



**Volume 64  
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Apr/May/June 2022**

**Trefil Caves  
Caves of Mull  
Llygad Llŵchwr  
Yorkshire Week**

**CHELSEA SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

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*Above: Tim Rose in Ogof Garn-y-Bica, March 2022  
by Matt Voysey*

*Front cover: Adrian Fawcett in It’s a Cracker/Notts 2,  
May 2022 by Matt Chinner*

## Upcoming Daren Camps

September 9th-11th and November 18th-20th  
Contact Mandy or Adrian if you’d like to come along.



**Editorial** Lots of club caving activities this edition, including no less than 12 pages of reports covering the club's recent highly successful Yorkshire potholing week. As always a big thank you to all our contributors.

Please submit all items for publication in this newsletter to [cssmattv@gmail.com](mailto:cssmattv@gmail.com)

Remember that as well as trip reports we welcome items of news or general interest, gear and literature reviews, technical/scientific articles, historical accounts and reminiscences, fun stuff, entertaining stories, and anything else you can come up with. 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 a public shared link to the folder, or ZIP them up and send via MailBigFile.

An electronic version of this newsletter is available to download from the members area of the club website, the Facebook group and the club forum. Also, if you would prefer to go paperless and receive electronic copies of the newsletter by email in future then let us know.

*Editors: Matt and Mandy Voysey*

## New Locks at Whitewalls

John has now replaced the Whitewalls door locks for a new electronic system. The cottage front and back doors, library, tackle store and key cupboard all now require either a key fob or a code to gain access. Members can collect their own key fobs from the library; either ask John for the key code to access or get a member with a fob to let you in. If returning your old key there's no need to pay, otherwise a £10 deposit is required.

### Front and Back Door Locks

#### To open with a fob

Just present the fob where it is marked 'card' on the lock.

The lock will then tell you if you have successfully unlocked the door (yes, it speaks!).



#### To open with a code

Press \* to light up the keypad, then enter the code followed by #. The lock will then tell you if you have successfully unlocked the door.

#### To lock the door

Close the door then lift the handle to engage the mortice lock.

Press and hold # (1 second) until the door informs you it is locked.

**Check the door can't be opened before leaving!**

Long press here to lock



**Important Note:** For safety reasons both doors can be opened from the inside when locked, but be aware that closing them behind you will result in being locked out! Always check the door is unlocked before using or ensure you have a fob or key code if you intend to return inside.

### Internal Doors and Cupboards

#### To open with a fob

Present the fob to the centre of the knob. The lock will then tell you if you have successfully unlocked the door.

Turn the knob to disengage the mortice lock (when unlocked the knob acts like a key to work the mortice).



Opening with a code is also possible, but this is not currently planned for members' use.

#### To lock the door

Close the door then turn the knob to engage the mortice.

Press and hold # (1 second) until the door informs you it is locked.

**Check door can't be opened before leaving!**



Long press here to lock

**Important Note:** This system doesn't automatically lock and unlock the doors, you also need to turn the knob to disengage and engage the mortice lock. This means that it's also possible to accidentally lock the door open. If this should happen simply use your fob again then follow the instructions above.

## Membership

### Current rates:

**Full: £30, Joint: £40**, plus BCA subscription per person of £20 for cavers or £6 for non-cavers.

**Associate: £18** to receive publications, plus £6 for BCA non-caver insurance.

**Provisional: £10** for any 6 months plus BCA active caver insurance to Dec 31<sup>st</sup> at £4.25 per quarter.

Members who have BCA membership via another club need not pay twice but should reference their BCA number and membership club with their payment. Full membership information and an application form can be downloaded from the CSS website [www.chelseaspelaeo.org](http://www.chelseaspelaeo.org)

Subscription renewals become due 1<sup>st</sup> October yearly. Please send all payments to:

Andy Heath, 28 Brookfield Road, East Budleigh, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 7EL.

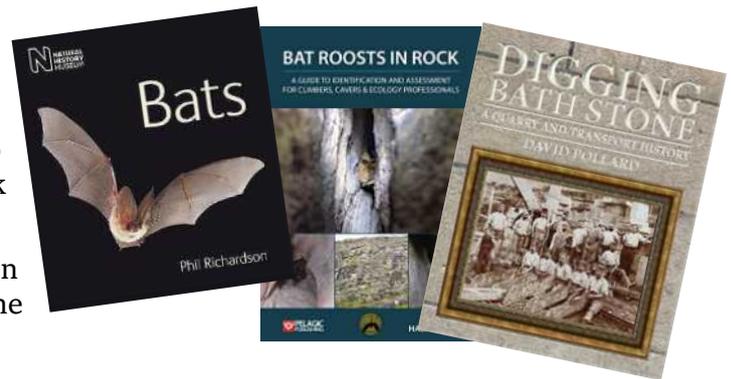
Email [csstreasurer@chelseaspelaeo.org](mailto:csstreasurer@chelseaspelaeo.org)

# New Library Acquisitions

by Paul Tarrant

I like it when people come up with suggestions for new books for the library as it makes my job easy getting stuff that people actually want to read. I have bought in 3 books this past month, two on bats and one on the mining of Bath Stone. All look to be excellent additions to the library.

**New Books:** Bats by Phil Richardson, Bat Roosts in Rock by Henry Andrews et al and Digging Bath Stone by David Pollard.



I found I had a few DVDs which I no longer want and that CSS members may like to watch. 'The Underground Journey' is a fairly compelling account of the exploration of a Derbyshire sough (mine drainage tunnel) done back in 1968 when gear was fairly rudimentary. Other titles may be familiar to people, and they are all in cupboard 4. Enjoy!

**DVDs:** Forbidden Secrets of the Cigalere by Sid Perou, The Giant of the South - Exploration of the Sima GESM 2006 by Marcus Taylor, The Underground Journey by Colin D. Fearn, A Rock and a Hard Place by Andy Sparrow and Wookey Exposed by Gavin Newman.



We have received an extremely generous donation of 15 French caving books from Andy Heath who wanted to free up space in his loft! Several of the books are of the series Speleo Sportive regional caving guides which completes the partial set we had in the library. Other books describe the Doubs region, the Vercors, as well as a book on classic traverses that can be made in French caves. All in all, France is well covered, so there are no excuses to going out there to explore their caves during a holiday. Andy is thanked wholeheartedly for his excellent donation.



**French Guide Books:** Speleo Sportive – Haute Savoie, Pierre Saint Martin, Monts du Vaucluse, Ardeche, Marguareis, Vercors; Speleo Guide Chartreuse, Speleo dans le Vercors 1 & 2, Grottes et Canyons, Speleologie Franche Comte, Vercors Caves, Travers le Karst and Speleologie du Doubs 1 & 3.

# TYWARNHAYLE by Paul Tarrant

## COPPER MINE

I recently visited northern Cornwall with Andrea, doing general sight-seeing around the peninsular. A trip to the Land's End area saw us visit Geevor Mine Museum which has lots of interesting mining artefacts on display in a beautiful part of Cornwall. There is an underground section of old mine adit that can be explored but sadly it was a bit short and there were no real workings to see.

Before going to Cornwall, I had contacted the Carbis Bay Crew who explore the region's mines and maintain a good presence on the dread Facebook. I was asking them for some suggestions of easy mine adits to explore on the northern coast area. However, one of them suggested we could meet up and do a shortish evening trip in Tywarnhayle Copper Mine near to Scorrier, so I agreed and on the pre-designated evening met up with Sam Peckham, Pete Flanagan, Jen and Kyle.

We drove up from the main road to park vehicles, then changed and walked downhill to locate the open adit. I shall be vague about the precise location! We entered a man sized level that appeared to be hewn from the rock. It was reasonably dry. We carried on for a couple of hundred feet until we entered a large chamber where a shaft was coming in from the surface which sadly had been used to dispose of domestic rubbish.

