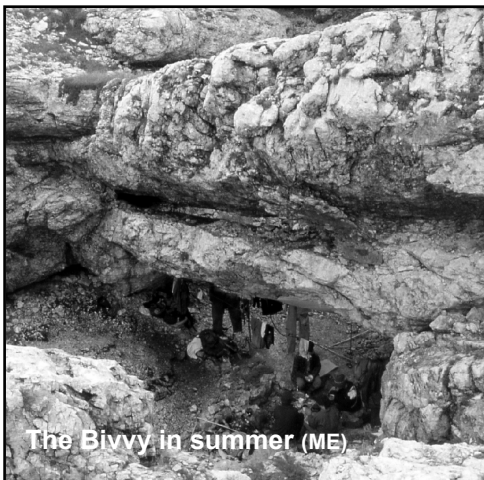


# 1995

## Mistakes are the Portals of Discovery\*\*



Following limited success on our expedition in 1994 and despite the evidence from the "Blowing Holes" recce, fewer cavers were prepared to spend another summer on Migovec. We, however, made our minds up after hearing Tim Guilford's talk on OUCC's exploration in Northern Spain at the BCRA conference. Talking to Clive Orrock after the lecture, we realised that it's only through perseverance and hard work that you find cave systems.



After further discussion, a much smaller group of die-hard optimists together with keen, unsuspecting freshers decided to commit themselves to another summer in Slovenia. This year, only eight people spent six weeks on the plateau, while five others spent between one and four weeks.

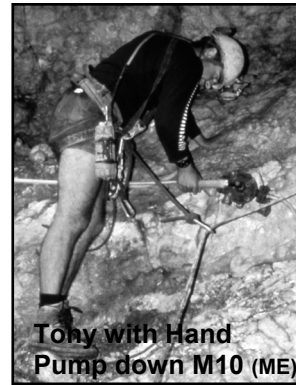
A big decision in 1995 was to dispense with a base camp at Ravne. If we could live on the mountain, far more effort could go into finding caves and we would save a considerable amount of money if we didn't have to pay for accommodation. At the time, this seemed like a very radical move and meant that a number of logistical factors had to be worked out.



Our first task was to get all our equipment and food up the hill as quickly as possible with minimal effort. The first possibility we looked into was a helicopter but this had two main problems associated with it: firstly at five hundred pounds per trip it was a little on the expensive side and secondly, as we were not officially supposed to camp in the National Park, we thought this would draw unnecessary attention to us. The method we eventually settled on was to get the local farmer to carry up our gear with a small tractor. He could only go about half way but this proved sufficient (and cheaper than a chopper at about £90 each way).

We had also rethought our food plans. During the previous year, Jim had joined members of the B.E.C. (Andy and Angie Cave) on one of their five day camps at the Restaurant in Daren Cilau. The system of dried food that they have developed over a number of years was copied almost perfectly. We realised that with dried food, bought in England, we could save weight and avoid the problem of food going off. We also thought much harder about specific recipes to cook, for example cream curries and tomato curries for dinner and Sos burgers, chapatti's and smash burgers for breakfast. As bread will not last six weeks, flour was taken up the mountain and used to make chapattis. In fact, the only non-dried foods we took were cheese, lard, chocolate and alcohol. We had learned that lard is good and discovered the usefulness of Daren Drums (airtight plastic containers for holding food). On the Daren camp, Jim also got a feel for what long-term exploration is really like - nothing comes easily and everything must be worked for.

Water was clearly vital and had led to much discussion. Collecting water on the 1994 expedition had been a long and time consuming affair (half a days work for three people every day) which consisted of someone abseiling down a shaft and filling bags with snow. These were then pulled to the surface and melted in the sun. This year we had essentially two ideas; the first was to take large barrels and tarpaulins up the hill to catch water when it rained and the second was to get a bilge pump to pump water from the bottom of M10 (a nearby snow shaft) in case it didn't rain. The barrels (some of which had been used by Phil Wickins, an IC Mountaineer, on a recent Himalayan expedition) were also useful for transporting all the food we bought in England on the roof of the van.



**Tony with Hand Pump down M10 (ME)**



**Paul underneath the tarpaulins in the bivy (ME)**

Some of the things we tried turned out to be a waste of time. Although the pump was used a few times for water, we discovered that if there were enough big barrels on top, then when a big rainstorm comes along you can have enough water for weeks (this has become the standard solution to water). We bought a petrol generator for battery charging but it turned out to be too heavy and inefficient and was later sold to a local kebab merchant. Although the tractor did save us some time, it was of limited value because it couldn't get all the way to the Shepherd's huts. Part of the reason for getting a tractor was because we didn't want to leave anything in Ravne, but it turned out that the friendly Klobučar family were happy for us to leave gear in their barn. A GPS that we borrowed for marking caves was not as useful as simple paint and string marking techniques for relocating entrances. In terms of locating caves relative to each other, we found surface survey to be the more accurate than the GPS (ed: this was before selective availability was turned off in 2002).

Overall, however, the logistics were much better this year and this, combined with a "hard core" team with a firm plan led to a very successful summer on Migovec. We had a determination to put in whatever effort was required to find new cave and unlock the potential of Migovec. We'd come prepared with an armoury of digging tools (sledge hammers, mallets, chisels, crowbars etc) and weren't afraid to use them.

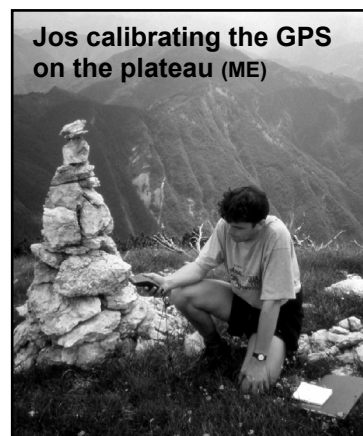
Jim Evans and Mark Evans

*"People have a tendency to congregate round the caving stores, their faces taut and quietly eager for action."*

\*\* A quote from James Joyce

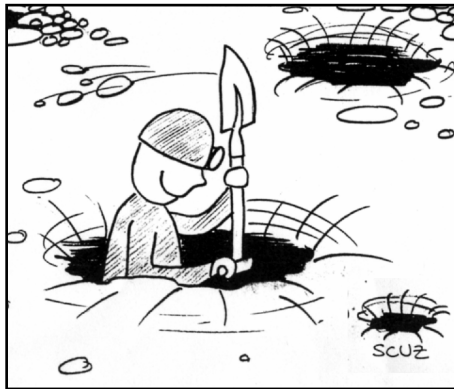


**"Reservoir Cavers": Tony, Jackie, Oliver, CVPete, Pants, Scuz, Alva (ME)**



**Jos calibrating the GPS on the plateau (ME)**

## Small Caves: The search (for the Grail) continues



In the first week of the Slovenia '95 expedition, the plateau was systematically combed in its entirety for evidence of caves, largely re-doing work carried out in 1994. This was necessary since an accurate map showing the location of potential cave entrances had not been made and it was impossible to say which entrances had been pushed and exhausted of leads and which had not been explored at all. This also acted as a familiarisation exercise with the plateau landscape, since it is essential to be able to find the way back to the bivvy again in all weather conditions, particularly useful for those new to the plateau.

