



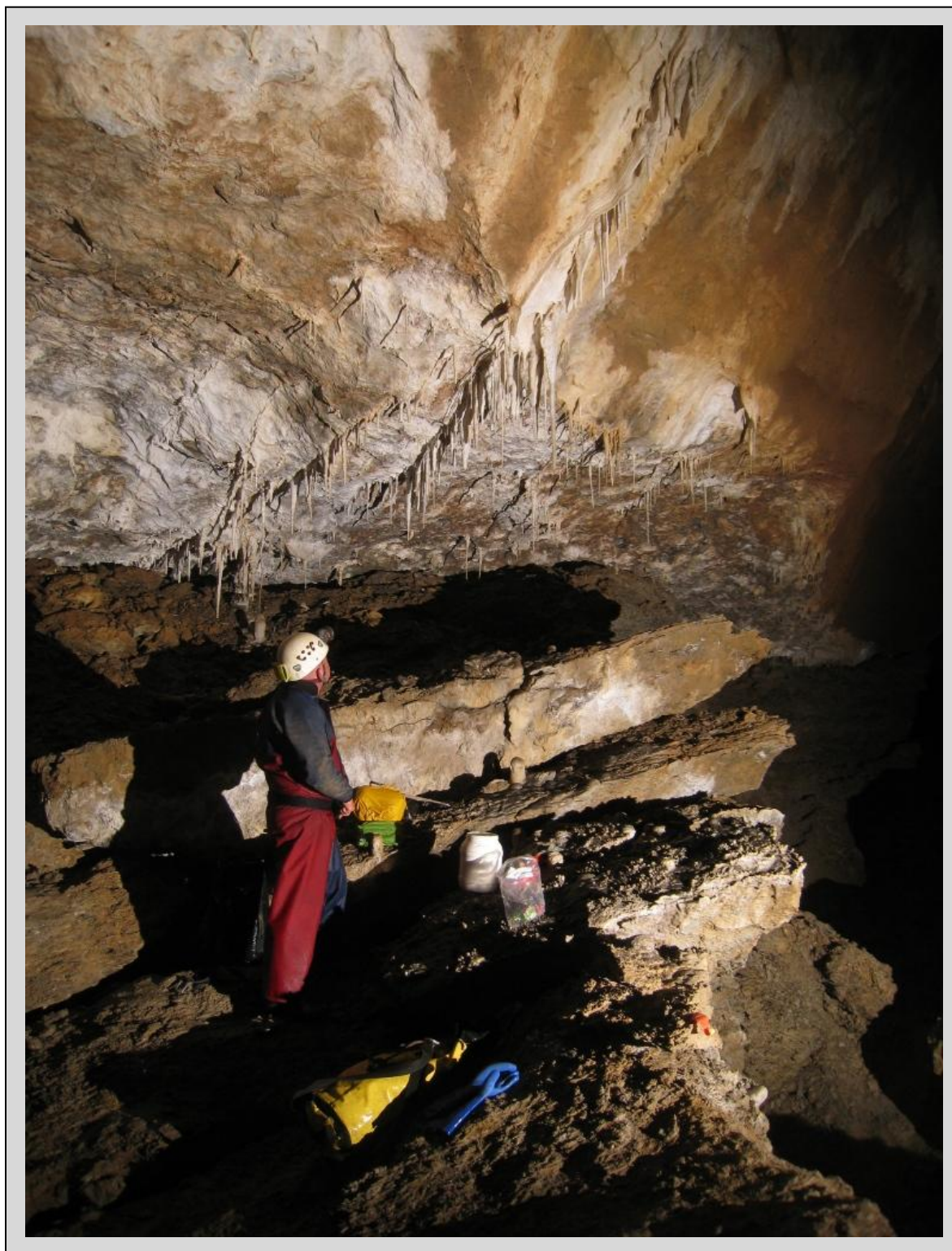
RED ROSE CAVE AND POTHOLE CLUB

NEWSLETTER



Vol. 57 No.2

May 2020



Warming up after the Tunnel de Vent - Pierre Saint-Martin

Photo: Sam Lieberman

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Editors Note:

First may I thank all those members who responded to my request for articles for this Newsletter. I think you will find lots of excellent reading in this publication, enough to keep you entertained whilst in the lockdown. In these uncertain times it was your club committees wish that we should try to provide some continuity with our club publications, so just in case we are in this for the long haul please please keep the articles coming.

In view of the fact that both our Annual Dinner and Annual General Meeting had to be postponed in March due to the pandemic we will shortly (*hopefully! - when I get them all*) be sending out to members all the officer reports for 2019 that would have been presented to the meeting for members approval. Needless to say we will do all we can to re-arrange both events as soon as we are able.

Best wishes, and above all **Keep safe.** *Mel Wilkinson - Newsletter Editor*

Club Meets:

If you would like to attend any future club trips or have any suggestions for trips after the lockdown then contact **Emma Wilson** or **Tom Clayton**.

Casterton & Leck Fell Permits:

Permits for 2020 can now be obtained online and will be displayed on the club web site as soon as any are finalised. If you wish to lead a trip in these areas please contact:-

Meets Co-ordinator: **Tom Clayton** at caving@rrcpc.org.uk

Permits should be booked through our Permit Secretary **Emma Wilson** permits@rrcpc.org.uk

News from the Farm:

Hi folks,

Well the mice are loving the lockdown, another 2 bit the dust. Speaking of dust, I washed down the changing room from top to bottom, looks really good. Cleaned the gutter outside the front door so at least the rain should run away from the farm. I've turned off the gas at the tanks and removed all the electric plugs that weren't essential. I couldn't find any transmitter for the oil tank meter so I've still no idea why it keeps turning off in the kitchen and there's still no reading on the electric meter in the lounge, weird!

Only one vehicle in the parking area up the road and I think it was a local runner. Michael and Cherry are still OK and are being supported by the Barbon mob.

Hope you are all keeping safe and well

Cheers, Ray

Social Events:

Our Social Secretary **Martin Fagan** will no doubt keep us informed as to when we can start our social activities again. So keep on eye on our web pages and **Facebook** page for announcements.

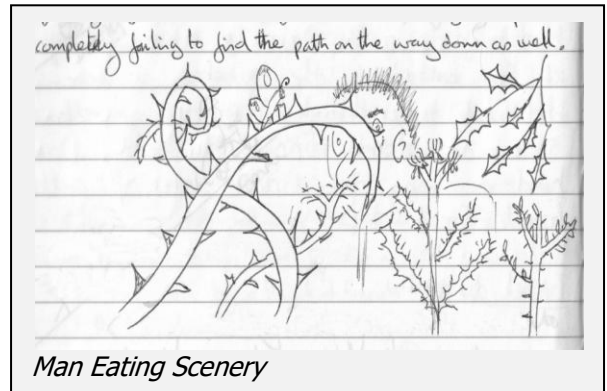
RRCPC 2017 trip to the Pierre St Martin - Part 2

"The Quest for Dinny's Nuts"

Friday 11/08/2017: I find myself at odds with my environment. I'd just gone for an afternoon stroll on the Ukhumurrutia trail from the Ibarra campsite. For extra interest I'd started at the end and after barely 500m was hopelessly lost in man eating vegetation.

Floundering on, following a badger trail, I found a road (the wrong one) and confidently forged ahead until I was completely lost once more. All hope of reaching the top of the hill evaporated so I trudged back vaguely downhill through the brambles and thistles back to the campsite before it got too dark.

After a day with the family Steve was itching to let his hair down and go on a recce up the hill looking for the track to the higher entrances SC3 and the Tete Sauvage, so I jumped in the car with him and off we went.



View down into Spain!

Steve had last been in the area 20 years ago and a lot had changed, roads upgraded, rampant building and development of the ski resort so it took a while to get his bearings. Following the road down in to Spain, we found the Lepinaux shaft now covered in a stone blockhouse with a couple of plaques commemorating Marcel Loubens and Felix Ruiz de Arcaute.

Heading back, we got stuck behind a herd of sheep that seemed immune to bullying and car horns so Steve pulled over to show me his crack (a small

limestone crevice in a gully with some old exploration spits). The road clear, we carried on with brief glimpses of sunlit peaks through the breaks in the mist to hunt for the old campsite, this appeared to have been largely levelled as part of a Nordic ski run but Steve was overjoyed to find an old friend - the old cattle trough that had doubled as a bath for stinky cavers to freshen up in and frighten the tourists in years gone by.

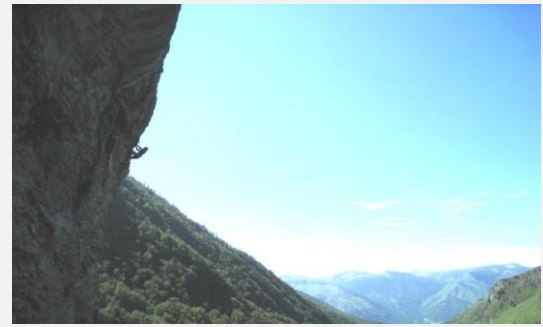
Also that day Julia, Beardy, Martin & Matthew Holroyd, and Djuke Veldhuis tackled the through trip from SC3 whilst Dinny (still complaining about a packet of nuts he'd lost on the through trip) and Marcus followed down only to go straight back up the Tete Sauvage. The through trippers made it through to the Grand Canyon and a wet canal...

"We ended up in the long wet passage (dinghy required in the description) and then in to a complex boulder choke. We returned in to the icy cold waters of the canal and found a climb up to the left, entering the cave at the climb back to the canal we did a complete 360 and got ourselves temporarily lost. Nothing was spoken, but nobody wanted to return to the icy waters of the canal. A compass bearing was taken and route descriptions read out a few times and finally it all made sense by turning round!"

Progress was then steady, through the Tunnel du Vent then a hasty run through huge chambers to warm up and have a luke warm meal before changing in to dry furies for the last stint to the Salle de Verna. A poignant moment was taken to the memory of Marcel Loubens in the Salle Lepineaux and plod on to the exit. Out in the early hours and after car shuttling back to the campsite for a well-earned rest.

Bob Johnson and Ros Berry also had a fine day out with a 13km walk around Lacs d'Ayous. Starting at the Lac de Bious Artigues they skilfully avoided the tourist traps and had a lovely varied walk stopping to feed the wild horses their apple cores and picking up some rustic cheese at a farm on the way back.

The next day was fine and RRCPC went via ferreting. In a rag tag collection of vehicles, we made our way over to Laruns, then taking the scenic route up towards the Col d'Abisque we parked in the obvious spot where a sign pointed down a track to the via Ferrata de Siala. Lunch ensued and Steve spent 1/2hr sorting out harnesses and gear for the family that had been twisted and screwed into topological nightmares by his work clients. A quick walk through



Via Ferrata de Siala



Relaxing in Eaux Bonnes

the trees led to an exciting series of wire bridges over a roaring canyon that were later found to be a) avoidable, b) tres difficile pour les petites c) the best bit. Interminable staples up the cliff then followed with two exits, one difficult with two overhanging sections, the other less difficult with two overhanging sections. By the time we got back it was too late to go canyoning as well so we retreated for coffees and ice cream in Eaux Bonnes.

Having mistimed a day of rest, everyone was back to caving on Sunday 14th. Jim & Ben Davis + Helen Sergeant had an afternoon in and out of the Verna.

"Having bored our children for 36+ years about 'this cave in the Pyrenees' we rolled up at the entrance which was surprisingly the same. Two rattly doors bar the new hut, the old one, which we used as a base for a week at a time in 1972, 74, 77-79 had got a bit creaky by then and apparently suffered a conflagration at the hands of another breed of 'farm animals'. The 'Ext. danger de mort' sign next to the door had vanished."

In they went, appreciative of the modernisations to the E.D.F. tunnel and after a token wait for the lights to go out (denoting the exit of a tourist party), gave up being polite and went in to the Verna chamber. Memories came back of a lake at the bottom of the chamber and climbing the Aranzadi wall to explore the chambers and pitches beyond with ULSA. Then it did go dark and various lights were tried until they could see something again. Trying to find the way up to the Chevalier was hampered by the fact a dam



PSM Grand Canyon

that had been built in the intervening years by the power company but a few hours of bimbbling around ensued and a draught of tea on the beach before exiting.

Meanwhile Martin & Matt Holroyd went on a jolly down and out the Tete Sauvage with the 'old man' Martin regretting leaving his pantin on the surface, Bob and Ros had been out walking and accompanied them back down having met them at the entrance as they exited.

Martin & Matt had followed Steve Gray and me down the Tete Sauvage but we were set for the more ambitious through trip, here's the full tale and our quest to find Dinny's missing nuts.....

