
**Wednesday 5th January 2005 - (THRUPE
LANE SWALLET)**
Rich, Gonzo and Clive

Took some pictures of the Archway Dig area and the new rift site then drilled two holes in the right hand wall. These should enable us to widen the rift sufficiently without spoiling the look of the place too much.

Clive North

**Wednesday 12th January 2005 - (THRUPE LANE
SWALLET)**
Gonzo, Tav, Tony Boycott.

Clive's efforts had taken out the first chunk of right hand wall. You can't see ahead any more clearly but it's now easier to see vertically up the rift which looks quite promising and also echoes well.

Tony drilled 2 holes, 1 metre long and 750cm long to continue the good work, while Tav and I enlarged the Arch and the constriction above.

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

**Wednesday 19th January 2005 - (THRUPE LANE
SWALLET)**
Tony Boycott, Richard, Tav, Dave King, Gonzo.

Last Wednesday's efforts had made a significant impact upon the right hand wall, enabling us to step down the rift about 1 metre. Looking down the rift now there is a suggestion of a passage heading back beneath our vantage point beneath the right hand wall.

While Tony drilled, the rocks that had been deposited beneath the 'aven' last week were ferried back to the arch and secreted in the recess opposite the exit.

Mark Lumley

Wednesday 26th January 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Nik-Nak, Dave E., Rich (surface support) and Clive.

Tony B's session had removed a deep chunk from the right hand wall of the rift. After moving several large pieces down to the Archway Dig, two more holes, each a couple of feet deep, were drilled on the right about four feet down.

It's now possible to see both up and down the narrow rift ahead; it appears to be in the region of about 40ft high overall; quite impressive, but narrow.

Clive North

Wednesday 2nd February 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Rich, Tav and Clive

Last week's session had done what was expected of it and a satisfying amount of rock was removed to the end of the OWR. One long (2ft) hole was drilled, etc., along with an approx. 8inch deep hole left over from last week.

Clive North

Wednesday 2nd February 2005 - (THRUPE SWALLET)

Dave K and Nik Nak

It has been a long time since we have been to the dig; the entrance plate was covered in rotting leaf material and mud. The stream was reasonably high and the inlet in Tango Rift was the wettest we have seen, however the inlet in the final chamber was only just running. The end chamber itself was also quite dry. We drilled almost three long holes and will return next week to place at least another two [...]

Simon (Nik-Nak) Richards

Wednesday 9th February 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Tav, Gonzo, Dave E., Richard, Clive.

An entertaining evening of rift widening, spoil removal, photography and old wire retrieval. The rift had been considerably widened by last week's efforts and Clive put in 2 more holes to facilitate progress downwards.

Mark (Gonzo) Lumley

Wednesday 9th February 2005 - (THRUPE SWALLET)

Dave K & Nik Nak

Dave and Nik Nak drilled an additional two long holes to go with the three holes drilled the previous week. (Got the drill bit stuck for most of its length in the last hole).

Simon (Nik-Nak) Richards

Wednesday 16th February 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Rich, Dave K and Clive

A lot of the recent floodwater had found its way down Plaster Passage and on down to the 'duck' below Bamboo Aven, where there was a build up of sand and gravel.

At the nameless rift Dave had a productive session removing the debris plus a great deal of gravel etc from the downward continuation of the rift. Four half-metre holes were drilled (thanks to a new second battery pack). The air in the rift is still fresh, although no obvious draught this week.

Clive North

Wednesday 23rd February 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Rich, Gonzo and Clive

To the Rift[†] to remove spoil and to insert another five holes. Looking on down the Rift[†] (better view now) it seems that there is a very distinct undercut on the left hand side opposite the little flowstone feature. Ummmmmh?

Clive North

[[†] The Rift has gone from being *The Rift With No Name* to being *The Rift of a Thousand Names*, but the diggers still cannot agree. The debate continues. (T.A.)]

Wednesday 23rd February 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

[Gonzo left his caving undergarments in the Ferret Shed after changing and, as they were thought to be a health hazard, Dave King took them and posted them through Gonzo's letter-box. This prompted the following email from Gonzo. (T.A.)]

Dear Dave

Thank you for posting my caving underpants through my letterbox on your way home last night. It's the thought that counts.

Unfortunately my wife got the wrong idea, storming out in her Ann Summers nightie, curlers and furry Simpsons slippers and leaving me and the kids.

