to soon receive many smug communications informing him that his "baby" had now grown into a teenager and was very likely to get bigger next year! Jonathan, Brian M. and Robin made the first connection with the Liat Prah streamway after surveying 200 metres of canals at the bottom of the vertical Um Im 1 system. After this refreshing swim they surveyed upstream Liat Prah along an inexplicably previously missed passage for 313 metres, again mainly swimming, to a boulder choke from below which the stream emerged. The nearby Laumann's Pot was descended down 27m and 43m pitches to provide an easier way in and lots more passage mapped.

Krem Um Im 2-5 is an interconnected system of attractive passages on several levels. It is adjacent to, and connects with in two places, a superb jungle-filled doline which became known as the "Lost World". A pleasant 30m pitch could be by-passed by descending the equally deep doline and entering a low and narrow streamway at the bottom. This was followed to where it became a wide, low bedding plane which eventually debouched into the side of walking sized canyon passage leading to Craggy Island. This large, oblong collapse chamber heralded the start of yet another horrific boulder choke where Quentin's talents once again came to the fore as he pioneered a complicated route through it for c.50m to an echoing area. The writer, scouting ahead for the survey, got to push the last bit to reach the head of a 20m pitch into what appeared to be huge, dry canyon passage. Having no tackle we left a 10m tape hanging down in the hope that this would be found from the newly discovered and adjacent Krem Um Im 6, the entrance of which was only a few metres away from 2-5 and also in the floor of the Lost World doline.

In this cave, once again, an enormous, frightening boulder ruckle had to be pushed and the good Dr. B. got the short straw on this one. He wormed his way downwards between
boulders as big as the Hunters' until a lack of ladders to descend the gaps between them curtailed his explora-
tion. These were eventually provided and the ruckle pushed to a depth of some 35m to where it opened up into solid cave at a stepped 30m pot. Quentin rigged this with one of the world's most frightening take-offs; the hanger being in the underside of a boulder weighing hundreds of tons and not only forming the ceiling of the 30m pot but also holding up all 35m of choke above!!! This was a classic hang which caused much ring-
clenching on the prussik out.

Below the pot a large, active and beautifully decorated river passage bore off downstream to reach yet anoth-
er boulder choke after 274m. Valiant attempts to pass this initially failed but by a stroke of luck we had a jar of fluorescein with us and some of this was chucked into the stream - mainly for the benefit of the video. Next day a party finishing off the survey were amazed to hear voices and then even more amazed as Mark and Jonathan emerged from the choke having pushed upstream from Krem Liat Prah. They had seen the green water and this inspired them to greater efforts - a marvellous and superbly timed stroke of luck. Um Im 6 (and by definition Um Im 2-5) were now part of the rapidly expanding Liat Prah system. Also on this trip, and at the suggestion of your dig-fixated scribe, an obscure hole at the base of the 30m pot was cleared by Quentin in the hope of passing the upstream sump in this cave. Sure enough open but decidedly squalid pas-
sage was entered and left for another day.

When that day came a couple of hundred metres of filthy and unpleasant phreatic tunnels were surveyed and the main way on desperately searched for. It just had to go. Our last chance was a tiny inlet canal with thick mud under the water and a definite "collector's item". With nothing left to survey we went for it and after 30m of misery the passage improved slightly in that we were no longer scared of disappearing forever into the quicksand of "Shit Creek". A good echo hinted at better things ahead and suddenly we gained a view of black space as we entered a 15m high bore passage at right angles. We had hit the jackpot again! A massive dry tunnel bored off upwards to the right. This was later mapped for several hundred metres and contained some stupendous formations. A huge side passage turned out to be an oxbow to the main drag and provided an airy balcony for the video team and some awe-inspiring views of the river passage below - this being reached by turning left at the initial entry point. This 15m high by 8m wide tunnel carried the main stream which was soon found to issue from an impenetrable choke on the RH side after 200m. Ahead the passage increased in size and gained height to form a gigantic, breakdown-floored square tunnel which we surveyed in a straight line for 390m to a point where the boulder floor met the ceiling. The heat and lack of draught indicated that a way on was unlikely but a wristwatch altitude measurement indicated that "The Grand Trunk Road" was not far from the surface. On the way back a small but interesting inlet, "Shnongrim Subway", was found which may well be explored further next year, our lesson on not ignoring the obscure passages being well and truly drummed home after this discovery! Krem Liat Prah had now entered the big league with some 14km of passage and looked quite likely to become India's second longest. This was confirmed after Brian, Jonathan, Shelley and team, who had meanwhile been dropping Krem Um Im 7 and 8 and connecting these to the main system, pushed the total surveyed length to 15118.01 metres. (There is some doubt as to the actual connection of these last two caves to the main system but if they are ignored the overall length is still 14828.90m). Michael's response to all this was: - "..... your discoveries make my nice speleogenetic model of the whole area totally OBSOLETE. Arrghhh ^*# *uu!=)+!?$%(/)=!!!!!!"

Brian McCoistir, of the Irish contingent, descends the 93m Tigermouth Pitch, Krem Um In 1.

Photo: Jonathan Davies
Pupils from Ullapool High School (teacher Dave Crooks upper centre) in the Grotto, Cnoc nan Uamh, June 2004.  

Looking out of the entrance to Pretty Pol, Allt Poll an Droighinn, June 2004. (Boffin-the-dog for scale).
The White Cave of Barlocco, Dumfries and Galloway. April 2004. Photo: Ivan Young

View of Shnongrim Ridge Camp, 2004. Photo by Brian MacCoitir
Brian MacCoitir descending the 93m shaft nicknamed Tigermouth into the main chamber of Krem Um In 1.
Photo: Jonathan Davies.

