

**Journal of the
Wessex Cave Club**

**Vol. 28 No.298
Feb 2006**

14th UIS Greece

New Mines on Axbridge Hill

Caverns Measureless to Man

Templeton Update

Officers

President

Donald Thomson

Vice Presidents

Dave Irwin

Sid Perou, Derek Ford

Chairman

David Morrison

Windrush

Upper Bristol Road

Clutton, BS39 5RH

01761 452437

Secretary

Les Williams

51 Churchill Road East, Wells

BA5 3HU.

01749 679839

Membership Sec

Jude Vanderplank

Holmwood Nurseries

Woodhill

Congresbury, BS49 3AF

01934 833320

Treasurer

Dave Cooke

Caving Secretary

Dave Meredith

Hutwarden

Pauline Grossart

Librarian

Phil Hendy

Tackle Officer

John(Tommo)Thomas

Hut Administration

Ian Timney

Sales Officer

Christine Grossart

Journal Contact

Jonathan Williams

Webmaster

Paul Wakeling

Training Officer

Les Williams

Officers E-mail Addresses are

available from our website

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

Copyright Wessex Cave Club

2005 All rights reserved

Headquarters

Upper Pitts

Eastwater Lane

Priddy, Somerset. BA5 3AX

ISSN 0083-811X

From the Editor

I hope you all had a great Christmas and New Year although it seems like a long time ago now.

Thank you to all those who have provided material for this edition of the journal. However it is a shame that it appears to be the same names who appear in every edition. I know they are not the only ones out there doing interesting stuff. The log book extracts are testament to that.

If you have never written for the journal before why not put pen to paper for the next edition and tell your club what you have been up to. It doesn't have to be a 10 page epic just a few words and perhaps a picture or two.

Congratulations to Wayne Starsmore who is now the proud owner of Cuckoo Cleaves.

Good Caving,

Jonathan

Committee Corner

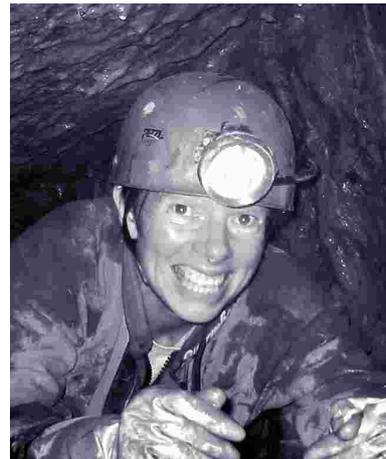


Photo: G. Ballard

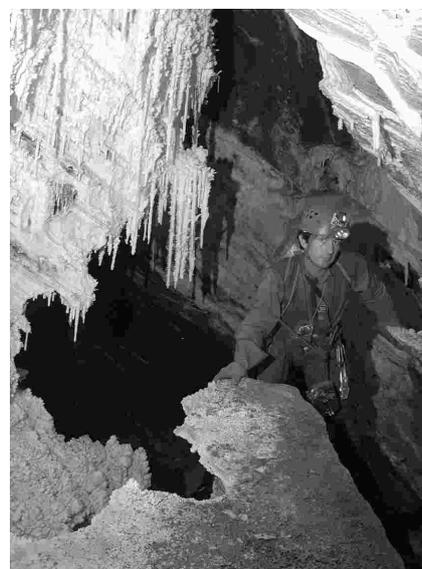
Jude Vanderplank kindly took on the role of membership secretary at the last AGM.

Best of luck with the Job Jude!

Cover Picture

Agia Triada, Greece.

Photo. Pete Hann



Club News

SUMMER 2006

Following our successful trip last summer (six through trips and other caving trips) the Pink & Fluffy crew has decided to try for the same in two new areas this year.

We are going to spend 6 nights in the Pyrenees from 22nd July to 27th July followed by 8 nights in the Ardeche, 28th July to 4th August.

In the Pyrenees we are going to lightly scratch the surface (or should that be the underground) of the Réseau Félix Trombe including a through trip and in the Ardeche collect a few easier through trips, enjoy some canoeing, climbing and perhaps some canyoning.

The trip is open to all so if you would like to come,

please send me an email
nik.nak@hotmail.co.uk.

Look forward to seeing you.
Nik Nak
(Simon Richards)

Club Web Site

Webmaster Paul Wakeling has been working hard to re-launch the club website. As always the website features information for the casual visitor along with a password protected area exclusive to current club members.

The web site diary section always carries the most up to date information on club trips. Well done to Paul for all his work on the site.

<http://www.wessex-cave-club.org>

News in Brief

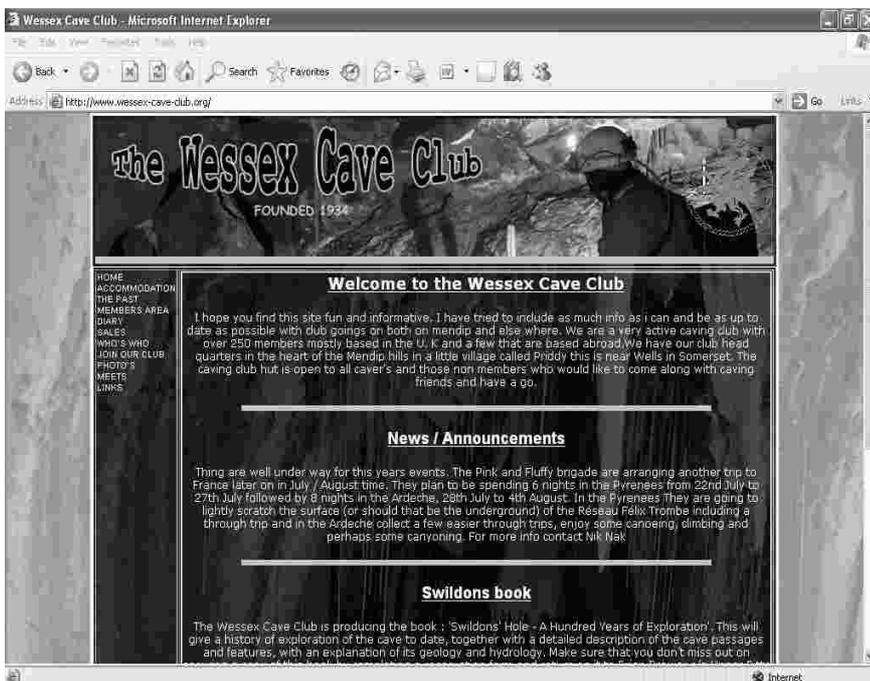
– Tony Jarratt blasted into a decorated passage in Rose Cottage Cave over the Christmas period. Unfortunately it led into the back of Aglarond 3, but digging continues in a rift.

Over the Christmas period, vandals smashed the lock to the Fairy Cave Quarry car park. It has now been replaced with a Mendip (CSCC) lock - remember to take a key if you are visiting the quarry and wish to use the car park. This facility is for cavers and English Nature only.

On 4th February, ten (out of over 200!) members turned up to clear the lofts at Upper Pitts ready for woodworm treatment. Two skips were required for all the unwanted fiberglass insulation and associated junk. The wood was treated the following day, and at the time of writing, it only remains to re-insulate and put everything back.

A New series of Secret Underground begins on 23rd February at 7.30pm on ITV1 West. Much of the underground camera work was shot by WCC Member Gavin Newman.

WCC member Wayne Starsmore has been announced as the buyer of Cuckoo Cleaves. Negotiations are currently underway with the CSCC to secure access for all cavers.



The new WCC Web Site.

Wessex Cave Club Journal

14th UIS Greece

He had his flash guns, but the fat bloke didn't fit

Malc Foyle

After our last few years of wandering around France looking at some of their classic systems with the Wessex. This year Pete Hann and I decided it was about time we thought of other members of our families when holidays were discussed. You know, hotels, beaches, sun etc.

So we thought 'how can we manage to please the women in our lives and also fit a bit of caving in' In flash of brilliance the UIS conference just popped into our minds, The 2005 conference was due to be held in Athens and the Acropolis was one of the places that I had always wanted to visit. The decision was made and the planning started. It was all going to be so easy or so we thought !

