

HALLOWE'EN RIFT: THE EARLY YEARS OF EXPLORATION 1982-1991

Compiled by Vince Simmonds

Introduction

This account represents a summary of the early history of the discovery in 1982 and, the subsequent exploration of Hallowe'en Rift up to 1991. The data has been collected from available online resources including the Mendip Cave Registry & Archive (MCRA) and Bristol Exploration Club (BEC) websites. It is not claimed to be a full and definitive account of the early years as there is more information contained in personal logs not accessed. However, it does cover the significant advances made during the early exploration of the cave.

Note: Several of the following accounts have been edited for grammatical and typographic errors.

Tony Jarratt's Logbooks [Volume 03, 1982 to 1988]:

31/10/82: *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes, Phil Romford. Accompanied Trev to his newly found dig in the woods above Wookey 22. Initially the site was a 6' square hole which Trev had dug for some 3' or so in loose fill. The hole is in conglomerate. After an hour or so's digging Phil broke into an open hole. This was cleared to reveal an 8' deep stal covered rift some 3"-12" wide (with a couple of resident spiders). The rift was too tight to enter and so we continued to clear the top section in preparation for next time. It is likely this opens out to passable size on the right. Looking bloody good. My first thoughts that the site was a mineshaft were proved wrong. Named Hallowe'en Rift in honour of the date.

5/11/82: *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes. Spent 3½ hours in the afternoon clearing rocks and clay from the foot of the rift. Trev dug and I (*Tony Jarratt*) hauled the paint tin out (in continuous rain!). Eventually Trev managed to open up a 15 – 20' long bedding plane crawl which he excitedly pushed into a low bedding chamber. I then joined him and we explored about 80 – 100' of low, phreatic bedding chamber/passage in dolomitic conglomerate. Much of this had a mud/sand floor with drip pockets, small botryoidal stal, a couple of cave pearls, etc. plenty of old formations exist around the walls and ceiling. Tree roots and many spots of white fungus are evident so we must be reasonably close to the surface. No obvious ways on were found (apart from a possible dig) which was a bit disappointing considering the excellent draught in the entrance. Hopefully, we will survey and dig further tomorrow. A bloody good afternoon's work.

6/11/82: *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes, (Batspiss at surface *Chris Batstone*). Chris was defeated by the squeeze at the bottom of the entrance rift. I went onto the "bottom RH dig" and spent an hour or so clearing infill but much more work will need to be done and it will probably be in vain. Trev attacked a rift/bedding near the entrance crawl with similar results. Not really any obvious prospects in the cave though it does give one the impression of being something much larger. Time will tell./Very similar to St. Georges Cavern. 1¾ hours.

Belfry Bulletin No.416, December 1982:

Hallowe'en Rift by Trev Hughes

"It seems that so far this year new caves on Mendip have been found by chance or fairly easily, viz Hole in the Road and the extension of Reads Grotto Dig, now called Charterhouse Cave. Little did know that what I initially labelled simply 'Unnamed Dig' in my caving log was to follow a similar pattern.

I came across the site while studying the wooded slopes in the area above the village, three fields away from the bottom of my garden. Initially all that was visible was a moss-lined, widened joint, hidden under brambles and hawthorn, in a low outcrop of dolomitic conglomerate. Spotting a spider's egg cocoon similar to those found in many caves I decided to return the next day to investigate the area with suitable digging equipment.

Saturday October 30th saw the start of work. The first job was to remove the dense brambles covering the area. Suspecting that any cave passage might follow the joint roughly northwards I started digging a hole at the edge of the outcrop to give space to allow progress to be made horizontally. Very quickly it became apparent that I was digging in a rectangular shaft filled with jumbled rocks and sandy subsoil. By the end of the day's work, I had a 1 x 1.3 m shaft, 1.5 m deep, which I suspected could be a mine shaft, although there was no evidence to support this, such as shot holes, etc.

I worked solo on Sunday morning but after lunch Tony 'J-Rat' Jarratt and the Hut Warden's husband, Phil, came along to help. We worked steadily throughout the afternoon and as the sky was darkening Phil opened up a clean walled rift in the northern part of the shaft. This was narrow at the northern end but widened to 0.3 m towards the still covered southern end. The rift walls were lined with old stal/flowstone and the deepest point appeared to be about 4 m below surface level. As it was Halloween the name of our embryonic rift cave was easily chosen.

My next visit (solo again) was on November 3rd. I spent the afternoon digging out the infill from the southern side of the shaft and opened up a widening rift. I was able to clear away the overburden without too much of it falling down the rift, which is about 0.4 m wide as it undercuts the southern wall of the shaft. After three hours work, I was able to descend this rift to a small, stony-floored chamber, the walls and roof of which were thickly covered with massive (but mostly shattered) stal, not to mention some huge spiders. By rearranging the stones on the floor, I was able to peer into a larger, low chamber to the east of the entrance rift. Due to problems with my 'nife-cell' I decided to finish for the day. Open cave passage had been entered after only 17½ man hours of work – quite reasonable progress.

