



# THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

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Opinions expressed in the Journal are not necessarily those of the Club or the Editor.

# club notes

## Wessex People

Congratulations to **Andy Summerskill** (Leg) on becoming a fully-qualified *parascender*. We don't think there's much need for this skill down Swildon's, but at least if one of us comes unstuck in Alum Pot, he may be able to fly down and offer advice!

**Dominic Sealy** can now be found at:  
The Chestnuts, Dulcote, Wells, Somerset BA5  
3NU Tel. 01749 679754

Don't forget the new **Swildon's survey** recently published by the Wessex Cave Club. It is available by post from Maurice Hewins, price £6.50 which includes P&P or from Upper Pitts.

A list of **jobs** that need doing at Upper Pitts is to be put up on the notice board and will also be published in the next Journal. If you feel that you would be able to help with any of them, please liaise with the Hut Admin. Officer, Max Midlen.

Don't forget the WCC v. BEC **Skittles match** on 6th January 1996 at 7.30pm in the New Inn. This was won by the Wessex last year and so we need to keep up the tradition and win the "Golden Gnome Award". Any queries, contact Phil Hendy on 01749 830802.

There is a trip into **Wookey Hole** on the evening of Saturday 3rd February (changed from 13th Jan). There is free access to one of Britain's better show caves, and you may wander where you wish - sorry, no diving allowed on this trip. Contact the Caving Sec. for more details.

### Club weekend:

*Pitch hauling and rigging for rescue* will be held on Sat. 20th January in the Wells Blue School gym to complement the club rescue practice the following day. Meet at Upper Pitts 9.30am.

The *club rescue practice* will be held in a Mendip cave and will include the use of techniques learnt at the workshop the day before. Meet at Upper Pitts at 10am. SRT equipment useful, but not essential.

## New Members

There has recently been an increase in the number of people wishing to join (or rejoin) the Wessex Cave Club; as can be seen by the list below. We wish them happy caving with the Wessex.

**David SPEED:** Little Crapnell Farm, Dinder,  
Wells, Somerset, BA5 3HQ 01749 342692

**Bruce Douglas ALBRIGHT:** 1421 Fillhome,  
Denver, Colorado, USA, 80206 (303) 860-0320

**Vince LYDON:** 5 Stoneleigh Rd, Limpsfield Ct.,  
Oxted, Surrey, RH8 0TP 01883 723159

**Christine Ann LUMB:** Warren Cottage, Stoke St.  
Michael, Bath, BA3 1PJ 01749 840667

**Malcolm Arthur SILCOCK:** Cross Gates House,  
Amberley, West Sussex, BN 18 9NT 01798 83131'

**Mark Edward EASTERLING:** 5 Wells Rd.,  
Chilcompton, Nr. Bath, Somerset, BA3 4EX  
01761 233785

**Samira ABBAS:** 20A Kelvedon Rd, Wickham  
Bishops, Witham, Essex, CM8 3LZ 01621 892335

**Gareth James PARSONS:** 20A Kelvedon Rd,  
Wickham Bishops, Witham, Essex, CM8 3LZ  
01621 892335

**Martin Charles KING:** 31 Saxons Heath, Long  
Wittenham, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4PY

**Ann Marie SCAMMELL:** Clematis Cottage,  
High St., Bathford, Avon, BA1 7TJ

**Owen HOWELLS:** 83 Penygarn Rd, Tycroes,  
Ammanford, Dyfed, Wales

**Graham JOHNSON:** 5 Dodd Avenue, Wells,  
Somerset, BA5 3JU 01749 678950

# caving notes

## MENDIP

**Swildon's** entrance is still prone to boulder movement. At the last visit, the Zig Zags were blocked by a roof fall and the rest of the boulders in the entrance looked decidedly unstable. 3 DMM's have also been placed in this cave.

12 DMM's have been placed in **Thrupe Lane** and there is a proposal to do the Left Hand Route in **Rhino Rift**.

**Quaking House**, Milverton is now gated. Permission and keys available from Farthings Farm.

## WALES

Changes to **Dan Yr Ogof** access look certain to occur in the New Year, with the formation of the committee known as the Dan Yr Ogof Cave Advisory Committee (DYOCAC). Changes to the current leadership rules look certain and proposals mentioned so far include: identity cards, seminar sessions for cave conservation and safety measures, and updates for leaders. The 4th boulder choke in **Craig A Ffynnon** is unstable.

The immediate area around the gate in **Ogof Capel** is unstable - divers to be warned.

People passing through the gate by the Chelsea's Hut at **Whitewalls** are being videoed by the owners of the house next door - be careful when opening the gate that your actions are not seen as damaging it in any way. If anyone has any knowledge about the right of way past this house, please contact the Chelsea S.S. Also, please do not change on the tramroad outside Whitewalls, and if you see anyone else changing there, suggest that they go into Whitewalls to get changed.

Thefts are still occurring at **Daren Cilau** car park - be warned.

## PORTLAND

Resin anchors have now been placed at the cliff over the entrance to **Blacknor Hole**.

## DERBYSHIRE

The pollution in **Knotlow** still exists, but the cause continues to be unknown.

Check that the entrance to **Cumberland Cavern** entrance is open before doing the round trip to exit this way from Wapping as the entrance has been dug out temporarily after it was blocked with spoil.

3 DMM's have been placed in **Merlins** at the head of S2 shaft leading to Gimli's Dream and Streamway. Three have also been added at the entrance pitch.

Advisable to add 10% to rope lengths quoted in "Peak Rigging Guide" in **Maskill Mine** to allow for new rigging using recently placed DMM's. There are loose boulders on the slope leading to the "Balcony" at the foot of Murmuring Churn - take care. All 'deviation slings' are in situ - please leave them there.

Use a *wire belay* on the metal post at **Eldon Hole** as the local cow recently found that a tape sling satisfied its hunger!

Be careful if leaving your vehicle unattended whilst caving in **Eyam Dale** near Carleswark. Recently, a vehicle was raided and set on fire, destroying all belongings - this is the third time that this has happened in 2 years. Suggest leaving someone with the vehicle or parking further down the main A623 road towards Stoney Middleton in the large lay-by less than 1/2 mile away.

Please remember that if you're visiting **Eyam House Cave**, you need to request permission *in advance* from Eyam Dale House Residential Home for the Elderly.

No access to **Crematorium Pot** or **Dr Jackson's** at the moment - negotiations in progress.

## DEVON AND CORNWALL

*Urgent warning* - there are unconfirmed reports of stress and potential failure in the roof of Bishops Chamber in **Pridhamsleigh Cave**. This will be investigated so just be wary and respect any tapes placed.

# AGM weekend

## A Precis of the Wessex AGM

39 members signed the attendance log.

The minutes of the 1994 AGM were unanimously accepted.

The annual accounts were unanimously accepted. P Haigh presented a commentary on the financial prospects for the club which drew the meeting's attention to the fact that the club had effectively subsidised Upper Pitts by about £1500 this year. He stated that hut income is insufficient to cover the expenses of running and renovating the hut. He would expect the committee to investigate this problem and put forward to the next AGM a substantial list of steps to stabilise the hut's finances and give some evidence that the shortfall was likely to be removed.

