



JANUARY 2018 NEWSLETTER

Editor's Note

I wrote a review of the ULSA's year for CHECC back in November as part of their grand prize. We did well in every category, entering the most number of competitions and winning best caving cake (thanks to Nosayba and Kat), fastest SRT race (due to me derigging it shortly after completing it) and longest write up. Thank you to everyone who entered items, including Alice, Kat and Ita for rants, posters and photos! You can find all of these with quick searching on CHECC's bit of UKCaving.

P.S. Please remember to renew your ULSA membership with Rose and Chris!

The student's year: ULSA and how to bin dive

Following on from Rob's thorough and extensive introduction to ULSA caving post last year, here's an update on the club activities this year! The current student incarnation of ULSA is following the teachings of Ian Peachey and taking a global stance of reducing food waste as well as their commitment to caving.

"Rats got to it before ULSA? You guys have been slacking recently." - Jack Dewison, SUSS, November 2017.

So recruitment has gone well this year, with probably 20 new cavers heading underground regularly, bringing the club up to about 50 regular student cavers. This includes some Europeans who are only with us for 1 semester or year and are getting in touch with their local caving clubs, which is really good to see.

Trips

Since September, most weeks we've run two day trips due to popular demand, to Giants, Easegill, Long Churns, Short Drop to Gavel exchange etc. Evening trips have been really successful with second year cavers who want to practice

Upcoming Events

23rd January: Training Recommences. The Edge, 8-10pm.

26-28th January: SWCC, South Wales caving. Meeting at the chapel for 6pm.

3rd February: Rift Pot

10th February: Give It A Go! Birkwith.

16th - 18th February: TSG, Peal District caving

10th- 11th March: Dinnermeet!

23rd-25th March: Bull Pot Farm, Northern CHECC

There's plans to attend the caving forum in Ireland over Easter, followed by a week's caving. Details from Kristian to follow.

For more details about upcoming trips, see the [ULSA Calendar!](#)

rigging, in Simpsons and Voldemort. These are great for late night bin diving in Settle and Ilkley.

“I haven't bought bread since joining the club” - Adam Metcalf, November 2017

Our annual pilgrimage to the Mendips occurred, our first weekend away. Our German posse all bought meter-long wooden swords. We still don't know why. Alan and Aileen Butcher kindly descended on the Shepton with other SMCC members and brought tea and cakes and upon hearing this, everyone became very efficient cavers. Some members recall making the most of the Butcher bar tab in the Hunters, but I don't know about that. Caving happened, the wonders of GB and Swildons were seen.

Our next weekend away was at the Pennine Hut, firework fun at the University hut in Selside. It's a great location for making the most of Alum, Long Churns and further surveying efforts. Traditional ULSA onion soup (with thanks to ULSA alumni including Lyndie, Chris, Sniffer, John and Wob), served with dhal and vegetable curries, all upcycled from the bins. The return journey this year was blessed with roadkill plunder: a deer. Inner city Leeds massacre or eco-friendly recycling? We're yet to decide but venison stew has been on the menu for weeks now.

Training

We have regular SRT and theory sessions twice weekly, which have been hugely popular and we're lucky to have use of the university affiliated gym training wall. Most freshers are SRT competent and some are rigging their first caves. Mike has been leading some leader training which will also be rolled out at this year's CHECC.

Most training sessions are preempted by soup and pizza kitchens, often kindly hosted by Naziba, with the week's scavenged treasures, aiming to redistribute the wealth of West Yorkshire. And of course, all training sessions are followed by the pub.

First Aid and Cave Rescue visits

Early on a Sunday in November, we heard CRO had just put the kettle on. Seeing an opportunity for free biscuits, a staggering 14 students clambered over to Settle and met the brilliant volunteers. Organised by Sean Whittle, the man who ran our very successful cavers' first aid course in



George Lazonby cannot be woken from his peaceful slumber, safe in the knowledge that the prize loaf is his. Photo: Wob Rotson

February, we were shown around the HQ, introduced to the rescue vehicles and practised some hauling configurations on Ruth, the unfortunate dummy. There was a demonstration of the call out procedure from the comms room using SARCO. Up from typically 3 or so a year, there's been 9 cave rescues already this year, and perhaps 80 fell rescues. All in all, a very fun morning. Many thanks to Sean, Slug and the whole cave rescue team.

