

2005

In 2004, the underground camp in Gardeners' World led to an enormous amount of horizontal extensions at a depth of around -800m. However a feeling that the deep leads were slowly shutting down motivated a concerted effort to find new cave entrances, and think once more about the myriad of unexplored leads in the shallow sections of Gardeners' World, System Migovec and other smaller caves such as U-Bend.

Everyone that made it up to the Bivvy, from fresher to Auld Old Lag, found something new on the plateau. A new series of cave entrances were designated the K-series for Kuk, though in truth the majority of them were actually found on a newly explored miniature plateau below Podriagora. The intention of this systematic exploration was to find the 'missing' cave systems of Migovec. The huge drainage basin must drain somewhere and the underground streams found so far cannot account for all the water that must find its way down beneath the plateau. The folded nature of the limestone is very clear from the cave surveys, with independent pitch series dropping down at 80 degrees from the horizontal, with horizontal developments then being made on a North-South plane of the rock. Although none of the leads discovered this year led to a rush to hundreds of metres below the surface, there are many fruitful digging possibilities left, and we now have an entire section of the plateau that has been carefully and comprehensively investigated. The high altitude of the new Podriagora plateau also offers greater depth potential - and the possibility of reaching the magic '1000m' mark in a mountain which has sumps at between 900 and 1000m above sea level.

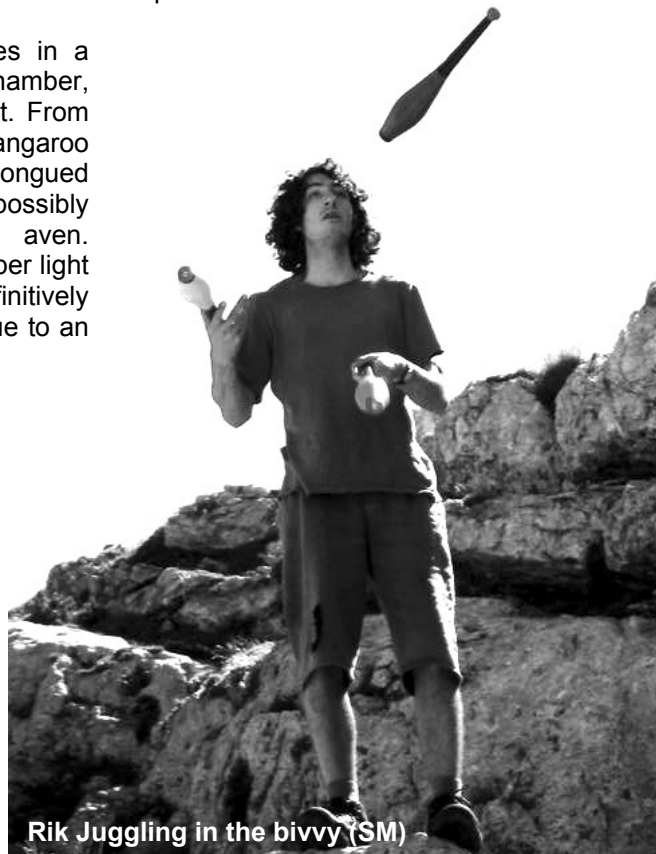
Exploration at moderate depth was still taking place in GW, with the 'Captain Kangaroo' extensions being made through the Pico window reached by Tetley on the derig in 2004. This area of the cave was very unlike the rest of the GW and System Migovec caves - being a fairly immature (and therefore tight in places) vadose rift, but entirely missing a stream with only occasional static pools of water. Large beds of dried mud were found in various locations. The jury is still out on whether it is an ancient section of the cave that formed before the main Pico water drain existed, or whether it becomes active every year with snow melt. Only a return in later years to see whether our footprints have been erased will tell.

The explored passage terminates in a thin rift, beyond which lies a large chamber, with an enormous echo and draught. From the survey, it is most likely that Kangaroo links into the enormous fork-tongued Concorde - Space Odyssey pitch, possibly entering into the unexplored aven. Unfortunately, the very last trip, a super light weight camping trip intended to definitively connect the surveys, was aborted due to an accident.

In a more curious development, a perched sump was found in a side passage half-way down Kangaroo, which along with a section of tight rift started to wind its way North towards System Migovec.

As with every year spent trying to unravel the mysteries of the caves of Migovec, we have generated as many questions as we have answered.

Jarvist Frost



Rik Juggling in the bivvy (SM)

Captain Kangaroo

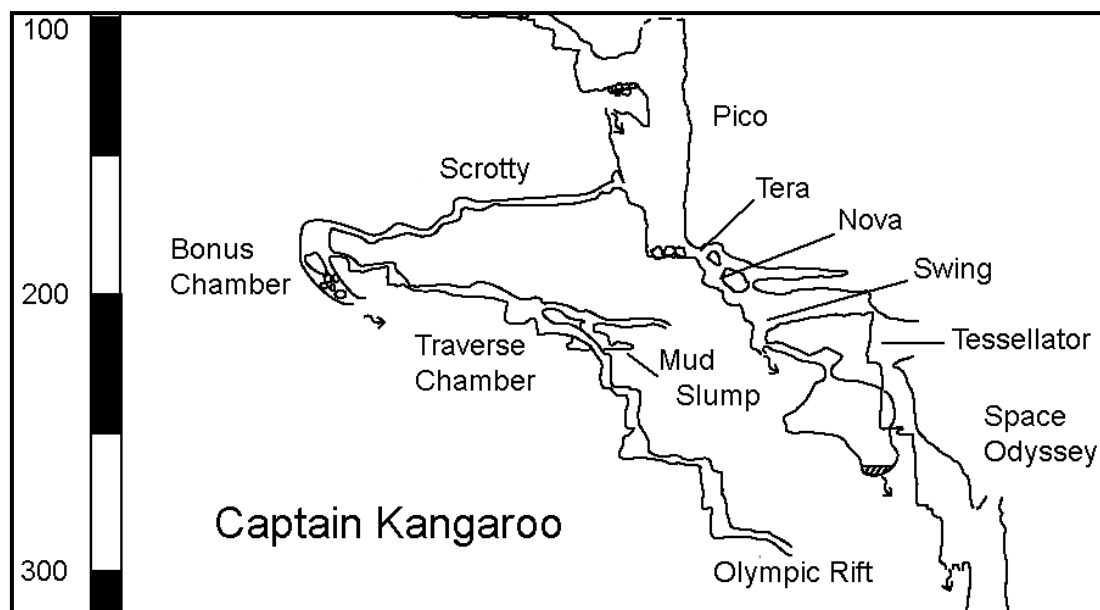
At one point during last years expedition, Tetley had spotted a window half-way down Pico in Gardeners' World. While Jarv and Clewin took photos of Concorde, he had set off on a solo bolting mission to reach this potential lead. In the months that followed, I'd repeatedly heard how he'd traversed right after the second rebelay, the one by the rock bridge, and, a few bolts later stood on a ledge. A dry rift, a metre or so wide led off, but the act of unclipping himself from the rope, while alone, half-way down Pico, had so unnerved him that he couldn't say much more other than that it was a Very Good Lead, that he'd named Captain Kangaroo.

