



RED ROSE CAVE AND POTHOLE CLUB

NEWSLETTER



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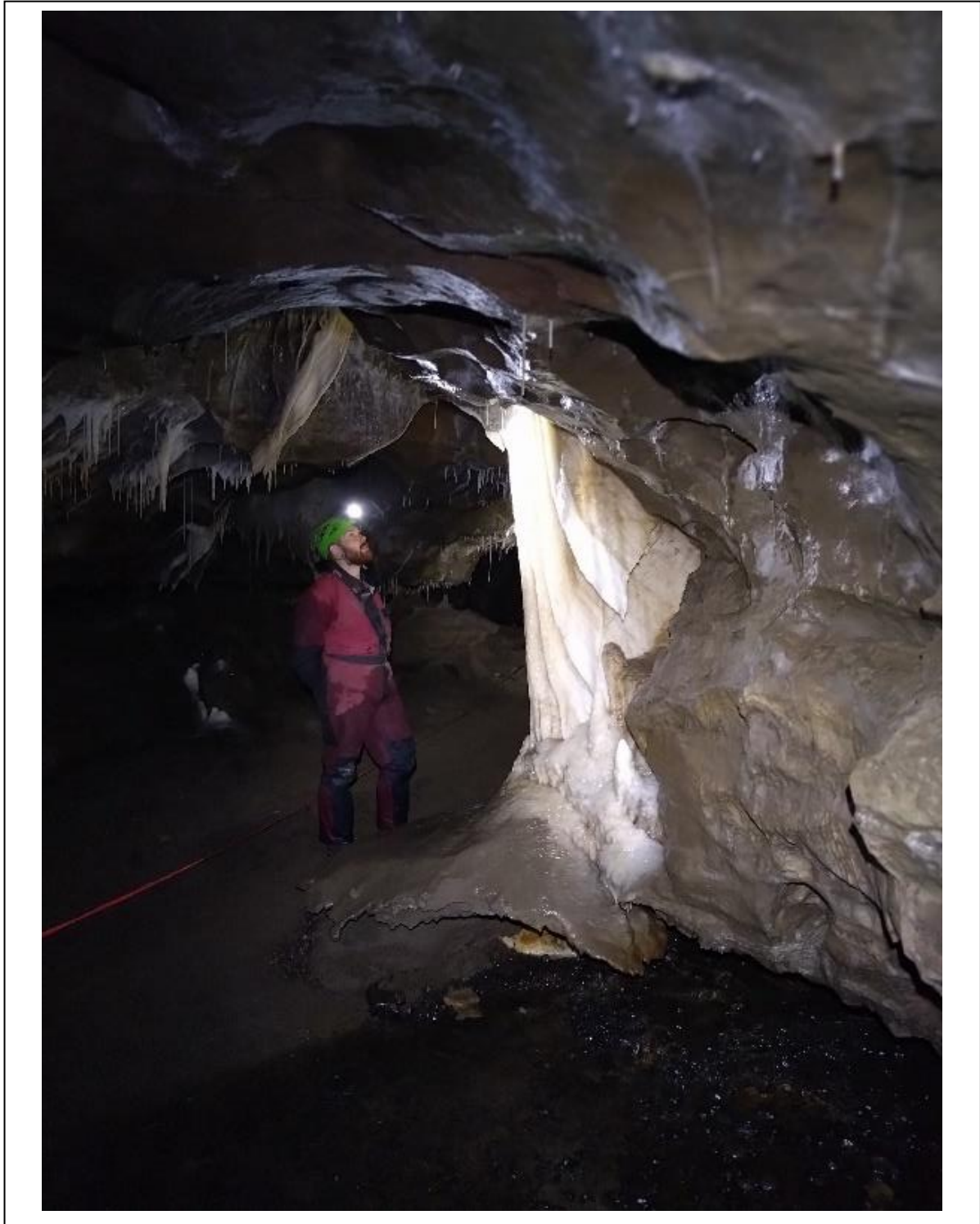


Photo: Curry Inlet - Notts II by Colin Jones

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Editor's Note

I am writing this in rainy Scotland, looking out towards Cùl Mòr and Suilven from the Grampian Speleological Group's hut in Elphin. The hut was deserted until last night, when several cavers and their families descended on the hut for a weekend of caving. I had made a conscious decision before my holiday not to bring my caving gear, so that I could concentrate on ticking off the local Munros and Corbetts. However, with a hut full of enthusiastic cavers, I'm now tempted to dust off the club's gear to explore the local delicacies! The moral of this story is to never leave your caving gear behind!

As usual, thank you to everyone who has contributed to this Newsletter, particularly those who had submitted their articles in time for a May Newsletter that never materialised due to a lack of articles. I hope this bumper edition makes up for the lack of one in May.

Gwen Tawy

Newsletter Editor

News of Interest

Sandra Wilkinson has recently been in regular contact with a Casterton resident, Simon Drakeford, who writes short "sketch" articles for the local Casterton Parish Council website on places of interest in the parish. He has several sketches on his website, now including one on Bullpot Farm.

Thanks to Sandra, who helped supply information and some old photographs from the Ron Bliss Collection. The finished article can be access here, and is a great read: <https://www.castertonparishcouncil.org.uk/a-sketch-about-bullpot-farm/>

Club Events

RRCPC Socials Survey Insight Summary

Last year I went out to the club to get your opinions on socials via a survey. It's taken a little longer to write this up than it should have but here's a quick summary of the findings:

1. People have enjoyed meeting up with other members, meeting new members and sharing a meal together at socials.
2. 11% of people felt unsure about how much they have enjoyed previous socials.
3. The main reasons people felt they couldn't attend socials were having kids, time restraints and specifically about Bonfire night, multiple people felt unsafe and therefore did not feel they could attend.
4. The most attended socials were the Summer BBQ, Bonfire Night, Annual Dinner and Photo Competition.
5. Suggested improvements were:
 - a. Better communication about upcoming events
 - b. Engaging more with younger members
 - c. Potential to not coincide socials with committee meetings
6. The most popular new ideas for socials were talks from members, curry night, socials with other Dales based caving clubs, quiz night. Trips away were also suggested as an idea and socials not held at the farm.

For context here are some stats on who we had responses from:

- 38 people responded to the survey
- Over half of responses (58%) were from people who have been members for more than 10 years. Only 4 responses were from members of less than 2 years.
- 6 responders hadn't attended a Red Rose Social in the past.
- 2/3rds of responses were from people that identify as men
- There was a diverse split of ages responding to the questionnaire:
 - 14 - 24: 9%
 - 25 - 35: 17%
 - 36 - 45: 14%
 - 46 - 55: 17%
 - 56 - 65: 23%
 - 66+ 17%

Thank you to everyone that took part in this! Hopefully you've already noticed that I've tried to be slightly more vocal about socials and that all dates for the rest of the year are already decided and listed on our [website](#). Additionally, we had a curry and film night earlier this year as a new social.

I'm keen to get as many new and younger members feeling welcome at socials and am always open to feedback and suggestions. If you have an idea of how to help people feel more involved, then please do get in touch (social@rrcpc.org.uk)!

Going forward I'm looking to organise talks from members and potentially have a social with other Dales clubs. If you would like to show off some caving photos, talk about an expedition, a dig or any other topic, please let me know.

Thank you!

Alice Shackley



RRCPC Socials
Photo Credit: Hazel Hewitt, Sam Lieberman, Andy Hall

Trip Reports

Crackpot

9th March 2024

Dinny Davies, Gwen Tawy

I had been invited to the ULSA dinner, which this year was in Swaledale. We had heard rumours that the students were going to Crackpot on Saturday morning. This was likely to be the closest we'd be to Crackpot for a while, so decided to copy their plan. We leisurely drove from Bullpot Farm through beautiful countryside to the meeting spot, in the hope of missing the rush of students.

Arriving at 2pm, we were surprised to find that the students were still milling around, and even more surprised to learn that some were still underground. We were immensely impressed by this, having been told they arrived at 10:30am for a trip that can be completed within 30 minutes. Perhaps they had found kilometres of new passage?

We slowly got changed then trudged up the hill to the impressive resurgence entrance. Mike Butcher (ULSA) was leaving as we arrived and warned us that one of the students inside the cave was interviewing unsuspecting victims as they entered. We batted away the microphone as we entered, and squeezed passed the group into a short crawl. Incidentally, I later saw the student interviewing Alan Brook (ULSA) at the dinner, who I'm sure provided ample material for the student's project. Any contribution from me would have been very dull in comparison to anything AB had to say about caving.

After the short crawl we popped out into the streamway. We first turned right, in the downstream direction. This quickly closed down. Upstream was more interesting, with some nice formations along the way. When we reached a loose choke, we turned around and climbed into the well-decorated and aptly named Turnip Field. At the top of the 'field' was a bench, which we sat on for a moment to admire the stal turnips. I scrambled down the back of the field and stumbled upon a bypass for the choke that led to a dig. After sticking our noses in here, we were satisfied that we'd seen everything there was to see. By the time we had returned the students were just about ready to leave. We were reunited at the Tan Hill Inn, where we had a lovely evening.

Gwen Tawy

Bullpot (Kingsdale)

13th April 2024

Emma Healy (Newcastle University Caving Club), Gwen Tawy, Sam Walker (Dudley Caving Club)

The latest SpeleloSisters+ weekend was at the Selside Hut (University of Leeds); somewhere I was familiar with but had never been to before. Confident I knew the way to the hut, I persuaded my passenger Rachael Pajak (MUSC) that I didn't need any navigation. After one wrong turn, which almost caused us to drive over a footbridge over the Ribbleshead railway tracks, I agreed we could check which turning was the correct one. Adrenaline high after our off-roading adventure, we completely missed the main entrance into the hut and somehow entered the building via a window/patio door into one of the bunkrooms. We completely bamboozled everyone who had already arrived, by announcing our arrival from the bedroom rather than the front door. I did think it was bizarre that the main entrance led directly to a bunkroom, but perhaps this was how things were done in Selside? After being shown the actual entrance, we unpacked the car and settled in for the night.

The next day, there was much talk about who would be going caving where. As I was recovering from food poisoning at the time, I was keen for a more leisurely trip. Those of you who know me will be surprised to learn that the culprit was not a rotting vegetable I had lovingly rescued from a bin, but instead some fish from a posh restaurant in London. That'll teach me.

I hadn't been in Bullpot Kingsdale for a very long time, so was happy to return. I recruited Sam and Emma, who wanted some SRT practice. Perfect! We found the entrance easily and I rigged the first pitch, amazed at how I had completely forgotten everything about the cave since I had last visited. Sam and Emma followed me down, and we negotiated the high traverse before making our way to the top of the third pitch. It was quite wet that day, so I decided the Fossil Route would be the most comfortable. As I was rigging the pitch, I heard another party (from SUSS) sneak up behind us. They decided to go down the wetter option, and we reunited at the bottom of the pitch. They were faster than us so had already started rigging the next pitch. We were getting splashed where we were and decided that we would get too cold waiting for them, so turned around to exit. Later we learned that they were unable to rig the next pitch, so weren't too far behind us on the way out.

Gwen Tawy

Sell Gill

14th April 2024

Rachael Pajak (MUSC), Gwen Tawy

Day 2 of the SpeleloSisters+ weekend, and I was ready for another easy-going trip. Today's plan was to run another simple SRT trip for people who wanted to brush up their skills. I originally started with a team of 4, but two defected to another leader, and we were left as a party of two. This worked out quite well, as my caving partner for the day was also my passenger on the way home.

It was a lovely sunny day, and the walk to the entrance was pleasant, if a little nippy. As I rigged the entrance pitch, I hoped my hands would warm up underground. Rachael asked if she could descend the pitches first so that I could help her from above if she needed it. With us being only two, it didn't take us long to get to the bottom of the final pitch. We walked past the thundering waterfall and continued along the passage as far as we could before returning the way we came. An enjoyable and efficient day out.

Gwen Tawy

Pre Club Dinner Caving Trip

18th May 2024

Group 1: Holly Bradley, Tom Clayton, Miles Clayton, Lucas Clayton, Noel Snape, Elliot Snape, Ethan Snape, Emma Wilson

Group 2: George Bosnyak (Boz), Zac Bosnyak, Andy Hall, Ian Lawson, Toby Lawson, Allan Rhodes, Hugh St Lawrence

After meeting some people at the YSS bunkhouse and then meeting Group 1 at Lower Long Churn, we all assembled for a team photo once various people had stopped mooning!

Group 1 went into Upper Long Churn for a potter about with kids. Emma takes up the story: *Holly, Noel, Tom and Emma took their children (Elliott (4), Ethan (2), Miles (3) and Lucas (1 - carried)) from Long Churn to Upper Long Churn. We rigged and life-lined Dr Banisters Handbasin and most went up and out that way. Miles saw Elliott climbing up and getting very wet, so didn't fancy it, so he and Emma headed back out the same way with everyone else doing a thorough trip. Great effort - well done.*



The Team
Photo Credit: Andy Hall



Double Shuffle
Photo Credit: Andy Hall

Group 2 set off down Lower Long Churn, not really sure where we were going, but with tackle for Dolly Tubs pitch. Some of us had not been in here for over 20 years so we hoped Ian could remember his more recent visit. Zac was using a stinky carbide light just for fun. Bit of a bumble when we discussed which way to go at the junction of the two routes. Left went out to daylight and the alternative route via entrance to Diccan Pot involved a low wet crawl. The right-hand route that we eventually chose goes via Double Shuffle and Plank Pools. At Double Shuffle I showed everyone how not to do it (see video on club Facebook page). Boz had his GoPro and video lights which soon came out to record the action.

