



Wessex Cave Club Journal
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Officers of the Wessex Cave Club

President Office Vacant **Vice-Presidents** Paul Dolphin and Jack Sheppard



Les Williams, Caving Secretary
 A man of many parts, Les is also club **Training Officer** and **Conservation and Access Officer**. He has caved widely in the U.K. and has arranged club trips to France and Belgium. Les has been to Slovenia several times, where he never failed to find the best Pizzas. Contact him on 01749 679839 or at caving@wessex-cave-club.org

Chairman	Dave Cooke	33 Laverstoke Gardens, Roehampton, Ldn SW15 4JB 020 8788 9955 chairman@wessex-cave-club.org
Secretary	Post Vacant	Treasurer Mark Helmore 01761 416631 MRO Co-ordinator Mark Easterling Mobile No. 07932 666475
Editor	Maurice Hewins	31 Badshot Park, Badshot Lea, Farnham, GU9 9JU editor@wessex-cave-club.org 01252 329302
Gear Curator	Laurie Orr	Membership Sec Simon Richards
Librarian	Phil Hendy	Hut Administration Ian Timney
Hut Warden	Pauline Grosart	Club Procedures Brian Pitman
Northern Caving Secretary		Keith Sanderson 01524251662
Sales Officer		Jonathan Williams sales@wessex-cave-club.org
Webmaster		Jonathan Williams
Hut Bookings	Wendy Williams	01749 679839

W.C.C. Headquarters, Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane, Priddy, Somerset BA5 3AX Tel. 01749 672310
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Editorial

As a now partly reformed Luddite, I was on a pretty steep learning curve when I produced Journal 272. It's layout was partly the result of expedience, mixed with inspiration but hopefully it worked reasonably well. In any case, it would not have happened at all but for considerable help from Judy, Rosie and Vern. Also I was well supported by all those that contributed.

As with all periodicals the Wessex Journal needs it's readers to write interesting articles and as Editor, I must select (assuming that I have a pool of material) so as to produce balanced issues. So, if your piece doesn't appear immediately, it does not mean I don't want it, please be patient.

Each issue costs £220 to print but we may be able to reduce distribution cost. If you are prepared to collect your Journal from Upper Pitts, please let me know. Also I am hoping to recycle some envelopes and will leave a box in the library for any you have.

This Issues Cover Picture

This photo, by Brian Prewer was taken at Lodmore and shows **John Ham**, at the third winch. The dig is now about 100ft. deep and is being dug by N.H.A.S.A. which stands for "North Hill Association for Spelaeological Advancement". Their first dig was at North Hill Swallet and other sites dug included Priddy Green sink, Windsor Hill and Twin T's. The team's greatest achievement was the opening of Manor Farm Swallet. Some of the veteran diggers are Wessex Members and a few of our younger recruits have helped out occasionally. Follow the saga in the Upper Pitts Log.



Left , Richard Kenney was a N.H.A.S.A. digger and regularly operated the surface winch until a few months before his death. The site hut is to the left. Right, John Hill stands at the third winch. Photo's by Brian Prewer.

Obituary

Richard Kenney

By Brian Prewer

Richard died on 27th December, after a short illness and many members attended his funeral. This obituary is taken from an address Brian made at that time.

The photo, with Graham Balcombe was taken at the 1996 Wessex Dinner.



Richard's parents came to Wells in 1924, when his father became a Tenor Vicar Choral in the Cathedral choir. He was born in Vicars Close and lived there until he joined the army at the age of 17.

His schooling began at Oakley School, in Priory Road, which meant passing Wells Museum twice a day. Like other youngsters, he was spotted by Herbert Balch, whose philosophy and friendship became, in Richard's words "the most important of anyone outside the family". It was Balch, who introduced him to caving at the age of 13.

Like his two elder brothers, Richard became a chorister in the Cathedral. The twin influences of the Cathedral and Herbert Balch became central to his life. He later wrote two books, about choral history, in Wells. Unknown to the rest of us, he was probably thinking of music, while dealing with an uncomfortable caving problem.

Railways were another of his interests and he said that "they involved people and places and were just another window through which to view the world". At an early age he discovered maps and set out to ride his bike along every road near Wells. Balch's philosophy of "seek and learn" was thus put into practice. It also came to the fore, when Richard took up caving.

His interest in maps led him to become a topographical surveyor in the Regular Army and he spent a few years in the Far East, putting it into practice. After a short spell in this country, Richard volunteered for what is now the British Antarctic Survey. He spent over 2 years on the Antarctic Peninsular and was allowed to name a glacier in his survey area as the Kenney Glacier.

On returning home, he realised that he needed a job and as happened in those days, Richard wrote to Clarks, in Street, expecting a job offer, which duly materialised, within a week. He spent over 30 years with that firm, doing Work Study, followed by 25 years as a computer programmer. Retiring at 60, with heart trouble he made a good recovery and fully enjoyed his retirement, still playing with maps, trains, caves, singing and computers.

My own involvement with Richard was purely through caving, which he started, aged 13, when Herbert Balch took him to help with the archaeological dig at Badger Hole. In 1942, as he recorded, in the Wessex Journal, Balch arranged for Jack Duck to take Richard and

his brother, Howard down Swildons. They took candles and Richard wore his football boots!

