

Gadsden Grotto

NEWSLETTER

Volume 14 • Number 2

P. O. Box 2092



April 2000

Gadsden, AL 35903



Inside This Issue

- ▶ History of the Symbol
- ▶ Surprise Pit
- ▶ Golondrinas
- ▶ A Nice Saturday
- ▶ Natural Well / Drake Pit
- ▶ Caves Poem



**FROM THE
CHAIRMAN / EDITOR
MICHAEL A. RAY**

This issue of the Gadsden Grotto Newsletter will be a little shorter than past issues. An effort is being

made to get a publication out in time for the Alabama Cave Survey April 16. The ACS is holding their meeting in Gadsden at the Gadsden Public Library. If you wrote an article for the newsletter and do not find it in this issue, please understand our need to rush an issue printing. Your article will appear in the next issue in line with the hundreds of articles that have been submitted.

Although the stack of articles that have been submitted for the newsletter is extremely great, we can always get your article in an issue. So please submit any cave related item. Include a picture if possible. Some of us are lazy readers and just look at the pictures. High contrast pictures with people in them are best for newsletter publishing.

Want to know more?

Come to the
Gadsden Grotto
Meeting at the
Gadsden Public Library
254 College Street
When: 2nd Tuesday
of every Month
Time: 6:30 p.m.

Gadsden Grotto Newsletter is published on a semi-regular basis by the Gadsden Grotto 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. Reprint permission provided that both the author and the source are credited. The Gadsden Grotto Newsletter is distributed free of charge to Gadsden Grotto members and in exchange for the publications of organizations with similar interests. All materials for publication should be submitted to
M i c h a e l A . R a y a t
12725 Co. Rd.31, Centre, AL 35960 or email to mray9@tds.net.

History of the Gadsden

Grotto Symbol

Editors Notes: The Gadsden Grotto Symbol was designed by a group effort. The symbol appears on the cover of this issue in black and white. The color version contains red and yellow colors. Bobby Whorton as the Grotto's founding secretary/treasure kept a good record of the symbols history. The following is a brief explanation of the symbol elements and the reason they are part of the symbol.



Symbol by Bobby Whorton

- The symbol was first adopted in May 1983.
- Feature #1: "Gadsden Grotto Alabama" - The Border (in yellow).
- Feature #2: "Stalagmite- The Great Gorilla .."
An icon inspired by a memorable incident during a push trip in the 60's.
- Feature #3: "Alabama State Boundary."
- Feature #4: "Caver on Rope." Symbolic of the vertical exploration interest of our Grotto membership.
- Feature #5: "The Cavers Light," accented in red beams, represents the location of Gadsden.
- Feature #6: "Stalactites." Symbolic of the Tennessee River, a prominent southern boundary of the Cumberland Plateau.
- Feature #7: "Bats in Flight." A dimensional effect, is representative of the Huntsville, Birmingham, and Montgomery Grottoes of Alabama.

Information submitted, in trust, by the guidelines recognized, by the National Speleological Society, in the interest of historical preservation.



Trip Reports

Alabama's Deepest Pit, 404'

by: Stick Harper NSS 46573

Saturday the Cullman Grotto, consisting of Glen Ledbetter, Harold Calvert, Jeff Lynn, Kuen Drake, Shane Drake, David Drake, Derick Mitchell, Patrick O'Diam, Evon Thompson, Wendy Bowen and me Stick Harper did THE pit. This is something that I have wanted to do since I first heard of it. I have had to work up to this; it was something that totally awestruck me. When we got to the pit we all started getting rigged for the pit. We lowered the Monstrous rope over the edge and sat and waited. We all had forgot the radios so the only way we could communicate was the BO system. We had two people in the group that had to leave early so they went first. We first sent four down then two up two down method. First was Kuen and David, then Patrick and Shane. Then Kuen and David came back out. Next were Harold and Evon they dropped it, on Evon's way down the rest of the group showed up. Patrick and Shane came up next. As I got on rope I saw and started talking to Derick. He is like a father to me; he got me into caving and has been with me on most trips. He has watched over me and taught me a great deal about caving. I was excited about seeing him. When I was halfway down I stopped and started thinking I am 200' up and 200' down. I thought I am a long ways up and a long ways down. There was a great deal of water going over the waterfall outside and when we got down to the bottom 50' of the drop, we were getting heavy spray from the water fall inside the pit. When I got to the bottom I knew that Wendy was next and I told Harold and Evon that no one else was coming down after Wendy. It was really wet down there and we were all ready to get up. I had a bad ascend because my basic kept sticking, it wasn't wanting to track at all. I

ended up having to grab my bungee cord and pull it up on half the ascent. But I really enjoyed the trip. Awesome, Inspiring, Beautiful, Exotic, Challenging, I love this. May God Bless You in the Name of Jesus.

Natural Well / Drake Pit

by Derrick Mitchell
iclimbrope@earthlink.net

Saturday 3/18/2000 our group of four bounced Natural Well. Glenn Ledbetter, Wendy Bowen, Jeff Lynn and I had been there before. We were testing new gear for our trip to Mexico and the 180 ft. pit was just deep enough. Gear tested, we decided to make a trip to Green Mnt., Drake Pit is 109 ft. deep, but a enjoyable trip with a lot more near by. Trent Chasm, O'Hara Fare Well, etc., more than we had time for, so I guess a return trip will be planned. Last month we spent a little time in Obscure Magnificence and Hung

Well, again we did not have the time to do these two great caves justice so we will also be making a return trip to this area. Bice Mnt. has some great caves and will probably give up a few more in the future. Just past Hung Well is a large sink with a huge limestone wall with a small opening, Bice Sink Cave really excited me but the 120 ft. of cave has probably excited and disappointed many before me. With spring just around the corner the problem of too many caves and too little time is already raising it's ugly head. This summer is going to be a busy one, see you in the Tagwoods.