Out on expedition again, I was keen to get pushing straightaway and soon teamed up with Marcin Kowalski, a Polish caver who had caved with us in England, during the previous year. Our first trip, to rig from the entrance to the lead, was cut short by the lack of a rope for the last hang down Laurel, but we were soon back with 100 metres of blue Lanex rope, and looking for this 'fabled' window down Pico. After swinging around on the rope for ages, I ended up bottling it, and passed the bolting kit to Marcin, who had already been nicknamed "The Machine". Once the rope was in place, we admired the view from the ledge and set off into the unknown.

It was indeed a Very Good Lead, for about five metres. Sixty metres of twatty, rifty passage, suitable only for amateur contortionists and enthusiastic cavers then followed and we quickly settled on the name Scrotty. We didn't kill the rift, though, it clearly continued but by the time the surveying was done it was definitely time to return to the surface.

My next trip was an epic. After much faffing, Marcin and I finally entered the cave at 4pm. Perhaps it was the thought of that rift - I hate small passages at the best of times and when the rock is sharp and the way on unclear, it was hard to get motivated. "Why have fun caving when you could go underground with a suicidally insane Polish cave diver?" I thought to myself. "Come on Rik....." Marcin said once again. At least I hadn't got ferociously pissed the night before...

Eventually we broke into a chamber, named Bonus chamber, only to discover another spikey rift leading off. After loads of bolts and a few small drops, we eventually turned round as the night had passed. My oversuit was shredded and I wasn't sure how glad I was that the rift continued. We returned to the bivvy at 7:30 am. I tried to sleep all day but got a sun-burnt face. Eventually, however, thoughts of new passages and possible connections to the System to started weighing on our minds.

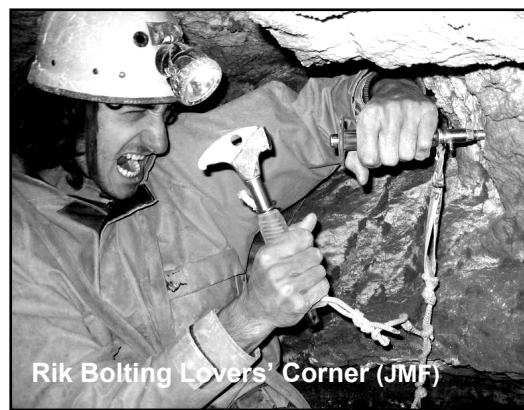


Extended Elevation of the Captain Kangaroo Extensions in Gardeners' World (2005)

Several days later I was back underground again with the Machine. We took the express route through the horrid scrot, Marcin thankfully carrying the tacklebag. We got to the pushing front quite quickly, in about two hours, and then slipped easily through the acrobatic squeeze at the limit of exploration. Marcin left me to put in the second bolt for the undescended pitch that followed. I dropped the first hang, then put in a bolt at a convenient ledge leaving Marcin to investigate a parallel pitch which eventually rejoined the first. We then spent hours bashing through 'Olympic Rift', named after the acrobatic moves required to pass it. At the end was a non-passable squeeze with an obviously massive black space behind it. There was a two second echo but no way through without a chisel. After surveying, we left the cave after 14 ½ hours. I spent the next day absolutely fucked and yet, once again, I soon started thinking about returning for more...

My final trip was with Jarv. We headed down with the intention of pushing the unexplored side passage off 'Traverse Chamber'. The rift quickly dropped into a small chamber, down a free-climb. After that, there were two potential leads. One was an excessively twatty rift. The other was a slightly less twatty rift, leading to a small pitch.

I bashed the awkward pitch-head open with brute force and a shower of sparks from the quartz in the rock. I then put in a bolt while Jarv curled up in the perfect armchair rock ledge in 'Lovers' Corner'. Jarv placed the rest of the Y-hang and dropped the pitch, a short 8-metres, past a ledge that formed a continuation of the rift, before touching down in a pleasant little chamber. The floor was covered with dried dinner-plates of mud curling up at the edges, with an obvious (but completely dry) waterfall at one end of the chamber, and a crawl-space leading off.



Rik Bolting Lovers' Corner (JMF)



Rik in Mud Slump (JMF)

It didn't take long to realise that there was no way on except for digging through the mud. We left 'Mud Slump', then followed the lead from the ledge. I bashed and squeezed down about 15m of the tightest rift seen so far in Captain Kangaroo but Jarv was cold and eager to head out. I emerged, flustered but not totally panicked despite my distinct claustrophobic tendencies. Unfortunately, we had no survey tape, as Marcin had hidden it somewhere along the long road to traverse chamber, but by Jarv's hand-compass and guessing distances, the rift twists away to the right away from the rest of Kangaroo.

We started our exit from the cave with only one tacklebag at a sane hour in the evening. This felt deeply wrong, but as we stopped at Tetley's classic Captain Kangaroo window seat overlooking Pico Pitch to munch luxury cheese and bread and cheese, I realised that less than two hours from the cave exit I felt fairly fresh and was still enjoying the trip. I vowed never again to go on an epic 15 hour slog unless I REALLY wanted to. At the entrance I realised that caving the next day was even on the cards. Thank-you Mr Frost, my best trip of the expedition.

