

CUCC 2011 Austrian Cave Science Expedition

Post-Expedition Report

October 2011

The CUCC Expedition to Totes Gebirge in Austria 2011 was very successful this year. The expedition took place from the 16. July to the 20. August 2011, and within these five weeks, a total of 31 participants went to Austria, 28 of which went caving. It is also worth noting that ten of the participants have never been on a caving expedition before, and that four participants have started caving less than a year before.

In weeks 1-3, two camping trips to 204/Steinbrückenhöhle were organised by altogether eight participants. This was the first camping trip on a CUCC expedition since 1995, and significantly enhanced our camping expertise. These trips allowed a lot of work to get done in and around the Wares area in the lower levels of the cave. Many questionmarks were ticked off, but no dramatic major finds could be made.

Meanwhile another team of cavers continued previous year's exploration of 258/Tunnockschacht. Pushing trips were made below the bottom of String Theory and at the northern end of the cave beyond Flying High, which has now reached a point 9m higher than the entrance and 5m higher than Stonemonkey. The main focus was on trips to the lower levels of the cave, where the chamber Above and Beyond was found as well as a pitch called The Beast, which has been approached from about 4 different places. Exploration of 258/Tunnockschacht continued into weeks 4 and 5, and at the end of week 4, the long sought after connection into the Wares area of 204/Steinbrückenhöhle was finally found, very close to the pushing front of the previous camping trips.

As a third cave, exploration of 161/Kaninchenhöhle started in week 3. The main goal was Irony of Time, a bolt climb into the roof of Repton Chamber, which has been prepared at the end of the 2009 expedition. The very windy passage almost immediately broke into a huge north/south trending phreas (Country for Old Men), which continued 150m north to a first pitch. While initially this passage seemed to be heading for the bottom of 234/Hauchhöhle, it also reduced the gap between 161/Kaninchenhöhle and 204/Steinbrückenhöhle from 420m to 270m. In further trips, various small pitches were rigged and the phreas was pushed further north, reducing the distance between the two caves to 130m and finally to a mere 34m. The large phreatic tubes were also explored southwards, leading to an additional 600m of passage. This new loop is heading towards known areas of the cave, but it opens up dozens of new questionmarks along the way, most of them strongly drafting and very promising for further exploration.

As the passages in 161/Kaninchenhöhle are now clearly heading for the Catty Puns area of 204/Steinbrückenhöhle, another team decided to rig Brian's Phat Shaft (100m deep) as an easier way into this area. This pitch has last been descended in 2001 and substantial rebolting of the route was required, which ultimately prevented pushing trips from this side.

In total, 5.5km of passages have been surveyed, which ranks very high in the 35 year history of CUCC expeditions to Totes Gebirge. The two caves 204/Steinbrückenhöhle and 258/Tunnockschacht now have a combined length of 27.8km (Steinbrücken: 17.7km, Tunnocks:10.1km), and 161/Kaninchenhöhle has a total length of (24.9km). The missing connection between the

caves is left tantalisingly close for 2012, with all the routes bolted and prepared. The combined system of Tunnocks/Steinbrücken/Schwarzmooskogelhöhle system would be 93.8km.

The success of the expedition was made possible by the large manpower of this year's expedition. The combination of experienced and less experienced cavers worked very well and the novices definitely learnt a lot about expedition caving. Also the combination of CUCC and non-CUCC members, most notably from UBSS, worked very well, and lots of shared spare time activities kept the morale exceptionally high.

Expedition Income	
Award from GPF (incl. report deposit)	500.00
Other grants received¹	248.18
Other external finance	0
Contributions from participants	14757.62
Total income	15505.80

Expedition Costs	Expected	Incurred	
Communal transport to and from Austria	2200	2576.71	+14.62%
Local transport	600	383.65	-56.39%
Estimate of personal travel costs ²		2650.00	
Total transport costs		5610.36	

Gear	800	1524.61	+47.53%
Camping	2500	2078.45	-20.28%
Camping consumables	200	169.59	-17.93%
Food	1248	1288.01	+3.11%
Local counterparts	100	187.31	+46.61%
Insurance (cars&drivers)		288.99	
Medical equipment	300	30.06	
Others	100	4.37	
Total of other costs		5571.39	

Estimate of personal gear costs **4324.05**

Total expenditure **15505.80**

¹Four participants received travel grants of 72 EUR each

²Several participants were travelling individually to or from e.g. Norway, Spain or Macedonia for other caving expeditions or personal reasons