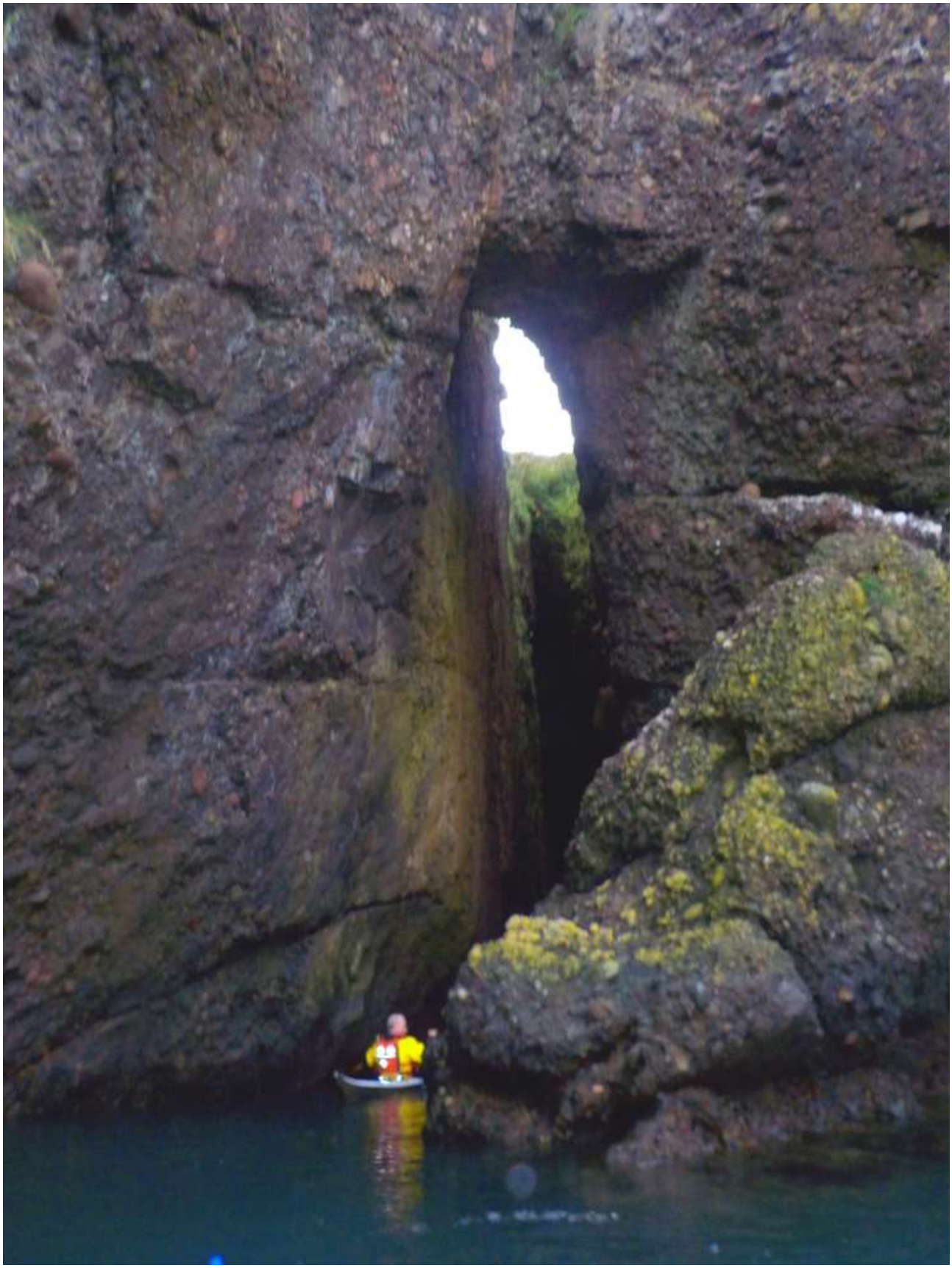
James Reid – in his Caves and birds of Fowlsheugh, Deeside Field, 1927 – outlined some of the notable sea-caves to be seen from a rowing boat (presumably) trip from Stonehaven to Crawton and back. Before I read his article, Iain Greig and I took a double kayak on an Integrate Paddling club evening outing intending to show him some of the best caves. My list was rather similar to Reid's and we were able to visit the ones I'd intended and even find a new one.

