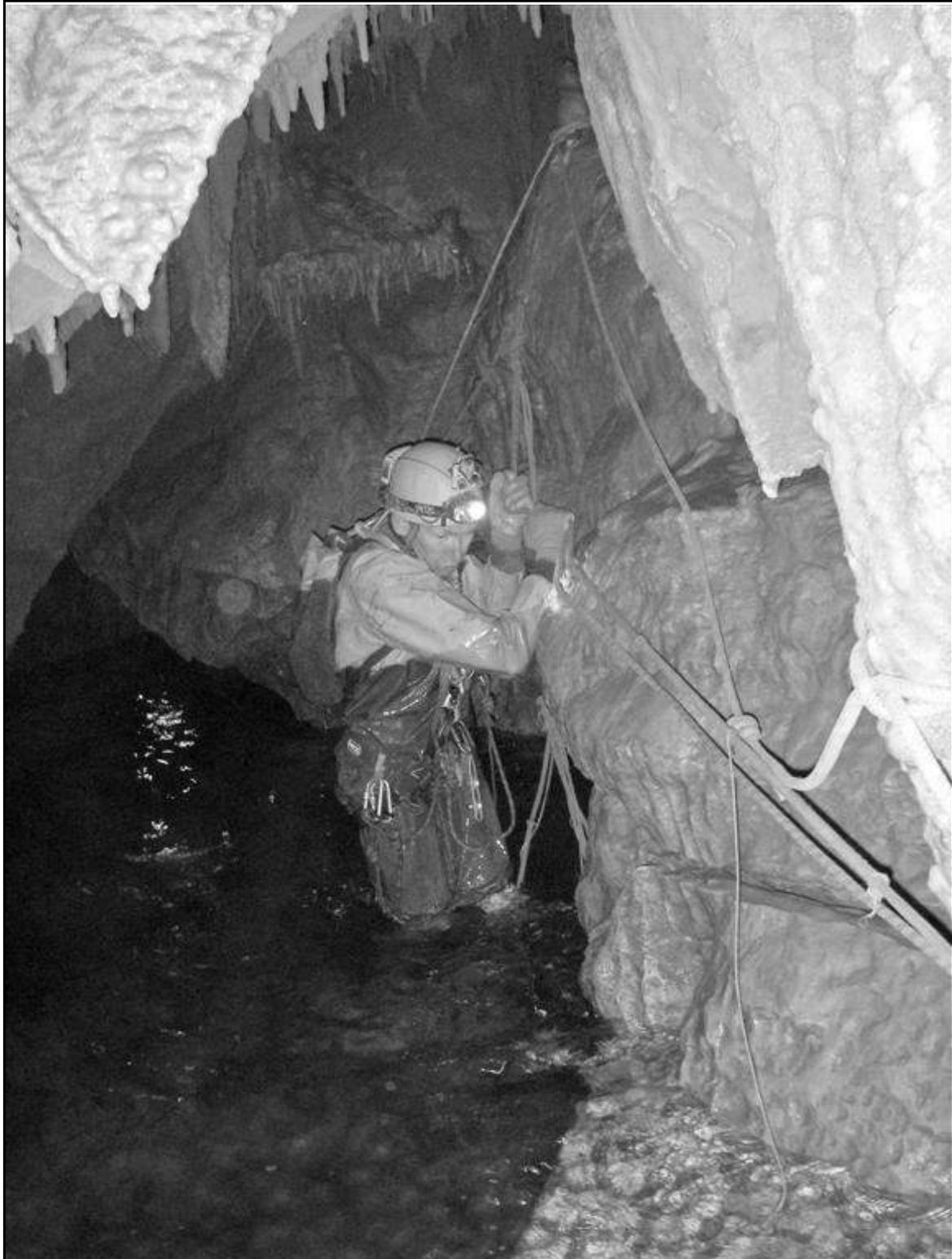




Journal of the Wessex Cave Club

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Alistair Gordon. PSM Canyon. Photo: Graham Price

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~~~~~  
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The editorial year has come round full circle. After a wobbly start with Volumes, Issues and Page numbering all going astray, a measure of control was restored, thanks to Phil Hendy and Maurice Hewins. Looking back over the year my main feeling is one of relief. Somehow I muddled through and published a Journal every other month. I enjoy the technicalities of production, but not the gathering of material. By now I should have relaxed on this score. This year's contributions have included photographs from 15 member, and articles from 25. It is noteworthy that almost all these contributors have made multiple inputs. Sometimes the difference between a trip description and an article is marginal, and many of our active members write up their explorations at length - and these are the core of the Journal. Not being a natural hoarder (quite the reverse!) though, material remains a constant anxiety, and hence my frequent plea - bleat - for more, more, more - and my enormous gratitude for all the contributions which have filled the past 6 Journals. This is your Journal. Keep writing it, and I'll keep producing it.

Since I can pretty well guarantee a 100% zero response to any request for feedback or opinions, I have resorted to a verbal straw poll when at Upper Pitts, to canvas your views. Most recently my query was on the best, or favourite, Caving Books. "The Famous Five go Underground" scored highly... but Phil has yet to list Enid Blyton in the library Authors. Given that we have the biggest, and best maintained, caving club library in the UK, it was surprising how few of you read any caving books at all. Way out ahead was "Subterranean Climbers", by Pierre Chevalier. The next two were "The Longest Cave" and "Beyond Mammoth Cave", both by, or co-authored by, Roger Bruker. And, for the record, I specifically included Martyn Farr, Jean Cadoux, Norbert Casteret, Robert de Joly and Jaques Attout in my query. With the notable and obvious exception of Martyn, most people's reactions were "Who are they. Never heard of them". Subterranean Climbers appeals because so many of us have explored the Dent de Crolles, the scale is human and we can relate directly to the book. The Kentucky karst systems, by comparison, are almost beyond comprehension. Almost, but not quite, as Roger Bruker's books have brought them into human focus. The caves are endless, but so is the Kentucky karst area. Its sheer size has it brought problems which, by and large, we don't have in the UK.

We now have a most interesting and enjoyable contact with Dr. Hilary Lambert. She, with Roger Bruker himself are on the board of the Karst Environmental Education and Protection Inc. A charity which produces a periodical called the Karst Window. There is a copy in the library now. It makes sobering reading. We tend to take the almost total protection of our caves and caving landscapes for granted. There, with zillions of acres of karst limestone, it is all too easy for ignorance of what lies beneath it to allow misjudgements and commercial interests and pressures to despoil it.

I did some light-hearted rule-of-thumb analysis to compare our situations viz a viz our respective caving areas. It is easy to be envious of our fellow cavers in the USA, because there they have a ratio of 268 square miles of landscape per caver. We have just 23 square miles. It seems, however, that our dramatically greater population density has brought us a bonus in environmental protection. In the UK there are 660 of us for each square mile of it. So we guard it jealously. In the USA there is landscape littered all over the place and only 85 Americans to each square mile of it. Non-cavers take their space for granted - and not its protection - which can be, as the Karst Window shows, a constant battle. The occasional quarry problem, awkward farmer or landowner is the exception here and we should count our blessings.

And an apology to our photographers. I have not been able to attribute all the photographs in this issue. [Wessexeditor@streamcotts.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:Wessexeditor@streamcotts.eclipse.co.uk)



## Wessex Rescue Practice 15<sup>th</sup> September 2007

This year the practice took the form of a search. A rather unlikely party of three: Mary, Mungo and Midge were very overdue, and as it turned out rather widely separated around Swildon's.

Twelve searchers set off underground shortly before 11am, armed with two Heyphones and plenty of enthusiasm. The surface Heyphone was repositioned a couple of times, as the underground ones moved about, the final site in Solomon Combe (about 100 metres along the path to Swildons from the Priddy Road) proved very good for reception from quite a few different underground locations. The central control point on the Green was manned all day, tracking underground teams using the T card system the MRO has recently purchased. This proved very useful.

rather flattened by their experience, (perhaps I should explain that they were only sheets of red A4 paper that we'd laminated, and placed on Friday night!).

