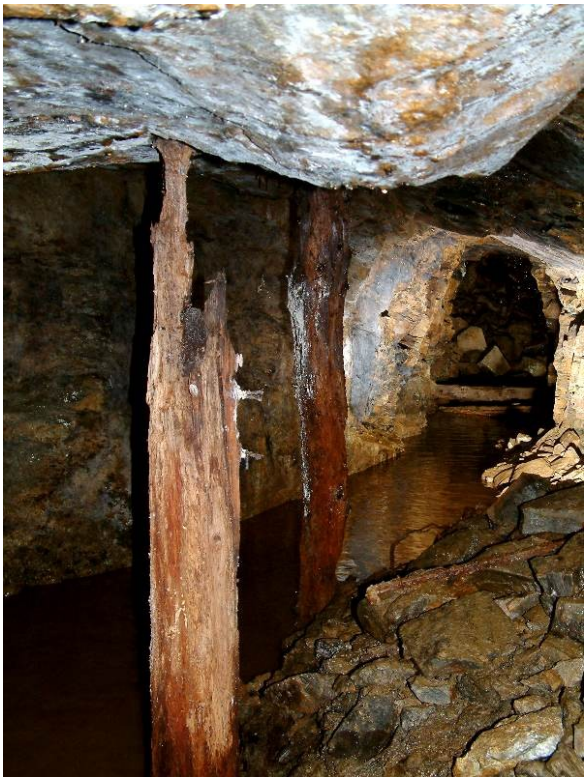
Plymouth Caving Group

Newsletter & Journal No.152 ~ March 2009



SRT Training.



Wheal Benny



Little Duke Mine

Plymouth Caving Group

Newsletter & Journal No.152 ~ March 2009

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Alternatively committee or club member can be contacted through the Plymouth Caving Group's website under 'Contacts'

Editorial

It has been another busy year at Plymouth Caving Group.

Since the AGM last year a new home has been found for the tackle with the promise of keeping it secure, warm and most importantly dry, none of which the old store did terribly well. The library however has continued to move from place to place and is still in need of a warm, dry, permanent home where it can be accessed by members.

The committee members involved in organising trips have produced a varied and interesting selection with returns to old well known caves and mines but also visits to less familiar venues. Some short reports are included in this edition of the journal but Dave Warne has been slogging away loading many more reports and photos onto the web pages (the web address is at the bottom of each page of this journal).

If you have suggestions for trips then please contact the committee, especially if you are familiar with the location and can lend a little help with directions etc.

The trip organisers send an email to all members weekly with updates on trips, if you don't see those messages then contact the organisers. There are plans in the pipeline for both a weekend in the caves of the Mendips and also a weekend in the mines around St Just, details for which will be sent out by email so again if you are interested you need your current email address to be on the list.

As always my thanks go to all those who have submitted articles. If you've missed a copy then the last 5 journals are available as pdf files and can be forwarded by email or I can print copies at cost and post them on.

Chris Popham,
Editor,
chris@ipplepen.net

Looking for Past Members.

I have just come across your website and being a past member I thought I would mail you to see if anybody is still in the club from the early 70's?

I joined the club in '73 and we used to meet in a building behind the Breton Arms pub at Bretonside, I can't remember the name of the building but it had a sign on it saying, "Plymouth Judo Club". We had a very active membership at the time and the weekends we were often either mining around Gunnislake, usually Devon Great Consuls mine which was quite a trek from the train station. I used to go there with Glenn Latham, Chris "Pip" George, Dave Cather and Roger Floyd, RIP. (Roger died in 1976 just after joining the Army in a car accident I think, he was only 16 or 17!) I joined the RAF in 1976 and that was the end of my caving days unfortunately. Pip and Glenn took up climbing and Pip had a nasty accident and I don't know what happened to him afterwards.

When I joined I was taken under the wings of Brian Lewarne and myself, Pip, Roger and Glenn used to travel to the Mendips, South Wales and Yorkshire to do some really good trips. I have attached an account of a trip we carried out over the Christmas period in 1975 when we went from Gaping Ghyll main entrance, classic descent through the waterfall and all the way to the end of the system at Far Waters and out via Bar Pot.

Our trips to South Wales were mainly into Aggie and only once did we stay in the main system as for some strange reason the leaders used to like the crawling through the Southern Stream Passage, but it was worth it in the end when you reached the main river and made your way down to the first sump. We also had a foray down the Little Neath River Cave, I think that was the name.

The Mendips were always good trips mainly Swildons and Longwood August and once a few of us went down Stoke Lane Slocker?, to try to find Britain's tallest stalagmite. We never did find it although we were only feet away from the small passage that led to the chamber. The only clear memories of that trip were myself getting stuck under the boulders in the sump on the way out and what seemed like ages I managed to get free. Dave Cather said I was under for about 45 seconds but it did seem a lot longer. Good job we were fit in those days. The walk back to the hut we were staying at, the BEC, was quite a way especially in a blizzard and Dave almost getting hypothermia but after a few miles walking Brian Lewarne picked us up in the transit van.

Caving trips in Devon were mainly Bakers Pit, Prid and Afton. Afton was our favourite place and we used to go around the place unconventionally! Instead of the normal way by going around the big "S" bend we used to climb down that way and essentially do the trip backwards just to make it a bit more difficult/interesting. In Bakers Pit we used to go to a dig at the very end past the new extension and we did actually dig our way to the surface and I am not sure if you guys know about the other entrance which we kept quiet about. It was on the side of the road under a hedgerow opposite the grave yard of the church and we did have another dig but we left that one as we believed it was directly under the grave yard! We used to have another dig in the Dart River Cave at Buckfastleigh but one day we were digging and the place was flooding behind us so we made a quick exit, also the fumes of diesel fuel was over powering because the dig eventually led to the quarry and some of the pools in the quarry were polluted with fuel.

We were also involved in a dig at the fuel depot storage at Cattedown in Plymouth. In the 60's apparently some human skulls and bones were found at the site and in 74/75 the club was invited to dig again. We only had a weekend so we were quite rushed and none of us had any archaeological experience so our methods were a bit agricultural however we did come across some bones so we then eased off a bit. Radio Devon came and interviewed Brian while we were digging. The bones we found were mainly small, broken ribs and vertebrae and one long bone which was identified as a Femur. The bones were carbon dated and identified as Reindeer and said to be 50,000 years old. They were put in a glass case and displayed in the club and eventually they were donated to the Plymouth Museum.

Well Dave I hope this e-mail gives you a little insight into what was happening in your club over 30 years ago and I hope you go from strength to strength over the next 30 years. Feel free to print copies of the attachment for your members to read or print it in your magazine if you still have one.

Cheers,

Steve Thomas

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting.

Thursday 5th March 2009

The meeting opened at 20.00
Present:- Dave Warne, Patrick Hanlan, Ali Neill, Rupert Goddard, David Jean, Chris Popham, Ross Macartney.

Apologies:- Roger King

Minutes of the meeting held on 28th February, 2008 had previously been circulated.

Matters arising: .None

Officer's Reports

Chairman:-

The club has continued to function well over the past year, with regular trips being held on most Tuesday evenings. These trips on the whole have been well attended by the regular core of club members. However we still are not quite getting the commitment for the weekend trips away, with planned trips not going ahead. This is something for the club to work on in the future.

Currently the membership stands a 26, with at least another 5 pledging to rejoin. This includes past members who have returned to the club after some year's absence. There has also been some new members who have joined from the Cornwall area, with many more showing interest. Some of these are from the recently disbanded DMC. Club fees have managed to stay unchanged over the last few years remaining at £9 + £16 BCA insurance.

The past year has seen some changes to access, with the loss of Penrecca Mine, the gating of Crowndale Mine, with the gating project at Virtuous Lady Mine still ongoing. There is now an access agreement in place for Berryhead Caves, with two members of the club being leaders. Roger King has been very active as access officer within DCUC, and has been making good progress in securing access agreements.