In her fury she threw the pants onto the fire. They caught, and ignited the curtains, leading to the total destruction of the west wing.

My son ran out after her and was knocked down by a passing bullock. He is now on a life support machine in Clapton General Hospital.

My 8 year old daughter locked herself into the drinks cabinet and hasn't been heard since 3 am.

I write this email from my padded cell at the H.E. Balch Institute for the spelaeologically confused...nurse says that she'll be bringing round the rusks shortly...

Mark (Thunderpants) Lumley

Wednesday 9th March 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Rich, Gonzo, Dave E., Tav and Clive

Tav had a sustained session digging in the rift floor. He finally managed to thrutch down into the viewable rift ahead (updip). There is absolutely no way on there but he did confirm the definite draught noticed last week.

Tav and Gonzo exited; Rich, Dave E and Clive started drilling etc. After one battery was used up Rich left for the surface and then the long drill bit jammed in the hole and the fuse in the battery blew! Fitted the spare fuse and that blew as well. Oh dear!

At the base of the rift the raw width is about a foot and we are now in clean sand and small cobbles. The main area of interest is straight down....that draught must go somewhere - it's certainly not going up the rift.

Clive North

Wednesday 9th March 2005 - (THRUPE SWALLET)

Dave K and Nik Nak

Returned to find a pile of rubble, but unfortunately a bent drill bit still stuck within the remainder of its hole!?! Ho Hum. **The King withdrew the bit from the stone!**

With a little hammering we were able to squeeze into the passage ahead, an additional 10ft of caveable passage. The good news is it's about six feet high; the bad news is it's only five inches wide! The continuing passage is a phreatic tube at roof level (similar in size to the streamway after Tango Rift - except it's filled with stal flow) with a deep (4ft), thin trench. The stream cascades down another couple of feet and can be heard continuing to cascade.

It's looking good, but it would be nice to find a longer open stretch of passage - the search goes on.

Simon (Nik-Nak) Richards

Wednesday 16th March 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Subject: RE: There's Life in the Old Rift Yet!
Nik-Nak and Clive

The last week's session had done a good job and some large rocks were duly removed. Nik-Nak tried squeezing into the rift ahead and was able to push his feet into the apparent 'overhang' near floor level on the left-hand side. With encouragement from CN he then disappeared! Nik-Nak will pick up the story from this point....

With my feet, I could feel open space of 3ft wide and 3ft high; with Clive's encouragement, I pushed further in order to have a look. It was unfortunately only an alcove; however, it is large enough to hide in and makes the rift over a metre wide at this point; there may be no need for more enlargement! I could feel cold air rising from somewhere within the floor, but couldn't determine exactly where this was coming from.

Clive North & Simon (Nik-Nak) Richards

Wednesday 23rd March 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Tav, Richard, Dave K.

Plenty of spoil out from the bottom of the rift, but plenty more to come. There's the slightest hint that NikNak's alcove might extend beneath our rubble pile as there seems to be a widening with pendants below (but don't hold your breath!).

Mark (Gonzo) Lumley

Wednesday 30th March 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Dave E, Clive and Rich

A 3' long airspace was uncovered down rift [now called "Great Western Rift"_(T.A.)], and a link with the alcove was made beneath a fringe of stal pendants on the right (looking down-rift). The LH wall of the main rift is also belling out slightly and airspaces exist beneath the upstream stal flows. The combined floor area is in excess of 12 square feet, with a cool air flow emerging from the debris. The skip handler in the rift got quite cold!

Rich Witcombe

Wednesday 6th April 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Rich, Gonzo and Clive plus Dave K. and Nik-Nak co-opted from A-Team duties!

Removed the last of the debris from the bottom of the rift. We are now down to the 'original' level of sand, mud and cobbles etc.

The 'alcove on the left' is now enterable by all and appears to be a parallel rift with a ridge of rock or stal in the floor separating it from the bottom of GWR. There is some development both upwards

and to the right (on entering). There is still a draught.

Clive North

Wednesday 13th April 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Rich, Dave K., Nik-Nak and Clive

Dave K. and Gonzo removed all the rock and a fair amount from the floor either side of the rib. By the end of the evening Rich had estimated we had about another three sessions-worth of tipping space left in the OWR. That concentrates the mind a little!

