

# Cumberland Valley Caver

*published by*

## Franklin County Grotto

September 2011

# CUMBERLAND VALLEY CAVER

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## FRANKLIN COUNTY GROTTO

An Internal Organization of the National Speleological Society

Vol. 12, No 3

September 2011

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Franklin County Grotto meetings are held the 3rd Monday of the month. The location has been changed from the New Franklin Fire Department, New Franklin, PA, to the Franklin Fire Dept at 158 W. King Street, Chambersburg, PA 17201. The meeting starts at 7:30 PM. Both grotto caving trips and smaller individual trips are planned at these meetings. All members are invited depending on their ability to safely participate. You must attend at least one vertical training session in order to participate in vertical trips. Visitors are welcome. Contact any of the above individuals for more information or email [fcg@karst.org](mailto:fcg@karst.org).

The Cumberland Valley Caver is published a couple of times per year by the Franklin County Grotto PA. All cave related articles should be submitted to the editor for publication. The contents of this publication are not copyrighted unless previously copyrighted by the author. Material from this publication may be reprinted by other official organizations of the National Speleological Society without prior permission provided credit is given to the original author and this publication, and the article is not changed in anyway. Other interested parties must request permission in advance. Franklin County Grotto actively participates in a newsletter exchange program. All exchanges should be mailed to: Ken Jones, 4446 Duffield Rd, Chambersburg, PA 17201. Information regarding exchanges should be coordinated with editor so the exchange list can be updated.

Cover: **Hanging Dong, the largest formation in Butler/Sinking Creek System.** Photo by Andy Filer

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See the entire newsletter in **COLOR** on the website  
[http://www.karst.org/fcg/fcg\\_newsletters.htm](http://www.karst.org/fcg/fcg_newsletters.htm)

**From the editor...** Convention, OTR, Nelson's Pit, Little Pit, Corker Hill, Frustration Pit, Aqua, Butler dig, Picnic, Left Tit Pit, Bradshaw Run, My Cave, Simmons-Mingo, OTR and lots of vertical practices and vertical caving.(and a few other side trips) Lots of caving for both new and not so new members. We even had Glen in cave for 7 hours. His first trip underground in many years. He said it was the first time he'd ever used electric light instead of carbide.

FCG received some recognition at the national level this quarter. Pat Minnick received his NSS Fellowship award at the convention in Colorado and Gordy received a T-Shirt Salon merit award for the MAR T-Shirt design he put together for out spring MAR at Shade Gap, PA.

We have incorporated something new in this issue. There are some embedded links to videos taken on the butler trip. It took some research and testing but we think we've got it working. In the issue posted to our website just click on the links to see the "Air Dig" in action on the Butler Trip. I will attempt to collect a video or two for future issues.

I'd like to thank Andy, Gordy, John, Todd, Pat, Don, Steve, and Dane for articles, pictures, quotes, printing, distribution assistance and web support used in getting this issue out to our members and friends.

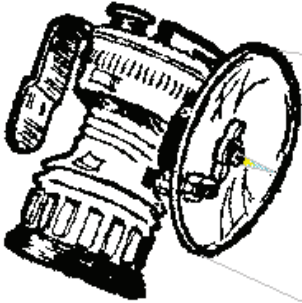
**Ken Tayman, Editor**

# Speleo-Spotlight...

John Boswell

NSS # 62808

FCG # 236



**M**y first contact with John was last November, via an email advising he wanted to join the grotto and asking about attending a meeting. He had not done any caving (except day dreaming about it) and was up for any training, projects or trips that might be coming up.

He had always been interested in caving, but just never found the friend or contact that could get him involved. While doing a little research he came across the FCG web site with its newsletters and pictures and then got in touch with the grotto. Ever since then he has been caving full throttle!

He has only been caving ten months, but has gotten a good taste of a variety of caves. His first wild trip was McAllisterville. Lots of chimneying. It worked him out pretty good. He hasn't really had any really scary trips yet, but going through the "Keyhole" in Ruperts was really tight and uncomfortable and left him sore for a few days. John is a pretty big guy and you can tell he is enthused by just how hard he pushes through those tight spots.

So far his most memorable cave is Carpenter/Swago. He was attempting a through trip (from the Carpenter side) during a full flood event. The 150' entrance shaft with water flowing in, huge passage, and the roaring in-cave waterfall impressed him! The water was running so hard that the cross-over trip didn't happen because the Swago team couldn't negotiate the waterfall from that side. So John got to climb back up the Carpenter Shaft. He said that was "quite a workout".



