

DACHSTEIN CAVING EXPEDITION 2023



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The
GHAR PARAU FOUNDATION
Funding British Cave Exploration and Cave Science

Dachstein Caving Expedition 2023

Expedition Report



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Editor: Andrew McLeod

Trip reports typed by: Paul McCarron

Front cover top photo: Group photo including sponsor's logos (Paul McCarron)

Front cover bottom photo: Muddy cowstails in WUG Pot (Oscar Doyle)

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1 Introduction

The Dachstein caving expedition normally takes place every summer on the Dachstein plateau in Austria. However, the last well-attended Dachstein expedition was pre-Covid in 2019, with only a small trip in 2022 of ten cavers. This year, the expedition had 21 cavers of nine different nationalities, including eight young cavers on their first expedition. The caves in the Dachstein are typically cold and vertical, making this a challenging but rewarding training ground for new expedition cavers.

Our caving area is high on the mountain, typically ranging from the Wiesberghaus mountain hut where we are based at almost 1900 m to around 2300 m altitude. The highest point of the Dachstein area is at 2997 m. In the mountain below is the 116 km long Hirlatzhöhle explored from a valley entrance, and a deepest explored point in a sump at 446 m altitude. In 2018 the expedition connected this to a high entrance (WUG Pot) at 2006 m altitude giving the Hirlatzhöhle a depth of 1560m. The entire plateau drains towards the Northern resurgences such as those in the Hirlatzhöhle and thus there is 2.5km of depth potential.

In 2023, we returned to a cave discovered in 2022 called Ectoplasm, located at around 2200m altitude. The area around this cave had not been prospected in detail before, and is very promising with many potential new entrances. We found and surveyed several ways on; there are multiple continuing leads in this cave.

In the surrounding area, new caves Goblinhöhle and Todestrichter were found, and other promising entrances identified. Goblinhöhle is a few pitches deep and ongoing. Todestrichter is a significant shaft with walls and ceilings of ice and rock. Initially ending in a tight squeeze into a parallel shaft, this was passed to a second ice-plugged shaft. The cave has a significant draught and has possible bolt-climbing leads; ice also varies from year to year and so we will return here in 2024.

The previously explored cave Spezialeshöhle was pushed to a conclusion at a boulder-choked shaft floor; a trip to another previously explored cave Thundergasm revealed that it was not in fact too tight at the end, as previously reported, but continuing would be challenging and require some organized effort in future years.

In WUG Pot, which has been the main expedition cave for around a decade, a new shaft series was explored to around 100m deep in the hope of bypassing some of the current shaft series, but it ended in a wet muddy rift which could not be safely explored and so the pitches were surveyed and de-rigged. Passage No 33., which was accessed by bolt climbing in 2019, was explored and surveyed to a pitch downwards and possible upwards continuation; this will be explored further next year. A project began in 2022 to bolt-climb the 'Forbidden Aven', which may be the main upstream route at the bottom of the pitches, was halted in 2023 just a few metres from the top of the climb due to a broken drill. Finally, right at the end of the expedition, a new and previously overlooked series of pitches was discovered just two pitches into the cave and within sight of daylight!

2 Sponsors and Grants

We are grateful, as ever, to Ghar Parau who this year awarded us £ 500. They also awarded two of our expedition participants with £ 100 Alex Pitcher awards, which are available to U25 GPF-eligible cavers on their first expedition outside the UK and Ireland.



Figure 1: GPF logo

We are also grateful to Kordas Rope and Eurospeleo Projects, who donated us 200 m of 10 mm Kordas rope.



Figure 2: UKCaving logo

We are further grateful to UKCaving, who this year supplied us with 200 m of 9 mm Spanset rope.



Figure 3: Kordas logo

All these donations help us to keep costs down for new and younger cavers.

We must, of course, also thank the local caving club Höhlenverein Hallstatt-Obertraun (HVHO). The club has assisted us with vital administrative support, allowing us to continue our exploration on the plateau, and in previous years more directly by donating bolts and hangers. This year we stayed at their club hut in Obertraun as guests both at the start and end of the expedition, including a trip into the Hirlatz on the final day of the expedition from the hut. Being able to use this hut in the valley makes arrival or departure from the expedition much more convenient, and probably contributed to reducing seilbahn costs by reducing the number of partial seilbahn loads.



Figure 4: HvHO logo



Figure 5: ESF logo

3 Expedition Training Weekend

The Dachstein is a training expedition; as well as having several cavers join us in Austria for their first expedition we also ran our usual open-invite expedition training weekend on the 2nd – 4th June, which was well attended by around 30 cavers plus instructors and organizers. As usual, cavers from several other expeditions were invited and attended. These training weekends have been organized for more than 20 years, aimed at deep Alpine caving but useful for all expedition cavers.

3.1 Expedition Training Weekend Report

The training weekend was held, as in previous years, at the Gloucester Cave Rescue Group (GCRG) depot in the Forest of Dean. This venue features an SRT facility which has been improved in recent years, as well as space for camping, some indoor floor sleeping, and some limited cooking facilities.

A large number of trainers volunteered their time to help participants learn expedition skills. Each year, the focus of the weekend changes; in previous years we have spent the time at a rope access centre learning counterbalanced rescues, or had a full-day rescue exercise. This year focussed primarily on SRT skills including self-rescue and aid climbing, together with workshops studying SRT kit set-up, underground camping and survival, bolting, surveying, underground communications and other basic expedition skills.

After a basic breakfast of veggie sausages in buns, Joel Corrigan led the start of the training with a discussion of how the weekend would operate, and then setting up SRT kit for expeditions including common pitfalls and issues.

The SRT practice area was then in use for the rest of the weekend, with cavers practicing a range of unusual SRT manoeuvres including use of rope protectors, passing a wire strop over a sharp edge, constricted pitches, tensioned traverse lines, tight rebelay, use of small diameter ropes and much more.

Some cavers also practiced self-rescue including pick-off rescues; others were able to try aid climbing up a line of bolts. Supervision and support was provided throughout by the volunteer experienced instructors.

Meanwhile, various workshops took place over the two days. A bolting workshop looked at installing and using both 8mm throughbolts and spits, using the small quarry at the back of the GCRG. Surveying was done inside, with several groups surveying the various rooms of the depot. A demonstration of underground camping and survival gear was also shown; vital information for a caver heading out to cold Alpine caves. Another workshop looked at using Cave-link systems for underground communications.

All of these skills practiced on this training weekend are directly relevant to the Dachstein expedition. For example, WUG Pot has a range of technical SRT including tensioned traverses; we camp underground; we routinely bolt pitches and use bolt climbing techniques; we survey our discoveries and we communicate with underground camp using the Cave-link system. It was

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therefore excellent practice for a number of the participant cavers who subsequently came to this 2023 expedition as their first caving expedition.

On the Saturday evening we had a talk from Joel describing the history of the Dachstein expedition and providing information for people considering attending, but a highlight of the weekend was a talk by Thomas Matthalm. Thomas was one of the three cavers on the trip that led to the Riesending rescue, one of the largest cave rescues in history taking 11 days and involving more than 700 rescuers. As one of the cavers, he described the early part of the rescue from the time of the accident until the first team of rescuers arrived, which took more than one day.

While exploring some of the deeper parts of Riesending, at a depth of around 1000 m, one of the team was struck by falling mud or rocks on the head while just beginning to climb a rope, and suffered a minor traumatic brain injury which left them unconscious. After cutting them down from the rope and stabilising them as best as possible, the third caver immediately left the cave, beginning a rapid ten hour trip to the surface, to raise the alarm.

This left Thomas supporting the care of his injured friend for several days before significant rescue assistance arrived. He huddled around him to preserve and share body heat, wrapping him in foil blankets and boiling water to use in improvised hot water bottles to keep him warm. He was forced to perform CPR on him several times after fitting led to temporary arrest.

Eventually the full rescue service arrived, and Thomas could leave the cave, leaving his friend in the care of the rescue services who would continue treating and stabilising him before hauling him out of the cave over five days, eventually reaching the surface eleven days after the accident. He would eventually make a full recovery.

This talk was an important reminder to all present that although big Alpine caving systems are amazing places to explore, they are not to be underestimated and that rescue is not immediate, is not necessarily rapid and can be a massive undertaking in a big system. As with our rescue training, the primary lesson is to avoid needing to be rescued...

4 Pre-expedition preparation

Expedition preparation began at the end of the 2022 expedition, when dates for the 2023 expedition were provisionally booked into the Wiesberghaus. This meant that planning could begin earlier than in 2022 where Covid and uncertainty about the availability of the Wiesberghaus meant planning was delayed.

First, a register of potential interest was taken. A Ghar Parau Foundation (GPF) application was then submitted, and of four potential candidates two applicants were put forward for Alex Pitcher awards (both of whom were successful). The usual budgeting was done based on the number of expected applicants; unlike last year we eventually ended up with more cavers than we more expecting instead of fewer which contributed to the surplus generated this year.

4.1 Caving equipment

The main purchases was a large order of rope from Starless River, hangers from Speleo-Concepts, maillons from seiltek.at, and various ancillaries such as accessory cord and snapgate carabiners. Purchasing gear within the EU often has cost and availability benefits.

We also bought equipment for the Cavelink for new longer antennae, and various rock-moving gear such as lump hammers, chisels and crowbars for working in the loose rock in Ectoplasm cave. Finally we bought a large tarp and shock cord for the WUG entrance; this tarp proved much more durable than previously with only one tear. More shock cord should be purchased for next year, and the small edge tear in the tarp repaired.

4.2 Food supplies

This year, like last year, most expedition food was purchased in Germany by Axel Hack, with only a small part purchased in the UK. Brexit means that it is no longer permitted to bring fresh vegetables or dairy from the UK to the EU.

Proper estimation of quantities required, and the detail stock-take performed at the end of the 2019 and 2022 expeditions, meant that we purchased sufficient non-perishable foods for the whole expedition and only require resupply of fruit and vegetables during the expedition.

4.3 Hut equipment

As we were returning to a larger number of cavers this year, we purchased various equipment for the hut that had been skipped last year. The largest expenditures were on a new large cooking pot and a large frying pan, together with a large-diameter colander which is greatly superior for draining large pots. We also purchased some new storage containers for Pigpen (expedition stores) which will hopefully be rodent-proof (although are not sealed and therefore not intended for storing food).

We also bought the usual miscellaneous goods such as oven gloves, whiteboard film, a new camping lantern, rope brushes, camping mats, washing up sponges, pegs etc. During each expedition we keep

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a list of items to be purchased for next year; this year's purchases were a combination of needed items from both 2019 and 2022.

4.4 First aid equipment

We did not have a stock list of first aid equipment in Pigpen prior to this year's expedition but it was felt necessary to create an expedition first aid kit suitable to be taken underground or on the surface in the event of an incident. A range of first aid equipment was therefore purchased together with a suitable drybag.

When the first aid kit in Pigpen was examined, a large quantity of it (including a considerable volume of out-of-date medications) was disposed of. A full stock-take of the remaining kit was taken; some useful items which were expected were not found and will need to be bought in future expeditions.

5 Expedition Members

The Dachstein 2023 expedition was attended by the following Expedition members:

Table 1: 2023 Expedition members

Andrew McLeod (Dachstein Expedition Society treasurer)

Jo White (Dachstein Expedition Society secretary)

Axel Hack (Expedition surveyor)

Tom Foord (Expedition surveyor)

Paul McCarron (Expedition social media)

Alex Ried

Aimée Dow

Alicia Roslaniec

Annas Alamudi

Andreas Klocker

Bente Hollestelle

Chloe Snowling

Christian 'Wolfo' Vogel

Ethan Hanley

James Colville

Janka van der Merwe

Josh Bratchley

Maxim Leijssen

Oscar Doyle

Petie Barry

Vladimír Fuka

6 Expedition reports

This section contains a mixture of content, including a summary of the progress in each cave described, trip reports from those caves, and cave surveys. This information is primarily drawn from the expedition logbook, and was generously typed up by Paul McCarron. Many thanks are given to those expedition members who have committed some part of their trip to writing and made this report possible.

6.1 Expedition diary

Table 2: Expedition diary

Date	Trips
13 th August	Stay in Obertraun at the HvHO club hut
14 th August	Head up to Camelot. Unpack gear and food; set up hut.
15 th August	<p>WUG Pot Setting up the WUG Pot entrance tarp: Andrew McLeod, Annas Alamudi, Bente Hollestelle, Janka van der Merwe, Jo White. <i>See trip report 6.3.1.</i></p> <p>WUG Pot Bypass Part One: Alex Ried, Oscar Doyle. <i>See trip report 6.3.2.</i></p> <p>WUG Pot Entrance Series Re-rigging: Josh Bratchley, Paul McCarron. <i>See trip report 6.3.3.</i></p> <p>Ectoplasm – the return: Andreas Klocker, Ethan Hanley, Vladimír Fuka. <i>See trip report 6.4.1.</i></p> <p>Spezialeishöhle Revisiting: James Colville, Petie Barry. <i>See trip report 6.5.1.</i></p> <p>Other trip SRT training in the Training Cave: Christian Vogel, Maxim Leijssen. <i>See trip report 6.8.1.</i></p>
16 th August	<p>Prospecting above WUG Pot: Annas Alamudi, James Colville, Josh Bratchley, Paul McCarron. <i>See trip report 6.2.1.</i></p> <p>WUG Pot Quest for the dry 70 bypass Part 2: Alex Ried, Oscar Doyle. <i>See trip report 6.3.4.</i></p> <p>Ectoplasm Objective Boom (Capping) and Exploration: Christian Vogel, Ethan Hanley, Vladimír Fuka. <i>See trip report 6.4.2.</i></p> <p>Other trips Tiergartenhöhle rigging: Andrew McLeod, Bente Hollestelle, Janka van der Merwe, Maxim Leijssen, Jo White. <i>See trip report 6.8.2.</i></p>

Date	Trips
17 th August	<p>Ectoplasm pushing: Andreas Klocker, Ethan Hanley, Vladimír Fuka. <i>See trip report 6.4.3.</i></p> <p>Spezialeshöhle Capping Trip: Petie Barry, Christian Vogel. <i>See trip report 6.5.2.</i></p> <p>Other trips Thundergasm tourist trip: Annas Alamudi, Bente Hollestelle, James Colville, Maxim Leijssen. <i>See trip report 6.8.3.</i></p> <p>Other trips Thundergasm – the return: Andrew McLeod, Josh Bratchley. <i>See trip report 6.8.4.</i></p>
18 th August	<p>Prospecting above Ectoplasm: Jo White, Josh Bratchley. <i>See trip report 6.2.2.</i></p> <p>WUG Pot The Definition of Madness (four day camp): Alex Ried, Oscar Doyle. <i>See trip report 6.3.5.</i></p> <p>Ectoplasm Further Capping: Andreas Klocker, Christian Vogel, Janka van der Merwe, Paul McCarron, Vladimír Fuka. <i>See trip report 6.4.4.</i></p> <p>Spezialeshöhle pitch descent: Bente Hollestelle, James Colville, Petie Barry. <i>See trip report 6.5.3.</i></p> <p>Other trips Setting up the Surface Cavelink: Andrew McLeod, Bente Hollestelle. <i>See trip report 6.8.5.</i></p>
19 th August	<p>Ectoplasm Surveying: Andrew McLeod, Vladimír Fuka. <i>See trip report 6.4.5.</i></p> <p>Ectoplasm Pushing! The Windy Part: Christian Vogel, James Colville, Janka van der Merwe. <i>See trip report 6.4.6.</i></p> <p>Todestrichter ‘Big Fuck Off Höhle’: Josh Bratchley, Paul McCarron. <i>See trip report 6.6.1.</i></p>
20 th August	<p>Prospecting near Ectoplasm: Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec, Jo White, Tom Foord. <i>See trip report 6.2.3.</i></p> <p>Ectoplasm Further pushing the windy rift: Annas Alamudi, James Colville, Janka van der Merwe, Petie Barry. <i>See trip report 6.4.7.</i></p> <p>Ectoplasm The less windy way: Andrew McLeod, Ethan Hanley, Maxim Leijssen. <i>See trip report 6.4.8.</i></p> <p>Todestrichter Death Funnel: Josh Bratchley, Paul McCarron. <i>See trip report 6.6.2.</i></p> <p>Other Trips Wiesberghaus – Drunk Paul: Paul McCarron. Trip report by Janka van der Merwe. <i>See trip report 6.8.6.</i></p>
21 st August	<p>WUG Pot Tourist trip: Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec, Tom Foord. <i>See trip report 6.3.6.</i></p> <p>Ectoplasm Creating Austrian Ass-space: Andreas Klocker, Christian Vogel, Ethan Hanley. <i>See trip report 6.4.9.</i></p> <p>Spezialeshöhle Survey and de-rig: James Colville, Petie Barry, Vladimír Fuka. <i>See trip report 6.5.4.</i></p>

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Date	Trips
22 nd August	<p>Prospecting Rolling Stones and C-8/Schneeklufft: Alex Ried, Annas Alamudi, Andreas Klocker, Jo White. <i>See trip report 6.2.4.</i></p> <p>WUG Pot Bringing old ropes from WUG: Christian Vogel, Vladimír Fuka. <i>See trip report 6.3.7.</i></p> <p>WUG Pot Surveying Closed Bypass and De-rig: Ethan Hanley, James Colville, Tom Foord. <i>See trip report 6.3.8.</i></p> <p>WUG Pot tourist trip: Andrew McLeod, Bente Hollestelle, Janka Van der Merwe, Maxim Leijssen.</p> <p>Todestrichter Rig, Push and Survey: Josh Bratchley, Paul McCarron, Petie Barry. <i>See trip report 6.6.3.</i></p> <p>Other trips Outlaw Klettersteig: Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec. <i>See trip report 6.8.7.</i></p>
23 rd August	<p>Other trips Tiergartenhöhle tourist trip: Aimée Dow, Alex Ried, Alicia Roslaniec, Annas Alamudi, Josh Bratchley. <i>See trip report 6.8.8.</i></p> <p>Other trips Gjaidalm: Andreas Klocker, Andrew McLeod, Axel Hack, Jo White, Oscar Doyle, Paul McCarron. <i>See trip report 6.8.9.</i></p>
24 th August	<p>Prospecting near the Simonyhütte: Annas Alamudi, Andrew McLeod, Jo White. <i>See trip report 6.2.5.</i></p> <p>Prospecting Goblin Höhle: Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec, Tom Foord. <i>See trip report 6.2.6.</i></p> <p>Ectoplasm Surveying the Windless Way: Ethan Hanley, Vladimír Fuka. <i>See trip report 6.4.10.</i></p>
25 th August	<p>WUG Pot Camp and Passage No. 33 (two day camp): Andrew McLeod, James Colville, Tom Food. <i>See trip report 6.3.9.</i></p> <p>Todestrichter Capping Day #1: Christian Vogel, Paul McCarron. <i>See trip report 6.6.4.</i></p> <p>Rolling Stones First Push: Annas Alamudi, Aimée Dow, Chloe Snowling, Ethan Hanley. <i>See trip report 6.7.1.</i></p>
26 th August	<p>Todestrichter Capping Day #2 – The Breakthrough: Christian Vogel, Paul McCarron. <i>See trip report 6.6.5.</i></p> <p>Rolling Stones Second Push: Annas Alamudi, Aimée Dow, Chloe Snowling, Ethan Hanley. <i>See trip report 6.7.2.</i></p>
27 th August	<p>WUG Pot Rope Collection 2: Aimée Dow, Ethan Hanley, Tom Foord. <i>See trip report 6.3.10.</i></p> <p>Ectoplasm Final Pushing: Alicia Roslaniec, James Colville. <i>See trip report 6.4.11.</i></p>
28 th August	Rain.

Date	Trips
29 th August	<p>WUG Pot Pushing a new passage?: Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec, Tom Foord. <i>See trip report 6.3.11.</i></p> <p>Other trips Tiergartenhöhle de-rigging: Chloe Snowling, Ethan Hanley, James Colville. <i>See trip report 6.8.10.</i></p>
30 th August	<p>WUG Pot The Parallel Universe: Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec, Tom Foord. <i>See trip report 6.3.12.</i></p> <p>WUG Pot Uphill Gardeners: Andrew McLeod, Chloe Snowling. <i>See trip report 6.3.13</i></p> <p>Todestrichter Derig and Prospecting: Christian Vogel, James Colville. <i>See trip report 6.6.6.</i></p>
31 st August	Head down hill and stay in Obertraun at the HvHO club hut
1 st September	Other trips Hirlatzhöhle tourist trip: Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec, Andrew McLeod, Axel Hack, Christian Vogel, James Colville, Jo White, Tom Foord.
2 nd September	End of expedition.

6.2 Prospecting trips

Prospecting for new caves is an important part of the Dachstein expedition. Each year, new caves are discovered and old ones re-checked as snow and ice retreats.

6.2.1 Prospecting above WUG Pot (16/8/2022)

Annas Alamudi, James Colville, Josh Bratchley, Paul McCarron. Trip reports by James Colville and Paul McCarron.

[James Colville]

The party initially set out to look for a promising but undescended cave found by Paul on a previous expedition. After scaling a rather loose climb above the tarp at WUG, a number of interesting but often snow plugged caves were found, some with horizontal lines but very few with + signs indicating fully explored systems. After this, the group continued upwards to scour an area of few marked caves in the direction towards ectoplasm. These caves occasionally seemed promising, but unfortunately all ended in boulder chokes (save for a small number of holes that possibly could continue horizontally or beneath snow). One particularly promising lead was dropped by Josh, but this ended in a debris floor at approximately 10m depth. Throughout this time an eye was kept at the occasional ominous looking thundercloud but luckily the weather held throughout the day. After completing the days prospecting the group joined the path towards the Simonyhütte and enjoyed a beer with fantastic views of the glacier before returning to Camelot.

Overall, the only casualty of the day was a pair of destroyed hiking boots that were clearly too old and cheap to withstand the karst.

[Paul McCarron]

Additional excerpt as I didn't realise James had already written a trip report.

I wanted to at least do a bit of prospecting above WUG following on from exploration I had done with Emily Punzalan, JP Wallace, Adam Prior, Rob and Nadia in 2019 to potentially drop a few of the holes that we had found back then that I still had coordinates on view ranger.

So, we set off on the trek first heading to WUG so that Josh and I could lift SRT kit. We then headed up the scree pile to the right of WUG. This took us up to circa 2050 m and we started to look around where the previous holes were. Although, we couldn't find my holes – we did find a couple of extremely promising holes – specifically one that looked to at least be a 10 m W x 7 m H x 20 m D that clearly was previously filled ice plugged at about 2100 m height.

The decision was made however to not drop this hole and instead prospect across an area of the map where there were little to no caves marked. Inspecting across the 2150m-2250m height range it is very clear there are little to no caves around this specific area which was confirmed by us exploring. James' report details the shenanigans of the day. We did drop one hole that was found.

It was a small hole, 1m x 1m wide entrance – 7m pitch, 3m crawl – choked (16/08/23 – PM Find 12)

At the end of the search, I have marked 14 total caves – 1 of these notes a promising area, and 1 very promising potential cave.

James has marked approx. 8-10 caves. Josh has marked approx. 6 caves.

Josh also climbed up to one of the caves on the side of the Niederer Oschenkogel – this choked as well.

