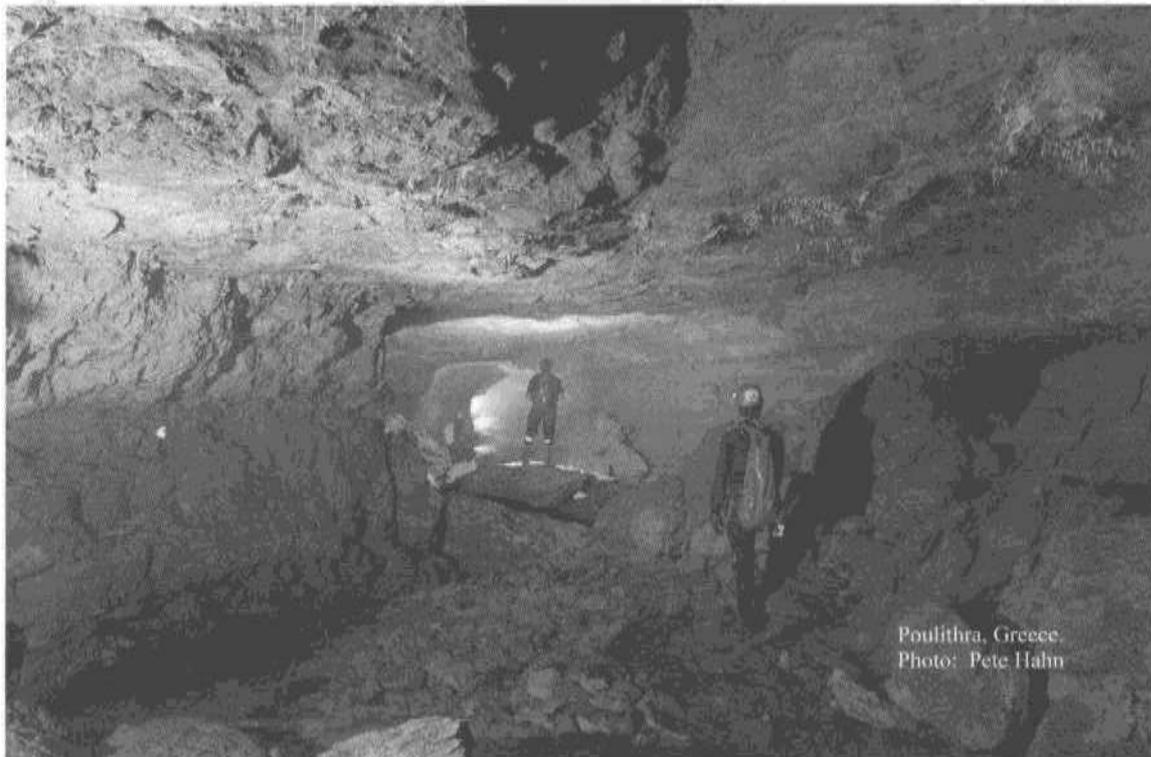


Journal of the  
**Wessex Cave Club**

**Vol. 28 No. 302**  
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## From the Editor

My first task as the new editor was to discover exactly what "Editorship" entailed in the context of caving club journals. So I availed myself of a strangely quiet Sunday morning following the Wessex dinner, and examined the journals of other clubs. The first, and golden rule of editorials seemed to be "Never say much". Closer inspection suggested that "Never say anything" was even better. I will now break it, but it made me consider exactly what the journal should achieve, and if changes would improve it. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it": I see no point in messing around with something that has evolved to function well. There is also the little matter of not having the skills to do so

The main purpose of the Journal is to keep **all** the members informed about **all** the club's activities, and to carry the club's administration organisation information. It can also used to publish articles of general interest, whether with scientific, historical, technical or sometimes somewhat peripheral content. And the bottom line is that **all the content comes from you.**

A couple of points about "Content" need to be made here.

Firstly this is not, primarily, a formal scientific journal, or produced for non-members. It is "Our" journal. Through it the inactive members can enjoy the exploits of the active cavers. Therefore the bulk of the journal should properly consist of accounts of our activities. Having spent 35 years in the wilderness, I can vouch personally that the journal kept me feeling still a part of the Wessex, even if the personalities were strangers to me.

Secondly our "Activities" extend beyond caving. The impulse that sends us caving also sends us climbing, doing via ferrata, mountaineering, hill-walking and canoeing, in Wessex groups. The club is enriched by these: so is the Journal *if* you send me your accounts. A number of you keep individual caving logs. These are not always directly suitable for the Wessex Journal, but could be with minor modification. If you write up trips at home, you can Email your accounts to me and also to Brian Prewer, who, amongst the many things he does for the club, will print, cut and paste them into the Upper Pitts log book.

Nobody expects literary masterpieces. This is emphatically not the place for pedantry over grammar and punctuation (OED online will do our spell-checking). If you want me to dot the "Is and cross the "Ts" then say so, but otherwise, just write - and see your name in print.

And, finally, my thanks for your contributions to this edition. You have ensured that this was not a baptism of fire. On the contrary, I have had such a glut of material that this issue has 16 pages, despite some serious print shrinkage and space saving. Long may this continue to be a problem! Although the new postage rates favour us, a fatter magazine may call for some creative accounting as well as writing! And on that pleasing thought,



*A Very Happy Christmas*



**Upper Pitts.** On 16<sup>th</sup> September, a grand total of two members plastered the hall, while another two worked on the new Sales cupboard and blocked drains. The new loft insulation is in the attic, but needs unrolling and laying between the joists.

**Swildon's Hole.** On 30<sup>th</sup> August, a party allegedly drinking alcohol and smoking cannabis went down the cave, and deliberately vandalized stal in Barnes' Loop and possibly Tratman's Temple. The Police have some names, and CSCC is actively pursuing a prosecution. Hopefully, this is a one-off. Litter has been collected from the Black Hole Series, and the old ring bolt at the far side of the Black Hole is to be removed, as it is unsafe for hanging ladders. The Blue Pencil chain is to be replaced.

**Brown's Folly Mine.** As stated in the last Journal, the gates to this mine have been welded shut, allegedly on the advice of the Mines Inspectorate. However, it is well-known that the Avon Wildlife Trust do not like cavers entering the mines, as it is supposed that they disturb the bats. Cavers, however, do not catch bats, weigh, bleed and examine them, or clip rings on their wings. One gets a whiff of hypocrisy.

**Star Shaft** has now been capped by CSCC, with a gate provided by Paul Wakeling. This has a short section of ladder, allowing access to SRT rope without the awkwardness of doing so while trying to enter the gate. The shaft is now a superb free-hang. The Club is investigating means of preventing damage to the miner's tools at the lower level, probably by installing a gate at the top of the final pitch, and initiating a leader system. The cost of the gate was around £2100, but part of this was defrayed by a generous grant from the AONB. Access is via a CSCC key.

**Thrupe Lane Swallet.** Chris Binding, Ali and Andrew Atkinson have placed eco-hangers at Perserverance, the Lateral pitch, above Atlas ledge and at Slither Pot, so an exchange round trip is now possible.

**Gough's Cave.** The pitch near Diamond Chamber (part of Castle's Hairy Ring) has had new bolts fitted.

**Digs.** Members are reminded that all digs take place on somebody's land, and permission should be sought before commencing work. This need was highlighted when illegal digs were started recently, close to public footpaths, in Longwood Valley and West Twin Brook Valley.

**West Twin Brook Adit.** There are reports of roof instability in part of this tunnel. Cavers are advised to beware.

**Hunter's Hole.** Some loose rocks in the roof between the two pitches have been safely deposited on the floor.

**Free Charterhouse Caves Permit.** As is widely known you need a permit to visit G.B., Longwood, Rhino, Charterhouse etc. What is less widely known is that as a service to its members the Club will give you, for free, an annual permit.

Simple ask any Committee member.

**The Longwood Valiev Sink** padlock is now the same as that for Rhino and Longwood. You can now while away a few minutes whilst your party leader wrestles with the Longwood gate.

**Singing River Mine.** Loose ginging in the entrance shaft has been stabilised.

**Blacknor Hole** (Portland). The P-Hangers are out of validation - beware! It is still advisable to leave someone on the surface if abseiling in, as it is still possible that the rope could be removed or vandalized.

**Upper Flood Swallet.** In early September, the MCG, pushing the end of this constricted cave, broke through a 6" squeeze to enter approximately 1400ft of high decorated passage, which seems to be leading down the valley. The way in collapsed, but was reopened, and currently the passage, up to 90ft high in places, is about 2.1km long! Unfortunately, the way in to the new passage has collapsed again in a big way, and the only solution seems to be to dig a shaft to intercept one of the aven's.

**CDG Training Weekend.** 29<sup>th</sup> Sept - 1<sup>st</sup> Oct. Experienced cavers from around the country were recently seen unravelling string as they explored the depths of Aveline's Hole. It appears that they were undergoing 'dry' line-laying practice, as part of the training weekend. Based at Upper Pitts, other activities included training at Vobster Quay and Wookey Hole, a Gas Management seminar, and a slide show by Clive Westlake.

