

# WRYSGAN

Trip 2 - 11<sup>th</sup> September 2005

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The sunny morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2005 found Heather and I pulling up in the car park below Llyn Cwmorthin to have an explore of the Wrysgan Slate Quarry. I'd been to Wrysgan on my own earlier in the year (see my trip 1 report!) and had a poke around, and this was to be (for me at least) an opportunity to have a better look. We were teaming up with two chaps called Jon and Tim (who hadn't yet seen Wrysgan) and we awaited their arrival. Time was against us that day due to having to drive back to Oxford before dark.



Before long, Jon and Tim pulled up and we set about our trip. The walk up first to the lake and then to the mine was hard going but the weather and views were fine. The plan was to make our way right to the top of the mine (as I had done on my first trip) and explore each adit in turn working down the hillside. On my first trip I'd been reluctant to go very far in any adit due to being alone, but being in a party this time would mean being able to push a bit further.



After a look around the main Mill level and the top of the incline tunnel, we made our way to the very top adit and kitted up.



The top adit led immediately into a very small chamber with a large window at the top opening to daylight. This was possibly Wrysgan's very first chamber, and made a great sheep home now due to the protection from the weather it offered.

The adit continued immediately into a larger chamber with a much smaller window, consequently it was much darker but still light enough not to need headlamps. The chamber floor on which we stood also opened into the top of a very large chamber coming up from below.

Looking down (aided with a 100 watt lamp) we could see the lower chamber was badly broken up, with



large amounts of former roof now all over the floor. The drop into the chamber was fairly serious and it didn't look possible to get down into it from our current position without fixing a long rope.

We continued along our present level, following a continuing tunnel deeper into the hillside.

This led into another chamber (below), a fairly narrow one this

time, but sporting a large window to the hillside. It was therefore nicely lit up with daylight and even had a little grass on the chamber floor. There was no lower chamber here and we proceeded into a continuing tunnel on the other side.



After a short while the tunnel ended seemingly at a blockage but it was possible to climb up over the rocks to enter another chamber.

This chamber again had a big window at the top so was easy to move around in. On the floor was a thick cable coiled up, and some degraded structure stood nearby suggested that an incline could perhaps have stood here at one time. A very large chamber came up from below but had suffered very serious collapse. Enormous, almost house-sized boulders came up higher than our present floor and loomed out of the darkness – impassable short of very heavy scrambling work.



We proceeded into the continuing tunnel and followed the level to arrive at the next chamber. This chamber was the first fully-underground chamber in that it had no window at all and consequently was extremely dark. With our big lamp we were able to look down into the lower chamber and see that it was in much better condition than the previous, with the whole roof virtually intact.



The photo on the left was taken with a tripod and lots of flashes, but doesn't give an idea of scale. It wasn't possible to put a person in the frame without sliding down the working face and possibly getting killed in the process. The chamber was probably around 100 feet wide, and the dark floor in the distance probably 300-400 feet away. I expected that one of the lower adits would likely provide an easy

connection with the floor level and between us and the floor were likely at least one worked-away level.

We continued along the level, and again the tunnel led into another large chamber much like the last. Again the lower chamber(s) were in excellent condition and we could see down about two levels with the aid of our big lamp (right).



It was at this point on my last trip I turned back so here on in was new ground for me (and all of us in fact).

Not surprisingly the tunnel led to the top of another chamber. In fact, following the level we passed along the top of about five or six chambers, one of which was two chambers knocked into one large one and had the clear remains of an incline leading down (just about passable, although we didn't descend it today). In the very last chamber we set up the cameras to take some pictures.





We got a shot into the bottom of the large chamber (above) with three of us firing flashes from spaced positions but again without anyone in the shot it's hard to get an idea of scale. This chamber was probably around 150-200 feet wide and dropping down it seemed two levels. The roof was intact.

This was the end of the road for this level without attempting to get down to a lower one (possible maybe using the incline, or via any chamber if a rope is used) so we headed back out to daylight and descended the hillside to the next adit.

The next adit I'd entered on my previous trip but abandoned due to upsetting a family of birds living in there but by this time the birds had moved on. On this occasion we did walk into it, and noted what appeared to be a footpath descending a tip in a small chamber. No doubt this would lead through the workings much like the upper level did, but with time rapidly running out we decided to earmark this adit for a future trip and head down to the lower adits.

The next entrance (skipping a large broken opening) was a man-way just above the mill level, leading down to a platform at the top of a gigantic chamber. It was in here that we left Tim, because I wanted the rest of us to go back outside and down the hill to the lowest adit (below mill level) to emerge at the bottom of the said chamber. The idea was to take a picture looking up with Tim in the picture, so that an idea of scale could be appreciated.



The photo (above) didn't really work as I'd hoped because the figure for scale (I.E. Tim) wasn't clear enough against the background. On a 3 Mega-pixel digital camera there just wasn't enough detail to even tell it was a figure at that distance. For future reference, perhaps a reflective or luminous caving suit would stand out better, with more thought to lighting, and also my medium format camera rather than digital. A whopping chamber though, very impressive indeed.

Back to the trip, Tim then left his platform and we waited for him to make his way down. We hadn't much time but we intended to follow the level in as far as we could. Once grouped together, we climbed over a fall and passed through the bottom of another whopping chamber to reach a tunnel leading on, obviously to other chambers, but unfortunately about five/six inches deep in water and looking like it got deeper.

Wearing only trainers (with four hours drive ahead and no spare footwear) I didn't fancy it, and nor did Tim and Jon in their walking boots. Heather however had a pair of wellies on, so we sent her off down the tunnel (left) with a torch to report back.



Before too long we heard her splashing her way back, rather quicker than she'd gone (mines are not nice to be alone in). As expected that way led to another colossal chamber, and no doubt a number of others beyond that but for today we were defeated by water and lack of time. We headed back out and down to the car park, hoping to return another day with more time for a better look around.