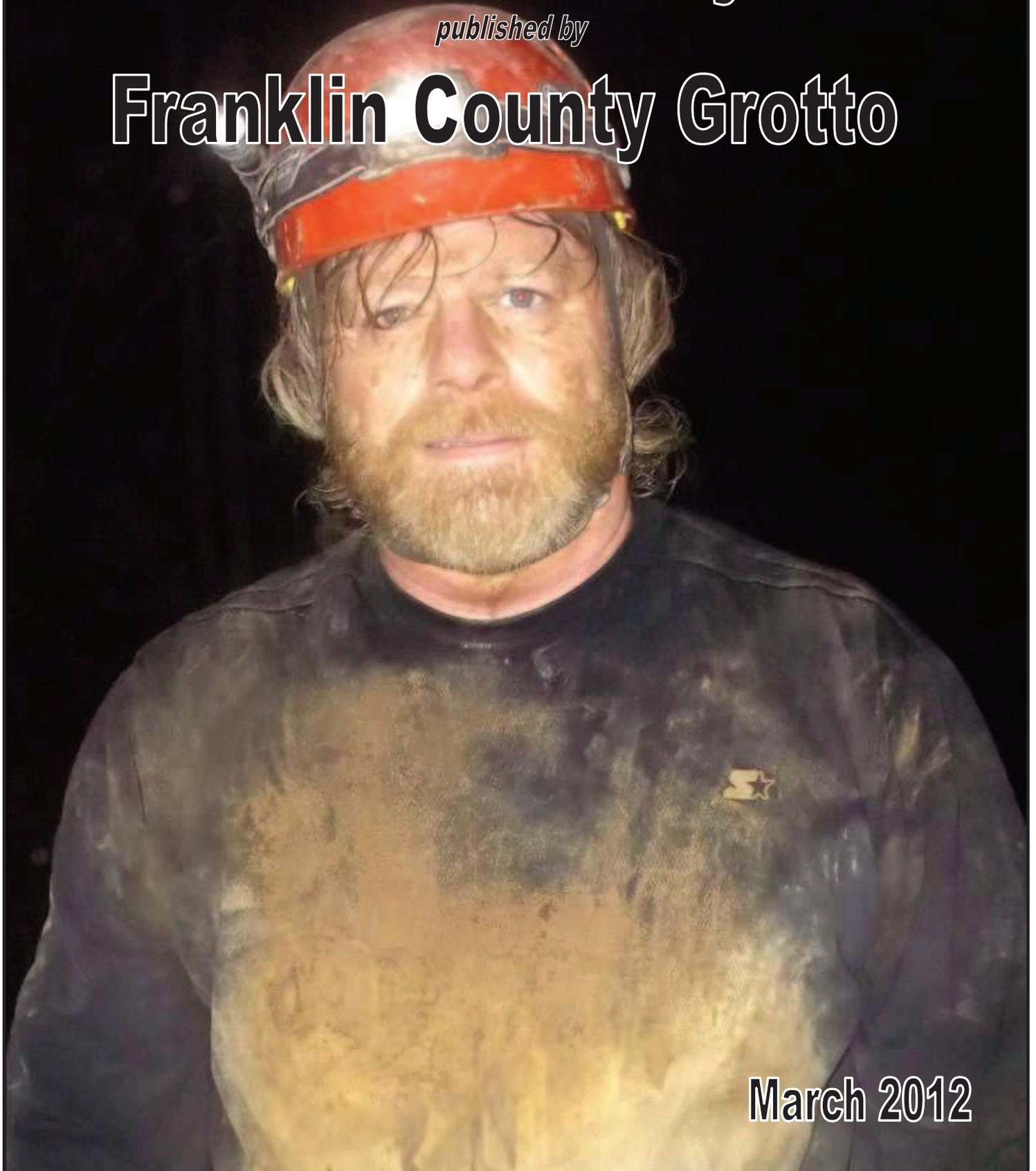


# Cumberland Valley Caver

*published by*

## Franklin County Grotto



March 2012

# CUMBERLAND VALLEY CAVER

Published by

## FRANKLIN COUNTY GROTTO

An Internal Organization of the National Speleological Society

Vol. 13, No 1

March 2012

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13373 Sunrise Drive  
Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214  
(717) 794-2069

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(717) 642-8970

#### TREASURER

John Boswell  
45 Manada Creek Cir  
Carlisle, PA 17013  
(717) 386-5397

#### MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Ken Jones  
4446 Duffield Rd  
Chambersburg, PA  
(717) 267-2669

#### EDITOR

Kenneth B. Tayman  
13373 Sunrise Drive  
Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214  
(717) 794-2069

#### MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Glen Sarvis  
1602 West Lisborn Rd.  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
(717) 766-5003

WEB SITE: [www.karst.org/fcg](http://www.karst.org/fcg)

Webmaster: Don Arrowood

[darrowood@comcast.net](mailto:darrowood@comcast.net)

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: John Boswell, after a very dusty, sweaty trip in Bone (Bone-Norman), WV *Photo by Ken Tayman*

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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,***

This first quarter of 2012 was very productive. We did our 4th Annual Winter Trip to Greenbrier County and got a lot of new people into a lot of new cave (for them). We also did some field work, following-up on some old Mike Houpt trip reports from several decades ago and secured permission to dig at a few locations.

We completed the re-gating project at Walnut Ridge and hope to continue good relations with the owner. Thanks Howard for doing the gate. Also, we spoke with the new owner of Corker Hill and Frustration Pit. It appears that we will be able to maintain access to these nice, small, local caves.

There is a lot of caving in our near future with trips to Kookan, and Porters already confirmed. Additionally, the VAR in April has a lot of great opportunities and the NSS Convention this summer in Lewisburg, WV is almost in our back yard. We continue to support two projects for University of Shippensburg at Cleversburg Sink while the cave is at full flood stage for the last 6 months.

