

EIGHTEEN ACRE

Wednesday 13 October 1993 - Graham Bromley, Max Midlen, Richard Witcombe

While MM showed RW the route down the main rift to the terminal dig - finding a dead shrew en route - GB resumed work at a dig just inside the entrance. This is a 3' deep slot on the right of the main rift with a small passage heading off further to the right in the direction of a choked rift spotted, but back filled, during the JCB operations.

Several large rocks and some mud were shifted and a small air space was enlarged sufficiently to provide a view into a small rift chamber up on the left hand side. A strong draught could be felt.

Wednesday 20 October 1993 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Jim Young, Richard Witcombe, Aubrey Newport, Pete Hann, David Gibbons and Steve Gibbons

Following some rock clearance work at the weekend, several more large rocks were removed from the link passage, and it was finally possible to get head and shoulders into the new rift.

On the left was a tiny decorated grotto, on the right a too tight clean washed rift with a possible up and down enlargement 5' or 6' feet along i.e. back towards the filled depression. The draught is coming from the right.

Wednesday 27 October 1993 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Brian Hunt, Richard Witcombe

Continued excavating the approach to the parallel rift, stacking rocks and mud around the base of the shaft. A 2' deep hole in the floor of the rift was uncovered, but all the development looks small scale. The mud is proving extremely glutinous.

Wednesday 3 November 1993 - Graham Bromley, Aubrey Newport, Richard Witcombe

Moved a small amount of rock and mud from the parallel rift, but eventually had to resort to bang. AN fired a one slab charge placed in a crack on the right wall of the right hand arm of the rift.

Wednesday 10 November 1993 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Richard Witcombe

Cleared a large amount of broken rock from last week's bang. Various small black spaces are close but may require a further bang to reach.

Wednesday 17 November 1993 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Richard Witcombe

By dint of much hard chiselling, half a dozen more rocks were removed from the banged area. The space ahead appears to be a steeply descending rift. Some small stones, thrown out of sight to the left, rattle down for about 10'. Bang will be needed to break into the rift.

Saturday 20 November 1993 - Clive North, Steve Ellis, Richard Witcombe

Placed and fired a Cordtex linked charge - one third of a Plaster slab in a crack in the left hand wall of the rift and the remainder of the slab on a large rock on the right.

Wednesday 24 November 1993 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Richard Witcombe, Mark Sims, Martin Ellis

MS and ME carried out a survey of the cave. DM took a few photos.

After the removal of a large amount of bang debris, entry was gained to the edge of a rubble choked rift passage between 3' and 5' across, about 10' long and 5' deep at the far, western, end. Stones rattle down a

further 5' or so through holes in floor. Unfortunately the roof and parts of the right hand wall are composed of large and small blocks held in by compression only, and by the end of the digging session, movement of a large boulder on the nearside edge of the rift was detected. GB suggested that we "leave the cave straight away." We did. Any collapse in this area could travel back up to the bottom of the entrance shaft so great care will have to be taken in any further probes.

Wednesday 1 December 1993 - Graham Bromley, Richard Witcombe

Examined the new rift carefully for signs of imminent collapse. It does not look at all healthy. A small amount of digging was done at the near, eastern, end, where there was the suggestion of a passage running under the eastern wall, but it proved to be only a small undercut and a 6" wide rift choked 3' down.

Work shifted to the the base of the grotto and an attempt was made the enlarge the narrow rift in the floor at that point. Two large rocks resisted all attempts to extract them, and only a small amount of mud and bang debris was shifted. A plaster charge will be needed.

It was decided that there was no practicable way of shoring the new rift, and the roof would therefore have to be brought down in the hope that something more stable lies above. Two attempts were made to pull out key boulders using a rope, but the friction of taking the rope round two corners rendered them unsuccessful. A small charge should do the trick.

Exited after stacking away some of the bang debris and spoil in various nooks and crannies.

Wednesday 8 December 1993 - Graham Bromley, Max Midlen, Aubrey Newport, Pete Hann, Richard Witcombe

AN laid a one slab charge on a key right hand boulder in the "loose" rift. MM went down after detonation and reported plenty of fallen rock.

The team then went over to Cuckoo Cleaves to lay a heftier charge in the terminal rift. The cave was wet and gale force winds made it an invigorating walk over and back.

Wednesday 15 December 1993 - Graham Bromley, Richard Witcombe

Very heavy drip throughout the cave. Inspected the results of the bang. Several large slabs had fallen from the roof filling the near end of the rift and leaving only a small and dangerous entry into the far rift. Careful shoring will be needed if work is to resume in this area.

