



Journal of the Wessex Cave Club

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Naples ancient water cistern. Photo: David Cooke

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Another “Colour” Journal, albeit only the front and back pages, but for once I have been receiving significant feed-back. The readership (that’s you) likes colour. In fact by the questionable virtue of skipping one journal, the Journals in the year since the last AGM will cost less, despite the colour printing, which you would evidently like to continue. In fact the “Budget” for the Journal has never been formally set, or even discussed, so an ongoing colour journal may well be something of a poisoned chalice for my successor. And, by the way, I have been underwhelmed (to put it mildly) by members competing for that hugely desirable position. I’ve never seen an editorial job specification and have absolutely no intention of producing one. For a Wessex Journal, the end justifies the means, so useful editorial attributes are (in no particular order....): unscrupulousness in bullying, cajoling and blackmailing articles out of your erstwhile friends; an ability to listen sympathetically to an endless list of complaints and suggestions about the journal..... and then ignore them completely; to be able to use a spell-checker; an easily acquired competence in desk-top publication; reasonable touch-typing; becoming immune to broken promises and undelivered articles. I can provide the requisite computer software. The Wessex Journal doesn’t go to the Times Literary Supplement, or for any other peer review. Most contributors write excellent grammar and the Editor doesn’t have to parse every sentence. So I acknowledge that this is all slightly tongue-in-cheek, and there is a downside. Producing the Journal is work. I would have found it far easier had I been regularly at Upper Pitts as there are two elements in the Journal: content and production. The technicalities of production are fascinating; as an absentee Editor, gathering material content rarely was (to put it mildly!). Each Journal is rewarding. Sometime between this one, 316, and 319, my successor must materialise - or 319 may be a long way off.

Before then we have this Journal, 316. There are no rules governing layout or illustrations, but this is the first time that all the caving photographs have come from a single expedition. There could, and should, have been far more, because there is an album of brilliant photographs on-line from this astonishing visit to the Naples netherworld. Only the five here were sent to me in printable size. It isn’t the first account of non-speleological exploration and most of the personalities involved have spent time under Paris before this foray into Naples’ man-made “Caves”. Dave’s account suggests that the excitement of Naples traffic and its underground marvels amply compensated for the boring old legality of it all!

This issue comes with the booking for our annual dinner, and also a catalogue-order form for our Wessex merchandise. A special range of clothing featuring the 75<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary logo is in the pipeline (details later at Upper Pitts), and a sample commemorative bone china mug is now on display at Upper Pitts.

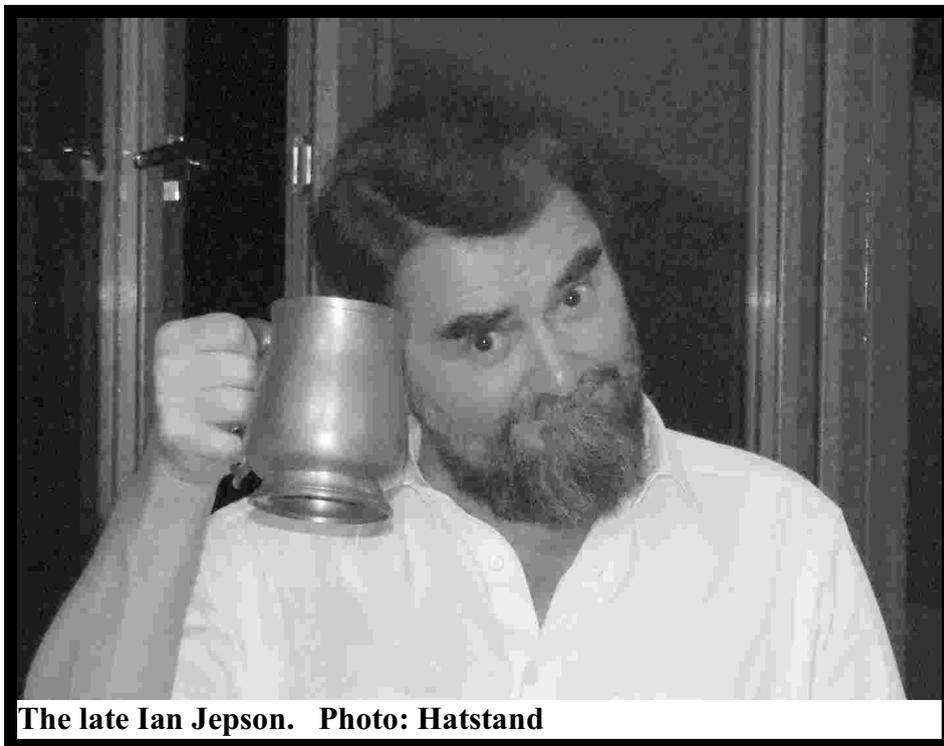
# Club & Committee News

## **Valete Ian Jepson**

Sad news - Ian Jepson has died. Ian joined the Club over 40 years ago and did a lot of serious caving in the 1970s. A full obituary and appreciation will appear in the next Journal.

## **Ratfest money.**

There was a small amount of money left after the various Ratfest activities. This has been divided equally between seven Mendip clubs and donated to their digging funds in accordance with Tony's wish. The Wessex does not currently have a specific digging fund and so we are seeking suggestions on how it should be used. The money must be spent on purchasing supplies or equipment for use in cave digs. Please let the Committee know of any ideas or requests for a share of the funds.



**The late Ian Jepson. Photo: Hatstand**

## **75<sup>th</sup>. Summer "Hosting" day**

Pete Hann and Phil Hendy are planning to set up some photographic display boards showing something of the Wessex Cave Club life, activities, and caving, for the intended day hosting our local landowners and farmers. Pete and Phil would appreciate the loan of any and all contributions, so please have a dig around in your albums, lofts, desks..... and see what you can contribute. For anybody who would like to make an input there will be a meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> June at 10am in the library.

## **Music in the Lounge**

Laura Trowbridge recently gave the club a stereo music unit. Its use has proved somewhat contentious, although music in the club is nothing new, and has frequently contributed much to lively social evenings. The issue will be raised at the AGM, but in the meantime the committee decision is that the music unit can be used at the discretion of the Hut Warden. The library remains sacrosanct, as it were, as a quiet room, but music in the lounge will have to be a matter of consensus and polite agreement. It was noted that we might, exceptionally, need a Performing Rights Society licence. That possibility is remote, but for immediate safety one has been obtained. The £44 was personally contributed from within the committee and has not come from Club funds.

## **Sofa Burning.**

A recent "Sofa Burning" overstepped the mark. Sofas have been burnt in the past (!) in ceremonies of celebration and to propitiate the cave gods. For some reason it was forgotten that the cave gods live underground, and the sofa was sacrificed at the top of the SRT tower, rather than at ground level, on the BBQ. This was a physical and metaphysical mistake. Luckily the temperature was not so high as to weaken the tower

structure. Unluckily it was high enough to melt all the galvanisation from the top platform. Les obtained that galvanised decking for us with considerable difficulty it will now require re-galvanising, which is never as effective.

### **Charterhouse extension.**

The indefatigable Charterhouse diggers have passed a perched static sump to reveal another ½ Km (at least) of passage. If not exactly “Stop Press” it is late breaking news, so more details in the next Journal.

### **Templeton**

Templeton has bottomed out to bedrock, with vertical bedding in the floor sloping down to the South rift. **Phil**

### **Fernhill Cave**

Fernhill Cave is open again .

After a major JCB exercise last year and a year of hauling skips up the piped shaft, the ATLAS digging team (which includes Wessex members) has re-opened Fernhill Cave in Fairy Cave Quarry. The 110m long cave was revealed by blasting in 1960 but buried by quarry waste tipping just a few years later. Like many of the quarry caves it was well decorated, and although the main chamber has been badly damaged by blasting, some impressive formations survive in the passage beyond. In due course the cave will be accessible through the Shatter/Withyhill leadership system, but over the next month or so the diggers will be reinforcing the shoring and carrying out surveying and conservation work. If you want to see work in progress, call in one Wednesday evening but be prepared to do some casual labouring! **Rich Witcombe**

### **Picnic Bench Tables at Upper Pitts.**

We now have 2 new, strong and solid bench tables at Upper Pitts. Thanks to Phil for assembling them and for engraving identification numbers on the end timbers.