As part of fundraising for CRO, 5 ULSA (and two Cardiff!) cavers took to shifting through the bins at Glastonbury Festival again this summer, donating £700 to the cause. Thanks again to Lyndie for organising all of this.

Surveying

Through the year, we've continued the production of a benchmark survey of Fountains Fell which was started in 2015, the main thrust of which has been in Fuck Off University of Leeds (FOUL) Pot, with Gingling Hole now finished and available to purchase. We're metres away from the successful completion of this survey and Carl is optimistic it'll be complete this year, despite having surveyed around 10m total in the last three trips. On the other hand, Rob, George and Luke have surveyed a combined distance of almost 200m in their last two trips surveying New Pasture Cave and Hammer Pot, somewhat aided by ditching paper surveying and getting slightly more modern with PocketTopo and a PDA. Trips by George to Liverpool to visit 'Uncle Julian and Auntie Becka' to Nerd and Tunnel have been successful (he hasn't got shingles yet), and work continues. Julian got cross with Rob for cooking the tofu wrong, so he isn't allowed back for more survex fun.

Digging

We've been digging with the Black Sheep Diggers in the Nidderdale system for over a year now, student and nonstudent ULSA member alike. Initially we were digging the dried up sump in Carter Passage near to Telegraph Aven, but after that became flooded again in January focus shifted to Guscott Pot, a cave which aims to find a dry link between Goyden and New Goyden. Between the two dig sites, a total of around 50m new passage has been pushed, over 15 different ULSA personnel have attended around 12 trips and a lot of boulders have been removed (though one very big one tried quite hard to end Rob from a height of 4m or so in March). Massive thanks must go to Chris Fox and Nick

Rant Book Latest

Loads of other trips have been chronicled in the rant book:

Rob's personal diary contains 20 entries from 2017, most recently regaling adventures in Ireby's [Jupiter Cavern](#), surveying in [Hammer Pot](#), and multiple Notts 2 pull throughs! All enjoyable and occasionally concise reads.

Nat describes the club's mass descent of [Gaping Gill](#), in October

Ita posted her first rant, [Illusion Pot](#), where we were surprised and excited to be joined by Tonk! The rant was selected for submission to the CHECC grand prize!

Alice tells a detailed story about the 'fully functioning team' down [Large Pot](#), where nothing went wrong and Nathan did not disobey the description's warnings. Contains a great photo of Tinkle passage.

I posted some photos of our frosty trip [Pool Sink-Lancaster](#) just before Christmas, where we adopted a puppy and cleared debris from the cave.

Bairstow, the core BSD crew, for being extremely accommodating and generous to the impoverished students, who on the last trip were bought chips for lunch! We hope the digs continue to progress and that we can continue to work with BSD in this important system.

The club has begun an ambitious (stupid?) digging project in Penyghent Pot, in the hope of finding a bypass to the worst of the Living Dead Extensions through the Hunt Pot Inlet and thence find a way into the fabled Penyghent Master Cave. By all accounts it's wet, miserable and slow going in quite a remote and dangerous spot. It's bred a new level of ultimate caver: Adam dislocated his shoulder quite close to the bottom of the cave on the last trip but exited without (much) complaint, repeatedly trying to stop Rob from carrying his bag. Bonus: allows for easy access to Settle bins, and Sam often provides Chocolate Surprise.

Recently, we've begun digging with Richard Bendall and his associates, with a core team of Rob, Luke and Nathan attending on a weekly basis to shovel mud and scoop gloop. Prospects look extremely good for this dig, and work continues. Keenly, this dig allows for bin diving in a lesser frequented area: Kirby Lonsdale. Getting to chat with other cavers (usually the original explorers) has allowed us to learn a lot about lesser known trips in the Three Counties System, like Voldemort Hole and Lost Johns' pull-through trips to Notts II. The production of the new volume of Northern Caves by our very own Sam and Beardy has also greatly encouraged more obscure sporting trips.

