

SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB

BELIZE 2006

REPORT OF THE CAVING EXPEDITION TO THE TOLEDO
DISTRICT OF BELIZE, CENTRAL AMERICA. EASTER 2006



BELIZE 2006

EXPEDITION AIMS

Primary Expedition Aim
To discover the cave system that links the sinks at Esperanza Camp in the Maya Mountains of Belize to the Rio Grande Resurgence near San Miguel.

Primary Objectives

- Discover and explore the Rio Grande cave system
- Travel to Esperanza Camp to explore cave systems at river sinks and reported cave sites
- Complete traverse of Columbia River and explore remaining cave sites
- Build on the 2002 exploration expedition

Secondary Objectives

- Explore Roaring River within Tiger Cave – previously unexplored
- Traverse the entire Blue Creek cave system
- Maintain and develop further links to support future expeditions

Additional Benefits

- Genuine exploration opportunity
- Providing information for Department of Archaeology in Belize on Caves and Artefacts
- Living with Mayan Indians in Toledo District – cultural exchange and providing income to local people
- Introduction of local people to Caving
- Raising the profile of Caving as a Sport

EXPEDITION MEMBERS

Name	Age	Previous Experience
Gary Evans	43	Caver for 20 years CIC, Outdoor Instructor & Technical Advisor Cave Rescue Warden, Underground Controller Advanced First Aid Trainer & Assessor. Vast amount of UK caving experience & European caves Expedition to Montanajos, Spain, 1992 Expedition to Belize 2002 Regularly involved in UK cave exploration (digging) Member of South Wales Caving Club (SWCC)
Alan Braybrooke	31	Caver for 12 years LCLA L2, Outdoor Instructor Cave Rescue Warden Advanced First Aider Significant UK and European Caving experience 4 previous Expeditions to Belize Member of South Wales Caving Club (SWCC)
Toby Dryden	49	Caver for 28 years LCLA L1, Outdoor Instructor Cave Rescue Warden, Cave Rescue Controller First Aider Significant UK caving experience Expedition to Belize in 2002 Regularly involved in UK cave exploration (digging) Member of South Wales Caving Club (SWCC)
Phil Walker	31	Caver for 12 years & member of SWCC UK and European Caving experience 2 previous Expeditions to Belize Photographer & Cave Photographer
Dave Wiltshire	35	Caver for 10 years UK Caving experience Experienced Climber in UK, Europe and USA
Dominic Hyland	42	Caver for 15 years Member of Cave Rescue Team Advanced First Aider Cave Diver with significant experience in UK and Europe UK and European Caving experience Member of South Wales Caving Club (SWCC)
Rhys Williams	31	Caver for 20 years First Aider & Cave Rescue Team Member Significant UK and European caving experience Twice reached the bottom of Gouffre Berger, France Expeditions to India Regularly involved in UK cave exploration (digging) Member of South Wales Caving Club (SWCC)

CONTENTS

Abstract	6
Foreword	7
Belize the country and its caves	8
Map of region	9
Planning and preparation	10
Expedition Diary 2006	11
Findings 2001 - 2006	37
Map of Sites	37
Surveys	43
Rio Grande Conclusions	49
Columbia Conclusions	51
Pueblo Creek Findings	51
Surveying	52
Man Hours 2006	53
Grid Locations 2001 – 2006	54
Summary 2006	57
Photography 2006	59
Administration and Logistics	61
Research	
Permission	
Fundraising	
Finances	
Travel	
Insurance	
Medical	
Rescue	
Equipment	
Accommodation and food	
Guiding	
Appendix	66

Acknowledgements	73
Address List	74
Bibliography	75
Glossary	76
Additional information	77



ABSTRACT

This report is the result of a seven person expedition to Belize, for three weeks during Easter 2006.

The expedition took place in the Toledo District of Belize for 3 weeks from the 18th March to 7th April, 2006 with 7 Expedition Team members taking part. The expedition was a follow up to a visit by a 5 man Team in 2002, which failed to achieve many of its objectives due to the recent passage of a Hurricane through the area, making Jungle paths impassable.

The area explored has not been previously visited, as far as we have been able to ascertain. US expeditions have concentrated on the Limestone in the areas North of the Maya Mountains and previous UK expeditions did not venture far into the deep jungle, where water sinks underground. We have extensively researched all previous visits by Caving groups and expeditions and have spoken directly to an American Group that explored Tiger Cave in the area in the 1980's, to Queen Mary's College who were there in 1988 and to the Mendip Caving Group who were there in 1994.

A small Recce party of 3 people (including 2 of the 2006 expedition members) visited in 2001 and then a party of 5 (including 3 of the 2006 members) commenced exploration in 2002, but were blocked by the hurricane damage already mentioned. 2 members of the 2006 expedition went to Belize in 2004 to join Chris Jackson for a small expedition, where some minor finds were made.

The potential is significant with 11km to 15km distance between sinks in the area of Esperanza Camp, deep in the jungle and the huge resurgences near Tiger Cave which become the Rio Grande. Vertical range is in the order of 520 metres.

We maintained a dialogue with our contacts in Belize from 2001 to present and have permissions granted for this expedition from the Belize Department of Archaeology. In 2002, we took locals from San Pedro with us to the caves that we found and explored and provided some caving equipment to Rene Torres at the Belize Department of Archaeology, who is responsible for logging cave sites and protecting the Mayan artefacts found at those sites. We involved locals from San Miguel for the provision of accommodation and some catering and hired local guides in both of the exploration areas.

FOREWORD

The inspiration for the 2001 trip occurred on a trip to Ogoch Yagouh, thinking there must be something better than the tight wet and cold passages. Belize proved to have none of these, though it had its own horrors, by the end we thought only of getting back to cool off, sleep an undisturbed night and eat a huge meal.

These memories faded and were forgotten when it came to persuading a new team of cavers in 2002, they soon learnt the error of their ways, as meals of a single cheese triangle and sleep interrupted by dogs, chickens, blasting music and crying children led to hysterical emotional collapses.

Once again, a gap of 4 years allowed us to increase the team size to 7 for 2006, all of whom thoroughly enjoyed the misery of jungle trekking and sleepless nights, though this time with the added attraction of torrential rain during around half of the expedition.

Now the memories are fading again we can start thinking about the next trip.



BELIZE THE COUNTRY AND ITS CAVES

Belize, until 1974 known as British Honduras, is a small country about 280km long and 110km wide, similar in size to Wales. Lying on the Caribbean coast of Central America, it has Mexico to the north and Guatemala to the south and west.

Belize is a relatively low-lying country with a coastline of small Cayes and the second largest coral reef in the world. To the north the country is flat as it extends to join the Yucatan of Mexico.

In the centre of the country lies a granite massif, Victoria peak being the highest point at 1120m, formed before the surrounding Cretaceous limestone, then being responsible for the surrounding uplift, which has formed the Mayan Mountains where the main cave development is located. This mass of limestone along with the large rainfall, which occurs during the wet season, allows for a huge potential for cave development. Unlike the Yucatan peninsula that has received attention in recent years, the landscape leaves potential for dry cave development. In fact it already contains the largest cave chamber in the Western Hemisphere; Belize Chamber, in Chiquibal Cave.

Prior exploration;

With geology like this it is well known as a caving destination. The Americans have been active there since the '50's and there have been several UK expeditions, including two by Queen Mary College in '88 and '89 and one by Mendip caving Group in '94.



MAPS



PLANNING AND PREPARATION

With the dry season at its height and steady weather, the best time to visit the country is between February and early June, though due to work commitments we were limited to the period around Easter, this causing the prices of flights to be somewhat higher than at other times of year.

Contact had to be made with the Department of Archaeology, who control access to all the caves in the country.

The collection and redistribution of group equipment to individuals went smoothly, avoiding having to freight kit, by making use of the huge baggage allowances given on US flights, far more than mortal man can carry.

Expedition Area

From our research, it is apparent that many groups had focused their attention around the Vaca Plateau, where the greatest systems had been found. This basin in the surrounding Mountains was an obvious choice, but to avoid repeating work we decided to travel further south into the Toledo district which, having poorer links to the rest of the country would have received less exploration.

Toledo district is connected by the Southern highway from Belmopan to Punta Gorda (PG), which passes through some awesome Karst features around Cave Branch area. Between Dangriga and PG, there is now a 'made' road for most of the way, though there is still a rough roadway for several miles that continues to 'jar the bones'. PG is the district town, set on the coast. It does have some ferry connections and an airport but most travel is by road. Being the main town its shops sell most things that it is possible to obtain in Belize. From here it is a further one hour bus ride to San Pedro.

San Pedro, where we planned on basing ourselves, lies on the river Columbia and was about an hours walk South of the smaller San Miguel on the River Rio Grande. These villages lie where the coastal plain meets the hills and the covering jungle. Both the rivers resurge from their underground journeys a short distance above the communities, with dry stream beds continuing above, through a huge area of limestone, allowing for significant potential development.

On the 18th of March 2006, three cavers; Gary, Al and Phil set out from Heathrow, to act as the advance party for the expedition to make the necessary arrangements. The small team were routed through Charlotte in the US and were hoping to arrive in Belize on 19th March.

The second party of Dave, Toby and Rhys followed on the 20th and Dominic set out for Belize alone on the 23rd March.

EXPEDITION DIARY 2006.

San Pedro spreads over a considerable area at the western edge of the coastal planes that have been cleared of jungle. Each family plot has a water supply and often a selection of buildings, a mixture of concrete 'hurricane proof' and traditional wooden thatched houses, we were lucky enough to live backing on to the river for washing or cooling off. Many of the inhabitants have small farms in the surrounding area to help feed their families, these backup income from jobs with lumber companies, small shops and bars. The jungle has been largely cleared from the flat lands around the village but is soon reached in the local hills; it is crossed by many trails mainly made by hunters. We looked for alternative accommodation this year, as we had made no arrangements before leaving the UK, but ended up at staying with same family as we had in previous years, due to their excellent location and the high level of hospitality toward us.

Expedition Log

18th March Saturday

London – Charlotte N.C.

AB, PW, GE

Up at 4.00am and depart at 4.40am. Very tired, but keen to get going. Very cold outside. Smooth pickup for Phil. AI 10 minutes late but we were on time at Gatwick. Phil's passport photo entertainingly young. Flight OK, Phil and AI dismayed at having to pay for headphones and AI scared that he'd have to pay for his dinner – a big relief when it turned out to be not the case.

At Charlotte, on the way through customs, AI was sent off down a different route pushing bags belonging to Phil and me and none of his own! Turned out to be just a Customs stamping error, but a bit scary at the time.

Hotel La Quinta OK – 2 double beds for 3 people – 10 minutes from the airport.

Went to Steak House takeaway for grub. As much as you could eat. AI delighted. I managed 2 platefuls and AI managed 3!

Writing diary at 8.00pm US time = 1.00am UK time – 21 hours into the day.

Made a plan with AI for a list of objectives and agreed to draw a map of known, potential and complete objectives.

Gary

7.18 at Membury services and I'm already getting a hard time for being a mere 3 minutes late, just Phil and Gary being cranky, they've been on the road for hours already. It's the low point of the big spring cold snap and the weather is Baltic, but duvet jackets have to be abandoned in the car on arrival at Gatwick, no use for them in Belize, though I've no idea where Charlotte is, potentially Alaska.

Easy flight, but rubbish films, then breezed through US customs, even Phil who always seems to set of every alert they have going. In fact it was me who was dragged off at customs, even as I sobbed that none of the bags on my trolley actually belonged to me. Charlotte proved to be at a pleasant temperature and we took the opportunity to stock up on calories at an eat all you can restaurant, felt like mere amateurs when those who truly knew how to take full advantage appeared.

AI

19th March Sunday

Charlotte – Punta Gorda, Belize

AB, PW, GE

Woken early, Phil attempted to become hyperactive with a bowl of colours and sugar for breakfast.

Arrive at Philip Goldstein Airport, the wall of heat hits us as usual, none of the hassles of US immigration and were soon rattling into the city in an old Taxi. We then had to sit by the bus station and get on with some quality waiting, most of the bus companies having collapsed the timetable was a little new and we experienced a little apprehension. The sun reflecting off our skin must have called the beggars in from miles and we were treated to a parade of them, starting with an old friend the contortionist, then the mad woman, finally Paul McCartney's co writer and Queen Elizabeth's boyfriend.

Eventually pulled into PG, here the plan hit a new low as our hotel was in darkness behind a 'for sale' sign. Hastily found alternative, only after hauling stupidly heavy bags across town and having to beat off helpful beggar.

Al

Up at 6.00am, woken by the gentle crackling of the out of tune alarm radio. Breakfast at the hotel – cornflakes, waffles and bagels. Phil ate sugared colourings in a bowl.

Charlotte airport efficient and clean. Realised error of mains incompatibility and had to get a message to Dominic. Smooth and OK flight into Belize City and taxi to Bus Station. No bus station any more – closed down. Got a lot of contradictory advice about buses and waited for an hour or so, then got on a bus for Dangriga. Not too full, journey enjoyable. 3 hours, but great views and not too tired. Horrible wait in bus station for change for bus. First 20 minutes in the bus fumes and then realising the 'clipboard man' knew nothing, we lugged our bags across the road to get food. Beans, rice and potato salad and a long cold coke. Super.

Long wait, then over the road to a very packed James Bus. Stood for half an hour in the packed isle, kept having to pick bag up as people got on and off. Got a seat while Phil and Al stood for another half hour. Chatted to a Teacher from Independence for a while. Long, long journey – nodded and slept and arrived in PG around 9.30pm.

Disaster – Nature's Way appeared closed. Al and Phil went to look for somewhere else and I was left on the main street to look after the bags. Fended off most 'helpers' but got stuck with 'Al the Fixer' for a while, finally getting rid of him. Al and Phil returned with Al the fixer! And then a long walk with all the luggage to St. Charles Inn. Small room for 2 had to do for 3. Bit grim, but not too dirty. Got a shower and then slept on the floor (my turn).

Gary

Travel with Toby and Dave to Graham Christian's house in Dorking.

Rhys

20th March Monday

Punta Gorda, villages and fixing

AB, PW, GE

London – Charlotte N.C.

TD, RW, DW

What a day! Up early at 6.15am. Wandered down to Nature's Way for intel and found it open. Breakfast of fruit, beans and coffee. Booked in for 2 nights and asked about car hire. Up to the Mayor's house after wandering around looking for the airport and Town Hall. The Mayor's lackey sorted us and we hired a Honda Passport for the day. Went over to St. Charles Inn to get our bags and moved them down to Nature's Way.

Then began a big day of visiting and back and for, waiting for people to get home. Drove to San Pedro and established that most people got back to the village around 5pm and checked that the community phone was still in the same place. Had a Coke at the Shop.

Met up with Cesario and he offered us accommodation. Also met the Alcaldi's wife who offered us the downstairs of her house. Checked out a room at the School as well, then after helping empty all the Pews from the Church, left San Pedro and travelled to meet Bruno.

Bruno talked about his desire to find out about caves for taking groups to.

His house at Sun Creek was outstanding and he had accommodation available, but a bit too expensive for us. He also agreed to rent or lend us a car based on us giving him information on the caves in the area.

Next we headed up the Southern Highway and had lunch at 3pm at Coleman's Café near the rice factory. Rice and Beans. Coleman was friendly and chatted to us, dropping the bombshell that there was a huge Hydroelectric Plant being built at Tiger Cave. We left the Café and drove to San Miguel and then up the private road towards the building site. We drove through the site area and on to Tiger Cave. Oh Shit, devastation. Bat Cave was dry and the entrance formations were smashed to smithereens. Tiger Cave seemed OK, but the roadway ran past the entrance and on up the Gorge. The Turbine was being built alongside the entrance. The Gorge to the Right of the entrance had been bulldozed clear and the pipeway route could be seen descending. Next, we drove around the back to another site, but were too scared to continue without permission. So we drove back down to the main Site Workshops to ask for permission. We were sent to Vernon up at the top workings. He was very relaxed and helpful and gave us free reign over the site. From there we went up to see where the Rio Grande sank to Tiger Cave and then where the Rio Grande appeared from Kangaroo Cave – a new sight for us. The plan seemed to be to divert water as it leaves Kangaroo Cave, capture it in a Pipe funnel and then pipe it down to the Turbine, leaving only Winter overflow water to drop into Tiger cave Roaring River. There was a Huge, Huge mess and building site, but easy access to the caves.



Entrance to
Bat Cave
2004



Entrance to
Bat Cave
2006



From there we went to San Pedro Columbia to meet Enrique Choco and Alfonso Chee who were potential guides. We also met Juliann Kesakoo, the Mayor, Cesario Choco regarding accommodation and Chrisbino Choon about transport.

We then picked up the car from Bruno and went back to Nature's Way for a shower. A meal in the Seaview Restaurant of rice, beans and spinach which was very good closed a hell of a long and tiring day.

Gary

Pathfinder day, first element of any day is finding breakfast. In finding this we found that Natures way hotel was really open, so arrange to move there, as we had arranged to meet the rest of the team there.

A vehicle was essential to allow us to get about and arrange all our accommodation, guiding, food, etc. As we couldn't get to Bruno who over the internet had promised us assistance, we had to rent a car off the mayor of PG.

This vehicle looked a bit smart for us, so it was abandoned on the edge of San Pedro Columbia; we felt it may be difficult to negotiate good prices from inside a shiny air-conditioned 4x4. There then followed several hours of not a lot as we went in circles around the village, with various leads and contacts being away, at the farm, moved, dead and generally not around. Eventually negotiated a good price with Cesario Choco, who we've stayed with before. Busy family are a bit older, so maybe quieter now, and the riverside location is hard to beat.

Al

Graham gives us a lift to Gatwick and we fly out to Charlotte, North Carolina. We eat in the Cracker Barrel and spend the night at La Quinta hotel.

Rhys

21st March Tuesday

PG, Belmopan and permissions

AB, PW, GE

Charlotte – Punta Gorda, Belize

TD, RW, DW

It was a long drive to Belmopan in 'little Jimmy', got a bit lost, strange in a country with so few roads, but have only ever been in the buses around the place.

The Department of Archaeology has moved to a nice shiny warehouse, where we were given permission to carry out our objectives, in addition we were asked to make contact with Trekforce. A UK organisation, who in carrying out environmental work had come across some new caves and the Department wanted checking out. Forestry permission bought and we managed to leave sweltering officialdom behind.

Our final mission was to contact Ian Anderson, the main caving provider in the country; he also provides the closest to a rescue service that can be found. This done we went caving!

St Hermans cave, a tourist cave close to the highway, but still a nice through trip, with good formations and lots of archaeology.

