

sag rag

26:4 July-August 2007



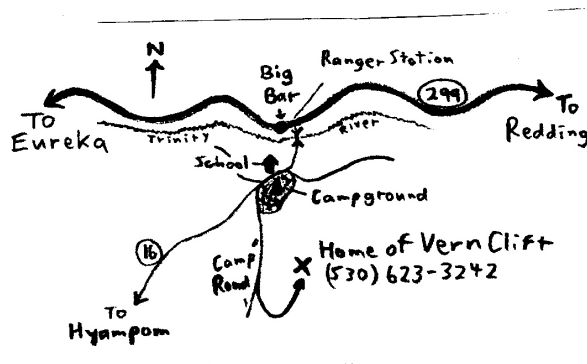
WAYNE DOWN UNDER

The SAG RAG is published by the Shasta Area Grotto of the National Speleological Society, Grotto meetings are held at different locations the fourth Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Meeting locations are announced in the SAG RAG, Membership dues are \$6 dollars per year and include newsletter subscription. Original material not otherwise noted is copyright to the SAG RAG. Such material may be copied with credit given to the author and the SAG RAG. For use outside of the caving community, please seek the permission of the author or editor first. Send material for publication any time to Bighorn Broeckel, 2916 Deer Meadows Road, Yreka, CA 96097 or <jbroeckel@snowcrest.net>. For more on SAG, check the web site at <<http://www.caves.org/grotto/sag>>.

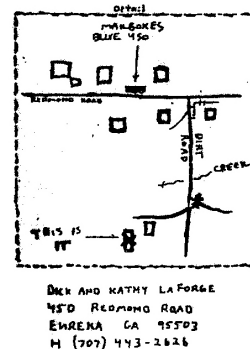
CAVERS CALENDAR 2007

- Aug 31-Sept 3 KMCTF Speleocamp. Contact Bill Broeckel (530) 842-3917.
 Sept 1-3 CRF Lava Beds expedition. Contact Bruce Rogers (510) 796-2283.
 Sept 21 SAG meeting at Cliff's in Big Bar 7:30 pm. Come for the whole weekend and go caving at Del Loma and Nunns Caves.
 Oct 5-8 KMCTF Speleocamp. Contact Bill Broeckel (530) 842-3917.
 Oct 6-8 CRF Mineral King expedition. Contact Mark Scott (415) 452-2845.
 Oct 13-21 Crystal Cave Restoration in Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park.
 Oct 20 SAG meeting at LaForge's in Eureka 7:30 pm. Come for the whole weekend and go caving down the deep pit Dick knows along the coast.
 Oct 26-28 Western Regional at Pinnacles National Monument hosted by SFBC.
 Nov 22-25 CRF Lava Beds expedition. Contact Bruce Rogers (510) 796-2283.

MAPS TO MEETINGS



September 21 – Big Bar



October 20 – Eureka

COVER EXPLANATION By Bill Broeckel

Wayne Cedidla is up-ended and captured live on digital camera by photographer Vern Clift. First on rope, Wayne attempted a walk-off rappel, encountering more slack than expected in the rigging. He immediately went upside down and experienced an inverted backside body slam into the wall of the pit. This all happened very quickly. Vern was already in position to take some pictures. A rock, dislodged from the wall, landed on the floor of the pit, and added a dramatic punctuation to the mishap. Fortunately, Wayne was able to right himself and continue on with the rappel. Apparently he was unhurt, and took off to check the cave while Melanie and Liz followed him down the rope. He seemed OK and the cave survey proceeded along as if nothing unusual had happened. I did a large part of the rigging and felt personally responsible for the excessive slack. I didn't see this coming, so didn't warn Wayne ahead of time, but at least can apologize to him now after the fact. Sorry about that Wayne. There are a number of good lessons to learn here, and one that pops to my head is: helmets with chin straps are a great idea. **BB**

