

Editorial

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As Editors we often wonder whether anyone actually reads the words that we pen at the start of each *Cave and Karst Science* Issue. One test might be whether we receive any correspondence in relation to the front-cover picture, which has a brief caption and a pointer to further information within this very piece. We are hopeful that the claim that the cave passages on Jinfoshan Mountain are at a higher elevation than any other trunk passages yet known on the planet might elicit some response. Readers who are interested in the ‘longest’ / ‘largest’ / ‘deepest’ / ‘highest’ lists may be aware of recent discussion on the claims of the 2012 Peru Caving Expedition to have found and surveyed most of the world’s highest (by altitude) caves, although they do note that, “*The highest known cave in the world is thought to be on the Rahkiot Ridge of Nanga Parbat in Pakistan at 6645m but this has never been explored and surveyed by cavers*” (see the excellent web site at <http://peru.commscentral.net/>). The surveys show these caves to be essentially vertical and largely vadose; the slideshow confirms that most (if not all) are currently active. Hence, they are completely different from Jinfoshan Mountain’s large (tens of metres wide and high), extensive (kilometres) sub-horizontal passages, which are part of relict systems that were probably abandoned many hundreds of thousands of years ago. So, our question is, do any readers know of equally large and extensive cave systems at higher altitude?

Having moved on from the front cover, we hope that readers will enjoy the mix of articles in this Issue, which covers aspects of biology, geomorphology, history and hydrology. There is a distinct Yorkshire bias to these, partially offset by articles on caves in Jamaica and Vietnam. Yorkshire also features on this Issue’s back cover, which includes a selection of photographs related to surface and underground exposures of the Porcellanous Bed in the southern Yorkshire Dales. Saturday 06 July 2013 witnessed two significant events in Ingleton, as the village was given over *almost* entirely to “Operation Homeguard”. Villagers and visitors alike entered fully into the annual re-creation of the 1940s liberation of Ingleton’s twin-town, La Chapelle-des-Marais, in the Pays de la Loire of western France... Meanwhile, close to the centre of the village, the British Cave Research Association field meeting “*The Significance of the Porcellanous Bed to Cave Formation in the Yorkshire Dales*” was underway within Ingleton Methodist Church.

The Porcellanous Bed (or Porcellanous Band) was first described in 1924 as a significant marker bed within the main Carboniferous Limestone succession of the Dales – the Great Scar Limestone of modern terminology. Initially the Bed was known only from its surface outcrop in areas north of the North Craven Fault, but subsequently it was recognized in various caves across the area, most notably in Gaping Gill’s Main Chamber. Studies and publications by the late Dick Glover not only raised awareness of the Bed and suggested how it might influence cave development, but also caused some controversy during the 1970s. More recently, improved understanding of major and minor cyclicity during deposition of the Carboniferous Limestone has led to recognition of the possible importance of major cycle boundaries to primitive permeability development and subsequent speleogenesis. The Porcellanous Bed’s cave development role or roles remain cryptic and local, but its original value as a marker bed remains in a modern context. Where recognized it provides a pointer to beds encompassing the junction between rocks of the Asbian and Holkerian major depositional cycles – a boundary that is claimed to act as a major inception horizon in the southern Yorkshire Dales.

Talks and subsequent discussions during the Saturday morning meeting in Ingleton Methodist Church looked at: general geological influences upon cave development; the specific nature and potential significance of the Porcellanous Bed; geological mapping of the Porcellanous Bed (and its equivalent horizon south of the North Craven Fault); and an alternative view of how much (or how little!) influence the Bed has had upon where and how cave passages have developed. During Saturday afternoon, two separate fieldtrips visited Porcellanous Bed exposures in Kingsdale and Crummack Dale; some related images are included on the back cover. Discussions of ways to advance Porcellanous Bed recognition and site recording had been planned for late afternoon but, due to the virtual lock-down of Ingleton village, more-limited discussions took place among interested parties during the fieldtrips.