

A Brief Note for Non-Cavers

The 'English' used in this publication is of a very idiosyncratic nature, full of seemingly general terms used in a very specific way - some of these uses are only found within ICCG! (see page 156) This page intends to be a crash course in modern alpine caving techniques.

The caves on Migovec were explored almost exclusively with SRT (Single Rope Technique), whereby a single rope is attached (belayed) to the rock, generally by use of a 13mm self-drilling rock anchor (known as a 'spit' - as they are made by the Spitz company). This little sliver of metal is about the size of a Rook from a rather small chess board with a mean-looking series of teeth on the drilling end.

In order to drive this into the rock, one uses a hammer and a 'driver' which has a threaded end to fit the spit, and a dedicated light-weight 'bolting' hammer. Once the spit is drilled sufficiently deep (producing a very recognisable 'tap,tap,tap...tap,tap,tap...' as the driver is rotated thrice anti-clockwise between hammer blows to stop the teeth getting clogged, then clockwise back to the beginning), a small metal 'cone' (which are very easy to lose, and of which you only get a small number of spares) is inserted into the end of the spit. The spit is then hammered straight into the rock, the wedge of the cone splaying open the deep parts of the spit and providing a sufficient purchase (hopefully!).

When the rock is poor, it can split apart, generally while drilling the pilot hole, though sometimes only when first loaded by a person's weight! We, of course, try and ascertain whether the rock is sound - generally by hitting with the bolting hammer - but this doesn't always prove a definitive test. When a such a bolt fails, it is said to have 'popped' - a term seemingly designed to lighten the mood. The process of inserting a spit can take anything from ten minutes to a full hour, depending on many factors. During this time, your caving partner is liable to get very cold. Once the spit is successfully inserted, a 'plate' or 'hanger' is attached, which has an 8mm bolt which goes directly into the spit, and is formed with a bend to hold the rope away from the wall, and a eyehole for the maillon. A maillon is a loop of metal with a screwed (by spanner) gate. The rope is then tied to the maillon. Alternatively, one can find 'natural' belays - generally by wrapping sling material (a strong nylon webbing) or wire around a suitable rock nodule or passing it through a window in the rock.

With the rope attached, one can abseil down, using one's Bobbin (a 'Go') or a Petzl Stop. The Stop is an auto-lock descender, meaning that one has to constantly squeeze in a big red handle with one's left hand to move. Though generally preferred for teaching novice cavers, they are considered rather cumbersome (they are heavier and the red handle often stabs you in the stomach in confined spaces) by the most experienced, and slower. Often the rope does not go clear of the wall, leading to a rub-point. These are the most dangerous aspect of SRT, and can cause the rope to be abraded extremely quickly. To guide the rope away from the wall, a 'deviation' is used where the rope is not knotted to another anchor point, but simply passed freely through a karabiner (see diagram two pages earlier). Every twenty metres or so, it is preferable to reattach (rebelay) the rope. This reduces the amount of bounce (and therefore abrasion) in the rope, and allows one to have full lateral control of the path of the descent.

To ascend the rope, at least two 'jammers' are used which allow the rope to pass through in one direction only, biting with sharp metal teeth when weight is applied in the other direction. Muddy rope and non-vertical sections severely reduce their ability to do this - with the risk of the jammer slipping. By standing in a foot-loop attached to one's 'hand-jammer', one can go up in a 'frog' motion. This motion is known as 'prussiking'.

A part of the cave requiring such rope and abseiling is known as a 'pitch'. 'Passages' are generally corridor-like regions of mostly-horizontal cave, 'rifts' or 'meanders' are narrow stream-cut passages typified by their sharp edges and mantle-piece like edges to walk or slither along, sometimes interrupted by narrow and difficult (but generally small) pitches.

Jarvist Frost

Sponsorship and Thanks...

Many thanks are owed to the following organisations, companies and people who have supported the Migovec expeditions over the years. Apologies to anyone left off the following lists.

Harlington Trust,
Imperial College Exploration Board, Goldsmiths,
Royal Geographic Society,
Royal College of Science Association,
University of London Convocation (Dunsheath)
Award, Imperial College Union,
Imperial College Trust,
The Rectors Trust,
Imperial College Health Centre,
Old Centralians Trust,
Ghar Parau Foundation (Mulu equipment stores).

Direct Food (Sosmix and Burger mix),
Fox's Biscuits (Rocky, Classic and assorted chocolate bars), Spring Fine Foods (Flapjacks), Whitworths (Dried fruit, Dried Onions, Rice, Dried Veg, Pasta), Westmill foods Ltd (Flour),
Katsouris Bros (Pulses), St Ivel (Spreads),
International Distillers and Vintners Ltd (Smirnoff Vodka), Tetley T- Bags, Van den Bergh Ltd., Nova Scotia (Dried Fruit), CPC Ltd (Marmite), McVities (Assorted biscuits and chocolate bars).

