

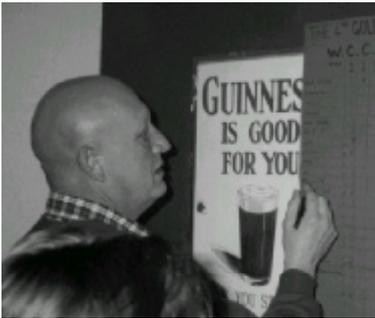


Wessex Cave Club Journal
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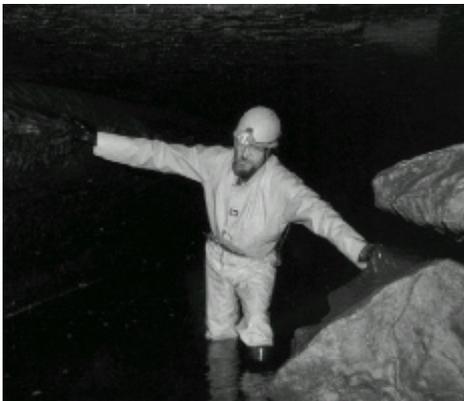
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Phil is the "Elder Statesman" of the committee, having been first elected in 1974. He has served as Chairman, Secretary and Editor and was responsible for arranging the first Wessex Challenge, which commemorated the Club's first 50 years. Following Yorky's death, Phil became Librarian in 1999. His courage underground will be tested in his new career as a teacher. **Good Luck Phil!**

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This Issue's Cover Picture

Ian (Ellis) Chandler in the Doolin Streamway and Left, John "Tommo" Thomas in the same cave. Both Photo's were taken by Jonathan Williams on the 2000 trip.

The Easter trip to Ireland last year was seriously effected by foot and mouth but this year the Wessex returned for a successful expedition. See Jonathan's report on the next page.

Boiler Fund T-Shirts Now Available

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Ireland Trip Co.Clare, Easter 2002 . by Jonathan Williams

It was with the usual expectations of grey skies and Guinness that we set off again on the annual Easter pilgrimage to the caves of Co. Clare. We were however overwhelmed that for once only the Guinness was to be found in abundance. Perhaps no one had told the Irish weather that Easter was particularly early this year but we were blessed with clear skies and dry weather all week long. The significance of a prolonged period of dry weather in Ireland had never really struck me before. Past experiences had led me to believe that the sun did not actually exist there. It was obviously as much of a shock to the locals as it was to us when the Galway weatherman announced that it was not very often he got to read the words “.....Tomorrow will be bone dry”. This week was to be our chance to fulfil a dream... a trip to Coolagh River Cave without a sense of impending doom. After a quiet and uneventful ferry crossing two group sets off on the mad dash across Ireland. My group taking the usual Mitchelstown Cave stop, while the others tried the new and untested Rock of Cashel. It was late afternoon before we all met again safe and sound in Doolin. Our host TJ was as accommodating as ever happily participating in our “Don't mention the war” jokes for the benefit of our German neighbours.

The classic trips of Co.Clare were soon ticked off in short succession. Aran View to Fisherstreet via the serving hatch at McGann's, and for those who hadn't quite developed a taste for the black stuff yet back in and out St Catherines.



Left,
At Coolagh River
Photo Tommo.

Right.
Jon Edwards, Jon
Williams, and Geoff
Ballard, at Doolin
after Fisherstreet.



Joined by our Irish friends Tall Graham, Brian and Des we headed off for a Poulelva - Poulmagollum through trip. An exchange was planned with the “Tigers” led by Les & Cookie opting to go *down* Poulelva Pot while the “Tarts” consisting of Geoff, others and myself were given the chance to go *up* 35 metres. It was in the true spirit of Berger training that we opted to ignore the 50kg of rocks placed in the tackle sacks at the bottom of Poulelva Pot choosing instead to employ a Z-rig to haul them up the 100 odd feet. After several pints that evening our total commitment to getting fit for the forthcoming Berger trip seemed to have become lost on the culprits, but the clock had begun ticking.

Coolagh River Cave offered the chance of another Classic through trip with the added bonus of a quick swim to the end of the cave. Two groups opted for Polldonough to Polldonough South and vice-versa. As always the promise of a pint and a toasted sandwich at the Roadside Tavern proved too much and we opted for a quick head out.

The usual days out to Galway, the Cliffs of Mohar and Doolin Pier proved a welcome relief from all that caving. At times the weather was almost too nice to venture underground. Others took the great weather as a chance to cave everyday, making trips to the not so popular systems including Fergus River Cave.

As the enforced sobriety of Good Friday, approached a trip to Cullaun 2 was planned and for those of us leaving on Saturday it was to be the last trip of the week. A point not missed by several members of the pitch hauling team from earlier in the week. Their early departure from the pub on Thursday night was not spotted by our Chairman but their handiness with a needle and cotton on the sleeves of his over-suit proved a fitting reprisal for the rock incident come the next morning.

Saturday saw hordes of cavers heading off for a 30-mile bike ride in the back of Cookie's truck - Afghan Rebel Style. However for the rest of us it was time to make our way back to the ferry. I am reliably informed that those who stayed on for the extra few days had a very enjoyable time.

Once again our Thanks go to Les and Wendy Williams for organising the accommodation. Just for the record, those attending were Les and Wendy and Chris Williams, Cookie, Lou and Biff, Geoff,

Dawn and Jack, Jonathan & Kathy, Jo Williams, "Our" Mark, Paul Wakeling & Laura, Jon "The Suitcase" Edwards, and Tommo.



Paul Wakeling at Cullaun River Cave, Photo Tommo.



Mark ?, Jo Williams, Lou Biffin and Kathy at Magann's (Tommo)



Cookie stitched up! Photo Jon Edwards.

BOLTS AND STRING by Nik Nak (Simon Richards)

It was my last day in the Pyrenees and after rigging, completing the through trip and de-rigging the PSM there was only one thing outstanding in order to round off a thoroughly good caving holiday. Time to finish something started on a previous visit.

Back in May, on a recognisance trip to the PSM, Mike Thomas, Kevin Hilton, Emma Heron and myself decided to go looking for holes in Spain. Driving only a few miles over the border we stopped to look at promising dark spaces not far from the road. We were soon disappointed, just dark shadows in the bright sunshine, however undeterred we continued to explore a small prairie. It wasn't long before we came across what we were looking for, fenced and black.

The hole was a circular shaft, 10ft in diameter, with what looked like a bottom 40ft below. We had two helmets with lights, a couple of slings, one ladder and a length of lifeline. Kevin, brave sole, volunteered to free climb as far down as he could, life lined of course and carrying the ladder. Half way a sling was hung over a natural belay and the ladder used for the remaining shear drop. Once at the bottom, Kevin confirmed that it was still going and began throwing rocks. It wasn't long before they hit something but the sound of tumbling continued loudly for several seconds after. 'Throw again. Another.' Everyone excited, Mike was down next for a look. A shelf could be seen 20ft below, but the next drop was out of view. A single rusty spit was found at the pitch head; someone had looked once before. Due to lack of equipment and this being our last day on this occasion, throwing rocks was all that could be done to further our exploration. We would be back!



Mike on the pitch.

On Wednesday 29th August 2001 the air was cooler, the sun was still bright and patches of low cloud and mist blew across the prairie. Imagine the scene from the film Highlander where Connor McCloud first discovers the 'Quickening' – exactly the same but without the lightning. Mike and myself were back, with John Thomas as surface support. This time with two ladders, SRT kits, bolting gear and enough rope for what ever lay ahead.

No daredevil free climbing this time, the two ladders were used to descend the initial 40ft. Straight forward enough, myself down first followed by the rope and then Mike. Unsure of the stability of the floor we remained clipped to the base of the ladder. With no experience of vertical exploration and having never felt 100% comfortable on rope, I left Mike to rig and make the decisions on how to proceed.

I followed gingerly behind. Mike decided to use the rusty spit found previously, backed the rope to the ladder and began to descend. The takeoff was from a jammed rusty old drum, which prevented loose rocks from following. Once Mike was down to the shelf and safe I followed. I was not at all happy, hanging from a spit the history of which was completely unknown to me. On SRT trips I had never considered the bolts, after all possibly hundred of cavers had used the same bolts

previously; they were safe? Instead I had always questioned the strength of the rope, but now as it fed slowly through my Stop I could only think of the bolt. Slowly, my full concentration was on making a smooth descent with no bounce. I don't remember talking or even breathing.

The shelf was wide and covered in loose rock that would not have required much convincing to continue its journey in the direction of gravity. The shaft continued, larger and offset from the first 60ft. Mike was already in the process of adding a new spit to the head of the next drop upon my arrival and once done, down he went. At the top, perfectly still so as not to disturb my surroundings and have part of it join Mike half way down the pitch, I listened to the commentary on progress. A couple of natural re-belays and a second new spit were required and Mike was at the bottom. From the sound of his voice I could tell he was a reasonable distance down.

