

Number 379



February 2016

MCG NEWS

A REVIEW OF 2015

Editorial

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I'm never really sure which path these newsletters will wander down when I first ask for contributions and comment in the weeks after the previous edition has been sent out.

I knew Ben Cooper had been working hard to put together a new survey for Bone Hole to incorporate the discovery of Happy New Year and I also suspected and hoped, that Ed Waters would share some more details of the ongoing exploration and reopening of the mines at Sandford Hill. These 2 major projects for the MCG in 2015 and the articles that both Ben and Ed have produced, inspired me to want to look further at what I feel was an excellent year for the group, turning this edition into part retrospective of 2015.

The AGM dinner back in April last year was a well attended and enjoyable event, and we finally had a full compliment on the committee.

One of the highlights of the year, but a month I was unfortunately unable to attend, was August, when a great turnout enjoyed fish and chips in the sunshine followed by a tough walk up the side of the gorge to Great Oone and Long Hole.

My personal favourite member's evening was the French Night, delicious food, everyone getting into the spirit and theme of the evening, with games and some laughs.

In this vein of looking back, I decided to take a look at the logbook and see 'What We Did In 2015.' If I had the time, then a look back at all of the group's logbooks would provide an interesting comparison as to how things have changed over the years and how cave's popularity with the MCG has changed. Before you read the What We Did article; which caves do you think were most visited by the MCG's members last year?

Andrew Horeckyj has again provided us with a gloriously illustrated trip report and it's his photo which graces the front cover

this edition.

Julie Hesketh writes about her return to Mexico and Belize where she had been on an MCG expedition a few years ago. Very different caving to that in the UK, in all aspects, and an enjoyable and fascinating read about a part of the world that I hadn't before thought of to visit for any caving reasons.

After Geoff Beales' tale of nearly drowning in Swildon's Hole was picked up by Descent as a reminder of what can go wrong in very familiar surroundings, he again regales us with his story of how access to Reservoir Hole was blocked and then regained! If anyone else has any good stories then please send them in.

Following on from the report in the last newsletter of the Garden Dig and Cow Hole, I have this newsletter, turned attention to Ubley Warren Pot, a cave with potential, and a place where there is archaeology, many fossils, a through trip and some sporty sections, all only 10 minutes walk away from the cottage. While I await some important news from Ubley Hill Pot, I think the next edition of the newsletter will include an article about Pinetree Pot, so may I make a plea for any photos, information or stories about the history of it!

Also this edition, some photos from a trip to GB Cavern, Christmas, news from the internet and a Wezzit competition.

Finally, I look forward to seeing many of you at the AGM and the dinner. May I ask that anyone who has not paid, does so forthwith, so that all the arrangements can be finalised. All the details you need are on page 15.

Hope you enjoy MCG News 379!

Tom Harrison February 2015
editor@mendipcavinggroup.co.uk

On the Cover:

The approach view to Long Straw Chamber, Otter Hole with Adrian for scale and Kev providing light beyond the big rock. Another flashgun and bearer would have been nice here- a note for future visits! **taken by Andrew Horeckyj**

BONE HOLE: THE NEW SURVEYS

By Ben Cooper

On 3rd January 2015 Tim Francis and Mike Moxon dug into a new section of Bone Hole that they named “Happy New Year”. Tim and I surveyed the extension the following month, and I have now managed to complete the survey of Bone Hole, collating my own earlier survey data with that from Andrew Atkinson. All the surveys were conducted using DistoX and PDA, and were drawn and compiled using Therion. The raw survey data is available online at:

<http://www.cave-registry.org.uk/svn/CheddarCatchment/BoneHole>

The following surveys are included below:

- **Plan of Bone Hole prior to Happy New Year discovery (Figure 1)**
- **Plan of Bone Hole showing Happy New Year (Figure 2)**
- **An elevation viewed at 278° (looking westerly), which is perpendicular to the primary direction of the cave, and shows the cave in relation to the surface profile of the gorge including the road. The surface profile was achieved by surveying down the hillside directly below the entrance rift using the DistoX. (Figure 3)**
- **Plan of Bone Hole and Perforation Choke (Figure 4)**

In addition, full 3-D models in Survex and lox format can be compiled from the raw data and viewed using Survex and Therion respectively.

Statistics from the survey are shown in Table 1 - Cave statistics.

Cave	Length	Depth (where applicable)
Bone Hole (pre 2015)	205m	39m
Bone Hole (post 2015)	276m	39m
Happy New Year (2015)	71m	25m (vertical range)
Perforation Choke	147m	41m
Total cave length	423m	41m

Table 1 - Cave statistics

Lengths and depths in Table 1 are relative to the Bone Hole locked man-hole, whereas absolute altitudes shown on the survey are based on the Bone Hole entrance co-ordinates obtained from the MCRA website. It is not entirely clear where the MCRA entrance datum is on the ground. The MCRA description is as follows: “From entrance steep descent down gorge-like fissure leads to collapsed chamber which has been known since early 19th century” leading to the interpretation that the datum is at the start of the fissure. I have therefore fixed the MCRA entrance coordinates onto survey station 1.0, which is a drilled hole in the rock wall on the left-hand side at the very start of the fissure. Based on the description and the size of the fissure’s entrance, there is perhaps 1m error on the location of the entrance datum, plus whatever error is inherent in the specified coordinates. The locked man-hole, which is close to station 1.3, an obvious egg-shaped bulge on the right-hand wall of the fissure also marked with a drill hole, is about 4m lower and 11m North of the entrance to the fissure.

Error in the survey can be estimated from the closed loops, which average to 0.84% suggesting the overall survey error is likely to be 1% or better. The loop errors are listed in Table 2.

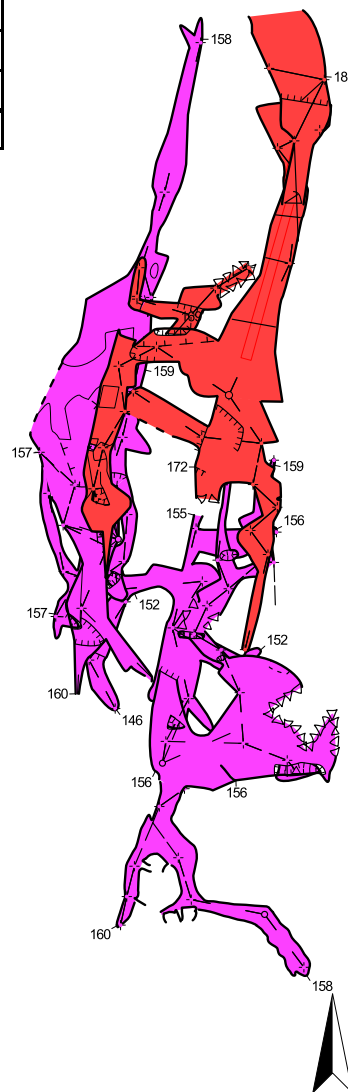
Relative error	Absolute error (m)	Total length (m)	Number of stations	x-error	y-error	z-error
2.32%	0.61	26.4	8	0.6	-0.2	0.1
1.73%	0.50	28.9	15	0.5	0.1	0.0
1.15%	0.08	6.8	2	-0.0	-0.0	-0.1
1.00%	0.17	17.3	6	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1
0.61%	0.12	19.1	9	-0.1	0.0	-0.0
0.50%	0.42	84.7	31	-0.1	-0.4	0.1
0.36%	0.16	44.4	22	-0.1	0.0	0.1
0.14%	0.03	22.1	9	-0.0	-0.0	0.0
0.84%	2.09	249.7	102	1.5	0.8	0.5

Table 2 – Loop errors

A number of permanent stations have been placed in the cave either as a painted mark or a drilled hole. These are identified and described in the raw data (.th) files using the Therion “mark” command.

Many thanks to all who helped with the survey; names are identified on the individual surveys, below.

Figure 1 - Bone Hole (pre-2015)



Bone Hole

10m

Length: 205m

Depth: 39m

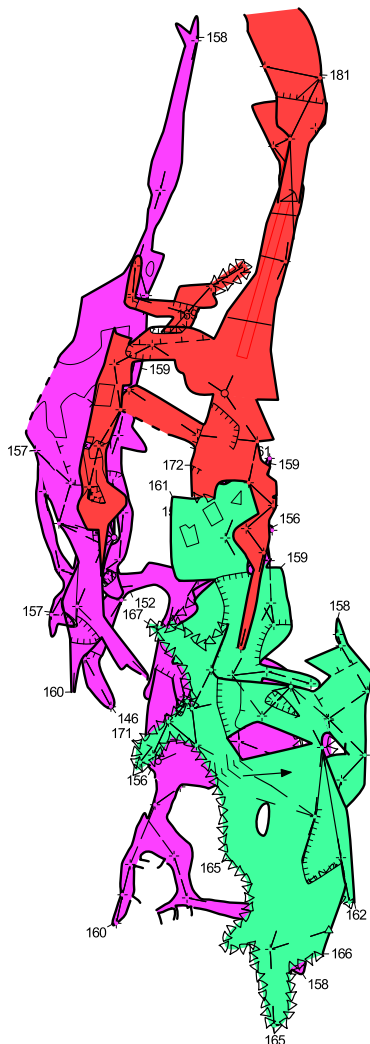
Surveyed by: Ben Cooper, Tim Francis, Andrew Atkinson, Mike Richardson, May Yap, Alison Moody 2014 – 2015

Maps

- Bone Hole
- Ladder Pitch

Figure 2 - Bone Hole (2015, showing Happy New Year)

“Happy New Year has highlighted a new area of potential for digging. A strong draught in the floor and a readily diggable location. In reality someone might have accessed it via the old cave but it took the impetuosity of the new discovery to restart interest in a project. The site is in the floor immediately after the breakthrough point – where Peat and Mike had a rummage.” Tim Francis



Bone Hole

10m



Length: 276 m

Depth: 39 m

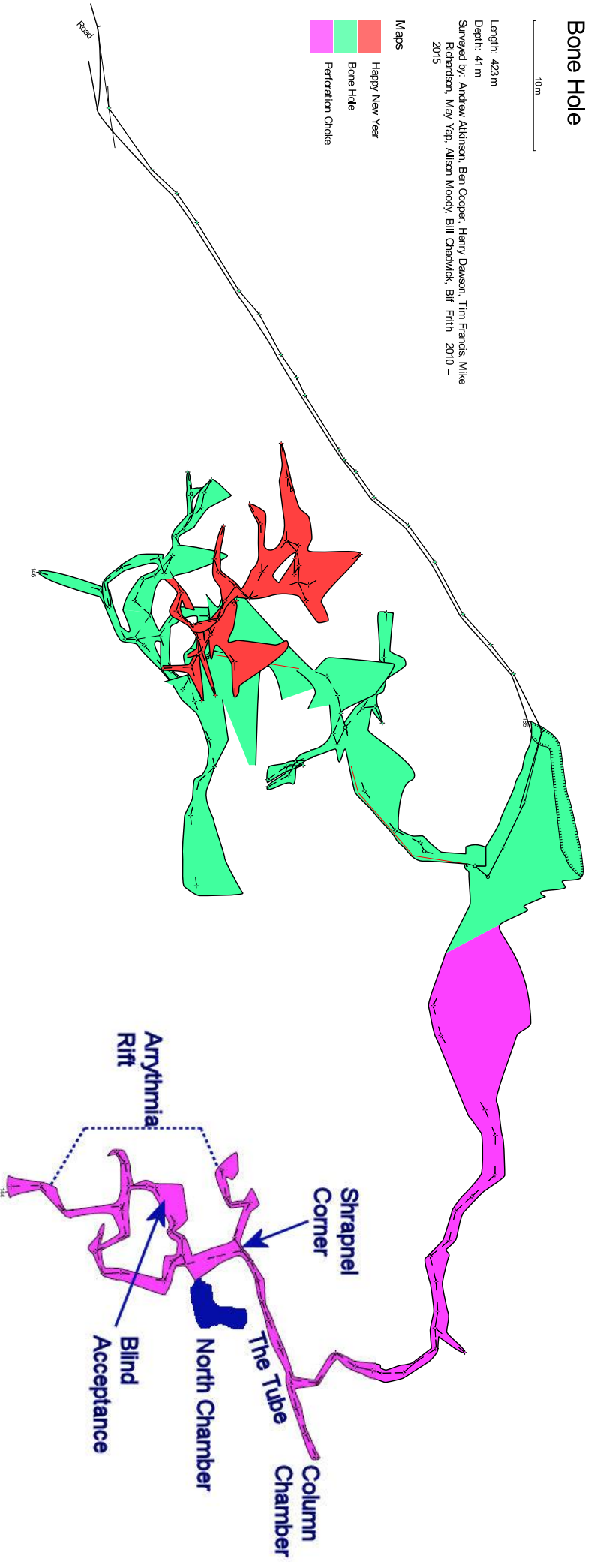
Surveyed by: Ben Cooper, Tim Francis, Andrew Atkinson, Mike Richardson, May Yap, Alison Moody 2014 – 2015

Maps

- Bone Hole
- Happy New Year
- Ladder Pitch

“During the Saturday of the February member’s weekend, Ben, Peat and I, returned to Happy New Year to dig at the floor in front of the breakthrough point. (As mentioned by Tim above left) Here there is a good solid bit of rift wall to dig down against. Ben rigged a pulley and we took turns in digging the mud, filling buckets and hauling them up. After 30 buckets I had to leave to prepare dinner, but Ben and Peat carried on and reported that the digging got easier with some good progress made.” Tom Harrison

Figure 3 - Bone Hole elevation (278°) (showing road, hillside, Happy New Year and Perforation Choke)



“The Elevation is comprised of Ben Cooper’s 2015 survey of Happy New Year and the entrance series, Andrew Atkinson’s 2012 Survey of Perforation Choke and the lower parts of Bone Hole, with an added Grade 1 sketch in Blue from Ed Waters of the most recent 2015 work in Perforation choke.