Equipment used: 3x steel bolts

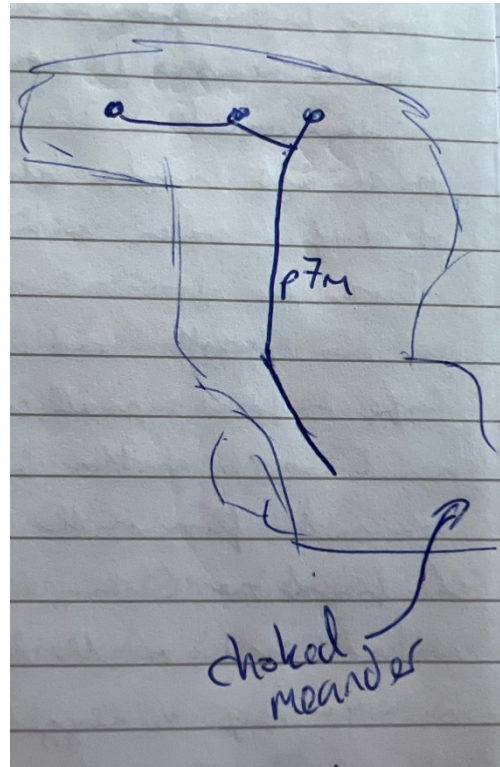


Figure 6: Sketch of small cave

6.2.2 Prospecting above Ectoplasm (18/8/2023)

Jo White, Josh Bratchley. Trip report by Josh Bratchley.

We headed off a short delay after the Ecto capping/re-rigging group departed to join them with some rope, bolts and other gear.

After 1:45 -> 2:00 hrs we arrived as they were kitting up. The 5 of them headed in with various objectives, then Jo and I went looking for more cave.

Lots of interesting holes were found, including an undescended shaft almost immediately above Ecto (Around 50m higher) and then much further right in the upper valley, there were others at nearly 2400m that looked promising.

Will need to go back and have a better look with the kit we left here.

Locations of things found on Mergin Maps.

6.2.3 Prospecting near Ectoplasm (20/8/2023)

Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec, Jo White, Tom Foord. Trip report by Alicia Roslaniec.

We were prospecting near Ectoplasm. After Tom calibrated his Disto, we went over to a newly discovered hole that had draught coming out of it. Alicia went down one descending hole, filled with rubble while Aimée went down the other hole also with Rubble.

Both Alicia and Aimée couldn't locate the direction the draught was coming from. The two explored further, at one end of the cave it looked like it dead-ended in a boulder choke to the other past a squeeze between a boulder and low roof was a small chamber, off to one side there was a small passage that Aimée explored that dead ended after 2metres.

The main passage Aimée and Alicia went down had a stream flowing from the direction of the squeeze and disappeared under some small boulders. A big block of ice was also present in the main passage.

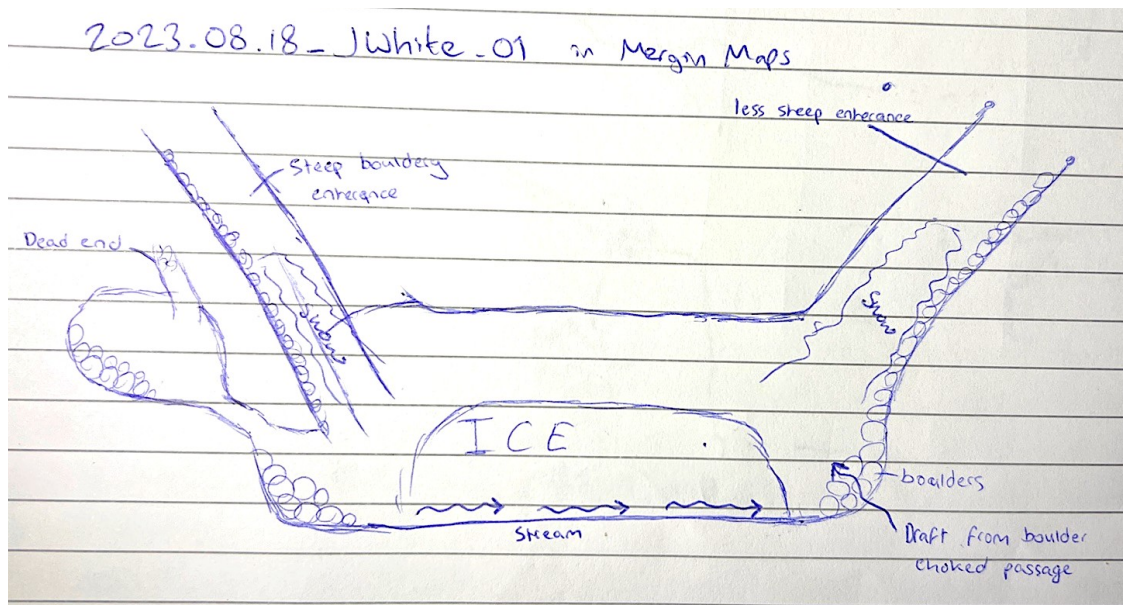


Figure 7: Sketch of 2023.08.18_JWhite_01 in Mergin Maps

After Aimée and Alicia exited the cave, Tom went in to have a look and locate the source of the draught. He concluded that the draught came from the boulder choke that was on the right as you climbed down the rubble, he also concluded that this could be a potential dig. The cave was logged on Mergin Maps and a minus sign chiselled into the side of the rock face beside the entrance.

6.2.4 Prospecting Rolling Stones and C-8/Schneekluft (22/8/2023)

Alex Ried, Andreas Klocker, Annas Alamudi, Jo White. Trip report by Annas Alamudi.

This was a rest day for Andreas and Alex, but they kindly agreed to come with me and Jo to prospect some old leads and to teach me basic bolting and rigging.

We walked to C-8/Schneekluft which was a short drop of about 6metres to a snow plug. A boulder-choked bedding plan. Rolling stones was a lot more promising with a continuing meander at the bottom of a 20m cork-screw freeclimb.

6.2.5 Prospecting near the Simonyhütte (24/8/2028)

Andrew McLeod, Annas Alamudi, Jo White. Trip report by Annas Alamudi.

Bolting Practice/Rigging Practice/SRT Practice

We dropped a total of three holes, all without fruition. The first was an 8m drop that was descended, only to find boulder chokes on both ends of the rift.

The second hole dropped about 12-15m onto a snow plug in a rift. The rift continued upwards about 1.5m that was free-climbed only to find it boulder choked.

The last hole also dropped about 10m onto another boulder choke.

After de-rigging the last hole, we continued to the Simonyhütte for cold beverages before heading back down the mountain to the Wiesberghaus.

6.2.6 Goblin Höhle (24/8/2023)

Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec, Tom Foord. Trip report by Alicia Roslaniec.

Tom, Alicia and Aimée as a group of 3 went prospecting along with Jo, Andrew and Annas over next to the Simonyhütte, not too far away from Ectoplasm. The objective of the day was to drop any potential holes that could possibly lead on. Alicia noticed a hole that was about 2x4m in size. After dropping a number of stones to the bottom to see if the hole was deep enough for us to justify bolting it and descending, we decided this could be a potential lead as the noise from the rocks hitting the bottom wasn't immediate. Tom set off with bolting; it was a good opportunity for Aimée and Alicia to learn a bit of bolting as they have not placed bolts before.

The hole was descended by all three of the party as it continued on past the ledge/false floor of boulders that could be seen from the top. In the end, we found a 30m something deep hole at a fault rift that lead to a 8 m ledge/false floor of boulders with snow which continued to drop another 10m below, followed by a 10 m pitch towards a 5 m aven that was walled to one side by a deep mound of snow.

At this point we had used up all 45 m of rope for the rigging and pitches. After the 4m descent we landed on a false floor of boulders. A hole in the false floor boulders led on to an undescended pitch as, even though we had the other team's 30m of Kordas/Eurospeleo rope with us, the hole in the false floor required a really skinny person to drop down it or capping wider. Looking up the fault rift there was a tiny bit of day light visible when all the torches were turned off. All in all, Tom placed 7 bolts and hangers and one deviation cord. The hole was exited by all and de-rigged and the newly found cave was named Goblin Höhle by Aimée. Goblin Höhle was added to

Mergin Maps with a description included. The cave needs to be further explored which requires capping and further bolting as well as surveying.

[Sketch survey overleaf]

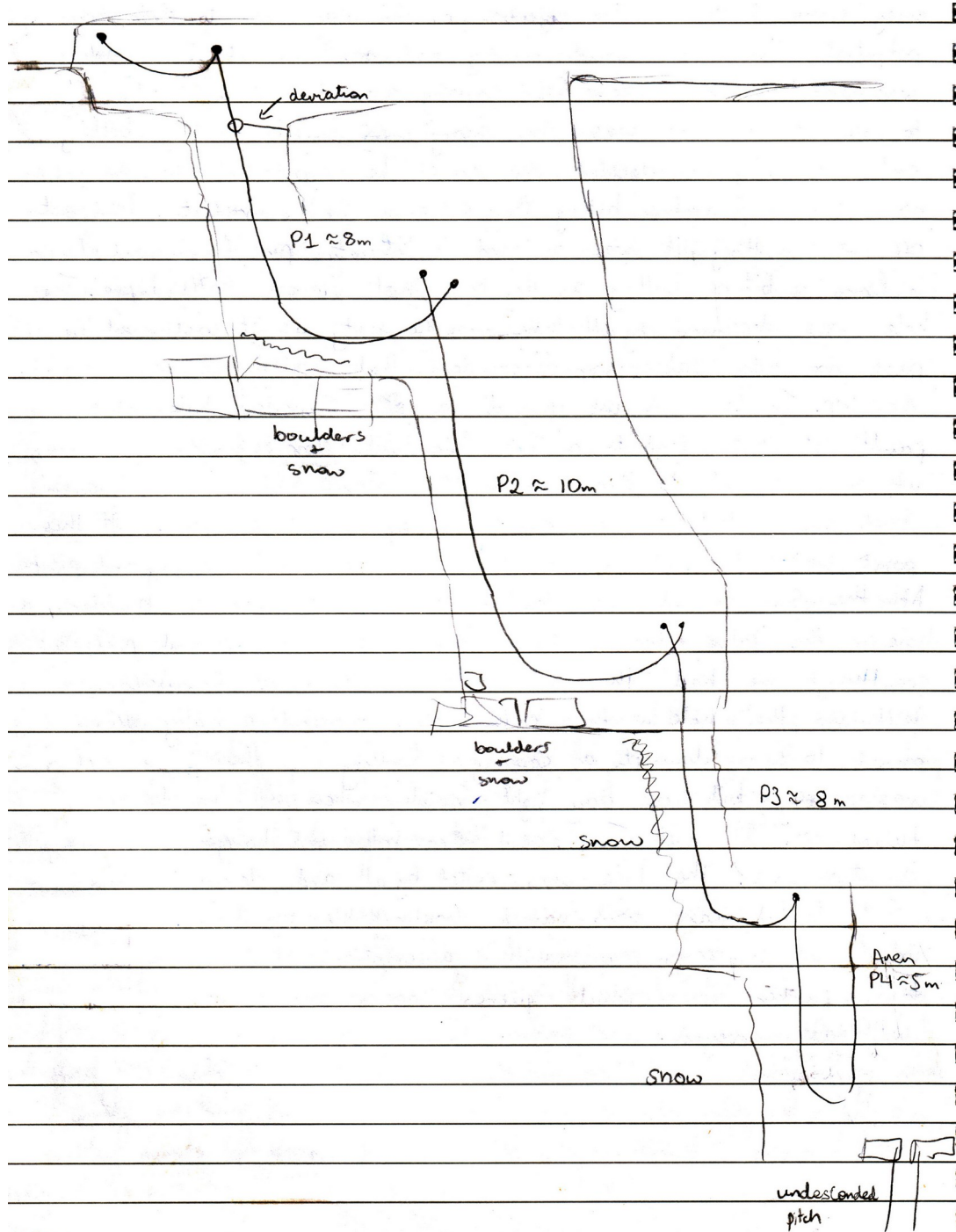


Figure 8: Sketch topo of Goblin Höhle

6.3 WUG Pot trips

WUG Pot is the main expedition cave, and has been explored for over a decade. In 2017 it was finally connected to the Hirlatzhöhle, making it 1,560m deep and over 112km long.

After the vertical pitch entrance series of over 500m depth, the cave changes character to the massive phreatic tubes seen elsewhere in the Hirlatzhöhle, complete with a thick sticky mud. A camp was established some years ago in one of these large passages. Several years of digging just beyond this camp (in the Chutney Mines) and exploration in the chamber beyond led to a breakthrough (It's Not Ideal) and, after a few years of further exploration, into Austrian Airspace. This chamber was originally reached by diving from the furthest reaches of the Western Hirlatzhöhle.

WUG Pot has now been almost entirely surveyed, although many leads still remain, together with efforts to find a higher entrance. The survey showed a possible connection between the final chamber in PL2 (another cave at higher altitude) and an inlet in WUG Pot (now called PL2 Inlet), but efforts here in 2019 proved unsuccessful and it is likely the connection is entirely choked with boulders. The connection with the Hirlatzhöhle needs further exploration to find a non-diving connection, but trips here are long and arduous and may require a second lightweight camp.

Forbidden Aven on the main upstream passage was partly climbed in 2022 and was tackled again this year but fell victim to equipment failure just before reaching the top of the climb. No 33. Passage was discovered in 2019, but was not explored in 2022 due to Covid and bad weather; this year it has been surveyed to a choice of bolt climbing up in the ongoing passage, or descending into a wide meander. A possible alternative to the 110 series, via a short aid climb halfway down of the 70, was descended down around 100m of pitches but ultimately ended in a boulder-choked floor and an unpromising tight wet rift which was not pushed for safety reasons.

The entrance to WUG has been surveyed twice, but despite this an alternative continuation at the bottom of the first pitch was missed until a trip late in this year's expedition, and is now leading into a large pitch series.

In 2019, the entrance to WUG Pot was buried under snowfall and required two days of digging to access but, as in 2022, there was no snow at the entrance this year.

The WUG Pot survey is available in Appendix A.

6.3.1 Setting up the WUG Pot entrance tarp (15/8/2022)

Andrew McLeod, Annas Alamudi, Bente Hollestelle, Janka van der Merwe, Jo White. Trip report by Bente Hollestelle.

This morning we walked up to the entrance of WUG over sharp and very uneven terrain to set up The Tarp. The rock was grippy and littered with fossils and interesting formations (there was also Karren – whatever that is). The horse-shoe fossils were quite big compared to the types we're normally used to and there were lots of red cracks and strips which we learned were formed when the sea retreated, and the sediment seeped into cracks and later solidified.

To put up the tarp we all sat in a circle reminding me of the parachute game and pulled it tight. It was very big. We drilled a few new holes for new attachment points, reused some old hangers and found many naturals to attach the tarp to. So, it now remains to be seen if it can handle our first storm. It looks solid, fingers crossed! (Also, there was a very 'cool' snow cave to hide in).

6.3.2 Bypass Part One (15/8/2023)

Alex Ried, Oscar Doyle. Trip report by Oscar Doyle.

Whilst sitting in a bothy bag near the bottom of the 70 pitch series last year, Alex and I had noticed a large opening in the far side of the passage and wondered if it might allow us to bypass the wet pitch at the bottom of the 70 and get to the start of the 110.

So it was that that we made our return this year. The day after we set up Camelot, we filled a bag with rope and metal work and headed down the entrance pitches. With rain forecast for 3 pm and heavier rain at 7 pm we made quick work of the initial pitches, our descenders smoking as we swung our way over to the start point for the climb.

I busied myself getting my balaclava and gimp mac on whilst Alex unpacked his climbing gear and slung his drill and impact driver gunslinger style. The climb was a short one, about 6 m, and went without a hitch. On reaching the top, Alex rigging a Y-hang and did a spot of gardening. Soon we both stood atop the climb, looking down into a small pot with what looked like a small continuation off to the side.

Rigging another Y-hang, we dropped into the bottom of the pot. Alex's whooping betrayed the existence of a huge shaft continuing downwards that had been hidden

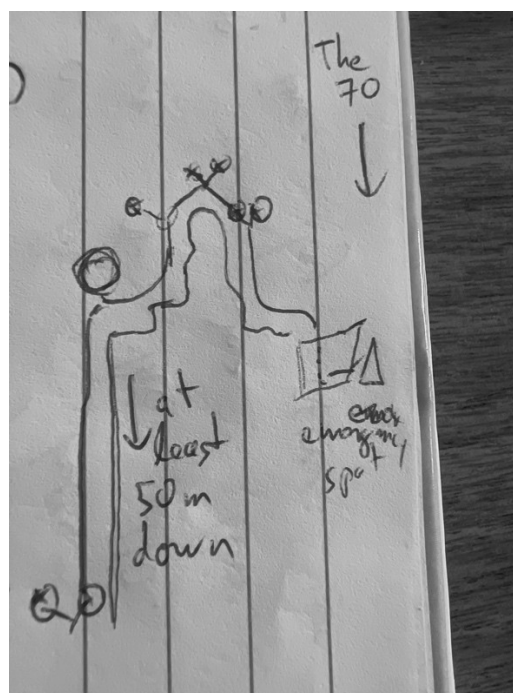


Figure 9: Sketch survey of the start of the 110 Bypass

around a corner. Being unable to see the bottom and knowing that we were heading in the rough direction of the 110, we decided to send Alex in to investigate.

Constructing a Y-hang out of 2 naturals and using all the rigging tat we had left, Alex dropped into the Abyss, making it about 25m down before running out of rope. Tying the rope off with another Y-hang, we beat a hasty retreat with grins on our faces and a plan to return as soon as possible with a really big rope.

6.3.3 WUG Entrance Series Re-rigging (15/8/2023)

Josh Bratchley, Paul McCarron. Trip report by Paul McCarron.

The main plan for this trip was to re-rig some of the re-rigging work that Andreas Klocker and I undertook in 2022. Unfortunately, due to a small incident involving water, Andreas and I had to quickly make haste down the pitches before camping in a shelter for a short while. Whilst the time spent sitting in the shelter was relatively comfortable, Peter Whittaker, Alice Ball, Alex Ried and Oscar Doyle emerged which meant I did not have time to make the final re-adjustments required to the rope.

Setting off just after 10:00, Josh and I took approximately 45m of rope, 20 mallions and 20 hangers (all stainless) into the entrance series at approximately 12:00 after arriving at 11:00 to see Alex and Oscar just about to head into the cave, and just after the tarp riggers arrived. Progress into the cave was quick with us reaching the bottom and making a quick game place (whilst also assessing the rigging – which was not as bad as people made it out to be according to Josh, but I am always appreciative of the feedback).

Josh was to re-adjust all of the rope placed last year, whilst I finished up with the last two pitches and traverse line. The two ropes have been connected, excess rope left secured at the bottom of the entrance series and all mallions/hangers have now been replaced with stainless equivalent hangers. The entrance series will need a few non-stainless bolts replaced with stainless – a task for a day with a short window of weather. Out of the cave and back in Camelot for 16:00, just in time to fettle with even more gear.

Equipment used: 7 stainless hangers, 8 mallions, 45m of 2022 10mm rope.

6.3.4 Quest for the dry 70 bypass Part 2 (16/8/2023)

Alex Ried, Oscar Doyle. Trip report by Oscar Doyle.

With more rain forecast for today – Alex and I set our alarms for 7 am to get a head start. After considerable effort with rope packing and contact lens installation, we began the 40 odd minute walk up to WUG. Mercifully the overcast weather gave us much needed respite from the sun.

Kitting up under the newly installed tarp – we headed underground at ~10:45 am flying down the pitches and regaining our limit of exploration at 12:00. We had bought 100 m

of rope with us and plenty of mallions/hangers/concrete screws/bolts. In a similar manner to the day before – Alex strapped on bolting kit and rigging tackle whilst I wrapped up warm for the coming wait.

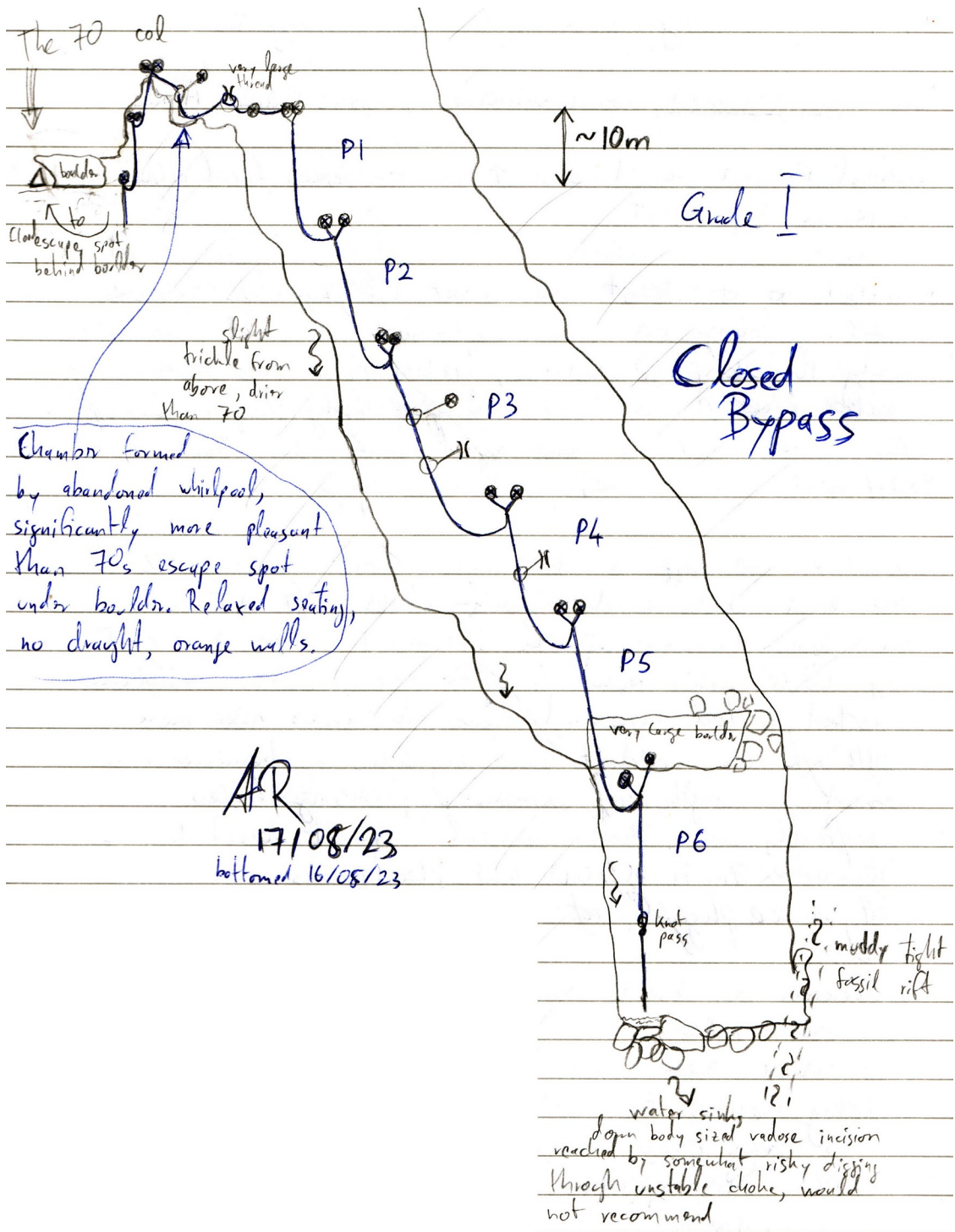


Figure 10: Closed Bypass sketch topo

Alex began his descent down the shaft – tying off the 100m rope on a natural at the top and bolting a Y-hang around the corner. A handful of rebelay and deviations, as well as a couple hours later – he was just out of my sight as the shaft began to bend around back under the window.

At about 14:30 Alex headed back up and I dropped down to see how it was going – we compared notes over a lunch of cheese and sausage back at the window.

