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## DIGGING LOG ARCHIVE - 2008/9 -

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Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008 ~ Kennet and Avon Canal

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### Hard-Core

Rich Witcombe, Mandy Voysey, Matt Voysey, Simon Meade-King, Dave King, Alan Gray, Alice Audsley, Tony Audsley.

### Navigators:

**Part Timers - (joined at Dundas Wharfe):**  
Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Karen Lumley, Sam Lumley, Emma Lumley.

### Tow-path

Clive North, Janet North.

### Cyclists:

The ATLAS New Year's day outing on the narrow-boat "Mendip Digger". We started from Bathampton at the crack of 11.00 am and navigated successfully to Dundas Wharf, where we met up with massed Lumleys and Norths. After lunch, we continued on to Avoncliffe, where Richard executed a smart three point turn and we headed back to the mooring at Hampton Wharfe. Most people had a go at steering, and we didn't run aground once, so quite a

successful trip.

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**Wednesday Evening, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Hannah Bell, Dave King, Alan Gray, Clive North, Faye Litherland.**

Gonzo and Matt clearing the **Wonderwall™**, Faye filling the skip, Clive and Hannah at the top, Mandy in JW, Dave and Alan in Erratic.

After a cursory scrabble at the end, the evening's efforts resulted in the demolition of two thirds of Witcombe's Wonderwall™, the removal (and washing!) of 68 bags and a visit to the Mendip Inn, [...]

Regards Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

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**Wednesday Evening, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Alan Gray, Richard Witcombe, Dave King, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Rob Taviner (Tav), Mandy Voysey and Clive North.**

Gonzo sped to the end ahead of the rest and had filled 30 bags by the time the team was in position !

Due to various ailments Rich, Alan and Dave looked after the Erratic connection with Mandy, Tav, Gonzo and Clive working on the pitch.

The 30 bags of material were gleaned from around the pitch base and were soon removed. Then followed a session carefully removing most of Richard's wall and storing the stone carefully in the Carpal Tunnel.

The plan is to do some more digging-out/clearing the base of the pitch/entrance to the Carpal Tunnel and then to construct a heavy-duty set of stone steps which will rise up to the level of the skip loading platform. This should ensure the stability of the whole area and allow us to return to digging again !

The whole operation may well take several sessions.....

Work starts in earnest next week !

Clive North.

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**Wednesday Evening, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mandy Voysey, Richard Witcombe, Dave King, Rob Taviner (Tav), Mark Lumley (Gonzo) and Clive North.**

Gonzo, true to his word, baled out the Link Passage for us, removing over 170 buckets of water and reducing it to a mere damp crawl - much appreciated Gonz!

Rich set-to rebuilding the wall/stroke steps at the base of the shaft with Clive and Gonzo removing mud and sand. Tav and Mandy did the hauling with Dave on duty in JWP. 42 bags came up and made their way to the surface. Another dozen-ish bags are ready at the bottom of the shaft for next time.

Rich managed a couple of courses of revettement and steps during the evening - a good pile of rocks were also brought up from the Carpal Tunnel.

The rains had produced another lake extending from the end up to half way across the floor of the first little chamber in Carpal tunnel. The water had obviously been right up to the the start of the chamber as well - that's a lot of water ! Interestingly, the 'lake' water was fairly clear, not muddied at all, so we assume that's it's percolation water coming down through the quarry floor etc.....

More bag removal and step-building next week then.....

Clive North.

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**Wednesday Evening, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mandy Voysey, Matt Voysey, Richard Witcombe, Alan Gray, Dave King, Rob Taviner (Vat), Mark Lumley (Oznog), Hannah Bell and Clive North.**

A very useful evening's work with Rich accomplishing another couple of steps and revettement at the base of the shaft. Tav hauled rocks up from the temporary dump in Carpal Tunnel and Clive loaded the skip with the 45-ish? bags produced at the end of last week's session and during the evening.

Matt and Gonzo hauling, Mandy in JWP, Alan and Hannah in Erratic, hauling.

In the dig itself, the lake has drained away revealing to Tav a run-in of material from an inlet on the right hand side and a collapsed section of pendant from the roof ! Apparently, there is a large volume of material now to remove - no change there then ! In fact, a lot of it can be stacked in the tunnel itself as there are previously dug areas not being used productively.

Link Passage was wet, but nothing like the previous couple of weeks.

More next week!

Clive North.

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**Wednesday Evening, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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More next week!

Clive North.

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**Wednesday Evening, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mandy Voysey, Matt Voysey, Dave King, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Richard Witcombe, Alan Gray, Clive North and Duncan Price (new boy!).**

In lieu of a sump at the end, (diver) Duncan contented himself with shovelling sand from the recent run-in, near the end, back to Gonzo to bag up. Clive, Matt and Mandy then ferried the bags back to a dump at the base of the shaft, past resident stonemason Rich. By the time we had stacked (I would guess) around forty bags, the ledge was fair groaning with bags.

Gonzo and Duncan were then redeployed on hauling duties, with the Voyseys looking after the JWP/Erratic section along with Alan and Dave who were also working in Erratic.

Some bags were emptied on the surface, but the majority await being dealt with next week (they currently reside just inside Erratic).

The new wall and steps are about one session away from completion I would guess - looking good.

The traditional 'de-brief' took place at the Old Mendip Inn....

Clive North.

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**Wednesday Evening, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**The Carpal Tunnelers: Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Rob Taviner (Tav), Duncan Price and Clive North.**

**The Erratics: Richard Witcombe, Tony Audsley, Dave King and Hannah Bell.**

Some difficulty in unlocking the Erratic gate this week plus ditto the car park gate....

No walling done this week, but 64 bags dragged from the end plus last weeks remaining bags - we are now back about where we were prior to the last inundation, apart from the sand which had built up at the farthest end of the passage.

Pool Passage wet again and the Link needed bailing....

Duncan proved a 'new' link between Pool Passage and Erratic by establishing a handshake connection - it's just before the low crawl at the end of Pool. There is just one boulder blocking the way.

The session in the Mendip Inn was somewhat intimidated by the constant presence of a policewoman at the bar, who appeared to be writing a statement. She remained there even after we had gone! Added to that, there were repeated visits by a male uniformed colleague and the presence at one point of an obvious

detective or two!

Don't know what was up but the cook (in whites) sitting next to the policewoman at the bar looked distinctly unhappy.

We managed to remain cheerful however, considering how close we were sitting, and most remained faithful to their regular amount of tipple!

Clive North.

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**Wednesday Evening, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Pat Cronin, Dave King, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Duncan Price, Rob Taviner (Tav), Mandy Voysey, Matt Voysey, Richard Witcombe.**

**The Original, but rather short, Version**  
Matt and Pat to the working face, Duncan loading the death slide.

Gonzo and Tav hauling.

Mandy in J.W.

Richard and Dave in Erratic. Steady work. Loading the bags would benefit from the use of a small gauging trowel reducing effort between digging and picking up from floor.

76 bags to surface

Exhausted, I'm back off to Ireland.

Love, Light and Peace

Pat



### **The Alternate, extended Version**

A talented and varied ensemble cast for this crisp February evening - Rich and Dave starring as 'The Erratics', Mandy as 'J.W. Transfer', Gonzo and Tav as 'Two Haulers', Duncan playing 'Skip Loader' and Pat and Matt performing interchangeably as 'Sandy Digg' and 'Carrie Bag' (a drag role).

Notwithstanding the theatrics, digging at the face was particularly pleasant tonight, not only thanks to the selection of Irish folk songs, Bob Dylan numbers and Leonard Cohen dirges emitted by Pat, but also the easy progress through coarse, aerated sand. The water clearly sinks through this sand fill floor quickly, and the air quality is noticeably better now that the coating of silt has been removed from the surface. We advanced the dig another 18 inches (and currently there is plenty of room down there for more) and removed 76 bags to the surface to undergo a strict process of environmentally sensitive and meticulously neat emptying.

Matt Voysey.

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**Wednesday Evening, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

**PLUS ramblings from the Mendip Inn ~ (Oh Dear !)**

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**Matt Voysey and Mandy Vosey, Dave King, Duncan Price, Clive North, Steve Shipston (Womble) and guest Katie Hargraves (MNRC).**

Dave in Erratic, Mandy in J.W., Clive and Duncan hauling, Matt, Kat and Steve digging / hauling / loading.

Tonight's efforts resulted in the patio being extended by 43 bags.

Easy? sandy digging continues, offering the hint of a glimmer of an indication of promising passage ahead. Dig face remains rectangular, left hand wall loose-ish, right hand wall solid-(ish).

Now we have a sizable patio outside the entrance and given that the haul to the surface can be hard work, thoughts turned to a pan Mendip digging effort, with beer and barbecue etc. (To be honest, some of us just thought of the beer). The problem would be how to determine a fair rate of exchange between (bags x distance) and burgers / beer proffered. We retired to the Mendip Inn to consider the problem further, where it became apparent that diggers require 1 pint of beer per 3.31 bags brought from dig face to the surface - hence a 72 pint barrel would be expected to yield approx 240 bags. From here the conversation became a bit intellectual with thoughts on the infamous German cat and Redding's Chicken. This latter theory states that observing a phenomenon causes it to have happened, at least on a sub-atomic quantum scale. So by extension, digging for cave passage actually causes it to be there ! The bad news is that the passage thus created is very, very small.

I expect more pre-existing normal-sized passage will be discovered next Wednesday.

Steve

**Duncan's contribution:**  
It is actually "**Reading's Chicken**" (after Prof. Mike Reading now at the University of East Anglia). The famous cat problem alludes to the fact that the act of observing something which is existing in an ensemble of states causes it to fall into one of those states. Reading's Chicken refers to the fact that the process of observation can affect the outcome. In the context of digging for cave passage it means that the act of digging actually creates cave passage anyway (unless you are me), so all digs are therefore successful.

(Professor of Quantum Speleodynamics).

**Tav's contribution:**  
You need to get out more.

Rob Taviner.

**Tony's contribution (and I wasn't even there):**

I didn't think that the laws of physics permitted us to know the nationality of Schrödinger's cat.

By the way, talking of cats; if you haven't ever seen it, Emir Kusturica's 1998 film "**Black Cat, White Cat**" (Crna macka, beli macor) is a must. Watching a pig eating a Trabant has to be more fun than wave equations and the 6 inch nail pulling scene is in a league of its own.

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**Wednesday Evening, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**An eclectic team were at the cave last night with an impressive array of clubs represented:**

Clive North	<b>ATLAS</b>
Dave King	<b>MNRC</b>
Mandy Voysey	<b>Cerberus SS</b>
Hannah Bell	<b>BEC</b>
Henry Dawson	<b>BEC</b>
Duncan Price	<b>Chelsea SS, CDG</b>
Mark Lumley (Gonzo)	<b>Chelsea SS, LADS, Rock Steady Crew</b>
Henry Bennett	<b>Chelsea, BEC, Rock Steady Crew</b>
Geoff Dawson	<b>Lancashire Cave and Climbing Club</b>
Richard Witcombe	<b>Home Guard</b>

Seventy something bags made it to surface with about 2-3 ft of progress horizontally at the end - a narrow phreatic arch continuing horizontally with the main passage undercutting the left wall and getting wider the deeper you dig.

Business as usual...

Regards

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

[Thankfully, Dave King corrected Gonzo's sloppy accounting (seventy **something**, indeed). According to numerate Dave, the bag total was **72**]

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**Wednesday Evening, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Cast - of thousands.**

If someone can produce a complete list I'd be grateful. I think there might have been 11 people present but I could only remember 8. To avoid upsetting someone by omission I've decided to avoid the problem altogether. A clear sign of forgetfulness. Not to mention a sign of forgetfulness.