Eventually got back after having driven through awesome scenery of bushfires and monster thunderstorms. Nothing to show for it, the photographer was asleep.

Got back and met the rest of our team.

Al

Up early again at around 6.30am. Hit the road in the 2 vehicles. Returned the Mayor's car and headed North in the Suzuki Jimmy with Phil driving. Stopped for breakfasts at Independence which was great and then drove off in the wrong direction, arriving at the Port rather unexpectedly. I was wondering what a Massive Ship was doing inland! Having sorted ourselves out, we headed inland and continued on to Belmopan and after much faffing there found that the Department of Archaeology had moved to the new Museum.

There we met Dr. John Morris and permissions were granted relatively easily. He was a nice man and very helpful. He also asked us to liaise with Trekforce to look at a new discovery at Rio Blanco.

Having left the Department of Archaeology, Al called Trekforce and I headed off to the Mapping department in search of more detailed maps of Southern Belize area.

Then on to the Forest Department where we were granted camping permission for Esperanza after 2 visits and much paper stamping.

From Belmopan, we went to meet Ian Anderson at Caves Branch. Nice guy, great set-up, but not really interested in what we were doing. Took a map and some written plans for him in case of Rescue requirement.

Next stop was Herman's cave. Brilliant through trip which started as a Show Cave and then went through huge caverns and climbs. Lots of Mayan Pottery and objects on the way through the cave. A great walk out in the jungle and some good photo opportunities.

Next was a super swim in Blue Hole – welcome and cooling, followed by the long journey back to PG, the last couple of hours being in the dark. The rough part of the Southern Highway was a nightmare and the poor little Jimmy got hammered. Al nearly took off as the tarmac changed to rough road after a bridge. Phil and Al shared the driving, as I had been stupid enough to forget to pack a driving license and deserved to be squeezed into the back of the Jimmy, though Al drying his pants on the driver's seat headrest after the earlier swim was rather disconcerting!

Arrived back at PG at around 8.30pm and met the guys off the bus at Nature's Way. We all ate at the Seaview – magic. Sat up making a plan with Al and drawing up a map for the guys for the next day's briefing.

Gary

Flight from Charlotte to Belize City. We catch the express bus from Belize City to Punta Gorda and meet Al, Gary and Phil at Nature's Way. Evening meal at Marian's Seaview Restaurant.

Rhys

Arrived in Belize City after night of horror in "La Quinta" Charlotte N.C – Nasty smoking room and air conditioning that appeared to suck life force out of body.

Well Belize was HOT! (35 – 40). A 20 minute taxi ride took us to the petrol / bus station.

I left sexy new tackle bag in taxi and super kind taxi man returned after 10 minutes of my panic. I now firmly believe in the strength of the good tip.

Got on express style coach and not the cool old American school bus. (Toby and Rhys were being a bit gay about the whole comfort thing).

Bus driver had obviously done the route since birth and drove 100 miles an hour all the way, even on ten miles of unmade track that would not look out of place in Rally GB. I actually thought we should have given him a standing ovation when we got to PG.

Met a girl from Dangriga on the bus. She worked for a finance company in Belmopan. She was 40 had two older children who were in higher education. She placed a lot of emphasis on education. There's a lot of poverty in Belize and I guess education is a way of trying to escape.

Leela Vernon the "Bruckdown Queen" was on our bus, she's a really famous Belizean singer. We heard from Chet who ran the hostel, that she was pretty radical when she was younger and is now on the board of PG conservation group.

Chet was a bit crazy, he came down 35 years ago from California. I think he was a bit of a hippy / beatnik back in the day.

PG when we got there was hot as hell, actually maybe even hotter. Even at 8:30 PM there was no air.

Gar, Phil and Al had just got back from Archaeology Dept in Belmopan.

Dave

22nd March Wednesday

PG – San Pedro Columbia

GE, RW, TD, DW

Rio Blanco

AB, PW

Up early once again, and had a shower, then coffee. Did a load of texting and dealing with messages. We all headed up town for breakfast at the Snack Shack – fruit, pancakes and coffee – very good. Shopping for supplies next, with Dave keen to help and Phil, though not fussed at first was really helpful. Got back to Nature's Way with arm-fulls of food and equipment and found that the rest of the Team had packed the car. I then secured all the roof load so that Phil and Al could head off for the Trekforce opening. I took the rest of the guys through the maps and the plan. Chet made us tea and Rhys broke a mug and then broke it again ! Very funny.

We caught the bus from PG at 12.00 – a great old museum piece and a relaxing ride to San Pedro. At Cesario's we unpacked the bags and got ready for a walk.

With the inevitable walk in the hottest part of the day, we all went quite well over to the Columbia resurgence. We managed to find the way, despite the significant changes since 2002 and found a great swimming pool, leaving Toby there whilst Dave, Rhys and I went on to look at the resurgence. Then headed back for an excellent swim.

Toby headed back ahead of us and then after a while we followed on. Moving very fast, we were surprised to have not caught up with him and then thought he'd got lost. Rhys and I went back, but there was no sign, so it meant returning and climbing the big hill for a second time.

We found Toby ahead with Dave, but I had got too hot by then and never cooled down until the shop and a coke. Back to base, pumped water and got organised.

Al and Phil returned late and we all settled back into the accommodation a bit.

I did a medical talk and then the usual audience of fascinated kids arrived.

We waited up late for the neighbour to arrive home so that we could arrange transport for the next day.

Gary

Gentle introduction, with a fine breakfast, accompanied by the faint raw sewage aroma and the squeals of a mad tramp.

Feeling like a real expedition having changed travellers cheques into 2cm of cash and with 'little Jimmy' overloaded to the max, with huge amounts of expedition kit, we promptly started driving the wrong way down a busy market street.

After unloading the kit into the hut, Phil and I set off to meet representatives of Trekforce. The occasion was the official opening of some trails they had been working on and handing over to the local representatives. There were a horde of jungle hardened 'students' on a gap year, lounging about, we got on with getting grid references and descriptions of the caves they'd found, some very exciting stuff.

There then followed rounds of speeches from all sorts of local dignitaries, government representatives and Trekforce. During all this someone took my name, with a whisper that the British High commissioner hadn't turned up so I would fill his slot.

So dizzy with the heat I stepped forward and rambled about why Belize has fantastic caves that people would want to visit and bring tourist dollars into the villages, not sure what else I said, but it received applause which was nice. The afternoon resulted in some good contacts and a free meal.

Back to the rest of the team, only day one, tortillas with egg.

Al

Breakfast at Snack Shack then catch the bus to San Pedro Columbia. In the afternoon, I walk to the Columbia River resurgence with Gary, Toby and Dave.

Rhys

Even more heat followed by smoothie and breakfast burritos all very civilized.

Went shopping in PG after breakfast for provisions. Brought 3 monster machetes, all about 3 ft long.

After an amazing bus ride with Bob Marley on the radio we arrived at our destination of San Pedro.

After chilling for a while a few of us went for a walk into the jungle. It was the hottest I've ever been. EVER EVER EVER.

Tried the Tortillas tonight cooked by our hosts. They are so so bland I think the Labrador would struggle to eat them.

We are staying with super cool Mayan family with 100000000 kids. Grand children and Great Grand children everywhere. The little ones come in and see us and get really excited about things like the head torches and gadgets.

I'm now lying in hammock in our hut, pretty much ready for bed. A massive cockroach just crawled under the hammock but Al wapped it with a Teva sandal. Phew Al you saved my life.

Dave

23rd March Thursday

Tiger cave, San Miguel

AB, TD, GE, PW, RW, DW

London - Charlotte N.C.

DH

Start of sleep deprivation, dogs, birds, dogs, children, dogs again, poor hammock tension and dogs once more. Crispino, a retired police officer, who lives close to our hut has a van, so we found ourselves well into Tiger cave by 9.30, after an invigorating pick-up ride.

Everyone seemed properly impressed by the scale of the cave and we travelled through to the end, taking photos, GPS'ing other entrances. Rhys, Gary and I swam across the lakes to Roaring river, the sump was still in place, but the swims seemed short. Bolting a traverse above Roaring river had been an objective but with the hydro scheme draining it within months we decided it wasn't a good use of time. Gary had a go at swimming up stream, all a bit scary for me, huge current and very intimidating fresh water crabs, big pincers.

Evening was a bit of a family celebration as one of their boys came home with his family, Basilicus who had caved with us previously, had a great surprise finding his old friends, taking up his bed.

Admin. of diaries, writing up contacts and attempting to arrange guiding with the mysterious moustachioed Enrico.

Dinner of tortillas with beans, all starting to understand the suffering now, maybe we'll give the ladies our bag of rice tomorrow.

Al

Rubbish night with loads of noise, too much heat and insects biting. 6.30am rise and 7.30am start. Peanut Butter and bread for breakfast and a cup of tea. A quick run over the shop for Cheese and then picked up a ride to Tiger cave.

We logged in with the workshop, then headed into the cave which was as impressive as ever. We all changed in the entrance and headed in, looking for leads all the way. Phil took photos as we went along. We climbed out to the jungle at the second skylight and then went on all the way to the rope climb. Toby stayed at the climb and the rest of us marched on through the big passages to the 'jump-off'. Up and over the climb and on through the muddy passages to the sump. Dave feeling tired and headachy. Phil got some photos done at the sump.



We then headed back to the rope climb and then back to the roaring river lakes. Al, Toby and Rhys went to the Chamber to look at the 3rd Jungle Entrance. Phil, Dave and I blew up the Inner tubes and Dinghy and then waited a long time for the others to join us, Dave and I managing to get a little sleep.

They eventually arrived and Al, Rhys and I headed out over the lakes in the dinghy and 2 inner tubes. The water was cold and the duck challenging, but no worries and then on to the end. We all climbed down to the Roaring River along the right wall and I got into the water heading upstream. Eventually the way on was blocked by a large calcite dam. We could get to the top of the dam but couldn't safely descend into the upstream end. The water was powerful and on the limit of safety for me to be in it, so it was all done with great care.

We stormed out again and changed in the entrance, finally leaving the cave to join the others at the river.

We rode back in the pickup and after a rest at Cesario's, cleaned kit and bathed in the river. Dave and I wandered over to see Enrique to arrange Saturday.

Gary

We got a ride on a pick up, up to tiger cave, near San Miguel. AWESOME! Formations, massive stal! Entrance 100ft tall, massive massive chambers. Still bad headache – turning nearly into a migraine. Made it to sump end of cave but was battered and did not go down passage and canal to roaring river.

Me, Toby and Phil went back to river/pool to cool off and swim, we had been caving and underground for 6 hours.

Bean and onion stew with tortillas for dinner ummmmmmmmm!

I'm writing this on a bed (not hammock), which I've already slept in this afternoon. I was so wasted after the first day; I crashed on bed for a couple of hours.

I was woken up by big dad of family fixing lock on one of our doors. It was Belizean style. Fixed with a hammer. I quickly looked for gun but not quick enough

Dave

24th March Friday

Tiger cave area

AB, GE, PW, RW

Punta Gorda

TD, DW, DH (arrives)

We were up a little later – 7.00am! for a 7.30 depart time. A quick scramble to get ready and then away on time. Dave and Toby were going to PG to meet Dominic at the airport. Al, Phil, Rhys and I were dropped off at the site workshop once more, but this time were sent to see the boss. Vernon drove us up to see Geoff Hanson who was very cagey and didn't really want us there. Refused us permission to enter Kangaroo Cave. He seemed blissfully unaware of what the caves were about. He seemed convinced that that we were hunting relics or taking pictures for National Geographic.

We went to the sink and GPS fixed it and also saw some huge Iguanas up a tree. We then followed the dry river bed which seemed to be an overflow route for the river, and found an enormous sink. We climbed down and explored, but could find no ways on. Photo's and GPS readings were taken and then we headed back up to Kangaroo Cave to GPS fix the entrance. Next we followed the watercourse down and chatted to the workers who were smashing rocks, well, thinking about smashing rocks. We climbed over the workings and went down to Bat Cave. Al and I went in and swam to the end with the intention of surveying the cave.

Following the surveying and exploring, there was a long wait for a lift, and we had to shelter in a water pipe at the riverside and got some sleep. Then once the rain had stopped, we headed to the riverside for a swim and a lounge.

Back at base, I rang home and then did some clothes washing by asking the girls to show me how it was done. Then over to check with the guides and arrange a lift followed by a super tea of rice, beans and egg. Kit and paperwork sorting then bed.

Gary

Woken extra early by Dave and Toby crashing about on way to bus as they were meeting Dom today, which we all enjoyed.

The plan had been to head back to Tiger cave and visit some of the sites we'd not visited before, but we were pulled into the office of the manager. A big American with a big dog, sat behind a big desk with, we suspected a big gun in it. He was concerned that we may cause him trouble, environmental or archaeological, we managed to survive this but were forbidden going into Kangaroo cave, our main objective for the day.

Had a good look around the Tiger cave sinks, finding some huge features, got some good Petzl photos for Lyon Equipment, we also pushed to the end of the Bat cave and produced a rough survey. Talking to the local Indian builders, who all predicted that the scheme would be washed away with the first big rains, but in the midst of this they confirmed that Esperanza camp was open, one of our main objectives!

Rain showers which had started in the night returned so we slept in the Hydro pipes.

Lots of brews.

Dinner of rice and chicken, absolutely huge

Al.

Me and Toby went to PG on 5.30am bus to get Dom from the airport. After whole day of wandering aimlessly eating nice food and falling asleep (on jetty overlooking the Caribbean) we got Dom at 3.30pm, caught bus at 4.30pm from PG.

Punta Gorda bus was rammed and before we left we all had to witness coppers beating two drunk drivers.

I stood up all 1hr bus ride home wid ma home boys at d bac av di bus.

Dave

25th March Saturday

12 mile rd, Gibnut holes and bridge

GE, DW, TD, PW

Above Columbia resurgence

AB, DH, RW

Big rain through most of the night, alarm at 5am, up to cancel driver, the road being impassable if wet. After a long faff, team went to check an area of Swiss cheese like rock passed in 2002, while I took a team to GPS some large shafts descended in 2001. Possibly a foolish hope but 2 objectives were needed, no real chance of finding the shafts, became quite lost in the Milpas, the local farms. Did find and explore a crag line and rock shelter where Dom found a stone blade, as well as a Marijuana field, which nearly fell to my over enthusiastic machete. Luckily I was stopped in time, there was probably an AK47 aimed at me at the time.

Walked back past many big cat tracks, Rhys insisted they probably belonged to an Alsatian. Finished early enough to get washing done and visit guides and drivers, who seemed hopeful that we'd be able to get along the road tomorrow.

Al

It rained heavily all night and the 5.00am start was cancelled. We got up again at 6.30am, mooched around and then split into 2 groups. Al, Rhys and Dominic went to look at the Potholes from the 2001 trip and Dave, Phil, Toby and I walked up the 12 mile road as far as the Rio Grande bridge. We looked for caves on the way and looked hard at Gibnut, finding only a rift, 6ft drop and 20 metres of passage.

At the Rio Grande dry river bed, we were 3 Km from the Kangaroo cave resurgence, so the long dry river bed suggested a long underground river.



We got shown a shortcut back by a farmer and his grandson and had a mental rollercoaster ride through a narrow trail cut through thick undergrowth. We were shown a Tapir track at a stream.

We got back around 4.00pm after the obligatory coke. After sorting water, Al and Dominic went off looking for some new leads from villagers. We had to cancel Enrique from guiding the next day as we felt the 12 mile road to be impassable to traffic due to the thick flowing mud on it following the rains. Instead we booked 2 lots of transport and planned a split for 3 to go to walk the Columbia and 4 to go to Rio Blanco.

A good atmosphere after a dinner of Corn Tortillas, egg, tomato soup and tea.

Gary

The returning team who had travelled on foot along the road today came back with tales of such mud that we went out again and cancelled all the guides and reorganised our drivers. Too much rain has fallen for the drive up 12 mile road to Champon cave. Instead, Gary, Toby, Phil and Dave explore "Gibnut" caves part way up 12 mile road. Al, Dom and I walk out past Columbia River resurgence to GPS a shaft found by Al some years ago. We're unable to find it due to vague memories and jungle. Find a field of marijuana though. Swim in the river and come home.

Rhys

Me, PW, GE and TD went up 12km road for 9km to dry river bed (Rio Grande River) we've worked out that riverbed goes to Kangaroo Cave/Tiger cave resurgence downstream and possibly to Champon up stream.

The road up to stream was muddy and boggy and we think we would struggle to get 2 wheel drive vehicle up there at the moment. On the way up we crossed some spectacular bridges that all look like they're in state of decay and about to collapse into riverbed (took pics)

Met some Mayas, who showed us a slight short cut back to San Pedro (still 8k march). On the way we were shown Tapir footprint – pretty cool.

We stopped at the shop for welcome coke in old-fashioned bottle.

Family made flour tortillas (nice) with some sort of onion - was the tastiest thing we've eaten.

Dave

26th March Sunday

Pueblo Viejo

RW, AB, PW, AB

Salamanca

GE, DW, DH

Up at 6.15am, relaxing get ready and porridge for Breakfast. Pickup arrived on time and we were off on the rough track to Salamanca. We located the sink quickly and GPS fixed the location and took photographs.

We then set off down the river, looking for leads and taking in changing river bed conditions. We found 2 x 20 metre tubes and that was it, though some quite large pieces of stal were found in the river bed near the Salamanca bridge. There was a nice section of limestone Gorge also.



It started to rain, which made rock hopping lethal. We continued, struggling on and failed to find Bat Cave Columbia due to the inaccuracy of the previous trip's Grid References and also the large amount of Jungle Growth. We had a swim on the way back.

Bean mush and rice for Tea.

Gary

Up early for porridge, then out at 7.30, to our drivers. Salamanca team disappeared to the church to meet Jimmy, a youth in a pickup we'd flagged down last night and haggled with. The Pueblo team set out with Crispino, for the long drive to Pueblo, to follow up some of the leads given to us by the Trekforce team. Stopping at the newly constructed and permanently staffed visitors centre, closed, we looked at the painted map showing a trail passing our desired entrances.

On arrival we sought out some guides, many were not at home and the remainder seemed very disinterested, so we set off. As always getting through the farmland was the problem, once we could hit the river bed we'd be fine.

After beating off his attack dogs, Alex Sho left his farm to come with us to the cave entrance, and led us upstream for some reason, crossing a huge propped log, high over the river bed. On down the river, getting lost in Rhododendron patches, our machete was laughed at, as it repeatedly bounced off, Rhys nearly trod on a snake busy basking, trod very lightly from then on.

A huge arch crossed the river, which was pretty awesome, except that soon after this the river disappeared into the mountain which called us in.

