

T I G G U O C O B A U C

NEWSLETTER OF

N. U. C. C.

NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY CAVING CLUB NEWSLETTER

No. 2 Dec. 2023

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EDITORIAL

Having served as the 'very important' club librarian for the past year I was a bit surprised to find that hardly any records of club activities had been preserved. There are odd photos here and there and incomplete trip journals, but nobody knows who they are or what they belong to. It was decided to write a newsletter to help combat this issue. One other NUCC newsletter had been written in the entirety of the club' s history dating back to 1948, and that had been published in Feb 1970. Here follows an extract from the editor of that paper.

'A University club suffers from a relatively fast turnover of members with the result that very little in the way of a living record of the club gets passed on to each new year' s recruits. However, by including in the newsletter a brief summary of the club' s regular trips, this lack of communication will be combated by the build-up of a record of activities and personalities. A second benefit to the club will follow from the exchanging of our newsletter for those of other clubs as this will ensure that we are well informed about caving activity in all parts of the country and also enable us to contribute our news and views to the flow of information between cavers.'

It seems not so much has changed in the 53 years since that was published. Here is our second attempt.

Ollie.

MEMBERS

John Fox	President/Supreme Chancellor
Charlotte Payne	General Secretary/President with Extra Steps
Ben Want	Treasurer/Master of Coin
Ollie Brain	Kit + Train. Off/Noodle Wrangler + Camp Leader
David Trevarthen	Training Officer/Camp Leader
Benedict Claxton-Stevens	Librarian/Master of Scrolls
Barney Hepburn	Trip Officer/Subterranean Abductor
Brandon Hall	Trip Officer/Subterranean Travel Agent
Lainya Knopik	Publicity Officer/Propaganda Minister
Liv Warwick	Wellbeing Officer/Happiness Enforcer
Oliver Harris	Social Secretary/Social Visionary
Eva Hesketh-Laird	Member/General Annoyance
Andrew Gray	Member/Combobulator of the Contraptions

Including members on the committee, the club has 33 registered members at the time of publishing.

Our email address may be found on the Nottingham SU website and social media links are below:

Instagram: @nottsunicavingclub

Facebook: University of Nottingham Caving Club (NUCC) 23-24

SUMMARY OF CLUB' S ACTIVITIES AND FUTURE MEETS

The club is very active with usually numerous trips going on each week. Below are a few trip reports from those who I managed to irritate sufficiently enough that they gave in:

Sunset Hole - 24/09/23

After some chaos with having to go back and get Nat's oversuit, we made it and got changed, John having some shambles of forgetting his chest jammer and central... there was a bit of a walk to the cave which was fun as we struggled to find it. We found it in the end though, entering the stream entrance which was less squeeze than the drier entrance. They met up a bit into the cave and we followed the snaky stream which dropped down a bit before reaching the first climb. There was no natural but some bolts which John rigged with the 15m rope. Next was a short-ish walk down the stream to the following climb, which was quite wet and would be unpleasant to free climb. The first bit I rigged was a longer walk away which started with a backup off a natural to a couple of bolts, was a tricky climb over to the bolt but got there in the end, it was a little tight rigging but Nat put a sling there for getting back up. A little further on there was the 35m pitch with a little bit of traverse. Almost did the y-hang with the double fig 8 and alpine the wrong way round but Nat guided me, then I really didn't want to descend the pitch but did it in the end and was proud of myself for doing it! Was starting to get a bit cold, the final chamber was a bit sad but could see headtorches in the hole which looked pretty, there were some nice stals and crystal formations along the streamway as well. I went first ascending again and some of the climb changeovers were tricky but I got there! Managed to avoid carrying the tackle sack on the way out... rescued a frog!! Which did mean I had to crawl without using my hands.... I did hurt my shoulder but now the froggo should be happy in a nice pond far from the cave.

-Liv

Peak Cavern - 07/10/2023

We started off the day with minimal faff and got in the cave at a shockingly early time for NUCC. Perhaps this was an indicator of a pleasant caving trip, as it was also a lovely walk up. On sunny days like this, it is almost a shame to be underground.

With 3 freshers in tow, we set off through the show cave and onto the real cave. There were minimal complaints through the muddy ducks and boulders, which is unusual for freshers. Everyone sped past surprise view, and we even managed to convince freshers to climb under a rock in the streamway. Very cold and very wet, so naturally, I did it twice. After an impromptu water fight, we managed to pass a

couple of groups to Buxton. We got the fresher to lead, to see how deep they were willing to go... which turned out to be quite deep. On our way back to the round trip, I took the lead to the handline to window inlet. The climb was perfectly fine, but that soon changed with the muddy crawl onwards.

Personally, galena is one of my favourite parts. There aren't many crawls you can seal slide down! A few of the tight parts were riddled with profanities, but for the most part, it was easy going. Not even the climb down near surprise view caused trouble, nor the climb up before. Freshers were not best pleased going down surprise view sump for fun, and I will admit I am not quite as thin as when I last tried, so I was stuck for just long enough to be embarrassing.

A quick detour to treasury and we retraced our steps, making sure to give a good bath on the way back. I may have incurred a HR complaint with the force I used to scrub those poor freshers, but I'm sure the Sunday cavers will appreciate the clean suits.

Overall, it was a good cave with good people. We even got a personal roasting from a tour cave on the way out, but they have to create some entertainment for an £18 tour.

-Natalie

Ogof Ffynnon Ddu 2 - 21/10/23

The south Wales OFD 2 was a very beautiful cave with lots of pretty stalactites and stalagmites, as well as crystals in the walls. It was challenging at some points but would definitely do it again!:)

Ogof Ffynnon Ddu - 21/10/23

We went as a group of three with Charlotte, who was very sensible and responsible, and went as far as the music box. On the way we saw some pretty stalagmites and lots of crystals and walked along the streamway, although the water was too high to walk the whole way. We did a few traverses including airy fairy, which we all survived. Overall, it was a brilliant introduction to caving and we are all very excited to do it again.

-Alexander

GB Cave - 04/11/23

We started the trip around dinner time and drove to a field in the middle of nowhere. We opened a small door and started our crawl into the earth. We walked for about half an hour and then the cave opened up into a very impressive cavern. We then made our way to a squeeze in which there was loads of twists and turns. We

then made our way upwards to find the grand chamber but couldn't find the route into it. After about half an hour of squeezing through random pathways we eventually found a path that seemed hopeful. We got to the top and had finally made it to the grand chamber. It looked amazing and the amount of stalactites and stalagmites took me back. We sat at the top of the grand chamber just taking it all in before we then decided to head back out and end the trip there. The journey up was a painful one with lots more crawls but when we came out at the top we were greeted by a blue sky. Overall I think this was an excellent trip.