At first, the Kenney brothers were members of Balch's M.N.R.C. but in 1947, they joined the Wessex. Richard remained an active member until his death. He regularly helped Balch at his digs, including Badger Hole, while beginning to cave seriously, with Howard on Mendip and further afield. The passage connecting the Dry and Wet Ways, in Swildons, was opened by the brothers and bears the name Kenneys' Dig. It was, for years, the rescue route.



Richard, on the left, with N.H.A.S.A. in 1987, after a trip down Swildons.



At Badger Hole in 1946.

With his late brother, Howard, he formed a group of cavers, dedicated to caving on Friday nights, (the Friday Niters), thus allowing them to spend weekends with their respective families. This also enabled new club members to gain experience and their trips were advertised, in the Wessex Journal. Richard also helped to organise many trips to South Wales, to explore some of the major cave systems there. His incredible knowledge of these complex caves always amazed us- he appeared to need only to look at a map or survey to record it in his mind, for future use.

For a time Richard was on the club committee and was Editor of this Journal from 1972 to 1974. He was until last year a regular digger with N.H.A.S.A. and worked at Twin T's and Lodmore.

When Luke Devenish stood down as our President, in 1993, Richard was the obvious choice to succeed him. He became a very active President, attending our A.G.M.'s and Dinners. For many years, Richard was a Trustee of Upper Pitts, in which he took a great interest. The Caving World, and the Wessex in particular has lost a good and valuable friend.

The Club send our condolences to Richard's wife and family.

Water and Mud '99

Andy Kay

Translation of article submitted to Speleo-Dordogne 2nd trimestrial 1999

Unlike last year, this campaign saw a lot of water and virtually no mud and this is not an allusion to the weather conditions! This year, most of the mud was to be found on the vehicles, after a bit of off-roading, (but that's another story) and the aquatic element at the Grand Souci de St Vincent, where some serious progress was achieved.

Since the deep dive made by Malc Foyle, in 1996, the site has attracted the attention of a number of cave-divers, from both sides of the channel. Thus, it was, that unknown to us, a couple of British divers, Clive Stell and Tim Chapman, pushed the underwater depth to minus 70m in September 1998, during a "tourist cave-diving trip" to France. It seemed logical that the current explorers got together to form a proper team, hence four divers were anticipated at La Chassenie on April 2nd.

2nd April Malc Foyle and Robin Brown (WCC/CDG) arrive in a peculiarly lightly loaded Land Rover (compared with what we're used to). The compressor and sacks of equipment are unpacked. A 4-wheel drive trip is made to the area of Bretigneras (Exideuil) and to the Font de La Doue (St Raphael), to check the water level. A bit later, back home, we welcome the arrival of Michael "Fish" Jeanmaire and his charming wife Liz.

3rd April Arrival of Clive Stell and Tim Chapman (B.E.C/C.D.G.), in a fully loaded Transit. Unpacking of a vast number of tanks, including an industrial-sized Oxygen cylinder, several tanks full of Helium, another compressor, etc.....In short, the other two had left the transport of the sizeable kit to their pals! One of the compressors is fired up and rapidly Robin's two 12 litre tanks are ready to go. On to the Grand Souci, where Robin is going to dive and check the state of the shot-line and of the deviation line, running from it to the last belay at minus 60m. As he is working quickly, (20 mins. planned), he doesn't have too long to pass in decompression, the "gag of the day" (which was to become the motto of the week) only consisted of tossing a few pebbles into the pool, while he was on his minus 3m stop.

A good start and returning to the house, the computer is set up in the living -room and calculations made for the mixes to be prepared, the next day.

4th April A big morning of gas decantation, for the Trimix and pumping tanks. We're all a bit worried about the racket that the two compressors produce....but the locals are used to the noise of tractors etc. They have got used to strange happenings, when British cavers are in evidence, en route for the Souci.

Logistically, diving the site has become incredible complicated. Malc (diving on air), leaves a tank of Nitrox on the shot at minus 9m and another at minus 30m, for the "deep" divers. Then his plan is to leave the shot at about minus 36m and to run out more line at 180 degrees (in theory) from the other one, already in place., in order to find the opposite wall. He will start a survey from this point. He returns after 45 mins, his slate showing that he had found the talus slope, which previously had been considered to be a central cone, ascended it to minus 26m and tied off the line with a "doubtful belay" (his own words).

During this time, Tim had gone down to the “deep route”, to leave a reel for Clive, who would dive next. Clive was obliged to wait for Tim’s return because they had worked out an original system of “bottle sharing”. Tim had only used one of his tanks of Trimix and a bit of the Nitrox, staged on the line, for his return. Like that, he was able to pass his second unused tank, containing a mix for deeper diving to Clive. Should Tim have met with any problems on the way back out, he would have had enormous gas reserves. As there were no problems, the system was very efficient, as it allowed a maximum amount of mix to be available for the days to come

On the surface, passing all this stuff to and fro wasn’t all tranquillity either. Your author was tied off to a 8mm rope, full of knots, (the special Souci rope), which hadn’t been undone for some years. It was suspended on the edge of an abyss which, were it not full of water, would provoke severe vertigo and would at least require a proper double lifeline, rather than a doubtful rope tied round a withered tree.