We had reached a point roughly halfway down the shaft with the bottom now visible with our lights on full spot. In front of us was a huge boulder poised between the walls – covered in mud and with a medium sized fossil chamber behind it. With the fossil route going nowhere, we elected to continue down – into a drippy part of the shaft that looked like it might be waterfall in wet weather.

Another couple hours passed by with me rearranged rocks at the window to make a better sitting space to wait out any floods – the quiet only intercepted by the occasional drilling and hammering from ~50m below. As I was about to slip into a hypothermia induced coma – a call come from below asking for more rope. Having used all the rope, we had bought with us – I headed back to the waiting ledge on the 70 proper to grab a small length of rope we had seen yesterday. Dropping down the pitches to find Alex hanging from a Y-Hang under the large boulder – I handed him the 13m coil.

It was then that a hasty knot pass was rigged halfway down the penultimate pitch. The rope hanging at roughly shoulder height at the bottom – we had barely made it. Landing in a shallow pool of water fed by the drips – we were disappointed to find the bottom of the shaft blind. Most of it being fossil it was obvious that it didn't have too much water. After 20 minutes of ferreting in some orange mud filled holes in search of continuation – we gave up and began the long prussik to the surface making it back to the tarp at roughly 21:00.

Disappointed that we didn't find the bypass we were looking for but happy to find what turned out to be 100m of fine SRT in a pleasant section of cave. Next stop, camp – and Forbidden Aven!

Alex Ried survey notes:

[chamber at top of initial bolt climb] *Chamber formed by abandoned whirlpool, significantly more pleasant than 70s' escape spot under boulder. Related seating no draught, orange walls.*

Bottomed 16/08/2023 – Drawn 17/08/2023 by AR.

Circa 100m deep shaft somewhat akin to Yorkshire pothole. Every effort has been made to rig away from potential water, but P6 was drippy even in settled weather. Nature of mud deposits @ bottom indicative of only minor drainage, but descent in unsettled weather not advisable. Y-Hangs to P5 & P6 rigged on SS expansion anchors. Remainder on 6mm MM self-tapping screws – mix of zinc plated and stainless.

6.3.5 The Definition of Madness (18/8/2023 to 21/8/2023)

Alex Ried, Oscar Doyle. Trip report by Alex Ried and Oscar Doyle.

'The Definition of Madness'

Day 1: Forbidden Aven to Camp 1 [Alex Ried].

In 2022, Oscar and myself started scaling Forbidden Aven at the far upstream end of the main phreas, located in left fork just after PL2 junction. We reached the calcite fall at the end of an extremely muddy (slop) ramp but got no further then. It was a relatively unpleasant experience.

So about a year later we set off with two large heavy tackle sacks, filled with bolting kit and food for 5 days plus circa 150 m of 8.5mm in a third tackle sack – Annas kindly carried this up to the entrance for us and Oscar took pity on me in taking his bag plus the rope bag down the pitches. After a prolonged faff session at the entrance, we started our descent around noon. Bottom of the 110 (lunch) 13:30, meander 14:30, Hirlatz 17:00. More faff ensued as we separated bolt climbing kit from camping and other gear at the left fork to then make our way to Forbidden Aven where we arrived around 19:00.

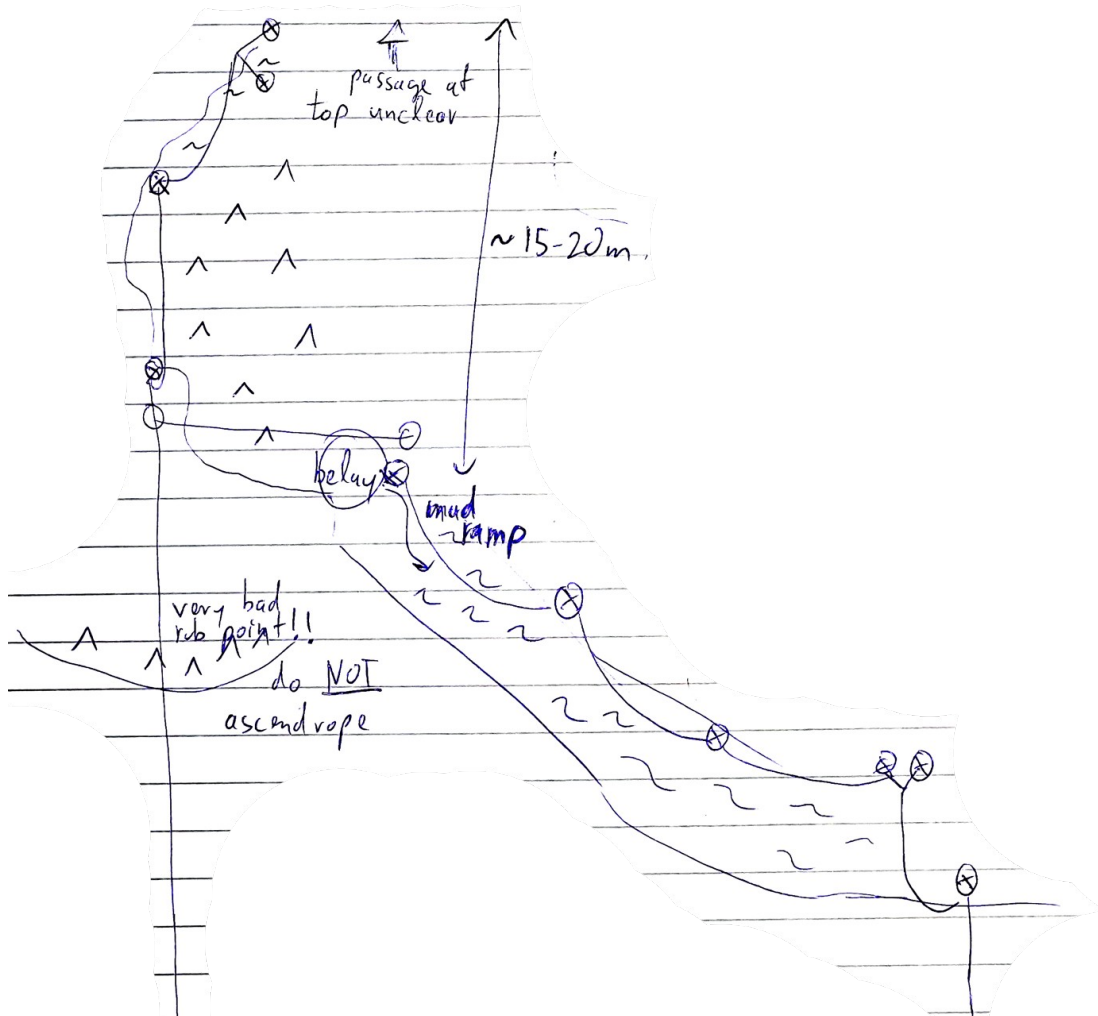


Figure 11: Forbidden Aven bolt climb

The muddy traverse was just as bad as I remembered, in addition at least one of the aluminium carabiners left in situ showed bad signs of galvanic corrosion. The calcite fall started off clean with a short succession of overhangs, the stick-up/concrete screw/impact driver combo working a treat. Some of the calcite is fairly well “Weathered” and somewhat soft, other sections fairly hard. Most bizarrely, it was very

'sticky'. The drill bit did actually get stuck at one point and I had to use the spare drill bit to free it.

Regrettably, the clean steep calcite gave way to a mud covered slope between 70°-50° which made anchor placement more difficult and fouled the etriers, drill, etc with copious amounts of mud. Within ~6m of the top, the bloody drill stopped working. Copious swearing and bashing did not improve its state. Some rope swinging antics to obtain hangers from Oscar later, I rigged a Y-hang from 2 existing holes which was no joy. Rigging 2 single screw rebelay whilst taking climbing hangers out I made it back to Oscar's level (on a rope I had trailed up), tied some 6mm to my rope and threw it over to him so the up rope can be reached from the belay. After ~3hrs 30mins of climbing I was fairly tired both mentally and physically and felt unable to face the muddy ramp of death. Instead I abseiled over the lip of calcite with great care.

This is actually quite sharp, consequently the rope hanging down Forbidden aven at present **MUST NOT BE CLIMBED** under ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. It is 8 mm rope and failure almost a certainty. Oscar returned via the ramp and we met up at the bottom around midnight. We made our way back to the bags left at the junction, down the joyous slog of deep sludge to camp. Oscar generously volunteered to get water whilst I made camp ready. Glorious dinner and bed around 3 am after what felt like a very long day. There is now a length of ~90 m and ~45 m 8.5 mm 2022 unicolor rope at camp 1 to push leads next year.

Day 2: Austria's deepest bureaucrats [Oscar Doyle].

Camp 1 – WUG Pot.

Waking up at around 11am, we extricated ourselves from our nice warm sleeping bags and enjoyed a typical Camp Breakfast of porridge and coffee. Feeling too exhausted/sorry for ourselves after our drill failure up Forbidden Aven the day prior, we elected to swap the bolting kit for a notepad and pen and spend the day doing an inventory of the camp.

Although it sounds like a tedious undertaking, much fun was had rifling through the various bags and containers finding items of varying vintage. Re-bagging, labelling and taste tasting a few bags of mysterious white powders filled the next couple hours, occasionally interrupted with soup consumption. All the camp stoves were tested and found to be working and I only almost set myself on fire once. Weary from all the note taking and counting, we retreated early at around 8pm in order to be well rested for the next day.

Day 3: Austrian Airspace [Oscar Doyle]

With all hopes of bolting anything dashed by our drill failure, we had to settle for a scouting trip to the end of the cave to try and find something to climb for next year and check out a few spots for a camp.

So after a course of the most usual breakfast, we reluctantly strapped on our mud-encrusted caving gear and headed towards the Chutney Mines. Having not been further into WUG than Camp 1 before, I was excited to finally be able to put faces to the names of all the horrible muddy places I'd heard about. Almost as quick as it had begun, the Chutney mines gave way to the vast muddy delights of Chutney Chambers. In the bottom of Chutney Chamber, we descended what is quite frankly a shit pitch [ed: It's Not Ideal]. Decidedly muddier, we stomped through 'Reborn Hope' and climbed up 'Fat and Fearless' both of which were pleasant and dry. Ascending 'Human Trebuchet' we began walking up a large sloped passage. At this point we unfortunately arrived at the top of 'Frexit' which is basically 'Deep Sludge' inclined at about 70° - if you are familiar with 'Deep Sludge' then you will understand the problem.

Below 'Frexit' is 'Constructive Negativity': a pitch with 3 rebelay. The rope is relatively new, mud covered 9mm in a rather fabulous orange - it is also lightning fast and great care should be taken when descending. Following the most arse-clenching abseil I've done in a while, we were soon back to horizontal and we made great time waltzing down 'Exploration Fever' - a large gently sloped passage with a relatively friendly cracked mud floor - only occasionally disturbed by a collapse. It was here that we spotted a couple of flat sections that might be suitable for a camp 2 location. Soon we dropped in to the roof of 'Sho-Wadi-Wadi Land' which is a large chamber that's sloping down on both sides with a sandy-mud floor. The lower sections of the slopes are black from where the sumps have risen up in the past. First we went for a look at the sump, sort of by accident as we were looking for 'Bolivia can wait', but what a good looking sump it was! Trying hard to not fall in, I scrambled up onto a ledge on the side and took some snaps.

Climbing back up the slope we headed the opposite way: down into the dark confines of 'Bolivia can Wait' where we wasted no time because the passages quasi-aqueous nature was evident by its silt deposits. Shimmying up the last rope, we popped in to a yawning chasm - the dark walls and floor caused by moving silt deposits from the sumps giving the place the colour pallet of Mordor. Hiking up the (rather loose) boulder slope we soon reached a side passage (B-Series) that Alex explored whilst I made my way to the top of the chamber to recce the possible climbs. After finding the rope from Joel's bolt climb, I headed back down to 'B-Series' to join Alex for a spot of lunch in a nice sandy part of the passage. Sausage and wine gums consumed, we headed back to the top. Alex ascended the rope up the half-finished bolt climb whilst I tried to scramble up around the side - before realising how high I'd gotten and wimped out. We snapped a couple of photos and then, after Alex won his battle with a rather large heat seeking boulder, we managed to relocate our entrance hole and we began the journey out - taking notes and pictures of a couple potential camp locations on the way. Much swearing and lamenting was done on the ascent of 'Constructive Negativity' due to our ascenders becoming manually operated, which was enough fun without having to dodge all the falling mud/rocks.

Eventually we made it back to camp at around 7 pm. The trip to the end and back with one light tackle bag took 9 hours door to door. Not too bad, considering we did spend a while snooping around some leads and taking photos. It could be done in around 8 hours of strictly travel time.

6.3.6 Tourist trip (21/8/2023)

Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec, Tom Foord. Trip report by Alicia Roslaniec.

A party of three went down to 110 m and then came back up. We had a fantastic time with a brilliant guide. Tom tried to tighten two bolts with a spanner but they weren't loose. Alicia tightened a maillon on one of the pitches. We all survived a successful trip and we were back in time for free pasta dinner.

Also Tom found a patch of snow that he has never seen before near the Tyrolean.

6.3.7 Bringing old ropes from WUG (22/8/2023)

Christian Vogel, Vladimír Fuka. Trip report by Vladimír Fuka.

We started quite early (departed ~9am) and went to WUG. We reached the bottom of 110 at 12:45, made a break for food and drink and warmed our hands over a candle. After 13:15 we packed a heap of old rope, stuffed it into a backpack (tackle sack) and started to head back. I had the personal stuff of both us; Wolfo had the rope. We met the survey party at the boulder in the 70. They were only starting. At the top of the 70 we met Andrew, Bente, Max and Janka. We exited the cave at 17:25 and then waited for the Andrew group to come out. Eventually we brought the rope back to Camelot. Wolfo brought the rope to the main path, I then brought them back to Camelot.

6.3.8 Surveying Closed Bypass and De-rig (22/8/2023)

Ethan Hanley, James Colville, Tom Foord. Trip reports by Ethan Hanley and Tom Foord.

[Ethan Hanley]

There was much faff, largely attributed to the sheer volume of people going down WUG this day. As such, it was past 12:30 before we three entered the cave. However, we made good progress reaching Whirlpool chamber halfway down the 70 by 14:30ish. Vlad and Wolfo passed us at this point and we overheard the inevitable traffic jam with the final group at the head of the 70.

Beginning to survey the failed bypass past this point, progress slowed dramatically. Thankfully, the surveying was reasonably straightforward. Tom went down first, marking stations, with James following close behind with the Disto, and Ethan taking up the rear as a pure tourist. Touching bottom circa 16:30, we snacked, investigated the significant air current about the meander at the base, and seconded Alex & Oscar's conclusion that this currently-impassable lead was too high to warrant capping.

Heading back up, with Tom de-rigging, we were reunited at the whirlpool chamber for approximately 17:45, coiling the rope and snacking once more. The survey would later clock the new series in at ~86 m.

Getting into a rhythm, we made decent time for the remaining pitches, prussiking ad-infinitum until we finally spied the tensioned traverse, exiting the cave shortly thereafter at ~20:30 and heading back in the dark for a late dinner.

[Tom Foord]

Quick trip down WUG to survey and derig 'Closed Bypass' (the shaft series explored by Alex and Oscar from part way down the '70'.) It's an impressive shaft that spirals down as a single pitch of 85m, but unfortunately lands on a choked floor with no real way on. A narrow rift takes a strong draught inwards, but would require some serious chemical enlargement.

De-rigging was uneventful and we made a steady exit, arriving on the surface at sunset. 8 hours underground.

P.S. We left the up pitch from the boulder ledge on the 70 rigged, as the small chamber just before the main 85 m pitch makes a much better place to sit out a flood than the old shelter location on the 70.

6.3.9 WUG Camp and Passage No. 33 (25/8/2023 to 26/8/2023)

Andrew McLeod, James Colville, Tom Foord. Trip report by Tom Foord.

After an uncharacteristically early start, we entered the cave at 10am and made our way down the pitches to the big tunnels at ~-570m. We turned right and ascended 'Uphill Gardeners,' eventually reaching 'Shoelace Traverse' which had been climbed and rigged by Axel (with support from Andy) back in 2019. This must have been a beast to climb, as it involves an ascending traverse in typical gloopy WUG/Hirlatz mud that spirals up around the chamber wall to reach the entry to 'Passage No. 33' above.

Andrew stayed back to fettle the rigging, while Tom and James went ahead to the limit of previous exploration which was only about 50m along this easy walking passage. We surveyed as we explored, first walking and then clambering over boulders as the passage gently ascended. Several high level phreatic openings led off but could not be reached safely without bolting. The mud became dryer as we progressed, and seemed to be the same pale coloured, powdery stuff found at camp.

After 96m surveyed trending east then north, we arrived at the lip of a pitch approximately 10-15m deep, but with a wide mud floored canyon, descending round a corner at the bottom. The sound of running water could be heard. Out over the pitch were some large boulders covered in stal wedged across the canyon, and beyond and above these were gaps leading to black space beyond.

The strong draught we had been following seemed to disappear upwards in that direction. It looked like it would be possible to reach this high level continuation by bolting forwards and upwards from the pitch head.

We marked our final survey station (number 11) high on the right wall just back from the pitch head. Andrew had still not arrived so we went back to find him just finishing his adjustment of the Shoelace Traverse rigging. We showed him the new find, then the three of us returned to below Shoelace Traverse (now significantly better rigged) to install a new rope on the slope below which will make access much easier and safer for future pushing trips. (A couple of earlier rope climbs in Uphill Gardeners could do with similar treatment).

Time was ticking on, so we retreated to the big tunnels and squelched our way down to camp. A message received by Cave Link indicated that the weather was due to turn bad from 1pm the next day, so we set our alarms for 4am and got our heads down. We managed to leave camp by 5:30am and were back on the surface by around midday to find a beautiful sunny day with no storms in sight.

[Sketch survey overleaf]

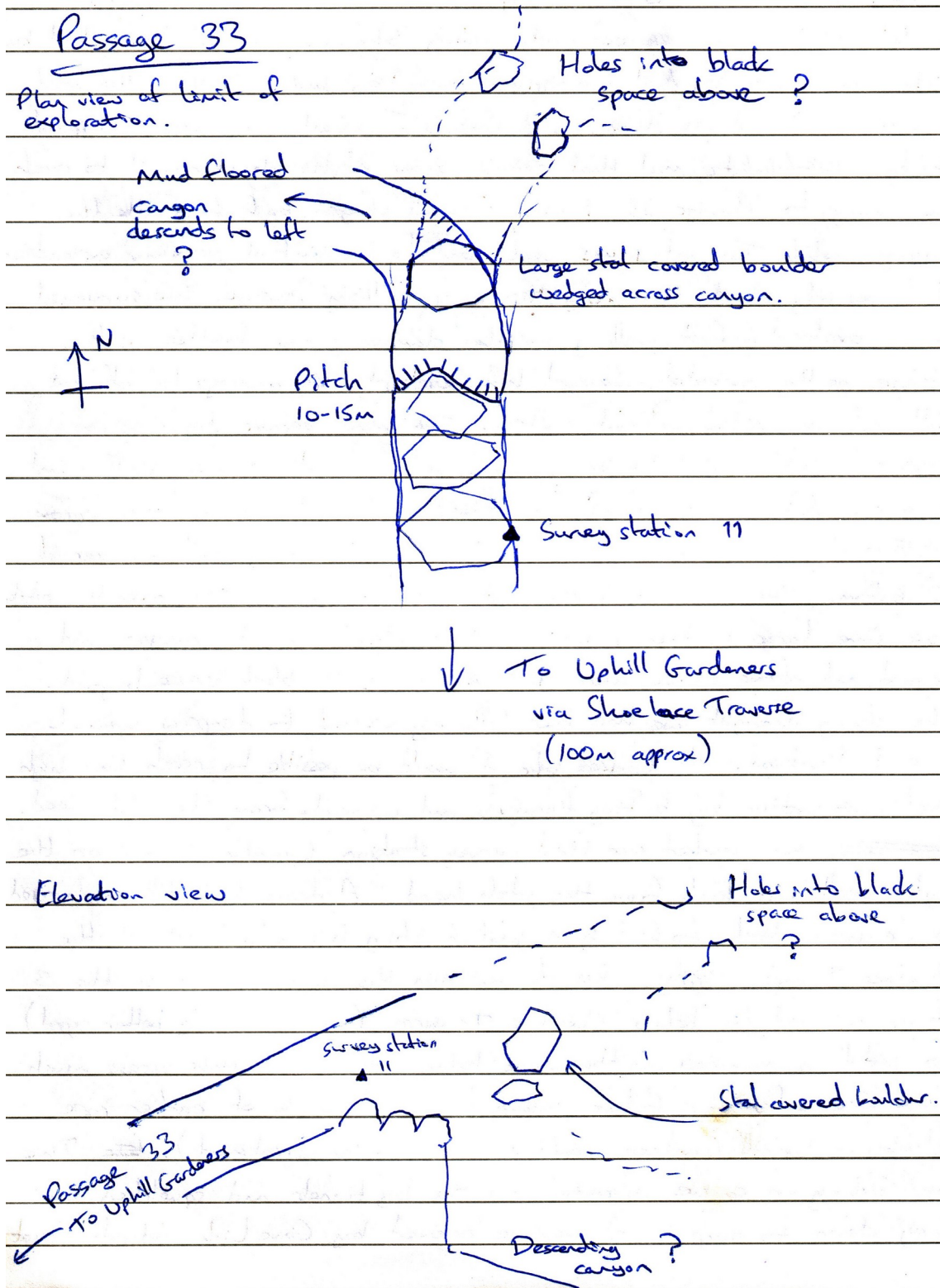


Figure 12: Sketch of end of Passage No. 33

6.3.10 Rope Collection 2 (27/8/2023)

Aimée Dow, Ethan Hanley, Tom Foord. Trip report by Ethan Hanley.

In the beginning, there was faff. This faff was not so good, as significant rain was due for approximately 8pm, potentially endangering our return up WUG. Our original

objective was to collect some old rope from the end of the fossil pitches, but given that we were only entering the cave at 12:00, we resolved to simply get as far as we could in a third of our time.

Descending the entrance series, 70, and 110 in good time, we stopped for a quick bite to eat at 14:30. Happy with our progress thus far, we resolved to descend the fossil pitches and collect the rope after all, confident in our ability to ascend in good time.

Stashing between 60 and 90 metres of mud-clad, ancient rope into our individual tackle sacks, we began the long upwards journey at approximately 15:30 noting the mud dragged upward from Deep Sludge to these ropes and thankful that we need not experience the full atrocity just 100m below us.

After an uneventful upwards march, we once again saw daylight at 19:35, exiting the final pitch-head to a blue sky, barely believing that four hours had passed since we settled into our rhythm.

Keeping faff to a minimum, we availed of the remaining daylight on the route back, returning to Camelot as the mist rolled in and striking an objective off the board.

6.3.11 Pushing a new passage? (29/8/2023)

Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec, Tom Foord. Trip report by Aimée Dow.

With the weather on Tuesday taking a turn for the worst, we were unable to explore any caves that are at risk of flooding. We decided it would be a good opportunity for Alicia and I to learn how to survey caves using a Disto and how to draw them on SexyTopo on my phone. Before going to the caves, Tom took us to the Wiesberghaus for practice. We made a survey of the shoe room and the hallway, leading to the end of the bathroom corridor. Our survey in the shoe room wasn't accurate due to the external factors that affected the calibration of the Disto, such as the pipes and radiators all around the room. Our survey of the corridor turned out a lot better, however. Once we felt we had enough practice, we then headed to WUG to explore a passage that Tom had found on the way out of a trip that we had taken with Ethan just 2 days beforehand.