We carried on and descended a slippery ramp which had timbers supporting the roof. At the bottom of the ramp a narrow slot with some scaff bars gave access to a lower section that we explored for around four hundred metres and which ended at a short concrete lined shaft which had a lid on it. It is possible to exit at this point, if you have first lifted the shaft lid, but as we had not done this we had to retreat along the heavily timbered adit. We went back up the scaffolded squeeze and then followed the main way on, which got bigger, and gave some good displays of secondary copper staining.

The mine started to get quite big at this point and we entered an area with several ways on and which led to a heavily timbered section which had an ascending iron skipway very similar to the one in Cwmystwyth. A level took us into a very large stoped out chamber with selenite needles on the roof and a lake stretching off into the distance. We continued on, finding that we had returned to a point we had previously visited and eventually we came to a mined out area with a very large rope showing the way up. 'Stope on a Rope' is what it was called and from the passage that led off from the top, a high passage with magnificent copper staining on the walls was explored until we reached an ascending ladder which was one of six (45m of ascent) that needed to be climbed to gain the entrance adit just above where we had parked our cars.

We had been underground for just over 2 hours and had seen a lot of this mine. It was really very good and well worth seeing. Sam, Pete and I had a celebratory pint in The Victory pub nearby before I drove back to Newquay.



# Mull

## MACKINNON'S CAVE

by Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley

If you're holidaying on Mull, you've bagged all the hills and coast walks, done the islands, spotted golden and white tailed eagles until your eyes were watering, tired of the magnificent views, marveled at the geology, your liver can't handle another distillery, rutting stags aren't your thing and you want to strangle the next otter you encounter then you might fancy a short, cave-related, diversion.

MacKinnon's Cave, Grid Ref NM 441323, the longest in the Hebrides, is located at the north end of the western coastal area known as the Wilderness.

A 1 mile walk to the cave is signposted from Balmeanach Farm above the mouth of Loch na Keal. This brings you down to a rocky beach with a little easy scrambling over rocks (mind the tide as the cave is only accessible for a few hours either side of low tide, and the whale!).

The cave is formed in quartzite at the base of spectacular basalt cliffs and has an impressive entrance about 90ft high. It was explored in 1773 by Dr. Samuel Johnson and James Boswell who surveyed it, remarkably accurately, using Boswell's walking stick as a measure.

A walk-in entrance brings you to an impressive chamber which, on our visit in late May, resonated theatrically with the sound of the cormorants nesting in the roof. The walking passage continues for a total of 150 meters.

Abbott MacKinnon is said to have hidden here in the 1400s to avoid capture by clan MacLean.

Needless to say there is the usual guff about vanishing pipers, hairless dogs and the like and, whatever you do, watch out for the fairies...



*Clockwise:  
Karen Lumley at the entrance to  
MacKinnon's Cave.  
The bouldery beach approach to the  
cave.  
The lazy way to go whale spotting.*

# LOCHBUIE TO CARSAIG



*Left to right:  
Uamh nan Taillearan.  
Two caves immediately beyond the rope climb.  
All photos by Gonzo*

**Another interesting diversion for the holidaying caver is the magnificent coastal walk from Lochbuie to Carsaig, with rock shelters appearing in the cliffs almost from the outset. After a mile you'll reach the ruins of Glenbyre from where the terrain becomes more challenging. Pass the walled entrance of Uamh nan Taillearan (Cave of the Taylors). After another mile or so there are a couple of fine sea caves (marked on the OS map) immediately after a small rope climb (mind the tide) and beneath a waterfall. Several of the caves along the route have been used for storage by the farmers and the latter two show signs of having been used for habitation or shelter. There's a small campsite at Lochbuie from where you can watch the otters fish the incoming tide as you pick off the ticks.**

# THREE TREFIL CAVES

by Adrian Fawcett



**26TH MARCH 2022**

**Team Left-Right: Paris Oomadath, Emyr Walters, Adrian Fawcett, Gareth Jones, John Newton, Andy Tyler, Tim Rose, Mandy Voysey and Matt Voysey.**

If the weather forecast had been for rain we'd have found something else to do. But we were rewarded with a fine early spring day, blighted just a little by smoke from the Llangattock grass fires drifting across the moorland. I wasn't sure that a lot of hiking for a relatively small amount of caving would appeal to many people, nevertheless a party of no fewer than nine cavers assembled at the north end of Trefil village. We took care to park south of the barrier which might be closed by the time we got back – and indeed it was.

After a brief delay as Paris decided on a last-minute change of attire, we were on our way across the rough featureless expanse that lies west of Trefil. The two miles of rough moorland we had to traverse to get to Ogof Ap Robert seemed more like three. Since we planned to visit

three caves, our exploration of Ap Robert went just as far as Toad Hall. Care was necessary negotiating our way through the cave, partly due to a number of bats in close proximity, and also due to the disintegrated shoring on several loose climbs which had definitely deteriorated since my previous visit. After some photographs, and exploring the network of passages off Toad Hall, we retraced our steps, and continued our trek to the next cave – Ogof Garn-y-Bica, best known for the discovery there of some prehistoric animal bones.

This seldom visited cave is a pothole with two linked pitches, the lower one being quite a fine shaft, taking the cave to a depth of about 30 metres. Rigging the cave for SRT, it didn't take me long to realise I was missing some kit. I had remembered to bring hangers, but somehow overlooked the need for maillons to go with them. I went back out of the cave to confess my stupidity and see what kit we could scrape together. Pooling all the krabs we had between us, and rigging sparingly, we had just enough





Toad Hall, Ap Robert

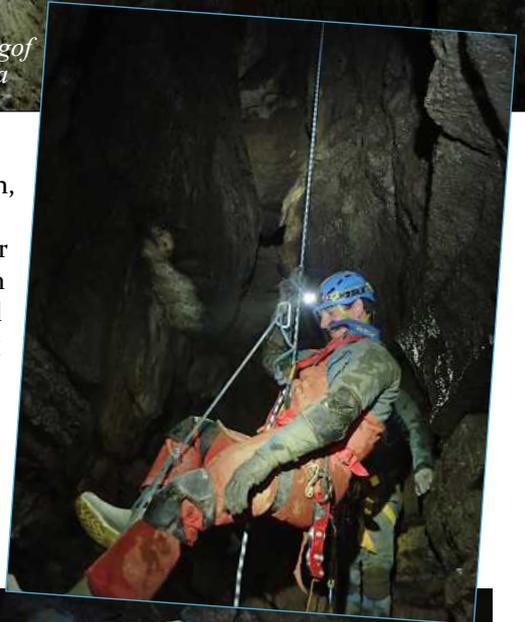


1st Pitch in Ogof Garn-y-Bica

metalwork to reach the bottom. The five of us with SRT kit descended (Emyr, Tim, Matt, Mandy and me), while the others enjoyed the sunshine on the surface.

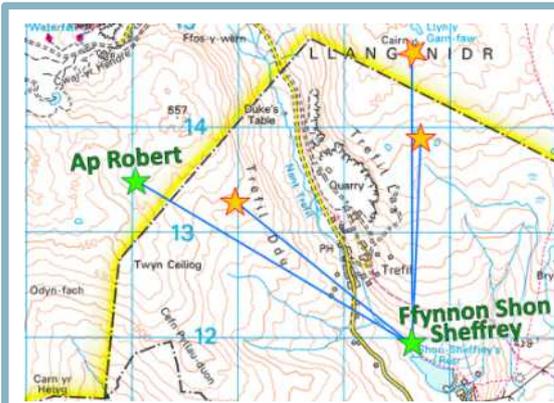
And then onwards to our final cave – Ogof Tarddiad Rhymni. We negotiated our way down into the huge disused quarry, which was another world compared with the rough moorland, and located the entrance which is hidden behind a small drystone wall. A relatively horizontal cave with some decent sized dry walking passage, Ogof Tarddiad Rhymni is far more substantial than any other caves in the area and was very much a contrast to the first two. Despite the cave being basically one main passage and a side branch, we still managed to lose each other for a while after splitting into three groups, which added some delay to proceedings.