### **Club Accounts**

Some small administrative corrections had to be incorporated into the accounts for 2007/2008. The amended 2007/2008 accounts will shortly be published in the members area of the Wessex Cave Club web site. These accounts will also be published in the 2009 AGM handbook. Anyone wanting a printed copy now should contact the treasurer. **Aubrey**

### **Equipment & Cleaning**

All the club rope has been tested and is up to date. However, it's not just club ropes that need cleaning after use. Please wash ladders and spreaders as well! **Tommo**

### **Pen Park Hole Leaders.**

Dave Mason and Andy Jackson have volunteered to become Pen Park Hole leaders, and will take up their duties once they have had an opportunity to visit the cave and become familiar with it.

### **Visiting Group Meetings**

Members, members representing other groups and other caving interest groups are welcome to hold their official or informal meetings in the common room or library. We do however request that the Club is informed as much as possible in advance that the meeting date and time can be recorded in the Calender. Requests for a meeting space should be made to the Hut Bookings Officer, **Alison Moody** on 01749 870278 or e-mail aadmoody@talk21.com. Thank you.

### **Orpheus Caving Club Fees**

OCC Members' Hut Fees will go up to 3.00 per bednight from 1st. July. This means that Reciprocal Rights fees go up too. **Jenny Potts**, OCC Hut Bookings Secretary.

### **Major Jobs Priority list.**

Overspill water drain across Mrs. Gibbons' field to alleviate the flooding problem.

Ladies dorm makeover - target NOVEMBER. Needs input from all.

New front porch.

New changing room door porch.

Repair towel rails and loo roll holders.

New sink in the ladies dormitory.

Extractor fan for gents loo.

Rail to be installed in changing room.

The committee have agreed to have the front porch replaced with a new UPVC one, and to build a weather porch outside the external shower room door. We are at present getting quotes for them. We also intend to re-style the Ladies dormitory: if you have any ideas about its layout that you would like considered, please email me at: [iantimney.builder@btinternet.com](mailto:iantimney.builder@btinternet.com). I will be planning two consecutive working weekend late in the Autumn, these dates will be posted in the next journal and at Upper Pitts. In the interim I intend to organise a one day working weekend this summer for general maintenance. **Ian Timney** Hut Admim Officer

### **Under Stairs Keys**

Since the Under-Stairs cupboard is effectively a more secure place than the Library. Key holding involves significant responsibilities, and people asking for one should have good reasons to do so. In practice the Committee have decided to cap the number of key holders at 22, and anyone requesting a key should be able to show the committee that there is a good reason for this.

### **Committee Vacancy**

The post of Journal Editor will shortly become vacant. Actually it's available now, but will be formally vacant after the publication of Journal 318, the 75<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary issue. If you are even remotely interested, please contact me to talk about it. My telephone number is 01666 577 411. **Noel Cleave**

### **Mendip Cave Survey Scheme**

The scheme has been wound up. The details are below. Essentially most of the surveys involved were very out of date and time has moved on with internet distribution and digital printing.

### **Mendip Cave Survey Scheme**

The following notes detail the background and decisions taken when the scheme was wound up. The executive meeting is recorded below. *(Notes prepared by Joan Goddard, 25.04.09)*

#### **Present:**

Alan Gray (Axbridge and MCR&A)

Graham Price (Cerberus)

Chrissie Price

Joan Goddard (MCG)

Aubrey Newport (Wessex)

Tony Boycott (Mendip Cave Registry & Archive)

#### **Absent:**

Hayley Clark (Shepton)

Vince Simmonds (BEC)

#### **Future survey availability – MCR&A**

All present were in agreement that the Survey Scheme in its current form should be wound up and that it should become part of the Mendip Cave Registry and Archive for reasons given in the accompanying notes for the meeting. It was agreed that the principle of the Scheme should continue *i.e* clubs and cavers to be encouraged to allow their surveys to be shared online via the MCR&A. An archive of surveys would be kept on the MCR&A. There was some discussion on copyright. It was decided to put the surveys online but with caveats to the effect that if they are downloaded acknowledgement must be made of the surveyors and clubs who donated them to the Mendip Cave Survey Scheme in the first place. The original copyright would remain. The possibility was raised that they could be supplied in .pdf form, but decision is left to MCR&A.

### Survey Masters

It was unanimously agreed that the masters should be offered to the BCRA library. The British Geological Library is involved with the BCRA library and it was felt that they would be better able to look after the masters than Wells Museum. Joan is to contact the librarian to find out if they will be prepared to take them and to sort out transportation (possibly via Hidden Earth).

### Distribution of money in the MCSS bank account

It was unanimously agreed to share the money between member clubs of the MCSS as this was the original purpose of any profit made by the Scheme, the money being used to fund survey equipment and expenses. The clubs are the Bristol Exploration Club, Wessex Cave Club, Shepton Mallet Caving Club, Mendip Caving Group, Cerberus Speleological Society, Axbridge Caving Group.

*[No money is required by the MCR&A for getting the surveys online]*

*[The BCRA Library has a substantial grant/legacy so it was felt that it would not require money to maintain the survey masters].*

The bank account will be closed and the money distributed..\*\*\* (see note at end)

### Scans of surveys

Three discs were handed to Alan Gray for the MCR&A. Alan will provide each of the representatives of the MCSS clubs with a copy of the surveys on disc.

### Further discussion

Aubrey brought up the point that if any of the surveys are downloaded from the MCR&A and used as a basis for adding further survey information, copyright will need to be taken into account. MCR&A will consider this. If further survey work is done, hopefully clubs will pass it to the MCR&A (and the MCR&A could request survey material they hear about "on the grapevine"). Possibly original survey data could also be archived on MCR&A.

\*\*\*\*\* The accounts were not finalised at the time of this Journal publication, but Aubrey suggests that the sum will be small (of the order of £60)

## **The Napoli Report 'Vedi Napoli e poi muori'.... See Naples and die.**

Friday March 13 2009 to Monday March 16 2009

It all started with a picture on an internet forum, innocent enough.. it simply showed a broken urn in a dusty passageway and yet there was something about it conjured up an image of history and grandeur that set my mind racing at all the possibilities such a place could hold, such a thing would not look out of place in a museum, or perhaps even held aloft by a grinning Tony Robinson, an archaeologist's dream in a speleological heaven....

At school I was often accused of dreaming and certainly I had an overactive imagination, and whilst this might well have been my problem I had never planned to make it someone else's, and so I'll never know how I managed to convince three of my friends to invest not only their time but also their money in a monumental Easy Jet assisted leap of faith from the safe and normal realms of Britain straight into the unknown heart of Naples.

Indeed it was a risk, I had spent nearly four months searching for a contact who was willing to lead us into this mysterious underworld, fortunately deliverance finally came in the form of Luca from the NUG (Napoli Underground Group), and whilst we maintained constant contact via emails and he had agreed to meet us for a weekend of exploration, I knew that a lot of things could go wrong in an unknown city within a foreign country and on a rendezvous with someone I had never seen before.

Something that went wrong straight away was the fact that we had hired a car, I like to think that I am not prone to exaggeration and so with that in mind I hope you will forgive me for describing my experience of being driven around Naples as nothing short of complete and absolute insanity. No sooner had Les driven us out of the rental depot and we were plunged into chronic madness, I've never seen anything like it in my whole life,

I found myself desperately clamouring for a happy place in my mind as we fought our way through head on traffic, scooter sandwiches and pedestrians who practically climbed over your car to cross the road, whether it was moving or not. Parking consisted of driving into the next persons rear bumper then engaging the handbrake (sometimes) and traffic lights were only observed by the weak, even Les who is renowned for white van man shenanigans was at a loss for words.... I always joked that while Les might be the king of the road in the UK due to his rather 'Gung Ho' driving style, if he ever met himself coming the other way he'd be stuffed... unfortunately for Les this was karma city and it seemed like every motorist had the edge on him and I think we all secretly wondered how long it would be before he cracked up or we wrecked the car.

The 3.4 kilometres to our hotel turned into a near Darwinian struggle lasting about 45 minutes with Andy clutching the Tom Tom as if it was the Holy book and giving orders like we were engaged in a rally, Les often had to go head on with cars to force them to give way... it was an unforgettable experience that I won't be repeating anytime soon without sedation and a Sherman tank.

We were firmly in the back streets, a place where washing was hung to dry, people congregated in huge groups to talk and men cooked colossal squids on a barbecue (yes really) this was already shaping up to be an adventure and we hadn't even gotten out of the car. Our hotel was proving tricky to find and so Andy and myself disembarked and went searching for it on foot, we soon found it and I had also gotten in touch with Luca who was coming to find us. Andy rejoined Les and Cookie in the vehicle to show them the way to the hotel, whilst I remained there so that I could meet with Luca. Unbeknownst to me Les had decided to test himself further by attempting to drive down an alley way that was almost exactly the same width as the car, I'd have loved to have seen a photo of this, but unfortunately no-one could open the doors to get out and take one.

