

Ogof Draenen description

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Description credits

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Updates

Last updated: 02-Jun-2009

If any other Draenen cavers would like to submit passage descriptions, pictures, or corrections, please get in touch!

Location

Pwll Du, Gwent, South Wales, U.K.

Length

Last official length 66'120 metres, as of December 1999 (survey discontinued). Current estimated length 70'000 metres.

Depth

151 metres

Entrance grid reference

SO 2467:1176

Entrance altitude

362 metres

From the road from Blaenavon to Abergavenny, take the road to the left, just before the Keeper's Pond (or on the right, just after the Keeper's Pond when coming from Abergavenny). Parking is on the left after just over 1 km, on a large concreted area opposite the Lamb and Fox public house. If the car park is blocked, ask at the Lamb and Fox if you can park in their carpark instead.

From here, walk down the road towards the Pwll Du Adventure Centre. Follow the stream that runs in front of the building downhill to a fence. Cross this where padding has been put on the wire (taking care not to damage the fence) and then proceed, to the right of the stream, down an obvious but very steep path. This leads directly to the entrance, a small gated phreatic tube at the foot of a small outcrop.

Access

The cave is gated. Access is controlled by the diggers in Morgannwg Caving Club and should be applied for in writing to Sue Mabbett, 2 Garth Close, Morganstown, Cardiff CF4 8LF. Please enclose a SAE with letters of enquiry. Applications are rarely refused.

The gate is located at the entrance to the cave, and uses a combination lock. A log book (for logging trips and for recording damage to the cave or information of scientific interest) is placed in a black ammunition case bolted to the west wall of the Lamb and Fox Pub so that it can be filled out on the surface.

Please do use the log book and sign-in; remember, your life or that of a friend could depend on it!

Pwll Du Cave Management Group

This group, formally constituted on October 13 1996, and comprising representatives of clubs involved with Ogof Draenen together with the Cambrian Caving Council, will administer future access to the cave and conservation policy.

Conservation

All visitors to Ogof Draenen are requested to respect the marker tapes which have been laid in many parts of the cave, as these are there to help protect the formations and occasionally the floor, in order to preserve the cave environment. However, due to the rate of exploration in the cave, it is not always possible to keep up with the taping and some calcite and gypsum formations, mud formations and guano deposits are currently unprotected. Visitors in unfamiliar territory or new extensions should be alert to this fact and exercise an appropriate level of care.

Ogof Draenen is also inhabited by bats. It is a criminal offence to interfere with bats (note that this would include photographing them without a license, or remaining in a roosting area long enough to change the temperature significantly), so please avoid them wherever possible. Furthermore, please note that the use of hexamine for heating and cooking produces harmful by-products (read the packaging!) which can disturb, or even poison bats. Thus, although the use of hexamine in the cave is not prohibited, any disturbance or harm caused to the bats would be considered a criminal offence, so please avoid using it.

As in the nearby Llangattock caves, the use of carbide and the smoking of cigarettes in Ogof Draenen is prohibited.

Flooding Characteristics

Most of Ogof Draenen can be passed during high water conditions, with the following known exceptions:

- The ducks in Agent Bloreng and Y Gwter Fawr can sump in wet weather.
- The section of the Beyond A Choke streamway before the chokes can become hazardous in high water.
- The southern end of the Big Country streamway sumps in wet weather.
- The Western extremities of Bloreng Inlet can become very "sporting" after heavy rain but Bloreng Inlet appears not to change very much.
- In Dollimore Series, the normally ankle-to-knee depth water in Out Of The Blue can become chest deep very rapidly, with less than a day of rainfall, and Into The Black can pond up to completely cover the mud banks around Yellow Van Passage.

Following several days of rain, a few hours worth of heavy rain will cause serious flooding throughout the early portion of the cave:

- In Upstream Passage, the water can be seen to rise a few cms a minute, causing the low sections at its upstream end to sump.
- The 4m roped climb in the entrance series becomes a waterfall with a significant volume of water. However, the entire entrance series can be passed, including that climb, although it is extremely unpleasant.

Overview

Ogof Draenen is the second longest cave in Great Britain and contains some of the largest cave passage in the country including, in War of the Worlds and Dollimore Series, what is probably the second largest passage in Britain. It is also very complex in places. Visitors are strongly advised to carry a survey and this description, or to go with someone who knows the cave well. There are also many loose boulders to traverse and the danger these pose is often heightened by a slick covering of mud. For this reason the cave can prove very tiring. The cave is not suitable for novices.

As the cave is extended, it is obviously becoming possible to do longer and longer trips. The duration of some of these trips should not be underestimated; not only can they prove extremely tiring, but serious consideration should be given to the need for extra lamp batteries. There are now several reports of inward bound cavers donating spare lights/batteries to outward bound cavers!

Roughly speaking, the cave is shaped like a letter "K" (although from the survey the shape appears more like a lower case "h"), with the backbone aligned

northwest-southeast and the entrance at the junction of the two arms with the backbone. The cave may therefore be conveniently divided into six "areas":

1. The entrance
 2. The upper (northwest) backbone
 3. The lower (south) backbone
 4. The upper (north) arm
 5. The lower arm:
 - East
 - Southeast
-

Description

1. The Entrance

Entrance Series to Cairn Junction

Following the small entrance passage, a climb down in the floor is reached after a few metres. This descends down to two scaffolded shafts. From the bottom of these, a low crawl leads off. The crawl widens into a small enlargement and a stream is seen at the far end of this. The stream is followed through a flat-out crawl, and down a tight, wet, hole in the floor where a further drop lands at the head of an 8 m deep scaffolded shaft. At the bottom of this shaft is a chamber. From the chamber, two passages lead off: 1) a tall rift straight ahead, and 2) a low crawl to the right (the usual route).

1) The rift is a traverse, Darling Rifts, with several oxbows and side passages leading off. Just before the rift closes down, after about 75 m, a passage doubles back on the right. This is the Pitch Bypass but an obvious continuation of the rift is in the floor assisted by a fixed handline. This leads down to a chamber with a stream running down the opposite wall and disappearing in the floor. On entering the chamber, a large side passage to the right can be followed to a 20 m pitch, Big Bang Pitch (hangers are placed above the pitch).

Beyond the pitch, a small series of passages can be accessed which consist of two oxbows, and a passage leading back through a choke into the chamber before the pitch. These contain many fossil dorsil spines of sharks (ctenacanthus) which appear as black objects with a U-shaped cross-section protruding from the walls. Other loose shark fossils collected from the floor of the same area were identified as the spine of gyracanthus, and the tooth plate of psammodus. The samples of the gyracanthus spine and psammodus tooth plate are located in the National Museum Cardiff, available for viewing on request - advance booking required. For further details, see the BCRA publication "Cave Science", Vol 30 (1) pp 33 - 36.

Big Bang Pitch comes out in the roof of a large breakdown passage that is littered with boulders for almost its entire length. A stream runs under the

boulders. The usual way on is downstream (when facing the hangers at the top of the pitch this would be to the left - in the direction of a large mud and sand slope). Not too far on a cairn is seen. This is Cairn Junction. The side passage to the right is the other way in.

2) The crawl is only a few metres long and leads very quickly into an enlargement. In the floor of the enlargement, there is a short awkward rift which doubles back on itself to regain the stream in Spare Rib. This is followed until, after two small cascades, it disappears in the floor of a chamber. A large boulder blocks the view of the main part of the chamber.

From here three passages lead off; 1) to the left of the chamber a rift is the other end of the Pitch Bypass passage from the rift traverse, 2) straight ahead and along a high rift is a comfortable oxbow to the third passage (although this route is slower) with a few holes down into it (one such hole contains some formations which would easily be damaged by the passage of cavers overhead so please take care if using this route), and 3) a low crawl to the right (the second passage follows approximately the same path as this passage).

The second and third passages can be followed into a larger passage and this can then be followed to two climbs, a 4 m roped climb and a further, unroped, but smaller one. Shortly after, a climb up some boulders leads immediately to Cairn Junction.

Strawberry Passage

Cavers are requested not to enter Strawberry Passage, and to take extreme care if they do visit it, in order to protect the formations, some of which are in very vulnerable positions. Some sections of passage have not yet been taped.

Starting from the top of an awkward slope above the 4 m roped climb in the entrance series, a bolt traverse begins on the left-hand wall then passes to the right-hand wall to cross over the top of Cairn Junction and enter Strawberry Passage. Depending on how the traverse is rigged, as much as 50 m of rope and 15 hangers may be required. From there it may be desirable to rig a 15 m ladder landing beside the cairn as the traverse is somewhat exposed.

Strawberry Passage begins as a slope up into a narrow rift. Early on, a crawl under the right-hand wall bypasses a taped off oxbow, and a climb up and down is required later. Tapes mark where sediment deposits and stal are in vulnerable positions, please pay attention to them. After about 150 m of narrow but generally walking sized rift, there is a selection of very fine stalactites and helictites, tucked in an undercut. Less than 100 m further on, a junction is met with a larger passage.

To the left, a taped route through a smooth but cracked mud floor quickly reaches a dig, after passing a rift to the right. The rift, Quality Street, passes an awkward oxbow to the left before reaching a 2 m drop. Traverse over this to

protect the mud floor and climb down a few metres beyond. The passage continues as a winding rift with thick layers of glutinous mud on the walls. It has not been taped and so extreme care must be taken not to damage the stal flows. In the floor, an orange calcite 'stream' meanders gently, before filling the floor at a low section. Carefully stepping over it, there is an oxbow that bypasses this section, but as all that lies beyond is a narrowing passage covered in glutinous mud, it may be better to stop here.

To the right at the junction with the larger passage, the main way on continues with a smooth cracked mud floor, passing several sections where dried crystal pools with unusual crystal growth and calcite 'streams' cross the passage. Passing these requires careful stepping between taped sections, without dropping mud on the formations. The problem is made worse by the large amounts of damp mud that sticks to cavers' boots. Beyond this, a drop down to the left reaches an inlet aven and a short section of streamway, which feeds one of the inlets in Gilwern Passage. Continuing past the drop down, avens all choke before a pool containing The Strawberries is reached. The Strawberries are a unique formation made from hundreds of small red-orange balls of calcite, forming on the bottom of the pool instead of the usual calcite crystals. The pool fills the entire passage and continuing along the low and narrow passage ahead would destroy The Strawberries, so it has been left un-entered, with a tantalising view into the passage ahead, enlarging to walking size again.

There may be hope for a bypass, but until one is found, the passage must be left unpushed.

Cairn Junction to Tea Junction

From Cairn Junction the large passage continues downstream to the right, passing by several side passages and oxbows, up and down easy climbs and through some shallow pools to the enormous, boulder-littered, Tea Junction. Here, a large, although out of sight stream enters from a very large passage to the left.

From the first right turn on the way downstream to Tea Junction from Cairn Junction, a large side passage on the left, which soon lowers to an easy crawl, can be taken. After about 50 m a hole down to the right is the Wonderbra Bypass whilst the crawl continues ahead. Wonderbra Bypass is a quick and much easier route than the streamway, which emerges further downstream under a very large rock bridge, close to Tea Junction. Avoiding the hole down, the crawl continues straight ahead to a junction. Straight ahead closes down past a squeeze, but right leads along a low crawl into White Arch Passage, 150 m upstream from Tea Junction. This route to White Arch Passage, Carpet Crawl, takes the same length of time as Wonderbra Bypass but is quicker than the stream route and makes a refreshing change for the boulder-weary caver!

2. The North

Upstream Passage

Heading upstream from Cairn Junction, to the left, the large passage leads past a noisy inlet on the left and over a large dried mud bank to more large passage. About 50 m further on from the mud bank, Big Bang Pitch can be seen entering from the roof. The large passage continues past this, to a loose choke which is passed at the top on the right. The choke is short and the large passage is regained on the other side. The large passage ends after a further 100 m of stream passage, where an inlet showers in from above and some formations can be seen in an alcove to the right.

The way on now becomes a 3 m high but much narrower passage. Some 30 m along here the main passage turns right, but ahead an originally-laddered climb (a pull-through rope is now in place) leads to the 300 m long, but small, Ladder Passage. Upstream Passage continues past an inlet and then becomes a short crawl. This ends at a sharp turn to the right at which point the roof once again rises to standing height. Just past here, a stream enters from under the left wall. This can be regained by climbing into a narrow rift to the left. This is the start of the Waterfall Series. Beyond, Upstream Passage continues past the way into Waterfall Series as 500 m of small passages and some traverses.

Waterfall Series to Knees Up Mother Brown

At the start of the rift the only way on is to leave the stream and proceed up a series of tight climbs until the stream is regained. Following a short section of stream passage, a further climb over the stream leads to a cascade beside a fixed rope. The rope climb overhangs slightly and has few footholds. It may be beneficial to send the better climbers up first, and use a 10 m belay line for weaker climbers. From the top of the rope the stream can be followed for 200 m to chokes.

About 60 m along the last section of stream passage (from the top of the rope) a small tube on the left enters a smaller inlet passage. This passes several boulder obstacles before entering a small chamber from which several ways lead off. To the left, the stream can be followed for a further 150 m. All of the other passages end quickly in chokes, except for the one almost directly above the way in. This leads to a very slippery climb up, assisted by a another fixed rope. A belay may be useful for weaker climbers.

At the top two passages lead off. The one over the top of the aforementioned chamber choking, and the other being the way on. The way on passes by some gypsum formations and under some low sections before reaching a sharp right hand bend. The obvious route on becomes blocked with mud after 30 m. Instead a climb up on the right is the real way on. This reaches a series of crawls after 40 m.