North Chamber is added, which contains interesting mud markings, possibly animal, as well as the link connecting Shrapnel Corner to the bottom dig via Arrhythmia Rift.

Possibly an extra 20m of passage to add to Ben’s totals and a survey project for the future.”

Tom Harrison from correspondence with Ed Waters

Bone Hole

10m



Length: 423m

Depth: 41m

Surveyed by: Ben Cooper, Andrew Atkinson, Tim Francis, Henry Dawson, Mike Richardson, May Yap, Alison Moody 2012 – 2015

Maps

	Bone Hole
	Happy New Year
	Ladder Pitch
	Perforation Choke

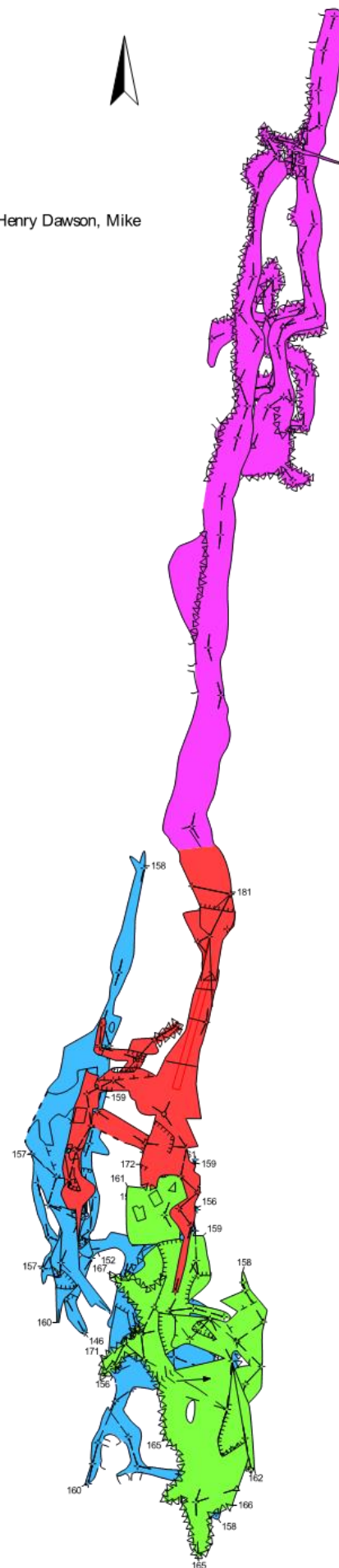


Figure 4 - Bone Hole plan (showing Perforation Choke and Happy New Year)

“Nearing the completion of the surveying back in the Summer, a team comprising of Ben, Peat, Tim and myself made a quick visit to Bone Hole. While Ben and Tim were working near the ladder pitch at the bottom of the Bone slope, I took Peat into Happy New Year with some spray ‘smoke’ to see if we could pin point any draughts. Whilst we were unsuccessful with the draught testing, we could hear Tim and Ben when we were near the breakthrough point.

None of us mentioned where each other were at this exchange and it later transpired that Ben and Tim had thought we were on the ladder at the time!

Tim reports that a during a recent visit Ben worked out where this sound connection was. “There is a large crack in the wall – right hand side as you climb the ladder next to the jammed boulders mid way up.where the ladder briefly rests on a rock. The wall there must be quite thin and a crack goes all the way through. And if you get the angle right you can just get a torch beam to shine through.” Ben advises from that according to the survey the wall at this connection is just 2m wide.”

Tom Harrison

References:

<http://therion.speleo.sk/>

<http://www.mcra.org.uk/registry/sitedetails.php?id=727>

Ben Cooper

SANDFORD LEVY: FURTHER PROGRESS

Hancock's Shaft, TH Chamber, by Ed Waters

Since the last report there has been much work in Sandford Levy to further investigate the discoveries made in August. Though no significant breakthrough has been achieved, a few further bits and pieces have been added, and our understanding of the mine has grown considerably. With the survey completed, the major leads were re-investigated.

Brian re-climbed Hancock shaft and rigged the shaft for SRT. The top of the shaft probably still represents the most promising lead in the mine, but digging the choke at the top of the shaft would be an extremely technical undertaking! The shaft is lined with walled deads for its entire 25m height, and the upper courses of this walling are exceptionally loose. The shaft appears to be at least partially natural, and at the top it appears that the passage kinks before continuing upwards, and that the shaft above is choked with miners backfill. We have decided to leave this be for the meantime, but it must be said that Hancock's Shaft is certainly one of the finest mineshafts I have seen on Mendip.



Above: Looking up at the top of Hancock's shaft. Note the Stemple in the region of 200 years old "securing" the deads.

Left: The view at the very top of Hancock's shaft of the miner's infill blocking the way. The photo looking past the right side of the Y Hang in the above photo.

Photos bravely taken by Graham Price

Waiting for people to ascend/descend the shaft, has provided a bit of time to further study Hancock's signature at its base, the consensus seems to be that the most likely interpretation of the writing is that it says A. Hancock 1781. Tom Harrison (of all people) also noticed some more previously unseen writing, this time in the form of the initials TH smoked on the wall in the chamber beyond Pearl's Den. This has now been named TH Chamber as a result.

Right:
Smoked initials in the now named TH Chamber

Photo by Graham Price



Below Left:

Biff at the head of the two pitches (20m and 5m) directly off the Levvy.

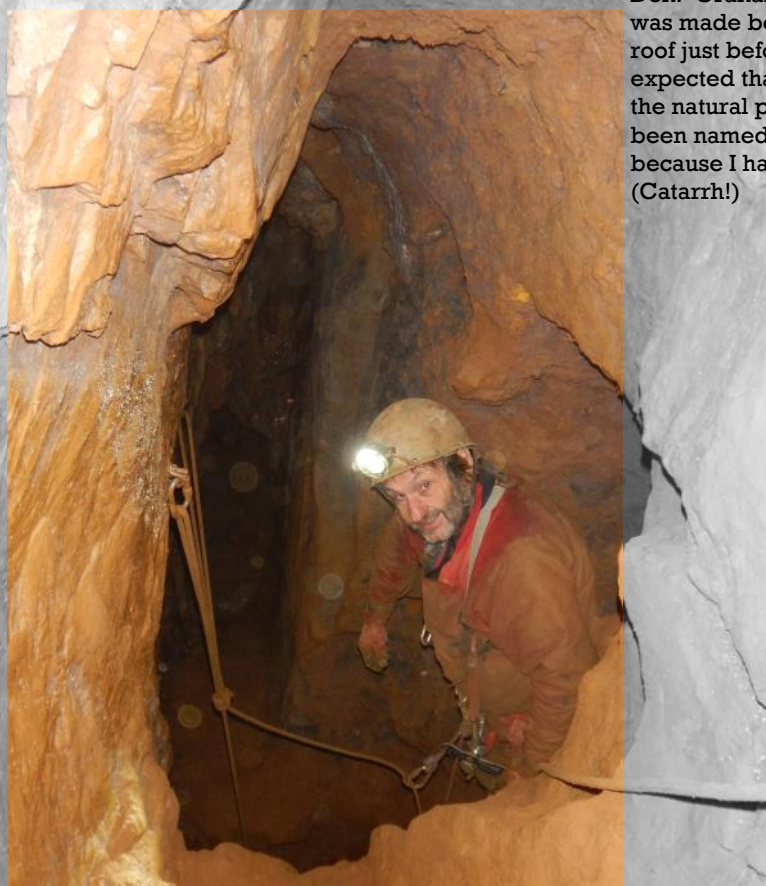
Photo by Graham Price

Bottom Right: Graham in Hairy Passage

Photo by Tom Harrison

Between the breakthrough point and the entrance to Pearl's Den was a narrow mined passage doubling back towards the breakthrough point and sloping steeply upwards. This was almost completely filled with miner's backfill, which was removed by Graham and myself over a couple of trips. This led to a rift high enough to stand. However, there was no sign in the floor of the shaft which Graham has cemented from below just before the breakthrough, it must be hidden in the copious waste rock on the floor. The way on was another backfilled passage, again doubling back towards Pearl's

Den. Graham pushed this to the point where a visual connection was made between this passage and wedged rocks forming the roof just before Pearl's Den. Work continues here, though it is expected that it will just end in the stacked debris filling most of the natural passage in Pearl's Den. This section of the mine has been named "Qatar" in order to continue the "Gulf" theme and because I had a nasty cough all the time we were digging here (Catarrh!)



From 2004 I had noticed a small mined passage leading off the initial shaft up from First Crossroads. I had always assumed that this led directly to a dead end. However the survey suggested that it might be worth a look, and Biff did just that. He reported that it ended at a loose choke which appeared to be the base of yet another shaft leading up. Initial digging proved very easy, if frightening! There clearly was a shaft above, and possibly passage ahead, but it had been filled from above with a vast quantity of waste rock. At some point a piece of timber had been left in the passage, and this had started to rot and some form of fibrous fungus had grown out of the timber and all over the walls, roof and floor of the passage, hence it was called "Hairy Passage". This passage was clearly driven from the Levvy side, but beyond a constriction about 4m in the shot holes were clearly driven from the far side. This was getting interesting, in more ways than one, since the first session left us with an unsupported roof of partially wedged boulders about 3m up. Graham said that

the dig needed a sinister name, so we named it Sinister, as this also chimed with the Latin for "left" (sinistra) and the passage lay on the left of the shaft looking up.

