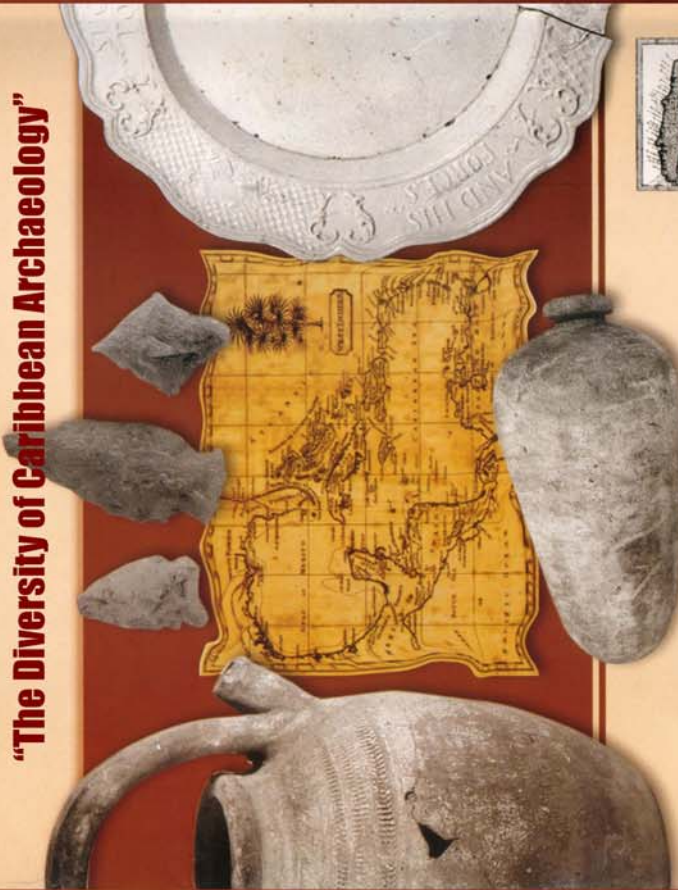




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JAMAICA NATIONAL HERITAGE TRUST  
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**XXII Conference of The International Association of Caribbean Archaeology (IACA)**

## **Ceramic Age**

## **Spot Valley cave: a new inventory and survey of Jamaica's fourth pictograph site**

by

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### **Abstract**

Spot Valley cave was located by Mr David Fletcher and was mapped by Dr James Lee in 1970. He reported that fragments of human bones and teeth were found in crevices against the walls and in the floor associated with numerous potsherds of White Marl (Meillacan) type. The collection now kept at the University of the West Indies consists of 693 potsherds and 1 reconstructed vessel as well as a small chert component. The study of the human remains has shown that there were a minimum number of 8 individuals here, 4 adults and 4 juveniles, some of them showing pathological lesions. Dr Lee reported that there were about a dozen poorly preserved pictographs applied to the cave wall in black pigment, in the same style as those at Mountain River cave. He illustrated some of these pictographs in the form of drawings which he presented to the 11<sup>th</sup> IACA Congress in 1985. A new survey of the interior of the cave has now been carried out, and a photographic record of the pictographs made, thanks to the kind co-operation of the present owner of the property, Mr David Lee.

### **Résumé**

La grotte de la vallée du Spot a été localisée par Mr David Fletcher et a été schématisée par le Dr James Lee en 1970. Il a rapporté que des fragments d'os et de dents humaines ont été découverts dans des fissures sur les murs et dans le sol associés à de nombreux tessons de poterie du type White Marl (Meillacan). La collection actuellement conservée à l'Université des Caraïbes consiste en 693 tessons de poterie, 1 récipient recomposé, ainsi que d'un petit composé de chaille. L'étude des restes humains a démontré qu'il y avait au minimum 8 personnes ici, 4 adultes et 4 adolescents, certains d'entre eux présentant des lésions pathologiques. Le Dr Lee a écrit dans son rapport qu'il y avait à peu près une douzaine de pictogrammes piètrement préservés appliqués sur les murs de la grotte d'un pigment noir, dans le même style que celui de la grotte de la Mountain River. Il a illustré quelques-uns de ces pictogrammes sous la forme de dessins qu'il a présentés au 11<sup>ème</sup> Congrès de l'AIAC en 1985. Un nouveau levé de l'intérieur de la grotte a été fait, et un enregistrement photographique des pictogrammes aussi, grâce à la coopération du propriétaire actuel du site, Mr David Lee.

