

NEWSDESK

Altamira's hands

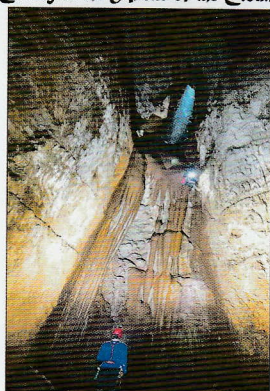
THE prehistoric cave art at Altamira Cave in Spain is well known, though not easy to see as access is severely restricted to help preserve the originals – a replica cave serves to satisfy the needs of tourists. The panels include six stencilled handprints and now, during an inventory of the paintings, three new handprints have been identified. These are in poor condition, but enhance our understanding of what the cave would have once looked like.

Eight of the hands are on the ceiling of the Sala de Polícromos, between depictions of horses, with the final hand over 200m from the cave entrance. This last hand was found in the 1980s and differs from the others, being based on a literal print where a child's hand was blackened and pressed against the wall, rather than making a stencil. An analysis of Europe's prehistoric paintings suggest that around 70% of the population was right-handed.

Meghalayan caving

THE Caving in the Abode of the Clouds 2019 calendar should be available by the time you read this report. As usual, this expedition series – which has been exploring caves in Meghalaya in north-east India since 1992 – produces an A4, spiral-bound calendar featuring photographs shot during the previous year's expedition, running this from February to January. Each page has space for writing notes against each date.

Caving in the Abode of the Clouds

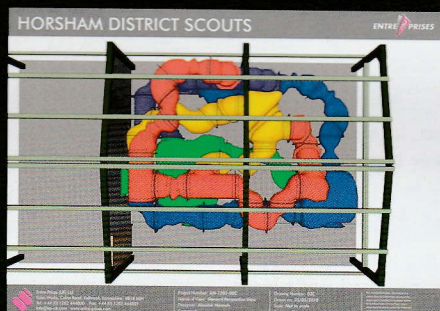


Calendar 2019

Since 1992 the expeditions have logged over 1,630 caves and over 1,000 of these have been explored to yield over 491km of passage. In 2018 alone, 22.8km of cave was surveyed, including extensions to Krem Puri, the world's longest known cave formed in sandstone.

Cavers can support the expeditions by purchasing a calendar for £4.50, including p&p, by contacting Ivan Young (e-mail: ivany.07@gsgroup.demon.co.uk).

Making caving accessible



A draft design for the artificial cave, as prepared by Entre-Prises



Paul Dold in the Réseau Félix Trombe in France in 2005
Photo: Paul 'Footleg' Fretwell

PAUL Dold died far too young; a caver and award-winning cave photographer of note, he lost his life while diving off the south coast of England in 2016 (see *Descent* 253).

Paul was active as a leader with Horsham District Scouts as well as a County Cave Leader and Assessor with the West Sussex CC. His enthusiasm was infectious and he did much to encourage young people to take up the sport; he also talked about building an artificial

cave as a training facility. His brother, Martin, is now leading a project to make this concept become a reality, by building an artificial cave system that will be made available to a wide range of groups within the Scout movement.

Following Paul's death, donations were distributed to three charities – the Cornwall Air Ambulance, Horsham District Scouts and the South East CRO – which received nearly £3,000 each. Now, a repeat donation is being

called for, as building an artificial cave requires a lot of funds – the target is £110,000.

Two designs are being considered, both containing features such as sumps and boulder chambers, replicating a true underground environment. About a third of the cost has already been raised, but that leaves a lot of work to complete the project. If you are able to donate something, however small or large, please head for the fundraising site of www.wonderful.org and search for Paul Dold.

Our hidden support

EVERY year a dedicated team of volunteer cavers puts together a superb weekend caving event, Hidden Earth, which is normally held around the end of September. Details for the coming conference have yet to be announced, though we know that people are already working away in the background on our behalf.

What seems to be less well known is what Hidden Earth does with any surplus funds from, typically, the caver-run bar. This enables the Hidden Earth organisers to help to fund 'good causes within caving', which it does on

a regular basis.

In February, the team agreed to pass £3,000 to the Ghar Parau Foundation to support British caving expeditions, something that Hidden Earth does most years. In addition, £2,000 will help the British Cave Monitoring Centre at Poole's Cavern (see *Descent* 265) to enhance the existing equipment with movement detectors. Finally, £3,000 is being given to the project that is raising funds to build an artificial cave in memory of Paul Dold (see above).

Hidden Earth ... our hidden support team!

Wind Cave 150

AN additional 594ft of surveyed passage has been added to the total for Wind Cave in South Dakota, which on 9 February took it past the 150 mile mark. On average, Wind has seen around 2 miles of passage surveyed annually, but this maze cave is far from finished. An estimated 3,000 leads are still to be pushed and an assessment of airflow suggests that only 10% of the system has yet been explored. At something over 240km long, Wind Cave is the world's sixth longest.

Gouffre Berger

THE Fédération Française de Spéléologie is again organising an international meeting at the Gouffre Berger, to help maintain and clean up the cave. Not only is this a chance to do some good for conservation, it is an opportunity to descend this world famous cave and, this year, to meet some of the first explorers to have reached -1,000m.

For more information and an application form for the event running from 20 to 30 July, visit: <https://berger2019.ffspeleo.fr>.

Star struck with dots

A NEW theory has been put forward to explain the dots and other markings found in Palaeolithic cave art, which suggests that early man was capable of keeping track of time using the stars. Some European art has been revealed to depict constellations – the animals so common to cave paintings, the researchers believe, are representations of the night sky. As part of the work, the paint used to draw these was analysed

and dated to a range spanning 12,000 to 40,000 years ago, then software was used to calculate star positions at the relevant time. Many paintings corresponded with significant events, such as comets being visible. Several specific examples have been studied further, one of which is the classic painted 'dying man killed with animals' from Grotte Lascaux, which can be dated to the time of a comet strike.