The new committee was asked to investigate the following:

- Alan Surrel's donation
- The Luke Devenish Memorial lecture
- Potential new sources of income
- The dwindling return from sales
- Training weekends
- The completion of the kitchen
- The possibility of a drying room with dehumidifier away from the showers
- The removal of debris from outside the back door

A motion to change rule 2 of the club rules to read:

“the objectives of the club shall be to promote the sport and science of caving and the conservation of caves”

was passed

A motion to:

“raise the rate of subscriptions by the rate of inflation, upward to the nearest pound to £24, and the early renewal rate to be raised to £18. Joint membership rates and OAP rates to be raised proportionately”

was passed

The motion:

“That the club should provide SRT rope and equipment for training and the general benefit of it's members. The committee will be responsible for the administration and maintenance of the rope and equipment”

was considered. An amendment to this was proposed:

“That the club should provide SRT rope and rigging equipment for training and the general benefit of it's members. The committee will be responsible for the administration and maintenance of the rope and equipment”

which was passed. A further amendment was proposed:

“That the club should provide SRT rope and rigging equipment for training and the general benefit of it's members. The committee will be responsible for the administration and maintenance of the rope and equipment. No action to acquire rope and rigging equipment shall be taken by the committee until detailed procedures have been publicised and voted on by an AGM

which was defeated. The amended motion:

“That the club should provide SRT rope and rigging equipment for training and the general benefit of it's members. The committee will be responsible for the administration and maintenance of the rope and equipment”

was passed.

*Andy Summerskill*  
*WCC Secretary*

## Afternoon Ramble

After a drink or two in the Hunters to restore brain cells (?) some people embarked on "A Questionable Walk" devised by Tuska. This involved a 3 mile amble around the local Mendip area - Eastwater, St. Cuthbert's, North Hill, Nine Barrows, etc. - identifying photo locations and answering questions about the surrounding countryside as you went. A prize was awarded at the Dinner for the most correct answers, along with other awards presented annually to members.

## Dressing for Dinner

There is a rumour on the hill that Les has been seen in a suit; not a wet suit or an old oversuit but allegedly a two piece suit complete with tie and shirt. These rumours must be exaggerated!

I enter the hut and as I pass the ladies dorm I could be mistaken for thinking it was the perfumery department of some large high street store. As I reach the top of the stairs my nostrils are greeted by the smell of aftershave and I glance around at the familiar faces but something's wrong. All suited and booted these aren't the crowd I usually cave with, these look like a set of fine gentlemen going out for dinner, but of course that is exactly what they are doing.

In the common room much mirth is being made of the colour of someone's tie, the cut of their suit, or the fact that someone didn't realise that down here we dress for dinner. I have to look twice as one of our resident tomboys walks into the room no longer clad in jeans and sweatshirt but transformed into a vision of elegance. It is astounding how people's appearances alter when the occasion demands.

By half past seven there's a group of the best dressed cavers on Mendip freezing to death at the end of Eastwater Lane. The coach is late! This near hypothermic state is soon cured at The Wellsway with a couple of pre-dinner drinks. As we seat ourselves for dinner a plaintive cry of "If all you're going to do is talk caving, I'm sitting somewhere else" is heard from the end of our table. Talk at the table did turn to other matters but only after new leads in Draenen had been discussed.

Maybe it was due to the length of the room or maybe some people have strange eating habits but I'm sure as we got our starters, desserts were being

whisked to the far end of the room. The main course seemed to involve the kitchen staff in friendly rivalry as to who could get the most food on a plate. A curious enquiry as to the fate of some off-cuts of turkey brought yet another heavily laden platter to our table. All of this was washed down with pints of ale and glasses of 'chateau vin boite'. The dessert of raspberry and apple crumble brought back memories of school days and that particular 'polyfiller' topping that I thought only school canteens could produce. The selection of cheeses also proved interesting with such varieties as Stilton with apricot and Wensleydale with peach.

After dinner our Master of ceremonies, Mike York, announced that certain members of the Wessex had managed to distinguish themselves in various ways:

To Les Williams went an award for communications from the camp site to the cave entrance on the Berger expedition even when the phone line was down, Dominic Sealy was congratulated on his ability to get more than one vehicle into one parking space, all be it on top of one another, Max Midlen earned the "Life before my Eyes" award after having not one but two bolts fail on him whilst exiting the Berger, Debs Morgenstern received recognition for her trogloditic Berger bottoming trip, and last but by no means least Tuska was the recipient of a steaming and rather fragrant prize for the most artistic signature yet seen on a survey.

After the awards, more drink and conversation flowed and when the coach finally came to take us back to the hut it was generally agreed that it had been a very good evening.

A vote of thanks goes to Marion Batten for arranging it. "Thanks Marion."

*Badvoc*

## A Day Out with Tuska's Tours

On the morning after the Dinner, the survivors assembled, bright eyed and bushy tailed, ready to board our luxury coach. Soon we were away, across the familiar Mendip countryside, with it's stonewalled enclosures towards the Georgian city of Bath. As the coachman wended his way through the wide uncrowded streets, we could see the magnificent civic buildings. Many had been made from the golden oolitic limestone, hewn from the very quarries we were about to explore.

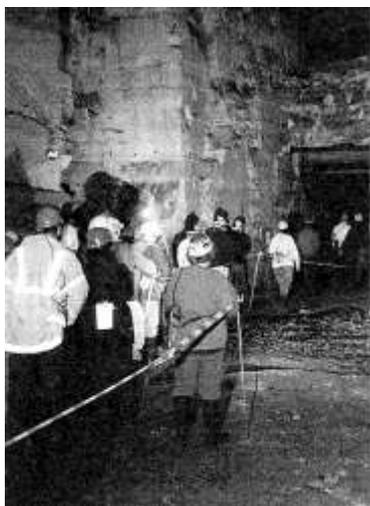
No sooner had we arrived at the Bath Stone Quarry Museum at Corsham, than Bob Scammell introduced us to the owner, David Pollard, who had deferred his holiday to escort us below. Whether out of enthusiasm, or fear of what we would get up to is not clear!) He took us in, ahead of a public tour, down a slope shaft with 159 steps, beside a railway track, which led up to where the winding gear had once stood.



Once we reached the level containing the good building stone, the rest of the trip was essentially on one level, much to the relief of at least one slightly hungover geriatric. Those who had visited other Bath stone mines, soon noticed the similarities but compared to Box, etc. the place is obviously much more stable.

The sections open to the public are subject to an annual HSE inspection. The last stone was cut in the 1950's and during the War, ammunition was stored in the quarry. Connecting galleries were walled off and in places, the roof was strengthened.

As we proceeded, David explained how the building stone was extracted. He pointed out the marks made by the pickers, key workers who opened up the 'breach', which formed the top face of the block. The workings showed marks of jadding irons and the smooth faces left by the heavy hand saws like the



one that hangs in Upper Pitts. Many of the pillars left to support the rood, taper in towards the bottom, to maximise the volume of cut stone.

The men were paid by the cubic foot.

Large cranes, worked by four men, were used to lift and drag out the blocks.



Holes in the roof marked places where chogs (the central pin at the top of a crane) had once rested. Shears or lewis pins were used to attach a block to the hauling chain.

In all, we saw three cranes, including two very rare ones in a section not shown to the public. This also contained some compressed air rock drills.

Surprisingly, formations have formed very rapidly and below the original entrance, David showed us a wooden support completely encased in pale yellow calcite. There was also a barrel covered in the same way. The photographers present had a field day and the two hours below passed quickly.