Once we had checked in and dropped off our gear it was time to drink beer, unwind and discuss battle plans with Luca who I was very glad to finally meet with face to face, fortunately Luca spoke exceptional English which worked rather well because the rest of us were bloody awful at Italian. This wasn't to say that our plans didn't have some translation issues however, in my meticulous planning for this trip I had overlooked one detail which was the length of the pitches, I figured they would be in the 5-10 metre range and so when I asked Luca to confirm and he duly responded with a cheery '300metres' I nearly choked on my beer, a quick look at my comrades confirmed that I was also about to get lynched, I had to do something and quick and so I queried "300 metres on one drop?" to which Luca replied that of course this wasn't the case and the longest drop was 90 metres, this wasn't much better and I think Les was about to attack, but I figured if I just kept repeating my question in a robot like fashion then the pitches would get smaller and I wouldn't have to carry out my plan of waiting till everyone was asleep and then sneaking back to Britain in shame, so I had one more desperate try at rewording my question and fortunately realised we were both talking about completely different things and that in fact the pitches we were doing were only 10 and 7 metre drops. I think everyone breathed a sigh of relief, more beer was taken and I was very careful in future to ask my questions correctly and clearly.

#### Saturday March 14 2009.

With morning came the frantic gear checks and preparations for today's big trip, I discovered with no small amount of rage that my light had patiently waited to get all the way to Italy before it had total and utter failure, which amused and still does amuse my comrades.

Never mind, Andy kindly loaned me his back-up light and so with our gear and cameras we set off to meet up with Luca and begin our journey into the underworld of Naples.

We met on the steps of the church of Pietrasanta, the oldest church in Naples, where we were introduced to Fullvio and Carlo... like Luca they were both members of NUG and it was Full's photos that had initially inspired me to come here. We were soon led inside the church to perhaps one of the most amazing underground entrances I have yet to see, a grating was lifted up, revealing a small flight of stairs which dramatically ended in a huge iron gate that made the most amazing groaning noises when dragged open. This led into a huge undercroft filled wall to wall with marble carvings and tablets that were no doubt many hundreds of years old and had been broken off in a previous earthquake.

We kitted ourselves up here and set off down a huge flight of stairs to a black hole in the floor, with the remnants of a rusty ladder poking over the top, a quick depth assessment revealed this to be about 10 metres, a quick ladder assessment revealed that I would in fact be abseiling this one.

I wasn't alone in this prudent decision and once we had all touched down we made our way into the darkness proper and up a small climb to the second pitch. We'd already heard a lot about this pitch and Luca had kindly brought a hammer in anticipation... See one of the first things I noticed when I met Luca, Carlos and Full was that I was a lot bigger than them, which when caving in a new place is always a bit worrying. So when Luca mentioned a squeeze I already knew I was in trouble, when it turned out to be a squeeze above a 9 metre pitch I realised hammer or no hammer, we might well be stuffed. Anyhow my luck was in, I'd assessed the situation and constructed a plan that consisted of pulling up two metres of slack rope, attaching my stop and then letting gravity do the rest. This worked surprisingly well which meant I got to sit at the bottom of the pitch and gloat while certain members of my party fuffed, got their heads stuck and generally showed us up in front of our Italian friends. No-one needed to mention how much of a nightmare this was going to be to get back up.... although Les promptly did and in a loud manner.

We de-kitted and took in our surroundings. We had abseiled in via a hole at the top of a giant water cistern that had been hollowed out of the local tufa stone by the Greeks (The front cover photograph) It was at about this time that I realised we had gone back nearly 3000 years in time. This was it, the reason I had come here.

Luca explained that a lot of the aqueducts started off with these giant cisterns, and that they had eventually been tunneled between and modified to hold more water and so they created a huge network that provided all of the water to Naples, some 2700 years ago. The Greeks and then the Romans had done extensive work in digging out the passageways that we were now stooping and crawling our way along and in recent times this amazing place had found use as a shelter for the population from World War II bombing raids. It was these shelters that we were going to see first and as the passageways became wider and changed their characteristics from the wonderful mellow brown tufa walls to the more practical and modern wartime whitewash, it was apparent we had arrived at our first part of history.

I have been in plenty of air raid shelters before, but none quite so pristine as this, it was completely untouched since the last residents turned the lights out, stole the light bulbs and left... the first thing I noticed was the lack of graffiti and tagging, there was none. The walls were completely untouched, and all over them were networks of wiring that had been set up in the war and were still perfectly in place, right down to the porcelain fittings. Luca explained how