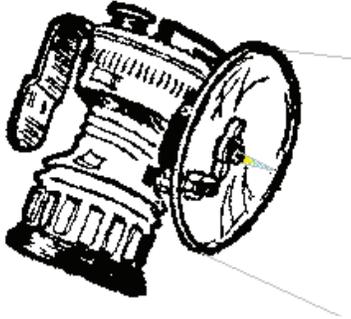
I'd like to thank Andy, Gordy, Glen, John, Prof. Tom Feeney, and Don, for articles, pictures, charts, printing/distribution assistance and web support used in getting this issue out to our members and friends.

***Ken Tayman, Editor***

# Speleo-Spotlight...

Dave Morrow

FCG # 246



*(I first met Dave at the Spring MAR in Shade Gap, PA. He joined up with FCG and quickly worked his way into the group with his quick wit, caving ability and desire to cave a lot. I asked him for a little bio for this article and he provided the following write-up. Ken Tayman, editor)*

**B**orn and bred in Blackrock, a suburb of Dublin, Ireland, I grew up in the fortunate position of being 10 minutes from the sea and an hour from the Dublin Mountains. The back yard was my first outdoors and I used to spend allot of my time climbing trees and making dens.

The house was old, +200 years and had been refurbished by my parents when they moved in. Luckily for me, they had left all the junk in the back yard which made for one large, slightly dangerous playground. However, my particular favorite pastime was digging holes. By the time I was nine years old I had perfected my craft and the cratered yard resembled the Somme.



Dave at top of waterfall drop in Left-Tit-Pit, WV *Photo by Gordy*

I did my military stint in the militant wing Cubs and then the Scouts and did plenty of hiking and camping in the Wicklow Mountains. When I finished school, I went to study Mining and Mineral Processing, getting my degree in Nottingham University, England (where Robin Hood used to hang out). I did some of my student drinking in the carved out caves under Nottingham Castle of Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem (1189AD) - very atmospheric!

The degree gave me lots of excuses to go to mines and quarries and have a poke about. I spent one of my summers in Pyhäsalmi Mine, Finland. This is a deep (it's home of the world's deepest sauna, at 4,724 ft underground) mine where I started to learn my trade.

After graduating, I worked for a large Lead/Zinc mine in Ireland, followed by a salt mine and then my current employer ten years ago. I started off in sales, and travelled round Ireland visiting quarries trying to sell.

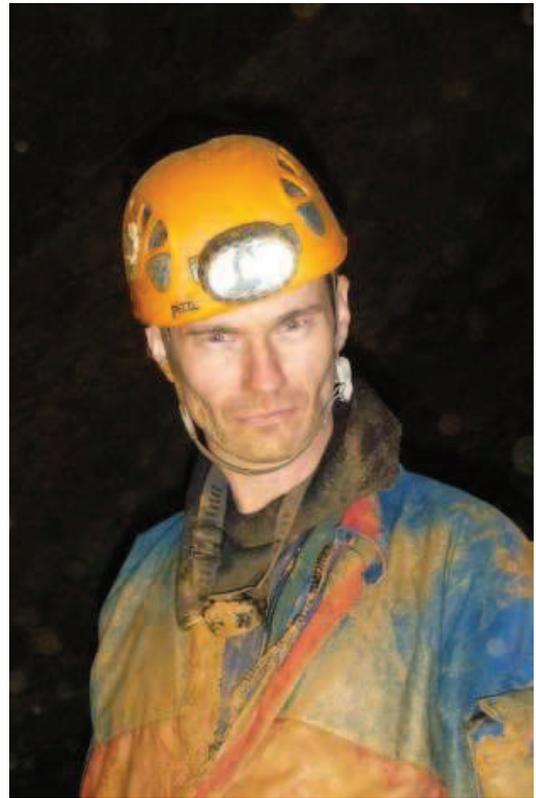
I then got relocated to an office based in Somerset, UK to work with a specific type of crusher for my company. In the new job I had a lot of opportunities to travel and got to travel round the UK, Europe, South Africa, New Zealand, Japan, amongst others. While staying in New Zealand I did get to go with a guy I worked with to the Waitomo Caves which were most excellent. The trip mainly consists of wearing a wetsuit and sitting on an inner tube while guides float you round, throw you down rapids and show off all the cool glow worms that are there.

Since I moved to the area, I had known that there were plenty of caves in the Mendips and had intended in getting into some of them. With my new job I was suffering serious underground withdrawal symptoms as I was now almost entirely surface based. However, life got in the way and I didn't find a good excuse to go until my two brothers and one of their friends came to visit.

I organized a trip with Ken, a local guy that does caving trips. I must admit that I was expecting a heap of paperwork, training and all the usual stuff that goes with this type of thing. However, nothing of the sort, a 30 second pep talk (don't die, don't touch the formations) and we were off.

First was Goatchurch (the Somerset equivalent of Carnegie). First hurdle was the 'Drainpipe' - a tight 30ft smooth bore phreatic with a nice, 90 degree entrance. This was a little tricky for me, a lot tricky for my youngest brother whom struggled to get his 6'10 frame round the bend.