Earlier in the week I had been to see Dr. Frank McBratney, the manager of Wookey Hole Cave on whose land this cave lies. He voiced no objections to the dig although he wished to consult that other Wookey Hole resident, Jim Hanwell, on the 'whys and wherefores' before giving the full go-ahead (*This has now been done and permission given*).

J-Rat and I next marked at the site on 1 Nov. 5th and, with Tony heaving up buckets of stones and me loading them, we lowered the floor of the first chamber by some 0.6 m. Not surprisingly, the inevitable J-Rat dry stone wall appeared!

With the floor of the chamber lowered I was able to determine that the opening on the eastern side, first noticed two days before, was only an alcove measuring 2 m. x 3 m., but away to the west a low passage (a half tube in the roof of a low bedding plane) could be seen. After about 3 m. this passage appeared to open up. The floor was composed of uncompacted sandy mud and broken pieces of calcite floor. By wriggling into this passage, pushing the mud to the sides, and then reversing out with as many lumps of calcite as possible, progress was quickly made. Three such operations opened the end up to passable size. After hauling out the last of these blocks Tony joined me at the bottom of the rift. Once into the half tube a noticeable outward draught could be felt.

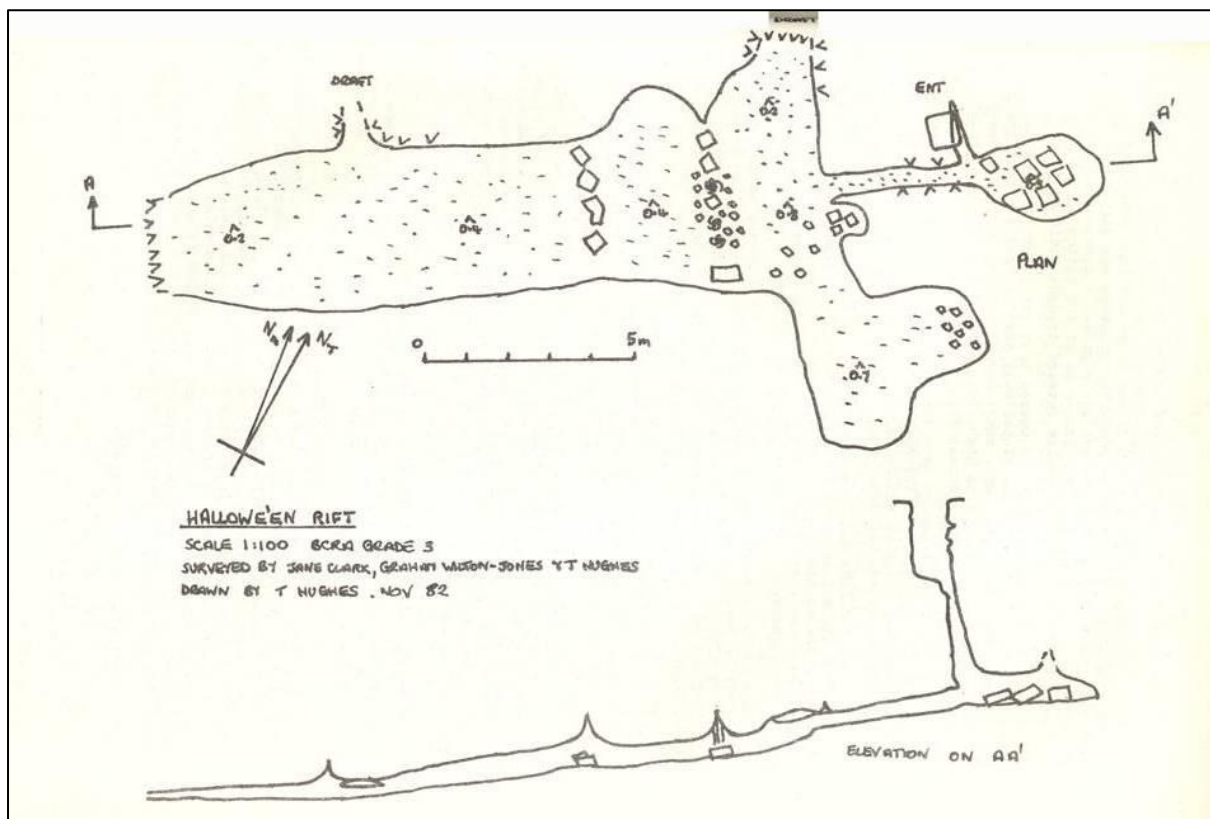
With Tony hot on my heels, I squeezed into the larger bedding passage beyond. To the left the passage sloped away down dip and straight ahead the low bedding, now 4 – 5 m. wide,

continued. The floor is mostly sandy mud and the roof generally 0.5m high. This area of the cave was christened Guy Fawkes Chamber for obvious reasons.