## **Resumen**

La cueva de Spot Valley, en Jamaica, fue encontrada por el Señor David Fletcher y fue mapeada por el Dr. James Lee en 1970. El ha registrado que los fragmentos de huesos humanos y dientes fueran encontrados en grietas junto a los muros y en el suelo asociado a numerosos fragmentos de cerámica do tipo White Marl (Meillacan). La colección que ahora pertenece a la University of the West Indies consiste en 693 pedazos de cerámica y en un vaso rehecho así como una pequeña muestra de sílice. El estudio de los huesos humanos ha revelado un número mínimo de 8 individuos, 4 adultos y 4 juveniles, algunos de ellos revelan lesiones patológicas. Dr. Lee ha registrado, en la pared de la cueva, la existencia de cerca de una decena de pictogramas de color negra y mal conservados, que son de estilo idéntico a los de la cueva de Mountain River. Estos pictogramas fueran dibujados y ilustrados por Dr. Lee en el XI Congreso Internacional para el Arqueología del Caribe (IACA) en 1985. En Enero de 2005 la cueva fue de nuevo prospeccionada y fue echo el registro fotográfico dos pictograma, con la simpática colaboración del presente propietario, el Señor David Lee.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Spot Valley cave, in St. James Parish, was located by Mr. David Fletcher, a member of the Archaeological Society of Jamaica who then lived in the vicinity, and it was mapped by Dr James Lee in 1970 (JC7 in his notation) (Lee, 1970). He subsequently visited the cave again and made some further observations (Lee, 1971, 1973) as well as including it in his more general surveys of Jamaican rock art sites (Lee, 1974, 1990). Lee observed some pictographs in the cave, as well as potsherds and human and animal bones, which were removed for safe keeping to his property at Runaway Bay. His collection (including the material from JC7) was handed over to the University of the West Indies in the year 2000, and it has been inventoried (Allsworth-Jones and Rodriques, 2005; Allsworth-Jones, 2008). A detailed report on the human bones and teeth has been made by Santos (2008).

Lee recorded the position of the site in terms of one of the old Jamaican 1:12,500 maps, but he made no detailed plan of the interior. It was decided that this should be done, and the work was carried out in January 2005, thanks to the kind co-operation of the present owner of the property, Mr David Lee. The mapping was undertaken by members of the Jamaican Caves Organization, including R. S. Stewart, G. Van Rentergem, and I. Conolley.

## **SITE SITUATION**

The position of the cave lies somewhat inland on the north coast of Jamaica between Montego Bay and Falmouth in St James Parish [Figure 1]. As indicated by Lee, it is 1.22 km south east of an open air settlement which he referred to as Spot Valley (J-15 in his notation) (Lee, 1970). The cave is some way up a steep northward facing escarpment and because of the extent of vegetation it is by no means easy to find. As shown on the plan [Figure 2], its dimensions are no more than about 8 by 12 metres, with a small entrance on the north east side. The coordinates as established by Lee in terms of the Jamaican grid system (metric version) are North 194836.08 and East 158163.76. The Jamaican Caves Organization team established the GPS location of the site in terms of the World Geodetic System (WGS 84) (Stewart, 2003). It is at latitude 18° 29' 11.7" North and longitude 77° 46' 45.0" West. It is at an altitude of 283 ± 10 metres.

