PLYMOUTH CAVING GROUP

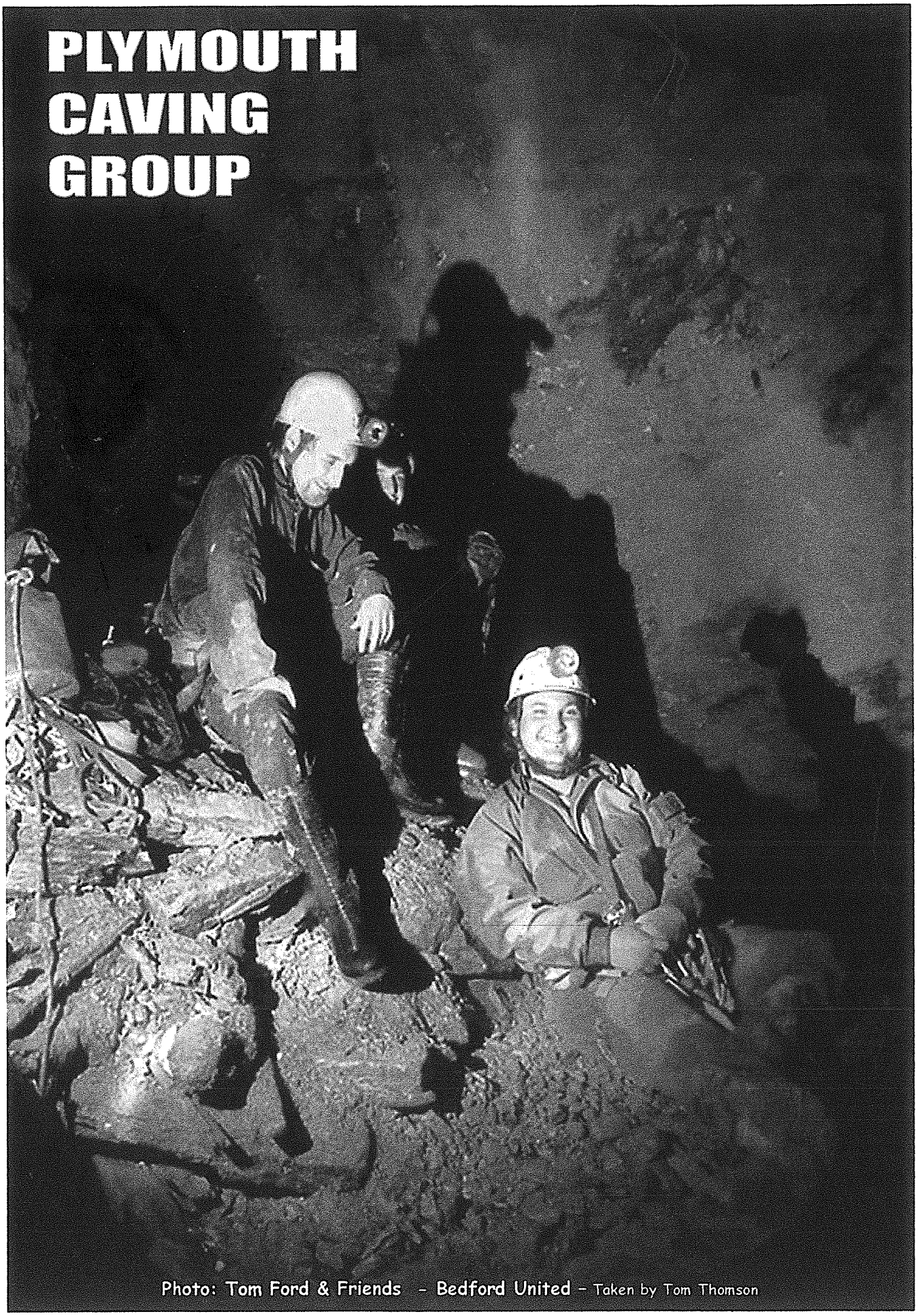


Photo: Tom Ford & Friends - Bedford United - Taken by Tom Thomson

Newsletter & Journal No. 146 Dec 2004



Plymouth Caving Group

NEWSLETTER No. 146 – December 2004

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Calling all Cavers

The PCG AGM is coming up on Thursday 13th of February 2005

Venue will be the function room in the Hyde Park Hotel AGM commences at 8 pm

Contacts for the Plymouth Caving Group

Chairman: - Alasdair Neill. 97 Mount Gould Road. Lipson. Plymouth. PL4 7PX. Mobile No. 07808486507

Secretary: – Chris Kelland. 78 Durham Avenue. St. Judes. Plymouth. Devon. PL4 8SR. Mobile No. 07930829182. Email. caving-enquiries@blueyonder.co.uk

Treasurer: - Patrick Hanlan. Demelze. Tremabe Lane. Dobwalls. Liskeard. PL14 6JT. Home No. 01579 - 320468

Membership Secretary – Colin Smith. 15 Bearsdown Close. Eggbuckland. Plymouth. PL6 5TX. Mobile No. 07764536251. Email. colin.smith@plymouthcavinggroup.org.uk

Tackle Warden: - Darren Hitchcock. 61 Maristow Avenue. Keyham. Plymouth. PL2 1LP. Home No. 01752 - 562261

Conservation Officer: - Rupert Goddard. Ground Floor Flat. 98 Salisbury Road. St Judes. Plymouth. PL4 8TB Home No. 01752 – 224826.

Meet Secretary: - Dave Warne. 34 Greenhill Close. Goosewell. Plymouth. PL9 9JW. Mobile No. 07831562791.

Temporary Editor: - Tom Thomson. 117 Milehouse Road. Stoke. Plymouth. PL3 4AE. Mobile No. 07779795736

Alternatively any club member can be contacted through the PCG web site under 'Contacts'

The address for the PCG web site is as follows - http://plymouthcavinggroup.org.uk

Welcome all, this is my first newsletter as Editor, and hopefully I can carry on in the usual tradition of the previous Editors. Hopefully this Newsletter will reach you early in the New Year.
If any club members have any articles for publication for the next Newsletter, then please email your articles to tom.thomson@plymouthcavinggroup.org.uk

Plymouth Caving Group meet at the Thistle Park Tavern, Coxside, normally on the first Thursday of each month for a committee meeting at 8.00pm. This is open to all and potential members.

Trips to local caves and mines are held on alternative Tuesday evenings, although there are a number of digging projects that are done on the other Tuesday evenings. All members are welcome to try their hand at digging. Please see the website for the 'Diary of Events' or contact the Meet Secretary through the PCG website. Weekend trips are organised during each year, these have included Gaping Gill, Yorkshire; St Just, Cornwall; Mendips, Somerset; and caves in Wales.

The club hold an extensive library of books relating to caving, mining, mine and cave surveys, exchange newsletters, and journals. We also hold much equipment, which can be hired out at a small fee. This includes SRT kits, caving suits, lamps, helmets, rope, electron ladders, and much more. Contact Darren Hitchcock the Tackle Warden through the clubs' website for hire.

SOUTH WALES TRIP 15th-17th OCTOBER 2004

GENTLEMEN, CAVERS ..... AND CHIMPANZEES??

Participants were-
OSAMA, TONJA, RUPERT, AIDI, ANNABELLE, TOM the STUCK, LIONEL, PATRICK.