The conference web site was accessed and it looked as though organizing the trip was going to be piece of cake (wrong). After taking our time we decided which hotel we liked in Athens. We were on the point of booking the hotel when we found out that the Greeks had changed the venue to a conference centre 60 kms outside Athens. Back to the drawing board.

Again we decided on a hotel a couple of miles away from the conference venue so that the girls could have a nice quiet holiday. Now things were looking up flights booked, hotel booked, now all we had to do was decide which pre conference trip Pete and I were going to do, because the girls had decided to stay put in the hotel for the duration of our stay.

After a lot of deliberation we decided to go on a 5 day trip to the adjacent Island of Evia to a cave called Agia Traidia. The trip was organised and ran by the Athens based club SPELEO.

At last the whole trip was booked and mostly paid for. Was it cheep ? No one of the most expensive holiday we have been on for a long time, Just before we left, the venue was changed for the third time. The conference was now to be based on our hotel and another just up the road.

Sunday 14th August arrived and we arrived at Heathrow and guess what our flight was delayed for two hours. What a start. We arrived at Athens to find our taxi drivers waiting for us (thank god). We finally arrived at our hotel in Kalamos, the conference venue at 21.20 had some food and collapsed into bed. Our first full day in Greece dawned at about 9.15 am. The hotel was all of 50 yards from the sea with well kept grounds and a swimming pool. Our room had a sea view and Evia was in the distance. We had some time to kill as our caving excursion did not start for a couple of days. The morning was spent looking round the hotel, walking along the beach and generally getting use to our surroundings, very nice they were to. Later in the day Pete and I walked the couple of miles or so down to the local town called Apostoli to have a look around. After spending a bit of time wandering around the harbour and finding important things like bars and cash machines, we decided to walk back to the hotel following the beach as much as possible. Walking back along the sea front we came to an area where the bushes met the sea and created some very secluded areas in one such area the dwarf discovered one of the great loves of his life, naked sunbathers, female of course, but more importantly from a speleological point of view there were several streams running into the sea. I eventually managed to drag Pete away from his ornithology and we found a rather large pool with cold water appearing to well up through a sandy floor. The total discharge of these streams was easily greater than the average flow from Wookey and Cheddar put together and the water was really quite cold indicating that it had been underground for quite some time. We were later to find out that there are no known caves in the whole area. The rest of Monday, before going to the pub that is, was spent packing our caving gear in preparation for our excursion because we couldn't remember which day we were suppose to

be leaving and Pete who had been in charge of all the correspondence had left his paperwork at home (bit like his flash guns at Easter ha ha) . All we could remember between us was that we were being picked up at 2pm, but which day ?

Tuesday dawned and again the sun scorched down on us. These caving trips are hell when the choice is between swimming in the sea which is at a temperature of 28 degrees, swimming in the pool, sun bathing or sitting in the bar. Ain't life a bitch. We were staying in the Clamos beach hotel which was situated about 60 km NE of Athens. The hotel is about 50 yards from the sea with superb views out across the Aegean. The rooms were comfortable and en-suite. The other guests all seemed to be elderly Greeks. We wondered what the other residents would make of it when load of cavers arrived the following week.

Tuesday disappeared (this sun bathing is just hell) and Wednesday dawned. Is this the day we go off caving ? I hope so other wise the dwarf has really messed up. We wandered around the hotel for the morning and went up to our room just after one in the afternoon in the hope that if we took our rucsacs down to reception at around two there just might be some people waiting for us. At about 1.30 our phone rang. It was our tour leaders inviting us down to the bar for a drink (the dwarf still lives).

On arriving in the bar we found Thomas our leader, Stephanos, Georgia SPELOE's president and Amica waiting for us. Also with them there was two aussi birds Grace Matts and Julia James who, some of the longer standing members will recognise as an old Wessex member from about 100 years ago. We sat around talking and getting to know one another. I decided it was about time I sussed out a bit about the trip because up to now Pete had had most of the dealings regarding the excursion. I had a look at some maps and a chat with Thomas. I realised that I still didn't have a clue where we were going or what we were doing, so I just followed on.

We were driven to the nearest port to catch a ferry to Evia, it's only as you start travelling around that you realise just how much Limestone there is in Greece (just about the whole country). we arrived on Evia and drove to the very south of the island to a small town called Karistos, where we were to be based. Our Greek hosts had booked us tourists into a smart apartment complex just outside of Karistos.

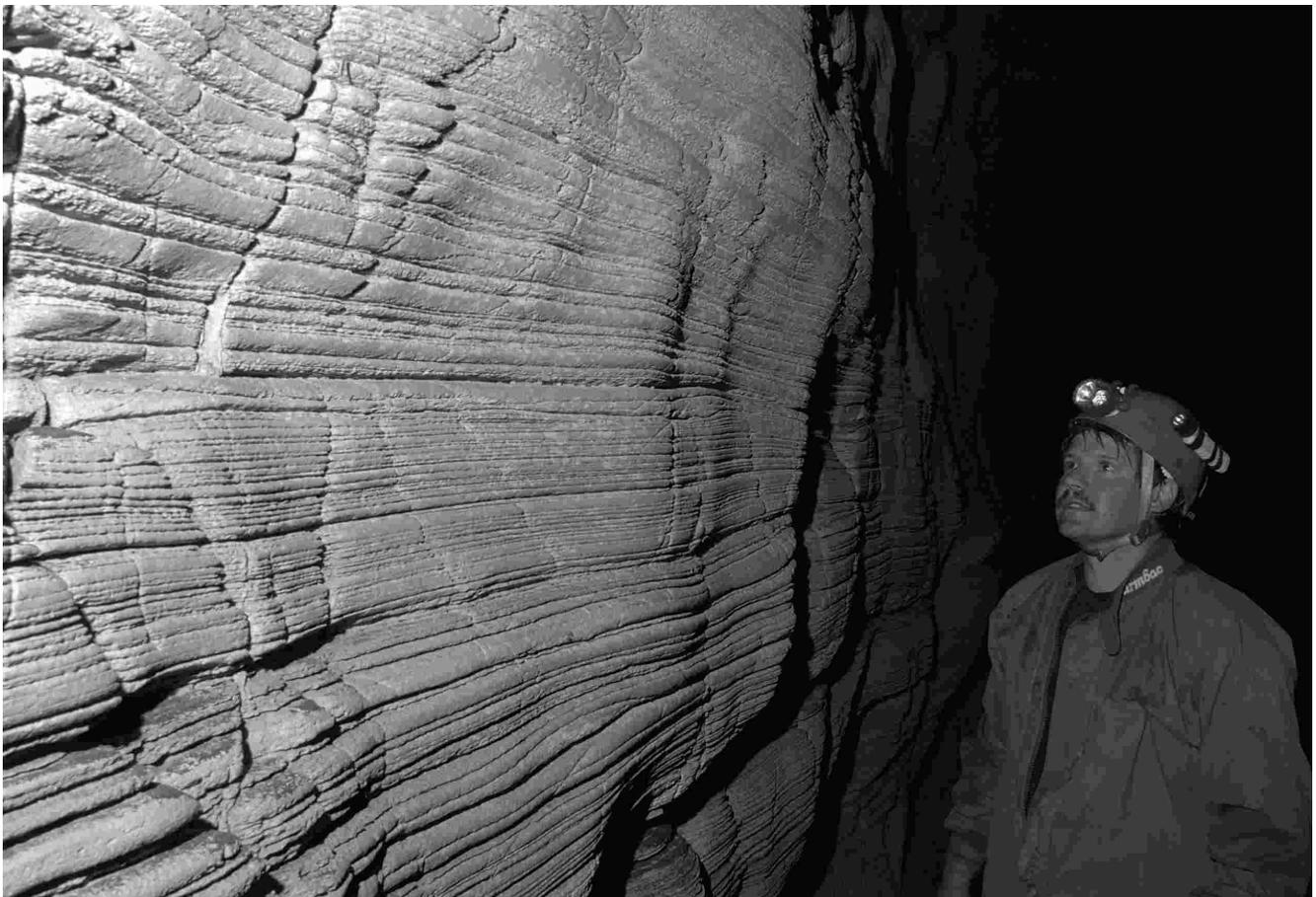
Each apartment slept two people and had its own shower etc. there was also a swimming pool and more importantly a bar. The other two members of our team were already ensconced because, they had already travelled directly from Athens with the rest of the Greek team. They were a Japanese called Ryo Matuzawa and an American called Louis Bernstein. We unpacked and got our life sorted out reasonably quickly because we were going out to eat in Karistos with our host's. Pete and I were ready in plenty of time so we thought we would go to the swimming pool. Pete Hann swimming ?? I hear you all ask. That's where the bar was (well what did you expect). Sitting in a shaded bar with a cool beer, now this is what all caving trips should be like. Thomas and Stephanos duly arrive to pick us up and, yes you've guessed it they knew where to find us. Cavers are the same the world over.