By the time we had all exited the cave, the sun was setting, and the first part of the group had already set off on the longer, but rather easier, route back via the quarry road. It was almost completely dark by the time we were all back at the cars, so just as well none of us chose to take the direct line back over the mountain.



Above: Tim at the bottom of Garn-y Bica;  
The entrance series of Ap Robert  
Left: Ogof Tarddiad Rhymni

Photos by Matt Voysey



## Hydrology and digging potential in the environs of Trefil

by Mandy Voysey

It's common knowledge that there must be more cave to be found on the Mynydd Llangynidr, so I was interested to come across the following nugget of information while doing a bit of research prior to our trip...

One of the largest resurgences of the area is Ffynnon Shon Sheffrey by the reservoir near Trefil. Dye tests conducted by Bill Gascoine (CSS) showed that water sinking in Ap Robert plus 3 other sinks in the area (NGR SO 1270 1470, SO 1270 1390 & SO 1100 1320) all reached the resurgence with a trace time of under 48 hours. All 4 sites are roughly 2 miles away from Ffynnon Shon Sheffrey and around 1700 feet (518m) altitude. Plotting these on a map shows the potential for a very extensive cave system, all that's needed now is a way in, which would be much easier if the mountain wasn't covered in pesky gritstone!

# A TRIP TO LLYGAD LLWCHWR 1 & 2

by Paul Tarrant

23rd April 2022

A small, select group comprising Paris Oomadath, Pete Smith and Adrian Fawcett drove from east Wales to meet with Paul Tarrant in west Wales on the lonely mountain road near to Llygad Lluchwr.

We first visited Llygad Lluchwr 2, which is situated in the first large doline, encountered on the left-hand side when climbing over the stile in the dry stone wall. We had heard of the problems created by tree collapse following a past winter storm, but understood that some good folk had reopened the entrance. However, perhaps there have been further collapses as the cliff above the cave entrance still looks unstable with a degree of mud, rocks and muck having been brought down in the area of the entrance. We determined that it was probably OK to descend, and so we did, and explored much of the cave's larger passages which did not require too much crawling.

Much of the cave is still pristine and beautiful and this brought forth cries of excitement from Paris who marvelled at the quality of the formations and the varied passage shapes. We spent about an hour and a half exploring before deciding that we should head over to Llygad Lluchwr.

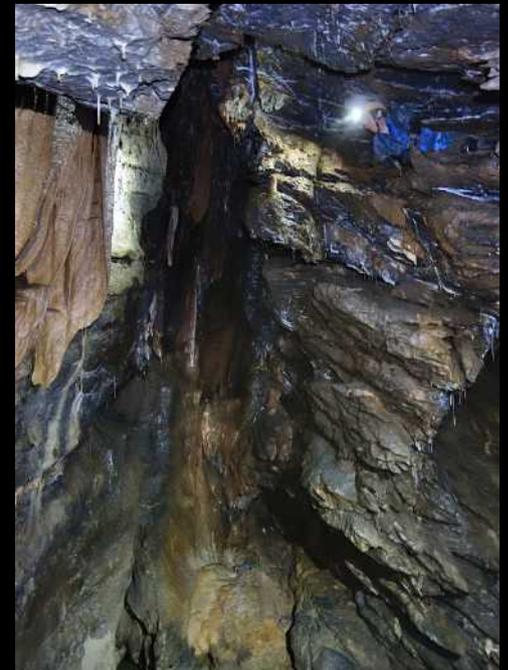
A bit of history is needed here! We have all heard of

the brave antics of Birkbeck and Martell who first recorded details of their trips in Yorkshire's caves and potholes from 1842, and undoubtedly there were others who explored caves in Britain in the mid C19th. Not many will have heard of Thomas Jenkins, a cabinet maker from Llandeilo who first explored Llygad Lluchwr and other nearby caves in 1841 and went on to do several trips with friends, taking into Llygad Lluchwr a variety of noise making instruments like trumpets and guns to test out the cave's acoustic qualities. He also conducted scientific experiments measuring volumes and temperatures of the waters resurging from the cave and comparing them to the water that then resurged at the large Holywell springs in north Wales before lead mining activity messed up the local phreas there!

His first recorded trip to Llygad Lluchwr was on 1/5/1841 when he explored up to possibly the First River Chamber, entering the cave at 8pm with four others. Their only lights were candles and they explored up to 567 feet from the entrance, which they regained at 1:00am! He did several other trips, details of which he recorded in his diary' and in September 1847 he made a coracle boat that could be broken down and transported into the cave to explore the



Top Left: Paul in LL2 by Peter Smith - Top Right: Paris admiring formations in LL2 by Paul Tarrant  
Bottom Left: Collapse at LL2 entrance by Peter Smith - Middle: Paris in LL2 - Right: Peter and Paris in LL2 by Paul Tarrant



*Top Left: Paris, Adrian and Paul by the entrance of Llygad Lluchwr  
Right: Adrian in 4th Lake Chamber, Llygad Lluchwr  
Photos by Peter Smith*

lakes he had found as part of his earlier explorations. It cost him ten shillings and six pence (52.5p). He explored the lakes in fine fashion stating, "We made up the coracle and proceeded down-stream over very deep pools through several magnificent caverns where man never dared to go."

Jenkins' last trip was in August 1855 when he was 42. He wanted to see if the coracle was still serviceable but found it to be a decayed mess instead, thus ending his 14 year long caving career in Llygad Lluchwr. His diary can be found at [www.llandeilo.org](http://www.llandeilo.org) and is an interesting read giving insight into Welsh country life during the early Victorian years.

Back to the here and now! We athletically entered the cave through its slightly challenging entrance and made for the First River Chamber which seemed a lot

further in than memory recalled. Water levels were up and precluded us traversing around the rocks to see the short sump that accesses another of the river chambers.

Our journey deeper into the cave was too confusing to describe here with any real clarity but certainly we explored the majority of the cave's river chambers and other linking passages. I think we all marvelled at the large flowstone formations that our lights revealed. Our return from the river chamber, requiring equipment to descend to, seemed remarkably short compared to our journey in and we were soon back at the entrance which demanded displays of athleticism to exit. We all agreed it had been a fine trip with lots to see during the 3 hours we spent in there.

## CSS MEETS 2022

### July 15th-17th – North Wales

A weekend of mine exploration staying at the Lancashire Caving and Climbing Club hut in Tanygrisiau, close to the big mines of Blaenau Ffestiniog. Trips planned are Cwmorthin/Oakeley on Saturday (which will include SRT and zip lines!) and Maenofferen on Sunday. For further information contact Matt Chinner, the organiser of this meet.

### August 26th-29th – (Bank Holiday) Whitewalls

A trip to The Great North Road in Dan yr Ogof is planned for Sunday (contact Adrian or Mandy for further info). Cavefest should also be happening this weekend, based in Crickhowell, so CSS members may want to take part in that too.

### September – Hidden Earth (Cancelled)

Alternative club meet to be decided.

### October 7th-9th – Derbyshire Meet

We'll be staying at the TSG hut in Castleton, just a short distance away from Peak Cavern which has been booked for Saturday. There are a number of trip options within the system and the plan is to have an easy trip and a more sporting one involving SRT on the same day. Contact Andy Heath for more information.

