



Volume 59
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Going on a Turkey Hunt

Ogof Caci

Fairy Cave Quarry

Turkey Stream

Coniston Copper Mines

CHELSEA SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY



The Columns, OFD. Photo by Dan Thorne

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*Front Cover: Mandy Voysey crossing
MAGS Catwalk. Photo by Matt Voysey*

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Editorial

This is my first newsletter as editor. I hope you like it. Thanks to my esteemed predecessors Steve and Gonzo I have been set a very high standard to maintain!

A very big thank you to all who contributed articles and pictures for this issue. Without you there would be nothing to print, so keep it coming!

Please send all material for publication to cssmattv@gmail.com

Send high resolution photos in JPG or TIF format. For very large files or collections of items upload them to Dropbox or Google Drive and send me a public shared link to the folder, or ZIP them up and send via MailBigFile.

NEW! A **FULL COLOUR** electronic version of this newsletter is available to download from the members area of the club website. Also, if you would prefer to go 'paperless' and receive electronic copies of the newsletter in future let me know.



Matt



Upcoming Daren Camp Weekends

- 20th-21st May
- 1st-2nd July
- 19th-20th August

New diggers always welcome

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Or Adrian: adrianfawcett@outlook.com

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Going on a Turkey Hunt

By John Stevens

For a while I have wondered what happened to the Turkey that Turkey Stream was named after. It had been broken off in the early days of the exploration of Agen Allwedd but could be seen lying in the streamway for several years.

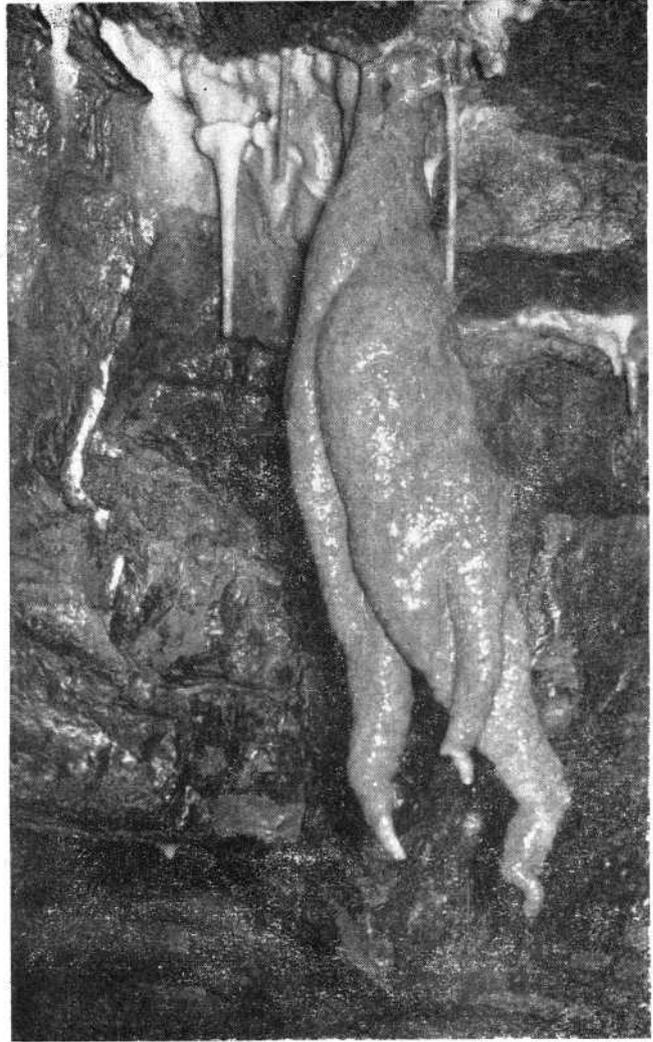
Could it be found or even restored if it was deemed appropriate?

One of the exploring clubs of Turkey Stream was the BNS (British Nylon Spinners), the same club who found Rimstone (see CSS Newsletter, Vol 58 p 66-69). As a result I had borrowed the BNS folder from the library and in their Journal was a photo and description of Turkey Stream being discovered:

It was first entered in April 1958, when M Davies, R Furber, J Dyer and two other cavers penetrated 1500 ft from NW Junction. ... At 300 ft a bulbous formation was observed ; it resembled a Turkey, and provided an unusual name for the series. In this region there are many formations, and several weeks later a party of BNS cavers, by clambering over a boulder scree and traversing a muddy ledge, entered two small chambers on a high level. The walls of these chambers contain some helicities, whilst straws hang from the roof...

This photo had some background features that may just be enough to find where it had been. But was it on the left or right wall and was 300 ft an accurate estimate of its distance up Turkey Stream.

On the 27th January 2017, Mike Read and I were off on a shortish survey trip up Coal Cellar Passage. I had enlarged and laminated this photo in a hope we could see something. We paced our way up from NW Junction and had just passed the route up to Helicite Gallery by the time we hit the



The Turkey

*Photograph taken in 1958
by S.C.L. Phillips*

300ft mark. But we had been on the look out for much of that length, anywhere where there were formations. But about 10m beyond the climb up on the right wall I spotted a match.

Here there was a large lump of stal on a bank on the left but we could not get it to match the photo. It had water erosion and a bit layered in places. Could this have been it but smashed and flaked off a section when it fell to then have water erode it beyond match? It may be over 50 years but I don't think it would be that different. We searched the stream bed but found nothing much. The pile of boulders in the stream would stop anything large being washed away.

The other option is someone placed it somewhere like Helicite Chamber or it disintegrated over the years or someone carried it out (unlikely as the bit we were looking at weighed quite a bit).

The site of The Turkey



Mike trying to compare the lump with the Turkey



CSS Evening Trips

by Paul Tarrant

The dark evenings and roadworks going on in the Clydach Gorge have led to reduced number of evening trips in the Llangattock region. However, with the lighter evenings there is increased opportunity for trips over in the Eastern Valleys. The sort of places that lend themselves to evening trips are Aggie NW Junction, Aggie Music Hall, OCAF HOTMK, Ogof Cnwc, Gwaliau Gwynion, Wainfelin Iron Mine, Draenen, Shakespeare's, and Pen Eryr.

There's been a few evening trips down OFD in recent weeks which have involved CSS members Dan Thorne, Lisa Boore, Claire Vivian, and Dave Coulson who I think is a new provisional with 20 years experience in the Dales. We've visited places like the Skyhook, Cross Rift, and Cwmdwr. Last night Claire and I visited OFD1, taking three locals along the traverses on the Escape Route (the Streamway was much too high to contemplate the Round Trip) and we went to Lowe's passage, returning the same way. Dave went to OFD Top with two local cavers to visit Swamp Creek. Both trips took around 2.5 hrs and this time we were just too late to visit the ever excellent Ancient Briton.

Evening trips are fun trips, visiting caves and enjoying them for their own sake and generally lasting up to three hours. There is a message group set up to advertise mid-week trips, which mainly happen on Tuesdays or Wednesdays. If you want to be added to the group to learn of these trips please respond to the thread on the web forum or send an email to ptpeaty@yahoo.co.uk.

