Plymouth Caving Group

Newsletter & Journal
No.147 – August 2005



Plymouth Caving Group

NEWSLETTER NO. 147 – August 2005

CONTENTS;

Member contacts and editorial	Page 1
Letter from the president	Page 2
Spain 2004 trip reports	Page 3
" "	Page 4
" "	Page 5
" "	Page 6
" "	Page 7
" "	Page 8
" "	Page 9
" "	Page 10
" "	Page 11
Caving World Depth Record report	Page 12
Cueva vallina Survey	Page 13
Wray and moor wood mines a history	Page 14
" "	Page 15
" "	Page 16
" "	Page 17
Moor wood mine; Survey	Page 18
Moor wood mine; elevation	Page 19
Wheal Fanny trip (15th march 2005)	Page 20
Additions to the library	Page 21



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

Editorial.
Welcome all; I hope this finds you in fine fettle and every ones cruising along that strange and slightly unpredictable road called life, to whatever destinations in your mind, I know its been a busy one for my these past few months and I expect It has for most of you too, but thanks to everyone who contributed your articles and idea over the weeks (after all its your journal in only the humble editor!).

So please 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 meets 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.

Letter to all Club Members from the president ; Bob Cawthorne

It came as a bit of a disappointment to learn variously from Dave Jean, Ali Neill and Hugh Browning that the club experienced a less pleasant Annual General Meeting than most would wish for, and that there has been some discord since.

As a retiring President, and previously Chairman, Secretary etc., I always tried, however unsuccessfully, to maintain a policy of non-interference, and to let the new officers get on with their work. On this occasion, however, I feel a distant!!! And impartial view may help. I have no axe to grind, no faction to support, only the well being of the club.

Why does anyone join the Plymouth Caving Group? There are a variety of reasons: to maintain links with friends, to continue caving after moving from another area, to start caving after hearing about it, to get more information from those with experience, to have the facility of caving with a group rather than as an individual, to share expertise and knowledge with novices, to have access to equipment which would otherwise be very expensive, and to access to literature, information etc. There are certainly many other factors.

I never recall any individual joining the club with the prime aim of imposing their will.

And so the PCG formed, over 40 years ago, as a loose association of friends and acquaintances. To avoid confusion and chaos a committee was elected, a constitution adopted, and various simple by-laws invoked.

When any new member joined they agreed to abide by the club's rules and regulations and the decisions of the committee in the day to day running of the club. If there was disagreement then individuals, or groups, could bring causes for concern to the committee (any other business) or send resolutions to the AGM, or call for an Extra-ordinary General Meeting.

The main headache for the committee was always regarding finance. The club has always had to pay for itself. Funds have been raised by two methods, direct and indirect, just like every other organisation and the government itself. Directly, if you want o be a member you pay the annual fee and receive the basic membership benefits. It was always felt, from the inception of the club, that use of the equipment caused the expense of wear and tear, and that a tackle fee was appropriate. Getting the balance right between membership and tackle fees has always been the most difficult job for the committee.

They bent over backwards in provision for youth members, unemployed members, occasional members, one off visitors etc etc. Apart from decisions by the general meetings and committee NO-ONE has the right to make up their own rules regarding the conduct of the club, eg. waiving fees for any reason, agreeing access arrangements for other than PCG etc. This only leads to division and jealousy. How else can the club reasonably operate except by its agreed rules?

In the 40 plus years of the PCG there have been squabbles and divisions, and members have come and gone. However the majority have always seen the sense and benefit of unity and the club has survived generation after generation of new (and old) cavers.

So, from a distance, my message is – get back underground seeking new caves and mines. Be tolerant of the difficult decisions of the committee and officers.

Finally, my thanks to the many who turned out to greet Lloyd and myself last September. I am now almost fully restored after major open-heart surgery and am looking forward to getting underground again.

Bob Cawthorne, Lliber, Spain

SPAIN 2004 REPORT

Sunny Matienzo at Easter 2004 was noted for its foul weather, incessant rain and hail, and a crowded campsite which turned into a reincarnation of the Somme. This had the effect of driving people underground, and we were able to discover and survey many kilometres of new cave. The usual crew took the Plymouth – Santander ferry, while AD and Annabel flew out with a group from the SBSS.

In the Summer I went out with Carmen, taking the Weymouth – Guernsey ferry and another ferry from Guernsey to France, followed by a quick drive down through France. Carmen was going on to meet the Wessex in the Herault, so I had booked to return as a foot passenger on the Santander – Plymouth ferry. Unfortunately the new ferry, the Pont-Aven, had broken, so Brittany Ferries coached the foot passengers back through France to catch the Roscoff – Plymouth ferry. A sad event was the death of German, founder of German's bar; his funeral on 10th August was attended by a huge crowd, including the expedition members.

For a further trip for a week in October we flew from Bristol to Bilbao – unfortunately Easyjet have since withdrawn this route**.** This trip was with Jenny Pinder and Pete Eagen. We were joined by Carmen a few days later.

106 Torcon de Riaño

This cave had only been explored once, on ladders in the 1970's. It forms an inlet into Cueva de la Hoyuca, one of the main entrances into the Sistema de los Cuatro Valles (Four Valleys System), but a connection has never been made. Visits in recent years had found the pitches impassable due to the amount of water entering.

1st August. Ali, Torben, Juan. The first short drops were rigged for SRT, as far as the top of the big pitch, and photos and video were taken. A cave on the left of the entrance was explored to a low wet section.

7th August. Ali, Torben. The main shaft was rigged. At the bottom the tight outlet passage was pushed to the sump, with no possibilities of any bypass. A number of passages were noted in the shaft, which would entail much bolting to get to. The pitches are 7, 3, and 80 metres.

553/1930Sumidero de Cobadal

The Cobadal area contains a number of stream sinks and sites with very strong draughts, but only very limited amounts of cave had been entered. However the slot dug last year above the stream sink was eventually passed by Heski and Pete O'Neill, the former finding a constriction extremely committing and returned back up, while Pete explored down a passage for some distance, eventually popping out into a roomy river passage.

11th April. Ali, Pete Eagen, Carmen (A team); Pedro, Pete O'Neill, Hesky (B Team). A return trip to explore and survey, but first to try to improve the entrance – a severe obstacle to all but the slimmest caver, especially on the return. Meanwhile a cast of thousands continued excavating various surface sites in an effort to make an easier entrance. Several sites were opened up and filled in again.

After the B Team opened the squeeze a bit more the A Team surveyed in and made radio and vocal connection with the surface, pinpointing the best spot to dig..

The entrance consisted of a vertical slot followed by a tube sloping down at about 45º, the bottom section of which still remains very tight. This was followed by a further descent in a rift, following a sinuous route to follow the parts of passable size. The A Team surveyed into cave, passing several side passages. The passage was very muddy and wet, although the opening up of the entrance and draining of some pools has improved this since. At one point the draught was lost where a climb up

a rift was noticed, a slight draught in the opposite direction being noted beyond. The passage soon enlarges, and after a climb over a boulder the main stream is met.

Upstream from this point was unexplored, but appears to be a large meandering passage. We surveyed down stream, via various dry high levels avoiding the water most of the way, a few short climbs and a false floor leads back to the main water. Finished surveying at cairn, Pete's point of turning back the previous day. We took photos on the way out, although there was a strike when Pete tried to get me to lie flat out in a puddle near the entrance. This would have been very photogenic but not a nice idea seeing the conditions on the campsite made it next to impossible to dry out wet gear. On the way out the B Team caught up with us, having explored on down from the point we reached. They had been stopped in continuing superb stream passage by Pete slicing his hand (necessitating an early return to England) and a duff compass. We got back to the entrance hoping the surface diggers had made an easy exit, but they had failed. I had great difficulty getting back out of the constriction, where it seemingly was too tight to get the chest through you also ran out of any foothold to push against. After a worrying 20 minutes or so, trying every possible position, brute force and a handline passed down by Pete eventually won the day. The surface dig was evidently very close to getting through.