We arrived in Karystos, which is situated right on the sea and as Kalamos was, is not by any means a tourist trap. We spent some time just looking around the town before we were taken to a taverna up a little side street. There we were met by the owner who obviously was very familiar with the members of SPELEO. We were ushered into the kitchens to see what sort of food was available and chose our meals. The food was superb and a few at a time the other members of SPELOE that were accompanying us arrived and as the beer and wine flowed we all started to get to know one another.

Thursday morning dawned with Julia hammering on our door at 7.30 am, Pete and I were semi-conscious. I think our holiday has just ended. We were all breakfasted and ready at 8 o'clock when our hosts arrived to pick us up. Me and Pete were still in shock. Our excursion was based around the Ohi mountain which rose to an impressive 1350m straight out of the sea. Today we were going to a cave called Kali Sykia. We set off in cars and even at 8am it was very warm. We had about an hour drive over the island eventually we drove down a very impressive gorge. The road had by now degenerated to not much more than a dirt track. The convoy stopped nearly at sea level. In front of us was a hill that the cars obviously had no chance of getting up, the lads had already excelled themselves getting their cars as far as they had. We started to unload all the gear and started contemplating walking up this sodding great hill in the midday heat. We noticed gear being stacked in Stefanos's 4 wheel drive Renault Berlingo. The girls got in and he set off up the hill. After about 100 yards he came to a grinding halt. 'That's it' I thought now we've definitely got to walk, but with that Stefanos reversed down the hill, parked in the middle of a little ford near to the other vehicles. Next we heard the car rev like hell and with that he disappeared up the hill flat out in first, in a huge cloud of dust.

After Stefanos braving several runs up the hill and just like in the Wessex, the young keen types were walking up the hill with large sacks. We all congregated in a flat area. Was the cave here, no chance bags on our backs we started up the hill the temperature in the high 30's centigrade. The stunning views made up for the heat, big Limestone hills rising straight out of the blue Aegean 'beats trudging up Ingleborough in the pouring rain I thought'. After about one and a quarter hours we arrived at the cave entrance. It was quite large 12-15 m high and about 10m wide and was first entered in late 1992.

The large entrance was used by shepherds in the past. Being very dry you could do the cave in the clothes that you walked up in, but in traditional English overkill Pete and I had over



Malc Foyle in Kalia Sykia

suits and wellies with us. The large entrance soon lowers to a crawl over very dry earth for about 10m where the passage increases in height to probably 8 - 10m high by 6 -8m wide. Incredibly the limestone is laid down in beds of about 30mm thick. We had never seen anything like this before. Pete had taken his camera so he started snapping away. The large passage wandered along for 80 - 100 m to a large stal bank which was duly rigged with a hand line to assist with the ascent. Up to this point the cave was quite well decorated, but after the top of the climb it was richly covered with stal. The floors were covered in crystals which you could not avoid walking over, there was also something that resembled a calcified powder of some sort again we had never seen any thing like it.

A couple of hours were spent taking photographs before we exited to the sun light the cave at 150m long was quite short but, definitely worth the walk. Back down the hill for lunch that had been prepared on the beach by Thomas and a couple of the others who did not walk up to the cave. The beach that I refer to was actually a delightful cove with next to no people on it where we had a grand lunch and I hoped we were going to relax in the sun (no chance). One of the Greek lads called Vasilis asked me if I fancied going to have a look at some sea caves. I had all ready noticed two entrances about one hundred yards off shore, so I agreed to have a look. I was quickly kitted out with a face mask, snorkel and fins and off we went. I quickly noticed that we weren't swimming directly to the near cave entrances, we just kept going and going. After several hundred metres we swam around the headland and a couple of hundred metres in front of us was a large cave entrance.

Arriving at the entrance I duck dived down, below the water was a huge entrance 10m wide and probably 8m high. We swam in to the much smaller entrance above water, wallowed through and swam to the shore. We removed our swimming gear and set off into the gloom. I now figured out the reason for bringing a light with me (we were going caving again). It's not very often that I have been caving in just my shreddies. The passage was spacious as we wandered in about 60 -70 metres. We stopped in a large passage with a sandy ramp in front of us. 'This is as far as we have been' Vasilis said. The passage was still large I wasn't even bending down (this is my sort of exploration). We carried on about another 40 -50 metres until we came across 20 -30 bats hanging in the roof, they started to get a bit excited and seeing that the only caving gear we had was one mini 'Q' light each and all we were wearing was shreddies we about turned, but the passage at this point was 3 metres high, 5 metres wide, getting large and we could see on for a least another 20 metres. On the way out we dived out through the submerged entrance it was fantastic swimming through the large azure arch out into the sea.

We arrived back at the lunch party after looking at the other sea caves, which were not much more than large alcoves and Vasilis explained that we had left the cave in on going passage. Upon hearing this, Stephanos, who is one of the most experienced cavers in Greece, pulled on a pair of wet suit socks, picked up a couple of torches, grabbed a camera and dived into the surf. He returned after about one and a half hours. The cave had gone another 70 metres and finished at a pool , with a narrow stal filled passage one side which appeared to close down. Not bad over 100 metres of new cave and all it took was a swim. Pete won't find that much in a years hard digging on Mendip. It was time to pack up and return to Karystos, so we loaded up Stephanos's car and set off, meeting the others on route in a lay-by next to a small spring having a water melon stop. We were happily driving up the road a suddenly we had to come to a grinding halt. What for you may ask, well there was a real live Tortoise crossing the road ,so we had to give way and at the same time take a few photographs. Its not everyday you see something like that. That evening we had another good meal and a few beers in town, not to late to bed tonight because, Friday was the day we were to visit the big cave.

Friday dawned again at 7 am and we were breakfasted by 7.45 ready to go when our hosts

arrived to pick us up. Today we were to visit a cave called Agia Triada. Agia Triada is situated about 4 km outside Karystos and is a resurgence cave of about 3.5 km in length. The entrance is 20 m behind small church and it was where the Greeks were camping. We were given a brief outline of the cave and the parts that we were going to visit. It appeared that the cave had been known for a good period of time and was first visited in 1932 and in 1934 the first siphon was reached. Various trips were made over the years but, it was not until 1981 that the siphon was passed. The divers name was John Cordingley and as a lot of you will probably know John. I believe he was a Wessex member around 1981 (Phil ?) its a small world. In 1982 John returned with Geoff Crossley because, in 1981 John arrived at the foot of a large waterfall and needed help to climb it. They climbed the waterfall and eventually found another siphon about 1500m further on. Between 1982 and the present Speleo members have found and pushed upstream through another 5 siphons. Also they have found a fossil passage above the stream way which is well decorated and our objective today. Most of the Speleo members that are with us have never visited this part of the cave.