Clive North

Wednesday 20th April 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Dave K and Clive

Removed a satisfyingly large amount of rock from the end. Gonzo could see spaces in what would be the downward continuation of the rift (on the right-hand side looking down) and the long bar would go full length and waggle about fairly freely. He felt that the draught was going down that way as well.

However, given the spoil disposal difficulty; if we don't find some open tipping space soon, we will have to shut the GWR dig down. (End of the Line?)

Clive North

Wednesday 27th April 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Tony Boycott, Dave King and Clive

Tony and Gonzo to the end to clear last week's rubble and assess the prospects re abandonment. Meanwhile, Dave and Clive brought a few skips-worth up to take to the OWR.

The way down shows a singular lack of promise, with a small, mud-filled void beneath the stal flow, a narrow, possibly draughting crack running down below the spoil-filled section of the rift and NikNak's alcove being full of sand/mud.

Cheered by this news, Clive then started drilling the overhanging boulder at the base of the aven. After several attempts and various strange noises and vibrations from the drill it became apparent that drill's cutting tip had dropped off. That was that.

Clive North & Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

**MAY THE FOURTH BE WITH YOU !
Wednesday 4th May 2005 - (THRUPE LANE
SWALLET) -**

Pat Cronin, Dave King, Gonzo.

Digging down in Nik-Nak's alcove, while Pat attempted to sing the rift into submission. Went down a couple of feet through sand choke. Some signs of widening with an encouraging undercut in the south wall. Conclusion: It's still worth pursuing the alcove.

Mark Lumley (Gonzo) & Dave King

**Wednesday 11th May 2005 - (THRUPE LANE
SWALLET)**

Richard, Gonzo, Nik Nak, Dave K.

Digging continued in the Alcove to a depth of about 4ft. To the North, the alcove started under cutting, but closed up within about a foot. Pushing the crow bar into the floor was now only possible at the south end, going in about 2½ ft, but narrowing the further down it went. All were of the opinion that the Great Western Rift dig has reached The End of The Line.

So next Wed, the start of the assault on the aven. The good news is:- Mr Gravity has offered his assistance with spoil removal.

Dave

King

Wednesday 18th May 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Pat, Rich, Dave K and Clive

Gonzo and Pat amused themselves with some photography on the entrance pitch whilst the others went to clear the remaining spoil back to the OWR.

An amusing game of cave 'sardines' ensued whereby Pat, Gonzo and Rich variously tried in passing over, under and around each other whilst trying to avoid me as I was scrunched-up in the alcove with the drill.

Pat measured the total depth of GWR as approximately 3.5 Pats which equates to exactly 6m!

A 6inch hole was gently drilled in the boulder. The remaining rocks appear to be quite well stalled which is good news - but we could not see any obvious beckoning black holes further up.

Clive North

Wednesday 25th May 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Rich, Dave K., Dave E., Clive

The remaining half of last weeks boulder was underpinned, with the timber used to hold the entrance gate open, in case it decided to move during drilling.

Peering up the aven with a spot torch there appears to be a large boulder at the top, close to what could be a roof. Difficult to make out, but the fact remains that the large rocks up there have come from somewhere. More next week.....

Clive North

Wednesday 1st June 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Dave K and Rich.

Went down to investigate. It is now possible to stand up in the aven and peer over a layer of stalled-up rubble at chest height into a small void, above which the rock-filled rift continues to a height of ten or twelve feet above the floor; jammed debris obscures the view beyond this.

Using the small bar, DK was able to "dismantle" much of the first rubble layer, uncovering a 3" section of thin-walled bone in the process. The rock and stal debris was stacked in the lower dig.

Rich Witcombe

Wednesday 8th June 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Dave K and Clive. Rich on late night surface support.

The bone, discovered last week, was carefully removed, wrapped in bubble wrap and removed for Tony A to take a look at.

Some considerable time was spent assessing the options about how to proceed up the aven **safely**.

It was eventually decided to continue digging away more of the clay and small blocks at the current limit and then to break up the two blocks positioned strategically in the centre of the shaft about 6ft up from the base. Started working on this.

Clive North

Wednesday 15th June 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Rich, Dave K and Clive

Cleared away debris from last weeks session, along with more clay etc and removed to the OWR.

Started drilling holes in the grand piano blocks in the aven, but the drill bit disintegrated and this stopped play. Hope for better luck next time.