12th April. Becka & Andrew (CUCC), Neil Pacey. Starting from the entrance, we explored and surveyed the side passages left from the previous day. First was a rift which closed down after about 30 metres. The next was a climb up an awkward rift at the point where the draught was lost, which Becka and Neil explored but found it closed down. Andrew and Ali continued to the point where the river was joined. Going upstream, the water flows out from miserable wet crawls, but a much larger passage heads on, carrying a small stream and a strong draught. We left a station at the first junction, and continued past some fine incised meanders cut by the stream in the silt floor. The passage ends at a low choke after about 150m, with a draughting route through boulders on the right. Returning to the junction, Neil and Becka explored a well decorated passage choked after 200m, while we started to explore a maze off to the right, with many leads left unexplored. The surface diggers had not yet got through, so we had to exit by the original route again.

13th April. Jim Davis, Ali, Tanya. We continued surveying the maze area. One draughting route ended at a slot dug through into a choked aven. A series of rifts were next explored, leading down to an unclimable drop, down which we could hear a stream and see what appeared to be a survey station. At this point a light appeared, proving to be Phil Pappard, the surface dig having broken through. He was able to identify the station, closing a loop. We then abandoned exploration to join a cast of thousands now able to enter the cave, and followed a team who had been pushing downstream and had reached the top of a short undescended pitch. From the point we had previously reached, the stream is at first bypassed by more high level dry passage, as far as a clear water inlet where a slot down rejoins the stream. After a while some waist deep pools are followed by a long rift passage with very little fall, ending where the stream starts to cut down and exploration had stopped at a drop which could be climbed down but might be very difficult to reverse. On the way back we surveyed some dry oxbows.

On later trips the pitch and another immediately after were descended and the stream explored to where it disappeared into a large choke, with high levels continuing above.

After the main expedition had returned to England, Tim Allen and Martin Holroyd continued the exploration near the bottom, finding a series of passages explored as far as a chamber. When their survey was plotted it was found to have come back towards the entrance. This made the rift at the point the draught reversed in the entrance series more interesting. This was later re-examined, and a strongly draughting tube found. This led to a short pitch down into larger passage, Pinnacle Passage, which very soon ran into the chamber reached by Tim and Martin.

23rd July. We continued exploration of leads off the passages entered by Tim and Martin.
"After Ian decided house painting was more important than grabbing, Ali Carmen & Juan went into Cobadal with the intention of surveying the downstream out of the sandstone chambers beyond "Big Keyhole". Carmen & Ali crawled up 150 ft of passage to be rewarded with huge booming echoing avens, stomping off into the distance… well 25ft round the corner it ended in a 60ft high circular aven, possibilities of high level passage being climbed (bolted) to the right. Surveyed back through crawls, & out to station 13 & 10 (17.7.04). We seemed to spend a lot of time in passages that looped around 2 little inlets & ultimately kept ending up in the same place via different routes (thank god Juan stayed put for 2½ hrs or we'd have been v. lost!!" (Juan & Carmen).

24th July. Ali, Carmen, Jenny Corrin We returned to the Maze area – several passages on the left linked round or didn't go, but contained some fine formations. A wide passage on right pushed to choke of sandstone blocks, with a good draught. A series of rifts off this passage were explored – still some leads.

25th July. Ali, Torben, Carmen, Andy Pringle.
Andy & Carmen pushed a strongly draughting route in the top of the downstream choke, and noted possibilities following the stream also. Ali & Torben surveyed the stream passage down from pitch to choke – found a frog & a large black & yellow dragonfly, perhaps 2 km from the cave entrance. A rift on the right hand part way down was explored to a traverse over the stream leading to a connection with known passage. Here there were signs of recent flooding backing up high above the stream. Back at the upstream end of the river passage, Torben climbed up into the maze area seen the previous day.

18th August. Ali, Jenny.Surveyed many of the oxbows and side passages in the upper part of the streamway – about 300m.

28th October. Ali. Pete, Jenny Pinder, Carmen.
At the terminal choke a climb up on the right enters the Wessex Inlet. This had previously been pushed as far as a low duck, which had been entered for a short distance. We were able to lower the floor at a number of points producing a much more comfortable airspace, the end was pushed as far as a narrow bedding plane where further lowering of the water level is recommended.

733 Cueva Vallina

4th April 2004 Keith, Annabelle, Francoise, Ady, Jason, Stumpy, Pete Andy Bob Jenny Corrin
"Valline Top entrance tourist trip. No interesting incidents but pitches with 10 people is fun. Top entrance, to Swirl Chamber, back at bottom entrance". (JC)

6th April. Valline – Pete Eagen, Angus & Tufty.
Met a South Wales Caving Club bod at the carpark.

We then went to Shatter passage and surveyed to the end and some side bits, from where Ali, Hugh and Trish left off last August, approx 350m surveyed. Pete and Tufty explored Tits Up to a dig, while Angus and Ali located a narrow draughting rift. This was pushed along a small passage degenerating to crawling over rubble, with some digging in places required. We stopped after about 150m at a corner, the draught still present. This passage was named Barney Rubble's Uranium Mine.

9th April. Valline PT Eagan Santi Ali Steve Jones
A pitch at the end of Shatter Passage noted on the previous trip was dropped, one ladder length to a blind pot 2m wide 5m long, choked at both ends, a good draught above. "Checked out side passage from Shatter (now Tits Up) small roof tube full of Tits, very interesting but too small (36b). Dug through end of passage from previous trip 6/4/04. Large tube 2m dia still going but needs good look to find way on". (PE)
Ali & Steve pushed on from the corner at 150m in Barney Rubble's Uranium Mine. This continued as crawling with sharp rubble on floor, requiring digging out along one particularly low stretch. After about another 150m, a junction to right was reached (not pushed). The passage then became larger and sandy and popped out into larger passage, to right an easily diggable choke, to left a choke taking the draught – needs some stabilisation to get into a continued wide passage or chamber visible beyond.

10th April. Ali, Mushroom, Angus (MNRC).
We checked further side passages in Shatter Passage/L'Empedrat. Some loops were surveyed. Two digs on the north side near the chamber, one to small stream, the other draughting but needs more digging.

27th July. Ali, Jenny Corrin, Carmen. L'Emedrat area. We dug the choke at the end, with little success, and surveyed Pinnacle Chamber. Back in the Maze we explored some roof passages, one led up a steeply ascending tube ending at Scissorhands Aven.

28th July Barney Rubble Torben Ali Carmen. The choke at the end of Barney Rubble was previously pushed along the right hand wall through dodgy looking boulders to where a small hole in the roof opened into blackness. I had hoped to subcontract this site to someone more used to dodgy chokes, but Carmen persuaded me to return. The 300m or so of crawling soon passed, the choke this time did not seem half as bad. Moving a few rocks aside, I popped up into a chamber which ended very quickly at a ledge overlooking blackness. The others soon came through, and a loose climb led to a traverse across loose slabs precariously balanced over a deep hole (since rigged with a traverse line) led to a bridge reaching the far side, with many deep holes as yet unexplored. Carmen climbed up at the far end to enter a low wide passage. The passage was continued through another boulder choke to a wide low sandy floored passage with meanders in the sand, to open up in another chamber with another deep hole in the floor. This was traversed on the left, avoiding many deep holes in the floor to continue to a canyon at the end, with a 30-40' drop – impassable without tackle. Torben & Ali surveyed out with Carmen checking all holes for a possible free climbable route down to the canyon.

29th July. Torben, Ali, Carmen, Jenny, Carolina, Andy Pringle.
A team of 6 returned the next day with ladders & rope to push the canyon & do photos. Torben pushed down a ladder rigged in through one of the many holes in the floor that took us to within 15 ft of floor of the canyon to a continuation at a lower level. More impassable holes in the floor requiring more tackle – we will return when the team has recovered from the bruises & scrapes from Barney Rubble.