By just after 9am we were standing at the entrance. The cave starts as a high rift with the stream cutting down and in true continental fashion you traverse the first 250m from 4m to 25m above the stream on a straight forward traverse with in situ hand lines where needed a cracking bit of passage reminiscent of some parts of OFD. Again the Limestone is very thinly bedded, after some 300m we arrived in a large chamber with quite a few bats in residence. By now Pete and I were melting, we had both taken the same gear that we use in the Herault assuming that it would be OK. Well we just had to sit in this large chamber and cool off. The dwarf promptly removed half of his caving gear and just sat there steaming. (it's OK by now the Greek lads were getting used to him and didn't think he was strange any more). eventually we cooled down a bit and climbed down into the stream way. From the chamber it's about 100m to the siphon. Looking at the siphon about 10m down stream up a hand line aided climb on the left is the bypass. We climbed up into a somewhat smaller passage attached our SRT bags to our belts with tapes and set off down a small passage.

All was going well for the first 15m, then the dwarf said 'your going to have fun in this bit' then 'it's OK it's getting bigger again'. I set off down the narrowing passage and he was right I did have fun but, I got through OK. In the briefing outside Stephanos had said that there was one narrow bit and we had just passed it. All plane sailing from here, well another 4m down the passage I could hear Pete grunting ' Your going to have f-----g fun in this bit. Don't rush at it' he said 'cheers mate' I said as I approached the squeeze and sure enough I was going to have fun in this bit. I went in head first face down and could not even get my shoulders in the hole, so I backed out which was a bit of fun the squeeze being a 'U' tube. Turned around and went in on my back and still could not get through, but it was very close. So as they say it was going to be an early shower for me to day. Some of the others in the group had already decided not to go up the 30m waterfall just as they rejoined the streamway. Myself and Angelo waited until the others came back and then we all went out together, having a good look around on route and when we were back in the large chamber I noticed a sizeable passage up near the roof at the top of a boulder heap and said to Vasilis ' where does that passage go'. 'What passage' he said, so I pointed it out to him. He had never noticed it before.

Back out in the sunshine after being underground for only about three and a half hours and have a good lunch. I decided the best thing to do was relax in the sunshine and wait for the rest to return, so I did for about 6 hours. Pete eventually emerged with the rest of the team after just under 10 hours underground. Now Pete hasn't spent that long underground for a couple of years so , you can imagine what state he was in. Knackered he was but, he still managed to fill his face and then promptly fell asleep and started snoring gently. Pete reckoned that the cave was one the best decorated he had ever seen and give me a cussing because, he had actually remembered to pack his flash guns, but this time he had no one to

hold them for him. We spent a leisurely evening before going back to our hotel and a quick couple of beers before bed.

We ganged up on our host's and they agreed to give us an extra hour in bed on Saturday. We were picked up at nine o'clock to travel to the Dimosari gorge. We went via the Kalyvia centre which like an information centre, but it deals primarily with the flora and fauna of the local area. It also has a superb video show of the largest dragon house which is situated near the summit of Mount Ochi. Dragon houses are believed to be temples built in the Archaic era and there are quite a lot on Evia. After our visit to the centre we continued up to the top of the Dimosari where we were to begin today's activities a leisurely walk down this impressive gorge.

The gorge starts at an altitude of just over 1000m and winds its way down virtually to sea level. Again the whole gorge is in limestone and starts off quite gently all on well marked paths. Within about half a mile we came across one of Pete's distant relatives, a dwarf tortoise which fitted very comfortably into the palm of his hand. We carried on down the gorge which started to steepen and the scenery became even more dramatic, by now we had picked up a stream and of course we started quizzing our Greek friends about the whereabouts of the caves that there must have been in a gorge like this. They did not know of any caves in this very large gorge and by now we had arrived at another large valley coming in from the right carrying another stream. About 400m up this valley there was a pumping station extracting water. There was still quite a substantial stream flowing and this was the end of August! Again we enquired if there was anything known behind the pumping station. The answer was still no. We carried on down the gorge and after nearly 4 hours we arrived at a car park at the bottom of the gorge to be met by Thomas and Stefanos and ferried to a local taverna for lunch. After a leisurely lunch we spent a few hours relaxing on the beach and a very rare event was recorded. A dwarf floundering in the surf, now this was so funny I actually nearly drowned



Agia Triada

Photo: P.Hann

myself laughing so much. Later that evening the others in our group had decided to walk up to the dragon house near the summit of mount Ochi. Pete and I opted to stay with Thomas, Stefanos and a couple of others in Karistos. There was a concert of folk music by the townsfolk in the local square that evening at which we spent a good couple of hours we also had a look around the town and ended up at a cracking beach front bar and spent a few hours just chatting.

Sunday was our last day and the plan was to go for a walk on mount Ochi to look at some huge stone columns that were carved ready to be transported to Rome in the days of the roman empire but, for one reason or another never left Greece. I was intrigued by the passage that I had spotted two days before in Agia Triada, so Pete and I had talked Stefanos into returning with us to have a see if we could climb into it, also Pete wanted to take a few more photograph's.

Again it was an early start up at 7.30am to breakfast pack all our stuff ready to go back to the mainland. Stefanos arrived at about 8.15 and we were off to the cave and ready to go underground by just after 9 in the morning. Back across the traverses again into the large chamber . After having the obligatory 20 minutes cooling off period Myself and Stefanos started off up the boulder heap towards the passage that I had seen close to the roof of the chamber. Once we were at the top of the boulder slope we could see that the passage was worth trying to climb into. Eventually we managed to lasso a small stal boss with a sling, after hanging off of the bottom of it to make sure that it held my great weight, I attached a loop of rope underneath of the sling and stood in it, swung out over a bit of a drop and stood upright. The passage was definitely going, the problem was getting my other foot into the tape sling which was now very taught. The only hand hold that I had was a sharp piece of stal and seeing that I did not have any gloves it had all ready drawn blood so I back tracked.

Stefanos had gloves so we decided that he should have a go. Never having tried a climb like this before he was a bit apprehensive but, quite soon with combine tactics we had him stood one foot in the sling and the other on a small ledge. Stefanos used the rope to make another foot loop and just before he stood into it in perfect English he said. ' If I fall off now I will surly die '. I looked down and some 30 feet below us I could see Mr Hann laughing so with words of encouragement I said. ' In that case don't fall off then '. It had to have been the quote of the week and one thing that will stay in my mind for some time. With the crux of the climb cracked Stefanos disappeared up the rest of the climb and off down the passage. He returned after 10 - 15 minutes to report that it carried on for 40 - 50 metres and then closed down. He rigged up an abseil and we were soon back with Pete.

After the exciting bit we started concentrating on photography. Pete and Stefanos had a great time taking photo's from the sump back to the entrance and we eventually emerged into the Greek sunshine after an enjoyable 3 1/2 hour trip. We were met by the rest of the crowd, had a bit of lunch and packed the cars ready for the trip back to Kalamos. The journey was uneventful and we arrived back in time to register for the conference and enjoy the opening get together with the girls, held on the roof of one of the other hotels.

The conference itself has lectures on just about everything you can imagine regarding speleology. As you can guess most of the technical stuff was miles above our heads, but there was a lot of expedition reports, films and slide shows which were terrific. Gavins Wookey film was shown and received a standing ovation (the only one that I witnessed). One of the most impressive films that I saw was on Kruber cave. The 2000 m deep system in the Arabika massif, western Caucasus. Not only did they managed to dive a sump at -1400 m, but they filmed it as well. After that one of the team fell 30 m at a depth of 500m and not only did they manage to get the victim out alive, but they filmed some of the rescue as well. The footage

showed all of us what sort of conditions the cavers were working under and the get the casualty out alive was a major feat.