Clive North

Wednesday 22th June 2005 - (THRUPE SWALLETS)

(There was no digging on Wednesday)

Wednesday 29th June 2005 - (THRUPE SWALLETS)

(There was no digging on this Wednesday, either). **Wednesday 6th July 2005 - (THRUPE SWALLET)**

Gonzo, Dave K and Pat.

A late start, so we went down Thrupe and photographed the entrance and

Out too late for the pub...calamity!

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

Wednesday 13th July 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Rich, Dave K. and Clive

(Digging tip) There was a problem with the drill battery; a ni-cad cell tag had come adrift. This was fixed by turning the drill on and touching the tag against the cell - the resulting arc welded the tag to the cell beautifully!

More holes were drilled in an attempt to bring down the lower boulders in the aven. Some may have been left hanging and loose so next week extra special care will have to be taken.....

Clive North

Wednesday 20th July 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Clive, Dave K, Pat and Gonzo

Having cleared the debris that had come down from last Wednesday's efforts an entertaining hour was spent with a set of drain rods bringing down the rest of the loose stuff. Gonzo cowered in an alcove and positioned the end of the rods and Pat furdled vigorously from further back.

Lost one drain rod and almost lost Gonzo's face when a cube dropped out as he was looking up. There is another piano still perched above, but the walls seem solid and there is an encouraging, upward draught.

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

Wednesday 27th July 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Dave K., Rich and Clive

Mindful of the appalling weather forecast (2-3inches of rain predicted during the evening) we hurried underground. Needless to say - no rain materialised.

We worked on the 'Grand Piano' and hopefully this should have removed the offending block and anything loose in the immediate vicinity but may well expose further loose blocks above. At the moment we just can't see.

Clive North

Wednesday 3rd August 2005 - (THRUPE SWALLETS)

(There was no digging on Wednesday).

Wednesday 10th August 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Dave K, Gonzo and Clive. Rich as surface-support.

Rich produced a very lightweight 6ft alloy ladder from the depths of his garage. This was carried down and installed in Bone Aven. The first large rocks were found almost at the bottom of the Archway Dig.....a large pile of rocks, clay and gravel was also found at the base of the aven and spread down the slope. The last session had certainly been successful - big-time!

After clearing back the debris the aven was carefully looked at by Dave and declared stable(ish). The second Grand Piano had happily disappeared along with several of its close neighbours and a lot of the clay and rubble. The rift appears to continue straight up - although choked.

There is now a third, even bigger, piano lying horizontally on top of a stalled block with a delicately-placed chockstone pinched between it and the wall.

Holes were drilled both in the both supporting blocks, leaving the piano well alone. Before leaving the aven Gonzo barricaded the slope to try to encourage rocks to fall into GWR rather than the other way. (The dump site is now filled neatly to the brim).

Clive North

11th August 2005

We wish Pat Cronin all the best with his forthcoming move to Co. Clare, Ireland.

Quoting from Pat's last email;

"Oddly enough its been a lot of fun."

Perhaps he does need a rest :-)

Wednesday 17th August 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Dave K, Rich and Clive

Straight to the end to check on last week's efforts. A satisfyingly large pile of debris, including a couple of big boulders at the base of Bone Aven stacked up against the timber barrier we had erected. Unfortunately, the last large Grand Piano had only come half way down the aven before becoming insecurely jammed.

Dave throsted with the drain rods in futile attempts to dislodge it. He eventually gave up and gingerly wrapped a rope around the wobbling rock. A good pull from below and down it came.

After a change of underwear Dave retreated to the base of GWR and began hiding the spoil we were shovelling down at him.

Rich and Clive took turns up the aven, digging and inspecting. Rich declared the 'dark chink' from last week **"not without interest"**. During Clive's turn, a football-sized rock fell from the top, which he selflessly caught with his face thus prevented it from falling onto the diggers below.

The inspections revealed that at the top of the aven there is a gap of about 6 inches wide between the rock ahead through which you can just make out a 'rift' going on up for about 6ft. Half way up it degenerates to about 6inches wide. It's impossible to make out whether this is in solid or a gap against large boulders (i.e. ruckle).

Clive North

Wednesday 24th August 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Dave K., Gonzo and Clive

To the end to do the final tickle of the Bone Aven boulders. Took some pics looking up the aven to

compare with the 'before' pics taken ages ago, plus Gonzo did his best in the confined space to get some shots.