**John after exiting Nelsons Pit** Photo by Andy Filer

Some of the other Caves John has done includes: Nelson's pit (70'), Left Tit Pit (40'), one hour intro trips into Simmons-Mingo and My Cave, 7 hour Butler trip, Aqua (upper section 25' vertical), Hesston, Halls, Fantasy, Whittings Neck, Fantasy and plenty of other smaller PA caves. Not bad for only ten months caving!

He attended the University of North Carolina at Wilmington where he majored in partying with a concentration in surfing and minored in academic failure. He likes hiking, camping, fishing, recreational shooting, grilling, and drinking. Not necessarily in that order. He works for the Department of Defense as a financial management analyst.

*by Ken Tayman*

# Nelson's Pit/ Little Pit Trip

June 11, 2011 by Gordy Ley

Having missed the chance to do Nelson's Pit at the MAR, I was looking for an opportunity to add this cave to my list. John Boswell wanted to do Nelson's as well. Andy Filer had done the trip at MAR, and had given me pretty explicit directions. John Appleby's brother owned Little Pit, so we had a good connection to gain access there. This would make a good pair of pits for a day trip.

I pulled out about 8 am with Ken Tayman and Dane Wagle. After a slight delay trying to hook up with Steve Isch (didn't happen), we were on our way. Pat Minnick, John Boswell, and David Morrow (the Irish Caver) met us at 1000 Steps. We were running about 30 minutes behind, and got a call from Andy wondering where we were. Not to worry... Andy was there, and already had the pit rigged! Andy's climbing influences were apparent in his rigging, with multiple, equalized anchors, and in-line rope pads. Andy dropped first, on his belly. Pat followed and had a bit of trouble passing the pads. We pulled the pads up, and replaced them with a rubber pad on the ground. Much easier to pass. I think the



David Morrow "abseiling" Nelsons Pit. *Photo by Andy Filer*

rest of us entered the tight little squirmy entrance hole on our backs. It's a tight little twisty hole just to get through, and as soon as you duck your head to get around the root, you are ON ROPE! 65 feet up! Very smooth rap on Andy's nice clean white rope! Well, at least it WAS! A surprise awaited at the bottom of the pit. A possum had fallen into the pit, and was in the lower reaches, somewhat subdued, but very much alive! Pat exited

immediately to get a duffel bag to rescue him. Bag in hand, we tried to roust the critter, but he went deeper into his hole. I knew there was a reason that he had that prehensile tail! I grabbed his tail and dragged him out, and in spite of his resistance, got him into the sack. 'Possum on rope! The climb out was very pleasant. A nice free climb, showing layers of rock, etc. It seemed like a lot higher than 65 feet while hanging on the rope! Getting back through the hole, again on my back, presented very little problem. As you get up into the hole, a convenient spot to place your foot is right there.

When we released the possum (we called him Nelson), he obliged us with a very by-the-book 'playing of possum'. After that, he staggered a couple steps,



Dane exiting thru 55 gallon drum at Little Pit. Photo by Andy Filer

and then loped off, (unfortunately right back toward the woods and the pit), seemingly none the worse for wear!

We gave John Appleby a call, and headed for Little Pit. A stop for a sandwich had us a little behind time, and John was waiting for us when we got there. He had done some recon as to the best way up to the cave, and actually drove us up in the bed of his truck! We found the cave easily, and opened the nicely designed gate over the steel drum entrance drop. The first 15 feet is a rebar ladder, but we got on rope from the get-go and rappelled on down the approximately 30 foot entrance drop. At the bottom, there really isn't much passage. It was kind of small, sticky, and muddy to get around with our vertical gear still on. As we prepared to climb out, the rope apparently dislodged a rock (more of a slab, really), which made some very commanding crash, bang, and thuds on the way down, narrowly passing by Ken's *good* leg! No one was hurt, though!

As we got back to our vehicles, we got to meet James Appleby, the owner, and had a nice chat. We got changed just before a thunder shower finished off our day. A good day's caving! □

# Corker Hill

When we dropped off the proposed MOU to WASHCO on March 17, Adam Shaool asked if we could do another trip, this time to Corker Hill. We jumped at the opportunity to introduce the owners to the Cave. During the prep for this trip we also got permission to go out to the caves and relocate the entrance and clear some brush from orchard road and trails to cave.

