

1999

The Adventure continues...

In 1999, there was a much higher proportion of novices than in earlier years and, for various reasons, few seasoned expedition members made it out to Slovenia, especially in the first half of the expedition. Fortunately, as we'd decided to make full use of Hotel Tolminka while it was set up in the previous two expeditions, we'd left many unexplored shafts along the large horizontal passages of Level 2 and Exhibition Road. This year, we therefore decided to push these higher level leads in a bid, not for greater depth, but to try to achieve a greater understanding of the system as a whole. Everyone on the trip could also be fully involved in the pushing...

Though it may be obvious, it's worth stating that the first-timers on one expedition very often become seriously hard cavers who take a leading role in subsequent years (as has been demonstrated time and time again on Migovec). Team work, trust, effort, discomfort and a modicum of risk combined, once again, to make this another expedition where real exploration took place (unlike 'stunts', however impressive, like walking solo across Antarctica or getting up Everest in the fastest time). Imperial cavers stood where no one had been before and, by recording and surveying over 1.5km of cave passage, increased the knowledge we have of our planet.

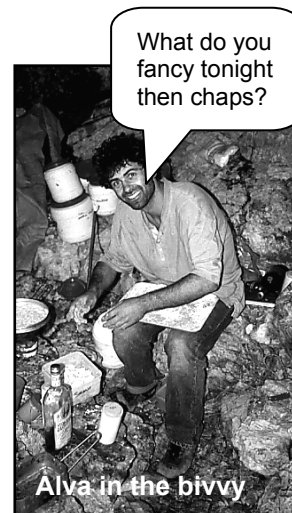
James Hooper and Clive Orrock

You live off that???

Bivvy

The following food items, stored in a wire cage (to keep them away from the mice), in white Daren drums, or in jars scattered around the Coleman petrol stove, give a good 'snapshot' of the foods that form the main staples of the expedition:

Smash, sos-mix, split peas, chick peas, dried mixed beans, dried veg., cheese sauce granules, dried egg, milk powder, split peas, butterscotch, creamed coconut, angel delight, popcorn, golden syrup, dried peas, pearl barley, tomato puree, cornmeal, porridge oats, dried onions, suet, lard, red lentils, split peas, pasta, chocolate, dried parsley, chilli powder, sage + onion stuffing, herbs and spices (vindaloo, oregano, coriander, mint, sage, madras curry, chives, basil, black pepper, madras curry, cinnamon), salt, baking powder, garlic powder, marmite, yeast, Lea and Perrins sauce, dried prunes, tomato puree, tea, herbal tea, coffee powder, spaghetti, brown rice, basmati rice, white bread flour, brown flour, chapatti flour, lime pickle, mango chutney, dried onions, angel delight mix, dried apricots, raisins, peanuts, popadoms, prawn crackers, vitaminski (powdered vitamin drink), large (cheap) blocks of cheese, jam, biscuits, cooking oil, soup powder, margarine, sugar, vodka (preferable Smirnoff Black Label), double rumski (80% alc. by volume with rum-flavouring).



Tolmin

Down in the town, however, there's the 'Jedi-list' (the Slovenian for menu is Jedilni list):

Beer, pizza, beer, ice cream, hot chocolate, ham and eggs, beer, Wiener schnitzel, Krn platter, beer, cheap red wine at the 'bar of ill repute',..... (+57s for Tetley)

James Hooper

Paradiso: “The course is set for an uncharted sea”**

While sitting round the fire in the bivvy, the cry “It goes” came bellowing across the plateau. Another team had just returned victorious. Smiles broke out on peoples faces. Wild exaggerations return as we break open another bottle of vodka. We all knew we were going down once again...



Paradiso (JE)

Over the previous few weeks, the expedition had returned to Level 2 to thoroughly investigate the remaining leads. One of these was Arian5, an exposed, vertigo-inducing, 30m deep pot that was eventually rigged down to a boulder floor. From here, a window looked out onto a huge void. On closer inspection, however, an easier bypass to this exposed shaft was found. Climbing down through boulders at the point where the rope drops in from Faulty Towers, a friendly 15m pitch led directly to the head of the same void. Thank goodness we weren't pushing this via the Torn-T entrance series! The spur of the moment decision in 1996 to play the traverse game made these relatively stress-free day trips via M16.

The void was a 70m deep monster, named Paradiso after our favourite bar in Tolmin. According to which source you use, Dante reputedly lived in/visited a cave in the vicinity, which led to the inspiration for the Inferno. “Abandon hope, all ye who enter here....” I wonder what he would have made of us, seven hundred years later, casting stones down this deep abyss, counting seconds before the sound of “crash, rattle, boom...” ?

At the bottom of Paradiso, a nasty, constricted meander soon closed down. However, a climb up led to a spacious rift and the head of another pitch, ‘the shaft of ill repute’. Sharp, protruding walls made the pitch difficult to rig. And then a river joined the shaft 30m down, making the obvious way on dangerous at worst and unpleasantly wet at best. Jim, Alva and Ben Young remained keen, however. A window was spotted. A swing led into a dry, parallel shaft. Fear and elation led to a frantic bolting session.

“I still can't see the bottom.... I'm just putting another rebelay in....”

Touchdown. It's always both a physical and emotional relief to stand once again on solid ground. Father Shed was indeed an awesome, spacious, 70m drop. Better still, a short section of tight rift broke through into a large horizontal passage. “Level 3, Level 3, it's going....” And then it closed down. Damn. But all was not lost. A small hole led to another 30m drop, named Bear Necessities after Huggy's sparse, scary, rigging. Another tantalising pitch followed, the sound of water could be heard. Alas, time was running out and so reluctantly we derigged, leaving the Paradiso series, at -420m, as a tantalising lead for the 2000 expedition.

