

Grotte de la Fenetre 4

a description of the connection with

Grotte Roche

(Speleo Vercors summer project 2012)

Report and photo's by Glenn Jones



Grotte de la Fenetre 4 was discovered in 1932 when EDF drove a tunnel through the side of the Bourne Gorge from Goule Blanche to the hydro station lower in the valley. Access has not been possible until very recently, and with the discovery of the recent extensions in Grotte Roche a connection was inevitable. This report describes the route between the two caves which is equipped as a pull through trip. A 30m rope is required and the usual pull through techniques should be employed.



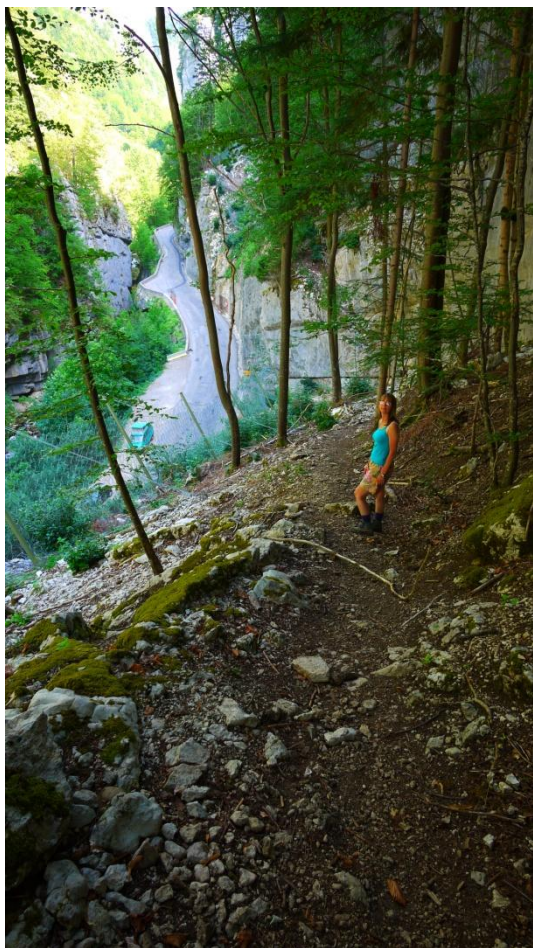
Speleo Vercors



September 2012

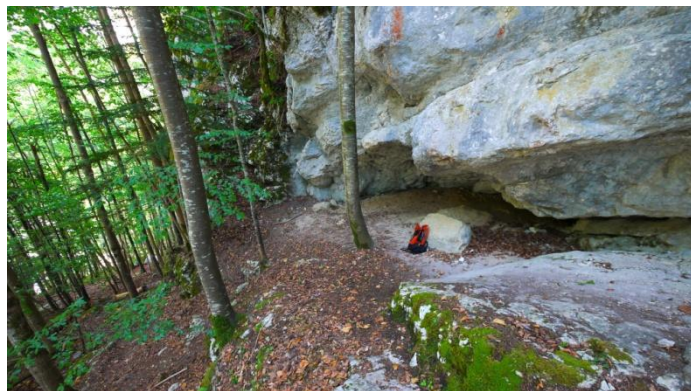
Grotte de la Fenetre 4

Location; Grotte de la Fenetre 4 was connected to Grotte Roche two years ago. The entrance is located high up the south side of the Bourne Gorge 92 metres above Grotte Roche and is reached by following the path on the opposite side of the road to the Grotte Roche parking area. The path starts off steeply and has a fixed cable hand-line to aid novices. The path follows an ascending ledge at the side of the gorge and it takes around 10 minutes to reach the entrance.



The path above the gorge

The entrance is located on this ledge



The entrance



The entrance is a short flat-out crawl into a small chamber, followed by a further crawl (following the howling draft) into a good sized passage with some good formations.

The passage is followed to a 3 metre climb up into a short section of passage with many marmites (round, flat bottomed holes in the floor containing water). Shortly beyond the marmites is the EDF pipe – not an open canal as suggested on the survey, but (disappointingly) a large pipe encased in concrete (which reportedly leaks!) The passage continues to an obvious hole on the right which is the start of the connection to Grotte Roche - there are many fossils in the cave walls in this location. (The cave continues on two fronts, both of which are in the progress of being extended).