The club has received a donation of old caving magazines from Andy Pugh, an ex caver in the area who was clearing out is loft.

The club has also received an offer for a Tywarnhale Mine plan drawn on canvas. The plan is currently in the possession of a Mrs Margaret Rose. This plan belonged to her late husband, but she has now realised the true value, and feels it would be better to have it displayed for all to see. I am currently looking into the King Edward Mining Museum as it final resting place. The club will receive a copy for its' library.

As reported last year, we relocated the tackle store to the Moorcroft site. This has proved successful, and we are still in the process of sorting it out. However due to restructures within AI, it is not certain if this store will be available in the future. The club library has now been relocated to this store, and thanks go to Mike Bennett for giving it a home over the last couple of years.

Dave Warne.

Secretary:-

Dave Jean reported that his main tasks had concerned minuting meetings

Dave Jean.

Treasurer:-

Income	2008	2007
Subscriptions	478.00*	452.00
Interest	29.73	45.70
Tackle Fees	98.96*	95.00
Xmas Draw	0.00	22.50
	606.69	615.20
Expenditure		
Printing & Postage	108.15	67.97
Insurance	424.00	402.50
Subscriptions	102.00	103.00
Web Hosting	32.00	29.00
Misc (BCA)	28.00**	28.00**
	694.15	630.47
A loss for the year of	87.46	15.27

* An estimate from paying in figure. No detail available

** These sums to be recovered from BCA

Year End Balances		
Community Account	729.94	395.13
Deposit Account	1524.97	1479.27

Patrick stated that the larger losses were largely due to falling interest from the deposit account and increased printing and postage charges. When the overpayments to BCA have been reimbursed the real loss will be about £60. The Awards for All application is progressing

Patrick Hanlan.

Librarian:-

Ali Neill reported receiving the usual exchange material, some 50 items. The library is currently partly housed at his house and partly in the tackle store awaiting shelving.

In making the library a more usable resource, I have continued indexing recently acquired publications and updated our journal index, which hopefully is now updated on the website.

There is apparently a fair amount of material, including purchased items and record copies of minutes, which are in other committee members' hands. Without this going into the library we cannot keep track of what we have got, and it is not available for members wishing to consult it.

For quite a few years access to the library has been difficult due to storage problems and apathy. The future of the library is very important to the future of the club.

Ali then went on to briefly criticise the range of trips on offer and maintained that this limited membership

Ali Neill

Editor:-

A journal was circulated to all members in June 2008. In addition copies of the current journal and those from up to 5 years previously: almost 50 additional journals, were sent to all the exchange clubs to bring us up-to-date with all exchanges.

The exchange copies increased the printing and postage costs over previous years. However, as many copies as possible were delivered by hand to members to keep costs down.

A journal is in preparation for circulation as soon as the AGM minutes and finishing touches have been added.

Chris Popham.

In discussion it was decided to offer exchange copies in electronic format as pdf files to other clubs. Moreover, it was agreed that an audit of received copies should be made and those clubs that had not sent to Plymouth caving in the last 3 years should be removed from our list of exchanges.

It was however pointed out that given the option most people favour printed copy.

Rupert Goddard then took the Chair.

Election of Officers

Chairman	Dave Warne nominated by Dave Jean seconded by Ali Neill appointed nem com
Secretary	Patrick Hanlan nominated by Dave Warne seconded by Dave Jeanl appointed nem com
Treasurer	Rupert Goddard nominated by Dave Warne seconded by Chris Popham appointed nem com

Dave Warne then resumed the Chair.

Other Committee Posts
It was proposed that
Alasdair Neill be responsible for the Library, Ropes and SRT Tackle
Dave Warne be responsible for Lights and the Website
Rupert Goddard be responsible for Membership, Conservation and DCRO/DCUC links
Chris Popham be responsible for the Newsletter and Journal
Ross Macartney be responsible for Meets, and
Dave Jean be responsible for BCA contacts
They were elected without opposition.

The meeting closed at 20.40.

The next Committee Meeting will be at Moorcroft on at 2 April at 19.30 to be followed by a Social Event at the Thistle Park Tavern.

Wheal Benny.

27th January, 2009

We met in the lay-by at the foot of Kit Hill in thick fog. Most of us managed to miss it on the first approach and were sent around by the tower for a second attempt at a landing. Dave then led off into the middle of no-where, well Latchley (so much the same thing), down ever narrower lanes, finally ending with a parade of cars backing down a half made road towards the flooded river at Lamerhooe.

The mine was a small concern worked for tin and arsenic with a small amount of wolfram also produced. The works cling to the steep river bank and a surprising amount of activity was crammed onto the long, narrow platform. There is a well preserved arsenic labyrinth, brunton calciner and 4 buddles.

Access to the adit is by a locked and gated entrance beside the buildings and wheelpit. The first section is quite large enough to walk down though waist deep in water, which shallows out to about ankle deep at a crosscut. Directly ahead the adit continues for only 20 feet before ending in a fall of deads. However there are 2 marvelous supporting timbers which have rotted away to little more than thin fingers; not exactly confidence inspiring.

To the left of the crosscut there is a short passage which is big enough to walk along to where it makes a sharp right turn. The passage is then filled by a fall of deads but a bit of a squeeze and a crawl took us up into the stope above. This still has a number of cross members though the majority of the planks have fallen away. At the far end of the stope is about 8 feet of hanging chain with 3 inch links and at the near end there is another short passage that leads back over the main adit. A piece of rock from the floor despite being very dense contained only traces of pyrite and arsenopyrite and appeared to have been heavily altered suggesting the Hingston Down granite surface must be very close at hand.



The arsenopyrite is deposited as very thin foliated layers interspersed with killas rock.

Back at the crosscut we crawled over the pile of deads into the other side passage. The crawl goes for about 20 feet before opening out again but here the adit is flooded with chilly, waist deep, orchrous water. The water shallowed out after about 15 yards and the passage ran on for a further 70 yards ending in an ochrous pool of thick red water overhung with red formations. There is no stopeing on the passage, though there were a few short side passages. The lode is exposed in the roof in places as a lose quartz filled fissure mixed with grey fluccan and some rock pieces. In other places it had a thinly layered appearance suggesting multi-phase infill of an extensional fault. Where they were exposed the hanging and footwalls had a dip of about 10 degrees north towards the river, ie concentric to Hingston Down.

Back at the crosscut the decision was made to head out and call it a day as we were all pretty cold, rather than looking in the other adit. This of course meant wading back through the flood just inside the adit entrance which seemed to now be much colder than when we originally entered.

Luckily the river hadn't washed the cars away so it was back into the fog and off to Chip Shop to get warm.

Chris Popham

SRT Training, Mount Batton.

26th June, 2008

This was the second training session that Ali had organised for us and was well attended, possibly because the weather was better this time.



While Ali finished rigging the ropes, I sorted out the pile of equipment into SRT kits and made sure everyone had everything fitted correctly.

Cheryl was the first on the rope and was happy to finally use her new kit. It was also Finbars' first time and he did really well. I showed them and Dan how to do a change over by which time Ali had finished rigging and continued with the training.

Dan was impatient and just wanted to fly up the rope before he could manage a change over unassisted, which meant climbing up the rock to help him. Sarah had done SRT before, but not for many years, so this was a useful refresher for her.

Adrenaline junkie, Becky, took time out from her hectic schedule to brush up on her skills.

Rupert finally turned up and assisted with the training, which freed me up so I could get on the ropes and get some practice in.

Dan also had a go at rock climbing, assisted by Ali on the safety line.

An enjoyable and useful evening was finished off with a pint in the Mount Batton Centre bar.

Many thanks to Ali for his time and effort and hopefully with sessions like this, more people will be able to attend the SRT trips in future.

Ross Macartney

Mendips.

June, 2008

Mike Bennett and myself were invited on a Mendip trip of the Southsea Speleological Society on June 21st-22nd. This was a farewell trip for Paul Nash, prior to his departure for a new job with NATO in Singapore.

