



Journal of the Wessex Cave Club

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Maurice Hewins & John Thomas with 50 years of caving each.

President

Donald Thomson

Vice Presidents

Sid Perou
Derek Ford

Chairman

David Morrison
Windrush
Upper Bristol Road
Clutton BS395RH
01761 452 437

Secretary

Kevin Hilton
63 Middlemarsh Street,
Poundbury,
Dorchester,
Dorset DT1 3FD
01305 259274

Membership Secretary

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Phil Hendy

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Noel Cleave

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**Headquarters**

Upper Pitts,  
Eastwater Lane,  
Priddy,  
Somerset,  
BA5 3AX,  
01749 672 310

Journal 311 is Journal 310 after joining Weight Watchers. This is partly because your editor is an absentee caver at the moment, and unable to nag, cajole or coerce you into contributing, in person. The obesity of 310, however resulted from a wish to maintain a sensible juxtaposition between event and narrative. With the additional enclosures this content-lite Journal keeps the whole thing in the cheapest postal rate. The Journal may be content-lite, but it's distributed with a questionnaire. Your committee have been discussing and designing this for some months and many Emails of draft versions.

Our Chairman writes:

In all respects the club has seen a period of successful growth year on year for many years, it has been at the forefront of club caving both at home and abroad. The club has been popular with both individuals and other caving organisations wishing to use our facilities and friendship to broaden their caving knowledge and experience. It is from such individuals and organisations sharing such experiences that future generations of Wessex members are forged, as we all were.

This popularity is due to certain qualities not necessarily found elsewhere in club caving and this quality must be maintained for the future health of the club. However the consequences of such popularity means we have to constantly meet the diverse needs of current and potential members. To do this requires achieving a balance of opportunities for all. A balance we all need to accept. The club was founded on the basis of meeting a need for an organisation "for those unashamedly interested in caving just for the sport of it ". The Club grew from four visionary members to one hundred and seventy five in the space of 5 years.

From the year after its formation the club provided hostel accommodation for its members. When the membership outgrew the capacity of club facilities, the Club provided more. We are in that position today and need consider carefully the capacity and/or quality of our facilities. It is from the membership the current committee seeks guidance as to how we should proceed to meet the demand. We have been fortuitous because we are popular and the income over the past years, prudently gathered and saved, has been such that we are now in a position to consider what provision will meet the clubs current and future needs, we are growing and this opportunity may only come once.

Be visionary in your thoughts and guide well your committee to the future to uphold the spirit of determination of the founding four and those who followed.

It is sometimes hard to be objective when you have a family of two hundred and fifty people each one desiring, sometimes, a different paint on the walls, floor, ceilings, doors, windows and cupboards of the kitchen, bedroom, lounge, library and loo and you 'only' have all the colours of the rainbow to work with and you still can't get it right. Well, for five minutes we ask you all to be just that - objective!

If together we can mix those colours in the right order then maybe we can meet everyone's aspirations of how they see the club headquarters delivering to their needs.

Listening to some club member conversations over the last few years it is more than apparent it is time we share openly what these sometimes strong colourful feelings of direction are and how the individuals and groups within the club see the club painted.

Some of you may feel there is already a well prepared, undercoated, top coated strong founded palette and status quo is a good way to remain. If so, it is important to say so!

Whatever your feelings please fill in the questionnaire, own your views and share them with others. Thank you.

## Club News

### RIP Adrian (Mac) McMillan

I have received the sad news that Adrian McMillan has died (4th March).

Adrian was our longest standing member having joined the Club in 1937. He served as Chairman for a stint starting in 1948. He was an Honorary Member. He always remained interested in the activities of the Club. Prew tells me he recently made a donation to support the publication of the Swildons Book. Our thoughts are with Adrian's family and friends. A full obituary will appear in Journal 321. **Dave Cooke.**

### Maurice Hewins. Still going strong.

Fifty years ago members of "Young Farnham" spent a weekend caving on Mendip, when they camped in the field behind Maine's Barn. On 12<sup>th</sup> April two of them, Maurice and John, returned for a nostalgic trip back down Swildon's. They were capably supported by fellow Wessex members. On Maurice "70<sup>th</sup>. Birthday" 13 members attended the party in the Old Grotto. Maurice took a portable DVD player and played the caving movie he'd made some 40 years ago. Most of the guests then went down to the 20. In the evening there was a good turnout at Upper Pitts, 60 or so, for a barrel and festivities.

### "The Swildons Book"

Sales to date are 890, and the whole print run has now been received from the printers.

### Ogof Craig a Ffynon

Thanks to the efforts of our Secretary, the Wessex now has its own key to Ogof Craig a Ffynon. It is in the tackle store with our other gated cave keys. There are entry restrictions, so please read the details on the Club notice board (They are similar to those in force for Aggy - no carbide, record your visit, leave the bats alone etc. etc).

### Mendip Cave Registry.

This group is now calling itself the mendip Cave Registry Archive (MCRA), to avoid confusion with the MCR (formerly MRO). Straightforward, isn't it?

### Fairy Cave Quarry.

Natural England (formerly English Nature) have started a further round of work in the quarry. The perimeter is being strengthened to try to keep the trial bikers out, and a digger will be used to remove soil and rock from the area of Fernhill Cave, with the intention of re-opening this short but interesting hole. It is worth noting that the quarry is now a Special Conservation Area (SCA) which is the European version of a S.S.S.I., but with teeth. Damage or disturbance now becomes a criminal rather than a civil offence. Cavers' access to the caves will not be affected.



### More bureaucracy

The following notice will soon be on display at the foot of the tower/fire-escape steps:

"The Wessex Cave Club accepts no responsibility whatsoever for any loss, injury or damage to persons or equipment whilst using this tower"

### The Tower and the Rope Drop Test Rig

The ladders and climbing enticements are attractive to children.

Please do not let children use them as playgrounds. The legal height considered to be so dangerous as to require restricted access and safety fencing is only 1.2 metres. Both exceed this. Children are always welcome at Upper Pitts, but are completely the responsibility of their supervising adults, so if you bring them..... please supervise them.

### Photocopier

Our thanks are due to Pete Hann, who has presented the Club with a combined Photocopier / Scanner / Printer unit.

### The Driveway

After an enormous amount of discussion, study and research, your Committee have decided that the driveway has come to the end of its 30 odd years as a pothole-patch-make-do-and-mend access to the club. Before the AGM we should have proper, professionally laid reinforced concrete driveway (so no need to paddle to the Annual Dinner bus wearing wellies). The work arrangements (which will, inevitably, involve some access inconvenience) will be published on the notice board and web-site in due course. The salient details are that the new driveway will be:-

1. Slab construction, 2.5m x 80m x 150mm, wider on the corner, with stone drainage edges.
2. The work will be done by outside contractors.
3. It will cost of the order of £8,000.

If this seems a lot, to put it in context, a 60 year life gives a cost of £133 a year, or £2.56 a week, without the current unending drip-feed of funds for repair materials and without the continued risk to suspension units, silencers, and pedestrians!

### Nicknames and Photographs

Pete Hann writes:

“I would like to make a couple of comments concerning some articles in Vol 29 Journal 310.

Nicknames should not be used in an article in the Journal, as very few people know who they are and it is nice to know who was there.

Photographs should include, where it is, the photographer's name, and who is in it.

The Journal has been used by many for research and will be in the future I am sure, but if these points are allowed to continue the articles will be of no use, and that will be a shame.”

### Your Editor responds

Pete kindly added “Keep up the good work we all know it is a thankless task”, but I must demure that it is far from thankless and rarely seems like work. I think he is correct in both elements. Nicknames have been a vexatious issue. I did mention it in an earlier editorial and raised the issue in Committee, particularly because early on in my Editorship I hadn't a clue who was who, which compelled me to quote Nicknames. On the other hand, Nicknames are what we use as cavers and their use keeps the accounts lively and vivid. What I should do, for future historians, is to publish an annual list of Nicknames.

On the subject of photographs, my response is “I Wish”. I particularly wish that Pete had given me the names of the subjects in his two superb photographs of Fou (or Foux) de Lauret. And in the same breath I apologise because that was something of a cheap shot, but it does illustrate the point that it is all too easy to submit wonderful photographs with incomplete information, and I simply do not have time to chase up all our contributors. I can make immediate amends for my omissions, if you ask me to, thus: Please note the photos in the last Journal on

pages 156,157,158,164,165 and 166 were taken by David Cooke. This being an immediate example and my apologies to Cookie!

### Big Stu's Recruiting Drive.....From his Protyre Affinity company Newsletter, Issue 31.

“In December, Neil and Lawrence (of the marketing team), allowed Stuart Waldren, ('Big Stu'), to convince them that it might be nice to join him for a caving expedition.

Stuart is a member of the Wessex Cave Club, and he enjoys nothing more than getting away from it all in the dark and serene caverns that Britains' network of caves has to offer. Being that the Wessex Cave club recently joined the Protyre Affinity partnership, Neil and Lawrence were invited to meet the club members in Priddy, near Wells and venture into Swildons Hole to see what it's all about.