Two knackered old farts get up far too early to scrounge a lift up the hill with the CSCA. We're tipped out at the ski station where Steve wisely stripped down to his underwear for

the remaining 20 min walk. I'd less bag space, so wore the bottom half of my neofleece and was a sweaty mess by the time we got to the entrance. 10 mins later Steve was also a sweaty mess as he struggled in to his gear with the mid-morning sun beating down on us. What the two bemused hikers must have thought at this sight, I can only guess! A quick 'before' photo and then we were off. Pitch after pitch after pitch goes down interspersed with the odd thrutchy rift. "Bloody parrot ladders" kept echoing up as Steve got entangled for the umpteenth time on the wretched ironmongery that infests the initial pitches. Even when we found one of the nicer ladder free pitches, Steve managed to abseil on to a spike of rock that left him hanging from his chest harness. Having discounted the notion that he'd found the secret of levitation, a brown trouser episode was avoided by attaching jammers rapido and prussiking off the spike. Eventually we were down. An old rusty bobbin sits at the bottom of one of the last pitches.



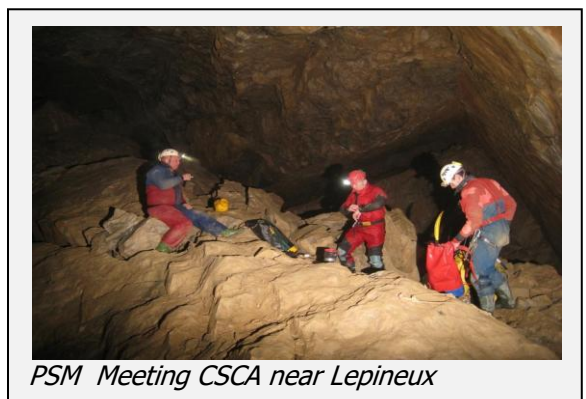
Stuck Steve!

Then the 1st taste of things to come - a small duck, it's possible to stay mostly dry though. Big arrows on the wall point the way on to the Salle Cosyns and the journey begins. Magnificent streamway and big passage through Salle Monique and Salle Suisse lead to the Grand Canyon, deserving of a few photos.

There's then some wading through pools with icy water penetrating through the neofleece and adding a few kg to each footstep. We find the way up to Gallerie des Marmites without too much trouble, but then lose the way in a bunch of muddy tubes. After consulting the notes (now wet and disintegrating) we try an unlikely looking rope climb. At the top the rope is belayed with a worryingly small 5mm cord through an equally worryingly wobbly hanger, and I remember this being described by Dave Ottewell a few days before, we were back on track. Heading towards the Tunnel de Vent we have further entertainment with unnecessary traverses, interesting rope climbs and a pointless attempt at staying dry on a teetery traverse over the Vasques canal. Having got most of the way along, a strenuous pull around the last corner presents you with a shredded rope barely hanging on with its last two strands of core. Steve's already found the water's not as deep as it looks and so I drop off the traverse and wade on.

We manage to miss the dry way through to the beach with the rubber rings etc. at the Tunnel de Vent and having already been up to our necks in cold water decided to just go for it and haul ourselves through on the cord. A few quick tugs and we were through and walked briskly on to get warm. Once we were warmed up we stopped for a bit of food and decided not to get changed in to the dry furry suits we'd brought (a mistake as we later found out). The cave is huge after the Tunnel de Vent and there's lots of slogging up and down huge boulder piles.

Approaching Salle Lepineux we saw the lights of the CSCA team, catching us up having gone down SC3. We all puzzle over the way on briefly at the top of another mountain of rocks when set off towards the Lepineux. Up and down yet more boulders spotting the many bits of tape and markers we passed the remains of the stretcher and chiselled memorial to Loubens who fell and died in this chamber and plodded on as the lights of the much faster CSCA team disappeared once more into the distance. After an age, more climbs, getting lost on the plethora of marked trails we sit down for a bite to eat. Steve's feeling his age and misspent youth, adulthood and middle age but eventually we come down to stream level and pop out in to Salle Chevalier, I've been here before. Knowing we're within striking distance of the end I pick up the



PSM Meeting CSCA near Lepineux

pace a little and before we know it we're pacing down the E.D.F. Tunnel wondering if the CSCA minibus will still be waiting for us or not. Luck is with us and we exit to see our chariot awaiting. Down and out in under 12 hours - time for a beer (or two).

Steve & I took a well-earned rest but the Davis clan took in a couple of gorges over the next couple of days. Les gorges d'Ehujarre provided geological interest as to the original outlets for the PSM and Gorges De Kakuetta with impressive Passerelle D'Holzarte suspension bridge, Helen writes "... in refurbished condition - just as well, as Jim refused to cross back in '77 when the main cable crumbled if you touched it"

Tuesday 15th: - Matt, Martin Holroyd & Djuke + Tony in support went for a retry at Grotte de Bidouze. With prior knowledge from Djuke, the through trip was successful, if short.

Meanwhile we were determined to get Rowena underground so we rocked up to the show cave centre and, for no more than the standard fee, negotiated a trip up in the bus with her wheelchair. It was a hard push getting the wheelchair up the E.D.F. tunnel but worth it, especially for Ro who'd never have seen that magnificent space otherwise. Hung around and took some pictures with the Verna all lit up for us then back down to the inevitable spending spree at the gift shop (at least they had some good journals and surveys available there).



PSM - Louben's stretcher
- Lepineux



De-rigging team at Tete Sauvage



De-rigging team - job done!

All good things must come to an end and Wednesday was earmarked for de-rigging. A cast of many turned out including a random bunch of Polish cavers. The combined services were first down Tete Sauvage as they were going through to de-rig up CS3. Martin & Matt + Poles led the way de-rigging Tete Sauvage whilst Steve & I valiantly hung back on the surface, in the sunshine taking silly pictures on the snow nets, to give them a chance to get to the bottom and fill a few bags up for hauling out. Jim & Helen eventually joined us having taken the scenic (and sharp and pointy) route up, I'm sure the blood will wash out of the ropes Jim.

A successful, if slightly damp expedition – perhaps we'll stay on the Spanish side next time!

We never did find Dinny's nuts.

Sam Lieberman.



Playing on the snow net



Steve preparing to descend Tete Sauvage



View towards Lepineux shaft

Conservation

A team of 14 cavers met up at Bull Pot Farm on a cold blue-sky glorious winter Sunday in January. There had been some understandable damage to the fell following the rescue event that had taken place early that January. Some rutting and hollows had appeared from the CRO vehicle accessing Lancaster Hole over the wet boggy fell. We had put out a call for help to the caving community, so there was a lovely mix of RRCPC, York Pothole Club and individual cavers in attendance. We even had the muggle caving equivalent come along and help, although there are plans afoot to make her into a caver.

The group was divided into teams, one team was preparing stakes for marking out the route along the wall to Lancaster Hole, loner-Duffy attended to the water-logged slurry by the stile and gate and everyone else went along to the areas where the vehicle travelled and just got on with it. They were a fab team!

The remediation works involved filling in and squashing down the ruts and lifting and filling in the hollows.

The ground was frozen, it really was a chilly day, but it actually helped filling the holes as the peat clung together in chunks when digging/ lifting. The remediation work was

finished quickly as a result of the number of people who had kindly turned up to help, so everyone had time to have a good natter whilst we waited for the stakes to arrive.



The fell before work began



The fell after Remediation Works

As the fell is very wet and soft in this area, it is prone to further damage by people walking across it. All we can do now is leave nature to do its part in fixing what is left. Anyone accessing Lancaster Hole via this route would cause further churning of the ground and/or widening of the damage as people attempt to walk around the heavily boggy areas.

Consequently, the team finished up by placing way markers, in the form of stakes with reflective tapes and arrows, along the path that follows the wall.

The drainage here is a lot better and it will be less likely to become boggy. Therefore, please

can anyone accessing Lancaster Hole follow the waymarked path along the wall.

Once we had finished marking the path, we all headed back to the Farm for tea and a mountain of cake. All except loner-Duffy who was adamant he wanted to complete the work by the gate himself. And a fabulous job he did. Now cavers can access the stile without wet feet. Superstar.

An article about the works also features on the CNCC website here. [Casterton Fell Remediation](#)

More photos on next page:-

Holly Bradley



*Walking to the fell on a frosty morning
(Photo by Sam Bennett)*



Duffers and others working hard



*Some Remediators
(Photo by Roo Walters)*



*Some of the team
(Photo by Sam Bennett)*

Rollerball update



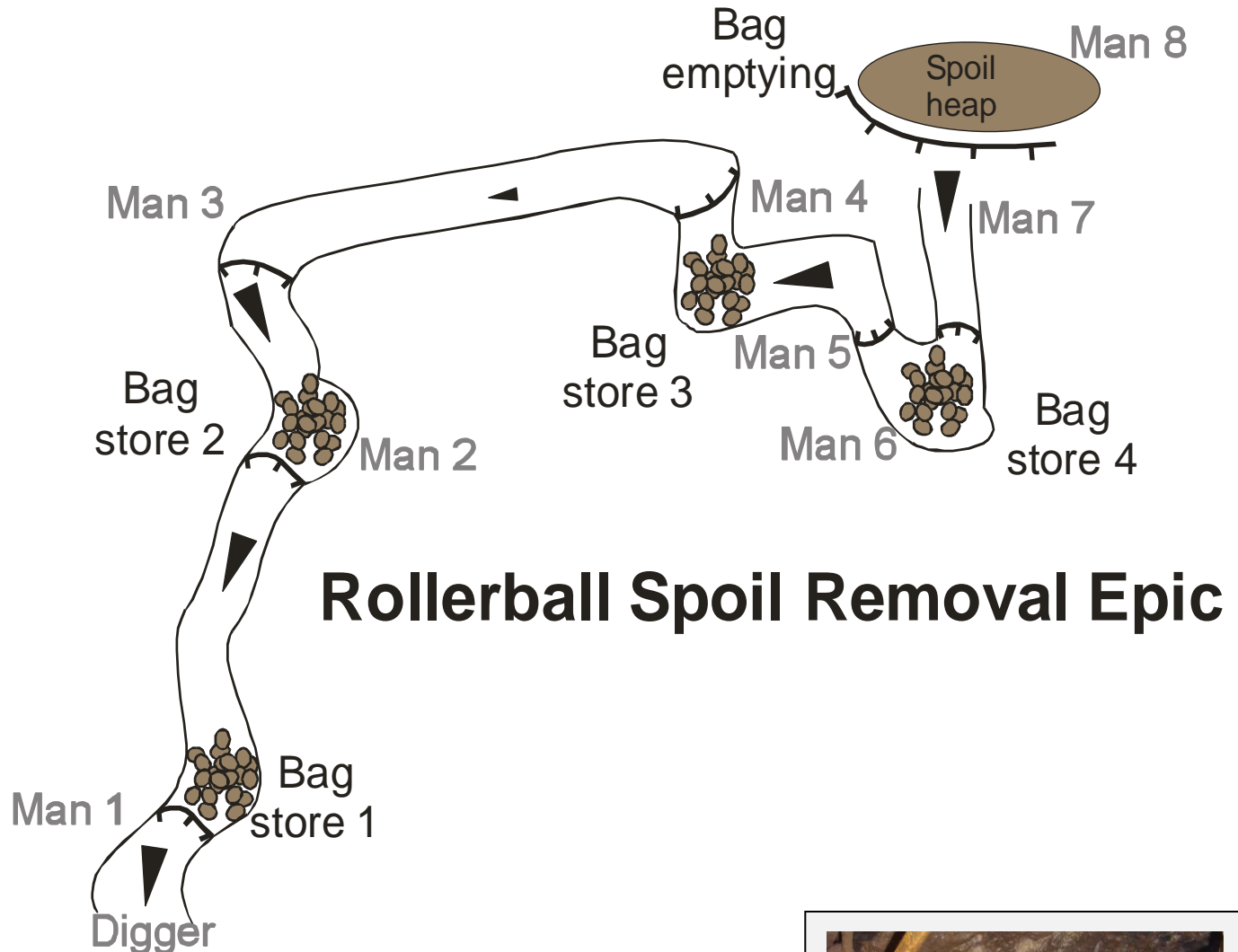
Hugh working hard to remove spoil

As with almost every dig, it gets harder and harder to work the dig face, until the diggers eventually throw in the towel, not us, well not quite yet! The problem is never, can you keep digging but where do you put the stuff you've dug out. Well in the case of Rollerball, there is nowhere, so out to the entrance it has to go, to be added to the huge spoil heap that is rapidly filling the shakehole and incidentally increasing the depth of the cave as it gets bigger.

The bags of spoil have to be staged and then moved further up in another session.

We can move them from the front of the dig, to Store 1 and then to store 2, where they remain until the next session, to then be moved out to the entrance. Of course this is all dependent on the number of diggers available.