Rik Venn

Pushin' Captain Kangaroo (to the tune of 'Flowers on the Wall')



It's good to see you're finally goin' pushin' underground,
I'm sick of seein' you down in the bivvy bummin' 'round.
You've finally patched your oversuit's enormous gapin'
rip,
You know you'd better stop usin' your arse for extra grip.

(Chorus)

*There ain't no hangers on the wall,
and this rift is rather small,
that don't bother me at all,
but I just wish I weren't so tall.
Smokin' pseudo-spliffs and pushin' Captain... Kangaroo,
Now don't tell me... I've nothin' to do.*

Some people say it's tight and scrotty but they've never been.
It's really the most beautiful passage I've ever seen.
So come on, won't you follow the blue Lanex off Pico,
Go right at the rub point 'cos it's guaranteed to go.

(Chorus)

There ain't no hangers on the wall...

Go digging at the boulder chokes and bolting in the
rock,
We're sure of the connection, sure as ten feet long's
my great big nose,
A parallel shaft series would be mighty fine indeed,
But don't go pushing too far north, it's headed for
Space Odyssey!

(Chorus)

There ain't no hangers on the wall...



Rik Venn

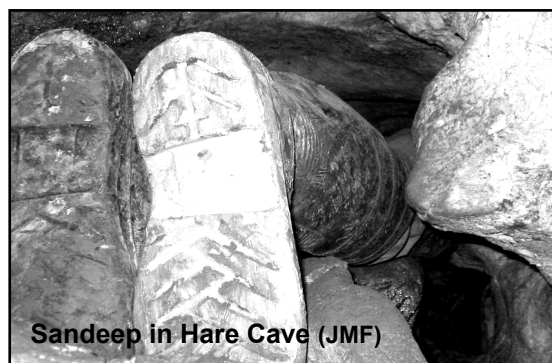
The Death of a Hare

Jarv escorted Sandeep and I to Hare cave, found in 2004, in the hopes that we could wriggle round the tiny corner at the end and discover storming delights beyond. I followed Jarv's advice and carried out an acrobatic handstand manoeuvre to enter the torpedo tube, and then squirmed my way to the end. Making the turn felt like too much commitment, especially as I didn't know whether I could get back down the first section!

As soon as I was clear however, Sandeep managed to wiggle directly through the tiny 'Torpedo Tubes' and shot straight around the corner. He reported, that once around, the phreatic tightened to nothing on both branches, with a bit of loose scree.

The boulder floor was still draughting though... Bring on the JCBs.

Joanna King



Sandeep in Hare Cave (JMF)

Alone: A solo push in U-Bend

I'd originally planned to go down U-bend with Sandeep, but he was so unnerved (or frustrated) by my amazing five hour faff effort that he bottled out at the point where we reached the first rope only to hear my cries of "C***, F***! I've forgotten my sodding SRT kit! Oh Jesus, where the f*** is it?" I suppose my bad language may impair my future effectiveness as the club's social secretary... Oh well. I went back to the bivvy, nicked Jarv's SRT kit and then returned to the entrance, alone. After dropping the first pitch, I realised that although I had rope, a bolting kit, spits and cones, I had neglected the hangers and maillons.

Oh well. I ripped off my SRT kit and plunged into the rift. I'm quite claustrophobic and I was solo caving, but I told myself not to be a big Jessy and surprised myself by slipping easily DOWN a horrid, nasty, squeezing, blowing rift. I plodded on and, after about two minutes, I found the bolts. In my usual forgetful style, I looked back to see two identical sides of a fork in the chamber. Unfortunately, my notoriously poor sense of direction had kicked in once again. I started down the right fork, traversed across a large gap above a potential ankle re-breaking drop. I traversed up, got lost, didn't panic, then went back to try the other fork. Three hours later, I was lost. Millions of blowing SQUEEZES flashed before my hungry eyes – I was FUCKING LOST!!

Jesus. I waited about another ten minutes getting cold before I decided the only way to get my head out of this heavily draughting rat-size rift was to take off my helmet. I slid back down to the floor sweating and panting. This was ridiculous, I couldn't have been more than twenty metres from the surface, but I was seriously starting to worry if I'd ever find the way out. Paranoid fantasies began to fill my lonely head. I tried singing to keep myself company but the notes rattled hollowly around in the wobbly boulder choke. Nothing would shift the disturbing thought that my disorientated struggling in the choke had pushed a huge, unmovable rock over the entrance to the squeeze. After I thought I'd tried every possible one of maybe six draughting routes through the rift, I crawled into a small hole to die.

There, I had a flash of hope. I saw a shredded rubber glove on the floor of one of the routes from the chamber, and followed a trail of shredded bits of over-suit through the rift and found my way out. Ahh, an epic trip at minus twenty metres. Unfortunately I left some bits of Jarv's SRT kit in the cave, necessitating a return trip sometime in the future. Maybe tomorrow, or maybe I'll just design and make a new type of re-usable teabag.

Rik Venn

Logbook Extracts 2005

*"Bad driving is better than good walking."
- Simon, the local taxi driver*

*"Ummm, your leg looks very hot." - Sandeep to
Tetley*

*"I pissed on my cuddly toys when I was two."
- Jo King*

"Somebody write something...."

"Something."

*"Do you own a Down Jacket?
Yes 15 points, no 0 points."
- The start of the 'Comf league table.'*



Rik and Shed at Sunset (SM)

He Squeezes to Conquer: Another stab at U-Bend

Everyone, from lag to fresher agreed that U-bend was a serious contender for development. So close horizontally to Primadona it was much higher, nearly on the plateau itself, and offered the prospect of simultaneously providing a far more pleasant entrance while adding greater depth to the fledgling system. A connection into the main Sys Mig was anticipated via Exhibition Road. And yet, an anti-exploration curse seemed to hang over U-Bend during 2005 - carbide generators were dropped, hand jammers misplaced, spitz mislaid, people suddenly betrayed by their guts. In the end, the most productive trip of many attempts to explore the cave was the derig.