Quentin Cooper surveying in the main downstream passage of Krem Um In 2.
Photo: Jonathan Davies
Tim Lawson and Steven Birch at the excavation shed beside the entrance to Uamh an Ard Achadh, Kilbride, Skye, June 2004. Photo: Ivan Young

Steve Birch in the main stream passage of Uamh an Ard Achadh, June 2004.

Photo: Ivan Young
A selection of seemingly ancient bovine jawbones, limb bones and a horn, found in Um Im 6, have been given to Tony Audsley who will attempt to identify them.

With no sign in 6 of the tape left hanging in 2-5 a return was made to the latter cave with 20m of ladders for the pitch. The nature of the place precluded dragging full SRT kit through and the last section of choke almost precluded us as a highly dodgy "spiral staircase" of loose Henrys had to be negotiated to reach the pitch head.

At the base of the pot the huge, dry canyon had metamorphosed into a grotty little stream passage well endowed with crabs, crayfish, assorted cave fish and bats aplenty. Having got there we were then obliged to survey "Shnongrim Sewer" so set off downstream in a healthy draught. After 200m of mud, bats and gradually deepening water most of the team mutinied when it reached chest height - or in Jayne's case eye level! With the alluring draught and echoing nature of the passage the writer just had to look a little further and after only c.50m of not unpleasant ducks he emerged into the side of a 6-8m diameter river passage. Once again a grotty lead had led us to the big stuff and we wondered how much had been missed over the years by people only exploring the "holiday sized" passages. To the left the water got deep and there may be a sump, judging by the ample mud deposits in this area. To the right it was wide open and well populated with bats, who almost certainly did not enter via the low streamway. The passage bore a distinct Jamaican feel and so was named Ratbat River as their patois would have it. Only a cursory glance was had before the writer retreated with Dr.B and team to the surface. 

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Thinking to find an easier, safer and more direct way in we decided to revisit Krem Shrieh (Monkey Cave), located on the north side of the ridge but known to have a large bat population and an unpushed streamway heading in the right direction. The previous, obviously soft and wimpy "explorers" had chickened out when the underground wildlife had become too much for them in a walking sized (just) streamway called "Half Bat Half Fish". Full of confidence Robin, Quentin and I descended this truly spectacular doline and 60m pot to the bat-infested depths where the very air consisted of bat piss and ammonia, plus the odd falling parasite and selection of guano. As we approached the unpushed streamway the airspace became less but the bats became more. With our upper bodies taking up most of the space scores of these black and somewhat loathsome little buggers were bouncing off us and the walls and dropping into the stream. Not content with decently drowning like nice, cuddly British bats these monsters then took off from the water or swam rapidly to the walls (or Quentin) to gain height for their next dodgem flight. Several actually took time off for a quick shag within inches of our heads before resuming their frightening antics. Meanwhile, below water level, huge blind fish smashed into our legs and lower bodies and almost certainly the crabs and associated fauna at floor level were also up to some dirty tricks! It then dawned on us that one of the last people here had been Martin "Lump" Groves - a man not renowned for his wimpishness so we hereby apologise for our preconceptions and would like to state that the original explorers did a magnificent job in actually surveying this horror story! Anyway, we pushed on into huge passage and were about to take off our face protection and heave a sigh of relief when Robin noticed the rope hanging down the entrance pitch - bugger. Needless to say this cave did...
not provide an easy route into the Liat Prah system but it is obviously part of something much bigger and needs further investigation next year. A possible, draughting dig may pay off and the undescended pot in the floor of the doline should be dropped. Apparently the locals are very impressed by cavers who visit this place as it is a well known venomous snake habitat!

An attempt to join the resurgence cave of Krem Umtler to the lower end of the system was also doomed to failure due to the immense size of the intervening boulder choke where fears of getting lost forever seriously gave us the frights. A better thought out attempt may be made next year as a connection would considerably extend and tidy up Liat Prah as stated earlier. It is potentially India's longest cave.

Not far away the superbly named Krem Bun (sorry Daniel) eventually yielded a pitch system of 209.15m to Thomas, Shelley, Imogen and team. This cave was not jokingly named but in honour of their local guide, the diminutive Bun Sukhlain. His mate's name was Never Full so it could have been worse.

Most of our exploration plans for this year never got done as the sudden growth of this system overshadowed all else. A whole new area was also opened up at Semmasi (or Samassi, Sem Massi, Sammasi, etc.) village where the superb river cave of Krem Tyngeng (wide open mouth cave) yielded 3752.41 metres and Krem K'dong Semmasi (Semmasi corner cave), 902.75 metres. With at least nine more known caves there is a lot more to do in this hardly touched area despite it being a bit too Christian and heavy on the TEMPERANCE!!! Apparently our colleagues were the first westerners most of the villagers had ever seen so the headman, Bikin Paslein, took lots of photos of them - a nice role change! Other caves were explored near Daistong and another new area to the south, beyond Tangnub village was briefly investigated. There are tales of large caves here so roll on February 2005!

Nicky, assisted by Andy and Jonathan, recorded much of the expedition on video in the unlikely event of surpassing her excellent production from last year. Many people took a comprehensive selection of photographs and images, some of which accompany this report - with thanks to their owners.