The afternoon was a wet trip to Swildons upper series. This still rates as my favorite cave. It's got a bit of

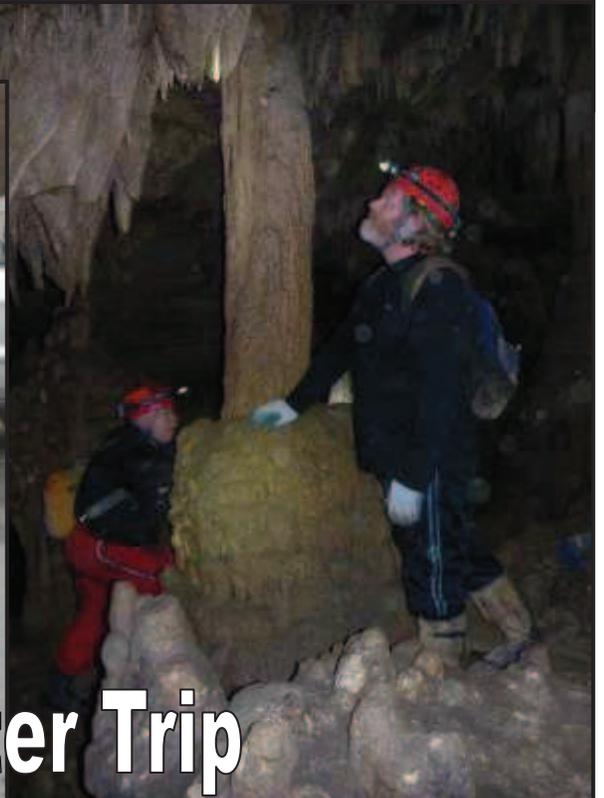


Dave looking really serious after sleazy connection crawl in Sinnett-Thorne Mountain

everything. The upper series is excellent for beginners taking a good active stream and has plenty of mazy areas to get lost in. Then it gets a bit more advanced and the 20' is the gatekeeper to the rest of the cave. The 20' is a flowstone covered waterfall that is normally negotiated with a caving ladder (the local cave shops actually sell them made to measure). After the 20' there is an excellent sporting stream-way followed by No. 1 sump. Another test of metal. Although only 6ft long, it still required full submersion and pulling yourself through on rope. *Continued on page 18...*



Twenty foot ladder climb in Swildons Cave, UK - Dave's #1 rated cave!!



4th Annual Winter Trip

## 4th Annual Greenbrier Co. Winter Trip Bone/Norman Jan 20-22, 2012

If four years in a row is enough to establish a new tradition, we can look forward to our winter trip to the WVACS field house as a regular event from now on. This trip almost didn't come off. I had done most of the planning, with assistance from Gordy, but when I got really ill and had to back out, Gordy picked up as trip leader. Then about 3 days before the trip, Gordy had a family situation that precluded his participation. Luckily Pat agreed to lead the trip. At the last minute I felt a whole lot better and decided to go.

FCG members on this trip were Pat Minnick, Dane Wagle, John Boswell, Glen Sarvis, Steve Isch and his guest Katie and me, Ken Tayman. Andy Filer and Dave Morrow would arrive late Friday night and miss the Friday trip to Bone. The goal was to get some new cave for everyone. None of us had been to Bone, so we decided to make that our Friday afternoon (extra) trip. This cave has very deep, dry, dusty crawls and face mask filters were highly recommended, and I was glad I wore mine. Since I was just getting over a sinus and eye infection, I also bought a good pair of swim goggles which helped immensely.



Ken T after a few hours in dry, dusty Bone. *Photo by John Boswell*



Katie checking for passage down to waterfall. *Photo by Glen*

Alternately crawling through a couple inches of dry powdery dust and then walking in 10' - 15' high passage, we picked our way back toward the "Devil's Pinch" connection to Norman Cave, No moisture at all, except for one 20' dome pit that had a nice trickle of water dropping from the ceiling. Steve and John decided to explore the side passage marked as "DP" while the rest of us cleared nose, eyes and mouth of dust. The nature of the cave seemed to change here. The floor was damper, passage was taller and wider. It was different enough to encourage me to come back again when we had more time, today we wanted to eat at the bowling alley and also had a commitment to be at the field house to unlock it and build a fire in anticipation of Andy's and Dave's arrival probably around 10:pm. The trip out was good and as we started our mile long hike back to the car it started to rain. It would rain fairly hard all night long!!! Dave and Andy showed up at the field house around 10 pm. Had nice evening sitting around the wood stove and enjoying our mildest winter trip yet.



**Formation section above waterfall.**

*Photo by Andy Filer*

We got off at a decent hour for our Norman trip. Pat and I had been in Norman on a couple occasions, but always went downstream with the main stream passage. Today, we would search out the upper section above the waterfall. It is a well decorated section and would be new to everyone. I knew Katie was enjoying the trip when she entered the cave and got into the big room. WOW. This is BIG!!! Her largest cave up until this weekend had been Carnegie Cave in Shippensburg, PA. The all night rain had the waterfall ROARING!!! As we approached it, we could see water running under the breakdown coming from several different directions. It probably wouldn't have been safe to go downstream anyway.

I had a couple different set of directions on how to find the upper section. Andy and Steve checked out the high route through the breakdown, over the giant flowstone which included a crawl through a small pool. The pool turned out to be a giant lake, and the flowstone bank had an inch of water flowing over it. Dave went

low toward the stream and determined that was probably the way to go. Also this would get everyone to the bottom of the roaring waterfall. They quickly found the alternate connection near the waterfall and climbed into the upper section. Very pretty! Finally made it to another small connection with water flowing through it. After checking it out found another big, hip deep lake, which no one felt like doing. We departed in three groups, first Glen and I took our time and hiked up and exited, Next John and Dane left when they decided not to do the wet crawl with flowing water. The rest came out 30 minutes later. Everyone enjoyed the fairly short but pretty and exciting trip. Of course everyone wants to go back and go downstream to see the Great White Way and other side trips. Will do later.