**June 25, 2011**

We had a good turnout for the brush-busting detail. Perhaps the promise to do the caves afterward helped with the numbers. FCG members present were Pat, Dane, Todd F, Ron, Drew and his dad Val, Steve, Katie, Gordy, Ken T and Howard.

Spent hour + hacking, chopping and trimming brush and limbs from orchard drive. We were surprised it took another 30 minutes to find the cave entrances. Hacked our way to the entrances. Gordy had GPS coord for the entrances but didn't bring them because didn't think he'd need them.

After brush detail everyone did Frustration Pit and several did entrance to Corker Hill.

\*\*\*\*\*

July 16, 2011

We met Adam and his friend at the cave. FCG members on this trip were Pat, Gordy, Andy, John



Pat lowering himself down into the slot. *Photo by Gordy*

and Ken T. Gordy/Pat rigged the cable ladder and hand line for the entrance drop.



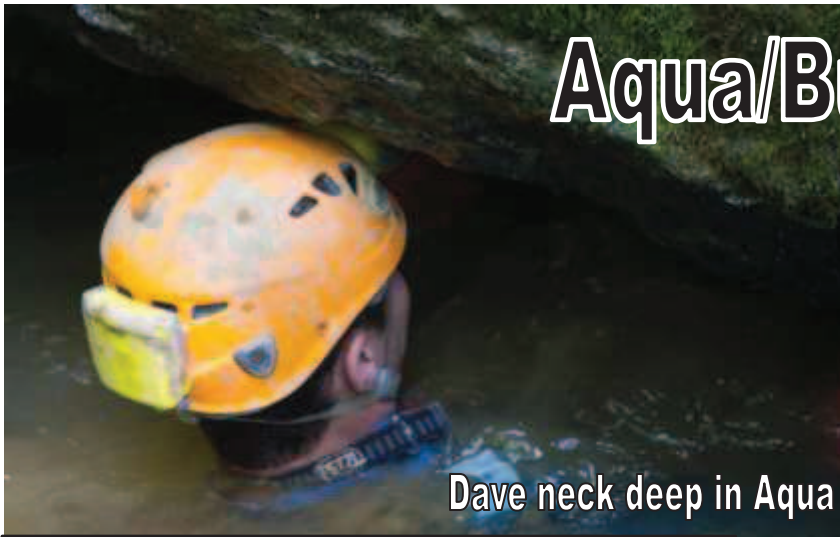
Todd at top of slot, checking out the eight foot drop below.

*Photo by Gordy*

First time on ladder for Adam and friend. They looked like they were enjoying themselves. It was also the first time in this cave for John, Andy and Todd. The big room was much smaller than I remembered. (seems all the caves I revisit are smaller!) Found our way down to the formation room. Climbing back up through the "slot" was fun as usual.

Good trip. Continued to build good relations with the cave owners. □

# Aqua/Butler



Dave neck deep in Aqua



Ed & Dave in Butler



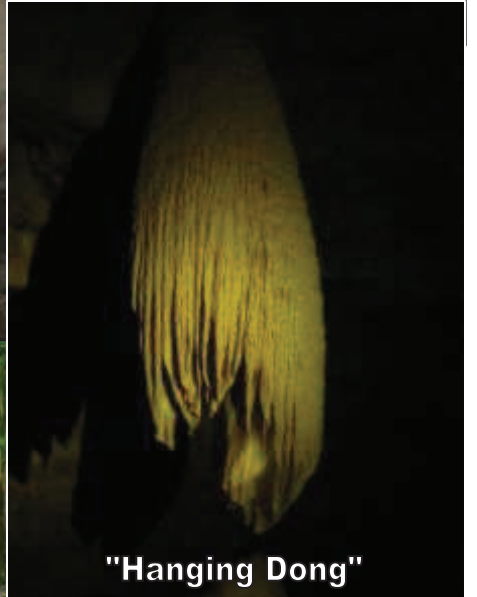
"Air Dig"



Ken just inside Aqua



Steve getting wet



"Hanging Dong"



Andy pushing rope



Aqua spring

# Lockridge Aqua Cave Trip Report

*By Andrew Filer*

**O**ur trip to Aqua cave began early August 12<sup>th</sup> when we all met up at the McDonalds in Greencastle to convoy down. John Boswell and myself were the first to arrive, and were welcomed by the senior citizen mafia enjoying their dollar menu coffees, surely bought with the lavish social security checks our government provides us. Shortly afterward Dane Wagle, Pat Minnick, Gordy Ley, and Ken Tayman arrived, and then we were off. A couple hours and many conversations later we wound down the gravel road to the parking lot for Aqua.