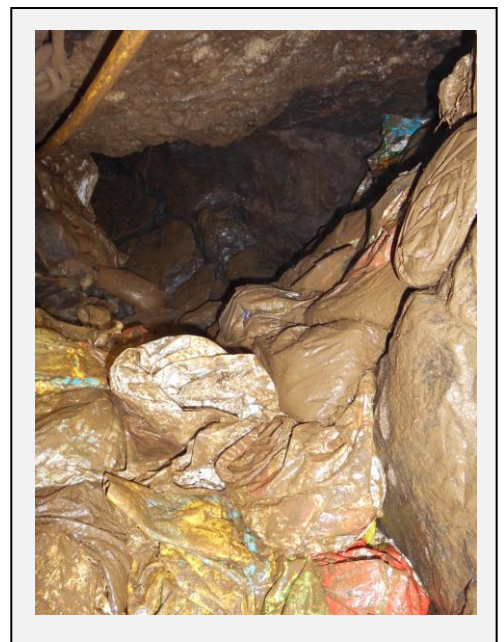
We can move them from the front of the dig, to Store 1 and then to store 2, where they remain until the next session, to then be moved out to the entrance. Of course this is all dependent on the number of diggers available. As we showed on the 'Big Dig', we can get stuff from the face, to the spoil heap in one go but generally 3 people can only get it to Store 2, then next session gets it to the surface. It's hard work but that's just par for the course in a dig.



With 5 people we can get the stuff to bag store 3 and maybe out to the surface but with 9 people we could get it right out to the surface in one go, well that's not going to happen is it? 'Top tip', the little chamber of Store 4 (see photo 1) is a nice place to be when handing the bags to the surface, so if you're going to come, try to get sat in this position.

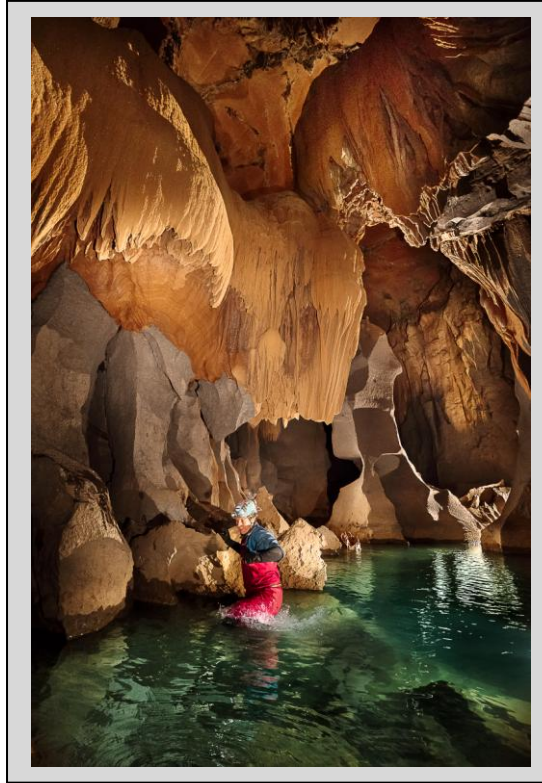
Normally we have two of three people and only get the spoil to Store 2, (see photo >) which means climbing over the pile of bags becomes a bit of an obstacle course. In the next couple of sessions we'll definitely know if we can continue with the dig as this is the critical stage of the operation. Watch this space!

Ray Duffy (Dig Coordinator)



2020 Photographic Awards

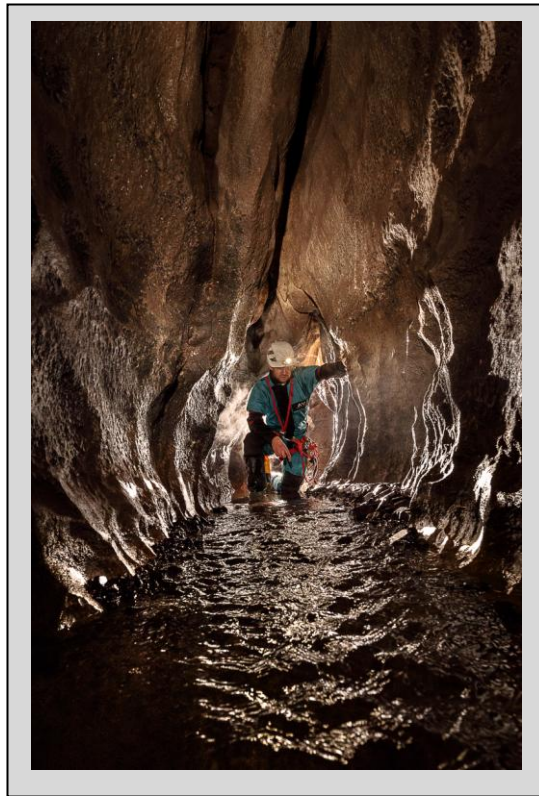
Winner: Underground Abroad - Ret Dung Khur, Pool wading - *Bill Nix*



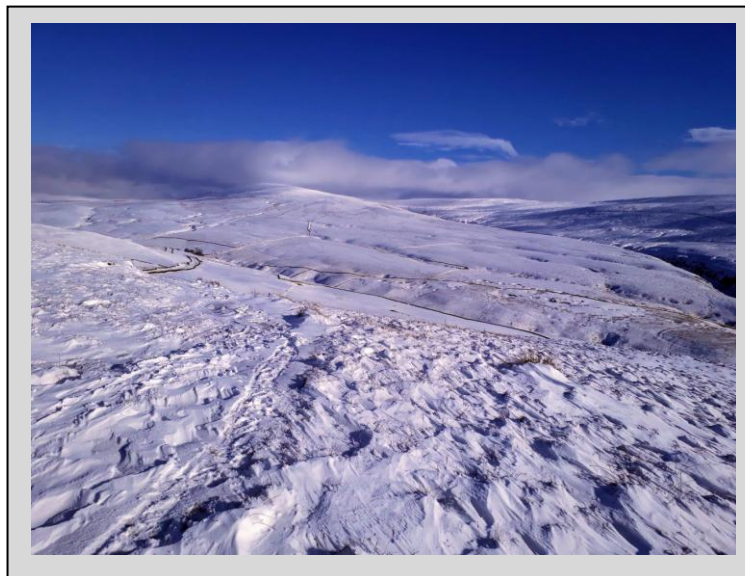
Winner: Above ground - Abroad - Lake Annecy - *Sam Lieberman*



Winner: Underground - UK - Scanty Lardos Pot, Anne Summers Streamway - *Bill Nix*



Winner: Above ground - UK - Crag Hill and Casterton Fell - Andy Hall



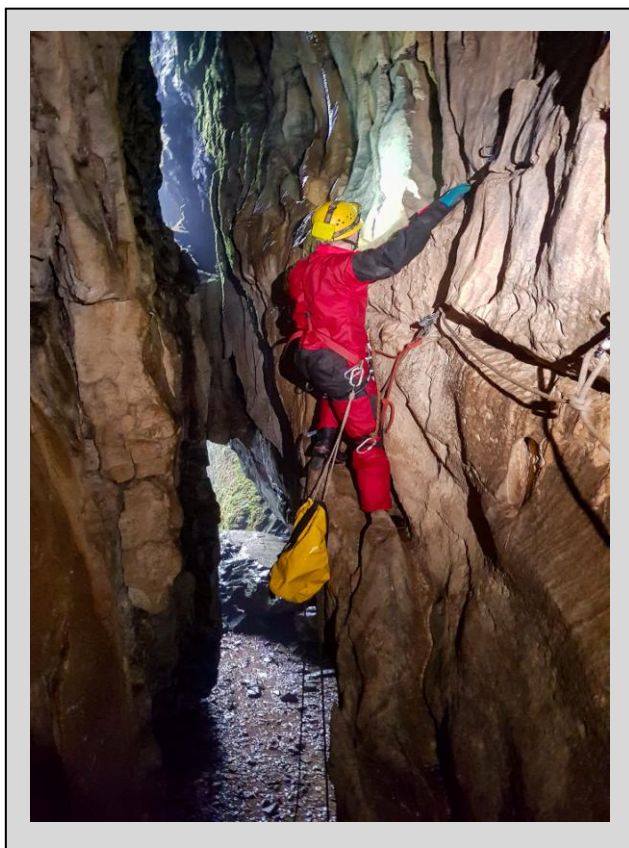
On the night members vote for the Giles Barker Trophy:

1st: Deep Pool Traversing, Ret Dung Khur Megalaya - Bill Nix

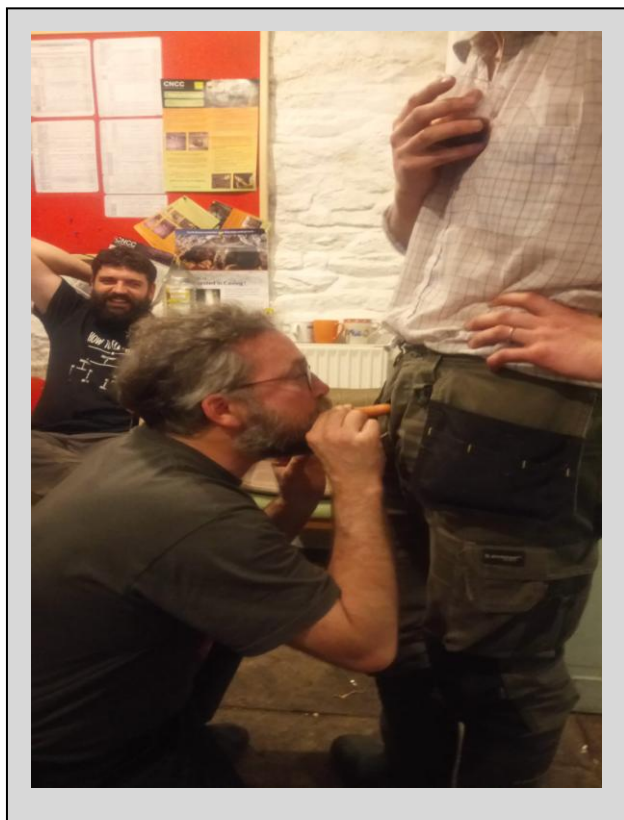
2nd: Wilf Taylors Passage - Toby Speight

3rd: Great Douk - Johnny Baker

Winner: Pocket Camera Print: Traverse in Alum Pot - *Chris Hunter*



Winner Humorous Print "Untitled!" - *Gwen Tawy*

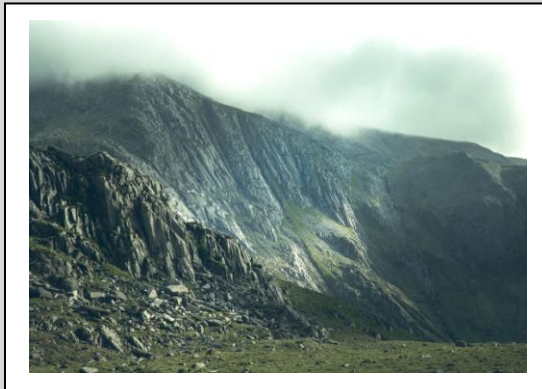


UK Above ground:

2nd. Red Deer Stag
- *Andy Pringle*

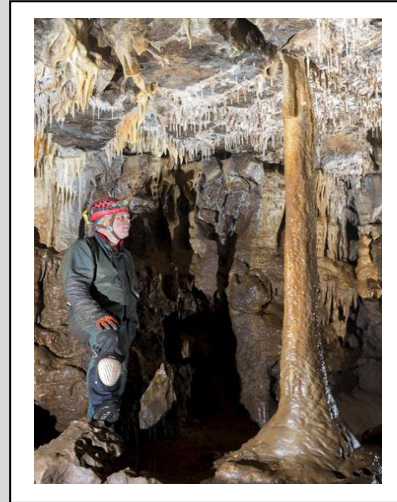


3rd. Idwal Slabs
- *Chris Hunter*

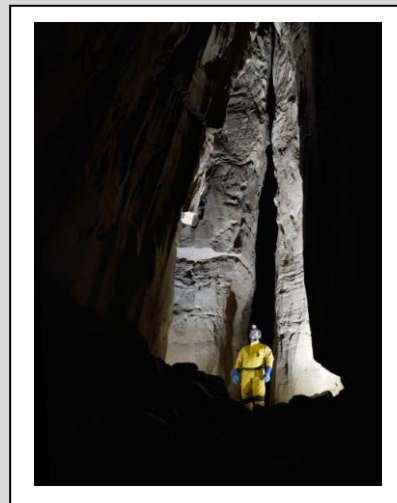


UK Underground

2nd. Crackpot in Swaledale
- *Andy Pringle*



3rd. Big Rift, Wretched Rabbit
- *Ray Duffy*



Point & Shoot Camera

2nd. Self Portrait, County Pot
- *Andy Hall*



3rd. Crystal Palace, Bull Pot of the Witches
- *Andy Hall*



Abroad Above ground:

2nd. Mother & Calf Sperm Whales Diving
- *A Pringle*



3rd. Entrance to Tiger Cave, Krabi
- *Bill Nix*



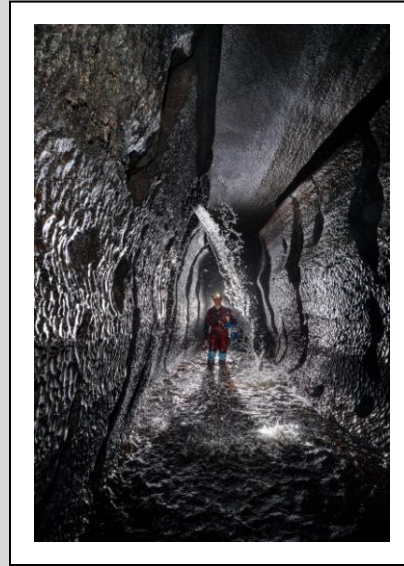
Humorous Category:

3rd: Who's the Guy?
- *Alan Martin*



Abroad Underground

2nd. Ailee Cascade, Doolin - *Bill Nix*



3rd. Jiuero 2, Cantabria - *Andy Pringle*



2nd: Cleaning the Gimp!
- *Sam Lieberman*



Blast from the Past - 1

A recent chat with Dave Creedy triggered memories of this trip:-

Guided tour of the Happy Wanderers new find – Pippikin Pot, Tues. 31 March 1970

The Red Rose had prodded around in the Pippikin shakehole for years but no significant progress had been made. Unbeknown to us, until the rumours started flowing, the Happy Wanderers had broken through into a massive complex.

