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A Soaking on Skye

by Julie Hesketh-Laird

This year's Grampian Speleological Group's Annual Dinner was held on Skye and never having been there, let alone caved there, I thought it definitely worth a look. According to the GSG's "Caves of Skye, Occasional Publication no 7", there is a considerable outcrop of both Cambrian Durness Limestone and Jurassic Limestone. There are only 2 caves over 300m in length but from my now limited experience of what the area lacks in length, it certainly makes up in quality.

On a wet and windy Friday afternoon, Eva, my 4 and a half year old daughter and I headed off towards Skye for the weekend – my husband Ross would join us on the Saturday evening for the GSG annual dinner. Skye is about four and a half hours drive from Edinburgh. Only the first 45 minutes is on motorway and soon the road is windy and the biggest hazard is the grazing deer! The Grampian had booked a hostel and restaurant just over the Skye Bridge for what was the best attended dinner ever in the club's history.

Saturday dawned, very wet and incredibly windy. Around 30 or so people went underground that day – a large group of us heading over to Spar Cave (the Cave of the Nursling), a sea cave just to the south of Elgol. For some strange reason I had thought that we would just ramble over a sandy beach and pop into a sea cave for 20 minutes or so and then head to the café in Elgol for tea. So I had taken just waterproofs, a helmet and a couple of torches. And a 4 year old girl. Hmm. Following in the footsteps of Sir Walter Scott who wrote about the cave in his work "Lord of the Isles" in the early 19th century, we set off in the lashing, horizontal rain down a muddy footpath and onto a rocky beach. We reached the small headland to find the tide still high and the cave on the other side. Some brave soul traversed around the headland, above crashing waves and called the rest of us over as the tide was on its way down. Eva was just superb with Mark and Pete - Grampian lads - helping her across the sea-weedy traverse. Thank goodness Ross wasn't there to see us heave her across the climbs by the hood of her coat! A very slippery walk up the valley on the other side of the headland took us to the cave entrance and under a waterfall in full spate and into the cave itself. When Walter Scott visited the cave in 1814 he had to climb over a wall built across the entrance using a rope, but a later passing sailor fired a cannon at the wall, demolishing it. Remains of the wall across the head of the inlet still exist. The cave itself is just spectacular – with almost vertical sides. It is

Julie and Eva in Spar Cave (photo Mark Lonnen)

From the editor

It is nearly the end of another year – another good one for MCG.

I think you'll agree that there has been lots of interest throughout the year resulting in some good reports. Thanks to you all for your input.

The Newsgroup is an excellent source of information too and it covers so many areas of caving – a very useful tool for me as Editor. But more than that; even though I live 300 miles away from the general hub of activity, this huge conversation that everyone can have enables me to be a part of whatever is going on.

I'd like to wish you all a great Christmas and a happy New Year – and here's to another good year for MCG. ***Yvonne***

In this issue

formed by the erosion of an igneous dyke from a calcareous sandstone bed. It is the most surprising of sea caves and completely unlike any other I have ever been in as it is just beautifully decorated. The passage is high and the floor muddy to begin with but as one progresses into the cave, the walls, floor and ceiling become sparkly and white and the passage climbs up over flow gours to a clear emerald green pool. A good description (of a tour of the cave in 1835) found on the web at http://cookfmly.rootsweb.com/mcphun1835/tour10.html describes it well – "when, becoming incrusted with this brilliant substance [spar], it suddenly passes over a high mound, on which its roof rests, supported by massy columns crowned by capitals of pendent icicles. From this majestic portal, a steep descent conducts to a pool of the clearest water. It is only within a few years, that this cave was brought to light. Its beauty and magnificence when first discovered - before it had been despoiled of its stalactitic decorations by the contemptible pilfering of inconsiderate travellers - is spoken of with rapture by those who enjoyed the singular good fortune of witnessing it. What a proof does the unobserved toil of Nature, constructing, during ages, a monument of its workmanship so splendid in the dark recesses of a rock, afford of the might and skill of the guiding hand of Him who directs her operations where no eye but His surveys them, as well as on those vast fields of space on which worlds may gaze with wonder and delight!"

Soaked to the skin – (even through Gore-Tex!), we made our way back to the car and I took my shivering child off to the local village hall for a warming hot chocolate and a complete change of clothes. I am not sure the experience has exactly enthused her about caving but it doesn't seem to have put her off either (caving now = chocolate in her mind!).

That evening, the GSG gathered for its usual excellent annual dinner and around 40 or so people gathered after to hear me give a presentation on Upper Flood – and so an orderly queue of people wanting trips in the cave began to form!

