**11/7/23 – Homecoming - Watershed**

Becka, Harry, Charlotte

T/U ~13 hours

Slogged down from Top Camp to Homecoming and headed down the entrance series. Wassil had snagged the rope on the longish pitch near the entrance (just after snow ends, beyond short crawl). It was so tight that Charlotte had to downprussik to free it. Steady progress to the pushing front in ~2.5 hours. Charlotte rigged a traverse down and across 2m so Harry and I could survey a side passage that quickly reached a pitch whilst Charlotte remained to finish rigging the pitch. We all descended the pitch to 2 routes. Right quickly led to another pitch so Charlotte continued rigging the same rope down this pitch whilst Harry and I surveyed left to a drop down to a canyon with a stream in it. We all descended Charlotte’s second pitch which dropped in a canyon streamway, and we surveyed a couple of legs each direction to check they went. Right upstream headed to short splashy climbs up. Downstream was tightish canyon. We exited in ~4 hours with a disturbing find on Gromit (the 50m at the base of the entrance series) – I saw a lump of mud on the rope, tried to flick it off but argh, the sheath had gone from a chunk of rope. I cautiously jammered above it, shouted down to warn the others, and tied it out in a butterfly. It was ~5m below the rebelay and many metres from any of the walls so hard to know what caused it – sharp jammers? Rockfall? Previous damage? Out 11pm and then a disappointingly long slog up to Garlic Cave to enjoy the new facilities.

**11/07/23 – Kresh Konnection exploring and re-rigging**

Emily, Joel, Lizzy, Merryn

The day started fairly quick and we arrived at the Fishface entrance at 10:30am, making our way underground by 11. Joel and Lizzy went around to re-bolt the first pitch in the connection with me and Merryn following after to measure and record rigging diagrams. Due to an odd mixture of rope the first 9m pitch ended up being rigged with a rope from 1999… As we went on Joel and Merryn rerigged P4 and P5 with separate ropes to free up the 50m currently being used so we could bring the 50m down to where we were planning to push. During this time Joel rearranged the ropes and went back to remove the 1999 rope and replace it with an in-date rope. Essentially a good few hours were spent rearranging ropes, during which time me and Lizzy took a nap in a shelter at the bottom of P5.

For the rest of the trip we actually ended up dropping to the bottom of the second rebelay of the Kresh Konnection pitch (P6) and started with a 20m(ish) passage we called Electric Toothbrush after being woken up at 7am that morning by Becka’s electric toothbrush. After a small climb up and down the passage finished with a waterfall. We named the waterfall “Turd Rock Falls” after a suspicious-looking rock at the bottom. Finally, we all took a quick wee in the rift, which had a small streamway below. Thus Wee Wee Rift was born. All in all a very enjoyable trip with rope left in place for people looking for shallow pushing.

**12/07/23 – Prospecting near Fishface**

Emily, Merryn, Joel, Lizzy, Tom

After consulting the weather forecast in the morning and seeing 50 millimetres of rain forecast from 8pm onwards we decided the best use of our day would be to prospect. Our first port of call was a previously scooped hole at the path between Fishface and Homecoming. With no photo and only a rough location we looked in a few holes, climbing to the bottom of a couple that looked possible but to no avail. After marking the hole, we decided to continue in a vaguely North direction following a rift of passage in Homecoming below us. After some impressive bunde walking we found another prospect which Joel eagerly descended only to find it also choked out. It was therefore nicknamed Joel's Disappointment which later changed to Sunglasses Disappointment after he figured out he lost his sunglasses somewhere in the hole.

Yet another bunde battle later we emerged to 2 rucksacks on the plateau and realised we were at Amphitheatre. It was here that Joel and Lizzie discovered that Radost’s prized hole was in fact one they and Sarah had prospected the week before… They were not happy. Whilst here Joel and Tom dropped into some smaller surrounding holes and after a miscommunication for the Latin of sewage pipe Grivel Hole and Grivel Pot were born.

From here we began to circle back towards Fishface, on the way we found a large flat expanse of limestone with one semi hopeful prospect. After a large amount of gardening and some dodgy free climbing from Joel it was decided it was far too chossy to look into any further. Finally we found our one true promising prospect – a hole temporarily named Crucifix as it's buried in a bunde patch next to a cross. After putting one bolt in and preparing to start more bolting/rigging we looked up to see a large thunderstorm approaching. We left our bolt and rope and started to leg it up the hill. Tom did not enjoy this part. Finally we arrived, drenched in sweat and wheezing for oxygen, but not burnt to the bone by lightning, we arrived at top camp as the storm hit. We spent the next part of the night cowering in the one dry corner of the bivvy as the forecasted rain poured. Five of us sheltered in the animal shelter and watched Matilda the Musical - a good storm pastime

**14/07/23 – Floating down the river to Bad Aussee**

Honorata, Radost, Chi, Oakem, Wassil, Merryn

Me and Radost are leaving today (15/07), so we wanted to do a fun rest day activity on our last full day. Chi, Wassil, and Oakem agreed to go canyoning to Grabenbach (V4A4) with us. We decided that we wanted to be in the canyon in the hottest moment of the day. We were ready to leave at noon but Chi realised he’d lost his car keys. 2 hours of searching for them around the Potato Hut yielded no results. Disappointed, we decided to float down the river to Bad Aussee where we later had ice cream. Floating down the river has been definitely the most dangerous and stupid thing I’ve done on Expo. Don’t do it and if you have to – wear a helmet, gloves, and shoes unlike us. I started rolling in one waterfall and was really afraid I’d hurt my head. Then, I hit my hip really hard on a rock. I’m not gonna do it again. Ice cream was nice though.

**10/07/23 – 12/07/23 – Camp in Fishface – Pushing Redlight and Perseid Showers**

Emma, Mike B, Mealy, Jonty

10/07

We wake up earlyish with the goal of leaving at 9/10 but quickly decide MUCH more faff is needed. A stop is made at the shops to buy biodegradable bags and a magazine, eventually Jonty, Mealy, and I make it to the car park. It is very very warm and we are worried about dehydration… We get walking, faffing more by running into many groups coming off the plateau, and Mike catches up quickly. Once on the plateau the weather seems more pleasant – a cool breeze is present now – when I see the cause – a huge cloud of rain hanging above the Dachstein. “Nah, that’s just mist” says Uncle Mike. We make our merry way, not forgetting to bow to the plateau monster (Mike doesn’t bow) until we hear a rumble of thunder – “Nah, that’s just a plane” says Uncle Mike. Soon, torrential rains start, which we are not dressed nor prepared for, so we hide by crouching against a wall in the plateau. Then, wind turns and we get very soaked so we huddle under Jonty’s 1-man emergency bothy. Anyway, sun returns, much more faff is had. I take a fall… We don’t make it into Fishface until 20:45, carrying LUDICROUSLY large bags! Mealy and I lead the way in, made a little clumsy by our heavy loads – though not as heavy as Jonty’s, and not at all as bad as Mike’s, whose “side bag” is a full-sized tacklesack containing lots of rope. The first pitch was Not My Friend and I dropped a plastic bottle – after that I enjoyed myself – especially impressed by TK Maxx, a super cool pitch!! Mealy and I get down just after 23:00, followed soon by Jonty, and a little later by Mike who had stopped to get Even More Rope. Mealy goes off to faff with Cavelink, Jonty and I head over to help, and we send the important message “camp crèche want more peanut” – it sends. Mealy and I share smash and noodles, Jonty and Mike eat curry, we whip out the mini-jägermiester all take a lil sip and head to sleep. I apparently caused some disturbance by snoring (sorry) and we all sleep intermittently.

