

## DEFINITIONS AND COLLOQUIAL TERMINOLOGY – The Funny Side of

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Often people outside caving circles overhear or are literally left in the dark when talking to cavers who throw around words like abseiling, pitch, fissure and flattener. To the lay person we cavers must sound crazy. For example how many people would know what was meant by this simple description of a caving trip.

"We ground-trog for an hour before locating the entrance in a doline on the ridge above the resurgence. The first section was easily chimneyed to a large ledge overhanging a pitch. At the northern end of the ledge we used a jug-handle as the anchor point for the ladder trace and a large stalagmite for the belay point. A few of our group abseiled using cross-krabs. Next there was a tight squeeze followed by a long flattener. We emerged in a railway tunnel and followed it to the stream passage which eventually ended in a boulder choke."

I am quite sure we could all spin a few convincing yarns about the definitions of some of these words.

Listed below are some of the not so correct word definitions and colloquial terms used in speleological circles.

**ANCHOR** A heavy rock attached to a string line, which is dropped down a pitch to check the depth before lowering abseiling ropes or ladders.

**BAT** A small flying mammal, which is capable of excreting with precise accuracy while in full flight.

**BATTERY** The thing that always gets stuck in a tight squeeze.

**BELAY** A group of cavers lost underground and not able to find their way back through a maze of passages, sometimes referred to as a DELAY by experienced cavers.

**CAVER** A rockclimber who wants to get away from bad weather conditions in the mountains.

**EXPERIENCED CAVER** A person who has no idea of time or distance while underground.

**CHIMNEY** A vertical shaft with a bright-spark at the bottom.

**CHOKE** An over sized caver, firmly wedged in a small passage.

**CLAUSTROPHOBIC** Someone who is frightened of Santa Claus.

**CLEFT** An open wound on a cavers chin which may require stitching. This type of injury is often incurred while following too closely behind the boots of the caver ahead.

**COLUMN** A continuous procession of cavers winding their way through the cave passages.

**CORALLOIDS** A form of haemorrhoids (piles) which develops when a caver spends too much time sitting on a cold damp floor.

**CRAWL** What you do when you want to gain access to a cave under the control of another club.

**DEAD CAVE** A cave that smells of a partly decomposed animal.

**DECORATIONS** A collection of trendy, state of the art climbing gear hanging from a cavers waist harness.

**DOLINE** An environmentally friendly, decomposing string made of spaghetti, used to accurately measure caves during surveying expeditions.

**EFFLUX** A resulting gaseous reaction which occurs after consuming a large meal of baked beans.

**FAULT** Something that goes wrong, which you can blame on another person.

**FISSURE** A caver who has become bored with the sport and spends most of the time fishing for perch or trout in the nearby river.

**FOUL AIR** Often encountered in a tight passage, when following a caver who has eaten baked beans for breakfast.

**GUANO** A lubricating substance which when liberally applied to an over size caver, assists in extracting them from a tight squeeze. Works better when applied fresh.

**PITCH** The Colour of a cave when all the lights go out.

**RIFT** A divorce or irreparable marriage breakup of a couple, brought about by one partners desire to go caving more than once a week.

**SPELEOLOGY** An addiction to which there is no cure. The only treatment is more caving.

**STALAGMITE** A small cave dwelling insect. A bite from this nasty insect will result in a skin irritation, followed by severe itching. However the bite is not fatal.

**STALACTITES** Tightly fitting jeans.

**STATION** A place which inexperienced cavers look for, to find the easy way out of a cave. Usually located at the end of a railway tunnel.

**SUMP** The part of the cavers car that is left behind on the rough track to the Karst Area.

**TIGHT SQUEEZE** Five cavers and all their camping equipment in a Suzuki Vitara 4WD.

**TRACER** An armchair caver who spends most of their time drawing cave maps from survey data.

**TROG** A well dressed caver, who frequents the local dance with suit and tie, but hasn't had a shower for a fortnight.

**WHALETAIL** A very long and unbelievable caving story about a past underground expedition.