-Jack

Swildon's Hole - 05/11/23

On the Sunday of the Mendip's trip, despite the previous night's debauchery, half of us went to Swildon's Hole. It was a very wet cave the whole way but had lots of climbing, jumps and waterfalls. I fell into more bodies of water than I care to admit. The final stretch began with a 1 metre sump, which I found out the hard way is an excellent cure for tiredness and/or hangovers. Despite being warned to wear as many layers as possible, most of us still underestimated how bloody cold it would be - especially when we got stuck behind a group of 10 Plymouth freshers doing a waterfall ladder climb. We waited and got fairly cold, but on the bright side got to look stupid doing warming up exercises. Even the emergency shelter and pocket warmers made an appearance, but we all did fine and got out alive, thoroughly enjoying the whole thing (there is a gun to my head). There were no squeezes, so we were much less bruised than normal. In a rather whimsical end to the trip, we climbed out the trunk of a tree, before depositing litres of stolen cave water from our wellies into the stream.

-Alexander

Giant's Hole - 09/11/23

The trip STARTED out pretty well! Ollie drove us to Peakshill farm, which was full of minibuses, so I was worried that the cave would be full of baby cavers (luckily, we didn't get stuck behind them). I tried to hug a few sheep, but they weren't the friendly kind.

We climbed down Garland's Pot and through the Crabwalk, which I thoroughly enjoyed! Although, the Vice was a little cosy. But the fun slide down Razor's Edge Cascade made it all worthwhile (even if I scared Ollie a little at how fast I slid down). We went to check out St Valentines sump, that Ollie wants to drain, and he decided to go for a very soggy crawl while I sat back and watched in the dry.

Then things started to go a little downhill. Re-joining the round trip, there was a small rope climb that I took a bit of a tumble on. Thinking everything was okay, I continued on, up the climb, and no more than a minute later, I realised that my

finger was starting to hurt quite badly. I took off my glove to reveal a lovely bent finger (not how it usually looks).

I continued on, like a soldier, stopping every now and then to soak my finger in the nice, cold, water to keep it numb! A few climbs, a lovely crawl through Giant's Windpipe, and a traverse over the Crabwalk later, we made it back to Garland's Pot and then came the hard part of trying to climb the ladder with one hand.

Eventually, we made it out of the cave, back to the warmth of Ollie's car and off to the Urgent Care Treatment centre we went. Followed by a trip to the pub, of course.

Overall, solid trip, broken finger lets it down a little, so for me, 7/10!

-Lainya

Oxlow Caverns - 10/11/2023

We went to Oxlow Caverns near Castleton to practice our SRT skills. Even though it was cold and wet, it was exciting and rewarding. We'd been caving for what we thought was a long way, only to realise we'd only done 4 pitches just very slowly! Changing in the farm carpark was an experience...

-Sophie

Owl Hole - 18/11/2023

I'd wanted to do this cave for quite some time and, now that I had the day free with friends attending DCRO training, I finally had the chance! Only problem was that there is no signal near the Orpheus. So, after driving around for a bit to try and load the peak district caving website, I finally was on my way there! The entrance is a small hole approx. 5m up in a rock face. Bolts have been placed closely together with the view of aid climbing up to the entrance and I had a fantastic time doing so! I put in a quick pull-through rope to get down afterwards and was on to the cave proper.

Owl hole is brilliantly decorated, although it seems well visited and many of the formations are broken or dirty. This doesn't take away from how much fun I had on this trip, just exploring and throwing myself down every hole to have a look around. A brilliant little cave and would definitely do again!

-Ollie

Eldon Hole - 16/12/23

Left TSG late morning, having chosen our callout time for 7pm and having a nice breakfast. Andrew had kindly sorted all the rope for the trips that day but I still spent 5 or so minutes faffing over which ropes to take and eventually

settled on taking the 80m (south gully is a 65m pitch). Didn't take a rope bag and simply carried it - surely this won't end up being a problem...

We all drove over in three different cars and parked up near the cave. Once we approached the cave we split off into different groups at around 12:45 or so - with me, Big Ben, Kira and Cathy doing the South gully route. I got to work rigging the start of the pitch with some help and advice from Ben. All went fairly smoothly until I got to the first (hanging) re-belay. I rigged it fine with a good amount of slack after some trial and error, however I needed to uncoil the end of the rope before doing the re-belay. I was quite stressed thinking about the rigging so I somehow managed to get the rope tangled while attempting to uncoil it. Meanwhile, Alex S was descending down the west wall glancing over at me with pity, while Andrew's glorious trombone playing served as a great soundtrack to the trip.

Unfortunately, my anxiety levels were rising to the point where I couldn't quite think straight while I was fiddling around with the rope. After maybe 10 minutes I came to the decision that it was best to do a mid rope changeover and head back up while partly derigging the re-belay and deviation.

When I resurfaced, Big Ben decided to take over while I was feeling quite embarrassed and thinking I hadn't instilled the best confidence in our new freshers. It was then time for Kira and Cathy to start descending. I helped coach them through the deviation and the hanging re-belay while Big Ben offered some extra input. At some point David showed up, who assumed we were on our way out at this point as I was still on the surface. After some time I was then able to start descending and got to the first re-belay while Cathy was at the next couple of re belays (which were a real bitch) maybe 20m below.

At around half 4 it started to get dark (winter is great) so I tried to switch my Fenix on. It didn't turn on which led me to realise my headlamp never had a battery in it. I had taken it out and put it on charge after running around the streets of Castleton slightly drunk the night before and completely forgotten about it when leaving for the trip. My hopes of getting down Eldon were lost and I made my ascent of shame back to the surface, while writing the trip off as the worst one of my caving career.

It wasn't too long before people on different routes were back up at the surface. Alex H offered me his battery and I began to consider whether I should give Eldon another shot. After some coordinating, I was given the green light to make my way down South gully while our callout would be extended slightly. I had rigged my descender at the top of the pitch at around 5:45 pm or so - about five hours after first starting the rigging. After some struggle at the hanging re-belay and the final re-belay at the edge of the shelf I had finally made it down Eldon.

At this point Big Ben was the only one left at the bottom and started making his way out while I had a quick peek at the main chamber, which was spectacular. After Big Ben made it past the shelf re-belays I started on my ascent of Eldon. At this point I was tired and decided I needed to blast a bit of music through my phone speaker to cope with prusiking up 65m and de-rigging. After putting on Selected Ambient Works 85-92 by Aphex Twin (the perfect background music for anything) I started my journey up the rope. After around half an hour or so I was back up at the surface with Big Ben with the rope all derigged. It was around 7:20 pm by the time we left the cave, eager to get back for our Christmas dinner.

-Barney

Cussey Pot - 16/12/23

After the Derbyshire Explorers Forum I'd heard lots about Cussey Pot and was keen to go and have an explore in one of the UK's newest caves. We drove to the car park and walked the full 20m to the cave entrance to find the metal lid. Once inside, it was clear how visited this cave was by the amount of loose rock and dirt, just waiting to be dislodged. I descended first and once down, hid quickly around the corner before the shout of rope free. I was soon joined by my friends at the bottom and we turned right, towards the slot squeeze in the floor. After a brief and really quite enjoyable climb down through rock and scaff I arrived at another squeeze. Halfway through I met the pleasant surprise of a large chunk of wall trying to give me a hug. I pushed it off and out of the way and was through the slot, reminded to be careful of what I touch. Another rifty traverse and climb saw us at the start of the second pitch but unfortunately the rope was jammed near the floor and I didn't particularly fancy the muddy downprusik to the ground some 15m below.

