



GADSDEN
GROTTO
Newsletter

SPRING 2013



GADSDEN GROTTTO

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Chairman: Stephen Brewer
- 1st Vice Chairman
of Programs and Projects:
Anthony Cline
- 2nd Vice Chairman of Public
Relations: Michael Ray
- Secretary/Treasurer:
Sharon Brewer
- Newsletter Editor: Michael Ray
- Web Page Design: Michael Ray

NEWSLETTER

The Gadsden Grotto *Newsletter* is published on a semi-regular basis by the Gadsden Grotto (GG) of the National Speleological Society (NSS) as its official newsletter.

All material submitted for publication is subject to editing for clarity, grammatical considerations, and to meet space limitations.

Any opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) named and do not necessarily represent the views of the Gadsden Grotto or the NSS. Unsigned material may be attributed to the editors. Permission to publish photographs associated with an article is the sole responsibility of the author of the article. Reprint permission is granted provided that both the author and the source are credited.

The Gadsden *Grotto Newsletter* is distributed free of charge to GG members and in exchange for publications of organizations with similar interests.

All original materials submitted for publication will be returned to sender. Electronic materials will not be returned. Digital photographs need not be greater in size than 800 pixels wide.

Submit materials for publication to:

Michael Ray
4634 County Road 7
Leesburg, AL 35983
frogray@tds.net



WEB PAGE

<http://www.caves.org/grotto/gadsgrotto/index.html>

IN THIS ISSUE

- ▶ Summary of Meeting Minutes.....3-4
- ▶ Off Rope - A Tribute to Karen Blackburn.....4
- ▶ Cave Biology—Isopods.....4
- ▶ Stephen's Gap Wedding5-6
- ▶ Inherited Article from Gary Stewart7
- ▶ Cherokee Rock Village.....7
- ▶ Thorn Well Trip Report.....8
- ▶ Frick's Cave Trip Report.....9
- ▶ Back on Rope.....9



Mr. & Mrs. Neiswenter.
Photo by Zachary Toth Photography

Cover Photograph: Stephen's Gap by Jim Loftin. Wedding of Shanon and Charles Neiswenter. March 2, 2013.

Inset picture—Charles and Shanon by Zachary Toth Photography.



MINUTES

Of the Gadsden Grotto
Regular Meetings

The following are summaries of the minutes from the Gadsden Grotto Regular Meeting.

For full details of the minutes, see the grotto secretary/treasurer

November 13, 2012

Opening Business:

Susan Teal's father is now in Regional Medical Center in Anniston. Treasurer report for the month of October: Income: +\$10 in memberships General Fund \$247.59 Rope fund \$75.00 Total = \$322.59. Programs Chairman Vacated seat was appointed and filled with Anthony Cline.

Old Business:

Steve Brewer showed pictures from Water Color Cave, a new one and reported on the survey underway. There was discussion that all members should contribute to the newsletter. Michael Ray informed us that the sign is being laid out in such a way to optimize our funds by getting two signs for the price of one. Placement of the sign was also discussed. We are hoping to install one in the Weaver Cave. The donated equipment belonging to Bobby will be handled by David Teal and Michael Ray. An auction at the reunion or the Christmas Party was discussed. Some of Jim Loftin's pictures were shown, and people guessed where the locations were as the slide show progressed.

New Business:

The possibility of raising grotto dues was discussed. The purpose would be to encourage NSS membership. The discussion was tabled until a later time. Steve and Sharon Brewer volunteered to pay for the first run of 50 of the new grotto brochures. Christmas Party at Michael Ray's house.