Shared lunch with Alex at entrance before we started out surveying, photographing and exploring, managed 200m of big passage before we were stopped by a pitch.



Came out to torrential rain, dry season my bum, back to the village in a little over an hour, very wet and cold. Called in again to see Alex who gave us coffee and we showed him digital photos of what we'd found, he knew of other 'bigger' caves though we'd need someone more experienced to get us there.

Lots of being stared and quizzed about 'what is that?' until the pick-up arrived and we rattled back under a blue tarp, to a lifesaving brew.

Plans for tomorrow again destroyed by the weather and the team all now wanting to hit Pueblo Creek cave.

Al

It's still too wet for Champon and Esperanza Camp. Gary, Dom and Dave walk the Columbia River bed down to the resurgence. Al, Toby, Phil and I travel to Pueblo Viejo and find our way down to the river with the help of Alejandro Cho (Alex). We eventually reach a rock arch and then a large cave entrance. We survey into the cave but are halted by a 15m overhanging pitch down due to a lack of kit. The pitch is named "Better than India". We survey a side passage "Phil's End" and back through the rock arch. 355m surveyed altogether. More rain on the walk out and journey home.

Rhys

Me, GE, DH walked about 18km along the dry riverbed of the 'Colombia' – it was hot, overcast and even torrential rain. We got absolutely soaked and were still warm!! We found a few passages but no entrances to the big cave that must be running underneath. We started the walk at Salamanca camp, which is an old British army base – all derelict now – very weird.



Picked up some nice big stal in riverbed and also lots of flowers (started pressing in book). It was hard work in the wet – all the rocks were slippery as hell. It was great to get to resurgence and have a dip in 'bounty' ad pool. The other team found cave in the area they were looking in and it looks like it might go! Heading there tomorrow, can't wait
Dave

27th March Monday

Pueblo Creek cave

RW, GE, DH, DW

Hills South of Pueblo Viejo

TD, AB, PW

As it had never been intended to operate as one big team we split in case this new cave closed down and until the trails recovered to allow us access to the wilder areas where most of our objectives lay.

Toby, Phil and I set out with Juan Coi, intending to try to meet some of the guides for Okeb Ha, the Rio Blanco sink, though with the community phone out of order, we had not managed to contact them.

Eventually we ended up in Pueblo again and met an old guide. There was confusion as to whether he would guide us to the same cave as yesterday. A nod from his wife and he was allowed out with us.

A really enjoyable day out, giving us some of his jungle knowledge, ended up on a fantastic hilltop, great views, but the blatant lack of cave caused us to remind him of why we were there. On the way back, he didn't find the trail to the big cave we'd heard about. As we were drawing near to the village and quite disheartened we spotted a shaft close to the trail.

I descended this using a length of handy 'donkey' rope (not CE rated) but it was blind. Prudencia returned having remembered more caves, led us a short way back up the trail to another shaft (about 10m deep) we couldn't drop and a small cave under the hill top we'd been on earlier.

Another afternoon of torrential rain, sat in the village waiting, our driver had headed towards the Guatemalan border, possibly for minor mischief. Endured more stares from the school children, while Phil lay on the floor soaked and shivering with fever, I think maybe we all had a low point.

The other team returned ecstatic from massive discoveries, we sent Phil home with them, it was now that I realised that my GPS had gone from my rucksack, further sinking my low. Back to the hut eventually, Phil unconscious and with stereo vomiting and much hurried exiting the hut throughout the night, we settled to rest.

Al

Up at 6.00am, tea, porridge, pack and out at 7.00am. One hour in Chrisbino's truck to Pueblo Viejo; a long rough journey. Dave, Dominic and I were in the back enjoying the ride. We walked from the village shop along trails and a tough walk on the river bed for around 1 ¼ hours to a large cave entrance – Pueblo Creek Cave.

We changed and headed in. A big cave, and on passing a jungle skylight, we came to the pitch. I chose a location and Rhys placed the bolts and then rigged. A good free hang.

We all descended and the cave was huge at the bottom and huge ongoing through the cave.

We worked in, surveying as we went. The guys measured 359 metres in the entrance passages yesterday and we surveyed 450 metres today. Passages were enormous and it was all very exciting.

We crossed a lake at one point, finally arriving at a massive chamber that we named 'chamber of enormity'. We finished at a pit, after hand lining down a smaller pit, leaving the cave ongoing for the next visit.

We turned and headed out, taking an hour end to end, including 4 people up the SRT pitch.

We had a late lunch at the entrance and changed for the hard slog back to the village, again in 1 ¼ hours. Hard with the heavy pack.

An enjoyable ride back to base again with Dom and Dave discussing weapons of war and the scenery!

Bath in the river, did some washing, water pumping, then egg and rice for evening meal.

Gary

Pueblo Creek Cave again today with Gary, Dom and Dave. We rig 'Better than India' pitch and drop into really big stuff. Approximately 450m of passage is surveyed before we turn back. The way on is still open. We leave with a couple of short climbs and a canal to attack next time. In the evening, Phil is crashed out, feeling unwell. After dinner my rear end goes and then I throw up as well. Dom is also throwing up.

Rhys

What a fantastic day!!

Headed 14/15 miles South West to Rio Blanco Park and onto Pueblo Viejo to the cave the lads found yesterday. It was awesome, nice jungle and riverbed walk-in followed by brand new cave. The entrance had obviously been in before but the next section via a 40/50ft rappel was virgin territory.

We came to a small lake following the cave and it needed to be swum across. I took the swimming challenge and although it was a bit sketchy swimming without buoyancy aids it was an incredible feeling knowing I was the first person in the known universe to swim across it. The water may have been a bit stagnant because it made me cough when I got to the other side.

We surveyed the cave as we went along which was great because it's something I have never been involved in before

Saw my first Whip Scorpion today nasty looking mother, part spider part scorpion part man!!!!!!

Dave

28th March Tuesday

Columbia Hills

AB, TD

Woken early by boys on way to bus for rest day in PG. I was left with recovering sickies. Set out with Ansalmo under blue skies, 7am and quite cool, so set a good pace, he pointed out more 'Alsatian' prints. Logged the trail, until it ran out, he then set off cutting trail, working really hard, but it became clear that we'd not get through today. Forced to hurdle fallen trees where ant colonies were on the move by the million, only a handful of bites hurt enough. Managed to locate a couple of small holes and one which we had entered in 2001 which I surveyed and located. There I witnessed the spectacle of a Mayan excited as he ran about the place, which was well stocked with Gibnut, though always just out of sight, earned it the name Royal Rat cave. Got close enough to locate shafts, but didn't actually see them, another hard day and the river was calling, a two coke day.
AI

Rest day today – ready for it. Two big highlights – sit down flush loo at Lubantaam and then Mash & Baked Beans for lunch. Off to PG for the 6.00am bus, but no bus – oh oh. Realised it was a no go and stopped the first pick-up truck we saw. Two guys were going to the Education department in PG and they gave us a lift. It was cold in the back, but a good laugh. Breakfast in the snack shack of pancakes, fruit and coffee. Had a wander and rang home. Nice to think about home. Hung around the town centre square and debated good solid topics with Dave and Dominic. Then got the bus back to San Pedro. Tidied up the hut and had a snooze. Dave and I made lunch and then the 3 of us headed for Lubantaam for a stroll. Relaxed and enjoyable afternoon. Back via the shop and egg, flour tortillas and some jam for tea. Good !
Planned the morning and packed ready to go. A good day.
Gary

29th March Wednesday

Champon cave, Rio Grande

AB, TD, GE, DW, DH, PW, RW

Rolled out at 5am, to create buckets of tea and huge porridge, now getting complaints about too much breakfast. The drive to the bridge was a long way; it was little wonder that John and I were tired in 2002, when we tried to walk to the cave. Two hour slog up the river bed, surrounded by nice jungle, lots of big cat prints and snakes. The cave was at the head of the dry river with no sign of an alternative course, so we didn't even try looking for some of the other caves in the area we'd been told of. We'd learnt the folly of trying to look for these things without a guide; they always prove to be a waste of time. Team effort at surveying and photographing as we went, large river cave, lots of deep pools so forced to share buoyancy. Upstream it eventually sumped in a deep pool, managed to dive into a large airbell, but having to tread water I decided to retreat while I could. Downstream it disappeared down a small Phreatic tube, quite scary, push able? definitely in Mendip. Very cold from all the immersion by the time we exited, tins of corned beef were well received. Crispino managed to fit all seven of us in his pickup and slide it up the hills home, the weather making being in the back of trucks a pleasure again. Team still weakened by illness, so Esperanza put back another day, but a nice evening, with big food and the now regular Guatemalan soap on the telly.
AI

Up at 5.00am for a 6.00am depart. Porridge for breakfast. We got a lift to the 12 mile road Rio Grande bridge with Crispino. Then we waited for him to go back and collect the second part of the group. A 2 ¼ hour slog up the dry river bed which was hard work. Saw 2 dead snakes on the way.



Champon had a huge entrance, in which we changed and took buoyancy to lake 1. Then headed back to do some surveying notes and drawing. The cave was impressive, with lake after lake and streamways, all of which we surveyed as we went. We got to the end just in time to head back to the entrance. Changed, lunch and then the big slog back to our lift and the trip home.
Tired tonight and a little achy.
Gary



Pick-up rides in two shifts for all of us up the 12 mile road to the Rio Grande bridge. We walk up the dry river bed approximately 5km to Champon cave. It is hot and hard going. We survey 500m or so of fun, river cave with quite a lot of floating and swimming. The walk back is a bit of a killer and I'm glad to see the pick-up and driver!

Rhys

Champon was fantastic. Long walk in on dry riverbed, lots of swimming in the cave on the inflatables, which was good fun. It ended at a sink, 500m of quality caving.



After racing back to the entrance and having a bite to eat we then made a record breaking yomp back to the pick up point

The ride back was very good with the cool breeze blowing over us in the back of the truck. Another well deserved coke at the shop in the village when we got back.

More tortillas for dinner, I was hank marvin and ate loads

In bed by about 8:30ish tonight exhausted, hope I sleep well tonight and don't wake up at stupid o'clock like I have been doing

Dave

30th March Thursday

Pueblo Creek Cave

**AB, GE, DW, DH, PW, RW
TD Birthday**

Up at 6.00am and away at 7.00am. One hour truck ride to Pueblo Viejo. Strolled on down to the cave and headed in. We explored on beyond and surveyed past the previous end point that we had reached.

We crossed the lakes and Al and I made another 200 metres before reaching a huge log jam in a rift passage. The end of the jam resulted in a huge drop, which prevented further progress. This requires a return with a bolting kit and a rope.

Whilst Al and I had been exploring the far reaches, the rest of the team had returned and surveyed an inlet to around 100 metres.

We strolled back out and lunched and then headed back to wait for our pickup at 4.30pm. Tortilla and beans for Tea again. Tired and weary now. Esperanza tomorrow ! Ooh err !

The cave was amazing today – big and a new find.

Gary



Getting towards the end of the trip, so sacrificed some breakfast rations and felt invincible. Waiting with Rhys to see if Bruno, local contact would turn up, though it did start raining. On arrival the pitch had been rigged again and there were some photos being posed for Lyon equipment, showing their rope in use.

Dropped into a big chamber, had a quick look at inlet, it involved ducking so no one had been there yet, off it went into the distance, fine sized UK passage. The way that we followed went off down huge passage, often too big to appreciate by our headlamps. Really requiring surveying along the edges rather than a centre line, to get the full scale of the place.

Tried to get photo of a massive stal boss, but we were now rapidly running out of flash guns as the wet nature of this trip took its toll.



Continued surveying beyond the previous limit, but eventually hit deep water, with only limited time and insufficient flotation Gary and myself continued, to explore and sketch the way on. The others returned to survey the inlet and start up the pitch, as we'd only brought three SRT kits.

The way on continued, obviously taking unbelievable amounts of water in the wet season, with whole tree trunks jammed way overhead. Eventually it was a log jam that stopped us, leaving us suspended thirty feet above the river, disappearing into the distance. The folly of trying to descend this wooden boulder choke was obvious, but still frustrating as it was our last available day to explore here.

Dave fell badly on exiting the cave, luckily escaping serious injury but reminding us of the remote nature of this trip.

In Pueblo my GPS had turned up in the school and been confiscated, so I was very happy again, though the data had been deleted.

On return to Columbia, Toby reported 5" of rain in an hour, again threatening to upset our plans to travel to Esperanza. Another big dinner and the teams prepared for the next couple of days apart.

Al



Pueblo Creek Cave again for all of us. We survey a short amount into the canal at the end. This turns out to be quite long and deep. We don't have enough buoyancy to safely get the whole team across, survey and photograph. Gary and Al go ahead to do a grade 1 survey while the rest of us head back to survey an inlet at the base of Better than India. We de-rig and walk back in the rain.

Rhys

Back to Pueblo Creek today to survey more of new cave.

We ended up with another 400m which is fantastic for the amount of days we've had.

The trouble with Pueblo Creek is that it's an hour's drive with an hour to walk in and the walk is pretty tough.

The boys are heading into to Esperanza camp tomorrow and staying out the night.

I was supposed to be going with them but went over on my ankle at the Mayan ruins the other day. I can walk on it and it's not too painful, but with a big pack on over uneven ground, it isn't a good idea.

I am pretty upset about the whole thing if I'm honest, but it's not fair to rely on other people just because I think I MIGHT be ok, they will be miles from main tracks and I could put us all in difficulty.

Still I have been involved in pretty much all the objectives and thoroughly enjoyed myself

Dave

We now have a rat running around the roof of our hut.

Now we only have limited time left to us in the jungle, ration packs are being eaten to try to boost energy levels for what is to come. Our bags were packed by 10.00am and we sat back, nervous about whether we'd even get up the track and if we did what we'd find there.

Crispino beasted his new pickup, only recently bought in Oklahoma and driven to Belize, harder than any of us were comfortable about as it scraped and slid its way along.

Eventually he stopped and just as we strapped our packs on, an American logger we'd passed turned up, to find out what we were up to. He then took us further along the trail, driving one handed while looking over his shoulder to talk to us as his truck ploughed through the jungle. We set out strong and well at 12.30, confident our guides Alfonso and Hawhee were the best in the village.



The following hours blur, becoming a nightmare of incredibly steep and muddy ascents that were hard won, followed by treacherous and slippery descents, with many fallen trees to clamber over or squeeze under. At some point water started running out; we'd packed for the four hour walk promised by the guides, Rhys' illness also returned. We passed numerous open shafts but were focused on just reaching the camp, our packs heavy with camping equipment, food, and caving equipment. Everything was extra difficult, a snake was spotted, even when pointed out it was hard to see, playing dead in the trail, this being very poisonous had to be boxed round by cutting through the jungle again.

On we went, a GPS at one point showed us only 2km from our goal, an hour later we were 3km; our guides had missed the trail.

Eventually it started to darken and as we continued stumbling, waiting for the injury that would herald a serious incident, the guides called a halt.

A rough night, with little time to set a nice camp and little energy to boot. Hammocks were slung from any tree that would support their weight, surprisingly difficult, we settled in to sleep as an escape from the thirst.

AI

Bit of a lie in (7.00am) and muesli for breakfast. Sorted kit and packed for the big trip to Esperanza. Only me, Rhys and AI going. Early rat-pack lunch and Toby, Dom and Phil went off for an easy day in PG. Dave tidied up and stayed in San Pedro.

Pack a bit heavy. Off at 11.30 with Chrisbino and picked up Alfonso and Hawhee. We travelled up the 12 mile road, a little nervous and excited too. Chrisbino got a fair way beyond the Rio Grande bridge and then enough was enough. Luckily, an American in a Monster 4x4 truck took us further than we thought possible. A nice guy – a logger. We were dropped off and then set off, going well, though it was a hot afternoon.

For a long time we made good progress, but it got progressively harder. The GPS put us within 2 Km of Esperanza, but then it all went pear shaped. We lost the trail and headed in the wrong direction. We were traversing a mountain, up and down steep sided gullies. The guides were cutting trail all the way. More and more tired, all of us were struggling badly on steep ground.



The Esperanza trail had not been open, despite what anyone had told us and this caused cutting and then losing the trail.

As the evening wore on, it became darker and more desperate. We had almost no water left now and it was getting dark, we were lost and exhausted. We were all concerned as it was getting dangerous, with all of us slipping and falling. The guides gave us a little of their water. Eventually, we had to stop and make camp, The guides spent ages trying to light a fire with wet materials and we fussed about for half an hour trying to put up hammocks.

Finally, we got sorted and the guides slept on the floor by the fire, which had the advantage of keeping the insects away.

I slept OK, but the jungle was a bit scary – noisy, pitch black and with a Kinkajou thrown fruit husks crashing down all night. No water, so couldn't eat.

Gary

Gary, Al and I are due to leave for Esperanza at 11:30am today. It looks like rain is coming. We head up the 12 mile road with Chrispino and he drives the pick-up through some really rough terrain and across wet patches of dirt road. Fair play to him. Eventually he decides that enough is enough. However, we are lucky enough to be taken another km or so by an American logger in his 4x4. We follow overgrown logging tracks, skid tracks and pig tracks. Eventually we find ourselves toiling up steep slopes and down steep slopes, into and out of big dolines/depressions. It seems that carrying such heavy bags with caving kit and overnight kit was not such a great idea. The occasional fix on the GPS shows us inching towards the supposed location of Esperanza. Then we start drifting in the wrong direction along non-existent paths. Things look bad as our water is running low and it's getting dark. We are forced to camp with no water in the middle of the jungle and with no idea of where we are. Making the best of it, we put up our hammocks while the guides attempt to light a fire. I go to bed after a lamb stew from the ration pack. I'm quite thirsty, but am saving my final half litre of water for tomorrow.

Rhys

Said goodbye to boys going on big trip and other lads going to PG, Had some time to myself. Tidied up and slept. Family fed me today and spoke to Mayan girls about washing machines and UK comparisons to Belize; they really thought I should get rid of my washing machine to wash clothes in the river instead. Mad!! How different is my life in the UK to theirs!!!!

Dave

It rained during the night, but I didn't get too wet. The guides covered themselves with more large leaves.

We were up at the first light at around 6.00am. We broke camp and set off, weary, hungry and still thirsty. We walked for an hour or two, struggling along, then Alfonso declares 'big mistake'. We had come back to a point we had previously been at – a 3km detour ! It was obvious at this point that we would have to head for home. The guides headed for the nearest water source on the trail at a cave called LaGunita. It was torturous getting there and the long trip into the cave drew on the last of my available energy. We reached the water and began pumping it through the filter at 1.00am and drank a litre there and then. I felt immediately improved. We filled all our containers and headed out, then cooked up an excellent and large lunch and rested for half an hour.