We turned around and headed in the opposite direction, this time going left at the base of the first pitch. This way led to some great caving and fun sections of traversing, climbing and squeezing. Soon I arrived at a particularly tight squeeze for me and, after watching my short friend struggle to get through with srt kit on, decided that it was time to strip. It wasn't quite as bad as I'd expected and I slid right through, shortly joined by the others. We reached the bottom of the next series of pitches and stopped for a nice chat and refuel at the entrance to Loperamide Lust. I egged my friends on to go and explore what I had heard to be a particularly miserable crawl and soon heard lots of unhappy noises coming from them both. Soon they emerged back, somewhat more brown than before and unhappy that I hadn't followed them. Oops. It was a steady exit from the cave and an hour later we emerged back into the world very muddy and ready for a Christmas dinner. I ran to the nearby waterfall to wash myself and kit quickly and we all agreed that it was quite a nice place to be. I'm sure a return will happen soon.

-Ollie

Holme bank chert mine - 17/12/23

Cool mine. Went in no caving kit other than helmet and light because I didn't bring kit with me as I intended to hike. After a bunch of faff we finally left at around 12pm to head to the mine. We went in at bottom level and investigated a lot of the right hand passages where they all ended in the flooded workings and would need to be dived. There were some pretty crystals and some forming stals as well as some interesting calcified roots. There was a crystal pool and the water was very blue and pretty. There were some sketchy bits of the mine where it was ominously held up by a log that looked ready to snap but we explored about half of the cave scrambling and had a go on the working minecart which was super fun. Not sure what entrance we exited out of, it may have been one of the top level ones as there were a bunch of other entrances (we did have to fight the lock to close in the entrance we went in). There was a curtain reveal just before the entrance we went out of, then went to the loo and saw the other entrances as I climbed up the hill a bit, it was pretty cool and I got to be a feral creature again! Would be down to come back in caving kit to explore more of the flooded bits.

-Liv

The scheduled club meets over the coming few months are as follows:

2-4 February - Yorkshire at Bradford Pothole Club

16-18 Feb - South Wales Caving Club

23-25 February - South Wales for Southern Council of Higher Education Caving Clubs

8-10 March - Peak District at Technical Speleological Group

22-25 March - South Wales at Whitewalls

Alum Pot on Ladders - Trip Report

It had been one of those jokey suggestions for some years that it would be funny to do Alum Pot in the Yorkshire Dales on ladders. I first heard of it when I was a fresher two years previously and had largely forgotten about it since. Something about the idea stuck with me though and, nearly two years after my first caving trips, I found myself thinking about the idea once more. But what would it take? I began entertaining the idea of doing it with no fixed date in mind along with some friends, thinking about how I would pull it off and who I'd like to do such a silly thing with. I ran it past one friend whilst on an expedition in Spain and they mentioned why not go all the way and do it in a suit as well and make the most of the experience. And so the idea was born.

Some months later, the dates and location for NCHECC were announced and I knew this would be the perfect opportunity to put the plan into action. All the Northern (and most Southern) clubs descended to one area for a weekend of caving, mischief, and drinking. Well, mostly the latter two. I'd reached out to those who I felt would be up for the trip, asking (begging) to borrow all their club ladders and themselves. Well I had a lot of ladders at the end but not a lot of participants. Eventually, four others tenuously agreed and I went to purchase my new 'caving suit'.

After arriving at the YDG for NCHECC, word had spread of the plan and suddenly well over fifteen cavers were planning on making their way to Alum to either do the ladder or to watch. This was going to be mayhem. The next morning, after a bright and early 9am start I had fourteen ladders at my feet, over three hundred metres of rope and one very charming suit. Not-so-surprisingly though, all the fifteen had disappeared. Still, the plan had been made and this was the best chance I'd have to fulfil my silly dream. My friends and I set off for Alum with the intention of me rigging the NW route whilst they went via a mixture of dolly tubs and the SE hang down to the bridge; carrying a barbecue, steaks and other random bits.

A few trips up the hill saw all the kit deposited at the top of Alum and I got to work rigging. Many of the trees around Alum were suffering from dieback and so a mixture of great care and the idea of 'more is better' was applied when making the top anchor. Soon all the ladders were assembled and ropes tied together for life-lining. I dropped over the edge and felt the familiar feeling of 'oh crap' upon seeing just how far I had to go, not having done any pitches quite so big for a few weeks, nor with good visibility. A moment to compose myself and quickly the ladders, rope and people were in place. Unfortunately, at the last minute I heard a shout 'abandon' coming from far below, followed by 'dolly tubs'. I knew this was the end of my Alum dream for the day. Ten minutes later I found myself shuffling across the greasy slab and onto the bridge with my friends packing away their feast and getting ready to head out. There had been some complications. It was a

somewhat disappointing walk back down the hill on Saturday, bitterly cold and wet, but clearly looking fantastic in my suit jacket and trousers...

Much discussion was had that night about the trip but I was still eager to return on Sunday and finally fulfil the dream. Unfortunately, much of my wet kit had frozen overnight and so supplies were limited the next day. A mixture of waterproof trousers, coat and suit (of course) saw me at the top of Alum once more but this time with a different crowd. An abseil down saw me at the bottom of the pot and very wet indeed. Despite the cold and spray I was ecstatic that I was finally here and what I was about to do. I clipped my micro onto my harness, pulled through some rope stretch and began the long climb back towards the surface. The ladder from the bridge the day before had been described as 'the ladder to hell', seemingly endless as the bottom cannot be seen and just disappears into the dark. It also felt endless coming up the thing. All in all, eleven ladders were used to reach the floor with only a minute amount spare.

The self-lining was fun but I was acutely aware that a slip off of the ladder would be a long and soft catch by the micro. Luckily it was never tested and I had a brilliant time, stopping often to chat with friends, take photos and even sing a caving song. It was one of the most fun times I'd had in a cave in the past year and the people and friends who lent a hand to help really made it special.

I was feeling ecstatic upon reaching the top and the change back into SRT was a welcome one. The only job left to do was pull up the rope and ladders and pack it all away. I'm now content not to touch a ladder for a little while like the majority of others, it seems.

-Ollie

NUCC FRANCE TRIP - JULY 2023

After two years of pandemics and viruses, it was finally time for NUCC to return to their annual(ish) summer trips abroad. This year I took on the planning role and, having experienced the great caves of the Vercors, France the previous summer on a Berger permit, I was eager to return. What follows is a shortened version of some accounts from the trip.

Ollie.

12/06/23 - Ollie

We woke up bright and early - this is a lie, we were very groggy. I had stayed up the night before beating Lainya at Mario Kart so had had 4 hours of sleep and regretted every moment of my existence. Anyway, Lainya and I picked up Andrew (Supreme Faff Lord), Liv and Little Ben and headed down to Dover. The journey was uneventful mostly besides the karaoke and good vibes. We somehow managed to get through border security despite Lainya having the wrong surname...oops. Had a lovely nap on the ferry and bombed our way to some French oriental forest or something.