11/07

We make a late start (it’s hard to leave warm sleeping bags ) – no response on Cavelink so we send several more messages saying “Weather update pls?” etc. Mealy, Mike, and I eat porridge, Jonty eats noodles, then Mealy and Jonty head off to push Radost’s lead and Mike starts rigging Perseid Showers – I sit in a bothy in case Mike needs me. He does not, and I get quite bored. Eventually he comes back, now a little damp..! Quite displeased at the state and placement of some bolts. We go to find the others and run into them on their way back – Radost’s lead was a loop and Fishface was connected to Fishface yet again. Back we go to camp – still nothing on the Cavelink – a little concerning as rain was predicted for ±24 hours later and we really wanted a weather forecast. After More Faff we decide to stay another night, so Mike went off to rebolt and rig the rest while Jonty, Mealy, and I went to look at the mysterious ABC-lead in Moths 2. I enjoyed doing the free climbs there! Then, we heard LOTS and LOTS of water that Mealy did not remember – we carried on the look down the pitch which was rigged quite weirdly – the rope into Moths was sort of dragged into Moths 2. We decided the vibes were Simply Off™ and left without pushing… Pot-this, me and Mealy had some veg soup and also fancied non-freezing water so we heated up water which tasted SO good. Jonty was sipping the warm water and it fogged up his glasses – upon which he proclaimed he couldn’t see anything other than the BEAUTIFUL GOLDEN GLOW of our veg soup! And indeed, this beautiful glow felt like a divine presence! We each took turns fogging up our glasses and looking at what we decided must be the face of God himself and were thus lengthily entertained.

Anyhow, back from Moths area, we decided to have a lil look for anything, practically, and stumbled upon what looked deeply unpromising - a tight little sandy rift Jonty had to crawl into, but was in fact some really nice passage that contained some pretty little formations!! Thus we surveyed Get Rifty – a fun detour. We popped out into a BUG rift that we briefly were hyped about but turned out to be familiar ground. Back at camp we were quite tired so headed to bed despite being a little worried about Uncle Mike who was still on Perseid Showers. Luckily he showed up not long after – a little damp and not too thrilled about the effort – Perseid Showers still needs surveying and it was wetter than you would want to get even with rebolting.

12/07

Mealy and I get up around 7 and pack (and faff a lil) to start prussiking out and stay on the safe side of any rain. The bags were very awkward in the rifts but other than that it was quite a good time – Mealy left me sweet treats on the bolts every now and then as motivation. At around BBBB time, I got horrible cramps that made the entire rest a bit of an ordeal though prussiking wasn’t too bad. I had a little cry on the surface but mostly was just very pleased to be in the sun again. Soon followed by Jonty and Mike – conclusion: EFFORT ≠ SUCCESS!

Author’s note: MB would like me to include that we discussed the most likely position to fins Keiran A in a sex shop – customer or salesman – and decided we would expect to fins him naked as a human counter.

**11/07/23 - Perseid Showers 2023 Rigging**

Mike Butcher

All on through bolts, about 300m of rope, taken in one bag to much regret.

Can’t really remember the rigging exactly. Continues for about 200m of rope to a boulder floor, dropped a ~15m pitch to the left side of a house-sized boulder. At least five streams converge in this area. Below the 15m pitch the floor is choked by boulders with a pool/gravelly sump at the downstream end. Still a strong draught but no obvious way on. Could be many side passages on the way down. As I was alone with no disto and with a thunderstorm forecast (rightly) for the next day, this was not surveyed, so a return visit to survey, drop the parallel shaft, and derig is required. I was wearing a new AV Holloch oversuit which still had its waterproofing, as well as a gimp mac over the top. Just about able to stay dry enough, but a PVC would be better. This was a fantastic bit of cave, thoroughly enjoyed the splashy Yorkshire nature, even though I was a little scared of flood pulses at times. Was rather sad that it didn’t break into the next horizontal level. Might still be worth pushing the parallel shaft from the end of the first rope.

**14/07/23 – Shallow Homecoming pushing beyond Hobnob Hallway and Dead Flies Passage**

Will, Nadia, Mike, Sarah

Having seen 2 A-leads at the end of Dead Flies Passage on the big survey, we headed down to investigate and push. Arriving at the end of the survey, we reached a small ~3x1.5m chamber with a streamway passage (?2018-26A) back to the left and a more rifty passage straight ahead (?2018-25A).

We were surprised to see survey marks heading off down ?2018-25A starting at 91 and ending at 133 continuing along the passage for quite a way (~40m). This passage started out rifty then went more phreatic, it was mostly walking but a little stoopy and awkward in places. The survey marks ended at 133 at a significant drop, it looked like there was more horizontal ways on over the top of this pitch (QMC?) but we dropped the pitch and carried on pushing and surveying down.

Sarah bolted this ~12m pitch dubbed “The Goose Box” which dropped down to a ~6x2m ledge. The back of this area, a few metres from the pitch looked very clean-washed and had a small puddle at the bottom, presumably from the rain a few days prior. At the other end of the ledge was a traverse and a drop that Sarah bolted but failed to reach the bottom of (by ~10m) with a 50-60m rope that was used for both pitches.

The second pitch consisted of a ~10m traverse line, a ~10m drop, then a rebelay followed by a ~25m drop into a streamway (QMA)

Back at basecamp Nadia looked up the survey points that weren’t on the survey and it was done by Frank Tully in 2018, the records we have only go to 112 so 112-133 will need to be resurveyed.

Speaking of, towards the end of Dead Flies Passage we found a tacklesack, presumably from 2018, with a rope and some incredibly rusted maillons and hangers. It was slightly wet, but presumably mostly from dripping. The rope may be usable, but the metalwork won’t be.

**13/07/23 – Homecoming**

Zac, Jono, Sarah, Will

The day started out bleak, with the plateau overcast and still soaked from the night before. Zac and Sarah set out from Top Camp while Will and Jono came from Base. We all bumped into each other at Homecoming which was excellent timing! We proceeded to Garlic Cave for some lunch where Zac and Sarah got very cold. Philip joined us there also. We waited for the rain to die away then hiked over to Homecoming. Sarah followed by Zac then Will then Jono. The plan was to rerig the small pitch and traverse after Radagast as well as investigate a phreatic tube 5m below the Radagast pitch head. Each of these were to be done in pairs but this plan was scarpered when Jono needed the longer rope from Sarah (exploring Radagast) to rerig the pitch and traverse. In the end Zac rerigged it under Jono’s supervision while the other 2 stood around.

Sarah then ascended Radagast and rigged a new rope to swing over to the tube. Having been unsuccessful, Zac then valiantly tried for half an bour until everyone got cold. Ascending, Zac saw a great spot for a deviation. We then all exited the cave to the dying light, Zac and Sarah first followed a while later by Will and Jono.

On the way back to Top, Zac slipped and pulled his arm/scraped his arse, meaning Mike had to apply cream to it at Top Camp. A bit of a faffy trip but an important step for making progress.

**14/07/23 – 259 – Homecoming – Watershed – Alpine Showers**

Becka, Jono, Harry, Charlotte, James

T/U Becka and Jono 13 hours   
T/U Others 15 hours

Walked from Top Camp to Homecoming and headed down quite efficiently. Split to 2 groups at the previous survey limit below Charlotte’s 2nd pitch. Harry, Charlotte, and James started surveying downstream. Jono and I surveyed upstream for a mighty 3 legs (“Alpine Waterfall”) to where the stream spouted down from on high. We went up the pitch with the rope and drill aiming to bolt a vertical lead, but Harry caught us up to say they needed it so he took the drill and rope and they bolted downstream until they ran out of rope to leave a splashy A-lead continuing downstream. Jono and I ticked off the QMA between the 1st and 2nd pitches (it just was high in the same rift that Harry et al were in – confirmed with a vocal connection) then we surveyed a minor loop and lead near the start of the 2023 finds (“Flowstone Canyon 2”) and Jono did photogrammetry. We’d run out of horizontal leads so headed out, luckily beating the jam caused by the two trips arriving simultaneously at the bottom of Homecoming entrance which meant that some people had a very late night.