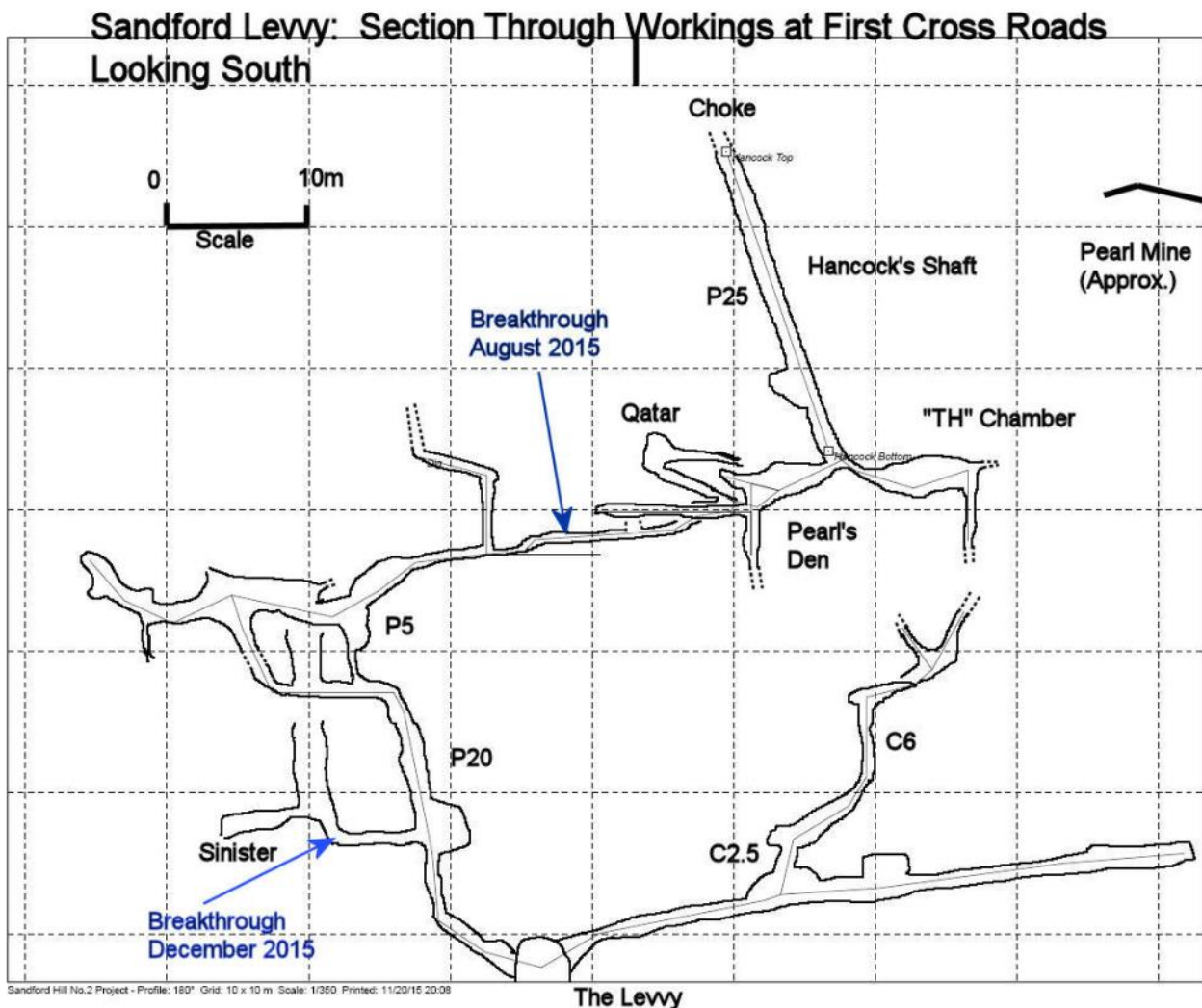
The next session saw the lethal roof dealt with by using some of Graham's inimitable style, about 400g of it, on the end of a stick. Digging re-commenced in the well practiced style, collapse, clear, repeat, and the next session saw us through to a high rift with fine shotholes driven vertically down, and an ongoing mined passage beyond. The roof, some 6m up, is best not looked at too closely, especially with a bright light, and probably also provides the floor of the passage above. The floor consists of a steep slope of debris, which has a nasty habit of blocking the way out if care is not taken. Over Christmas the ongoing passage was dug to the point where the miner's stopped at a narrow ochreous vein. Material in the debris suggests that they were after lead, as we have found a few rocks with traces of what looks like Galena in them, whilst there are a large number of lumps of Ochre scattered around - it appears this was not worth removing at the time the mine was being worked.



Looking up Sinister Rif, Ed inspects the new find.

Photo by Tom Harrison

If Sinister was worked before the Levvy was opened (which seems very probable) then the "Old Man" was clearly working at considerable depths on Sandford Hill, certainly in excess of 60m. Plans are now being made to open up one of the surface shafts in the hope that we can find our way to the top of Hancock's Shaft from above, and hopefully start to fill the gaps along the vein towards Pearl Mine and possibly even Saville Row Shafts some 80m away. Ed Waters, January 2016



HOLIDAY CAVING IN BELIZE AND MEXICO

By Julie Hesketh

Last Christmas, I managed to persuade my husband Ross and daughter Eva (then aged 11) to help me scratch an itch I'd had for a long while – to go back to Belize where I'd been with MCG friends back in 1994 on a caving expedition. This time around it would be a holiday, though my family, knowing me as they do, knew that I'd want to squeeze a caving trip in if I could. And so I did.



Me, Jules & our guide in Kantemo. Selfie

Even better was an opportunity to meet up with 'old' friend and recent MCG member Julian (Jules) Flavell who had been living in Chiapas, Mexico for around 20 years or so following our original Belize trip and other visits to Central America. We planned to spend Christmas in Belize and meet up with Jules and his family in Mexico to see the New Year and 2015 in.

I won't bore you all with tales of golden beaches, winter sunshine and snorkelling, all that come easy in Belize at that time of year. I'll start at San Ignacio, a small Belizian town us MCG cavers stayed in in April 1994 ahead of our trips into the jungle. We arrived to find it had changed a fair bit – all for the good of the locals. Where in the 90's there had been a rubbish tip, was a town square with small tourist kiosk. Where there had been muddy roads, was now tarmac, lined with proper pavements or sidewalks as the Belizians now call them. That was another big difference. Back in the 90's Belize felt like a quaint British outpost even though the British army was pulling out of the country permanently and the Queen had just made a visit. Belize had gone 'all American', though there were many British expats running guest-houses and tourism businesses still.

It was though an American tour company that we visited Actun Tunichil Muknal (ATM) Cave. The name translates to "Cave of the Stone Sepulcher" because of the incredibly well preserved human remains still in the cave. We used a tour company with mixed feelings as caving is surely something that should be available to all and not preserved for organised tours? On the other hand, the cave at ATM is truly unique with human remains in situ and many well preserved Mayan remains. The argument for controlling access there is strong and despite the frustration of being told how to put on my helmet and walk and climb in the cave, the guides, at least those we saw led sensible and sensitive trips. One frustrating point was that cameras weren't allowed because in 2012 a tourist had dropped a camera onto the main attraction in the cave and accidentally stoved a hole in the human remains. So that led not to more strict guidance or taping off of the remains but a ban on cameras. Odd. And it means that I don't have my own record of our trip but the photos here are but reproduced with permission of Pacs Tours who gave us a DVD of beautiful photos.



Above Left: Human Remains

Above Right : Mayan Pottery

Both photos in Actun Tunichil Muknal Cave reproduced with permission of Pacs Tours



Photo of Actun Tunichil Muknal Cave reproduced with permission of Pacs Tours

ATM cave was initially 'discovered' by a Canadian caver, Tom Miller in the 1980's but not fully explored or surveyed. The Wessex Cave Club did a number of expeditions in the late 80's and early 90's which surveyed the cave in detail. It was those trips that got us in the MCG interested in the area eventually visiting another part of Belize (the Mountain Pine Ridge) in '94.

Our family trip in 2014/15 was however a somewhat more civilised affair, albeit with an early start. A mixed group of about 12 of us took our minibus up towards the cave, mostly on tarmac roads though the last 5 or so kilometres was on un-made up road that climbed gently through lush jungle and small, brightly painted villages. We arrived at a large carpark where at least 6 other minibuses were congregated and groups were preparing for their trips. Donning walking boots and carrying our helmets, wearing just shorts and t-shirts, we headed towards the cave – a 30 minute or so walk that involved about 3 river crossings – the first of which was chin deep on me – so we all got our first real good soaking and a short swim. The path to the cave was well worn and led to the entrance, a large clearing where picnic tables had been erected and where we had lunch (the Belizian staple of chicken, rice and beans).

The cave entrance is a resurgence with a short swim to enter the cave – fun though daunting no doubt for my fellow tour group new to such things. We swam in, which is always a beautiful way to start a cave trip. And then waded and stooped and clambered and swam for about 45 minutes upstream in the high winding passage while I listened in some fascination to the reactions of my fellow tourists who had never been into such caves before, let alone swum in any. Eva and Ross were pros (of course) and despite their reservations of doing a caving trip on holiday seemed to be as blown away by the experience as all of us were.

Eventually we paused ahead of a climb up into fossil passage. We had covered about a kilometre of cave and were told there was another couple of km to the top entrance in the jungle. At the top of the easy climb, we took our shoes off as requested and ventured into the large, dry and wide open fossil chamber and passages. This chamber held a profusion of Mayan pots and a larger profusion of tourists all vying for a good view of the artefacts. In this first chamber are a number of almost intact Mayan pots left near the sacrificial fire as if they had been there just yesterday (had it not been for the calcite deposits holding them firmly to the cave



Mayan pottery in Actun Tunichil Muknal Cave reproduced with permission of Pacs Tours

floor). We were told that some of the pots were food receptacles, others are small serving dishes, but that all were used by the Mayans in rituals over the course of around 300 years. Between the pots were occasional human remains – thigh bones and skulls that looked as if they had not been left there but washed in or down the cave in flood. Most, we were told were apparently, sacrificed.

We picked our way around the remains and headed up a wooden ladder, letting other tourist groups down before we ascended. We entered a large gour-floored chamber and crossed it, passing a few shards of pot. Then a crawl and a wriggle and a squeeze and we were into the final chamber of our visit; essentially a Mayan tomb with an almost intact human skeleton of an adolescent calcified into the cave floor. I've done a bit of caving in my time and seen a fair few things in caves but this was pretty special and the remains almost intact. Incredible and I do wonder, given the tourist numbers in Belize are growing, if they will remain that way or if the Belizian Government will restrict access even further.

We were not rushed through the trip but it was eventually time to retrace our steps and wade and clamber back out of the cave. By now my fellow tourists were all 'experienced cavers' and their confidence and speed had improved hugely so we had a fun and lively trip back to the turquoise entrance pool. We swam back out into the humid jungle air.



A Cenote in Yucatan, Mexico. Photo by Julie Hesketh

More jungle, baches, snorkeling and Mayan ruins followed for me and the family before we headed over the border to meet Jules and his family at Chetumal in Yucatan, Mexico. Yucatan is known for its cenotes of course, so we visited a fair few of these for a swim and to gawp at their beauty. Cenotes are essentially cave features – large caverns formed by solution in limestone or collapse within limestone. Many are tourist attractions, opened for a few dollars as underground, freshwater swimming pools with bars and ice-cream stands nearby. Some have deep sumps fed by cool, clear water; cave divers territory. And many are absolutely stunning with shafts of hot Mexican sunlight piercing them and lighting up the clear water below.

We enjoyed lots of these (returning to the UK to see that a small group of Wessex cave club divers had been in the area holidaying and diving nearby). And then more hotels, swimming pools and fabulous meals followed before heading over to an eco-lodge that Jules has booked us into for New Year, with a caving trip thrown in for us too. It's a trip with a difference though – one to 'La Cueva de las Serpientes Colgantes (the cave of the hanging snakes) at Kantemó. Ross, Eva, Rosy and Oliver (aged 2) for some reason decided that they'd rather stay by the small pool in the jungle so Jules and I headed out for our trip. About an hour's drive from our accommodation we arrived at the small village of José María Morelos in the Kantemó province where we met with our guide for the evening. Our guide was part of the Maya Ka'an project that aims to create sustainable tourism initiatives in small communities in the Yucatan. The project has funded a small number of jobs and brings visitors into the very un-touristy area away from the crowds on the Yucatan coast.

You know when a caving trip is going to be an unusual one when the first bit of kit you are given is a bicycle along with a helmet and lamp! So we mounted our bikes and headed into the thick jungle, just after sunset. The midges were coming out which meant that any bats roosting nearby will be thinking of coming out for supper. Given the time, we sped on our bikes down a narrow track through the dark, crashing over thick tree roots and being whacked in the face by hanging plants. After a 5 minute cycle, we arrived at our destination, a rather inauspicious clearing in the jungle where we 'kit up'. More unusual caving kit was handed out – surgical masks and latex gloves to protect us from any bat borne nastiness. And mossie spray – lots of it. We were being bitten to bits!