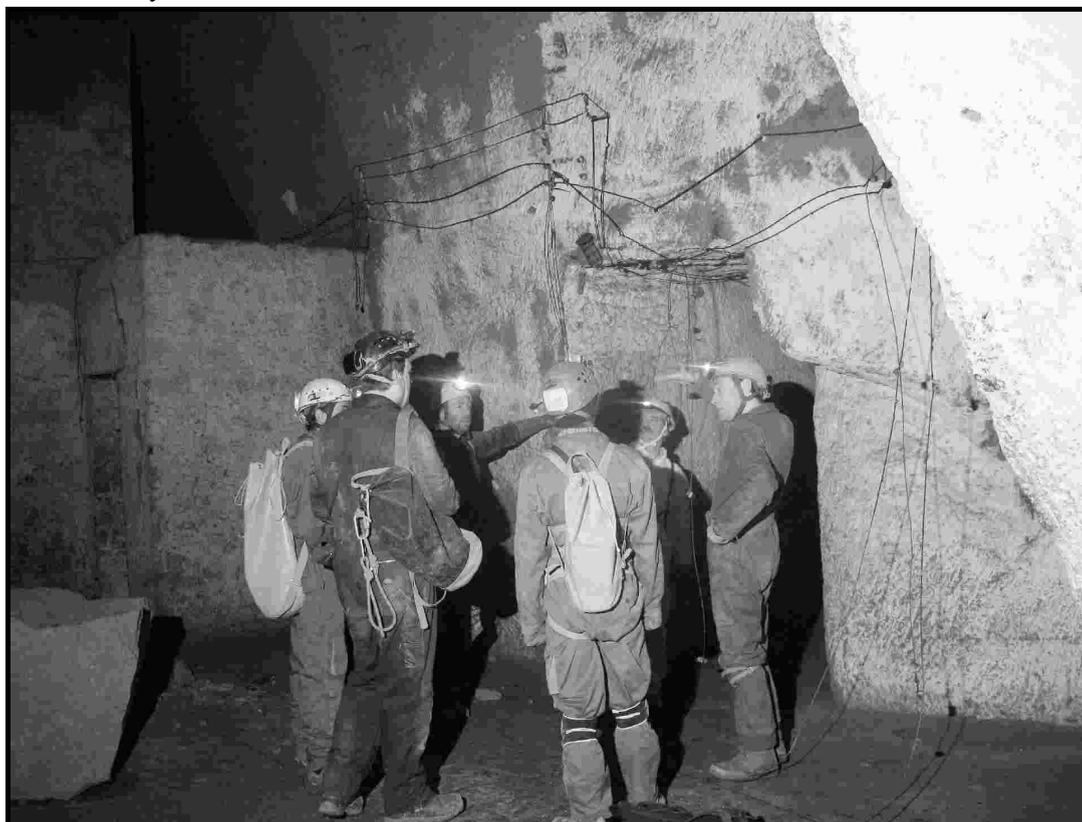


Photo: Dave Cooke

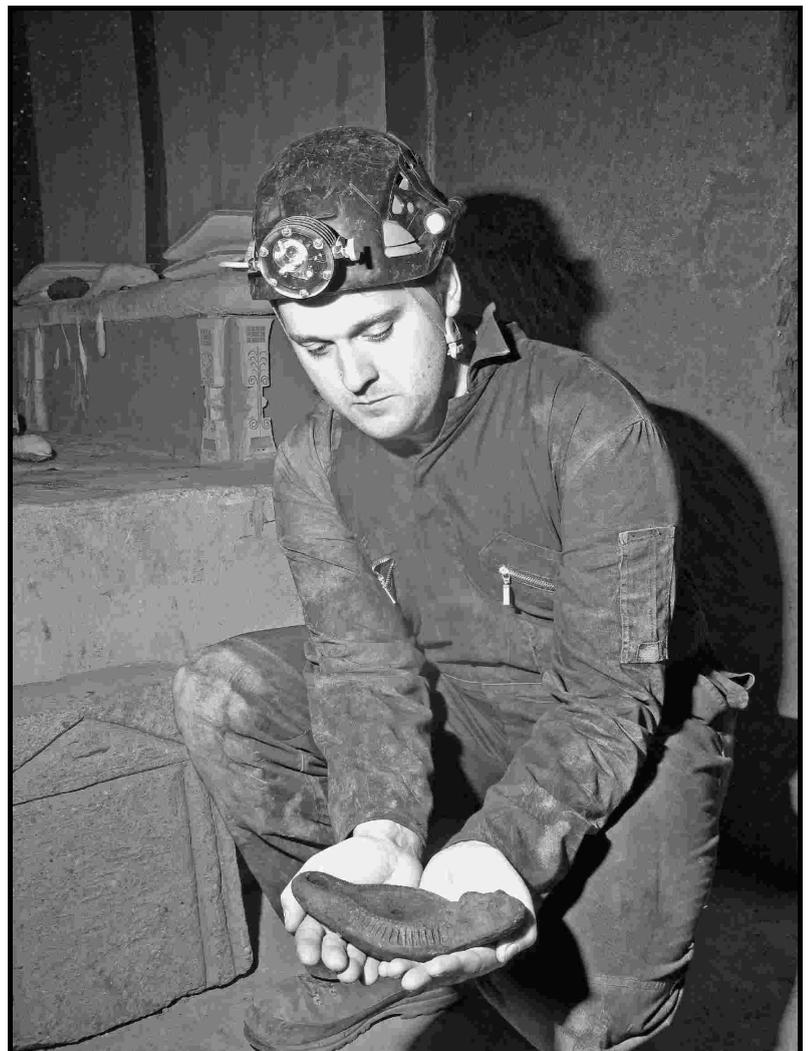
the cisterns had been joined together to make these grand chambers, and how people had actually lived down here for weeks on end, it was poignant to think of the uncertainty people must have faced down here in the gloom, no doubt cramped and probably quite smelly and for all the wonderment and intrigue I felt as a casual explorer here, I all too aware that the novelty would wear off if being here became a thing of necessity, or even if my very survival depended on it. These aqueducts had saved plenty of lives too, in a city of millions only several hundred died to the bombings, testimony to a purpose well served. On the wall in a prominent place was a large wooden crucifix, the only piece of wood in this place that hadn't crumbled to dust, a remnant that was most fitting, I thought.

A further look around revealed a cubicle with a still working toilet, clearly testimony to Italian plumbing skills to still have water in after almost 70 years! Most impressive; one of the most breath-taking sights for me was in a side passage nearby which found us climbing up a seemingly endless flight of spiral stairs. We were told that we would need to be quiet here as we were directly below a monastery and so I reached the top and looked over the edge to behold the fantastic architecture wind its way down into the darkness like one of those strange puzzles that trick the eye.

We were soon moving on, jumping from the 1940s to some 2700 years or more previously, in the wonderfully carved out tunnels and cisterns, all painstakingly pickaxed and chiselled out by hand in what was an amazing accomplishment of architecture and construction that is generally only possible with the utilisation of slave labour, where every inch of passageway was pitted with the pick marks that had formed them. Every couple of feet a recess was set into the wall which would have held the oil lamps providing the only light that the people who had toiled here would probably ever have known. Often we found ourselves traversing over small canals of water, a trickling glimpse of their former use. I fell in.... Les laughed.

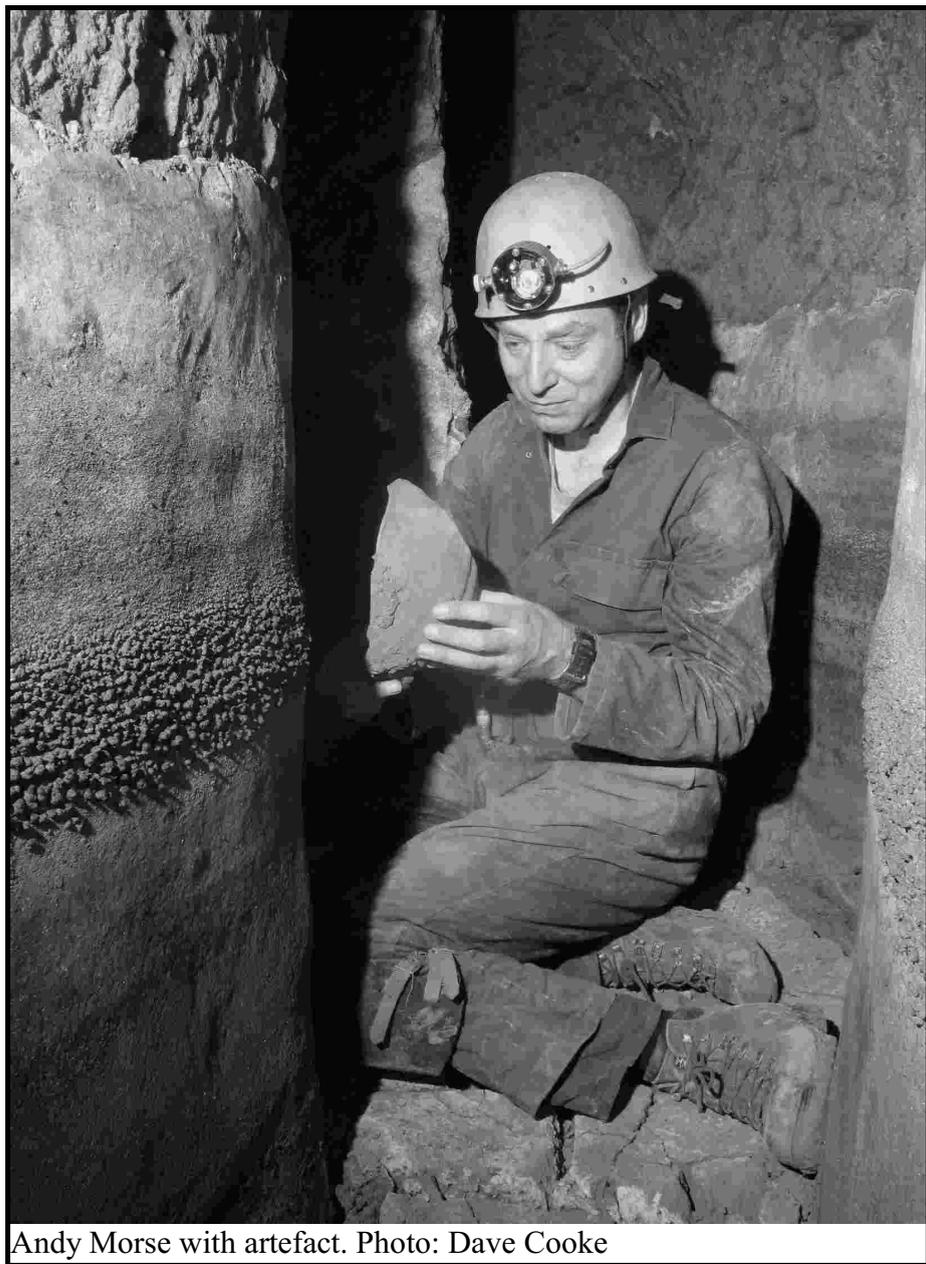
Every now and then the small canals would give way to a large water cistern which now empty served as a huge chamber. The tide marks around the walls were a tell-tale sign of the years of varying water qualities and levels. Luca called one of these cisterns 'The Wave chamber' due to the many coloured bands on the walls.

It wasn't long before we started finding artifacts, a pile in the corner contained broken clay pots, a hole in the wall revealed a partial amphora... everywhere there were scintillating mosaic tiles of indeterminable decade, century or even millenia, whilst here was an accumulation of debris encompassing the whole of the past several millenia, it was hard to tell between old and new and although a great deal was newer (albeit AD rather than BC) a great deal was certainly older.



Dave Murphy with Oil Lamp. Photo. Dave Cooke

I was in my element, and soon we were all finding interesting items, from a near fossilized skeleton of some kind of rodent to a perfectly wrought glass lamp, untouched since the day its last light was extinguished.



