

Swan Mine (also known as Kingsdown Quarry) NGR ST 81019, 67022.

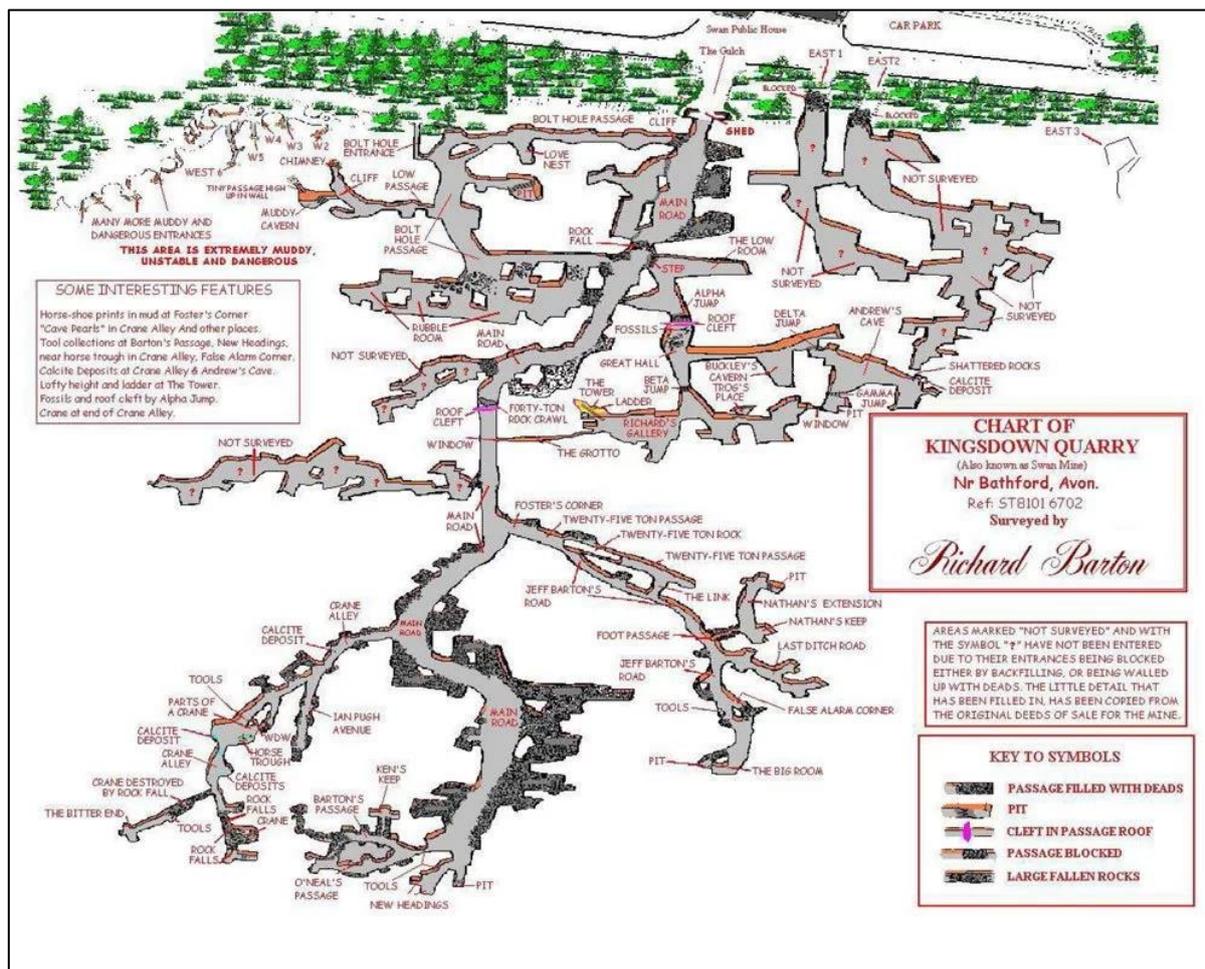
With members of the Axbridge Caving Group (ACG), underground about 2 hours.

Introduction and background

Entrance located opposite the Swan Inn public house. There were originally three entrances. A small but interesting stone mine (Freestone) where extraction is believed to have started in the late 18th century and ended in 1932. It is thought to be the last operational stone mine in the UK to remove stone using horse and carts – wheel ruts are a predominant feature throughout the mine passages, a few hoof-prints still remain. A major attraction of the mine is the numerous artefacts that are still in-situ including a well-preserved crane, a second crane has been crushed under a rockfall, a fine carved stone trough, and a variety of other industrial paraphernalia.

