



THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 260 JUNE 1998

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

Club News

Club Events and Meets

A **Banwell Caves** trip has been organised for Saturday 20th June - this will include Stalactite Cave and Bone Cave. Meet at Upper Pitts at 2pm.

Don't forget to come and support the Wessex in whatever way you can (!) at the **Annual Cricket Match** on Saturday 1st August - usual time, usual place and probably the usual frivolities!!!

After you've recovered from the cricket, why not make the extra effort to attend the **WCC Yorkshire Meet** over August Bank Holiday, 29th-31st. Suggest you contact the Caving Secretary if you're interested as we may be able to book the caravans again.

An updated **WCC Membership List** is currently being produced by Vern Freeman. Unless you have stated previously, phone numbers will be issued in this list. However, if you DO NOT want your telephone number to be included in the list, please contact him ASAP

With the **next Journal** (last in this volume), you'll receive: the new WCC Handbook & Prospectus, updated WCC Address List, details & map for the WCC Dinner weekend as well as the nomination forms for next years committee - be prepared!

New Member

James H Carr

Culver Cottage, Luccombe, Minehead
TA24 8TE Tel: 0973 366762

WCC AGM & Dinner Weekend

October 17th and 18th

10.30am: AGM at the Hunters Lodge Inn

6.45pm: Coach from Eastwater Lane for Dinner at the Mendip Centre, Combe Lodge

12 midnight: returning to Upper Pitts

Sunday: Mystery Tour

Good News!

The WCC "**Slovenia Expedition 1998**" has been awarded the Ghar Parau Foundation's runner-up prize of £250. The application placed particular emphasis on introducing new cavers to the experience, techniques and, (lets not deny it), fun of international cave exploration.

The first prize of £1,250 has been awarded to the Ghar Parau Foundation Kapuas River Recce Kalimantan 1998 (India).

1998 has not been a good year for expedition funding. The Foundation for Sport and Arts decided not to fund anything abroad and the Sports Council has failed to provide any money because of its split into the UK Sports Council and regional Sports Councils. Some money might be forthcoming when it gets its act together. As a result the GPF has had to rely solely on its own funds.

In order to increase the impact they decided to award two large prizes instead of several smaller prizes, so we are particularly lucky to win this prize.

Thank you GPF

Letter

Is anyone going to the **NSS Convention** – in Tennessee this August? If so, read on ...

I received this message about a month ago and was asked if I could put it in the Journal so that Wessex members may be made aware

Dear colleagues,

John Harwell Lives about 15 mins from JFK Airport. If anyone is going to attend this convention on a cheap ticket through JFK, let John know and he may be able to put them up if they also want to go 'touristing' in the City.

*John may be contacted at:
82 Doyle St, Long Beach, New York, 11561, USA
e-mail: 100660.2001@compuserve.com.*

John Hanwell

Cavers Fair 3rd-4th-5th July

Friday 3rd July:

Venue: HUNTERS LODGE INN, PRIDDY
Registration from 7.30pm – midnight
Social evening with slides - cavers get-together
BAR TILL MIDNIGHT

Saturday 4th July

Venue: PRIDDY VILLAGE HALL
Registration from 8am * Breakfast served from 8am
with refreshments available all day *
times for the following to be confirmed:
Cave art exhibition, hands on rescue equipment
workshop, underground first aid, trade stands.
Pre-booking is strongly advised

ALL SESSIONS DEPART FROM
PRIDDY VILLAGE HALL
short caving trips 9.30am

Upper Swildons, Upper Eastwater, Burrington
Caves and other venues according to demand

longer caving trips 1.30pm

Swildons Sump 1, Priddy Green Sink - Swildons
through-trip. Eastwater and other venues
according to demand

St Cuhberts Swallet 9.30am - 3pm approx. A
choice of trips into this classic cave.

Underground Cave Art

with artists Robin Gray and Mark Lumley - choice of
venues.

Cave Photography Workshop

(provisionally Swildon's Hole)

guided walk

with naturalist Martin Torbett(1.30pm)

cave video

with Pete Isaacs shoot 9.30am in Goatchurch edit
1.30pm using digital technology.

Basic SRT

Surface training Split Rock Quarry- 2 sessions
(9.30am & 1.30pm)

Ropework

Underground in Upper Swildons - knots, belays,
handlines, lifelines - 2 sessions (9.30am & 1.30pm)

Ladder and line

Swildons Old 40 foot Pot - advanced pitch rigging
lifeline systems - 2 sessions (9.30am & 1.30pm)

SRT Rescue

For experienced SRT users- 2 sessions (9.30am &
1.30pm)

SRT Rigging

For experienced SRT users- 2 sessions (9.30am &
1.30pm)

Novice and youngsters caving trip

Saturday 4th July - afternoon Goatchurch Cavern

Compton Martin Ochre Mine

9.30am - short easy trip for mine enthusiasts

Singing River Mine

1.30pm Longer trip in a complex and fun system
(10 metre entrance pitch)

6.30pm MENDIP CHALLENGE

Treasure Hunt for competing teams. Priddy area
1st Prize £50.00 token from Quipu for Leisure

8.00pm BARBEQUE AND STOMP

with local band TUFF E NUFF *Bar until 11.30pm*

Sunday 5th July - morning:

Registration from 8.30am Refreshments and
breakfast

Hymac digging extravaganza

Guided walk and Caving trips

Ropework

Underground in Upper Swildons - knots, belays,
handlines, lifelines - 2 sessions (9.30am & 1.30pm)

Ladder and line

Swildons Old 40 foot Pot - advanced pitch rigging
lifeline systems - 2 sessions (9.30am & 1.30pm)

SRT Rescue

For experienced SRT users-
2 sessions (9.30am & 1.30pm)

SRT Rigging

For experienced SRT users-
2 sessions (9.30am & 1.30pm)

venue: SPLIT ROCK QUARRY:

Variety of SRT routes to try with advice on hand.
Time 9.30am - 4pm

Sunday 5th July - afternoon

venue: SWILDONS HOLE afternoon trips to visit
40' pot washed away 10th July 1968

WEEKEND TICKET FOR SATURDAY - TWO

SESSIONS, BARBEQUE AND STOMP AND

SUNDAY SESSION £12 pre registered

BARBEQUE AND STOMP £5 per person on the
door

BOOKINGS TO -
CAVERS FAIR, PRIDDY GREEN
HOUSE, PRIDDY, WELLS,
BA5 3BE

all cheques payable to NCA Training Account

THE CAVERS FAIR IS ORGANISED JOINTLY BY COUNCIL OF
SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS AND THE NCA TRAINING COMMITTEE

Back to the Silurian

Maurice Hewins

Many years ago, Judy and I had spent happy hours scouring the face of Mendip in search for fossils, so when Les Williams announced that a geological field trip was planned we looked forward to revisiting some old familiar sites. It was, however, a pleasant surprise, when a glance at the itinerary showed that all the planned locations were new to us. It was also a new-look Les who took us round. Obviously well-versed in his subject, he discussed such matters as plate tectonics and graded sediments with an enthusiasm often found lacking in younger under-graduates.

Our first port of call was the abandoned Downhead Quarry (NGR ST687461) to inspect the oldest rocks in the Mendip stratigraphic column. Here, some 430 million years ago, in Silurian times, volcanic activity beneath a shallow sea deposited a series of Andesitic and Rhyolitic tuffs and lavas. These materials are commercially extracted in nearby Moonshill Quarry.



Our three car convoy then moved on to Beacon Wood (NGR ST637458) where Portishead beds of the Old Red Sandstone lie exposed near the line of the old Roman Fosse Way. Les explained how the silts and pebbles here had been graded when washed from an arid landscape during floods into the Upper Devonian Ocean.

We then called at the cafe at Maesbury Garden Centre, much to the relief of Richard and Mel who had somehow missed breakfast. Then, leaving the cars here, the group set off along the track bed of the former Somerset and Dorset Railway until gently dipping beds of Lower Limestone Shales were reached, exposed in the cutting (NGR ST605472). The first fossils of the day were found here, typically Brachiopods such as Spirifer and parts of crinoids.

A final stop before lunch was made at Gurney Slade Quarry (NGR ST619487) in more familiar Carboniferous Limestone. Like those at the last site, the rocks here were laid down in warm shallow

seas and yielded abundant fossils. As well as reef building corals we found both Spirifer and Productus.