Working at the top of the aven, whilst waiting for Gonzo to prepare his kit, I became aware that there was a slight air movement through the choke and that I could hear, VERY faintly, a distant stream! It's very faint but I'm sure it's there and it's already named **Tinnitus Torrent** by Gonzo). Maybe we are getting close to the sinks near Parfitt's cottage after all.....

Clive North

Wednesday 31st August 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo & Rich

To the aven. A fair amount of rocks and mud had fallen, all of which were pushed into GWR. Both G and R climbed to the top of the aven and listened hard - sadly neither heard any water.

The aven has a definite right hand wall which curves up to the left above a false floor of mud and small rocks. Further up are at least two large slabs with smaller rocks around them.

Gonzo tried a geological hammer on a rope as a grapple but failed to bring anything down. (He did get the hammer back though, so it wasn't a total failure).

Rich Witcombe

Wednesday 7th September 2005 - (THRUPE SWALLETS)

(There was no digging on wednesday).

Wednesday 14th September 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Rich, Dave K., Clive plus Gonzo on surface support (brief!)

Clive and Dave headed to the end to try to loosen the boulders while Rich removed buckets and plastic bag detritus from Bleak hall.

The last session had done its job and exposed a rift trending up to the 'left' about 3-4ft wide with a 3-4ft wide boulder jammed across it a few feet up! This in turn was sitting on the remains of the unstable rock and clay floor.

This session's work concentrated on trying to loosen the floor under the boulder and the boulder itself. As a result, the boulder may have moved and jammed or it might even be less secure than it was if that is possible.

The area is potentially **VERY UNSTABLE**. It will require careful examination next week.....

Clive North

Wednesday 21st September 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Rich, Dave K., Gonzo and Clive

To the end to check out the results of last weeks session. We had removed the right hand rock which was jammed between the mega-boulder and the wall plus a large amount of the 'flowstone' slope on the left upon which all the boulders had been resting.

This latter area was left as an arch of clay and rocks with lots of small cracks - very loose. One errant rock did leap at Richard; he caught it sucessfully with his head, so it wasn't damaged.

The area above the boulder seems interesting and Gonzo reckoned he could see a black space beyond the rocks. It sounds hollow enough and the 'draught' still rises up there steadily.

More next week no doubt.....

Clive North

Wednesday 29th September 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Dave K., Gonzo and Clive

Last weeks *session* had brought down a reasonable amount of the overhanging clay and rocks on which sits the omnipresent boulder. The latter was still unmoved. There now appears to be a large rock embedded in the clay etc just underneath it.

After a thorough inspection and a think, we cleared back the debris and then brought down some more to replace it. How long can this go on? Best to take it slowly though.

Clive North

Wednesday 5th October 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Rich and James W., Dave K. (surface support) and Clive

To the end and pleasantly suprised to find that a large amount of the clay and rocks had gone along with the large rock which had appeared last week. In addition, the mega rock had gone as well. This left a satisfyingly large area at the top of the shaft with a view up at a large flat slab in the roof ahead.

There appears to be more development directly upwards, time will tell.

Clive North

Wednesday 12th October 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Dave K., Rich and Clive

After very heavy rain there was the sound of a cataract coming up the entrance shaft - luckily the water hadn't risen to adit level.

Rich and Dave volunteered to open up discreet sinks in the depression and monitor the situation whilst Gonzo and I went to the end to check out the results of the last *session*.

The trip to the end was fascinating with a real showerbath running in an around Bleak Hall and a good little stream running down the Old Wells Road.

At the dig there was a metre-high pile of clay and boulders sitting neatly at the base of Bone Aven. After clearing, I made my way to the top and found the digging face was now about 5-6ft wide and had a solid rock wall on the right hand side. There was still some clay and rocks on the left forming the left wall and part of the remaining 'archway'. Up above though there was now a clear view up another 20ft up a solid rift. The view was partially obscured by two large boulders 6ft ahead, but the top of the visible rift appeared to be about 3ft across and a foot wide with jammed rocks. I think this is probably the narrow side of the rift - the main part being hidden behind the large boulders.

Gingerly poking one's head up a little higher above the clay and rock ledge on the left revealed a lower continuation of the rift wall which veered around to the left out of sight (behind more small rocks) into what may be an open rift. It's just a bit dicey yet to go any further up for a proper view.