James Hooper



Abandon Hope....
Paradiso Shaft (JE)

** Dante Alighieri's claim for Paradiso, the last *cantica* of the Divine Comedy.

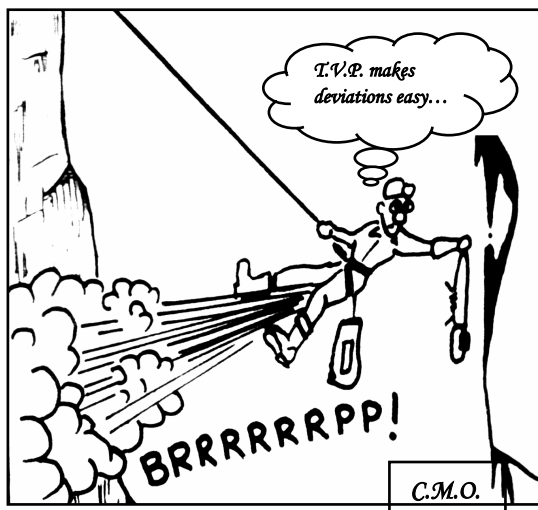
Obelix and Co.

'Nineteen': the average age of a soldier killed in 'nam. This was also my age on my first expedition to Slovenia. A few days earlier, Jim had taken Henry and me on the Grand Tour, shown us how to negotiate Gladiator's traverse and Spirit of Elvis. He'd then introduced the wonder that is Exhibition Road. Anyway, Jim had much more important things to do that day, probably involving the shit-pit, so it wasn't without a touch of the nerves that the two freshers were sent down to the bottom of Skalar (-300m) to see what they could find.

I remember my first bolt, a beautiful hang down Skalar. Scrappy (Henry's nickname, 'cause I'm Shaggy) pushed a tight and nasty crawl to a 15m pitch with a tight pitch head that I then rigged. Then there was this big black hole - 'Obelix'. We chucked a few rocks down and estimated the depth to be 1024m. More careful timing produced a slightly more realistic value of 80m. (Well, realistic to us. On arriving at the surface all claims were dismissed as exaggerations, but we showed them!) We then spent about an hour doing our first bit of surveying through the crawl. Only about 30m were added to the system, but it wasn't easy, especially as we hadn't done any before!

We returned a few days later after convincing Goaty that our lead was going somewhere. I was too scared to bolt out over the top of an 80m pitch and so, it emerged, was Goaty. I left the top of Obelix that day never to return.

Andy Jurd



Bolting Obelix

Near the end of the expedition, Jan bolted down the wide, cylindrical shaft of Obelix (spending ages carefully placing each bolt). As Shaggy predicted, the pitch did indeed turn out to be about 80m deep. At the bottom, a wide rift passage, with what looked like a pitch continuation, was left as a good lead for 2000.

James Hooper

Recipe Corner: Chapattis

Ingredients: plain wholemeal flour; pinch of salt; butter or margarine; water

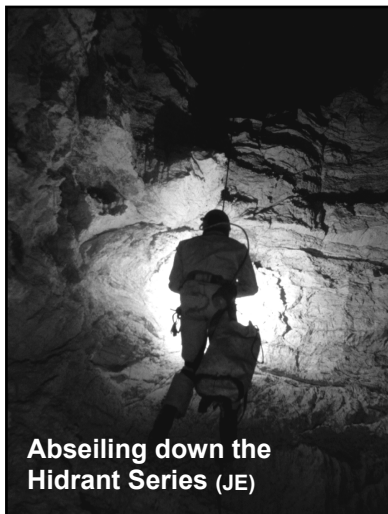
Stir flour and salt together in a bowl. Rub in butter until the mixture resembles fine bread crumbs. Add sufficient water and then mix into a stiff dough. Knead on a lightly floured surface (e.g. the top of any Daren Drum that doesn't contain powdered cow). Leave the dough to rest while you make tea, roll a cigarette, kill a mouse etc. Then divide dough into lumps and roll out each piece into 15cm diameter circles (6 inches is also acceptable). Light the stove and wait until flames die down to a reasonable height. Fry chapattis for approximately 3 minutes in a hot pan until lightly browned. (The use of a Le Creuset cast iron frying pan is highly recommended). Chapattis are ideally served with cheese and lime pickle though jam or marmite make decent alternatives. Advantages: good source of carbohydrate; excellent food to weight-carried-up-hill ratio; making a large batch is an acceptable way of putting off going caving. Making these is also the only known way of properly cleaning your hands on top of Mig.

James Hooper

Resurveying the Hidrant: Searching for missed leads

It's interesting how perceptions and attitudes have changed over the years. By 1999, a prevailing view was that re-rigging down to below -400m seemed like nothing. To a self confessed aficionado/fanatic of the system however, it was fascinating to abseil down into yet another of the cave's secrets, reconfirming once again that the mountain is truly hollow...

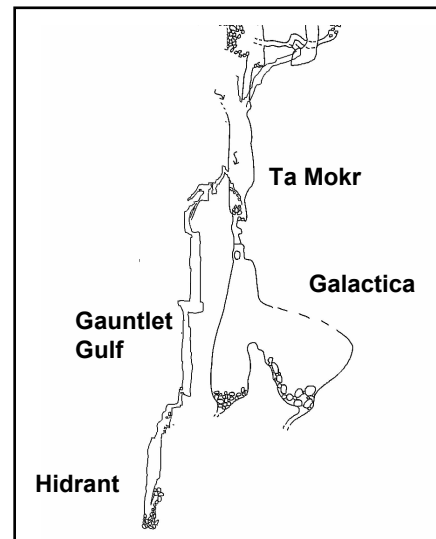
The Hidrant series was pushed by the Slovenians in the early eighties to a depth of -547m, and received its name (from Fratnik *et al.*) after a spout of water suddenly started flowing out of the wall in an otherwise dry section of cave. (There was a storm outside at the time). The series remained off our survey though - after a determined search we realised that the data and original drawings had disappeared over the years. We decided to fill in this blank, adding to our knowledge of how the known system fit together. There was also the hope that a Hotline-type lead remained to be found, ignored in a push for depth.



