

# Rick Wakeman - Journey to the Centre of the Earth (1974)

*Recorded at The Royal Festival Hall, London  
with The London Symphony Orchestra and The English Chamber Choir*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HVDIPmbCnE>

*Richard Wakeman (born in London in 1949) is an English keyboardist and songwriter. He is known for being part of the rock band "Yes", and for his solo albums released in the 1970s. He intended to be a concert pianist, but he quit his course at the Royal College of Music in 1969 to follow his dream of composing and playing rock music. During the 1970s, he performed for David Bowie, T. Rex, Elton John, and Cat Stevens. He became a member of "The Strawbs" in 1970, and then joined "Yes" in 1971. Rick began his solo career in 1973. His most successful work includes "The Six Wives of Henry VIII" (1973), "Journey to the Centre of the Earth" (1974), and "The Myths and Legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table" (1975). He formed a rock band "The English Rock Ensemble" in 1974, with which he continues to perform.*

## 1) The Journey (02:58-06:10)

By horse, by rail, by land, by sea, our journey starts  
Two men incensed by one man's journey from the past  
In Iceland, where the mountain stood with pride,  
They set off with their guide  
To reach the mountain side.

Roped as one for safety through the long descent  
Into the crater of volcanic rock they went.  
Look up from our telescopic lens,  
One star for us to share,  
We continue on our prayer.

Crystals of opaque quartz, studded limpid tears,  
Forming magic chandeliers, lighting blistered galleries.



**Rick Wakeman 1974**

## 2) Narration 1 (06:10-06:43)

Admiring shades of lava which imperceptibly passed from reddish brown to bright yellow, their way lit by crystals appearing as lighted globes, they continued through the lava gallery, which gently sloped until they reached the intersection of two roads. Without hesitation, Professor Lidenbrock chose the eastern tunnel. And the journey continued through a succession of arches, appearing before them, as if they were the aisles of a gothic cathedral. The walls were enhanced with impressions of rock weeds and mosses from the Silurian epoch.

## 3) Narration 2 (07:55-08:47)

The Eastern route they had taken had come to a dead end. With three days' walk back to the fork to find Arne Saknussemm's original route, they found their water rations were limited to one day. Knowing their only chance of finding water was on that route, they set off for the fork and there, finally, they fell, almost lifeless on the third day. After sleep, they continued down the other tunnel in their quest for water, and whilst searching on his own, Hans, the guide, heard the sound of water thundering behind a granite wall, and with a pick axe, attacked the wall, so as to allow a stream of boiling water to enter and cool in their tunnel. Not only had they found life in the water, but they had also found a flowing guide to the centre of the Earth. They called the stream the Hansbach.

#### 4) Narration 3 (11:42-12:43)

Replenished with the water the journey continued with haste, but somehow they found themselves separated. Professor Lidenbrook's nephew, Axel, found himself alone. His mind was seized with unparalleled fear and he saw memories of home flashing before him. His fiancée Grauben, his house and friends in Hamburg. He saw hallucinations of all the incidents of the journey. And unworthy as he felt, he knelt in fervent prayer and then, in panic, he ran blindly through a tunnel, only to reach a dead end, where he fell panting for breath. In the darkness he cried. Voices... voices... he heard voices. He heard his uncle's voice. Due to the shape of the gallery and the conducting power of the rocks, his uncle's voice was uncannily travelling around the walls. By means of their chronometers they discovered they were four miles apart, so Axel set about the task of re-joining the Professor and their guide.

#### 5) Recollection (16:05-18:07)

Memories of a life on earth go flashing past,  
Of home, of Grauben, friends of whom he's seen his last  
Contemplating what his life's been worth,  
While trapped beneath the Earth,  
An embryo at birth.  
Pain and fear destroy the beauty I have seen,  
Of caverns, where no other man has ever been  
Silurian epoch hosts me as my grave,  
My final bow I wave, a life too late to save.

Crystals of opaque quartz, studded limpid tears,  
Forming magic chandeliers, lighting blistered galleries.



#### 6) Narration 4 (18:09-18:48)

Suddenly the ground disappeared from beneath his feet. He fell down a vertical shaft, his head hitting a sharp rock. He lost consciousness. On opening his eyes, he found himself with the professor and the guide, and looking around him, he saw an ocean, stretching as far as the eye could see; a giant forest of mushrooms; a line of huge cliffs, and strange clouds hung overhead, as he lay on a deeply-indented shore of golden sand, strewn with shells. For a moment, he thought he was back on the surface of the Earth, but he soon realised that they had reached a world within a world.