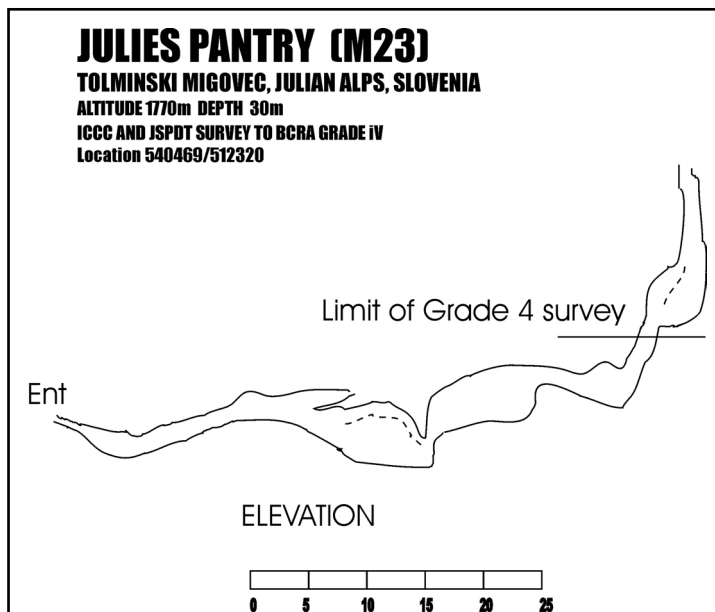
We attempted to relocate the 'blowing holes' found during the Winter Reconnaissance, some of which were marked with B numbers (e.g. B9, for blowing hole number 9). However, finding small splodges of paint in this limestone jungle was no easy task. The breathing holes that we did find turned out to be not much bigger than a fist.

Although we spent almost another week moving and splitting boulders, or chipping away at bedrock with hammers and chisels, the entrances kept choking with rubble. We seemed to be digging our own caves! To our great disappointment, all our digging efforts on the surface came to nothing.

In the meantime, there had been some success. Four caves on the edge of the mountain had started to show real promise. These discoveries are described below:

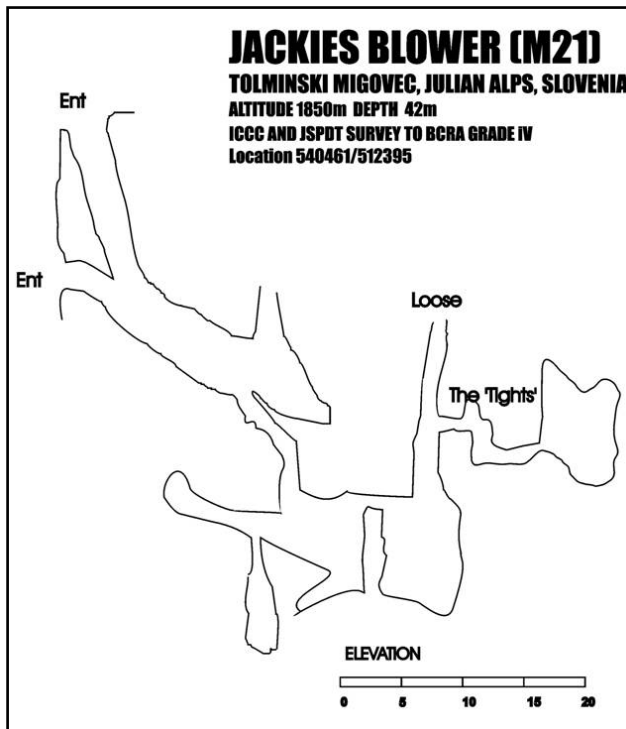
### Julie's Pantry Cave (M23)

This cave was discovered at the top of a scree slope whilst looking for the Mule Path (up the steep Western side of the plateau). Anyone attempting to reach the cave from the top of the plateau will create a high risk of dislodging boulders onto others below. Julie's Cave has very strong draught blowing through its small entrance. A short low passage leads directly to a large open chamber. Around the corner to the left, a climb up over boulders and through a squeeze (which may be bypassed through another short awkward passage) drops into a second chamber with a loose climb on the opposite side. The cave terminates some distance into the small passage beyond.



*"Jos found some more blowing holes from the recce, but they were so small we just couldn't take them seriously..... worn out and feeling low, our spirits were raised by a splendid curry from Mark."*

### Jackie's Blower (a.k.a. B9 or M21)



*"I heard a call 'below' with an extreme urgency in the tone of voice and the next thing I saw was a sofa sized bolder bounce past – a near miss!!!!"*

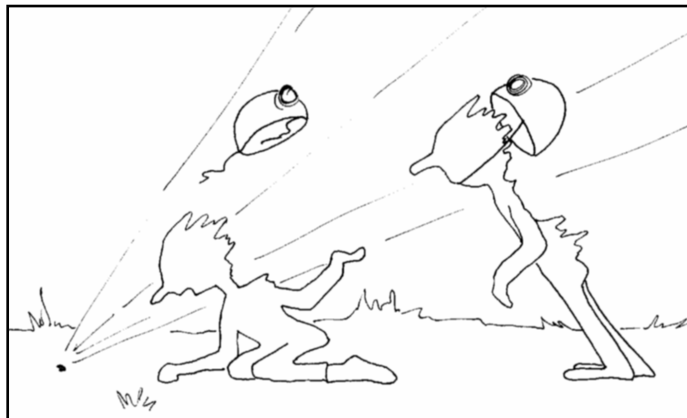
This 40m deep cave is located on the edge of the steep Western side of the plateau, about half way between the peaks of Migovec and Kuk.

At the back of the entrance chamber, a scree-covered slope (rigged) led immediately to a 10m pitch. Three large chambers led off from here. The first was entered by descending directly. Digging the sloping floor, we eventually reached the side of the cliff. Scree falling down the entrance pitch made it a hazardous place to rest! A second chamber was entered by bolting a dodgy traverse across the side of the shaft to a window about 6m above the chamber floor. Further traversing at this level (above the second chamber) for about 10m, followed by a climb upwards on loose rock, led to a narrow squeeze and a rift with a false floor. A series of several more tight squeezes (The 'Tights'), heading in the same direction, led to the final chamber, ten metres in diameter. The floor, here, is essentially a conical pile of scree, the apex of which lies below a climbable shaft heading towards the surface (deduced by the increasing amount of soil and insects as the cave is ascended).

### M25 (Gulliver's Kipper Cave) (Location 540513/512310, Height 1730)

The entrance to Gulliver's Kipper is clearly visible high above the path between the Shepherd's huts and the plateau as it winds, almost horizontally, around the distinctive face of Migovec. Access is only by climbing up steep, scree-covered rock and is not for the faint-hearted! Although the cave itself is not dissimilar to others in character, it cannot be explained how a number of rotten wooden logs came to be found just inside the entrance. A small number of bones were also found, although there was no evidence of human activity.

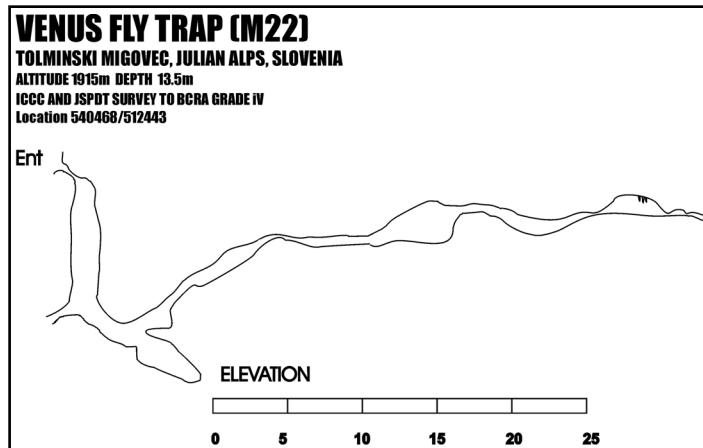
The walk-in entrance led immediately to an open, 10m pitch over an airy chamber. We really thought we'd found something here but all passages leading away from the chamber at floor level were too tight or choked, and an enclosed high-level traverse at entrance level led only to the opposite side of the main chamber. This cave was not surveyed, effort going into significant digging elsewhere.



