

## **FROG POT**

**Wednesday 17 September 1997** - Kate Lawrence, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Len Coltham, Richard Witcombe

Continued excavating mud and farm rubbish from the 6' diameter pot. There are fluted, solid rock walls around most of the circumference. Short too tight rift uncovered in south western corner at a depth of approx 10'.

**Wednesday 24 September 1997** - Kate Lawrence, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Len Coltham, Richard Witcombe, Graham Bromley

Digging by Somerset Wildlife Trust trainees earlier in the week had uncovered a large block which judging by its fluting had fallen from the back wall. More mud and rubbish were removed from around the block.

**Sunday 28 September 1997** - Dave Speed, Kate Lawrence, Rob Taviner, Richard Witcombe

Tony Jarratt had banged the block on Thursday. The debris was removed and digging was concentrated in a choked 18" wide rift at the north end of the dig. Household rubbish and rusty corrugated iron are still being found at a depth of 12' or so.

**Wednesday 1 October 1997** - NHASA

Erected tripod and cleared mud and rubbish from the shaft.

**Friday 3 October 1997** - SWT team

While clearing out the top section of the northern end of the rift, a man-sized hole was opened up about 5' below ground level. Nick Robson and Kate Lawrence squeezed in and were able to clear a way down a 12' shaft to a mud and rock choke emitting a slight draught. There was no sign that this had been entered before, but there may be a blocked connection to the main rift.

**Sunday 5 October 1997** - Dave Speed, Graham Bromley, Len Coltham, Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Kate Lawrence

Cleared a small amount of mud and rock from the new shaft but the awkward lift out soon pulled the handle off the only small bucket available. GB uncovered an encouraging airspace amongst the fill.

Clearing switched to the bank of spoil between the new shaft and the main shaft. A clay choked crack a few inches wide is the only high level link between the two, apart from the entrance keyhole, but at a depth of 8' the connection appeared to be widening.

**Wednesday 8 October 1997** - Dave Speed, Kate Lawrence, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Len Coltham, Richard Witcombe

Continued clearing the north end of the main rift. At a depth of 12', a way through into the new rift was uncovered. KL did a round trip, descending the new rift and emerging in the main shaft.

**Sunday 12 October 1997** - Richard Witcombe, Dave Speed, Paul Stillman, Len Coltham. Dave Morrison later

During the recent spells of heavy rain, turf and mud had slumped to the shaft bottom. The afternoon was spent clearing the threshold to the new shaft to create a spoil removal route. A small frog came up in the fill.

**Wednesday 15 October 1997** - Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Graham Bromley, Kate Lawrence

Digging in the new shaft and further clearing outside the threshold. Another frog was spotted but eluded capture.

The new rift is approximately 6' long by 18" to 2' wide with a small offshoot to the right and an earthy choke straight ahead. The mud floor is underlain by a stoney fill.

Taking a bucket out through the lower entrance is extremely awkward, and a small amount of chemical enlargement would be beneficial.

**Sunday 19 October 1997** - Kate Lawrence, Rob Taviner

Clearing away spoil from the surface.

**Wednesday 22 October 1997** - NHASA

Digging in the new rift, using a skip instead of a bucket. A few feet of horizontal progress made.

**Sunday 26 October 1997** - Dave Speed, Kate Lawrence, Bob Cottle, Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Dave Morrison

Digging in the new rift. An end wall was reached about 10' in from the lower entrance, with a diggable way on down and perhaps under it. KL opened up a tiny, draughting hole towards the end of the afternoon, but it was soon lost in the quagmire of the floor.

**Wednesday 29 October 1997** - Clive North, Dave Speed, Rob Taviner, Richard Witcombe, Kate Lawrence

Digging beneath the end wall of the new rift. Towards the end of the evening, RT uncovered a small hole on the left hand side, partly covered by a large slab which had probably peeled off the wall. There was fresh air by the hole, but various rocks prevented any clear view downwards.

**Sunday 2 November 1997** - Kate Lawrence, Graham Bromley, Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Dave Morrison, Paul Stillman, Len Coltham, Clive North

More mud was removed from around the large slab before it was pulled out of the floor and smashed up with hammer and chisel. Beneath was only a small airspace in the wet mud.

At the end of the afternoon, another tiny hole was uncovered against the vertical back wall.

**Wednesday 5 November 1997** - Dave Speed, Paul Stillman

A token bucket was brought out to the main shaft.