31st July. Ali, Torben, Carmen, Pedro.
The pitch started by Torben, 20m deep, was bottomed. This dropped below the level of the canyon through to a lower level, explored to several avens and blind rifts. We left this and returning to the

main level, realised a long traverse would be necessary to reach the floor of the canyon beyond the hole just descended. The right hand side was gained by crossing a slab bridged across the passage, the Bridge of Khazad – Doom, beyond which the traverse was started until we ran out of rope.

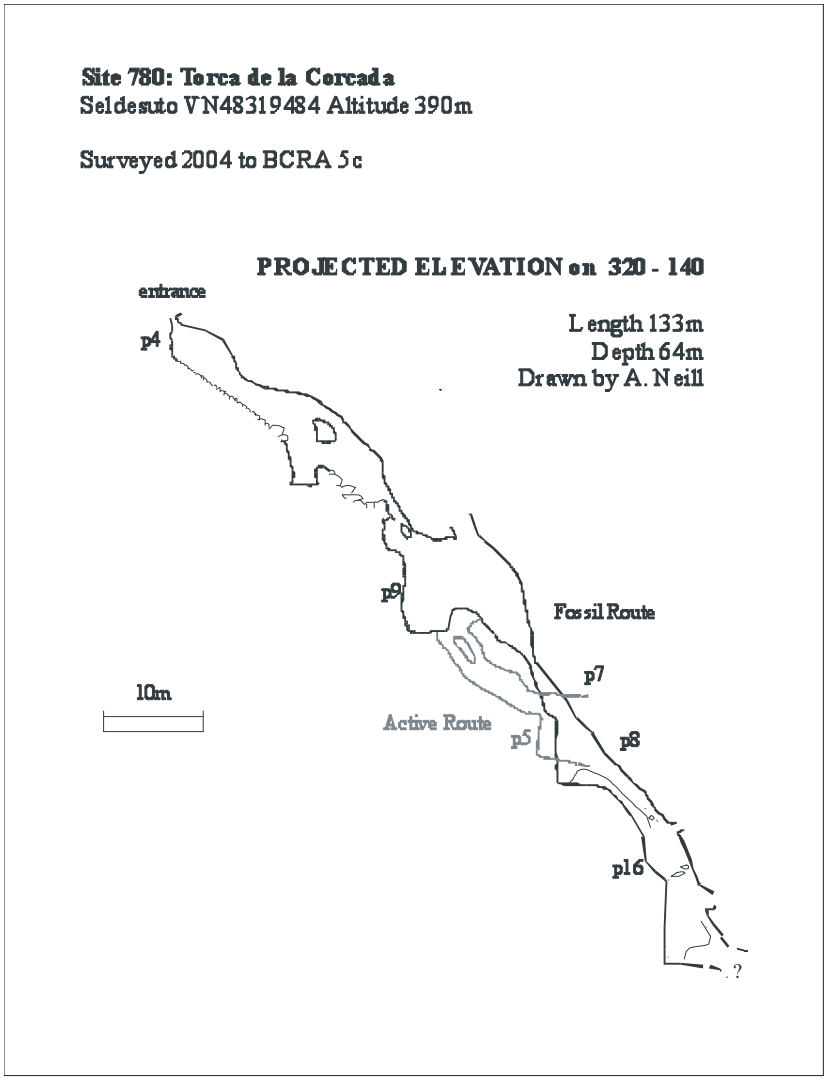
11th August. Ali, Phil Pappard, Pedro, Carmen, Nigel Dibben, Steve Openshaw. The Traverse of the Pigs, across the Bridge of Khazad Doom, was completed and a short pitch down entered the large canyon passage. This passed several avens and unexplored side passages, before reaching a continuing passage composed of steep mud sloping down to a rift in the floor. We were able to make some progress using the short piece of rope we had remaining, but to continue traversing would require much more rope. We therefore managed to climb down the floor slot, gaining a muddy route through ending up in a large aven chamber, Galeria de German, where the continuation of the main passage could be seen up a steep wall.
Some way back Pedro and Carmen located a side passage which linked to a parallel larger passage, one way leading to two deep shafts and the other to a chamber with a way on visible at the far end.

15th August. Ted Cawthorne, Ali, Jenny, Pedro. We looked at a number of sites off Swirl Chamber, one a climb up to a short ladder pitch leading to a very tight passage which Pedro managed to force through, only to connect to known passage. Pedro then found a low bedding passage leading off the chamber, which eventually reached a passage showing signs of previous exploration, we believe by the Catalans. This leads to an area marked on their survey as La Zona Blanca, probably not previously entered by British cavers.

25th October. Ali, Pete, Jenny Pinder. Another trip into Barney Rubble. Pete was able to do the muddy climb up at the end of Galeria de German, which reached the continuation of the main passage. This was pushed for about 200 m, with several leads left requiring tackle. Towards the end the passage tended to split and choke. An 11 hour trip, with many photos taken.

27th October. The Dutch Circle, an area near the Double Dutch pitches, was looked at because it approached some new passage found in the last few years, but nothing new was found. We then went to Birdsworld (the Zona Blanca noted in the summer) where a complex series of passages and a climb up into a large high level was entered, and partly resurveyed as we could make no real sense of the Catalans survey of the area.

780 Torca de la Corcada
This cave had originally been explored by the Catalans, shown to them by the farmer. The entrance in a field on the edge of woods had been blocked with a boulder and grassed over, but fortunately Pedro was able to remember the location. The site was made easier to reach due to a new track being put in to allow the adjacent barn to be done up, saving a long walk in.
8th August. Ali, Phil Pappard, Steve Martin, Talking Terry, Pedro. The small entrance pitch with a good draught drops into a roomy steeply descending passage, where a grovel through boulders and careful traverse leads to the second pitch. From here a small stream canyon is followed down to the third pitch, in a very narrow meander which couldn't be pushed far, but draughts. At the top of the stream canyon a climb up into a chamber reaches two pitches and a steeply descending bedding with a dry stream canyon (very reminiscent of Eastwater), leading to a further pitch. Here we ran out of tackle. A classic ladder trip.
13th August. Ali, Phil, Terry. The last pitch was descended, and a climb up led to a stal constriction beyond which passage could be seen leading off from the hangingwall of the inclined fault on which most of the cave is formed.



Coteron/1471 Torca de Papa Noel.

The connection between these caves in 2003 makes entering by Coteron the easiest way to explore the many leads left in the lower parts of Papa Noel.

8th April Ali Pete E Carmen Santi

We entered via Coteron, and pushed the area around the Papa Noel connection, a seies of tubes and climbs were entered explored and surveyed, but seen to end at the bottom of a narrow pitch. Paper Plane Series was looked at closely for a connection with Ramp in Renada but nothing was found. Visited Plaza de Concorde and then did the through trip from Edge of the Universe via the Ramp (with a few route finding problems to begin) and out of Reñada which was open at this point. However the following day a Cardiff Medical School group attempted the through trip , and found the low crawl at the inner end of Reñada sumped and had to make the long trip back up through Coteron.

14th April Pete Eagen, Becka Lawson, Ali

Becka and other Cambridge University Caving Club members had explored a series of high level passages, Cheesecake Series, reached by bold 16 and 18m climbs up loose boulders and shattered rock, on a corner below Belcher's Slab. We continued the exploration of these, ending in big avens & one draughting unsurveyed crawl at the end.

48 Cueva-Cubio de la Reñada/333 Torca de Azpilicueta

Passage in Papa Noel had been linked to a previously entered chamber, which proved to be At the Opera in Azpilicueta, explored in the early 1990's.
7th August. Ali, Carmen.
Entering Reñada and going up the rigged pitches into Azpilicueta, with a few route finding problems, eventually found the way to the pitch dropping into At the Opera, up an exposed rift climb of about 20m in the wall of a chamber. We then looked at some side passages, including Crystal Crunch, and found an unsurveyed route into the main passage of Azpilicueta, bypassing the Azpilicueta entrance pitches.

1655 Pants

3rd August. Ali, Juan, Ian Chandler.
On the last trip a short extension was entered from the new (higher) entrance. Digging continued at two draughting sites at the end of this extension.