JUNE SAG MEETING Minutes from June 16th, 2007 SAG meeting at grotto campout in Shasta County. The meeting was called to order at 8:22 pm and adjourned at 8:54 pm by Chairman Liz Wolff. Those attending were members Jim and Liz Wolff, Bill Broeckel, Melanie Jackson, Steve Hobson, Neils Smith, Vern and Linda Clift, and Wayne Cedidla. The old minutes were read by Steve Hobson and accepted as corrected. Treasurer's Report: \$840.47 + \$53.27 petty cash = \$893.74. Collected \$6 from Jim for Ken Seigris. Brian Marshall is paid. SAG RAG Report: Latest Cow Caver was in. Bill will spend the rest of the month on the next issue of the SAG RAG. Mad Hatter Cave will be in it.

Correspondence: Speleo-Ed was reviewed. Bill talked about inter-grotto trips. Sisson Museum sent us an e-mail wanting to know about a slide show program. Liz said she could do it Aug 2 at 2 pm in the afternoon. The Museum also sent an inventory receipt for our display.

Old Business: Reunion 20-22 July 2007. We have the project laid out. Jim and Liz have looked at the site. There are about a dozen pieces of graffiti on a 30-ft section of wall near the entrance to Trench Bench Cave. Liz will check on the tools: scrapers, putty knives, wire brushes, etc. At least four hours of work. Three trailers are expected: Vern and Linda, Neils Smith, and Steve Hobson. Liz will get T-shirts from the T-shirt Gallery in Mt. Shasta. The logo will be the one at the Museum: short-sleeved. First one is \$16.99, after that the more ordered the cheaper they get. Liz will check on the sizes. Mushpot Cave (theater) will be available for the slide show. Jim needs a carousel. Liz will have a sign-up sheet for the clean-up.

New Business: July meeting will be held at Lava Beds for our 25th reunion.

Trip Reports: Bill Broeckel finished up the Mad Hatter and Deadwood Cave surveys this morning. He also surveyed some other cave (Argus) last night. Bill Broeckel and Liz Wolff recently finished up the survey on Francis' Folly, about 300 ft, bringing the total over 1,000 ft. Jim, Liz, and Bill B. surveyed Chimney Pit (56 ft) and did GPS on Lava Plug Pit, Undertakers Pit, and another one.

Shasta Area Grotto Secretary/Treasurer – Steve Hobson

SH



Shasta Area Grotto meeting on 6-16-07. Pictured clockwise from the left are Jim Wolff, Linda Clift and little dog, Vern Clift, Liz Wolff (Chairman), Wayne Cedidla, Melanie Jackson, Steve Hobson (standing), and Neils Smith. We don't generally take pictures of the meetings, but this outdoor meeting had a special circumstance. The Clifts set out the Astroturf ground cover and the fresh fruit. Photo by Bighorn Broeckel.

Shasta Area Grotto June Campout

By Bighorn Broeckel

The grotto is celebrating a silver anniversary this year. This year is also our tenth annual June campout to the lava caves of Shasta County. We did miss in 2004, however, by general consensus so we could attend the opening of the new Visitors Center at Lava Beds.

Here is a run-down with year and the major highlight for each June campout.

1985	Cave Survey school
1995	Grinch Caves
1998	Survey school again
1999	Wilcox Cave
2000	Nine Lives Cave
2001	Elisha Cave
2002	Elisha Cave
2003	Alice Cave
2004	(out to Lava Beds)
2005	Mad Hatter Cave
2006	Mad Hatter Cave
2007	Blowhole

There may have been some others. As you can see, that "tenth annual" claim is a bit arbitrary. However, the events of the latest edition (2007) proved worthy and deserve some review.

A very congenial group of cavers assembled for the event, and by name they were Bill Broeckel, Wayne Cedidla, Linda Clift, Vern Clift, Steve Hobson, Melanie Jackson, Neils Smith, Jim Wolff, and Liz Wolff. Jan Sorochtey from the Forest Service stopped by for a chat, and the Clifts also brought two little dogs.