Spent the evening around a small campfire on the deck and ate Mexican in Lewisburg with John Pearson.. Andy and Dave decided to run up the road away and do Sharps. (See next article) They got back around midnight. Pulled out early on Sunday. Nice weekend with lots of new cave for everyone. *By Ken Tayman* □

## Sharpe's and Island Ford Cave Trip Report

By Andrew Filer

During the winter Greenbrier trip, Dave Morrow and I decided we wanted to get some extra caving in. We made it down Friday evening, and had missed the trip to Bone (Norman) cave earlier in the day. So after Saturday's trip to Norman, we ate a quick supper and made our way up to Sharpe's cave. Both of us had been there previously, but didn't get to explore much of the cave. We had a bit of trouble finding the entrance in the dark, and spent a while walking the hillside. Eventually we found the cave, and headed through the main passage. I hadn't been to the waterfall, so we walked upstream and



**Dave at water falls in Sharpes Cave.**

*Photo by Andy Filer*

made the loop. After that we travelled to the far end of the cave. We noticed the air was very fresh, and shortly after word found two field mice. We looked for a passage to the surface, but couldn't find one. On the way out we reflected on the large number of bats in the cave, many more than either of us had seen previously. It was getting late, so we headed back to the WVACS field station.

On Sunday morning the group decided to pull out early, so we stopped by Island Ford Cave on the way back. Since the cave didn't appear very long, we choose to only change into caving boots. The cave ended up being much larger and muddier than we expected. As a result we took our time, and didn't venture into any muddy crawls. We were surprised at the lack of graffiti given the caves impressive entrance next to the road. The cave also seemed to have a healthy bat population, with no signs of white nose. On the way out we passed a large school group on their way in. □

# Fall MAR

## Woodward Cave, PA

*OCT 14-16, 2011 By Andrew Filer*

**A**s usual, I started MAR out with a short climbing trip on Friday. Cynthia (Nittany Grotto) and I visited Coburn rocks which are only a few minutes away from Woodward campground. Following some late night meetings of the minds, a group of us decided to go on the guided trip to Alexander Caverns the next day. Our group consisted of Myself, Glen Sarvis, John Boswell, and his son from Franklin County Grotto. Several friends Philly and Nittany Grotto were also on the trip.

In the morning we drove to a maze like Amish farm and parked near the concrete bunker that was built when the cave was commercialized.

Since the landowners son built a house only a hundred yards or so from the entrance we changed in the cave. We were given a nice tour of the dry section and then proceeded to get out the boats. They were surprisingly seaworthy for their age and appearance.



Some Nittany Grotto cavers along with FCG caver Glen Sarvis in low ceiling water section of Alexander Cavern. Photo by Andy

After getting our paddling rhythm together, we explored the far reaches of the cave. Some notable parts of the tour were the derelict remnants of docks and lighting, plus the spectacular hanging formations everywhere. On the way out we saw a formation that had been created on a forty five degree angle because of the wind. We then had a rather delicious meal at the local Arby's.

After lunch we returned to the campground to decon our gear. Afterward Mindy Johnson, Dave Brown and myself headed over to Coonscat Cave for the afternoon. Once we figured out where the entrance actually was, the trip went pretty smooth. Fortunately the cave did not live up to its name, and was surprisingly feces free. The cave contained the usual Pennsylvania crawling maze, and was a worthy afternoon endeavor. We then popped round the campsite for an excellent dinner.



Dave Brown, Mindy Johnson & Dave Morrow at Field Trip Cave. Photo by Andy

While eating we sprayed our gear down again, and planned for the evenings events. We met up with Dave Morrow, who had done the wet trip to Alexander's after ours, and headed down to Tytoona Cave. Mindy Johnson, Dave Brown, and Allen Maddox (with his grandson?) also joined us. Given our need to be out of Tytoona by closing time, we had a rather speedy trip through the cave. Water levels were pretty high so Allen and his grandson wisely stuck to the drier portions. We decided to visit Field Trip Cave afterward, which is just up the road. The entrance is within five feet of the road, and the roads traffic shook the cave the entire trip. We enjoyed the usual crawling but had the bonus of a rotting raccoon in the tight confines. A WNS free bat was seen in the cave. It was getting late so we headed back for the night.

Sunday morning Cynthia was nice enough to show us the location of several caves. So Dave and I were joined by Amos Mincin, Mindy Johnson, and Dave Brown from Philly Grotto for the day. We located the entrance to the Miller caves, and Chisel Cave. We explored Miller 1, partially dug open Miller 2, and only looked at Chisel's watery entrance. The recent flooding had wreaked havoc and clogged the entrances with debris. We decided to forgo a rather long and nasty crawl in Miller 1, perhaps to do another time. It was getting late in the day so we all parted ways. On the way home I ran into Dave at a gas station, and convinced him to sample Arby's fine cuisine for the first time. It was another good weekend of caving. □

# Corker Hill/Frustration Pit Surface Survey



# Frustration Pit/Corker Hill: Surface Survey

November 10, 2011 by Ken Tayman

Amos Mincin of Philly Grotto offered to assist with surface survey of Frustration Pit/Corker Hill Cave and plot them on map for future use in negotiations with landowners. He also offered to obtain assistance from Landon Woodward, a professional surveyor for the project.

On November 10, 2011, Amos and Landon met up with Andrew Filer, Gordy Ley and Ken Tayman from FCG. Landon and Amos had already started the search for the property marker stakes. After finding some property stakes (for reference) the FCG members assisted mostly by clearing brush and carrying some gear.

Landon set up gear and took shots starting from boundary stakes and working his way up to the caves. This survey will be tied into the Corker Hill and Frustration Pit surveys.