103 bags removed from the face - which I think may be a record from the sharp end. Passage continuing in fine style - large, phreatic and dipping steadily. Easy digging in coarse dry sand. It's much bigger the deeper you go so down and in is definately the best way to dig it - it just means more spoil needs to come out.

Then retired to the newly reopened Waggon & Horses, which may very well be the answer to our problems. Decent opening hours, decent beer and a (relatively) welcoming wench. Does it register success on the Alan Gray Lagerometer though ?.

Rob Taviner.

**From: Duncan (Mr Memory) Price.**

**Rob (Amnesia) Taviner, Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey & Geoff Dawson in Carpal Tunnel Clive North loading the cable car. Richard Witcombe & Mark (Gonzo) Lumley hauling it.**

Duncan Price doing the JW transfer.  
Dave King hauling in Erratic.  
Alan Gray & Tony Audsley final dumping -  
dunno who was inside or outside. **[We took  
turns - it was cold outside (T.A.)]**

Duncan Price.

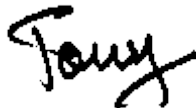
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**Wednesday Evening, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave  
Quarry]**

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**Rob Taviner (Tav), Matt Voysey, Mandy  
Voysey, Jeff Dawson, Clive North, Richard  
Witcombe, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Duncan  
Price, Dave King, Alan Gray, Tony Audsley &  
Hannah Bell.**

The start was delayed slightly because of a rescue  
in Swildon's Hole, but a team of 12 managed to get  
104 bags of spoil from the face to the surface. The  
evening ended in the Waggon and Horses, crisps,  
nuts (edible and human), 6X and Butcombe -  
(although some deviant souls did drink larger -  
yuckk !)



Tony Audsley.

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**Wednesday Evening, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave  
Quarry]**

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**Richard Witcombe, Clive North, Mark Lumley  
(Gonzo), Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Hannah  
Bell, Rob Taviner (Tav), Alan Gray & Dave  
King.**

- Rich (Walling)
- Clive (Loading)
- Gonzo, Matt, Mandy, Hannah, Tav (Digging & Hauling)
- Alan Gray & Dave King (Erratic Workers)

Recent heavy rain had flooded the dig again causing two problems. Firstly, it hadn't completely drained - which meant digging the face was pointless (i.e. the bags would be too squalid and heavy). Worse still, another largish boulder had detached from the 'solid' right-hand wall. Too big to break up, this will need to be encouraged to evaporate at some point, but we can work around it for the moment.

We gardened 43 bags from around both the new and original boulders, which cleared all the associated run-in and makes access to the face easier. All in all **a useful session**. Retired to the usual place (where we are now expected) for the usual repast.

Rob Taviner.

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### **Monday Morning, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2008 ~ Caine Hill Shaft [Priddy]**

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**Tony Jarratt (Jrat), Anne Vanderplank, Roger Galloway, Annie Audsley, Tony Audsley.**

105 loads came out today thanks to an enthusiastic Bank Holiday BEC/GSG team. All of these came from Son of a Pitch. We also cleared all the bags from the bend and Roger and Annie briefly visited the end. They were suitably impressed. In the afternoon Jrat emptied about 60 bags at the spoil dump. (Trevor Hughes also emptied bags on 25/03/08).

Tony Jarratt.

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### **Wednesday Evening, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Geoff Dawson, Alan Gray, Dave King, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Clive North, Duncan Price, Steve Shipston, Rob Taviner (Tav), Mandy Voysey, Richard Witcombe and Dave Drury (ex MNRC).**

Tav turned up with a load of new bags which Geoff overfilled and dispatched to the surface. The air quality was good at the face but deteriorated further up Carpal Tunnel due to Mandy having eaten garlic bread for tea. 87 (?) bags were dumped in the process and about 1 m progress made at the end.

Duncan Price.

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**Wednesday Evening, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Richard Witcombe, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Alan Gray, Rob Taviner (Tav), Duncan Price, Dave King, Geoff Dawson and Clive North.**

**Plus: Sally Hill and Katie Hargraves from the MNRC.**

Newcomers Sally and Lucy did a great job hauling at the pitch head, Gonzo loaded the skip (must have been tough as he apparently had his fingers in his ears all the time!), Duncan and Tav ferried along Carpal Tunnel after Tav had had a go at the face and Clive enjoyed trying not to overfill the bags during his go....

The end was pushed on by a factor of 87 bags (in other words about half a metre perhaps) - there are yet more small, delicate roof pendants appearing and a conspicuous fetaurte (°) on the right side - a slab of angled bedrock(?) with a sharp right-angled corner to it. Maybe a corner or a boulder perhaps more likely.

We happened on a group of four scramble bikers on our way back to the cars in the dark - don't know who was more surprised - them or us!

Usual wet, debrief at the Waggon afterwards.

Heavyweight search for Fernhill due to begin on Monday all being well.

Clive North.

[<sup>(\*)</sup> - Fetuarte = Feature - but Clive's version was such a good word I left it in. (T.A.) ]

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**Friday 4<sup>th</sup> April to Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2008 ~ Fernhill Cave Revisited  
[Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**John Stevens, Kevin Sparkes, Dave Speed, Jim Young. Did most of the work.**

**Dave Morrison, Rich Witcombe, Tony Audsley. Did most of the watching.**

**Alan Gray, Clive North, Dave King, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Duncan Price, Antoinette Bennett. Came and went.**

[Click on the images to enlarge]

The plan to reopen Fernhill Cave; blocked by tons (tonnes) of quarry tip since around 1965, was first mooted last year by Alan Gray. Fernhill is interesting because the cave was only open for a short time (1960-1965) and it is thought to hold several good digging sites.

Alan managed to convince us that blurred shapes in the 1960s photographs could be identified as features in the present quarry face. So mid-day Friday 4<sup>th</sup> April, Dave Gibbons' Magic Digging Kit was assembled on the spoil heap and work started.

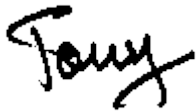
Much to some people's surprise, the top of the bedding-plane was uncovered late on



Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> and the choked entrance was reached the following day.

Installation of the concrete pipes caused a few heart palpitations, but was otherwise straightforward and the pipes were extended to the surface and the excavation backfilled.

(A fuller account will appear at some stage, but this is enough for now).



Tony Audsley.

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**Monday Afternoon, 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Antoinette Bennett & Duncan Price.**

The bags of empty bags were moved from the entrance to the top of the tight way from Erratic Passage into JW. One of these was left in JW. The intention was to remove one token bag of spoil to aid the digging effort, instead we just did a tourist trip to the dig face and out via the Pool Passage link back to Erratic.

Duncan Price.

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## Wednesday Evening, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]

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**Richard Witcombe, Alan Gray, Duncan Price, Geoff Dawson, Clive North, Rob Taviner (Tav), Dave King, Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey.**

Before embarking upon the usual evening session of digging in Balch, we all clambered up the mud banks to look at Fernhill. It was indeed exciting stuff as there was a corner of rock poking out that actually was part of the entrance rift that we'd seen in all the old pictures. It had some stal on it and everything! Another exciting aspect was the massive mud and rubble bank hanging over the entrance ready to collapse at any time. After much optimistic banter from Rich and Alan and some doom laden words from Tav about our cave finding prospects, we set about our usual business of digging.

This weeks attendees were... Mandy (digging the face), Tav and Matt (ferrying bags), Clive (loading), Geoff and Duncan (hauling), Alan (working the link), and Dave and Rich (hauling and ferrying in Erratic/Invalids Chamber). Everything is looking quite good at the sharp end, and actually quite comfortable too this week with the spoil returning to its dry sandy state. We have another large roof pendant looming ahead and an assortment of interconnected rocks to pull out, but I was definitely feeling the positive vibe. We filled all available bags with spoil (mostly sandy, some sticky and some stony) and then all headed up to the surface for some emptying. I can't remember how many we did, but I do know that it was an even number. [74 according to Rich (T.A.)]

Mandy Voysey.

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## Wednesday Evening, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]

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**Early Birds: Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Nick Hawkes, Geoff Dawson, Rob Taviner (Tav), Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Alan**

**Gray, Duncan Price, Hannah Bell, Katie Hargraves, Dave King.**

**Late arrivals: Tony Audsley, Rich Witcombe.**

While the senior citizens investigated some hole that has appeared nearby, work resumed on the boulders at the end of Carpal Tunnel, with Gonzo and Nick Hawkes at the digging face. A number of large rocks were removed and, after initial hopes that this might be the boulder constriction behind which the silt-fill has accumulated, the way on has reverted to sandy fill (business as usual).

About a metre of progress.

A broken skip stopped play early but for the statisticians out there I can report that oodles of bags went to surface while a shed-load remain at the bottom of the pitch.

The team adjourned to the Waggon and Horses to be served fine ales by several kilos of barmaid.

Regards

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

[As usual, Gonzo lacks precision (although he was right about the barmaid). 59 bags made it to the surface and 35(ish) were stacked in the cave after the skip had broken (T.A.) ]

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**Wednesday Evening, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008 ~ FERNHILL CAVE [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Tony Audsley and Richard Witcombe**

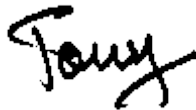
Tony and I went to the bottom of the shaft to assess work required. There will need to be rock and concrete underpinning beneath the bottom ring before the key stones facing the rift can be carefully removed. Peering to the north through the rocks, the stal coated wall of the entrance bedding-plane can be seen and a slight draught of air can

*Admiring Fernhill's new entrance*

be felt. We will create a short corridor (with steel lintel overhead) to the rift and then work our way downwards and to the right. It will be a few weeks before we can get into the entrance proper. Watch this space.

Rich Witcombe.

There is also scope for installing a RAILWAY - joy of joys !



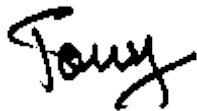
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### **Wednesday (most of the day), 23<sup>th</sup> April 2008**

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#### **Tony Audsley**

Made a wheeled digging truck with rubber tyres in the hope that it will run on the wall of the Fernhill concrete pipe without needing rails.



Tony Audsley.

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### **Wednesday Evening, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry] (St George's Day in UK - ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL'S DAY in USA.)**

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(This morning [28<sup>th</sup> April], Tony Audsley trapped Richard and me at the bottom of Fernhill Shaft by removing the ladder. He would not drop the ladder back down until one of us agreed to write up last week's Balch dig. - I gave in - here it is).

**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Geoff Dawson, Alan Gray, Duncan Price, Katie Hargraves, Dave King, Richard Witcombe, Clive North, Pete Flanagan and Mark Ireland.**

The broken skip was replaced and Clive spent some time cleaning out the pulley that had seized.

**Carpal Tunnel Diggers and Hauliers:** Alan, Katie, Geoff and Mark Ireland.  
**The Loaders:** Pete and Alan.  
**The Cableway Hauliers:** Gonzo, Clive and Pete.  
**JW Passage Toilers:** Gonzo and Katie.  
**Link Haulier:** Dave.  
**Erratic Passage Portage:** Rich.  
**Outside Bag Emptying Duty (OBED):** Duncan.

Including the 35 bags that were left at the bottom of the pitch last week, 109 bags were removed. Still sandy fill at the end and digging to the left hand side of a large roof pendant.

Alan Gray.