Abseiling down the
Hidrant Series (JE)

By the time I joined the expedition, most of the series was already rigged. Jim and I set off to survey and finish the job off. Now, for some reason, Ta Mokr has always scared the shit out of me and I was glad to finally shout "pitch free". I was less happy about the 50m scramble up loose boulders that followed. At the top, a short climb down followed by a traverse over a blind 5m pot led to the start of the Hidrant series. Beyond a small section of rift, two consecutive 10m drops broke out at the head of a fine 40m shaft into a chamber. Alas there was only one way on. In the corner of the chamber, a narrow fissure led straight to the 'Gauntlets Gulf' pitch head. This was initially narrow but ten metres down it opened up into a sizeable shaft. We searched for a way on at the bottom. Where were the rusty bolts? A short drop through boulders, followed by a small crawl, led to yet another pitch: more re-bolting was needed...

The pitch started with an awkward take-off of the sort that gives you a momentary "Is my harness done up properly?" panic. After passing over a steep boulder slope, the last 30m was pleasantly vertical. The bottom of the shaft was a steep and precarious boulder slope that had, for me, an eerie feeling about it. Perhaps because I knew that a long time ago someone had been here before. Perhaps it was because the whole series was unnervingly quiet with no draught or water. Perhaps it was just that sort of chamber. Now at a depth of about -450m, it felt very deep and a long way from the bivvy. In fact it seemed a long way from anywhere - it was hard to imagine that this was the same cave as NCB, the Hotel, FA999... We searched for leads and the way on but couldn't find anything. There seemed to be a possible continuation beneath the boulder floor but it looked far too dangerous and unstable to attempt.



"Jim, shall we start to derig and survey out?" "Yeah OK."

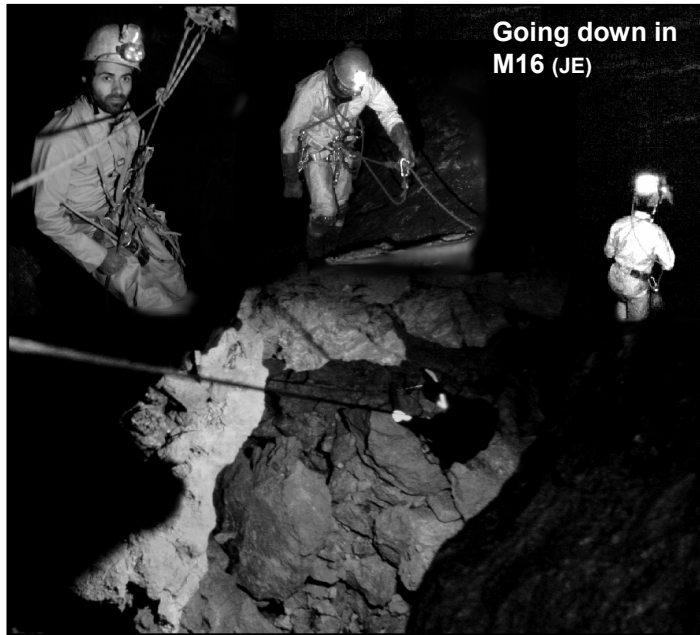
Speaking to JSPDT members afterwards, it seems that this was, indeed, the way on, leading eventually to two parallel shafts, 'The Shaft of Rotting Socialism' and 'The Shaft of Rotting Communism'. Perhaps these names were the reason we were unable to find any written records...

James Hooper

Fun and Games: Other leads in the system



Bolting up in M16 (JE)



Going down in M16 (JE)

With the persistence of a goat trying to get at an old wet-sock, Goaty and others explored and surveyed around 100m of twisting rift passage, named Spiny Norman, starting from the bottom of Brezno Strahov.

Zebra passage, a rift at the western end of NCB passage was pushed, by Jan and Tetley, through a constriction to a wide undescended pitch - Leki Pot. Light failure caused them to leave this lead and skulk out of M18 (like Gollum in the Lord of the Rings).

Finally, with great enthusiasm, aid climbing techniques were used by Jim and others to climb a 20m shaft, Ghengis Khan't, between Mig country and Titanic in Level 2. The head of the pitch led immediately to another 15m pitch further down with no obvious continuation. Climbing up from the initial pitch head led to a further aven that would require more bolt climbing to progress.

