

Forum

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Notes for Authors

The Importance of Notebooks

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Abstract: Keep a notebook handy. It is the ideal place to record chance ideas and observations. They may not lead anywhere, at least immediately, yet they might. Even if not, at some future date they may contribute to your research programme in unexpected ways. Notebooks are an invaluable adjunct to your memory.

In October 2023 I attended a big, international geological conference, my first such meeting in eight years. It was delightful to be so engulfed by my subject after a long break. And I suspect it turned-on parts of my brain that had been snoozing for some time. On the second day, sat in a talk far removed from my reawoken thoughts and ideas, I experienced a flash of recollection and realized that there was a paper that I should have written many years ago. Wandering the trade stalls after lunch, the University of Michigan Department of Earth and Environmental Science gave me the most vital piece of equipment at that juncture. They gave me a notebook, bless them; I had forgotten my own in the hotel room. I had written 1,000+ words before I flew home. The paper almost wrote itself, has subsequently been favourably reviewed, and is now available on-line. But I regard the pivotal moment of this tale to have been the procurement of a notebook, a tool that I should have had in my bag or pocket at all times. Many thanks, UoM.

Again, I started to write the present note when I was in a notebook-free situation. Ideas may strike at any time and that day one emerged while I was waiting for a lift home after a medical appointment for a family member. I borrowed a pen and wrote notes on the blank back of a flier for on-line medical services. Once again, the importance of having a notebook and pen or pencil was emphasized to me. There are those who would sing the praises of an electronic notebook – no paper, no pencil – but for me they lack the flexibility of scribbling ideas on paper. But use what you prefer, so long as you have not forgotten it! Make your notes as appropriate and as necessary. I just prefer a recording medium that does not need a power supply.

In short, keep a notebook close to hand (Donovan, 2021, pp. 11–15). Do not do what Donovan does (notebook forgotten, the fool), but do listen to his recommendations (notebook remembered). I emphasize the importance of recording good ideas that occur to you as they happen. Do not let them get misplaced. I know that I have had thoughts and insights that have been soon lost because I failed to write them down. Once recorded, you do not have to take an idea or observation any further, but you can. Hence my preference for a notebook over random scraps of paper. An unusual note on a scrap of paper might accidentally be discarded, unless you take pains to preserve it. In contrast, notebooks may be robust and they tend to have a long shelf life; some of mine are more than 40 years old. Leafing through them, there is always the chance of relocating an old thought, made many years ago, that now has a renewed relevance.

Reference

Donovan, S K, 2021. *Hands-On Palaeontology: A Practical Manual*. [Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press.]



Correspondence



Editorial Preamble

It is now some 8 months since the sad and untimely passing of David Gill (see tributes in CaKS, Vol.51, No.1, April 2024). Dave left a variety of potentially publishable material with us, and hopefully – when the time seems right – we shall re-start moving some of the submissions through the review, revision and (possibly) augmentation processes. One item that was already published shortly before Dave’s death was a short communication related to karst terminology (CaKS, Vol.50, No.3, December 2023), which we had assumed would attract wide-ranging, perhaps international, comment. In fact, the limited initial feedback was already pencilled-in for inclusion in the CaKS April 2024 Issue, but over-riding space issues necessitated that no *Forum* section could be published at that time.

Responses had been surprisingly few, and we hoped that the delay of publication might provide opportunity for more feedback to arrive, but this was not the case. Hence, below, we publish a concise overview from Tony Waltham, and the two far shorter comments that pre-dated Dave’s unexpected passing. Perhaps appearing “*tongue in cheek*” at first glance, the brief words of Chris Howes are invaluable, insofar as they probably sum-up the prevailing view of the non-specialist “silent majority” – and of some specialists too!

Responses to...

“*The use of Chinese terms in cave and karst science*” (from CaKS *Forum* of December 2023.)

It is interesting to read of David Gill’s concerns over Chinese terms being used to describe karst. Terminology derived from different languages can so often be difficult to appreciate, and the introduction of these Chinese terms can perhaps be confusing, but their use is certainly not ridiculous.

Some terms upon which David Gill focused require separate consideration...

The term *tiankeng* was introduced by Zhu Xuewen to label and distinguish the numerous large and spectacular collapse features that were recognized during the 1990s, when transport and infrastructure in southern China improved sufficiently to allow karst scientists, including Zhu, into the more remote areas of mature karst. Tiankengs form a recognizable sub-group of very large, karstic, closed depressions that *could* be included within the general term of *mega-doline*. However, their collapse origins contrast greatly with those of large blind valleys, and even poljes, that could also be included as mega-dolines (though Americans would prefer mega-sinkholes). There is clear and significant value in the term *tiankeng*, which renders it neither confusing nor ridiculous.