The conference was based on two hotels, ours being one of them and the other was situated about 5 minutes walk away. Apart from the lectures there were trips laid on to various areas for those who wanted to look around. There was a day excursion included within the enrollment price and one the due day 7 or 8 coaches left the conference venues and set off in convoy. The first stop was the Corinth canal which is well known. We then travelled on into an area called the Peleponese where we stopped at a service station to be met by an eminent geologist where we were given an on the spot lecture on the surrounding area. This area included hills up to 1900 metres and a proved by dye testing, sink - resurgence I believe of 40 km ! Also the local mayor was there to welcome us compete with television crew. After our lecture and complete with mayor and entourage our convoy of coaches, now complete with police escort set off to our next stop which was an old amphitheatre and again we had a local archaeologist on hand to give us a talk on the history of this site. Lunch was provided curtesy of the mayor and local community I believe and what a grand spread it was. It was held a hotel around the pool and there was as much food and wine as you wanted to eat or drink. The afternoons entertainment was a visit to a show cane called Kapisa which is still under construction. You walk down a short blasted tunnel and arrive into a largish chamber, well decorated. Leading off the chamber there is a couple of circular routes the take you past some very fine decorations. There are quite a lot of calcified human bones within the cave and we were fortunate enough to be walking round with and American called Dave Hubbard who is an expert on such things. This meant that we had a running commentary and made the whole thing much more interesting. The excursion lasted the whole day and considering it was included in the registration costs was well worth it and a damn god day out.

Our hotel was where the club stands were situated. There were stands from obviously Greek clubs including Speleo, also there were stands from Italy. Spain, South Korea, Belgium and others. They were all very interesting and it gave us time to get to know the Speleo members better. We did, get to visit the Acropolis in Athens. This was another thing that we really wanted to do and if any of you find yourselves in Athens with a good half a day to spare, go and visit the Acropolis you will not be disappointed. Yes there are millions of people and it was boiling hot, but the place was superb.

Finally the closing ceremony was at our hotel and as you would expect included a lot of eating, drinking, Greek music and dancing. A good time was had by all and we were picked up by taxi to be driven to the air port at 6 am (ouch). Was it worth going to ? Definitely I was a bit skeptical to start with but approached the conference with an open mind and had a great time. You meet people from all over the world. There was about 400 people there from over 50 different countries. There are lectures to suit everybody including somebody with a lack of technical knowledge like myself. The next UIS conference is in the USA in four years time. If you have nothing better planed it will be well worth considering, we will be giving it a lot of thought. As they say up North ' a rit good do'.

Both Pete and I would like to thank the following. Thomas Theodosiadis, Stefanos Nikolaidis, Amica Likiqrdopoilou, Georgia Tartari, Vasilis Athauasopoulos, Glanna Xatzi, Ilanna Mazauitou, Alexandros Loukidis, Agelos Kanarios and Diouisis Papadopoulos, Who are all members of the Athens based club Speleo. They all put themselves out to give us a great time. I apologise if any of the names are miss spelt, I cannot read Glenn's writing.

We are hoping that a small contingent of Wessex members will join Speleo members on an expedition in Greece next summer.

New Mines on Axbridge Hill

Phil Hendy

On Christmas Eve, a party consisting of Alison Moody, Adrian and Jude Vanderplank, Nik Nak, Richard Carey and myself set off to explore Axbridge Ochre Mine. Access to the upper grottoes was made with difficulty (the rail lines propped against the wall as an aid to the first part of the ascent are now missing) and most of the party went up and had a good look around.

Afterwards, Alison asked us to look at a potential site she had found whilst walking the dog. A little below the Mine we found a low wide opening under a rock face in a depression. With her usual enthusiasm, Alison soon dug and wriggled into a roomy passage. Digging the fill from both sides allowed us all to enter a few minutes later. The passage was indeed roomy, but ended after 10m in a solid wall. We were not the first cavers to enter, as we found the names 'Jules' written on the wall in carbide smoke.

While we were discussing this, Adrian wandered off down the hill, to find another open mine in a similar location. This was only 6m long, but had three large shotholes in the wall, one of which was covered in calcite. Apart from the right hand wall of limestone, the rest of the mine was in cemented angular breccia. We have called these sites Axbridge Ochre Middle Mine and Axbridge Ochre Lower Mine, at ST 4317 5507 and 4320 5505 respectively.

I returned on Boxing Day, to try to locate the other known sites in the area: Flint Crevice, Letterbox Cave, Triple-H Cave and Large Chamber Cave. I found four sites, which did not quite match the descriptions in 'Complete Caves of Mendip', and subsequently (on 15th Jan, with Pete and Alison) discovered that I had found three of the caves, but not in the correct sequence. However, the last site I found, a shaft in a depression, turned out to be a hitherto undescribed site. This was about 6m deep, leading back under the entrance to a short passage in ochreous fill. We rescued an amphibian from a ledge, and so we named the site Toad Pit (ST 4287 5497).

On the same occasion, when we were exploring the four 'known' caves, Alison noticed a spoil



Ali Moody Digging into Axbridge Middle Ochre Mine

Photo Phil Hendy

heap through the bushes to the west of Large Chamber Cave, and wandered off to find a complex of entrances in a large depression. Two walk-in entrances to short passages in poor quality ochre had a handshake connection, while below and to the right were two short grovelly crawls. We called this Four Entrance Mine, located by GPS at ST 4289 5494. We noted a low ruined wall running east-west below Toad Pit - this might have been associated with a tramway.

Axbridge Ochre Lower Mine has been surveyed. Once the others have been surveyed, it is my intention to write a full description of the area. There appears to be plenty of digging potential, but we will have to ensure that we are not duplicating work (so far unpublished) by the ACG.