On the day in question there was a supernatural amount of rain



water pouring into the cave, which at times was so loud that sign language was more effective than shouting to someone only 4 feet away. Several experienced club members (including Stuart), said that they'd never seen Swildons Hole so flooded. In the photo with Neil and Lawrence is Stuart's oldest son Jed, who was by far a more knowledgeable and capable explorer than the



marketing boys! Stuart took the novice team roughly 70 feet below surface, before deciding that it was too risky continuing any further due to the sheer volume of water filling up the passageways. All in all, the boys had great fun and would recommend it to anyone...provided they're not claustrophobic...or afraid of the dark.

## **Swildon Book Review**

Having tried, and failed, to get someone to write a formal review of "Swildon's Hole, 100 Years of Exploration" for Journals 309 and 310, we have now received this delightful review from Dr. Herman de Swart, which he produced originally for Speleo Nederland Pierk of March 2008. Dr de Swart wrote: "Please find enclosed my review in, and also a 'more or less' translation. You can be confident my Dutch is better".

DAVID IRWIN, ALISON MOODY, ANDY FARRANT *Swildon's Hole -100 Years of Exploration* Wessex Cave Club, Priddy, Somerset, 2007. This book is very clearly my choice of this quarter. Not only because it is a beautiful book is (I will come to that in a moment), but also because it brought back good old memories. In the starting time of the Dutch speleology, almost forty years ago, the first foreign journeys were (except to Belgium of course) those to the Mendip Hills, to go caving and celebrate Christmas and New Years Eve. We had big parties in the Hunter's Lodge, where this book now is presented. But of course especially the long journeys in Swildon's. I still remember in detail the journey with James Cobbett, when in the end we only had one working Oldham battery on the four participants. In the dark and with some degrees below zero we got lost when we came out of the cave, and so our wetsuit were frozen! But luckily they had then already good showers in the Wessex CaveClub hut, where we regularly were guests.

Many years later there were also the cave diving camps in this area, with among others dives in Swildon's and Wookey Hole, and with Oliver Lloyd, in spite of his already advanced age, as perfect host. But enough youth sentiment. Swildon's Hole is still one of the most popular caves of the United Kingdom. Now about the book. First some business-like data: bound with dust jacket, 276 pages, over 250 images (coloured and black and white photos, drawings, register. very many maps), comprehensive literature overviews, an index of persons and names of passages and rooms etc., and a big format is, enclosed map (scale 100m 6cm). All maps in this book are newly drawn by Phil Hendy. The book is published in an edition of 1500 copies.

Then the content. Beside a short introduction about the cave, about the book and about the authors, three extensive' chapters' follow (on which more in a moment), a list with recommended literature, the usual letters of thanks, a list of the most important maps in the book and the index.

The first chapter, by Dave Irwin, describes the history of the exploration of Swildon's Hole, from the very first beginning in 1901 to the discovery of the second entrance (Priddy Green Sink) and through trips in two directions in 1996. All clubs that have participated in the exploration of the system, with at the end almost ten kilometres length and 164 meters depth are mentioned. The Wessex Cave Club (WCC) of course. This club has, I think, delivered the main contribution to the exploration of

Swildon's, and the book was issued to celebrate the 70 years of existence of the WCC. But also the Bristol Exploration Club (BEC), the Westminster Speleological Society (WSS), the University of Bristol Speleological Society (UBSS), the Shepton Mallet Caving Club (SMCC) and many other clubs made important discoveries. And of course let's not forget the Cave Diving Group (CDG), because with the many sumps in Swildon's cave divers have played an important role in the discoveries. In Swildon's was also the first cave diving effort in Great Britain, in 1934! That is not so strange because an important motive of the exploration of Swildon's was (and is!) the discovery of the connection between Swildon's and Wookey Hole. About half of that connection, nearly two kilometres and a half are still missing, as the crow flies. This wonderful historical chapter counts 123 pages, is well documented and comprises many (old) illustrations .. Dave Irwin died unfortunately in the spring of 2007, and so did not see the book finished.

The second chapter, by Alison Moody, is a description of the cave. This begins with a beautiful picture over two pages, where the cave is printed on an aerial photograph of Priddy and surroundings. There see you already well how complex the cave is 'built', and that explains also the mode how this chapter is written. A large number of trips, mainly 'round trips', through the cave is described, whereby in the text, completed with clear topo's and pictures, all parts of the cave are described. It also is a very practical chapter, printed in bold are all kinds of advises given; about equipment, risks, if the sumps can be done free diving or not, etc. Alison Moody and colleagues have checked especially for this book all parts of the cave one more time (walking, crawling, climbing, swimming, diving), so the result is a very accurate up-to-date text.

The third chapter, by Andy Farrant, gives in 32 pages an excellent overview of the geology and the origin of the cave. The author not only is strongly involved in the investigation of, and in the cave, but is also as a government geologist responsible for the present study of the Mendip Hills. So he knows what he is talking about. And moreover, he can make use of what his famous predecessors already have written about the cave, for example the 'four stages model' of Derek Ford, now a 'grand old man' of the karst research, but who started in Swildon's. This chapter too is lavishly illustrated, especially with many clear diagrams and maps showing how and in which sequence the different parts of the cave were formed.

What is not included in the book? A chapter about the many rescues, but that is mentioned already by the editors Jim Hanwell and Richard Witcombe themselves in their introduction, and a (little) chapter about the little animals in the cave. But these are minor details. What is included in the book is worthy of congratulations! It has become a wonderful book!

## **Club Trip to Derbyshire**

**Knotlow exchange trip & Oxlow.** Date:4 ,5 & 6 April.

Attendees: Dave Mason, Jon Mason, Andy Jackson, Mark Adams, Rhys Whickham, Sally White.

We headed up to the Orpheus straight from work on the Friday evening and made good time. We all met in The Royal Oak and enjoyed a hearty evening meal and a couple of pints before heading to the Orpheus to get settled in for the night. Mark,

Andy and Dave pitched tents and braved a cold night under canvas whilst the others stayed in the warmth of the bunkroom. We awoke to a grey, cold morning. It had rained most of the night and the tents were left to dry out between the showers. We soon had the famous "Wessex Cooking Club" breakfast on the go and this time without smoking out the residents of the cottage! Having devoured a hearty breakfast we were soon all cleared up and the cars loaded ready for the first trip of the day-the

exchange trip in Knotlow.

We headed into Monyash and parked the cars. The clouds loomed dark and ominous looking before starting to dump snow and freezing rain on us semi naked cavers struggling to get into our oversuits as quickly as possible!

We headed down the track in a freezing cold storm and soon found ourselves standing above the huge lid of the 210ft deep Knotlow Chapel Dale Engine Shaft. Andy and Rhys were to descend this and exit via the climbing shaft.

Very close by we found the climbing shaft. Dave, Jon and Sally were to descend from here and exit from the Engine shaft. Very soon each team were busy rigging the entrance pitches. We had agreed to rig the two re-belays on the Engine shaft to allow three people on the rope at once on the long prusik out.

Dave rigged the first pitch of the climbing shaft and descended the short narrow first pitch. Sally then took over on pitch two rigging the traverse on the right hand wall and then deviation at the head of the rift. We then made our way along the well worn path past the chain that marks a window into



the Engine shaft and then to the head of Waterfall pitch. Jon rigged this, backing up to a natural on the right hand wall before traversing at high level along the left hand wall. A deviation was rigged using a sling on a "P" in the opposite wall to give the perfect free hang.

By this time the other team had been waiting for us in Waterfall chamber for a while and were pleased to see us. We all very quickly got moving up our respective pitches in order to help stay warm.

The slog out of the Engine shaft was gladly interrupted by stops for a rest at the re-belays whilst the rope above became free. At one point chatting to the other party as they passed the chain in the aforementioned passage!

We all emerged at pretty much the same time in the surface to the relentless biting wind and were quick to de-rig, get changed and into the Smithy for a well deserved cuppa! I'm pleased to say that the air quality throughout the cave seemed fine.

Whilst sat in the café we decided that a second cave was in order so after dropping into caving supplies for a spot of shopping we made our way to Oxlow Cavern. We had decided to do a short trip into East Chamber at the base of pitch three.

So it was that we found ourselves again getting changed on the side of the road into wet and cold caving kit, the wind seemed worse here and the forecast snow clouds threatened on the horizon. We headed off up the hill and after a bit of tooting and froing managed to find the entrance to the cave.

We all headed down the first pitch again rather narrow in places. We followed the cave down to the easy second pitch climbing shored up piles of rock along the way but also finding flowstone along the route. Pitch three was rigged into the impressive East Chamber and a quick look round was had by most of the team. We then started the long slog back out de-rigging as we went. We met at the cars and got changed in the fading light. A quick call to the Oak and we had managed to reserve another table!

We all settled down in the cosy pub for another excellent meal (we really can recommend the huge rack of ribs!). We emerged to find the first flakes of snow starting to fall and the campers decided it was time to relent and break camp in favour of the bunk room. What a wise idea that proved to be!