The first crawl is of varying height and ends after 70 m at a squeeze up a slope. The larger passage that leads on from here is short lived as a junction is met with a crawl to the right. The upper passage quickly becomes very tight and chokes after 20 m, but not before it passes over a visual hole into the lower passage. The lower passage is an easier crawl than the first. After some 40 m it becomes a rift of stooping proportions. The rift is followed for over 200 m, through some small complexes (though the way on is usually obvious), and over some easy traverses to where a climb up is forced into a somewhat larger passage. This is choked in both directions and so the continuation of the rift on the other side of the passage must be taken to another climb up. This leads into a much larger passage, Knees Up Mother Brown.

Knees Up Mother Brown and beyond

Knees Up Mother Brown is a phreatic passage with a flat roof and sand floor. This makes it possible to run the 200 m (to the left) from its junction with Waterfall Series to its junction with Lost River Passage. Turning right on entering Lost River Passage leads past a few oxbows before the passage degenerates and ends after 100 m. Turning left and scrambling up a small slope up enters 6th Heaven Chamber, with its fine collections of aragonite formations. To the right here, a low passage enters a choke, while straight ahead, a climb through a rock window enters another chamber which also contains a few aragonite formations.

Turning right on entering Knees Up Mother Brown sees the passage roof progressively lower to crawling height after just over 75 m. The crawl lasts for a further 175 m. At this point, the sand on the floor turns to wet mud and the passage enlarges to stooping height. A few metres ahead a low bedding can be seen at head height to the left, while the passage swings right and follows the edge of a choke which makes up its left wall, before becoming too tight. The bedding to the left enters a chamber in the base of the choke. Here a route up to the right enters the low, but wide, Padlock Passage. To the right the passage chokes with rocks, but to the left a taped route leads over boulders and under some low sections to a steep ramp down. At the bottom of the ramp, the passage becomes much larger and after 50 m a deep pit develops in the floor. Some 50 m further on the passage appears to choke. This marks the start of Bolder Land.

Bolder Land

Warning; this whole section of cave is VERY loose and should be treated with the utmost care and respect.

At the end of Padlock Passage, a bedding to the right contains some holes down between boulders. These enter a passage within the choke running in the same direction as Padlock Passage before entering a loose chamber. The way on is to cross over to the left and take another small passage within the choke. This reaches a squeeze up and then enters a loose section of passage which quickly

enlarges and which also contains a deep but blind pit in the floor to the right. Ahead there are two ways on.

Ahead is loose and requires a lot of faith. This route is not advised!

A better route is low and to the left. This enters a large undercut with the upper route entering from the right and a 5 m pit at its far end. The way on is to crawl round to the left of the pit on a ledge and then climb up at the head of the pit. **This requires the use of a boulder that is supported by a badly shattered wall. Take extreme care!**

The passage continues as a shattered rift with several undercuts to the left. Many pits also exist in the floor and in the undercuts. After just over 100 m, the passage narrows and starts to wind. A climb must then be made over a boulder pile. The climb back down lands at the head of a 6 m deep pit, the bottom of which is accessible through the last undercut.

The passage now turns right and takes on a phreatic style before reaching a small boulder ruckle at a corner to the right. At this point the passage enters the overlying millstone grit. Ahead, in a lower section, a junction is met. The way on is up to the left where it reaches another junction. Here the only real way on is to the right.

Continuing up to the left an area is reached where the only possible way on is under a shattered roof to the left. This enters a chamber with the continuation under the wall to the right. Ultimately this enters a terminal chamber filled with red sand run-in.

3. The South

The Beyond A Choke Streamway

From Tea Junction, the streamway continues downstream to the right. After around 50 m of huge passage, a higher passage leads off ahead up a large slope. This is Gilwern Passage. The Beyond A Choke streamway continues to the left.

Beyond A Choke streamway starts big and wide over boulders but narrows after a hole down through boulders to the streambed is reached. Although the large passage continues up an easy climb ahead, this is not used as it requires a 10 m pitch to regain the stream.

After about 750 m of easy walking passage (along the streambed), interspersed by a few easy climbs, cascades and many pools (some up to 2 m deep), some very obvious stalactites and stalagmites are seen up to the right. Just past here, two chokes are encountered in quick succession. Both may be passed via semi-obvious muddied routes starting about 4 m up each.

Beyond the chokes, the passage is narrower than before and short traverses are necessary. After about 100 m a small climb over boulders is met. About 100 m beyond here on the right is the 5 m climb up into A Bit Of A Dive. This passage goes for 250 m to the Parrot Sump. This is known to change height considerably and currently ends at Parrot Sump 4.

Some 300 m further downstream the Agent Blorenge streamway, the far end of the "Round Trip", enters from the left. Beyond A Choke streamway continues past this for about another km through many areas of 2-3 m deep pools. In many areas along here, the passage is up to 5 m wide and often the roof lowers to give the impression that the passage is about to sump, although its final end is in the Riflemans Chamber, where a boulder pile is reached with a high mud slope to the left. At the top of the slope, a balcony gives a view back up the stream passage and at the far side of the balcony on the right, a route up through a choke enters a higher level, loose chamber with no way on. This is the present limit of the downstream cave. From here, the water flows south for over 7 km to the Snatchwood Bridge and Pontnewynydd risings.

The Score

This is usually entered via Back Passage (see Tea Junction to Lamb and Fox Chamber in section 5 below). Back Passage leads, via 60 metres of flat-out crawling, into a chamber at the start of Crystal Cruncher Passage.

To the left is an oxbow, while the main way on is ahead. After 150 m of comfortable crawling/stooping, a side passage to the left reaches a dig, and the way on gets a little lower over the next 150 m. At this point, Crystal Cruncher Passage swings right to enter the main passage of The Score. To the right it descends to mud fill, while to the left, it continues crawling sized. After 25 m, the mud floor descends, and the passage becomes walking sized. 50 m further on, the alternative route in via Oo Crawl joins from the right.

Beyond this, the passage enlarges to over 7 m square, passing several side passages until the roof lowers to just over standing height. In general, the side passages at floor level can be followed for about 100 m while those higher up are usually only a few metres long. The first side passage on the right, Extramarital, contains two squeezes. The second is long and extremely tight, without any reward on the other side. It is only passable by the smallest of cavers. Continuing along the main passage, the roof quickly rises again as the passage enters a chamber.

To the left and right are small side passages while ahead/left, the way on is up a small climb from where a low passage gains a short section of the larger passage. In the floor, a taped off passage enters the chamber through a tight squeeze while ahead, the passage closes down after 75 m. At this point, a small passage to the left can be crawled along to reach a junction after 50 m. To the left closes down while to the right is One Night Stand. This continues small and

passes through a tight squeeze part way along, to reach the end after a little over 100 metres at some calcite formations; The White Wormery.

About 260 m back from the first choke (about 20 minutes from Tea Junction) in the Beyond A Choke streamway, a 10 m climb can be made up a muddied stal alcove on the left (facing downstream) into Over The Top. This large passage leads over a hole in the floor down to the streamway and continues for 110 m, passing a crawl at head height on the right, to another hole in the floor to the stream. Over The Top ends after about another 150 m.

The crawl on the right, Oo Crawl, is about 275 m long. Very tight to start with, it becomes slightly larger after about 75 m.

A further 100 m on, the roof rises to standing height with a few low sections. This section of standing passage ends after 100 m where it enters the main passage of The Score, having passed some delicately placed gypsum crystals (exercise care).

4. The Northwest (Gilwern Passage and beyond)

The Beyond A Choke Streamway to Forever Changed

Climbing the slope from the point at which the start of the Beyond A Choke streamway swings left enters Gilwern Passage. This is fault-controlled (by the same fault that controls most of the Beyond A Choke streamway) and is therefore remarkably straight throughout. It is beautifully decorated, and great care must be taken in some places to avoid damage, particularly by the splashing of mud, to the formations. These are mainly gypsum crystals, which extensively cover both walls of the passage for almost its entire length, and calcite formations which, although not as abundant, are equally as beautiful.

From the top of the slope, Gilwern Passage turns right before quickly becoming a crawl over mud banks, just after some formations, but it is possible to stoop in a channel on the right after a few metres. After about 30 m, the passage enlarges at a tricky sand slide. About 20 m further on, a large crystal pool and flowstone formation, Giles' Shirt, is seen to the right. Here the passage lowers after a climb up but soon opens up again as an inlet comes in from high on the left. The water disappears. Then, after a comfortable 150 m long straight stretch, the largest section of passage in Gilwern Passage, and a right turn, another inlet comes out of an aven. The stream from this aven flows north along Gilwern Passage, in the opposite direction to the Beyond A Choke streamway, and is known to resurge to the north in a small cave under a limekiln beside Cwm Dyar (referred to as Clydach South Resurgences No 1 in The Caves of Clydach - Tony Oldham).

Gilwern Passage is then followed, past some protected formations, for a seemingly endless 750 m. This section starts as a walk in the stream but soon becomes a more uncomfortable walk over boulders. Here the passage appears to

close down where an easy climb ahead leads to a junction with a side passage to the left. The passage straight ahead is Morgannwg Passage. This inlet passage has (mostly sunken) calcite rafts in a crystal pool near its start. The passage is taped off to protect these, and closes down just beyond the pool.

Gilwern Passage continues past this junction to close down after about 20 m, just past a sharp S-bend. Here a climb up straight ahead also leads to a junction. The passage on the right is the other end of the passage on the left at the last junction (the easier way to reach this point), while up a small climb on the left leads to the large, but dead end, Old Illtydian's Chamber.

At the bottom of the climb up towards Old Illtydian's Chamber, after the S-bend, the water disappears under a low arch to the left. This can be followed through to a slight enlargement with a dry crawl ahead. This crawl is very short and leads to a climb up boulders into a (stable) choke where the roof is made from boulders in the floor of Old Illtydian's Chamber. Once at the top of the climb, the way on is through two adjoining squeezes (one of which will prove impassable to persons of more than average build) into another enlargement. The low arch straight ahead is the way on. The roof now becomes solid and covered in bunches of gypsum. This the start of Forever Changed, the initial passage of the Galeria Garimpeiros Extensions.

Forever Changed to Hearts of Olden Glory (The Galeria Garimpeiros Extensions)

Forever Changed carries the Gilwern Passage streamway but this disappears to the left when the passage begins to enlarge.

Forever Changed now becomes lower and progress is made by crawling over large dried mud banks. This only lasts for a short distance and the passage gets larger again when the stream re-enters from a sump on the left. Here the passage gets very muddy and the taped path generally follows the stream through knee deep mud. Fairly soon a high level passage comes in from the left and the whole passage gets larger again.

Ahead at this point a 1 m tall, gnome-style stalagmite, the Guardian, is seen ahead under a pure white curtain-stalactite, while a multitude of straws decorate the walls. After this the roof lowers again and the path leaves the stream to wander between some 1 m long straws. The path then follows the stream again for a short distance to a junction where another streamway, carrying a larger stream, enters from a somewhat smaller passage straight ahead. The combined streams then flow off to the left, along a lower but wider passage to become the Y Gwter Fawr streamway.

Continuing ahead (upstream) the Hearts Of Olden Glory streamway takes on a superb, echoey, phreatic style to a sharp right hand bend. Here the phreatic style continues ahead, while the stream swings right and the passage takes on a more

rifty style as it continues. A side passage on the right ends after some distance having passed through a chamber.

At the point where the side passage leads off, the stream passage swings back to the left. It continues with the rifty style for about 100 m to a choke. Here a high level passage leads off on the left. This will be mentioned later.

Another World

Continuing ahead at the sharp right hand bend in the Hearts Of Olden Glory streamway eventually leads after some distance to a crawl. This, in turn, ends at a short climb up by some slightly muddied stal. At the top of the climb is a chamber with some columns.

An obvious passage leading off to the right from the chamber can be followed through a low arch to a decorated chamber. The main way on here is straight ahead, but to the left a passage doubles back. This passes by a tall stalagmite and stalactite, with straws decorating the walls (great care must be taken). The passage reaches a small drop from where a low crawl on the right can be followed for 100 m to where it branches. Both branches close down shortly afterwards.

Back at the main way on, the passage starts about a 1 m high but very quickly opens up into a well decorated chamber, Another World. The main way on from here is to the left. This large passage crosses over a small stalagmite in a dried up streambed in the floor, and passes a dead end passage on the right before a small passage leads off low and to the right. This winds its way to the high level passage mentioned earlier near the choke at the end of the Hearts Of Olden Glory streamway.

Indigo Rift

The main way on leads past more formations to a Y-junction. The passage to the right follows a mature rift to a large cross rift where the passage to the left enters the left fork from the Y-junction. Following the left fork, a climb up into an aven leads to a flat-out crawl that will be mentioned later, whilst continuing ahead follows an almost perfectly circular mud-floored passage. This soon becomes more straight-walled with a rounded roof. Three avens are passed before a choke is quickly encountered. The first is to the right, the second a little further on, is in the middle of the passage, and the third is entered through a narrow rift to the right. Another aven can be entered via a low crawl to the right.