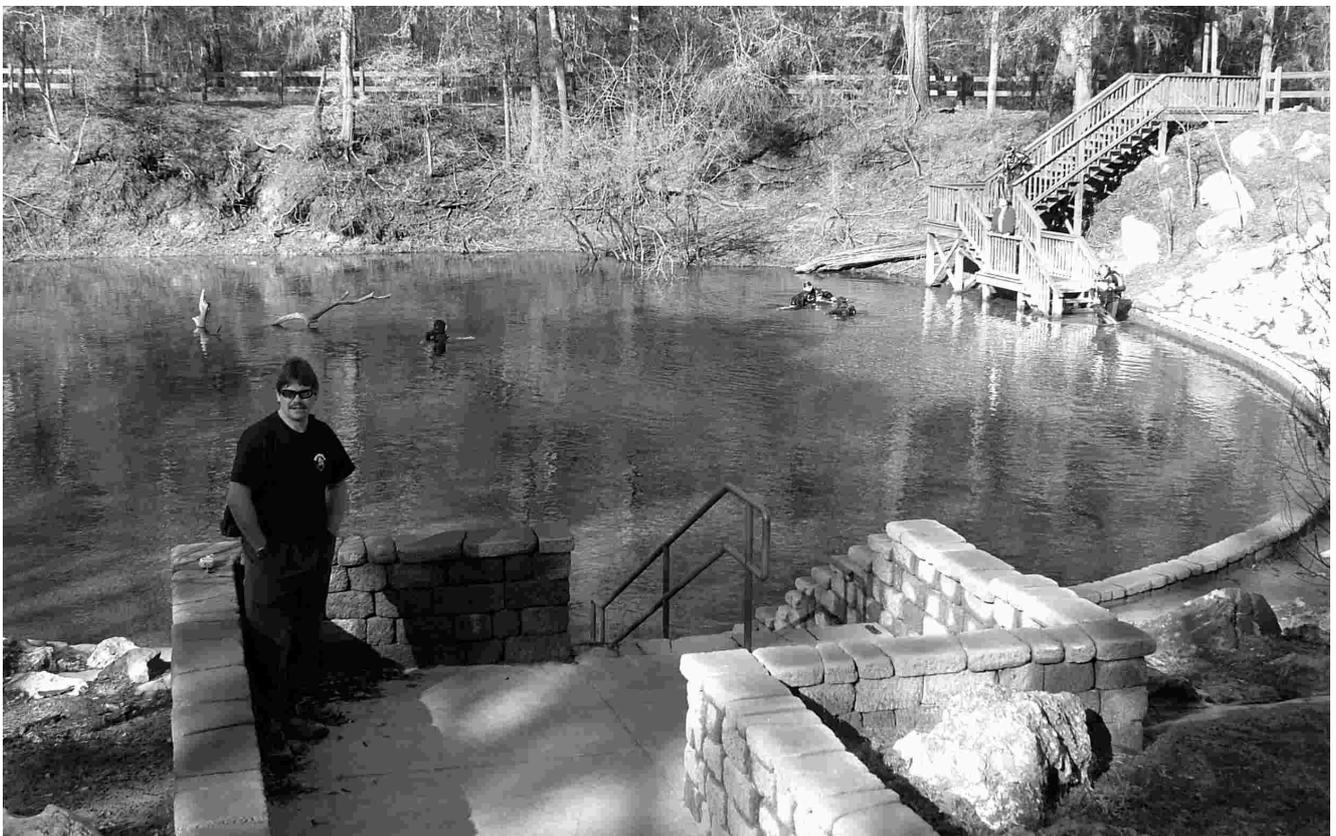
Caverns Measureless to Man

(Thanks to Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

Michael Thomas

Central North Florida is a God Forsaken place, it is an area with no vertical relief, very little in the way of scenery and very little alcohol, infact it's a dry county. The inhabitants of the place are a cross between Groundhog Day and Deliverance! However what it does have in its favour is miles and miles of swampland, and under that swampland are caves. Northern Florida is a huge clear fresh water aquifer containing some but not all of the world's great underwater cave systems. Five Wessex CDG divers traveled to Suwannee County near Live Oak over the New Year period of 2006. Jon Beal, Andy Judd and I flew to Atlanta, Georgia and then drove five hours south just before New Years Eve. Meanwhile Malc Foyle and Jon Williams had been at the Mouse's house in Orlando for Christmas and drove three hours North to cave country the day after New Year. Our sole intention while in Florida was to dive, as there really is a very limited amount to do above ground and no dry caves either. If you do plan a diving trip to Florida take some good books, your I-Pod and most importantly some friends you don't mind being with continuously for two weeks.

Any way back to the diving, Going on a diving trip organized by Jon Beal only means one thing, you will dive every day at least twice and you will swim and swim and swim until you are sick!. The three Atlanta divers planned on hitting the ground running. The first day's diving after a long haul trip was supposed to be gentle but after sorting rental cylinders and gear in the morning we dove (just for you Malc) Peacock springs. This check out dive was around two hours long and involved the divers swimming the entire length of the peanut line and then some up the Olsen Line. This was the first of many great dives in Peacock Springs that we did culminating in the grand traverse a swim of nearly a mile from Orange Grove entrance via Challenge Sink, Olsen Sink, Pothole and finally surfacing in Peacock 1 Spring. This is a truly great cave with such a diverse passage size and shape with enough cave critters to keep biologists happy for years.



Malc Foyle at Little River Spring

Photo: J. Williams

Once Jon and Malc had arrived we started going to other sites a little further away from base. Dives were done in Madison Blue Spring during a small tornado, Telford Springs, Bonnet Spring, Little River Spring, Cow Spring and Ginnie Springs. All the caves can be fantastic dives in the right conditions which most of our dives where, unfortunately we lost the good visibility in Telford where we had a gloomy but long swim. We discovered after that a team of divers in another system up stream of Telford had had some problems during their dive earlier that day. Judging by the muck flowing through the cave some problems must have meant a screaming epic at some point. Florida is a focal point for many of the world's resurgence divers and during a trip you will meet many different nationalities, during ours we met teams from Finland, French Canada, USA, UK and Austria.

Two days diving was done at Ginnie Springs, this high flow system has some of the clearest water and largest underwater cave passage in the world an awesome cave dive. You work hard on the way up stream and concentrate on making as much progress as possible before turning and cruising out with the current. Words do not do Florida cave diving and our trip justice but probably our favorite cave dive was in Cow Spring. It's another high flow extremely clear cave with some of the most stunning mud formations we had ever seen. Side mounts were used on this dive to allow easier access through the entrance restrictions, due to the high flow and snug entrance this cave is protected from abuse, but if you just make that bit of effort it's a superb caving trip! Go on book that flight!

Reference:

<http://www.floridacaves.com/>

<http://www.diveoutpost.com/>

<http://www.sidemount.com/>



Jon Williams at Martz Entrance, Madison Blue Spring

Photo: M. Foyle

B.C.A. N/L 5 (Dec 05)
B.C.R.A. Bulletin 'Speleology' #5 (Dec 05)
Bull. Bibliographique Speleologique. Speleological Abstracts 42-43 (2003-2004)
Cave Diving Group. N/L 157, 158 (Oct 05, Jan 06)
Craven Pothole Club. Record 81 (Jan 06)
Chelsea S.S. N/L 47, 11, 12 (Nov, Dec 05), 48, 1, 2 (Jan, Feb 06)
Descent 187, 188 (Dec 05-Jan 06, Feb-Mar 06)
Grosvenor Caving Club N/L 134 (Oct 05)
M.N.R.C. N/L 107 (Winter 05)
NSS News 63, 9 Part 2 (American Caving Accidents 2002-2003) (Sep 05)
63, 10, 11, 12 (Oct, Nov, Dec 05)
Shepton Mallet Caving Club. J. Series 11 No. 8 (Aut 05) (Iceland, S. Wales rescue, Central Thailand, Castle Cary)
Soc Spel. de Wallonie (Belgium) Regards 62 (Jan/Feb 06)
Soc. Suisse de Speleologie. Stalactite. 53, 2 (Dec 03), 53, 1, 2 (Jun, Dec 04)
South Wales Caving Club N/L 124 (rec'd. 1/06)
U.B.S.S. Proceedings. 23, 3 (2005, Publ. Jan 06) (Aveline's Hole)
N/L 3rd Series 1 (Summer 05) 2 (Spring 06)
Westminster Spelaeological Group. N/L 2005/4 (Oct 05)

Wessex Cave Club. Minutes and Records 1934 - 1939 (Copy and CD-ROM)
Basic Cave Diving (1986) Exley S. Publ. NSS Cave Diving Section - thanks to Mike Thomas
Priddy Green Sink survey (2005) - thanks to Kevin Hilton and Emma Heron.
Grande Faille du Fond des Cris (Grotte Rouxhet) Survey

MISSING BOOKS

The following items are missing from the Library and not booked out. Their return would be appreciated, as others wish to read or borrow them:

Potholing under the Northern Pennines (Heap)
La Pierre St Martin (Douat)
La Dent de Crolles et son reseau souterrain (Various)
Belfry Bulletin (521, 522)

ERRATUM

The map of Ebbor Gorge produced in the last Journal shows a scale bar which is in error by a factor of 10. For 50m read 500m etc. Sincere apologies to walkers who have subsequently been surprised by the length of the walk through the Gorge, and my thanks to Willie Stanton for bringing the matter to my attention. The Library copy of the map has been amended.

Phil H.

Templeton Update

Just the same - Only Deeper

Phil Hendy

When The Templeton saga was last reported a year ago, we were digging underneath the newly-built 3rd platform, at - 82ft (25m). The dig was in three sections, a south 'pot' reached via a narrow rift, a central open area, and a northern rift, full of loose stones.

In the last twelve months, the depth has increased to -138ft (42m). The main walls have remained more or less vertical, although we have had to keep blasting away part of the west wall in the main section to allow the skip run to be extended. The south pot, which can be very wet at times due to surface runoff and a small intermittent inlet, has swung northwards, to reduce the overall length of the dig, and become part of the main area. To the north, the rift now extends to the centre of the shaft, and is very narrow. At one time it was only 3" wide, but it has opened out. At the far end, efforts have been made to shore up the roof at intervals with cemented stones, but no progress northwards has been made due to the extreme looseness of the fill. Most effort has been concentrated on the widest part of the dig, and as it narrows, progress downwards has speeded up. Now, where the rift enters the main shaft, we have encountered a vertical section of calcited stones, which has been stabilized. It is intended to leave this in situ.