## THE PICTOGRAPHS

In his first report on the site, Lee stated that there were “about a dozen poorly preserved pictographs applied to the cave wall in black pigment” in the same style as those already known at Mountain River Cave and Worthy Park in St. Catherine Parish (SC-1 and SC-6 in his notation) (Duerden, 1897; Lee, 1967; Watson, 1988; Aarons, 1988). It was the “first north coast occurrence” and at the time the third such site in the island. In 1993, another site with pictographs was discovered at Potoo Hole, near Jackson’s Bay in Clarendon Parish (Fincham and Fincham, 1998), hence (since it has not been published in full before) it seems reasonable to refer to Spot Valley cave as Jamaica’s fourth pictograph site. As Lee pointed out, the other sites are situated in the southern part of the island, south of the Dry Harbour Mountains, at a distance (as the crow flies) of some 80 to 100 km from Spot Valley. In his final general account of Jamaican rock art, Lee (1990) mentioned that the Spot Valley paintings were “partly obscured by dirt, dust or smoke”. He did not further elaborate on what they might represent, but he did include a diagram showing some of the pictographs (Lee, 1990, Fig. 7). Some of the representations as redrawn by him are clearly of human-like figures, but others appear to be schematic or even geometric.

It is clear from the new plan of the site [Figure 2] that the images are concentrated in one small area along the south western wall of the cave. They were recorded photographically, and two of these images are reproduced here [Figures 3 and 4]. The first shows human-like figures which appear to correspond to Lee’s Figure 7b, the second may correspond to his Figure 7c, although that is not quite sure. A detailed mapping of the figures, such as was recently carried out for Warminster (Loubser and Allsworth-Jones, 2007), remains to be done. It may then be possible to correlate the images as they appear on the walls with Dr Lee’s drawings, which do not show them in the position or in the orientation in which they appear in the cave.

## THE ARTEFACTS

When Lee first went to the site in 1970, he recorded that “fragments of human bones and teeth were found in crevices against the walls and in the floor associated with numerous potsherds” (Lee, 1970: 2). When he returned one year later, “another search produced considerable additional pottery fragments” which tended to “complement” what had been found on the first occasion (Lee, 1971: 2). In particular, “one bowl approximately 10 inches in diameter and 3 inches deep, roughly circular and devoid of handles or decoration” was pieced together from 57 fragments, which together made up about 75% of the original bowl. This bowl is now part of the Lee Collection [Figure 5]. As at all the other petroglyph or pictograph sites for which evidence is available, the ceramics at this location, in Lee’s view, were essentially of White Marl type. In that case they can be expected to date to the period from approximately 1000 to 1500 AD.

Apart from the bowl which Lee reconstructed, the collection from the site now at UWI consists of 693 pottery fragments, of which 600 are body sherds and 93 are rim sherds. Only one of the body sherds and 14 of the rim sherds are decorated. The body sherds are mainly dark in colour with prominent white temper, like the reconstructed bowl. A few however are reddish in colour, and there is evidence of at least one massive water jar in the form of a base and a top with a spout. Although the intervening pieces are missing, probably these were parts of a single vessel, with a characteristic yellowish colour and a temper distinct from the majority ware in the cave. There is a small chert component, consisting of 2 flakes and 1 core. In general, the impression is created that this was (at the time of discovery) an undisturbed burial cave, and that the present collection represents more or less the totality of what was left strewn on the surface (Allsworth-Jones, 2008).

The term burial cave is well known in Jamaica, and goes back at least to Duerden (1897, chapter II, pages 21-31). He was concerned to counter the notion then prevalent that these caves could have been “regular places of habitation”. On the contrary, as he pointed out, all the evidence suggested that they were “natural ossuaries”, that is, places where “the (human) bones, perhaps some time after death, were collected and deposited” (Duerden, 1897, 25). Burial in this

context did not imply inhumation. That is the sense in which the term is used here, as it was also by Lee (1978, 3-4).

## **THE FAUNA**

The few faunal remains (8 in total) have been catalogued by Dr Lisabeth Carlson (2008). There were four identified bones of Jamaican hutia (*Geocapromys brownii*) belonging to a minimum number of two individuals. Of the two bird bones at the site, one was identifiable to a species, the Caribbean dove (*Leptotila jamaicensis*).

## **THE HUMAN REMAINS**

There were 185 identifiable human bones and teeth in the Lee Collection, including 35 fragments diagnosed by Dr Carlson. The majority of bones are fragmented and showed post mortem damage, such as bone discolouration and periosteum destruction, deposition of limestone, and strong mineralization.

