

Forum

Readers are invited to offer thesis and dissertation abstracts, review articles, scientific/technological notes, book reviews, comments on previously published papers and discussions of relevant scientific/technological interest, for publication in the **Forum** of *Cave and Karst Science*. All views expressed are those of the individual authors and do not represent the views of the Association unless this is expressly stated. Contributions to the *Cave and Karst Science Forum* are not subject to the normal refereeing process, but the editors reserve the right to revise or shorten text. Such changes will only be shown to the authors if they affect scientific content. Opinions expressed by authors are their responsibility and will not normally be edited, though remarks considered derogatory or libellous will be removed, at the editors’ discretion.

“History and Motivation — Inputs and Outputs”...

*[Life is like a sewer – what you get out of it depends on what you put into it. *]*

*Our Journal began its life as **The Transactions of the British Cave Research Association**. Volume 1(1) was published in January 1974, following the BCRA’s creation in June 1973. As was described in that first-ever Issue, the remit of the Transactions covered: “...all aspects of speleological science, including geology, geomorphology, hydrology, chemistry, physics, archaeology, and biology in their application to caves, as well as technological matters such as exploration, equipment, surveying, photography and documentation.” In 1982 the Journal was rebranded as “Cave Science” (The Transactions of the British Cave Research Association) and when the present editors took over in 1994 the title was changed to “Cave and Karst Science” (The Transactions of the British Cave Research Association) to make it clear that we welcomed submissions with a focus on surface karst in addition to those on caves. Throughout these improvements the Journal has kept faith with its original ethos and mission, to encourage submissions from, and to publish material relevant to, cavers with an interest in cave science, as well as from academic researchers – a policy that we support and endorse. Let us lose sight amid the plethora of journals servicing “ever more specialized” research options, we provide the reminder table below, which expands upon the basic advice that is included both on the Journal’s inner-front cover and at [<https://bcra.org.uk/pub/candks/guidelines.html>]*