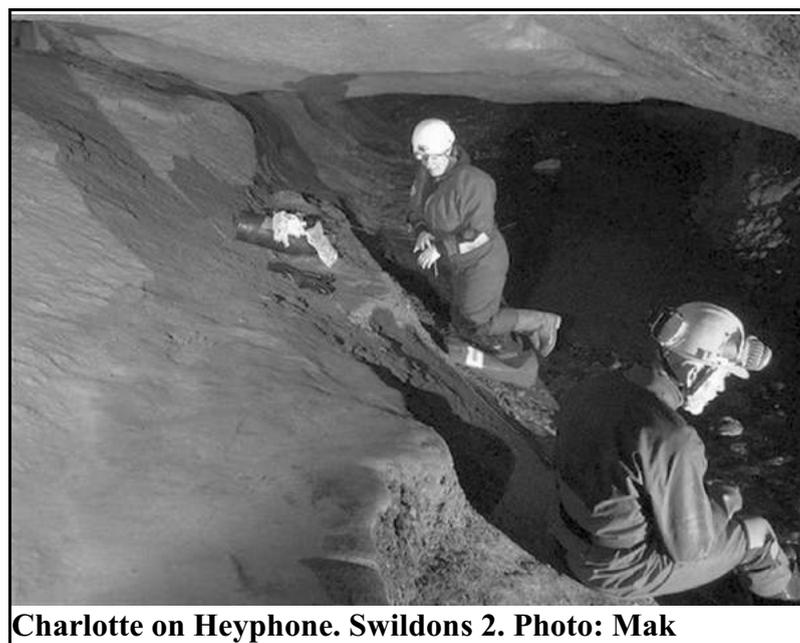
A short debrief at the Wessex rounded off a very pleasant and useful day.

My thanks go to everyone who got involved, whether underground, on the surface or supplying unexpected but very welcome refreshments on the Green. **Jude**

**Editor's Note.** This is the first time that I have made an editorial comment, but I felt that so much work and effort had gone into this, that Jude had not done herself and her helpers justice, so I requested an addendum. This is it: -



I'd view the overall arrangements as pretty much of a team effort -

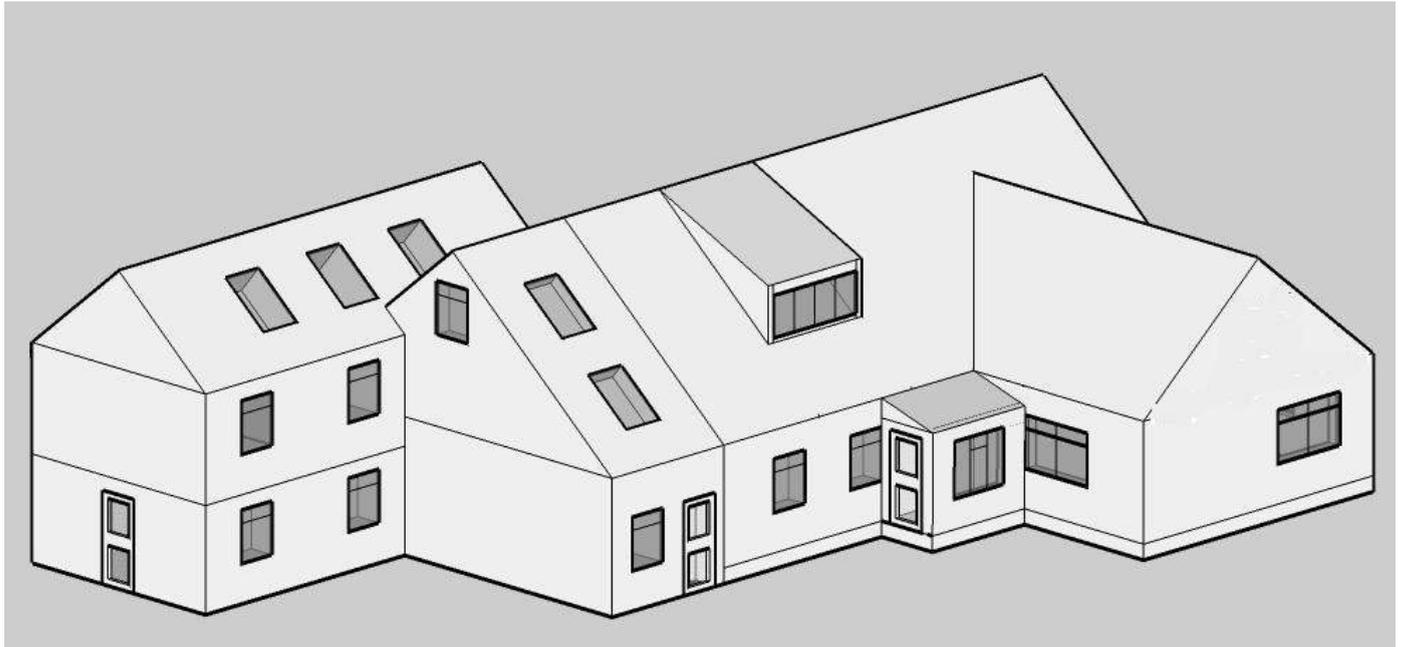


**Charlotte on Heyphone. Swildons 2. Photo: Mak**

Geoff was a very good "ideas" man, and the wording on the cards was his idea. We all went down on the Friday evening to position cards: Adrian & NikNak to Vicarage, Geoff to SE inlets and I went to Blue Pencil. I avoided individual thanks as so many other people were also so supportive, particularly Paul checking Heyphones, (he came up straight from work on Friday to do this), Paul & Mak sorted out equipment from the MRO store. I understand it's quite a while since there's been a club practice, and often getting people to take part on the day is a bit like bashing your head against a brick wall - so my biggest thanks would be to everybody who came to take part, they made it happen on the day! **Jude**

### Library Extension

The new Upper Pitts “Library Extension” has been lurking just below the horizon for some time. Planning speeds are like Tectonic Plates moving, but there is progress, and the shape of things to come should be like this:-



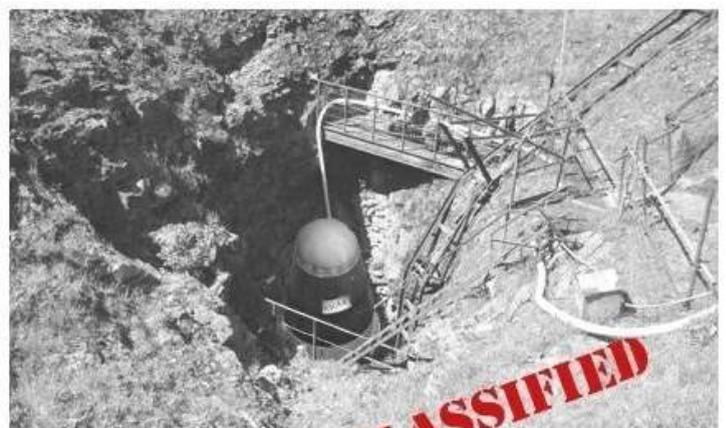
We hope to have more detailed illustrations for you to see at the AGM and Dinner.

### The Swildons Book

This, too, has been lurking just below the horizon for some time. The delays have ensured that the book’s quality reflects the scores of man-hours which have gone into it. The first proof copy was on show for the Boat Race weekend. It is a stunning production and if any book is destined to become a caving classic, this is it. It is priced, as forecast, at £25, and the indications and pre-orders suggest that it will find a home on most of our bookshelves. Given the sheer numbers of cavers who enjoy, or have enjoyed, Swildons, wisdom would suggest that if you haven’t yet ordered a copy, you should do so fairly promptly. Geoff Ballard is managing sales, but Brian Prewer is also prepared to take orders - and cheques!

### Templeton Finance

The rumours published in Journal 306 that the Templeton Mafia have arranged financing from the Defence Establishment would seem to be true. These recent photos come from a reliable “Source” on the inside track.



**Templeton Trials. Not for publication.**

### Journalist Vancancy

Your editor is domestically limited in the amount of time he can spend at Upper Pitts. People do let me have

snippets of information, but it would be great to have someone committed to keeping me in the picture on the doings and activities on Mendip (and elsewhere). What huge new discoveries, cave closures, P Hanger faults or replacements..... for this section, "Club News". Any volunteers for the role of acting unpaid local reporter?

### **PSM Rope Sales**

In preparation for the PSM camp, Malc bought some 1,200 metres of Edelridge 11 mm static rope. It was always the



intention so defray some of the expedition expenses by subsequently selling this rope. It has all now been cleaned and sorted, and is up for sale. Rather than first come first served, the purchase priority will be (1) people who paid to be on the expedition, (2) Wessex Club members (3) the rest of the world. The price will be 90p per metre and the available lengths will be listed for the AGM weekend on the Upper Pitts notice board, and also at the Dinner. The photos show how it started.

