

## ASSYNT, SCOTLAND – April 2018

### SATURDAY 7th

Everyone arrived safely at the GSG Hut (Taigh nan Famh) during Saturday after the 9 hour drive from Cheshire and Manchester. The full team was: Anton Petho, Gina Lewis, Olly King, Rob Stevenson, Nigel Dibben, Pete Johnson, Phil Edge, Tom Howard and Charlotte Meakin. Tom and Charlotte slept in their van while the rest slept in the hut. Gina and Anton cooked a meal for all.



The GSG hut at Elphin



View from the front door

### SUNDAY 8th

The day was planned for the Traligill valley. We decided to start at the cave at the end of the walk and then work back to the cars. The first site was therefore the Cnoc Nan Uamh system (NC 276 206). Walking up the valley, the entrances were soon visible as they are conspicuous caves. First is Uamh an Uisge (Cave of Water) with a steep slope down to the water followed by the Pothole Entrance. These were left as there was a very heavy flow of water in the bottom and we moved on to Uamh an Tartair which is the main entrance. This open cave has a small entrance to one side leading in to the river. We all went in and split up to explore around the stream area. After a while, the party split up and some headed south, upstream into Landslip Chamber. From there, part of the group went on to passages leading to Far Passage, a muddy passage with a lot of worm casts in the floor and ending in a sump (Sump 1). After meeting up outside the cave, the rest of the group also went in and followed the upstream route to Far Passage.

Heading back down valley, the Uamh an Uisge was investigated and a short section of upstream passage explored although the downstream passage leading to the Waterslide was ignored as the water level was dangerously high.

We then continued down to the Lower Traligill sink looking into Inclined Rift Cave (NC 2710 2092) on the way; this was a low gravelly crawl. At Lower Traligill (NC 2706 2091), the stream was sinking in both the normal and the Flood Sink and there was no way that we would have been able to explore Lower Traligill. After taking some more photos, we headed down past Tree Hole (NC 2695 2097) which was briefly explored. After this, we carried on down the valley to Glenbain House.

At Glenbain Hole behind the house (NC 2650 2169), we descended into the stream and Tom looked on down but the cave was getting tight and very wet in current condition. A retreat was made. Finally, we went down to Firehose Cave (NC 2635 2160) which is a significant resurgence into the river just below a powerful waterfall. Again this was impenetrable because of the high water level.

We returned to the hut and enjoyed a meal cooked by Olly.



Eastern entrance to Cnoc nan Uamh



Streamway



Lower Traligill Sink (to left of picture)



Phil and Anton in Tree Hole



In Glenbain Hole



Firehose Cave is just left of centre below the waterfall

**MONDAY 9th**

For Monday, we chose to look at the Allt nan Uamh valley and Rana Hole (NC 26895 16768) in particular as Tom was planning to leave the same night. Caving was a bit delayed as the previous day, Anton had found that his car had a broken spring and it (the car) was picked up and taken to Ullapool for repair. Caving therefore started at about 2pm.

The walk up to Rana was shorter than the walk on Sunday but seemed to be colder and windier but everyone in the group made it to the entrance. At the cave, we rigged a rope on the entrance (50m total) and descended, not knowing quite what to expect as the only survey we had consulted was a topo for the rigging. However, it turned out not to be too difficult a cave to navigate and the second pitch was soon rigged and most of the party reached the bottom of Rana Hole which joins into Uamh an Claonite beyond the sumps. A short exploration was made down the streamway before we started the return trip out. All exited safely and returned to the cars and home to the GSG hut but the cave was left rigged for a further trip the following day. This night, it was Rob's turn to cook tea for all.



Rana Hole entrance



Streamway at the bottom

## TUESDAY 10th

Rana was the target to de-tackle it but first of all we decided to visit Allt nan Uamh Stream Cave (otherwise known as A.N.U.S. Cave). This was located easily in the northern branch of the valley and we poked around in most of the passages. The Rana de-rigging team of Olly, Pete and Nigel left slightly before the others and headed back along the footpath and up to Rana Hole. The cave was quickly descended as far as the second pitch which Olly de-tackled. The Rana team made its way out easily, the trip seeming to be somewhat easier as a result of our knowing the cave better. After this, the Rana team followed the high level path past the Bone Caves and down to the road and the cars. From Allt nan Uamh Stream Cave, the other group returned to the cars with Rob and Phil visiting the Bone Caves as well. Because we had a slightly earlier start and an earlier finish to the caving day, we had time to go down to Ullapool and have an expedition meal in the Frigate restaurant.



The team at the entrance of A.n.U.S. Cave



Gina explains the geology



The cliff (left) containing the bone caves



View from the Bone Cave

## WEDNESDAY 11th

After most had left in the morning, Nigel and Anton went up Knockan, behind the GSG hut, to look for various holes marked in Caves of Assynt. Started walking from the hut up the road to the hamlet of Knockan and followed obvious track up the hill to the south and east.

1. At NC 21847 09739 found a fenced hole to the north (left) of the track. The hole did not have any passage off but was partly open in frost-damaged limestone and then continued with earth roof. This hole takes drainage from a ditch on the other side of the road. No obvious prospect.



Fenced hole by track



Earth roofed chamber alongside sink

2. A fenced hole at NC 21973 09561 with two holes, one taking a stream and the other which looked like a slight rift but filled with gravel.

3. A huge shakehole was passed at NC 21791 09328 but the bottom was filled with rocks. There was plenty of evidence of slumping around the sides.



Large shakehole, about 100m across.

4. Uamh an Tartair was found at NC 21660 09150 as recorded on C of A. The pothole entrance was seen first and then we descended a short way into the sink cave lower down the hill. Photos were taken. The stream was not followed underground as we were not equipped for the trip.



Pothole entrance to Uamh an Tartair



Main sink



Cascade from inside



Continuation to the base of the pothole

5. Next target was Uamh Cul Eoghainn which we think we found at NC 21162 09277 (c.f. C of A as NC 2115 0925). Spotted as a small cave in the rocks.



Uamh Cul Eoghainn

6. At NC 20991 09247, a small cave was found. We thought this was Un-Named Cave.



Probably Un-Named Cave

7. Next to find was Elphin Hole which we think we found at NC 20872 09321 (about 40m from the location in C of A. We also found a curious feature of a car battery semi-sunk in a depression at NC 20831 09352 where the ground seemed to vibrate as if a wooden shaft cover but this might be a pure coincidence.



Elphin Hole



Car Battery depression

8. Next, we tried to find Uamh Poll Eoghainn but the coordinates used were a long way out and we could not find the cave. The coordinates in C of A are NC 2066 0933 which is in the river bed rather than on the hill.

9. Black Finger Pot was found (we think) at NC 20952 09826 where there is a distinct depression. The coordinates in C of A are NC 210 098. The pot has been back-filled.



Black Finger Pot (left hand side half way down)

10. We did not find Calcite Cave (NC 2082 0995) despite the accurate grid reference.

That concluded the search for caves on Knockan. Afterwards, we went to Ullapool to collect Anton's car and watched filming of a Jeremy Clarkson programme at the garage!

## **CONCLUSION**

In every respect, it was an excellent caving mini-expedition. Apart from Pete, it was the first time any of us had been underground in the area. Anton and Gina had been there on field trips and their knowledge added a great deal to the enjoyment. And then there were the meals!

Nigel Dibben, 21 April 2018