

# Imperial College Caving Club



2013 Summer Tour  
Slovenian Expedition  
'Z Miga na Kuk'

## **Introduction**

The 2013 'Z Miga Na Kuk' expedition was a highly successful 5-weeks of cave exploration on Migovec. Collectively JSPDT and ICCC cavers added another 1.8 km of new cave passage to System Migovec (already the longest cave in Slovenia) bringing the total to an impressive 27.3 km. The developments were all at depths greater than -500m relative to the entrance, explored on multi day camping trips based at 'X-Ray' our underground home each summer since 2010.

## **Aims**

The major aim of the expedition is to enable our members to cave at a level (figuratively and literally) that is impossible in the UK. We aim to have cavers taking part in multi-day caving trips involving camping in the cave and exploring many hundreds of metres below the surface, The discovery of new cave passage, along the requisite skills such as rigging, bolting and surveying, is something that we attempt to get every caver on the expedition to experience.

## Summary of Activity

### Travel

18 cavers travelled out from the UK. Nine travelled with the equipment in a union minibus with the rest making their own way.



'Unpacking the van with Migovec in the background'

### Setup

As usual setup began on Sunday morning. The van was driven up the winding road to Tolminski Ravne where, we were able to unload our many crates of food and equipment into a barn, generously given over to our use by a local family. The barn would serve as a store room for the next five weeks as we brought supplies up the mountain piecemeal as we needed them.

The Bivi, our camp and base of operations on the mountain, was already partially prepared for habitation by a small team that preceded the main expedition. The added presence of cavers, biscuits and tea completed its construction and so on Sunday night most people were able to sleep on the mountain.



'The bivi'

Aided by excellent weather (which would continue for nearly the entire expedition) and superb organisation the expedition managed to haul everything necessary for caving up the mountain within two days and by Wednesday the first teams were heading underground to explore and camp.



## Caving

This year the major deep discoveries were found through the most unlikely of leads:



'Descending Milka Pitch'

## Xanadu

Near the underground camp, a crawl through a muddy tube to a pitch that had thwarted exploration in 2012 (Euphrates), revealed over 500 meters of walkable phreatic (Cuckoo's Nest) as well as active canyon streamways.

The initial phreatic passage eventually leads to a junction, one direction leads into a canyon streamway, (Time Bandits), that leads to a 30 m high aven with no obvious continuation. This aven is only the source of half the water in the streamway, but the other inlet is too tight and immature to explore.

The other direction of the junction breaks into another canyon streamway. Following this upstream leads along rift (Rejuvenation Rift) until the source of the water disappears into cracks in the ceiling of a chamber. A crawl from this chamber leads to two very tight awkward squeezes that are left unpushed (Straight Jacket). Downstream also remains unpushed.

Another hole off the main phreatic passage was also pushed (Hydrophobia). Down a small climb immediately leads to a ~15 m pitch which joins a large rift with an active stream. Upstream very quickly becomes too tight to proceed. Downstream was pushed down a further pitch following the water. The water disappears into a large hole, this is left unpushed. Instead traversing across the hole eventually leads to a second dry hole, which was pushed till it died. Traversing across this second hole leads to a final large pitch which has been dropped to a ledge with the pitch continuing unexplored.

## Balamory

Balamory, a minor lead at -795 m (last attempted in 2010), gave way via a climb to beautiful white sandy passage (Kokain Rute). One fork of Kokain Rute leads to a boulder blockage, similar to that at Minestrone; these two positions being only 20m apart on the survey it is assumed that they connect but digging either side would be arduous. The other fork of Kokain Rute leads to a massive (5 m wide x 40 m high) active rift & pitch series, leading eventually to two large parallel shafts. The smaller shaft was pushed to a multitude of horizontal leads (Pick Your Poison), most of which remain unexplored. This was the deepest point explored this summer (-885m).

## Minestrone/Atlantis



'Insignificant leads in Minestrone, 810m below the surface'

'Minestrone' was extensively pushed despite very little reward. However expeditions to this area of the cave did uncover something interesting. Some sort of small mammal was spotted, possibly a pine marten. The animal was briefly sighted by one team resting at a junction (Hawaii) and subsequent pushes found that their food stashes at the junction had been nibbled. At 500 m below the local surface and with a horizontal distance of a kilometer to the open air, the question of how the animal got there remains a mystery.

A rather insignificant lead (in size and prospect for further exploration) that received a lot of attention this year was 'Hash', an ascending body-sized crawling tube very close to 'Hawaii' in 'Lost Miles'. The crawl was pushed in three trips and ends in an unpalatable squeeze chicane.

Similar to Hash, 'We Are Not Alone' is a fairly obvious passage that was completely unnoticed last year. The spacious crawl leads off from Atlantis and eventually becomes a wide bedding plane. The way on was initially blocked by boulders but after some work by the pushing team there is just a single rock blocking the passage. It is advised that a chisel could be used as a lever to move this rock. Further back in We Are Not Alone there are markings on the wall that look like they could be scratch marks from a small animal, perhaps the same one as was seen in Hawaii.