### **"Wet Forty".**

The Great Wessex Boat Race took place on 9<sup>th</sup>. October. It was a huge success and a full, illustrated, report will be in the December Journal. In the meantime, Ali "Milk-of-human-kindness" Moody has offered to keep her special "Wet Forty" pipework in place so that anyone who didn't enjoy (if that's the right word) the full wet forty experience then, can do so during the AGM / Dinner weeknd, 20<sup>th</sup>. October. What is it with Ali, pipework, water and discomfort?



### **Wessex Geriatric Group News**

The WGG staggered and trembled their way into Swildons for the first ever WGG convention, held under international Nostalgia Rules. For the record, the Zimmer-Frame team consisted of: Ken Dawe 74, Noel Cleave 68, Nick Hart 67, Bob Pyke 67, Paul Allen 63, Tim Reynolds 63, Jim Giles 63, Patrick Horton 61, Kerry Malone 60, and guest star Phil Hendy 58. This gave an average age of 64.4. Mad Mathematicians may note that the RMS comes to 64, so the presence of Ken and Phil at the ends is insignificant. We did, however, drag Charlie Reid-Henry underground with us, and also Patrick's Son, Jeremy Horton, mere striplings both at 47 and

36 respectively. The genesis of this episode lay some 9 months previously in a Hostelry moment involving Bob Pyke and Tim Reynolds and over-indulgence in Hop and Nostalgia. Instead of dying the following morning, the idea gathered an unstoppable momentum. Well, these things happen, even to people as old and wise as ourselves.

The roll was called at 1000 at Upper Pitts, with a distribution of equipment and lights. Only then was it observed that Patrick Horton shared the same longitudinal fault as Puke, although the Horton distortion was visually ameliorated by an appropriately proportional girth. It should be mentioned that Charlie's distortion is in the opposite



sense, as it were. Also at this stage the Beer Monster requested that Charlie should rig the 20 and that we should assess his rigging skill and his general caving prowess. Jeremy came along to keep a filial eye on his Father. Uncle Roger Horton was alas, absent in Canada, but with us in spirit, and, indeed sent me a most touching Email to show that his heart was with his Brother. To Quote this: **“Noel, Patrick has a secret desire to do sump 1 naked and feet first. R”**. Prew came as official photographer, to count bodies in and out and act as MRO co-ordinator should these not tally. Also because he simply couldn't believe this nonsense, and was wise enough to plead some piffing injury to avoid participating more actively. So we descended via the short dry to the 20 where we encountered a tiresome mob of Weegies (**not** to be confused with WGGs), and Puke went all medical and deemed it wise to escort two of our more sensible members out via the Long Dry before their palpitations became fibrillations. The rest toddled down towards the sump, reaching it somewhat depleted by retirees at Barnes, in time to watch the Weegies sumping cabaret acts. We retreated in good order up the Devils alternative to Barnes as far as the 20. Charlie having lifelined us down competently, it was deemed necessary to check his further skills, so he was deputed to organise a hauling party. Jeremy volunteered to simulate an upper-body and arm inadequacy, and the Geriatrics under Charlie's excellent management, hauled him up. It was a happy chance that Noel just happened to have some pulleys, and a sit-harness tape in his bag. It was felt that the Beer Monster would be more than happy with this, but Noel discovered that Charlie had no experience of the Wet Way uphill, so the opportunity was taken to correct this. Thus after some 3 ½ hours we emerged. After hot showers, replacing colostomy bags, applying haemorrhoid creams and muscle linaments (with care to avoid confusion....) We retired to the Queen Vic for victuals and rehydration therapy.

We darkened the Vic's doors again that evening when the party was joined by Jim and Andrea Hanwell, Fred and Andy Davies, Brian and Brenda Prewer, Dory MacFarlane and Jim and Nicks' wives. A good time was had, with a toast to absent friends, before the party adjourned, some to the Hunters and some to further deplete Mr. Prewer's Malt reserves. The effect of these, and the disastrous social milieu at the Hunters was to cause idle talk of a future repeat episode, which even a delightful walk the following morning, guided and commentated by Jim Hanwell, failed to dispel.

## Tuska's Reliquary

David Morrison

*A New Club Covers year ahead, a successful one in sight  
Let us know your news and views and perhaps we'll get it right!*

# New Members

## We welcome the following new members:-

Darren Chapman, 20 Dymott Square, Hilperton, Trowbridge, Wilts., **BA14 7RF** 01225 762058

Christopher Halls, 5 Dickenson's Grove, Congresbury, North Somerset., **BS49 5HQ** 07970 682823

James Hassall, 15 Langmans Close, Watford, **WD18 8WP** 07775 744177

Patrick Warren, 11 Bryony Way, Rock Ferry, Wirral, **CH42 4LY** 0151 644 1525

Adrian Bennett, 22 South East Crescent, Sholing, Southampton, **SO19 8PR** 07801 061976

Claire Cohen, 11 Thanet Place, Croydon, Surrey, **CR0 1QP** 020 86885161 / 07761 608720

Paul Kirk, 8 Galingale Way, Portishead, Bristol, **BS20 7LU** 01275 846445

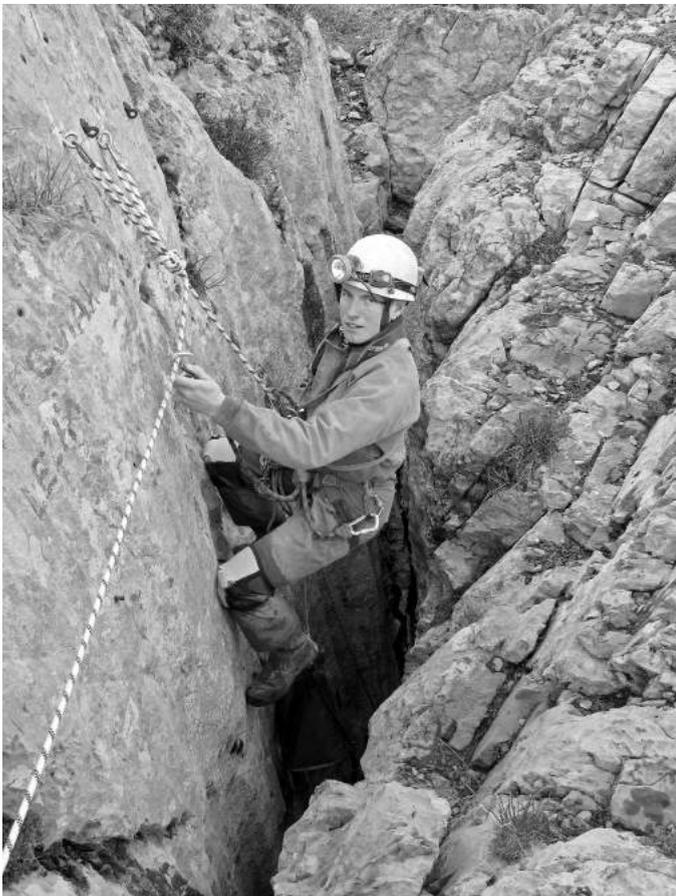
David Murphy (**Kknowme**), 28 High Street, Durrington, Wiltshire, **SP4 8AE** 01980 590932

## Change of Address: -

Jacky Ankerman, The Garden, Collage, Wookey Hole, Somerset, **BA5 1BP**. 01749 679531

## The PSM Summer Camp.

Malc Foyle set up this summer's fortnight down in the Pyrenees. The primary focus was the Pierre St Martin system, but a number of other major systems were visited, amongst them the Lonne Peyret and the Couey Lodge. There were 62 cavers plus approximately 10 friends, wives and family there, with members of no less than 8 other caving clubs. There were also visitors from Greece and Mexico, while even our own Wessex members took the opportunity to come across from their Matienzo explorations. Some 27 PSM "Through Trips" were achieved and



we almost all had the unique opportunity to see the Salle Verna with a degree of floodlighting from the EDF works in progress.

The following account is transcribed from the two log books kept at the main and lower camp sites. "Kept" in this context merely meaning located. The actual writing-up meaning of "Kept" seems to have been adversely affected by factors such as: fatigue, Vin, lethargy, Vin, Calamity Jane, Vin, procrastination, Vin..... Also with two logbooks, some trips are missing completely while others have been written up twice by different participants. Here and there, therefore, I have had to concatenate accounts in a somewhat random manner. **Editor**

Sunday August 5 2007 **Lonne Peyret** Mike Botts and Tom Baker

Pleasant 4 Hour trip rigging entrance series to the Lonne Peyret, although it took a while to actually find the entrance!.