*David Lowe and John Gunn, with thanks to *the late Tom Lehrer.*

Submission types	Guidelines to main potential content type	Guidelines to nominal content size	Nature of any associated review	Ancillary comments
Paper	Scientific or technological aspects linked to any relevant speleological or karst topic, including archaeology, biology, chemistry, conservation, geology, geomorphology, history, hydrology, physics, surveying and IT in a broad sense.	Normally up to 6,000 words but may be longer, subject to editorial agreement, depending upon the specific topic and the make-up of the content. Illustrations may include tables, photographs, maps and other forms of drawn graphic figures.	Submitted manuscript papers should already be at a high standard. They will be subject to peer review by two specialist referees, possibly but not always from the CaKS Editorial Advisory Board (EAB).	In the highly unlikely event that no suitably qualified reviewer(s) can be obtained for a highly specialist or esoteric submission, the editors will seek advice and recommendations from at least two individuals with “as-close-as-possible” topic-related expertise.
Report	Interim (progress) reports on the aspects of science or technology outlined above. Less rigorous submissions of descriptive material, including reports of caving and/or karst-related expeditions, are also welcome.	Typically from 500–3,000 words, but – depending upon type/content – this is negotiable “at the editors’ discretion”. Illustrations can include tables, photographs and drawn figures (as above).	Normally submissions will be reviewed by an EAB member, unless the subject matter is outside the available fields of expertise. In the latter case, assessment by a recognized specialist will be sought.	In the broad case of expedition reports , scope exists for the inclusion of narrative and/or logistical material that is perceived as being of potential value to others intending to visit the area(s) under description.
Feature	Articles dealing with core topics (please also see the Ancillary Comments) that fall outside the broad guidelines (above) either for the Paper or Report categories and/or are considered too long to appear as normal Forum contributions (see below).	Topic dependent. Generically, features may span, or – more rarely – exceed the ranges of sizes described above for papers and reports. Authors may make a case for longer than “standard” articles; such cases will be considered by the editors, taking advice from the EAB or from a recognized specialist on the topic.	As with Reports , depending upon topic, once accepted, most features are subject to review by a member of the EAB . If there is no suitable EAB reviewer, as with other submission types, a single or, occasionally, an additional review, might be requested from another specialist.	Examples of items include: new translations/presentations of historical milestone publications; appreciations of the ideas of major contributors to any cave and karst science and technology field; or considerations of past activities and/or future ways forward in cave- and karst-related studies and activities.
Forum	Personal statements or targeted comments on topical issues; discussion of published material and invited or independent book reviews. <u>Where appropriate</u> , statements should put forward an argument and provide a supporting case, backed by examples used as evidence. Please also see “ Abstracts ” (below) and Ancillary Comments.	Though, by definition, Forum provides space as an “informal talking shop” among its various functions, a target submission size is normally up to c.1,000 words, but, reflecting the variety of material that is acceptable, the sizes allowed are flexible. Intending contributors should be aware that publication might be delayed due to competition for space in some issues.	Most submissions (see Ancillary Comments) are reviewed by the Editors, who will rule on aspects of “appropriateness” as well as the interest of the content. A standard condition (featured in the Forum banner) is that there is no rigid editing of informal contributions, but: “... <i>remarks considered derogatory or libellous will be removed, at the editors’ discretion.</i> ”	Please refer also to the “ Abstracts ” entry below. Originally envisaged as a vehicle for “ <i>Letters to the Editor</i> ” and short, informal, pieces of “ <i>Scientific Correspondence</i> ”, Forum ’s scope also allows for episodic contributions, as yet best typified by an ongoing series of “ <i>Notes for Authors</i> ”. Basically, the editors are “receptive to useful ideas”.
Abstracts	Authors (or supervisors) of undergraduate or postgraduate “theses” (or “dissertations”) on cave or karst themes should submit their abstracts . When doing so, it helps to state whether the thesis is available via an on-line link or as an inter-library loan, giving details of any access restrictions or conditions. Abstracts of presentations at BCRA (and related) conferences or symposia are also welcome. Normally, Abstracts will appear as part of Forum .	The Forum guidelines above provide a useful guide, but the potential variety of material requires policies to be relaxed and flexible within reason. Research degree abstracts are text-only and cannot be revised, so must appear as facsimiles of the originals. Most other abstracts are also initially “text only” but, for re-use in CaKS, illustrations can be added (space permitting). Please refer also to points in the Ancillary Comments.	As for Forum in general, the editors will normally provide a preliminary assessment of the submission, following which they will advise on its suitability, enquire about scope for modification/clarification of the text, and/or enquire about the availability of any suitable illustrations.	Conferences and symposia are commonly regarded as transient events; hence preparation (and vetting) of abstracts is not inevitably rigorous. Commonly they contain (at best) “typos”, but may also include accidental misinformation. In an ideal world an Abstract should be “set in stone”, but the editors of CaKS prefer not to publish errors, and would request that all authors preparing abstracts take enough time to check (or recheck) and revise their submission.
Photo Feature	Images and explanatory text that introduce a feature or topic of potentially wide interest...	<u>Ideally</u> up to 3 photos and a supporting explanatory text of c.150–250 words.	As for Forum/Abstracts , the editors will comment and advise on interest and suitability.	Ideally Photo Features should aim to promote and stimulate feedback and ongoing discussion.



Things we all forget (sometimes)

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Abstract: Nobody is perfect. We all make mistakes, sometimes in print, yet it is by publication that our observations and ideas reach the widest audience. The possibility that you might have made an error is of little consequence. If it occurs in a journal paper, publish a correction in a subsequent issue. If an error occurs in a book, your mistake can be corrected online. Whatever, publish and move on. The important thing is for you to report your data for the widest readership possible, not to worry about some minor mistake in writing.

“... was dismissed for ***, Dexter maintained the run-rate with a quick fire *** before ...”

(Hignell, 2005, p.100).

“Brunch and Pringle (1987) to follow”

(Bromley, 1996, p.305, reference list).

I am concerned with the potential author who is always close to submission, but who doesn't publish. Why? There can be multiple reasons for having such cold feet, such as a dread of the peer review process (Donovan, 2005). Herein, I look at the author who lacks self-belief and shies away from publication because they have a dread of making even a small error in print. The important thing to me is to publish my papers and make a contribution, but there are those who don't publish, for whatever reason, and thus fail to contribute. My purpose here is to dispel one aspect of the fears of non-publishers; that is, do not let the possibility of making an error scare you. We all make mistakes; it is what we get right that is important.