At the Jolliffe Arms at Kilmersdon, Mark Helmore and son joined us. His car boot contained some price specimens from his own fossil collection. Then it was on to the landscaped tips of the old Kilmersdon Collieries (NGR ST682536) where sufficient material is available for fossil-hunting, I was busy stuffing some fine ferns and Calamites into my bag when I looked up and found the others had gone.



It had just started to rain slightly by the time Les gathered us together at Church Farm Stratton on Fosse (NGR ST663677) where we sheltered under a cliff of Dolomitic Conglomerate of Triassic age. Since the rocks at Downhead were formed 215 million years had elapsed and Mendip had crossed the equator. High limestone mountains stood in a desert landscape like that in Death Valley, USA. We old timers were puzzled by Les referring to a Mercian Mudstone hut but it turned out to be the modern term for Keuper Marl.

The most spectacular location had been left till last. At Great Elm, after stopping at Mells for ice cream, the cars were parked by a river and we followed the East Mendip Way beside a swollen stream and through banks of pungent wild garlic up onto an impressive wave-cut platform of Carboniferous Limestone. It was exposed during quarrying and the overburden of Jurassic Inferior Oolite rest unconformably on it (NGR ST746489). A thunder shower fortunately missed us as we collected a few last specimens, before returning to Upper Pitts for tea.

In 7 hours, Les had taken us through 260 million years of geological time. The whole excursion was well-researched and a lot of time put in checking the exposures before hand.

Thanks Les

Library Acquisitions

NEW EXCHANGE - Grosvenor Caving Club's main interest is in North Wales - an area in which the Club holds little or no information on

**GROSVENOR CAVING CLUB
Oct 1997 Issue No 78**

New access point to Halkyn Mines - Thomas Evans Shaft
Third Entrance to the Milwr Tunnel Via The Halkyn Drainage Tunnel
Halkyn Castle Drain - archaeology, exploration & NO survey

**GROSVENOR CAVING CLUB
Dec 1997 Issue No 79**

The Discovery of Ogot Siamber Wen - history, discovery, exploration, access & survey
Lost Johns, Yorkshire - photo
Halkyn Tunnel, Bellan Adit, Powells Lode - photos
Coed Nant Gain and other caving news

**BELFRY BULLETIN
Vol 49 Nos 489-493**

Life after Reynolds
Knotts 'n' Stuff - bondage at the Belfry? - no, just how to cave safely
BEC. Club Logs - past entries
Swimming in St Cuthberts - re-examination of the terminal sump and the surrounding passages
Foul Air in Cave digs in which Explosive cords are used as the main excavation agent - should be read by all members of the Doc Nobles fan club
A Potted History of H E. Balche (1869-1958) - historical article with photos
St Cuthbert's Swallet: young or old? - geology, hydrology and a diagram
Meghalaya 1995 (or "Not another Puncture Trip") - diary, exploration, sickness, transport and much more

MNRC NEWSLETTERS

**April-Dec 1997 Nos 59, 60 & 63
(Nos 61 & 62 - missing)**

This is the Club Newsletter and mainly consists of internal news
2nd part of the MNRC in Virginia in 1997 - seems like everybody had a good time

**CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL
The Red Dragon Annual Journal
1997-98 No 24**

To review the contents would take a whole Journal!

**CHELSEA SPELEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY NEWSLETTERS
April-Dec 1997 Vol 39 Nos 4-12
(CSS Newsletter June 1997
Vol 39 No 6 - missing)**

Ogot Draenen Second Entrance
Margert River, Western Australia - history, exploration & access
Llangattock Caver Counter Results
A Herculean Labour - exploration, history, survey work, photos & Cantankerous Surveyors Series
Kangeroo Island, S. Australia - exploration
Notes on S. Norland, Norway 1997
The 1997 NSS Convention
Neighbourhood Watch: The Continuing Saga - with newspaper clippings
Caves of Marble 1997 - history, exploration & potential
Blackwalls: Arson at Whitewalls the true story
CSS Index: 1997, Vol 39, Nos 1-12

**WHITEROSE POTHOLE CLUB
1997 Vol 16 Nos 3 & 4**

(1997 Vol 16 Nos 1 & 7 - missing)
A Walk On The Wrong Side
Back Packing Weekend in North Wales
Vercours 97
A Personal Journey - Gouffre Berger
Memoirs of a pot-holing man

**AXBRIDGE CAVING GROUP
NEWSLETTERS**

**June-August 1997 Nos 72 & 73
(No 72 is an Expedition Special)**
Albanian Expedition - from a member's diary, aims, reasons, access, equipment, map, rigging top & photos - well worth reading
Malaysian Expedition 1996 - aims, transport, reconnaissance, map, geology, photo's & surveys
Discovery and Digging Report of Carcass Cave (the first year) or the Ramblings of a Landscape Gardener - history, exploration, excavation & survey
Notes on the manuscripts of George Bennett's History of Banwell with particular reference to the section headed "The Caverns"

**MENDIP CAVING GROUP
NEWSLETTERS 1997**

Agua. 1996 Expedition - history, exploration, access, rigging & survey
Caving in the Bob Marshall

Wilderness Area - In Flakey Cave
Fragments from France, part 15 - a youthful senior citizens trip through the Trou des Herietiques to the Goffre doPont de Gerbaut.
Discoveries in the Jungfrau, Switzerland - tourist trip
Nettlebed, South Oxon (NGR 704868) - Chalk Mine
Access to O.F.D. Rules and Bylaws
Peak Cavern (or a Six Sump Tour) - tourist trip
Frogman Blows Record Bubbles at Paidirac - solo through trip from the L'Emergence dela Finou to the Gouffre de Padirac (From "Depeche du Midi")
MCG in Mallorca, 1996 (diving) - reconnaissance for future trips
Descending the Angel's Staircase - the continuing saga of the exploration of the Purification Karst Area and its cave systems.
To Hell and Back - Camp One, Infernillo - Systema Purification, Karst and caves.
Fragments From France, part 16 - Guiers Mort-Glaz Junction. Trou du Glaz to Grotte Chevalier and Glaz through trip (P36) to Reseau Sanguin
Ogot Draenen round trip - tourist trip
Madagascar 1998 - proposed expedition
MCG Practise Rescue, June 7th 1997 - Tynnings Barrow Swallet

**CRAVEN RECORD
Jan 1997 No 45**

Short Drop in 1885: Low Douk Pot-1885 - history, exploration, mystery solved
Greenhow. Notes on Great Expectations, part 1 (continued in next issue) - exploration, history & survey
The Big Snow, 1947 - text, verse and photo's
Fact and Fiction - the loss of Dennis Brindle at Malham Sinks
In Seine?:Bapteme de plongee souterraine - yet another way of learning to cave dive?????
The Plants of Gaping Gill - now could this be the new "we weren't unable to go underground for fear of disturbing the lesser spotted Bladder-Warte"
Old Books and caving photographs - an appeal
Ode to the CPC

**THE GRAMPIAN
SPELEOLOGICAL GROUP
BULLETIN Third Series
March 1997 Vol 14 No 2**

The Michelin Guide to Claonaite 4-6
Midge Alert Update - it may help
some
The Waterslide: A Tale of Two City
Slickies - an extension to Uamh
Norm Breagaire - history,
exploration & survey
One Thousand Litres Downed - the
Mendip invasion of Scotland
Lower Otter Hole - exploration,
history & survey
Creag Nam Uamh Bone Caves -
description, age & formation of the
Caves with excavation &
depositional history. Also a survey
Index to the Glasgow Speleological
Society Journals 1964-79

**THE GRAMPIAN
SPELEOLOGICAL GROUP
BULLETIN Third Series
Oct 1997 Vol 14**

Laglingarten Fissure Cave, Argyll
(NGR NM147072)
Flood Pulses in the Traligill Basin -
observations & map
3D.Cave (NGR 7245/4445) - grade
III survey
Many Dolines Near Loch Loch -
some observations
A Trip Down ANUS (or Janet & Joan
Go Caving) - tourist trip.
A Fortean Experience in Assynt -
Mendip invasion & the resulting
havoc, plus a cartoon
Poll na Damoclean: the state of play
- description & survey
Uamh Nan Claig: IOnn 1 Fife Team 0
- a nightmare repeated
Claonite and other dives
Night on the Tiles II - survey and
photo
Index to Glasgow Speleological
Society Newsletters 1964-79
Index to the Ayresshire Speleological
Society Newsletters 1968-70
Index to the Speleologist 1965-1969