Sunday dawned slightly brighter and we headed off to the Allt Nan Leac Valley and for the first time, the cloud had lifted to reveal just what a spectacular setting the caves of Skye are in – with the Cuillins towering above the sea at Loch Slapin. A large group of us headed over to the Camas Malag Caves – one of the best fun caves I have done in a long time. Steve Birch, a local Skye caver treated us to a guided tour of a few of the caves of the Valley. A 15 minute coastal walk took us to a small depression where a healthy stream was flowing off the hill into a low cave entrance. I waved goodbye to Ross and Eva and disappeared into what I can only describe as a Yorkshire cave in miniature. The cave winds its way downstream taking a peaty torrent of water past occasional oxbows and through deep wallows. An unusual feature which is common in Skye caves is the occurrence of igneous dykes protruding into the limestone. At one point, the granite forces the water back above ground for a few metres before the stream plunges back over a short pitch and underground once more. That gave just enough time to wave again to the family who were walking on the surface and head back into the lower cave. The short (around 200m or so) but superb trip ended when the walking height rifty passage opens out to a spectacular entrance on the cliff overlooking Loch Slapin.

We had just enough time to take in Beinn An Dubhaich Cave before we hit the long road back to Edinburgh. A 10 minute walk uphill from Camus Malag, this cave too has multiple entrances due to the water being forced above ground by igneous intrusions. The cave was reached by a slippery climb down a small tree into a shakehole with 2 passages off. The dry way led first into a canyon which we traversed for 25m or so to a climb into a deep pool and a sump. We returned via the much thinner bottom of the canyon and then set off to the very "exciting" wet passage. The "wetsuit boys" had little trouble at all navigating the absolute torrent in Water-

Julie at Beinn An Dubhaich Cave dry entrance (photo Pete Dennis)

MCG t-shirts

A few limited edition Upper Flood t-shirts are still available. To avoid disappointment, order yours now from any committee member, price £10.00.

fall Chamber – so fierce was the water there that it ripped my Petzl Tikka off my helmet, never to be seen again. I made a hasty retreat in the dark, groping my way up the turbulent cascade and inhaling the peaty water as I went. Fortunately the lads managed to find the extremely tight and wet furthest exit to the cave and we met up on the surface – where I was relieved to breathe the sweet Skye air. The wet caves of Skye hold no hostages and are very serious undertakings in such wet weather!

Julie in Beinn An Dubhaich Cave (photo Pete Dennis)

Speaking of the weather – it looked as if it was about to break once more and so we headed quickly back to the beach car park where Ross and Eva had been playing in the rock pools. Alas, we didn't quite make it before the heavens opened once more and we struggled out of our sodden gear in a complete deluge ensuring we were damp and soggy for our long road trip home.

If you are ever on Skye for a holiday, DO pack your caving gear – you will be in for a wonderful treat – even if the weather is unkind to you as it was for us. The GSG occasional publication no 7 is all you need for a long weekend of absolutely superb caving. Haste ye there!

Shetland Attack Pony (it's only the name that's stupid)

by Ben Cooper

The Shetland Attack Pony is the Holy Grail for cave surveyors; well almost. For the last few years, occasional articles have appeared in the BCRA caving journals describing experiments with electronic compass and clinometer technology. The goal is to produce a "total station" for cave surveying, a single instrument that at a push of a button will record all of the survey readings in one go. At the start of 2007, there seemed to be little progress in producing a device that was sufficiently accurate, let alone one that was compact, robust, affordable and suitable for mass production. Then, out of the blue, a GP from Lancashire, called Phil Underwood, published details of his prototype electronic compass and clinometer that met all of the above criteria [CREG 66]. He called the unit the Shetland Attack Pony, and was offering a unit for loan and in the future to build units and sell them at the realistic price of £250.

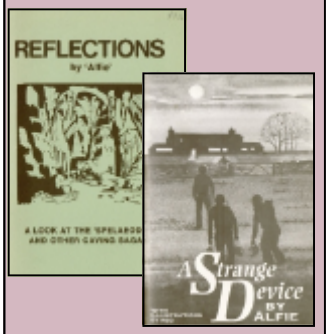
Figure 1 - SAP shown next to Suunto compass for scale

The benefits of the SAP were immediately obvious. The unit is aimed using a laser pointer, so can be used at arms length. In constricted passages, taking sights with a traditional compass and clinometer can be almost impossible, and typically the quality of readings in such circumstances is very poor. With the SAP, it is as easy to use in a con-

Alfie

Sad to report that Stanley J Collins, better known as "Alfie" has died at the age of 82. Older members will remember him from the singing sessions at the Hunters in the 1960s.