Another experience awaited me. First a rusty old spit and now a brand new spit that I had seen placed only twenty minutes before. Again, I was completely unconcerned about the rope and as I put my full weight on it to descend the only thing I could think about was the bolt.

Heart racing, blood coursing through my veins (was this the Quickening ?), I closed the handle on my Stop and down I went. Again I moved slowly and deliberately. Mike's rigging and placement of the re-belays encouraged me to relax and enjoy the ride as I descended, however I still gave the second new spit the respect it deserved. The shaft was now wider and more open, but it was difficult to get a good perception of it as a whole. After about 30meters I landed to meet Mike on a flat silt floor, with absolutely no way on. From the bottom, the shaft was a beautiful circular shape. Its walls were in the main flat with a few thin vertical alcoves jammed with debris of various descriptions at all heights. It was easy to imagine the entire shaft flooded with melt water in the Spring thaw. A few minutes to admire its symmetry and I began the journey up to reach blazing sunshine at the surface.

It was disappointing to reach the bottom so soon but satisfying to know that we had pushed the hole to its conclusion. As for a name, we decided to call the shaft 'Quickening Hole' due to the atmosphere when we first entered; the rolling mist and our nervous excitement at what may lie ahead. The shaft bottomed at 50 meters and I would not suggest that any one else bother descending it, however if you find another black hole, push it. After all **we cave not because of what is there, but what might be there!**

The Berger with Goonsuit and Ladders.

Ray Deasy recalls a combined clubs trip to the cave in 1960

John Thomas's photo shows Ray on Ingleborough in 1961



The expedition party from London, Birmingham and Bristol met in London on the 9th. September, for the trip over to Grenoble, over 600 miles away. Two days of hard travelling brought us to Grenoble, which can claim to be among the cities of the World to have such beautiful views literally on it's doorstep. Great Alpine peaks rise into the air, many of them snow-capped. The city itself is situated on a flat alluvial plain with the mountains all around seemingly cutting it off from the rest of the world.

Because of the winding mountain roads, it was another 20 miles onto the Somin Plateau, passing through Sassenage and the Engins Gorge. The weather was extremely warm when base camp was reached even at a height of 5,000 feet; naturally enough it was taken to full advantage by exploring the plateau itself. The area up on the plateau is covered mainly in pine forest, and what ground the trees do not take up is bare limestone waste devoid of any water and intersected by very deep grikes.

By now Tuesday had arrived and some thought had to be given to laddering the cave in preparation for a descent, so, the weather still keeping fine, a laddering party was sent over to G.B. and the cave was laddered as far as Cairn Hall shaft, spending about 5 hours down the cave.

The Gouffre Berger entrance is one of 5 deep shake holes, the former being about 45 feet by 15 feet wide and about 45 feet deep. The old French expedition huts still remained sound in frame, though their protective covering shed through successive winters.

It turned out to be an hour's hard trekking from the base camp to the Gouffre Berger and, unless arrows had been placed by the S.G.C.A.F. (Spelo Group Club Alpine Francais) it would have been impossible for us to find it. The journey to the Cave was land-marked by a deep shake-hole with a section of shaft in it, all of 60 feet deep, and Puits de Fromargere (the Cheesery) with its deep imposing entrance and passages.

Another laddering trip on Wednesday took us down to Gontard's shaft. By now the unexpected had begun to happen. We found that we were many feet short of ladder and rope and the only remaining hope was of borrowing enough tackle from the S.G.C.A.F. of Grenoble. That evening it began to rain and it was still raining 24 hours later when we went down to Grenoble to meet members of the S.G.C.A.F. to ask for more tackle. Permission was granted and sufficient ladder and rope was given to explore as far as Claudine's Cascade, our objective. A third laddering party, which went down that day, could penetrate no further than Cairn Hall because of flood-water, which came cascading down the shaft. Had it not been for a hasty warning they may well have been trapped. Friday morning came with the grim outlook of plenty of rain for the day. By now the camp was more or less flooded out and sleeping in the Land-rover and Van was most uncomfortable. Saturday morning, dawned with the prospect of a fine day and, after 48 hours of continuous rain and sleet, we needed it. This was just the lull in the storm, however, for by 12 noon the rain was with us again, but not before the camp had been moved nearer to the edge of the forest and away from the prevailing winds.

It was now quite impossible for the two parties to reach Claudine's Cascade in the limited time that was left and an attempt would have to be made the following morning or nothing at all. All the rest of Saturday more kit was taken over to the cave and a camp was set up there, flood packs and survival rations were sealed and, most important of all, a final assault party chosen for the Cave.

Sunday came along with storm clouds in the sky, but after a good filling breakfast, we set off to the Cave, shouldering heavy kit bags. The surface party was well established at the entrance and waiting to lifeline us down Ruiz shaft. Hand shakes all round and into the depth below. At this stage two of the party decided that it would be wiser if they dropped out, leaving only four in the party with a pile of kit that a party of ten would find no easy burden.

At the bottom of Cairn Hall the four of us were on our own, but not quite for good, telephone communications being established with the surface at this point.

The winding cleft was the next torture to follow, lugging heavy kit through this twisting recess using only the friction that arms and legs could provide whilst pressed tight against the rock. Moving along in this ungainly fashion for what seemed an eternity, the Boudoir was reached, an extremely comfortable "room" off the main passage, being no more than 7 feet by 7 feet with a dry clean sandy floor.

Three more journeys back and forth were made that day, transporting gear from Cairn Hall along this wretched winding cleft. (Although only 475 feet in length, the winding cleft was most exhausting. It was a former stream meander which was about 100 feet from top to bottom and, when kit accidentally fell, it meant a good time of struggling and cursing to squeeze down to the lower reaches of the rift to get it back.) The telephone cable proved extremely faulty in the winding cleft so it was re-laid completely with a new wire.

That night camp was made in the Boudoir, good communications being established with the surface. It was now obvious that it would be impossible to reach the objective of Claudine's Cascade with such a small party and large amount of kit.

The cave was particularly cold with a temperature of only 38-39F in the Boudoir, but a comfortable night's sleep was had, even if a little restless.

Monday morning did not dawn, it arrived by the time of our watches and the call signal of the telephone from the surface. After a good breakfast, we contacted the surface to say we would press on as far as was safe, so, with more kit the rest of the winding passage was negotiated to the head of Garby's pitch 130 feet deep. The stream meander had left behind a peculiar rock pulpit from which one could look right down into the circular shaft of Garby's. The telephone was tried out here but with no success. It would be impossible now to re-lay all the telephone wire and to continue without telephone communication meant disaster. It was decided that we could only safely go to the top of Aldo's shaft. Progress was now very fast. At the bottom of Garby's shaft another trickier cleft followed about 230 feet long onto the head of Gontard's shaft 80 feet deep. At the bottom a small active stream-way came in and a further two drops of 25 feet and one of 35 feet along a horizontal plane of 175 feet brought us to Aldo's shaft 145 feet deep. This was as far as we could go so we busied ourselves by taking plenty of photographs of this wonderful Cave. There are some peculiar growths of Splash deposit on the rock wall at the top of Aldo's, situated on buttresses on rock. These unique deposits were reminiscent of chickweed.

The depth we had attained was about 700 feet out of the total depth of 3,750 feet of the whole Cave. We arrived at the surface late Monday evening to a warm cup of soup prepared by the surface crew. Then the long trek in the dark back to base camp began. We were all pretty tired and, although it was raining hard, the heat walking inside a "Goon suit" was unbelievable. The

various markers on our trek were passed with anticipation – Puits de Fromargere, the deep shake-hole, the open moor – and we returned through heavy mist back to base camp, where another hot meal was waiting.

Tuesday morning came with another noticeable drop in temperature. Most of the morning was spent getting kit back from the Gouffre Berger, only just in time before an inch of hail fell. Then the sun shone for a brief period, followed by heavy snow. It was decided that it would be no advantage to stay any longer on the Plateau, so the tents and gear were packed away. Everything now was fairly deep in snow (about 2 inches fell in half an hour) and everybody had freezing toes and hands. The Land rover only just managed to make it onto the road. Everybody jumped in and we set off to Grenoble. Although the object of the expedition was not achieved, much hard-earned experience was gained, which must be the core of every major trip like this.

Memories of Twin T's , a discussion by Jim Hanwell

A trip down TT's, and some notes on the dig

On descending the 7m deep entrance shaft, the limestone beds exposed by Luke's blasting in 1969 show compression fracturing and small scale anticlinal folds, indicating that TT's lies very close to the South Western Overthrust. This major fault line traverses the southern limb of the Mendip anticline between Cheddar and Pen Hill. Apart from providing us more limestone to play with along the southern flank of the central plateau, this crucial thrust almost "brings back" the Black Rock Limestone to the surface along its so-called hanging wall, i.e. on the Westbury-sub-Mendip side of the fault line (see the cross-section on Sheet 280). With its famed reputation as Mendip's most cavernous variant of our local limestones, we had hopes of re-entering the BRLst and dreams of this containing older fossil caves hereabouts. The entrance to TT's is shown on Gilbert Green's maps to be on the nearby contact between the Burrington Oolite and Clifton Down Limestone outcrops on the Priddy side of the thrust.