**Check our temporary
web site at
personalpages.tds.net/~mray9**

Trip Reports Continued...

Golondrinas

By: Derrick Mitchell

Friday, 3/24/2000, 6:30PM, my caver friends and I met in Patric Odiám's front yard, in Cullman, Al., to start our journey to Mexico. Three vehicles loaded to the roofs with people and gear, we started our nine day trip. Driving all night Friday and all day Saturday we arrived in Valles. Dividing our group between the Hotel Valles and Hotel Pena, we checked into our rooms. After we had a fine meal at the Valles Stake House, we got some sleep. Sunday we took it easy and enjoyed the beautiful 90 degree weather, making a visit to a garden/curio kind of place called the Birdcage. Monday, 7:00AM, we loaded up our crew and drove to Aquismon. Driving thru Aquismon I could not believe my eyes, the town looks like it fell off the pages of a good book. Children on the way to school, men and women walking in and out of the shops on the square, the town has a old world feel that cannot be described.

Turning at the CocaCola Golondrinas sign we drove up the mountain to a small village and parked just off of a tight turn in the road. A thin young Huastacan indian ask if he could carry our rope to the pit. Our three Spanish speaking members of the group were soon to tell the rest of us that our new friend was named Sotanos. While the first rope was rigged he returned to the truck and got our second rope. The walk to the pit was level and about 800 feet long. I have been told that the first trips to Drinas required pack mules and a two day trip, I am glad I missed those early trips. This was my first trip to Mexico and my friends encouraged me to



be the first to rappel, I took them up on the offer and had a great rappell. The pit floor is a beautiful shade of green thanks to the Swallows and Parrots who call the pit home. As the other cavers rappelled down to the six acre floor, I was glad to share the pit with them, but I really enjoyed the time I had on the bottom by myself.

After a three hour visit on the bottom of the pit I began my 1091ft climb to the top. Wendy Bowen climbed with me and I made it out in about 1:20, I drank plenty of water and took my time. When I got to the 1000ft. mark I had a little party, counting those ten rings. After the last person was out, we pulled the rope and spent the night in Aquismon at the Hotel le Mansion.

Tuesday we went to Cepillo, but the heat, or the food, or something began to get to me and I got sick before I could do the pit, I sat on the lip and tried to talk myself over the lip but I could not do it. I stayed sick the rest of the trip, but I enjoyed the time with my caver friends. Some of the others will post the trip and cover other aspects of our journey, but I want to

thank them all for the support they gave me.

Our group was, Jeff Lynn, Wendy Bowen, Glenn Ledbetter, Tracy and Harold Calvert, Shawn Drake, Kewin Drake, Westly Pyton, Evon and Greg Thomson, Vic Bradford, Vic's girlfriend, Gary Phelps and, our group leader, Patric Odiám.

Trip Reports Continued...

A Nice Saturday of Caving

by Stick Harper

Saturday the Gadsden Grotto consisting of Mark, Kelly, John, and me Stick all met at Shoneys for breakfast. After discussing what we wanted to do we then set out for Halls Pit. When we got there the gate was locked and there was a court order that said no trespassing. So we left not wanting to have any bad landowner relations. So someone tell me is the pit open or not. Anyways, we then set out for Scottsboro Pit since it was close. Upon arriving we plotted the cave and set out looking for it. We found it and bopped it. As we were unrigging I asked everyone if they were intrested in doing something else, we all were. So we all left out for another cave upon arriving at the parking area we all decided that it was just getting too cold for us. So we headed out for Unclaimed Bagage, and by the way if someone has never been there, this is a cool place to go. This was my first time there and found several things that I had been wanting, Anyways. Then we all hopped in the caver ride and headed home after locating the parking for 3 caves and doing 1. What a good day in tag.



CAVES

by: Sadie Angel Jones

*Caves, caves,
what a trip!
Their big, their
muddy, their
beautiful, drippy
and wet! You
twist, you turn,
you crawl, and
sweat. You look
all around you at
the beauty your
in. You may trip
or fall and get
stuck in mud and fall backwards in
it to. You climb up rocks and slid
down them to! Watch out! There's
a bat in front of you! Oops! You
fell in guano. now your covered in
bat poo! There is the opening,
your way out! You step up, top, no
longer underground. You look down
and smile and think to yourself
that was fun! I can't wait until
we go caving again!*



Got News?

We need your trip reports, old trip stories, book reviews, technical cave information, first aid topics. Send your articles by mail or e-mail. E-mail attachments must be in ASCII (or plain text format). Send photographs or sketches for the article when possible.

TO: **Michael A. Ray**

12725 Co. Rd. 31

Centre, AL 35960

E-mail: mray9@tds.net

Gadsden Grotto
P. O. Box 2092
Gadsden, AL 35903

Calendar of Events

- April 16 - Alabama Cave Survey Meeting
May 9 - Gadsden Grotto Meeting
19 - SERA
June 13 - Gadsden Grotto Meeting
26 - NSS Convention, Elkins, West Virginia
July 11 - Gadsden Grotto Meeting