The 'jank-mobile' (my car, consisting of a roof box ratchet strapped to the roof, five people crammed in with full caving, climbing, via ferrata, canyon and personal kit), cranked merrily along the way. It only bottomed out a few times and the loud music drowned out the other bad noises for the most part. We set up a very wholesome camp with the ten club members, a small(ish) fire and lots of charred pasta. Amazing.

13/06/23 - Ollie

The day started off very well with the car wheels grinding against the arches about 30cm into the journey. ---Shit. A lengthy repack and some more car noises later and we arrived at St-Julien-en-Vercors. Very Pretty! A trip to the shops, a club dinner; pasta of course, maybe some alcohol and its been a pretty good day. Looking forward to caving tomorrow!

14/06/23 - Liv

Showcave (Grotte de Choranche) was very beautiful with lots of white straws and very blue lakes. There were noodles (olms) and a light show that was unexpected. The tour guide was very lovely and also a caver + we had a chat afterwards about the cave system + caving in general. After, we had lunch (pasta leftovers for me) and I bought a noodle softie for 14 euros (well worth it). We headed back to the cars where I got my helmet + brought the boat + tacklesack to the cave (Grotte de

Gournier).

John

We then went to the real cave Grotte de Gournier where we had to cross the lake at the entrance in the leaky club boat. Thankfully, Natalie swam along behind me to propel me along. We then climbed up to the traverse which was a bit sketchy with rusty pitons and slippery footholds. The cave was incredible. Very white and pretty with huge formations and large passages. We unfortunately couldn't find the way down to the streamway & reached the terminus so turned back to check out a boulder choke just after the fountain room. Feeling tired at this point I decided to stay at the top. Andrew and Natalie had gone down, followed by Lainya who got stuck! Eventually with me pulling from the top & Natalie & Andrew pushing, she was free and we headed out of the cave. Back across the traverse we took the knots out of the climb handline and descended. The rope to pull the boat back was very tangled and got cut with Natalie pushing me back across! Natalie then went back to sort it in the end turned into an epic trip returning at around midnight.

15/06/23 - Ollie

After a late night the day before, everyone was more than happy not to emerge until late morning. Some of us decided to go for a wild swim session in the nearby river. A lot of shrieks and screams of 'fuck that' s cold' were had, mixed with 'don' t spill the fondue' which I was carrying across the river. We wandered to Grotte de la Goule Noire where lots more 'fuck' s' were had due to the colder cave water. Andrew and I found a roped climb along the canyon to the road and eventually to the bridge where a man asked us if we were going to jump. We both hatched the idea of 'we could' and began planning how to rig the bridge... An hour later, a big Ben and lots of rope acquired, I found myself 40m above the river suspended on a rope. It was brilliant. Only after de-rigging did we see the big sign that said 'no rappelling off this bridge' . Oops.

16/06/23 - John

Learning the ropes for canyoneering - today we tried out the fig 8' s and pull through rigging at the cave "Grotte de L' Olette" . Some faff trying to find the way in lead us up a traverse between the car park and cave exit to the top entrance. I opted for the traverse way in followed by a short pitch to try my fig 8. The descent was fast but not as fast as expected. A second traverse at the bottom lead to pitch 2 which was a bit longer but double roped so slow. A lot of faffing later & finding a cute unicorn-smoothie crag-swag, I then slid down pitch 3 and climbed out to escape & warm up in fresh sunlight. After dropping me off at the hut, the others went off to do via ferrata/corda and climbing.

Ollie

After finishing at Grotte de l' Olette half of the group decided they fancied via ferrata whilst the other left to find a place to rent cowstails. No success. Whilst half left for the via ferrata, a few of the no cows tails crew left to go climbing. Andrew, Ian and I arrived at the crag at 8pm and after a short while deliberating we decided that the via corda sounded rather good. Que an epic six hour adventure that didn' t see us home until 5am. The via corda was amazing though!

17/06/23 - Grotte de Bornillion - Little Ben

All 3 entrances were big and impressive with an impressive river flowing out of the leftmost entrance. We went in the rightmost one and left our bags just within the natural light zone, it was very hot at the start of the trip so I stripped off to skin on the top half until it cooled down. The navigation was difficult for the first section as we were trying to find our way through a large boulder pile while being confused by the survey, arrows in the cave pointing multiple directions and the very rough route description. We eventually made our way through and found ourselves in a muddy tunnel with 3 kind Frenchmen. They told us the correct way forward and gave us some suicidal advice which we elected to ignore (they said the siphon is passable, which it may be, but not if you want to go caving again). Moving on, I went down a flat-out calcite crawl that looked like it kept going, ultimately we decided it wasn't the way due to some rather delicate, yet undisturbed, crystals. After backing out of the crawl, the way on was up and to the left up a muddy, yet sharp and relatively steep tunnel. This led to a clean bedding plane with some really cool rock formations. The floor and ceiling were both covered in spikes that looked like they formed when lots of small streamway pots sort of merged together. This section ended with a boulder choke that was relatively easily navigated and placed us at the floor of the chamber with the siphon (that the French were referring to). There was a short walk down to the siphon from the point we emerged from the choke. After looking at it and taking a few pictures, we walked back past the exit of the choke and towards the main exit, this was more of a tunnel with a boulder floor than a chamber as it led all the way to the exit. This tunnel was large in all respects, long, wide, high ceiling, boulders that probably were in the thousands of tons and stalagmites that reached the roof. We bimbled along boulder hopping while looking for a moderately sketchy climb up and a traverse which we found near the entrance next to a very large hemispherical lump of calcite. The climb up wasn't very difficult but the rocks looked like they could come loose anytime, the traverse was easy and not all that exposed but quite high up and lead to the top of a boulder pile that was in the entrance. Once we walked out we were greeted by a mountain goat who was watching us menacingly from a ledge about 10 m above. The cave took 3 hours in all.

18/06/23 - Ollie

My poor car dislikes Grenoble and those stupid speed bumps. Anyway, we drove through Grenoble (silly place). Lainya had booked to try paragliding after Andrew and I had forced her into one previously and she'd loved it. Looked like it was a great experience and it was fun to watch the gliders taking off. Only one got caught in a tree... Whilst L.K. played in the air, we had our own dopamine kick by playing with a very sweet border collie. Next was to head to the via ferrata and storm the Bastille! We started storming but had to retreat to a coffee shop for some cold drinks. But then the storming resumed! Big Ben, L.K. and I climbed through the cannon port and into the base very sweaty, half naked and out of breath... but we made it! Back at the house a few games of lick 'n' stick, a lot of drinking and I was a bit of a mess. A drunken barefoot walk led to me stepping in some form of shit, twice. Another retreat to the shower to end the day for me.

19/06/23 - Eva

Today we went Canyoning! It was the first canyon I've ever done and it was very wet and soggy (not really my kind of thing). And guess what happened?! I got cold!!! Cool to jump off big rocks into the deep water. You've got to be pretty fearless. Between the two groups we managed to lose two tackle sacks! One was lost at the first jump as it sunk to the bottom. The second was washed away in the canyon. Rest assured both were miraculously rescued. One was picked up later in the trip and the other was rescued by Andrew who descended off a bridge with a massive stick and crab (hook) attachment to 'fish' out the bag. What a hero. Back at the house, everyone is shattered and slightly mentally and physically destroyed by the trip. Would probably do it again though.