FRIDAY.
We drove up on Friday afternoon with a call at Sainsbury's for provisioning. Patrick claimed to have a recipe for something tasty that would suit all tastes – veggie or otherwise and including chickpeas. One participant revealed an intolerance to chick peas! Amazing - there's always some awkward bugger. No, sorry didn't mean that. Caving is a team sport after all and all tastes must be catered for – however bizarre. So we bought a wide variety of beans as substitute and a jar of Very Lazy green chillies for a very lazy cook. Beans and chillies – trouble brewing perhaps.
We arrived in the hills without incident and tucked in to the tasty dish. Thanks to generous additions of fresh chillies with seeds my gums were glowing!! They felt as though they'd been bathed in 125.
We hit the pub for cooling alcohol and after a bedtime snack of cheese on toast topped with green chillies turned in for the night.
There was a rumbling in the dark...

SATURDAY
Morning and a feeling of demotivation in some cases. After a leisurely breakfast we delayed the inevitable by visiting the Dragon toy shop and then havered* on for some time about where to go. The keen types went off to play with complex rigging somewhere and the rest of us eventually decided to go into Bridge Cave. I think at this stage Lionel invented the term 'gentleman cavers'. Those too keen on difficult trips do not qualify!
The gentleman cavers eventually found Bridge Cave and led by Rupert had a fair old time splashing about, climbing high up the sides and generally pushing the envelope (but not too hard). We found some prettys and Tom played cameraman at great length taking a multitude of photos of himself. 'Just to get the scale right'. Yes of course Tom.
(Scale can be said to be very important for A1 photography I'm sure you would agree, unbiased of course, the editor.)

When we met up with the others at the Croydon Hut, it seems they had been the subject of a callout - 3 pandas and a chopper on standby. Quite impressive for 1 dog left in the car but a tiny bit embarrassing.
With Patrick's recipe book exhausted, we picked up a delicious Chinese takeaway with a Welsh accent.

SUNDAY
Morning and time for a bit of gentlemanly caving with an edge. The cavers wanted to go for a walk – aaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh. Tom decided to do some local exploring so Rupert, Lionel and Patrick were briefed by Aidy on rigging Pont Mawr. We bought our licence and after Saturday's lesson set a callout time at the SWCC complex.. Rupert had made one trip there before and strode off confidently across the moors. We found the hole and Rupert and Lionel rigged ladders successfully, (well we survived so it must have been A1 rigging.) Lionel led the 3 gentlemen, and we pushed on to what appeared to be the sump. Judging by the flood debris above our heads we were lucky to get so far. Why do I always feel so uneasy when I see twigs stuck to the roof? We saw loads of pretty stuff and were so impressed we got quite lost in the

boulder choke. How many times did we see that white bucket chaps? And from a different angle each time.
Finally back at the pitch we flew up the ladders like the athletes we are and yomped off back to SWCC.

We arrived there at 7.00 – our callout time – to find the place deserted and in darkness. (I hope somebody would have come looking for us.) We checked in with Aidy who by now was in Plymouth and headed for the hut to collect Tom and drive home.

And the chimpanzees? Well, Rupert wanted to visit the Chimp sanctuary but Section 23, subsection xvii, para12 of the Club Constitution, states very clearly that '.....visits to relatives during club trips are strictly forbidden'. I'm sure the Secretary will back me up on that.

(A serving suggestion – Lazy Green Chillies spooned generously over vanilla ice cream are like a trip to paradise with overtones of the inferno.)

* haver – to babble or vacillate. Seems to cover most caving conversations !

PATRICK HANLAN

THE GREAT ROCK MINES

By Chris Proctor

Great Rock Mine lies close to Hennock, on the north east margin of the Dartmoor granite. The mine is well known as the last "metalliferous" mine to have been worked in Devon – it finally closed in 1969. It worked a series of narrow east-west trending lodes containing micaceous haematite, which was used in the manufacture of rust proof paint. The lodes were worked by levels driven in from the valleys on both sides of the hill and almost all of these remain open allowing access to much of the workings. I first became interested in the mine in early 1983, when access to the site was more or less unrestricted and over the course of the next year, surveyed all the accessible levels, with the exception of the South Lode no. 3 level. This entrance lies in the grounds of the mine office, now a private bungalow and the owner refused access due to its dangerous state although he did allow me to survey the short Middle Lode no.3 level nearby. Also, I did very little vertical work in the mine due to lack of other people interested in the mine. In the last few years the PCG has surveyed many of the levels including some areas I was not able to enter: the survey given here combines both. Thus the survey is only a preliminary version showing the more accessible areas. Since then the level entrances have been gated and locked to prevent casual visitors from entering the mine. Most of the entrances are owned by the Sargent Charitable Trust but the South Beadon Levels and the no. 3 Levels are under different ownership (the no. 3 levels lie in a private garden so are particularly sensitive). We are currently investigating access to these: in the meantime no attempt should be made to enter any of the levels without permission as the situation is delicate and we could lose access to the whole site. These notes below are based on my visits in the 1980s, updated where necessary.
On the west side of the hill three main lodes were worked, each by two levels lying close to Beadon Lane.

On **North Beadon Lode**, the lower level leads through unstable stopes to the level forehead about 175 m from the entrance. The timberwork was actively collapsing in the 1980s and further collapse appears to have taken place since then. The short upper level contains two winzes down to stopes above the lower level.

Main Beadon Lode was worked right up to the mine's closure. In the 1980s there was little to see underground as both levels were blocked not far in by collapsed deads. I have not had the chance to visit this level recently.

South Beadon Lode (South South Lode) upper level is insignificant. The lower level leads over a flooded winze to an area of stopes with deads heaped on collapsing stulls. This area looks fairly dodgy but comparison with the survey notes shows that only one stull platform has collapsed in the last 20 years. At the far end is a winze with skip rails still in place. The winze can be descended down a series of five pitches totalling 35m through stopes to reach the South South Lode no. 2 level. No. 2 level contains an interesting series of remains including *in situ* compressed air lines, ventilation ducting, tramlines and some nice timberwork. A crosscut leads north to South Lode but progress east along this, towards the original entrance, is blocked by collapses. In two places the floor has been stoped away beneath the no. 2 level and these provide a choice of descents down through heavily timbered stopes descends to no. 3 level around 30 metres below. A crosscut north here provides access to South Lode: a few years ago the no. 3 level could be followed east along this lode through to daylight on the other side of the hill but it is in a poor condition so collapses may have occurred since then. In all this complex contains well in excess of 1 km of accessible workings.

The main workings, on the east side of the hill were worked on a number of levels numbered from no.1 (top) to no. 4 (the Crosscut Adit at the valley bottom).

North Lode no. 1 and 2 levels were used in the 1970s and early 1980s by Leicester University Mining Geology Department as a teaching mine. No. 2 level is easily located as it is the first level reached by following the track along the course of the old leat from the west side of the hill. The no. 1 level leads under an airshaft (now capped) to the top of a stope down to the no. 2 level about 20m below. The University cleared this stope out and installed fixed ladders, now long since removed. Both levels continue though only the lower one is easily accessible. This leads to another stope which in the early 1980s contained two impressive ore chutes side by side. Unfortunately these have now collapsed.

The entrances to the **Middle Lode no. 2 levels** lie side by side beside the leat track. The southern one leads over a flooded winze to a dead end after 120 m. The northern one was worked until the mine's closure, and is longer with several branches and stopes above and below the level near the far end. In the 1980s the timberwork was still in quite good condition with ore chutes and a ladder in place in the winze at the far end. I have not visited either level recently.