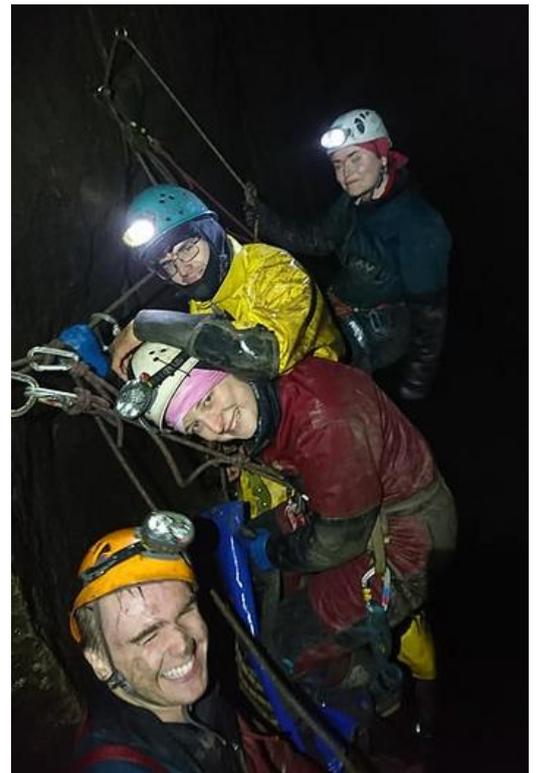
Trips abroad

Over summer, we tried to scavenge for food abroad, when Booths and Co op were less fruitful. We had a great canyoning holiday in June through Italy and Switzerland, a group of 18 cavers parading through the European countryside in wetsuits. We made successful descents of a number of canyons, some technically demanding and some splashy fun, and all agreed that canyoning is a much nicer sport than caving and we needed to move to Europe, where wine is cheap, crisps come in 500g bags and you can play frisby in the rain and not be cold.

At Easter, a group of ULSA cavers crossed to the emerald isle and man, we were out-drunk. If you think CHECC is messy, you have no idea. The Irish Student Caving forum were very hospitable held in Kiltyclogher, Co. Leitrim, before we ran away to Clare and joined up with the SMCC.



A man provides: Wob Rotson with a nights haul from... ??? Photo: George Breley



Without a ledge to stand on, Voldemort to Notts 2. Photo: Rachel Turnbull

Expeditions

Seeking food freely given by sponsors, 12 ULSA cavers headed out to Bad Aussee, the Loser plateau to ambush CUCC expedition for six long weeks along with UBSS and some SUSS/NUCC. For some, it was their first expedition and for others their first time camping underground. The diet of instant mash potato and curry appeals to many Yorkshire cavers and enabled vast amounts of successful exploration. Thanks again to CUCC for inviting us back every year, it's a brilliant caving event to be a part of. See this thread for more

info:

<https://ukcaving.com/board/index.php?topic=22020.0>

Convinced I could survive on small portions of couscous after the omelette and chips splurge of CUCC derigging, I then headed over to the Dachstein, Austria too. The Dachstein was joined with university cavers from Kent, Dublin, Bristol, Cardiff, Exeter, Reading, Plymouth and cavers from Australia, Czech Republic, USA and Hungary.

Supporting other clubs

Since we were given a generous grant a few years ago and replenished our tackle store (guess who's enrolled on the kit inspection training at CHECC this year), we were excited to help out start-up clubs, Lancaster and Harper Adams by lending oversuits when we can spare them.

In our continued efforts to make a Yorkshire student master club, SULSA, we joined SUSS for a joint Christmas weekend at the YSS in 2016 and their summer holiday to France to do Le Verneau traverse (which obviously also had a NUCC contingent, clingy as they are). However, the 'special relationship' has become strained recently on hearing the dispute regarding breakfast they've had recently (though the vegetarians will always be welcome with us if they feel further threatened). Some of us spent New Years' with the BPC, SUSS and former Cardiff University students up in the Dales, where Rob experienced some harassment from SUSS after resourcefully replacing his forgotten helmet with a more lightweight, bobbed option on a trip in Peterson Pot.

Along with supporting other clubs with equipment and experience on trips, we're here to offer advice too.

