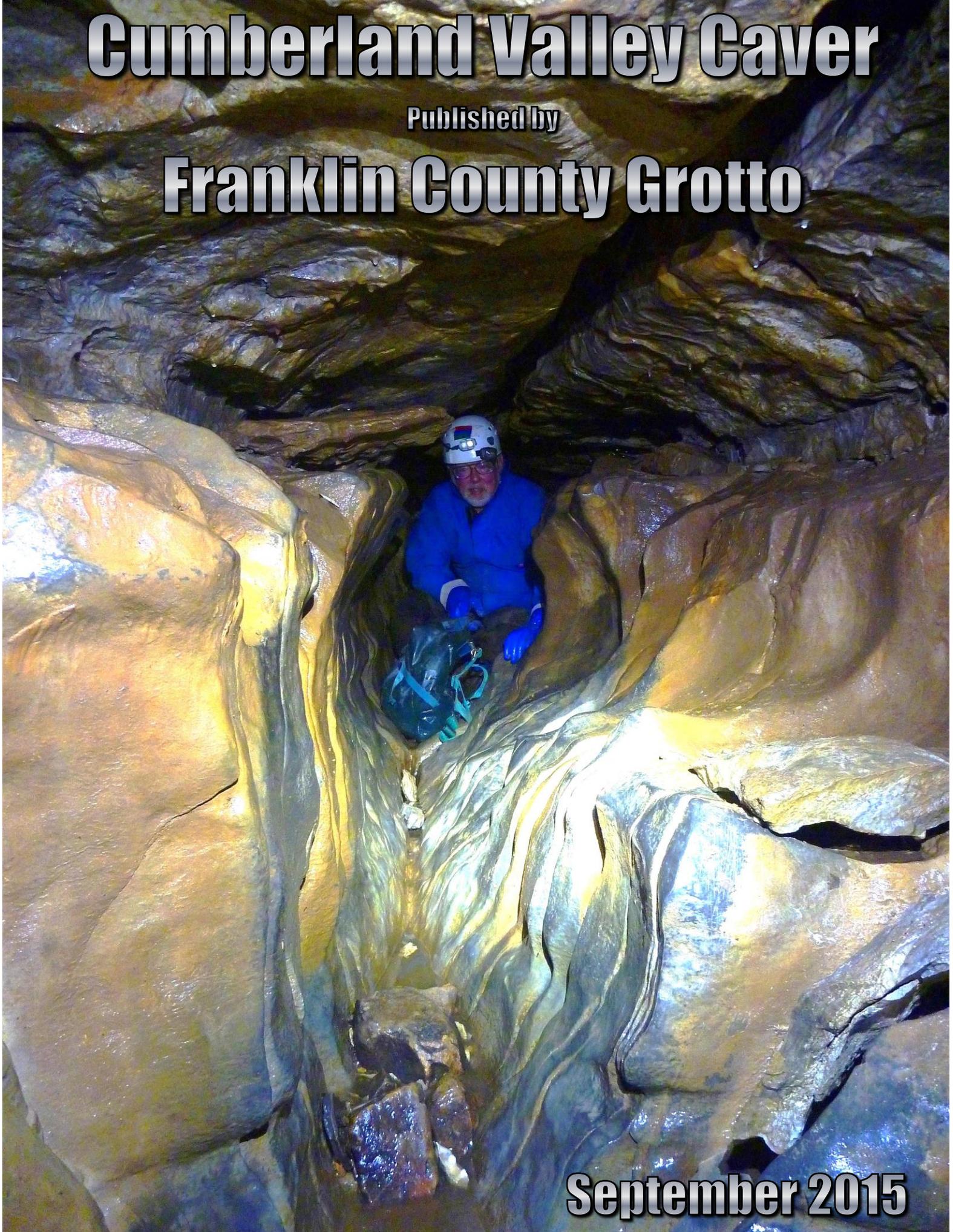


Cumberland Valley Caver

Published by

Franklin County Grotto



September 2015

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FRANKLIN COUNTY GROTTO

An Internal Organization of the National Speleological Society

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Franklin County Grotto meetings are held the 3rd Monday of the month. The location is at **"The Cottage Pub and Restaurant"** at 572 Wayne Ave, Chambersburg, PA 17201. The meeting starts at 7:00pm. 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.