Bar Paradiso (for supplying us with certain essential provisions), those who work in various shops, banks, bars and restaurants in and around Tolmin (for be so welcoming to the annual influx of dirty English cavers).

Hewlett Packard (Laptop Computer), Trimble Navigation (Global Positioning System), Compaq (Laptop Computer), Marlec Engineering Co. Ltd. (Solar Panels), Panasonic (Laptop Computer), Merck Ltd (Daren Drums and BDHs), Pico Sytems Ltd.(Laptop Computer), Brian Joplin (Little Dragon), Alcatel (GSM phone), Fisco Products (Ultrasound tape measure), Survey Supplies (Helmet mounted survey instrument), Caving Supplies, Inglesport, Bernies Cafe, Dragon Equipment, Brian Jopling JA&RE React (Little Dragon).

John Harrison, Tony Waltham, Alan Speight, Andy Cave, Angie Cave, Simon Bottrel, Bob Schroter, Don Adlington, Richard Hermitage, David Gibson, Sarah Freedman, Alan Swan, Roger Serpell, Rick Halliwell, Wookey, Nick Williams, Olly Betts (and all those involved in the Survev project), Nigel Wheatley, Andrew Royle, Stefanie van den Boom, Peter Dorward, David Judson, France Sustercic, Hugh St Lawrence, Allan Richardson.

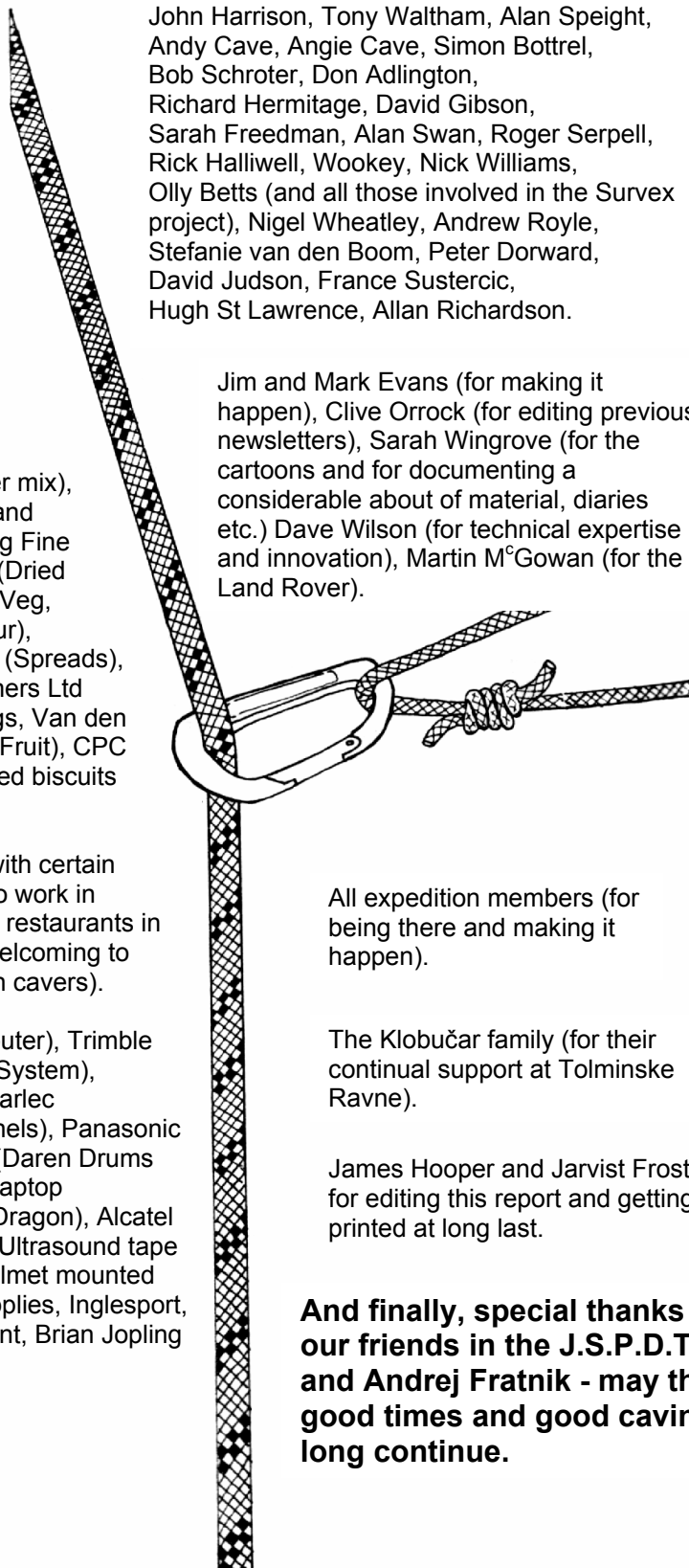
Jim and Mark Evans (for making it happen), Clive Orrock (for editing previous newsletters), Sarah Wingrove (for the cartoons and for documenting a considerable amount of material, diaries etc.) Dave Wilson (for technical expertise and innovation), Martin M^cGowan (for the Land Rover).

