

The FLOWSTONE

Vol 25 Issue 3

March 2018



The King's Torrent


A Monthly Newsletter of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society

CULLMAN GROTTO FLOWSTONE

March 2018

Volume 25 Issue 3



Visit us: www.cullmangrotto.org or 

Inside This Issue

- 2 Echo Chamber
- 3 Tag Calendar
- 4 Limrock Blowing Cave Preserve
- 5 Tumbling Rock, Moss Rock and Rescues
- 6 Why We Keep Going Back
- 7 Minutes
- 8 Leftovers

The Flowstone is published monthly by the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society. Items submitted for publication must be received by the 20th of each month for inclusion in the following month's issue.

The Cullman Grotto will exchange by request with any publishing grotto. Republication of items within **The Flowstone** is allowed provided credit is given to author and source.

Membership to the Cullman Grotto is fifteen dollars (\$15) per year for individual or twenty dollars (\$20) per year for family. Dues are payable at the first grotto meeting of each year (January) and includes subscription to **The Flowstone**. Subscription rate for non-members is fifteen dollars (\$15) per year.

The Cullman Grotto meets on the first Monday of each month unless the first Monday falls on a holiday or otherwise noted. In those cases the meeting will be held on the second Monday. Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. and are held at the old L&N train depot, Arnold St., Cullman, AL. All visitors and prospective members are welcome.

Official Grotto Address

Cullman Grotto
 c/o Harold Calvert
 123 Co. Rd. 250
 Cullman, AL 35057
webecavers@hotmail.com

Newsletter Exchange

The Flowstone
 Sharon or Perry Clayton
 1628 Edmondson Rd
 Hanceville, AL 35077
dcpbookwyrms@hotmail.com

2018 OFFICERS

Chairman
 Harold Calvert
 (256)287-9770
webecavers@hotmail.com

Vice Chair
 Scott Murphy
smoothys1@gmail.com

Secretary
 Evon Thompson
binerbat@gmail.com

Treasurer
 Tracy Calvert
webecavers@hotmail.com

APPOINTMENTS

Advisor
 Vic Bradford
by carrier pigeon only

Safety
 Jeff Lynn
 (256) 558-7042

Membership/Library
 David Drake
 (205)790-1350
dmdrake1@gmail.com

Webmaster
 Kuenn Drake
kuenn.drake@gmail.com



Front Cover: *Water coming from The King's Shower in Tumbling Rock*

Photo by: *Scott Murphy*

ECHO)))) CHAMBER

Ancient Cave Paintings Turn Out to be by Neanderthals, Not Modern Humans

By Rachel Becker@RA_Becks
Feb 22, 2018



A new discovery that Neanderthals were painting cave walls more than 64,000 years ago has anthropologists rethinking the history of art. Found deep in Spanish caves, the rock art was once thought to be the work of modern humans, but the new dates mean that Neanderthals must have figured out fingerpainting, too.

Using a new and improved radioactive dating technique, researchers discovered that paintings in three different caves were created more than 64,800 years ago. That means the paintings were created 20,000 years before modern humans, or *Homo sapiens*, arrived in Spain, according to a study published today in the journal *Science*. The discovery makes these the oldest examples of cave paintings in the world and the first to be attributed to Neanderthals.

Neanderthals are our closest extinct relative, but for a long time, they had a reputation for being pretty backward. Early modern humans, for example, made cave paintings. But

even though Neanderthals used pigments and decorated themselves with eagle claws and shells, there was no clear proof that they painted caves. One theory goes that Neanderthals developed their rudimentary culture only after early modern humans arrived in Europe some 40,000 to 50,000 years ago.

Today's findings show the writing on the wall: Neanderthals were clearly painting splotches and tracing their hands on caves long before modern humans showed up. The discovery adds to a growing body of evidence upending the idea that Neanderthals were less evolved than early modern humans, says Marie Soressi, an archaeology professor at the University of Leiden who was not involved in the research. "It's impossible to say that one is more clever than the other," she says. These cave paintings are "the very last piece of evidence we were lacking."

The reason we didn't know Neanderthals were cave painters until now is because it's hard to figure out when cave art was created. The most common dating method can only be used on organic material, like bones, so it usually doesn't work for cave paintings. Another technique uses the rate of uranium's radioactive decay as a clock. But it required lots of material to come up with a date, and cave paintings are too rare to risk damaging. Rock art "is unique, it's precious — there's a lot of pressure on you not to make a mistake," says geochronologist Dirk Hoffmann at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. So he and his colleagues fiddled with the method until only tiny scrapings of cave walls were needed.