2091
2nd August. Ali, Pedro, Carmen, Torben.
A dig near Cobadal, this was dug down to a very low streamway.

OTHER SITES

7th April. Ali Lank P Eagen.
Recently felled Eucalyptus plantation above Riaño. (All unexplored).
5253 9964 – several rifts in back of depressions and collapses in forestry tracks" (site 1991)
5257 9968 – depression at end of track, rift at one end" (1992)
5260 9960 Shaft unexplored (1993)
Near Fuente Aguanaz - several unexplored caves on west side of minor road approx. 473018 No number given.

30th July Enaso. Ali. Two small unexplored entrances, 2092 & 2093, found.

6th August. Ridge above Vallina. Sites 1139, 2095-2098. Ali, Juan, Penny, Jenny. A number of previously known sites were partly explored and new ones located, mostly shafts.

16th August. Sites 1450, 1721, 2112-2115, above Vallina. Ali, Phil, Hillary.

26th October. Some of the shafts seen on the 16th August were returned to. Ali, Pete.

29th October. South Vega. Pete, Jenny, Carmen, Juan, Penny. Some sites previously seen by Juan and Penny were noted, including a low crawl leading to a 60m shaft, and a wide but totally choked entrance.

Alasdair Neill

SPAIN EASTER 2005

At Easter 2005 the Matienzo expedition was unable to gain a permit, no permits being issued for caving in Cantabria due to problems with cave rescue facilities. Visits to the various government departments, the Cultura and the Protección Civil, assuring them we had the resources to carry out rescue ourselves, received a positives response, but no permit had arrived by the time we left. A great deal of surface prospecting was carried out, resulting in the discovery of some 120 new sites,

and some caving was done in systems outside the area. The weather was fine and hot, although just a few weeks before heavy snow had cut off Matienzo.

22.3.05 Driving up to the col at Portillo de la Sia, we met a group from South Wales Caving Club, then carried on up to the pass. Here a very unsightly windfarm appeared last year, overlooking the Ason gorge, evidently only permitted because it lies just over the border from Cantabria in Burgos provence. The recent heavy snow had however felled the power lines leading from the windfarm. The SWCC lads directed us to the entrance of a system recently explored by the Spéléo-Club de Dijon, near Gándara, lying on the hillside above the major resurgence of Cueva Rio Chico. The latter, and another resurgence to the north, were issuing huge volumes of melt water. We followed the directions and quickly located the entrance, an excavation down through boulders issuing a strong draught, a short distance above the road. We then drove down the Ason gorge, in which all the resurgences draining the higher ground were also emitting huge quantities of melt water. The entrances of Coventosa, and Cueva del Agua (Matienzo) were also visited.
Ali, Les, Chris & Wendy Williams, Mick and others from the Grosvenor.

23.3.05 Area below Fuente Las Varas. An area which had been burnt off in the last few days was walked over, locating new sites 2168-2176. These were largely developed under a sandstone bed, further sites on a line located in previous years previously hidden by vegetation. Ali, Torben Redder.

24.3.05 Ridge above South Vega. New sites recorded were 2192-2209. Ali, Les, Tash, Chris, Andy Morse, Dave Cooke.

25.3.05 La Gatuna. This is a valley between Cobadal and Riaño, in which a couple of very short caves had been explored many years ago, and which had apparently not been visited by cavers since. This Easter a cast of thousands descended on the valley, locating a number of draughting digs. These are largely in Eucolyptus plantations, which tend to attract more than their fair share of brambles and gorse.
New sites found were 2219-2222, the latter being an area of short caves issuing a fair draught.
Juan, Ali, Penny, Hilary, Phil, Steve, Terry.

26.3.05 The system at Gándara. The entrance pops out into the roof of a large passage, soon reaching a short rope traverse round the head of a pitch, where we encountered the first of several other groups in the cave. Beyond, a lake to the right is the main way on, but we first continued along the large passage to a rope climb up to a high level, which didn't go far but contained some fine formations. Returning to the lake, the strong draught is followed along a series of switch-backs and crawls eventually regaining large passage. We ended at a climb down boulders; a later trip here found the route down to a split pitch, ending in a large waterfall chamber. Apparently a through trip from Torca la Sima is possible.
Carmen, Pedro, Carolina, Ali, Patrick Warren.

27.3.05 La Gatuna. A couple of the digs previously located were further inspected. A strongly draughting fridge in the bottom of a depression was inspected with the "up-your-endoscope", a remote mini video camera. These revealed the draught coming from narrow fissures, and the owners of the fridge were reluctant to allow us to blow it up as they still use it on occasions, despite being plied with bottles of wine.
Ali, Carmen, Pedro, Phil, Pete & many others.

28.3.05 Cueva Narizón - Torca Palomas through trip.
These caves are situated near Castro Urdiales, on the coast towards Bilbao. A huge limestone quarry behind the town is very obvious when driving along the coastal motorway; just to the west of the quarry is a side valley containing an industrial estate. Parking on the approach road to the latter, the two entrances are close to each other a short distance up the hillside. Having rigged the Torca

Palomas exit, a short search revealed the rock formation giving Narizón (big nose) it's name. The entrance nearby soon leads to the first pitch, really just a handline climb. A series of complex crawls and rifts leads to a pitch dropping into larger passage. One way small crawls lead into a very well decorated area, containing many superb helectites. The other way further crawls and another pitch lead to a river passage, where soon a climb up leads to the base of the large entrance shaft of Torca Palomas. This system is about 5km long.
Patrick, Carmen, Pedro, Ian Ellis Chandler.

29.3.05 walking over South Vega from the top of TV mast located new sites 2252-2260 –
Ali, Andy Pringle, Pete Eagen.

30.3.05 Last year our permit area was increased to cover an area to the west of the road passing over Puerto de Alisas. Following the ridge west for about 2km, we located new sites 2261-2284. Some of these had been previously explored by another group, but we do not yet have the results of these explorations. Ali, Pete Eagen, Pete Jones, Dave Milner, Andy Pringle.

Alasdair Neill.

Ukrainian Caving Team Smash the World Depth Record.

On 19 October 2004, after four years of trying a group of nine intrepid cavers Carrying about five tonnes of equipment and determined to push themselves to the limit, passed the elusive 2,000m depth mark in Krubera,, the world's deepest known cave, deep below the Arabika mountain massif of the western Caucasus.

This however was not the first expedition in resent times to delve into the depth of the this vast cave system but was built on many previous expeditions In What The Ukrainian Speleological Association's have Called of the Abyss project which is funded by the US National Geographic Society, some like the resent august 2004 trip contained a team of no less then 56 cavers (45 men and 11 women) representing seven countries , Setting up camps at depths of 700m, 1,215m, 1,410m and 1,640m, where they cooked meals, slept up to six people to a tent and worked for up to 20 hours at a stretch. while forged on ahead blasting a way through many bolder chokes and blocked passages on the way,All the wile keeping in touch with the surface base camp by rigging nearly 3km of rope strung with a telephone wire.