20/06/23 Grotte de Favot - Little Ben

The trip started with a short drive to a random layby then a torturous, bordering vertical hike up the side of a gorge with full caving kit, a rescue/first aid kit and 115 m of rope. We soon reached a grand entrance after minor route finding troubles and lots of sweat, at 0211h. The entrance was large with a few boulders. After a small cooling and drinking break we headed underground, the first tunnel was described as a 'low muddy crawl' which is a bit more dramatic than reality, it was mostly a stooping passage with a dry mud floor and one section of hands and knees crawling. We promptly emerged, to our surprise, back outside, but looking to the right a steep, impressive, pentagonal phreatic tube descended rapidly (about 30° - 35°) into complete darkness. Along this passage were bolts placed for a handline that we didn't bother rig as we were confident in our climbing abilities, which turned out to be the correct decision. The tube ended at a spectacular chamber full of very large and white stal and we spent much time making noises to that effect. We hopped over some boulders, down a stooping tunnel and emerged in another room with some less impressive formations. Moving further into the cave we

reached a massive chamber with a very big echo and very big formations, took some pictures and after some deliberation regarding the solidity of a particular boulder and potential backup anchors, a 55m rope was rigged and dropped down a pitch that we assumed was 35 m. In reality, we passed both a 14m and 35m pitch in one go enduring some mild rope rub in the process. After jumping down this, we admired the large muddy bell shaped stal we just slid down and attempted to head deeper. This invariably failed as we had reached the end of the cave, some squeezing was attempted and my helmet made some unhappy noises but alas, we had bottomed the cave and started to head out (time = 0415h). After some faff derigging and a moderately sketchy scramble up the phreatic tube we made it back to the sweltering heat of the surface and started to hike back down to the car, which was an uneventful affair. (Time = 0530h) cave complete, I give it an 8/10.

21/06/23 - Ollie

Today saw us begin the return journey back the UK. It was rather uneventful for the most part. At around midnight we had reached our intended camping spot but coincidentally, the entirety of France was in a large thunderstorm and the thought of holding a metal pole in a forest didn't seem to excite anyone...weird. Having waited for the other half of the party to arrive to discuss moving on further, my car made more unhappy noises scraping along the ground when we began to set off again. A quick exit from the car confirmed the issue - the tailpipe had fallen off. Great. Luckily a caver is never far from some zip ties and paracord and soon the issue was fixed rather spectacularly. After removing a small fox from the road, we were on our way once more although soaked to the bone. A welcome service station later and our tents were set up and ready for a blissful sleep.

22/06/23 - Ollie

The next morning saw us leave early to get to Calais for the ferry. Lainya still managed to get back to the UK despite having the wrong name once again and everything went oddly smoothly. All in all it was a fantastic trip with great friends, great food and lots of good stories to tell.

TIGGUOCOBAUC?

The title of the NUCC newsletter 'Tigguocobauc' was chosen as it was the original title of the 1970s newsletter, and it seemed fitting to keep the tradition and build upon the club's history – hence the font and styling.

The word Tigguocobauc originates from the ancient Welsh translation by Asser – friend and biographer of Alfred the Great – of Nottingham. Well, the translation of the ancient Old English name Snotinga-ham, which itself is an adaption of one of the many Norman words for Nottingham. Tigguocobauc means 'the dwelling of caves' in old Welsh and goes on to form the basis for the branding 'City of Caves' today.

Ref: Nottinghamshire History – An Historical Sketch of the Caves of Old Nottingham and The Nottinghamshire Coalfield: some notes regarding its ancient history *by* Alfred Stapleton (1904).

Matienzo Caves Project – Members Report

A summary of the expedition was published in the BEC newsletter no.583 written by Paul Fairman with whom I spent most of my time caving when he wasn't trying to kill me ...

The gist was though that I had a fantastic time and enjoyed both the very warm and very cold temperatures of Matienzo, learned how to manually survey, cap and search for surface sites, as well as develop and practice a whole host of other skills. I found a new cave (albeit a very small one), spent a few days in the muddiest place I've ever seen and saw some dodgy bolting too. I made great friends there and learned a lot. Oh and also saw some pretty thigs too.

-Ollie.

Ario Caves Project – Members Report

I was lucky enough to be invited along to the Ario Caves Project 2023 expedition, taking place in the western massif of the Picos de Europa National Park, Spain. I had first been recommended the book ‘Beneath the Mountains’ by a friend and fellow caver and had thoroughly enjoyed it. My head had been filled with images of discovery, camaraderie and friendship and so when the opportunity arose to go to Ario, I jumped at it.

My expedition began with an early morning and a flight to Bilbao Airport. From here a convoluted series of public transport connections found my friend and I resting at Ovideo for the night, before heading to Los Lagos where we met up with the rest of the team. I hadn’t met any of them before but all seemed friendly and amiable. They handed out some group kit that needed to be hiked up the mountain and we set off. I couldn’t help but recall the fabled sections ‘sod 1-4’ as I slowly made my way up to the camp, with sod 2 being my personal least favourite and possibly the steepest. At the end of the up sections we walked past the entrance to Xitu and saw the old OUCC sign marking the original exploration date of the big cave. I had arrived at Ario. After setting up my tent and fending off some inquisitive cows I got to the task of eating. I had decided not to bring much food up with me and instead relied on old leftovers of previous expeditions, all of which were out of date by at least 4 years. The first item on the menu was the mystery fish. Tasty.



Camp at Refugio Vega de Ario

My first proper day of the expedition began with a walk over to the new hot prospect of the exped – 27/9. A tight, rifted cave with lots of sharp rock protruding at every angle just waiting to tear the oversuit apart. The cave had previously been pushed for some years and had had a bit of work done to enlarge

the 'capped rift'. Soon after the acrobatics of the capped section, a shaft parallel to the main hang emerged, perhaps only 10m away and a daring swing over to it saw us drop down to a rough, boulder strewn floor. Fighting along the top of the rift just above floor level, we found ourselves above another short drop, quickly rigged. The way on was too tight initially but a bypass was discovered and way on emerged through a short muddy crawl and into a small chamber. The passage continued to another large chamber with water flowing into a corner where another tight rift appeared. This was pushed with limited success as only one member of the party could fit into the rift and had decided that they didn't quite fancy living there permanently. Back in the larger chamber and it was noticed that a rope could be seen penduluming across the void above us. We had essentially discovered an extraordinarily convoluted route back to the bottom of the original shaft where we'd begun. Other viable leads were noticed by the team on our exit and saw variations of us return to push, with limited success. A new rift was discovered that, after some extensive percussive persuasion, yielded no results was named 'pass the hammer' passage. A fitting name.

