

On the perils of a 3-man expedition ...

or 'the monotonously monumental mammoth clearing up operation'  
1<sup>st</sup> August

At this point in time I'm more than a little worried about the prospect of Alex, Andy and I having to dig two deep caves and strike camp by ourselves.

This work intended as a complaint in any way against those who have gone / are going home. Shit happens, and people have jobs to do - this can't be helped.

However, the unfortunately reality of the situation is that we're ~~very~~ dependent upon the appearance of Paul, Bill Naylor and La Vernon to dig us out of one BIT hole. Jo, Martin and Geoff are leaving in less than a week's time, ~~leaving us~~ and I assume John still intends to be home before the 11<sup>th</sup>, which will leave us three strong inside a week. I'm not sure we can afford to rely upon the appearance of the other three, however much we may think they will arrive - ~~the~~ this is a risky assumption to rely upon.

I personally don't very much like the idea of spending 2 weeks of the 7 <sup>spent</sup> in Spain shovelling up and down the hill / ~~digging~~ <sup>digging</sup> 2 caves as a part of a 3 man team, since I remember John saying how hard it was last year with several more people.

So, here are one or two reflections on the problem:

- (i) Dye - tracing Vasco to Ct is daft. It's a shame we couldn't have begun to dig Ct tomorrow (2nd) because we have two extra cavers keen to help tomorrow in the shape of Rod and Andy Scott. Nevertheless + its entirely fair V that Andy K. should get + good



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to the bottom, and John as well. Dye-tracing, however, will add several days to the schedule — place the detectors Saturday, put fluorescein in Vasco Sunday, and even were we to ~~allow~~ allow only a day for the water to pass through, that would make it <sup>at the earliest</sup> Monday before we could begin to dig, without allowing for any days where we didn't have enough fit/keen/available covers to do the work. Martin / Gueff / Jo are leaving midweek, which means under that schedule they would probably only be able to do 1 dig trip

~~the shortage of covers to~~  
Given three days that we're wasting here, we could start designing C4 and try to make a physical connection to Vasco ourselves. After all, it remains wide open and reasonably close to the streamway. We should be very wary of committing the time and people now to essential work, given how ~~lacking~~ <sup>lacking</sup> in those very resources we shall be in a week's time.

ii) The shortage of covers is already starting to tell — we've lost 6 good covers in two days. I've been available to cover for the last two days and haven't done so because of a shortage of manpower, and even if I came tomorrow it would be a working trip, since except for the bringing out of one bag of rope from the Munster, there's nothing to be done before the dig in C4, and without survey support (ie Alex!?!?) in Vasco.

To be cut down to 3 will be a real g.i.t because we also (ideally) need to man Base, and to have someone carrying food up the hill, which leaves just 1 cover. ~~Hummm~~. Not good.



iii) There are however, still 3 weeks left, which leaves plenty of time to save productivity if we're efficient.   
 To this end we might like to consider a no. of ~~ideas~~ ideas:

a) Start carrying gear down the hill now, such as carrying shit from the Hilton, spare crockery or whatever.   
 No more empty bags going down

b) Andy move in with John straightaway, + strike + remove the spare tent

c) Run on a lightweight Top Camp? - we really don't need the big green tent and this a lot of the stuff in it for a 3 man (possibly) expedition - we can live in 2 force 10s and cook in the Hilton if we have to, and we ~~could~~ could economise in other ways such as maybe carrying down the camping gear stores + living on Epigas (!). There must be loads of things we can do to make it easier for ourselves in the long run.

There needn't be a crisis, but there might be a pain in the arse.   
 Lets think about it.

Nobby! ~~scribble~~

Footnote - 2nd August

OK. So I completely panicked.

Nobby: of things that make you "go":   
 Mornflakes are first   
 lentils are second &   
 Prussiking is third!   
 N.B. (!!) Don't follow him up the monster!



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18/996

Gregg, Alex, Marti. C4. Down the bottom (again! V??V).  
 Swift but relaxed trip down. Fumbled & Feh at bottom of  
 last rope pitch, ladder pitch then protracted stretch to final  
 beach & camp. Took photos & headed towards (?) last  
 survey station of '95. Started survey. When hit  
 C4 inlet with UPSTREAM inlet heading OFF was  
 decided to look at this instead — c. 80M of VERY  
 interesting streamway to large waterfall chamber — more photos!  
 Then finished of C4 survey with pretty crawl at bottom done  
 in 2 legs. Marti headed out, stopped at Buggor Bognor  
 for Tea, Alex went on & MS waited for GPN for Tea.  
 After Tea, headed out. ~~At 0240 MS~~  
 Alex 0240, MS 0500 ~~at 0610~~ GPN 0610.  
 All back before call out, pretty swift trip considering, sorry  
 about write up 'cos I'm bolloxed!, MS.