Rather different are *fenglin* and *fengcong*, where there is scope for debate. These terms do correlate, broadly, but not exactly, with *tower karst* and *cone karst*. The mis-match is because the Western terms are based on landform shape, whereas the Chinese terms are defined by relationship to base-level planation. The other terms “understood” by David Gill are mere variations. So, it might be a case of assessing the alternatives, based on disparate aspects.

1. Fenglin and fengcong can be related in a genetic sequence. The same cannot be said for the varied tower and cone karsts described outside China.
2. *Cone karst* fails as a description when most hills within it are hemispherical and not conical.
3. The term *tower* has been distorted by localized use to describe endless varieties of rocky, steep-sided “*isolated limestone hills*” at multiple contrasting sites.
4. The Chinese terms should perhaps take precedence, because they were used many centuries before comparable terms were adopted in the English language.
5. China’s terms are based upon the largest, most important, and most varied karst in the world, so might do well to dominate the terminology.
6. The morass of conflicting literature reveals considerable problems in defining tower karst and cone karst, and then distinguishing between them. Similar problems occur in describing some areas of mixed fenglin and fengcong, but these appear to be on a smaller scale.
7. *Peak cluster* is derivative, as it is merely a direct translation of *fengcong*.
8. *Cockpit karst* is a local term from Jamaica.
9. *Polygonal karst* is a different descriptor that also includes types of doline karst.

Terminology should be understandable, but to be usable in scientific study it has to be definable and sensible. The evidence would appear to favour the Chinese terms as the more useful and appropriate in any scientific consideration of karst and its geomorphological evolution. Purely descriptive terms, including *tower karst* and *cone karst*, can be useful, and should remain so, especially among non-specialists in situations where they are used without any implications of genesis. However, their retention and informal use should not preclude the use of more-precise scientific terms, especially when the benefits of using the latter could be worth the effort invested in trying to understand them.

Tony Waltham
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Dear Editors,

Personally I would prefer the use of English terms for karst phenomena (recognising, though, that “*karst*” is not English). However, I would have thought that deciding what term to use should be one of publication precedence, as is used in most (if not all) branches of science.

Best wishes,

Bill Quinton (Member 05353) [03 January 2024]

“... And I have some sympathy with Dave Gill’s stance ☺...” **Chris Howes** [23 December 2023]

 **Correspondence** 

Letter to the Editor of
Cave and Karst Science

The article about deneholes by Reeve (2023) raised a nostalgic memory. I visited the deneholes at Hangman’s Wood in Grays, Essex, in 1959 or 1960, whilst in the 6th Form at Palmer’s School in Grays, to which I travelled daily 10 miles by bus or train from Hornchurch.

Reeve (2023) mentions that the explorations by the Essex Field Club in 1958 involved local Boy Scouts, who must have included some of my school friends. When I was involved we entered down a shaft, perhaps No.19, probably using a rope ladder without a lifeline, but I remember it was only about half the average depth of “just over 80 feet” reported by Reeve (2023, p.127). At the base were six circular chambers and we crawled through several tunnels into the bases of other deneholes.