Long, hard days underground were balanced by the usual evening entertainment and every night the traditional bonfire was patronised by the cream of European and Meghalayan socialites. Quentin and Danny, our professional Irish musicians, did us proud with fiddle, mandolin and guitar sessions and most of the locals were also accomplished musicians, particularly on the guitar. One memorable night saw the real "Shnongrim Combo" in action with Carlyln (harmonica), Pa Heh (guitar, drum), Heipormi (guitar, vocals), Menda (guitar, vocals and hymns) and other passers-by playing traditional Jaintia festival tunes. Plenty of beer kept the troops happy and Carom and Cribbage were popular with the intellectuals. The re-employment of Myrkassim Swer and his Muslim cooking team was much appreciated as was the excellent job done by Bung and Addie in organizing the camp and driving us around. Addie's new found fame as a submarine jeep driver may last some time! The people of Nongkhlieh Elaka and Semmasi were once again superb. Special thanks must go to local guides Raplang, Pa Heh, Carlyln, Heipormi, Menda, Bikin and Bun - and others - who actually found the caves for us to go down. Overall, 17.5km were surveyed to bring the grand Meghalayan total up to 261km.

The finale of the expedition was a party held at Donbockwell "Bok" Syiemlieh's farm, between Shillong and Guwahati, where a bamboo bar, bunkhouses and stage were laid on and a local rock band provided. The
evening was much enlivened when the month-long unwashed Quentin, looking like a poor man's Alice Cooper, joined them on stage to play some superb rap and blues on electric guitar - much to both their and our astonishment and delight. Our very grateful thanks must go to Bok and his staff, the Ladies of Shillong (Barrie, Dabbie, Maureen, Rose etc) and everyone else who helped make this trip yet another magnificent epic. Only 10 months to go...

**Top Tips for Pushing Meghalayan Caves!!** Check everything accessible and don't worry about a lack of draught. Tight squeezes, ducks, grim boulder chokes and short digs are all worth a go and, as this expedition proved, often pay off big time. The presence of Heteropoda spiders may indicate routes to the surface above or nearby and plenty of "Snotgobblers" (web-building fly larvae) invariably are a good sign of lengthy, draughting passages - they are an excellent indicator of routes through boulder ruckles. Very few Meghalayan caves are "finished", or ever will be.

(*I have adopted the spelling favoured by Carlyn Phyrngap and Daniel Gebauer and apparently appropriate for the place name "Cowshed" - many other spellings are used by locals, mapmakers and visitors.

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**SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND SIR?**

By Dick Grindley

For those of you with palates jaded by the unending search for caverns of un-plumbable depth and endless bound, here is something new: 152 potential Scottish cave/mine/hole sites that need to be found and investigated. They were all extracted from a bundle of old 6” OS maps showing bits of Argyll and Galloway presented to the author by John Crae. As they were all pre-NGR, positions were listed in terms of Lat. and Long. and converted to NGR using the Ordnance Survey GPS website. In addition, although the maps are fine examples of the engraver’s art the description names are a bit vague at time as to exactly where they are referring to and the Lat./Long. given are just a best guess of position by me. In view of this the computer produced final digits of NGR Eastings and Northings should also be regarded with a healthy degree of scepticism until confirmed/corrected by GPS.

If anyone feels the urge to investigate some of these sites I would recommend checking positions on the original maps (now held in the GSG library) to get a feel for what you are looking for. The ref.# listed refers to my marking up of the individual sites on a particular map and some of the descriptions have been cross-referenced to possible sites listed in other publications:

**Symbols Used on Chart**

* New Caves of Scotland by Tony Oldham

‡ Caves of Kintrye and Mid Argyll by Tony Oldham

$ GSG Cave Data Base

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TWO INHABITED CAVES IN SCOTLAND

A Query by Dave Irwin

Scottish caves may be found on quite a few picture postcards. Many are obviously sea caves that are dotted around the mainland shores as well as other sites in the Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands. The greatest number of cards relate to one of the most famous caves in the British Isles - Fingal’s Cave on Staffa. This has been depicted in many ways, steel or woodblock engravings, lithographs including a wonderful collection published in Paris in the 1830s; and during the photographic era there have been many thousands of images published as photographic prints and picture postcards. Two of the more important publishers were John Valentine of Dundee and George Washington Wilson at Aberdeen. The earliest used postcard of Fingal’s Cave was sent from Oban to Strassburg on 9th September 1898. This is an early use of a postcard anywhere in the U.K. and was printed by Raphael Tuck of London. In addition there are many sites relating to Wallace, Rob Roy and Bonnie Prince Charlie.

Of interest to me are two sites once occupied by two lesser mortals. The first is some nine miles south-east of Portpatrick at Ardwell, once part of a large estate with a mansion. Whether it’s still there I do not know. The site was known as Sheep Rink Cave and was once the home of William Purvis at his cave dwelling near Ardwell
a William Purvis. From the photographs it appears that he had resided in the cave for some time as there is considerable evidence of the installation of a door and rough stone blocks giving some protection from the weather. I have two cards of the man and the site indicating that he was famous, if only locally, making it viable to publish picture postcards of him. Both cards date from c. 1905, the earliest, printed in Germany, has no retailer or publisher imprint. The second card was published by one Henry, a draper in Glenluce.

The second site relates to Grimm’s Cave, some four miles north east of Stonehaven at Muchalls. It is obvious that the site was a local curiosity for it appears on at least two picture postcards. The first was published in the X.L. Series by the famous art publisher John Valentine of Dundee during the early 1920s. The others were included in the Holmes’ Silver City Series, printed by Harvey Barton of Bristol and published by R. Begg of Muchalls, c. 1930. The dates in themselves are meaningless for they merely indicate the published date for the postcard; the photographs were taken some time before.