Robin isn’t diving today. This gives him the time to dream up the “gag of the day” to liven up Clive’s long deco stop, at minus 3m. Finding a suitable branch and some dive-line, he goes “diver fishing”. Clive grabs the “bait and Robin yells that he’s “got a bite” and starts pulling on his improvised fishing rod, like a true angler, provoking so much laughter, that we were lucky not to all fall in the water.

Clive had returned, after tying off the line, at the depth he reached in 1998, (minus 70m). If things don’t seem to be advancing quickly, it’s because it has been decided that each belay must be utterly “bombproof”; almost as if the team were descending an open-air pothole and not one full of water.

5th April Early in the morning, the village wakes to the sound of tractors, taking silage to the beasts and the din of both compressors, accompanied by the whistles and shrieks of various tanks and valves being purged. Preparing the gas mixtures is a delicate but noisy operation.

Once at the hole, Rob dives first, to re-tie the belay and continue the “circular route), started by Malc the previous day. While he is in, Tim ties two stage tanks to the shot-line at minus 9m. Then, he makes a tour of the pool at minus 9m and finds another fissure, which he descends to minus 9m, where the walls bell out. No doubt this is another way to the main chamber below. Rob returns after 50 minutes, in the water.

While Malc and Clive are kitting up, Tim enters the second pool, which so far has never been dived. Hardly an attractive site, the hole contains a jumble of dead branches and a blue dustbin bag, whose contents we don’t really want to know, floating on the surface. He finds something else, among the assorted detritus; an abandoned toy plastic zebra, some 30cm long. He throws it up to us, without the others noticing.....Then he submerges again for about 20 minutes, retuning with a story of a descending passage with virtually zero visibility. So there’s another lead going off.

Clive goes for a deep dive. His deco stops having been carefully planned, the idea is that Malc shall follow, after 45 minutes, to pass Clive on the shot, while the latter is decompressing at minus 12m. Having got used to interpreting the diver’s movements below, by “reading” the rising bubbles, we see that everything appears to be going according to plan. So Malc sets off.

Later, we were to learn that having two divers on the shot-line, at the same time, could cause a few problems. The deeper diver's air bubbles effectively reduced the density of the water around the shallower one, thereby reducing his buoyancy. The latter was thus obliged to constantly make adjustments, in order to remain at the all-important depths for the deco stops. The effect is most pronounced at minus 6m., in the narrowest part of the constriction, between minus 4m and minus 12m. Clive was later to describe it as "like being in a Jacuzzi."

Meanwhile, Robin has prepared "the gag of the day". This time, it's the plastic zebra, that Tim found, which is attached to the line and tossed into the water, when both divers are at minus 3m. Yet again, he "gets a bite" but he retrieves his bait intact. Clive surfaces shortly afterwards "What the hell is that?" he asks, with a big grin. He thought he had hallucinated some kind of exotic fish from the Red Sea. Ten minutes later, Malc returns and immediately busts out laughing. At minus 3m, he was prepared for anything, a fine shower of pebbles, a bottle of beer dangled down to him. He wasn't expecting to see a zebra come bobbing along in front of his mask! Holding a demand valve, in one's mouth, while laughing hysterically is not easy but he managed to do so, during his decompression. But let's be serious. Some good work had been achieved. Clive had run out about 20 metres of line, while reaching a depth of minus 77m underwater. Malc meanwhile had prolonged the swallow route and surveyed on the way back.



Once back at the house, the decantations and pumping recommence. Also we start to draw up the survey. Immediately, two things become apparent. Following the wall on the "shallow route", Malc and Robin have started to circumnavigate the chamber. Also, due to the bad viz', Malc left the shot at 90 degrees to the path of the "deep route" rather than the 180 degrees planned. The end of their line appears to be only a few metres from the bolt belay of the "deep route". It seems like a good idea to try and join the two lines, next day and continue the circumnavigation at this depth. It's an exciting moment. For the first time, we are beginning to see the cavity, even if in reality the visibility doesn't exceed 3 metres. Instead of a central cone, there seems to be one wall, that slopes steeply down and it is on this that the shot lies. At about minus 3m, the diameter of the chamber is of the order of thirty meters, huge in other words and quite unique in the Perigord.

To Be Concluded



Garth Weston has submitted this picture of a lost Mendip cave. Do you know which one? The answer is hidden elsewhere in this Journal.

Caving with the aged

Some guidelines drawn up by Garth Weston

(Garth is well qualified in this area, as his elder brother, Paul, digs at Lodmore, with N.A.H.S.A. and he is no spring chicken, himself.)

These notes have been produced, without the assistance of SAGA (caving section), as guidance for those persons, unable to resist accompanying aged cavers on their occasional visits, to the netherworld. Not to be confused with nether region, an area of some inconvenience, in the presence of running water.

Never assume that that they know what they are doing, because of age, experience, bullshit etc. Even if the stories are half true, they will have forgotten the **how** and may be vague about the **when**. Be sure, it was a long time ago.