From the survey it can be seen that the passages are joint controlled, and the bedding continues to the east although it is filled to the roof with mud. At this stage we estimated that we had 30m of passage with two obvious dig sites. The total digging time to date: 24½ man hours.

The next day Tony and were joined by Chris Batstone who, unfortunately, decided that the narrow entrance was not for him. His part in the day's proceedings was to haul spoil up the entrance rift while I cleared out the bottom. J-Rat and I started digging at the two sites within the cave; both are low beddings and work is tiring on the arms.

Jane Clarke, Bassett, and I completed a Grade 3 survey (see above) on Nov. 7th. With a strong pencil beam light, the dig nearer the entrance can be seen to open up after 6 – 7m. Beneath the 0.2m space soft mud overlays a calcite floor resting on more mud. A crowbar can be used to open up a trench in this to give a workable roof height.



On Nov 10th. Quackers and I did some more work clearing out the entrance rift floor and the choked northern side – it may well continue northwards at passable size. It is far larger than the other rifts in the bedding roof within the cave and is therefore well worth clearing out.

The latest trip at the time of writing was on Nov. 16th. when, again solo, I continued working at the eastern dig site. By blocking the edges of the bedding with spoil I revealed that a draught, roughly comparable with that leaving the entrance crawl, comes from the low arch now only a couple of metres away. The calcite blocks extracted from this dig are hampering further work and must now be properly removed. The low roof makes this vital. Work continues

and more discoveries may have been made by the time this article appears in print. All help is most welcome.

Finally, what of the other, more well known, cave in this area? Well, does the idea of a dry grotts trip to Wookey 22 appeal to anyone?"

Tony Jarratt's Logbooks [Volume 03, 1982 to 1988]:

19/2/83: *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes, Phil Romford, Andrew "Wonder-boy" Trafford, Pete & Alison Moody. Assisted Trevor with his ongoing dig at the bottom of the entrance pitch. After an hour's digging opened up a black, promising space and decided bang was needed. Andy volunteered to go back to Priddy and find Pete Moody who was the only easily obtainable "bang man" at the time. He duly arrived and successfully disintegrated the offending boulder. 2 hours.

26/2/83: *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes, Wonder Boy, Mac, (Quackers at surface). Trev removed the totally destroyed boulder to find that the calcite floor continued just as solidly beyond. A large amount of debris was moved out of the cave but another bang will be needed to progress further. 1¾ hours. *Mac, I assume is Stuart MacManus, Quackers aka Mike Duck.*

5/3/83: *Tony Jarratt*, Mac, Wonder Boy. Digging at the new end of the cave – Trevor having found some 20' of passage – flat out crawling ending at the usual mud and rock infill. While Mike and Andrew sorted out the sledge system, I had a kip! We then shifted several sledge-loads of grot. The way on can be seen for about 12-15 feet with some 4" of airspace and a slight draught. Much work to be done before open passage will be gained. 2 hours.

30/4/83: *Tony Jarratt*, Tim Large. Drunken trip again! Tim laid a few ounces of bang on the flowstone/conglomerate at the end of the crawl – now some 80' in – and bloody horrible! An unpleasant pool of water has transformed this once nice dig into a miserable shithole. 35 mins.

30/12/83: *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes, Quackers, Rachel Clarke, (Alan Thomas at surface). Superb, mild, and sunny day! Trev dug about 25 sledge-loads of mud and rock from the end of the crawl which we then hauled back and dumped in the LH passage. Alan, and later, Quackers, prepared the entrance for capping. A very useful day's work. 3 hours 10 mins.

31/12/83: *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes, Fish & Liz [*Jeanmaire*], Sam the dog, Alan, Quackers transported compressor pipes *to the cave* and Trev and Quack played with the drill in the entrance. Ron and his new lady also visited.

Belfry Bulletin No.419, May and June 1983:

Hallowe'en Rift: Further Work by Trevor Hughes

"After a layoff over Christmas, work in and around Hallowe'en Rift has recommenced with greater enthusiasm than before, with more club members getting involved and seeing the first non-BEC members down the cave. Here is a summary of events to date (end of February). It is hoped that more discoveries will be made before this article appears in print.