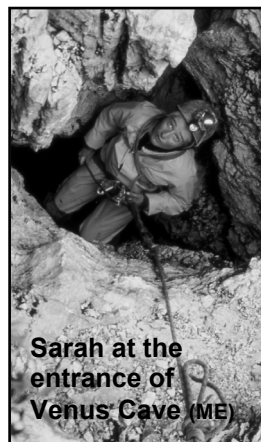


**Venus Cave (M22)**

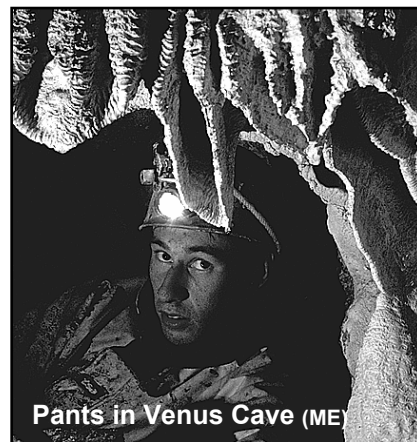
The entrance is on the extreme Western edge of the plateau just before the land starts to slope up towards the peak of Kuk. When it was found, the entrance was merely an 8cm diameter hole and was sucking air in so strongly that flies were getting trapped, (hence the name). Half an hour's excavation at the surface with a spade revealed a narrow 10m rift pitch leading off into a series of low horizontal passages.



“Quite a nice cave! Small and muddy.” Could this be the entrance to the Migovec System? We really thought so at the time. The passages were draughting but largely choked with rubble. A low crawl led to a small chamber with calcite formations, the first discovered on the Migovec plateau. Unfortunately, no way on was found, though the initial excitement was certainly memorable.



Sarah at the entrance of Venus Cave (ME)



Pants in Venus Cave (ME)

The beginning of the '95 expedition was characterised by events like these - high spirits as we thought we were into a system and then low spirits as the leads dried up.

Jim Evans



**A short return to civilisation**

**IMPERIAL COLLEGE CAVING CLUB  
SUMMER OFFENSIVE**



**OPERATION MIGOVEC '94**

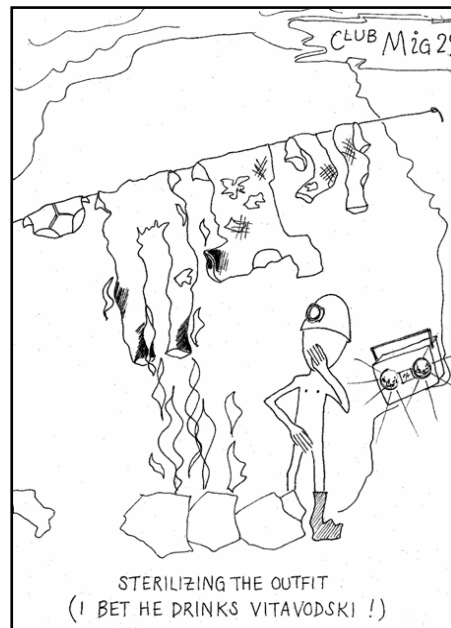
**1994 Expedition T-Shirt**

Time was passing quickly. The queue for the shit-pit in the morning was becoming a permanent feature, but turnover was quite quick. After three weeks of work on the mountain, three weeks on a diet of wholemeal chapattis and bean curry, and three weeks of loose stools, our caving clothing was in tatters. Unlike Yorkshire's caves which have been smoothed by centuries of water and decades of human bodies, these Slovenian caves were proving to be tight and sharp. Rips and tears were an inevitable consequence of this expedition's caving. Although our minds were strong and enthusiasm was high, our bodies were weak. A trek was made down the mountain to the river for a much needed wash. We then headed off for a weekend in Trieste to visit the nearest caving supplier, buy new oversuits and to find a whole load of babes on the beach.

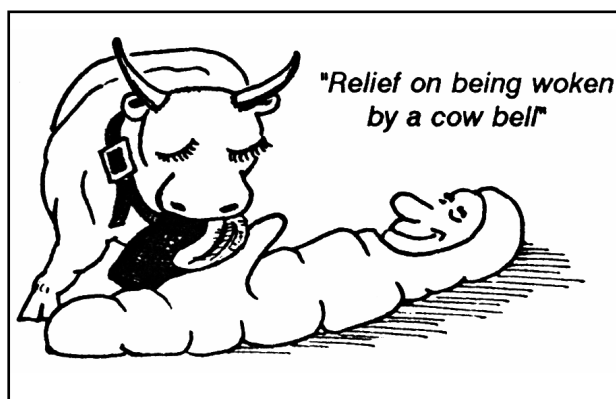
There was massive trouble getting back into Slovenia at Nova Gorica; we had no green card and couldn't afford the 200 quid they asked. So we drove to the next border crossing and here we were allowed through. The next day we heard that Croatia had attacked the Bosnian town of Knin. No wonder they didn't appreciate the 1994 expedition T-shirt at the border..... Simon Gaberšček (JSPDT) is in Tolmin waiting to get called up to fight at the front.

Back at the bivvy, tempers became slightly frayed with Alva Gossan's and Olly Mann's continual "philosifications." While the rest of us got down to stitching our tattered clothing to the sounds of a Kevin Bloody Wilson tape, Mark attempted to cremate Tonx (Tony Hayden) and himself with a Sigg bottle of petrol. Fortunately a TSA oversuit was the only casualty.

Sarah Wingrove



*"Spent the night near the roadside at Tolminski Ravne. After getting very little sleep and getting cow pats blown up your nose all night, all hope of sleep was finally dashed when the cows herded round us at 7am."*



### PF10: The way down to the Soča?

Jim and Alva were looking for blowing holes in the southern valley of the plateau...

“Hey Jim.....come and have a look at this.”

Jim went over to find Alva looking down at a pile of boulders. As he got closer, however, he could see, or rather feel, what Alva was talking about. It had a howling draught. This looked promising, although it would need some work.



Alva digging out the entrance of PF10 (ME)

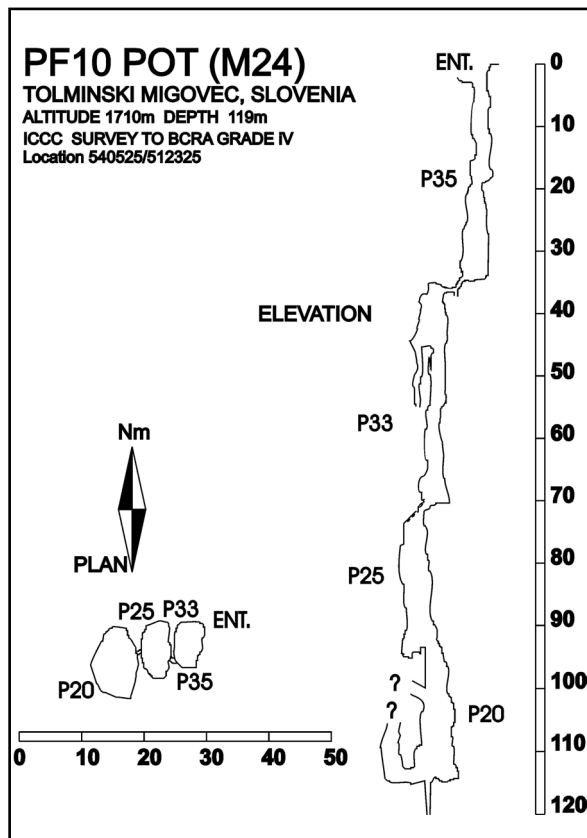
After returning from Trieste, Alva, Pants (Anthony Woods), Tonx and Olly set to work on this project, inventing new digging and boulder moving techniques as they went. After two days of hauling, a large shaft suddenly opened up below and PerFect 10 (PF10), named after a Kevin B Wilson song, became a going lead. Kicking the remaining rocks down the hole, Pants and Olly prepared to descend. Ten metres down, there was a large boulder precariously balanced between the sides of the shaft. Twenty metres down there was an ice plug. The boulder was hit repeatedly with a sledge hammer, crashing down just as the Park Warden arrived. The Warden took an interest in what we were doing, though he didn't seem too concerned that we had opened up a large hole in the plateau.