James Hooper

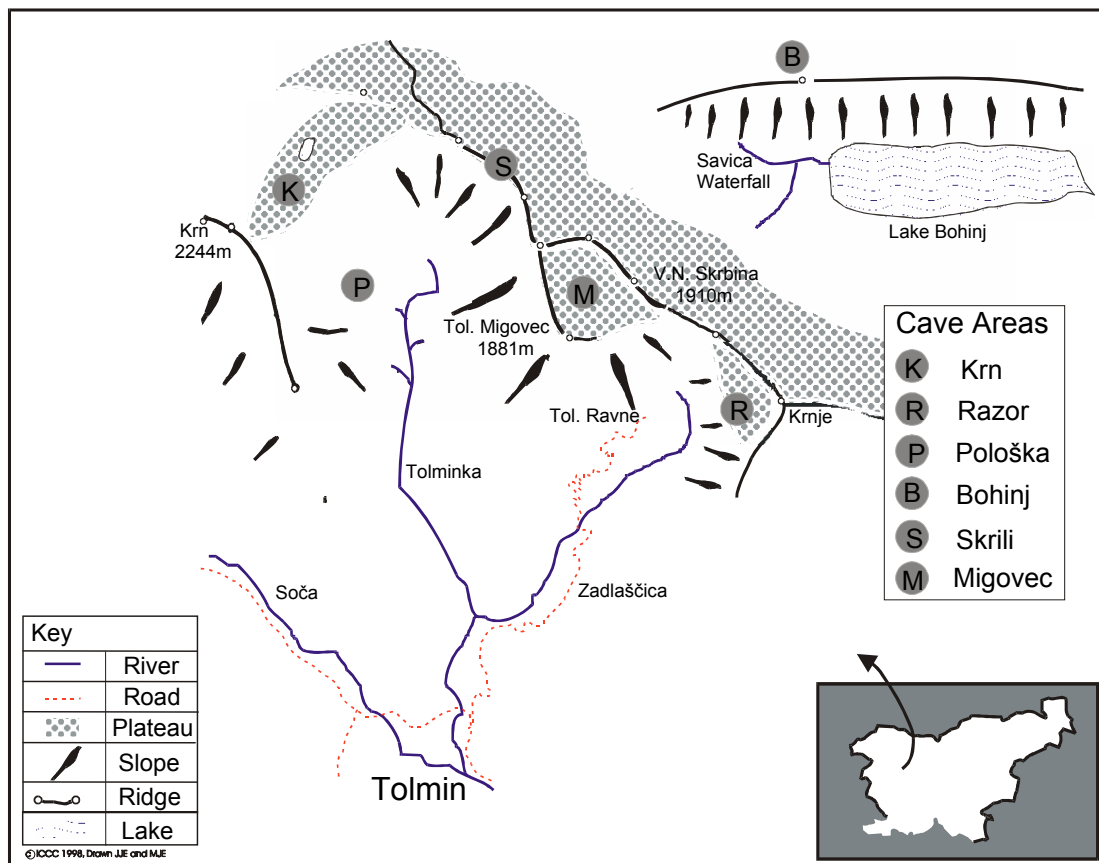


1999 group photo with the Red Van and the Klobučar Family (JE)

Dye Tracing: The mystery of the resurgence

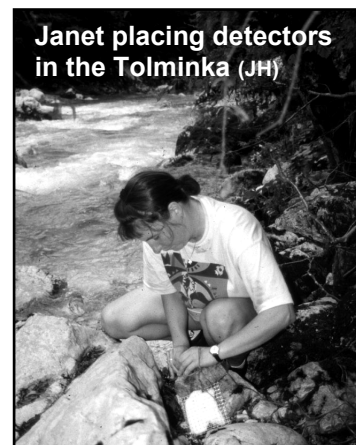
“Look at them, looking for caves, and look at them when they find water in the caves, what they are really looking for... is alcohol.” Groucho Marx

The three resurgences in the area are the Tolminka river, the Zadlaščica river, and the Savica. The first two have small multiple resurgences, the water seems to seep though a layer of gravel (Pološka Jama resurges half way along the Tolminka valley on the west side). Both the Tolminka and the Zadlaščica join the Soča river, which then flows into the Mediterranean. The Savica resurges from a cave 5.25km to the NE (alt 775m), pouring immediately into the valley below as the famous Savica waterfall, before flowing into the deep, glaciated Lake Bohinj. From here, the water flows out as one of the main tributaries of the Sava river, eventually joining the Danube and flowing into the Black Sea.



Schematic map showing the location of the rivers in relation to the Migovec Plateau.

Over the years, hours have been spent attempting to determine the resurgence(s) for the system. On each occasion, about 2 litres of optical brightener was released and detectors (cotton wool in chicken wire - nicknamed 'Zupons') were placed in various locations as detailed below. The advantages of optical brightener are that a positive result can be detected in the field (using a UV lamp) and that there is no possibility of turning any rivers bright green. (There are too many tales of this occurring by mistake in other areas of Europe and, though it always makes a good story, we were anxious to avoid jeopardising our position with the Slovenian authorities). Care was taken to avoid contamination. Although no conclusive results were obtained, for completeness, the following is a record of attempts made.



1996: Optical brightener placed at base of Ta Mokr. Detectors were placed in the Zadlaščica and Tolminka resurgences. Faintly positive results were obtained from some of the detectors in the Tolminka but not in Zadlaščica river. (No clear conclusion, contamination possible)

1998: Optical brightener placed at Marwood Inlet. Detectors were placed in the Zadlaščica and Tolminka resurgences. No positive results, after 3 days and after 4 weeks.

1999: Optical brightener placed at Bikini Carwash. Detectors were placed in the Zadlaščica, Tolminka and Savica resurgences. A faint positive connection was made with the Mala Savica resurgence, but not to the other two rivers. (Possibility of contamination - the Dom na Komni Refugio is located nearby).

2000: Another attempt was made but due to continuous rain all detectors were washed away!

2001: Optical brightener placed at Hotel Tolminka. Detectors were placed in the Zadlaščica, Tolminka and Savica resurgences. A faint positive connection was made with the Mala Savica resurgence, but not to the other two rivers. (Again there's a possibility of contamination from the Dom na Komni Refugio).