The surface work has involved erecting a barbed wire fence around the entrance and a compass and inclinometer traverse of the area to establish the exact location and altitude of the entrance. I started the traverse at the 9:2 top entrance of Wookey Hole Cave. My closed loop took in the '22 Radio Location Point' the Hallowe'en Rift survey datum and so back to the 9:2 entrance via the lower field. By taking fore and back sights, keeping my leg lengths as long as possible and using the two short ranging rods as survey stations quite good results were achieved, despite the windy conditions. The traverse length was just over 814m. My vertical mis-closure was 1.20m and the (magnetic) x and y mis-closures both less than 3m. If the

opportunity arises, I will repeat this exercise using a theodolite and ranging staff which will give far better results. Hallowe'en Rift has a map reference of ST53534809 and given that the ground level at the 9:2 entrance is 108.09m OD the survey datum at the rift top is at 133.81m OD (approx. 439ft).

The work underground has proceeded well. I reached a particularly solid section of calcite blocking progress in the dig on 28 Nov 82, the trench being about 1.5m long (see BB No. 416 p20). The offending calcite was broken up by Tim Large on 7 Jan using only 150gm of wonder hammer' and on my next two (solo) trips in mid-January about 1.3m of progress was made. The bang, although not displacing the rock, had set up a large number of readily useable cracks. A hammer, chisel and crowbar were all that were needed to remove the rock. On the latter of these trips, I installed a 25-litre drum, cut in half, as a spoil hauling sledge for the entrance crawl.

A large BEC team comprising 'Quiet' John Watson, Blitz, Rachel Clarke, Rob Harper, and myself carried out a major spoil removing exercise on 22 Jan. Rob aid Blitz, despite coming out with some sickeningly weak jokes also enlarged the end of the trench considerably.

The next trip was nearly a month later on Sat 19th February when J-Rat fresh from his Latin American exploits, returned to the fray. On this trip we were joined by Andy Stafford 'the Grampian Wonder Boy' and Phil 'Tour de France' Romford. To the Grampian Wonder Boy went the dubious honour of being the first non-BEC member down the cave. Progress was slow and tiring as a large slab of calcite blocked the way on, but by clearing away the mud cover the open section of passage, first fleetingly noticed on Nov 7th (1982) could be clearly seen.

The GWB was despatched to find the Moody Sisters (WCC) and suitable quantities of boulder laxative for the metre square calcite block. A hearty 'crump' ended the day's events all was set for the morrow and my thanks to Pete and Alison for turning out at such short notice.

J-Rat, Mac, the GWB and me returned the next day. Pete's bang had totally demolished the block and the debris was quickly removed from cave. Mac had a look round while Tony and me, started chiselling away at the hard strata originally under the calcite slab. This sloped up and away from the trench bottom to leave a 0.2m high slot approximately 0.5m away. This low section continued for about 0.5m and then opened up slightly. I worked on after the others had left until my light gave out. I had opened the squeeze somewhat, but it was still too small to pass. About 4m of low passage could be seen.

Not wishing to leave longer than possible I returned in the week and spent a further 3 hours working away at the squeeze. Luckily, the calcite gave way before my aching arm muscles and I was able to pass the squeeze into the low bedding passage beyond. By shoving stones, mud, and a section of shattered calcite floor aside I was able to progress for 5m in an elliptical passage some 2m wide. I built a small cairn to mark my progress and returned to the entrance end of the trench to pick up the club's Suunto compass and a tape. I surveyed the trench and extension at the end of a tiring afternoon.

I returned the next afternoon with only a limited time to spare and dug my way along an additional 3m of passage visible from the day before in less than 2 hours. The end is still open and is a low arch floored with jumbled rocks and is draughting healthily out of the dig. The limited stacking space will mean that spoil will have to be removed back past the squeeze. The dig also has a slight downhill gradient – Blitz to take note!

Although only 8m of new passage has been entered it is of a passage form, very similar to the Cam Valley Crawl recently discovered by Rob and me connecting 22 to 23. My surface survey

work and recently acquired large scale plans of Wookey Hole Cave show that the present end of Hallowe'en Rift is, with a generous error margin of $\pm 2\text{m}$, only 81m from the nearest point of Wookey 22. Me and Rob are working on a dry connection between Wookey 23 and 24, we have already bypassed the first of the 23 sumps and are confident of eventual success. I need say no more.