With a new way to date the rock art, researchers carrying lights and scalpels crawled deep underground into caves all over Spain. The plan

was to scrape samples off of the mineral-rich crusts that had hardened on top of the cave paintings. By figuring out the age of the crusts, they'd know at least how old the paintings were — without having to disturb them.

Dirk Hoffmann and Alistair Pike scraping cave crust from above a ladder-like painting thought to have been created by Neanderthals.

They found the oldest dates for three paintings — the outline of a hand, red-painted stalactites, and a ladder-like geometric shape — in three different caves that had been occupied by archaic human species. The most recent painting is at least 64,800 years old, according to this technique, and the oldest is more than 66,000 years old. "When you stand in front of cave paintings, it doesn't matter who made it," Hoffmann says. "It's just the fact that it's there for over 60,000 years. This is, in a way, breathtaking on its own."

Other experts agree with the dates and that the timing means the art must have been created by Neanderthals. There's no fossil evidence of modern humans in Spain that long ago, says John Hawks a paleoanthropologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who wasn't involved in the research. "There's no secret story," he says. "The results are just, 'Hey, Neanderthals were making these things, and you didn't know it.'"

We don't know why the Neanderthals painted these images or what they mean, but there's one thing they show clearly: Neanderthals and their modern human relatives weren't as different as we thought. "These Neanderthals were human," Hawks says. "We see them doing human things."

Speleologists Discover Kentucky's 5,000th Known Cave

Kentucky Geological Survey



The Kentucky Speleological Survey passed a major milestone last month when it discovered the 5,000th known cave in Kentucky. The Bluegrass State ranks fourth in the country in number of officially documented caves, and many more remain to be discovered. The Speleological Survey's "Race to 5,000" started a year ago, encouraging cave enthusiasts to help bridge the existing knowledge gap by submitting new cave locations. Cave number 5,000 was discovered in Jackson County by Speleological Survey member Bruce Isaacs. About a quarter of the state is underlain by limestone favorable for cave formation, so the Speleological Survey expects the number of known caves to continue increasing well into the future.

The Kentucky Speleological Survey is a volunteer-based, nonprofit organization dedicated to the study of cave and karst resources in Kentucky, and has long collaborated with the Kentucky Geological Survey. To further its goals, the Speleological Survey gathers and archives information about cave conservation, research, and exploration. This information is stored under lock and key in Kentucky Geological Survey offices on the University of Kentucky

campus. The archives contain cave maps, survey notes, exploration photos, descriptions, GIS files, and many other forms of information. This information aids in the discovery, survey, and mapping of caves throughout the state.

Kentucky Speleological Survey speleologists use newly available airborne LiDAR data in their search for new cave openings. LiDAR (which stands for light detection and ranging) uses airborne laser scanning to create ground maps in unprecedented detail, even in areas covered by dense forests. Geologists at the Kentucky Geological Survey are also using the LiDAR data to create more accurate maps of geologically young surficial deposits; use artificial intelligence algorithms to delineate sinkholes; and use computer programs that combine LiDAR digital elevation models, physics-based models of slope stability, and elements of probability theory to identify landslide-prone areas.

The Kentucky Speleological Survey works with individuals and other organizations to grow its database, as well as share information with responsible parties including cavers, landowners, and government and environmental agencies.

For more information on caves and caving in Kentucky, visit the [Kentucky Speleological Survey](http://KentuckySpeleologicalSurvey.org) website. Find out more about the Kentucky Geological Survey, including its studies of karst and other geologic research, at the [KGS](http://KGS.org) website.



TAG Calendar

March 5

Grotto Meeting

L&N Train Depot, Arnold St 7:30PM

March 10

Grotto Trip

TBA

April 28

Tennessee Cave Survey Spring

Presentation Meeting

Sewanee, TN

May 3-6

67th Annual SERA Summer Cave Carnival

Scottsboro, AL

Hosted by the Birmingham Grotto

May 10-19

NCRC National Training Seminar

Camp Skyline - Mentone, AL

July 28 - August 4

2018 NSS Convention

Helena, MT

Limrock Blowing Cave Preserve

By Sharon Clayton



Life took a bit of a left turn for me 4 months ago with my mother's completely unexpected death. I've spent those 4 months trying to sort out the "new normal" in my life, dealing with grief, trying to figure out my schedule & responsibilities in my role as primary caregiver for my sister, and also trying to help my dad learn to live alone. With all that "stuff", i really haven't had much time or inclination to go caving. So, when i got an e-mail from Kuenn last weekend, inviting me to go along with him taking a group of young people from his church to Limrock Cave on Monday, my first instinct was to decline. I mean, Monday is one of my few days "to myself" and i had a to-do list about a mile long. But then i took a second look at his invitation. Especially the last line: *"I don't need the help with the cave, cause it's Limrock, just wanted to extend the invite if you need to get away for a few hours."* And i realized that, yeah, i did need to get away and do something ELSE for a few hours. I sent Kuenn a text & joined the expedition.

