

Hobnail Hole, Triangle Chamber – Friday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016

Rich, Simon M-K, Clive, Duncan & Emma

The first job of 2016 focused on clearing storm debris from the entrance of Thrupe Lane Swallet – gateway completely obscured after the weather this week. The process was made easier when DP uncovered a convenient drain hole adjacent to the cliff face. Once the stream was again flowing unimpeded, RW, SMK, DP and EG resumed digging in Triangle Chamber. On the way in, RW and SMK found a small frog already at work in Black Pot – swiftly exited to the surface via EG and a glove.

Digging efforts proper concentrated on removing more of the stream silt and shingle from the floor of Triangle Chamber. RW built a retaining wall to hold back the spoil. There was a shortage of big rocks for the wall so SMK went and fetched a selection from elsewhere.

At the end of the session the crawl was more open but more water continued to pool in the floor. It is now possible to see forwards for at least three metres with a likely continuation to the right but the way on will require enlargement, especially to allow progress past constrictions on both sides. The roof lowers but may rise again allowing more space beyond the constriction. Throughout, a good draught was felt and the air fresh. This was also felt at the entrance.

An enjoyable afternoon with some holiday spirit thrown in.

Emma

Further to our excellent session yesterday in Triangle chamber, a couple of observations. 2ft ahead of where I was working, the way on changes from low and wideish to higher and narrower. I would estimate the height to be approx 2ft. On the floor is at least 1 ft of stream debris. The passage, from which a cool draught is emanating, then disappears round a bend to the right. The next step, after clearing out the floor to the constriction, will most likely be to drill the right wall to eliminate the tight bend, hopefully leading to larger development beyond.

WHFS Wed 6th Jan

Clive, Mud, Tav, Duncan & Dave.

The previous bang had done a good job of enlarging the approach to the more restricted section of the inclined bedding plane. The plank had also done a good job of preventing most of the spoil from trundling down the slope. A few large rocks were broken up before dispatching to the surface. Three more long shot holes drilled and popped before some of the team headed for the usual refreshments.

Dave.

**Hovvy's Rift Cave, Asham Wood Quarry at ST 70695 45305 Length Approx 21m (so far)**

**Introduction:** Named after the common name of the Hoveringham Stone Ltd the Quarry Company who operated here from 1965. I suspect the chambered entrance of this pretty rift cave was probably collapsed in or was destroyed during the time this company operated in this area of the Asham Wood quarries. Prior to Hovvy's the quarry was opened up and operated by the Evermy family as Asham Wood Quarry Company from about 1946.

**Location:** In Asham Wood Quarry lower section not far from the Main Spring (of Seven Springs) into Whatley Brook. Locate Main Springs resurgence (often dry) at ST7102.4528 and back track walking down slope on the obvious old vehicle track for about 100m turn left into a quarry entrance area with large rocks across the entrance to prevent vehicle access. Stay to the left of the open area for about 35m and enter the unkempt hedge area through an obvious gap/rough path over some rocks to a flat area. Turn left and walk towards the cliff face and follow it west for about 50m passing the two small cave entrances to Bradshaw's Cave (entrances 2 & 3). The small cave entrance is between large stable boulders slightly up an easy scramble of 3m up to the partially collapsed wide rift with many large boulders having fallen away during historic movement and cliff face collapse.

**Road Access:** Park at Dead Woman's Bottom at ST715.462 (do not leave valuables in your car) and walk up to the Seven Springs Main Spring on the vehicle track alongside Whatley Brook this takes about 20-30 minutes and mobile phone reception is poor in the quarry.

**Description:** The small entrance drops in at 45 degrees down about 2m to a 1m wide stable rift with jammed mostly calcited boulders overhead. The parallel walls have a good flowstone covering and there are some small curtains. A strong draft is emitted and a few bats are occasionally seen flying in and around the cave. The rift has jammed boulders in the floor down for about 1.2m and evidence can be seen of a mud floor below these which has taken water occasionally. To the south the solid rift continues for about 6m to a squeeze, 'The Funnel'. Past the squeeze is a large rift passage about 4-5m high, 1-1.2m wide and 10m long with a boulder muddy floor and few jammed boulders at the start in the roof and various curtain formations off some shelves. The end of the rift narrows and appears to close down in mud. After about 3.5m from the squeeze there is a passage off on the right about 1m wide and 3.5m high with some black knobby limestone layers, named 'Black Pudding Passage' with some short straws and flowstone. Great care is required entering this passage up on the right hand shelf avoiding the straws in on the roof and also to avoid touching the large 'slightly jammed' boulders at the start that appear to be unsupported along one edge! 2m past these there has been a collapse of some large roof slabs but under these the probably too small passage is seen to continue. However, it is possible to slide over these with care for another 5m sloping back down to the old water flow floor level. The end wall is a boulder ruckle but low down it is possible to see into a small vertical passage with a draft – perhaps a connection to the old Seven Springs Cave? More to come...Digging continues quietly.

Regards Andy Watson

Sat 9th Jan - Hobnail Hole - Triangle Chamber.  
Simon & Dave.

The surface stream was very high and half way up TLS gate due to debris washed against and blocking the gate.

Since six of the team turned out for Saturday's session down Hobnail it enabled two of us to have another go at Triangle Chamber.

The plan was to bale the water from the dig and tip it into a side rift using a saucepan, since a bucket was too big. Rich had brought along an old saucepan for the job, but this turned out to be in better condition than Simon's soup pan, so a swap was done.

The chamber was very wet with water dripping in from quite a few locations. Spoil from the previous session had once again been washed back into the dig, leveling the floor again. Although this is easy digging by shoveling the gravel straight back on the spoil heap, the water entering the chamber was more of a problem. A poke at the end of the dig with a hoe

failed to allow the water to flow away any quicker. We soon decided that laying in 6in of water to dig out the same spoil again wasn't really an option. So we joined the rest of the team in King Cobble Hall and declared that the Triangle Chamber is a fair weather dig.

Dave.

Hobnail Report Sat 9th Jan (King Cobble dig) Simon, Rich, Emma, Duncan & Clive

After an attempt by Simon to clear the adit gate of flood debris all descended with Dave and Simon heading for Triangle Chamber and the others to the King Cobble Crawl dig.

The debris from the last bang had effectively blocked part of the streams exit and the dig was a frothy pond.

A lengthy session by Duncan with the mega-bar eventually persuaded the stream to disappear down its usual cleft and a number of skips of Banff debris were removed.

Clive then set-to with the mega-hammer and long chisel in an attempt on the cracked blocks impeding the headroom at the face.

Only partial success meant a return to drilling and banging - one hole in the blocks, one in the left wall and one at stream level in a large block forming the right hand side of the cleft where the stream disappears. This should help the drainage issues.

Leaving the cave, thanks to the surface stream having risen noticeably, was a much wetter experience than going down. The draught emerging from Colditz and blowing out of the entrance had to be experienced to be believed!

Clive

Sat 16th Jan 2015.

Rich/Simon/Tony L. (Clive for lunch)

After a fairly dry week, water levels had dropped considerably. With a small crack team available, it was decided to mount an assault on Triangle chamber. All passed successfully through the 90 degree squeeze and work commenced in earnest. The floor was steadily deepened and water bailed back over the spoil heap. Unfortunately the amount of water percolating in, although small, was enough to convert the material into gloop. However good progress was made and by close of play we were clearing the approach to the constricted bend ahead. The floor is of unknown depth, but at least one shothole will be needed in the right wall. Beyond, the rock appears to be quite fragmented with loose looking rocks jammed in the roof. The air was definitely fresh, indicating bigger things beyond. No doubt conditions will become much dryer in summery weather. Exited into a clear cold afternoon. Earlier we were visited by the Wyatt family who seemed very friendly and interested in our activities. They have purchased part of the Parfitt farm.

Simon.

Further to yesterday's digging report a thought occurred to me. Could the 'broken ground' visible ahead be a clue as to where we might enter the known cave? To quote the 1996 survey notes describing Bypass passage: - 'the second (avenue) has a lot of loose rock and is best left alone'. Thought this worth mentioning.

Simon.

SAT 23 JAN

Simon M-K, Rich W

Large stream entering the adit and debris nearly to the top of the gate. As no others turned up while we were having lunch, we decided to go over to Longwood Valley Sink to give the diggers there a hand.

We arrived just as spoil clearing had finished for the day - good timing! After waiting for the very loud detonation which ended proceedings, SM-K and RW carried on down the valley to check out GP's dig at the lower end of Velvet Bottom. Signs of fairly recent digging - broken rock piled into a rough wall - but prospects are very poor. A 3m long passage with 360 degree solid rock. Back via Rhino Rift, collecting a bag full of rubbish.

Favoured Hobnail digging day - Friday 29/1. Emma G and Mike K may be available.

Rich

PS Geoff Newton and Mike Kousiounis found 30m of passage in Sludge Pit over Christmas.

WHFS Update 27th Jan Mark, Duncan, Mud, Spike, Matt & Mandy, Clive

Last weeks bang had done a good job again. The blast had progressed just beyond the position of the plank which remarkably is still in one piece!

A large pile of rock was waiting to be removed along with three big sections of roof which came down with just a little persuasion.

By the end of the evening all was cleared to the surface. The view on down the slope to the 'low arch' is now rather constricted by rubble and two very large slabs. One 1m and two short holes were drilled and use made of the remnants of one of last weeks holes for the end of evening bang using the last of my supplies before restocking this weekend.

Very cold for changing due to wet kit and the pub was a welcome retreat!

Clive

Hobnail Report 29th Jan 2016 Rich, Dave, Tony L, Mike Kousiounis, Clive and Emma (surface support). No Simon due to 'the lurgy'.

A fairly low stream this time (although the adit was well blocked but was left untouched due to the amount of debris washed into the cave during clearing operations) and nothing flowing into Hobnail.

All proceeded to the King Cobble Crawl dig where the last bang had done its job and the water was escaping well into the base of the mud and rock

choked rift on the right away from the solid left hand wall. A good section of the overhanging roof had come down as well (as planned) easing access to the face.

Many skips of debris later Mike took over and set to with the hammer and chisel and removed large sections of the, now cracked by bang, solid sections of rock in the floor. As the water and debris level lowered a small black hole appeared which was happily taking the stream.

Subsequent clearing around the hole and removal of large water-worn slabs from the way ahead eventually revealed a continuation of the passage. According to Mike who had contorted himself into a position to look ahead it appears to be a horizontal tube-shaped passage formed in the aragonite with a solid roof and sides (hurrah!) with the stream running along a cobbly floor. By the end of play it appeared that the water was taking another left hand turn at the end.

Nearing the end of the session the base of the approach slope become increasingly unstable and a large rock slithered down almost to dig level. This was stabilised and awaits a bit more attention with jammed rocks next time.

More clearing of the floor area ahead of and into the passage ahead is needed along with possible stabilising of the mud and rock slope on the right hand side (luckily there are big boulders in there which seem to help hold it all together). Temptations to bang the left hand wall and roof are being ignored for the time being (for reasons obvious to those familiar with the roof of King Cobble Hall!)

One the way out Dave and Mike had a look at Triangle Chamber during which a voice connection was confirmed by Tony in The Dairy.

Mike is 'on loan' to us from the Longwood Valley Sink crew and joins us on this group.

Clive

WHFS Update 3rd Feb 2016 Mark, Duncan, Mud, Dave, Tav & Clive

Dave at the sharp end this time clearing. Clearing was achieved down to the level of the plank placed last week.

By the evenings end all the rubble and rocks had found their way to the surface. Marks re-fashioned spoil heap is beginning to take on quite a monolithic character - a bit reminiscent of an ersatz Angkor Wat temple (if looked at in the dark!)

Two 1m shotholes, 1 x 0.5m one and three short ones in large boulders were fired before a distinctly chilly race to the pub.....

Clive

Hobnail - Wed 3rd Feb Rich, Simon (surface duty), Mike K, Dave and Clive

All down to the King Cobble Crawl Dig where the bang had done its job and Dave was able to extract plenty of debris before attacking the large rib of bedrock in the floor.

With the aid of the mega-bar this was eventually removed and attention paid to the way on where the stream appeared to turn left and then right around a large limestone block in the floor. This was eventually levered out to reveal the stream running around and under a large aragonite block (or could well be bedrock) in the floor.