There is also another picture postcard depicting an inhabited cave at Muchalls. This site was the home of one Adam Middleton, known locally as Nippie. Again the cave appears to have been lived in for some time as the entrance chamber is weather-proofed and has a door. Is this Grimm’s Cave?

I would be grateful for any information on either of these two individuals and their homes.

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Any reader who can help with this inquiry should contact Dave Irwin at Townsend Cottage, Priddy, Somerset BA5 3BP - Ed.
In April 2004 a cave hunting expedition by Jim Salvona, Peter Ireson and I (1) had a secondary objective of some nearby barytes mines. Jim found one blocked adit and later research on the Internet showed that we hadn’t missed anything by going home when we did.

The Auchencairn History Society pages on the Internet (2) include a useful section on industry with information about mining in the area around Auchencairn. The main barytes mine was at Barlocco. It closed in the late 1800s to be reopened from 1914 to 1920 and again from 1946 to 1954. By then the workings extended 280 feet below sea level or 330 feet below the adit. It was then abandoned for the third time and the adit dammed to supply water to Barlocco Farm. Another mine near Airyhill Cottage was then reopened for a short time before it too was abandoned and the shaft filled in. The 1854 map of the area shows two shafts next to the cottage.(3)

The other site in the area is further east near Airds Farm where a copper mine next to an older barytes mine was abandoned in the late 1800s due to an accident to the pump. This site was reopened in 1951 and produced crushed quartz for pebbledashing for a time, but was not successful. Some good copper ore was found and the old workings pumped out to find a pinch bar wedged against the bottom valve of the old pump. Copper prices didn’t make it economic enough to even extract the ore that had been found and by 1961 everything was dismantled and the shaft concreted over. Some relics can be seen from the cliff-top path round the Balcary Heughs.

What is Barytes?

Barytes or barite is a form of barium sulphate BaSO₄ and a very useful raw material for the high technology, petrochemical, chemical, building, pharmaceutical and other industries(4). It is also known as heavy spar. Most of it is used in oil-drilling muds because of its low abrasion properties and high specific gravity of approximately 4.5 (5); its name is derived from the Greek word for heavy - baryos. It is relatively inert and inexpensive so it is used as a filler, extender and pigment - eg in paints and plastics. It is also a good gamma ray absorbent and can replace lead in nuclear radiation shields.

References:
(2) Auchencairn History Society; http://www.auchencairn.org.uk/clubs/historysociety/historysociety.htm
(3) Digital historical map archive; http://www.old-maps.co.uk/
(4) The Barytes Association; http://www.barytes.org/
(5) Mineralogy Database; http://webmineral.com/data/Barite.shtml
REVIEWS

CD: ‘In Too Deep’: ‘Dangerous Dick and the Duckbusters’; produced for and distributed by the Canadian Caver, PO Box 8124, Station Central P.O., Victoria, B.C. V8W 3R8, $15 (Canadian) + $3.50 p/p. Also available online at www.cancaver.ca/music.

Very occasionally some enterprising caver - or group of cavers - get together in a recording studio to create some audio product for the cave exploration market. These vary in style and, more importantly, quality. A notable appearance of late was the music from ‘More People Have Been to the Moon’. Now another excellent CD has appeared, imported into Scotland as a result of the latest GSG caving holiday to Vancouver.

‘Dangerous Dick and the Duckbusters’ has a title which might discourage the discerning listener but do not be fooled. First off, the standard of the lyrics, musicians and recording are top line. This is a professionally produced disc and those responsible are, co-incidentally, all members of Vancouver Island Cave Exploration Group. Even the sleeve paper for the disc is an excellent full-colour compilation of artwork.

So what of the contents? They comprise, as stated: a philharmonic phlight of phreatic phantasy, a collection of songs which can best be described as folk with a country and western background. All have humourous content, highlights being ‘On the Surface Again’, ‘It All Sounds Like Bullshit To Me’ and ‘The Cop-out Calypso’. There is even a song which attempts to explain to the non-practitioner why we go caving. Best of all, the CD was produced specifically to generate funds for cave conservation and study in Canada, and carries an injunction not to copy the contents because you would simply be ripping off, not only fellow cavers, but also a very worthwhile speleological cause.

The CD may be obtained using the information above, but Peter Dowswell, 28 Eriskay Road, Inverness, IV2 3LX has volunteered to act as an un-official agent in the UK so contact him for copies. It is likely there will be a slight delay, because an additional pressing may be required in Vancouver to meet the huge demand that the disc justly deserves!

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Book Review:

When I started to profess an interest in cave sediments, some twenty-six years ago, researching published work on cave sediments was in some ways easy - there were relatively few academic articles to seek out, although a number of them had been published in French! In the preface to this book the editors suggest that this paucity of early interest was due to the collection of cave data being provided by recreational cavers: rarely did specialist scientists venture into the arduous, subterranean world unless, by some happy coincidence, they happened to be cavers as well! In the intervening quarter of a century speleology, the science of caves and cave environments, has come of age. In the late 1970s, a cave sedimentologist had few weapons in his/her arsenal: lithostratigraphy, statistical analyses of sediment size and shape, basic X-ray diffraction
analysis of clay mineralogy, and the newly-developed U-series disequilibrium dating of speleothems. Interpretation of results was heavily tinged with speculation, and the most spectacular palaeoenvironmental reconstructions invariably depended on the incorporation of faunal or archaeological material. Since then, dramatic technological advances have moved hand in hand with a dramatically increased quantity of work in this area. This book is a good, but necessarily partial synthesis of the state of the science of cave sediment analysis at the present time.

