

Sunday 5th January 2025 Fernhill Cave

Clive and Dave

A short trip to assess how to shore up the roof above the digging area.

First off a quick fettle of the gazebo. A few poles splinted.

At the bottom of the pit no sign of anything having changed. No additional mud or rocks appeared to have fallen either ahead or onto the bags covering the top of the wall and shelf above the digging area.

Measurements taken for a stemple to go across the pit at an angle at about the same level as the top of the latest wall. This will be approximately 600mm directly below the large boulder in the roof. A frame can then be constructed that will bridge from the stemple to the wall and extend over and beyond the wall and subsequently cemented into the wall and infill behind the wall.

Dave will fabricate/modify an acro prop in the coming days such that it can be installed during the coming week. Once installed measurements can be taken for the framework.

Dave.

Wednesday 8th January Fernhill Cave

Clive and Dave.

Due to the impending weather warnings Clive and Dave visited Fernhill late morning as opposed to the usual evening session.

A little more fettling of the gazebo. More snow will soon right it off.

An Acro props supplied by Andy W had been modified with a point on one end, shortened and the square foot plate corners bent up to form a convex surface to allow a better seating surface by Dave.

A 40mm pocket was drilled out with a core drill in the right-hand wall to offer a very secure location for the point of the Acro prop. A 15cm deep hole was drilled in the left-hand wall to take a 30cm length of 17mm bar. The bar was slightly bent to ensure a tight resistance fit when hammered in. The Acro prop was installed with the footplate of the Acro prop, which already had a hole in the centre, placed over the bar to ensure it couldn't move.

The next stage will be to source 4 or 5 suitable 1.2m long steels to lay on top of the Acro prop bridging across to the wall and beyond into the alcove. These will provide a roof to protect the dig site but also a floor on which to stack/cement in rocks to pick up the boulders in the roof.

Dave.

Thursday 16th of January 2025 Carrion Slocker solo

I took in four scaffold poles (1x3 foot, 2x4 foot and 1x5 foot, four swivel clips and one foot-plate and some Postcrete. The cave was pretty wet still and I cleared the surface grill on our 4 inch drain pipe and most of the water went this way; But the cave was still pretty wet throughout right down to the bottom. I fitted one extra swivel clip on the scaffold framework already in situ at the bottom by the dig site, this secured I fitted another 5 foot tube across under the arch and put a

foot plate on the upright tube and 'postcreted' this into position. I then looked at the way on and managed to lever-out one large boulder. My drill, P&F's will be needed for the next visit as there is an angled 3 inch bedding slab dipping almost right down to the gravelly floor; this needs reducing and removing to allow a better view and possible access. I think I am still probably on the Downhead fault line. A smoke test revealed no smoke going above Halfpenny Rift from the dig section which means the smoke is mostly drifting into the dig site, possibly a positive sign. 3 hours.

take care, regards Vogon

Tuesday 21st January Fernhill Cave

Clive and Dave

Six lengths of angle iron taken down to the dig.

Offered up across the acro/stemple and walling.

To level up the wall a couple or three rocks required to be cemented in so Clive resurfaced to mix and bring down a skip load of mortar whilst Dave sourced and cleaned suitable rocks. Rocks cemented in place as a foundation for angle irons.

Next session, possibly Thursday evening.

Dave.

Thursday 24th of January 2025 Carrion Slocker solo

I visited Carrion with a view to drilling the slab, but the very heavy rain made it all too wet, with lots of water running in the field and in Heale stream. So I abandoned the idea of a solo descent to drill, P&F and went home!

Thursday the 30th of Jan 2025 Carrion Slocker solo

I took in my drill, P&F to deal with the slab. The surface temperature was 0°C and the cave was very wet, but not pouring in like the previous week; albeit flowing well in the field stream feeding Carrion and in Heale stream adjacent to it. I cleared the debris grill on our 4" drain pipe and this diverted most of the overflow water from going down the pothole; This takes about 30 minutes to actually reduce in the cave so I still got very wet going down to the bottom. It soon became clear that the cave had recently taken a lot of water from the two recent winter storms. Many floor areas had been washed clean and in the bottom of the dig I had lost a black plastic cementing trowel (still missing) and a 2L water container with water in it, 2 plastic halves of a 5L water container that I sometimes use for small cementing jobs. Fortunately, I had not lost any tools or slings that were stored more securely. I found one 1/2 plastic container just in view and managed to retrieve it with a crowbar, it was full of mud and pebbles. No sign of the other bits at this stage. I drilled, P&F'd the sloping 100mm thick slab perfectly, and it dropped safely to the floor about 150mm (Clive, Dave and Richard et al would have been impressed!). This slab is now relocated as a great step at the bottom of the slope and it just needs a small amount of cementing. Once removed, I could see around another hanging roof slab/block in the way and I could see the other 1/2 plastic container and the 2L water container that had been washed into a corner by the storm waters. I drilled P&F this slab/block with some difficulty and also dropped

this safely to the floor and after a second drill, P&F to reduce its weight I used a sling to pull it all back and stored the biggest lump to one side safely. I split the other lump and I stored these manageable rocks further back in the passage. I then recovered the 2 containers from a corner of the bedding which is about 0.5m high and I gained 1.5m of cave length. The right side of the roof of the dig is a large and very secure dolomitic slab which is reassuring. On the way out I brought out a small trench prop, one not used after taking two in during June 2024. The cave still has a good draft throughout. Upon exiting wet with a very heavy bag (drill & trench prop) it was pleasant to find the sun out and a warmish 9° on the surface for changing by the car. 3 hours.

take care, Vogon

Sunday 2nd February

Fernhill Cave Clive and Dave

Fitted the six lengths of angle iron bridging across between the walled up section and Acro/stemple.

Clive set about plug-n-feathering the boulder on the LHS whilst Dave resurfaced, mixed a batch of mortar to take down.

The angle irons were bedded in with the mortar and a number of rocks placed on top of the angle irons and some thrown to the back of the cavity beyond the angle irons. A lot more rocks will be required to fill the cavity and stack on top of the angle irons to pick up the boulders in the roof.

Hopefully in a few weeks we will have finished the shoring and can get back to proper digging progress.

Dave.