All expedition members (for being there and making it happen).

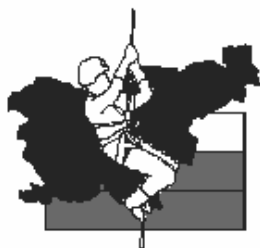
The Klobučar family (for their continual support at Tolminske Ravne).

James Hooper and Jarvist Frost for editing this report and getting it printed at long last.

And finally, special thanks to our friends in the J.S.P.D.T. and Andrej Fratnik - may the good times and good caving long continue.



The famous (successful) sponsorship letter



Imperial College

Migovec'96

Imperial College Caving Club
Imperial College Union
Prince Consort Road
London SW7 2BB

Ann Wiseman
International Distillers and Vintners Ltd
05/07/96

Dear Ms Wiseman

The following fax is with reference to my phone call on the fifth of July. I am seeking support through either donations or discounts on food for the high profile *1996 Imperial College Caving Club Expedition* which leaves for Slovenia on the fourteenth of July. The expedition is supported by the Royal Geographic Society and the University of London as well as the National Caving Association. I enclose the expedition proposal.

Founded in 1962, the *Imperial College Caving Club* is amongst the most established, experienced and respected of the clubs in Britain. We have an excellent expedition record with major expeditions throughout Europe, Morocco, Nepal, Haiti, Canada, and Peru - finding the deepest cave in Southern America. The 96 expedition is a continuation of two years exploration and study of the Migovec plateau in Slovenia, we will be performing scientific studies and following up dramatic cave discoveries we made last year.

The present expedition is gaining publicity through various local press releases, through a number of articles in the national caving magazine and to London and other University magazines. We are also giving presentations, for example to Royal *Geographic Society*, *Cotswold Camping* and at the *National Caving Conference*. At the presentations and in the press releases, we will give details of what we have experienced, eaten, and used. Any support that we receive will be acknowledged on these and all other opportunities. We have two experienced photographers on the expedition, so we can also supply photographs if required of any products we receive being consumed whether in camp or underground.

The following products that your company supplies have shown to be favourites on previous expeditions and tours:

42 litres of vodka

Any help you can give us will be gratefully received and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely

Alva Gossan.

To Migovec, Always!

The publication of this report has been put off for many years, waiting for a suitable conclusion such as reaching that magic 1000m mark or discovering the elusive connection between Gardeners' World and System Migovec. However, exploration, like life, is not that simple and there remain many unanswered questions on Migovec, just as there remain many ragged edges to this report. Many apologies, once again, for any unintentional errors that have crept into this journal, for missing out any important information or stories and for any overly zealous editing (rewriting) of articles. Little did we know when we started this endeavour that it would end up being such a lengthy and demanding task.

As to the future, this report was sent to the printers with less than two weeks to go before the departure of the summer 2007 expedition. A new generation of IC students are preparing for their first summer on Migovec, as are a new generation of JSPDT cavers. It is our belief that there remains much new cave to be discovered. What is certain, however, is that the area of limestone between Kuk and Migovec will forever be a special place where good conversations and strong friendship will endure amongst those who stay there a while. Long may the adventures continue!

James Hooper and Jarvist Frost



Quote Unquote

“On Migovec, we found a way that open hearted people can follow for generations.”
 Andrej Fratnik, Migovec Caver 1974 - Present Day

“‘In here!’ screeched the silk-monkey, and she disappeared completely into the rock. Then Sniff saw that it was a cave, a real cave, such as he had always dreamed of finding. Its mouth was rather small, but inside it opened out into a big room. The rocky walls rose smoothly up to a gap in the roof which let in the sunlight, and the floor was covered with smooth white sand.

...
 ‘Don’t disturb me,’ said Sniff solemnly. ‘This is the biggest moment of my life so far, and it’s my first cave.’ ”

Tove Jansson, *Comet in Moominland*

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Useful Weblinks

<http://www.union.ic.ac.uk/rcc/caving/>
http://jspdt.esmartweb.com/s_uvod.html
<http://www.jamarska-zveza.si/>
<http://kras.zrc-sazu.si/>
<http://www.ap-ljubljana.si/>
<http://www.slo-zeleznice.si/>
<http://www.slovenia.info/>

Imperial College Cave Club site
 JSPDT site
 Speleological Association of Slovenia
 Karst Research Institute
 Slovenian bus timetables
 Slovenia train timetables
 Slovenian Tourist Board

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