On the following trip, two hours were spent belly down on the ice clearing rocks. Eventually another pitch was found. Back on the surface, chants of “See you at the Soča” were regularly heard as the PF10 Posse argued with the Torn-T Tigers over which cave will go over the magic 1K first. Things were looking up.

Subsequent trips found a few more pitches. Each of these was blocked at the bottom. No problem, we had become demolition experts by this time. At the bottom of the fourth pitch, Alva and Tonx searched for a way on in a fairly large chamber. They found a small side chamber which was blind. But, through a boulder pile at the other end of the original chamber, there lay a possible way on. Down through the boulders, beyond a two metre flat-out crawl, there was a possible hole in the loose boulder floor. Unfortunately this lead was deemed too unstable to investigate safely.

PF10 was very cold and drippy, and, though there were possible leads, M18 was, by now, going “big time” and the end of the expedition was approaching. We decided to derig and concentrate our efforts elsewhere. So the light-hearted rivalry between fans of the two caves ended. Great fun and a thirst for exploration were certainly felt down this 119m deep pot.

Jim Evans and Tony Hayden



### The assault continues: A return to Torn-T (M18)

No real depth - that was the problem three weeks into Slovenia '95. Surface prospecting had resulted in a few promising leads (Gulliver, Jackie's, Venus) but nothing that was our highway down to the Soča river. Time for a return to Torn T-shirt Cave. The trouble was, we'd all become rather used to scouting around on the surface in the sun, and occasionally doing a bit of caving, but nothing you really needed an oversuit for, and nothing where you might end up cold and tired. Even those of us who hadn't experienced Torn-T at first hand had heard enough about it from those on last year's expedition. We knew that 'cold and tired' was exactly what to expect.

So, when the excuses had run out, the first Torn-T trip of the expedition was a rather half-hearted affair. We went in, had a look round, and came back out. The only progress was to tick off a few leads near the first main chamber, and to "set the ball rolling." First impressions were not good. We came back cold and tired, some sooner than others: Jim, Jos and Tonx rushed out, dying for bowel relief from another splendid curry, and claimed their territory just outside the entrance.

*26/7 First trip down Torn-T*  
*"For 'Evans sake we've got to widen that rift."*

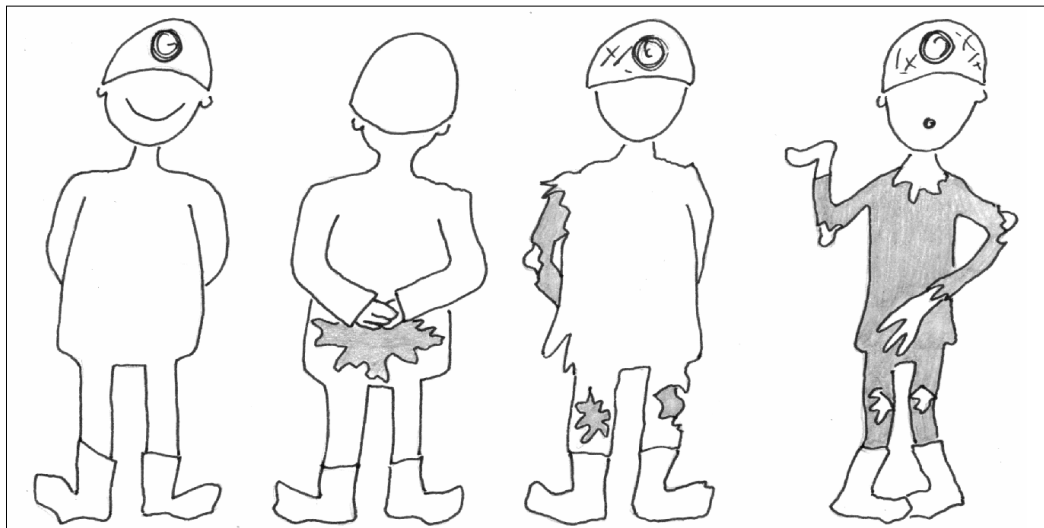
The next attempt was altogether more serious. The route through the rift had to be found again, with only a few markings on the wall to help the memories of those who had been there before. This was critical: by finding the best route, the time taken to get through the Shreddies Series fell from about two hours on the first attempt to under 40 minutes. The other objective at this stage was to check the rigging, left in situ over the winter.



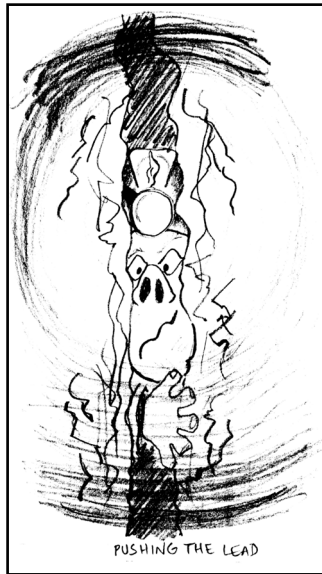
Iain in the Torn-T Entrance series (SW)

The third trip started the real work, first re-rigging some abraded ropes, then pushing on to the limit of exploration at the bottom of the rift. A narrowing of the rift together with a tight corner and lowering ceiling, combined to make it impossible to pass. Just. Hammers, chisels and "The Spike" were on hand to widen the passage, but there was room only for one person to use them. The back-up team played Cave Twister to pass the time. Perhaps a metre was gained, but progress was barred by an obstinate lump in the floor. Increasing hunger forced a return to the surface for a curry. This trip introduced us to the 'shredding' qualities of the rift - from a team of six, three oversuits were written off.

Peter Eland



### The Key breakthrough: Optimisqueeze



"It really does look like the end," was Pete Hambly's first impression at the end of the rift and who could blame him.

"It looks bloody tight," said CV Pete.

"Yes - I'll try and squeeze over the top," said Scuzzer, the smallest member of the group.

Scuzzer carried on high in the rift while CV Pete and I carried on hammering the beginning of the rift. After a while we could tell that her grunting was taking on a resigned tone.

"I'm coming back, this is getting tighter."

Once back, we discussed the possibilities - it looked like there was an alcove lower in the rift which it might be possible to squeeze into - but it looked very tight and didn't seem to lead anywhere. Anyway, we were grasping at straws and this was really the only option - it was either this or call it a day in Torn T-Shirt.

"OK, we'll hammer it a bit more and then I'll give it a go," said CV Pete.

After another ten minutes of hammering, CV reversed himself into the rift, guided himself to what looked like the widest section and started to push himself through the squeeze.