The three main avens unite in a large chamber with two ways leading off, a low passage to the left, which leads to the flat-out crawl mentioned earlier, and to the right is Indigo Rift. Progress along here is made by traversing high up on very friable ledges coated in a thin layer of slippery black mud. Initially, Indigo Rift passes over the fourth aven, but further on many other holes can be seen in the floor. Eventually a large one is reached. This has been bolted to gain access

to a series of small passages that will be mentioned later. Indigo Rift continues after a climb up over this hole. The going slowly becomes easier after this until, after some distance, a junction is reached. A flat-out crawl to the left enters a dead-end enlargement, straight ahead is a small, windy, passage with a few side passages, while to the right leads to a loose choke. Down a small hole to the left before this choke, leads to a series of small passages containing a dry streamway and a pitch with an aven up into the already mentioned bolted hole in Indigo Rift. A climb up into one of these passages provides a difficult way into The Realm of Baron Von Carno, but is not the usual way in.

The Realm Of Baron Von Carno

This passes very close to both the end of Indigo Rift, and Lost River Passage in Waterfall Series. Most of the passages in this series are crawls and several loops are possible. This area is only for the ardent passage-collector!

The main way into this series is to drop down through the floor of Indigo Rift, half way between its start and the bolted hole, to where a small stream is seen to enter from a crawling-sized passage. About 15 m along this, some passages to the right connect with the other route into this series (mentioned above). A further 20 m in the way on is to the right while the stream enters from the left. Another 30 m on, beyond a squeeze, a hole up enters a passage in a cross-rift. To the left can be followed for 100 m, whilst to the right enters Kebabarama Drama after 100 m (see later).

Continuing at the lower level, 30 m and several junctions later, the passage reaches a junction at a cairn (present as of 5 April 97) with Fastrack Membership ahead and an inlet, The Stream Of Running Commentary, to the left.

Fastrack Membership is a tight oxbow so the inlet itself is usually followed. About 130 m along The Stream Of Running Commentary, some holes above enter the main passage of The Realm Of Baron Von Carno, at the same point as Fastrack Membership enters from the right. 100 m further on, some passages to the right enter Kebabarama Drama. A side passage along this section heads off for 400 metres, trending away from the rest of the cave, and contains a seasonal sump; this should only be followed after extended periods of dry weather. A further 150 m on, The Stream Of Running Commentary enters the end of The Realm Of Baron Von Carno. This larger, decorated passage can be followed for 500 m to where it closes down. Some 200 m along this are the holes down into The Stream Of Running Commentary.

Kebabarama Drama consists of several sections of large(ish) passage separated by numerous chokes, squeezes, climbs and crawls. Yuk!

The Y Gwter Fawr Streamway (Breadfruit Boulevard and Saint Giles Series)

The downstream passage of Y Gwter Fawr continues for a short distance past some straws and around a few bends to a low, wet crawl. This opens up after a short distance in a chamber. The way on from here is along another wet crawl which was once, and sometimes still is, a very muddy and intimidating duck. This is about 30 m long, gradually lowering before becoming slightly higher about half way along, and is the start of Breadfruit Boulevard (Chapter 1).

Once out of the duck, the passage enlarges to stooping size with mud banks but this quickly becomes a short crawl. Following this the passage returns to stooping size with crawls over mud banks and enlarges progressively over 300 m to become over 10 m wide and 15 m high. At this point, however, the passage chokes. Just before the choke, an inlet to the right can be followed for 10 m to a fork. To the right can be followed further than to the left but neither are longer than 30 m.

The route through the choke begins at the top on the right and climbs steeply to a loose but level passage. This is Saint Giles Passage at the start of Saint Giles Series. This enlarges over 20 m to become 7 m high and 15 m wide. Some 30 m ahead, a side passage to the right is the start of the Lamb And Flag Passages. Beyond the passage descends a steep and very loose slope (take care) to regain the stream. The passage at this point is about 10 m square with large mud banks although these quickly give way to boulders. The passage then becomes progressively higher (perhaps as much as 20 m high) with several boulder obstacles.

At one point, a large boulder spans the passage giving a choice of routes, over or under. Immediately on the other side of this, two holes to the right enter Clerical Error. *This passage is not to be followed to protect its floor of dried crystal pools, which can be seen from its start.* Ahead, the lofty passage continues to a rise up boulders. At the top, the passage is more square-shaped. About 20 m along here, the taped route splits. To the left, a laddered climb up a stal bank is the route into the Dyer Straits Streamway, while a further 20 m ahead leads to another split in the route. To the right here is The Wiggly Business, while to the left, the passage becomes much lower and arched. This quickly opens out to its former size, passing a crystal pool containing some cave pearls, and continues to enlarge.

Ahead the passage contains some deep pools of water and mud (these are easily avoided by narrow ledges to the left, just above the water) and ends after 200 m in the well decorated Passion Fruit Chamber. Here the way on fills with mud with the only notable side passage being 40 m before the end, a narrow rift 50 m long.

The Wiggly Business begins as a low arched passage and continues for 350 m as sections of passage, similarly sized, intersected by many squeezes and small

chokes. The last of these chokes breaks into 130 m of larger passage, a possible continuation of Saint Giles Passage from Passion Fruit Chamber, which is well decorated with crystal pools and other calcite formations.

Lamb And Flag Passages

The initial section of the Lamb And Flag Passages is 3 m square but quickly becomes a tall rift. Two routes can then be followed, along the floor or 3 m above. The lower of these two options is the start of Lamb Passage whilst the upper is Flag Passage. These quickly become separate but follow a similar path. At a point about 100 m along either, they rejoin, with Lamb Passage entering from below through a choke in the floor of Flag Passage. Flag Passage then continues for 200 m passing many side passages (some of these have not been pushed to conclusions!) before becoming silted up. One of the side passages on the right can be followed to gain Pixie Meadows, about 200 m of passages with several walking sections. One passage in here reaches a canal and sump.

Dyer Straits Streamway

At the top of the climb, an oval tube 1 m high reaches a small step down after 5 m. The way on from here is to continue in the same direction, feet first, along a much smaller tube to reach a drop down. This is aided by a fixed handline and is the top of a 7 m descent down a narrow rift to reach the stream. This rift is very awkward on the return and should not be attempted by tired or inexperienced cavers. The stream can be followed upstream for 10 m to reach a choke in the floor of Saint Giles Passage, the source of the stream. Downstream the stream descends steeply, but without any cascades, to end after 300 m of narrow, zig-zagging streamway, in a very low, silted sump.

The passage is decorated throughout its length with both new and very old formations (though none are particularly memorable) and has two main side passages, both of which are to the right. The second of these, about 200 m along the streamway, reaches a tight and awkward rift passage which has not been pushed to a conclusion!

5. The East and the "Round Trip" route

This section contains not only the description of the "Round Trip" but also the descriptions of some of the major side passages and minor series encountered en-route.

Tea Junction to Lamb and Fox Chamber

To the left at Tea Junction is White Arch Passage. This boulder strewn passage is the obvious upstream end of the Beyond A Choke streamway although it is not called so. After about 60 m, Back Passage (the first significant side passage) leads off up a small slope to the right, and is the way into The Score. Back

Passage begins as a rift, and soon lowers to a bedding crawl. Shortly after Back Passage is a larger side passage to the right, which begins as a fairly wide bedding plane crawl. This passes through narrow sections and ends after 70 metres with a visual connection to Crystal Cruncher in The Score.

White Arch Passage continues past this to where Carpet Crawl enters from up a slope to the left, just after a hairpin bend to the right. Shortly after this, a shattered climb down is reached.

The next significant side passage is seen after 200 m as a 2 m high opening on the right on the outside edge of a left bend. This leads to a very muddy, tight, streamway. This is about 200 m long in the upstream direction (to the left) and passes under Raiders Passage, and is some 100 m long and rather lower downstream (to the right). Both directions end in sumps.

White Arch Passage continues past this to enter a passage-chamber after passing through an impressive arch (although the author fails to understand the origin of the adjective white!). The passage then turns left and continues for a further 100 m to where a large boulder choke is reached. A way can be found through at the top right hand side of the choke into the lower end of the enormous Lamb and Fox Chamber, with its house-sized boulders.

Lamb and Fox Chamber

Lamb and Fox Chamber has two dead end, low level, side passages next to the way out of the choke, one to the right, and one, some distance away to the left. This passage can be followed through a small choke to a pitch (10 m) and aven (5 m) each leading to short sections of stream passage, the upper of which contains a further short climb up. High on the left is a cascading inlet, even higher above which a rift passage can be followed past a large bedding plane to the right to a choke. Just before the choke, a low passage to the left can be followed to a series of climbs down, leading to a passage containing a stream which can be followed until it emerges in the north wall of Lamb and Fox Chamber where the stream becomes the cascading inlet.

The way on from Lamb and Fox Chamber is over to the far right hand side of the chamber, at the top of a climb up a cairn, and is a high level rift perched on a ledge on the right hand wall of the chamber.

Indiana Highway

The high level rift (at the top of the cairn) from Lamb and Fox Chamber begins as a stooping height passage, but soon gets higher before a large bedding plane crosses in the floor below, with the way on continuing on the other side. To the right in the bedding plane is the start of Raiders Passage. To the left in the bedding plane, a climb down enters a chamber with a large 25 cm long fossil in the roof on the left, and a flat out crawl on the far side on the left, which leads back into Lamb and Fox Chamber. The crawl is 40 m long, and is inhabited by

bats, so should not be entered. A very small passage to its right, which is also important for bats so should not be entered, connects with the bottom of the traverse further down Indiana Highway after over 50 m.

Either traverse over the bedding plane, or drop down into it then climb back up into the continuing rift at the other side.

The continuing rift - Indiana Highway - is easy at first, a stooping-standing passage with a dried mud floor. After a short distance, the rift from the side passage in Raiders Passage (described later) is seen on the right. The way on continues past this, down and up some slopes, before the floor drops away, and the main traverse begins. This continues for a considerable distance. At one point, the normal walking ledges disappear, and a crawl to the left bypasses an awkward corner. Immediately after this, a rope is reached. This is a safety line across a 20 m deep shaft, Lost Crusade, in the floor. From the bottom of the shaft a short passage, Destiny, leads to a further 8 m pitch and then ends in a *dangerously loose* area.

Indiana Highway continues over the shaft to a breakdown chamber. Two passages lead off; to the right is the Canyon (described later), while straight ahead a climb up boulders leads to crawls round to the left on exposed ledges either side of a canyon in the floor. This in turn leads to a junction between Megadrive (ahead and to the right) and Megadrive North (ahead and to the left), with Megadrive being the way on for the Round Trip.

Megadrive North and Underworld Series

Megadrive North begins wide with a deep rift in the floor and can be followed for 200 m, initially through a shattered section, to a choke. For most of its length, the rift in the floor meanders through 15 m wide beddings to the right, while occasionally crossing the taped path through the main part of the passage. One of the early undercuts on the right contains the downstream end of Black Beetle (mentioned later), while a hole on the left enters a series of oxbows formed in the undercuts. About 100 m along Megadrive North, just before a 15 m waterfall in the middle of the passage, a triangular shaped passage (point upwards) can be seen to the left. This can be followed through a zig-zagging section, beginning with a sharp corner to the left, to reach the Canyon.

The choke at the end of Megadrive North is in a chamber with several other routes leading off. To the right, a passage beginning in an undercut can be followed to a short oxbow, with the route to the right a rift and the route to the left a crawl at head height. Where these two routes join, two routes again lead off. To the right, an obvious rift passage ends quickly while a route hidden behind boulders to the left drops down into Anastomosis passage. To the right here ends quickly, to the left reaches a squeeze onto a climb into the chamber at the start of Blue Eyes Cryin' and Faded Love (both mentioned later), while ahead, a small stream passage can be followed upstream for 50 m, becoming increasingly small, to reach gravel fill in a turning space.

At the point of entry to the chamber at the end of Megadrive North, a trench passes from the centre of the passage to the left. The climb down into this is loose so should not be used. About 10 m beyond this, however, a second section of trench can be descended easily where a bedding plane at floor level (heading to the left when facing the choke at the end of Megadrive North) can be followed to a small enlargement. To the right, the bedding continues to enter a larger passage. To the right here, a crawl re-enters the trench, while to the left, 20 m of walking-sized passage reaches a choke. The edge of this can be followed to the left for 10 m.

At the first enlargement in the bedding plane, three holes drop down in the floor (the one directly ahead should be the easiest to descend, having a boulder pile beneath it) into a large chamber. This is the start of Underworld Passage and Underworld Series. To the right here, the large passage continues, passing a bedding to the left almost immediately, and a large echoing aven slightly further on, to a point where the passage ends at a large crater and boulder choke, 100 m from its initial chamber. Some 20 m before its end a small passage on the right chokes after 20 m, while 10 m before this, a 22 m pitch drops down to the right (backup to a solid boulder, there is a bolt rebelay 3 m down on the near side of the pitch). This enters Under Underworld. At the bottom, the stream that sprays (in most conditions) down the pitch flows North-West through a very muddy gravel, to reach a choke after 20 m. About 5 m before the end, the masochistic can follow a very low and exceedingly muddy passage for 50 m. Half way along on the left is a small chamber with a blind 10 m aven.

Heading in the other direction along Under Underworld, 100 m of wide, crawling/stooping passage enters a decorated chamber. To the left, the passage shrinks slightly to reach an inlet choke, just beyond a calcite floor. Ahead, a smaller decorated passage reaches an impenetrable sump after 35 m, just beyond a small stal grill, while to the right, a hole down enters a torturous 150 m long streamway, with several old formations, to reach a totally silted sump. Water in this passage would almost certainly back up in flood.

The bedding to the left in Underworld Passage reaches a crater, which can be descended in stages to reach a well-washed passage. This leads to a 5 m climb down to a stream (the same one seen in the early portion of Underworld Passage, Blue Eyes Cryin' and Anastomosis Passage). Almost immediately, two 5 m pitches are met in quick succession. The first having bolt holes above the pitch and the second probably having the same (although none were found on a reconnaissance trip). At the bottom, 30 m of very tight streamway reaches a too tight section.

