

W/L Dec 30th Clive, Dave, Gonzo, Tav

Little draught throughout the cave and residual fumes in the far reaches.

Cleared the debris from yesterday's bang and squirrelled it away between the boulders in the Hammer Rift choke.

Then off to the Duke of Sausage to solve all the world's problems in front of a roaring log fire.

W/L 23 Dec

More cementing around the large roof slab in the Hammer Rift choke.

Gonzo

28 Dec

Cut back the expanding foam around the chockstone in the boulder choke to cement it up properly now that the roof is better supported.

The chockstone moved rather alarmingly when I removed the expanding foam - a potent laxative!

29 Dec

Drilled and popped the dig before exiting with a rather sick-sounding drill clearly in need of TLC.

Gonzo

Hobnail Monday 23rd Dec

Duncan and Clive plus Spike on Ferret Shed support duty with doughnuts.

(Simon unfortunately suffered a car breakdown in Beckington en route so missed out on both the digging and the Xmas fare in the Ferret Shed)

The large boulder left over from Richards last session was drilled along with the prominent rock on the left hand side of the dig face.

These were dispatched before we broke for mince pies and mulled cider courtesy of Duncan. Spike arrived and we mulled over digs and the world in general for a while before returning underground to pile the resulting blocks at the base of the shaft ready for removal when we have a full team.

The breaking up of the left hand side had produced three more very large rocks so these were dealt with in the traditional manner, the remains will need clearing next time as well.

A 'normal' winter stream was flowing into the adit, no build up of debris on the gate. No seepage into the dig apparently - all nice and dry.

A section of the stone wall between the stile and the previously collapsed section has also come down. No sign of it apparently having been hit from the road side.

A Merry Yuletide to all our readers!

Clive

Hobnail THURS 11 DECEMBER 2014

SM-K, RGW, DK and guest surgeon Tony Audsley

A large stream was flowing into the adit but there was no build-up of debris at the gate. A trickle of water was leaking through the dam into the cliff face "canal" and below in Colditz there was some evidence of recent water flow. Fortunately, instead of ponding up, most of this water had seeped away down-dip under the boulder (a good sign).

After DK had cleaned up the boulder area for the surgeon's attention, TA made a single incision and carried out the usual operation. The fumes came out in the flash.

TA departed after lunch, muttering that he had been told that the dig was in clean rock and now he had got a lot of mud on his boiler suit. The rest of the team blamed CN and returned to digging - DK at the face, RGW in the middle and SM-K braving the cold and occasional sleety rain on the surface. The operation had been a success and a large amount of broken rock was sent up. Rather surprisingly there was a mud-choked section just under half a metre wide descending to the right of the remains of the boulder. By the end of the session, a large lump of the boulder "root" was prised from its slightly larger partner still in situ, but both will probably require the surgeon's knife.

There seems little doubt that the descending bedding passage is a viable way on since with the roots of the boulder removed, it will measure just over a metre wide by just under a metre high.

RGW

9 Dec Windsor Hill

Dave, Gonzo

Drilled, popped and cleared around 20 skips-worth of right hand wall before putting the world to rights in the Poacher's Pocket.

Gonzo

W/L

25/11

Gonzo, Mandy, Matt, Tav

Cleared the debris from the last bang.

The way on is lower, wider and constricted but draughts and there is still an echo from beyond the constriction.

2/12

Gonzo

Drilled and popped (after a misfire which was resolved after ten ft of cable was cut off the sharp end!)

Gonzo

FRIDAY 28 NOV

SM-K, DK, RW. CN sent a sick note.

The new road surface has been laid from Croscombe? as far as Thrupe Farm, but there are no signs that anything more will be done towards Maesbury. The work is tidy and no rubbish has been left near the hamlet.

There had obviously been a flash flood in the last week as there was debris to the very top of the cave gate and mud all over the adit steps. One of the pieces of timber had been

swept from the dam in front of the canal and a small stream was flowing into the cliff. The morning was spent putting matters right.

After an early lunch, a start was made on digging - DK at the face, RW on the ledge and SM-K on the surface. The cave from the bottom of the entrance wall had been washed clean and there was a large pool in Colditz. Once this had been bailed into the floor slot, DK started working northwards, cutting into the floor of the narrow ongoing rift which was emitting a strong draught. By the end of the session, both walls were beginning to close in and the way ahead looked slightly less encouraging. It is probably worth another few hours clearing, but in an end-of-day assessment, both DK and RW felt that the significant way on would turn out to be the down-dip bedding on the left (west) side. The large block in the threshold will obviously need a visit from Dr. Nobel.

RGW

WHFS 26th Nov Mark, Spike, Dave and Clive

Early arrival Mark had accumulated a good pile of rock from the face by the time Clive appeared. This was shunted down Pol Pot and five holes drilled - four in the flat face ahead and one down in the floor and to the right.

This seemed to have done the trick and a fair amount of rock was removed. Before the end of play Dave brought down a loosened chunk of roof (large). There seems to be a lot of fractured rock yet to be dealt with as well so unlikely to be need for drilling next time round.

A foggy drive to the Poachers for refreshment showed that the direct route over the hill seemed best unlike the A361 route which sent Dave miles off course and almost caused him to miss the first round! Left there at 11.30-ish with one or two still in the bar - bit of a change from you know where!

On Wed next Speedy will come over to check out final details for the frame needed to hold the grill over WHFS Lower.

Clive

WHFS 19th Nov Mark, Dave, Spike and Clive

The WH stream is starting to make a comeback at last - the first signs of it were visible last night below the culvert but disappearing well before the cave.

An initial 3 holes drilled in the troublesome blocks in the centre of the rift took care of the immediate problem of loose rocks that 'bloody well won't come out' and resulted in a very pleasing pile for Spike to deal with.

Two holes previously drilled by Mark on the right hand side were joined by a fresh one and fired which produced a less satisfying pile of gravel but leaves us with a nice sized portion of the rift where we can work comfortably forwards. A further step may soon need to be cut in the sloping bedding floor to maintain the height and also to prevent everything, including the digger, from constantly sliding forwards down the dip.

We are now facing a very nice cross joint in the rock (not open) which has produced a nice flat face to drill into next time.

Post digging a trek to the Poacher's Pocket at Chelynych was made - it seemed like a bit of a hike to get there but strangely, after a pint or so the journey back to the W & H crossroads seemed to fly by.....

A busy pub last night (skittles night) and warm with nice beer as well and was still fairly active when we left just before 11.30.

Clive

The curious green object was in evidence further down the rift again.

Next week will probably require a clear before the pop to remove the pile of boulders from in front of the dig face. It would however be feasible to drill shot holes in the face before this if anyone turns up in an advance party.

The RHS could probably still do with a quick poke with a crowbar to make sure the loose stuff has all dropped. There were still a few promising looking cracks when I left it...

Spike

WHFS

W/L

11/11

Gonzo, Mandy, Matt, Tav

Cleared a large amount of spoil (you can now turn around at the end) and commenced drilling.

18/11 Gonzo

Drilled and popped.

Gonzo

Balch Clear up 17 Nov Mandy, Matt, Tav later joined by Gonzo who had been on W/L duty.

Thankfully not many moths in residence and none of them permanent. Through a combination of vigorous scrubbing (Mandy has obviously had plenty of previous experience as a scrubber) and spraying, a surprisingly good amount of white stal was recovered from beneath the thick coating of mud. Cleaned up JW Passage and a good chunk of lower Pool Passage which is now all glistening and shining. In fact probably better than it's been for a number of years. There's still quite a lot to do but I suggest we let nature take it's course over winter and revisit in Spring.

Retired to the Sausage to polish our halos and lament the loss of my special Italian brush.

Tav

Hobnail Nov 17th RGW, SMG and CN on a Monday visit this week to avoid the road resurfacing and closure later in the week.....

After all the rain an above average stream was flowing into the adit. Some bright spark had kindly removed our dam preventing water from entering Hobnail - as a result the cave had had a good scrub and there was a deep pool to bail at the face in the previously dry dig.

This done, Simon (with newly acquired bad back - his turn now!) looked after hauling to the surface, Richard took up position in the coldest, windiest portion of the entrance shaft to guide the skip and Clive dug at the face, gently cooled by the enticing draught from ahead. (Currently the draught is such that it can be easily felt whilst standing *outside* the cave entrance!"

Good progress made again following the open space in the roof of the northward trending passage. The face is about 2.5ft high with a bedrock floor and consists in the main of a hard-packed, no doubt ancient, clay fill yellow in colour containing water-worn rocks of a similar yellow hue. Above this is the more recent grey-black fill containing organic matter and, on this occasion, a piece of (perhaps) Tony Dingle's old det wire(!), and a salted peanut packet!

A open rift coming in from the right hand side around foot wide can be seen to go back up-dip for around 6ft or so to what appears to be a low, flat-roofed and black-end chamber. We thought this must connect with the open cave just above the Coal Cellar but no link could be established by shining lights through.

Work continues.....next week (probably Thurs)

Clive

Just one detail to add to Clive's report.

The pool in Colditz was bailed by CN into the blackened slot on the right-hand side of the "chamber". RW went down into the Coal Cellar and found the water pouring out of the wall just beyond the support scaffold bar. There will clearly be no point in banging open this slot as it would only give us another route into the unpleasantness that is the Coal Cellar.

RW

WHFS Nov 12th Mark, Spike and Clive

Three holes drilled into the right hand wall and two in the floor this time.

The results were a repeat of last weeks problem of stacked blocks all cracked but irretrievably locked together! Another bang is needed to remove a particularly large block in the centre of the rift which is the key to the problem.

No draught in the cave at all this week - unlike last weeks icy gale!

The rockpile in Pol Pot is building up and despite pushing it regularly to the back of the rift will before too long mean we will be hauling to the surface again. We daren't fill Pol Pot totally as this will only cause us flooding problems in the future.

One surprise - as Spike and I left the W & H Dawn told us that we would need to check by phone before coming over as apart from the nights where she has a group in upstairs she will be shutting earlier. My first thought was it was a result of us moving the Xmas party, but to be fair I think that its just not worth her while to stay open for just three of us - a bit different to the days when there were sometimes 13 of us around the table.