"What's the best bin for eating spaghetti out of?" - Will Whalley, January 2017

Rachel



Taking care of The Chapel, ULSA's tackle store. Photo: Brendan Hall MSc

Albania: an exploratory caving holiday

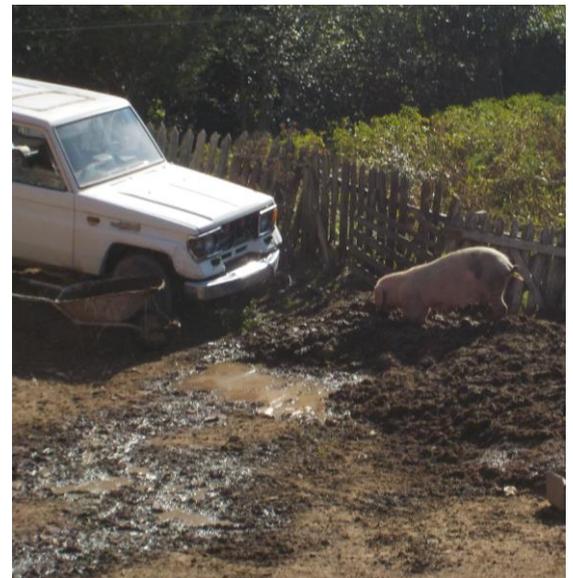
September saw Rob, Geroge and Luke in the Kelmend province of Albania (on the Montenegro border).

This is a brief photo tour of our trip to Albania at the end of September. We were very fortunate to go on this trip after Dave and Barny, formerly of EPC but now just good mates, kindly invited us out for ten days. We had a great time exploring quite tough caves with no chance of rescue if we [messed] up, in addition to eating huge quantities of feta cheese, drinking raki and playing with the cats.

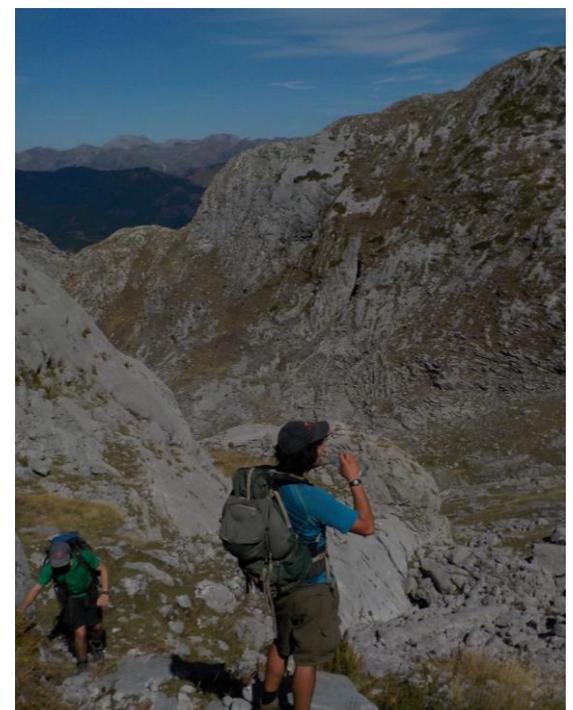
Right: George, Luke and Barny gear up on the first day outside Luigi's guesthouse before walking up the hill. Luigi is the bossman of Lepushë, the village community where we were based. There is no law enforcement here, but with Luigi on our side we were guaranteed limitless kindness and hospitality. Albanian culture dictates that as he has accepted us into his home, he will protect us until death. Luigi built the house himself from the ground up, a pretty exceptional feat. The man is a total hero.

Right: One of Luigi's sows enjoys a good wallow in the mud outside his house. Albanian rural communities are almost entirely self-sufficient, meaning their way of life is very sustainable. Big tick.

The walk in each day took around 1hr40mins, and included over 800m of altitude gain. Good warm up before a day's caving. As you can see, the amount of limestone is vast, and the potential for a really deep cave is massive.



Before entering the cave each day, we would have a picnic similar to this. Albanian cuisine is amazing, and is based around a diet of bread, potatoes, meat, feta cheese, cucumber, tomato, aubergine and pickles. Each day Luigi's son Leonarda would produce huge quantities of extremely tasty food, and it's a good job we had to walk for nearly 4 hours a day or we would have got very fat.