Our intention was to have one last stab at pushing the strongly draughting rift opening from the 40m shaft, before retrieving the rope and putting the cave to bed for the summer. Chris gave the Z-bend a try but decided that this was a job for my more 'refined' frame. With full rock contact I tried the squeeze, getting far enough to see around the corner and into continuing passage but no further.

An hour of bashing later with hammer and chisel and I was in up to my waist. With no SRT kit, I believe I could have managed it. Time was ticking on though, the Spitz-greasing Vaseline that we were carrying was required for Gardeners' World and so we reluctantly headed out, leaving the conquest of this cave for yet another day.

Sandeep Mavadia



Fools, Hardy and Danger

Suffering under oppressive grey weather, Chris Franklin (aka 'Broken Chris') and I were kick-started into our plan to cross 'Hardy' in GW and climb into the rift viewable on the far side. The old bolts for the pitch were discovered, and gave us a rigging head-start. With many bolts placed, we made it across and were presented with a fair view up a short climb into a clearly passable rift.

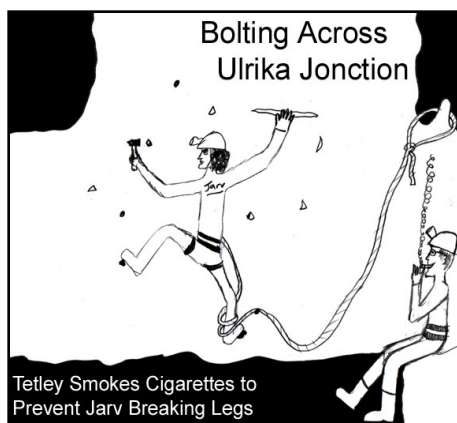
So we decided to return the next day to make the climb. Chris was given the role of belaying me and instructed on how to use a Munter Hitch. A bold step round the corner and then a classic chimney up onto a platform, where a natural gave a safe point. The rift does indeed continue, but requires several rebelays. Potential for the brave....

Martin McGowan

The Only Way is Up: Bolting Ulrika Jonction

Tetley rubbed his hands together gleefully in the bivvy – here we go again! The plan was to explore an Aven at -150m in the main system, the hope was to find a horizontal passage that connected to the never-exhaustively-explored NCB passage. Long legs were a necessity for this yet-to-be-pushed traverse and climb. With a choice between the petite Jo and myself, I was deemed the suitable donor.

I chased Tetley down the M16 entrance pitches, meeting up briefly just before Brezno Strahov. Looking down, I saw an odd sheep-sized white cloud just next to the pitch head. Flicking on my spot beam as Tetley recounted a decade of anecdotes, it remained in the bright light. Forcing myself to break the gaze, when I glanced back a minute later it had disappeared. As ghost sightings go, it was certainly a rather tenuous observation – but still!



We zipped down and up into Hotline, meandered along the blackened passage to arrive at our climb. The traverse looked eminently do-able, with a drop of around four metres into the bottom of a pit. Our only problem was the complete absence of any suitable belay. Tetley took the rope back into Hotline passage and wrapped it around a boulder, but I doubt it would have done much more than make sure I smeared my face along the rock-face on my way to breaking my legs! Better not fall then... Putting in the bolt was fairly shonky – both arms outstretched with just a knee and tenuous foothold to keep one pressed against the rock. Shifting forwards to blow out the dust was horrendous.

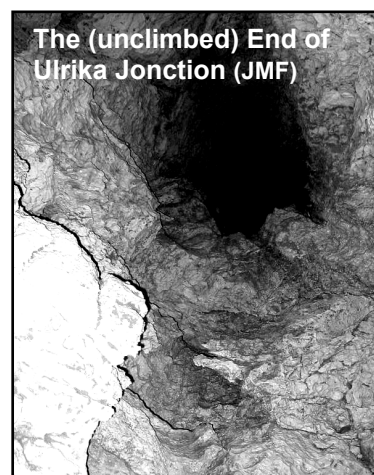
“If only I had a long, flexible, straw!” I remarked rhetorically to the cave.

“Ah,” replied Tetley pausing for a dramatic drag of his cigarette, “I just happen to have one of those in the pocket of my oversuit.”

With gaudy green plastic tube coiled around my neck, and an ineffectual belay hanging slack from my waist the bolt slid in smoothly. A hanger was quickly attached to the bolt and a rebelay formed, the rest of the traverse was then smoothly passed.

Finding myself at the foot of a little aven, the rope was attached and Tetley skipped over. Looking up, there was a choice between a four metre and a six metre route. With Tetley belaying from a sling placed over a natural at head-height, the shorter climb was attempted. Easy footholds, and a bit of classic 'beached whale' to flop over the top. Looking back across the pitch, it was clear that the 6m climb disappeared into tiny inlets – not something that I would have liked to abort and down climb!

From my new vantage point, a too-tight crawly passage disappeared off to the side - the only way was up! A dirty few metres later, and we were sitting above the main pitch, a drop of about ten metres. The air was still and warm – a far cry from the conditions below in Hotline passage and rather indicative that we were in a blind aven.



A further traverse could be attempted across and above the full pitch – fully exposed and with few belay possibilities. From where we stood, we could see over the edge of a continuing slope (see photo) into a small bit of crawling passage that in all probability would shut down to mouse-hole inlets. And yet, I still wonder what could lie just over that limestone slope...

Jarvist Frost

AREA K: A 'Shaft Bashing' Summary

K1 AKA "Goat Shelter": An Obvious 'classic cave' on the flank of Kuk, a rift bursts out in higher entrance. No lead.

K2: From the ridge we could see an obvious triangular entrance which was too tempting to leave. We wandered over to find a triangular 1mx1m entrance dropping into a 3mx3mx3m chamber with a big draught and choked tube leading off into the mountain.

"Easy digging! Massive draught!"