**15/07/23 – Prospecting N of Garlic Cave**

Becka and Sarah

T/U 10 mins

We walked under the flanks of the Kleine Wildkogel to the ridge at the top (where you can see down to the tiny hut in the bowl between that ridge and the next). The GPS track for Becka is downloaded and I logged 4 caves, named 2023-BL-Q1 to Q4. Two were horizontal and are Katasterable (Q2 and Q4) and the other two (Q1 and Q3) are open shafts but would need to be dropped to be checked out.

**16/07/23 – Homecoming – Hobnob Hallway > Dead Flies Passage > Golden Goose**

Becka, Sarah, Alice, Buck

T/U 8 hours

Alice and Buck came from Top Camp with a drill and batteries but however… no drill bits. We hoped we might meet the camping trip exiting and be able to take their drill bits so we took all the kit down but sadly we didn’t see them so Sarah rigged as far as she could without bolting but couldn’t bottom the pitches. Meanwhile Alice and I surveyed “Golden Goose” to finish an A-lead upstream from the previous existing centreline (station 91) and we then resurveyed down to Sarah’s pitch (survey name “Goose Box”) because Frank and Nadia’s data for this had disappeared… Unlike their survey stations which we largely reused. The survey is now nearly to the pushing front. We looked at QMs on the way out and ticked off/killed the 2018-20B one, it ends at an aven, QMX, about 20m beyond last survey station after ~10m of tight rift. The newly replaced, new red rope on Gromit is already worryingly furry, not good after so few trips.

**16/07/23 – The Tempest Diaries Part 1 of 3 – Tempest Initial Explore**

Joel, Lizzie, Tom, Ely

T/U ~2hrs

47.69111, 13.80984

Having arrived at Top Camp, we decided to go and poke the hole we had found at the end of the day on the 12th. Given the working title of Tomb of Christ by Tom due to its situation under a large metal cross, it was agreed that if the cave went it could be renamed Tempest in honour of Lizzie’s favourite primary school performance – The Tempest: The Musical. Emily had begun bolting a traverse in before we were scared off by weather. So I continued this to a Y-hang which dropped ~20m onto a snowy slope with passage leading to both left and right. Tom dropped in and started bolting a rebelay while I dug through the snow to look at the more promising RH lead – this turned out to be a scree slope ~45° which continued for 15m. Sadly the drill packed up before Tom could finish the bolt, and with more weather approaching we turned around, vowing to return.

**17/07/23 – The Tempest Diaries Part 2 of 3 – Tempest Pushing**

Joel, Lizzie, Tom

T/U ~5hrs

Raring to go and with many promising leads to explore (and survey!), we raced down to Tempest to continue the work. We finished Tom’s bolt, which meant the scree slope was marginally safer to descend. I continued down to a choke above a short pitch with a ledge to LH while Lizzie and Tom surveyed from the entrance. Some serious gardening was required which occupied me until the other two arrived, then we bolted a traverse into the short pitch and entered the chamber now known as Narnia due to the impressive frozen waterfalls and other ice formations. We surveyed into this chamber, noting again exciting leads to both left and right of the pitch base, then headed back to the surface.

**18/07/23 – The Tempest Diaries Part 3 of 3 – Tempest Pushing**

Joel, Lizzie, Tom, Zac, Ash, Merryn

The hype was growing, and not one but two groups went to push (or kill, in Ash’s case), this cave. Congregating at the base of the Narnia pitch after I had added a rebelay on the entrance pitch, Ash and Zac set off to survey the LH passage and scored an impressive 100m before reaching a choke – Fartichoke was born, a lovely horizontal and almost straight passage with sandy floor and looming avens in ceiling. Meanwhile, the remainder set off to continue down Narnia, bolting another 13m pitch with much faff and surveying up to the top of Tomb Raider. At the bottom, which Tom reached first, we were dismayed to find a cessation of human-sized cave. Tom had landed on a choke, with small holes to left and right, but nothing easily accessible. Upon seeing this, Lizzie turned around and left in disgust, but driven mad with disappointment me and Tom began hacking frantically at the boulders on either side. Suddenly, with a cry of joy, I heaved aside a mighty boulder to find a nearly Joel-size hole in the floor with an excellent echo. After much experimental squeezing we found that feet-first sans SRT kit worked best, and I had a quick look to see a large and impressive rift below. We had left Lizzie waiting long enough, so turned around and returned to surface, planning to bring some heavy demolitions kit the next day.

**19/07/23 – The Tempest Diaries Part 4 of 3 – Tempest Killing and Derigging**

Joel, Lizzie, Tom, Ely, Merryn

On what would really turn out to be our last day in Tempest, two groups went down once more – an intense pushing group, and some tourists. Me, Lizzie, and Ely attempted to bash a bigger hole to get into the rift at the bottom of Tomb Raider, achieving virtually nothing after an hour of work and deciding once again to drop in without SRT kits. We were joined by Merryn, and the Skeleton Team squeezed in to survey the rift. This sadly crapped out in chokes at both ends of the rift and along a connection to the right, but we fully surveyed and got some good photos before returning out the hole to discover a mildly hypothermic Tom waiting for us in his gimp poncho like some frozen wizard. Concluding that, despite our best efforts, this cave was going nowhere, we derigged the cave in stages and left all the rope at Fishface. Defeated but contented, we retreated to Top Camp.

**20/07/23 – Homecoming, Goose Box > Lassitude Canyon**

Sarah, Becka, Adam A

T/U – 12hrs

Managed to get underground before noon (!) at about 11:40am. Becka had gone via Fishface to pick up her caving kit and some drill batteries.

We got to the bottom of Gromit without incident and sorted through the drill and drill accessories that had been stashed there. They were in a holey tacklebag with no dry bag, so drill was extremely dirty. We repurposed Adam’s Sainsbury’s bag to store the drill, divvied up the drill gear, then continued on through Hobnob Hallway, Dead Flies to the pushing front. We dropped to a large ledge near where I had run out of bolts on a previous trip. I drilled up while Becka and Adam layered up. I descended to my previous single bolt rebelay and turned it into a Y-hang. I abseiled around a further 5m and put in another rebelay. Here, the initial rift meets a perpendicular canyon with a small waterfall coming in from the side. I descended another ~10m and peeked around the corner, finally spotting the bottom of the pitch with my spot. I rigged a final rebelay and reached the bottom.

Calling up to Becka and Adam they began surveying down. I paced around to keep warm. When the others arrived, I layered up (Becka had brought my things). Becka surveyed the chamber we’d dropped into (waterfall on the right, a streamway in a cut down canyon, a clamber up to the left). The left led to some phreas above the canyon – a promising lead – but would require a rope traverse.

Becka and I climbed down into the canyon to survey the streamway (Adam had hiking boots rather than wellies, so would have gotten very wet feet). We surveyed until we reached a ~8m small cascade (honestly not very wet, even your feet would be fine), which would require ~2 bolts and ~10m rope. Left it as a lead. Becka and I tweaked the rigging on the way out, then we headed out of the cave.

**19/07/23 – Prospecting near Fishface**

Nadia, Max, Flo, Kai

We went prospecting near Fishface. We found a cave with 2 entrances that linked together in several places. We dropped the first one and it didn’t go anywhere so we dropped the second part which had loads of ice features, some of which had to be destroyed to stop them squashing people. The second part of the cave went straight down then opened up slightly into a low flat chamber.

**19/07/23 – Prospecting West of Garlic Cave**

Becka, Sarah, Adam Aldridge

See Becka’s tracklog for route and 2023-BL-05 to 09 for 5 logged caves. Adam descended three of them on naturals but sadly they all ended immediately, as did the two horizontal ones that we logged. We also failed to circumnavigate the Kleine Wildkogel which made me both sad and cross. I checked out Paul Walker’s lidar hole in the bunde which turned out to be a grassy bowl with no hole whatsoever.