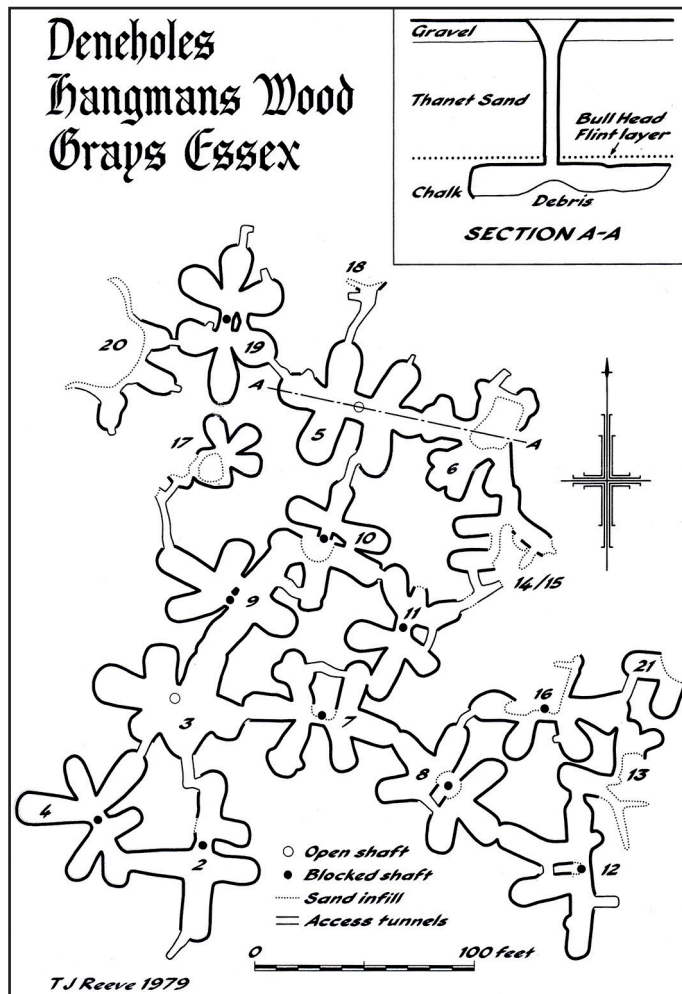
We were told that the deneholes had been excavated originally for flint (rather than chalk) mining, with the interconnections made later, in Victorian times. It would be interesting to read about any relationships of deneholes in general with the Grime’s Graves Neolithic flint mine in Norfolk, which seems to have few recent academic references.

Whilst studying for science A-Levels, we were also given English classes by an idiosyncratic young teacher named Campbell Mathews. He spent one lesson reading to us an account of an exciting caving trip in the Mendip Hills. That introduction, coupled with my first ‘caving trip’ at the deneholes, encouraged me to join the Cambridge University Caving Club in 1960.

Regards,

Trevor Faulkner

Reeve, T, 2023. Deneholes and chalkwells – a brief summary of archaeological and historical research. *Cave and Karst Science*, Vol.50(3), 125–133.



Plan by Terry Reeve showing the relative shapes, sizes and positions of the Hangman’s Wood deneholes. [Previously published as Figure 2 in Reeve, 2023.]

More about the Essex deneholes – and loosely related Editorial retrospection

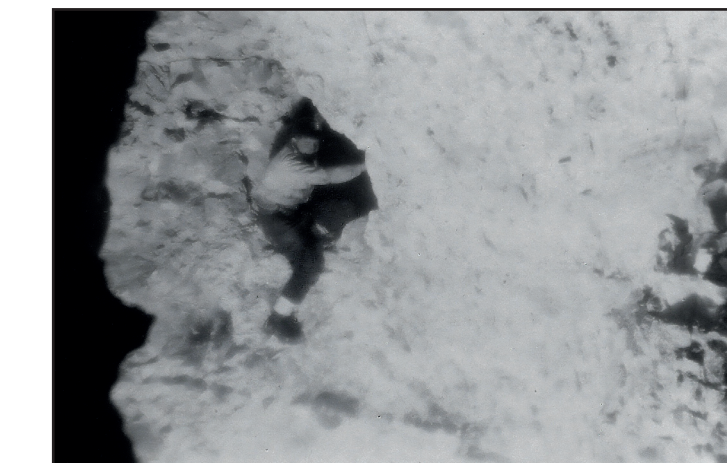


Photo 2 (above): An image from Harry Long’s photograph collection (see p.87 text) showing Sid Perou in caving action inside one of the Hangman’s Wood deneholes during 1957. The image is included despite its acknowledged rather poor quality, in consideration of the comments in the adjacent text about Sid Perou’s life and work. (Compare with Photo 1.)

Photo 1 (left): From Harry Long’s photograph collection. One of the explorers, standing on a dark ?flint seam below a hole in the wall that is the same one featured with Sid Perou in Photo 2.

An editor's soliloquy

On Christmas Day 2023 I received an unexpected gift, or at least an e-mail and attachment, from the celebrated “Yorkshire” caver, Harry Long. There was no message, but the attachment was an image labelled “Denehole 1957”. Despite my curiosity being piqued, the chaos of the season, sad events elsewhere, and my own poor health delayed a response until mid-January 2024. It turned out that Harry had been tidying up his photo collection and had wondered if the image he sent might be useful for *Forum*. During a subsequent telephone conversation, Harry agreed to send me surviving contact prints of images captured in and around some of the Essex deneholes during the late 1950s (see photos 1–4).