Sunday August 5 2007 **Tete Sauvage** Nigel Jackson, Jerome Oswald-Jones, Gareth Wignall, Carmen Smith, Patrick Warren. Rigging trip time six-and-a-half hours for all except for Jerome - eight hours. Sent Pat and Carmen ahead while we sunbathed. Had to deal with a self-inflicted injury to forearm due to stupidity. Entered at 1330 and caught up with Carmen and Pat a minus 200 metres just when they ran out of rope. We handed over our packs and followed down a few pitches before conning Jerome into taking the last two bags and heading back for more sun tourism on the surface.

Notes on cave: (1) First few pitches have the most awkward b\*\*\*\*rd ladders known to man. They snag all the rope coils around them. Malcolm Foyle believes they are 50 years old. (2) The pitch heads are tight and awkward (a fat man's nightmare), or large and exposed with no protection. (3) Jerome is fat and unfit. **Nigel**

Sunday the 5 August, 2007 **EDF/La Verna** Cookie, Tom, Sarah, Stuart, Graham, Noel, Jude, Adrian Kevin, Ann and Jon (Keith and Cookie as Taxi drivers).

Abortive EDF Tunnel trip..... We had been told that there was

a new road to the tunnel and that the works to come connected into the Hydro-Electric scheme had finished. There was some debate as to whether we needed a key or not. There is indeed a new road but there was a gate across it. Keith off-roaded it around this gate and straight up the pipe path! We eased the gate aside and carried on. The works are unfinished and the EDF tunnel gate was locked. Keith reckoned that access via the water pipe was an option; we declined to try this!. We soon discovered that Sarah could gain access by pulling the wire gate back slightly at the bottom corner, but finally we decided that the politics involved were too serious to allow a pirating access, so opted for a 24 hour delay and a proper solution of the key problem.

In the evening there was a mass meal at the Auberge at St. Engrace. The meal was OK but the waitress was surly and unsmiling, and we were made to feel most unwelcome after 2200hrs.

Monday August 6 2007 Tete Sauvage to La Verna. Tom Baker, Mike Bottomley, Carmen and Pat.

Six and three quarter hours. The B\*\*\*\*rds. "My legs are only ickle". So Carmen had to move twice as fast to keep up with the oversized freaks who all live in an atmosphere much higher than her. Part of the rush was that they anticipated catching up with Tom's boat positioning party close to the Tunnel du Vent. The boat rigging party were too far ahead, as it happened.

Monday August 6 2007 EDF / Tunnel du Vent

Tom, Graham, Adrian and Jude, Sarah, Noel, Cookie, Ann, Jon and Kevin took the boat back up to the EDS entrance. The workmen at the top were very helpful and pleasant. They produce keys and unlocked the gate without problem Kevin, Ann and John just wanted to get the feel of the place, left early and found the Salle Verna illuminated by the workmen: it was a stunning surprise Adrian and Jude peeled off three-quarters of the way in, the rest reached the Tunnel du Vent in five hours. The route is completely dry. It was hot going, mostly we rolled our suits down, but Sarah did the trip in just a fleece. Route finding was no problem although the markers are arranged for cavers coming downstream, as it were. The abiding impression was one of vast, gloomy chambers where one wall and the ceilings were only intermittently visible. The floors seem to be no-go areas. Progress is on the sloping sides boulders. We took in ladders as well, and rigged them, but basically the fixed aid ropes would have been adequate. Inevitably we found the Inflator pump was unserviceable so used lung power to blow up the dinghy. Cookie rowed through on the fixed-line to anchor the blue retrieval rope at the far end. We returned at a good pace and caught up with Adrian and Jude in the Salle Chevalier. Out after 8 1/2 hours. It was a very hard game going in uphill!

Back at St Engrace, we had a splendid Pasta nosh, courtesy of Nigel, Stu Genders and various other cooks. Back to camp into the most amazing thunderstorm and got totally soaked between the car and our tents It rained like hell all night.

Tuesday August 7 2007 La Verna

Graham, Sam and I joined the EDF Tunnel Mob Handed trip. Went as far as the "Mendipy" crawls (!!!) at the end of the Salle

Chevalier. Left Sam in the Verna with Anna. Thought Graham had gone back, so shot back on my own to find that he was not there. Nigel Taylor and Alan were sitting in the Verna. We waited in the Verna and Graham returned with Nigel, Jerome, Gareth, Keith and Alistair! He had avoided the "Mendipy" crawls - the correct way, of course, so he was going like a duck on snot trying to find us, while I was going like a duck on snot back to the EDF. Ah well, at least we didn't have to search for Graham in the depths of the cave. **Chrissy**

Tuesday August 7 2007 SC3 to La Verna. Kevin, John, Charlie, and, Laura.

The trip consisted of elevenses, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, supper and a bedtime snack.

Wednesday August 8 2007 Lonne Peyrett Mike Bottomley and Tom Baker.

Cookie and Stuart taxi service for Mike and Tom on the big trip into the **Lonne Peyrett**

Superb twelve-and-a-half hour trip to the bottom (Salle Styx) of **Lonne Peyrett**. The main streamway is completely superb with large steeply dipping ramps, waterfalls, cascades, and a couple of short lakes. Some of the passages, in particular at the Grand Chaos and the Chaos of Titans are indeed chaotic with boulders everywhere! The Salle Styx itself is very impressive (ie absolutely huge!) **Mike Bottomley and Tom Baker**



Thursday August 9 2007 Tete Sauvage to La Verna. Cookie, Stuart, Alistair, Andy, Noel, Graham.

Cookie and Chrissy took us up to the Tete Sauvage. We got underground at 10 o'clock Mostly we found it easier to climb down the first few pitches using their parrot ladders. The open rungs are a pain and catch on ropes and tackle bags all the time. Then on to the main pitches, all very straightforward, and well rigged. We regrouped at base of the last main pitch looking at the duck, yuk, but once through it was fine down to the bottom and the Salle Cosyns. We had no problem route finding in the Grand Canyon - the best part the cave. Water very cold, another two degrees colder and we could have skated along. Just below the Marmite we spent a few minutes in muddy network tubes before climbing into the "Marmites", a nice fossil passages. Noel led the way there and into the Tunnel de Vent pools. Here we lost some time having trouble with the boats getting caught on the fixed



line. Noel and Alastair made it through OK. Then the entertainment of watching Stuart swear and curse his way into the dinghy from out of his depth almost warmed us up in the howling gale. Having a fixed line was essential for those who decided to swim and pull through, which Andy did, and which made him seriously chilled. Then it was just a long slog out, with no route finding problems with Noel and Cookie leading the way. Met the Irish idiots at the end of the EFF tunnel. They had just completed a 33 hour epic trip complete with a mobile cafe. Their packs were monstrosities. We gave them a lift down to their car on Cookie's tailgate. The debt to be repaid in beer at SUCCRO in October! Chrissy and Co had cooked a superb pasta meal back at St Engrace which was most welcome.

Friday August 10th 2007 Gourettes Via Ferrata, Cookie, Tom, Sarah, Stuart, Nigel, Jerome, Gareth, Graham, Chrissy, Sam. Longer drive than expected, but did include buying lunch along the way. First route (Difficile) good fun. Lots more staples than were really required. Second route (Très Difficile) take you to the nose of the cliff. Very overhanging. My arms were burning as I completed the last change-over. Then there was another overhanging change-over. Looking up I saw a third. This was suddenly serious. I wasn't sure that I could make it as I struggled with the carabiners. Just before my arms gave out I remembered the "Quick Draw" that Tom had lent me, snapped it in, sat back and relaxed. Life was wonderful again. My own personal "Quick Draw" went straight to the top of my shopping list. Once that route was finished, I ran round the third route at the bottom through the gorge cut by the river. It was easy and great fun as it includes a Tyrolean. Chrissy said that she was watching with sweaty palms as we all leapt around the rock faces: then Tom took Sam on this river traverse. Back to the cars for Gateaux Basque - the local speciality. **Cookie**

Saturday 11th August 2007 Source de Bidouze. Cast of

thousands Cookie, Tom, Sarah, Adrian, Jude, Ann, Nigel, Jerome, Gareth, Noel, Joel, Matt, Stuart.

