
RED ROSE CAVE AND POTHOLE CLUB



NEWSLETTER



Vol. 57 No.4

December 2020



Emma Key in Wilf Taylors Passage, Lancaster Hole

Photo: Bill Nix

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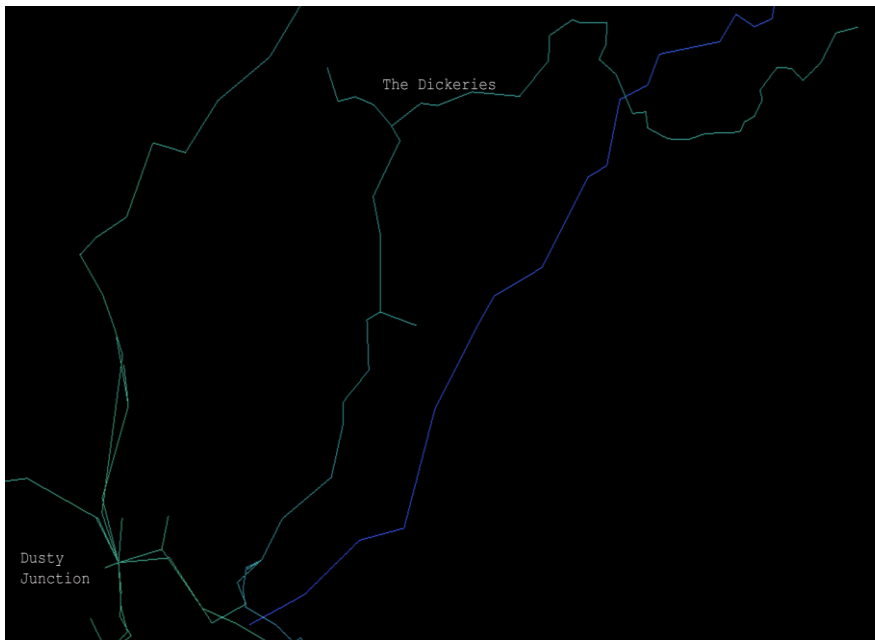
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Another bit on the side (Following the article in Newsletter Vol 57 No 1. p6)

So you're at the farm again and can't decide what to do, well here's another place to go and explore, The Dickeries. "Where's that?", I here you say! Well, when you get to Dusty Junction from Mistral you're confronted with several options, maybe you've not noticed. To the extreme left, almost behind you, is the Wet and Muddy Wallows back to Link. Straight ahead leads to the Hall of the Ten and Mountain King but over to the slight left is the way to Red Wall (RW) and White Wall (WW) Chambers, which are also worth a visit and a wet connection through to Ratbag. It is this passage that soon reaches a slump in the floor, that the way on to RW and WW, passes on the right but at the far end of the crater are boulders. A hole in the boulders leads carefully down to a way through to a streamway at a T-junction. Downstream soon sumps though upstream is The Dickeries stream coming from the right.

Going upstream starts off as easy going in a vadose, pretty passage but soon lowers and to hands and knees and reaches a fork. Straight ahead quickly ends in T-junction, left is a muddy upward tube which seems to be close to the Wet and Muddy Wallows. To the right is a small muddy sump, god knows where that leads.



Anyway the main fun lies up the right-hand passage of the fork just passed. A bit of crawling soon enlarges at a joint/aven where the passage changes with walking and wading through pools to reach a lowering in the roof and a 'duck'! Well, when we were surveying this passage, I stupidly started digging the soft sand away and the duck lowered so we could progress with a bit of squeezing beyond and the passage became mainly sideways walking up to a small aven.

The aven wasn't very high and had a small passage at the top, well worth a bit of effort, a few of concrete bolts some rope and you'd be up in no time. Carrying on beyond the aven was a small continuation passage that would require a smaller team member than me to see where it goes.

"So why didn't we push it?" Simple, after crawling through the water and spending hours surveying my hands were shaking so much I could hardly write and Sam wasn't much better, we were close to hypothermia and tried to rush out to warm up. There was a really cool draught in there so the air was coming from somewhere, but where? There's nothing anywhere near that end of the cave but maybe it leads to the surface, it's that cold!

Ray Duffy

20 Years of a Dry Way to Notts 2

Divers found it in 1985 but to top the joy of mortals like me a dry way was found on 23 November 2000 after a +4 year multi club dig i/c Red Rose members - Pete Hall , Ray Duffy, Bill Sherrington and others But a lot more fun was to come !!!!

The first year was spoilt by foot + mouth disease, although Leck Fell was one of the first place in the UK to reopen. Then the hard work began. (*divers are not of this world it was already well cherry picked*)

Lots of cavers joined in the urgent engineering of the entrance and lots joined in the digs - most had some hope of a link to Lost Johns and Easegill. So, an overview of some of the incredible engineering:-

Green Tape Inlet: Pinning then capping hanging boulders and finding 150m good passage.

Shower Bath: A similar project but prodding rocks in a slopping passage and then putting the cage forward - tons removed, impressive smoke tests had no result. (*we found later we were under the undiscovered Cup Cake complex*)

Cup Cake entrance: Long capping and then a dig at the far end caused a moorland collapse which was dug into. (*still 12 metres down*)

Voldermort entrance: Found by scaling and capping in Oliver Lloyd aven, finding the Incredibles Chamber and the fine old caverns of the Haywaggon.

Poppy Passage: Top sump area, digging and draining of a sump led to a possible dry way to Notts 1.

Gour Inlet: The placing in by a diver a Phil Parkers' electric pump to prime it from the dry (*an automatic system was found to be impossible for complex scientific reasons*) - the impressive and strange Parallel Universe was found. Later the sump was drained by drilling through the rock to a pitch and helped by an automatic syphon primed by floods !!

Inlet 5: EPC used 100 metres of thin pipe to catch and drain water and tho + over a semi sump + then bail; and dig to an extension almost like the main passage in Notts 2.

Lastly Bruno Kranski Sump: that had been drained mainly as a test for Phil's pump was looked at and a few digs started, however it was a smoke test that proved a link at last to Lost Johns / Easegill, and on Nov 6th. 2011 a dig connected tho 140 metres long re-enforced by lots of staff and cement /concrete pressed into the walls. If you think the entrance shaft is impressive its twice as long and much further from the car!!!

In the last few years more has been found, it's a fine cave and keeps fairly clean and lots of happy trips.

Sorry, there were so many people and clubs involved, I have left them out otherwise this missive would be twice as long and still would have left a lot out.

20 years is a short time to an oldie like me, but 20 years after Lancaster hole/Easegill was found I was 17, seen most of it surveyed quite a bit I helped connect - The Borehole to Easegill and helped re-open Top Sink. 20 years before seemed beyond time, I had not even been born !! Lancaster/Easegill had caused horrible rows and stress, thankfully a better 20 years, so may it remain.

Cheers, **Andy Walsh**

Back to My Roots

When, some time ago now I read the late, great Tom Sykes article about his family farming at Bull Pot Farm, I meant to write a little about my ancestors living at Gale Garth. I knew I had a very old photo somewhere of my Great Grandfather's stepsister standing with a woman who, presumably was her grandmother at the top of the track down to Gale Garth sometime in the 1890s. But I couldn't find the photo. Having a tidy up the other day, I found the photo.

I can remember myself when the trees in the photo were still at the top of the Gale Garth track, but they were dying then and are now long gone. My Great Grandfather and his step sister, Lucy lived there when they were very young. But schooling was a problem, as you can imagine and the family moved to Nether Lodge in Ribblesdale. I have Lucy's sampler from this period of their lives on our wall. I imagine she and my Great Grandfather, Roger Towers, went to school in Chapel le Dale.



Gale Garth



Lucy's sampler

Strangely our lives intertwine here as Toby, my husband helped mend the bell tower on the old school when Tom Lambert bought it in the 1980s. Fate seems to have linked us to my ancestors in other ways. We came to live in the Ingleton area, not because some of my family used to live here, but because of caving. But I found some of my aunt's family research not long ago and discovered that one of my ancestors had been a chambermaid at the hall in High Biggins. Now we live in Low Biggins, just down the road.

Eventually my Great Grandfather went to live in Austwick. We have a picture of him holding a goose for plucking and two of his family of six girls at the White House near Wharfe where they lived. One of the six little girls was my grandmother.

As a child, I remember being taken around the Dales to meet my great aunts. One lived in Settle, one in Horton

and one over at Halton Gill. My great uncle at Horton was, apparently, the first to bring electricity to the village by installing a water turbine in the beck. He and my great aunt lived at the other end of the row to the Penyghent Café and my aunt had a haberdashery in the front room of the house.

Growing up in Keighley I never thought I would be retracing my roots in the way I have. And it is only thanks to the wonderful world of caving that I did

Jane Chilton.



White House near Wharfe

Penyghent Pot Saga - 1967

Ian Wilkinson's car arrived by Lancaster Baths - the trip was on!! The cave that was then every cavers dream. Ian was a 19 year old mischievous but likeable student, inside the car was Roger Calvert an Elvis Presley lookalike and a bear of a gardener. Then there was me, young as well, but all legs and an Oxfam body, all of us were RRCPC and joining 4 others from another club (HWCPG?).

We roared off, heavy rain came - I'd jack out but it suddenly stopped "it'll be rite" says one. The fatal quote of old, one of those times you wish you said NO.

An hour later we were roaring up the stoney track up to Hull Pot - almost no 4x4 then and this car was made to go on carpet, almost made it despite rocks and stones hitting the sump. Ian was like a mad thing at the controls before it grounded.

We got into our newish HOME made wetsuits all using a lot of our mothers talc to get them on including our 4 new mates. Then the rain hammered down, then stopped again, I did not jack it in but in the nice hot wetsuit + being young you felt invincible.

Down the entrance shaft and into the crawl - soon to go flat out it was noisy and MOVING! That as suds and foam rushed past you, the cave was alive!! Down the 1st pitch and into "Easy passage NOW it goes big but if 6ft tall B_____ not easy "Penyghent Pot best steam way pot in UK" - had I been conned?

Soon the big pitch came I was glad to stand up at last. Yes it was impressive just out of the spray and the magical tinkle of the ladders as they rolled out down the depths (light alloy ladders a sound of the 60's). Then pitch after pitch (on an earlier trip I missed, Jim Newton had a list on a card under his helmet) The HWCPG were doing a fine job, we were soon down the 9th pitch and into the low almost hands and knee high passage past the Hull? /Hunt and High Hull pot inlet. After 100 ft of this, now into the Master cave. Wow, but it wasn't wow - still could not stand up. Long Churn was better, Oh dear. Much more water now and noisy and exciting, we at the last pitch which after a short foray was deemed too wet today, when we were aware that noise seemed to be everywhere, a roaring, thudding, hissing below onwards, behind and echoing this was the time of steam engines but even this sound eclipsed that, it had to be heard to be believed.