Luke went a bit crazy in Albania due to the amount of surveying we needed to do, as Barny and Dave were not especially keen on surveying and admitted openly: 'it's not accurate.' There were positives to this however, which included trying to get a sponsorship from Binky for nail varnish (used to mark survey stations), a beauty products company run by a star from 'Made in Chelsea'. George is the keenest surveyor, and was PDA boy for the duration of the trip. They made a fine team while I was bolting the way onwards, even pioneering some new surveying techniques with a tripod mounted disto.

The surveying pioneers, who were actually just cold and bored. The reason they were cold is because the caves in Albania are typically around 0 - 2°C. They contain a lot of ice, so much ice that occasionally we used ice screws for rigging (see below). This pitch involved a descent in a body sized hole behind a massive ice plug, which was a bit precarious and scary given the chance of survival if the shit hit the fan.



"I've never used a rope protector in the middle of a hang before." - Wob



Me (Wob) rigging the top of the icepiece pitch (with the ice screw deviation). The caves we explored were almost entirely vertical, with basically no time off the rope. The rock in the caves varied between excellent clean dolomitised limestone and utter shitpiece cheese rock. This

meant at times we had to be quite inventive with the rigging: I've never used a rope protector in the middle of a hang before. We borrowed Peachey's drill for the trip which was excellent, cheers Peach!



A drilled thread rigged off 5mm cord at the pushing front in EPC519, the deepest cave we explored this year at -350m (there are deeper caves, but they are further down the hill). The other two caves we explored both ended at chokes, but this cave hit a huge fault which had a very shit, muddy and awkward meandering passage developed along it. It is showing no signs of stopping though, and unusually for these caves contains a stream. This makes it a very promising prospect for the future, but the likelihood of any of the older guys returning to it is slim after their 10 hour epic in there at the start. We left all the cave rigged though, so we might return one day, who knows!

Wob Rotson

Memories of Pennine Huts past... Part I - Watty, Food, Drinking and Fireworks

As this year's *[Editor's note: actually LAST year's, Oh the shame. I'm sorry Lyndie!]* Pennine Hut approached Rachel asked if I could write a history of Pennine Hut. I don't know too much of the wider history, although I believe some ULSA members were involved in preparing the site and building the original hut, so here is a few memories of mine, my first visit being in 2000. It has proved a tougher assignment than first imagined so it will be serialised, this being part one.



ULSA Library is back on the Shelves of Eddie B! See librarian Carl for more help. Photo: Kristian

After a few years many Pennine Huts merge into one so memories of specific things happening at specific times have become a little vague. There are, however, things that come to mind when thinking about the annual Pennine Hut*: Watty; food; drinking; fireworks; mayhem; injuries; caving games; carbide related incidents!

The hut itself has changed over the time that I have been attending. The pit room used to be larger with bunk beds in as well; the common room area was smaller. In effect the common room was enlarged to give more room for the many day-use groups but reducing the space for people to stay overnight (not that this has deterred ULSA from having as many people there as possible). One remedy to this situation that I have employed in various years is to just stay up all night drinking beer though this is not conducive to good caving the following day. This led to me being asked on one of the more recent Sundays “Lyndie, have you really had twenty six pints?”

The kitchen was a little more basic in 2000 with the fine oven, flat hob and extraction system arriving a year or so later. Cooking equipment has not changed much over time although the odd frying pan has possibly been damaged.

My first six Pennine Huts were firmly associated with Watty, our revered President for twenty years or so (surviving a dinnermeet coup and having a resignation rejected in that time), until his untimely death in 2007. He would organise the food for the whole weekend and do most of the cooking making use of the large wooden spoon he bought in Sardinia on an ULSA new year away. I now have the wooden spoon as well as the email he sent me detailing what to buy. One of the years, when I did the shopping, Watty's list said 3 French sticks. At Morrisons they were on a buy one get one free offer so I got four; Watty used three and left the other one on the shelf! Another year certain others did the shopping using a 'simple' spreadsheet; plug in the total number coming and it generated how much of everything to buy. They believed the spreadsheet and thought 2kg of mince would be enough to feed 40+ people; Watty's face was a picture when he realised that they had brought in 'all the food' for the weekend, in about three boxes.