Mostly easy walking although there are places where scrambling over rocks and negotiating lower sections is required. An interesting couple of hours spent wandering around and taking photographs. Some decent fossils were also noted, in particular, corals perhaps evidence for Jurassic reefs.

A representative selection of images from the recent trip have been selected and presented below.



Survey of Swan Mine (Kingsdown Quarry) by Richard Barton

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Artefacts



A well-preserved crane still survives



Carved stone trough

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General interest



The group stopped to look at some hoof-prints in the soft sediment on the floor. Wheel ruts are clearly visible throughout the mine passages.

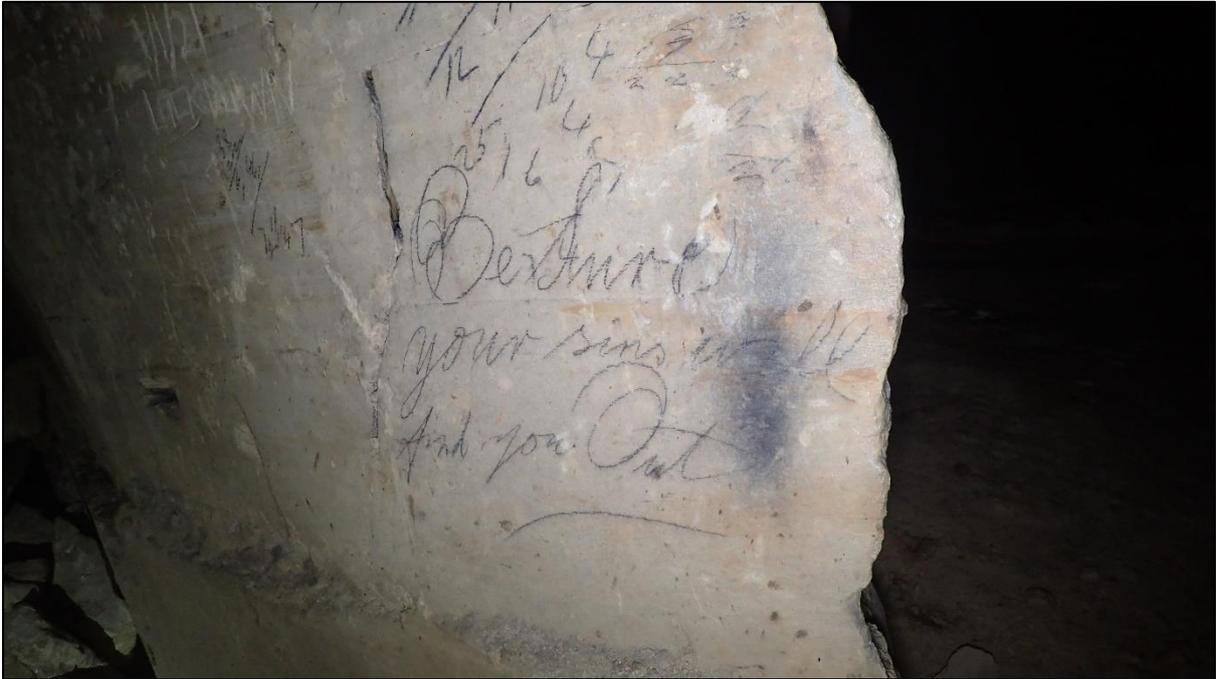


The group exiting from the main entrance, opposite the Swan Inn

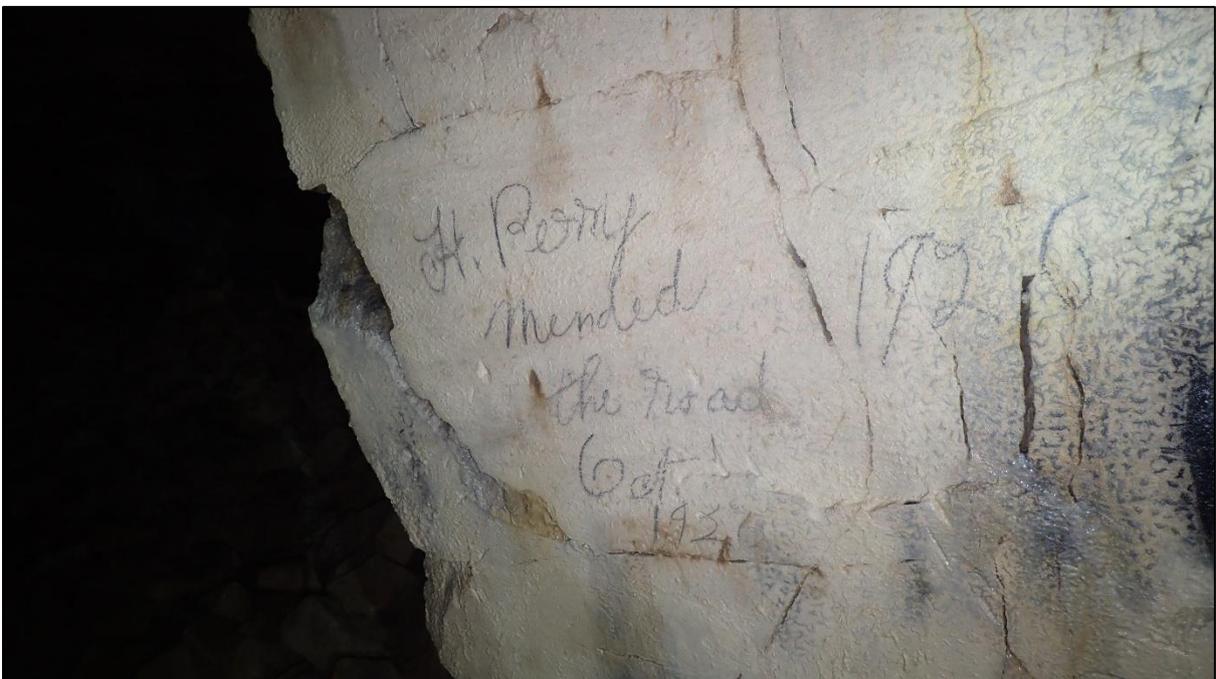
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Historic markings and graffiti

There are abundant historic markings throughout the mine related to quarrying activities sadly many markings have been defaced by unnecessary graffiti and, in places, calcite deposition.