We can try the phoning idea and see how it works out. The 'Sausage' is just that bit too far away from WHFS at 10 at night.

Clive

WHFS Nov 10th Dave spent some time at the weekend fettling the last piece of the grill ready to be fitted. Clive went over on Monday morning and bolted it in place plus replaced some of the rusting steel nuts and bolts with stainless(?) ones. Still some more drilling out of holes and fitting of a few more bolts to do some time when Dave is back.

Also fitting of the gate to do below the grill.

No Dave this week so Wed will be drill, pop and clear night.

Clive

Hobnail THURS 6 NOV

SM-K, RGW, CN, DK

Between 11.30am and 4pm, very large amounts of silt, mud and rocks were removed from the right-hand passage, with no need for any chemical persuader. The floor slot on the right was left alone and covered with a poly bag to prevent spoil from filling it. During the digging, the solid floor adjacent to the slot was found to peter out towards the back, allowing the floor in front of the narrow end passage to be deepened. The left-hand wall was followed around to the threshold of what is clearly an on-going, down-dip, bedding plane passage - possible "fed" by the end passage. At the end of the session, a fist-sized sandstone cobble and a squashed plastic flower pot were extracted from this passage, which will probably see our main effort next Thursday.

With luck, we now have a secure, just about North-sized, natural passage to follow into the unknown (famous last words!). It has been christened Colditz as the kneeling digger hacking spoil from the face ahead conjures up images of a POW escape tunnel.

RW

WHFS Nov 5 Clive, Gonzo, Spike

3 holes were drilled in the more solid right hand wall.

After firing, the fumes were conspicuous by there absence, having been drawn elsewhere by the cold draught entering the shaft from above and the rest of the evening was spent on a partially successful encouragement out of the wall of the resultant tower of large, fractured, residual blocks. Then off to the Wagon and Key-jangler to meet up with Dave.

Gonzo

W/L 23/10

Gonzo, Laura Trowbridge, Mandy, Matt, Tav Cleared a lot of spoil from the last bang and started drilling

24/10

Gonzo
Drilling

25/10

Gonzo
Drilling

4/11

Gonzo
Drilling then set and popped 12 x 8mm short holes and 4 x 10mm long holes

TUES 4 NOVEMBER

SM-K, RW

Spent half an hour probing various points in the right-hand passage, throwing the few buckets of spoil into the Coal Cellar. Straight ahead the narrow, sinuous rift is draughting nicely, the hole on the left less so. More surprisingly, a blackened slot was uncovered on the right-hand side beneath the miniscule stal flows. It is possible to peer down about 1.5m but it definitely goes deeper and this too draughts well.

The main purpose of the visit was to grout various cracks and potentially "moveable" sections of the entrance rift. This was accomplished in good time thanks to a perfect mortar mix by SM-K.

A good clearing session on Thursday should reveal the preferred way on.

RW

Hobnail Hole Thursday 30th Oct

Richard, Clive, Simon & Dave.

Work continued on the right hand branch of the T junction (heading North). The top 2ft is silty/sandy washed in sediments in clearly defined layers with some rocks and occasional bits of black plastic sack on top, and a few worms within. Below this it's more like mud/clay but still containing rocks. The floor was lowered and the end dug out giving a height of about 4ft, length of approx 6ft and width of 3ft. There is calcite flow over the solid right hand wall of the passage, below which there is a narrow 3" to 4" band of silty infill between the mud floor and wall. Above and to the left just before the dig face there is a small rift/chamber, water worn and blackened. Straight on and above the silt deposits the rift/passage continues on over the dig face with a slight upslope (possibly an inlet) with a noticeable draft blowing out. Also at the end but turning 90 deg to the left (West) there is a narrow rift, again just above the silt deposits, but this is heading down slope with a draft. It would appear perhaps that water entering from the left at the T junction has probably continued flowing down through the fractured floor, whilst water entering from the right which has washed in

the silts has either joined the stream from the left of the T junction or flowed on down the narrow West rift at the dig face (or perhaps the whole lot just backs up and slowly drains through the floor in various places :-)).

Where to continue digging? The floor is still mud/clay filled with rocks, so digging can still continue down. But the narrow rift to the left (West) and straight on (North) might be the top of a wider rifts below the silt infill, so these will need further investigation.

Dave.

WHFS 29th Oct An earlier start than usual for Dave and Clive to further fettle the grill - this was very nearly 'finished' but for the lack of some vital nuts (no not Mark and Simon!). There is still a section to be fitted next time.

Turning to underground matters one hole was drilled in the big block which had presented itself in the centre of the rift - this produced a very satisfying pile of blocks and bits and revealed the continuation of the narrow rift (3-4inches wide) and carries on in a dead straight line for (I estimated) about 10ft (others, maybe with more reliable eyesight reckoned 6-8ft). This is heading in just the right direction to intersect the main rift(s) as planned. The direction of this rift seems approximately at 45degrees away from the direction of the link passage to Pol Pot.

Dave and I decided to call it a day at what we thought was around 9pm just as Spike appeared with the news it was actually 8pm! He had a look underground in the hope of finding some rock to worry but had to content himself with an early visit to the W & H instead.

Clive

Perhaps worth noting is that there was a curious looking green object (again, not Mark or Simon...) some way down the narrow rift. It kinda looked like it may have entered from the left hand side, given the way it was lying, but I'm less certain of that. It seemed to be plastic with grooves around it's circumference.

Next week's committee meeting will have to decide which part of the rift suffers Clive's wrath next. There are arguments for and against each of the lhs pile of boulders, the bedrock(?) on the rhs, or indeed the floor...

Spike

Hobnail 23rd Oct 2014.

CN/DK/RGW/SMK.

To open the proceedings Clive and Rich descended to the face to continue clearing the results of last week's charge. In fact the bulk of the material brought out was stream fill with the occasional rock. By lunchtime a considerable volume had been removed and more valuable depth gained. The afternoon saw more of the same and some interesting features emerging. To the left we are now excavating below the eroded inlets, but whether any water has sunk here is still unclear. To the right is a sizeable undercut which has the appearance of another inlet. However if this is the case why does the overflowing drainhole water flow from the left to sink here? Clearly all is not as it seems and this may well be the area to concentrate on. Next weeks' further clearance should enable a decision to be made on the way forward/downwards.

Simon.

Hobnail Thu 16th Oct 2014.

CN/DK/SMK.

It's surprising what you can achieve in a day. Despite damp weather for the previous days, work proceeded apace. The sizeable stream was first diverted away from the drainhole and Clive then went below to start the day with a bang. As we have become used to by now, the rock put up stiff resistance to the drill and only one and a half shotholes were possible before the battery drained. However on descending after lunch it was clear that much damage had been wrought. (Incidentally the fumes cleared in seconds thanks to the cold air issuing from the coal cellar, generated no doubt by the passage of water somewhere beneath us.) Dave's hay net proved invaluable for lifting awkward rocks and significant downward progress was possible. Such that an extra worker would now be useful for guiding buckets up the shaft. For the second half of the afternoon attention switched to the surface landslide which was transformed by skilful sledging. The stream now has a much clearer path which should reduce flooding in the vicinity of Hobnail.

Simon.

Wed 15th Oct

WHFS

Clive, Dave, later joined by Gonzo & Dillon to ensure we weren't late for W&H's.

Spike provided further back up at the W&H's.

The next section of grill was offered up and found to require a little more fettling before welding and a template cut for the top grill. A couple of hacksaw cuts were inflicted on the padlock to weaken it, but not yet enough to break it free..

Dave with the assistance of couple of long wrecking bars prised out a number of rocks making it almost spacious at the dig face. Clive then drilled and popped the LHS (I think) and floor using smaller charges so as not to produce too much gravel but just break it up into manageable rocks. Gonzo had reported on the lack of cars at the W&H's, and so to ensure we weren't locked out and it was close to 9.30pm anyway, toys were packed away and off to the pub.

Dave.

W/L 14/10

Gonzo, Mandy & Matt

Cleared debris from the last bang to enlarge the tight section passed by Mandy on our last trip. Then drilled.

15/10

Gonzo

Popped the W/L dig before heading for Windsor Hill Flood Sink.

N.B. If anyone is heading over to Fairy Cave Quarry take some WD40 as, in the last week or so, the combination lock on the main gate has become extremely stiff both to open and to close - I nearly gave up trying to re-lock it on departure.

Gonzo

W/L 9/10

Gonzo, Mandy, Matt, Tav.

Cleared spoil from the last bang, then Mandy moved forward a body length to the next constriction. Drilled and left.

12/10

Gonzo

A.M. Drilled to enlarge the constricted point passed by Mandy then cemented and wedged the virtually unsupported side of the coffin-sized roof-boulder in the Hammer Rift choke.

P.M. More drilling then popped the dig ready for clearing on Tuesday evening.

Gonzo

WHFS (date unknown) Mike Moxham, Jeff Begley (hope the spellings are correct), Dave, Spike, Simon, Mark, Paul and Clive (It's actually Mike Moxon & James Begley)

A bumper team this week which meant that we were able to clear WHFS Lower of its branches and tree trunks etc (Mike, Jeff and Dave)

The rest busied themselves with clearing the previous bang and drilling and firing four more holes and dealing with the results.

One strange discovery was that our stock of plastic buckets has disappeared. Skips and bits of metal sheet still present but no sign of the buckets.

Good progress made especially in the floor - plenty to be removed from there next time.

Clive

W/L 30/9

Gonzo, Mandy, Matt

Cleared a lot of spoil to enlarge the approach to the dig face.

Then drilling.

1/10

Gonzo

Drilling

2/10

Gonzo

Banged the dig in an early lunchbreak

Thu 9th Oct 2014.

CN/RGW/SMK.