Thursday 6th of February 2025 Carrion Slocker solo

I arrived at Carrion on a very cold morning, frosty grass right across the field and a fair water flow from the field into our 4" drain, but thankfully it was not overflowing today. A good flow in the Heale stream too. I took down cement and a survey line to measure the bottom section. I cemented the bottom step firmly in place. My measurement estimates below Twopenny Rift were rather short; Twopenny Rift to the small chamber with a muddy shelf is actually 5m, to the bottom of the engineered slope and steps is another 5m and to the end of the cave in the muddy, pebbly bedding is another 4m. The end of the cave is named Three-way Drain as the small stream that I was following turns left and has a tiny cross bedding stream from the right joining it. All the water flows into a very small 3-4" high bedding hole on the left and this water probably drains over into the Merehead Quarry catchment that is pumped over to Whatley Brook (not proven but most likely), or possibly back into the Downhead fault line or into the lower reaches of Heale Farm Cave. This activity has finalised the digging in this cave and it just requires some equipment clearing out. I will check the final description in due course, I have updated my Grade 1 survey.

Final overall length 144m (468')

Final overall depth 54m (175')

Take care, regards Vogon

Wednesday 5th February Fernhill Cave

Clive and Dave

Clive continued plug-n-feathering the boulder in floor on the LHS.

Dave mixed two skips of cement mortar and took them down.

More rocks, including the plug-n-feathered rocks were thrown to the back of the cavity, a few more were cemented into position where possible. Remaining mortar used to consolidate the rocks on the angle irons.

More of the same to follow on Saturday.

Dave.

10th Feb 2025 Willet's Lane Hole solo 2 hours

My last visit to Willet's was in August 2018 some 6.5 years ago. It appears that no one has been there since. Also, I did not write up the extensions, albeit I did do a rough survey at the time. This visit I took a couple of photos in the Main Chamber (upper) just inside the two entrances and one in the side passages' small chamber (Rushton's Chamber) carefully avoiding the ten or so roosting lesser horseshoe bats, and I noted two great a horseshoe bats at the far end of Bargain Basement Chamber (lower) and took two photos in Crackpot Rift; noting how awkward and tight it is at the bottom to get out of (I used a short webbing ladder to assist) and avoided going through the next tight squeeze into PVA Chamber (so named due to the consistency and stickiness of the mud therein). If I go again I will take my drill, P&F to enlarge this lower squeeze; this is probably a summer job as there is lots of sticky mud now and also visible water running in the base of Crackpot Rift below the rock steps.

I dropped into Waldegrave Estate Office after getting changed to see if Edward W had received my request to visit Dudwell Farm Shaft to measure and photograph it and his Personal Assistant confirmed it had been received.

Take care, Vagon

### **Fernhill Tuesday 11th February**

Clive and Dave

Dave had modified another one of Andy W's Acro props to make a stemple which involved cutting it down to 750mm (+/-50mm), cutting and welding each end to a point. Down the Pit two 40mm holes drilled to accept each end of the stemple. Stemple installed to secure the boulder in the roof ahead (to the North). Clive meanwhile mixed up a batch of mortar and lowered it down to the Pit in three skips. The mortar mix was used to consolidate the infilled rocks in the alcove above the shoring.

A couple of 1.2m lengths of 75mm angle iron are now required to bridge between the newly installed stemple and retaining wall of the alcove. Dave.

Saturday 15th February Fernhill Cave

Clive, Meg & Dave,

Before heading over to Fernhill Clive, Meg & Dave liberated some hefty angle iron (that may come in handy for future shoring) that had fallen from aloft during one of the recent heavy storms.

On over to Fernhill for repeat performance of the previous few sessions.

Photos taken before 12 skips worth of rocks collected from South Passage and stacked and thrown to the back of the alcove. By the end of play the alcove filling is near complete, with just the facing wall to build up with flat rocks mortared in to pick up the boulders in the roof.

A couple more lengths of angle iron still required to fit.

Dave

Wednesday 19th February Fernhill Cave

Clive and Dave

Two skips of cement mortar mixed and used to grout in the previous sessions rocks. A couple flat rocks cemented in on the front edge of the alcove as foundation for two lengths of angle iron (still to be procured).

Dave.

Friday 21st February 2025 Carrion Slocker Cave Solo

Final clearing out of cave – I went down to the bottom of the cave to clear out all the digging paraphernalia - 3 unused scaffold poles, a spade, a crowbar, 2 drag trays, 2 small cementing pots, a short garden hoe, a three-claw digging hoe and various other small things. It was good to see the surface drain working well with the heavy rains and the six-foot drain at the bottom slope also working well, capturing most of the cave stream water in the digging area. I bolted two scaffold tubes together and with these, the two drag trays and a very heavy bag it took two hours to exit up all at the climbs etc. There is still surface to tidy up in the swallet to complete.

take care, regards to all Vogon/Andy W

Saturday 22nd February Fernhill Geoff and Dave

Half bag of cement, two 1m lengths of flat steel bar (100mm x 10mm) courtesy of John G, and a 0.6m length of 40mm angle iron taken over to Fernhill.

Dave descended with the steel work whilst Geoff mixed a bucket of mortar and followed on down with it.

The two lengths of flat bar (8kg each) were persuaded into position bridging between the latest stemple and alcove wall. This took a lot of jiggling and fettling to fit them in due to a lack of space to manoeuvre them. The bucket of mortar was then used to bed them in.

Test fitted the shorter length of angle iron on the opposite end of the stemple and alcove wall.

Wednesday 26th February **Fernhill - Wednesday 26th February** Clive and Dave

One skip of cement mortar mixed and taken down.

A few more rocks cemented in on top of the flat steel bars.

Bucket of rock/rope washing water tipped, bucket to surface and cleaned. Fresh water and bucket to be taken down next session.

Ladder from below the entrance pipe removed for cleaning and inspection. Ladder cleaned and found to have significant rust and deterioration of the wire in a couple of places and therefore declared as U/S. We now require a replacement ladder for next session.

The spoil bags on the surface have once again been flipped for further rain washing.

Dave.

Ps. Next session will be Sunday afternoon to continue cementing rocks to pick up and shore up the roof boulders.

Back on the surface all the spoil bags that have been washed in the rain were turned inside out such that the forecast Sunday rains can further wash them off.

The shorter ladder from the Ledge in the rift was also removed for cleaning and inspection.

Dave.

Thursday 13th March

Fernhill Cave Clive and Dave

Note that there wasn't a session on Saturday 9th March.

This week's midweek session was moved to Thursday afternoon due to Clive and Dave's availability.

Three skip loads of cement mortar plus rocks from the bottom of entrance rift taken down The Pit. The main threatening looking roof boulder now picked up on the shoring. There still remains some minor shoring and finishing back filling the cavity.

There is a football size rock in the back left (NE) corner that may just be held in by the mud that probably need to be removed.

Dave.

Ps. I'm not about for the next week or so inc probably Saturday 29th.

28th of March 2025 Carrion Swallet

Paul & I cleaned up the surface swallet hole removing all digging bits from the surface to leave it clean and tidy. Paul kindly painted both swallet gates with wood preservative. There are still 3 pipes and two Dexion lengths to put on roof rack and remove to MNRC.