Eileen and Keith (OCC) had been busy and got the boiler well fired up and we came back to a warm cottage. The tents were soon down and the sleeping stuff transferred to the bunkroom. By now the snow was falling steadily.

We awoke the following morning to clear blue skies and three inches of snow! The track was ice encrusted and moving the vehicles was going to prove impossible for a while. So we tidied up and started the inevitable breakfast cooking marathon! Soon the snow began to melt and it looked like we could head out so the cars were loaded. Unfortunately it was decided that it was now too late for the planned third caving trip to P8 so instead we decided to drive to Castleton instead and climb Mam Tor. Afterwards we again descended to the car park and made our way to the tea room at H&H for a cuppa to warm us up before heading back to Bristol. The drive home was blighted by snow, hail sleet and rain showers.

All in all a great weekend, shame we couldn't quite get in that third trip but the weather just wasn't on our side....until next time!

**Dave Mason.**

## WCC/CDG Annual Hérault Trip: Easter 2008

Mike Thomas, Jon Beal, Kevin Hilton, John Maneely, Malc Foyle, Pete Hann, Clive Westlake, Claire Cohen, George Triantafillou, Elena Lalou, Charlie Reid-Henry, Nathan Boinet. All photographs by George Triantafillou, except those by Pete Hann

A slightly turbulent journey across the channel saw us in La Havre for our 12 hour jaunt down through France to the Hérault region. It being my first cave diving holiday er sorry expedition with the CDG/WCC I was introduced to the delights of petrol station sugar coated waffles. The 12 hour journey flew by, talking nonsense and taking in the ever changing scenery from the mundane flatlands of the north to the dramatic limestone flanked gorges of the south. We arrived at our campsite at 8pm putting up the tents in the obligatory drizzle that always seems to accompany this ritual. The plan for the week was to concentrate explorations in “Calaven de la Seoubio”. Some of you will know of the ongoing explorations of this site from previous years. For me this was a chance to discover possible new cave along with gaining further cave diving experience. For others Seoubio had been a long and memorable ongoing project with further scope for discovery.

### Saturday March 22 2008 Calaven de la Seoubio

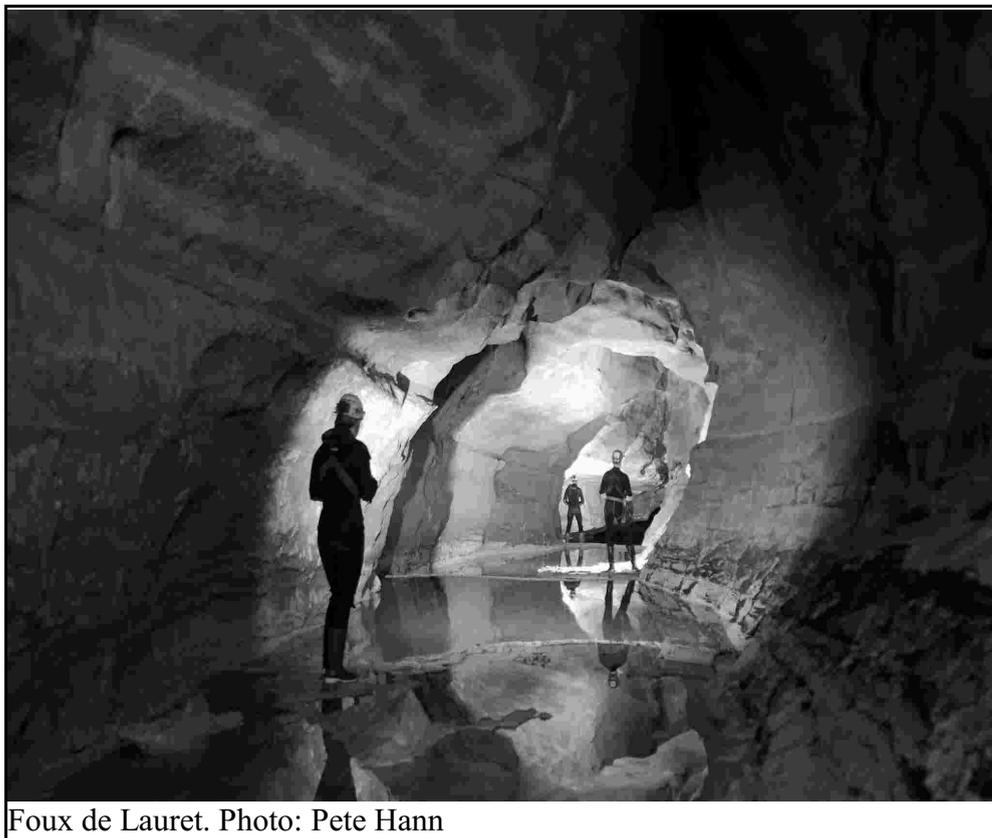
Saturday morning found Mike rigging the 30 metre entrance pitch. First job was to lower all the cave diving gear, ladders; bolting gear and the like ready for the planned 3 days exploration. Being the highly organised fine tuned group we were, we all had jobs to do. Kit all now down at dive base, John B proceeded to clear the cobbles that usually choke the exit in sump 1. A small detail had been missed however when telling me about the delights of Seoubio’s sump 1 prior to this Expedition. A little tight I was told ....nothing



At Foux de Lauret

major, except now 10 minutes before the dive- “er, you may have to remove your caving helmet and cylinders due to the intimacy of this sump, which also means you won’t be able to see anything due to diving lights being attached to said helmet. It’s ok though, I have a little torch you can borrow which you can attach to your arm so you can see “....says Jon B....Joy of Joys! Jon had

actually done a good gardening job and exit from sump 1 was uneventful. Next job was to check the diving lines through to Seoubio 5. This was to be my first long solo cave dive. I had been told that most of these sumps were pretty scenic with good visibility, they weren’t wrong. What a dive, With visibility yielding approx 10 metres and the odd paeleolithic scull for company the job was complete with minimal work due to the lines being in such good condition. John M, Charlie (who could unfortunately only stay for 3 days before driving to Hungary) and Kevin took up the job of ferrying equipment through to sump seven for further exploration. The days tasks now complete we exited in daylight & met the French caving team (CLPA) at their dig “Aven Des Triops” . Pete Hann being experienced in these matters took the task to inspect this vertical 30 metre dug out shaft roughly



Foux de Lauret. Photo: Pete Hann

above sump 7 in the Seoubio.”It’s going to need a lot of bang” came his words once at the surface.

**Sunday March 23 Calaven de la Seoubio**

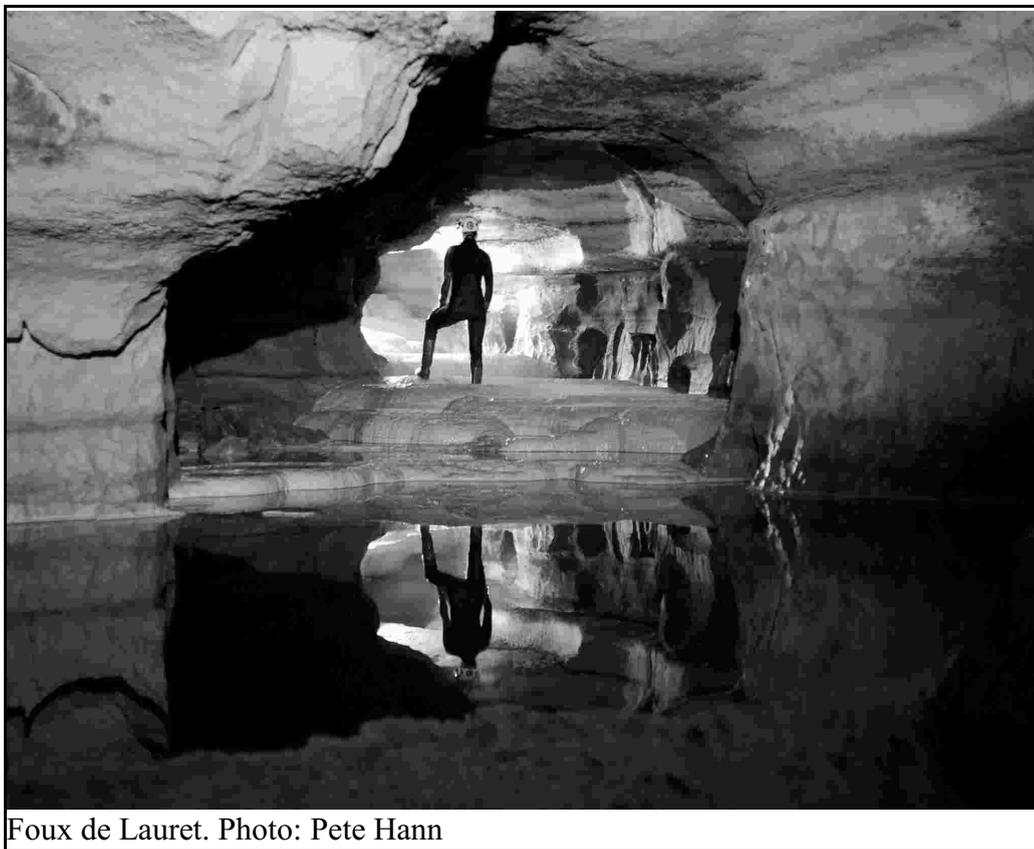
After a good night’s sleep in a Down arctic expedition sleeping bag, yes it was cold. We hit Seoubio early. The plan executed. Jon B, Charlie, Clive, Nathan (member and cave diver of the CLPA and John M to explore possible leads upstream near sump 7. Myself & Mike to ladder a pitch and survey the passage below that had been spotted on a previous trip. Let it be said, Seoubio is a muddy cave. Travelling through the cave I found myself often reaching for what I thought was a hand hold only to find a muddy mess sliding straight off and plummeting the depths below. Brittle limestone was also a first for me ...careful progress had to be made. We arrived at the potential “caverns measureless to man” rift passage in good time.