The book, like cave sediments, is broadly sub-divided into two: the first eight chapters look at the clastic sediments (i.e. the rock fragments) whereas the next eight chapters concentrate on the chronological and palaeoclimatic data that can be extracted from an analysis of speleothems (i.e. chemically precipitated material). The final short chapter, looking at faunal assemblages and cave sediment characteristics from certain West Indian caves emphasises the worth of a multi-disciplinary, ‘holistic’ approach to cave sediment studies. Throughout the book, only caves created by dissolution of soluble bedrock are considered, i.e. karstic caves rather than lava tubes, sea caves or fissure caves.

A number of chapters stand out as important reading for those with a serious interest in cave sediment studies. The first chapter, written by Rachael Bosch and William B. White on *Lithofacies and transport of clastic sediments in karstic aquifers* is a seminal work, as one would expect of the latter-named author (one of the ‘leading lights’ in geological studies in caves for a number of decades). It attempts to identify five types of sediment (facies) that one may find in caves: in order of decreasing flowing water power these are diamicton facies (i.e. flood deposits, emplaced quickly in a very mixed state), thalweg facies (cobbles and gravels representing discrete streams during flood events), channel facies (well sorted and well stratified sediment of a range of particle sizes), slackwater facies (deposited slowly from back-filled floodwaters), and backswamp facies (clays derived from the insoluble residue of limestone solution, deposited in phreatic conditions. I would recommend you look beyond the gentle sprinkling of mathematical equations here (unless such things excite you!) as the chapter offers a reasonable classification of cave sediment types based on their environment of deposition. However, it is based largely on studies of caves in the southern USA where the icy fingers of episodic glaciation have not necessarily reached, so such a classification may have only limited applicability to caves in northern Britain.

Another important paper in that by W.B. White (again!), *Palaeoclimate Records from speleothems in limestone caves*, an excellent synthesis of the state of play in this important branch of speleology. Once more, a sprinkling of equations might put off some (but a lot less than in the two following chapters, reviews of U-series dating and palaeoclimatic inferences from speleothems), but if you look beyond these there is a lot of well written text to inform the interested reader. Andy Baker’s subsequent work on one of the stalagmite samples that Tim Atkinson, Russ Harmon and I collected in Uamh an Tartair (Traligill) in 1980 gets a mention in White’s chapter.

Two other chapters that caught my eye - mainly as they are about caves in comparable environments to those with which I am familiar - are the ones by Burger (*Glacially-influenced sediment cycles in the Lime Creek karst, Eagle County, Colorado*) and Spotl et al. (*Speleothems from the high-alpine Spannagel Cave, Zillertal Alps (Austria)*). The former is, quite frankly, a disappointment. It is based on what appears to be extremely limited background research by its author, who makes some sweeping - and glaringly incorrect - statements early on which arouses the suspicions of the informed reader. A classification of clastic sediments in these two caves is based on colour, grain size distribution and “general composition” which I take to mean lithology, and then related to known unconsolidated deposits above ground; such an approach is a valid one, but Burger supports what appear to be speculative observations with very little actual hard data. The provenance of the cave sediments and their method of entry into and transportation through the cave systems remains unproven at the end of the paper. It is hard to see how external referees did not savage the original manuscript, and how the editors allowed its publication in this form. The second paper, by contrast, is considerably better. Although the paper concentrates largely on the explanation of speleothem deposition under a range of climates, including cold phases, I was interested to read about features in this cave system with
which we are also familiar in Scottish caves: dark iron oxide/hydroxide coatings of cobbles and gravel, and sharp protrusions of tectonically-stretched chert on the walls of some passages.

I am sure that other readers may find aspects of the remaining chapters of interest. However, I am extremely disappointed in the number of poor diagrams it contains and the number of missing references in some of the chapters (including those I have highlighted above). For example, diagrams on pp. 97-99 are clearly low-resolution scans of quite complicated originals, rendering them all but illegible! Again, scanning at too low a resolution has reduced some of the photographs (e.g. those on pp. 76 and 282) to a murkiness that would be worthy of inclusion in our own Caves of Assynt (2nd edition)! It is surely the job of the editors (or the publishers) to make sure this does not happen. The inclusion of several colour plates is welcomed, but why are the same photographs repeated as black-and-white scans in the text? The cost of this book (over £90) indicates that the publishers had no faith that it would reach a wider audience than via a library shelf. At that sort of money, I would expect a better product. Its contents are of interest to those who would like an overview of certain aspects of cave sediment studies, but would I buy it? I don’t think so; rather I would try to borrow it from someone who had splashed out.

Tim Lawson

Note: There is a copy of this volume in the GSG library. -Ed.

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UAMH AN ARD ACHADH (High Pasture Cave):
A window on the prehistory of Strath, Skye

By Steven Birch

Introduction

In the Grampian Speleological Group Bulletin of October 2002, an article was published regarding the recent archaeological discoveries and preliminary fieldwork undertaken at Uamh an Ard Achadh, Cave of the High Field or High Pasture Cave on the island of Skye (Birch, 2002:12-27). That report provided a detailed background to the cave and its environs including the identification of stone-built structures in close proximity to the cave entrance. Initial interpretations based on the discovery of these structures and material recovered from within the high-level passages of the cave suggested occupation and use of the site during the late Bronze Age and Iron Age periods. Finally, the report discussed the continuing threat to the archaeological deposits within the cave and the need for further fieldwork at the site, to enable informed recommendations to be made regarding its future management. In this article I will discuss recent developments at the High Pasture Cave site, including archaeological fieldwork carried out during 2004.