Postscript: *Since writing the above article Rob and I have spent another couple of hours working at the dig. We have added another 0.7 metres of passage, dragged back a considerable quantity of spoil, enlarged the entrance squeeze, and can now look along 3m more of low passage, the dig is still draughting. A further solo trip on the March 1st gained another 0.3 m and a clearer view of the continuing passage which widens out after the narrow section marking the dig face at the moment. The draught on this trip seemed the strongest ever."*

Tony Jarratt's Logbooks [Volume 03, 1982 to 1988]:

9/1/84: *Tony Jarratt, Trevor Hughes, Quackers, Edric [Hobbs], (M. Bishops dogs visited). A good day's work clearing rubble, clay, and bang debris from the entrance shaft giving plenty of room for further work and bucket hauling. 11:30 – 4:30pm with some forty or so buckets loads removed. A bit more work needs to be done to clear the floor down to bedding plane level.*

29/1/84: *Tony Jarratt, Trevor Hughes, Edric Hobbs, Gary Lewis. A concerted spoil clearing trip to remove bang debris from Brian Workman and Dave Turner's trip. Thirty or so sledge-loads removed. Gary's first trip for five years! 3 hours.*

25/2/84: *Tony Jarratt, Trevor Hughes, Brian Prewer, Ricky Sellars and Mark ? (both PCG). Continued removing spoil from the end – about 20 sledge-loads shifted. Trevor thinks it is possible to continue by digging and bang is unnecessary for the present. 2 hours.*

26/2/84: *Tony Jarratt, Trevor Hughes, Edric Hobbs, John Chew. More spirited removal – about 12 loads. The new sledge then split, and we jacked it in, leaving Trevor to carry on breaking rock at the end. This place does not improve. 1¾ hours.*

3/3/84: *Tony Jarratt, Trevor Hughes. Trevor had done some exhausting mid-week digging and had passed the terminal obstruction revealing some 15' or so of impassably low crawl leading on. We went down with the hope of passing this low section. I dug and Trevor cleared from behind me. The flat calcite floor was easily broken up and removed at first but soon became well cemented together and bloody tough – very difficult to remove in the confined conditions. I managed to gain some 6' or so and could see an enlargement of the passage some 8' ahead – this appears to be a cross rift. Trev then had a quick bash before we were forced to retire and prepare for the (excellent) Wessex "Balch and Before" party. With either a few hours hard work with hammer and chisel or a banging trip we will be into new ground – hopefully Wookey 22! 2 hours.*

9/3/84: *Tony Jarratt, Trevor Hughes. Trev reckoned that only one foot of chiselling would gain access to the open passage – following a bang by Tim Large during the week. Suitably refreshed we went down with full intentions of reaching Wookey 22. About half an hour's difficult work provided just enough space for me to squeeze through into eight feet of relatively room passage with only a 2" high way on at the end. Thoroughly disappointed we cleared a bit more – allowing Trevor to view the new bit and then headed out. More blasting will be needed to reach the next (possibly)open section some 4 feet beyond the 2" high bit. I hate this bloody dig! 2 hours.*

7/4/84: *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes, Tim Large, Alan Downton (Bedroc), Graham Proudlove (CPC). Trev and Tim used the compressed air drill to put in 2-foot shot hole, which Tim banged. Alan assisted underground while Graham and I looked after the telephone and compressor and mended a fence, collected firewood, etc.

14/4/84: *Tony Jarratt*, Alan (Bedroc), Andy Lolly. Cleared bang debris of previous weekend. Two rabbit sized burrows lead off. Much more banging to be done and little space left for dumping spoil. 1¼ hours.

2/3/85: *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes, John Dukes. This trip heralds a return of interest in this site! Trev and Co had checked the state of the compressor in the morning and so in the afternoon we transported the drill and pipes down the cave and started the compressor. Unfortunately, this ran out of fuel after about two seconds so nothing much was achieved! So little happened that I went to sleep for about ten minutes and Trevor complained about my snoring! 1 hour 20 mins.

16/3/85: *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes, (Alan Thomas). Fixed four sticks of bang in one of the shot holes drilled by Trevor the previous week resulting in a pleasantly dull explosion. The compressor was then turned on to help clear the air. ½ hour.

24/3/85: *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes, John Chew, Edric & Lisa cleared the spoil from the last bang while I wasted my time on the surface for an hour or so.

30/3/85: *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes, (Edric, Al Thomas, John Chew, Simon & Dominic Knight). Six sticks of bang fixed in shot hole drilled by Trevor in his last trip. Dominic let it off, giving a nice dull bang. it is to be hoped that this bang will see us through the calcite blockage and into diggable passage. ½ hour.

6/4/85: (am) *Tony Jarratt*, (pm) with Trevor Hughes, John, Lisa. Walked up to the cave from home and commenced clearing the bang debris. The calcite had been thoroughly shattered and came out like large sugar lumps making digging reasonably easy but spoil stacking a problem. Open spaces began to appear in the debris and after a couple of hours of bloody hard work I reached a point some 8' – 8' in where I could look along the top of a small rift to blackness beyond. It seemed that only one boulder was blocking the way on but I was now too knackered to continue so went out to inform Trev and Co.