We headed down to a drag trail and stomped out with rests every half hour.

Rhys was still struggling, as he was unwell and Al and I carried some of his gear.

Eventually we made the road head and had a refill of water at a spring.

From here we stomped on home, getting back at 7.00pm, very very tired.

Gary

A disturbed night, a Kinkajou was in the canopy above us, eating fruits and hurling the unwanted parts down upon us, all we'd hear would be the whistle as the 'bomb' fell and wait for the impact.

Add to that the torrential rain which returned at some point, it was not good and I was quite pleased to be setting off at first light. The guides emerging fresh from their bed on the floor of palm leaves.

Eventually we reached a trail, very excited that we were back on track, but discussion with Alfonso, it turned out that we'd cut a huge circle around a mountain and we were back on our own trail. What to do? The guides had missed the trail and no one had been there by this route since before the hurricane, we may make it, but it looked doubtful.

Having to make the right decision was not as hard as I feared, though I was desperate to push on to the start of the Rio Grande cave system and the temple pyramids there, it had taken 5 years and so much effort to get a team this far in. Even for this trip, we'd started out with 15 potential members and only managed to get 3 this far.

We turned back, our water bottles dry, for the retreat to Lagunita, a cave which is the only reliable source of water in the area. Realizing our peril we dumped a load of equipment there, not wanting to die in the woods with bags full of uselessness.

Four hours after starting out we reached the cave, the snake, still playing dead had now moved further down the trail. The final 2-300m of caving may be the hardest and longest I've ever managed, but eventually a pool of clean water was reached, we drank deeply and filled every container. A brew and food, we'd been too dehydrated to eat properly for nearly 24hours, without this cave things could well have turned out very badly for us.

Setting out again we slogged along, getting out of the jungle a day early, so no chance of a lift we pushed ourselves along, getting into the village seven hours later. The guides we were pleased to see, were done in too, though they had the extra effort of cutting almost the whole way.

Feet almost too sore to bear my weight, and all of us crawling with ticks, we arrived home.

Many litres of water went into my body to try to undo the harm it had suffered. I then spent the night having to pee constantly.

Al

We're up at first light after some reasonable sleep but frequent awakenings as missiles fell from the tops of the trees narrowly missing our hammocks. Apparently it was a Kinkajou discarding nut/fruit shells. A few showers of rain fell, but nothing that really got me wet. I eat a pudding, have a sip of water and we're ready for off. There will be water at Esperanza so that's where we're heading. After a few ups and downs, gently sipping my water (the guides giving up some of theirs for Al and Gary), the guides realise that we've walked a circle and rejoined a point we had been at some time yesterday.

Now we're beginning to feel a lot more desperate and begin shedding kit. Unnecessary heavy stuff like wellies, inner tubes, maillons and bolts are dropped in a pile in the jungle! It would still be a long way to water and we're dying. After a little more walking we agree that we should head out of the jungle and give up on Esperanza. Going on would be futile. Water could be found on the route out. Rather relieved, we trudge on and down towards a cave called Lagonita, a source of a water. We arrive at the entrance some ten minutes after I've taken the last sip of water from my bottle! The 3 litres I set off with yesterday has gone. We stagger into the cave with the water pump, fill bottles, platypuses and have a drink. Back outside the cave we cook and have a short rest. Re-hydrated, walking onwards now is a breeze. It's downhill and on good trails. We pass through an old logging camp then up and down towards the road. Some of the hills and the heat start to take their toll on me and I start feeling very sick until we actually make it back to the road and a nice gradient again. We gather water from a roadside spring and March back to San Pedro Columbia for a well-earned Coke by about 7pm. For the last two days I've been suffering from rather bad diarrhoea and wind (made worse by exertion with a heavy rucksack/hip belt). Consequently, Gary and Al have helped me by taking some weight from my pack when I was suffering the most. I must thank them for that!

Rhys

Went to Aguacate today, bit of a recce' for resurgence to Pueblo Creek Cave. It all went a bit wrong with nothing really cave-like to be found apart from a small system in the village. This was shown to us by a couple of small boys who we think may have got into bother from the local boss man for not contacting him first.....oops

We had a fantastic meal tonight; chicken fried rice with carrots and cabbage, our intrepid explorers missed out on the best meal so far.

We expected the boys back tomorrow but they turned up tonight after having walked for nearly 12 hours. They stank were covered in ticks and were exhausted. They had an epic

Dave



2nd April Sunday

San Pedro Columbia

Bodies are now ruined and with the team only looking towards going home, the trip has come to a natural end. Perhaps we were spoiled by finding the Pueblo cave so early on in the trip, the weather forcing us to our secondary objectives before we'd finished the main ones. Now having found a cave there was no further interest in setting up more.

A dull day, packing with many walks on still sore feet to the phone office to attempt to achieve things for the next few days. Did manage to get our gifts sorted easily, as a son of our host family had cycled 30 miles with some carved bowls, this saved us a lot of suffering later.

Cesario and the family seemed quite sad for us to be leaving, it was nice to have this day to talk and spend time with them. It turns out his brother knows Esperanza really well and would be the best guide if around next time, apparently he wishes to escape the western encroachment and set up a new but traditional village there.

Final meal of beans, egg and flour tortillas, went down well, good food this year.

Al

Lazy day. Resting, washing clothes and packing during the day. Read and sorted and a walk to the phone. Good rat-pack lunch and tortilla/beans for Tea. Some photography also today. OK day, good chance to recover. Felt good considering the previous 2 days. Read some Treasure Island and hit the sack.

Gary

3rd April Monday

Punta Gorda and Cayes

Up at 5,00am and on to the 5.30am bus to PG. Tired and bags heavy. We were dropped above Nature's Way, walked down and left the bags there. Coffee with Chet and then down to the snack shack for a pancake breakfast.

Dave, Dominic and I went to the jetty to tell the boat that we were on our way. The boat provider turned out to be Roberto from the snack shack.

Everyone else arrived about 45 minutes later and we set off at speed for the Cayes.

We first went to Snake Caye and snorkelled around the island. Brilliant snorkelling with lots of big and bright fish and barracuda and brain and fan coral. Then we went on to Snake Caye, but despite extensive searching, no snakes !

In to the ranger station and look-out tower. And then looked for Manatee. Fishing for Red Grouper (not me) and then up the river for more Manatee spotting – but no luck.

Back to the jetty in the late afternoon. The sea was very choppy and it was the end of a great day, followed by a bagel and a shake at the snack shack. Back to Nature's Way for a Shower.

Nature's Way is a Grotty Pit – do not stay there again !

Off for a beer in the seaview restaurant and then a meal. Asked for a Veggie Meal and just got a salad. Very disappointing. Tortilla chips and dips helped a little.

Read some Treasure Island back at Nature's Way before kipping. 4 of us squeezed into a room as Mrs Chet was unhelpful (and left an empty room rather than let us use it).

Bathroom filthy in the morning.

Gary

All up for the 5.30 bus, very busy, but managed to cram our stuff in and stand all the way in.

Traditional long wait for breakfast, broken for me by the 45 minute queue in the bank to change the last of our money, returned to inhale my now cold pancakes and run to the quay to meet the boat. Apart from the queue, the other hold up had been my inability to do my own signature, must maintain practice whilst in the jungle in the future.

A fantastic day, like a real holiday and the stresses evaporated; great to see the country from a different angle. Only marred slightly by having to pay tourist prices, having been off in the villages, I'd not been able to arrange a more local rate, so you end up paying about three times the amount. Also a strong wind got up and large wadge of notes was threatening to disappear into the Caribbean.

Al

We catch the 5:30am bus from San Pedro Columbia to Punta Gorda. Breakfast at Snack Shack then down to the sea front for our boat ride. We visit Snake Cayes, go snorkelling, paddling and sunbathing. We visit the Port of Honduras Marine Reserve warden centre then go fishing and looking for manatees (which we don't find). Finally we take a detour up the Rio Grande Estuary before heading back to PG. We stay at Nature's Way and eat some fantastically TASTY food at Marian's.

Rhys

4th April Tuesday

PG to Belize City

Express bus to Belize led to alternative suffering, as hyperactive air-conditioning, meant the only time I was warm was when I was squatting with my breakfast at Dangriga bus station. Arrived into carnage and confusion in the city, taxi drivers touting for business, selected a couple, managed to choose the biggest looking minivan, with the smallest luggage capacity ever.

Eventually sorted, though had to persuade the drivers we didn't want our bags tied to the roof, aerial and hanging off the boot, even if they did 'jus drive slow, man'.

Our hotel, had been included with our flight tickets, so consequently it was in the tourist area, drove past cruise line passengers being off loaded, whilst local business men, clamoured at the fence bars to get at them.

Hotel was a palace, though having been through several hurricanes it was somewhat lacking straight lines. Our rooms were each considerably larger than the hut we'd shared for the last two weeks.

12.00 set out to see the sights of the city, 12.45 finished, including having lunch.

AI

Up at 5am and struggled up to the bus station. Dave and I carried the big bags on top of each other together, which helped. Had Muesli at the bus station for breakfast and then straight onto the 6.00am express. Only B\$24 and 5 hours. Brilliant. Slept most of the way.

Evening meal at a Chinese. Good big meal and price good too.

Gary

5th April Wednesday

Belize City

Up at 8.00am. Met Dave and went for breakfast at a Coffee Café. Slow service, but good rolls. Met the guys and Rhys, Dave and I went to Belize Zoo. Toby and Phil stayed at the hotel, watching TV.

The Zoo was brilliant – big cats, Tapirs, Monkeys, fantastic Harpie Eagle and Macaw Parrots. Really great and the animals were well cared for. Dave lost his wallet. Bus back to Belize City and then met Dave for lunch. Wandered around a bit and then Nachos at the Wet Lizard – Americansville !

Back to the hotel and watched a film with Phil until Satellite packed in.

Shower, then the bar for a rum and coke.

Gary



Last day, Dom and I set out early to try to get to some Mayan ruins by the Western border, fantastic public transport saw us there with ease. Though Dom did some sterling work preventing his conversion by a Mormon missionary, possibly I looked beyond help.

Xanitunich ruins were very impressive reached by a hand cranked ferry, and on a hill top dominating the surroundings.

The land here was far more tamed than the South, many cattle ranches. Scariest moment of the trip must have been traversing around the top of the pyramid, on polished limestone holds. Journey back was even better, proper café for lunch then at the zoo in time for feeding, so lots of animals running about, never sure whether animals in the bushes are wild or escaped.

Al

I have breakfast at Le Petit Cafe and then catch a bus to the Belize Zoo. We get pretty good views of most of the animals, including howler and spider monkeys. We catch the bus back and in the evening eat at Thrill on the Grill.

Rhys

Found a cool little coffee shop this morning and went for a walk around the city, it's all quite different at 6am

Met Gar back at Hotel and took him to coffee bar, had pina colada smoothie which only took an hour to make

Went to the Zoo on the bus which was really cool, loads of really fantastic animals which you could get surprisingly close to.

Had an epic on the way back, getting on bus to BC realised wallet had been left in zoo, told boys I would catch them up, epic!!!!!!!

Decided to hitch after retrieving wallet and was picked up by Scottish farmer who took me all the way into BC, very bizarre.

Back to hotel another shower and out for food, walked to restaurant that didn't exist / closed, much to everyone's annoyance. Back into the city for food then and a couple of beers, tried coconut rum.

Dave

6th April Thursday

Belize City - Charlotte N.C.

Just when we think we're nearly past the hassle, Belize gives us just a bit more, the big bus, booked for us by the hotel, was another of the mini minivans. So a small amount a frantic searching got us two taxis. Almost there, finally for some reason we all had to pay different airport taxes, even though our tickets had been arranged and bought from the same agent. At least we didn't have to have our bags rummaged through; they could tell the bags were well packed and probably unpleasant, so we were X-rayed instead.

Al

We catch taxis to the airport for our flight to Charlotte. On landing, we pass surprisingly swiftly and smoothly through customs, security etc.

Rhys

7th April Friday

Gatwick

Home and not too cold, scattered throughout the flight, not too bad as by now we were all sick of each other. Unfortunately had the same rubbish films as outbound.

Al

I don't sleep much on the plane and have watched all the films/documentaries that I fancy. We land at Gatwick and Toby, Dave and I are met by Graham who takes us back to his house for a cup of tea. We then drive the last leg of the journey back to Wales.

Rhys

Up early, no change there then, breakfast at coffee bar, quick wander into town.

Taxi's turned up; smashed window, flat tyre & sliding door hanging off, I love this place it's mad.

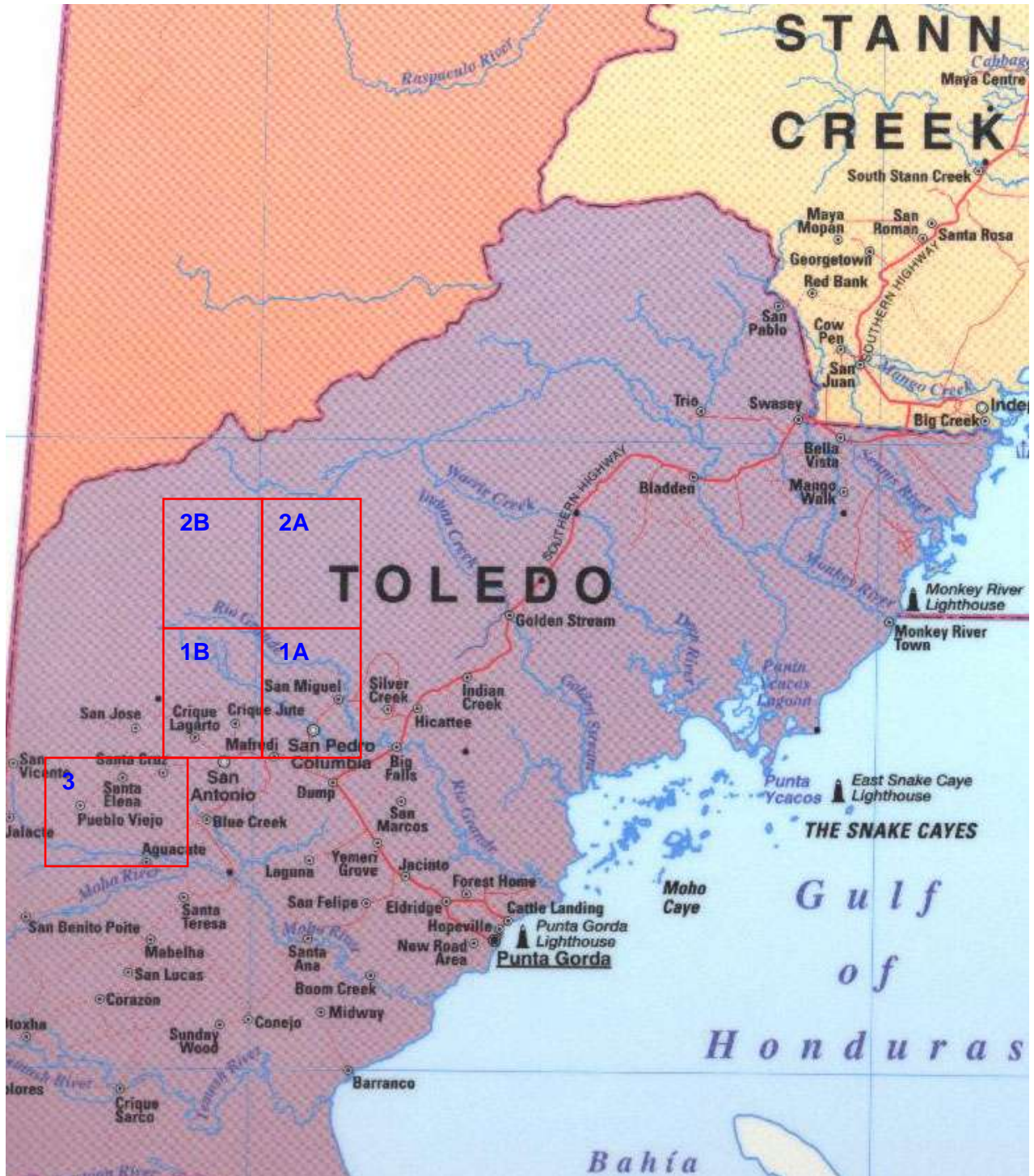
Spent rest of Belize dollars at airport and then onto half full plane to the USA

One step closer to home.