It is advisable, to take some games, pack of cards, television etc with you. Waiting for old farts to negotiate crawls, easy climbs, water etc can become very tedious and you may need some diversions. A few push-ups often help.

They will need to be properly attached, not with some old knot, they've forgotten to tie, to a substantial rope, at least half a mile before any pitch. This is to prevent " Balch's Levitation", a delusion suffered by those that think they can " Bound Over Houses, or more likely have vague memories of having done so, in the past. This is a hormonal problem.

Ladders can present a particular problem, yes, they still use them but they have a tendency to drop off, after quite mild exertions. (split infinitive). A barley sugar should be given, before the climb and hot chocolate afterwards. Games of I-Spy may also help.

In order to get them to enter water, even if only 3 inches deep (they will not understand 75mm) it is no good to appeal to **manhood** (gone), **better nature** or any decent **feelings** (all gone). Threats of blackmail, or a big stick, is more likely to work. Never threaten "**you'll be late for the pub, if you don't get a move on.**" This causes panic.

They have some archaic views, regarding lighting. First choice is often carbide! Though, there may be some, who still hanker for candles. Resist these poisonous and antisocial forms of lighting; people can get burnt. Insist on nice new, NICAD, rechargeable electrics. Don't believe them, when they tell you about their nasty toxic contents. It may be true: but it's modern.

The most difficult time may be the journey out. Gravity causes havoc, with the aged. Going down is easy, half a dozen good staggers, a few stumbles and hey-presto, you're at the bottom. Be patient; mention of Oakhill or Exmoor or any other geographical location is likely to work.

Never, never, ever let one drive you to or from a cave. Look at their cars! They are either covered in dents, or pristine, because it's the first time it's been out of the garage this year. **Finally, DON'T**You'll regret it.

Video Review

Maurice Hewins

The Wessex were well represented, in the B.C.R.A. video competition, with entries by **Neil Wooldridge** and **Laurie Orr**. Both depict a classic cave descent but create very different moods.

Laurie and his team decided to show a trip in Swildons, down to Sump 1. They have captured the spirit of youthful caving. Their video is full of exuberance and they are in no doubt that an active stream-way can be fun. At times, they race through the water and no chance is missed to enjoy themselves, especially when diving the Sump. Inevitably, Laurie becomes a "true son of Mendip" at the Double Pots. Cheerful music is interspersed with sounds of the stream but the story tells itself. Swildons is depicted well and the locations are instantly recognisable. Perhaps the best sequences are those shot on the 20 ft pitch and in the constrictions near the Shrine. Here, the formations shine, with their film of running water. Most cavers will identify readily with this film. It made me feel young again.

In contrast, Neil and his helpers produced "Eastwater; Caver's Cave". It is, like its subject, a much more sombre affair. It too depicts a well known standard trip but here, Neil is shown, descending alone, apparently deep in thought.

After a brief historical introduction, narrated by **Phil Hendy**, our intrepid caver makes his way, through the Boulder Ruckle and on into grim stark passage. A very effective sound track, which mixes music with sounds of over-suit sliding on rock adds to the tension, as Neil heads towards Dolphin Chimney. The steep dip in Eastwater comes over strongly. It looks an unforgiving place, with not a pretty in sight. I particularly liked the sequence, on the ladder, where the lighting worked well.

Over all, the lighting in both videos lacked variety and some dark areas, occasionally, might have added to the dramatic effect. Also, the constraints of the 10 minute format, demanded by the competition rules may be the reason for the lack of a really punchy ending. But these are minor criticisms. It's good to see the Wessex still making films!

Film makers flourish, when people see their work. Try to borrow or buy copies of these videos, from Laurie and Neil. They are worth seeing. You can see these and other videos at the **Wessex Film Show at the Hunters on Saturday March 10th at 8 pm.**

Memories of Old French Hols

Mike O'Connor (Speleogeriatric)

Mark Helmore's article, on Hol's '99, took me back to the 70's, when some of us, from the Wessex, who were joint members with Dorset Caving Group, (encouraged by Mike York) went out to the Gorge de la Bourne. Nigel Graham was also on the trip. Not many small clubs went that far, by themselves in those days, though the Wessex were in the Picos at the same time.

Yes, the scenery from Pont-en-Royans is fantastic, especially where we camped slightly further into the main gorge. You'd crawl out of your tent, in the morning and swear the utterly huge cliffs were falling down towards you; a hell of an optical illusion. The bars in Pont-en-Royan were excellent and one of them, near the gorge bridge was partly built into a cave. Our campsite had a pool in the river on one side. We arrived on a very hot day and I still recall Gordon Peters, (another Wessex member), taking one look, stripping off, climbing a rock ledge and diving in. Have you ever seen anyone coming screaming, vertically back out of a ten foot dive, as fast as they went in? The water was **very** cold, as it was straight from the huge Grotte de Bournillon, just round the corner in the Gorge.

We also thought the access to the Grotte de Gournier was extremely pleasant. It's just about unique to stop at a thatched bar and have a wonderful French coffee or Orangina, before caving and a few ice cold swift lagers, when you come out.