In the chamber at the start of Underworld Passage, a route can be forced (with care) through boulders to the left. The stream below issues from Blue Eyes Cryin', although there is no physical link. Ahead in the chamber, holes through boulders in the floor reach the stream again while a short and narrow rift with phreatic shelves, above these holes, can be followed for 20 m to a chamber. To the right, a short section of passage reaches the climb up to the squeeze into

Anastomosis Passage. Ahead is a continuation of the narrow rift and down a hole in the floor, just to the left of the previously mentioned passage, is Blue Eyes Cryin'. This consists of 50 m of stooping height, but wide, passage beginning with a trench in the floor containing a stream and ending in a choke. The continuation of the narrow rift, Faded Love, gradually enlarges over 50 m before breaking into a short section of larger passage terminating in a choke. The choke at the end of Blue Eyes Cryin' is in the floor at the start of this section of passage, suggesting that these two are in fact one and the same passage.

Megadrive to Saint David's Hall

From the Megadrive and Megadrive North junction, turning right heads along a low, impressively wide bedding passage, the Megadrive. This quickly becomes much higher. After 100 m, the larger Siambre Ddu Passage doubles back on the left (note: it is easy to accidentally follow this passage on the way out if not doing the "Round Trip"). This can be followed for 150 m to a large choke with two avens (one part way into the choke).

The Megadrive soon becomes more diamond-shaped and continues for some distance getting higher and wider (in some places it is large enough to hold three buses!), until the passage shrinks in size at an obvious corner. Here the passage takes a sharp left turn before continuing as a much smaller passage, The Nunnery. This starts as a low, very draughty crawl but soon opens up to become more square-shaped. After a short distance, Going Square leads off to the right and The Nunnery takes on a shape more reminiscent of a mine.

The next passage along The Nunnery is Perseverance II on the right. This is the usual way on. The Nunnery continues past this junction however, and another passage on the right (Perseverance I), until an echoing chamber, The Chapel, is reached beyond a dangerous looking choke. Here the passage continues after a scramble down to the left but terminates after about 5 m in another loose choke which is very close to the surface.

Perseverance II is a low crawl a couple of hundred metres long, becoming a larger square passage just before some calcite formations. Before long, this square shape gives way to a round, sandy floored, passage. At this point, Perseverance I (described in more detail below) enters from the right. Behind the formations, a tight passage on the right leads, after much squeezing and tight crawling to Going Square. The sandy passage of Perseverance II continues until the floor suddenly falls into The Arms Park from the 8 m high Balcony Pitch (a fixed ladder has been installed).

Two passages lead off from the bottom of the pitch, while a climb on the far side (originally maypoled) leads to Erection Series with its terminal choke that is very close to the surface. The right hand passage at the bottom of the pitch leads for 100 m to a point where a way on is through a bedding to the right.

This ends after 50 m in an area of breakdown near The Chapel and under Erection Series.

The way on from The Arms Park is the left hand passage, The Players' Tunnel. Starting low down, this quickly leads into an enlargement, with the way on down a hole through boulders to the left. Continuing along a large boulder-strewn passage for some distance leads to the enormous Saint David's Hall beyond an easily passed boulder ruckle. This chamber contains innumerable numbers of boulders on the floor but has a perfectly flat roof.

Saint David's Hall to the Beyond A Choke Streamway (the "Round Trip Connection")

At the far end of Saint David's Hall, a low passage called Swallow Series leads off. At its start, a route on the right leads down through the choke in the floor of the chamber into the end of Agent Bloreng II. Although this makes an alternative Round Trip route, bypassing most of Squirrel Rifts, it is not the usual route.

From Saint David's Hall, by crawling into a passage high up amongst the boulders on the left, the main way on through the complex and misleading Squirrel Rifts is gained through a small crawl. All the side passages in this area are either oxbows or enter Upper Rift and beyond (see that section for details).

After a right turn about 25 metres along the passage, the way on follows the largest passage until it reaches a junction with four ways leading off after about 250 m. At many points along this passage, the route turns sharp corners, often giving the impression that the passage is heading in the 'wrong' direction. To the right at the junction almost connects with the end of Swallow Series. The way on from this junction is to the left and then down a hole to the right. Continuing ahead instead of taking the hole down to the right would enter Upper Rift at its main point of entry. From here on the way on becomes more obvious, quickly passing through a keyhole-shaped section, with many short, dead-end side passages. Only one side passage is of any size. It heads to the right and contains some chocked boulders at its start. After 150 m, some rifts on the left lead into the "Round Trip Connection" and Haggis Basher Number One, but are not the usual route.

The main passage finally terminates after a further 100 m in a chamber with a large passage to the right and another, smaller one, to the left. Two corners before this chamber, a steeply descending rift on the right leads to a climb down at a junction with a larger passage containing the Agent Bloreng streamway, Agent Bloreng II. To the right leads back, through some suprisingly large sections of passage, to a choke in the floor of Saint David's Hall after 350 m, where a route up through the choke on the right connects with the start of Swallow Series, while to the left leads under an aven into Wooden Spoon Passage then to a sump. Other passages near the corner mentioned above are just other ways into Haggis Basher Number One.

Back at the chamber, turning right into a large passage enters the 300 m long Wooden Spoon Passage, while the passage to the left leads down a hole in the floor after about 20 m (the "Round Trip Connection") and along a tight passage to Haggis Basher Number One. To the left here leads past good formations to a choke, with the small series mentioned earlier entering almost immediately from above. Above the hole down, an alcove ahead contains a small passage. This provides an easier route than the one mentioned later into Life On Mars. The choke at the end of Haggis Basher Number One can be passed by way of a hole on the left half way up it. Ducking under a large boulder then gains Haggis Basher Number Two. This can be followed for 60m, past some formations and a short inlet, to a choke. Immediately to the left before the choke, a flat out crawl is the connection to Interesting Times, and the Long Round Trip.

The main way on in Haggis Basher Number One is to the right. Shortly after, a high level passage on the left leads to Life On Mars. About 50-100 m further on an inlet in a large passage leads off on the right but this soon sumps (the other end of the Agent Bloreng II sump). The main passage now continues, as Far Agent Bloreng, a big gravel-floored streamway, past a 150 m long Crystal Mole passage to the right, to a point where the water disappears down a rift to the right. The way on is a crawl ahead into a chamber. From here there is a hole down to the right into the stream or, ahead, is a crawl over sand. If negotiating the Round Trip then either route can be followed. The stream route is however faster and less exhausting.

Around 80 m along the crawl, an inlet enters from the right. At this point a crawl to the left leads to Crystal Maze, POB Passage and The Swim. Just back from here, a climb overhead leads through a short passage to the stream, but just past the inlet is a junction. To the left, a stooping-sized passage can be followed for over 20 m while, two metres ahead at a junction with the stream, to the right heads upstream along the stream route, while downstream (straight ahead) is the way on. The way on downstream is very tight (although this can be bypassed by an eyehole and climb to the left) and leads immediately to The Sewer, a 30 m long, 1.5 m high passage half full of water.

Beyond this, the way on leads along a traverse that ends at an awkward climb that looks easy from the top. A 10m doubled handline is advised, looped over a small spike of rock 3 metres off the floor at the first available route down the climb. Almost immediately afterwards is the Second Sewer. This is shorter than the first but begins with a duck where it is possible to keep your head dry. A difficult chimney up the tight rift immediately above the duck reaches a higher level bypass. Downstream from here leads down a series of small cascades and exposed climbs, characteristic of this end of Agent Bloreng, to the Beyond A Choke streamway. Upstream from here leads to Tea Junction.

Life On Mars

The passage from Haggis Basher Number One leads up a ramp to a crawl on the left. 30 m further on this enters a larger passage. To the left is the alternative

way in from the passage above The Connection. To the right leads through a crawl to a somewhat larger passage. Where it enlarges, a passage on the right leads to Squirrel Rifts II. About 80 m further on, a side passage to the left can be followed for about 200 m through some small chambers and chokes. Continuing past the side passage, a chamber is reached beyond a climb.

Taking the rift at the end of the chamber, a climb gives access to a south trending rift. After about 50 m, a passage on the left can be followed to a parallel rift. To the left, this zig-zags to end after 100 m having passed through a chamber, while to the right the way on ends after 150 m in chokes.

Crystal Maze

(With thanks to Tim Francis, MCG, for corrections.)

This begins with 100 m of crawling and thrutching until a junction is reached. To the left is The Swim, a series of sandy floored chambers containing the Hanging Basket helictite formation. To the right is Pontypool Or Bust (POB) Passage which can be followed for over 100 m with a few blind side passages and an oxbow. Just before the end is an awkward squeeze leading to a small chamber. A tight squeeze and crawl then enters a larger chamber. On the other side, 20 metres of crawling then reaches a smaller chamber, and final dig.

Upper Rift & Beyond

Upper Rift can be followed to an inlet at a turn to the left. A junction is passed with Ben's Link on the left. Continuing ahead, the route leads up a climb and over a traverse to end too tight. Just before the traverse, a hole to the left is Upstream Passage. This enlarges to a traverse and then a walk in the stream. At a corner to the left, Tube (that is its name!) leads off on the right. Continuing downstream, a passage to the right can be followed up a climb to enter the Squirrel Rifts main route. Further on, a hole up is the other end of Ben's Link, while the stream ends at a choke.

Tube can be followed through some low sections to where it becomes walking height. As the passage begins to ascend, a lower route is the main way on, Tube Surprise. This turns right at a junction and passes several short side passages as it winds its way for 75 metres to a junction with a passage to the right containing a small streamway. Continuing ahead reaches a choke after 40 m. A route through the choke enters a larger passage, Agent Blorenges III.

Unlike the other Agent Blorenges, Agent Blorenges III does not contain a stream. It can be followed for about 30 m to a rift on the left which, after 20 m, enters the Squirrel Rifts main route before the initial right turn.

Raiders Passage

Raiders Passage has only two significant side passages, the first almost immediately on the left and the second, a flat-out crawl also on the left, not too far past the first. These actually join and two rift passages lead off. A narrow rift on the left leads past some enormous deposits of bat guano to Indiana Highway, while that to the right enlarges and continues for some distance. This is a large passage with the rift winding in the roof but comes to a dead end. Back around 10 m is a long flat-out crawl over sand to the right. This leads to two chambers, the upper one of which appears to connect with a rift in Canyon West, but the connection is too narrow.

The main Raiders Passage is, however, straight ahead into a rift in the floor at the start of the second side passage mentioned above. Raiders Passage, like the series past Big Bang Pitch, contains many fossil shark spines up to 25 cm long. The passage immediately obtains a solid roof and enlarges (up to 3 m high and 2 m wide). After about 75 m of phreatic style, Raiders Passage takes a sharp left bend in a larger section of passage. Immediately after this corner, a fossil spine about 25 cm long (the largest in the passage) can be seen on the wall to the right. For about 400 m from here, the passage becomes more shattered, necessitating a few climbs and stoops, with occasional short oxbows.

The passage displays a distinctive orange and white colouration on either side and has an unconformity in the roof. Many fossil pectoral and dorsal spines, large piles of bat guano (up to 3 m long, 1 m wide and 0.5 m high!) and gypsum "cornflakes" can be seen along here before the passage splits in two. To the right a low passage (the usual way on) becomes flat-out before entering the other passage, while, to the left, the larger passage continues up a small climb. When the two passages join, the phreatic style again takes over and the passage continues for a further 400 m until it joins a larger and higher passage. To the left closes down very quickly, while to the right leads along an almost perfectly straight rift, past a short side passage, to a hairpin bend to the left.

On the bend, a large fossil can be seen passing through a flake of rock on the left. From here, the passage becomes noticeably phreatic and passes many short oxbows and natural rock bridges until it appears to fill up with mud. This can be crawled over to access another section of large phreatic passage with many small oxbows to where it also appears to close down. Here a small crawl ahead leads into a small chamber. To the left leads to a dead end, while to the right leads to a dig, the end of Raiders Passage.

The Canyon Passages

After the start of the Canyon a smaller rift passage quickly leads off on the left. This is Canyon East. Meanwhile the larger passage leads into a chamber. To the right here, is the other end of the loop from Megadrive North, to the left leads to a side passage in Canyon East a few metres after its start, while straight ahead and left leads to a series of three oxbows (with a large pile of guano) with three

passages leading off. Two of these are dead end rifts (one of which is assumed to connect with the end of the side passage in Raiders Passage), and one of which is the more rounded Canyon West. The two Canyon passages join after 350 m (along either passage) and continue as a tall, somewhat keyhole shaped, passage. A 100 m further on Big Mole Passage leads off high on the left. The Canyon continues for a considerable distance but a few hundred metres before it ends, the 250 m long Tractor Tracks Passage leads off to the left (south) in a complex area of passages at different levels.

Black Beetle

Black Beetle has two access points, but is generally easiest to navigate when accessed from Siambre Ddu Passage. A short distance before the end of Siambre Ddu Passage are two low beddings to the right. These are sometimes taped off to prevent casual visitors, but may still be accessed with care to avoid damage to the mud floor. The bedding further from the choke is easiest, and is soon joined by the other. The combined passage follows a narrow rift in the floor before entering a wider section. This has a large choke to the left (this can be ascended for a long way, but is not stable, and visits are not advised), and several too-tight holes around the perimeter. A slot in the floor reaches Black Beetle, with its fairly significant streamway.