The Cumberland Valley Caver is published four 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 any way. Other interested parties must request permission in advance. Franklin County Grotto actively participates in a newsletter exchange program. All exchanges should be mailed to: John Boswell, 45 Manada Creek Circle, Carlisle, PA 17013. Information regarding exchanges should be coordinated with editor so the exchange list can be updated.

Cover Photo: Pat Minnick in sculpted passage in Sharer Cave. Foto by Filer.

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See the entire newsletter in **COLOR** on the website
<http://www.karst.org/fcg/fcgnewsletters.htm>

From the editor:

Well, last issue was the Terry McClanathan Gazette, and this issue is my personal caving journal. Nobody submitted anything for inclusion in the newsletter once again. I guess it is what it is.

~ John Boswell, Interim Editor

Mummau Cave

by John Boswell

Matt Saltzer of York Grotto organized a trip to Mummau Cave in Lancaster County on April 19th and invited me to come along. I took my son Justin and met up with several York Grotto members at Matt's house and we caravanned over to Mount Joy to visit the cave.

The cave is in an old quarry and has been heavily visited in the past. The owner said he and all his friends used to play in it when they were kids.

The old quarry has been filled in with tons of dirt and graded and planted to match the surrounding hillside. You would never know a quarry was ever there. The gate is a small, square section of metal that looks almost like a picture frame lying on the ground. It is very inconspicuous.

You enter the gate and climb down about 6-8 feet and



double back into the original entrance to the cave. The main section of the cave is fairly typical of Pennsylvania cave passage with a long, low crawl with a mud floor and is nearly devoid of formations. Eventually you come to a section where you can stand up and the cave has several intersecting passages that loop back around to rejoin the main passage. There are a few fun squeezes. At the back of this section lies the main reason to visit the cave.



Sometime in the not-too-distant past, someone noticed a blowing lead and began to dig in a low passage trending upward. When they finally broke through, they discovered a beautifully decorated virgin passage with numerous aragonite ball formations (I believe this is what they are – I'm not a



geologist). Some of them are the size of softballs and incredibly delicate and beautiful, and very rare for this area. We took pictures in this passage and then coached each other slowly through the formations so as not to inadvertently damage anything. Beyond this is a wide, low room which leads to another section of cave where there are many beautiful, pure white

stalactites, stalagmites, and helectites. After taking many pictures here, we carefully picked our way back out of the new section and then out of the cave. The decorated new section of the cave is not very large, but it is well worth a visit if you get a chance to go.



Sharer Cave

by John Boswell

I had heard some good things about Sharer Cave in Centre County and found out it would be a new cave for several people, so I set up a trip for July 11 with me, Gordy Ley, Pat Minnick, Andy Filer, Mindy Johnson, and Sketch Minihan. Sketch was the only one who had been there before, so he agreed to act as our leader.

We arrived at the cave property and the Amish owner pulled up on a cart pulled by two giant mules. He was going to cut hay in one of his fields and talked to us briefly about the cave. We trudged up the lane, startling a group of about 15 turkeys along the way. We went across a small section of field to a deep and very steep sinkhole where the cave is located.

We gingerly picked our steps down the steep embankment, trying not to slip or fall. Pat started to slip and went to make a big step to a flat landing, but his foot got caught on a root and he went flying, his descent stopped by a pair of flexible saplings...No harm done. Sketch said "Wow, you really had some hang time there" and a new nickname was born. For the rest of the trip (and the next one), Pat was referred to as "Hang Time".



The entrance is at the base of a large rock face at the end of the sinkhole. Once you crawl inside the low entrance, you come to a room with a very large and impressive gate made of steel bars. The gate was constructed by Nittany Grotto and John Chengler. The opening in the gate is hard to find and there is sort of a secret key mechanism. I won't spoil the mystery in case anyone goes in the future.