The **South Lode no. 2 levels** lie above the leat track. Both have winzes down to the South Lode no. 3 level just inside their entrances. The winze in the southern level can be crossed on timbers and tramway rails and runs to where it is blocked by collapsed deads 100m in. It might be possible to dig through this as a small airspace remains on the right underneath a shelf in the hanging wall. This might eventually give an alternative way into the workings accessed by South Beadon Lode lower level.

South Lode no. 1 level is in the woods above the no. 2 levels. Like them there is a winze in the floor just inside the entrance which I have not been across. The old mine plan shows this was a long level so this spot would almost certainly repay further investigation.

South Lode no. 3 level was one of the mine's main haulage levels and was worked until it closed. It was driven over 500m west, crosscutting south to South South Lode and ending beneath the South Beadon lower level, with which it was connected in the early 1960s via the no. 2 level (see South Beadon lower level). The connection to South Beadon remains open (see above). I have never entered this level (access was denied during the survey as noted above) but the level contains extensive stoped areas both above and below the level. An undescended shaft in the floor partway along the level provides the possibility of a link down to the Crosscut level below, and ultimately a through trip all the way from South Beadon Lower level to the Crosscut. There is a winch and other remains in South South Lode near the end. Parts of this level are now in a poor condition.

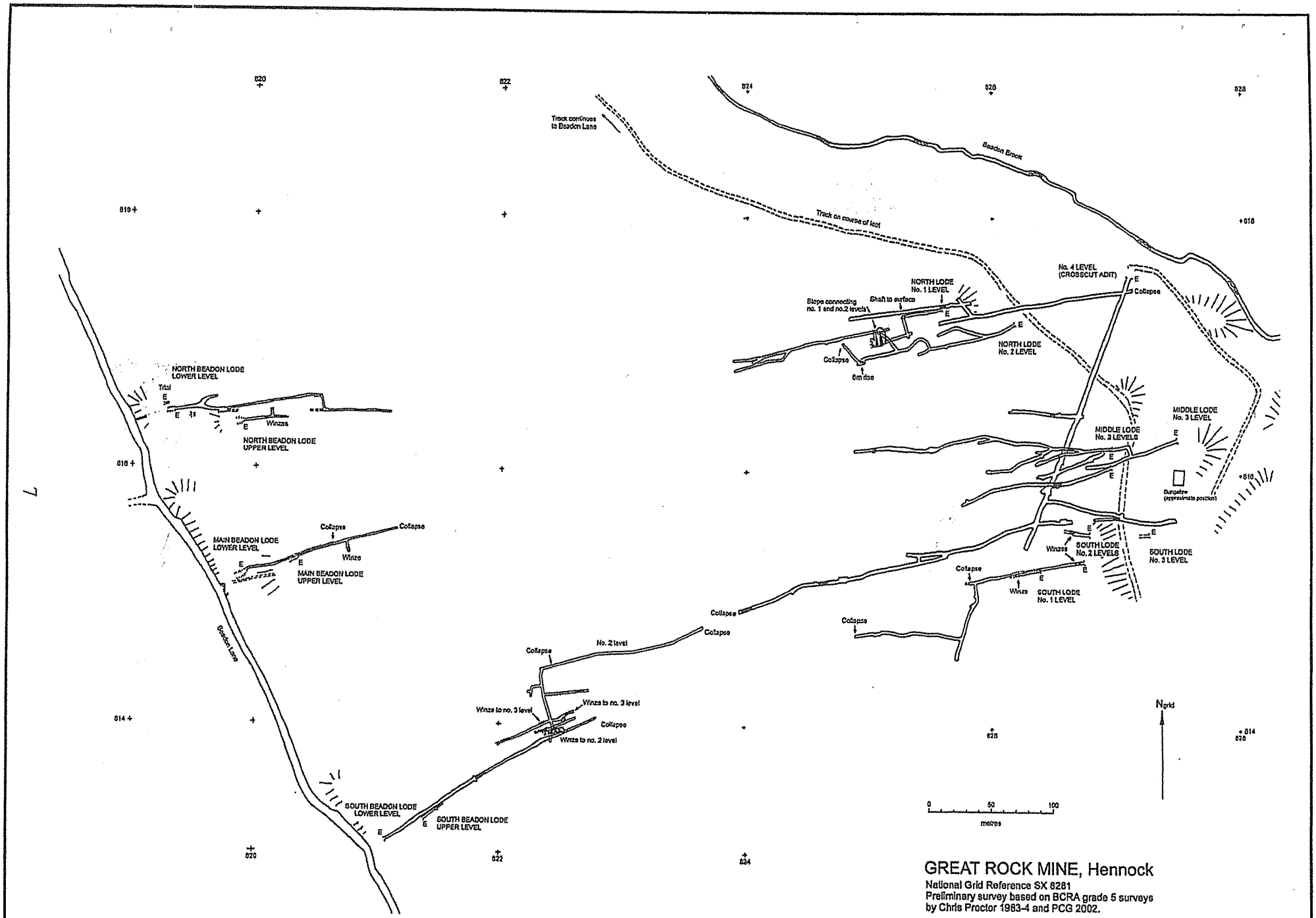
Middle Lode no.3 level is a small trial working, of interest only because it exposes the granite-killas contact.

No. 4 level (Crosscut Adit) was driven from the valley floor in the 1930s to intersect all the known lodes at depth. This is one of the most extensive levels with over 1 km of workings still open, and has the timbering mostly still in good condition. Just inside the entrance the crosscut intersects North Lode. To the east is collapsed but to the west the level lead under stopes with well preserved timberwork and over a small winze to an area with extensive ochre deposits. The Middle Lodes were developed by short drives from the crosscut, and are in varying states of decay. South Lode can be explored west from the crosscut for 250m to a collapse. This area contains more good examples of timberwork (including a well preserved ore chute) and there is a ladderway upwards about 100m along the drive. A short distance before the collapse is a large flooded winze filled with clear blue water.

Thanks to Ali Neill for information on recent work in the mine and particularly for details of workings on the South and South South lodes; also Roger Burt, Peter Waite and Mike Bond who supplied information about areas I was not able to get into in the 1980s. The following book is essential reading for anyone really interested in Great Rock and adjacent micaceous haematite mines.

Tony Brooks, 2004. Great Rock, Devon's last "metal" mine. Cornish Hillside Publications, 180 pages.

NOTE ON THE SURVEY:
the preliminary survey presented here is based mainly on my work carried out in 1983 and 1984. The no. 2 Level workings accessed from South Beadon were surveyed by the PCG in 2002. South Lode No. 3 Level has not been surveyed so is not shown here. A sketch plan of all the workings based on the old mine plan is given on page 43 of Tony Brooks book, which shows the approximate course of the no. 3 level.