Digging the Limekiln Dig (Ogof Caci)

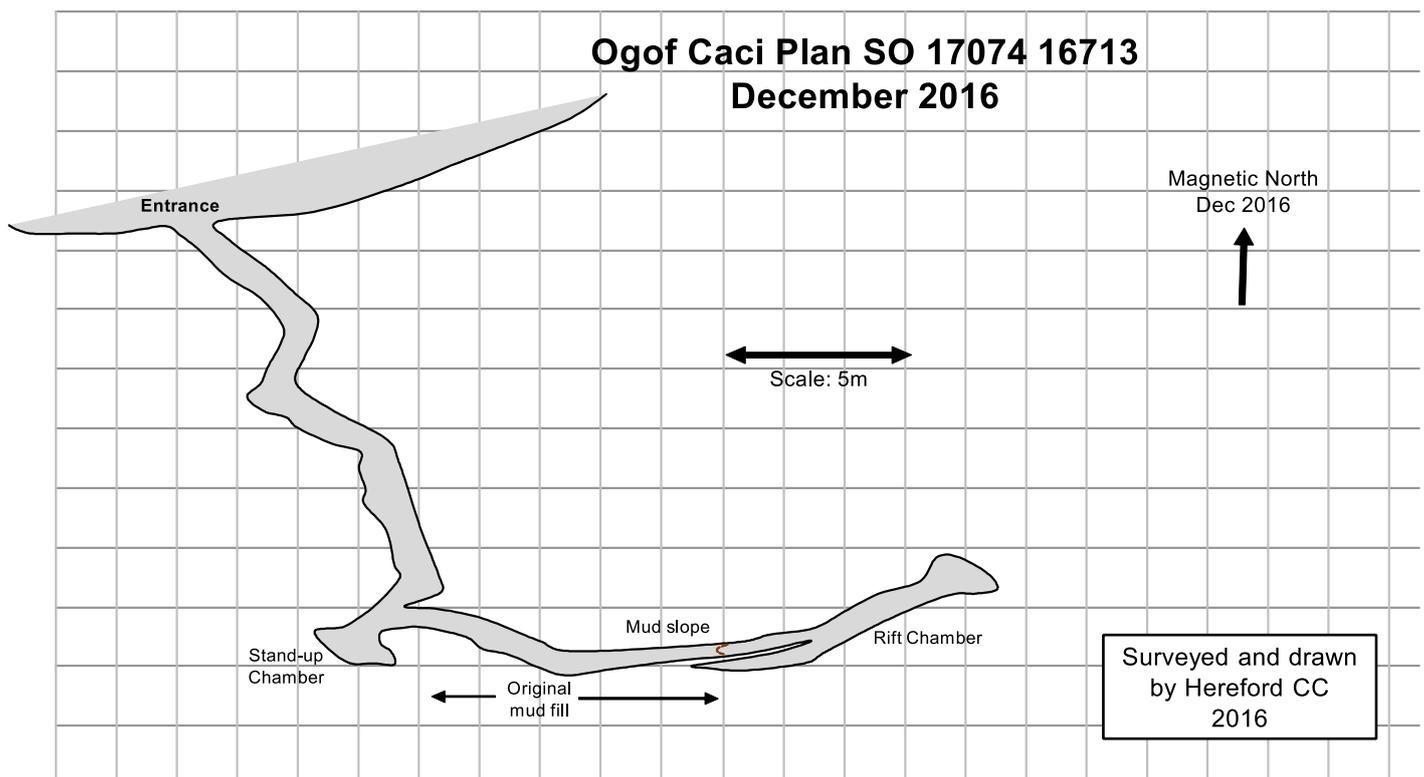
by Paul Hartwright

In May 2016, we renewed our acquaintance with the Limekiln dig knowing that it had speleological potential. Surveys of Agen Allwedd show that Summertime Series is about 600 metres away in a south easterly direction and Remembrance Series is 400 metres away to the south west. The mountain behind the cliff face is shown as a blank area for caves. Our investigation inside the cave showed that it went for about 15 metres and ended in a small space where it was possible to stand up. Water trickled in at this point and could be the cause of the mud fill that blocked further progress. A spoil heap outside showed that the dig had received previous attention. We later found out that it was probably John Stevens and Geoff Newton's dig from the mid-80s.

The existing cave has solid limestone walls and was filled with solid mud at its furthest point. The passage walls had some scallops showing that

water had flowed here at some time in the distant past. We experimented by probing into the mud and decided that the left-hand passage was diggable. Later, a strong team arrived to dig into the mud wall and transport the debris back down the entrance passage and onto the existing spoil heap. The mud had some large embedded rocks which were dealt with in the usual way. We experimented with a long rope for dragging the trays of mud and rock out but found that it was easier to pull them out on a short rope because they were less likely to get stuck. But it did mean that we wore out a few pairs of knee pads!

We progressed for about 2½ metres into a well-formed passage approximately 1 metre in diameter. The person digging at the front had to work hard in a confined space but found that the quality of the air gradually deteriorated. Something had to be done. After considering various pumping systems, we settled for a 'stirring' system where a car radiator fan running from a 12-volt battery blew air around so that it was sufficiently mixed with fresher air from the entrance passage. Digging here required a team of at least 4 people to transport the



mud and rocks onto the tip outside. Kingsley often did the job of tidying the spoil heap so that it caused minimal change to the outside appearance. We all got very muddy because the water from above continued to trickle in even when the weather was dry. We dug following the rock roof and hoped that it would rise into an air space. At intervals, I probed ahead with a 1 metre drill bit to check for voids but repeatedly found that the mud continued.

By September we had progressed about 5 metres when we noticed that a small slot had appeared at roof height. It was only about 3 centimetres wide and 15 high but it had a draught! This was a great encouragement and digging progressed well for another metre. The slot became bigger and the draught stronger, eventually eliminating the need for the 'stirring' fan. In cold weather the draught flows into the cave and when the outside temperature is greater than about 8°C it flows out. A non-toxic smoke test was conducted when the draught was going in to see if any could be seen on the top of the cliff outside. We saw none.

In November, we transferred the club trip to digging in Ogor Caci and 9 people turned up! Digging went very well and 2 more metres were added to the length of the passage. This enabled us to progress up a partially open mud slope and look along the top under the solid rock roof. With difficulty, we could see about 2 metres ahead although some rocks would have to be moved to allow progress. After moving a rock on his right-hand side, Grant revealed a space of about 2 cubic metres but we could not find any way on from there. The best bet was to continue straight ahead under the rock roof!

Just as the job was getting exciting I was informed that the NRW (Natural Resources Wales) had become aware of our dig and wanted some details. We had relied on our permissions and good relationship with the Duke of Beaufort and his solicitors over many years to allow us to dig in various places. But this area is now designated as a SSSI for a wide range of biological and geological interests and there is a requirement for owners and occupiers to consult with NRW if their activities have potential to affect the special interests. NRW manages caving activities across a large part of the hill through the Mynydd Llangatwg Cave Management Committee (MLCMC). An on-site discussion with the NRW representative for the area enabled us to explain what we hoped to

achieve. In return he explained what conservation measures we should take. After a meeting with the MLCMC and a check with the landowner's solicitors we were given permission to continue. However, we do have to limit the amount of spoil removed from the cave and we all look forward to natural regrowth processes covering the excavated mud. This old quarry site is a unique habitat for some plants that only grow in this area.

Fortunately, we had reached a point in the cave where it was possible to stack rocks along the cleared passage inside the cave. By now, we could see about two metres ahead to a dark cavity. It was not long before we were close to a breakthrough. The digger at the front retreated and allowed me to remove the last few rocks. Inevitably we hoped to soon be walking down a large open passage! I wriggled forward and into a new space and was finally able to stand up, but the chamber was only about 1 metre wide. We had emerged from under a solid limestone wall on the north side into a rift. It went in both directions but was only about 6 metres long and 3 metres high. The south side consisted of boulders that had a black covering typical of the deposits caused by water coming in from outside. There are a few small straws.