The inclined passage below the entrance shaft turns to head down an enlarged bedding plane dipping 42 degrees to the south; a general direction of dip evident throughout the upper half of the cave. A narrow vadose trench in the floor provides a convenient T-shaped cross section. This had been subsequently filled with periglacial gravels and clays sludged in from the surface. Once cleared this trench became known as the Cresta Run. A timbered chute was laid along its floor up which "sauce-boats" heavily loaded with spoil could be more easily dragged. These were pulled from a winch located below the concrete pipes at the foot of the entrance shaft so that the 15-metre long hauling rope only snagged once en route. Some heavily laden boats broke loose whilst being dragged up the chute, however, dangerously tobogganing down its slippery surface onto those below, however; so, we resorted to heavy duty poly' bags instead. Quickly released retrievable strops tied around the necks of these bags aided their swift transfer out of the cave, hauled by NHASA's trusted old winch to the surface. Countless bags dragged up the Cresta Run polished the timbers, thus enabling diggers to glissade gracefully down its steep convex slope to a concave landing and platform at the bottom.



2nd. Winch on Cresta Run

The bedding plane was also enlarged laterally at the top of the Cresta Run; its sloping floor thickly covered with angular boulders, well anchored by tenacious mud that had clearly sludged in from above. This appeared to be the toe of a scree-like slope, the top being out of sight beyond a tight slot that was never pushed upwards. The surfaces of the larger boulders have thin flowstone coats, and several stalagmite pillars up to 500 mm long had formed, interspersed with more modern straws. Most of these formations are fractured and distorted, indicating ongoing settlement of the steeply poised clay fill beneath.

Similar features exist at the bottom of the Cresta Run where the Sixties Passages entered and phreatic avens ascended above the landing and second pitch. **Photo above by Brian Prewer.**

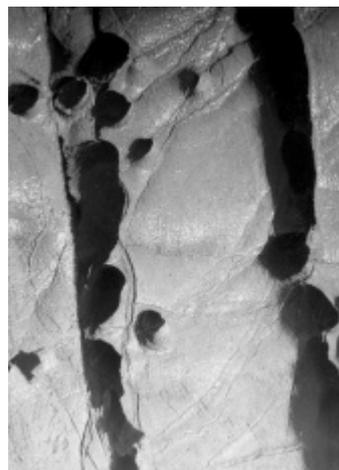
Distinctive cavities in the bedding plane roof of the Cresta Run posed a greater puzzle, however, and generated great debate. The otherwise smooth ceiling contains many tubular pockets; best described by Willie Stanton as the sort of holes made "by thrusting the fingers into wet cement mortar". Each tube was strangely solitary. Whilst many of us were pondering about likely processes whereby solution and cavitation at the surface of mighty torrents down TT's in the past somehow combined to "drill" these holes, WIS subsequently chanced upon similar features on his wanders over Mendip. Indeed, our lone sleuth of local karst features was duly rewarded in finding

several thousand such holes at over 60 sites covering a range of limestone outcrops, including quarries. Most were hidden beneath overhanging bluffs close to the ground surface, often behind screens of growing grass, and occupied by the yellow and black banded “grove snail” *Cepaea nemoralis* (formerly *Helix nemoralis*) during their summer growth sprees. Further ingenious deductions substantiated what, at first, had seemed a far-fetched notion – these outdoor holes had been entirely scraped out by snails! Accordingly, they were boldly dubbed by WIS as “helixigenic cavities”. Were the ones underground in TT’s also “helixigenic”?

In the absence of any other explanation for the unusual rood tubes down TT’s, some of us “came out of our shells”, too; risking the premise that the holes down TT’s were the work of snails as well. Willie’s seminal papers on the subject were later published in the proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists’ Society (1984) and the UBSS (1986). The latter, for example, ends with photographs and a sketch section of TT’s, in which WIS ventures the possibility that the roof tubes of the Cresta Run might also be “snail holes”. If so, he concludes that the larger holes found down the cave could be some 100 000 years old, and probably formed in the Last (or Ipswichian) interglacial. During this lengthy warm period, Britain’s climate was similar to today’s; the landscape being well covered with temperate vegetation, and sea level was some 15 metres higher than at present. TT’s was then a great gulf surrounded by 10m high limestone buttresses. Its floor probably contained open shafts descending to unknown depths. Just the spur needed by earnest diggers! But the “snail hole” theory for the roof tubes down TT’s remains unresolved, however. For example, WIS has recently told me of subsequent studies of similar features under overhanging cliffs around the shores of annually flooded Irish lakes. So far, these are thought to have been the result of some form of corrosion associated with intermittent flooding. Could this be so down TT’s? And, if so, why have such distinctive tubes not been spotted down other caves? The mystery deepens.

Snail ? Holes (Phil Hendy)

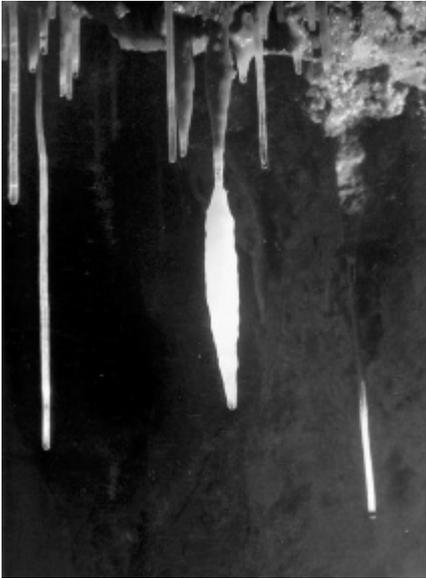
Now unresolved theories have habit of encouraging cave diggers, of course. So, compared to “snail pace” progress of barely 1.5mm a decade, NHASA’s “terranauts” dug at warp speed proportions throughout the summer of 1985. A vertical pit was excavated in the loosely consolidated stones and mud that filled the rift below the end of the Cresta Run. Much of this debris had slumped in from the avens and Sixties Passages above. It also remained unstable, and required treating with greater caution than was shown initially. After burrowing downwards for about 8m it had been possible to squeeze into a well-decorated Lower Grotto by the autumn. But all was lost when the sides of the pit succumbed during the very wet winter that followed. A lot of water washed down the Cresta Run to join all too frequent shower baths down the avens. Our pit became a plughole.



Further digging erred more on the side of the snail! It took until 19th November 1986 to recover the lost ground and re-enter the Lower Grotto. A separate shaft was sunk to the south of the previous one. The ramp at the end of the Cresta Run was extended to a bridge over the new shaft. From this platform, it was possible to stand upright and haul up spoil from the working face directly below. Fred Davies bolted a third winch to the rock face above, and Albert Francis excelled himself in building what must be his finest retaining wall under Mendip. This was carefully constructed from the top downwards as the shaft deepened; an undertaking that used every large stone available on site, and bucket loads of cement mortar. The latter, called “pug” by Albert, was mixed on the surface and lowered on demand from below. Many stones that had been painstakingly hauled to the surface only the previous year were even returned underground. Indeed, it often seemed that more material went down the cave than came out!

Albert’s masterpiece securing the formerly unstable 8m deep Second Pitch to the Lower Grotto is thus a lasting exhibit typifying the larger size component in the original fill. It is also worthy of our effort to protect the latter’s fine formations from further collapses. At the opposite end of the fill’s particle size range, too, Willie Stanton produced another significant discovery. In a sample taken from near the top of the pitch he found a weathered piece of sandstone comprised of polished round grains of clear quartz. This composition, or lithology, is typical of Upper Greensand deposits that formerly covered the area at the beginning of Upper Cretaceous times. As I have tried to depict on my block diagrams, this rock was laid down in a rising sea that eventually submerged Mendip almost 80 million years ago. Indeed, this so-called Albian overstep was the last such marine transgression across the Wessex region, no less.

Here, I confess that my three diagrams cannot do justice to the complexity of the story, especially during Jurassic and Cretaceous times. The main mineralisation of Mendip accompanying earth movements during the former period, for example, has been omitted for the sake of the “big picture”. Nowadays, one must go to the eastern borders of Somerset to find Upper Greensand outcrops. So, the weathered fragment found down TT’s probably arrived there much later as the sea fell in Quaternary times, during the early stages of Mendip’s exhumation as the climate cooled. Residual debris from the Cretaceous cover would have been strewn around the newly exposed plateau surface as the Upper Greensand escarpment gradually retreated eastwards. Similar deposits have been identified in the fill excavated from the fissure in the nearby Westbury Quarry Caves, of course. They are important tell-tales in the reconstruction of Mendip’s long erosional history, and help in the relative dating of early cave formation on the plateau.