Better luck was had elsewhere in 27/9 with several other teams pushing the lead at the very bottom of the known cave. Over the course of the expedition this was the main focus, with hundreds more metres of rope being brought in to help to drop the seemingly endless pitches. Eventually, a major breakthrough saw the expedition connect 27/9 with a larger system - 2/7, and provide another entrance to some harder-to-reach places.

Aside from my time in 27/9 I also undertook a trip in the cave known as C4. This was the site of much excitement in 2017 where a major effort saw a sump connection to 2/7 as well. Several bolt climbing leads had been established at the bottom of the upstream section of the cave and required further assessment. A team of us went in as an 'advance party' to rig the furthest sections of the cave for an aid climbing element to join later. At the streamway in the lowest section of the cave, a large waterfall approx. 30m in height falls into what's known as 'Sanctuary Chamber'. Here, the ropes trailing up the waterfall had been trashed by 6 years of abuse and required checking. A game of rock, paper, scissors decided who would be going up the ropes first and being that I won, I sat back and watched as my friend gingerly decided whether aid climbing or prusiking was the best option. After half an hour of sitting in my makeshift binbag gimp-mac, a call to climb was heard. Soon we all reached the Sanctuary proper - the site of the 2017 deep camp. Kit was dropped off, a cup of coffee was drank and we were on our way back out into the waterfall - this time however the levels were very much higher, resulting in a thorough soaking. Another few hours of prusiking saw us back safely at the camp for the night - Bugger Bogner (-450m). Some food, water and use of the camp toilet - named the Ario dream catcher, and I was conked out and asleep. After waking and some food, several more hours of prusiking, a little mishap and falling rock on the pitch known as 'The Monster' and we were at the surface, finally.

Only the two hour walk back to camp from there. I collapsed into my tent and had a brilliant nights sleep.



C4 Camp at Bugger Bogner

That was the majority of my caving escapades over my short time at the Ario expedition. I also took part in some surface walking and shaft bashing, as well as a rest day or two. Lots more exciting cave was found outside of my own adventures and it is all available to read in the Ario Caves Project facebook page, or on UK Caving where some of it was published. All in all, I loved every second of it and meeting so many new and wonderful people was amazing, not to mention the scenery when not caving! Surely a return trip will be on the cards for me.

-Ollie.

CUCC Loser Plateau Expedition, Austria – Members Report

This year I returned to the Cambridge University Caving Club expedition to the Loser Plateau in Austria. This is an expedition with a long history, surveying the SMK system under the plateau for over 40 years and the system is now over 150km long with a seemingly endless supply of promising leads to still follow. I also attended in 2022 as my first expedition experience and had a fantastic time so I was very keen to return for another two weeks this summer.

Having left all my packing to the last minute as usual, I threw the last of my kit into my bag hoping I hadn't forgotten anything too important and started the long drive over to Austria on my last day of term, picking up three members from Cambridge on the way. We took a late Friday night ferry from Dover (where my passengers made a strong effort to invite a seagull into my already overfull car) to Calais before a solid 14-hour day of driving on Saturday to reach base camp. I was very glad to be able to share the drive out, although after swapping and taking a brief nap in the back I was quite unhappy at waking up to find out Harry was driving my car at 180kph (110mph) down the autobahn.

Going for the start of the expedition meant that the first few days were focussed mainly on set up of our two camps which we'd be using for the rest of the expedition. Base camp (the 'Tatty hut') is located opposite the Gasthoff, a guesthouse where we hold the annual expedition dinner, and within walking distance of Grundlsee, a beautiful lake which we visited for swims almost every rest day (including those with thunderstorms). Top camp (aka 'Stony Bridge') is the place to stay whilst up the hill for caving trips, essentially a giant bivvy under a rock bridge with far more smash than you could ever possibly want to eat. Getting from base to top camp requires taking a half hour drive up a toll road followed by an hour hiking and then another hour of scrambling to cross the limestone plateau itself, with the added difficulty of an excessively heavy rucksack containing caving kit, bivvy kit and extra food for the group. But all went smoothly with setting up both camps and soon we were all ready and keen for caving!



Enjoyment of the hike to top camp could vary depending on the weather

My first caving trip of the expedition this year was a return to Balkonhohle (Balcony) to retrieve the ropes which we had stashed there the year before at about -150m. Five of us (me, Harry, Chi, Emma and Janis) were desperate to go caving by this point so we headed up from basecamp in the morning with plans for an efficient day of walking across the plateau, going caving and returning to sleep at top camp at a reasonable time. Through extensive caver faff, we were finally at the entrance and about ready to actually get underground at about 5pm that day... Things got more efficient once we were going and with some speedy rigging of the ~100m entrance pitch series and a bit of debate over whether one of the big boulders wedged in the rift was new since last year we eventually made it to the ropes we would be rescuing. After packing an overly heavy tackle sack each we turned around to start the return journey to the surface. Unfortunately, an oversight by Chi meant that we only had enough tackle sacks for the rope we collected from underground, and the 100m of rope used in the entrance series would have to be flaked up the pitches as we went, which I made sure to complain about plenty as I derigged. Eventually, I made it out to the surface around 11pm and faced the job of trying to pack everything into my bag to carry it back to top camp. With well over 100m of rope and all my caving kit to take back, the usual 20 minute walk felt endless and took closer to an hour with being so top heavy, tired and grumpy but we made it back to camp and much needed noodles.

After a few days hiding from thunderstorms down at base camp, I returned to stay at top camp for a good run of caving trips. For my second trip, I went to Fishface with Jana, Lizzie, Mike, and Emily. We headed into the cave around 3pm, thinking we had allowed plenty of time for the rigging team to get ahead of us but were quickly proven wrong as we bumped into them faffing at the second pitch. Despite this delay, we reached our pushing front at the bottom of pitch 4 before it was too late and were able to survey a short section of cave and bolt a short new pitch. This was Jana and Lizzie's first expedition caving trip and getting to explore new cave with them for the first time was a lot of fun. I also needed a few reminders from Mike but was pleased I hadn't entirely forgotten how to survey, and it came back to me quickly. We turned around about 9:30 and made it back to top camp by midnight.

The next day I changed cave again, this time visiting Heimkommenhohle (Homecoming) with Harry and Emily, which is where I would end up spend the rest of my time caving. The first thing I found out about Homecoming was that the walk was far longer, taking about an hour from top camp. This was annoying on the way there but far worse on the way back as we would confirm later that evening. Our objective for the trip was to continue rigging the cave and try to reach the pushing front in a section called Watershed which had been left in 2019 with two tantalising leads of walking passage. The entrance series had been rigged the day before so we began making our way through this, where the second thing I found out about Homecoming was that the rifty passages in the entrance series are a huge pain to get through with tackle sacks. After making our way through these and heading down

the big 55m pitch where the dry rope made some very unpleasant sizzling sounds, we continued on through a selection of crawls, short pitches and traverses to another big pitch series called Strained by Gravity. At this point I began my first time rigging on expedition and got quite scared as the person who had originally bolted it was clearly much taller and a better climber than me. The other two huddled in a shelter and watched Matilda the Musical as I continued to make slow progress across the short traverse and then down the pitch. At the end of a second traverse, I found a Y-hang which needed to be rebolted over an exposed 40m pitch. Although the plan was supposed to be for me to learn bolting that day, I looked at the awkward angles and scary black drop and decided that was absolutely not the place to learn so I insisted Harry should rebolt the pitch instead. With that job done, it was reaching time to turn around so we headed back up after a much needed noodle stop which we ate with a rope knife after realising that we'd neglected to bring any cutlery with the stove. On the way back we really appreciated how long and uphill the return journey was, getting back to top camp at 1am.