The museum has the usual little shop which sold an informative guide to the Bath stone industry. The tour ended back at Upper Pitts, with hot soup and rolls prepared by Wendy Williams and her mother; thanks ladies.

Thanks are also due to Bob Scammell and Dave Morrison for arranging the trip. We look forward to another weekend away with 'Tuska's Tours' in the near future.

Further reading:

Bath Stone, a quarry history by Perkins, Brook and Pearce ISBN 0 946045 24 0

"Tanky" Elms, a Bathstone Quarryman, compiled by C J Hall ISBN 0 9508625 3 3

*Maurice Hewins*

# WCC bookings

## **DERBYSHIRE - 27th/28th January**

A booking for Peak Cavern has been made for 27th January. Accommodation has been arranged at the TSG caving hut and cost is expected to be £3.50 per night.

*Location:* the TSG cottage is located in the village of Castleton on the A625 north west of Buxton. The cottage is in the centre of the village and can be difficult to find. If you approach from Winnat's Pass then the door is on the left after the left 90° bend. It looks like a garage door, but has the club name on it in very small writing! If in doubt, ask at the Peak Hotel.

*Other information:* Castleton is a tourist town and boasts good facilities such as shops, chip shop and numerous pubs. The Pennine Way starts nearby and there are numerous walks in the area. There is also plenty of climbing on gritstone and limestone.

## **WALES - 8th-10th March**

The Pwll Du outdoor centre at Blaenavon has been booked from 8-10th March 1996. Cost, although dependant on numbers, is expected to be about £4 per head for the weekend.

*Location:* the centre is situated directly above Ogof Draenen and not very far from Llangattock and the Clydach Gorge. To find it, make your way to the roundabout on the A40 at Abergavenny. Take the Heads of the Valley road A465 for a short distance then turn left for Llanfoist and Blaenavon B4246. Continue through Llanfoist and then up the mountain for about 2 miles. Near the top of the mountain turn right, opposite a pond, for Pwll Du. The centre is about a mile along this road on the right, just past the Lamb and Fox public house.

*Caves in the area:* access has been arranged for Ogof Draenen, Agen Allwedd and Craig A Ffynnon. Other caves in the area include Daren Cilau, Ogof Pen Eyre, Eglwys Faen, Shakespeare's Cave and Carno Adit. If anybody requires access to Carno Adit, please contact the Caving Secretary, Les Williams, on 01749 679839.

*Other information:* the centre is fully-equipped but the kitchen utensils are for bulk catering and you are therefore advised to take your own - crockery, cutlery and cups are not provided. There is a pay phone at the centre and the pub, which is within staggering distance, does not close! The nearest shops are in Llanfoist or Blaenavon, both about 2 miles away. There is also extensive walking on Bloreng, Llangattock and Sugarloaf mountains.

## **SLAUGHTER STREAM CAVE - 20th April**

Slaughter Stream Cave in the Forest of Dean has been booked for the 20th April. This is an extensive system (about 12.5km) only entered in the last 5 years, with large fossil passages and an active stream way. Numbers are limited so contact the caving sec. to book your place and for further details.

## **WEST BRECON - 3rd - 6th May**

The traditional annual booking at the WSG cottage in the Ystradfellte area has been made for May Day Bank Holiday. We have reciprocal rights with the WSG so cost will be the same as their member's rate (£2 per night in 1995).

*Location:* make your way to Hirwaun at the junction of the Heads of the Valley road and the A4059. Continue west along the A465 to the next roundabout and take the road to the industrial estate. At the next roundabout turn right. Follow this road through the industrial estate until a long straight section with a small river on the right. At the end of the straight section, turn right over a hump-back bridge, just before a caravan store yard. The WSG cottage is on the left 200 to 300m along this lane. Parking is quite restricted so people are advised to share transport where possible. The pub is called the Red Lion and is about two miles further along the lane.

*Caves in the area:* members staying here normally visit caves such as Little Neath River Cave, Bridge Cave, Pant Mawr, Tunnel Cave, OFD and Dan Yr Ogof. Although some of these caves are dependant upon the weather, there are plenty of wet weather alternatives.

*Facilities:* accommodation is in a typical caving cottage with a well-equipped kitchen and sleeping is on a two tier Swiss bunk, although camping is allowed in the grounds. There are shops in Penderyn and Hirwaun and a cafe and a chip shop in Hirwaun.

### **WEST CORNWALL - 24th-27th May**

West Cornwall 24th to 27th May. It is planned to visit some of the tin mines and also to do some climbing and walking. Accommodation will be camping. More details will be available nearer the date.

### **REDHOUSE SWALLET - 8th June**

Forest of Dean. A real collectors cave. Wetsuits recommended, hydrophobic's need not attend. Places limited so names to caving sec to reserve your place.

### **DSS DEVON - 14th-16th June**

A small cottage in the centre of Buckfastleigh, on the edge of Dartmoor has been booked. There are caves nearby, plenty of walking on the moor and the cottage is not too far from the beach. The cottage has all mod cons and is close to pubs and shops. Numbers are severely limited, so names to caving sec to reserve your place. More details later.

### **OTHER MEETS**

Currently being arranged are: Yorkshire (5th- 8th June and 28th-30th June), Otter Hole, Bath Stone Mines and North Wales.

There are plans underway to organise a Wessex Cave Club expedition to the Picos, Northern Spain next summer (1996).

It is also possible that a trip to Slovenia may be organised for 1997 which would take the form of a club holiday but in a caving area. If anyone is interested or has any information which would help in the planning of these trips, please contact the Caving Secretary.

Also contact the Caving Secretary for further information on the above meets, to reserve places, or if you have any ideas on trips or caves you would like booked.

# editorial

When I became a member of the Wessex Cave Club almost 4 years ago, this is the last thing that I thought I'd be doing. However it seems that I was in the wrong place at the wrong time, had access to a computer and could arrange the printing of the journal easier than most. So, I'm your new Editor.

I'm looking forward to doing the job for the next few years, although I'm sure it's going to be a lot harder than it appears at first glance - the production of this journal seems to have taken quite a time to put together with sorting out the layout, type faces, etc., although I'm sure that it will get easier as time goes on.

If you have any ideas or suggestions, please write to me at the address in the front of this Journal. If you submit any articles to the Journal, please supply a typed hard copy as this makes it easier to check spelling, layout, etc. However, if you have access to a computer, please supply a disc - preferably in Mac format as well as a hard copy. Please could you also leave a phone number or address so that I can contact you in the event of any queries. Everything that is sent in for publication in the Journal I will endeavour to publish, although it may not necessarily appear in the next Journal due to limitations of space.

We're thinking of having a Berger special edition of the Journal. If anyone has any articles about the WCC Berger trip that they wish to publish, please send them to me!

Finally, thanks from all of us must surely go to Nick Williams for the production of an excellent Journal over the past seven years. Personally I would like to thank everyone that has helped with articles, layout, printing, typing, etc. for this Journal as it has made my life that much easier.

Thanks

Rosie

# 25 years ago

Journal No. 132, Vol. 11, Dec '70

## CLUB NEWS p147

'We beg to remind members that annual subscriptions of 30/- (Full Members) or 35/- (Joint Members) are now due ..... As this year's expenses are expected to be heavy you are asked to be prompt with payment"

"Members are warned that rent (10/-) charged annually for food boxes in the Upper Pitts Kitchen is now due - failure to pay will result in seizure of contents. From 15th November 1970 the Hut Fees are 2/- (10p) per night (Guests 4/- or 20p). This brings the fees in line with the change to Decimal".