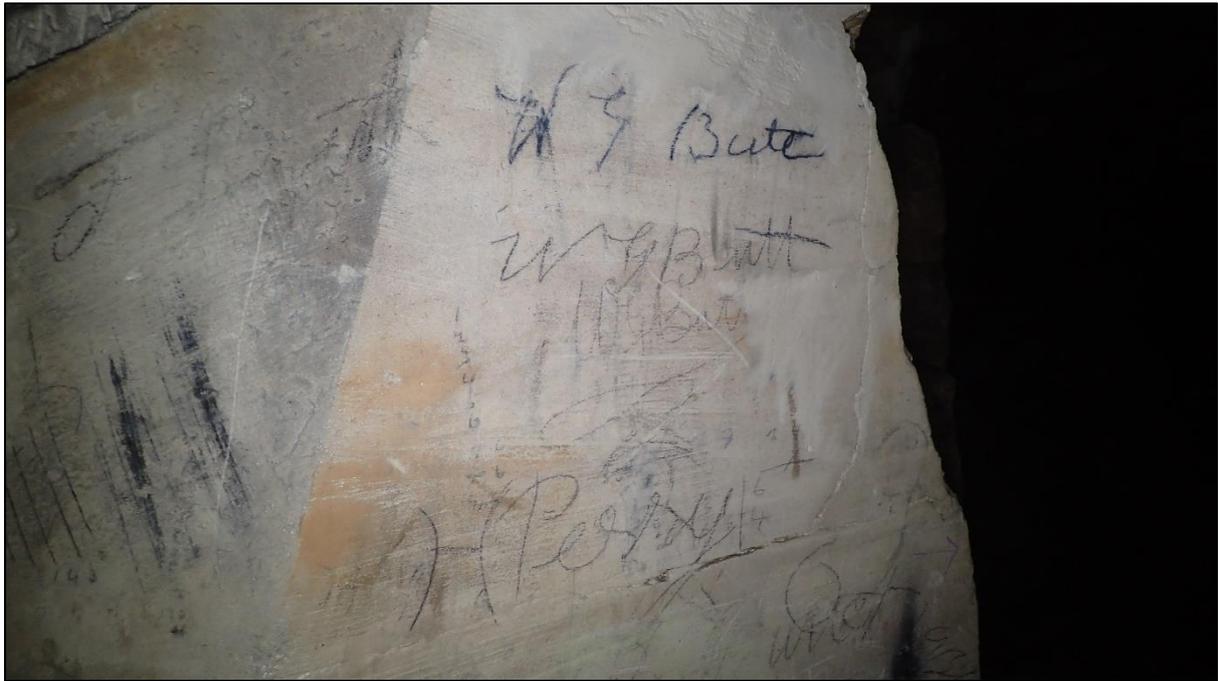


“Be sure your sins will find you out” Image taken 14th January 2024



“H. Perry mended the road Oct 1926” Image taken 14th January 2024

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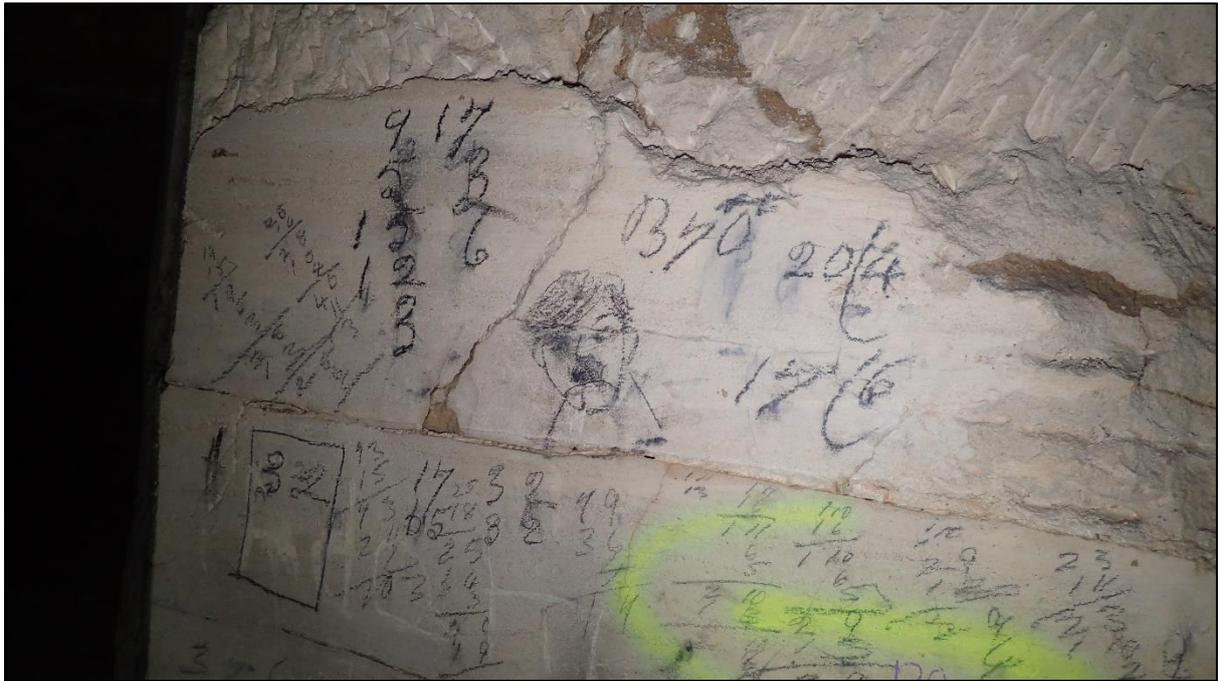


“WG Butt (x3) H Perry Oct 1931(?)” Image taken 14th January 2024



The historic markings related to quarrying practices are slowly being covered over by calcite deposition. Image taken 14th January 2024

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A mixed panel featuring historic quarrying related markings, a possible depiction of 'Hitler' and a poorly placed spray-paint direction arrow. Although the mine ceased operation in 1932 it is likely that the underground workings were being explored since then as they are to present. Image taken 14th January 2024

There are several cartoon-like caricatures depicted on the walls, as can be seen below:



Figure wearing a hat, the name tag slightly obscured by candle soot. Image taken 14th January 2024