Zac announced that his carbide had gone out, mainly because the jet had fallen out! Zac and Boz stopped to look for it above the pool. The rest of us continued onto the top of the Dolly Tubs pitch via a 3-meter climb down, already equipped with a rope. On reaching the pitch the SRT route was already rigged with a rope. This explained the rope on the previous climb. We thought this might happen and moved over to the right to use the slightly longer but drier older ladder route. Andy and Ian rigged this, and Allan went down first muttering about his dislike of ladders. Managed to



Toby crossing a deep pool
Photo Credit: Andy Hall

get our ladder mixed up with their gear anyway, which caused some stress for a novice coming back up. Toby made a good effort to descend but was mainly lowered on Italian hitch. The large ledge halfway down made things a bit awkward but at least he got a rest. Hugh was not happy about the rigging setup as the ladder hung awkwardly from the belay point used, so decided to move the belay sling. More faffing about did result in a better hang for the ladder. Boz and Zac arrived having found the carbide jet in a pool and got his light working again.

At the bottom we were greeted with the excellent view of the open shaft of Alum Pot. Our timing was just right as sunbeams were shining straight down the shaft. Everyone eventually descended except Boz. More milling about at the bottom as the ladder rig was changed to a third belay point meant for an even smoother ascent. We stationed a person on the ledge halfway up to help Toby get up, which he managed with little problem and a good pull. After derigging we split into two smaller groups with myself, Hugh and Zac following the alternative route avoiding the previously mentioned 3-metre climb up. This leads to another two short climbs and a traverse with exposed step over the route below. The Cheese Press goes off here, which most of us avoided except for Hugh. I was not sure where I was going, and after a short distance took a right-hand turn up a dry passage to the sound of running water. At the junction with the water, I looked upstream and could see daylight. I realised I was in the entrance passage to Diccan pot, so made my way out to a very warm afternoon. Dropping my tackle, I went back for the others, and we all got out in time to meet Holly at the entrance.

We split up again here and Hugh, Zac and I went through Upper Long Churn and via Dr Bannister's to collect the rope left by Group 1. I had forgotten what an impressive passage this is with lovely passage shapes and fine scrapping on the walls.

We were all reunited back at our vehicles at Alum Pot Lane. More amusement here when we found Boz had had an accident only a few yards from his vehicle. His welly sole had come loose, which tripped him up and he had fallen and cut his eyebrow open. "How did we laugh". He later sent me a photo of his black eye (see above). The club President was able to present him with the Yellow Welly award at the dinner for the silliest thing done since the last dinner.



Boz's award-winning black eye
Photo Credit: George Bosnyak

Andy Hall

Heron Pot

18th May 2024
Dinny Davies, Toby Speight, Gwen Tawy

Keen to be at the annual dinner on time, we thought that a quick trip somewhere between Bullpot Farm and the YSS would be sensible. After deliberating for a while, we settled on Heron Pot. The weather had been dry for a few days, so the possibility of a through trip was high. Toby met us on Leck Fell after popping into Inglesport. While changing, he bashfully admitted that something was wrong – he didn't have an oversuit. No matter, the trip wouldn't take long, and it was a warm sunny day.

My little legs struggled to keep up with Toby and Dinny on the walk up to the entrance, so I was already tired when we arrived. I was thankful it would only be a short trip. The water levels were significantly lower than the last time I was there, which I'm sure was a relief to Toby, *sans* oversuit. It didn't take us long to descend the pitches, and when we reached the bottom of the final pitch, Dinny shot off; we didn't see him again until we were out. Toby and I chatted while we crawled until the ceiling lowered to a point where we had to crawl on our bellies. He was ahead of me and therefore reached the exit squeeze first. I was impressed by the squealing noises coming out of him, but a little concerned that he was complaining because the entrance was near-sumped. I was very relieved to find quite a bit of airspace once I rounded the corner, suggesting that he was being a tad overdramatic. A refreshing, but not totally unpleasant exit.

Gwen Tawy

Curtain Pot

8th June 2024

Dinny Davies, Dave Ottewell, Gwen Tawy

It was a sunny but cold day, and our packs were heavy with rope as we set off in search for Curtain Pot. We spent a little time roaming the surface and peering in various shakeholes for something that looked familiar to Dave, who had been before. Once found, Dinny tasked Dave and I with locating the belay anchors while he got his harness on; a job he thought we would be perfectly capable of doing ourselves. Not so. We spent at least 10 minutes looking, and were beginning to wonder whether we should inform Dinny that the topo was wrong and that they didn't exist. Dinny, frustrated by our incompetence, followed us into the shakehole to do the job properly. Naturally, he found them almost immediately by peeling back a thick blanket of moss that Dave and I hadn't bothered to touch.

Thanks to Dinny, we soon found ourselves zipping down the first few pitches; the third of which is very picturesque. This pitch lands in a large chamber, where the way on was not immediately obvious. Dinny was well ahead of me by this point, but I could hear him instructing me to go through a hole in the floor into an awkward crawl. Dave soon landed in the chamber behind me, and realised that we'd accidentally bypassed the next pitch by going through the crawl. Dave and I decided it was worth spending some time rigging the pitch, to avoid the crawl on our return. We'd spent so long faffing that Dinny's had ran out of rope and had retraced his steps to find the next tackle sack, which I was carrying, so that he could continue rigging. Dave and I followed sheepishly, as Dinny whizzed through the passages and down the next set of pitches.

The cave got larger after the 4th pitch, and there was significantly more horizontal caving involved than I had expected from a 12-pitch trip. I was also impressed by how varied the trip was. When we neared the bottom, we realised that our ropes had all been wrong, due to the cockup after the 3rd pitch. Somehow the incorrect ropes had happened to work on all subsequent pitches though – lucky! After a quick look at the sump, we returned to the surface, happy we'd had a good day underground.

Gwen Tawy

Notts II – Club Trip

29th June 2024

Anthony Day, Dave Creedy, Andy Hall, Colin Jones, Jack Overhill, Tony Rooke, Hugh St Lawrence

Always a popular trip underground, Notts II is a superb outing and one of my personal favorites. The trip had been arranged by Hugh St Lawrence at relatively short notice but there was a fair degree of interest. I had arranged to pick up Andy on my drive North from Horwich, which I think was welcoming as he had just returned from holiday and probably didn't want the hassle of driving.

Upon arriving at the usual car park at Cowan Bridge it was found to be closed off to visiting traffic due to a village event at the community hall. As such I suggested the car park at St Peter's Church, Leck (donations welcome...although a few chose to be selectively blind). Andy quickly made a few necessary calls to ensure that everyone else who was attending the meet would make their way to St Peter's.

As we waited and people turned up there was the usual exchange of lighthearted banter and ribbing. As usual, Jack bore the brunt of it with his fur-lined wellies. Once it was decided on the plan of action kit was sorted out and loaded into the respective vehicles. Before heading off up onto Leck Fell and our parking spots near to the gate.



Assembling at the entrance
Photo: Colin Jones

A lifeline was rigged to aid security on the descent, particularly for Andy who was not feeling cave fit at the time and suffering with back problems. The climb down was as entertaining as always as you look at the scaffold and breeze block construction, interspersed with bits of timber and other stuff.

The climb down took a while as you basically take it in turns then wait for the descent to clear before the next person makes a move. Safety is paramount!

Once at the foot of the climb it was a case of navigating the slots and rifts to access the main streamway. En-route we looked at some of the tackle left behind from parties that had been digging in there over the years. There is a lot of tackle that needs removing at some point in the future.

Once at the main streamway we headed upstream through the beautifully sculpted meandering passage. In places you are reminded that occasionally lumps of rock have fallen or moved into place and lie lodged above the stream passage. Nevertheless, it is an impressive system. We stopped briefly for a chat and to take the opportunity to get some photos. After which we decided to break up into two groups and head up to Curry Inlet. As always, the calcite formations are something special in that part of the system.



Reunited underground
Photo: Colin Jones



Formation in Curry Inlet
Photo: Colin Jones

Returning to Curry Corner we split up again with myself, Jack, Tony and Anthony heading up towards the upstream sump, and the 'SWIM'; needless to say, we decided not to swim on this occasion. Instead, we scrambled up a rather messy and muddy slope into an aven, and into various crawls and passages on the way back to Curry Corner. After which we gathered as the group of 7 and started making our way back downstream and the way out. Dave Creedy did head down towards the downstream sump, but at that point High St Lawrence was trying to convince me that a trip into Count Lazlo Stroganoff was worthwhile. Much scrambling and general exploration was had.

Making our way back out of the system we once again stopped at the pile of tackle. It had been decided on the way in that as we exited, we would try and take some items out with us. Somehow, we managed to make a balls of it and it ended up with Hugh, Andy and Dave lugging up old rope and something else they were chunnering about. Whereas Jack and I struggled valiantly with a digging drag tray and a pickaxe handle. Probably explains why they took so long?

Back at the cars we got changed and watched the cloud and rain roll in. All day it had been perfect weather at the surface. I think that a good day was had by everyone who attended. Post trip drinks were had at 'The Pheasant Inn' Casterton where the days endeavors were discussed.

Colin Jones

Iron Kiln Pot – Personal Reflections

29th June 2024

Anthony Day, Dave Creedy, Andy Hall, Colin Jones, Jack Overhill, Tony Rooke, Hugh St Lawrence



Clever breeze block foot and hand holds in the entrance shaft.
Photo: Colin Jones

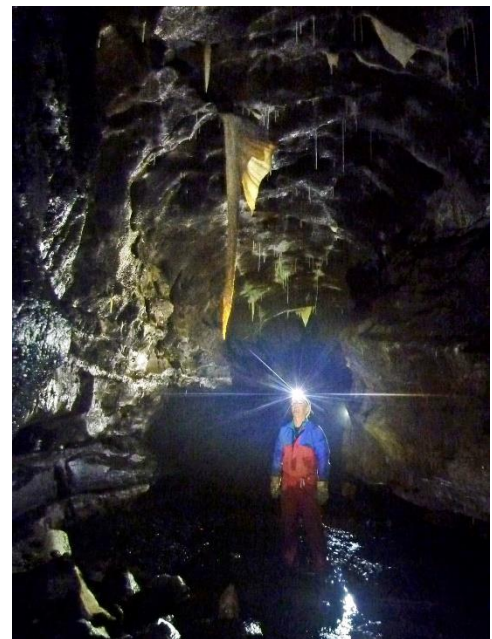
Iron Kiln Pot, popularly known as Notts 2, has been on my wish list since I re-emerged on the scene after too many years overseas. Hugh knew I was keen to visit the pot and kindly arranged a trip for me and other kindred spirits. He also looked after me well.

The entrance shaft is a remarkable feat of engineering. Incalculable man hours have been sacrificed to provide entry to the Notts 2 Master Cave, a superb streamway with numerous inlets and some spectacular formations. It's now my favourite cave.

I remember when Dave Brook (ULSA) proposed the three-counties concept. There was considerable scepticism at the time. How could the multitude of apparently isolated potholes and caves across Casterton, Leck and Ireby be linked? But they have. A combination of evolving cave diving technology and diver capability plus a concerted urgency among the digging community made it happen. Notts 2 is a key connection that was discovered and surveyed from an underwater entry and extended further once a dry entrance was gained. The cave offers a wonderful experience for young and senior cavers; there are through-trip opportunities, it's a gift for cave photographers and there's plenty to interest speleologists.

It used to be that active cavers of three score and ten and beyond were rare. Nowadays, aging boomers are everywhere. It's not age that matters, it is fitness and zest for life; I need to work on my fitness as uphill thrutching exposes a paucity of energy reserves, but it does provide untold entertainment for onlookers. Thanks to all the team for a great trip and the comradeship that caving brings.

Dave Creedy



Admiring a 6ft stalactite in the main streamway
Photo: Hugh St Lawrence

Greensett Cave, Whernside – Hugh and Dalek’s Trip

3rd August 2024

Dalek, Andy Hall, Anne Jones, Colin Jones, Hugh St Lawrence

This was a summer break from a diet of Casterton Fell caving! We’d decided a month or so ago that a jolly summer’s day out with picnic might be a nice idea, and Greensett fitted the bill – a reasonable walk in to warm up and then some exploration of a cave none of us had done. It rained the day before, but luckily came out fine for the day and we duly set off from a busy Ribbleshead around 11am.

I was a little late and had to do some fast walking past gaggles of would-be summiteers, but I caught up just past the stile onto the open fell to find Andy and crew climbing over the fence into Force Gill. I suggested an easier route was to follow the path up onto the plateau and contour across to the cave. But Andy was in Google maps mode, so I left them to visit the pretty waterfall and continued up the well beaten path.



The limestone near the main entrance
Photo: Hugh St Lawrence

Just past a rocky step, a break away from the crowds and contour south for a few hundred metres leads to an obvious gorge feature, the low resurgence. The main entrance is another hundred metres south in a similar gorge with a rising and several sinks and easily recognised by a mini limestone ‘stack’ or pillar 30m downstream of the entrance. I then walked over to the main sink area where several more entrances are located.