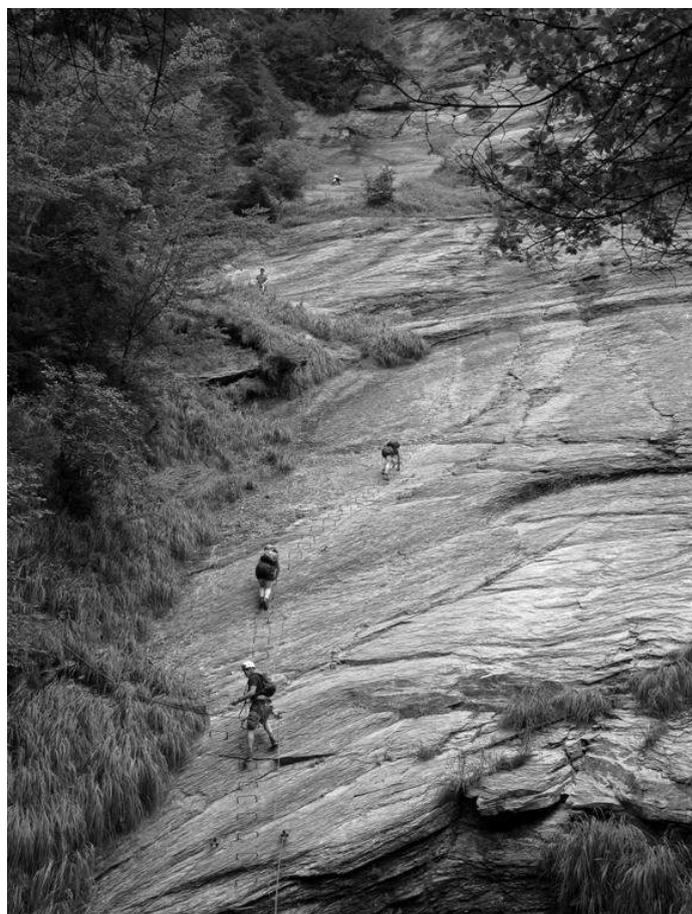
Quick pull through trip. Very pretty cave with plenty of moon milk cascades and blue pools. Salamanders and toes in static sumps. Must go back with a camera. NeoFleece chilly. A Wetsuit would be ideal.

Saturday August 11 2007 La Verna Mike Bottomley and Tom Baker

Trip into Aronzadi Gallery and meandre Martine to head of Azizia pitches. Fixed in situ ropes to, but not including, the pitch into the Salle De Montpellier. Lots of traversing in narrow rifts. Short climbs and odd sections of pretty stream way. Need hangers for bottom pitches. For a couple of hours there we were back in the Dales!

Monday 13 August 2007 Couey Lodge. Cookie, Nigel, Jerome, Gareth.

A jaunt with the idea of giving everyone some rigging practice. Nigel was feeling rough from the night before so snuck out of the cave at the first opportunity for a couple of hours kip in the car park, and rejoined us later. I rigged the first couple of pitches, and Jerome took over to the bottom of the 65 metre pitch. I rigged to the bottom of the 55 metre pitch. The French rigging topos seems to give pitch lengths rather than rope lengths, which explains why Jerome needed another 15 metres of rope to bottom his pitch. I Abseiled down to him with some more rope, only to find him perched on an dubious a ledge. Some fun and games ensued to attach the extra rope without maroning Jerome or pulling him off his ledge. All went to plan, and one knot pass later was the bottom of the pitch. The two big pitches were



magnificent, and great fun. Having looked around the corner and seen some crawling was required, it confirmed my opinion that

we had done the best of the cave. Nigel Jerome and Gareth had originally planned to go to the end, but it only required a little persuasion to convince them to abandon their original object. Nigel did most of the derigging. All out in time for a nice curry cooked by Sarah. **Cookie**

#### Tuesday August 14 2007 La Verna - Photographic Trip

Photographers Andy, Pete, Tommo. Slaves: cookie, Malc, Russ, John, Laura, John. Bystanders Tom, Sarah, Rita.

All geared up with massive flashbulbs of traditional type, none of this electric electronic rubbish, and walkie-talkies. Smooth and slick operation. **Cookie**

**Editor's Note.** Pete's photographs are sensational, but it would be a travesty to render them in monochrome and

### **The major rescue above Pierre St Martin**

For those who are interested this is the reason why the Gendarmes and Garda Civil were "guarding" the route up to Tetes Sauvage and there were so many helicopters buzzing around.

This was because a Belgian lady had to be rescued after four days trapped in the Anialarra system, in the Spanish Pyrenees. An international team of rescuers from Spain and France lifted the injured Belgian who had been trapped in an underground cave system for four days.

Spanish police said the Belgian female was rescued from 650-700 meters (2,032 - 2,296 feet) below ground in the early hours of Wednesday (August 8 ) morning.

Anette Van Houtte spent almost four days trapped after breaking three toes and hurting a leg.

The 49-year-old cave researcher was reported to be "safe and sound" apart from the leg and foot injuries that prevented her from exiting the cave last Saturday (August 4). She was recovered to a French Hospital. She had originally entered the cave, in the Pyrenean town of Isaba, Navarra, near the French border, with several other scientists. She was part of an expedition team when she became trapped. After her fellow cavers realised they could not free her, they left the scene to call for help. It took them 12 hours to reach the surface, according to police.

On Monday (August 6) police managed to set up a phone connection with Van Houtte. One team member stayed with her, both key factors that helped officials locate her, police said.

Groups of rescuers took turns transporting her through nearly five kilometres (3 miles) of narrow tunnels. At one point some 50 meters next to the exit, explosives were used to widen the tunnels.

A team of 79 people from both sides of the border - 44 Spanish Civil Guard members and 35 French cave divers - took part in the rescue. **Cookie**

#### North Wales Weekend. May 2007.

**This was described by all and sundry as a totally outrageously successful weekend. Thanks to Carmen we have this account and these photographs. Ed**



Ok, this just a quick pen to paper for all the members out there that do not have internet access via broadband.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgblEY2J-s>  
(Looks like a candidate for TinyUrl to me. Ed)

This is a 7 minute long video of the weekends events with pictures and music.

Those present. Sarah Payne (what train?) , David Cooke (duty driver), Les, Wendy (4WD expert) and Chris Williams, Andy Morse( capt Yellow), John Osborne ?? (aka Hatstand) , Patrick Warren

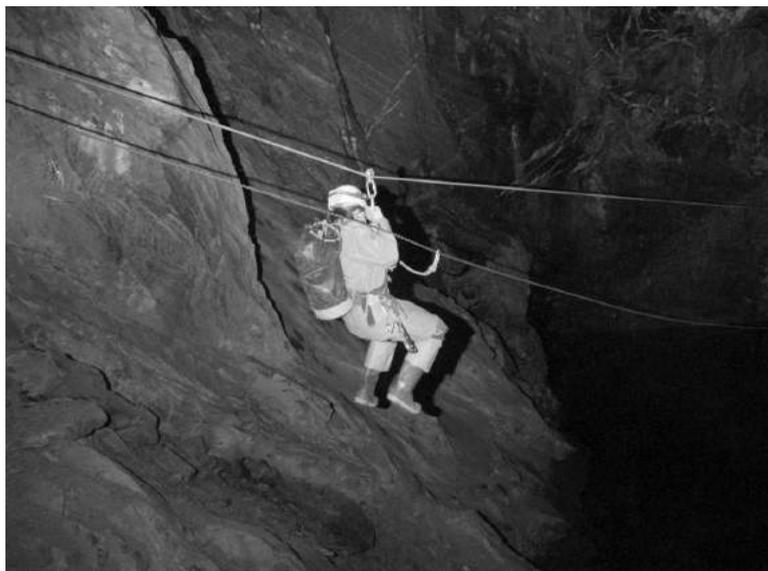
then shrink them for this Journal.

Monday 13th August 2007. Source de Bidouze. Alan Richardson and Alastair and Ruth Gordon. Noel went along for the ride and to guide them. We took the rough path to cliff-top and to entrance. Noel came down an easier GR track and waited at the resurgence. Alan, Alastair and Ruth enjoyed the Source de Bidouze and loved seeing the Salamanders and Toads in the static sump pools. Later Alan had a minor wallow in the huge arch resurgence just below it, which is a seriously impressive porch and pond place. It drizzled on the way back and the path became very slippery.

(CPC infiltrator), Pete Smith, Carmen Haskell.