My intention is to
a. illustrate some of the caves that can be visited and entered by kayak or at least seen from other types of boat.
b. locate them
c. point out some features of geological interest
d. provide links to more photos and more detailed descriptions

Bowduns is the second headland after leaving Stonehaven and has a cluster of caves. They are fairly unusual on this east coast in that they have 'missing layer' cave tunnels which are aligned with the strike of the bedding. They thus face NE and have near to vertical walls.

Looking about SW at the entrances to the left (E) and right (W) chambers of the Deil's Kettle. They form a single cave because the middle wall has a window inside which connects them. The right hand chamber has a large hole in the back (SW) wall. This is a blowhole in stormy weather from the NE. The left hand chamber has a slot in its back left (SE) corner which is a blowhole in very stormy weather. The photo was taken from NO 8838 8457.

Just round the corner to the right (W), and further SW, is the entrance to a much longer cave.



This has what is effectively an arch, then a narrow gloup or sink hole – through which the light above is shining – and then about 50 m of tall cave tunnel with about 20 m of shingle beach.

It is not an active blowhole. Photo taken from about NO 8833 8455.

After going round Bowduns, past Castle Bay, Dunnottar Castle and Old Hall Bay we come to the first of four finger like promontories – Dunnimaol. You can see a deep V plan indentation on its north side. This has a cave tunnel at its end, the left branch of which goes through to the other side. It is sometimes possible to see some light from there – from this north side.

The next promontory is Maiden Kaim. The dip of the layers of conglomerate can be clearly seen to be quite shallow – BGS has 22 degrees SW.

Going into the geo after Maiden Kaim, the south entrance of the so-called 'subterraneous passage' through its nose may be seen on the right.

Looking about NW through the tunnel – from near NO 8820 8335.

Turning left from here and nearer to the next promontory, Strabandra Knap, what attracted my eye when I first saw them, was the line of six holes running up the cliff. I wondered whether these could be blowholes. It turned out that the bottom three are – and have been video'd doing so a number of times. James Reid includes this cave in his Deeside Field article and tells us:
"In storms great seas rush in and completely fill it, and the compression, with loud snoring noise, sends the spray high into the air through holes that pierce the roof. With caution one may sail into this gloomy tunnel for 30 yards and then abruptly turn [right] *into complete darkness. By crumpling up a number of newspapers, setting light to them and allowing them to float on the surface, it is possible by the aid of these blazing torches to proceed with great caution a few yards further. "*

Taken from about NO 8814 8333, looking WSW. Strabandra Knap is on the left (S). These are the blowholes, with the main tunnel entrance below them – into which Reid rowed his boat.

Going southward around this headland, the fourth and last promontory comes into view:

The east end of Tremuda, taken from about NO 8826 8327. On the right is the entrance to the geo called Strabandra. BGS 1:10000 shows a fault running along the north cliff of Tremuda. The two

tunnel entrances can be seen to be formed along north dipping joint planes parallel to that fault. Tremuda is capped by Tremuda Basalt – but that is much clearer in the next photo.