The others duly arrived, and we had lunch. Dalek and I decided to have a look at the entrances at the sink, while the others went off to the main entrance. The first hole we looked at dropped into a promising rift and then immediately a low bedding with loose slabs. It didn’t look great, so I told Dalek not to bother and after I’d extricated myself, we looked at the second hole. This dropped down to a feet first wriggle through a short rift into a small streamway. Sideways shuffling in narrow rift with occasional crawling ended at a scummy waterlogged rift and a left turn to a choke. We assumed



Dalek in the top entrance rift
Photo: Hugh St Lawrence

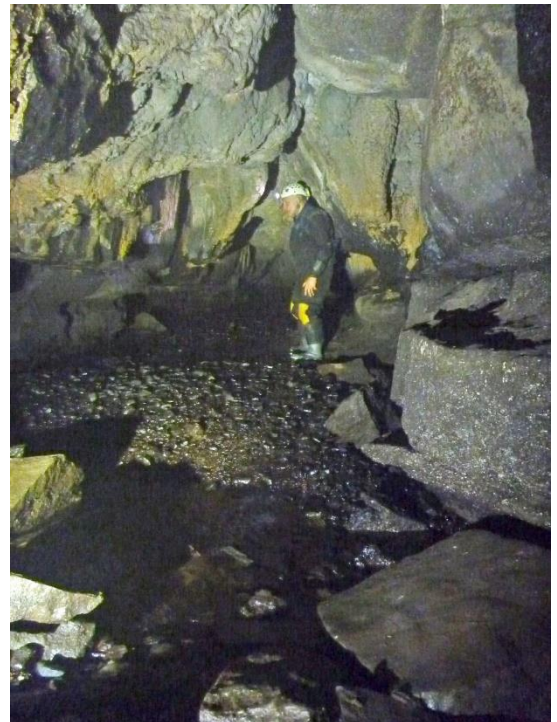
the scummy rift was the duck which connects with the main cave, but neither of us fancied it, this was a picnic trip after all! Exiting proved straightforward as far as the entrance climb where Dalek's gammy leg gave him a bit of difficulty, but we were soon in the sunshine again.

Off we went to the resurgence and main entrance...but no sign of the others? After wandering about for ten minutes we realised it was the wrong resurgence and corrected course to the middle gorge with the stack. Here, Anne was waiting with Steve Round who was walking his dog up Whernside.

Near the top of a boulder slope at the head of the gully was the main entrance into roomy passage which shrank a bit but was still easy walking and stooping in a flowstone encrusted passage to a junction.

Straight on was another wet rift, but we'd already had our quota of those for the day, so I turned right into a wide mud floored crawl. I shouted for Dalek to follow but no companion materialised. Roomy crawling seemed to end at a boulder pile and very low 'swim' beneath. But a climb into a roof bedding soon dropped down a small hole into easy dry going to a slope with daylight filtering in through another entrance. I pushed a low cobbly crawl for ten metres, but flat-out wetness wasn't really what I'd come for, so I popped out the daylight hole into the bottom of a deep green gully

A few minutes' walk and I was back with the others who were already changed. Dalek and I never saw Colin and Andy in the main cave, and assume they were hiding as a trick, ha-ha. But maybe they never went in the cave at all!



Walking passage inside the main entrance
Photo: Hugh St Lawrence

After a thoroughly enjoyable grovel around an unusual and little visited cave, we set off back via the easy path down. Anne set a record for the return to Ribblehead, while Andy hobbled in last suffering from blistered feet - he'd worn his wellies for the walk up and down. Silly boy!

Hugh St Lawrence

Greensett Cave, Whernside – Andy and Colin's Trip

3rd August 2024

Dalek, Andy Hall, Anne Jones, Colin Jones, Hugh St Lawrence

Colin, Anne, Dalek and I set off in front of Hugh for the long walk up to Greensett Caves. We passed Blea Moor tunnel and took a direct line up the hillside past Low Force and High Force waterfalls. That proved to be an error as Hugh arrived first at the sinks to the caves below Greensett Tarn. We had a brief stop here and left Hugh and Dalek exploring the upper entrances as described above. The three of us wandered across the limestone pavement past an obvious entrance in a rock walled shakehole down to the resurgence.

Colin and I changed into caving gear and set off to explore. The main entrance to Greensett Cave is not immediately obvious as it is hidden behind rocks at the top of the boulder pile. This leads down a slope to the flat 4m wide roofed passage.



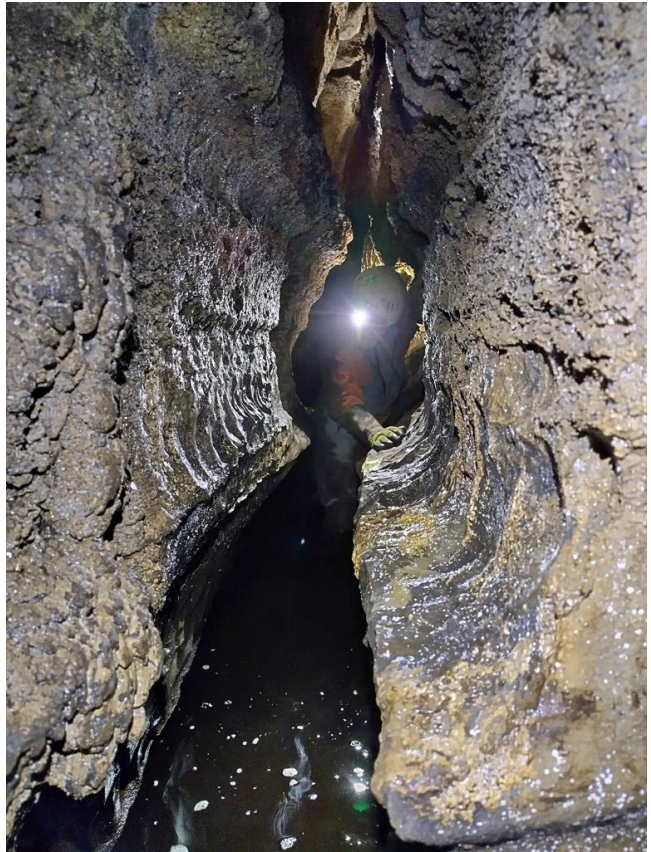
Andy in passage near the main entrance
Photo: Colin Jones

A mainly walking passage leads to an obvious junction and we turned right through a low crawl covered in black mud leading to more walking followed by a roof fall with a way over the top and down a slot to an interesting oval passage and more walking to a chamber with daylight entering from the roof. There is an awkward exit here up through a small hole out into the rock walled shakehole we had passed earlier. We then went back to the downstream entrance to find Steve Round and his dog talking to Anne.

The two of us then returned for a second trip to take photographs. This time we investigated the left-hand turn at the junction. I explored this for through a narrow joint controlled passage in thigh deep water to a wet crawl where I turned back. We carried on up the right turn taking more photos and as Colin exited up the awkward hole. I continued down left to the stream into a crawl under some dodgy looking blocks. I turned round at this point as my picnic was waiting for me on the surface.

We all convened back at the main entrance where we had another break and food stop followed by gear washing in the resurgence stream. We returned via the easier route used by Hugh back to our cars at the railway station at Ribblehead. Dalek got a lift with his bike back to Long Preston from Colin and Anne, while Hugh and I went for a pint at the Station Inn. A jolly summer's day out. The walk there and back takes longer than the caving trip.

Andy Hall



Andy in wet rift near left-hand branch
Photo: Colin Jones



The team at the main entrance
Photo: Hugh St Lawrence

Digging and Surveying Reports

No Parsan! – Part 1: Mistral, The Frontier

2nd March 2024

Dinny Davies, Hugh St Lawrence, Gwen Tawy

The famous rallying cry of Republicans in the Spanish civil war seems to have been adopted by the caves of Ease Gill – or caves anywhere, most likely! “They Shall Not Pass!” is the refrain, as the caves battle back against all the odds to stop the forward progress of cavers. Or so it seemed at the time!

It’s March 2nd and a slightly soggy day, but Dinny and Gwen have agreed to accompany me to The Frontier in Pippikin, not far beyond the Mistral entrance. Our mission? – Ray wants The Frontier mapped for the soon to be published Sheet X of the Ease Gill survey. The Frontier is a series of passages extending beneath The Crumbles and includes a small streamway to a sump which feeds the Border Sump in the Earby Series. I also have a draughting lead to investigate from last time I was there...which is over 30 years ago! It was a very inviting lead with lots of airflow, that needed a touch of enlargement. So, as well as survey gear, I have a heavy bag of capping tools. Fortunately, we’ve shared this out, so the pensioner doesn’t struggle too much!

What I’ve failed to bring along is an accurate memory of the entry to this series – which begins with a tight crawl to an acute (90° or less) bend up into a body size tube. But I’ve been there before, and indeed almost got Ray around the bend on one occasion (when he was a bit slimmer!) Dinny and Gwen are young and flexible, there’ll be no problem. Erm....

We pass the Mistral crawl and ignore the left turn to The Hobbit. Straight on and down is our route, a series of climbs through slightly dodgy boulders until the walls become more solid in a mud floored tube of almost walking size. All too soon the pleasantries end, and a dribble of water flows left into a small T-shaped thutch.



Dinny entering the Frontier squeeze
Photo Credit: Hugh St Lawrence

Leaving my bag for a minute I throw myself headfirst into the upper, wider part of the keyhole, but within a body length my chest is jammed against a bulge of rock. Lots of faffing around to gain an inch here, an inch there.... but no, I’m not going to fit this way. I back out and turtle over so I’m looking at the ceiling...but I’m not going to fit that way, either! Time for a flexible friend!

Gwen is next and easily progresses beyond the offending bulge. She can see around the acute bend up into the body size tube...but can’t pass the bend! She also turns over and tries it on her back, but still to no avail.

Dinny doesn't think we're trying hard enough – "Get out the way, let me have a look' he moans. Several minutes of audible thrutching later his boots reappear, and we assist him, defeated, from the keyhole.

Next up Gwen decides to have a go feet-first. Good thinking! This definitely gets her further than before, with legs starting to creep up around the bend into the tube. But she still can't fit – or is maybe worried that if she commits, she might be marooned beyond the bend, unable to see where she's going, with no one able to help her. Discretion becomes the better part of valour!

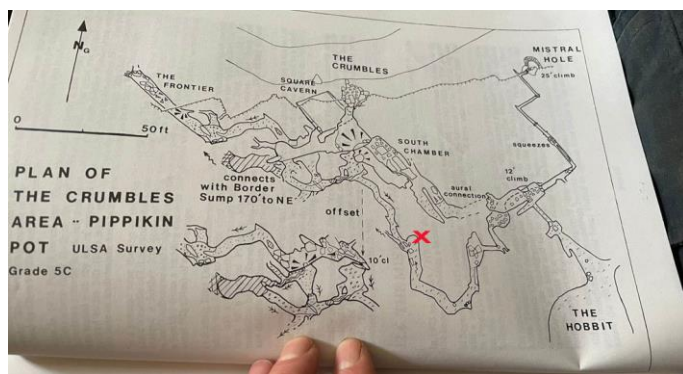
Not to be outdone by the female in the party, Dinny and I both try the feet-first fandango, which does feel closer to do-able...but isn't actually do-able! This is ridiculous, just around the bend and through the tube lies a hundred metres of open cave! But...



Gwen at maximum effort
Photo Credit: Hugh St Lawrence

No Pasaran!

Well, we brought the capping gear! So, I spend an hour in awkward muddy conditions drilling holes in the bulgy bits and blowing them a bit less bulgy. But guess what, we still can't fit! Or at least on this occasion it's got the better of us.



X marks the spot of the squeeze
Photo Credit: Hugh St Lawrence

A little despondent and cold we start out. To cheer ourselves and warm up a bit we decide on a quick look down the Far Streamway as Gwen hasn't been before. It's pretty easy mixed going but with some really nice bits of passage, quite photogenic in places. We also revisit a side passage to roped aven climbs which are very close to, and indeed connect with (very tight!), the passage below the boulder climbs in Mistral. As a finishing touch we follow a crawl back up to pop out in the route to Dusty Junction. A saunter back through The Hobbit, pick up the bags, and we're soon out in a blustery but sunnier afternoon.

Despite the mission failure it was a fun day out. And I'm sure I heard Dinny and Gwen agree to return sometime!

Hugh St Lawrence

Fibretip, Like a Phoenix

Like a Phoenix, Fibretip surfaces again.



Fibretip
Photo Credit: Ray Duffy

A long time ago the Dark Lord wondered where the water going into the Rollerball shakehole disappeared had disappeared to and he started digging. There soon appeared a small hole taking the water and in keeping with Rollerball (named because of the cobbles rolling into it, not the pen type of the same name), he named his hole Fibretip. Many capping trips involving Hugh, Ray, Sam, Andy *et al.*, finely led to a boulder blocking a drop so work stopped. We were fairly sure the water turned up in Mostly 'Armless passage at the upstream end of Samori Passage in Rollerball but it wasn't certain.

In the intervening years the unstable bank of till above collapsed into the hole to Fibretip and the entrance seemed to disappear, oh dear! It stayed completely covered for years as no-one could be bothered about it and Hugh had many other projects calling for his attention. However, I couldn't leave a hole to be lost and not being able to go underground, for medical reasons, I decided to find the illusive entrance. After hours of digging sloppy mud, I eventually got down to the slabs covering the hole, these had fortunately saved the hole from the overburden.

Time to bring 'the walling guru', so Sam started to build a retaining wall while I delivered many, many rocks and packing for the project. By the beginning of June, we'd got a nice wall surrounding the hole and the entrance had risen from the ashes. The hole definitely feeds the spout at Mostly 'Armless as while the lads had been trying to wash off at this point they found the water issuing from the passage was really muddy from my digging work on the surface, a positive dye test if ever there was.