This cave was dug by Chris and Jarv for about two hours each. Rik did a further half-day of digging. Much rock was removed, slowly descending into the blocked rift. It would also be possible to start digging under the (solid rock) lip of the entrance, likely to rejoin the rift further down. The cave is still 'alive' but progress is very slow and the rock friable. It would benefit from another year of freeze-thaw, especially now the deeper rock is exposed.



K3: 30m shaft on top of Green Dome (Zeleni vrh). Believed bottomed in the early 90s.

K4: Entrance towards the east of the north face of Kuk. Chris and Jo climbed down onto the scree and then up into the entrance. Was found to be merely a window, with light filtering in from above.

K5: Entrance on west-end of north Kuk cliff face. Abseiled down to by Chris with bolt placed just off path to Krn, backed up to VW-camper sized van nearby. Rebelay 20m down on sloping ledge – dodgy half-inserted bolt! Chris arrived at entrance and explored – small horizontal development with light filtering in from windows above. Loose boulders bouncing down most of the way. Chris continued on abseil down to scree floor – had to free climb after end of 90m rope!

K6 AKA "Torn Scrotum": On the way back to camp from 'Green Dome' we saw a small tube going along the bedding plane. Jarv crawled along it for 6m to a widening with mud floor. Not much draught but still wide open. Needs elbow pads and Kevlar underwear.

K7: Up on grassy plateau east of K2. Clamber 5m over boulders into obvious entrance to get to a boulder choke. Small draught. A dig. Dodgy clamber.

K8: West facing overhang, scree slope into boulder choked 3mx1m chamber.

K9: Obvious triangle hole topped shaft under a rock bridge. Bolted by Dave and Sandeep, with through-bolts forming a traverse from the left, to a Spit on the right then down via a deviation around the natural to a rebelay 2m below the lip of the shaft. Straight drop to minus 15m. Big window on pitch can be swung into, which is a smaller parallel shaft dropping into same chamber. From the bottom of a small chamber, a tight rift leads off to the east and almost immediately dies. To the west is a larger chamber that forms the start of an extensive bolder choke.



There is a floor level way through to the straight west, which enters further boulder choke ending at a draughting dig-able collection of rubble. Lots of hanging death above. Alternatively, one can walk up the large slope to the south of the chamber, and then traverse to the west to enter the boulder choke at a higher level. The chamber that you enter is a twin shaft that appears to go most of the way to the surface, but has no obvious entry. Above the west termination of the boulder choke is the bottom of a climbable pitch. However, the climb was rather exposed – and it was concluded that it was likely that it would shut down to sub-human sized inlets. However, Jarv occasionally wakes up wondering what was over that limestone lip...

“Found a caving Salamander on the way out, christened him Sammy and played with him for a bit. Took photos and made a Godzilla horror flick.” - Jarv

“Only one SRT kit, so Jarv sunbathed and picked daisies to toss down the pitch while GI Jo dived down the hole.”



K10 AKA “Torn Testicle”: A 50x30cm wide vertical hole filled with vertical limestone razor blades. 3m deep, just enough room to swivel around in. Stones rattle when pushed to the north. Would be easy enough to de-razor with hammer. Would need to lift boulders out from bottom before attempting to crawl underneath. It was plumbed with an inserted leg. Probably excessive effort.

K11: A fantastic looking scree climb into chamber in NE end of massive shakehole. Cold-draught. In right of chamber, boulder choke – serious digging possibilities.

K12 AKA 'Victoria Coach Station':

A large ~10m wide triangular entrance leads down over massive boulders and large snow slope into ~40m wide perfect-dome of a chamber. Choked at floor level, but draughty holes visible in sides of chamber at higher levels. Main push was in the North-East wall, where a bedding lane crawl led upwards at roof height. Choked with ice and boulders – enormous outward flowing freezing draught. Progress good, but unpleasant – best technique was to use crow-bar to scoop ice and boulders towards you down the slope before slithering out the slot and pulling them into the main chamber. A little unpleasant!



“K-Plop: My natural cave-discovery ability guided me to a promising looking hole in the ground, just short of the K12 entrance. I peered down the gloomy depths and noticed blackness at the bottom - I called Jarv over to investigate this exciting new lead.” - Jo

Dragged back from the beauty of Victoria Coach Station [K12], I dived down Jo's grotto, admiring the fine jellified Chamois diarrhoea formations on the 3m free climb down. Below the enormous boulder choke, I eagerly advanced on the obvious gaping black hole. I name it 'plop-pitch' for its beautiful sound upon tossing pebbles into it. A going lead it was not; a pile of excrement it was.” - Jarv

K13 AKA 'Pedestrian Subway / Arrivals Hall':

Rift in hill directly above + to the north of the K12 entrance hole. A grotty and loose sloping crawl which leads to a free-climb turning into a 4m pitch. This drops you into a small chamber (Length:Width:Height 5:3:8m), with many boulders. Possible dig at floor level to South East. Large gash in floor makes you realise that you are right up in the domed roof of K12!

3 Bolts Placed:

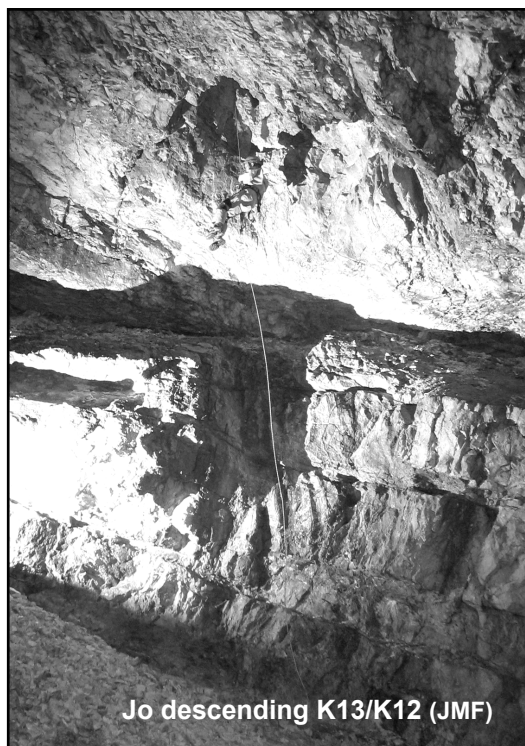
#1 at end of crawl, safety for free-climb and backup

#2 4m pitch bolt, on west wall

#3 Bolt at floor level of gash in floor. Possibly attached to a mere boulder – abseil with caution!