Older PCG members will remember Paul as being one of the most active members and club treasurer for many tears until his job took him away from the area in the 1990's. Family life meant he gave up caving, but recently he has started again, being in the Portsmouth area joining the SSS.

We had arranged to meet in the New Inn, but eventually met Paul and his son Ben (who has also started caving) in the Queen Vic – what a surprise! They had just done a trip down Swildon's as an introduction for Ben. On Saturday we did Short Round Trip, some going down Blue Pencil to Sump IV. Unfortunately these days I find the squeeze "once called Birthday Squeeze" quite challenging, so ended reversing back to Swildon's I with Mike and meeting up with the others just as they returned through Sump I.

After the cave we ended up on Priddy Green for the hugely popular Priddy Green Sheep Races before adjourning to the Hunter's. Having the Belfry to ourselves, the sound systems and strobes were soon discovered. Mike in his tent was very concerned for our well fare, having thought a group of rowdy BEC members had turned up for a rave. Little did he know… Some people are really too old and should know better?.

On Sunday there was a distinct lack of life so I joined Top Chapman and Sarah Payne (Wessex) to assist on the Bad Bat dig in Shatter Series. Tom had dug up a too-narrow aven there many years ago, but decided to resurrect the site using modern rock-breaking technology. Burdened down with large bags of the necessary tools, and joined by Hatstand (Wessex) we soon arrived at the site. Beyond the Shatter Pot pitch we found the air not brilliant, everything being harder than it should be. Needing to be out in time to meet up with Mike to return to Plymouth, I then headed out with Hatstand, leaving Tom and Sarah at the dig.

Alasdair Neill.

Mendips - DSS Trip.

18th-20th October 2008

Availing myself of the arrangement that PCG & DSS members were welcome on each other's trips, I went up on Friday night with Mike Bennett. Staying at the Shepton Mallett hut – my first stay there for many years – we soon met Jason & others who had been down Singing River Mine.

On Saturday, being unable to get keys for our planned trip, we went to Hunter's Lodge Inn Sink, which I had not visited before. The history of this cave is well known; during the foot and mouth outbreak, with most caves closed, Roger Dors was very keen to keep caver's custom in the pub. He therefore suggested that a dig could be commenced where in wet weather water soaked away in the pub carpark. The water was followed down by blasting along a too-tight fissure, until eventually open cave was entered. The discovery featured on a number of TV programs.

Whilst some of the DSS contingent went off to Swildon's our party, Mike, Richard Vought, Tracy Elliott, Rob (a new DSS member) and myself, got the key from the pub and were soon changed and ready. The nicely walled entrance is a short shaft with a fixed ladder, entering the initial dig. This is a now a pleasant crawl descending in typical Mendip fashion, the Pub Crawl. A few short drops and a scaffolded section breaks into the first section of open cave, Happy Hour Highway. This is roomy and contains many fine formations. A climb down on the right enters Rockin Rudolph Rift. At the end of Happy Hour Highway a crawl leads up to a climb up a wall of digging rubbish to a roomy inlet passage, the Barmaid's Bedrooms, which heads back towards surface on the other side of the road

from the Hunter's. Again this has some fine formations, and in this part an important discovery of bones has been made, including bison and reindeer.

Full details of the digs, exploration and bones are recorded in various Belfry Bulletins (copies in the PCG library).

On Sunday, many of the DSS being worse the wear from the night before at the Hunter's and the Belfry, the same party as before headed to GB. I had been down GB innumerable times before, but only on one or two occasions, many years ago, into Ladder Dig extension. This was in part due to the very real flood risk in this part of the cave. Don't believe anyone who says this is OK in wet weather; they probably weren't around on that occasion when a group of scouts had a very extended stay beyond the dig. I was, (on a PCG trip), but fortunately made it out before the main stream overflowed into Ladder Dig, which effectively sealed them in. A quick trip down into Bat Passage was followed by a good deal of searching for the route up into Great Chamber, which hopefully we can now remember. This involves either a squeeze up through boulders, or an awkward exposed traverse.

Alasdair Neill.

Obituaries

Tony 'J-Rat' Jarratt.

J-Rat, probably one of the best known characters in British caving, died at the end of August. He had been diagnosed a very short time before with a particularly aggressive cancer.

I first met Tony in the Hunters on my first trip to Mendip with the PCG, some time in the early 1980's. He had just returned from the Mexico expedition featured on Sid Perou's "Realms of Darkness" TV series. Soon after we joined him on explorations in the newly discovered West End series in Eastwater Cavern. At the time he was working for the Ordnance Survey and this led him to have an unrivaled knowledge of caves and mines often in the most obscure locations. We were able to compare notes on various holes I had visited with my father, and probably at that time by hardly anyone else, particularly in the Welsh borders and North Wales.

He lived up to the BEC's motto of "everything to excess" more than most, & the memories of drunken after-the-pub sessions in the Belfry along with the likes of Rikki Sellars will be very hard to forget. More recently his one visit to Matienzo carried on this reputation.

His enthusiasm for Mendip caves in particular has left a great legacy in the number of more recently discovered caves and mines that he was either the driving force behind the exploration of, or had a great deal of influence on other diggers.

He left the Ordnance Survey to take over BAT Products in Wells, and it is from this shop that most cavers will have known Tony. We last saw him in June, when his illness was already having an affect but before it had been diagnosed.

Alasdair Neill.

Jim Eyre.

The death of Jim Eyre was recently announced. Jim was particularly well known for his books, which are probably the most entertaining caving books you can find. His outrageous cartoons illustrated many of these books, as well as the walls of places such as the New Inn in Clapham.

Jim was particularly well known in the Dales, where he started caving in 1942. He was involved in many new explorations, in Britain and abroad, such as his first descents on ladders of shafts over 1,000 feet deep in Greece. He was a driving force behind the Cave Rescue Organisation, and involved in many of their most serious rescues.

His life was recently well described in a piece on BBC Radio 4.

Alasdair Neill.

Wheal Uny Access.

Many members in the past may have visited Wheal Uny which is a nice easy trip and is notable as being the only extensive section of the Great Flat Lode still accessible. However please note that for some time there has been NO ACCESS allowed to this mine underground.

The background to this is as follows: a number of individuals, being concerned at the loss of underground access caused by shaft capping schemes, resolved that some effort should be made to counter this. A group, including members of Carn Brea Society, the Russell Society, Camborne School of Mines, the Ussher Society, Cornwall Bat Group, Rosevale Mine, Cornwall County Council, and other organisations, was set up. I represented PCG and DCUC on this group, which was named Cornwall Underground Access Group (CUAG). Members put a very large amount of time into producing a document producing a rationale for retaining access under such schemes, and producing alternate engineering designs for shaft plugs which would retain current or possible future access. This was particularly aimed at Kerrier District Council as being by far the most active local authority carrying out such schemes in recent years. This met some success, Kerrier taking on board our suggestions and consulting us about future capping schemes.

We were able to check out numerous shafts prior to being treated, much of this work being done by Hugh and Trish Browning, Kevin Baker (CBMS) and myself. Our results were reported in various PCG newsletters. Our recommendations led to access being retained at many shafts which would have otherwise been lost, including Wheal Uny, where chain link fences with locked access were put in instead of the plugs originally proposed.

A number of us also had a meeting with Kerrier officers including their solicitors to discuss our proposals, and access to mines which they owned or leased. They very much appeared to take on our proposals, and the solicitors expressed a strong opinion that there was no perceived liability on their behalf that should prevent access for groups such as ourselves. Our proposals were subsequently supported at a full council meeting of Kerrier, and reported by them in the local press.

Unfortunately at this time certain individuals based in West Cornwall were caught on a number of occasions entering a number of sites in the area, breaking in through shaft grills and putting in timber work etc. which were totally incompatible with interests such as bat conservation. This in particular seems to have put back all the work we had carried out, and although schemes since have generally incorporated provisions for access, KCC will apparently not at present entertain any access. This also resulted in access being revoked at very short notice for delegates of the NAMHO conference at Truro.