We all looked at the hole that was just to the right of the end of the 2nd pitch, before the Tyrolean, and decided to see where it goes. Tom started to rig off some existing bolts (probably from cavers who had made the same mistake!). As he was starting to descend down a very tight and uncomfortable hole, Alicia who was sitting on a ledge that overlooked a large chamber full of boulders, and I who was behind the pitch head, were looking at each other and were beginning to make the connection that the hole that Tom was descending into would have been much easier accessed by climbing down the boulders beside Alicia.

Just as we released this, Tom started shouting, "What the fuck, the fuck you doing here, what the fuck..." and we saw him appear out the other side of a hole and into the chamber where Alicia was sitting. He realised that his new discovered passage was actually a known passage and all he had done was go down between a narrow boulder

climb! Despite this mild (but hilarious) hiccup, he continued on down the drop between the boulders and emerged at the bottom of a known pitch to the sight of mine and Alicia's headtorches above him in the distance. We called it a day and began to head out of the cave, but whilst waiting for the rope on the 1st pitch of the entrance series to be free, Tom found a side passage that was not on the survey, which opened up into a big chamber with a pitch that had not been previously bolted.

We made the decision that we will return here the following day to explore and survey this unknown passage.

6.3.12 The Parallel Universe (30/8/2023)

Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec, Tom Foord. Trip report by Tom Foord.

After yesterday's embarrassment (see previous report), I decided to redeem myself by taking Alicia and Aimée to explore and survey the side passage/pitch I had spotted at the bottom of the first pitch of WUG. After descending the entrance pitch, this passage leads off to the right immediately before the big boulders you clamber over to reach the 2nd pitch. Incredibly, it appeared nobody had looked up here before, because it shortly opens up and arrives at the head of a pitch which had no signs of previous exploration. After a spot of gardening, I rigged and descended the sloping pitch to reach a parting of ways; either a continuing descent to a boulder floor a few metres below, or a solid floored passage that doubled back.

I consulted Aimée and Alicia for their preference and the solid floored passage was chosen. After a few metres this led to a short drop into a boulder passage leading in 2 directions. Ahead led to a sizeable chamber with a drop into a narrow, wet meander at the far end, but no other way on. However, doubling back the other way led over holes in the boulder floor to emerge below the earlier parting of ways. (Future explorers would do well to rig a direct descent to this point).

From here a gap through boulders led onto the start of a spacious fault-guided pitch descending at approximately 70 degrees, with a stream descending in a deep canyon somewhere below. I rigged a couple of rebelayes to reach a stance on a rock rib where the shaft turned a corner to the left, at which point I ran out of bolts. From this stance, I could see a further 40m down the continuing spacious shaft before it turned a corner out of sight. Unable to proceed further, we retreated to collect the survey gear, and surveyed all of the day's finds down to the stance. The final survey station is clearly marked here with a large Tippex blob and the number '8' (on the back side of the rock rib).

The survey indicates that this new shaft series may well provide a bypass to both the Tyrolean and the tight pitch head, therefore bypassing several of the more flood-prone sections of the cave. It will be well worth further exploration on next year's expedition.

[Sketch survey overleaf]

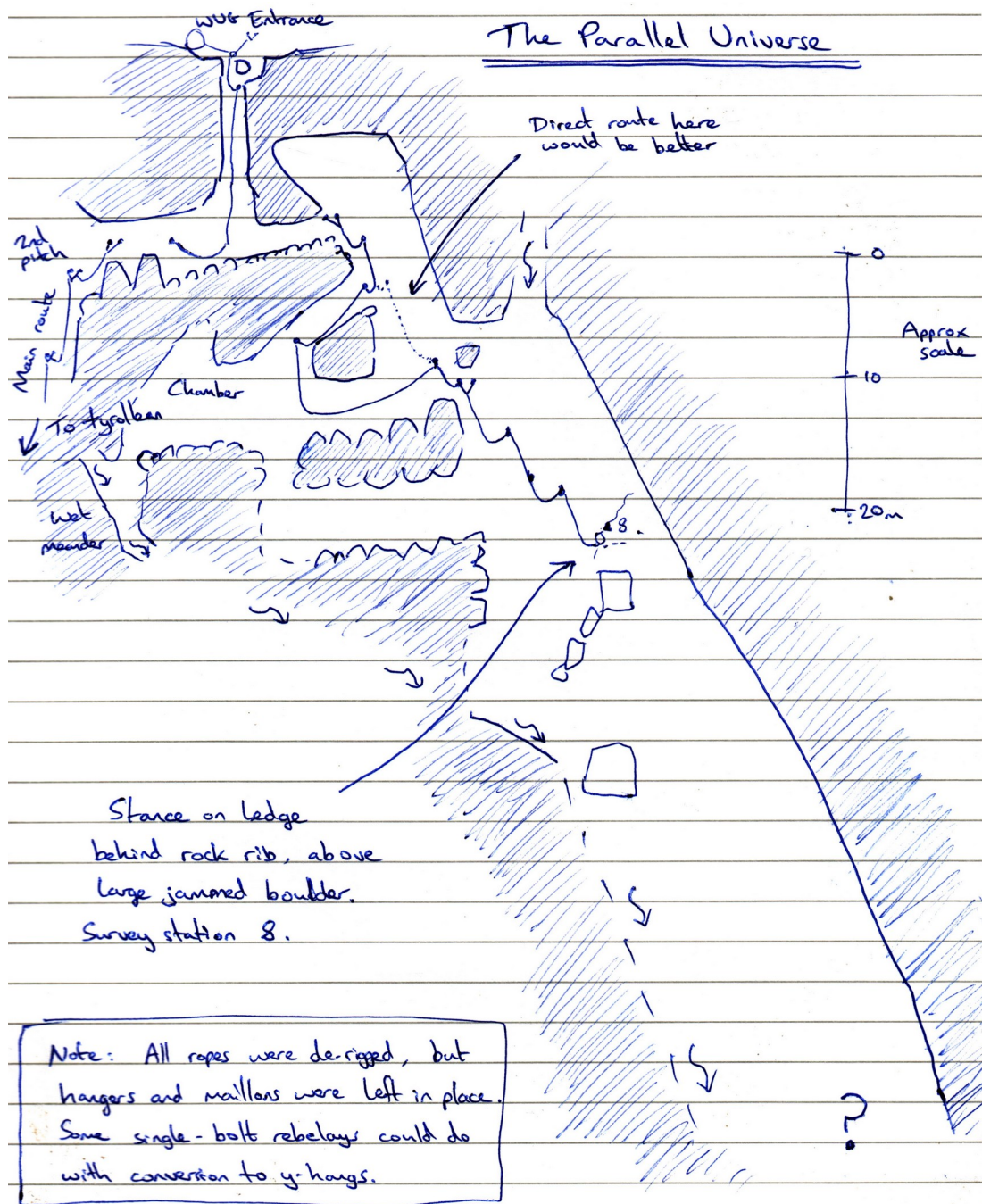


Figure 13: Sketch of the Parallel Universe

6.3.13 Uphill Gardeners (30/8/2023)

Andrew McLeod, Chloe Snowling. Trip report by Andrew McLeod.

Chloe was interesting in looking a stalagmites in WUG Pot for future collection for speleoclimatology studies. Most of WUG Pot is fairly devoid of formations but Uphill Gardeners has a reasonable number of formations, particularly in one particular alcove. We therefore set off for a bounce trip to Uphill Gardeners. Since this trip could take some time, we set a callout for 6 am although I was hopefully of getting out before

midnight (and, rather overly-optimistically, making it in time to get a drink from the bar...).

After walking over to WUG Pot, we set off down the pitches. After around five hours we reached the base of the pitches, and set off up climbs into Uphill Gardeners. Since Uphill Gardeners is an inlet passage, we were now going uphill and it took between one and two hours to pass the various obstacles and awkward climbs in Uphill Gardeners and reach the alcove.

We had been warned in advance by Axel that access to the alcove is very difficult due to a slippery mud slope terminating in a small 1 m to 2 m or so drop into the chamber, so we had brought a rope for this purpose. Nonetheless, access was still difficult and in the process we thoroughly coated ourselves in mud.

Chloe began looking for suitable stalagmites and photographing them. Meanwhile, we collected drip water samples for later analysis. This took some time, but once we were done we scrambled out of the chamber (with some difficulty) and proceeded back down Uphill Gardeners to the base of the pitches. The passage is much easier in the downhill direction.

We then stopped for a freeze-dried meal dinner and water, before beginning the long ascent out of the pitches. After a long trip, this was slow going, and we eventually emerged around 3 am after which we messaged the group to indicate we were out of the cave. Leaving gear at the entrance, we headed back to Camelot for a well-earned rest.

6.4 Ectoplasm Cave

Ectoplasm was discovered in 2022, and pushed extensively this year. The initial walking entrance, leading to a pitch blocked by loose rock and a pitch below a levitating ice disk, has lead into a maze of small crawls and meanders with a range of strong draughts. Some excellent delicate ice formations have been discovered in some of its chambers.

The Ectoplasm survey is available in Appendix B.

6.4.1 Ectoplasm – the return (15/8/2023)

Andreas Klocker, Ethan Hanley, Vladimír Fuka. Trip report by Ethan Hanley.

Ectoplasm was first explored in 2022; however, this discovery took place too late in the expedition to properly push it. Given the promising location, airflow and horizontal entrance, it was made a priority for this year.

Andreas, Vlad and I set off from the Wiesberghaus at approximately 10:30, carrying a large load of gear. Blessed with largely cloudy weather, we made the uphill trek in 2 hours and 4-minutes, but this would likely take large amounts of time and water in less optimal weather.

Resting upon our arrival at Ecto, circa 12:45, we first took a gander at the big cave around the corner, name forgotten, but found that it was still unfortunately plugged at the bottom with ice – worth another look in another couple of years.

Getting into our gear, too until shortly after 13:00 hours, at which point the three of us formed a chain to ferry gear past the awkward entrance squeeze. Observing the two pitches (provisionally named ‘Death-by-Rock’ and ‘Death-by-Ice’) from a traverse line rigged the previous year, Andreas chose to prioritise some gardening on the former, having determined that the partial ice plug on the latter had grown from last year.

Andreas began clearing muck of the scree from ‘Death-by-Rock’, using foot, hammer and crowbar to this end and eventually uncovering some solid rock suitable for a pitch-head. In the meantime, Vlad took a look at ‘Death-by-Ice’, descending via the rope remaining from the gear before. Upon reflection from this lower vantage point, a solid rock point suitable for a deviation became apparent, pulling the rope away from the partial ice plug such that this blockage was less of a concern.

Both parties concluded that their respective pitches would require slings for further progress, and we lacked any such thing, so we decided to leave further pushing for today. Leaving the cave ~16:00 hrs, we stashed our gear between both Ectoplasm itself and a neighbouring cave, ensuring that we would only need to carry the essentials through a speedy 1hr 40min hike downhill returning to the Wiesberghaus in time for helping with dinner.

Gear used: hammer, crowbar (pre-existing rope + maillons)

6.4.2 Objective Boom (Capping) & Exploration (16/8/2023)

Christian Vogel, Ethan Hanley, Vladimír Fuka. Trip reports by Christian Vogel and Ethan Hanley.

1) Capping Party (Christian/Vlad) – Written by Christian

Way up on the usual path/Simonyhütte to Ectoplasm entrance. After a brief check of the entrance passage, we decided that it should be enough to cap the boulders on the actual flooring/boulder rubble.

Took around 40 shots, now the passage is fine for 1 person and gear for further pushing.

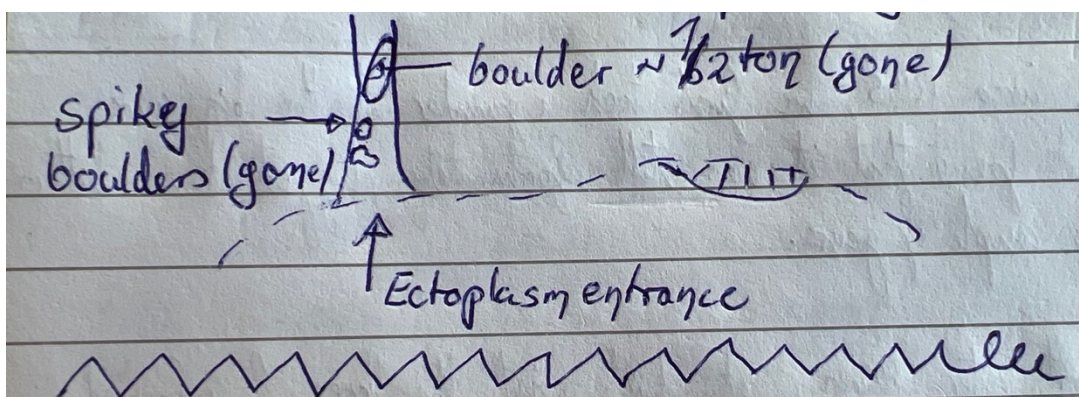


Figure 14: Capping sketch in Ectoplasm

2) Exploration Party (Ethan, Sunbathing) – Written by Ethan

Given that there wasn't a need for a third pair of hands in Ectoplasm, I opted to faff around in pleasant sunshine rather than shivering my behind off further into the cave.

Checking out the neighbouring cave at Andreas' request, I let down a knotted 30m rope to use as a handline on the otherwise-unclimbable ice flow.

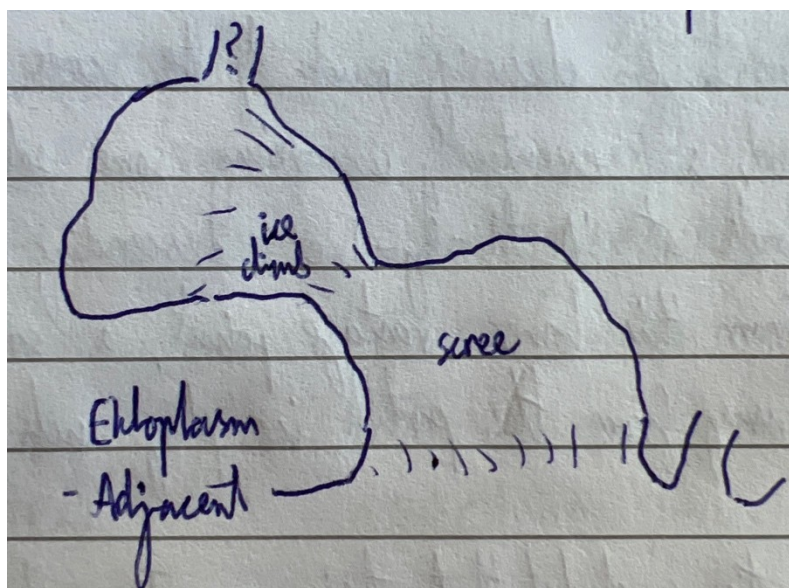


Figure 15: Sketch of entrance adjacent to Ectoplasm

At the base was a slightly mushy ice sheet with a tight crawl for at least 10m to the right but otherwise impassable. I wasn't in an oversuit, so was unable to complete the crawl and determine what, if, anything came after.

I secondly explored a cave ~20m downhill from Ectoplasm, with a pink dash at the entrance. After a short climb down a scree-slope, I encountered a moderate rift, with approximately 5m to the floor from my current position – rope needed (watch for false floor!) Not being properly equipped to descend, I could only note a squeeze at the base of the opposite side of the chamber, the extent of which remains an open question mark.

6.4.3 Pushing (17/8/2023)

Andreas Klocker, Ethan Hanley, Vladimír Fuka. Trip report by Vladimír Fuka.

Andreas started rigging the death by rock it starts with a handline then to re-belays after approx. 10m there is a small chamber where the main direction of the falling stones continues in the same direction a small hole goes upwards above it, but the draught comes from a phreatic tube going horizontally to the left. In the meantime, I descended to death by ice (a few metres further in the original corridor).

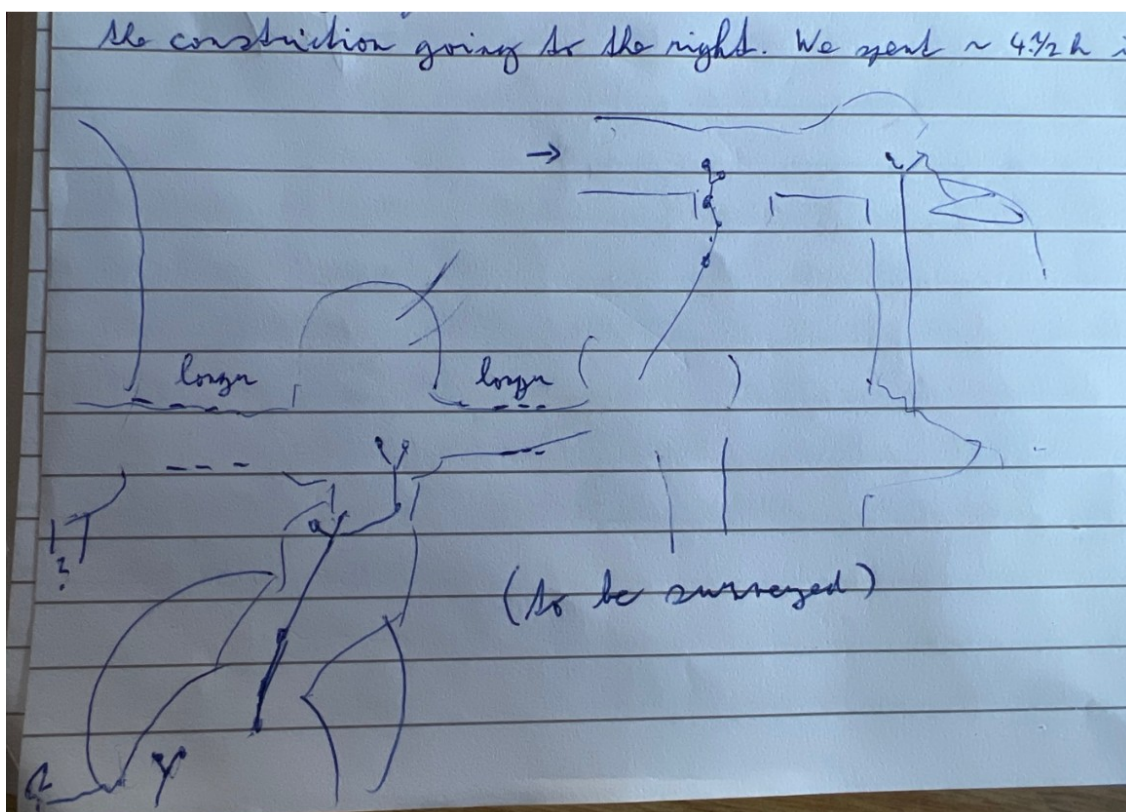


Figure 16: Sketch of Ectoplasm Death by Ice and Rock

The bottom is mostly blocked by stones and ice and on the left (maybe below death by rock) there is a small pool of standing water with dripping water and a tube coming from above. From the aforementioned chamber we took the phreatic tube – first without gear, then I and Ethan returned for the rope. After the meandering tube, we found a small chamber with a hole in the floor. The tube continues meandering to another bigger chamber, the dripping water and another hole in the floor on the RHS from the entrance (probably active). We started rigging the first one (y-hang, hand line, y-hang pitch, re-belay) to a larger chamber with a meander on the bottom.

There were some drips into the meander which fell ~ 4m deep. We rigged it and I descended it after some meandering I found a tight pot and I could see a continuation below after the continuation going to the right. We spent 4.5hr in the cave.

6.4.4 Further Capping (18/8/2023)

Andreas Klocker, Christian Vogel, Janka van der Merwe, Paul McCarron, Vladimír Fuka. Trip report by Janka van der Merwe.

The intention of this trip was to cap at a squeezey bit and continue pushing a pitch by "Death by Rock."

In the beginning, there was a walk. This was after much faff. Fortunately, the weather held up nicely to be cloudy, but not rainy. Janka and Paul appreciated this, being the two ultra-sensitive to the UV Rays. In order to protect extra against the sun. Paul was also sporting a dashing green paid shirt.

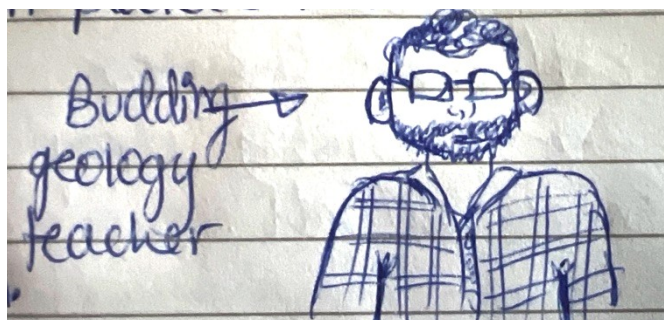


Figure 17: Paul as a budding geology teacher

Janka's choice of walking stick was ...Interesting... Wolfo very kindly forced some poles into her hands, and she's realised that they are very useful. She will steal some abandoned ones from pig pen. Anyways, NOT IMPORTANT! What is important is that the walk up was really fucking hard. Anyone without a camelback struggled because there were no water steps until Simonyhütte ~insert crying emoji~. The non-camelback users should start an uprising and demand water breaks. For the people.

Finally, we all ambled up to Ectoplasm. There was an initial amount of prospecting done to suss out some holes. Then Jo and Josh turned up, to do the proper big gun prospecting.

Now, the actual caving. Wolfo and Vlad went ahead for some capping to open up a tight meander. Andreas, Paul and Janka went in after to push the Death by Rock pitch. They found that actually it connects up to Death by Ice. So, after this news, the trio went to push the squeezey meander that apparently ended in a 10m pitch. On the way, Paul's stomach gave in, and he had to take an emergency exit to chugg some water and eat some calories. While this was happening, Janka was scouting at this squeeze. According to Andreas, this is where she learnt to swear. He could not believe how many fucks and shits could come out of such an elegant lady. Unfortunately, she was not enjoying shoving a bag with a drill in it and wearing her SRT gear on in this squeeze. They said fuck it and left it to someone who would actually enjoy it.

Now having given up on this lead, they decided to join back with the capping team. After heading through a very draughty meander, and having heard the blunt booms echoing through, the clear boom boom at the bottom of the pitch. There was a lot of

firsts for her, including also drilling and rigging 1 bolt. After having abandoned a lead because they disliked squeezes, Wolfo asked the group if any of them enjoyed shitty squeezes. Unwilling to squeeze but keen for responsibility, Janka went to check it out. What she actually witnessed was a hot and sweaty Wolfo, wedged purely by the effort of a drill and pure will, saying “Cyka” every second word. Her sympathy was minimal because it was just too funny. (He did get out!... obviously!|).

Wolfo then go to the bottom of the pitch “getting into a major fuck up with this SRT gear”. Janka followed and they found another ~10m pitch with ice at the bottom. Unfortunately, they were running out of time, so they left it for tomorrow.

On heading out, Jo and Josh reported exciting leads. So, with all this good news, the group were filled with excitement for tomorrow. Spirits were high on the way to dinner.

6.4.5 Surveying (19/8/2023)

Andrew McLeod, Vladimír Fuka. Trip report by Andrew McLeod.

We surveyed down ‘Death by Ice’ and then headed up to ‘Death by Rock’ to complete a survey loop. We then started surveying the onward meander in ‘Death by Rock’ but retreated when the pushing group approached.

The ropes on both ‘Death by Ice’ and the pitch to there from ‘Death by Rock’ were de-rigged. A red 20-40m rope was left at the top of Death by Rock. A shorter rope was left at the bottom of Death by Rock.