The week before the trip, I had received an invitation from the Happy Wanderers to visit their new find on Leck Fell. I was allowed to bring along just a few fellow Red Rose cavers. The selection process was largely dependent on who could get time off work. Accompanying me, were David Creedy, Chris Bargh and David Copestake (Copper). I think it was Kenny from the HWPC who was our guide. The Pippikin entrance series was quite narrow and one particular awkward slot is as vivid in my memory today as it was then. I seem to recall that Chris had to remove his upper garments to squeeze through. Chemical persuasion had been used and I thought they should have used a lot more.

We descended some 4 pitches, all rigged, dry and friendly until entering a streamway. The climax of the trip was the Hall of the Mountain King. We were whisked here, there and everywhere by our proud guide to mainly muddy places with evocative names. What an amazing discovery.

Jim Newton

Letter from Lionel Rice!

Hi Andy,

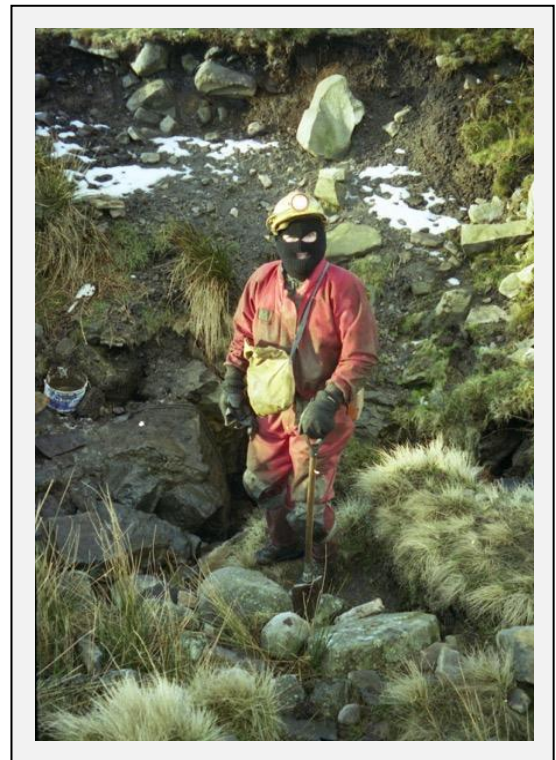
I have sent this picture into the new-sheet a few years ago when it was reported (yes a true story) that jihadist terrorists were alleged to be seen training on Casterton fell.

Looking at it again, I wonder if its possibly more of a case of Jim engaged in early distance caving with a unique PPE mask?

Anyway if you think it get a laugh or maybe 2 then use it

The actual picture was taken by me when Jim and I were digging at Sunny Crest.

Lionel



50 years ago, or nearly - Scaling in Waterfall Passage.

The Red Rose had procured a rich supply of scaling poles which led to a reappraisal of avens in Lancaster Hole. On the 1 November 1970, Bev Stevens was fed up of fitting the new showers so he joined Pete Llewellyn, Steve Hesketh, Chris Bargh, Dave Creedy and Howard Rothwell (Jonah) in an expedition to attack the big aven in Waterfall Passage.

The scaling poles were connected and a ladder attached. Bev as the expert climber volunteered to lead. A "red-head" was inserted about 20 feet above ground to which the pole was lashed. The foot of the pole was placed on a ledge to maximise the elevation. Bev set off up the ladder and at 30 feet reported a large passage about 10 feet above. There was a crack to the left crying out for a peg that we didn't have that would have perfectly stabilized the wobbly assembly. Various items of junk were offered to the intrepid climber as an alternative and rejected. Bev once again ascended the teetering pole. Suddenly, the pole started to bend, the onlookers raced for cover and Bev glided majestically to the deck. The Red Rose became the proud owner of a 90-degree coupling.

A week later, Bev, Frank Croll, Frank Hardy, Ian Jopson, Chris Bargh, Dave Creedy and Pete Llewellyn returned, properly equipped with pegs and bolts. A shorter pole was used and the whole contraption robustly belayed. This time, Bev made it into a passage some 10 feet wide and 6 feet high, unfortunately choked with mud after 25 feet. Has this inlet been dug since?

It must have been a wet day as the Master Cave had started to back-up from the sump, deepening by about 10 inches per half hour. Swimming against the flow was not an option and it was too deep for vertically challenged and lightweight cavers to resist the current and wade. Only Frank and Bev could manage to walk. The ever-resourceful giant, Frank Croll, leapt into the water trailing a rope. The other cavers plunged in grabbing the rope; bobbing up and down they were half towed by Frank to safety.

Dave Creedy

Adapted by Dave Creedy from an article by Chris and Bev, p19, RRCPC Journal No.6.1971-1972



*Hi folks,
from your President and
Hut Warden*

*I know you're all missing
the farm so I thought I'd
give you a view of our
lovely mowed lawn where
we'll be able to have a
celebratory BBQ when this
is all over.*

*Cheers, Ray Duffy
(PS. Only one mouse)*

Trois Betas to Grotte de la Diau

RRCPC Summer trip. 649m deep, 4.5k long.

I hadn't got any set plans as far as this through trip went. Everyone there agreed they were on holiday, so went for a fairly relaxed fluid plan. I went up on the first rigging trip as a mule and stowed my U/G kit under some shelter. The riggers (Dave Ottewell, Marcus Evans, Sam Lieberman) all seemed happy, so they were left to enjoy themselves while Steve and I checked out our kit on the first few pitches while Helen Sergeant botanised and oo'd ad aa'd at every hole she found; has it been pushed?

A few days later, the first team of six went for it (Dave O, Marcus, Dave Foxton, Shane McKinley, Mike Bottomley, Steph Dwyer) and completed it in about 9 hours, said they'd had a great trip, but it was the coldest cave they had been in, and windy, even worse than the Tunnel du Vent, PSM.

"How wet was it?" "Not bad, just a couple of places in the stream way", was the reply. OK, I thought, but we had a thunderstorm two nights ago, so I'll add a shorty wetsuit to up my insulation and decided to accept the invite to go with Steve, Liz and Sam.

Steve and Jim shuttled Jim's van to the Grotte Diau car park. More vehicle problems, but that is another story!

A 6 a.m. start got us to the entrance at 8.30'ish and we were off down by 9.30. The entrance pitches (@200m) were straightforward and fun especially the deviation that even for me with long arms was a challenge. Thanks to my new adjustable Petzl Dual Connect cows tail, sorting this took just a few minutes, eventually meeting up with team for the 'horizontal bit'. This started off with the most unnecessary pile of mud I have ever encountered; the only mud anywhere on the trip that you could not avoid. It nicely greased all the SRT kit and made use of my 'twist, pull, and turn' karabiners a right pain especially further on in the trip when my hands were cold. Note to self- stick to pear screw gates (which I also had with me) in future. There followed a bit of up and down, route finding with the stream way always audible and sometimes very loud for seemingly so little water. I stopped to estimate the flow and guessed about 5L/sec and became more aware of that persistent cold draught. The metre wide stream passage meandered rhythmically from side to side as the canyon got deeper, making it a pleasant stroll with the odd sideways shuffle.

All seemed to be goingly. Pitch followed pitch and there seemed to be more water. The rigging points were well placed to the side of most of the water, but then as we went further, it became harder and harder to avoid the spray and then impossible, meaning you just had to get down quickly. I use a rack, so all the pitches throughout the cave were a pleasure for me to descend, in contrast to some of the struggles the others had on Stop's. However, I started noticing that at each pitch (habit always makes me check my kit) I became aware that the karabiner attaching my rack kept unscrewing itself UPWARDS (AND, yes, I did have it on the right way up). Bother, that's not good, I thought, and kept checking.... Just as well as on the last wet-wet pitch I was rigging the second half and thought "Hmm my harness feels a bit sloppy". So I checked the waist belt (back buckle) and found it nearly undone. Four letter words, some shouting and Sam came across and helped me re-fastened it. (Having spoken to Steve afterwards, he definitely said "Yes, we checked each others kit at the start").

I was starting to feel cold, I think we all were, but there are degrees. Don't stop, keep moving, that's what generates heat. On we went, using the large survey instructions at key points to route find until we reached the main stream which was sporting and impressive. Stepping from one slightly submerged rock to another required focus and coordination. Getting wetter was not the attractive option.

As the stream way got bigger, the rocks got bigger, the gaps got deeper and traverse chains started appearing on different sides; they didn't make it less wet. Maybe the water was higher than for the first group? On we went. At some point I realised I didn't want to be there. Why? I knew the signs of hypothermia; my coordination was getting worse and having to stop and get my balance before committing to the next 'rock hop' was getting worryingly more frequent. Instructions were "Climb up river right before the sump". Steve indicted up, relief, but then it wasn't as he remembered (no blame here Steve, 25 years ago and I've forgotten lots as well). Sam was ferreting and Steve went downstream and realised what we thought was a sump wasn't. Meanwhile, I needed to get warm, so got in the group shelter with Liz- she was shivering as well- and we eat stuff. A voice from outside said "This is not the sump, the way on is further, we need to get moving NOW as we are already way overdue. My thoughts "Stay, no way; we are now warmed up a bit and at least we're not quite shivering", but then aloud "I'm not carrying my tackle bag (the duplicate set of rope for the trip now WET and heavy) as we don't need it now (main pitches done)." I didn't need anything to make balance even harder.

Back in the water, there were more chains, more rock hopping, one hairy tensioned wire diagonally across the stream, and then eventually we reached the climb out river right. Was I relieved? Dead right; bashing on, we generated some heat, in nice walking passages above the stream way; but there was still that cold draught. Then came the wooden stemples, someone had taken a lot of care putting those in. The first group had muttered something about a stainless steel ladder, but then refused to say anything else and just grinned and laughed. Well when we got to it, yes, it was beautifully made, and in a good place landing on a ledge above a large 15m square hole. The way on was a traverse on a body width narrow ledge around the hole, followed by the crappiest ladder you ever did see; maybe that is what they were grinning about? It did seem somewhat bizarre that such a masterpiece of stainless steel work should be in isolation, but then the traverse chains in the stream way were a bit random as well. The cave quickly got bigger. The last bit of entertainment was traversing above a lake on a series of wires at different heights allowing for different water levels. After that, we entered a breakdown section with house sized dossers; it smelt different, that smell of the surface; long overdue for me, and then the entrance outline against the dark sky. Relief, yes, achievement, yes, sensible, bordering on maybe not, but grateful to my team mates, absolutely. Keeping one's footing outside the entrance was really hard as it had a coating of greasy algae. Steve texted to say we were out; a mere 5/6 hours overdue, and then swore at us for not waiting for him. Honest, we were trying to find the right way across the scree on to the path back to the cars, Steve. A brisk ½ hour walk down brought us within sight of the lights of Dave & Helen O, Ian, and Marcus with warm drinks and food. We quickly changed into dry gear and then the drove back to Talloires. That could have been an epic, but that is another tale (Jim's van). However, there is a funny side to that as it was running like a 70 legged centipede. Some enterprising campervan-ers had chosen this lovely quiet spot for their dream sleep. Whether they survived Jim managing to get it started is not known as no-one hung around to find out.