Ladder rigged I peered down to the bottom of the 6 metre pitch, It didn’t look particularly inspiring that’s for sure. Mike dropped down into the rift first trying to sound optimistic whilst slowly sinking into the gloom. Uninspiring yes. I tried not to sound nonchalant at the fact of finding new cave for the first time but it was tough as I sunk thigh deep in mud while trying to drag a survey tape along the length of a 30 metre mud smothered passage !. Still you win some you loose some. Surveying now complete we headed on down to the hive of activity that could be heard around sump 7. Nathan and John M had been busy climbing high level holes trying to locate links to the French surface team who were busy drilling on the surface. John M had been given precise instructions by Nathan where to dig .....so he dug. Meanwhile, Jon B and Charlie dived the terminal sump 9 in the hope of finding new leads whilst Clive handed out piping hot galaxy hot chocolate to all in need . A great deal of work accomplished it was now time to head out after a satisfying 9 hours of caving.

Back at the campsite we carried on the hustle and bustle, Partly to stay warm ....the temperature dropped to a chilly 5 degrees and partly because there was so much to do. Our average night would consist of kit cleaning and re-packing for the next days exploration, Cooking (as fast as possible before we had chance to chew our own fists off), Personal hygiene (because we had all been happily urinating in our wetsuits all day, well I did anyway). Drinking beer and French Cider, Lots (because we were in France) and of course logging all the survey data.

**Monday March 24 Calaven de la Seoubio**

A more leisurely pace today! .After two days of



Foux de Lauret. Photo: Pete Hann

hard graft it was decided to indulge in a little tourist cave diving. The Vis valley within the Hearult is absolutely littered with cave diving sites but unlike the Dordogne & Lot both popular with cave divers, here you are almost certainly guaranteed to have the whole cave to yourself. The plan for today was to visit the Rodel, a small cave situated above the Vis River. Mike, myself and George a caver from Greece and a member of the CDG kitted up while Jon B and Elena- George’s wife kindly helped carry gear in as we walked a civilised distance to the entrance of the cave. We crawled stooped & shuffled 30 metres into the boulder



Rodel

strewn passage where we were met by the crystal blue waters of the sump pool. Mike described the submerged passage and the procedures for how to maneuver in a particularly tight piece of passage while both George & myself got ready... I don't know what George was thinking but all I knew was I just wanted to get the hell in there, The tight bit of passage was the least of my worries. I was sweating like a pig and that sump had my name written all over it! Submerged we followed the dive line through the low but picturesque bedding plain. Our dive lights illuminating the way on picking out the smooth clean washed shapes while ever aware of the distance between diver and dive line. We arrived at said squeeze and assumed the feet first position as we eased ourselves down through the pebbly choke, amusing to watch I'm sure. Diver pushes gently against the pebbles to descend choke. Diver does not move. Pebbles move up then roll straight back onto stationary diver. Procedure is then repeated several times, At least the visibility is great and relatively warm in comparison to UK cave diving! After diving to about 240 metres from dive base we turn due to the passage becoming extremely tight. On the return journey George took photos even while negotiating the squeeze. How many cave systems are yet to be found in this area?.....Too many I'm sure!. We headed back to camp after our usual lunch of baguettes, Camembert and pate stopping now and again for photo opportunities.

#### Tuesday March 25 Calaven de la Seoubio

Our final day at the Seoubio. We awoke early with the plan for a long day ahead. Jon B had drawn out a plan of action. Mike and John M would descend Seoubio first for the final look at the terminal sump. The bad viz had hampered the last visit and it was decided that a further look would be advantageous given Seoubio's viz had been left to settle for a few days. Jon B to let off the smoke bombs at the pre agreed time. The remainder of the team- Clive, George and myself to help carry all the equipment out after the final push and to dive a sump previously overlooked as small and insignificant. The viz we very quickly discovered was dire. With all the portage over the last three days you literally couldn't see your hand in front of your face. Thank god for thick UK dive line. The diving in this cave isn't particularly difficult. The depth being shallow and no line junctions to negotiate but when you are carrying additional equipment blind as a bat completely dependent on the dive line your concentration has to run at 110%. We arrived at sump seven after taking a few detours as Clive took the time to show us various other routes along the way. Time past quickly and before we knew it Mike and John M arrived back at sump seven to be greeted by hot chocolate while we eagerly hounded them on their finds. Unfortunately again viz hampered exploration. The terminal sump appeared to be static with no prominent way on. All higher level avens however were explored and an agreement that the terminal sump still needed one more trip to close the chapter on downstream Seaubio. Exiting the cave wasn't too much trouble as we all pulled our weight carrying out the tackle bags. Jon B stayed behind readying the release of the smoke bombs for the CLPA on the surface. One last job needed to be carried out before exiting Seoubio. A small sump needed diving and being the naive and inexperienced diver I of course fulfilled this role perfectly. On past exploration it was hoped that this sump was extremely short with a possibility of an air bell on the other side. A stall boss

partly submerged blocked the way on. Mike and Jon B helped me get kitted up, the aim of the game here was to get into the water as quickly as possible for the narrow passage leading to the sump was muddy as hell and even after a minute, mud oozed into the once clear sump pool. Diving under the stall boss it was clear that no air bell existed. Ahead, an ongoing very narrow but wide bedding plain. I could see the rolling deluge of mud slowly pursuing me from the passage I had just left. The sump certainly didn't look promising as it narrowed dramatically after 10 metres or so. I thought I'd give it one last chance as I turned 180 degrees and felt for a way on with my feet. No luck, still better to have checked than to have assumed. Swimming back was quite uneventful apart from the line being pulled into somewhere black small and horrid, apparently my face must have told it all



Foux de Lauret.

when I clambered out of the sump pool, if only the sump went!! Tired, after 9 hours of pretty hard caving we were ready to exit but not quite. Mike had spotted "an enticing black hole"- as he would call it. Before both Jon and I could shout out *no please don't do that* Mike was off like a rat up a drain pipe up onto a mud wall. We reluctantly shed our own body weight in tackle bags as Mike shouted enthusiastically down to us as Jon also effortlessly climbed to the top. What little hand holds there were simple fell away leaving super slippy mud to try and claw into, Swearing and calling out for my mum (a little bit) I got to the top. In front, an 8metre wide 6metre high fossil passage. We followed it in hope but unfortunately after 40 metres the passage dropped back down into the main passage. Finding a way back down was fun. We weren't going to use the way we came so climbing loose rock and walking over rotting calcite brought around much laughter and merriment. Soon enough we were out with the help and alarming efficiency from the whole group and the CLPA.

#### Wednesday March 26 Foux De Lauret

Today was a chance to sample one of Herault's finest river caves, The Foux De Lauret. Nathan had kindly arranged access for what turned out to be an interesting and sporting trip. Large deep river passage followed dusty rabbit warren sized holes. What the cave lacked in calcite formations certainly made up for

in rock structures. Monolithic almost synthetic looking rock loomed over our tiny figures as we swam by reaching the odd gour pool here and there and having a good laugh as is always on good caving trips. Clive Pete and George all taking photo's , while myself , Malc, Mike, Jon B and John M worked it like pro's in front of the camera's .

#### Thursday March 27 Gourneyrou

Today the group split and various cave and cave diving sites were visited. The plan had been set to visit the Gourneyrou. Mike and Jon B relished telling me about the joys of the near vertical scree slope that had to be negotiated whilst sporting 18kg of diving equipment on your back .....”Have you ever tried scree running Claire” –Mike asked as I slid and cursed my way down after the third 18kg trip to the resurgence pool- This had better be good! We all readied ourselves all carrying 2 x 12 litre cylinders each as this was to be quite a deep dive. Jon B dived first solo whilst Mike, George and I all dived together. The submerged cave certainly was big. Huge boulders littered the floor as we followed the thick dive line. Parts of the line had been repaired with even thicker 12mm rope, testament to the force of the flooding that occurs here. We arrived at our turn point at a depth of 45 metres and 320 metres from dive base. Spread out in front of us huge rock shapes cut by water and time dominated this enormous and ever deepening passage. This was a place that would be very hard to forget. 25 minutes spent decompressing and we were out ready for the next adventure by way of Follatiere cave. The scenery is beautiful around the viz valley. The trek to the next cave gave us a good chance the appreciate the tranquil woodlands and the alpine scenery of the higher grounds as the sun shone down. This cave appeared

completely different in character to all the others we had visited. Dark sharp limestone covered most of its interior as we picked our way over the now abandoned river passage and up through razor sharp corkscrew inlets.