This wasn't to be the average North Wales Weekend...oh no....Les had gone into overdrive with his "I know this geezer" contacts, and an absolutely amazing long weekend of events (4 days) were install for those....and only those....who were "ard enuf to come".....

Thursday afternoon.



Cookie arranges to pick up Sarah, Carmen and Peter at the Wessex at approx 2pm.

Foolishly Sarah believes this and arrives for 2pm then panics when nobody is there and drives around Mendip trying to find someone....sensibly Carmen and Peter who know Cookie much better arrive 40 minutes late....and only have to wait for 10 minutes for him to arrive....

We load 8 tons of stuff, from inflatable boats to enough rope to do GG mainshaft into his truck and depart 1hr late, exactly on time...

We arranged to meet Hatstand at Porthmadog (pronounced Pourth my Dog ....or is it Port madock or something) at a pub.....surprisingly for Hatstand at a railway station(anybody would think that bloke was a train driver or something)where

we ate in restaurant where the main feature was not your average plough or keg or cart wheel but a train.....full size....in the restaurant....although Sarah, who was clearly inebriated on half a glass of lemonade at this time was rumoured to have said "What train?? Bless The Williams Clan joined us an hour later and we signed up for the local Thursday night quiz team... failed to even register in the top 5 miserably...and I thought Les was the source of all knowledge!!!.....then headed off



to a climbing bunkhouse for the night where we eventually met Morse man and Patrick.

Friday

Hatstand was our illustrious leader on a through trip called Croesor Rhosydd. It is the joining of two old abandoned slate mines with a variety of pitches and very deep lakes that has been modified as a classic "Indian jones style" through trip for those of Mining/caving/adventurous persuasion..

Zip wires, wire ladders

and traverses, boats and 2 x 80ft pitches have been permanently installed in the mine to make a superb classic downhill through trip with plenty of yee haaas and hoo hoos.

There is normally a good hours walk to and from the mine but Wendy 4WD Williams, ensured a rather pleasurable chauffeured journey to and from the mines....for the select few....(those who left their chariots of transport at the other side of the hill).

Saturday



The Milwr Tunnel complete with 140m of fixed ladders, train ride and scaling of parrot poles. Doug and Mad Mick from the UCET (united cavers exploration team) <http://www.ucet.org.uk/> showed us the delights of the Milwr tunnel. This is part of a very large mine complex which involved 140m of going down fixed ladders in the Olwyn Goch shaft....wading in thigh deep water....scaling approx 50m of Parrot poles and best of all the train ride which is best achieved in low water levels. Two mining/caving clubs got together and installed a traction

engine type thing (I'm a girl forgive the technical errors) that when cranked up with a turny handle thing would chug along the original train tracks installed by the miners all those years ago.

3 carriages were made up for our comfort which involved sitting astride soil pipe seats, ingenious. Sadly lacking was the absence of a buffet car, but there were no delays leaving station and the fare was certainly not in line with British rail tariffs ...being only a pint of bitter, far better than even Apex rates...

Access to the Milwr tunnel is controlled by the Grosvenor Caving Club.

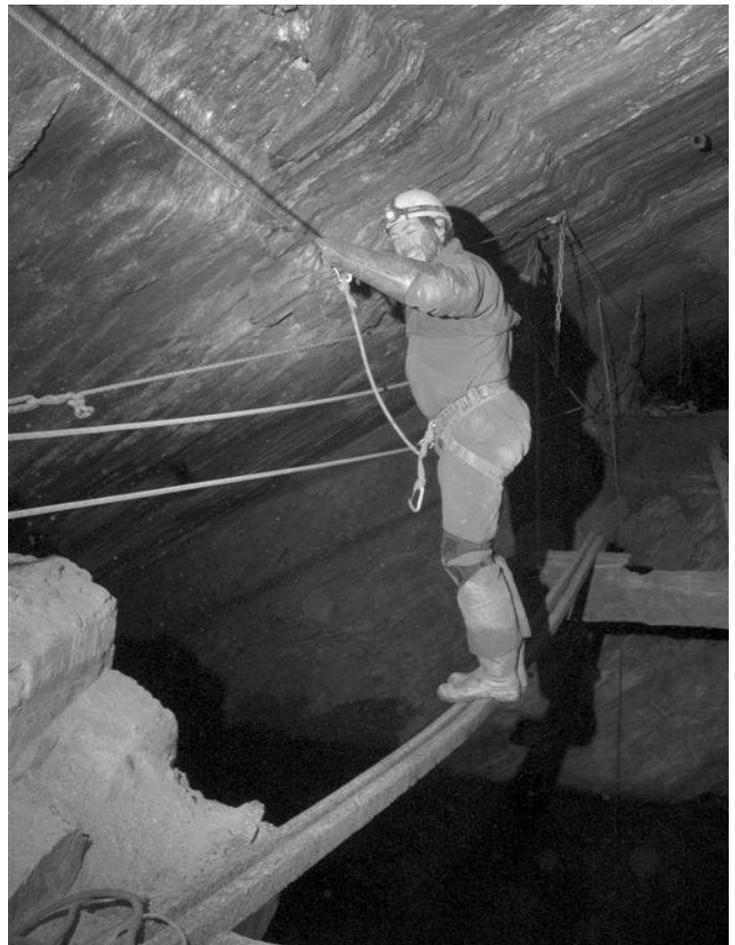
### Sunday

The North Wales Caving Club were operating a winch meet. Some while back, they purchased the Craven Pothole club's old GG winch, it was now modified to winch its own members (and Guests) down the 90m shaft in to a mine system which broke into natural cave (Pool Park).

Not quite as sophisticated as the Craven (due to a small entrance hole), a large weight with a hook is attached to the winching cable. The unsuspecting caver has to attach the D- ring of their harness to the hook on the weight, then get winched down the 90m shaft.... Brill...Captain Yellow was the first to risk life and limb, and I understand he was extremely grateful for the 2mm safety cord attached to the winching cable at chest height as a physiological aid.

Pool Park is I believe the biggest of the N Wales caves and still has the potential to get even bigger. Pushing and surveying trips had been hampered by the difficulties in accessing the cave but the N Wales Club now hope to rectify that with this new winch. It really is the best way to visit this complex system...contact the N Wales club for winch meet dates and trips.

Many thanks to the North Wales members for the depth tour of the history of the cave and Mine.





Monday.

Pepes Shaft

The UCET are exploring this rather minor mine system but have reason to believe that a lot more mine passage remains inaccessible due to falls/collapses. They have several digs/projects going on in this mine with a view to connecting it to some more passage that has been recorded in History books but is no longer accessible.

Pepes shaft (a nickname due to Pepes involvement) is another 90m man made mine shaft that is made easily accessible due to the addition of a home made winch and cage system designed by the clubs members.

Similar to Gaping gill winch meet, you sit in a chair/cage and get lowered down on a winch that resembles a landrover winch fairly slowly down the 90m level.(the shaft continues down) Although the current system is not extensive there were some rather interesting formations, mine relics and deep sections of liquid sinking mud for the poor unsuspecting caver to fall into.

Many thanks to all those involved who included members from the North Wales caving Club, UCET cavers and the Grosvenor Caving Club for providing access.

It was a great adventure packed weekend....

**Carmen**

(All the photos with this article were taken by Carmen. Ed)

## The Molephone.....an ear to the Underground

Rich Carey is reputed to have run out of upwards vertical motion on a recent foray into the depths of Mangle hole. Plainly the cave has been improperly designed if so famous and intrepid a caver can discover that a combination of mud and grip deficiency necessitates a small, but imperative, anti-gravity assistance from his friends. He is not alone, as the 20 has also seen a recent hauling episode with a guest on the WGG Swildons trip needing a minor pull. The Beer Monster foisted Charlie R-H onto this trip with some fatuous request to assess his abilities..... Like How?? The official assessment was that (1) excessive girth leads to intestinal compression in squeezes and one should always cave upwind of Mr. R-H (or control his diet for the preceding 24 hours) It is suspected that the Beer Monster already knew this. (2) He is a dab hand at life-lining, and belaying with a figure 8 descendeur (lovely to see these antique and obsolete skills still being practised). (3) He failed to panic properly when confronted with a minor rescue on the 20. (4) He now knows the Wet Way exit from Swildons. Perhaps. Then there are rumours of a Berger trip in 2009 with a Northern Club.....and a summer foray in 2008 towards the Lot with lots of families. Still more rumours swirl around a quickie weekend in June 2008 to do a mob-handed pull-through Trois Betas to the Diau.