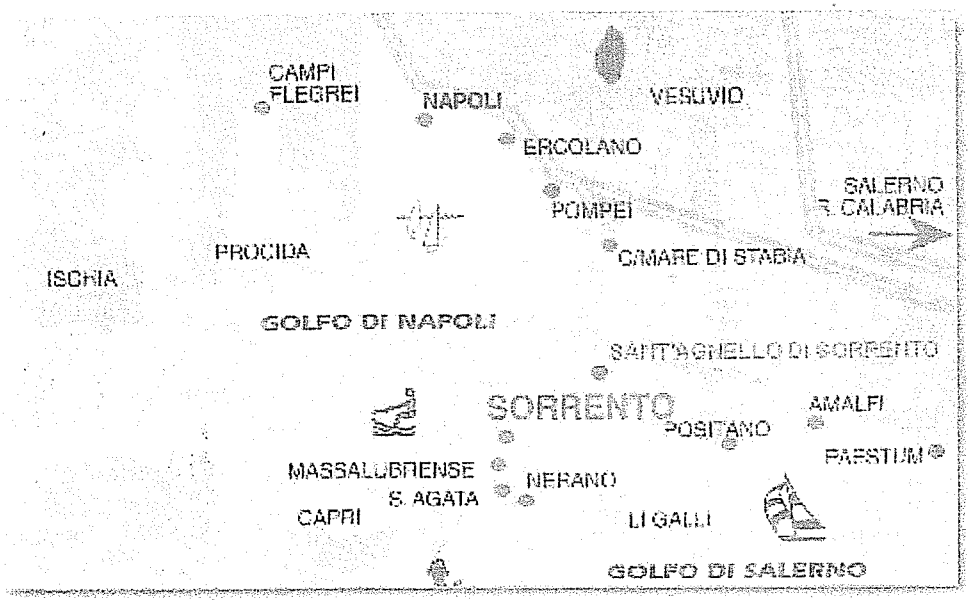


GREAT ROCK MINE, Hennock

National Grid Reference SX 8281
Preliminary survey based on BCRA grade 5 surveys
by Chris Proctor 1983-4 and PCG 2002.

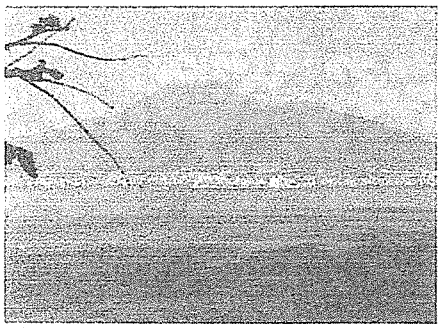
Limestone's and sea caves of the Sorrentine Peninsula and Capri, Italy

Earlier this year I was able to base myself for a time in Sorrento, Italy and took time to explore not just the obvious tourist sites of Vesuvius and Pompei but the limestone's that form Monti Lattari (or Milky Mountains) and the associated sea caves.

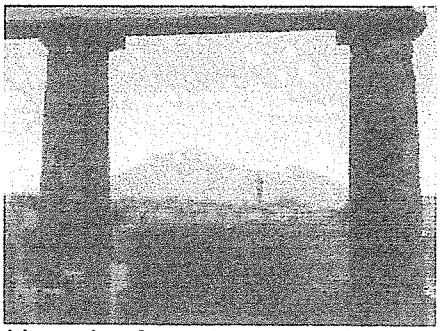


Map showing the Bay of Naples and the positions of Vesuvius, Sorrento and Capri. The Monti Lattari extend the length of the Sorrentine Peninsula from Amalfi to Sorrento and the limestones extend further to the island of Capri which was once part of the peninsula.

Dominating the Bay of Naples is Mount Vesuvius, the only active volcano on the European Mainland. This was the site of the catastrophic eruption in August AD79 which famously buried Pompei in volcanic ash. There have been many eruptions since, most recently in 1944, and most of the rock types to the north of Sorrento are igneous in origin.



Vesuvius viewed across the Bay of Naples from Sorrento

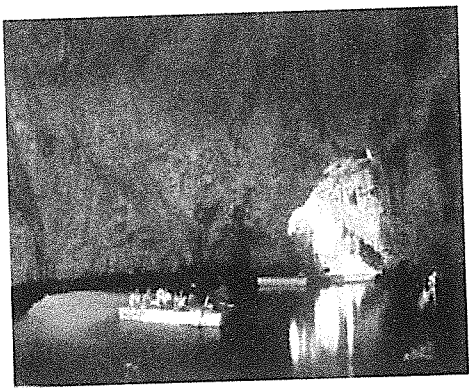


Vesuvius from the ruins of Pompei

The limestones form the Monti Lattari which is basically a spur of the Apennine Mountains which form the 'backbone of Italy'. The limestones of the Monti Lattari form the coast of the Gulf of Salerno between Amalfi in the east and Capri in the west forming narrow clefts and valleys, some of which are collapsed caves, that run down to the sea. The limestones were deposited as a Mesozoic (largely Jurassic) carbonate platform that contain formations of different ages, lithologies and facies which have been heavily deformed and faulted by subsequent complex tectonic processes. This has resulted in structural weaknesses in the rock which

has aided cave development. The limestones vary from being dolomites, which were deposited in largely lagoonal conditions, oolitic limestones to cherty limestones. Some of the limestones are similar to the Portland limestones of Dorset.

In either Positano or Amalfi it easy to hire a fishing boat which will enable the coast to be explored more easily than attempting to do so by land. There is much evidence of cave formation all along the coast, some of which are today being put to good use as boat stores. The most famous cave along this part of the coast is to be found at Conca dei Marini between Amalfi and Positano. Here is the site of the Emerald Cave (La Grotta dello Smeraldo). It is a large chamber some 60m long, 30m wide and 24m high that has been invaded by the sea. The superb calcite formations show that the cave was originally formed when the sea level was much lower and the subsequent rise in sea level has caused part of the cave to flood, a phenomenon known as bradyism. The emerald colour of the water gives the cave its name and this is caused by sunlight being refracted from below through entrances that are now submerged. Of particular interest at this time of the year (Christmas) is a ceramic crib below the waterline.

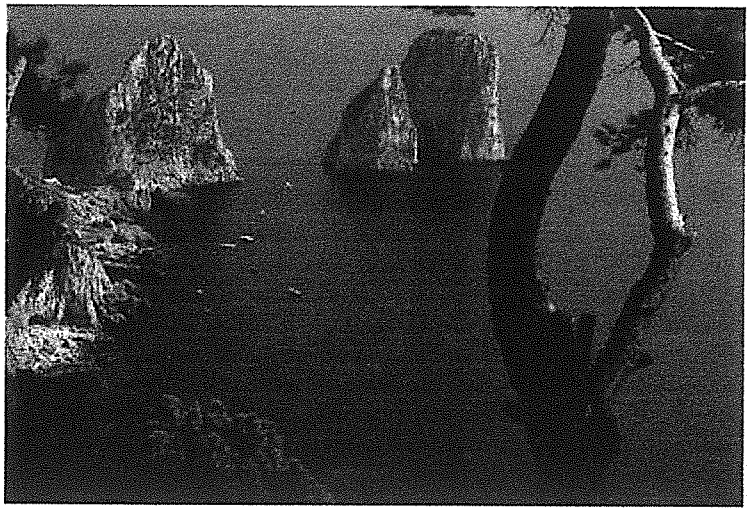


The Emerald Cave

Following the coastline westwards there are a number of other sea caves that are similar to the Emerald Cave but less famous, Grotta Acquata and Grotta Matera to name but two.

Beyond the westernmost point of the peninsula, Punta Campanella, with its lighthouse, lies the island of Capri, now separated from the mainland by a narrow stretch of sea called Bocca Piccola. Geologically, Capri's limestones are the same as those on the mainland to which it was once joined. Today a comfortable hydrofoil trip makes the journey to the island comparatively easy with regular sailings to the island's main port, Marina Grande. Here, as in Amalfi, it is comparatively easy to negotiate for a boat to circumnavigate the island.