After lifting out some rocks Adam managed to squeeze into a small space lower down the wall but discovered that there was no way on from there.

On the next cold day, we did a careful check with joss sticks to see where the draught is going. Disappointingly it seems to go upwards at various places along the rift. We could find no place where it followed the wall horizontally. As this rift is almost parallel to the cliff face outside (although some twenty-three metres from it) we are thinking that it could be the result of a partial collapse towards the north. It is suggested that at the next opportunity we look for melted snow holes on the mountain above the cliff face to see if any warm air is rising through the rift.

Cavers who helped with the dig and came more than once are: Kingsley Hawkins, Grant Hartwright, Jan Langmead, Adam Hartwright, Phil Checketts, Michal Poreba, Barry Hill, Nick Negus, Steph Binks, Tim Macklin and myself - Paul Hartwright.

Discussions are taking place to consider what we should do next.

Paul Hartwright
7th January 2017

Aggy Sand Caverns

by Dan Thorne

Agen Allwedd to the Sand Caverns, a trip before the CSS Annual Dinner.

Adrian had kindly offered to lead a trip to Sand Caverns before the annual dinner. And rather at the last minute we decided to join in.

Whitewalls was a hive of activity when we arrived and after some faff a group of 6 of us headed off to Agen Allwedd. The entrance series was quickly passed and the slippery main stream passage was taken, but not without marvelling at how some groups seem to miss this and end up taking Southern Stream instead. Not a mistake I would like to make.

At the start of the Second Boulder Choke area we took a short detour to loop around Midnight Passage and approach the Second Choke from the other side, before passing through and continuing to Northwest Junction. From here the cave seemed to be out to get us, as with rolling boulders I ended up on the floor a couple of times.

A short detour to the Frozen River area revealed some lovely crystal pools. Before a spot of lunch and continuing to Sand Caverns area. Some impressive untouched mud and big passage was finished with a well decorated chamber before closing down to a dig. We spent some time ferreting around looking for potential places to push through. It certainly feels like this passage should continue.



On starting our return we explored up a diagonal scaffold pipe into Central Avenue to try to make the connection through to Eastern Avenue and the inner circle. But after a rolling boulder narrowly missed Lisa's legs we all felt that the loose boulder choke was a step too far for today and decided to start our return.

The trip out was uneventful and Turkey Pool was passed without getting wet. Once back to the entrance series we could see that wet footprints led the way. We were following out another group who had visited Keyhole Chamber and were followed by the bat counting team.

All arrived back at Whitewalls within a few minutes to end a very pleasant day trip.

My thanks to Adrian for organising, and Tom F, Steve S, Gary K and Lisa for their company.



Lisa negotiates the Turkey Pool traverse

Correspondence

Dear Editor,

I was interested to read of John Stevens' explorations beyond Turkey Pool and up Rimstone Passage, and particularly of the BNS initials found in the mud floor there (CSS News. Vol.58 Nos.10-12, p.66).

In an attempt to resolve the mystery of these initials, I conducted a search of records held in the Grampian Speleological Group library for enlightenment. We hold a detailed MS by Mel Davies which was to form a 'History of a Caving Club' (BNS, formerly ICI Fibres Caving Club). Comparing the write-ups here with those in BNS Journal for 1959, I conclude that the survey shown in the latter on pages 14-15 does in fact show Rimstone - as the continuation beyond Hawkins Horror and apparently ending in a sump. This sump is noted on Ian Penney's sheet survey as 'Turkey Sump'. The more primitive survey by BNS and Hereford CC shows Rimstone continuing straight on rather than heading to the left, but it would be the obvious way on before Summertime was opened up. This conclusion is backed up by a lecture given to the CRG by David Leitch at the Flying Horse Shoes hotel, Clapham on 18th September 1959 (and later on 26th Sept to the BNS in Pontypool). In the transcript on page 6, he states:

"Towards the end of March, [1959] BNS made a detailed exploration of the upper end of Turkey Passage. This varies in size but averages 20' high by 10' wide. A draught blows with the stream in winter from the Terminal Chamber but not from the sump. They explored a few oxbow passages, Rimstone Passage which is an upper passage with a floor of dried out gour pools, and Summertime Passage as far as the boulder choke."

If this is so, then the footprints were almost certainly left by Ian Butterworth and John Dyer (BNS Journal p.22), although there is also an outside chance they were left by Ron Furber, Graham Holly and Gwyn Williams who (from our MS) were reported to have "...crossed the Turkey Pool yet again and made a thorough examination of their sumped end of Turkey Passage" (July 1958).

I may be very wide of the mark, but hope these notes will prove helpful in unravelling the mystery.

Yours,
Alan L. Jeffreys

John replies...

I have the CSS copy of the BNS journal at the moment so have reread it. It seems on page 22 that Ian Butterworth and John Dyer were discovering Turkey Pool on that day (6 April 1958) after starting the exploration at Turkey Junction where Coal Cellar Passage goes off on the right.

I think the clue to the foot prints, is your reference of the David Leitch lecture, where you say in March 1959 they made a detailed exploration of the upper end of Turkey Passage.

I think that they must have maypoled into the passage, as no other signs of climbing were obvious.

I think the survey shows Turkey Stream going to its first sump with double oxbow shown but not sure which the other oxbow is. There are a couple of other short / higher level oxbows in that area.

I think a maypole had been carried up to investigate higher level passages as I still have to get back to one that I have looked into from below. It has an obvious scratch mark on the rock face below from a scaffold pole and a carbide mark which reads either 'MD 26 12' or 'MD 31 12' - can't quite remember and mislaid the photo of it at present. So I think it's definitely Mel Davis's work over Christmas / New Year, but don't know which year. This passage is before Turkey Pool and not shown on any surveys or described in any texts I have seen.

