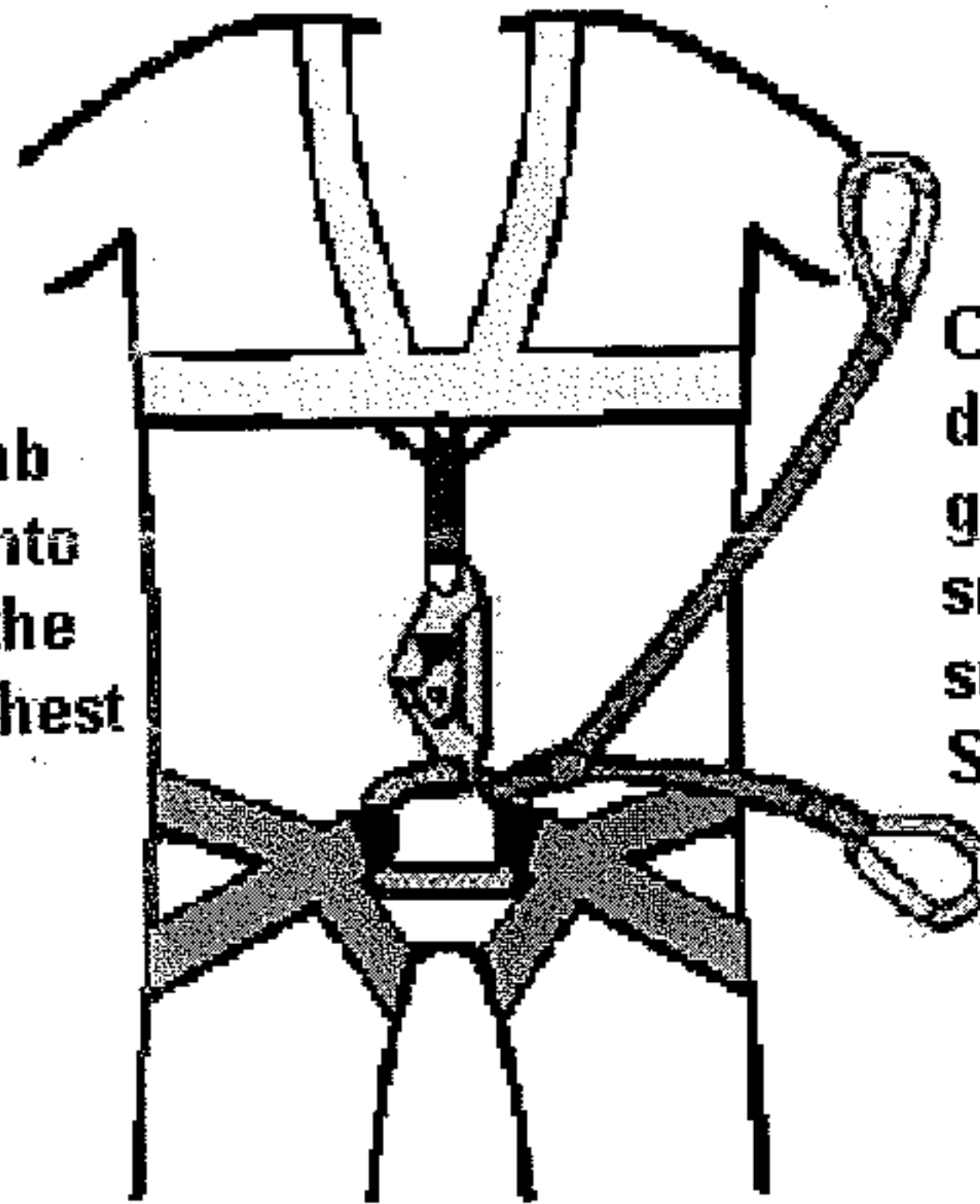


# DACHSTEIN CAVING EXPEDITION SRT SETUP

A few people have asked me about SRT kit layout so rather than repeat the same thing to everyone I'll write a few bits down. Remember that this is my personal opinion and that there are other people out there who might disagree with me. Luckily for the safety of mankind they'll be wrong!

This layout is obviously very similar to most of the setups you'll see but it really does work well in the typical caves of the Dachstein. Everyone in the Welsh contingent has this rig and I believe that a standardised set-up is important for many reasons. First, at a glance anyone can see if there's something wrong/missing etc, even the less experienced ones. Secondly, if the lights go out and that attractive young lady is struggling to pass the rebelay below me then I can talk her through it with absolute confidence that she's taking off exactly what I tell her to. As it were! Far less chance of her unclipping herself from the rope and plummeting to her death. Thirdly, it's a versatile, easily releasable system that works well in caves where you need to strip kit off to get past obstacles. Fourthly, it's extremely versatile on expedition rigging. Fifthly (and hopefully the last of the "thlys") as a rescuer or as a rescuee it's easy to take bits of kit off and convert them into hauling systems, etc ...