## From the Log Book & the Wessex Website

Saturday July 21 2007 Charterhouse Cave Pete Hann, Ali Moody and Nigel Graham

This was mainly a cementing session to try and stabilise the top area before we continue working downwards. Cave and very wet and at the lowest point it is now possible to hear a steady trickle of water..... perhaps this is upper Flood coming in as a drip ( apologies to the MCG) **Ali**.

Tuesday 24th July 2007 Charterhouse Cave Ali Moody John Telling ( UBSS)

A trip to investigate how our rivals the UBSS are getting on in Great Swallet, and to compare their part of the **Charterhouse** boulder choke with ours. Great Swallet is extremely choked with boulders and a considerable amount of mud. The UBSS have done an impressive amount of work and installed a large amount of scaffolding to reach a depth that I estimate it to be about 45 metres. They have also found a short length of horizontal passage that leads off about eight metres above the deepest point reached. in Charterhouse. The ruckle is much cleaner but with considerably larger boulders. We have avoided the use of scaffolding but have used a large quantity of cement. Both digging teams appear to be following a solid, near-vertical, Left (East) wall.

In Charterhouse we estimate that we are now about 80 metres below the entrance, making the height difference between the two digs about 25 metres (allowing for about 10 metres in the difference in altitude of the entrances). However, until a high-grade survey of the **Charterhouse** is completed it is not possible to compare the horizontal distance between the two digging sites and it is therefore not really possible to calculate at present which of us is further down at the cave.

The Charterhouse site has a much stronger draft and it would be very interesting to carry out a smoke test between here and Great Swallet. In the near future and John will be doing a return trip to inspect our dig. Unfortunately as carrying in a BDH of sand is now a mandatory requirement, I think he has drawn the short straw on this exchange! **Ali**

Wednesday August 1 2007 Daren Cilau Fiona and Clare

The sun and came up, so packed the tent, Mum and the kitchen sink, headed for Langattock, and was greeted by wall to wall sunshine. Tent put up a and a large meal prepared and demolished a in minutes; an excellent night's camping with the sound of sheep outside. Next morning sorted out all the kit for a Darren Trip - this time my best thick sleeping bag had to go in. With the kit prepared we headed up the hill towards the cave and pushed and pulled our packs through the entrance and on to the Hard Rock Cafe. It was a nice meal when we got there; hot chocolate and a lamb stew - meals are always better in the Hard Rock Ate up, looked at each other and decided it was time to go; plodded back and and had good fun in the entrance squeezes with the remaining bag. Another couple of trips to be down with the Egyptian cotton lining and the feather pillows to the Hard Rock Hotel should see a good night's sleep at the camp! **Fiona**

Saturday August 4 2007 Charterhouse cave. Nigel Graham Alison Moody

With a third of the hardcore dgging team away on his hols., Nigel and Ali did a conservation trip replacing and cleaning tapes when necessary throughout the cave. To prove that we weren't completely slacking we also sieved two rocket tubes of gravel from the streamway and carried them down to the start of the Aragonite crawl at the bottom of the citadel. **Ali**

Sunday August 5 2007 Cairn Hill Tony and Fiona

Made good progress with the bottom dig 20 bags out. The Hoover extractor is working very well. We now have clean at at the bottom and can work for several hours at a time. **Fiona**

Wednesday August 8 2007 Rocket Drop Cave Steve (newboy) Watson and Paula

Visit to see if anything had moved, as the centre of the large depression close by seem to have sunk further recently. No sign was seen underground of any new movement. Bob lifelined and watch the evening get darker. A pleasant day. **Paula**.

Monday August 6 2007 **Dolly Tubs** Christine G, Rick Stanton, Elizabeth and Martin

Cracking shafts of light and lots of water - too much water for the Diccan Pot exchange so all down Dolly Tubs eventually, and Christine had a go at rigging **Christine**

Sunday August 12 2007 **Wigmore Swallet** Fiona, NikNak and Geoff

An excellent trip transporting diving kit down to the sump; really enjoyable conditions. This cave grows on you each time you do it. Thanks to NikNak and Jeff for the ladders. Another trip next week for Chris J to dive through some of the sumps. We also brought out some dead bottles. **Fiona**

Sunday August 19 2007 **OFD** Clive Westlake, Clare Cohen, Mike Thomas

First plan: Top to one, failed - high water. Second plan: Cwm Dwr and out by the escape route - failed at Hush sump when boulder choke found to be under water! All back out Cwm Dwr.. In the streamway it was knee to thigh-deep in water. Miss Cohen cured a fear of climbing on the divers pitch, both ways with ease. **Mike**

Monday August 27 2007 **Swildons, Rolling Thunder.** Aubrey, Jude, Adrian.

Down to Rolling Thunder to drill and bang the end. The shattered rock at the end made for interesting drilling, but eventually two satisfactory half metre shot holes were produced. Thanks to Jeff and StuPot for clearing previous debris and Anton for carrying the drill down. Hopefully extensions will be found in time for the second edition of the Swildons Book. **Adrian**

Saturday September 8 2007 **Mangle Hole, Sandford Levy, Mine X.** Cookie, Jo, Carmen, Pete Smith, Dave (Kknowme) Murphy.

Today I did so much underground it was like an assault on the senses, it started off full on and hard going in Mangle hole, then slowed down with a breather in the form of Sandford Levy and then an absolutely fantastic finale in the form of Mine X. It was like a Mendip cocktail with lots of good stuff to savour, so long as you didn't mind the taste of mud, grit and cave slime that came with it.

### **Mangle hole cave**

If the name wasn't bad enough, hearing an infinitely more experienced (and far smaller) caver describe it as "horrible" halfway down the first ladder was enough to warrant me making accusing gestures at Cookie, who previously admitted that leading these Second Saturday cave events was a good way to knock off some of the more "interesting" caves in the Mendips.

Not to be put off I made my way down the first ladder pitch which was in fact two ladders joined together, I spotted a lot of spiders on the way down which meant I must be getting more comfortable with laddering if I had time to check out the wildlife, arrived at the ledge and waited for the others to get down and set up the next pitch. As I don't know a great deal about rigging it is all the same to me, and so I didn't know whether to be impressed or disturbed by the creative rigging techniques that soon followed, but I found myself descending the ladder all the same.

After touching down I caught up with Carmen and we split up to investigate various ways through the boulders that filled the large chamber, being much more confident with freeclimbing I practiced down a bit of wall and invented a new (if not extremely short) round trip.

Anyhow, the others all arrived fairly soon after and we headed to Aldermaston chamber, which involved a lot of mud and a squeeze which someone once described as "like putting a marshmallow into a piggy bank" not wishing to be put into the squishy confectionery category I decided I would give it my all. Anyhow it turned out to be quite spacious and after blasting the chamber with my Scurion and watching three of the group unceremoniously yank an anonymous caver up a very muddy slope (Seeing a grown man fly up and over a ledge is a sight to behold) we set off out and topside.

### **Sandford Levy**

This was more of an interlude, and recklessly shunning the need for a leader we set off into the murk, using the handline that had been kindly rigged at the entrance by persons unknown we descended and regrouped at the bottom before heading further on in (we didn't do this, there was a handline though); I was really impressed by all the cave pearls and Cookie seized my Scurion to give it a road-test whilst I had to cave out with his light and helmet on, which felt for all the world like someone had strapped a candle to my head. I admit I am becoming

a bit of a light junkie but I can quit anytime I want.

**Mine X** (Expletives deleted)

This place was the pinnacle of every mine I have done so far in terms of the sheer amount of artifacts and imprints left behind, it was overwhelming in that everywhere I looked there was something that caught my eye. Descending a 30 foot pitch and landing on what can only be described as a heap of artifacts, we got comfortable and spent a good amount of time simply looking at all the various things left behind by the miners so many years ago. There was so much character and the mine was so pristine that it almost felt like the miners were still there, whether it was in the thousands of pick marks that peppered the passageways or the stacks of crystal coated deads (some of them were almost entirely crystalline) everywhere you looked there was history. We made our way to the great chamber and I was amazed at how untouched the place was, the floor was covered with flakes of crystal and ochre that must have accumulated unhindered for decades and huge veins of ochre ran through the natural chamber, if this wasn't enough the best was yet to come. We took a side passage and found ourselves in what looked to be a giant geode, absolutely every patch of wall was covered in tiny points, like someone had decorated the chamber with hundreds of silvery stone hedgehogs and a tub of Araldite! I am easily impressed but this was one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen and was the highlight of the day for me.