The entrance room from the inside looking out.. The water is about four feet deep near light beams. *Photo by Gordy*



Dane, waist deep in 55 degree water.

*Photo by Gordy*

While we were prepping gear for the cave we noticed a late model car roll in, and several teenagers walk into the woods with flashlights. We started walking to the cave and soon noticed our ill prepared companions had plans to explore “the water cave”. Ken gave them some good advice, we stripped down to our shorts, and went for a dip. Fortunately the entrance had a foot of airspace to make our chilly start a bit more tolerable. We waded over to a sandbar and put our cave suits on. Someone had mentioned that this was a particularly dark cave, and they weren’t kidding. The near black walls seemed to devour the light even the mighty Sten light put out. A short walk brought us to the boulder and “low angle” scramble needed to access the bolts for our ascent.

My intense fear of heights coupled with standing on Gordy's back (on top of the boulder above the stream) made the high angle scramble rather unpalatable. That said, it was climbed, and everyone made quick work of the ascent.

The upper level of Aqua is apparently little known despite the rather expansive amount of passage that it contains. Several short climbs and crawls brought us into the Really Big Room. We found several nice formations, and a few promising leads. John probed a lead by textbook chimney technique, and we all explored the area for an hour or so. On the way down through the Nervous Breakdown Room we found a partially decomposing bat, the cause of death unknown.



Andy, climbing the "Nervous Breakdown Climb" Photo by Gordy



John, reaching the top of 25' climb on rope that Andy hauled up and rigged for the rest of us. Photo by Gordy

We attempted to double rope rappel down to the stream, but the ship rope (as Dave Morrow would call it) prevented us with micro racks to do so. We rigged a pull down single rappel and descended to the stream below. On the way out we noted that the water level had dropped at least a foot since our arrival. After we made it out we were greeted by a group of church camp counselors who were doing a scouting trip to the cave. Gordy also attempted to dive the sumped entrance, but muddy water precluded him from doing so. We made our way back to the parking lot, changed, and admired the nice suspension bridge across the stream. After a short dinner we head over to setup camp outside Butler cave. □

# Butler Trip

July 12-14, 2011 by Ken Tayman



Front L to R: Anne, Ken, Pat. Rear (Left group): Todd, Graham, Steve, Glen, Justin, Lauren, Ed. (right group) Dane, Drew, Dave, John, Andy Photo by Gordy

We have several new members to the Grotto and for some, also new to caving. After several months of crawling around in a bunch of small, wet, muddy PA caves, I wanted to get them into something BIG! I got with Ed Kehs (BCCS) and asked if we could do a combo work/tourist trip into Butler Sinking Creek? He agreed and said he'd like to get back to his project way back in the cave. If we could get enough cavers, we could work on the "Air Dig" about a 1/2 mile in, while he took a few *slender*, faster people another mile deeper into the cave. We had 15 Franklin County members (including a few guests). This would give 13 for the air dig plus 2 to assist Ed.

The original plan was to enter via the historic entrance, rappel the 30' entrance shaft, do the down-climbs and chimneys, circumnavigate the big room, hit the rabbit hole, cross the step-across and down to Sand Canyon. However we had issues with the lock on the historic entrance gate. There seemed to be something in the lock which prevented inserting the key. So, after several attempts by a couple different teams, we decided that we would all enter via the newer dug walk-in entrance just 100' from our camp.



Cable for hauling dirt. Photo by Gordy Ley

Only three of us, out of the fifteen FCG people, had been in the cave before. So it was basically a tourist trip for everyone as we worked our way about a half mile into the cave. Lots of big walking passage with just a few breakdown climbs. I think it was a nice slow 45 minutes to the "Air Dig" which is just a little ways past the "Moon Room". A nice break down climb took us up about 40' above the stream to the entrance of the dig. Here is where Ed, Dave and Andy separated from the main group to continue into the cave about another mile to Ed's project. (See Andy's report page 14)



Dane & Todd digging and loading dirt at end of dig.