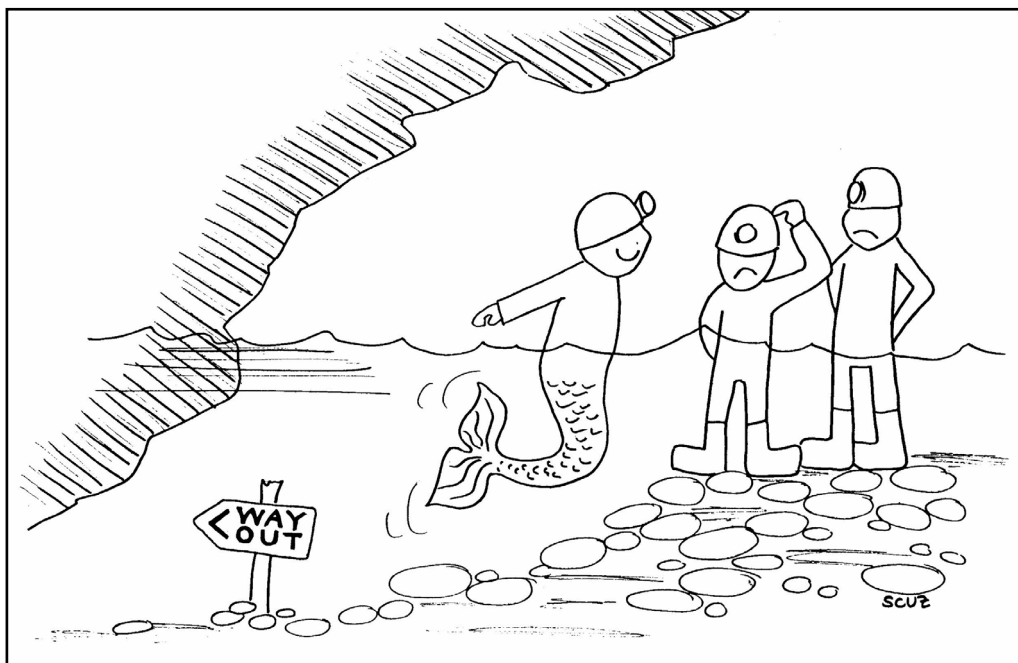
To further complicate matters, it is of course possible that water in different parts of the cave (eg. Ta Mokr, Rock & Roll and Hotel Tolminka) resurge at different places. Further studies need to be done (possibly with coloured spores - perhaps as a joint project with Slovenian cavers).

In 1996, Janet took a large number of water samples from various locations in the cave and along the Zadlaščica and Tolminka. Tests were done on these samples, measuring their pH, conductivity and bicarbonate concentration. There was only a very small variability in these measurements and unfortunately nothing can be deduced from them.



Janet with water sample in the bivvy (1996)

James Hooper



X marks the Spot: The Survey Project

“All the most exciting charts and maps have places on them that are marked ‘Unexplored’.” Arthur Ransome, Swallows and Amazons, 1930

By 1996, the importance of an accurate and complete survey was apparent to all - being instrumental in finding the connection and making a cave system. It also became obvious that the survey itself was becoming a major project in its own right.

Above ground surface surveying was done to determine the locations of the entrances. As the plateau caves are in close proximity to each other, this was found to be more accurate than using a GPS system. Underground, an evolving network of permanent survey stations (PSSs) was established (pieces of paper with names and dates, or bolts or carbide marks on the wall) and an ethos of “surveying what you find and tying into each trip into a PSS” was instilled. A laptop computer at the bivvy (powered from a car battery which was charged by solar panels) allowed us to see the results of our efforts soon after the trip. Indeed, surely no expedition member will ever forget those mesmerising moments, sitting round the fire, drinking Vodka, watching the survey rotate on the screen.

Right from the start we used the Survex programme written by Olly Betts. Each survey trip had a name (e.g. Migcon) and a Survex file with the same name was set up. Each survey station was then prefixed by the file/trip name (eg. Migcon.4 was station 4 of the Migcon survey). The files also included information on who was on the trip, the date the trip occurred, location of Permanent Survey Stations (PSS) & other information. A system of PSS cairns was also instigated (with waterproof notes detailing date, persons on trip and specific identity) which enabled sections of new cave to be tied into the main survey many years later.

By “reading back” the data, we ensured that no transcribing errors occurred when typing the data in and the ability to see the line survey in the field allowed us to check for “blunders” such as mistaking a back leg for a forward leg. (In 1996, due to problems with the batteries, Survex was run in BASIC and there was only just enough time to watch the survey rotate before we ran out of power!). As the survey grew, the cave was divided up into areas in order to keep the files organised sensibly. A certain degree of organisation/dictatorship was also needed on each expedition to ensure the original notes were filed for later use.



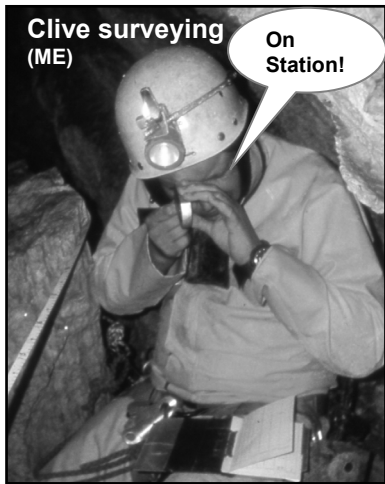
The first benefit of the survey was as a tool for exploration. The ability to see a main line in the field aided exploration on several occasions, most notably when making the M16/M18 connection, and helped us to understand the system as it was explored.

Clearly the survey also serves as a permanent record of our discoveries following the dictum, “No exploration without documentation”. While thousands of people mourned the death of Princess Diana in 1997, soon after the expedition returned, a group of ICCC cavers were taking part in the annual survey weekend at the Evans’ house. Here, a full survey showing passage names & detail was drawn up each year.