Each year after Saturday breakfast Watty would calmly kit up and set off, on his own, laden with rope and ladders to rig Dolly Tubs, The Greasy Slab and along to The Bridge. He would usually prussik out up the 140 that someone else had,



ULSA's winning [vegan] cave cake at this year's CHECC. Well done Nosayba and Kat! Photo: Rachel



Currently a prototype. New ULSA caving whistles are here and ready to order from Adam. Get 'em while they're hot!



Mattress rugby made a return to this year's Pennine Hut. Photo: Chris H

by then, rigged and could often be heard cursing and swearing his way past said other person's rebelay; always out in time to commence preparartion of his famous French Onion Soup, a tradition we have carried on at every Pennine Hut since his death.

Expletives when caving, quiet and polite when not; great caver and inspiration to many (learn more about Watty by talking to older members or look in The Forum pages on the ULSA website - the one called 'Watty', with the most posts and the most views).

In general the food element of Pennine Huts has remained the same; breakfasts on both mornings and a three course meal on Saturday night featuring the aforementioned soup. Sunday food used to be burgers for the cleaners and cavers before leaving the hut 'spotless' for the next group. Over time, and with the coming of more vegetarians into the ULSA family, the Sunday food has become a hearty veggie soup which is easy to keep hot on the hob for whatever time any Sunday cavers return.

Various food items have found their way to other parts of the hut in differing ways: the carbide porridge bombs, courtesy of nitro cellulose in camera film cases; the baked beans launched outside (methinks carbide involved again); the block of lard hidden in the roof above the drying room which was still there the following year but had been all but consumed by wildlife; the jalapeno eating competitions; the mushrooms stuffed in mouths; the whipped cream on the kitchen floor (very slippery); the attempts at industrial custard production and so on and so on.

In my earlier days at Pennine Hut there were more cans of drink consumed and many can towers built. The common room floor used to have carpet tiles which were gathered up on the Friday and stored out of the way, then replaced in a jigsaw type way after cleaning on the Sunday. This meant that all manner of spillage could occur throughout the weekend. Later years saw a move to barrels of beer, which have proved popular.

As well as building towers from floor to ceiling cans were used for games of tennis and generally just thrown around. There was one late night where Matty and I spent an hour or so kicking empty cans at each other whilst a few watched



This year's Pennine Hut firework display. Photo: Chris H.



Pennine hut's classic caving trips and usual faff on a surprisingly lovely day. Photo: Hannah Noble

on. We were both sporting scratches on our faces by the next day!

There was one year when I brought various random bottles of booze to be 'used up' and labelled them as a cocktail bar; Noel had the same idea. It got messy! Very messy! Sam arrived at 9am on the Saturday morning expecting to catch the end of breakfast but instead found noone up and breakfast still to cook; he cooked and then tried to get us up without much success. That day most of the 'experienced' cavers stayed in bed, as slight movement induced nausea, emerging for a walk on the limestone around 4pm!

Another time there was tequila slammers consumed except there was no salt or lemon, or tequila, so the substitutes decided upon were soy sauce and black pepper to accompany homemade slivovica (that a friend had sent me from the Czech Republic); they weren't good! I think Hodge did three of them though; not sure how....

Fireworks have been an integral part of every Pennine Hut weekend. My earliest ones featured Footleg in his white lab coat and wearing safety goggles acting as MC conducting a fine display. Such order was thrown into disarray the year a rather drunk Sam set light to the whole box of fireworks sending showers of sparks in all directions. Some have been let off in the hut itself usually resulting in the fire alarms going off and rooms filling with smoke. At some point one of the older cavers introduced the technique of launching rockets from the hand, which has the advantage of being able to take aim; this method still seems to be in use and I understand has also spread to mouth launches. There was Hawkstone's homemade fireworks in the shape of buildings (I'm thinking Houses Of Parliament and Empire State); they burned, they changed colour, they made a mess! Before my time there is the story of how the main kitchen window was cracked by a 19p rocket that went in the wrong direction!

More mayhem in the next instalment. A Happy New Caving Year to all.

Lyndie



Our best efforts to hurt ourselves when it was 'too treacherous' (fun) to go caving. Bull Pot Farm, December 2017. Photo: Hannah Noble