Good caving and cave diving was had by all and what better way to end it than to spend the evening socializing in Malc's , Pete's and Clive's warm cabin. Kevin, who had unfortunately damaged his wrist right at the start of the trip had been slaving away all day over a hot pan making spaghetti bolognaise ready for our return while George and Elena had very kindly brought with them several bottles of ouzo for our consumption. Both Pete and Malc had expressed concern that they would only be able to handle a quarter of a bottle between them so some foolish individual had wagered a bet on drinking them both under the table. I don't remember much after that apart from the chant Pete frequently repeated that night as ouzo was poured into each of our glasses.....One for Dwarfy, One for Shrek, One for Mikey and one for Bob Doux. We were all slightly the worst for wear the following day..... I will never drink ouzo again and paid for it dearly by turning green later the following afternoon as we drove back home winding our way up the hair pin bends of the Vis Valley.

An excellent trip had by all. Everyone working together pulling their weight and enjoying the experience at the same time .Although Seaubio may be coming to it's natural explorational end all was not lost. Apart from piecing parts of Seaubio's puzzle together by way of a more detailed Survey, our French caving friends have given us information on a few very potentially good leads ....Watch this space ! **Claire Cohen**

## Extracts from the Cambrian Caving Council newsletter April 2008

Pollution warning - **Little Neath River Cave** and caves lower down the valley. It has been reported that a solvent, probably diesel, has contaminated Little Neath River Cave. It is strongly suspected that it comes from 4 wheel drive vehicles in the river. The result is that the atmosphere in the cave is currently not healthy, nor is diesel good for the skin. Beware in this cave and those lower down the valley. Direct reports back to the conservation officer would be welcome via e-mail .The Environment Agency have visited and taken samples from the river but the results are not through yet. The smell has markedly decreased there since the last rain. A BBNP Warden claims he smelled what may have been diesel on the river at Pont Melin Fach a few weeks ago. That may have been the same incident.

#### **Dan yr Ogof** temporary access limitations

Most readers will no doubt be aware of a recent incident where cavers were trapped in DYO by rising floodwaters.

Currently the rescue dump is being increased in capacity and scope so that it will fully cater for any future incident. This process is anticipated to be completed over the next month.

The DYOCAC and the DYO showcave management wish to ensure the safety of wardens and their parties while in the cave. During May, IN WET WEATHER ONLY the number of cavers allowed into DYO will be restricted to approximately 8 in any one day. In dry settled weather the access will remain as at present with three parties allowed in.

The showcave staff may remove caver access if the water levels and or the weather conditions warrant it.

Work has been carried out over the last 18 months to upgrade

some of the fixed aids within the cave. In particular new anchors, handlines and a fixed stainless steel ladder have been installed at the Abyss. Over time the rock had become more polished creating a tendency for people to only complete the round trip in one direction to avoid climbing up the Abyss. This led to the buoyancy devices generally being at the wrong end of the Green Canal for most people. The introduction of the ladder should mean that we now have a more even split of groups doing the round trip each way, thus giving a better distribution of buoyancy aids.

The next phase of work will be to replace the chain ladder at the Risings with a new stainless steel version.

**Pwll Dwfn** There are reports that the p-hanger at the top of the last pitch (part of the y-hang) in Pwll Dwfn is loose. This will be looked at as soon as possible, but in the meantime caution should be used.

**Cathedral Cave Access.** Due to the installation of a ventilation fan access from Cathedral Cave into the bottom of Tunnel Cave has not been possible for a number of years. During the last year an airlock has been constructed to allow access to and from the showcave without compromising the working of the fan. With the start of the new showcave season it is now possible for DYO wardens to obtain keys to the airlock. The access to **Tunnel Cave top entrance** and the associated maintenance of the fixed aids remains with SWCC. Access through the airlock will only be available when the showcave is open, keys being obtained from the showcave management. Access will be available to DYO wardens operating in a very similar way to that used for

DYO. Cathedral Cave and Tunnel Cave Airlock Access Rules are available on the Cambrian website

**Otter Hole** The new booking system is working well, and a signing-inbook has been placed at the entrance. The rescue dump has been replenished and the rope on the black stal replaced. The tangle of ropes through the sump has been sorted out, the rope through the arch has been removed and the rope through the eyehole tightened to aid progress through it for those so inclined. Brushes have been placed at the climb to the extensions to assist

parties to clean off when leaving the streamway.

Surface work saw the path cleared and a complete refurbishment of the bathtub which is now reported to be in good working order. The provision of a duck is promised and ambitious plans to rig a shower near the bathtub may or may not come to fruition.

Please consult the latest news section of the CCC website for up-to-date details.

## From the Log Book & the Wessex Website

Monday March 17 2008 **Goon's Hole** Ali and Pete Moody.

On 13 September 2004 Ali pushed a savage squeeze at the end of our dig in Goon's to discover a small chamber. Today was the follow-up trip, this time with me accompanying her into the extension. Over the last four years I made a number of solo trips attempting to open up the squeeze. The use of commercial explosives is prohibited so a variety of esoteric and not too successful alternatives were employed. The squeeze remains, in Swildons book parlance, "Extremely snug". Unfortunately a thorough exploration of the chamber is going to have to wait: a colony of about a dozen Lesser Horseshoe Bats are in winter residence, many hanging in the narrow rift we particularly want to check. **Pete**

Wednesday March 19 - Tuesday March 25 2008. **Craven Pothole Club Mendip Meet.**

34 members of the Craven descended on the Wessex hut. The dribble began on Wednesday and there were members caving on the Thursday; Goatchurch and Sidcott Swallet. That evening saw the masses arrive, the Hunters attended and much ale drunk. With the leader, Ric, missing due to bad health, a replacement was found in the capable hands of Gordon Cordwell who with the help of Brian and Brenda Prewer and Ali Moody soon had things planned and trips in place. Swildons was the centre of attention on Friday with various trips down to Sump 1, the Short Round and Priddy Green Sink. Saturday evening was spent playing skittles in the New Inn; CPC versus the Wessex and Others... final score a draw! Sunday saw St. Cuthberts and GB trips. In the evening a Reservoir Hole trip took place. On Monday Folk started leaving but some did a Manor Farm trip. Others walked. Several visits made by the diggers to admire the Templeton Dig. Monday night a final visit to the Hunters by the dwindling remains followed by a clean up on Tuesday morning. A great weekend was had by all. Thank You! **Pete Jones.**

Friday March 21 2008 **Withybrook Slocker.** Graham & Chrissy Price, Nigel Graham.

Things are never that simple! In the combined Price/Somerset County Council Adopt-a-Culvert project, the stream was found to be finding an alternative way from a fracture in the culvert. A large sink to one side of the cave entrance has been opened up, walled around, leaving the strike face exposed. It's well-sculpted limestone, but very shattered & we spent some 7 hours clearing a lot of clay to try and establish what's what before the boulders can be stabilised. Once the stream's diverted they will be under a 10' artificial waterfall. **Nigel**

Sunday March 23 2008 **Charterhouse Cave** Ali, Nigel Graham, Mark Ollis (CPS).

CPC Mendip Meet. In the event only Mark of the visiting Craven members took up the invitation (although Nigel is a Craven as well as a Wessex member). Tourist and sand-hauling, Midsummer Chamber first while we were all dry. Then while Ali showed Mark around the Citadel and Chiarascuro Nigel ferried the 3 BDH drums to the Aragonite Crawl. All three helped drag the sand into Singing Stal Chamber where we cached the sand before exiting. **Nigel**

Sunday March 23 2008 **Pwll Dwfn** Mad Fiona with Lucy, Isaac and Tim from the CSS.

A good SRT trip into Pwll Dwfn today. Really enjoyed this cave. As need to do more SRT this was an excellent start. **Fiona**

Monday March 24 2008 **Daren Cilau, Hard Rock Café** Mad Fiona with Lucy, Isaac and Tim.

Had a good trip to the Hard Rock today to deliver some more kit to Camp One. It was their first trip to Hard Rock and they had an excellent day's caving. **Fiona**

Sunday April 6 **Gaping Ghyll: Corky's**

Not been down here before, but found entrance (with fixed ladder) without too much bother, along dry valley upslope of Bar Pot.

Trip consisted of several short pitches broken by sections of horizontal crawling (consistently small, but without any significant fat bstd filters), and concluded with a 40m approx hang into Mud Hall. Went for a wander round GG and exited with time to beat snow off hill (almost).