Dave

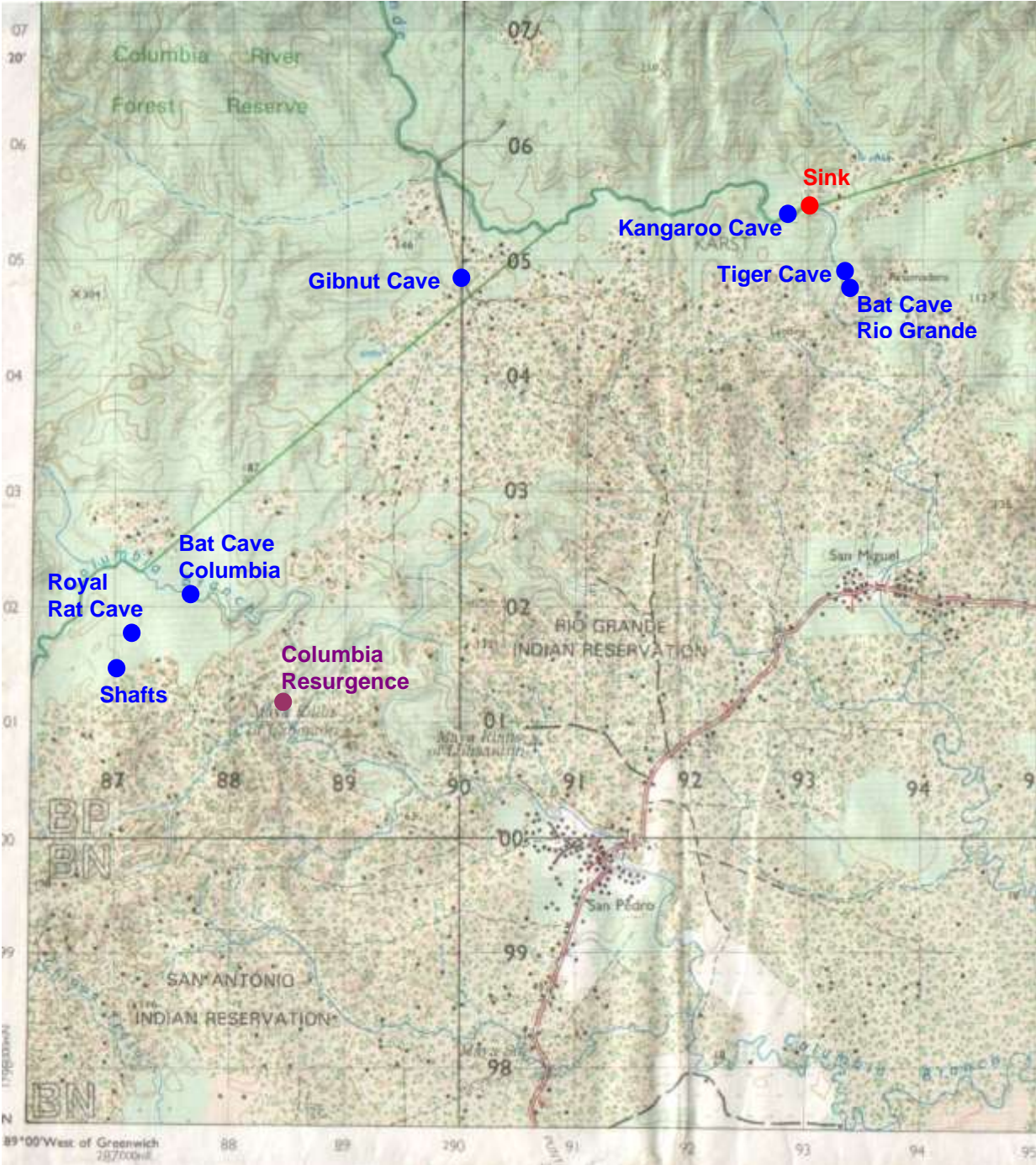
FINDINGS 2001 - 2006

Maps of Sites – Overview

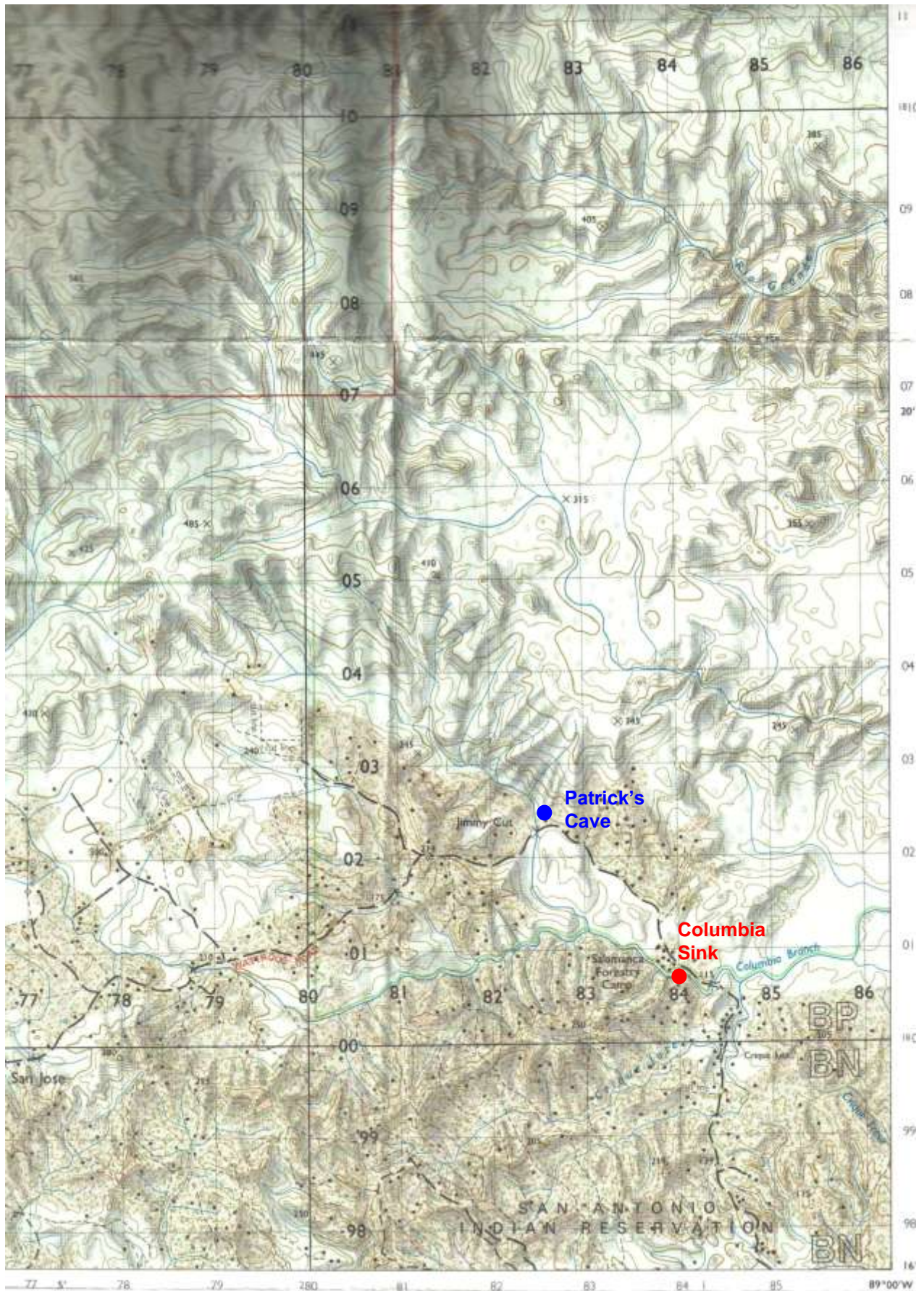


1. San Antonio / Rio Grande

1A San Antonio East



1B San Antonio West

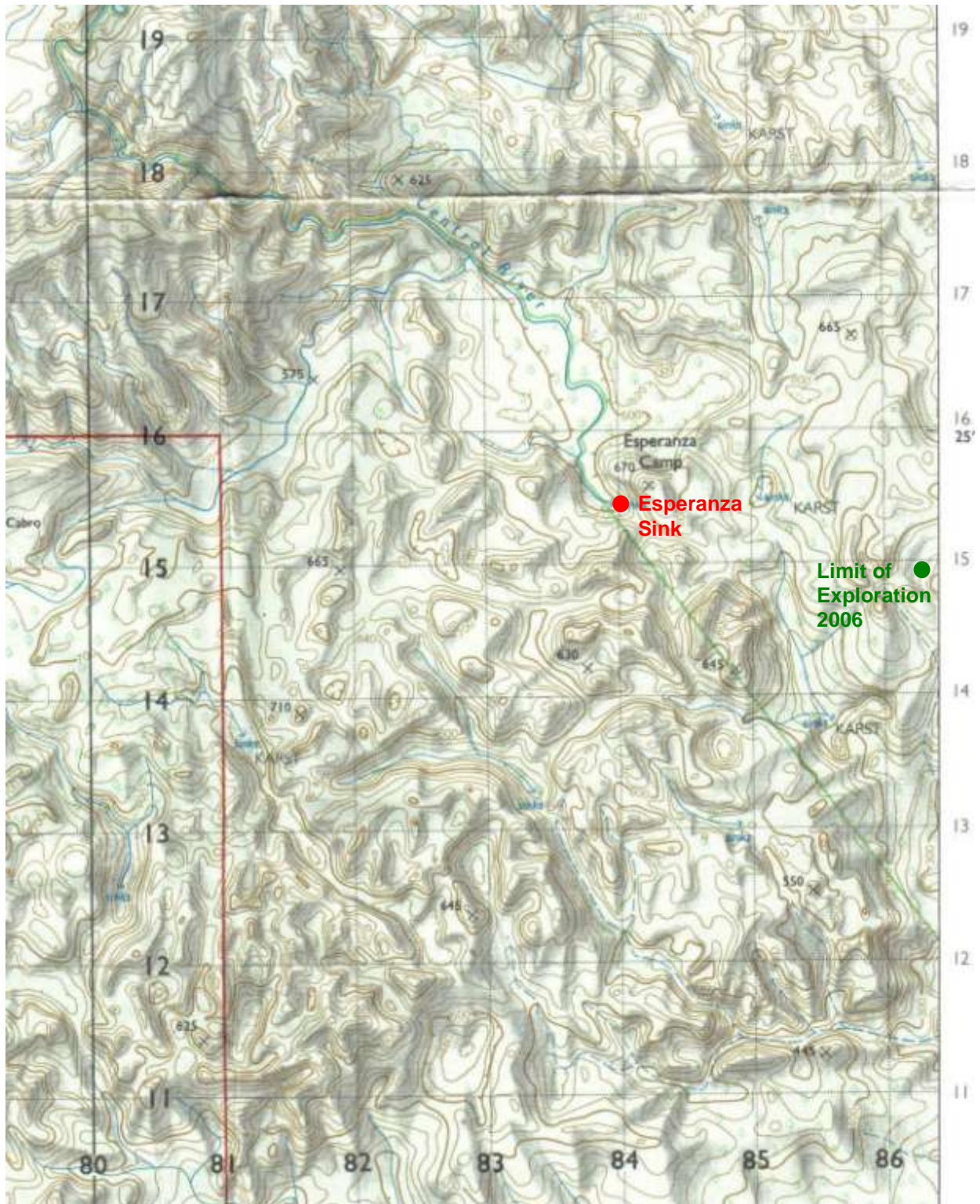


2. Esperanza

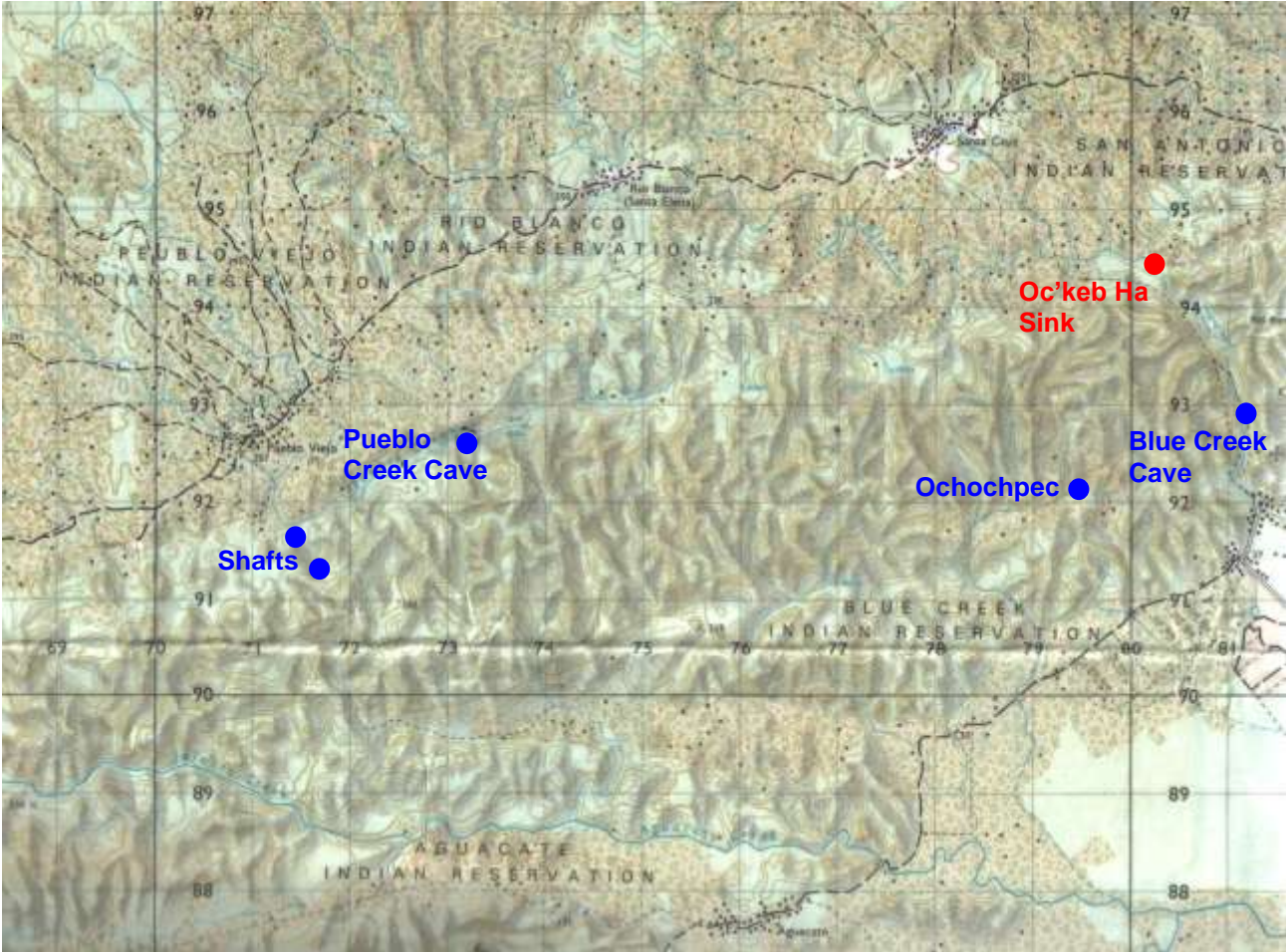
2A Esperanza East



2B Esperanza West

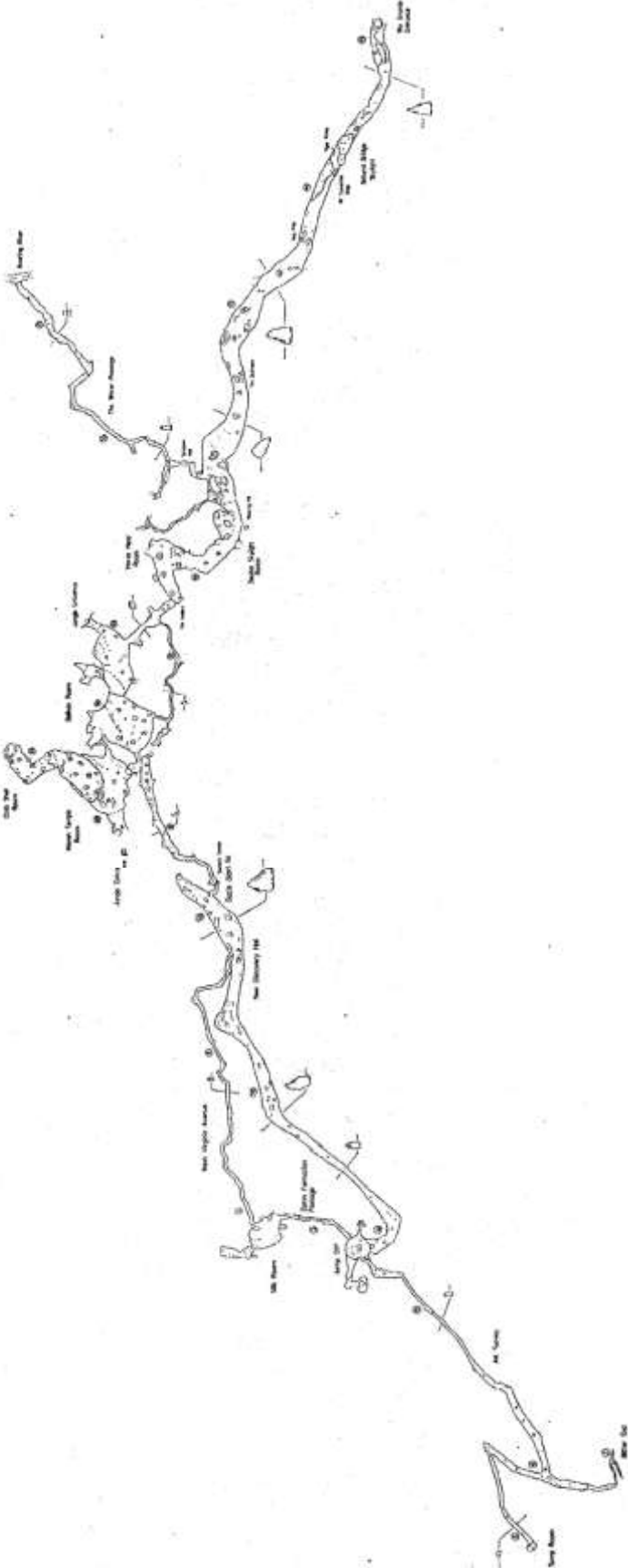


3. Pueblo Viejo



Surveys

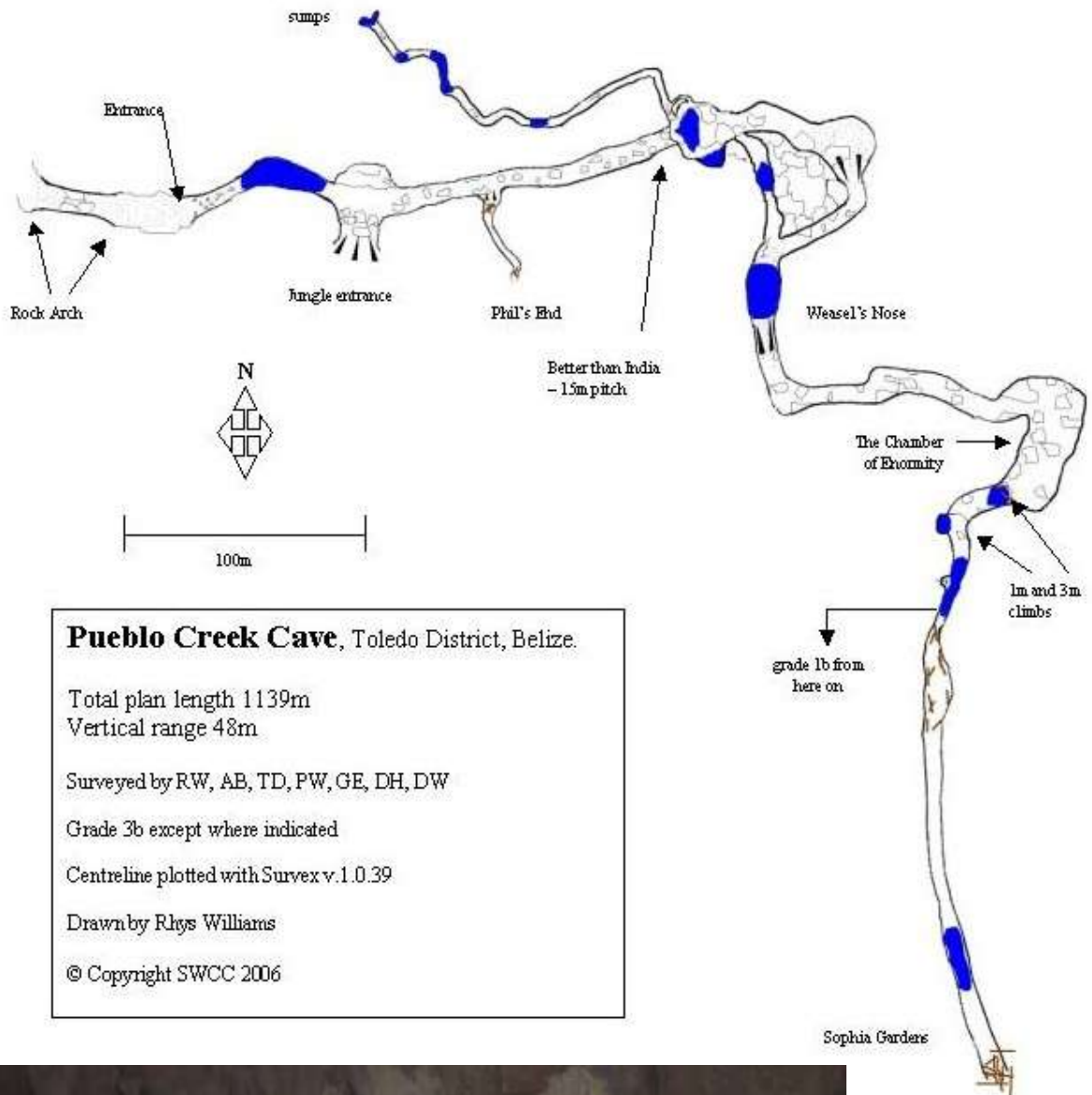
1. Tiger (Hich Tulz) Cave (Surveyed 1984 by Peter Bosted et al)