Not without interest I think you'll agree!

Clive North

Tuesday 18th October 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Rich and James, Dave K., Clive

Last week's *session* had been very successful with good metre deep pile of clay and boulders waiting for us at the base of the aven.

At the top of the aven, the clay and rocks slope on the left had gone and had been partly replaced by a large lump of similar from further up. (Nasty stuff 'similar'). One of the two impending boulders had disappeared (leaving the second unsupported).

The view up the aven is now much clearer and reveals an inverted T-shaped passage the upper part of the rift being a couple of feet wide and the 'bedding' passage at the bottom about 6ft wide. There appears to be a very large boulder at the limit of view, maybe jammed across the 'end' of the rift like a trapdoor.

The opening to the left just above the clay bank is also more visible and contains another upward trending rift with a rock jammed in it and possibly a horizontal (?) continuation below.

The area is completely dry and fossil - Rich reckons we are somewhere between Wareham's cottage and Andrew's farmhouse, north of the valley floor and well away from the sinks. Interesting.....

Clive North

Wednesday 26th October 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Dave K., Clive

To the end armed with the usual kit for possibly dealing with a boulder jammed in the aven. So far so very good..... Then... Ah, no spoil in the shaft! Only the moth-eaten remains of one of last weeks 'devices'.

[for various technical reasons, last week's session hadn't worked as intended (T.A.)]

So, no progress made but the drill battery was left in situ and I suspect that this week's session will have removed the clay bank and anything else immediately around it. We shall see.

Clive North

Sunday 6th November 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo and his son Sam (surface support), Dave K. plus nephew Chris (surface support) and Clive (sub-surface support).

After all the rain the stream was about a foot deep flowing through the adit gate. Gonzo & Co set-to to build a dam behind the Ferret Shed, the roadside pipe was unblocked and much ferreting about with bars etc in the depression soon reduced the stream to a spray at the foot of the shaft and Dave and Clive descended...

After clearing, Clive worked his way into the little chamber. Some judicious gardening followed and then a look round.

First the good news - the boulders only extend about another four feet and then we are into completely clear solid rock!

Now the really good news! Beyond and up the 'rift' the passage dimensions at a guesstimate are in the order of 10ft (**yes 10ft!**) wide and 5ft high. The passage goes up at a steep angle of maybe 60degrees for about 25ft. Regular readers may remember talk of a 'trapdoor' boulder visible, possibly jammed across the head of the rift - well it can now be clearly seen to be a large boulder (the biggest yet) jammed in mid-rift and passable both below and above. There is also a dramatic 'pillar shaped' boulder jammed across the passage]

Above the boulder the rift appears to be nearly vertical, about a yard across and I estimate the distance visible from my position to the 'top' of the visible rift to be around 40ft.

Things are looking up indeed!

Before we can get to grips with all this though we need to finish the gardening etc. To this end we attacked a strategic boulder. [...] I suspect that the whole of the remaining boulder pile may have come down which, whilst being very good news, may present us with a considerable problem in clearing the base of Bone Aven. Assuming that the rocks came right down and didn't become jammed up in the aven then the access to GWR **[the spoil dump _(TA)]** will probably be cut off.

All in all a very satisfying trip and promising outlook (apart from the fact that its all going uphill, fast!)

Clive North

Wednesday 9th November 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Two Daves (King and Everett) plus Clive

Nice dry entrance this time. To the end where the base of Bone Aven was found not be blocked but containing a good pile of clay etc. However.....8ft up the aven - there was the mega block well jammed across the rift with another large one on top of it plus God-knows what else above!

Three holes were put into the the rift walls where the rock was trapped in the hope that by taking out the pinch points it would enable the block to fall. Most of the rock's weight is sitting on a ledge so this may or may not work - in which case it may be more unstable next time.

All in all though a good session - more next Wednesday.

Clive North

**Wednesday 16th November 2005 - (THRUPE
LANE SWALLET)**

Dave K., Gonzo and Clive

Last week's *session* had done its job and released the boulder which had dropped about a foot. A section had been blasted off it as well, making it narrower and therefore even more unstable than before.

Had yet another go at the boulder to try to bring it down but I suspect that it may well have jammed further down now, leaving a 'backlog' of boulders etc still left in situ in the rift. These will have to be dealt with.

We'll see next week.....