During July 2005, a 4th steel platform was built at -102ft (31m) by drilling the wall, inserting steel pins, and welding horizontal RSJs to them. The area was then decked with an open steel grid. By January this year, a 5th platform had been built at -122ft (37m). New skip rail is added in 10ft (3m) lengths, so this makes loading the skip difficult between platforms. The problem is solved by using one or two wooden staging platforms, hung from ropes, from which spoil can be passed from the bottom to the skip. The skip has two openings; for a while only the new back door could be used (closed in transit by a steel flap) but at present, both doors can be used for loading. We dig twice a week, on Mondays and Wednesdays, taking out an average of 6 skips per night. The bottleneck in the system is the length of the skip run and the time it takes to haul a skip, though with a new longer cable, there is no longer any need to add a 14ft (4.3m) extension cable, which really slowed things down. A skip can be loaded in as little as 5 minutes, though a hauling cycle takes about 11 minutes.

The fill continued to be mud and small stones, with the occasional larger rock or even larger boulder. Most of these have been beaten into submission with sledge hammers, though on occasion a snapper is required. The wall is blasted for the skip run by using Cordtex in 10mm holes drilled with a power drill - we have 240v down to the 3rd platform. A 100mm hose has been taken to the bottom, so bang fumes can be extracted. Stones and dollops of mud can be passed up by hand, though for the smaller stones and bang debris, wooden trays made by John Ham have been invaluable. Currently, the bottom consists of large rocks and stones, clean-washed with gaps up to 6ft (2m) or more between them. The walls are deeply fluted in places, with widespread rillenkarren, narrow parallel grooves formed by water trickling down the face. Some areas of wall proved to be loosely attached, and have been removed for safety. The flowstone coating to the walls found higher up has largely disappeared, though there are patches of stal. Some flowstone and stal has been dug out of the spoil, though the rock is mainly limestone.

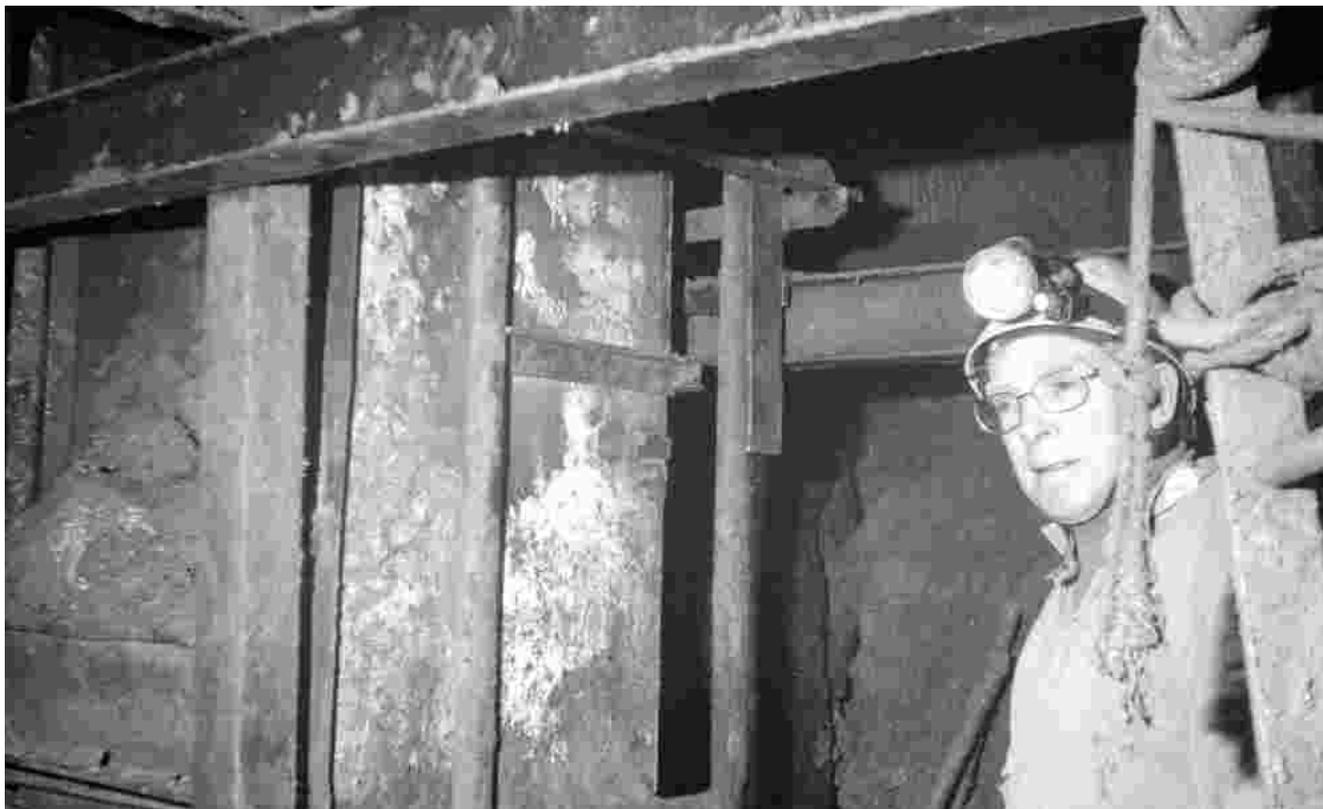
On the technical front, the winchman is controlled from below by hand-held radios and a tweeter. He can see the skip loaders by viewing a screen connected to a CCTV camera. Attempts to increase the cable-carrying capacity of the winch failed dramatically in March when a new drum was being tested. A skip loaded with rocks went out of control near the surface, and fell uncontrolled to the 64ft (19m) level, where it left the rails and burst open, scattering rocks down the shaft. Fortunately, there was no-one below at the time. The skip was

recovered and repaired, and the original drum refitted. The problem was solved temporarily by using an extension cable, which was fitted at the 4th platform. The skip was rested on a bar, the cable disconnected, and the extension fitted. The skip could then be lowered to the bottom, and the exercise was reversed on the way up. Now, however, the engineers (Tuska and Jim Young) have raised the drum off its bed, and fitted guides. These allow an extra length of cable to be used, and we have moved up from 9mm to 10mm cable. In July, the winch failed with a full skip on the rails. This necessitated renewing the hydraulic pipes and cleaning the control box. This box is connected to a cut-off line run down the shaft, so in emergency, the diggers can disconnect the winch controls. In January however, the wraps of the cable slipped and jammed on the drum, causing some cable damage. A minor re-think was necessary, but the problem has now been solved, though the cable must be watched during winding.

The old NHASA generator continued to play up, but in March a 2.5kva Briggs & Stratton generator was obtained. This too has its moments (being currently seized!), but is generally very reliable, and will power a small drill as well as the lights. The main diesel genny and the dumper have had problems, all of which have been resolved. In October it was found that the bank below the winch where the dumper is parked, was collapsing, so digging ceased while a retaining wall was built.

Socially, most of the diggers met on a hot June evening for a barbecue, and sherry and mince pies were partaken of just before Christmas. Surplus pies were taken to the Hunters' for the benefit of those less fortunate than ourselves (ie. BEC diggers). In June, Templeton hosted the Derbyshire CRO, who used the shaft to demonstrate hauling a casualty up a shaft in the horizontal position. This was part of the 2005 RESCON conference on Mendip.

Progress at the moment is good, and the loose fill is exciting, though there are as yet no signs of the shaft either bottoming out or leading to horizontal passage. There is a strong team of regular diggers, drawn from NHASA, Axbridge, BEC and Shepton, plus independent diggers and visitors. We just keep digging...



Graham Bowden at Templeton

Photo P. Hendy

There has been so much caving going on recently that I have only extracted the more interesting entries. If you just pop down Swildon's & bumble around the Upper Series you won't find your entry in; however if you do battle with raging floodwater & get washed over the 20' you might get a mention. There are some entries that deserve a full write up such as Mike Barnes's exploits in Llygad Llŵchwr or the Club trip to North Wales.

There are many digging trips reported in the log, too many to record here - how about someone doing a review - Crook's Hole, Templeton, Bath, Tumbledown & others?

21.7.05 Slaughter Stream Cave

Clive Westlake, Chris Grosart, Ann VdP, Leg & Vern

Team 'Green & Smelly' on tour again - this time to the Forest of Dean. Straightforward ladder pitches led to impressive stream passage to the sump, which went on.....and on.....and on.....So we reaches the 'end' & returned via the round trip.