We all headed out and realised the B--- obvious the place was flooding, the force of the now river water was tremendous, 5 of us were on one side of the passage, Me and Roger on the other at one corner that I could not possibly force my way round. The man mountain Roger used his strength and pushed me round. Clinging on I found he could not get round either but with an adrenalised heave I pulled him round in waist deep (for me) water.

It could not get worse, but it did on the other side, it was also waist deep + raging when suddenly the one in front was washed away --- fortunately someone trapped him and we pressed on.

The roof lowered to the low bit before the big inlet. The water almost touched the roof, the passage was wider but still a strong current. You could not see where you were going - with my face on its side in the water. Lips askew sucking air from the air space in front, hand feeling for the airspace beyond. The current still pulled and I was thinking of letting go of the ladder to increase the odds when the current 'stopped' I was passed the inlet and suddenly burst into the aven of the 9th pitch.

To our surprise the ladder, and the way out could not be seen! Someone soon found it behind the waterfall "in the dry", climbing up it was silly, a curtain of water behind you + the rest of the way you climbed in almost dryness, then took a deep breath, held on tight and forced through the roof of water at the top, sputtering and gasping. Pitch after pitch followed and at a gloomy spot Ian Wilkinson quietly told me he was an asthmatic and hoped he would not have an attack, this was not good news AND it was before inhalers or any real medication.

Soon we came to the big pitch, what a sight, 120 ft waterfall crashing down, thundering - awesome, but what amazed me was the spray. I've only seen it rarely, lots of spray but it was going all rapidly UPWARDS in the wind. Also, Roger Calvert, about to go up, who was blowing his whistle to call 'up up' so forcefully he had blood from his mouth - it was getting desperate!!! The crawl. The crawl; would it be sumped? Fortunately not, but it was full of brown fast flowing water + foam. On the surface it was cloudy - we found out a half to one hour downpour had occurred when we were underground.

NOTE - Penyghent Pot entrance has been seen underwater and Hull Pot full to the brim. We were glad to be out. The next day at work (Co-op Furniture shop) I was taking deep breaths in and out, I can breathe!!! I'm never taking it for granted again. Ian later left Lancaster and went into a career in Forensic Psychiatry. Roger got a career in tree management for all of Birkenhead area, marrying a girl who probably liked Elvis!!! but both were good lads anyway... AND THE MORAL IS - DON'T GO DOWN A WET CAVE WHEN IT'S WET!!! But it is a very good trip!

Cheers, **Andy Walsh.**

Blast from the Past - 1953

**Members of the Rock and Pot Club at Beezley Barn,
taken by Jim Newton on a Box Brownie prior to a successful trip down Alum pot.
Note the wooden ladders!**



My First Traverse of the Azpilicueta, Renada System in Cantabria.

Recently I saw a Spanish account of a traverse of this classic in Matienzo, northern Spain, and it brought back memories of the first time I did this route. As usual with my caving, it became more eventful than we had anticipated.

Back in the now fading past of my early forties, I and my caving partner went to do this classic with a bigger team. They would de-rig Azpilicueta while we continued to the connection with Renada and exit the system at valley level.

Nowadays, tracks take you well up the hill towards the entrance of Azpilicueta but back then it was a stiff slog up a steep slope as the system is around 350m deep. The entrance to Azpilicueta is an underwhelming hole with a loose bouldery slope. But soon, pitch after pitch takes you into a grander rift and you feel you are in a serious system. The pitches had been left rigged for exploration and this was really a de-rigging trip on which we tagged along to do the full traverse. The last pitch is enormous. The belay was a Y hang but with no line leading into it, so you were on the brink of the 100m drop when you clipped in. The descent is next to a rock wall for some way, but, after a re-belay, you swing out into a huge and imposing chamber with a great rock slab crossing holes in the floor at the bottom.

This chamber is a hub in the system. You can go on through an enormous high level series further into the cave from here or you can pick your way through holes in the chamber floor to the connection to Renada.

The two of us had some sketchy instructions from the rest of the team about this connection but were relying on markers having been left to show the way. I knew the Renada part of the system very well as I had resurveyed a lot of the smaller passage in the past. So it was only the connection where things could get sticky.

And they did. As soon as you drop below the level of the big chamber in Azpilicueta, you enter an area like a huge Swiss cheese. Holes go off everywhere and the main clues are the wear on the passage floor. Fortunately, the pitch that drops into Renada had a long rope leading into it so we could follow this to the connection. This pitch is where Giles Barker sadly lost his life in a fall in 1992. It has a nasty constriction a few metres down which is awkward to descend. At the bottom is a squeeze into a little chamber and then you debouch into more Swiss Cheese. This is where we had been promised markers but there were none to be seen. Apparently someone had moved them to another part of the cave. So we went around and around looking for the way on. We knew we should be looking for an upwards rift but failed to find it so went back to the chamber at the bottom of the pitch to have a rethink. Here we found we were not alone. As we had been abseiling down the pitches in Azpilicueta, we had been passed by two Spanish cavers who were doing the through trip. But they had got lost in this part of the cave too and had found themselves back here.

Fortunately our next foray was successful. A left turn into a sandy floored passage took us to a balcony. Below us a rift descended, and above us a chimney shaped rift rose into darkness. On the recovery of Giles' body I had spent a long time waiting at the top of the connecting rift with some Spanish rescuers to help the team who had come in from Azpilicueta to navigate the complexities of the Renada passages. So I had a fair idea we were in the right place, even looking up from the bottom of the rift.

Luckily we were in the right place. A tricky shimmy off the ledge into the rift led to a straightforward climb up into the convoluted passages of Renada.

The rest was easy. Many parts of Renada are beautifully decorated, especially the area around the Stuffed Monk Gallery. Initially when we got to this region of the cave the Spaniards we had in tow had intended to carry on some distance into the cave to go to Ghost Lake.

But when I pointed out the turn off passage they needed to take to go in that direction they said they had changed their minds and wanted to go out with us. The rest of the trip was uneventful if muddy. The cave gets very squalid as you get towards the bottom entrance and you have the delights of the Blowhole, a crawl partly full of muddy water to navigate near the end.

So, tired but happy we made our way out into the warm sunshine and back to the car. A change of clothes and a beer at the bar was on our minds. However beers were to be a distant dream. As we got to the car, my husband, Toby drove up in our camper van. Quickly he explained that one of the expedition had had a very nasty fall climbing in the Ason gorge. As my caving partner was a doctor, we had to set off immediately to help. We arrived in the field to find he had already had excellent care from other members of the expedition and was in the expedition spinal board. Once the ambulance had arrived we deployed our Neil Robertson stretcher to carry him back to the road. The Neil Rob was deployed as a makeshift bullfighter's cape on the way to the casualty by one of the team who had been approached over enthusiastically by the field's resident bull.

My friend the doctor and I got into the back of the ambulance with the unfortunate climber, she to monitor him on the way, and I to translate as I can speak reasonable Spanish. We spent the whole night at the hospital ensuring they had all the details for the casualty and the history of the accident. Unfortunately for us we were still covered in mud from the cave and dressed only in tee shirts and shorts. Nor did we have any money with us for refreshments or any way of getting back to Matienzo. Remember, this was in the days before mobile phones so we couldn't ring up to get anyone to come for us. Fortunately for us, another expedition member came to the hospital to see how things were going and generously took us to a late night bar for a bite to eat. So we didn't get back to the campsite in Matienzo until the wee small hours. So, as I say, it wasn't the straightforward trip I had hoped for at the beginning of the day.

Jane Chilton

Blasts from the past - Jim's Diary entries

1. Diary Entry 17th July 1988

Went to Bat Cave with Garth, Pete and Mick. Garth got into the right hand inlet but it became tight within 6 feet. We began digging in the farthest boulder choke but the left side roof slab moved. Discretion being the better part of valour, we turned to the right side and pulled down a few boulders - the rest will definitely follow once we get a bar in. On the way back, we found a 20 foot hole in the cliff downstream of the Howgill entrance. It may require a bit of digging.

2. Diary Entry 21st February 1988

Went down Easegill with Roy Breakell to Iggy Bliss to photograph the stals we had seen last week. My flash was exasperatingly sticky - what's new! We then proceeded to Innominate Sink where we found a hole at the top of the waterfall and diverted water down it. We eventually slid into the hole to clear out the debris. Luckily a decent sized slab had fallen over the hole and saved it from being completely filled in. Looks tidy!

Jim Newton

Caves and Mines of Cadshaw Quarry

Colin Jones drew my attention to some obscure caves in the "Other Areas" section at the back of the latest volume of Northern Caves. On a wet day at the end of October we thought we would have a look. The area lies to the South of Darwen near Cadshaw Rocks, a local beauty spot and just to the East of the A666 junction with Greens Arms Rd. The caves and mine are located in Carboniferous rocks but not limestone. It is known locally as Rough Rock, a Sandstone Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 319 to 320 million years ago in the Carboniferous with some shale bands. Three small caves are mentioned in the Northern Caves guide book, Cadshaw Cavern (SD 7064 1803), the longest along with Constriction Cave (SD 7067 1803) and Turton Pot (SD 7065 1802). There is also a mine in the main quarry at the base of an obvious buttress. Before our visit I contacted John Cordingley about the area as I thought he would be aware of the area. He supplied me with some useful info and survey of the mine done in the early 1970's.

We parked up in the lay-by on Greens Arms Rd just past the junction with the A road and got changed in the rain. A gap in the wall gets you to a footpath which we followed to a well made track. The quarries and mine were worked in the 19th Century when a tramway linked them back to the main road. This is the route of the track. We turned right here and followed the track which curves round the hill for about 500 metres to the obvious large quarry on the left of the track.