In the afternoon and fuelled by my excited description of the discoveries to come, we all returned to the hole. Trev and I cleared a couple of large boulders plus a lot of small ones and Lisa and John stacked rubble back along the passage. Eventually, we could see into an approx. 30' wide, 20' long bedding chamber – unfortunately, only about 6" high with a mud and calcite floor. My initial hopes had vaporised and we can now only progress by digging a trench through the floor, and disposing of the spoil in the sides of the bedding plane. By this time, we were fairly tired out and suffering badly from CO₂ – Trev and I panting continuously and Lisa having a headache. Defeated in our hopes of marching through huge tunnels to Wookey 22 we left the dig and staggered down the hill for tea and a bath. Despite the disappointment of the find it is very encouraging and gets another 25' at least towards Wookey. The draught is also encouraging. A most useful days' work. 3½ hours.

8/6/85: *Tony Jarratt*, Snablet *aka Peter MacNab Jr.*, Biffo *aka Trevor Hughes*. Removed the limited amount of bang debris at the end and attacked the calcite bank with hammer and chisel before deciding that it will need at least one more bang to progress further. 15' of too low passage can be seen and there is a definite cool draught. Dragged out the rock drill, hosepipe, and a couple of loads of spoil. 1½ hours.

1/11/85: Tony Jarratt, Nigel Graham (WCC). The idea was dig the end in preparation for a bang but on arrival we found the Trevor had already done it. Removed a few slabs of calcite from the end then returned to the surface via the lower passage where we had a look at Quiet John's dig. This is a large passage but is extremely muddy and it is difficult to decide the correct way to continue. On the surface we removed the last sections of NHASA compressed air pipe and delivered them to Twin Titties. ¾ hour.

BEC Logbooks: *(the standard of handwriting is not great!)*

22/1/84: A summary of the Christmas period trips up to and including today's successful work.

Trip 1 - clearing spoil from the end – this took quite a while but resulted in the end becoming quite 'workable in'.

Trip 2 – 3 shot holes were drilled in the entrance (4ft in 5 mins) and fired (~ 10oz per hole). The noise was heard in the village.

Trip 3 – started the clear out of the entrance hole – one hell of a lot of rock has been removed.

Trip 4 – a 5hr digging trip cleared out the entrance. It is now quite a sizeable affair.

Trip 5 – Dave Turner, Brian Workman, Chris Castle, Alan Thomas, Alan Turner, Self. The twittering twosome were conned into drilling and loading the hole (4ft ~ 12mins). A successful detonation and a retreat to the house for tea.

28/1/84: solo. Trip to sort out bang debris – rather wet but all of the debris is of manageable size loosening up work undertaken.

29/1/84: J'rat, Edric (*Hobbs*), Gary Lewis (prospective member), and self. Digging at end. Less wet than yesterday, a lot of stuff shifted but lots more still to be moved. One more trip and then we will be ready for shot hole/firing.

25/2/84: Tony Jarratt, Brian Prewer, Trev Hughes, Rick Stanton, Mark ...? A good afternoon's digging. Plenty of shite was removed from the end AND working done I believe that I may have dug past the solid calcite obstruction, and we may be back to good old mud and stones. More work tomorrow will tell.

Various dates: The actors: Biffo, Tim Large and Tony Jarratt. The stage: low, 'orrible, tight, and muddy (badly lit!)

Enter the fair Biffo, stage left: "Alas poor Yorick I knew him Horatio."

Tim (The Local Government Man): Bugger that where do I put the bang? bang & (explosively) BAANNG!!!

J'rat: Ours is reason why, pass the crowbar!

To sum up 'Rat and I have now gained approx. 6m of passage past the area mentioned 25/2/84 and have reached a low chamber. The way on, drafting well, is a small hole requiring chemical enlargement.

[late entry added 24/11/84, Why am I always pissed when I write in this log? Biffo]

Logbook entries by Trevor Hughes aka 'Biffo'

18/3/84: Chris Castle, Alan Bedroc. To the end to try and drill a shot hole by hand. Not very successful. The cave is a thing of beauty and a joy for all time. 1½ hours.

Logbook entry by Chris Castle

7/4/84: Tim Large, Graham Proudlove, J-Rat, Alan (Bedroc) and self. 2x2' deep shot holes (one in calcite floor, one in the roof) drilled and fired. A good thump. 3 hours.

Logbook entry by Trevor Hughes

[Un-named comment – Biffo keep up the good work, with a little more effort your handwriting will soon be totally illegible!]

14/4/84: Alan Downton (Bedroc), J.Rat, Andy Lolley. Went down to clear spoil from previous weekends banging trip. Roughly 2½ - 3 feet has been gained, more banging trips needed. Trip time 1¼ hours.

Logbook entry by Alan Downton

20/5/84: Lavinia Lawrence(?) Q John ('Quiet' John Watson). Dug 13' passage to left of Jayrats dig looks good easy digging. 3½ hours.