Rigging Strained by Gravity, big scary drop behind me

I was feeling the effects of multiple late caving trips by this point, but also determined to get in a good pushing trip before going back down the hill so we were up again relatively early the next day and headed back on the long walk back to Homecoming with Harry and Sarah as soon as we'd finished breakfast. We repeated the entrance series and returned to the Strained by Gravity pitch series, which we finished rigging to finally get to the start of Watershed, and close to the pushing front. Watershed was a 400m long section of traversing with some

interesting climbs that became increasingly slippery with more visits. But the most exciting part for me was that there were even some formations to enjoy, a rarity in this system. At the end of the traverse, we reached a T junction, with two excellent walking leads to consider. Choosing to go left, away from the noise of a waterfall, we could finally begin surveying new passage. We quickly fell into our rhythm and started making our way along, I was responsible for the disto, my favourite job as it is the least stressful to just read out numbers and I could enjoy the new cave we were discovering. The deep sand on the floor and calcite on the walls led to the name Flowstone Canyon, which continued for just over 100m with a mixture of awkward climbs and walking. At the end of this passage, after a slightly awkward downwards squeeze, we reached the top of a new pitch and a sensible place to turn around and start the increasingly lengthy return journey. Fuelled by more noodles and copious quantities of sweets, we made our way back out of the cave and reached the surface at 1am.



Enjoying the formations(!!) in Watershed

At the end of a 13 hour trip, and the third day of caving in a row, the thought of walking an hour back to top camp was not filling me with joy so I made the very silly suggestion to just be lazy and stay at the cave entrance instead. It was a clear night but the temperatures on the plateau dropped to only just above freezing overnight and we had no sleeping bags, bivvy bags or roll mats. Despite

these obvious drawbacks, Harry was tempted by the idea of not having to hike back over the plateau again and agreed to stay with me whilst Sarah hiked to a closer camp since she had sleeping gear much closer than we did. We assembled a 'bed' made of tackle sacks, rucksacks and whatever else we could scrounge from gear left at the cave entrance and layered up with all our thermals and undersuits on. With an emergency shelter over the top, it was surprisingly tolerable temperature-wise although I certainly wouldn't recommend it for a good night's sleep. After a very long night, the sun finally came up and we packed up to cut straight back across the plateau to the car park and the call of chips at base camp. The rest of the day was spent eating lots of food, swimming in the lake and attempting a film night where I passed out asleep five minutes in.

After a couple of days of festering at base camp to recover and enjoy other nearby adventures like via ferrata, I was keen to return to Homecoming and find out where the pitch would lead. This time, Harry and I were joined by Becka. Repeating the entrance series and carrying on to the pushing front was taking a good number of hours each way by this point and we decided an underground camp somewhere in Flowstone Canyon could definitely be justified. Having reached the top of the pitch, it was finally my chance to learn how to bolt and Harry gave me a very brief lesson in what I needed to do. I set my first bolt and then had to trust it as I leaned back over the edge of the pitch to add bolts for a traverse leading off at the same level. After two more bolts this passage was accessible and Harry and Becka excitedly ran off to survey this, leaving me with the task of continuing to bolt the pitch directly beneath the traverse. Unhappy with being abandoned to bolt on my own so quickly after being taught, I continued to make slow progress and stressed over avoiding rope rub on the surrounding jagged rocks. I got to the bottom of the pitch just as the other two returned from their section of passage and came down to join me. Oblivious to my grumbling, they then set me on rigging the next pitch down whilst they surveyed in the other direction again. This next pitch was even more stressful, dropping down a relatively narrow rift where getting the rope to hang nicely was challenging but after a lot of complaining I reached the floor in one piece and was stood in the streamway, with a narrow but tall rift to follow in either direction. As it was getting late, this was the end point for the day's trip and we made our way back to the surface by about midnight and headed to camp for the night.

Since we were now pushing a lead in the streamway, and a key guideline for caving in Austria is avoiding water where possible, the thundery forecast prevented us from being able to return and push the lead until our penultimate day on the expedition. My last trip in Homecoming was with Becka, Jono, Harry and James and we headed straight for the streamway again. Once there, we split into two teams and Becka and Jono headed upstream whilst Harry, James and I followed the rift downstream. We surveyed around 60m of the rift before reaching some more pitches, and this time it was James' turn to learn how to bolt. This would later be named Alpine Showers for its proximity to waterfalls but on the rope it was manageable

to avoid most of the spray and we continued onwards to reach a last 20m drop down where the rift suddenly became much larger. Unfortunately, we could also see the end of our rope dangling 5m above the floor and wouldn't be able to make any further progress that day. Whilst standing on the traverse leading out to this pitch, James also realised that by jumping on the rock he could garden huge boulders as the entire wall was very unstable and made some impressive crashing sounds. With no possibility for further progress we had to turn back and start heading upwards again, although only after Harry redid half of the day's survey because it had rubbed off in his pocket. The return journey to the surface felt just as long as usual, and as much as I loved my time caving on expedition I wasn't too mad that this would be my last time prusiking up those pitches for at least a year. Harry and I bivvied at the cave entrance again (but this time with sleeping bags and roll mats which greatly improved the experience) to shorten the walk back off the hill in the morning and got back to base camp about midday. There was just enough time to shower, eat some chips and ram my car full of more kit again before starting the long drive back to the UK that afternoon and catching the ferry early the next morning.



The open lead at the end of Alpine Showers which I will have to return to next year

-Charlotte.

Mouldridge Mine Survey Project Diary

Below is the diary of the survey project of Mouldridge Mine in the Peak District.

-Ollie

26/01/23

First trip into Mouldridge Mine, solo. An explore of the basic system trying not to get lost. Started surveying at the far end of the straight shaft back to the entrance. Getting a grasp of basic surveying and doing it terribly. Not surveyed anything at all before this so interesting and I enjoyed myself. Lots of little kids around and a few teachers trying to keep hold of the mayhem. Got called 'the laser man' and a 'caving expert', both of which are normal things to want...

27/01/23

A return to Mouldridge the next day doing mostly the same. Surveyed the large chamber and made one part of a loop so exciting times. Found extra bits of cave I'd not seen before making my challenge harder. Had a look on top of the hill for the shafts and found two open and descendible, the others blocked by concrete blocks as the original map had suggested.