by Nick Chipchase

A Theory of Things at Fairy Cave Quarry

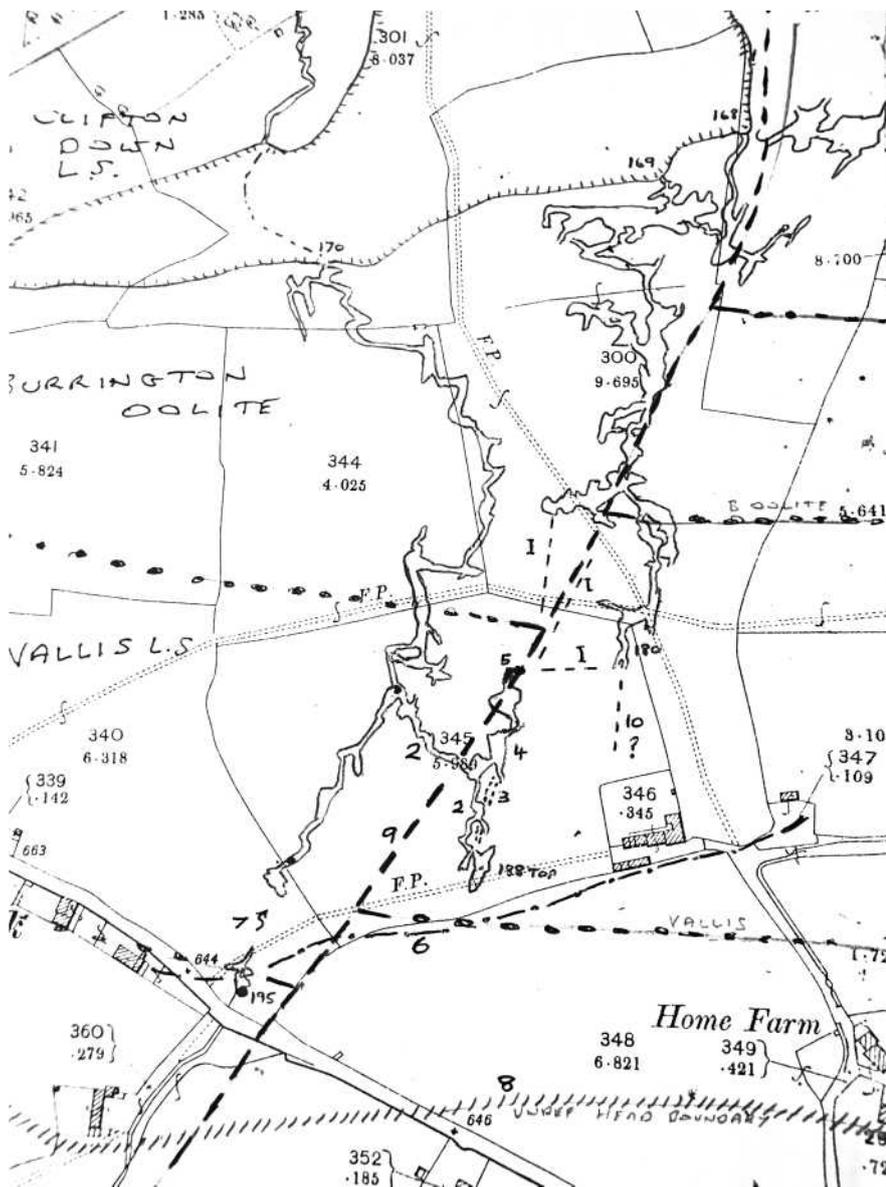
I have been caving at Fairy Cave Quarry on East Mendip since the mid 1960's. Over the years little in the way of explaining the development of the caves there has been published. My interest has been resurrected in the last few years and I have been undertaking trips to try to get the caves in perspective. I must say, though, that I am no geologist and my

theories are purely the result of my own uneducated observations. Still, no research is wasted as it can be amended by those more erudite or indeed spark more professional interest.

The present caves lie within a well defined catchment with streams rising on the Beacon Hill pericline and sinking where they meet the limestone. Their outlet at St Dunstan's Well has resulted from dislocation in the impervious bed along the escarpment caused by the Withybrook Fault which is well exposed in the Quarry. This follows the usual Mendip pattern with streams forming on the periclinal boundary and sinking near the limestone shales boundary. There are differences, though, on East Mendip as the hydraulic gradient is far less and the streams sink further from the shales boundary. At Fairy Cave Quarry all of the larger caves are basically fossil conduits having originated as purely phreatic channels then modifying to vadose as base level dropped. Withyhill does become active again after exceptional rainfall but this could be the results of interference by quarrying and to a small degree the opening up of Withybrook Slocker. Normally the Withybrook stream runs via Conning Tower Cave at a much lower level but clearly backs up at the Withybrook end to run through Withyhill Cave sometimes flooding the entrance passage to near the roof. A post flood trip to the end of Withyhill in November 2016 revealed a can of WD 40 that had washed through from the slocker.

In this account I want to look at the relationship between Withyhill Cave and Shatter Cave. Both run closely parallel and are formed within joints and bedding planes. The major feature the Withybrook Fault certainly guides development here but within the caves themselves it's hard to define a relationship. Shatter, Withyhill and Balch all cross the fault seamlessly and in the quarry passages of the former Balch Cave can be seen crossing the fault plane at right angles. There appear to be no more joints and fractures close to the fault than anywhere else in the quarry. The big question has always been - where do the caves originate? Unlike West Mendip they do not even reach the Black Rock Limestone or shales. That leaves another 400 metres to go to follow the more usual Mendip pattern. There is a problem though. Much of the Black Rock Limestone is overlain by periglacial head deposits which keep the modern streams on the surface. Midway Slocker has found a route through the head cover and runs horizontally under the householder's garden with evidence of earlier sink points in close proximity. The assumption is that sinks like this well post date the quarry caves and will only lead to immature vadose passages. So to answer that we must know what came first - the head or the caves. Now supposing the head dates back to the Anglian Stage that ended 424,000 years ago (also the furthest ice came south in the last 2 million years) we might very well say that the caves came last placing them around the same age as other major Mendip systems. So their points of origin are not going to be within the Black Rock Limestone.

My first forays into deciding if Shatter Cave and Withyhill Caves are linked involved smoke testing both. Shatter Cave draughted well just below the Plughole but at the far end the draught was lost. A major joint controlled passage runs off below Plughole Chamber ending in several chokes. Digging here in the 1970's



Withyhill and Shatter Caves with geology and surface features.

- 1 Possible routes Withyhill to Shatter. 2 Capture route Shatter to Withyhill. 3 High level Shatter conduit. 4 Jonathan's Chamber. 5 Priceless Grotto. 6 Valley bottom. 7 Stream overflow Withybrook to Withyhill. 8 Undefined head boundary. 9 Approximate position of Withybrook Fault. 10 Possible undiscovered inlet from the valley.***

“First Generation” formations that have been broken and recemented. The Leaning Tower of Pisa in Shatter is a prime example. You see the same phenomenon in upper Frozen Deep in Reservoir Hole. In both caves a large stal boss has been tipped up and smashed. Cryogenic or seismic I do not know but recent investigations in The Frozen Deep have indicated that ice formed here at depth some 30,000 years ago (Descent 254).

Graham Price and I dug in a narrow joint controlled rift at the Northern end of the boulder chamber in the 1980's but abandoned the attempt. Others continued work here (Mark Lumley et al) to enter a small grotto in choked bedding they called “Priceless Grotto” for one of three reasons. They too abandoned the dig. Recently I carefully smoke tested all of the boulder chamber on a day when there was an inward draught at the stal floor “trapdoor”. I was lucky as often there is an outward draught here. The Priceless Grotto dig carried no draught then or subsequently on an outward draught. I did find the origin of the draught though in a quite unexpected place (more some time anon). On the day of Storm Doris more smoke canister testing was done in Priceless Grotto which then was draughting strongly as was the whole of the East branch. The

revealed very little except an intact rodent's skull which did not bode well for extensions South. Even more frustrating was the fact that the draught seemed to switch directions during the smoke test. Next try was in the big breakdown chamber beyond Jonathan's Chamber. My theory is that when you are beyond Pearl Chamber you are in the Shatter conduit. The tight vadose rifts going back to the Withyhill main passage are a capture route that drained water down from the Shatter Conduit. This capture route continues as a joint controlled rift to Column Chamber. Unseen by many covers on tourist trips is the well decorated and unspoiled conduit at higher level that probably links to Jonathan's Chamber (named after my son who was one the same month I found it). The Cerberus dug through boulders and stream gravel to enter the boulder chamber through a hole cut up through the stalagmite floor. The boulder chamber is different to any other chamber in both caves. There has been a lot of collapse from under the bedding and all the stalagmite which existed at the north end has been ripped up and broken. You can still see the remains of a stalagmite floor here a metre off the present floor. Both this area of Withyhill and all of Shatter exhibit those

other area was draughting also and both would seem to lead to a common origin. OK so the likeliest result here would be to connect with Shatter at Fourways along the fault or the terminal chokes East along strike. Two surveys of the caves differ. The CSS compilation of the 1970's and a more recent survey by Duncan Price et al (see CSS NL Vol. 53 pp. 106-107) seem to differ by as much as 30 metres on a North/South axis at Priceless Grotto. The Price survey suggests that this point is North of the terminal chokes making a link along strike unlikely. Price has the route heading along the fault (hard to place the fault accurately) towards Fourways. Duncan Price, Naomi Sharp and I investigated Fourways during the new survey and managed to insert a partially clothed Naomi into some tiny stalagmited grottos with no draught (Naomi's Niche?). No sign of any link to Withyhill here.