#### Brezno Slapov

The large waterfall pitch at the end of Atlantis, Brezno Slapov, was dropped using a combination of rope and freeclimbs. Following the water and dropping a further pitch led to an active rift streamway, Lethe. This eventually ended in a sump after about 100 m with no dry way on. However, a secondary inlet was found just before the sump to the left. This led to a small chamber with a possible bolt climb, and a larger chamber further on with a wet aven. In the larger chamber it looked like there was possibly a drier bypass/continuation but this was left unpushed due to the wet conditions on the day.



'The sump at Lethe, 850m below the surface'

## Invictus

The very strong draught felt all the way from Red Baron chamber appears to disappointingly go up the shaft at the end of Invictus. Bolt climbing does not seem possible due to the chossy nature of the rock. Dropping the pitch to the bottom of the shaft leads to an impassable crack in which the water pools (RCC Passage of the Year).

## Yorkshire

Yorkshire was continued, following the streamway downstream. The pushed route through (Curious and Curiouser) makes use of two dry streamway bypasses, in order to avoid tiring thrutching high up in the rift. The rift however has not been followed completely so (while likely) it is not certain that these bypasses join with the same streamway. The second bypass leads to a topologically complex passage (Labryinth) with one poor quality lead left - a dodgy climb that requiring rope. The lead that was pushed was a climb down rejoining a streamway as it breaks into a large chamber (Slinging in the Rain). Two pitches in the chamber were dropped before leading to a perched sump. A bypass across the top of the last pitch leads down a sandy crawl that is eventually blocked by two large boulders that resisted attempts to move them. The passage can be seen continuing on the other side.

## Undercover Squirrel

'Undercover Squirrel' was pushed ('Rural underground') but all leads were subsequently killed. A crawl off Hot Pants remains unpushed.

## Monatip

ICCC members joined JSPDT teams pushing in Monatip (part of another 4km system also beneath the Migovec plateau). At their closest points, Monatip and System Migovec are now approx. 125m apart. It is hoped that the two will be connected within the year, solidifying System Migovec's position as the longest cave in Slovenia.

## Surface Bashing

We also saw an enthusiastic continuation of last year's surface exploration with over 20 surface caves catalogued and pushed. Though most did not lead to significant discoveries one surface cave, named Jailbreak due to its entrance initially being blocked by a column of rock, was surveyed to a length of more than 100 metres (depth 30m) and contains a promising dig.





'Chamber in Jailbreak'

## **Derig**

Excellent weather this year meant that the underground camp was very efficiently used. It is perhaps not obvious but good surface conditions mean that preparation and motivation for caving is far easier. As a result most people managed to have enough trips to satiate them a few days earlier than normal (many people had been on 4 3-day camping trips which is fairly unusual). The camp was therefore packed up early, with the last few teams taking less essential parts of the camp and the final team carrying several bags out.

## **Soča/Lower altitude acclimatization**

Due to the efficient derig the expo was left with a few days spare at the bottom of the mountain. In order to effectively acclimatize to the lower altitudes of the Soča valley and eventually London an effort was made to relax by the banks of the local Soča river. To aid the teams recovery, an inflatable dinghy was used to enable a more aquatic form of relaxation. As a result of this we have had no cases of sub-optimal altitude lassitude.



'The Soča river'

### **Cave Radio**

A digital cave radio system, borrowed from Cave Link ([www.cavelink.com](http://www.cavelink.com)), was installed to send text messages from the surface to and from underground camp. The radio functioned correctly across the 500 metre vertical distance and allowed cavers to send their new findings, equipment requests and weather reports to and from the surface.

## Summary

This expedition was very successful. We achieved our aims to introduce new members to alpine caving. Six new cavers came on expedition. Everyone got to experience caving in System Migovec. Four made it to underground camp and made new discoveries in the cave. Logistically we managed to feed and shelter 18 people for 5 weeks on top of (and in) a mountain on budget and with no shortages (other than a brief biscuit crisis). Caving was carried out continuously for 4 weeks, with all the necessary rope and metal work that had to be brought from the UK.

Our links with the JSPDT are stronger than ever and proved invaluable this year, helping us to conform with new stricter Slovene Government regulations concerning cave exploration. They also helped us acquire cheaper insurance, saving club members hundreds of pounds and considerable time. This was on top of their usual contributions to exploration, equipment and merriment.

## Summary of Accounts

Outgoings	Amount
Food	£ 1,986.64
Camp Expenses (Bivi and Underground)	£ 639.03
Caving Equipment	£1,545.59
Minibus (Fuel, Ferry Cost, Hire Cost)	£2,286.71
Miscellaneous	£175.00
Total	£6,633.28

Income	Amount
RCC Funding	£1,314.69
Ghar Parau Foundation Grant	£600.00
Member's Contributions	£4,718.59
Total	£6,633.28