On the way out I got exploration fever and started climbing up all manner of holes and ledges, I only wish I had brought my camera but that can wait for another day! It wasn't a big mine, in fact it was quite small but it was like an exclusive museum and I felt privileged to be there, the only things missing were the miners but I am fairly sure they clocked off decades ago.

A great day, god knows why I decided to cave with one knee pad but now I am walking around work like a cripple, it was well worth some severe bruising and minor swelling however and I am looking forward to the next trip! Wherever that may be. **Kknowme**

Saturday September 8 2007 **Swildons two**, Bang squeeze-Dave and Jon Mason (not related!)

We decided that it was time to see if Jon would fit through the squeeze so we could plan whether or not to do the round trip next time. This was Jon's second trip into Swildons two and a chance to see some new stuff.

After getting changed and saying hello to Tommo and Clive fresh back from diving in Porth we headed off into the sunset. Headed straight down the wet way like things possessed determined to be back out in time for Butcome and Chilli courtesy of Roger! We made good progress down to sump 1 and through the sump pretty uneventfully.

Once into Swildons two we splashed along the streamway to the landing. It had been dry for a few weeks and the water levels were low. We headed up over the landing and into the corkscrew climb up through the boulders- I'd forgotten how bloody awkward this was on the way in and both of us spent some time puffing and panting trying to work against gravity and the squeeze. Finally we got through and made good progress along the passageways ahead. I'm always amazed by the mud banks along this section of the cave; they almost look man-made! We had plenty of airspace through the duck and then came face to face with the squeeze. I got through without any issues and turned around to coax Jon through. He passed the first bit no problem but then hit the real tight bit and I'm afraid it got the better of him! We decided to turn around with Jon vowing to come back and try it on his back.

We beat a hasty retreat back through the cave with only that Beer and Chilli now on our minds. We decided to do Barnes Loop for a change rather than the rift and stopped for a look at the pretties. Then carried on out and were welcomed by a warm evening and a perfect night sky when we got top side. Stopped for a breather and a bit of star gazing and then back to the cottage for a hot shower, before heading to the Hunters for that well earned Butcome and chilli. All in all a great evenings caving with a perfect end. We will get Jon through that squeeze next time.....

## Cheramodytes

### “African Caver’s Disease”

Yes, we cavers do have our very own disease. It is undeniably exotic and glories in the medical name of

**“Pulmonary histoplasmosis”** This is sometimes given as “Benign PH” or “Acute PH”, but even the Acute version is benign in the sense that it is unlikely to kill you. Better still, you won’t get it in this country. It’s a hot climate malaise, although on the continental USA it does occur in unusually cooler latitudes (right up to 44°N). The first reported outbreak amongst cavers occurred in 1948 in Florida, with subsequent infections reported from caves in Africa, Peru, Venezuela, Brazil and Panama. It’s a fungal infection of the lungs (Caver’s Lung sounds a lot better than Athlete’s Foot!). It’s symptoms are similar to our common pneumonia, but with outrageously vivid X Ray indications. It will make you feel weak, sick and feverish, with respiratory symptoms from shortness of breath upwards including chills, coughs and a chest pain when breathing in.

See a doctor, obviously, not least because, in our typical macabre medical manner, we love to see a disease which we haven’t previously seen; also because he will probably put you anti-fungal medication and some precautionary antibiotics. If the acute version spreads throughout your body it can knock you off just fine. Otherwise grin and bear it. It will clear up of its own accord, but it will set you back for month or so.

That’s what it is and what it does, so why do cavers have the dubious honor of claiming for themselves? No prizes for guessing; it’s our old caving companions, the bats, who are to blame.

The fungal spores can develop and live in bat guano. If this is dry and dusty, and you breathe it, then you are at risk. How soon you get it, and how badly, is dependent on how much you breathe and for how long. A short exposure times (20 minutes or less) can produce mild symptoms, whereas two or three days may result in severe illness. It takes a fortnight or so, on average, before it gets going, but as with many other diseases, the time between infection and onset can vary widely - in this case from 2 - 21 days.

## Recent Library Additions

Philip Hendy

### RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

As at 23 September 2007

BCRA N/L No. 8 (Aug 07)

Cave and Karst Studies 33, 2 (for 2006)

CDG N/L 164 (Jul 07)

Chelsea SS N/L 49, 8/9 (Aug/Sep 07)

Grosvenor CC N/L No. 140 (Aug

MNRC N/L 114 (Autumn 07)

WSG N/L 2007/2, 3 (Apr, Jul 07)

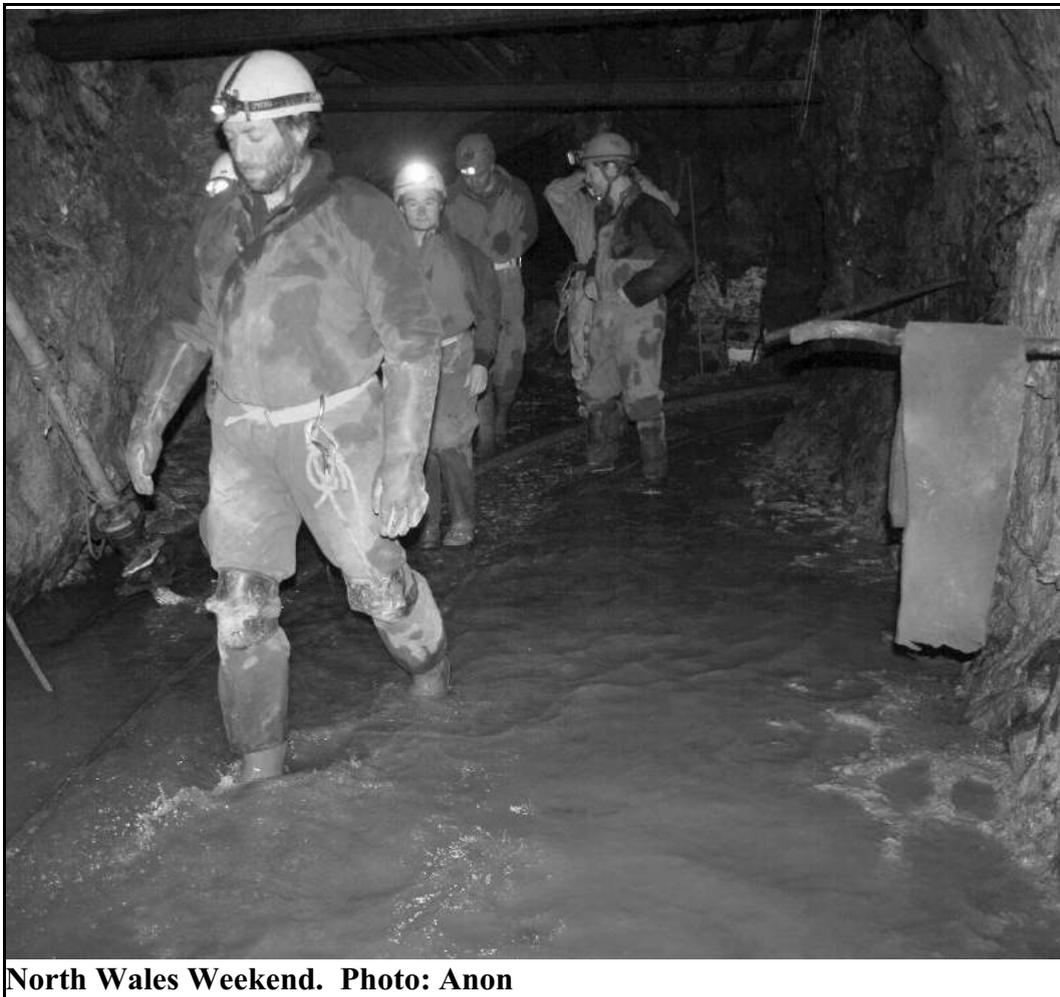
Balcombe F.G. (2007) A Glimmering in Darkness (CDG). (*Autobiographical and dive logs*)

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| Car Park Resurfacing | 13 October |
| AGM                  | 20 October |
| Committee Meeting    | 20 October |
| Annual Dinner        | 20 October |
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**North Wales Weekend. Photo: Carmen**



**North Wales Weekend. Photo: Anon**