By this time the right hand wall, composed of the mud and rock 'choss' of the ascending rift was beginning to sag a bit into the stream and a halt was called to enable drilling two and a half 0.5m holes in the left hand, solid, wall for some lightweight charges (aware of the potential unstable nature of the roof of King Cobble Hall).

The plan now is to 'gently' push back the left hand wall to give us space to work without, hopefully, affecting the loose right hand wall. This may well require some reinforcement in the shape of a rock support wall.

A return of Friday is planned.....

Clive

THRUPE LANE Sunday 7 Feb Quick inspection visit to Thrupe Lane to see the effects of yesterday's persistent, heavy rain. The stream had returned to just above average winter levels but the effects of flooding were very apparent:

There is a pleasant, rippled sandy beach around Hobnail Hole!  
The entrance grill to Hobnail is covered by a pile of twigs and vegetation debris.  
The cliff face sink adjacent to Hobnail is similarly filled with debris.  
The canal leading to the cliff is partly filled with silt.  
There was a large lake in the depression, backed up from the adit.  
The top of the adit was just visible but the gate was under water.  
A tide mark showed that the lake level had been at least a foot above the adit.  
All the stone revetments had survived the flood intact.

A lengthy surface clearing session will be necessary before the next underground excursion. It will be "interesting" to see how the underground shoring and grouting has stood up to the flood pulse - care will need to be exercised!

Cheers

Rich

WHFS - 10/02/16 Clive, Mud, Duncan, Tav & Spike

The previous bang had made a right old mess, and a veritable multitude of buckets of spoil were sent forth. Later tickling with a bar resulted in a large part of the roof landing on my leg, but no damage. The 'shot to sh\*t' nature of the dig face available at 9pm meant we chose not to drill & pop.

Several (6?) very large boulders have been stashed on the right hand side, awaiting some resizing before they can be hauled to the surface. Several more 'boulder-nettable' boulders are waiting with them.

I've put the two halves of the plank across the bedding plane for the moment, so any more wash in doesn't launch the boulders down the bedding plane. Next week might benefit from an early start by

someone with plug and feathers to make these lumps more manageable...

The Poacher's Pocket was closed for refurbishment when we arrived, so we headed for refreshment at the Duke. Think it's shut until the 19th...

Spike

Friday 12 February

Hobnail Hole Simon M-K, Clive N, Rich W

Pleasant, sunny day with the stream back to the normal winter level. Spent one and a half hours before lunch clearing away the flood debris. The adit approach and gate need more work but Hobnail Hole itself and the cliff canal are now back to normal. The problem had been exacerbated by mechanical hedge trimming up the lane which had created a lot of shredded vegetation.

The descent after lunch revealed a squeaky clean cave with all shoring and grouting in good order. Twigs were encountered as far down as Black Pot, and the the Dairy was a bit more drippy than usual. King Cobble Hall was seemingly unchanged but there were fresh leaves at the highest point and some scouring of the "streamway". In particular, the bottom of the muddy aven at the face had started to run in, causing collateral collapse of the right-hand wall further back. A fair amount of spoil was cleared up to the dump, but much of the time was spent constructing and reconstructing various retaining walls. This will be an ongoing process while we carefully enlarge the constriction. Already the threat of slumping is somewhat reduced as we continue to lower the gradient of the sliding infill. Slightly disconcerting was the unannounced arrival of a couple of rocks out of the ceiling while the waller was at work!

A pack of 2001 MoD biscuits was added to the emergency stockpile of Mars bars in King Cobble Hall.

It was three very knackered pensioners who eventually struggled back to the surface!

Rich

WHFS Update Monday 15th Feb Duncan and Clive

A one a half hour sortie to drill and pop 5 boulders left over from last week and to do the same with a couple of 1 metre holes in the roof.

All fine except a 1 metre drill bit lost it's cutting head 2/3 of the way into a hole. Luckily we had a spare to carry on with but that meant we were down by a third of a meter on that hole.

Only enough drill power was then left for another half metre hole. There should still be a fair amount of clearing to do on Wednesday though!

It is now possible to just glimpse moving water on the right at the end of the visible passage. Presumably this was the rippling pool that Matt and Mandy reported weeks some weeks ago. This doesn't appear to be the main flow of the stream by any means but is no doubt connected.

Getting nearer but to what remains to be seen!

Clive

PS Can potential diggers indicate whether Friday or Saturday would be favourite for next week.

WHFS Wed 17<sup>th</sup> Feb Mud, Matt & Mandy, Tav, Spike and Clive

Mondays bang had done the trick and the results gave Mud a busy hour or so clearing at the bottom of the slope.

Whilst the spoil was cleared from the base of the Upper Slope to the surface two 1m holes went in to the continuation of the roof and were duly fired before an exit to the 'Duke' to warm up and recover.

Sight of water head noted on Monday is now obscured by rock debris!

Clive

Hobnail Hole Fri 19th Feb 2016.

Clive/Emma/Rich/Simon.

Undaunted by recent flash floods, the work continues. Whilst Emma remained above ground to clear debris from the adit, the old (and not so old) lags descended to the working face in the streamway. Although all necessary equipment was taken down with us, our time was fully occupied in extensive chiselling operations in the roof which resulted in a useful increase in headroom. Whilst the passage ahead is dropping at a steady 45dg angle our path is obstructed by a large flake of rock. This is protecting us from the contents of the aven shadowing us to the right but limiting our progress unless either it is reduced in size or the left wall is further modified. With some of the aven's contents removed Richard was able to build up some walling to prevent outflows from that source. Heavily calcified and metamorphosed rock betrays more evidence of the fault we're working through. We've now passed the 92ft level with- by my calculations- approx 70ft of descent ahead to reach the Water Chamber where it is presumed the stream emerges into the known cave. All to play for!

Simon.

WHFS Wed 24th Feb

Clive, Tav, Spike Duncan & Dave.

The stream, although flowing well, only a small trickle was flowing through our dam. Six bungs were used, despite the top three not doing much due to one having gone AWOL. The level rose behind the dam until the leak round the side and flow through the unbunged pipe matched the flow approaching the dam (obviously). But this small trickle didn't seem to make a significant difference down below.

A lot of spoil to clear from the previous bang, most of which had been held back by the two piece scaffold board. A couple of larger slabs were broken up before being dispatched to the surface and the boulder net was deployed to shift a couple that couldn't be reduced to skip size chunks. Once cleared the scaffold board(s) were removed, but the view down was still obstructed by debris just below. A few more skips of spoil cleared from below where the scaffold board(s) were sited, before end of hauling from dig face declared. Whilst the stockpile of spoil on the corner at the bottom of the first slope was cleared to the surface, the roof at the sharp end was further attacked with chisel and crowbar. The roof had been horizontally fractured which enabled a few large chunks to be levered out. The slope down is



now blocked by a large slab approx 1m x 0.5m x 0.120m, which will require reducing before extraction, possibly with a small bang (some good walling material if not reduced too much). No bang this week due to the quantity of spoil that required clearing, but after the crowbar attack there is now another sessions worth of spoil to clear before another bang in the roof required.

A late finish with the temperature down to "mild" -2 deg C, and re-hydration back at the Poacher's (now open after their refurb of convenience).

Dave.

Hobnail Hole - 27/2/16 Clive, Darrel, Dave, Emma, Rich, Simon & Spike

Arriving late as usual, to the strains of the News Quiz on Radio 4, I expected to find the Ferret Shed deserted and a hive of activity underground. Not so, as a veritable multitude of team members were busying themselves with food, drink and discussion.

Once we were quorate, the 'Youth Division' (Darrel, Dave, Emma and your correspondent) were despatched to sort the mess in Thrupe Lane Swallet that had been caused by a party misunderstanding which gate should be left open. With much of the surface stream diverted down the old shaft, I descended to discover that the lower gate had indeed been left closed and was completely blocked to the brim by horticultural waste. As much of this as possible was relocated to the side of the entrance to the Railway Series, but inevitably some was washed further into the cave. The state of Cowsh Crawl will need to be investigated again at some point soon.

Once the gate had been blocked open with a couple of rocks, I returned to the surface to find the rest of the team keeping the shaft sink clear to ease my return - mighty fine work. In fact, Emma's work kept the sink flowing until we returned from our Hobnail work. They were, however, a bit miffed that I hadn't left them a ladder to join in the clearing fun - although there was distinctly limited space and it was more than a tad damp.

Joining the Senior Management team in Hobnail, I was despatched to the awkward, low, gravelly and damp dig face as I am shorter than Clive (apparently - can't say I'd noticed). The subsurface stream presented a much warmer aspect than the Thrupe Lane Swallet stream had earlier, verging on the pleasant. Within moments I had completely broken the dig, and Rich came to the rescue to reinstate the stepped approach. For the rest of the afternoon much gravelly fill was removed from the rift, with no sign of a bed-rock floor to worry about. Some more wall was crowbarred off, and eventually, with some acrobatics (and a damp head), two ways on could be seen:

1) Straight ahead, the rift has a flat roof, 3-6 inches above the water level, which lowers until it reaches the water level. Difficult to tell if water is flowing in this direction.

2) At a 30 degree angle to the left, a slightly higher rift is visible and heads for at least 5ft. The water level never quite reaches the top of this inverted v shaped feature, and water seems to be flowing away in this direction.

I retreated from the face to allow the day's other infrequent visitors a gander before Clive attacked the left hand wall with linctus. When this was fired, some potential slumping was heard, for details ask Clive, Dave or Simon.

On my way out I paid a visit to Triangle Chamber, which doesn't seem to have lost all progress - I could certainly get further than was available on my last visit, before I retreated when attacked by

the local wildlife. Standing in Triangle Chamber, I think I could very faintly hear the sound of the drill, but I could not hear any voices until their owners entered the Dairy.

Returning to the surface for a chilly change, more food and drink was consumed (some with added lead) before the parties retired from whence they came, leaving the lane as peaceful as they had found it.

I believe the favoured day for this week is Friday. You'll be pleased to note that your correspondent will not be able to make it and hence someone else will be responsible for next week's report.

Goodnight, thank you, and may your god go with you...

Spike

WHFS - Latest Boulder-Wrangling Session Spike, Mud & Clive

Mondays large rock, which had been left at the bottom of the Upper Slope was soon demolished by Mud and more rock deposited there from below.

It had been decided that the large block directly ahead at the face would not be banged after all due to a potential 'gravel-risk' and that we would attempt to pull it clear after the fashion of our efforts (Dave, Duncan & Clive) on Monday night.

Spike had a lengthy session clearing around the rock and by dint of much levering and swearing managed to get ropes around the back of the block. We were going to drill into the block and insert a bolt for hauling and had come prepared to do just that but, no doubt due to the excited anticipation of the task, I had managed to leave the bolts in the car!

Using Dave's patented aluminium 'dragsheet' under the rock (much excitement experienced by Spike as the sheet was sent sliding down the slope towards him) the hauling rope was manned via the pulley at the top of the slope. As the rock moved inch by inch Spike managed to get behind it and help push from below while, at the same time, levering it clear of the floor with a crowbar.

After a while it was possible to manoeuvre it sideways and park it in the bedding on the right (looking down slope) under a large, particularly loose section of roof which promptly settled firmly down into place. Two jobs in one sorted.

Finally a set of short vertical holes were drilled in a detached section of roof on the right and one 1m hole in the roof ahead. During this operation the 1m drill bit snapped (as they do periodically) but it was extracted safely and the spare pressed into use.

The excavated passage is now, happily, narrowing and we hope to keep it to no more than a metre at most. Next Wednesday will see us at the 'archway' beyond which we can see for around 3-4m down dip although its impossible to see the dimensions of the passage just yet.

Clive

Fri 5th Mar 2016.  
Clive/Rich/Simon .

After a pleasant lunch in the ferret shed, two of us produced sick notes and were excused underground duties down Hobnail Hole. This only left Clive to carry the flag so it was decided instead to relocate to Winsor Hill. In a feeble attempt to avoid any strenuous activity we embarked on a tour of one of the quarries, but by bad planning ended up back at the dig. Before we could produce another convincing excuse we found ourselves being lured below ground to inspect progress by the Wednesday nighters. This was most impressive with a transformation from my last visit, but we then realised too late that our safe return to the surface was conditional on assisting with some spoil removal. A quantity of broken rock was therefore brought up part way. Exited to a chilly late afternoon. An enjoyable interlude.