**The MRO** rescue training exercise in G.B. Cave on 4th November was not too well attended, but useful work was done practising pitch hauling in the first grotto. Phil Hendy.

**Templeton** could now be sub-let to the CDG for diver training. The available 3 metres of zero-vis gloop would be ideal. Tuska's titanic sump-pump may spoil this .....

**The Editor** (that's me) is asking for feed-back, criticism and suggestions for future journals. I would far, far rather be a target for brickbats and contumely than be underwhelmed by your apathy. Incidentally, what exactly are "Brickbats"?

**P.S.M** is booked for the Wessex as a club trip from 4th August to 18 August 2007. Anybody is welcome to come along, because of the nature of the cave, cavers with any degree of experience will find plenty to do. The trip is open to all members and guests.

There will be a trip fee of about £25.00 each. We have booked SC3, Tete Sauvage and the EDF tunnel. If we have enough people to rig both top entrances we will need to buy 1000 metres of rope 110 karabiners and about 15 tackle bags. After the trip all tackle purchased will be donated to the club to for an expedition store for the use of members. We have not decided how the gear store will be run. This is something maybe for the committee to sort out. We think that having a pool of equipment of this volume will benefit the club.

Any questions contact either Malc. Simon or Butch. We are looking at accommodation at the moment. There are hotels, Gites and camping all local to the cave.

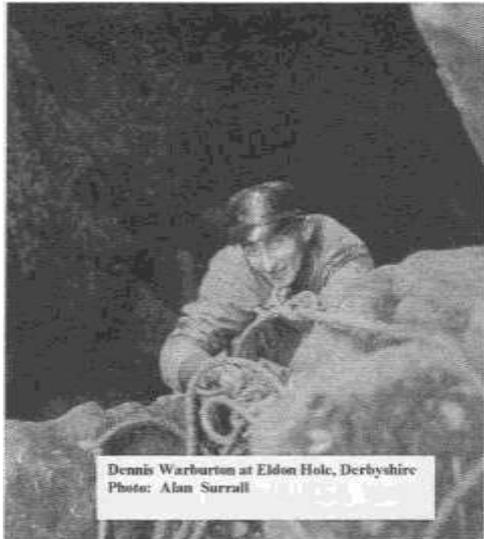
**Mortons Pot** Mad Phil, Emsy and sundry other delinquents are

currently digging the terminal sump in Eastwater which requires pumping each time. The electric cable and pump has taken many hard trips to install. We therefore want to limit unnecessary traffic down this route to prevent damage

## Obituary Denis Warburton. 1925 - 2006

Denis Warburton, who was by profession a Chemist, started caving in the early 1950's, regularly travelling down to Mendip with Alan Surrall and others from Birmingham. He soon put his analytical skills to work underground, rapidly becoming one of Mendip's foremost cave surveyors.

Denis is recorded, jointly with Alan Surrall and Phil Davies, as surveying Eastwater in 1952-54 and this work was published as a CRG grade V survey on two sheets with Plan, Elevation and Passage Cross Sections. This was one of the earliest surveys to be published in conformity with the new CRG standards (Butcher, 1950) - and the Wessex team could hardly have chosen a more difficult subject! It is clear from this work that in addition to being a meticulous surveyor, Denis was also a fine draughtsman - for it is his signature that appears on this survey. Denis worked on many of the smaller Wessex survey projects at this time; surveys of Cookoo Cleaves, Hillier's Cave, Withybrook Slocker and even in a cave on Steep Holme - surveys which appeared at regular intervals in the Journal. In 1956/57 Denis is reported helping Derek Ford (also Jim Hanwell and others) with the Grade V survey of Stoke Lane II, published 1959. In 1960, also on East Mendip, Denis is recorded as working with Phil Davies on the survey of Fairy Cave. In 1962 Denis, again working with Alan Surrall and Phil Davies, completed the single sheet (Plan and Elevation) Grade

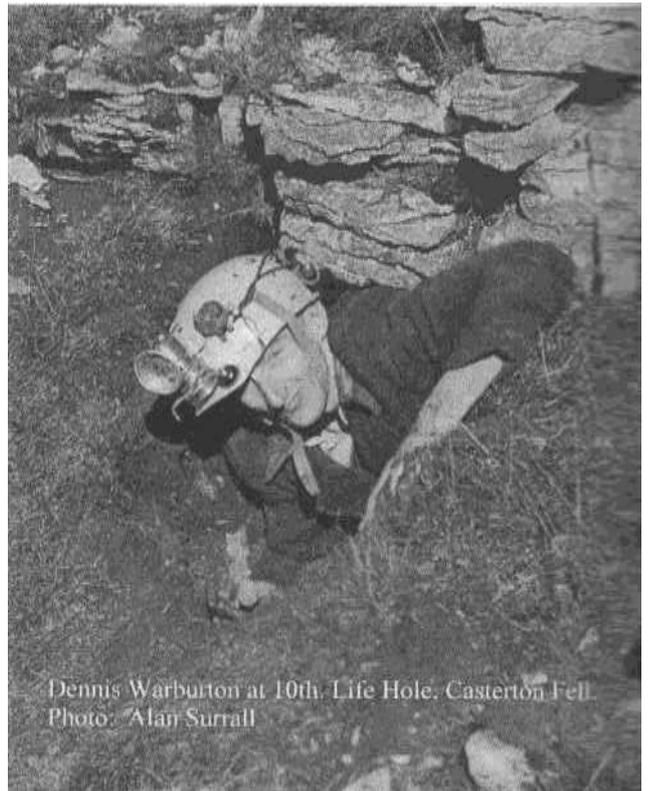


V survey of Lamb Leer. This must have been a busy year for the Wessex surveyors as, also in 1962, Denis Warburton, Alan Surrall and Jim Hanwell produced the two sheet (Plan and Passage Cross Sections) Grade VI survey of Balch's

Hole. Around this time several Mendip surveyors met to discuss survey practice, problems and standards. The resulting report "The Mendip Survey Colloquium" was published privately and is often quoted - but rarely read. However thanks to the tolerance of the Wessex Editor at the time Denis' own 15 page theoretical paper had already been published in the Journal (Warburton, 1963) and has been quoted in virtually every paper or book on Cave Surveying since. What is often forgotten is that at this time all the vital survey calculations would have been done manually, using Log, Log Sine and Log Cosine tables; always a time consuming and error prone task. Chunky desktop calculators with a simple Polar to Rectangular function key

to the cable. If people are considering a trip down the new Morton's Pot route, we'd strongly appreciate they chat to MadPhil on 07929 572177 before hand.

only became available in the mid/late 1960s. Indeed, we know that around 1968 the Chemistry lab at Wolverhampton Metals kindly provided Denis with an early model Olivetti calculator that could actually be programmed - using a magnetic strip - to do some of the survey number crunching. Using Log tables remained a necessary surveying skill for several more years;



and it is interesting to note that as late as 1976 Bryan Ellis still thought it appropriate to include four pages of 4-figure Log tables in his classic book "Surveying Caves". As well as working enthusiastically on many of the Mendip digs of the period - including Cow Hole and later Fairmans folly - Dennis also travelled to Yorkshire and Wales with the club. He even did some surveying in Yorkshire But his casual suggestion one Sunday morning in Horton-in-Ribblesdale that we should rise early "to do Pen-Ghent before breakfast" was greeted with some trepidation by many hardened cavers; particularly when they realised that a walk up Ingleborough was on the menu to follow breakfast!

In 1968 Denis switched to working in Agen Allwedd (the task that I took over two years later). Now we were working to a genuine Grade 6 with new versions of the Survey Unit and a tape measure conveniently marked in feet and tenths. We arrived one weekend in May 1968 and, closely following the recommendations of his 1963 paper, took no less than 6 calibration bearings on our way to the cave entrance - and a similar number on every trip thereafter. The vagaries of Magnetic Declination were not going to spoil this survey.

Denis Warburton passed away quietly on February 26th, 2006. Just eight members (or former members) of the Wessex Cave Club attended his funeral in Stourbridge on 7th March. They were outnumbered by his family, former work colleagues, and many friends from the village where he had lived with Brenda

for the past 30 years. It had rained heavily that morning and continued to rain during the service, somehow we felt that Denis would have approved. **P.R. Cousins, August 2006**

References: Butcher A.L., 1950, "Cave Survey" CRG Occasional Publication No. 3 Warburton D., 1963, "The Accuracy of a Cave Survey", J. Wessex Cave Club, Vol 7, No. 89 pp 166 - 181

#### **Peter Cousins also writes:**

'After attending Denis Warburton's funeral earlier this year, I had always planned to write something about his contribution to Cave Surveying. For a variety of reasons it took a bit longer than planned -and is technically still lacking the exact date when he joined the Wessex, which will probably be buried in the pages of the small size 1950s Journals that pre-date my collection.

### **Ardeche: Diving - Geoff Ballard**

So we were off to France again and although the primary focus was the Henne Morte whilst in the Pyrenees the focus was less sharp for the second week with the proposed 32km paddle down the Ardeche amongst other things.