On a blustery but dry day the work of deepening the entrance shaft continues, a portion of the stream having been diverted to dry out the workface. Prior to the lunchbreak, Clive drilled assorted shotholes, and upon a successful firing we retired for lunch in the ferret shed. Rich then descended to the coal cellar on a retrieval operation and digging proper got under way. A satisfying quantity of rock was removed enlarging the working area and exposing farther the undercuts on both sides. To the left is what appears to be a very waterworn inlet whose water has then sunk opposite under the right wall. What is developing (or not) under the right wall is not yet clear. It might just be a tiny bedding plane or something more significant - only time will tell. In the meantime we must just keep on going down in the rift and not be diverted. A final surface session saw the entrance works within sight of completion - one more push and we'll be ready for the lid.

Simon.

WHFS Oct 8th Mark, Simon, Dave, Spike and Clive (Tav on W & H support duties)

An early start by Mark on the loose slabs on the floor resulted in a pile of large rocks by the time Clive went underground to Plug & Feather the constriction in 'The Link'.

One of these rocks did try to decapitate Mark's finger when it fell back into the bucket he was holding (didn't kick it deliberately, honest!) but luckily he had nine other digits as spares.

The constriction in The Link succumbed so its much easier to get the skip or bucket past now into Pol Pot.

Mark and I felt we had left the rock, that had been antagonising Spike since last week, for him to deal with but it turned out to be the wrong one - luckily there were plenty of others to engage him with instead. Both he and Dave had a good go with bar, sledge and chisels and a good pile of rock had been removed by the end of the evening. The floor must have been dropped by around 18inches from the last session.

There is still plenty of cracked rock to work at but its tightly trapped and will need a bang next time to shake it up further

Clive

Hobnail Sat 4th Oct 2014.

SMK

As I was in the vicinity on my way back from Cheddar,I decided to have a quiet assesment of the dig face.Dave was on the final shift on Thur,and I couldn't quite visualise the state of play as described by him.He has certainly pulled a lot out and cleaned up the area.From the Threshold the rift slopes down to a T junction where a solid wall cuts across our path.A small flow of water was trickling out from the left side with the main stream being audible somewhere beyond.Craning my neck much blackened rock was in evidence and considerable undercutting.Opposite to the right is an undercut several feet deep,but whether this is significant is difficult to say.The floor of the rift is the solid 'divider'that we have been removing as we go down.I think that we must carry on deepening and enlarging the rift and no doubt the way forward will become clear.

Simon.

WHFS Wed Oct 1st Mike Moxham, Jeff Begley (hope the spellings are correct), Dave, Spike, Simon, Mark, Paul and Clive

A bumper team this week which meant that we were able to clear WHFS Lower of its branches and tree trunks etc (Mike, Jeff and Dave)

The rest busied themselves with clearing the previous bang and drilling and firing four more holes and dealing with the results.

One strange discovery was that our stock of plastic buckets has disappeared. Skips and bits of metal sheet still present but no sign of the buckets.

Good progress made especially in the floor - plenty to be removed from there next time.

Clive

Hobnail Thu 2nd oct 2014.

CN/DK/SMK.

An excellent day's progress. A considerable quantity of debris was cleared following last week's bang. Following a lunch break Clive then laid 2 further charges on the rib of rock dividing the rifts we're following. This was after Dave had driven in some wedges to secure the boulders overhanging the working area. But we needn't have worried as nothing moved and all above looks pretty solid. The offending rock was no more and extensive clearance revealed undercutting on both sides of the rift. To the left was a damp waterworn crack and to the right a more substantial feature, running in several feet at one point. The floor of the rift was still loose material at close of play. Bang will probably be needed to remove protrusions above the undercut, but it seems that we should be able to progress downwards fairly rapidly. (When I refer to left and right, this is with your back to the Threshold)

Simon.

Hobnail Fri 26 Sep 2014.

CN/RGW/SMK.

We begin our second attempt to break out of the foot of the entrance shaft almost exactly a year after work on the dig commenced. Our efforts to date have been foiled by a worryingly poised ruckle, which seemed determined to guard the void visible beneath it. So despite entering cave that has clearly witnessed considerable water erosion, we were forced to beat a hasty retreat. After careful reappraisal a decision was made to concentrate our efforts in the floor of the rift on the surface side of the Threshold. To this end Clive drilled and banged 2 large rocks jammed in the rift. After some clearance, things started to look interesting, with considerable undercutting apparent beneath the wall of the fault. Before finishing, a second charge was fired, the fumes being quickly dispersed by a cool draught wafting up from the nether regions. Are we finally on the right track at last or is the cave about to repel us once more? Don't miss next week's gripping episode.

Simon.

WHFS Wed 24th Sept Mark, Spike, Matt & Mandy, Clive

After a long hiatus (is that a back injury?) on the digging front an active return to the face occurred on Wed...

Two sets of charges were fired and good progress made especially in the floor - this should make working conditions much more comfortable in what was quite a confined space.

Bang fumes were encouraged to clear quickly by the old trick of dropping burning newspaper down the shaft. This cleared the fumes in seconds but, of course, replaced them with a fug of smouldering paper! It worked well though.

Dave says he would like to do some clearing around Cowsh Crawl next week (Spike?) so maybe grill work will continue the following Wed.

W/L 16/9

Gonzo, Mandy, Matt, Tav

Cleared the last bang (can see ahead about 5 metres), some remedial work in the boulder choke, drilled

Clive

23/9

Gonzo

Drilled and popped

Wed 17th sep 2014.

After emerging from Thrupe lane, Alan and I paid a brief visit to Hobnail. We descended into the Coal cellar and can certainly corroborate the instability of the area. In fact we beat a fairly hasty retreat. We then carefully examined our options. The right hand end of the cross rift beyond the threshold was seeping water and the stream sounded not far off. However I think that the easier and most secure way forward is to continue down into the floor of the entrance rift. This has the advantage of 2 solid walls with the infill being removed as we go down.

P.S. to RGW. No earthworks were damaged in the making of this report.

Simon.

THURS 10 SEPT

Simon M-K, Rich W and Clive N

While RW prepared Dave Speed's steel ladder for installation in the entrance shaft, CN and SM-K went down to the Coal Cellar to begin work on deepening the floor. CN successfully reduced one large slab by plug and feathering and started on a second. After lunch RW and CN went back to the Cellar. While RW was down in the pit checking the dumping route into the lost chamber, the bridge of rocks near the scaffold pole began to collapse. CN gamely held the key slab in place while RW climbed out of the hole. More rocks then slid down into the pit, and the whole area started to feel very unstable. A decision was made to vacate the Cellar, taking some of the more accessible tools with us. The plug, an entrenching tool and a lump hammer remain beneath the rocks.

Over lunch it was decided to go back to basics and see what the stream would make of the hole to date. RW concreted in the entrance ladder on the north side of the shaft while CN dug out the last of the stream trench. The water readily flowed into the canal and disappeared happily into the cliff face 3m south of Hobnail Hole with no back-up. SM-K went below to see where the water emerged, but there was no sign of it and as he is deaf in one ear, he could not accurately place the background noise of the flowing stream.

RW, with both ears in reasonable fettle, went down instead. The situation was as follows:

1. A trickle could be heard but not seen in the narrow slots at the bottom of the entrance shaft.
2. Most of the water could be heard, but again not seen, at the rift crossroads immediately beyond the threshold. The sound was coming from a metre or so to the right where there is a narrow, choked inlet rift. The visible slot ascending above this point was surprisingly dry.
3. Down in the Coal Cellar, there was a tiny seepage coming through the west wall near the ladder, but there was no sound of falling water below the floor either in the area of the lost chamber or the putative 10m pitch.

In the interests of a long and active retirement, the diggers have decided to leave the Coal Cellar alone for the time being and follow the sound of the stream to the right of the threshold.

The stream continues to flow into the new cliff face sink, and as a result the old cave is now dry enough for a clear-out of the flood debris.

IMPORTANT NOTE Do not use the steel entrance ladder for the time being. Even when the concrete goes off, the ladder will not be securely held until another course of rocks is placed on top. In the meantime the wooden ladder can be used.

RW

FRIDAY 5 SEPT

Simon M-K and Rich W

In the absence of the new entrance ladder, the pair went underground. In the Coal Cellar, the wall supporting the roof block was dismantled and replaced with a scaffold bar. (This is a temporary solution - a heavy steel beam may eventually be required). Rocks from the floor area were then thrown into the "lost chamber" via the hole in the floor. Much more of this to do and some of the larger rocks may need "treatment".

After lunch, the south wall of the entrance shaft was raised by several courses.

RW

WHFS 3 Sept Mark, Dave, Spike and Clive

After collecting the excellent galvanised grill frame from Chancellors (many thanks Kate!) and attaching it by ingenious means (thanks Dave!) to the Jeep roof bars it was delivered to Windsor Hill and persuaded to go through the Windsor Hill Wood gate (just!) before arriving at site.

After much measuring and discussion the frame (around 3m by 2m) was cut and bent to fit the opening on the previously fitted supports. Holes were drilled in the rockface for coach bolts to secure the whole contraption and the operation finished off with a cement fillet along the top of the wall.

Much pleased with the success of the venture all repaired to the W & H to put the world to rights and rest Mark and Spike's newly acquired bad backs (mine having gone into, hopefully, long-term remission!)

The next step with the gate is to get the remaining sections from Chancellors for next week - Dave will advise on cutting and fitting etc.

Clive

W/L 27/8

Solo drill and walling

29/8

Solo drill and walling

2/9

Gonzo, Mandy, Matt, Tav

Drilling and walling

Joined by Paul and Ali who continued a photographic record of the main cave.

3/9 Solo drill, then popped the dig before collecting gravel for tonight's work at Windsor Hill Flood Sink

Gonzo

Fri 22Aug 2014.

RGW/SMK.