The hole is now ready for a new generation of diggers to take up the cudgel, as Fibretip would be a more direct way to the bottom of Rollerball as it's less than 20 metres vertically and 10 metres horizontally from the end of Mostly 'Armless passage, so a couple of pitches maybe?

Ray Duffy

Over There – Extension

July 2024

Johnny 'Braindead' Baker

Over There is a stream sink 200m east of Lancaster Hole, which I started digging in 2020. I had noted the sink a decade earlier as a likely source of the water in Razor Aven in the Earby Series. Over the next four years of almost exclusive solo trips, the dig consisted of an 8m scaffolded entrance shaft leading to a few metres of rift passage into a choked shaft where I had dug down several metres against a solid limestone wall in a series of scaffolded drops to a total depth of 14m from the surface. Occasionally I thought I could feel a draught as I prodded the floor with a crowbar, but the dribbles of water soon washed in shingle to block these test holes. Progress stalled somewhat due to the need of dry weather, winter floods washing in debris, and the spoil needing to be taken to the surface. However, in the spring and early summer of 2024 after a few trips with willing volunteers the dig was back on track, and another 2m depth gained.

But something was telling me that the way on was off to the side of the bottom section of the underground shaft. Due to the shape of the solid wall, it was relatively easy to extend the scaffolding sideways and dig down next to this bottom section, nudging the dig a metre to the east. This paid dividends with the unearthing of a strong cold draught, but again, it was coming from the east of my new shaft. The wall was starting to undercut, and I decided to utilise this, rather than try to drive a horizontal shaft under the cobbles. So, I set to with capping the undercut with the intention of effectively mining a safe passage to the side of the loose cobbles, which presumably stretched all the way back up to the surface.

A few trips later, and I could see what looked like a rift going off about 2m along my capped crawl. The problem was that the entire lefthand wall of the crawl was the base of a loose cobble slope. I threw caution to the wind, and slowly inched past the protruding cobbles and reached the solid wall, this was indeed the start of a proper passage a metre high and half a metre wide. This continued for about 8m to a flowstone blockage with a low bedding underneath. The floor was shingly, and a brief dig enabled me to see along another 3m, but with no obvious way on.

Satisfied with my breakthrough, I retreated to eye-up the cobbly slope to work out what shoring would be required to make it safer. At this point, there was a small unprovoked collapse of a few small stones, but enough for me to make a very sharp exit!

Once back on the surface, I messaged Hugh to see if he was available to give moral support while I went in to sort the shoring. He was free that evening, so we went back Over There to stabilize the crawl and survey the extension. I went in with some short scaff poles and a bag of tools, while Hugh tried to retrieve his joysticks which had been lost on a previous trip.

I dragged the gear through the crawl and picked up a pole to try it for size. At this moment there was a big rumble, and I fended off a couple of cobbles with the pole. Somewhat unnerving, but the rumble only lasted a split second. I was unhurt, and not overly surprised to see my exit blocked by a few hundred kilos of rock. There were gaps between the blockage,

but not big enough to get through. When Hugh arrived at the crawl he saw the blockage, and asked where the way on was!

I explained the situation and Hugh offered the moral support that I needed and made a couple of trips to the surface to fetch bits as required. I cracked on and placed a scaff pole. We then cleared some of the blockage so Hugh could pass a longer pole through....cue a second rockslide. This was smaller, but equally as annoying as the first had been. Eventually, three poles and some shoring were placed, and the fallen cobbles dragged into the extension.



Johnny on the wrong side of the collapse in Houdini Crawl
Photo Credit: Hugh St Lawrence

After being isolated for two hours I was joined by Hugh. We went to the end, and I spent an hour digging under the flowstone, this inevitably resulted in having to wallow in an ever-growing puddle. My technique was to go in feet first on my front and drag the shingle back with my feet. When I'd had enough, Hugh wanted a quick look before exiting. He just managed to turn around and go in headfirst, and thought he could see the roof rising to the left. But as it was already after midnight, we deemed it time to survey our way out, getting back to the Farm by 1.30am.

I returned the next (the same!) day and spent some time adding more scaffold and shoring, and then digging the shingle at the end. After two hours of dragging stones back with my feet, I could bend my knees and wave my feet around in what I presumed was a small bell in the roof. My head was about a metre into the crawl. When I looked past my feet, cobbles prevented me seeing if anything lay ahead, but the cool draught was very enticing.

Upon hearing of the being temporarily trapped episode, Ray suggested a name for the passage, and "Houdini Crawl" was named.

Hugh was keen to have a go at the dig, and was unhappy with some of the survey data so wanted to resurvey the extension. We arranged a trip for Wednesday 24th July 2024. I went in early and fitted another pole, and when Hugh arrived we swapped places and he added yet more security. Satisfied that we had made the crawl as safe as we could with available resources, Hugh set off to dig the end. I started moving the spoil back out of the way, and barely thirty seconds after Hugh entered the crawl, I heard muffled shouting.

I moved to the start of the crawl, "How's it going?" I asked.

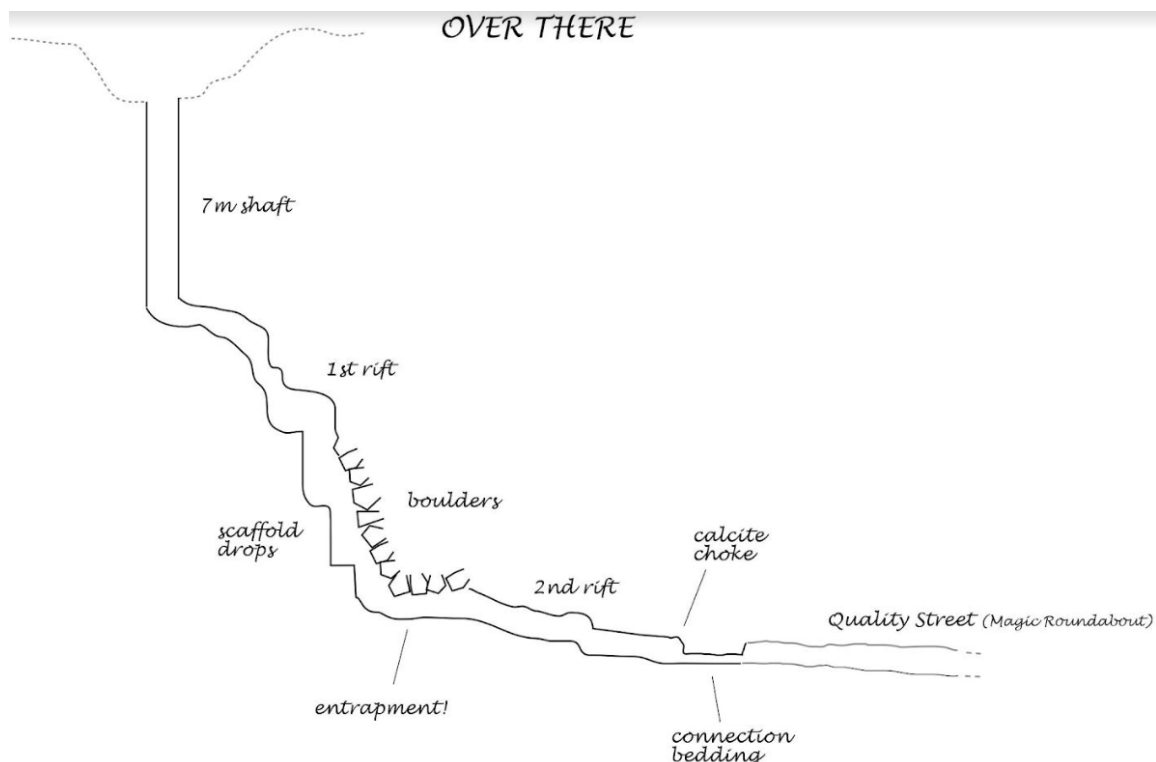
"You're already through! I'm in a passage! Bring the survey kit" came the reply.

He had got though without needing any more digging. Hugh advised me to go headfirst, but I doubted I would be able to turn around in the small passage so went in feet first again. I reached the point where I could get my feet up, and they were grabbed by Hugh. I couldn't quite get my chest any further, but Hugh said there was space to kick shingle forwards and barely a minute later I was through.

The passage was a good metre high, and easy crawling avoided breaking the plentiful pretties. We thought it likely that we had connected to known passage, and as we progressed it became clear that we had joined up with the system. We proceeded through a low wet crawl to the top of a 1.5m headfirst skydive, which was an entertaining manoeuvre. This led via a choice of routes to a well decorated 10m high aven. Satisfied that we would be able to recognize these features on the Lancs Hole survey, we exited, surveying back from the skydive for good measure.

Back at the Farm we looked at the survey and confirmed that we had connected to the end of Quality Street in the Magic Roundabout series. My four-year long quest was over. Including the numerous walks to the entrance carrying scaffold poles or shoring, I must have done 200 trips, for barely 20 metres of cave. I'm slightly disappointed that Over There isn't the source of the Razor Aven water as I had originally supposed, but beggars can't be choosers!

Thanks go to Hugh St L, Ray D, Sam L, Andy H, Rob S, Pete H, Sandra B and Ed, and everyone else that gave encouragement or help.



Johnny 'Braindead' Baker

Lancaster Hole to Over There

31st July 2024

Johnny 'Braindead' Baker

I arranged a trip to try an Over There – Lancs Hole through trip for 31st July, so I decided to go in and rig Lancs entrance on the 30th. This evolved into going to check the condition of the rope on Arson Shaft, and then into trying the through trip out of Over There. All went well until the roof traverse at the start of Old Kent Road. The way on looked small.

Progress was made by thrutching along at the top of a tall narrow stream passage. To start with, there were the occasional foot or hand holds, and I got along a few body lengths. However, I reached a smooth corner where I decided the consequences of slipping down into the tighter section below didn't justify the risk. To be fair I think I might still have bottled it even if I hadn't been on a solo trip.

From studying the survey, I knew there was an alternative route via a roof crawl. I found the crawl and progressed until a calcited-in rock made a squeeze which at first sight I thought I would never fit through. But I somehow managed to wriggle through, and arrived in the roof of the stream passage, further along than I had reached earlier. However, the way on looked even worse than before, and would have involved a very committing slide down to a wider section. Disappointed, I had to admit defeat.

Upon looking at the survey back at The Farm, I was only a dozen or so metres from where I'd been to from the other end. Unfortunately, this could be a short length of passage that I'll never visit.

At least I have the distinction of being the first person to FAIL to do a Lancs-Over There through trip!

Johnny 'Braindead' Baker

I have a cunning plan!

Ray Duffy, Sam Lieberman

Those words are usually associated with the sound of a stampede away from me, weird! However, my best mate Sam Lieberman seems to be always willing to fall in with my crazy plans, and so we found ourselves at the last car parking place on Leck Fell and setting off for a dose of 'Spotholing'. For those not aware of this arm of our sport 'spotholing' involves wandering around, often fairly aimlessly, whilst poking into every depression in the hope of finding that most elusive of features, a going lead.

The first order of business was to find Bye George Pot as Sam had never been to the entrance and we were heading that way, roughly, on our search for the stream that feeds the avens at

the end of Ratbag Inlet. A little bit of useless searching and then I got the guidebook out and checked where it should be, and surprisingly it was. However, you'd never know it was there in the shakehole, as the entrance (see photo - right) was covered with peat and reeds.

While I did the photography Sam got stuck in and dug out the flimsy and deteriorating fibreglass cover. At the bottom of the entrance shaft there seemed to be a black plastic bag: let's hope it's something out of Viz and not a dead sheep (see photo below). A new more substantial lid slightly raised up on rocks might make the entrance remain visible.



Locating Bye George Entrance
Photo Credit: Ray Duffy



Bye George Entrance Shaft
Photo Credit: Ray Duffy

Bye George all sorted we floundered over the fell in the direction the GPS was telling us to head, as I'd got the coordinates for the avens in Ratbag Inlet from the position file in Survex. When we arrived at our destination the more enticing prospect was a bit further along the fell, and that's where we started digging (see photo below).

I took the first spell while Sam wandered around picking blueberries but after changing over protagonists it became apparent that this was not to be the magnificent discovery we'd hoped for, typical!

Undeterred by this failure we set off looking in every shakehole as we wound our way back uphill heading for the flattening in the slope of the fell. Poking in any hole with a promising hole at the bottom while prodding with my ski pole. Eventually we were rewarded with the pole unable to reach the bottom of one small opening, hmmm! Out came the helmets and with lights on full beam we could see clean-washed rocks about 2-3 metres below.

This hole would definitely succumb to digging but would require scaffolding and shoring. (SD 67009/80166@338m). The distance from the dig to where Ratbag Inlet avens



New dig?
Photo Credit: Ray Duffy

appear to be is a fair distance (183m east and 64m south of avens and 17m higher) so there might be a fair bit of horizontal passage but probably it could be tortuous as well, bargain!

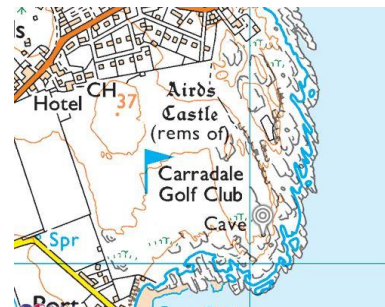
Several other likely candidate shakeholes were inspected but none appeared as promising as our deep wet sink, so we wended our way back up to Leck Fell House having had a great afternoon's fun with a fine breeze to keep the midges at bay and no sign of the forecast showers, wonderful afternoon's sport.