I found the use by Mark and company of the dingy rather French and worrying. We used to find the odd bunch of French cavers doing that and trying to look heroic, in front of the occasional audience. It seems to be a natural habit for a lot of them. Since we caved, at that time, in short wet suits, the lake was never a problem. In fact it was an enjoyable swim. The complete nutter in the group, Norman Bowley, (he caved with Yorkey on Portland) used to stick most of his dry kit in a canoe bag, strip down to his Y fronts and swim across like that. He didn't seem to feel the cold. On one occasion, this caused near panic, in an heroic French group, paddling four up in an inflatable, when he stopped for a chat and implied they should come in, as the water was lovely.

Mark may have noticed that on climbing up from the lake, he ascended some old dry dusty formations. These used to be huge gour pools, with beautifully pastel green and blue pools, over which regular pulses of water flowed down the gours, to fall into the lake below. Sadly, one year some cavers were stuck in the huge passages beyond, when a flood funnelled through this small part of the resurgence. When the French Army arrived (they were and possibly still are the local cave rescue), they decided to make use of their carefully acquired technical skills and blew the shit out of the pools, with an anti-tank rocket launcher, destroying the whole wonderful formation. There used to be a copy of my photo of these gour pools, framed in the Upper Pitts lounge, 'cos I won some competition with it.

We also met, on one occasion, some cavers from the Devon/Somerset border in the local café, one evening. The son of the café owner was trying to practice his English. We could only feel sorry for him, as the mix of West Country accents descended further and further into obscurity, with each round of alcohol. Heaven knows what he told his English teacher.

I also remember the horrified looks, on the faces of our group, when we walked up to have an initial glance at the largest entrance in Europe, the Grotte de Bournillon and coming round the footpath over 50ft up the side of it, to see a 30ft wall of water rushing down the enormous dry cave passage. It was not raining outside but hot and sunny. The entrance formed a huge lake, probably around the size of Priddy Green, and 30 to 40ft deep, in something under 5 minutes. Apparently, that resurgence is fed from 30 miles away. So, remember, if you go there, it looks hugely inviting but what is it doing 30 miles away? There is no way you'd outrun the water. It may have been a fluke but looked a reasonably regular occurrence. Some of our party went back a couple of days later and following phone calls about the weather, made a very nervous trip, for some way into the switchback passage. It's a great and spectacular area to visit and we had a great time but treat it with respect and be prepared for fairly long trips.

Garth Weston's mystery cave entrance (Page 29)

The photo was taken by John Tucker, in 1962 and is of Sandford Pearl Mine. The mine shaft was explored by S.S.S.S. in 1949. A 70ft ladder led to two partly natural galleries, one of which contained a fine nest of cave pearls. The entrance was blocked with rubble, in 1971 during quarrying operations Ref. Mendip; The Complete Caves, 1977 edition.

Giant Caves of Borneo

Caving Suitable for Wessex Saga Members

John Thomas

In the spring of the year 2000, during a tour of Malaysia, Angela and myself had the opportunity to visit Gunung Mulu National Park,, in Sarawak. These days, you can fly into Mulu, in a Twin Otter aircraft, direct from Miri, on the northern coast of Sarawak and three action packed days were spent in and around the caves, within the park.



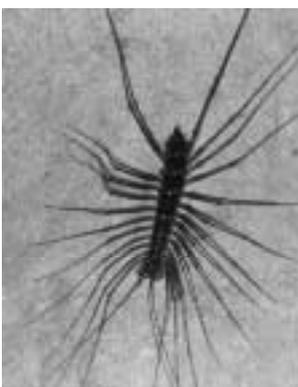
Based at the Mulu Lodge, at Long Pala, the first afternoon was spent walking the 2 Km, from the park headquarters, through dense forest, to Deer Cave, with our local student guide. We first looked at Langs Cave, which was very pretty and has a large number of swiftlets, which fly several kilometres into the cave to nest.

Next, we climbed up to the entrance of Deer Cave. Entering the main passage, it is stunning. It is 160m wide, 120m high and 750m long. As you proceed, through the chamber, you realise you are walking through tons of bat guano and it's associated smell, along with thousands of feeding insects. On reaching the end of the chamber, you look out through a vast opening, onto an area of rainforest, named the Gardens of Eden, situated in a dead end valley. It was dusk, when we left the cave and we wanted to observe the millions of bats that leave the cave, at night, to feed. We were not disappointed.

The next day, we were up early and our next mode of transport awaited us down on the river, a long boat, powered by an outboard motor. We sped up the river Melinau, for about an hour, until a translucent green tributary flowed from the right hand bank. The long boat turned into this and it turned out to be the Clearwater resurgence. Next, a quick trip into the Cave of Winds and then, Clearwater Cave. On returning up the resurgence, Angela and I swam for some time in this beautiful place. I even considered taking up cave diving! All too soon, we had to board the long boat and head back to the lodge.



On day three, I asked if I could enter a few small caves, in the area and was given a map and a mountain bike! So, off I went again, in search of Moonmilk Cave and Racer Cave. I found them both but only afterwards realised Racers are snakes, that frequent the caves and live on bats and swiftlets, with the possibility of the odd old caver, for good luck! Late that afternoon, we left Mulu and headed for Sabah.