Attention was turned to the narrow rift below the grotto. Mud and stones were removed from around two blocks which proved too large to pull out. With these rocks "dismantled", the way on downwards could be nearly man-sized.

Wednesday 22 December 1993 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison

Continued digging in the narrow rift, but failed to shift the two large rocks. Bang will be needed.

Saturday 25 December 1993 - Tony Jarratt

Banged the offending boulders.

Wednesday 29 December 1993 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Dave Cooke, Damien ?

Cleared away the bang debris. Pulled out next boulder exposing top face of a further boulder - no idea of size.

Saturday 1 January 1994 - Graham Bromley, Nick Williams

Banged the boulder.

Wednesday 5 January 1994 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison

Further clearing session.

Wednesday 12 January 1994 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Richard Witcombe

Continued digging down the rift - very awkward as it is barely man-sized. Several sizeable rocks were removed and a good deal of claggy mud.

Wednesday 19 January 1994 - Graham Bromley, Richard Witcombe

A very cold night - the lock was frozen as was the steel lid. Thawing and brute force eventually got us in.

Continued clearing the inclined rift. We are basically manufacturing a passage by removing the rocks between two tiny rifts. Some bang debris, tamp quality mud and two or three pieces of bedrock were removed. A large slab of former bedrock defeated us.

Wednesday 26 January 1994 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison

After a prolonged struggle, succeeded in lifting out the former bedrock slab. It is now resting in the passage and getting in the way!

Monday 31 January 1994 - Tony Jarratt

Contract banging in the rift.

Wednesday 9 February 1994 - Graham Bromley, Richard Witcombe

AJ's bang had been very destructive, and a large amount of broken rock was removed from the rift and disposed of in the collapsed rift area and the small chamber below the entrance. The digging position is now a comfortable sitting one with a view ahead of 3'- 4' of slightly wider rift with a slot in the floor emitting a slight draught.

Wednesday 16 February 1994 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Richard Witcombe

Manhandled several large rocks out of the rift and uncovered a second hole against the right hand wall. It is only 6" across and choked a foot or so down, but is indicative of some larger rift or pot development. Another large block in the floor needs banging.

Monday 21 February 1994 - Tony Jarratt

Contract banging in the rift.

Wednesday 23 February 1994 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Richard Witcombe

Cleared back a large amount of broken rock and small pockets of mud. A new hole in the floor was opened up and by the end of the session at a depth of about 8', a narrow 6" to 9" wide rift was revealed, loosely choked with water eroded rocks and emitting a slight draught. The rift which is aligned along the strike appears to developing at a steep angle downwards towards the east i.e under the grotto.

Further banging will be needed to widen the rift, now tentatively named Dentistry Pot, after the extraction of numerous tooth like remnants of bedrock.

Monday 28 February 1994 - Tony Jarratt

Contract banging.

Wednesday 2 March 1994 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison

Brought out a good deal of broken rock from Dentistry Pot, creating a stacking and disposal problem in the process. The way on down is widening up a little but is some way off being open, far less man-sized.

Wednesday 9 March 1994 - Graham Bromley, Richard Witcombe

Shifted a little more rock and mud from the pot, but we were hampered by a bulge of rock on the near side which refused to succumb to hammer and chisel. The rift now appears to be wider at the west end and an undercut at this point could indicate a connection with the collapsed rift.

Rescued a medium sized toad from the rock stack.

Sunday 13 March 1994 - Graham Bromley, Aubrey Newport

Banged the bulge.

Wednesday 16 March 1994 - Graham Bromley, Richard Witcombe

Removed the bang debris, only to reveal another shelf of rock that will require "treatment". Dumping space is virtually all used up.

Thursday 17 March 1994 - Tony Jarratt

Contract banging.

Wednesday 20 April 1994 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Richard Witcombe

While RW undertook some dry stone walling and stacking in the small chamber below the entrance, GB and DM removed bang debris and mud from Dentistry Pot.

Rescued a small toad.

Wednesday 21 June 1995 - Dave Morrison, Nigel Graham, Richard Witcombe

Trial dig in the main rift, beyond the horizontal squeeze (which DM failed to pass on this occasion). Cleared gravelly mud and waterworn rocks from near the top end of the rift, throwing the spoil further down the passage. The passage here is up to three feet wide with a deep undercut on the right, and it should provide a safe link with an offset, choked section of the rift some 6' below. Not without interest.

Rescued a small toad.