**NSS NEWS
Feb-Dec 1997 Vol 55 Nos 2-12
(Oct 1997 Vol 55 No 10 -
missing)**

The Lava Tubes of North Mauna
Loa, Hawaii - history, exploration,
geology, photos, map and survey
Salon Gallery '96 Salon Gallery - yet
even more very fine photos
Vrtiglavica, Slovenia - the Worlds
Deepest Shafts
Caves in the Geographic Names
Information System
Rock Climbing in the Central Oregon

Lava Tubes - 1996 developments
Environmental impact of opening up
this area to the Public - text and
photos
Conservation, Restoration, and
Low-impact Caving: New
Approaches and Attitudes.
South Easter Cave Conservancy
Acquires Kennamey Cave - history,
exploration, zoology, photos
NSS News Index to Vol 54, Nos 1-
12, 1996
Monitoring the The Unthinkable at
Wind Cave - the Development of a
Show Cave & its drainage system - a
subject dear to the WCC Heart -
solutions and a photo
Lead Mining Threatens Ozark Caves
- history, geology, map & photo
Speleology and the National Park
Service - what can they do for sport
and conservation
Lechugilla & the Future conservation,
preservation & protection
Lechuguilla Restoration: Techniques
Learned in the Southwest - text with
photos
Gas and Oil Drilling in cave and Karst
areas - geological & legal
implications with text and photo
Restoration of the New Mexico Room
in Carlsbad Caverns - history,
techniques and photos
Microbes in Caves - what to wear,
how to love and tend them and
remember their Birthdays
Secrecy and Discretion as Cave
Management Tools - basically, if you
find a cave don't tell your best friend
or even your mother
Infrared Photography Used in
Monitoring Bat Population - text and
photos
The Missouri Caves and Karst
Conservancy
The Purchase and Gating of a Cave -
text and photos
Just what is a Speleo Digest? - text
with cartoons
The Lave Tube Systems of New
Meexicois El Malpas - history,
geology, archaeological, photo's,
maps & diagram
The 1996 Cartographic Salon
Winner: Milverton Lakes System - a
very impressive piece of work which
deserves more than cursory glance
Computer Graphics - a freehand way
to generate and display The
Milverton Lake
The Exploration and Survey of
Lilburn Cave.- California's
Mysterious Marble Maze - history,

exploration, photos & survey
Cold Comfort in Yorkshire Pot. The
1000 ft Deep Trash Dump -
exploration, history, photos &
surveys
Lilburn Cave, Kings Canyon Nat
Park, Tulare County California -
coloured fold-out plan and elevation
of the System
Caving on other Worlds - fantasy?
The illumination of Weyer's Cave -
historical engraving
Gunung Byda Project 97 -
exploration, history, map and photo
Discovery and Initial Exploration of
Deliverance Cave, Borneo -
exploration, photos & survey
Gua Guruh. (Thunder Caves) -
exploration, survey & photo
Hornbills Secret Cave, Borneo -
exploration, survey & photos
Charming the Snake: further
exploration of Green Cathedral Cave
A Guide to the Gunung Buda Photo
Gallery - double page spread of
photos
The Fall of Snail Shell - the Making
of a Television Film
Gunung Buda log book - a
Journalist's View
Sarawak caves - an interview with
David Gill
Return to the Desert Caves of Saudi
Arabia - history, exploration photos &
surveys
The Archer Caves, Florida -
exploration, history, geology &
surveys
Techniques & Safety. Descending
101
The Ranshaws of Covington.
Kentucky and Mammoth Cave
The Slovenian Post-Camp: Caving
in Paradise - well, we know that!
American Caving Accidents in Vol
55, No 12, part 2

**SPELEO-CLUB DE TOURAINE
1977 No 7**

Le Gouffre DiAphanice - exploration,
history, surveys & photos
La tanne aux Enters - exploration
history & survey
L'epopee Souterraine - an ancient
cartoon - rude too!
Ex Libris: Nigel Graham

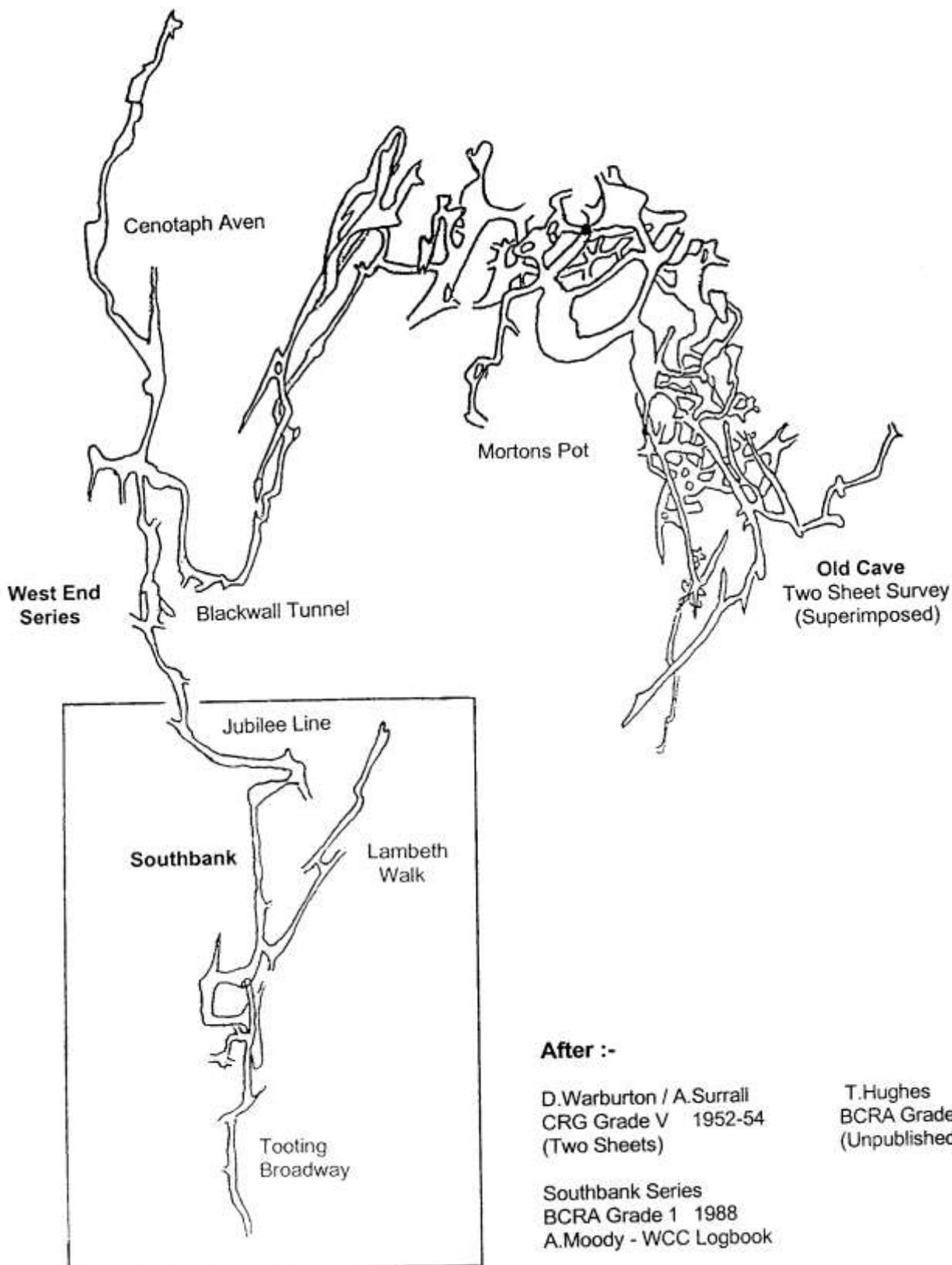
**REDCLIFF CAVES GUIDE
Axbridge Caving Group. 199;**
History, survey, exploration and
engravings

PORTLAND PUBLICATIOIS
Letters and drafts



Thanks to Chas and the BEC for donating yet another cartoon. The full size version is in the Library
Closer inspection is recommended in particular the book titles.
For the full story behind this mishap see Tuska.

EASTWATER CAVERN



After :-

D.Warburton / A.Surrall
 CRG Grade V 1952-54
 (Two Sheets)

T.Hughes
 BCRA Grade 5
 (Unpublished)

Southbank Series
 BCRA Grade 1 1988
 A.Moody - WCC Logbook

Southbank Series

By Rob Taviner

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ...
We had everything before us, we had nothing before us
We were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way

(CHARLES DICKENS - A Tale of Two Eastwater Trips)

This year is the tenth anniversary of the discovery of Southbank Series, the last of the West End extensions which dominated Mendip digging throughout the 1980's. This is the story of its exploration, which took place over the course of two trips in December 1988.