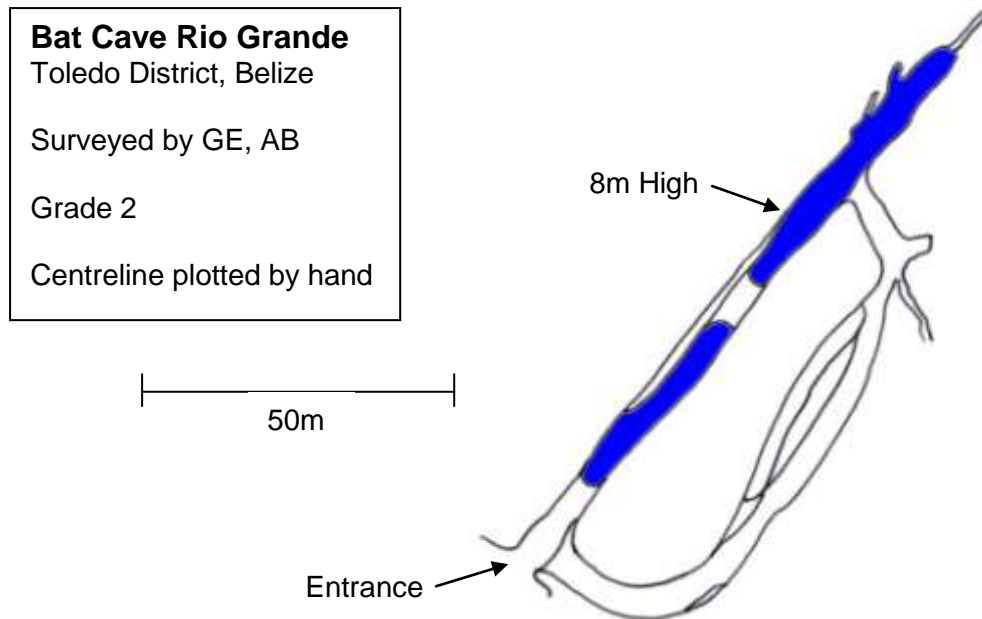
2. Kangaroo Cave (Surveyed 1986 by Peter Bosted et al)



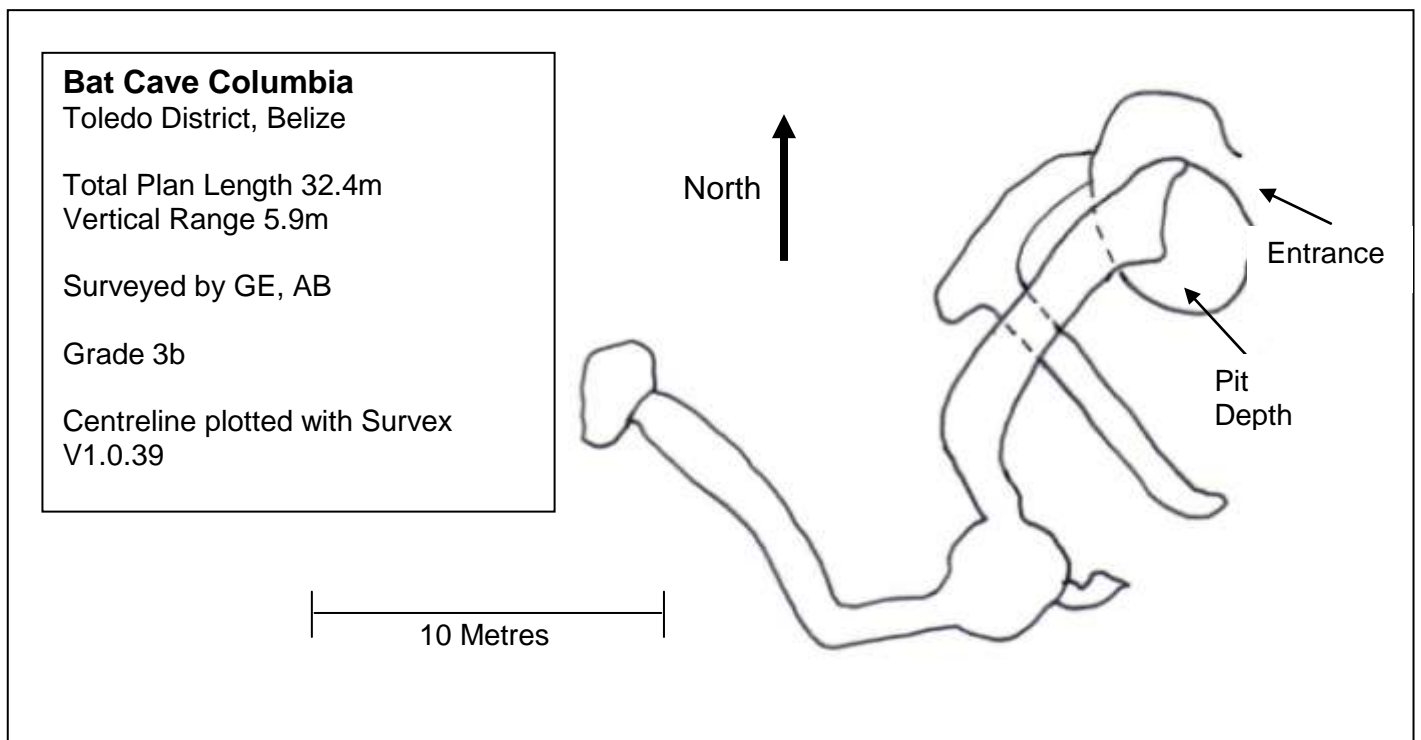
3. Pueblo Creek Cave (Surveyed 2006 by SWCC Team)



4. Bat Cave Rio Grande (Surveyed 2006 by SWCC Team)



5. Bat Cave Columbia (Surveyed 2002 by SWCC Team)



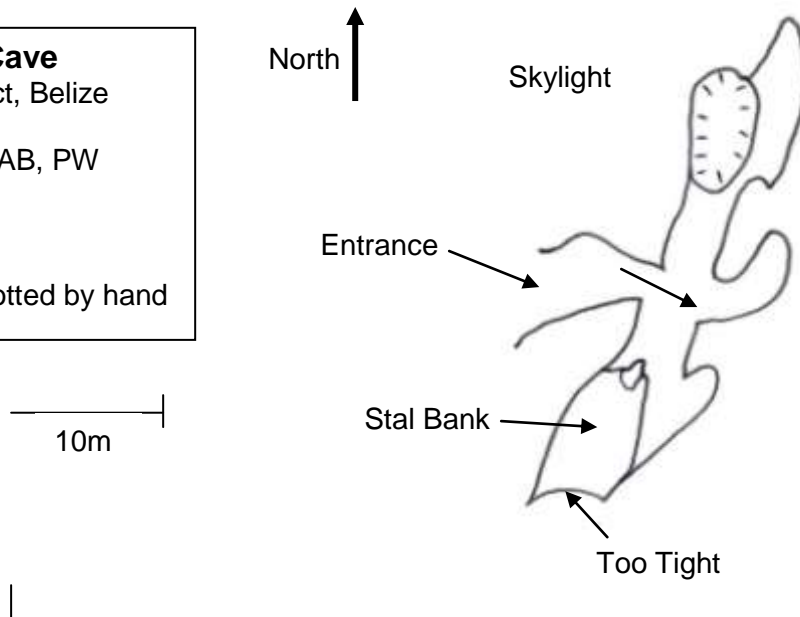
6. Royal Rat Cave (Surveyed 2006 by SWCC Team)

Royal Rat Cave
 Toledo District, Belize

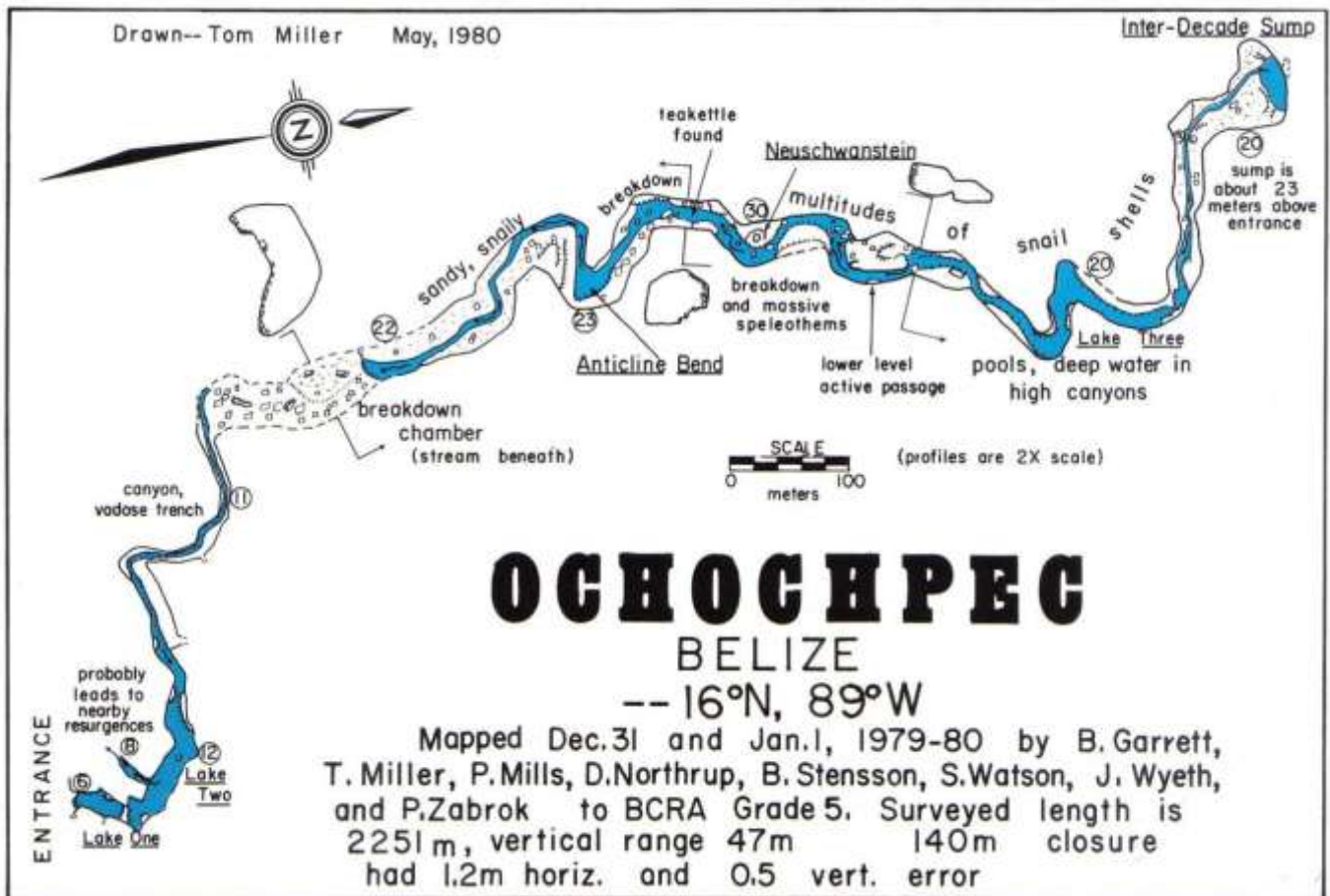
Surveyed by AB, PW

Grade 3b

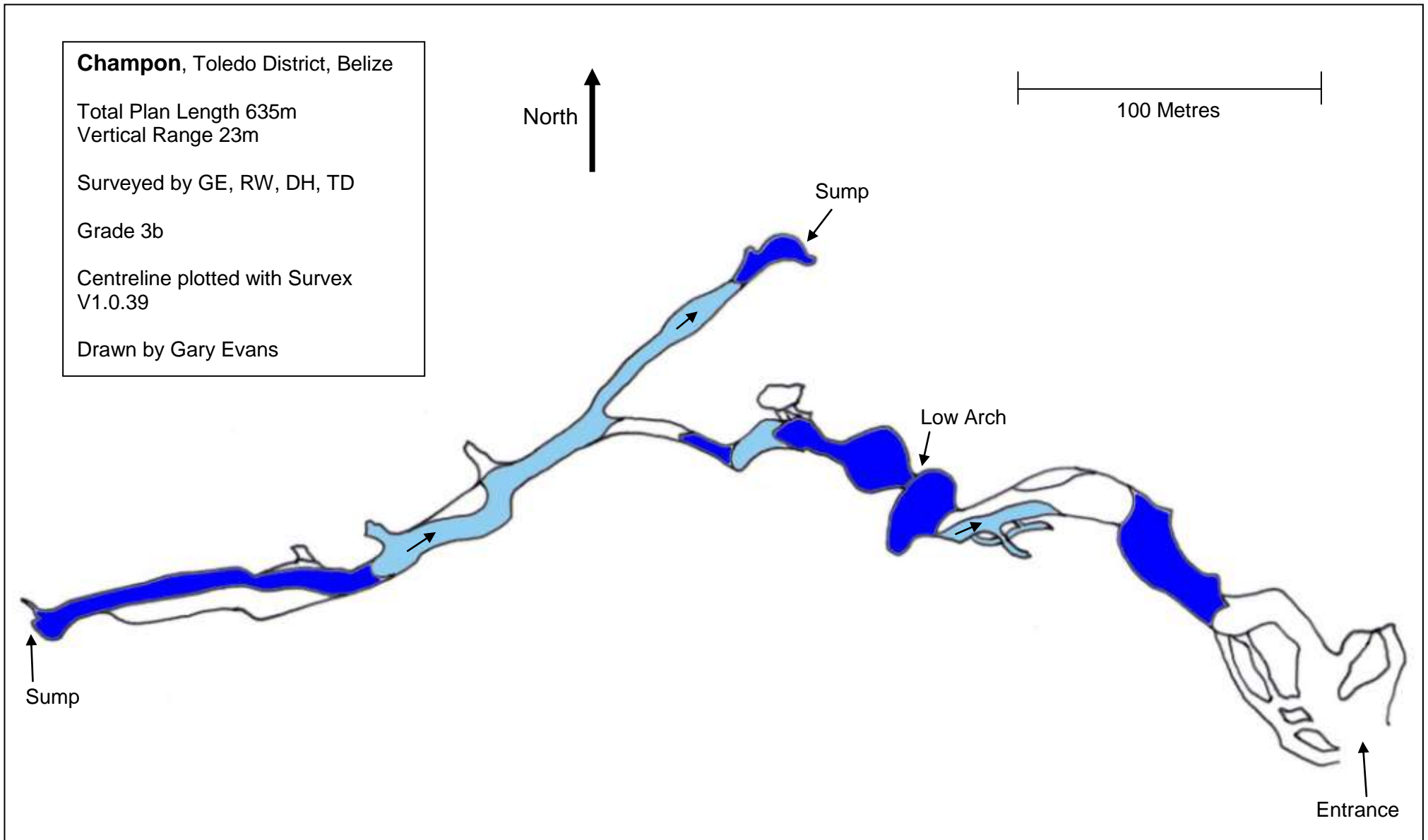
Centreline plotted by hand



7. Ochochpec Cave (Surveyed 1979 by Tom Miller et al)



8. Champon (Surveyed 2006 by SWCC Team)



Rio Grande Conclusions

Since the very first expedition in 2001, discovering the route of the river flowing along the Central River and the Rio Grande was the primary objective. From its earliest known surface flow in the Central River in dry season, to where the river meets the sea as the Rio Grande, the course of the water changes from overground to underground on a number of occasions. Our aim had been to track the river from Esperanza Camp, where the locals had told us that the Central River first sank underground, to the resurgence at Tiger Cave, where it then continues on the surface to the sea. However, the difficulties of getting deep into the jungle, following the hurricanes of 2001 that destroyed jungle paths, made access to Esperanza camp once again unattainable.

Our Observations and assumptions for dry season flow are as follows.