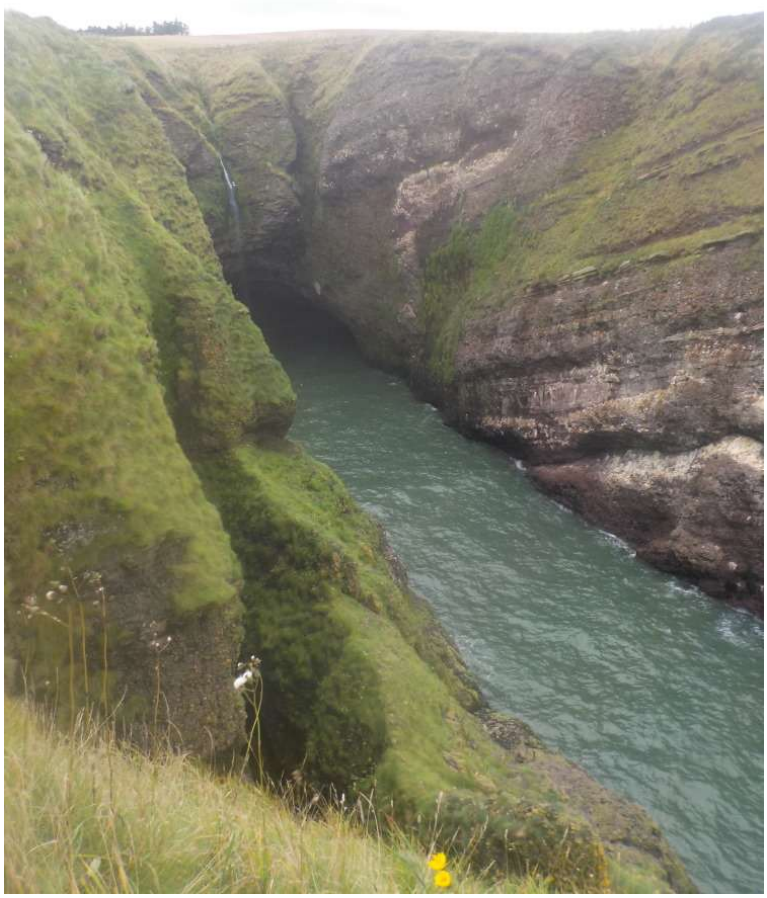
Looking through NNW through Tremuda Subterraneous Passage. The green at the end is on the south side of Strabandra Knap. The cliff above and behind the near cliff (Dunnottar Conglomerate) is Tremuda Basalt. Taken from near NO 8816 8311. The rift entrance on the right intersects with the left tunnel on the previous photo to be the S end of the bar on a 'T' plan. Tremuda is thus riddled with cave tunnels – an example of a 'cave cluster'.

Taken by Nigel Corby from Tremuda, looking south.
The white arrow points to the north entrance of Long Gallery – a large tunnel which turns gently left (E) to come out in the end of the un-named headland and just this side of the line of skerries named Mons Craig. The facing cliff is Tremuda basalt. The TBVF exposure ends on the far side of the fault on the far side of Mons Craig. The Long Gallery is wide and tall enough: "*.. through which a boat with sails set can pass, in calm weather ..*" according to the OS Namebook.

A photo taken while just inside the north entrance of Long Gallery. Light from the north entrance behind the camera and light from the south entrance visible round the curve.

The east end of the promontory between Tremuda and Thornyhive Bays; and the south entrance to Long Gallery. Layers in the Tremuda Basalt are coloured by guano. Mons Craig is out of shot on the left (S).