**Sunday 9 November 1997** - Graham Bromley, Rob Taviner, Bob Cottle, Kate Lawrence, Richard Witcombe, Dave Speed

More mud clearing, reaching a depth of perhaps 25' below the surface. The tiny airspace seems to be leading under the end wall, and the walls on either side are undercut. A few pieces of broken plate and a small bottle came out of the fill together with a strong smell of diesel.

**Wednesday 12 November 1997** - Kate Lawrence, Graham Bromley, Paul Stillman, Len Coltham, Dave Speed, Rob Taviner, Dave Morrison, Clive North

General mud clearing. A small airspace was uncovered in a narrow rift on the right.

**Sunday 16 November 1997** - Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Len Coltham, Richard Witcombe, James Witcombe, Dave Morrison, James Morrison, Kate Lawrence

General mud clearing. There appears to be a diggable way on under the end wall. Another small frog found.

**Tuesday 18 November 1997** - Kate Lawrence, Dave Morrison, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman with some help from SWT students.

Cleared out all the mud from the rear end of the new passage.

**Wednesday 19 November 1997** - NHASA

Further mud clearing.

**Sunday 23 November 1997** - Dave Morrison, Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Len Coltham, Clive North, Kate Lawrence

Lowering the floor level of the new passage, which is now a well sculpted 20' deep elliptical pot, 8' long by 18" to 2' wide. More depth needs to be gained before the downstream arch can be properly investigated.

**Wednesday 26 November 1997** - Rob Taviner, Kate Lawrence, Richard Witcombe, Dave Speed, Dave Morrison, Paul Stillman

Cleared more from the floor and pushed 2' into the downstream passage. The fill is gravelly mud with occasional stones.

A draught was present but it is probably a circular flow.

**Sunday 30 November 1997** - Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Len Coltham, Bob Cottle, Richard Witcombe, Clive North, Kate Lawrence

Pushed 2' to 3' further into the downstream passage. The left hand wall carries on straight but the right hand side widens out considerably, perhaps indicating a tributary. Overhead the roof appears to be of jammed boulders, and none too safe judging by the occasional mud falls.

By the end of the afternoon, a small hole had appeared in the end face alongside the right hand wall.

Four planets - Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter - were visible in the starry night sky.

**Wednesday 3 December 1997** - Kate Lawrence, Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Dave Speed

A further probe into the downstream passage. Just inside the threshold, a large section of roof appears to be unsupported. Clouting the block with an entrenching tool produced no movement, but mud falls from alongside it were disconcerting for the digger. The filled passage ahead has a small airspace at roof level with a thin layer of blackened fill (? rotted stream born detritus), but the roof block prevented any view of the way on.

A dead vole was found at the bottom of the new shaft.

**Sunday 7 December 1997** - Kate Lawrence, Richard Witcombe, Ken Appleby, Rob Taviner, Clive North

Digging in the downstream passage, now some 5' long. Minor mud falls continued, but the roof block remained in place. The fill ahead contains a number of larger rocks, perhaps indicative of a collapse zone. Air spaces appeared from time to time but no significant draught was detected.

**Wednesday 10 December 1997** - Kate Lawrence, Rob Taviner, Richard Witcombe, Dave Speed

A significant roof collapse had occurred, depositing a large pile of mud in the downstream passage. Overhead

was a 10' high void with a doubtful ceiling and views further up the rift. This joint probably continues up to the surface so further horizontal progress at low level will be very problematic. There is a possible small bedding plane on the left but otherwise just a huge mud choke.

Digging made small inroads into the mud pile.

**Sunday 14 December 1997** - Bob Cottle, Paul Stillman, Len Coltham, Dave Morrison, Rob Taviner, Richard Witcombe, Kate Lawrence

Deepened the floor of the second shaft outside the downstream passage, encountering very stony fill.

**Sunday 18 January 1998** - Graham Bromley, Kate Lawrence, Rob Taviner, Richard Witcombe, Bob Cottle, Paul Stillman

Further deepening of the second shaft. Small amounts of water percolating out of the near end wall - possibly another choked connection with the entrance shaft.

**Tuesday 20 January 1998** - Paul Stillman, Len Coltham

Small amount of spoil brought out from the second shaft.

**Wednesday 21 January 1998** - Kate Lawrence, Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe

Started clearing out the left hand inlet passage in the open pot - an 18" wide sinuous rift.

**Sunday 25 January 1998** - Dave Speed, Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe, Kate Lawrence

Further clearing of the inlet. The lower section is very narrow.

**Wednesday 28 January 1998** - Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Lawrence Kelland, Kate Lawrence

Digging in the floor of the second shaft.

**Friday 30 January 1998** - Paul Stillman, Len Coltham

Light problems meant that only a token bucket was brought out.