The centerpiece of the weekend was the Sunday morning excursion up to the Blowhole. Just about everybody went up there, including the little dogs. We have been talking about dropping this pit for ten years, and now three of us finally did it. After working in this local area for 25 years, this is the first vertical action we have attempted on the project. All the vertical caving photos in this issue, including the cover shot, are depicting this event. The cave they found turns out to be quite the cave, especially for a vent, and Liz Wolff gives a detailed run-down of the survey. Blowhole is currently the 5th deepest cave in the project, as well as the first vertical cave.

Mad Hatter was finished on Saturday morning, June 16 (see last issue), and so was Deadwood Cave (501 ft). Deadwood is in the next parallel past

Mad Hatter, so the map is pending the rest of the parallel. A brief ridgewalk revealed that there are yet more parallels beyond.

While ridgewalking, one of the sinks was a little deeper than the others. The air was cold down there, and there was some mud at the bottom. This became frozen brown ice as I slid in as far as I could. I had to re-enter head first to get a good look at this. There was an ice floor as far as could be seen in several directions. The cave looked complex. Alas, the ice has nearly filled the cave. This is the first perennial ice cave I've seen in this area, and true to form, the cave is too low to get into.

Argus Cave was a short-lived foray into virgin cave on Friday night June 15 (see further), and Fair Dinkum Cave was noted on our way out Sunday June 17 (also see further). Thus the following footage gets added to the project: Argus (127), Mad Hatter (107), Deadwood (27), Blowhole (212), and Fair Dinkum (184). Total: 657 feet. That brings the project total to 35,096 feet or 6.6 miles of surveyed cave passage. The number of caves with at least some survey data is 134. With over a dozen caves that we have peeked in but that remain unsurveyed, we have been tossing around the number 150 for the project lately. About ten new caves seem to be showing up each year, so the number is expected to keep growing. **BB**





This sequence shows Melanie Jackson on rappel in Blowhole. She was the second one, after Wayne went upside down. Understandably, Melanie decided to take a very cautious approach. First she sat on the lower edge, where her right hand is resting in the first (upper) picture. Next she slowly rolled on her right hip into the rappel with her locked off rack beginning to take some of her body weight. The second picture shows the rope positioned well on the rope pad. She is about to unlock her rack and is ready to slide on down the rope. Photos by Bighorn Broeckel.

The Blowhole

By Liz Wolff

The Blowhole, as the locals call it, or Danger Pit as we long called it, is in a spatter cone series that are reputed to be the source of the cave bearing lavas for the valley. It is one of a complex of four on the north end of a ridge. The pit is surrounded with a fence to keep the unprepared from falling in and a sign to warn the overly brave from doing something they'd regret later. During the annual Shasta Area Grotto June campout those who hiked to the top of the spatter cones and lent support to the cave team were Bill Broeckel, Vern & Linda Clift, and Jim Wolff. The rest of an eventful weekend is detailed elsewhere.

Before dropping the pit we found a small climbable seven foot deep pit with a fence around it. Wayne Cedidla climbed it with the aid of a hand line and found it sealed off all around. Jim climbed into a hole on the side of the spatter cone to see if it would be a better way in besides on a rope. It was tight and had a 12 foot free drop at the end of it, and is not a viable way to enter the pit. If it were to be surveyed, it would perhaps add 3 or 4 feet to the total depth.

At the time of the survey Wayne, Melanie Jackson, and Liz Wolff rappelled into the pit to explore to see if there might be any cave there and survey if so. Wayne being the first to rappel, took the stretch out of the rope in an unexpected manner, but keeping his cool, righted himself and descended as if he did that every day. As Mel and Liz rappelled, he explored and said that there was more than 40 feet of cave and the passage divided two ways at the bottom of a slope. So we sent the danger sign, which had been thrown into the pit, back aloft to warn the unprepared (there is a broken water ski rope tied to one of the fence posts) and began to survey.

The entrance pitch is 13 feet on the lowest side and 16 on the side we dropped into. The entrance chamber is roughly circular, dirt and breakdown floored; in fact almost the entire cave is breakdown floored. The passage descends steeply to the divide with one short, intact crawl off to the NW just before the divide. Broken glass was found just in front of the crawl.