Always take care. Any academic author, even the most revered, can make unfortunate errors or accidental omissions. The danger of co-authored papers is that you might expect your collaborators to identify your mistakes, which is likely, but not invariable, so be extra vigilant, not less so. It was only after publication that Fearnhead and Donovan (2007a) realised that the paper included incorrect stratigraphical information. We corrected ourselves in the same year (Fearnhead and Donovan, 2007b). Fiona collected the fossil, her name was first on the paper, it later became part of her PhD thesis, but she blamed me for the error; what else are husbands for?

We all make mistakes. The more we publish, the more we are likely to make errors in print. The shorter a paper, the less likely we are to make mistakes, which is what made that in Fearnhead and Donovan (2007a) particularly exasperating. Yet, it is the report of a new species of fossil that was important; we corrected an error as soon as we were aware of it.

There are also (alleged) factual errors that may be spotted by readers, who might publish a comment. Sometimes such errors are real, sometimes they are only in the eye of the beholder. I have had comments on my papers that fit both categories (Donovan, 2017, pp.31–34). Published comments can be constructive or critical; replies can vary from the apologetic to the brusque. And my favourite reply sums up it all – “Oh, well, nobody is perfect” (Rosholt *et al.*, 1963).

But what happens if you make a boo-boo in, say, a book, where a correction is not easily published? Once upon a time books might have had a slip bound in for an erratum (Fig.1).

ERRATA.

Page 18, line 17, for river on the road read river or the road.

„ 52, „ 9, „ Argnes „ Arques.

„ 60, „ 2, „ Mamfold..... „ Manifold.

„ 61, „ 24, „ Cessbury „ Cissbury.

„ 69, (note), „ of the thirty-three cases ... „ of thirty cases.

Appendix III, ad.l Pole-cat (*mustela putorius*), Cresswell.

Figure 1: A short erratum bound into Pennington (1877) before the first page of text [author's personal copy]. This methodology is outmoded in 2025.

Even in these days of print on demand, I doubt if we could return to such a method. Perhaps now such errors could be published online. Deal with it by the easiest method. This is scientific publication, not religious self-flagellation.

I sympathise with both Hignell (2005) and my late colleague Richard Bromley (1996) for the minor glitches in their books that appear at the top of this note. That is what they are, just minor (albeit galling for the authors), and I highlight them here to illustrate what can sneak past even the most attentive of proof-reading authors. They happened, they are obvious, and they might easily have been corrected if spotted. For example, the numbers omitted by Hignell were 29 and 25, respectively, gleaned from p.102 of the same book. Whether the subject is sport, science or whatever, we are all capable of omitting the obvious.

So, what is my take-home message? Be careful when writing, obviously, but stay on an even keel. If a mistake is made in print, it can be corrected. This is true of all hiccups in the publication process. Do not be scared off by such possibilities. They are not an excuse for self-flagellation. Instead, publish any corrections – there will likely be none – and move on. The important point is to publish your paper or book, not keep it hidden. To repeat my view from an earlier publication:

“Communicate your own fascination and excitement in your special interest in your papers ... Have fun.”

(Donovan, 2005, p.100):

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Received: 02 May 2025.

**Book Review****High Pasture Cave:****Ritual, Memory, and Identity in the Iron Age of Skye.***by Steven Birch and Jo McKenzie*

with additional contributions from 50 specialists.

Published (2025) by Oxbow Books, Oxford and Philadelphia
656pp. ISBN 978-1-78570-950-0 (hardcover).

Price £55.