Hopefully this situation may be resolved at some time in the future, but in the meantime Wheal Uny and any other such sites must be avoided at all costs. These sites are regularly checked by KCC officials, so don't thing you will not get caught there! Underground visits will only further put back any attempts to regain official access, and for anyone aware of the situation can only be regarded as actions bringing our interests into further disrepute.

Alasdair Neill.

Gaping Ghyll.

I'm going to Far……t. I may be some time.

Introduction by Brian Lewarne

We have, in the past four years, achieved on average two "Epic" caving or potholing trips per year. The "Epic" trip being defined as extended trips, of 12 hours or more, down classic super severe caves or potholes. The following is not just another write up of a personal trip but the final "Epic" of an immaculate team down what has become "home-ground" for this club. The far reaches of Gaping Ghyll is now an old haunt for us; since four years ago. Our techniques have drastically changed and our standards have gone up. The time taken to do the same trip has also

been cut. In fact, if they hadn't spent so much time sightseeing and tea making on this trip, it wouldn't have been an epic!

The aim of doing this system has changed from purely sightseeing to extending the system. Especially on behalf of Paul Hatherley, digging-site information has been omitted from this narrative!

The narrative was originally written by Steve, criticised by Glenn and "Pip" and then re-written and extended by Roger. (Steve has to leave the team now as he starts his career with the RAF this month.) So let's see what they did down in the magnificent nether-regions, while you were eating and drinking your way through Christmas.

Members present: - Roger Floyd (Leader), Steve Thomas, Glenn Latham and Chris George.

It was the afternoon of December 26th (Boxing Day) 1975. It was about 2 o'clock that we started the 2½ mile walk up to Gaping Ghyll (GG).

We all reached Bar Pot at about 3 o'clock where we all got changed. Roger and Glenn went down Bar to rig the two pitches of 45ft and 100ft. Meanwhile Steve ran back to Ingleborough Show Cave to collect his ammo-can. While Roger and Glenn were down Bar, Main Shaft was rigged by Brian, Steve and Pip.

It was 4 o'clock when Glenn went down Main Shaft, (365ft), followed by Pip. This was Pips first time and trip in Yorkshire; his hardest trip before was Longwood August, (Mendips). Glenn had never been down GG before, but he had been to Yorkshire. Roger and Steve therefore, were the only ones out of the four who had been down GG. Roger, then Steve descended Main Shaft for their second time.

The level of the water was about the same as in the summer i.e. medium level; the level of water throughout most of the system seemed average. Glenn and Pip had a good look around Main Chamber as they had only seen it in pictures before. We then packed all the SRT gear into a poly bag and proceeded to Old Henslers Crawl. The passage varies in height between 2 feet and 10 feet but the average height is about 4 feet high.

After about half-an-hour, we emerged in Flood Entrance Pot. Straight ahead was Bar Pot and to our left was another passage leading back to Main Chamber. We traversed along a 2-foot wide ledge above South East pot, (140ft) and continued up a small boulder choke, down then up another and down into the bottom of Bar Pot and to our great relief, we saw the rope, which was our way out. We sat eating chocolate and sorting the SRT gear, deciding which to take to Echo and what to leave behind. We decided to take with us 2 clogs, 2 sit harnesses, 1 pair of Jumars and Steve's brand new cloggers. After about ten minutes we left Bar Pot heading towards Hensler's Master Cave.

To get there we had to go through new Hensler's Crawls, which are about 500ft long with an average height of around 2 feet and are about 4 to 5 feet wide. For most of the way, we were crawling through cold, muddy water a few inches deep. The entrance to New Hensler's is a very small, awkward hole in the floor. It took us about 10 minutes to find this hole. After about half-an-hour in this passage it started to open out until we were able to stand in a large stream passage. The water was coming in from Disappointment Pot.

We continued up this stream passage for about 200 feet, where we came into Hensler's Stream Passage. It is about 10 – 15 feet wide and about 20 feet high. It then goes bigger again when you come to Hensler's Master Cave, which is about 30 feet high and 40 feet wide. The river went down to the left, while we went up a boulder slope to the right, where you go along a passage which is more like a mine passage than a cave; then a double bend where we came to the Far Country ladder.

The climb up the ladder is grim because it sags as weight is put on it. Steve went up first, followed by Glenn, Pip and Roger. There are three passages at the top of the ladder; the one to the "Blowhole" is on the right as you go up. After some easy hand – and – knee crawling, we came to the Blowhole, which is a hole about a foot in diameter and a foot long with a cold pool in it. We all had an Ammo can each, two large ones and two small ones. Roger and Glenn had a

spare cell each, just in case. We all got through the Blowhole, without any trouble at all. Another 40 feet of hand and knee crawling and we came to Echo Rift (40 feet).

Roger then rigged the pitch while Steve and Glenn rigged themselves up. Steve went down first, followed by Glenn, Pip and Roger. The pitch is very easy; free hanging most of the way with a ledge 25 feet down.

The floor at the bottom is very muddy; up to a foot deep in places. We tied our S.R.T. gear on to the rope and then went to our left, (as you look up the pitch). We went straight into the Southgate Ducks, which are 600 feet long, with about six ducks in all; the smallest having a 5-inch airspace. If these ducks should have sumped we would have been trapped. The water was very cold and we were very glad to get out of Southgate.

We reached the First Cross System at about 7 o'clock where we had a bite to eat. The passage here leads to Mountain Hall through Nevada passage, which was on our right. On our left was a large bedding plane, which was another way back to Echo Rift. Straight ahead was "Sahara", a small, sandy passage that is about 250 feet long, 3 to 4 feet wide and varies in height from 8 inches to 15 feet!

This passage was awkward for Glenn, who was the biggest and Roger who was the smallest. There is one squeeze, which has a small stone sticking out of the floor and with no handholds to pull ourselves through; this is where everyone had his problems. This was soon overcome. In Sahara there are some fine straws, some reaching up to 2 feet long. We passed the place where Roger and Brian had "bivvied" in the summer; all that was left were a few candles.

Soon after this, the passage opened out to Northgate, where there are some very fine formations; mainly straws with creamy white stals and flowstone. We then carried on to the right through a large pool and to the passage with sand on the bottom instead of mud, but this soon changed. At one point there is an inlet where we all had a refreshing drink. Where this stream enters we turned left into a passage 3 feet high, but 2 feet of it is mud and cold water. A bit more crawling and we came to a small climb of 10 feet. After this we were stooping until we came to 12 pure white Cave Pearls. At this point, the passage splits up. They both go to Clay Cavern. We went up the right passage.

We soon came to Clay Cavern, which is about 20 feet wide and 10 feet high. On our right up a boulder slope was the way on. Straight ahead was a grotto and to our left was another way back out. We went up the slope to the "Orifice".

We went down this head first, as you cannot turn around at the bottom, then along Penny Arcade, which is wicked crawling because there are pebbles and sharp rocks everywhere, with an awkward constriction at the end. You then start hand and knee crawling again until the passage opens out to Bree Junction, where we left our ammo cans.

On our right was Rivendell and straight on, the Northern Line. Here, Roger said we were nearly at the end of the system; 1,000 feet to go. Glenn led followed by Pip, Steve then Roger. We continued down the Northern Line. At first we were walking, passing some fine formations, including a large white stalagmite known as the "Lady of Far Waters". The passage from here is 4 to 6 feet high with 2 to 3 feet of water nearly all the way to the end. Here and there a small stream joined the main stream way. After what seemed like ages, we reached the Terminal Sump, the end; beyond was a sump called Far…t.

At the end of the system there is nothing really to see except very thick mud and cold water! At this point we were 500 feet under the surface.

On our way out on the left, we passed a small rift called the Canal, which leads to Hallucination Aven. We did not go up it but carried on. After a short while we came back to Bree Junction, where we turned left into Rivendell. This is a beautiful passage filled mainly with straws, but there are some stals, columns, bosses and helictites. We then went back to Bree Junction, had a rest and more food!