I will issue a final description once i have validated it

Regards Andy W

Saturday 29th March

Fernhill Cave Clive, Geoff and Dave.

Two skips of cement mortar and two skips of building rocks taken down, all of which were jigsawed into place. Barely enough room to get either one arm or head through the small opening at the top, therefore most of it was done by eyeballing where rocks and mortar were to go, retreating and then working blind one handed. Filling the cavity seemed to be akin to a cross between a dental surgeon and a blind bricklayer.

Geoff joined the party a little later than Clive and Dave, but just in time to source some rocks from Main Chamber/Crawl.

The main boulder that was causing concern is now secure with a small amount of infill, a short angle iron to place and bit of grouting still to do which can be done on a Wednesday evening when digger numbers are limited.

Digging at the bottom of The Pit can now recommence, starting on Saturday 5th April.

Dave.

Wednesday 2nd April Fernhill Cave Clive and Dave

A few more rocks plus two skips of cement mortar taken in.

Last few rocks cemented in placed in the roof of The Pit and a lengthy of angle iron cut and grouted in to pick up the rock in the roof on the left-hand side.

With the roof now secure, we can return to digging ahead and in the floor of The Pit. Plenty of mud to dig out and rocks to reduce with plug-n-feathers.

Firstly there is a football size rock probably just held in place with mud in the right-hand side corner about 2m up. A bit of gardening in this area is probably required.

Dave.

It has to be added that Dave has seriously underplayed the effort that he has put into this task .....

He has utilised Andy's Akro props along with serious pieces of angle iron and copious quantities of rock and concrete to make the place as safe as it could possibly be in the circumstances.

The latter stages of the job in particular were exceedingly difficult and uncomfortable working by feel, perched on a ladder, placing rocks and cement above his head in a space which ended up just big enough to turn his helmet around in.

So thank you Dave - we're couldn't have done it without you!

Clive

Dave, Geoff and Clive

Back to digging again! After a break of around three and a half months or so it was good to get back to battling with the mud at the bottom of The Pit!

Conditions were dry in the cave with a strong outward draught and the compacted mud in the dig, although not wet, proved as claggy as ever.

Geoff and Clive both had a good go at the fill with Dave hauling up to the main rift. A new innovation in the shape of a short steel ladder was positioned on the ledge half way down The Pit to stop the skip from becoming stuck under the overhang there on its journey up. This proved to be very effective and eased the hauling operation.

By the time 37 bags had been filled the big block in the floor had been shown to be apparently sitting on an even larger slab. The top of that second boulder will probably be the new 'floor' level for the time being at least while we work forwards.

Before finishing Dave fashioned a rock to a suitable size and shape to fit perfectly on top of the secondary steelwork inserted on the left side at the top of the rift, opposite to where the recent supports have been put in. This just needs a bit of cement grout sometime to finish the job.

The obvious loose rock and mud just ahead in the rift wall was also brought down. In due course a short stemple or two and some rock and grout will be put in to finish securing it.

All the bags were taken to the surface and emptied. Due to staff shortages there will be no digging next weekend. Dave is away this Wednesday as well so probably digging unlikely then too although I may go along and attack the buddleia at the back of the surface tip to ease spoil dumping,

Clive

**Fernhill - Tuesday 15th April 2025** Dave and Clive

A short trip to utilise one skip of mortar and some very carefully selected rocks to finish off the roof support (at last!).

The tape measure came out in preparation for a short stemple to go in under some potentially unstable blocks on the right wall just ahead. Nothing like the risky stuff we have been dealing with over the past three months!

Clive

**Wednesday 23rd April Fernhill Cave** Clive and Dave

Dave fitted a stemple to pick up the football size rock in the North corner to prevent it and anything behind or above it dropping out. In due course the mud around it will be removed and it will be cemented in along with a few addition rocks.

Clive then set about plug-n-feathering the large boulder on the left. Dave stashed the broken up rocks on the shelf near the top of the rigid ladder to be used later to further secure the North corner.

Next session on Saturday 26th will be breaking up the last chunk of boulder, followed by digging and hauling out the mud infill.

Dave.

### **Fernhill Cave Saturday 26 April 2025 (pm) Clive, Geoff, Dave**

Clive first plug & feathered the remains of the large boulder in the dig. The others relocated the pieces to a ledge near the top of the climb for possible future walling use. Then all combined to dig out 35 loads of mud and relocate this to the surface. Making space rather than going down. Dave heroically hauling throughout. An open crack was exposed between the next boulder and the left hand wall.

Geoff

Saturday 3rd May Fernhill Cave

Geoff, Rich (surface duties) and Dave

Since Geoff was running a little late Dave went ahead and started digging. Geoff arrived as Dave was filling the last few bags.

Geoff then loaded whilst Dave hauled the spoil out of the Pit. All the bags were then hauled to the surface in one shift. Geoff guiding the skip from the bottom of the Entrance Rift and Dave on winch duty. This worked surprising well with only a couple of hiccups. It was a bit more effort for Geoff guiding the skips with the haul down rope and a bit more effort for Dave on the winch to overcome the tension being applied by Geoff. This saved double handling the bags to the ledge and then the surface which would've needed two shifts since not enough space for number of bags.

Rich then arrived and helped empty the 47 bags of spoil.

Dave popped back down to inspect a rock in the roof of the undercut on the left hand side to see if needed to be brought safely down, but it appears to be very secure and can stay where it is. Whilst there a large rock in the floor was reduced with club hammer.

Ahead, a gap is getting a little bigger between the clay infill and the low roof.

Dave.

Wednesday 7th May Fernhill Cave

Dave - solo

Dug and bagged up 30 bags of spoil. Manhandled them up to the bottom of the Entrance Rift.

Both ahead and to the Left there is an undercut to the walls with a gap between the bedrock and clay/mud infill of up to 25cm for a distance of about a metre or so.

Dave.

Ps. Clive unavailable this weekend - Dave and Geoff on duty - anyone else interested?

Saturday 10th May Fernhill Cave Geoff and Dave.

Dave on winch, Geoff loading/guiding skips. 30 bags of spoil hauled to surface from the bottom of the Entrance Rift. Whilst Dave emptied the bags, Geoff continued digging in The Pit. A further 22 bags filled, hauled out and emptied on the surface. Total bag count 52.

In other news the scrotes have revisited the quarry.

The cement bucket had again been opened and a load of cement dust poured in through the hole at the top of the entrance cover. Dave was able to clear up some of the cement dust that was all the way down the concrete pipes and a pile at the bottom of the pipe.

Before leaving site Dave and Geoff removed the cement bucket, mortar mixing saucer, trowel and shovel. Leaving only the skips and empty bags behind. Also poured a load of water down the entrance pipe to wash off and/or consolidate the dust.