We met up with the majority of the group in Guntersville. It turned out to be Kuenn, me, and a group of 8 young missionaries (2 young men and 6 young women) on the outing. As we made our introductions, we had some fun with the fact that i was the only person in the group who was not a member of their church. I believe there were some suggestions of Kuenn performing a "ninja baptism" in the cave before the day was out. I started trying to figure out how i would explain to Perry that i had accidentally converted by the day's end!

I've been to Limrock a number of times before this trip. But this time it was different than any other trip! We have had a lot of rain in the area, so we were expecting it to be a little wetter than usual, but we got quite a surprise when we ducked under the ledge at the entrance. Within about 3 feet, we were wading in knee-deep water! But that was nothing compared to what we saw when we got to the point where you enter the stream passage. Instead of a slight drop down into a smooth path, we were met with a pool of water almost up to the top of the rail that leans on the rock there. I believe my response was "Wow!!!" Kuenn was not sure if we would be able to go any further (it was impossible to see how deep the water was at this point), but he decided to scout ahead a little ways and report back. He dropped into the passage, up to his waist in VERY cold water & disappeared around the corner. He was back in a little bit, reporting that it didn't get any deeper and we could go ahead, at least a little ways. The group decided they wanted to keep going, although there

was a LOT of squealing as we dropped into the pool! Believe me, there was reason to squeal...that water was icy!!!

It actually turned out to be a great day to tour Limrock. The water actually washed out most of the sucking mud areas, and the waterfalls were spectacular. We went to all the good spots, showed the group some bats, a few cave crickets (ewwww!!!) and even a cave crawfish (although it disappeared pretty quickly when the silt got kicked up) The group decided they wanted to brave the "wet" exit. I think Kuenn was concerned that the water level might be a little close to the ceiling for comfort in a few spots, but it turned out to be just fine. Everyone made it through without a hitch. We noticed that the water levels had dropped significantly at the entrance. What was knee deep when we went in was only about ankle deep on the way out. It was probably a good thing, since a couple of the young ladies took off running the moment they saw daylight!

To sum it all up, we had a really fun trip to Limrock that day. It was different than any other time i had been there before, and i got to share it with a really great group of young people. Thanks for the invite, Kuenn. It turned out to be a great day for a get away!



Tumbling Rock, Moss Rock, and Rescues

By Harold Calvert



I know that the title will get me automatically flagged for the American Cave rescues issue. So let me start out by saying, in no way were any members of Cullman nor Montgomery grotto involved in accidents or rescues. We simply were there at the moment these rescues took place.

The first rescue was at Tumbling Rock. I had helped the Montgomery grotto with a scout group, the goal for the day was to make it to the topless dome and back out. There had been rain all week, with forecasts for rain this day also. The group number was a total of 34 people. The water levels in the cave was very high, but never dangerous.

We all made it to the kings shower without incident. You could hear the roar far back in the passage. The shower was pumping. Like fire hoses. I had never seen it like that.

Nathan, the caretaker at the preserve, went in to check it out. He came back and said it was like a hurricane at the dome room. There was like a vortex swirling

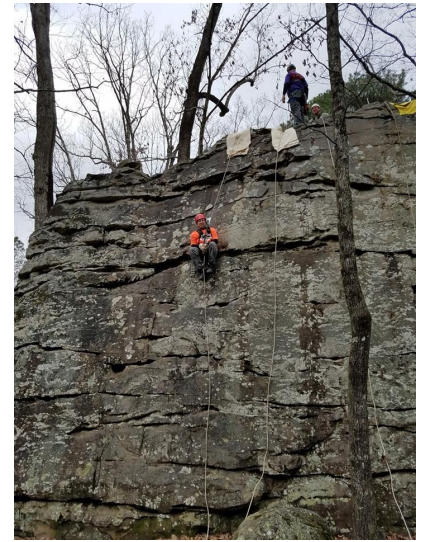
down the pit.