Andy Morse with artefact. Photo: Dave Cooke

One of the biggest privileges I think we were granted was the freedom to explore, Luca and Full had surveys that just ended in blanks with countless tunnels still branching away like tree roots, unexplored and enticing. None of us needed any encouragement to set off into the unknown in pursuit of treasures and sights untold. There were so many different passageways that everyone seemed to have their own personal aqueduct to explore and when we found ourselves in a huge cistern I discovered all manner of artefacts in the huge debris cone nearby, an almost intact Greek urn of unknown age and a very crude ancient looking red clay pitcher were among the best pieces. There was simply too much to see and discover and not nearly enough time. Eventually we had to head back leaving behind us plenty of ongoing passageway unchecked along with countless easy digs that would have required perhaps a minute or two of hand digging to break through into more new stuff. It was a blessing and a curse to partake in such a wonderful dose of exploration fever only to leave so much unexplored, yet perhaps that is part of the wonder of it all, it was the mystery that drew me here and

I am sure it is the mystery that will draw me back.

There was a great degree of faffing on the way out, the second pitch in particular which was awkward enough on the way down, now that gravity was against us, was even more exciting. When I reached the top I did my best to think through how I was going to get myself in the squeeze with all my gear on and not get hung up at the same time, in the end I opted for a bit of thrashing and some choice expletives and it seemed to work fine. Once I had gotten myself through I was free to laugh at everyone else struggling, except no-one else was... I found it hard to conceal my disappointment. An interesting climb up the ladder that was only surpassed in its rustiness by its incredible wobbliness and we were back in the church basement, getting changed amongst the carving and reliefs of eons past whilst eating all of Andy's sweets and generally feeling rather pleased with ourselves. An amazing and thought-provoking trip.

Sunday March 15 2009 Meeting “The pope of the underground” in an umbral cathedral.

A quick espresso and a briefing from Luca and we found ourselves as guests in the company of a man called Clemente Esposito. From the street his museum looks to be a humble shopfront but once inside it turns out to be a showroom for various fascinating artefacts found beneath the city. The true beauty lies beneath and so once again we found ourselves kitting up and it was only when we began descending flight upon flight of spiralling stairs until finally emerging into a great echoing chamber (I was amazed) that we realised this may not be a museum of the conventional variety. Clemente Esposito is nicknamed 'The Pope' of the underground and if he was The Pope then this was clearly his cathedral. We emerged into a huge great chamber which must have once been composed of many cisterns that were now joined together, and had doubtless been enlarged yet more. The result was this colossal hallway, festooned with artifacts and relics, carvings and busts, all had been discovered in the clearing and restoration of this place, a labour of love which we were told has taken him and others over twenty years. We ourselves were asked to carry buckets of water and cement blocks down with us, thus perhaps playing a small part in the ongoing projects that are planned down here, it was a small price to pay for the honour of having Clemente show us around and Luca kindly translated while the history and purposes of these great spaces were explained to us.

On the walls were drawings and stories left by the people who had once sheltered here, a wonderful insight into the thoughts and feelings of the time. While the drawings were simple, the messages above them were stark and wonderfully descriptive of the mood and atmosphere at the time.

Luca and Full soon led us away from the rest of the group and into the aqueducts and passageways that stretched off into the darkness; any aspirations I had of actually being able to stand up with headroom to spare were soon smashed as we left the roomy more recent passageways and found ourselves stooping back in time to some 2700 years prior as we entered the Grecian aqueducts.

We stopped at several cisterns along the way including one that was straddled with some interesting arches and the floor of which had seemingly never been stepped upon. We finally came to a huge cistern chamber with various holes in the wall and the remnants of all sorts of debris that indicated that at some point in the past someone must have lived there. Instead of ladders the people who used these places would climb up opposing dug out holes in the wall, often these stretched upwards a very long way. Cookie climbed up one and nearly fell off which, after consulting my 'Is it ok to laugh chart', led me to discover that under 20 foot of fall is acceptable whereas 30 or more requires a second or so of respectful silence before you let rip. After some photos we made our way outwards and back into the museum to de-kit, then Luca evicted us with a broom. The sun drenched streets of Naples were somewhat harsh on the eyes of us troglodytes and so we beat a hasty retreat to a place where beer was served, bank accounts were broken and we discussed and reflected on a fantastic weekend. To say I was somewhat relieved would be an understatement, I had all manner of nightmare scenarios running through my head before I flew out, and although a lot of people enquired if they could join me, I mainly tried to keep it to just a few folks, mostly because if something went wrong and we were left in Naples without any idea what to do I would have less people to lynch me and might even outrun one or two of them.

I needn't have worried, Luca and Full and the Napoli Underground Group went out of their way to accommodate us, giving up their weekend to show some crazy English guys their hidden world and they really were fantastic guides and drinking comrades, it was also a great honour to meet Clemente who came out on a Sunday especially to meet us.

I envy their underground, unlike a lot of the artificial in England it is free of vandalism and bereft of the kind of people who plunder the slightest artifact, for an entire city with over four million people within and around it there are only a handful of people who have ever seen it or even know it exists, Luca often spoke of his frustration at how little interest the city and municipality showed in a place that could easily capture the most mundane of imaginations. I sincerely hope this changes and these amazing ancient places get the visitors and

respect that they deserve, and yet when I think of this it is also with the knowledge that I have seen all too well what a lot of visitors can do to such places, preservation and also promotion of awareness is something I know these guys are good at however. Their photos and tireless articles on websites and forums are the very reason I even did this trip, and with people like Clemente and the NUG devoting their life, money and energy to preservation and promotion I know that this amazing lost world is in good hands.

When every footstep you take leaves behind the first change in millenia it is easy to see why such a potentially ephemeral place needs such passionate guardians and educators. It is their world, and what an amazing world it is... vast cathedral sized chambers, ageless crypts and hand carved passageways, miles of labyrinthine constructs, all traversed by a mere handful of intrepid explorers, the kind who aren't content with open air, blue skies and sunlight, instead preferring the umbral under-streets and winding maze-ways that will no doubt keep the curious mind and adventurous spirit very busy for further millenia to come.

Monday March 16 2009 Farewells and volcanisms.

On Monday we said our goodbyes to Luca and departed to do some volcano touring,

Solfatara was the first one we did, very active... I burnt my ankles on numerous sulphur spewing fumaroles in the name of photography. My comrades are very kind in their taking pictures of me on request, I am possibly a bit of a poser but volcano pictures always come out pretty well even if I do get set alight.

Next we did Vesuvius, which was swamped by tourists (I guess we would fit into that category too, now) but also gave a tremendous view of Naples, I am often mystified by why people would choose to make their homes so close to a live volcano, especially a repeat offender such as this one, yet I must admit Naples has a charm that is totally unique to anywhere I have seen. Before I had come here people warned me about crime and how the city was depressing and grim, but this isn't what I experienced at all, indeed every single street had something ancient and beautiful to look at.

The buildings were often so high and the streets so narrow that a mobile signal was impossible, looking up you could see that these majestic structures were often covered with busts and carvings, decaying paintwork had flaked away often revealing the ancient stonework beneath like wonderful rustic scars running down to the street. Great terraces and stairways covered the city and the backstreets were full of artwork and beautiful shrines which were clearly well maintained. Whilst there was the odd bit of rubbish this merely served to remind that the city was well used... certainly if you have an eye for detail, you will not struggle to find beauty in or indeed beneath Naples.

My thanks to Luca, Fullvio and Carlo of the Napoli Underground Group, also to Clemente Esposito for the fascinating tour of his underworld and to Les, Andy and Cookie for taking a chance on coming out here, which I am certain was well rewarded. Grazie amici! **Gnomie**

## From the Log Book & the Wessex Website

Saturday February 14 2009 **Lionels Hole** Rich Carey, Tim Ball, Graham Candy, Faye (BEC), Pete (DSS)

An excellent ..... round trip, last done by myself 16 years ago, and much better this time round. Aably led by Rich Carey we slithered and squeezed on the route. For some unknown reason I decided to explore Horrifice 1 and missed the way out of the stream, therefore continuing on into a smaller and smaller wet space until it sank into cobbles. Somehow I managed to turn

around. I was most unhappy! Fortunately Rich returned to rescue me and I headed towards his light. For this reason I declined to visit Horrifice 2. We returned in good time, but did spend some time finding the way on from Junction Chamber. Fortunately no other major route-finding difficulties. 2 Hours. **Tim Ball**.

Saturday February 14 2009 Eastwater, **Primrose Pot**. Emma Heron, Phil Rowsell.

It's still there!!! **Emsy**

Sunday February 22 2009 Cairn Hill Shaft. Fiona Crozier, Nigel Graham, Aubrey Newport.