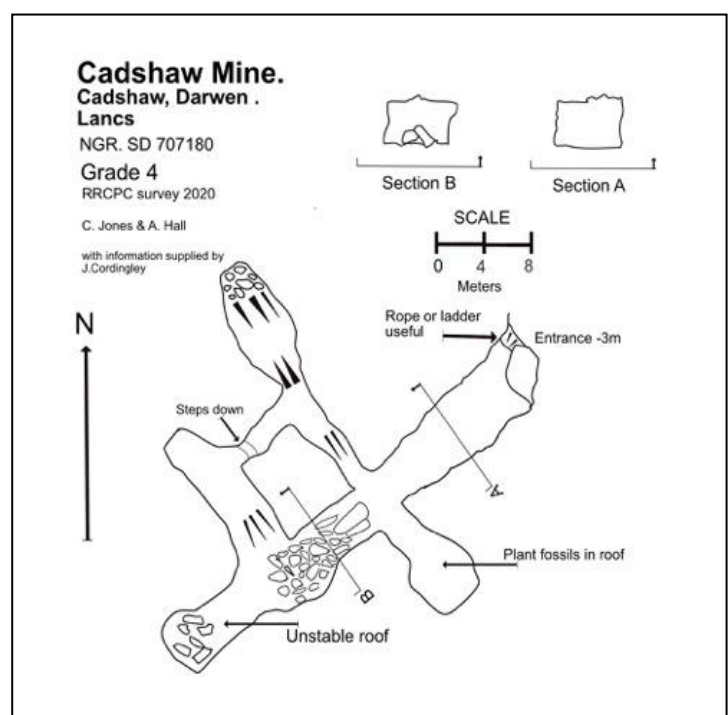
It has been used by climbers in the summer but nobody was there when we arrived! In the middle of the quarry face is a large pillar and an obvious collapse.

The buttress above the mine entrance began to give concern in 1975 and was eventually blown down to make the other climbs safer. At the base of this behind some large boulders is the mine entrance. The entrance involves an awkward 3 metre drop over a smooth sandstone slab. We had brought a ladder for this but a hand line would probably do.

Inside is a spacious mine passage 4 metres by 4 metres leading south to a staggered X roads. To the left the passage ends quickly but here there is a prominent shale bed in the roof above the more massive sandstone beds.



Entrance and inside of Cadshaw Mine



*Entrance to Constriction Cave**Inside Cadshaw Cavern**Entrance to Cadshaw Cavern*

There are numerous plant fossils in the roof and in blocks on the passage floor. Back at the X roads we followed the passage to the west up a slope and to an obvious collapse area straight ahead. To the left here the passage goes down a couple of short drops and turns left again into a dodgy collapse area and then left again over rotting timbers back to the main passage. We did a basic survey and took some photographs.

We then went to look for the three sandstone mass movement caves in the old quarries to the west. We found Constriction Cave first near the foot of the face in the left hand corner. The cave is well named as the entrance proved too tight for me to get in. I'm not sure I could have got out even if I had forced myself down the vertical entrance drop. It is only supposed to be 12m long and described as a sporting trip but of only short duration!

After a photo and video of me struggling to get out of the entrance we walked on to the other western end of the quarry to find Cadshaw Cavern. This an obvious entrance at the base of the cliff just above the footpath near some fallen rocks. A awkward crawl over angular sandstone blocs leads round several corners for about 10m to a low chamber, which is as far as I got. The cave is supposed to continue but the way on was not obvious. I won't be rushing back!

Next we looked for Turton Pot, which is supposed to be a 3m shaft, where a rope is helpful. It is supposed to be located 7m above Cadshaw Cavern but Colin searched the quarry about the cavern and found a couple of places where slumping of soil and rocks seemed to have occurred, probably filling in the entrance.

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CORDINGLEY, J. 1974 *Journal of the Lancashire Caving and Climbing Club*. **5**. 3. 31-32.

Andy Hall

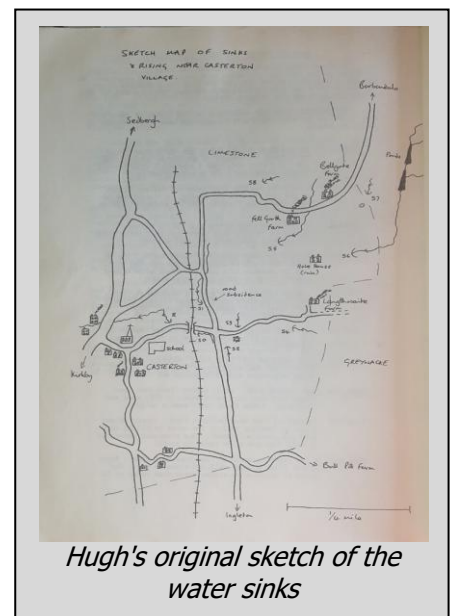
Back in the summer, Marjorie Murray from Casterton had asked me to write about our Slab Pot exploits for the Casterton Newsletter. I finally got around to it last month, and they put it together and sent it out - thought you might like to read it, not that you don't know it already, of course! Sorry if your picture is not there - I sent a load of pictures including people shots, but they selected what they wanted, editor's prerogative! Hugh St. Lawrence

Typical Water Flow from Wandales Lane

Would the Red Rose cavers be able to help explain the drainage (or non-drainage!) of surface water? A team sprang into action to investigate the sinkholes and risings of Casterton village.

I didn't get wind of the project immediately, but when I did hear about it I was keen to get involved – I already had some knowledge of the area from cursory investigations almost 50 years ago! When we were young lads in the Red Rose club, my caving buddy Alex Fletcher and I would find any hint of an underground cavity interesting, such was our obsession. We also found the girls of Casterton School quite interesting (!) and would occasionally visit our girlfriends on my BSA 175. One evening we were returning to Bull Pot Farm and noticed water running down a culvert and disappearing beneath a concrete slab. The slab was very heavy but we managed to lift it just enough to glimpse water falling into a very narrow cave. I then dropped the slab on Alex's foot which he still complains about to this day.

Fast forward 45 years and I was back on my old hunting ground. In wet weather a stream still ran down the culvert and under the concrete slab. In the intervening years somebody else had had a look and enlarged the narrow crack. They'd managed to get down 6ft or so but not much more. All possible ways on were heavily choked with years of flood debris.



With buckets, trowels, picks and crowbars our team swung into action, patiently removing the 'fill' that choked the cave passage. Hoisted to the surface, the fill was wheel-barrowed to the bottom of Rodger Read's chicken pen where he'd kindly said we could dump the spoil.

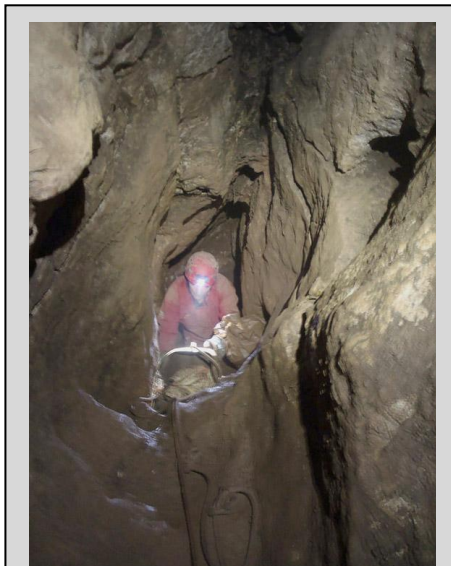


Andy Hall hauling spoil up the entrance climb

HEDGEHOG POT

A short passage was duly unearthed heading underneath the road, but this soon plunged downhill as a steep shaft. We dug this out to a depth of some 15ft but it became plugged with ever denser sand and clay. After wet weather a pool of water would form at the bottom several feet deep and take days to drain away.

Some of the local wildlife took an interest in our excavations, too. We turned up one day to find a live hedgehog at the bottom of the shaft.



Digging out what was to become Hedgehog Pot

It was loaded into the digging bucket and given a free ride back up to its natural habitat – but it gave us a name for this part of the cave, 'Hedgehog Pot'.

Just at the bottom of the entrance climb another very low passage was unearthed and proved much easier to dig out – it quickly extended as a horizontal passage heading towards the railway bridge.



Hedgehog in a bucket! Ray Duffy to the rescue

As it lengthened we employed ropes and 'trays' to drag the spoil back and hoist it to the surface. With the spoil removed the passage was a comfortable hands and knees crawl, up to 3ft wide and 4ft high – quite roomy, really!

One day I was returning from the end of this passage when I noticed a small horizontal crack in the wall, a kind of letterbox. Shining my lamp in, it seemed to enlarge after a couple of feet. But the more interesting thing was the cool draught of air that was blowing out of the crack. Draughts or airflow in caves are often indicators that a more extensive cave lies ahead – it's always a good sign, although whether humans can follow the cracks that air blows through is another matter. We decided to try.

The letterbox was enlarged with rock drills and small charges allowing entry to a sentry box where it was just possible to stand. At one's feet was a small rock tube about 18 inches in diameter from which the air blew; but even more interestingly, there was the sound of running water. Our dream, the underground river of Casterton, surely lay just ahead!

TO THE RIVER!



Andy descending the 'Tight Tube'

With great difficulty the base of the sentry box was enlarged, allowing a slim body to slide feet first into the tube. After two tight body lengths the tube ended at a ridiculous manoeuvre onto a 6ft drop to a wet mud floor. From a low arch at floor level the sound of 'the river' was ever louder. Excitement was high!

Reaching the 'river' had its own problems, mostly involving lying flat-out in a pool of mud and water whilst trying to hammer off rock projections – pure delight.

But with some final contortions and much spluttering, my ageing body finally slid over a mud bank and into the river. Eureka! Only it wasn't quite a river, more of a small stream – how the acoustics of a cave can play tricks! The stream cascaded from a mud lined passage into a frothy, filthy sump; no way on in that downstream direction. But upstream the passage quickly enlarged to walking size, up to 8ft high and 6ft wide, lined with thick, wet mud banks. It looked as though, in wet weather, the sump pool must back up along the passage, depositing silt and mud on the passage sides. The passage continued quite roomily for a short distance before the roof gradually lowered to a crawl and then a flat gravel in the stream. That was not a complete deterrent, but was uninviting to say the least!

Eventually we got a couple of slim bodies through the tube and into the stream passage, so we could survey that part of the cave and take a photo or two. We called the passage 'The Chicken Run', partly because it headed up under Rodger's chicken run and into the field beyond, but also because there was noticeable reluctance from some members of the team to brave the challenge of the rock tube! Admittedly, anyone of average girth just wouldn't make it!

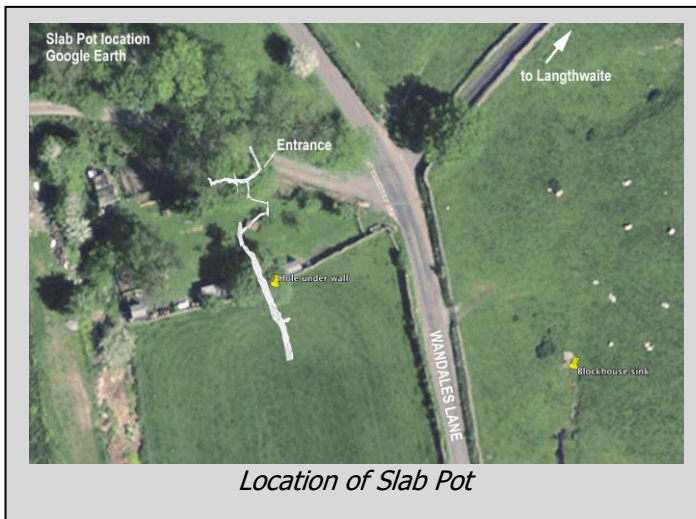


Slim and Supple Zac Bosnyak beside the 'Chicken Run' mud banks

ALL IS REVEALED... OR NOT!