Author of 'The Spelaeodes', 'Reflections' and 'A Strange Device' and composer of many caving songs, he was guest speaker at one of our dinners where, in his inimitable style, he recited his "Nautical Narrative of Percy Pound"



Dave Irwin

A short film of Wig Memorial Day is now available on Mendip TV

http://www.mendiptv.co.uk/

Swildons book

The Swildons Book will be officially launched at the Hunters on Saturday 8th December at 8pm. If you have prepaid, reserved or just want to try your luck, make sure to get your copy as it is a limited edition

Why SAP?

Shetland Attack Pony seems a strange name for a piece of surveying kit. But if you go to the SAP website, the inventor Phil Underwood explains how it was named:

"I often dreamed of a digital compass/clino, that would allow me to just place the instrument against the station, shine a laser beam on the next station, and record the readings directly into memory, to be down-loaded later on a computer. So I built one and, thanks to the high alcohol content of Austrian beer, called it the Shetland Attack Pony."

So there you have it. Shetland Attack Pony. It's only the name that's stupid.

Waterwheel key

Charterhouse Centre have replaced the padlock and MCG have been given a copy of the new key.

stricted passage as in a comfortable chamber.

As it happened, Mike Richardson and I had agreed to survey Upper Flood's notorious Boulder Choke just a few weeks before Phil's article was published. A trip with that objective had fortuitously been aborted due to a small mud-slump blocking the way. On seeing his article, I immediately wrote to Phil and he offered to loan me his unit. It finally arrived in time for the August member's weekend, and I managed to persuade Mike to take a day off work and make a long weekend of it to get the most out of the SAP.

We set out on the Friday to survey the Boulder Choke, considering this to be the easier trip physically, and so conserve our energy for a long surveying trip at the far end of Neverland on the Saturday. All our expectations of the SAP were fulfilled.

The first thing to point out is that Phil has put a tremendous amount of thought and design into the unit. It is indeed compact and very easy to use. It is microprocessor controlled, and so Phil has of course had to write the control software for the unit. In so doing, he has put in numerous additional features that give the SAP the feel of a professional production unit, rather than that of an experimenter's prototype. Snazzy features include:

- On-off control, to stop the unit being accidentally switched on in transit
- Auto-switch off if unused to conserve the battery
- Continuously alternating display of compass and clino readings
- "Freeze" control to freeze the readings when a survey leg is recorded
- Survey leg counter
- Non-volatile memory to record survey leg data
- Auto-upright display, that flips the display as the unit is turned over
- Display and laser brightness control
- Battery charge indication (percentage)
- Ambient temperature display
- USB computer interface to download saved survey data
- Configuration control via USB interface
- Computer software to simplify interface to the unit (available for both Windows and UNIX)
- Automatic battery recharge control (via the USB computer interface)
- Buzzer to warn of magnetic interference

Underground the unit performed faultlessly and lived up to all our expectations. Using the SAP for compass and clino, and my Bosch laser rangefinder for distance, it was not only a lot more comfortable to take measurements, but also very much faster. Indeed, even in the constricted Boulder Choke, we found that instead of Mike waiting for me to take all the measurements, I was now waiting for him to write them all down and sketch the passage. Taking readings was a joy. In the Boulder Choke, we surveyed 82m in 39 legs, an average leg length of 2.1m per leg, indicative of the small and convoluted dimensions of the Choke.

The next day, with the help of Julie Hesketh, we tackled the remaining 300m of Neverland beyond the Rope Climb. The survey trip for the first 400m of Neverland had taken 12 hours producing 41 legs (9.7m per leg). Braced for another long trip we set off ridiculously late, not making it underground until after mid-day. Thankfully, however, with slightly easier terrain and the benefit of the SAP, we polished off the survey in record time recording a massive 48 legs (6.3m per leg). We emerged from the cave just 7.5 hours later.

A couple of loop closures on the Saturday also established a survey accuracy of 1.6% for the SAP. In fact, compared to compass and clino under ideal conditions (<1%), this is not a great result, and not as good as Phil's published results (1%) [CSG 37], but it still represents a good overall accuracy, and one that is more than adequate for our current purposes.