Clive North

**Wednesday 23rd November 2005 - (THRUPE
LANE SWALLET)**

Gonzo & Dave K.

We travelled in light to inspect the boulder that we hoped to find at the bottom of Bone Aven.

Unfortunately, it is still wedged in the Aven, but now only four feet up, its new position effectively shutting off the Aven for the time being. On top of the boulder is some loose spoil and about 10' further up is a second smaller boulder resting across the aven.

Some spoil was pushed down the rift.

Dave

King

Wednesday 30th November 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo and Clive

Three ammo boxes and two lengths of timber for shoring were moved to the end, a photo of the offending boulder was taken (sorry about the quality but it gives an idea), two holes drilled, etc. Game over for boulder at last!

Clive North

Wednesday 7th December 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo (solo digging trip)

Arrived early and spent an hour diverting water and clearing the debris over the entrance gate.

Arrived at the dig to find a substantial pile of gravel that had once been the boulder. With this removed, and more debris dropped from higher up, I was able to get right up to the big boulder perched on the cusp above. From below it looked quite manageable, being just a couple of feet across, but on closer inspection it is quite long (3 ft), perched a little precariously on the mud bank and held in place by some loose fill. Caution prevailed and I left it alone. Beyond, the aven appears to be wide open and free of boulders.

On the way out I noted (as described to me by Clive the week before) that a large stream can be heard in the crawl out from the Bamboo aven duck. The noise is coming from the rift on the corner, the water sounding as though it is about ten feet away - an interesting spot for a diggers' night off perhaps!

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

Wednesday 14th December 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Gonzo, Dave K., Dave E., Clive and Rich (purveyor of beer)

Leaving Gonzo to poke at the source of the roaring stream he heard recently - at the sharp left hand bend when coming up from bamboo Aven, we arrived at the end to find the last(?) remaining boulder fairly well wedged about 3/4 of the way up Bone Aven.

About 2/3rds the size of the last brute, it had a smaller companion resting against it just behind plus a lot of clay etc.

The lollipop on the end of a drain rod technique was used again. The aim was to lift and separate, as it were.... There was a distinct sound of material falling but just how much we won't know until next week.....

Clive North

Tuesday 20th December 2005 - (THRUPE LANE SWALLET)

Dave K., Gonzo and Clive

Last week's efforts had really done the job and a large pile of rock and clay was awaiting us at the base of Bone Aven. This was slowly cleared with Dave carefully making sure that nothing got jammed up in GWR.

Then followed a gardening session in the aven; large amounts of clay and a fair number of largish rocks were sent to the bottom. Looking up, the aven now has some mega boulders jammed-up near the top. These really are 'grand-pianos'! There may be ways around them though....

After all this we then had to dig our way out of the base of the aven again!

Clive North

**Wednesday 28th December 2005 - (THRUPE
LANE SWALLET)**

Gonzo, Dave K., Witcombes - Rich and James
and Clive.

At last, time to ascend the
aven. Rich came armed with a tape
recorder and Gonzo with a camera
to record the great voids
beyond. Gonzo was volunteered to
make the first ascent. The boulder hanging in the
centre of the shaft, which had been thought to be
jammed, turned out to be clear of the solid by about
3mm! However, it did turn out that above it was a
pile of large rocks all well jammed (apparently) in
place and these pinch the large one firmly.

Skirting said hanging rock pile, Gonzo turned his
attention to an obvious hole on the left hand
side. Although this had solid rock walls on either
side, the roof was another large hanging boulder
and the floor an awkward rock to get over. Beyond
a roomy section of about 15ft long, standing height
and about 4ft wide. Beyond this yet another pile of
hanging boulders guards a continuation of the
passage - at this point Gonzo politely handed over
the exploration to Dave!

The hanging rocks in the continuation of the
passage, which had put paid to Gonzo's
exploration did the same to Dave's. More work is
required here.

Dave estimated the total height to the roof from the
breakthrough point (by the Alcove) to be about
40ft. The whole area (boulders apart) seems
phreatic in origin and is dry and obviously ancient
compared with the rest of the cave.

So, no measureless caverns this time, but hope
springs eternal. Incidentally, it's worth mentioning
for the record that if anything fell from the main
'Grand Piano' boulder pile it would fall directly into

the entry point, vertically below - at best trapping anyone in the new section.

Is it time to take up stamp-collecting??!

Clive North