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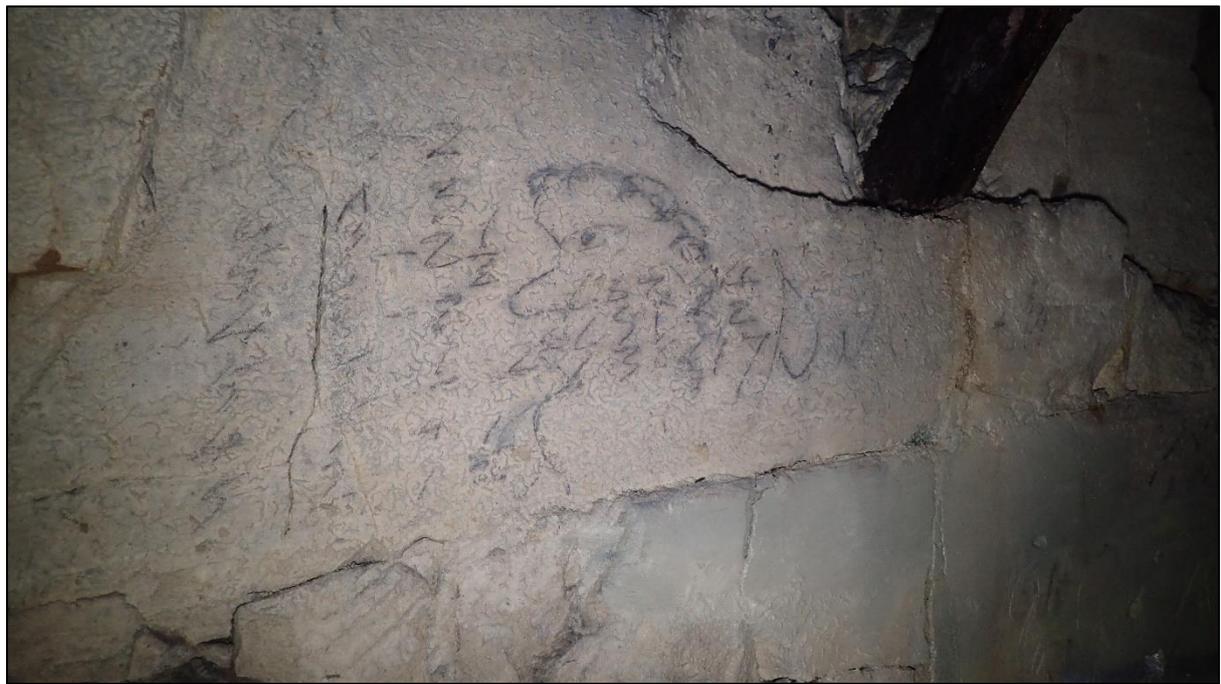