What followed was the usual series of grunts and straining associated with negotiating such places and then, after about ten minutes, it stopped.

"Are you through?"

"No I'm just having a rest - I'm getting there though - I hope this'll be worth it."

A further ten minutes of grunting and obscenities and then, "I'm through, hold on I'll just get my breath back ... it looks like there might be something round the corner."

There was a pause while he recovered from the effort.

"Yes there is another tight tube - leading down..... hold on, I'll just get some rocks to throw down, OK, here goes."

RATTLE.....RATTLE...BOOM.....BOOOM.....BOOOOM

"Jesus Christ .....it goes.....yeeees..."

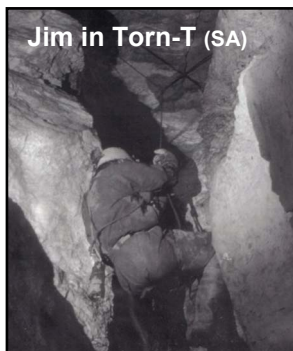
An ecstatic feeling went round the group.

The next squeeze, named Turtle's Head, needed a rope and was even tighter. However, although we only gained about 4 metres of grotty passage, this is probably my best memory from all my trips in Migovec. I think part of the reason is that it overcame a big barrier mentally and physically for us at the time - after that, all the other squeezes which we negotiated in Shreddies that year were almost a matter of course.

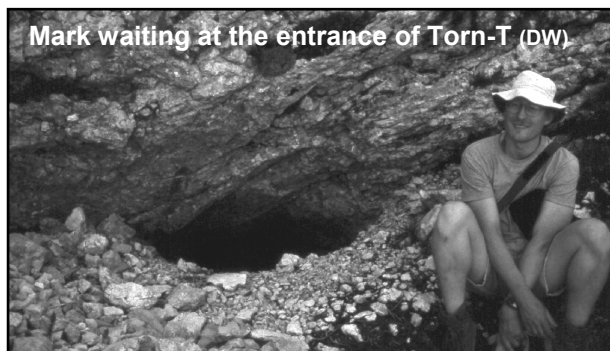


Feet in Turtle's Head (ME)

Jim Evans

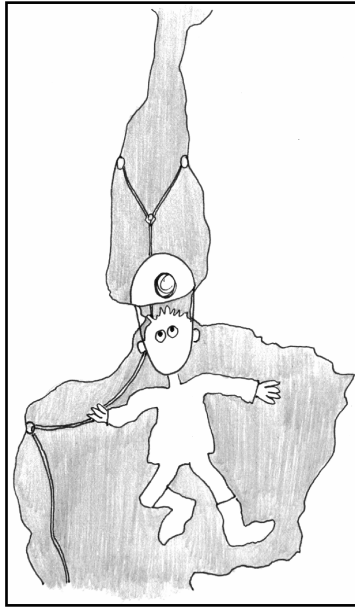


Jim in Torn-T (SA)



Mark waiting at the entrance of Torn-T (DW)

## Pushing the limits: Shreddies Revenge (Torn-T)



Eventually, almost unbelievably, I was through Optimisqueeze and crouched in a small chamber, barely big enough to turn around in (the first priority: it's nice to know you can get out once you're in!). A look around revealed the way on - a letterbox opening into darkness (Turtle's Head Squeeze). As a stone was chucked in, the team erupted in shouts as the echoes and rumbling persisted for several seconds. First wild estimates put the depth of the pitch beyond at about 50m. After a little more widening we returned to the surface to tell the others the good news.

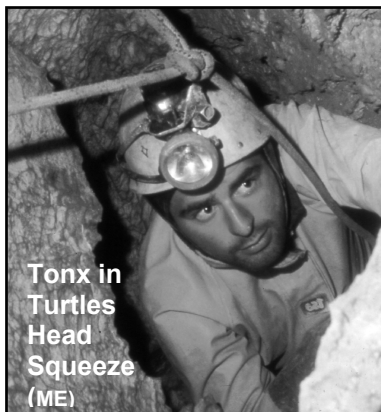
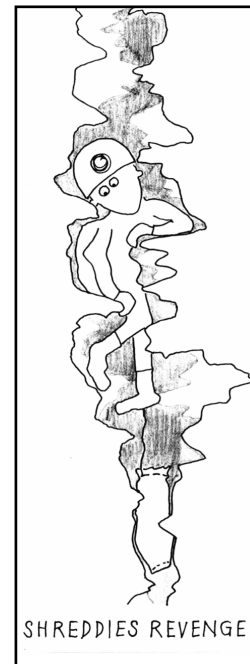
***“Found a corker of a pitch beyond an awkward wriggle and returned to the bivvy jubilant.....MORE CAVE!”***

Ropes, drill and bolting kit were carried down the next day as well as spare carbide and food for a long trip. From now on we also had to carry SRT kits through the rift, and this added to the strenuousness of the Torn-T experience. Further work widening 'Optimiski Squeeze' enabled Jim to pass through to rig a safety line for the next pitch.

With the line in, attempts to get through the opening showed quickly that it also needed attention from Hammer and Spike. Finally Oliver was through (a bit dodgy with no harness maybe but there was a ledge below the opening). He found a 5 metre free-climb to a chamber. The way on was a hole in the chamber floor. After everyone had had a look we went out with failing lights.

The next team down rigged about 30m of rope below 'Turtlehead Squeeze'. A chamber part way down the pitch was found, and in the other direction the rift gradually opened into a small, wet, flat-floored chamber, 'Fratnik's Treasure Trove'. A further rift passage led on and Haematite 'pearls' in drip pools were an additional bonus.

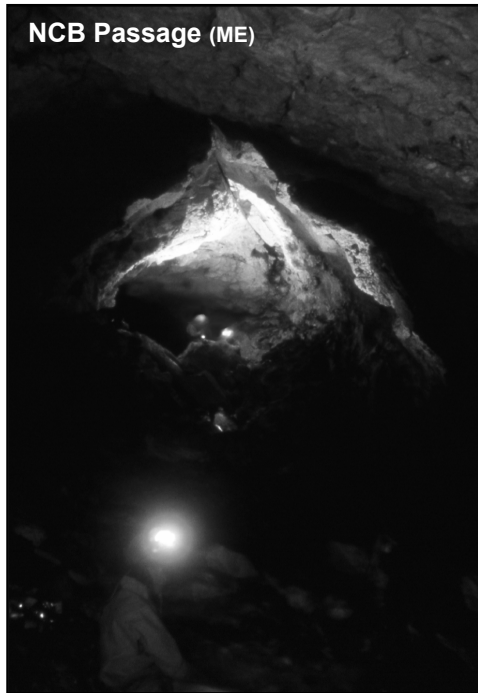
We returned to tackle this second rift, soon naming it 'Shreddie's Revenge' as Jim had left an easily-followed trail of threads from his brand spanking new oversuit. Sazza (never one to pass quietly through rifts) inched through OrSazmatron squeeze far enough to see a possible pitch opening in the floor. Another breakthrough! We were amazed by the echoes of our voices in the void beyond. However, the rift-widening process was slow and it was many hours of barbaric hammering later before everyone could get to the pitch head without needing surgery.



It took another trip to pass through this pitch head (Nutcracker). Wedged into the rift, unable to swing the hammer more than a few centimetres or even to turn my head, I spent over an hour putting in two bolts. Putting on my SRT kit while wedged precariously over the pitch, I eventually got down a 15m smooth-sided shaft that widened out to a large chamber. Yet another rift led off. After waiting in the cold for Saz to join me, I used a boulder as a natural to send the rope down a hole in the floor. After pausing to refill my carbide, I came out over a pitch so deep there was no bottom in sight. A chamber opposite also stretched off into darkness...