I decided that I'd find two dive sites that Ade and Nik Nak could share with me and having donned my billabongs fired up explorer. Accompanied by 'AltaVista', to prove me with the necessary pigeon French translation, I began peeling back the layers on watery holes in the Ardeche. Unfortunately nobody I knew of had dived in the Ardeche previously and I was unable to get a copy of Stuart Morrison's guide *The Cave Diving Guide to Eastern France* from him. The sites looked good. I short listed two; the Goul de la Tannerie and the Grotte de Font Vive due to their 'shallow' nature and relative easy in terms of access from our proposed base - riverside on the Ardeche.

We arrived at the site; Dieu Mithra, in the Bourg Saint-Andéol, just on the edge of the Rhone, where two independent resurgences appear within 100 yards of each other! There are an abundance of listed monuments - it's like walking around an open air museum, and the place is worth a visit on its own merits.

The images I'd seen had shown the site in condition and in flood, and given we were there I the height of summer I wasn't expecting it to be in flood. We all wandered over to the spring and I had to hide my disappointment at what I saw. Where had all the water gone? In all my contingency planning I hadn't considered there being 'no water'; the water levels were very low and what was remaining looked milky and scummy...I'm on holiday, I can get this at home!

Nik Nak had very kindly volunteered to transport a dozen cylinders of various sizes a couple of thousand miles so it seemed only polite to get kitted up and take a look. Ade and Nik Nak had brought their kit yet seemed even less enthusiastic about getting in, which was overly apparent at the haste in which their kit was ferried from the car. We were a motley crew in all but our delight to be faced with this smelly puddle.

Anyway, I began the customary pre dive angst and the mental battle that ensues during the quiet time one spends kitting up. What can I say, I'm a 'big girls blouse', I get a little apprehensive when it's my first dive of a new site. The routine is well practiced, it was the only way out of the heat of the day, and I knew that once in the water I would be too busy focusing on staying alive to be doing battle with the demons

of my imagination.



It was apparent that everyone was very busy with their own thoughts and I was very soon ready to get in. The twin 12's were out for their maiden voyage and I confess, I'm not as nibble on my toes out of the water as I'm used to... they're almost the same size as me. I know our December pin up has twin 20's but it's a scale thing!

I had to back into the water down a steep pebble slope before I could turn around in heavily scalloped bedding. The line, belayed to hangers, was a white wire, which was picked up in the light easily. The scum remained on the surface yet the milky visibility stayed with me for the initial 20 meters. The bedding, although a few meters wide, was evidently less than a meter in height which was only noticeable when one had to pass the line which zig zag across the ceiling.

The profile of the dive showed that for the first 750 meters it stayed above twenty meters with an obvious 'step' about 100 meters in called The Well. At 50 meters I became away of an air space above me and at 60 meters I was crawling, hands and knees in dry passage in what was expected to an endless sump; currently standing at 1200 meters penetration with a depth of 209 meters!!!

I was gutted. No sooner had I settled into the dive than it finished! There was no way I would be able to climb back out of The Well if I continued so I had no other options; it was time to rejoin the others. Adrian was soon persuaded with a "come on in the waters fine" and on our exit the pair of us

press ganged Nik Nak to join us. This time Ade took his camera and much bugging about ensued... From time to time the weather has a habit of curtailing caving

trips and this was one of those occasions, a disappointment but a good day! **Geoff Ballard.**

## **Greece: Peleta. By Michael Thomas and Kevin Hilton**

When Malc Foyle and Pete Hann returned from the international caving conference in Greece in 2005 they brought home with them a request to put a small team together to dive the terminal sump of a deep cave called Peleta in the Peloponnese in the summer of 2006. When Malc spoke to me and asked if I would be one of the divers I agreed without giving much thought to the problems of diving a sump at nearly -500 m and all the other logistical problems a trip such as this would entail. Several weeks were then spent deliberating over the team and, once chosen, how to get the team to Greece with all the toys. We opted to fly into Greece on this trip, although this did limit us to the basics of what we could take with us, simple SRT kit and one set of diving kit between two. We purchased three tents and some other camping stuff once we arrived in Athens. As with most trips the final team count was somewhat different from what we started with, but on finally arriving in the country (despite the security forces bugging up the airports on the weekend we were to fly), we had three divers Andy Judd, Kevin Hilton and myself. We also had Pete Hann as camera man and chief helper to divers! and finally Malc Foyle as the best caver in the world our hero and political leader of the team. John Thomas, Rita Foyle, Sandy and Sarah Hann did sterling service in feeding, mothering and sorting out camp life for all those unfortunate enough to have to go underground.

On arriving in Greece in mid August, unsurprisingly we found it rather warm, the daytime temperature was between 40 and 44°C every day for the duration of our trip. The underground temperature was 18°C making it somewhat uncomfortable during the ascent out of Peleta. We had to be very careful even underground not to get dehydrated so we stockpiled the cave with plenty of fluid for use on the up part of the pushing and working trips. The system worked, as we had no heat related injuries throughout the trip despite times when we were getting very warm on the de-rigging and removal of diving equipment.

For the first two days that we were in Athens we spent a lot of time with Vassilis Trizonis, one of the Speleo club's divers. Vassilis had dived the terminal sump in Peleta in 2000 but without finding the way on. We dived two sites with Vassilis, Vouliagmeni a sink hole cave in the sea close to Athens and Sintzi Resurgence in the mountains a few hours drive west of Athens. Both sites were very enjoyable and ripe for further exploration. The two dives also gave us the chance to teach Vassilis some British cave diving techniques. The third day in Athens was put aside to sort out all the gear needed to go to Peleta and severely overloading many cars to get in the equipment and people. Finally we left Athens late afternoon for the five hour trip to Peleta, arriving well after dark.

When our camp had been erected in a rather wild area of shrub and thorn bushes we assembled around the large camp table at around 22.30 for dinner. It was at this point that Malc informed me of the first caving trip leaving at midnight to

start the siphon running in sump one and I was the designed diver! I dived sometime after midnight and was back in bed by 03.30.

The Speleo members are a very dedicated team, with only eight days in the field scheduled for this trip they would cave in shifts night and day to ensure the best possible outcome, although it came as a bit of a shock to the system! With the siphon running the sump would be empty by morning and the first rigging teams could enter. Two days later the cave was rigged to the terminal sump and the diving kit was ready to go at the dive base.

### **Kevin takes up the story of the exploration beyond the terminal sump. '**

20 meters above me the rope bounces and twangs ominously over the rock. The boulder strewn floor is still another 20 odd meters below and the harsh walls of the chamber stretch away beyond my lights into greyness and black. We are ½ k down and on the wrong side of a sump moving into virgin territory but this is not a friendly cave. I push tentatively off the wall swinging for a deviation that I had spotted on the other side of the shaft. It is a good looking hold and I grasped hard pulling myself in. With a crack it peels off the wall and spins away towards the floor landing with a huge reverberating boom.

'You OK' yelled Mike who had been busy emptying fluorescent into the stream. It's eerie fluorescence trickles down the walls and drifts across the floor.

'Fine' I replied with a little more confidence than I felt. Time for take two. The second deviation held and minutes later I touched down. The floor consisted of huge car sized boulders haphazardly balanced on one and other. Mike was close behind. We peered down. Fluorescent green water disappeared tantalizingly down into yawning black spaces. We were not on the floor by any means. Choosing the larger of the gaps we dropped the remainder of our rope. Mike clipped in and disappeared down through the boulders.

'Rope free' followed very shortly and I dropped down to find the knotted end just brushing the floor. The water was collecting, pooling and then rumbling off down canyon passage. We followed. Perched boulders hung precariously in the roof. The stream took us down two small drops before launching itself into space over the head of yet another pitch. The walls belled out to a pebbly floor 5m below. The stream gathered itself and danced off provocatively beyond our lights. But for us this was the end of the line. Out of rope and kit there was no way on. Well, not until next time.....

We de-rigged back to the sump and kitted up. Mike had passed the sump two days earlier. As expected it had turned: out to be perched, shallow and was relatively spacious. The water was cold after the effort of prussiking back up the pitch and the bags raised clouds of silt as we pushed them through in front of us. It was nice to see some friendly Greek faces from the support team when we surfaced. Alex had even got some soup

on the go.

Filling our own tackle bags we left the support team to finish packing kit and started out. The climb out from the bottom of Peleta is hard work. Most of the ropes lie against the wall. Whilst the abseils in are fantastic there is little chance to get a smooth prussiking style going on the way out. I curse my tackle bag as it snags yet again against the wall.

A couple of shorter pitches lead to the meanders. Here the rock is striated grey and white and almost marble like. It is pleasant caving and easy going. There then follows a succession of shorter pitches that vary between 10 and 30 meters in length. Most of the time there is plenty of space. There is only one awkward squeeze at the top of a pitch. Wellies waving out into fresh air I force myself into the hole.

The rock becomes darker and we stop for a rest at the bottom of the 'big pitch'. At 78 meters it is the longest hang in the cave with only one rebelay close to the top. I tip green fluorescent water from my wellies (the stuff got everywhere) and start on up. I absent mindedly wonder if my feet will glow green tonight and keep me awake. I am getting tired.

Another series of shorter pitches, ledges and climbs and we come up through a boulder choke to the 38m pitch. This is easily the most spectacular pitch in the cave. The chamber is large with a small lake. The walls ascend and sweep in towards each other finishing in a perfectly circular shaft that rises straight up.