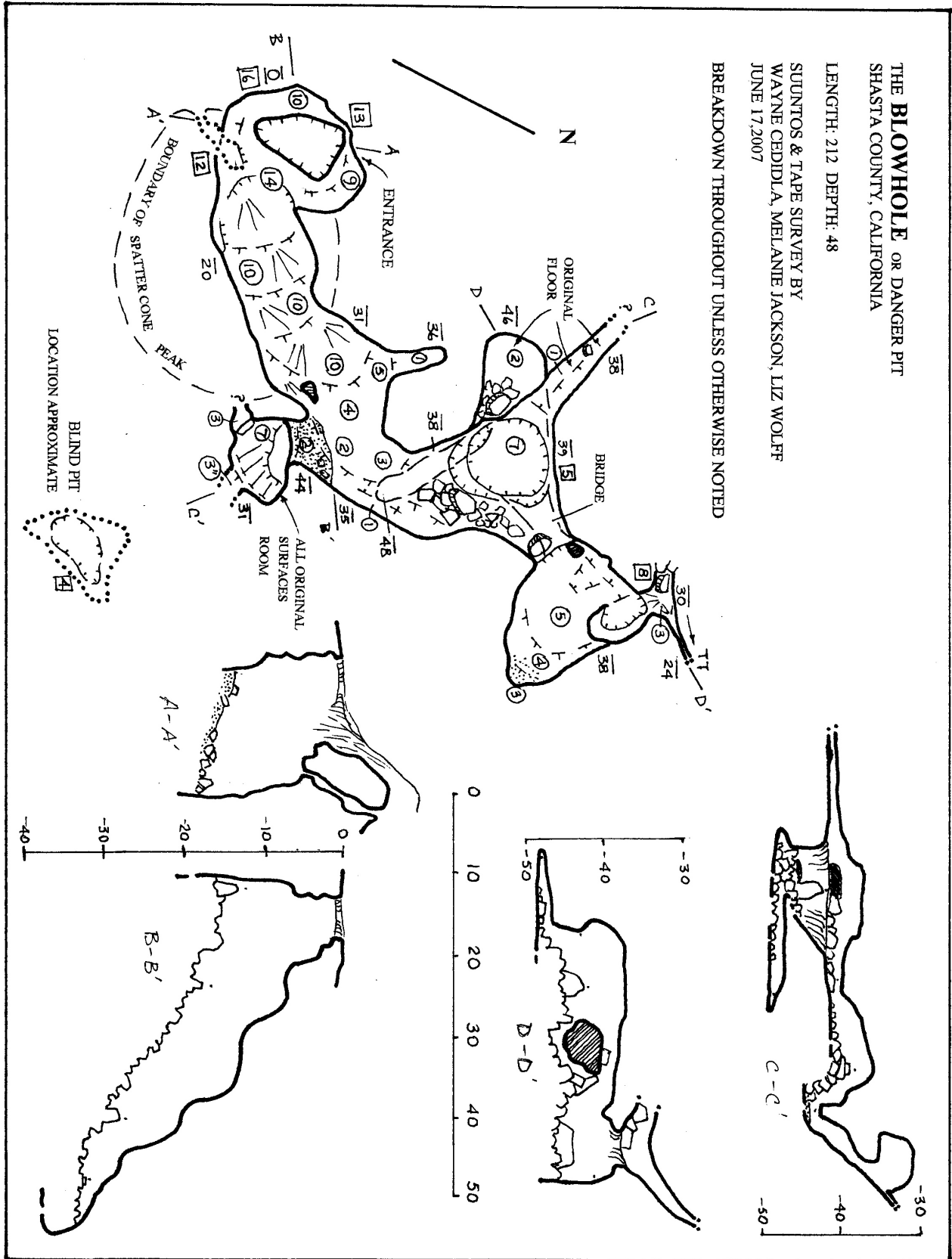
At the divide we went west into another nearly circular-appearing room with four passages exiting in different directions. Wayne found a shotgun shell on a prominent piece of breakdown; no surprise, we weren't the first to walk here.