**23/07/23 – Fishface 4th Pitch Rerig**

Botch, Rob

After storming up to Top Camp, we decided to make use of the rest of the day by rerigging the 4th pitch in Fishface. I enjoyed learning the route to FF and the profusion of alpine flowers. We arrived around 17:00 only to discover that Rob’s drill was not in the alcove. After having a meltdown and shouting at no-one in particular, Rob decided to run back to Top Camp to get a drill while I chilled out in the sun. We actually got down around 18:00, quickly smashing down to the offending pitch (around 19:00?). While Rob got the drill set up, I went down to identify which rope was the new one (Nadia had previously started the rerig) and show Rob where to head for at the bottom. After faffing around changing ropes I got down the bottom then up the handline to the new bottom of the pitch. As it would take some time, I decided to explore a bit. I ran down a few pitches, which was easy due to reflectors. I went wrong once when I popped through a little hole to a crumbling slope above a big drop. After a while I thought maybe I should return, but maybe just one more pitch… This was the massive TK Max. At the bottom it was really time to return (20:15) so I quick stepped it back, returning to a (slightly worried) Rob at 21:00ish. He’d been done for 40 minutes and had had time to derig most of the old rope. To my disappointment he’d opted not to pass the rope through the little window. We got back to camp around 22:30 where the others were a bit surprised by our lateness. Ate a massive bowl of tortelloni.

**24/07/23 – Homecoming – Rigging Fixing**

Rob, Nadia

T/U ~11hrs

Various reports/complaints had made it clear that the rigging in Homecoming left a lot to be desired, so since the forecast for the afternoon precluded the possibility derigging Big Bastard or making moves to push Clap My Pitch Up, Nadia and I decided to go and fix this.

The walk between this cave and Fishface is one of the most irritating pieces of plateau bashing I have ever had to do. Lots of snaking up and down through rugged terrain, through huge batches of bunde and dwarf willow, with little idea how close you are to your destination. So off to a good start.

Eventually arrived and kitted up. Headed down the first couple of pitches with banks of snow before arriving at the pitches after the crawl. Installed a new bolt at the pitch head just after the crawl to make a traverse line. Then installed another rebelay near the bottom of this to reduce rub.

Then headed onwards. Had to completely derig the next section then rerig because many of the Y-hangs were needlessly low and also because the rope had been threaded around a natural through an alpine butterfly in a highly japish fashion. At the head of the main hand on Radagast I decided to swap the rope because the Y-hang had been so poorly equalised that the alpine butterfly had tightened solidly.

HOW TO TIE AN APPROPRIATE Y-HANG:

* 2 bolts close together
* Fusion/bowline on a bight
* SRT rigging should be tight and high
* Use appropriate knots for the configuration of bolts
* Add traverse lines to pitch heads to reduce rub

After fixing this new rope in at the top I carried on rerigging down Radagast. This long (30-40m) hang had not been broken up at all, despite there already being a rebelay bolt halfway down! I added another bolt here then just below drilled a thread for a deviation. This pitch could do with one more rebelay before the traverse to avoid the big swing in the drips. Swapped out small rope at the bottom as the new orange can do it all. Then headed on through the annoying rift traverse with the up rope to the next traverse. Added another natural to the end of this to make getting off the end easier. Then derigged the ~10m down pitch and following up rope which arrives at the head of Wallace. Replaced these with a new descending traverse which avoids the need to go down and up through an annoying rift. I then installed a small new traverse line to protect the exposed approach to the start of this while Nadia added a new rebelay partway down Wallace and lengthened the deviation.

NB: While I was rigging the new descent to the head of Wallace at 17:00-18:00 we heard a huge flood pulse somewhere ahead of us in the cave, which came on really quickly and dissipated over ~2hrs

We turned around at ~20:30. On the way out I noticed that Radagast is formed along a really nice normal?? Fault, a marker bed ~50cm thick between 2 shale bands shows it has ~10m displacement. Walk back was very damp and treacherous, saw many salamanders. Back at Top Camp at ~1am after dropping gear at Fishface.

Through bolts used: 13

**22/07/23 – Pension Talk**

Rob, Botch, Luke, Adam EJ

After a long drive across Europe consisting of pension, traffic, HS2 talk, we turned up to find Base Camp overrun by all the Kresh and their friends prepping for an excursion to Slovenia

**24/07/23 – Fishface – Wombling around tidying up the mess**

Luke, Botch, Becka

T/U – 10hrs

After Becka was finally ready we set off to Fishface, underground before 11am. Got to camp in 1hr making note of all the equipment abandoned in the cave: 2x ropes, 1x brew kit, 2x tacklebags. Went to derig Mourning the Moths – it was dry, no water in sight, contrary to previous explorers’ reports. Botch derigged, removing the nuts (take note for returning explorers – NO NUTS). After much discussion we decided to go to Coconut Shy to rejig our memory. On the way I jokingly sent Botch down a rathole – unfortunately it went and he disappeared for too long and I realised I would have to regrettably follow him to survey it. We started to survey as the passage got progressively smaller and muddier before a final letterbox which shot you out into a rift. While Botch and Becka surveyed, I desperately looked for a way to get back to known passage without going back through the letterbox. I succeeded by climbing up through the rift but it would need bolting before people return. Went back to see that Botch and Becka had surveyed to a point that would need rope. I sent them back through the letterbox (gerbilhole.svx) and did the dodgy climb one more time. Little scuttle around Coconut Shy, then it was time to go home. Fettled the Cavelink, went out of the cave removing excess and dirty rope, above ground before sunset.

**27/07/23 – Fishface rerigging and Gerbil Hole attempt**

Botch, Nadia

After a freezing night in the cloud at Top Camp, the prospect of an underground camp wasn’t seeming too bad. We got going slowly due to the chill, then walked over to Fishface. The camping team was myself, Nadia, Rob, and Kai, plus a non-camping team of Luke and Becka. We were last so spent some time re-rerigging the 4th pitch – removing the footless traverse in favour of two rebelays. I was a bit concerned it’d be too tight but we didn’t want to put any bolts in so left it at that. We got to underground camp and had some noodles – no utensils so we ate with a pencil. We then went to bolt down the rift that Luke freeclimbed to the lead in the rift at the end of Gerbil Hole. Rigging took a while due to the confusing nature of the rift and shit rock. We’d used our two ropes to get to the lead so just surveyed out to complete a loop. By the time we got back to camp it was 21:00 so we just made soupy gnocci/smash curry and ate it with spanners.

**29/07/23 – Garlic Cave area prospecting**

Botch, Rob

We were both tired from our 2 days in Fishface so went to prospect around Garlic Cave. We took a couple of blue barrels over for GC storage. We stopped via Homecoming to have a look and took some extra stuff to take down the hill. We dallied a bit looking at plants and arthropods and also got a bit lost. Once at GC we relocated the Jape Drum and removed the soup inside then had bread and cheese while looking at the view. We had limited time to prospect so set off quickly. At first we found little but then by levitating over some bunde we located a couple of decent prospects – one hole under a Green Alder (needs capping due to boulders) and another large slope to a small square hole with a 10m drop below (in big area of bunde, near pavement). We then headed back and go very lost on the ‘well cairned’ route back. On the way we located a very good lead draughting with a snow plug, and a massive ‘train tunnel’ near the path that has leads in the back that could have been blocked by the snow plug before. We were very late to meet our lift back, but so were they. Back down for a swim in the lake with lightning.

Green Alder Cave – 47.699, 13.806  
Square Hole Cave – 47.699, 13.805  
Path Cave – GPS BROKEN needs relocating  
Train Tunnel – 47.683, 13.807 (identified as 2004-03 1623/270)

**27/07/23 – 28/07/23 – Camping without utensils – 2 days in Fishface**

Rob, Nadia, Becka, Botch

T/U: 26 hrs

Did a bit of packing the night before but it was too chilly to want to really commit to the pack. So that had to be done the following morning, when it was equally cold, which made us all a bit grumpy. Plan for day 1 was for Kai and I to visit the European Federalists aven to see if we could work out what was going on there while Luke was also there rigging CMPU.