Simon

On 14 Mar 2016 20:32, Clive North <[clivenorth@btinternet.com](mailto:clivenorth@btinternet.com)> wrote:

Mud & Clive

After a good chat with Mike Oram at the farm we found that the stream had reduced by about a quarter on last Wednesday's flow but the 'local lads' had been active again and, although they hadn't touched our temporary dam, they had used a fair amount of our walling stones from the tip in an apparent attempt to block the flow into the Lower Sink.

These were replaced on the tip and the bungs fitted to the dam as there was a strong flow going down the Upper Slope again. (see last Wednesday's report. (no pressure Spike!))

At the end a 1m and a 0.66m hole went into the 'archway' area with a couple of small 'trimming charges' going into the roof on the right hand side to try and keep the dimensions down to a reasonable scale.

More action on Wednesday no doubt!

Clive

Hobnail Hole Following on from Simon's report - there is now a sizable pile of debris at the foot of the Upper Slope ready to come up to the surface.

If we should have more than three or four on Wednesday I can chisel and remove the remaining bits down below and then drill and bang.

The next bang is above the 'archway' so we are making very good progress. Wednesday's bang worked well and we will strive to maintain the artificial width at no more than 1 metre.

All best

Clive

WHFS - Wed 16th March Mud, Duncan, Tav, Mark (the wanderer returneth!), Dave (recovering from the lurgy by hauling solo on the surface!), Clive and latterly the Voiseys.

Much early streambed deepening and dam building took place in an effort to thwart the phantom stream-diverters. A much improved first line of defence is now in place in addition to our concreted dam.

At the end a satisfyingly large amount of broken rock from Mondays bang was evident most of which was hauled right out to the surface during the evening. By end of play the main obstacle was a very large slab from the left hand wall which Tav managed to lever clear. It will need banging before next Wednesday - the plan is to do this on Monday evening.

The way on is still blocked by bang debris. My thought is to just bang the big rock to ease access and to concentrate on chiselling and clearing as much of the loose rock as possible, to enable us to have a good squint at what lies ahead, before further banging.

It was 10pm before we all set sail for the pub - I was planning on the same mission until my brakes suddenly failed as I was descending Windsor Hill towards Shepton. This happened just as Mike Oram's 4 x 4 was coming up the narrow lane towards me and I was braking to allow him to pass - but very little happened! I managed to squeeze into a slight widening of the lane as Mike came past (no doubt wondering what the hell I was doing!) before carrying on down the hill, finally coming to a stop with the use of the handbrake.

It was obvious that the pub was out of the question and that a very slow and careful trip home was called for. I did text Dave to say that I wasn't going to make it but, in the heat of the moment, failed to send it until I got home - sorry to cause some anxiety as a result. (Especially as I had the kitty!)

A very slow trip home via quiet country lanes with no steep hills worked - although no doubt there were more than a few disgruntled drivers following my slow progress along the A39!

Clive

Re: {Thrupeswallet} WHFS - Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> Outer dam remodelled by kids, much flow down main drag, along with loads of debris. Water everywhere. Quick check at face showed it none the worse for wear, but very soggy.

Spoil cleared from bottom of Blind Faith (upper slope) up to surface, water ponding up where the spoil was cleared, backing up level with the conveyor belting on the corner.

Exited, was miserable...

Spike  
(Still grumpy)

SAT 26 MARCH

Hobnail Hole Simon M-K, Clive N, Duncan P and Rich W

A miserably wet day. Although the stream was moderate on arrival, there was evidence of recent flash flooding - the adit gate was covered with debris and there were piles of twigs around the Hobnail grill. Underground, the Dairy had heavier drip than usual but King Cobble Hall and the streamway were unchanged with no indication of what might have caused the slumping noise heard after the last bang.

We spent an hour or two clearing bang debris and run-in material, and fettling the drystone wall on the right. CN then drilled a series of shotholes in the crystalline left

wall. As RW was climbing the ladder out of King Cobble Hall to check the firing cable, a slab of rock detached itself from the wall and lodged on his left foot. After carefully dropping this to the floor, DP investigated the stability of the surrounding area and quickly persuaded several hundredweights to fall to the floor, thereby shortening the pitch and causing some consternation to CN and SM-K who were still in the streamway below!

All safely exited and the charge was fired without any follow-up noises. On the surface the stream had risen considerably and the adit was filling up. There will be no session next week as CN will be sunning himself in Cornwall.

Rich

WHFS - Wednesday 23rd March Mud, Mark, Dave, Duncan, Tav, Spike & Clive

The stream level had dropped a bit further since our Monday night visit and, as a result of the updated dam, the cave was entirely dry.

The evening was spent with Mud at the sharp end doing a particularly rigorous nights work clearing the results of Mondays bang which included several large rocks which needed boulder net treatment up the Lower Slope.

By close of play the 'face' had progressed an amazing 4-5ft forward well into the long-awaited decorated 'rift' section of the passage, beyond the famed 'archway'.

We now have a stal and flowstone lined A-shaped extension approx 2ft high and 3ft wide at its base. The bedding at floor level has reduced to around 3inches, perhaps due to the accumulation of flowstone. The way on is obscured by robust stal curtains parallel to the walls.

Of great interest is the sound of the now, much reduced, stream. It was generally agreed that it sounds as if its falling a short distance in a roomy space.....

There was a also noticeable inward draught on this occasion which would also explain the completely dry rock surfaces from the entrance down well into the cave.

No time for drilling on this occasion.

I am away next Wednesday but intend to drill and bang with Tavs help on Monday afternoon. I will take a record photograph of the formations before we start work removing them!

Clive

Bradshaws 5 March

Andy and Paul to Bradshaws 3.

Drilled, cleared and 2 meters gained. More to do on fresh batteries.

Im around for Hobnail on Friday PM.

Paul.

WHFS Update - Wed 6th April Mud, Dave and Clive (M & M on surface support - pub)

A small crack team this week....

All was well with the dam, gate and lock etc. The 'lads' seem to have transferred their dam building interest to a new one, diverting some of the stream into one of the higher sinks on the opposite side of the valley - excellent!

The pile of rocks awaiting removal from the base of 'Blind Faith' after last weeks session is certainly considerable although Dave and Mud did manage to remove a fair number of the larger rocks to the surface whilst Clive drilled at the end.

The way on was cleared a little bit more with the rake and it was just possible with ones head on the floor and careful positioning of the helmet lamp on full spot to look along the 6inch wide and 8inch high (approx!) rift for probably three metres or so to a definite patch of blackness.

The stream sounds really close now and it does sound to be running/falling in a reasonable space. My feeling is that the rift might open up a bit after the next bang or two after which we should have a much better idea of what we have. It may well have opened up appreciably after Wednesdays bang.....

One final thought - a second or two after we banged, we all heard a distinct rumble as we stood at the entrance. So noticeable that even Dave heard it (sorry Dave!) So it remains to be seen what has happened at the end. It might have just been a dislodged skip falling but I can't imagine that would have been so audible on the surface.

My internet has been out of action for a while so I haven't been able to post the picture I took of the end prior to the previous bang although Duncan did post his. For what its worth its attached here.

Resume of play next Wednesday.

Clive

Hobnail Update - 8th April

Simon, Dave and Clive (Rich on afternoon tea support)

More recent flooding was very evident - the adit was still blocked to half its height and there was debris around the Hobnail gate.

At the Hobnail dig face (Carrara Crawl after the pure white slabs of presumably Aragonite coming out) the last small-ish bang had been successful and it was possible to enlarge the left hand wall a bit further. The roof slab, with its annoying sharp tongue that kept stabbing you in the back whilst working, was given the Plug 'n Feathers treatment to remove the bottom 6 inches or so which has greatly improved things.

Two 0.5m shotholes were fired in the left hand wall - another bang or two there should provide enough space to work fairly comfortably in the space and start lowering the stream debris floor (hopefully) and maybe attack the solid roof of the tunnel ahead if need be.

Next session - next Friday.

Clive

WHFS Update Wed 13th April Mud, Dave, Spike, Duncan, Steve & Fiona, Matt & Mandy & Clive

The 'Dambusters' had been busy building a couple of new dams upstream but have left our area alone thankfully.

On the other hand some kind soul had gone to some trouble removing a lot of the bolts on the grid to the left of the gate, smashed off some of the wall retaining the scaffold bars and attempted to saw through the lock and chain. Much discussion ensued and Mud and I will go to fit some Allen bolts on Friday and drill out the key slots etc. A re-cementing session is needed using grit from nearby rather than FCQ.

In the cave, after Fiona and Steve had had a look at the bottom Steve was volunteered to start clearing the bang rubble from last week with Clive loading and then doing a bit of profitable chiselling etc. All was sent to the surface by end of play along with all of the rubble from the base of the Upper Slope.

During the process of drilling two 1m holes the 1m drill bit snapped inside the second hole reducing its length to a miserable few inches. There was just enough power in the drill to put a short hole in the roof though as well.

So there shouldn't be too much to clear next week as a result.....

Its now possible to look along the passage rather more clearly and the 'big' news is that its about to go vertical! We have around 4-5ft of solid rock on the right hand side to remove before we hit an apparent widening of the rift where it appears to be several feet deep, judging by dropped stones (which fall into a pool). The character of the visible passage changes completely into a sculpted meandering rift around 6in wide (but twice that lower down) visible for around 10ft perhaps.

The stream is obviously flowing at the base of this (much quieter this week). Bearing in mind Duncan's survey which shows the end of the Lower Sink to be about 10ft lower than ours it looks as though we are narrowing the gap and maybe heading for (hopefully) the

stream beyond the end of the Lower cave at least or, just maybe, picking up streams coming in from the other swallets a little higher up the valley.

Either way we may soon be dragging rock up a short vertical before hauling to the surface - unless we break into something cave-able!

Clive

WHFS - 20.04.2016

Clive, Mud, Tav & Spike

A big hammering effort from Mud resulted in a good view of the 'drop' and the way ahead. The drop was more of a 45-degree slope and the way forward is a rubble-floored narrow rift, curving gently to the right, which will need widening as usual. You can see ahead for about 2-3m until it diminishes to nothing.

Presumably the rubble sits on top of a continuing stal slope.

All debris was removed to surface before Clive applied science in the usual manner. Then to Poachers where it proved to be Clive's turn to be served a terrible beer.

Tav

2th April - Mud, Dave and Clive

An energetic afternoon carrying gravel, mixing concrete, lifting rocks and generally repairing the damage done to the gate surrounds the other week.

Arrived to find very large rocks had been thrown forcibly at the gate and grill, presumably in an attempt to burst the lock. There appeared to be rock thrown down the cave as well. Ah well.....

After 4hrs of work we think we have made it as secure as we possibly can in the circumstances....

Clive

WHFS

Wed 27th April

Gonzo, Clive, Spike, Mud, Duncan & Dave.

No stream to be heard again tonight.

Spoil cleared and brought out to surface, after which the way on can be seen as a rift and is barely body size yet. The bedding plain floor seems to continue a little further but getting steeper. Three shot holes drilled in the right hand wall and popped before vacating the area for the Poachers.

Dave.



Hobnail Update 23rd April 2016 Simon, Rich, Dave, Spike, Emma + Darryl on surface support.

Spike drew the short straw to work away at the face resulting in losing all feeling in one very wet leg by the end of the session.....

A reasonable amount of rock had been displaced by the last bang. This was added to by some energetic hammer and chisel work. The retaining wall on the right is holding up well and was further stabilised by a couple of wooden wedges placed by Rich. By the end of Spikes session the floor had been lowered a few more inches producing a nice pool to work in!

A vigorous testing of the further reaches of the visible stream passage was attempted by Dave with a set of drain rods. These he managed to push in for around 2.5m in a fan pattern before hitting something solid each time - assumed to be either a solid lip, a protrusion from the roof or large boulder maybe.

Bang-wise - a couple of 0.5m holes were drilled and fired along with 3 x 0.5m holes left from the last bang (which were originally approx 1m but only the first 0.5m had had any effect on the very tough rock. The lighter charges we are using, fearful of destabilising the adjacent retaining wall and the roof of King Cobble Hall(!) have their limitations compared with what we would normally be expecting to use. Slow but sure is the only, but slow, way at the present.)

The date of the next session is still open to debate.....

Clive

Hobnail Update -Fri 29th April/Mon 2nd May Friday - Dave, Simon and Clive

A reduced level of spoil for removal this time as half the length of the available holes drilled had not removed any rock. A frequent problem due to the reduced level of bang we are using in our efforts to reduce vibration etc.