### November 4th-6th – Whitewalls Bonfire Meet

Fire, frolics and caving fun. Caving trips to be decided, but it will include a range of options for all abilities. As usual there'll be a communal feast, fireworks, barrels of beer and a huge bonfire to enjoy.

### December 2nd-4th – Whitewalls Curry Weekend

The annual evening of home-made curry culinary delights with a selection of caving trips on offer to work up an appetite. Bring along a curried concoction to share, be it a vat of curry, a spicy side-dish or some tasty sundries.

**Extra trips may be added, so check out the CSS website, Proboards and the members' Facebook page for updates.**

# Yorkshire Week

On 23rd-29th May, CSS enjoyed a full week of caving in the Yorkshire Dales. A good number of members joined in and much caving was undertaken with 10 trips in 7 days and one sheep rescue. Caves visited were: Magnetometer Pot, Lancaster Hole/Wilf Taylor's, It's a Cracker/Notts 2, Notts Pot, Car Pot, Juniper Gulf, Short Drop Cave/Gavel Pot, Big Meanie/Death's Head, Pool Sink, Swinsto Hole and Scanty Lardos Pot. We also enjoyed many visits to the Helwith Bridge Inn and some people even went walking. Here are some trip reports from the week...

*Jon Abbott, Adrian Fawcett and Mandy Voysey in Notts Pot - by Matt Chinner*

## IT'S A CRACKER

*by Jon Abbott*

I had been wanting to do a through trip of the Leck Fell cave system for a while. During these few days in Yorkshire this aspiration was to be realised not once, but twice.

So it was that Matt Chinner, Adrian Fawcett and I trudged up the soggy, misty moor, past the inviting streamway of Lost Johns' and the not so inviting fenced-off enclosure of Lost Pot, to the two familiar shake holes of Boxhead Pot and It's a Cracker. It's a Cracker was one of my first SRT caves some years before. The pitches are airy but straightforward, revealing clean-washed shafts of fluted limestone. Adrian made light work of this, although the sound of falling water was deafening and a wind ripped through us as we eagerly awaited our turn on the rope to escape the water from the previous pitch. Near the bottom of the last pitch, a swing gains access to a ledge 10m above the floor of the pot. From here, there are two ways into the master cave system. The Tube takes all the water from It's a Cracker and Boxhead. It has a fearsome reputation when dry. Today it would be suicide. The way on for us was a rock strewn tube from the ledge and, having taken off SRT gear, the crawl provided a welcome respite from the bedlam of the cascade and allowed us to warm up. Finally we could converse.

The route through Cresta Run to eventually emerge

in The Tate Galleries "offers a diverse collection of crawls, climbs and traverses; several route-finding puzzles and good formations"(Not for the Faint Hearted). And so it did. None of our party had negotiated this route before but the description was accurate. Occasionally a feature, such as a "flat-out wriggle in water" or "a tiny chamber with a calcite column" reassured us that we might find our way, but we had hard-rigged It's a Cracker just in case. Eventually a bizarre climb up an inclined tube, equipped with a 'thank god' hawser rope, deposited us in Avens Passage, part of the Tate Galleries, and the cave got big again. Helictite Rift goes right towards Lyle Cavern and a connection with the master cave streamway, leading to Lost Johns' Cave, Death's Head Hole and Big Meanie. But our way was left. From this end of the Tate Galleries a dig, the 2011 connection to the Notts II Streamway, allows an exit via Committee Pot (AKA The Iron Kiln). I was familiar with Notts II, so was Matt, and had explored most of the dig from that end but had never reached the Tate Galleries. This was the part of the through trip that I was most apprehensive about.

The passage closed down and a stone cairn offered reassurance. But the way on was not obvious. After some searching, a muddy incline through a



*Jon and Adrian at the entrance - photo by Matt Chinner*

constriction led to a chamber. It hit me with a sense of smug realisation that I had been here before. I expressed as much and began the corkscrew descent into the dig by a backwards bellyflop manoeuvre that would allow me to navigate feet first and toe my way through to a small standing chamber. Matt's few words at this point revealed a tone of sarcastic incredulity but he followed anyway. Total admiration goes out to those who persevered with this dig. It is tight, uncomfortable and reinforced with bits of scaffolding and cement. Apparently it is only 200 metres but it seems longer, much longer. Most of the way is crawling feet first until there is just enough room to turn around for the final wet crawl into Sir Digby Spode's Inlet and a view of the Notts II streamway.

The water was hoofing through! Mid-thigh deep in places. Upstream is pretty, amazingly pretty. But, with some sense of urgency, we headed downstream, wedging ourselves against the walls of the canyon and prepared to catch Adrian were he to be flushed away by the torrent. Passing Showerbath Inlet for a final soaking, a left turn begins the ascent into



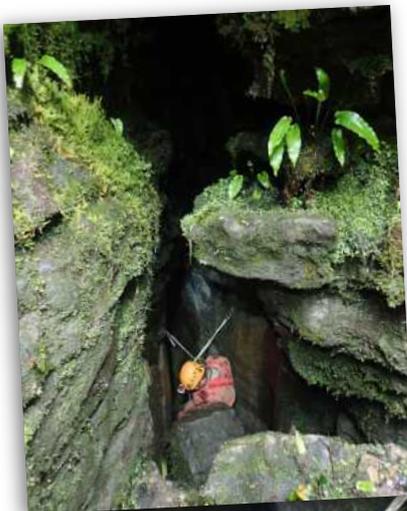
*Jon and Adrian in the Tate Galleries - photos by Matt Chinner*

Committee Pot leading to the 50 metre shaft of scaffolding, ladders, hollow blocks and whatever else they found when they ram-raided Jewson's, to lead ultimately to the surface. A trip involving route finding, water, discomfort, beautiful formations, great company and more discomfort. A cracking trip!

# Car Pot and Juniper Gulf

by Adrian Fawcett

27th May 2022 – Adrian Fawcett, Mandy Voysey, Matt Voysey, Matt Chinner and Mike Green.



**PLAN A** We had permits for Car Pot and Juniper Gulf for the same day. Since they're not too far apart, we'd conceived that with two parties, one could rig each cave and de-rig the other. With hindsight, that was a somewhat optimistic plan – but, as it turned out, we did indeed visit both caves.

I'd visited Car Pot once before – in 2006 – but since then the cave had evidently shrunk. Others might argue I had become fatter or more feeble in the intervening years, but I'm sticking with my version of the story.

The guide book describes an easy climb down into the entrance shakehole, but due to changes since this was written, even that had become more challenging. Nevertheless, we were soon down, and the first pitch presented no difficulties. But then came the "letterbox". After an abortive forwards attempt, I tried backwards – that was easier, but quite snug even for me. Beyond lay Baptistry Crawl. On my previous visit it had been an inverted T shape, and it was just about possible to crawl flat out, with shoulders in the undercut each side. But the floor was higher now, and progress was only possible sideways, pushing with my feet. Pushing the tackle sack ahead of me, it jammed after a couple of metres. I tried again without the tackle sack, but still could only move a few inches at a time – and realised that even if I got through, others in the party probably would not. A shame, because the cave gets rather bigger after that. So, we headed back out and devised a plan B.

*Car Pot photos - Top: Matt C on the first pitch by Matt Voysey. Bottom: Mike on the first pitch by Matt Chinner.*



## PLAN B

Although we had many hundreds of metres of rope in all sorts of lengths back at YSS, with us we had just the tackle needed for Car Pot. Clearly, that wasn't enough rope to get us to the bottom of Juniper Gulf, and the cave also has some long traverses with a lot of bolts. But we decided to give it a go anyway, until we ran out of rope, maillons, or both.