A lot of useful work achieved in a few hours. Far below ground (well about 35ft actually) the Coal cellar was minutely examined to determine the least dangerous and most practical way forward. Despite agreeing to differ on one point, we eventually reached a consensus as to where to concentrate our efforts. It was decided that we would move down against the secure face of the

fault to the left of the entry rift, This will require a scaffold pole to support the suspect roof at present supported by a makeshift wall, to enable us to dig below. In this left corner a small inlet rift enters and considerable undercutting is in evidence. It looks a much safer proposition than our original point of attack and should lead into the void that we glimpsed last week. After Richard started poking into another hole claiming to hear a stream, I thought it advisable to get him to the surface as soon as possible as our prolonged visit to the underworld was obviously affecting his judgment! Once on the surface he quickly recovered and a productive walling session followed. The wall of the entrance shaft now awaits the fitting of Dave Speed's fixed ladder which we expect to receive shortly following a minor adjustment.

Simon.

WHFS 20/8

Clive and Gonzo.

Second bar cemented in despite being 6" too short (should have gone to Specsavers Dave!).

W/L Aug 15

Gonzo

Drilling and walling

Aug 19

Gonzo drilling and walling.

Matt, Mandy, Paul and Ali helping to supply gravel and rocks and photographing the cave.

The retaining wall has now enveloped the scariest of the hanging boulders (not without its moments!) and is just about supporting the bottom end of the coffin-sized roof slab.

More delicate work is required to support the 'coffin' and to consolidate the jumble of huge rocks on the right.

Another gravel haul is now needed.

The dig will be popped this week and will need clearing next Tuesday.

Gonzo

TUES 19 AUGUST 2014

SM-K, AG (who had to leave early), RGW and CN (approximate combined age 260+)

While RGW fettled rocks around the entrance shaft, CN, assisted by AG and SM-K, drilled one shothole in the protruding boulder preventing access to the visible lower chamber. A charge was fired before lunch.

After lunch, the thinnest member of the team, AG, squeezed through into the new chamber. This measured about 8' in length, 4' in width and was of standing height under a reasonably secure roof of jammed blocks and eroded solid. There was a cream coloured stal flow on the south, solid (fault) wall.

Back under the entry point was a view through loose, smaller rocks onto a ledge above some sort of shaft. Another awkward view of the shaft head could be obtained from under the north wall. RGW replaced AG and was later joined by SM-K (CN could not get his shoulders through the squeeze). It was decided that the “best” route to the pitch head would be under the entry point and to this end the duo started carefully removing rocks, trusting that none was a key component of the rock pile. SM-K withdrew to allow RGW to place a rope around one of the larger rocks, ready for a pull from the Coal Cellar above. RGW joined CN in the Coal Cellar and the rock was duly yanked, causing a number of related rocks to move. When no further movement was possible, the large crowbar was called for, and levering began. Quite unexpectedly, this caused a large piece of the “solid” fault wall to peel off and threaten to fall across the access squeeze. The Coal Cellar floor was beginning to quiver by now and small rocks started to trickle into the depths. At least one of the rocks seemed to fall for 30 feet plus.

Clearly it was time for a rethink! Firstly, the detached wall was encouraged to find a position of temporary repose, partly blocking the squeeze. Further rock re-arrangement was done to stabilise the mass, but in the view of both CN and RGW, the squeeze route to the lower chamber was now too dangerous to use. Poking in the west end of the Cellar revealed a very narrow descending slot only a few inches wide. This could be widened by bang at a push but given the nature of the rock it would be a long slog. Alternatively, the floor between the slot and the condemned squeeze could be excavated but in the absence of very large blocks, the north side would be problematical to say the least. It was decided to leave the dig and allow settlement and “adjustment” to take place without the presence of the diggers.

Back in the Ferret Shed, a third option was debated, namely to investigate the floor around the two holes in the floor of the other, northerly, arm of the Coal Cellar. This area resembles a proper passage in that it seems to have two walls, and from its position, it might just lie over the fabled 30 foot shaft.

While we were pondering what the future might hold, a party of two Forest of Dean cavers turned up. With the stream still emerging from two-thirds down

the entrance shaft, they were warned to expect a damp trip, but they decided to attempt it and report back on conditions by email.

Hobnail Hole continues to flatter to deceive, but we are not beaten yet.

RW

Thu 14 Aug 14.

CN/RGW/SMK.

A lot of useful work done despite continuous heavy downpours. After bringing more edging stones over from FCQ for the entrance shaft, the walling continued apace. Clive appeared after lunch and I descended with him to the shelter of the Coal cellar, whilst Richard continued with his surface works. A noticeable cold draught was issuing from the depths, such that it was uncomfortable to linger in the Threshold. Two boulders are preventing access to the depths below, and these have to be dealt with carefully to avoid destabilising adjacent material. The first of these was expertly drilled and plug and feathered by Clive. However the second boulder (off which we need to remove a small portion) succeeded in blunting yet another drillbit in the familiar superheated rock present on this fault. Hopefully the problem will be resolved next week. The sound of a stream could be heard somewhere below but it was difficult to pinpoint the direction. The new lightweight steel ladder was installed at the base of the lower rift and proved very useful. Finished the day with more walling, just before the heavens opened again.

Simon.

Wed 13th Aug Fernhill - Paul and Ali Replaced log book and undertook some gardening. One bucket out.

Wed 13th Aug.

Clive, Gonzo, Dave & joined by Les Williams for site visit.

Les had a look at the two sinks. Regarding Lower WHFS, CSCC will now take on the gating of this and Les will contact Dave Speed with regard to using the grill already purchased for the job. GP will have no further involvement in this.

Upper WHFS - Clive, Gonzo & Dave cemented in the top bar that will support the grill. The lower bar somehow seemed to be a tad short, particularly once the first bar was cemented in and a new position to maintain the correct alignment was required meaning a much longer bar than originally planned is now required. Dave now has a length of 2" galv water pipe that will (time permitting) cut to length and delivered to Gonzo for next Wed. Min 7'6" straight edge/bar required to align bars with top of wall.

The gate looks good and will certainly out live most if not all of us. A template was offered up and the plan will be to hinge it on the RHS of the entrance. The eye bolts will need to be repositioned on the long side of gate.

The team (less Les) then joined Spike & Amy who were reserving our table at W&H's.

Dave.

W/L

10/8 Gonzo

Drill, wall, pop.

12/8

Duncan, Gonzo, Mandy, Matt, Tav

More supplies taken in for walling.

The bang debris was cleared, building blocks sourced and work continued on walling up within the Hammer Rift choke.

Aug 10th Just back from W/L.

Drilled, walled up the choke until I'd used up all the materials we sent up (3 sandbags, 2 skips, 1 BDH of dust, popped the dig on exit.

Gonzo

Wed 6th Aug WHFS.

The Mysterious Lady (Kate), Gonzo, Tav, Dave, joined later Andy & Sue.

The Mysterious Lady, Gonzo & Dave measured up WHFS 1 (ATLAS dig) for the now required grill and gate (see previous e-mail for details), whilst Tav went on down the valley checking sites for the registry. Andy arrived, accompanied by Sue, on a mission to drop down as many digs as possible in one evening. So whilst Andy & Sue headed off for to more dig sites the remaining four decided the W&H's required a visit.

Dave.

W/L

3/8 Solo drill and walling.

5/8 Solo drill.

Then joined by Paul, Ali, Matt & Mandy for an energetic evening of ferrying gravel to the boulder choke.

2 trugs, 3 sacks, one BDH and 2 trays of gravel, more water and a drum of cement now in situ.

Bang wire moved up 10m.

Gonzo

31.07 - Tav, Dave, Duncan, Spike - Windsor Hill

A useful surface exercise (in more ways than one) staggering around the quarry in waist deep nettles and brambles. The results were as follows :-

1. Windsor Hill Upper Sink - can no longer be recognised. To avoid the proliferation of similar sounding names I've renamed it Trench Dig.

2. Windsor Hill Swallet - the original swallet is presumably buried beneath tipped rubble. The stream now sinks into a culvert at the end of a stone lined surface stream trench. This is currently taking all

the flow.

3. Windlass Pot - sadly there is no sign of this. However it might be worth another look in winter when the undergrowth has died down a bit.

4. Windsor Hill Cave - definitely in the southern sector of the quarry but no remnants could be found.

5. Windsor Hill Flood Sinks - are now completely dry! I've altered this on the cave registry to Windsor Hill Upper Flood Sink.

6. Pig World - I've assigned this name to the new lower entrance. The upper entrance and the entrance further east have retained the name Bedding Plane Caves.

7. Horeshoe Cave has two entrances and no horseshoes.

8. Ham Hole - when the quote 'we'll easily find each other in the quarry' proved inaccurate, Dave and Spike stomped down to Ham Hole to admire the totally collapsed boulder choke and the extraordinary wattle and daub building that has appeared on the platform outside the entrance!

Regards

Tav

TUESDAY 29 JULY Hobnail

SM-K, RW

Walling, lunch, walling, followed by a walk up to Thrupe Swallet - very overgrown but still secure.

Rich

Thrupe Depression 23rd July - Spike & Clive

Surface digging occurred despite the heat, as I needed to take a bad day at work out on something. The channel was deepened and extended towards the currently blocked rift - Clive believes that we are a foot or so right of our target and as a result do not need to worry about the massive slab of rock that is blocking the path. It is also expected that a considerable quantity of infill will need to be removed from the rift to stop it blocking itself in use.

Adjourned to the Waggon before 10 to find it deserted - free cake though! Warned Dawn that numbers may be even lower next week so she has asked us to call ahead if we are going.

Spike

W/L 23rd July

Early start by Gonzo for more consolidation of the still-intimidating boulder choke.

A relatively stable base has now been established from which to build a wall up to the most worrying slabs.

Then joined by Mandy, Matt and Tav to clear the dig.

The last bang had worked well and easy access was made to the constricted junction.

Up was blind, down drops 2m to a too-tight rift heading in the 'wrong' direction.

Ahead continues straight as before, well decorated but too tight to push without help from Dr Nobel for about 4m (10m with adrenalin-breakthrough-goggles!) to a point where it appears to step up and enlarge slightly.

Still draughting, still a good echo.

Tue 22nd Jul 2014.

AG/CN/RGW/SMK.