*Photo by Ken Tayman*



Drew crawling in to assume duties at transfer point. Here he loads buckets onto the trolley to be hauled out to dumpsite. *Photo by Gordy*

I had worked on this dug about 18 years ago with John Wilson as our sponsor. At that time the dig was only about 30+/- feet into the horizontal crevice. I think we pulled 25 *boats* of dirt then. I was really impressed with the progress made since then. I would guess the dig is now 300 feet back into the crevice. This would be a very long and difficult drag for the boat. So they have strung a cable along the wall and ceiling most of the way back to the actual dig. Then a platform is hung on pulleys and the rectangular shaped box is strapped on, and then it is reeled back into the dig where it is filled and then reeled out and dumped. About 50 feet from the dig, the bucket is removed from the cable, hooked to a strap and manually hauled the rest of the way.

It took about 7 or 8 people to run the dig. Two people to dig and fill the bucket, one to haul the bucket 50 feet to the end of the cable, then hand up to another who loads the bucket onto the cable. There is one or two people who pull the bucket along the way toward the front. Another pulls the rest of the way, dismounts the bucket from the cable and hands off to the last person who carries the bucket a short distance and dumps the load.



Ken T at dig point, using an entrenching tool.

While one group was digging, Pat took some first-time Butler Cavers on 1 1/2 hour tour to the "Moon Room" and "Hanging Dong", the largest formation in the cave. When they returned, they relieved the diggers, and Pat took the rest on the tour.

When finished digging, we had hauled out 65 buckets of dirt, clay and rocks. estimating at least one cubic foot per bucket, that would be the equivalent of more than two cubic yards removed.

Photo by Gordy Ley

Not bad considering the actual digger is lying down, while digging and then hauling each bucket about 300 feet.

By now, Ed, Andy and Dave rejoined the group and we started heading out. We took our time and enjoyed the walk out. All in all a great trip for all.

Great campfires. Great company. Great Conversation., and great weather until about 11:00 PM Saturday night when we had a cloudburst that continued until 3:30 AM.

We considered a Sunday morning tourist trip but reconsidered when we determined it would be hard to do the trip and also get out of camp by noon. Dave and Steve decided to do the lower section of Aqua Cave (just a few miles from Butler) on the way home,

Thanks Ed, for setting us up on this trip, We all really appreciate your support. □

*check these video links to see the dig in action:*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sy1D3Q82sU>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpErV7lf\\_94](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpErV7lf_94)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrkB0TqJQtE>



Gordy at transfer point loading bucket onto trolley Photo by Ken T

## Butler Cave Trip Report (addendum)

By Andrew Filer

After our adventures in Aqua cave, we got to the real purpose of our trip, Butler Cave. We decided Friday night that we would split into two groups with the main group working on the air dig, and Ed Kehs, Dave Morrow, and myself working on a lead Ed was pushing in the Evasor Gallery area. Saturday morning we headed into the cave and started the walk to our days' work. We dropped off the main group at their project, and we *sprinted* away towards ours. On the way to our dig we passed many exceptional formations and received a thorough education on the caves history from Ed.

After much walking we finally started the final crawl to our dig, it was cozy to say the least. We got out the drill and micro shaving equipment and got to work. Ed quickly discovered that the rock that blocked our path was rather crumbly and not a good candidate for micro shaving. We got the drill out and went to town. That lasted about ten seconds when the battery died, luckily we had another. The second battery didn't even turn the drill bit. After a bit of conversation, we concluded that while the batteries were freshly charged, may have good bad due to their age and use. Ed and Dave proceeded to work by hand until no further effort would be of use. So we shrugged our shoulders and headed back to help the main group.

On our way back we explored several side passages and took a look at a lake that had the remains of a failed attempt to drain it in the past. We finally made it back to the main group and took a rest. Due to a weeklong climbing trip (which got rained out unfortunately), I decided to head out early. Ed led Dave and myself to the Moon room on my way out. After taking pictures of the rather spectacular formations I made my way out. A quick shower and I was on my way home, through what turned into the storm of the century (or so it seemed) for almost the entire drive back to Hershey, PA. □

## Patrick Minnick NSS 20099RL (FE)



**Congratulations to Pat on his recent selection as Fellow of the National Speleological Society. He was presented his award at the annual national convention in Glenwood Springs, Colorado.**

**His expedition to Iceland, multiple trips into Lechuguilla, Chairmanship of the Pennsylvania Cave Conservancy, ER-NCRC staff membership, and varied challenging caving experiences. all contributed to his selection.**

**Pat is Franklin County Grotto's first "Homegrown" fellow. GOOD JOB Pat!!! □**

# "QUOTES" of the Quarter

"Possum on rope"

*AF re possum rescue at Nelsons*

"Old Cavers go slow"

*DW re slow climb out of Nelsons Pit*

"If I shut my eyes, then I couldn't see myself in the mirror"

*JB re sleep/relaxation techniques*

"I found the other shoe."