Left, Millipede in Racer Cave.

Right, Columns in Langs Cave.



Adventure caving can be organised, through the park headquarters. It can be tailored to suit Saga members or young Tigers. Bunkhouse accommodation is available, as is the luxury of Mulu Lodge. Climbing Mount Mulu can be arranged, this 7798 ft peak takes three or four days to climb. But a final word of warning, the insects are the noisiest and most fearless that I have ever had the misfortune to meet on Planet Earth.

Extracts from the Upper Pitts Logbook

Edited by Brian Prewer

2.9.00 Les's Geological Tour of Mendip

Cast of Hundreds

A superb introduction to the geology of the Mendips. We won't mention the ammonite in the wrong bedding that couldn't be there.

5.9.00 Shatter Cave

Mark, Bean, Nik Nak, Emsey & Kathy

Definitely a boiler suit jobby. Too hot for fleecies. Very pretty pretties, worth a look by all. Contact "Helmores Inc, Adventure Caving" for a trip. (Buy him a pint or two)

6.9.00 Lodmore Dig

Usual crowd + 2 Girlies

Girlie cavers there to add spice. Fun had by all.

9.9.00 Swildon's I & back (of course)

Nik Nak

8.00am, just the right time to go, had the cave all to myself. Unfortunately there was no water either. Sump I is presently Duck I with about ½ inch air space.

9.9.00 Rhino Rift

Morse, Kev, Neil & Nik Nak

Left hand route, straight in and down, no messing, right down to the bottom – done.

9.9.00 GB Cavern

Lloyd, Kathy, Jon, Mat, Steve, Ian, Mark & Rus

Went down hole in ground in two groups.....it was dark! We went up to see the car and down to the Waterfall. Then Jon, Lloyd, Mat & Steve went back via the Devil's Elbow; Lloyd renamed it Devil's Arsehole.

10.9.00 Longwood

Andy, Nik Nak, Rocker & Kath (the other one)

A proper good cave with everything – interesting entrance (especially on exit) – couple of pitches – letterbox (parcel hatch) – hairy traverse - screaming Yorkshire tart - Nik Nak chasing wellies & tethers. Andy couldn't get the key in or out & I was completely b*gg*red.

15.9.00 to 17.9.00 Hidden Earth 2000

The Wessex ran an excellent conference again this year in Bristol! Many delegates took a risk on finding enough fuel to get home again. The caving spirit will always overcome.

15.9.00 Redcliffe Caves

Maurice & Eleanor Hewins

Well someone had to go on the BCRA trip!

23.9.00 St Cuthbert's

NBW + BEC Brothers

Hard caving, superb epic, classic. Moderate pace. Through Sump I & down to Sump II. Up the Entrance Rift in less than 3 minutes. Nice.

23.9.00 Daren Cilau

Nik Nak & Suntan

To the Hard Rock Café & down the Kings Road to the Terminal Sump – 9 hours. Very warm welcome at the HR Café by the Daren diggers – two very large mugs of hot tea. Thanks lads.

20.9.00 18 Acres Dig

Tuska, Tommo, Nik Nak, & Kathy

Hairy loose boulders in places but quite a pleasant dry dig.

30.9.00 Beer Quarry Caves

NBW, Morse, Cathy & Wendy Morse

As per usual – see previous write-up.

30.9.00 OFD Top to III

M Thomas, M Foyle, R Brown

Downstream to sump. MT & RB left Foyle half way over the traverses going to OFD III. He said he was too old & should be left to die! So we left him. Although on our return we found him in much better shape & fit enough to follow us out. Odd that.

30.9.00 OFD Top Entrance

Jon, Tommo & Kathy

Photo trip – nice bibble

1.10.00 Pant Mawr

Jon, Tommo & Kathy

Good SRT pitch and pretty corridor of helactites. However the 2½-mile walk seemed a lot longer. Popped into Dragon for tea as usual.

1.10.00 Swildon's

Tricky, Rich & Carl

Excellent photo trip & on up Crystal Passage. New Zealand caves were OK but nice to find the water turning the right way again!

3.10.00 Charterhouse Cave

Aiden, Rose, Laurie & NBW

Did it all. Good fun. Especially Russ going through the gate squeeze. Ho – Ho

Some Other Weekend – not too long ago Giant's Windpipe, Derbyshire

~~Simon (the original one, obviously – so obvious, in fact, that I'm going to cross this out), Steve, Geoff Shrimpton & Doreen (Landlady of the Miner's Standard, Winster) +DF.~~

Nice & wet for Doreen's first trip. Two broken ribs & a partially collapsed lung for Geoff! Good trip!

5.10.00 Withyhill

Mark, Richard, Geoff & Kathy

Nice trip for a Thursday. Very different to Shatter Cave but very pretty.

7.10.00 Swildon's

Phil Hendy, Maurice Hewins & Prew

With the water halfway up the top pipe, it was a slightly heroic (& very aquatic) trip to the Old Grotto to enable Maurice to do some more stereo photography. Phil down to the 40' – the bottom bit was like a water turbine. An enjoyable couple of hours although Maurice lost a sling & krab near the entrance – washed off his ammo-can by the sheer force of the water.