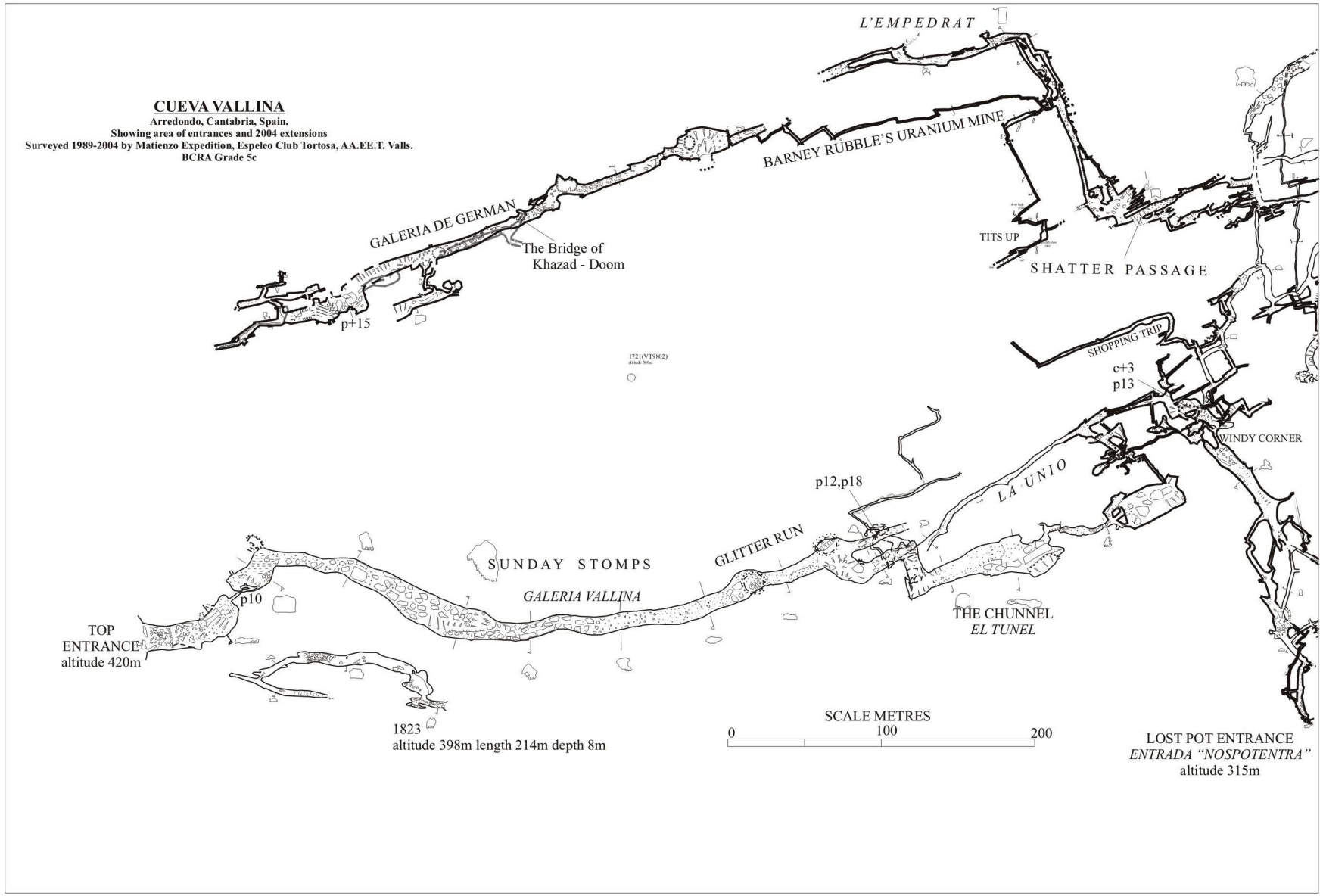
A List Of The Deepest Known Caves

Krubera, Georgia (Abkhazia) 2,080m (6,822ft)
Lamprechtsofen, Austria 1,631m (5,354 ft)
Gouffre Mirolda, France 1,626m (5,335 ft)
Reseau Jean Bernard, France 1,602m (5,256 ft)
Torca del Cerro, Spain 1,589m (5,213 ft)
Sarma, Georgia (Abkhazia) 1,542m (5,062 ft)

Finally after much effort, colleagues Denis Kurta and Dmitry Fedotov squeezed through a narrow, 100m-long passage pointing steeply down, which successfully bypassed the sump which hade barded there way to date and. On 19 October 2004, team leader Yuri Kasjan dropped down a pit and discovered from his altimeter that he had passed 2,000m. More pits and passages brought the explorers to a sandy chamber at 2,080m, the deepest to date any caver has ventured below ground (gold miners in South Africa regularly go beyond 3,400m). The team christened the chamber Game Over. But never the less the team now wants to into the depths to see whether the cave leads even deeper.

Cehi 2, Slovenia, 1,533m (5,030 ft)

Tom L Thomson


CUEVA VALLINA
Arredondo, Cantabria, Spain.
Showing area of entrances and 2004 extensions
Surveyed 1989-2004 by Matienzo Expedition, Espeleo Club Tortosa, AA.EE.T. Valls.
BCRA Grade 5c
L'EMPEDRAT
BARNEY RUBBLE'S URANIUM MINE
GALERIA DE GERMAN
The Bridge of
Khazad - Doom
p+15
TITS UP
SHATTER PASSAGE
SHOPPING TRIP
c+3
p13
WINDY CORNER
1721(VT9802)
altitude 398m
p12,p18
LA UNIO
GLITTER RUN
SUNDAY STOMPS
GALERIA VALLINA
p10
TOP
ENTRANCE
altitude 420m
THE CHUNNEL
EL TUNEL
1823
altitude 398m length 214m depth 8m
SCALE METRES
0
100
200
LOST POT ENTRANCE
ENTRADA "NOSPOTENTRA"
altitude 315m

WRAY AND MOOR WOOD MINES

Wray and Moor Wood are two small micaceous haematite mines, located south east of Moretonhampstead. The area between Moretonhampstead and Bovey Tracey is well known for this ore, which was used in particular for the production of rust-proof paints. The best known mines were Great Rock (closed in 1969 due to lack of available ore) and Kelly (where the surface plant is largely restored by the Kelly Mine Preservation Society).

Amongst the smaller mines were Wray (SX771848) and Moor Wood (SX777836), which although nominally separate mines seem to have been operated as one concern, which has caused a considerable amount of confusion about their history. The mines were described by H.G. Dines of the Geological Survey (1), who may have visited them while they were working, and if his account is correct then the sequence of events can be unravelled with reasonable confidence.

In 1920 Government returns record the owners of Wraybarton Mine as C.J. Payne and J.N. Mullis of Wray Mine. They were prospecting for "shiny ore" (a local term for micaceous haematite). The following year the owners were Payne & Bice, and in 1922 the mine was taken over by the Wray Ferric Oxide Mine Ltd. In August 1922 a 6 month prospecting licence was granted to this company by George Tarlton Wills of Pepperdon, the area covered extending from Pepperdon Down for over 3km south east to Casely Wood, with an area of 469 acres. The licence precluded sale of any mineral discovered, and restricted working to trying the lodes by adits. A sum of £50 was to be paid to cover legal costs and land damages. The licence included option for a mining sett being granted, which was exercised in July 1923. The sett was for thirty years, with royalties of 10s per ton of shining or iron ore and 3d per ton of sand sold. The sett was signed for the company by William Wallace, a director. Wills was allotted 200 ordinary £1 shares in the company gratis and another 200 at par as a condition of the lease, and had the option of taking another 200 within two years. During 1920-1925 2 men were recorded as employed underground in the official statistics (3 in 1921), and 2 at surface (none in 1921, and 5 in 1922-1923 when the dressing plant may have been constructed) (2). The machinery and plant were offered for sale in October 1926, comprising 8-10h.p and 5h.p. Petter oil engines, a ram pump, Californian stamps, "buddle pans", 1000 yards of tram rails and 3 waggons, winch, windlass, Avery one-ton weighing machine, a Corona paraffin blazing lamp, etc etc. (3). A few months earlier part of the freehold of the sett, but not including the actual mines, was sold by Auction (14).

The Wray Mining Co. Ltd. was formed in 1928 with a capital of £2,000, to take over the business of the previous company, on parts of Pepperdon, East Wrey, and Wrey Barton (4). The following year it was said development was being carried out, and a crushing and concentration plant was erected (5).

According to Dines, an adit at Wray Mine was driven on a lode for a short distance in 1929 and a small amount of ore raised, but this was too hard and granular for paint making. Prospecting resulted in the location of three or four lodes at Moor Wood in 1931 (6). The List of Mines record 4 employed underground and 4 at surface in 1928, and in following years 2 to 3 underground and 1 to 3 at surface. The mine was listed as Wray Mine, the agent or manager being E.J. Tucker. From 1930 the mineral worked was listed as red ochre, which may in fact refer to micaceous haematite – which in official returns tended to be lumped together with ochre and other ores used for colour manufacture etc. There is a noticeable absence of ochre in the accessible workings and dumps at both mines, so in fact red ochre was probably a mistake.