*JB re search for SI's belongings strung along I-68*

## NSS Convention T-Shirt Salon

Gordy submitted his FCG Grotto 30th Anniversary Spring 2011 MAR T-shirt for consideration.

He received a Merit Award!!!

Good Job Gordy!



## FCG Picnic 2011

*July 30-31*

Picnic at the Rouzerville Hunt Club came off well. Not a large turnout (16), but a good combination of active and retired cavers. Glen's stories were well told as usual. Howard fired off his *black powder canon* three times. John and family brought the bean bag toss which was a nice diversion. Pat sort of claimed the record with three consecutive bags through the "*Bull's-Eye*" hole. Todd F furnished a record amount of corn on the cob which he cooked up on his deep-fry turkey cooker. Everyone enjoyed tracking down the little green spider eyes on the "*Spider Hunt*." Thanks to Anne, Diane, Pat and Howard for behind the scenes efforts. About 6 members continued the tradition of the "*Midnight Hike*". □

## Cleversburg Sink

Current water level

As of September 7, 2011, the water level in Cleversburg Sink was:

Up to the old gate

>>In the entrance room

Top of ladder

Mid-ladder

3<sup>rd</sup> rung of ladder

Base of ladder

Knee deep

Sand room sump

2<sup>nd</sup> crawl sump

Dry



Hurricane Irene's and TS Lee's 2 weeks of **heavy** rain and related floods has Byrd Run going "full force". Even though we did not actually open the gate and climb down, we feel assured that Cleversburg Sink is completely flooded at about 27' to 30'. Verified by Ken Jones and Ken T.



# Dry Branch/ Elk River Valley

July 8-10, 2011 by Gordy Ley



Gordy getting ready to drop into Left Tit Pit (aka LTP) photo by John Boswell

In early July, we made a trip to West Virginia to explore some caves in the Dry Branch/Elk River Valley. This trip had been postponed from June. After meeting Steve Isch and John Boswell at McDonald's, Ken Tayman and I headed south. Cruising along I68 in western Maryland, we were passed by a car with a very excited driver. Uh, oh; we better check the trailer! We discovered that the door on the trailer had come open, and apparently, Steve's daypack was missing. There was, however, one shoe still in the trailer. As we took the next exit and backtracked, we quickly located the errant luggage. One more switchback and we found

the flattened, exploded pack. Primary searching yielded some items of clothing and an obliterated phone charger. The other shoe was found about ¼ mile farther down the highway. MIA were Steve's Pocket Rocket stove and a figure 8. After securing the latch, we proceeded. Possible thunder storms presented this day as a day-long rain! The entire length of our travel down 219 to Elkins was almost zero visibility fog!

We set up camp at Kumbrabow State Forest campground, about 6 miles off 219, up a twisty gravel road. It continued a steady drizzle through the evening. Dave Morrow showed up about 10:30

On Saturday, we headed for the caves. With the previous day's rain, I thought the Elk River would be flowing, and limit our activity to the My Cave side of the river. As we entered the valley and found the river dry, we proceeded downstream to the triple culvert that led up to Left Tit Pit. We hiked up, following the stream, and easily found the cave – really just a small hole in the creek bed.

The entrance is climbable if you are familiar with it, but I just rigged my 50 foot rope and dropped in to direct the others as they rappelled.