7.10.00 Daren Cilau

M Helmore, M Easterling & S Richardson

To Hard Rock Café & on to sump. 7 hours & home in time for tea.

8.10.00 Wookey 22

M Thomas & R Brown

A quick trip from 9² to 22 to shine a bright light up into the climb below Halloween Rift with a view to restarting this high level dig! The divers had an unpleasant swim to and from 22 in zero vis' that makes you wish you were somewhere warm and safe and not in the dark being cold and wet.

10.10.00 Swildon's

NBW, Bean & Jesus

To the Black Hole & back in 1hour 20mins. Free climbed the 20 footer, except JC whom we suggested use the ladder on the way out. JC definitely doesn't walk on water, but didn't he do well. Tip top diamond trip.

11.10.00 Stock House Shaft

NBW

Videoing

14.10.00 Swildon's

Claire + Kent Uni Troglodytes

Took the freshers down to the 20'. Enjoyed by all, looks like we've got 8 new cavers on our hands.

14.10.00 St Cuthbert's

Vern & NBW

Free climbed the entrance in flood. Nice !

20.10.00 St Cuthbert's

Vern & NBW

Diamond trip – Caving like it was the last day on Earth. Not too much water this time. Navigated the tricky round trip up Coral Chamber. Route was essentially, Rocky Boulder, Quarry Corner & squeeze, Coral Chamber, Horror Chamber, Far Chamber, Long Chamber, Across the Slopes & back to Quarry Corner & OUT!

21.10.00 Eastwater

Stop Go, Suntan, Kev & Emsey

Lower Traverse, Primrose Path, Upper Traverse & out.

Eastwater Appreciation Society pre-dinner bibble. Was meant to be a Regent Street outing but was changed due to a party of 6 rigging the Dolphin Pot. Lower Traverse & out was the original plan but Primrose had to be tackled while we were there (we left Stop Go smiling to himself at Hallelujah Hole having had a few pre-trip drinks). Primrose Path is as beautiful as "The Sound of Music", you can almost hear the Von Trapp children singing at the bottom! Didn't find Primrose Pot, probably because we couldn't be arsed!! Very wet entrance.

22.10.00 Swildon's

Ross & Nik Nak

The only hard cavers left after the Dinner. Black Hole just for a look, will go with a rope next time. Managed to miss the masses at the entrance & the 20'

22.10.00 Post Dinner Mystery Trip

Chris Williams & Others

Visit to tunnel at Rowberrow treatment works. We saw some really brilliant bats, one wasn't really happy, one was asleep. We saw a big giant water pipe.

23.10.00 Porth-yr-Ogof

Tuska, Lu, Kev, Emsy, Rob (Ems Dad)

A return to re-enact the "Don't hang on to the tree!" We hung onto the tree (which was shaking gently in the flood). Funny how Tuska's wetsuit still looks brand new since last year's trip. Emsy lost a kneepad – it must have been sucked off my leg!

24.10.00 Ogof Bwa Maen & Silica Mine (probably called Blue Hole)

Emsy, Rob (Ems Dad), Steve & Phil

Decided to explore some holes along the River Hepste. Explored the hole on a high level opposite the now fenced off high level path. Lovely water-worn tunnel & an interesting helmet off squeeze into its one & only stood up bit! The silica mine is horizontal & at river level so it can all be explored, unlike the high level better known mines where half are under water. More small holes to explore along this stretch. We'll be back.

25.10.00 St Luke's

Pete, Aubrey, Steve & Colin

Last time I went to St Luke's it was a mere depression, in fact it was to roll a concrete pipe into the depression. Well 7 years on its turned into a major construction of iron-work, stone walling & a vertical experience (120ft) & still going down. I was surprised to find the formations at the bottom, which I nearly trashed. I shall return again, perhaps next year or maybe 2007.

25.10.00 Stock House Shaft

NBW & Tony JRat

Just the two of us this time. Winched out 106 bags & did some more videoing. The new casing & lighting work fine.

Flash back to 1962

These photo's from **Angela Thomas** show, (left), a group of nurses from Mendip Hospital at Goatchurch. On the right, is **Paul Weston**, with Angela relaxing on the ground. The others are **Jack Johnson** and **D Stokes**. The picture on the right, was taken in the New Inn and shows Paul, (2nd from left) and the Landlady, **Emily Speed**.



Flood Damage in Withyhill

The recent exceptionally wet weather has caused deep flooding in Withyhill Cave. Opinions vary as to the seriousness of the damage but leaves have been deposited, high in the roof. These pictures, taken by **Pat Halliwell** were taken, in November, and show **Ric Halliwell** inspecting the deposits. It may be possible to wash much of the deposits of, with a spray, at a later date.



