

27th-28th April 2019: An away trip for some of the Hallowe'en Team!

Saturday: A leisurely coffee and breakfast, kit prepared and then loaded into the van. I set off for Gower just after 08:00 and arrived at Overton at 10:15. I was the first to arrive, followed shortly by John Cooper. Jonathon Riley and Alex Gee (Hallowe'en diggers) then turned up in Jon's car. They had paid for 'all day parking' down in Port Eynon and needed a lift back up the hill to Overton, I obliged. Back at Overton, a brief discussion with one of the locals regarding parking was settled amicably and we parked where we had intended to anyway.



L to R: John Cooper, Alex Gee and Jon Riley at the entrance to Harry Thomas's Cave

We quickly sorted ourselves out and headed off towards **Harry Thomas's Cave** (HT Cave). It was still windy (Storm Hannah was passing through) but the rain had stopped. At the cave entrance, got changed ready to venture underground but were thwarted by an obstinate rusty gate bolt. John had tried to free it but to no avail, so I had a go and with some gentle persuasion, and with the aid of a lump of rock, the gate was eventually opened. Once into the cave Jon, Alex and I set-up a hauling system, which after some fine tuning did the job. We soon got into the flow of things and spoil was being removed from the cave at a good rate.

The spoil comprised mostly the filled bags that John had left last year, this was the first trip of this season's excavation, and the rocks that he couldn't manage by himself. After a couple of hours of shifting spoil, we stopped to take a short break. Then, we resumed the hauling activity. We stopped when John announced that he'd had enough. We had to free the bolt before we left and there was a bit of tidying to be done too. We secured the cave and left.

We had decided to walk along the coast path and visit **Culverhole**, a Medieval dovecote built into a deep cut fissure and cave. Alex and I managed to wriggle through a gap under the wall and look around the interior of the 'dovecote'. There are natural solutional features and it is apparent that some of the passages continue, although we didn't explore them any further. At the back of the wall the nooks crated for the doves to nest are clearly visible and there were empty eggshells lying around the 'cave'.

It had been a long day and we made our respective ways back to the vehicles John and me to Overton via the mere, and Jon and Alex to Port Eynon where we to meet later. We were soon back together and

headed to the Ship Inn to eat and drinks. John returned to Swansea while the rest of us headed up to Cefn Bryn to go ‘vamping’. Once parked we went to look at Maen Ceti and the nearby cairn before retiring to our respective vehicle to rest up for the night.

It was still quite windy!



Looking down from the entrance at the activity below



Culverhole.



Looking out to sea from Culverhole.

Sunday: I was a bit chilly last night and it's still a bit windy this morning, although it has abated a little. We had arranged to meet this at 09:30 in Overton. After breakfast and some kit sorting, a brief stop in Port Eynon, we met at the allotted time. We made our way to Harry Thomas's Cave.

We quickly changed and went below ground to restart where we had left off. Jon and I were at the bottom, I was breaking up some large rocks with the lump-hammer, Jon loading the bucket, Alex and John were hauling and dumping the spoil along the end of the path outside the cave entrance. When the rocks were cleared, I went up to the platform to take over hauling. John had decided he wanted to dig, so we let him. Jon continued loading the bucket, I hauled it away and Alex dumped the spoil along the path. Another considerable amount of spoil was shifted.

About 13:00 we decided to call it a day. I returned to the bottom to insert an 'acrow prop' and fixed the ladder securely to it, very solid it was too. I left my hauling kit (buckets, ropes and strops) at the cave as I will return on the bank holiday Monday in a week or so.

Cave secured we made our way around the headland to visit **Cave 43**. The tide was low enough for us to get into the cave and point out the interesting features to Jon and Alex.

Inside the cave it was very slippery as it was still damp, the tide still receding. All had a good look at the sediment sequences, the bone fragments and the speleothems. All too soon it was time to leave the cave and make our way back up the slope to re-join the coast path and walk back to the vehicles in Overton. There was a brief chat before we climbed into our vehicles and started the journey back to our respective homes. I left about 15:00 and arrived back home around 17:15.

Back at home I unloaded the van, put my kit away, then got into a hot bath to soak for a while. Then, I sat down for a spell before dinner. A good productive weekend.



The higher entrance to Cave 43



L to R: Jon, Alex and John exit Cave 43