After the best part of six month's regular digging we had worked ourselves to a standstill. The pensionable bodies were worn out, and the cave had no more to reveal, at least not without considerably more effort.

The cave is 60m (200ft) long and 8m (26ft) deep. Its deepest point, the sump, is at a similar level to the rising or resurgence in the valley just below Casterton School. This suggests that any cave beyond the sump, through which the water flows to the rising, is likely to be permanently flooded. Dry passages may exist above the water table, but appear to be largely filled with post-glacial deposits. What is more revealing than these statistics, however, is that not all has been revealed! Slab Pot is just a small inlet cave into what is likely a much more extensive cave system spreading north-east for a kilometre or more from the resurgence.

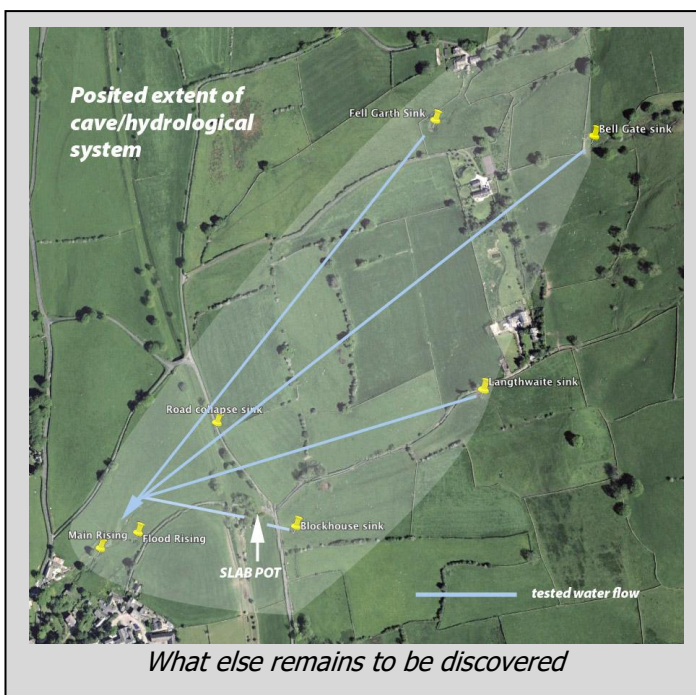


There are significant sinks, where surface streams go underground, near Fell Garth on the back road to Barbon, and near the Lanthwaite settlement. An 8m shaft was dug at this latter site but unfortunately didn't go into a navigable passage – the sink is on a geological fault and the limestone is broken into a chaos of large, loose blocks that cavers commonly call 'hanging death'! No way through there for humans.

But our experience in Slab Pot does suggest that where water is running through the cave, it has washed out a lot of the fill which seems to block the dry upper passages. So it seems likely, if these more distant sinks can be penetrated, that open stream caves will be discovered, perhaps of considerable length.

THIS IS NOT FLORIDA

Certainly the climate isn't like Florida! And the sinkholes mentioned here are not Floridian either, and are unlikely to suddenly swallow whole houses and give rise to alarming TV documentaries. Never say never, though; a gable end of a house at Lanthwaite recently suffered subsidence and back in the '70s we cavers heard news of a collapse in the road down from Hazlett's garage. We never saw it but the council might still have records of its location and repair. Fifty years might seem like a long time, but it's half a blink in geological time – this is a rapidly evolving part of the landscape!



LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Many thanks to the people of Casterton for your support, interest... and chocolate biscuits. Cavers always need feeding!

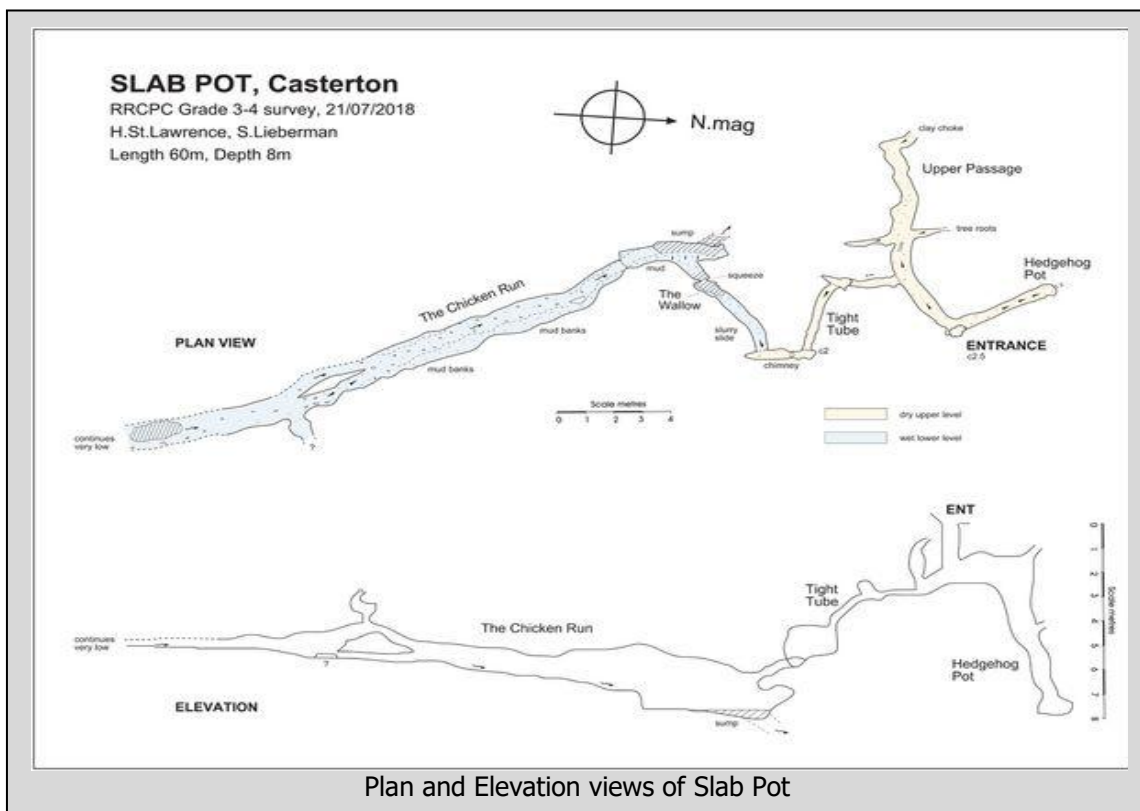
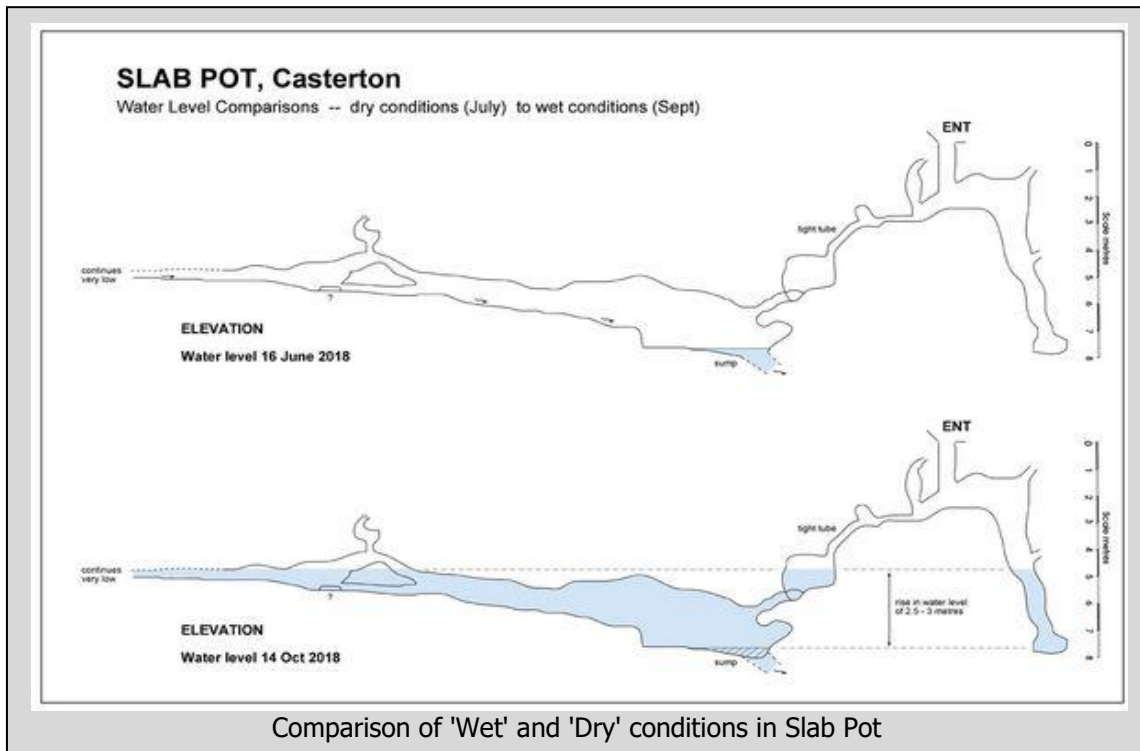
Post Script:

WARNING - DO NOT ENTER

None of the caves mentioned here should be entered by other than expert cavers. While they are not long or deep, they are highly technical. Very tight sections, loose rock, flooding and other risks make these caves potentially hazardous to the untrained.



For example, you have to negotiate a very tight and awkward passage to reach the Chicken Run, which is not for the faint hearted! It's also evident that in wet weather the passage partially fills with water, i.e. the sump backs up filling the passage. I found this out on another attempt to visit the Chicken Run – the feet-first manoeuvre out of the Tight Tube is especially difficult for a six footer like me! Thrashing around trying to find footholds in the drop beneath I suddenly felt my wellies entering a deep pool, and, squatting on the edge of the tube exit, I looked down into a black pond! Oops! You don't want to find yourself in the Chicken Run when a sudden rain storm breaks overhead or on a nearby fell.



Yellow Gill Pot Saga Update

Progress with the Public Liability Claim for damage to the track in Dentdale.