After an uneventful commute we arrived at the traverse above Red Light. This was very much the rectum of Balcony’s Arse. Disgusting sticky mud everywhere and they had used the 8.5mm rope to rig it, thus making the rope really nasty. One part of the traverse was pretty strenuous and muddy, no-one needs that, feel bad for whoever had to wait while it got bolted. Anyway, got to the end and it was a total minger. Super chossy pitch combined with a mud festival. No thanks. Got a voice connection with Becka at the top of CMPU but couldn’t see her light. Decided to fuck it off as it was almost certainly just the top of Apis Medicus. Left it rigged for now, a visual connection can be made later.

Then we headed back along the traverse to the head of CMPU to try and traverse across to the ‘free-arse’ that Luke and I had spotted the year previously. It quickly became apparent that traversing at the level of the ‘Free Arse’ would be very difficult, so I decided instead to traverse above and then drop in from the top. Some very muddy and naughty traversing ensued with a hardy dose of choss. But a short while later and I was looking at a rather nice phreatic passage with two junctions visible immediately. Very promising!

Kai came over and we began the survey. Not wanting to steal all the thunder, I asked Kai If he would like to be on book. He enthusiastically said YES (when has Kai not been enthusiastic?). So we headed back across the traverse above the ~70m drop, surveying as we went.

NB: after getting down the hill and going to put the data into the computer I realised I had forgotten that Kai is very dyslexic and had managed to write a lot of the numbers the wrong way round i.e. a clino reading of 07 rather than 70…. And no record of the numbers was retained in the disto. So it will have to be resurveyed.

Then, back to camp where we discovered the lack of utensils. Ate some gnocchi/curry soup with a spanner. The fairy lights made the situation far nicer though. Kai proceeded to throw Botch’s spanner down the rift after I washed it and the bowl at the tap.

Next day struggled to find motivation to leave sleeping bags but eventually made it back towards CMPU and the ‘Free Arse’. Nadia, Botch, and Kai began surveying the nice horizontal passage across the traverse while I rigged Apis Medicus. Remembered how poorly/quickly I rigged the traverse last year, resolved to fix it later. Pitch rigged to bottom, I looked at water levels quickly, seemed the same as last year in the rift. Looked at what the others were up to at the top. Really nice horizontal passage ongoing. On the way down earlier, rocks were rained on me by the traverse above so I hid and in the process noticed a canyon passage just before the top of Apis Medicus. So stole Botch and went to survey this. A nice passage, then ended at a window onto Apis Medicus, then Botch headed out while I improved the rigging of the traverse between CMPU and Apis. Much better now. I headed out in a big train of cavers, getting out just before 10pm

Thru bolts used: ~12

**28/07/23 – Fishface – Perseid Showes to Flaque Verte**

Lea, Luke

T/U: 11hrs

Descended to camp near Perseid Showers. Left some pf our gear there and continued down Perseid Showers. At the bottom, found a green puddle. Does not look like a sump. It had been 2 days without rain so the pitch was wet but nothing too much. Didn’t see any leads other than a parallel shaft to Perseid Showers at about 140m down. Surveyed from puddle to Perseid Showers’s survey (~60m vertical of surveying). Derigged (Luke) and met Nadia, Kai, Botch, and Rob at the top of the pitch. Came out of Fishface, left the rope from Perseid Showers at the junction to the pitches. What an amazing feeling to be at the bottom of Fishface! WOW!

**29/07/23 – Mendip Man – Survey trip**

Kai, Becka, Luke

T/U 2hrs

We headed out earlyish and headed down to Fishface gear store to find Becka almost ready, complaining about the quality of Disto lasers in the daylight even though she didn’t bring hers. After some above ground faffing we headed to the entrance where Becka rigorously ran through proper surveying techniques with me. We then proceeded into the cave. While Luke was using the Disto my arse kept getting in the way (illegible). We then eventually got to standing passage after finding a bat skeleton in a QMB. After finding the standing passage (illegible) through a squeeze which we did not go through. We then went back to the 2nd exit which is just before the standing passage. I could squeeze out of it, however there needed to be more digging to get Luke and Becka out. Luke managed to climb out of the hole but myself and Becka went back in Luke then showed me a hole he found that draughts.

**28/07/23 – Fishface – Claw Crane off Coconut Shy**

Becka, Adam A, Ben, Adam EJ

T/U: Adam EJ and Ben: ~7hrs, Becka ~10hrs, Adam A ~12hrs

Steady abseil down the entrance series. Ben and Adam EJ decided to head out from there so we had a quick tourist up Elizabeth Line then they headed out. Adam A and I hauled the expo drill I’d brought in and rope to the north of the cave but failed to use any of it as the QMB immediately on the left in the chamber in Coconut Shy turned up trumps – a brief grovel popped into another chamber with several ways on. There was a 4m vertical climb to head upstream, a phreatic tube above the way we entered and a walking canyon ended in a false floor with a ~15m pitch down to a floor and possible ways on. From the loose false floor we teetered up a bank of poorly accreted pebbles with giant slabby boulders balanced delicately on top. This led to a second, larger pitchhead with water entering from the far side. On the return I got down the pebble bank but Adam got trapped, braced securely at the top but his feet pawing wildly, sending the pebbles cascading and eroding the hideous loose boulders. Eventually he had to just go for it and skittered down, phew. We met Luke and Nadia back at the camp kitchen and I exited in the midst of the camp team and Lea. For some reason Adam dawdled at camp and ended up exiting last and was late back to Top Camp

**27/07/23 – Fishface – Rerig Clap My Pitch Up and 4th pitch**

Becka, Luke

Down Elizabeth Line and rigged the Red Light for Danger traverse, 2 short pitches and then Luke rigged Clap My Pitch Up whilst Becka fiddled with switching ropes. Rob and Kai went above us on European Federalist traverse – this didn’t seem to be above Clap My Pitch Up. We exited and Luke rebolted the 4th pitch further back, giving a hang that avoided the traverse and the awkward rebelay that had previously been tried – this is the 4th and hopefully final iteration of the 4th pitch this expo.

**28/07/23 – Fishface – Theophilus Goon, above CMPU**

Nadia, Botch, Kai

T/U (from underground camp): 20hrs

After Rob and Kai traversed over the top of CMPU the day before, finding a phreas window, Botch, Kai, and I got to reap the horizontal rewards. Starting at the window, we took the small phreatic tube on the left of the window.

We went through a small tight section after a few metres and Kai exclaimed he had found mammoth bones just like he had dreamt he would. The bones turned out to be bat bones and appeared to be most of a full skeleton. These bones sit beside a rock pillar which has a junction. We chose the left passage again and marked the station with a 5 even though we know in two legs we’d be back for the other option. We were wrong!

The passage opened up to walking height rift with some flowstone and crystals in the ceiling. Next we got to a mud floor and a tight squeeze down a mud slope. We popped out into an even bigger rift which appeared to be phreatic at the top.

Traversing forward, we found a 40x15cm stalactite with crystal-like hairs of helictites growing out the side. Passage continued with a stream visible in the floor at times. I dropped the survey book, Botch with longer arm removed his helmet and got stuck in and just managed to retrieve the book. Good, didn’t want to redo the last 20 legs.

We got cold and stopped at a junction. The main rift began to have a mud floor again and ascended upwards for 10m before turning a corner out of sight. On the right there was a small phreatic tube about 0.5m in diameter, at least 3m long. Unclear if it is promising.

Also there is another small rift on the left earlier on in the passage that I couldn’t decide if it was too small to be a lead.