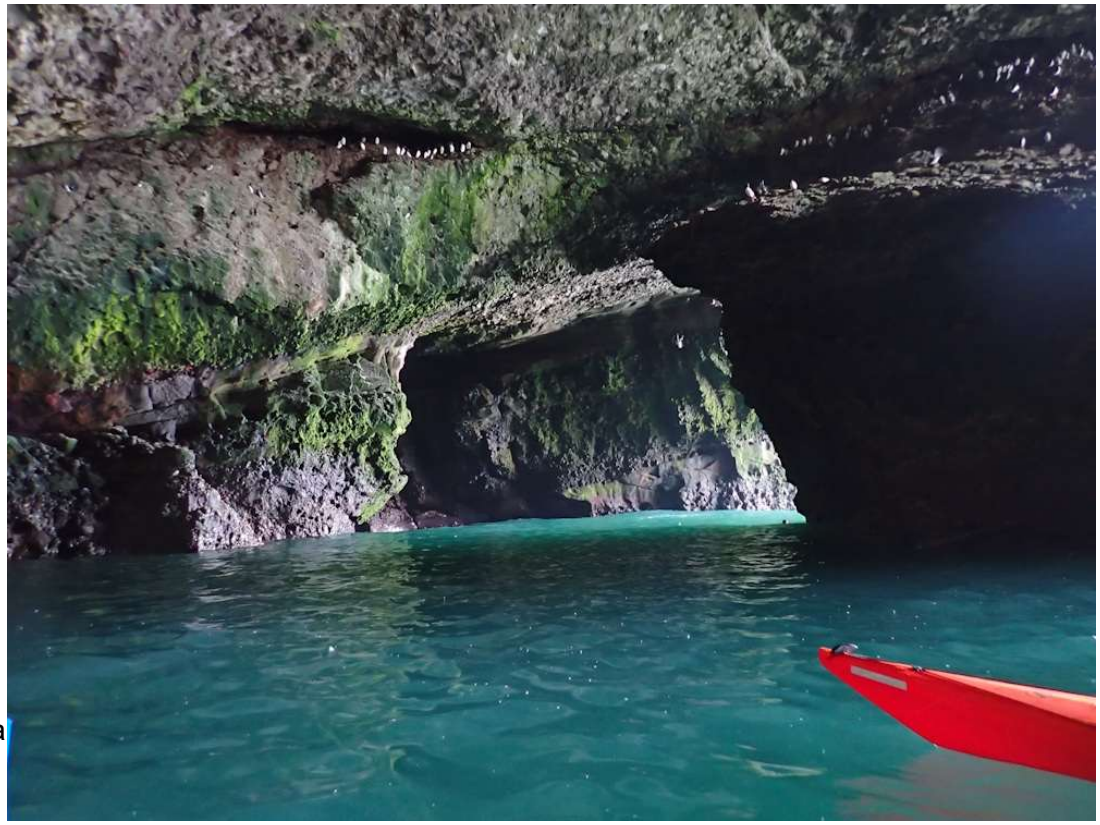
Looking SW at Turturra Heughs (cliffs) from NO 8816 8236 at Wallace Bridge (cave and two arches) about centre; and obliquely at the entrance (a bit right) of a fairly large cave. The rock is now Whitehouse Conglomerate from here south to Crawton. Thornyhive Bay is at right angles (NW) to the right.



Looking roughly W by S down into the geo which leads to Wine Cove (= cave). BGS 1:10k solid and drift shows a fault running along the N wall of the geo and is probably the near vertical rift which can be seen in the end cliff. The entry to the geo is at NO 8805 8188.

This is a rather blurred view from Trelung Ness, at NO 88018 81571, of the south corner of Trelung Bay. The line of what BGS 1:10k solid & drift marks as a fault, may be seen leaning about 10 degrees right in the corner on the right. The bottom of the fault, in shadow, is the north entrance to Trough Cove - which is currently the third longest sea-cave in Scotland at 323 m. Its more obvious middle entrance is in the middle of the photo. Its south entrance is easier to see in the next photo. The cliffs of Fowl's Heugh recede towards the left (south). The camera position is just a little west of another subterraneous tunnel through Trelung Ness, also on a fault, and in line with the one mentioned above, but not drawn as connected.

The photo below shows Trough Cove south entrance. It is clearly formed on a joint dipping (apparently) about 30 degrees south. This gives a wide tunnel which runs about WNW until it meets the tunnel from the north entrance. Camera location at about NO 8800 8130.
The middle entrance can be seen obliquely, to the right (N).



Inside Trough Cove – about the middle of the south tunnel near NO 8787 8138, looking north along part of the tunnel from the middle entrance. The underside of the Whitehouse conglomerate bedding can be seen. At high tide and low swell – as in this photo – there is potential for a small motorised vessel, of shallow draught, to make a passage from the south entrance to the middle entrance or vice versa. A rough plan over aerial may be helpful.