From the room we looked into a passage six feet off the floor that continued west, but were disappointed to see it would be impossible to pass a small welded rock in the one foot high, three foot wide keyhole-shaped passage. We then headed north, climbing over a bridge into a smaller room. This room contains upper level passages on a ledge eight feet high, that go two ways and take air, but are not enterable. The dome with the upper passages sparkles with gold and silver slime.

Returning to the first room, we looked into two lower crawls. One is obvious under the ledge with the blocked passage, going 17 feet to a lava seal; the other was obscured by breakdown and needed to be opened enough to enter. Mel slid down it and found a lava seal after 16 feet.

Returning to the first divide, we headed for the east branch of the cave. From the breakdown pile a mud floor can be seen in a crawl hole. The room beyond is intact, walking sized, and quickly ascends a steep remelt slope to a three inch high by three foot wide solid lava passage that goes, less than people-sized. This is the All Original Surfaces Room, a name larger than the room itself, which seems to be in a direct line to the sealed pit. Above the entry crawl is a shelf four feet deep and five feet high that heads back toward the first divide. On one side of the room is a ledge about three feet off the floor with a large boulder wedged insecurely in front of it, which we would have to pass under to access the ascending passage behind it. None of us had a death wish, so we passed up that lead. All told, the Blowhole is 212 feet long and 48 feet deep.

LW



ARGUS CAVE

Bill Broeckel

Description

At 127 feet in length, and containing some endearing features, Argus qualifies as another cute little lava cave for Shasta County. A short chute, under a low edge of broken basalt, is used to enter the cave. Prospects improve immediately.

The entrance chamber is forty feet wide. It is possible to stand up straight under a small dome. The rest of the cave is lower, but a bat may be seen roosting near the entrance. Dirt and debris from the entrance extend down into the cave, then give way to a flat floor of exposed lava.

The cave narrows down and gets lower. A critical point is reached along the right wall, where a small lava stalagmite tries to block the way. With some care, it is possible to crawl through without harming the stalagmite, and the cave enlarges again. However, cross-sectional dimensions only double, and further progress is soon stalled out by a large dune, and partial occlusion by related fill material.

The direction of flow in the cave is southeast (up valley), a localized phenomena off of a flattened lava pooling area.

Cave Story

After hand scooping rocks and dirt for 30-40 minutes, I was finally able to slide down head-first far enough to just reach an important blade of rock. It jiggled! At that point, I knew I was in – without tools. When the rock pulled out, it was the size of a small platter. A few minutes later, I slid down the gullet feet

first and allowed the cave to swallow me whole. Soon I sat up in a broad room.

I saw a beer can. Then, I saw the bat. It was a solitary sleeping bat. the date was Feb. 15, '05 and it was time to leave. Bats and cavers have a few things in common, like just looking around for a place with a little peace and quiet.

Back outside, I took a few minutes to disguise my dig. I distributed the rocks into the bushes in all directions, and brought in arm loads of pine needles to cover the naked dirt. This was the finishing touch on a good example of a low-tech approach to opening caves that I like to self-righteously refer to as a "low impact dig", or "L.I.D."

Never mind the poor bat.

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Two years later I returned to the cave for a late night visit. It was June 15, the Friday night of the grotto weekend campout. The beer can was still in there, but the bat was gone. Sliding down the chute was easy this time, and I quickly found a comfortable place to sit and set up the survey. Before long I was crawling down the right side of a low passage about ten feet wide. I tried hard not to kick the poor "lavamite" I referred to as Argus. Unlike Hermes, I had no wish to do harm to Argus, the sentinel with 100 eyes. He was like a guard at a check-point or a night watchman. The cave was named for him.... You know, maybe I should just stay home late nights with David Letterman or whatever.

My reward for getting past Argus was bigger cave, 20-ft wide and 2-ft high. Here was yet another breakout in the many

small lava caves of the County Shasta. I love it when caves get bigger. The cave soon ended, however, with a partial dirt fill. I could see over the top of the dirt for 20 or 30 feet. After that, who knows?