PS The Waterside Hotel 5 mins up the road does excellent beer & chips!

30.7.05 Gough's Cave

Mike Thomas, Malc Foyle, Phill Short, Andy Judd, and Jon Beal with help from Jon Williams, Russell Brookes, Chris Binding & Glyn

All kit to Lloyd Hall on Friday night. Divers in at 9.30 Saturday morning. JB & AJ surveyed Sump 1B at 130m long. Mike T & Phill diving in Sump 2, Phill pushed the inlet passage on the left going upstream to a final conclusion. 3-4m of new cave ending in a very low tight & muddy bedding. Phill felt most at home! Mike T took water samples around the inlet area & Malc F supervised in Bishop's Palace.

6.8.05 Stoke Lane Slocker

Adrian VdP, Chris Grosart, Nik Nak & Clive Westlake

This trip fell together after several mistakes, such as Nik Nak's chronological dyslexia, then nearly fell apart when Clive forgot half his neoprene. Eventually we went underground at 13.30. Sump 2 was no problem despite gaining another low bit at the deepest point. On to Sump 4, then came back taking pictures. One of these was in the foetid duck that bypasses Sump 3 where Nik Nak asked, "Shall I put my face half underwater?" Only to be told, "No - three quarters!" At this precise moment Adrian found a comfortable, totally dry bypass to the duck. Back to Sump 2 taking more pictures of this seriously handsome stretch of cave. CW next distinguished himself by smashing his facemask - Nik Nak relaying one back through the sump. The mildly punishing carryout was eased by the anticipation of the BBQ - one of my better birthdays! CW.

7.8.05 Thrupe Lane

Noel Cleave, Graham Candy (Both WGG)

Ahem....Er.....Not sure how to put a gloss on this episode. We rigged the entrance pitch brilliantly. So far so good. Then we arrived at Perseverance Pot, caving fabulously with an astonishingly professional performance. Then, um....er....well it was like this: Noel had forgotten just how unwide the walls are and that the top and bottom are sort of squeezy rather than easy. Graham, half way down, encountered his tackle bag jammed solidly beneath him, which is where it stayed immovably as he climbed back up. Noel thrutched back up & disengaged the packs, Graham then retreated to the top where eventually Noel & the tackle bags joined him. At which stage we said 'sod this' or words to that effect, & went back to our brilliantly rigged entrance pitch. Hey Ho - another Noel cock-up. (See entry 26.11.05 Thrupe Lane).

7.8.05 Edmund's Rift - Wookey Hole

Geoff Ballard, Mike Thomas

The object was to explore the merits of pushing the dig. Pleasant dive to Edmunds Rift. From the platform we donned SRT kit & upped the pitch. MT re-rigged the pitch while GB went off to explore. The main route is through a 45deg bedding, upslope to the right, very muddy & initially 'cherty'. After a short distance a 'passage' joins from the right, which becomes constricted after a few metres. It appears that the way on continues but closes down. Continuing along the 'main route' for about 20m the chert is replaced by scalloped conglomerates, the ceiling & floor take on the appearance of flowstone. At the current end there are immediately three options, left (downslope), straight on or right (upslope). Left is choked beyond which it appears to close down. Straight on is too narrow & would require banging. To the right (far left corner) is also too narrow & again needs bang. By climbing between boulders there is a draughting inlet at ceiling height heading downslope to the breakdown at the current end. Conclusion: due to the number of banging trips required weighed up with the other potential digging sites in Wookey, I would not recommend Edmond's Rift be at the top of the list.

20.8.05 Dan yr Ogof - The Far North (LHS)

The 'totem pole'(think about it) was: Geoff 'Badger' Ballard, Simon 'Nik Nak' Richards, Dave 'Butch' Meredith, Rob 'Suntan' Delacour and Jon 'Suitcase' Edwards.

Going to an end is always an option for a trip and with this in mind we decided that Far North Choke was calling. With none of the team having been beyond The Rising and having heard tales of desperate climbs and rumours that we would fail to locate North Aven we set off with tackle and survey determined to reach the end.

Swimming the Green Canal in just a fleecy would not come as a huge surprise to those that know Suitcase, albeit funny to watch, however the realisation that he had done so with his electronic car key in his pocket was amusing especially as he had tackle in a dry bag. On reaching The Rising Dave decided to free climb up the right hand side, rather than using the in-situ hand-line, unknowingly volunteering himself for any suspect climbs we were yet to find. Unfortunately there were none. Now everyone's role within the group was clear. We had The Gatekeeper, The Climber, The Young Oaf, The Old Dodder and of course The Eye Candy (thanks Noel) - it's at this point that you may be wondering who's who - be kind.

The obstacles on route were easily passed and we reached, in comfort, the Far North Choke after about four hours of caving. The return journey was not without its humorous moments. We climbed the ladder from GP Hall and entered the Long Crawl; Geoff, Nik Nak, Suitcase, Dave and Suntan, yet by the time we reached the first 'enlargement' the order had changed with Suitcase at the rear - now that's magic! This was easily explained; he'd taken a side turning?????

Rob had a cramp hit on the way out. Having just cleared the Cattle Trough, with Jon close on his heels, the pain struck leaving him momentarily disabled and Jon left lying in a crawl of cold water. Unaware of this, as Dave, Nik Nak and I were further up the passage, we heard Jon pleading "No, no, don't stop", and Rob's reply - just come all over me", which was soon followed by -"arh, it's gone hard. Rub it." It was a good trip in good company, well within everyone's capability - shame there was no ice cream when we got out, but the curry and chips at the Copper Beech went down well, as did the beer.

Contents

Officers		122
From the Editor		122
Club News		123
Greece 2005 by Malcolm Foyle		124
New Mines on Axbridge Hill By Phil Hendy		132
Caverns Measureless to Man by Michael Thomas		133
Library Additions		135
Templeton Update by Phil Hendy		136
Upper Pitts Log Book Extracts		138

Club Diary

March 11th	MRO AGM - Hunters Lodge Inn
March 26-27th	Derbyshire - Opheaus CC - Nettle Pot & P8
April 14th -17th	Yorkshire - NPC - Easgill and Others TBC
April 29th -1st May	South Wales - WSG - Trips TBC
April 22nd	MRO Rescue Practice - Swildon's Hole
May 27-29th	Gower, S. Wales - Camping - Trips TBC
June 3rd	MRO GB Workshop
July 22nd -4th August	Pink & Fluffy Trip to France
For further details on any club meets contact Dave Meredith: melndave26@hotmail.com	

Wessex Practice Rescue

On Sat April 22nd there will be an MRO Rescue Practice in Swildons Hole. If you've never been involved in a rescue at all, this should be an ideal starting point as it will cover the whole event from start to finish, including call-out procedures, surface control, etc. It is hoped that there will be multi-club representation & so it should mimic a real rescue more & enable healthy discussion in the pub afterwards!

On Sat June 3rd there will be a Rescue Workshop in GB. This will cover the individual skills that rescuers need & in the past has gone through first aid, stretcher carrying, pitch-hauling etc - this may be useful following techniques that you weren't that comfortable with in the Swildon's practice.

Did you also know that the Wessex SHOULD have a rescue practice of it's own EVERY year. Jonathan tried to organise one during 2005 but, due to lack of interest, had to cancel it - be warned that I WILL be organizing one this year so I'm relying on as many people as possible to attend. Although the topic of rescue may seem a bit tedious, you never know when you might need it & so why not learn some of the skills in advance. It may even help you to self-rescue & hence save the embarassment of a call-out (speaking from experience, this is definitely recommended!). Of course the other use may be when you're abroad & far away from any formal rescue organisation - you just never know.

Why not have a think about where you'd like YOUR rescue practice to be? Any sensible ideas welcomed but I'd like to make it as realistic & accessible to as many people as possible.

Finally, if you have any requests for training that you'd like to see, please let me know & I will ask one of the wardens to arrange a session just for you!

Rosie Freeman
MRO Co-Ordinator