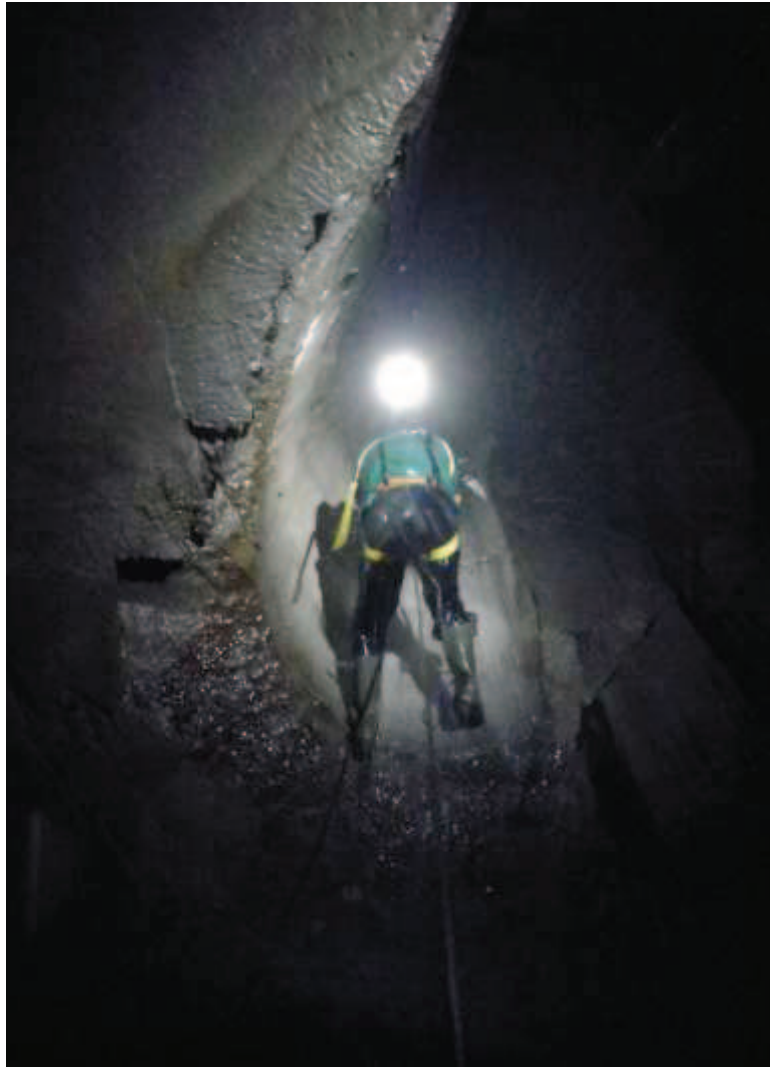
Dave about to drop the 40' wet drop in LTP Photo by Gordy .

Ken chose to forgo this hole in the ground. At the base of the 20 foot drop is a pouring deluge of water, which we followed into the cave, through a crawl, and down a couple interesting downclimbs. There isn't much to rig to, so I doubled up and rigged above the last climbdown and backed up with another rig point in line with the pit. The drop into the waterfall isn't very big, but once on rope, it's pretty easy backing over the edge. The first ten feet, the caver has his feet on the wall with the stream flowing down; once the dome bells out, you are hanging IN the waterfall for the remaining 25 feet! The cave's main passage is mostly mud slope and water, so we elected not to spend much time at the bottom. As we exited the pit, I held the climbers offline as best I could to keep the out of the direct waterfall. Not so for me, being the last one! As I climbed up getting pummeled by the water, it takes some concentration to remember not to climb right into the ceiling, which I did (remember) just in the nick of time before ramming into it with my helmet!

As I climbed out of the entrance, Ken asked me if there was another cave nearby, because he had seen a cloud of fog hanging around the area. Indeed, Bradshaw Run Cave was only 100 feet away. It was LTP's twin sister, separated by breakdown. It had about the same layout--a hole in the streambed, leading to some down-climbing and a waterfall. I dropped in the opening and found a couple bolts. I called for the ropes and gear, and summoned the group for another quick, wet pit to drop. Steve dropped in first, and called my attention to the rope bag that he had padded the lip with; it was filling with water above him like a bladder! I turned the bag around and that seemed to help. Steve, Dave and I bounced the pit, and we headed out. Bradshaw Run has a substantial amount of passage that I think is a lot more desirable than LTP, so we must come back sometime!

We drove back up the road and parked where the Dry Branch meets the Elk River. After crossing the river, we walked upstream (left) about a half mile on the abandoned railroad bed to the first creek bridge we came to. Check this out!/? Now there is some water in the river! As we returned to the river bed, we could see to our right a beautiful blue hole in the river bed. Whatever flow existed disappeared into an escarpment on the right side of the river. Above and to the right of this hole was the Elk River entrance to My Cave!