On a sizzling hot day it was quite a relief to descend to the air conditioned comfort of the Coal cellar. A considerable amount of poking about with Alan followed, in an attempt to unravel the mysteries of the floor and what might lay beneath it. To this end we inserted ourselves into the obvious hole on the left. After some hesitation we concluded that it was fairly secure and were able to get a better view of the way on. Tantalisingly close between 2 large boulders a sizeable space-looking somewhat like the top of a choked shaft - was visible, possibly 6 ft across and with a clean washed solid wall on the far side. After a lunch break, RGW and myself carried out a second appraisal and it was concluded that the easiest point of access would be in the floor close to the base of the entry rift. Here a few minutes work with the mini sledgehammer began to open up the approach. It now needs some precision drilling of some obstructing rocks and we should have a safe entry point to the 'wonders' below. Exited to see Clive stretched out reading the 'Telegraph'. He will, we must assume, as per the normal practise, be able to produce a medical note on his next visit!

Simon.

Gonzo to W/L.

Drilled and popped just two holes to try and remove the corner and floor ahead with minimal damage to the surroundings.

The encyclopedia-, fridge-, TV- (elongated, flat screen and otherwise) and other domestic appliance- and scholarly tome-shaped rocks of the Hammer Rift boulder choke enhanced my exit experience with their much-appreciated immobility.

Clive and Spike on a gravel run to the Ferret Shed.

WEDS 16 JULY Hobnail

Alan G, Rich W, Simon M-K. Clive N paid a brief visit to try out his newly restored back but he was not allowed to lift anything or go underground

AG, RGW and SM-K all took turns in the Coal Cellar - sometimes two at a time (it is that big!). The good news is that it is possible to peer through small holes into a sizeable void below from at least three different points in the Cellar. The bad news is that all approach options mean "tinkering" with large interconnected slabs. For an hour or so, gravel and small rocks were cleared from the floor area, revealing the key rocks in all their glory. Then, one of the diggers leant casually against a block

the size of a fridge only for it to move a few inches. This detached it from a rock above the size of an elongated television which is supporting a lot of encyclopedia-sized debris.

After a long pause for thought, a wedge-shaped rock was gingerly inserted between the "fridge" and the good right-hand wall, and the gap between the "fridge" and the "TV" was filled in with smaller rocks. We now have to decide which slabs we can surgically remove (almost certainly by plug and feathers) without causing a major collapse of household furnishings.

Lunch was taken to settle the nerves, and a pleasant afternoon was spent raising the walls of the entrance shaft.

Work will continue next week.

RGW

July 16th Gonzo, Matt, Mandy & Tav with cameo appearances by Paul & Ali.

Ferried in gravel and a horizontal skip.

Gonzo continued consolidating the worst part of the Hammer Rift boulder choke while Mandy, Matt and Tav cleared the debris from the last bang to advance 1.5m up to a well decorated junction with a body-sized hole in the floor dropping 2m, a constricted way on straight ahead obscured by fine formations and a possible continuation up to the right with a good draught and a phreatic echo. A corner will be removed tomorrow to enable better access for a clearer view ahead.

Gonzo

WHFS Wed July 9th - Clive, Paul and Gonzo. Spike joined us later. Dave and Ray in W&H.

Clive mixed cement, Gonzo applied this and Paul ferried it in.

The midges were kind to us on a very pleasant evening.

Paul.

Tue 8th Jul 2014. Hobnail

AG/CN/RGW/SMK/Les for a brief visit.

Now that we're out of sight of daylight, things are really getting rather serious. Added to which is the very real danger that a breakthrough may be not far away. A small charge was laid before the luncheon adjournment to enable larger dimension cavers to enter the Coal Cellar. This is a washed out void, its walls massive detached blocks blackened by water action. With a careful reappraisal, it appears that the area is more stable than we had thought last week, although we must obviously proceed with caution. A supporting wall was thrown up to support the most suspect boulder and we should now be able to proceed in reasonable safety. It is also now clear where to concentrate our efforts, with all watercourses seeming to converge 5-6 ft below under the East wall. A sizeable

passage is apparent at this point from which cold air is issuing. The most secure access point is directly below the entry rift, which will entail the removal of assorted jammed rocks and debris.

Simon.

WHFS 2 July

Mark, Dave, Simon and Clive

After the hiatus of mal-functioning drill batteries and then worn out drill bits, a return to WHFS was a welcome change!

The Quad Hilti drill bit churned through the Black Rock Limestone with consummate ease compared to the battering experienced at Hobnail.

Eight 300mm holes (couldn't get the 400 drill we usually use) went in and fired with the use of an extra delay det. All good but probably a bit too optimistic, as to the number of holes, as we appear to have a few new cracks appear where we didn't necessarily want them. A bit of cementing needed as a result and a return to a more a cautious approach!

Clive

W/L 6 July Solo trip to move bang wire forward, carry in water for cement, drill and photograph.

2 photos below, looking forward from the constriction 5 metres into the dig:

Gonzo

W/L 4 July Lunchtime solo trip to rig a rope from 2 small rawlbolts down the calcite slope below the choke and clear the last bang.

1 metre progress now approaching fine formations.

Passage turns right ahead, low with mud floor.

Started drilling but 2 week old 600mm Bosch drill bit nearly blunt already - back to Hilti Quad bits next time!

Gonzo

With the support of Naomi, Martin & Nicky, Paul & Ali and Dave plus one of the groundsmen, I dived in the springs behind the Bishop's Palace last night. The visibility was superb until the silt on the floor was disturbed. The smaller satellite springs adjacent to the L-shaped lake have boils through quicksand rising up into them but are only waist deep. A covered spring beneath the lawn discharges into one of these. The Bottomless Well is in fact only 2.5 metres deep.

Duncan

Further to Simon's report, it may be useful to give an idea of the depth of Hobnail Hole. From the surface down to "the threshold" is approximately 7m. Beyond the threshold is a 3m blasted drop to Simon's "lower ground floor". The way on is a loosely choked (and possibly loosely walled!) rift in the floor, down which stones rattle for about 4m. Thus potential depth to date is - 14m or say 45'.

Rich

Wed 2nd Jul 2014

AG/CN/RGW/SMK.

A possibly quite significant day. The troublesome band of rock finally capitulated after fighting to the end, thanks to Clive's bombardment. Yours truly was then inserted to examine the lower ground floor. The space below is hemmed in by enormous pieces of detached bedrock, the water inflow over countless years having played havoc with the material trapped in the fault. Not a trace of mud was in evidence with everything squeaky clean. It's clear that the stream has been sinking close by on the surface and has disappeared into the floor beneath our rift, from which the draught is issuing. Next session a careful appraisal will take place, to assess the stability of the roof and walls. We have at least achieved the first of our objectives, namely to engineer a permanent alternative stream sink. The good people of Thrupe lane can now sleep easy in their beds.

Simon.

I'll be doing a 'lunch break' clearance and drilling trip before then but if anyone fancies a bit of exercise next Tuesday evening 7.15 I'm hoping to ferry in a few sackfuls of gravel/dust (Clive - can I scrounge some of Pat's sandbags off you?) and some containers of water so that I can gear up the walling beneath the worst section of the boulder choke on subsequent trips - the worst blocks have been gingerly grouted but the area is still extremely fragile.

If you have any please bring some plastic bottles of water as the puddles are now virtually dry. I'll store this at the bottom of the calcite slope and then pop the dig before leaving.

Gonzo

Finally, after 5 year's negotiation. We have a date and time arranged for a dive in St Andrew's Well. Martin & I are meeting at the Bishop's Palace for 7:15 pm tomorrow (3rd). There are evening tours going on at the same time, and we have to be out by 9 pm, but a modest turn out of ATLAS interested parties would probably not go amiss. The springs are, after all, the resurgence for Thrupe Lane etc. etc.

Duncan

W/L 2 July Gonzo, Mandy, Matt, Martin Grass

Photo, clear, drill and pop.

Gonzo

Although there may have always been a sketchy boulder, bear in mind that the full force of the flood stream had been thundering down the Railway Series. Therefore what once was a sketchy boulder could now be a BOULDER of DOOM !

Dave.

TLS 26 June Report: Spike, R Deasy

After much faff, we headed to Thrupe, getting to the entrance before I realised I probably should have brought a ladder for Ray. Both freeclimbed down with a minimum of fuss to face the water still entering ~10ft from the base.

I spent some time getting wet around the start of the Ferret Run, clearing a fair bit of organic matter from the gate, followed by several grapefruit sized rocks which were blocking it shut. Progress down the climb at the end of the FR still looks too wet and unnecessary. Filled 4 bags with sticks and mulched down leaves etc.

Ray headed on down the Railway Series, loosening and moving to the entrance several large logs (one ~4ft long!) before deciding that progress beyond a sketchy boulder in the roof might not be wise. According to Clive, said boulder has always been sketchy, so perhaps nothing to worry about.

Ray filled another bag with detritus, all 5 of which were stacked at the start of the RS, before we climbed back out the entrance to be met by Clive and Reena (?) by the car. Pub followed - see earlier report.

More movement is clearly happening in the entrance and these rocks must be coming from under the adit. I suggest we need to divert the stream ASAP so some finer investigation can take place. We also need to get the organic matter out sooner rather than later as a lot of it is heading in a pongy direction...

Spike

June 26 Spike and Ray D - to TLS to check out the flood debris situation - awaiting report....(!)

Dave K and Clive on medically-induced W & H duty along with a surprise visit from Mike R....

No sign of Paul - did he 'bimble' in FCQ as expected?

New replacement drill bits now acquired (Hilti this time rather than Bosch) from Hilti in Bristol - these are high-temp versions which should stand a better chance of surviving the extremely hard rock encountered at Hobnail. Have used them before with success before being diverted to more easily purchasable, and cheaper, Bosch versions

Clive

MON 23 JUNE

Clive, Simon, Rich

Another beautiful summer's day but the stream is still flowing strongly and it continues to emerge at the foot of the entrance shaft.

A short walling session was followed by a multi-shothole charge, and then lunch in the sun. After much post-prandial rock clearing, the area of the slot was again exposed and when RW and SM-K had run out of energy, CN attacked the floor with the big bar. He quickly holed through into open "passage". The rubble floor is about 6' below but the view is not good enough to confirm that there is a definite way on. It could just be a significant void. Either way, a new phase of digging is just around the corner.