27/8/84: Q John and Lavinia. Dug the end passage draught can be felt left to right, 3' of progress was made, although the digging is in easy mud it is hard due to the fact you are flat out. 2 hours

Logbook entries by John Watson

8/6/85: Snablet (*Pete MacNab Jr*), J Rat, Biffo. Cleared bang debris from end and dragged a few loads of spoil to surface, needs more banging. At least another 15' can be seen. Draughting strongly. 1½ hours.

1/11/85: J.Rat, Nigel Graham (WCC). Small amount of digging at end. Site is now ready for a BANG. ¾ hr

Logbook entries by Tony Jarratt

Tony Jarratt's Logbooks [Volume 03, 1982 to 1988]:

31/10/87: (All Hallows' Eve) *Tony Jarratt*, Trevor Hughes, John Chew. Start of the Hallowe'en digging season – on All Hallows' Eve! Put 1 "liver sausage" under calcite blockage at end. Excellent sounding bang. 1¼ hours.

13/11/87: *Tony Jarratt*. Friday the 13th trip to bang Hallowe'en! Laid one "liver sausage" under calcite at the end. Nice quiet thump. Cave quite wet in places. ¾ hour.

4/12/87: *Tony Jarratt*. Yet again ½ kilo "liver sausage" meets its end! Placed it on the conglomerate boulder blocking the way into a small "chamber" that Trevor has reached. Things do actually look a bit more inspiring here at present and there is a good draught. Maybe this is the big one? Extremely quiet bang – only just convinced that it went off at all! Should have knocked shit out of the place. (Eighth trip in eight days – I'm worn out...) [Bloody thing misfired! – see below.] 55 mins.

8/12/87: *Tony Jarratt*. Quick trip to rectify the misfire of 4/12/87. The detonator had dropped off the Cordtex prior to firing due to my using damp masking tape instead of insulating tape (I presume). Taped on another det. and got a very satisfactory thump. Trevor will now be able to clear the debris tomorrow and hopefully enter the small "chamber" beyond. There should now also be room to turn around at the end. Trevor, Pete Glanville, and Jim Dunton were down at the weekend and apart from clearing a small amount of spoil, Pete took several photographs - the first taken in this cave. 25 mins.

13/12/87: *Tony Jarratt, (Jane).* Hangover trip following NHASA dinner! Laid out and successfully fired ½ kilo “liver sausage” on calcite blockage at end of the cave. The rift leading on should now be accessible. Looks good. 40 mins.

23/12/87: *Tony Jarratt.* Trevor failed to turn up, so I struggled alone to place ½ kilo “liver sausage” at the end in a nice hole directly under the calcite floor. The way on is apparently open after about 4’ of calcite covered boulders. Two or three bangs should do it. Crawled back to the entrance with a sledge full of rocks which collapsed halfway! Back again to the end with a new length of bang wire then back out again to fire the charge off successfully. We should be into new passage over the Christmas. 1 hour 20 mins.

24/12/87: *Tony Jarratt, Trevor Hughes.* Yet another “liver sausage” in the rift at the end, after clearing the debris from yesterday’s bang – which had been quite successful. One or two more bangs will be needed to gain access to the passable passage which can be seen beyond. Dragged out two sledge-loads and a couple of large rocks. 1 hour 50 mins.

27/12/87: *Tony Jarratt, Trevor Hughes.* Cleared out five skip loads of debris and fired two “liver sausages” at the end to remove the RH wall and hopefully shatter the calcite covered conglomerate boulders blocking the way on. Double ‘light pox’ caused a few problems. Came out to a miserable, wet, and foggy afternoon – brightened up with French beer and mince pies! 2¼ hours.

28/12/87: *Tony Jarratt, Dave Turner.* Cleared the debris from yesterday’s bang and fired off another kilo. 99% certain will be in next time. Dragged out three skip loads, the bang having demolished the Rift wall. Temporary misfire due to bad condition of white/black wires. 2¼ hours.

29/12/87: *Tony Jarratt, Phil Romford, Trevor Hughes, John Chew.* Yesterday’s bang has shattered the face but not enough to allow entry to the tantalising passage beyond. Very frustrating. We cleared about four skips and a few large rocks. Very disappointing. Needs another bang which we can hopefully get someone to do later today. 1 hour 40 mins.

30/12/87: *Tony Jarratt.* Hungover banging trip – two “sausages” at the end. Next trip planned for tomorrow morning. Only one left before we lose the digging barrel to the Wessex! ¾ hour.