**Wednesday 4 February 1998** - Paul Stillman, Rob Taviner, Richard Witcombe plus NHASA

A large amount of mud and a few small rocks were brought out from the second shaft.

**Sunday 8 February 1998** - Kate Lawrence, Graham Bromley, Paul Stillman, Rob Taviner, Richard Witcombe, Ken Appleby, Bob Cottle, Don Pickrell

Further digging in the second shaft. Stony fill and erosion features in the right hand wall.

**Wednesday 11 February 1998** - Kate Lawrence, Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Dave Speed, Lawrence Kelland

More digging in the second shaft. Bone fragments (probably cow) were found in the mud fill and a few tiny holes were uncovered in a more gravelly layer alongside the indented right hand wall. The second shaft is now about 20' deep.

**Sunday 15 February 1998** - Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Len Coltham

Using a four bucket relay system, over thirty loads were brought out from the second shaft. Plenty of broken

cow bones from the near end.

**Wednesday 18 February 1998** - Kate Lawrence, Rob Taviner, Richard Witcombe, Paul Stillman, Dave Speed

Digging in the second shaft. More bones at the near end, and occasional stones and gravel layers amongst the glutinous clay.

**Sunday 1 March 1998** - Graham Bromley, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Kate Lawrence

Clearing the run-in material at the back of the second shaft.

**Wednesday 4 March 1998** - Kate Lawrence, Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Mark Lumley

A foot or more of water at the bottom of the second shaft following several days of heavy rain.

More excavation of the run-in material. Beyond the threshold the roof rises for about 20' in what is essentially a third in-line shaft. There may be a way on over the top and possibly some development down to the right.

**Sunday 8 March 1998** - Graham Bromley, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Bob Cottle, Richard Witcombe, Don Pickrell

A pool 8' long by 2' deep had accumulated after heavy rain.

The afternoon was spent bucketing out water and finally a few loads of sludge.

**Wednesday 11 March 1998** - Richard Witcombe, Dave Speed, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Mark Lumley

A large amount of sludge and glutinous mud was brought out from the floor of the second shaft.

**Wednesday 18 March 1998** - Kate Lawrence, Paul Stillman, Rob Taviner, Mark Lumley, Richard Witcombe

Digging in the threshold between the second shaft and the aven beyond. Ahead is a total choke, with a narrow 1' wide rift continuing beyond the aven at head height and a bedding plane roof emerging on the left. With a width of 4' narrowing to 3' and no floor yet encountered, there is the potential to excavate a roomy, walking passage.

**Sunday 29 March 1998** - Graham Bromley, Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman

Digging in the threshold and face beyond.

**Wednesday 1 April 1998** - Richard Witcombe, Paul Stillman, Tony Littler, Rob Taviner, Dave Speed

Digging in the downstream passage. Before leaving, RT climbed 10' up the aven to a point where it became too tight.

A small frog was rescued from the bottom.

**Wednesday 8 April 1998** - Kate Lawrence, Paul Stillman, Tony Littler, Rob Taviner, Dave Speed

Further digging in the downstream passage.

**Wednesday 15 April 1997** - Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Tony Littler, Dave Speed

Digging in the downstream passage. The fill beneath the bedding plane roof and in the alcove on the right is a fine, layered silt, while the narrow rift ahead and the floor deposits are a compacted stony fill. A large slab

uncovered in the floor has probably dropped from the bedding roof.

**Wednesday 22 April 1998** - Kate Lawrence, Paul Stillman, Rob Taviner, Mark Lumley, Richard Witcombe, Dave Speed

Digging in the downstream passage. A second block was uncovered, resting on the first slab.

**Sunday 26 April 1998** - Kate Lawrence, Bob Cottle, Rob Taviner, Richard Witcombe

Digging in the downstream passage. The second block is large and will significantly reduce the surface area of the digging face.

**Wednesday 13 May 1998** - Kate Lawrence, Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe, Mark Lumley, Rob Taviner

Started moving the surface spoil heap by trailer to a more acceptable location in preparation for the summer shutdown of the dig. Cleared about two thirds of the heap with a spectacular electrical storm raging overhead.

**Sunday 24 May 1998** - Kate Lawrence, Paul Stillman, Rob Taviner

Finished clearing away the spoil heap.

**Wednesday 8 July 1998** - Paul Stillman, Tony Littler, Dave Speed, Richard Witcombe

An interval at Frog Pot whilst awaiting the installation of more shoring at Dave Mitchell's Dig.

Cleared gravelly fill from the right hand side of the passage.

Evil smell in the threshold to the second shaft.