A second charge was planned but CN's brand new drill bit was completely blunted by the next shothole. The rock seems to have been "superheated" along the faultline, making it very hard indeed. Instead the day concluded with another entrance walling session.

RW

W/L 21 June Impromptu trip to the dig while Karen did the Tesco run.

The last bang had shattered ahead for 1m and lifted the calcite from the rock beyond that.

3-4 metres of progress.

Beyond continues well decorated, passable in places, with sections requiring chemical persuasion.

Grouted the Hammer Rift choke on exit.

Gonzo

Paul, Spike and Clive removed the remaining pile of 'Balch-Bags' from the quarry and took them to Thrupe where they now reside behind the Ferret Shed waiting for high water conditions and the possibility of washing them out. In addition eight bags of gravel were also stockpiled there as well.

Kate and Ray joined Mark for a short grouting session in W/L.

Clive

19/6

W/L

Drilling, more grouting in the approach, then popped the dig to emerge to a warm welcome from the local horseflies which was better than watching the football.

Gonzo

Hobnail SUN 15 JUNE

Rich, Alan (Yes - Alan Gray of Clutton), Clive

Brief look at the digging face. With the benefit of Scurion power, AG reckoned that the passage at the bottom of the floor slot was person-sized. Then a walling session, taking the left-hand side up a couple of courses. I have left a shelf for a steel beam to run under the large entrance boulder. The right-hand "shelf" will be a stout steel bracket bolted to the wall - job for Dave K?

During the afternoon, a very large piece of farm contractor's machinery came out of the paddock opposite and demolished a substantial section of the the TLS wall - including the part that I had rebuilt in the spring! The contractor did not stop. I do not intend doing more than pile up a heap of rocks where the wall stood. What with repairs to the Longwood Valley Sink walls, I am suffering from a serious surfeit of limestone walling!

Rich

W/L

3/6

a.m. Gonzo drilling and grouting

p.m. Gonzo & Pail Stillman drilling, grouting and popping

7/6 Gonzo grouting, then cleared back to start of dig - 1 metre progress - way on looks encouraging and very well decorated but just too small to push.

45 minutes drilling with tired old Bosch 24v produced a mere 6 inches of shothole.

Gonzo

Hobnail THURSDAY 5 JUNE

Cast in order of appearance: Rich W, Simon M-K, Dave K, Ray D, Clive N

No further roof falls since last week, and very cold air at the dig face. Spent the morning session clearing the floor area just beyond the threshold. With 4+ diggers it was possible to have a digger's assistant down below. After lunch, CN drilled one long shothole in the lower part of the left-hand buttress and one

short hole in a floor slab (the battery ran out prematurely). The fumes duly and swiftly emerged and DK went below to wreak havoc on the broken rock. After much work with the short crowbar and heavy hammer, a 3-4" wide blackened slot was opened in the floor, allowing a restricted view down for 6 to 8 feet to a possible "void". Various other floor slabs were cleaned off ready for next week's application of Dr. Nobel.

NB The stream is still sinking near the cliff fall and emerging at the foot of the entrance shaft.

RW

WHFS 5 June Clive, Dave, Ray Deasey, Spike (disguised as Paddington Bear for some reason).

Drill, pop, clear, drill, Addlestones.

Gonzo

W/L dig

22/9 Gonzo - solo drilling session

27/9 Gonzo - solo drilling session and then fired 3.5 shotholes in calcite floor

29/9 Gonzo, Matt & Mandy

Cleared a large amount of debris (calcite over mud over calcite & rock).

We're now 2 metres into the dig as a roomy crawl with another metre wriggle for Voysey-sized people.

Pretty ahead with a hint of possible change about 7 metres away.

Photo of Mandy below with her feet just beyond the point where we started.

On exit a small amount of expanding foam was applied around the pinch-point of the 2 large, detached slabs in the approach to Hammer Rift (which I wasn't going near with cement and a trowel!).

Photo attached looking up at the pebble that is holding back several tons.

Now I'm more confident that the pebble holding them together wont just fall out when knocked we'll do some grouting to make access a bit safer but a long term solution would be preferable if the dig goes anywhere.

I've been in touch with Nick Chipchase who dug into Hammer Rift and Chisel Rift with Pete Rose in 1969.

His survey attached below with the dig superimposed crudely in red.

Gonzo

Excellent photos Clive, the colours are amazing. I've been thinking about the poly bag mystery. Is it not possible that it ended up where it is as a result of one of the 2 major collapses in 1967-68.? When the ground gave way, there must have been some lateral shockwaves as well as the vertical movement. Another possibility is that it was washed in via an early pit excavated soon after the collapse. (before we arrived on the scene) One of the archive photos that you copied for us, shows a sizeable hole in our corner of the site, that may have passed very close to the poly 'chamber'. All comments on these theories welcomed.

Simon.

WHFS 29 May Clive, Dave, Gonzo, Spike

Cleared, drilled, popped, cleared, noted slight draught, adjourned for refreshments.

Hobnail Tues 27th May 2014.

CN/RGW/SMK.

Events are now beginning to gather pace. Whilst before lunch more debris was removed from the banged cross rift, it was later in the day when the true nature of the task became apparent. The left continuation of the rift runs into a substantial boulder ruckle, which seemed determined to bite back, fortunately without success. A sizeable space was visible 6ft below appearing to run back under the approach passage. (There can be no question of working in this area) By far the safest option will be to excavate the floor of the cross rift at the point where we enter it, and where we have the security of good rock. It's clear that a very large volume of water has been sinking in this corner of the site, with rotten blackened rock everywhere. If only we can engineer a safe way down for the next few feet, then a breakthrough could be very close.

Simon.

WHFS 22 May Clive, Gonzo, Spike

Trip to WHFS where we found that, despite our numerous requests and suggestions, our winter's work in stabilising the sink and placating the landowners with a safe entrance has been literally and metaphorically undermined with a 10ft pit with one solid face and a teetering wall into which, without remedial action, our foundations will collapse when the rains come again.

The debris not stacked on our walkway has been dumped in the stream bed where it will no doubt be washed into the old NHASA dig next season.

On retrieving my chisel from our hiding place the end has been snapped off.

The concept of a collective team effort is clearly wasted on some.

Drilled, popped and drilled our more stable rift before adjourning to W&H to make wax models to stick pins in.

W/L May 20th Gonzo, Matt & Mandy.

Clearing session.

Be warned if you plan to visit:

Before we started digging we took a closer look at the boulders through which you climb to gain access to Hammer Rift.

This is iffy to say the least, with two slabs in the position you would generally push against, suspended in mid air, pinched together with nothing more than a couple of tiny pebbles and holding up tons of rock which will land on the unwary.

Mandy thought that one of these moved on her last visit.

It is difficult to see what can be done to make this safer without major shoring but in the interim application of a liquid grout may help a little.

I'd suggest we take Hammer Rift off the tourist trade route until it is stabilised.

Yesterday's bang had done a great job advancing 1.5m into solid passage at full passage width.

The way on is encouraging (photo attached), draughting, has a good echo, heads into no-man's-land and is more straightforward to drill than the approach.

Spoil was stacked out of sight in the more stable reaches of Hammer Rift.

Gonzo

Fri 2nd |May 2014.
CN/RGW/SMK.

Another quite encouraging day's work. After firing a charge to break up a boulder under the threshold, work began to improve access to the inner sanctum. This provided improved security and enabled us to try and work out what exactly is going on. Clearly some water has sunk directly below the entrance shaft, but interestingly there are signs of a possible way on in a North-Easterly direction. And it is from there that a majority of the draught appears to be issuing. CN laid a second charge to wrap up the proceedings and further deepen the approaches. All to play for!
Simon.

Windsor Hill – April 30th Chris, and his friend Richard, Clive, Gonzo, Kate, Spike.

2 pops, 2 clears.

We're now about 2m along.

Our rift continues with another small rift entering on the left just ahead

At the end of play we redirected the considerably reduced stream away from WHFS1 and into the dig.

The water disappeared before reaching the dig rift.

No water was seen to enter the inlet in the old NHASA dig after we diverted it so there's passage(s) nearby taking the whole stream.

It would be good to hop left once we have advanced a few metres into more stable rock.

Gonzo

Hobnail Sat 26th Apr 2014.

CN/NP/RGW/SMK.

Progress seems to be accelerating at a surprising pace. Not only has the floor dropped several feet in the past fortnight, but we are uncovering more and more evidence of erosion by the stream as it sinks along the line of the fault. Progress today was forward rather than downwards as we pushed into an area of rotten blackened rock which appears to be a confluence point for the water. And through it all the cool draught continues to blow. We now need to engineer a workable space from which to pursue this draught, hopefully into the open cave that should lie not far away.

Simon.

Hobnail 22/04/14

RW, CN & DK

Last weeks bang debris cleared comprising several buckets of spoil and larger rocks, which revealed a few more draughting black holes. After a timber beam was cut and fitted to support the boulder in the East wall/roof, more of the fractured floor was removed. The draughting black holes soon joined up to show two parallel cherty rifts with a visible depth of approx 3-4ft, each 3-4 inches wide and about 1ft apart. The central section of rock separating the rifts is fractured and can be flipped from side to side. More rock removal to follow.

DK.

Amongst the stream-blackened debris removed yesterday were several fist-sized sandstone cobbles - a very encouraging sign.

Rich

Hobnail Thur 17th Apr 2014.

CN/DK/SMK.

RGW's grouting is put to the test with 2 rather tasty little charges aimed at taking out the floor. The result was satisfactorily destructive with considerable damage inflicted. As far as could be seen the grout remained intact. Much debris removed and more remains. This has taken out the base of the facing (east) wall but the wall above seems quite solid. It's still too early to say what is developing. Clive also laid a charge on one of the collapse slabs blocking the stream. A very worthwhile afternoon's work.

Simon.