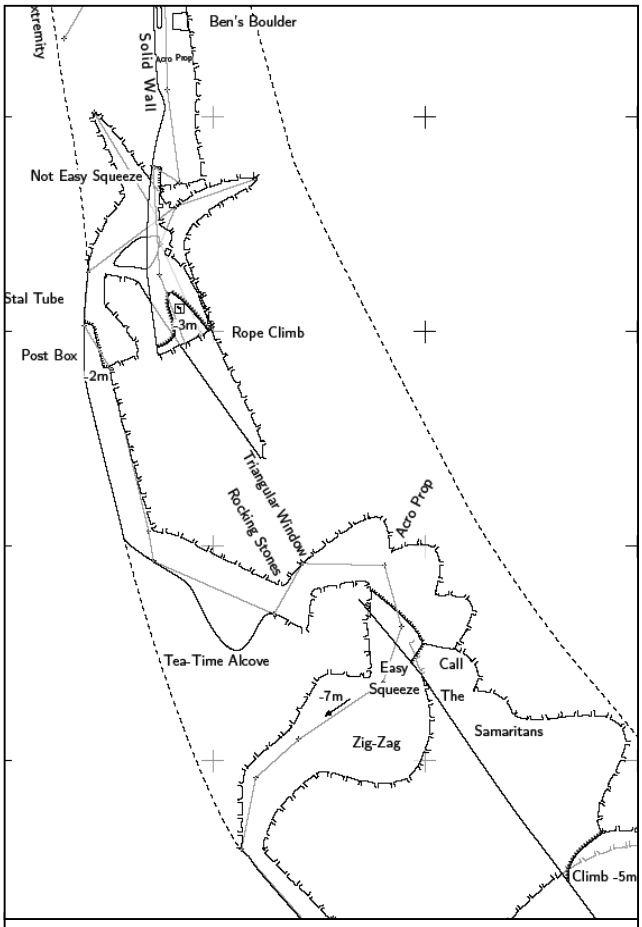


Figure 2 – part of Upper Flood's Boulder Choke surveyed using the SAP and drawn in Therion

So – should we all rush out and buy a SAP? Well, I have! But I would recommend caution, unless you have cash to burn. The potential problems with the SAP are as follows.

It is not waterproof or even water resistant. I "seal" mine with insulation tape to keep out the moisture, and open it and expose it to warm dry air after every trip.

It is fragile. While Phil has made it as robust as possible, a drop is likely to dislodge internal components (battery, etc), destroying the calibration. While recoverable, it will take an hour's intense work to re-calibrate.

My new unit has suffered a "system crash" while connected to my computer, requiring me to hard-reset the unit by disconnecting the battery. This is not a known fault, and may be a one off, but is indicative of the fact that this is a newly designed unit hand-built to order.

Any electronics equipment can only be expected to last for a few years before single components start to fail. Typically, individual components are only available for sale for a few short years, and maintaining old equipment can be very difficult. That said, we all have reliable radios, etc., that are 10 or 20 years old! The point really is that at £250, one does need to consider replacement cost.

There is no guaranteed maintenance or warranty, relying only on the good will of Phil Underwood. Luckily, there is plenty of that, but my worry would come if too many people ask to buy a SAP and then swamp him with support issues. One option could be for Phil to offer the unit through a supplier, such as Firefly Electronics. In fact, there are currently a small number of inventors offering high-tech electronics including Scurion and Stenlight, not to mention more established manufacturers such as Speleo Technics and Petzl. At the other end of the extreme, Siemens has recently gone into a joint venture with Zaragoza University, Spain, to manufacture the next generation cave radio, the TEDRA!

Finally, I said at the start that the SAP is only almost the Holy Grail. What's missing? A built-in laser rangefinder of course. While these are available as separate units now for £60, an integrated device would allow for all three readings to be taken at one go. Not only that, but LRUD data would also benefit from having accurate direction recorded, rather than the rather vague Left and Right, which also suffer from ambiguity in terms of left with-respect-to-which-direction? Furthermore, if the distance could also be recorded electronically together with the station number and directional information, then the occurrences of blunders could be reduced to almost never.

References

CREG 66, A Combined Electronic Compass and Clinometer, Phil Underwood, 2007
CGS 37, Calibrating a combined electronic compass/clinometer, Phil Underwood, 2007

Stainsby's Shaft

On 03/11/07 and 04/11/07, a party including Biff Frith, Doug Harris, Geoff Beale, Brian Snell and Keith Knight installed a new fixed ladder in Blackmoor Shaft (Stainsby's Shaft) to make digging easier.

On 10/11/07, Bill Chadwick, Mick Norton, Biff, Carl Ruxton and Doug tidied the shaft and rescued the digging apparatus from the recent dig.

On 01/12/07 and 02/12/07, a cubic metre of spoil was removed from the head of the second shaft and a mortared wall was built. Diggers were Tim Francis, Adrian and Biff, joined by Alan and Simon, ACG.

(MCG named this Blackmoor Shaft in 1961, but it is actually Stainsby's Shaft - supposedly 108m deep. A level at 69m intercepted a large cavern.)

BCRA Cave Technology Symposium 18-20 April 2008, Mendips

The 2008 BCRA Cave Technology Symposium will be held in the Mendips on 18-20 April 2008.

Organised by BCRA's Special Interest Groups: Cave Surveying Cave Radio & Electronics and Explosives Users.