December 8, 2012

Held at Michael Ray's Home before the Grotto Christmas Party 2012

Opening Business:

Michael Ray welcomed everyone to his home. Minutes were approved. Treasurer Report --- General Fund \$247.59 Rope fund \$75.00 Total = \$322.59

Old Business:

Stephen Brewer told everyone about Tyler and Kristin (Kgirl) Horton showing interest in being an active part in the grotto. The Facebook page helped make the connection. M. Ray is still working on the sign. He has to layout the sign again to make it conform to the printer's software. The Chairman, Stephen Brewer, spoke about an issue concerning the October Meeting Minutes. He stated that there is no mention of the Amendment A by-laws Section 1 E (deals with vacated chairman seat) vote and the passing of said amendment. He asked those present if there were any objections to changing the October minutes to reflect the passage of the amendment. Grotto brochures were passed out. A large printing and wide distribution in the community was discussed. The first run of 25 brochures was completed costing \$25.00. Stephen and Sharon covered that expense. Charlie and Shanon expressed an interest in contributing to a larger printing. Stephen Brewer passed around maps of Water Color and White Plains Caves. The map of Hawkeye Triple Drop is in process.

New Business:

Newsletters were passed out. Mystery Falls planned for tomorrow. Auction Details, Party Fun, and Article Donations were discussed. Meeting Adjourned @ 6:16 p.m. for door prizes, What Is It game, Auction, and PARTY!!!!

Change added to the October minutes: CORRECTION directed at the December meeting to include the following information. During the October meeting a vote was taken to amend our grotto by-laws. The following Amendment was voted on and passed.

Amendment A, By-Laws Section 1

E. A vacancy of the Chairman's office shall be filled for the balance of the fiscal year in following manner:

1. All Regular Members will be given at least two weeks notification of the vacancy and forthcoming election.
2. At the next Regular Meeting, following the two week notification, the vacancy shall be filled by a majority vote of the Regular Members present.

January 8, 2013

Opening Business:

Stephen Brewer welcomed everyone. December minutes were read and approved Treasurer Report --- General Fund \$384.37 Rope fund \$75.00 Total = \$459.37 Karen Blackwell Blackburn Garmon (spouse Dale Garmon) died January 6th. The obituary is attached to the minutes.

Old Business and Trip Reports:

David Teal went ridge walking and caving with several others visiting No Mayan Doom Well which is barely in Tennessee, Alabama Slide in and Grand Oliver Cave in Etowah County and some others. Stephen Brewer passed around some more cave maps for people to see, and spoke about Crickety Crack, Two-step Double Drop, Hawkeye Triple Drop, Near Miss Well, and Little Bitty Multi-Drop. M. Ray is now waiting on the sign to be ready for pick up. Steven Argo and Ken Lofgren went hiking and came across something on Scenic near Noccalula. Sharon Brewer mentioned an educational film group at Taylor County High School in Georgia would be doing some filming on Cheaha and might possibly use White Plains Cave for a tight squeeze film shot.

New Business:

David Teal motioned to donate \$25 to the NSS in memory of Karen Blackburn. M. Ray was directed to handle that. David Teal motioned that the grotto donate a current grotto patch to the archives in Indiana held by Mr. Soule (Sewell). Jacobs Mountain tract was purchased by Forever Wild. David Teal mentioned that Bluff River additions are being surveyed is being resurveyed by Jeff Machen and himself on an upcoming Friday sometime and invited anyone else along. Surprise Pit caving trip planned for Jan. 26th was brought up. David Teal made a very strong suggestion that the trip be put off until it was dryer conditions. He stated the hypothermia was a concern because of the water spray at the bottom. Whistle codes were discussed. Stephen Brewer noted the warning and said he would re-evaluate the trip plans. Tyler and Kristen spoke about a cave supposedly behind Kmart in Anniston. Plans to visit and look for the cave will be soon. Tyler and Kristin asked about going vertical and how they go about it.

February 12, 2013

Opening Business:

Michael Ray presided over the meeting in the absence of Stephen. Michael reported on Mr. Brewer's condition and that he is in the hospital having tests run. Michael gave an abbreviated treasurer

Minutes continued....

report. \$16.35 was spent on the Cave Sign made by Model Tee's in Centre AL. \$25.00 was spent on Karen Blackburn's memorial to the NSS. Generations Bank statement printout as of 2/12/13 shows a total of \$418.02. Minutes from the Jan 2013 meeting were read and some changes were noted.