So the Eastern branch of Withyhill is part of the ancient Shatter Conduit that has been captured by Withyhill. I believe all originated in the denuded valley that runs South from the escarpment then West along the flank of the Beacon Hill pericline. The plateau at Withybrook has eroded down leaving the valley as a shallow relict. The valley travels West far enough to have enabled several streams to sink along its length after running off the impervious core of the pericline and over the head covered Black Rock Limestone. During periglacial conditions the whole valley would have been active as water could not sink through the frozen ground (as at Cheddar Gorge). It's possible the same stream formed Shatter Cave and Withyhill Cave following the retreat of the head cover after its removal by erosion. Both caves originated as discrete phreatic channels. Evidence of these are plainly seen in Shatter at Pisa and along the Withyhill main passage. The latter is a metre or less in diameter and at Shatter much larger. Evidence of a larger phreatic conduit can be seen near the end of Withyhill's Eastern branch. The big terminal chamber here is close to the valley bottom and only some 15 metres below the surface. Any evidence of ancient sinks in the valley has long disappeared as there has been much tipping along the hedge line.



Flood debris at "Withybrook Slocker" Nov. 2016

Post flood (Nov 16) examination of Withyhill showed that flood water ran directly from Withybrook Slocker to the terminal choke. Hence the rather new WD 40 tin, a large polythene bag and other debris. Several areas of old gravel deposits were ripped up and a leaf on the helectites at Helectite Corner showed the water to have backed up from the entrance to over a depth of 2 metres. A point worth remembering when exploring the cave in advance of heavy rain. The upshot of this trip was a chance at last to photograph the chamber we found above the streamway final choke back in the 1970's. (Yes I got injured there). I won't now have to go back through that nasty First Boulder Choke and don't advise anyone else to. Poking about I found a chamber I had never seen before. It had a remarkable metre high pink pillar on a pure white calcite floor. Of more interest was a dried mud floor that over time has had the cracks filled with calcite. I have never seen the like before. One cannot say it's virgin cave with certainty but I doubt the current crop of Mendip cavers have seen it. Anyway I have named it Pink Pillar Chamber and for the moment I want to keep it secret. It is not over the tape but very awkward to get into. I doubt I shall see it again and put that floor at risk.



Upstream end of "First Boulder Choke"

I am 70 this year but after 50 years the thrill of these fabulous caves at Fairy Cave Quarry has not diminished. I hope to continue visiting them for a good while yet.

Nick Chipchase



“The Pink Pillar”



Above: Dried mud with calcite infill, “Pink Pillar Chamber”
Right: Formations at south end of the boulder chamber

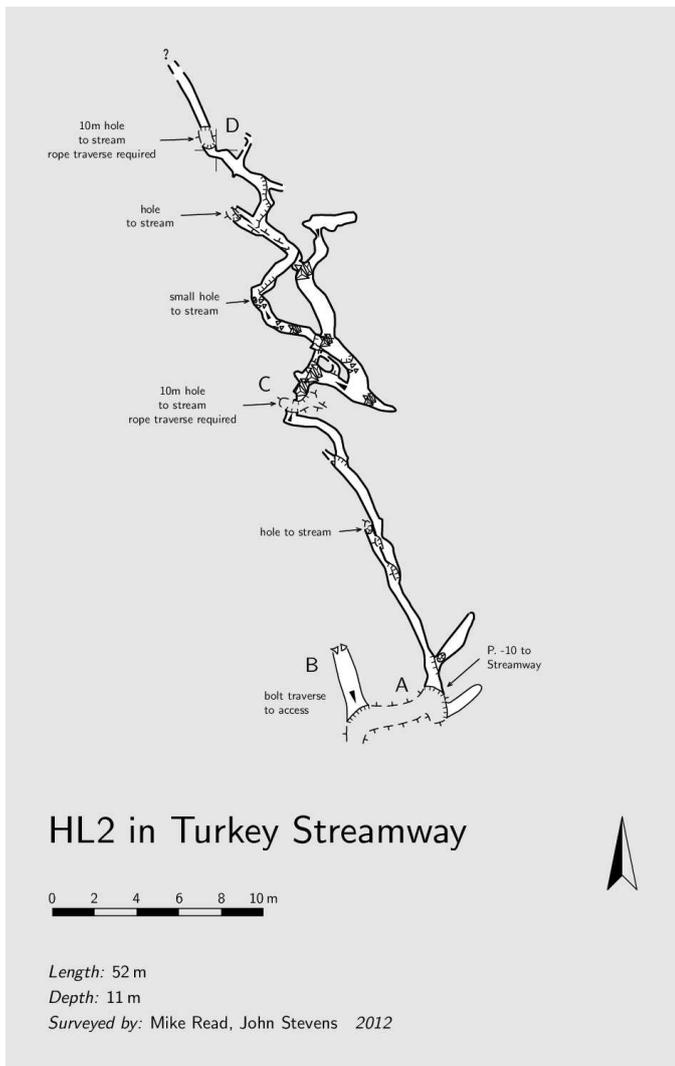


More finds above Turkey Stream

by John Stevens

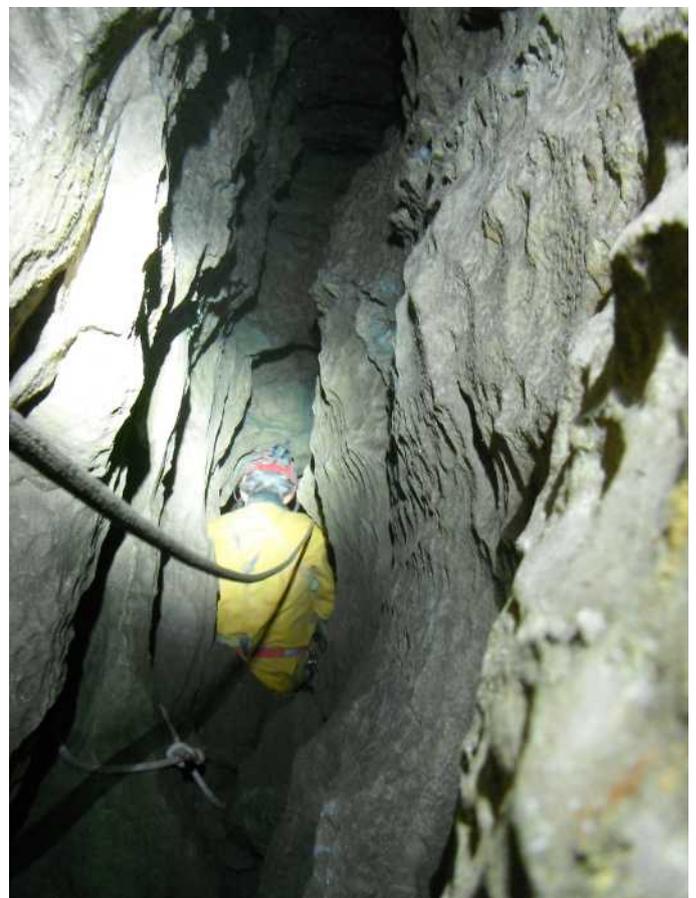
Some three years ago we found a bit of passage above Turkey Streamway and I had written most of an article at the time. Unfortunately I had not finished the survey drawings, so it was put to one side. So for completeness I thought we had better publish it.