Postscript- Having left one bag and a bit of other gear behind, others in the group- Dinny, Dave O, Helen B, Ian, Steve, Heather, Sophie and had a trip back in, so thanks mates, I owe you one.

Afterthoughts; Steve, Liz and Sam- thank you is an understatement.

We were slow as Steve and Sam were rigging. Later we doubled up. 6 is probably an ideal number, as you have 3 rigging pairs and sharing the tackle between 6 instead of 4 means its less weight each.

I was chatting to a group of young university cavers at the farm and they were deciding on what club ropes, karabiners, etc., they could afford with the money they had, and found that they had not considered survival.

SO Always have a BIG kissu/group shelter; you can make a big one smaller, but not the other way.

Screw gates- checking did me well. Think about how kit works when your hands are cold. Harnesses, I'm getting a new one.

Food, yes we had enough. AND as you get older and in my case thinner, I need to buy some warmer kit and take more notice that the last time I did a 15 hour dry trip was 20+ years ago, a properly wet one 42+.

Jim Davis

Blast from the past - 2, Jim's Memories

31st August 1969

Party:- Jim Newton, Duncan Baldwin, Roger Calvert, Steve Hesketh, Dave Creedy, Eric Holland.

After working on Bull Pot Farm on the Saturday, everyone was eager to go and push Duncan's passage in Bull Pot of the Witches. Armed with scaling poles, off we went but all our attempts ended in loose boulders, which was sickening after the size and direction of the passage. Duncan and Roger finished up surveying the passage and we all retired to the farm, carefully passing the loose entrance.

1st September 1969

Party:- : Jim Newton, Ian Carruthers, Roger Calvert, Pete Llewellyn, Steve Potter, Chris Barge, Frank Hardy

On Monday morning, due to the disappointing previous day, we decided to change the direction of our attack and dig in Lancaster Hole figuring upon Skittle Alley as being a promising spot. On seeing the near static upstream sump we decided to bale it. After about two hours, we could see through into a passage and after further baling (of mud this time) Peter and Roger wallowed through two feet of mud into a chamber about ten feet in diameter and five feet high. After a slight squeeze, it opened up into a stream passage about 25 feet high and 8 to 12 feet wide. This continued for 300 feet and then closed to a crack. However, it holds two scaling possibilities and a prospect of a further good dig. The difficulty coming back is that each caver refills the mud sump Roger slid through preceded by a tidal wave of mud, which meant that baling had to start again. Everybody braved the mud and then we fought our way out, weighed down by the same mud and further hampered by drained lamps, after two consecutive days of caving.

Jim Newton



We are pleased to make available for Sale this postcard of a painting of Bullpot Farm produced by John Conway.

Available for sale now in the Club Library.

Price £1 each with envelope.

All Proceeds to Club Funds

Library Additions: January 2020 - April 2020

Journals:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| BCA | - Newsletter Issue 37 |
| BCRA | - CREG: Journal Issue. 109. |
| Descent | - No. 272-273. |
| Grampian S. G. | - Bulletin Fifth Series Vol. 3 No. 3. |
| RRCPC | - News-Sheet No. 359 |
| | - Newsletter Vol. 57 No. 1. |

The club has also received a number of older publications from the librarian of the Grampian Speleological Group, yet to be catalogued, which will fill in several of our missing items. Our thanks to them.

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

Blast from the past - 3, 5th. August 1997

Terry Reagan and I took a drive up to Warton to probe the left hand rising pocket of **Harry Hest Hole** (no giggling!). After hammering the bar upwards, it finally went and I could look up into the open space. We set to and cleaned out eight bucketfuls, and then tried to enter the gap. It took three goes, scraping at the tight edges each time. It was a phreatic rift chamber, about 10' x 5' with clean rock walls and a boulder clay flat floor. Up above, I could see the rift where we'd previously noted a draught. I found the same draught coming out of a small 1' x 6' rift in the wall straight ahead. The rift over the entrance appeared too tight, although a good height. The flat floor seemed to have soft drain holes in it and thinking about it, may be the way down to get to the source of the draught. We took out another four bucketfuls and called it a day.

We returned to the car to find not only a note from the Carnforth Constabulary telling us to report to the Police Station but evidence that they'd broken into the car and rifled through our belongings! Of course, being law abiding citizens (and they did have Terry's number plate!) we drove straight there, only to be told that someone had reported, "two suspicious looking men with shovels and bars" going up Warton Crag. It seems that the area had been rife with thefts from cars. (This I knew very well as my car had been broken into at that very same spot just a few weeks previously and my coat stolen!)

Jim Newton

Women's Caving Weekend.

I had enrolled for a women's caving weekend on 7th February. I felt a bit nervous and apprehensive about this. I haven't done much caving for a long while due to a bad back and wondered if I had let myself in for something completely out of my depth. I had also, rather foolishly, offered to do a talk. This preyed on my mind as I practiced it in the weeks leading up to the big weekend.

I arrived to a practically deserted YSS hostel and bagged myself a bunk in one of the dormitories, and then headed to the pub. There, to my relief were quite a number of friendly looking cavers. They budged up to make room for me at the table and I started to get to know the women around me. I had a great chat to Adele, who was formidably making her way into the world of cave diving. The descriptions she gave of the poor visibility in the dive she was doing made me shiver.

As the evening wore on, more women joined us, some of whom I knew a bit from sight, and Liz Lawton, who I do know a bit better, telling impressive tales of the Berger. By the end of the evening, I felt a lot more comfortable and really happy that I had decided to come.

The next morning, the organisers, Lydia and Nadia organised a slap-up breakfast for us all. They had a list of trip suggestions for the some 30 odd cavers who were there. Thoughtfully they had put on a trip for those who wanted something not too challenging. I signed up happily for a trip down Short Drop.

Short Drop is a beautiful, easy classic. It has a famous rock bridge in it and lots of finely sculpted streamway. Three people descended the pitch and the other three of us started to make our way slowly out so we could really enjoy the variety of this lovely cave. After a few tactics involving piling up boulders and giving each other a shove, we got out of the entrance onto a freezing cold Leck Fell. At the cars we changed as quickly as possible and converged on Inglesport café for tea and stickies.

Back at the YSS hostel, Nadia organised a posse of willing cooks to create a veritable curry fest for us. This was really welcome after a cold day out. 6 trips had taken place, some to give people a chance to rig and some just for fun. All had been a success.

After our feast, we all assembled in the common room for a fantastic talk by Fleur Loveridge about a caving expedition to Myanmar. We were shown stunning photos of beautiful cave passage. The team had clocked up somewhere around 8 km of surveyed passage in around 7 days. Fleur explained that this passage might all have been visited by monks over the years because the monks of the local monastery control the access to the cave. But even if others had been there before, the surveyed length and the quality of the caving was impressive.

After that, it was my turn. I gave my talk from my series of Calamity Jane pieces, which tell of the many idiotic scrapes I have got into underground. To my relief, I didn't get tongue tied or lose my place and the talk seemed to be well received as a bit of light relief.

My snores, I am sorry to say, disturbed others in my dormitory both nights. However, since the Sunday morning was the scene of the mother of all storms, there wasn't anything for people to need to be bright eyed and bushy tailed for. After another amazing breakfast we convened in the common room to discuss various issues. First on the agenda was digging. Not too many people seemed to have done a great deal of digging, but there was certainly a lot of interest in the subject. Maybe another women's weekend might see some digging going on somewhere as part of it. Another conversation was held about the lack of helmets and harnesses that fit the female shape. Other topics specific to female cavers were also aired. It was refreshing to have these discussions in such an easy atmosphere.

The weekend activities had finished by around late morning when we all left to find a way back home through Storm Dennis. Many of us reconvened at the weir at Settle for photos of the monster flood.

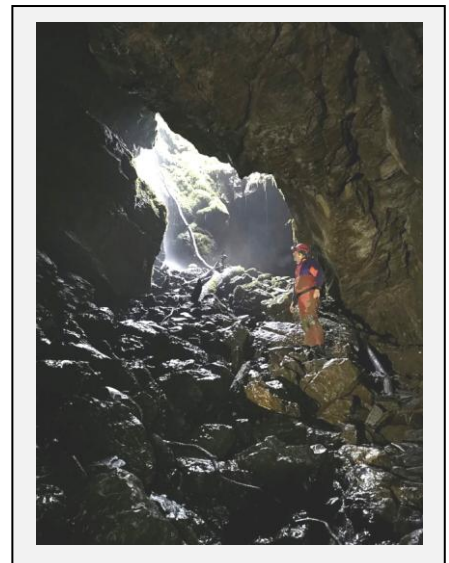
Thanks are due to Nadia Raeburn-Cherradi, ULSA and Lydia Leather, NUCC for organising and running this brilliant event. We are looking forward to having another one next year. I for one have now added a lot of new friends to my Facebook list.

Jane Chilton

Ramblings of a Novice Potholer

Some things are exacerbated by alcohol, and some things should never be contemplated after alcohol. I once met a motorcycle mechanic that bought two scrap Ford Cortina's on Ebay after an evening's drinking. Enthusiasm and bravado are also fueled by a few beers or a glass of wine.

In my case it was watching caving videos on Youtube. Bored by what the TV had to offer, countless soaps and crappy dramas. I usually resorted to watching climbing or caving videos of which there are plenty. I was aware and familiar with the film work of Sid Perou, but did not realize what an abundance of caving films he had produced 'Underground Eiger' - 'Lost River of Gaping Gill' - 'Breakthrough' - 'Beneath the Pennines' all of these stories held me captivated. And the majority of his filming had been carried out beneath countryside that I had run, cycled or walked over at some point. Then there were the films of Caver Keith Edwards, Dudley Caving Club. All of this sort of niggled away at me until one night when I decided to fire an email off to Keith Edwards to enquire about caving. His response came within 24 hrs and was encouraging 'Find a local club' he advised.

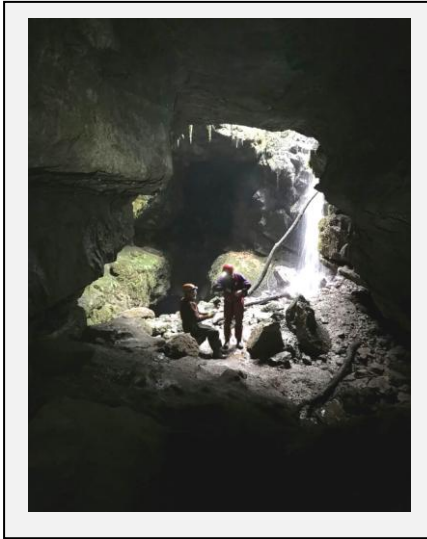
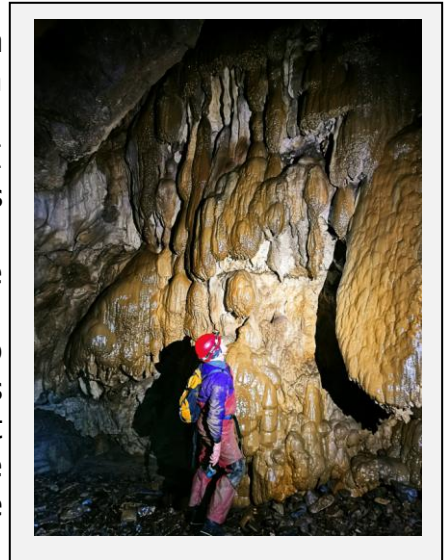


At this point I thought to myself you either go for it or walk away and stick with pastimes and hobbies you already are comfortable with. I'd done a lot of fell running in the past, but that had sort of taken a back seat since I gave up racing competitively. My winter climbing had also taken a back seat due to work commitments and recent poor winters. I still enjoyed my cycling, be it mountain biking or road cycling. I am quite solitary by nature and I enjoy mooching about in the hills and mountains, exploring areas off the beaten track.

Caving was not a pastime to be done on my own even though I'd been into easily accessible pots and caves whilst out in the hills 'Great Douk and Yordas Cave' and I was aware of the risk. I had also taken my daughter down into Gaping Gill on one of the Bradford CPC organized winched descents. Geology was also fascinating to me and whatever pastime I pursued geology was very much in evidence.

Living just North of Bolton on the edge of the West Pennine Moors, I did a bit of research and found a few caving clubs that are local to me. As such I found the RRCPC, got the contact name and fired off an email to Steve Gray. Arrangements for me to visit Bullpot Farm were made for an introduction to potholing.