## OTHER DELIGHTS p149

Easter will see a party in Yorkshire. There will be a full range of trips and accommodations. All serious Mendip cavers should take the opportunity to experience the more testing vertical features of Yorkshire's big pots. "If yer not 'ard yer'd best not come".

We'd also like to mention that there are regular caving and digging meets on Mendip ..... 'The Friday Club'.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR p170

19 Oct

### THE REPLETE MENDIP CAVERS

Dear Sir,

Many people who were present at the 1969 Annual Dinner must have wondered if it was worthwhile to attend in 1970, for the food was so poor.

I, for one, became even more uncertain when I heard that our learned medical member Dr D M M Thomson would be responsible for this year's effort.

I thought of all the things that doctors are supposed to say are bad for you:-

No alcohol	-	disintegrates the liver (do cavers need livers?)
No salt	-	corrodes the heart
No sugar	-	makes the blood gritty
No strawberries	-	they form kidney cobbles
No mushrooms	-	cause galloping fungaloids
No potatoes	-	they are too aquiferous
No carrots	-	your Nife cells should be fully charged

In fact the list is endless, and I imagined that we would all starve. However, Don deserves our congratulations for a well organised and very pleasant evening, and I hope that we shall see Frome again next year.

'Twas Medicare's finest hour

Richard Kenney

At one point the water swept horizontally along a straight canal but was stopped at the end by a recent choke, and now tumbled through a hole in the wall into a huge pot-hole. Through this lay our road.

By great effort we managed to keep tolerably dry, but, as we clung to this watery ladder, I pricked up my ears at the remark, "Will you have your back or your stomach in it?" Not one of my companion escaped a drenching as he crept through the narrow space between water and rock. I pushed through cautiously, but, in spite of my efforts, I floundered in a pool. Now began the most sensational part of the journey. Through a succession of vertical rifts, which seemed without top or bottom in the gloom, the torrent swept headlong. The ledges giving out, we scrambled along the walls, bestriding the gulf or pushing on from hold to hold, candle in hand, with feet against one side and back to the other. Beneath us, beyond the glimmer of the candle-light, the water roared with a deafening echo.

From the Standard, 3rd March 1905

## GHAR PARAU FOUNDATION EXPEDITION SEMINAR

10/11 February 1996 Plas-Y-Nant, North Wales

A seminar for anyone interested in organising or going on a caving expedition anywhere in the world. The seminar will consist of lectures and workshop sessions in which experienced expedition cavers will help delegates to conceive and plan their own trips abroad. Topics covered will include:

Choosing and researching a location	Fund raising, budgeting and accounting
Choosing equipment	Food and nutrition
Medicine and rescue	Diving expeditions
Report writing and publishing	Photography and video: techniques
Scientific objectives	Cave surveying

This seminar will be suitable for all cavers interested in caving overseas, from experienced expedition cavers to complete novices. Holiday cavers with an interest in Europe, Asia or the USA will also find it of use.

Expedition groups who attend the seminar will be able to benefit from a special late deadline for applications to the Ghar Parau Foundation for funding from the National Caving Association/Sports Council and Foundations for Sport and the Arts.

Cost of the seminar will be £25, including food, accommodation and course notes.

If you are interested in booking a place on the seminar or would just like further details, please contact the organisers at the addresses below:

Howard Jones  
37 Church Rd  
Northenden  
Manchester  
M22 2NN  
0161 998 6653

Nick Williams  
71 Pendle Rd  
Leyland  
Preston  
PR5 2UN  
01772 421119

# library notes

Thanks to Bob Scammell and Barry Wilkinson (see later entry) for their donations of journals and books to the Wessex Library. Both these donations have filled gaps and expanded the library, which now contains over 1200 catalogued items.

Following is a list of new acquisitions for the Wessex Library:

## **STALACTITE 1/94**

Societe Suisse de Speleologie

Der A2 in der Loubenegg (Sieben Hengste]  
Description of exploration of this system with a plan

La grotte de l'Enfer, France  
Massif de Saleve  
History and description of this system with a plan

Plongees speleo en Roumanie  
Diving expedition to Roumania, dive site, etc  
Short account in English

Nouvelle technique de desobstruction  
Appears to be a method of blowing up boulders, etc, by drilling a 10mm hole clapping in a couple of Hil cartridges, then stemming the hole with steel rod belting the rod with a lump hammer thus detonating the cartridges and splitting the rock. Pictures and drawing. This technique is not for the fainthearted, only for the foolhardy

Nous avons teste le bloqueru de pied Alphanice  
Description of foot jammer using a Bonneti step

Annual report of various sections of the Swiss caving clubs

## **STALACTITE 2/94**

Le gouffre des Bois de Chatelat, Jura - a Tuska type Archaeological dig

Barenschacht 36 kilometres of exploration. Swiss History and continuing exploration of the system with surveys

La Muttseeohhle, 1060 metres deep. Alpes Glaronaises. A brief history and continuing work, with plan and section

Kurznachrichten Sieben Hengste Region  
Description of cave sites in the Region and abroad

## **STALACTITE 1/95**

Surveying: Errors Underground Topography  
The meaning of the word Moonmilk  
Sediment in the L'Ofenloch  
The Grottoes in the De la Sulzfluh  
Cuban Expedition 1995  
Cemmo Rabon 93 Mexique 1000 metres deep  
Underground accidents  
Speleo Art  
Annual section reports for 1994

## **CRAVEN RECORD OCT 1995 No. 40**

Gaping Gill Centenary Way  
Meets reports, including Pierre St Martin  
Sell Gill, the true story  
New entrance in Easegill system - via Pippikin  
Northern cave diving  
Dow Cave/Providence Pot - a brief history  
Gua Tardis and New Years Cave Sarawak  
Transylvania - a brief description of the area and caves with a map  
Climbing in Sky  
Silver mines of the Voorges

Mountains in France  
Conservation  
Birks Fell Cave  
George Cornes - late President of the NPC - an appreciation and Obituary

## **CHELSEA SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER 95/11**

Draenen names  
Agen Allwedd's length  
Ogof Draenen survey note with condensed survey  
Pwll-y-cwm - some thoughts on the hydrology

## **WHITE ROSE POTHOLE CLUB NEWSLETTER 95/11**

Hagg Gill extensions, Yorkshire.  
Survey with sections and descriptions  
Dib Well - a water pumping exploit  
Recent digging in Langstrothdale  
Vercours 95 - club trip - various caves  
Strans Gill Pot

## **NEW SCIENTIST 7th Oct 1995 "Offprint"**

Iridescent fossils rise up from volcano (mud spring) near Wootton Bassett. Reported in the WCC Journal in 1974 by Willie Stanton. Of course, the locals have known about it for years

## **SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB NEWSLETTER**

Have now been bound into 16 volumes with separate index and Anniversary publication