Ever since its discovery in 1902, Eastwater has enjoyed something of a connoisseurs reputation - its steep difficult passages and gloomy atmosphere deemed a poor third cousin to its near neighbours - Swildons Hole and St. Cuthberts Swallet, with their exhilarating streamways and finely decorated passages. However, despite this - or more probably because of it - Eastwater has always attracted the die-hard digger, and every decade had yielded at least a moderate extension.

Following in this great tradition, May 1983 saw BEC members Keith Gladman and Andy Lolly digging one of Eastwaters classic 'off the trade route' sites which never go ... when it went ... a small, seemingly innocuous passage in the seldom visited Ifolds Series which was to yield several thousand feet of new passage, ultimately more than doubling the length of the known cave.

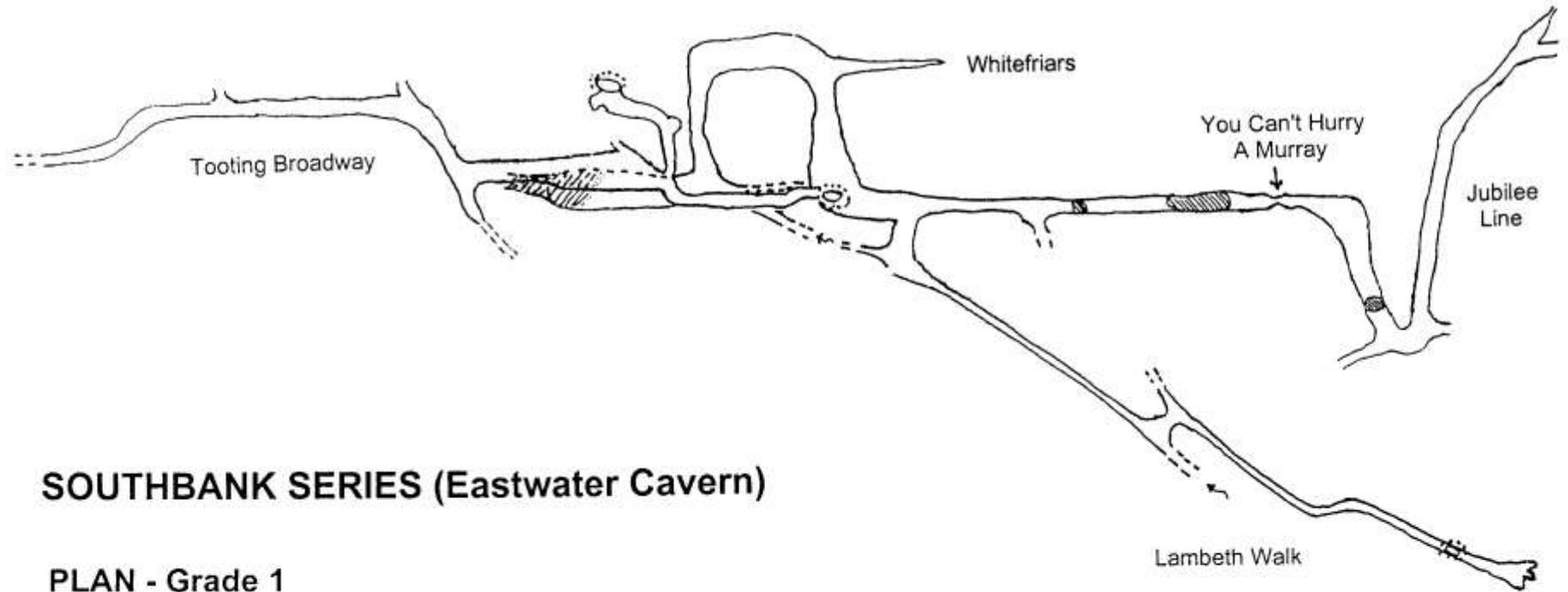
The initial 600ft discovery in the newly christened 'West End Series' grew rapidly, and by the time momentum finally slowed, the BEC extension totalled over 2000ft. At this point, faced with an evil, torturous but powerfully draughting passage snaking off into the distance and with repeated trips starting to take a heavy toll on personnel, the BEC invited WCC members to help shoulder the load. One year later, this consortium of diggers finally passed the 'Blackwall Tunnel' - to discover well over one thousand feet of new passage, including 'Jubilee Line' - a continuation of the main trunk route - and a major inlet terminating in the awe-inspiring Cenotaph Aven.

Progress at these two sites was frustrated by repeated flooding in the Blackwall Tunnel, until in March 1985 - following a particularly alarming near-miss - the problem resolved itself, by flooding

permanently, a state of affairs which was to last for more than two years. Once reopened - with many of the original pushers having faded away or gone onto pastures new - a new generation of WCC diggers took up the gauntlet at Cenotaph - see WCC Jnl 20 (220 & 221). Only Pete and Alison Moody returned to Jubilee Line, which terminated in a constriction beyond 'Waterloo' - a flood-prone U-Tube.

On December 10th 1988 - following a number of digging trips - Alison finally forced a very tight downward vertical squeeze into a low, aqueous crawl. After widening from below - to allow Pete, Murray Knapp and myself to join her - this led for some 100ft to an awkward squeeze up through a calcited slot to the head of a descending canyon. Passing a window to the left - from which emanated the sound of a rumbling stream - the canyon led down to a roomier bedding chamber - 'Muddy Chamber', with an attractive inlet - 'Whitefriars'. Beyond continued to a wide mud bank, where a short dig gained entry to 'Blackfriars' - an 8ft diameter tunnel carrying the long-sought main Eastwater stream. Elation proved to be short-lived however as upstream the water emerged from an impenetrable crack, whilst barely 50ft downstream the thick mud-coated tunnel ended in an ominous sump.

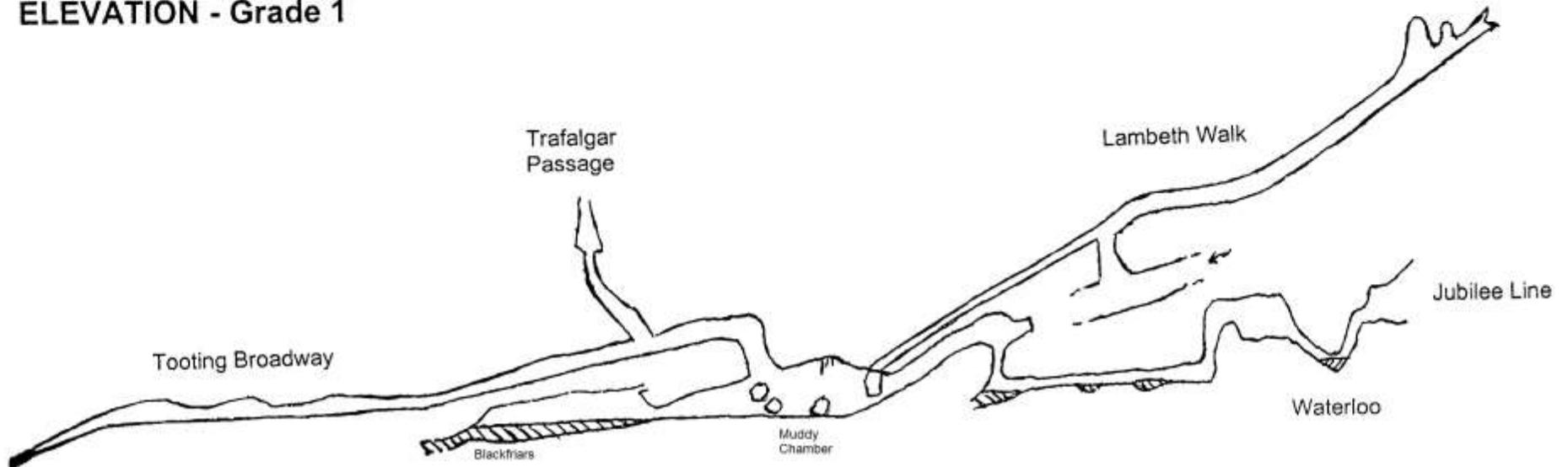
Returning to Muddy Chamber, the strong draught evident throughout the series was finally relocated whistling down a slimy 20ft high Coal Chute type aven in the left-hand wall. At the top, a stooping canyon led down to a gravel-filled fossil sump and 'Tooting Broadway' - a wide abandoned streamway, which led after 100ft of variable height passage to a filthy and steeply descending crawl. At this point, with 500ft of new passage, a section of main streamway and very possibly the deepest point on Mendip in the bag, we decided to leave the side-leads - in particular the window from which emanated the sound of a further section of streamway - for another day.