Surveying will be continued tomorrow.

6.4.6 Pushing! The Windy Part (19/8/2023)

Christian Vogel, James Colville, Janka van der Merwe. Trip report by Janka van der Merwe.

Objective: Pushing! (The Windy Part)

We went easily through the cave, except for the infamous “Suka” from Wolfo about literally everything. We showed James the beautiful squeeze where you have to get a bit horizontal in the rift.... But don’t worry, there’s a nice seat in the end!

Wolfo rigged up the pitch and let Janka go in first, so she was able to experience going into a cave for the first time, for the first time. So the new bit is called “Sugarland” because of all of the beautiful ice formations, and all the “Suka” coming from Wolfo. Which we thought meant sugar!

Janka looked around and put her head around a corner and felt an intense draught! So exciting!! James went some way through but needed to go back with some rope. We will return another day!

6.4.7 Further pushing the windy rift (20/8/2023)

Annas Alamudi, James Colville, Janka van der Merwe, Petie Barry. Trip report by James Colville.

Following up on the strong draught coming from the rift in the corner of sugar-land, the team set out to both explore the meander and to photograph the pretty ice formations at the bottom of the pitch. I was very thankful that I had left my gear at the entrance of the cave yesterday during the long walk up in the hot sun.

The descent of 'Death by Rock' and the following pitches and meanders proceeded a little slower than the day prior due to a large bag of rope. This didn't prove too much trouble however, as apart from Annas who decided that the rift before the sugar land pitch was a little too technical for them after the party reached sugar land with little trouble and good time. Janka then set about photographing the chamber whilst Petie set out to bolt the small drop that I had found yesterday, and I repacked rope ready to use. I had found yesterday, and I repacked rope ready to use. Our work was occasionally punctuated by the sharp crack and boom of capping going on in the rift above to widen it.

The meander continued at the bottom of the small pitch through proved to be difficult and small necessitated the removal of SRT kits in order to fit through some sections. The meander also splits into an upper and lower section, both proceeding parallel to each other, the lower section proved to be impassable (though not for lack of trying) whilst the upper section could just about be passed it required the removal of my helmet. On the other side of this squeeze a small section of standing passage opens into a 4-6m pitch in the floor, the chamber below seems to open further so dropping this pitch head will happen in the future, but by this time, Petie and I were needing to head back out of the cave so we left the rope and bolting gear in the meander and turned back.

Picking my coat back up on the way back and placing it in the front of my oversuit to protect it (I had taken it off earlier to prevent catching in the squeezes). This rather portly appearance I had developed in addition to the cold and narrow meander lead to the name 'Waffer thin mint'.

6.4.8 The less windy way (20/8/2023)

Andrew McLeod, Ethan Hanley, Maxim Leijssen. Trip report by Ethan Hanley.

With the objective of pushing past the 'swearing meander,' we entered circa 1pm after significant fuff. Collecting the red rope, recently extracted from the dead 'Death-by-Ice,' we squeezed through the first meander, passed the yellow rope and toiled to carry the requisite equipment for bolting.

Despite failing to...

FINISH THE WRITE-UP!!!! (I presume this was Andy)

I shall indeed. As I was saying, despite failing to swear at an appropriate frequency, the swearing meanders was certainly unpleasant. Reaching the large chamber thereafter, Max and Ethan were offered bolting practice on the pitch to be pushed, which hit the floor at ~8m.

The base of the pitch by a meander, combining an awkward squeeze with both ice and mud, and eventually leading to a light and sound connection to the survey team at the base of the yellow rope.

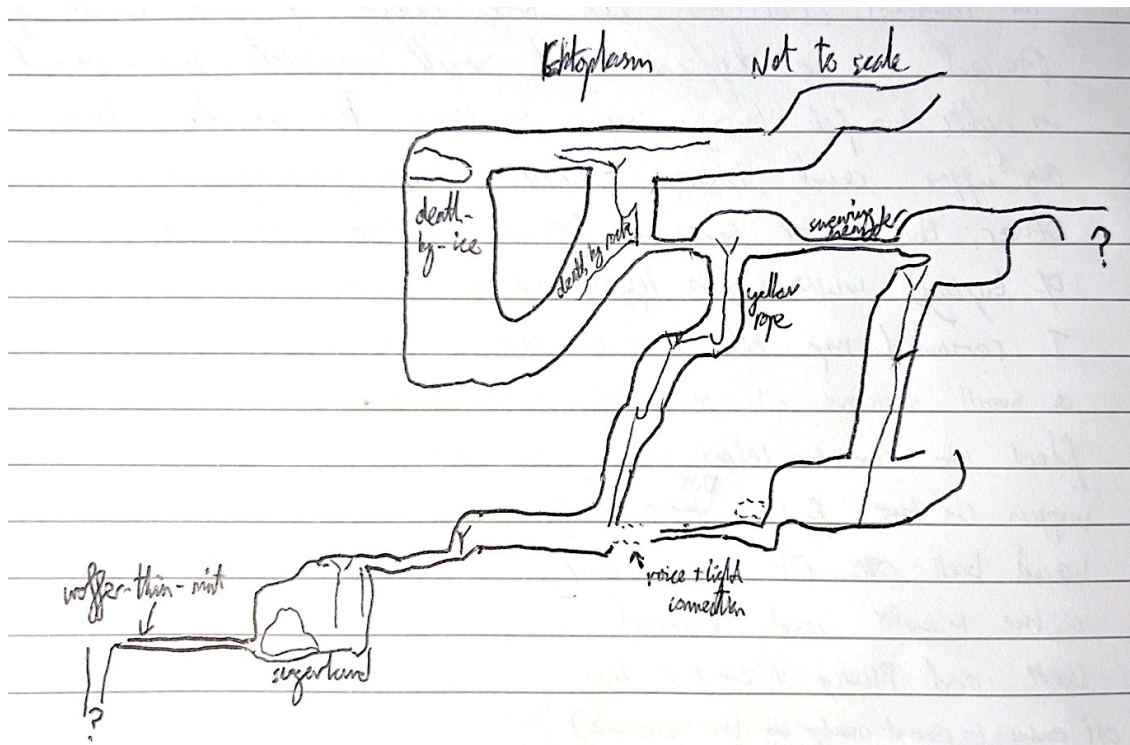


Figure 18: Ectoplasm sketch less windy way survey

Returning up the pitch, we chose to instead go high from the chamber, free climbing in to get another meander and eventually, yet another moderate pitch. With significant draught in said meander! However, a number of failed bolts from Ethan in the dodgy pitch-head rock ate up some of our grave time, and it was decided to leave this pushing to a later date.

6.4.9 Creating Austrian Ass-space (21/8/2023)

Andreas Klocker, Christian Vogel, Ethan Hanley. Trip report by Christian Vogel.

Objective: Creating Austrian Ass-space

Departed 09:30 from Camelot via Simonyhütte to Wildkar/Ectoplasm.

Quick decent, effective ass-space creation via capping by Wolfo and personal capping ass-istant Ethan.

After successful ass-way testing/approval, Ethan and Andreas visited Sugarland. Quick sortie to PASTA at Wiesberghaus.

6.4.10 Surveying the Windless Way (24/8/2023)

Ethan Hanley, Vladimír Fuka. Trip report by Ethan Hanley.

Starting late due to much faff, Vlad and Ethan set out circa 1030 with the intention of surveying all outstanding sections of Ectoplasm, with the stretch goal of bolting and pushing the non-windy way. Making reasonable time despite the heat, we reached the cave around 1240, and after a quick lunch began our days work.

Beginning with the primary path, we surveyed Austrian Ass-Space and Sugarland with little difficulty. However, 'Waffer Thin Mint' proved more of a challenge. By about 8m in, we had frozen our hands and arses off through the constant lack of motion and retreated in defeat to the top of the yellow rope. The Smearing Meander was also problematic, but at least offered some warmth and we eventually broken into the subsequent chamber at approximately 5pm. Quickly surveying the Pitch of the Windless way, we unfortunately had to bail on the connecting meander lest we miss dinner and left carrying assorted kit we'd found strewn throughout the cave.

6.4.11 Final Pushing (27/8/2023)

Alicia Roslaniec, James Colville. Trip report by James Colville.

In order to finish up at Ectoplasm and use/collect the gear left in the cave from previous pushing trips, myself and Alicia set out up the hill. The walk up unfortunately required a further detour via WUG to collect the caving gear I had neglected to carry back to Camelot after my camping trip.

We finally arrived at Ectoplasm for around 2 pm and set off down the pitches. We made good time and reached the squeeze at the end of 'Waffer Thin Mint' within the next hour. Unfortunately beyond this point the speed and success of the trip drastically decreased. A reasonable time was spent pushing rope, bolts, a drill, SRT kit etc. through the squeeze to enable me to start bolting. Furthermore, the first bolt failed as the nut rotated the entire bolt instead of tightening. A short whilst later, I successfully put in the bolt i needed to start a traverse line to the pitch. Unfortunately, my poor luck would continue when I went to put in the Y-hang above the pitch with the drill battery suddenly dying, I lucked into getting the first hole I tried to drill. Quite annoyed by this I opted to use the bolt I had to hang out over the pitch and have a better look into the chamber below.

The draught in the passage is strong but unfortunately the chamber did not open out as much as I had hoped and looks to only lead to further meander (though the pitch should be dropped next year to be sure). Disappointed but not disheartened we turned to

representation on orilly sadness

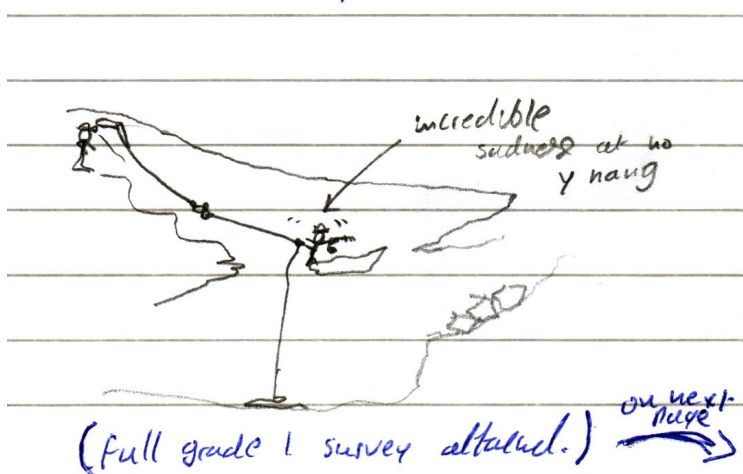


Figure 19: Sadness in Ectoplasm

leave the cave only to find that taking the bag back out of the cave was MUCH harder than bringing it in, turning what should have been an at most 1 ¼ hour exit into a 2-3 hour slog dragging the bag centimetre by centimetre out of the cave. This was also not initially helped by the bag tether having been unclipped during the re-packing of the bag.

This did lead to a rather dark and wet walk back to Camelot, only returning at 10:15 pm. Due to the cavalcade of issues with this trip, I have decided to name this pitch, Murphy's Law.

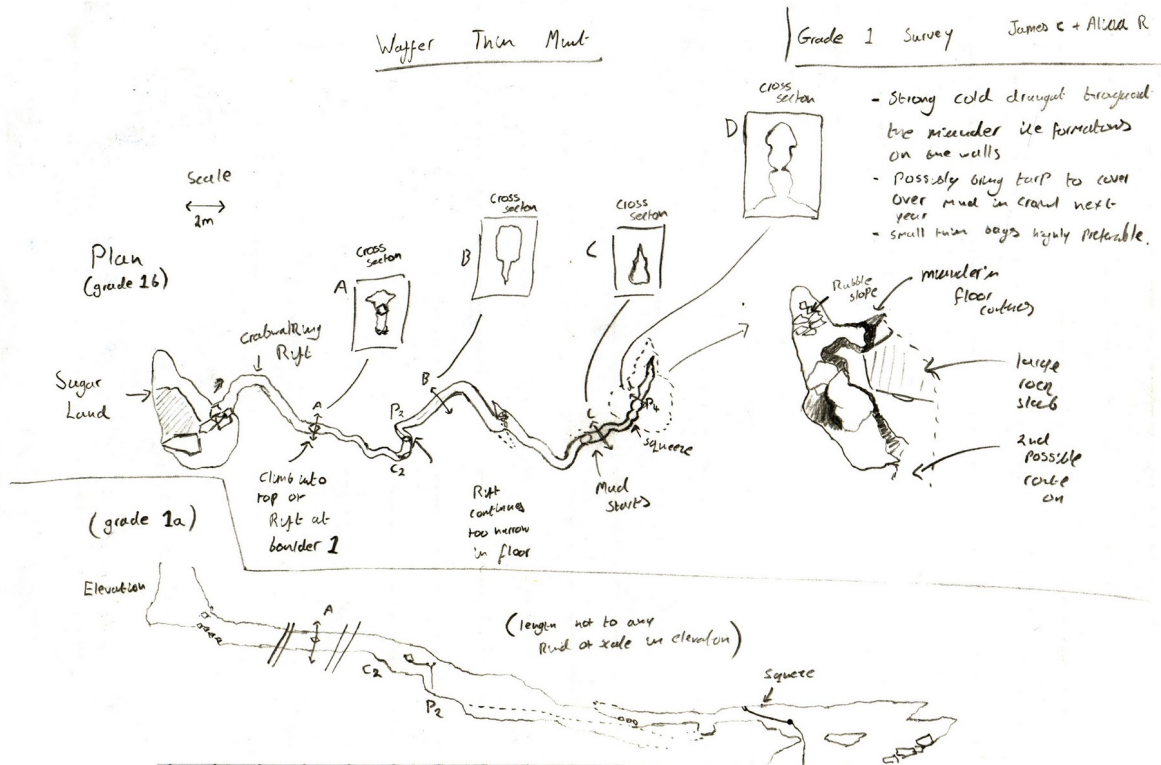


Figure 20: Ectoplasm sketch survey

6.5 Spezialeshöhle

Spezialeshöhle was previously pushed between 2017 and 2019, and was pushed to a conclusion and surveyed this year. The cave is relatively close to the hut, and has been primarily explored and surveyed by Petie Barry.

The Spezialeshöhle survey is available in Appendix C.

6.5.1 Revisiting Spezialeshöhle (15/8/2023)

James Colville, Petie Barry. Trip report by Petie Barry.

A return to a cave last visited in 2019. It's a ~25 m deep pot ending in a too-tight rift with a view down a pitch of ~8 m and with a good draught. I did two capping sessions here in 2018 but failed to get through. James and I arrived at 12:30. It's only a ten minute walk from the Wiesberghaus, and after a little re-rigging we reached the bottom and the capping commenced.

This generally went well, and the pitch head started to widen out nicely. After 2.5 hours my capping rods were mostly bent, so I packed up the kit and James passed down the rigging kit from his boulder ledge above me where he'd been lying the whole afternoon. After placing a Y-hang, I clipped into the rope and slithered down. I quickly figured that I'd be able to pass the very tight squeeze, but I'd probably not return. There looks to be at least one more session to make it a passable pitch head.

We packed up the gear and started the laborious process of getting up the rift to the bottom of the pitch. It's a very laborious 5 m of cave. A 4-hour trip.

6.5.2 Spezialeshöhle Capping Trip (17/8/2023)

Christian Vogel, Petie Barry. Trip report by Petie Barry.

After Tuesday's promising trip it was time to return. I'd recruited Wolfo to finish off the capping as I'd bent most of my pins on the last capping trip. Wolfo got stuck in straight away and 1.5 hours later there was enough space to squeeze through. I got the pitch rigged; it's tight but doable. A 6 m drop brought me to the top of a boulder slope,

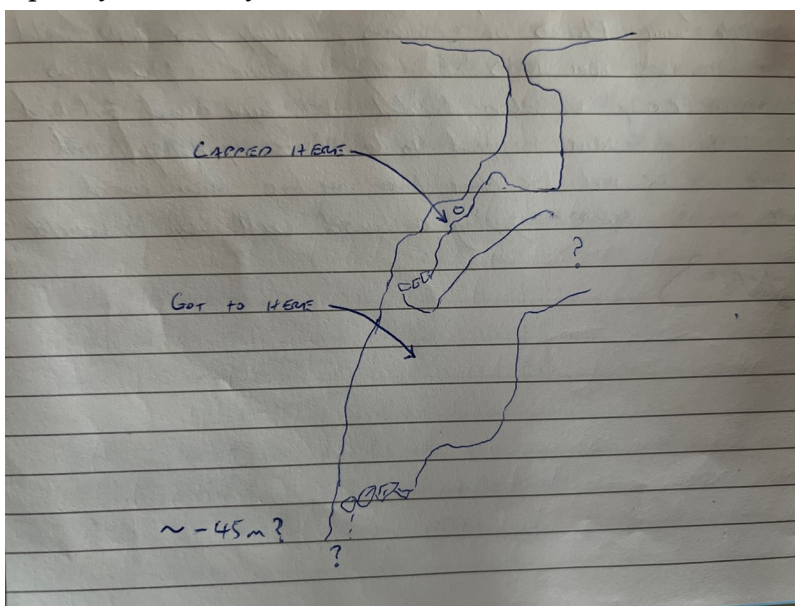


Figure 21: Sketch of Spezialeshöhle capping

with a booming pitch around the corner. I rigged down along this gardening as I went. Feels dodgy.

Placed a Y-hang and dropped down to the end of the rope, dangling in space ~10 m above the floor. This was a big rift rising to the surface and descending to a boulder floor in the other direction. A small black hole was visible in the boulder below. With no more rope we packed up and left.

6.5.3 Spezialeshöhle pitch descent (18/8/2023)

Bente Hollestelle, James Colville, Petie Barry. Trip report by James Colville.

After the successful capping of the tight pitch-head on Wednesday, we set out with more rope to descend into the unknown areas of the cave. Initially the rope that had proved not to be long enough was replaced with a newly brought 100 m rope and we descended to a boulder ledge around the corner and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down the pitch. There was then a brief fuff caused by the drill having been unintentionally left at the top of the pitch in a seemingly “empty” bag. Once this was resolved, we proceeded to garden the edge of the boulder ledge and Petie and Bente both put in a bolt to create a safe place for people to shelter whilst people negotiated the very loose pitches above us on the way back. We then followed the pitch down to a rocky floor with a small hole in the far-left corner leading to a further pitch. Whilst deadly with loose boulders around this pitch head a small animal skull was found which was photographed and plated on a small boulder to the right.

I then bolted and rigged a Y-hang above the pitch, and we checked to see if the remainder of the rope reached the bottom of the pitch. As the rope did not reach the bottom, Petie descended with another rope and rigged a free hanging rebelay below constricted pitch-head. Unfortunately, much to our disappointment, this pitch ended in a heavily chocked boulder floor marking the end of this cave. I descended to have a look after Petie had come back out as there was no place to shelter at the bottom. After taking some more photographs at the bottom, the three of us ascended back out of the cave.

[Sketch survey by Petie Barry overleaf]

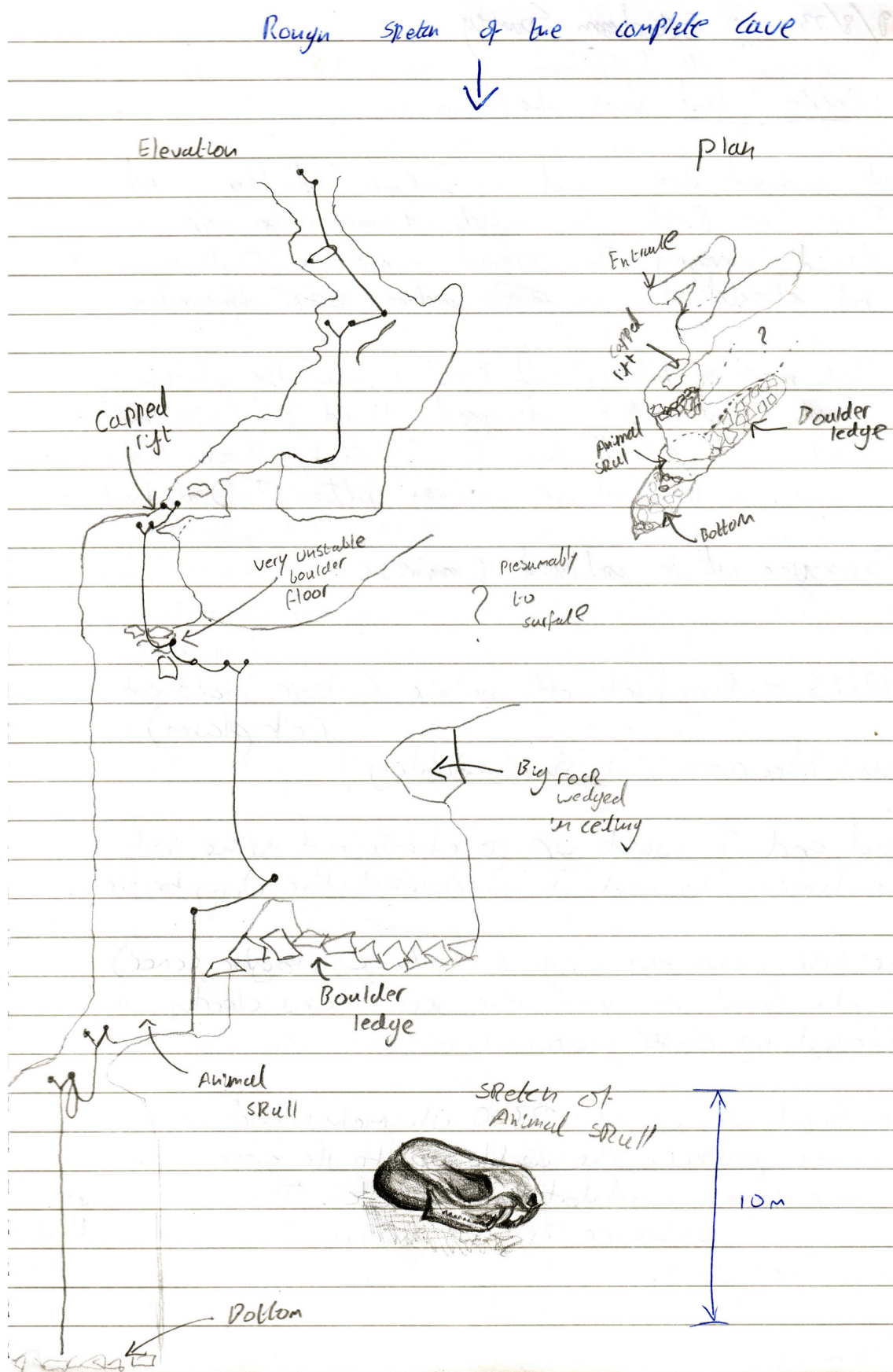


Figure 22: Spezialehöhle sketch elevation

6.5.4 Survey and de-rig (21/8/2023)

James Colville, Petie Barry, Vladimír Fuka. Trip report by James Colville.

As the previous trip into the cave had pushed to an impassable boulder choke, one last trip was planned to finish up with a survey and to bring the ropes back out of the cave. The party set out at approximately midday and made good time up to the cave and set up to go down.

I went first to mark survey points followed by Petie with the Disto whilst Vlad brought up the rear to sketch and take data. We made efficient progress down the cave before leaving. I de-rigged and brought up the rope due to the fact that I had remembered to bring a spanner. Overall a quick and successful trip as we were back for just after 2 o'clock.

6.6 Todestrichter

'Todestrichter' means 'Death Funnel', an apt name for this cave consisting primarily of a large shaft with loose rock, frozen walls, snow and ice formations throughout. Discovered this year, careful exploration led to a tight rift with a strong draught which was passed by capping to another pitch blocked by an ice plug. There are still bolt climbing leads to try and follow the draught, and a return next year is guaranteed.