(Date: Mon, 28 Apr 2008 16:53:30)

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**Geoff also wrote up an account, but had email problems and couldn't send it.**

**Here it is now (1<sup>st</sup> May 2008)**

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Eastern promise continues. The dig is edging slightly left, to the side of Mark's boulder. For the last few feet, progression has been horizontal, though we may be forced down again soon. There are a couple of almost vertical veins of flinty rock which crumble when battered. A wide-ish band of black and copper coloured sand makes up part of the end wall and the last 2 or 3 feet of the floor.

What is this? - Something washed in from the quarry? Something washed in when the glaciers melted? Or a band of sedimentation when the rock was being formed?

There was a wee bit of disquiet over some rather full bags. Partly my fault this, I should have told the digger to reduce the volume sooner. Especially when I struggled to get the first one past my shoulder.

Our evening venue [The Waggon and Horses] goes from strength to strength, approaching gourmet soiree level. The crisps and nuts (on the table

already as we arrived) were supplemented by a big basket of chips 'On the House'.

See you next Wednesday.

Geoff Dawson.

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**Thursday Morning, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2008 ~ FERNHILL CAVE [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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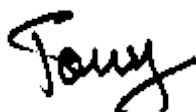
**Alan Gray, Richard Witcombe, Tony Audsley**

Braving heavy showers, the trio arrived heavily laden to start work on underpinning the concrete pipes. Tony had manufactured a wheeled truck for the shaft which worked well for a prototype and only occasionally threatened to deposit its load of rock or concrete on the cowering individuals at the bottom. After Alan had sent up eight skips of mud from the floor, Rich went below and had diverse specially chosen rocks sent down to him. By the end of the session the left hand side (facing north) and the back of the pipes had been underpinned. The balance of the concreting will be done next week, after which the rocks facing the entrance rift will be removed with surgical precision. The bedrock floor of this vestibule may well require a very tiny administration of Dr. Nobel's linctus to facilitate access.

More news next week.

Rich Witcombe.

The truck worked well for when hauling rocks and clay OUT of the hole but it did have an unfortunate tendency to perform somersaults when carrying buckets of concrete DOWN the shaft. (Back to the drawing board).



Tony Audsley.

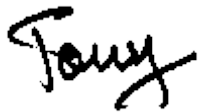
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Friday (most of the day), 25<sup>th</sup> April 2008

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**Tony Audsley.**

Made the MK II version of the truck - on Monday we will see if this one showers Richard with concrete. I don't see what all the fuss was about, he had a helmet on.



Tony Audsley.

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Monday Morning, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2008 ~ FERNHILL CAVE [Fairy Cave Quarry]

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**Tony Audsley, Alan Gray, Rich Witcombe**

Tony had modified his truck, giving it a longer wheelbase and higher attachment points. With a better centre of gravity, it proved safer and speedier.

After sending up a couple of skips of dried mud, Rich carried on with concrete and stone underpinning, completing an arc of about 260 degrees. A couple of large rocks were then carefully removed from the front face, revealing the stal-coated far wall of the entrance rift about 18" ahead. Some grouting was placed up to the left between the pipes and the stal wall, but more will have to be done here when we have better access.

A significant draught is emerging from the bedding-plane, which increased as Alan cleared another couple of skips worth of mud and small stones. The widest part of the bedding-plane will be off to our right, so we may have to cut downwards and then move along it a short way to gain access to the cave. More grouting will be needed to stabilise the right hand side as we lower the floor. All in all, a **useful little session** and **not without interest.**

At the end of the session, Tony went below to savour the stal curtains and the breeze and as he did so the skies darkened, lightning flashed and thunder rolled. An intense hail storm followed.

Have we troubled the cave gods?

Could they be unleashing their anger at the attempted removal of the Great Curtain all those decades ago? Some form of sacrifice may yet be required to placate them. Does the ATLAS team have any virgins left? (\*)

Rich Witcombe.

(\*) I think we are out of virgins, they have a very limited shelf life. (T.A)

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**NOTE: (1<sup>st</sup> May 2008)**

Geoff Dawson wrote an account for 23<sup>rd</sup> April, but computers being what they are, he couldn't send it until this morning. (Scroll back to the 23<sup>rd</sup> to see it).

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**Balch Report: Addendum.**

Alan kindly reminded me of the other highlight (for some) of the evening when the skip (luckily empty) parted company from the pulley about half way down. It made a suitable dramatic crashing sound as it found its way, at speed, down to the Carpal Tunnel!

Alan appeared neither shaken, nor stirred!

Moral of story - check the karabiner screw gate frequently, this one had worked its way open....

Clive North.

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**Wednesday Evening, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

**Mandy Voysey, Matt Voysey (surface support only - taxi driver), Richard Witcombe, Alan Gray, Dave King, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Geoff Dawson, Tony Audsley, Clive North.**



Gonzo had made an early start, so we decided to leave him in peace for a while as we inspected the works at Fernhill. The crack against the stal-covered cliff face looks really enticing with a strong draught flowing inwards. (Presumably this is flowing through to Fairy). Balch was flowing in strongly last night too and the draught was going up into the roof at the end of Pool Passage - a through flow through to the rift in the quarry no doubt).

In the cave - the Erratics - Mandy, Dave, Tony and Rich. The stalwarts - Geoff, Alan, Gonzo and Clive - went deep below; digging, chaining it back, loading, hauling, JWP-ing and saying nice things about the Erratics!

[He is implying that we sat about and chatted - I wonder how he knew ? (T.A.) ]

63 bags by the evening's finish. Highlight of the evening's efforts was the fact that at the end we have reached an area of pure sand. I really do mean pure sand too - clean, coarse gritty sand that would easily double for builder's sand. It's colourful too - deep yellow-orange with a two inch thick layer of black sand above it separated from the yellow by a very thin flowstone(?) layer. This is across the width of the passage at floor level but stretches upwards in an apparent ridge in the centre of the passage which also appears to be rising into the back wall. There is still a band of clay around 6 inches thick above the sand, clinging to the roof.

It appears then that this sand has come in from ahead of us, which is interesting. I'm puzzled by the black sand - most likely chert I suspect unless it could have come from the Beacon Hill volcanics??

Time will tell!

Clive North.

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**Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]  
(May the fourth be with you)**

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**Alan Gray, Simon Fowler (Axbridge Caving group), Mark Ireland (Axbridge Caving Group)**

1. One bag of spoil was excavated from the digging face and taken out to the surface. During its triumphal progress through the cave, **46** photographs were taken to illustrate in horrid detail the trials of cave digging.

Alan Gray.

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**Wednesday Evening, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Richard Witcombe, Alan Gray, Dave King, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Geoff Dawson, Duncan Price, Katie Hargraves, Rob Taviner (Tav), Sissel Balomatis and Tony Audsley.**

Despite a lateish start, a big team removed 112 baglets of very high quality sand from the end to the surface.

The Mystery of the Black Sand may have been solved - a number of jet black rocks were pulled from the black sand band, clearly the cause of the staining. Underground it looked like coal (we are very close to the Coal Measures after all). Once cleaned up on the surface however they looked more like limestone coated with a very black and shiny veneer - presumably the result of superheating through fault action associated with the Withybrook Fault. Interesting though. Alan took some sand samples for analysis.

Rob Taviner.

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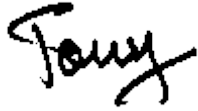
**Wednesday Evening, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008 ~ Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Clive North, Richard Witcombe, Sissel Balomatis, Tony Audsley.**

A quick pre-Balch session to worry the boulder that was blocking access to the bedding-plane and

egress from the concrete pipes. The worrying process had to be fairly gentle because of the risk of damage to the pipes. A good first effort, the boulder is obviously nervous but hasn't entirely gone to pieces yet. Work continues ...



Tony Audsley.

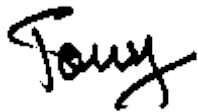
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**Wednesday Evening, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008 ~ Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Clive North, Richard Witcombe, Alan Gray.**

A quick pre-Balch session to continue worrying the boulders at the top of the bedding-plane. The gravelization process is not completed yet - work continues.



Tony

Audsley.

*[I was on holiday, so wasn't there, but I did get a graphic description from Rich]*

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**Wednesday Evening, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008 ~ Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Rob Taviner (Tav), Mandy Voysey, Matt Voysey, Hannah Bell, Geoff Dawson, Dave King, Alan Gray, Clive North, Richard Witcombe.**

While half the team were amusing themselves gaily producing loud bangs from the Fernhill Cannon (we must perform a ballistics analysis on this to see where projectiles might land - Withybrook perhaps?), an early start from Gonzo and then Mandy at the face succeeded in loading rather a lot of bags with the wonderful coarse, shelly alluvium we're currently tunnelling through.

Matt and Tav took up ferrying positions, but with nobody in the JW link passage a considerable

backlog ensued. Eventually, the missing link was filled by Clive and normal flow resumed, Geoff and Gonzo now hauling and the rest of the lower diggers swapping positions so we all had a crack at the dig face. The final team result hoisting and emptying a total of 94 bags to the surface.

Digging is a pleasure at the moment, and the coloured bands of sand almost rival those of Alum Bay. Unfortunately, no more 'coal' was extracted this session, which may upset our plans for coping with the upcoming world energy crisis.

Matt Voysey.

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**Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Alan Gray, Dave King**

Surveyed from the end of Bulrush Way – Gour End, Link Passage, JW Passage, 35 foot pitch, Carpal Tunnel to dig face.

Alan Gray.

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**Monday, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2008 ~ Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Tony Audsley, Clive North, Alan Gray & Richard Witcombe**

A major rubble clearing session with at first just Alan and then Alan and Rich at the bottom of the shaft. A hole in the fill was opened up through which a 6' deep void could be seen. The bedding-plane is about 2' wide between the stal wall and a bedrock front wall and is loosely choked with rubble. One large slab was jammed in the floor and up to the right a big stal slab hung rather precariously.

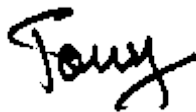
Clive inspected the workings and decided to leave the blocking stone to catch debris, and instead bring down the stal slab by 'gravellizing' a small rock supporting it. This was successful, with the stal slab now lying on top of the blocking

rock. Rich inspected the void up to the right, created by the collapse, and decided it could be walled up. A 4' steel beam spotted at the time of the JCB work was lowered down and wedged between a bedding in the stal wall and the sloping front wall. Stone and concrete walling was built up from this, and a bit of "corbelling" took the rocks round to the pipe ring.

Much more walling remains to be done, but a safe working area is now feasible. All told, thirty six buckets of broken rock came out. **A Useful little session.**

Rich Witcombe.

What Rich omitted to mention was that during the session, sunlight traversed the bottom of the shaft, although it did not light the whole of the bottom. This needs investigating further and may even require the use of LOG TABLES.



Tony Audsley.

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**Wednesday evening, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008 ~ Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

**Tony Audsley, Clive North, Alan Gray and Richard Witcombe.**

Started with a bang - the reduction of the fallen stal slab. Tony then commenced clearing rubble at the bottom of the shaft, to be joined later by Rich. It was decided that the residue of the stal was still too large to shift, and more linctus was applied.

Rich and Alan went back down and investigated the 6' by 6' by 2' void. Just beyond the shored section, there are a couple of large knife-like slabs in the roof poised to slide down - we won't go there for a

while ! The session finished with a grouting and walling session.

About ten skip loads of rock came out.

Rich Witcombe.

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**Wednesday evening, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Rob Taviner (Tav), Duncan Price, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Mandy Voysey, Matt Voysey, Dave King, Katie Hargraves & Geoff Dawson.**

75 bags of sand were removed from the end and redistributed along Carpal Tunnel above the "S" bend during grading work so that drag trays could be used. 10 to 12 more bags-worth were used to grade the lower section up to the dig face. By removing most of the steps, 84 bags of mud were generated which were emptied on the patio in two goes - up to JW passage and then out.