Old Business and Trip Reports:

Ray reported the cave sign was finished and showed the product to the group. Jim Loftin suggested it be hung at least 7 feet high to prevent too much vandalism. The idea being that a person would need a ladder to get to the sign to do a lot of harm. M. Ray reported that the Karen Blackburn Memorial to the NSS was completed. David Teal reported that a current grotto patch to the archives in Indiana was donated as voted on in the past meeting.

New Business:

Flowers were purchased by the grotto for the funeral of Susan Teal's father to be refunded to Sharon from the grotto funds. Susan Teal presented a thank you card to the grotto. The ACS meeting on April 13th in Scottsboro was announced. Michael Ray reported that Sharon Brewer completed the 2013 NSS Internal Organization report which keeps the grotto current and maintains our NSS charter. David Teal stated that we should begin talks about the Grotto Reunion. The group proposed Memorial weekend of May 27th.

Trip Reports:

Steven Argo reported on the new cave he found in Etowah County and the survey trip with Stephen Brewer and M. Ray. Jim Loftin reported a new cave in Weaver which he called Weaver Pit. Jim also reported on a new find in Blount County, called Oneonta Cave. Mark and Kristen Medlen reported on a cave they named "Garbage Guzzler".

March 12, 2013

Opening Business:

Minutes read and approved. Treas. Report: Exp: \$41.35 Inc: \$25.00 Gen Fund -\$348.02 Rope Fund-\$75.00 Tot: \$423.02. Stephen Brewer reported on his medical situation.

Old Business and Trip Reports:

Jim Loftin volunteered to take the sign and check with the owner of Weaver Cave. Stephen Brewer reported on the SCCi Frick's Open House on March 9. Michael Ray reported on a 10 hour cave trip to Byers Cave. Stephen Brewer stated that he turned in two more short caves, Low Down and Impaling Doom Drop.

New Business:

The ACS meeting on April 13th, 9 a.m. in Scottsboro at the public library was announced. Stephen Brewer brought up Jacob's Mountain Preserve and discussed some of the funding issues and management plans. Turkey season starts March 15th. Everyone was encouraged to wear orange! David Teal stated that Zuber Quarry is off limits and there is a man assigned to watch all traffic in the area. The watchman has orders to call the Sheriff and a tow truck. The grotto has special permission through David Teal to visit Bat in the Pocket. David Teal motioned that the reunion be held Memorial Day Weekend at Moses Tomb.

Program: Charlie and Shanon's Stephen's Gap On-Rope Wedding



OFF ROPE



Karen Blackburn Garmon

The Gadsden Grotto wishes to express our condolences to the family and friends of Karen. Although she was only a member of our grotto for a short time, we will miss her. She came to us from the Sewanee Mountain Grotto.

NSS Number: 34339

Memorial services were Thursday, January 10, 2013, at Glencoe-Hokes Bluff Chapel for Karen Blackburn Garmon, 50, of Southside, who died on Sunday, January 6, 2013 at UAB, surrounded by family. Bro. John Hammonds will officiate.

Karen was born August 19, 1962 to the late Harvey O. and Lera Burke Blackburn. Her early school years were in Huntsville, AL. She completed her junior and senior years at Southside High School, Southside, AL. graduating in 1981. She received a BS in computer programming from Jacksonville State in 1985. She worked many years for Mowhawk Industries, Dalton Georgia.

The Gadsden Grotto donated funds to a memorial to the National Speleological Society.

CAVE BIOLOGY

Cave Isopods



Cave isopods are a blind and unpigmented freshwater crustacean. The terrestrial "pill bug" is a good example of the general form. Cave isopods can be up to 12 mm (0.6 inch) in length. Isopods feed on fine particle in the water. They can be found in a variety of aquatic cave habitats, including stream gravels, under large rocks, on rotting wood in streams and drip pools.