Some time in the future, cavers can come back to this spot and work on expanding Argus Cave. For now it stands at 127 feet. The entrance is in the same shallow, broad sink that contains entrances to Pink Coat, Two Face, Uncle Runt's, and Petticoat Caves for a total combined passage length of 1,534 feet. This has been a most productive sinkhole.

We haven't done very many digs in this area. The last one I remember was when one of our most industrious diggers opened up Split Rock Cave, which turned out to be quite the poster cave for the value of digging at selected spots.

I heard a bat as I prepared to exit the cave. I hoped it was the same one. I removed the beer can, it must have been tossed in somehow. I didn't hurt Argus. I hoped Hera the goddess would not be angry with me.

Emerging into starlight, I didn't dare look at the time. I slunk back to camp and got some sleep, to be ready for what the next day might bring. Argus Cave fills in another detail around Uncle Runt's, an area where most of the caves have already been delineated. **BB**

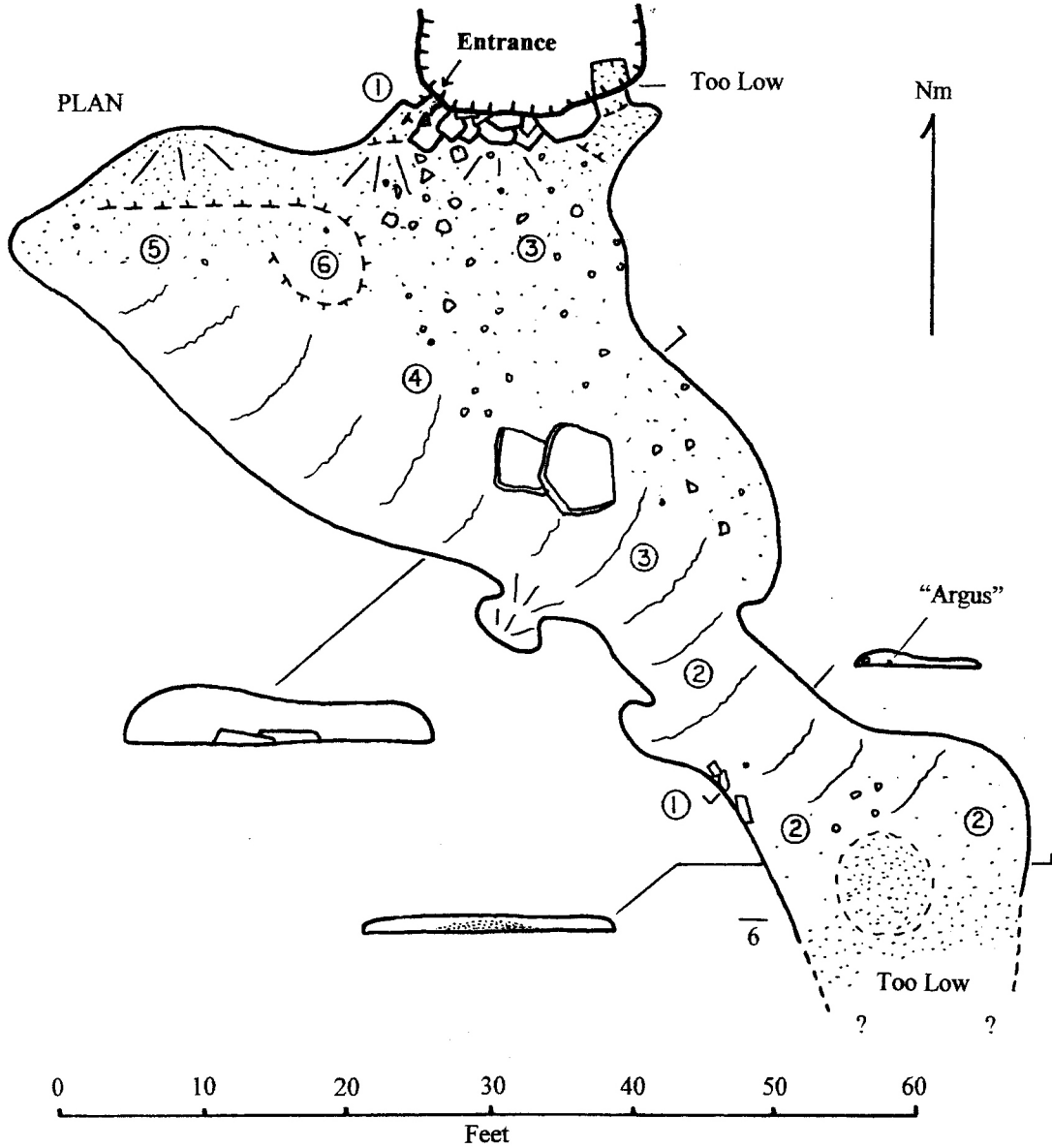
Argus Cave

SHASTA COUNTY CA

LENGTH 127 feet

DEPTH 6 feet

PLAN



Tape and instrument survey: 6-15-07.
 Shasta Area Grotto. National Speleological Society.
 Cartography/Copyright: Bill Broeckel © 2007.

Map: Argus Cave

FAIR DINKUM CAVE

Bill Broeckel

Fair Dinkum Cave is composed of two parallel lava tubes connected by a low crawl under the intervening wall. Total passage length is 184 feet, depth is 10 feet.

The entrance measures 2x2 feet, and drops into the lower end of the first tube. Many pinecones litter the floor near the entrance. The hands-and-knees passage proceeds to a ledge. On top of the ledge, a crawlway continues to a slender natural bridge. Beyond the bridge, breakdown blocks the way and some daylight comes in through small holes.

Back at the ledge is where another crawlway goes under the wall, connecting the two

tubes. This is a belly crawl, but very quickly this opens up into the side of the 2nd tube, roughly parallel to the first.

Upflow becomes too low after about 20 ft. Downflow does better, and reaches a nice room. A dune has drifted in on the left. Light and dark lavacicles appear on the right. A side passage on the right nearly connects to the entrance. Sound goes through, but otherwise it is blocked off.

The main passage continues, but much lower, going past a breakdown slab and on into a small room half filled with sand castles. A pure white fungus ball was found in this room. A ledge on the left goes up into one final perched chamber, in which the air is noticeably warmer. This is the end.