The dig face is heading upwards vertically through sand with no sign of a solid roof or walls. The height from the floor to the furthest extent to which a crowbar can be inserted is 2 m - this leaves another 2 m rise before the passage reaches the same altitude as the start of the dig (i.e. airspace).

Duncan Price.

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**A WET Bank Holiday Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> May 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Alan Gray, Dave King & Duncan Price.**

**Alan's** **account**  
Today's task was to complete the survey of Balch that was started on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May. The weather was appalling, tipping down with rain and by the time we had changed into our caving suits, our undersuits were quite wet. While walking to the cave entrance our oversuits were also soaked. [ *I almost feel sorry for them* (T.A.) ]

There was a small stream running off the rockface and into the lower entrance of the cave. By the time we had surveyed to the bottom of Pool Passage we were all cold and when we eventually reached Erratic Passage, Dave was having trouble holding the Disto still due to shivering. Still, the survey was completed and the only task that remains is to survey on the surface between the three entrances.

Alan Gray.

**Duncan's** **account**  
Surveyed from Lower Entrance along Pool Passage to tie in with Alan & Dave's survey of 18<sup>th</sup> May. Thence back up to Erratic Passage and the Upper Entrance (taking in the Middle Entrance) with several loops back down into Pool Passage.

Erratic Passage was surveyed to the run-in at the end and also the rocking boulder blocking the handshake connection with Pool Passage. Finally, the connection between Erratic Passage and JW passage was surveyed.

Duncan Price.

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**Wednesday evening, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Alan Gray, Duncan Price, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Geoff Dawson, Dave King, Katie Hargraves.**

**Gonzo's** **Tale**  
Soloed in early to take down a long bar for prodding the end and a skip for Carpal Tunnel.

The wriggle at the end of Bullrush Way was decidedly damp and refilling. The connection to JW passage was over a foot deep and I gave up bailing after about 40 buckets as much of the displaced water was just running back in instead of soaking away.

There were no signs of flooding in the first section of Carpal Tunnel so, once the skip was set up and tested (works perfectly!), I moved on. Around the corner things have changed a bit - about half way down water has flowed in from both the left and right hand sides of the passage. The 'loose' right hand wall has collapsed and washed in a load of clay, sand and rock, moving the large half-buried boulder to the left in the process. This will all take about 2 trips to remove but the passage profile looks superb as, with solid walls to both left and right and with a line of pendants down the middle, **it looks like an inverted stegosaurus!**

The large, sand-roofed void at the end has been cruelly replaced with a lake around a sand-cone spilling out into (and blocking) the approach and a trickle of water entering from above. Again, I'd estimate that it will take at least a couple of trips to remove this spoil but there's the possibility that it could be open above the sand-cone...

Left quickly to save the team a wasted evening of pulling out heavy, soggy bags and adjourned to the pub via a brief digging session with the team in Fernhill (where there had also been a mini-collapse but that's another story!).

Regards

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

**Alan's**

**Tale**

Gonzo descended Balch Cave and found that the dig was flooded. Ladders and ropes were thrown down Fernhill Cave and due to the rain over the past few days, there had been a slumping of mud at the bottom of the pipe. While the rest of the group cleared the spoil, Duncan and Alan surveyed the three surface entrances to Balch Cave. On returning to Fernhill digging there was abandoned since small rocks were falling from the roof void.

Alan Gray.



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**Thursday morning, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Alice Audsley, Tony Audsley**

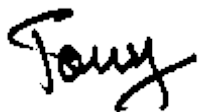
The sun was shining, so we went over to fill in the holes in the lower side of the pipes, which were catching the wheels of the truck. Did this and then examined the collapse at the bottom of the shaft.

Oh dear !

The photographs show a small pile of mud and rocks occupying the top quadrant of the base of the shaft. What they don't show is that last week, three or four people could, and did, stand up in the space beyond.

Boulders, rocks and mud are all simple creatures at heart and, like children, if they think that they can get away with misbehaving, they will. The secret is to stop them before they think about it - we all forgot that.

**MORAL:** Fix the roof before digging out the floor.



Tony Audsley.

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**Wednesday evening, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Geoff Dawson, Rob Taviner (Tav)**

Down to the dig for a look and to take some photos.

Unfortunately, Thursday's rain has created another slump (probably from up ahead) and the dig has backfilled to just below the floor level at the corner halfway down Carpal Tunnel, burying some of our tools in the process.

This will take several trips to remove but it will be interesting to see what has happened above our previous end point...

The upper reaches of Carpal Tunnel had been flooded as well but will be fine once it has dried out.

Reverted to plan B (a walk through Ashwick Grove with Dave, Mandy, Richard and Alan).

Regards

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

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**Wednesday evening, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Andy Heath, Duncan Price, Sissel  
Balomatis, Geoff Dawson, Mandy  
Voysey, Dave King, Alan Gray, Richard  
Witcombe.**

An inspection of the dig face revealed a disappointing sight: the passage was infilled with gloopy mud beyond the S-bend with airspace lost about 12 feet from the end of the bend. Several empty bags are buried in the fill. Andy set about digging - rolling the mud into footballs and filling bags. These were loaded into the drag tray and sent up to the bottom of the pitch. Two haulers were required, one at the top and a second half-way down where there is a slight bend in the passage. In all, 42 bags were emptied on the patio with about 8 left in JW passage and another 12 or so at the bottom of the pitch.

The amount of run-in puts the dig face at about the same point as it was at the beginning of February. There are a few inches of mud on top of the sand. Once through the former, spoil removal

is relatively easy. Given that the fill must have been washed in from somewhere, "open" passage must lie ahead...

Duncan Price.

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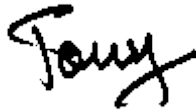
**Wednesday evening, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Tony Audsley.**

Fixed mesh over the Fernhill gate to stop the lads rolling rocks down the shaft.

Had a good look at the bottom - the collapse has slumped a bit and revealed part of the bedding-plane wall, which makes drilling into it a lot easier. Inspected gaps between the pipes, but could see no sign of large void behind them - must be one somewhere.



Tony Audsley.

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**Wednesday evening, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Duncan Price, Geoff Dawson, Mandy Voysey, Matt Voysey, Dave King, Alan Gray. Plus on the surface: Tony Audsley to deliver washers for the pulley, Mark Lumley (Gonzo) to mock the diggers and & Dylan (a sheep dog) to round them up.**

The first part of the evening was spent removing the 29 bags that had been left over from last week at the bottom of the pitch or in JW passage. The contents of the bags were gloopy, sticky mud that in some cases had to be scraped out. These bags were then spread out in Erratic Passage to dry.

Another 17 bags of clay were then also hauled to the surface and then (luckily) we ran out of bags. The end of the dig is now diggable from

about 2m in front of the **boulder<sup>(#)</sup>** that fell from the roof in an earlier flood (19 December 2007). Ahead, air space can be seen for another 2m; below this is a 4cm deep layer of clay, the consistency of caramel and under this is sand that appears to have filled the previously open dig space.

At the dig front, the tip of a digging bag can be seen projecting from the mud so there is a stack of digging bags buried in the sand. A boulder was removed from the clay/sand adjacent to the right hand wall and another boulder (1m x 0.5m x 0.5m) was uncovered lying in the floor and partly blocking the way on. Unfortunately, there is only sand around the boulder and very little to lever off so perhaps Clive will be needed.

Dave then dismantled the pulley assembly and removed it from the cave for cleaning.

Studying the survey of the dig, the distance from the **boulder<sup>(#)</sup>** to the end of the cave (18 May 2008) was 7m. On the 21 May, the dig was extended by another metre and the vertical shaft located. This was the furthest extent of the dig. After this date it was flooded, with wash-in of sand and clay. Thus, the distance from the boulder to end of the dig was 8m.

The distance from end of the **boulder<sup>(#)</sup>** to the end of the visible passage is now 4m, indicating that another 2m has to be dug to reach the end of the visible passage and then another 2m to reach the shaft.

On the plus side, the sand can have only been washed in from ahead thus creating open passage.

Alan Gray.

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**Wednesday evening, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

**Diggers: Geoff Dawson, Dave King, Duncan Price, Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey and Rich**

**Witcombe.**

**Après Dig in the Waggon & Horses: Gonzo (and his dog Dylan).**

Digging was delayed because persons unknown had trundled another boulder in front of the gate. DK managed to drag the gurt rock inside the car park using his trusty gurt van.

The late start and small team (particularly small in my case) meant that only 44 bags made it to daylight. Much bag "laundry work" followed to make the more squalid examples useable.

Next week the day shift will start shoring works in Fernhill.

Onwards and downwards.

Rich Witcombe.

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**Tuesday (am & pm), 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mandy Voysey, Alice Audsley, Tony Audsley, Alan Gray and Richard Witcombe.**

Ageing hippies Alan and Rich arrived in Alan's flower-power VW camper van. (Alan had just emerged from a week at Pilton).

We ferried what seemed like hundredweights of kit (generator, drills and misc ironwork and tools) to the shaft, with the intention of sticking a few pins into the rock wall to cure the collapse - a bit like acupuncture but on a larger scale.

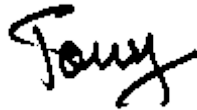
Because the drilling was likely to be a bit tricky, TA had prepared a cunning device to hold the drill position and much to everyone's surprise, it worked very well.

Tony went below and drilled, while the surface team variously tended the generator, hauled out spoil (8 loads), sunbathed, gardened and discussed the merits of Darwinism / creationism.

By mid afternoon, four pins were in position, Mandy was suffering from sunburn, Tony was knackered and

conversation was flagging, so we called a halt.

We still need to stick in 2 or 3 more 18mm pins, so one or possibly two, more long sessions are required before we are back to normal.



Tony Audsley.

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### **Wednesday evening, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2008 - NOT Balch Cave**

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**Duncan Price, Alan Gray, Richard Witcombe, Geoff Dawson and Clive North + Gonzo (my elbow still hurts) Lumley on surface support at the Waggon and Horses.**

As we had failed to make a quorum for effective spoil removal from Balch, Rich came up with the alternative idea of a look at Willie Stanton's two digs at Westbury.....Brimble Pit and Locke's Hole.

Having left the cars at the Waggon & Horses, we all piled into the Jeep and went via the dig at Caine Hill to give Geoff a look. Much amusement ensued when a curious J-Rat stuck his head through the window, much puzzled by a car full of Atlas-types cruising mysteriously past his dig on a Wednesday evening. We pointed out that we couldn't possibly comment on where we were headed and if we did we'd have to kill him!

Locke's Hole turned out to be about 40ft deep - its notable features being Willie's trademark steps and novel gothic-style roof supports (4ft high pillars made of cemented rocks), curious geology (much spar and a Neptunian dyke) and several frogs, toads and newts, which were given a lift back to the nearby pond.

Brimble Pit has a entrance sealed with a gate locked with a large nut and bolt. The wheel nut spanner from the car worked a treat and we were soon climbing down yet more Stanton-esque steps fashioned from flat slabs cemented into the

wall. Down a roomy shaft for around 20ft, then into a couple of parallel rifts dropping down to a very constricted right-angled section. It was agreed that this could be enlarged, but we do have other commitments at the moment...

The geology of this pot is extraordinary - much eroded sharp rock, more spar and Neptunian dyke material everywhere. Around 80ft deep I'd guess.

After exiting, we teamed up with Gonzo at the Waggon and Horses for a traditional (if understaffed) debrief.