In mid July Steve, Hugh St Lawrence and I returned and blocked the entrance with plastic sheeting, concrete beams and assorted rocks. We spent a couple of hours filling the entrance with alternate layers of rocks and plastic sheeting to seal up the cave from most of the water. It felt sad to have to block up a known cave but if we had not have done so the farmer would have done and we needed to keep on good terms or so we thought. The following week later at end of July Hugh and I met with David Ellison at Greenwell. We suggested (but without admitting liability) that we would help repair the track as an act of good will. He also mentioned the use of a Public Liability Insurance claim but we discussed this with him and mutually agreed this might not be the best route for us to go as it could get out of hand once lawyers and insurance companies got involved. It might also take some time. The track needs fixing a.s.a.p. He mentioned around £2000 for concrete etc and asked us to make a contribution towards this (50%). We approached CNCC and they agreed to help us fund this (£500). The members involved have made a contributions to club funds to cover the costs and raised £500 between them. I sent him a final email stating the without prejudice offer of £1,000 to help repair damage to the track on 11th August.

We heard nothing for some weeks, then suddenly in mid September I got an email from the National Union of Farmers asking why I had not replied to their letter. It transpired that this letter had been sent the letter to the wrong address. They sent me a pdf of the letter which showed this to be the case.

It transpired that NUF were making a Public Liability claim on behalf of the landowner. I contacted the BCA Public Liability insurance company, Holden Group, Howard Jones at BCA and Andrew Hinde (CNCC chair).

We were sent a form to fill in. We sent our insurance company details of the issue along with photos taken by Hugh and I at the time. This also shows that about a third of the water was coming down the track from above the flood spring during the period when the flooding occurred at the time of a major flood on Dentdale. Without a survey and dye test there is no way they can prove the link between YGP and the flood spring as there are other sinks in Yellow Gill. I was told that the issue could drag on for a while. We were advised to have not further contact with the land owner.

At end of October The BCA Insurers contacted the landowner Mr Ellison via the NFU and sent him a letter. They noted that we had made a without prejudice offer in full and final settlement of this claim of £1000, and he had rejected this offer. They said that for the sake of clarity this offer is now being withdrawn.

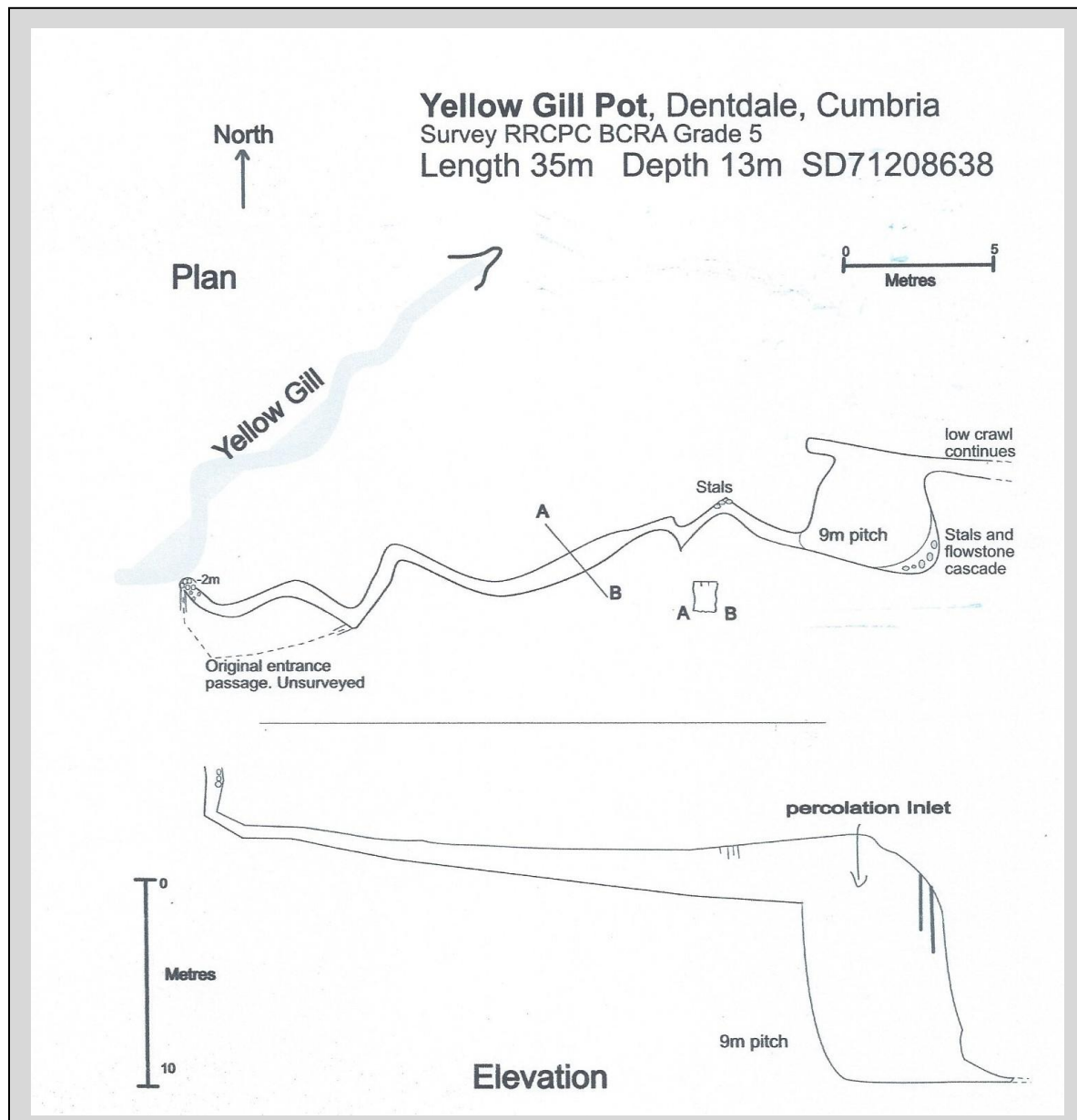
The insurers do not believe that the actions of the RRCPC have caused any damage to your property. The cause of the damage was a prolonged period of bad weather, and would have occurred regardless of the actions of our insured. Accordingly we make no offers of settlement and consider this matter closed. They also stated the following....

"If you disagree with this assessment of liability, I will require a Pre-Action Protocol compliant Letter of Claim together with all key documents in support of your claim. You are also required to provide me with a summary of events giving rise to your claim and full details of your loss including calculations. You will have to evidence that a duty of care is owed to you, that such a duty was breached and, such breach caused foreseeable loss..."

We were advised to have no further contact with the land owner and if we heard from him we were to contact our insurers. The CNCC have also withdrawn their offer of £500 to support us.

This is where we are at at the moment. Interesting to see what Mr Ellison will do now. As of end of November we have not heard anything from the landowner. We said to him all along in our early discussions that going down the route of involving insurance companies is fraught with risks. He really has shot himself in the foot. We will do nothing more unless we hear from him.

Andy Hall



STOP PRESS: In the middle of December we went for a sneaky walk around The Kelds area below David Ellison's farm buildings to have a look at the bottom of the track. The landowner has now repaired the track with a new concrete section and hardcore and river rubble used to fill in other sections. This would not have cost him much money as it seems to have involved about one load of ready mix. This effectively means he has accepted liability and we expect to hear no more about the matter. Let us hope so.

Bad Air in Caves

Intoxicating digs and beyond

CO₂ is a colourless, odourless gas that is 1.5 times heavier than air and extremely hazardous at concentrations above 5%. It is an asphyxiant as it displaces air and it is also toxic. Mixtures of CO₂ and de-oxygenated air (mainly nitrogen), known as 'blackdamp', have caused many fatalities in coal mines in the past. Similar gas compositions have been reported in caves.

In December 1997, Dr William R Elliott published a caving article [1] in which he described the impacts of CO₂ at concentrations of 3%, 4% and 5%, accompanied by reduction in oxygen concentration. He stated that at 4% CO₂ most cavers would be puffing and at 5% needed to get into fresh air quickly to survive. While surveying a particular cave in Texas, known for its bad air, the surveying team forgot to write down the data at each station before moving on to the next. Had they persisted, and not been alerted to the problem, they would have perished with a useless survey.

The Derbyshire Caving Association has published useful safety information on the effects and symptoms arising from exposure to elevated CO₂ concentrations in caves which, generally, start to become observable above 2%[2].

In mining and civil works, entry into blind headings and confined spaces requires special precautions to be taken and the process is heavily regulated. In a mine we would be legally required to ventilate any space before entering and check that the air was breathable and gas concentrations were within permitted limits, before entering.

The Health and Safety Executive sets CO₂ concentration limits for the workplace at 0.5% for long term exposure and 2% for short term exposure. However, cavers excavating at digs are not bound by health and safety at work provisions, unless they are employed to cave and explore. Gas monitors are pricey and mechanical ventilation devices are impractical, in most instances. Cavers must therefore manage risk by application of common sense, the most important, underrated, defence mechanism we have. An individual, or team, excavating a narrow, muddy tube will be consuming vast quantities of oxygen turning it into CO₂ which, as it builds, may initially cause a headache and eventually, in extreme cases, will fail to support life. This is not a desirable result as there would be one less digger and the dig would be blocked. Simple precautions against asphyxiation risk are necessary and I am sure already employed as a matter of course:

- An observer remaining in fresh air during digging operations,
- Continuous banter with the face worker to ensure that they are ok,
- Regular changeover at the face and rest stops in fresh air,
- Recognise that flowing water will entrain air and aid ventilation, as will a drafting dig,
- A plan in place to deal with any emergency.

However, that is not the full story. There is a lower concentration carbon dioxide effect which has only recently been brought to light with potentially massive ramifications.

Public health studies conducted in 2012 [3] and 2016 [4], in the USA, independently demonstrated that very modestly elevated CO₂ concentrations in buildings can lead to reductions in decision-making performance. Significant impacts on productivity, learning and safety were observed with increases in CO₂ levels from 600ppm to 1,000ppm to 2,500 ppm (ppm = parts per million; 1% by volume = 10,000ppm). Researchers in the latter study discovered that average cognitive scores of typical participants, decreased by 21% for 400ppm increases in CO₂ levels. These results are important for cavers, especially those who enjoy excavating in confined spaces.

The above studies are attracting particular attention for broader reasons:

1. Increased insulation of buildings, for energy saving, has led to excessively high CO₂ concentrations, generated by human activity, sometimes in excess of 2,000ppm (0.2% by volume) and as high as 3,000ppm (0.3%), in the absence of adequate ventilation. Such levels can impair brain function. At about 1000ppm (0.1%) thought processes start to become noticeably negatively impacted.
2. The CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere is increasing relentlessly due to the burning of fossil fuels in spite of national pledges to reduce emissions. The average atmospheric CO₂ concentration is now over 400ppm and in cities it will be higher. Some researchers have suggested that 600ppm is a critical limit that should not be exceeded otherwise humans may start losing the capacity to think their way towards a climate change solution, or even to adaptation. The CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere is likely to exceed 600ppm this century. The inescapable conclusion is that the unstoppable rise in atmospheric CO₂, which is driving climate change, could eventually expose the global population to conditions in which rational thinking could be impaired - maybe within 75 years.