16/03/23

The plan was to drop both shafts found the pervious trip. I started with the one closer to the adit entrance with a rusty metal plate over the top. A Derbyshire key is needed to open it. An 8ft scaff bar was placed across the entrance, y hang rigged and shaft dropped. I eventually hit the bottom with some 27m of rope used in total and both knots at the end undone. There's no way on.. Somewhat conscious of the possibility of bad air, I prusiked up immediately and returned to an interesting lead halfway up the shaft. I traversed along gingerly. At this point I had expected the shaft to connect to Mouldridge proper so only explored a small amount to find the connection before the passages became somewhat complex and as I was solo, I turned around. It was only later when I stayed at the Orpheus Caving Club that a member had said that he didn't think that the shaft connected. I later confirmed that it does not.

17/03/23

A return to Mouldridge the next day and this time to explore the open shaft at the top of the field/hill near the stone wall. Once more the scaff bar was placed with no backup to be found. As I climbed into the shaft, I noticed the ground was more unstable than I had previously thought. I did a bit of gardening which seemed endless and made sure I was still confident in the scaff bar placement. As I descended it seemed that my gardening was in vein as I was showered with heaps of small stones and dirt, partially filling my rope bag on my belt. The ground is filled with old and rotten fence posts and is somewhat unstable. I made sure it would hold and headed for a small opening in the 'chamber' that I was in to explore. It didn't go particularly far and headed towards the surface before choking out. Back at the heap of fence posts I saw that the other side of the chamber through the posts was somewhat empty so I dug through the posts and found a way into the other half of the chamber. A few ways lead on but most closed down soon. To the right a small hole up an incline leads to a bend left with some small and forming stalactites. Past these the route headed downwards and became tighter than I'd enjoy by myself so pushing was abandoned and I returned to the surface in a shower of more mud and rocks. I'm not confident in this lead going anywhere but it's worth an explore and return visit in the future.

After this I took photos of the capped shafts I could find on my way to the adit entrance and headed to find the connection in Mouldridge to the shaft explored the previous day. No connection could be found. Two likely suspects are a wet sump/possibly a duck in dry weather and a tight crawl that will require some digging to enlarge. I will have to return down the shaft when I can survey it with others to have a proper explore.

On the way down to the adit, I noticed it would be possible to get underneath one of the capped shaft entrances for some more exploration.

20/03/23

Confused by which shafts have been located above Mouldridge I headed to there to get some what3words coordinates for each and to make my own map, similar to the one made in the 80's.

23/09/23

Trip with Ben Want (Little Ben) and myself (Ollie Brain). Showed Ben the wonders of Mouldridge and the basics of surveying using the Shetland Attack Pony. We started at the far and of the middle level and surveyed a passage rising into the ceiling. The therion data afterwards shows ~67m of passage surveyed which is

pretty good going considering the conditions! After the battery died on the pony, we went to collect the BCA artificial cave for the freshers fair. A good day out.

30/09/23

Survey squad of Lainya, Ollie and Liv going to survey more of Mouldridge mine. My (Liv) first time surveying in a cave. Also my first time going to Mouldridge mine overall! Had an explore before getting to the survey work. Did some of the branching passages from the upper part of the mine. I was doing the notes (drawing the map), Lainya was mostly using the Pony to take measurements and Ollie was the "dog" and picking the station points. We then switched to manually surveying when the Pony died a death. Another first as I'd never manually surveyed before. I again took the notes which was mostly writing down numbers and drawing the plan (making sure the stations were marked). Lainya did the clino and compass measurements along with some distances and Ollie was the dog again picking survey points and doing some measurements. We surveyed approx 100m of cave!

01/10/2023

Lainya and I had to drop the BCA cave back off today so we headed to Mouldridge again afterward for a bit more surveying. We were both very tired and it was raining outside the car so reluctantly we agreed we should get out and go caving. I suggested we just put on helmets and go in normal clothes and so 5 minutes later we arrived at the entrance decked out in no kit at all. We found a large section that needed surveying and got to work. Time spent ~2 hours.

01/11/2023

Another trip to Mouldridge from Lainya and I, focusing on smashing out the last bit of the upper series. The shetland attack pony was great for the first hour and half but then started to give us some whack measurements - giving a reading of ~98m for a distance of 3m. Resetting and calibrating seemed to do the trick for a while but the same error occurred again. I was feeling lazy (again) so we finished the loop and called it a day. Another 86m surveyed and only a really tiny bit left of the upper series to do. Total cave length is now up to 471m - think we'll surpass the 550m that it is currently stated to be.

17/11/2023

Planned to stay at the Orpheus with some friends over the weekend and arrived a few hours ahead of them (8pm ish) so decided an impromptu survey trip was in

order. Got kitted up at Pikehall as always and made my way to the mine, only having to run back to the car once which is becoming a bit of a habit at this point. The plan was to tie up all the small loose ends in the upper section of the mine – about 3 'leads' that are short ish.

Started on the most interesting – a leg that has two surface-connecting shafts in it and had a very good and excitable trip doing this until about half an hour in, the shetland decided it really liked the number 98.98m and would give no other readings for tape. Brilliant. After another 15 minutes of recalibrating several times and angrily tapping at the case, nothing changed and the end of the survey trip was called. A shame, but some really exciting measurements were still taken and I stayed up until 1am ignoring my friends mostly and entering the data into Therion.



The Mouldridge Mine Survey so far – showing the upper section nearly complete but still with lots more work to do. Survey has since been updated.

Using AI for Caving Songs

In the previous edition of the NUCC newsletter there were a few interesting articles written about caving songs, poetry, mythology and other topics. I decided that it would be an interesting challenge for me to try to write a funny caving song but quickly came to the conclusion that I'm really not very good at it. Cue the appearance of ChatGPT. I have tried a few times to get it to write a good folky, boozy caving song that would be simple for everyone to sing along to.

The current song stuck in my head whenever I cave is 'show me the way to go home', sang beautifully by Mr Yeaden in 'The Underground Eiger'. I tried to get it to write a song to the same tune and it did come up with some good lyrics but they just didn't quite fit! I have tried with a few other songs and suggested it comes up with a tune of its own but there always seems to be some disconnect with the lyrics and tune.

If anyone has a spare five minutes, it also gives some very interesting route descriptions if you suggest a cave name, worth a try.

Anyway, the best that I could get is this interesting parody to Sweet Caroline by Neil Diamond. Enjoy.

Verse 1: Where it all began, I can't quite comprehend, But I know we're feeling strong,
In the depths we dive, Exploring, feeling alive, Knowing it's where we belong.

Pre-Chorus: Hands, touching hands, reaching out, Touching caves, feel the thrill,
Sweet cave explorations, the joy is real.

Chorus: Cave explorin', ba-ba-ba, Good times never felt so fine, So fine, so fine,
so fine!

Verse 2: To believe we'd find, A cavern so divine, Warmth spreading like the sunshine,
Hands, reaching out, Touching caves, feel the thrill, Sweet cave explorations, the joy is real.

(Pre-Chorus) (Chorus)

Bridge: Climbing up those walls, Finding secret halls, We're the kings and queens of rocky waterfalls,
Good times never felt so fine, So fine, so fine, so fine!

Chorus: Cave explorin', ba-ba-ba, Good times never felt so fine, So fine, so fine,
so fine!

Outro: Sweet cave explorations, the joy is real, Sweet cave explorations, I believe in what we feel.