An enjoyable diversion from digging!

Clive North.

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### Wednesday evening, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2008 - NOT Balch Cave either

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**Matt's**

**suggestion:-**

As it's been absolutely tipping down all day what say we skip the sludge-bath and divert our digging efforts to the coins in our pockets at the pub tonight?

And so it was ...

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### Monday (am & pm), 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]

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**Richard Witcombe, Mandy Voysey (she walked from Shepton !), Clive North, Alice Audsley, Tony Audsley.**

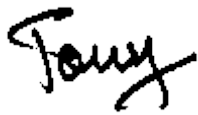
A longish session from 10:30 until about 4:00 pm. Tony and Alice arrived with a vast load of kit, generator, angle grinders, **drill** steels, **drilling** jigs and every possible **drilling** accessory imaginable. Everyone except Tony ferried all this kit over to the shaft. Tony drove back to Cheddar to pick up the **DRILL**, which he had forgotten.....

... eventually, work started with a certain amount of clearing out of the working space. Two more holes were drilled, pins were fitted and some steel lagging fitted above the pins. All rather snug now.

All that remains to be done is to fit a cap and legs to support the outer end of the pins. Then the work of clearing can begin.

With any luck, Wednesday should see the cap and legs fitted and we will then be back in business.

22 skip loads taken out.



Tony Audsley.

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### **Wednesday Evening 16<sup>th</sup> July 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

**Tony Audsley, Richard Witcombe, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Duncan Price, Clive North.**

Short sections of iron bar and steel were taken over to Fernhill to position across the bars Tony had drilled into the rock face. A nifty adaption welded to the top of a short scaffold bar also appeared, which turned into a vertical support underground. I won't try to describe it - see Gonzo's pictures perhaps....

Tony spent some time wrestling all this into position accompanied by the underground fashioning of wooden wedges (temporary) and the removal of 32 skips of rocks and clag. A nut had come off one of the wheels on the truck so the plastic skip was used on its own - dragging it up the shaft proved just fine and lighter than using the truck as well.

The Balch team returned with news that things were drying up well in



Carpal Tunnel and there were no reports of further runs-ins after the recent rains.

At the 'post-mortem' in the Waggon and Horses, a discussion ensued about how much time we would apportion to Balch v Fernhill and the general feeling seemed to be that while Balch continued drying out we would try to get Fernhill opened (although I think this will take longer than anticipated personally).

There was a feeling that a concerted 'blitz' on Balch was needed and maybe a weekend (with extra help drafted in with the attraction of a barbecue perhaps) devoted to getting back to the 'sand' aven and up it.

It's planned to return on Monday for a cementing and wall building session at Fernhill with Wednesday probably being a 'proper' digging session there.

Clive North.

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### **Wednesday Evening 16<sup>th</sup> July 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mandy Voysey, Hannah Bell, Geoff Dawson and late arrival Dave King.**

Mandy, Hannah & Geoff headed over to Balch and entered the top entrance (I believe) into Erratic after first unlocking the lower entrance to Pool Passage route. Headed on down to the sharp end (or is that now the blunt end?), where Dave joined them shortly after.

The washed in mud at the end of the navigable section of Carpal Tunnel is only a couple of cms thick lying over the top of the usual dry-ish sand. Just beyond the now caveable section of C.T., the roof does seem to rise, but since there is a blue spoil bag half buried at this point (just out of reach unless you're into mud/sand swimming), I shouldn't read too much into it. Back at the "S"

bend the mud is a little deeper and glutinous, but since I haven't been that far for a while this may just be the normal state of affairs.

The team then headed out via pool passage, but not before Geoff had a look down the bottom of the pitch in the floor of J.W. Passage prior to the link to Pool Passage.

Since there was likely to be plenty of help over at Fernhill, it was decided to see whether there were any signs of where the quarry flood water sinks in the quarry floor. Nothing found except the tide marks on the trees 4' off the ground.

A muddy wallow in Hillwithy before joining the Fernhill team and assisting in spoil hauling.

Dave King.

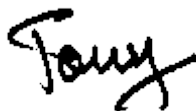
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**Monday pm 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008 - Hazards of the road - Green Ore to Hillgrove**

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**Tony Jarratt (JRat) and Tony Audsley.**

Tony and I were travelling back from Fernhill, heading for Priddy and we had just passed the Green Ore cross roads when my Land Rover made a series of rude noises. Firstly like a handful of nuts and bolts being dropped onto a metal plate and then a blood-chilling squeal rather like a very big circular saw hitting a very big nail. Tony did enquire into the cause of this but his question was couched in complex technical terms and it wouldn't do to repeat it here. I just had an image of lots of folding beer vouchers being diverted from the Hunters' into the hands of some garage owner - a very sad thought.



Tony Audsley.

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**Monday am & pm 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Richard Witcombe, Tony Audsley, {Tony Jarratt (J-Rat) surface support}, Alan Gray and Clive North.**

Tony fettled the ironwork and woodwork for a while before digging out 26 skip loads of clag from the collapse. A suitable (Witcombe-sized) working space ensued which enabled Rich to continue his cemented wall upwards to pick up Tony's steel supports in the roof.

*(Click image to enlarge)*

A good draught kept the face workers cool while those on the surface gently sweated in the heat!

*Richard wall-building in the recovered section*

A little cement was also applied to the 'ridges' between the concrete rings which should make the skip glide up and down more easily.

It just remains to angle-grind off some protruding steel rods sometime....

So, as a result, full scale digging can resume at Fernhill on Wednesday!

Clive North.

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### **Wednesday Evening, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Geoff Dawson, Alan Gray, Duncan Price, Richard Witcombe, Clive North, Dave King & Dylan (on wood retrieval).**

Having spent the previous seven months plus on hauling duties [because of a damaged knee (T.A.)], Dave took the opportunity to dig and got stuck in with both hands, two feet and one knee.

The reinforcing rods and general shoring offer security from any further settling/falling rocks and mud from around the pipes. Geoff assisted at the bottom filling the skip, whilst the rest of the team shared the arduous tasks of

hauling, emptying, counting, planting wild strawberries, watering the trees (genuinely) and sunbathing (it can be tough on the surface).

50 + skips were dug and hauled out before revealing the boulder to be reduced. Before Clive had the chance to threaten the boulder, it was dislodged and along with its companion, hauled to the surface. We can now descend about 6ft down the bedding-plane, so to finish off, Clive and Rich descended the pipes to admire the bedding-plane.

Rich found his legs were too short to reach the bottom and blamed it on the short ally ladder not being there. Well, it was moved for the boulder hauling operation. Clive and Rich proceeded to load up more spoil for hauling taking the count up to 60 skips + 2 boulders.

Back to the usual watering hole (the Waggon and Horses) for re-hydration, although again, not our usual table. Now that's just not cricket !

Next on the agenda will be cutting back the re-bar to allow easier and safer access to the bedding-plane.

Dave King.

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### **Wednesday Evening, 30<sup>th</sup> July 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

**A Cast of Thousands: Mark Lumley (Gonzo) & Dylan the Digging Dog, Duncan Price, Rob Taviner (Tav), Geoff Dawson, Mandy Voysey (plus Matt in pub), Dave King, Steve Shipston, Fiona Burchell, Alan Gray and Richard Witcombe.**

Digging was preceded by the issue of the ATLAS uniform for use on all ceremonial and State occasions.

The vast numbers present meant that there was a good deal of lounging and idle banter on the surface, while a hard core toiled at the face. Despite the fair weather, some walling work took place around the spoil heaps to provide for a dugout when the rains come - Gonzo has some sort of overhead tenting material to keep the water out.

Down below, bedding-plane clearing continued with forty one-ish loads of spoil and rocks reaching the surface. The grouted left hand side of the bedding-plane was left behind, and an itinerant dry stone waller was luckily available to pack more rocks into the void created. The depth of the bedding-plane below the pipes is now about 6 or 7 feet (the correspondent's light source did not allow him to be more specific) [I'm surprised he could see that far with it - he can't usually (T.A.)] but stones rattle down another 6 or 7 feet through various small holes.

The usual hostelry, provided beer and refreshments.

Rich Witcombe.

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**Wednesday Evening, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Tony Audsley, Dave King, Alan Gray, Duncan Price, Richard Witcombe and Clive North.**

Tony and Clive spent the evening removing more 'clag' and various rocks from the right hand side, the floor and the 'bedrock' near side. A large rock was persuaded to go into the alcove below Rich's left-hand dry-stone wall and will be cemented into place later.

The right hand side is now well clear of 'hanging-death' but does need a bit of added security in the shape of a couple more steel bars putting in

under the jammed rocks in the roof.

By the end of the evening, after 30 skiploads and three large blocks extracted we had dropped the floor by about a metre, over about half its width.

We next need to bang down in the floor over the next few feet - after that it appears to be wider - we may be able to do this before next Wednesday....

We can see down now for around 10ft but the bedding-plane is fairly well filled with rocks and large slabs.....

Clive North.

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### **Wednesday Evening, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

**Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Rob Taviner (Tav), Geoff Dawson and Andy Watson.(MNRC)**

Given the recent weather of rain and even more rain, the expectation was that the dig face would be a sticky quagmire of filth and hence best avoided. None the less, we all agreed that a recce was needed and we optimistically took all the empties down to the bottom.

It wasn't looking good at the approach of the dig head, there was a pool of water in the normally dry connection. It was also a bit damper at the foot of the pitch, there were signs of "mud slumpage" and a couple of the steps had re-located.

However, from then on all was much drier than it had been previously. Obviously, there was still mud in abundance and it was still a bit sticky, but generally everything was drying out nicely. Tav got straight to work bagging the excess spoil from the face, while I cleared the approach route. The mud was very easy to just peel back and after a while we had an area that somewhat resembled the

comfortable, sandy dig that we had known before (though obviously now of lesser dimensions).

Tav was determinedly tunnelling forward in the hope that he could shove his head in far enough to see what was going on at the end. After a while he shouted back that he's found a rift heading off on the right. He was playing it cool, but I was well excited. Anyway, after a bit of worming and much sweating, access was gained. We all took turns in going to the end and sitting in what turned out to be a sort of tube heading upwards. It has solid rock walls with a bit of mud still to come out from above. At present it is a person sized alcove and quite comfortable.

Matt, Geoff and Andy had been ferrying the bags back to foot of the pitch, but as we were only a small team it was decided that the bags could stay there till next week. So we merrily exited that cave with beer and crisps in mind.

Mandy Voysey.

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### **Wednesday Evening, 13<sup>th</sup> August 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Dave King, Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Geoff Dawson and Duncan Price.**

Last week "40" bags of spoil had been left at the base of the pitch. Mandy & A.N. Other had removed one on Tuesday, so this left 67 bags which were hauled out, emptied and spread out to dry in Erratic Passage(\*). There was a ½" deep pool of water in the dig about 10' from the S bend. The end was looked at - the floor requires digging out to make real progress.

Duncan Price.

(\*)  $40 - 1 = 67$ . Erratic Passage is well named. The normal rules of arithmetic do not apply here.<sub>(T.A.)</sub>

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## Wednesday Evening, 13<sup>th</sup> August 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]

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### **Alan Gray, Richard Witcombe and Clive North (later aided and abetted by the Balch crowd)**

A rock tenderizing session on the bedrock of the 'floor' (nearside) of the bedding-plane, and the large protruding boulder very much had the desired effect - lots of lovely clean broken rocks to bring out and a comfortably wide bedding-plane.

Thirty skiploads went up by the end of the evening, leaving a bit more rock bashing and clearing before the BarBQue next week.

