

Austria 1969

Those present :- Mini bus

Car

Don Vosper	John Pudduck	Joan & Pete Goddard
Dave Hodby	Bill Scrace	Pete Mathews
Roger Wallington	Marion	
Greg Smith	Pete Pierce	
Roy Stephens		

Eis Kugel Höhle (Tennengebirge Mountain Range)

Everyone managed to meet in Salzburg as planned, and after spending one or two days exploring the town and its attractions, our thoughts became diverted towards exploring caves, which after all, was the prime purpose of our visit.

The prelude to our caving activities was a meeting with the club's good friend, Felix Siezler. Immediately Felix led us into his house, it became apparent that he was an enthusiast. Boxes, full of slides, covered one wall of his front room, and from these he selected a few to show us. Following the slide show Felix produced a flagen of wine and proceeded to explain what he had planned for us.

"Er..... what's that you said Felix? Ice cave entrance 2250 metres above sea level; crampons and ice axe needed?"

Pete Mathews' lower lip dropped on his otherwise expressionless face, and we all began to wonder what we had let ourselves in for.

The following Friday evening, we met Felix, and after travelling a fair way up the mountain, the time came for us to park the vehicles and continue on foot. Felix explained that we would climb up 550 metres that evening, to a mountain hut (Doctor H. Hackel Hutte-1526 metres) and leave the remaining 724 metres to the cave entrance until the next morning.

It was a heavy slog up the mountain with all our equipment, and it was only constant encouragement from Felix that kept some of us going. What particularly amazed us was the way he completely underestimated how much further we had to go, and how long it would take us. Consequently we soon became wise to his optimistic cries of "Only 15 minutes more" and "Just over that hill".

Eventually everyone reached the hut and after consuming Wurzel soup (Two frankfurters swimming in thick green soup) and beer, all adjourned to bed.

We awoke the next morning to the familiar patter of rain on the roof. Following a hearty bacon and egg breakfast, we changed into caving gear and began the trog up to the cave. The hut was now situated just below the snow line, for just above the hut the rain turned to snow. We climbed for perhaps an hour in single file following in Felix's footsteps, The snow becoming deeper and the wind stronger all the time.

"Only 15 minutes more to the cave entrance" shouted our leader. "Yes O.K. Felix," we retorted. However after threequarters of an hour there was still no sign of the cave entrance, and weather conditions were getting progressively worse. Then, whilst traversing round a ledge, Felix fell into a waist deep snow-drift, promptly followed by myself. At the same instant there was a thunderous roar, followed by a minor avalanche of snow which fell on John and Marion. At this point many people began to feel a reluctance to continue, so we decided to abandon the trip and go back down.

We made our way to a large cave entrance that we had passed on the way up, where we sheltered and ate the food that we had brought with us. Whilst the others chomped away merrily, Roy, Wally, Pete Pierce and the Hon Treasurer, crawled off into an inviting cave passage leading off the main chamber. Large boulders were strewn on a floor covered with a kaolin clay, and the walls had a liberal covering of moon milk. In brief, the cave was fossilised and boring, similar in passage size to the Long Hole in Cheddar.

An ice packed traverse from the cave entrance required a lifeline, and unfortunately, due to a running belay jamming, Pete Goddard had to cut the line and leave some behind. (tacklemaster please note).

The way down was quick, and indeed the casual observer might well have wondered what fully grown M.C.G. members were up to, romping and sliding in the snow, playing snowballs in the middle of July!

Memorandum

Having fully recuperated the next day, we drove to the Taugl B. River gorge at Sommerau, watching out for "needle bends" as Felix called them.

When we reached Sommerau, Felix pointed out the cave entrance on the other side of the 200ft deep gorge. At this, Pete Mathews, and Pete and Joan Goddard decided to go sightseeing! Felix waited while the rest of us proceeded to change into caving gear.

Felix always caved in the clothes he normally wore. They comprised of; kletter boots, climbing breeches, shirt, tie, and sports jacket. I once asked him what he did when he met with any water in a cave, to this he replied, he took off his boots and socks, and rolled up his trousers!

The walk to the cave was long, but easy, as a foot-bridge spanned the gorge 100ft above the bottom, and we reached the entrance raring to go. After lighting our lamps, we waltzed into the entrance passage and turned right into a rifty crawl on hands and knees. The floor of the rift was mainly jammed boulders and flowstone, in some places we could hear the roar of the stream below. Between the layers of limestone there were layers of silica, a characteristic of caves of the locality.

The stream was met a few hundred feet further on, and was fairly high due to the large amount of rain that had fallen during the last few days. The passage was similar to O.F.D. 2, except the streamway was not so deep. We climbed several cascades being stopped by a deep pool, with water gushing out of a small hole the other side. According to Felix, whom we had left at the first cascade, this was virtually the end of the cave, but in drier weather it is possible pursue the passage further until it becomes too tight and wet.

So ended our caving in Austria, and we left Salzburg the following day in search of the sun.

Greg Smith