We filed through the gate and began picking our way down the passage. The cave doesn't have much in the way of formations, but the passage is eroded into very interesting shapes and patterns throughout. The cave isn't all that large, but it has seven different levels to it so there is a lot of climbing and scrambling to make your way through it.

Shortly after starting down the initial passage, we passed over a good sized hole in the floor that dropped about 20 feet or so to one of the lower levels. A rope could be rigged here for a fun little drop. We stepped across the hole and continued on our way.

There were passages large and small, with little side leads and climbs here and there. There is often more than one way to reach a spot in the cave, with passages leading off in different directions converging in the same place.

Towards the bottom of the cave, there was a little water present. I'm told that at times there is much more water and sometimes the lower levels get completely flooded. We got lucky that it was mostly dry and only wet enough to get your shirt wet if you were belly crawling through low passage. Several of these lower passages had flat, clean-washed limestone floors in them that looked almost like a Roman bath or something. It was very cool. We eventually came to a room that sometimes has a waterfall running into it during times of higher water and also a long, protruding rock that has been decorated to look like a crocodile with a mud snout and two reflectors for eyes – Crocodile Rock.

There is an extension to the furthest reaches of the cave that can be reached through a very tight squeeze. Andy took a peak into it, but it was very tight with water running and the sides had begun to close up from mud slumping in. He didn't push it very far, and neither did any of the rest of us. We retraced our steps back up the seven levels to the gate and exited into a beautiful summer day.

Sharer is a sporty little cave with a lot of climbing and stretching. I described it as "just hard enough". It was a fun trip. Thanks to Paul Winter for coordinating the trip and key transfer with me.



Quotes of the Quarter:

"Hang Time" - S.M. re: P.M. acrobatic aerial pirouette.

"Let's get going before my nipples cut through my shirt." - J.B. re: extended rest periods

"They're like a herd of small animals." - A.F. re: a gaggle of Amish children.

MUDfest 2015

by John Boswell

MUDfest was held the weekend of August 1 at Lincoln Caverns. We were lucky and had nearly perfect weather and beautiful moonlit evenings the whole weekend. 113 registered attendees showed up and were ready for a good time. Some came from as far away as New Jersey, Massachusetts, and even Canada!

Trips were offered for most of the available caves in the Huntingdon area, and everyone who wanted to go on a trip was able to sign up for at least one. Trips went to Kookan, McAlisterville, Alexander Caverns, Seawra, Allensville, Blacklog, Sugar, and others. Self-guided trips went to Tytoona and Hall all weekend as well.

David Briggs and I led a trip to Allensville Cave and took a group of guys from New York through the cave. Dave made a good observation that the cave should have been named “Hell to Heaven Cave” because you have to negotiate a very low, water-filled crawl for quite a ways and then a complete immersion duck-under at the beginning of the cave before it begins to open up into walking passage. After that, the formations become larger and more frequent, and finally you come to the best part – a long series of cascading waterfalls for several hundred feet at the back of the cave until you eventually reach the terminal sump.



Tom Ackerly in Allensville Cave

Everyone seemed to really enjoy the cave once we passed the grim entrance series. They were exhilarated at the duck-under, which was a first for most of them and is always very “adventurey”.

Terrance Lovell and Dave Bookhammer set up a really cool zipline that was anchored/tensioned by Dave’s Jeep. Lots of people had fun taking rides throughout the weekend.