A gale of a draught was roaring down the hole most of the evening.

Clive North.

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## Wednesday Evening, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]

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### **Geoff Dawson, plus 4 members of the Moles Caving Group**

It was the evening of Duncan's party. Everyone gathered around Fernhill, beside the marquees erected to ward off the sunshine and moonshine - in which they succeeded 100%.

I wondered if anyone was going down Balch and was told 'Just the Moles'.

Now who or what could they be?

Is this a generic Mendip term commonly applied to people who go underground while everyone else is reveling on the surface? Or could it be a Caving Group? I wandered across and found only the lower entrance open. That was handy as it reduced my chances of missing the Moles and finding myself locked in.



After a few minutes, I arrived at the bottom of the ladder near the dig head and found the Moles. Then someone shouted back, "It's draughting".

They kindly let me go in to have a look next.

There was a little slop at the start of the final tunnel, but the rest was dry - surprising after the deluges of the days before. I wormed along the sand and up into the pocket/rift at the end. Above my head between the wall and the mud caking the roof, was the small hole I'd stuck my hand into the week before. Then my hand had only gone in as far as the palm. Now I could get part of my arm in. I took off my glove and sure enough, there was quite a good little draught. Not a howler by any means, but enough to make my hand chill down.

The top of the pocket is round with a circumference of a person's shoulders. The top is plugged by mud that can be crumbled off by hand with a small amount of force. There is a slope of fallen, consolidated mud in the pocket and I think that this needs to be removed first before tackling the plug - to give mud knocked down somewhere to go and avoid trapping the digger.

So what will be revealed next Wednesday?

Geoff Dawson.

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### **Wednesday Evening, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Underground:** Tony Audsley, Alan Gray, Clive North.

**Surface:** A cast of thousands, all munching burgers and doing the occasional bit of hauling.

First off - a thank you to Duncan for inviting us to his rain-lashed birthday bash. Rarely have I had so much fun standing in a muddy huddle under a leaky tarpaulin!

Also appreciation to Gonzo for providing us not only with the aforesaid shelter but the family sized modern tent as well - even though it was unused!

Tony A, Alan and Clive took it upon themselves to wrest yet more broken rock from the base of the Fernhill bedding-plane, whilst the howling draught from the surface carried with it the smells of burning newspaper, wood, barbeque fire lighting fluid and much later cooking sausages.

Around 10 [actually it was 19 !<sub>(T.A.)</sub>] skips of rock came up before we decided that rock tenderizing was not needed yet - more urgent was a good cementing session to tie in the stacked rocks on the left hand side. Tuesday has been set aside for this....

A long slab of 6inch thick flowstone was also prised out of the lowest accesible part of the dig to reveal another few feet of well-choked rift.

Sightseers to the bottom of the dig included Alison Moody and the Balch cave visitors led by Tony Littler !

Another surprise visitor, surface only, was Paul Stillman !

Cheers

Clive North.

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## **The Wigmore Project (Home Close Hole) 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> August 2008**

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**Organisers:** Tony Jarratt and Dave Morrison.

**Expert Consultants:** Dave Speed and Jim Young.

**Diggers:** Mark Crook and Mike Gibbons.

**Important Visitors:** Nigel Perkins, Bridget Perkins, Lord Waldegrave of North Hill, Lady Caroline Waldegrave OBE., Penny Wiseman.

**Riff-Raff:** Alice Audsley, Tony Audsley, Jane Clarke, Rachel Clarke, Henry Dawson, Glenys Grass, Tim Large, John Maneely, Stuart McManus (Mac), Clive North, Brenda Prewer, Brian Prewer, Duncan Price, Peter Webb (RA), John Williams (Tangent), Rich Witcombe, Liz Young and Joseph (Liz and Jim's grandson).

After the recent breakthroughs(\*) underground in Wigmore Swallet and especially the discovery of some high avens, thoughts turned to the possibility of making a connection from the surface. By two very unhappy coincidences, Tony Jarratt and Dave Morrison felt the need for a major project that they could concentrate on.

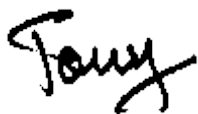
So the great Wigmore excavation or, more properly, Home Close Hole was started. Digging began at 0830 on 21 August, when Dave Gibbons' Hymac started stripping the turf from the depression. The excavation proper started just before noon that day and a hole was started on the north side of the depression. As luck, or possibly skill would have it, this happened to be just the right spot and the top of a buried rock-face was found some 3-4 metres

below the surface.

The digging stopped at -10 metres, two rock walls were visible, unfortunately too far apart to act as foundations for the concrete pipes, which were sited on marl fill. The initial digging at the bottom might be a bit tricky.

**NOTE:** Digging at the site will not start until the ground has been re-seeded.

(\*) - See for instance:-  
Chris Jewell, 2008. *Descent* (201) p13  
Stu Gardiner & Chris Jewell 2008. *Belfry Bulletin* (530) 56(3) 17-21.



Tony Audsley.

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**Tuesday am & pm, 26<sup>th</sup> August 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Alan Gray, Mandy Voysey, Duncan Price, Tony Audsley, Clive North.**

Alan and Mandy had a morning trip to the end of Balch to check on the famed draughting 'sand aven'. They found it a constricted area to be in and no detectable draught today.

On the other hand, the wind was tearing in (and out) of Fernhill as Tony applied large amounts of cement to the boulders on the left-hand side. 13(!) skips of rocks were also removed to the surface.

Clive North.

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**Tuesday morning, 26<sup>th</sup> August 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Alan Gray, Mandy Voysey.**

The start of the trip was slightly delayed as we had to return to Shepton Mallet to pick up Mandy's battery and also the lock on the top entrance was jammed so the middle entrance was used to gain entry. Down to the dig via the squeeze in Erratic.

The entry to the draughting ascending rift that Geoff noted last week is via a small squeeze. The rift is about six feet high and quite small. Both Mandy and I could not locate the draught but weather conditions were very different to those of last week. The mud blockage was slightly enlarged using a drain rod but digging is difficult with all the debris falling over you.

When we had finished, the hole was slightly enlarged and the top of the mud plug could be seen extending for another two feet which would make the bottom of the plug at least four feet thick. The rift is water worn and thinking about it now, may not be vertical but slightly trending upwards. Only more digging will prove this. The floor leading to the rift will have to be lowered considerably to provide a quick escape if the mud plug suddenly drops.

Looking that the survey two facts become apparent:-

1. We still have to dig for another 3m horizontally to reach the sand aven buried after the flood on 28th May.
2. The narrow near vertical rift in JW Passage is 7m vertically and 10 distant from the dig face at the end of Carpal Tunnel.

Alan Gray.

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**Wednesday Evening, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Alan Gray, Rob Taviner (Tav), Clive North, Richard Whitcombe, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Dylan, Dave King, Paul Stillman & Duncan Price.**

Digging took place in two shifts; with Tav, Paul, Clive & Rich down t' hole first, with the others surface hauling. Then a half-time change-over with Duncan, Alan & Dave at the pointy end while Gonzo & Dylan maintained control on the surface. An integer multiple of ten\* skip loads of debris were removed.

As Tav says: "Way on is down and then right at some indeterminate point. All reasonably stable, apart from a couple of bits of dangling doom higher up on the right that may require a revisit."

\* I think it was 50 in the end.

Duncan Price.

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**Wednesday Evening, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Clive North, Duncan Price, Rob Taviner (Tav), Alan Gray & Richard Witcombe.**

**Visitors: Martin Grass, Paul Stillman & Kate Lawrence.**

Seventeen loads of rock were brought out, at which point a halt was called while general stability was considered. The fill on the right is now threatening to slide into the excavated pit and as no open spaces beckon yet at the bottom, it was decided to switch the point of effort more to the right.

Before this can take place, some steel and concrete shoring will be installed under the hanging slabs. Two bits of angle were fitted and concreting will be done next week. The present "pit" will be

partly back-filled as we move across the bedding-plane.

Rich Witcombe.

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### **Thursday Evening, 11<sup>th</sup> September 2008 - Chelm's Combe Quarry, Cheddar**

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The new owners of the quarry have asked the ATLAS diggers to photograph, survey and report on the caves in the quarry. After an initial recce on 27<sup>th</sup> August by Gonzo, Matt, Mandy, Dave, Duncan, Fiona Burchell (MNRC), Rich, Alan, Tav, Clive, Paul Stillman and Tony, a second trip was organised to start the photographic survey. This time a smaller, crack team was assembled, ie., Gonzo, Tav, Paul Stillman, Kate Lawrence, and Steve Sharp.

The initial set of photographs may be seen

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

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### **Wednesday Evening, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Ken James (BEC), Justine Emery (BEC), Malcolm Austin (BEC), Paul Hatfield, Mandy Voysey, Mat Voysey, Duncan Price, Dave King.**  
(joined by Alan Gray and Richard Witcombe on the surface to watch the last bag get emptied!).

After 2 months away from Balch Cave, the dig looked amusingly familiar as the last lot of wet weather had kindly flushed its spoil back to the site by the block in the middle of the passage, which was nearly buried again.

The passage beyond was just small body-sized. 50 plus bags were removed to regain access to the small aven. The fill does not appear to have come down this aven and I'd presume that most of it has come from up ahead.

The block in the floor could do with tenderizing as it is yearning to visit the surface in bits!

Regards

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

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**Friday Evening, 6-12 PM, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2008 - Hunters' Lodge Inn, Priddy**

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**20 barrels emptied, Hunters (almost) dry. Tony would have approved.**

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**Wednesday Evening, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Alan Gray & Richard Witcombe**

Three of the right-hand hanging slabs were shored using two lengths of angle iron, one hefty baulk of seasoned oak and some carefully placed rocks and wooden wedges. A small amount of concrete will be required to stop anything moving. The one remaining threat - the blade shaped rock - can be shored when we are a little deeper and further over.

Redistribution of the spoil from the centre of the shaft to the left hand side was started. Interestingly, the large jammed slabs in the middle of the bedding-plane slipped gently to the floor when I breathed on them !

Rich Witcombe.

I always thought you were a heavy breather !

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**Thursday Evening, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008 - Chelm's Combe Quarry, Cheddar**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Paul Stillman, Mandy Voysey, Dave King.**



Continued the photographic survey of Box Cave and Reynold's Rift. Three more photographs posted or possibly

(HINT: use the "< BACK" button when you get to the page).

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### **Wednesday Evening, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Cast of thous...er....four.  
Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Mandy Voysey, Duncan Price, Dave King.**

Doubled the depth of the passage approaching the small open roof-space with a view to continuing at that size straight ahead.

Big block still requires attention.

56 bags stacked at the bottom of the ladder for the spoil fairy to remove.

Regards

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

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### **Wednesday Evening, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Richard Witcombe & Alan Gray with Paul Stillman and Kate Lawrence appearing later.**

Concreted in the shoring steel and timber, an awkward job as the grout needed to be applied overhead. The large section of detached wall on the lower side of the bedding-plane was slightly reduced in size with a lump hammer and then levered out with a crowbar to drop onto the floor.

An inspection of the roof beyond the "dagger" rock revealed a "lightly" jammed mass of rocks. It may be possible to carefully insert concrete amongst them to stabilise them a little. The dagger itself will be shored with oak timber. More spoil was shifted

from right to left and consolidated behind a stone wall.

Rich Witcombe.

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## Home Close Hole - Wigmore Farm - The fencing saga

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### **Thursday afternoon, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008: Tony Audsley**

Found that a small lake had formed in front of the shaft. Water draining from this had scoured out a channel to the shaft and washed out some material from round the top of the concrete rings. Encouragingly, there was no water at the bottom of the shaft.