We stop for another rest and chat to a Greek group who are on a shorter training trip. New caving recruits have to undergo a very structured form of training before they can qualify as 'cavers'. The group is made up of two novices and their two trainers. They all have identical kit. For the novices this trip to the bottom of the 38m pitch will be logged as an important part of their training. We eat all our food and are still hungry. So we eat all the Greek's food as well promising to buy them beers later on.

We wave good-bye and climb on out knowing that once we are at the top of the 38m pitch we are more than 2/3rds of the way up the cave. A couple of shorter climbs lead to two interesting pool traverses. The Suretread welly is not big in Greece and so any water that threatens to come above ankle height demands a traverse. We splash on through and carry on up.

Like all good big cave systems the entrance series is a pain.



Peleta. Photo:  
Pete Hahn

We take off our SRT kit just before the start of the crawls and hang it up. It can stay there until we come back in to help with the de-rigging. The passage drops down to a hands and knees crawl full of large loose muddy boulders that run right up to the edge of the sump. The boulders are testament to the force of water that can sweep through the cave in the winter months. There are no loose boulders on the entrance side of the sump.

When we first arrived the entrance sump was still closed. Attempts to siphon the water out the previous week had proved unsuccessful. Work started again as soon as we arrived - we were underground by midnight to put Mike in the water. The problem was a kinked pipe and once repaired and a second pipe had been added the water level began to drop. We retired to bed knowing that the sump would be open the next morning.

Now the sump is just a damp muddy tube with a squalid puddle in the bottom and a slippery climb up the far side. We throw our bags ahead of us and haul ourselves out. A series of squeezes, crawls and small chambers and the air is starting to smell fresher. The final climb out is up an electron ladder that hangs awkwardly over the entrance ruckle. It is dark and moths and flies bombard our lights. This is not a place to take a deep breath!

Georgia looks up from her book. She is camp commandant and chief cook working miracles with pasta, beans and rice for the whole team each meal time. She gives a squeal of delight and we both receive big hugs. We know that beer is not far away...

Cave depth: Prior to the trip Peleta was 490m deep and Greece's fifth deepest cave. We added a further 53m taking it to 543m and making it Greece's fourth deepest cave. However there is very little depth potential left (20-30m) and with over 3km to the suspected resurgence in or near the sea the remainder of the cave is likely to be flooded.

Cavers beyond the sump at -490: M Thomas (UK), K Hilton (UK) and V Trizonis (GR).

To date there has been no sign of the near one kilo of flouroscene that we put into the cave.....

### **The Resurgence cave of Poulithra**

During our stay at Peleta we had two scheduled days of rest by order of the expedition leader. This did not mean we could not go caving, just not anything hard! So we went down the mountain to a possible resurgence cave to Peleta on the

outskirts of a village by the sea. The cave was called Poulithra and was around 200 meters long terminating in a sump. This sump was supposed to have been passed many years ago by a local village man in exceptionally dry weather. We were introduced to the man and he said that he swam through the sump with a little airspace and continued for another 150 meters or so to a place where the water came out of the ground. He then turned for home. We were to go and investigate the sump with a view to Andy diving it after we had finished in Peleta. After splashing down 200 meters of fine deep water cave, very refreshing after the heat of Peleta, we reached the sump. While we were discussing the short cave Andy decided to have a closer look at the sump. He swam across the pool and disappeared for some time, on his return he informed us that we may want to have a look at what was beyond the sump. Andy had passed the sump with a low duck on the right! Several British cavers fell over each other to free dive the sump closely followed by Vassilis. After around 600 meters of fine well decorated river cave and passing through a boulder choke on route we reached a final sump, the end of exploration for that day! We had not seen anything beyond the sump that fitted the description of our local village friend, it seemed to us unlikely that a non caving local on his own many years ago had got much further than the sump 200 meters in but if he did we will never know! No one had passed the choke about 200 meters from the sump as this was only passed by Kevin at high level through a tight squeeze between boulders and by myself at river level through a slightly more roomy duck of a couple of meters long but with only a few centimeters of air space.

On our last caving day of the trip we returned to Poulithra to support Andy in a dive of the new terminal sump with a Greek Speleo survey team following behind. We carried one small

set of diving gear to the end as well as escorting Pete and his cameras through all the deep water sections including the first sump. As you may know Pete is not a lover of water so the near flooded sections were a big challenge to Pete and to the rest of us who had a hell of a job keeping Pete above water in the out of depth swimming sections! But all the struggles were worth it as Pete's photo's show.

When Andy had kitted up he set off on his big exploration dive and then promptly returned a couple of minutes later having passed the sump at around 4 meters long. Yet again Kevin myself and Alex (Speleo) followed Andy through the sump, Kevin and I free diving and Alex using one of Andy's cylinders. Another 200 odd meters of large cave was explored before reaching another sump. Andy dived this to a depth of 18 meters and 30 meters in before reaching gas reserves and the limit of the equipment he had. Finally this cave has a proper sump but it took us 800 meters of great river cave to find it.

Our trip to Greece was nearly over and had been a huge success we had pushed the ends of two caves and both had given good results and are still open for further exploration

The link between Peleta and its still unknown resurgence in the Poulithra area would make a superb through trip. We had further cemented relations started by Malc and Pete between the Greek Speleo club and ourselves and gained access to a new limestone playground. We returned to Athens in our severely overloaded cars and made ready for our departure the following day. That evening we went out for a couple of drinks and returned the following morning at 06.00. Athens is a great party town but that is another story. Finally we must say that none of the exploration above would have been possible without the hard work and support of Stephanos and the Speleo club of Athens, Many thanks for making a super: trip happen.

**Mike & Kevin**

### A GRAND DAY OUT - Nik Nak

Is it possible to enjoy all that Swildons has to offer in a single trip? This is an interesting question and one that needed an answer. Whilst visiting every last passage in the Cave the Pink & Fluffy book description team, myself included,

hatched a grand plan to attempt a trip of epic proportions. Having been through Priddy Green Sink, Watagate, the Damp Link and having completed the Short Round Trip numerous times it seemed logical to join them all in a single super trip, a Grand Tour! The 'official' itinerary and full description will appear in the Swildons book in due course.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2006, Stuart Gardiner, Fiona Crozier and I met early at Upper Pitts for a pre-trip cup of tea. Without much delay we were soon walking across the fields towards Priddy Green Sink, the most biologically active cave I have ever visited; the walls have been covered in a white bacterial carpet and a wriggling mass of worms, the air thick with the stench of cowsh and rat droppings purposely deposited in the middle of crawls. However, since the farm has moved from dairy cattle to goats and the Cave has cleaned up its act, there is now only minimal organic matter and the slightest smell.



**Swildons Grand Tourists. 16 September 2006**

We entered the Cave, closing the lid behind us at 09:25. One has to earn the right of passage through Priddy Green Sink; it is not without effort and not an entrance for the claustrophobic. Although I have been through many times I am always intimidated by Clitoris Crawl, best approached headfirst it was not until through this that I started to enjoy the trip. The crawling in Priddy Green is amply rewarded by the pull-through pitches of Cowsh Avens, including unfortunately one flat out crawl to the head of El Crapitan, previously in liquid cowsh! For me, the final abseil alone into the Swildons Four streamway is worth the trauma and possibility of contracting something nasty.

Once in the Swildons Four streamway Fiona left us, returning to surface via the sumps using a bottle left on the preparation trip. Stu and I decided to dive through Sump Four (now shorter due to our digging activities in Tumbledown) and set the siphons going on Gloop Sump at the start of the Damp Link to save time. Whilst we had to go there and back again, at least we were moving and wouldn't be cold waiting for it to open later.

From Four the Watergate connection was next and is truly a pleasure, no really! I've done it four or five times and always after several months manage to completely forget what it's like, maybe this means something. I am reminded by previous fellow participants of the awkward climbs and thrutches at the start, but I don't think I've ever had a problem. For me the key is to think out every move rather than simply throw myself at it.

On a preparation trip on the previous Wednesday we had placed two ladders down into Lower Fault Chamber and bailed the Lower Fault duck completely dry, that is except for the porridge at the bottom. I was unsure if the next duck had to be bailed (it doesn't) so we lowered this and Stu gave us a demonstration of his skills, completely avoiding the large air gap in preference to only a couple of millimetres between water and ceiling. Ladders were also placed on Shatter Pot and on the Twenty on another preparation trip.

The Watergate ducks were low, only the last one needed bailing so our progress through was swift. Stu decided to have an argument in the long duck with two buckets that were heading in the opposite direction, however practice makes perfect and luckily he won. Leaving via the previously bailed duck and making use of the ladders we headed towards the Mud Sump.

Now since this was the first ever attempt of the Swildons Grand Tour we decided to make it that little bit more special by adding on a few extra loops. As part of the preparation I had placed a bag containing one rope and an SRT kit at the start of Airless Oxbow (on the left, halfway between Mud Sump and Shatter Pot). We picked this up en-route, continued along the oxbow and on to the Forty-two Foot Rift up into Swyne Puke. This is not a pleasant free climb, starting isn't too easy and then it's exposed. Back against one wall, knees and hands on the other, it's a shuffle along and up. A fall here would not be pleasant.