The Lower Grotto was found below such fill. Whilst the steeply inclined floor of this open side chamber consists of more large boulders *in situ*, the sloping roof and west wall display an intricate network of calcite veins from which minute frost-like crystals had grown. Many also cover rock faces within the vein mesh, much like lichen patches on old brick walls. Being able to sit at leisure with these jewelled surfaces at arms’ length facilitated their close examination. At first, I thought the steeply inclined west wall of the chamber might even be the sole, or underside, of the South Western Overthrust itself. A few measurements of the grotto’s alignment, however, showed its orientation to be consistent with the bedding throughout the upper half of the cave. So, it is simply another enlarged joint plane, blanked off after 6m by rectilinear walls along the faces of cross joints. **Photo’s here of the 2nd Grotto. By Phil Hendy.**

Moreover, the roof of the Lower Grotto also has many “snail holes”! Although now some 25m below the entrance, significant open routes to the surface via joint controlled rifts like the

Second Pitch and avens above must have existed over long periods of time. My notes in NHASA’s “Log Book” Vol. I on 10th December 1986, however, recall that I spotted a couple of holes that led me to query whether snails would have “pushed” past a flake of chert and a silicified crinoid stem whilst “consuming” the limestone around them. These formidable obstructions still fill almost half of their respective holes. But then, I’ve always marvelled at those undaunted by tight squeezes!



The way on and down took us away from the Lower Grotto. Another infilled joint rift was excavated and walled to create the Third Pitch. This descends a further 5m, and so the dig reached a total depth of 30m below the entrance by the end of 1987. The first surveying trip took place on 12th December of that year, in time for such results to be reported at NHASA’s Christmas Dinner. Everyone there was cheered with the prospect that the dig would soon be over 100 feet deep in the New Year.

A steeply sloping vadose enlarged passage heads directly down dip from the bottom of the Third Pitch. From the beginning of the New Year in 1988, the cave took on a different character. No more snail holes were found! More noticeably, too, the fill was not so consolidated and less plagued with mud. Smaller debris was bagged and removed to the surface in relay shifts whilst boulders were jammed into the narrow and ungraded floor of the passage as convenient steps. On average, about 20 bags of spoil surfaced on digging nights every Wednesday. Thus, rapid progress was made down the

choked passage for some 10m. The resultant route provides a convenient invasive link between the upper and lower levels of the TT’s system.

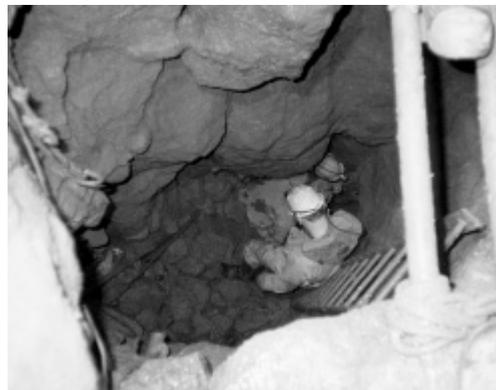
By mid-January, the passage suddenly opened out into the top of an inclined rift, jammed with clean boulders. Gaps revealed that the rift continued much deeper, and Brian Prewer drew a sketch plan of this breakthrough in the NHASA Log on 20th January. Much “gardening” of the rift was required over the following months, and some of the larger boulders were “banged”. This slog

created the Fourth Pitch during 1988, aptly just over 4m deep. My note in the Log on 6th April records: "The final bedding plane at the bottom of the dig has evidence of anticlinal folding, similar to that seen in the entrance shaft. Minor faults have occurred along strike joints, and these appear to have caused the breakdown and boulders at the bottom. The rock is very shattered and veined with calcite. There are no 'snail holes' in the roof at this lower level!" Yet more evidence of TT's being developed in the compression zone bordering the nearby South Western Overthrust.

Distinct changes in the angle and direction of dip are also noticeable on descending the Fourth Pitch. The bedding steepens to dip 48 degrees and slopes south-south east; controls which strongly influence the alignment of all passages developed throughout the lower half of the system,

The pitch below Cresta Run.(Phil Hendy)

below 36m in depth. Indeed, the narrow rift at the bottom of the pitch was a barely enlarged dip joint jammed with foundered slabs. It took the rest of year and much engineering to make progress through this ruckle. Thus was the 3m deep Fifth Pitch "manufactured" and secured. In the summer of 1989, drilling and "banging" operations to widen the northern arm of this dip joint uncovered large angular slabs of a red sandstone-cum-siltstone. This startling find occasioned me to jump to the conclusion that these might be Old Red Sandstone blocks; either upthrust as at Carscliff above Draycott, or maybe a much younger infill derived from periglacial debris above. The latter



supposed the ORS debris to have been transported across the plateau surface to sludge down a gaping pothole! My entry in NHASA's "Log" that evening, on the 2nd August, even gives annotated cross-sections of these alternative notions for the record. This seminal exercise was undertaken in the Hunters, needless to say!

Whilst driving home, sobered by other possible explanations, I came to the conclusion that the red sandstone might be Triassic rather than Devonian. Thankfully, several specimens had been removed from the bottom of the dig and were in my car boot awaiting more careful examination the next morning. Dilute HCl acid and a binocular microscope thus resolved the matter: the rock was a red-brown silty mudstone typical of the Mercia Mudstone Group (formerly Keuper Marl) which had buried Mendip in late Triassic times. Thus, we now had a significant neptunian dyke associated with TT's, to a depth well in excess of 40m. An appropriate "PS" was appended to my log book entry, and the second survey trip to the dyke undertaken on 4th August 1989.

Similar neptunian dykes have since been found down several caves on Central Mendip. They form when mobile seabed muds sludge down gaping joints and faults in the older rocks beneath the sea floor. Muds are even sucked into seafloor fissures that open up during earthquakes. There is also the possibility that windblown desert dusts during Triassic times could similarly infill such openings. In either case, these younger deposits gradually buried the Mendip archipelago late in Triassic times, whilst reactivation of the old folds and faults in the basement rocks frequently occurred well into Mesozoic times. These structures also indicate that Mendip experienced tensional forces extending older lines of weakness, particularly along its anticlinal axis. Strike joints were especially susceptible; such movements causing them to part. To a lesser degree, flexing would also widen some dip joints and bedding planes locally. As mentioned earlier, these active phases are also contemporary with Mendip's primary mineralisation, caused by hot mineral-rich waters rising from deep within the earth's crust. Many mineral veins are thus linked and aligned with neptunian dykes. No ore bodies have been found down TT's, however.

The choked and unstable route through and beyond the dyke took the rest of 1989 and much of 1990 to clear and stabilise; a siege that yielded barely 3m of passage which traverses westwards across the steeply inclined beds. This effort was eased by making many modifications to the hauling systems back to the surface, and by much maintenance of the fixed ladders on every pitch; some being replaced. Large amounts of cement were used to build lintels and support boulders. By September 1990, a corner was turned both literally and metaphorically. An enlarged dip joint with a loose ruckle in the floor provided the opportunity to make more rapid progress downwards for almost 4m. Once cleared, this vertical rift became the Sixth (or Mini) Pitch. At the bottom, the way ahead returned eastwards and widened out. Although still choked with loose boulders, it had "holes everywhere" according to Dave Turner's note on 19th September.

The way on thus continues like a corkscrew, spiralling downwards anticlockwise along narrow joints and bedding planes. As explained, the "twist" is depicted on the vertical section accompanying

my survey so that this drawing, in the strictest sense, is not fully extended or conventionally projected. It simply portrays the essential fact that the lower half of TT's has developed within a narrow zone of north-south rifts closely associated with the neptunian dyke. The roofs of several narrow strike joints in the corkscrew that we dug out and enlarged indicated that they had formed initially as tiny phreatic tubes, subsequently invaded by vadose water. Indeed, most of the system's enlargement probably began under phreatic conditions.

A 3m long mud crawl from the bottom of the Sixth Pitch reaches the top of a nicely sculpted open rift directly beneath the dyke. This rift has been enlarged into a classic splash pot whose splendid vertically fluted walls provided pleasant holds to climb. It descends 4m to the next turn of the corkscrew below. Thus, the so-called Fluted Chimney is key link to the middle level passages. These open out into a low chamber with a small muddy oxbow, and a pit filled with loose boulders that heads south down a dip joint. Once again, this development is aligned with dyke above. The passage ahead descends steeply to the north, however, like a staircase. It ends on a narrow landing and ledge high above the Main Chamber; thus completing the full circle of the middle section in the corkscrew. The bottom of this lofty chasm was over 10m below. Another "moment of truth" had arrived, and NHASA was on the brink of a well-earned breakthrough on 10th July 1991. **The Seventh (or Fever) Pitch beckoned! (Below) Photo Brian Prewer.**



Having been unable to play any part in the pushes around the corkscrew myself, I have gleaned the above outline of events from the latter pages of NHASA's "Log Book" Volume I. Ironically, my own circumstances at this very time could not have been any further from the good fortune justly won by the TT's stalwart diggers. It seems best, therefore, that readers are "taken down" Fever Pitch by Brian Prewer's own firsthand account that appropriately fills the last few pages of the "Log" (Vol. I). Brian will also be able to provide details about the foul air conditions experienced on many digging sessions. The excess carbon dioxide seemed to be much more than would be produced by diggers hard at work, even excited ones!