On arrival at the cave, we found a muddy, emaciated sheep down in the gully looking up at us rather pathetically, or perhaps sheepishly. It had presumably been stranded there for several days, and none of us relished the prospect of getting in there with it – but we had little option. Mandy took charge of operations, and she and I attached a couple of belts around the sheep, then looped a rope through them to allow the animal to be hauled to safe ground. During the whole process the animal remained totally docile, and once detached from the makeshift harness just lay on the grass for several minutes – before getting back to the business of eating grass and making up for a few missed meals.

After giving the items we'd used a good wash, we embarked on our descent of Juniper Gulf, rigging it fairly economically to get as far as possible. Despite having well short of the rope lengths on the top, and not protecting the final traverse (which hardly needs a rope), beyond all expectations we somehow made it to the head of the big pitch with not even a maillon to spare. And there's not a lot to see at the bottom anyway.

All in all, a memorable day out – even if not one that went entirely to plan. And, if we had managed to bottom Car Pot, what would have been the fate of the sheep?

*Top to Bottom: Matt, Adrian, Mandy and Mike at the entrance to Juniper Gulf (MC).*

*Adrian rigging the first pitch (MC).*

*Matt C prussiking towards the entrance (MV).*

*Mandy about to descend (MV).*

*Mike crossing 'The Bad Step' – a particularly wide section of the traverse after the second pitch (MV).*

*Adrian, Mandy and Mike pulling up the rope (MC).*

*The rescued sheep (MV).*

*(MC) = Photo taken by Matt Chinner.*

*(MV) = Photo taken by Matt Voysey.*



# SHORT DROP CAVE AND GAVEL POT

*by Sas Watson*

**Date: Friday 27th May 2022 - Cavers: Tim Rose, Sas Watson, John Newton and Jann Padley**

Having spent all of the day before hanging on string Tim and I objected to the idea of another day of it! We consulted the books, rigging guide and the internet for ideas and decided on Short Drop Cave and Gavel Pot. The two caves ticked many boxes for us, most importantly there was more 'caving' than 'dangling'. As a bonus it was a very short walk from the car. John and Jann said they would join us too, none of us had been to either of these caves before. With minimal faffing we were ready and out the door heading for Leck Fell. John gave Tim and I a lift, and Jann said he would go separately. We set off and drove past the car park exit to see Jann turning the wrong way. A bit further up the road and Jann was still not behind us and we suddenly wondered if he knew where to go to get to the cave! At the same time Tim was looking in his camera box and discovered that the memory card was not in the camera. With two things to rectify we turned round and went back to the hut. We retrieved Jann while Tim went to hunt for the memory card - to no avail, it was on his desk back in Dorset!

We went in Short Drop Cave first. The entrance was in the bottom of an overgrown, dry sink hole and dropped 4ft straight into a stooping and then crawling section of passage. There was a little bit of grumbling about the crawling but it was a refreshing change from hanging on string! It wasn't long before we came to Main Inlet and from there it was walking stream passage. We went past a number of inlets and decided that we would investigate some of them on the way back up. The stream passage was easy going, with occasional crab walk style bits, cascades and puddles to slow the progress. We had a little investigate of an oxbow on the way. We eventually found ourselves at the 5m pitch. The head of the pitch was very friendly with no traversing required! We backed up stream to where we would have room to don harnesses and SRT kit. Tim rigged the pitch sufficiently out of the water and we abseiled down. John had a look at the pitch and decided he would not come down and instead he would wait for us and guard the rope. The stream continued with little cascades down towards the next pitch. We had already decided that we wouldn't be doing the bottom pitch or traverses into Gavel Pot. Instead we would investigate it from the top. Tim rigged a short traverse line so we could each go and have a look at the final pitch head. We then turned back to find John and the rope he had been guarding.

Back at the pitch I set off up first. When I was near the top John came back over and watched what I was doing to get off the pitch. He said it didn't seem that bad and maybe another time he would venture down. It didn't take long for us to all be at the top, the pitch derigged and uncomfortable SRT kit doffed. On the way back up the streamway we had a little trip into Breakdown Inlet. Tim followed the high level passage while the rest of us took

the easier lower option. Both routes ended at a small climb up that gave access to a nicely decorated little chamber. Jann sampled the upper passage on the way back out to the main streamway. The next side passage we looked at was South Inlet. It looked low and muddy and so by 'we' I mean Tim and Jann grovelled around in the mud whilst John and I found somewhere dry to sit! Continuing on we got to the turn off out of the main inlet and got back into the crawling and stooping passage - it didn't seem as long on the way out. Back at the entrance I used Tim as a foot hold to get back into the daylight. It hadn't been a particularly long trip so we decided to continue on to Gavel Pot.

There were a few fenced off areas that we looked at while trying to find the entrance and then we realised that it was the other side of the stone wall. Following the path within the fenced enclosure we were able to see the large shakehole. On the way down John decided to test the depth of the shakehole by launching his Peli Case down the steep slope. Thankfully it landed in the undergrowth on a ledge and Tim was able to rig a handline from a tree to retrieve it. John said his box contained snacks and his car key. He then followed it up with that he didn't mind about the snacks but he did about his car key. Tim and I were not sure he had his priorities right! Box retrieved and safely attached to us we got back to looking at the shakehole in front of us, there were a couple of ways into the cave. We had a look at the bolts we could see and decided on what we thought was the right route. Once again we donned our SRT kit and Tim began rigging the entrance pitch. The rest of us were getting a little chilly at this point. John didn't like the look of it so went to sit in the sun. Jann and I descended the hole to join Tim. At the bottom of the pitch Tim was looking round for the bolts to rig the next pitch. We were failing to see any sensibly placed bolts to make it work. Eventually we decided that it wasn't going to happen on this occasion and we decided to exit the cave. We found it annoying that we couldn't work out how it was supposed to be rigged.

The walk back to the car didn't take long and we started to get changed by the cars. The minute we started to get changed there were a few cars going up and down the road. Why is it that the moment you are mostly naked on the edge of the road that someone stops and asks if you have just been caving?! That evening Tim and I re-examined the survey, rigging topo and description and realised that we were going down the wrong pitch in Gavel Pot which is why it didn't make sense. It turned out we were heading down the route that joined into Short Drop Cave that we had looked at earlier. We didn't realise we were meant to walk to the other end of the shake hole to find our route. At least we will know for the next time we visit, and hopefully have a camera for some photos!

THIS IS ME AND A LOT OF WATER IN ...



# NOTTS POT

by Mandy Voysey

Thursday 26th May - Adrian Fawcett, Jon Abbott, Matt Chinner, Tim Rose, Sas Watson, Matt Voysey and Mandy Voysey.

Originally the plan for the day was to do Pillar

Holes, however as often happens in Yorkshire the moistness of the weather brought on a change of plan and the permit for Notts Pot was swapped from Saturday to Thursday. This was a trip that I hadn't done before and had been on my to-do list for a while, so I was looking forward to it.

As expected, the morning was particularly drizzly and uninspiring, but fortunately we managed to fritter away enough time faffing about that the dampness had eased by the time we had to commit to getting changed. A romp over the hillside soon brought us to the entrance, with a short daylight pitch in two sections to reach the streamway below. The start of the cave proper was quite low and the water seemed to be entering with some vigour - was this normal? I wasn't sure, but the people who'd done this cave before didn't seem too fazed so I took that as a good sign. Soon after, a short rope climb and another short pitch brought us to Three Ways Chamber where a decision had to be made as to who was going where.