This event will feature lectures and demonstrations on the Saturday (function room at the Hunters Lodge Inn), with field trips and classroom events on the Sunday (at Wessex Cave Club).

Longwood parking

The owner of Lower Farm/Longwood Grange Farm requests that cavers and walkers do not park on the 'triangle' of grass just at the top of her drive, on the right hand side of the lane.

This piece of land is private and includes a grave. Please do not drop litter (or pee on the grass or in the hedge). Apparently, some of the crosses marking the grave have been removed by persons unknown.

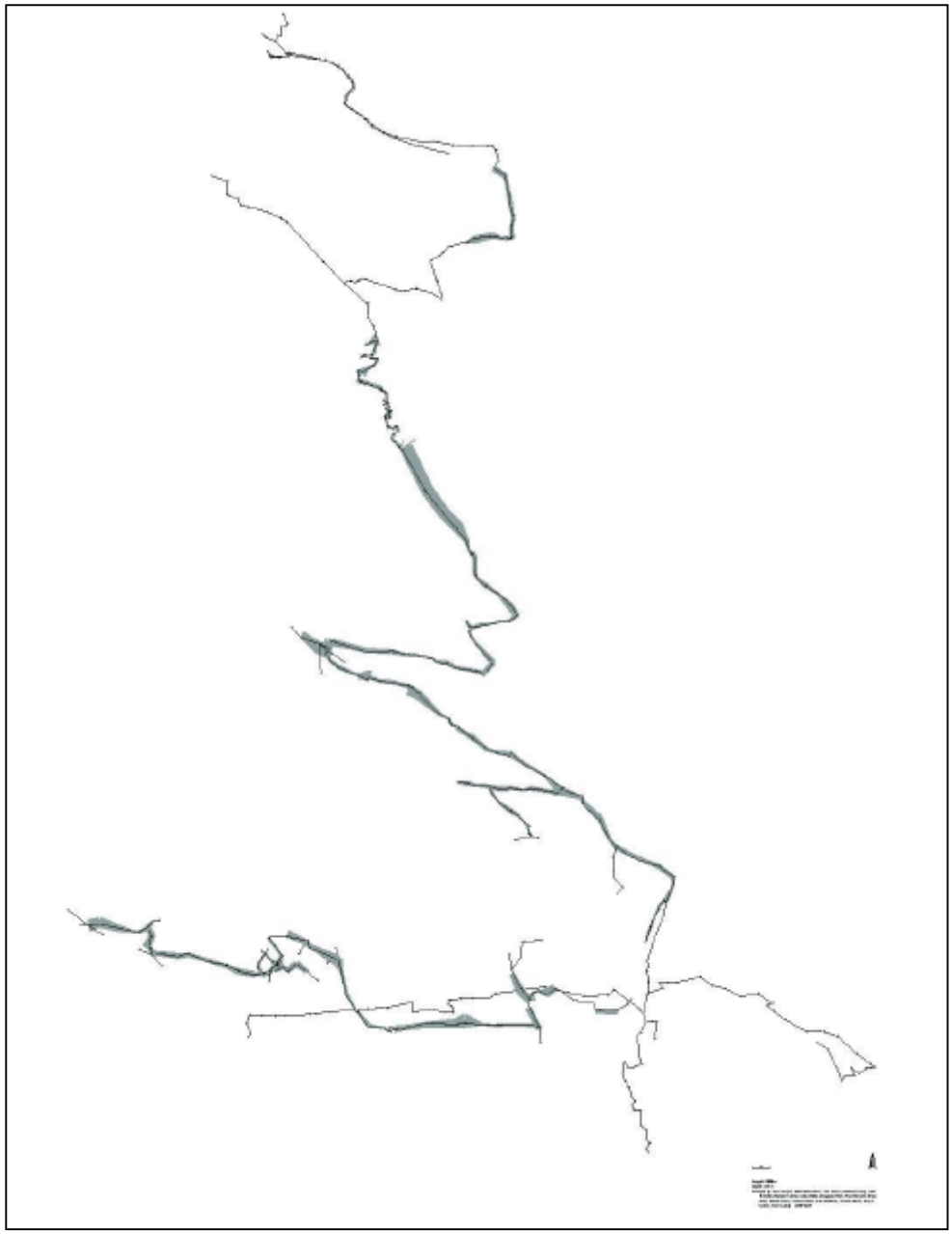
Upper Flood Swallet survey

by Ben Cooper

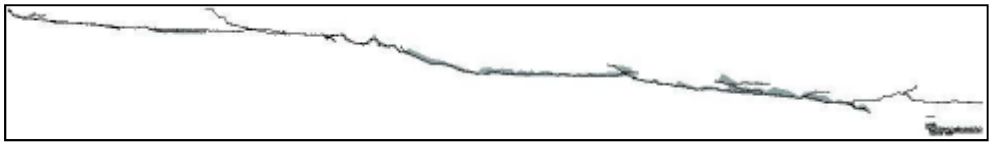
There has been no further surveying of Upper Flood since the summer, but I have been working on constructive comments received at the BCRA. One particular strand that has taken quite a bit of time recently is the extended elevation, which I will explain in a moment.