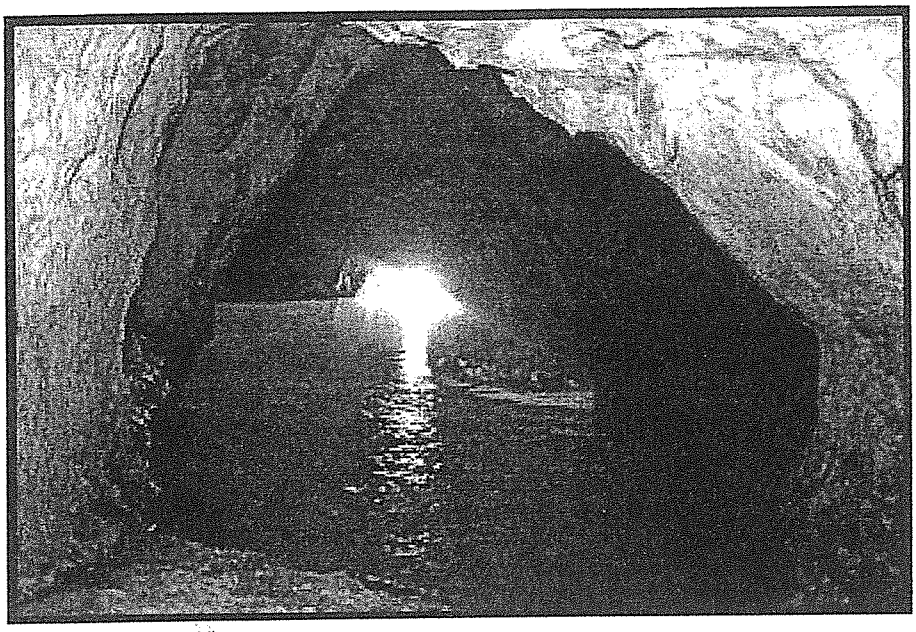
Sailing clockwise around the island, the first cave reached is Grotta di Tiberio which is directly beneath the ruins of a summer palace of the Emperor Tiberius. It is said that the emperor had his enemies thrown over the cliff to the cave and Roman artefacts have been found inside it. Continuing we soon reach the Grotta Blanca (White Cave) which is higher up and contains brilliant white calcite formations of all types. Then comes the Grotta Massullo before the boat rounds Capri's equivalent of the Isle of Wight's Needles, a collection of pinnacle like stacks called the Isola Faraglioni.



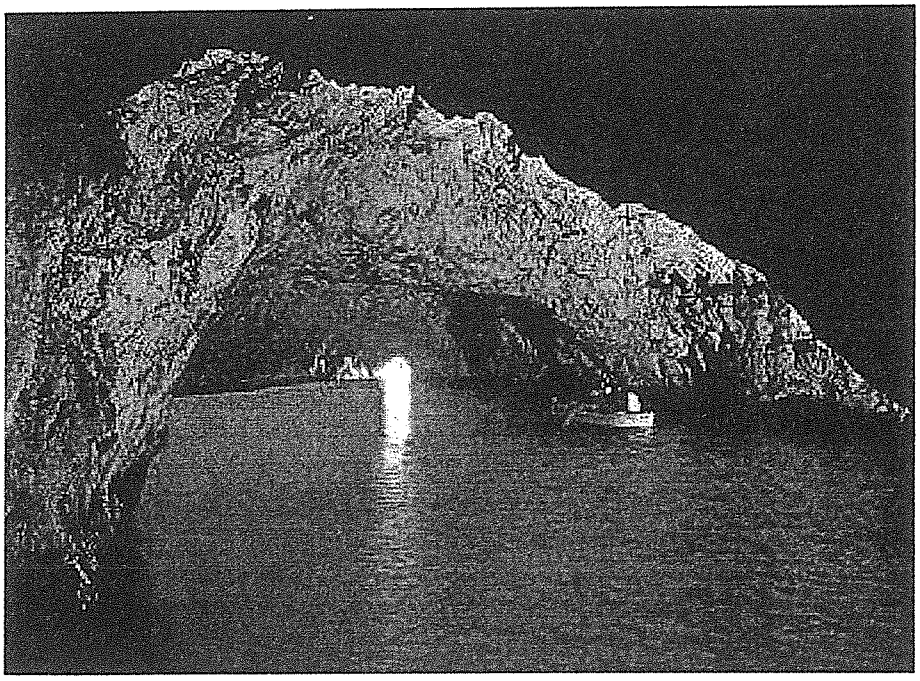
Isola faraglioni, Capri

There are many other caves along the southern coast of the island, most notably Grotta Verde (Green Cave). As with the Emerald Cave on the mainland the colour of the water in the cave is as a result of the light refracted by the sea. Further along, where the coast is more exposed and the sea is rougher, is Ox Cave where the sea rushing into the cave creates a noise like the bellow of an ox.

Finally, as we approach the complete circumnavigation, we come to Capri's most famous sea cave and undoubtedly one of its main tourist sites, Grotta Azzura (Blue Cave). In the high season the water outside this cave is thick with boats bringing tourists. I had heard that these unsuspecting visitors paid once for the boat trip from the Marina Grande, then paid to get on a smaller boat to visit the cave and, finally, paid an entrance fee as well. In the right light conditions this cave is well worth a visit. With a length of 54m and a width of 30m the chamber is low and can only be entered by small boats carrying two or three people who have to lie back to get through the entrance. The gondolier in charge of the small boat waits for the low water between two waves to enter the cave so visits are only possible in calm weather. Once inside, a rope along the cave wall allows the boat to be dragged right in. The sight, though, is amazing with blue light shining through the salt water and bathing the chamber with blue reflections. These are best when the sunlight is shining directly in front of the cave entrance which is really a couple of hours either side of midday. This cave, of extraordinary beauty, was rediscovered by the German August Kopisch in 1826, although prior to that in was known to the Romans and various artefacts, such as statuettes, have been discovered in the cave.



Two views of the Grotta Azzura, Capri



The caves in these limestone's are by no means confined to the coast, they are just the easiest to reach and visit. Many fine caves, though nothing outstanding as far as I'm aware, exist both on the Island of Capri and in the Monti Lattari.

David Jean
November 2004

Trip to Dog Hole Extension

Tuesday 19 October 2004

The likely suspects were:Colin Smith, Osama Gobara, Richard Vooght, Rupert Goddard and Tom Stick, plus new members Alasdair Shaw, Lindsey Kendrick and Shaun Beaven

This cave has been very neglected on our meetings list for a long time. The only member of this group who been through the Dog Leg was me - Colin, so with three new members and four who'd not been in here before, I was a little apprehensive to say the least... But judging the members who where there and with the keen attitude of the new members we decided to give it a go.

We met as usual at Bretonside, Dave and Chris turned up intending to go off to a mine, but called it off as just the two of them were going to do the mine trip.

It was good to see Shaun had come along again, especially after last weeks digging trip... And another surprise, Lindsey Kendrick, who emailed me after talking to Rupert while draining his blood was waiting there with her kit, all ready to go. Lindsey was soon signed up as the PCG's newest member - Welcome Lindsey

Oh it was nice to see Osama, Rup and Tom Stick too of course. We set off and would be meeting up with Richard V and Alasdair Shaw by Pridhamsleigh. Alasdair being one of our 'timed out' provisional members, paid his membership and has therefore beaten Lindsey into second place in the 'Newest Member' category. I feel almost sorry for the membership secretary (me that is), so many new members details to add to the membership list in the last couple of months!