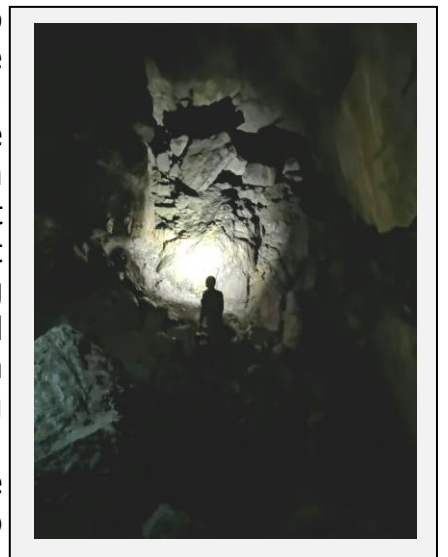
At this point I decided to tell my wife Anne that I had made a decision to have a go at caving. I cannot say I got an enthusiastic response to my newfound interest in the sub terrain. Also, I was beginning to wonder what I had let myself in for. I didn't know what to expect or what was involved, and the antics of cavers on Youtube suddenly became a real possibility F##k! And after making arrangements to go to Bullpot I would be letting Steve Gray down after he'd said he would meet me there. So, on the 4th January I found my way along the tortuous road to the middle of nowhere and Bullpot Farm. At this point I was crapping myself; I hate introductions and I'm not that comfortable in new company. After finding my way into the building and ultimately the kitchen I was informed that Steve had gone off to Casserole Pot for a dig. I introduced myself to the two extremely pleasant and friendly club members in the kitchen. Ordeal over no need to worry about descending a pothole today. And so, arrangements were made for me to go the following week and gear would be available and I'd get taken down into 'Bullpot of the Witches' but due to unforeseen and very tragic events that were to occur later in the day on the 4th the outing due the following weekend was put back until a suitable date could be arranged.



At the end of January, I got my chance to go down into 'Bullpot of the Witches' in the company of Andy Hall & Mark Ashby. At this point I was still nervous, and it was purely bravado that spurred me on. The traverse around to the entrance slot was easily dealt with and the initial entry into the slot was Ok. Once into the confines of the passage I felt mildly claustrophobic, but I soon settled down and got my mind in check. I soon found myself in what I conceived to be a tight space waiting for Andy to set up the electron ladder for the 6m descent into the system. Down at the bottom of the descent the ceiling forced me to stoop as my eyes were beginning to get used to the light. My first thoughts were to head out into the light and the main entrance shaft of 'Bullpot of the Witches'. At this point Andy directed me towards a low tunnel and said "through there" I got

down and started the crawl 'F##K THAT!' I thought as I made a hasty retreat back into the safety of the low ceiling and the bright light of the main shaft.

By now I had arrived at the conclusion I'd take up stamp collecting or something sedate. As I looked back towards the crawl that I had beaten a retreat from, I could see Andy and Mark shining their head torches from the other side of the squeeze. I couldn't lose face now and let them down, so taking a deep breath I got down and started the crawl, then the flat out push through to Chamber 32. By now my heart was beating fast and I had just gone through my comfort zone to enter a big cavern. As Andy quickly directed us down between boulders and into the Crystal Palace, I was thinking to myself 'what if I have a f####ing coronary' while I'm on this side of that slither. Anything but the rational thoughts that I should have been having. Back in Chamber 32 my mind settled down and I began to take things in a bit more. My head torch batteries were dying and so my ability to see the chamber in full were not realized.



We then made our way through the squeeze into the main pot and ultimately Burnett's Passage. Whilst Andy and Mark made their way along Burnett's I waited with the bags and contemplated the outing so far. A large party of school children arrived with their team of teachers. Without fear and without prompting they piled into the passageway and headed off into the dark. Once Andy & Mark returned, we made our way back out and towards the ladder and exit chimney.



We took time to look at formations and take photos along the way. The restriction at the top of the electron ladder was probably the most awkward manoeuvre that I had made all day. With legs flailing around on an uncontrollable and unfamiliar ladder, trying to push up and twist my body sideways without keep banging my head seemed ridiculous and trying. However, once I was crouched inside the entrance passage my head cleared and I started to reflect on that first proper excursion into a pothole.

Since that first outing I have become a member of the RRCPC been down County Pot, again with Andy and Mark. And also, a club outing into Notts II, the nervous apprehension is still there at the onset 'I'm still a complete novice' but the enthusiasm and interest is growing. My wife is convinced that I've taken it up to escape from her as potholing is something, she has no interest in whatsoever.

Finally, I'd like to thank the RRCPC and those two friendly chaps I met on my first visit to Bullpot Farm for their words of encouragement 'you'll be alright' Thank you Andy and Ray.

Colin Jones

B.C.A. Course's

I am sure most people saw the BCA notice regarding course's. I had a quick look and put it to the back of my mind. The Notice arrived again from a different source and this time I did something.

Choosing a course was more difficult than I had expected. In the end I had three course's that had my interest.

"Safety down the mines for cavers". What a good well attended course with a underground trip in Nenthead mines.

"Underground navigation". Everyone gets lost now and again. A trip down County with Nigel Atkins was interesting with a different look at navigation. We went in the Trident Series, then randomly stopped and located our position on the survey. This was easier said than done.

My third course was "Underground photography". This was led by Rob Evies. Lots of hints and tips, and a chat about equipment. On the 14th march I had a trip in Kingsdale master cave to try my new skill. Still lots to learn

Malcolm Hughes, Jeff Croston



Eli Simpson & other Speleological Archives pertaining to Caves on Casterton Fell

Some armchair caving for you on a socially isolating day.

This is a really interesting archive if you are interested in speleo-history. I came across this BCRA archive some time ago. In fact I used the original books and documents to research, edit and publish early photographs and documents of the Ease Gill system for the BCRA publication *The Ease Gill System* by Jim Eyre and more recently while looking for old photographs of Bullpot Farm showing the old, now demolished outbuildings in order to get permission to rebuild part of the old barn from Yorkshire Dales National Park,

I thought it worth bringing these archives to members' attention as there are numerous mentions of the Casterton Fell area and its caves and the first set of books are now online on the British Geological Survey website. [The Eli Simpson Archive | Publications | British Geological Survey \(BGS\)](#)



The Eli Simpson Archive is an extensive collection of material covering caves and caving in Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cumbria and Derbyshire. It was compiled by Eli Simpson (1884-1962), the founder of the British Speleological Association (now the [British Cave Research Association \(BCRA\)](#)), with contributions from other BSA members.

▼ Yorkshire: Cave photographs and drawings; documents relating to Eli Simpson	
Link to album	Album title
BCRA/101Y/A/1	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 1. 1933-1934. Photographs 1-210
BCRA/101Y/A/2	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 2. 1933-1934. Photographs 211-400
BCRA/101Y/A/3	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 3. 1933-1934. Photographs 401-603
BCRA/101Y/A/4	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 4. 1935-1936. Photographs 604-801
BCRA/101Y/A/5	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 5. 1937-1940. Photographs 802-1004
BCRA/101Y/A/6	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 6. 1940-1948. Photographs 1005-1351
BCRA/101Y/A/7	Yorkshire cave photographs. Eli Simpson collection. Vol 7. 1948-1958. Photographs 1352-1611
BCRA/101Y/I	Simpson's Rolleiflex camera; 275814 [c.1920].

List of Albums published on BGS site

The core of the archive consists of 100 large-format record books. These are generally 250 pages long and contain a fascinating mixture of maps, surveys, photographs, exploration accounts, newspaper cuttings and published articles. The subject matter dates from the period 1920's through to the 1960's, and includes the discovery and exploration of many of the major cave systems in the Yorkshire Dales and the Peak District, with lesser collections for the Mendips, Wales, Devon and Scotland, and other ephemera, and Simpson's personal material.

The record books came to light some years ago as part of the material that had been stored away for years in the [British Caving Library](#). The archive has been moved to the [National Geological Repository](#) at the BGS for safekeeping, and has now undergone scanning by a team of volunteers in the BGS offices in Edinburgh. The team of volunteers are mostly members of the [Grampian Speleological Group](#) who have now undertaken the digitisation and some indexing, but are also giving interesting insights into the collection with their encyclopedic knowledge of caves and caving.

The archive is based at British Geological Survey (on the terms of transfer of the archive material to secure, temperature and humidity controlled storage), at their site in Keyworth, Nottingham. Given concerns of potential donors to the archive and possible issues around ownership, the transfer will be made on the basis of "indefinite transfer", without transfer of ownership. So for the first time cavers and the public will know the contents of these historic documents. They will also be able to access the archive record books, for reference, in the BGS library five days a week.

Who was Eli Simpson?

Eli "Cymmie" Simpson (September 16, 1884 – February 1, 1962) was an influential and controversial British caver and speleologist and a founding member and Recorder of the British Speleological Association.

Simpson began caving in 1901, and in 1905 helped create the, [Yorkshire Speleological Society](#) the first British club formed specifically for the purposes of exploring caves. Simpson undertook cave exploration, mapping, and photography throughout his active career.

Simpson was a founding member of the British Speleological Association in 1935, became its Recorder for much of its existence, and organized the most extensive cave archive in Britain.

The installation of gates on BSA-controlled caves caused much friction with other caving organisations as well as within the BSA. BSA influence waned after 1945 when new or dormant caving clubs (such as Northern Pennine Club and Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club) gained ground, and members expelled or resigned from the BSA went on to create other organisations, notably the Cave Research Group of Great Britain (the two merged in 1973 to form the British Cave Research Association).



Lancaster Hole entrance photo on its exploration in 1946. See notes below for more detail

What is online at the moment.

There are 7 volumes of material relating to the Yorkshire Dales online at the moment with more to follow. See diagram below.

I have trawled through these and made some notes of especially interesting photos below to save you time if you just want a quick look:

A/1 p.27-30 BPOW & Cow Pot from BSA Meet in 1933-34.

p.37 Bullpot Farm and BPOW 23rd May 1934

A2 Ingleborough Area

A3 Calf Holes. p.19 Witches Cave and Ease Gill Kirk

A4 p.10 Gaping Ghyll p.10 Aug 1935.

p.28 Photos in Buxton of BSA 1st Congress July 1936. The forerunner to BCRA Conference and Hidden Earth

A5 p.27 Victoria Cave etc Interesting to compare with what it looks like now

A6 Arch dig and Penyghent. p.35 1st Post-war GG winch Meet 1946

p.49 Lancaster Hole and its discovery. p.51-54 Cow Pot and Ease Gill. Photo of Kath Gilbert (Kath's Way) at Swindon Hole

A7 p.6-12 Graveyard. p.7 Lancaster Hole 1947. p.8 Pikedaw Calamine Cavern. First series of photos of the system. p.13 Leck Beck area. p.14 Bill Taylors Passage p.17-18 Upper Ease Gill 1948



*First Colonnades photo
20 Oct 1946*

I include some photographs here to give you a taste of the sort of material that is available. They are all copyright of BCRA and were also included in the BCRA publication *The Ease Gill System by Jim Eyre* in 1989 with additional material by yours truly.

The first recorded photo of the Colonnades taken in October 1946 shows Bill Taylor, Christine Rawlins and Norman Thornber. Miss Rawlins was Eli Simpson's "housekeeper" at his address in Austwick but she seems to have been more than that as she features in a number of his photos and other records.

Norman Thornber is well known as he produced the first caving guide book, Pennine Underground, while Bill Taylor was a later founding member of Red Rose.

Another interesting shot is of Lancaster Hole Entrance on 20th October 1946 soon after its discovery. The man in the dark hat and trousers is thought to be Bill Taylor's father who was left on the surface in charge of the lifelines. The woman and man to the right is probably Christine Rawlins and Norman Thornber. It looks like it was taken on the same day as the photo of the Colonnades mentioned above judging by their attire.

Two Youtube videos in relation to Eli Simpson by Sid Perou



The Graveyard early in 1947

Whilst Dave Checkley and other BCRA officials were sorting through some of the BSA archive material, a box of 16 mm film clips were discovered together with some notes. These were passed across to Sid Perou, who identifying them as being very fragile, negotiated with the Yorkshire Film Archive that they be digitised, with the YFA retaining the originals for safe-keeping. They turned out to be the original 1953-1954 experiments by the British Speleological Association, led by Eli Simpson, to make a film about limestone caves in the Yorkshire Dales, called Birth of a Yorkshire River. As originally conceived, it was a grandiose project which included resurrecting the waterfall at Malham Cove using pumps and laying two miles of hoses down the Watlowes Valley, and powering large underground lights with an even larger generator which needed to be transported to the cave entrances. But as the technical and cost constraints became apparent, the project was abandoned and all that remains are these rushes and the notes. Using his technical know-how and a lot of detective work, in 2012 Sid unraveled the story and made a superb documentary on the project, first shown at the BCA's Hidden Earth conference a few years ago. Both are about 40 mins long but well worth a watch. More information can be found at this link [Link to British Caving Library](#). (Extract from BCRA records)

The first of these is a Video biography of Eli Simpson based on salvaged footage from a 16mm film in the archive. [Link to watch the Youtube video](#)

This includes account of RRCPC formation and other useful facts. It turns out that Montagu Passage was named after Miss Montagu, a benefactor from Windermere who funded the BSA HQ in Settle, Cragdale (later became the Police station)

This film records the life of Eli Simpson (1884-1962), and the major contribution he made to British caving. He founded the British Speleological Association in 1935, and although nominally its Honorary Recorder, dominated its activities. His controversial approach to the original explorations of Lancaster Hole in the post-war years, whilst motivated by speleological and conservation interests, only succeeded in fragmenting the association. The film features interviews with Harry Long, Bob Leakey, Dave Judson, Bertie Bradshaw, Frank Atkinson, and "Potts" Barker, all of whom worked with Cymmie.