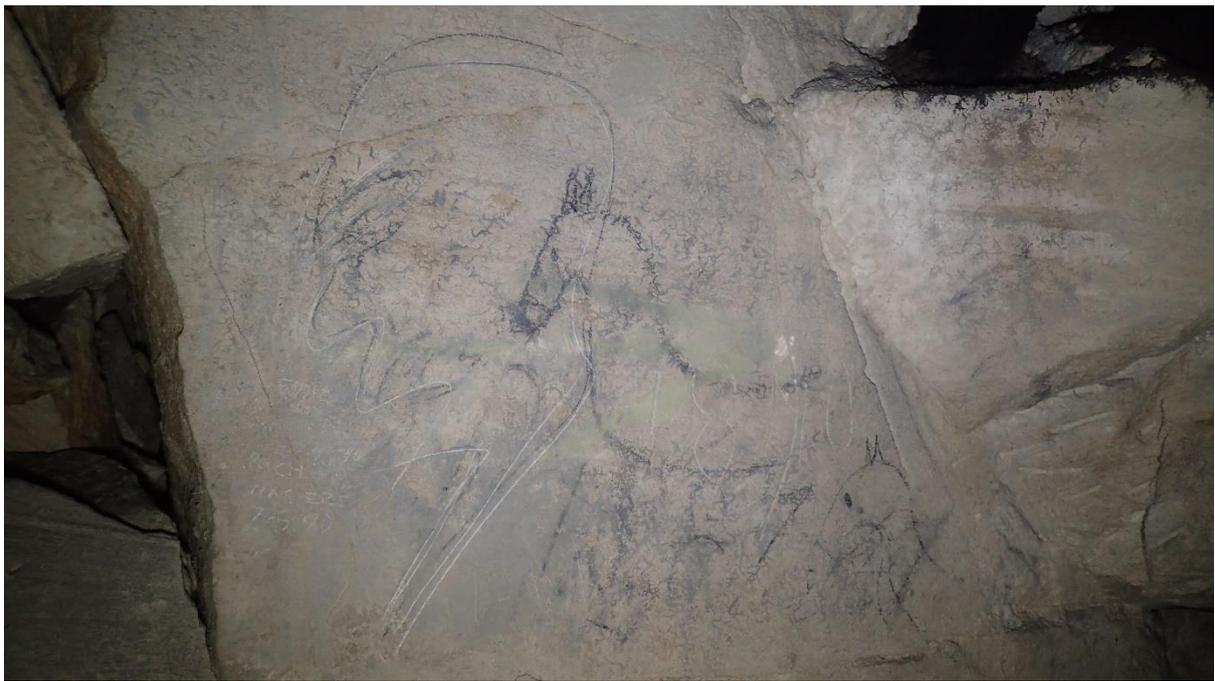
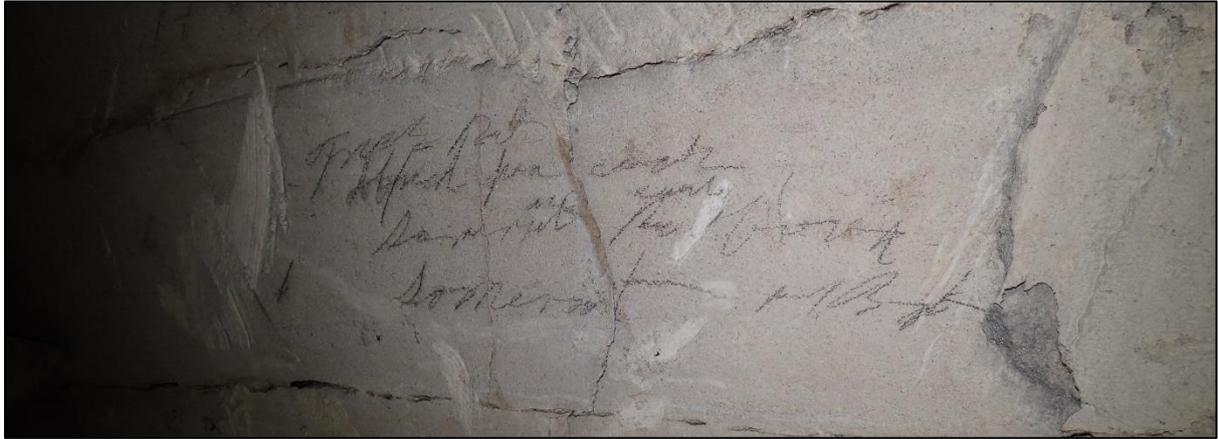