Sunday 3 September 1995 - Mark Williams, Nigel Hellyar (both Shepton Mallet CC)

Carried on clearing rocks and mud from rift dig. The undercut wall is dropping down at a steep angle but the main rift wall is levelling out to form a floor.

Wednesday 6 September 1995 - Mark Williams, Nigel Hellyar

Further digging revealed a choked continuation of the rift under the undercut wall but it had reduced to little more a foot wide.

Wednesday 13 September 1995 - Graham Bromley, Dave Speed, Mark Williams, Richard Witcombe

A decision was made to dig further down the rift in any area where the walls and roof get regrettably rather "vague".

A considerable number of small and medium sized rocks were brought up and stacked in the abandoned section of the dig and the rift above it. Spaces were revealed among the boulders, with a view down for 6' to 8'. One very large rock, close beneath the "roof", had to be removed to gain access to this promising area, and it was encouraged to slide down by rope and crowbar. Finally it was manhandled to one side by the Herculean efforts of DS.

The unstable nature of this area coupled with its undoubted promise suggests the name "Death or Glory"!

Wednesday 20 September 1995 - Graham Bromley, Dave Speed

A few more large rocks were removed from the dig, often accompanied by sliding or falling material! In the interests of long term digger survival, some form of shoring will have to be devised before the "shaft" gets any deeper.

Wednesday 29 November 1995 - Dave Morrison, Graham Bromley, Martin Ellis, Richard Witcombe

GB, ME and RW returned to the choked rift and attempted to move several medium sized rocks and one huge block with no success. The largest will have to be banged, but very carefully in view of the precarious walls and ceiling.

Meanwhile DM, having failed to pass the horizontal squeeze, set about excavating a larger vertical route. Aided later by the rest of the team, a hole through the floor was eventually opened up but cement or concrete grouting will be required before the route can be safely used.

Wednesday 6 December 1995 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Dave Speed, Richard Witcombe, Martin Ellis, Tony Butcher

Mixed three buckets of sand and cement at the Shepton hut and carried them over to Eighteen Acre.

RW cemented the loose rocks around DM's new vertical route down the rift.

Wednesday 3 January 1996 - Graham Bromley, Richard Witcombe. Later Pete Hann, Ros Fielder

Tried out the new grouted rift climb - reasonably secure so long as the large block at the bottom stays jammed.

Drilled two 9" deep 3" shotholes into the large block ready for banging, and put one similar hole into the rock beneath. Moved back a few token rocks from the bottom of the dig.

Wednesday 24 January 1996 - Aubrey Newport, Pete Hann, Max Midlen

Banged the two boulders using cordtex and det only.

Wednesday 31 January 1996 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Dave Speed, Richard Witcombe

The bang had been very effective, and three members of the team started the rock clearing while DM chiselled his way down the new rift route. He "broke through" after an hour!

By the end of the session, all safely removable material had been cleared away leaving a teetering mass of interdependent rocks. An extensive concrete and rock shoring operation will be needed to make any further progress.

Sunday 25 February 1996 - Dave Speed, Dave Morrison, John Hill, Richard Witcombe, Anne-Marie Ethier (American visitor)

RW started walling up the unstable side of the rift using concrete mixed in the small chamber above.

Wednesday 28 February 1996 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Dave Speed, Richard Witcombe

A further walling session.

Wednesday 6 March 1996 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Dave Speed, Andy Buchanan, Richard Witcombe

Completed the main part of the concreted wall. This mass of rock should stay put when the slabs below are shifted - famous last words!

Wednesday 13 March 1996 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Dave Speed, Andy Buchanan

Shifted the very large slab a few inches, breaking its contact with the bottom of the wall, and cleared smaller rocks and debris from around it. A cordtex charge will be needed to crack the slab.

Sunday 24 March 1996 - Graham Johnson

Drilled two small diameter shotholes in the slab.

Wednesday 27 March 1996 - Clive North, Dave Morrison, Dave Speed, Richard Witcombe

Banged the slab using Cordtex.

Cleared the broken rock fragments and started digging in the rift, removing a muddy gravel fill and the occasional rock.

Spoil was stacked higher up in the rift. A thin crack was noticed across the bottom of the concreted wall - either an effect of the bang or of the undermining.

Wednesday 3 April 1996 - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Dave Speed, Kate Powell, Clive North, Richard Witcombe

Continued clearing rocks and muddy gravel from alongside and below the concrete wall, using the upper grotto as the main dump.