Adrian was rigging the Centre Route and needed an extra three bag porters, while Jon rigging the Twilight Zone route required only two people. The two routes reunite before reaching the Lower Streamway, and as Adrian's route was theoretically easier/quicker the tackle for the lower pitches went that way, along with Tim, Sas and Matt V, while Jon, Matt C and I headed for the Twilight Zone.

Surprisingly none of us even thought about

humming the theme tune as we went, but we had a very enjoyable journey regardless, with some good sporting fun. There are some interesting pendulums along the way which provided good spectator sport for Matt and I watching Jon swinging about below, searching for a mythical deviation which possibly doesn't exist (it's on the topo, but the writers of the CNCC route description didn't find it either). So slick and efficient were we that we beat the others. Hah! I was the last one down and was just opening my bag of sweets when Adrian arrived with the rest of the team close behind.

Next up was the route to the Lower Streamway, which starts off as a traverse along the upper section of a rift passage. There were some knobbly formations along here, but they weren't very comfortable to sit on and it was also very breezy. Tim and Sas decided to head back at this point as it was getting a bit cold and progress was slower; I wondered if maybe they were the wise ones. However, I don't like to miss out on anything and things soon got moving again. After the next pitch we were again wedged in a rift but this time we could see Adrian descending the pitch below... right into a massive swirling maelstrom of water. Surely this was insane! Communication wasn't easy over the roar of the water, but as we'd all lost sight of Adrian and he seemed to be no longer on-rope we assumed everything was OK after all and we all bravely followed. I must admit to feeling a certain amount of trepidation at the top of the pitch wondering if I would shortly be swept away, but luckily it was possible to swing across just skimming the surface of the violently foaming water before



Left-Right photos on Central Route: Tim and Sas - Mandy ascending to Three Ways Chamber - Tim abseiling - Adrian rigging  
Top Left: Mandy abseiling the final pitch



Don't get swept into the maelstrom!\*



Left-Right: Adrian in the Twilight Zone (\* the quote is a lie, he didn't actually say that) - Matt C heading up the entrance pitch - The after trip team pic (L-R: Jon, Tim, Matt V, Sas, Matt C, Adrian and Mandy) - photos by Matt Voysey

landing on the other side, so it wasn't quite as bad it looked. A bit further on I met Matt C ready to drop the next pitch, this was only short, but even more insane. Surely plunging straight into a pounding waterfall isn't a good plan! Here I started making excuses along the lines that I'd rather not die or be pummelled into the sump, but Matt bravely demonstrated that our route lay in the small tube next to waterfall and not actually within/beneath it. Therefore as long as we swung across in time, everything would be fine. It looked dodgy, but I did it anyway and was pleased to see Matt holding out a fixed rope that I could pull myself across with just as my bottom hit the water. I did likewise for my spouse behind me and then the whole team was reunited once more as we turned the corner and found Matt, Adrian and Jon sitting by the terminal sump just a few paces further.

All that was left now was to head back out, and Matt C volunteered to de-rig. Heading back up was not too bad at all, and where our two entry routes met we all

swapped to do the opposite route to that taken on the way in. Adrian and Matt V de-rigged the Twilight Zone, while Jon, Matt C and I did the Centre Route which was also quite good though perhaps less sporty than our route in. The bags were much heavier now they were filled with wet rope and it was just as we realised that we were about to have four bags between the three of us that Adrian and Matt appeared at the top of the pitch to help. From there it was only a case of ferrying the kit up the short rope then passing them up the daylight pitches to the surface where Tim and Sas were waiting for us. Unusually for a Yorkshire exit it was neither freezing, foggy or rainy for the romp back, it was actually quite nice, just a shame that there's never an ice cream van around when you want one after caving (and one that sold ice cream and booze too would be a dream come true!). This trip included lots of rope dangling, swinging, traversing, plenty of water, a good jolly team and a smidge of fear, so overall it was a very enjoyable outing.

## Photos from a Lancaster Hole - Wilf Taylor's trip

Tuesday 24th May - Adrian Fawcett, Matt Chinner, Louise Hull and Ralph Whittaker



Photos by Matt Chinner

# Pool Sink

by *Tim Rose*

**Saturday 28th May**

**Team: Tim Rose, Sas Watson, Jann Padley.**

With the majority of the group wanting to hang on string all day an alternative was sought. Much debating of the merits of SRT caves involving carrying hundreds of metres of rope uphill followed! Our specification was a cave that had a couple of small pitches, easy or ideally no traverses, horizontal caving between the pitches, a streamway and some pretties. Not much then. Eventually we settled on Pool Sink and made our way to Bull Pot Farm. A gentle plod across the moor led us to Ease Gill and we quickly identified County Pot at the base of the descent into the valley. Having never been there before, a bit of faffing around entailed but we soon found Pool Sink entrance.

We'd been warned that the entrance series involves an awkward S-bend that some have previously failed to negotiate. No issues were encountered, and in fact it seemed quite spacious to us midgets. We were soon at the head of the first pitch. I failed to locate the two sets of rebelay bolts shown on the topo but did notice a deviation bolt a few metres down. I'm sure the enthusiasts would have been horrified, but the direct descent gave a free hang so I deemed the deviation/rebelays superfluous and just abseiled straight down from the Y-hang. Having been rather vocal the night before about my dislike of carrying too much rope uphill it was at this point I discovered the extra, and totally unnecessary, 15m rope left in the bottom of the bag from the previous day – doh! A T-junction was met at the base of the pitch and we headed downstream in a classic meandering passage. The next obstacle was a simple traverse over a hole in the floor to a short section of high level passage. Another easy traverse over a second hole lead to the short second and third pitches, all of which was rigged with a single 40m rope. More meandering passage followed to the head of the fourth pitch. Now I know Yorkshire-men love their SRT, but when you get to a descending pitch and find a row of bolts heading upwards with a lack of foot holds beneath, I'm immediately looking for an alternative! "Sorry chaps, this pitch is going to be a bit damp" I declared. Fortunately, just beyond the pitch head was a natural flake (and I had a sling with me) allowing a Y-hang to be made with one of the pull through anchors to avoid the worst of the water. With no rain forecast and water levels, if anything, falling, this seemed a reasonable thing to do. Annoyingly we'd carried 35m of rope for this expecting a traverse, but as we rigged it 15m would have been sufficient.

Another 20m of excess rope. Together with the 15m rope mentioned previously that's 2.17 kg (dry) I didn't need to lug across the moor.

Pitches done, we ditched our harnesses and went for a wander. Having taken 90 mins to get to this point we agreed we'd aim to be back at the base of the fourth pitch within an hour. Navigation from here down to Holbeck Junction was fairly straight forward but as we didn't have either a survey or description with us this was to be the end of our trip as the cave then started to feel complicated. The larger passage/chambers around Holbeck Junction were very nicely decorated though. Reversing our steps we were soon back to the base of the pitches. Upon ascent, the first couple of metres of the fourth pitch proved to be a bit aqueous but we all agreed the wetting was preferential to the airy traverse alternative disregarded on the way down. Quick progress was made up the third and second pitches and along the traverses. At the base of the first pitch, instead of ascending, we decided on a short detour to Magpie Chamber. The passage was followed to a junction. "Which way?" Sas shouted? "The one with the most water" I replied. This was the right hand fork. After a short distance we found a nicely decorated area but were rather underwhelmed by the size of the 'chamber'. Back down to the first pitch, a swift ascent, bit of a wiggle through the short entrance passage and we found daylight 4 hours after entering. All that was left was to stroll back over the moor and drive back to the YSS hut. Once back and examining the survey we realised Magpie Chamber was up the left hand passage, oh well, one for next time! In summary, a brilliant trip in a brilliant cave; it had short (and as we rigged it) easy pitches, there was a streamway, there were formations and there was horizontal caving. What more could you want?