Aubrey and Nigel helped Mad Fi to move spoil to bag stack. We were impressed by Trevor Hughes (BEC) demonstration of rock splitting using plugs and feathers. Helped Tony Audsley load his Landrover with bags of spoil for disposal. Interesting site. Full marks to the diggers for clearing so much silt back to bare rock, which is very well sculpted in what appears to be a phreatic maze emerging. Fi was on form:

Nigel: "Fi, your squeaking is positively orgasmic!"

Fi, giggling: "Oooh it's wicked it's such fun, It's the best dig on Mendip".

**Nigel**

Saturday February 28 2009 Stoke Lane Slocker Emma Heron and Laura Trowbridge

Through Sump 2; didn't need digging to get through. Quite high water. **Emsy**

Saturday March 7 2009 Swildons. Paschendale Emma Heron, Claire Cohen.

Really enjoyable and a really nice bit of Swildons that is rarely visited. Sump looked crystal clear and inviting (If it wasn't for the carry!). **Emsy** No it doesn't! **Claire**

Saturday March 7 2009 Charterhouse Cave Ali, Pete Hann, Nigel Graham.

Yet another cementing trip - hopefully the last, but we're prepared for the possibility of future "Repair" trips. AM and PH reinforcing the lower by-pass in Chill-Out Choke until:

Ali: "Keep mixing"

Nigel: "I can't, I've run out of sand"

We had used the full stock. Retired taking the kit no longer required there, with us, after Ali and Pete had rearranged a tape, and NG had washed the mortar buckets.

Later: AM, PM, PH and NG formed the Charterhouse Diggers Team at the very enjoyable pub quiz organised by the Cheddar Caving Club for that evening. We didn't win, but we didn't do too badly either. **Nigel**

Wednesday March 18 2009 Bos Swallet Rich Carey, Jude VdP and Sarah Payne.

Rich agreed to share this little gem with us. It's a typical Burrington steeply sloping rift, which includes a couple of wriggles - and much more mud than expected. **Jude**

Saturday March 21 2009 Fester Hole. Maurice and Judy Hewins, John Thomas.

Resumed attack on (Old Farts) Fester Hole. Sunny day on the ledge. Removed 38 loads by lowering the floor in second chamber and began following right-hand wall downwards. Easy digging, but knackered for geriatrics. **Maurice.**

Friday April 3 2009 Action-Packed trip to Yorkshire

Emma Heron, Russ Brooks, Rog Saxton (BPC), Ali Brooks. Phil Rowsell.

Arrived Thursday night and met up with Russ and Rog at the dump. After large quantities of tea were drunk, Rog and I did Washfold Pot. An excellent cave with some pitches and plenty of free-climbs and proper caving in between. Loved it!

Saturday April 4 2009 Dale Head Emma Heron, Jason Mallinson and Keith Mason (YSS).

Departed the YSS bright and early with Jason and Keith, the trip of the day being a recce to the sump and to check out the dodgy rigging on the big pitch. Loved this place: scrotty entrance crawl, comedy "Lobster pot" entrance to first pitch, and the big pitch is very scenic. At the bottom the way on becomes more squalid and the final obstacle is a duck before reaching the sump. Out to pie and chips in Settle.

Sunday April 5 2009 Simpsons Pot

4am finish in Helwith Bridge.... and after 4 hours sleep a quick trip to Simpsons before the long drive home.

Thursday April 9 2009 Kingsdale - Rowten exchange.

Myself, Jason and Chris Tate (YSS, who came in as far as the canals) went in via Kingsdale, met Claire Cohen, Mike Thomas and Mike Bottomley (CPC) just as they were coming down the final pitch of Rowten. The free-dives are lovely, nice smooth, non-snaggy roof and you can see a bit: not like Swildons, then!

Friday April 10 2009 Malham Cove

Nice run on the allotment in the morning, then a dive in Malham Cove in the afternoon. Tricky job trying to get changed subtly with loads of climbers and tourists milling around. Note to self: get changed at the car next time! Same gang as above, had nice dive to first air-bell.

Saturday April 11 2009 Large Pot - Rift Pot exchange.

Same gang as above. Myself and Jason into Large and met the others just around the connection duck. Claire and Mike B continued out of Large. Jason, Mike T and I exited Rift (I derigged, and lost my spanner). I'm sure Mike T might have a comment on the enjoyability of this trip!

Sunday April 12 2009 Swinsto & Joint

Claire, Mikes T and B washed their kit off in Swinsto in the morning. Then I met them at Joint in the afternoon for a dive. Claire and Mikes T and B to second air-bell. I exited after the first air-bell.

Monday April 13 2009 Hardrawkin Pot & Dale Head.

Claire and Mike T went to Hardrawkin before their long drive home. Myself, Mike B and Sam Allshorn (ULSA) carried for Jason to the sump in Dale Head where he dived three times. Described it as "Tight and gnarly, no visibility, but still going". Swift exit after 5 hours.

Tuesday April 14 2009 Retail Therapy

Spent lots of money in Inglesport on a gorgeous Meander undersuit.... then home. After an excellent few days in a fantastic caving region. **Emsy**

Saturday April 4 2009 Fester Hole Maurice, Tommo, Judy, John Thomas and Prew.

40 loads removed. **Maurice**

Saturday April 4 2009 Swildons, Shatter Series. Jude VdP, Matt Faulkner, Tim Ball

A speedy trip to Shatter Chamber for the purposes of "Scientific Research" ie. to determine whether we could hear explosives being set off by Adrian VdP and Clive Westlake in Swildons VII We arrived ten minutes before the agreed time of 1315 and waited until 1330, but no "Bang" was heard so we exited. We later found out that unfortunately Adrian and Clive had taken longer to reach their destination than expected and the explosives had not been set off until 1430 hours. The ducks in Shatter Series smelt very bad.... yuk! Upon returning to the first duck we met Rich Carey and a couple of chaps from the MCG. At the

base of Shatter Pot we met Geoff Wade (SUSS) and three others - all looking very clean.... but this would not be lasting long! Time, under 4 hours. **Tim Ball**

Saturday April 11 2009 **Portland** Nigel Graham.

Visited the newly refurbished Portland Museum to present it with the last copy of "The Caves of the Isle of Portland" which I purchased for it, a month or so ago. The museum is in a pair of cottages bequeathed by Marie Stopes, and in a display of her history is an intriguing paper - only page one visible - by her, on human bones found in a "Fissure" in a local quarry. The description of the cave suggests that it was a Karst, rather than a mass-movement cavity. The diagram is on a page not displayed: worth investigating! Marie Stopes was a pioneer in Birth Control and women's sexual and marital health, but her scientific field was palaeontology. **Nigel**

Saturday April 11 2009 **Swildons.Tumbledown & Jenga** NikNak. Adrian VdP.

A trip to Swildons 7 to examine the results of the previous session and add some more chemical persuasion. The boulders are getting smaller as a result of our efforts but there are plenty of larger ones hanging in the roof, perhaps ready to come down, maybe stable? This is our problem. The game of Jenga goes on! Stepped into Tumbledown on the way back and spent an hour removing three large buckets from the end: every bit helps. **NikNak**

Wednesday April 15 2009 **GB** Hugh Dowling. Ric Halliwell. Second trip down a Mendip cave - and suitably impressed. Excellent formations, some of the best decorations that I have seen. I was told that the cave was very dry. We went down by the oxbows and out by the gorge. **Hugh**

Thursday April 16 2009 **Swildons.Tumbledown & Jenga** NikNak. Adrian VdP. Hatstand, Rachel Sparrow.

NikNak went down early with Hatstand and Rachel (who went as far as Swildons IV), and dug for a couple of hours in Tumbledown - another five full buckets out from the end of the dig, before the oxygen was sufficiently depleted. Adrian turned up, giving NikNak the excuse to stop whilst he could just about breathe, and then both continued down to VII and Jenga. The previous block is no more, however another, larger, block has taken its place! There are spaces between boulders, but the unstable roof is getting further away. **NikNak**

Saturday April 18 2009 **Fester Hole** Maurice, Judy, John Thomas, Prew and Tommo.

Five old farts festered again. Stratified layers of clay and silt removed from floor. 45 loads. Excellent therapy for Geriatrics. **Maurice**

Saturday April 25 2009 **Swildons** Ade and Jude Vdp, Rich Carey.

