

1. Job, B., 1999 Walter Sylvester - Potteries inventor and his famous invention:the Sylvester. *Mining History*, 14:2 p.37-40.

2. Brook, D., et al., 1994 *Northern Caves* 3, pp. 164-5.

3. Newton, J., 1992 The discovery and exploration of Sylvester Pot. *Journal of RRCPC.*, 1983-92, 9, pp.3-6.

4. Round, S., 1990 New find in Easegill. *Caves and Caving* 47, p.4.



Yours faithfully,

Peter and Julie Mohr

28th October, 2000.

Dear Sir,

Walter Sylvester, the Sylvester and Sylvester Pot

Barry Job's recent article in *Mining History*¹ about Walter Sylvester and his invention, "the Sylvester", in 1895, was most informative and solved the problem of its origin, which has puzzled us for some years.

Readers might like to know about the use of the Sylvester in cave and pothole exploration. Jim Newton, a senior member of the Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club (RRCPC), has used a Sylvester device in cave exploration for some years. On most Sundays, Jim can be found on Casterton Fell digging and poking around for some new cave entrance. He generally works alone, and has found his Sylvester especially useful for shifting fairly large boulders from shake-holes and other potential openings.

His technique would not be strictly approved off by 'health & safety', however he has made a number of discoveries using the device, the most famous of which, was **Sylvester Pot** (NGR SD673806), located on Casterton Fell, up the west bank of Easegill.² On 1st October 1989 Jim Newton, Jim Farrer and Paul Wilkinson found a sink hole blocked with rocks too big to shift by hand. Jim Newton described what happened:

However to day we had the Sylvester, a lightweight ratchet hoist, and we decided to try it out. The first boulder hauled out opened up a low crawl, which Paul soon cleared and exposed a large limestone flake. At first we thought it was bedrock, but levering with a bar showed it was not. We soon started ratcheting with the Sylvester and after snapping the rope once, out it came. It was broken up with sledgehammer. Paul went in and said it was blowing, and it was...³

The subsequent exploration revealed a low crawl, which led to a 20m pitch from the bottom of which a further crawl reached a beautiful gour pool, now called 'Newton's Wonder'. Another passage follows a complex route, which eventually joins the main Easegill system at the lower reaches of County Pot – all in all, a difficult and in parts, tight, grade III trip.⁴

Jim was delighted to see Barry Job's paper. He had bought his second-hand Sylvester at a farm sale, and has puzzled over the origin of the name for years. Always the optimist, he continues to ratchet away, looking for more ways in, and more ways on.