Ray Duffy

(Not) Cave Surveying in Scotland

Emma Key, Bill Nix

Bill had been talking to a friend about a couple of caves which he had noticed on the Scottish Cave and Mine Database near to where we go on holiday a couple of times each year. One was near to Campbeltown and reasonably extensive, although it was apparently hard to find in the summer due to being hidden in extensive bracken growth, we decided to save this for another visit in the winter or spring.



Carradale Cave

Kintyre, Carradale, Port Rìgh, Argyllshire.

NGR:	NR 82030 38070	Alternate Names: None recorded.
WGS84:	55.58734, -5.46037	
Length:	Not recorded	
Vert. Range:	Not recorded	
Altitude:	Not recorded	
Geology:	Not recorded	
Tags:	Cave	
Registry:	main	

The other was also marked as "cave" on the OS map and the all the information available on the registry was "not recorded". It is only about 1/2 mile from where we stay so felt investigation was needed. My optimism of caves measureless to man was high so I borrowed a survey kit and big tape measure from the Red Rose before we went our recent holiday there.

One damp and drizzly afternoon, we decided to wrench ourselves away from the teapot and go exploring. Bill had hazy memories of the cave from his childhood and suggested we leave taking the survey kit for another day. Armed with the OS app on my phone we strode off across the golf course towards the shoreline where the cave was marked.



Carradale Cave
Photo Credit: Emma Key

We bashed our way through soggy bracken to the location on a rocky outcrop on the edge of the golf course. Bill found a very small rock arch at the top of the gully which was exactly where the legendary cave was marked on the map. I was convinced that there had to be more to it than that but after climbing up, sliding down and poking all around the gully I had to concede that it was indeed the Great Cave of Carradale!

Oh well; it got us out for a bit of fresh air and maybe the Kintyre Master Cave is still out there somewhere awaiting discovery!

Emma Key

Blasts from the Past

Gingling Solo: An Underrated, yet Superb Caving Trip

9th June 1996

Dalek

As I was Meets Secretary in 1996, I thought that any would-be (or even full) member would be interested in this exciting venture on this dry June day. Since I now had a car, I got the tackle out for a Big Rift caving trip. All went into a tackle sack with my SRT kit.

On Sunday 9th June I woke up early at 8:30. Breakfast of Weetabix and some apple pie with custard. Since Jack Kelly wasn't going anywhere due to his foot injury, caused by running into a stone wall when landing Chris Kinghorn's Paraglider, I felt pity for him and gave him some of my brekkie. Got a lift with Paul Wilkinson (Youth) to get my car from the Marton Arms. He declined to go down since he had done a Gingling Hole trip two weeks ago on ULSA's trip down the Big Pitch route.

Called at Jerome's tent by The Flying Horseshoes at Clapham Station. Not interested! So, to Bernies to see Steve Helsdon and Gavin Davidge, but again, they weren't sure about doing it! It seemed such a shame to miss this golden opportunity to do this. So, 23 minutes later I was the only one parked at Dale Head!

Underway just after 12:00 and down the entrance at 12:45. Abbed down on my Fig 8 and made rapid progress down to the 'Ammered Ole' in 50 minutes! I'd free climbed pitch 2 and bypassed pitches 3 and 4. The fourth pitch didn't require rigging in any case as it was a traverse over and down to Stal Chamber. It was steady going down The Rift, and I thought that 'The Thrutch' would be OK, but on the return it wasn't. A right-hand bend into a canal and nearly chest deep water to a narrowing where I leaned through, while the tackle bag came through under water. Through a pool and a wade to a flowstone blockage. A slide over, with the bag being awkward to pull through due to it being lopsided. Emerging under an aven.

More sliding and then a short walk in nice passage to the 7th pitch. There was a small pool and 2 ledges to the head of it. Couldn't see any bolt holes and there were few naturals. So, I used a stal boss on the floor to a flowstone thread (underneath it) and tape that took me over the edge. I never saw the rebelay bolt and only saw it on the return! So, a deviation was used from a chunky wall flake (short sling/krab). There was plenty of rope lying on the floor (20m). A Fig 9 knot to show this. About 1.25 hours to here.

The next and 8th pitch would've been straight forward with 2 bolts on opposite walls, but no, there was only one that I saw. So, I tried to be clever and used about 20 to 25ft rope to a backup block; but of course, this left me with 20ft too short!! I estimated that I'd be able to Chimney it back up (only just succeeded).

There was no such luck with the 9th pitch, or the 10th as these were only obvious as wooden beam belays. A narrow passage led to the 10th. I decided that I'd be able to free climb this

one on the return, as I did; stepping deftly onto the floor of the rift, about 2–3 metres below the pitch head.

The last pitch, no. 11 had a mud bank with nothing to go on, and signs of scuffing in the mud! One would be tempted to go over the top, but it was far too slippery, so I decided to take the narrow rift option. It was free climbable, but only just! The mud made gripping on the walls, difficult. Viewed the sump from say, 12 to 15ft above it as it was too risky to go any further. One would be helplessly stuck in the pool without any means of pulling yourself out!!

Free climbed the 10th OK, but not so with the 9th! Got almost to the top, where it narrowed to form a squeeze, and the effort required to get there caused me to pant like a steam engine! I couldn't hold onto the precarious walls of mud and slithered down dejectedly. This, together with the effort of reaching up after doing a 20ft chimney to gain the rope end on the 9th caused me to lose a lot of strength! Felt generally weakened and dehydrated. A rest stop and then I got up the 8th. It was now 4:15 and the thought of The Thrutch was mortifying.

At The Thrutch the main bulb on my FX5 headset blew! So, I was now on my pilot bulb. "Shit, if this one goes out then I'm done for" I thought. I tried to move more quickly but the confines of the passage proved otherwise. With much effort and thought put into extricating myself from The Thrutch, I now felt more confident.

I tried and succeeded to free climb the 6th pitch (from directly below it) and hand-lined the 5th (traversing around the drop). Similarly bypassing and then chimneying directly up above the 4th to reach the top of the 3rd went quite quickly. Going through the boulders route, back and below onto the chamber to reach the 2nd. The free climb was easy. I felt as though the 1st was also free-climbable. With care, taking it methodically and weighing up every move, I reached the railway sleeper! 5:50!

A five-hour solo that really took it out of me yet felt so good to have achieved. Pulling up the heavy bag I was elated to walk back to the car for 6:30. Now it was throwing it down. Home for 7:50 and made myself a pasta Bolognese. I let the FX5 dim and wrote my account about this trip. I rang Johnny Shaw regarding the break-in into the tackle store on Tuesday June 4th! I told him about the 2 suspicious men, hanging back at The Farm on Thursday, 30th May, when Mike and I were doing a Lancs Trip! He said that he would ring the police and tell me what happened later in the week.

Dalek

P.S It seems a shame that not many Red Rosers seemed interested to go down it on the scheduled April 2024 trip that Hannah had organised for us all. It is one of the Best All Round Trips in The Dales!!! See [Gingling Hole Fools Paradise YouTube Video](#) by Burnley Caving Club.

How to Make Friends in Langcliffe Pot

3rd August 1986

Dalek, Mike Cooper, Mick McHale

After trying to get to Kilnsey Crag by way of a broken-down bus and hitchhiking for 90% of the way, I succeeded in getting down Dowkabottom Cave yesterday. The object of the exercise was to have taken photos but didn't due to:-

- a) Forgetting to pack my battery belt carrier (so a pocket of my furry suit for the Oldham lamp sufficed).
- b) I knocked the tripod over and chipped it.
- c) Camera battery power was low and so the shutter wouldn't fire.

Then I made my way to Buckden House to see my newfound friend, Mick McHale, an outdoor instructor and caver.

The morning dawned at 07:00. Sausages, beans and omelette for breakfast. Mike Cooper arrived at 08:00 from Howarth. Got 6 ladders, 2 spreaders, 2 belays, a 28m (100') rope, and a 120' rope ready for Oddmire and Nemesis.

Departed at 10:00 and parked at Scar House Gate. Changed and walked up the used track to Oddmire for 11:00. Used the metal bar at back for the 1st belay and 2nd for head of the Chimney climb with the ladder. The 3rd rebelay to my bolt hole with a ladder. There were three ways down over rock debris. The furthest was a dead-end climb. Righthand side was a hole to nowhere. Lefthand side is a narrow rift to the streamway.

From here it was downstream in pools and rift to Strid Passage. This route is apparently the best way in as we found out later. 1600' in just over half an hour and Hammerdale Dub was reached. Relatively easy going for 200' and another 700' to Dry Way. Through 500' of awkward boulders and passage to gain Langstrothdale Chase. A lovely passage of 4000' length with various obstacles to negotiate in its length, makes this a really nice stomping passage on this side of Nemesis. 1200' of crawling, out of the water to Boireau falls Chamber, through a low rift, squeeze and bedding. In a spacious but muddy chamber led to a low point and small hole in the floor. Past a metal bar and wire to a more awkward hole to the floor and crawl to Nemesis Chamber. One had to turn around and face the other way then crawl flat out in the water to a slight drop to reach this chamber!

We tied the rope to 2 boulders, 20-30' further back (later I would add spits with bolts at the standing ledge to use for SRT). All of us abbed down on Mick's Fig 8 and tape harness. At the bottom and ahead was a small wet pool that we reversed into so that we could immediately gain a climb up and along a slab to go down again. I went to the right of The Choke, which was sharp and tight! The lefthand route was the easier of the two. Up a slope and down again, then a slither to the left of a boulder chamber, i.e. in a narrow rift. At the foot of this is a short crawl to start of The Proper Choke!

There was more water than the last time that I was here. Now it was 3:37 and Mike Cooper 'freaked out' when he saw that I needed to take my battery/belay belt off, saying that we were 'Mad' to go on and that the weather was going to 'Break'! I said we'd be about 10 minutes, but I really didn't know how long we'd be. I got through a rather tight and fiendish looking small triangular hole (that went from horizontal to vertical) and wondered how the heck I'd get back through it! Mick had to hold my lamp and belt for me as I did it. All this took about 10 minutes, and coming back I couldn't see which way was the best way through to get to Mick. It was too narrow in the water (frothy scum was everywhere). After much delay we decided to move a small boulder in the stream way. As he pulled, I kicked it away. The next was a small triangular hole that Mick had no trouble passing. Again, he had to hold my lamp, and again I tried to shallow breathe to force my way through! Facing lefthand down, my right shoulder kept jamming and my wetsuit kept snagging on my chest. After what seemed like an age I got through. Mick self-lined up the pitch, then lined me up. We were starting to get tired by now.

Amazingly, Mike Cooper had gone, yet left 3 bits of Peanut Yorkie atop a boulder, for us. That was a jolly good gesture, considering that we (or rather I) didn't know the guy! We packed up and were off at 5:05, the next obstacle being BFCh.

From the crawl I had to turn around to stand up from in a crouched position. I'd got the upper half through, but left hand/wrist was pinned to my side and it was agony to try to pull it through! So down I went again. Tried again, but this time Mick was screaming at me to get a move on. Success! In the small antechamber was the metal bar. I required a leg up from Mick who stood directly below so that I could stand on his shoulder and get out. Mick was again ok on this manoeuvre.

More choc, 2 pieces this time. So, it went on, all the way out. I was really knackered, yet we both needed to alternate in carrying the big yellow bag of rope with 2 ladders in it! Drank several times after eating the choc bites, which now, started to make both of us feel sick! Reached Skirfare Inlet junction at 7pm. We thought this would be quicker, despite being 3-4 times longer. Northern Caves described it as 'A nice pleasant passage', but it was anything but that.

The way becoming wetter and lower with lots of flat-out crawling. Got to Thunder Inlet at about 8pm (2600' onward). Mick was beginning to have doubts on the sanity and validity of this route. He asked several times if we had gone the wrong way up this Inlet. I said that we'd have heard it. We didn't but a sign up on the wall was arrowed 'out', so reinforced the feelings that we were nearly there.

The going got worse, i.e. flat out in shallow/deep water. Climbs up, over and under boulders, then flat out over a sharp and grainy calcite floor. Eventually at a drop to the familiar passage by 8:40. Up into Oddmire by 9pm. Detackled and out for 9:30. Buckden House at 10:30. Well, what a knacking long day out in the company of 2 new cavers for some of the time.

Dalek

7th April 1990

Dalek, Mike Cooper & various ULSA members

Since I had now established a camp of sorts at the far side of Nemesis Boulder Choke, I conceived this idea or, rather project, to check out any going leads that might reveal the missing link to hitherto, unknown depths that must lie there below the Yoredale Series of Limestone.

There were 10 ULSA lads already at the Kettlewell car park waiting for me and Mike Cooper. Eight of them walked up the hill with their gear in rucksacks. Mike and I got changed and were up there for 12:30. They were all waiting for us, still unchanged!

Used a 92' rope in the Oddmire entrance. The block just inside was the belay. This left 25' on the floor as spare. Whizzed down Strid Passage in 35 minutes, then a bombshell from Mike! He said he felt ill and didn't want to go all the way.

Arrived at my camp 'The OK Coral', where the shootout with the 'Big Guns' occurred, in the history books. My idea for this novel site. It was 5pm and I told Malcolm Bass that the unleaded petrol he'd brought in for my stove was actually leaded. I couldn't unscrew my BDH so had to bash the lid open; it was cracked anyway after dropping it beyond Nemesis Choke. The messages left in my notebook were scrappy, albeit had interesting reading material.