I myself must rest contented with my trips to complete the survey of TT's made following 9th December 1991, and my own general conclusions about the cave's overall development offered below.

The Bottom and End

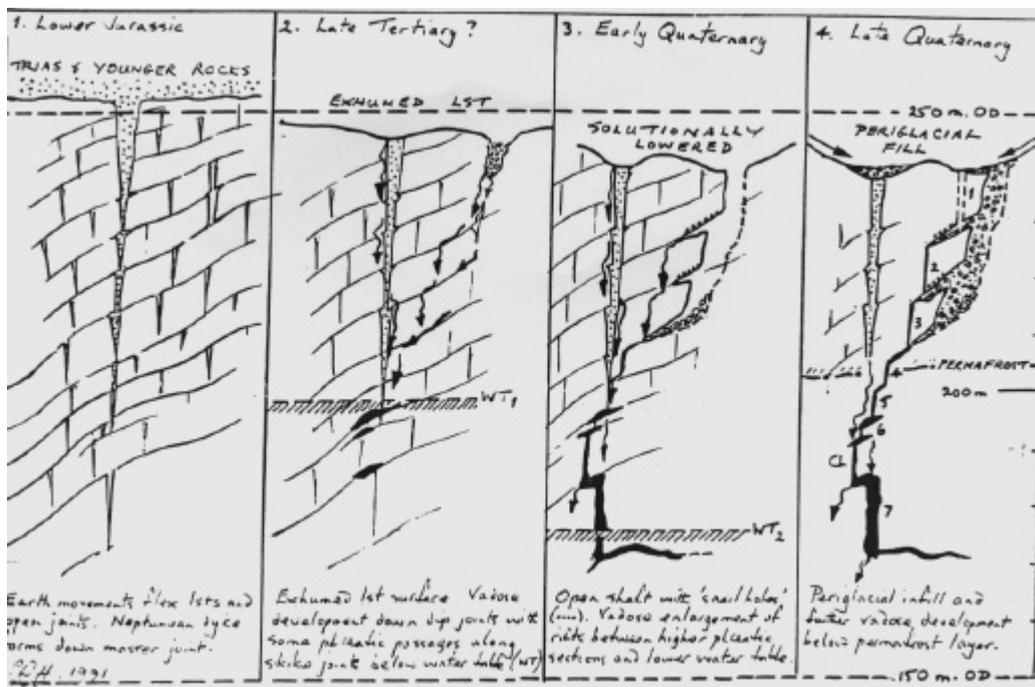
The Main Chamber is yet another enlargement along the same master joint down which the neptunian dyke formed. No evidence of Triassic red sandstone debris was found here, however. Lateral widening of this joint, which forms the roof of the chamber, seems to have been completed by vadose waters falling from above. Below 40m in depth, in fact, the joint appears to have been the main focus for many smaller inlets from the surface. Our dig had probably followed the larger of

many such routes. At the time, I speculated that the lower half of the cave was well below any permafrost layer during the Ice Age late in Quaternary times.

Being unable to revisit TT's since its closure bars us from making the firsthand checks that are really necessary to clear up many unresolved aspects about its likely development. Hopefully then, readers will appreciate that the following review of how the system formed is speculative and inevitably incomplete. During the decade that has elapsed, too, many advances have been made in such matters; so, my thoughts at the time must suffice. I will risk the charge of being out-dated. Those supposed "snail holes" are a case in point!

Whilst the first encounter with small-scale phreatic development occurs high up in the old Sixties Passages, the next obvious evidence of such enlargement is seen at the top of the corkscrew, as mentioned above. An initial draw down in the water table is thus suggested to around 200m above present day sea level (Ordnance Datum). More conclusive evidence of former water table levels occurs at the bottom of the Main Chamber, some 68m deep. The horizontal crawl that leaves the floor of the chamber and heads generally eastwards for over 16m has a classic phreatic form. Such enlargement often occurs deep down in the saturation zone, of course; nevertheless, I ventured that it was probably more para-phreatic, following conventional wisdom at the time. Thus, I proposed a further fall in the water table to a height of, say, 175m OD. The passage itself, surprisingly called Phreatic Passage, follows the strike of the dipping limestone beds at first, then turns to head southwards along the direction of dip. It is fully choked at the end with a compacted silty-clay fill. Ask Dave Turner who dug out many bag fulls of this! Is this the end of the TT's story?

The time has arrived to blow away any smoke still lingering from my doubled-barrelled reports on NHASA and TT's. After my last surveying trip on 9th December 1991, I drew up the final plan and section given earlier in this article. Copies were stuck into our "Log Book" Vol.I (1970-1991) at the end. I later forgot, however, that I had also written an introduction to the next volume early in 1992 following other trips down TT's over the Christmas period. This contribution included schematic drawings showing four key phases in development of the cave. These now provide me with a fitting and thought-provoking end to these reports.



By the way, I also added encouraging notes about the good prospects of three obvious digging sites at the end of TT's: Turner's Dig, the downward continuation of the master joint below the neptunian dyke along the west wall of the Main Chamber, and the Pit above. Thus begins NHASA's "Log Book" Volume II. By the autumn of 1992, however, the dig had to be closed down and the fixed aids were removed. Most of the book's pages thereafter remain blank.

Acknowledgements

No cave dig succeeds without help from willing hands. Over the years, TT's has seen many of them, and I can only hope that my reports of such a significant site do some justice to all their hard work. At best, too, this review of our findings might even help to reopen the cave in due course. Future diggers will take on NHASA's unfinished business down this promising place one day. Like me, they will wish to thank all involved, especially those named in both of my articles.

Over the years, our dig had the blessing of three local farmers. The original permission was obtained by NHASA from Fred Smith of Green Ore who then owned Church Farm, Priddy. His manager, Bert Body, did much to encourage and support us during the first and second phases of the dig until 1988. On his retirement, the farm was taken over by Chris Jarvis. He kindly allowed us to continue the dig to the point where I have ended this account; inconclusive, maybe, yet content with memories of NHASA's "fun and games" and "finds" down Twin Titties to date.

M.R.O Report 2001

Summary of Secretary's Report. The foot and mouth crisis that threw a shadow over 2001 had a major impact on British caving. The MRO probably suffered least: no caving equals no rescues. The only impact on us was that we could not fully carry out our training program. The incident list reflects the lack of activity, a good year with no injuries sustained as a direct result of caving. However I do not feel it is appropriate to over praise this year's achievement given the circumstances. A "nil" result for 2002 is the target to aim for.

The administration tasks of MRO carried on as normal during the year. Wardens meetings have taken place and representatives attended the BCRC AGM. The only exception has been the SWERA meetings, the majority of which were cancelled due to foot and mouth.

The accounts show a healthy surplus of income over expenditure. Equipment insurance is still our main outgoing expense, approx two thirds of this year's turnover. We have spent relatively little this year on equipment. This is just as well, as we have some large invoices projected in 2002 budget for replacement radios. Our main source of income for the year has been the stomp and donations from the clubs. So a big thank- you to those clubs who have donated.

Two new wardens have been appointed this year, Ivan Sandford and Vern Freeman. The list of wardens is constantly reviewed and it is particularly pleasing to welcome new blood into the organisation. Although it must be remembered that rescue is the responsibility of all who cave on Mendip, our self help philosophy is not well understood by those outside of caving, particularly the professional agencies. It is important that we remain voluntary, self-reliant and self-funded if we wish to avoid adverse publicity and over regulation/legislation.

Bob Cork

Incident Details (There were three callouts, one a Missing Party and two Trapped Persons.)
Corsham Stone Mine (Sunday 4th Feb.) MRO received a call from Wiltshire police at 14:45. Concern had been raised regarding the safety of three people who had been down a mine at Neston, near Corsham. Derek Hawkins, Nick McCamely and Bob Scammell were contacted and asked to liaise with the police at the scene. A search of Ridge and Park Lane Mines was suggested and progressed. A backup team from Mendip was put on standby and to ensure insurance cover was in place the incident was logged with Avon and Somerset Constabulary. Wiltshire Police do not provide personal accident cover for voluntary personnel.

The Missing party was located approx 200m inside Ridge Mine. They had decided to camp in the mine for the night and were unwilling to come out. The local police inspector however insisted that the exit immediately. All stood down at 16:00.

Blackmoor Swallet (Monday 14th May) This relatively simple rescue from Stainsby's Shaft created great media interest owing to the nature of the incident and was reported worldwide. A party of school children from Charterhouse Centre were on a night walk in the vicinity of Blackmoor Swallet when they heard shouts. The whole area was at that time closed to the public owing to foot and mouth and in theory no one should have been there. Further investigation indicated that somebody was shouting for help from down the shaft. MRO was called out at 23:15 and Alan Butcher raised a team that included Tony Jarratt, Ivan Sandford, Dany Bradshaw, Roger Haskett, Mark Easterling, Vern Freeman, Kevin Hilton. Emma Heron and Martin Butcher.