A new sett was granted in November 1932 by Wills to the Wray Mining Co. Wills died in 1938, the estate passing to a Margery Hamilton of Canterbury, New Zealand (15).

It seems likely that from about 1931 the returns actually referred to the Moor Wood Mine, operations at Wray probably having ceased, and certainly were said to appear long abandoned in 1938 (9). In that year only 2 persons were recorded at the mine (1 underground), and it is likely

operations ceased soon after. The Geological Survey record that in 1938, on the main lode an upper adit had been driven 60 fathoms and the lower 30 fathoms, a rise from the lower and winze from the upper being mined on separate strings therefore being 18 feet apart (7).

In March 1941 Roy J. Nicol of Limehouse, London, leased Pepperdon and East Wray for 30 years (16). The mine was named Pepperdown [sic] Mine. Operations were probably confined to Moor Wood. In November 1942 the sett was assigned to Nicol & New Ltd. of London (16). Work ceased in 1944, and in 1946 parts of the sett, including Casely Wood and areas lying south west of the railway were surrendered (16). Some work was again being carried out in 1947, when 2 persons were employed underground and 6 at surface. Dines records that in 1942 the mine had not reached a producing stage. It was possibly about this time that a dressing plant was constructed at Moor Wood (9).

Development on the main lode had evidently reached the full extent before 1941, it is likely operations since that date was confined to a small amount of stoping. The adit on the southernmost lode is not referred to by Dines, which suggests that it was driven after 1944. This adit, and the adit on the northern lode, from beside the mine buildings, both contain exploratory drill holes evidently driven in search of parallel lodes. These holes are of unknown length and appear too small (3cm dia.) to be cored holes. At Great Rock Mine, similar percussive drill holes were driven, when any traces of "colour" in the cuttings were the evidence of mineralisation looked for (12). These probably date from the last years of the mine.

Subsequently Nicol & New worked the Hawkmoor Mine, treating ore at Kelly and at Moor Wood, where the mill was operated by mains electricity. Hawkmoor closed in 1951 (8). There is a suggestion that the Ferrubron Manufacturing Co carried out some further investigations on the site, possibly in the late 1960's just before Great Rock Mine closed (12). Perhaps the exploratory drilling referred to above dates from this time. The derelict buildings remained on site until 1974, when the present bungalow was constructed on the site (9). Adjoining settling pits have been filled in more recently. The mine has almost entirely been stripped of materials, even timbering. Some is known to have been removed after the mine closed, some quite recently but much may have been removed to Hawkmoor for re-use.

The above interpretation of the history can be backed up by statistics of employment and development up to 1938, assuming that no work was carried out before 1920, and excluding the north and south lodes at Moor Wood, the date of which is unknown. These estimates also assume accuracy of the official employment figures, that the rate of advance was fairly constant (this could vary according to rock conditions, the skill of the miners, and whether machine drills were used) and that the amount of stoping carried out was insignificant.

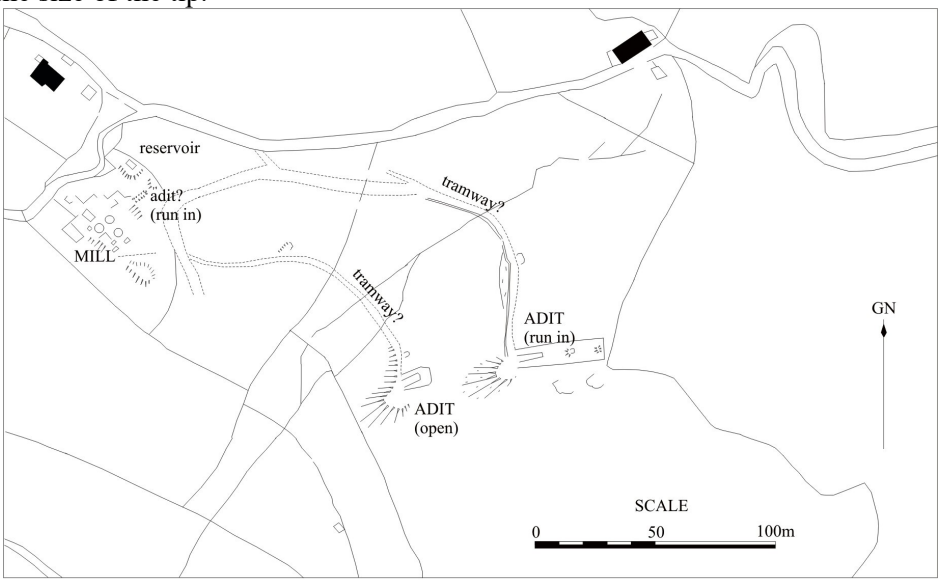
Wray Mine total development approx 160m, if total employment in 1920 to 1931 here then this was the result of 19 man years' work (underground employment only) or 8.4m development per man per year.

Moor Wood to 1938 development approx 200m, underground man years work in 1932 to 1938 20, if this work was all at Moor Wood then a figure of 10m development per man per year is given.

The total development at Moor Wood amounts to about 410m, indicating another 15 to 20 man years work if the above rates continued.

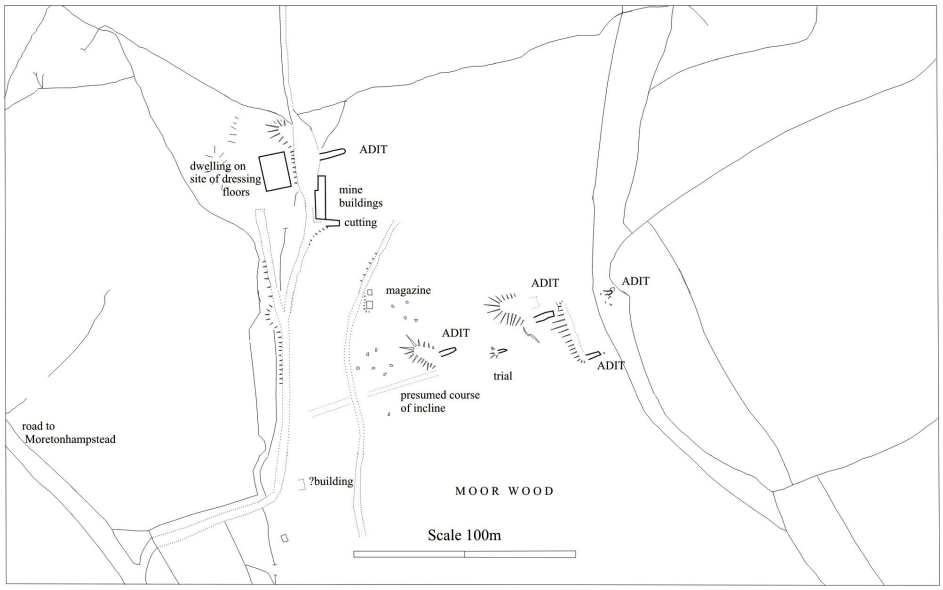
Wray Mine lies on land owned by Devon County Council, and managed by Dartmoor National Park Authority. The foundations of the small mill are well preserved, and include a pillar or stack constructed from stone and brick which is visible from the Moretonhampstead road. Foundations on several levels include three buddles. At the top is the now blocked entrance to what is presumably the short adit referred to by Atkinson et al (10). Lines of two tramways can be traced to two adits,

one at mill level and one further up the hill. The latter may have been connected to the mill by an incline, but this is obscured by a forestry track. The workings are well fenced off, the upper adit and a possible shaft above are run in, and the lower adit is gated. The key can be obtained from the National Park Office. The adit is 84m long including crosscuts, one of which leads to an exploratory drill hole similar to those at Moor Wood. The upper adit is likely to be of a similar length, judging from the size of the tip.