Measured up for the fence.

### **Monday afternoon, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2008: Tony Audsley**

Off to Uphills to buy 7ft strain posts, 5'6" split posts, wire, staples and such like. Left all this by the shaft and then dug out a deeper channel from the pond to the shaft to try to dry out the area a bit.

### **Wednesday (10am - 4pm), 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008: Tony Audsley**

Borrowed a post hole digger from Dave Speed and treated myself to a decent crow-bar from Uphills. Started digging postholes. Found this rather more difficult than anticipated because of the large amount of buried rock in each hole.

Realised that the planned line for the fence was not going to work (deep mud), so over to Uphills for more posts.

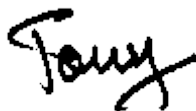
### **Thursday (10:15am - 6:30pm), 25<sup>nd</sup> September 2008: Alice Audsley & Tony Audsley**

Over to Uphills again for yet more posts and then continued digging holes and fixing posts. A bout of chainsaw carpentry to fix the bracings for the strain posts provided a bit of light relief. Had lunch sitting in the sun and watched dragon flies cavorting (I think that is what they were doing) over the pool. By the end of the day, we had fixed the major posts and fitted two strands of barbed wire, which had tasteful, pretty, pink barbs (Barbie wire ??)

**Friday (10am - 3:30pm), 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008: Alice Audsley & Tony Audsley**

To Uphills again to get eight more split posts and then spent another warm and sunny day hammering them (and others) into the ground and fixing the wire to them. Lunch again sitting on the stones by the shaft watching the dragonflies and Cow 42, which seemed intent on forming a deep and meaningful relationship with the Land Rover.

Hopefully, the fence is now finished, although a stile might be a useful addition - do IKEA do them as flatpacks?



Tony Audsley.

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**Saturday, 28<sup>st</sup> September 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Clive North & Duncan Price.**

Boulder worrying session in Carpal Tunnel, the results of which will be inspected on Wednesday.

A recce was made of the ales available in The Oakhil Inn where we received an indifferent welcome. Sadly, no budget lager.

Duncan Price.

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**Wednesday Evening, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Alan Gray, Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe.**

Installed more steel and timber shoring amongst the hanging slabs to the right, and threw concrete into various nooks and crannies - also over the heads of the writer and Alan. This area is now "good to go" as our trans-Atlantic cousins would have it (but no lifetime guarantees of course).

Alan drilled a hole in the large slab but the Hilti failed to crack it. Clearly the Hilti is not man/woman enough for the job, and we will need to use more robust methods, but carefully or all our good works will be undone.

Some more walling was built on the left and debris dragged down from the right was installed behind it.

We're getting there.

Rich Witcombe.

---

**Wednesday Evening, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

---

**Alan Gray, Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe.**

Installed more steel and timber shoring amongst the hanging slabs to the right, and threw concrete into various nooks and crannies - also over the heads of the writer and Alan. This area is now "good to go" as our trans-Atlantic cousins would have it (but no lifetime guarantees of course).

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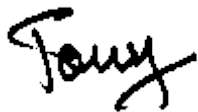
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### Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2008 - Home Close Hole [Wigmore Farm]

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**Alice Audsley, Tony Audsley.**

Dragged five 6 metre lengths of steel strip from the farm to the dairy unit, did some cutting and sticking and then dragged three 10 metre lengths over to the dig.



Tony Audsley.

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### Wednesday Evening, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]

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**Plague Victim: Dave King** (delivered a new skip and rope and then crawled away, coughing and spluttering).

**Main Team: Clive North, Duncan Price, Mandy Voysey, Paul Hadfield, Rob Taviner (Tav), and Richard Witcombe**

**Après Balch - two digs an evening hard men: Mark Lumley (Gonzo) and Ken James.**

Clive attacked the boulder on the floor and broke it into half a dozen pieces. These were further reduced by lump hammering by Paul H (who may have damaged his hand in the process) and the remains were built into the retaining wall.

While Clive carefully cut off two of the rod ends protruding from under the pipe shaft with a cutter

blade attached to his drill, Paul H and Rich shifted mud and small rocks across to the left hand dump. Once Clive had finished, Tav and Ken joined the team at the bottom of the shaft and spoil was then sent up the shaft using a two skip system.

Twenty seven loads were removed from the right hand side of the bedding-plane and as a parting gesture some of the talus cone was brought down with a bar by Tav. The working space now almost warrants the title - small, decorated bedding chamber.

Rich Witcombe.

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### **Wednesday Evening, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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#### **Mark lumley (Gonzo) and Ken James.**

Cleared the remains of the obstructing block in Carpal Tunnel. The site would now benefit from an additional horizontal skip (Dave?) and rope (Mandy?).

Then joined the others for an evening of skip-hauling frivolity at Fernhill.

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

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### **Wednesday Evening, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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#### **Alan Gray, Dave King, Paul Stillman, Mandy Voysey and Clive North.**

[Rich normally brings a ladder for the shaft, but as he was not digging this week, it was left to Gonzo ... (T.A.)]

After subjecting Gonzo to the 'sackcloth and ashes' treatment for forgetting the ladder, Alan and Dave set to at the bottom with Clive sawing away at the remaining steel rods with gusto (sorry hacksaw).

After 25 skips, all change for Mandy and Paul to have a go, finishing with a grand total of 56 loads.

Progress was made forward removing yet more of the clag and rocks which had come down last week plus more knocked down this week.

As a matter of urgency we could do with some more 'hammerbeam' shoring put in place beyond the big square block up in the roof, to give us some protection from the rocks hanging there.

I feel that we could be dropping the floor now as the draught is disappearing rapidly down at a couple of points along the left hand wall. One of those points is a nice waterworn joint that just could open out further down.....

All best

Clive North.

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### **Wednesday Evening, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**In approximate order from digface: Duncan Price, Kate Lawrence, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Matt Voysey, Ken James & Mandy (part time latecomer).**

[Gonzo had promised to bring a ladder for the Fernhill shaft but .... (T.A.)]

Gonzo's cunning plan to obtain a full compliment of diggers for Balch was foiled by the provision of a ladder for Ferhill from the Cerberus tackle store. An extra skip was installed in Carpal tunnel so that spoil could be hauled direct from the digface (it still really needs two at the front - one to dig/fill and the other to load/haul back the skip). A further worker at the S-bend can do the transfer to the second skip.

An unknown quantity of bags were filled (40 new ones plus whatever recycled ones made it

down). These were stacked up at the base of the pitch. The dig face is now at the far wall of Geoff's Rift and the floor will require dropping to get into the ongoing passage ahead. The fill is coarse sand on the surface, below which is damp mud and some rocks.

Duncan Price.

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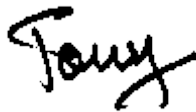
**Wednesday Evening, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2008 - Home Close Hole [Wigmore Farm]**

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**Henry Bennett and Tony Audsley**

Using varied and cunning techniques, 30 ft of fixed ladder was lowered down the shaft and connected to a belay at the top.

We then had a quick look at the bottom, which was very gloopy, although there was no standing water.



Tony Audsley.

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**Wednesday Evening, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Mandy Voysey, Kate Lawrence, Dave King, Paul Stillman, Richard Witcombe.**

Gonzo at the bottom of the shaft with the hideously overweight, dirty old bags Mandy and Kate at the top.

[That sentence is an excellent example of the effect that punctuation can have on meaning. One careless slip and ...

However, knowing Gonzo as we do, there is the suspicion that this was not entirely accidental. Therefore, I have given Kate and Mandy my old Swiss Army penknife; the one with



the rusty, but still exquisitely sharp, orchidectomy blade. I can only recommend Gonzo, that you get some wire wool and start knitting yourself some chain-mail underpants.<sup>(T.A.)</sup>]

Dave in JW.

Paul and Richard in Erratic.

75 bags out in total.

Had a quick look at the 'end'. Geoff's Latch Locker had dumped 10-15 bags-worth of mud and there were signs of it having ponded up, but not too much damage. While changing we discovered my wet pants and Ken's gloves in dubious proximity.

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

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**Wednesday Evening, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008 - Home Close Hole [Wigmore Farm]**

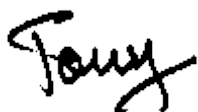
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**Pete Hellier and Tony Audsley, later Henry Bennett**

A wet and generally horrible evening. Tony and Pete went over to the hole, taking scaffolding (to fence the shaft) and scrap car wheels (for foundations for the tripod if necess). We bolted the Rose Cottage tripod together and set it up roughly over the shaft. Two legs resting on rocks, one on a car wheel.

Pete went down the shaft and found 6" of standing water at the bottom.

That was enough, so packed up and then met Henry B walking over in the rain. Unanimous decision to go to Hunters' - best idea we had all evening.



Tony Audsley.

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**Wednesday Evening, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Clive North, Dave King, Kate Lawrence, Paul Stillman, James Stillman.**

Horrendous wet and cold weather failed to deter seven valiant souls... (from procrastinating for as long as possible in their vehicles before the inevitable exposure to the elements).

All of us to the bottom tonight, where 74 bags of spoil were conveyed via a tightly spaced chain gang to the base of the pitch, where they were very neatly stacked by Paul. Debutante digger James did a sterling job at the dig face, even the malodorous smell of Matt's rotten helmet failing to elicit any words of complaint from him!

During the session, a dripping inlet formed on the left wall; by the end of the session it had become rather persistent and puddles were forming. Speculation was that this was likely the water bailed from the pool on the way in, but I doubt the proving of this assertion really warrants dye tracing.

Matt Voysey.

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**Wednesday Evening, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**[There are two independent accounts of this week's digging, one by Dave, written at 4 in the morning before he went to bed, such was his excitement. The other by Gonzo, written with classic style and punctuation. (T.A.)]**

**Gonzo's Account (Sent on Thu, 6 Nov 2008 09:01:07 GMT)**

Tav at the bottom loading up 78 bags - well-hung, well balanced Duncan and Gonzo over the top passing to Dave and Clive who came in the back way then up to Erratic Mandy, Mat, Richard and Paul Gray(\*) on top.

Mark Lumley (Gonzo) - Mad Scientist and Master of Dubious Punctuation.

(\*) Paul Gray is a foul chimera constructed by Gonzo out of bits of Paul Stillman and Alan Gray

### **Dave's Account (Sent on Thu, 6 Nov 2008 04:20:14 GMT)**

**Early arrivals:**  
Gonzo, Duncan, Alan, Rich, Tav, Paul S & Dave.

Only seven, so it was off to Balch with Fernhill taking a miss this time round. Tav at the bottom of the pitch to load the neatly stacked bags from last week, whilst Duncan & Gonzo hauled them up. Dave in J W Passage to transfer the bags for Paul to haul them up the rift to Erratic, assisted at the top by Alan & Rich who were also on ferrying and emptying duties.

**Later arrivals:**  
Clive, Mandy & Matt.

Clive entered via the Link and S bend, after bailing 50 (?) buckets of water from the Link, then assisted with the bag transfer in J W Passage. Matt & Mandy stayed in Erratic and on the surface to help with the ferrying and emptying.

All 74 bags from last week were out and emptied by the time the lower team members exited. So off to re-hydrate much earlier than usual, but not before a little WHIZZZZZZ & BANG, or should that read fiz & pop.

Dave King.

**PS - Note:**  
Not up early this morning writing this before going to work. Just very late getting home.

### **Dave's Addendum (sent on Thu, 6 Nov 2008 18:47:00 GMT)**

Sometimes you wait for nearly a week, but occasionally two come along at once.

