

TURKEY 1975

by
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In September 1975 five members of the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society spent a month driving to Turkey and caving there. The party consisted of:- Dick Baldock, Ian Cassely, Carol Walford, Julian Walford and Adrian Wilkins.

The best studied and most caved region in Turkey is the 40,000 km² of limestone comprising the Western Taurus Mountains. Erinc (1960) has described the karst: 'Extensive surfaces of erosional nature at an average altitude of 2,000m are entrenched by deep valleys. All of these conditions contributed to maximum development of karst in this area, where both small and large karst features such as different kinds of lapiés, dolines, uvalus, poljes, blind valleys, ponors, resurgences, travatine terraces, caves, avens, natural bridges, and subterranean river courses form the dominating element in the landscape.'

It is not difficult to understand why caving expeditions to Turkey have concentrated upon this area. The Spelaeo Club de Paris (Chabert 1970, Bakalowicz 1972) have contributed most to the spelaeology of this area. Since 1965 they have made regular visits to the Taurus, and explored many new systems. In 1966 Nottingham University Caving Club (Dunford) worked with Dr. Aygen of Ankara University to carry out a hydrological and spelaeological survey of the Manavgat River, for use in a proposed dam construction. Several new caves were discovered and the source of the Manavgat River was located. Members of the Chelsea Spelaeological Society (Marsh 1969, Gilbert 1969) visited the area in 1968 and 1969. London University (Norman 1967, Collett 1968) have also caved there.

From a study of the available literature, the resurgence cave of Pinar Gozu was made our primary objective, this cave had first been entered by the French in 1965 and subsequently explored by them and the Chelsea Spelaeological Society. By 1972 the cave had been pushed to a length of 5,000m and a height of 250m. Pinar Gozu, (literally the eye of the water) is situated at 1510m on the lower slopes of Dodegal Dâg, which at 3000m is the highest peak in the Western Taurus. The cave is best reached by dirt track from Yenis Bardemli, a sprawling village on the western shore of Lake Beysehir, a large polje at 1125m.

After driving our minibus virtually continuously for four days across Europe we arrived at Pinar Gozu just before dawn. As the sun rose behind Dodegal Dâg and we had our first glimpse of the wild, desolate scenery we had come to explore, we gasped in wonderment. Parked just in front of us was a yellow minibus with 'Chorley Lancs.' emblazoned across its rear, this

told us that the sleeping occupants of the six orange tents at the side of the river were members of the Red Rose Pothole Club. Unfortunately the Red Rose had to depart later that day, but not before they had given us a brief guided tour of the cave.

Because a detailed description and survey of Pinar Gozu has already been published (Bakalowicz 1972), I shall confine myself to a very brief account. The main stream is a large river passage, with frequent cascades some of which are awkward to climb. Several sumps are encountered but these are all readily bypassed by following the strong draught through fossil series or over high level traverses, there is a 27m downward pitch to regain the stream from one traverse. The cave ends in a sump after 4,000m, the draught can still be followed over some high level traverses to a 25m aven down which the draught enters. 1,000m from the entrance the Affluent tributary is met, this is equal in size to the main stream but carries no draught, the passage sumps after 400m. Above the Affluent sump the Red Rose had discovered a series of large attractive chambers. Apart from inside the Affluent the outgoing draught is very obvious. The French have measured wind speeds of up to 166km/hr. near the entrance. The Summer flow rate is 500-600 litres/second, and the water temperature is extremely cold 4-5°C.

Dick Baldock dived the Affluent sump, 'a large, clear sump with rock and gravel bottom. Descends to about 15m in the same line as the previous passage. Ran out of line at 66m and returned to base. Water very cold but visibility excellent, 30m'.

The Red Rose had left a cairn at the termination of their explorations. Above the Affluent sump, we found a route past the cairn through an unpleasant boulder pile into a new chamber. In contrast to the Red Rose discoveries this chamber was muddy and unattractive, at the far side of the chamber a large, loose boulder choke was entered but no further progress could be made.

Climbing the final aven in the cave was discussed but in view of the amount of bolting that would be necessary to accomplish this, diving the terminal sump was chosen as a more feasible alternative. Dick Baldock dived and found the sump to be only 7m in length, Julian Walford then demonstrated the sump to be easily free diveable. A double thickness of diving line was left in the sump. 33m of stream passage led to an 18m cascade which stopped progress, the lower 10m can be free climbed but the top 8m will require pegging.

We also descended a dry pot in the locality Karamâc (also called Karastaaki In). This pot, which is 800m above the resurgence, was discovered by the French (Bakalowicz 1972) who descended it to a depth of 92m. Despite the strong inward draught at the entrance no way on could be found at the bottom. Much walking was done on the hillsides of Dodegal Dâg, and several shafts were found and descended, however predictably they were all choked with snow or boulders. Having spent a fortnight encamped at Pinar Gozu we decided to move on and see more of Turkey.