The Todestrichter survey is available in Appendix D.

6.6.1 'Big Fuck Off Höhle' (19/8/2023)

Josh Bratchley, Paul McCarron. Trip report by Josh Bratchley.

Paul and I went up to check out some of the holes Jo and I discovered the day before.

The first didn't go (snow blockage, maybe scree) which Paul descended. The second was clearly snow plugged on closer inspection.

The third was up at 2300-ish metres and was my favourite prospect. The walk up to the general area is long, hot, undulating but OK. The walk higher up to this entrance is just scree and snow and is rather crap.

We reached the cave entrance and I kitted up and started rigging. It is gently sloping to begin with, with a snow floor and lots of scree. The walls at the entrance are ok, so the rope was anchored on the right to start. It then goes along the roof and right wall following the dip down. After 30m or so, a shaft is reached.

After throwing some rocks down, it seems quite deep. Somewhat corkscrewing down. Rocks tumble for 10+seconds, but they hit a few ledges. The approach is **EXTREMELY LOOSE!!!** Only 2 people should really go in a team, and until I can figure out a safe route down, we need to be crazy careful. It is rocks and boulders held by ice, but not solidly, plus in the snow, where they readily collapse.

We will return but are currently 30m or so down.

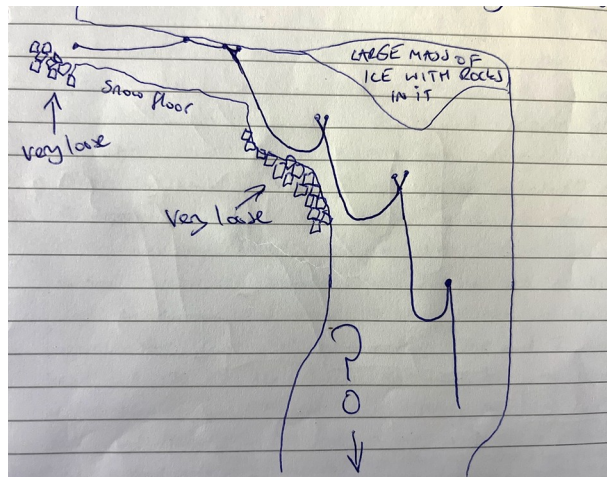


Figure 23: Sketch of Todestrichter entrance

6.6.2 Todestrichter: Death Funnel (20/8/2023)

Josh Bratchley, Paul McCarron. Trip report by Josh Bratchley.

So the hole we pushed yesterday has a new name. We gave it another go today, bringing 50m of rope to see where it goes. It has already eaten 50m of rope. Whilst bolting, it

was possible to avoid the deadly falling rocks by swinging into a gap under the overhanging wall.

A deviation allowed a hang to drop much of the shaft which is to the right when facing

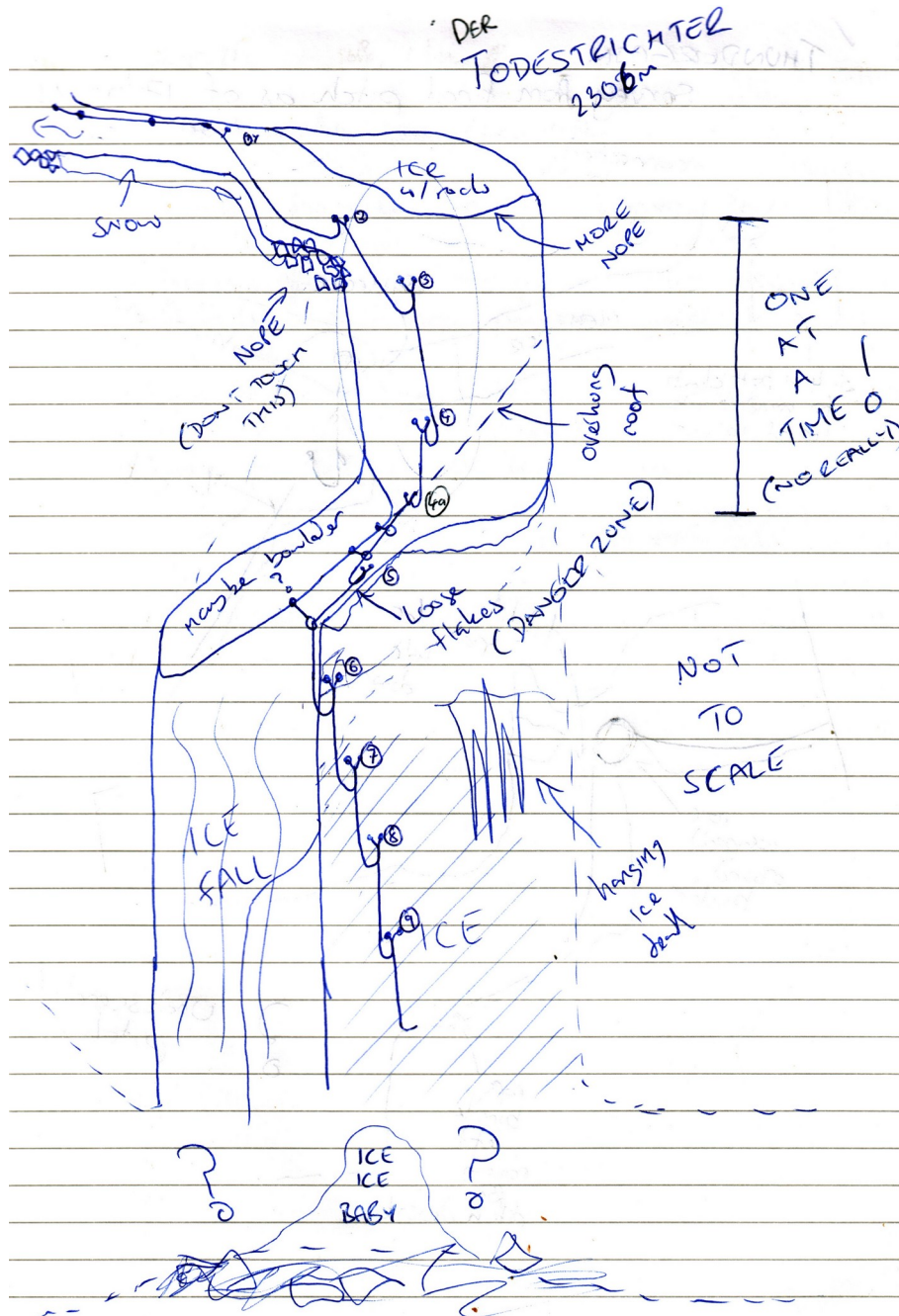


Figure 24: Sketch of Todestrichter upper section shaft

the wall. The bottom section is mainly ice over rock, with lots of big icicles above that look sketchy. The rope ended somewhere around 25m from the floor. Survey below.

6.6.3 Day 3: Rig, Push and Survey (22/8/2023)

Paul McCarron, Petie Barry, Josh Bratchley. Trip report by Paul McCarron.

After the previous trip where we were unsuccessful in getting to the bottom of this new cave, we decided it was best to enlist a small extra bit of help in the form of Ireland's finest surveyor – Peter Barry. In the hopes that this new cave would go, we packed an extra 15 hangers/bolts/mallions in addition to 100m of the finest Teufelberger rope (thanks to UK Caving for the sponsorship), two drill batteries, my new (but now extensively used Makita DHR183z drill) – in addition to survey kit provided by Vlad.

Wanting to make good time, we set off at 10:30; however, we definitely did not account for the near 26-30°C degree heat and lack of wind or shelter on this walk and to be honest, it killed me. NO amount of the finest ESB Banana suncream could protect nor hasten my arrival to this god-forsaken cave for the third time in four days.

Eventually nearing 1300 and after nearly falling on my ass a number of times on the scree, we arrived at the blowing opening on the side of the cliff. We all pulled our phones out and averaging all three, agreed that this cave is at 2306 m altitude.

The three of us split into the necessary teams. Josh would proceed with bolting the last few re-belays and Petie and myself would make a start to the surveying of the cave. As with the draft survey that was made on the previous trip report, we made sure to take it pitch by pitch, ensuring that none of us were in the danger zones of the others at any one time.

Josh blitzed down to the end of the cave to finish the rigging, which resulted in Petie and myself enjoying an echoing remix of dance anthems. These played through Josh's phone as he struggled with cleaning enough ice off of the walls of the cave, before the symphony of drillage began to take place thereafter.

The survey of the cave was completed in good time, and just as we reached the overhanging deviation pitch at the danger zone, over looking Ice-Ice Baby, Petie was able to splay the next station down to Josh who was now at the bottom of the cave. With a suitable location now chosen, Josh gave us the all clear to head on down to the bottom.

Blitzing the remaining pitches and down the icy slope, Josh pointed out that in its current form, the cave seemed to end in a narrow ice/snow covered rift. Here, there seemed to be a draught. However, quite peculiarly, when you walked up to the higher level of the ice the temperature also seemed to drop. There was also a boulder collapse visible that looked like it could possibly go, so Josh asked me on my way down to have a look over; however, no way on was visible.

Throwing rocks/ice into the rift you could hear the ice drop off into a possible pitch. This rift however is too tight and will thus require the services of a willing capper. The name of this rift will be “This is not a problem”. The rift is about 15cm wide, 1m high and 3m long.

Whilst we had the time, it was decided that we would bolt climb up to the point where we could see past the rubble pile of collapsed boulders. Unfortunately after 4 bolts, Josh could see enough that it was clear that it did not go on.

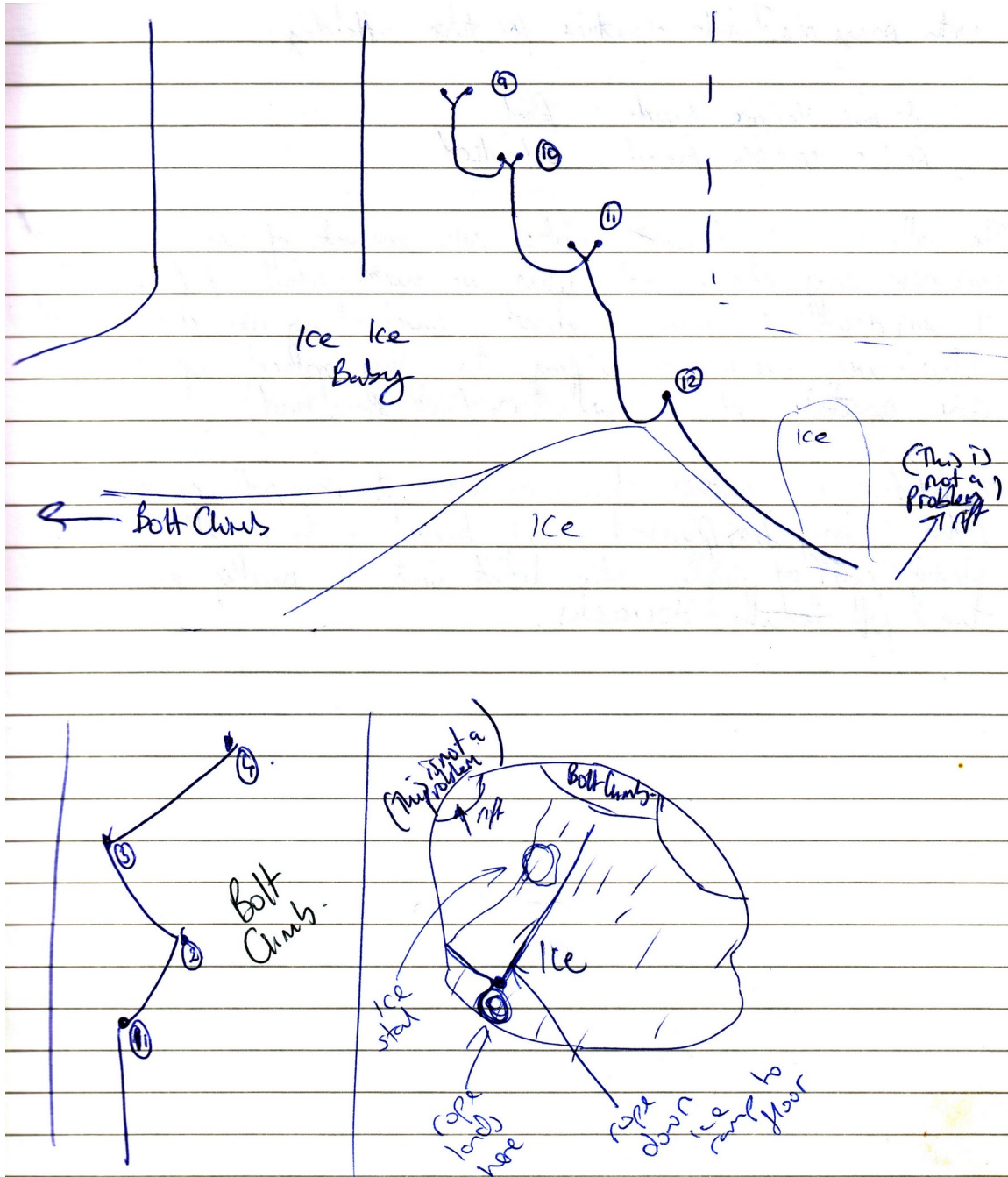


Figure 25: Todestricter sketch topo to bottom of Ice Ice Baby

With this finished after a bit of frantic digging by Petie with the bolting hammer in the rift – we decided to head out, leaving rope in situ, but removing the extra rope. We need to push this with Wolfo or anyone willing to cap.

Current depth: 68.5 m

Surveyed by Petie Barry and Paul McCarron

6.6.4 Capping Day #1 (25/8/2023)

Christian Vogel, Paul McCarron. Trip report by Paul McCarron.

After pushing the cave to what Josh, Petie and myself thought was the end of the cave, but with a possible lead at the rift, I enlisted our fine explosives expert, Wolfo to absolutely destroy the living daylight out of this rift.

Setting off a little bit late by our standards, we arrived outside of the cave by about 13:15, equipped with 3 drill batteries and an absolute fuck-ton of caps to open up the rift succinctly named “This is not a problem” after Josh showed Wolfo a photo of the rift the night before.

Swiftly Wolfo, wielding my new drill, got to work – drilling, capping, chiselling, hammering and capping in rotation. It wasn't too long before the last hole was drilled and capping for the day ended. Having a quick look into the field of destruction, it was clear significant destruction of this cave did indeed take place. Ice formations were now visible and the draught had become significantly stronger and throwing a rock down, a clear 2-4 second drop was heard. A bit more capping will be required to fully open up the rift to see what lies beyond, however, and unfortunately we had ran out of drill batteries for the day.

De-equipping my layers and putting on my SRT kit, we left before being hit by a thunderstorm on the stupid walk down. We will be back again tomorrow.

Equipment used: 1½ bottles of Wolfo's caps, 3 drill batteries (to be recharged), 1 drill bit.

6.6.5 Capping Day #2 – The Breakthrough (26/8/2023)

Christian Vogel, Paul McCarron. Trip report by Paul McCarron.

After the success of yesterday and with expedition fever at an all time high for me on this cave, Wolfo and myself agreed an early start with quick set-off was in order to maximise our chances of getting through “This is not a problem”

So, Wolfo packed his remaining caps and I lifted 4 drill batteries to further our chances. We arrived at 11:15 to find Andreas and Axel in the distance, and were in the cave by such time that capping had commenced straight away at 12:00. Bit by bit, Wolfo progressed deeper and deeper into the rift. By about 14:00, so much efficient progress had been made that you could now clearly see the shaft beyond. However, the draught was now blowing extremely strongly – so much by 14:30 Wolfo took a break to warm up whilst I set an anchor up as a safety line for him. By 16:30, 3 of 4 drill batteries were used up and about 75-80 caps had been set off before the last 5 holes were drilled to conclude the capping.

With the rift fully open, I set off rigging the traverse line across the rift, whilst Wolfo set the last hanger for the Y-Hang, which he was first to descend – rightly so for someone who had sat in a cold rift shivering for nearly 5 hours. On the other side, a 20–25 m shaft with icicles everywhere was present – the deathly kind nearly 2-3 m long for some. The type that would kill you instantly if they fell. Unfortunately, after a quick descent by Wolfo, “Rope free” was shouted by Wolfo. Blasting down the shaft I reached the bottom to find the shaft blind and ice-plugged.

Looking around you could see this is an active ice-plug with scalloping on the walls in a downward direction. The draught is now so intense at the rift that it must go somewhere. However at this time, we were nearly not only at our callout, but also when the poor weather front/storm was due to hit, so it was decided to leave the cave all rigged as the cave will need surveying and leads checking.

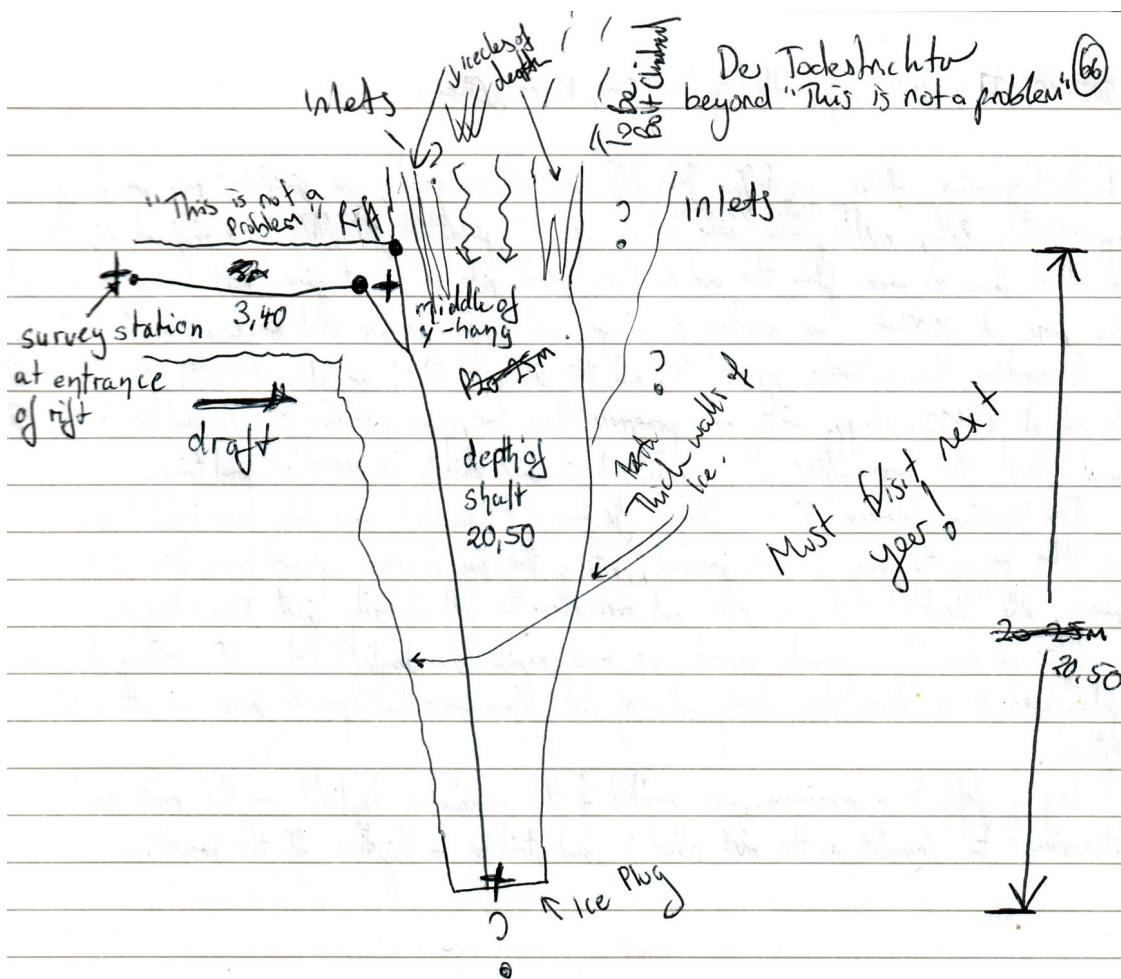


Figure 26: Todestrichter sketch beyond 'This is not a problem'

Wolfo notes a couple of avenues that should be checked and a possible adjacent meander in this ice rift. A bolt climb may be necessary for one of these – but THE DRAUGHT MUST COME FROM SOMEWHERE!!

A MUST CHECK FOR NEXT YEAR!!!

On the walk down, Wolfo described his passion for my drill, noting that I am a very expensive person to be around – as now he must not only buy this drill, but also my swanky USB C 65W Soldering Iron (Pinecil).

I also propose that the expedition creates a fundraising opportunity by creating at least a 13 song CD of “Songs from the Dachstein” featuring some Wolfo classics such as “Scree Tattoo” and “How bolts of lightning can kill you”.

Equipment used: 4 drill batteries (recharged), 80-90 caps, 30 m rope, 3 bolts/mallions/hangers.

6.6.6 Derig and Prospecting (30/8/2023)

Christian Vogel, James Colville. Trip report by Christian Vogel and James Colville.

[Christian Vogel]

Departure ~10:30 via Simonyhütte to Wildkar; misty weather with occasional rain.

Recovered the min-max thermometer from Ectoplasm, dropped Todestrichter to the last shaft after capped rift. Tape survey: rift 3.40 m horizontal, shaft depth: 20.50 m, sloping at ~3degrees.

De-rigged the shaft (30m rope & 3 mallions). Inward draught; aven at top of shaft **should be climbed**.

De-rigged upper 20 m of rigging (20 m rope, 6 mallions).

[James Colville]

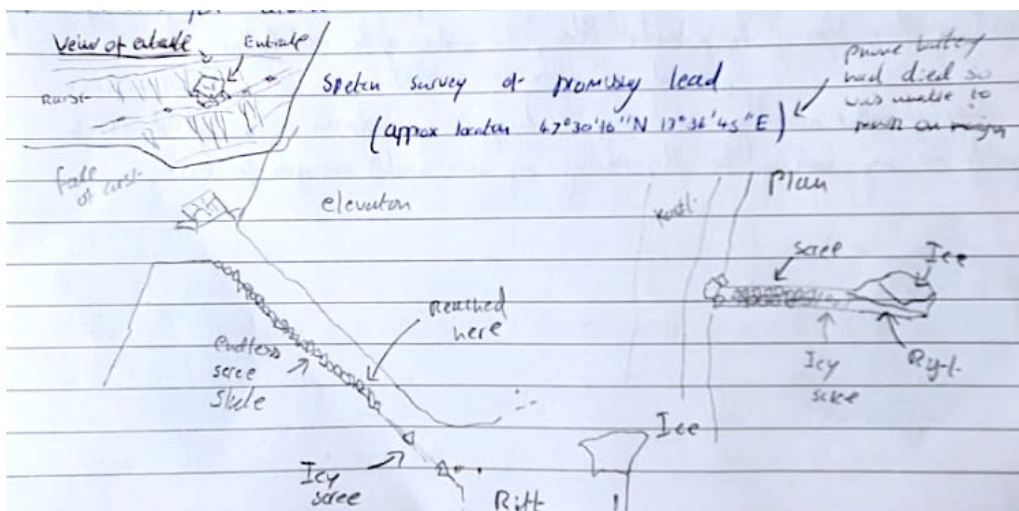


Figure 27: Sketch of promising lead below Ectoplasm

As we still had a fair amount of time left in the day we decided to take a longer off path route back to Camelot prospecting on the way. A number of promising holes in the area below ectoplasm were identified. The most promising of these was a small hole beneath some boulders that lead to a 45 degree scree slope. This was descended for 10 m or so

until reaching an icy section heading down into a rift. We also found an excellent place for a temporary camp whilst prospecting/pushing the caves in the surrounding area. We then made our way back to Camelot for around 8pm.