Two half metre holes drilled in addition to using the remains of the previous weeks three holes.

On firing just a faint 'crack' was heard - no big bang. Obviously just the det had gone but it was so quiet that my feeling was we had a faulty det (Vince Simmonds had recently had a similar problem).

A return with another det would be needed.....

Monday

Mud and Clive

Mud enjoyed his first taste of Hobnail and a tour of the site and Ferret Shed.....

At the end the det was indeed found to have only been partly destroyed blowing itself off the cord in the process. This will be given to Nigel to check out following the issue with one of Vince's dets (problem with that batch?)

A new det was fitted along with a short length of fresh 5gm. On checking the circuit from the firing position an open circuit was detected so a return had to be made to the end! On checking it was found that one of the firing cable terminations needed remaking and all was well on firing.

On a more positive note! - on both trips I detected a definite gentle draught blowing over the stream as it disappeared under the low roof at the end. When drilling, the dust falling into the water is swept away to the left - this seems to be where the draught is emanating from. As the water level seems to have fallen a little perhaps this has opened up a small airspace, which we can't quite see yet, which is allowing the cave beyond to breathe?

For this week I can only make Friday I'm afraid - any takers?

Clive

WHFS - Weds 4th May Clive, Dave, Mandy, Matt, Mud & Spike. Tav on pub duty.

After the bank holiday weekend, a handful of stones had been thrown about on the surface, some down the shafts, and an attempt made at carving some graffiti into the top layer of concrete.

The previous bang seemed initially not to have produced a vast amount of spoil, with most probably having fallen further into the void ahead. After some mole-style digging had allowed me to get my body into position, some larger blocks were prized out with one big boy left for reduction in the future.

Beyond the constriction, the bedding plane is once again apparent to the right. The taller rift seems to continue, but is still choked up with debris that is still too awkward to clear. This week's science experiment (2x 1m holes in the rhs, and one shorter into the lip of the constriction) may make it viable to clear the bitter end, but I expect realistically we're still a couple of weeks off that.

Worth noting that it was drafting outwards when we got to the face - not strongly, but noticeable...

Spike

Bradshaws

Extended again last Monday now about 150m, regards Andy Watson and Paul Stillman

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FRIDAY 6 MAY

Simon M-K, Clive N, Dave K, Rich W and Emma G

Emma arrived bearing two excellent small digging skips, manufactured by husband John, and then combined useful surface work with dog sitting.

The underground party found the usual heavy drip in the Dairy (why is the drip heavier in the summer than the winter?), but conditions elsewhere were fairly dry. At the face, the bang had removed the smallest amount of rock/aragonite that it could get away with, and this was soon cleared and concealed in unobtrusive dumps. An awkward peer ahead revealed a low arched passage dipping down to a tiny air space above the water.

CN then drilled a pattern of five short shotholes which were charged with heavier Cordtex. There was a successful detonation (with no collateral rumbles), but the fumes which normally chase us out of the cave were strangely absent. Were they instead being drawn into the cave through the air space ahead?

On the surface, in warm sunshine, afternoon tea was taken on the lawn, and much yarnning and speculation ensued. One of the near future projects discussed was a visit to the Old Wells Road in TLS to see if the reported post-flood silting has blocked the route to Bone Aven.

Digging next week will probably be on Friday.

Rich

Hobnail Update - Friday 13th May Emma, Simon and Clive

A low surface stream and next to no draught at the entrance.....

The Dairy, again, was very drippy.....

The Cararra Crawl stream was the lowest I think I have seen it with a little more airspace visible ahead as a result. No noticeable draught this time.

The fairly minimal results of the last bang were removed, some useful chiselling done and quite a bit of the streambed excavated before 6 x short holes were drilled and fired.

Again, no fumes chased us out of the cave this time.

On Monday evening the three of us plan to catch up on the drilling and banging at WHFS in readiness for Wednesday.

Talking of which - Matt & Mandy were going to write the report for last Wednesday as they got through into 'the next bit'.....

Clive

WHFS 11th May - Mud, Oscar, Clive, Dave, Spike, Matt and Mandy

The evening started with Mud and Oscar digging at the face, who then relocated further back to be replaced by Clive when Matt and Mandy arrived. The bang debris was shifted back and quite a bit of loose rock encouraged to leave to wall, all of which we were able to haul up to the surface when Dave and Spike arrived. When the hole leading to the face was clear Mandy had a look and found that once the lumps lower down the hole were pulled out it was possible to sit alongside the massive boulder that was blocking the way on and joggle it about some. This was then lashed up with rope and dragged up the slope with a mighty team pulling effort, but as it was sort of in the way there too it had to be dealt with by Clive anyway.

At the bottom a view into an enlargement had appeared beyond a sizeable slot between the rock, somewhat strangely the slot seemed to shrink to size not accepting to a Voysey bottom when one was thrust in. It was also not possible for the loony who tried it upside down to be able to squeeze through. We could see that the way on is bigger but probably still too narrow for comfortable movement. Matt saw a silty floor, but we couldn't get a clear view of the way ahead as it was obscured by a large rock flake.

Mandy

WHFS - Monday 16th May Emma Gisborne, Simon Meade-King & Clive

The 'scrotes' have been in action again with a very large amount of rock thrown down the shaft and lots of scars on the grill where rock had been forcibly thrown.

No apparent damage to the cemented walls though which was a relief.

A lot of rock was piled up at the base of the shaft and down towards the lip of the Upper Slope. I feel if we could block off the base of the shaft with some sturdy timber this would remove the attraction of trying to get rocks to bounce down into the cave.....

On the Lower Slope the large rock dragged up from the end last week had been split nicely into pieces and was still in situ ready for removal on Wednesday.

At the end half metre holes were drilled into the major block of bedrock in the centre between the two ongoing rifts and four more in the low roof in front.

A couple of short holes on large flowstone lumps in the floor completed the picture and a satisfying thump was the result.

Toby et al were away on Monday - that may well be the case on Wednesday as well - main gate to drive closed.

Clive

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2016 – Solo trip to Bradshaw's Cave photograph beyond Bat Roost Breakdown Chamber and check out end of Incline Aven. In through 3<sup>rd</sup> entrance and right to end. Looked at potential at high level passage leading off and downward sloping from Incline Aven. Shuffled a few rocks around and it does not look promising it probably leads to a collapse caused by the old track and quarry workings – digging probably finished here. Took photographs all the way back to the Bat

Roost Chamber boulder choke, so we have a pretty full set of pictures now. No other leads in this system. I could do with a proper survey Alan, total length at rough measurements about 150m with three entrances nicely spaced.

Full description released soon :- ) I have a full sequenced photo set if any one wants to see them for Bradshaw's Cave and a few for Hovvy's Rift Cave next door.

Andy W

WHFS Mark, Mud & Oscar, Duncan, M & M, Tav & Clive

No more damage to the gate I'm happy to report.....

Underground the big boulder which had been gently banged half way up the Lower Slope was removed before Mark enjoyed a return to the fray at the sharp end.

All the banged debris was taken to the surface leaving a tantalising area of half-banged rock (in the centre of the two parallel rifts) and a large waterworn flake on the right to be drilled and banged. This done a late trip to the Duke of Sausage was taken.

All looking very interesting!

Clive

Hobnail Update 20th May Simon, Rich, Emma, Dave, Clive & Darryl (tea-time surface support)

The surface steam was low and the cave very dry (no draught at the entrance this time) except for the usual heavy drip in The Dairy and subsequently

in King Cobble Hall.

Last weeks bang was a good 'un with fair amount of small both large and small with a good start on removing the roof over the stream.

There is now a comfortable working space so no more effort need go into widening the approaches (very difficult banging due to the exceptionally hard rock) so attention has now turned to the roof of the tunnel ahead. This is all solid 'Aragonite' as far as we can tell so the drilling is easy and the subsequent bangs hopefully better. Initial results from last weeks bang are encouraging. A return to 1m holes might now work well.

There was still a draught coming from the 'way on' but it has to be said it was much weaker than usual - all least it was there unlike the entrance!

No Hobnail session this coming week due to my commitments but back to normal the week after.

(WHFS on Wed unaffected!)

TLS Mon 23rd May 2016.

Dave K/Rich W'/SMK

And so the great expedition set off at last from the ferret shed to attempt the passage of the Old Wells Rd. After the strenuous walk-in to the entrance, the intrepid party paused to recover their breath. Our carer (DK) then sorted out the rigging for the pitch providing us with a frisson of excitement as we scrambled to reach the top of the ladder. All safely down, we turned off into the Railway series noting how flooding has scoured out the floor where once had lain the wooden tramway. Progress was uneventful until the route dipped down on the approach to Bamboo aven. Here we encountered the first major obstacle with a considerable blockage of stream debris for approx 6ft. Twigs jammed in the roof indicated that this section had sumped in the recent past.

However a minor problem like this was not going to defeat us so we set to for an hour or so and finally forced our way through to the foot of Bamboo aven. All was then clear to Bleak hall where to our relief the squeeze into the Old Wells rd was wide open as was the steeply descending bedding plane beyond. So, oblivious to danger and with typical British pluck we pushed on down the next 200ft and almost reached our goal only to be thwarted at the last moment by the final gravel choke barely 10ft short of the end and the climb to Bone aven. An airspace existed over this choke and a determined effort on our next visit could see us through. On the return up the passage it is apparent how steep is the descent. In fact this gradient takes you down to a depth of nearly 180ft - the same level as showerbath aven at the start of the marble streamway. Surfaced after 2 hrs to a pleasant summer's evening having nearly achieved our objective. And with a return trip to follow.  
Simon.

WHFS Wed 25th May

Clive, Gonzo, Spike, Alex Randall (MNRC), Mandy & Matt.

Scrotes had been busy again, therefore some clearing of the entrance shaft was required before descending further. A barrier at the bottom of the shaft is probably the best idea. This may stop the scrotes throwing rocks down to see how far they tumble, much as we do with small stones when we have a potential break through ahead.

The previous bang had produced plenty of spoil to clear including a few large rocks, some of which were reduced and a couple required deployment of the boulder net. A few fractured rocks were also persuaded to jump down from the roof to increase the working space. Alex, having not visited WHFS before, took a shift at the dig face and soon got into the swing of it ensuring there was always a skip of spoil ready and waiting to be hauled up. Alex commented on how much hard work has gone into the dig so far.

Time ran out before all the spoil could be removed, so no drilling and popping took place. But since there is still an evenings worth of spoil still to remove, an in-between drill and pop session won't be require before next Wednesday's session.

In addition to all the gravel and rocks the last bang produced, it also dropped a large coffin size slab of rock from the centre of the roof. This will require banging to reduce it to more manageable chunks (hopefully not to gravel). Beyond and below this, the rift continues on and the gradient of the floor seems to increase. A small hole in the calcite floor in the current working space reveals a small section of false floor.

Duke of Sausage or Poacher's?

Poacher's won the final vote.

Matt sampled both the Swordfish & 6X, and made his views clear by nearly soaking the barmaid as he spat the 6X out across the bar. The Swordfish was declared as passable.

Dave.

Hobnail Hole, Fri 27th May

Simon, Richard & Dave.

No Clive this week combined with a relatively dry spell meant that it was an ideal time to have another push at Triangle Chamber off the bottom of Black Pot.

Due to a handhold giving way in TLS on Monday, Rich had sustained a nasty bruise which made it uncomfortable in the approach to Triangle Chamber due to a limestone bulge in the floor. Dave retrieved a lump hammer and chisel from King Cobble Hall in the hope that the offending rock could be removed. With the rock slightly reduced Rich was able to pass through with a little less discomfort. To remove the bulge entirely will require a more aggressive attack.

Although the surface stream was very low there was a surprising amount of water trickling down into Triangle Chamber. Most of this was coming down from the rift on the far side of the chamber and then disappearing under the wall at the bottom. This left the dig to the far left relatively dry, or so we thought. A shallow hole was first dug in the approach to allow what little water there was to be bailed out along with the mud slurry that soon developed. Digging then commenced to lower the floor to give a reasonable working space, this was made easier since most of the spoil was loosely packed gravel and silts that had been washed in to fill previous digging efforts. Due to the easier digging it didn't take too much more effort to dig the floor deeper than on previous occasions. Despite there not being much water about, there was quite a bit of water in the gravel and silt layer above the underlying impervious clay like deposits. This had the effect of instantly turning what seemed to be a dryish mix into a slurry that could be scooped up in a bucket for removal. After a couple of hours we were digging through virgin floor deposits at the end and pulling out a number of rugby ball size rocks and eventually enabling a better look at the "passage" ahead.