Dave.

Ps.Dave not about next Saturday (17th) - can't recall whether Clive is available.

Watch this space.

Monday 12th May Fernhill Cave

Dave - solo

A quick trip to install a scaffold clamp to clamp the lower end of the surface hauling jib to the inside of the concrete pipe to prevent the scrotes from pulling it out. Also fettled the Pit hauling krabs.

Dave.

**Fernhill - Saturday 24th May 2025** Geoff, Dave and Clive

Geoff had first go at the end coming to terms with the exceedingly claggy clay (consistency not unlike damp Plasticene - I'm sure it would make great pottery clay!) Clive acted as 'bagman' feeding the filled bags into the skip for Dave to haul up to the main rift.

What seemed to be a large rock started to appear in the floor on the left hand side which made a change from the endless clay.

Clive took over and revealed another two big blocks in the floor, taking up most of the initial available floor space.

There is still plenty of clay to be removed dead ahead – it will be interesting to see what is revealed.

The undercut on the left goes in for around 6 feet with a mud floor – whether this is all mud or whether there are more boulders there remains to be seen.

Either way, there is still plenty of mud and rock to be brought out!

By the end of play over 60 bags made it to the surface thanks to Dave's hauling prowess. Getting

the clag out of the bags proved to be the most difficult part of the whole operation!

Clive

### **Fernhill - Wednesday 28 May 2025**

Dave and Clive

Dave was already beavering away at the bottom, after an early start, when Clive arrived.

The evening was spent with Dave clearing around 40 bags of clay from the dig before hauling them up to the main rift. They will be ready and waiting for the next hauling session up to the surface.

By the end of play the difference at the end was very noticeable but there is lots more clay to come out and before long there will be boulders to remove.

Interestingly, we noticed that on the top of the clay bank ahead there was a half inch thick layer of flowstone so that clay with the airspace above has been there for quite a while.

Clive is not around for the next week and will be back for Wednesday the 11th.

Clive

### **Fernhill- Sunday 15th June** Geoff, John and Clive

The approximately 40 bags of spoil left by Dave and Clive last time in the main rift were hauled to the surface and, with some difficulty (!), emptied.

John on winch duty, Clive on the ledge and Geoff at the bottom loading.

A return is planned to fill more bags on Thursday....

Clive

### **Fernhill - Saturday 26th July** Geoff, Dave, John and Clive

With half a dozen bags from Wednesdays session languishing at the bottom of the dig John had a long overdue session digging while Clive loaded the skip for Dave and Geoff to haul up to the main rift.

After a changeover of digging and hauling teams attention turned to hauling a grand total of 61 bags and three loads of rocks to the surface.

In the dig itself things are looking up- almost literally! The still draughting low opening ahead had now revealed a higher level up to the right where some stals and flowstone can be seen. Difficult to be sure of the height but it gives an impression of maybe a metre.

Great to have something more substantial to aim for at last and it draughts!

More to do midweek.....

All best

Clive

Thursday 19th June Fernhill Cave

Clive and Dave

More of the same - all bags now filled with spoil and stacked at the bottom of the dig ready for hauling out. Beneath the very sticky clay the infill is a little more gritty/sandy and drier, hence less claggy. A couple of small rocks pulled out and a large rock loosened ready for popping along with the much larger boulder beside it.

No digging this weekend, usual session on Wednesday evening.

Dave.

Ps. Anyone else interested in joining us down Hobnail Hole to stabilise the boulder in Butts'?

**Fernhill - Thursday 26th June** Dave and Clive

The previous session's 40-ish stash of bags and rocks were hauled up by Dave to the entrance rift before a plug and feather session on the big rock on the floor of the approach to the dig.

Then followed some shothole drilling in the big rock in the floor of the dig and one that Dave had dug out last time.

Two small charges were fired which should have suitably cracked up the big rock for further attention.

While drilling it was noticed that the drill dust was flowing gently away from the dig face and a very slight coolness could be felt as well.

On Saturday the main chore will be hauling the bags to the surface....

Looking ahead - next weekends session will be on Sunday 6th.....

Clive

**Fernhill - Saturday 28th June** Geoff, Dave and Clive

While the sun beat down, Glastonbury Festival rumbled in the distance and the horse flies got to work Geoff and Clive headed underground to load the skip while Dave entertained horse flies in between hauling on the winch.

60 loads this time (apparently it was 50 bags we dug out last time not the 40 I mentioned previously). 10 of these were rocks.

The entrance rift is now completely clear and awaiting the next load to be brought from the bottom.

Thursday's bang had done a brilliant job and there's now a large pile of freshly broken rocks awaiting removal on Wednesday.

Clive

Wednesday 2nd July Fernhill Cave

Clive & Dave

The previous bang had done a good job of breaking up the rocks up in to manageable sizes without too much gravel being produced. Approximately 30 skip loads of rocks, 10 of which were bagged up, were hauled from the Pit and stacked at the bottom of the Entrance Rift.

Digging soon filled the remaining spoil bags which are now waiting for hauling up out of the Pit. A few rocks also wrangled out.

At the dig face the air was cool and fresh with a definite draught easily detectable from between the mud floor and the roof ahead.

Dave.

**Fernhill - Sunday 6th July** Geoff, Dave, John and Clive

Approx 60 skips of mud and rocks were hauled up in two sessions, first from the entrance rift and then from the dig itself.

John hauling on the surface with Dave assisting throughout, plus a session in the cave, with Geoff and Clive loading etc underground.

The next session is planned for next Sunday....

Clive

Wednesday 16th July Fernhill Cave

Clive and Dave

Between 30 & 40 spoil bags filled and stacked at the bottom of the pit for hauling out on Saturday.

The mud/clay infill is a lot drier and much easier to dig. Ahead we have horizontal development with a sculptured solid roof with the draught still apparent from ahead.

Dave.

Ps. Digging as usual on Saturday afternoon.

**Fernhill Cave Saturday 19 July** Dave, Clive, John G, Geoff

Started with John & Dave hauling and bag emptying until 15 bags of mud had been emptied, Clive on the naughty step and Geoff loading. The 15 bags were then sent down for Geoff to fill with mud at the face and John left alone to haul on the surface whilst the other two assisted in the transport of the remaining 31 bags of mud to the surface. When the 15 bags were full they

were hauled up to Main Chamber by Dave who then went to the Naughty Step, whilst Geoff loaded and John and Clive hauled and emptied. So those with the maths that is 61 bags of mud to the surface.

The view ahead when digging activities had ceased as follows: The airspace above the mud and rocks continues to proceed ahead in the rift under a solid, scalloped roof. Despite the airspace becoming very small, there was a draught.