“K13->K12: Jo's Suicidal Photo Shoot

On from K-Plop Shit-Cave, Jo suited up and inserted herself into the upwards crawl of K12. Not much progress without crowbar, certainly continues for another five metres in a similar vein. Blowing very hard!



Somehow convinced, Jo was persuaded up to K13 in a sweaty Meander and wriggled herself into a harness. Jarv zipped back to K12 to place flash-slaves. Jo had a quick look at the small chamber – suggests no way on. Inspected from a number of angles, the rebelay was clearly a mere boulder wedged across the drop - not part of the bedrock! However, with the combined force of Jarv's pleading voice and a natural disinclination to Prussik out K13, Jo zipped down the spectacular abseil into the main K12 chamber, getting flashed as she went. Photo good, fear of God on Jo's face captures the moment!”

K14: A shallow rift approximately fifty metres south of K9 which goes into a small chamber. A small lead goes left, though this is probably not worth pushing as its likely to break back onto the surface...

K15i (the Rik-Venn imaginary series): A big outward blowing, very cold cave. Goes in ten metres heading south and down, then a diggable choke, below a mini-cooper sized boulder with many cracks and no visible means of support. One hour digging gained one metre. Needs crowbar to clean boulder floor. Drips on roof like GW!

K16 / The Escalator: Located just below the path near Skrbina. A series of holes just on the edge of a break in the bedding plane. Returning back up the scree slope within the cave was like running the wrong way up an escalator - hence the name! Obvious alcoves. Small drop into scree. Uphill to rift, which goes further up along bedding plane to close down. Strong draught. Possible hammer. Downhill steep scree to ice plug. To right through scrotty little hole, full with scree.

K17: In a shakehole on the top of Podriagora. Climb down three metres into a long 5x5m boulder filled chamber. In East end of chamber, a small squeeze can be seen with enlargement beyond. Easy digging, but very loose and scary.

K18: Round the corner from K17 a rift disappears into a hole. 5m pitch to boulder floor - needs rope to avoid scary hanging death.

K19 (Coach-Crash Dig):

"Found entrance in pile of boulders in middle of boulder field, a rift dropping down a few metres, then running down gravel pile into the hill, and seemingly opening out. Noted distinctive split boulder a little up-slope from entrance. Encouraged by sight of obvious bedrock rift walls under superficial layer of rocks.

After some initial digging, entrance rift was wide and clear enough to climb down, but collection of loose rocks around top made some gardening necessary. Was left with one final rock to move that was threatening to fall into the rift. Janet started taking pictures. Tried to move rock with tape, slightly concerned that the larger rock I was standing on was not entirely stable.

I heard a little tinkling of pebbles from behind me - strange, since I hadn't done any digging there.

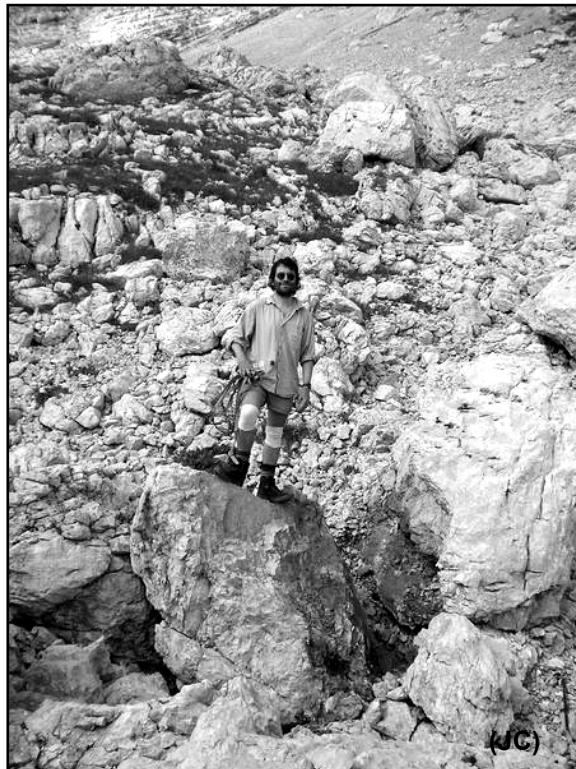
Couldn't get rock clear - too heavy and nowhere stable to leave it near hole, so had to drop it down rift, even though it was going to jam. Slight movement of rock underfoot as it dropped...

Heard more tinkling of pebbles from behind, then all-too-familiar deeper rumble and varied screams. Sprung nimbly back to safer ground in time to see sizeable Henry settling noisily into new position.

It landed right where I was previously standing seconds before, and where I had been lying down a few minutes earlier whilst jinking boulders down the rift with a crowbar: Actually, if anything, the rock has stabilised the surface somewhat - the thing its left side is leaning on is now definitely going nowhere, and it's still possible to access the rift by going under it, but it was decided to leave an attempt at cracking the boulder wedged down the rift for another year. Probably rather better with caps, and the actual extent of bedrock under the surface cover isn't entirely clear. A 4ft rock bar (or even a longer piece of scaffolding) would be nice, if someone could be persuaded to carry one up there." - Dave Wilson