We climbed up the 40 foot bank to the cave and slid down the slope into a huge room. We continued to the bottom of this room and up the muddy other side into a smaller passage. As we followed this passage, we came to a rig point and a dead end for us.



John ascending the 40' drop in LTP.

*Photo by Gordy*

This was Outhouse Drop, and the roar we heard was Taggard Falls below us. The water from the river flowing into the “Black Hole” cave provided the water for Taggard Falls. Everything that we had seen this day were parts of a big picture of the present and the past, the above-ground, and the underground flow of the Elk River! We did not get a chance to enter the Dry Branch side Of My Cave on this trip, but, Hey, you can’t do it all in one day! Another trip! We finished our day with dinner at the Brazen Head Inn. A restaurant and Irish Pub after a day of caving in West Virginia—what more could you ask for?!

After breakfast on Sunday we packed up. Before heading home, we had one more cave to visit. We headed south and dropped the trailer at but you cannot see what you are doing on the second one.



**Steve ready to descend the 40' drop in Bradshaw Run**

I hung over the edge and fished around until it made sense and climbed on down. Believe me, I wouldn't have done that if I had not already known that it was doable by me in the past! I tied hand holds in the hanging rope for good measure, and Dave and John followed me in. Each room you are in continues down the breakdown pile into even bigger rooms until you realize that it is all just one humungous room that goes on and on! Finally reaching the bottom, we climbed a little way up the other side and into another room containing the Register Rock, which was covered with a lot of historic signatures. Behind this rock is the Jar of Gravel climb down through breakdown to get to the rest of the cave. We will leave this for another day. We were out of time, and I had to work when I got home! We covered a lot of ground in two days! I am sure I wet their appetite for returning to these caves on another trip. □



**Dave climbing up the entrance shaft at Simmons-Mingo**

## Vertical Practice

June 27, 2011 Ken T.

Pat had a short vertical practice at his house, in his tree, for a couple of our newer members Ron Emge and Todd Feasley. Neither had done any SRT work before and were interested in testing out a few different climbing rigs to see which they actually would prefer. Gordy assisted Pat and I showed up for moral support.

Ron and Todd checked out both rope walker and frog rigs. The easy on/off rope traits of the frog system seemed to be appreciated by both of them.

Gordy and Pat both climbed using different rigs. Finished up around 8:30. □

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## Vertical Practice

April 22, 2011 Ken T.

Pat lead a vertical practice for current and newer members. In attendance were Gordy, Scott, Stitch, Pat, Steve & John B. After a few practice climbs, Pat took the opportunity to demonstrate some of the hauling systems he works with in his cave rescue activities.

He set up a 3:1 mechanical advantage rig with safety prussiks and belay ropes. After explaining the safeties and techniques, he actually hooked in John, Gordy and Stitch (individually) and gave everyone the experience of hauling and of being hauled up the 55 foot cliff.

Not shown in the picture on the right is the Belay setup which is Tandem-Triple Wrap Prussik with a Radium Load Releasing Hitch. A PMP is also incorporated into the Belay during Hauling (Raising) operations, but not used in the Belay during Lowering Operations. □

## Vertical Practice

July 30, 2011 (picnic) Ken T.

Members present: Pat M, Ron E, Gordy L, Todd F, Jonathan P, Howard W and Ken T.

Pat rigged two ropes. Everyone did a couple drops and climbs. Ron and Todd still checking out frog and rope-walker rigs. The simplicity of the frog seems to be winning. Weather was unusually breezy and bug free. Nice four hour practice. □

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## Safe Practices!

We've recently noticed in pictures in the newsletter and Speleo-Schedule, people on rope and cable ladders without helmets. Even though in both instances, the persons were just a few feet off the ground, we have decided, in the interest of safety, and good caving practices, all participants in vertical practice should wear a helmet. Please bring, and wear your helmet, even if just assisting. There should be an extra helmet available if you don't have a helmet or just forgot it. Don't be surprised (or offended) if you are asked to don your helmet at grotto vertical practice □

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A 3-1 (Z-rig) with a PMP & prussik PCD. (Prussik- Minding Pulley with a prussik Progress Capture Device.)The line at the right is the Belay line.

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## **FRANKLIN COUNTY GROTTO**



Nelson, our rescued possum from Nelson's pit

*photo by Andy Filer*