WRAY MINE
based on PCG sketch mapping and OS 1:2500 plan
reproduced by kind permission of Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright NC/02/39084

Moor Wood mine is in private woodland, and the main workings provide domestic water supply to a number of properties, so it is essential permission be obtained to visit the site. The landowner was very helpful, and showed us the location of the various adits. We surveyed the workings on two trips in October 2002, taking photos and some video. Those involved were Hugh and Trish Browning, Alasdair Neill and Chris Kelland



MOORWOOD MINE. Based on PCG mapping and OS 1:2500 map, reproduced by kind permission of Ordnance Survey.
©Crown Copyright NC/02/39084.

The northernmost adit is adjoining the old mine buildings, which contain some machinery mountings.

The entrance was reopened by the present owner. A cutting on the south side of the buildings may represent a further adit entrance.

In the wood above the access track are to be found the magazine and det store, constructed from white Candy brick. To the south of these are three adits on the main lode. The lowest is presumably the one from which an incline worked by a hand winch ran (10), although there are only faint traces of the presumed course of this to be seen now. Outside the adit lies a valve, possibly from an air main – the only surviving evidence of any use of machine drills. This adit is the take off point for the current domestic water supply. Above this the next adit is the most extensive; outside on the tip are fragments of a side-tipping waggon. Just above is a tip contouring the hillside to the adit on the southern lode. A pipe protrudes vertically above the ground about 1.5m, and runs down through boulders into the adit. This may perhaps have been used for ventilation, in a similar manner to a device photographed by AK Hamilton Jenkin at Great Work Mine (11). The highest adit is in fact just a short low drive under a large boulder, connecting through a 30cm by 35cm hole into stopes from the level below.

Underground the layout needs little description beyond the plan and elevation is required. The pitches on the main lode have all been equipped with 8mm spits, enabling a through trip to be undertaken. The highest stopes are very narrow, from which ore seems to have been extracted by pick. In this area there seems to have been a restricted shoot of workable ore, which Dines (1) described as soft and clean and suitable for paint making. Apart from this area, the workings only expose narrow strings of hard ore.

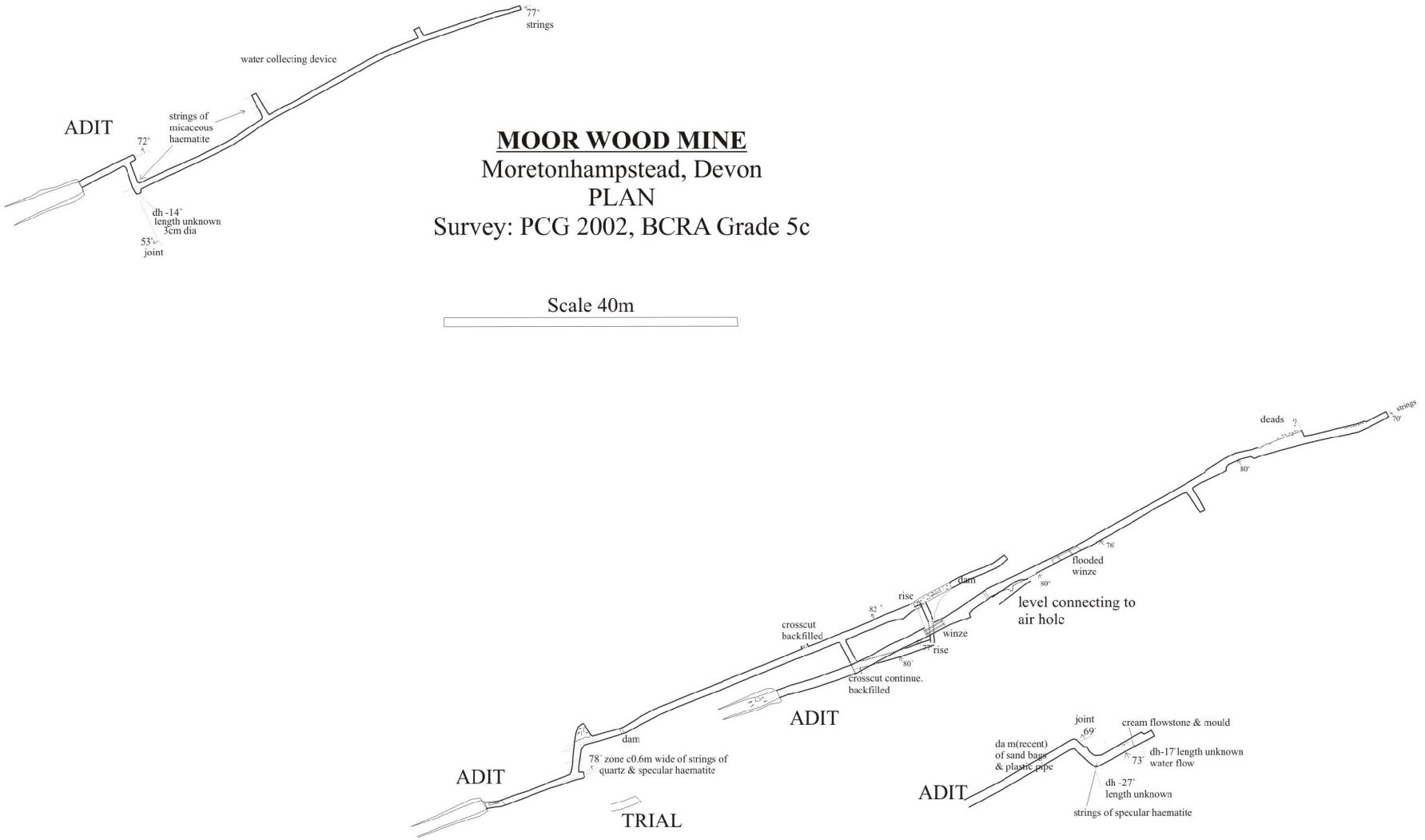
The pitch down to the bottom adit can be quit wet. On our first descent this was lined with stemples, probably the remains of a ladder road, which were almost rotted away and have now collapsed. At the foot, a boxhole connected to a rise from the bottom adit. This was covered with rotten planks, which we knocked away. However there is much loose debris overhanging this drop, so a small crosscut is best followed to a short pitch into the bottom adit.

