Wiggling Deep into the River Kwai's Death Cave - Finally! January 2015



After stymied attempts over two years to get back into the Death Cave Sir Rodney Beattie of Id, uh, Oz and I returned to Hintok River Camp for a third go. Hintok Camp was the site of the WW-II POW camp on the River Kwai's Death Railway. Now it's an upmarket resort paying homage to it, and the site of the museum we've been creating with both POW and Paleolithic find from Hintok cave on site and Death Cave a mile away.



With us was a documentary crew made up of newly minted Explorers Club member Les Nordhauser (white shirt on left) of Greenlight Films and prospective and camerman Jesper Brehe Nymand (black). Sir Rodney carries one of the 02 tanks in the red case and I have the other. Two years ago we had to exit the cave fast because of deadly CO2 levels. Last year the new tanks our silent partner, resort owner Khun Suparerk, purchased for us, failed due to a factory misfire.



Shooting a doc means interviews. First Sir Rod before the entrance to the Death Cave.

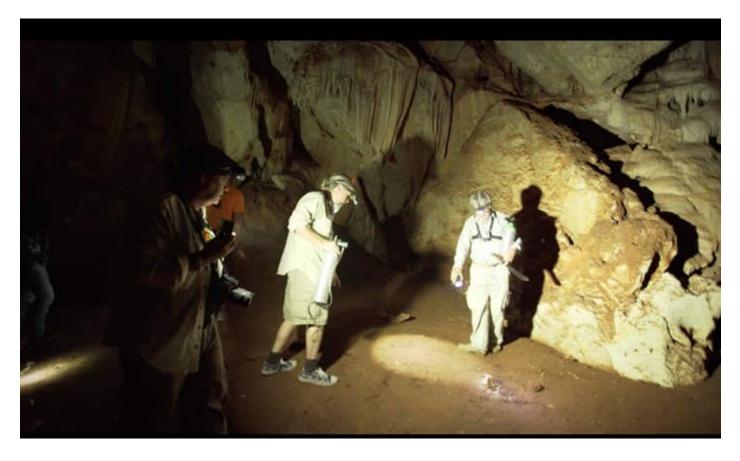




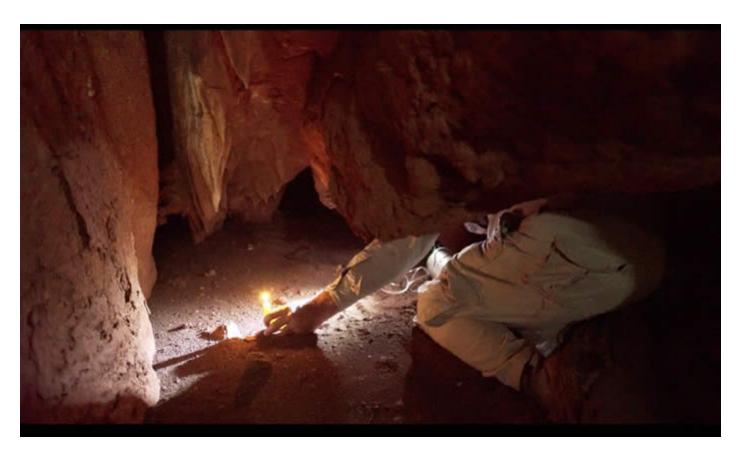
It's a fun descent.



Getting the 02 ready. You don't go in without an extra light either. Rod was hooked up with a GoPro too.



02 levels were the best ever in the first gallery. We really didn't need the tanks there. But the problems would be further back and down low.



The candle test at the entrance to the wiggle space into gallery two. Whew. No problem.



The crawl space was about fifteen feet long and so narrow we had to wiggle through on our sides. Helps that my nickname as a kid was Skin, short for Skinny.



Rod squeaks through into gallery two.



Our focus! Ten years ago Rod had wiggled in here and spotted what he thought was a collapsed burial jar but he had to exit fast because of bad air. It turned out to be what may have been an offering laid out on a flat "plate" of limestone. The large snail was a Stone Age food and commonly found in offerings, and the location also lent support to the theory.





We took samples.





Professor Ernie Walker, a noted physical and forensic anthropologist in Western Canada, identified them as from a hoofed animal, probably a pig or piccunary-like animal (though the rib was too small to ID as anything).



I sent jpgs of this odd molar to Drs. Keith Hamilton of Saskatoon and San Francisco's Gary Nomura. Both dentists concurred that it was unusual and, if human, was probably a third molar. Prof. Walker identified it as probably a pig's. I'll give him the last word:

"The images you sent to me for an opinion all represent non-human remains. The lumbar vertebrae are from an immature animal. Similarly, the rib is non-human. It is too large and I suspect an ungulate of some sort. The two phalanges are first phalanges from a mature ungulate and very likely a bovid. Anyway it is a split-hoofed

