

CAIRO SHAFT

Fernhill Farm, Compton Martin

16 October 1997 - Dave Morrison, Kate Lawrence, Simon Hickman

Descended a new shaft revealed by collapse beneath a four wheel drive vehicle in June 1997.

The circular shaft is approximately 2' in diameter and ginged for much of the first 15'. After 20' it opens into an inclined, steeply descending rift, with a 20' ascending passage above a wall of deads, and a way on visible downwards beyond a partial mud and detritus choke.

22 October 1997 - Kate Lawrence, Dave Morrison, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe

RT, DM, DS, RW and PS descended the shaft. RT cleared the mud choke and squeezed down another 10' to a watery passage which he pushed for 20' upstream to a choke and a 20' downstream to a possible sump. Good crystals were found in the lower passage, and two small mammal skeletons (? rabbit) in the upper passage. A few spiders were also present.

The mine looks to be partly natural and is likely to be a trial for either iron or lead working.

The depth is approximately 50' and length 100'.

19 November 1997 - Kate Lawrence, Andrew Wear, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe

First trip underground for the landowner, Andrew Wear. RT dug upwards through a choke of deads at the end of Les Williams' extension to enter an ascending roomy passage, with a number of extensions at roof level. A few straws were noted and at the highest point, roots were visible. Evidence of ochreous deposits suggested that this may be a mid 19th century iron mine mentioned in Gough's "Mines of Mendip".

RT, PS and KL explored approximately 150' of new passage.

A rock filled phreatic tube half way along Les Williams' extension might repay further attention, as might the flooded "downstream" section. The former will probably require bang and the latter a diver.

29 November 1997 - Kate Lawrence, Rob Taviner, Keith Savory, Carol Tapley

KS dived the flooded passage, but found the way on too constricted after 15'.