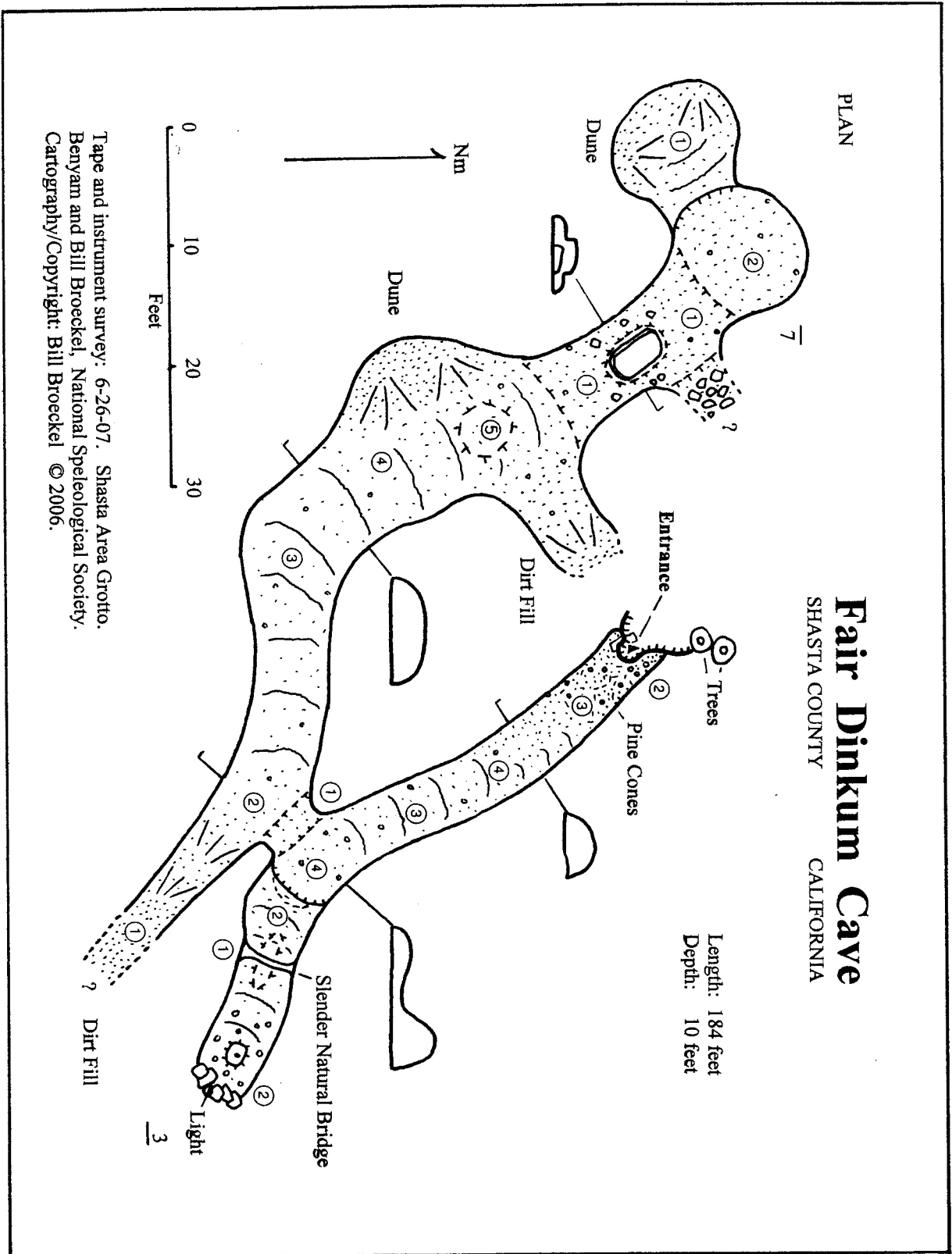
Cave Story

A scientist named Rick Forster was out scouting geology when he found the small entrance to this cave. Shasta Area Grotto later noticed it on 6-17-07 on our way back from the Blowhole survey trip. We had previously walked by the area many times, but had never spotted it before. The entrance was tucked in near some trees, not easily seen from a distance.

There was only time for a quick check, enough to see that this was indeed a respectable little cave - fair dinkum you might say. Two Shasta Area Grottolians returned 9 days later to complete the exploration and map of Fair Dinkum Cave, another new and recently discovered Shasta County lava tube. **BB**



The entrance to Fair Dinkum Cave on 6-26-07. Photo by Bighorn Broeckel.



Map: Fair Dinkum Cave



Wayne Cedidla checks the blind pit near Blowhole. We think the barbed wire around these pits may be quite old and originally strung by ranchers to keep cattle away from the edges. Photo by Bighorn Broeckel.

T-SHIRT SALES

Even if you missed the 25th reunion, you can still obtain one of the fine grotto T-shirts. These are sage green in color, and feature original art on the front illustrating lava and limestone caving in the Shasta Area within the numerals "25". Blue lettering says:

"SHASTA AREA GROTTTO 1982 – 2007 (25) YEARS OF CAVE EXPLORATION".

These come in a rather generous men's size large, and there are a few extra large still left. The cost is \$10, plus \$2 for postage and handling. If you arrange with Liz Wolff, you could probably pick up a shirt at a grotto meeting for a straight \$10. If you would like one of these very soft, comfortable, handsome, historical, collectors-item grotto T-shirts, please contact Liz Wolff at POB 865, McCloud CA 96057 or by phone at (530) 964-3123. **BB**

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STAMP

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