Firstly, though, a new feature of Therion version 0.5.1 allows me to output the Therion internal format (known as xvi) as a pdf. What this means is that you can now see the raw centreline and LRUD data (Left-Right-Up-Down), without me having to spend ages drawing the cave detail on top of this. To produce Therion output, first I need all the data in a text file called <survey>.th (similar in format to Survex input files), and I can then create 3d and xvi output. However, you need special software to visualise these files. Using XTherion, one can view the xvi in order to draw the cave detail on top of it, which is then exported into the pdf files which you have seen. I can now share the raw survey data much more quickly, rather than you having to wait for days and days while I produce the finished article. The following images are these "centreline" files for the entire cave.

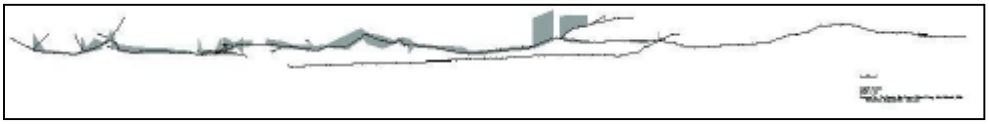
Raw centreline output for entire cave:



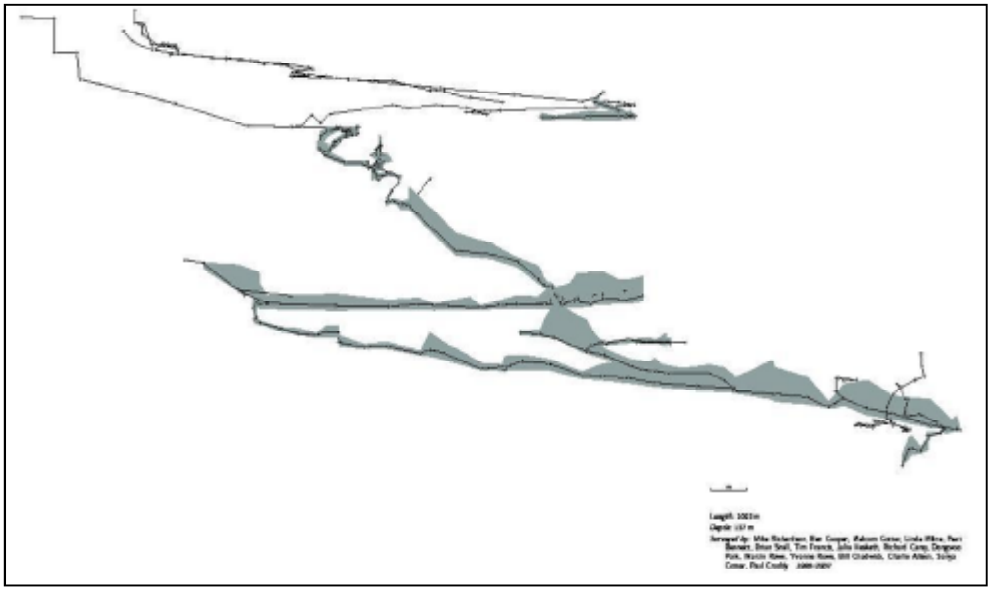
Extended elevation from the Entrance to the end of Royal Icing Passage:



Extended elevation from East Passage (on the right) to West Passage and Neverland (on the left). A very small section of Royal Icing is also shown linking the three passage (2/3 from the left):



Elevation of entire cave. The elevation gives a true perspective, looking from the South to the North, of the entire cave. (This view is also what you see if you view the 3d file in Survex):



With these centreline files, there is no opportunity to provide labels, etc. This comes with the full Therion drawing output. So, for those of you who have been into Upper Flood, you will be able to trace the cave and know where various features are along the extended elevation. For those with Survex, you can also refer to the 3d to identify particular survey stations marked with an x in the images above. For those of you who have not been into the cave, don't worry - I will be producing a properly drawn-up extended elevation with all features labelled. However, before I do that, I wanted to produce these drafts for comment. The problem is, the cave is very long and featureless when drawn in this way. It has already taken a lot of time to learn about extended elevations, and then work through the entire cave survey (about 12 sections) marking the start points and when to extend left or right. So before I commit any further work, I would be grateful for some feedback on the direction you want for the extended elevation maps. Do I need to split these up any more into shorter sections?