Dave Brock dived The Poseidon 2 Sump to no avail. Leaving at 7:20, we checked out the boulders at The Agora in the fissure in the righthand wall in Aphrodite Avenue. It got tighter as it got lower, and I got a bit knackered with the effort expended on this venture. Checked out the Proper Dementor Sump and got back to the last boulder climb, where I further climbed 30' above with the aid of Malcolm's lining. Rigged it for Malcolm and found that the wide bedding got a bit too low, and tight.

There was an echo and draft coming from a mousehole on the lefthand side. This required more persuasion from the use of a chisel, which we didn't have. Going back down I damaged my left knee on the climb down to Sacred Way, by banging it against the wall/rock. It was now 10 minutes or so to get from The Agora to my camp, and it was now 10:10! I wanted to dig a few more minutes in a high fissure to no avail.



The Agora Formation
Photo Credit: Dalek (Taken on 10th May 1998)

So, here we all were in Langcliffe on a Saturday night having a brew and chocolate to eat. Leaving at 11:10 with Malcolm, we were the last ones to go. As expected, there was a bottleneck of bodies awaiting their turn to go up Nemesis Pitch. On reaching Langstrothdale Chase, I felt really tired and was moving along just on Impulse Power (see Star Trek!). I couldn't keep up with Malcolm, so had Javed Bhatti for company until the exit. A chocolate bar at Strid Junction helped a lot. Due to my delicate left knee I had to crawl now on my righthand side, with my battery on my Left. This felt so strange as I always tended to crawl on my left side.

It took us just over an hour to reach The Oddmire climbs. I managed to handline up and assisted Javed, by handing over my Croll for his Prussik. Pulled up his BDH and bag, and we were out for 04:00. Freezing conditions now, yet Mike Cooper was the only one waiting for us out here!!

Followed Javed by his route, as by now I was in a daze. I was glad I had my oversuit hood to keep me warm. Down to the car park for 05:00 and added the petrol back into my car. Malcolm and another were waiting for us. Away 5:40, following Mike Cooper. Told Sara Spillet that we were out (lived in Grassington). Got to Bradford for 07:00 and had to really concentrate all the way to stay awake to get there!

Dalek

10th May 1998

Dalek, Mike Cooper

Langcliffe Pot, Oddmire Ent. Project: NFTFH: 13 hours



Mike in Boireau Falls Chamber
Photo Credit: Dalek

I was up at 05:45 and met Mike in Utley, Keighley at 06:30! Kettlewell by 7:30 to get up to the hole by 08:15. We had to move a block and stone to gain access to it. Got to Boireau Falls Chamber (BFCh) by 11:00 and through Nemesis by 12:00. Went to have a look at The Poseidon Sump by going through a 1-foot-long duck with 4" of airspace, I free diving it. A big chamber to a big sump, by a muddy slope. At The OK Coral passage there were loads of camp gear strewn about, including my water bag and

BDH's. The climb was 5 mins from here but with an ULSA rope on it now. Free climbing it up I pulled up the bag of Darren Drums which had the snacks of pickled cheese sarnies, Peperamis, and my camera gear.

I'd take 6 pics of BFCh, Nemesis, Agora, and New Fearnought Streamway Choke. The passage through Aphrodite Avenue, 10 mins away, involved traversing over Gour Pools, in a tall rift passage. Another 15 mins through the boulder obstacles and passing The Sandy Walled Climb (rope on it) we reached the Dementor Sump and the climb

up to The New Fearnought Streamway. The 3-metre climb led above the passage to a massive choke. 4pm, and half hour spent here to sort Mike's light out, take a photo and eat some food.



Mike descending in Boireau Falls Chamber
Photo Credit: Dalek



Mike on Nemesis Pitch
Photo Credit: Dalek

It was a further hour to reach The Nemesis Choke. Mike insisted on taking more notes and I insisted on moving on out! Again, it was belt/battery off at The Duck Chamber, preceding the 2 squeezes in the water. Two pictures of Mike through the squeezes in BFCh, then it was a half hour whizz along Langstrothdale Chase. Mike insisted on going through the Wet Way and I on the Dry Way!

I'd have to take both bags through if I did it my way, so I relented. Wet Way took 15 mins. The first half was easy going in thigh deep water and the 2nd half in a narrow crawly section. Mike, of course was elated. Got through Strid Passage in 32 mins. I left Mike behind at The Block (the only place where you had the option to go under or over). I free-climbed the 3 entrance pitches. The exit was made at 9:30. Mike at 9:45. We jogged and walked it down for 10:30 and got changed but we didn't beat the pub's deadline for closing at 10:30! Just 2 cans on our return, and home for 12:00.

Dalek



Nemesis Choke
Photo Credit: Dalek



New Fearnought Choke
Photo Credit: Dalek

30th December 2001

Dalek & Yassen Roussev

12.5 hours

Up at 05:55, temperature outside -3°C. Yassen made us a cooked breakfast. Away at 07:40, Kettlewell for 08:45.

We were already in our clean caving kit at home (Big Softies-Yeah).

Began walk up from gravel heap at 09:00. Took the lefthand route up via gates to top of hill and then crossed over to our right. Over one very low wall, then climbed over another one. In the area at approx. 9:40. Spent an hour looking around for entrance. Mistook one that looked as if it had collapsed. Checked out a nearby rift in a shakehole. Choked! Went back one hole and found our entrance. Frozen boulders needed bashing in order to dislodge them. Icicles hung all around the small opening, necessitating breakage to gain the small crawl and pitch. The pitch or handline climb down was very slippery indeed. Shuffle down to head of first proper pitch. Bolt put in, then abseiled down to small ledge of second pitch. Another bolt then, again, abbed down on our belay belts to small chamber. Scrambled down a rift to reach the proper passage. Mainly crawling for 40 mins to reach Hammerdale Dub. 25 mins

walk/stoop to Dry Way, then 15 mins crawling to pop out into Langstrothdale Chase. This is a lovely tall and meandering passage, taking 30 mins to negotiate boulder piles and various obstacles en-route to Boireau Falls Passage, high up on the right. Time for our Pick n' Mix snack and a drink of juice.

Yassen always had his headset coming loose and falling off! Negotiated the flat out squeeze after the squirm down a squeeze to reach Boireau Falls Chamber. Now here lay the first tricky bit. A drop down an inverted funnel (fun on the return) to an antechamber to another drop and flat-out crawl in the streamway. Here, there were boulders all around to make it just that bit more difficult. This was nothing compared to what was to come! Gaining the head of Nemesis Pitch, I found my 100-foot rope there, still in the same place, high up on the left on a hidden shelf in my plastic bag for protection. All it needed were 2 maillons to loops I had left on the rope. A nice ledge to start the hang from and Yassen got down first. Rope pulled up and on with my harny and Fig 8. So it was that one kit sufficed for the both of us.

Lefthand side for first choke-prelim. It was still a struggle in the Proper Choke, first part. A triangular hole on the pelvis was tight. I was thankful that we had only to carry a mini SRT bag each, and one provided the snacks for us both.

On previous occasions I had taken one, and even two full tackle bags to bring in supplies for necessary exploration with my temporary explorers. They were Mick Forrest (Kenny Taylor's son), Pete Hall, Neil Pacey, Pete and Sara Spillet (BPC), and on occasion, just myself.

Continuing through The Choke, I noticed that the duck was low today. On some occasions it was desperate going through! Either way, I nearly lost my fleecy hood, and Yassen broke his strap on one miner's knee pad! A large water-logged chamber at the foot of the slope down from the triangular hole required crawling to reach a low arch and climb up over boulders. Everything around oneself looked precariously and dangerously loose! More so at the point where one had to go down onto a metal stemple, which of course held everything together. Holding our breaths, and with racing heartbeats we gingerly stepped onto it and into another lowish chamber. Soon we reached a solid looking wall, but a huge block of stone forced us to clamber up and traverse around it at height to finally pop out into the tall and impressive passage of Gasson's Series. All this took us about 45 mins to get through, and we could relax more now that the crux of the trip in was over.

I noticed that my left elbow gave me a sharp pain on trying to bend it to any degree. This would give me much more aggro next year, when I had to forgo any more caving after Easter so that I could have it operated on to remove damaged cartilage in there. Bypassing Poseidon Sump Passage to continue to the camp I'd set up some time ago, we then reached "The O.K. Coral". Here, we found all the cooking gear strewn all over the place. Now, it was that water reached this part and washed away all my cups etc, lodged into rocks nearby. Pools remained in further passages and the dry food store had perished. I'd take two bags of gear out later and would need to organise a team to come back to clean up the rest of the place. So, now it seemed that global warming was working its insidious way into My Project and it would never be the same again.

A free climb up by a fixed rope was ok, as was the climb down. Through the boulders at The Agora and now through to Silver Rake and Streamway. Another 15 mins to the bouldery area

and with the time at 5pm we decided we had better make our way back. A snack of chocolate at The Agora and Nemesis Choke. It was 6pm and it took us 42 mins to get through. I got up first. No cowstails were required as a foothold was gained on the ledge. Chest jammer off, easy now. Lowered all gear down to Yassen. He took ages to get up. Away at 8:10. Up BF Squeeze but Yassen unable without assistance. So back down again, and up as last one. Back at Langstrothdale Chase climb down we finished The Pick n' Mix off. 9pm! Half hour to Dry Way and 13 mins to get through. At Roads Junction he was 10mins behind. My left knee was badly bruised now. So, it took us 58mins to get through to the entrance pitches. My FX5 light was now fast growing dim. 10:43pm. I free climbed the pitch up. Yassen handlined up. This, only to save time kitting up! Both of us handlined the second part up. Left my bolt in.

The last part, to gain the ledge and out, proved to be a bitch. We staggered the gear on my rope. I went up first. Chest not wanting to go through. An icicle barred progress, so used a stone to smash it up. It was FREEZING now. Told later that it had got down to -10°C ! I had to line Yassen up. We used both our belay belts. Yassen was out for 11:45.

Freezing conditions meant that we were unable to coil the rope up. Snow was thick on the ground and Yassen slipped twice. Jogging down, I was unable to get a mobile signal through to Clare. Drove down to petrol station phone box. It was out of order. Here we got changed now as it was well after 12:00, and past our call out time. Drove over to Threshfield and the phone box there was ok. Apparently, Clare had rung Mike Cooper at 12:00, as arranged; but he was not in. Then Bull Pot Farm. Ian Watson (Watto) answered and told her to ring Skipton Police Station. A full rescue was in progress for an Oxford student (Rosa) who had abbed down the 4th pitch of Pool Sink and lost control of her descender, breaking her pelvis on landing! On driving off Clare rang me on my mobile phone (signal gained now). She'd be putting a curry on now. It was 00:45. Yassen was asleep in the car. Main roads were ok now, doing 70mph. Arrived home at 01:40. We stayed up until 05:00, excited as we were about the day out and glad of our return. I was last to turn in. Washed and charged FX5s up and furry suits into washing machine. Thighs and quads killed me. Left knee bruised, left elbow unable to move, neck hurt on twisting as did lower back! Not to mention that I was covered in cuts and bruises, especially on chest and back! Yassen was joking of course, when he said about doing it all again.

Got up at 11:00. After breakfast Clare insisted on getting beers in from ASDA. Yassen stayed in reading my Darren Diary. Met Ian Watson (Watto) outside in car park of ASDA. I was told it was Keith Sanderson (BICC) who had eventually phoned up CRO first. The police would have checked to see if car was still there (Kettlewell). Yassen stayed another night, and I took him to Pudsey train station the following day. Nuff said!

Dalek

First Visit to Bullpot Farm

May 1970

Richard Ellwood & Danny Ellwood

Hi all, I am a returning member from a long time ago, though there are still quite a few folk about who were here back then. My brother Danny is awaiting membership too, though as he lives in Malaysia he won't be at Bullpot any time soon. I thought it would be good to recount our first visit to Bullpot Farm in May 1970. We had a family walk over Ingleborough, and on spotting Greenwood Pot we went down with a box of matches, there was also a guy called Martyn Richmond with us who was in the Red Rose for a few years; he's now a judge in Hong Kong.

We decided to return the following week with bicycle lamps and a bit of rope, however my dad heard us discussing it and said "Don't be crazy, there's a man at work who does lots of caving, I'll ask him". The man was called Arthur Woodall - It's his initials on the wall of Battle of Britain Hall. He said "Just turn up at Bullpot Farm with a change of clothes and someone will take you underground". Accordingly, the next weekend me and Danny set off. We had found the place on a map and thought it best approached from Barbon.

Bus from Lancaster to Kirkby Lonsdale, sat in the shelter until the rain stopped then hitched to Barbon. An old guy in a Morris traveller dropped us by the pub. Walked up the hill taking turns to carry our old ex-army metal frame rucksack. Eventually we got to Green Lane and set off up towards the farm. Drizzle and a very indistinct path made us decide to drop down into Aygill and follow it up. At last, we could make out the farm and finished off into the farmyard.

Deserted, not a soul, no cars, people, nothing. Turned out it was the India Expedition leaving do in Buttermere. Having checked the map, it looked like we go down to the risings and follow Easegill to Cowan Bridge, and soon we were looking down Bullpot. We saw the hole in the side and with matches climbed down into the bottom of the open pot. It was very wet weather so Cat Hole would have been a soaking, and the other way needed tackle so we climbed up and out. Continuing along the track we saw a minivan heading up to Bullpot. Quick decision, and we crossed the wall and ran up to the road just as he came back.