No photos unfortunately. Some idiot took the camera but left the memory card on his desk in Dorset.



**Left - Right: Tim, Sas and Jann**

*A not particularly life-like drawing by Mandy Voysey*

# Magnetometer Pot

Monday 23rd May 2022

John Newton, Adrian Fawcett and Matt Chinner.

by John Newton

Adrian, Matt and I met up at the YSS hut at lunchtime and after a quick bite and a cup of tea set off for the short drive to Fountains Fell. We went to Neals Ing but there was no-one about and not knowing whether it would be OK to park there we had to come up with an alternative. Adrian has OS Maps on his phone but there was no reception and we had not brought a paper map with us. We decided to go back to the hut to pick one up, but on the way reception was regained and Adrian downloaded the map to use offline. We turned around and went to park at Dale Head. The walk is twice as long from here but is mostly on a well-defined and hard track which makes it easy. The entrance was laddered and we set off. Route finding is straightforward and we had soon crossed the top of the 1st Well Pitch and into the wet crawl. This is mostly flat out with some deeper sections and is very cold. The dry crawl is longer but is higher and it was a relief to be out of the water. After a quick look at the Styx sump we waded through the River Styx which has some decorated roof pockets and deep water with lower airspace. This leads to Easy Street and a walk to Holes Junction. The next section of passage has a lot of traversing in a narrower passage and led to the top of the pitch into Caton Hall. As this was planned as a shorter trip we had not brought tackle for this pitch and headed out visiting a short oxbow on route. The exit was uneventful but very cold until I lost a small metal plate from my lamp bracket while ascending the entrance pitch. The trip had been about 3 hours and we were back at the hut in time for an early dinner.



John and Adrian rigging the entrance by Matt Chinner

Lat/long: 54.1696751670784, -2.1889070276298 NGR: SD 87765 74892  
Sunday 29 May - Adrian Fawcett (rigger), Mike Green and Jon Abbott

by Mike Green

The last day of the highly enjoyable CSS Yorkshire week saw the three of us driving over in Jon's mobile office to Upper Littondale to tackle this interesting looking pothole. Adrian had sold it to us with his morning presentation, though not to anyone else it seems.

Parking was a doddle in the obvious place on firm grass, opposite a flat concreted square with a drain inspection cover on the other side of the road. We kitted up and slid open the hatch, which was chained to a block to deter its removal. Looks like the rogue metal thieves get over here too.

A short climb down into a chamber you'd expect in a drain, is followed by a blasted out rift dropping further down, and a short climb into a small chamber. Just below where you drop in is the first pitch, initially slightly constricted but soon opening up past a deviation and dropping into walking size streamway. This follows joints zigzagging left and right through low wet sections and blasted out constrictions until, after a few hundred metres, it finally reaches the next pitch.

A short traverse out over the falling water and round to the left onto a wide ledge, then round another left hand corner leads to a nice dry Y-hang back down to the streamway. Another short section of streamway reaches the final pitch – another short traverse and impressive hang beside a large cascade in a fluted pot.

This is Cloud Chamber; a small calcited choke with an easy climb up (with or without handline) into a calcite choked area, or tight (too tight for adults) squeeze up above where the stream sinks into a calcited void that heads a body length out over the stream. It wouldn't take much to enlarge this, and the calcite makes the choke relatively stable, contrary to all the warnings. This would count as a 'low hanging fruit' dig site in S Wales or the Mendips.

We were privileged to have a dry day, as in even relatively wet weather the pitches must become very difficult with spray and water levels and the narrow streamway difficult to walk along. As it was we had an uneventful trip back with myself derigging and Jon bag ferrying. Dragging bags in the stream worked for us but in higher water this would not be possible.

Back on the surface we met another party kitting up to go in. Not the longest trip in Yorkshire but a definite classic worth a visit. Attempting it in higher water conditions would make it very challenging, and definitely not one to attempt if they are rising.

Scanty Lardos Pot

# BIG MEANIE

(WHERE MANDY GETS TO PLAY WITH THE BIG BOYS...)

**Big Meanie team: Jon Abbott, Mandy Voysey, Chris Tomlin and Gary Jones.**

**Death's Head team: Adrian Fawcett, Mike Green, Matt Voysey and Alex Randall.**

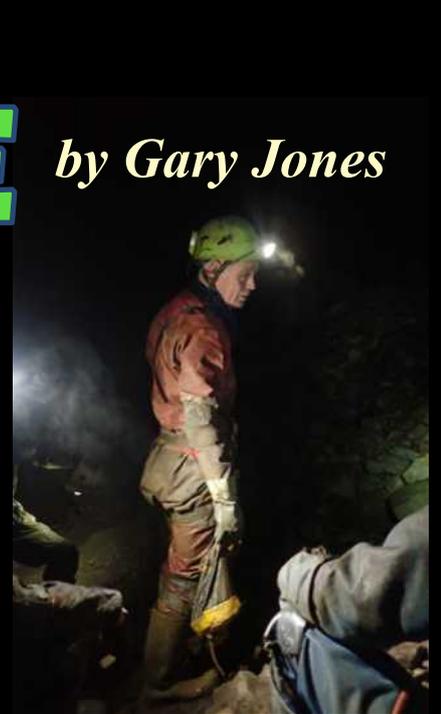
During the latest CSS sojourn to Yorkshire, an exchange trip between Big Meanie and Death's Head Hole was suggested. As I'd never been to either of them, it seemed like a good idea.

Eight of us descended on Leck Fell and split into two groups for the trip. My group consisted of Mandy, Chris, Jon and myself. Big Meanie starts as a small rift and quickly leads to a tight rift pitch which is described as difficult for the larger caver. Hence it was decided that the few of us in the group more likely to encounter difficulty (i.e. me and Chris) do the exchange from the Big Meanie end so that if the squeeze is indeed too squeezey, then it's not far to come out again!

Jon led the way, rigging as he went. He made encouraging noises including relaying back to me that he had already gone through the squeeze without realising it. Great I thought, maybe it's not too bad. Upon arriving at the pitch and looking down, my years of caving immediately said I probably wasn't going to enjoy this bit very much! I put my rack on and prepared to descend happy in the knowledge that all being well I only had to descend this pitch, and with gravity assisting it probably (!) would be ok. Nevertheless, just before committing I thought maybe I should get my jammers ready just in case. Unfortunately by the time I'd had this thought, the rift was already a bit awkward and I couldn't reach down to free my hand jammer from beneath where it was safely secured out of the way. After a few failed attempts, I decided just to go for it regardless! All went well for a metre or so until I hit the squeeze proper and ground to a halt. Initially I thought it's just my rack and I needed to knock a bar off and feed the rope through, but I was unable to do much with my rack as it was firmly stuck between me and the rock. Changing tack, I attempted to pull myself back up by pulling on the y-hang above. This managed to get me a mere few millimetres and clearly not enough to release my rack or get back up above the squeeze. Several more attempts were made to ascend but it appeared I was rather stuck! It was beginning to become unpleasant and I was genuinely wondering whether I was going to need assistance to extricate myself from this predicament. At this point, I decided that Big Meanie wasn't for me as I could feel the beginnings of panic rising and that's never very nice. After calming myself, I once again tried to haul myself up but with no luck. Eventually I managed at one point to move just enough to feel renewed downward motion and suddenly I was through. I descended down the rest of the (increasingly nice) pitch and got off the rope. I was relieved to be through but not entirely happy to be on the wrong side of the squeeze and reliant on successfully completing an exchange trip that no-one in either party had done before...

Whilst we waited for Chris to descend - another who had been put in the "might not fit" category - I looked around the chamber at the bottom. Muddy is my overriding memory...