SOUTHBANK SERIES (Eastwater Cavern)

PLAN - Grade 1

ELEVATION - Grade 1



Exploring new cave is always tiring, but when you've just tackled 500ft of Grade 5 passage onto the end of Mendips most relentless cave, it gets exhausting. Whilst the climb down the aven - with the aid of a bang-wire handline - proved surprisingly uneventful, the return journey through the breakthrough squeeze was ridiculously difficult - taking poor old Murray nigh on 20 minutes, (hence 'You Can't Hurry a Murray'). By this time, Waterloo - which involves an uncontrolled head first slide down a 30 degree mud slope, followed by a strenuous thrutch up the other side and which had taken a good two hours to bail on the way in - had practically refilled. Difficult at the best of times, when it's three-quarters full of water, you're knackered and have only a tiny triangle of air to aim at, it's not even remotely funny. Fortunately, this time it passed without incident, and back in Jubilee Line we felt like we were out.

Unfortunately we weren't. The section from here back to the old cave must rank amongst some of the hardest caving I've done. Blackwall Tunnel was arduous, Lolly Pot a desperate struggle and the rift above Gladmans a total bastard. Increasingly concerned about the time, Alison - fully aware of the power of sheer blind addiction - hared off up the passage with my fags and after 9 hours, just one quarter of an hour short of callout, we were out. The cow shit wafting over Gibbons' field had never smelled so sweet. I had one wetsuit arm hanging from a thread, I was bleeding from every exposed part of my body and I was asking Pete for a ladder out of the entrance depression. And as for the beer I'd promised myself for pioneering the Coal Chute climb? I was so dehydrated I couldn't drink it. It was that serious. Going leads or not - never, ever again.

Three weeks later - December 31st 1988 - we were back. This time, just to make it hard, we decided to transport two plastic skips to Waterloo which proved a ridiculous struggle through the innumerable squeezes, but well worth the effort when it cut the bailing time down to just half-an-hour. Once in the extension we headed straight for the upstream window, where a short, awkward traverse led to a keyhole passage. Whilst the stream rushed along in an impenetrable crack 10ft below, the way on lay at roof-level, through a steeply ascending small jagged tube. After 150ft of extremely arduous going, a hole in the floor gained access to a section of the stream but this closed down almost immediately. Above the hole, Alison squeezed into a continuation of the fossil passage - a dry canyon which ascended pleasantly beneath avens for a further 100ft before becoming too-tight. (This was subsequently pushed for a further 30ft, where the passage split - all ways on being

impassably small). With the 'Lambeth Walk' having netted a further 250ft, we headed back to Tooting Broadway' - this time installing a fixed handline in the aven en-route.

Hopes that this high-level abandoned passage might offer a quick bypass to the Blackfriars sump below faded when the steeply-descending bedding lowered and became heavily choked and after 50ft of very difficult progress, Alison pronounced it long term. Reversing the bedding proved more difficult and Alison was only eventually retrieved by being pulled out with a rope tied around her feet. One remaining lead remained - a small hole in the canyon leading to the head of Tooting Broadway, from which seemed to issue the bulk of the draught. A wriggle through a slot led into a hands and knees crawl, which enlarged beyond a sand-choked passage to the right, rearing up a steep mud bank with a booming echo above. An avalanching 20ft ascent reached a ledge with the only way on being through a difficult and slippery vertical squeeze overhead. Combined tactics and arduous thrutching saw Pete through into a small aven, with possible continuations above and at the base. It was the only time I ever heard him say he'd had enough. No-one has ever been back. Heading out - the 50ft of Trafalgar Passage had given us 300ft+ for the day, taking Southbank to about 800ft in all and New Years Eve had seen the digging barrel well and truly won.

Waterloo was sumped. What had been an intimidating prospect before was now a potential nightmare. Whilst Pete, Alison and I negotiated it more or less successfully, the combination of mud, timing and a short, nasty free-dive got the better of Murray, who earned two eyes full of gritty mud for his trouble. With Murray practically blind, the trip out to Magic Fountain - the first available clean water - was painfully slow. Finally, after another 10 hour trip, we were out. Whilst the rest of us headed straight for the pub, Murray headed straight for the hospital. Sporting two eye-patches, he made it just in time for the New Year celebrations.

Since that time, only about a dozen trips have been made to the extension, by about only the same number of cavers. In an attempt to bypass the West End Series - the difficulty of which inhibits sustained progress - efforts concentrated on the fossil upstream sump in Tooting Broadway. This was excavated for 20ft - finding the remnants of old spoil bags doubtless washed-in from an old Mortons Pot dig - until flooding curtailed operations. Repeated efforts at Mortons Pot itself - which although vastly easier to get to is a difficult digging

Floodpulse *The Final Part*

A short Story by *Andy Sparrow*

Two weeks after the pushing trip they were due to meet again. Smithy had suggested they meet on the surface this time but Rigger had been evasive. He liked to get down to the camp the day before to 'unwind a bit'. What, wondered Smithy, went through Riggers mind during his solitary vigils underground? Did he feel closer to his lost friends? Was it his chosen penance to be endured until they whispered forgiveness to him from the shadows? Or was it as Alex hinted that Rigger awaited the flood that would bear him away to final reunion.

The weather forecast was not good. Thunderstorms were edging northwards and the prediction of rain over the next two days was 60%. The air was sticky and hazy as Smithy trudged once again to High Fell Pot. The pot was rigged testifying to Riggers presence. He left the muggy air of the fell behind and crawled into the cool darkness.

The camp was empty. He brewed tea feeling uneasy. Where was Rigger? Images flashed through his mind and anxiety began to gnaw. He could be crushed under a boulder in the Great Choke or lying injured in some obscure side passage. What should he do? Wait? Search? Go for help? Within an hour Rigger appeared, drenched. 'That's sorted'. He said. 'You've been to the pitch?' 'To the head of the next one. Follows straight on.' 'Big?' '20 metres. It's rigged.'

At Riggers request they ate and slept before returning to the pitches. It was the second time Smithy had slept at the camp. The previous week he had been tired after the pushing trip but now there was expectation buzzing in his mind and the constant whispering of the nearby streamway nagging, filling his troubled dreams with watery torments. He lay awake for a while. Sometimes, alone, underground, irrational fears stalked him - the feeling of a presence lurking behind him in the darkness. Then he would steel himself to take control, dispel the fears, to turn and face what lay behind him. His light would dissolve all shadows and the fears would be exiled to that little corner of his mind that harboured things irrational. Did Rigger feel those moments? Did he crave them, in the hope that one day he might confront the ghosts of his companions and offer up his guilt?

He felt far from rested and refreshed as he shed the sleeping bag. They brewed and ate, a heavy

sense of imminence draped around them. There could be few more pitches. They were running out of depth, entering the zone of sumps, or of what? Master cave? Fossil system? All or nothing, and this the day.

The stream was lower than before and they passed the former sump with dry bodies. Even with the reduced water flow the wet pitches beyond still thundered and whipped up a gale.

The pitch beyond had been re-rigged. The traverse line was extended and a couple of rebelay took them swinging from wall to wall away from the waterfall. A few paces took Smithy to the head of the new pitch. The traverse line awaited him and a straddle between smooth walls took him to the hang bolts and suspended rope bag. It was no more than 20 metres, a simple hang clear of the water into a great rift passage. Last pitch, he thought to himself. Last pitch.

The flood came. Not in a pulse or a rush or a sudden deluge. It was more gradual, and much more sinister. There was a change of tone to the water, a gustiness in the draft. Smithy felt a deep sickly unease. He saw Rigger sinking into view through a mist of spray and struggling now to unclip himself buffeted in a squall of water. The waterfall was pounding the base of the pitch now and spray exploded towards them. And the water that heaved itself into the next void below his feet was murky with peat.

Rigger was beside him now on the traverse. He shouted vainly into Smithy's face and motioned towards the hangbolts. In the rift beyond was a big chockstone. They could not stay on the traverse exposed to the spray and chilling drafts, neither could they climb amidst the torrent above, or below them. They traversed over and perched back to back on the chockstone legs dangling into space.