**31/07/23 – Mendip Man and Silver Moth**

Adam B, Kai

We set off to the Fishface gear store on a fine sunny day. I was promised some proper Mendip-esque horizontal passages, exactly what I came to Expo for. Kai showed me into Mendip Man, past the dollop of snow in the rather impressive entrance and set off down boulder and rock rubble floored crawling passage. At a junction we began to survey a decent lead to the right. I was on disto and Kai on book. The passage was low and surveying was pretty tight. We surveyed on and the passage gently descended with a few turns and low squeezes and a junction halfway on the right. The roof lowers and chokes out after about (blank) metres. The ceiling is decorated with tiny cloud and plume like blobs of calcite. After the passage crapped out, we pushed back and surveyed the junction to the right. This just led round in a loop to earlier in the entrance passage. Before going left at the first junction, I attempted to dig out a slope while Kai went for a piss. The dig was fruitless and we proceeded on through a rather rude and grumpy low passage with a sea of offensive rocks on the floor and pushed into a standing height chamber with boulders in the centre. There were 2 leads here. The first was a small crawling passage, not quite flat out, this choked quickly and was filled with bat poo and some form of fungus growing upon it. The other lead was after a climb up through a squeeze. Beyond the squeeze a 4m rift appeared human sized in width. It seemed to lead to floor level and we didn’t descend, it is still an open lead but definitely a D lead and probably goes back to floor level. We surveyed to the rift and called it a day in Mendip Man. Without a good dig it doesn’t appear to be going.

Before heading to Top Camp we checked out a hole Luke found that needed digging just across from Mendip Man. With energy low but the draught exciting, we took turns to pull head-sized boulders from the entrance until we squeezed through into a sitting height junction. The route straight on choked after 11 metres but to the right a strong draught and a cracking great echo. The passage began as a small sharp calcite crawl and then dropped down in a series of freeclimbable steps descending 4ft to a 4 metre hole. We surveyed, tired but excited, up to this point and left it as an A lead. We decided to call the name Silver Moth as the passage had a lot of moths and took silver from the fact that Luke found the hole. With a great draught out of the hold we planned to return with a handline and a lot of psyche after the rain in 2 days time.

**30/07/23 – 01/08/23 – Pushing the bottom of Fishface – Camp #2**

Rob, Luke, Becka, Lea, Botch

T/U: 48 hrs

Headed underground at ~10pm on 30/07, arrived at camp around 11:30. Good night’s sleep, unlike the following night. Packed rope, bolts etc before, facilitating a quick start. Fixed up the rigging on Apis Medicus on the way down, arrived at the first pitch which was left in the canyon by myself, Nathan, and Max last year. Much wetter than last time so decided we needed an additional rebelay bolt way out to the left. Next drop rigged, then we were into new territory. Scuttled along the top of the traverse after trying to force a lower route and deciding it was too shit. Reached a big pitch, decided the scuttle needed to have a rope so began bolting along while Luke and Lea surveyed, Luke returning to the main hang to get additional rope in the meantime. Dropped down the pitch toward a ledge, swung out to avoid the spray of the pitch with a skyhook on a small lip. PING it was off, and I swung across the shaft, stopped myself hitting the wall with my hand which then became unusable for the rest of the trip.

We then landed on a big ledge in a large fault zone: massive piles of choss were everywhere and the water fucked off down into a small gap between some large boulders. We wandered around the space for a bit deliberating the best way to progress. There was a big aven dropping in again carrying water (over 5 active inlets had been passed by now) and the possibility of a big traverse into space between the choss. In the end I decided we should follow the water and I scuttled along some boulders above the noisy streamway below the hanging death. Placed some traverse bolts feeling quite tired after adrenaline from the hand had worn off. Used an ARSE hanger (tick) then dropped down right into the flow of the water. Rigged a deviation while being pissed on then reached the floor of the drop where the inlet from the aven dropped in. Walked across the chamber feeling very cold, saw that there was another ~5m drop down to a flat floored streamway below. Much more noise from water behind us than in front, which would imply that things got easier ahead but I couldn’t make the others get that wet (even though Lea was well equipped in her fluorescent jacket looking like crew at a festival). We derigged back to camp (apart from the short pitches to get to the new traverse) and the next day did some surveying across the traverse (now named ‘Delicate Steve/I did Naat’ as Nadia assumed I had scooped when I would not interpret that I had). Later, after inputting data saw we were well on course to connect, <100m horizontal and <10m vertical from Razordance. Another year, hopefully over.

Called it ‘Dentelle de Caca’ after Lea said that the flaky calcite precipitates on the wall looked like the lace on a wedding dress. Thru bolts used: 16

**01/08/23 – Fishface Undergroup Camp day 3**

Becka, Luke, Rob

After a slowish start we surveyed across Delicate Steve (Rob’s traverse) into a phreatic window opposite the Clap My Pitch Up Pitch head, repeating the Rob and Kai survey that had been deemed inadequate. At the junction where Nadia, Botch, and Kai went left (Theophilus Goon) we surveyed the larger branch to the right. This led fairly soon over canyons to an aven with possible continuations. We wrapped up the survey and Luke and I finished the Clap My Pitch Up/Apis Medicus derig whilst Rob improved the Delicate Steve traverse. Luke and I headed to the bold traverse on Elizabeth Line and Luke bolted it as a pitch instead whilst Rob derigged the European Federalist traverse because it was decided there were no good leads there. Got all the rope back to camp and sorted it out to prussik out (beastly bags) and some rope got washed at the spout whilst we waited for Lea and Botch to return. Out ~10pm

**02/08/23 – Cold Shallow Holes – Prospecting N of Fishface**

Botch, Rob

After getting out of a 48hr camp we were a bit knackered so wanted to do some prospecting. After some tactical faff to avoid the rain, we set off around 12:30. I wanted to look North of Fishface as me and Becka had found an aven north of the Coconut Shy with water coming in from above. We passed the Silver Moth crew coming out to also prospect the area as their cave had died. We first found a shaft with a deflated balloon (‘Dead Balloon Hole’) which connected through to a small surface rift and surveyed this. We then inspected a huge doline with not much in the way of cave and found a small cave and a blocked small shaft. We then headed towards the aven directly above where I’d been in Fishface and found a very promising hole – Mountain Aven. It has a ridiculous draught, blasting cold air 5m from the hole. Unfortunately, despite a bit of clearing rocks, we couldn’t find the way on. However, it could be very promising as when we exited our glasses fogged up! We then dropped kit at Homecoming and met Becka and Luke who’d been working on a new route to Homecoming. They showed us a promising bivvy site too.

Dead Balloon Hole: location in survey  
Big Doline Cave (3m long): 47.692200, 13.814630  
Big Doline Choked Hole: 47.692790, 13.814660  
Mountain Aven: 47.693100, 13.813270  
New Bivvy Spot? 47.693590, 13.809920

**31/07/23 – Fuck Keanu – U/G camp day 1**

Botch, Becka

After getting underground late the night before, we got going relatively promptly at 08:30. We were supposed to check Keanu Breeze, a wet lead that was supposed to be decent. Luke kindly showed us the way, though due to confusion almost left with my bag, leading me to chase him down for the swap. Becka then rigged the top of KB, immediately forgetting the survey and trying to go into CSJ. Some persuasion and a paper survey got us back en route to the bottom, where ethe way to the lead was a single bolt climb down a waterfall. We sacked this off. After some noodles at camp we went to look at some leads in Coconut Shy that Becka and Adam Aldridge had found. Our first was a climb up to a scree slope aven. I coaxed Becka up this, only for it to end immediately and be very loose. The next was a short pitch to a chamber with a few ways on – a rift back under to another (undropped) chamber, and a rift heading due North. This went on a decent way, alternatingly muddy and very sharp. Eventually Becka’s patience for this rift ran out at a squeeze, at which point we agreed that I’d scout on a little further. After another 10m I found a huge aven with water coming in on the right and the rift continuing on. Becka still could not be convinced so we headed back to the chamber. The final lead was a drop into a big chamber with water coming in the far side. We made the pebble bank safe and I bolted the pitch ready for tomorrow. We got back to camp around 20:30 and made dinner, with a very wet Rob sprinting in about an hour later.