The minimum number of individuals represented is 8, of which 4 were adults and 4 juveniles. This estimation is based on adult mandibles [Figure 6] and juvenile right humeri respectively. It should be noted that the lower left mandible has some limestone attached which precluded tooth observation. More details are given in Santos (2008).

The apparent disarticulated origin of the material together with bone fragmentation prevents a detailed determination of the age of these individuals, but they do range from infants to mature adults. The youngest individual whom it was possible to identify, on the basis of the left humerus, was between 1.5 and 3.5 years old at time of death, according to Johnston's tables (1962 in Bass, 1987). One innominate bone could confidently be identified as male, and seven other bones are most likely male as well, whereas there was at least one talus which, on the basis of its size, could reasonably be identified as female. Thus, the mixture at this burial cave of individuals of all ages and both sexes is similar to that observed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in such well known sites as Halberstadt (Flower, 1895) and Cambridge Hill (Duerden, 1897).



In addition to the mandibles, seven teeth were recovered, 2 permanent and completely formed, 4 permanent in formation, and 1 deciduous molar in formation. No caries or dental enamel hypoplasia was observed, although it should be noted that the crown of one permanent lower incisor could not be observed due to taphonomic changes. One permanent canine has slight deposits of calculus, an oblique occlusal dental wear, and moderate dentine exposure, grade 4 according to Smith's (1984) scale. An estimated age similar to what is indicated here (2 years  $\pm$  8 months) was obtained for the deciduous molar, since its root was not completely formed (cf. Ubelaker, 1989).

There is clear evidence of pathology in some of the human bones from this cave (Santos et al., 2002). Most obvious is osteoarthritis, manifested in an adult left humerus fragment and in a lumbar vertebra, and an adult femur shows signs of periostitis. Similar lesions on vertebrae were found on human remains from Hartfield, an open air site, also in St. James parish (Santos et al., 2002).

In terms of bone variability, one humerus fragment presents a septal aperture of medium size, in terms of development, according to Bass's classification (1987). This non-metric, or qualitative, trait causes no symptoms and represents a minor anomaly of skeletal anatomy (Mays, 1998).

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The pictographs in Spot Valley cave may not be as spectacular as those in Mountain River cave or Potoo Hole, but (unlike the situation in those two cases) they are closely associated with human remains and archaeological material indicative of a burial location.

From a stylistic point of view, they are comparable to the figures depicted elsewhere. Watson (1988) was able to identify 148 pictographs at Mountain River cave, of which 61 were zoomorphic, 84 were anthropomorphic, and 3 abstract. At Potoo Hole, according to A. G. and A. M. Fincham (1998), there were at least 46 pictographs, of which 18 were zoomorphic, 7 anthropomorphic, 8 geometric, and 13 undefined. Obviously the numbers are much less at Spot

Valley cave, and the images do not appear to include zoomorphic representations, so any comparison essentially relates to the human-like figures and to a lesser extent the geometrics.

The pottery, fauna, and human remains recovered from the site have been carefully safeguarded in the Laboratory of Archaeology at UWI, and the importance of the cave itself is clear to the present owner, who has undertaken to protect and preserve it.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks go to the following persons: The owner Mr. David Lee (Spot Valley Sports Entertainment and Training Complex, Rose Hall, St. James) for allowing us access to the site. The JCO team for helping with the survey, particularly Dieter Roggy and Elizabeth Slack. Dieter Roggy and Michael Loftin for making the DVD of the recording process. Dr Lisabeth Carlson for identifying the animal bones, as part of the process of creating an inventory of the Lee Collection at UWI. The Centro de Investigação em Antropologia, University of Coimbra, for their support of Dr A. L. Santos.