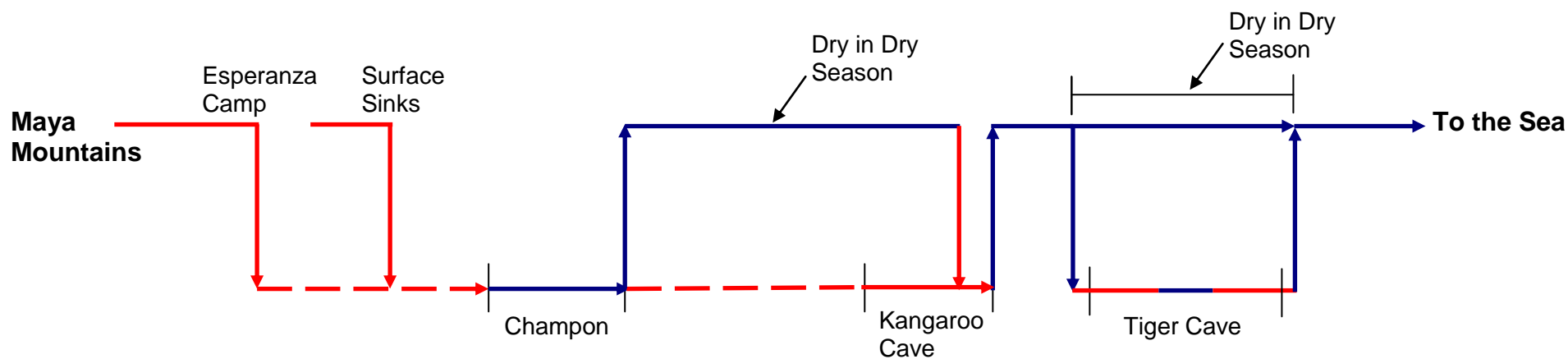
From	To	Route	Observed	Comments
Source of the Central River in the Maya Mountains	Esperanza Camp	Overground	No	Surface Flow until it sinks at Esperanza Camp – Known from the sink shown on the map and from locals' knowledge. There is a site called Cumbres South East that we have not visited.
Esperanza Camp	Champon	Underground	No, other than in Champon	Water sinking at Esperanza camp is not seen again until it is observed inside Champon before disappearing into the downstream Sump. Water clearly flows out of Champon in the Wet Season and along the Dry River bed. There is no known access to this water other than Esperanza Camp sink. There may be a link at Lagunita as it is in the right place
Champon	Kangaroo Cave	Underground	No	The water that sinks at the downstream sump at Champon is next seen at the Kangaroo Cave Resurgence. All the dry river bed on the surface has been walked.
Kangaroo Cave	Tiger Cave Main Sink	Overground	Yes	There is a short section of surface river that sinks into Tiger Cave a few hundred metres later. There is a much larger main sink a hundred metres further on again that must take water in the wet season.
Tiger Cave Main Sink	Tiger Cave Resurgence	Underground	Yes	This has been seen at the Roaring River
Tiger Cave Resurgence	The Sea	Overground	Yes	No further sinks known beyond the Tiger Cave resurgence

For Wet season flow, we know that the dry river beds take a significant flow of water, due to the huge amount of flood debris that appears at the end of each Rainy Season. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that there is both underground and overground flow in the wet season.

There is still considerable potential for a huge underground system, as the unknown underground river runs for around 15km and the size of the known river caves here are extremely large. There would be plenty of opportunity for Cave Divers.

Rio Grande River Flow Representation

- Known water course
- Assumed water course
- Blue = Route explored
- Red = Route not explored



Columbia Conclusions

This year we managed to complete our work on the Columbia. A team of 3 people walked from the sink at Salamanca all the way to the resurgence West of San Pedro.

Whilst there were some interesting limestone gorge features and a few small tubes and caves were found, there was no evidence of any substantial river cave on the Columbia. Bat Cave Columbia, which we found in 2002, is up above the river, is relatively short and completely dry and all other caves in the area are well away from the dry river and are in the main dry.

The distance from sink to resurgence is around 7 kilometres. There seem limited prospects of finding access to the underground system here and even then it could well be immature and inaccessible. The sink consists of a large pool where water seems to seep underground, rather than spectacularly disappearing as it does in the Rio Grande systems.

There was however one interesting find, some large stal that was found under the bridge at Salamanca. These finds represented significant stal formations, the source of which was unknown.

Pueblo Creek Findings

The discovery of Pueblo Creek Cave was an exciting opportunity to undertake some significant underground exploration at an impressive and challenging location. We were given the opportunity by The Department of Archaeology at Belmopan asking us to liaise with Trekforce in relation to some Cave Entrances they had found. This led us indirectly to the entrance of the Cave at Pueblo Creek. Trekforce had been into the initial dry and open entrance passage, but is clear that first pitch had prevented them and locals from exploring further.

This is a very large active River Cave that takes a significant water flow in the Wet Season. The Chamber of Enormity was extremely large and will need to be properly surveyed on a future trip. The exploration was halted by a large log dam which prevented us continuing. A lack of bolting equipment and time ensured that it would have to remain a future project.

The rift containing the log-jam clearly continued for some distance and the nature of the cave suggested that it does indeed carry on. Anecdotes of loggers using this or nearby caves to float logs through the ridge in the wet season to save time hauling them may well be only stories, but it does make one wonder.

The cave heads East initially and then around 400 metres South. With another 3.5km to the Aguacate Creek on the other side of the ridge and another 4 sinks East of Pueblo Creek Cave, there is clearly a Cave System of some size contained within the ridge between Pueblo Viejo and Aguacarte.

Surveying

Underground surveying was carried out to varying levels of accuracy depending on the length or significance of the site. Some smaller caves were merely sketched with distances estimated and passage orientation taken approximately by standard Silva walking compass (BCRA grade 1B).

Our larger finds, Pueblo Creek Cave and Champon Cave, were surveyed more thoroughly using a 30m tape, Suunto sighting compass and Suunto sighting clinometer for the centrelines. Cross sections and passage detail were estimated. The grade of those surveys would relate roughly to BCRA grade 3B.

We were hampered in our accurate surveying by the rather poor compasses and clinometer borrowed from SWCC. Sighting through a scratched and grimy instrument proved quite difficult and this wasn't helped by the fogging of viewing lenses that follows the occasional, but inevitable, dunkings in wet caves.

Survey data was recorded in waterproof notebooks in the field and entered in to cave survey software on a palm top computer back at base in the evening. This gave a useful on-screen image of how the cave was developing.

Back in the UK, the surveys were drawn up in full, incorporating sketched passage detail from the notebooks.



Man Hours for Exploration 2006

Date	People	Hours	Total Man Hrs	Notes
Saturday 18 th March	3	0	0	Travel to US
Sunday 19 th March	3	0	0	Travel to Belize
Monday 20 th March	3	13	39	Groundwork in South
Tuesday 21 st March	3	12	36	Groundwork South & Belmopan
Wednesday 22 nd March	2	9	18	Trekforce Opening Rio Blanco
	4	3	12	Columbia Resurgence
Thursday 23 rd March	6	9.5	57	Tiger Cave
Friday 24 th March	4	4	16	Bat Cave & Hydroelectric site
Saturday 25 th March	4	8	32	Rio Grande Bridge
	3	6	18	Above Columbia Resurgence
Sunday 26 th March	3	9	27	Traverse of Columbia dry river
	4	10	40	Pueblo Creek Cave
Monday 27 th March	4	10	40	Pueblo Creek Cave
	3	7	21	Pueblo Viejo Hills
Tuesday 28 th March	2	7.5	15	Columbia Hills
Wednesday 29 th March	7	10.5	73.5	Champon
Thursday 30 th March	6	10	60	Pueblo Creek Cave
Friday 31 st March	3	31	93	Esperanza Journey
Saturday 1 st April	4	2	8	Rio Blanco
Sunday 2 nd April	2	1	2	Fieldwork
Monday 3 rd April				South Cayes
Tuesday 4 th April				Travel to Belize City
Wednesday 5 th April				Visit Zoo & Maya Ruins
Thursday 6 th April				Travel to US
Friday 7 th April				Travel Home
			607.5	



GRID LOCATIONS 2001 - 2006

1A. Caves & Resurgences - Columbia

Site	Easting	Northing	Altitude (Approx)
Columbia River Resurgence	All Grid References removed at the request of the Belize Department of Archaeology		29m
Patricks cave (Ackelhar)			
Columbia Sink at Salamanca			
Phreatic tubes choked with mud on Columbia 2 x 20m			
Bat cave Columbia - adjusted from 2002 Grid Reference			
Columbia River Ansalmo 1 – Low 4m			
Columbia River Ansalmo 2 – Larger 6m			
King Rat cave - 50m			
Shafts – Near Columbia			

1B. Caves & Resurgences – Rio Grande

Site	Easting	Northing	Altitude (Approx)
Bat Cave Rio Grande	All Grid References removed at the request of the Belize Department of Archaeology		28m
Tiger Cave			36m
Tiger cave Jungle entrance			39m
Tiger cave Jungle entrance no.2			39m
Kangaroo Cave			59m
Active sink downstream of Kangaroo cave			51m
Overflow sink/shaft downstream of Kangaroo cave			68m
Champon Cave - 50m south of entrance in river bed			118m
Lagonita Cave - junction of main surface stream bed and resurgence stream bed			485m
Gibnut Caves			

1C. Caves & Resurgences – Pueblo Viejo

Site	Easting	Northing	Altitude (Approx)
Pueblo Viejo -10m shaft	All Grid References removed at the request of the Belize Department of Archaeology		
Pueblo Viejo – Undescended shafts			
Blue creek resurgence			
Oc'keb Ha, Rio Blanco sink - reported info from Trekforce, not yet visited			
Cave system and pottery – not yet visited			
Caves at foot of crag line			
Pueblo Creek Cave - rock arch upstream of main cave			213m

2. Caves not in Toledo District

Site	Easting	Northing	Altitude (Approx)
St Hermans cave – CO Sheet 25			
Marbel Ha River Cave			
Marbel Ha Hill Cave			

3A. Exploration Information - Columbia

Site	Easting	Northing	Altitude (Approx)
Salamanca Bridge	8438	0063	
Columbia Inlet from right heading downstream	8468	0066	
Start of Gorge on curve of River	8715	2364	
Trail crossing Columbia river	873	022	
San Pedro Columbia Bridge - measured/estimated from map	0291350	1799925	
San Pedro Columbia Bridge - GPS	0291415	1799926	26m
Junction on trail for Columbia River Source	0288541	1800714	33m
Swimming site downstream of Columbia River Source	0288518	1800908	42m

3B. Exploration Information – Rio Grande

Site	Easting	Northing	Altitude (Approx)
12 Mile Road Fix 1	915	047	
12 Mile Road Fix 2	908	047	
12 Mile Road Fix 3	904	047	
12 Mile Road Fix 4	901	047	
12 Mile Road Fix 5	8997	0516	
Big Rock 1	898	055	
Bridge over seasonal dry River	897	057	
Rio Grande Bridge (3km to Kangaroo Cave)	0289752	1805878	96m
Short cut turn off on 12 mile road	902	048	
Chrisbino's drop-off point on 12 mile road	0289866	1810917	226m
Water source on 12 mile road	0290045	1811659	
American drop-off point on 12 mile road	0289595	1812546	250m
Point we left the old logging road and hit small trails	0288089	1812223	
Closest point to Esperanza - most westerly recorded point on our jungle circuit	0286360	1814918	
Most easterly recorded point on our jungle circuit	0287181	1814777	
Most northerly recorded point on our jungle circuit	0286422	1814946	
Logging camp between 12 mile road and Lagonita	0287207	1811520	210m

3A. Exploration Information – Pueblo Viejo

Site	Easting	Northing	Altitude (Approx)
Entry point to river bed on walk-in for Pueblo Creek Cave. Below falls			291m
First place for wet feet in river bed on walk-in for Pueblo Creek Cave			225m

2006 GPS settings

Position format: UTM UPS

Map Datum: NAD27 Caribbn

Note: 3rd and 4th digits in both the Easting and Northing figures relate to the kilometre grid square on the map. For example, Columbia River Source is in grid square 8801



SUMMARY 2006

Summary of findings against Expedition Objectives

Primary Objectives

1. Discover and explore the Rio Grande cave system
Progress made as detailed earlier, though still more work to do to complete the picture
2. Travel to Esperanza Camp to explore cave systems at river sinks and reported cave sites
Prevented by routes to Esperanza camp still not being open from the South. Will require a further attempt to achieve this objective
3. Complete traverse of Columbia River and explore remaining cave sites
Completed

Secondary Objectives

1. Explore Roaring River within Tiger Cave – previously unexplored
Explored to limit of safety due to high water flow. The new Hydro Electric scheme may well capture most of this water, making the passages passable in the future
2. Traverse the entire Blue Creek cave system
Not undertaken due to time being spent instead on new discovery
3. Re-visit site of 'Rods' and photograph or film these.
These were unusual flying rod-like creatures that were seen in 2002. Subsequently, the same creatures turned up on a US National Geographic TV programme the following year, with film of examples, but no explanation as to their nature. The site where we saw them in 2002 was visited, but nothing was found on this visit.
4. Maintain and develop further links to support future expeditions
Old contacts reaffirmed and many new contacts added.

Additional Benefits

1. Genuine exploration opportunity
Discovery of Pueblo Creek Cave a major find
2. Providing information for Dept of Archaeology in Belize on Caves and Artefacts
Full report sent to Dept. of Archaeology, Belmopan, Belize
3. Living with Mayan Indians in Toledo District – cultural exchange and providing income to local people, introduction of local people to Caving
Achieved

Future Work

The Objectives for future work are clear from the summary and these are :

1. Travel to Esperanza Camp to explore cave systems at river sinks and reported cave sites
2. Continue exploration of Pueblo Creek Cave
3. Follow up on new leads in Pueblo Viejo Area
4. Return to Roaring River in Tiger Cave if the water levels have been reduced by the Hydro Electric scheme capture of water at Kangaroo Cave resurgence.

Additionally, as the Department of Archaeology in Belize seem pleased with the work we are undertaking, it is very possible that they may have additional objectives for future work, in the same way as they did in 2006.



PHOTOGRAPHY 2006

Equipment:

- Kodak DX4330 Digital Camera (3.1 Megapixel)
- x3 Quantaray Q15 Flash
- Hanimax CX215 Flash
- x2 Practica 1600A Flash
- x3 Kodak Rechargeable Ni-MH
- Kodak K4000 Battery Charger
- Jessops TP 318 Mini Tripod
- x3 SD Memory Cards (512 MB, 128MB, 32MB)
- Otterbox 5000

Report:

We started using digital photography on the previous Belize expedition, with mixed success.

The harsh conditions of caves did not lend themselves very well to the electronics of modern photography.

In the couple of years between the previous expedition and this one a number of trips in Britain were undertaken in an attempt to improve the results of the photography.

The other main problem with photography is getting willing volunteers to partake in the sessions. There is nothing worse than standing around in the cold and wet waiting for the photographer to get that one good shot.

It is slightly better in Belize as the caves are generally of a nice temperature. However, boredom can still overcome any photo session.

For this trip we attempted to make the photography as quick and pain free as possible. Although we had three weeks for caving, the two hour walk to most caves meant the photography had to be quick, so that as much of the cave could be explored, before the inevitable return back to camp.

A basic digital camera was used, mounted on a tripod. The camera is approx 4 years old but seems to survive quite well in the conditions of the cave. A number of SD cards were used with the intention of taking as many photos as possible and then sorting / deleting back at camp. The problem with this process is being able to determine whether the shot is any good or not. The mini display does not give a good indication of the quality of the shot. This was partly counteracted by using the SD cards in a Palm PDA which give a slightly larger quality picture. However, there was plenty of space on the cards to keep nearly all the shots and edit once back in the UK.

Three main caves were attempted to be photographed:

Tiger Cave:

Initial acclimatisation trips. Previous expeditions have taken numerous photos of this cave, so I only wanted to take a few for my own records and to gauge the effectiveness of the process. Good spirits allowed the photography to go fairly smoothly, everyone was happy enough to take turns with the flash guns.

Champon Cave:

An excellent & exciting trip dampened the desire to hang around for photos. The need to wrap up all the equipment before short swims put paid to too many photo stops. Additionally the cave included very large passages and the flash guns were just not enough to light the shot.

Pueblo Creek:

Two main trips with photography were undertaken here. A few good shots were taken on the first trip, the best ones using natural light near the entrance to filter into the shot. The second trip proved a bit of a disaster on the photography front. The trip started off with 6 flash guns and all the team ready to take photos. The flashes went down one by one, due to a combination of mud and water, until we were left with lighting shots with head torches. A real shame, as there are some great photo's to be taken in this cave system.

Conclusion:

The photography on this expedition produced far better shots than previous attempts underground. There are still a lot of areas for improvement.

- The main requirement remains to speed up the process, not an easy thing to do due to the desire to find new cave.
- Need to cater for the flash units in wetter conditions. The problem here was wet hands rather than the wet cave.
- Brighter flashes needed due to the scale of the systems in Belize.



ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS

Research

For general information, the backpacker guides, Rough Guide, Lonely Planet, etc. proved adequate. However, more information is becoming available on the Internet.

Permission

All cave exploration in Belize falls within the jurisdiction of the Department of Archaeology who control access. This is due to the significance that caves played in the Maya beliefs and the artefacts that are often encountered within caves. To prevent theft or remains from being destroyed by ignorance, permission must be obtained from the DoA. Additionally, permission to camp in the Jungle and Forest Areas must be obtained from the Forest Department before heading into the jungle areas.

Fund-raising

We received a substantial grant from the Welsh Sport Council and equipment from Lyon Equipment, for which we are extremely grateful.

Finances

The individuals funded the expedition in the field, with the grant being held in an account to meet any large unplanned expenses. This was then distributed to the members on return.

Accounts Belize 2006

	Expenditure	
Flights	7 x £580	£4,060.00
Insurance	7 x £115	£805.00
Accommodation		£368.76
Guiding		£72.80
Transport		£425.60
Food Belize		£35.70
Additional Belize		£32.62
Additional UK		£416.08
Report		£100.00
	Total	£6,316.56
	Income	
Welsh Sports council		£2,000.00
Team members	7 x £616.65	£4,316.56
Lyon Equipment	<i>equipment</i>	£0.00
	Total	£6,316.56

Travel

Flights to Belize proved expensive as we flew at a peak time. It was also difficult getting flights, having been advised not to book early by one agent, we later found that no one else had had this advice and seats were all booked

Once in the country there is an excellent network of buses, mainly old American school buses, which will transport you very cheaply. These though are in position to serve the locals, so the only bus will often leave remote villages before dawn to reach markets. The Express bus from Belize City to Punta Gorda made a big difference to the time taken for an otherwise arduous journey and the comfort level was very impressive for Belize.



Hitching is a good alternative, though in some of the poorer and remote communities we saw no private vehicles.

Car hire is available and we did hire vehicles early on to get the logistics sorted out. This wasn't cheap however and we couldn't manage to keep our own hire vehicle for more than a few days with the budget we had. The Suzuki Jimmy that we borrowed from Bruno took a real hammering on the rough unmade roads.

Insurance

BCRA insurance was no longer available, so we purchased ours this year through Snowcard. This wasn't cheap though and added £115 to the costs per person.

Medical

Before leaving, details of necessary inoculations were obtained from GP's, the cost varying from surgery to surgery. The largest expense was to cover for Rabies and required a month to work. Advice on requirements was provided to Team members by the expedition Medical Officer (MO) and medical questionnaire and next of kin questionnaires were completed for all Team members before departure

Anti-malarial drugs were obtained from chemists and were surprisingly cheap. Team members were responsible for their own regimes and were monitored by the MO to ensure that everyone was keeping their Malaria cover current.