## Frustration Pit/ Corker Hill Surface Survey Addendum By Gordy Ley

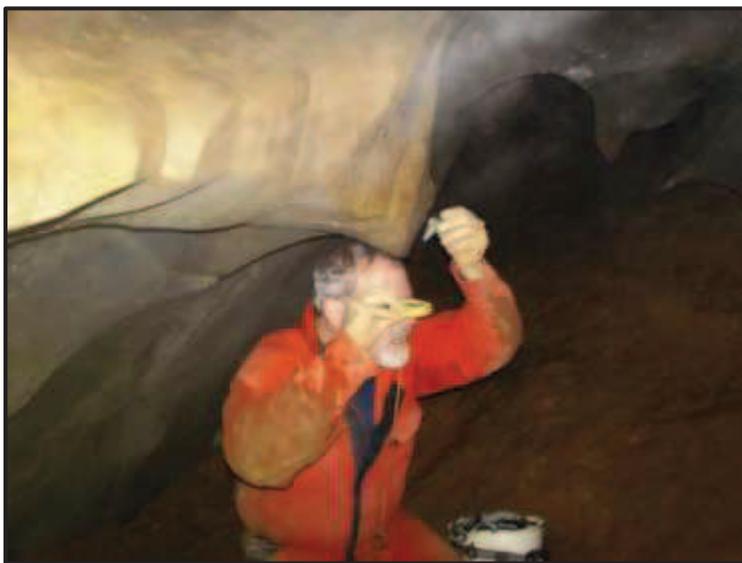
Based on property pins, Landon established a point in the field below the cave to use as a reference to shoot to the Frustration Pit entrance. We did some brush-whacking to establish line-of-sight, and set a pin at the



### Landon and Amos marking a boundary stake

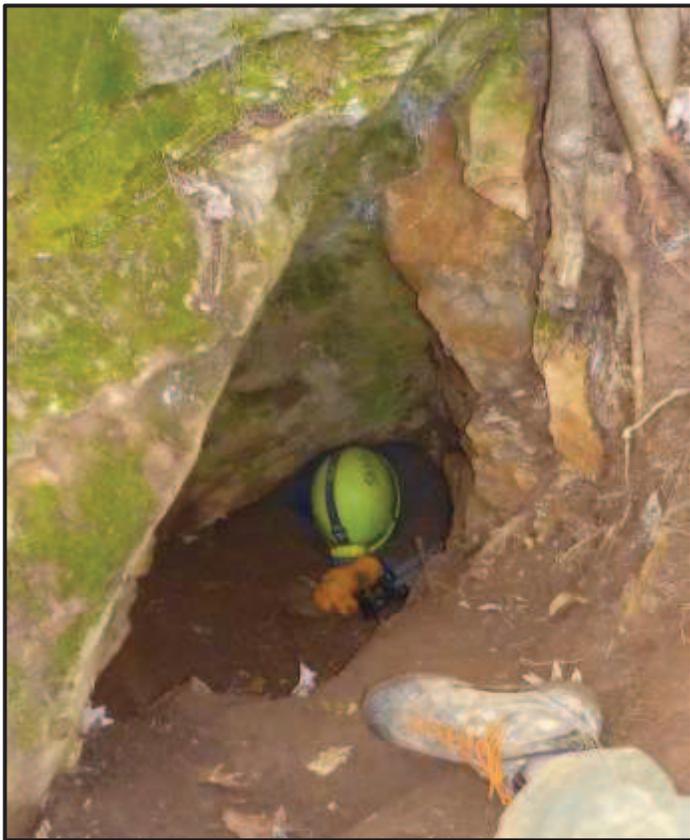
Pit. We then chased a few more property pins near the billboard, and on to another corner. Landon then set up a GPS beacon and left it to think for awhile.

Apparently, the longer it searches, the more accurate it is. While the GPS was cooking, we all returned to the caves and took shots from Corker Hill down to Frustration Pit, and the other entrances. Landon also set a marker on the access trail for future reference. The accuracy of Landon's surveying instruments is purely amazing to me! After shooting off a couple pins 700 or 800 feet distant, all the data combined to yield an accuracy of within an inch or so. After establishing this initial reference point, he can tell the instrument to search for him while he proceeds to the next point. It scans up and down and back and forth to view the prism that he is carrying, and tells him with a green light when he is at the right spot. He communicates with a remote computer handset to the instrument. Landon then points to a spot and says, "There!". After scooping away a few inches of dirt, there is the missing pin! The following week, on Saturday,

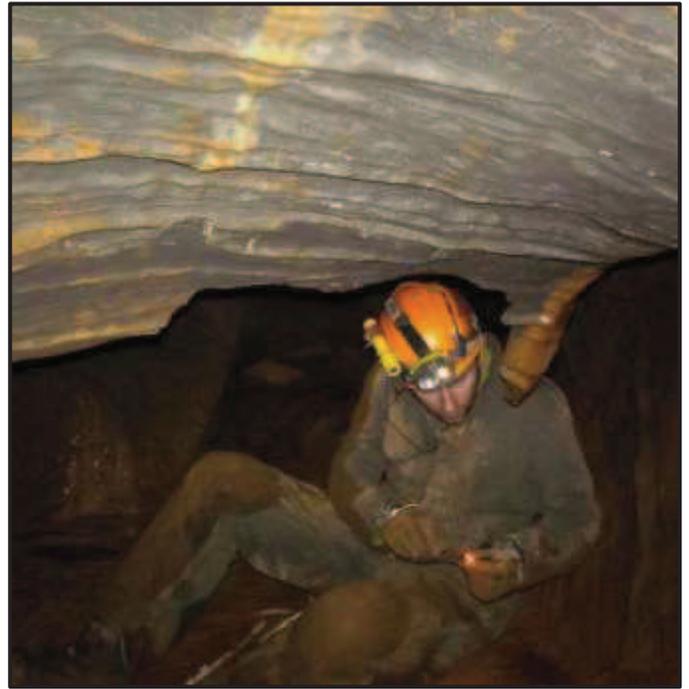


Bill shooting azimuth in Frustration Pit

Nov. 19, Amos returned with Bill Schultz to do a line survey in Frustration to determine the underground footprint. Scott Markley Andy Filer, John Boswell and his son Justin, and myself were in attendance as well. John, Justin, and Andy mostly took off and explored. I started taking shots with Bill from the Dug Entrance. We worked our way in the entrance and shot back through the Halloween Room. Scott and I took turns doing the running end and back-shots. Then we continued down the small 'pit' to the junction of the main passage above the entrance to the 'Cellar'. We turned right and proceeded to the end of the main passage, and shot up to the top of the 'Spectre'. This would be the maximum extent in this direction. Back at the junction, we took a couple more shots to the left toward the pit entrance before calling it a day. We ended on the tip of a stalagmite at the base of the passage in the largest room below the middle dug entrance. We would try to return soon to continue to connect the other entrances. After Scott finished his finals, we had our window of opportunity on Dec. 15. On hand were Scott, Stitch, Andy, and myself. We dropped in the Middle Dug entrance, and started at the last station—B22.