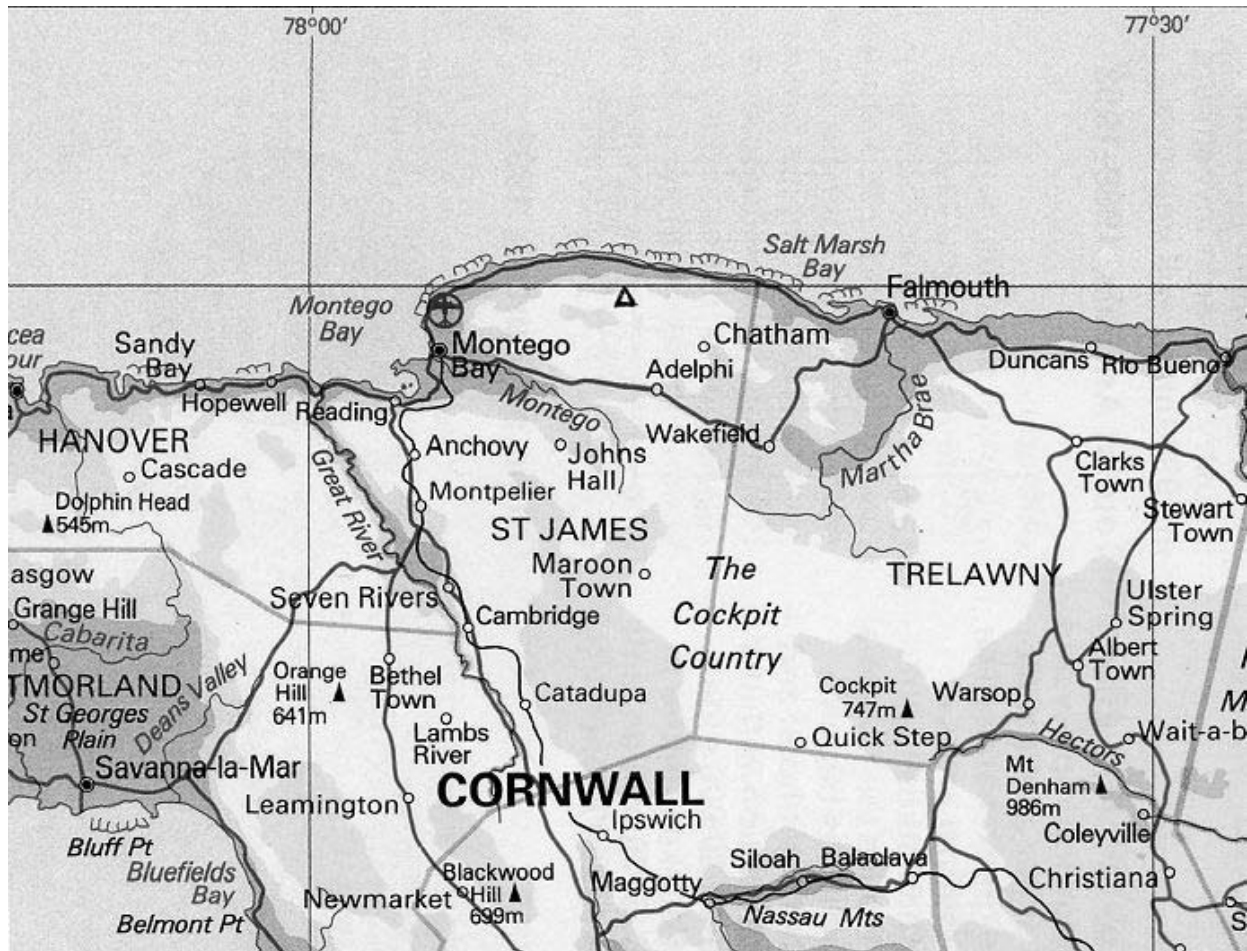
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1. Map showing the location of Spot Valley cave