**03/08/23 – Homecoming – Second Coming shitshow**

Rob, Luke, Chi

T/U: 13hrs

Chi had come up to Top Camp hoping to continue to push Second Coming with some people who might help him carry the gear out after, unlike some. So we set off in the drizzle for Homecoming entrance, making use of part of the shortcut to the [illegible] that we scouted when dropping off our gear at the entrance the day before.

From the rerigged entrance series, some of my rebolting still needs some work, especially the descending traverse below Wallace. Then onwards down Gromit and onward to the pushing front. Made quick time across some South Wales-esque traverses, before arriving at one where three excellent naturals had been ignored in favour of three shit bolts placed at ankle height. A common theme of the trip.

A bit more ropes then we arrived at Swiss Cheese where Chi, Wassil, and Merryn camped. Atrocious campsite, freezing and muddy. Felt sorry for them. It was from here that the quality of equipment rapidly deteriorated and I became very cross.

Moved along a traverse apparently rigged by top climber Dan Heins in 2019, really muddy and **cunty**. Slight rage. Heavily corroded litter rigging. ‘Wilfully Endangering Lives’, quite appropriate name.

Continued along the shitshow then down a terribly rigged pitch before arriving at an insane step across a gap, where it was entirely possible to rig on the original side all along. Arrived at Chi’s rigging which was a substantial improvement until we arrived at the pitch, where my baby (8.5mm rope) had been desecrated. I then learnt that Wassil had rigged some of the worst rigging I have ever seen. From a blank canvas of rock he had created the worst rub possible over an unstable boulder pile. Truly abysmal and pathetic for an expedition caver.

We continued to the main hang where Chi had tried his best in the circumstances, but had nonetheless suffered from a lack of supervision. A massive rub point followed by a 25m hang to a loose boulder climb to a one bolt wonder ~350m deep into a harsh alpine cave. At this point I became very upset. No-one should be on their first ever expo in this position. We rerigged Chi’s one-bolter to add another bolt then continued. At this point Luke and I had decided we needed to completely derig this lead to prevent future idiocy. Not only that, but we had passed at least 5 A leads en route to the pushing front that Chi had guided us to. We carried on to the actual pushing front, a pretty nasty traverse rigged by Chi to a massive drop into a huge space. We could see into a massive continuation, possibly a ~10m phreas or even bigger. But this project was not one for 4pm the day before leaving Top Camp. We derigged the ropes then Chi headed out with a full bag while Luke and I stripped out all of the shit rigging up until the South Wales style traverses, which we left because our bags were full. Left full rope bags just before Gromit traverse. Then I added a new Y-hang rebelay to Gromit while Luke left. I exited the cave very dehydrated and still angry.

Learning points:

1. Do not use shit bolts that are 5 years old.
2. Traverse lines are meant to be tight, not slack like a via ferrata rope.
3. Rope protectors are not for use unless there is no alternative.
4. Rope rub is unacceptable, especially not on pitches deep into alpine caves.
5. New expo cavers need appropriate supervision, especially if they claim they are experienced despite only having attended expo for 3 days in the past (not Chi).
6. Fuck Haydon Saunders
7. Fuck Wassil Janssen.

Thu bolts used: 2

**03/08/23 – Pushing/Derigging trip down Homecoming – Goosebox – Sticky Trigger**

Nathan, Becca, Botch

T/U: 10hrs

Having no plans to cave at Garlic Camp I set off for Homecoming with no plans, a bag full of gear, and hope. I met Becka and Botch as they were descending the entrance and joined their pushing/derigging trip to their evident relief. My first trip down proceeded smoothly, although the large red AV was annoying to manoeuvre through the crawls. The pitches down Hobnob Hallway were accompanied by an all-pervading roar, which signalled the presence of an unseen torrent of great magnitude. The pushing front(Lassitude Canyon) that had been left was now a knee deep streamway and not an inviting prospect. We chose to push a muddy traverse along a phreatic passage at the top of the rift. I was elected to bolt and struggled along slowly, economically putting in a traverse line with the meagre allotment of through bolts allowed to me. The phreas doglegged a couple of times but we ran out of rope relatively quickly. The keyhole continued for another 10 metres before doglegging left again out of sight. I dropped 4m to a ledge in the rift but this proved a dead end. We decided to derig. I derigged the traverse and then Becka took over on Goose Box. We headed out slowly, derigging all the handlines, leaving a drill and bolting kit at the bottom of the entrance series. I caught up with Chi on the way out, who had left Rob and Luke in the insanity of Second Coming. We surfaced new 10 and I returned to Garlic while Becka, Botch, and Chi walked up to Top Camp.

Through bolts used: 8

**02/08/23 – Prospecting around Fishface**

Becka, Luke, Lea, Adam EJ

A mellow, pleasant wander in the sunshine. We refound and rechecked 2019-CUCC-RH-01 (GPS 47.69156, 13.81210, Alt 1695) – this was (still) a p4 to a ramp down to a choke. We then found 2023-BL-10. Lea and Adam EJ dropped a p5 to a 5x5m loose clamber with a crawl to the N to a 2x4m chamber 4m high with no way on. Finally, Becka explored 2023-BL-11, which was a 10m boulder ramp to a cave with a continuing ramp down with some snow and a skylight to a 2nd entrance. Luke then forged a more direct, better route to Homecoming as he and I ferried over our gear there.

**01/08/23 – Bavarian Gentian**

Lea, Botch

Descended big pitch rigged by Botch and started surveying the chamber. It was a wet day and we heard the water at the back of the pitch start flowing with more energy. We surveyed a rift at water level. Didn’t finish surveying it and left it as a QM. We surveyed the rift at the back of the chamber which led back to Coconut Shy. I remembered a hole the size of a toilet bowl on the false floor of the rift. It seemed to have a chamber with a waterfall. We decided to give it a shot and found a less tight place to bolt a pitch a metre away. Botch taught me to bolt and I was able to bolt my first Y-hang while singing ‘Like a Virgin’. We were limited in time and once in the chamber it was quite wet, so we sent a few legs/splays and derigged the whole thing. Very nice caving day. Went back to Top Camp after 2 nights of underground camp.

**03/08/23 – Channel Number 2 (continuing Cocoa Channel)**

Lea, Adam EJ, Ben C, Manfred Wuits

Descended Fishface entrance series with tourist trip (Adam B, Sam Lee, Kai). Had a snack in the kitchen and went to the end of Cocoa Channel. Ben bolted new traverse lines, Adam EJ was on nail polish duty, Manfred had Wookey’s disto, and I was doing the notes (for the first time). The rift led to Miracle Maze 1 after 2 legs-ish. We then surveyed a short phreatic tube leading also to Miracle Maze 1. We came back to the start of the surveying part and decided to go down the rift into a small chamber. I rigged a single bolt pitch of about 4.5m. The chamber led to a narrowing rift at water level. We could see a waterfall from where the rift was too narrow. Adam EJ derigged and we came back to Top Camp.

**08/08/23 – Homecoming Push-Derig – Watershed**

Sam, Becka, Hannah, Adam A

T/U: 16hrs

After a big (double noodle) breakfast, we packed all three of our through bolts… and headed down from Garlic to Homecoming. Our mission was simple: push a lead in Watershed, then derig Watershed and the top of the entrance series. Our lack of through bolts did not deter us.

After the uneventful entrance series we gathered our kit, rope, and morale before heading through Propane Nightmares. Becka led the way, only occasionally reminding us to “keep up”, or that “snails crawl faster” (that second one may just have been in my head).

Turns out that beyond Strained by Gravity is a moderately traumatic rift passage best left to those with reliable life insurance and grippy wellies (preferably both). This was not my favourite section and our progress through was perhaps suboptimal. Now slightly behind schedule, we arrived at the lead.