The slot is quite tight, and lands on top of a boulder pile which should be treated with care. An extra step down reaches the downstream passage, while a hole to the side (to the right when approaching the slot from Siambre Ddu Passage) is the upstream passage. The upstream passage starts small and requires crawling in the stream in several places. It reaches a choke after 40 metres.

In the downstream passage, a small inlet to the right reaches a muddy chamber after 10 metres. All ways off are choked, or have too-tight connections back up to the bedding in Siambre Ddu Passage. 10 metres further downstream, a roof tube reaches a choke after 15 metres. The downstream passage continues for another 100 metres with some rock obstacles, before the stream flows out under the right wall. Following the stream back into a larger passage, to the left is an inlet which reaches a choke after 25 metres. To the right soon loses the stream, and a dry passage to the left here enters the side of an undercut in Megadrive North.

Going Square

Going Square begins walking/stooping height and reaches a crawl after 60 m. This enters a chamber with short side passages to the left and right, and one heading back under the crawl. The way on is through another crawl ahead-left. About 15 metres ahead, a hole down to the right enters an oxbow that lowers to a crawl. This will be mentioned later. To the left, a passage behind rocks leads through a very tight section (Hoo Hoo Crawl) into Perseverance II. Continuing ahead, after 30 m, a short slope down reaches a junction where a squeeze to the

left enters the small passage from the side passages in Perseverance I, and ahead is the way to the connection with Fault Chambers. To the right is the continuation of Going Square.

About 30 m further on is another junction. To the left is a short side passage while Going Square continues to the right. Ducking under a rock arch, an enlargement is reached where a crawl to the right is the oxbow mentioned earlier. Turning left here, the passage decreases in size to become stooping/crawling height. Ahead, a crawl in the floor to the right ends in shale fill after 40 m. The way on passes a short side passage to the right and after about another 50 m enters a chamber. There are many side passages leading off the chamber, none of which are longer than about 20 m. This complex area is over the middle portion of the Squirrel Rifts.

The way to the connection with Fault Chambers reaches a junction after 40 m. Clambering into the rift ahead, an awkward climb down in the floor enters Rift Chamber in Fault Chambers, ducking out from under the wall. This climb has few handholds or footholds near the top and a very tricky landing. A 10 m handline may prove useful on the return, although finding a secure belay point may prove very difficult. To the left at the junction, a narrow passage becomes a traverse before the floor drops 10 m into a pitch. This can be more easily accessed from a side passage near the first inlet in Perseverance I. Either route drops 10 m to the floor, where a further awkward climb down reaches a series of small, very muddy passages and a slippery traverse.

To the right at the junction in Going Square, the main way on is Fault Rifts. This begins as crawls separated by short standing sections, one of which has a short dead-end passage to the left. After several standing sections, one has a natural rock bridge to the left. Continuing through eyeholes ahead, the passage branches several times, each route ending after less than 20 m. The way on is to climb onto the rock bridge (this may be more easily reached by crawling under it and then climbing up the other side). The way on is to traverse to the left into an eyehole, running parallel to the way in.

Once through the eyehole, a climb ahead reaches a junction. Ahead-right is the awkward climb up from Rift Chamber, while back to the right is a further junction. To the right, a crawl under a choke reaches a clamber down to the head of an awesome pitch, where water sprays in from 10 m above and lands over 20 m below. The pitch lies almost directly above the small streamway in Tube Surprise. To the left at the junction, a chamber has a short side passage to the right and a crawl over a slab ahead. The crawl reaches a junction with a rift where to the left, a short passage has some short side passages. Above at the junction, a very tight ascent in a rift for 5 m reaches Headache. This enlarges and ends after less than 50 m. Passages to the right along here enter a parallel passage where to the right enters the other side of the pitch mentioned earlier, about the same distance off the floor, and to the left reaches a 30 m pitch, this time above the first inlet in Upper Rift.

Perseverance I and Fault Chambers

From the side passage in Perseverance II, Perseverance I begins as a walking sized passage. The roof lowers a few times, and an oxbow is passed to the left, which may be inhabited by bats in winter (please respect any tapes). After this, a passage hidden in an alcove up to the left is a tight flat-out crawl back to the Nunnery (the original way in). Some side passages on the right along here lead through a small series back into Perseverance II. One passage in this series enters Going Square after some very tight crawling. Continuing along the larger passage, a hairpin bend to the right precedes a scramble up boulders to reach an inlet (a good place for a drink) after 100 m, with a side passage ahead. On the other side of the inlet (to the left), a short climb leads to the top end of the large Fault Chambers.

High on the left here a smaller inlet enters that eventually makes its way, along with the water from the other inlet, into Agent Bloreng II. The Fault Chambers are a series of large chambers with a dip of about 30 degrees. The lower chamber, accessed through the large opening at the bottom of the boulder slope in the first chamber, is called Rift Chamber. Two other main side passages lead off Fault Chambers, Elliptic Passage at the top end of the chambers, opposite and slightly lower than the way in, and Fault Rifts at the far end of Rift Chamber.

The first part of fault rifts is a tall rift passage which quickly reaches an 8 m climb up to a platform. The climb is unprotected and slightly awkward, so the more usual route in is via Going Square. For this reason, the rest of the route is described as part of that section.

Elliptic Passage and beyond

Elliptic Passage can be followed for some 300 m of 4 m high and up to 5 m wide passage, passing several short side passages, to a boulder ruckle. About two-thirds of the way along this a muddy crawl low down on the left is the start of the route into the Wyvern Extensions. The ruckle can be easily passed through a walking-sized hole to the right. Past this, a short section of passage leads to a real choke. A side passage on the left here, accessed by following the left edge of the choke, leads to a hole down to the right in a small chamber. This enters a further small chamber after a few metres of crawling. The way on from here is to the right along a crawling, later walking, passage which leads after about 100 m to a larger passage at Big Beauty Junction.

The Wyvern Extensions

Wyvern Hall and the Main Route

(With thanks to Reading Uni CC and Mark Helmore, Wessex Cave Club, for corrections.)

From Elliptic Passage, the initial passage leads north as a muddy crawl. This ends after a few metres at a small climb down. From the bottom of the climb, a few side passages lead off but the way on is straight ahead. This quickly lowers to a flat-out crawl. The passage becomes walking size after 30 m where some short side passages lead off. The route ahead enters a 5 m diameter chamber at the top of a 4 m climb.

One of the side passages on the left before the climb up into the chamber, beside a small stal flow, can be followed along 20 m of stooping-crawling passage to a point where it enters a wider area with the roof at standing height. Ahead, this enlargement enters a further large, but low, chamber with a flat roof. To the right here chokes, while to the left lowers before a slope down is reached. The slope enters a large, but low, chamber with some straws in the roof, Wyvern Hall. The taped route here splits in two. To the right it enters a hole down through boulders to a stream (but the stream cannot be followed), whilst to the left leads round to the left of the chamber. Where the taped route turns right, an inlet enters from a 4 m high, 4 m wide, passage on the left. The taped route continues past this to enter another high level chamber.

The inlet can be followed for about 50 m to a chamber with the only way on (of any real significance) being through a crawl to the right, and entering a complex area of rifts. The main route begins as a crawl/stoop with a few squeezes to a seeming dead end after some 40 m.

From here the way on is a climb up a tight rift above. At the top of the climb, the route doubles back over the top of the climb. This enters a somewhat larger rift with the way on in a tight rift to the left, which then joins a rift to the right. A short, tight drop must be negotiated before the passage becomes a crawl.

At the end of the crawl, a junction is met. To the right a climb down enters a tall chamber known as The Garden. In The Garden a tight rift rising to the right can be followed to enter Awe Chasm 13m off the floor (see the section on Republican Plot), whilst a hole in the floor enters the start of Gore Blimey (a part of Republican Plot) and has become the more common route into here (see the same section). To the left just before the climb into The Garden, the passage passes over a small depression in the floor and along a rift to the left into a chamber with several ways off. An aven at the first junction in the second side passage to the left here can be free-climbed (with care) to enter Pasta Best - again, see the section on Republican Plot). Most of the other routes lead to the same place but the easiest route is straight across the chamber and under a stooping height arch. This enters a further chamber. To the immediate left and right, the other routes from the last chamber enter, whilst the two main ways on from the chamber are both further off to the right. A route into Pasta Best (see the same section as before) is located in a slot under a wall to the left whilst directly ahead, a crawl leads into a rift passage which can be followed for about 80 m to almost enter Lucky Thirteen Series.

The two main ways on both begin as rifts and are beside each other. The left-hand route quickly reaches a 7 m climb down into The Land Down Under, whilst the right-hand one continues as a comfortable sand-floored rift.

The rift passes many cross rifts and side passages but the way on remains obvious until a semi-tight squeeze is encountered between boulders. Shortly after this is a slight turn to the left after which a trench develops in the floor. The passage then enters a cross rift. The way on is to the right where the rift passes over some holes in the floor to Republican Plot (these are dangerously slippery and should not be used). After crossing the first hole a rift to the left must be taken. This quickly reaches a crossroads. A right turn here reaches a further junction. To the right is the route described below into Presidential Mayhem (see the section on Republican Plot), ahead is a slope up and to the left is the continuation of the original rift. The rift turns right a further crossroads then meets another junction after just over 50 m. To the right another slope up connects to the slope up at the earlier junction. To the left the obvious way on is taped off to protect the stal flows down its walls. This taped section is bypassed by taking a narrow rift ahead and then taking a very narrow, ascending rift to the left. This regains the rift just beyond the taped off section. *(It is advisable at this point to check the route used to enter this rift as it can be confusing on the return.)*

The continuation of the main rift soon enters an enlargement/chamber with a side passage to the left. This side passage can be followed for about 100 m. The main way on continues ahead-right.

This passes some side passages before entering a larger section of passage where the side passages enter from the left. This larger section is short lived and enters a low passage to the right. This passes through a crawl before regaining the rift at a junction. To the left oxbows over a pit in the floor into the larger section of passage, opposite the way into the low passage (this route is taped off in the larger passage). Ahead, the way on soon enters a chamber with some stal almost encircled by tape in the floor. Ahead the way on soon closes down. Two passages to the left unite and can be followed for 20 m to a small chamber with a pitch on the opposite side, The Didgeredoo. This enters Interesting Times (see below).

In the chamber with the almost encircled stal, two passages double back to the right, one above the other. These unite at the higher level to become Come Back You Bastard. This can be followed through a section containing delicately positioned stal (take care) for a further 75 m.

The following section can be very confusing on the return and it is advisable to continually check the route of entry on the way in.

Also in the last chamber, a passage to the right enters a cross rift after a few metres. To the right, this enters Come Back You Bastard at the lower level, while to the left is the way on.

This enters Ponderosa chamber after just over 20 m. Up ahead quickly becomes a flat out crawl past delicate formations (Pond Life) and passes through an extremely tight squeeze to enter The Whitehouse (also incorrectly referred to as Anthodite Chamber). This chamber contains large amounts of anthodites (aragonite crystals crossed with helictites) in the roof and an impressive 3 metre high stalagmite boss in the floor.

In Ponderosa, a passage to the left, Pond Passage, can be followed for about 100 m of crawling and stooping to enter a more shattered area with some small stal formations. Just before the stal, a hole down to the left reaches a 0.5 m high narrow rift to the left, while further back from the stal, a passage to the left is the 'Easier Route'. The narrow rift can be followed for over 20 m of tight passage of a similar nature to reach an aven. The aven can be climbed to reach a larger passage. This passes a passage that is the 'Easier Route' to the left before entering Yanto's Grotto. This chamber contains unusual blue formations over a large amount of one wall. To the left here, a climb up over boulders and a route under them unite and pass through some crystal decorated sections to reach a climb up into a roof passage. To the right this contains the 50 cm blue Coldfinger stalactite and 20 cm blue stalagmite formations, the largest blue formations in the cave, while a climb up ahead accesses the route to the left. This reaches a climb down into an enlargement where the only possible way on is being dug.

Republican Plot

The passage from the Wyvern Hall Main Route quickly enters a chamber. Continuing across the chamber, the rift ahead/right loops back into the Wyvern Hall main route, while the rift ahead has a small side rift to the left. This can be followed round to the right in a low passage. The height increases at a turn left as the passage passes over a blind hole in the floor (Beware, don't fall!). Across the hole, a low passage to the right can be followed to a second hole down. This can be free climbed to enter Presidential Mayhem.

Back under the way in, the passage degenerates close to the base of the last hole. In the opposite direction, an enlargement contains a short side passage to the left, which initially heads left then curves round to the right, a rift ahead/left and a squeeze between rocks to the right. The squeeze enters the original part of Republican Plot.

The original part of Republican Plot opens up quickly to stooping height. Ahead/right a crystal adorned passage cannot be followed far. Ahead/left, the way on continues past a taped off oxbow to the left, two short side passages to the right and a hole up to the left into the Wyvern Hall Main Route before it enters a decorated section. **Please take extreme care** as the stal is in a very vulnerable position. The way into The Land Down Under is blocked off just after a 1 m high column, Ice Cold In Alex. Please do not pass this formation as there is nothing to see beyond.

Back in Presidential Mayhem, ahead in the rift, the way on is again to the left in a sandy passage. The floor steadily lowers and the passage becomes a 15 m traverse with a stream in the bottom. At the end of the traverse, passages to the right are blind, while those ahead and above end in a chamber and chokes. To the left, a smaller passage enters the start of Gore Blimey.