There was just enough room with helmet removed to get a view of what lies ahead for the next 2 ft or so. Unfortunately the two walls start to converge and drop down, with just a small triangular window left open partially blocked with twigs etc where the stream flows under wetter conditions. Some of the right hand wall is not solid and it may be possible to widen the passage. It is likely that the passage we are in is the very top of a rift that will hopefully widen lower down, so the preferred option would be to significantly lower the floor at the end to see if the passage does widen.

Dave.

Hobnail 3rd June Dave and Clive on early shift - Rich and Simon later

The previous bang was our best yet with large slabs of roof lying in the stream awaiting removal. Progress should now be much swifter as we are dealing with just a roof of aragonite as opposed to the widening of the approach through the previous band of extremely hard red rock.

Drilled and banged again.....

Rich and Simon discovered on our way out - Rich camouflaging one of the steel beams with dark spray paint before trying to remove the hard nodules which had previously caused him (and me) anguish when trying to pass through the crawl at the base of Black Pot. These were 'gently' banged later in the day.

A plan to attack the old second gate in TLS was abandoned due to the amount of falling water in the lower part of the entrance shaft. We will try this again when the stream is diverted into Hobnail.

Clive

Belated WHFS REport - Wed 1st June Just Dave & Clive .....

Fitted a wooden barrier at the base of the entrance shaft to stop thrown rocks from bouncing down into the cave....no sign of damage by the 'Scrotes' for a change.....

At the end the large coffin shaped slab which had dropped from the centre of the roof was drilled along with a large bulge in the roof and both duly fired. Dave manhandled a selection of large rocks up to the base of the Lower Slope to join the heap of spoil there awaiting removal.

A fair sized pile of spoil awaits a good turn out next Wednesday!

Dave and I tried the Horse and Jockey in Binegar for a change - the beer would satisfy even Matt I think and the welcome was very friendly!

Clive

WHFS Gate Wed 8th June Full dig report to follow from Matt.

On arrival at WHFS we found the the opened padlock & chain neatly laid on the wall.

The removable grill section had been replaced upside down.

The couple of rocks Clive and I placed in front of the sheet of board at the bottom of the entrance shaft weren't in the same position as left last week. But the board was in position with extra rocks against it.

No signs of anyone having gone through - The hand line was still all laying at the top of the first slope where Clive had left it after hauling up the bang box last week. The short handled shovel & lump hammer were as left last week at the bottom of the first slope. The dig face area hadn't been disturbed since the bang last week.

????????????????



Dave.

WHFS Dig, Wednesday 8th June 2016.

Mud, Spike, Dave, Matt, Mandy, Alex.

A two stage affair this week, commencing with the clearing and hauling of a large amount of stacked spoil from the bottom of the first slope. Matt and Mandy then sent down to the dig face for a short second phase attack, with just enough bodies in the team for buckets to make it all the way to the surface. There remains enough shattered rock at the bottom for a second clearing session alone, though it will subsequently need more attention from Clive. The visible way on currently appears as a tiny triangle between flowstone coated walls; there may be additional interest beyond the silted and cobbled 'floor' I reported previously, but this currently lies under the debris pile waiting to be uncovered.

Thence to the multi CAMRA award winning George at Croscombe, where each well-kept beer and cider we imbibed was a golden elixir, every innovatively flavoured potato crisp, savoury whole wheat twig, or roast peanut snack was as manna from the gods. Four different real ales and at least eight ciders on offer, and bustling with locals even after we left at 11:30... Now that's a decent pub!

Matt.

On the left hand side (looking down dip) a gour pool was revealed in the bedding plane undercut, just under the left hand wall. It's not huge - 8x3" and maybe a few inches deep, but it would be worth documenting before we risk damaging it with future bangs.

Plan for next week:

A team needs to haul the spoil from the first slope to the surface - min 3, ideally 4 persons.

Someone needs to dismantle the bowders at the bottom, and possibly the roof - 1 person, drill, p&f

Someone ought to photograph the gour pool - would be worth taking some extra water to clean the nearby flowstone and recharge the pool as it looks little scummy - 1 person, camera, water bottle, toothbrush.

Once the above is complete we can either clear the bottom to the first slope again or if numbers permit - all the way out.

Spike

WHFS - 15/06/16 Alex, Clive, Dave, Mud and Spike

No untoward activity at the entrance this week.

By the end of the session, the team had hauled an unholy amount of spoil to the bottom of the top slope, almost sealing us in. The front is notably roomier now, with much of the central "coffin sized" slab removed, leaving two flowstone covered rift walls about 3-4ft apart, narrowing to the front. More access to the bedding planes was found as gravel was pulled out of the floor.

The floor is a calcite false floor that is broken in the centre, which may be a result of dropping the coffin on it, or it may be the original drop we saw some weeks back. Certainly the debris to be cleared from under it is a mixture of sharp bang debris and water worn rock.

The roof still has an ominous looking floating bowder which may benefit from more attention and give more headroom up front.

There is still much gravel to be cleared to get a better idea of where the way forward lies. There are also several large bowders that will need reducing - ideal plug & feathers candidates...

Hobnail Report - 11th June The result of the previous weeks 'mini' bang on the troublesome chert(?) nodules in the floor of the Black Pot Crawl was that they had mysteriously disappeared and that the copious 'tamping' of the bang, with wood backed up with a canvas bag filled with cushions from the Ferret Shed, had succeeded in protecting the stal close by.

In the Carrara Crawl dig there was a good amount of largish debris to remove after the previous bang and the opportunity was taken to back-up the support of the right-hand wall (the base of the mud and rock-filled rift) with large rocks and a wooden wedge or two.

A few more holes drilled in the roof of the advancing tunnel successfully fired.

A rematch is planned for Friday (17th) - are you about Rich and Simon?

Clive

Hobnail Update 17th June 2016 Dave, Emma, Clive + Rich on surface support.

On arrival at the Carrara Crawl dig we were amazed to see a 'sea' of greeny-brown' foam, several inches deep, across the whole of the stream 'pool'. No doubt a result of the storms of late....

The previous weeks bang turned out to have been the best yet with several very large blocks of arragonite littering the floor along with plenty of smaller lumps. The largest pieces were incorporated into the steps approaching the dig with the rest transported to the various discrete disposal sites near King Cobble Crawl.

Three short shotholes were the limit this time due to the drill battery evidently not having been charged properly. So a smaller amount of progress next time as a result.

Ahead, we can now see the large block which Dave had detected previously when probing with the drain rods. It appears to run across the passage and the top of it is quite visible above water now. Its either a block or maybe the start of what passes for 'normal' rock in Hobnail at the end of the arragonite section below The Dairy.

Dave plans to have a probe with the mega bar during the next session.

Clive

WHFS Wed 22nd June

Spike, Mud, Mandy, Matt & Dave.

Traffic not too bad on the A37 Southbound to Shepton Mallet, but it was backed up on Long Hill just South of the Old Frome Road crossroads, but this was easily avoided.

No need to knock today since we bumped into Toby on the approach track.

No apparent scrote activity.

A quick look at the dig face and the nice little gour pool before drilling the two large rocks for plug-n-feathering. Text book split for the first rock, but the battery ran flat after 1 1/2 holes drilled in the second rock. But being a smaller rock a partially successful reduction with the plug-n-feathers was achieved as 1/3 of the rock cleaved off the top.

All the spoil from last weeks effort was cleared from the bottom of the first slope out to the surface. But there is still a sessions worth of spoil to clear from the dig face, including loose infill from below the calcite floor. Some of this infill is bang debris but some off it is what would have been supporting the calcite floor as it formed before it dropped/settled.

The team of five then rehydrated in the beer garden at the George, Croscombe, where we could still hear the singer/guitarists performing in the bar but still be able to chat. Before leaving we met and chatted with the Landlord whom Mud has known for many years and who was very interested in our digging/caving activities.

I think we may have found the venue for this years ATLAS Xmas dinner.

Dave.

Hobnail Hole Fri 24th June.

Simon, Rich, Dave & Emma.

Triangle Chamber.

The approach to Triangle Chamber is now a little easier to negotiate after the rock in the floor had been reduced on a previous occasion.

The target was to establish whether or not the dig in Triangle chamber is worth pursuing, or does it just pinch up.

Once again a lot of silt had washed back down the dig in Triangle chamber, but since it was not hard packed it didn't take too long before we were back to where we had got to on the last visit. The end of the dig was pushed further by pulling out rocks from the floor along with the silt and mud. This revealed an opening heading down to a lower silted floor approx 0.5m below the original silt floor level. With a detectable draft, and a silt floor, it seems as though it opens up beyond the rock blockage. The width at the end is only 200 - 300mm and is too narrow for further reasonable progress. The right hand wall has two distinct bulges that could easily be removed with a little of Dr Nobel's. The dig now has a gradient heading down towards the end where it is hoped that the water will now drain and flow away. Heavy flooding may now wash away the spoil for us instead of refilling the floor.

On exiting Hobnail, the Thrupe stream was in flood with only a small trickle getting past the dam.

Dave.

Hobnail Hole Simon, Rich, Dave, Emma & Clive

Relatively high stream levels but the TLS adit was free of stream debris despite the recent heavy rains.

In Hobnail the strong draught at the entrance had returned and there was a strong stream in the Carrera Crawl dig.

A goodly amount of spoil was removed, courtesy of the previous bang, and two 650mm holes drilled in the roof and fired.

An annoying corner was also hammered into submission in the approach to Triangle Chamber to ease access.

Talk was of Saturday for the next session - turns out I could do Friday or Sunday. Would Sunday suit Spike I wonder?

All best

Clive

WHFS - 6/7/16 Dave, Mark, Mud, Tav, Spike with Duncan Disorderly on pub duty

I arrived late to find the team well stuck in to clearing the spoil from last week's session, culminating in a selection of decent sized walling blocks - some the results of the past plug & feathers effort.

Mark and Tav both had a look at the front, declaring it "pointless" and "never going anywhere".

The team then retired once again to the George for refreshments and conversation.

Next session will need to concentrate on more dismantling of the false floor to gain access to the bedding plane. There is a very real possibility this will require the removal of the gour pool, although that may have to wait until the next session Duncan can make.

Don't think it'll benefit from a bang at the moment, but a cut down sledgehammer would be useful - Dave can you remember what happened to the head I brought out to be rehandled?

Cheers,  
Spike

Belated WHFS report for 29/06/16 Alex, Clive, Dave, Duncan, Tav & Spike

More clearance from the bottom to the base of the top slope revealed a second layer of bedding plane below the false floor we had been working on before. This provided a large quantity of spoil, some clearly stream-washed, along with some heavily eroded calcite.

Next session (tomorrow) will need to clear spoil to the surface and/or attack more of the false floor to follow the very promising looking (9" high in places) bedding plane. There are some largish boulders in the bedding plane, which are clearly water-worn, but seem too big to have just washed down - a bit of a mystery...

Photos attached:

The gour pool which we can hopefully save

Clive looking under the false floor into the bedding

A view down the newly revealed bedding with lump hammer for scale.

Spike

Hobnail Update 10th July Emma, Tony Littler, Clive

Low-ish surface stream and a corresponding reduction in the flow rate of the Carrara Crawl stream.

Good result from the previous bang - current dump site in King Cobble Hall now filled.

We are now but a couple of feet from the apparent 'block' that Dave had discovered via his drain-rod probings. It will be interesting to see if this is causing the blockage of the stream....

Four good holes drilled and popped before leaving. Mega-bar removed along with the drain-rods (they are in the Ferret Shed Dave)

I won't be about for a Hobnail session this week.....

Clive

P.s. Numbers for tomorrow night?

WHFS - Wed 20th July 2016 Mud, Spike, Dave, Matt & Mandy, Clive plus Duncan on 'pub support'.

A very productive session with Mud at the sharp end reducing the stal 'blockage' in the continuation of the rift to a pile of glistening fragments.

The large rock at floor level on the right was also almost totally removed and was one of three large rocks that needed the boulder net treatment up the slope.

Attention then turned to clearing the mud and rock fill in the bedding just to the left of the rift and the end here was extended a couple of feet or so until a large loose rock ended play. This needs a bolt attaching so it can be pulled clear.

