

# CIST CAVE, HAM WOODS, CROSCOMBE, SOMERSET: NGR ST 597, 447 A BRIEF NOTE ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

by

V.J. SIMMONDS

## ABSTRACT

An archaeological investigation, consisting of the excavation and recording of Cist Cave and associated features: a levelled platform, and a possible 'cist', was undertaken by members of Axbridge Caving Group between 21st and 25th August 2017. The results of the investigation were inconclusive and no artefactual evidence for dating the 'structures' associated with Cist Cave were recovered during the excavation.

## INTRODUCTION

Ham Woods is located on the southern flank of the Mendip Hills, Somerset. It is aligned circa south-west to north-east, rising from the village of Croscombe rising to Windsor Hill. Cist Cave is located on the cliff above Screech Hole, where a bone assemblage that included human remains C14 dated to the Early Iron Age have been recovered (Simmonds and Brayne, 2019 and Simmonds, 2020).

## RESULTS

Cist Cave is approached by a steep scramble up a scree slope from the combe path c. 20 m below. The cave, located in a small limestone cliff, has two small entrances opening on to a levelled platform that is ovoid in shape, with an area c. 5 m x 4 m. At the north-east extent of the platform a stone-built structure, the 'cist', partially blocks one entrance to the cave. Following clearance of vegetation, the surface of the platform and the area around and within the 'cist' was cleaned by trowel and brush prior to planning. The 'cist' consisted of a rectangular structure measuring 1.50 m length x 1.00 m width x 0.40 m height, constructed of angular limestone cobbles and boulders. At the north-east extent of the structure, the naturally dipping limestone appears to form a 'headstone'. The levelled platform with surrounding low stone wall of moss-covered boulders, consists of angular to subangular coarse gravel, cobbles, and boulders of limestone, with an infilling matrix consisting of brown humic loam and decayed leaves. There is abundant root disturbance from surrounding established mature trees. Excavation of an exploratory trial pit was terminated at a maximum depth of 0.20 m due to root disturbance. No finds or artefacts of archaeological significance were recovered during the site investigation.

## COMMENT

An initial visit to Cist Cave in May 2015, found the site to be largely undisturbed. Unfortunately, subsequent unregulated excavations carried-out by local 'cave' diggers have compromised the 'cist' feature and contextual and/or artefactual evidence might have been lost.

Thus the results of the investigation were inconclusive and no artefactual evidence for dating the structures associated with Cist Cave were recovered during this excavation in 2017.

#### REFERENCES

- Simmonds, V.J. and Brayne, K. 2019. A summary report and radiocarbon date on the human remains from a bone assemblage found at Screech Hole, Ham Woods, near Croscombe, Somerset. *Proceedings of the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society*. **28**. 1. 129-136.
- Simmonds, V.J. 2020. A summary of the faunal remains from a bone assemblage found at Screech Hole, Ham Woods, near Croscombe, Somerset. *Proceedings of the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society*. **28**. 2. 239-245.

V.J.Simmonds  
vince@mendipgeoarch.net