Peter Eland

## The discovery of NCB: “Ad augusta per angusta”\*\*



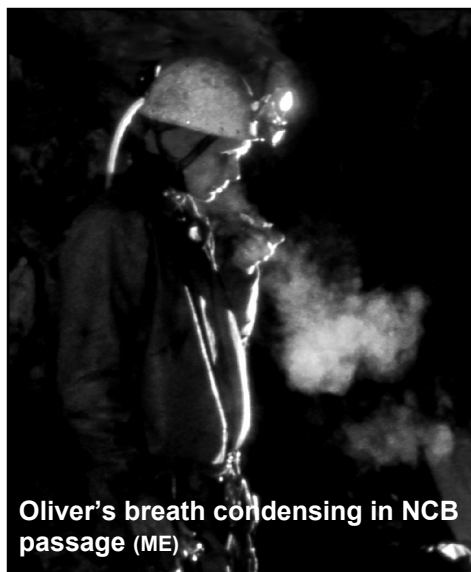
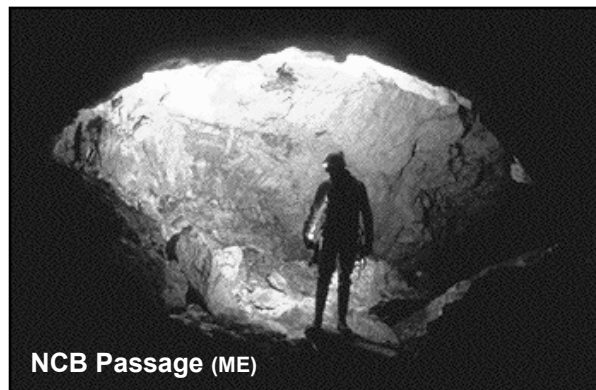
On the following trip, Mark guided me through the widest parts of the rift. I found that the easiest way to get through Nutcracker was to take my SRT kit off, squeeze through and then put it back on while straddling the pitch. Arriving at the bottom of this perfectly circular 15-metre pitch, I heard CV shout from beyond:

“It just keeps going - I think we have another 30 metre pitch here.”

Going through a tight little alcove, I came to the head of the pitch. After a while I heard “Rope Free,” from below and followed him down. Another dead end unfortunately, so we headed up the pitch looking at leads off the side. There seemed to be a large chamber/alcove at the top of the pitch. After a bit of swinging around I managed to get in.

“Hey..... this isn’t an Alcove at all, it seems to be a passage, with really black rocks, and wow..... shafts all over the place.”

At the bivvy, the news was greeted with great excitement. After all the hard work down Torn-T, we had now broken into something big and significant. We named the long horizontal passage NCB (National Coal Board). Now the leads were multiplying by the minute. A few trips later and we had crossed two traverses and had 250m of horizontal passage, but the many shafts that were distributed along its length seemed to be blind. We were beginning to run out of steam.



This was an appropriate time for a real break from the exploration and in some ways I think it's what the expedition has been missing in recent years. We took a few days completely off visiting Trieste and Postojnja Jama. We had a real laugh (with the obligatory Alva nob shots in the train etc.) ate lots of pizza, drank beer and worked out what we should do next. After long discussions, we decided that a camp in NCB passage (at a depth of -120m) would be an effective way to explore the area and would also give people the experience of an underground camp.

Jim Evans

\*\* “To great things via narrow ways.”  
(A quote at the beginning of a chapter of ‘Ten Years under the Earth,’ by Norbert Casteret).



## Touching the Void: Camping in Club Mig (NCB)

The first half of the '95 expedition had been hard, but the second half was proving to be harder. An underground camp, Club Mig, was set up in NCB passage, the most godforsaken place on earth. The air is very damp and there is a constant howling draft along the passage. On top of this, the series of rifts and squeezes between NCB and the surface are not for the faint hearted - there would be little hope of getting an injured caver out through the entrance series.

"Wooa, shhhhhit!" Thump! "Pants! are you OK?" I yelled back up the rift, "what happened?" "Phew, I'm OK, I think," Pants said in a very shaken voice. We were on our way down the rift at the beginning of a camping trip and Pants had lost his grip on one of the many dodgy freeclimbs. He fell about 3m, badly bruising his ribs and winding himself. "Do you want to carry on?" I asked, secretly hoping that he would want to go back because I'd had a bad feeling about this trip. To his immense credit he said, "We can't turn round now, we've got work to do!" Oliver was way ahead of us, oblivious to all this action.



Oliver and Pants at Club Mig (ME)

We got to NCB passage in good time, dumped the tackle bags and had the obligatory brew. The plan for the trip was to drop as many of the pitches along the passage as possible and get a feel for which, if any, were going. We reached the camp in the early evening and so got to work straight away. The first pitch we bolted down was blind with a perfectly flat rubble floor. We surveyed back to the main passage and then returned to camp for tuna and mash. This was the first camping trip for all three of us in NCB and so we were all a little apprehensive about it.

The camp was far from ideal but it was the best we could manage under the circumstances. The floor of the passage is strewn with boulders so we had only cleared a number of small individual sleeping areas. While Pants prepared dinner, I tried to take some photos of the camp for the BCRA conference. By the time we had finished a few Fox's Biscuits promotion shots and taken general squalor snaps, we were starting to shiver uncontrollably (cave photography always seems to have that effect). "Jesus! This cave is bloody freezing!" said Pants. "We've noticed," came the reply. "I wonder where that f\*\*\*ing draft's coming from?" Pants mumbled through his balaclava as he pulled the sleeping bag cord tight around his face.



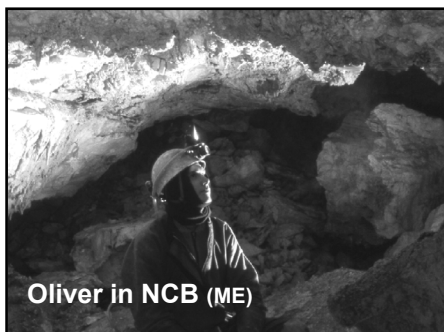
It was an uncomfortable night for me; I don't like camping underground at the best of times. I may have slept for an hour or so but not more. After a slow start in the morning we got back to work. Before returning to the eastern end of the passage we decided to head west to get an idea of what other leads there were. I took a few photos at the terminal boulder choke and we had a poke around for a way on, but it looked totally solid.

On the way back I noticed a small tube going off from the main passage heading south, near the drip where we collected water. It was up at roof height but we just managed to climb up to it. After about 15 minutes of crawling, we came to a small chamber. In the far corner there was a small circular hole into a black void! (I think that was Oliver's description, the name stuck).

Through the small hole, the darkness of 'The Void' was impenetrable. Even with the brightest light we had, all we could see was constant spray coming from higher up the shaft. Oliver eventually managed to locate some loose rocks to throw down the hole. We estimated that it was 40m deep. "Bollocks! We haven't even brought a rope," I said (we were only recceing after all and hadn't expected to get lucky).