The hole from The Garden (see the section on the Wyvern Hall Main Route) descends through relatively stable boulders to reach a short drop into a passage. To the left is the sandy crawl which connects with Presidential Mayhem while to the right, the passage quickly enlarges into a tall streamway. As the passage is enlarging a sandy crawl to the right is the route into Awe Chasm. Just beyond this, an inlet enters from the right, and about 10 m further on flows out to the left. A passage to the right above a constriction is about 30 m long. A rift further on almost connects with the 30 m long side passage. A rift even further on, opposite where the stream flows out, is about 20 m long and connects through an extremely awkward and tight constriction to the 30 m long side passage.

The stream can be followed downstream along a 50 m traverse. The route passes through some old stal and later a crawl which can be bypassed (only on the way in) by dropping down to floor level and taking the stream route to the left. Where the traverse ends, there are some short side passages to the left and ahead, but the stream route turns right and passes through a complex section and a tall chamber before it becomes too tight. A passage in the roof to the right of the chamber can be followed through two chambers to where it becomes impassable.

The route into Awe Chasm begins as a crawl, but the floor drops quickly to give a standing height rift. Ahead, a tight rift passage can be followed to make a tight loop with the inlet. To the right, the way on turns left and ascends slightly to enter an enlargement. Only the passage ahead left can be followed far. This quickly passes an outlet which passes back under the passage but becomes too tight. The water re-enters at the inlet. Just beyond this outlet, the source of the stream is entered, a 40 m high fluted aven, Awe Chasm.

Several routes lead off from Awe Chasm. Up ahead, a slope of rocks can be ascended to a further slope but is blind. Up ahead/right, an undercut is blind. To the left is Blessed Pork Scratchings. Almost directly above the way in, an almost invisible rift is the end of the tight rift from The Garden in the Wyvern Hall Main Route. Beside and above that is another more obvious rift. This is Pasta Best. At the same height as the rift from Pasta Best, but opposite the way in, another rift also enters Pasta Best. High in the roof, a stream enters but this has yet to be reached (work continues). Awe Chasm cannot be free-climbed.

Blessed Pork Scratchings is a well decorated passage and has formations in extremely vulnerable positions so great care must be taken. After about 10 metres, the taped route ends and if you must proceed, step in the footprints of the original explorers to prevent damage to the delicate mud floor. The passage

ends after 50 m in a choke which it is hoped will connect with Headache in Fault Rifts.

Pasta Best was originally reached by bolting up from the tight rift but as there are other routes into Pasta Best, it is unlikely that any fixed aids will be left. The slot under the wall of the chamber containing the climb into The Land Down Under (in the Wyvern Hall Main Route) is narrow but quickly enters a somewhat larger passage. The obvious route passes unstable boulder slopes up to the left, before narrowing down to reach a tight crawl which can be passed to enter a blind chamber.

The free-climb into Pasta Best emerges in a rock floored, stooping height passage. Back over the climb, a loose but low enlargement is blind. A passage to the left when facing this enlargement can be followed to reach the top of a loose boulder slope. Two routes on below here reach the tops of the loose boulder slopes in the other part of Pasta Best.

The other route from the freeclimb initially heads away from the Wyvern Hall Main Route and swings left to enter a decorated chamber. The formations have not yet been taped so please take care not to damage any. To the left in the chamber, a narrow rift reaches a pitch back into the Wyvern Hall Main Route, just after the climb down into The Garden. To the right in the chamber, a tight rift eventually doubles back to the left to make an extremely tight connection with Awe Chasm, over 20 m from the floor. Diagonally across the chamber, a climb over some boulders drops down into a rift passage. The rift descends quickly (spits are in place for bolts) to the head of a 20 m drop down the second half of Awe Chasm. This drop can be descended without getting too wet, although no fixed aids are likely to be left.

Interesting Times and The Long Round Trip

The Didgeredoo pitch drops from the Wyvern Extensions Main Route down into Interesting Times. It is in two main sections, each about 10 m, with a 2 m climb in between. These are aided by a fixed handline (as of November 2004). The pitch is very tight and ascending it is almost impossible without the aid of a rope and ascending gear (jammers or prussik loops minimum) - allow at least 15-30 minutes for each person to ascend. There are loose chockstones near the top, these should not be relied upon, despite their convenient position. Check if the handline is still in place before attempting this trip.

At the bottom, two walking sized routes lead off. The first of these would be ahead when facing the head of the first section of the Didgeredoo pitch, the second would be to the left (when facing into this second route, the Didgeredoo pitch should enter on the left side of the passage), and is the usual way on.

The first route soon enters a small chamber, and immediately degenerates into a few silted rifts. One directly opposite the point of entry can be followed for about 30 m.

The second route (the main way on) soon turns left to enter a small chamber. Short side passages lead off both sides, but the main way on is on the opposite side, and quickly lowers as it swings left at a decorated corner. This passes several small side passages, and an oxbow (containing a dirtied stalagmite). After several crawls, one crawling section is over a small rock bridge. At this point, a side passage to the right is the usual way on, and ahead soon splits into several passages containing rock pillars and chokes (affectionately known as the Land of a Thousand Pillocks).

The side passage to the right enlarges into a small chamber, with the way on being on the opposite side. Passing some formations, the way continues ahead into another crawl. This passes some raised drip pocket formations, looking almost like trees (but also referred to as the 'mushroom' formations).

Beyond this, the crawl enlarges, and a passage joins from the left. Calcite pillars can be seen ahead, but the way on is along the passage to the left. This starts as a rift, then passes a low side passage to the right, and becomes a flat out crawl. The crawl then drops into a hole on the right, which swings left, and passes through some tight sections. This then joins the end of Haggis Basher Number Two, with the way out immediately to the right. Haggis Basher can then be followed to rejoin the normal Round Trip.

The scope for further developments in this area is significant as there are still many side passages that have not been dug.

The Land Down Under

The 7 m climb down (the Didgeredon't) into The Land Down Under is aided by a fixed handline (as of July 1999) and reaches a small chamber with one passage leading off to the South as well as two holes in the floor to the East. The holes lead down to a very short section of intermittent streamway, but the passage is a better prospect. This route begins by enlarging to walking size although large amounts of stalagmite flow and columns must be carefully avoided. The passage then lowers before a grill of stalagmites block the way into a passage to the left. To the right of this passage a narrow rift is the best route on. This quickly enlarges before entering a small, decorated chamber.

Two passages lead off from the chamber. Across on the far right-hand side of the chamber, a short section of passage leads to a 2.5 m column. The route here is taped off but is accessible from the far side so please do not cross the tape to see what might lie around the next corner! To the left from the decorated chamber a walking height passage passes a very delicate set of straws and columns (pass with extreme care!) and over a hole in the floor to a very small stream to reach a junction. To the right will be described below, while to the left reaches a corner to the left to the stream. The passage now continues as a tall rift, passing several formations, before it becomes more arched and finally ends at the Barite Choke.

A flat out crawl beginning between some formations on the right in this last section enlarges quickly and can be followed for over 100 m through many large sections.

The passage to the right mentioned above can be followed to a small decorated chamber from which the way on continues as a very well decorated passage where great care must be taken to avoid damage to the formations. This eventually reaches a flat out crawl into a chamber. To the left a small hole leads to over 100 m of small passage while ahead-right a further chamber-enlargement is entered. To the right, a passage containing a small stream can be followed, passing through a few tight traverses, to reach the 2.5 m column mentioned earlier, whilst to the left a small crawl passes through an extremely tight squeeze to reach a larger section of passage. This can be followed for over 150 m, passing several short side passages and oxbows, to a very tight section. Beyond this, a slope up enters an area of cross rifts but all routes close down within 20 m.

6. The Southeast

The Lucky Thirteen Extensions

Gone With The Wind

To the right from Big Beauty Junction quickly leads to a chamber on the other side of the Elliptic Passage choke, while to the left leads into Gone With The Wind. This begins as a 2 m high phreatic arch with a sandy floor and continues like this for about 100 metres, passing an alcove with a passage leading off after 50 m, to an area with many gypsum "cornflakes" decorating the roof, walls and floor. Here, the passage becomes more square-shaped and the sandy floor gives way to a rocky one. Gone With The Wind ends after a further 200 m, where the passage ducks down under a low shattered arch (pass with care). This is the start of the Midwinter Chambers.

Note; the choke near Big Beauty Junction has a good water supply, and the floor at the start of Gone With The wind is soft sand, making this a good camping location for long term digging trips.

Midwinter Chambers and Going Somewhere

Midwinter Chambers consist of a succession of chambers separated by short crawls over rocks and gravel. The rock in this area is in thin, slate-like, layers. This results in a very loose passage roof! Much of the Midwinter Chambers are adorned with hanging "forests" of gypsum crystals or large mounds of "snowflake"-like gypsum on the floor. After about 100 m of these chambers, the arched passage of Going Somewhere leads off to the left, but the Midwinter Chambers continue to the right. These are much as before, and reach what was once a seeming end after about 75 m. A hole to the right here now enters the Northern end of Upbeat in Hexamine Highways. Also at this point, a dead-end

passage doubles back to the left but a flat out crawl in the floor leads through a few small chambers into a somewhat larger chamber. On the far side of the chamber, a low passage on the right is Hexamine Highway. This passes some short side passages before a 1.5 m step up enters a shattered, crawling sized passage. At the end of the crawl, a hole down to the left enters a squeeze, marking the start of Hexamine Highways.

Going Somewhere takes a right turn past a side passage straight ahead after just over 10 metres. The roof lowers before rising again not much further on. The way on turns a few corners with the roof lowering and rising on several occasions before the passage then turns a corner to the left, passing some short side passages on the right, and enters a larger passage after a further 30 metres. This is Snowball Passage. To the left is the alternative way out via Rogered Senseless and Gone in the Years South, while to the right leads along the main part of Snowball Passage.

Hexamine Highways

Once through the tight squeeze, the passage becomes somewhat larger than before but this is short lived as the passage passes over some gypsum in the floor and then ascends a steep rubble slope into a narrow, shattered passage. After a short distance this opens up again and it is necessary to slide down a small rock slope under a toppled stack, The Leaning Tower Of Pisa. The passage then gradually enlarges and passes a short side passage to the right. Ahead, a step up is reached. At this point a tight tube heads off to the left while Heartbeat continues ahead. The tight tube enters a larger passage which passes through an easy choke and a tighter section before reaching a junction. To the left is Worm Hole Series while to the right enters a larger passage after 20 m, Death By Kangadile. This passes Top Hat Passage on the left before reaching a dug out crawl after 30 m. The crawl ends in a dig where a severe lack of oxygen makes digging hazardous.

Top Hat Passage is 60 m of walking-crawling passage intersected by squeezes and ending at a very tight squeeze and choke. This is very close to Pick-A-Stick Aven in the Last Sandwich.

For the first 60 m, Worm Hole Series consists of several chambers and walking sized passages, intersected by tight crawls, until it enters a much larger chamber. Part way along the 60 m, a short side passage on the left ends close to Exodus. From the chamber, the only way on is to the left along a crawling-squeezing passage, ending after 50 m, close to Pick-A-Stick Aven in the Last Sandwich.

Heartbeat passes through a squeeze to reach a T-junction. To the right, a walking sized passage lowers and passes through a squeeze before reaching a T-junction after 40 m. To the left here is Downbeat while to the right is Upbeat. Upbeat passes several boulder obstacles to reach a junction after 40 m. To the right closes down, while to the left passes an oxbow before becoming very

shattered. This smaller passage reaches a loose hole up into the Southern end of Midwinter Chambers after 50 m having passed several side passages and oxbows. This route into Midwinter Chambers is loose so care must be taken if using it.

Downbeat continues in a straight line to reach a chamber after 50 m. A side passage to the right here has been dug inconclusively, while across the chamber, a crawling sized passage can be followed for 70 m through several tight sections to two chambers. A side passage on the left along here becomes too tight.

The junction of Upbeat, Downbeat and Heartbeat is called Crunch Corner. Climbing up above Crunch Corner, a small roof tube, The Gerbil Run, leads off. Early on this reaches a very tight, 5 metre long squeeze before becoming small crawling sized, and it is possible to turn around if needed. It passes some small gypsum formations, The Frozen Gerbils, before swinging left, and reducing in size. 10 metres along here, it then passes through a tight squeezing section, into a larger passage. Ahead-left, the passage passes a delicate calcite raft formation, Gerbil Heaven, before ending in a chamber with helictite decorations. To the right in the larger passage, a squeeze enters the continuation of the large passage. This passes over a pit in the floor, and ends after about 60 metres, passing some short side passages.

Warning: The squeezes in The Gerbil Run are exceptionally tight, and even small cavers will find them uncomfortably awkward. It is important that you ensure you can get through before entering each squeeze, as it is not possible to back out when you are part way through them.

Gone In The Years

About 50 m along Gone With The Wind, a small passage (the first one) on the left leads from a small alcove into another large passage after about 100 m of crawling-stooping passage. This is Gone In The Years and leads left and right. To the left is Gone In The Years North and to the right is Gone In The Years South.

Gone In The Years North passes a few side passages on its 75 m journey to a choke. A small stream flows out of the choke and down an impassable hole in the floor. By following the small stream that flows through the choke upstream, it is possible to pass the choke. Once through, following a small passage to the right and then taking a flat-out crawl to the left leads to a somewhat larger passage. This passes under some low arches before it enters a large circular chamber. Following this to the right, a hole down enters a walking-size passage which heads in both directions. To the left, a stooping height arch enters 300 m of passages, which connect with several of the small side passages along Gone In The Years North and pass close to Elliptic Passage, while the larger passage to the right passes over a rubble bank into a chamber where the way on is straight ahead over a further rubble bank into a chamber at the start of the Big Country Extensions.