A Mystery…

Analysis of the archaeological material recovered from High Pasture Cave during 2002 and 2003 indicated a domestic use for the site, while deposits of animal bone from specific locations within the cave was more difficult to interpret. For example, although the animal bones had been recovered from archaeological deposits, heavily disturbed by cavers unknown at this time, it was still possible to identify concentrations of pig, cattle and red deer bone within the passage. The types and frequency of bone present within these deposits indicated that the carcasses of these animals had either arrived in the passage relatively intact, or that the animals had been butchered and the subsequent animal remains had been placed within specific locations within the cave. Evidence for butchery of these animals was clear to see with regular cut marks, made by various types of metal implements, and the splitting open of long bones for marrow extraction. One other important factor that came to light during the initial analysis of the animal bones was that the carcasses of pig had been butchered in a very different way to the cattle and red deer. For example, the pig long bones...
had not been broken open to extract marrow, but remained remarkably intact, although cut marks were often present.

The high incidence of pig bones in the assemblage recovered from the deposits in the cave also contrasts considerably with other excavated archaeological sites in Scotland and within the wider context of the United Kingdom. Most sites in the Hebrides in particular show pig to be a minor item of the diet during prehistory, with sheep and cattle being more prominent. The so-called 'high status' sites of the period such as brochs and duns, have produced pig bone assemblages of 15 - 22% of the total recovered animal bone. However, the High Pasture Cave assemblage produced in the region of 80 - 90% pig bone, prompting Peter Rowley-Conwy of the University of Durham to suggest that 'feasting' of some kind may have been carried out at the site. This preliminary analysis was also borne out by the way in which the pig carcasses had been butchered in comparison to other species present on site.

Viewed in conjunction with the structures of possible prehistoric date on the surface including a stone-built roundhouse, yards and smaller cell-like buildings, and the presence of a large 'U'-shaped structure of unknown function, the archaeological deposits in the cave below presented several intriguing questions. How was the cave utilised by the prehistoric inhabitants? Were they merely using a hole in the ground as a place to dump unwanted rubbish, a process that has continued to the present day; or could the abandoned, high-level passage have been used as a natural souterrain, where people stored their produce and game in relatively stable temperatures throughout the year? However, there was one other possible explanation for the use of the site, that of ritualistic behaviour - a term archaeologists often turn to if no other explanation is forthcoming!

Locations in the landscape such as springs, wells and deep natural shafts in the ground are known to have had a special significance with early Celtic societies, where access to the 'Otherworld' or 'Underworld' could be secured and offerings made to the water deities and ancestors. And although sites such as these may be difficult to identify in the archaeological record, several sites have been recently identified that may have served such a function. Several of the brochs discovered and excavated in Orkney, such as Gurness, have been found to have internal 'wells' or 'cisterns', many of which would have provided a poor and limited water supply. Accessed by steep steps leading underground, archaeological deposits have been found in these so-called wells including the skeletons of red deer and other domestic animals. However, the most significant site discovered to date in the British Isles has to be Mine Howe, also in Orkney. From the surface the site now appears in the landscape as a low, grass-covered mound. However, this man-made pile of earth surrounded by a deep rock-cut ditch of some proportions, contains a series of steps that takes one down steeply to small underground chambers and a well or cistern some 30 feet below ground, the whole structure built in dry stone walling and the chambers having corbelled roofs. Anyone who has descended these steps to the 'well' below would soon realise how difficult it would be to extract water for normal domestic purposes,
negotiating dark and slippery steps. Therefore, we have several possible parallels in Scotland with which to compare our interpretations of the High Pasture Cave site.

Fieldwork - 2004

With the myriad of questions concerning the potential use of the High Pastures site and how it may have meshed with the wider prehistoric landscape in this area of Skye, we produced a preliminary report for our work at the cave during 2002/3 and put together a research design regarding further proposed archaeological fieldwork, including detailed survey and excavation. And with partially successful bids for funding to Historic Scotland and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (and including what seemed like an unlimited funding package produced from our own pockets!), we looked forward to the 2004 season. However, although we were keen to get on with survey and excavation work, certain other housekeeping tasks had to be addressed first including the construction of a new wooden surround and trap door for the cave entrance (to stop unwanted livestock) and a pulley system to haul buckets of spoil from below. A dam was also constructed in the stream supplying the cave, to supply water for the wet-sieving equipment (the water being returned to the stream), and a site shed was erected in which we could store our equipment. The latter was also found to be useful as a changing room and somewhere to eat lunch in vile weather, while later in the season it would also be a fairly safe refuge to avoid the attentions of the wee biting things!

Therefore, with our equipment all in place, we set about the archaeological fieldwork including a survey of the archaeological landscape surrounding the cave, a detailed planned survey of the surface structures in close proximity to the cave entrance, a detailed survey of the cave passages from the

Cave survey showing location of Bone Passage, where Trench 1 has been excavated.

George Kozikowski operating the wet-sieving equipment at the sink (finds deposited in trays)
entrance down to the Bone Passage (plan and profile) and the start of excavations in Bone Passage during the months of April and May. The excavations started with the removal of disturbed deposits in Bone Passage, in order to prevent further damage to this delicate material, which also included the removal of boulders and smaller stone. Because we would have to transport the stone some 50 metres through the main stream passage to the entrance, we decided to stack them in Bone Passage for now. However, the kibbles of mud and smaller stone removed using wooden trowels and spatulas (to prevent damage to archaeological material) had to be carried out to the surface, where they were processed through a series of wire meshes of varying hole size in the wet sieve. The resulting material, including stone residues were then left to dry in air on absorbent tissue, after which they were initially sorted and separated into various finds trays.

