

exactly the right length.

Almost immediately Phil found another huge drop $\frac{3}{4}$ sec. drop. We decided to have a Y rig with a hand traverse, but on the first bolt (done by me) the bolting tool broke. A disappointed Phil and I emerged (slowly in my case!). Still great potential in this cave!

P.S. After dinner consultation the 80m pitch became the Moskrit. The pitch below the Boggers?!

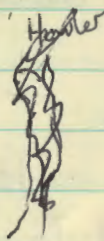
17th July Ian, Fred and Mike Surveying.

We started down relatively late, about 1:00 pm, as Fred and I had come up from base. Mike had an 'entertaining' diversion when he went the wrong way in the 'squeeze' at the top of the climb down the rift in the Ginnel entrance series. Eventually extricating himself, we continued along the rift and began surveying at the head of Stragewags. We surveyed along the Achilles route, rigging Achilles as we went. The climb was difficult to read - hence our readings are in %, the only discernible scale. I then abbed to the bottom of Achilles, while Fred dashed off up Achilles down the Executioner and partway down the Howler 'Bridge'.

(12)

until I could see Fred. I obtained a compass reading on him, but was forced to estimate height below the Holder Ridge, and horizontal separation.

That tried to sketch it and failed. We must
Gripet Sketch



draw this up asap, to get some idea of what's going on. Anyway, we then started surveying the Executives route, stopping at the convenient excuse of my

Survey light falling apart. After the trip and a meal, Fred ran down to Ario. He'd come up from Base camp - the same day!

18 July Ian and Mike Pushing

A replacement bolt driver was supposed to come up from Ario in the morning but didn't. This meant that we went down without much hope of rigging the next unknown pitch but with plans to re-rig various bits and pieces on the way.

At the bottom of the Nostril we found that the floor is a mass of huge splashed boulders and all the rock is very flaky. The next pitch head is a thin overhang at about 6ft and can be rigged

using huge boulders that are lying around on the floor. The pitch itself is a long rift with several ledges. We went down the first 15m to a platform with a stream and rubble everywhere. ~~was~~ On the way out up this 15m pitch I decided to traverse along various ledges ~~up the~~ to get a good view of the main shaft. It is so large that my light did not carry to the far wall (20m dia?). Probably the best rig is from ^{the} a traverse at the top of this pitch, mentioned previously by Phil and Sean. (Airy!) However, I did not go as far along the lower traverses as I could. GOOD TRIP! Note. We also re-rigged the Hauler (again) + Obolok.

Graham + Silva 14th July - 17th July. The Epic Strid.

We decided not to set off on the evening of the 13th - which was fortunate considering what happened when we did set off. We were supposed to be putting the first set of dye detectors in the gorge and reapprecies therewith. Then we were to walk back looking at caves on the way - for which purpose we carried most of our casing gear. It all looked very promising from ~~at~~ there - where we could see our destination Cain. It looked so close! - Little did we know. The path wasn't, but at this stage we were not unduly discouraged. As we scrambled down steep hillsides in the blazing sun I began to feel less happy however. I sat and became mesmerised by a rare drip while Graham put the 1st dye detector in. At my evident dislike of the precipitous terrain

(14)

it was decided that we would look for caves on the way down and come back out of the gorge by another - easier - route. Gradually ~~how~~ it became evident that we wouldn't even be looking for caves on the way down - it was enough of a problem trying to find the way down. Graham insisted there was a good path which he had come up from Cain and he insisted it must be in one of the rashes leading down to the gorge. ~~The multiplicity of~~ The proliferation of these rashes was one of the difficulties in route finding. The military map marked one! with no clue as to how you knew when you were in the right one. We kept coming across paths, breathing sighs of relief and ploughing forward with renewed vigour only to have our hopes dashed as yet another path simply disappeared, stopped. Camping on in a likely ~~direction~~ direction was generally unsuccessful as at the time when we painfully traversed across a steeply sloping wood. Graham went on a little - and disappeared - over what seemed to be yet another sheer cliff. I heard nothing for a while, and began to wonder what would do if he'd had an accident. The best answer seemed to be - die slowly, ^{as well}. In fact it seemed the only one. Then I heard ~~something~~ frenzied scuffling in the grass and the first swear words to emit from Graham's mouth that ~~morning~~ morning. He had found himself him gazing over a ~~rather~~ rather long cliff and had got back as quick as he could. We began ~~to~~ me the full - redundant - rucksacks - and to realize that our

boots did not fit as well as they might. So it was over into yet another valley and into yet another steep wood. When we eventually got to the other side of that valley we looked back at the wood and thought - was that really it? Did we really come down that. By chance Graham had turned across just before the cliff face at the bottom of the wood, but even the woodstep was so steep you would look at it and think it was impossible. I wasn't sure whether to think - We did that, aren't we great? or God, am I really still alive? Despite Graham's protestations that it really was going to be better from now on and that ~~the~~ we really were nearly there - the path disappeared again, at ~~you've~~ you've guessed it - a cliff face I was now reduced to sliding down hillsides, unable to get organised enough to traverse or anything complicated like that. At about 10 pm - 12 hrs after we'd set off, it began to get dark. As the terrain was 'difficult' enough in daylight we decided to stop for the night. We were held on the slope by bushes to stop us rolling down - on what Graham said was a path, but I couldn't see it. The night was uncomfortable, we had run out of water practically and we had a circuit to sleep on. Oualine are right, there is such a thing as night hunger. Next day started early as we couldn't sleep. It also started unencouragingly with swarms of mosquitoes which

(16)

did their worst. We had muesti with some water, ^{Graham brought} as I was winging hairy only had 4 biscuits since we left Top camp. We then hobbled on down, put to shame by our first sign of civilisation - a shepherd, who bounded past us using his stick as a 3rd leg. Not fair thought.