Hobnail April 14th - Clive and team

We had a useful grouting session at Hobnail Hole today with Duncan and Naomi joining Simon and I.

The next job is the attack on the floor, but we should give the concrete 48 hours to harden off. As Simon is not available on Tuesday, this pushes work on to Wednesday or later. I may well not be around but you and Simon can proceed according to our plan.

Some points from today:

1. The stream is now sinking before the adit. Duncan went down the shaft and cleared the blockage, but much flood debris needs to be removed.

2. I had a furlge down the Hobnail slot with a long bar but could feel no voids, just stream debris. I also poured a watering can full of water down the slot. It disappeared into the debris - sadly without any sound of falling water. The cool air was present but the draught not so strong as last time.

3. At least one rat was seen around the dig on several occasions. Diggers/cavers should therefore be aware of a possible Weil's Disease risk.

Cheers

Rich

A correction to the report from last night:-

The rift is 6-8 inches wide, although there was a large flake about 5-6 inches thick against the right hand wall, held in place by a thin mud layer. This flake peeled off when the crow bar approached it, effectively blocking the view ahead.

Dave.

----- Original Message -----

From: [Spike](#)

To: [ATLAS Diggers](#)

Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2014 10:06 AM

Subject: {Thrupeswallet} WHFS - 16/04/14

Clive, Dave K & Spike, with Tav and the Voyseys on pub duty.

I arrived early for my dental appointment with the rock I was called off last week. On arrival, it became clear that persons unknown have been playing with the stream as the bungs had been removed from the dam and chucked down the hole, the backup dam had been removed and the stream down to WHFS 1 had been dammed at various points. Obviously it's hard to take the moral high ground here as we're playing with it just as much, but it's further proof that folk are about and can see what we're up to.

Some time later, once I had the remains of last week's second shot on the surface, Clive arrived and began drilling. DK arrived shortly and we set about restoring the back up dam to reduce the water in the shaft. Once the smoke cleared, DK descended to clear the spoil. This revealed a rift heading at least 4ft back into the wall, and up to 3ft deep. Unfortunately it's only 2 inches wide. More holes drilled and popped before the pub called. Hopefully we can go inwards and slightly leftwards to hit solid rock before we need to go downwards...

We pulled one rock out of the backup dam and stashed the bungs in the blue bucket to restore the flow before we left.

There had been an intention to grout more of the base of the shaft which is exceptionally loose, however there was no gravel available. Turns out that more (or possibly the same) persons unknown had used said bags to try to dam up where the stream resurges from the embankment. One of the bags was damaged beyond use, but both were removed back to the usual spot in the hope that we can use them for grouting next week. Perhaps we need to consider hiding these as well...?

Apologies for the essay, I'm bored at work...

Spike

Windsor Hill - I cleared the second gate on Sunday. Although the stream is sinking before the adit it comes out a couple of metres up from the base of the pitch and dispenses a good soaking. There is probably a lot of debris further in and Cowsh Crawl from the base of Perseverance Pot to Butt's Chamber may not be passable. The status of the Railway Series towards High Atlas is unknown. The spoil from opening up the gate is placed to one side of the start of Plaster Passage.

There is talk of digging at Hobnail Hole this Friday which would be a good opportunity to inspect Thrupe Lane Swallet in more detail.

If no one has any objections then I will post the first paragraph on UKcaving though I see that Dave has beaten me to it.

I might bring my germs along to WHFS later this evening if I can be on light duties. No WLH for me!

Duncan

Clive and team

We had a useful grouting session at Hobnail Hole today with Duncan and Naomi joining Simon and I.

The next job is the attack on the floor, but we should give the concrete 48 hours to harden off. As Simon is not available on Tuesday, this pushes work on to Wednesday or later. I may well not be around but you and Simon can proceed according to our plan.

Some points from today:

1. The stream is now sinking before the adit. Duncan went down the shaft and cleared the blockage, but much flood debris needs to be removed.
2. I had a furlge down the Hobnail slot with a long bar but could feel no voids, just stream debris. I also poured a watering can full of water down the slot. It disappeared into the debris - sadly without any sound of falling water. The cool air was present but the draught not so strong as last time.
3. At least one rat was seen around the dig on several occasions. Diggers/cavers should therefore be aware of a possible Weil's Disease risk.

Cheers

Rich

Windsor Hill Mark, Dave, Spike and Clive (the Voiseys and Tav on W & H duty)

Mark started and Clive finished drilling a set of holes in the right hand side of the rift which we were intending to widen. This had to be a bit of a 'surgical strike' as we needed to be careful we didn't over-widen the rift at its start for fear of destabilising the base of the entrance shaft.

After a suitably loud bang Spike spent some time removing the debris - a tricky task given that he had to support himself with one hand and dig with the other!

The bang did the tricky though (luckily) and the threshold area of the rift is secure. We are in about two feet now and the left hand wall is curving to the right - hopefully this is just a temporary aberration as if it continued much in that direction it would be back in unstable rock. We might well have to bang on the left hand side in that case

The evening finished with a grouting session at the base of the shaft - a little more is needed next time plus more chemical persuasion.

All best

Clive

Hobnail Tues 8th Apr 2014.

CN/RGW/SMK.

With substantial shoring now in place, we could finally start to attack the floor and size up the way forward. Two charges were laid by Clive and as expected it is the north - east corner that appears to hold the key. The steady cold draught coming up there seems to be emerging from a narrow descending rift running away into the cliff. Careful grouting will have to accompany our continuing progress, but the prospects are looking excellent.

Simon.

Mark, Spike & Clive

A mini gravel run provided 4 bags (as yet unused) for WHFS and another 4 for Hobnail.

Mark first had a look down the 'other' sink to re-assess the amount of water appearing from our dig. It appeared to be roughly equal to that sinking in the rift we are intent on attacking. (I'm going to refer to it as the 3rd rift). This is perhaps not surprising considering its alignment and its position close to the cliff-line.

Most of the stream (reduced as the dam was partially in place) was sinking in the main (old) rift and the 1st and 2nd rifts in the dig.

Two single, fairly small, bangs last night removed the centre portion of rock in rift 3 to an extent of a couple of feet. Next time a series of holes on the right hand side of the rift should enable us to cut a section of that wall away. In addition some grouting is still needed close by and half way up the shaft.

Mark tidied up the rock pile by the surface wall to make a safe hauling area and plans were discussed to rig a pulley over the shaft.

Refuelling as usual at the W & H.....

Other news - the rock removal from Wookey for the Wells Museum Witch of Wookey project made the Wells Journal with a picture of Martin Grass and Gavin Newman in diving gear. The rocks still remaining at Wookey were moved to the museum on Wed by Mark and Clive.

A funeral report for Rob Cowlin also appeared in the Journal - amongst the enormous list of attendees at Dinder Church was listed David Speed representing the 'Atlas cavers'.

All best

Clive

Hobnail Tues 01Apr 2014.

CN/RGW/SMK.

Almost like a summer's day, but there was work to be done. Things didn't quite turn out as planned however due to a rather stubborn rock which only succumbed at the second attempt. In the meantime RGW installed a second wooden beam to further enhance our security. A final clear out revealed the next targets for Clive. It will be interesting to see what lies a foot or so beneath the present floor. Don't miss next week's gripping instalment.

Simon.

WHFS Wed 26 March Last week saw the completion of the supporting wall by Clive, Dave, Gonzo, Matt, Mandy and Tav.

Last night saw another gravel run by Clive, Dave and Gonzo who were joined at WHFS by Tav and Spike.

A great deal of grouting was carried out at the base of the shaft and a steel stemple was fitted beneath a loose section.

Next week will see us heading downwards at last!

Gonzo

Tues 25th Mar 2014.

CN/RGW/SMK

The work to consolidate the dig continued on a rather cold dreary day. It was decided that as a treat we could also proceed with some serious rock breaking, and Clive was given the chance to try out his shiny new plug and feathers kit. This was very effective on a protruding butress, but less so on a larger lump. This will be chemically removed on our next visit.

SMK

Hobnail Hole Sun 16th Mar 2014.

SMK

A beautiful sunny day. I thought that I would clean out the digging face to see what we're up against and brought out half a dozen bucketloads. I then did a bit of gentle crowbarring and things started to get interesting. Moving a couple of smallish waterworn rocks a narrow rift was exposed at the base of the sloping wall on the left. It was possible to see down several feet onto blackened material and the air was cool. It seems likely that the floor we are on is has been undermined by the water. Something appears to be developing below us although there is no doubt still much work ahead of us.

Simon.

WHFS Wed 12 March

Gonzo, Ray Deasey, Spike

Finished work on the scaffold bar gate.

Ray popped down the old NHASA dig and found that, as expected having lowered the floor, the considerable stream disappearing into our dig does not reappear in the one next door.

Adjourned to W&H to catch Dave's germs.

Gonzo

Hobnail Hole Tues 11th mar 2014.

Foggy, Clegg and Compo. (Alias CN/RGW/SMK)

Step by step, working conditions are being brought up to current H&S standards and today saw significant progress to that end. Jim Young's steel beam was manoeuvred into position and RGW built up a concreted wall above it. This beam has the advantage of providing increased security whilst not

reducing the digging area below. A second beam at right angles to the first beam was considered to be a necessary further precaution to support the roof, before the solid looking floor can be attacked.

Simon.

WHFS - Wed 5th March.

Dave joined later by Spike.

After some fettling of scaffold tube for the gateway at the MNRS, headed over to WHFS.

Drilled and fitted the scaffold tube to the top of the wall and cut and bolted sliding tube section into Scaffold tube.

A couple of rocks removed from the right hand side, making space for a socket for the sliding tube to be cemented into position.

Measured up for grill/gate for other sink.

A quiet session in the W&H's with just the two of us, so we only stopped for one round.

Dave.

Wed 5th mar 2014.

CN/RGW/SMK.

A springlike day. Careful thought as to how a second beam can best offer security to the dig. The existing support appears not to have moved since last week. As further progress is dependant on banging, it

is important that all is safe before we move on down. The good news is that the draught is beginning to filter up from below again. All remaining material now cleared from the floor leaving a nice clean washed face.