## **Ex Libris WILKINSON**

Lead mining in the Yorkshire Dales

- Arthur Rastrick

Pennine Walls - Arthur Rastrick

Horse shoe bats - J D Hooper

Mysterious World of Caves - Ernst Bauer

Prussiking - Robert Thrun

Vanishing Grottoes Mendip - Pearse & Eatough

Derbyshire Northern Caves 1-5 - Dave Elliott

Box Stone Mines - Cotham Caving Group

Ogof Ffynnon Ddu - Orielly et al  
Nansk Grotteblad - Speleo group of Norway

- run of some 30 Journals  
Pennines of Adjacent areas - HMSO

Bristol and Gloucester District Regional

Geology – HMSO

Numerous other journals that have filled gaps

## **NSS NEWS 95/9**

NSS Convention coverage

## **Federation Francaise de Speleologie 1992**

International expeditions - a complete list

Brief reports on the areas and caves

Some 36 expeditions: URSS Georgia, Turkey, Brazil, Austria, China, Roumania, Guatemala, India, Spain, Mongolia, Indonesia, Portugal, Greece, Lebanon, Laos, Tunisia, Nepal

## **GEORGIA UNDERGROUND 95/9 Vol. 31/4**

'Blunder Hole'. Discovery and exploration

Plan and sections. Jackson County, Alabama

Taking the Highland Plunge' Highland Plunge discovery and exploration. Photos and plan and sections. Oventon County, Tennessee

A successful ridge walk

Sir Lance-A-Stot and Yank it well

Discovery and exploration. Plan and section

Jackson County, Alabama

'The Rebel Cave Project' Surveying Story. Plan and profile. Drawings by Linda Heslop

The discovery of Tag's most remote pit

Blue Spring Cave. Exploration and survey trips, photos and drawings by Linda Heslop  
Larson's Well. The making of a classic

Banging, exploring, surveying  
Safety, equipment and techniques  
Equipment review. The BMS Microrack

## **Federation Francaise de Speleologie 1993**

International expeditions - a complete list

Brief reports on the areas and caves

Some 37 expeditions: Columbia, Swiss, Indonesia, R Junie, Guatemala, China, Mexico, Austria, Turkey, Philippines, Spain, Madagascar, Roumania, Italy, Dominica, Albania, Morocco, Brazil, Russia, Tunisia.

## **Federation Francaise de Speleologie 1995/1 No 27**

Basically a guide to how the Federation conducts its business, who looks after what, how and where

## **International Caver 1994/11**

Bill Board/ Caving below the vineyards: the Entre-deux Mens Karst Gironel Historical and surveys

Observations on the karst and caves of the Karakorum North Pakistan guide

The new Drachenhauchtoch survey and Windgat cave, Namibia. 'Black Munbas and dust'

Introduction Caves of Slovenia Guide

Recent explorations in the caves of the Mantamba Hill Tanga, Tanzania. 'Historical'

International news

## **International Caver 1994/12**

Vietnam, A caver's paradise

Chanta Casolae Valsenii – an expedition cartier

Floods and boulder chokes; Cuetzaleu Mexico

World Caver guide and Karst Atlas of Rumania

## **International Caver 1995/13**

In memory of Vladimin Kissel'ow - 'Russian cave diver'  
The pothole system Lukina Jama - Trojania, Croatia.

History, exploration and survey  
Grotte Chavuet - a stone age masterpiece

In the depths of Mongolia. Small caves description and surveys

China caves 1994. Descriptions of caves and surveys

Caving in the Philippines Pangasinan Province. Cave exploration and survey

Turkey, Central and western Taurus. Hydrological and speleological investigations. Cave survey, etc

## **International Caver 1995/14**

Classic river caves of Slovenia; Piuka-Rak Triangle. Basically a guide to the area

World Caver's guide and karst atlas of Hungary

Caving below the desert: Cater Magara, Syria

History, exploration, geology and survey

The first international cave: E A Martel 1885 – 38

International news. Book reviews

# Just another swift half

Rob Taviner

*The tigers of wrath are wiser than the  
horses of instruction'*  
WILLIAM BLAKE

*'Go up, thou bald head'*  
II KINGS

*There's a problem, you might have to give Scotland  
a miss'.*

Potential sprogging complications threatened to put the knackers on Sutherland '95.

*Of course dear'* I said. *'Not bloody likely'* I thought. Fortunately the problem of how to get to Sutherland without proving I was a complete bastard were avoided by a last minute all-clear and I was on the phone to Jake.

*'I'll pick you up at 5.30'* he said, *'You won't have to drive at all'.*

Sounded good.

*'Oh, by the way, are you in the AA'.*

Ummm.

Jake shows up at 7.30.

*'We'll have a swift half in the Hunters and then hit the road'.*

Where have I heard that one before?

*'Just another swift half...'*

I pull out of the Hunters car park at 9.30 placating the remonstrating Jake only with ready access to the on-tap cider. Estelle takes over at Preston and heads north with the Talking Heads at full volume and the cold fan at full blast. Dawn breaks and Jake surfaces. *'Where are we?'*

*Glasgow'.*

*Terrific, I'll drive'.*

Bastard.

We blow away Jakes' strange taste in German stomping brass band music on the swingbridge above the Corrieshalloch Gorge. Jake tests the swing part just as I'm taking a photo - I always wanted a shot of that particular piece of sky. Ullapool follows swiftly, the Canadian flag flying from every trawler. I try not to look Spanish. After 650 rain free miles we pull into the Grampian hut at 10.00 a.m. It's a glorious day with deep snow on the peaks. Perfect. The hut is full with a motley crew of climbers, cavers and hydrologists (Expert Quote – *'The water goes in at the top and comes out at the bottom'.*)

*'A quick breakfast then we'll shift a load of scaffolding up to Damoclean Dig'.*

OK.

*'We'll have a quick one in The Alt before we go'.*

Ummm.

The Alt has a new landlord - Eric - he opens all day and serves food. Four hours and numerous pints later the plan is abandoned. With just two hours sleep in 48 an early night is called for - oh, with just time for a swift half.

Sunday sees us dumping five scaffold bars into Damoclean, 2.5 knacker miles up the side of Breabag mountain. After a quick tea and brevil break we're off up Traligill to try and locate the long lost Blar nan Fiadhag Pot. This small open pot, discovered in 1970, lies in the middle of a featureless moor and has a potential on-going rift. Frustratingly it has never been relocated. We prospect the two distinct grid references quoted for this site but apart from some fine limestone pavement there's no depression and no cave. We poke about in one or two minor sinks before heading back to the hut where the Tonys' Jarratt and Boycott have arrived.

Later that night Mike O'Driscoll invites a couple of Knockans finest back to the hut to sample the scrumpy.

*'Looks like piss'* Ian ventures disdainfully

*'Tastes like piss'* agrees Hughie.

The atmosphere is aggressive. J-Rat tries his 'hands across the ocean, we're all brothers together' routine. Hughie steadies himself searching for profound words of wisdom.

*'Piss off, ye baldy-headed Sasunnaich bashturd'.*

Gradually the deadly nectar works its magic. By the time they crawl from the door at 3.30 a.m. they're convinced it is piss.

Mayday breaks gloriously. A session in Tree Hole is planned. Most of our work in Sutherland has been concentrated on linking together the known sections of the underground Traligill. We had pushed downstream Tree Hole for 70m, practically connecting it to Uamha a' Bhrisdeadh-Duille (Disappointment Cave), another of our discoveries. The largest gap however, not much more than 100m

on the surface, lay between upstream Tree Hole and Lower Traligill Cave/Lower Traligill Flood Sink. In '94 we'd pushed a grim wet and muddy crawl for 15m to a wide flat out section with a howling draught, since pushed by Grampian members Goon, Martin Hayes and Roger Galloway for a further 5m. We were absolutely certain it would go.

