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COTSWOLDS CAVE NOTES

by

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ABSTRACT

The following brief notes are intended as a supplement to the authors' papers from the years 2000, 2005 and 2007, which constitute the 'Landslip caves of the Cotswolds' series.

NORTHERN COTSWOLDS

Temple Guiting

Norman's Field Rift. NGR. SP 1006 2858 Alt. 245 m.

In early 2010, a cave entrance appeared in the middle of a field. After an initial drop of approximately 2 m, a descending gull rift can be followed to the south for 8 m to a final depth of 6 m. The gull then becomes impassably narrow. The cave was surveyed by the Gloucester Speleological Society for their Newsletter (Duxbury, 2010). Such small, near-surface gulls have previously been reported in the Northern Cotswolds (Self and Boycott, 2007), but all known sites have had their entrances infilled by the local farmers.

The cave is located on a gently inclined, north-facing slope of a tributary of the upper River Windrush. The overall orientation of the gull is 178°, so it runs directly into the hillside. This is very unusual, as most gulls are found in the joint set most closely aligned to the contours. A possible interpretation is that this is a 'gull tear', whereby different parts of a hillside are moving in different directions (Self, 2008). A short distance down valley, the hillside contours change to a north/south direction and Norman's Field is seen to be the upper part of a spur of land between tributary valleys of the River Windrush. Mass movement of this spur in the direction of the main river would be to the west. This could open gulls in the north/south joint set, though it should be noted that this is unusual. Throughout the Cotswolds, gulls mainly form in the north-east/south-west and north-west/south-east joint sets.

Cleeve Hill, Cheltenham

Tight Rift. NGR SO 9843 2551 Alt. 280 m.

A young caver has managed to squeeze down into a tight rift located between Isaac's Cave and St Paul's Cave. The cave entrance "looks to be just a rabbit hole until the vegetation is pushed away". At a depth of perhaps 5 m, "the fissure had turned into a slope that was probably blocked by stones". The quotes are from Champion (2010). This site is likely to be the more westerly of two sites marked on Figure 4 of Self and Boycott (2007) as "other small holes" and described in the text of that paper as "a tiny rift …… not accessible".

Charlton Abbots

Roel Pytt. NGR SP 0466 2442 Alt. 270 m.

This site consists of a small vertical hole, almost entirely in rock (rather than soil) but very broken at the top, 3 metres deep (J. Duxbury, *pers. comm*.). The horizontal development is a mere 1 metre to left and right, parallel to the contours which here run NE/ SW. The cave is on an Iron Age settlement known as Roel Camp about 1 km to the east of Charlton Abbas. "Pytt" is simply the Anglo Saxon word for pit.

MIDDLE COTSWOLDS

Newington Bagpath

Cave. NGR ST 818 948 (approx.) Alt. 205 m.

This grid reference refers to Newington Bagpath farm. The cave is located on level ground at the side of a field, about 50 m from the edge of a deep valley, a tributary of the Little Avon River. The entrance may be covered with a corrugated iron sheet. A climb down of 4 m can be made to a boulder bridge, from which a ladder is needed to reach an 'inclined chamber' at a depth of 15 m (A. Ward, *pers. comm*.). The cave is on private land and permission to visit is actively being sought

SOUTHERN COTSWOLDS

Bradford-on-Avon

Gorton's Rift. NGR 8215 6100 Alt. 85 m.

Gorton's Rift is a major gull within a small stone mine, whose entrance is in the garden of 34b Budbury Close, Bradford-on-Avon. The cave itself has been described in Self and Boycott (2000), based on earlier reports from the 1960s, but the exact location of the entrance was unclear in all those reports. The grid reference quoted is that of the mine entrance. Within the mine, the strata are heavily fractured and camber to the south at about 25°.

Gorton's Rift is at the end of the right hand branch of the mine and continues from it in the same direction (53°). The gull walls are very irregular compared with others in the region, showing very clear 'fit features'. The rift begins abruptly in a cross joint that has not significantly opened. The gull is about 50 cm wide with a descending floor until after 8 m another cross joint is met. The gull narrows as it briefly follows this cross joint to the left before it is seen to resume its original direction.

The way on is down through a hole in the floor in the first part of the gull. A laddered route between several false floors of wedged boulders attains a surveyed depth of 22 m (M. Breakspear, *pers. comm*.). The gull also continues upwards for an estimated 6 m through the beds that form the roof of the mine. Despite its limited horizontal development, Gorton's Rift is twice as deep as any other gull in the Cotswolds region and therefore is a site of regional

significance. The evidence of *en echelon* development and fit features proves that it is a normal gull and not a fault.

Gorton's Rift is high on the valley side of the River Avon as it abruptly changes its course from south-west to west. In such a location, it possible for different parts of a hillside to move in different directions, producing a gull tear running into the hillside (Self, 2008). There is no evidence to indicate this is happening here and Gorton's Rift appears to be a normal contour-aligned gull associated with the upstream hillslope direction. The cambering to the south seen in the mine is probably a local development in near-surface rocks.

Both lesser and greater horseshoe bats roost in the mine and sometimes in the rift itself. The current owners of the mine are friendly towards visitors, but for both conservation and safety reasons this site is unsuitable for recreational caving.

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