And so we venture quickly down into the cave. A low, stoopy entrance led into a wide low chamber. It was hard to stand not just because of the height of the cave but because of the many bats whooshing past our heads into the jungle from the depths of the cave. It was humid and we were sweaty and the whole place stinks of guano. From the entrance chamber we walked a short way and then take a fork into a low, crawling size passage. The cave passage was pock marked with large holes into which our guide peered and shone his torch. We proceeded with caution. After about 10 minutes our guide beckoned us forward to him and pointed just ahead to where a snake was dangling from a hole in the cave roof, twisting itself around to look for prey. It turned and twisted around in the hot air sensing bats flying by. We moved on, inching underneath and around the snake to a slightly wider and part of the passage where we saw another two snakes at roof level. We stooped to see that both had already caught prey and were slowly turning their bat meals over in their jaws and swallowing them down into their body cavities, writhing as they did. We stayed crouched down watching, in interest and slight nervousness. These snakes would not have a go at us – we were too large and they were not poisonous. Nonetheless, sitting crouched in a humid, sand floored cave passage with hundreds of bats still flying past us, we felt just a tad vulnerable watching the snakes devour their meals. We managed to grab a few photos, though not terribly good ones as the cave was obviously dark and we didn't want to use flashes which would disturb the wildlife. And then we slowly backed out, shuffling back towards the entrance chamber, cautiously avoiding other snakes that had joined their companions dangling down from the crevices in the roof.



A snake eating a bat in Cueva de las Serpientes Colgantes (the cave of the hanging snakes) in Kan-temo, Mexico

Photo by Julie Hesketh

The rest of the cave was fascinating too with blind, white fish swimming around a crystal-clear pool, and a ceiling covered with fossilised shells. We emerged hot, sandy and sweaty into the dark jungle night, amazed to have seen such a phenomenon so real and close up. But we had to head back as the others were waiting for us to see the New Year in under the jungle sky back at our huts so we sped back for tequila and celebration.

References (should all be in the MCG library):

[MCG Special Publication on Belize 1994](#)

[Below Belize, OMC Speleological Expedition to Belize 1988](#)

[WCC Journal Vol 20 \(No 222\) Oct 1989](#)

[WCC Journal Vol 20 \(No. 222\) April 1990](#)

<http://discovermagazine.com/2014/dec/15-cave-of-the-crystal-maiden>

2016 AGM Dinner

The 2016 MCG AGM Dinner will be held at **the Mendip Inn** (<http://www.mendipinn.co.uk/>) on **Saturday March 5th, arriving at 7pm** for 7:30 meal.

STOP PRESS—Please pay without delay, so that all the arrangements can be made!

A reminder of the details :

Given the low demand for a coach in recent years, and the relatively short distance from the cottage (9 miles) it is intended that car share will be used to get to the dinner, and a shuttle of taxis has been booked for the return journey starting at 11pm. Cars can then be collected before 10am from the pub car park on Sunday morning. Total cost for food and transport back to the cottage will be £30. Unfortunately there is no accommodation at the venue, but there are a number of B&Bs located within a few miles

The 2016 Mendip Caving Group AGM dinner menu choices are;

Starters

Broccoli & Stilton soup freshly baked bread
Prawn Cocktail served simply with wholemeal bread
Pheasant & Pistachio Terrine served with lightly toasted Ciabatta

Mains

Slow roast Beef Brisket braised 24 hours in a rich port jus, roast potatoes and veg
Char Grilled Chicken Breast with tarragon cream, roast potatoes and veg
Vegetable Wellington with carrot puree served with roast potatoes and veg
Fillet of Salmon with lemon caper butter, new potatoes and veg

Dessert

Chocolate Mousse
Sticky Toffee pudding served with toffee sauce and vanilla ice cream
Lemon Cheesecake served with sorbet
A selection of cheeses with artisan biscuits (£2.50 supplement)
Tea and filter coffee (free of charge)

If anyone has any specific dietary requirements, please let us know asap and we can speak to the pub who are very accommodating. The pub has real ale on tap, including Butcombe, there are also several lagers and ciders available. House wines (there is a choice of 4 reds and 4 whites) are between £15 and £16 a bottle.

Please email Karen Fendley with your menu choice via treasurer@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk or print this page and fill in the form below, posting to Karen Fendley, 35 Arcaadia Close, Beggarwood, Basingstoke, Hants RG22 4AJ.

Payment can be by cheque to The Mendip Caving Group, posted to the above address or to Karen in person, or electronically to Acc. Number 72017776 Sort Code 40-44-33 Reference: AGM followed by your name i.e AGM Tom Harrison. Remember it's £30 or £32.50 for cheese and biscuits. Deduct £3 if you don't require transport back to the cottage.

Looking forward to seeing you all there,

Ed Waters

Either email Karen Fendley treasurer@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk or post the form and cheque to Karen Fendley, 35 Arcaadia Close, Beggarwood, Basingstoke, Hants RG22 4AJ.

Guest Name/s	Starter Choice	Main Choice	Desert Choice
e.g Joe Bloggs	Prawn	Beef	Cheesecake

Do you require a taxi from the venue back to the cottage? Yes / No

I enclose a cheque or have paid electronically (Acc No. 72017776 Sort Code 40-44-33 Ref.: give your name)

Please provide a contact number or email address

Otter Hole

Trip Report and Photography by Andrew Horeckyj

A small but beautifully decorated grotto off the main passage, beyond Long Straw Chamber, with Adrian and Kev as flash-bearers.



**Trip Report: Otter Hole, Saturday 8th
August 2015.**

Jeremy Gilson, Adrian Fawcett (Otter guide), Ross Wheeler, Kevin Speight, Andrew Horeckyj.

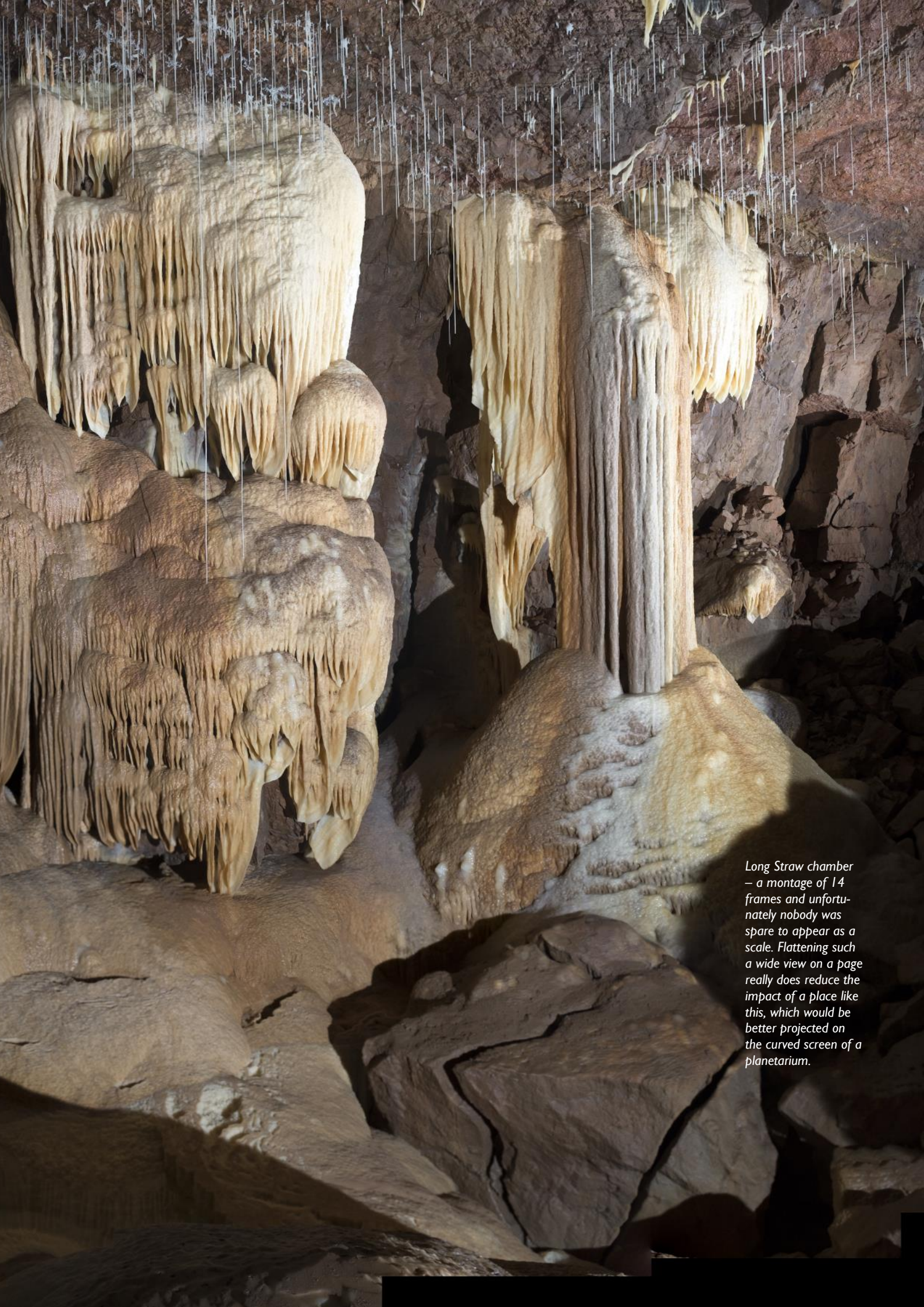
Otter Hole is widely regarded as one of the truly great trips in British caving. Its name is often voiced in slightly hushed tones for a number of reasons: it is a long day trip if you go right to the end; it is arduous and tiring with little "cruise" passageway and no *resting* in harnesses and at pitch-heads; it has long sections of deep cloying mud, that holds a boot when standing and though nice and slippery, will render ineffective most tractive effort - oh - and it has a tidal sump that once passed, commits the visitor to remaining within until the celestial mechanics permits an exit some few hours later. The reward is a section of decorated passage that just builds in its splendour to a symphonic climax around the famous Hall of Thirty and its neighbouring chambers.





What's not to like about it?

I can honestly say that I have wanted to visit this cave ever since I saw Sid Perou's film of its discovery – *Into Darkness*, broadcast in 1984, so it would be fair to say it made a lasting impression. It would also be fair to say that an understanding of the mechanism of the tidal sump and its behaviour in 'normal' and 'flood' conditions, has removed a lot of the drama associated with the cave's folklore, but not diminished the sense of wonder that comes with approaching a cave that by its nature needs to have trips managed by tide tables and river levels. The imminent rainfall prediction is a lesser consideration here than for a Mendip catchment cave- the last fortnight's weather is more important.



Long Straw chamber – a montage of 14 frames and unfortunately nobody was spare to appear as a scale. Flattening such a wide view on a page really does reduce the impact of a place like this, which would be better projected on the curved screen of a planetarium.

We met the guide Adrian at 09:30hrs in the woodland parking area and followed the track down to the river Wye through the woods in morning sunshine- it was a beautiful day. Entering the cave at 10:15hrs, the initial crawl leads to a short drop down to a flat – rather than flat-out crawl through liquid or glutinous mud in a section that sees water on the highest of flood tides. Although the mud makes the going nice and slippery, shoving or dragging cargo like camera bags is made hard work because there is nothing to grab on to – though it is fun. We got a little strung-out on this section towards the tidal sump and it became clear that Ross was having to fight his suit that was too tight. This *wardrobe malfunction*, meant that our date with the tide table was in jeopardy, so Ross decided in the light of this and the fact that he was also feeling a bit unwell that he would have to abort his trip. Jeremy - as trip leader, decided to escort him out of the cave (for safety) and that the remaining three would continue with the day as planned- collection as per plan around 19:30hrs.





The Hall of Thirty- not the classic view from the back of the hall, which can seem a little flat. In order to get the firefly to trigger the flash it had to be in clear line-of-sight at this distance...but I quite like the dramatic lighting. Kev is walking into shot.



Approach to the Hall of Thirty- a montage of 4 frames from the passageway on the walk-in and it really is a 'grand approach'. Adrian and Kev with the flashes. The video guidewires and associated contraptions, detailed in Descent 247, have been digitally removed from the images here.



The tidal sump itself is a short feature of a few yards and beyond it the passageway soon cleans-up. It is a series of boulder climbs and twisting chokes that are pretty straightforward – even for a six-footer, but a fair amount of it is awkward and some a bit snug. There is not much simple walking passage in the cave, it is more of a workout session than many places.