*'Let's stop in The Inch for a quick one'* says J-Rat. The Inch also has a new landlord - Derek - he also opens all day and also serves food.....

Twenty-four hours later we follow the Two-Tones' into the cave. They've cleared four skiploads in twenty minutes. *'It's about to go'* shouts J-Rat. With difficulty we manoeuvre a couple of larger boulders away down the crawl. As Tony digs his way through the rest of us follow. A couple of squeezes under roots and streambed boulders see us sliding down to a small muddy chamber with the roar of water visible but not attainable through an eyehole at the top of a low bedding crawl. However a squeeze to the left enters a big scalloped bedding, 4m wide and a metre high, which meanders via an entertaining roof-level squeeze to a boulder choke and short section of streamway. Upstream looks hopeless but downstream can be seen to continue through a low fast-flowing duck for at least 10m. Nobody fancies it in dry kit. *The 'Swift Half Series'* had gained us 60m and closed half the gap to Lower Traligill Cave in one hit.

With time to kill we wander up-valley, first building a dam to divert the surface river into Lower Traligill Cave and open the Flood Sink, before looking at Uamh Cailliche Peireag, an impressive arched sink/flood resurgence and old battleground of J-Rats. Something very dead and very smelly blocks the main stuff off to the left but a strongly-draughting crawl to the right is noted for later attention. A quick trip down the Waterslide in Cnoc Nan Uamh to check on the state of the divers line and another promising lead bagged and it was off to The Inch for a celebratory impromptu (*'be there at 8.30 sharp'*) Ceilidh. Celebration proves a fine mix of beer, whisky, bagpipes, drums, crash-barriers, vomit and blood. Simply magnificent.

Wake up with a mega hangover and a mouth like a vultures crutch. J-Rat looks like he's had the shit kicked out of him. Half a bottle of paracetamol later I've got kidney failure but the hangover's fading

fast. We watch the worlds worst sheepdog herd his flock straight down the middle of the road to the consternation of two coachloads of tourists and one despairing owner. Funny, I've never heard *those* commands on One Man And His Dog. It's turned really hot, just the sort of a day *not* to carry 13 scaffold bars up to Damoclean, so we carry 13 scaffold bars up to Damoclean - or rather carry 9 and watch Gadge dehydrate his way up with 4 strapped to a mountain bike. Two hours digging see a further 3 ft depth gained in this classic swallet which promises another Claonaite. For Wednesday night digging we take a look at a flood rising behind Elphin, to verify reports that stones can be heard rattling down 8-10ft. They can, but fifteen minutes boulder rolling reveal it to be a long-term dig.

Thursday and we're back in Tree Hole, pushing, photographing and surveying. Little progress is made in the choke at the end of the dry stuff leaving the low streamway which J-Rat pursues tenaciously for 20m past the other end of the impassable eyehole to a sump. The survey totals 80m from the start point of the '94 dig, taking the length of the cave beyond 200m - the 5th longest in Assynt and in excess of 500m once the sumps downstream separating it from Uamha a' Bhrisdeadh-Duile and Traligill Rising are connected. The photographic trip is abandoned due to a broken cable.

Afterwards, whilst the Two-Tones begin a much-needed surface survey I take advantage of the dam to dig open the rarely visited Lower Traligill Flood Sink, the next cave upstream and one we'd always been hopeful of extending. A quick trip reveals a fairly uninspiring hole with one possible lead - a boulder preventing access to a small streamway which can be seen to sink in gravel a few feet downstream, but upstream appears to continue - albeit with an apparent potential of only a few feet. Still a lead is a lead so we apply some rock-remover for a follow-up trip the following day.

Whilst J-Rat and Estelle play in Waterfall Rising, Tony Boycott and I transport some of the digging kit further up the valley, attacking the promising lead in Cnoc Nan Uamh en route. The Waterslide drops very steeply and dramatically for 75m to a sump, passed the previous year by Tony and Pete Mulholland to 500m of excellent passage. An inlet, so small that none of us had ever noticed it before, debouches directly into the sump pool. Investigation revealed a low pebble-filled crawl

leading to a water-filled but on-going and apparently roomy passage. We felt that by removing the rock-lip at the entrance to the pool we may be able to drop the water level sufficiently to pursue this passage further. It was just possible that it could provide a sump bypass, or at that depth, at least a decent inlet.

Jake and Gadge spend the day expanding the bedding in Uamh Cailliche Peireag which looks long term but draughts well and is heading straight into the large blank area housing the Upper Basin sinks. Just for a change we rounded off a productive day in The Inch.

At the bottom of Traligill, a big house which had stood empty for years and had recently been bought by some enterprising lads from Aberdeen for conversion to a Geology lecture centre, had been the scene of some excitement. During the course of the day they had uncovered some interesting war relics, including a live hand grenade and concerned at the prospect of nutters roaming the hills laden with explosives, had called the army to dispose of it. Later we're entertained by a group of drunken bikers serenading some lads from Gloucester with Wurzels songs.

*'Where are you lot from?'* they ask.  
*'Somerset'*. Silence.

### GOON IN DOWNSTREAM TREE HOLE



### SCAFFOLD RUN TO DAMACLEON



After a week of fine weather, things finally deteriorate and despite fortification in the Culag Hotel in Lochinver enthusiasm is low for a return to Flood Sink. Whilst the Tonys' and Simon Brooks complete the surface levelling from Glenbain Cottage, I grovel back in to check that things have rearranged themselves satisfactorily. They have, but with a gain of all of 2m prospects look between grim and nil. Upstream, the water enters from a very low pebble-filled crawl presumably entering from a sinkpoint only a few feet from the entrance. Interestingly only some of the water sinks in the bedding to the right, most of the water disappearing through a tiny hole straight ahead. We now believe that most of the water in upstream Tree Hole derives from the water sinking in Flood Sink, with the main underground Traligill travelling through a flooded loop from Lower Traligill Cave to enter Tree Hole at one or more points downstream, in particular at the old upstream sump and the impressive waterfall discovered in 1991. To finish we give Simon a guided tour of the Upper Basin, clearing out Uamh Cailliche Peireag en route. The draught has diminished but the low and undulating bedding can be seen to continue behind a big boulder, so we fire and retire. Jake and Gadge spend the day constructing the scaffold frame in Damoclean to facilitate a push ahead.

By Saturday, an influx of Grampian regulars swells the numbers sufficiently to enable us to concentrate on specific projects. Tony Boycott and Simon plan a lengthy trip beyond the sumps in Cnoc Nan Uamh whilst Jake, Estelle and Gadge headed back up to Damoclean, which is now in full swing. The rest of us return to Lower Traligill to try and tie up a few loose ends. Leaving J-Rat to organise his diving kit outside Uamha a' Bhrisdeadh-Duille, I guide Goon & Co through the delights of the various Tree Hole extensions, culminating in a little progress beneath the upstream choke and another failed photo session. A potential way on is noted and we head out to assist J-Rat into Uamha a' Bhrisdeadh-Duille to investigate both the downstream and upstream sumps for the first time. Only 15m of approach passage separates the entrance from the downstream sump but it proves to be 15m of extremely tight and muddy thrust plane which takes an interminable time to negotiate and where the limitations of certain items of kit designed for more spacious occupations become only too apparent. Still it helps to take J-Rats mind off the dive and he pursues a large descending and fast-flowing thrust passage beneath fine roof pendants for 10m until concerns about line belays force a retreat.

