



The British Cave Research Association & The Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club

BCRA & the RRCPC

Ease Gill Field Meeting

Friday 6th May 2011 at 9.30am – 6.00pm

Barbon Village Hall and the Ease Gill Cave System, Yorkshire

The BCRA and RRCPC would like to invite you to a field meeting that will explore the geology, formation, exploration, archaeology and fascination of the Ease Gill cave system. There will be a morning of talks in the Barbon Village Hall, followed by lunch break and a drive to Bull Pot Farm, where we will split into three groups. Two groups are only for those with previous caving experience and their own equipment, as we will be going underground into County Pot and Bull Pot of the Witches, to look at features associated with the long and complex history of the cave system. The third group will take a walk over the area above the system, to see the various entrances and surface geological features. Ease Gill is one of the longest caves in Britain, which has something of interest for everyone, caver and non-caver alike.

Registration If you intend to participate please register **prior to the 29th April**, particularly if you want to go underground, since group sizes will be limited. To do so please contact David Checkley by email on: bcra-chairman@bcra.org.uk or phone 0161 439 4387

Equipment required Those going underground need full caving gear, but the systems will be rigged with both SRT ropes and ladders. Walkers need boots and waterproofs.

Cost There will be a charge of £6 per person for participation, with reductions for BCRA and RRCPC members. This charge will include tea and biscuits in the morning, but you are advised to bring a packed lunch. For those who don't manage to bring food, there is a small shop and pub in Barbon village.

Getting to Barbon village hall

Travelling north from Skipton along the A65, turn right just before the bridge over the River Lune and Kirby Lonsdale. This is the A683 signposted for Casterton, Barbon and Sedbergh. Drive through the village of Casterton and after 300m take the right fork, signed for Barbon. Follow the lane round to the right as you enter the village. The village hall is a few hundred metres further on the left. There is adequate parking on the left side of the hall.

Getting to Bull Pot Farm

Instructions will be given at the meeting, but it can be reached from Casterton or by returning to the A65. There is limited parking at the farm so it would be appreciated if people could share vehicles. Kitchen facilities are available at Bull Pot Farm at lunchtime and afterwards along with changing and showers after the walk and caving trips.

The Program in the village hall

9.45 Dave Checkley - introduction

10.00 Dr Chris Thomas - The Dent and Craven faults: their significance during the Palaeozoic evolution of Northern England

10.35 Dr Tony Waltham - Thoughts on the evolution of the Ease Gill caves

Tea break. with Images from Ease Gill by Ray Duffy

11.35 Andrew Hall – A brief account of the history of exploration of the Ease Gill Caverns area from late 19th Century to the present day

11.50 John Thorp - Archaeology of the caves of the Ease Gill – Three Counties System

12.30 Lunch break, with Images from Ease Gill by Ray Duffy

13.15 Drive to Bull Pot Farm

17.30 Concluding remarks and discussion at Bull Pot Farm

Abstracts of the talks

Dr Chris Thomas - The Dent and Craven faults: their significance during the Palaeozoic evolution of Northern England

The Dent and Craven faults are amongst the best-known and longest-studied major structures in the British Isles. They separate the upstanding Askrigg Block from the Craven Basin and were demonstrably active in Carboniferous times (360 – 300 Ma (million years ago)), controlling sedimentation, particularly on the southern margins of the block. Recent work by the BGS, in collaboration with Dr Nigel Woodcock (Cambridge) suggests strongly that the history of the faults and related structures is likely to extend back into the mid Lower Palaeozoic. In terms of their origin, they are considered likely to reflect constructive crustal scale processes active during the middle Ordovician (c. 450 Ma), along the eastern margin of Eastern Avalonia, the ancient foundation of England. Subsequently, successive reactivations of these structures during early Devonian ‘Acadian’ (400 – 380 Ma) deformation and later Carboniferous – early Permian, late ‘Variscan’ (290 – 300 Ma) deformation, have given rise to the geology we observe today. In terms of the genesis of the Ease Gill and adjacent systems, the tectonic regimes of which these faults are manifestations have influenced the architecture of the caves via the structures (folds, joints and faults) which formed in response to the stress fields extant during various phases of deformation, particularly from the Variscan onwards.

Dr Tony Waltham - Thoughts on the evolution of the Ease Gill caves

Ease Gill is unusual among the major Dales valleys in that it was not deeply excavated by a Pleistocene valley glacier (though it was over-run by ice), and has therefore lost fewer of its caves to surface lowering. It does have the normal high level caves, above a low level trunk route fed by many down-dip inlets, but is complicated by major inlets, past and present, from both Leck Fell and the Dent Fault Zone. The caves have a very long chronology, and may well preserve an exceptional record of past environments.

Andrew Hall – A brief account of the history of exploration of the Ease Gill Caverns area from late 19th Century to the present day

The history starts with recorded explorations in the 19th Century by Balderstone and others and extends up to modern explorations by cave divers and diggers.

John Thorp - Archaeology of the caves of the Ease Gill – Three Counties System.

Recent and interesting archaeological finds of faunal material in the caves compliment research in adjacent areas. With a notable lack of archaeological material from caves in the area these finds are of prime importance. Other related adjacent archaeological bone caves will be briefly described and put into context.