

*Irish Caving Expedition to*

**– PAPUA NEW GUINEA –**

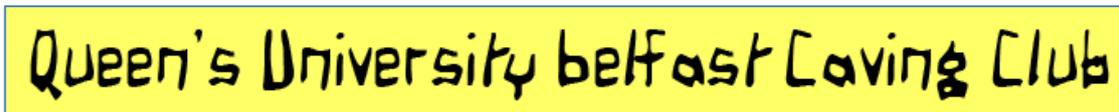


**December 2015 – January 2016**

## CONTENTS

Section	Page
<b>1 – Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
Summary	6
The Team	8
Aims and Objectives	10
<b>2 – Logistics</b>	<b>12</b>
Expedition Timeline	13
To and From Fogoma'iu	15
Jungle Treks	16
<b>3 – The Kosua</b>	<b>19</b>
A Brief Report on the People and Family Life at Fogo	20
Kosua Politics & Tok-Tok	26
Sing-sing	28
<b>4 – Cave Exploration</b>	<b>35</b>
Overview	36
Geology and Cave Potential	46
<b>5 – Medical Report</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>6 – Food and Equipment</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>7 – Wildlife</b>	<b>62</b>
Appendix 1: Cave Surveys	
Appendix 2: Diary Extracts	
Appendix 3: Accounts	
Appendix 4: Food Inventory	
Appendix 5: Publicity and Articles	

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# Part 1

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## INTRODUCTION

## Summary

Since our first venture to the Southern Highlands, the original team members had been harbouring thoughts of a return. Multiple unexplored leads left in 2011 remained so, and the looming uncharted Darai Plateau was calling us. We had always intended to open the expedition to a wider circle of cavers. What's more, the people of Fogoma'iu were extremely keen that we visit again: their continual question in the final days of PNG 2011 was "When will you be back?"

We again enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of our Kosuan hosts in 2015. From the instant our Twin Otter landed on the grass airstrip, the village was out in force to greet us with full regalia, costume and drums. Most of the local faces from our last expedition were here again, but in the anticipation of our return, an even larger village group became involved in the 2015 expedition. Other Kosua tribespeople from the nearby villages of Talilsu and Sienne Falls also joined.

The expedition's success was reliant on local support for accommodation, food, guiding, portering and finding caves, and we are grateful to the Kosuan people for helping us and keeping us safe for the duration.



The growth in expedition membership for PNG 2015 posed some extra logistical challenges, but also brought opportunity to cover more ground in the jungle and on the plateau during our three weeks. Many long treks on steep and difficult terrain ended in frustration when the caves at the end of the trek were not as exciting

as promised, though we were rewarded with some very spectacular passages and a new cave of 2.8 kilometres.

We are convinced that the approach of using local support is the best way to explore the Darai Plateau. Pinpointing cave entrances on a map or by aerial reconnaissance is almost impossible because of the dense tree coverage and undulating surface. Surveying on foot in the company of the people whose hunting ground this is seems to us to be the best way of identifying the greatest quantity of cave entrances ±one of which may just turn out to be the route to a Darai Plateau main drain to the Hegigio River.

While we didn't find the main drain, we did explore thirty-three caves during PNG 2015, with a surveyed length of just over eight kilometres.

There is certainly more to discover in this region and in the wider central and southern Darai Plateau. A future expedition here would benefit from local Kosuan expertise, and an advance trekking expedition of weeks or even months is advised to methodically search for new entrances. We would be keen to open the expedition to a caving group based closer to the region ±for example Australia or New Zealand ± for whom more regular reconnaissance expeditions might be easier to arrange.

The search for a Darai Plateau master cave continues, and we left Fogoma'iu with the same friendly question from our hosts: "When will you be back?"

Stephen Macnamara  
Expedition Leader, PNG 2015



## The Team

The 2015 expedition team were 14 experienced cavers from Ireland, Britain and Germany, including 6 veterans of the 2011 expedition. We also enlisted the help of 3 DXO 2 1' R Z G D Q \$ X V W U D O L D R a d a c o m p a n i e d t h e 2 0 1 1 t e a m . Z K R With his fluency in Pidgin English, Paul again proved a valuable asset to the team in negotiating and forging friendships with the Kosuan people.

Séamus Breathnach



Aileen Brown



Una Donoghue



Claire Dunphy



Nick Edwards



Kayleigh Gilkes

Axel Hack

Jack Healy

Éabha Lankford













































































































































































































