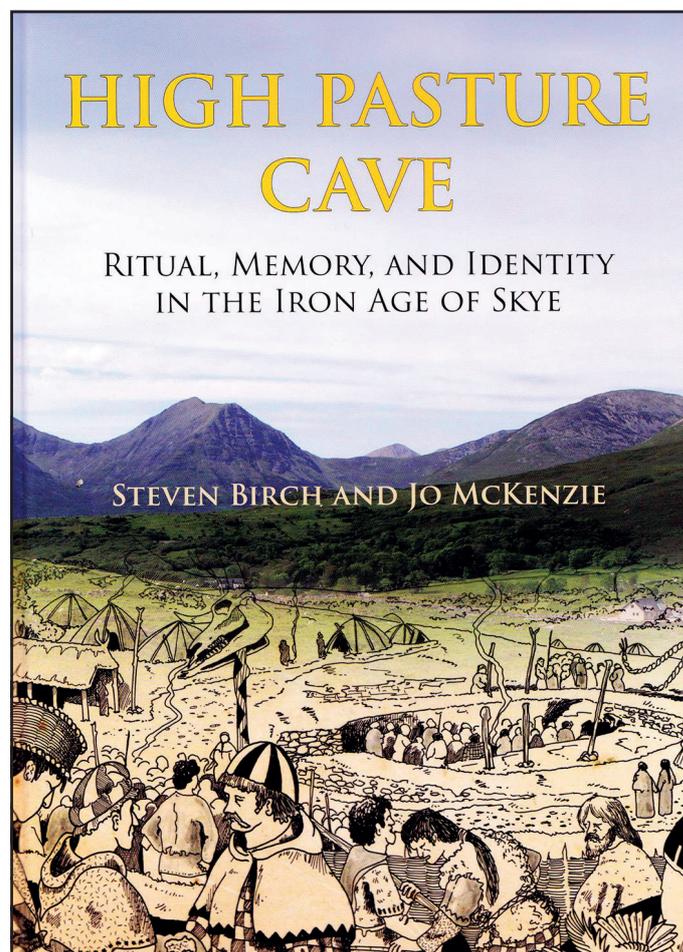
An open-access on-line version is also available at:<https://www.oxbowbooks.com/9781785709500/high-pasture-cave>

High Pasture Cave (Uamh an Ard Achadh) was discovered in 1972 by cavers from the University College of London Speleological Society who were prospecting for caves in the Durness Group limestones north of Beinn an Dubhaich on Skye. During the early explorations of High Pasture Cave by UCLSS and the Moldywarps Speleological Group, the cavers had noted the presence of scatters of calcited bone on some of the passage floors, but it was not until 20 years later that the archaeological importance of the site was recognized fully by Steven Birch. Then, after another decade had passed, Birch and the late Martin Wildgoose started formal archaeological investigations of the site in 2003, in collaboration with Historic Scotland and the National Museums of Scotland. An initial evaluation and rescue archaeology exercise revealed the abundance and quality of the archaeological evidence preserved at the site. The project developed and expanded into a much larger seven-year excavation programme, which was followed by another decade and a half of detailed post-excavation analysis of the excavated materials, documentation and archiving of the finds, and preparation of the results for publication. The resulting monograph is a testament to the combined efforts of more than 50 researchers, supported by numerous students and volunteers whose contribution was essential to the success of the archaeological project.

The first part of the book provides the background to the discovery of the cave and explains its geological and geomorphological setting. This is followed by a detailed account of the archaeological evidence including the sequence of structural modification and episodes of human activity at the cave in prehistoric times. Based on detailed studies of artefacts, augmented by radiocarbon dating of organic materials, the researchers were able to recognize eight consecutive phases of activity at High Pasture Cave. These started early in the Bronze Age, at around 2000 BC, with the deposition of pottery and stone tools outside the cave entrance and in the Bone Chamber, a section of side passage perched above the active streamway that later became a focus for the repeated deposition of materials in succeeding time periods. Following a 500-year hiatus, more-continuous and intense activity recommenced at the cave during the Iron Age, from around 800 BC, when a stone-built walkway with retaining walls and a descending stairwell was built to provide a formal access route into the cave. Later in the Iron Age there were successive structural modifications to the stairwell and walkway as well as the building of a massive enclosure wall around the precinct to the cave entrance, and throughout the Iron Age large quantities of ceramic, stone and metal artefacts,

animal bones, hearth ash and midden material were deposited inside the cave. Blocking-deposits were emplaced in the Bone Chamber in the Late Iron Age, around 100 BC, followed soon afterwards by deliberate back-filling of the stairwell, which closed off access to the underground chambers and signalled the end of ritual activities at the cave.