**Dave, digging K19.
Before and After shots...**



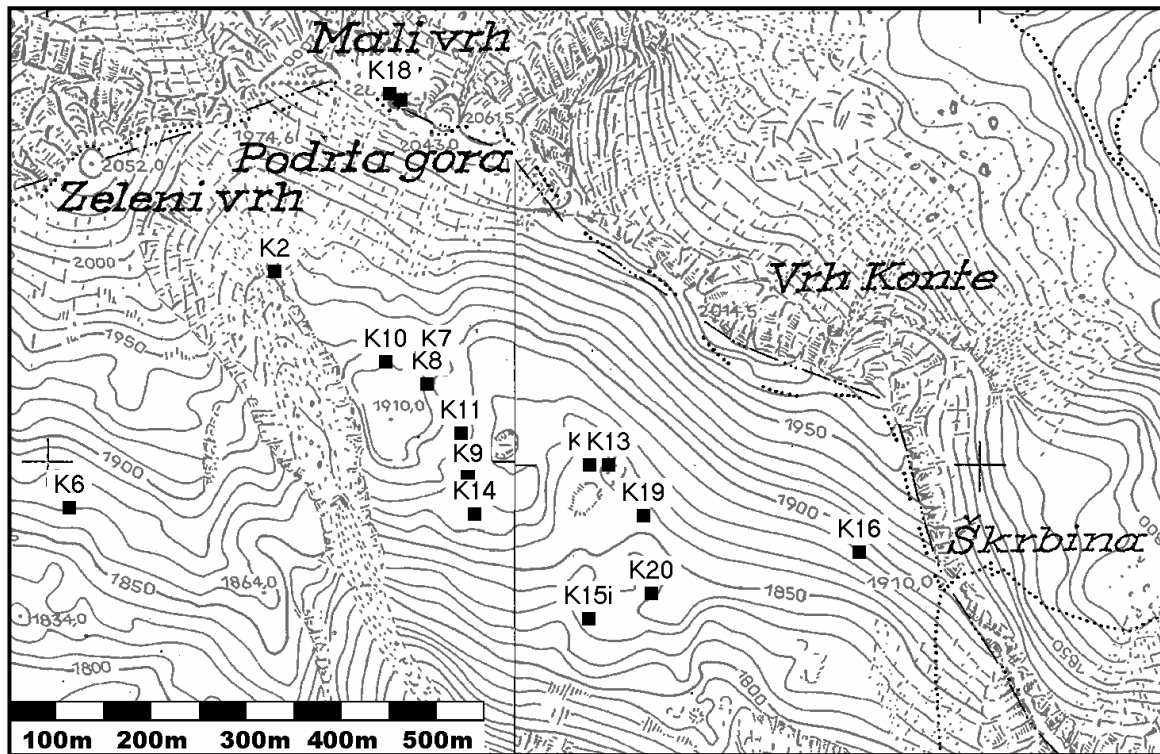
K20 / K-Moss: Near K15i. Small mossy-hole, could be dug with easy rock. Small draught. A little digging carried out.

K-Series GPS Coordinates (Lat/Long) WGS84 Datum

Name	Altitude	N	o	"	E	o	"
1	?	?			?		
2	1888	N	46	15 35.5	E	013	45 58.0
3	?	?			?		
4	?	?			?		
5	?	?			?		
6	1875	N	46	15 27.2	E	013	45 47.8
7	1899	N	46	15 32.4	E	013	46 06.2
8	1910	N	46	15 31.7	E	013	46 05.7
9	1872	N	46	15 28.5	E	013	46 07.8
10	1892	N	46	15 32.4	E	013	46 03.6
11	1878	N	46	15 30.0	E	013	46 07.4
12	1851	N	46	15 28.9	E	013	46 13.9
13	1870	N	46	15 28.9	E	013	46 14.9
14	1885	N	46	15 27.2	E	013	46 08.1
15	1835	N	46	15 23.9	E	013	46 13.9
16	1900	N	46	15 26.1	E	013	46 27.5
17	2035	N	46	15 41.5	E	013	46 04.2
18	2030	N	46	15 41.7	E	013	46 03.7
19	1859	N	46	15 27.2	E	013	46 16.7
20	1842	N	46	15 24.5	E	013	46 17.1

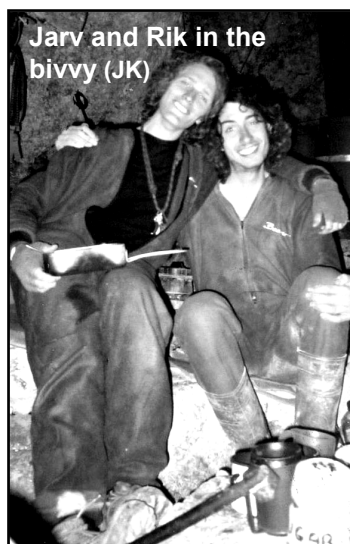
A Map of Area K

(K1,K4,K5 are located further West below Kuk, K3 is on top of Zeleni vrh)



So Long Migovec!

Talk had shifted from pushing to derigging - time to put Gardeners' World to rest for another year. The last week was the coldest we'd ever seen on the Migovec plateau during summer time, our tents covered with glistening drops of frozen dew as we clambered out of the bivvy to bed. One amazing night the visibility was simply unbelievable – the decadent lights of Capitalist Italy showing the line of the coast from the Trieste bay down to the Venice lagoon.



One last germ of an idea was gradually infecting some of us with weaker minds. Tetley was finally back on caving form, after having been laid low by a series of illnesses that left him with dodgy balance and an entirely understandable wish to avoid overly strenuous activity. Although he'd discovered the window-entrance to Captain Kangaroo from Pico in 2004, he hadn't actually been through it and was keen to have a look at our latest discoveries.

To confirm the hypothesized connection with Concorde would require a significant amount of effort – a two-man team to bash through the last bit of unpleasant rift, and someone to rig down the normal pitch series and await on a ledge for the expected connection. Lovers' Pitch needed a proper push down the winding rift, particularly as it was heading away from the rest of the GW pitches. Mud Slump required some attempt at digging to see whether we would resurface in more passage - and this entire area required proper surveying.

The plan, as it gradually came to be, was to organise a super light-weight underground camp at a mere -220m, allowing a far more pleasant push of the end of Kangaroo. With four cavers underground for 48hrs, we hoped to finally solve the mysteries, one way or another. An ideal spot had been located, on the soft dried-mud floor of Traverse chamber, with water carried from the perched pool in Bonus-chamber, just a short prussik and wander away.