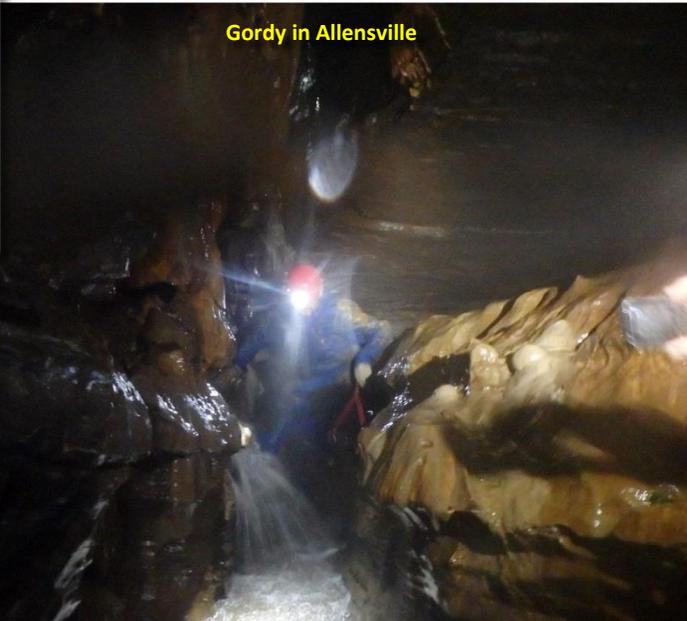
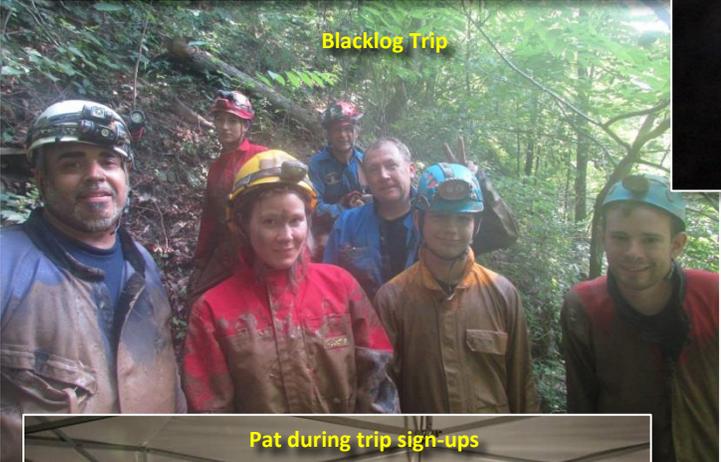
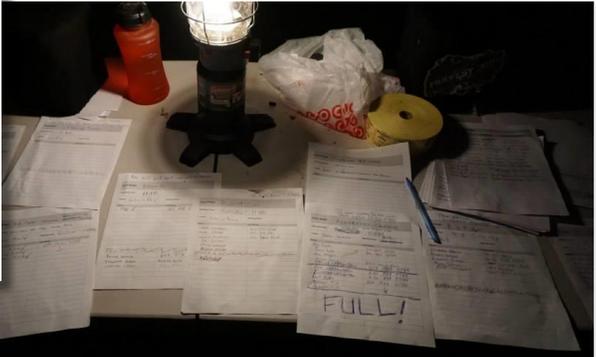


Unique Zip Line Tensioning

Saturday night there was a communal pot-luck meal that worked out well, followed by some nice raffle items and then a hearty bonfire. Lots of music was played and we watched a series of Chinese Lanterns sail over the ridge in the evening sky.

PCC served breakfast on Sunday morning and raised \$205, and MAKC sold coffee and raised some funds for themselves. Donation buckets were passed around and enough money was raised to cover the cost of the port-a-potties

and enough extra to send a nice donation to the NSS. It was a very fun, free, event with perfect camping weather and a good chunk of change was raised for the caving community.



Cave Rescue Training

by John Boswell



Eastern Region – National Cave Rescue Commission (ER-NCRC) held an Orientation to Cave Rescue (OCR) training class at Endless Caverns the weekend of 18-20 September.

I drove down Friday and quickly pitched my tent and then had my gear inspected before classroom training commenced at 7pm. We learned about the Incident Command System, the rescue callout process, and the basics of cave search before class ended at 10:30pm. I retired to my campsite and enjoyed the clear night sky for a bit before hitting the hay.



Saturday morning, training started promptly at 8am and we covered topics such as hypothermia, blood sugar issues, dehydration, and initial medical assessment, stabilization and care. We were introduced to the equipment commonly used in cave rescue scenarios, including field telephone setup and use, the Ferno litter, the SKED litter, Oregon Spine Splint half backboard, KED half backboard, and cervical collar.