The cave is permanently rigged for pull through trips (and is used as such by outdoor pursuit providers) and this description assumes that that will be the method of progression between the two caves (using a harness and cows-tails).

In August 2012 EDF were undertaking massive repairs to the water pipes in the Bourne Gorge, and at the time of this visit, there was no water in the EDF pipe. Local reports suggest that when in operation, the connection to Grotte Roche is likely to be wet and possibly more interesting.

The R3 on the survey is easily descended,(but would be difficult to reverse without a rope). A short, low section leads to the easy R2. The R4 (which is directly above the R7) is fitted with an 11mm hand-line giving protection to the top of R7 which is fitted with two Petzl anchors and a length of chain.

From the bottom of the R7 a short crawl leads to a small chamber and a short section of ascending passage leads to the head of the P15. This has an 11mm fixed rope hand-line traverse to the pitch head chain belay. The 15m pitch lands in a small chamber with an awkward 2m climb up into an ascending passage (not horizontal as per the survey). This quickly leads to an easy 2m climb down into a further passage which ends in the roof of the breakthrough chamber in Grotte Roche.

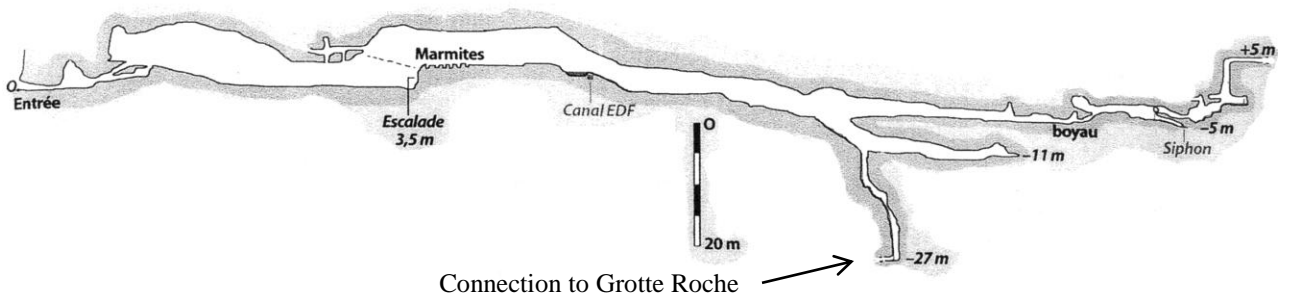
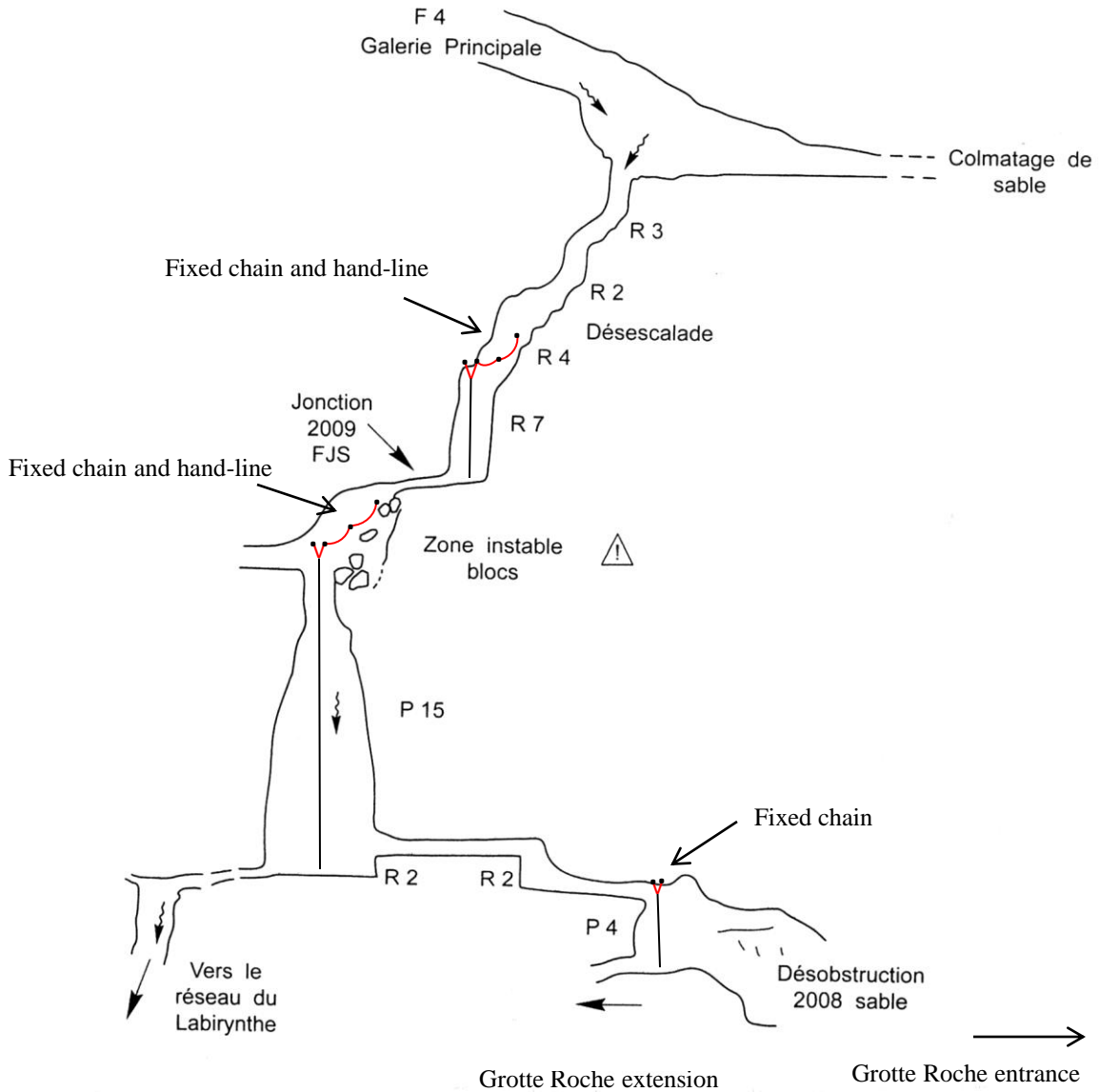
A chain hanging from the roof out over the passage is not easy to reach or rig safely, but clipping into the chain with cows-tails whilst threading the rope avoids what could be an embarrassing situation. And then it's back out through the Grotte Roche entrance passage to daylight.