A lad with his girlfriend having a run out, said he would take us to Kirkby Lonsdale. Unluckily he was in a head on in Casterton and in trouble as a crazy old woman told the cops she had seen it, which she hadn't. Police gave us a lift to Kirkby Lonsdale and bus home. On the way up New Street in Harry's window saw a notice, 'Interested in Caving? Contact Dr John Frankland on Fairfield Rd', about 100 yards from our house! I did, and soon I was a member. My brother Danny had to wait but we used to go in school holidays and explore County etc. I was just 15 by one week and Danny was 12 (for a fortnight). Happy Days.

Richard (Dick) Ellwood

Berger Through the Decades

Going back to near the start of my Caving Adventures when everything was new and exciting, I was enraptured and fascinated with doing The Gouffre Berger Classic deep trip in France.

1980 BPC Initial Trip

See also BPC Bulletin Vol.6 No.4 1981

So, 3 years after joining BPC I endeavoured to do this trip. I didn't get much advice regarding 'Do's and Dont's'! I had done SRT but hadn't any advice on the correct lengths of cowstails needed to do safe and proper change-overs. Also, the carbide lamp was always flickering out, so I got myself an 'Ever-Ready' Large Block Battery for shining on to the huge passages that I expected to see. This, together with a large Ammo Box to house my camera gear was what I took down to 'Hall of The Thirteen'. The photos were insignificant in the light of the feeble flash guns that I used. The Large 'Ever-Ready' battery grew very feeble, very quickly on my way out, as I had to use it all the time now due to the carbide failures! As a consequence, I was 'rescued' from Camp 1 to the exit in a time now of approx. 15 hours! The rest of the holiday went without any major hitches.

1983 BPC Pirate Trip

See also BPC Bulletin Vol.6 No.5 1985

As BPC were over in The Vercors this year, and after doing a thorough going over in Grotte de Bury over 3 days (I reckon this is The Next Best Trip to The Berger in the Vercors), then it came as some surprise that we found out that BICC (Bentham and Ingleton Caving Club) had rigged down The Berger and were away on a day off! So, with a car ride to The La Moliere Plateau, 2 very keen cavers were dropped off to rendezvous with the couple that brought them up by a given time that evening.

It didn't bode well that my lamp bottle leaked water, and John had forgotten his tube (to attach to the lamp). He took one from a poly bag that lay by the entrance. It was 2:45 when we got down the entrance. Dropping out of Aldo's into The Starless River, we initially took the wrong muddy passage but soon realised our mistake. There were the handline traverse, fixed rope descent, and a rather loose looking traverse line to avoid a pool. A quick look round Camp 1, then we turned back. My Carbide had gone out and my electric had gone dim, so had to follow John for most of the way out. Going up Aldo's, John had got himself 'jammed' by the knot and stayed like that for half an hour or more! Getting him off by removing the rope from 2 belays and undoing the knot! Of course, he had to be clipped into the traverse line above for safety. My carbide light kept briefly coming on when prussiking, then it died altogether at both the Meanders. I'd got rub points on my backside and forearms, while John suffered cramps from the exercise coupled with the concentrated Nestle goo he sucked on for sustenance from time to time. The trip took 6 hours, and with the walk back in the semi-darkness we only had 15 minutes to spare before our 'lift' friends arrived.

1988 CPC/Wessex Trips

This holiday was arranged with Maggie McPherson and Gary Smith of CPC, as my Chauffeurs for the duration of the holiday. It was Duncan Frew of The Wessex that organised the whole thing. Many new acquaintances were met, and stories were told over the campfires.

There were two rigging trips to Gontards and Abelles of 2 and 11 hours. Also, two bottoming trips of 27 and 10 hours. The last one was a solo! Since I'd gotten more experienced at caving, I undertook this solo trip as a test of my abilities to traverse through the pot at speed without any rigging or people in my way. So, on Sat 23rd July I stayed by the entrance on duty, with Mike Bertenshaw and Mick McHale. They'd been to Bourgin Hall taking photos and were resting up by the campfire that had now gone out.

I had a breakfast of 3 Weetabix, jam and bread, and tea. It was 08:00 and I bade farewell also to Rick and Pat Helliwell, who arrived at 07:40. Wearing only my Alpinex Suit, my wounds had mainly healed by now. That is my arms and back, from the gruelling 11-hour ferrying and rigging trip to Abelles on the 17th! No one was in sight, and with just my red tackle sack of personal provisions I made rapid progress to the bottom of Aldos in 31 mins. At Camp 1 in 1hr 05 where 3 Eldon lads were. Changed into my yellow oversuit and added the extra rubber inner tube cutouts for my knees and elbows. Arrived at Abelles inside 2 hours and 2h 45m at Camp 2. Using a swing cheek pulley on Claudine's Traverse line-wire, made abbing really smooth. Reached Baignoire by 11:27, and Hurricane pitch by 11:45. The Canals by 12:00!

I decided to wade along The Canals, as I knew the water got to armpits depth at one point. Traversing some of it to the end got me to an evil looking pool. Being clear and deep, I crossed over it on the left. Tried climbing back up on lefthand side, and zig-zagged up 30' but it was too exposed to carry on. There was a traverse ledge going to a boulder bridge, but it looked too dodgy, so I poked around lower down for 45 mins. Met Rick and Pat Helliwell at the crawl, after they'd done the Baignoire Traverse half hour earlier.

The traverse wireline of Reseau de Mat seemed impossibly hard to prusik up using my pulley and cowstails! The foot loop cord had twisted round my long cowstail so that the weight of me on the cord/pulley didn't allow me to move along. It was a catch 22 situation! I couldn't even take the top jammer off as the weight was still on it when sitting down on my chest jammer! I was now, just off the floor and too far from the walls to get a purchase on any grip that would have aided my situation somewhat. The only way to resolve the issue was to swing completely upside down, hook my legs round the wire (painful) and ease my weight off it that way! Fortunately, it worked, but it wasted more time and took it out of me (later).

At Camp 2 now by 1:50pm (1h 05 from the bottom). A half hour rest and a meal with tea. Abelles at 3:15. Whizzed through to the end of The Canals in 5 mins! Once up Balcony I stripped to furry suit only and got to Camp 1 by 4pm. That's 8 hours now. I still felt good but needed a drink as I was now dying of thirst. An Orange Redoxon with some chocolate and I almost ran to Aldos; 4:11 to 4:41pm! I thought that I could be out within the hour, i.e. now less than 10 hours, but it was not to be. By Gontards at 17:30 I realised that I was now knackered! I was panting and constantly adjusting my chest tape loop to bring me in closer to the rope, and that didn't help matters much. The rope also tried riding up with me making me take two steps up instead of just one, most of the time. I had to take the bag up because the rebelay was 10' off the floor and therefore not enough slack for tying it off or possible to pull it up after.

Garby's was easier despite it being longer. A tackle bag was tied off near the bottom, which made it easier to get up. Out from Cairn Hall in 20 mins and the exit made at 18:20, so the whole trip done in 10 hours and 20 minutes!

I'd met Mark Sims on the last (Ruiz's) pitch, while Murray Knapp at the entrance gave me tea, orange juice and beer!!! No wonder I felt bloated on 7 drinks! Back for 8 while 8:50pm. Got pissed by the bonfire!

1992 BPC Rigging Trip

See also [BPC Bulletin Vol.6 No.9 1992](#)

This was to be the longest-running holiday-come-expedition to Albania with a casual finish in Italy that would take me over 5 weeks to do! Getting and using The Landrover Discovery (on loan through Allied Colloids Chemical Company) to France was just the start of all this frantic caving with BPC friends. I'd gone with Wilkie, Sharon and John Perry, and arrived on Saturday in August, at La Moliere. We got underway on Sunday to rig to the bottom, if possible.

I got down the entrance with Gates and Hall at 12:15. Taking a leisurely jaunt to Camp 1 with Tim Brown (DCC) and Joe 'Berger' Grove by 3pm. They'd gone back to The Relay Pitches to pick up some mislaid gear (for rigging) beyond Camp 1. Sharon Kelly and Mick Riley (Smiley) duly appeared. We had to take 10 tackle bags and a Carbide Rocket Tube to the bottom. Set off at 3:30. Gates and Hall left us to it from The Canals (before Abelles).

I rigged Balcony, Calcite Slopes and Vestibule, while Sharon rerigged Vestibule as the rope hang for it was no good and didn't reach the bottom. Sharon rigged Cascades and Claudines. The wires from previous years were missing – hence we were in the water! Smiley did Topographer's.

Brief rest at Camp 2 (9pm). Started rigging Gaches from a climb up and a traverse along a ledge (2 bolts and a natural). Got down to within 20' off the floor when the rope ran out! Apparently, the ropes had been bagged up in the wrong order! Sharon rigged it from the traverse bolt to the far wall for the free hang. She also rigged Reseau de Mat and de Singe, while Smiley did Grand Cascade pitch.

At Baignoire, the traverse lines were still in place from the corner and were useful on the return. Smiley tried to keep us out of the water, but even after adjusting it, it still sagged a lot. Little Monkey proved to be a swine. I had to climb up from bolt at eye level (no ladder was here this time) to find a bolt and cord to pull up on. Backed up by a stal boss (on wall in front) Sharon unbacked it (!!) to a bolt around a corner, a tension traverse to a bolt high up, to a bolt lower down. Sharing these two was awkward. Spent more time unscrewing and adjusting the rope through the Lizard bolt to get the hang just right. Down to a tiny ledge to hang from a column (and more tat) to drop over the edge, to the edge of a pool and two cascades. There were no spits/bolts, so got soaked falling in. Tied the line off to the wall. Down the slope was The Hurricane water, but to left of it was a crawl to a bolt at start (on wall) to a ring bolt on the floor. Smiley rigged, over the edge to a bolt 10' away and 5' down. Then a rebelay, say about 60' down. Got down in spray for about 2:30am. Down slope to the canal and beyond the 1988 limit. The pool was only waist deep and more passage and a pool followed. Got to a climb (blue polyprop on it) to a small passage down to walking passage in water again. Finally got to a pseudo syphon. Turned back at 03:32 Mon 24th.

I was up the pitch last. Decided to try out the rope walking technique. Got halfway up to a rebelay and thought I heard Sharon exclaim 'Oh Shit', and thought that we had a flood pulse

coming in. The spray didn't help matters along. In going up Little Monkey I found it difficult in crossing the pool at the same time.

Arriving at Camp 2 I was told that Smiley had a carbide flare up from the rocket tube, while still attached to him!! It'd singed his eyebrows while tied to him and now he felt 'gadzonked' from Vestibule pitch onwards.

Arrived at Camp 1 at 10:15am, and for the next 2 hours Smiley made us brews and 2 meals; a chicken curry and beef madras. Fell asleep in Brian Rhodes's thermal sheet bag (both ends still open) and his Pertex liner and Karrimat. We were woken at 2pm by Richard Senior, Mick McNamarra, Dave Miller (Gob Shite) and Des Crowley. They were just passing through to go to the bottom. Departed at 4:30, taking us 4 hrs to exit (me). That made it a 32.25-hour rigging trip.

We met John Perry on the track, just before the camp site. He cooked us a beautiful pasta Bolognese dish, then the beers started flowing all around us by the warmth of a bonfire. So, this was the end of a superb rigging trip to the bottom that will live in our memories till the end of our days.

1994 RRCPC/CSCA Trips

Organised in conjunction with the CSCA, on the plateau with all the logistics of the military was yet something else to behold! This was to be a minibus epic with 10 Red Rosers being driven out from England by Ray Duffy in 19 hours. They were myself, Ray, Neil Pacey, Angela Hare, Claire Wilkinson, Jo Wilby, Christine Bleakley, Jenny (?), Liz Daniels, and Lee York. Another motley crew of 9, also from Leeds, would be going out in Joe Lynch's van.

Tuesday 9th August

Got up early to find that we'd need to pitch our tents up at a long distance away from previously, as the CPC & CSCA (Army) were here before us. We were given the tasks of unloading and carrying gear from a van, like Jerry cans of water, a huge gas cylinder and a Fridge! It was flight Lieutenant Richard Smith for the coordinating and recruitment of support for establishing Base Entrance Camp. This required 9 tents, a stretcher, 15 sleeping bags, various mats and 6 large bags! Nine people were required. Johnny (Braindead) Baker said he'd stay back at camp on guard duty. Back for 3pm and we tried to sort out the camp duties. I was beaten by 2 others at being 'Bar Staff' and consequently missed everyone else going off to Autrans for the afternoon. Chores like walking over to the 'Water Trough' for fresh water and preparation for the evening meal by 6:30 was my lot. Spaghetti Bolognese with sprouts and cauliflower were the order of the day, by 9pm. Teas and fruit cocktails to finish off with. It was £56 or FF450 for 10 days' worth of army meals.

Visited The CPC campfire by 10:30 and was told about Keith Sanderson's plight by Rick Halliwell. He had a broken thumb, wrist and an impacted left femur down Piagga Bella at -700m due to a 5m fall.

Wed. 10th August: 1st Berger to Camp 1 and Forced Bivvi by Aldo's

Up at 06:00. A continental style brekkie. Away at 8:15 and down the entrance at 9:38. I was stuck behind Andy Ive as he pratted about on Garby's and Aldo's. To speed things up a bit I took his rigging bag to make my total now of 3 tackle bags to carry. Caught up with the others

at Grand Gallery, of Dave Harris, Christine Bleakley, Gavin Davidge and Jason (?). On waiting for Angela Hare and Jim Stevenson we decided to look up a passage on our right. A left fork, and we continued to a high wall. On our return Andy had gone upstream and left, up a large passage and along some muddy banks to wait for us. After getting myself into 'quicksand' up to my knees, several times I called it a day. Lost about an hour here. Arrived at Camp 1 by 2:15. Munched our way on snacks and wandered over to 'Hall of the 13'. Jim and Andy were taking photos. Got back and recharged my carbide generator to quarter full for a fast exit.