We also learned some basic medical skills like how to physically assess a patient who is unconscious or disoriented, monitoring pulse at different body locations, taking blood pressure readings, basic splinting procedures, and how to move and position a patient to ready them for packaging and evacuation.

Then we moved on to actually packaging a patient into the different backboard and litter types using a vapor barrier and wool blankets to wrap them



into a warm, water-resistant burrito and then the proper way to lash them to the litter for safe transport through the difficult cave environment.

Later, the instructors set up an obstacle course around the campground to try to simulate different cave passages. The students then had to transport a loaded litter through the course, which included low squeezes, narrow fissures, a rocky stream passage, tight turns, through a drainage culvert, etc. When we rounded a building during the obstacle course, we saw a black bear in the woods where we were headed. We were able to watch him for several minutes as he moved out of the woods and across a small field to avoid us. It was pretty cool.

To end the training on Saturday, we went over the rules of the mock rescue to be held on Sunday, and took a written test on all the

information we had covered. We were dismissed around 7pm after a full day and some strenuous exertion moving the patients around the obstacle course.

We had some time to socialize Saturday night and Dave from the Cave, who works at Endless Caverns, packed a group of 7 students into the Gator and took us up the mountain to the giant, lighted "ENDLESS CAVERNS" sign that is visible from miles away. It is the largest lighted sign in the U.S. It was pretty neat to see it up close, and the view of the valley was spectacular. After some picture taking, Dave took us back down the mountain and into the cave for a stroll around the tourist loop with tunes playing on his Bluetooth speaker. It was really fun.

Sunday morning, everyone struck camp and met at 9am at the entrance to the cave to run our mock rescue exercise in Endless Caverns. We were to rescue a group of 3 experienced cavers who had



Centipede Technique



gone on a survey trip to push leads the night before and had failed to return. We split into teams for entrance control, logistics, communications, several search parties, and evacuation teams.

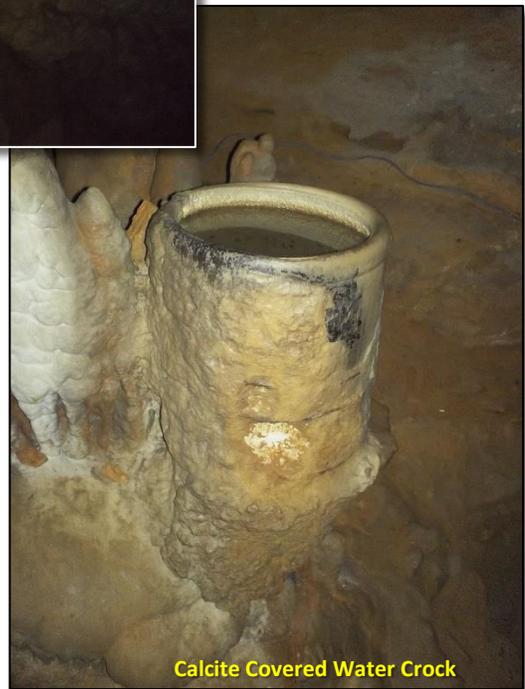
One of the search parties soon located the first lost caver, who had suffered a head injury and was disoriented and incapacitated. My evacuation team was sent in to get him out. We carried our equipment to the caver's location, which was down an 18 foot drop and in a low alcove of the cave. We assessed his condition, recorded his vitals and sent them back to the communications team to relay back to the Incident Commander. We prepared the Ferno litter with blankets and vapor barrier, fitted a cervical collar to stabilize his neck, and packaged him in the litter for transport. It was challenging getting him into the litter and securely packaged in the low passage.

We then started the arduous task of moving the patient through the varied passages of the cave. The litter is extremely heavy once loaded, and difficult to move in the smaller passages. We also had to be very cognizant of the many formations in this particular cave. We had a six-person evacuation team, which is the minimum manning requirement. We stopped several times along the way to check the patient's vitals and relay them to the communications team and also to evaluate how we would negotiate different sections of the cave, which gave us brief rests to catch our breath. It was exhausting getting him up and out of the cave without any "extra" members to relieve us.