Figure (head only) with curly hair, possible name tag. Image taken 14th January 2024



Horses (or ponies) do these figures relate to the time when horses and carts were operational in the mine? The face partially overlying the larger horse is later. Image taken 24th January 2024

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This inscription has, so far, has proven to be unintelligible. Image taken 14th January 2024

Natural features

Fossils



Colonial coral, evidence of marine reef environments during the Jurassic period. Image taken 14th January 2024

Fungi

The familiar mushroom or toadstool, although important structures, are just the reproductive or fruiting bodies of fungi that usually appear annually. The most persistent part of fungi remains hidden below the surface, in the soil or other growing medium, as vast numbers of thin, branching filaments known as hyphae. These hyphae permeate the growing medium to form a matted web called the mycelium. Fungus lack chlorophyll, which plants use to produce food by photosynthesis, so fungi rely on decaying, or in some species living, tissues of plants or animals as a source of nutrients. Saprophytic species – those which use dead organic matter – are important in the recycling of plant and animal matter into the food chain. Parasitic species – those that affect living plants and animals – are significant in regulating numbers of plants and animals. There are plant-fungus relationships which are more benign in which the

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mycelium grows in close association with the root system of the host – in a symbiotic partnership in which both species benefit – each obtaining nutrients from each other. Many host plants with a mycorrhizal association tend to fare better than those without.



Above and below: Over the roof surface can be seen a network of mycelium, the root-like structure of fungus consisting of a mass of branching, thread-like hyphae. The growth originates and spreads from where a wooden stemple has been placed to secure the roof slabs. Mycelia are vital in terrestrial [and aquatic] ecosystems for their role in the decomposition of organic material.



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References

Sterry, P. 1991. Country Guides: Fungi of Britain and Northern Europe. Reprinted 1995 by Chancellor Press



More artefacts. Image taken 14th January 2024



Hoof- and boot prints. Image taken 14th January 2024