In my inexpert opinion the draught was too strong to be purely from Duck's Pot and may connect with the rift beyond The Curtains and with Fairy Cave. Whether we connect with Duck's Pot digging this way is anybody's guess. What is almost certain is that this is not going to connect with the aven climbed by Fred Davies all those years ago. That probably lies directly below Main Chamber straight under our fixed ladders.

Geoff

To Add, Rich also joined the surface team of Clive and John and helped to empty spoil bags.

Dave.

### **Fernhill Wednesday 23rd July**

Dave and Clive ably assisted by Adam, Danielle and Annie (sorry I don't know the surnames!)

Having survived a jam packed car park due to a large contingent BEC members we headed underground with Dave leading the visitors first Curtain Chamber for a look while Clive started filling bags in the dig.

The visitors then all took turns at the face while Dave and Clive oversaw hauling operations to the surface. A respectable total of 14 bags made it to the surface leaving a few still at the dig face waiting for the next session on Saturday.

Clive

### **FERNHILL SURVEY 30/07/2025 Clive, Dave & Duncan**

Duncan arrived just as Clive was leaving the car park - Dave was already underground. The survey was started using a prominent roof feature above the shaft which also afforded a shot across to a similar feature at the end of the route into the main Chamber (both points were stations from a previous survey of the dig done 16 June 2023). Once the dig had been measured, a further series of shots were taken into the Main Chamber from where it possible to hear Dave and Clive clearly below. On looking down the side rift from the Main Chamber it was possible to see lights so the survey was continued downwards. There was evidence of flooding at the base of the rift and by climbing up a couple of metres and looking over a stalagmite Duncan could see Clive over the mud fill in the dig a two metres away. Dave came around to look before we packed up and went to the pub.

(I'll sort the survey data out later)

Duncan

Wednesday 30th July Fernhill Cave Clive, Duncan & Dave

The 50 or so empty spoil bags that were left to dry on the surface after Saturday's session were bundles and taken down along with a container of water to refresh the rope washing bucket.

Clive started digging a wrangled out the large rock from the right-hand side of the dig face. Whilst Clive continued to dig Dave clubbed the rock to a more manageable size.

Meanwhile Duncan commenced surveying starting with the bottom of the Entrance Rift to enable the survey to tie with the previous survey data from 2023. Digging paused whilst Duncan pushed the survey to the dig face. Clive then continued digging and Duncan continued surveying in to Main Chamber where he could clearly hear Clive and Dave's voices emanating from the old Rift Dig at the bottom left of Main Chamber. Descending the rift a visual connection was made with only a couple metres between Duncan and Clive. Dave then joined Duncan to view the connection. The connection viewed from the Rift Dig end is an almost vertical slot between bedrock/boulder/calcite slope about 30cm wide and a couple off metres off the floor.

The draught we have experienced is almost certainly a circulatory draught via Main Chamber.

It would be possible to continue to dig the connection but there is no point in doing so.

First task on Saturday will be to haul out the 20 or so bags currently stacked at the bottom of the ladder in the Pit, followed by "where to dig next?".

A couple of options:-

Dig down through the floor at the current dig face.

Continue straight down at the bottom of the Pit ladder.

Dave.

**Fernhill - Saturday 2nd August** Geoff, Dave, Rich and Clive

At the base of The Pit there were around 20 bags left over from the last session which needed to be hauled up to the main rift for starters.

Whilst doing this the rigid ladders were repositioned, i.e. the shorter top one exchanged for the longer bottom one which made hauling better but not necessarily so for climbing!

This done the intrepid trio then set about attacking the new dig site, i.e. straight down if slightly offset at the of The Pit.

The obvious large boulder had been sitting there for awhile was crowbarred out of the way to await a bang this week. All the remaining available bags were then filled with clag uncovering another large boulder in the floor.

This is likely to be the situation for the foreseeable - boulders surrounded by clay. Banging and plug and feathers will need to be employed more often.

Attention then moved to hauling around 60 bags to the surface (Dave on winch, Clive on the naughty step and Geoff loading at the bottom).

Rich arrived in the nick of time to help with emptying the bags - a job he obviously relished!

The midweek session this week will be on Tuesday when we will deal with the big boulder.

Clive

#### **Fernhill - Tuesday 6th August** Dave and Clive

This session was all about clearing mud from around a big boulder in the floor before banging both it and the large freestanding one leftover from the previous session.

The previously uncovered sloping bedrock floor below the ladder was re-uncovered and it appears to be continuing down at an angle below the big boulders. It will be interesting to see what transpires next.....

22 bags worth of mud and a few rocks were hauled up to the main rift ready for their trip to the surface at the weekend.

Both rocks were duly banged before the usual trip to the pub for rehydration.

Clive

#### **Fernhill - Saturday 9th August** Geoff and Clive

Tuesdays bang had done an excellent job of demolishing the freestanding boulder and of breaking up the majority of the large one which was sunk in the floor.

After a brief session with the lump hammer to make the bigger bit fit into the skip better Clive hauled to the main rift with Geoff loading below adding more bags of mud in addition to the rocks.

By the end of the session, the bags and accumulated rocks had been added to those we had dumped on Tuesday.

There's now a need for another major hauling session to the surface - hopefully this weekend.

At the bottom of The Pit there remains one block which needs some plug 'n feathering. More mud removal and no doubt another bank will be needed.

Geoff reported that the slanting bedrock floor was carrying on to the north and we need to open up the floor below the acro prop.

Clive

#### **Fernhill - Saturday 16th August** John, Geoff and Clive

A hot day for surface winch work but a good cold draught from the entrance no doubt helped John while winching.

Just for a change Geoff and Clive reversed their usual roles loading skips and shepherding the loads past the Naughty Step.

Around 60 bags hauled to the surface from the entrance rift along with maybe another 10 loads of rocks. All bags laid out in there sub for drying.

At the bottom of The Pit there is one rock needing p&f attention plus a bang is needed on the next big rock down in the floor. In addition it would be good to remove some of the big rock immediately above it leaving enough if it to maintain stability in the rift. Jobs for midweek.....

Clive

**Fernhill- Saturday 23rd August** Geoff, Dave and Clive

Dave and Geoff removed a Baker's dozens-worth of spoil from around the big boulder in the floor before Clive plug and feathered the large rock left over from last week.

A substantial bang was set in the next very large boulder sitting in the floor and at the same time the large boulder jammed in the rift above was reduced (hopefully) by about a third.

The next session will be on Tuesday when there will be a lot of rock to shift!

Clive

**Fernhill – Tuesday 26th August** Dave, Adam, Andy & Clive

Last weekend's bang had been incredibly successful with a large pile of shattered rock awaiting attention.