The short pitches are readily climbable with the exception of pitch four (or was it five; the one with a choice of drops either side of a wedged block) which is best tackled with a short rope @ 10m. Most of the pitches have a single bolt so can be roped if preferred. Probably rigged for ladders when dug but as you'll have an srt kit for last pitch anyway, a short rope or two works fine.

Last pitch has a few spits in place. A traverse rope to pitch head and beyond is currently in-situ so last pitch can be easily dropped with a 45m rope, a couple of hangers and a krab for in-situ deviation tat 1/3 way down. Worthwhile way into GG if you're in the dales. **Biff**

Wednesday April 9 **Heale Farm Cave** Ali moody, Andy Snook, Charlotte Kemp, Jude Vanderplank & Richard Carey.

We decided to include this out-of-the-way cave as part of our A

to Z on Mendip caves and despite the loose entrance we managed to get down as far as the Alimentary Canal. There were quite a few furry moths around so some care was needed to get past them. A very interesting and different cave.

Fortunately we had asked permission from the landowner as we were interrogated by a lady from the neighbourhood watch. She did calm down a bit once we had managed to explain that we did in fact have permission. Apparently there have been a lot of burglaries. So despite the fact that we were parked in plain sight appear to have caused a ruckus.

Saturday April 12 Swildons IX & Damp Link NikNak, Geoff, Rich, Adrian and Jude.

This was a trip that had been on the cards for a long time, but I didn't really think I was ever going to do it! It was put in the diary for Saturday 12th, and then nobody spoke about again (apparently they were trying to avoid scaring me off) - they were successful.

We followed the plan that NikNak, Rich and I should go in via Mud Sump and ladder Shatter, then down Blue Pencil to meet up with Adrian and Geoff in IV, as they had dived sumps II and III. Geoff went through IV first and did an excellent job of sticking to the roof, so the vis was still good when I went next. NikNak then did a sterling job of free-diving through to take a reg and cylinder back for Rich, and repeated the process for Adrian. This gave me time to have a look at the Tumbledown dig, which is much longer than when I saw it last.

Sump V was better than I had expected, the water level was quite low, and Geoff guided me through. NikNak went up to start the syphons going in Damp Link, and I went with him as I was the only one who hadn't been there before. We were soon back in the streamway.

Sump VI wasn't far, and Adrian had kept his cylinder with him as he prefers to dive it, whilst the rest of us went via the by-pass. This is up a climb, and then seems to keep turning left until you feel as though you've just completed 4 sides of a square, but at this point you reach the squeeze!! The shovel that lives there is a bit of hint, I just managed to fit through (that was an only just), then NikNak scraped from one side and Adrian from the other, and everyone got through.

Swildon's VII is very impressive, and just like Clive's photograph. We soon went on through to sump IX and had a quick swim in the sump pool. Then retraced our route back to the start of Damp Link. A previous party had left most of the lead that should be at sump II here, so Adrian and NikNak took it back to sump IV with Adrian's cylinder, to be taken out later in the day.

Gloop sump was total empty by now, and we made our way up through the rather constricted passage to Grit sump, the narrow upwards rift just before Grit proved to be quite strenuous (though perhaps the air wasn't too good at this point). It was good to wriggle though the right angle bend after Grit and feel the fresher, cleaner air. The next section "Causer's Calamity" doesn't look far on the survey - but it feels a long way when you're having to crawl on your belly!! It's a welcome relief to drop down into Shatter Passage and recognise the way out.

Four of us came out through Mud Sump, whilst NikNak returned to sump IV to retrieve the cylinders, and took the lumps of lead (there were 8 to 10 of them), back to sump II..

We got back to Wessex as Maurice's party was in full swing - there was still plenty of beer and food left - which went down very well!! **Jude**

Saturday April 19 2008 Charterhouse Cave Pete and Ali

Moody, Pete Hann

The initial aim of this trip was to enlarge the letter box squeeze at the start of the passage above the Frozen Cascade so that Pete X 2 could get through it. A large tarpaulin was taken in to protect the flowstone cascade but a second one will be required to protect the bottom section. The squeeze was attacked from both sides and fortunately it proved relatively easy to break up the crystal floor and after about an hour Pete X 2 were able to join Ali on the far side by the bend where the passage swings right an enlarges. Muddy oversuits were removed but the crystal pool that had stopped Ali on 15<sup>th</sup>. March had drained. The first part of this passage is reminiscent of St. Paul's passage in Swildons. It heads in a South-Easterly direction and then breaks out into a larger high-level passage entered by climbing up between a few boulders. At this point it became very clear that we weren't in an inlet passage but in an old fossil downstream route. This passage is square shaped, just like some of the active streamway. In an upstream direction it ended almost immediately in a stal and mud choke, while the 2m X 2m passage with a gour floor slopes downwards heading on a bearing of 135°. It then changes shape to a phreatic tube 1.2m in diameter bearing 120°, still descending and becoming increasingly muddy until it ends in a stal encrusted duck (very similar to Gour Pool Duck in Shatter Series, with a 1.5 cm airspace. This appeared to be short and after sticking his feet through it to determine its length, Pete M (also the only person with a wet-suit on) very bravely pushed it and with much spluttering emerged in an air-bell 45cms high and 1.5 m wide. Unfortunately we seem to be in Charterhouse's version of Swildons Sump V and looking ahead a further air-bell could be seen on both left- and right- hand side of the passage and it is thought that these are probably joined. The air-bells have about 10cms of airspace and beyond the passage sumps. Length of passage from the right-hand bend to the ducks estimated to be about 70m. and the new passage appears to be running parallel to the active streamway. We now have two downstream sumps to dive! **Ali**

Saturday April 19 2008 Daren Cilau Jay Woods, Andy Snook, Steve.

This was my first trip into this cave after lots of encouragement over the last few months by Fiona. I had to be up at 0500 to meet Andy and Steve in Bristol by 0700. We arrived at Whitewalls and changed outside in the cold, rain-threatening Welsh weather. It took an hour to negotiate the entrance series as Steve was doing a lot of filming. My lungs were thanking me dearly for giving up smoking, and I was loving the added oxygen. We negotiated the wriggle and then checked our names in the log-book in the Big Chamber Nowhere Near the Entrance. Next on to White Company for more photos and videos. The formations here were splendid - they blew me away. On next to the Antlers and then on to the Kitchen and much debate as to where the rope and the plastic pipe ladder went? Next we headed down a side passage and examined really fine crystal formations. Headed back towards the log-book and decided to check-out the ladders. A quick check on the time and we turned about and made our way through the entrance series. Back at the hut, changed in fine Welsh rain only 7 hours after setting off. Wow! I shall definitely be doing a lot more exploration of this cave system in the future.

**Jay**

Friday April 25 2008 Templeton Phil Hendy, John Hill, Aubrey Newport.

Phil and John bailed the bottom pit and reamed the shot-holes. Aubrey arrived, suggested a different pattern and we drilled

another 14mm by 1m hole. Charging with 100gm Cord we protected the lights and cameras and exited to meet Prew and Jonathan Riley. After a satisfying bang we were pleased to see that the cameras had survived but we could see nothing else but swirling smoke. Debrief at the Hunters! **Phil**.

Saturday April 26 2008 **Dan yr Ogof, Great North Road.** Mad Fi, Adrain F, Stuart France.

Had an excellent trip into DyO this weekend. Really enjoyed the Green Canal - it's always a pleasure to go through it. I got to do it twice this time. We took all our SRT kit in Daren Drums for the pitches ahead. Really pleased these climbs were roped. Looking forward to a return trip to get to the bitter end. Really enjoyed the trip, but it was no so good for poor old Stuart France who sadly landed rather hard on his hand and broke his radius. By Sunday morning he had his arm in plaster! **Fiona**

Saturday April 26 2008 **Charterhouse Cave** Ali and Pete Moody and John Cooper.

A trip to continue the survey from the start of the narrows and hopefully to get as far as the active stream way sump. The Narrows proved very slow to survey and was also extremely cold thanks to the howling gale blowing up this section of passage. It was a relief to get to the pitch and once below the confluence progress was quite fast, we eventually reached the sump at 5:00pm after surveying for about four hours trip time seven hours. NB it takes about 1 ½ hours from the sump to the entrance.

The preliminary results of the survey (until we tie the survey station in Singing Stal with the original 1983 it survey):

Length of surveyed passage from Singing Stal to the sump = 460 metres (which includes about 60 metres through the boulder choke).

Vertical drop from Singing Stal to the confluence = 93 metres which gives a depth at this point of 160 metres and an OD of 95. Vertical drop between Singing Stal and the sump pool = 112 metres which gives Charterhouse a depth of 180 metres (590 ft) and an OD of 75.

This makes Charterhouse deeper than both Longwood (at 175 metres ) and Swildons Hole (167 metres ). Wookey Hole is Mendip's deepest cave at 182 metres ( 597 ft ) but we should beat this once the sump is dived. YOHHHH.... **Ali**

Saturday May 3 2008 **Charterhouse Cave** Pete Hann, Alim and Pete Moody, Clive Westlake and Richard Carey.