We drove around the Southern end of Lake Beysehir to the town of

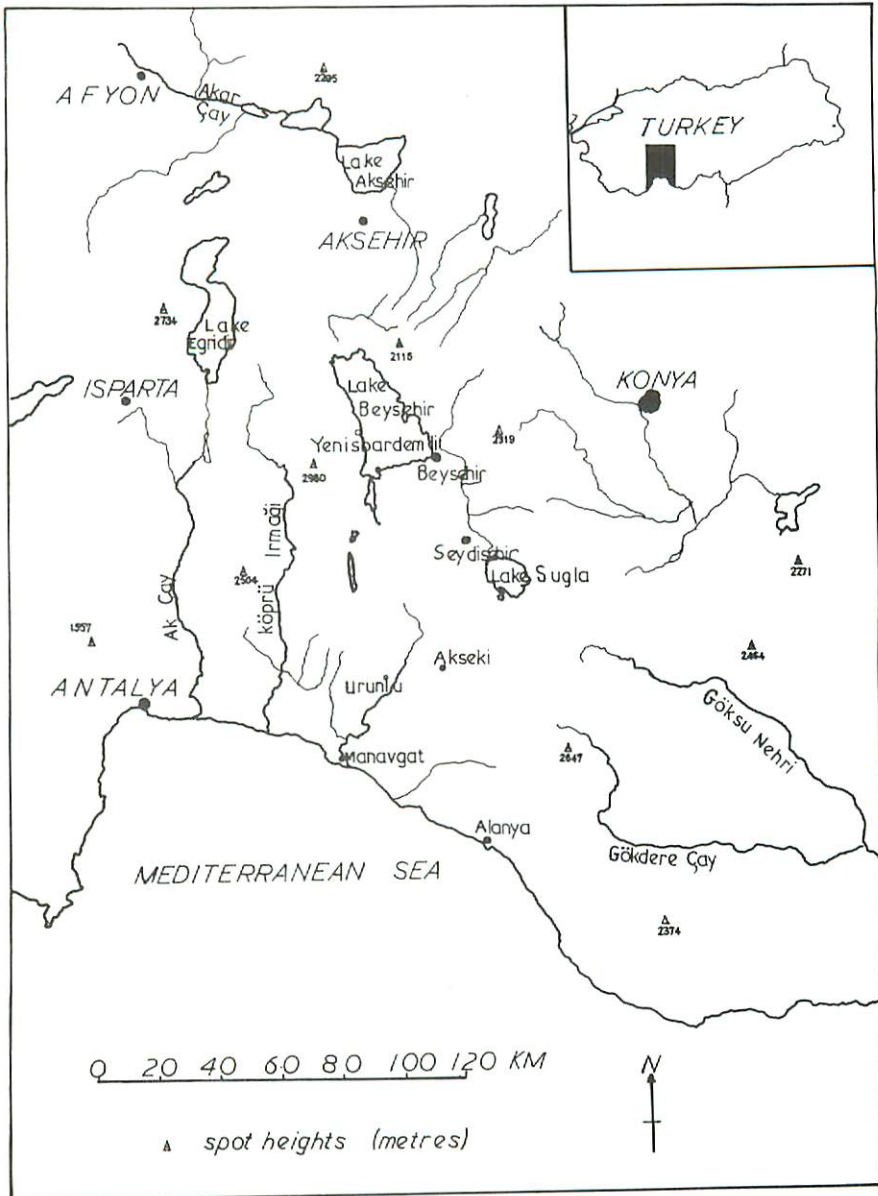


Fig. 52.

Beyşehir where we restocked with food and then via İbradı to the village of Urunlu, arriving at 1 a.m. and we slept in the open just outside the village. After breakfast next morning we were greeted by Mustafa, one of the several English speaking locals.

"Hello, are you English?"

"Yes."

"Then you must be cavers! Come and stay in the Schoolhouse." Having been installed in the Schoolhouse we were escorted by most of the village down to the cave of Duden Urunlu (Dunford 1966). This is a flood resurgence at the head of a dry valley running into the Manavgat gorge. Next day we returned with our kit to the cave. It is a magnificent cave. A series of five large lakes are separated by interesting climbs and sections of dry boulder strewn passage; pure white stalactites and gour pools are everywhere. Carol crossed the lakes straddling a large rubber tyre, the rest of us used masks, fins and snorkels to speed up the swimming. At the fourth lake a low duck was pushed, this led to the final lake, a sump pool. The terminal sump was not dived but is extremely promising, at least 15m deep and 10m wide with perfect visibility. A side passage sump was free dived but found only to be an oxbow.

After leaving Urunlu we set out on the trip home, a night at Antalya with a swim in the sea and a shopping trip broke up the journey.

Turkish people were very hospitable and treated our desire to go caving with the humour with which we might treat a foreign eccentric visiting England, they were always enthusiastic to show us the entrances to caves, which we welcomed as accurate maps are non-existent. If in the village during the evening we would be taken to the Cafe, (the social centre of a Turkish village, equivalent to the English pub except that only tea or coffee is served), to meet the rest of the village. Language proved to be no problem as everywhere we went we met English or German speaking Turks. In the villages fruit, vegetables, bread and eggs were readily obtainable; in the towns meat and wine were also available.

There are still vast areas of virgin limestone in the Western Taurus, which undoubtably contain some very large cave systems. Pinar Gozu and Duden Urunlu are both large impressive caves the full potentials of which have yet to be realised.

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