Among Harry's prints – sadly the least sharp of the set – was one with a pencilled note on its back, which simply said: “*Sid Perou*”. Various circuitous thought processes took me back to 1970, and later led from Harry's short note to this longer one.

Most readers will know that 15 July 2024 brought the caving world the sad news of the death of Sid Perou, in hospital in Thailand, at the age of 87. Details of Sid's many contributions to caving, climbing, and other “outdoor” activities need no repetition here because full and well-deserved tributes will be plentiful elsewhere. Nevertheless, it must be said that, whereas he might not appear to have been an obvious figure to transcend to the Elysian Fields of cave science, few could rival the impact that the results of his film-making skills and vision, plus their ready accessibility, have had in raising interest in, and boosting the images of, caves and caving.

In the mid-1960s I had unexpectedly blundered into caves and caving during a school field-week in Horton in Ribblesdale. Returning home to Leeds, I was full of enthusiasm for an active and rewarding outdoor pastime (caving) that seemed to suit my abilities and motivations. Dauntingly, my parents didn't share my enthusiasm because, reflecting some (then) quite recent events, they were blinded by emotive and misleading words from Press coverage of cave “rescues”. Despite this, my parents were wise enough not to try to forbid my speleo activity. In 1967, after sitting with me to watch Sid's classic “*Sunday at Sunset Pot*”, their worries evaporated magically. There is no logic, but thank-you Sid.

Jumping forward to August 1970, I was parking my motorbike at Ivy Cottage in Horton when a *Mini Moke* tore into the car park, and a curly-haired stranger, clearly on a mission, leaped out and dashed across to me. “*Hello... do you know Harry Long's address?*” What random optimism! I explained that I wasn't “local” but staying at Ivy Cottage while working on my Geology BSc mapping project. “*Oh...*” he interjected before I could say “*...but I exchanged a few letters with Harry recently, and he lives at... ..*”. “*Great*”, he said, “*I'm Sid Perou by the way. I need to see Harry about my new film.*” No doubt my jaw dropped, but maybe I managed an “*Oh, I'm Dee, good to meet you*” before he sprinted back to the *Moke* and sped off towards Skipton.

Though strictly it's not part of my own memories, in later years Sid – apparently still driving an open-sided *Mini Moke* – returned to Horton for a while. Few locals remember details, but the surviving mythology is that he rented a small [?]garage opposite the Vicarage in the village. No details of his occupancy have reached me, except that, perhaps, Sid had made arrangements to use the “facilities” at the nearby Pen-y-ghent Café. His residence in Horton did not endure, because (anecdotally) wild parties that he hosted scandalized at least some of his neighbours.

Returning to my memories, it's hard to believe now, but our paths never re-crossed. The random Ivy Cottage meeting remains clear in my memory, but it's improbable that Sid would have remembered the event or even my name. Nevertheless, I was intrigued by the approximate circularity when, 50-odd years later, Harry Long sent me a photo of Sid. My great regret is not having a longer chat that day in 1970 when, hopefully, Sid found Harry. We all like to contribute (even if only in small ways) towards oiling the links within the remarkable worldwide machine that is caving.

To complete and conclude a rather pixilated *Forum*, this and the preceding page contain a selection of Harry Long's 1950s images, which Phil Wolstenholme has optimized using recent technology. These images relate to the deneholes at Hangman's Wood, near



Photo 3: Entrance to one of the Hangman's Wood deneholes. Image from Harry Long's late-1950s photographic collection.

Grays in Essex, which were previously described by Terry Reeve (CaKS, Vol.50, No.3) and subsequently mentioned by Trevor Faulkner in his letter published above. Over time, memories of names and numbers inevitably grow dim, and Harry is uncertain about the specific identities of the shafts in his photographs, and about the details shown. Perhaps if Terry sees them he will recognize the sites and might provide more information.

Regardless of the actual site details, Harry does remember that he and his friends had use of only one electron ladder. Deploying this, they could descend to the “alcove” visible beyond the caver in Photo 4. Once there, the ladder was lowered from the surface and reelayed, allowing a complete descent to the denehole's floor, and exploration of the excavations that lay beyond.

My sincere thanks once again to Harry Long and Trevor Faulkner for providing images, information and keys to reminiscences.

David Lowe



Photo 4: Denehole shaft in Hangman's Wood. The “alcove” visible beyond the explorer was of particular importance to the explorations carried out by Harry Long and his friends (see main text above).