
Mendip Caving Group Newsletter

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A MISSIVE FROM MEGHALAYA

Dear all,

Postcards seem hard to come by in Shillong but Internet cafes are two a penny so it seems easier to send something this way.

We were delayed in getting to India - we were diverted to Bangkok and so had to stay the night in Calcutta before moving on to Shillong. Shillong is filthy and extremely run down. The cavers here are amazingly friendly and Brian and his family are kind - we practically have the run of the house whilst we are here and party all night - though we are only here for one more night before moving on to another caving region. I hope it is prettier than the last.

We stayed in a town called Borsora - a mining town - coal mines. The mining is pretty basic here - small tunnels with small boys and men digging the coal by hand. It is pretty basic stuff. Everything is covered with a layer of black dust and we had little water so you can imagine how grimy I am.

We spent five days there. I was terrified at first - not least because before we went a local guy was shot dead by militants who are trying to extort money from the mining operations. To make it worse we were staying in the mining man's house! Still, we survived despite sometimes having armed military men accompany us to the caves - at one point with loaded assault rifles with the safety catches off!

We moved on to a small village called Kunjoy in the heart of bandit country so as you can imagine, I was a tad nervous by now and perhaps wishing I'd gone to Lanzarote for a week instead. The village was prettier and the people were lovely - lots of babies and small children everywhere watching us! And we had no trouble at all from anyone for the whole trip.

We managed to survey around 5km of cave between six of us - passage size varies from 1m high to perhaps 15m high. We also have a few leads open too - some shafts that we didn't descend as the six of us went for a recce only.

Tomorrow we are moving on to a better known caving area to meet up with the main group and I will do a bit of tourist caving and may get pulled into a team to do some more new stuff depending on how they get on.

See you at the end of the month.

Julie Hesketh