Removing this will give us more 'foot room' for attacking the bedding to the left. At this point the bedding is around 2ft high and moderately comfortable to work in - it will be interesting to see if this continues down and gets any higher but the main interest is pushing the bedding across to the left. Here we can see for around 15ft, the height of the bedding being around 10inches. At the end there appears to be a change in character away from bedding to something apparently boulder-filled. The rock there appears very clean and waterworne and as its well over 'to the left', ie up-valley, happily takes us away from the lower dig and more 'in-line with whatever lies below and beyond the Pol Pot area.

The next session will need a sustained effort to clear last nights spoil the remainder of the way to the surface from the bottom of the Upper Slope.

Clive

Hobnail Update Sat 23rd July Simon, Rich, Emma, Tony B, Tony L and Clive

The results of one of the best bangs so far, in the Carrara Crawl, were cleared by Tony B and Tony L followed by some useful chiseling and two good shot holes in the roof.

We are now in about six feet and can see on for another six feet or so having apparently nearly gone through the Arragonite band to emerge in what passes for normal 'normal' rock.

There appears to be a bit of a rift going off to the left about 4 feet ahead but it doesn't seem to be taking any of the stream.

Working in the crawl is now as a bit of a wetsuit situation and can only get more so! ( unless we can suddenly drop the water level by some means ).

Next Saturday we plan a two pronged approach with Tony B drilling and banging in triangle chamber while Clive continues semi aqueous work in the Carrara Crawl.

Clive

Hobnail Hole Sat 30th Jul 2016.

Clive/Emma/Rich/Simon/Tony B.

A crack team descended Hobnail after the usual alfresco meal on the ferret shed patio. Our first destination was the carrara crawl dig to clear back last week's bang debris. The stream was unusually low and a careful examination was made of the way ahead. This revealed that the stream has turned sharp right just ahead. It would seem likely therefore that we will be crossing below the parallel aven. Clive drilled 2 shotholes into the next roof arch to enable us to move slowly forward. Meanwhile Rich and Tony had left for Tringle chamber to attack the promising terminal squeeze. After firing the Carrara charge from the Dairy, we moved up towards the surface with

Tony firing the Triangle charge from the Coal cellar. All in all a useful afternoon's work with the opening of a second front a bonus. Next Sat the biggest Ferret shed spring - clean since it's construction.

Simon.

WHFS Update 3rd July 2016 Mud, Dave, Ray Deasey, Matt Mandy & Clive (Duncan on 'pubwatch')

The opportunity was taken to clear the pile of spoil (including three very large rocks) from the base of the Upper Slope to the surface.

Ray had a look at the very bottom having never seen the cave since we were working on the Upper Slope. He was duly impressed I think it fair to say!

Matt also had a squirm around at the end and confirmed the two large blocks obscuring the way on are loose but impossible to access until we have lowered the mud and gravel floor of the bedding plane immediately below the end of the slope. This will, at the very least, give us more leg room for working across to the left towards the boulders, and, hopefully the way on.

An earlier finish an visit to the pub ensued.....

Clive

Hobnail Hole FRIDAY 12 AUGUST

Simon M-K, Clive N, Emma G, Tony B, Rich W

After the usual al fresco lunch, the team split into two parties - SMK, CN and EG to King Cobble Hall (see separate report) and TB and RW to Triangle Chamber:

TRIANGLE CHAMBER

Rigged a short ladder on the drop into Triangle Chamber, making the climb out safer i.e. not reliant on dodgy chert nodules. The chamber itself and the onwards passage were full of heavy drip, resulting in quite unpleasant digging conditions. Only one of TB's two shothole charges had gone off, and the broken rock was soon cleared and incorporated into the spoil retaining wall. A small piece of the loose wall above was removed, but a much larger roof block defied attempts to bar it down. Digging at the end involved squeezing past this block, and neither TB nor RW spent long working alongside it. Some blackened, waterworn rocks were removed, and it looks as though the passage turns right and perhaps becomes more of a bedding plane. The air at the end was fresh, and water drained away without backing up.

TB had to wait for CN's drill before laying a charge, but when this arrived the batteries quickly gave out. As a result, the short section of the unfired shothole was only slightly lengthened, but a mass of Cord was additionally inserted behind the roof slab in the hope of dropping it to the floor. The charge was detonated from the bottom of the entrance shaft.

RW

Belated WHFS Report - Wed 17th Aug 2016 Mark, Matt & Mandy and Clive

Despite having less than the required six to dig from the end - we managed it!

Mark had a good go at the mud and rocks in the bedding floor and also managed to wrestle out three of the large rocks obscuring the way on.

Five skips were filled and stock-piled in readiness for the Voisey's arrival. They were then hauled (plus the large rocks) up to Blind Faith before Matt & Mandy joined us at the end for another five skip loads.

This proved about enough for the evening and a slightly earlier trip to the George ensued.....

The mud and rocks in the bedding plane need to be lowered a bit more before we 'volunteer' Matt to have a go at pushing the bedding plane to the left to the bouldery continuation we can see.....

Clive

Hobnail Hole - King Cobble Hall Report - 12th Aug Simon, Emma & Clive to Carrara Crawl having replaced the King Cobble Hall ladder with our new ATLAS ladder (much improved!)

The previous bang had been extremely successful with two very large blocks and a pile of smaller fragments found awaiting us in the water.

These were all removed to the new dump site and three x 2/3m holes drilled and successfully fired.

There was a slightly better view of the rift, at water level, going off to the left (approx 6-8in wide) which appears to continue. The main wide low passage also bears round to the right with just a few inches of air space visible.

Good progress is being made now with the banging operation compared with the early days.

The plan at the moment is to resume the attack on Saturday next. Tony L??

Clive

Hobnail hole.Thrupe lane. Sat 27th Aug 2016.  
Clive/Emma/Rich/ Simon.

Having managed to spin out lunch as long as possible,there seemed no option but to go underground.In fact the entrance verticals were dry and pleasant and we soon arrived at the bottom of Black pot where we were to go our seperate ways.The Cobblers(Clive and Emma) to the delights of the Carrara crawl dig,and the Triangulars(Rich and Smk) through the cathole to Triangle chamber.Once down into the chamber the latter duo made a careful appraisal of the way ahead.Despite being shaken up by a length of fuse,the large boulder obstructing us was still intact and will need chemical attention.A single charge should be more than enough for the job.Some vigorous crowbarring managed to at least bring it down into a jammed position ready for



banging. It was now possible to get a clearer look ahead and it looks promising. A small bedding plane intersects the roof with some loose material issuing from it. The way on is choked with a mass of waterworn debris including sizeable cobbles and is potentially 2-3ft wide. Airspace exists above the choke on the right. It may be that development is trending in that direction. With the boulder removed we should be able to pull a lot of stuff out.

Returned to the Dairy to await the appearance of the team from the lower deep levels and the successful detonation of Clive's charge. Uneventful ascent to the surface for tiffin on the patio. Simon.

#### Hobnail Report Sat 3rd Sept Rich, Simon, Dave & Clive

All to Carrara Crawl to clear the previous bang. A good result again with some large pieces and a lot of smaller fragments to move up to the dump in King Cobble Hall.

Whilst Clive 'immersed' himself in shothole drilling Dave and Rich returned to Triangle (see separate report).

Duncan's drill was used in Carrara Crawl whilst Clive's was away being serviced (first time ever - its been going since Thrupe Swallet!)

Two full length holes and two shorter ones were drilled and fired. Two holes were placed on the extreme right, almost at the start of the famed open tunnel, which should improve the view on that direction at least.

More of the same on Friday.....

Clive

Addendum .....

Triangle Chamber - Dave and Rich managed to reduce the boulder that was blocking the view on. More work required on Saturday.....

Clive

#### Hobnail Report Fri 9th Sept Dave, Rich, Simon, Emma & Clive

All to Carrara Crawl to clear last weeks bang (very successful) before Dave tried forcing himself into the continuing passage which proved too low as yet.

Dave and Rich then returned to Triangle for an inspection (see separate report - hint!) before Dave returned to King Cobble Hall, to deliver three drain rods from the Ferret Shed. These were used by Clive in an attempt to try to lower the water level in the ongoing passage by trying to excavate a trench where the stream enters visible enlargement beyond.

This failed apart from managing to 'pot' a nice black cobble with the drainrod 'cue'. The rock was perched at the limit of the low section and disappeared from sight along with some smaller cousins.

The plan now, apart from perhaps a last bang, is for Dave to possibly engineer a rigid (rather than the floppy drainrod) sectional rod with a blade at the end which might succeed in scraping away enough of the silt floor to enable us to lower the water level enough in the approach to dig away the silt in comfort.

Eight 400mm holes were drilled and charged (in some discomfort it has to be said!) before firing and exiting to warm up.

A return visit is planned for next Friday.

Clive

WHFS - Wed 7th Sept 2016 Mud, Dave, Emma, Matt & Mandy, Spike and Clive

Toby mentioned that details of the 'lease' of the woodland are due to be finalised very soon and he would keep us informed.

A bumper turn out for this session which meant we could haul back from the bottom to the base of the Upper Slope with 'relative' ease. A number of skips of the 'stream-debris' from the base of the bedding-plane were removed.

Matt performed various gymnastics in the final bedding plane and managed to remove the boulder blocking the view ahead.

Both he and Mandy felt they could have pushed through into the continuation but it would have been too committing and they may well not have been able to reverse the move.

Apparently Matt could see down the bedding again for a considerable distance along an A-shaped section which was man-sized with the lower bedding on either side. (Do correct me if I'm wrong on this Matt).

The down side of this is that to gain access will mean blasting the roof of the bedding approach (around 10ft) which is no mean feat bearing in mind how far down the cave we are and the effort needed to remove the debris.

Dave and Clive had a good look at the continuation of the main rift and came to the conclusion that for the next session or two we should continue to excavate the fill here to see just what is happening to the rift at this point. There are two well eroded joints, a couple of feet apart, at this point which seem unlikely to peter out suddenly. We should be sure of what is happening here before we take the plunge and blast off sideways.

At the pub Duncan entertained us with a video of the approach to the new sump in Wigmore and the team very kindly arranged a ice cream treat with a candle on top to be served up before they sang 'Happy Birthday' to me!

Chatting to the very friendly American landlord (who has been down Thrupe) - he was keen to have the MU5 that has been promised and was suggesting putting up an 'ATLAS' blackboard for us to note down our discoveries! I pointed out that we wouldn't be needing much chalk!

It was agreed that the ATLAS Xmas dinner would be held at The George on Wed 14th December - the landlord (must get his name) has booked us in.

Clive

Triangle Chamber - Hobnail Hole, Fri 9th Sept

Richard & Dave.

The previous weeks assault on the conglomerate boulder had reduced it to manageable chunks and some gravel. This was soon cleared and used to build up the spoil retaining wall. More rocks were pulled out inc some dislodged from above to try and make the dig face a little safer. There is now a small body sized chamber opened up between the rocks and boulders. There isn't an obvious open space in sight, just more water worn rocks and boulders. Plenty more rocks to pull out to see if we can find a more secure roof to follow. There is a lot of twig and leaf debris washed in through the roof all along the joint/rift in the roof at the dig face and it's approach.

Dave.

WHFS Report - 14/9/16 Clive, Dave, Mandy, Matt, Mud, Spike, Tav (Duncan on pub duty)

Plan was to attempt to clear the infill straight ahead following the second slope. A multitude of buckets of muddy slop to medium sized rocks were removed, with little sign of a change in progress. A number of large plates dominate the infill, with mud above and below, but are hard to remove. Either way, the roof and floor only seem to get closer together.

Having tidied up the area and made a bit more of a working space, we've decreed it necessary to bang across to the roof tube Matt identified last week. Tav had a nose in this direction and felt a not inconsiderable draught coming out of the way on. Interestingly, Clive reckoned the draught further up the cave was blowing inwards...

Next week we'll need to drill and bang the roof, but we also have a hefty pile to clear from the base of the top slope.

Spike

P.s. Do we definitely think it needs banging, or could we more gently remove sections of roof - plug & feathers or chisels? Harder work, but may be easier to clear...

Understandable thought re the Plug and Feathers but I'm afraid impractical for a number of reasons, just one of which is the much shorter duration of the drill battery capacity when drilling the wider holes.

We'd need an awful lot of them too!

What would be very useful though is a practical way of stopping the blasted rock from falling down into the lower section of the bedding plane which would make its removal a bit of a pain....