**Wednesday 15 July 1998** - Paul Stillman, Tony Littler, Richard Witcombe, Lawrence Kelland, Dave Speed

Added a second pulley to the haulage system (on the skip handle) and a longer rope. Hauling was lighter but longer, so little advantage was gained.

More digging in the downstream passage.

The source of the smell was uncovered - a dead rabbit trampled into the threshold mud!

**Wednesday 22 July 1998** - Paul Stillman, Tony Littler, Rob Taviner, Kate Lawrence

More digging in the downstream passage. Some of the roof blocks seem to be held in place by side friction only.

**Sunday 26 July 1998** - Paul Stillman

Underground photography.

**Wednesday 29 July 1998** - Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Dave Speed, Kate Lawrence

More digging in the downstream passage. One roof block now has a mud choked rift on either side of it - pit props will be needed to give at least psychological security. The right hand, wider rift has larger rocks in the fill, one possible helping to hold up the above mentioned roof block!

**Wednesday 5 August 1998** - Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe, NHASA contingent

Several feet of horizontal progress made. The rift on the right has become narrow and well choked with small rocks, but the bedding plane on the left between the roof blocks and the fallen floor blocks is still two feet

high and packed with silts and gravels. A sort of half tube is developing in the roof block.

**Wednesday 12 August 1998** - Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Lawrence Kelland, Richard Witcombe

Cleaned out the slurry at the bottom of the second shaft.

Rescued a small frog from the open shaft.

**Wednesday 26 August 1998** - Paul Stillman, Kate Lawrence, Simon Meade-King, Richard Witcombe, Dave Speed, Tony Littler

Installed two timber pit props between the roof blocks and the fallen blocks in the horizontal passage, and removed more fill from the end.

Rescued another frog from the bottom of the cave.

**Wednesday 2 September 1998** - Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Tony Littler

Continued digging in the terminal rift and bedding plane. The large chockstone in the rift slid out, seemingly without affecting the stability of the roof.

**Wednesday 16 September 1998** - Simon Meade-King, Paul Stillman, Rob Taviner, Mark Lumley, Tony Littler, Richard Witcombe and a large NHASA contingent.

A large amount of spoil removed from the face. The left hand rift is now almost as wide as that on the right, and mud falls from above are occurring. The central roof block will need more shoring.

**Sunday 20 September 1998** - Richard Witcombe, Rob Taviner

Inserted a third timber support beneath the central roof block.

**Wednesday 23 September 1998** - Rob Taviner, Richard Witcombe, Kate Lawrence, Tony Littler

Inserted a fourth timber support - at this point the gap between the central roof block and the floor block is only 20".

Removed three token buckets of mud.

**Wednesday 7 October 1998** - Richard Witcombe, Paul Stillman, Rob Taviner, Tony Littler

Removed more mud from the lower passage. The digging face is now over 10' from the pot and the digger needs an assistant to help with bucket handling.

**Wednesday 14 October 1998** - Richard Witcombe, Paul Stillman, Rob Taviner and a NHASA contingent

The digging face is advancing under another mud filled aven which periodically deposits spoil on or in front of the digger. The overall passage width is increasing, but a large block is embedded in the mud ahead.

**Wednesday 11 November 1998** - Dave Speed, Paul Stillman

Erected a new steel cable winch (incorporating an old MNRC winch) at the dig. It was linked to the tripod by a length of scaffold pole.

**Wednesday 18 November 1998** - Richard Witcombe, Kate Lawrence, Dave Speed, Paul Stillman, Tony Littler

After heavy rain, cracks had appeared around the surface spoil heap which is directly over the current end of

the cave!

Underground, a large run-in had occurred, derived no doubt from a roof collapse at the far end, which is temporarily inaccessible. A start was made on clearing the very wet mud slurry.

A steel hook was used by the ledgeman to guide the steel cable away from the overhanging snags in the shaft wall.

**Sunday 29 November 1998** - Paul Stillman and three MNRC members

Moved some of the spoil heap to the field edge dump using wheel barrows.

**Sunday 13 December 1998** - Paul Stillman

Moved more of the spoil heap by wheelbarrow. The area is still subsiding.

**Wednesday 16 December 1998** - Kate Lawrence, Rob Taviner, Richard Witcombe, Paul Stillman, Tony Littler

Brought out sludgy spoil from the run-in and took it by wheelbarrow to a dump near the farm.

**Wednesday 30 December 1998** - Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe

The area of collapsing ground is now some 8' in diameter. In the south west corner, a hole in mud has appeared, 1' across and up to 3' deep. A major subsidence seems imminent.