The sump continues in fine style, heading straight for Traligill Rising the upstream point of which can only be a few metres away. We quickly ferry a single kit the 100m up toward the upstream sump where a connection with Tree Hole appears a certainty but disappointingly we're repelled at the *Compass Sucker* by a mixture of boulder rearrangement and high water conditions. None too enthusiastic to repeat the bottle carry immediately, we abandon the kit on a ledge and head out for a well-earned bath. Goon, chuffed at having propelled his 46-Inch chest through the inaptly named 40-Inch squeeze, confesses his delight at a having visited more virgin Sutherland cave in one day than for some time, although with some reservations as to the general dimensions. Despite fine diving conditions, further boulder rearrangement and cut line also defeat Tony and Simon at Cnoc Nan Uamh and they are unable to locate the underwater squeeze into Northern Lights. Progress at Damoclean Dig has fortunately been more forthcoming and hopes are high that the swallet will soon begin to open up.

For three of us, Sunday is our final day and whilst Gadge goes off to try and remove a large offending and rather public boulder plugging The Elephant Trap and the divers head for Claonaite, most of our party return for an all out session at Damoclean. It's been a hard weeks digging, drinking, sherparing, drinking, scaffolding and drinking so I decide to take a day off wandering the sizeable and relatively untouched limestone plateau behind Elphin, taking in Cold Water Cave and some interesting localised sinks and risings on the Southern shore of Loch Urigill. A mellow spot. Packed and ready to go we wander over to the Allt Nan Uamh to pick up Estelle and J-Rat who have been killing time waiting for the divers listening to Tony Boycotts' car radio. With perfect timing we materialise as one, only to spend the next twenty minutes bump-starting Tonys' not unexpectedly flat battery. Safely ensconced in The Inch the divers reveal that they've finally located the contentious main flow in the terminal Sump 6 complex. Further trips are planned. A swift half, a quick bite to eat and farewells all round see us on the road before midnight, arriving after an uneventful journey - bar an entertaining police chase and a pathologically high rabbit count - on oh so green Mendip by mid-morning.

The late arrivals stayed on for an extra week to pursue a whole mess of leads. An attack on the new terminal choke in Tree Hole was begun - to be

continued next year - and further attempts were mounted on downstream Uamha a' Bhrisdeadh-Duille. Mike O'Driscoll eventually managed the furthest penetration yet but reported it to be getting too tight, although there was a feeling he may have missed the main way on. Damoclean developed into a relatively solid rift pursued for 20ft into an area of loose bedding planes. Only time prevented more substantial progress but at least the game is afoot. Uamh Cailliche Peireag was pursued but continues to keep a firm lock on its secrets and would appear frustratingly long term. Bad weather threatened to prevent a return to the Waterslide dig in Cnoc Nan Uamh but relented long enough to reveal a powerful air current above the newly broken sump. This will prove difficult to pursue but is potentially an exciting site which could go just about anywhere.

A fortnight later an inspired Simon Brooks returned with a second wave of Southern invaders to achieve Sutherlands' discovery of the decade. Diving with Mike O'Driscoll he continued the passage investigated with Tony Boycott in the Claonaite Sump 6 complex, surfacing to 300m of stream passage and *'The Great Northern Time Machine'*, a huge chamber. Follow up trips revealed numerous avens, fossil oxbows and inlets taking the total discovery beyond 800m, restoring Claonaites' recently usurped position at 2.5km as Scotlands longest cave. Many leads remain and the big stuff lies tantalisingly close to a number of known caves. It is likely that future work will concentrate heavily on the Allt Nan Uamh whos' remote boulder-strewn crags and dark brooding flanks doubtless harbour many a secret yet.

So another successful expedition has flown by and as in previous years the main aim had been achieved only for yet more leads to reveal themselves. The combination of more and more cavers seeking success north of the border coupled with the discovery of two 'big ones' in consecutive years suggests that it is only a matter of time before Sutherland takes its' rightful and inevitable place amongst our major caving regions. Whether this will be a good thing or not remains to be seen. The attraction, at least for this over-crowded Sasunnaich lies in its' unspoilt remoteness. For some reason the prospect of hordes of tourist cavers stomping around Sutherlands' wild mountains and glens fills me with trepidation.

Ah well ..... best have another swift half.

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# letters to the editor

The AGM decision to provide SRT rope and rigging equipment was not made by a unanimous vote, and, having spoken to various members afterwards, I feel that the concerns I express here will be shared by several members.

While it is accepted that traditionally the Club provides expensive items of 'group' equipment such as ladders, lifelines, Bosch drills etc, many of us feel that SRT equipment should not fall into this category. Admittedly, it is expensive, and I can see the attraction to any member in having the Club provide SRT kit for his (or her) use. The Club has wisely taken the view that harnesses, jammers etc are personal equipment, and that these items, like helmets, lamps (and diving gear), should be bought by individuals for their own use, and they will be personally responsible for their maintenance regarding function and safety.

But SRT rope cannot and should not be regarded in the same way as ladder and lifeline. In SRT, a caver commits himself to that one rope and rigging system, without the inherent belt and braces approach of ladder and lifeline. Inspection of lifelining ropes and ladder is relatively simple, and the safety record of traditional techniques supports the methods of checking ropes and ladders. Lifelines are designed for shock loading; abrasion is easy to detect, and the relative cheapness of this type of rope permits regular replacement. Similarly, rusted wires on ladders are easy to spot, and the most common ladder 'failure' is a slipped or bent rung - neither of which is essentially life-threatening.

The concern over the safe working-life of SRT ropes means that in practice, they tend to be replaced more frequently than may be strictly necessary, because damage tends to be internal and hence not detectable. It may be relatively easy to log 'man-trips' per rope, but who is to decide how many such trips should take place before replacement? Similarly, who is to calculate the amount of shock-loading that any rope has been subjected to? When considering group SRT rope, the Club must err generously on the safe side, which means a large and continuing outlay on rope. Gifts of rope, unless they are brand-new, must be regarded with suspicion, and refused, because the history of such tackle cannot be guaranteed. To paraphrase, one man's caving kit is another man's rubbish!

The stated intent of the AGM decision is to provide SRT training for members. We do not currently have a Training Officer, and I am firmly of the opinion that one cannot be appointed except by a General Meeting of the Club. It is too responsible a position for us to do otherwise. When such an officer is appointed, he or she must have a recognised qualification, and be personally responsible for the care and maintenance of all Club SRT kit, and for logging its use. Maybe I am being cynical, but how easy it will be to define any caving trip where members want to use this gear as a 'training trip'!

Furthermore, for insurance purposes, this tackle must only be used by adult, fully paid-up members of the Club, and it would be wise if each user was to sign a suitable indemnity. The Club should also be very sure of its responsibilities and liabilities in this area, and ensure that its insurance cover is adequate, at the very least.

All in all, I believe that the Club has opened a very dangerous can of worms, and I trust that if the Committee decides to implement the AGM decision, it will do so very carefully. Past experience has shown that accident liability ultimately devolves on every single Club member, active or not, wealthy or not!