If we could come up with something soon that would obviously be a big help. Ideas?

Clive

Hobnail Hole - Fri 16th Sept Clive, Simon, Emma, Tony Boycott & Dave.

Both Dave & Simon had brought along long handle digging tools to see if the stream bed and hence the stream could be lowered at the far end of the low arch crawl beyond Carrara Crawl. Before this the previous weeks bang debris was cleared and disposed of in King Cobble Hall. The approach to the low arch was now more accessible and so Dave's digging trident (see attached photos) was successfully deployed. Various rocks, cobbles and silts were dug and either persuaded to drop down into the unknown or dragged back to be stacked in King Cobble Hall. The stream level went down as the blockage at the end was cleared. It was then possible to dig the floor and walls of the crawl out to make it large enough to crawl through. Dave crawled through reporting back as he went.

At the end of the crawl the way on turned slightly to the left and down a cobble/boulder 45 deg slope for approx 6 metres. The rift we expected to see opening up on the right running back up parallel to Carrara Crawl was blocked up with rocks and boulders of varying sizes looking perhaps a little more stable (but not much) than King Cobble Hall. The passage is triangular in cross section with a width that varies from 2 to 3 metres at its base. At the bottom of the slope the floor levels out and is silted up with the stream sinking under the right hand wall approx 1 metre from the end of the passage. Overhead, the apex narrows as it extends up to approx 6 metres.

Back at the top of the slope it was then possible to dig more of the stream silts, rocks & cobbles out to further lower the stream and increase the crawl dimensions. Tony B then proceeded to go through, but with the clock ticking and our imaginary callout time approaching, Emma, Clive & Simon decided to hold off until the next session to do the flat out crawl in the now lowered stream. The end of the crawl could do with a precision attack with plug and feathers to remove what appears to be a bedrock flake on the left hand side that will improve access to the new extension.

On exiting we were met on the surface by a slightly concerned Richard who was thinking about seeing what caving kit he could cobble together from the Ferret Shed to come and find us.

Finished off with tea and cake in the Ferret Shed.

Dave.

WHFS - Wed 21st Sept Mark, Spike, the Voiseys, Tav, Mud and Clive (Duncan on pub support)

The evening was spent clearing last week's spoil - in addition Clive and Mud had a go at starting the next banging campaign.

The bad news is that the drill battery was playing up and only two half metre holes were possible. They plan now is to return for a bang only trip, maybe on Monday, depending on whether fresh supplies can be obtained in time....

Clive

FRIDAY 23 SEPTEMBER

Hobnail Hole Clive N, Tony B, Dave K, Emma G and Rich W

A pleasant, warm September day, with the stream very low.

The whole team went down to the new passage, where CN successfully plugged and feathered the protruding rock on the left at the exit from the low crawl. The descending rift is impressively roomy but creating a way on will not be easy. The stream disappears through a narrow slot in the right-hand wall just before the mud-choked termination. A small hole above allows a restricted view of a rubble-filled inclined bedding plane, and there is cool, fresh air at this point - some might say a slight draught.

After building a retaining wall at the far end, attempts were made to excavate the floor in front of the slot, but little progress could be made with the stream present, and attempts to persuade the water to sink elsewhere were unsuccessful. Several rocks were broken out of the right-hand wall without revealing much more. DK also furgled in the mud choke with the long bar, but apart from some gurgling sounds (from the mud, not from DK) little was achieved. It was reluctantly concluded that we shall have to blast through the wall where the stream sinks, trying not to damage too much the pleasant appearance of this feature.

On the way out, DK observed some movement from the rocks and mud at the foot of the aven near the head of the rift. Some thought will have to be given to safeguarding this potential area of collapse.

Digging next week will probably on Friday - the earlier the better.

RW

Hobnail Survey Quick trip earlier to redo the line survey and add the new bits. Very impressed with the breakthrough, less impressed with the blank wall it ends in...

I surveyed everywhere I could get to. There's some of colditz missing compared to the last one I did as it's silted back up. There's also a sketchy climb in the new bit that I was going to have a look over, but I'd need a spotter to make it back down.

I'll make the data available better later, but for the time being, here are the interesting facts:

Length 107m

Depth 36m

The end of the new bit is 10 m south of the entrance, and 2m west.

The new bit is directly under the triangle chamber dig and headed in the same direction, but is over 8m lower at the highest point I climbed to, and over 14m lower at the blank wall...

Spike

WHFS Tues 27th Sept Emma & Clive

Last weeks rather compromised bang had in fact done a really good job - quite a devastating scene greeted us on arrival at the end.

One particularly large rock needed Dr Nobel's magic linctus and two full 1m holes were fired in the roof.

As a result there should be plenty of rock to remove over the next two or three sessions before another bang is needed.

I will have Wednesday night off but aim to make the pub with the kitty.

Clive

Hobnail Update - 29th Sept 2016 Emma, Dave and Clive

Whilst Dave had a look at Triangle Chamber (in the process rescuing an obviously confusing frog) Emma & Clive continued to The Waiting Room to take some pictures (results attached).

We did try synchronizing watches to do a voice test between Triangle and TWR but couldn't make voice contact, although we could just hear Dave moving rocks around.

On Daves arrival we spent some time gardening the potentially loose area around the breakthrough point and built up a supporting wall of well-keyed rocks to reinforce the main boulder bordering the squeeze. All looks much safer as a result.

Rich had suggested we dig at the very back wall where Dave had managed to get a small 'gurgle' of water to briefly flow away last week. Dave is convinced that the back wall and possibly the floor of the chamber come together at this point so we decided to dig away at the floor a few feet further back up the passage where the stream currently sinks. Dave grappled with a hidden rock that had been annoying him since the first digging session in TWR and eventually managed to remove it. The 'second' rock that was believed to be there turned out to be bedrock so we left it!

The result of our efforts was a pool about a foot deep and it was decided to concentrate in future on banging the adjacent wall, where there is a distinct A-shaped set of joints, which should enable a fairly clean cut to be made into the wall just to one side of where the stream sinks.

I propose, if any of the team are available to have a drill and bang trip on, say, Tuesday to set things up for the usual run of clear, drill and bang to start perhaps on Friday.

As a result I will excuse myself, again, from WHFS on Wednesday (apart from the pub that is!)

Clive

Hobnail - 4th Oct 2016 Emma & John Gisborne plus Clive

John enjoyed his trip to the far reaches of TWR and he and Emma patiently waited while Clive drilled 3 x 1m and 1 x 0.5 m hole in the 'triangle' of rock above the possible way on.

A distant band was audible from the firing position in The Dairy after laying out a new 150ft reel of bang wire (thank you Tony A!)

The plan is to return to clear and bang of Friday.

A note to the WHFS team - I won't be out to dig on Wed but will join you in the pub for a catch up.

I'd be grateful for bang contributions as I've just restocked .....  
Clive

FRIDAY 7 OCTOBER Hobnail Hole

Simon M-K, Clive N, Dave K, Tony B, Emma G and Rich W

Surface stream still very low. Everyone down to The Waiting Room where an effective charge in the right-hand wall had produced a lot of broken rock. This was cleared along with the results of some determined chiselling. A rock buttress remained which prevented a clear view of the way on, but it appears to be more open and the stream can be heard running off "downhill".

Various spoil housekeeping tasks were also undertaken, and while Clive took a few photos, Tony drilled the next set of shotholes. One went through the rock and into a silt floor. The charge was successfully fired. Work will resume at the end of w/c 17/10.

Rich

WHFS Wed 13 Oct

Mud, Spike, Mandy, Matt, Dave & Duncan (pub support)

Most of the spoil from the dig face was hauled to the bottom of the upper slope, leaving three skips loaded and about three or four more skips worth still to load. These needn't be hauled up before the next drill and bang since there is plenty of space to work in.

Because there were only five out to play, a pull down cord was used to get the skip back down. This worked ok, although a more robust rope would be better (note to self - rope + new skips). A pull down rope also means we can get away with less bodies jammed in the bedding plane provided the reduced number of haulers can cope - Mandy & Matt nailed it.

It won't be long now before the dig starts get a bit aquatic and it would be good to get past the squeeze before it does. We have quite a bit of stacking space at the bottom of the upper slope, so I suggest we prioritise on hauling spoil up to here and clearing to the surface whenever we

can't dig at the bottom, whether that be due to reduced numbers, too wet or whilst drilling is in progress.

Dave.

WHFS - 19th Oct 2016 Just three stalwarts this week - Mud, Dave and Clive.

Dave's addition of a new 'haul-back' rope and some new skips enabled us to fairly easily deal with the left-over loaded skips from last week and to also remove the remaining large rocks from the dig.

Three 1m shotholes were drilled (thanks Duncan for the load of your battery) plus a short hole in a large slab remaining on the floor. A satisfyingly loud 'crump' followed....

I threw a few stones down the continuation of the bedding plane and they went some distance (as previously reported) but this time fell with a distinct 'splosh' into a pool.

There will be plenty to do over the next week or two - there is still a large pile at the bottom of the Upper Slope (although Dave and Mud did drag some rocks to the surface last night) plus no doubt a load of new material from the end.

Clive

Hobnail Report Fri 21st Oct 2016 Rich, Emma and Clive

Dave had decided not to accompany us due to an attack of the lurgy. Rich though was suffering a cold but bravely managed the trip nevertheless.

The bang in TWR had done a great job producing some large blocks, which required some hefty levering with the mega-bar, and a lot of smaller stuff.

Rich deployed a novel form of spoil tip management - namely digging a hole and burying it! This took place in the sand choke at the end of TWR and was finished off with the start of a sturdy rock wall (with naturally eroded features only visible of course) which will help deflect the winter flood waters.

By the end of play the dug passage had reached around 5ft in length and I'm very happy to report that I could see ahead along the open bedding for about 3ft into man-sized passage beyond with the stream running freely downhill into it.

A wall with blackened nodules is visible - maybe the far wall of a parallel rift. Oh and there is a faint but distinct outward draught.

All to play for as they say!

Attempts to drill a couple of deep shotholes into a big lump of bedrock blocking the way ahead were thwarted by a drill snapping, irretrievably, in a hole.

This meant we could only manage one half metre hole fired this time.



The next couples of trips should be interesting.....

Clive

Clive, Dave, Mud & Spike

WHFS Report - 26/10/16 TL/DR for Tav: We cleared a load more rocks to the bottom of the top slope.

After deciding that we should make the most of what dry sessions we have left this year, we set up to clear the debris from last week's bang up to join the small heap already at the base of the top slope. The bang had done a sizeable amount of damage to the face, and a large number of fist-sized and up blocks were hauled up by the team. As we were short on numbers, a lot of the gravel and mud was left to be dealt with in future as the buckets needed to be emptied piecemeal rather than tipped.

Several sizeable rocks were detached from the roof and the left hand side, some of these have been temporarily stored just back from the dig face as they were too large to manhandle through the awkward stages at the base of the second slope with only the four of us. With a bigger team, most of these could be dragged out using the boulder net. One 'hearth-sized' slab will probably need to be dealt with in-situ.

Depending on numbers, next week would probably be best served by clearing the remaining 10-15 buckets of mud and gravel (and the boulders if possible) before Clive sets to drilling, and the rest of the team makes a start on the now quite sizeable pile at the base of the top slope. Face wise, there's enough of a target for two long shot-holes into the roof, and we'll need at least a small charge in the hearth-stone...

The way on is draughting nicely, although the fabled "v-shaped roof tube" we're going to follow down the next slope is still maybe 6ft off...

Spike

Hobnail Hole - Fri 28th Oct 2016 Rich, Simon, Dave and Clive

Last weeks small bang (due to drill bit snapping) still enabled Dave to wrestle some very large lumps of bedrock from the new blasted passage leading off TWR.

Rich and Simon carried on with the process of 'burying the spoil' - hiding bang debris in a sand bank basically - whilst building a substantial wall to channel the stream away from the tip into the new blasted passage.

This might seem strange but this is the route the current, tiny, stream is taking and no doubt will be followed in high water conditions.

By the end of play a clear view could be had ahead into a passage in the order of 6-8ft across with plenty of rocks and cobbles visible. A distinctly cold draught was emerging as well.

Three short holes were drilled in the remaining obstacles and its expected that, with luck, we should be able to enter the new passage on our next trip which looks like being Friday.....