Who said to whom of what ?!?! #3

'Go on. Can I ... have a feel ... so to speak?'  
 ( 'Clue - she likes them 'firm but not hard' )

Andy, translating the special offer on the outside of the milk tin:  
 'Eucharilla gratis er el interior'  
 = 'There's a spoon inside us all!'



1st August C4 Martin S, Alex, Geoff  
 Through to sump at end of Underground  
 Overdrive where Alex went boating & Martin  
 took photos. Then back to survey upstream  
 from last upstream station of previous year. This  
 was continued past C4 inlet into unexplored  
 territory. This was a fine streamway ending in  
 huge area with waterfall coming down into 'latter'  
 at bottom. More photos.

Then tied in survey through to end  
 last station in C4.

An absolutely brilliant trip. Enjoyable  
 from beginning to end, now by my SRT rig is  
 now working more or less properly. (at least)  
 C4 now around 600m deep!!  
 Geoff.

3/8 → 4/8 C4. In a contrary tone to the positive view from Geoff above,  
 the first stage of the de-rig was a bit of a shambles. Not to do  
 Nobby, Alex & Andy down 'cos they put in a lot of effort but  
 my own part was a waste of time. I got to the brew site c. 8PM  
 which was an hour later than agreed. After putting the brew on  
 & poking around the cave to keep warm & trying out the  
 candle + bivvy bag idea I got concerned. I really didn't  
 feel like going to the bottom of the cave having done so  
 twice within the previous 4 days (3rd/1st) & we'd agreed I'd  
 meet them at the brew site (bugger Bognor) anyway. By  
 12 A.M. I got very concerned so descended the 65m & heard  
 sounds at the bottom of the 45 ("free & easy"). From there it  
 took 2 1/2 hrs to get the rope up the ~~to~~ 45 & 65m by which  
 time everybody was cold & tired. We all decided to give up &  
 headed out but fell short of our target of bottom of the  
 monster. For me, going back down C4 is the most



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serious form of torture that could be inflicted on me.  
Hopefully I will have recovered sufficiently by tomorrow (5th).

Notable quotes:

Nobby = "It's about 10 o'clock isn't it?"

Answer = "No, it's 3 in the morning"

Alex = "Is there a lighter for this stove?"

Martiz = "Yeah, it's on your helmet"

'An evening in Ario'

It's currently 7.50 am, ~~and~~ the sun has only been around for an hour or so, and I have just arrived at top camp.

Last night at the Ario Redugio ~~at~~ at about 10.35 I could have been heard telling Josep Guomas of the SIE, "It's alright. I've got a torch and I know the route from the path to top camp very well. I've done it ~~the~~ ~~the~~ dozens at times before. I can do it in the dark and the day."

Well it was certainly dark and it was certainly foggy. As I left the redugio, and ~~the~~ looked for the start of the path, ~~it~~ I had to bend down just to see ~~what~~ what the ground I was walking on looked like. It was now that I <sup>should have</sup> spotted the fatal flaw



in my argument. I may have walked between the snow pole and Xitu many times, but I had only been to Aris once a year ago. It took me almost 5 minutes to find the start of a path, ~~however this was~~ This soon had a coniform yellow point mark on it so I kept going; crouching down as I went to examine every rock as I passed it looking for more yellow marks. If I didn't find one within a few metres, I'd backtrack and try again until I did.

Sometimes this process took a number of minutes to find the way on, but I stayed on route, or so I thought, and was getting there slowly. By midnight I was not so sure. I was still following yellow marks but I hadn't passed anything I recognised. In fact I'd passed a number of things I didn't recognise. Then I passed an arrow but ~~didn't~~ couldn't find any continuation of the marks.