**A small crab that clips into the top of the croll and chest harness**



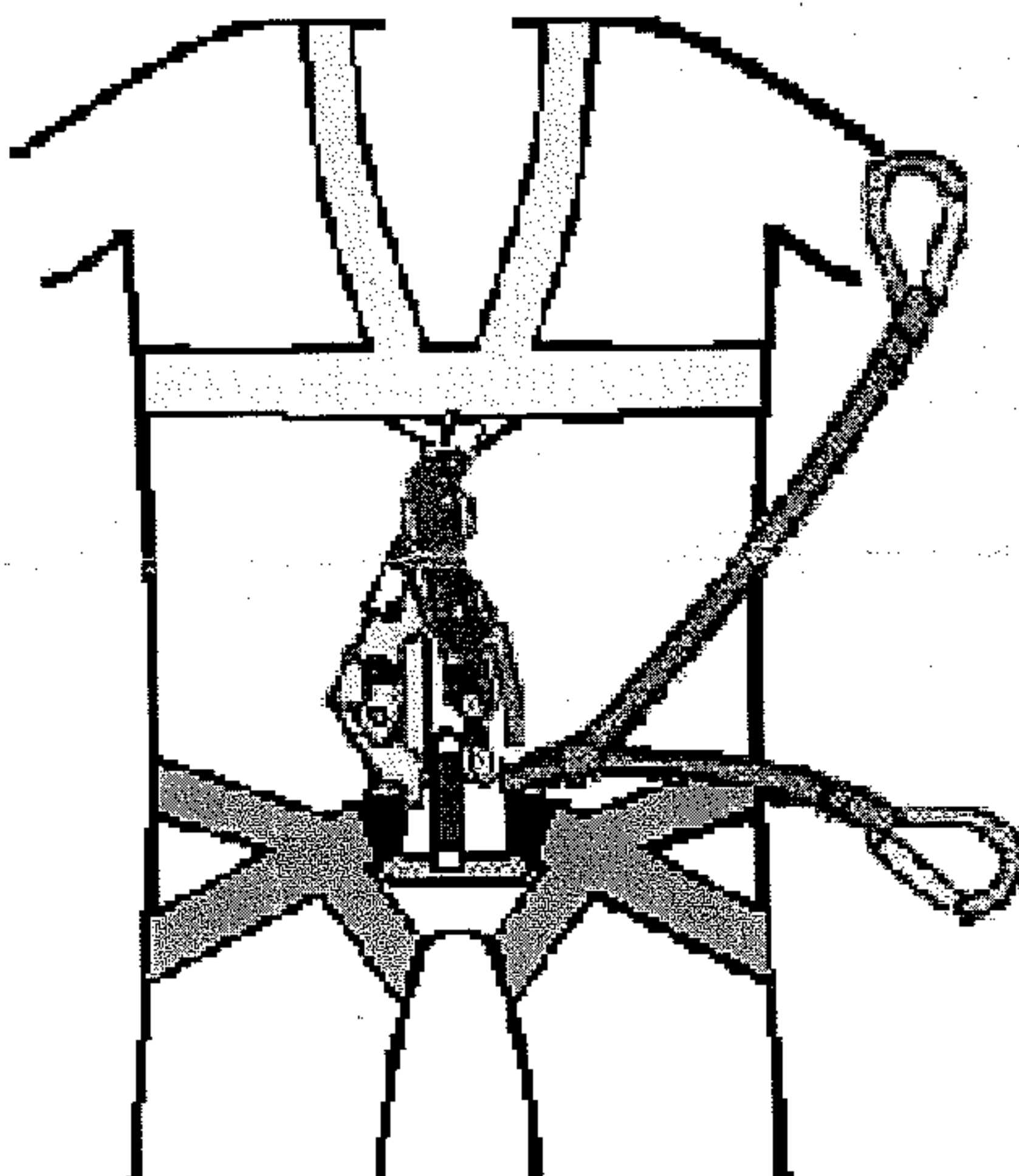
**Cowstails (8 or 9mm dynamic with snap gates without snaggy hooky bits such as the Petzl Spirit bent gates)**

I'll explain the rig and justify as much of it as I can be arsed with. Lot of it is long-winded blurb for the geeky types out there. Sections in bold are the important bits.

Imagine you're the caver wearing a harness and you're looking down towards your crotch (never done that sort of thing myself).

**Central maillon** (D-shaped and not triangular). Not going to justify it but triangular ones are pants.

From Left to right: **cowstails** (I use 8 or 9mm dynamic with snap gates without snaggy hooky bits such as the Petzl Spirit bent gates). I believe that for 99% of caving screw gates on cowstails are absolute and utter crap. My justification goes as follows:



If you're tired, got heavy bags, passing tight and awkward rigging, have been dragging your arse through muddy areas, your hands are cold, and the snow melt is starting to pump down the pitches, I can guarantee that at some point in your career you will be unable to undo a screw gate on your cowstail. Most of the time this won't really matter but it doesn't take much imagination to visualise what could happen in the worst case scenario. I've lost track of the number of people who I've had to assist when they can't undo the bloody things, and I've had loads of issues with my own kit over the years. You need to be able to pass obstacles rapidly and with little fuss. Screwgates offer nothing more than a psychological crutch that the nervous often feel the need to rely upon. The strength of most types of screwgate assumes that they're closed properly, and if you use them as snap gates then they're not much stronger anyway. Pointless, slow, fiddly. Use them for something else.

These (cowstail and croll) are the only permanent items on the harness (in some circumstances, such as really tight caves, cowstails can be attached to the central maillon with another maillon so that you can sack them off and put them in a bag to pass meanders, crawls etc. However, it's not a recommended procedure).