Please leave space - for me eventually to remember to fill this ch. The following is copied verbatim from Silvia's manuscript.

Well I can't remember where I'd got up to but I wouldn't want to leave you all in suspense so I'll send an abbreviated conclusion by Graham post. I think I'd got to us drinking vino binto and gaseosa - strictly medicinal of course. Scientific details of the dye detectors placed that afternoon are in base camp log book.

Monday morning dawned fine and we set off back by the easy route - Culiembro. Tree was not in the running - Jan could tell you why. Culiembro was wonderful - spectacular views of gorge etc. At least it was wonderful until we hit the shepherd's huts at Oston where the mist came down; the path disappeared and Mvara's much vaunted cairns did not make themselves evident.

We spent much time clambering up rocks in the mist, Graham getting impatient - this is an occasion worthy of note, it doesn't happen often. 'A snail could get up here faster' he accused me as I stood in front of a rock, and continued to stand in front of a rock, then moved to the left, then to the right, but above all failed to climb up it. I eventually persuaded him that giving me half a bocadillo that we'd bought in Cain would be a good psychological move. This was

After we'd decided that the white marks on the rocks were, no, they aren't, yes they are, no they can't be, paint. Lichen was the day. Then!!!! we found a cairn - or at least a stray
~~Don, Sham + Mike Suroging, Dye Plains, + De Tracking.~~

~~We went down at 10.15 psyched up for a spanking hot trip. We got down to the limit of surveillance with no problems (just before the blind spot) and surveyed through to the hot tub, fishing up with the FUSG survey. We set up about 10 stations in the boulder chamber (which is impressive).~~

~~At last years brown up spot we discovered that we had no tin opener. Our Mangerix wasn't sufficient for us to rip it $\frac{1}{2}$ open with our bear hands but with the help of a sharp stone our Mangerix tin didn't stand a chance. Before leaving we contaminated the streamway with about a pint of disgusting red cariogenic slime.~~

rock or two which looked like the sort of thing Alvaro would call a cairn. From then on life became slightly more pleasant, the sun came through the mist and the road to heaven, white well and truly paved with rocks and sorrow looked as if it brought its rewards to the righteous. We arrived at a deserted refugio, amid swirling mist and sun, balm to a troubled soul. The arrival of Urey and Dave from 12/5 basking completed our happiness as they had food, food, food. We then treated ourselves to a night in a bunk. So the first moral of this story is - when Graham says 'its going to get better from now on - in fact the path disappears and it probably gets worse. The second end of space moral of this story is - when Graham

says "we're almost there, not much further" - expect to arrive sometime the next day.

(18) 19th July. Ukey Nicola Fred Pusling -

We got off to a great start Nicola and I (Fred) went down to the cave and got our gear on, and Fred got on top of the snow plug in 20' of the shale. Of course Ukey had never been to the cave, and couldn't see us because we were hidden behind a bit of a tree trunk in the hills before I went out to see what she was playing at.

We got down to the bottom of the nest without any more uppers, and I went down the pitch and they hauled up the tackle bags.

I had myself on then Ukey managed to shove a bit of rope through I saw Switch plate. I went round the airy traverse, which was quite simple. I came back and took some rigging gear and again I rigged up a traverse the and a belay and from

Went back, &

I asked Mikey to see what she thought of my belay, and then if she thought it was ok to go down a bit and do the rebelay.

Mikey took the 45m rope, and rigged it to my belay and then set off down.

She decided to put a bolt in for a rebelay, but after about 50 mins of hammering decided that maybe a bolt wouldn't be much use anyway. Instead she decided to use the mag many rope protectors method. By this method she went down until she got to the end of the rope without reaching the bottom. On the way up a rock fell out of the roof and hit her on the head. But she was ok.

Meanwhile Nicola had been subjected to about 1 1/2 hours of my singing, and persuaded me that it was my turn to go down.

(20)

I set it with the 90m light weight
I swung around a bit underneath
the belay trying desperately to find
a crack in the deviation (just
to catch all the covers) but failed.

Then I saw a suitable flake for
a rebelay. It was a pretty desperate
thing. One had hold on to the flake,
and one had rigging the rebelay, while
the rope was trying to pull us away.
Anyway it was ok, but by the time
I had done it my carbide had
run out of water, and my battery
was almost dead, so I tied the
bags on below the rebelay, and
went back.

Nieda, terrified at the prospect of
being subjected to another round
singing decided to go back. I had
her spare battery.

Nieda's electric had also died
but her carbide ~~was~~ was lost.
I told her that the rebelay
was dry.