Gone In The Years South also continues past a few side passages to a crawling-sized tube. This is quite short. Large passage then continues for about 250 m where it splits into two. The upper passage is a walking-stooping passage over boulders, while the lower passage is flat-out. These two passages are about 100 m long each and eventually join through a hole through boulders at a choke. Two other passages can be accessed through the choke, the 75 m long high-level Gone In The Head, and the much longer, low-level Rogered Senseless. This is entered through a 5 m long tight crawl and can be followed for about 400 m through larger passage with an undulating floor to where it enters the even larger Snowball Passage.

Snowball Passage

This is named after a large (football-sized!) ball of gypsum near its start. At the point of entry Going Somewhere leads off to the right, whilst the small hole to the left is the original, but less commonly used route, into Sleepcrawler Series.

Snowball Passage is about 100 m of large boulder passage ending in a choke, just after a small slope up boulders where a smaller passage to the right loops back round into Snowball Passage, 20 m back from the choke and a few metres above the floor (many people find this loop confusing and visiting cavers should take care not to go back on themselves when following it). Halfway around the loop, a short side passage leads off to the left. A small alcove to the left of the choke at the end of Snowball Passage passes through the edge of the choke (proceed with care!) and enters the end of the Black Run in Sleepcrawler Series. Roughly where the two ends of the loop connect, a slot down to the right leads to a reasonably large passage, Exodus. This gypsum-decorated passage continues for about 100 m until it splits into three. To the right fills with mud after about 50 m, very close to Worm Hole Series in Hexamine Highways, whilst both to the left and ahead lead to dead ends after about 15 m.

Last Sandwich

About 50 m before the three-way split, a side passage to the left is the Last Sandwich, a smaller continuation with a few low crawls over sand and rocks which enters a choke after 300 m. During the first 150 m, a few side passages are encountered, the most notable ones being after about 75 m where one on the right can be followed for over 50 m, and just after this on the left, a larger passage quickly becomes very tight and enters the loop at the end of Snowball Passage. At the 150 mark, a junction is met. To the right enters the loose Pick-A-Stick aven where a small passage at the top chokes close to Worm Hole Series and Top Hat Passage in Hexamine Highways, while to the left, the Last Sandwich continues more as a stooping/standing passage with fewer crawls. This passes several side passages but the main way on is always the way straight ahead. After a long 150 m, the passage dips down through a gravel squeeze before picking up again, through two more squeezes. The second of these ends at a slope up and emerges in the floor of a 1 m high, 2 m wide passage with the only way on ahead. This is the start of Dollimore Series.

The main side passage on the right about 100 metres after the junction with Pick-A-Stick aven, can be followed through a squeeze into Pisspot Passage after 150 metres, providing an alternative route into Dollimore Series.

The Big Country Extensions

The Route Into Big Country

The initial chamber of the Big Country Extensions (see the section on Gone In The Years North above) has several ways off, only two of which can be followed for any significant distance. The first is a passage under an arch straight ahead while the second is to the left into another chamber. The passage straight ahead leads past several side passages and under some arches to where it becomes a round, but small, tube just beyond an inlet. This ends in a large dead-end chamber.

The chamber to the left of the initial chamber has a short climb down, at the bottom of which a passage leads back under the climb into Three Amigos! This is about 100 m of large passage, at the start of which an inlet enters from the left. Where the large passage narrows down towards the end of the 100 m, it turns right before turning left into a chamber. Directly across the chamber, two well-decorated side passages lead off, only to link up and then end after 120 m. To the right of these passages, a further decorated passage can be followed through some crawls and stoops to a walking-sized passage. This, however, can only be followed for 50 m after which it closes down.

A small tube on the right here, Slaughter Canyon, leads along a flat-out crawl in a keyhole shaped passage. After about 40 m a tight awkward squeeze (larger cavers may find it very difficult or impossible) is reached. This is followed by a further 50 m of crawling to emerge in the wall of a huge bouldery passage, some 15 m wide and 7 m high, Big Country. This large passage, but which is surpassed in size by War of the Worlds, MSAD and Into The Black(!), contains one of the largest streams in the cave and heads in both directions.

A side passage near the start of Slaughter Canyon (the author has yet to find this passage and would welcome some information...) enters Nervous Breakdown. This is a series of loose crawls and small chambers totalling about 140 m in length. With names like Sword Of Damocles and Damocles' Museum, this area is best avoided.

Big Country

To the left, upstream, leads for over 100 m to a point where The Hangman's Creek enters from the right. A 100 m further on the passage chokes. The inlet carries a large stream that can be followed for about 200 m, past side passages on the left and right, to where the passage ends in a 100 m long loop, with a few side passages. One side passage on the right has a connection with Blorunge Oxbow.

To the right from Slaughter Canyon, downstream, the passage leads for 150 m to a large junction. To the left is the Bloreng Inlet (described later), while to the right is the continuation of Big Country. About a further 50 m downstream a small side passage leads off on the right and can be followed for 100 m to two dead end branches.

Big Country continues beyond the side passage with its boulders giving way to wet mud banks after about 150 m. The passage now begins to become much higher and wider until, after a further 150 m, it finally closes down. Straight ahead, a comparatively small hole leads to a series of small passages, Canyonland, and a pitch down into a short length of passage, while a hole in the floor to the right is the way on.

The hole down to the right leads immediately into a large arched stream passage, the continuation of the Big Country streamway. This passage passes over several mud banks to the right before choking after 100 m, but to the left the passage widens and passes over similar mud banks and past muddied formations to a large chamber. Ahead the passage returns to its former size and passes over yet more mud banks to a sandy area. At this point, a sandy alcove to the left enters a short side passage. Ahead, a low section enters a much larger continuation of the stream passage. From here, the passage becomes larger still as the roof rises and the boulder floor rises to meet it, forming a large choke estimated at over 40 m wide and 25 m high (though this may be exaggerated). This is the present limit of the downstream cave. From here, the water flows south for over 8 km to the Snatchwood Bridge and Pontnewynydd risings.

Bloreng Inlet

Bloreng Inlet carries a stream as large as the Beyond A Choke streamway but is a rather smaller passage than Big Country. After just over 50 m, one of the several beddings at head height on the left enters Bloreng Oxbow, whilst Bloreng Inlet continues for a further 300 m of large stream passage to an ascending choke just past where Bloreng Oxbow re-enters from the left and a house-sized boulder is lying in the stream.

About 50 m upstream from the downstream end of Bloreng Oxbow (about 100 m upstream in Bloreng Inlet) the Blorens Inlet enters from the right. This rather monotonous, keyhole-shaped, and gypsum decorated passage, can be followed for a total of 650 m. After the first 350 m of this streamway a side passage leads off on the left, Poetic Justice. Poetic Justice leads past a side passage to the right containing a small complex, into a larger passage after 200 m. To the left reaches the top of the choke at the end of Bloreng Inlet (although there is no physical connection) while to the right the passage narrows and ends 50 m past a short side passage to the left. Blorens Inlet finally ends some 300 m past the way into Poetic Justice.

Many of the passages in the Big Country Extensions are well decorated and so great care must be taken. This is especially true of Poetic Justice. There is also a risk of flooding in the lower end of the Big Country streamway.

Dollimore Series

MSAD

The passage from the Last Sandwich contains some gypsum crystals and reaches a short crawl after 20 m. At the end of the crawl a hole up enters a wide area with a steep boulder slope down into a 10 to 20 m square, boulder floored passage, More Singing And Dancing (at least, this is the "acceptable" name for the passage). To the left, the passage rises up a boulder slope before descending into a stream. The passage continues 5 to 15 m square past several formations and can be followed for over 400 m to a choke in the floor of the Reactor (see the section on Sleepcrawler Series). The stream in this passage is assumed to be the one seen flowing in the passage north of the Reactor. Just before the end of the passage, a spectacular Pagoda formation can be seen to the left (confirmation of its name is being awaited). To the right along MSAD, the large passage can be followed for over 300 m to a junction with a smaller passage to the left containing a stream, Out Of The Blue.

This part of MSAD contains many sections of passage larger than War Of The Worlds South but as it does not hold these dimensions for long enough, it is difficult to ascertain which is the larger passage. The author's personal feeling is that War Of The Worlds South should be considered as the larger.

At about 150 m along MSAD (Right), at a point just before a 20 m by 10 m opening (!!!) at the top of a boulder slope to the right, a passage to the right at the base of the slope is the Clique. This can be followed for about 40 m until it degenerates into a series of choked rifts. The opening at the top of the slope is the beginning of Screaming Like A Stuck Pig, a 5 by about 7 m passage that is very reminiscent of Elliptic Passage. This runs parallel to the remaining 150 m of MSAD with several openings or passages into it. The passage ends at a 15 m pitch into the Hall Of The One (see later). About 5 m back from the pitch, a flat out crawl to the right, about 3 m from the floor, enters a passage with its own view down the pitch. A small continuation enters over 300 m of passage, Pisspot Passage, initially running back along Screaming Like A Stuck Pig and then turning towards Hexamine Highways, with a squeeze connection back into the Last Sandwich side passage.

To the right at the junction with Out Of The Blue, MSAD continues larger than before and enters the largest chamber in the cave, Hall Of The One, with several ways off. The chamber is about 40 metres long, 30 metres wide including the landing, and between 15 and 20 metres high - this is only 5 metres wider than Lamb and Fox Chamber, but is much larger in terms of open volume. To the right, Screaming Like A Stuck Pig enters from 15 m up the wall, while to the left a route up a boulder slope provides the main ways on. From the top of the

boulder slope, a climb up the scree slope to the right reaches the Nicola's Grotto Landing and to the left, another small slope reaches a much smaller passage, Luck Of The Draw, while ahead, a 4 m roped climb down enters Into The Black.

Nicola's Grotto Landing & Passage

Please take great care when visiting this area not to damage the delicate formations.

From the Landing two passages lead off. To the left, a descending passage passes through a series of rifts to a chamber with several digs, one of which connects to Catlitter Crawl in Dogleg Complex. Some distance over to the right, the walking-sized (Nicola's) Grotto Passage reaches an area with some small formations. Passages to the left and right here also end in digs. Ahead, a flat out crawl enters an enlargement with some much better helictite formations, Nicola's Grotto. A passage continues to the left here and appears to end at a choke. A route under the choke enters an area with yet more helictite formations, these being somewhat dirtied. Ahead, 10 m of stooping passage enters another grotto. This has a collection of some very fine helictite formations. The way on beyond closes down so please do not enter the grotto, as the best view is from the point of entry.

Into The Black

The climb emerges at the top of a steep boulder slope in a large chamber, at the bottom of which a further slope enters yet an adjoining large chamber. Together, these chambers are equal in size to Hall Of The One. To the left, a steep 20m slope up boulders to the left reaches Dog-Leg Complex, while to the right here a large passage containing both of the aforementioned streams leads off. This passes spectacular sedimented mud banks and cliffs with the stream flowing in between. On its 400 m journey to a choke, the passage passes many smaller side passages, only two of which, situated about 100 m and 50 m before the choke on the left, can be followed very far. The first (100 m before the choke), Yellow Van Passage, begins as a 4 m square passage and enters a small chamber after 20 m. Two ways lead off, a low passage to the right and a slope up then down ahead. These two routes unite and continue as a large passage for 100 m to end at a draughting muddy choke. The second side passage begins small and branches several times, totalling 200 m of passage with several climbs.

The choke at the end of Into The Black is the current limit of the downstream cave. From here, the water flows south for over 8 km to the Snatchwood Bridge and Pontnewynydd risings.

Dog-Leg Complex

The collections of helictites in Dog-Leg Complex are, alongside those in Luck Of The Draw, amongst the finest in the British Isles and great care must be exercised to avoid damaging them. *A selection of photographs are available in our Draenen gallery.*

Once at the top of the slope from Into The Black, a climb up a rift to the right reaches a level floor, the true start of Dog-Leg Complex. 10 m along from here, a tall rift to the right is the principal way on, though a hole at floor level ahead reaches The Gobbler (see Luck Of The Draw), and there is a side passage to the left. The side passage enters a slightly larger passage, which can be followed round to the left to reach a balcony over the climb up the rift. From here, a traverse to the right (beware, the floor and wall to the right here are very loose and some form of protection is essential) reaches a further balcony on the other side of the hole down. On the far side of this balcony a large alcove through a 2 m high arch ahead houses a small passage to the right. This can be followed through increasingly larger passage to reach a junction with Luck Of The Draw.

The principal way on reaches a junction after 5 m where a wriggle over a boulder to the left enters an enlargement. Passages up and down ahead-right offer apparent ways on but the real continuation is in fact through an inobvious rift at head height back to the left. Within a few metres, this reaches a traverse over blind holes in the floor which in turn enters an enlargement. To the right, a crawl can be followed to reach a much larger passage, Top Banana. From here, to the right leads to 300 m of passage passing over Into The Black (one of the passages here, Catlitter Crawl, connects with a passage from Nicola's Grotto Landing) while the taped route to the left enters a climb up a rift which can be followed to reach a decorated chamber, Top Spots. The taped route turns left here into a flat out crawl. This turns a corner to the right near its start in a small enlargement and ends at a very tight, awkward, squeeze into a rift. To the left here enters a chamber with four ways on.