Adam and Clive loaded the skip at the bottom for Dave and Andy to haul up into the main rift until unfortunately Adam sustained a nasty cut to a finger and had to return to the car park with Andy for some first aid. Both then promptly returned to the fray.

Around a dozen bags of rock reached the surface leaving a large amount of rock still to be hauled from the main rift.

At the bottom, the larger of the two blasted rocks turns out to be at least 5 feet deep. A large part of it has been removed - just how much more remains to be seen.

It looks as though we're going to have to remove the whole thing rather than leaving some in situ.

Hauling and banging would be on the cards for this weekend.....

Clive

**Fernhill- Saturday 30th August** John hauling, Geoff and Clive losing etc....

Approximately a dozen skips of rocks etc moved to the surface before Geoff headed down The Pit to do some pre-bang clearing. About another dozen bags were produced before John and

Clive headed down to start drilling for the bang.

John had a good look at the left hand wall against which the, now somewhat shattered, boulder rests and voiced concern about its stability.

Dave and I had been previously aware of joints in the rock face both across and a couple of feet behind the face. John quite rightly pointed out we couldn't tell how much if any support the big jammed boulder was giving to the face on the left. Maybe nothing at all, but as that face is also undercut by several feet there is enhanced risk it might drop if we bang the big jammed rock.

The feeling is that two or three acro props across the rift should at least stabilise it in position while the jammed rock is removed.

A second opinion from Dave is needed before we do anything else. Needless to say, the bang was abandoned for the time being!

Before finishing Geoff's filled bags of mud were winched up to the surface. Communications were a little tricky due to the noise of heavy rain on the gazebo and in the cave things were getting a bit drippy!

Clive will be out of action for the next two sessions - mid week and weekend. Waiting to hear when Dave is due to return to the fray from up north.

Clive

Saturday 6th September

Fernhill Cave

John & Dave

A short trip planned to assess the left-hand wall to see if shoring required before further removal/breaking up of large boulder.

Viewing the undercut in the left-hand wall behind and beyond the boulder it was quite apparent that the boulder was not offering any support to the left-hand wall and both John and Dave agreed that the left-hand wall is bedrock and no further shoring required.

Whilst there it was possible to rock the large boulder with crowbar. It was also felt that as well as digging down, it may well be worth further investigating digging out beneath the left-hand wall where there is already a gap above the mud infill going back more than a metre. This would be fairly easy digging once the boulder is reduced/removed.

On the way out the bang wire was retrieved.

Dave.

**Fernhill - Wednesday 10th September** Dave, Adam and Clive

Adam's finger happily had recovered enough from his previous experience at Fernhill to allow him to join us.

He soon set to prising rock out of the floor of The Pit where the rock had previously bitten him. Dave excavated more mud from around the big block and Clive hauled the spoils up to the main rift.

After a team changeover three holes were drilled in said block whilst 16 bags of mud were taken to the rain sodden surface. Around a dozen rocks await a similar fate next time.

A satisfactory bang rounded off the evening. A return is planned for Saturday.

Clive

Saturday 13th September Fernhill Cave

Clive and Dave

Wednesday's bang had done a good job of creating a lot of manageable size rocks, a few larger rocks that required reducing with lump hammer and not too much small gravel.

Dave having arrived a little early began bagging up the gravel and mud spoil and stacking it along with the rocks at the bottom of the lower ladder ready for hauling.

On Clive's arrival Dave hauled whilst Clive loaded. Approximately 50 skip loads of loose rocks and bagged spoil were hauled and added to the rock pile already at the bottom of the Entrance Rift.

Clive then plug-n-feathered a couple of the larger rocks whilst Dave continued to bag up more spoil from around the boulders in the floor. End of play was declared when no more bags were available to fill.

With approximately 20 bags in The Pit and a further 60 or so loads at the bottom of the Entrance Rift, the next session or perhaps two will be predominantly hauling.

Any additional hauling and winch operatives would be most welcome.

Dave.

'One hundred not out!' - a record breaking evening when we managed to haul out exactly 100 skips of rocks and mud!

**Fernhill - Wednesday 17th September** Adam, James Maillardet, Andy, Dave and Clive

With James loading at the bottom of The Pit, Adam hauling up into the main rift, Clive loading the surface skip, Andy on the ledge and Dave winching it didn't take too long to exhaust the pile of bags at the very bottom. This enabled James to carry on digging while we all 'moved up one' to haul the large pile of spoil up to the surface.

By the end of play all had been cleared but in that time James had added around another 25 bags worth which await us at the bottom of The Pit next time. His efforts revealed another large slab just to the north of our current excavation whilst the undercut on the right hand (east side) continues down with a healthy fill of gritty, pebbly material.

The extra time involved meant Dave and Clive had to beg for entry to the locked and barred Oakhill for rehydration!

Clive

**Fernhill- Saturday 20th Sept** John and Clive

Approx 30 bags of mud and several of rocks were hauled up by John to the main rift from the bottom of The Pit (left over from the previous session).

Three holes were then drilled and fired in the next big block in the floor to allow more access to the interesting uncut under the right hand (east) wall.

Clive

Wednesday 24th September Fernhill Cave Clive and Dave

A new skip haul down rope taken in and old ones removed.

A bracket installed on the underside of the wall foundation steel on the left-hand side to support the lower ladder section.

Saturday's bang had produced some large sections of rock which were broken up and stacked on the ledge at the bottom of the pit.

Now the floor in the Pit is getting lower, measurement taken for a longer ladder.

An early retreat to the Oakhill. Dave

Ps. I'm not available this Saturday (Hidden Earth). Anyone else available to join Clive in a hauling session?

**Fernhill - Wednesday 1st October** Adam, Dave, Andy W and Clive

Having fettled the positioning of the ladders down into The Pit around a dozen skips of rocks and bags of mud were brought up into the main rift to join the pile already residing there.

The large rock in the floor which had been holding up operations was P&F'd and removed.

A useful session then ensued with Adam uncovering the interesting undercut on the right hand (East) side at the bottom. Unfortunately this revealed a vertical rock wall a few inches in!

Further removal of rock in the floor then revealed a much more interesting undercut which is worth investigating. Having said that the chances are that it is under a rock slab rather than solid - we'll have to wait and see.

There is now a very large pile of spoil awaiting hauling to the surface. The plan at the moment is to work at this on Saturday- availability and weather permitting.

Clive

Sunday 5th October Fernhill Cave Clive and Dave

A 4.5m builder's ladder taken in to make access to the bottom of The Pit easier and also to ease skip hauling. The ladder replaced the shorter builder's ladder and was suspended from the bracket installed the previous week. A further bracket was bolted behind the ladder for stability and additional security. The new set up was tested and worked well guiding approximately a dozen or so skips of spoil hauled up that were added to the huge stash at the bottom of the Entrance Rift.