Ade wanted to return to VII to deal with another boulder; he headed down the stream while Rich and I went via Blue Pencil; we met up at sump IV. While Ade set up his *persuading poultice* Rich and I had a quick look a IX. Got back to VII in time to hear Jenga go Boooooom. **Jude**

Saturday May 2 2009 **Swildons. Swine-Puke.** Ade and Jude VdP, Gordon Kaye, NikNak

Ade and NikNak on a mission to connect the top of Maypole Aven with Terminus Chamber. From the Terminus Chamber end, armed with drill, 2 batteries and an endless supply of blacks; didn't run out of blacks or drill battery, but out of time. It will take at least one more session, if not two, to produce the connection. The difficulty is in deciding from which end to mine. Terminus Chamber is pleasant when you get there, and ideal for blacks, but a long carry. The top of Maypole is quicker to arrive at the end, but more suited to Doctor Nobel's medicine. Gordon and Jude enjoyed the pleasant way down via Shatter after helping get the drill to Terminus. An enjoyable but tiring afternoon out.

PS. We have decided on a name for the connection..... "Swyne Floo" **NikNak**

Saturday May 2 2009 **OFD Top to Smith's Armoury** John Biffin, Tim Ball, Faye Litherland (BEC), Dave Cooke.

I'd planned to go to Smith's Armoury and get further than last time (just beyond the Maypole Bridge), and so set off with high hopes plus an alternative route description on how to reach the start of the traverses (thanks Les). Bif had also been there before. We'd allowed plenty of time. After the obligatory "getting lost in the Brickyard" the route was dutifully followed with no further navigational errors, however everyone except Bif had an epic at some stage of the journey. Faye did not want to jump from the boulder onto the ledge which leads to an alternative easier passage to Bhowani Junction, and then I had complete loss of bottle at the Crevasse - I'd forgotten that bit from last time! Cookie went across first with the rope, then Bif and then Faye. They set to work rigging the ladder pitch beyond whilst I wondered about just how deep that hole really was and why had my legs turned to jelly at this point. After about what seemed like 20 minutes I heard a shout "are you coming over" to which I replied "I'm not feeling it". Quite what I was not feeling at that point I don't know, confident I think was word that my brain was looking for. However after one false attempt the way to do it was in fact to switch off my spare light and therefore the bottom of the Crevasse could not be seen and therefore could not be worried about. I'll remember that tactic in the future. Thanks to Faye for coaxing me over. Onwards, and myself and Bif took the lead, waiting for the others at a tricky climb a little before the start of the first traverse. They were taking their time but eventually appeared. Later it was revealed that Cookie had experienced a "moment" trying to cross one of the minor traverses in the preceding passage. Having arrived at the start of the traverses we looked at the clock and decided that we wanted to get back for the barbecue at the hut so we turned around; however some of us used this as an excuse to give our jangled nerves a rest! Bif gets the award for being steady in the face of all obstacles. I'll get there next time..... trip time 5 hours total thereabouts.

Sunday May 3 2009 **Pwll Dyfn** Dave Cooke, Faye Litherland (BEC), Laura Trowbridge, Steve McCabe, Aiden Harrison, Tim Ball.

Good weather for the walk up (not too hot or sunny) and a good trip had by all. The cave already had rope in place so we had to rig over the top. Aiden was doing his first SRT in some 8 years on borrowed kit. Plenty of small pitches made for a speedy entry considering the party size. At the bottom we saw a very clear sump pool with some heavy duty mesh in place on one side - for catching stuff washed in perhaps? Laura got very excited but

unfortunately did not have her diving gear, however we were told that it looked good for that kind of thing. Plenty of time available to lounge around on the surface afterwards in broken sunshine for those out first.....trip time 3-5 hours depending on where you were in the group.

Plenty of other caving was done during the weekend, plus some mountain biking. Cheers to Les for organising the trip and sorting out the Westminster hut. **Tim Ball**

Saturday May 9 2009 **Wigmore** Chris Jewell & Claire Cohen. Trip to check out damage had been down with snapper on previous trip to terminal choke. All went well until issues with the connection cables and drill batteries. All fun and laughter while squatting in a cess pit boulder choke squishing bare wires into live connections.... sparks flying everywhere! Second snapper went off, ready for future adventures. Journey back to entrance uneventful but tiring. 10 Hour trip. **Claire**

### **Things you ought to know about Mendip** by Ian Timney

The first occupation of Britain by Cave men was between the Devensian cold stage, and the Younger Dryas Stadial some 15,000-13,000 years ago, and Mendip was one of the most important centres of that early occupation. Some of our most eminent archaeologists have in recent times re excavated Gough's Cave in Cheddar Gorge. They discovered that the cave had been occupied continuously throughout this 2,000 year period. Isotopes sequenced from human bones at Gough's cave tell us that their staple diet was horse meat.

Aveline's Hole in Burrington Combe on the other side of Mendip, to the north of Cheddar, is the oldest human cemetery in Britain; over 100 bodies were buried in Aveline's of people of all ages, over hundreds of years, during this same period. The isotopes sequenced from their bones tell's us that they did not eat horse meat; their staple diet was Red Deer, Wild Boar, Wolf, Lynx and Bear.

Andy Currant, one of the archaeologists working at Gough's Cave discovered at least five human bodies, killed in the prime of life, then carved up by flint blades and probably eaten. One of the skulls had clearly been held in the left hand, then scalped and defleshed with a flint blade held in the right hand. Their jaws had been removed to extract their tongues, the rib cages had been opened up, many of their large limb bones had been smashed to extract their bone marrow, and one of them had been decapitated whilst lying face down.

The isotopes sequenced from their bones match those from Burrington Combe. Perhaps these two Clans made war on each other and the victors ate there enemies..... or was it just early rivalry between the Wessex and the B.E.C ?

If you would like to know more about this fascinating subject, I strongly recommend that you read a book called "Homo Britannicus" by Chris Stringer, published by Penguin I S B N 978-141-01813-3 **Ian Timney**

## **Mendip Cave Rescue**

### **SECRETARY'S REPORT 2009**

Thirteen years ago when I wrote my first report as Secretary of the then Mendip Rescue Organisation. I commented that improved safety standards in caving were driving a reduction in the number of call outs on Mendip. I am pleased to say that trend has continued and although we see one more incident in this years report than last. The seriousness of the incidents is less. Long may this continue the best years for both the caving community and MCR are those when we achieve a target of zero incidents.

The above said, it is vitally important that the MCR maintain their high standard of service and continually improve and modernise. In a world were the words Health & Safety are used in proliferation and usually to refer to legislation. We must not forget safety is a way of life for those involved in adventurous activity. We all continuously assess risk, failure to do so is quickly rewarded with embarrassment, pain or worse. Those who suggest that H&S is ignored could not be further from the truth and statistics within caving over the past decade further prove this not to be the case.

Mendip Cave Rescue has on occasions been labelled as being adverse to change. I agree we have never been in favour of change for change's sake or moving from our guiding principle - Cavers Rescue Cavers. Over the last ten years we have seen many of our long standing wardens retire or stand down due to work or personal commitments and although we have retained a consistent core we now have many new faces. Training has

increased incrementally in both volume and quality . New equipment has been purchased to support new techniques and best practise in both operational and our enhanced medical capabilities. The MCR equipment store now has an array of kit that would not have even been thought about ten years ago. We have one of the highest ratios of Casualty Care Certificate holders of any team in the country. The name has changed from MRO, very emotive at the time, and now we are about to order Hi Viz tabards to identify rescue personnel. If I look back I cannot think what has not changed in the thirteen years other than the secretary. Looking forward I am sure MCR will continue to introduce positive change and further develop its resources beyond recognition.

I can not write this report without paying tribute to one of our most charismatic wardens, Tony Jarratt. Although Tony retired from being a Warden before he died, he spent many years in support of Cave Rescue. He was outspoken on how it should work, he always gave his time freely to train others, he was a vital link in the call out procedure, he played a major role in many rescues. over the years, he was a personal friend to us all, he was an exceptionally nice guy and we will miss him in the extreme.

I have held the position of secretary now for thirteen years during which time I was also treasurer for nine years. I have decided to step down from the role this year. This is partly owing to other commitments but mainly I feel that although we need consistency, officers should not hold a post for too long. Five years is probably good, ten years is a long time, 14 years would be too long, in my opinion. I have enjoyed my time in the role and will be continuing with MCR as a warden. I would like to thank all my fellow Wardens past and present for their support through the years.