In the field there were minor complaints, including bites and scratches, plus one or two infected blisters and cuts. This year there were a significant amounts of ticks picked up throughout the expedition. Individuals managed their own in the main, the MO dealing with some of the trickier ones. They did seem to choose some people more than others, the MO receiving none himself, despite the 2 day trip into the Jungle, whilst Rhys seemed plagued by a large number of them.

The use of re-hydration sachets helped at the end of hard days and prevented any serious cases of dehydration. Team members carried up to 4 litres of water each day, but even this wasn't enough on the longer days and everyone was encouraged to properly re-hydrate in the evenings.

Rescue

We contacted Ian Anderson at Jungle Lodge Tours. As a caver he is best prepared to arrange a rescue, though he is a commercial tour operator, he will keep an eye on local situations. We met him on the way back from Belmopan and gave him details of our plans.

Equipment

Hardware

We took SRT kits, as our reading indicated that many caves in the area had some vertical elements, as well more than 400 metres of rope. We had a bolting kit which was used at Pueblo Creek Cave.

Due to the amounts of water encountered underground the previous years we also took a small inflatable dingy and some car inner tubes, these were excellent, small to pack, and the children appreciated them when we left.

Equipment provided by Lyon Equipment was as follows :

<i>Item</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Semi-Static Rope – 9.5mm	400m
Drybags, Mediumweight – 29 litres	2
Drybags, Mediumweight – 19 litres	2
15mm Dyneema Sling – 120cm	3
15mm Dyneema Sling – 240cm	3
18mm Sewn Sling - 120cm	6
Tackle Bags – 27 litres	2
Tackle Bags – 35 litres	2
Tackle Bags – 42 litres	2
Simple Hangers	20
Twist Hangers	20
Maillons Long Opening 7mm	30
Petzl Tikka Plus Headtorches	7

Light

Due to the remote nature of the destination, we decided against electric lights. We were unable to arrange a source of Carbide from the UK, so we all used LED systems. These proved excellent both in the caves and also at our camps, with plentiful life in the 4.5v batteries. We did find them lacking in big passage where we used a 'Q' divers light to investigate distant openings.

Personal

Cotton overalls were used, but still proved very hot. Al used a bespoke tropical caving suit, which looked and handled better than the boiler suits.

Surveying

Was carried out using compass and clinometer both from Suunto, recording being undertaken in waterproof notebooks.

Equipment, Field

The GPS in 2002 that John used proved unreliable in some of it's readings but this year, Dominic, Rhys and Al all used GPS systems, gathering information quickly to mark locations or backup map work. These also worked well with only small clearings.

Two water filter pumps were taken and all expedition water went through these, a boring and time consuming job, producing up to 25 litres a night. This also went on some of the longer days with us, proving to be a lifesaver when insufficient water could be carried. Water could be obtained from puddles or other normally unhealthy places to drink.

Multifuel stoves were taken which were used to provide cups of tea as required and occasional meals when needed, providing a little more independence. Other than Dave attempting to set fire to himself and the hut we were staying in, due to a faulty fuel line, these worked well.

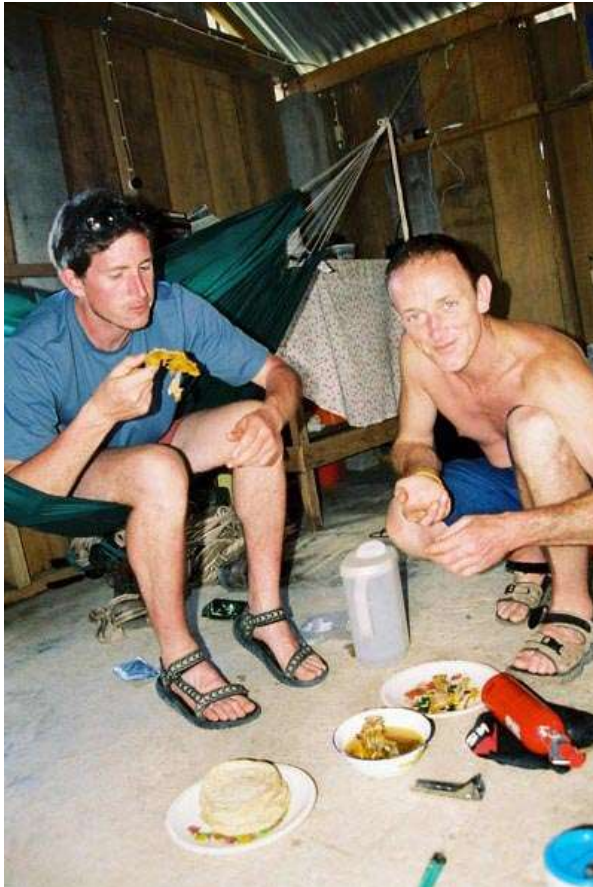
Also lots of suncream and insect repellent and we all had mosquito nets which were used as required.



Accommodation and Food

In San Pedro we stayed in a house share scheme, \$10Bz, meals here were \$4Bz, we only took an evening meal, buying breakfast and lunch from the store for \$1Bz and allowing more independence. Though when the shops run out of bread, biscuits can feel a little insufficient. Noodles bought locally helped keep us going but a glut of tortillas tested even a vegetarians taste buds.

Living in the communities is difficult, often we are sources of entertainment with people sat in our room watching us and there were always numerous children around. Children crying, dogs, chickens and music can all lead to slightly disturbed nights sleep.



Guiding

With many of the locals farming or hunting, there is a vast pool of information available. Previously we had little difficulty arranging this, though following the hurricane more people seem to have taken on normal jobs and were also busy fixing damage to homes or farms damaged by its effects. Though there were many people who claimed to know of sites, finding people with the time was a problem. We used a number of guides throughout the expedition, with variable results. However some locations would have been impossible to find without them.

One thing we did find is that the locals have little concept of time or distance. Sites that were claimed to be 'just down the road and left at the second bridge' would be 8 kilometres away and after 10 bridges. Likewise, people telling us that they went to a place last year, actually went there 5 or 6 years ago !

Appendix

BELIZE 2006 COMMUNAL EQUIPMENT

Kit
Batteries – AA x 30
Batteries - Duracell flat packs x 20
Bolting kit
Candles & Nightlights (T-lights)
Cooking Pans for Stove x 2
Daren Drums
Dinghy
Drill & Bits & Battery & Charger
Drybags (Ortleib)
Expedition Report 2002 – Copy
Gaffa Tape
GPS
Hangers
Inner tubes - 2
Kettle, Pots, Pans, Utensils
Machetes – 4 & sharpening stone
Maillon Rapide 7mm Alloy x 10
Map Cases
Maps
Matches / Lighter
Medical kit – Team
Mains Transformer – US to UK
Photography kit
Ration packs
Rope - 10mm Marlow LSK (300m)
Rope - 9mm Marlow LSK (100m)
Sewing Kit
Slings 16ft x 10
Spits
SRT Kits
SRT Rescue Gear
Stove MSR x 3
String – Ball Of
Survey kit (Tape, Clino & Compass)
Tackle bags
Thru-bolts – 8mm
Tin Openers
Water filtration pump
Waterproof Note pads
Washing up kit



BELIZE 2006 PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Item
Aftersun
Baby wipes (wet wipes)
Belt, Caving - load bearing
Bin Bags / Plastic Bags
Boots for jungle
Bum Bag
Camera (with spare batteries and film)
Caving Helmet with Lighting system
Caving Suit – lightweight or boilersuit
Clothes for travelling
Compass
Copy of Passport main page
Credit Card
Dextrose Tablets
Diary / Notebook / Pencil or Pen
Dry seal bag for documents
First Aid Kit – Personal
Flight Tickets
Food – Personal & additional to Group
Gloves – Cave (optional)
Gloves – Jungle – essential for Macheteing
Hammock - Lightweight
Hat – Wide brimmed and/or Bandanna
Insurance documents
Karabiners – Screwgate 2
KFS & plate
Knee/Elbow pads
Lamp Bulbs – spare
Lighting – spare (Mag light etc.)
Local contact details
Money (US \$)
Mosquito Net & Coils (optional)
Mug
Passport (with 6 clear months left)
Pen Knife
Poly Prop Rope
Powdered Milk
Reading material for journey
Rucksack and Waterproof liner
Sandals
Shirts - long sleeved for jungle
Shorts
Sleeping bag liner/system
Sleeping mat – Karrimat or Thermarest
Socks
Spanner for Rigging / SRT Kit
SRT Kit
Sunglasses and retainer strap
Sweets / snacks

Swimsuit
Tea bags
Toilet paper
Tools
Trekking Poles – optional
Trousers – long for jungle
Underwear
Warm Hat
Wash kit & towel
Washing Powder
Watch & spare or Alarm Clock
Water - Platypus and Water bottle/s
Wellington Boots
Wet Wipes
Whistle



BELIZE 2006 PERSONAL MEDICAL KIT

The list below is a personal recommendation and may be added to if desired.

Antiseptic Cream	1
Antiseptic throat lozenges	1 packet
Antiseptic Wipes	10
Bandage – Crepe	1
Bandage – Triangular	1 or 2
Gloves – Surgical	1 pair
Hand Cleaner – gelled types are good	1
Hydrocortisone cream	1
Imodium or preferred diarrhoea tablets	1 packet
Insect Repellant - Body	
Insect repellent - Clothes– Note 1 below	100ml +
Insulation Tape	1
Knee support if prone to bad knees	1 or 2
Malaria Tablets - Chloroquine	8 weeks
Melolin 10 x 10	2
Micropore Tape	1
Pain Killers – Paracetamol or personal preference	1 packet
Personal prescription Medicines – Note 2 below	As needed
Plasters	Assorted
Rehydration powder sachets	10
Safety pins	4
Scissors	1
Steristrips 13 x 75mm	1 pack
Sun Block for Lips	1
Sun Screen	1
Water Purifier – Iodine or Micropur	1 packet

Note 1 – Insect Repellents contain DEET – one of the only substances proven to damage climbing ropes – so obviously, keep Repellent away from Ropes in transit.

Note 2 – Prescription medicines should be accompanied by Prescriptions

BELIZE 2006 BASE CAMP MEDICAL KIT

Antiseptic Wipes - Mediwipes	40
Bandage - Open Weave 5cm x 5m	1
Bandage - Open Weave 7.5cm x 5m	1
Bandages - 10cm Crepe	3
Bandages - 10cm Crepe	2
Bandages – Triangular	3
Betadine – Spray	1
Cervical collar	1
Container for Kit	1
Cotton wool balls	10
Cotton wool tipped sticks	10
Dental repair kits	1
Disinfectant for utensils.	1
Dressing – Finger	2
Dressing – padded plaster for Blisters	1 box
Eye Bath	1
Eye pads – sterile	2
Eye Solution - Optrex	1
Giving Set	1
Gloves - Surgical	3 pairs
Injection Kit – Syringes and needles & Venflon	5
Insulation Tape	1
Melolin 10 x 10cm	10
Melolin 20 x 10cm	1
Melolin 5 x 5cm	2
Micropore tape	2
Normasol Irrigation solution	1
Paraffin Gauze Dressing 10x10	2
Plasters - Assorted Elastoplast dressings	1 box
Safety Pins	12
Salt	1
Scissors	1
Shampoo Prioderm 25g	2
Steristrips - 6mm x 75mm	1 pack
Thermometers (they break very easily)	1
Tisept Sachets	4
Tulle Dressing	2
Tweezers	1
Wound dressing – small No.8	3
Wound dressings – large No. 3	1
Wound dressings – medium No.9	2
Zinc Oxide Tape	1

Drugs & Medicines

Amoxicillin 500mg	20
Aspirin Tablets	6
Buccastem	10
Codeine Phosphate 30mg	10
Cold & Flue Remedy	3
Cuprofloxacil	20
Dextrose Tablets	1
Dioralyte sachets or tablets for rehydration	20
Ear Drops - Otosporin 10ml	1
EpiPen	1
Eye drops sachets - Amethocaine	2
Flagyl tablets 500mg for Intestinal Diseases	30
Gaviscon tablets	20
Ibuprofen 400mg	10
Immodium tablets	1 box
Metronidazole 400mg	20
Paracetamol Tablets	6
Piriton tablets or Benadryl	20
Sennokot tablets	10
Throat lozenges - Hibtane or Bradosol antiseptic	10
Throat Lozenges - Strepsils	6
Tums or Settlers	1
Voltarol - Diclofenac	10

Creams / Tubes

Antihistamine Cream - Caladryl cream 42g tubes	2
Antiseptic Cream – Germaline or Savlon	2 tubes
Canestan ointment 50g tubes for sweat rashes	1
Eye ointment Chloramphenicol 4g	1
Vaseline	1

BELIZE 2006 FOOD LIST

1. Food bought in Belize

- Meat, Fish,
- Carbohydrates – Potatoes, Rice, Noodles, Tortillas
- Sugar
- Vegetables - Carrots, Peas, Onions, Tomatoes, etc.
- Canned Foods – Tuna, Corn, Pineapple
- Cheese, Milk (depends on source), Eggs
- Bread, Biscuits
- Cooking Oil
- Margarine or Butter
- Beans
- Fruit – Banana, Oranges

2. Group Food

Individuals purchased an item allocated to them and took it with them to Belize for the Group

<i>Food Item</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Baked Beans	415g tin x 6
Instant Mashed Potato	Loads
Packet Soups (large & include Vegetarian)	10 large packets
Pasta	500g bag x 2
Porridge Oats	1 Kg bag x 2
Red Split Lentils	500g bag x 1
Rice	1Kg bag x 1

3. Personal Food

Take what you want from this list. Let the rest of the team know of anything not on here that you have thought of, or are taking.

- Ration packs for Jungle days
- Tea and Coffee for self for 15-17 days
- Drinking Chocolate
- Powdered Milk
- Sugar, Syrup
- Cuppa Soups
- Vitamin C Tablets
- Biscuits
- Dried Fruit, Nuts, Raisins
- Muesli Bars, Power Bars
- Salt, Pepper, Herbs, Spices as required
- Jam, Honey, Chocolate spread, Peanut Butter
- Sweets, Cake,
- Oxo, Gravy Granules

Food Rules

- a. No form of Meat can be taken through the USA
- b. No Fruit or Vegetables can be taken through the USA (other than dried foods)
- c. Meals should be simple and should be cookable within 15 minutes
- d. If eating Fruit in Belize, it should be ripe and/or fresh
- e. Raw vegetables should be washed in sterilized or boiling water and then wiped or peeled
- f. Avoid lettuce and leafy vegetables, as the large surface areas provide high doses of bacteria, germs and other nasties
- g. Avoid local milk, ice cream, fruit juice and avoid having ice in drinks



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Welsh Sports Council. For all the financial assistance received.

Lyon Equipment. For the generous equipment grant.

The Choco family, San Pedro. For accommodation and making us feel at home.

ADDRESS LIST

Alan Braybrooke

Leader/Author

abraybrooke@hotmail.com

c/o SWCC 1-10 Powell St Penwyllt, Pen-y-Cae, Powys

Gary Evans

Leader/Author & Report Editor

gary@swcro.fsnet.co.uk

c/o SWCC 1-10 Powell St Penwyllt, Pen-y-Cae, Powys

Dept of Archaeology, Belmopan.

Mr G Thompson (minister),

Dr John Morris (research director)

Mr R Torres (caving liaison)

00-501-8-22106 tel.

00-501-8-23345 fax

doabelize@btl.net

Ministry of Natural Resources + Environment, Market Square, Belmopan

Mapping section 08-22711

08-22249

Natures Way Guesthouse, PG.

Environmental/guiding/accommodation

Beowulf@btl.com

Cesario Choco

Accommodation/contact San Pedro

San Pedro Columbia, Toledo District, Belize CA

Community phone ph-07-22303

acapps@btl.net

Bruno Kuppinger

Accommodation & contact PG

Sun Creek Lodge. Toledo District, Belize CA

614 2080

Trekforce

Santa Helena Visitor Centre

Heather Steere – Expedition Manager – 225 3008

Guides, San Pedro

Enrique Choco

Alfonso Chee

Ansalmo Chee

Mayors

Punta Gorda – Carlos Galvis

San Pedro (Alcaldi) – Julian Kesacoo

Cave Tourism

Ian Anderson – 822 2800

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Below Belize

Queen Mary College Speleological Expedition 1988

And British Speleological Expedition 1989
C/o Wessex CC Upper Pitts
Eastwater Lane, Priddy, nr. Wells
BA5 3AX

Belize '94

Mendip caving Group
c/o MCG, Nordrach cottage
Charterhouse, Blagdon, Bristol

Journal of Cave and Karst Studies

Aug1996 Vol58 no2
(Theme issue on Belize)
ISSN 0146-9517

International caving information

www.cavepage.magna.com.au/cave/belize.html

National Geographic, and maps at
nationalgeographic.com
(Chiquebal Issue)

Maps of Belize

Large map of whole country two sheets
Published by Government UK (Directorate of Overseas Surveys)
Series D.O.S.649/1 North
Series D.O.S.649/1 South

Large-scale local maps

Military Survey UK, MoD
Series E755 (dos 4499) Sheet 38 San Pedro
Series E755 (dos 4499) Sheet 37 San Jose

Sources; Belize given in addresses,

UK, Edward Stamford Ltd of London
OS Southampton

Also to:

Rough Guide

and

Lonely Planet guides

GLOSSARY

Caye: low-lying coral island

Gibnut: a rodent about the size of a cat, commonly shelters in caves, popular for its meat, so many hunters know the location of caves and many caves are known as Gibnut hole/cave etc.

Karst: a geological term for areas of limestone containing caves.

PG Punta Gorda, the main town in the southern Toledo district.

Phreatic: cave passage caused by water under pressure, often circular.

Pitch: vertical section of cave normally requiring ladders or abseils.

Resurgence: place where water reappears from a cave system onto the surface.

Shake hole: a surface depression formed by the collapse of cave chambers below.

Sink: place where water leaves the surface and enters a cave system.

Speleology: the study of caves and caving.

SRT: single rope techniques, the means of ascending or descending using a single piece of rope and jamming devices.

Sump: an area of cave passage that is completely filled with water.

Swallet: same as sink.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Currency; Bz Belizean dollars, linked to the US dollar 2Bz=1US for the purpose of the expedition we worked on 3Bz=£1

Capital; Belmopan, though Belize City is still far larger and the site of the international airport, Belmopan is the location of the government and its agencies.

Climate; Wet and dry seasons, though not reliable. It is generally dry from February until April, but this is less likely in the highlands.

Temperatures can vary from a high of over 40°C to 10°C in a day.

Communications; Most villages are equipped with a phone, where it is possible to make national calls. Longer distance calls could be made from main towns, many offering email.