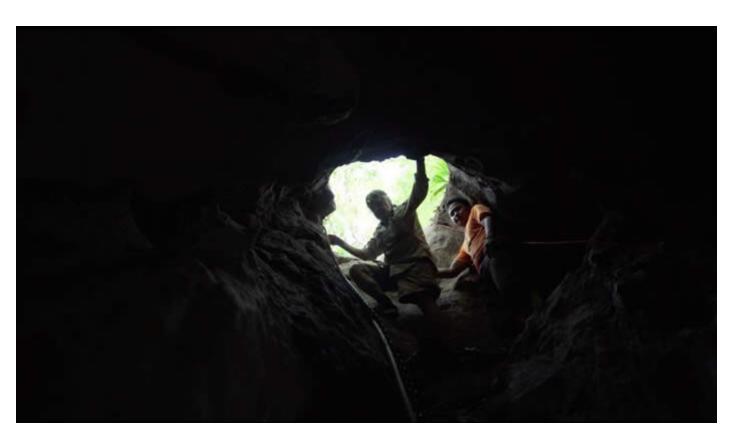
animal like water buffalo or some such animal. Finally, the tooth crown is definitely non-human and looks very much like a suiid such as a pig or peccary type animal. There is very little or no wear on the occlusal surface of the tooth suggesting a young animal and in this case, I would suggest the tooth was unerupted and the root portion of the tooth not fully formed. I am not all that familiar with the fauna of Thailand, but clearly these specimens are not of human origin."



Fifteen feet away on a shelf five feet above the cave's floor we found this five-footlong skeleton, encased in calcium carbonate, a testament to its age. Rod thinks it's human but I'm unsure. I'm awaiting identification. I followed the cave back 75 feet as it somewhat narrowed though it was still a dozen feet across. The floor was littered with waist high boulders. When 02 levels decreased I called a halt and we exited.



We only had the film crew for a day and had to shoot Hintok Cave too. It's another steep descent.









I gathered charcoal from an ancient campfire for carbon dating.



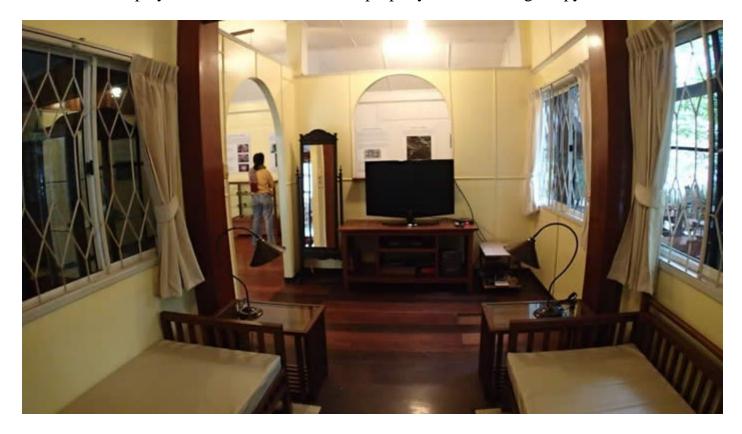
And we shot the museum which has had a soft opening. The title will go in the white space above Su and Rod.



There's still more to do, but it's coming along well.



The display cases still have to be filled properly. Call this rough copy.



Media room where a loop will run showing the interior of the caves and our digs.

Early Man in Thailand

while Homo Erectus (Java, and Peking Man dated 750,000 years) were hunting and gathering in the region more than a million years ago istone tools in Malaysia have been dated to 1.83 million years), our species. Homo sapien, didn't arrive until after our ancestors explored out of Africa 60,000 years ago. The first evidence of their arrival on the Cwal is dated to 8,000BC. Over this long period stone tool technology evolved.

Paleolithic 100,000 - 8,000BC (Crude Tools)

Grinding Stones

Mesolithic (Hoabinhian) 8.000 - 4,000BC (sumatraliths)

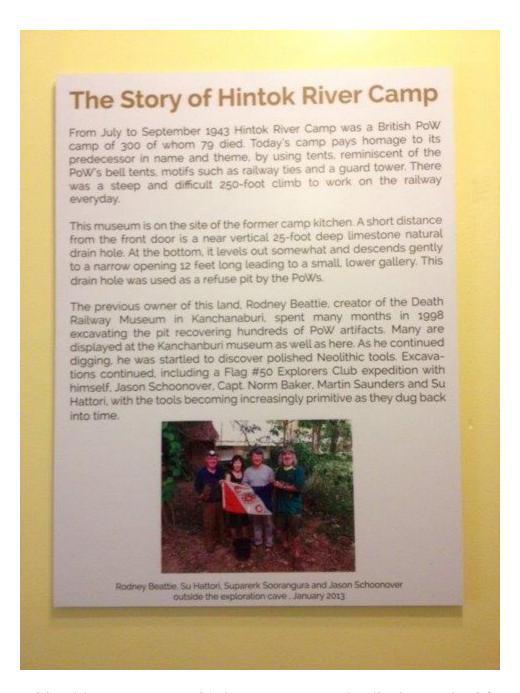


Stone Knives

Neolithic 4,000 - 2,000BC (polished adzes)



escape Ave



If the writing blows you away, it's because I wrote the display cards. Of course.



Wrap up interviews.



My turn again. Fun day!