The crawls at the top lead to two pull-through pitches, the last is an impressive descent into Shatter Pot, where it's possible to pendulum to the top of the ladder pitch rather than abseil to

the very bottom and have to climb the ladder (assuming one has been placed there!)

Mud Sump was a damp crawl; however our next addition to the Tour was anything but. Used as a test of worthiness for a potential mate by one Wessex member, the Muddy Oxbows were the most glutinous part of the whole trip. Completely sumped when we arrived, 15 minutes of bailing gave us a good air gap in the ducks, allowing us to fully appreciate the liquid mud running in through the necks of our wetsuits.

At Tratman's Temple we stopped for a Mars bar and then without a thought for the nearby entrance turned downstream towards Sump 1. I wouldn't say we were fresh, but we were determined to complete the tour so stomped on. Sumps 2, 3, 4 and 5 and we arrived at the start of the Damp Link. Our earlier diversion had paid off; Gloop Sump was now empty saving us a long, cold 45 minute wait. Crawling on to Grit Sump, we bailed this completely dry before once again crawling along Causer's Calamity to Shatter Series. I found this section particularly draining, a long, uphill crawl, where cramp constantly threatened. It was very pleasant standing for a while in Shatter Passage before making our way out through the ducks to Shatter Pot.

Once again the entrance was in sight and once again we headed away from it! Turning left for Greasy Chimney and the Short Round Trip. Having now completed a large extent of the tour, including the most arduous sections, we relaxed in the knowledge that even though a further four ducks and a sump lay ahead the trip had been a success! In Swildons Two we climbed up to take a look at Approach Bypass, but decided at least one loop should be left undone, a future challenge for some other deranged masochistic mole.

Whilst climbing the streamway from Sump 1, it struck us that whatever route we chose to exit the Cave, there would be someone who would either disagree with our choice or declare 'how could we miss out such a large proportion of the entrance series?' Although now quite tired, we had no choice but to do all of it. With four routes out we decided to repeat the Short Dry Way, firstly taking the Oxbows up (perhaps not the easiest direction), the Short Dry down, the Wet Way up, the Short Dry down and lastly up the Long Dry Way. Arriving at the top of Jacob's Ladder for the third time we could have simply just taken Binnie's Link out, but in a final fit of madness took the Zig-Zags. We exited from the Swildons blockhouse nine hours fifty-five minutes after entering Priddy Green Sink, the first ever Swildons Grand Tour was complete.

The question was 'Is it possible to enjoy all that Swildons has to offer in a single trip?' The answer is of course 'No'. Whilst we completed all of the major loops, we still missed major areas of the cave, including downstream of the Damp Link, Black Hole Series, North West Stream Passage, Vicarage and Renaissance. Importantly we were not able to include Blue Pencil Passage, critical access for dry cavers into Swildons Four.

Equivalent to a long French through trip it's a long day out, but what a trip!

**NikNak**

## Haute Savoie, The Trois Betas-Diau . Saturday, June 10, 2006

B\*\*\*\*R ! S\*\*T !

After successfully trying the SRD (sling the rope down) and the Ye Ha (Oh my God!!) techniques on the preceding pitches we now found ourselves at the bottom of the biggest pitch in the cave with two of our three ropes stuck. This left us with one 50m rope with pitches of 39m and 30m and many shorter ones between us and the exit. When we couldn't pull the rope down last time it was because of our incompetence.... We were trying to pull down the wrong end of the rope! Not this time though. Knowing that our rescue call-out option could be unreliable (We got away with it last time when we called to say we were safe and well and had to listen to Mark Helmore sing 'Threshing Machine' to us down the phone from the coach on the way back from the Wessex dinner... This time it was the weekend of the BCRA conference and Mark would be 'relaxing' after his Mendip Update slot!) The only option was for one of us to Prussik back up the rope and see why the rope wouldn't pull down. And with me being the one wearing the only full SRT kit that dubious honour was mine.

The Big Pitch in the Trois Betas section of the Diau is the last pitch in the entrance series of the cave. 63m high, with a flying rebelay 10m down to minimise the 'ffottements' (translation using babelfish = frictions). On the way down I had noticed that the shower mat which had been used to protect a rub point was wearing through itself, so the prussik up was very gentle. At the top I found the problem was that the pull-down rope had got itself caught in a narrow slot. Once freed I abseiled back down to rejoin Max Midlen and Richard Acton (former Wessex member whose name will probably be familiar to quite a few readers). The rope pulled down with no problems. The rest of the trip continued pretty smoothly and we exited the cave still in daylight. Well, so much for our trip.

The Diau pull through has, over the last few years, become a popular trip for Wessex members. The reason for this is that it is a relatively easy, fun, sporting trip through a big cave. Despite the extensive exploration of the Parmelan plateau undertaken by myself, Christine Grosart and others on a hot July day last year, (albeit on the wrong part of the Parmelan plateau!) it is an easy walk to a choice of two top entrances. As well as the Trois Betas there is also the Bel Espoir (Which translates to 'Beautiful Hope' - which is a little surprising as those of us that have done this route will probably remember it as being a muddy s\*?t hole!).

The entrance pitch of the Trois Betas has a couple of small (but obvious) ledges at roughly 1/3 and 2/3 of the way down, allowing the pitch to be rigged as three drops. Several other short pitches follow before a short section of thrutching leads to the top of the big pitch. At the bottom of this pitch the cave changes in character becoming more horizontal in nature. A small stream is followed in places through passages with frequent collapses that need negotiating, rigged traverses and a couple of pitches, one of them up (aided by use of a 'donated' Wessex ladder) as well as down. This passage eventually reaches the Salle Des Rhomboedres, the largest chamber in the cave.

It is here that the passage from the Bel Espoir entrance enters the system. The exit from this chamber is obvious if doing the cave from the Trois Betas entrance - just round the corner to the right on entering the chamber plus carbide arrows on the wall

and a telephone cable to follow. If entering from the Bel Espoir entrance the exit is on the other side of the chamber, but following the left-hand wall brings you to the carbide arrows and telephone cable. After a short section of smaller passage a series of pitches soon follows culminating with the Puits Des Echos, which definitely lives up to its name. From the bottom of this pitch the way on is down through boulders, then by traversing along the top of a rift in a pretty, calcited passage to a 23m pitch.

From the bottom of here the passage changes again. A meandering, canyon stream passage (typical of a Yorkshire pothole) is followed via several short pitches. Towards the end of this passage an awkward climb down past a hole in the floor, protected with fixed ropes, leads to the biggest pitch in the Affluent Des Grenoblois streamway, which is rigged up on the right, presumably to permit a 'drier' descent in wet condition. From here it is only a couple more pitches until the main Diau streamway is reached.

Entering the Diau stream provides a big psychological boost. However, it is still the best part of 2hrs caving to the exit, albeit along what can only be described as a superb, sporting streamway. However, after traversing the rest of the cave the consensus is that it goes on too long! It is whilst passing along



the streamway that the seriousness of flooding in the cave becomes apparent: fixed lines high above the streamway can be seen in several places. Even in dry conditions some of the fixed cables are used as an alternative to swimming. A couple of sumps are bypassed by following dry oxbows to the right. At the second of these, Le Soufflerie, a climb up wooden stemples leads to a section of passage with a howling draught blowing through it. Climbing down a couple of fixed iron ladders lead

back to the streamway. After another 100m the streamway is left for the last time and the way on to the exit is pretty obvious, following a series of fixed aids to the Grand Salle. In daylight the way out from here is obvious, but if the entrance is reached after dark another 10-15mins can be spent finding the way out.

Exiting the cave is normally greeted with a warm evening

breeze blowing, which makes the walk back down quite pleasant. We reached the car just as it was getting dark and we were pleasantly surprised to find out it was just 8pm, meaning that the cave had taken us 9½ from entrance to entrance. One of us will have to remember to take a watch next time.

**Andy Summerskill (Leg)**

## Upper Pitts Log Book Extracts

Edited by Noel Cleave

**Tuesday, November 14, 2006** The 70<sup>th</sup>. anniversary of Swildons Sump One being passed by “Jack” Shepherd.

### *“Happy Birthday, Sump 1.”*

#### **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> September - Swildon’s Lower Fault Chamber**

Pete and Ali Moody

Trip to leave a ladder on Lower Fault Chamber in preparation for next Saturday’s Grand Tour and to check that the connection to Watergate - Link Pool was fully open. There was a small amount of water in this so bailed it completely dry before exiting. **Ali**

#### **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> September Swildon’s**

Suntan and Ali Moody

Another prep trip - this time to leave some items at Trat’s Temple and to take Ali’s diving gear down to Sump II. Suntan had already taken his gear down on previous trips and we were somewhat shocked to find that between the 24<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> September, someone had rifled through his things (that had been stored in the alcove by Sump II) and removed several items. These included a yellow tackle sack, diving mask, neoprene hood, shorty wetsuit, and a diving harness (of sentimental value as it had belonged to Rich Websell). Fortunately they had not touched his valve or bottle. In the light of this I was not prepared to leave my gear by Sump II and hid my gear in a very obscure part of Swildon’s Two! **Ali**

#### **Tuesday, November 14, 2006 Wigmore Swallet.**

Max and Bean

Max Showed Bean the delights of Wigmore Swallet, but he didn’t see any! **Max**

#### **Tuesday, November 14, 2006 Swildons Old Grotto.**

Suntan, Ali Moody, Ken Delacour (Rob’s Father, 76... a good effort!) The “Old Chap” wanted to see Swildons. Short trip down pretty way to Old Grotto and back up short dry way. I think he liked it!