The passage does eventually open-up and become progressively more and more decorated on the way towards the first large and hugely decorated chamber – The Hall of Thirty. This is an incredibly beautiful place. Threading up the left side of the chamber to the back, the decorated sections continue with the walk through to the Long Straw Chamber, named after the profusion of straws which extent to some 12-14ft in places. Beyond these wonderful places, the passageway continues with stooping and clambering sections to the point where it terminates in a small sump, with a flowing stream -complete with shrimps according to Kev, which manage to eak-out a meagre existence from whatever floats their way. Above and up-slope from the sump is a large “terminal chamber”...named as such because it is the end of the explored cave, yet given the considerable altitude of the roof to this void, any number of entrance passages may exist higher up...it has to have a continuation somewhere?

We decided to leave the camera stowed for the entire inward journey, to ensure we did not exceed our time, then made a mental note to get a few frames in just a couple of locations on the return: the Hall of Thirty, Long Straw Chamber and a small side-grotto off the main drag, which was extremely well decorated.



Kev in the passageway approaching the Hall of Thirty. A view of the decoration in this area would be regarded as a destination in itself, were it not for the splendours of its more famous cousin, just around the corner.

The – rather muddy- trio after exiting the cave. A long, tiring but very rewarding trip.



The Hall of Thirty was the last scheduled picture-stop, so after grabbing a few environmental portraits of everyone present, we started the long return. Adrian had planned for us to be at the tidal sump at 18:00hrs on the way out, with us exiting the cave around 19:00hrs, though the eventual exit time was less important than the sump-time.

Despite being well-hydrated at the outset, not much of my two litres of fluids carried, remained for the return, so I could see that I was going to be a bit dry on the way out. Kev was just about out of fluids too. I made the mental note that in future- assuming a party of five, then it would be wise to designate one person as a “tanker”, to bring an extra two litres to the inside of the tidal sump and another two litres to the Hall of Thirty- which is an inevitable pause point. MCG members with a reptilian metabolism might consider this unnecessarily wasteful- but for us mammals I think it a good idea.

We reached the sump at 18:05hrs- which was good timing and then made our way steadily out of the cave through the tiring muddy section- which required me to take my time so I didn't upset a poorly left knee, (*which would subsequently require a minor surgical tidy-up*). We finally exited the cave at 19:15hrs.

The wash-bath up the hill is a civilized touch that does allow you to present yourself to the world in a reasonably clean condition at the car park, where Ross was waiting for us. A party of young European backpackers wandered past- and as usual, having encountered a bunch of muddy blokes in caving gear, struck up a conversation and asked about the cave. The explanation of the tidal sump “*trapping us in*” was sufficient to crystallize our heroic status amongst them...which suited us just fine. Ross needed a little fuel and we needed a *lot* of drink, so first stop was a garage, then on to Jeremy's in Bristol to collect the cars.

What a fantastic day's caving. Book the next one Jeremy...the knee will be fine.

Andrew Horeckj 2015

THE DAY I BROKE INTO RESERVOIR HOLE

by Geoff Beale

It happened when I was an active member of Newbury and District Caving Club and had also recently joined the ranks of the MCG.

It was in the mid 1980s when I was invited to go caving in Reservoir Hole. The trip was led by its stalwart and legendary guardian Willy Stanton. When our trip was finished, I was surprised to note that my caving performance within the trip had been checked closely by Willy. He explained that leading endless trips into the cave was tiring and he was looking to start a leader system and was actively looking for experienced cavers to undertake trips into Reservoir Hole as a guest leader on his behalf. I was offered guest leadership and I duly accepted. Guest leadership was conferred to me and not as a caving club right. I had led many trips into Reservoir Hole up to the time I joined the MCG in the early 1990s.

In those days trips were always evening/night trips between the months of November to March, a party limit of four plus a leader and no carbide lamps. It is strange to think that these months were within the hibernation season, when bats could be seen within the cave and not the summer months when they are more likely to be absent. I always thought that it should have been the other way around.

On my previous booked trip into Reservoir Hole (December 1990), The key had broken in the lock whilst I had tried to open it, I thought it may have been jammed by a small piece of grit or mud by the previous party. Willie was quite annoyed by this broken lock and later tried to dislodge the broken key section with a small hammer, but without success. Most cavers who have visited this cave will vouch what a nasty cave "gate" it had. However, I said I would see to the old locks removal. I told him that I knew someone with a bang license and he would make short work of the lock. Willy was furious with this suggestion and avidly said no. He said he would rather keep the cave closed, than to bang the old lock off. But I had a cunning plan up my sleeve.

On the 3 March 1991 I persuaded a caving friend – Ronnie Arkless (Who eventually joined the MCG) to help me with the errant lock's removal. At this point in time the cave had been closed for over three months, while Willie decided what would be best for the cave. Another caving friend from Newbury and District Caving Club ran a farm machinery repair business near Newbury and he agreed to loan us a half sized Oxy-acetylene gas welding set with a small cutting torch, this was mounted on a small wheeled trolley which had to be taken apart to fit into the boot of my car, and we set off for Mendip. We arrived in Cheddar Gorge on a Saturday morning and set about refitting the trolley back together and mounting the bottles. We had hoped there were are no tourists about to see what we were up to and where we were going. Willy always insisted on evening/night trips to deter tourists from following us, climbing onto the reservoir, scrambling up the lower gorge wall and discovering where the cave entrance was. We had hoped to avoid being seen climbing on the covered reservoir and our route to the cave entrance with our strange welding kit.

However, there were several cars and a coach parked there, so our hoped for stealth to the cave entrance didn't happen, but we managed to manoeuvre the trolley across the road and up to the top of the reservoir under the bemused scrutiny of the coach passengers and those in the cars. (What they must have been thinking of, the strange things cavers do in Cheddar Gorge, with a gas trolley, I just can't imagine.) – *Editor—a bit like today when cars and coaches are passing us while we are getting changed for Bone Hole and other caves near a major road!*

At the back of the top left corner of the covered reservoir, is a steep, loose, climb, up the lower gorge face to the cave entrance. We had thankfully brought a rope with us and were able to hall/winch the gas trolley to a flattish stance adjacent to the cave entrance where we were able to secure it with the rope to a nearby tree to stop it rolling down onto the top of the reservoir.

As I was about to light the gas torch, I silently thanks Ronnie for being a smoker with a light in his pocket to fire up the torch, as I forgotten this basic item. I managed to get the gas torch inside the gate and fire it up and managed to burn the old lock off without damaging the old securing eyebolt at the bottom of the gate. The cardinal rule of using any gas torch is the amount of heat used in the cutting process. I removed the worn gate and then picked up the old lock – forgetting it was still bloody hot – and I promptly it dropped down the steep climb where it was soon lost in the undergrowth on top of the covered reservoir. It may still be there!

We refitted the cave gate with a new padlock. Getting the bottle trolley back down the loose climb was a lot easier than getting it up. Something to do with gravity. Then back over the reservoir top to the car park. Fortunately, the coach and cars were gone so no explanations to our nefarious activities were needed. We loaded up and went to Willy's home in Westbury – sub – Mendip where we reported our actions and gave him the spare keys to the new lock. He then declared the cave open for future caving trips.

My next trip into Reservoir Hole was a week later with MCG members on the 9th March 1991, and it all went smoothly. Never looked for the old lock though, but it might make an interesting souvenir today.

Geoff Beale.

Background Photo: 'Totem Pole' Stal Formation in the Frozen Deep, Reservoir Hole by Tom Harrison

MCG ALMANAC 2015

by Tom Harrison

For the last couple of years, Ed Waters has been trying to encourage more of us to use the logbooks. Since becoming editor, I have found the group's logbooks an invaluable source of information. They provide a real insight into the early days of the modern explosion in popularity in exploring underground and contain useful detail in how a cave was discovered, dug, and developed. They can also leave tantalising clues about since lost discoveries or where a current dig may be fruitful.

As an exercise in data analysis, I thought it might be interesting to see what we did in 2015! It wasn't a highly scientific undertaking, with a simple read through of the logbook and a note taken of each cave visited and whether it was a visit, a dig or simply a surface visit to an entrance. Some trips involved a dig team and a 'tourist' visit team, for which I have recorded one dig and one visit. I apologise if I have missed anything and I cannot claim 100% accuracy, but I hope this gives a taste of 'What We Did in 2015.'

Findings

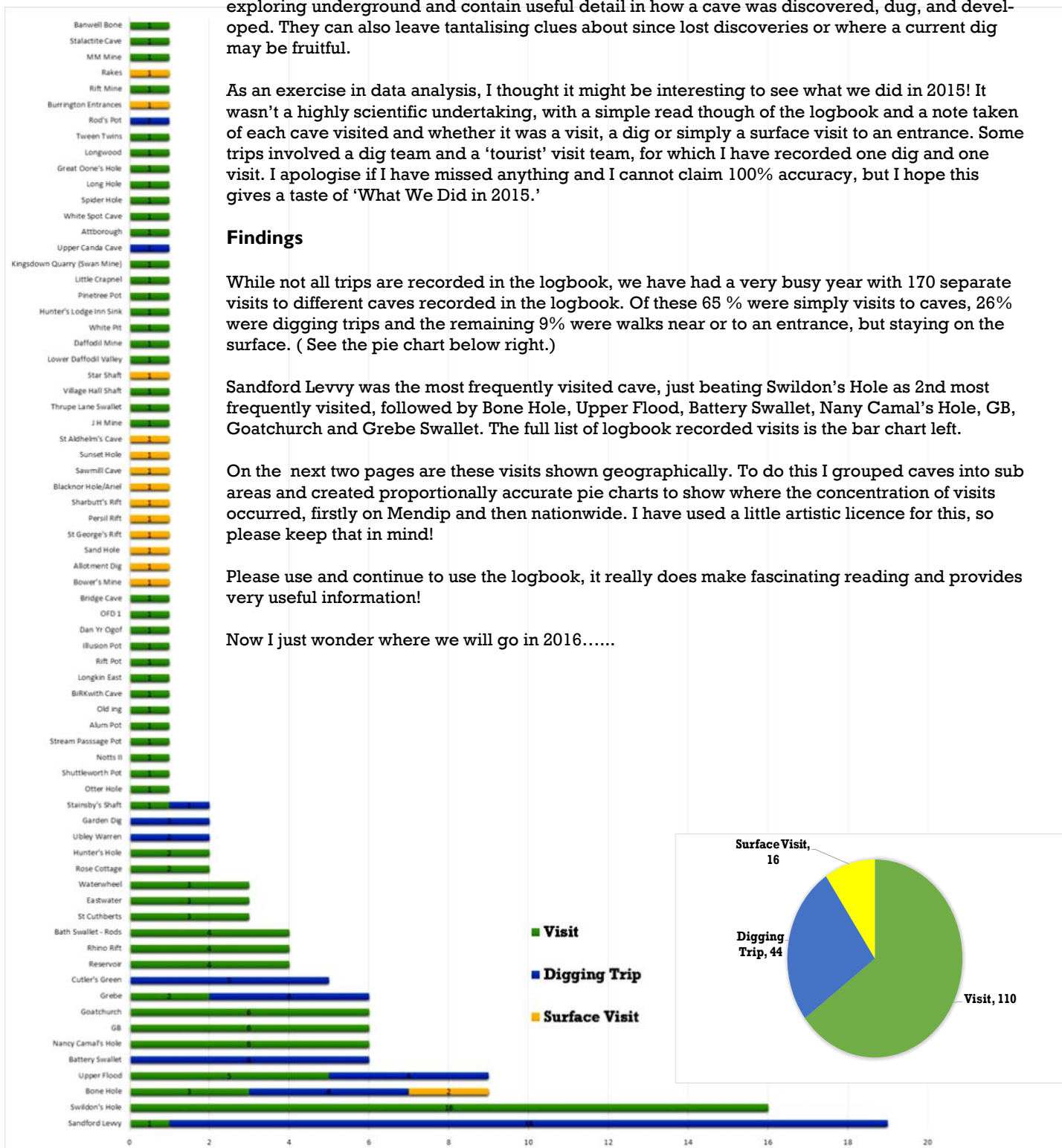
While not all trips are recorded in the logbook, we have had a very busy year with 170 separate visits to different caves recorded in the logbook. Of these 65 % were simply visits to caves, 26% were digging trips and the remaining 9% were walks near or to an entrance, but staying on the surface. (See the pie chart below right.)