TRIP REPORTS

Stephen's Gap Cave Wedding Trip Report

By: Charles and Shanon Neiswenter

Location: Jackson County, Alabama – Between Scottsboro and Woodville.

Trailhead near the junction of Hwy's 35 and 30.

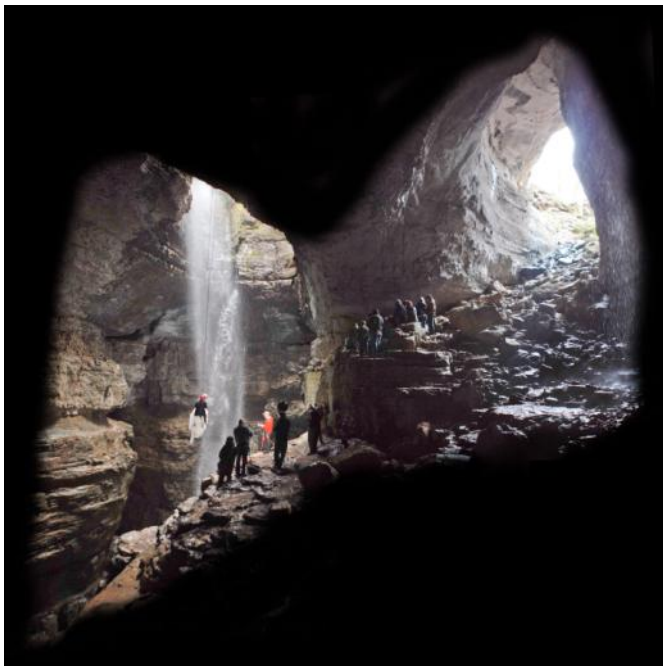
The daylight hike of approximately one-half mile has an approximately 400 foot rise in elevation. The trail, along a mostly dry streambed, is fairly easy to follow except for those who took a left instead of a right, not exactly sure where those folks went,



Photo by Sharon Brewer

but they did make it back so no harm no foul. The most challenging part of the hike up the mountain is within 300 feet of the cave entrance where there is a steep, muddy, slippery forty foot incline which is not quite suitable for wedding gowns and tuxedos. Yet it can be done.

The cave has two entrances. The first entrance is suitable to walk in. It is fairly steep and slippery when wet but not overly difficult for transporting video camera and light kits. The second entrance is vertical only. A waterfall off the



Bottom of Stephen's Gap Cave with Bride & Groom on Rope and wedding guests. Photo by Sharon Brewer

back side of the "pit" entrance is the only obstacle. However, ropes can be rigged around the entire pit for access. Two ropes were dropped on the previous day through the "Key Hole" which allows for a landing on the "pedestal" that rises up from the floor of the pit. Though small, the two lines were rigged to support ninety degrees apart and spaced approximately two feet from each other to minimize the danger of becoming intertwined. A pair of blue jeans in size 40, recently acquired from "Unclaimed Baggage", served as pad for the ropes at the edge of the pit.

The day of the trip.

All descent ropes were checked for proper rigging by Michael Ray and Jim Loftin. In addition, the pit was bounced using both lines by Stephen Brewer who hadn't been on

rope for several weeks. The "woohoo" was heard by all. Last to arrive, was Shanon Richey and followed closely behind and holding up the back of the wedding dress was Charles Neiswenter. Hereafter referred to as Bride and Groom. Attending were several members of the Gadsden Grotto and invited guests and uninvited guests who wandered up the trail. All were welcome except for the ones David told to "go away". Corsage and bouquets were rigged in accordance and with the help of David, who also served the impromptu Father of the Bride. In that as he said "we wouldn't be here if it weren't for him", which is 100 percent correct.



Ladies and gentlemen, we present to you...Mr. & Mrs. Neiswenter.