It had been almost a year since Mike Read and I had left a traverse into open passage (CSS Newsletter Volume 54 page 78-80). It had been marked as D on the survey and crossing this hole was the objective of a trip we did on 06/07/2013.



Inlet to see if it was muddy. Once we arrived at the bottom of the climb in Turkey Stream we put on the SRT kits and sorted out the gear to take with us. The drill was checked to see if it still worked after a year underground, then it too was added to the loads along with a rope and crowbar.

The ladder was pulled up and held/fastened for us to climb up to the high level passage. I ended up in front in the narrow rift to rig and cross the first hole that we had crossed the last time. I added a bolt on the far side so we could tie the rope off and cut it. The remainder was then taken forward by Mike to the next hole (D). Two bolts were placed, then he attempted to use the nice foot holds to cross the hole. The holds dropped off as each was tried in turn. A short rope through an eyehole then aided his crossing. Another bolt was placed as another hole followed almost immediately.



Mike having crossed the first hole contemplates the next 10m drop

We were quite laden with ladder, SRT kits, survey gear, drill battery, and food. So we had a slow trip in, with a quick diversion to Cascade

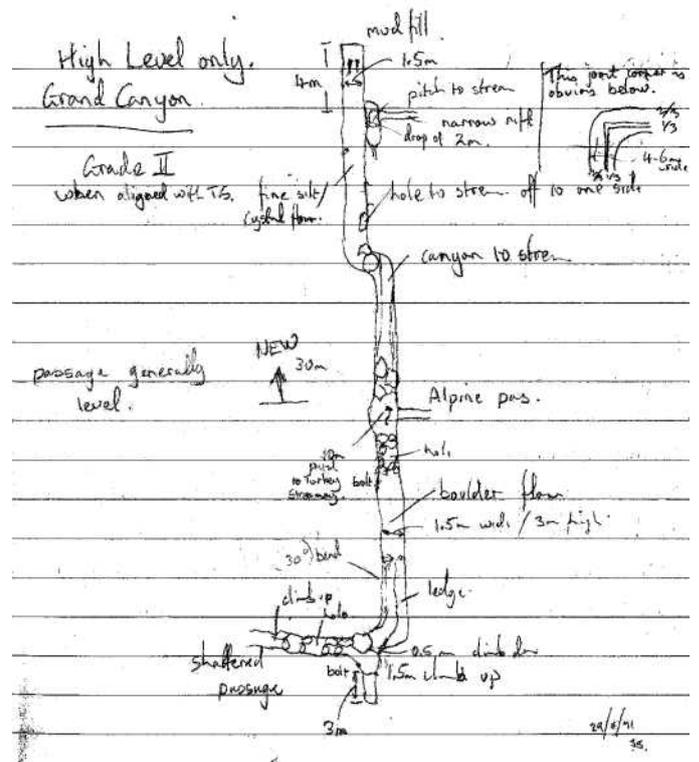
This was crossed and another bolt placed to aid a short climb down to a wider section of passage where we could pass. Mike loaded me up with the rope bag and drill and pointed me at the next hole. This was wide but at the start was a rift on the left. This had boulders jammed in to form a bit of a floor, but I expected some to drop out as I squeezed along the rift with all the baggage. The rift seemed too narrow but did get a solid floor. At this point I unclipped the rope bag and drill and placed them in an alcove. I squeezed along the rift expecting it to close down after a couple of metres but it kept going. The noise of the stream now faded, so we were heading off into a blank area of the map. Squeezing in SRT kit is never fun but the passage took a dive into what looked like a dried out sump with a cracked mud floor. This surely must be the end... but the arch at the low point was passable.

The passage rose up and continued, so I decided to wait for Mike. A few more bends and then either a squeeze at high level or one at low level. Mike was quickly through the low level route and led the way to suddenly emerge in a much larger passage with the noise of the stream again. Turning left we came to a drop back to the stream almost immediately, while right was easy going with the odd hole in the floor that was easily avoided. I had a vague feeling the passage was familiar but we had to search hard to find a few scuff marks that showed the passage had been visited before. The passage ended after about 20m with mud coming almost up to the roof with only a small tube continuing. This confirmed to me that we had found a different way into Grand Canyon, a passage I had extended with Simon Abbott and Herman Hertz back in 1991.

From my diary at the time:

Entered Shattered Passage for 10m before climbing up and traversing back over boulders to its entrance. A balance move (rope recommended) reaches ledge running to large hole down to Turkey Stream. This hole is junction with Alpine Passage. A bolt allows a rope traverse to Alpine or continuation of Grand Canyon. Canyon continues for 30m to mud choke. This final section discovered on 27/4/91 by J.S. Herman Hertz and Simon Abbott.

Herman was quite tall and had the reach to



Sketch Survey, JS Apr 1991

bridge over some of the holes, which meant we had only put in a couple of bolts.