The Birth of a Yorkshire River

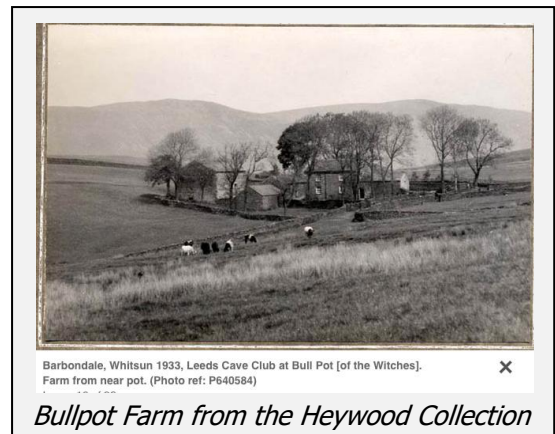
The second is an account of how the BSA experimented with the first attempts with 16mm film to make an underground film and features various caves in the Dales. [Link to watch video film](#)



H.W. Haywood Collection

This is a collection of photographs depicting cave exploration and related activities in the Yorkshire Dales area by the Leeds Cave Club in the early 1930's and taken by Harold Wadsworth Haywood FRPS was donated to the Geological Survey of Great Britain Library by Miss Haywood (his sister) in 1935. Eli Simpson was a member of this group. The collection consists of two large albums containing a total of 460 separate photographs. There are also twenty-six pages of typescript notes, a bibliography and nine pages of hand-drawn maps and sections illustrating the Alum Pot area and its caves, all produced by Eli Simpson.

The dates of the photographs range from 1928-1934. The images cover the Yorkshire Dales and adjacent areas of Lancashire and Westmorland in the west. They include surface photographs of the caves and karst features, many spectacular underground shots of the caves and their formations, and pictures of members of the Leeds Cave Club, exploring the caves and carrying out a variety of other activities on the surface. There are a number of photos in the environs of Bullpot Farm, Ease Gill and Barbondale, Bull Pot of the Witches and Cow Pot in Album 2.



Bullpot Farm from the Heywood Collection

Explore the albums with these links:

- [Contents Page](#)
- [Cave Listing](#)
- [Caves Map](#)

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- [Download PDF](#)
- Eyre J. & A. Hall (1989) The Ease Gill System. Forty Years of Exploration, British Cave Research Association, Speleo-History Series No.1

BCRA members are attempting to track down the owners of the copyright of the various elements of the record books and archive, as many of the original explorers are now dead. This is not an easy task and if anyone knows the likely owners, we would appreciate your help. Also if anyone is such an owner and has a problem with the publishing on-line of a section of a record book, please let us know and we will withdraw that part.

Andy Hall

Four Caves in the Gill....tra la la la...

(to the tune of Brown Girl In The Ring, Boney M)

I was wandering over a very isolated Bowland fell last weekend, keeping at least 2000 metres distance between me and the next person, when this tune popped into my head, as tunes tend to do – must have been a 70's throwback moment, funny what the old grey matter stores up for totally pointless future use! Well, maybe there's a pub quiz somewhere with my name on it, just waiting for that nugget, who knows! But as if that wasn't bizarre enough, my train of thought somehow conjured up the words 'four caves in the gill' to fit the tune. Yeah I know, weird, say no more!

So obviously the four caves have been subliminally bugging me, and now seems an appropriate time to spit them out, to come clean, to be totally LGBTQ..RSTUVW about them. Where are they? In Aygill, just as you walk down over the old kilns to the streambed.

This is an SSSI, a site of serious speleological interest; when it rains hard and the gill gets to flowing down past Aygill entrance itself, humungous amounts of water sink just below a small cascade where the path meets the streambed.

The water must, we think, all enter Aygill Caverns, mostly through the inlet passages above the cascades. But that's 50m underground, and a lot can happen in 50m. Maybe the water intersects unknown passages heading towards Bull Pot of the Witches? It's a dream we diggers keep alive, the dry connection! I mean, you don't think Ray and Sam are digging Rollerball for the fun of it, do you?...

So this SSSI is potentially quite an important spot in the cave connection business. This particular penny had also dropped in the head of one James Henry Newton some 35 years before. He had observed the same wondrous phenomena – unimaginable gallons of water disappearing at this exact same spot. He resolved to enter the caverns measureless which must surely lie there, undeterred by the singular lack of interest from his colleagues, and mindless of the 'uge 'enries which surrounded his chosen site of attack. Burrowing down beneath a limestone face, the inky darkness drew him down – surely it was a matter of just one more boulder to remove and he'd be in?



Alas, the removal of the last boulder also set in motion the scientific force Jim's namesake is famous for. No doubt with an alarming rumble, all Jim's removed boulders slid back in, taking his legs with them. It was several hours later that Ron Bliss just happened to pass by on a bird watching ramble, to be hailed by a dishevelled fellow trapped up to his waist in boulders.

Jim went on to discover Our Lady's Cave a little higher up the gill. Over the years I've become an Aygill aficionado myself, and have poked around with much please but not much joy in the site of these lower sinks. But in 2015 the key began to turn when a draughting slot was found 20m downstream of the surface cascade.



Bill Sherrington trusting the scaff.

Bill Sherrington was up for some digging, and with scaffolding and boards we rapidly made progress down to a limestone floor and open passage – well, all 4m of it! But it was open and with some more support to a dodgy roof we made another 2m progress. An upstream crawl was also pushed for 3-4m. All leads were choked but dig-able, or just too tight. But it was the first sign of real cave development in this little neck of the woods. (No.1 on the map)

Unfortunately, further work at the site was sacrificed upon the altar of the Great God of Barbondale. Returning a couple of years later it was still open but would need a team. Casting around to see if there was anything else, an oft rooted-in hole near the fall was the next recipient of the bar, again to no purpose. But just to one side, into the hill, a bit of bank and cobble removal revealed a cockled wall disappearing into what looked like a rift. More work

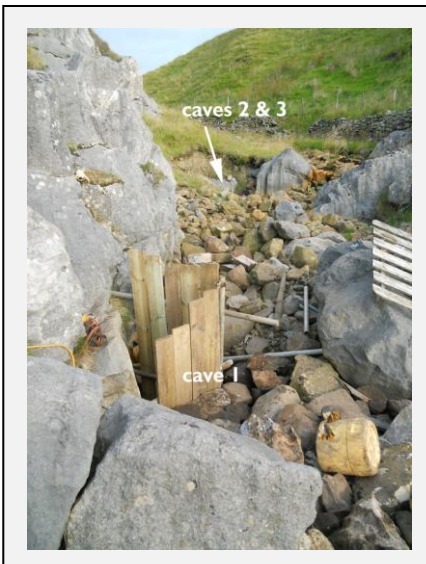
soon revealed an entrance... beneath a massive square block suspended by not very much. At last I took the plunge and ducked underneath to find myself in a roomy rift with walls over a metre apart, floored with boulders and roofed with mischief. But a way on could be seen under some dangling doom. It was time for Tom!

Not that I'm suggesting Tom is expendable. But in dangling doom territory it's reassuring to have a companion close by... just in case. And Tom's got the necessary 'neck'! Unfortunately the way on wasn't the way on, a case of in-washed choke material – it seems the water gets away downwards rather than along. A small rift to one side under the wall may hold the key but was never fully investigated as it required removal of a lot of floor. But large volumes of water sink into this entrance (No. 2 on the map) which is almost certainly joined in some fashion with cave No.3.

No.3 is a couple of metres away and is a 3m climb down though a boulder fringed hole into a small limestone walled chamber sloping steeply down to a narrow rift. This required a little bit of capping to enter and probably needs a lot more capping to pursue. Tom and I got far enough to see that it was joining another narrow rift that seemed to run back underneath us. It's all narrow going, but the walls are clean and appear to be solid wall not bits of boulder. It could be the way but will require work.

And that's if the entrance area stays open – with every flood more boulders are washed into the sink depression and you end up back at square one.





Caves 2 and 3 are likely to disappear without some work to make them long-term secure.

The problem is that there's no solid limestone base to work on, all the overburden and boulders hereabout are just packed into spaces of a very uneven, pinnaced limestone surface.

Up on the north bank away from all this carnage lies cave No.4. It's an obvious little black hole you see in the limestone cliff as you walk down the path – many a curious caver has poked their head inside to find little of interest save a narrowing upward tube. I pointed Tom at it and he said there was a draught. I didn't believe him so had a look myself – and there it was, a little fern dancing in a breeze.

Tom got back in with the crowbar and in

short order removed the earth floor to reveal a hole into space, quickly enlarged to become a 2m drop into a WALKING rift passage. This was too easy!

The passage sloped down into the hill, away from the streambed - good! – but all too soon hit a choke of moonmilk mush. A short way back from the end appeared to be some kind of opening in the floor heading back towards cave No.2.



None of the caves are very long – they won't be club trips just yet! But put together, in close proximity as they are, it's ample evidence that some more substantial cave probably lies below this point of engulfment. That more substantial cave may well be Aygill itself. But the possibility of intersecting new passage heading for Bull Pot makes it a fascinating tantalus, a worthwhile proposition, and a perfect place to hone one's digging skills just 5 minutes from the Farm. What more could you wish for!

PS: For about 3 days in the summer of 2018 it was almost 'Five Caves In The Gill'! Thirty metres upstream another hole had opened up and 3-4m of cave could be viewed, but with a roof composed mostly of the bank. Sure enough, a return two days later revealed that it would just be Four Caves In The Gill. I'm glad I didn't venture into that one!

... and one in Hazel Syke!

All these ambulations around Aygill have never been so rude as to exclude a visit to Hazel Syke, the lesser twin of the two conjoined gills that sweep down off Crag Hill. Indeed, Hazel Syke might have claim to be the more interesting hydrologically. In normal and dry weather its top sink is almost a kilometre north east of Aygill Caverns entrance, and the sinking water travels three kilometers underground (yes!) to emerge at the top of Barbondale. In moderate conditions the water flows past the top sink and disappears in earthy sinks about 500m downstream, the water rising in Aygill gorge 150m upstream of the main cave. In flood conditions, the stream overwhelms all these sinks and rushes right on down to join Aygill and fall into Barbondale.

So the lower half of Hazel Syke is little used, so to speak; although to see the waterfall at Hazel Syke Cave (Molly Pot) in flood is a sight to behold, and a sober reminder of the power of flash floods!

Only 60m or so upstream of Molly Pot is a flood gate across the beck and 10m beyond, over a slab of nice grey rock in the streambed, is a depression on the left (going upstream).

This is the site of a dig by Jim and Lionel some years ago and although they didn't get far it's a worthy objective – the start of the New Year Series in Aygill is passing underneath Hazel Syke at this point, and a short cut to the sharp end would always be welcome!

So around the time of the Aygill digs I once again visited Jim's dig for a traditional rattle of the bar. As per usual nothing further to report – it would need a team effort. Setting off back to the farm I was just about to duck under the flood gate when a crack in the grey limestone slab caught my eye. A closer look revealed a narrow rift with a couple of chock stones strategically wedged, but pebbles thrown in seemed to fall 4-5m. It was narrow at the top but did I detect that it opened up a bit below?

I returned a few days later with a sack of drills and digging gear and the top of the slit was 'modified' to allow the now more numerous chock stones to be removed. I could see a floor 4m down! But would I fit? Not quite, some awkward manoeuvres for the legs placed the chest against an impassable projection. I returned another day for some more modifications, and was pretty sure I could now make it...at least down! But no one knew I was here, so I bottled it. Once again it was time for Tom!