Photo by Zachary Toth Photography

Pictures taken, the Bride adorned her blue suede high heel shoes and climbed the last thirty feet up to the rigging points. The Bride was assisted in donning her harness and rappel gear by Michael and Stephen. The wedding dress was designed to fit over the harness and everyone who helped swears they didn't see a thing. I, Charles, was assisted by Jim, who had nothing to look at. I took my position above the "Keyhole" and worked my way down and descended about twenty feet to wait for my bride.

Trip Reports continued....



Left to Right Back Row: Sharon & Stephen Brewer, Steve Argo, Michael Ray, David Teal, Ken Loftin, Jim Loftin, Shanon & Charles Neiswenter. Sitting in middle: Peter Morgan, the minister.
 Photo by Zachary Toth Photography

She was having a slight difficulty with her veil. My Bride then descended to me and stopped at a point just above me so that I could “fix her shoes”. Once done, the bride descended to approximately twenty feet above the “pedestal” where she was greeted by Peter Morgan, the minister for our service. I descended to my bride and the ceremony commenced. Ms. Shanon Richey and Mr. Charles Neiswenter were wed.



Photo by Zachary Toth Photography

To all involved, My Bride and I would like to say THANK YOU from the very bottom of our hearts.

P.S. Mrs. Neiswenter still wants to take a crack at ascending through the “Keyhole” in her wedding dress. We may need a little help with that too.



The bride, Shanon Richey, getting on rope at the top of the pit and assisted by Stephen Brewer and Michael Ray.
 Photo by Jim Loftin



*This day
 is filled with joy
 and memories
 to share
 with friends and family
 dear to us
 who came to
 show they care.
 The love and strength
 you bring to us,
 just being by our side,
 fills our hearts
 with happiness
 so great we
 cannot hide.*

*Shanon and Charlie
 March 2nd, 2013*



Inherited Article

By Michael Ray
representing Gary Stewart.

Gary Stewart passed away on May 15, 2011. His wife, Debbie, gave his caving equipment to the Gadsden Grotto, Bobby Whorton and Michael Ray. Bobby Whorton

then passed away on July 1, 2012. His wife, Polly, made sure that Bobby's wishes for donated his cave gear was followed. Bobby had a trunk of cave literature that he received from Gary's effects. I then received that same truck when Bobby passed away and had to sort through the material to see what the Grotto could use. The following article is a cave trip report that was found in Gary Stewart's effects. The trip report was addressed to me as follows:

Dated: March 10, 2001

Michael,

Thought I'd write a short one since you said I never write you anything.

For one and one-half years I've driven to Huntsville from Guntersville and back every day to work. While four-laning highway 431 across from Honeycomb, I noticed an unusual hole in the wall they had blasted away before the final opening of the highway. They filled it up with limestone rocks. I had been told it was a natural pit.

I went and picked up my stepson that Saturday morning and decided to go see what it was. WE parked at the bottom and hiked up to find an old, previously gated, catacomb type limestone quarry. We went to my house to get more appropriate lights and returned.

Larry and I walked all through the maze and we found that there were also formations in various areas indicating that it had once been a large cave system. By the age of the huge old gate and hundreds of spray painted graffiti on the walls, the cave was destroyed by blasting and mining years ago. We left in disgust and amazement of the minds of progress.

I've since learned it was closed for years as a fallout shelter and is known as Quarry Cave and should still have a 90 foot pit entrance. I shall return to continue this saga with rope and gear.

Signed: Gary

P.S. I've never seen a map and have no idea what the ACS number was.