Now the flood reached it's zenith. The very walls of the rift seemed to quake under the awesome force. Gales lashed at them and the falls below roared in fury. They wrapped themselves in survival bags, and clutched the warm carbide generators to their chests. Smithy huddled and closed his eyes trying to concentrate on those little pools of warmth; around the generator and where his back pressed against Rigger's. His legs were cramped, his feet numb and his ears full of deafening white noise.

Time passed and trains of thought edged into dreams. He jolted back to reality clutching at the wall. Rigger felt Smithy lose his balance. He said nothing but rummaged between them. There was a click as cowstails were connected. If they fell, it would be together.

Hours passed and the flood gradually abated. The tone of water changed from boom and crash, to roar, and then to hiss. Rigger stretched and unwound himself from the plastic sheet. 'Pitches are passable. You fit?' Smithy grunted and tested his numb legs for movement. He back and footed cautiously from the chockstone to the traverse line. Back on solid ground he stamped around trying to kick life back into his limbs. The rope, that single thread connecting him to the world, rose up into darkness.

He clipped on a jammer and prepared to ascend. Then he heard the click behind him and looked back. Rigger had clipped his descender to the rope at the hangbolts; his path lay downwards. 'I have to know,' shouted Rigger. 'I can't get this close and go back.' Smithy sighed, shook his head and unclipped the jammer. 'No not you. That's your choice' Rigger motioned upwards. 'I'm coming with you.' 'No.' 'I've as much right to...'. 'To die... if it floods again? You've no right.' 'And you have? Because of Deep Ghyll?' Rigger stared silently back and then spoke. 'I can't carry that weight again. Your choice is up there, mine is down. Just go. Go...' Rigger sank from view and Smithy clipped his second jammer to the rope. He thought of the sleeping bag and hot food at the camp. He imagined the colours, smells and warmth of the moor above. And he thought of Rigger, his friend, going alone into the dark mystery below. But it was his too. Damn Rigger. Damn Deep Ghyll. He did have a right. He reached for his descender

Below the next pitch was a long streamway strewn with cobbles and fallen blocks. He caught up with Rigger who shrugged, shook his head, but said nothing. They walked on side by side into the great expanse of darkness ahead. There was mud on the walls now and foam clinging. Smithy expected a sump and a final end to their extension, but instead they found themselves facing a great ramp of boulders.

They clambered up into a boulder choke leaving the mud behind. They could feel the draught gusting past them urging them higher. Smithy, in the lead, could get no further. One boulder barred his way. He glimpsed past it into an echoing black void. He pulled at the boulder which wobbled and twisted. After much struggling he slid back down to Rigger who quickly took his place. A crowbar or hammer would have moved the rock easily, but

with bare hands and exhausted hungry bodies they would progress no further. Smithy took a last look into the black space, twisted his head and saw a great flat roof high above. Then the journey home began.

It was two weary figures that returned to the camp some hours later. With stiff, aching, limbs they shed their kit which dropped to the sandy floor. Chilled bodies slid into cold sleeping bags to huddle and shiver. Troubled sleep followed. There was water in Smithy's dreams to hound and torment him. He awoke with a start into blackness and heard the nearby streamway in angry flood again. He wondered what time it was, and on what day? He was overdue and, he surmised, they were flooded into the system. He rolled over and huddled for warmth. 70 metres above him, under the sun's glare, on the High Fell, there was much activity.

'We don't need any dead bloody heroes'. The rescue controller repeated the words banging his hand down on the landrover bonnet. Alex jabbed a finger at the cave survey laid out between them 'It's sumped here right? Bottom of the first pitch It's 150 metres and the roof lifts. No side passages - easy dive.' The controller stared at Alex, his craggy face full of doubt. And if you get through then what?' 'I come straight back. We get some more divers. We go in. We find them.'

There were several landrovers clustered drunkenly, around High Fell Pot. Cavers, fully kitted, stood restlessly in small groups. Ten hours had elapsed since Alex reported Smithy overdue and for nine of them he had waited, frustrated, with the rescue team for the crawls below the first pitch to open. Now his patience was exhausted. The controller looked to the great anvil clouds in convoy along the horizon; a sinister procession back-lit by the dusk. 'You better watch it in there if we catch another storm.'

There were many willing hands to help Alex with the heavy bottle harness. The clanging of the cylinders echoed in the chamber followed shortly by the abrupt hiss of vented air. Where the crawl began was a sombre pool of peaty water. Alex waded in and began his final checks. A row of grim faces looked on silently. He weighed the line reel in his hand. 150 metres. Barely enough.

Half a metre vis. He saw his outstretched hand and the orange cord unwinding through a dull yellow haze. The hiss of air through the valve alternated with the burbling exhaust, accompanied by the resonant clang of bottles against rock. At every bend in the passage he groped for the way on - fingers probing the rock walls to left and right -

seeking the void. The crawls seemed smaller than he remembered and the bottles jammed frequently. He willed himself to be calm as he twisted and eased himself free.

Progress was too slow. He checked his watch and gauges; half an hour into the sump, a third of the air supply gone, and not much line left on the reel. All his training and experience nagged at him; he was at 'thirds' and that meant abort. He tried to turn around but the passage was too narrow.

He swam on around another bend but the passage was no bigger. The first bottle gave out. He dragged the very last breath from it before changing valves. Now he watched the line reel make its last few turns. End of the line. And no airspace. And nowhere to turn. He dropped the reel and swam on.

Another rule broken. End of the line - those words echoed in his mind and all else was excluded. The fear within was a black hand gripping his stomach. His breathing rate was racing, legs pumping and finning. He crashed head on into a blank wall. Which way, left, right? He sucked hard for air, the valve dragging, bottle spent. Last breath. End of the line. He lunged upwards exploding into airspace. It extended in both directions and had been above him for the last 20 metres. He spat the valve from his mouth and breathed deeply before vomiting into the limpid water.

He dumped the diving kit and continued downstream. The airspace was small and the water lapped at his chin. It had been a long dive for a wetsuit and he shivered, but thoughts of generating body heat in the arduous passages to come spurred him on. He dragged himself from the chill canal at the boulder crawl and stumbled on over the chaos of tumbled rock.

The cave seemed sinister, altogether too much like a tomb. Would he find Smithy and Rigger safe at the camp he wondered, or... He pictured their sodden bodies lying broken under the hammer blows of a waterfall. He reached the camp. It was dark, quiet and he feared the worst but the two sleeping bags were filled with huddled shapes which he awoke with triumphal joyous kicks.

They brewed tea and shared their experiences. It seemed odd to Alex that he, the rescuer, now found warmth and sustenance with the supposed victims. The discussion turned to their immediate situation. They had provision for several days but with the threat of much rain to come, and with rescuers above anxious for their welfare, they would take their chance to gain the surface. Alex was sure that

without more rain the flooded crawls would open within a few hours. They left the camp.

The controller huddled in a duvet jacket and dozed in the landrover. A faint band of light revealed the far horizon as dawn struggled vainly through a canopy of cloud. The phone buzzed and the controller's hand awoke bringing the handset to his unmoving face. 'Yeah?' 'Cave here. The crawls draughting. Another hour and we can go in.' The controller looked over his shoulder at four cramped and entwined bodies sleeping fitfully on a bed of ropes. 'Good news boys,' he announced, 'You're all going caving'.

Below the High Fell Smithy felt the draught and knew the sump had broken. They were waiting by the boulder crawl for the levels to drop before attempting the final flooded section. Another few inches would suffice - one more hour.

Dawn had come without true daylight. A roof of black cloud denied the sun its radiance as the rescuers vanished one by one into High Fell Pot. The controller watched grim faced and grabbed at the telephone. 'Call me when you're all ready to go. Stay put till then'

Underground, the trio trudged onwards. Alex was struggling and weary. He had been long without sleep and the nervous tension of the dive had drained him. Smithy and Rigger slowed to his pace as they neared the crawls. They lowered themselves into the waist deep water and ploughed noisily into the Stoops. They struggled on as best they could, the water dragging at their legs, seemingly reluctant to release them from the cave. They found Alex's diving kit bobbing in the canal and shortly beyond the roof lowered into the crawls. The hands and knees passage was still half flooded but the airspace was ample and they continued on their way.

The telephone buzzed and the controller snatched it up. 'Cave here. Ready to go.' 'Forget it. Stay where you are.' 'What?' 'Stay put - the bastard's going to flood again!' The lightning speared into the fell top and the thunder echoed between the moorland ridges. The first rain drops smacked into the ground. The controller stood helpless as the downpour hammered upon him and he shook an impotent fist at heaven.