I learned some valuable insight as to what it might take to rescue someone from a cave in an actual emergency. It can easily become a very large, complex, and time-consuming operation. I hope to never have to put the training to use, but it is good thing for all cavers to have an introduction to rescue training like this "just in case". It also gave me a new perspective on the value of risk assessment that I will carry with me on future cave trips. As all cavers know, caving is a dangerous activity. When we go on trips underground, we are relying on each other



for safety and we really owe it to each other to get trained at least a little. It was a very valuable, fun, and exhausting experience.



Coy Cave Entrance Modification

by John Boswell



The owner of the Coy Cave entrance to the Hershey-Coy Cave System in Cumberland County approached York Grotto about doing some modifications to the entrance. He wanted to make the entrance area, which is in his front yard, more level and “yard-like” rather than the overgrown sloping pit it has been. He wanted to be able to landscape his property, but still provide access to the cave.

Matt Saltzer met with the owner to discuss his desires and then contacted Franklin County Grotto for assistance in doing the work.

It was decided that we would add a 30” diameter culvert pipe to the entrance to bring it up to grade and then backfill around the pipe to allow the owner to bring in fill dirt and eventually be able to plant grass, plants, etc. around the area.

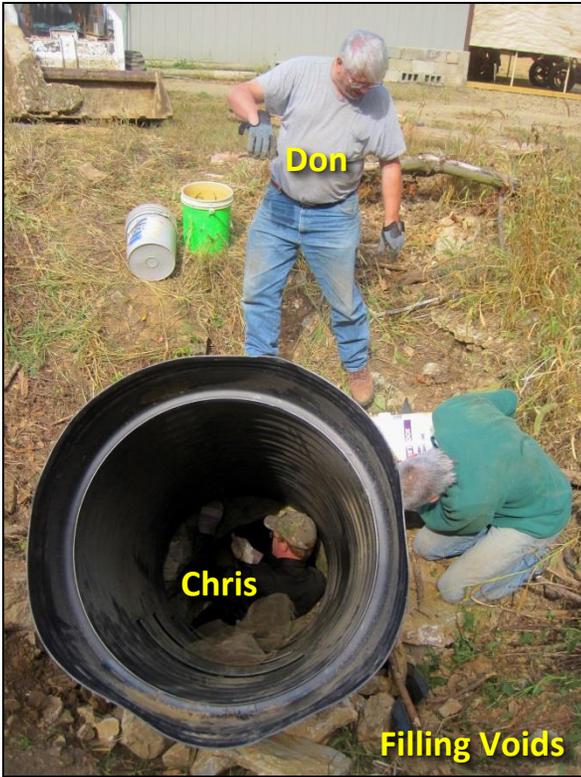
We met at the cave on Saturday, September 26 and got to work. We cleared out the entrance sink of loose rocks and banged off some protruding rocks to allow the culvert pipe to fit as flush as possible around the natural entrance. The end of the pipe was contoured to fit around the irregular features of the entrance and several steps were cut into the side of the double-walled culvert. The pipe was then laid in the pit at about a 40 degree angle. Rocks were then laid around and under the pipe in jigsaw puzzle fashion to support it and to eliminate any large open spaces.

Howard White brought his 1920’s-vintage cement mixer, and we mixed up 9 bags of concrete and added it to the rocks we had used to surround the pipe to create a solid foundation. Then more rocks of diminishing size were added to fill the sinkhole and any additional voids.

The owner (Garth) then began using his Bobcat to bring fill dirt to bring the backfill level nearly up to grade.