#### **Saturday, October 21, 2006 GB**

Jo, Mak, Bean.

Jo went caving!!! Bimble trip down to bottom of ladder dig

and back out. Jo even said she enjoyed it. Bumped into Mark, Leg, Sue, and some.

#### **Saturday, June 07, 2006 Diau**

Leg, Max and Richard Acton.

Diau pull through from Trois Betas. 9½ hours despite rope not pulling down on the “Big Pitch”. Leg prussicked up to free it. No other major problems. Proper job.

#### **Tuesday, October 24, 2006 Agen Allwedd.**

Pauline, Christine, Clive Westlake.

1<sup>st</sup>. trip to S Wales for me, “To give it a go”. Got to first choke, then narrow rift squeeze passage and wondered “Do I go on?” Continued to the entrance series, quite a bit of water in the stream, on the main passage. Stopped, looked at the crystals, continued on to Southern Stream Passage, quite far enough for one day. Returned, taking a wrong turn at the boulder choke and retraced steps, crawling through soft sandy mud - back over boulder-choke drop and returning through the tight narrow rift. Got delayed at a stumbling point - took a while to negotiate my way back across, I’m just 3” short of leg stretch! Eventually pushed myself across this particular awkward bit and back out to early evening sunshine. Hobbled back to Whitewalls hut and spent the evening in the Bear with fine company. Good day out. **Pauline**

#### **Thursday, October 05, 2006 Eastwater, Terminal sump, Morton’s Pot.**

Mad Phil, Emsy, Fiona, Rich Bayfield, Andy Kusyck.

Had a really good trip down to the terminal sump. This cave is impressive. Passing through Morton’s Pot, then a drain hole and the pointless pots you then get to the Technical Masterpiece and it really is, too. This is some place. It’s like an endless red traffic light, a place where movement only goes one way, your body has to be able to twist, turn and double back on itself. As we dropped further down the rift it got smaller and smaller and the rocks became very sharp and very crisp. Then through a place called “Hell’s Gate”. A wonderful spot if you get it wrong. It would be a long wait till

breakfast. I made my descent towards terminal sump. Suddenly the cave changes. It becomes much larger passage the mud becomes thick. We then tested out the lighting. Quite funny turning on a light switch all that way down the cave to have electric light to work with; the pump was also tested. Some cement was brought down to make a dam. I want to say many thanks to Phil and Emsy for making the trip possible. It was one of the best trips on Mendip I've done.

**Fiona**

#### **Friday October 27 2006 Swildons. Sump 1.**

Ken Dawe, Stu Genders and guests Len Dawes and Chris Baker, on a gentle geriatric trip to Sump 1 (and back). Average of the three elder members: 71 the overall average

#### **SMOOTH RUNNING - Phil Hendy**

A club the size of ours takes a lot of organization to allow it to run smoothly, and generally it does so very well. However, at times some members find themselves inconvenienced by the actions of others, and the Committee has suggested that I remind you all of the responsibilities we all have to ensure that our caving and other activities run without inconvenience.

**Tackle.** This should be signed out in the book, and returned promptly - clean and dry, and signed back in. No-one wants to carry dirty tackle away, and if it is clean, any damage can be spotted. Damaged kit should be marked for the attention of the Tackle Officer, so it can be repaired or replaced, to maintain a full store for everyone to use. Please ensure that small items such as Maillons are not lost - these and spreaders seem to vanish on a regular basis, and are expensive and time-consuming to replace. If anyone needs to keep some tackle on a long-term basis (eg. for a dig), please contact the Tackle Warden. It will not be a problem, as long as he knows about it.

**Keys.** Similarly, cave keys should be returned as soon after use as possible. These should also be signed out in the book, as it allows us to keep track of popular caves. Members are reminded that their own hut keys must not be loaned to non members, as use of tackle and the Library is a benefit of membership, not open to others. The keys in the tackle store are for members' use only. They are not to be loaned to non members (in any case, visits to CCC-controlled caves require a permit, issued by Committee members. 1-year permits are available f.o.c. to members).

**Library.** Most books and bound periodicals may be borrowed by members; there is a book to record these loans, which should be used. Some items are popular, and are often needed for research or planning trips - if we know who has them, we can help other potential borrowers to have access. Current periodicals, and some other clearly-marked items, are for use at Upper Pitts only, and may not be borrowed. If in doubt, please

ask the Librarian. It is worrying that some being booked out -and they have not been returned after a reasonable period of time. Why not use the photocopier to copy articles etc. which you need, then the whole item can remain in the Library?

#### **Wednesday, 01 November 2006. OFD 1 to Top Entrance**

Christine Grosart and Clive Westlake

CSG did not like the trip the first time and did not like it this time either! Clive pointed out that CSG must be the only person in Great Britain who did not like OFD. CSG pointed out that she must be the only person in Great Britain who loved Aggy. 'Nuff said.

ask the Librarian. It is worrying that some being booked out -and they have not been returned after a reasonable period of time. Why not use the photocopier to copy articles etc. which you need, then the whole item can remain in the Library?

**Upper Pitts.** Guests and members often comment on the cleanliness and comfort of the HQ. It does not get that way by magic! We should all clear our own mess, and wash up our cooking and eating utensils. We are trying to be 'green', and are helping by recycling what rubbish we can. Please think when ditching gash - we have separate bins for plastic burnables, tins (steel and aluminium) and glass, plus one for the rest. Since we only have one collection now per fortnight, it helps to have as little as we can in the non-recyclable bin.

**Heating, lighting and water all cost money.** Please turn off lights when the room is not in use. A recent fill of oil cost over £600, and this will not last the winter. When the central heating is in use, think twice before opening windows, or leaving outside doors (tied) open. Our water is now metered so again, please, try to be economical.

Large parties after a wet trip can often leave the Changing Room awash with water and mud. It does not take long to squeeze the worst out of the door, making the room more pleasant for subsequent parties. The extractor fans in the showers are connected to the lights. Thus the fans will continue to run if the shower lights are not switched off after use. In the drying room, the dehumidifier extracts water from the atmosphere, thereby drying wet caving kit. This will take longer if the bowl is not emptied after spin-drying kit, as the dehumidifier will try to extract this water as well.

Please note that when leaving Upper Pitts, doors and windows should all be closed and locked for security. The last to leave should make sure the gas is turned off, and the fire in the Lounge is in a safe condition. Most of this is common sense but a little more thought will make life at Upper Pitts easier for all of us. A copy of the Hut Rules is posted by the front door.

#### **Pyrenees. Trou Mile to Grotte de Pene Blanque. Tuesday 25 July 2006** NikNak, Noel, Cookie, Jo & Laura

The big trip! With no idea of how long the through trip was going to take we set off early, entering the cave at 9:00. We took a 30m, 60m and an 8mm 60m as spare; we also took the 20m off the fourth entrance pitch so that we could use it for the smaller pitches on the through trip.

We made good time down to the Trou Mile sump, currently

An ever decreasing wet, muddy crawl. Next the connection to Trou du Vent, reminiscent of a Mendip dig, provided entertainment, especially for Laura. A muddy tube, then a slippery slope with a hand-line (Laura's Folly) is followed by what seems like a never-ending roped climb. For ease we chained tackle sacks up the climb. A couple of short passages, small pitch and we regrouped in Grand Salle du Trou du Vent

(although large it cannot be truly appreciated as you pass through).

If Pertuis (the Sluice) is impassable it is either a long wait or a long trip back up; however there was no sign of any water, just a howling gale through the small hole that leads to the most beautiful shaft on the trip, Puits Danielle an almost circular shaft of 22 metres that opens in the roof of a chamber. Next an 11 metre pitch is avoided and this is then followed by a 27 metre pitch, which I think is possibly the worst of the trip; it's on a slight slope and there are unavoidable rub points towards the bottom. A side passage reaches Puits Cognac (52m, split in three), which is fun, all of us congregating on the ledges part way down before descending the next section; the second ledge is a superb bridge. Next two small pitches are followed by Cascade des Echelles (10m), and then I was expecting to be in larger passage (as per the survey in plan, a cross-section would have shown a thin, high, steep angled passage). After a little confusion we found a roped climb up into the fossil Galeries Michel Juhle.

Having seen what the exit was going to be like on the Sunday we were looking forward to some very easy going, proper stomping passage. We weren't disappointed however it didn't last very long! That is to say the amount of time actually spent stomping compared with the trip time was minimal. The passages were easy going and navigation was relatively straightforward, the mistakes we did make were because we simply did not see blindingly obvious passages? One of the chambers, Salle Elisabeth Casteret, we passed through was very grandiose and worthwhile seeing.

