

## CLAY HOLES

**Saturday & Sunday 11 & 12 June 1994** - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Jim Young

With the final arrival of the dry season, the cave was pumped out and steel guides (second-hand ladders from Daventry Transmitter) were installed to facilitate dragging a modified JCB bucket up from the bottom.

**Wednesday 15 June 1994** - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Richard Witcombe, Martin Ellis, Mark Sims, Mark Williams, Julian Stone, Anthony Butcher

In the absence of Jim Young and his tractor, spoil removal was by plastic bucket. A total of 70 buckets were brought out from the East Passage area - threshold and far end. The phreatic arch at the lowest point of the entrance bedding plane was inaccessible due to 4' of ponded water.

**July/August 1994** - The steel guides were welded together and provided with a number of steel supports.

**Sunday 4 September 1994**

The cave was pumped dry and serious digging commenced. East Passage was cleaned out and digging concentrated on the phreatic arch. This was revealed as a bridge of rock with only a very small point of contact at one end. Beneath it, another sculpted, phreatic tunnel was revealed. It is totally choked with clay, grey at the top and yellow below, but there appears to be a roof tube with wetter mud and black detritus material. The winter water may have drained out through this.

**Wednesday 7 September 1994** - Jim Young, Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Aubrey Newport, Pete Hann, Richard Witcombe, plus one or two visitors.

Brought out two tractor buckets of mud dug from the phreatic tunnel. The bucket loads must weigh in excess of 15 cwts.

**Sunday 18 September 1994** - Jim Young, Dave Morrison, Graham Bromley, Trevor Hughes, Richard Witcombe

After a recent spell of heavy rain, water had ponded to a depth of 10' or more. Pumping commenced at midday and continued until 8 pm. TH and RW left at 5 pm after a brief visit to Rushy Ground Swallet, but the other three stayed on and eventually brought out two bucket loads of mud, finally leaving the site at 11.20 pm.

The phreatic tunnel appears to be veering to the left and dropping at a very steep angle.

**Sunday 2 July 1995** - Keith Fielder and others

Pumped the dig "dry".

**Wednesday 5 July 1995** - Jim Young, Dave Morrison, Graham Bromley, Brian Pitman, Richard Witcombe

There was still about a foot of water in the bottom of the dig - a decidedly squalid prospect given its cowshy aroma and the low roof of the digging face. Attempts were made to bail it by bucketing the water over to the small phreatic mud filled hollow at the end of East Passage, where a few stranded twigs suggested a winter water soakaway point, but after a few minutes ponding occurred and at least some of water was observed seeping back into the lower dig.

Eventually BP and GB plucked up the courage to wallow in the mud soup, and succeeded in pulling out some

wet mud from the ongoing phreatic tunnel. With other cleaning operations, the JCB bucket was filled, but hauling out was left for another day.

A second year frog was rescued.

**Wednesday 12 July 1995** - Jim Young, Dave Morrison, Dave Speed, Keith Fielder, Mark Lansdown, Richard Witcombe

KF's pump succeeded in shifting about half of the ponded water, but could not tackle the sludgy final six inches.

Last week's spoil was brought out and dumped, and a plastic liner was then inserted into the bucket. A bucket load of sludge and water was successfully removed, and the bucket filled again with sludge and stiffer mud from the dig face.

The phreatic tunnel is veering sharply to the left and the small roof tube is rising slightly and oozing iron stained water.

**Saturday 15 July 1995** - Jim Young, Dave Morrison, Graham Johnston, Ivan ?, Rebecca ?. Richard Witcombe visited.

Since Wednesday JY had modified the haulage system by fixing a pair of ratchet brake hooks onto the bucket to engage the ladder rungs as the bucket is hauled up, and a fixed roll bar and guide at the head of the ladder to enable a safer indirect pull to be made by the tractor.

Digging in very squalid conditions extended the phreatic passage eastwards and at a shallow angle downwards for about 10'. The leftward trending tube at roof level, exuding the iron stained water, appears to separate from the lower section and peter out. At one stage the main passage below seemed to be closing down and some very closely packed rocks had to be brought out - possibly solution eroded bedrock rather like Rushy Ground. At the current face, the passage is low and one very large rock will almost certainly have to be banged.