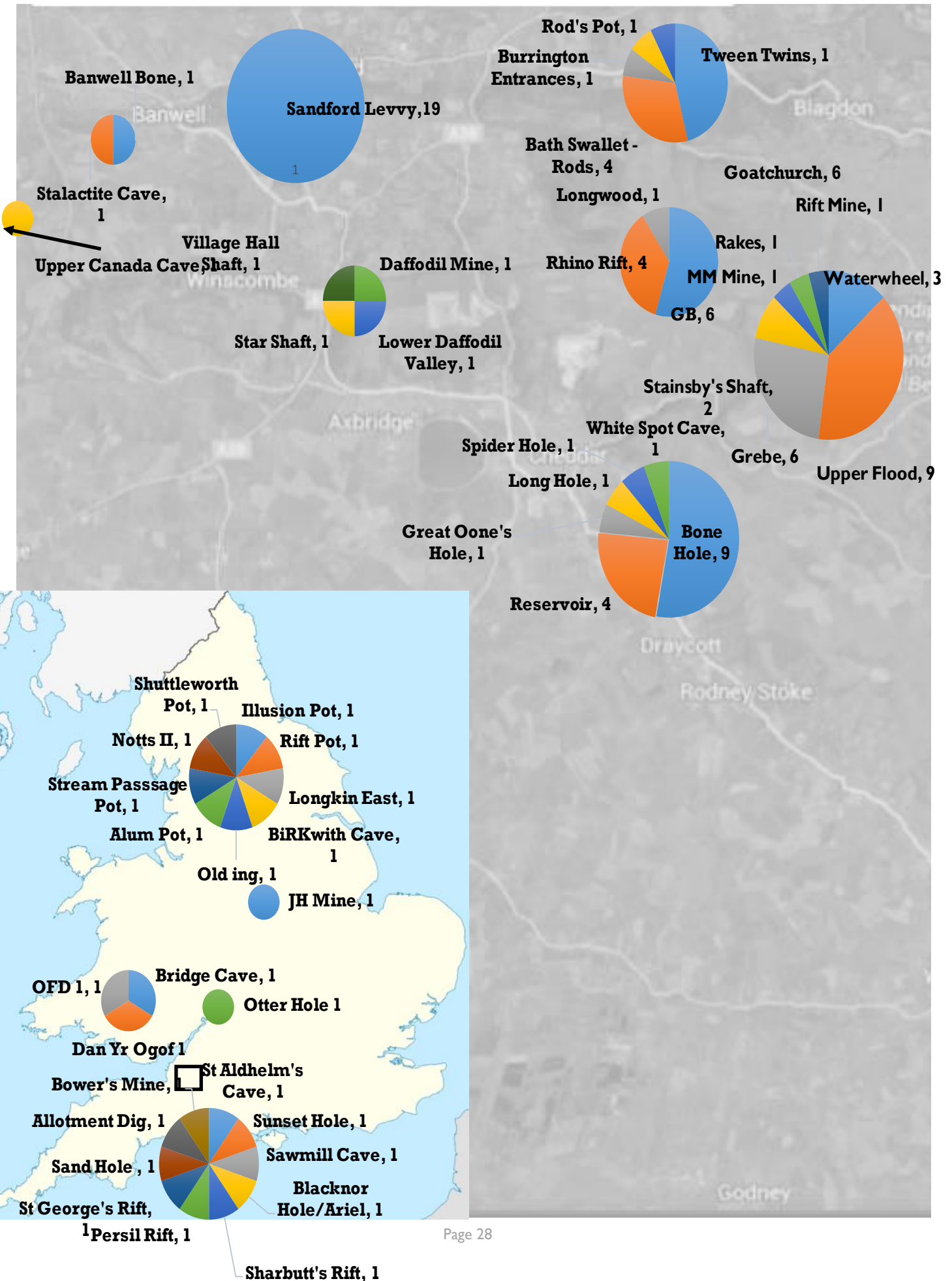
Sandford Levvy was the most frequently visited cave, just beating Swildon's Hole as 2nd most frequently visited, followed by Bone Hole, Upper Flood, Battery Swallet, Nany Camal's Hole, GB, Goatchurch and Grebe Swallet. The full list of logbook recorded visits is the bar chart left.

On the next two pages are these visits shown geographically. To do this I grouped caves into sub areas and created proportionally accurate pie charts to show where the concentration of visits occurred, firstly on Mendip and then nationwide. I have used a little artistic licence for this, so please keep that in mind!

Please use and continue to use the logbook, it really does make fascinating reading and provides very useful information!

Now I just wonder where we will go in 2016.....

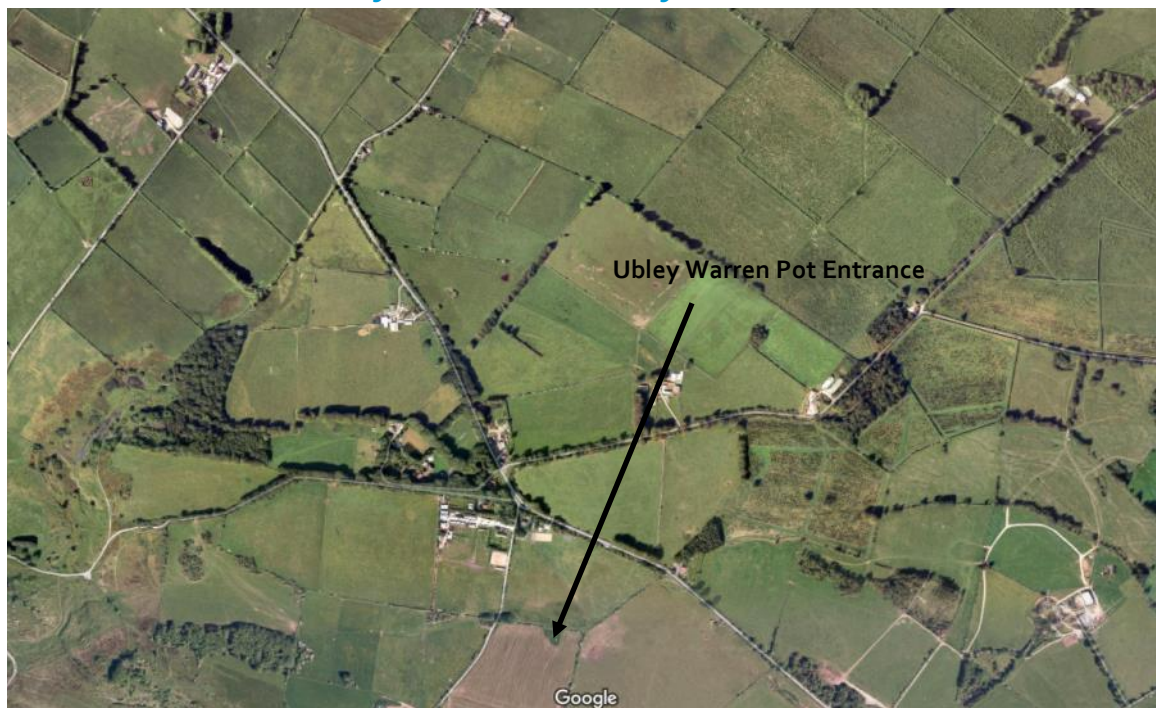






CAVES CLOSE PART 2

Ubley Warren Pot by Tom Harrison



Google Earth Image of the area closest to the cottage. Copyright: Imagery - 2015 Getmapping plc. Map data - 2015 Google

Last issue I started a new series about those Caves closest to our Cottage at Nordrach, with a short history of the cave and an update to the accessibility of the different caves and any new developments. I also hope that perhaps this series might encourage more visits to these interesting and mostly short trips within walking distance from our base.

Having looked at the Garden Dig and Cow Hole last issue, next up is Ubley Warren Pot, where the MCG have recently restarted a dig.

Ubley Warren Pot began life as two separate caves; Nettle Hole (also referred to as Nettle Pot) and Foot and Crutch Swallet. The small system is composed of bedding planes, broken up along now widened rifts and joints with chert nodules and many fossils which attempt to tear your suit apart, as you thrust, crawl and contort yourself through. It is tight in places with a tiny connection between the two parts called, "the Ugh" which I am yet to attempt. There are also loose ceiling boulders to be wary of, especially the rock/'brick' of Damocles in Nettle, but do not let this description put you off as this is a fun short trip, which took 30 mins to get from the terminal dig back to the cottage and a sporting through trip if you are small enough.



Ubley Warren Pot ST 5165 5553

Both above by Mike Moxon

Nettle Hole (alternative entrance to Ubley Warren Pot)

Nettle Hole was opened up in the 1960's by the Axbridge Caving Club. Nettle Hole Dig began in July 1964 and a 12 foot shaft, gave way to a small chamber and a rift emitting a draught. Work seems to have been steady but hindered by boulders blocking the way into the rift visible below and both the need for bang, and the amount of loose rock left the dig in limbo.

What is now the main entrance to Ubley Warren Pot was in fact a dig in September 1967, by member's of the Axbridge caving club in the Swallet next to Nettle Hole. This dig opened up a wide rift with airspaces which shrank down to what Tony Jarratt reported as, "a few inches wide" with a very strong draught. The Swallet was named 'Foot and Crutch Swallet' partly as work on its opening was halted during an outbreak of foot and mouth disease.

The real thrust of the digging appears to have occurred over the next 12 months. Tony Jarratt's diaries give an account of the progress.

With hard work (and the assistance of some bang) came the reward of the opening of the rift, a smoke test proving a connection to Nettle Hole, and the shifting of a boulder revealing choked passages with different possible ways on. With further work the intrepid diggers discovered bone, both ancient and modern (including human vertebra and skull fragments) as well as a medieval pottery shard believed to have been washed in, and what was possibly a wire animal trap brought in by some unfortunate rabbit.



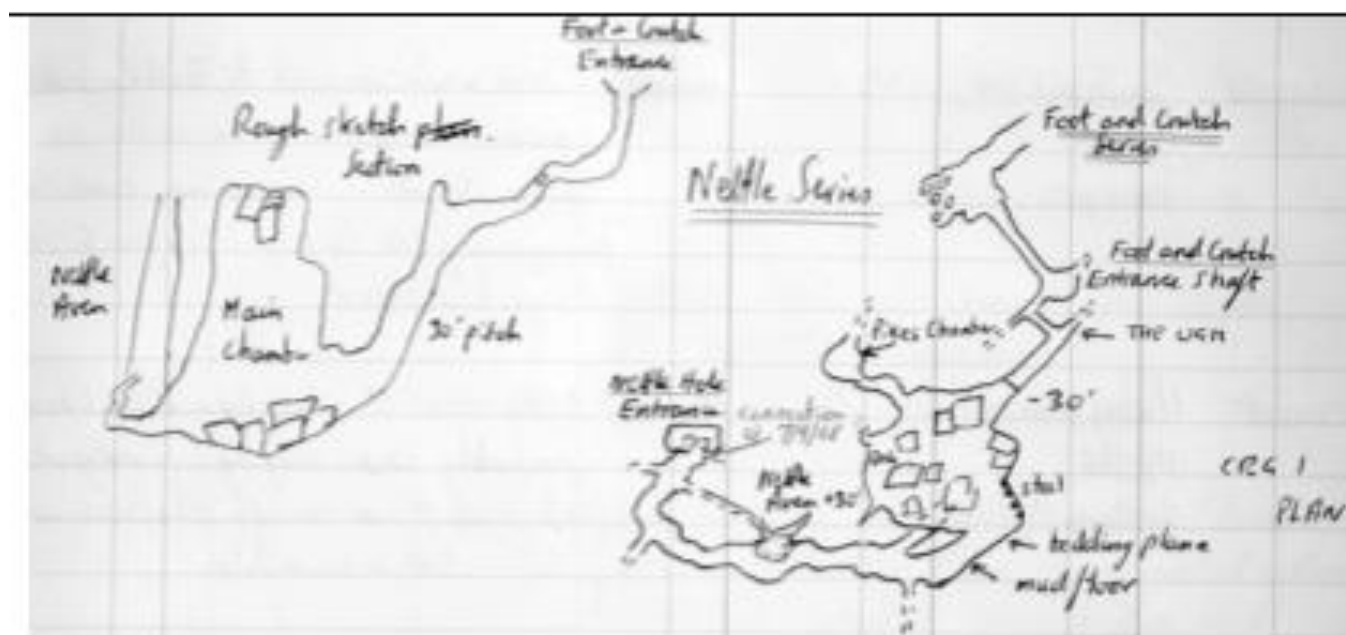
Ruckle Grotto by John Tucker from the MCRA Photo Archive and reproduced here with their permission

Crinoid crawl was passed and rifts were widened and unblocked to enter what could be described as a chamber Above a boulder ruckle in this area, a well decorated area was discovered, named Ruckle Grotto. The chamber area had two obvious possibilities; Sam's dig in the floor and a stal passage above this in the roof.