This unusual, if not unique feature appears to have formed as a result of there being a joint plane parallel to the cliff face and the erosion of a layer. It is about 10 m high and maybe 8 m wide. James Reid calls it The Cammach and likens it to a ‘triumphal arch’ (!). It is near NO 87997 80651. This photo was taken a little to the south of it.

Henry's Scorth East Cave is the one on the right. BGS 1:10k has the top of the corner marked as a fault.

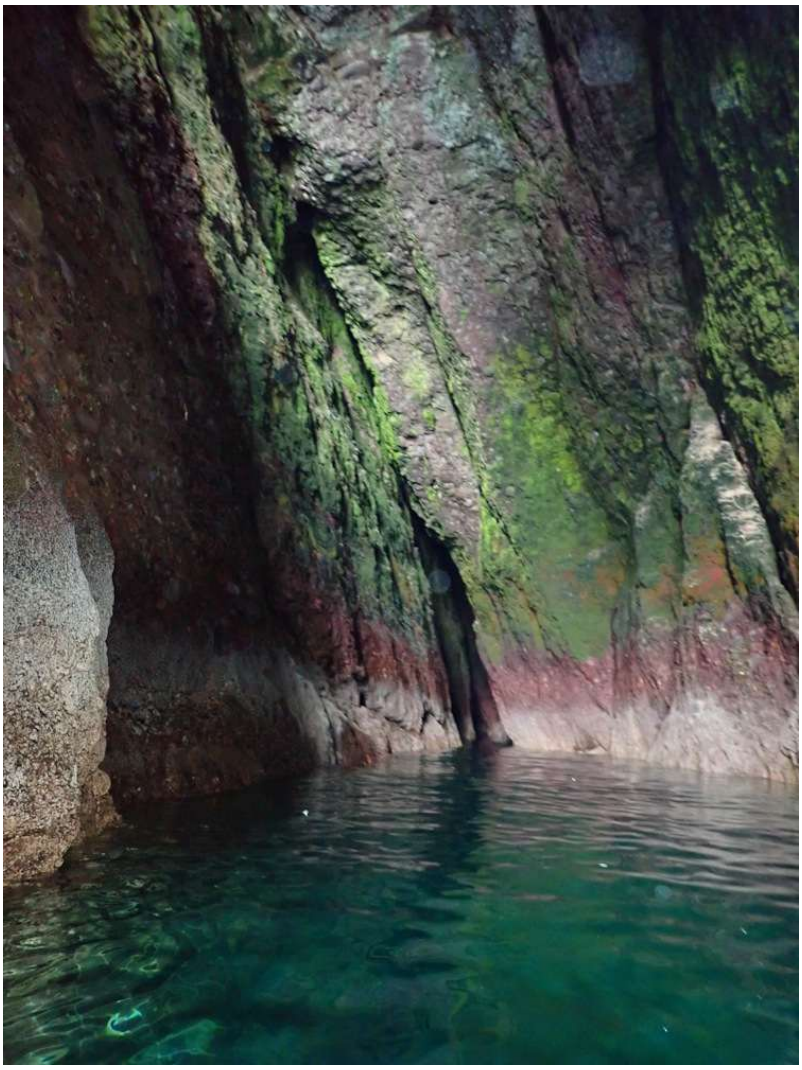
It is the last cave featured in James Reid's article.

Photo taken from near NO 8808 8026
looking NNW.

On the right is a photo taken inside the first chamber. It shows the continuation of the fault plane rather nicely.

Although it is fairly easy to enter in a kayak, in low SE swell, the entrance is rather too narrow for anything much wider.

It is one of the longer caves on the east coast at 222 m. A rough plan is here.



A photo taken from near NO 8814 7995 of an interesting, but hard to categorise feature. It appears to have formed on a vertical joint which has a small burn running down that joint. Is it a raised beach sea-cave ? Or what ? It is the largest of a number of ‘holes’ more or less high up in the cliffs of Fowl’s Heugh.

I hope that this gives a taste of what can be seen from the sea between Stonehaven and Crawton.

Nigel Feilden 17 April 2026