Is the increase in CO₂ already affecting us? There have been some strange, some may say irrational, decisions made by voters and politicians over the last few years.



Hugh St. Lawrence in cave dig

Now that we know that even relatively low CO₂ concentrations can impair thought processes and decision-making, I would be interested to know whether any of the Red Rose diggers have observed or experienced loss of judgement, or any other unusual side effects, while excavating in confined spaces. If not, it might be that cavers can adapt to elevated CO₂ atmospheres in which case there is hope for the future, or is there?

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Listed here are included a large number of journals and books that have been recently acquired from the BCA library and the Roger Sutcliffe Archive. Our thanks to the staff and volunteers at BCA and Andrew Hinde for making all these available.

Members wishing to use the library please contact any committee member who hold a key. The library is an excellent reference facility, please respect it - but above all please use it.

Sandra Wilkinson - Librarian: m.wilkinson@btinternet.com

WARNING!

AYGILL CAVERNS CLOSED

Aygill Caverns are blocked a short way inside the entrance.

Water sinking 10m downstream of the entrance has found its way into the formally dry route to the first pitch (Traverse Pitch)

The short squeeze in the dry route is now buried beneath a metre of fill and this area is now a significant flood hazard,

Plans are afoot to construct a new dam and re-open the entrance passage, but this work is unlikely to be effected until spring 2021

PARTY PARTY.

It was the 25th Anniversary of the Matienzo Expedition. No expense was to be spared on a great celebration. A stage was set up on the pasabolo pitch. A band would play into the early hours. Food and drink were bought to feed and water not only the cavers but the whole village who were invited.

Cavers were co-opted to volunteer to man the barbeque and the food and drink stalls. I took my turn on the drinks stall with Shuffle and Dudley of the CRO. Dudley is a gruff and bluff Yorkshire type who doesn't take kindly to people stretching the bounds of hospitality. The evening of the fiesta arrived. The barbeque hissed with burgers, the trade at our drinks stall was brisk with people queuing to have their glasses filled with local plonk. One particularly rapacious student caver came up demanding a bottle of wine, which we gave him and then he returned almost straight away for another.

"He's a bit greedy," I remarked to Dudley standing beside me.

"Here, give me that empty bottle," growled Dudley. He went behind a tree with it and a tinkling ensued. He handed back to me a full bottle of something warm and suspicious.

"If he comes back again, give him that" Dudley said. Shuffle and I decided that this was too offside, even to punish a pushy student, so we propped the bottle behind a tree and went back to work.

The rest of the evening went by in a blur. I drank lots of wine, stomped to the band at the dance. As dawn rose it saw Big Ears and Toby cavorting on the empty band stand. I remember in my inebriated state thinking it would be hilarious to dislodge Big Ears from the top of the scaffolding of the stage where he was currently roosting, and swinging from his legs in a fortunately unsuccessful attempt to make him fall off.

We staggered back to our tents as those who had been more sensible were just getting up. There was one fly in the balm of drunken repose. Toby, Big Ears, Sandy Crisp and I had agreed to go and de-rig a 200 foot rope from Coteron that day. It had been put on The Edge of the Universe pitch between Coteron and Renada. I had been co-opted because, if we decided to de-rig it and do the through trip as well, I knew that part of Renada well enough to guide us out.

We all got up around midday because it was boiling hot, the sun blazing down trying to shrivel the few brain cells we had left between us. We decided to leave the de-rigging trip until later when the sun had gone down a bit. Even by 6 o'clock in the evening it was still very warm. However, we decided we had procrastinated long enough and reluctantly got ourselves and our gear ready to go caving.

Coteron is not well placed for the party caver. It is up an enormous hill covered in sloping karst and brambles. We arrived at the entrance hot, thirsty and with thumping heads. I was nervous because I hadn't done such a long pitch as Coteron entrance before. It is a wonderful 150 foot free hang, but I wasn't in the mood to enjoy its quality. Big Ears rigged it and I went second. The pitch starts in a rift and then pops out in the roof of a big chamber so the last 100 foot or so is in a fantastic roomy space. I set off abseiling nervously down the rift. Suddenly a great squawk made me jump out of my skin. The rift was home to an Alpine Chough who had come out of its roost to see me off. Apparently, it did the same to Toby and Sandy Crisp who both equally got frights from this unexpected airborne pest.

Once underground the cool helped our hangovers and the trip went uneventfully until we reached the vicinity of the Edge of the Universe Pitch. Here the cave narrows to a small rift. An exposed traverse takes you round to the top of the pitch itself.

As the most competent amongst us at the time, Big Ears went off to see what we should do, de-rig and go out of Coteron or abseil through. He came back to say that the exposed traverse hadn't been rigged and it might be better to de-rig and go out of Coteron rather than attempt the through trip. Toby went back with him for a second opinion while Sandy and I malingered in the rift. Soon scurrying and groaning sounds were heard. Toby came scuttling back from the pitch. His eyes were like saucers and he was frantically trying to undo the D ring of his caving harness. His legs were doing circles of frustration as he wrestled with the harness. Apparently as soon as he got to the pitch head, his guts decided that they needed to evacuate some of the toxic brew that had churned round in them since the previous night. Having freed himself at last from the harness preventing him from relieving himself from this unwanted burden he rushed away into a more private part of the rift and did the deed. Unfortunately the smell of this made him sick too. He looked much happier after this removal of toxins from his system, but wrote in the log book later: "Toby saw the edge of the universe, shat himself and the smell made him sick."

The consensus was that we should de-rig up through Coteron. However, the rope didn't want to come up the pitch, so we left it for a more motivated party to remove. The way out was uneventful. I went up the top pitch first and came out to a glorious night. The sky was studded with stars and the outline of the ridge on the other side of the valley looked beautiful. Toby came out next and I pointed out the beauty of the night. "Look at the ridge opposite," I said. "Don't," groaned Toby, "It's swaying and making me feel sick again." I felt that by comparison I had got off lightly with the drunken debauchery of the night before.

Our weary party slipped and slithered down the bramble strewn slopes of the hillside, the starlight being of little help on the way down the treacherous slopes. We weren't in a drinking mood that night so the visit to the bar was a short one. The next day, as coherent thought came back, I confessed to Toby that there were great blanks in my recall of the fiesta. "Don't you remember drinking in the bar? Pablo threw us all out with a crate of beer in the end. We took it back to the bandstand and drank it," he said. "No, can't say I do," I confessed. "Then we ran out of beer", said Toby, "but luckily we found a bottle of wine propped up by a tree and finished that off."

This made me sit up straight and startled. I explained to him about Dudley and the bottle of wine. Perhaps it wasn't just alcohol fumes that had fuelled our trip down Coteron, but the contents of a bottle of Dudley piss!

Jane Chilton

Turbary Pot - 18th. October

We were inspired to go and investigate the new Turbary Pot through trip when our interest was sparked after reading about in Descent.

We met up with Liz on a cold grey morning in Kingsdale having fuelled ourselves up for the trip with a delicious bacon butty from Season Bakery in Ingleton. Once we were changed Liz and I nipped into Valley Entrance to put a rope on the pitch, meeting a friendly instructed group along the way. We reached the top of the pitch to find one group descending and another one waiting to. The chap from the group we had met promised to rig our rope on his way out as there was a plethora of ropes and a ladder already on the pitch leaving no space for us to add ours.



*Liz Lawton and Emma Key in
Turbary Pot Inlet*

Bill had started the trudge up the hill with his bag and we arrived at the entrance not long after him. Descending the first pitch I was surprised at how impressive it was, all I'd heard about Turbary was that cavers occasionally stranded themselves down there thinking it was Swinsto, so hadn't really expected that much of it. I hung around on the pitch while Bill took a few photos and Liz was on flash duty on the ledge below.

We all met up on the ledge then I carried on down taking over flash responsibilities while Bill took more photos of Liz on the pitch and I marvelled at the impressive dimensions of the pitch.

When we had all reached the bottom Bill repacked the camera gear and we made our way through the connection. It was a very short climb down through some scaffolding and then we were into Turbary inlet where we began crawling. This was quite easy going with a few flat out grovels in the stream and one snug bit where a formation juts down into the middle of the passage. I squeezed through and wondered how Bill would get on as I didn't have that much extra space

(although I was still wearing full SRT kit). Liz followed and I heard a bit of huffing and puffing from Bill but he was through with no major problems. We continued along the passage way and soon climbed down into the larger streamway of Swinsto Hole and took the chance for another photo opportunity.

After a few snaps and a nibble on a snack bar we carried on to the final short pitch of Swinsto Hole which was a bit splashy. Quickly we reached the main Kingsdale Master Cave and made our way to the pitch to find that our rope hadn't been rigged when the groups had left. Fortunately there was the usual rope down the pitch so we weren't marooned. Bill carefully climbed this and rigged our rope which was waiting at the top.

Kingsdale was still a bit gloomy as we changed wishing we could go and warm up with a nice mug of tea or a pint somewhere hopefully soon!

The new Turbary Pot through trip is a thoroughly enjoyable addition to the existing ones in Kingsdale and well worth a visit if you haven't already.

Emma Key

Lockdown Pot - Barbondale

Unsurprisingly, this hole was discovered during the first pandemic lockdown in March! Explorations in upper Short Gill (above the tricky climb) had been going on for several years, with Bill Sherrington and Tom Clayton throwing their weight behind promising digs which ultimately came to nothing – the main sink proved too dodgy to pursue and was strictly dry weather only; while a dry dig in the north wall of the gorge was scaffolded to 4m deep before interest waned amidst a catalogue of run-ins. I continued to root around periodically, convinced there must be some way to access caves which surely exist in the upper gorge.

A bit of background: The main cave in the gorge, Short Gill Cave, meets a stream passage whose water is derived not from Short Gill itself but from sinks 500 metres or more to the south. The upstream sump has not been penetrated, but beyond it will probably lie a substantial amount of stream cave. The second major cave, Short Gill Pot, is higher up the gorge; it runs both north and south but is smaller than Short Gill Cave and is currently blocked by massive collapse of the entrance. Another 50 metres upstream is the top sink – this easily gets blocked up, but when dug open it took the whole of the considerable stream and was dye tested to Short Gill Rising, though detectors in Short Gill Cave were negative. If this sink could be penetrated there is likely a cave longer and deeper and quite separate to Short Gill Cave.