Clive

WHFS - Wed 2nd Nov Dave, Mud, Spike & Clive. Duncan on pub support.

Half a dozen skips worth of gravel were dragged from the end before Dave, Mud and Spike got stuck into clearing the rock pile from the base of the upper slope.

Clive then drilled 4 x 1 metre shotholes in the roof of the way on and also popped three large rocks on the floor before heading for the pub.

Definitely the biggest bang we have ever had at WHFS! The idea was to try and beat the winter floods and after this bang it should be possible, at least, to look down the bedding and the possible way on.

Clive

Hobnail Hole, Friday 4th November

Clive, Richard, Simon & Dave.

Due to the clocks having changed and the nights drawing in lunch was kept a little shorter.

At the dig face the previous weeks bang had done a good job of breaking up the remaining obstruction into the open space previously viewed. Some chiselling and levering soon cleared the spoil, some of which was pulled back and some pushed forward which could be heard tumbling down a metre or so. Dave was then able to squeeze head first far enough in to get a better view and see how stable the exit of this short blasted section was before assistance was required to pull him back out. After reporting back that it was no less stable than other areas we had encountered Dave then went through feet first into the void beyond reporting back details including two large holes down slope that were probably part of the known Thrupe Lane Swallet. This was confirmed by descending the left of the two holes that led into the top of Butts' Chamber. The breakthrough point was then confirmed as being the "too-tight passage on the right" in Upper Butts' Chamber.

Richard and Simon followed through but unfortunately despite his best efforts it was still too restricted for Clive to get through. Richard, Simon and Dave climbed down into Butts' Chamber and through the crawl into Marble Chamber and on down Marble Streamway to where it enters Atlas Pot. Clive meanwhile drilled a couple of short shot holes to remove the restriction in the break through. After Richard Simon & Dave returned to The Waiting Room, Clive finished off setting the charge which was subsequently detonated from King Cobble Hall.

Then all headed out for celebratory tea and biscuits in the Ferret Shed.

Dave.

Hobnail Hole - Friday 11th November Simon, Rich, Clive, Dave, Emma and Duncan (joined us underground in TLS)

Last week's bang successfully eliminated the constriction in the connecting tube from Hobnail Hole to Thrupe Lane Swallet. Dave did some gardening of rocks and these were passed back to the Waiting Room and incorporated into Rich's Wall.

Everyone went through into Upper Butts Chamber exploring Lower Butts Chamber – passing the hole in the floor to Bridge Rift on the way to looking at Cowsh Crawl. Here Dave dug out some of the floor to assist with water flowing away. The crawl had plenty of water running into it forming a sizable puddle but not wanting to get wet the team retraced our steps to UBC crawled through the phreatic tube into Marble Chamber. Then down through boulders to the Shower Bath (with remarkably similar looking rock to the Dairy). Taking the familiar steps down the Marble streamway to gaze into the abyss that is the Atlas pot and viewing the Eagles nest above us on the right hand wall.

Retracing our steps back up Marble Streamway to the Shower Bath (where I ran into Duncan). Whilst Clive and Duncan had a catch up – Dave and I went exploring in Bypass Passage rejoining Marble Chamber. Everyone regrouped and made our way back through to UBC through the connection into TWR. Everyone brought out all the digging tools chaining them to the surface positioned at strategic points on exit. Plan for next week is to divert the surface stream from TLS down Hobnail to observe the effects of the water lower down in the latter prior to the planned weekend 'exchange trip'.

Tea and array of celebratory cakes in the Ferret Shed.

Emma

WHFS Update Mud, Dave, Spike & Clive

Spike and Clive at the top of the Lower Slope, hauling, with Mud & Dave at the bottom.

By all accounts last week's mega bang had done the trick and there was a sea of broken rock to deal with.

By the end of the session it seems most of the handleable rocks had come up leaving one particular gigantic flake blocking the way ahead.

However rocks thrown beyond the flake rattled down the bedding plane it is estimated for around 6-8 metres. This figure was decided upon after timing rocks thrown down the Lower Slope above.

It was felt that the passage beyond sounded 'roomy'.

The usual cold inward draught had dried out much of the cave and at one point a bat flew up from the bottom.

Next week's plan is to use plug and feathers and Daves Tirfor Winch to deal with the mega flake.

With that removed it should be possible to look down the next section - watch this space!

Clive

WHFS Wed 16th Nov

Mud, Clive & Dave.

The drill and bang etc was left at the bottom of the upper slope whilst we headed on down with winch, strops and scaffold pole.

Some of the spoil in front of the first large slab was cleared before winching it back. A couple more reasonable sized rocks were also man handled back to give a better view of the next rock that was blocking the way down. This turned out to be another very large slab approx 5 to 6ft long, 2ft wide sat the top and tapering to a point at the bottom, with a depth of about 8 inches. The tapered end was pointing down slope with the top/widest end only just above the floor of the approach. With a strop wrapped around the top and careful winching and crow bar jiggling, the slab slowly rotated until it was lying across the slope, but ready to slide down at the suggestion of a nudge. Repositioning of the strop around the tapered end enabled the slab to be winched, along with more crow bar jiggling, across and clear of the bedding plane. On closer inspection the slab was riddled with fractures and lucky that it stayed in on piece whilst winching, since a few light taps with a lump hammer soon reduced it to half its size.

The way on down is now visible for approx 6 metres, a bedding plane slopping at a similar angle to the previous, height at the top combined with the additional roof space afforded by two dissolved joints would allow access down for approx 2m before narrowing down.

The shortened version:-

A couple of slabs moved.

The way on ditto previous reports.

Dave.

WHFS Flood

The flood across the road in the parking area is much down from yesterday but still running. The water reached to the top of the steps at Toby's house and he was afraid he was going to lose the house (he did lose all power). The force of the water can be judged by the way the timber pile was washed down towards our path to the dig.....

The stream is flowing strongly into the Lower Sink although (unless its hidden by the falling water) someone has made off with the loose portion of the gate.

A small-ish stream is making its way through our dam into the Upper Sink and is pouring into Pol Pot. There seems to be a trickle or two running into the cave proper although that means there will also be a 'streamlet' flowing down the right-hand side of the Upper Slope again no doubt.

So digging on Wed will obviously just be from the base of the Upper Slope to the surface although duty at the rock pile in the cave will be damp! It will be interesting to see/hear what the stream/s are doing further down.

I may be on light duties having pulled my back a bit whilst diverting floodwater yesterday from the house.....

Had a good chat with Gavin at 'the barn' - his water borehole is done (just inside the wall near our parking area) and the mobile home is on site. During the flood water was disappearing easily into the hole in the broken concrete in the middle of the yard by the barn (as we expected). Today water was still eddying round in a pool there.

The water level under the manhole in the barn had risen to within 18in of the top (about the same level as the water in the yard) and appeared to be 'welling up').

Clive

WHFS Wed 23rd Nov

Clive, Mud, Spike, Matt, Mandy, Richard W, Dave & Duncan on pub support duty.

The flooding had subsided and the stream at the end of the road (where we park) was flowing as you would expect during very wet weather. The culvert was flowing well issuing a large stream overwhelming the square bricked sink, and flowing down past WHFS and on down the Lower Flood Sink (NHASA dig). The grill/gate that Clive reported as missing had been washed down the entrance shaft, to be retrieved next week.

No evidence that large volumes of water had flowed down the upper or second slope in WHFS, the hauling rope bundled half way down the lower slope and bang wire were as left last week. However a thundering stream could be heard and then seen lower down. This was gushing out from the bedding plane on the right near the bottom of the lower slope and flowing over the spoil and large slabs and down the bedding plane that was exposed last week.

The stock pile of spoil was cleared from the bottom of the upper slope before most of the team retired to The George.

Dave.

Ps. On my way home I stopped by TLS/Hobnail.

The stream was back to flowing within the rock lined banks.

Surprisingly no debris was laying on the Hobnail gate. So either this has been washed away, down the entrance, or perhaps someone has cleared it off. On Sunday 20th there were some large sticks/branches laying on the gate.

A lot of silt and flood debris in the culvert/channel behind the dam.

TLS gate remains choked with flood debris and the water level is half way up the gate.

Prodding a stick in the area of the old shaft just back from the gate revealed that water had been sinking there and washed out a hole a good metre deep.

Dave

Richard, Simon, Tony B, Emma and Clive

The stream had returned to its normal level after the excesses of earlier in the week.

After some general post-flood clean up Richard and Simon headed for Triangle Chamber to retrieve the last of the digging kit left there. Judging by the flood debris they found there the chamber must have flooded to the roof.

The whole cave had been given a thorough power-washing with not a speck of mud visible anywhere and clean bright rock much in evidence.

Tony, Emma and Clive headed for Carrera Crawl where the very lively stream had displaced some rocks at the top of the boulder slope and caused a run-in of rocks at the start of the crawl itself.

The Link crawl had around 3 inches of water running through it rather than the trickle we were used to.

The Back Door was passed quite easily after some photographs were taken and the team headed to Marble Streamway for a couple more pictures.

Concern was expressed about the safety of the boulder pile at the head of Butts Chamber which one has to cross when coming to and from Hobnail.

There are three large jammed rocks with a lot of space around them which one has to climb over. My feeling is that as the route will become more popular in time a fixed rope or similar running from the parallel route across the head of Butts Chamber would be a good idea.

If any of the jammed rocks do move a catastrophic rock slide is likely to occur into Butts Chamber. In my opinion these rocks are potentially far more dangerous than anything in King Cobble Hall.

Next Friday it is proposed we head for the Great West Road to start reopening route to Bone Avon.  
Clive

Thrupe Lane

Fri 2nd Dec 2016.

Dave/Emma/Simon.

A day spent clearing up after the great flood. The channel feeding the Hobnail drainhole was dug out back to Richard's walling, and we were able to divert the stream down it. However there was a certain amount of backup so we need to try and clear more from the hole itself if it's to become the regular sink. Attention then turned to the adit which had been invaded by a Tsunami of debris although the gate had prevented most from entering the cave. An impression was made on it and another full session should reopen the shaft. Retired to the ferret shed for a very fine selection of cakes supplemented by RGW'S arrival with mince pies'

Simon

To add.

Although Simon says a full session should re-open TLS entrance, there is an awful lot of silt and gravel that has washed down the stream towards the TLS gate. This is approx 1ft deep in

front of the gate, and the whole stream bed approaching the entrance really needs lowering by a good foot or so to prevent this from washing straight down the entrance when the stream flow returns to its normal wet winter condition or higher.

On Friday, after digging out the Hobnail culvert we managed to clear the leaf debris (that was about 1ft deep) that had settled on top of the silts over an area of only a couple of metres square at the bottom of the steps to TLS. There is an awful lot more clearing still to be done. It would be a good idea to put a call out to see if we can get a team cavers to put in a day session during a weekend to clear the stream debris, could also be the time to remove the gate from the Ferret Run. It was suggested that perhaps we could have a brazier burning away and make a bit of an event of it, perhaps even a BBQ. If this was on a Saturday we could then arrange an exchange trip between the two entrances on the Sunday. If we were to follow with an exchange trip, it would need to after some stabilisation work in Hobnail and after ATLAS have done the first exchange trip.

Thoughts?

Suggested dates?

Dave.

TLS - Flood debris Clearance - 17th Dec 2017

Simon, Rich, Dave, Emma & John, Spike & Amy, Clive

With the help of copious supplies of barbequed burghers, hot sausages, hot mulled wine etc (thank you Amy & Emma in particular) and a roaring fire pit, courtesy of Dave, the team managed to remove probably about a third of the accumulated leaves, sand and assorted debris left my Storm Angus. (pictures attached)

This was all barrowed away across plank bridges etc to be tipped as high above potential flood level as possible.

A return is planned for Wednesday evening as WHFS is not feasible at the moment.....

Clive

Had a look at WHFS today and the stream is still too high to dig on Tuesday...

Gavin has been working with a big digger behind the barn and is putting in a track and some sort of level area. He has had a go at the 'Barn Cave' and exposed the left hand wall of the stall-ed rift so it is around 6ft high now. There is a parallel joint about 4ft to the right and I've suggested they carry on clearing the broken rock between the joints and lowering the base in the hope of a wider space between them appearing lower down.

He and his friend Kev are really keen on the project.....

Gavin and family and now living in the caravan on site.....

Re the dinner - I can call at the MNRC and pick up two or three for the dinner although will have Dingle on board on the way back. About 7pm?

Clive