Simon.

Sat March 2nd Hobnail Hole.

Rich, SMK, Clive, Paul, and Duncan

WHFS - Tony B, Dave and Clive met up at FCQ to stock up on gravel - around 14 bags-worth this time.

At WHFS the water level had dropped a bit but was still 'lively'!

A couple of large rocks had been dropped down the shaft, the smaller one of which was removed.

More work was done on the walling within the shaft - one more course to finish that is all that is needed plus fettling a loose ledge/step in the shaft with cement next time. Dave offered up and measured up some scaffold pole for the 'lockable' bar across the entrance. This will be bolted to the top of the wall.

We have around half a dozen bags of gravel left on site

Met up with Tav in an empty W & H for rehydration....

Clive

Clive, Dave, Dylan, Gonzo 19th Feb

WHFS

Patio now built - Alan Titchmarsh would be proud of us!

A final bit of wall building half way down and a removable bar to keep the land agent happy then we can start to head down.

Gonzo

Hobnail Hole Wed 19th Feb 2014.

CN/DK/RGW/SMK.

A day of mixed fortunes. Overall good progress was made with Dave completing his work on the adit gate with the addition of a top backing plate. Richard also completing the concreted wall against the south bank. After refreshments in the canteen a considerable quantity of mainly leaves was extracted from Hobnail hole. So far so good, digging proper can now proceed? Well no actually, the dig wasn't going to give in so easily. The north 'wall', clearly saturated by the constant wet weather began to slowly collapse. Although I think the unstable layer is relatively shallow it threatens to loosen the beds above. Digging will have to be put on hold until we can decide on the best way forward.

Simon.

Hobnail Hole Thur 13th Feb 2014

CN/DK/RGW/SMK.

Rain, sun and snow: i.e. a typical Mendip day in Feb. Despite all that the weather could throw at us, another excellent day. Dave King managed to straighten out the adit gate (by driving his vehicle over it) and to reinstate it, this time with much meatier bolts. All this with a large stream running into the cave. Meanwhile Richard built up a concreted wall in Hobnail to consolidate the south bank, and to pick up the right hand edge of the suspect 'bedrock' slab. One more session should see this work finished.

Simon.

Windosr Hill Clive and Gonzo, supported by Dylan.

A gravel haul to the dig using the cut off legs from Pat Cronin's old, white hessian sailor suits.

The surface by the 'gate' was then levelled off with additional help from Spike and spectators Matt and Mandy.

Then off to join the bar room team of Dave, Duncan, Naomi and Tav to talk at length about ginger pussies.

Gonzo

Hobnail Hole Fri 7th Feb 2014.

CN/RGW/SMK.

Taking advantage of a brief lull in the weather, the work proceeds apace. As a precautionary measure Clive installs a section of telegraph pole to support a suspect piece of cliff. This done a small charge reduces the fallen boulder to fragments. The way on at last appears to be clear enabling a large quantity of flood debris to be removed and several feet of downward progress followed. The next priority is for Richard to concrete in place a supporting wall from the ledge to stabilise the south bank. To this end we collected a load of ballast from Fairy Cave quarry and left it behind the ferret shed.

SMK

Hobnail Hole Sun 2nd Feb 2014.

SMK

By this winter's standard a very pleasant day. After cutting up a few dead trees, cleared some debris from the adit gate. All our drainage works appear to be holding up well. Then removed half a dozen buckets from the dig preparatory to the boulder's destruction.

Simon.

Hobnail Hole Thurs Jan 30th 2014.

CN/RGW/SMK.

Cold and grey, but a whole afternoon without rain! The stream is very much reduced, and short of another deluge, is no longer a threat to the dig. Further excavation of very gloopy material reveals a second large boulder blocking our path (It's almost as if the dig has been deliberately booby-trapped!) The destruction of this obstacle will have to be carried out carefully to avoid further slippage, and be followed immediately by underpinning. RGW continues to consolidate the walling against the south bank.

Simon.

Wed 29th Jan, WHFS

Clive, Gonzo, Dave & Dillan, met at FCQ for a gravel run. But since we're running out of usable bags, only enough for one evening's walling was collected. On leaving, Dillan sneaked back into the quarry and nearly got left behind.

Same team with no additions.

Over to WHFS for some more walling, but this time down on the RHS cliff face.

Rift at the bottom still swallowing all the, now cleaner water that's being thrown at it.

The team was then joined by Tav at the W&H's and Dillan after Gonzo eventually remembered he was still in the back of the car.

Another gravel run next week.

More bags required.

Dave.

Hobnail Hole Thur 23rd Jan 2014.

CN,RGW SMK.

Today the earth moved for Croscombe as Clive dispatched the offending boulder at last. This was followed by some Witcombe walling wizardry in reinforcing the south bank. It's over a month since we were below this point in the dig and there's a lot more flood debris to remove, but we're about to move forward again. (Invited to tea afterwards by Rina up the lane)

Simon

Mark & Dylan, Matt & Mandy, Dave and Clive. Tav on pub duty.

The mega block by the new wall succumbed to a combination of mega ATLAS sledgehammer and bolster chisel without needing to resort to Dr Nobel's Linctus. The rock broke along the bedding into two large flat slabs which were then broken in to four smaller large slabs. These found their way onto the top course of the now finished wall.

Plans were made for a bar to be fitted across the access to the shaft which would be fixed in place by bolts into the rock. A spanner would be needed to remove the bar on work days.

The stream, dramatic as ever, flowed uninterrupted down the rift at the base of the shaft....

We need another gravel run next week prior to finishing the concreting in the shaft which has been on hold for a while.

Clive

Hobnail Hole Sun 19th Jan 2014.

SMK.

A beautiful sunny day. At finish the overhanging bank had been largely removed. Some material needs to be taken out from below, including a sizeable rock that is probably best sledged.

Simon.

Windsor Hill FS Jan 15th 2014

Simon Meade-King, ably assisted by Matt & Mandy, Mark, Spike, Dave and Clive. Tav and Andy Watson on pub-watch in the W & H.

A very wet evening again (surprise!) which resulted in the two giant boulders embedded in the floor, just above the new access 'gate' to the shaft, finally yielding to the combined efforts of the team and the mega-crowbar.

After breaking one into very usable large slabs the other was left for next week when we need to try and split it horizontally - in order to lower the step it now makes at the top of the shaft.

Dave raised the wall another course or so in addition.

The large stream was thundering enticingly into the two rifts in the dig, with no back up at all. The dam is still doing its job admirably.

Clive

Hobnail Hole WED 15TH JAN 2014.

SMK.

A rare break in the rain enabled me to remove 34 bucket loads from the dig. By the finish the 'plugged' boulder had been exposed again as well as the timbers trapped beneath it. The priority now must be the removal of the overhanging bank to prevent further landslides. Still a large stream entering the adit but the water is flowing more freely with the reduced dam.

Simon.

Winsdor Hill Wed 08 2014 Mark, Dave, Matt and Mandy, Spike and Clive. Tav at pub.

Intermittently a wet night but that didn't get in the way of a serious wall building and cementing session around the head of the shaft.

The idea is to create a substantial wall to discourage folk from slipping into the hole. This will leave a gap for a gate of some kind and an access point for spoil removal etc. The wall is well underway and another session should see it high enough. Dave and I have an idea on how to put a grill across WHFS1 as well using the existing framework. Hopefully this would help the political situation with the school group and land agents.

The stream was very high, the dam holding up well and when released the whole mass of water disappeared, with little back up, down the rift we intend widening.

More walling next week but we will need a gravel run to FCQ and I'll get some cement.

All best

Clive

Sun 29th Dec 2013 Thrupe Lane. SMK, Paul, Dave, Duncan, Naomi, Chris Jewel and partner, Spike, Simon and Clive

An impressive turnout of ATLAS to assist with reclamation works following the severe Christmas eve storm. Large quantities of assorted crud moved from A to B, C and D. By the time bad light stopped play the defences had been considerably strengthened ahead of more predicted bad weather. A useful start was also made on clearing out Hobnail hole. It appears however that a large boulder has slid in from the bank, wedging itself under the cliff. This will need to be banged before any further digging can proceed. It may however have prevented more flood debris from reaching the face. A stream was still running into the adit, so no attempt was made to assess the situation below ground. Martin Grass called in before lunch in search of Descent material. (It must be a slow news day!) Perhaps RGW could call him to provide him with a better resume than mine, of our activities. Concerning the adit gate, it doesn't seem to have been damaged too much, just bent slightly. The weak link was obviously the bolts, which need to be much more substantial.

Cheers Simon.

THRUPE LANE - 26 December 2013

Duncan & Naomi, Tav, James & Rich W

Cleared the main entrance of debris and recovered the gate. The hinge plate has been ripped from the wall and the gate itself is buckled. A new gate will probably be required, but it will be best if the maker, Phil Candy, has a look at the remains.

As a temporary measure, a stout piece of timber and a concrete beam were jammed in the adit entrance, and the gate was chained and roped to them.

Attempts were made to excavate subsidiary sinks, and to enhance the dam formed by the cliff collapse. With more manpower and better crowbars, a loose piece of cliff can probably be added to the pile!

Working conditions were pleasant and mulled cider supplied by Duncan and Naomi was much appreciated.

I will warn Les Williams that the CSCC may have to fund a new gate.

Rich

PS I have left a saw on site. Can the next person to visit, put it in the Ferret Shed - thanks.

Tuesday 24th Dec - Bigger is the word that springs to mind. Thrupe obviously experienced a severe flash flood last, with much debris still on the road. The dig – Hobnail Hole – is nearly full to the top with silt – many months of work lost. Perhaps a more serious problem is that the main cave gate appears to have been wrenched from its hinges and may be trashed. The debris and depth of water made it impossible to check.

Today (Sat) Simon and I installed an old door of mine across the open shaft, to prevent spoil from falling down the hole, and began demolishing the overhanging bank above it.

Good progress was made and another session or two should see it cleared to the point where we can decide whether the bank needs further attention or whether digging came restart in earnest.

All best

Clive