# SPOT VALLEY CAVE 1

Jamaica

Parish: St James

Area: Spot Valley

Location entrance: WGS84 – 18 29' 11.7" N 77 46' 45.0" W ± 5 m 283 m

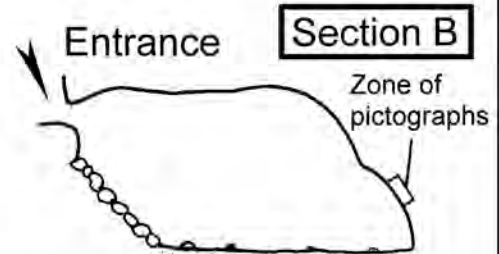
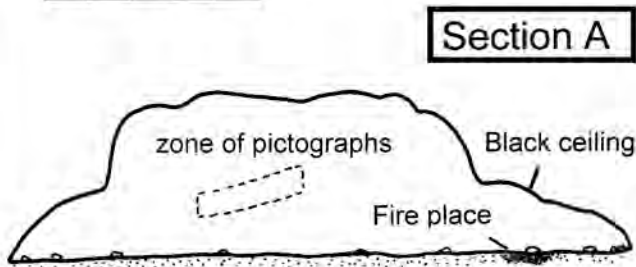
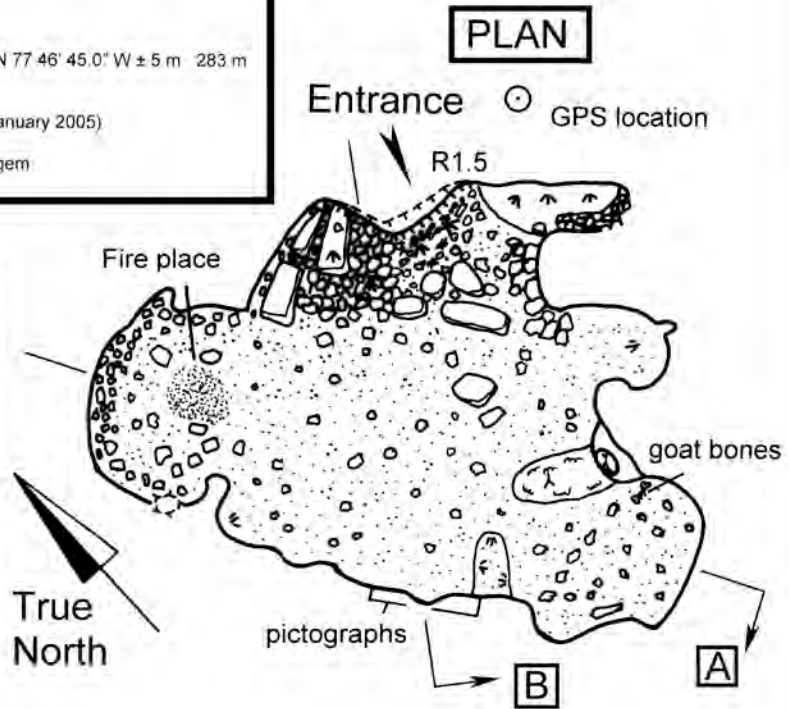
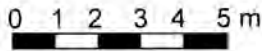
Surveyed by (JCO):

Elisabeth Slack, Guy Van Rentergem (11 January 2005)