Cherokee Rock Village Trip Report

1/26/2013

By Kristin Horton

Today was mine and my husband's first experience with ropes and harnesses. We have never rappelled or ascended on ropes before but we were very eager to learn. We really want to get into vertical caving soon so we needed to practice as much as we could. Sharon & Stephen Brewer were glad to help us out! They took us on our first trip today with some very nice people eager to learn as well. My first attempt was to rappel down a 23 foot drop off the side of a large rock. I am afraid of heights so this was a challenge but once I got past the lip I was fine. Ascending the rope was much easier for me but more physically challenging. Overall my husband and I had a blast. Now we are looking for some new climbing gear so we can get back on the ropes. We were very grateful to have such great help teaching us what we needed to know and a special thanks to Stephen who got the best workout of the day!



Kristin and Tyler Horton.
Photo by Sharon Brewer



Tyler Horton. Photo by Sharon Brewer

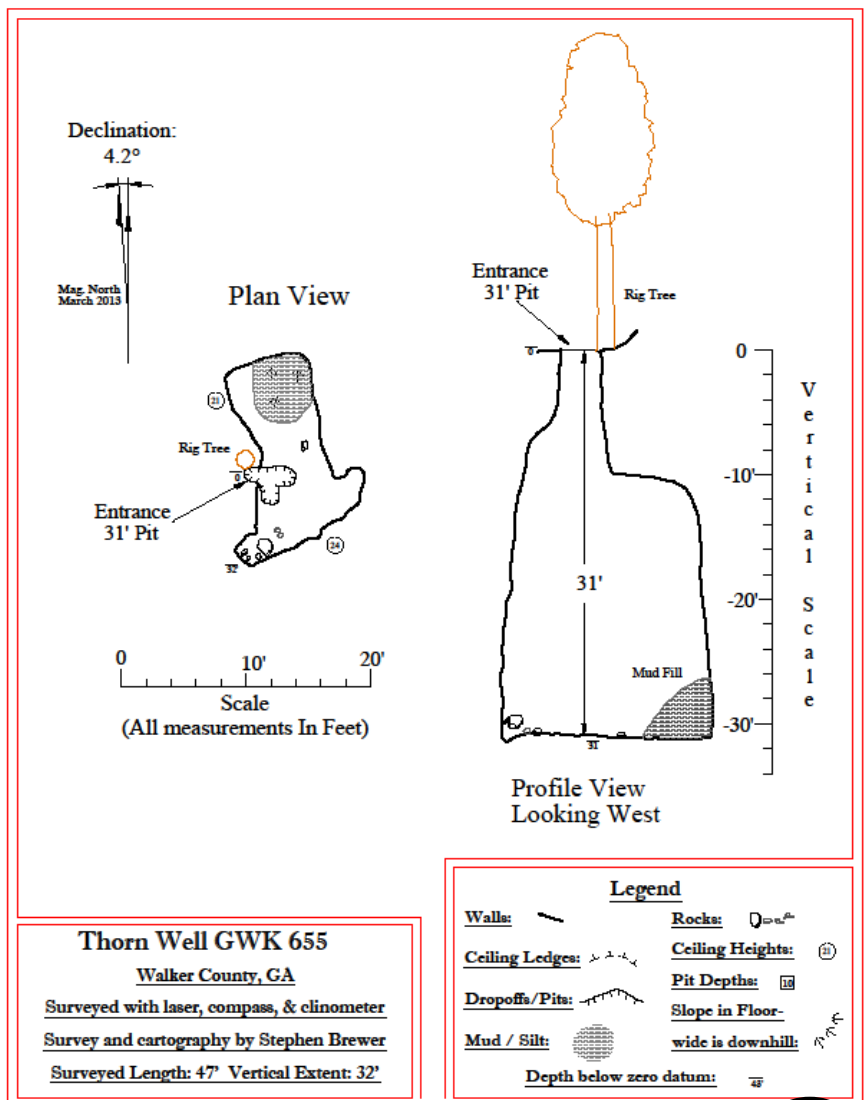


Thorn Well Trip Report

By: Stephen Brewer

On January 20, 2013, E.T. Davis and I went on a ridge walk on the southeastern slopes of Lookout Mountain in Walker County, GA. The area we chose to walk was off of GA highway 136, where we had observed a good amount of limestone and there were several known caves. We started high, at around 1600 feet, since we had noticed what appeared to be some Pennington limestone on the side of the road. After walking a bit, the limestone disappeared, not to be seen again for a long time. The slopes became more and more steep and I was somewhat befuddled at that; the map showed considerable space between the contour lines, which usually indicated a bench or at worst a slight slope. Then it struck me- I was using a metric topo map! Instead of 20' contours, the map was marked off in 10 meter contours (32.8 feet). Since I was used to 20 foot contour lines, it gave me the impression that the slope would be much gentler. After a mile and a half, E.T. informed me that his leg could take no more of this mountain goat terrain, and he would have to head back. At this point, I was just getting warmed up, so we made arrangements to reunite later. I continued on at about the same elevation, and about 10 minutes later