The entry into the Riviere du Pont de Gerbaut was not as I expected, we didn't seem to follow a worn path but we did reach the streamway. Noel was first in the water and headed downstream; or at least that's what he thought! The water was

very cold and deep (up to the neck!) and with no appreciable flow it was difficult to tell which way we wanted to go. We inflated our wine bladders fearing deeper water and continued, the roof becoming lower. Having maybe seen signs of flow in the opposite direction and no mention of a soaking in the description we turned, three of us now completely saturated. When we got back to the point we had entered and continued it very quickly became obvious that we were now moving downstream - never mind.

The Riviere du Pont de Gerbaut is a beautiful streamway, but a complete pain in the arse. The description talks about slippery moon-milk cascades that become wearing, in fact almost every step is on moon-milk so it's a constant battle to stay upright and avoid falling into deep, cold pools. A dry fossil oxbow and a series of pitches provide a break, but it's soon back to the moon-milk. The pitches in the streamway; Puits du Trapeze, Puits de la Douche and Puits de l'Affluent are picturesque and a pleasure. All of us were a little chilled and not looking forward to a cold swim in a section of canals before the final pitch that would take us to the aerial traverse into the Pène Blanche. However, although most definitely very cold we didn't have to swim and were able to either touch the bottom or use the side walls.

Arriving at the point we had reached on the Sunday was comforting, at least we now knew we could get out even if that was going to take while. After consistently traversing to pitch heads throughout the trip, crossing the aerial traverse was less scary than it had been. It was getting late and we were into sleep time so everything slowed. We eventually arrived at the entrance to Pène Blanche at quarter to four in the morning after 18¼ hours. I rested against a rock, closed my eyes and passed out for half an hour - why not! **NikNak**

## **The Grand Tour in Theory      The ultimate Swildon's Hole experience!**

During 2004 and 2005 the description team for the new Swildon's Hole book spent most weekends visiting parts of the cave. An excellent account by Adrian Vanderplank of the "Pink and Fluffy Era" was published in Journal 301. I must admit that a few of these passages I personally had hoped never to see again! The more pleasant of these excursions included the four classics trips for which the cave is well known; namely the Short Round Trip, Watergate Connection, Long Round Trip and the Priddy Green Sink to Swildon's through trip. From completing these later trips an idea was discussed within the team that it should be possible to combine them to create a new "ultimate" experience. Pete and I decided to take the idea forward, a major consideration being to keep to a minimum the amount of passage that is repeated and avoid travelling any in the same direction. Several other round trips are possible within Swildon's Hole, the most important of these being the Swynne-Puke Round Trip, and the Approach Passage to either 4 Letter Link or Howard's Dig circuit. However, we wanted to make our "mega" trip easily achievable by experienced cavers, and to design it so that it would be repeated, and hopefully become established as the next "challenge" up from the existing trips. It was also felt that these minor circuits would detract from the purity of the trip. After many hours of thought, some fairly lively debates and much time spent drawing squiggly lines on

pieces of paper we eventually came up with the answer - "The Grand Tour".

The Grand Tour starts with the descent of Priddy Green Sink and Cowsh Aven Series to Swildon's Four. The second part of the trip is the Watergate Connection through to Lower Fault Chamber. In Paradise Regained the first half of the Short Round Trip is reversed through the Mud Sump, thus allowing Shatter Pot to be laddered en route. From Tratman's Temple the tour continues down the streamway to Six. The Damp Link and Shatter Series then provide a return to Paradise Regained. The final part of the trip is to complete the rest of the Short Round Trip using Double Trouble Series and then exit via the Swildon's Hole entrance. Purists should carry all the tackle and equipment required for the entire tour through Priddy Green Sink and Watergate and also free-dive Sumps II and III etc. In the G.T. only three short sections of passage are done twice but each time they are travelled in the opposite direction. These passages are Swildon's Four - between Cowsh Aven and Watergate, Paradise Regained - between Fault Chamber Junction and Shatter Pot, and the Landing to Tratman's Temple.

Note that this trip is only really possible during the summer months when the Link Pool connection to Lower Fault Chamber is open. Also unless you are prepared to free-climb the Twenty this must be laddered in advance. Although I had

completed the itinerary for the Grand Tour in early 2005 and distributed it to members of the team, personal circumstances unfortunately meant that I had to postpone the plans to complete it until late September 2006.

### **Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September Swildon's -TheGrand Tour- Reality!**

Ali Moody, Rob Delacour (Suntan), Mark Madden Paul Swire (Beardy)

We descended Priddy Green Sink at 10am and no real problems were encountered except for Mark cracking a rib on the right-angled bend near the start of Barrel Passage and the team getting caught by the flood pulse that roared through the cave at about 11.30am! Shit Sump is certainly quite impressive with a wall of water coming out of it and as this is the second time that Suntan and I have been hit by a flood pulse in PGS in about 6 trips, perhaps someone is trying to tell us something. Fortunately the water subsided after about 20 minutes allowing us to continue down a fairly damp El Krapitan, after which we descended to Swildon's Four via the Bladder Pot Route, arriving approx two hours after entering PGS.

From Swildon's Four a fairly speedy trip was then made up through the Watergate Connection but with Mark finding his rib extremely painful in any crawl. Lower Fault was then detackled and a ladder and lifeline left on Shatter Pot, while passing enroute to the Mud Sump. Excellent timing as we reached Trat's Temple at the same moment as Dave Crane and Bruce Fraser who had very kindly volunteered to support the trip and had brought down the sandwiches, and also a mask and hood for Suntan to replace the items that had been "stolen" or "borrowed" from Sump II. Unfortunately by this stage Mark was in too much pain to continue and had to make his way out. The remaining members of the team turned downstream to go through Sumps II, III, IV, Paul free-diving II and III for the first time. We continued to Swildon's Six and then up through the Damp Link. (Note that new buckets are essential for Grit Sump as the ones in place are virtually unusable).

We arrived at the top of Shatter Pot at 5.45pm and then turned left towards the Troubles to complete the Short Round Trip. At Swildon's Two it was a real pleasure to find that Adrian and Jude Vanderplank, Dave and Bruce had already taken



most of the gear out. Adrian had met Bruce and Dave in Swildon's Four and these three had then carried all the SRT and diving gear back to Sump III, after which Adrian did a very heroic job of getting everything back to Swildon's Two. This included about 18kg of lead, so if there is anything you want to know about bottom crawling through sumps - he is the man to ask! Adrian thinks that he has probably left a deep groove through Sump II and III.

From The Landing a pleasant bumble to surface at 7 20pm and it was still light! Brilliant trip, which took only 9 hours if you take off the time lost as a result of the flood pulse in PGS.

Many thanks to our excellent sherpas who certainly made the trip considerably easier than it would have been without their support and a special mention to Dave and Bruce who carried a weight belt (complete with 7kg of lead) all the way out of Swildon's in the mistaken belief that it belonged to one of us!! Apologies to the rightful owner and it will be returned to Sump II asap. **Ali**

### **The Ardeche . Aven Déyspesse - Grotte de St. Marcel. Thursday 3 August 2006**

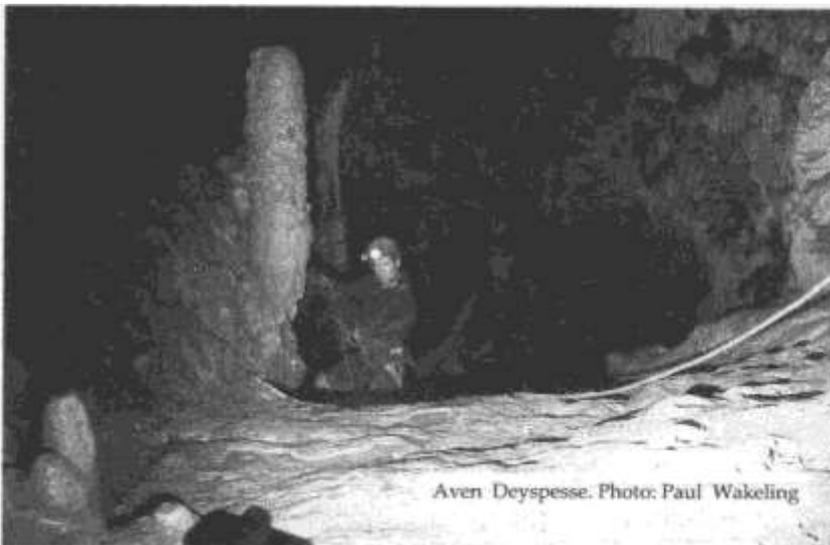
NikNak, Gordon, Dr.S, Adrian, Jude, the Hobbit, Jo, Andy, John, Laura T, Cookie, Noel

We pulled into the St. Marcel show-cave parking area to wait while NikNak and Cookie went to open the exit route from the base of the show-cave. While waiting Noel had a look at the maps on the show-cave reception hall. It dawned on him that our ideas of the Aven Deyspesse entrance location might just be wildly out. He consulted the manager there, who confirmed his suspicions and gave us explicit directions. John and Noel then set out on a rapid location exercise and drove directly to the entrance. This was reassuring. When they got back to the show cave, the time was almost noon, NikNak & Co were out and there was a sandwich lunch in progress (It transpired that, despite the written description, the actual linking hatchway at the foot of the show-cave

"Cathedral" was obscure enough to be hard to find).