Needless to say, the scouts did not get to go in. After a short break we headed for the entrance. This is where it gets interesting. Evidently it had been raining all day. Water levels had begun to rise in the cave even further than when we entered. In many places that had been dry, water was rising. The ankle deep spots that we crossed going in were now waist deep. Nothing dangerous, we were never in harm's way, but a bit unnerving to witness. One by one we got everybody out unharmed. Now for the rescue.

We made it back to the cars, when a lady came out of the cave yelling that they needed a rescue. An unnamed caver had fallen somewhere around the wildcat breakdown. The initial report by her was that there was a displaced knee. Dustin, who was with us, went in to see about them. The rescue was called in. Upon further evaluation, the caver had a torn ACL and displaced knee. The rescue group went in and packaged the caver in a litter and carried them out of the cave where an ambulance took them to the hospital. I don't have any more details other than that. Like I said, it was not our group, and we were not involved.

The second trip was to Moss Rock Preserve, in Hoover, Alabama. The Montgomery grotto often goes there to practice rope work. It is required

by the grotto to attend practices if you wish to participate in grotto vertical trips. There was a good size group, we had nine ropes rigged. Changeovers, rope transfer, double rope rappels, and various other things were discussed and practiced. We had a good session and all went well. There were several new people there, they got the first taste of rope work and are eager to learn more.



We were about done and had started to pack up, when we heard a girl scream and start crying. This is where rescue two comes into play. This is a public park with large boulders to climb around on. There are lots of people in and out all day. Climbing around, probably where they should not be. At least unprotected. There were two teenage girls that had scooted across a ledge about ten feet up, to get to a spot that they thought they could climb about fifteen more feet to the top of this boulder. Almost at the tip, one girl fell to the narrow ledge, severely breaking her ankle. Some of our group ran over to get her down, but she was hysterical and would not let anyone move her. The mother called for a rescue. Within minutes the rescue squad arrived and put a ladder up to get to her. The paramedics assessed the injury, then put an air cast on the



leg to stabilize it. They then lowered her down the ladder and into an awaiting ambulance . A place like that is very dangerous, just because of the amount of people going in and out of the park. They see everyone else doing it, so they don't see the danger until it's too late. I can imagine there are lots of rescues in that park. Let me make it clear AGAIN! The grotto was in no way involved with these accidents or rescues. We just happened to be in the wrong place at the right time.



Why We Keep Going Back

By Kuenn Drake NSS36723



If you have been caving more than a couple of times or even a couple of years you have probably thought on more than one occasion, "Why do I keep going back to the same cave over and over again?" The answers are probably something like, "It's because I'm taking newbies" or "I want to have a less adventurous outing today" or "I'm a caver and I like going underground regardless of the venue." Whatever your response I found myself asking that

very question this past week while leading a group of LDS missionaries to Limrock Cave (along with Sharon's help).

I enjoy Limrock. It's a nice entry level cave. Been there, done that, many many times. It does give you a quality caving experience and in 3 leisurely hours or so you've pretty much seen most there is to see. It would be a good choice for this day and group...or so we thought.

The past week had seen lots of rain in north Alabama, which included a good soaker the night before the trip. But this day dawned with perfect weather, blue sky and warm sunshine abounding.

I have seen the water level in Limrock at various heights over the years. From no water, other than a few pools, to ankle to knee-deep water in the main passage. There are a few places where it gets waist to chest deep, but that's typically only in a few areas when taking the wet exit, as we choose to call it.

However, this day would be a new experience for the entire group!

Once inside the entrance it only took a few feet before we realized (for the two of us that had been there before) this would be an interesting trip. The water level from the entrance back to the main water passage was waist deep almost the entire way. A couple of places chest deep! The normal rock strewn scrambling

passage had no visible rocks AT All! Wall-to-wall water. The spout coming out of the ceiling 2/3 of the way back was gushing like a wide open fire hydrant!

When we got to the main water passage the ground rises enough that we found a dry spot to perch. But I almost couldn't believe what I was seeing in front of me. The passage resembled a lake more than it did a stream. The majority of the group had nothing to compare it to, so they new no difference. But for Sharon and I, we knew it was vastly different. Sharon's comment was very telling as we walked up to the area where you normally jump down 3 to 4 feet to the main passage. She walked up behind me and in a low but very telling voice simply said.... w-o-w. That's about a descriptive exclamatory as I've heard in a while. This day there was no jump down, the water was right up to the level of the surrounding ground

I jumped in first just to see how deep it was going to be. About mid-chest on me, deeper for a few others. I told them to wait and I would go down to the side passage and come back and report if we were going to be able to do the cave today.