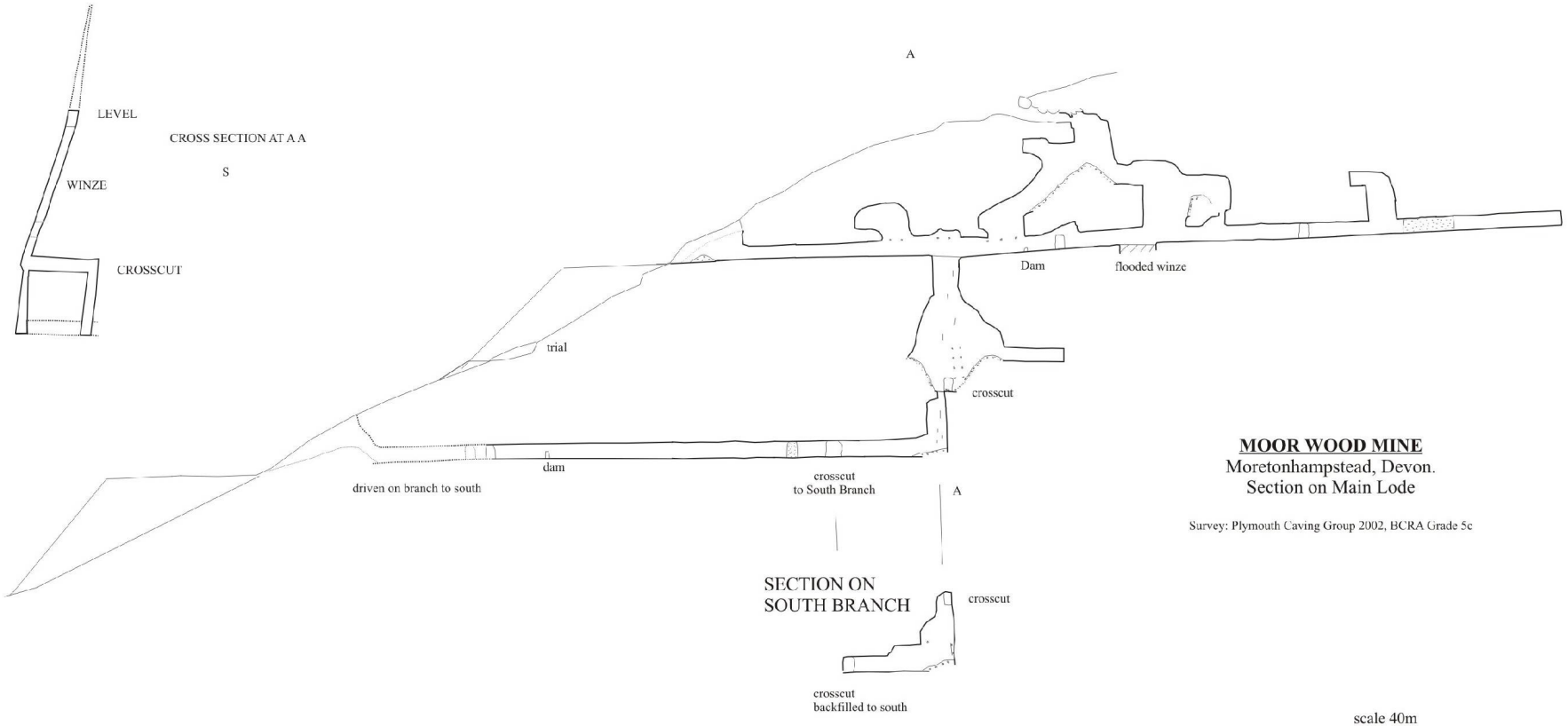
In the bottom adit, a dam for the water supply means the water is about waist deep in part. Near the entrance there is a short crosscut, according to Dines where a crosscourse heaves the lodes. However we saw no evidence of a heave, the crosscut appearing to connect two separate zones of stringers of ore.

In April 2003 an extension ladder was used to examine some openings visible at the top of stopes on the middle adit, which turned out to be very short.

(1) H.G. Dines, 1956. The Metalliferous Mining Region of South – West England. *Mems. Geol. Surv*.
(2) List of Mines.
(3) Western Morning News 9.10.1926
(4) Mining Journal 23.6.1928 p538
(5) Mining Magazine May 1929 p300, August 1929 p102
(6) Dines, op cit.
(7) J.A. Robbie, 1944. The Micaceous Haematite of South Devon, extract per J Crowdy/NR Walter.
(8) P. Roberts 1996. Kelly Mine: The First Ten Years. *In The Archaeology of Mining and Metallurgy in South West – Britain, Bull. Peak Dist. Hist. Soc 13.2.*
(9) P.H.G. Richardson, 1992. Mines of Dartmoor and the Tamar Valley after 1913. NMRS British Mining 44.
(10) M. Atkinson, R Burt and P Waite 1978. Dartmoor Mines, the Mines of the Granite Mass. Exeter Industrial Archaeology Group.
(11) published in the Cornish Miner.
(12) Imf. Tony Brooks.
(13) Devon Record Office 5016B/ME59-61
(14) DRO 5016B/ME62
(15) DRO 5016B/ME65
(16) DRO 5016B/ME70

Alasdair Neill.


77°
strings
water collecting device
ADIT
strings of
micaceous
haematite
72°
dh -14°
length unknown
3cm dia
53°
joint
MOOR WOOD MINE
Moretonhampstead, Devon
PLAN
Survey: PCG 2002, BCRA Grade 5c
Scale 40m
deads
?
strings
70°
80°
76°
flooded
winze
level connecting to
air hole
dam
rise
82°
crosscut
backfilled
winze
77°
rise
80°
crosscut continue.
backfilled
ADIT
joint
69°
cream flowstone & mould
da m(recent)
of sand bags
& plastic pipe
73°
dh-17 length unknown
water flow
ADIT
dh -27°
length unknown
strings of specular haematite
dam
78° zone c0.6m wide of strings of
quartz & specular haematite
ADIT
TRIAL


A
LEVEL
CROSS SECTION AT A A
S
WINZE
CROSSCUT
Dam
flooded winze
trial
crosscut
dam
driven on branch to south
crosscut
to South Branch
A
SECTION ON
SOUTH BRANCH
crosscut
crosscut
backfilled to south
MOOR WOOD MINE
Moretonhampstead, Devon.
Section on Main Lode
Survey: Plymouth Caving Group 2002, BCRA Grade 5c
scale 40m

Wheal Fanny, Devon Great Consols. 15/3/2005

We all headed direct to the mine to make the most of the evening. I arrived last, for a quick refresher in SRT, by which time the access was opened and the pitches rigged.

The first passage, of about 15 feet through the slate, opened on the first vertical pitch also of about 15 feet in depth. At the bottom in the short tunnel there was barely sufficient room for 3 of us to keep out from under ourselves. This tunnel opened at the head of the hanging wall of the lode. Here the excavated lode was about 8 feet wide so the 30-foot descent dropped us neatly onto timbers at the foot of the opposite wall.

Darren had already explored as much as he wanted to so he stayed put while the 4 of us ducked down through a small 'trap door' in the timbers onto a more extensive level a few feet below.

We initially explored westward in the direction of the Wheal Maria section. This is for the most part quite narrow and enclosed by timbering only a little overhead height. For extra support we walked on the metal tram rails running along the level where they passed over a ladder way to the lower levels, this seemed quite bottomless continuing down at the same slight angle to the vertical as the upper section. We soon reached the safe limit of the level where we were able to see a fairly large quantity of arsenopyrite ore which had apparently been excavated from a side shoot.

The eastern part towards the Wheal Anna Maria section was much more open. We walked about 30 feet down an incline to another level. This was again only about 8 to 10 feet wide but above it opened out to perhaps as much as 20 feet in places. Immediately above was the underside of the level from which we'd descended, supported every 10 feet or so by tree trunks wedged between the walls and supporting rough planks. In places this had collapsed and we could see at least 4 more levels above taking the total height to probably 50 feet or more.

It was about at this point that I started thinking 'I guess what I'm standing on looks the same from below, and the way it looks is none too safe'. Oh well if it gave, it would be a quick way to get a tour of the lower levels!

At the far end Chris pointed out the access way that led part way into Anna Maria but which is presently blocked by a collapse.

Back at the rope the amateurs took their time ascending despite 'encouragement' from Chris who could see valuable drinking seconds ticking away. As we waited we took a look at the round white mineral growths, up to the size of aniseed balls, which were on loose rocks but more common on the timbers where they butted up to the walls. Any thoughts on these would be welcome, some variant on arsenolite?

Back to the fresh air, a quick dust off and off for a fine pint in the pub at Chipshop.

Thanks once again to the old lags for their help and knowledge.

Chris Popham

ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

Great Rock Devon's Last 'Metal' Mine T. Brooks 2004.

CARN BREA MINING SOCIETY Newsletter 53, Dec 2004
CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY Newsletter (2004).4-6,8/9,10-12
47(2005).1-3
CRAVEN POTHOLE CLUB Record 74,75(2004). 77,78(2005).
KENT UNDERGROUND RESEARCH GROUP Newsletter 81, 2004
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SHROPSHIRE CAVING & MINING CLUB. Below! 2004.2,4.
SOCIETÀ SPELEOLOGICA ITALIANA Speleologia 50 (2004).
TREVITHICK SOCIETY Journal 31 (2004). Newsletter 125 (2004).
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SLELAEOLIGICAL SOCIETY proceedings 23.2 (2004)
WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL 27.290
WESTMINSTER SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY Newsletter 2004/4 2005/1

TRACINGS OF PLANS:
Botallack 6174
Devon Great Consols R88A/3
Great Pell Bounds V/P28
New Langford 2379
Wheal Russell R19B
Wheal Vyvyan V/P26