Yours sincerely

Phil Hendy

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The mention in Paul Hadfield's article of an 800 foot cliff with a cave entrance about 200 foot below the rim reminded me of a very similar situation seen in France. It was nearly 50 years ago, but the very impressive scene is unforgettable, though the details have faded.

It's in the Vercors, below the Col de la Machine, to which a narrow road runs along the edge of a drop of perhaps 1000 foot into the Combe Laval. The Combe is a blind valley, ending in a sheer cliff which had a large stream flowing out of it from a cave entrance about halfway up (or down).

Getting into that offers a real challenge, which was utterly beyond our equipment. I hope that members caving in the Vercors will have a look at it and that this will inspire them to have a go, even though it may perhaps have already lost its virginity.

Best wishes

Paul Dolphin

*Wessex Cave Club Journal*

# WCC logbook extracts

## **30.9.95 - Wessex Invasion of Portland**

Rather large group led by *Dom and Nigel*, including *Tall Graham, Grandad, Cookie, Debs, Les, Vern, Rosie, Mark, Mak, Jo, Max, Mad Al, Brian and Andy Morse*.

Descended down Ariel and into the system and waited as the rebolting programme was completed. Through trip to Sandy Hole. Some people found it a little bit tight in places, others found interesting traverses. I just found horrible crawls. I'm glad I brought knee pads! The evening was spent in successful search of Weymouth's equivalent of Twin Titties!

## **1.10.95 - Grove Cliff Caves (Flagpole)**

*Tall Graham, Mad Al and Grandad*

Entire system - saw a formation - no crawling. Excellent trip.

## **2.10.95 - Swildon's Upper Series**

*Tall Graham and Grandad Rands*

You would think Monday morning would be quiet in Swildon's, but oh no - met two other parties.

## **7.10.95 - Ogof Draenen Wessex Extensions**

*Mark and Les*

A trip to survey the finds of the last couple of trips.... Found 150 - 200 ft passage. 10 1/2hrs

## **11.10.95 - GB**

*Aubrey and Martin Cross* Got lost! so came out - someone had filled the place with bang fumes - could not see across passage. Vis 6-7ft .....

## **7.10.95 - Les Catacombes, Paris**

*Bob and Golly Scammell* These are old mine workings where 'deads' really mean 'deads'! Spiral stair approx. 80- 100ft followed by about 1/4 mile of low narrow passage which emerge into some really macabre old workings stacked with literally millions of peoples' bones, dug up at various times .....

## **14.10.95 - Ogof Draenen**

*Les, Mark, Andy, Cookie and Ian* Continued pushing the 'Wessex Extensions' now called 'Wessex Series'. 13hr trip

## **7.10.95 - Birkwith and Calf Holes**

..... took an inflatable dinghy into the Birkwith Canal.

## **8.10.95 - Heron Pot**

.....one of our novices is going to be a Wessex member - although he doesn't know it yet, on account of him being 3' nothing tall.

## **21.10.95 - North Hill Swallet**

*Tall Graham, Martin, Tim and Mad Al* Everyone told us this is the Wessex Cess Pit! However, no sewage was encountered. Plenty of fauna - beetles etc.....

## **28.10.95 - Ogof Draenen**

*Dom, Mark, Richard Hathaway, Ian Timney, Andy Morse and Cookie*

Further exploration. Nice formations.

## **4.11.95 - Loxton Cave**

*Debs and Cookie*

A trip to see what the Parish Council want to gate ..... the aven looked like some'at out of Raiders of the Lost Ark - the spiders were crawling over each other and could eat you alive

## **4.11.95 - Ogof Draenen**

*Mark, Max and Sue*

A short trip to show our Ozi member around the Wessex Extensions, had a couple of virgins and came out! Approx. length explored to date is estimated at 2 km and still going (the end and back is now a 6hr steady trip)

## **5.11.95 - Thrupe Lane, High Atlas**

*Dom, Carmen, Debs and Rosie*

A good 150' pitch, but a little cool waiting around

## **10.11.95 - Swildon's Hole**

*Dom*

Troubles well low

## **11.11.95 - ~~Draenen~~ OFD**

*Mark, Mak, Cookie, Andy and Tonic*

Saw the Draenen car park in flood and decided to do OFD instead

## **11.11.95**

"I'll do anything in a wetsuit" *Carmen* said

## **12.11.95 - Little Crapnell Swallet**

*Carmen, Dom, Debs, Cookie, Samira & Gareth*

Sporting trip in the wet. Excellent little cave, Tuska!

# subscription news

## LOCKERS

The lockers have recently been renumbered so that the membership secretary can establish who owns what. So far we only have those people listed below as owners of lockers. Therefore if your name is not on the list and you do possess a locker, please contact Dave Cooke, stating which locker is yours. He would be grateful if you could do this as soon as possible as there are other people waiting for a locker.

### *Locker owners:*

Steve Deacon, Pete Hann, Ian Jepson, Max Midlen, Aubrey Newport, Graham Prole, John Thomas, Stephen Waite, Beth Yates, Vern Freeman, Maurice Hewins, Jim Rands, Jackie Dallman, Mike York, Dominic Sealy, Nick Williams and Mark Helmore.

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

A gratifying number of people have paid their subs recently, but for those who haven't, don't forget that the rates increase on January 1st 1996 - the 2 rates are listed below. If you pay now, pay the amount in the left column, but remember that the full rate in the right hand column applies after January 1st 1996.

	Pre JAN 1ST	Post JAN 1ST
Single member	£18	£24
Joint (1 vote)	£22.50	£30
Joint (2 votes)	£31.50	£42
OAP (non-caver)	£6.30	£7.20
Journal only	£12.50	£12.50
Lockers	£5	
Food Box	£2.50	

To renew your membership, please send a cheque with your name, address and tel. no. (and details of the rates paid) to: Dave Cooke, 33 Laverstoke Gardens, London, SW15 4JB Tel. 0181 788 9955

If you have renewed your membership for this year, please find enclosed your sticker to stick on the reverse of the card. If you have lost your plastic membership card, please contact Dave Cooke on the number above - the cost will be 50p and please enclose an SAE.

# club diary

## 1996

### January

- 6th NCA Council Meeting
- 6th WCC v. BEC Skittles
- 20th/21st Wessex Rescue Weekend
- 20tht WCC Committee meeting
- 21st BCRA Council Meeting
- 27th DCUC AGM
- 27th/28th Derbyshire Meet - TSG

### February

- 3rd Wookey Hole
- 10th/11th Ghar Parau Expedition Seminar Plas-Y-Nant
- 24th CSCC Meeting
- 24th BCRA Cave Science Symposium
- 25th Ghar Parau Committee Meeting

### March

- 3rd WCC Committee meeting
- 8/9/10th Wales Meet - Blaenavon
- 16th NCA AGM, Stafford

### April

- 5th-8th Yorkshire Meet
- 20th Slaughter Stream Cave
- 21st WCC Committee meeting

### May

- 4/5/6th Wales Meet - WSG
- 24th-27th West Cornwall Meet

### June

- 2nd WCC Committee meeting
- 8th Redhouse Swallet
- 14th-16th Devon Meet - Buckfastleigh
- 15th BCRA Forest of Dean Seminar II
- 28th-30th Yorkshire Meet

### August

- 3rd-9th 1996 NSS Convention, Colorado

## 1997

### August

- 6th-20th UIS International Congress of Speleology, La Chaux de Fonds Switzerland