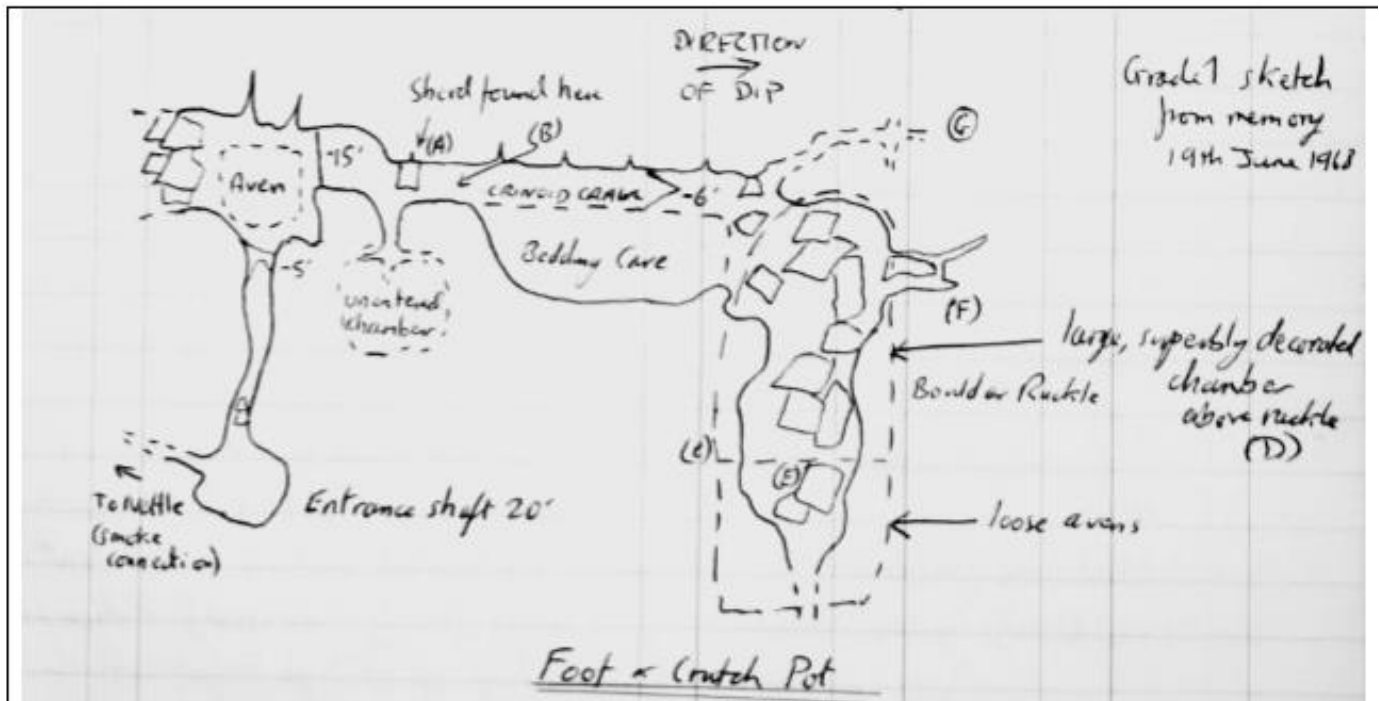
Further work was carried out in 1968, including in Chisel Rift, which is found on the left before turning right and descending into the boulder ruckle / chamber area, and in Sam's dig, however it was a push near the entrance just after the '68 flood which led to a major breakthrough. Here Tony Jarratt pushed "the UGH" squeeze, entering the descending rift passage to the 30 foot pitch into the main chamber of Nettle Pot, which hadn't quite been connected to the Nettle Hole Dig at this point. This chamber has stal and is where the Brick or Rock of Damocles hangs poised, seemingly ready to drop at any moment from the roof. In the floor a stream gravel floored tube crawl closes down. In the September of 1968, with only some minor works, Tony completed the through trip from Nettle to Foot and Crutch.

The connection prompted the renaming of the cave to Ubley Warren Pot. The old foot and crutch part of the cave being named the Foot and Crutch Series and the connection and Nettle Hole part renamed the Nettle Series.

The new cave even made a TV appearance on the BBC's Points West programme. Work continued for at least another year and an extension was found below Sam's Dig, a tube leading to a cross-joint, with a draining puddle in the floor, named the little girl's room and the continuation ahead of the cross blocked by stal floors and a tightening passage also walled over.

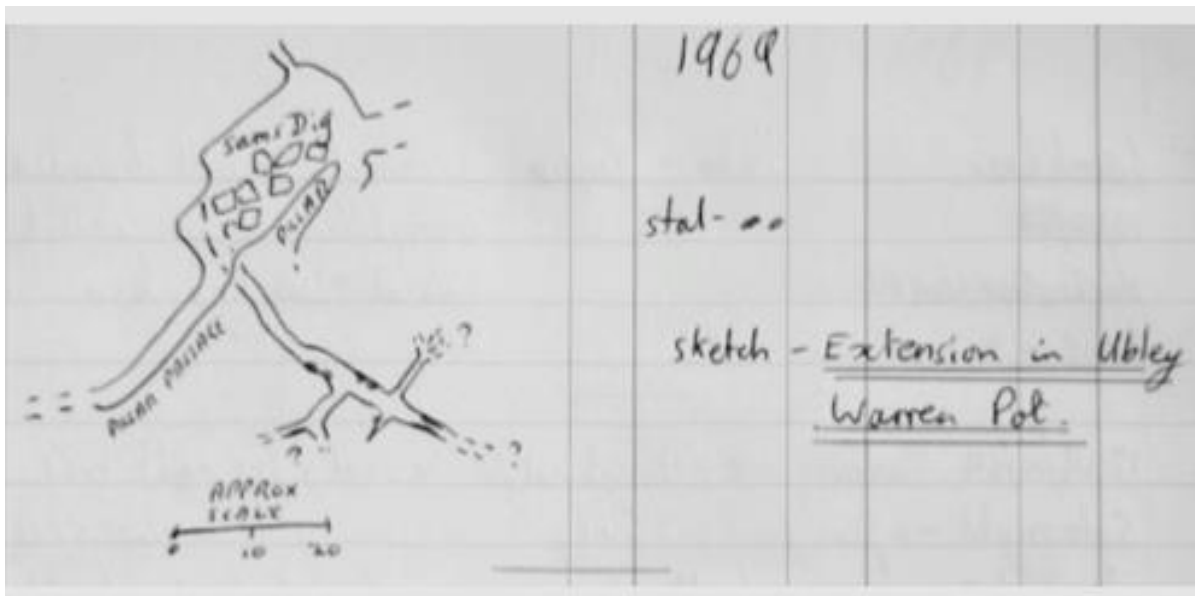


Tony Jarratt's rough section and plan sketch of the Nettle series of Ubley Warren Pot from his caving diaries published on the MCRA website and reproduced here with their permission.



Tony Jarratt's plan sketch of the Foot and Crutch series of Ubley Warren Pot from his caving diaries published on the MCRA website and reproduced here with their permission.

- A) Where the broken Pot Shard was found, as well as bone found amongst the washed in gravel
- B) Where Ancient Bone was found
- C) The Chamber
- D) Decorated Chamber (Ruckle Grotto)
- E) a 10' drop (Sam's Dig) above which was climbed for "20' in very loose rotten rock."
- F) A passage was, "forced and was found to be 12' long,before the end a passage led off at right angles to a passage leading diagonally away a ^ high bedding plane on the left"
- G) Promising tight rift (Chisel Rift)



Tony Jarratt's plan sketch of the last (that I know of) extension to Ubley Warren Pot from his caving diaries published on the MCRA website and reproduced here with their permission. This is the extension in the floor of the Chamber of the Foot and Crutch Series. The (?) marked on the bottom right of the plan is the Little Girl's Room and the blocked passage above it where some MCG members have been occasionally digging.

It has now been 50 years since Ubley Warren Pot last gave us a major breakthrough, so it seems an appropriate anniversary to take another look at this Cave. There have been some explorations and minor work to extend the cave over the intervening years, but some MCG member's have taken another look here more recently.

Tim Francis's log book trip reports take up the story of the latest push to extend this cave. 18th April 2015—Ben, Peat, Tim

"Back to the terminal dig after a break of several years. The rock was as hard as usual. So much so that Ben had to return to the cottage for fresh drill bits. We hiltied away until the air got too dusty and CO2 levels rose too far. It was extremely hard going but by the end we had broken the back of the nasty bit. We're now in the tube proper and only a few feet from the stal that is blocking our view. (see photo below of said stal)....."

Another afternoon session took place on the 9th August 2015, before Kevin Speight and I took a short trip to take some photos in February this year.

After an unexpectedly long walk to find the entrance (mostly caused by the pitch black darkness, we unlocked the CSCC key lock and rigged the short concrete piped entrance from the useful scaffold bar.

We descended into the floor being careful not to take the wrong route into the UGH squeeze connection into the Nettle series. Following the bedding plane with what appears to be a vadose or perhaps excavated trench, we climbed down a short way and entered Crinoid Crawl. At the end, Kev followed what appeared to be the tight way on but which was infact Chisel rift. Extricating himself, we went in under on the opposite side into the boulder ruckle and the chamber, above which is the Ruckle Grotto, which we didn't get round to taking a look at. We carried on to the Little Girl's Room where we had a short dig before leaving to get back to the cottage and a cup of tea!



Above: The concrete entrance pipe.

Left: At the bottom of the entrance shaft.

Below : The Stal blockage above the Little Girl's Room, with the stal curtain preventing sight of what lies beyond.

Photos by Tom Harrison



Ubley Warren Pot seems full of potential and perhaps had the ACG not moved their group HQ from the area, might well have had further extensions to it by now.

There seem to be many nooks and voids, that although explored could well warrant further investigation.

Chisel Rift was one area where Tony Jarratt wanted to focus some attention and the floors in the main Chambers of both parts of the Ubley Warren could prove fruitful too.

For more on this cave I would highly recommend the comprehensive article by Mike Ferraro from the ACG Journal and reading Tony Jarratt's caving diaries online at MCRA. From which this article was written. More Cave's close next issue!

References

[Axbridge Caving Group Journal 1967/8 Ubley Warren Pot by M J Ferraro PP 13-42](#)
[MCRA.—Tony Jarratt's Caving Diaries Vol. 1 Multiple](#)
[Mendip Underground A Caver's Guide by Alan Gray, Rob Taviner and Richard Witcombe Ubley Warren Pot PP420](#)
[Mendip The Complete Caves and a view off the Hills—N Barrington and WI Stanton Ubley Warren Swallet PP167](#)
[Axbridge Caving Group Newsletter March 1968 and Sept 1968 News from the Cave Digs and Ubley Warren Pot by T Jarratt](#)
With thanks to Alan Gray for his assistance and for access to the Axbridge Caving Group References

MCG CHRISTMAS 2015

by Tom Harrison



Thanks to a lot of hard work and preparation, Christmas at the MCG 2015 was a huge success. Back towards the end of summer, the committee had to make a decision about where we would hold the dinner after the popularity of the event in previous years and the difficulty in hosting such a large event in the cottage. The consensus was that we didn't want it to be anywhere other than the cottage so we felt that, although we didn't want to, there may have been a need to limit numbers. In the end we did squeeze everyone in and believe we had a recent record of attendees for a Christmas event!

Apart from a dinner which was incredibly tasty, we had secret santa which went down very well with gifts ranging from Festive Turkey Hats to books about Outdoor Pooing! We had music, games, drinks and a party going on well into the night!