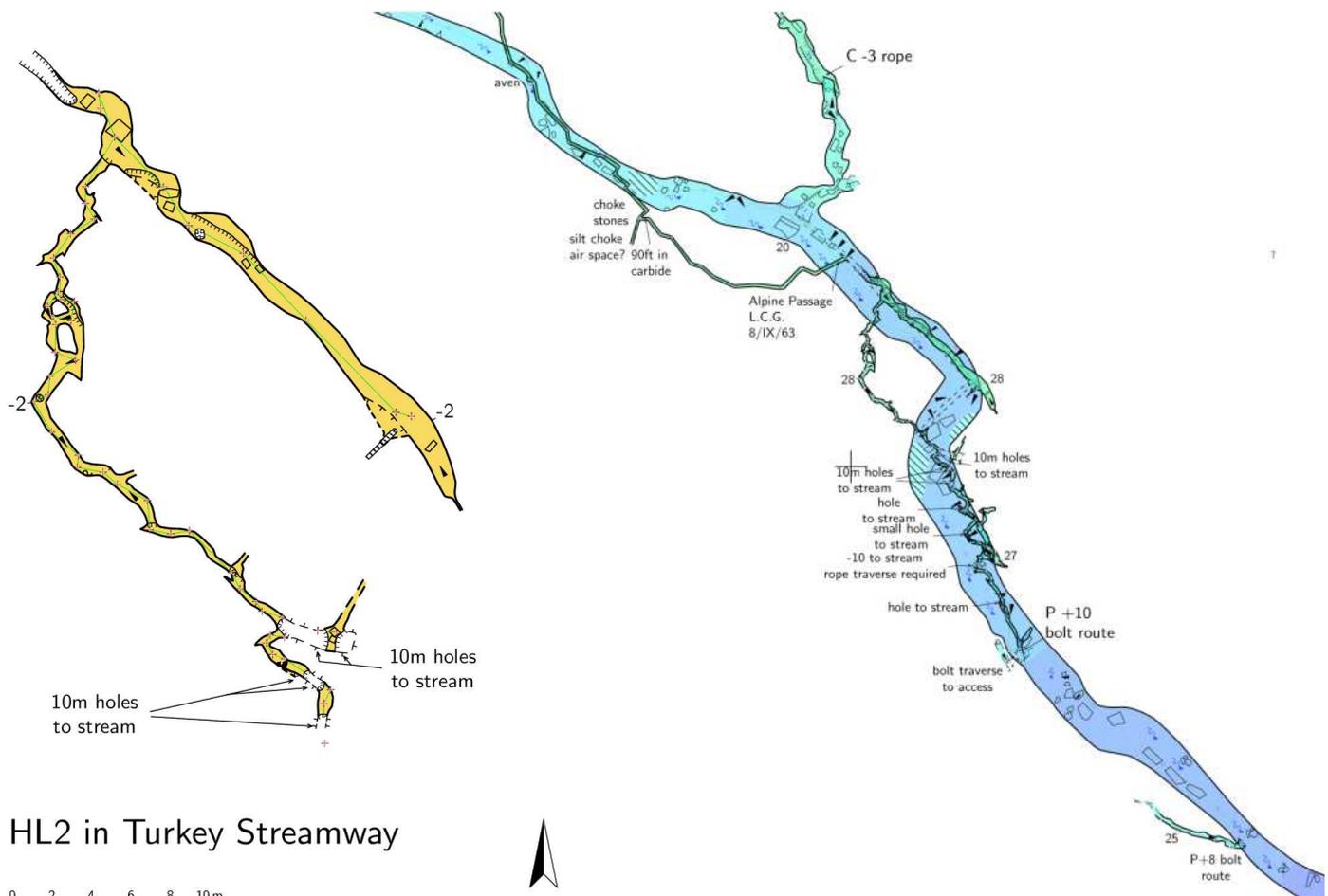
Mike and I went back to the junction to unpack the survey gear and look at the traverse I had done some 20 years ago. It looked very thin, exposed and no bolts in sight, we left it for another day. But if we were to dig the end, this would be the route in.

The survey started with doing the part of Grand Canyon we were in, then we retreated into our small wriggly crawl. We got back to the drill and rope and traversed back to the large hole where we paused the survey. Mike put in a couple of bolts in to enable him to cross the hole and confirm that it degenerated to a mud filled rift. A few more legs and we had joined the survey up to the previous one.

We then derigged leaving just one eye ring at the top of the climb with the rope looped through it. The last thing was to join these two surveys to the main survey. The nearest prime point was at Shattered Passage, so a few more legs and we were finished.

A slow trip out as we had to haul all the stuff out again. This made the trip last some 12.5 hours for about 50m of new passage.

I still can't figure out how we missed this passage twenty years ago. It may have been the stress of the traverse?



HL2 in Turkey Streamway

0 2 4 6 8 10m

Length: 81 m
 Depth: 4 m
 Surveyed by: Mike Read, John Stevens 2013
 Compiled: on 20 February 2017

The second half of the find (left) with the survey of the Grand Canyon, and (right) how the two high level passages relate to Turkey Stream.

Coniston Copper Mines Visit (Paddy End)

by Mandy Voysey

Heading to the Lake District for Christmas has become somewhat of a tradition for Matt and me, and last year we chose a cottage in Coniston to be our base for the week. Our plan of action was the same as every year - to romp up lots of mountains, enjoy the scenery, and hope not to get blown off any summits, drenched with rain or pelted in the face with hail too much. However, as we well know, a week of obliging weather is a very rare thing, so this year we also took some basic caving gear to be put to use on the inevitable foul day.

So Christmas Eve with a forecast of cloudy start followed by some serious heavy weather, saw us gambolling up the Coppermines Valley with underground adventure in mind. We decided to head into an area of the mine called "The Back Strings" entering at "The Funnel" by Levers Water. We had done this trip before back in 2006, and were looking forward revisiting the interesting obstacles and lovely blue stal.

After a bit of heading in the wrong direction and finding ourselves where Levers Water wasn't rather than where it was, we eventually found ourselves at the obvious entrance crater right by the waterside. Here there are two large mine entrances side by side. The right-hand narrower one is the correct way in, the other has a bit of a tricky climb leading to a loose edged pit of doom, which of course we went to by

mistake after initially going the right way and thinking it looked wrong.

Now, I had intended to write a fairly detailed account of our route in order to assist route finding for anyone else wishing to do this trip... however despite starting this write up very soon after our return, it seemed that many of the details had simply evaporated from my memory. On the plus side, there wasn't anything too devious to contend with, so anyone with a pair of cowstails and an inclination to explore could easily repeat the trip we did.

Our journey started by heading through a tall narrow cleft, with daylight streaming in from above. This looks deceptively like it's going to head back to the surface, but in fact leads to a short fixed ladder descending into the mine complex. Very soon after this we found ourselves at the top of a narrow stope with a hand-line and a succession of stemples wedged across. There was a choice of ways here, either a short traverse around the corner, or hop down the stemples to reach the bottom. We opted for the former and scuttled along into another stope with a left and right option. We chose left, and beetled along under some planks holding up tons of boulders. This got us to Arete Chamber which has a sturdy metal cable for safety over false floors and deep holes to reach the abseil point for the through trip to the Hospital Level. This looked like a very impressive descent and definitely something to come back to another day. With no way further at this level we returned and took in a side passage with pretty blue stal. However this also had hanging death and holes in the floor so we didn't progress right to the end.

So back where we joined the stope we then took the right hand route and found ourselves at the bottom of the row of stemples that we'd seen earlier. Carrying on in this direction led us to one of the major landmarks of this trip, MAGs Catwalk aka "The Stemples of Doom", which is a traverse across the top of a 30m stope using stemples wedged across the gap and is definitely a highlight of this trip. Luckily there is a safety line of sorts to clip into here as the variety of different heights and spacing of the stemples are actually quite un-nerving when trying to hop from one to the other. I was certain that the gaps must surely be wider than the last time we were there, however comparing photographs with those from our last trip proved that they are exactly the same, so perhaps my legs have shrunk.

This obstacle over we continued on to explore the rest of the mine. We took the left hand route leading to an extension that has been dug open by CATMHS in 1987. We clambered down a shored up hole by a very blue cascade formation and soon found ourselves in a large chamber with rails leading to a collapse in the floor, impressively perched on the edge of this was a mine truck in really good condition. After a bit of posing about here we continued on across the collapsed area using a handline fixed to the solid wall. This took us to a more linear section of the mine, a solid blasted passage going a fair distance. The start of which still had a windlass in situ. This passage was gloomier than the rest, but interesting in having lots of old wooden piping in place and plenty of metal bits and bobs. When the end was reached we returned from whence we came and took in any side passages that we'd missed on the way in. Between the extension and the traverse there were quite a few extra bits that didn't go far but had a goodly amount of the really vibrant blue stal that makes this trip so worth doing.

On exiting the mine we discovered that the conditions outside were truly foul, and we had to forge our way down the mountainside in strong winds and rain, so we had indeed chosen the right day to delve underground!

I would really recommend this trip to anyone who enjoys scenic mine exploration, there is plenty to see and some interesting situations that can all be done with very little kit and no great risk of getting lost. I'm definitely game to return with more kit and do the through trip sometime, so maybe we could have a club trip there sometime in the future...