I saw what I had been looking for the last hour or two-limestone! I was disappointed that E.T. had turned back just before we would have come into some good rock, but I pressed on alone. Soon I spotted what looked like a pit, and walked over to check it out. Upon arriving, I realized it looked familiar; it was GA 179, Fluted Well. It was a 60 foot pit that we had visited last summer during the grotto reunion. I walked on, going uphill a ways until the limestone disappeared, and then I headed back downhill until I saw it again. Then I came upon a small stream flowing downhill, and followed it a short distance until it dropped off into a man-sized hole. The hole was surrounded by thorn vines, the kind with 1/2" long thorns that reminded me of barbwire. With my gloved hands, I carefully cleared the area so I could look in. It looked like it might go, so I shot it with my laser, and got a reading of 30'. Not a spectacular pit, but enough to qualify in the state of GA. And there was no telling if it had any horizontal passage or additional pits at the bottom. Since I had no rope or vertical gear, it would have to wait for another day. I recorded the location on my GPS, took a couple of photos, and went down to meet E.T.

My next opportunity to go to GA to investigate my find was on March 9th. E.T. was busy setting up for the Frick's Cave Open House, so he was unable to join me. I was determined to put this one in the "completed" category, so I opted to go by myself. I parked as close as I could on the highway, next to the old quarry, and then headed up the mountain. I hiked up the mountain 1/2 of a mile, and followed the GPS pointer right to the hole. I had brought a 100 foot rope just in case, but unfortunately there was no need for that much. The pit turned out to be just a blind pit, with a few pretties at the bottom. I surveyed what little that there was, and then climbed back out. After finishing up, I walked another 3 1/2 miles to see if I could find anything else. There were a few more interesting karst features, but mostly a lot of downed trees from recent storms, which made walking very challenging. I would like to return next winter to take a closer look at the other karst features, and also to walk a little further along the mountain. I named the cave "Thorn Well" because of the thorn vines around the entrance.