It has to be said that as a Vercors caving trip it has not got a lot going for it. Grotte de la Fenetre 4 is a vaguely interesting with loads of fossils, and possibly scope for extension, but the connection is probably more of interest to guided groups. If an interesting trip with some technicality is required, then you are probably better going to the far reaches of Grotte Roche itself.

CROQUIS TRAVERSÉE F 4 / GROTTES ROCHE

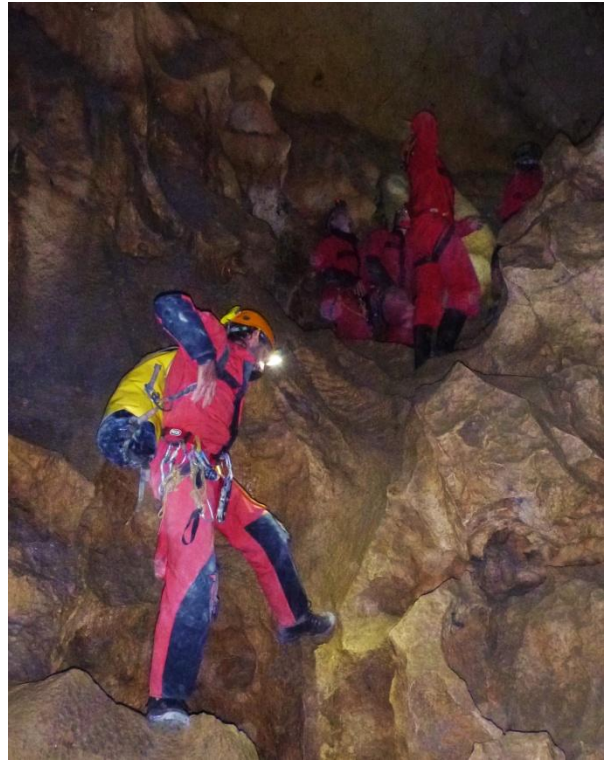
Emmanuel Gondras — FJS

Survey source; Scialet 38





The main gallery



Climb up to the Marmites



Formations in the main gallery



The top of R3



Traverse at the top of R7