**Stitch making first crawl through new passage to pit**



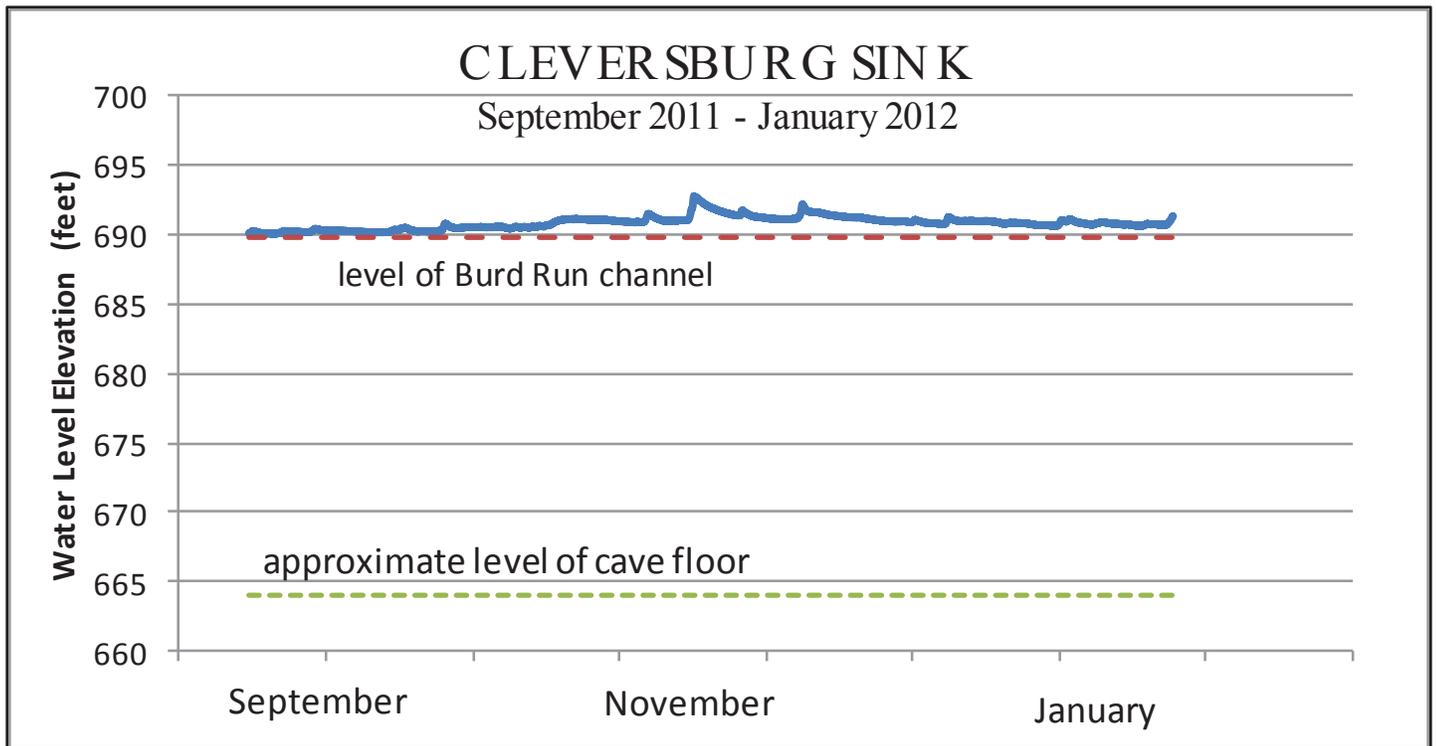
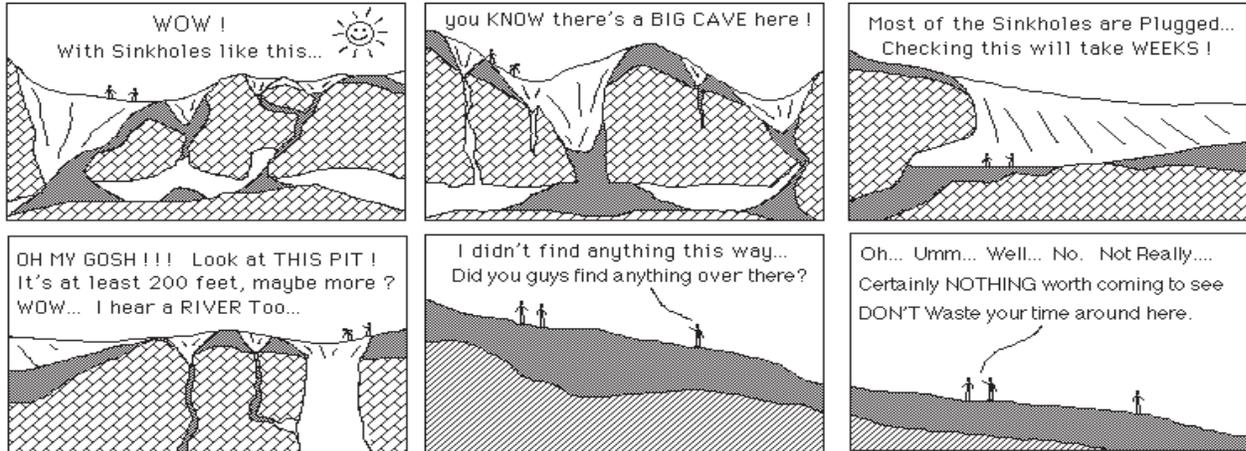
**Scott setting up survey station**

In order to improve the stability of our shots and back-shots, Scott and I were using a camera tripod and some connecting rod standoffs that I had devised. Then we would leap-frog our stations. This really helped us! It was much easier to take a good shot without stand on your head or trying to look out the corner of my trifocals! We bypassed the crawl-around to the pit entrance by shooting straight across the 1 foot high shelf. This method seemed adequate to the task of a line-shot search of the extent of the passages.