As this book serves as the main document of record for the archaeological excavations, the bulk of the text is taken up by the results of the analysis of the finds. The description and analysis of the remains of plants and animals that make up the environmental assemblage takes up about 100 pages, while over 200 pages are allocated to descriptions and interpretations of items of material culture. The bulk of these artefacts are typical of those found in Iron Age domestic contexts, including fragments of nearly 400 pottery vessels and over 500 worked stone objects such as hammerstones and fragments of querns. Despite most of the assemblage dating to the Iron Age the collection of iron objects that were recovered from the cave was relatively small and only five items could be identified as weapons such as spearheads and daggers. One of the more fascinating discoveries described in this section is a small, delicate, arched object of finely worked wood that has been identified as the bridge of a stringed musical instrument: most probably a seven-stringed lyre. A specialist in archaeomusicology states that it is by far the earliest example of this type of musical instrument to have been found in Europe, and the authors make the reasonable inference that, because the lyre is universally associated with song, this underscores the importance of oral traditions in the maintenance and transmission of knowledge in a pre-literate society. Overall, the book provides a fascinating glimpse into the lives of the members of an island community more than 2000 years ago, and illuminates their connections with wider Iron Age society across Britain and Europe.

Review by: Andrew Chamberlain.



Book Review

**Defined by Stones:****50 extraordinary places that connect our prehistoric ancestors to northern landscapes.**

by Ian Jackson

Published (2025) by Northern Heritage Services Limited
Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.
112pp. ISBN 978-1-7394861-8-1 (softback).

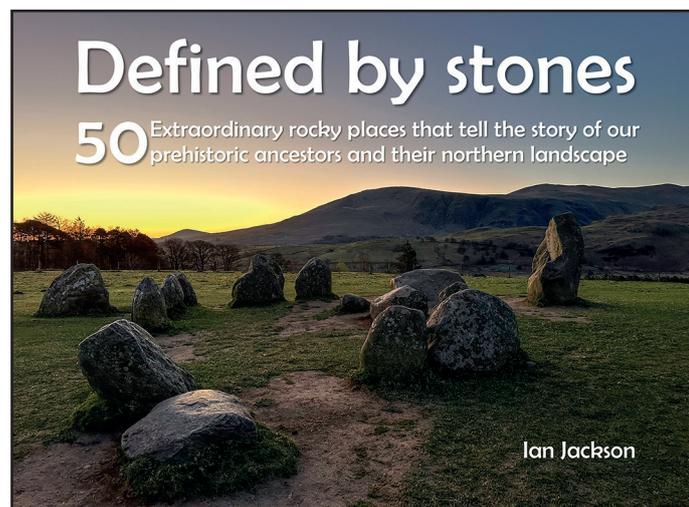
Price £12

[proceeds to the charity “MIND”]

In reviewing this fascinating book, it seems helpful first to examine its underlying context. Firstly, it is not an “out-and-out” cave or karst publication. Nevertheless, it does include sections about caves, alongside others linked to complementary geological and landscape features that relate to caves, to karst and to closely interwoven topics such as mineral provenance.

Readers might already have encountered four earlier books authored by retired BGS geologist Ian Jackson, all of which remain available. Published in 2021, 2022 and 2023, the first three were essentially highly accessible descriptions of the geology of Northumberland, Cumbria, and Durham respectively. In the fourth book (*Rocks at the Edge of the Empire*, 2024) the author considered geological background and current knowledge of history and archaeology in providing a consideration of how the rocks, and the landscape elements related to them, affected activities and developments during the Roman occupation of Britain. To achieve this in an interesting and undaunting fashion, the author moulded accrued knowledge and personal insights into extremely well-illustrated discussions of 50 sites, many of them on or close to Hadrian’s Wall, with just a few scattered widely across adjacent areas to the north and south. A similar approachable game-plan is followed in *Defined by Stones*, which again looks at 50 sites, carefully chosen and photographed by the author, this time within a region stretching from north Yorkshire to the Scottish border.