31/12/87: *Tony Jarratt, Trevor Hughes, John Chew, Rich Williams (Dick Fred).* Last ditch attempt this year to win the digging barrel. Dick and I went in first with the *neo solo* (?) pick (which we didn’t really use) I sat at the end and hammered away the debris of the last bang, which had done an excellent job. After about an hour I let Trev takeover and he eventually made the resulting hole large enough for me to squeeze through up into ‘*Domdaniel*’ – a 10’ long, 3’ wide, and 15’ high rift/aven liberally decorated with splash formation and old, dead stal. A long mane of roots hung down from the roof. Unfortunately, there was no obvious way on though the bedding plane may continue below the heap of rock and stal on the floor. There seems to be a slight draught here. Trevor came through after I had enlarged the hole a bit and when John joined us (Dick having gone out) we “celebrated” the discovery with a bottle of sparkling cider. All then retired to the surface dragging skips, bang, rocks, and solo pick to commiserate with each other on the outcome of 5 years digging. Such is the life of a cave digger! 3½ hours.

[According to online sources (Google Search), “Domdaniel is a fictional cavernous hall at the bottom of the ocean where evil magicians, spirits, and gnomes meet.” Slightly curious that during a conversation with Trevor Hughes he, apparently, has no recollection of the name – VS]

4/3/88: *Tony Jarratt.* To assess the possibilities at the end. Took in hammer, long chisel, and big crow bar. Found that someone (Pete Eckford?) had been very busy and walled up the entrance end of Domdaniel chamber backfilling it with rubble I dug up the floor for a little while and added another couple of feet to the wall before deciding that spoil clearance here would be much easier using a couple of gallon paint tins or plastic containers. Not much hope in the floor at the far end as it seems fairly solid just below the rubble – time will tell. Came out dragging a skip load of rubble. Cave quite wet with a big pool at the last low bit. 1 hour 50 mins.

8/8/89: *Tony Jarratt, Trevor Hughes.* Cave completely dry! Trevor drilled 2 shot holes which I filled with 4-ounces plaster. Another 4-ounces laid on LH wall. Sounded like a good one. 1 hour 5 mins.

31/8/90: *Tony Jarratt.* Trevor (Hughes) and Jake (Graham Johnson) had previously drilled six assorted sized holes at the end of the, at presently very dry, dig. I filled all the holes – plus a 4” long natural one – 7 in all and connected them up with Cordtex. The charge was fired from the entrance, and it took a second or two to go off. There was no mighty bang, but a most impressive blast of air and gravel emptied from the entrance rift! Looks like we’re in for another long, hard session of Hallowe’en digging. N.B: 24 oz. Gelamex used in the seven holes. One det. 55 mins.

22/10/90: *Tony Jarratt, Trevor Hughes.* 6½ oz split Gelamex charge inserted in the shot holes and fired using 2 No.8 detonators in series. Cave very dry. No obvious way on. ½ hour.

14/11/90: *Tony Jarratt.* Quick trip on my way home from work to put a N0.8 det in a shot hole which misfired on Trevor – the cord having been crimped. This was easily done though the cave is now damp again. Saw a leech halfway along the crawl! 20 mins.

7/4/91: *Tony Jarratt, Trevor Hughes.* *This followed a trip to White Pit...* Then to Hallowe’en Rift to bang the end for Trevor. The place looks even more uninspiring than usual. There is no obvious way on apart from a couple of minute rifts that Trevor insists draught. He has an even more optimistic imagination than I have! 8 oz. Gelamex (4 small sticks) and 2m Pentaflex in a split charge were lain in pockets in the roof. Back at the entrance my 9v battery failed to fire the charge. Trev went back up with a 24v Bosch drill battery and succeeded in firing the charge “after a bit of coaxing”. I personally think other parts of this cave hold greater promise than the end. 40 mins.

Tony’s next log entry was made following a trip into HR with me and Jake. It is included below for information purposes.

20/12/91: *Tony Jarratt, Vince Simmonds, Graham Johnson aka Jake.* Vince & Jake had re-started Quiet John’s dig in the lower part of the cave – now known under the piss-taking name of “Not the Blank Wall Dig”! A low, muddy crawl had been dug out, but a short section of floor needed banging to progress further. The new BEC (Bristol Exploration Club) Bosch drill was taken in and Vince easily drilled four full length holes with one battery! I then laid a split 6½ oz Gelamex charge using 2m Pentaflex and one No.8 det – fired from the entrance. At the base of the entrance shaft the lads are also digging a crawl. This seems to be the up-dip continuation of the entrance crawl – Not the Blank Wall Dig passage and could be quite interesting. 55 mins.

Sources consulted:

Bristol Exploration Club www.bec-cave.org.uk/category/publications/belfry-bulletin/ Accessed January 2023 (various dates)

Mendip Cave Registry & Archive: www.mcra.org.uk/logbooks/ BEC Caving Log Books 1943-1997 Accessed January 2023 (various dates)

Mendip Cave Registry & Archive: www.mcra.org.uk/logbooks/ Tony Jarratt's Log Books 1964-2008 Accessed January 2023 (various dates)