After endless bantering, a sudden wave of activity took over in the bivvy. A free-standing geodesic tent that had long been missing its fly-sheet was readied for underground action, fleece was squashed into plastic bags and packed, a Tranja and a diet of fishy-cheesy-smash was prepped for enjoyment. All in all, our four person team (Jarv, Jo, Tetley and Rik) had seven tacklebags split between them. In a break between afternoon showers, we scampered across the plateau and were soon zipping down the familiar entrance pitches.

Then it happened. Sauntering through the awkward Urinal series, I was brought up short by an almighty crash coming from a pitch or two behind me.

"Jo – are you OK?" I shouted slowly over the echo.

"I'm alright!" came the thankful reply.

Jo had come undone on 'I-Scream', the short but not too nice six metre pitch below Laurel. The main floor of the chamber is a good few metres below a nasty sloping ledge that sits directly on the abseil path. Descending with your eye on what appears to be the ground, it's all too easy to find yourself landing a bit sooner than expected with a jolt to the wellies. Burdened with twin tackle sacks, Jo caught some particularly bad luck. Instead of landing on her feet, she landed, with full force on her forearm, on one of the jutting vertical columns of eroded limestone.

Tetley, who had given us students a head start, soon arrived, whipped out his first-aid kit and demonstrated his ample nursing skills. Jo had a deep impact cut, where her flesh had burst open in a neat T-shape, gently weeping goopy blood. After arriving from below burdened with tackle sacks, Rik practiced his reassuring bedside manner (perfect for leading Fresher trips) exclaiming "Fucking hell Jo, that looks atrocious!"

Despite her protests, we decided that Jo shouldn't be allowed to go underground camping, and must instead visit a hospital. Tetley offered to take Jo out, then return to join us at camp, but there wasn't much enthusiasm. The whole event was a bit of a shock, the cave suddenly felt rather hostile.

Injured at -100m, with a mostly-disabled and possibly fractured arm, this would generally be a time to call the Cave Rescue in the UK. Here, of course, it was not so simple. Was the casualty capable of getting out by herself? Would we be forced to organise a hauling party? Of course, this being Jo, she happily ambled up the pitches, scorning any offers of assistance. Its always a bit embarrassing when you have difficulty keeping up with the casualty!

Once back at the bivvy, only three hours after having left it with stuffed sacks, Martin disinfected the wound and dressed it with more aplomb that we managed underground. Dave Wilson did sterling work as Taxi driver extraordinaire, arriving at the plateau just in time to admire the sunset, turn around, descend, and drive to a hospital in Italy.



Jo, with an injured arm (SM)

The following day, after hearing by mobile phone that Jo was alright and that nothing was broken, Rik and I returned to Captain Kangaroo to drag the rope and metalwork out. As we carefully poked Vaseline into the Spitz, one couldn't help feeling a slight sense of disappointment. After having failed to discover the parallel shaft series we were hoping for, Kangaroo was looking like a very minor side chain. Quite enough by itself to get into 'Selected Caves' if it were in the UK, out here it was merely a shallow and immature distraction from the developments that lay just a short way away. Still, some leads remain and its definitely worth a revisit at some point in the future.

Returning to the surface after our little afternoon jolly, we met Tetley on his way down – passing through the night to -350m, de-rigging the main pitch series as he surfaced. The expedition caving ended, as these things tend to do, with a string of fragmented memories. Clambering past the petrified moth in the entrance of Gardeners' World for the last time, getting changed on the ideally-placed patch of grass once outside, while being towered over by the peak of Škribina.

The clag descended for the remaining few days. Rik and I did the last carry of the year, bringing down the last few items to be taken back to Blighty. Our friendly bivvy, such a welcome sight when returning over the plateau, was just another misty shake hole. The fire dug out, the rain-collecting tarps removed, the barrels and Daren drums stashed away under the overhang. Just a ring of boulders that would make suspiciously good seats and two black salamanders mating messily on a rock.

Down at Ravne for dusk, the van had long escaped to Tolmin, leaving us with two single-person lifeboats - the bikes 'Benson' and 'Hedges'. Bought at a ridiculously low price from Ebay by Tetley, it was an even chance whether they would make it down the hill without rattling to pieces.

Wearing our Mig-lights, we set off down the hairpins for sunny Tolmin, racing the thunderstorm. Probably my most dangerous, and certainly the most exhilarating, event of my summer. Rik chased a badger off the road and, after brushing against a bit of bush when taking the hairpin a bit too quick, I looked down to see something that appeared to be a giant cricket affixed to my shin. With our brakes steaming, we shot out from under the rain-cloud as we made the final approach on the flesh-pots. Its always sunny in Tolmin, even at night! Finally arriving at the Paradiso, we went in with wild eyes to find the cavers and order our terminal Laško.

Jarvist Frost

Operation Enigma: A Lightweight return to U-Bend



Such was the lead, and so horrified were we that we had failed to successfully push it in the summer, that a crack team (Jo, Jarv, Rik, Tetley, Janet and Sandeep) flew out in October 2005 for operation 'Enigma', bouncing up from Kal (the Shepherd's huts) with our Slovenian friend Mr Bang.

The weather was absolutely atrocious, the visibility low to the point of making it difficult to find the entrance in the first place! The chemical persuasion, however, using original bang from the Nobel factory, was a rip-roaring success (in spite of drill battery issues), but there wasn't time to allow the cyanide to dissipate and try the squeeze.

The following day saw Jarv and Rik return without caving kit to retrieve the entrance ropes, struggling across a plateau that was simultaneously enjoying gale-force winds while being in the centre of a dense freezing cloud. Climbing down the loose scree to the entrance, with the 1000m plunge into the valley below all too clear in the mind's eye, this was truly an unfriendly place.

U-Bend is just 7m from part of the second (Drugi) entrance to Primadona and would add 50m of height if it connects as well as improving the ease of access to Primadona from the plateau. And there's always the possibility of finding a parallel shaft system! The Petrol drill will be brought out in 2007 to assist such explosive projects...

The weather cleared for a few hours around midnight on one of the days, allowing Jarv to take the below photo of Mig and Kal by the light of the nearly-full moon on a half-minute exposure, camera balanced on a dry-stone wall due to lack of Tripod.

Jarvist Frost



Gardeners' World Survey 2005