#### 7) Narration 5 (21:22-22:12)

Having made a raft from wood taken from the giant mushroom forest, with rigging consisting of a mast made of two staves lashed together, a yard made of a third, and a sail borrowed from their stock of rugs, they set sail from the harbour – Port Grauben, named after Axel's fiancée. With a north-westerly wind propelling them along at about three miles an hour, silvery beams of light, reflected here and there by drops of spray, produced luminous points in the eddy created by the raft. Soon all land was lost to view. Five days out to sea, they witnessed a terrifying battle between two sea monsters. One having the snout of a porpoise, the head of a lizard, and the teeth of a crocodile – an Ichthyosaurus. And the other, the mortal enemy of the first, a serpent with a turtle's shell, the Plesiosaurus.

## 8) The Battle (23:19-25:54)

Five days out on an infinite sea, they prayed for calm on an ocean free,  
But the surface of the water was indicating some disturbance.  
The raft was hurled by an unseen source, two hundred feet,  
with a frightening force  
And a dark mass rising showed to be a giant porpoise.

Rising out of an angry sea, towered the creatures' enemy,  
And so the two sea monsters closed for battle.

Crocodile teeth, lizard's head, bloodshot eye stained ocean red,  
Battle won, a victor's pride, three men thanked the Lord and cried  
"Save me, save me, save me, save me".

The serpents' fight went on for hours,  
two monsters soaring up like towers,  
And diving down to the depths in a single motion.

Suddenly, the serpent's head, shot out of the water bathed in red  
And the serpentine form lay lifeless on the ocean.

Crocodile teeth, lizard's head, bloodshot eye stained ocean red  
Battle won, a victor's pride, three men thanked the Lord and cried  
"Praise God, praise God, praise God, praise God."

## 9) Narration 6 (26:30-26:55)

Cumulus clouds formed heavily in the south, like huge wool packs heaped up in picturesque disorder. Under the influence of the breezes, they merged together, growing darker, forming a single menacing mass. The raft lay motionless on the sluggish waveless sea and in silence they waited for the storm.

## 10) Narration 7 (28:34-29:52)

For four days the storm had raged, as they clung to the mast of their raft for safety. Finally, with their raft wrecked, after being bashed against the reefs, they lay sheltered from the pouring rain beneath a few overhanging rocks, where they ate and slept. The next day, all trace of the storm had disappeared, and what remained of their stock seemed intact. Checking the compass brought only heartbreak, as it showed that a change of wind during the storm had returned them to just a few miles north of Port Grauben. So, deciding to try and find the original route, they advanced with difficulty over granite fragments mingled with flint, quartz, and alluvial deposits, eventually reaching a plain covered with bones, like a huge cemetery. A mile further on, they reached the edge of a huge forest made up of vegetation of the Tertiary period. Tall palms were linked by a network of inextricable creepers, a carpet of moss covered the ground, and the leaves were colourless, everything having a brownish hue. Exploring the forest, they discovered a heard of gigantic animals, Mastadons, which were being marshalled by a primitive human being, a Proteus. He stood over twelve foot high, he brandished an enormous bough, a crook worthy of this antediluvian shepherd.



## 11) The Forest (29:54-32:21)

Journey on through ages gone, to the centre of the earth,  
Past rocks of quartz and granite, which gave mother nature birth.  
Burial ground of ancient man, his life no more is seen,  
A journey through his time unknown, I wonder where he's been.  
(wonder where he's been ...)

The shore now gone behind the hill, the forest in our sight,  
Rocks and distant mountains bathed in waves of blinding light.  
Forests from a far-gone time, no living man has seen,  
A private prehistoric world – for you and I a dream.

Brownish hue dictates my eye, no colours hide their fear,  
Flowers faded, dull and cold, now bleached by atmosphere.  
Creatures twisting under trees, huge monsters soaked with rage,  
Hidden deep below our Earth, a frightening, bygone age.  
Their shepherd came, now long extinct, a huge primeval man,  
The three men filled with disbelief, just turned as one and ran.



## 12) Narration 8 (32:22-33:50)

Dumb with astonishment and amazement, which bordered on stupefaction, they fled the forest. Instinctively, they made towards the Lidenbrook Sea. Discovering a rusty dagger on the beach, and the carved initials of the explorer before them on a slab of granite, they realised that they were once again treading the route of Arne Saknussemm. Following a short sea journey around a cape, they came ashore where a dark tunnel plunged deep into rock. Venturing down, their progress was halted by a piece of rock blocking their way. After deciding to blow their way through, and setting the charge, they put out to sea for safety. With the explosion, the rocks before them opened like a curtain, and a bottomless pit appeared in the shore. The explosion had caused an earthquake. The abyss had opened up, and the sea was pouring into it. Down and down they plunged into the huge gallery, but on regaining their senses found their raft rising at tremendous speed. Trapped in the shaft of an active volcano they rose through the ages of man, to be finally expelled out on a mountain-side riddled with tiny lava streams. Their journey was completed and they found themselves 3,000 miles from their original starting point, in Iceland. They had entered by one volcano and they had come out by another. With the blue mountains of Calabria in the east, they walked away from the mountain that had returned them. The frightening Mount Etna.



Rick Wakeman 2018