Originally, we drew the passage detail by hand around the main line (printed from Survex), traced this, scanned it in to the computer and then added passage names. Soon, however, the survey grew too large for bitmaps (and extended elevations) and we changed to a vector system (and a West-East projection), importing the survex data into ‘CorelDRAW’ and then using a tablet to draw in the passage detail.



**Martin and Clewin
entering survey data (ME)**



Clive surveying (ME)

On Station!

'CorelDRAW' had the advantage of having different layers so we could have one layer with the main line, one layer with the passage detail and then different layers for the Slovenian and English versions of the survey produced each year.

Of course, it is not true to say that the final drawn survey is an extremely accurate representation of the cave, complete with full passage detail. Although we always aimed for BCRA grade 5, the survey, undertaken by a large number of cavers over the years is not as accurate as could theoretically be achieved - but it's certainly good enough. Our biggest loop, through the tortuous M18, out via M16 and back along the surface had an error of 1.33% over its length of 745.54m, small enough for me at any rate!

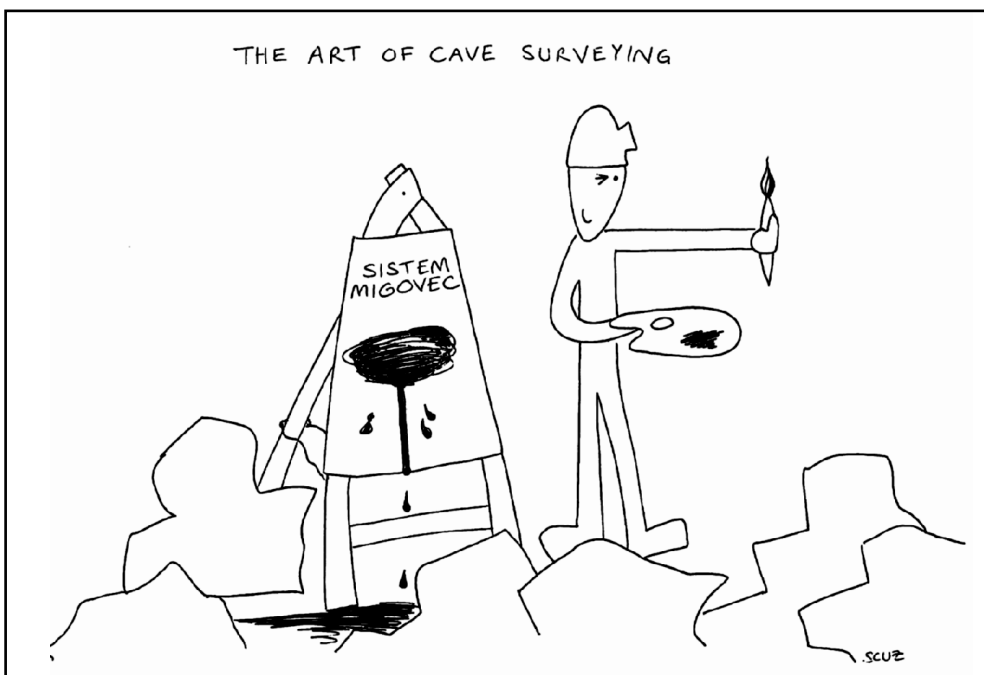
Over the years, a large amount of time has also been spent resurveying parts of the cave that had been found by the Slovenians. M16 was completely resurveyed down to Galactica and the Hidrant. Fortunately we were able to obtain a large drawn up survey of M2 with each station marked on the map and so we regenerated this data without having to enter this area of the cave (reputed to be wet and tight.) The survey for each year thus shows our knowledge at the time, so for instance, although the Hidrant was found in the 1980s, it doesn't appear on the survey until 1999.