So the two carrots of digging in the upper gorge were: 1) dropping into cave behind the upstream sump in Short Gill Cave, and 2) dropping into a possibly extensive cave behind the top sink.

Pre-pandemic visits to the gorge revealed a very small but draughting hole in large sandstone boulders only 10 metres upstream of the big collapse of Short Gill Pot. This might be interesting; even if it only ran back into Short Gill Pot it might provide new access. As the March lockdown took hold I wandered the Bowland fells for a couple of weeks until my frustration got the better of me and I loaded the car with digging tools and set off for Barbondale.



Early views of the dig site

The dig was tricky – massive sandstone cobbles had to be capped or shifted to get down to the limestone. As the dig progressed over several months it deepened and started to extend under a bank of large boulders and soil – the limestone was more visible but none of it seemed attached. Propping things up as best I could, I would return a week later to find a collapse that had to be dug out again to get back to the previous advance, all the while holding my breath below the overhanging bank and limestone blocks of unknown stability. It was probably a higher risk than Covid-19 and should have had a government warning!

Eventually I ran out of bottle, it needed better protection. On one trip I dismantled scaffolding from the top sink and reassembled it in the new hole. It wasn't perfect as there was nothing solid to pin the bars to, but it had psychological value. Another trip or two and some final capping of a small hole and suddenly I could see down three metres or so into an open rift. A rather committing feet-first slide through uncertainty would be needed to get a better look.

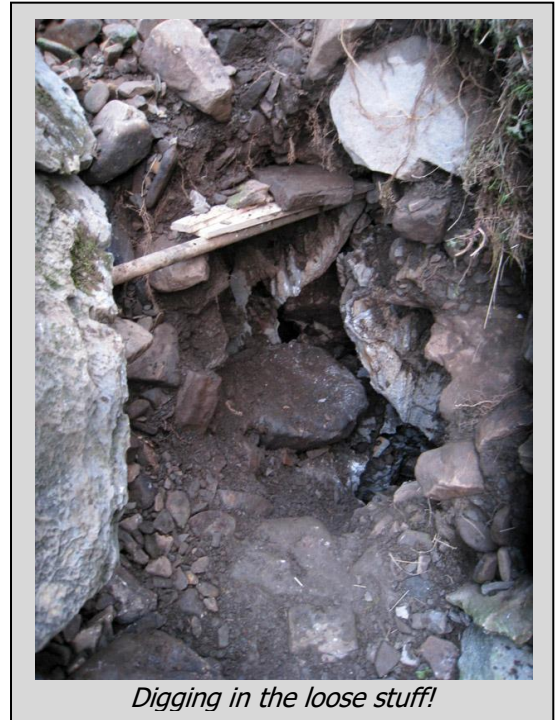
But summer had come and it was time for a change of scene – off to Dentdale with Andy Hall to push a hole we'd been digging over the winter. It was lovely, Dentdale in bloom and relaxing with a cold beer on the fellside, lying in the sun. Joy! We didn't find much but it was fun trying. But now that Andy had his digging hat on I thought I'd pop the question, would he like a look at the Short Gill dig?

He didn't seem overjoyed, maybe I hadn't sold it very well! Nevertheless, on 17th July we arrived at the Short Gill parking spot.

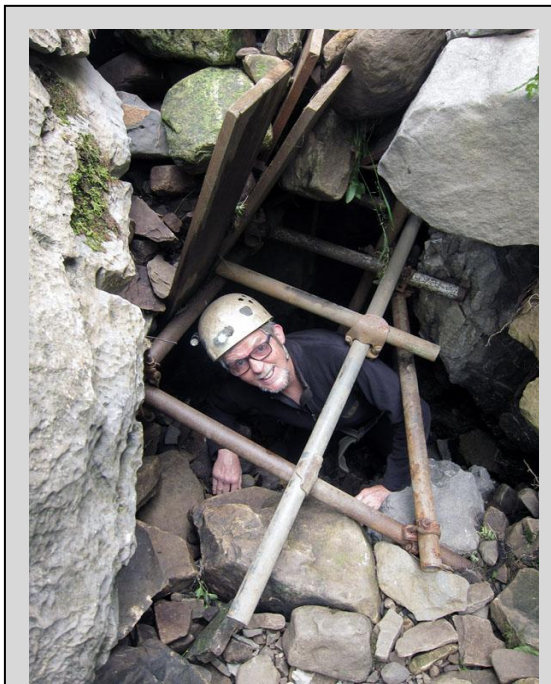
Andy:

"I was not impressed with the steep short climb over slippery grass carrying capping and shoring gear with Hugh disappearing into the distance. The climb takes about 10 minutes and I arrived in a sweaty mess! We spent the next few hours with a break for lunch scaffolding, capping and shoring the entrance as it was surrounded by overhanging boulders and loose soil. We also dug out the stream channel to take flood water past the hole more easily.

Hugh managed to very carefully descend the 3m climb just below the entrance using a lifeline to find a complex of small passages leading South away from the gill to a 3 metre climb down to the top of a pitch of about 10 metres."



Digging in the loose stuff!



Andy not looking happy amongst the scaffolding!

The climb down was a bit heart-in-mouth, but two passages immediately led south from the base, a rift and a tube. I chose the rift and with a few rocks cleared crawled down about 6 metres to a low corner. On the way I passed a hole in the left wall, a tube which quickly reached the top of a 3 metre climb down in solid rock. Back and footing down the climb led to a stance above a rift pitch. Lots of rock throwing ensued to exciting reverberations, it looked quite substantial at the bottom. I returned to the entrance and gingerly climbed out.

The following weekend was my birthday, and I was hoping for a present of caverns measureless, it all looked gift-wrapped! But really we had to make the entrance safer first and that turned out to be the order of the day.

Andy:

"Three trips up the hill for Hugh and Andy with scaffold poles, clips and shoring boards, hard sweaty work. Steve only managed one trip but he did carry up the bag of

cement. We spent some time adding more scaffold and shoring which made a considerable difference to the top of the entrance shaft. At the end of the day Steve climbed down for a look and took the left hand tunnel to the top of the 3m climb. On the way out he dislodged some rock and became stuck for a while. We were unaware of his shouts and had a brew. He eventually emerged looking a little flustered!"



Coffee break after improving the entrance



Hugh sliding onto the entrance climb

With the entrance a little safer, Andy and I returned on the 30th July with tackle. The entrance climb was no nicer and requires a very light touch, but we were soon at the head of the pitch.

A hole was drilled for a bolt and with the ladder set I descended a 7 metre pitch into a chamber. Scrambling down boulders a tall rift headed into the hill, but the roof also came steadily down as the rift narrowed. Eventually it was necessary to crawl flat out over cobbles to the edge of a frothy mud lined pool which looked choked the far side. Not quite the hoped for romp!

Andy went down for a look and confirmed my findings, he also surveyed back from the bottom with a disto-x. We had a look around at other possibilities but nothing went anywhere – a large rift entering the ladder chamber was blocked by an enormous hanging block. The upper part of the rift above the block could be accessed from the top of the pitch but upstream appeared loose and choked. That was it, finito.



Andy on the 7m pitch



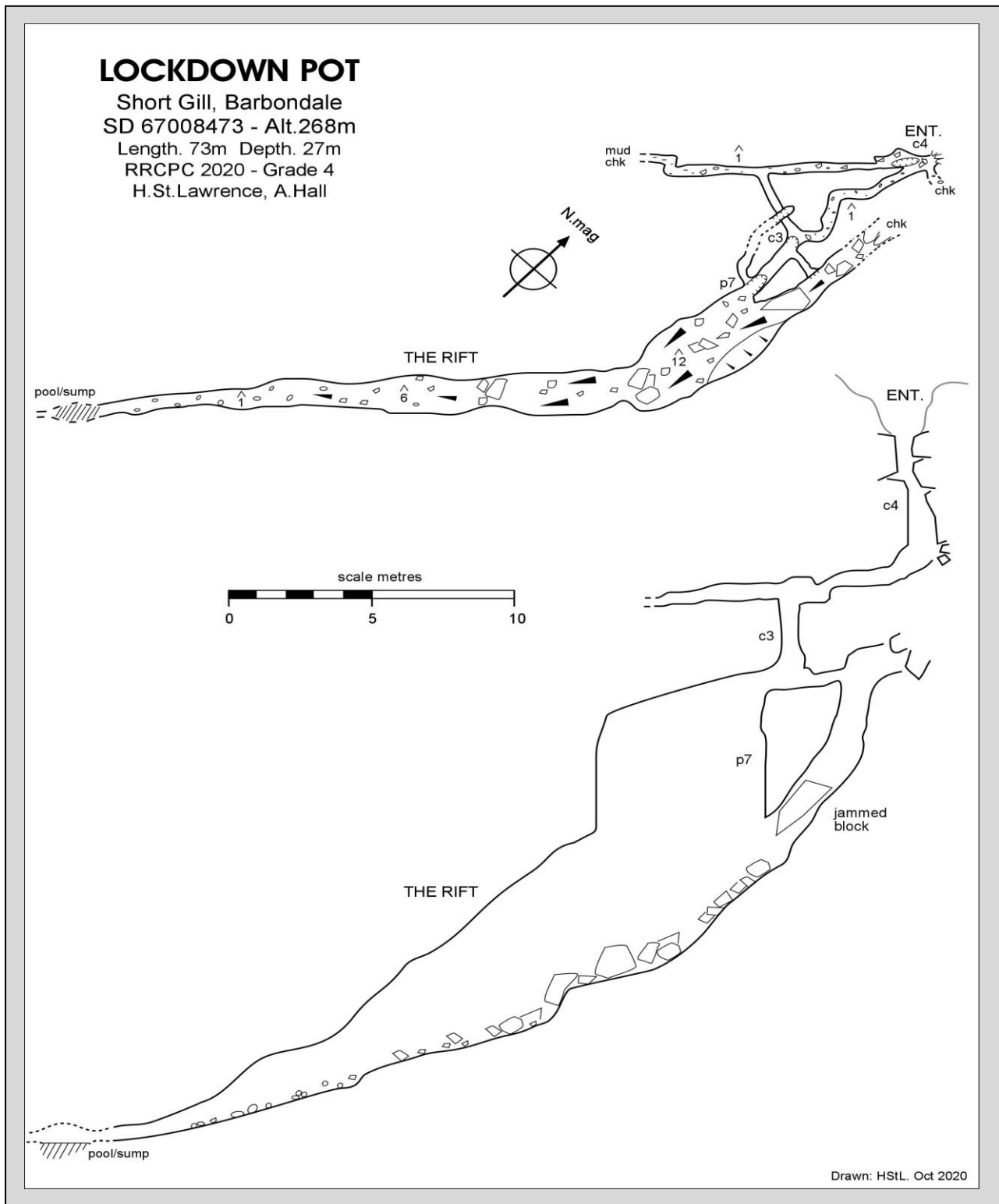
Andy in the roomy rift below the pitch

We made one more trip to correct some survey errors, but nothing new transpired. The pool appears to be a sump, and judging by the flood debris in the roof of the rift it backs up, so may be constricted or choked. Not proven, though, in case any water babes want to examine it.