After a while, Chris appeared having made a better job of it than me, shortly followed by Mandy who barely noticed the squeeze. We then continued on along a very muddy passage and up a loose slope before a junction where the obvious way is not the way to go. Following the less likely route drops you into a choke. As I was up front, I investigated this initially with my feet as the entry is vertical, but couldn't feel the way on. It's described as an awkward corner, and by now I was beginning to worry that



*Gary at the bottom of Big Meanie.*



*Jon descending the final pitch.*



*Chris coated in Big Meanie mud.*



*Mandy on the pitch to the main drain.*



*Mike in the main drain streamway.*



*Alex descending Death's Head Hole.*



*A rare photo of the team photographer at Death's Head.*

I was between two squeezes, neither of which I could comfortably fit through. I plunged into the choke head first for a better look and saw the passage at the bottom turned to the right and although still small quickly opened out into a wet passage. Relieved to see this, I almost recklessly dropped myself through and had no difficulty. Ironically both Chris and Jon had more issues passing this than the original squeeze. To continue the theme, Mandy had no problem.

Big Meanie being a pot that keeps on giving then continues on through a hands and knees crawl/canal. The plus side being that the floor is soft mud so the going was easy if a bit aqueous. The water didn't feel particularly cold but that may just have been me being warmed up by adrenaline!

Shortly after this watery delight, genuine relief was felt as suddenly we could see daylight coming in from above and to our left as we reached the balcony pitch that drops to the floor of Death's Head Hole. Even better, the other team were waiting for us (even if they did complain that they were getting worried as we'd taken a long time!) meaning an easy escape up the daylight shaft of Death's Head was in hand. Phew! Before exiting, we dropped down the scaffolded shaft that lead to the main drain and had a look around that as well which was nice and well worth a trip. The daylight prussik back up the shaft was very pleasant.

With hindsight, there are a few things I could have done differently to pass the squeeze without quite so much drama. I should have made sure my hand jammer was accessible before committing to it and I would have been better to put my rack on a cow's tail and descend from that thereby giving me room in the squeeze and stopping the rack from jamming. Although I didn't try it, it may actually have been the case that prussiking up through the squeeze may have been easier, especially with a pantin, or I may just have got stuck in a whole different way! An alternative method that probably shouldn't be recommended but which Jon successfully employed is to put enough slack in the rope above your descender so you effectively fall through the squeeze and are then neatly caught by your descender below.

Would I recommend the through trip? If you're not keen on squeezes then probably no, a simple trip down and up Death's Head Hole with a tour around the main drain would make a very satisfying trip instead. Having said that, now I've done it, it does mean I don't have to do it again!

*Photos by Matt Voysey*

# Swinsto!

by Matt Voysey

29 May 2022 - Gary Jones, Chris Tomlin, Alex Randall, Matt & Mandy Voysey.

On the last day of the CSS Yorkshire excursion, while some of the group headed off to visit Scanty Lardos, we felt we owed Alex (on his first trip to the Dales) a taste of some proper sporting rope-dangling fun and Swinsto fitted the bill for a short-ish Sunday trip. Surprisingly I worked out I'd only done this trip once, and that was back in April 2004. Gary and Chris also hadn't been for about 20 years.

Unusually, Gary was changed and ready first, so we sent him into Valley Entrance to rig the ladder. We'd heard that there was a rope in-situ that would almost certainly still be there, but we thought it best to check just in case; plus we were still busy faffing about getting changed. We waited for Gary to reappear from the piped entrance and then set off directly uphill. I'd taken a photo of the trip description from 'Selected Caves' but not the location map, a mistake realised as soon as we got to the Turbary Road and had only our 20 year old recollections to rely upon. We walked too far up the small stream bed, wasted time looking in the wrong place entirely, then eventually turned back to where Chris had been stood waiting, right by the cave, probably wondering why the rest of us had decided to go for a walk over the moor taking the ropes and kit with them.

Finally, Alex was ready first, and was hence nominated to rig. We did the trip as the classic pull-through and took two ropes to speed progress.

The first short pitch was soon met, followed by the Swinsto Long Crawl, which we'd all completely forgotten about and went on far longer than it should (300m). After this was a second short pitch, closely followed by the third (Curtain Pitch), then the fourth (Pool Pitch), which has a very photogenic window looking out into the pitch. You climb up above the window to reach the bolts to abseil, there was also a nice spout of water on the far wall, and I took some photos of folk here, trying to yell instructions for lighting to the people at the bottom over the roar of the water.

After this was the largest pitch (Split Pitch), which we did in two halves, getting off at the spray lashed balcony/ledge half-way down. Last down, after watching everybody descend getting splashed by the waterfall, I decided to be "clever" and hooked the rope into the deviation rigged onto the far wall just below the pitch head. Surely it must have been put in to avoid the waterfall right? Well, no. It put me right into the waterfall. Undaunted I switched to some SAS-style rapid evasive plummeting and reached the bottom not entirely wet. Now to pull the rope down. Oh dear, it seems to be stuck. The rope passing through deviation somehow conspired to make it entirely impossible to pull down. Well, it only seemed right for me to go back up and sort it out, and by the time I'd prusiked up directly through the full force of the waterfall (fun - I recommend it), unhooked the deviation, then abseiled back down, I was completely and utterly soaked.



Mandy at Pool Pitch



Gary, Mandy and  
Chris on the final pitch



Chris at the Second Pitch

Photos by Matt Voysey

## The Juniper Gulf

# BIG SHEEP RESCUE

The rope came down easily this time, then it was time for the second half of the pitch, which is the only exposed pitch head without a fixed traverse line to reach it, and certainly needs concentration to make sure you're on the correct side of the pull-through as you have to reach around the corner to get to the rope. Reunited with the rest of the team at the bottom we followed the route of the water onwards, a lengthy section with a few small free-climbs and traverses, caving through fine water sculpted passage. After briefly leaving the stream the next obstacle was Spout Pitch, which is really two pitches in a cleft/canyon.

After this the next section is called the Cascades, again following the water until a large chamber is reached with Swinsto Great Aven towering overhead on the left, then the final 'pitch' down into the Kingsdale Master Cave. This isn't vertical, and is more a rope-assisted descent of a waterfall. It was very wet, and topped off by the fact the rope got stuck again. Still soaking from my previous exploits it seemed only charitable for me to do the honours and climb back up to the bolts. These are set very close together and I bet a few people encounter the same problem here. I unfouled the krab, moved it down away from the bolts, then got Mandy to body-belay the other end of the rope while I used it to make a hand-line assisted, and very wet, descent. By the time the rope was stuffed I was freezing, despite high tempo disco dancing to warm up, so we made a quick run for the master cave.

Referring to the route description on my camera we located the correct way through without problem, to the short section of impressive main drain passage and very soon after to reach the rope and ladder hanging down from Valley Entrance passage. We used both, then a stretch of easy caving to exit via through the lidded entrance pipe.

A great, fun sporting trip. Everyone had a grand time, and those of us who had been before declared the cave to be even better than they remembered and the pitches more numerous. Note: We took 2x 50m ropes, as suggested by the lengths in the SRT rigging topo, but could definitely have used less (Selected Caves says 30m).



Mandy, Matt, Gary, Alex and Chris at Valley Entrance.



The team discover a scruffy looking sheep in the entrance cleft of Juniper Gulf.



Belay belts are attached around the body of the sheep behind its legs and a rope threaded through to haul it up.



The now muddy and smelly belay belts and rope are removed while the sheep wonders what's just occurred.



The sheep looks a bit confused until Mandy offers it some tasty grass, at which point it springs up and wanders off as if nothing had happened.

Everyone then goes caving!

by Mandy Voysey - photos by Matt Voysey  
See page 38 for full trip report.