A total of ten bucket loads, two or three containing mainly bailed water, were brought out.

**Sunday 16 July 1995** - Clive North, Dave Morrison

A shothole was drilled into the left hand rock or rockface and a one stick charge was fired.

**Wednesday 19 July 1995** - Dave Morrison, Richard Witcombe. Keith Fielder visited.

Partly bailed the percolation pond at the digging face and loaded the bucket with bang debris and mud. Conditions very squalid.

**Wednesday 26 July 1995** - Jim Young, Dave Morrison, Dave Speed, Keith & Ros Fielder, Richard Witcombe

During the week JY had brought out and emptied the full bucket and lowered a 45 gallon drum for bailing purposes.

No digging was attempted and instead RW, DS and RF went to Rushy Ground to recover tools, while the others carried out dowsing around the two sites. Later all joined in the divining.

**Wednesday 2 August 1995** - Dave Morrison, Graham Bromley, Keith Fielder, Richard Witcombe

Almost filled the 45 gallon drum with bailed water, and with GB at the sharp and very squalid end, removed half a JCB bucket load of mud.

Digging conditions would be much improved by modifying the roof with bang.

**Sunday 6 August 1995** - Dave Morrison, Graham Bromley, Jim Young

Brought out the water drum and half bucket of spoil, and excavated three more bucket loads of mud.

Beyond the passage constriction, the walls and roof appear to bell out, and by the end of the digging session it was possible to accommodate two diggers in the end "chamber".

**Wednesday 9 August 1995** - Dave Morrison, Graham Bromley, Dave Speed, Anthony Butcher, Richard Witcombe. Jim Young visited

More clearing of the end chamber revealed a wall veering left and a possible bedding plane roof line in that area. Various rocks were struck on the right hand side, but no obvious wall. It looks as though the mud roof could run back up towards East Passage.

A JCB bucket load of mainly greyish mud was brought out, together with a dozen large and very large rocks, the last one requiring a full team on the ropes. Several of the rocks came from the left hand side of the constricted archway and their removal has opened it up considerably.

**Sunday 13 August 1995** - Dave Morrison, Graham Bromley, Jim Young. Richard Witcombe visited

Brought out Wednesday's spoil, and removed three further bucket loads during the course of the day

The excavation is following the bedding plane roof down to the left but passage dimensions are vague due to the presence of solution eroded rocks amongst the glutinous mud fill.

**Wednesday 16 August 1995** - Dave Morrison, Graham Bromley, Jim Young, Richard Witcombe

During the week there was a collapse at the digging face. Mud and a very large slab of rock (4' by 2' by 6") had fallen from the steeply inclined roof, exposing clean grey rock, fretted with small phreatic channels and pendants. The rock had broken into at least two pieces but these will have to be smashed up further in order to manhandle them out of the digging chamber.

As a result of the collapse a right hand wall has appeared, delineating a "way on" approximately 4' 6" wide following the steeply descending roof. The fill is grey, glutinous mud with boulders.

The JCB bucket was filled with mud during the evening.

**Sunday 20 August 1995** - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Jim Young, Phil Hendy, Brian Pitman

Brought up the Wednesday bucket and four others during the course of the day. Several large boulders were broken up by sledgehammer.

**Wednesday 23 August 1995** - Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Jim Young, Maurice Hewins, Brian Pitman

Brought up one bucket and filled another. The steeply descending phreatic passage is approximately 5' wide and potentially 5' or 6' high. Another large rock has emerged which will require banging.

Filled bucket subsequently brought out by JY.

**Sunday 27 August 1995** - Brian Pitman, Nick Williams, Phil Hendy

Banging boulders in the digging "chamber".

**Sunday 3 September 1995** - Martin Ellis, Mark Sims, A N Other

8" of water in the digging chamber.

The broken rock from last Sunday's bang was cleared out and loaded into the JCB bucket.

**Wednesday 6 September 1995**

An evening of very heavy rain. This probably marks the end of the 1995 digging season at Clay Holes.

**Saturday 30 September 1995** - Jim Young, Richard Witcombe, James Witcombe

The water level was back to the autumn/winter normal i.e. above East Passage level.

Brought up the last JCB bucket of spoil, and with it all the digging tools.