Dr Andy Newton was also asked to attend, as it was not known what injuries the trapped person may have had. During the previous week concern had been raised for the safety of a man who had been missing for some time. It was thought likely that the casualty could be that missing person, which indicated that he might have been down the shaft for many days. The MRO team located the casualty and Dr A Newton examined and stabilised him at the scene. Owing to possible complications that may arise from the extended period underground, combined with hypothermia and dehydration it was decided to lift him from the shaft in a horizontal position on a stretcher. A helicopter was requested from RAF Chivenor for rapid evacuation. Unfortunately deteriorating weather conditions stopped the Sea King landing and the casualty went by ambulance to hospital.

Goatchurch Cavern (Wednesday 12th Sept) At 12:20 Brian Prewer was contacted by Les Davis, the Mendip Warden, with a request for assistance for a party of trapped cavers. Simultaneously Rich West received a call from the police reporting the incident. A caver had approached Sir David Wills in the Burrington Inn asking for a rope to assist his trapped friends in Goatchurch. Sir David contacted Les Davis for assistance, who in turn decided it should be passed to MRO.

The stereo call out raised Martin Grass, Tony Jarratt, Stuart McManus, John Williams, Dany Bradshaw, Mike Duck, Rich Long, Phil Rowsell and Rob Delacourt. The three cavers were located at the bottom of the Coalshute. They had been unable to climb out and had become disorientated. They were assisted out of the cave. All out and stood down by 13:10.

MRO Rescue Practice in G.B. 20/4/02 (From the Upper Pitts Log)



Left, Dr. Jo Wisley was on hand to give expert instruction.

Right, Keith Savory demonstrating how to use a drag-sheet.

Photo's Brian Prewer

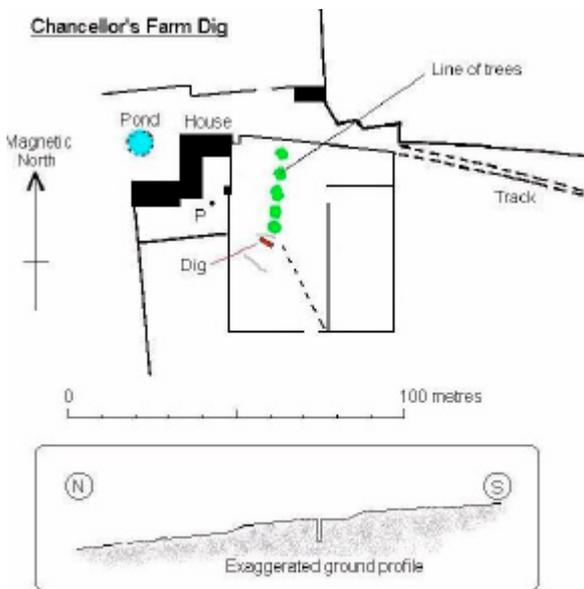
Practice Rescue. Kev, Emmsey, Cookie, Jo Wisely, and Prew. Attended the MRO Kit Circus down G.B. It was well attended with over 30 participants. Dr. Jo demonstrated First Aid, while various others showed Heyphones, drag-sheets and Hot Air Kit etc. Stretcher hauling and carrying were also shown. Photo's were taken by Prew. A useful couple of hours. Thanks to Charterhouse Centre for use of Car Park and Minibus.

NHASA dig at Chancellor's Farm

Phil Hendy

It was with a heavy heart that NHASA withdrew from its long-term dig at Lodmore Hole in October 2001. We had lost two key diggers, Richard Kenney and John Ham, although the average age of the digging team was still SAGA+. This, combined with the ever-increasing difficulty of underpinning a massive boulder ruckle and hauling spoil through a narrow crawl and up 120 feet of shafts, meant that further progress would be very slow indeed, although the long-term prospects continued to look good. The crawl leading to the dig face was walled-up, and the site was tidied, leaving the fixed ladder *in situ*. Lodmore was then left in the hands of the Army land agents, who expressed an interest in using the shaft for training purposes (! – Bin Laden Hide-and-Seek?). The next generation may succeed where we did not.

We had previously located a new potential site on Somerset Wildlife Trust land at Chancellor's Farm, Priddy, but the negotiations for permission dragged on, and NHASA was desperately trying to find work for idle hands. Then Kate Lawrence of the SWC came to our rescue. A collapse had occurred during the summer in a paddock adjacent to Chancellor's Farmhouse. With the help Neil Watson (estate worker) and Butch the builder (meant to be renovating a stone barn at the time!), Kate had dug it to a depth of eight feet, finding relatively recent infill, mostly builder's rubble but with some tin cans and bottles. The site appeared to be an old mineshaft. Knowing that NHASA



Based on 1880s 25" 1 mile OS map and fieldwork 26/1/02. Pump (P) to south of farm is unknown. Some field boundaries have changed and trees marked on original map have gone. Dig is in field 526, originally 1.019 acres.

were temporarily homeless, Kate kindly offered us the opportunity to take the dig over, in order to find out more about the site. This interim report is intended to give the state of play up to mid April 2002.

Brian Prewer, John Hill, Jonathon Riley, Albert Francis and the author turned up on a cold and wet night on November 7th, and were later joined by Eric Dunford and Andy Nash (the latter wisely merely observing from the car). We found a roughly elliptical hole about 8 feet long and 30 inches wide, and eight feet deep. It is located approximately 100 yards south of the yard at the end of the farm track, just beyond a line of trees. The field slopes gently up to the south, with possible low terraces to the north and south of the shaft. Several buckets of spoil were removed, mainly modern infill, and it was decided that for the time being, it was interesting enough for NHASA to continue – at least until it could be decided if we were digging an old mineshaft or a cave.

Work continued, always in the cold, and often in the rain, with the author assisting when his academic duties permitted, and with occasional assistance from Dave and Alan Turner and others, plus a few sightseers (on one occasion a ghost, and on another a man wearing a cardboard box!). We began to appreciate how comfortable we had been at Lodmore, with shelter from the elements both above and below ground. The dig is aligned NW – SE (126°), perpendicular to most of the rakes in the area. Prew located an 1880s 25" 1 mile OS map, where the site is clearly shown, but not labelled, at ST 5244 5253. The sides of the shaft are in limestone with the top six feet ginged. The shaft itself appears to be part of a rift, infilled with red clay.

Apart from the modern rubble, the infill consists of sticky red clay, with some slabs of limestone (old ginging?) and large lumps of calcite, which could conceivably be associated with a mineral vein. At about 8 feet down, a cavity was found under the NE wall. An earthy slope led downwards out of sight. When dug out, the skeleton of a pig was found, plus other bones, pottery, tile and slate.

By the end of January, heavy rain had caused one end of the rift to start slumping, and the next few weeks were devoted to building a retaining wall. Then digging started again. The cavity in the side was excavated to about five feet deep. It is a narrow rift, ending in an unstable wall of earth and stone, trending back to the surface but continuing downwards, under the left hand wall. In fact, the deeper we dig, the wider the shaft seems to be. The whole site poses more problems as we get deeper. If it was a mine, then there are no surface signs of a spoil heap. There are no

traces of mining or any ore, or pickmarks or shotholes. The fill could be backfill, if the field was subsequently leveled after mining ceased. There appears to be ginging at the top of the shaft, but below this, it all appears to be natural. At the time of writing, we have now installed a tripod and winch, and a fixed steel ladder has been fixed down the entrance shaft. This shaft is 19 feet deep, with the side rift about 3 feet lower. The prospects look good, and work continues.

In view of the location, casual visitors are not permitted, although NHASA is keen to recruit new members. Visitors to the farm are by permit only, and NHASA has a rare exemption for Wednesday evenings. So please contact a digger first, to arrange car-sharing from the Hunter's Lodge. Chancellor's Farm is now part of the active training area, MOD.



Photo's by
Brian
Prewer



Extracts from the Upper Pitts Logbook

Edited by Brian Prewer

16.12.01 Swildon's

Wizard cavers to Sump 1 & Mud Sump. "ALOHOMORA" – but the sump did not open – returned to surface to check spell book @ Roger Dumbledors. Plenty of Muggles to be seen.

Harry Potter & Hermione Granger

23.12.01 Gaping Gill

Dihedral Route – excellent dangle followed by a womble to Mud Hall & South East Pot. Proper job walk in & out in the frost.

Dom, Debs, Kev & Em

24.12.01 Lost Johns

Centipede Route to Master Cave. Excellent trip which was rather wet & noisy below Battleaxe. Plenty of evidence of flooding in lower cave.

Dom, Debs, Kev, Emm & Rob (Emm's dad)

26.12.01 Wookey Hole via Ebbor Gorge

Walk to Wookey Hole via Higher Pitts & Ebbor Gorge & back via devious routes. A nice sunny frosty stroll – but the hill on the way back is a killer. Investigated several small holes in upper Gorge.