Pip and Glenn started to lead out followed by Steve and Roger, through Penny Arcade, the Orifice, Clay Cavern, up the climb then to the inlet for another drink. Then to Northgate, through the sandy crawls of Sahara on to the other side of which we had a rest, and some

Dextrosols and Kendal-Mint-Cake. Then we went through the cold ducks of Southgate, to Echo Rift. Steve and Pip rigged themselves up. Steve used his Cloggers while Pip used Jumars. When they got to the top, Roger and Glenn tied on some ammo cans and they were hauled up. The SRT gear was lowered and Glenn went up followed by Roger. We all found the Jumars better to use because of the handle on them. Also the Cloggers were new and their cams would hardly move. At the top we had something to eat while Roger plaited the rope.

We crawled off to the Blowhole, through the Blowhole, down the Far Country ladder, where Glenn's belt broke as well as his wetsuit. Along Hensler's Master Cave and soon we were crawling through New Hensler's then South East Passage and Bar Pot. We all rigged up.

Glenn went up first followed by Roger, Steve then Pip. Glenn had gone asleep at the bottom of Bar Pot's first pitch where Roger fell asleep while Steve was prussiking up! When Steve arrived, he and Roger took some ammo cans to the first pitch. When they got back, Pip was just climbing over the top with a very dim light. Roger and Pip then hauled up the rope with help from Glenn, who had woken up. Steve then went to sleep while Pip and Roger plaited the rope. We all then went up to the first pitch carrying the rope and the rest of the ammo cans. Glenn went up first and came to the surface at 4 o'clock in the morning. Steve went up followed by Pip. Glenn came back in and helped pull up the ropes and four ammo cans. Then a very cold Roger came up and the trip was over.

Nothing had gone wrong, luckily! The trip was a success. We were cold, tired and hungry but happy because the trip was over.

We started what seemed like an endless walk down to Trow Ghyll and after what seemed like ages; we reached Clapham at 6 o'clock, where we got changed. Steve and Roger could not get their wetsuit zips undone so they had to cut themselves out. We then 'scoffed' ourselves with any food we could get hold of and we all got into our sleeping bags and were out like lights.

Roger, Steve, Glenn and Pip.

Epilogue by Brian Lewarne.

If the reader has borne with the above account, he may like to know that one hour before they came out, I had left Bar Pot after pacing around for 10 hours on the surface! They had everything against them pulling off a successful trip. All credit is due to Roger for no blundering in route-finding, as he had only been there once before, and all credit is due to all four of them for making the whole trip a success in more ways than one. IT IS CALLED TEAM WORK! A lot of people in our club might take heed of that. One other thing; all four were aged 16 years old. That's a record for a Far Waters trip.

PS. Far…. t is an extension or Far…. Waters, which is an extension of Far…. Country. It is a sump.

Matienzo Summer, 2008

The expeditions in 2008 were highly successful, with over 13km of passage being found. This makes it the best year since the mid 1970's for new discovery in Matienzo. Over 3000 sites have been located over the last 38 years, totaling nearly 300 km of surveyed passage. This year major discoveries were made in the Four Valleys system, and in the new cave found at Easter, Torca la Vaca, where 6.3km of passage had been found by the end of the summer.

The adjoining Ason gorge has seen important discoveries over the last few years, and in May the Mortero de Astrana and Garma Ciega systems were joined by Ramales cavers to make a system 103 km long, the Sistema de Mortillano. This is the 18th longest in the World.

We traveled out to Spain leaving Plymouth on the 23rd July, the ferry reaching Santander in time for early morning shopping. Arriving at Matienzo, the campsite had already been set up by some of the Manchester University group (MUSC), who PCG members will remember from last

year's NAMHO event. Having set up tents we received a message that a calf had been stuck down a hole at Riaño. I went over with Pete Smith (Pedro), Pete Eagen and Ian Ellis Chandler. Having located the lady farmer, we were taken to a field on the edge of the village. It turned out the calf was down a narrow rift; the previous day attempts had been made to open this up with a JCB but these failed when solid rock was reached. We rigged a ladder and Pedro went down first, but the rift was so narrow it was impossible for him to reach beyond the calf's head. It appeared its legs were also stuck in mud below. Pete went down next, and similarly failed. Despite being stuck for over 24 hours the calf was still alive, so the farmer agreed we should try to get it out by any means possible, which basically meant putting a rope round its neck and pulling, being the only option left. This succeeded enough for the calf to be lifted enough for Pete to get a rope round its body. It was soon back on surface in the hands of a large crowd of local well wishers who provided stimulus enough for the calf to soon be staggering around the field, shaky but with all signs of a full recovery. Our efforts were rewarded over the following weeks with large numbers of eggs and slabs of pork. The cave was previously unknown to us, and was given the number 3016.

On 25th July Pete, Angus and myself visited Cave of the Wild Mare (767), a short resurgence cave which we had seen issuing a huge quantity of floodwater at Easter. As this was close to Torca La Vaca (2889), the exciting new cave discovered at the end of the Easter expedition, we thought this warranted a further visit. This time with normal flow no water was coming out of the entrance, the small stream in the cave issuing from impassible resurgences in the stream bed below the entrance. The entrance is impressive and wide and contains an old stone structure built across it, but soon drops to a crawl in a wide bedding. This soon heightens to comfortable walking, with a number of side passages we did not really investigate, and a series of high cross-rifts with possibilities of high level continuations. Towards the end the water deepens and we stopped at a point where a large eel was seen heading towards us. We then investigated a side passage, issuing a strong draught, left ongoing by previous explorers in the early 1990's. This degenerates to a low wet crawl, at the end of which Pete was able to pass a choke to reveal the passage continuing. Angus and myself investigated a side rift, about 6m high, which I climbed at one end to where a slippery exposed traverse crossed to the other end where it appeared a passage continued. Balking at the traverse, I passed this to Pete who managed to climb the far end using hidden flakes, to show ongoing passage with a fair draught. As we found the existing survey confusing and lacking detail we then commenced to resurvey and photograph the cave.

26th July Pete, Angus, Ali. Cave of the Wild Mare (767). We pushed the passage at the top of the rift, which ended at a cross rift, with a shaft one way and a choke the other. The bottom passage split into chokes and a too low streamway. Further into the cave we located an inlet with low airspace. All these passages draught out strongly.

27th July. Cave 2916. This site to the south Torca la Vaca had been located at Easter and descended on ladders to a chamber containing various dumped dead animals, and an ongoing narrow slot left for lack of further ladders. I started bolting the shaft for SRT, supported on surface by Andy Pringle and Ian Chandler. The top few metres of the first pitch are in sandstone, as usual too soft to take spits, but below this the shaft was in good limestone and there was a noticeable, though intermittent, inward draught. At the foot of the pitch a squirm through a slot led to a slope requiring a bolt, at the foot of which the previously entered chamber was reached. At this point the delights of hand bolting in a cloud of bluebottles led to a retreat. We also looked at a number of draughting digs in an area dubbed the Langdales, being above the Lakes recently discovered in Torca la Vaca. These were situated below a series of large partly foundered sandstone blocks, in the same wood as 2916. I dropped one open hole into a small chamber where the draught issued from a low slot requiring enlarging to reach a further chamber beyond; a slot below the entrance formed a second entrance. We also looked at site 3035, the stream sink in eucalyptus seen at Easter. The depression contained a small cave under sandstone at the back, and at the bottom, probably where the stream sinks in wet weather, a draughting dig in boulders was found.

28th July. Cave 2916. Pete Eagen, Santi, Angus, Ali. Pete managed to get down the slot in the terminal chamber and a further pitch beyond in a complex area of rifts, but being concerned about being the only person able to get through the constriction left this going with the intention of enlarging the squeeze. On exiting the cave we discovered others looking at other nearby sites had had an incident with a local inhabitant, resulting in the Guardia Civil being called. It seemed allegations about the use of explosives had been made, at a sensitive time due to an upsurge of ETA terrorist activity. A number of visits by Guardia Civil and judiciary in following days led to no further action, they were evidently satisfied with our use of legally imported pyrotechnics for caving and our permit for cave exploration.