The very short light weight ladder can be used to climb down the last metre or so into The Pit and then stashed out of the way whilst digging etc.

The now replaced short builder's ladder was taken to the surface and stored beside the entrance pipe in case required in future.

The undercut on the right-hand side (with back to the ladder) reported last week now appears to be a less of an undercut and is possibly either bedrock or a large boulder.

Next session:-

Clive is unavailable this coming Wednesday. So currently it will be just Adam and I. Hauling from the bottom of the Entrance Rift is possible with just two, but very hard work. Is anyone else available Wednesday evening for a hauling session. I'm happy to operate the winch unless anyone else particularly wants to, so the other two tasks which are the easier options are loading the skip and guiding from the Ledge. Any additional help would be very much appreciated.

Dave.

A slight correction (!)

The undercut on the right hand side is under the boulder/bedrock

and is hidden at the moment under accumulated fallen mud !

Just sayin'!

Clive

Wednesday 8th October Fernhill Cave Adam and Dave

An early start since Adam landed straight from work.

With some tweaks to the hauling technique it was fairly straight forward to haul in one from the bottom of the Entrance Rift. A mega hauling session with a total of 104 skips of spoil hauled to the surface, split approximately half and half between rocks and bagged spoil.

With a little time still in hand all the bags were emptied too.

Dave.

Saturday 11th October Fernhill Cave Clive and Dave

Arrived at the quarry car park to find a van blocking the car park gate.

Dave headed off into the quarry to see if it was a climber's van. In the meantime two relative youngsters appeared from above the car park after realising we weren't going away and required

access. Transpires they were cutting up and pinching logs from Hobbs' land above the car park. A few diplomatic words were had and they headed off.

Back to Fernhill.

Clive and Dave took it in turns to dig and haul up from the Pit. By the end of play approximately 55 bags of spoil and a couple of large rocks were hauled and stacked at the bottom of the Entrance Rift.

The bottom of the Pit is pinching out with what may be just large boulders. The undercut on the right when standing with back to the ladder may still have some potential.

Dave.

Wednesday 15th October Fernhill Cave James Maillardet, Clive and Dave

Before winching, James and Dave visited Curtain Chamber.

A hauling session followed. 61 skip loads spoil hauled from the bottom of the Entrance Rift.

James loading, Clive guiding on the ledge and Dave operating the winch.

Clive then assessed the bottom of The Pit and agreed that although there is possibly some potential in digging the slight undercut to the right (East), the more promising option is to go West following the water worn roof.

Dave.

Saturday 1st November Fernhill Cave

Geoff and Dave

Done the bottom of the Pit Geoff and Dave took turns digging more mud out from between the boulders at the bottom. Approximately 25 bags of spoil stacked on the two ledges behind the Pit ladders. A vertical slab was uncovered measuring approximately 40 x 30 x 15cm, although not huge it was very difficult to extract due to the very cramped working space. It required a rope sling and hauling out with the skip hauling rope. The slab was then hauled up to the entrance rift in the boulder net.

The bottom of the Pit is closing up with large boulders/bedrock. I think we need to rethink where we dig. If we decide to rule out the bottom of the Pit and follow the water worn roof on the left/West, the Pit could perhaps be back filled which would make for relatively quick and easy progress.

Assessment on Wednesday.

Normal service has resumed, digging sessions this coming Wednesday and Saturday.

Dave.

**Fernhill - Wednesday 5th November** Adam, Alex, Dave and Clive

All headed to the bottom to appraise the possibilities, or lack of them!

The undercut area to the right (east wall) might still have potential with a rounded boulder in the

way. To work there though will need quite a bit of the large boulder, jammed in the main part of the rift, to be removed to allow room to manoeuvre.

The alternative was to look at the west side of the rift where the mud fill comes up to within a few inches of the waterworn roof.

While Clive loaded the skip with the stacked bags from the last session for Dave to haul up into the entrance rift Adam and Alex dug into the left hand mud bank to see what was there.

About a metre in a solid vertical wall was hit rather than the half expected continuation of the roof. Another probe was made further along the passage with the sand result. So no go there then.

The test of the evening was spent hauling approx 45 bags to the surface - an exhausting evening all round!

The next session will therefore involve a bang to ease the access to the undercut.

Clive

Following consensus that it was worth progressing the pit, but with there being little to usefully do without chemical persuasion to widen the base, Alex and I set to digging and probing into the mud bank under the left hand wall. Three holes were dug extending up to a couple of feet into the bank, proving what appears to be a solid rock wall under the overhang which is just off vertical. Detail of the connection is obscured by calcite, so not yet clear if there is a discontinuity there in the rock.

The sediments are clearly water laid and were becoming sandier and more clearly laminated towards the base. In the first hole we dug under and removed an interesting piece of calcite that seems to have formed as a pool in the sediment before being covered over. Perhaps 2' by 18" at largest extents, but now in two pieces. I'd like a better look at it so have left it in the main chamber end of the dig for next time - please don't smash and dispose on Saturday!

I'm interested in taking out another section in the floor of the first cut into the mudbank to see what happens underneath and whether we are on to more boulders.

Ad

Saturday 8th November Fernhill Cave Geoff and Dave.

No hauling and no space to dig at the bottom of the Pit, therefore drill and bang was the order of the day.

First a few photos were taken.

1. Looking North towards the link with old dig in Main Chamber from the bottom of the ladder. On the left, just before the spoil bags is where Adam and Alex on Wednesday dug an exploratory hole.
2. Exploratory hole - unfortunately a vertical wall was soon met with a calcite layer between roof and the vertical wall.

3. Looking down into the bottom of the Pit from the bottom of the ladder. Note the lump hammer, the direction we plan to go under the East wall.
4. Standing room only in the confines at the bottom of the Pit.
5. Two holes drilled and popped in the boulder (middle bottom in photo) in the North wall of the Pit to create some working space.
6. One hole drilled and the boulder popped in the bottom of the Pit.

Three holes drilled, two in the boulder in the North wall of the Pit and one hole drilled in the boulder to the East in the floor of the Pit. None of the three holes that were approximately 450mm deep went right through the boulders. After setting off the bang, Geoff and Dave took approximately 30 of the spoil bags and washed them in a puddle in the quarry floor.

Dave.

RIP Val Littler wife to Tony and friend.

### **Fernhill - Saturday 15th November Dave and Clive**

After all the rain we half expected to find the cave flooded but no, just very damp....

The idea had been to drill and pop the three boulders hampering access to the new dig site at the bottom. Unfortunately the business end of the drill bit decided to come adrift half way into the first hole. No spare with me so mission abandoned this time.