The main aim of this trip was to start photographing the new extensions, starting at the streamway sum. Pete M also wanted to dive the static sump at the end of the Frozen Cascade passage. It was also a very noteworthy occasion as it was also the 1000<sup>th</sup>. Recorded caving trip for Mr. R. Carey. Congratulations, Rich and you will soon have as much Radon poisoning as the rest of us! A fairly successful trip with Pete Hann and Clive photographing from the sump back to the pitch near the Confluence. Pete M dived 4 - 5 metres into the static sump but unfortunately was unable to find a way on as everything appears to be blocked by stal. Another attempt will be made when water levels are lower. **Ali**

Tuesday May 6 2008 **Loxton Quarry Cave** Phil Hendy, Rich & Kay (prospective new members), Nicky, Ade and Jude.

Into Loxton Quarry Cave after beating the lock into submission. When Ade and Jude arrived we went into Loxton Cavern - good trip, explored most of the cave. Rich went to the bottom (and just

got out!). Photos taken and debrief in the White Hart. Good Ale. **Phil**

Wednesday May 7 2008 **Templeton** The usual diggers (Phil, John Hill, Eric Durnford, Tom and Eric Turner) were joined by our President Don Thomson for his annual tour of inspection. Don did sterling service hauling spoil and three skips were taken to the surface. **Phil**.

Sunday May 11 2008 **Silica Mine, South Wales** Chris Grosart and Helen Rider.

Girlie trip to sort out some loose line in the roof of the 9 metre passage through "The Window". Loose climbing rope remove and floating line in ceiling re-belayed properly. This 'Pink' line connects with three others (!!?) @ 14.5 m and not the 12m level as expected. Need to go back and see where they all go. **Chris**

Tuesday May 13 2008 **Waterwheel Swallet.** Phil Hendy, Andy Chamberlin, Nicky + Kay and Rich.

A short but interesting trip, the canals being full of water and limited headroom - very cold! Did not go down the pitch as Andy had to get back to 'Er Indoors, and the new resin bolts for the ladder are in a silly place (We suspect we know who to blame!). Out into the sunshine and a good session in the Queen Vic. **Phil**

Wednesday May 14 **M is for Mangle Hole** Charlotte, Jude, Rich Carey.

Posing as the intrepid explorers for the M in our A to Z, we asked permission at the ski centre and because we wouldn't be out by 9.00pm we would have to do so at our own risk! M is also for mud. The entrance is easy to find, it's by a tree! There seems to have been a few collapse in the area as there were quite a few new holes that have opened up since the last time I was here.

Anyway back on track we rigged the entrance with 2 7.5m ladders and descended to the ledge. I used to attach the third ladder to the other two but we moved left and found some new hangers and attached our 10m ladder here. 7.5m would have been just enough. Straight down and to the mangle. We quickly found the Route to Aldermaston Chamber and though the squeeze was open the mud was of a soft chocolate texture. It was quite slippery once in the chamber and we declined to descend to the sumps. uesday May 20 2008 **Wookey Hole** Ali and Pete Moody, Martin Grass Jackie Ankerman, Lee Hawkswell and Nigel Taylor.

This was a great opportunity to have a look around all the side passages off the show cave including Charon's Chamber, the entrance rifts around Goatsherd Chamber and also the bedding plane beyond the stalagmite grill off the first chamber. Some very interesting Paw marks were found in the mud by the lake in the first chamber and it is thought they may be otter. Many thanks to Martin for arranging a wonderful womble down Wookey. **Ali**

Tuesday May 27 2008 **Charterhouse Cave** Mark Helmore and Mark Easterling.

After a suggestion from Ali, Bean and I found ourselves carrying 4 BDHs full of sand to the old gate just past Singing Stal. Well it's good training for the sand! **Mark H**

Saturday May 31 2008 **Swildons Hole** Emmsy, John Maneely, Adrian VdP, NikNak.

Ems and John had the Damp Link, and free-diving the sumps as

objectives. Adrian and NikNak were to have a dig at Tumbledown. All down to sump 2 together. Ems and John dived sumps 2, 3 and 4 uneventfully and started the siphon for the Damp Link. Then on to 9. Unfortunately the siphon hadn't worked its magic so we opted to head home via Blue Pencil, but not before dropping in on the Tumbledowners, who were very grumpy and jovial (must have been the special air they were

breathing!). Ems and John completed half a round-trip and met up with Ade and NikNak at the Landing. All headed out together. A very enjoyable trip and a first go at free-diving 2 and 3 for me. **Emmsy**

## Cheramodytes

Cavers tend to be a healthy lot; maybe the mud-packs and exercise help, but you look it (even I did, once....). Nevertheless you are human and suffer from hidden ailments which can inhibit your caving.; amongst these is Diabetes. Most people understand that it affects people's ability to metabolise sugars, and that the energy we normally receive from sugars is not naturally controlled and readily available to diabetics. Instead they take Insulin, often by injection. Resist the temptation to think "So what. Sounds like a personal problem". In adventurous situations our well-being is inter-dependent. Your safety depends on mine, and vice versa. Well not mine, actually as I am rather past that sort of thing. But we enjoy their caving company, so we need to know how diabetes affects them, and us, in practice. Their specific risk is called hypoglycaemia (An abnormally diminished concentration of glucose in the blood). A diabetic takes artificial insulin, and lacks the body's self-monitored release. It is all too easy to deplete the blood sugar reserves. First the brain (even in Cavers, the most sensitive organ) and then the rest of the body, runs out of energy and shuts down. This can happen fast enough to be lethal - think of a pitch-head traverse for example. It

happened tragically to Ian Roland of the CDG while diving in Mexico. Only 2% of diabetics will experience convulsions or unconsciousness, but every single one has experienced some degree of "Hypo" and for 80% their "Hypo" will show these symptoms: Nervousness / Irritability / Fatigue or Drowsiness / Faintness / Dizziness / Tremors / Weakness / Vertigo / Headaches. These are not behaviours we associate with our caving friends except in the Hunters on a Saturday night. If you see them, treat them or those 80% symptoms will worsen towards the 2%. It doesn't help that the excitement / adrenaline reaction is to demand more energy from our blood. The simple and basic treatment is to get some sugar into the sufferer (and every diabetic carries an emergency supply), but it might not be that simple in practice with a severe "Hypo". Diabetes varies in its severity and the precautions of its sufferers, but all should brief you, before a caving trip, on what to do if faced with a "Hypo". Big Stu is the perfect example, as he carries everything from edible glucose to a full-blown injection kit and invariably tells you about them first.

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

### The Exploits of Mak and Jo.... or News from the Antipodes.

Mak writes: "I see - we leave the country for a short while and all the mountain biking activity stops!! Well, we have managed a couple of trips on hired bikes - The woods behind Wanaka on South Island in late March - there were a lot of interconnecting trails (seems the norm here) and was very dusty given the drought.

On Wednesday April 16 we went in Whakarawera forest in Rotorua on the north Island supposedly the best in NZ - it was a blast through fern trees and on good trails - bit wet as it has pissed it down for a week. No-one fell off although Jo did get a wet foot stopping in a puddle"

Their New Zealand caving (so far) is described below.

Our trip was meant to be just the usual tourist thing, we still plan on doing the black water rafting when we get to north island, but whilst touring round south Island we have managed a few trips armed only with head torches.

Saturday March 22 Stream Cave in Arthurs pass. We stopped as it was signposted - reading the noticeboard they advise that the cave can easily be tackled - a wet entrance pool and a short fixed ladder at the end. We were debating when we saw another group getting ready, so we raced back to the camper - donned swimmers, shorts, sandals, t-shirt, fleece jumper and head torches and we were off - you could avoid the worst of the waist

deep entrance pool, but it was up above the knees, it then continued as a nice 3m wide 5m high streamway for some 500m with some pools and climbs - punters may get wet bits but us cavers managed with only wet feet. up the fixed ladder and out into daylight - a nice little active through trip.

Sunday March 23 Punakaiki Cavern, a short double entrance cave next to the road - need head torches as there are two branches that lead back from the cavern behind the entrance. Glow worms were present in the upper reaches.

Friday April 4 Clifden Cave - another signposted cave open to the public. There are three entrances two close together and another at the other end (there is a side branch leading to a sump but this needed rigging) Another good trip (about 300m) we ended up doing it there and back as there was a deep pool near the furthest entrance and we did not want to get wet - and had cameras and wallets without dry bags. Lots and lots of glow worms in this cave - also some graffiti so not sure that advertising cave locations to the great unwashed is such a good idea. **Mak and Jo**

On 6<sup>th</sup> April your Editor was savagely attacked with snowballs and disrespect while approaching Upper Pitts for a Committee meeting. Amongst the guilty parties Waldren (leading his son

astray, and egged on by Tuska and others) was wont to roll him in the snow.