Matt contemplates getting trolled again

HSCC Club Trip to Attborough Swallet

4th Feb 2017

by *Andy (Vogon) Watson*

This is a rarely visited small and grotty cave in mid-Mendip between Green Ore and Burrington Coombe. The lock is a CSCC key and it is quite near the road. So

Dave, Ros, Philip, Gavin, Ralph and I set off from MNRC caving clubhouse to visit this and then potentially visit Heale Farm Cave later time permitting. After getting changed in the layby we crossed the road went through the gate and down to the small stream sinkhole. The cave entrance stands out in in the swallet by being yellow and it has a very awkward cover, steel rod and padlock. Once this is removed it gives access to some vertical smallish concrete pipes and a rather weird ladder arrangement, which is hard work for those with long legs and big feet! At the bottom you meet the incoming stream water and round the corner is another fixed ladder among the scaffolding and Philip's loose rocks! Descending this gives two options; straight across is a tight loop passage, not advised; down is a rift passage which enlarges to a reasonable size and a tight link passage on the left looks into Cotham Hall chamber (the largest chamber in the cave at 30m long – but not that large). Onward and downward leads through a crawl to the bottom of Cotham Hall which has two routes onwards. The first on the right hand down a short fixed ladder follows the main small stream through a few awkward manoeuvres down this passage called Nasty Nasty, past a muddy lump and through a muddy squeeze a flat out crawl that tightens to a duck whilst lying in water. Nobody liked this, although Gavin went the furthest, brave man! We did not get to the 12m long Mud Hall (a summer trip perhaps in 2027?). The other passage out of the base of Cotham Hall descends to a right angle bend, a short rift and low awkward squeeze (Twist & Shout). Philip and I stopped here. Later though Gavin and David went through and proceeded to the 3 m free climb down and a rift passage before turning around.

Upon exiting the cave, locking the lid and returning to the cars in the layby David announces that he has lost his car key, probably in the cave somewhere! Gavin, Ralph & Ros drove back to MNRC to get a spare key. Philip, David and I tromp back to the cave, open the awkward lid and descend again to see if we can find the missing car key. After some 45 minutes it was located in Twist & Shout squeeze. Out again we met up with the others, opened the car and returned to MNRC. By this time most had changed or showered but no one had the motivation to visit Heale Farm Cave, so we waited at the hut, socialised with cups of tea before going out for dinner later. All in all and amusing day. Two trips in Attborough Swallet (a rarely visited cave) in one sitting!

In the 5 October 2016 issue of *New Scientist Zoologist*, there was an article about dwarf crocodiles living in the Abanda cave system in Gabon [1]. Three expeditions to this system have been held annually between 2010 and 2015 [2].

The 2010 expedition first discovered these crocodiles prowling a system of fossil karst passages, at least 5 km long. Imagine (as the chief cave explorer reported) crawling through a cave and suddenly seeing two big, glowing red eyes ahead of you. It would be bad enough coming across a fox, or a badger, but a pigmy crocodile ... (and 1.7 m long doesn't sound all that 'pigmy' to me!)

In the depths of the caves, the older crocodiles had become not actually paler, but had turned a bright orange colour. Rather than this being due to them losing pigment, the team's crocodile expert from the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation believed this was simply an effect of them living in the cave water, made strongly alkaline by bat guano, and that they are able to emerge to breed during the wet season. However the expedition website [2] states that the crocodiles are trapped in the cave, the only entrance being a 7 m deep pit.

One of the main sources of food for the crocs is the large number of bats that live in the caves. Even if they don't simply pluck the bats off the cave walls, the crocs have a steady supply of them falling onto the floor or into the water.

The website says bats in Gabon have been identified as a reservoir of Ebola virus, and then the crocs are hunted extensively for bushmeat! Crocburgers, anyone?

Following this, in the *New Scientist* issue 17/24/31 Dec 2016 there was a letter in which the correspondent wrote that in the 1980s he was working on a BBC documentary in Botswana. 'Out looking for shooting locations [he] climbed a ... hill ..., sat down' and saw 'a crocodile sunning itself on a ledge outside a small cave. At dusk, bats started flying out. The crocodile snapped them out of the air'.

Joe Duxbury

1. <https://www.newscientist.com/article-type/zoologist>. 5 October 2016, J Gabbatiss, "Weird orange crocodiles found gorging on bats in Gabon's caves".

2. <http://www.abanda-expedition.org/>

Crocodiles and Bats

CSS MEETS LIST 2017

April 12th-19th - Scotland, staying at the Grampian hut in Assynt (Easter Holiday)

A week based in the GSG hut in Elphin, with fine views and excellent caving and mountain walking prospects in very close proximity. A chance to see The Great Northern Time Machine, marvel at Cnockers and descend ANUS.

April 14th-17th - Whitewalls Family Weekend

Whitewalls is booked for the exclusive use of members and their guests. Children are very welcome, though not essential. There's no fixed plans, so just turn up and do whatever you fancy.

May 5th-7th - Whitewalls Working Weekend

A weekend of hut maintenance activities with John and Mike as taskmasters.

May 26th-29th - Yorkshire, staying at the Craven hut

This is the Bradford Winch Weekend, so Gaping Gill with its multiple through-trip options will definitely be on the cards for one day. Other trips to be decided, and may focus less on SRT than usual.

June 3rd - Wet Sink

Joe will be showing us the delights of Wet Sink/Slaughter Stream in the Forest of Dean.

June 23rd-25th - CSS Summer BBQ at Whitewalls

Excellent local caving, plus the usual BBQ fun and food. Proposed trip for Saturday - Draenen Waterfall Series.

July 14th-16th - Pembrokeshire

A weekend camping on the dramatic Pembrokeshire coastline, with a trip to Ogof Gofan and kayaking around the sites of speleological interest along the coast.

July 20th-22nd - Whitewalls Family Weekend

Another chance to bring your family and friends to Whitewalls, or just come along for a caving/walking social. Hopefully the weather will be nice enough for a BBQ too.

August 4th-6th - Mendip, staying at the SMCC hut

A good dose of Mendip caving, drinking at The Hunters' and BBQ feasting. Trips to include Charterhouse, Upper Flood, and Swildon's.

August 25th-28th - Bank Holiday Weekend at Whitewalls

Caving in one of our fine local caves on Saturday, to be followed by an evening of wine and cheese appreciation organised by Stuart. Sunday's trip will be further afield near Llandovery, where Paul will be leading us on a trip to Nantymwyn Mine.

September 14th-16th - Whitewalls reserved for members and their guests

Event to be decided. Could be caving, working or a combination of the two.

September 29th-October 1st - Hidden Earth

This year the event will be taking place in Churchill, Mendip.

October 13th-15th - North Wales staying at the Lancashire Caving/Climbing Club Hut

Our mission the Croesor/Rhosydd through trip, a classic underground adventure involving zip-wires, inflatable dinghies, and Indiana Jones style rickety bridges. There are other extensive mines to explore here and plenty of excellent mountain walks too.

November 3rd-5th - Bonfire Weekend at Whitewalls

Caving, bonfire, fireworks, food and fun with caving chums.

December 1st-3rd - Whitewalls Curry Weekend

More caving and fun with chums, but with homemade curry and sundries.

If anyone has any suggestions of trips they would like to do on any of the meets then do let me know. The above trips are likely to be expanded on and additional events added during the year, so watch this space for updates.

Mandy - mandola76@gmail.com



*Mandy, Mike and Andy
Bellan Mine, Cornwall Feb 2017*



*Pisa Passage,
Shatter Cave
by Nick Chipchase*