After removing the disturbed material we placed wooden runners along Bone Passage, where the archaeological deposits were most vulnerable, and nailed down wooden floorboards as walkways. We then selected a location in the passage for Trench 1, our evaluation trench excavated this year in order to examine the depth and integrity of the in-situ archaeological deposits. Excavation then proceeded more slowly, removing the claggy, mud deposits in 100mm spits, unless we uncovered more recognisable stratigraphic layers. Because of the fragile nature of the archaeological material we removed the sediments in small lumps, after which they could be manipulated more easily on the surface and the finds removed.

The first two contexts (layers) removed showed signs of disturbance, however by context 3 we were into secure layers of archaeology. At the base of context 3 we uncovered the remains of a floor roughly paved with granite cobbles, which had obviously been introduced in to the cave passage, interspersed with fire-cracked pebbles and stone. We recovered typical Iron Age pottery sherds from these upper levels, along with animal bone, fish bone, charred cereal grains, burnt hazelnut shell, shellfish and significant amounts of charcoal. Artefacts included stone tools, small flakes of flint, iron and bronze-working slags and residues (including ore-bearing rock samples), fragments of worked copper plate and bone and antler tools. We also recovered ecofacts that would be useful in interpreting and reconstructing the landscapes surrounding the cave during its use including reptile and amphibian bones, rodent bones, land snails and pollen samples.

Below the paved floor the archaeological deposits became less distinct with the artefacts and charred grain etc. becoming less frequent, although animal bone and charcoal remained prolific. On reaching a depth in the trench of around 0.7 metres, the deposits changed completely, the fine, sticky sediments giving way to compact limestone breccias. The interface here was
quite distinct and contained significant quantities of fire-cracked pebbles and stone, and abundant animal bones (some of which were heavily burnt). Recognisable here was the canine tooth of a brown bear, which along with a wolf canine from the deposits above provide evidence for some of the animal species that have now disappeared from Skye's list of fauna. We also recovered a large fragment of flat-rimmed pottery, quite different to the material recovered from the upper contexts of the trench, of possible Bronze Age date (mid-second Millennium BC). This crushed limestone breccia layer relates to another period of occupation at the site and most likely constitutes a basic floor.

We soon excavated through the breccia into slightly waterlogged gravely sediments, before finally reaching grits and cobbles that immediately overlay the solid limestone bedrock of the limestone passage. Small fragments of bone, much of which was found to be heavily burnt, were found in this bottom context although this may have been subjected to mixing and washing by a remnant stream in the past. However, no diagnostic artefacts were found in these lower contexts, making it difficult to provide a potential date for this material. Patrick Ashmore at Historic Scotland has funded one radiocarbon date for the site so far, this coming from a pig mandible recovered from the disturbed deposits at the top of the trench. This gave a date for the bone and hence the disturbed deposits of 390BC to 160BC, based on a 95% probability, an earlier date than originally expected. This puts the later stages of occupation at the site in the early Iron Age and it will be interesting to receive results from our next radiocarbon assays, which will be submitted to Historic Scotland soon.

The total depth of Trench 1, from the top of the disturbed deposits to the solid cave passage floor is in the region of just over 1 metre, showing an incredible build up of archaeological deposits through time. And, at the end of the excavation, it was incredible to see the sheer quantity of material recovered from such a small trial trench in Bone Passage, especially when it was all sorted, labelled and stacked in boxes in my study at home ready for despatch to the various specialists helping us with the post-excavation analysis.

**The work continues...**

The fieldwork for the 2004 season is now entering the post-excavation phase, with the various finds, faunal remains, ecofacts, sediment and rock samples, despatched to various specialists throughout Scotland and England. We have been fortunate in that many of the specialists are offering their services in-kind through the auspices of the respective universities. Their reports will form a part of the much larger Data Structure Report that we have to prepare for our main sponsors, Historic Scotland, and this will hopefully secure further funding for fieldwork in 2005. This will include further excavations in Bone Passage to enable us to assess the full extent of the archaeological deposits and to uncover further evidence of the paved floor and any other features that might be hidden below the deep sediments, while trial excavations will also proceed to examine the surface structures and their possible links with the archaeological material recovered from the cave passages below.
We have also been fortunate with the fieldwork in 2004, in receiving assistance with a cave morphology survey. Tim Lawson and Ivan Young have spent two days on site so far looking in detail at the formation of the cave and the sediments it contains. Samples have been removed for analysis and Ivan has produced a full set of digital images showing various elements relating to the morphology of High Pasture Cave and the surrounding landscape. The results of the cave morphology survey will be crucial in guiding our interpretations on the archaeological deposits it contains, including how the sediments containing this material arrived in the system and how it may have been affected since by natural agencies. The survey also included use of the mole-phone and radiolocation equipment in order to fix positions within the cave system to features on the surface. Of particular importance here is the possible location of a former entrance into Bone Passage that was used by the prehistoric inhabitants, but of which has subsequently been filled in. Details and results of the cave morphology survey will hopefully be published in the pages of the GSG bulletin at a later date, when the data from the survey has been prepared.

We had already noticed the presence of a boulder choke at the end of Bone Passage, which seemed to be going up towards the surface. This possible entrance, whether a former sink for the stream feeding the cave, or a fissure where the cave passage roof had collapsed in, is situated within one of the structures on the surface. However, there are no visible signs of this entrance presently on the ground. Therefore, at some time before the end of December we hope to bring in a geophysics team to locate the extent of this entrance using ground penetrating radar and other devices, so that we can establish how difficult a task it would be to excavate this feature. Hopefully, we shall carry out this work during the winter months so that the former entrance is open and ready for the start of next year’s proposed fieldwork on site, sometime in April 2005. There is a height difference of some 3 to 4 metres between the floor of Bone Passage and the ground surface above, and we await the results of the geophysics survey and the excavations with some excitement.

