

## **Short report on the 2017 CUCC Expedition to the Totes Gebirge**

The 2017 Expedition was undoubtedly a success, with nearly 40 members attending over the six week period. This year saw a smaller number of older returning members to the expedition, with the result that younger members took more responsibility for the planning and running of the Expedition. Once more, weather led to a loss of exploration man hours. However, learning from flood events last year, the weather did not pose any significant risk to cavers.

The aims of the 2017 Expedition have been more varied than in recent years. Resources were split between the three main objectives. Deep Tunnocksschacht leads required supplies to rig to -900m, re-establish an underground camp and for pushing leads in the further reaches of the cave. Balkonhoehle provided shallower leads, although as this cave has now been explored for four year it is reaching more committing depths. As shallower leads dry up, prospecting has once again become more active, with several new caves being explored this year. A new camp has also been established further North on the Plateau, near Organhoehle. This base has been vital for prospecting and exploring in the more remote reaches of the Plateau.

### **Tunnocksschacht**

After the significant finds of 2016, several leads were left below the camp set up in Kraken Chamber (-600m). Leaving some camping kit and supplies underground last year allowed for an easier set up, although large amounts of kit were still portered in. The rigging alone took a week to reach camp. Exploration commenced at the deepest part of the cave, Song of The Earth, with a 25m climb in an ascending phreatic roof passage. This dropped into a large chamber, Big Lad, where the promising draft found before was lost in the boulder floor. Exploration continued in passages at the Northern and Southern reaches of the main deep phreatic level. Whilst the passage was less yielding, promising leads are still waiting for next year. Once more a large number of first time campers made it to Camp Kraken, in keeping to the ethos of the Expedition; to encourage newer members to try new aspects of caving.

Re-exploring of several parts of Tunnocks at shallower depths also yielded more cave. The Beast, an undescended+ 150m shaft was explored with some truncated phreatic passage in the walls being pushed.

### **Balkonhoehle**

Balkonhoehle presents less committing caving than Tunnocks, with leads mostly nearer the entrance and less reliant on SRT. This year exploration was focused on the area around Hilti-a-Plenty, starting at ~200m depth. A lead from last year, a chamber named Galactica, was

explored. Dropping 50m from a ledge to the floor led to a chamber 130m long, over 40m wide and up to 100m high. Unfortunately no route on was found. Good work elsewhere in the area found several leads not explored last year, leading to Nothing to See and Sloppy Seconds. The later is now the deepest point in the cave at nearly -400m and still going.

## **Prospecting**

As leads in Balkonhoehle and Tunnocks have grown deeper, the need for more accessible projects has grown. Prospecting on the Plateau to the North of the established system led to the discovery of Schlechte Vorhersage Hoehle, and also to the West, with Gluecklicher Schmetterling Hoehle (GSH) and Fischgesicht Hoehle. Of these, GSH is the only continuing. The cave does lie further West than many other entrances, and could yield information on a possibly quicker route to the deeper phreatic levels.

## **Organhoehle**

It has been previously highlighted that to help with exploration in this area, a small camp was needed. A site was found nearly one mile North of the current bivvy site, 204 or the Stone Bivvy. The new camp could sleep four at a time and whilst less plush than the main campsite, it proved sufficient. Re-exploring Organhoehle highlighted how hard it had originally been pushed between '89-'92. After passing the Organgrinder, a particularly contorted and difficult section of passage, it was decided to concentrate efforts elsewhere. Exploration of numerous surface leads produced five new caves, with one significant find, Guten Morgen Hoehle, approaching one kilometre long and nearly entirely horizontal. The camp proved a success and has raised the debate of smaller, mobile camps in the future.