Whereas, conceptually at least, the former book is dominated by an exploration of conditions, situations, events and outcomes during the almost 370 years of the Roman Occupation, the more recent one is focussed upon similar, but necessarily broader, considerations relating to the thousands of years between the end of the final Pleistocene glaciation and the arrival of the Romans.



In both cases the timescales are mere blinks of the eye, lying between “now” and the foregoing hundreds of millions of years of geological history occupied in emplacing, modifying and (locally) removing the rocks and landscapes that underpin the human-related activities and developments covered by the two books. Nor is this irony ignored by the author... not detracting from his excellent and thought-provoking site discussions, for me an unexpected highlight of *Defined by Stones* is a succinct but remarkably comprehensive *Introduction*, which compresses the fundamental geological history of Britain into (my estimate) a 400- to 500-word precis.

A handful of cave sites stand out among the list of 50 vignettes in the book. Kirkdale, Kirkhead – with several other caves nearby – and Victoria caves. Also there is Heathery Burn and its eponymous cave... a site of massive archaeological importance in Victorian times, but subsequently lost to quarrying. Other, less obvious, examples include “rock shelters”, mentioned almost incidentally in, for example, the Fell Sandstone beds of Goatscrag Hill in Northumberland, and various caves in the “Magnesian Limestone” at Ryhope in County Durham. Necessarily, all of these, alongside various allusions to natural cavities and karst features in general, sit among other geological, archaeological, and more-broadly anthropological considerations that include discussions of many types of human interaction with limestone.

Other rock types, their geological contexts and wider landscapes (natural and those created or impacted by human activities) are also included. Likewise, on a more local scale, some of the site descriptions relate to specific individual landforms – or in some cases to collections of landforms, the erratic boulders at Norber being a stand-out example. Even limestone pavements appear centre-stage at some sites (including their role as inhumation sites), or among the supporting cast elsewhere. Also included are fascinating anthropogenic features at many scales, including not only standing stones of various types, but also ones that are essentially excavations, built-up landscape modifications, or both.

Prominent within the texts is the fact that features at many sites display significance related to more than one research aspect – or theme. Helpfully (in my opinion), the author has subdivided his 50 chosen sites into four broad themes, and the text describing many sites admits to such overlapping significances – or at least to recognition of multiple possibilities. “*Shelter and defence*” (11 sites) is an obvious broad theme, as is “*Ritual*” (20 sites), whereas “*Implements*” (11 sites) might be considered more tightly constrained, and “*Freeze and thaw*” (8 sites) feels potentially more wide-ranging. Thus, some overlaps must be expected, and the underlying knowledge, interpretation and opinions are inevitably at least partly volatile. The considerations presented are fascinating, if not provoking, but a ubiquitous scope for subjective speculation forms a major part of the enjoyment of the balanced and presumably objective coverage provided by the author.

Nowadays, if drafting a review, I don’t embark on seeking things to criticise, preferring to be ready to enthuse about the underpinning concept of a book (and, in this case, its predecessors). A comment met regularly within *Cave and Karst Science* reviews is that the item in question “...deserves a place on the bookshelf of anyone with interests in caves and karst”. I’m not sure that I can recommend *Defined by Stones* in quite those terms. Instead, I can say that I believe it would be a worthy addition to the bookshelf, bookcase or even the coffee table of many who have specific related interests; more so those who have a more eclectic fascination with aspects of the natural world and, specifically, of northern England.

Contemplating the review, I started by reading the many broadly “introductory”, “endnote”, “sources”, and “acknowledgements” sections, which help to set context and introduce the author. It then seemed productive (also enjoyable) to “cherry pick” my way (via the sites list) to places I had heard about and/or visited. Moving on, I switched from picking cherries, simply to playing bagatelle, ricocheting between new, enthralling, eye-opening descriptions. For me, that is the most fulfilling way to read this book.

In a nutshell, *Defined by Stones* provides undoubted “good value”, as do its still available predecessors. It’s also gratifying that the proceeds from the book sales go to charity.

Review by: **David Lowe**.