29th July. Cave of the Wild Mare – Santi, Angus, Ali. We completed the survey of the entrance area, a series of in places roomy passages on the right all ending in chokes heading towards surface. We then continued along the end of the main passage, a number of canals ending at a roomy chamber from which the sump dived in about 1991, Sump of the Wild Eels, commences. The strong draught appeared to issue from high cross rifts in the roof. I swam across the chamber and found a draughting slot too tight for me to get through. Repeating the swim with a lump hammer to improve buoyancy allowed the slot to be opened up, a short section of rift saw a choke with the draught evidently coming down from above. No eels this time.

30th July. 3034 in the Langdales. The slot was partly dug out, but requires tools to continue. Meanwhile Pete and Santi pushed 2916 down further pitches to a too tight rift.

31st July. Torca La Vaca (2889). Santi, Pete, Angus, Ali. We photographed various passages and dropped 3 different pitches in the top level of the cave, all about 30m deep, our 3 ladders were not sufficient to bottom these, and measured another 2 by Disto showing these also about the same depth. Other shafts had previously been dropped, two entering sections of deep water representing in all probability the continuation of the stream in Cave of the Wild Mare. We also improved the rigging on the 12m ladder pitch dropping to the lower parts of the cave.

At the bottom level of the cave a very tight squeeze with a big draught had been passed by Mandy from MUSC to a further pitch. The slot was widened and the pitch descended to a deep lake (Lake Bassenthwaite) leading to a low duck in deep water issuing the draught. This was passed to major extensions leading off south. However our trips concentrated on finishing off leads in the old part of the cave explored at Easter.

2nd August. Torca La Vaca (2889). Phil Pappard, Andy Pringle, Santi, Ali, Pete. While Pete and Santi continued dropping shafts in the upper level, one of which seemed to connect to the small streamway leading off the entrance pitches, Andy Phil and myself went to the slot to Bassenthwaite to enlarge it further. The route involved descending P12, then taking a route with some traversing and passing areas of rather vulnerable formations, to large sandy passages. After Seven-Way Junction these end at a choke (probably the same seen in the higher levels, under a surface depression). Just before this the slot leads off on the left. We soon got to work on the slot, without much success as the caps didn't really work in rock already partly shattered by previous attempts. Pete and Santi soon joined us; after deciding to return with different tactics, Pete and Andy started on out. On the way they put a traverse line from P12 to the entrance rift forming a quick way out and missing some vulnerable formations. Phil, Santi and myself then looked at a passage leading off Seven-Way Junction, the 50m Rift, explored previously to a traverse. This seems to take much of the draught from Bassenthwaite, so it was thought it might lead to a connection to Cave of the Wild Mare. Phil bolted across the traverse, a blind pitch, and got through a low arch connecting into a further shaft.

3rd August. Torca La Vaca (2889). Torben Redder, Ali. Pete and Santi looked at holes near the entrance, finding some passage which linked back to known passage. Torben and I returned to the 50m Rift. The next shaft was dropped, 18m deep, again blind, and the passage continuing over the top would require a drill to reach. Having surveyed back to Seven-Way Junction as we couldn't find the previous survey stations, we looked at a passage leading off the foot of P12, across some traverses, where the continuation was a traverse again requiring a drill.

4th August. Torca La Vaca (2889). Carolina Smith, Ali, Pete. We took lots of photos then traversed off near the foot of P12 onto a large block which forms a Pitch Bypass route. An

exposed but easy move gains well decorated passage heading back towards the entrance. Going back over a wedged boulder gains easy passage leading to an 8m drop into Gour Passage, near Seven-Way Junction. This had not been descended, so I rigged it as a ladder pitch which forms a quick route to the end, and by-passing most of the more vulnerable formations passed on the previous route to the end. We then went down to Bassenthwaite, involving a tight 6m pitch down the slot followed by a further 8m pitch dropping to a mud slope at the edge of the lake. We also looked up a slope on the right, leading to a choke not shown on the original survey, which seemed rather suspect. Meanwhile Torben and Santi continued the 50m Rift, eventually connecting to the passage off P12 and showing the survey of the 50m Rift was very inaccurate.

5th August. Cueva Uzueca (Cueva de la Hoyuca 107). Pete, Lank Mills, Santi, Torben, Andy Pringle, Ali . Lank had a number of sites he wanted us to look at leading off Quadraphenia, the fine main passage of the entrance series of Uzueca. The latter is one of the components of the Sistema de los Cuatro Valles, now 51.6km long including large extensions made later in the summer off Gour Inlet. Changing in the center of the village, we walked down a field to the entrance, one of three spread along the foot of the steep hillside. The entrance is a slope down to a small arch, which Lank insisted we open up a bit, a couple of traverses over holes, then a roomy chamber. From here the shortest route involves a tight and awkward rift, which we avoided by a route up a climb, a crawl along a bedding, a drop down into further low passage which gradually enlarges to join the old route at the start of Quadraphenia. We took a few photos in this then continued to the first point, a previous climb leading into a passage called Roofers' Way. While Torben rebolted the climb we looked at other side passages in the area, which comprised short dry passages all connecting to low streamways or sump pools. The climb complete, Pete and I surveyed Roofer's Way, several hundred metres of largely crawling, ending at a tight section which even Pete was unable to pass.

7th August. Cave of the Wild Mare – Phil Pappard, Torben, Pete, Ali. We took Phil and Torben to the sump pool, where they bolted up the rifts issuing the draught. Passages going were blind, the draught coming down a too-tight rift higher up. Pete and myself first looked at the end of the high level passage, the choke would be a long term project and Pete squeezed up into a choke connecting to the aven. The water in the low inlet was dropped slightly by digging, during which Phil was confronted by an eel. The inlet was pushed a short distance but continues low and wet.

8th August. Sima –Cueva del Risco (25). Pedro, Pete, Phil, Jason Linn, Torben, Ali. This system, nearly 10km long, was one or the early explorations at Matienzo. Pedro has been resurveying the system, and wanted to survey the Dambuster Series, previously explored but not surveyed. Entering by Totca del Sedo, a ladder pitch of 8m behind some houses and below a spectacular wet-weather waterfall leads down some climbs to the river passage. Going upstream this soon enlarges to generally easy going. Eventually a slippery mudbank is climbed on the right to enter a large fossil passage. A short distance along this our route was up a steep inlet, noted by the Spanish in their first explorations in the 1960's. At the top an awkward exposed traversed had been rigged by Torben and Pedro a few days before. This led into a few hundred metres of big passage, well decorated in places, and ending in draughting chokes. One way led to exposed traversing high above the main river passage. We completed the survey and photography of this series.

9th August. Cueva de Cefrades (Dofrades) (42). Jason, Pete, Phil, Torben. The end of this cave lies close to Hidden Hole, which with its tight and deep entrance has not been pushed for some years; Cefrades if connected could make an easier way in. The digs at the end are however difficult and little was done. However a draughting slot was noted and opened up part way up the handline climb leading to the digs. This led into a chamber, where climbs led up to where daylight can be seen at the top entrance. Heading back towards Hidden Hole a high level traverse required more equipment to push.

11th March. Cueva Vallina. Torben, Jason, Pete and Ali. At Easter we found a high level extension in the area of the Clapham Bypass, by bolting upout of the Graveyard chamber. A number of other possible high level passages were noted in this chamber. Torben managed to reach one of these by bolting from the first bolt route done at Easter, and also climbed up the

far wall with bolt protection. The former dodn't go and the latter route was seen to continue higher. Meanwhile in the major passages before Swirl Chamber, some of the survey data from 1989 was confusing and had never been drawn up. This led off a confusing area of large boulders and pits at a junction of passages 20-30m wide. Jason and I eventually located the passage by systematically following the south wall of the passage. A large pit was followed by a slope up to a much smaller passage, containing false floors and fine helectites. We stopped where this reduced to a tight crawl, and resurveyed this and the larger passages back to the main route through the cave.