Anyway - all changed we pay the farmer and head off across the orchard. Before we go in I stand and give the troops a pep talk, describing what lays ahead, undaunted they follow me in.

Osama was a bit unnerved by the many spiders lurking menacingly round the entrance, but he made it passed them unscathed. We gathered around the entrance to the dog leg while I spent a few minutes getting that blithering padlock off, grrrrrrr...

I nipped through the dogleg working out how to do it as I went, not as bad as I'd remembered, still a bit tricky, I was concerned about how the new members would fair. My fears were unfounded as the whole group were through the Dog Leg and down the tube before I could say 'we could go next door into Prid if you don't like the look of...'

After a quick bit of 'don't cross the tapes... don't go down there... etc we set off. As I'd only been here on a whistle stop tour once before, it was like being in a new, we explored many nooks and crannies, then left along Quality Street and on into Main chamber where we stood looking in wonder at the fantastic formation.

Tom, wagging his finger at me saying 'I could have got my camera here easily if you'd not stopped me'. He intends to come here again, with his camera next time, now that'll be a set of photos worth seeing. We spent a few minutes looking around a little further on from here, but with the time getting on a bit and the awkward scrabble up to the Dog Leg to look forward to, we said goodbye to Main Chamber and headed back.

Again I was very pleasantly surprised by the groups ability to negotiate the tricky bits, especially the considering that three of the group are new to caving, so a big pat on the all round.

All out we said goodbye Alasdair S, who headed off back to Somerset and Richard, still young to join us as we made it to the pub in time for a swift half and talks of tonight's daring do. I'm pleased to report that the new members appeared to have really enjoyed the challenge of Dog Hole Extension. (I hope your shoulder gets better soon Shaun!)

I'd just like to remind all of us 'Johnny-Come-Lately' members that the Dog Leg was first explored by the PCG back in 1976 and all cave beyond is available for us to enjoy thanks to their determination to explore new passage.

by Colin Smith.

Ye Old Mine

Digging trip Tuesday 20th October 2004

Colin Smith, Neil Henderson, Tom the Stick, plus new members Christopher Proctor and Shaun Beaven.

This small party of members and two new members descended upon an old mine adit to the view of exposing some new tunnels.

After 45 minutes of humping scaffolding and wood to the area we planned to excavate, one look at the dig site showed that our previous excitement may have been in haste. The opening, last examined in the spring, now seemed a great deal smaller and the boulders a great deal larger (sometimes the eyes are bigger than the stomach metaphorically speaking).

It was decided that Tom would take the two new members on a little trip around the mine site, while the three of us remaining would go for the big push.

After huffing and puffing for an hour with sweat cascading from our muddy faces, we were finally ready for the scaffolding part of the exercise. Colin went up to have an inspection of the area and we waited in anticipation to see what was needed. Nothing as it turned out as just as he was looking around, a small sprinkling of dust fell onto his helmet, sending him into full rapid reverse as boulders and mud came hurtling down to refill the dig site.

So, that was that. After another humping session with the scaffolding, a well deserved trip to the pub was our only consolation. I would like to thank our new members for helping us to move the board and scaffolding and hope that our experiences that night did not put them off going on any other future digging trips!

Written by Neil Henderson

Ding Dong Dell Osama's in the Well

Saturday 30th October 2004

Colin Smith and Osama Gobara Go Exploring in Torquay

The chance to explore something new and unusual is always compelling, so when Shaun Beaven (one of our new members) phoned me to say he'd been asked by someone in Torquay if he new anyone who would be interested in looking in an old well he'd recently discovered in his basement, it was one of those moments that doesn't come your way very often.

The well was reported to be 40 foot deep from the floor of the basement to the surface of the water, the water in the well being at least 7 foot deep with the water flowing in through a passage on one side and out through a passage on the other. I couldn't wait to get there....

Being a sensible caver (one who doesn't dive in caves that is), I found myself in need of a cave diver, but who... Adrian, he's a cave diver, ahhh bother, he's not available. Osama's back I wonder if he'd be up for a bit of well diving? Of course he was and he's available so date and time set, 9am Saturday.

As I lay in bed Friday night, trying to sleep, the thought that this well, in a basement in Torquay, with a passage in and out with water flowing through it is only about one mile from Kent's Cavern. The possibilities are buzzing through my diggers mind, I'm like a kid on Christmas Eve, sleep does eventually take me off to dreams of many kilometers zzzzzzz of passage zzzzzzzzzz just a duck away zzzzzzzz from being discovered zzzzzzzzzzzz...

Osama arrives on time, my kit's packed and ready, ropes, ladder, bags, digging tools, buckets for lifting the booty that's been in the well for hundred of years, lights and spare lights. Osama has brought his caving gear, wetsuit, dry suit, small diving bottle, large diving bottle, weights, regulators valves, you name it he had it. So off we set, up the A38, Mutimap printout in hand.

We find the place and are greeted by the very enthusiastic owner Ron, who tells us the tale of how the well was found by one of his builders a few weeks ago, while converting his basement into a gymnasium (nice). We grab our gear and head off into the house and down to the basement, still in the early stages of it's conversion so no worries about making a mess then!

Descending the stairs into the basement, we find a gaggle of builders who are somewhat amused/bemused to be introduced to cavers who were planning to go caving in a well, their amusement was only a little short of our own in this odd situation. We helped remove the sheet of plywood that was acting as a lid over the well and peered in.

Then followed an barrage of questions from our audience which included the builders, Ron and a young lad who seemed determined to fall into the well, I naturally explained that I was quite sane and that it was Osama who was barking mad as he was the one who was going to dive the well.

Our audiences interest waned while we got the ladder rope etc set up and changed ready for the epic voyage of discovery that lay ahead of us. Once I had Osama on a lifeline and he started down the well, interest swelled to a new high, jokes and banter were flying round the room like a cave full of bats at dusk. Osama hit the water (which it turns out was only 15 feet below floor level and about 6 foot deep).

There didn't appear to be any sign of the 'flowing water' that had been reported, but Osama was going to dive and examine the passages anyway, but obviously not too far as we had no backup in case he got lost in there.

Then we hit the first minor embarrassment, quickly overcome by me passing Osama's mask down to him, apparently it helps one see under water if you have a mask! This done, he duly applied the divers anti-mist solution to the glass of his mask, to which the lady of the house who'd recently appeared to observe the proceedings and swell the audience said "is it normal to spit in your mask?"

In went the mouthpiece and splash he was gone, bubbles light and more bubbles, now the audience was like one at a firework display, oooooh aaaaaah, then the cry went up 'he's gone' but I assured them that the bubble rising from the water at the centre of the well was a bit of a clue that he had not actually gone anywhere, only disguised by the muddied water.

Osama popped up, he'd circumnavigated the well bottom, feeling every nook and cranny, only to find that there were no passages leading off either side, in fact there were no nooks or crannies come to that. So the dream of kilometres of passage faded way, the builders went back to work and we thought the only thing left is to retrieve the treasure lost down the well for all these years.

A bucket was lowered on a rope, the first thing to come up was a large piece of wood, obviously ancient, I'm sure the dendrologists would be able to match its growth rings to the early 16th century.

Osama then fills the bucket with an assortment of debris from the well floor, we retrieve the bucket and ... and ... and... we find a bit of brick, some concrete and a few bits of limestone, all very clean, very little mud and a distinct lack of gold coins jewellery or anything else at all, in fact the only treasure in the well was Osama and the only thing worth anything was his gear.