After several minutes of looking I examined the arrow more closely. Underneath it wasn't 'ARIS' it said but 'TREA'. At this point I gave up. With visibility still less than 6 feet, and ~~was~~ I not ~~nothing~~ making any chance of getting back to the refuge at all brightly, I broke into my survival



big. The night was not too cold at any rate, even if it did rain, and I didn't manage to get any sleep. At about 5.30 I got up from my patch of grass ~~below the~~ on the Trec path. Almost an hour later ~~then~~ the day lifted a little and I was able to walk back to the hos boys path and follow it to SOD 4 without trouble. From there I proved that at least I did know part of the route and walked up as it got light.

John

P.S. The SIE eat a hell of a lot better than we do. Spaggetti followed by a huge Tortilla, coffee, then Brandy and coviny bullshit...  
 Excuse me mate but, ..... you're talking a lot of

2/8/96 (overdue wakeup) - C4 Jo, Nobby, Rod, Andy Scott

Various members of my friends and family were ~~to~~ keen to help to doing C4 ('strange people') but ~~this~~ this had to be put off until tomorrow, and because of family commitments (ie 18 month old Top Camp Baby, Heather Scott), ~~then~~ looked likely to be the only trip they could do today. However, they wanted to do a 'useful' working trip, and so we set about bringing out the rope that had been on the Monster prior to the re-rig, a trip that sounded straightforward... I had been told that there was a '90m of



rope coiled at the top of the Monoter, and a bag tied to the traverse line on the ledge'. What I didn't infer from this, was that the bag on the ledge was Full (of 90m of rope) ~~as ~~the ~~rope~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~bag~~~~~~

The consequence of this was that we bumbled in in about 2hrs with 1 small Oxford bag containing food and carbide to find we had 90m worth of problem on our hands

To went down the perched sump bit of the Monoter for the first time, whilst I brought up the bag of rope from the ledge and we conferred. Then, whilst I waited, Andy and Bob put half the spare rope in the Oxford bag and carried the rest out in their hands, and Jo and I followed behind with the rest.

Andy and Bob were very impressed by C4 ('It's HOOOGE!') and would have liked to have gone deeper, but in the event bringing out 180m+ of rope ~~was~~ (with 1 bag) was quite enough for 1 trip, and = job well done. Nobby!

NB - the un-named pitch below 'Maria Rosa' has been officially christened 'Double Fishermen's', in recognition of Jo's heroic struggle with the deviation at the top, and Bob's yet more heroic prussik past the core, and re-rig!

NB 2 3-4/8/96 To put the record straight, the trip wasn't a complete shambles, although the de-rig may have been. Andy and I had a brilliant time in zooming down the cave after Alex to reach the bottom (in 4hrs) for the first time. Underground Overdrive is very impressive once you get past the boulder chocky bits, with some fine meanders, and we both joined the elite bunch of people who have sailed on the Special Agent Sara. And yes, we yet again proved our complete and undoubted superiority over the '95 expedition by successfully eating 'Peaches on the Beaches'!



Some pitches still need names . . .

C4

(new cave)

- 5 Watershed
- 6 Fizzy Willy
- 7 As advertised
- 8 Maria Rosa
- 9 Double Fishermans
- 10 (poxy ~~the~~ pitch)
- 11 } The Manger
- 12 } (Olives perched sump)
- 13 Growing up
- 14 } (left pitches)
- 15 } ('Coneiform rift'?)
- 16 } 'shit gets in your eyes' ←  
(we like this!)

- 17 Mash Brown
- 18 Bugger Bognor
- 19 } ? Cat o' nine tails
- 20 }
- 21 Free and Easy
- 22 ? (10m)
- 23 Hope Street (Tape measure Torture rift around here.)
- 24 The ~~Si~~ Cheating Necromancer
- 25 Here be Dragons
- 26 ~~Widger~~ Marie Celeste

Vasco  
 Spania  
 pitches  
 (assuming we're going to name them)

- 13 Lucky B p 4
- 14 Bolt Farming p 15
- 15 Another girl p 10
- 16 Another planet p 10, 19
- 17 Another fine mess p 19, 16
- 18 p 3 ? p 3
- 19 ropel climb 0
- 20 p 5 p 5
- 21 p 10 ? p 10
- 22 ? Down in the hollows? c 10
- 23 The We Shall Walk p 15
- 24 } In Glorious Mud p 8
- 25 } p 6

- Non fiction series (mid sump)

- 232 (c 8) ↑
- 236 Stone the Giants p 10
- 230 In Heil Brown GFS p 10

\* Smegdrive series