12th August. Torca La Vaca (2889). Phil, Pete, Torben, Ali. Pete and I first surveyed a short alternate route connecting to P12, with some nice formations. We then joined Phil and Torben who succeeded in removing some loose parts at the top of the tight pitch leading down to Bassenthwaite. This also made the slot passable by larger cavers. We then resurveyed the link down to the lake, some doubts having been expressed about the accuracy of the original survey. We had planned to carry this on through the cave, but fortunately met the wet-suited Killer, Jez, and Dave Foxton who continued this part. On the way out we removed a lot of rubbish left from the digging.

13th August. Cueva de Carcavueso (81). Torben, Ali. Being at a loss for a trip we walked over to the entrance of this cave, one of the main entrances into the Sistema de los Cuatro Valles, and only about 10 minutes walk from the campsite. It is located close to the main sink of the Rio Clarón, and in the past has frequently become blocked by flood debris. We were anticipating having to dig our way in, but found the entrance open and protected by tree stumps. I had only been into the cave once in 1988, so could not remember the route, but we explored the cave for the first hundred metres or so. The smallish passage soon enlarges and joins roomy chambers, eventually reaching a point where the river can be heard. We later found out the way on is down a short handline in this area.

14th August. Cueva Vallina. Torben, Jason, Pete, Will Stewart and Ali. A trip to look at a number of leads in Vallina II was planned. However as we had to rig on the way in and the size of the party and only a couple of us knowing much of the route meant that most of these were left for the future. Superb caving in generally easy passage, but with a distance underground of some 10km, taking 4 hours to get to the areas to be looked at made it an arduous trip. Reaching the First Abyss through Simeon's Loop, which we had visited in the last few years, we then climbed up handlines on the east side of the Abyss to the start of the Galeria de los Elefantes. This passage may not have been entered since the explorations of the early 1990's, and is a superb sandy tunnel with superb formations and large selenite needles on the floor. An easy stroll for about 600m led to our first goal,a passage left going when this part of the cave was first explored. After a food break, wh followed this passage, easy walking with the odd crawl and lots of question marks on the side, which proved to be all oxbows. Reaching the final survey station from the previous visit, the way on proved to be an awkward climb up through a choke into a chamber. Simeon had been that far before, but we were only able to get Torben up with help from below and needed a ladder or rope to allow anyone else up the climb to push the passage. We then returned to the First Abyss, where I remembered a route down overlooking the Thornton Force waterfall pitch. If we could get down this it would cut out about a kilometer of awkward, but spectacular, caving and make a fairly easy round trip which would assist pushing passages in the area. However the route was much more difficult to relocate than expected; the waterfall could be heard in the chamber, but the source of the sound was much harder to spot. Eventually Jason found the route, down through boulders under a huge block at the bottom of the chamber. By this time some people had had enough, so we carried on out by the way we came in, making it out for about 11pm, in time for bocadillios at the bar.

16th August. Cueva de Cefrades (Dofrades). Jason, Pete, Pedro, Ali. We returned to look at the rift found on the previous trip. This time we went in by the top entrance, an impressive rift on the hillside. The short entrance pitches had been descended a couple of times before on ladders; we used SRT to get over the top of this. I rigged from a ledge covered in pellets from an owl's nest higher in the rift. A y-hang, a short drop then a swing across to a narrowing of the rift where I put in another y-hang rebelay. From here a swing led into the passage reached by the

climbs reached on the previous trip. Pete rigged a climb up into a passage crossing holes down into the chamber we had found. A tension traverse led to a climb up where the only easily reachable lead was a tiny hole with a pool visible beyond, and no real draught. Surveying all of this, we then descended the climbs to look at a large passage over the top of the last pitch, which we had always assumed, incorrectly, was the connection to the top entrance. Pete started to bolt a traverse into this passage, but Pedro found a climb up from below bypassing the traverse. This proved the passage connected to an aven further towards the bottom entrance.

18th August. Cueva Uzueca (Cueva de la Hoyuca). Pete, Pedro, Ali. We returned to Quadraphenia to look at side passages, and also resurvey part of the main route, to put in LRUD data. Starting in the area we had looked at on the 5th, we looked at several side passages which closed down or dropped into low streamways. Next, on the right, a passage which eventually rejoined Quadraphenia was investigated. This crossed a number of traverses over a low wide streamway, which could be followed upstream to rejoin Quadraphenia. At the second traverse a passage on the right became too low but draughed well. Pete dug through the end to enter passages with signs of previous exploration, believed to be part of the Flashbulb Hall series, although nothing appears to have been surveyed before in this area.

We then continued to a main junction just before Pig's Trotters Chamber, where a long, easy going, stream passage goes on the left. This passage, Marathon Passage, heads towards surface and towards Riaño Cave. The passage draughts well, but ends in a series of stalled-up small passages with no apparent way on.

Alasdair Neill.

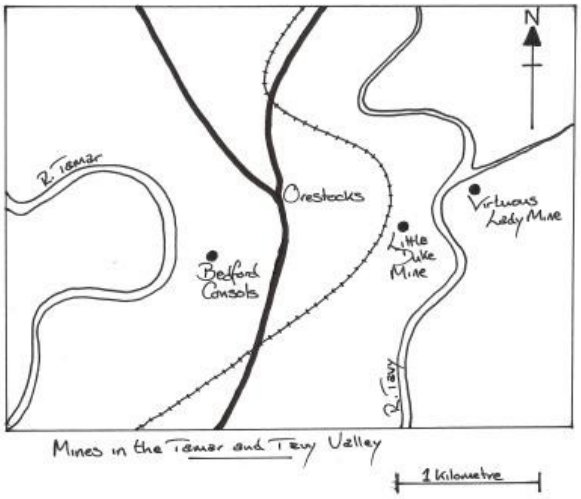
Little Duke Mine.

The mineralisation in relation to nearby mines.

British National Grid SX471695

This article relates to visits made in July and October 2008 with Plymouth Caving Group and Devon Mining Club.

Little Duke Mine was a small venture on the west bank of the River Tavy, high on the hillside and just down from the Orestocks Junction on the Bere Alston to Gulworthy Road. The mine was worked initially in the 1840s and 50s as a copper prospect in the higher levels, the majority of the production coming from around Whim Shaft. Tin production was from the western section of the mine around Gill's Shaft (now under disused bed of the Bere Alston to Tavistock railway) and West Shaft. The mine was reworked for arsenic and tin during the early 1900s though only in the upper levels where the highest yields of arsenic came from around Whim Shaft. There is no calciner, arsenic labyrinth or flue on the site, the ore was taken up to the Orestocks road junction and then to Gawton for refining. A brief walk in the woodland at the Orestocks road junction revealed numerous pieces of quartz having a white, massive form but none with any evidence of mineralisation.



In the present day the site is littered with part filled shafts and pits which form a rough line east-west from the crest of the hillside above the River Tavy to beyond the bed of the disused railway.

Access to the mine is via an open gunnis close to Whim shaft, a small entrance in level ground beside a ruined building. Whim shaft was originally sunk to the 30 fathom level with the workings finally reaching a

depth of 50 fathoms. Off Whim Shaft levels at 10 and 20 fathoms opened onto the hillside. Deep adit was a further 20 fathoms below the 30 fathom level and was driven south-eastward opening onto the bank of the River Tavy.

Little Duke is a little to the south of nearby Virtuous Lady Mine on the opposite bank of the River Tavy. The lodes of both mines trend roughly east-west but whereas those of Little Duke are just sub-vertical: 80°S, those of the latter are flat lodes, highly unusual for the Tavistock area. As a consequence of this and the mineralisation in the lodes it has been put forward that the lodes worked in Little Duke were extensions of those worked in Bedford Consols approximately a mile away a little to the south and on the far western side of the hill in Maddacleave Woods above Gawton.