The plan now is to allow the fill to settle over the winter and also allow the owner to bring in topsoil and backfill/grade to his liking. We will



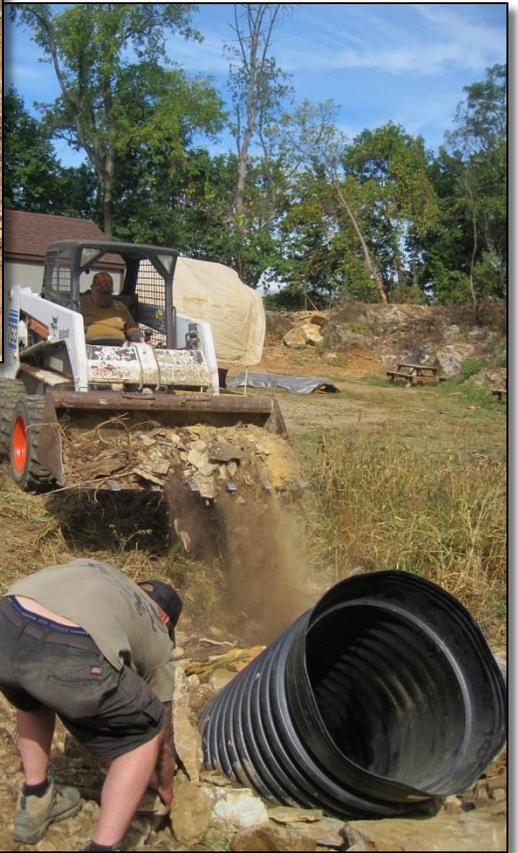


then return in the spring and pour a concrete “curb” around the protruding pipe. That will act as a sort of frame around the pipe, which will then be cut off level with the curb and allow the existing rebar grate to sit in it and be completely level with the ground so the owner can mow right over top of the entrance.

Matt also brought two aerial photographs of the property with the map of the cave overlaid on the photo. These were nicely framed and presented to the owner, and also to the owners of the Hershey entrance. Both owners were very happy with the photos and said they were very happy that cavers can continue to enjoy visiting the cave.

It’s a shame that more cave owners aren’t like Garth, who kept access to the cave as an important consideration in his property improvement plan. He could easily have just bulldozed rocks and debris into the pit as so many others have done in the past. It was a fun day and the work wasn’t all that difficult. I think the final result will be pleasing to the owner and also to the cavers who enjoy visiting this unique system.





Matt

Garth

Chris



Mike



Howard

Cleversburg Sink

by John Boswell



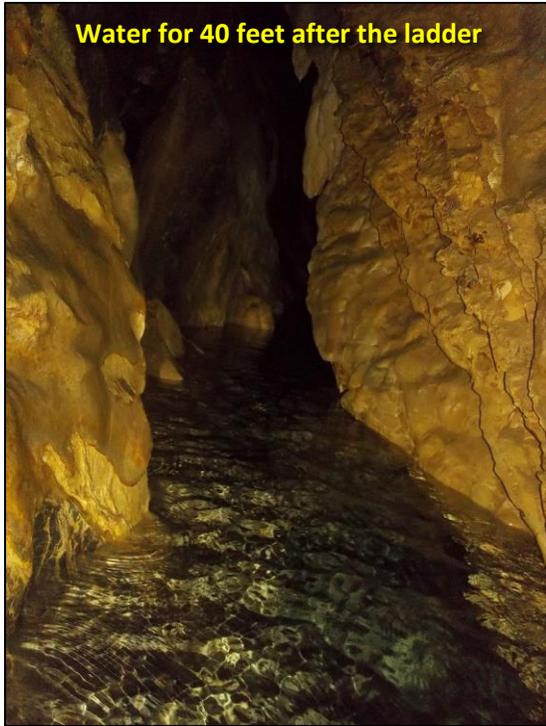
Gordy Ley went into Cleversburg Sink on Monday October 5 to replace the water level monitoring equipment with Professor Feeney and reported that the ladder was sitting on dry land. This really piqued my interest since I have only ever seen the top of the ladder beneath 10 feet of water. I decided to go take a look.

Jeff Boyer and Jake Troupe met me at the cave, we unlocked it, and headed in. Sure enough, the ladder was dry! We went down the ladder to the main passage. Jeff and I wore wetsuits and I brought a life jacket and a float in anticipation of this being a swim trip. There was still water to the left and right, and it looked pretty deep in places, and it was a beautiful turquoise blue. We headed to the left and by chimneying along the passage walls we were able to stay dry above the waist and after about 40 feet we hit dry passage! (Dry in the sense that it was above water level. It was far from dry.)