I believe that Gonzo's report is probably more accurate, since I took the count of bags to be the figure from last week's stacked bags. That count was dubious since the member entrusted with the start of the count hadn't quite got the hang of the numerical system.

Therefore, last weeks report will require amending to reflect the correct count. Not done, it could throw out the end of year accounts and Shareholders' Report.

Dave King.

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**Wednesday Evening, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Dave King, Richard Witcombe, Alan Gray.**

The B team, of ill cavers, walked from the carpark to Fernhill. Alan with a sore elbow, Dave with five stiches in his head due to an incident with a runaway wheelbarrow containing a brazier, Gonzo with a cold and Richard being Richard.

Prior to digging, Richard inspected the far end of the bedding-plane for hanging death. The first third, from the bottom of the pipes has been shored up and is safe. The next third is protected above by boulders in the top; however, one TV sized boulder is sitting on a large slab of detached stal but it looks safe. The final third is most unsafe with a large boulder (supporting other boulders above) with friction contact to the rift wall and about 20 feet above the depth of the digging area in the bedding-plane. It may be possible to install some protection but it may not be necessary to dig close to this area.

Forty loads were claimed by Dave, but Richard and I suspect this, as Dave was suffering from concussion and had trouble counting.

Alan Gray.

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**Wednesday Evening, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Pat Cronin, Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Rob Taviner (Tav).**

The A-team dug about 50 bags out of the gloopy terminus and deposited them at the base of the pitch.

There's a nice sand layer below the mud, which looks pretty much the same as the last time we dug this bit out - about a year ago !!

Spookily there is a face on the wall - which might explain why Gonzo felt someone watching over his shoulder.

Rob Taviner.

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**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2008 - The Rat Fest**

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JRat's friends gathered to share their memories of him and to celebrate his life with stories, singing, dancing and a little drinking. (18 barrels of beer and two of cider). A party, led by a piper, wended their way up North Hill, where portions of Tony's ashes were consigned to the wind and the mists.

**The misty ash-scattering party at Priddy Nine Barrows**

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**Wednesday Evening, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Richard Witcombe, Alan Gray, Ken James.**

Only eight diggers turned up tonight, so the smaller of the parties was relegated to Fernhill while the other five removed bags from Balch Cave.

Richard traversed to the end of the bedding-plane, below the poised boulder ruckle and installed some psychological shoring. Then with Alan digging at the bottom of the bedding-plane, Richard hauling up to the bottom of the shaft and Ken at the top hauling and dumping, twenty loads were removed.

We were then joined by the Balch team - Gonzo, Mandy, Duncan, Clive and Dave. Mandy then dug out another sixteen loads that were hauled to the surface and dumped.

Alan Gray.

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**Wednesday Evening, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Duncan Price, Mandy Voysey, Clive North, Dave King.**

46 bags removed from bottom of ladder and taken to the surface. We then washed the bags in the quarry before joining the others at Fernhill.

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

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**Wednesday Evening, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008 - Balch Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Alan Gray, Kate Lawrence, Rob Taviner (Tav - where's yer trousers), Duncan Price, Dave King, Mandy Voysey, Paul Stillman.**

Business as usual with 61 bags removed to surface.

We're now back at the fallen rock from the first big slump observed on 28th May 2008 (see digging log).

This block will need a bit of TLC from Clive if he is about. If not there's plenty of spoil to remove on the next trip.

Regards

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

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**Wednesday Evening, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Turned up in time for digging:** Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Dave King, Alan Gray, Clive North, Richard Witcombe, Paul Stillman, Mark Lumley (Gonzo) & Dylan.  
**Turned up in time for the pub:** Rob Taviner (Tav).

A slightly late start (due to forgetting the ladder again, necessitating a quick trip to the Cerberus tackle store) but soon 55 skips of assorted rocks and clag were up and out, to be expertly structured into a new feature wall by Rich.

Midway through the session Alan started whooping enthusiastically. Apparently a "way on" had been opened up. A quick changeover of personnel and a bit more digging, and soon Mandy and I were able to take turns squeezing our heads into the hole for a look. There was a glimpse of a lot of broken boulders and bedrock, a floor that appears untouched by human boot, but not great deal of room for swinging cats, or dancing. Unfortunately a couple of further sessions will be required to stabilise and expand the opening before we can get anything more than our heads through.

Matt Voysey.

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**Wednesday Evening, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008 - A T L A S Christmas Dinner [Waggon & Horses]**

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**Alan Gray, Alice Audsley, Clive North, Dave King, Duncan Price, Janet North, Kate Lawrence, Kate Speed, Les Oxborough, Mark Lumley, Paul Stillman, Rich Witcombe, Rob Taviner, Tony Audsley & Tony Dingle.**

We ate, drank and were generally merry. Enough said.

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**Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Alan Gray, Dave King, Duncan Price.**

The plan was to dig downwards to expose the route into Fernhill reckoned to be 4' down and stack the debris in the cave. However, it was evident that there was not enough space and the spoil would have to be brought to the surface. Duncan was making good progress at the bottom, with Alan hauling from the base of the shaft and Dave at the top, when the back wall of stacked deads collapsed burying the digger up to his waist. Fortunately, no-one was hurt and the arch of rubble above the initial collapse remained in place. The rest of the day was spent clearing and grading the slope (one of the digging buckets was buried under the collapse but later retrieved).

70 buckets of spoil were removed.

Duncan Price.

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**Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Early Birds: Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Alan Gray, Dave King.**

**Visitors for Elevenses: Darrel Instrel and Amy Cork**

**Sunday Lunch Shift: Duncan Price and Antoinette Bennett**

**Tiffin Stint: Clive North.**

A labour-intensive day of remedial spoil removal taking us down to the previous level in more spacious surroundings.

Some shoring required, particularly in the rift ahead, while the 'approach' end would benefit from a wee bit of 'stabilizing slop' (technical term!).

140 loads out, including some large boulders.



Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

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**Wednesday Evening, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**B R E A K T H R O U G H !**

**Alan Gray, Antoinette Bennett, Clive North, Dave King, Duncan Price, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Richard Witcombe & Rob Taviner (Tav)**

Clive went to the bottom to dig, with Duncan bucket swapping and Antoinette working at the base of the pipes, while the others hauled from the surface. Duncan then reversed into the hole and enlarged it with the pick so as to admit Clive and Antoinette, where we waited while the others joined us in the "new" passage.

This went for 30-40 ft in 4-5ft wide passage of similar height which headed south with a few prints from previous visitors and then turned right along a rift for about 30 ft through a squeeze which only Alan could pass to a dead end.

Some work was done on digging in the opposite direction and then a celebratory drink at the Waggon and Horses.

Duncan Price.

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**Sunday Morning, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Paul Stillman, James Stillman, Alan Gray, Richard Witcombe, Duncan Price, Antoinette Bennett and Clive North (plus Dylan on surface stick retrieval duties).**

Gonzo took a few snaps of a couple of posers while Alan and James surveyed and Richard shored up the wall of the rift.

25 bags of spoil to surface.

Plans are afoot for a Christmas Eve digging session with mulled wine and mince pies at the usual time.

A few snaps from this mornings activities attached.

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

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**Wednesday Evening, 24<sup>th</sup> December 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Duncan Price, Tony Littler, Clive North, Rob Taviner (Tav), Alan Gray.**

Alan at the face, Clive loading, Duncan at the bottom of the pipes and the others hauling.

On reaching the dig, there had been a minor collapse but this was quickly removed. Rocks and mud were removed from the floor and the horizontal shelf that could be seen two feet below was quickly reached. A few more boulders were removed from the lip and a dark space could be seen. More rocks and mud were removed and a horizontal cleft six feet wide and six feet deep but only two feet high was revealed.

Alan with tottering piles of boulders and mud to his left, right and behind crawled in and continued to remove rocks from the floor. He was not helped by Clive, who dropped rocks on him and when these did not kill him, decided to throw a full skip on top of him!

This small chamber was somewhat enlarged and Duncan and Tav also had a look. It appears, from the draught, that the way on is further along this horizontal cleft. The large pile of tottering mud and rocks ahead will require gardening and shoring.

53 buckets removed. Then to the surface for mince pies and mulled wine.

Alan Gray.

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**Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> December 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Price, Stillman, Fowler,**      **Lumley Antoinette Richard Alan Gray.**      **(Gonzo), Bennett, Witcombe,**      **Duncan Paul Simon**

Gonzo had the first digging shift at the bottom then Richard and Alan were called down and there was a minor collapse before Gonzo exited. Richard gardened some rocks from beneath the two large flat lumps of stal that are wedged vertically below the skip slide, when all of a sudden there was a major rock fall just missing him.

Rocks were jammed between the two lumps of stal and the wall and a wooden prop inserted underneath. These rocks were then cemented in place. Below the stal was a small triangular dark hole. More clearing was undertaken and beyond the triangle was a small pretty grotto four feet long and eighteen inches high.

Beneath the two lumps of stal, flowstone has completely blocked the bedding plane now making the ~~eastern~~ **western** end safe. Thus the alcove, located on Christmas Eve, can be dug out safely from this side.

80 skips of spoil removed.

Alan Gray.

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**Tuesday Evening, 30<sup>th</sup> December 2008 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Rob tavier (Tav), Dave King, Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Alan Gray, Richard Witcombe, Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Duncan Price, Antoinette Bennett.**

80 skips of rubble removed from the floor. The undercut on the west side was quickly entered but no obvious way on could be seen. Proceeded to partially-collapse the rubble-chute, which soon made it safe (ish) enough to crawl underneath to the east side of the bedding. This is where all the draught is going.

Here there is a choked narrow rift in the floor and possible way on straight ahead. Basically, it just needs a bit of stabilisation work and a fair bit more general clearing but without tempting fate it looks fairly good for a quick entry to the main chamber.

Then to Horse & Jockey as the regular haunt was shut.

Rob Taviner.

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**Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2009 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Rob Taviner (Tav), Alan Gray, Simon Fowler, Dave King, Duncan Price, Richard Witcombe, Tony Boycott (!) and Dylan as stick-retrieval operative.**

More lowering of the floor straight on under the arch and working over to the suggestion of a rift on the right.

Richard did some shoring high up on the run-in to the right end of the bedding.

After lunch, we resumed the clearing; then took out the stacked boulders in the entrance of the south passage as they were looking a bit precarious. Having removed them, it became apparent that there is an unsupported bulge of debris to the right (east) of the south passage entrance that will need further stabilization or removal before it drops of its own free will on the workers below...104 skips out.

Mark Lumley (Gonzo).

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**Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2009 - Fernhill Cave [Fairy Cave Quarry]**

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**Mark Lumley (Gonzo), Duncan Price, Alan Gray, Richard Witcombe, Dave King, Mr & Mrs Voysey and Chris Davies (Dark Places, Axbridge & Wessex).**

AG and DP had first stint at the bottom and after gardening the eastern slope, sent up spoil from in front of the south passage, re-opening the entrance in the process. This allowed Mr & Mrs Voysey to inspect the premises later.

RW and MV then took over in the basement, although the former was working halfway up the eastern slope installing more timber struts. By the evening's end, MV was beginning to uncover a lower and potentially more impressive entrance to the south passage.

At this point the "rift" [He means bedding-plane (T.A.)] has essentially dropped into biggish passage and it is likely that the so-called north passage is a steeply descending continuation, which has been largely filled with material falling down the shaft. There are some hefty girt blocks in the floor which will need reducing to gravel. Sixty skiploads of spoil came out - more carefully than in the past. Rich Witcombe.

**-- That's all --**

**End of Log**