At about 3:30 I had to overtake the rest to get on ahead and make it back to Aldo's for 4pm! I was halfway through putting on my gear when I heard a gradual rumbling getting louder, that was still some distance away. Water trickled out and then spouted out from below me from various orifices. It was 4:08. Retraced back to 'The Gallery'. Watched with growing consternation at the ever-rising floodwater. Everyone else appeared half hour later. By now the small depression had begun to fill up, and the others had to negotiate it by means of the wired traverse line. All were looking for a place to sit it out. Angela, Christine, David, Jim and Andy were in a walled-up hole together on foil and survival bags. I got Jerome Bockley in a large type of fertiliser bag. He had no hood and no oversuit on. Gavin was in a large plastic bag and used a carbide generator to warm himself up. As also did Johnny (BD), and Jason had a carrier bag in which he had burnt holes in. Not long after, about 12 more 'Sherpas' came back and sat/lay it out at the top of a large rubble heap.

At about 10:30 Tony Dilger, Lee York, Neil and Ray got to us. The Lake was full and needed crossing on 4 inflatable rubber rings! I decided to check it out and go out from 12:00. Exit by 01:53 am. Liz Daniels and Sue were on entrance duty. Jason came out an hour later. We had a curry with sweetcorn and got away by 03:30, and back for 04:30. Tracy (Rhys's girl) at the camp tent gave us loads more chicken curry. Finally, bed at 05:30.

Friday 12th August: Aid to Army Guy

Found that the rigging had only been done to Camp 2 by Tony Flannagan's Team. The weather forecast was fine for the next 3 days. I decided to go for a bottoming trip and booked myself in for 10pm. Down at 9:38pm, and at Camp 1 by 10:42. Five were asleep; Jack Sheldon's lot, I think. Got tired by Camp 2 where I met 4 coming back up Gaches pitch. They all said that Capt. Richard Smith and one other an "Ernie Wise" were still down there, somewhere! I said that I'd let them know.

Just had a bit of fruit cake at the bottom of the Great Rubble Heap (Camp 2 was situated at the top of it!). The rest of my food; Nougat, Twix, half a cake and dried fruit mix, I gave to the other 2 on finding them. I was told that Ernie was in a bad way, shivering with spasms in his left leg. They were below The Grand Cascade and Bagnoire Traverse in the middle of the river on the dry part in survival bags. Good thing was that he had some tea (Alas, no carbide), to keep him war, between his legs, so I gave him my slug (all of it) and still decided to bottom it, nevertheless. It was 02:15.

Reached the bottom, by the long and deep canal for 03:05. Realised that it was actually the pseudo-syphon, later on. Got back up Hurricane and Grand Cascade with my lamp always blowing out from the draft. Collected my blue bag with Darren Drum, and as I was now feeling tired the rope was not running well on each prussik step. Found 2 guys at Camp 2 still bivvying there. They'd no food and were shortly due to run out of electric light. I just had to give them

my 2 spare Duracells and most of my orange juice to see them get out alright. A slow exit to Camp 1 (04:15 to 9:00). Stayed for 4 hours sleep and left at 2:15pm. Exit made by 7:50pm, so it was a 22-hour trip, under duress!

Tuesday 16th August: Detackle It

A 5am wakeup call, and I got down entrance at 8am, then to camp 1 by 9:00. Chas Frankland and Stan Halstead arrived an hour later. Woke up Rhys Watkins and Marion, then all of us had a brew. Left Stan and Chas at Balcony, and I continued to Abelles and Cascades by 11:30. Two bags to Camp 1, then 1 bag, out. Going past many people to the entrance and exit at 5pm.

Met Hugh Penney on the walk back, who had sadly missed the Berger trips and now resides in France. Neil, once he'd got the campfire burning, decided to dispose of my awkwardly fitting Alpinex Furry suit by melting it in the fire! Gave Braindead my oversuit. Angie, as the Camp Doctor bandaged my bloodshot right eye upon washing it out of the carbide that had splashed into it when I was in The Canals. The evening turned out to be very harsh and noisy when a storm broke right over us.

Wednesday 17th August: Detackle-Finale

9:30 and a very wet and windy morning. Everyone who were going down were very worried about it. It would be late afternoon when I would go over with a carrier bag of chocolates to leave by the entrance camp, accompanied with Johnny Southworth and Kenny Buttrick. There was no sign of any tackle yet. Kate and Bob Riley were still manning the tent, and John Lynch and Graham Tutton were acting as coordinators. Jo Wilby and Angie were still here, waiting!

A half hour later and the rope twitched, and I hauled up 3 bags. Angie and Jo then made their way back with these while Andy Harrison declined to take owt back and promptly disappeared! I suggested to John Lynch why don't most of us just go back and those at the entrance collect the bags for all of us to pick up tomorrow. So, this was the plan that would bring the expedition to its end. Other trips into various caves would now ensue.

2014 RRCPC/CSCA Trip

See also 'Gouffre Berger' Booklet produced by Mel Wilkinson

Again, I was to partake in my final venture into this fascinating pothole under the auspices of our military friends. Jack Sheldon had organised the expedition in conjunction with Steve Gray and others. At times, the surface preparations went very well, and at others seemed comical, with both sides presenting humorous accounts of their underground (and above ground) forays.

My only trip down had resulted from an unexpected turn of events from the outset of my journey from home. This would have lasting consequences over the 2 weeks of my holiday. So here is the account of a 24-hour trip I had with Emma Key, Adam Milward and Si Lewis.

I had arrived on Tuesday morning after a 20km walk from Grenoble, due to a missed train and a connection lift from Steve Gray. We were all camping up at Autrans in a field, as permission to camp on La Moliere Plateau had not been granted for some years now! My feet were blistered and I had been too dehydrated to function properly for the next 2 days. As

Thursday dawned, I realised that the undertaking was going to prove more arduous than I had anticipated!

Getting down the entrance at about 1pm, we made steady progress to Camp 1. Three 'Thunderer' lads and Barney Whiteside (RRCPC) passed us by before we got there. There were 6 tackle bags of rope plus our own gear to carry down to Camp 2, but not all of us made it to there! Si climbed down one of the Calcite Slopes and slipped as a flake broke off, and he landed quite badly on his back, winding himself. He tried to go on but realised that he was in a bad way and decided to get himself out before the situation got worse! Later, at Vestibule pitch we met Conner Roe and his rigging team returning, without any problems to report.

Going through The Canals we tried to strap 2 bags together to make it easier to traverse the deep pools, with limited success. Emma came back to help me with my 3 bags and lighten the load a bit, but it was still a chore to get through without getting up to your chest deep in the water. Adam helped us along by setting up a hauling system to get us both over a longer tension traverse. By the time we got to Topographers I, especially was feeling very tired and worried about my continued energy drain with increased aches and pains in all areas especially the lower regions, that is my legs! I was glad when we took time out to set up a tent and get a brew going with a bit of food. The atmosphere grew steamy and resembled a sauna cabin!

The going was still tough when we climbed up and slithered down the other side of The Grand Canyon, with our bags in tow. Time was running against us, so we left our bags clipped into the rope and made our slow scramble back up the canyon slope.

When we got back to the first pitch, I couldn't find my foot loop, and while the others patiently waited at the top, I fashioned one from a sling of cord I'd used for pulling the bags along. It was easier to go back through the canals but for the pulley I'd forgotten to bring. To facilitate a wire traverse line that took me low into the water, so Adam heaved me out to a large extent. Going past Vestibule pitch and returning to find the others were now ahead of me. Now the real slog of climbing up to Balcony pitch and Camp 1 really began to take its toll on me. My back, hips, knees and neck were aching, and I wondered how I'd ever be able to reach the entrance in this condition.

Back at Camp 1 for the 2am radio check, and we confirmed that we would stay here for some hours to sleep and eat. A very tasty curry and a snuggle down in a wide Bivy tent against a wall. The 3 of us lay down to a cosy sleep. Emma got the benefit of the warmth from me and Adam as she lay in the middle of the tent!

7:00am radio check followed by breakfast. It was very cold to strip off our warm camp clothes and don our wet furrys and socks to make our exit. Slow going to Aldo's, then the prussiking took its toll on me. I was definitely lagging way behind Adam who kindly took my bag off of me and continued on out to reach the surface for 1pm. A few brews and we made our way back to the car where Si was waiting for us. I was in such a state that I just fell into my tent and lay there. Thanks to Sandra Wilkinson and Heather for coming over to see me, to provide advice, rehydration and medication to my feet. The rest of my holiday was spent either mountain biking (thanks to Steve) down the Gournier and doing some Via Ferratas.

Dalek

Conservation

When Nothing is a Good Thing

Over the years the Red Rose have attempted to keep the Ease Gill System in tip-top condition, mending paths, fixing entrances, removing rubbish, bolting pitches and of course, cleaning stals. Sam Lieberman and I have spent a lot of time attempting to return The Colonnades area back to something like its original state, an impossible task but worthy of a try.

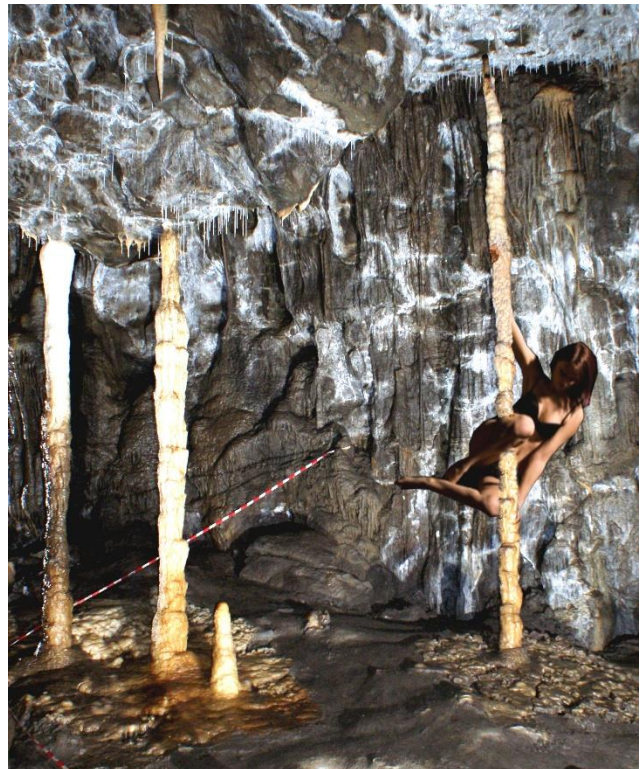
When I first visited the Colonnades, it was with a large group of Red Rose youths and we romped around the muddy floors looking in every corner for ways on, like the thousands before us, and in the process treading the mud over the already present mud with no regard for what might have been there originally. Guilty, like many others, we'd no idea what lay below the mud or what had been there before it got smeared everywhere.

Years later and a lot more conservation aware, I and many from our club and others went back and tried to repair our devastation. It took years of separate visits, mainly just Sam and I, but we've clawed back some of the beauty that was once viewed by the explorers when they first discovered it.

However, the area beneath the columns had been almost totally destroyed by all those wishing to have their photo taken next to these magical stals (I was one of the transgressors). It was originally a calcite floor but floundering around had broken up much of the surface and left only the mud layer showing below.

We cleaned and scrubbed until some of the calcite that remained became visible but much of the lower mud layer had footprints all over it. The columns were taped off in an attempt to keep the area as safe as possible and I spent hours smoothing out the mud to make it look as though no-one had ever walked upon it.

With the evolution of photographic software and digital cameras/phones it became unnecessary to actually cross the conservation tape to be photographed next to the columns as you could now just drop a photo of a person right next to them (see photo).



Photographic magic
Photo Credit: Ray Duffy

On several returns to do more conservation work I noticed fewer and fewer footprints behind the tape until on our latest visit there were NONE whatsoever, success!

It is a shame that the delicate Cooling Towers formations have disappeared and the calcite around the columns has somewhat deteriorated but let's hope that what's left remains for all to appreciate in the future.

Ray Duffy

Library Additions: March 2024 – May 2024

Journals:

British Cave Research Association: CREG Journal: Issue 125 (March 2024)
Cave Diving Group: Newsletter: Nos. 226-230 (January 2023 - January 2024)
Craven Pothole Club: Record: Nos. 153-154. (January 2024-April 2024)
Derbyshire Caving Association: Newsletter No. 158 (Spring 2024)
Descent: Nos. 296-297. (February 2024- May 2024)
Grampian Speleological Group: Bulletin: Fifth Series Vol 5 No 1 (March 2024)
RRCPC: Newssheet: Nos. 398-400. (November 2024 – April 2024)
Wessex Cave Club: Journal: No. 361 (March 2024)
Gouffre Berger 2023

Other Publications:

Easegill Caverns Pilop Conservation Project - Marion Dunn (undated)
A Sketch about Bullpot Farm - Simon Drakeford, Casterton Parish Council Article (2024)
<https://www.castertonparishcouncil.org.uk/a-sketch-about-bullpot-farm/>

Film:

The Ario Dream (2017)
Farm Animals (Party Time at the Farm - Historical)

*Changes for easier access to the club library are now in place:
Members wishing access to the library room should contact the librarian direct, who will brief them on access arrangements, and then issue the member with a key. They will then be able to view on site, or log out any publication they either borrow or wish to browse in the Reading Room.*

The library is an excellent reference facility, please respect it - but above all please use it.

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