Hannah reports:

We didn’t have high hopes for our pushing ventures with only 3 through bolts, but as we’d come this far, we felt we should at least try. The first Y-hang on the existing rigging at end of Watershed had a spinning bolt, but as we were limited on resources, we overlooked this (so needs replacing next year if people go back). I added a deviation on a splashing section as was keen to stay dry on this long trip – 1st bolt gone. I then reached the end of the traverse, where Harry had previously run out of rope. I used our second bolt to finish the Y-hang and dropped approximately 15m to a ledge. The canyon dropped again off this ledge another ~5m and then disappeared round a corner but looked to be continuing. Our 1 remaining bolt was not gonna get us far down here, so we decided to save it for a deviation needed on Strained by Gravity and turned around. Becka derigged this section.

On our escape we discovered several spinning through bolts on the lower sections of Watershed as we derigged – below [illegible] Canyon pitches rigged by Charlotte.

W pulled all rope out of Watershed except for one handline heading up into the deathy rift section and a traverse line over a bold step in the same rift series. We stored these ropes near the base of the up pitch into Propane Nightmares, just round the corner – i.e. where Hobnob Hallway splits from Second Coming.

We then derigged only the top 3 pitches in the entrance series and carried these ropes to Garlic. We washed all the rope we had in the stream below Strained by Gravity, but most of the rope left at the base of the up pitches (~600m) is unwashed as it came from Second Coming or was Strained by Gravity and above.

Summary of rope in Homecoming:

* Entrance pitches below Radagast to bottom of entrance series all left rigged.
* 3 ropes in short passage above small pitch above Radagast, coiled.
* ~600m rope, some will be old and need junking, most of it dirty, ALL needs checking
* NO ROPE on entrance pitches up to end of Radagast.
* NO METALWARE on any derigged ropes.

**06/08/23 – 08/08/23 – The three-day bounce for the four-day weekend**

Charlie, Adam B, Ben

It all begins in the Tatty Hut, several Gössers short of a brewery. “Let’s go up in the weather window!” Charlie had not done enough caving and wanted to camp in Fishface. “We’ll call it the three-day bounce.” “Then we’ll have a four-day weekend!” “The three-day bounce for the four-day weekend!” “We go to find the four-day weekend!” Glossing over the ensuing hangover (and Adam’s tent-sump experience) the Three-day Bounce was planned: Adam EJ and Nathan Walker would join the camp, and we would combine the trip with camp derigging.

Sunday 6th August:

In the mid afternoon, the five of us set out to Fishface. Fuelled by curry arancini and fresh bread, the vibes brewed as the day went on. The walk up via Stone Bridge was awful: wet, windy, with occasional hail. The Stone Bridge was a mess, with the tarp full of water, we had our curries and continued to Fishface. As we walked, the weather window remained firmly shut.

A quick change, and down we went. Time in: 21:00 (after faff). We made camp by 23:00 and straight to bed. Much pissing ensued; statistics:

Charlie: 5  
Adam B: 3  
Adam EJ: 3  
Ben Chaddock: 2  
Nathan Walker: 3  
Total Pisses: 16

We woke before dawn: 10:00. An alpine start. Now to get to business: Our lead was a hole in the floor at the start of the Elizabeth Line. Charlie bolted while Adam and Ben went to derig.

Adam B now recounts the derigging: (After derigging we are joined by Nathan and Adam EJ)

Me and Ben pressed along the Victoria Line [sic]. Beautiful passage. We derigged 2 pitches in an hour all very smooth, until… we reached a sketchy up traverse and up pitch. This of course me and Ben ignored and proceeded to rig an incredibly sketchy 1 bolt wonder pull through, completely unnecessary, to derig an up pitch. At the time we were rather happy with ourselves. Nadia did not hold that same sentiment. Anyway, we popped back to Charlie to find a pile of yellow group shelter slumped on the floor and some fresh bolts on the wall. Finally, Charlie awoke.

The potential 4-day weekend awaited. Charlie went first, the hole was nice and cosy. He slithered down and we followed. The chamber consisted of an old meander and dry waterfall about 4m diameter. “The four-day weekend!”, we exclaimed with grins on our faces. However, like all great weekends, it ended far too soon with a Monday, the only real lead a tight stream canyon, which audibly connected into the streamway, was tight and shit, as Charlie found out, and as such was a lead named Monday. We surveyed out and waited to rendezvous with Adam EJ and Nathan Walker. After hearing of their travels in an old streamway pitch that became too wet, we made our way back to camp: we arrived at 17:00. After such an arduous entry to the trip, the actual caving was a load of bollocks. And aside from Ben and Charlie checking out some crawls we all headed to bed at about 19:00 after an almighty 9 hours out of bed.

It was decided on an early start be had on the Tuesday. Our alarm clock, Nathan Walker, at 07:00 a human Casio beep, resonated through the twisting passage of bed-ridden cavers. With your classic faff, we packed up camp and left to the surface at 09:30. What was also realised underground was that the drum for our bowel movements was missing. I as such proceeded to individually bag mine and 3 other men’s shits into a larger double bag and then securely seat them right at the top of big red fatty tacklesack, precious cargo.

We all prussiked out to a glorious sunshine day, meeting the derigging team on the surface, taking part in an impressive amount of faff even by my standards – about a 2.5 gap between members. After all having had a good chinwag with Frank on the rebelays, we headed out to a beautiful day. With Nathan out around 11:30 and Charlie popping out at 14:30. Overall a successful yet underground remarkably eventful trip. 5 legs surveyed, 3 pitches derigged, and some shit moved from one hole to another solid [sic].

**08/07/23 – 09/07/23 – Garlic Cave Setup and First Nights**

Nadia, Jono, Phillip Ballister, Jana, Oakem

After doing a big bounce carry yesterday, we now had sufficient supplies to spend the night and begin the proper set up of the camp.

Philip set up the solar panels the day before (hopefully he writes that up) and we started with bolting practice to prevent the solar panels from blowing away in the wind. We used 4 bolts and tied them on with blue string. Meanwhile, Jono was digging steps into the entrance of the bivvy.

Our next priority was the water tarp. Sarah and Janis had previously filled our water tub with snow and left it out in the sun. This meltwater was our source for the initial camp. We added 2 bolts to the back of the cave for the back points. One bolt to he right side (looking in) and used a small tunnel for the 4th corner. We didn’t get to test it in a storm, but drips were collecting overnight. The current plan is to just have the bucket under and scoop water out.

Ground was levelled for 5 bed spaces ‘comfortably’. Sarah arrived at 2am and slept on the plateau. Good thing because we didn’t have space for her. A few drips in the night but no problem in bivvy bags.

We did a little prospecting the next day (but I’ll let someone else write about that) but not before levelling out the outdoor kitchen area, Jono improving the stairs, and contemplating a new way into the big hole. We worked on making the climb down on the far side less sketchy by filling in the floor under the climb and raising the level to make the climb shorter. Currently crossing the swiftly depleting snow plug is easier. The way around the back includes walking close to a 12m cliff which we feel will eventually cause an accident by a sleepy caver. Also, the climb down the back is not ideal.

We then started on the tarp set up (after being delivered a generous supply of curries and metalwork by Maddie and Evelyn). We dragged a big block to the right side of the cave and Jono placed a bolt high in the right wall. We noticed big holes in the ceiling, so we chose to do a tent sloping in 2 directions so that the majority of water does not drip into the sleeping area. We rigged a rope across from the front water tarp bolt to the new bolt for the peak of the tent. We then used an inserted chockstone and a natural for the lower corners of the sleeping area. We tied the back to the right back water tarp bolt and put a new bolt low on the left wall under the water tarp. We added an X of rope under the tarp on the sleeping side. We put a parallel rope down the middle tied to the top rope and a block in the floor. Currently we are only using the tarp in a half folded position.

Sleeping was good but needs to be tested in a storm. Felt damp from condensation. Much colder in the cave than outside.

Jana and Oakem worked hard on steps into the outdoor kitchen area. The ground was grassy so the frequent trips were making it muddy and slippery. Still need to find a gryke.