

Success at Tearsall

Pool and Sump Series linked

Tearsall Pipe Caverns No 2 near Wensley (No 1 has long since been quarried away) is the adopted cave of the Masson Caving Group, and hence has been the periodic focus of their attentions over the years.

Much has been written about this ancient mining site, which dates back to the early 1600s, and its importance is recognised in the writings of the well-known local mining historian, Nellie Kirkham. A plaque has been erected to her memory in Sump shaft by Paul Chandler, the group's founder and leader.

Up until now the accessible workings consisted of two separate systems, both of which are part mined and part natural, known as the Pool and Sump series. (*Caves of the Peak District* pp 130-131).

They are very close together, and a small stream has been dye-tested to show a link between the two. The stream feeds a 10m long sump which overflows a calcite dam in the Sump series. Several attempts have been made to pass the sump, which, it was believed, would provide the key to a link-up of the two systems.

In the dry summer of '94 an 'all or nothing' assault on the sump was mounted, and half an hour of frenzied baling lowered the level enough to enable us to squeeze past a boulder blockage and to enter a stooping-sized phreatic tube trending at right angles to the sump.

To the right the passage soon ended in loose clay fill, but after about 10m the way-on left led to a more promising narrow rubble-filled ascending rift.

Attention was focused on this area, impetus deriving from the rubble fill which was calcited miners deeds; if the 'old man' had been here then there must be a way on. A barely detectable draught seemed to confirm this.

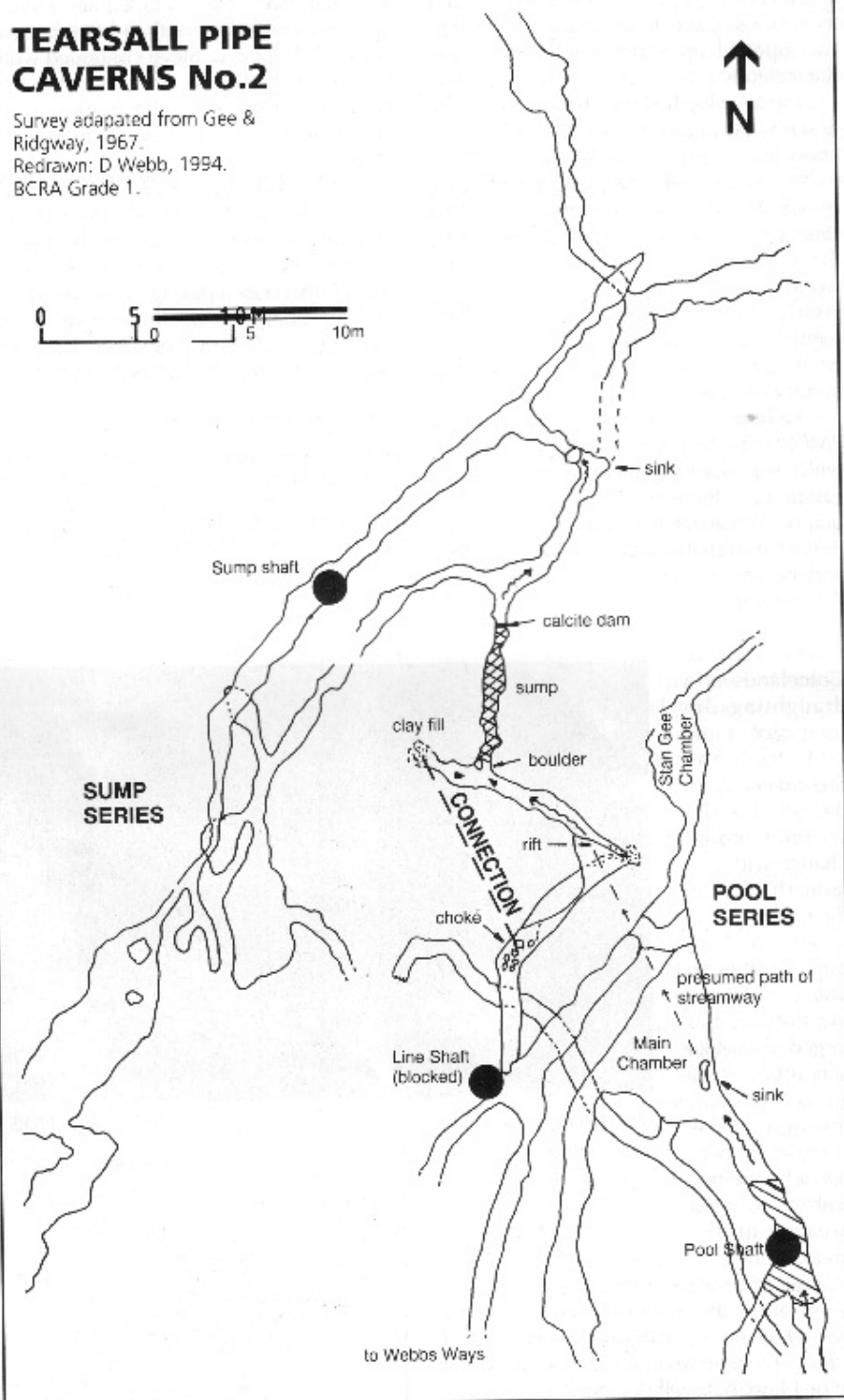
The fill was eventually removed and the way on revealed as a tight muddy tube leading off the far end of a small low chamber.

Adrenaline does strange things to the human body and, not without some effort, large and small grunted through to emerge in walking-size natural passage; the Tearsall Master Cave! ??? Unfortunately our excitement was short-lived, since 6.5m further on the passage was completely blocked by boulders... but there was a draught.

The following week we returned with a long pole which brought large quantities of muddy boulders crashing down around us. A black space appeared, and after careful enlargement we were through into big well-trodden passage. Sump and Pool series were finally linked.

TEARSALL PIPE CAVERNS No.2

Survey adapted from Gee & Ridgway, 1967.
Redrawn: D Webb, 1994.
BCRA Grade 1.



Notes

- The link emerges in Pool series near Line shaft, and through-trips are only possible from Sump to Pool due to baling restrictions.
- A higher level route by-passes the tight

muddy tube, but contains some small but pretty decorations; please take care.

- Diggers: Chris Broome, Mick Biggin, Andy Beardmore, Andy Morrison, Graham Carr and Dave Webb.

Dave Webb