Will we merely find a former entrance to the system that has been back-filled with boulders and rubbish at some time in the past, to stop livestock falling in, or could we be looking at an entrance that has been enhanced in some way to make access to the cave easier for the prehistoric inhabitants at High Pastures, with a flight of steps leading into the 'Underworld'? The excavation of this feature will require care and caution. As any caver knows the excavation of the shaft will require a certain approach from a safety point of view, while from an archaeological slant we have to be prepared for deposits that might indicate a ritualistic closing of the entrance, such as have been found at the entrance to a number of man-made souterrains from the Iron Age period. Whatever the case may be, the opening of the entrance will greatly facilitate the removal of spoil from the continuing excavations in Bone Passage, will enable us to bring better lighting into the passage for the proposed work and allow us to provide improved interpretation facilities for the visiting public during open days on site.
One other recent development at High Pastures is the discovery of small-scale quarry workings some five minutes walk from the cave, where a deposit of magnetite is exposed on the surface on the granite/limestone contact zone. On closer inspection, this deposit also contains a small vein of copper ore. Samples taken from this site were compared with the ore-bearing rocks recovered from Trench 1 in Bone Passage and we were amazed at the close similarities between the samples. Although we cannot be certain at the moment, this site may have been quarried during prehistory to extract basic ores of iron and copper for metalworking at the High Pastures site, a factor that may become more apparent once we start our excavations on the surface. Another interesting parallel arises here with the site of Mine Howe in Orkney, mentioned earlier in this report, where abundant evidence for metalworking has been recovered from the excavations on the surface in close proximity to the subterranean stairs and chambers. With regards to magnetite and copper deposits in the vicinity of the caving areas of Strath on Skye, I have recently obtained an article published in 1951 in the Transactions of the Geological Society of Glasgow. This article provides details of the locations of magnetite discovered in the area using geophysical survey, undertaken by staff at the University of Leeds (Whetton & Myers, 1951).

Finally, since the discovery of the disturbed archaeological deposits in High Pasture Cave in 2002, my thoughts had often turned to who may have been responsible for the initial excavations. There are few local cavers on Skye and my enquiries elsewhere failed to find any potential individuals or caving clubs, who might have attempted the dig through the calcited boulder choke in Bone Passage. However, my fortunes changed in July of this year when during a search of the internet for possible hits on the High Pasture Cave site, I came across a possible answer to my query. Of all places, the contact came from a caving website in China - the Hong Meigui Cave Exploration Society! Within the web pages I found references to various people around the world who are members of the society, which included a CV for these individuals. One name, a Denis Bushell from Manchester and member of the White Rose Pothole Club, had a reference to High Pasture Cave on Skye that referred to him as a part of the 'archaeological dig team'! This obviously started the alarm bells ringing and I immediately contacted Alan Jeffreys for further details.

Alan found a reference to a White Rose Club trip to Skye in 1997, in which visits were made to High Pasture Cave (Tolson, 1997) and digging was carried out to extend the known passage length. Unfortunately, this did not refer to any excavations in Bone Passage. However, after obtaining Denis Bushell's contact telephone number from the WRPC Secretary, I took the plunge and made the call. After exchanging a few words and stating the purpose of my call, Denis apologised for not getting in touch with me earlier regarding the cave. He had read the GSG Bulletin of October 2002, which included my article on High Pasture Cave and the reference to 'disturbance of the material by cavers unknown', which had initially caused some embarrassment. However, we soon crossed this impasse and proceeded with our discussion of the site. He told me how that during their club trip to Skye in 1997 they had visited High Pasture Cave, explored the system and had attempted to excavate in the boulder choke of the terminal chamber, in order to secure a second entrance and hence, a through trip for the cave. However, this proved too dangerous with the loose boulders and lack of scaffolding, so they then turned their attentions to Bone Passage. Here, they excavated through the calcite-covered boulder choke into the continuation of the passage and in so doing discovered what they thought to be the remains of Late Glacial fauna, including reindeer antler and wild boar tusks. With the potential importance of this deposit they did not excavate the passage any further, but collected a sample of the animal remains for further analysis. The material was passed on to staff at the University of Manchester where it was soon realised that rather than being Late Glacial in origin, the bones belonged to red deer and domesticated pig. A radiocarbon date taken on one of the bones confirmed a date in the Iron Age and thus, some dis...
However, when I informed Denis of the situation I found at the cave in 2002 he was quick to reply that they did not leave archaeological material scattered throughout Bone Passage and that some form of disturbance must have taken place afterwards. Indeed, from the description Denis gave me of how far they penetrated the boulder choke in the passage, it would seem that cavers entering the system have since pushed the lead further, some 5 to 6 metres beyond their limit of exploration.

With this contact and the new information it has provided, at least we now have some idea of how and when the archaeological deposits in the passage were initially disturbed. The work carried out by these cavers explains to a certain extent what we have encountered during our excavations this year, especially in Trench 1. But it is also becoming increasingly obvious that some of this disturbance occurred during the prehistoric period, when the former entrance to the cave was possibly being utilised as a dump for material during the later stages of occupation at the site. Therefore, it would seem that the passage in High Pasture Cave has been used for a variety of different purposes over a long time period, events we hope to unravel during our proposed archaeological investigations at the site.

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Note: All images by Steven Birch and Martin Wildgoose, except radio-location picture above.

References