Kevin and Christine have taken up canoeing. This is worrying, because although John Hurst and Graham Candy paddle kayaks they do so for adventuring. Kev and Chris are going all competitive and aiming at the Devizes to Westminster race. Chris writes: " Kev and I managed to stay upright in today's Hasler Series race. As newcomers we had to start in division 9. Southampton estuary was a tad choppy and the wind picked up, not to mention rescue boats zooming about creating wake, causing more trouble than they helped !! But we got a flying start after plenty of practise with standing starts the evening before and held a good position throughout, finally finishing 5th out of

11 in our class. We covered the 4 miles in 29 mins 20 seconds, clocking an average speed of 8 mph ! This is alarmingly quick when our old boat could barely manage 5mph with a strong wind behind it !!"

Luckily Kev then brings the whole thing to earth by revealing that their new, slimmer, go-faster canoe rolls along just fine..... 6 times in their first outing, and as Chris says, We have a new racing K2 (the red one) which is very fast and very tippy ! She is a beautiful craft and will (hopefully) see us right through to the big race next Easter. However, naturally we have had teething troubles and the bottom of the canal is smelly and rather deep in places !!

## **RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY As at June 3, 2008**

Cave Diving Group N/L 167 (Apr 08)  
Chelsea S.S. N/L 50, 5 (May 08)  
Craven Pothole Club. Record 90 (Apr. 08)  
Derbyshire Caving Association 'Derbyshire Caver' 128 (Spr. 08)  
Grampian Speleological Group. Bull. 4th series 3, 4 (Mar 08) (Rana - Claonite breakthrough)  
MNRC N/L 117 (Spr. 08)  
British Geological Survey: Western Mendip / Eastern Mendip. Geological maps with guidebooks  
Stone C. Priddy, Chewton & Charterhouse Mineries, Somerset. Plymouth Mineral and Mining Club.  
W.T.Warwick Magic Lantern slides of Mendip (CD)  
Priddy Village OS map (CD)  
Dr. William Buckland. Inaugural address to Somerset A & NHS 1849 (part)  
British Cave Research Association 'Speleology' 10/11 (Aug/Dec 2007)  
Bristol Exploration Club Belfry Bulletin 56, 2 (528), (Aug 07) (*Digs at Rose Cottage, Cain's Hill, Upper Canada Combe, Alco Hole*).  
3 (529) (*Tribute to 'Alfie', Caine Hill Shaft, Meghalaya, Raven's Well, Rose Cottage Dig, early caving ladders*)  
Cambrian C.C. N/L Jan 08  
Cave Diving Group N/L 166 (Jan 08)  
CSS N/L 50, 2 (Feb 08), 3 (Mar 08) (*Balch Cave dig, Wigmore diving*), 4 (Apr 08)  
Craven Pothole Club 'Record' 89 (Jan 08)  
Derbyshire Caver 127 (Winter 07)  
Descent 200 (Feb/Mar 08) (*Swildon's Hole Book Launch and Review, MM Mine, Wig memorial unveiling*) 201 (April/May 08)  
Grosvenor C.C. N/L 142 (Feb 08)  
Mendip Caving Group N/L 346, 347, 348 (Dec 07, Feb, Mar 08))  
Mendip Nature Research Committee N/L 116 (Winter 08)  
Speleological Union of Ireland 'Underground' 72 (Autumn 07)  
UBSS Proceedings 24, 2 (Jan08) (*Jodie Lewis's archaeological dig at Charterhouse 2006, Swildon's Hole hydrochemistry*)  
N/L 5, 6, 7 (Spring, Summer Autumn 07)  
Westminster Speleological Group N/L 2008/1 (Jan 08)  
Caving Pictures CD (Donated by Clive Westlake)  
Cave Art ( A Guide to the Decorated Ice Age Caves of Europe) Bahn P.G. (*Locations, opening times, etc.*)  
Dead Man's Cave. Frazer C. (*Children's adventure story*)

**MISSING** Descent No. 201 is missing from the Library, and has not been booked out. It is therefore not available for members who wish to read it and, quite simply, this is **theft**. Once again, please remember that current journals (in the rack on the door) **MUST NOT** to be removed from Upper Pitts. All other items must be signed out, and returned promptly for the benefit of the rest of us. **Phil Hendy**

## **Upper Pitts – Weekend usage**

Tuska's Reliquary in the February issue of the Journal gave some food for thought, but unfortunately very little nourishment. This analysis attempts to expand on the bare statistics. I used the booking sheets for 23rd July 2003 to 6th August 2005, though data was missing for January and February 2005.

I recorded names booked in for Friday and/or Saturday, and whether or not they were members or guests. The range of members using Upper Pitts at weekends ranged from 0 - 37, and

guests from 0 - 23, with total bunks used from 0 - 42. The average number each weekend was 11.7 members, 5.8 guests, with a total occupancy of 17.5.. I looked in more detail at 'normal' weekends, ie. not Bank Holidays or Dinner Weekends, and divided usage into months Figs 1 and 2).

Generally, February October and November are the busiest times, with a drop in August due to holidays. During April,

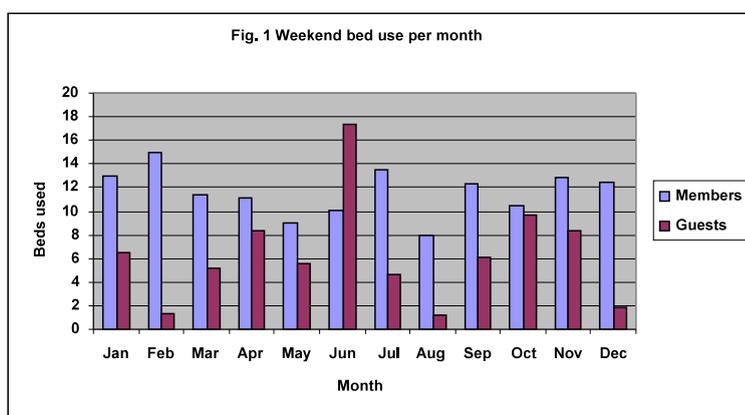
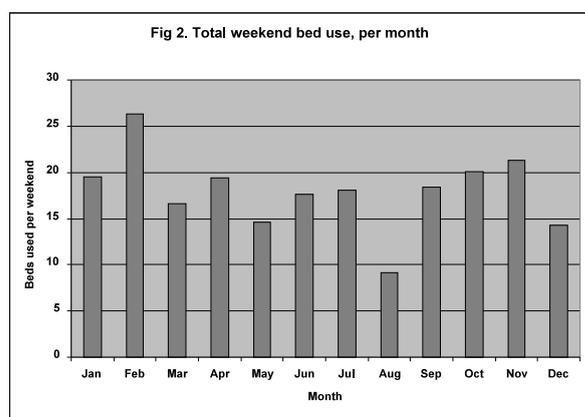
October and November we have lots of guest bookings, and there is a 'blip' in June, which may be due to the archaeologists booking, usually a large number over at least two weekends. Obviously over the years we have several covers in ones or twos from other clubs staying at Upper Pitts, but guest groups can number up to 12 or more (larger groups have stayed more

recently, but the data is not available). Normally we expect one group per weekend, but over the period in question, we have had the following (**Table 1**):

**Table 1.** Hut usage by multiple groups

| Number of Groups | Occasions | Range of Guests |
|------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 2                | 14        | 8 – 23          |
| 3                | 5         | 7 – 15          |
| 4                | 1         | 8               |
| 5                | 1         | 20              |

On both Dinner weekends during the period covered, 37 members stayed at Upper Pitts, with 3 and 5 guests respectively (wives/partners or dinner guests). The number of guests at working weekends has varied from 1 (twice) to 17. The number of members staying was 11, 6 and 15, though not all of these helped with hut maintenance.



I have refrained from commenting on these data because a statistician is someone who can go directly from an unwarranted assumption to a preconceived conclusion. As Noel Moynihan once said, statistics are figures that can prove anything – even the truth, so make of them what you will. **Phil Hendy**

| Contents                 |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Tuskas Reliquary         | 181 |
| Club News                | 181 |
| Club Visit to Derbyshire | 183 |
| WCC/CDG Visit to Herault | 185 |
| Cambrian Council News    | 188 |
| Log Book Extracts        | 189 |
| Cheramodytes             | 192 |
| The Molephone            | 192 |
| Library Additions        | 193 |
| Hut Usage Statistics     | 193 |

| Diary Dates                                |              |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Mark's 50 <sup>th</sup> . Birthday barrel. | 14 June      |
| MC Registry. Library Booking               | 15 June      |
| DSS Hut booking (15 guests)                | 27 June      |
| Trois Betas - Diau WE                      | 20 / 22 June |
| Tea Party                                  | 05 July      |
| Priddy Folk Fair                           | 11 July      |
| Committee Meeting                          | 20 July      |
| Euro Congress. Vercours                    | 23 / 30 Aug  |
| Committee Meeting                          | 21 September |
| AGM & Dinner                               | 18 October   |