While Scott and I were shooting to the pit, Stitch and Andy spied a lot of leaves and dirt at the opposite end of the room, and went into a digging frenzy with rocks and sticks! Scott and Andy went outside to the New Dig, while Stitch and I worked burrowing away from the inside. Work proceeded very quickly, and we broke through and connected the room near the bottom of Frustration Pit to the 'New Dig'. The three young guys passed through the connecting tube, but I was too wasted to get through! I was so tired that I had a hard time even getting out of the cave! We still need to return and connect the Middle Dug entrance to the survey, as well the new dig. A fun productive day!□

# Only A Caver

by David Herron



The instrument in Cleversburg Sink continues to measure water levels in the cave at a 15-minute interval. The graph represents the water level change inside the cave between 23 September 2011 and 27 January 2012. That's 12,000 data points! Despite the vast amount of data (and that doesn't include the chemical stuff), water levels remained consistently high due to the wet fall weather conditions. September 2011 proved to be second wettest month ever (since records began in 1932) with 11.75 inches of rainfall; this was second only to June 1972 and Hurricane Agnes. We continue to believe that water levels were held high by the surface flow in nearby Burd Run, which ran steadily all fall. We continue with our hypothesis that water levels in the cave will only begin to drop when flow in Burd Run dries up. We'll be watching!

*By Professor Tom Feeney, Department of Geography and Earth Science*

# Fall VAR

## RASS Field Station, VA

SEP 16-18, 2011 By Andrew Filer

Leading up to VAR, I was starting to worry no one else was going. The usual suspects had things such as work, travel, and family conflicting with caving. Luckily several friends from Philly grotto were planning to go. So on Friday myself, Mindy Johnson, and Dave Brown carpooled down in Amos Mincin's Maroon Party Van. We arrived late in the day, but just in time for the guided trip signup rush. As we decided on the trip down, we would go on the Crossroads cave trip.

Saturday morning we woke up early and headed to a local restaurant. Other than being locked out initially, it was a decent place. But I wouldn't try the seafood. We then made our way to Crossroads cave. The group had grown from ten people to seventeen, so it was going to be one of "those" days. The trip felt like a human slinky experiment. Part of the group turned back, and the rest of us thankfully resumed a reasonable pace. By the time the trip was over it was almost dinner time. The meal was excellent, despite its appearance. Both Amos and Mindy won prizes in the nights drawings. A good presentation was given on Project Simmer (Simmons Mingo Cave).

Sunday morning we packed up and headed to the John Guilday Cave Preserve. We visited New Trout cave first and were surprised by the high temperatures that greeted us within. Our best efforts to find the back of the cave ended in defeat, after attempting to navigate our way through the saltpeter maze. The remnants of Confederate mining were scattered about the cave, with the hand carved stick ladder being the most interesting. We then headed up to Hamilton cave. The cooler temperatures were much appreciated, but the mazelike crawling did get a bit old after a while. A rather fat rat also joined us on the trip. We ran into the local spelunkers on the way out, and got to enjoy their struggle to squeeze through tight passages with firemen's helmets on. I then crawled up the cliff to see the huge gate that encloses Trout cave. Since it host several bat species, it has been closed until WNS has run its course. We then cleaned up and made the long drive home. □



Trout Cave, John Guilday Cave Preserve, gated to protect bats. Photo by Andy.

# Peaceful Transfer of Power

After several years as Franklin County Grotto Chairperson, Ken Jones transferred the responsibilities of guiding the grotto to the new 2012 Chair Ken Tayman.



At the November meeting, the gavel is symbolically transferred from outgoing Chair, Ken Jones to incoming Chair, Ken Tayman.

## **Cleversburg Sink** Current water level

**As of March 11, 2012, 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

Water is about 26 feet deep. Down just a little from January. Checked by Ken and Stewart Tayman

## **North American bat death toll exceeds 5.5 million from white-nose syndrome**

On the verge of another season of winter hibernating bat surveys, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists and partners estimate that at least 5.7 million to 6.7 million bats have now died from white-nose syndrome. Biologists expect the disease to continue to spread.

White-nose syndrome (WNS) is decimating bat populations across eastern North America, with mortality rates reaching up to 100 percent at many sites. First documented in New York in 2006, the disease has spread quickly into 16 states and four Canadian provinces.

Bats with WNS exhibit unusual behavior during cold winter months, including flying outside during the day and clustering near the entrances of caves and mines where they hibernate. Bats have been found sick and dying in unprecedented numbers near these hibernacula.

## **CAVE BUCK\$**

*As of January 16, 2012*

Franklin County Grotto sponsors a "Cave Bucks" program that solicits voluntary contributions from its cavers of \$1.00 per cave visited during the month. The money collected is then forwarded to a Cave conservancy or other organization for the specific purpose of buying or leasing caves.

On January 16, 2012, FCG approved a \$50 cave buck contribution to Pennsylvania Cave Conservancy and \$47 to West Virginia Cave Conservancy.