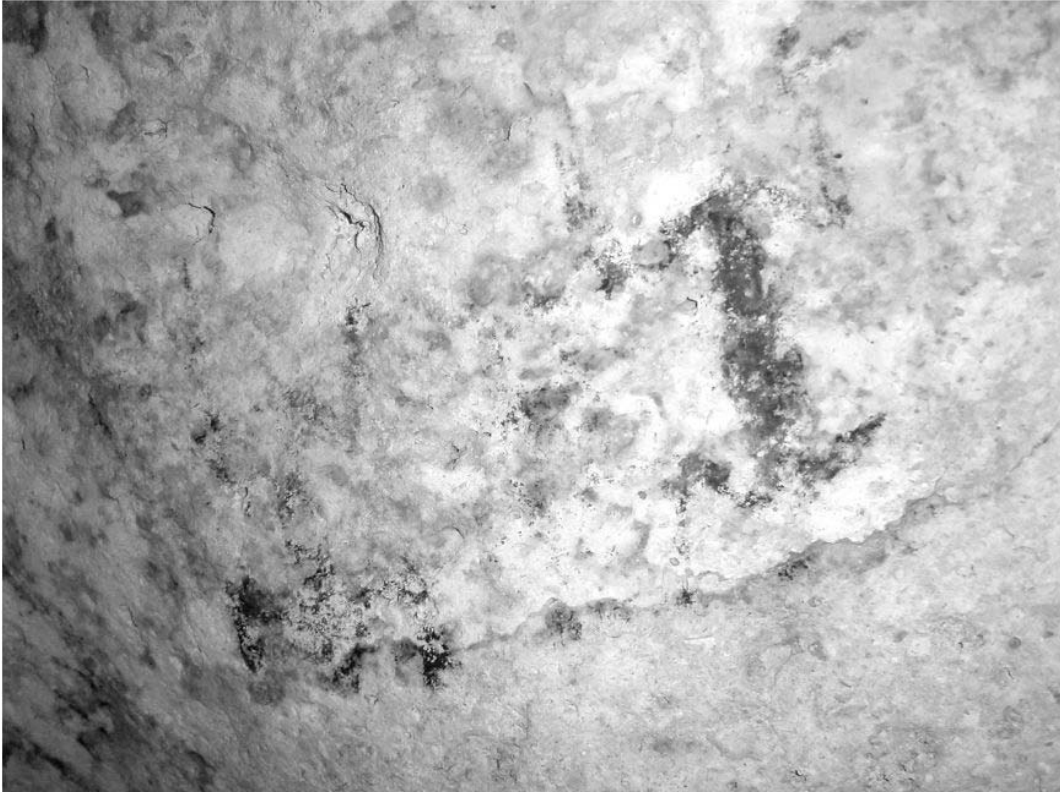
Precision: 5D BCRA grade

Compilation and drawing: Guy Van Rentergem

Legend	
	Cave entrance, dripline
	Drop e.g. R2: depth 2 m
	Slope (high – low)
	Dome in ceiling
	Sand Rock fragments
	Vertebrate remains
	Vegetal debris
	Roots
	ashes
	Flowstone
	Stalagmite
	Column



2. Plan of Spot Valley cave, with two sections (A and B)



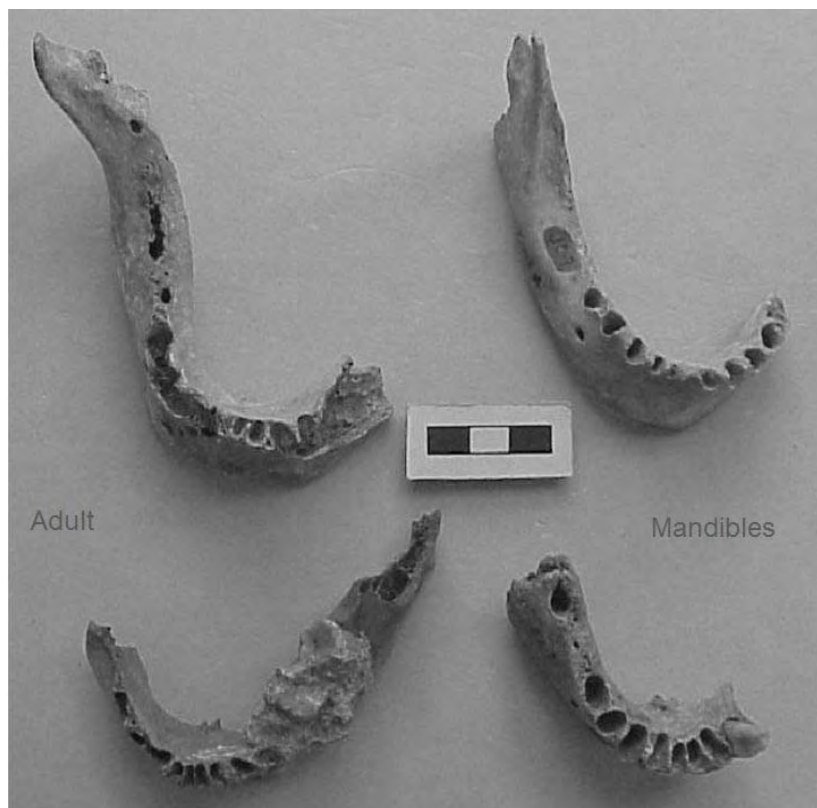
**3. Human-like images in the cave**



**4. Geometric or abstract designs in the cave**



**5. The bowl reconstructed by Dr J.W. Lee**



**6. Four adult mandibles from the cave in superior view. The left inferior mandible has some limestone attached to its left part. Some sockets are open indicating that the teeth were lost post mortem but others are closed, meaning ante mortem loss.**