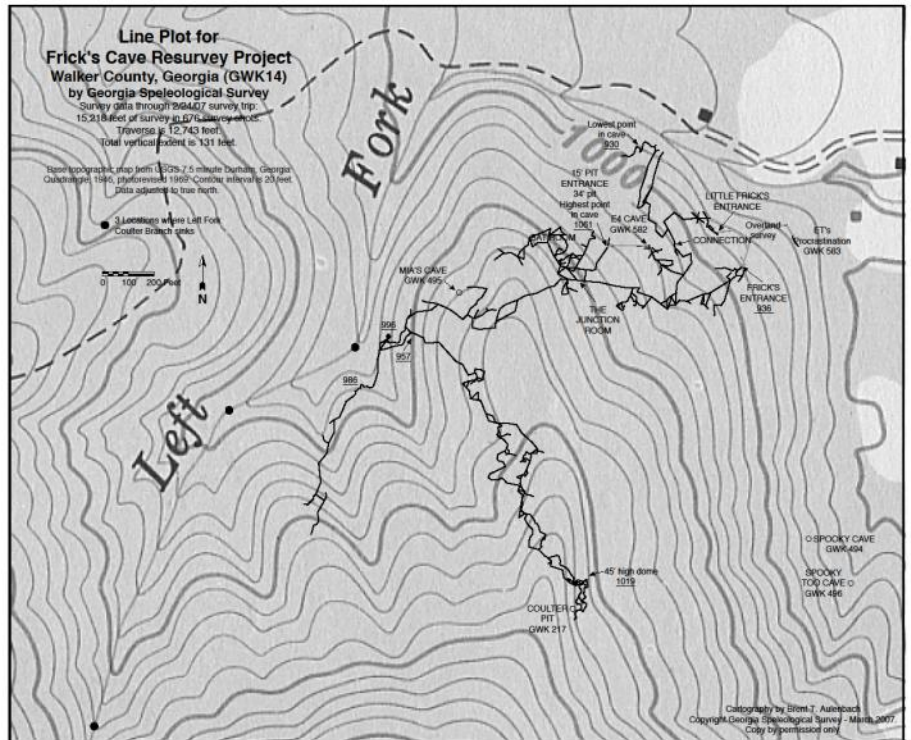


Frick's Cave Trip Report from Kristen and Tyler



Tyler & Kristen Horton in Frick's Cave.
Photo by Sharon Brewer

We made the decision Friday to venture out to Georgia for the SCCI Open House at Frick's Cave. They gave details to dress and prepare for "Cold and Wet Caving." So we did what we thought was our best in order to prepare for small puddles or knee high water that we anticipated may be in the cave. What we learned was that if you do not have a scuba suit, then you will pretty much have water in EVERYTHING you take into the cave. The first half of the cave is very beautiful and open. There were a few large rooms where you had to "Be Silent" and not disturb the sleeping Bats. The creek runs throughout the entire cave and the water was frigid to say the least. The further you pressed into the cave the lower and lower it got. This low ceiling finally led to what they call the "Frickin Crawl" and what a frickin crawl it was. After what seemed like several hundred yards of belly crawling we finally reached the back part of the cave. In the back of the cave you were able to stand again and explore several rooms. Did I mention that during the crawl we had to lay completely flat in the creek, on several occasions, and crawl through? The freezing water drenched our clothes and filled our shoes. But man was it worth it! This cave is very beautiful and home to several bats. We were glad that we took the opportunity to see this cave, especially since it is rarely open to the public. Afterwards our gracious host, Stephen and Sharon Brewer, took us to see an awesome waterfall and some nature scenery that was breathtaking. Not only that but they showed us the entrances to several other caves that are scattered throughout the mountainside. We had an extraordinary time with great people, nature, adventure, and beautiful weather. A special thanks to our host the Brewers and the SCCI. I would definitely recommend that you all see this.



Back On Rope Again!!!

By: Sharon Brewer

Not sure how long it has been since I have been on rope, but this Saturday, I found it fun to be on rope.

I have placed my harness somewhere for safe keeping and cannot find it. I figured I would just slip on a Swiss Seat if I found myself wanting to do anything on rope. That is exactly what I did. It felt good to have control without using excuses to keep the pressure off of my reluctant butt.

I was content to watch from behind my lens and still be a part of what everyone else was doing without the uncomfortable straps binding into my legs.

In December, I started to change the way I eat. I am trying to transform a diet into a lifestyle with portion sizes and calories being the focus. Next December, I am sure the picture of me on rope will be with a butt much smaller and a regular harness.

I am slowly making my way back to the ropes, but at my choice, my pace, and my comfort.



Sharon Brewer.
Photo by Kristen Horton

Like Caves?

caves.org

 **Click On FIND A LOCAL CAVING CLUB!**



**Take Nothing But Pictures
Leave Nothing But Footprints
 Kill Nothing But Time**



Caves are protected by Alabama State Law

GADSDEN GROTTTO
P.O. BOX 2092
GADSDEN, AL 35903