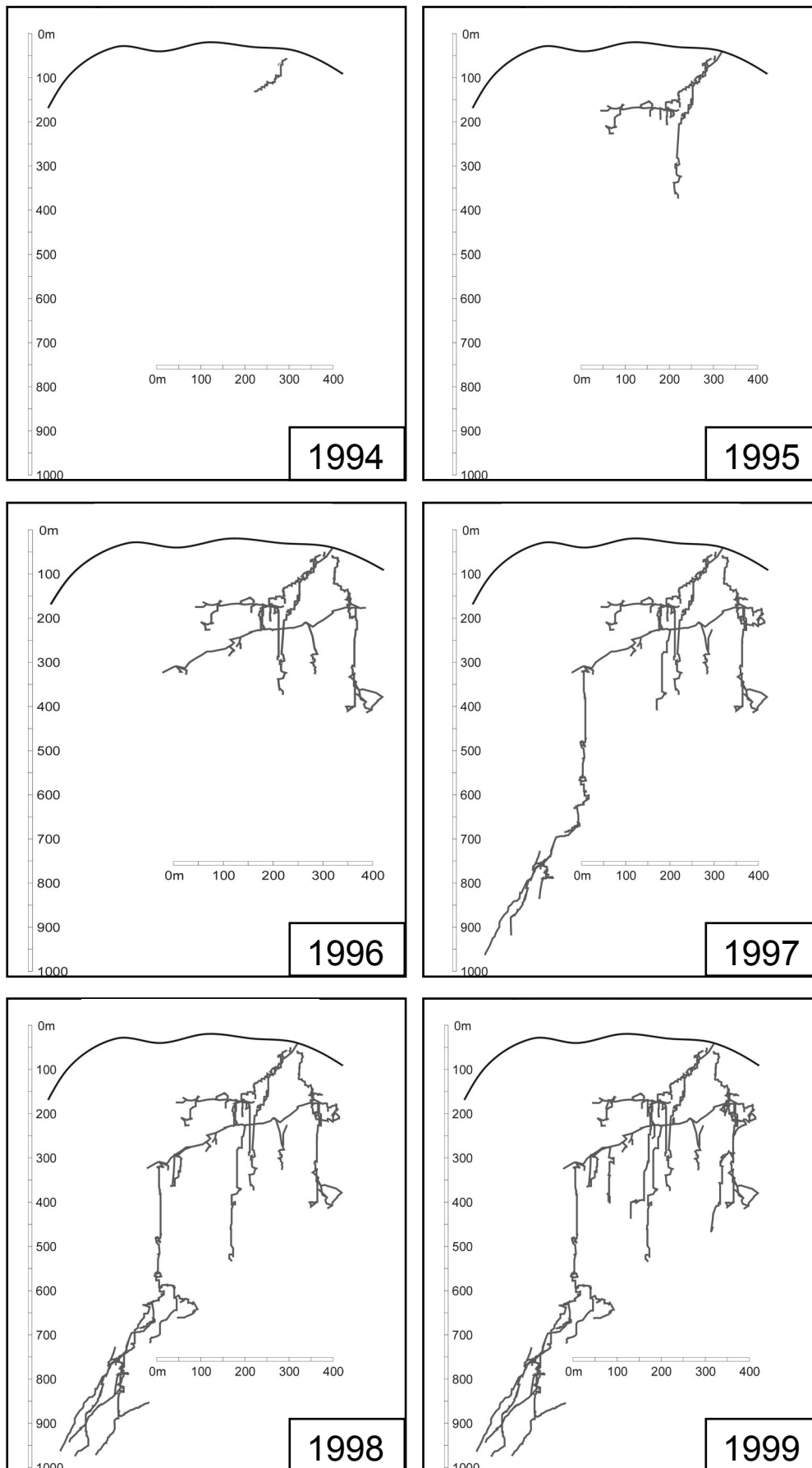
Martin and Shed with Solar panel and laptop (ME)

Finally, a few facts. By the end of the 2001 expedition, the system survey contained 1823 stations. The total length of the 1823 survey legs was 12956m, the total plan length was 7959m, the total vertical length was 7499m and the vertical range of the system was 967m. By 2002, system Migovec was both the sixth deepest and the third longest cave in Slovenia.

James Hooper



The Hollow Mountain: The Development of a Survey



They must invent not just explore...

On the top of Migovec,
underneath an old rock bridge,
sit potholers from I C 3
making plans and drinking tea.
It might appear they're lazing round,
delaying going underground.
But looks, you know can cause deception,
fertile thoughts deserve a mention.
To go where no-one's gone before
they must invent not just explore...

In ninety five, to save on weight,
they brought dried food to re-hydrate.
To obtain vital H₂O,
they placed some drums under the snow.
The plan was then to use a pump
(an idea surely hard to trump).
But, looking back, it's appalling
the time it took till a tarpaulin
was used to catch precipitation
avoiding the great irritation
of descending to the bottom
of M10 and pumping often.

Another cause of some frustration
was the lack of a location
good enough to find once more
the caves they found in ninety four.
And so a G.P.S. system
was early on employed by them
(though on the recce they weren't told
that batteries quickly fail when cold).
Mig was methodically criss-crossed
but how to avoid just getting lost?

String to the caves - quite good I say -
though underground it's so passé...
Yet down Torn-T, on every trip,
each wrong turn would cause a rip.
A further detour from the route
would quickly shred the over-suit.
Now after much deliberation
on how to change the situation,
a neat solution was conceded
a trail of blood was what was needed...

Foul smells were constantly emitted
from the pit where they all shitted,
and the place got even dire
as the dung piled that much higher.
And so they stopped throwing bog roll
down that fly-infested hole
and instead they burned it in
a stove made from a metal tin.
(To keep the germs under control
They then washed hands in strong Dettol).

Grinning with the satisfaction
of knowing bowels have been in action,
Clive looked around this well-trod cleft
to find, one day, no paper left.
And, by now, you'll understand
why there was nothing second-hand.
This, plus the smell of underarm,
quite rapidly caused much alarm.
"It's been a while, oh dear gosh,
I've been four weeks without a wash."
How did he clean his dirty arse?
By rolling naked in the grass...

In ninety six, a fine laptop
was obtained - but how to stop
Alva's great inventive brain
from writing a computer game
and using all the solar power
flattening batteries hour by hour?
By talking of philosophy,
unleashing days of sophistry...
Although this made them quite irate
at least they saw the cave rotate!

It's very tricky to believe
the next contraption to receive
their attention one year later
a super sonic bat detector.
"No more digs in scruffy holes -
that's for goat-men and for trolls.
We'll lie around and drink vodski
and then at night you all will see
the caves we find, too big for man."
This really was a cunning plan.
The bats, alas, but such is fate
just would not co-operate.
The cavers though they couldn't lose,
for they got drunk on all the booze.



Now For Something
Completely Different...

Fresher recruitment poster

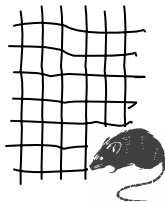
Now, of course, with all this drinking
they were certain to start thinking
"There must, there must, just be a way
to make it simpler to survey."
And so it was that Shed did glean
of a helmet-mounted-laser-beam.
No more compass, tape and clino,
one quick ZAP and hey, presto!!
But once again there was a snag
The helmet had a large price tag
And up on Mig they weren't assured
that the helmet was insured.