What is an Extended Elevation? The way I would explain it is that it is a representation of the cave that shows the path taken as if it was walked, with all bends straightened out. In other words, take each survey leg, set the compass bearing to zero, but keep the length and clinometer as measured, and then draw the centreline. Viewed from above, it would be just a straight line, but from the side, the true slope of each survey leg can be seen. In contrast, for the non-extended elevation, each leg is projected onto the plane of view, so is foreshortened according to the sine of the angle of view. This does not happen with the extended elevation. If anyone can explain it more succinctly, please help me out!

Summer 2008

It is usually about now that cavers begin to think what they might do by way of a caving holiday during the summer of the coming year.

I have been doing some translation work for a group organising an event in the Vercors region near Grenoble next year. The aspect that particularly caught my eye is the pre-rigging of several caves for at least the duration of the event (23-30th August 2008).

You will find a list of the caves to be pre-rigged on http://vercors2008.ffspeleo.fr/index.htm

Note that the Gouffre Berger will be subject to pre-booking (in May 2008).

As a caving region, the Vercors is second to none. To be able to visit a good selection of representative caves without having to bring your own rope, etc. should make for a convenient arrangement! I will be pleased to give whatever assistance may be needed if anyone decides to attend this event. The two official languages of the conference side of the event are French and English.

Tony Knibbs

Archives

We are creating an archive of MCG documents, preferably in digital format and are looking for a volunteer to co-ordinate this project. If you are willing to take this on, please contact the committee.

Charterhouse Cave

Charlie Allison has stood down as our Charterhouse Cave leader as he is unable to make regular trips to Mendip. We need a volunteer to take his place.

Duracell batteries

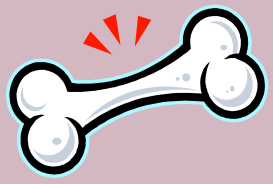
We now have a small stock of Duracell batteries for sale at the cottage. AA batteries are £1.00 each; AAA batteries are 50p each. Available from any committee member.

Work weekend

Make a note in your diary - 7/8/9th March 2008 will be a Cottage Work weekend. Please come along and help to maintain the MCG's major asset, Nordrach Cottage.

Yv'sdropping

BF: "I had a big bone,



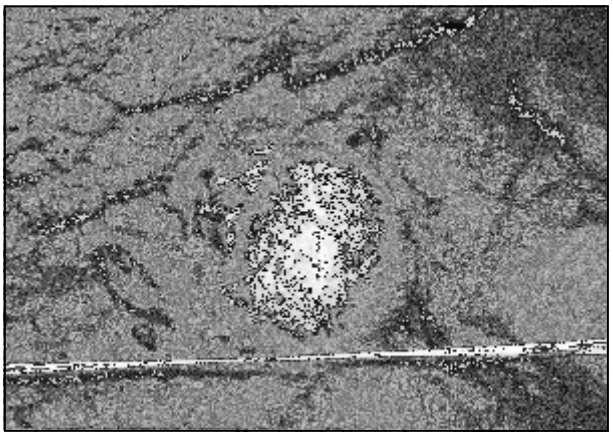
but there wasn't much meat on it."

The bones of Ubley Hill Pot

by Yvonne Rowe

There has been quite an exchange of thoughts and opinions recently about the bones found in Ubley Hill Pot over forty years ago. Mick Norton and I decided it would be a good idea to combine all the comments and recollections for all those who are interested.

Mick started the ball rolling by asking what it was like in Ubley Hill Pot as it was a cave he didn't think he had been down. Tony Knibbs was the first to enter the debate saying that he remembered that at the end is a boulder choke of modest dimensions but of maximum impenetrability. There was no stream as such and air currents were absent. The most interesting aspects were the two human skulls near a point of meagre drip and the vestiges of a wooden-runged ladder at the bottom of the last short pitch. Tony's own interpretation is that the skulls belonged to two people who had descended the hole to escape the Monmouth rebellion which probably caused the nearby countryside to be scoured for possible forced conscription/punishment! Their ladder then broke.... The rotted wooden rungs were very quickly trampled into the mud by exploring cavers. He only ever saw them on his first visit.



Skull in Ubley Hill Pot. Photo by Don Searle

Mick was intrigued by this account and wanted to know what happened to the human skulls. Tony replied that he thought they went to a museum for dating but nothing more was ever heard of them. He also said that he didn't recall seeing the skeletons. There was a photo taken at the time and the skulls could have been mistaken for beehive stals, until you made out the eye sockets! Mick said that when John Champan & friends sent eight human skulls found in Haywood Cave, Hutton for dating, it took a decade for the answer. It is thought these were four and a half thousand years old (Mesolithic). They were found upside down, with bits of ochre in their mouths; these are now in Axbridge Museum. In later times, parts of human bodies were thrown down caves.

