

CHISLEHURST CAVES DISCOVERED

The Tag game arrange recently by David Harvey and Ros Day in Chislehurst Caves was a novel event and very atmospheric. The afternoon session: I played a very 'dodgey' archaeologist named Prof. Jones with my trusty henchman/heavy Mr Robinson who make a living out of trading in ancient alien artefacts, and damn whoever gets in our way. We had heard rumours of a lost civilisation on a deserted planet and had ploughed the profits from our last, fairly lucrative venture into an expedition to find whatever profitable pieces might still exist and corner the market in these yet unknown artefacts.

Having found and entered an entrance to a cave system we holed up for the night in some (fortunately empty) creature's lair - bones, *fake pooh (hopefully, David)* and tracks, plus an awful feral smell. It was bloody dark in there. *We sat waiting for the game to start in the blackness to save our torch batteries and a weird echo surrounding us if we spoke - very tension building.*

Game on, so we set off over the rocks from a recent cave-in through a narrow space into an adjoining cavern. The floor and walls glowed faintly from some forms of fluorescent insects and spiders (*nice touch people*). Just as we got clear of the tunnel we heard a crash and rumble behind us. Clambering back to investigate we realised we were sealed in by a massive tunnel fall-in. *Good work with the sound effects and dropping scrim netting.*

Looked around a bit - nothing profitable yet! Met a fairly spaced-out chap claiming to be a guardian of some sort. He told us to leave, but did not explain how, now we were blocked in. Besides, if he was guarding something, then there was bound to be money in it. Slipped past him. Next, heard some crazy person being totally paranoid and letting off shots from a beam weapon in every direction! Talked her down a bit with bland reassurances and lies and got her to stop shooting. Found a human body (her handiwork?) in a side cave which was pretty decomposed but obviously killed by a beam weapon. So, talked gently but kept one hand on the trigger. The mad woman was in a make-shift camp on a large cavern, and we were shortly joined by other, more sane friends of hers. They were the crew from a crashed freighter marooned here, but getting by (physically, if not mentally). Learned from them of the nearby presence of an ancient burial chamber (at last, the prospect of financial remuneration!).

Investigated the burial chamber with some of their crew. Very interesting. Now the inventory: Body rotted centuries ago, but beautiful golden death mask, some scraps of rich fabric left, lots of votive offering bowls, incense burners, gold, platinum, latinum, jade small offerings, unknown coins, broaches, bracelets and necklaces - a very nice hoard indeed. Also, a large open jar of green gunk and a locked chest. Not much call for green gunk in my line of business, so put the jar's top firmly, but carefully back on. Was going to force open the chest until crew-person Laura produced a key she had found some time ago. So, unlocked the chest, attached our rope to the handles and opened the chest from as far away as possible (*we've done this sort of stuff before*). To our surprise it did not explode, let off a swirling mist or hiss in a sinister fashion, but just sat there! Cautiously peaked inside. Some sort of egg warmly wrapped up on a nest of some sort. Well, ornithology is not our line either so we closed it again and forgot about it.

Outside we could hear more of those guardian clods arguing with the rest of the crew. We stuffed as many trinkets into our pockets as could decently pass casual inspection. Had to leave all of the bigger stuff, but might come back for it later. Went out to meet the guardians. Discussed with the yokels about scientific necessities, archaeological truth, historic imperatives, the free market economy and bribery, but all to no avail. They wanted us all out of their caves (except for anyone that had gone bonkers), and fast! They had cleared a way out for us. We travelled along a bloody 3 foot high, long, winding culvert (*and boy! did my calf muscles feel it over the next two days*) with Mr. Robinson in front (that's what heavies are paid for - to get shot before I am), then me, followed by the crew being herded into the culvert. We wanted to make a dash with our ill-gotten gains at the far end. Unfortunately, more of guardians were awaiting us. Forcing Mr. Robinson out of the culvert they searched him and found part of our loot. Imagine my indignation at this 'Mr. sooo unprofessional for a man of science! Shame on you!! I don't know what came over him Sir.... etc. etc.'). My treasure was still well hidden and I convinced the guardians of my genuine honesty whilst managing to convince them that all of those plebes behind us in the culvert had been tomb robbing like mad.

While they endlessly argued with the crew, we nosily topped Guardian Harvey within feet of his 'brothers' who were so busy lecturing the crew that they didn't notice (*mental reminder - next time Jim, use your knife - it's quieter and you don't get wounded by ricochet in a confined space*). So, me (minor wound) and Mr. Robinson (Michael Beswick) scooted off into the sunset still considerably richer. Behind us, the happy sound of someone else getting the blame (gunfire, screams, general mayhem). I call that a result!

Thanks to Ros and David for organising it all. Great fun! We seemed to be 'in game' for a great deal longer than we actually were. Some of us organised a number of attack/defend scenarios to use up the remaining time and any spare energy. These were good. All that echoing noise and lights in the pitch black. Once you were dead it was nice to sit in the darkness and watch the light show. So, a good day!

Perhaps we can get another one going with a much larger area and more people? One plea I would like to make, though. People who moan about cost of games! To get decent sites on which to play Lazer-Tag, we have to pay more money. This game was £15.00, which I thought was OK To put it into perspective: other friends that same day went up to London by train to go to a Premiership football match (duration 90 minutes) at £25.00 to get in! Take into account train fares, program, a Bovril (yes, they still sell it), a pint or two and a hot dog and you are lucky to get change from £50-60!!! Cinema trips are getting pricey too. So £15.00 for a cracking, all afternoon 'do' at the caves is just no contest for me. Some of the all day games are even cheaper. Let's get some quality sites and bite the bullet for the cost!

Cheers,

Jim Cutler

P.S. games in these caves definitely need: clothes that you don't mind getting very mucky. Knee-pads and a hard hat/helmet (some of those rocks are as hard as rocks).