The digging area is a narrow mud and gravel filled rift running under the wall into a loose boulder choke with a silted floor visible three or four feet further down. The rift extends horizontally beneath the wall for 10' or so, but the left hand wall is a sliding mass of slabs.

Shoring is going to be a tricky business.

Wednesday 17 April 1996 - Dave Morrison, Dave Speed, Kate Powell, Richard Witcombe

After a close examination of the digging area, it was concluded that any attempt to progress along the rift would be too dangerous. Instead the floor will be lowered at the near end of the rift, with the spoil being thrown into the far end. When this area is filled the concrete wall will be extended downwards to seal it off and provide security.

Several large slabs were manhandled, mainly by DS, into position under the wall, and clearance of the floor area resumed. After a short while holes amongst the rocks appeared under the left hand side, but in attempting to enlarge them it became evident that some of the protruding blocks were very solid, probably bedrock.

Wednesday 24 April 1996 - Dave Morrison, Graham Bromley, Dave Speed, Clive North, Richard Witcombe

Continued clearing the floor of the rift and enlarging the "air space" on the left. A protruding spur of bedrock will probably have to be surgically removed if the left hand route is to be properly investigated.

Wednesday 13 November 1996 - Dave Morrison

Reconnaissance visit to check the digging face. A few rocks were taken out from the bottom of the shaft.

Saturday 16 November 1996 - Dave Morrison, Graham "Jake" Johnson

Shifted four buckets of spoil and a dozen or so rocks from the digging face beneath the cemented wall. The crack already present in the wall widened considerably.

The best way on appears to be downwards at a steep angle beneath the wall, and temporary shoring will be needed to keep the cemented mass in place until a firmer foundation can be found.

Saturday 23 November 1996 - Dave Morrison, Graham Johnson

Cleared more rocks from the digging face, resulting in a partial collapse of the concreted wall. The diggers were sufficiently alarmed to check out the cave for alternative dig sites, but no better option could be found.

Wednesday 4 December 1996 - Dave Morrison, Graham Johnson, John Attwood

Drilled and banged three boulders.

Sunday 15 December 1996 - Dave Morrison, Jim Rands, John Attwood

One of the three charges had come out of its shothole and had presumably exploded "harmlessly". After the bang debris had been cleared away, a shothole was drilled in a further boulder and two charges were set off.

There is now a view downwards into spaces between larger boulders and a slight draught was felt.

Much concrete walling will have to be done in the near future.

Wednesday 18 December 1996 - Dave Morrison, Max Midlen

Took cement underground.

Friday 20 December 1996 - Dave Morrison

Carried 8 bags of sand and 4 of ballast over to the cave, and lowered some of it down the shaft.

Saturday 21 December 1996 - Dave Morrison, Simon XXX + 2

Took rest of the sand and ballast underground.

Sunday 22 December 1996 - Dave Morrison

Cleared rocks back from the digging face.

Wednesday 25 December 1996 - Dave Morrison

Christmas Day. Moved rocks around and started concrete walling.

Thursday 26 December 1996 - Dave Morrison, Dave Cook, Katie XXX (Belgian)

Continued concrete walling.

Friday 27 December 1996 - Dave Morrison

Continued concrete walling.

Saturday 28 December 1996 - Dave Morrison, Eddie Walters, Anthony Butcher, Hayley XXX

Completed the concrete wall, and resumed clearing rocks and mud from the digging face. Draught still present.

Wednesday 1 January 1997 - Dave Morrison

Cleared rocks back.

Wednesday 12 March 1997 - Dave Morrison, Mike Willett, Angie Cave.

Further digging below the concrete wall.

Sunday 12 January 1997 - Roz Bateman, Dave Morrison

Further rock clearing. It is now possible to look into a more solid rift ahead, although it may well be that this is a section of the old terminal dig approached from a new direction. Quite a strong draught.

January 1997 - Anthony Butcher, Nigel Hellyar

The lower route does give access to the old dig. Various holes probed.

5 February 1997 - Dave Morrison, Richard Witcombe

Continued walling along the left hand side of the lower route.

12 February 1997 - Dave Morrison, Julian Ward, Richard Witcombe

After a day of driving rain, there was very heavy drip in the cave.

Dug in the floor beneath last Wednesday's section of walling. Eight buckets of spoil were dumped higher up in the rift.

Wednesday 12 March 1997 - Dave Morrison, Mike Willett, Angie Cave.

Further digging below the concrete wall.

Wednesday 9 April 1997 - Dave Morrison

Solo furtle in the floor below the wall.