Smithy was in the lead, Rigger and then Alex following. A gust of air wafted past him, and then another. A sense of unease gripped him suddenly and he crawled on faster, surging through the sluggish canal. Then he stopped, heart thumping, and looked into the water - it was flowing. 'Go on

for God's sake!' came Alex's voice fraught and desperate behind him. Smithy surged on against the increasing flow. Little waves were flowing towards him, gentle little humps of water that eased the level higher every time. There was no great flood pulse to sweep them swiftly to oblivion - just gentle swirling brown water, growing stronger, creeping higher. It was flowing fast now and a little wave splashed at his chin, another wave followed pushing higher, and then another, and another.

The rescuers cowered against the wall of the shaft as the torrent hurled itself at their feet. One man still crouched at the start of the crawl watching the muddy water swirl away into the passage, as the water level that they had watched for hours as it slowly dropped, now rose rapidly. Only inches remained before the passage sealed. He called out suddenly. 'There's a light!' 'What?' 'In the crawl. I saw a light.' He waded forward into the waist deep swirling water and peered into the diminishing airspace. He shouted as another rescuer joined him. 'Hold on to me!' He took a breath and lunged in to the crawl. He struggled back clutching an outstretched human hand. They both hauled and a sodden body was dragged out. Smithy lay retching and coughing. The rescuers lunged into the crawl again. They dragged out a lifeless form, it was Alex.

'He's not breathing!' 'Pulse?' 'Yes! I'll do him. Get a resuscitator down.' Smithy fought back to reality. Rigger. There was no Rigger. He stumbled back to the crawl and stared in horror at the tiny remaining airspace. 'Rigger!' he screamed. 'Rigger!' And then more quietly - 'But he was between us', And as he watched the airspace closed.

A week later and Smithy once again tramped through the bogs and heather of the High Fell. The storms had long past and the sky was an undiluted blue. It had been three days before the crawls reopened and a team had been able to enter the cave. They had searched to the camp but found nothing. They concluded that Rigger's body had been carried into the sump below the Boulder Crawl and that a diving recovery should be attempted.

Alex, in his hospital bed, had strained under Smithy's inquisition. 'I was at the back when it flooded' he recollected slowly, 'and then Rigger pushed me in front. He said something... something about having to come last this time. I felt him pushing me on.' 'Right to the end?' 'Don't know...' 'Could he have made it back do you think?' 'Going downstream. He'd have to have been very fast. The current would have helped, but all the same...' Alex shook his head sadly.

Smithy pleaded for a place on the search team but the controller was adamant. 'It's too personal for you lad. We'll find your mate.' Smithy had insisted that the Pot be left rigged so that Rigger, if alive, could surface. The controller, with an air of sad indulgence, agreed.

And true to his word the Pot was rigged. Smithy remembered how he had felt a few weeks ago stood by that hole. He had not wanted to go alone into the darkness but had felt committed to prove something to his friends. And on this day he was equally reluctant, and equally committed where a friend was concerned.

It was a lonely journey and a reluctant one. As he neared the camp he hoped desperately to see a glow of light or to smell simmering food but all was dark and quiet. He rummaged round looking for some sign of recent occupation. Things had been disturbed and some food eaten, but that was probably just the search team.

He left the camp and followed the traverse into the Extension. It seemed futile and pointless to search to the very limit of the cave but a nagging tiny spark of hope urged him on. The stream was low and the wet pitches seemed to hiss rather than roar. He reached the last pitch and looked across at the chockstone where they had sheltered from the flood. He remembered Rigger connecting cowstails as they clung on above the torrent.

And now he was nearly at the end and all hope was gone. Ahead the great boulder slope reared up. He climbed up to look again through that little window into the great untrodden vault and saw the way was open. There lay the hammer and the broken shards of the boulder. He scramble: through, spirit soaring, uplifted to the very roof of the great fossil passage in which he now stood

The heart of the High Fell lay open before him. A single set of footprints led off along the cracked mud floor. He bounded after them, a little pool of yellow light casting vast shadows, diminishing dissolving, into the distant cavernous vault.

Andy Sparrow 1997

Sojourn in South Wales: 1-4th May 1998

Mark Helmore

After a delayed start Les, Max and myself finally arrived at the WSG at about 10pm on Friday night. Dumping our bags we ran (well it felt like it) all the way to the Red Lion, where we were greeted by a large Wessex contingent (sorry Mak) who, having much further to travel, had arrived hours earlier? Several swift scoops later found us meandering our way back to base and eventually to bed. Max, however had other ideas, and I was soon awoken by him coming through the small side window!! Not to be outdone Danny tried to reverse this act and ended up in a heap on the floor, his fall luckily broken by some beer barrels, where he received much sympathy from his cohorts.

Saturday morning arrived too quickly for me (and others) but soon, nursing various ailments we were off to OFD. Once organised with a key for top entrance, Mak, Badvoc, Vern, Rosie and myself shot off on a Pendulum pull through, whilst others were drawn to the dubious delights of Northern lights. The trip through Pendulum passage was longer than some had expected but the helictite formations more than compensated for this. We soon exited the cave to a fine summer evening, and after a quick change made our way to The Angel for refreshments. On our return to the WSG the walk to the Red Lion did not appeal so a quiet evening ensued, at least until Les and Co returned!

Waking to a glorious Sunday morning (no hangover) it was decided that whilst some hyperactive troglodites insisted on a Pant Mawr Pot trip followed by a Little Neath trip, Mak, Vern, Rosie

and myself preferred a leisurely stroll past Bridge cave to White Lady, returning to surf into the Little Neath entrance. A classic trip followed the very best of entrance series (if you like a wet entrance that is) and we were soon stomping down the fine streamway followed by drifting down the aqueous canal section.

With the sunshine calling us we were soon outside and sunning ourselves by the cars and partaking some of Rosie's Mum's cake. After a cream tea at the WSG we decided an afternoon constitutional was required and a walk to Sgwd yr Eira Waterfall (the one you walk behind!) was organised. A pleasant stroll ensued and we were soon there, and what a sight - no not the waterfall - the young 'lady' who proceeded to flash her upper half to her camera yielding boyfriend!! The waterfall was quite pleasant as well, and, with it bagged we strolled back via the officially closed route (a great improvement on the officially diverted route, if a little exposed).

Pub time again, and after a fine meal and a couple of pints we returned to the WSG where Mak the pyro stoked the old boiler! and a mellow evening followed. This was soon spoilt (enlivened) by the appearance of the Wessex choral society (don't give up your day jobs) and a fine evenings entertainment followed.

With Monday morning arriving it was time to go our various ways, bringing to an end an excellent club weekend (even the old duffers enjoyed themselves). Here's to the next one.



Back Row: Judy, John, Alan, Maurice, Mel, MAK, Leg, Malc, Dom, Rosie, Brenda, Vern.
Front Row: Richard, Les, Debs.

Extreme Sark Chasm

Rich Websell

Its funny how a “nice” weekend away from it all, can turn into a bit of an adventure. You would expect the Channel island of Sark to be well away from anything speleological but not so.

Whilst browsing through the guides in the island's Post Office I came across a small book entitled “The Isle of Sark; Caves and Scrambles”. It describes many sea caves around the island which I thought would be the usual sea cave, barely out of day light and full of dead things washed in on the tide - I was to be proved wrong.

The first cave we decided to check out was the Boutique Caves located on the north headland of Sark. This is entered to the left of a gully on the headland of La Grune, down a steep loose slope with a huge square entrance on the right which enters a large collapse chamber. A climb down leads out of daylight to a long narrow passage with deep pools and windows out to the sea with superb vistas out on to raised beaches. A good half hour can be spent exploring side passages and looking for marine life, anenomes etc. The exit to the cave emerges into a gulley with a difficult scramble back up, emerging the other side of the headland from the entrance; an impressive through trip.

On the same day we visited Fern Cave and the Red Cave or Horse Cave. Not so extensive or impressive, these are located near the Eperquerie landing and were the location of a couple of amusing incidents. The first involved me slipping on a wood makeshift bridge on the climb down slipping banana skin style into a stream and disappearing from sight. The second involved a bloke who was heading across the rocks towards Horse Cave as I was making my way back. I explained how to get there and that the tide was rapidly coming in failing to mention that I had only just got back - he had earlier spoken to Ann and bragged that he could climb “like a goat”. Anyway we met him later forlornly pushing his bike and looking a bit sorry for himself. He looked a bit wet and explained that he got caught by a big one, ah well, you can't tell some people!.