Club News

We welcome the following new members, (elected 9/12/2000)

Peter Jenkins Hasel Cottage, School Lane, Stedham, West Sussex, GU29 ON2
01730 812021

Phil Short 29 Taverner Close, Baider Park, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1UP
01207 871456 (day), 01207 686355 (evenings)

Tamsin Williams Baytree Cottage, Langford Road, Lower Langford, N. Som,
BS40 5HU 01934 863564

Dave Crane 9 Nelson Road, Bishopstone, Eastleigh Hants SO 50 8BR
0794 0057869 (mobile)

Changes of Address

Dave Speed 5 Ethel Street, Wells, Somerset

Dave Edge Manleaze Caravan Park, Cannards Grave, Shepton Mallet
Mobile 07989 424988

Carmen Haskell Harbour Road, Sherborne Dorset



Congratulations

Members will be pleased to hear, that Max Midlen and **Christine Lumb** were married, in Australia recently and that **Andy Summerskill** got to the wedding, despite his para-gliding accident. Andy is back home and on the mend.

Max and Christine have moved to 58 Towradgi Street Narraweena, N.S.W. 2099, Australia. 00612 9984 1124

Digging Barrel

2000 was a rollover year, as nothing was discovered

Guest Hut Fees have been set at £4. Members rates remain unchanged at £2

Andy Morse wins the Speleo Stone at the Knockhundred Dinner, in December, at The Old Drum Petersfield. **Ian Timney** made the presentation, before a mixed Wessex and Knockhundred crowd.



Subscription Rates for Next Year (2001-2002)

The 2000 A.G.M. set the rates for the club year, starting in October 2001 as follows:- **Ordinary Member**, £35. **Joint Members, with one vote**, £43-75 **Joint Members, with 2 votes**, £61-25 **Senior Citizen Rate**, £10-50. **Full Time Student**, £17-50. **The Subscription Rate** remains for the time being at £13. **Remember**, Subs are due before the A.G.M. and should be sent to, **Simon Richards, Membership Secretary**, 65 Binfield Road, Stockwood, Bristol, BS14 8TW. Please make cheques payable to Wessex Cave Club and tell us of any change of address etc. Overseas members can pay with credit cards and will be sent appropriate forms.

Library New Acquisitions to 17/1/2000

Bristol Exploration Club, Belfry Bulletin, 51, 5 (No.509) (Dec 2000).
British Caver, No.75 (Xmas 1979) and No. 77 (Summer 1980)
Chelsea Speleological Society Newsletter, Vol. 42, No. 11, (Nov 2000).
Descent ,No. 157 (Dec 2000 / Jan 2001).
Devon Speleological Society News (Newsletter) No. 21 (Oct 2000).
Grampian Speleological Society Group Bulletin 5, 4 (Oct 2000)
Grosvenor Caving Club Newsletter, 107 (Nov/Dec 2000) and 108(Dec 2000)
National Speleological Society News 58, 10 (oct 2000).
Westminster Speleological Group Newsletters 2002 (June 2000) and 2003 (Sept. 2000)

Politics

The Clubs Response to the Proposed Merger of N.C.A. with B.C.R.A

The Committee discussed the issue on 10/12/2000 and were happy with the idea, in principal as long as it results in a democratic organisation, which serves caving better.

The Wessex likes and supports the existing “ground-up” hierarchy of N.C.A. but recognise a need to include other types of membership e.g. national groups, like B.C.R.A., N.A.H.M.O., C.D.G. and Individual and Professional membership etc., though we strongly believe that the main power in any new organisation should be club/regional based.

Wessex accept the concept of individual membership of a national body, providing it is either non-voting, or on a proportional voting basis, with decision making “club biased”.

The New National Organisation must have within its’ aims that of promoting clubs and club caving. The Wessex would wish this to be framed in the constitution.

Local issues need local decisions and the National body should not be able to interfere in local matters, unless asked to do so, by the relevant local organisation or club.

Officers of the new organisation must be voluntary and receive no personal benefit, from their post. Paid employees should be disqualified from any voting.

Personal choice must be maintained. It should not be obligatory to join any particular organisation, as a consequence of being a member of another.

Finally, the Wessex Cave Club are not opposed to some form of commercial or professional membership but it must be clearly defined and it should not carry a disproportionate voting influence. Commercial interests must not be allowed to influence the running or decision making of the proposed new body. Professional caving is with us, whether we like it or not but it must not be allowed to interfere with club caving.

These views have been forwarded, on your behalf to N.C.A and B.C.R.A.

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CAVERS SHOP AT



BLACK WAL'S CUPBOARD

Forthcoming Events

Committee Meetings,	March 11 th , April, 15 th , June 10 th , July, 15 th , Sept 2 nd .
Club Video Evening,	Sat. March 10 th , at the Hunters Lodge, at 8p.m.
M.R.O. General Meeting,	Friday March 16 th . At the Hunters at 8p.m., All Welcome.
Easter trip to Ireland	Sat. April 7 th to 14 th /16 th . Staying in cottages in Doolin. Co. Clare, Contact Les, A.S.A.P. about Bookings.
South Wales Meet,	May 4 th to 7 th at the W.S.G. cottage Penderyn.
C.S.C.C , A.G.M,	Sat May 12 th at the Hunters, at 10.30 a.m.
France (at Doubs)	May 24 th to 28 th . Joint meet with Belgium cavers.
Banwell Caves ,	Sat June 9 th at 2.00p.m.
Craven Winch Meet,	August 18 th to 27 th .
Hidden Earth 2001,	At Buxton, October 12 th to 14 th .
Wessex A.G.M. and Dinner,	October 20 th .