Underground communication
led to much deliberation
thus with great enthusiasm
they put a wire down the chasm
and carried down a radio
to Exhibition Road you know.
All in all a fine conception
despite a lack of clear reception

Another year they did decide
to put an end to stones that slide
at sonic speeds, quite obscene,
down the top of M16.
Some chicken wire was acquired
and then some action was required
to put in place the new stone traps
and stop rocks falling on their caps.

"But Halt!" - the thinkers did expound,
"that means going underground!"
This led, you see, to much discourse
on how to use the new resource.
Without much fuss (and like a sage)
Dave built a giant mouse-proof cage
and sometime later by the fire
Ben made a handy deep-fat fryer.



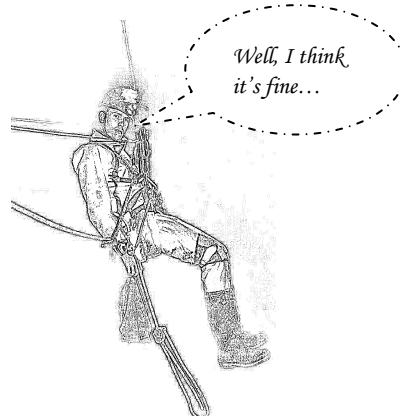
Not content with deep-fried cheese
Donuts and onion bhajis,
they used their intellectual might
to satisfy their appetite.
Clew' made fresh bread in the morn
and at night they munched popcorn
(if there was any left to scoff
a certain faction liked "Lid Off").

There were some errors too, of course
like chicken soup with chocolate sauce
and, for sure, far more dramatic
a Twix bar caked in battery acid!
Andy found a way to bake
gorgeous double-chocolate cake
And what went with this fine gâteau?
Ben brewed some wine - 'Chateau
Plateau.'

Ninety seven - at the Hotel
shivering, in darkness total,
it was too cold to get much sleep
(essential when you push down deep).
And so they thought, "Oh flipping heck
let's try and scrounge some Polatec."
This they did - they made warm clothes
and extra pits to aid repose.
So the camp became too warm
and lying in bed became the norm.
Slippers lined with trusty duck tape
made it harder to escape
the nasty, horrid, awful shock
of putting on your cold wet sock.

Now Gladiators was a pain,
you went on down then up again.
And so the cavers did converse
and planned a monster straight traverse
Down to Tolmin where some wires
were bought for a sum of Tolars
these, plus extras for the drill
and bolts and clamps went up the hill
then Mark (a doctored engineer)
went down Sys-Mig with all the gear.

He put in place a huge zip-line
declaring, "Well, I think it's fine,
but then again, perhaps it's best
to leave for someone else to test."
No-one really felt so brave
Till Huggy soloed out the cave.
He was, hurrah, in naive bliss
for the shop owner had said this -
"If it should break under the strain
you must, of course, return again."



In ninety nine, they were not bored
 for they'd a camera to record
 events up top and down below
 and (in case you didn't know)
 the cavers also ran the risk
 of being taped on minidisc.
 These efforts didn't come to much,
 conceivably as life is such...
 But opinions are divided
 for recording coincided
 with Jim's early disposition
 to become a great musician
 (his first "toot-toots" on the recorder
 quickly led to mental trauma).

In June of the millennium
 it chucked it down 'ad nauseam'
 So they used their giant brains
 to try to stop the monsoon rains.
 First, a sun dance to the Gods
 this led to hail - against all odds.
 They then tried gastronomic art
 to try to make the cavers fart
 but generation of methane
 soon proved, alas, to be in vain.
 (Three days work to build an oven,
 one bun later, it was trod on).

It was so tough just keeping warm
 (as flames were doused by every storm)
 that in order to stay drier
 they then placed carbide on the fire...
 An almighty detonation
 Didn't change the situation
 and so they dreamed (as things got dire)
 of a dehumidifier...

Plans were drawn, page by page,
 but they never reached the stage
 where they were ready for defiance
 of those trusty laws of science.
 For while they thought, they drank rumski
 (double rum and herbal tea)
 and so, you see, they did forget
 that all their clothes were soaking wet.
 and thus (when truly, deeply pissed)
 declared "the sun does not exist."

Now those with a mere arts degree
 might say, "just learn from history
 - you're better off to bolt by hand
 leave power tools in dear England.
 Underground they often fail
 you carry them to no avail.
 Drills like the mighty 'El Chorro'
 will only ever cause you sorrow.
 and there's far more satisfaction
 using your own hammer action."
 Now yes, perhaps all this is true
 and 'wrist-action' is best for you
 but why miss out on the great thrill
 of stirring sauce with petrol drill?



Now years ago an old platform
 was used to help Jim to perform
 a dodgy climb up the cave wall
 alas it hardly helped at all...
 But know I'm told that coming soon
 they're planning an aven balloon
 No crazy bolting up the hole
 it'll all be done remote control.

So if on top of Migovec,
 underneath an old rock bridge,
 in a depression you should see
 those potholers from I C 3,
 don't think that they're just lazing round,
 delaying going underground.
 To go where no-one's gone before
 They must invent not just explore...

James Hooper

"Arriving in thick mist around lunchtime, the ascent had taken its toll. The bivvy had a ghostly feel to it, but still it felt like a sort of homecoming. Soon the fire was on the go, and some bread was freshly made by the time the missing inhabitants of this rocky moonscape appeared out of the gloom. The sun broke through, and I sat on the grass up top, and watched and greeted and surprised all the people I had given my ultimate trust to over the past number of years."

Iain M°Kenna (arriving at the bivvy days after having plaster removed from a broken leg)

System Migovec Survey 1999