Phil H

27.12.01 Swildon's

Quick evening trip to Sump 2 – very low water – we didn't even get wet until Sump 1. Line in Sump 1 very frayed – needs replacement.

Phil Short & Andy Judd

29.12.01 GB Cavern

Barzo ladna jaskinia, jak dla mnie trockz zu ciepla (moze ubsatem siz zbyt grubo) Signed:- Pawel Kryszkowski, Wielkopolskiejo Klubu laternictwa Jaskiniocyo.

Fez Tommo & Pawel

Which means:- It's a very nice cave, I was very hot (maybe I was overdressed). Pawel Kryszkowski, Wielkopolskiejo Club from Poland. Bet you didn't know I could speak Polish. Log Ed

29.12.01 Dan yr Ogof

Mike Thomas, Chris G, Gavin Newman & J Wisely

Very snowy afternoon in Wales. Two women, an old git & - well – Mike went in river entrance. Bloody cold swim. Through show cave where we saw very unusual formations such as snowmen & Xmas trees etc. Through Lakes & Boulder Chamber, through Mike's favourite Long Crawl up past crystal pool & then came all the pretty stuff. Thousands of long straws beautifully backlit by Gavin's light (wished he had had his camera. We were glad he didn't). Down the Green Canal & back round the Camel (Jo & I went the squeezey way). Played ropes & ladders in various places. Absolutely superb trip. Thanks Mike & Gavin. I now have a cold but it was more than worth it! C

.30.12.01 Goatchurch

Cast of Golden Oldies (well mostly)

Alison Moody's candlelight sherry & mince pie trip. 20+ underground including Prew, Alison, Nigel Graham, Geoff Newton, Barry & Marion Wilkinson,, Maurice & Judy Hewins, Tav, Murray Knapp, Phil & Dan (*not a G Oldie*) Hendy, D Morrison, Adrian & Judith Vanderplank, Glyn & Julie Bolt, Dave Walker, Christine Grosart & Rich Warmen. All to the Boulder Chamber where refreshments were consumed. Then to the surface via the Tradesman's, leaving the intrepid to go to the Drainpipe. Very gentlemanly, (*and ladylike*) nice to see Alison in a skirt! (And to see that she has rejoined the Club.)

30.12.01 Swildon's

Dom, Mak, Kev & Emm

To Pirate Chamber & Shatter via Landing & Troubles. Then a quick womble in 4 streamway before out – 6

hours. Good trip. Another example of Mak's dodgy memory – it was only as we thrutched back out of Pirate that I remembered why it's been 8 years since I was last there!

31.12.01 GB Cavern

Phil H, Chris G & D H

Steady wander around Main Chamber, round & down the Oxbow, and then back up the Waterfall. Couldn't find Devil's Elbow but didn't try very hard either! Bit of photography by Phil & Chris. 2 hours.

31.12.01 Longwood

Butch, Carmen, Kev, Jon, Chef, New Jo

(Butch's Moment, Kev's Wellies & New Jo's Leather Trim). Down to Reynolds's Passage – trying to catch up with Butch who was behind us!! Up to Wet Gallery (Butch had a moment with a loose rock along way off the ground). Out August (Wellie grabbing rock on right). Good trip, transport courtesy of Chef & Butch to avoid damaging leather trim.

2002.

1.02 Swildon's

Jonathan, Pawel & Fez driving.

New Years Day trip to show our Polish guest the joys of Mendip Caving.

(Here we go again – I'm doing my best – Log Ed)

Naprawdz fantastyczna (I worked that one out on my own!) jaskinia, poczulem siz nareszcie jak w Anglii.

Polskie unikanie wody tu niestety nie skutkuje – musisz siz zmoveyd. Wielkie podszkowania dla Klubowiczdw. WCC za mite atmosfere. Signed Pawel Kryszkowski.

(Translation:- Fantastic cave, Poles prefer traversing to getting wet. Many thanks for Wessex hospitality – a great atmosphere)

1.1.02 Cuckoo Cleaves

Kathy, Phil & Dan H

Gate frozen shut but beaten into submission. Waste of time as we bottled out on the drops into the Canyon. But we swept away a few cobwebs. Debatable if this was the first trip of the year, see above. Cold, slippery, tricky & only 100' in.

1.1.02 Ogof Draenen

Mark, Dom & Butch

First trip to Oxford Extensions for us. Down through Elliptic, Snowball & the Last Sandwich to enter More Singing & Dancing – an amorous trunk passage leading past Out-of-the-Blue – a fine 1k long streamway, & on to Into the Black & then out. 8 hours approx.

3.1.02 Swildon's

Knockhundred Strikes Again

Pete Jenkins, Daniel Timney, Ian Timney to Swildon's. Pete & Daniels' first trip to the sump & beyond. We enjoyed a good old splash down to Sump 2 then up to the Black Hole for a look, we had intended to bottom the Black Hole with Simon & Es Turner but Simon was not well, we will all be back another day.

4.1.02 Box Stone Mines

Weston Bros

Back Door to(you name it they went there) & out Back Door. Film by HTV in Quarryman's Arms (including free beer!). Various ancillary lights fiddled with by Weston Major on return journey due to failure to charge Nife before trip. Weston Minor provided his final packet of "Japanese Seaweed Soup" during the lunch break at Eastgate (thankfully he promises it is the final packet).

5.1.02 Ogof Draenen

Mark & Dom

Back to Oxford Extension. This time we visited the War of the Worlds area with (supposedly) the second largest passage in the country. An outrageous passage with many formations if you hunt them out. 11hours approx.

10.1.02 GB Cavern

Vern, Mak & Carmen

Vern says that he does not do write-ups so I will! Cancelled Eastwater for GB instead. Devil's Elbow, Landing, Great Chamber & Bat Passage. (Where were the bats?) Bad air all the way through; poor "kept fellows" obviously ate too much Xmas pud! Quick exit shower, tea, cakes, natter natter, then the men had to go & do their chores – shopping, etc. I went to Bat Products for another cup of tea.

12.1.02 Swildon's Hole

Kev, Em & Cookie

Through the Troubles to bail the sump in Lower Fault Chamber. The plan was to attack Watergate – (un)fortunately my lamp failed at the point so having done all the ground work we were forced to leave it for another day. A round to the tune of "I like spanking" "I like bailing, I like bailing.

Bailing sumps, bailing Sumps. I like bailing shitty ones, I like bailing shitty ones.

Shit sump grumps, shit sump grumps.

12.1.02 Withyhill Cave

Phil H, Carmen, Kathy, Jonathan

Photographic trip to Column Chamber & Flake Chamber. PH failed to enter Green Lake Chamber, but some good photos were taken. Much more crawling & thrutching than I remember – or am I getting fat?



Left, Kathy and Phil in Withyhill

Left Formations in Withyhill.

Photo's Carmen Haskell.



13.1.02 Swildon's Hole

NBW & Cookie

Berger training run down to Sump 1, thence to Mud Sump & out. Mud Sump level has dropped 3 feet since the beginning of December. Must drain slowly in low water conditions. Time to attack it!

17.1.02 Cuckoo Cleaves

Carmen & Phil H

What a steep thrutchy cave! Phil gripped once or twice – I do not think I will do this cave again for a while.

17.1.02 Manor Farm

Carmen & Mak

To the very endiest of end bits (Mak's stupid idea), exploring all the passages off, & out again. Bad air coming up the entrance shaft.

21.1.02 Sandford Levvy

Prew & Alison Moody (yes really)

Trip to see if we could find the cave & also to see if it would be suitable for "Golden Oldies" trip next Christmas. Looked at all bits & pieces that didn't need a ladder or maypole. Cave pearls on floor seem to have recovered quite well after recent damage.

There is no access problem, however the Ski Centre people would like cavers to book in & out at the office. Out of courtesy it is wise to ask to use their car park.

22.1.02 Tynings Barrow Swallet

Geoff, Paul W, Jon

Boring cave – down to the sump & back – nothing to particularly recommend. Livened up the evening therefore by rolling the motor on the way to the Hunter's – one smashed to pieces Volvo & a lesson about when to buy new tyres. *Signed* - Jon, 10 minutes post crash.

23.1.02 Bath Swallet

Pete H, Keith F, Steve Watson, Colin Shapter & Aubrey

Pete & Keith played at aven climbing but don't like big rocks. Rest of us moved spoil from dig – looks interesting but we need cement (here we go again!) Climbed 20' up aven.

26.1.02 Manor Farm Rescue

Phil H & Prew

Woman couldn't climb September Rift (rigged with only a rope). Phil, Prew, Rich West, various BEC & MRO Wardens attended. Worst part was getting to the cave – very muddy after 1½ days heavy rain. Casualty came out under her own steam with the aid of a ladder & a tight lifeline. Debrief (and tea) at Charterhouse Centre, all back in time for the Hunter's. (PH stayed on top – no kit – honest).

30.1.02 Bath Swallet

Pete & Aubrey

Yes we got the name right for Shower Pot – fu**king wet everywhere until bottom passage.