The cave promised much and is certainly well formed and pretty roomy and solid aside from the entrance climb. An interesting piece of the Short Gill jigsaw without revealing the full picture, its 50 metres of passage will probably be a collector's item only!

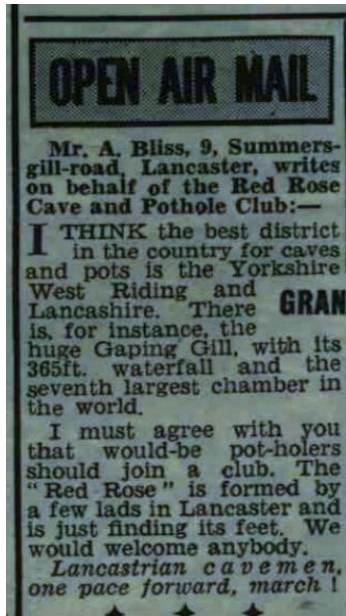
So it's on to the next one. And we're already into a new cave. But that's another story!

Hugh St. Lawrence

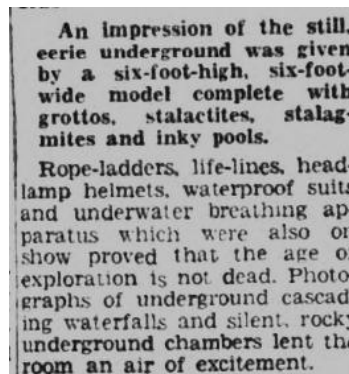


Red Rose in the Newspapers

Over various lockdowns I developed an interest in genealogy (tracing family histories). As part of this I subscribed to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) On a wet day in December I thought I would look for articles relating to the RRCPC and a surprising number were available. I have reproduced the most interesting ones below putting them into their historical context.



The oldest article was from the Daily Mirror on October 13th 1950 entitled "Open Air Mail" and is a letter from Ron Bliss to the paper with advice on joining a potholing club.

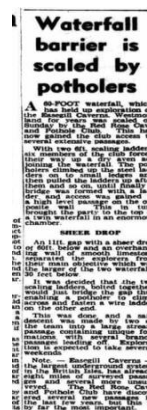


The next was Published on the 14th Apr 1953 in the Morecambe Guardian. It was about a Hobbies exhibition in Morecambe. The club had a display with maps, photos caving equipment and a 6ft high model of a cave! I wonder what happened to that?

The third article dated Lancaster Guardian & Observer Fri November 19th 1954 with the banner headline at of page: "Lancaster Potholers Make History" although no date for the trip was given. It concerns the first descent on electron ladder of Gaping Ghyll by four club members including Tom Sykes, Ray Barker, Michael Bateson and Jim Eyre. It was supposedly the first time it had been done on electron ladder.

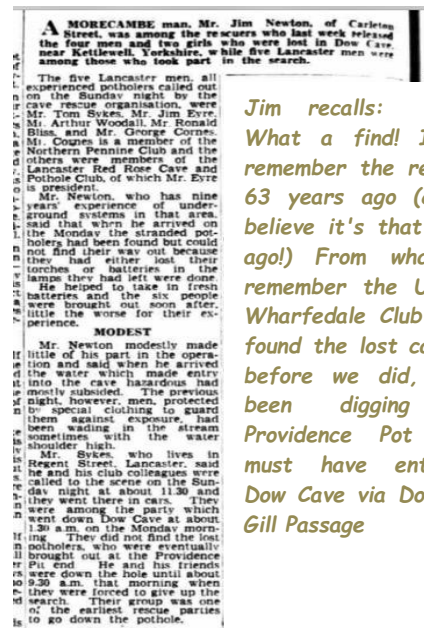


The next is from Morecambe Guardian, September 13th. 1957 and is an account of exploration on the previous Sunday. It describes the climbing of a 60ft waterfall in Ease Gill system using scaling poles.. I think possibly the 50 ft pitch in Pool Sink.



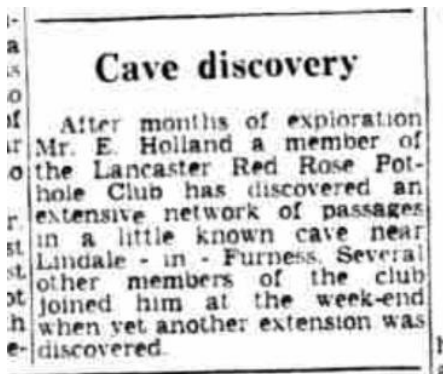
The fifth article I came across was from the Morecambe Guardian 20th Dec 1957.

Title: "Local Potholers in Cave Rescue Drama at Dow Cave" It is about rescue in Dow-Prov system and club members were involved at both ends of the cave system searching for the overdue party and supplying them with fresh batteries when they were eventually discovered and brought out of Providence Pot. Jim Newton especially features here.



Jim recalls:
What a find! I do remember the rescue 63 years ago (can't believe it's that long ago!) From what I remember the Upper Wharfedale Club who found the lost cavers before we did, had been digging in Providence Pot and must have entered Dow Cave via Dowber Gill Passage

We now get to 13th February 1959 and a small article featuring Eric Holland and discoveries in Lindale in Furness. Not sure which cave this is.



Andy Hall

The last one I came across was the incident involving Ian Carruthers from the Coventry Evening Telegraph Monday 12th August 1968. "Potholer Trapped" This was an infamous rescue from Pegleg Pot and lead to the closing of access to the caves of the area and the formation of the Council of Northern Caving Clubs to regain access.

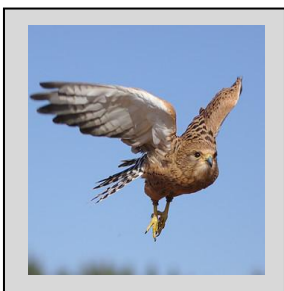


As Free as a Bird

As Mel and I have been travelling up to the farm to do our Hut Warden duties and complete some library work we have regularly and over some time observed the following.

Going up the steep hill a Flutter of Sparrows flit from one hawthorn bush to another, their sanctuary and food provider. Turning the 90 degree bend we start looking out for the Kestrel, but also soaring above it is usually a Buzzard patrolling high. The Buzzard is often sitting on a fence post and only moves as we slowly avoid the many patched potholes on the road. Reaching the top of the hill a Murder of noisy Crows sound the alarm from their craggy outcrop. This is also a favourite spot for our Kestrel to hunt, as it hovers over the steep drop down towards Smithy House.

On down towards Gale Garth a flash of yellow and red as a Charm of Goldfinches dart across us. Here also in winter a Covey of Red Legged Partridges are reluctant to leave the road and we patiently herd them on to the banking.



Here another Kestrel has his territory between the farms, and its bronze body hovers over the fells and fields in search of a kill.

At Bullpot Farm there's a Wren, so small, but with such a powerful singing voice, and the Swallows have returned again to nest under the eaves of the porch, leaving their tell tale droppings.

There's usually Wagtails bobbing around the car park and Ray tells me that the big old tree at the back of the car park has visits from a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

Until last year we also had Redstarts nesting in the tree at the back of the garden but that's now been felled, so I wonder if they will return? Also Barn Owls and Little Owls are about and our neighbour Cherry, at Gale Garth, reports sightings of a Short Eared Owl, so there must be lots of field voles to feed all these raptors.

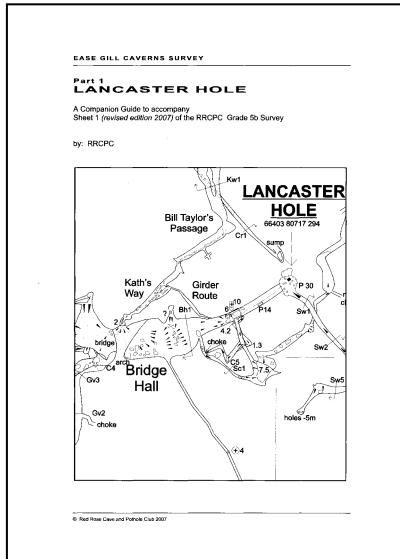
Steve Gray tells of a Stoat in the loft of the changing room which is doing an excellent job of killing the mice for us, by the size of it's spraints it is very well fed, says Steve.

So, although we are in shutdown at the farm our feathered and furry friends are having a good year.



Publications for Sale

Easegill Caverns Survey



Sheet 1 – Lancaster Hole Area (2nd. Edition 2007)

with accompanying guide, covers the Lancaster Hole area and eastwards to Stake Pot.

Sheet 2 – Stake Pot to Snail Cavern Area (2nd. Edition 2011)

with accompanying guide, covers most of the Stake Pot Inlet series (Earby Series) and the main drain and high level routes eastwards to Oxbow Corner

Sheet 3 – Snail Cavern Area to Holbeck Junction

with accompanying guide covering also County Pot, Wretched Rabbit and Snail Cavern to Holbeck Junction

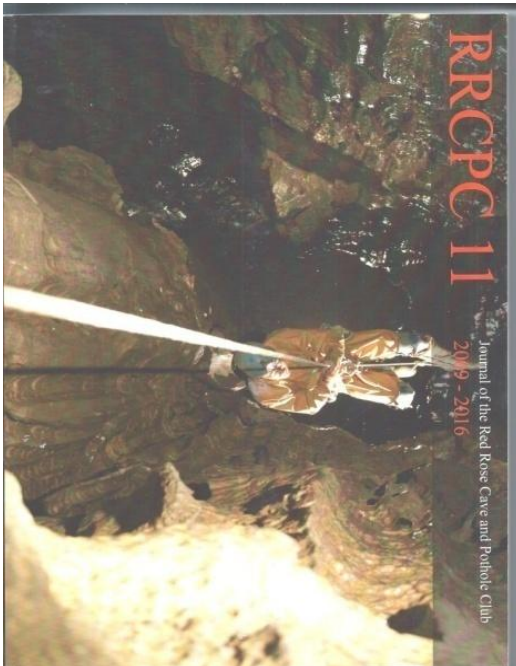
Sheet 4 – Top Sink to Holbeck Junction Area

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