Water being a great level indicator it gave me a new perspective for the gradients of Limrock. I now know that the side passage is actually going upward. Once there I could see that even though it had more water than I've ever seen flowing down its twisty windy path, it was very doable. So I retreated, hailed the group and off we went.

We visited most of the normal places; dome rooms, register, rimstone dam alley. At the boat launch we crossed the stream which wasn't as deep as I was expecting, and went back to the normal turnaround spot at the end of the main passage. We then retraced our steps back to the boat launch area.

I explained to the group that we had a decision to make. Normally when taking a group through Limrock I would divide the more adventurous folks at this point that want to get wet and do the wet exit, and send the rest of the less adventurous out the dryer passage. However, there were several of the less insulated ;^) in the group that I could tell were ready to get out, and NOW! So I said we can try the wet exit because I know it is the fastest way out, but I'm not sure what the highwater is going to present; we may end up retracing and going out the dryer passages or we can possibly take the sidewalk passage.

They were game to go wet-et, specially if it meant getting out sooner. Everyone was well drenched and shivering when we weren't moving. So, we headed out the wet passage - and although it was still deeper than I had ever seen before - it wasn't as bad as I thought it might be.

There was one section that I knew could be sketchy. It's where the passage gets fairly narrow and the ceiling comes down to about 6 feet. I was concerned that it would not be

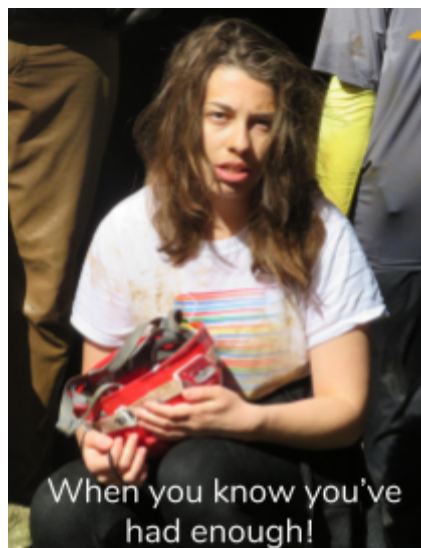
passable.

We made it to that area and although it was a little scary looking there was still 14 inches of airspace and it only lasted 50 feet. We were soon back to the climb out of the stream passage, which was still about the same depth as earlier, however, the main exit passage was noticeably different. Rocks could now be seen that were previously submerged. This cave drains quickly.

To of the young ladies, which had been very good sports to this point, were obviously ready to get out of this dreadful place. When daylight was spotted ahead they charged right past me in a full on sprint in the knee deep water. Reminded me of a motivational talk I heard many years ago when I was a missionary. The speaker was talking about the power of motivation. The story was about a homesick but a highly determined young man would exclaimed, "My momma's in heaven, my papa's in hell, my girl is in Chicago...I'm seeing one of them tonight!!"

All things considered, it was an enjoyable trip.

And that my dear Watson, is why we keep going back!



When you know you've had enough!



Minutes of the Meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society

February 5, 2018

The regular monthly meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society was called to order on Monday, March 5, 2018, at 7:45 p.m. by Harold Calvert, Chairman. 8 were present.

The "minutes" from the January meeting were read. A motion was made by Kuenn Drake to accept the minutes as read and was seconded by Perry Clayton. The motion was approved.

The treasurer's report was given.

The editor needs submissions for the Flowstone.

A lengthy discussion was held on midget ladies wrestling and it appears that half of the grotto has a midget phobia.

Announcements:

SERA will be held from May 3-6.
NCRC will be held from May 12-19 at Camp Skyline.

Old Business:

No old business.

New Business:

No new business.

Upcoming Grotto trips:

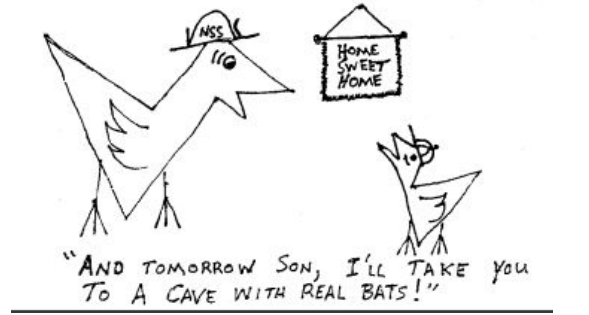
February 10th: Tumbling Rock with Montgomery Grotto
February 17th: Rope practice at Moss Rock

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Limrock Cave 02/26/2018 Before - After



Birds of a Feather



FEATHER