Left, Pete Hann and Aubrey Newport at Bath Swallet.
Photo Bob Scammell



Right, Brown's Folly, Clapham Junction.
By Carmen Haskell.

31. 1. 02 Stone Mines.

Phil H and Carmen

Photographic workshop with digital and classic cameras. Several hours messing around with lighting angles followed by a debrief over 6X in the Crown. Rumour has it that Brown's Folly Mine is now locked by the bat botherers.

Club News

Notes from the Committee Meeting 14/4/2002.

Black Wal. The meeting was saddened by the news of the death of "Black Wal" Wilcox. His value to the club over the years was recognised, not least in his efforts in maintaining his cupboard of supplies. "Black Wal's Cupboard" will retain his name under new management.

Accounts 2000/2001. Although these were given to members who attended the A.G.M they have not yet been circulated to all members. Copies are available on request.

Power Washer This apparatus is now repaired and working.

Antique Diving Suits. These have now been handed over to C.D.G. in the person of John Buxton.

Dogs at Upper Pitts. The Hut Warden has experienced some unpleasantness concerning guests trying to take dogs into the dormitories. Animals are **not** allowed there or in the kitchen.

Tackle making. The Tackle Warden would like some help with drilling rungs. If anyone has access to a pillar drill would they please contact Laurie.

Lost Conductivity Meter. A small black plastic case, with a carrying handle and containing this piece of kit has gone astray at Upper Pitts. If you have it, or know where it is, please let us know.

New Members, elected on 14/4/2002

John Phillips.	9 Hawk Close, Abbydale, Gloucester, GL4 4EW.	01452 550240
Phil Filer.	Stonecroft, Holt Heath, Worcester. WR6 6NA.	01905 620467
Terence Chew.	429B, High Road, Benfleet, Essex,	01268 754088

Changes of Address

Kevin Hilton and Emma Heron.	63 Middlemarsh Street, Poundbury, Dorchester, DT1 3FD.	01305 259274
Dave Edge.	North Beach Caravan Park, Rush, Co. Dublin, Republic of Ireland.	00353879 161828
Dave Cooke	3 Saxon Court, Moorland Street, Axbridge, BS26 2BA	01934 733260

Obituary; "Black Wal" (Wally) Willcocks

Walter James Roger Willcocks died suddenly on 11th of April. He was aged 69. Known in the caving world as "Black Wal", he originally joined the Shepton with his school friend Ken Dawe but he became a Wessex member in 1966. Wally was an active caver and digger throughout the 70's and took part in club trips to Spain. He was Gear Curator/ Tackle Warden from 1971-75 and was active on hut working parties. The concrete standing outside carries his name. Behind the scenes Wally assisted with Journal production and distribution and in recent years brought down loads of firewood from his home in Twyford, usually returning with a back-cargo of peat. Wal was a keen gardener. His famous Cupboard will continue and a key will be kept under the stairs. All in all Black Wal was one of those larger than life characters that make the caving world so entertaining. He will be missed. We extend our condolences to Judith and her family.

Tony Audsley has sent in the following appreciation. (Ed)



Wal was a person who held very strong opinions and he could hold forth on these at great length. One afternoon in the late 1960's, at Rhino, he was standing on the railway holding forth. Unfortunately, he was just next to his (lit) carbide lamp. Intent on the conversation, Wal did not notice the leg of his boilersuit catch fire. We of course, were too polite to interrupt him to tell him, (but we did help him to put it out).

No appreciation of Wal would be complete without a "Wal's arm" story (he had lost his left one in an explosion) He had an extremely disconcerting habit when knocking in nails of holding the nail in his good hand and then hitting it using his left wrist as a hammer. He always complained that his artificial arm was not well made and kept falling apart.

There used to be a belief within the Wessex that Wal had a "best hand" that Judith kept locked away.. When Wal had to be smart, she would issue him with the hand at the last moment, so he did not have time to get it greasy. Whatever the truth of this, I was with them on one smart occasion. Wal was clean and polished with a spotless hand. Unfortunately, Judith had to see someone on the way. As soon as she was out of sight, mutterings and obscenities came from deep within Wal's beard about the car's performance. In an instant the bonnet was open, Wal was prodding and cursing the engine and the once clean hand was greasy.

Wal was many things, powerful, opinionated, irascible and infuriating. These were his obvious characteristics, but he was also an immensely kind person and very concerned about the people he knew. He hid this behind a rather gruff exterior, sometimes very successfully – but it is the thing that I, for one, will remember him for: he was a very good friend.

Jim Moon. We are also saddened to hear of Jim's death. He was Wessex Chairman 19 87-1989. We must also report that, BEC member **Dave Yeandle** has died in a paragliding accident in Spain.

Harridge Wood Nature Reserves. Under a new agreement with Somerset Wildlife Trust, control of caves and digs in the area has been granted to the Cerberus, who will issue permits. Details in the Cerberus Journal 26(2) March 2002.

Library Additions to 23/3/02

Chelsea Spelaeological Society Newsletter Vol. 44, 1,2,3, March2002.
Bradford Pothole club Bulletin Vol 7. ,1 (2002) (History of the B.P.C. 1933-2001).
BCRA Cave and Karst Science Vol 28, 2 (August 2001).
Craven Pothole Club. Record No 65 (Jan2002).

Descent No. 164 , (Jan 2002).

Grosvenor Caving Club Newsletter No. 117 (Jan "2002).
 International Caver No.9 (Oct 1993) and No. !0 (1994).
 Journal of Cave and Karst Studies (NSS) Vol 63, 3, (Dec 2001).
 Mendip Rescue Organisation Annual Report and Incident List 2001.
 NSS News. Vol 59,12 (Dec 2001)(Articles on digital cave photography).
 South Wales Caving Club Journal .122 (2001).
 Westminster Spelaeological Group Newsletter 2002/1 (Jan 2002)
 White Rose Pothole Club Newsletter Vol 20,4 (Dec 2001).
 William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust. Newsletter 32 (Feb 1979).
 Thanks to **Don Thomson** and **John Vanderplank** for miscellaneous donations to the Library.

Extracts on page 172 (Ed.)
 and Vol 60.,1(Jan 2002).

I have found the following website in NSS News. <http://www.culture/arcnat/cussac/en/index.htm> It is a well-presented site describing the discovery of archaeological remains and engravings in the Cave of Cussac, on the banks of the Dordogne in 2000.

May Bank holiday Trip to Penderyn. By Maurice Hewins.

Penderyn 2002 was one of the best attended Wessex Meets with 36 members present for at least a day. In addition, 6 of the Devon Berger team came along. Somehow we squeezed all the cars and tents into the grounds. Despite the fine weather and excellent ale at the Red Lion a lot of caving got done. Les led a notable OFD trip, going in at the bottom and coming out the top, via the Pom Pom , accompanied by the Saga A team of Pyke, Dawe and Cleave. Andy Morse and Brian Prewer took Saga B and the Girlies into OFD 1 with the cameras. Cookie, NikNak and Jo Williams went to Draenen, while other teams explored various parts of OFD, Pant Mawr and Dan yr Ogof. On Sunday evening Dudley Thorpe (Mr Dragon) laid on a splendid barbecue at his house, which was greatly appreciated. Thank you Dudley. All in all, a cracking weekend.



Left ,Ken Dawe, Noel Cleave, John Thomas and Bob Pyke relax after OFD. Centre, Jo Wisely and Gavin Newman at Porth yr Ogof and Right, Saga B Team in OFD 1 Stream way, Photo's Brian Prewer.
Below, John Thomas and Judy Hewins in OFD 1. Stereo Maurice Hewins.



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Congratulations

to

**Mark and Taz Easterling
and
Malc and Rita Foyle**

On their recent weddings

Photo's Vern Freeman and
Mike Thomas.



Herault Trip, 26th July to 10th August.

August.

Berger Trip, 1st August to 10th

Wessex Committee Meetings, 9th June, 14th July and 1st September.

Mendip 2002, 14th to 16th June. Starting on Friday 14th June with a Welcome Evening in the Hunters, with slides and videos. (Please bring your contributions), Sat 15th BCRA Regional Meeting at Priddy Village Hall, CSCC Training Event and Wessex Challenge, followed by MRO Stomp and Barbecue. Sunday 16th June, Split Rock Rope Course. The Yorks trip that weekend is cancelled and the last pre-Berger meet is 29th- 30th June. Gaping Gill, all entrances both days. N.B. no overnight sleeping is allowed on the fell.

28th Sept Dihedral/Stream passage Pot and 29th Sept Disappointment Pot/ Flood entrance.

Hidden Earth, Monmouth, 27th -29th Sept.

Wessex AGM and Dinner, Sat. Oct 19th

Stop Press

Wendy Williams is taking part in "Race For Life 2002" on 21st July, to raise money for Cancer Research U.K.

Wendy is asking for sponsors for this very worthy cause. Contact her on 01749 679839 or wa.williams@virgin.net



T-Shirt Logo, See Page 162