Dave dug a few bags of slurry from the bottom and these were removed to the main rift to await removal to the surface along with the bags from last Wednesday evening. The aim would be to have a go at this on Wednesday next.

One strange thing to report was that someone has removed the bags that we had left carefully laid out on the spoil heap to be washed by the rain! Weird!

Clive

Jim and I collected those bags up on Wednesday as you and Dave were heading down. Dave told us it needed doing! They are bagged up at the base of the main rift.

Ad

Wednesday 19th November Fernhill Cave

Adam and Dave

A chilly evening as the temperature had dropped to just below zero.

A total of 50 skip loads of rocks and bags were hauled to the surface with Dave loading and Adam on surface winch duty. Both then descended to the bottom of the Pit to find a small pool had formed due to the small trickle of water running in.

Final task was back to the surface to empty the spoil bags.

Dave.

Ps. Neither Clive or Dave are available this Saturday.

Wednesday 26th November Fernhill Cave Adam, Jim, Clive and Dave

At the bottom of the Pit a small puddle had formed. If deemed necessary this could be pumped or bailed out if the weather turns a lot wetter.

Whilst Clive drilled five holes in the three boulders on the North face of the Pit, Adam and Jim dug and filled 16 bags with spoil from behind the boulders and Dave stacked them on the ledge beside the rigid ladder. Clive finished charging the holes whilst the other three hauled up the pit and then on up to the surface. All bags emptied and boulders in the Pit remotely reduced.

Should be plenty of rocks and rubble to dig out on Saturday.

Clive and Dave rehydrated at the Oakhill, joined by Gav and Pat (Gav's mate who lives locally) Deposit for Christmas dinner paid and menu selections passed on.

Dave

Saturday 29th November Fernhill Cave Geoff, Clive & Dave

A welcome surprise visit from Rich, not to dig but Xmas cards delivery.

Wednesday's bang had the desired effect of nicely breaking up the three boulders to create a larger working space.

Bags filled, larger rocks reduced with lump hammer.

Plenty of bags of spoil, probably around 30 - 35 bags plus 15 - 20 skips of rocks all hauled to the bottom of the Entrance Rift.

Back on the surface, the previous session's emptied bags were taken down to the quarry floor and washed.

Plenty more still to dig out and bag up in the Pit (some empty, washed bags available on surface), plus bags and rocks to haul to surface.

Re tools. Neither the yellow handled lump hammer or the short crowbar could at first be found, later the lump hammer was located buried in the gloopy mud just beyond the Pit, the whereabouts of the short crowbar is still unknown.

A reminder therefore at the end of a digging session to stash all tools together out of the mud and clear of the dig face, where they are unlikely to get buried should any mud slump in.

Dave.

**Fernhill - Wednesday 3rd December** Adam, Jim and Clive

A hearty evenings work clearing the entrance rift of last Saturday's spoil. Adam hauled in total 71 skip loads to the surface including around 10 fresh ones which we had filled at the bottom of The Pit.

Sadly, the wet weather had caused a continual seepage of water which had softened the mudbank to the left and above the dig causing quite a lot of slurry to pile up on top of the soil already waiting to be cleared.

Adam bravely volunteered to clear this while Jim hauled it up to the entrance prior to clearing it to the surface.

We now need to stabilise that area which might be accomplished most easily by a cemented rock wall.

This will have to be our priority for Saturday.....

Clive

I should point out that I only hauled 51 skips from the main rift to the surface. Jim hauled the remaining 20 that we filled from the pit first to the rift, and then to the surface.

Adam

Saturday 6th December Fernhill Cave Geoff, Clive and Dave

2 bags sand, 1 bag gravel, 1 tub of cement and the mixing saucer were taken up to the entrance in preparation for the anticipated wall building.

All three went down to the bottom of the Pit to assess options.

To try and reduce more mud from slumping down and to better expose bedrock and or large boulder to build upon, a number bags were filled from the left-hand side (West wall). Spoil was also dug out from lower down exposing a large sloping boulder near the bottom of the Pit that would serve as a suitable foundation stone. In total 16 bags of spoil were hauled and emptied on the surface.

In addition the misplaced short crowbar was located.

Dave.

Ps. Obviously no digging this coming Wednesday evening, instead we might move it to either Wednesday afternoon before our Christmas dinner or Thursday morning. Watch this space for update.

For some reason Wednesday evening digging was moved to Thursday morning :-).

Thursday 11th December. Fernhill Cave. Geoff, Clive and Dave.

Let walling commence.

A skip load of cement mortar mixed and sent down along with drill, angle grinder, length of steel rod and numerous rocks. Fortuitously rocks with parallel faces had previously been put to one side as they were hauled and unloaded on the surface. This made finding suitable wall building rocks a relatively simple task.

A large rock/calcite, that probably came up in the boulder net fitted nicely into the larger hauling skip and turned out to be ideal for bridging between the sloping boulder and bedrock, forming a stable foundation for the walling. This also meant that our original plan to pin with rods the rocks onto the sloping boulder as well as cementing in place wasn't necessary, therefore angle grinder, drill and rod were not required.

It didn't take long to cement in place half of the rocks that were sent down and a second batch of mortar was soon required and the remaining rocks built in to the wall. By the end of play the wall was already approximately 30cm high with a volume of around 0.1 cubic metres (3 cubic ft).

Final task was to wash the mud laden spoil bags in one of the large puddles in the quarry floor.  
Dave.

Ps. This weekend we shall be digging/walling on Sunday afternoon followed by the usual session on Wednesday (17th) evening.

Saturday 13 December Fernhill Cave Clive and Dave.

Two skips of cement mortar mixed, plus several skip loads of rocks lowered down to the Pit.

Wall building continued with few more courses built up.

The puddle that had formed in the undercut at the bottom of the Pit had all but drained away, likewise the larger puddle just beyond the Pit had significantly reduced.

A gravel run will be required from quarry for next session on Wednesday.

Dave.

Fernhill Wednesday 17 December Clive, Dave, Adam and Jim.

Gravel run from the quarry completed.

Three skips of mortar and half a dozen skips of rock lowered down the pit.

Wall raised by a few more courses,

Bottom of the pit looking pretty dry.

Dig dates over the Christmas period to be agreed.

All the best,

Adam

Saturday 20th December Fernhill Cave Clive and Dave.

Approximately eight skips worth of rocks and three of cement mortar mix relayed down in four stages to the Pit where wall building continued. Before continuing with wall building, one skip load of mud was cleared off the bags that were there to protect the wall should any mud slump down.

By the end of play the wall had reached a height about 1.4m.

Wishing all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Dave.

Ps. no midweek digging this coming week, watch this space re next weekend between Christmas and New Year.