6.7 Rolling Stones

Rolling Stones is a cave discovered in 2005 or earlier, but not extensively pushed as far as is known. As the name suggests, the cave is quite loose in places, but is a short walk from the Wiesberghaus (compared to Ectoplasm etc.) and received several days exploration in the latter half of the expedition when tired cavers were looking for easier targets.

6.7.1 First Push (25/8/2023)

Aimée Dow, Annas Alamudi, Chloe Snowling, Ethan Hanley. Trip report by Annas Alamudi and Chloe Snowling.

[Annas Alamudi]

We walked up to Rolling Stones accompanied by Axel and Jo, who oversaw a certain amount of faff prior to entry to the cave.

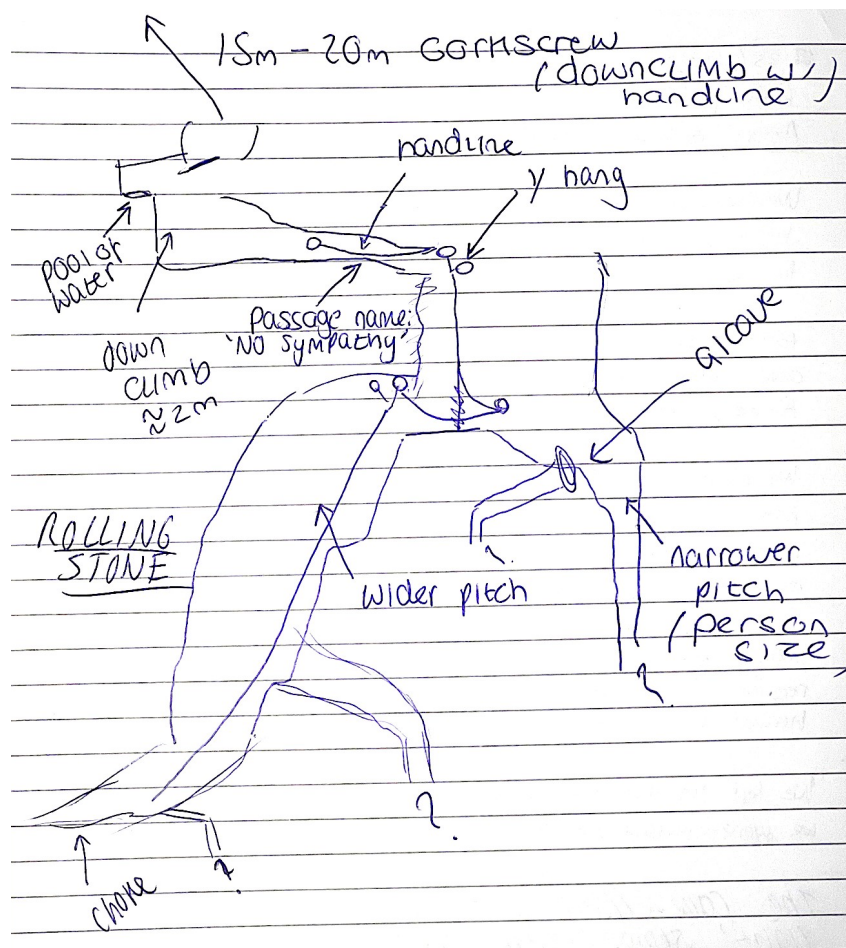


Figure 28: Sketch of Rolling Stone entrance

Ethan rigged a handline on a natural at the mouth of the cave, then Chloe entered the cave followed by Annas, Aimee, with Ethan bringing up the rear.

We climbed down to the meander at 25m where Annas retreated from a few days ago, and Chloe pushed through the meander after bolting a safety line. The meander

emerged at an awkward pitch head at the top of a narrow rift, roughly 10m deep. Two routes are visible from the pitch head, the left route would require “a narrow person,” while the right is more normal human sized.

We left the kit behind and returned to the surface as we were pressed for time. We intend to return tomorrow.

[Chloe Snowling]

The cave itself was very much a “Traffic Light” style cave as Ethan described. A significant amount of gardening was done upon reaching the two pitch heads. However, rocks were still tumbling down on the groups ascent out of the cave.

6.7.2 Second Push (26/8/2023)

Annas Alamudi, Chloe Snowling, Ethan Hanley, Jo White. Trip report by Chloe Snowling and Annas Alamudi.

[Chloe Snowling]

We set off at 9:45am finding our way through the unforgiving bunda. Jo and Ethan took Vlad's Disto in an attempt to create the first survey of the cave. Annas and Chloe pushed the 'Wider' lead of the two previously discovered descending pitches at the end of the last Rolling Stones trip (25/08/2023). Annas put into practise his newly acquired bolting skills, installing a handline to a Y-anchor. The wider pitch ended at the bottom (10m). However, a alcove at ~5 m down (on the left as abseiling) presented a narrow squeeze meander lead. Threw stones down; seem to drop 10-15m. Chloe checked this lead but backed out due to the narrow width.

[Annas Alamudi]

There is a disagreement within the team as to which was the best lead. In any case, the first pitch down the left side goes, the first left after heading down the right shaft also goes out. Will need a more space efficient caver. The small hole that fitted Chloe's arm could be a dig in the Mendips.

[Chloe Snowling]

Cave was de-rigged. Would recommend narrower of two leads is pushed. Bolts left without washers on.

[Route to cave and survey on following pages]

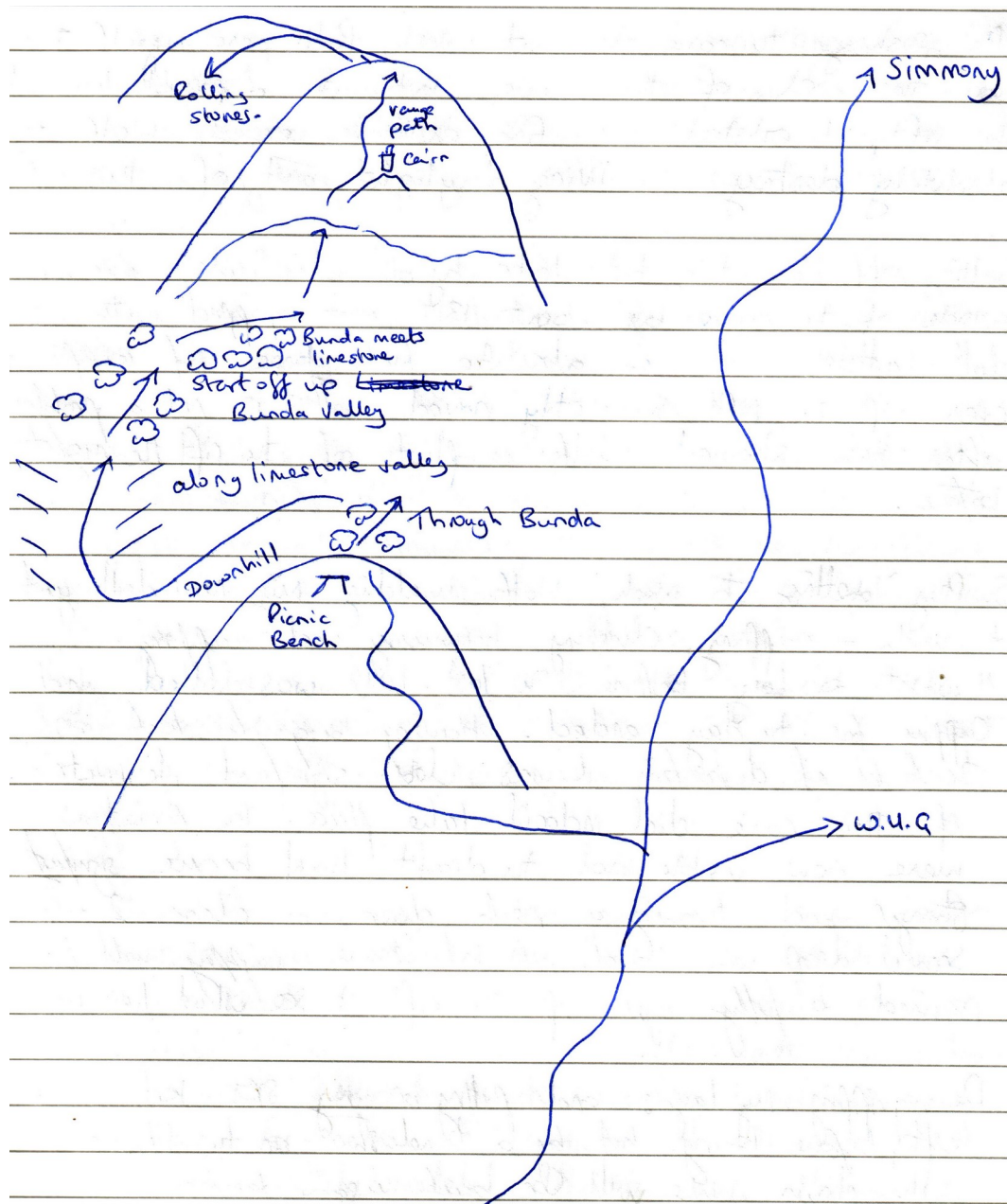


Figure 29: Route to Rolling Stones

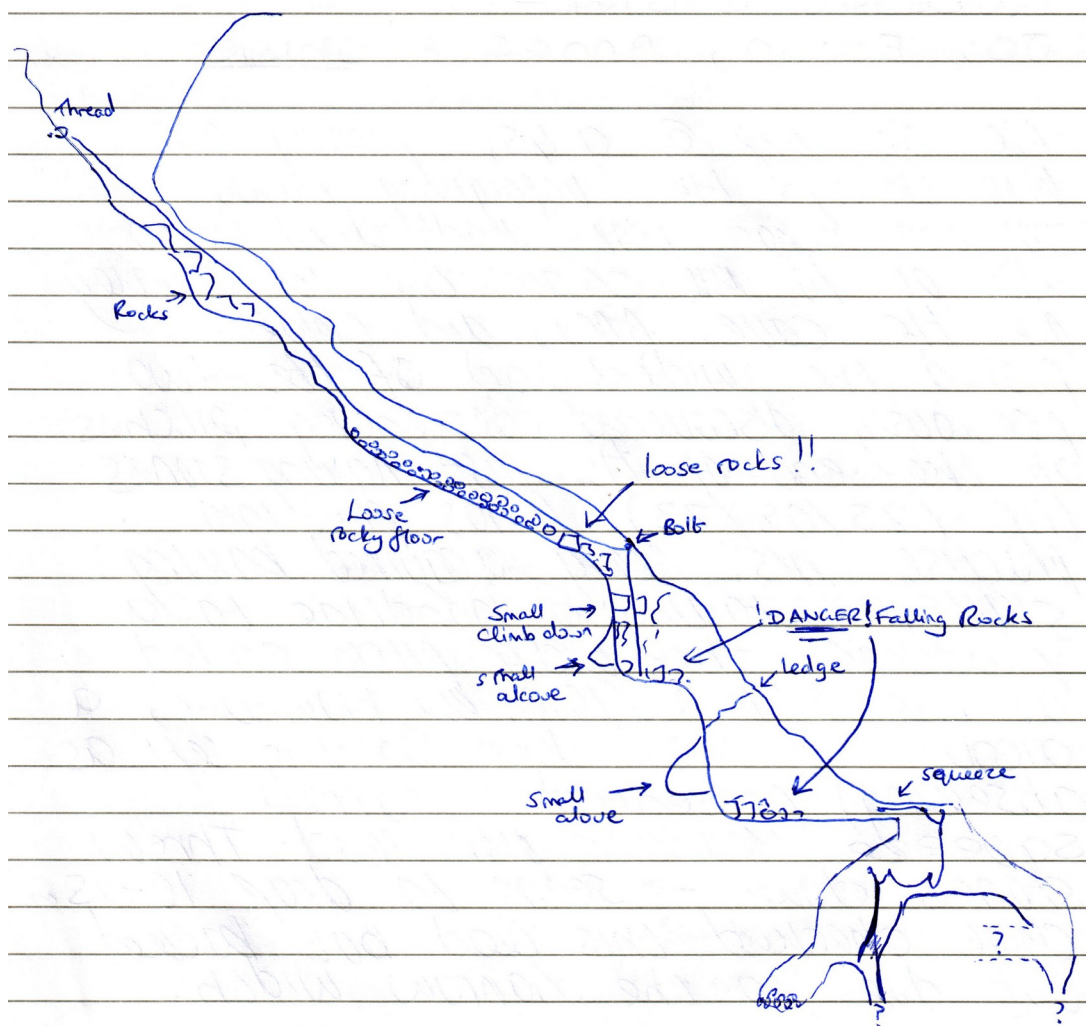


Figure 30: Rolling Stones sketch survey

6.8 Other trips

Any trips that were not strictly exploratory.

6.8.1 SRT Practice in the Training Cave (15/8/2023)

Christian Vogel and Maxim Leijssen. Trip report by Maxim Leijssen.

Wolfo helped me practice some SRT in the ‘training cave’ next to the hut. Then he stole both my ascenders and descenders, and I learned some knots for the purpose of not dying. Fun, 10/10.

6.8.2 Tiergartenhöhle rigging (16/7/2023)

Andrew McLeod, Bente Hollestelle, Janka van der Merwe, Jo White, Maxim Leijssen. Trip report by Janka van der Merwe.

After a morning of soaking rope, cleaning up other people’s shit and eating some lunch because it reached 12 o’clock, we finally headed down to Tiergarten. Andrew made sure to break in two of the newbies by making them good pack mules. After ageing our knees by at least 5 or 50 years, we settled down, stripped off and waited for Andrew to bolt in a new pitch. This is because the tree previously used for starting the cave had fallen over. It didn’t actually join the mass grave of trees inside this massive gaping hole as it fell away from the hole. While sitting around and looking pretty, we started to panic a bit when we found small tick like things crawling over us. Janka was keen to use the microscope setting of her camera for anything she could find, and the mystery of the insect was solved! It was not a tick – too many legs and too hairy.



Figure 31: Insect

It was of course bloody hot! But we put on our layers and abseiled down. On your way down you could get an amazing view of a well-constructed bird’s nest, before abseiling into the tree below you. Then, you must make a cautious scramble to the actual cave. When you get to the second pitch, which is quite hard to find, you get to abseil down a slide made of frozen water.

Quick travel back in time: While we were all getting dressed, Andy yells “FUCK! RUN!” and proceeded to belt it away from his bags. This is because he put his bag down on a wasps’ nest!!!! But everything was actually fine, they calmed down and no-one got hurt!



Figure 32:
Bees

Everyone tries to go down the pitch gracefully, but everyone slips and looks very silly. When at the bottom, everyone except Andy and Jo crawled around on hands and knees due to lack of crampons. The ice formations were BEAUTIFUL. Very cool. Got some good photos, made sure to absorb all the views and then we headed out.

On our prussik up, Andy decided that Jo and Janka didn't need the nice ledge at the re-belay, so he threw it away. Janka also decided that there was another rock that was too wiggly and threw that into the hole too.

Then we began our walk back. In the morning I decided to do something easy, but it really fucking wasn't easy. I'm probably just unfit. But fuck me it was shit going back up.

6.8.3 Thundergasm tourist trip (17/8/2023)

Annas Alamudi, Bente Hollestelle, James Colville, Maxim Leijssen. Trip report by James Colville.

After a slight delay caused by going via WUG to collect gear and the failure of a 2nd pair of boots (found in Pigpen) to replace the boots that had broken the day prior, the six of us entered Thundergasm.

Andy and Josh headed off first at a pace to get to the bottom to explore whilst the rest of us took a more relaxed pace down the snowy slopes to the "first" pitch after the crawl. The pitches proved to be impressive and mostly dry though the rock was particularly sharp in places. Upon reaching the sphincter the group split with Bente and I continuing down whilst Max and Annas began the long prussik back up. The passage beyond consisted of multiple short pitches on sometimes alarmingly fast rope punctuated by high traverses over rifts. Eventually somewhere a few pitches after "vegan threeway" we also decided to turn around and head back. This decision happened to be almost perfectly timed by chance as we met the other two in the snow-covered entrance pitches before enjoying a sunset walk back to Camelot.

6.8.4 Thundergasm – The Return (17/8/2023)

Andrew McLeod, Josh Bratchley. Trip report by Andrew McLeod.

It still goes!

... sort of.

Thundergasm was first discovered in 2017. Exploration in 2017, 2018 and 2019 led to a 200m deep cave, 400m long. The first 100m depth is relatively straightforward and pleasant; and awkward entrance followed by bigger pitches. Below this, however, it becomes harder, being primarily meander with short pitches and (further down) a few bigger pitches which probably flood in the wet.

The 'end' of the cave was a tight squeeze in a meander. This had been rejected by the 2019 team as probably too tight to push, and the cave was not looked at in 2022.

Now in 2023, a plan was hatched to use the first 100 m as a good tourist trip for some new cavers (Annas and Max) and then let some more experienced cavers (Bente and James) push a bit further down. Meanwhile, Josh and I would head straight to the far end, try a bolt climb to a small window near the end, and confirm the meander was indeed too tight.

In the morning, there was much fuff. The cave link units were misbehaving, and rope needed cutting after drying in the sun. This led to a significantly delayed departure around midday. James had his kit at WUF which led to additional fuff as he and Annas went that way, whilst the rest of us headed to Thundergasm via the other leg of the 651.

My memory of the route up the Wildkarkogel sadly failed me somewhat, and we did not take the easiest route up, but we were nonetheless soon at the entrance. We then waited for some time for Annas and James as they had the rope.

My memory had further failed me, in that we had derigged the first three entrance pitches in 2019, and so we ended up using the 50 m rope we had brought for the far end on those pitches (with *_very_* spartan rigging). At this point, Josh and I set off on our own.

We rapidly descended the entrance pitches until we reached the recently exploded Sphincter, the site of several days capping effort by Wolfo in 2019. We were then into the meanders. Soon, very conveniently, we found a 30 m rope and some hangers which had originally been left to rig the water chamber pitch.

Descending further, we realised the cave is longer (and harder) than we remembered. The later meanders are particularly awkward, especially with a large, heavy bag. It turns out a heavy 45L petzl bag is exactly the right size to jam horribly in about 80% of the meanders.

Eventually, we reached the 'final' chamber. After a brief poke around, Josh started a bolt traverse into the window about 3 m. Unfortunately, this only led to a steeply ascending mind tube and back above the entrance to the tight meander. Eventually, with no other options, we were forced to try the meander...

With no bags or SRT Kits, this meander was tight and grabby, but not horrific. Soon, we arrived at the squeeze where the last team from 2019 (Alex Noot, Sabrina Brooke and Ari Cooper Davis?) had squeezed through and installed a handline but had gone no further. While I waited on the "Safe" side of the squeeze, Josh forced himself through. Excited by a tight but passable pitch, he asked for the drill and his SRT kit. Getting the bag with these in through the meander was deeply inconvenient.

Once suitably armed, Josh set off rigging the tight pitches with spare rope from the in-situ handline (which we replaced with a 3 m section stolen from the bottom of another rope earlier). He disappeared off for around 20 minutes or so, reporting that it continued and opened up.

Eventually, with the time ticking away, he returned through the squeeze and out the meander. Realistically, this squeeze (and possibly other parts of this meander) needs capping if continued exploration is to be practical.

Since we still had a lot of cave to do to get out for our 9 pm callout, and it was already past 6 pm, Josh headed out immediately so he could message back to base. Meanwhile, I began a somewhat slower return to the surface.

The bag. The bastard bag. At every available opportunity, it would trap itself in the meander. Repeated lifting a too-heavy bag with one arm is cruel and unusual punishment. There were high levels of general suffering until the pitches below Vegan Three-way, at which point the meander becomes slightly less awkward. After a brief stop in the pleasant chamber to eat some cereal bars and drink some water, the straightforward entrance pitches were reached, and after a bit of prussiking, I was finally free into the fading light...

TO BE CONTINUED... maybe?

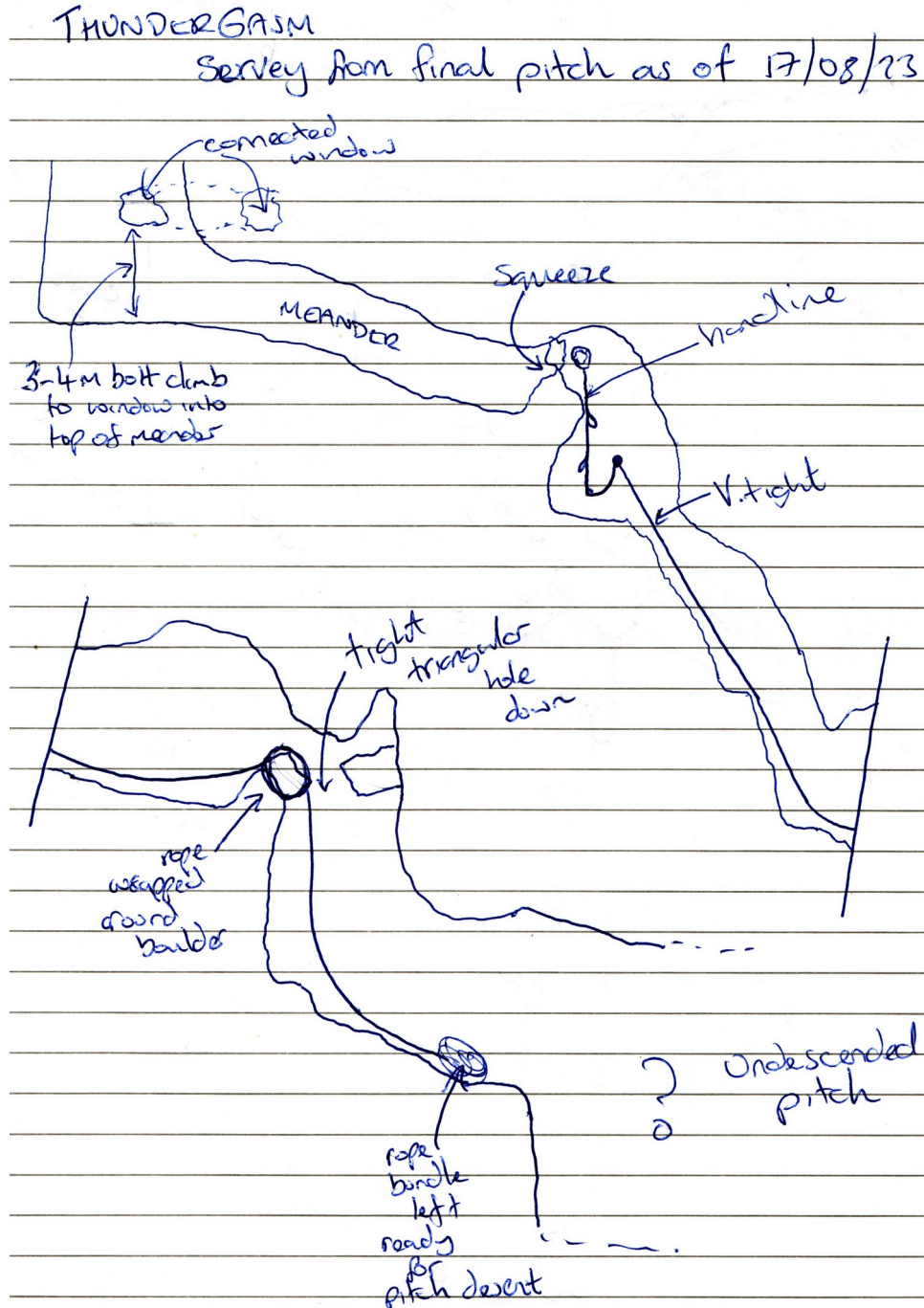


Figure 33: Thundergasm: sketch of current limit

6.8.5 Setting up the Surface Cavelink (18/8/2023)

Andrew McLeod, Bente Hollestelle.