Much thanks has to go to Karen who took on the role of both head chef and organiser, but also to many of you who helped in many different ways in the preparation, tidying, cooking, entertaining and clearing up that night and the next day! I won't risk naming anyone in particular, (other than Karen) as I'm sure I will miss someone off, but thanks to you all.

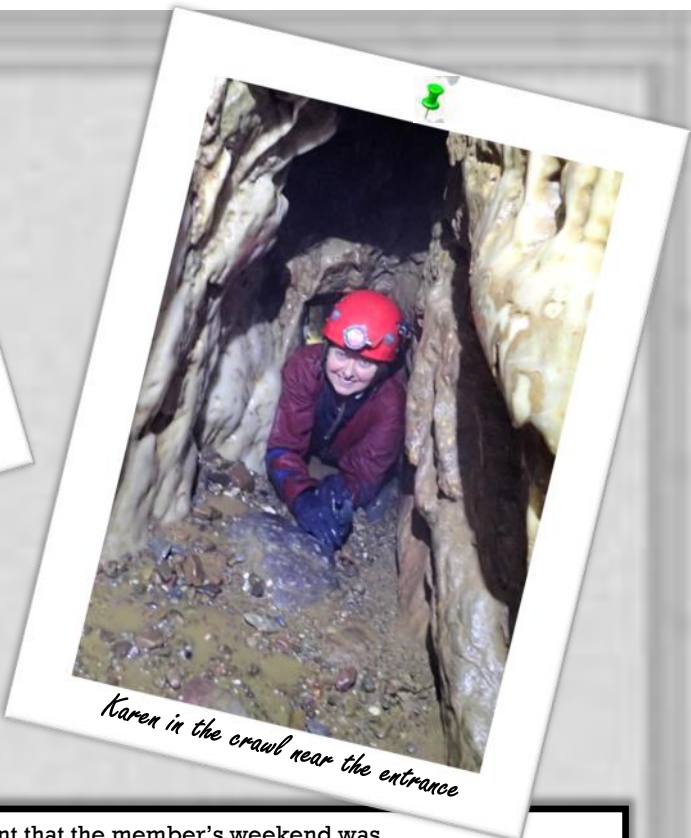
Here are a few photos from the preparation, I was having too much fun to take any during the dinner and afterwards! It might have only just taken place, but I'm already looking forward to the next one!





Tom, Mike, Richard, Karen, Ed and Buddy

January Member's Weekend 2016



Karen in the crawl near the entrance

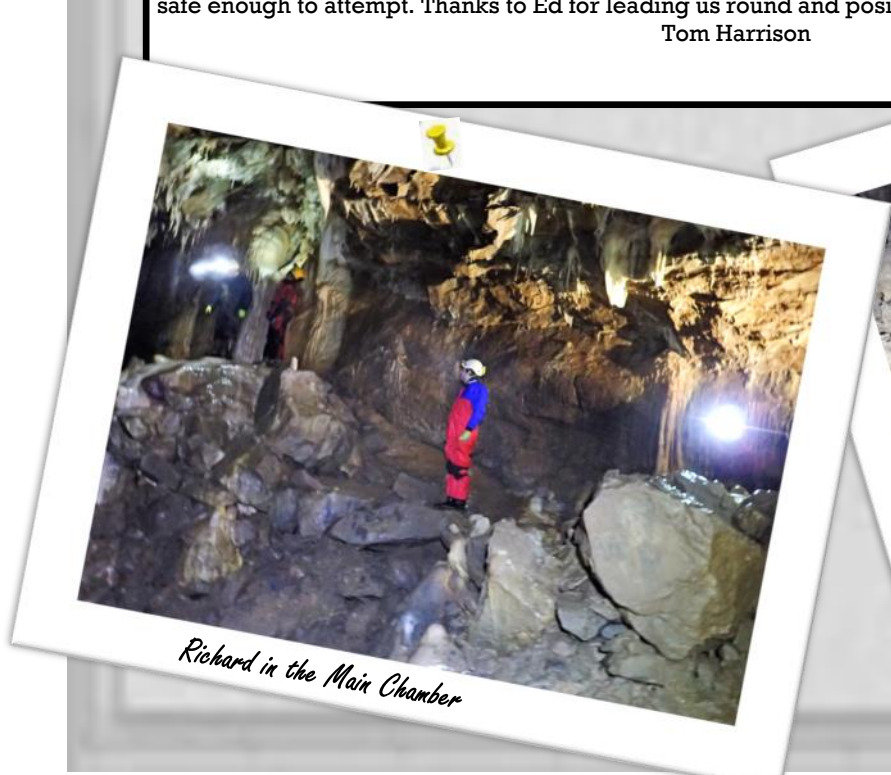
The 1st January fell on a Friday this year, which meant that the member's weekend was probably going to be a particularly quiet one, especially as rain had been falling so heavily on New Year's day.

However it was pleasing to see that there were a few of us at the cottage on the 2nd and 6 of those there decided to see where all that rain had gone, so headed off to GB Cavern. We parked at the new designated point, we changed and wandered off to the entrance with Ed pointing out some interesting features; mining, caving and otherwise, en-route.

There was water flowing in the cave before we reached the gorge but the highest water levels had passed by the time we got to the end of the Streamway where marks on the walls showed the peak levels from the water backing up, had passed.

Having a good old explore, doing the loop and visiting but not descending Bertie's Pot before we eventually headed back up the gorge and climbed the waterfall which was interesting with the extra water but still safe enough to attempt. Thanks to Ed for leading us round and posing for photos in the cold water !

Tom Harrison



Richard in the Main Chamber



Ed showers off

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

By Joan Goddard

The Mines and Minerals of Mendip by Peter Burr, Mendip Cave Registry & Archive, 2015. Two Volumes, £65.00

I have been waiting over ten years for this book to be published and it has been worth the wait! Peter Burr has been collecting and studying Mendip minerals and mines for most of his life - and his work continues. The two volumes cover geology, the mineral deposits and types of mineralisation, mining history, mineral rights and trade, social history and more.

Volume 1 contains chapters on the lead mines of "Green Hill" including Charterhouse, the "Rowpits" including Stock Hill plantation and "Lamb Hill", West Harptree. The final chapter (over 200 pages) concerns the calamine mines of Winscombe-Shipham-Rowberrow and East Harptree and includes much social history.

Volume 2 deals mainly with ochre and iron mines, describes minerals from Merehead (Torr Works) and Whatley Quarries, followed by celestite and barite. There is an interesting chapter on Loxton mines, and finally an **ENORMOUS** bibliography.

The review in Descent suggests the bibliography and index are slightly lacking but I cannot comment because so far I have not needed to use them. The first print run of 130 copies sold out in no time, even at £65, but a reprint should now be available.

I would like to point out that the volumes are pretty heavy and although they are traditionally bound they would benefit from being stored horizontally on the library shelves.

A Catalogue of British caving material held in the Gerald Platten Scrapbooks (in Wells Museum Library) compiled by Dave Irwin, 1989 and published October 1993. The scrapbooks gathered together material from various sources to share with cavers, before most caving clubs and their publications came into existence. There are some interesting early photos of Mendip and elsewhere.

The Cave at Nerja by Ana López del Hierro, ALDEASA, 2002. Guidebook [Donated]

Tales of Dirt, Danger and Darkness by Paul Jay Steward, Greyhound Press, 1998.

A collection of short stories, many of them amusing [Donated]

A Bedside Book for Older Cavers by John Gillett, Mirador Publishing, 2013. – Quite an appealing title for me, I suppose - and I have read a few chapters – but I think I need to age a bit more before fully appreciating the book [Donated]

The Almost Complete Eclectic Caver by Thom Engel, Speleobooks, 1992. Short articles and stories [Donated]

COMING UP

Jeremy Gilson, our Caving Secretary and Hayley Clarke and Ed Waters, our Social Secretaries have put together some great trips and events over the last few months, many of which you will have seen in the newsletter!

It is worth checking out the newsgroup in the week before the member's weekend for more information about what's going to be happening.

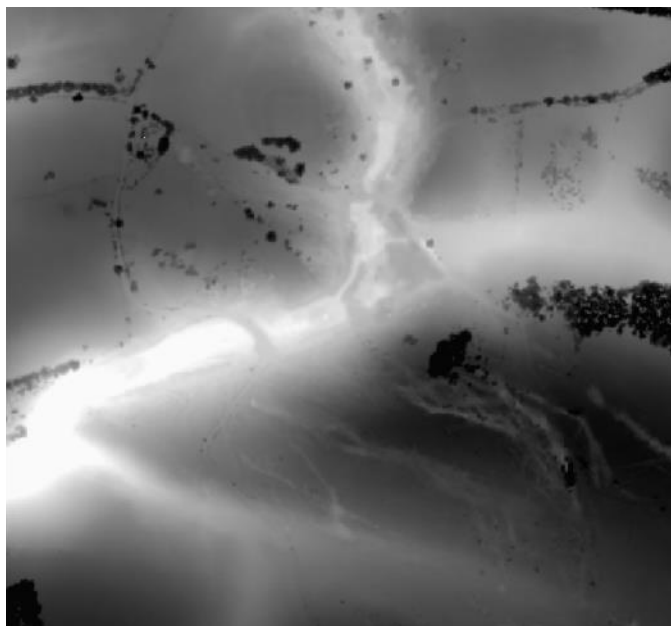
If you can run a trip, would like to go somewhere in particular, can help with food, cook a dinner or have a good idea for a social event then please get in touch with one of the committee.

Date	Event	Location	Contact/ No. of Beds Booked
4/5/6 March	AGM Weekend	Nordrach	
5 March 10am	Annual General Meeting	The Hunters Lodge Inn	Brian Snell
5 March 7pm	AGM Dinner	The Mendip Inn	Ed Waters & Hayley Clarke
11/12 March	Hut Booking	Nordrach	East Anglia Uni 12 Beds Booked
18/19 March	Hut Booking	Nordrach	Scouts 14 Beds Booked

INTERNET CAVING

LiDAR

It was announced last year that the Environment Agency was releasing over 11 Terabytes (or more than 12,094,627,905,536 bytes) of LiDAR data onto the internet. LiDAR or Light Detection and Ranging is point data that is in this instance collected by aircraft by taking measurements over the ground allowing a map to be built up of the surface features. Vegetation can be penetrated allowing features to be more clearly defined than aerial photography might. Archaeologically interesting items can sometimes clearly be picked out, with notable examples being lost Roman roads being picked up by these scans. For the caving community I believe that the technology could be used for surveying and to spot hidden Karst features including drainage basins and possibly even entrances, as well as for finding other possible underground features such as mine entrances. Using the data and a downloadable open licence piece of software, I was quickly able to produce this picture on the right showing the Velvet Bottom drainage area. The white depicting the lowest areas shows the natural and artificial landscape of this area, the Rakes and Gruffy ground. More soon...



Quick Links

The MCG's Yahoo! Newsgroup can be found at:
<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/mendip-caving-group/>

The MCG's YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChMYISO7Z9qc-GnTGEK-XA>

And Finally.....

A Mendip Wezzit (Where is it)

Anyone know ? Anyone been to the end?!

A small chocolate bar for the first 3 correct answers (MCRA recorded name)

Email me your answers!

get2_tom@hotmail.com

Clue 1: The photo

Clue 2: Son, that's not fatness

Clue 3: Top Right of this Page



MENDIP CAVING GROUP

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Thanks to all the contributors.

Special Thanks to;

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Tim Francis
Geoff Beale

And to all the photographers' contributions, as acknowledged.

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Mendipcavinggroup.org.uk



Founded 1954

Please send any submissions, photos, comments, letters to Tom Harrison

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The Mendip Caving Group consists of some 110+ members of all abilities who have banded together to share resources such as ladders, ropes, a caving library and accommodation on Mendip.

The Group is registered as a charity in the UK, and our objectives are: For the benefit of the public, the furtherance of all aspects of the scientific study and conservation of caves and their related features.

Membership is open to anyone over the age of 18 years with an interest in the objects of the Group.

Members have use of the Group's cottage at reduced rates, free use of Group equipment and free access to the library. They also receive the newsletter of the MCG and Occasional Publications (a journal-type document published infrequently.)

Pre 2016 AGM Committee



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