The passage is very high (50 feet or more) and very intricately sculpted and composed of a swirl-patterned limestone intersected at points by quartz veins. The bedding of the rock is nearly vertical. There are flowstone formations of very white calcite scattered throughout and some very large hanging chockstones loom from the upper levels.

On the map, the point where we left the water is right across from the Straight Gorge passage that leads back beyond the Bat Bone Pit and this was still very full of deep-looking water. You could swim back that way with a wetsuit and maybe encounter more dry passage. We didn't have the map with us, so we didn't realize what it was and did not explore it.

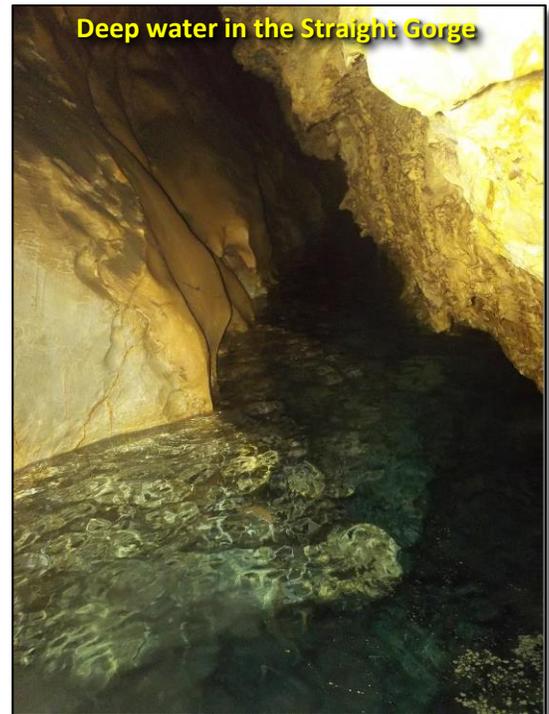
We made our way to a passage trending to the left, making very slow progress due to the extremely slick mud, which was almost like trying to walk on ice. Even though this cave has been heavily visited in the past, it had the appearance of a virgin cave because there were no footprints or marks anywhere (and because we didn't have the map and so didn't know where we were heading). The high banks of the passage were marked with thousands of horizontal lines several millimeters apart that marked the gradual recession of the water as the cave had drained.



We slip-slided our way along climbing over breakdown blocks and sliding through low passages like otters in the slick mud and came to the Sand Bank Room, which had a high mound of very wet sand sloping up towards the bare limestone walls, where numerous carbide signatures were seen dating back to the 50s and 60s.

We poked our heads into several potential passages and found one that continued to go in a low tube past a lovely travertine bridge with a white stalagmite perched on it. I remembered this feature from the map, but I didn't know whether this was the passage that led to the rest of the cave, or if it just petered out in short order. It looked to be a difficult maneuver to get up and out of this passage in the slick state it was in, so we decided to return to the main junction room and look in other areas. Upon exiting the cave, we saw on the map that this travertine bridge passage is the way to the rest of the cave and it was free of water as far as we could see, so the back of the cave may well be accessible at this time.

We returned back to where we had exited the water and headed north into a passage with very large piles of very large breakdown blocks. There was passage under, over, left, and right. We explored all kind of little alcoves and passages and there were lower levels that were still water-filled. There were extremely interesting patterns of erosion and the patterns in the limestone itself in this area. Some of the stuff was as jagged and sharp as a shark tooth, and then there were areas of smoothly cascading flowstone. There were quite a few ribbons in this area, as well as numerous pits. I don't think we quite made it to the New Hall section, but we were pretty close. We then thought it was a good time to leave and made our way back to the ladder, up



through the entrance room, and out into the cool night. It was exciting to finally be able to see more of this cave than just the flooded entrance room. Hopefully, it will continue to drain and expose even more passage.