We got him out, cleared our gear away and had a final chat with Ron before setting off. He was most pleased with the work we had done, we were pleased having had a very odd/interesting caving experience, one that in our fertile imaginations held such great potential, but turned out to be exactly what it said on the tin – 'A Well'.

We have an open invitation from Ron to go down the well at any time, this invite is extended to the rest of the PCG and the wider caving community. If interested please feel free to contact myself or Osama and we can give you the contact phone number and address.

I Guess it only remains for me to say 'All's Well that ends Well!'.

By Colin G Smith

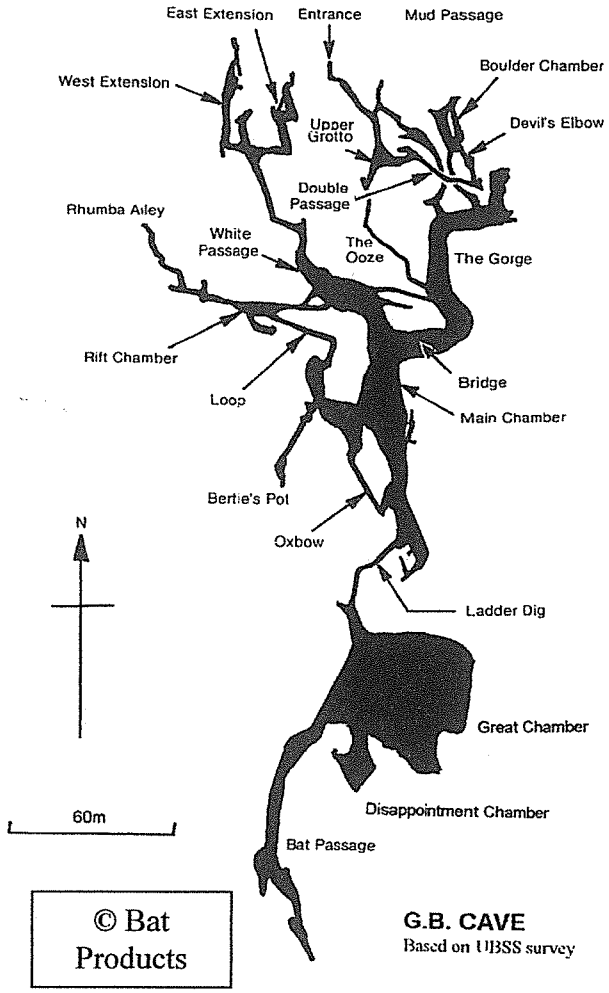
MENDIPS TRIP;
DECEMBER 3-5 2004

Participants were;
PATRICK, LIONEL, and TOM the UN-STICK.
(or two gentlemen and a pirate)
With Tom the tum and his mate Ben joining us on Saturday.

FRIDAY.
We drove up a.m on Friday slightly later than planned as Lionel had to find an emergency dentist on account of a very niggely filling.
We still managed to arrive at the hut before dark though, after assisting Lionel to chase donkeys across the wilds of the cheddar countryside, for there own welfare of course !!
Stopping on the way in Wells at Tesco's for provisioning and the obligatory visit to the hub of the Mendip caving scene, Bat Products.
Patrick again showed his talent in the kitchen, by rustling up a steaming pot of very passable pasta in no time at all. After refuelling, we all then retired to joys of the Hunters Inn for a well earned pint and a cheese & onion sandwich or three.

SATURDAY.

Morning dawns and we are all up bright and early ...ah except the esteemed author! After a traditional healthy cavers breakfast, and obtaining the key from the farmer we set off for G.B. cave. This proved to be a very good trip if a little sporting at times for are gentleman cavers!



The trip was only slightly marred by the discovery that the intrepid photographer had forgotten his camera....ahhh! But undeterred we marched, crawled and climbed on passing some very impressive formations indeed, continuing down to the sump and back up to the waterfall. Patrick veered off, climbing up a fixed ladder near the entrance, whilst on the way out nearly getting wedged in a rift!

Back to the hut for a well earned cuppa. At this point are intrepid gang decided to wonder into Wells (again), and proceeded to curb crawl the streets for a hour. As with all cavers' if left to follow their noses found themselves in a local hostelry!

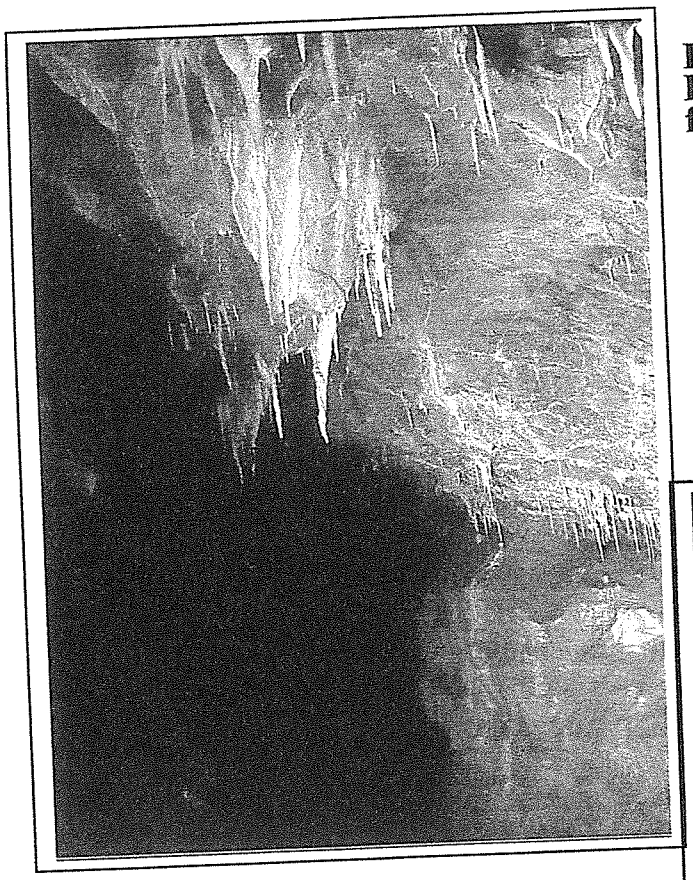
After some good pub grub, and a pint or four are intrepid gentleman retired for the night, only to awoken by another gang off cavers (presumably the Westminster lot) Who were a little worst for wear, apparently (we found out the next day) celebrating the fact that one of there number was off to Tasmania, (lucky bugger.)