The Aven Déyspesse entrance was right by the car parking area. Given factors like ground-clearance, we left the Vanderplank wagon back nearer the metallated highway. NikNak rigged the actual Aven Déyspesse entrance pitch but all the lower and subsequent pitches were puled through. They were mostly typical of the entrance avens we'd encountered in the Ardèche so far: off-vertical, finely decorated, slippery calcite slopes. With 12 of us the entrance manoeuvres took a while, but we foregathered at the foot without problems and set off into the "N" series of passages. They were stomping central, vast, dry, walking passages. The various "N" series side passages came up exactly as

surveyed and described. There were occasional small pitches & handline descents to be pulled through and a few minor pre-rigged traverses. We made good time in undeniably impressive, but very easy, going. Eventually we reached the fabled "Labyrinth". Mr. Spinnler had stressed that route finding through it would not be a problem, and armed with this assurance, the Cambridge University notes, the description from "A Traverse le Karst" and the reflective arrows at every junction(l), we had not the slightest difficulty. I allowed myself the guilty pleasure of route finding out front at my own pace. The passages varied from medium squeezes past stal flows, to longish crawls, with occasional walking for light relief. Much of the passage was very finely decorated, in marked contrast with the rather sombre brown of the "N" series.



Aven Deyspesse. Photo: Paul Wakeling

Arriving at the junction, NikNak made the connection to the show-cave hatch-way. From there on out the passage is mega, enormous, vast, etc. etc, simple walking on well trodden pathways to the gated entrance to the open air. We

were all through in 6 hours (which included some photo stops). It was a cracking trip, if slightly undramatic. Perhaps, given its reputation and descriptions from earlier years, we expected too much. **Noel**

## Tuska's Reliquary

David Morrison

"The club glows rather than grows at present", a topic of conversation recently overheard and I could not resist but join in the conversation. "There appears to be a year on year decline in caver numbers and no new or young cavers", well ok maybe. Although you would not believe the latter comment if you had visited the hut last Friday night and witnessed the prelude to what must have been a very enjoyable weekend for all.

Young people clad in various regalia, some of which depicted letters of the alphabet which spelt various colourful words as the conversations moved between groups. At three in the morning many were still limbering up, for the next days caving, with the various and curious torture tools and games for which the Wessex is so renowned, still merrily soaking up alcohol which gives a certain looseness to the body to enable one to turn inside out when needed and sometimes when not. Sights to behold indeed, whether the planned trips to the end of various caves happened the next day I do not know but everyone was having fun.

The University Clubs had booked Mendip, whether there is enough cave passage on Mendip to accommodate that number of people end to end perhaps does not matter. So many people just forcing themselves down the caves in convoy like a giant "pipe cleaner" will at least give us some cleaner passages.

By three thirty a.m., looking round the room, the kaleidoscope of colour with enough letters of the alphabet to make up various words, it was clear to me that there is a major core of interest and energy in people, in all that caving brings together. Such energy giving hope that our club will grow and glow if we engage in the right welcoming way the newer generation of cavers, striking a balance between the social and serious sides of caving. Many thanks to the club members who helped with the caving trips and who stood up longer than I did on the Friday night.

**Tuska**

### Welcome to the following new members:

**Gareth Mason** 07786 445123 [gareth9mason@hotmail.com](mailto:gareth9mason@hotmail.com)

**Chrissy Price** 01749 840795 [solidjellv@darkeypang.org.uk](mailto:solidjellv@darkeypang.org.uk)

**Nial Peters** 07726 930113 [njp39@cam.ac.uk](mailto:njp39@cam.ac.uk)

Welcome back - rejoining member:

**Leo Kearley** [lyncolt63@hotmail.co](mailto:lyncolt63@hotmail.co)

### Your new committee members in their own Write. ....

#### Simon Richardson - Caving Secretary

Yes I know! I did say that I'd never be on the committee ever again. But caving secretary; doesn't really count does it?

I'm told many of you won't know who I am, so .....

I live near Oxford and joined the club as a rock climber 10

Years ago. I have been on numerous club trips at home and abroad and have been tackle officer in the past. As Trade Hall Manager I may have been rude to you more than once at a recent Hidden Earth conference - Sorry about that! I'm also a keen youth leader with the Duke of Edinburgh's

Award scheme and hold a Mountain Leader certificate. For the following year I would like to see some kind of integration of student groups on club trips in an attempt to gain future members (I'd like to say it was my idea, but I'd be lying!). And something that may not work - Club trips to Mendip!

Hope to see you at the hut **Simon**

Noel Cleave - Journal Editor

After producing three summer camp journals I feel justified in describing myself as a blot on the escutcheon of the editorial profession. Having, however, what the police would describe as some 'previous', I was not well placed to dodge this

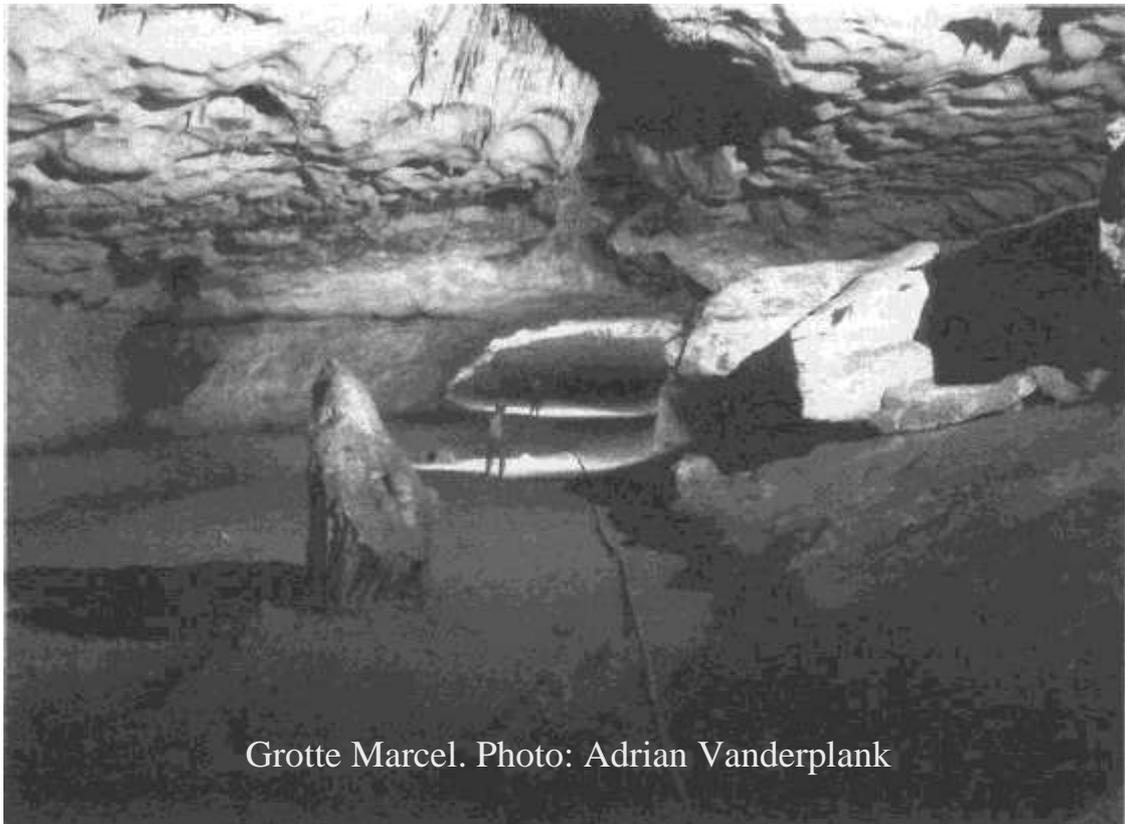
vacancy. It is my first committee job since joining the Wessex in 1955. This suggests both that my footwork is getting slower, and that I am generally fairly incompetent. Both are true. Caving apart, I have a couple of science degrees, was a student and an instructor at the Outward Bound Mountain School at Eskdale. I spent my professional life in the Royal Air Force as a navigator, and also as a combat survival instructor. This career forced a 35 year hiatus in my active caving (I am catching up as fast as I can). The Journal, vitally, kept me feeling a part of the Wessex. Time now to show my gratitude. **Noel.**

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**Diary Dates**

27/28 Jan 2007 - Devon.	Staying DSS
27 January 2007	Last date for Journal 303 submissions
24/25 Feb 2007 - Derbyshire.	Staying TSG
Bank Hol w/e 5/6/7 May 2007 - South Wales.	Penderyn.WSG (Booking Pending)
August 04, 2007 - August 18, 2007	PSM. Organiser - Malc Foyle. See Club News.
For the latest diary details, please visit the Club Web-Site <a href="http://www.wessex-cave-club.org">www.wessex-cave-club.org</a> or Simon Richardson: Mobile 07788 978964.	



Grotte Marcel. Photo: Adrian Vanderplank