Most of today was spent sorting out first aid kit, but once Bente returned from Spezialeshöhle, we had to head up to Schladmingerloch to setup the surface Cavelink.

We found the hunters path which heads off the 601 just above Camelot and headed up towards the same location we had placed the unit last year. We had slightly more cable this year, and the weather was drier than last year so finding damp spots for the antenna plates was more difficult.

We used two orange cables and most of two blue cables to a good damp patch of mud at the eastern end. We used out 100m wire plus the first 20m of wire of the next 100m cable to reach some very damp moss.

For the surface unit, we used some epoxy resin to install a resin anchor and a pair of combination padlocks to secure the unit. The GSM unit was secured to a piece of wood because the Cambridge 'expo' managed to leave the extension pole and screwdriver in their top camp storage. We also left an explanatory sign on the surface unit and where the wire crosses the hunters path.

Padlock code: *[redacted]*

Surface Unit: 33T 395688E 5263558N

Eastern Antenna (approx.) 33T 395774E 5263529N

Western Antenna: 33T 395616E 5263592N

6.8.6 Wiesberghaus – Drunk Paul (20/8/2023)

Trip report by Janka van der Merwe.

(This is after 2x beers, 1x schnapps)

“The Irish love the Boom-boom-bang-bang”

Wolfo shows some affection, with slight strangulation. Also Wolfo wants to find someone to join the “Mile Down Club™!” We are caving! Wolfo

So then Paul proposed this idea with James, the most Christian person on this trip. Probably in the whole Wiesberghaus.

What’s intimidating about Paul now is his scary stares into the distance as he says “Der Todestrichter.”

6.8.7 Outlaw Klettersteig (22/8/2023)

Aimée Dow, Alicia Roslaniec. Trip report by Aimée Dow.

Alicia and I set off to explore another part of Dachstein that we hadn't previously been to, to try out a nearby Klettersteig. It was really hot when we were walking over and we met lots of people, including a woman who looked to be lost with her son who started talking to us in German, but I had absolutely no idea what she was talking about, so I just nodded and agreed.

As we were walking away though, it turned out she was British! We then past the Gjaidalm and eventually found the start of the Klettersteig, which was about 20m from the co-ordinates that were found online. We had a really good time doing the Klettersteig and the views the whole way around were incredible, although it only took us around 30minutes to complete. When we were done, we decided to stop at the Gjaidalm for a cold drink and a dessert on our way back.

Alicia got an 'apple brioche thing' – her words – and I got an Apfelstrudel. We both got a Gjaidalm stamp on our arms too. On our way back to the Wiesberghaus, we befriended a field of cows who kept following us whilst licking our arms. We had a really nice day and are hoping to try out some more of the via ferrata around the area before the end of the trip.

6.8.8 Tiergartenhöhle tourist trip (23/8/2023)

Aimée Dow, Alex Ried, Alicia Roslaniec, Annas Alamudi, Josh Bratchley. Trip report by Annas Alamudi.

Tourist trip to Tiergarten. Easy access to pitch-head, but worrying amount of rope rub between pitch-head and first (and only) re-belay. The cairns marking the cave entrance was not immediately visible, but we managed to find it eventually. The abseil down the ice slope was a wee bit chilly, but manageable with only oversuit over normal clothes. We went to the end of the cave then proceeded to faff with underground photography, followed by a hasty exit via the 25m ish pitch back up to the path.

6.8.9 Gjaidalm (23/8/2023)

Andreas Klocker, Andrew McLeod, Axel Hack, Jo White, Oscar Doyle, Paul McCarron. Trip report by Paul McCarron.

After being fried by the sun over the last few days, this rest day turned into a quick trip to the Gjaidalm with only one sole objective for those attending;

- For our veggie friends: Food
- For our omnivore friends: Schnitzel

The walk was very pleasant with nice amounts of sun. The food was also very nice. Just when we were about to leave, it was decided to have a desert. Good thing we did as just

when we were about to pay, the sky opened up and we were greeted with a thunderstorm (with some hail!).

Thankfully, we missed this, however the rainfall made the return journey less pleasant – hot, humid – the result a sticky mess of people who didn't want to really move with their full stomachs.

6.8.10 Tiergartenhöhle de-rigging (29/8/2023)

Chloe Snowling, Ethan Hanley, James Colville. Trip report by Ethan Hanley.

Given the weather forecast, predicting rain just bad enough to make hiking miserable but not enough to justify a rest day, we three opted for a weatherproof, short tourist trip: Tiergarten needed to be derigged before the expedition ended, and was therefore making the perfect candidate.

Unfortunately, my caving gear remained under the WUG tarp from my previous excursion, so the others enjoyed a late start, whilst I made the round trip from Camelot. Stumbling back through the door at 10 am, like a drowned rat, it took almost two hours of fuff for me to sufficiently dry my waterproofs and work up the courage to step foot outside once more. With the patience of others at breaking point, we finally set off downhill at 12 am.

James and I had already poked our heads into the Tiergarten doline on the way up the hill, taking a slight detour with Vlad's guidance. As usual, we could navigate down the hill in decent time, despite the mizzling rain. Hopping down the exposed pitch circa 1 pm, Chloe then followed the provided directions to the cave itself, and we each unnecessarily made fools of ourselves sliding down the ice slope, to much amusement.

With both a GoPro and a phone in tow, our tourist trip quickly morphed into a venture in cave photography, and we fuffed around with lighting and poses till all were fully sated. James climbed up to a pristine section, and after some difficulty Chloe managed to squeeze into sparingly-visited chambers just beside the pitches. Eventually, we exited the cave, once again amusing ourselves with the glassed pitch, and being greeted with rain for our trouble. James speedy rope-walking ascent up the doline finally persuaded Chloe of the virtues of the Petzl Pantin.

Changing rather miserably (with much moaning from Ethan especially), and dividing the de-rigged ropes between us, we left at 16:00 to squelch our way back up the hill, reaching dry, warm Camelot once again for 17:15.

7 Achievements and Future Objectives

7.1 Expedition Achievements

The following list details things achieved during the 2023 Dachstein expedition.

- Rerigged the parts of the WUG Pot entrance series that were not rigged in 2022.
- Pushed and surveyed a cave explored in 2018, Spezialeshöhle, to a conclusion.
- Pushed and surveyed a new pitch series in WUG Pot 'Closed Bypass', found halfway down the 70 series, to a conclusion.
- Explored locations for a second camp near Austrian Airspace in WUG Pot.
- Discovered a new pitch series, 'The Parallel Universe', in the entrance of WUG Pot.
- Climbed most of the upper half of Forbidden Aven.
- Explored and surveyed No 33. Passage to a choice of routes.
- Removed old rope from WUG Pot.
- Explored and surveyed Ectoplasm cave to a number of on-going leads.
- Prospected the area between the Simonhütte and Ectoplasm cave for entrances.
- Discovered, pushed and surveyed a new cave Todestrichter near Ectoplasm.
- Discovered, pushed and partially surveyed a new cave Goblinhöhle near the Simonyhütte with ongoing pitches.
- Revisited Thundergasm to ascertain the state of the current lead; lead is ongoing but difficult.
- Re-explored an old cave, Rolling Stones.
- Supported two new young expedition cavers with Alex Pitcher awards from the Ghar Parau Foundation.
- Supported two new young expedition cavers with additional discounts to their expedition fee (in addition to the usual U25 discount).
- Trained eight cavers new to expeditions in bolting and prospecting.
- Bolted a new access route to Tiergartenhöhle following the demise of the original tree.
- Identified formations of potential scientific interest for climatology research in Uphill Gardeners, and took samples of drip water.
- Created a First Aid grab bag for cave and surface incidents.

7.2 Future Objectives

- Continue re-rigging WUG Pot.
- Explore and survey the Parallel Universe.
- Complete the Forbidden Aven climb.
- Set up second camp to explore Showadiwadiland.
- Continue pushing and surveying Passage No. 33.
- Push and survey Ectoplasm cave to a conclusion.
- Push and survey Goblinhöhle to a conclusion.
- Return to Todestrichter to assess ice and snow changes.
- Explore Deeper Impact in WUG.
- Rig PL2 to bottom and explore for connection to WUG.
- Explore and survey the continuation of Rolling Stones, Spreken sie Welsh, Thundergasm etc. as resources dictate.
- Continue prospecting in the area around Ectoplasm and the Wildkar klettersteig.
- Purchase more first aid equipment e.g. pelvic binders, traction splints.
- Install TinyTag temperature loggers in WUG Pot, Ectoplasm and other caves.
- Consider conducting scientific sampling in WUG Pot pending scientific value and all necessary permissions.

8 Expedition finances

A summary balance sheet for the income and expenditure for the expedition are given below. The British Pound Sterling (GBP) bank account and Euro (EUR) cash account are run separately, but to allow easy comparison a combined figure has been produced at an exchange rate of £ 0.9 / € 1. There were a number of foreign currency withdrawals made, totalling a conversion of £ 720.74 to € 800. The expedition ran at a overall surplus of approximately £ 918.63 this year, including £ 415.03 generated from the training weekend.

8.1 Balance sheet

	GBP bank account	EUR cash account	Indicative combined figures at £ 0.9 / € 1
Starting balance	£ 864.53	€ 142.70	£ 992.96
Income			
Net balance from training weekend	£ 415.03		£ 415.03
Expedition fees	£ 1,840.00	€ 1,150.00	£ 2,875.00
Donations/grants	£ 500.00	€ 61.17	£ 555.05
<i>Subtotal</i>	£ 2,755.03	€ 1,211.17	£ 3,845.08
Expenditure			
Food shopping	£ 105.53	€ 529.67	£ 582.23
Hut supplies and equipment	£ 269.22		£ 269.22
First Aid equipment	£ 147.94		£ 147.94
Caving equipment and supplies	£ 1,383.28		£ 1,383.28
Web hosting and bank charges	£ 12.04		£ 12.04
Wiesberghaus expenses		€ 590	£ 531.00
<i>Subtotal</i>	£ 1,918.01	€ 1,119.67	£ 2,925.71
Currency transfer GBP to EUR	-£ 720.74	€ 800	-£ 0.74
Net balance	£ 116.28	€ 891.50	£ 918.63
Final balance	£ 980.81	€ 1,034.20	£ 1,811.59

8.2 Income and expenditure charts

The charts below are produced using the indicative combined GBP and EUR figures.

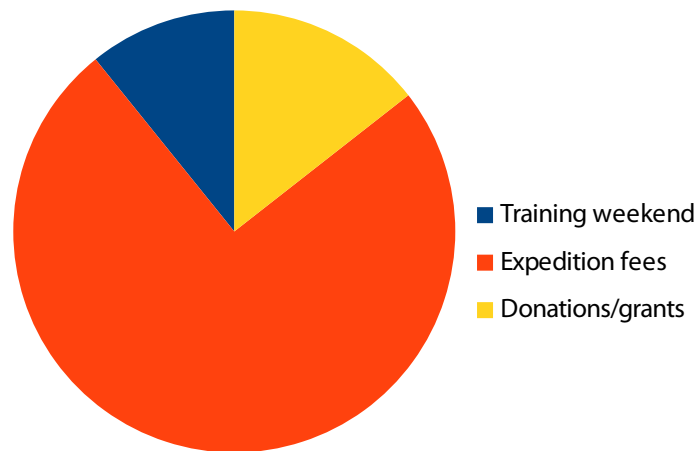


Figure 34: Income (combined GBP/EUR)

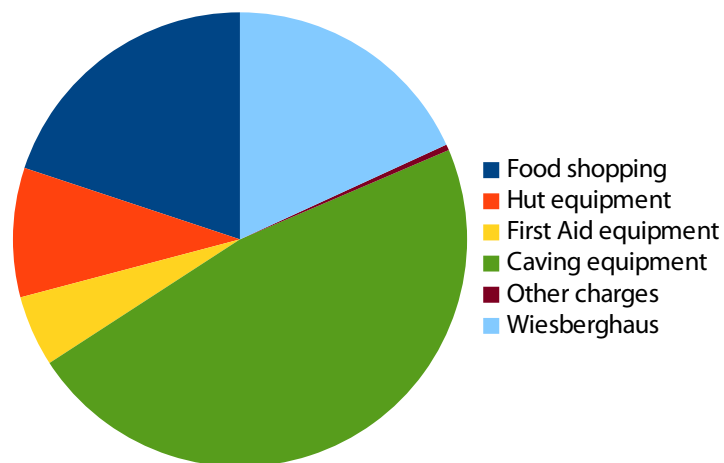


Figure 35: Expenditure (combined GBP/EUR)

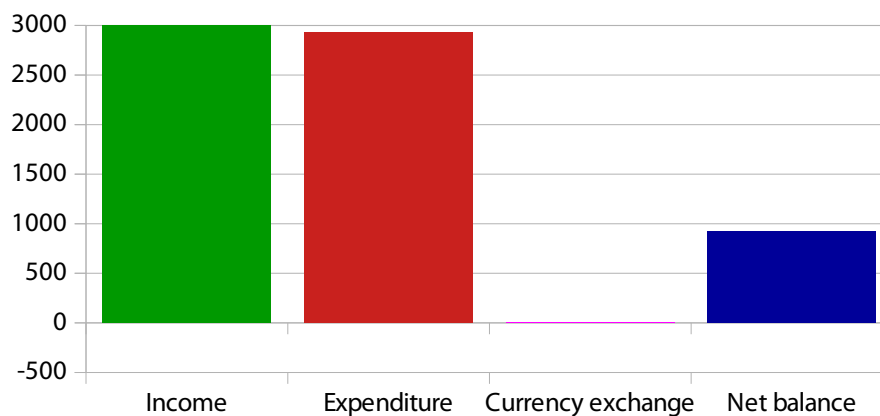


Figure 36: Income, expenditure and balance (combined GBP/EUR)

8.3 Treasurer's report

Last year's expedition, as the first post-Covid expedition, had considerable uncertainty about its finances. We were facing significantly increased costs at the Wiesberghaus, and the possibility of not being able to run the expedition at all. Worse, a number of participants that we were expecting dropped out, leaving us running with very small numbers.

A decision was made to avoid purchasing unnecessary hut equipment, and since the 2019 expedition had restocked a number of basic expedition supplies, we were able to keep most expedition expenses down. The potentially dramatic increase in Wiesberghaus costs also did not occur (although costs have risen further this year). Countering these relative savings, however, we were intending to begin the WUG Pot re-rig and so purchased a large quantity of ropes, hangers and maillons. The end result was that the 2022 expedition suffered a deficit of around £ 393.85 even after including funds raised by the training weekend of £ 283.53.

In 2023, we were still uncertain as to how many participants we would get, and we were limited to around 20 cavers due to bunk space. Consequently, financial planning was relatively conservative but spending was much less restrained than 2022; we purchased further caving equipment and supplies, new equipment for the hut, and were able to purchase replacement first aid kit.

Since we had a much larger number of cavers this year than in 2022, we were able to generate an overall surplus of approximately £ 918.63, of which £ 415.03 were raised by or during the training weekend.

8.3.1 Income

The training weekend is run primarily to provide training and advertise the Dachstein expedition, rather than as a money-making venture, but surplus funds are donated to the expedition. The training weekend made more money than usual this year as funds were allocated to the expenses of a visiting speaker who chose not to claim those expenses.

This year we received £ 500 from the Ghar Parau foundation for which we are extremely grateful. Two expedition participants also received individual Alex Pitcher awards of £ 100 each, intended to help new young expedition cavers purchase equipment for their first international expedition.

The bulk of our income came from expedition fees. The expedition fee was only increased slightly from 2022. Due to high inflation, this was not a significant rise. The standard expedition fee was set at £ 160 or € 180 which was primarily paid by bank transfer for GBP payments and cash for EUR payments. As in 2022, we did not charge a daily food rate. This expedition fee includes use of the seilbahn, all food and use of all equipment. It does not include accommodation.

We were able to offer a discount of £ 50 this year to student or U25 cavers, making their expedition fee £ 110 or €125. We gave a further discount of £ 50 or €55 to two U25 student cavers on their first expedition who would have been eligible to apply for the Alex Pitcher award, as we can only submit two names for this award.

8.3.2 Expenditure

As usual, the largest expenditure this year was on caving gear. The majority of this was for 400m of rope, 100 maillons, 120 m of 6 mm cord, 50 stainless hangers and 12 snapgate carabiners. However, we also purchased a new tarp for the WUG Pot entrance which survived a lot better than previous tarps, a set of padlocks for securing the surface Cavelink, and a set of crowbars and lump hammers for use in Ectoplasm. There were other ancillaries such as spanners, wires for the Cavelink set, SIM cards and top-ups for the Cavelink set and electrical tape etc.

Food shopping was carried out primarily in Germany this year, rather than bringing food from the UK. The cost of this was only slightly increased on 2022 despite double the number of participants, meaning the cost per participant was significantly reduced. In 2022 there had not been an expedition since 2019 and so we could not rely on the food stored on the hut; this year, we were able to be more conservative in buying food.

Costs to the Wiesberghaus increased considerably this year, particularly the cost of the seilbahn. This was ameliorated by our reduced use of the seilbahn despite the increased number of participants, in part due to better organization of arrival and departure times. The costs paid to the Wiesberghaus are around a sixth of all expedition expenditure, and so for the time being they are affordable. This will only remain true, however, while the number of seilbahn trips is minimised.

There were also a few trivial expenses on web hosting and bank charges. We paid fuel expenses to Alex Ried for delivering the rope and Axel Hack for delivering food shopping.

8.3.3 Future spending

Next year we will need to purchase further hangers, maillons and bolts for both the WUG Pot re-rig and general prospecting. This year, we purchased a similar amount of gear to what we used, although we still have stocks of rope for the WUG Pot re-rig.

We have kit for a second underground camp, and should not need to spend a large amount on further kit for this except for higher-quality underground food, if desired. We should not need to spend excessive quantities on hut equipment next year. We should purchase further first aid kit e.g. pelvic binders and traction splints.

We will need to ensure that we minimise seilbahn usage or the costs for this may become increasingly unreasonable.

8.3.4 Net balance

The GBP bank account saw a net increase of £ 116.28; this includes £ 720.74 converted to € 800 via cash withdrawals.

The EUR cash account increased by € 891.50. We deliberately asked participants paying in Euros to pay by cash so as to have sufficient cash to pay the Wiesberghaus; as these fees were less than feared, we were left with a large surplus. This can be used next year to pay the Wiesberghaus, and all participants can pay by bank transfer (possibly via a suitable EUR account).

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The GBP account is managed via Natwest. We do not hold GBP cash, and we do not have an EUR bank account.

As in 2022, our fees to the Wiesberghaus were paid in cash, and all participants are required to pay their hut fees to the Wiesberghaus in cash as well.

8.3.5 Conclusion

This expedition, unlike the previous year, has balanced out last year's deficit and made a further small profit. It is likely that, if possible, the expedition will continue to expand. There is, therefore, probably no need to increase expedition fees at this time. However, conservative planning must be made for an increase in seilbahn usage and therefore an increase in fees. Furthermore, the usual spending must continue to buy expedition equipment; running out of gear is not an acceptable outcome for the expedition.

I recommend that the next expedition's fees remain at the same level as this year.

Removing the daily food charge and incorporating all costs into a fixed expedition fee significantly reduced administrative efforts without significant detriment and therefore I recommend this continue.

I recommend we continue giving a discount of around £50 to young or student cavers.

I recommend that further support is given to young or student cavers e.g. match-funding Alex Pitcher awards for eligible participants not put forward for the award.

9 Summary

The Dachstein 2023 expedition was generally successful. We attracted an excellent group of cavers, including a number of younger cavers and cavers new to expeditions. We were able to train these new cavers in a range of expedition skills from basic SRT skills through to bolting, deep Alpine caving and underground camping.

Although we did not limit numbers this year to achieve this goal, we had a good balance of newer and more experienced cavers which helped ensure that newer cavers could always be grouped up with more experienced cavers. We ran an informal 'mentor' system where more experienced cavers took some responsibility for newer cavers; not to train them personally, but to ensure they were getting the most out of the expedition and to introduce them to the Dachstein expedition and expedition caving more generally.

We ran a significant surplus this year, which has more than balanced out the deficit of the 2022 expedition. This is in part due to funding and sponsorship which we have attracted from the Ghar Parau Foundation, Eurospeleo Projects and UKCaving. We have been able to keep all exploration supplied with gear throughout this expedition, and we have also carried out a full stock check of first aid equipment and created an expedition rescue first-aid bag.

We are able to remain at the Wiesberghaus for at least the next year, and provisional dates have been suggested. An expedition next year could be very similar to this expedition; if numbers were to increase any more then careful management of available accommodation plus a more cramped expedition would be needed. Therefore, the expedition may need to limit numbers and consider how to ensure a good balance of participants.

In terms of caving, we have not made any major breakthroughs in WUG Pot but have found a significant new series of pitches (Closed Bypass) which sadly did not provide a bypass, explored Passage No. 33 to an ongoing bolt-climbing lead and downwards pitches, found an exciting new unexplored pitch series right at the cave entrance (the Parallel Universe) and explored potential locations for a second camp near to Austrian Airspace. The top of Forbidden Aven once again eluded us due to equipment failure; this remains a priority.

It is clear that exploring in WUG Pot is made easier by camping, and that for any significant exploration near the connection with the Hirlatz a second camp will be necessary. Setting this up, and running a long camp for experienced cavers from this camp, should be a priority for future explorations.

Ectoplasm has continued to reveal further passage but only with difficulty. The draught is strong, but the hoped-for breakthrough into big pitch series has not revealed itself. Nonetheless, the new cave Todestrichter proves that there is significant vertical development in the area. The area between the Simonyhütte and Ectoplasm is still very promising for prospecting, as shown by discoveries such as Todestrichter and Goblin Höhle which both need further attention.

Spezialeshöhle has been pushed to a definite conclusion. In contrast, Thundergasm has been revealed to still be ongoing, but trips to the bottom are no longer short trips and the end is hard,

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tight and almost certainly dangerous in wet weather so it is not an obvious target for significant exploration. Rolling Stones has been explored or potentially re-explored, but will require further capping; while it is not in a particularly promising location, it is (relatively) close to the Wiesberghaus compared to the Ectoplasm area albeit potentially too loose to be a good training venue.

There is still lots to go at on the Dachstein plateau. The logistics are getting harder as the prospecting areas get higher up the mountain and further away from the Wiesberghaus. Exploration in WUG Pot became harder as the connection was made with the Hirlatz and trips to the far end are now serious undertakings. But these problems are all manageable with proper planning and organization. The reward is an area with excellent, if sometimes difficult caving, with ice formations, big pitches, large passages, and a depth potential in the mountain of 2.5 km.

Having the Wiesberghaus and Camelot also makes the expedition significantly more pleasant; the trips may be hard, but sleeping inside in a warm hut having eaten good food and (occasional) showering with warm water balances it out. And when the body needs a rest day, the views are superb. We hope that there will be Dachstein Caving Expeditions for many years to come – there is still plenty of cave left to find...



Figure 37: View from Camelot (Out of Office)

Appendices

A. WUG Pot Survey



B. Ectoplasm left entrance survey



C. Spezialeshöhle



D. Todestrichter