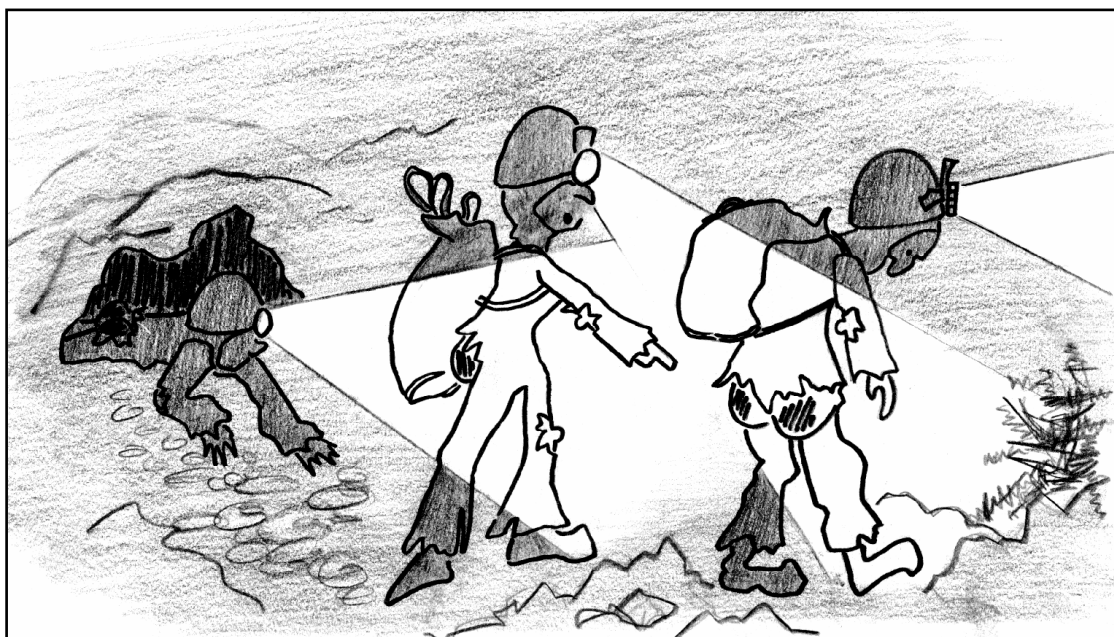
Back at the camp we sorted out the gear and decided to stick to our original plan. There was one further large shaft off NCB passage so we agreed to drop it and, if there was time, we would come back and look at The Void. We bolted down the next shaft along NCB passage to a large bouldery floor; it was a drop of only 20m or so. In one corner a small stream was running down the wall and then splashing down a hole in the floor.

Bingo! Maybe we've found a continuation we thought. We had the drill with us so I started bolting; Pants took over after the second bolt and finished the Y-hang. Placing the bolts we'd both got fairly soaked but the hang was dry and we descended excitedly. "Rope free! It's about 15m and quite big," Pants yelled from the bottom. Oliver and I followed hastily with the drill and rope. The bottom was a nice little chamber with a stream coming out of the wall and disappearing amongst the boulders but there was no way on. It had taken us several hours to come to this conclusion and none of us relished the prospect of surveying, especially as Pants and I were pretty wet and cold. We decided that, since the next group were due very soon and they would undoubtedly want to see this part of the cave, we would leave the surveying as a present for them. On expeditions since then we have realised the importance of surveying as you explore and not just being glory boys.



By the time we returned to Club Mig, Jim, Scuz and CVPete were just swinging across into NCB passage singing the 'Hi Ho' song from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. It's a great feeling to see the lights and hear the noises of other people. We sat down together and had a cup of tea, discussing what we had found; these post-mortem sessions are excellent for whipping up the enthusiasm of the fresh team...

Mark Evans



## Behind a pile of Boulders: The discovery of Godzilla

Scuz, CVPete and I met the others in NCB passage.

"We've found an underground river," said Mark with a grin.

"And also if you climb along that tube," he said point vaguely at the wall, "after about ten minutes you get to a small hole looking out onto a Void."

This all sounded very exciting. We decided to look for this Void first, but after climbing up few different holes we didn't find it.

"Maybe he meant on the other side of the passage," said CV Pete. "I'll have a look at this pile of boulders down here."

"It looks like a bit of a slippery drop, I'd better get a rope... it's becoming a bit of a pitch, hold on I'll get some rocks to throw down"

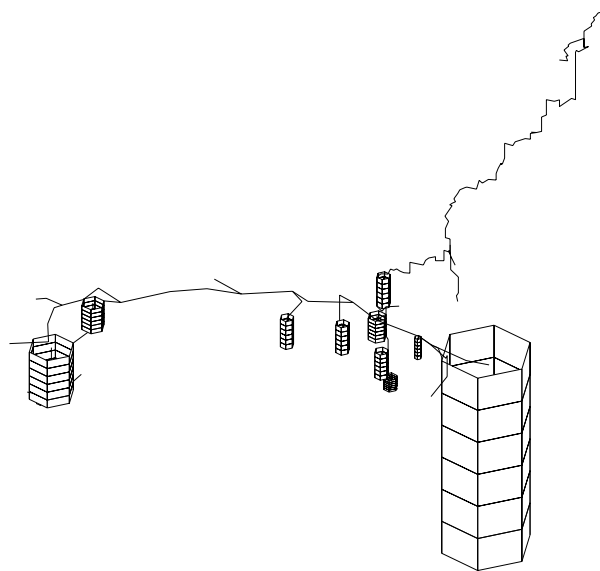
"Ok here goes"....."Distant BOOOM"

"Jeeeeeeesus Christ, that's a long way."

"Hold on I'll just time that....Ok.....1.....2.....3.....4... Boooooom."

"Bloody Hell..... that's over 4 seconds..... it must be over one hundred metres deep."

Jim Evans



## Diary Extracts '95

*18/7 Tony and Pants got up at the crack of dawn to meet the tractor that Mark and Jackie sorted out. Rest of group came down to help the carry up to the Shepherds' Huts*

*28/7 New shit pit installed considerably further from the bivvy. Someone keeps missing the pit. We suspect this to be Jim.*

*29/7 Weather really cold and wet again. The vita-vodka and vodka-soaked prunes went down a treat. The Chinese meal came up a treat!*

*30/7 Pete "no point in killing yourself" Evans solved the mouse problem by making it into a kebab.*

*8/8 Miserable day with low visibility and constant showers. PF10 deemed safe to enter and goes immediately to -30m with a snow-plugged chamber and more draught.*

*13/8 The 35m pitch in TT is bottomed and surveyed. Yet another blind shaft. Swing at top of pitch lands in massive horizontal passage (NCB). Water is becoming a problem: the barrel in M10 is not working properly.*

## Taming the beast: A partial descent of Godzilla



Jim and I had been waiting for what seemed like hours. CV had descended the pitch 'Godzilla' to see if our third length of rope, robbed from pitches elsewhere in NCB Passage and knotted to the end of the other two lengths, was touching the floor of this remarkable shaft. When he returned, a little breathless after prussiking about 60m on a freehang, he broke the news. Negative.

"Maybe another 15 to 20 metres," he reckoned.

Here, indeed, we had a scary monster! It was out of all proportion to ICC's two summers of vertical exploration on Migovec to date. But tomorrow we were packing up to go home... We did have one last rope of around 15 metres, cut from a vital traverse in NCB Passage, with which to bottom this clincher. There was bound to be another big pitch in its floor - a shaft like that just can't go nowhere. I was really excited.

"Hey boys! Who wants to rig this?" I said holding up the tatty bit of nylon.

CV was quick to reply. "I'm not doing that again."

Jim was already tucked up in his sleeping bag at Club Mig and the water for re-hydrating food was warming through. "I've done big pitches before," he said with a smirk.