SUNDAY

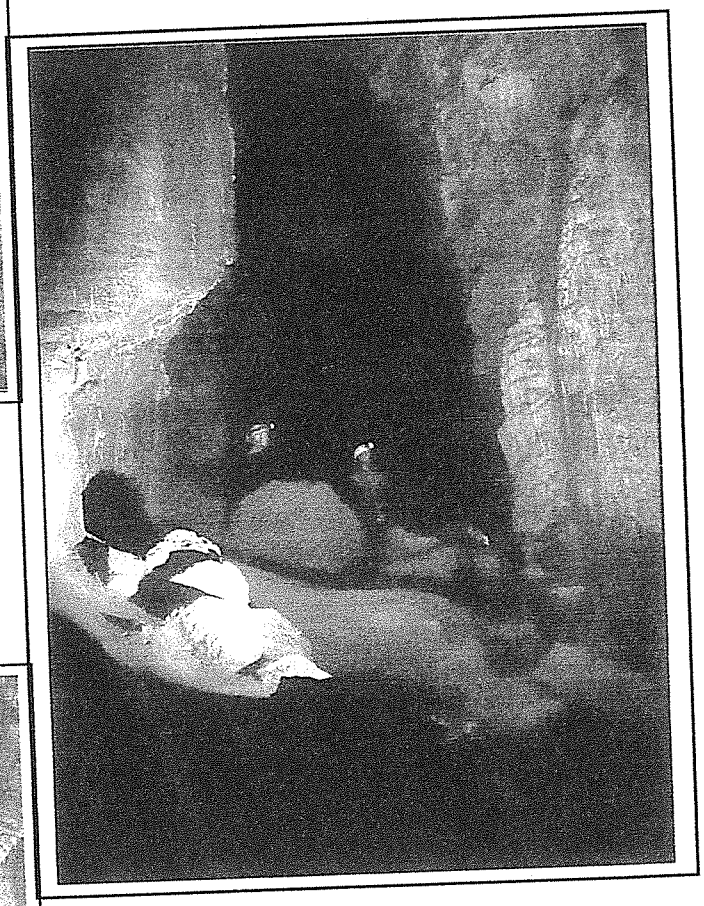
Morning, and after a double helping of breakfast that Tom the tum had kindly left us, we were ready for the next bash, or should I make that A squeeze? So off we went too, well you guessed it, GB again! So our intrepid photographer was satisfied after all, as he managed to take a number of reasonable photos. See next page.

A merry little trip was had by all, with a duck, scramble and a welter in some lovely mud, (lovely jubbly!) we all headed back to Plymouth.

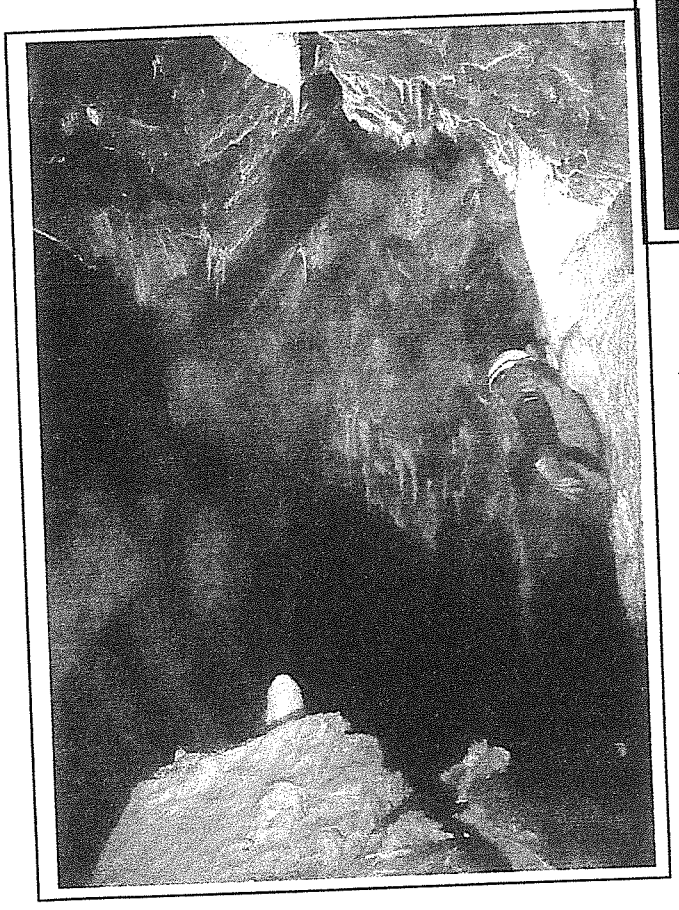
Written by Tom L. Thomson.



Festoons of stalactites and Helictites in oxbow passage Seen from the entrance to Bertie's Pot



Patrick and Lionel in the Main chamber from near the sump



Lionel edges round the chasm above the bridge in main chamber note the Helictites in the background !

Something for the older members...

According to today's regulators and bureaucrats, those of us who were kids in the 60's, 70's and early 80's probably shouldn't have survived, because...

Our baby cots were covered with brightly coloured lead- based paint which was promptly chewed and licked.
We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, or latches on doors or cabinets and it was fine to play with pans.
When we rode our bikes, we wore no helmets, just flip flops and fluorescent
'clackers' on our wheels. (I think you will find they were known as spokey donkeys - some old git wrote this)
As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts or airbags -riding in the passenger seat was a treat.
We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle and it tasted the same, We ate chips, bread and butter pudding and drank fizzy pop with sugar in it, but we were never overweight because we were always outside playing

We shared one drink with four friends, from one bottle or can and no-one actually died from this.
We would spend hours building go-carts out of scraps and then went to speed
down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes. After running into stinging nettles a few times, we learned to solve the problem.

We would leave home in the morning and could play all day, as long as we were back before it got dark. No one was able to reach us and no one minded.
We did not have Play stations or X-Boxes, no video games at all. No 99 channels on TV, no videotape movies, no surround sound, no mobile phones, no personal computers, no Internet chat rooms.

We had friends ,we went outside and found them
We played elastics and street rounders, and sometimes that ball really hurt.
We fell out of trees, got cut and broke bones but there were no lawsuits. We had full on fist fights but no prosecution followed from other parents.
We played knock-down-ginger and were afraid of the owners catching us.
We walked to friend's homes we also, believe it or not, WALKED to school; we didn't rely on mummy or daddy to drive us to school, which was just round the corner.

We made up games with sticks and tennis balls.
We rode bikes in packs of 7 and wore our coats by only the hood.
The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke a law was unheard of.
They actually sided with the law!
This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers and problem solvers and inventors, ever.. The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility,

and we learned how to deal with it all. And you're one of them.
Congratulations!

Pass this on to others who have had the luck to grow up as real kids,
before lawyers and government regulated our lives, for our own good.
For those of you who aren't old enough,

thought you might like to read about us.

This is surprisingly frightening.....and it might put a smile on your face: The majority of students in universities today were born in 1983.....They are called youth.

They have never heard of We are the World, We are the children, and the Uptown Girl they know is by Westlife not Billy Joel.
They have never heard of Rick Astley, Bananarama, Nena or Belinda Carlisle.
For them, there has always been only one Germany and one Vietnam.
AIDS has existed since they were born.
CD's have existed since they were born.
Michael Jackson has always been white.
To them John Travolta has always been round in shape and they can't imagine

how this fat guy could be a god of dance.
They believe that Charlie's Angels and Mission Impossible are Films from

last year.
They can never imagine life before computers.
They'll never have pretended to be the A Team, Red Hand Gang or the Famous Five.
They'll never have applied to be on Jim'll Fix It or Why Don't You.
They can't believe a black and white television ever existed and don't even know how to switch on a TV without a remote control.
And they will never understand how we could leave the house without a mobile phone.
Now let's check if we're getting old...

1. You understand what was written above and you smile.
2. You need to sleep more, usually until the afternoon, after a night out.

3. Your friends are getting married/already married.
4. You are always surprised to see small children playing comfortably with computers.
5. When you see teenagers with mobile phones, you shake your head.
6. You remember watching Dirty Den in East Enders the first time around.
7. You meet your friends from time to time, talking about the good old days, repeating again all the funny stories you have experienced together.
8. Having read this mail, you are thinking of forwarding it to some other
friends because you think they will like it too...
Yes, you're getting older!!!!
By Gary Eato