Ahead, up a mud slope, a stooping height passage reaches a loose slope up, followed by a crawl to reach a richly decorated chamber - one of the best decorated chambers in the cave. It is requested that cavers do not enter the chamber as to do so would destroy many of the formations (there is a good view of the chamber from the point of entry, where the taped route ends). To the right a 5 m squeeze enters 15 m of passage ending at a choke. Ahead-right, a small passage containing some seriously tight squeezes enters the other side of the decorated chamber. This route does leave many formations very vulnerable however so, again, please do not use this route.

The other way on from the aforementioned chamber is an obvious one to the left, beginning with a small climb up. This passes through a decorated chamber and then a very well decorated section of passage to reach a left turn into a large passage-chamber, Circus Maximus. At its far end, the roof on the left side is decorated with a very fine selection of helictites. An obvious passage at this end

of the chamber can be followed though a narrow rift to enter another helictite decorated chamber. For the best view here, a passage to the left just before the chamber can be followed round a corner to enter the chamber (please take great care). From here, there is no way on.

To the right of the Circus maximus, also at its far end, a series of holes enter Rainbow Canyon. This passage takes an immediate right turn and runs parallel to Circus Maximus. After 100 m the passage takes a hairpin bend to the left then one to the right after a further 100 m, before the passage degenerates into a series of small choked passages.

Out Of The Blue

A small slope down quickly enters the stream passage, this being about 4 by 4 m, roughly circular with a rift in the roof (occasionally, opposing mud banks give the passage more of a diamond shape), dimensions which it holds for its entire 1.1 km length. Over the first 400 m, many displays of straws and stalagmites are on view with two areas of exceptional displays of helictites and straws. For the length of the streamway, most of the walking is done on the streambed. This can become very tiring and so trips to this area should not be underestimated.

Luck Of The Draw

Throughout its length, this passage is well decorated with mud, gypsum and calcite formations. Please try to avoid damaging them.

Luck Of The Draw begins as a large bouldery passage, with liberal amounts of damp mud. At its start, several side passages lead off but most of these are complex oxbows, although one on the right after 75 m, or 30 m beyond a series of arches, enters the Dog-Leg Complex.

The main route is generally walking-sized and continues as such for over 1.2 km. Early on there are many intricate calcite formations, but after about 1 km a section of passage containing what must surely rank amongst the finest collection of helictites in the British Isles is encountered, Medusa's Children. An equally impressive display of helictites can be found in Dog-Leg Complex. Approximately 100 m beyond this a further chamber is encountered. This has an unusual formation in the roof, the Lightbulb.

Some 100 m further on, Luck Of The Draw turns sharp right and lowers to a crawl. Although initially this is only a short crawl, it sets the scene for the next 700 m; a mixture of crawls and stoops which get progressively lower! Relief is provided by the occasional standing section, though these become less frequent over the last 350 m.

Beyond the crawls the passage ends in two small chambers. All possible continuations pinch out or end in mud fill. This part of the cave is unlikely to interest any but the serious prospector or insane masochist!

Throughout its length, Luck Of The Draw has several side passages over 100 m in length. The first notable side passage is after 150 m, past some very delicately placed formations on the right at a bend to the left. This is the Gobbler, and is a series of gypsum decorated chambers interlinked by rubbly crawls. Near its far end, the earliest of the many real side passages to the right reaches a climb down. From the bottom, 30 m of passage reaches the early portion of Dog-Leg Complex.

The other principal side passages are situated around Lightbulb Chamber. To the left about 100 m before Lightbulb Chamber is a passage which reaches a dig after 100 m. Just before entering Lightbulb Chamber a passage leads off to the right and reaches another dig after some 30 m, whilst ahead, as the passage turns right out of Lightbulb Chamber, is a more substantial side passage which enters a chamber after 200 m. To the right and ahead from here are digable leads which are currently being pushed.

Cantankerous Surveyors' Passage

Just beyond the short crawl that begins 1.2 km into Luck Of The Draw, there is a standing height chamber to the right. At the end of this chamber, a crawl in the floor leads into a walking-sized passage after a few metres. The route takes a rift to the right after about 15 m and ends after 20 m in a much larger passage. To the right, a walking-sized rift passes through a climb and some short crawls to end 15 m into a crawling-sized phreatic tube. Ahead is a small oxbow while to the left the route continues large. This reaches a choice of routes at a circular chamber up to the right and an archway to the left. The routes rejoin just after the archway.

Also just after the archway, a passage doubles back up a slope to the left. This enters a chamber with a large and impressive helictite formation in the roof, The Geryon. Several other routes off this chamber lead back to the main route. The main route continues beyond the archway to reach a 'chamber' after some 100 m. Several side passages are passed, those on the right being oxbows and those early on on the left reaching a maze of small passages. These either end up as oxbows or close down. The 'chamber' is really a junction. To the right, a crawling passage can be followed through a small constriction for 100 m. To the left, the passage enters a further chamber after about 30 m where the only way on is through an undercut ahead. This ends at a dig after 15 m.

Sleepcrawler Series & War Of The Worlds

Sleepcrawler Series

The small hole opposite Going Somewhere in Snowball Passage passes through several squeezes and down some small climbs before, after some 100 m, it enters a series of stoops and crawls, Don't Go Skiing, with a high level connection to Red Chamber. The more usual method of entry is through the choke at the end of Snowball Passage from where The Black Run heads off in an Easterly direction. This reaches a choked area after 100 m where the way on is through a low section, first to the right and then to the left (as the subsequent right closes down).

The route turns to the left and lowers before entering Red Chamber. Here a small hole to the left reaches a climb down into Don't Go Skiing. To the right, a tight passage oxbows into Lost In Space after 100 m, but this is not the usual route.

Heading straight across Red Chamber a crawl under the wall enters a series of interlinked, wide but low, chambers containing large banks of gypsum. These reach a seeming end after over 150 m but a hole through boulders to the left enters a short series of passages, A Shallow Grave, while to the right another hole through boulders enters a low passage.

The roof quickly rises to standing height and a chamber is reached. To the right here, a passage enters the oxbow from Red Chamber to Lost In Space, while to the left, a short passage reaches a small ramp up boulders marking the start of Lost In Space. This can be followed for over 750 m. After 100 m along here, the oxbow from Red Chamber (mentioned above) enters from a rift in the roof. Over the first 500 m, several areas are met where the large passage is split into sections by low crawls and tight squeezes, some of which are not obvious. One of these tight sections is located to the left just before the passage chokes but regains the large passage quite quickly. A short distance on the taped route forces the caver to enter a smaller passage to the right, containing several rock pillars. This regains the large passage at the bottom of a small drop.

About 20 m from this drop, a climb overhead enters the way on as ahead chokes just past some formations. The climb overhead enters a small passage to the left, Intergalactic Overdraught. This turns many corners before it once again enters the larger passage. The passage now continues with fewer tight obstructions than before until, 40 m past a passage on the left, it chokes.

The passage on the left, Killer Tomato Crawl, is 500 m long and well decorated with gypsum but cavers are requested not to enter the passage to protect the gypsum from damage.

Just before the boulder slope which leads up to the choke, a passage - one wall lined with boulders - leads off to the left. This enters a passage much larger than

before, Cold Fusion Passage, and passes by a large rock covered in gypsum, The Washing Machine, and several other formations, before it reaches a very wide area. Following this, the passage shrinks and becomes very narrow. This narrow section ends where a climb up boulders enters a huge, high-roofed chamber, The Reactor, the second largest in the cave.

To the right the fault-controlled flat wall is covered in pale green flowstone, while ahead the end of the chamber lies some 60 m away with no way on. To the left, however, a large alcoved section of chamber enters an area where the wall has peeled off to reveal a large passage at the base of a 25 m high boulder slope. The boulder slope is very loose and must be descended with care. At the base, the large passage can be followed for 100 m, with the stream seen intermittently between the boulders, until it reaches the site of a camp. From here, a smaller passage provides the only way on, passing several old formations, to reach a large corner to the right after 100 m. Just before this, a hole up enters a passage that leads to the top of the camp. This passage has a fine collection of intricate helictites that are (and hopefully will remain so) in pristine condition. From the corner, the taped route crosses over a large boulder and down a short climb to reach a steep boulder ramp. The ramp makes a considerable climb before it reaches a large junction. The huge passage to the right is War Of The Worlds (WOW) South, whilst the somewhat smaller passage to the left is WOW North. These are both inlet passages.

War Of The Worlds

War Of The Worlds North enlarges over the first 75 m to become a very large passage, although by no means as large as its southerly counterpart. After over 100 m, water enters from a small inlet on the right to flow south, back along the passage. After a further 150 m, the passage bends round to the right and soon ends at a large choke. At this point, a 2 m climb to the right enters Sendero Luminoso. This passage begins crawling size and passes a few formations, but further along the passage, the formations become much more intricate before the passage finally chokes after 200 m.

War Of The Worlds South begins very large and almost immediately reaches a junction. A mud and boulder slope up to the left enters the fault controlled Golden Handshake Rift, 200 m of crystal adorned passage ending at a choke. At the junction, War Of The Worlds South is an impressive 19 m wide and 15 m high, making it Britain's second largest passage. It continues as such, along the same fault that controls Golden Handshake Rift, for over 400 m. Beyond this the passage roof begins to gradually lower until, having passed several short inlets on the left, the passage chokes.

The stream emerges from under the left wall, just before the choke. Above where the stream emerges, a tight route can be forced to a climb down in a narrow rift. This can be more easily gained by following the stream until the stream route becomes too tight. At this point a crawl to the right gains the same

narrow rift. The rift becomes lower and enters a stream passage with the stream flowing from the left into an impassable rift on the right.

Heading upstream, the passage turns right before a side passage enters on the right. This only reaches a muddy aven. Continuing upstream, the way on is to follow the left most stream. Other routes are passed to the right, some of these contain streams but no way on. Two crawls in the stream are then necessary (*Warning - this area is rather loose*) before Prisoners Of War is entered.

Prisoners Of War

Several passages in this series contain delicate mud deposits and have been taped off. These are either oxbows or have no way on. Please respect the tapes and also avoid areas which look as if they should have been taped but which have not been.

About 10 m beyond the crawls, two passages to the right (the second of which contains a stream) unite and become Route 1. Ahead is Route 2.

Route 1 begins as a low, very muddy, streamway but quickly becomes walking-sized before reaching a junction. To the right the stream inlet becomes impassable. To the left the route becomes somewhat lower with two side passages to the left. These enter Route 2 (see below).

The way on continues to where it gains a stream flowing in the opposite direction to the last one. This stream brings with it some entertainment in the form of thick glutinous mud! A rift on the left here also enters Route 2. The passage turns right and then loses most of the stream to the right. From here the stream makes its way to the earlier inlet in Route 1.

The passage now enters a chamber. To the left, another passage enters Route 2. To the right is a black aven with some red "seaweed" patterns on the rocks. To the right of this aven the way on continues through a cross rift with some mud lacework on the rocks. The way on then becomes smaller and 100 m further on enters a low phreatic area at a junction. The stream flows off to the right where it cannot be followed. To the left, several small side passages are passed on the right (these are oxbows into the passage about to be met) before a junction is met. To the left is where Route 2 enters. To the right the passage lowers, passes the side passages mentioned above, and enters a 5 m wide by 3 m high passage. This is the continuation of War Of The Worlds South and is called Peace In Our Time. To the right chokes after 20 m having passed some black avens. A pool below one of these contains some interesting black doughnut-shaped mud formations. These are black versions of the strawberries in Strawberry Passage. To the left the passage climbs up a loose slope (take care) where it can be followed for 50 m through one low section to a choke.

Route 2 begins low and wet. 75 m along is an inlet to the right. Ahead is Route 3 but it is recommended that one follows Route 2 along the trench in the inlet.

Route 3 soon enters a chamber at a choke. From here there are two routes on. These are an obvious route up through the first section of choke and a hole up to the right. The route up enters another chamber. On the right here is a shattered continuation. This reaches a junction at a short climb up over a boulder with a passage to the right. Up over the boulder a narrow route enters two further chambers. There is no way on from here. The passage to the right reaches a junction with a very low passage to the left and a scramble up ahead. This enters a chamber. To the right here is the aforementioned hole up to the right at the start of the choke. To the left, a tantalising way on is taped off. The only way on from here is the very low passage. This enters a rift passage with a chamber to the right where Route 2 is met.

From the trench, Route 2 becomes larger with two side passages to the right. These enter Route 1. The way on to the left becomes larger and enters a chamber where Route 3 enters from the left. Up ahead is a secondary part of the chamber. The way on from here is up to the right. This enters a wider area where the only real way on is ahead. This becomes an easy traverse followed by a climb down to the left. At this point a hole down to the right enters Route 1.

Continuing ahead, another hole entering Route 1 is encountered. This enters Route 1 near the black aven. The passage turns left at this second hole and quickly reaches a junction. Ahead a wide passage enters the climb down to the left with many short side passages. To the right is very complicated. The best route here is generally the left most choice of routes. This ends at a junction in a smooth phreatic area. To the left chokes. To the right reaches an aven with some more red "seaweed" markings on the rocks, Seaweed Aven. Ahead a junction is reached. To the right quickly reaches the final connection with Route 1, whilst to the left a small slope down enters Blue Blood Streamway, that is presumed to be the source of the Out Of The Blue Streamway in Dollimore Series. To the right the streamway narrows before choking. Several small passages on the left are oxbows with tight side passages and avens. Heading left in Blue Blood Streamway reaches a choke after 75 m. At the point of entry into Blue Blood Streamway a very muddy, narrow, rift ahead enters an aven after 20 m.

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