Since starting in February 1998, FCG has collected and donated \$1132.00 Cave Bucks to the following organizations:

Tytoona Cave Preserve	\$ 40
Southeastern Cave Conservancy	\$ 54
Pennsylvania Cave Conservancy	\$282
West Virginia Cave Conservancy	\$318
Mid-Atlantic Karst Conservancy	\$413
Appalachian Cave Conservancy	\$ 25
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1132</b>

*Dave, continued from page 5...*

After this, the 'Short round trip' (4-5 hour) is accessible and includes bailing sumps, highly decorated chambers, a smooth 40ft rock slide and some more fantastic passageway. The back of this cave is very remote and there is a fairly extreme through trip for the hardcore along with plenty of dive able-sumps for those that way inclined.

After my first outing I asked Ken about joining a club. He recommended the Cheddar Caving Club. This is a fairly new and active club with about 40 members and 6 instructor level cavers. This was good news for me as I found out later that some of the better known and established clubs could be very cliquey and full of internal politics. I worked my way through some of the Somerset classics - G.B. , Manor Far, Sidcot Swallet , Rod's Pot, Rhino Rift, St Cuthbert's Swallet to name but a few. Most of this caving was done on a Wednesday night after work. Underground for 8pm and up in time to get a drink at the Hunters (well known cavers pub) was normally the theory. I also went on some longer trips with Sunday trips to South Wales quite common to the likes of Ogof Draenen, OFD and lots of other caves with odd names. Before leaving for the US, I also managed to drive the 12 hours to get a few remote caves in Assynt, Northern Scotland with the best clubhouse I've come across.

I then got to go vertical in Yorkshire. First was County Pot to Lancaster Hole where we first had to rig the 100ft Lancaster Hole exit. Cave consists of a number of pull downs and some top notch passageway. Sunday was the big pull-thru trip going from Swinsto to the Valley Entrance with I am guessing about 8 pitches to rig and definitely on my top 5 listing. The Wednesday after the Yorkshire trip I was on the plane, heading to York, USA. I had been transferred with work as an ex-pat to help with a recently acquired product line. Even before leaving I had been trying to see what the caving potential was in this part of the U.S. I was relieved to find that there was indeed a 'York Grotto' and hastily joined up.

A number of circumstances kept me out of caves for the first 6 months or so: No gear - stuff didn't arrive for about 8 weeks (thanks to homeland security folks), hunting season, Christmas and a fractured wrist. So the first outing for me in the US was to the 2011 Spring MAR. Definitely a different caving experience. Most caving I'd done in the UK would still allow you to sleep in your own bed afterwards and any overnights were quite functional camping/pub affairs so I'd never seen so many cavers or such organization in the one place before. As I had arrived early Saturday morning, I'd managed to run into Chris from the York Grotto who pointed me in the direction of a Kooken trip with Pat Minnick. I was lucky with my Kooken trip and water level was low enough that we could do a through trip and get my first face-to-face with cave mud - PA style. It was also the trip that I learnt that rope more suitable for mooring boats than caving doesn't work well in Mr. Petzl's Stops and that some caves terminate in greenhouses! After the MAR, I decided it might be a good plan to join FCG.

At the end of April, I was lucky enough to go on a camping trip with my partner, Juliana to Hawaii. This gave me my first excuse at going lava tubing on the Big Island. Kaumana Cave is 25 miles long and I hopped between skylights for about half a mile while a big thunderstorm rolled overhead. Definitely an atmospheric place!

After this and plenty of caving I was fortunate enough to experience OTR. This is definitely a real slice of 'unique' American culture, hiding out in rustic WV. Don't think I have ever seen people that have taken having fun so seriously. I could try and describe it to a 'non-believer' but maybe it would just be easier to go and see the Speleo version of Burning Man for yourself.



Since joining the FCG, I got to hit plenty of cave both in PA, VA and WV with like-minded caving folk. Had some excellent trips to Nelson's (critter caving), Little Pit, LTP, Aqua, Butler, New Trout, Sinnet-Thorn, Sharps, Bone-Norman, McAlisterville, Rupert, Alexander and a bunch of others that I can't remember the name of.

All have been fun, but what really makes it special is having a group of friendly, enthusiastic cavers that have made an outsider/legal alien/immigrant/Irish feel very, very welcome.

Looking forward to plenty of 2012 caving!

*By Dave Morrow, Celtic Caver*

# Walnut Ridge Gate Project

February 7, 2012

On a FCG trip to visit Walnut Ridge Cave on November 6, 2010, we noticed the gate to the cave had been ripped off its hinges was just lying there a few feet from the entrance. While talking to the owner we mentioned the status of the gate and offered to have the grotto try to repair or replace it and he said OK!

With winter rapidly setting in, and with FCG sponsoring the Spring MAR in May, we didn't make any progress on this project at all. Howard did say he would look at it in the spring when the weather was better. Finally, on July, 28, 2011 (late spring!), Howard, Ken T, Steve and Drew stopped by the cave and checked out the damaged gate. Howard retrieved the door and will repair or replace the hinges.



Final fitting, just needed a little tweaking. Photo by Don Arrowood



A little grinding here and there!

Photo by Don

Might replace the entire door. After making a second trip for more measurements, Howard started on the new gate. In September 2011, FCG reimbursed Howard \$20 for some material and parts.

Late summer and fall found Howard in the hospital for hernia surgery, and finally on a very nice in day in February 2012, Don, Howard and Ken T took the new roughed-in gate to the cave for a final fitting. A little grinding here, some banging there and the gate aligned up really well. Then we hauled the gate to Howard's shop in Newburg, where he milled the latch and completed all the welds.

We took the gate back to the cave where it was installed and is in great working condition. This project took a little longer than originally anticipated, but the end results were worth the wait. Howard always does "Top Quality Work" and this was no exception. Franklin County Grotto enjoyed doing this project as a effort to create and maintain good Cave Owner Relations with the caving community. Thanks to Howard for his efforts. by Ken Tayman ☐



Howard milling latch in his shop.

Photo by Don



Final product. Looks good. Really solid!

Photo by Don

Kenneth Tayman, Editor  
13373 Sunrise Drive  
Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214

## FRANKLIN COUNTY GROTTO