The next day saw us on little Sark and an interesting visit to the Pot; a steep cliff climb into a collapsed sea cave with fixed ropes, very impressive. The same day we also visited the top of the Creux Derrible - another impressive chasm

about 150 ft. deep, another collapse windowing out onto the beach.

Next day we visited the Gouliot Caves on the headland opposite the private island of Brecqhou. The entrance is located down a steep cliff path where a huge collapse chamber enters a fault guided passage windowing back onto the sea through the headland, a very spectacular outlook. It was here that we again noticed how rapidly the tide changes, falling about 5m in 10 mins. Taking advantage of the low tide we went back across the island to view the Creux Derrible from below and the other rifts and caves in Derrible Bay. Again the rapidity of the incoming tide is both impressive and worrying; the beach where we were previously standing being covered in about 10 minutes.

I do not have much knowledge of the geology of Sark; I believe it is Granite but please correct me Les. All the caves appear to be fault-controlled and located along lines of weaker rock. The sea has created some impressive caves with good examples of raised beaches. Sark is not recommended as the Club's next overseas expedition but a great place for a few days exploring and scrambling and admiring the incredible scenery, and for those with gastronomic interests there are numerous pubs and tea rooms about - no cars, but watch out for mad cyclists.

One word of warning if you visit any of the caves timing is critical with the tides, most of the caves being only enterable at low tide. The guide explains the maximum levels to safely enter. The tide ranges are also phenomenal and locations vary considerably between high and low water

Recommended equipment; a short handline, a petzl headtorch preferably one each! and possibly a handy leg saw or long hose in case you get your boot stuck and the tide is rising. A gull swat may also be a good idea if you get too close and yes they are pretty accurate on their bombing runs!

My thanks to Ann Johnson for her tolerance and bravery and for allowing me to turn a nice weekend into a bit of an adventure.]

Recommended reading:
“*The Island of Sark ; Caves and Scrambles*” by Terrance M. Kiernan Available on Sark price £3.50.

Logbook Extracts

22.2.98 - Swildons Round Trip

Dave Edge, Danny, Rachel Edge & Naomi Jones
... need more than a sausage sandwich next time!!
Mud sump OK. No bailing required

14.2.98 - Tatham Wife

Dom, Debs, Morse & Cookie
Planned to do Meregill, but the clap of thunder put us off. So did Tatty Wife instead, catching hypothermia!

15.2.98 - Lancaster Hole to Maple Leaf

Morse & Cookie
Appathy attack disguised as some spurious illness depleted our party to just two. Spent some happy hours trying to route find to Maple Leaf. Found plenty of off-survey stuff & eventually Maple Leaf

21.2.98 - Thrupe (Slither Pot)

Stop-Go, Cookie & Simon
Simon retired from the cave without even descending Perserverance. and Stop-Go almost expired from exhaustion - what is going on?

21.3.98 - Upper Swildons

Maurice and Eleanor Hewins and Prew with two fit climbers and a Morris dancer

21.3.98 - MRO Rescue - Swildons

Story A - implementing today's rescue practice at Blue School, Unfortunately we didn't practice route finding so if you are at the 20' pitch and need to get to Barnes' Loop, *go downstream*. If you need to go back to the entrance, just to make sure it's still there, then follow COOKIE

Story B - the little-known *Upper Entrance Series Barnes Loop* was rigged for casualty evacuation (by mistake) due to Les' inability to communicate effectively

29.3.98 - Imosway Quarry, Fancy Beach

Mike DY
Observed what looked like three large holes in quarry face whilst driving down Wide St. returning back and driving on the wrong side of the road, the three large holes had become 1 large and 2 small. As I had spent lot of early caving ducking and diving round these quarries in the end I was forced to go and inspect the said holes:

Hole One North - solution cavity in Rock face,
Hole Two - walk in cave passage leading into a quarry boulder choke. Some 12' long, 6-7' high, 2-3' wide, **Hole Three South** - just an illusion or trick of the light. Bet Nigel G knows all about it. Still, have been underground

4.4.98 - Manor Farm

Mark, Max, Mak, Vern, Rosie & Jo
Went down, got wet, came out. Rosie said "My bum's too heavy". Good photographic trip, lots of posing, getting wet waiting around for photos to be taken, only to get out and find the photographer (Mak) hadn't put the film in properly - it jumped off the sprocket, honest

4.4.98 - Swildons

Long round trip, streamway wet. Muddy duck sumped so dived it. Down Blue Pencil onto sump 9. Had difficulties with sump 6 bypass squeeze due to effect of age on girth! Out via damp link and shatter lots of bailing

4.4.98

Maurice with John, Prew, Jim Rands & Ian Timney on 60th birthday! 40 years caving nostalgia trip over the old 40

Recruited 'young' Simon as rigger (good fun that!). Completed very short round trip to avoid upward ladder climb. John's "Prince Charles Knee" survived the trip.

Good excuse to reassemble with old and new friends in the Hunters back room. Many thanks to all who came, especially those who got me the miners lamp - I've long coveted one of those

5.4.98 - Eastwater

Vern, Mak, Jo & Rosie
Managed to be persuaded to go down Eastwater by someone so only decided on a short bumble to the top of 13 Pots (well, Jo and I wimped out of Dolphin pitch - what's the point of going down just to come back up again?!!) Had fun back up the chimney and definitely not an NTR trip. The water levels seemed somewhat higher than on the way in - the words "vertical sump" spring to mind - could have had something to do with the downpour on Mendip whilst underground PS important to remember which entrance to come out from! - especially if you're more than caving snake size!

12.4.98 - Manor Farm Swallet

Nice but Damp, Desi & Calvin
... sunny and warm when we went in, dark and snowing when we came out, typical Mendip!

15.4.98 - Thrupe Lane

Rich Websell & Rob Delacour
The "Old gits, we only go caving when it's nice and sunny and warm Club" went down Thrupe pissing wet and snowing! On ladder to the bottom of a very damp Atlas Pot

Caving Events

12.4.98 - Hardrawkin Pot

Mark, Jo & Mak

Pleasant trip forgotten the crawling already

18.4.98 - Eastwater/Thirteen Pots

Mark & Mak

Quick trip - tad damp in entrance - going down was good!

25.4.98

Dr Les Williams and 10 students on a time trip through the Mendip geological column - Old Red to Keuper Marle (or as Les calls it, Mercian Mud Stone) in 8 stops - see write up on page 164

26.4.98 - Thrupe

Simon & Steve

... our trip was a bit of a drag but we managed to 'persevere' on upwards

26.4.98 - Longwood/August

Stop-Go & Tall Graham

Highest water I have seen ... clean oversuit! Showerbath on full blast!

2.5.98 - OFD: Pendulum to Maypole

Rosie, Vern, Legbreaker, Mark & Mak

Nice helictitites, Felinfoel should be pronounced as it looks! Trip was longer than Rosie thought (no, the rope at top of Chasm doesn't drop straight to the streamway!)

3.5.98 - Little Neath

Rosie, Vern, Mark & Mak

Yoh! Like bathwater! Proper job

9.5.98 - WCC Rescue Practice - Rod's Pot

Prew, Mike York, Les, Mark H, Mel, Andy, Mak, Danny, Shag, Butch & Cookie

We did the whole rescue from initial phonecall to cups of tea back at the Wessex - this is the way to do them. Learned a hell of a lot about the logistics and communications not to mention a refresher on pitch hauling. The realistic scenario made it even more rewarding. Acting Oscars to Mel for her screaming victim and Mark as a reporter from the Burrington Gazette.

10.5.98 - Manor Farm

Mel, Mak, Andy & Cookie

Since we had all changed for the rescue at Swildons we thought we had better go caving. Andy and Mak pushed the passage at the bottom of Florence's Bathtub in the low water conditions - although they still looked very wet to me. Had another look at the Aven and again resolved to climb it - sometime

PS The farm house is swarming with cute kittens if you want one

June

20th WCC Banwell Caves
20th 49ers Birthday Party, Priddy

July

4th/5th Cavers' Fair, Mendip
19th WCC Committee Meeting

August

3rd/7th NSS Convention, Sewanee, Tennessee
28th/31st WCC Yorkshire Meet

September

6th WCC Committee Meeting
18th/20th BCRA Conference, Southport
30th/14th Nov ISSA cave art Exhibition,
St Davids Centre, Cardiff

October

17th/18th Wessex AGM and Dinner weekend

November

21st BCRA Regional one day meeting,
Mendip, Priddy village hall
15th/28th 'A Brush with Darkness'
ISSA cave art Exhibition,
Wells Museum

December

25th Christmas Day
31st New Year's Eve