"I can't believe it!" I shrieked making the whole cave shudder. "This is the biggest pitch we've found so far and you can't even be bothered to go down it!" Pause. "Well then, I'm going... back in 20 minutes!"

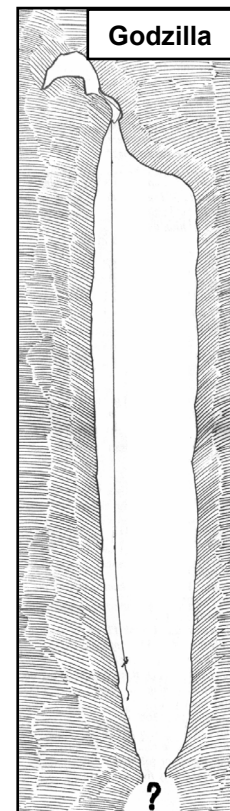
Men! I thought. With the rope at my side, I alone was determined to defeat this dinosaur. With difficulty I hauled up some slack, threaded my descender and steadily slid down the rope, mouth gaping at the magnificent smooth walls of the cylindrical shaft as I went. The top bolt faded out of sight and the first knot came into view. This must be solitude - suspended only from a ribbon of light stretching off into the dark unknown, no light but that from my carbide, no company but my own. Now I was at the first knot. I had a mental blank. How do I pass a knot?! I haven't done this for ages! I must have been there for 10 minutes or more trying to figure out what to do. Going back up was my favoured option. Finally I got it sussed, slid down, down, down to the next knot and repeated the procedure. I was sliding ever more slowly as the bounce in the rope was making me uneasy. The rope was trending towards the shaft wall and soon I had to push myself away from the wall with my feet as I went down.

The knot at the bottom of the third rope couldn't come too quickly. With my fourth and final rope securely tied onto the existing series, I dropped the free end then, with fingers crossed, I peered down into the void below. There seemed to be a ledge some distance down but the majority of the shaft was still as black as outer space. I forced a timid shout, "Ehh Ohh!" Breaking the peace was like swearing in church - the echo was addictive but a disapproving silence ensued. I gathered myself together and went back to business, descending to the very end of the rope. "Oh for Heavens Sake!" I was still dangling in thin air. I took a quick look around, noted that the ledge was still maybe another 15 to 20 metres down and started to ascend.

"There's a lot of rope bounce down here. Easy now, I think I can hear a grating noise. Don't look up... the rope's rubbing on the wall! This rope's seen better days - look at all those places where its deformed from being knotted too tightly too often. At last, a knot to pass! I can't prussik any more... No, tell me that isn't the bolt creaking. Creak. Please be gentle with me!"

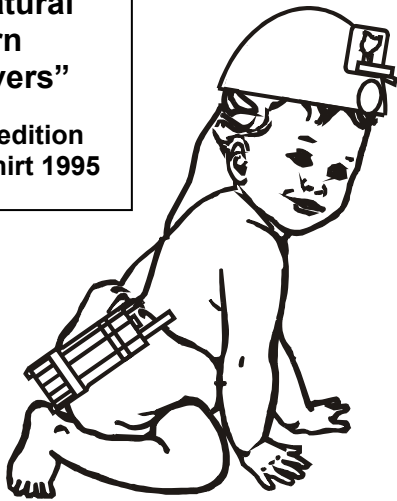
Back in the safety of Club Mig, a full hour or so later, I had to confess. "That was the most frightening ordeal of my life!" - Godzilla, I'll be back.

Sarah Wingrove



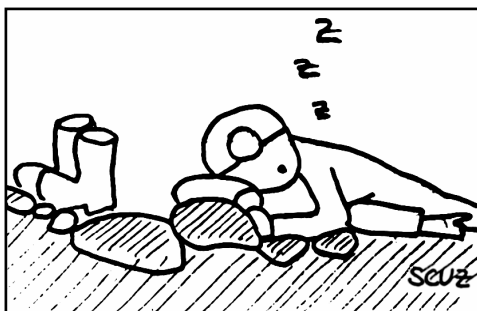
### Planning Ahead: Dreaming of Greater Depth

**“Natural Born Cavers”**  
**Expedition T-Shirt 1995**



Unfortunately, there was no more rope. The thrill of discovery and, for Saz and myself, the exhilaration of sheer terror, kept us talking late into the night, planning a return to Godzilla. When we woke up, we had morning shits in the BDH container, had breakfast (a mixture of Pasta-n-Sauce, sosmix and soup) and then lay around in sleeping bags playing I-spy...in the dark! At 4p.m., when Tony and Mark came down to help with the carry back to the surface, the ropes were pulled up from Godzilla and measured at 90m. This made Torn T-shirt 232m deep.

Leaving some equipment at Club Mig (thanks to Alva and Pants for taking out the shit BDH), we returned to the surface after over 52 hours underground. The news of our finds made a fitting finale to the summer’s caving.



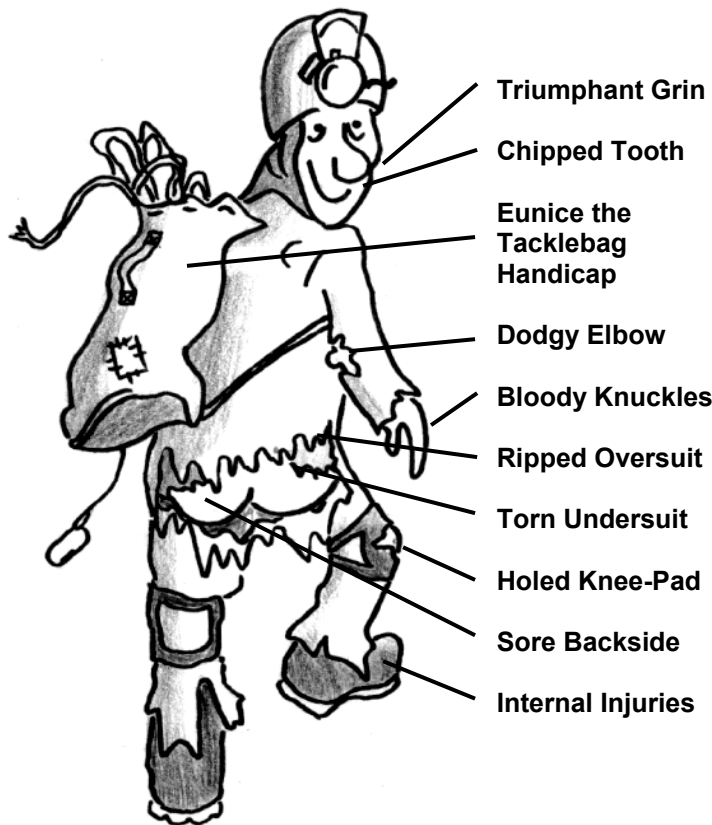
**Everyone knew that the glory belonged to the whole team, who had worked so hard over the previous weeks to extend Torn-T and to make the discovery of Godzilla possible. Things looked very hopeful for 1996.**

Peter Eland



**1995 team photo: CVPete, Pants, Oliver, Jim, Mark, Scuz, Tony, Alva**

### Anatomy of a Torn T-Shirt Caver



#### Further Diary Extracts '95

14/8 "Changed my socks for the first time in 18 days, I had grown rather attached to them."

19/8 Find a tantalising void in TT with a booming echo and sounds of water but it needs some attention with a chisel. More trips in PF10.

22/8 Many carries to the Shepherds' Huts for everyone. Frantically trying to get everything down the hill in time to meet the tractor.

23/8 Tractor arrives, perfect timing - £90 very well spent.

Sarah Wingrove