Mick felt that it was unlikely that people would climb down wooden ladders, wait for them to rot, and then be unable to climb back up. Even if that were the case, surely there would not be just skulls? So either the skeletons have been removed but not recorded, or are still in the bottom of the cave awaiting discovery, or the people buried in Ubley Hill Pot were skull burials, or they were killed, decapitated and just their heads thrown in. However, Richard Woollacott says that his recollection at the time is that there were bones as well as skulls. He passed over to the club his old 1950/60's photos amongst which were pictures taken at the time of discovery (by MCG) which might help. Their thoughts at the time were that the cave had originally been open and that the bodies were probably casualties of civil war battles,

Skeleton in Ubley Hill. Photo by Richard Woollacott

thrown down.

Tony imagined that the ladder had probably broken. He said would be interesting to find out who of MCG was first down the second short pitch and do they remember some rotting wooden bars at the bottom? The skulls were in a position hard against a down-sloping wall and half buried in mud and he'd be surprised if they could have rolled neatly together, just a few inches apart, if thrown down from the surface. Any event on Mendip associated with the Monmouth rebellion would have taken place around June/July1685. *[A useful little book is "The Monmouth Rising - Aspects of the1685 Rebellion in the West Country" Ivan Roots (ed.) Devon Books (1986)]*

Mick said that if the skulls were adjacent, two possibilities spring to mind, either they are skull burials or the people died next to each other (as in a mining disaster). If the latter, then surely their whole bodies would be in situ, when first found.

Mike Moxon (in Nepal!) joined the debate adding that skulls are usually the longest lasting of any bones, so often found after the rest of skeleton had decomposed; followed by Martin Rowe who said that in archaeology it is not unknown to find just a skull or skulls associated with the talus slope below a cave entrance. As the body decomposes, the head rolls down the slope away from the rest of the bones. Animals then take the long bones which remain on the top of the slope. The result is that you find a skull but not much else.

Skull in Ubley Hill Pot. Photo by Richard Woollacott

Richard said the remains were on a sort of mud glacier so probably did roll, or were brought down by the mud as it slid. As far as he can remember, after they had been looked at by Oliver Lloyd of Bristol University at the request of the Coroner and dated as ancient, they were left where they were, but a reply from Graham Mullan of UBSS says that according to the standard online reference list, the human material from Ubley is in the Natural History Museum. He believes that it hasn't been dated. He adds that looking at their reference list, he would guess that the information comes from Malcolm Cotter's 1962 article in the MCG Journal.

Skulls were also found in Bone Hole, along with Bronze Age beaker shards, at the base of a talus cone, but that's another story… !

'Mendip has at least 14 caves that contain material such as human bone and pottery from the Neolithic-Bronze Age period. There are also some that contain material that cannot be confidently dated but may well belong to these periods. In Brimble Pit Swallet a human skull and small fragments of rib dating to the Neolithic period were discovered as well as lots of other artefacts dating to the same period. Charterhouse Farm Swallet contained at least 28 individuals of Iron Age and Romano-British date along with other artefacts and animal bones.' *(Extract from an article by Jodie Lewis.)*

Back to Mick's original enquiry about caving in Ubley Hill Pot… Tim Francis replied saying that farm material has been pushed down the shakehole and has blocked the way on. As a result, a huge load of mud has slumped into the connecting squeeze. He and Peat Bennett have had a couple of digs here over the last five years which was a horrendous job as it was, but the air died very quickly. He said they were only talking 5ft or so of mud in the floor but it was a nightmare. Their best thought is to run a bowser of water down the entrance and flush the whole thing through!

To conclude: Mick still hasn't been down Ubley Hill Pot. And the skulls in the Natural History Museum have not yet been dated. It's anyone's guess which task will be completed first!

Caving Teamwork

Ed: I was sent this in the post, anonymously. Is someone trying to tell me something?

There were four cavers on a long trip, requiring a considerable amount of tackle to be brought into the cave.

These cavers were Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.

Everybody was asked to carry the tackle.

Everybody was sure that Somebody would carry the tackle.

Anybody could have carried it, but Nobody did carry it.

Somebody got angry about this because he thought it was Everybody's job.

Everybody thought that Anybody should carry the tackle, but Nobody thought that Everybody would not carry it.

The trip ended at the head of the first pitch when Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done and carried the tackle.

The moral to this story is for everyone on a trip to share the carrying of the tackle, including my camera.

Anon