If the arsenopyrite bearing lodes at Little Duke are related to those at Bedford Consols and not to those at Virtuous Lady this may simply be due to the level of emplacement relative to the ground surface. Virtuous Lady was worked primarily at or below river level: 25m ordnance datum, whereas the productive ground in Little Duke was in the upper levels: approx 120m o.d. and Bedford Consols similarly 130m o.d. There is no major faulting of the ground between Little Duke and Bedford Consols nor along the course of the Tavy Valley between Little Duke and Virtuous Lady inviting the conclusion that the relative positions of the lodes observed in the present day are the same as at the time of emplacement. However, given the sub-vertical deposition of the lodes in Little Duke and the flat lode deposits in Virtuous Lady it may be that the lodes were deposited in distinct mineralisation phases .

The lode at Bedford Consols apparently also has quite a steep dip but in the absence of any large, accessible, stopeing it is impossible to estimate the actual dip. The Bedford Consols lode also yields small quantities of anatase, a mineral comparatively rare in the wider Tamar area but this mineral is also listed in some records as having been found at Little Duke.

Entering Little Duke the gunnis is about 8 to 10 meters deep on a modest stope. The lode is apparent in the roof of the stope as a thin 2 to 6 inch wide, slightly brecciated fissure with a center of pale arsenopyrite occasionally with small stalactites of iron (limonite) and flecks of pyrite and chalcopyrite. However, at the foot of the first pitch there is a large area of green secondary minerals on the footwall of a small offshoot stope indicating a more substantial copper deposit.

A low narrow passage heads off along the trend of the lode towards the river from close to the bottom of the pitch but ends after a short distance. The main stope heads off in the opposite direction (westwards back towards the railway track) over a low pile of debris under some well preserved timbering to the top of the second pitch. Below the pile of debris a small hole extends downwards onto a lower floor in the stope where there is a perfectly preserved wheel barrow. This has the remains of an iron band around the wheel and where water has dripped onto it flakes of native copper have been formed by electrolysis as well as green copper secondary deposits.



Small pieces of killas rock containing arsenopyrite were collected from the floor of the stope. The arsenopyrite has a good crystal structure, is bright and silvery when

freshly broken but exposed crystal faces have taken on a golden surface lustre. The arsenopyrite, for the most part, appears to have crystallised directly into the country rock as disseminated strings without only traces of gangue minerals such as quartz and pale green fluorite. The killas has been much altered by the mineralisation and has softened in relation to the distance from the lode forming with dark grey-green chlorite as an alteration product and a grey-green clay where it is in direct contact. This appearance strongly supports the notion that the lodes here are extensions of those at Bedford Consols as that lode where it cuts across the end of the adit exhibits these same physical qualities. This physical appearance is uncommon for the Tamar area as a whole where arsenopyrite mostly occurs in shiny, massive form associated with quartz stringers: Gunnislake Bridge Adit and South Crebor, or a dull gritty form deposited on but not as stringers in the killas as in Devon Great Consols and Devon United.

Pyrite is also common in the loose material on the floor of the upper stope. It occurs mostly as massive lumps containing small 6 faced cubic crystals of 1 to 2 millimetres poorly bonded together in a matrix of gritty irregular pyrite. Some samples also contain chalcopyrite in pockets of very bright material.

The arsenopyrite in the dumps at Virtuous Lady is also found deposited in a softened grey shale and has a profound yellowish lustre almost to the degree that it could be confused with pyrite and an unusually high sulphur content. The sulphur content can be demonstrated by simply heating powdered mineral in a closed glass tube whereupon the sulphur will be driven off and will condense on the glass further up the tube, initially as a yellow deposit but burning to a black deposit with further heating. The purpose of prolonging the heating is that pure arsenic will also be driven off and will form a silver 'mirror' on the glass below the sulphur. The residue in the tube is magnetic being the reduced iron from the arsenopyrite. When heated in this way the arsenopyrite from Virtuous Lady evolves so much sulphur that it will form liquid droplets on the glass. The dumps at Virtuous Lady also contain well formed pyrite crystals up to 2cm along with abundant siderite and quartz.

The second pitch in Little Duke is down a narrow shaft that descends about 15m with a long ladder apparently glued to the side wall as it is certainly no longer supported from below. Several stope platforms are accessible from the shaft but none is extensive. The bottom of the shaft is quite confined with a small dry area and a flooded portion over a continuation of the shaft. This has been capped with discarded planks and ladders and submerged in about 2 feet of water. The timbers forming the platform-roof above this lowest level carry massive heaps of deads. Across the flooded shaft is a very well preserved level with large rounded uprights and roof bearers and well fitted planks, though it is quite deeply flooded. In an alcove off this passage are a number of relics including some sort of metal, paraffin or oil burning, lamp which stills shows a short length of wick. There are also bolts fixed together by candle wax that has run over them and a tin of approximately 1 pint capacity with pitch or wax around the inside making it quite weighty. There are also several candle stubs on the woodwork.

The water in the passage is about 2 feet deep but floor was apparently sound, initially littered with timber and ladders but then with rails. The timbering extends for about 6 to 8m before giving way to a low rock ceiling with only 12 inches clearance above the water, beyond which was a small stope apparently extending back over the timbered passage. There is some evidence of the lode in this stope though it is intermittent and not as clear as in the upper stope. Again there is abundant killas containing arsenopyrite to varying degrees amongst the loose material on the floor. From the stope the passage is tall enough to allow a person to walk upright and about 3 feet wide however it soon turns sharply left (south) and ends after about 20m at the foot of another shaft or winze which is completely choked with fallen debris.

Back over the flooded winze on the 'dry' side a narrow entrance gives access to a low passage under a massive pile of deads held back by only by very dubious looking timbers comprising some rough hewn planks but for

the most part only 3 inch diameter interlaced pine poles resting against thicker round props. This passage winds for several hundred meters in the direction of the riverbank. However the timbering in some places has given way and it is very unsound throughout though even where it has fallen in it is impossible to determine the extent of the stopeing overhead. There are a number of artefacts including a galvanised bucket.

Four samples from Little Duke; the first and second from the upper stope the third & fourth from the lower level, were heated in a closed tube. The first and second samples gave the tubes a coating of sulphur and a bright arsenic mirror. The third sample was obviously predominantly pyrite and though a dusting of sulphur coated the tube there was insufficient arsenic evolved to form a mirror. The fourth sample was dull silver-grey and visually gave the appearance of arsenopyrite but when heated it gave copious sulphur fumes no arsenic was evolved.

A sample of pyrite from the upper stope at Little Duke was also heated, sulphur was evolved and a magnetic residue remained but no mirror formed.

A reference sample from Bedford Consols was similarly treated and that gave a full coat of sulphur but perhaps a more substantial mirror than either of the Little Duke samples.

Despite close microscopic inspection anatase could not be identified in any of the samples collected at little Duke, though minute isolated cassiterite crystals were observed.

Based on the physical appearance of the arsenopyrite, the steep dip of the lode, the dissemination of the arsenopyrite as thin strings in the softened killas with little gangue mineralisation and the modest sulphur content it does seem fair to suggest that the arsenic bearing veins in the upper sections of Little Duke Mine are more akin to those of Bedford Consols rather than those of the much closer Virtuous Lady Mine. To the contrary however the abundance of pyrite and chalcopyrite but absence of anatase at Little Duke would be evidence for a link to the Virtuous Lady lodes.

Consequently, it may be the case that the presently accessible lodes at Little Duke are upper vertical extensions of lodes that extend beneath the River Tavy at depth and that at depth they would be more characteristic of the lodes at Virtuous Lady and that in the accessible section however they are extensions of the Bedford Consols lodes.

Chris Popham

Next PCG Newsletter will be available early in 2010.

If any member would like to submit any articles for inclusion, please email, or post copy to the Editor. Thank you.