The Slit

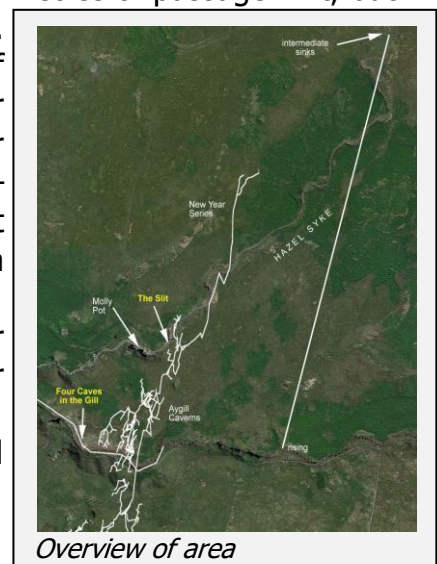
Tom made light work of the narrow descent while I struggled in a straightjacket of coarse limestone. But I got down and we were off....4m of narrow rift. Hmm. But what's this?... a slot to one side presented an easy climb down into a chamberette and a slide through into another rift. To the west this was choked, but downhill to the east was an easy slide down mud and gravel into a proper chamber – well, proper enough to get two blokes in at the same time. Comfy! If this chamber had an outlet it was choked. But it did have an inlet, a tube in the east wall rising up and blocked by a large chock stone. The only way to work this was by lying underneath it to try and loosen it. We took turns until eventually Tom shot backwards out of the tube followed closely by the large rock. Now the tube, still small, rose upwards into a kind of rift – straight ahead seemed to narrow, but by forcing yourself into a semi-standing position it was possible to look back over the rift along a tube which turned north and out of sight. Although the tube looked big enough, getting into it would be high jinks indeed. We left it for another day...which has not, of this writing, yet arrived.



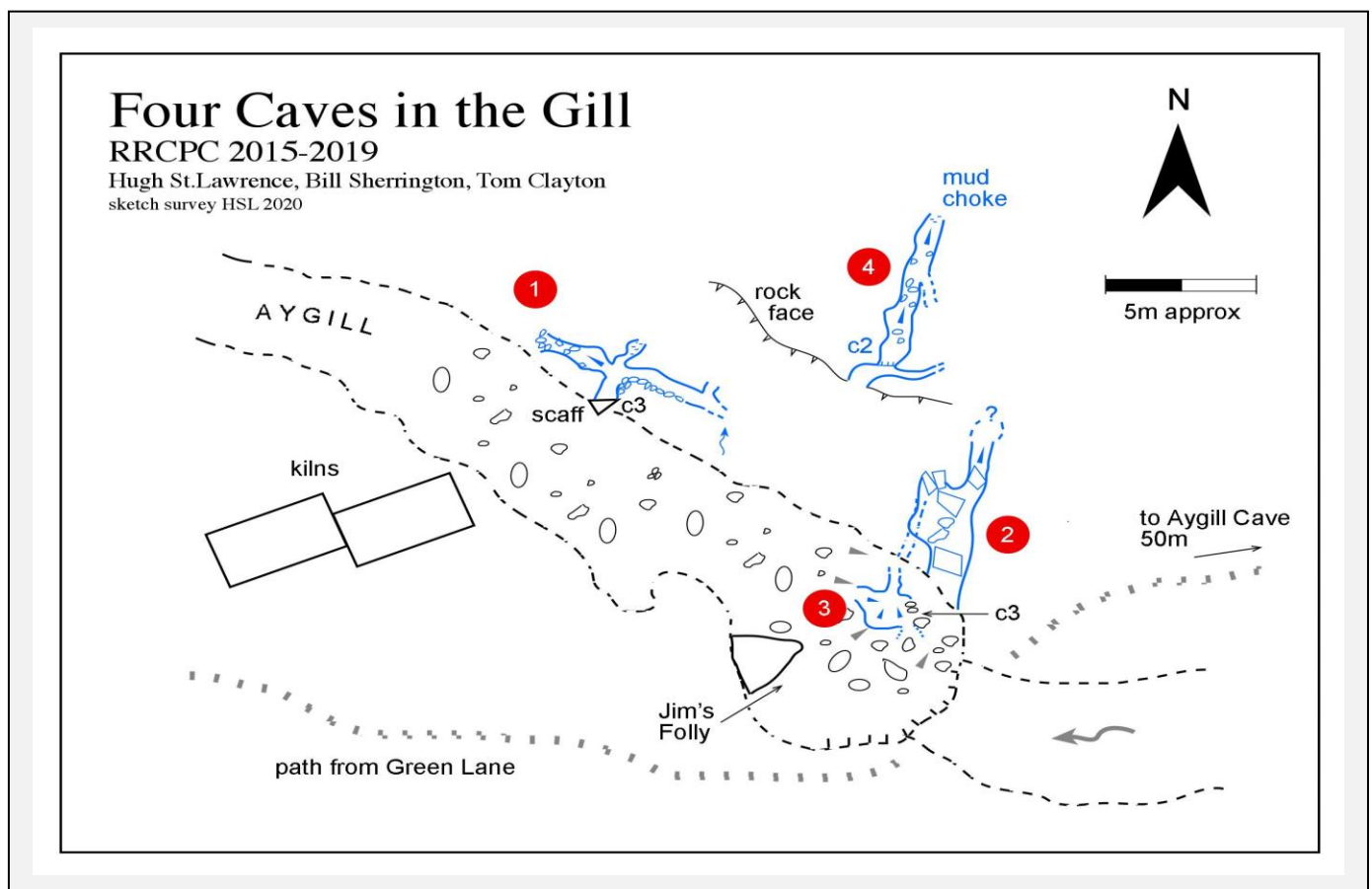
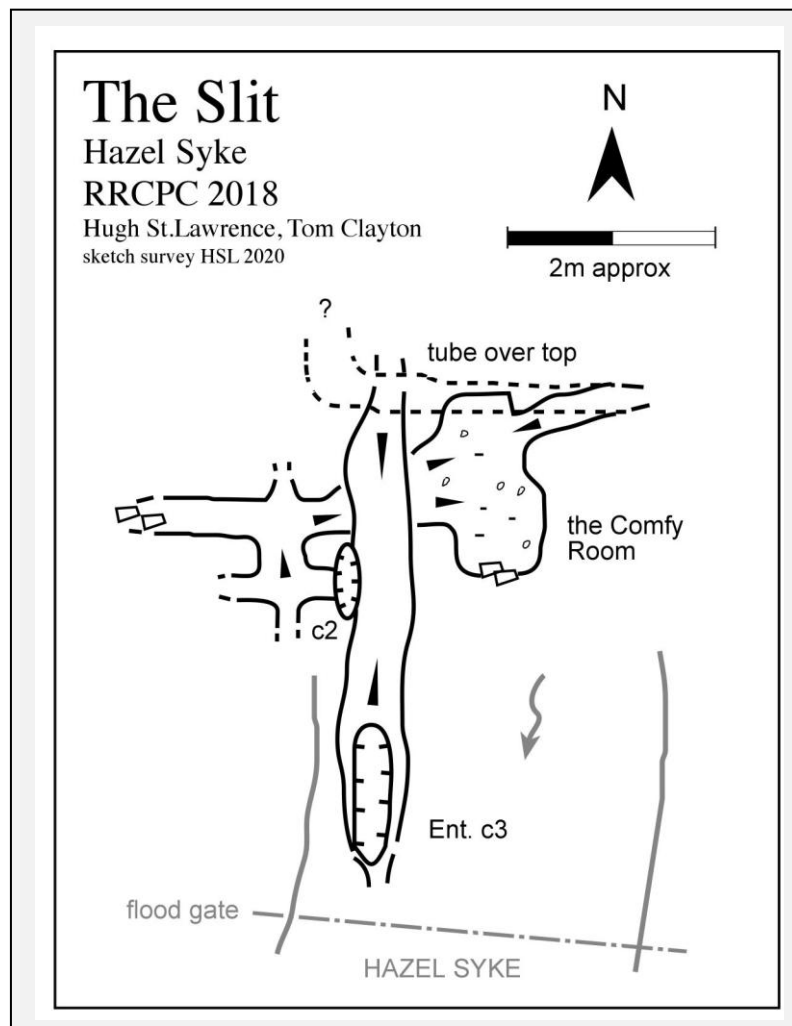
The Slit has maybe only 10 or 12 metres of passage in it, but it's entertaining for all that. Flexible skinnies with a love of gymnastics and a curiosity for what's around the next corner might have some fun in here – and who knows what they might find. Thirty metres below is a curious area of small extensions and loose boulder chambers beyond Flake Chamber near the start of the New Year

Series. Down Aygill and out of The Slit would make a novel through trip!

Hugh St.Lawrence



Overview of area



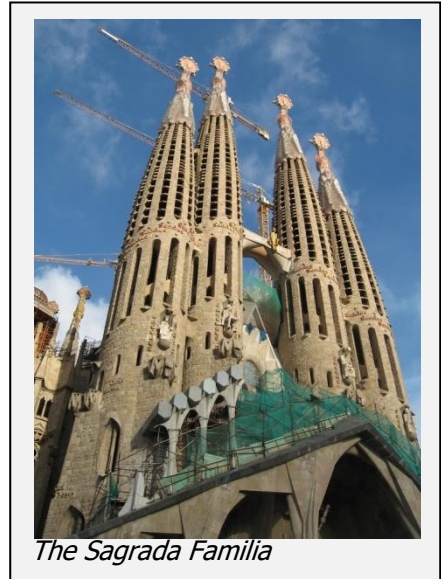
Visit to Armstrong's Brinscall Quarry and Stone Works

Last year I went on a visit to the above with my local Geology Group. My interest was fired by the knowledge that sandstone quarried and worked there is sent to the unfinished Sagrada Familia church – Antoni Gaudi's amazing architectural creation, in Barcelona.

I first visited the Sagrada when I was 17 in the 1960's. I was so taken with the building and I was happy to be there again in 2017 after a fifty odd year time span when I was able to see the progress made. On my first visit I saw many casualties of The Civil War on the streets with a lot of them missing limbs. A happier place in 2017.

Gaudi took over design of the Basilica de la Sagrada Familia, a temple of atonement to the holy family, in 1883. When the stone local to The Sagrada at Montjuic ran out, a worldwide search identified 6 sites where a similar siliceous sandstone was available. One of these is the site at Brinscall near Chorley.

The stone is cut from the face and sent to the workshop at Horwich where stonemasons saw the stone in cross-sections so that the structural integrity can be ascertained, also exposing the lovely beige colouring. Sometimes fossilised trees are seen within the blocks and some of these will be polished and used for none load bearing areas of the Sagrada. The low loaders which take the stone out to Spain are used for transporting other goods back to England so don't return empty.



The Sagrada Familia



Brinscall Quarry

Gaudi worked on the design for 43 years till he died in 1926. Work on the temple has been interrupted many times including some damage during the Spanish Civil War. The hope is that The Sagrada will be completed in 2026 a hundred years after Gaudi's death.

An organised visit to the quarry and workshop are both worthwhile and easily arranged with Armstrong's. We had a morning trip to the Works followed by an afternoon trip to the quarry. Hard hats required.....

Carol Makin



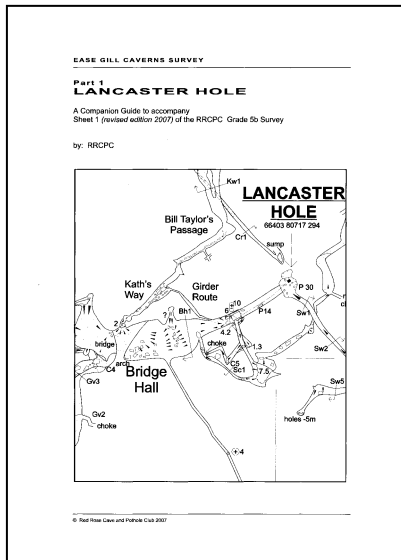
Cut Stone with fossils



Fossilised tree pieces

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

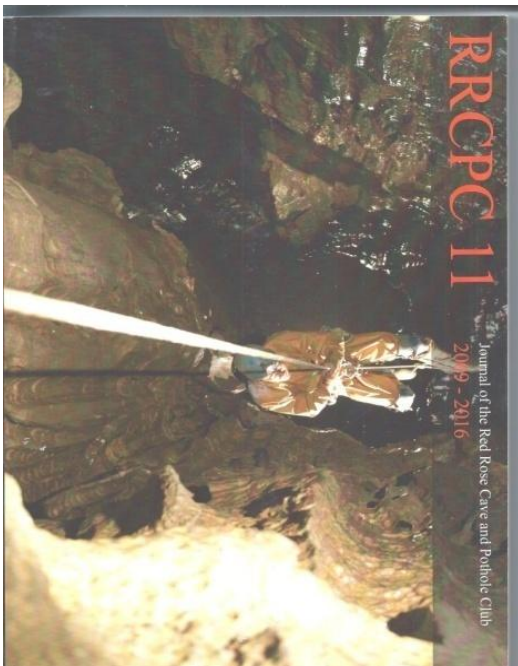
Sheet 3 – Snail Cavern Area to Holbeck Junction
with accompanying guide covering also County Pot, Wretched Rabbit and Snail Cavern to Holbeck Junction

Sheet 4 – Top Sink to Holbeck Junction Area
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