R.J. Cork  
April 2009

## Incident Report 2008

### Summary

| Day       | Date                      | Location          | Problem               |
|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Wednesday | 12 <sup>th</sup> March    | Swildon's Hole    | Exhausted             |
| Friday    | 9 <sup>th</sup> May       | Swildon's Hole    | Overdue / False Alarm |
| Monday    | 30 <sup>th</sup> June     | Priddy Green Sink | Overdue               |
| Saturday  | 1 <sup>st</sup> November  | Cain Hill Shaft   | Overdue               |
| Saturday  | 1 <sup>st</sup> November  | Swildon's Hole    | Fall                  |
| Sunday    | 16 <sup>th</sup> November | Swildon's Hole    | Fall                  |

### Details

#### Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March - Swildon's Hole

A caver returning from a trip to sump one found he was unable to ascend the Twenty in Swildon's. His two companions surfaced and went to Brian Prewer's house. Brian made a 999 call and passed on the details at about 15:40. He then rang Alison Moody who set off at approx. 16:00 to make contact with the stranded caver. BP then rang Rich West and agreed to make calls for more people.

RW contacted Dany Bradshaw who went straight to the Green to follow Alison. Ivan Sandford collected immediate kit and also went to the Green. RW arrived at Priddy Green at 16:04

16:06 Dany went underground without kit for a high speed trip to support Alison. At 16:27 Pete Moody & Mark Lumley followed with First Aid & Hot Air. At 16:35 Tony Jarratt & Jake Baines followed with the Heyphone. Surface Heyphone set up on Priddy Green. 2 Community Police officers also attended.

Henry Bennett, Dave King, Eddie Waters + 1 were available on the surface. Mark Kellaway, Keith Savory &

Greg Brock all arrived as the incident ended. Dany & Alison pulled the chap up the pitch and walked him out fairly slowly - they got the impression he that he had over-exerted himself before reaching the ladder and was too exhausted to climb up unaided. This was his first ladder trip.

Mark Lumley exited the cave at 17:05 to report the caver was walking out. At 17:22 the caver arrived on the Green. He got changed and went for a hot drink at Brian Prewer's house. Police informed 17:25.

#### Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May – Swildon's Hole

During an evening trip in Swildon's two (unrelated) parties managed to misunderstand leaving a ladder down the Twenty.

On reaching home one of the party members had doubts if he had done the right thing and rang Brian Prewer for advice. Brian suggested we wait for an "overdue" call but that if he was in anyway concerned he should ring 999 in the usual way. At 00:25 hrs the informant made the call to the police and passed details.

At 07:45 hrs Brian Prewer received a call from the Police requesting MCR take action. Brian called Rich West at 07:47 and passed on the details and Log number.

Richard rang the police and asked for more details. He came up against some resistance to give these details allegedly due to the Data Protection Act. He advised the police he was instigating an underground search and rang off to save time.

Dany Bradshaw was contacted and asked to start a search as was Phil Rowsell. At this point the police contacted Richard and gave the informant's name & number. He was also informed that a patrol car had been sent when the call was first initiated at 00:25 to check the Green. No cars had been seen therefore no further action had been taken until the call to Brian at 07:45. The informant was then contacted he explained the circumstances of the callout & was very surprised that MCR had only just been informed. After making the 999 call he had gone to bed only to be woken by two Policemen banging on his door at 04:14 hrs. He could not add to the information they already had but was told that Cave Rescue were involved.

At 09:16 hrs Phil Rowsell rang to say that he had shouted up every junction on his trip to the Twenty where he found - no people - and no tackle. It decided that unless an "Overdue" call was received later in the day that was then end of the incident. The Control Room was contacted, informed of the actions taken and asked to close the Log.

MCR was contacted later in the day by a senior officer within the communications room. A formal review has taken place and corrective actions to prevent a reoccurrence have been implemented.

#### Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June – Priddy Green Sink

B. Prewer received a call at 21.00hrs from Taunton Police requesting MCR to attend Swildon's Hole. A party of two was overdue from a Priddy Green Sink trip. The informant was contacted. The party had entered PGS at midday and were now overdue. Their car should be parked on Priddy Green. It was also established that they were experienced cavers but had not undertaken the PGS trip before.

Alison Moody was asked to stand by. BEP ascertained that the car was in fact on the Green before checking across the field towards Swildon's main entrance. One of the party was then seen walking across the field. It appeared that the other party member, who was slowly following behind, had been stuck in Clitoris Crawl for about 2 hours but was now OK but very tired. No further action was necessary. Sgt Denton, Taunton Police, was informed at 21.15hrs as well as the informant.

#### Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> November – Cain Hill Shaft

MCR were contacted by Taunton police at 16:51 hrs to say they had been called by a concerned mother. She reported that her son had gone to Cain Hill Shaft at 12:00 for a solo digging session and had left a overdue time of 16:30.

Whilst taking the details from the police at 16:52 a call was received in the Control room from the caver to say that all was well, although he had been sent to bed without any tea.

#### Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> November – Swildon's Hole

Richard West was contacted by Taunton Police control at 18:37-hrs. A 999 call had been received from a female

informant regarding a member of her party who was injured in the upper series of Swildon's Hole. The informant was contacted and asked to wait at Solomon Combe until contacted by an MCR warden. At 18:40 Rich Marlow was requested to attend along with other Wardens who were already on Priddy Green providing First Aid cover for the village Fireworks Display.

Mark Kellaway set up surface control in the First Aid tent on the green and MCR embarked on the dual operation of providing First Aid cover and running a simultaneous underground incident.

Paul Wakeling & Bob Cork set up surface control at the Cave Entrance whilst Rich Marlow, Ali Moody, Dany Bradshaw, Darrell Instrell, Adrian and Jude Vanderplank proceeded underground with kit to deal with the suspected injury .

A suspected leg fracture was diagnosed. The patient was stabilised, given pain relief and splinted ready for an assisted extraction from the cave.

A courtesy call was made to the Police and Fire service to update them and confirm that no assistance was required at this stage of the operation. Ambulance was requested to attend and was chaperoned to the nearest field gate by Les Williams

The patient was delivered to the surface at 21:16 hrs and carried across the fields to the awaiting ambulance. Incident closed at 21 :21

#### Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November – Swildon's Hole

Details of a minor call-out for Swildon's at 17.00hrs. An informant called Brian Prewer at his home saying that a female from a local caving group had fallen near the Lavatory Basin in the Wet Way & banged her head. She was conscious but cold & exhausted. The remaining party of 4 were trying to move her out of the cave. BEP called Martin Grass & Dany Bradshaw asking that they attend. BEP then started to call the police, before the 999 call had been completed the informant returned to say that they were all out & the casualty was being taken to hospital for a check-up. No 999 call was registered with the police. No MCR personnel went underground.

**R J Cork April 2009**

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

Mak celebrated a recent birthday in incendiary fashion, while elsewhere Les let the side down in the Great Italian Caving Fashion Show, where the latest garments were modelled by a select Wessex catwalk group. Next time, Les, dry-clean and press your clothes properly, and maybe you'll be asked to model the 75<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary clothing range.

## Recent Library Additions

Philip Hendy

The "Skipped" February journal, and its omission from Journal 315, means that "Recent" library additions becomes a bit of a misnomer, so the list below only refers to additions since Journal 315.

- B.C.R.A. Cave and Karst Science 34, 3 (2007)
- Cave Diving Group N/L 171 (Apr 09)
- Chelsea S.S. N/L 51 3,4,5 (Mar, Apr, May 09) (*New style*)
- Craven Pothole Club 'Record' 94 (Apr 09)
- Descent 207 (Apr/May 09)
- Grampian S.G. Bull. 4<sup>th</sup> Series Vol. 4 No. 1 (Mar 09)
- M.N.R.C. N/L 123 (Spr 09)
- NSS (USA) 'News' 47, 4 (Apr 09)
- SUI (Ireland) 'Underground' 75 (Spr 09)
- Wittenburg Univ. S.S. (Ohio) 'Pholeos' 27, 1, 2 (Apr 09)

# Diary Dates

The small "Dates" table used in previous editions of the Journal gives too little information, and has incurred justifiable criticism, so that format is being abandoned in favour of this more detailed list.

**Jun 22nd - 23<sup>rd</sup>** Hut Booking Harrow School  
(Charles Farrar-Bell / Andrew Lee) 30 pupils + 4 staff

**Sat Jul 4** Phil's Birthday Bash - all friends welcome  
Members and personal guests only weekend

**Sun Jul 5** Committee Meeting Upper Pitts

**Fri Jul 10th - 12th** Hut Booking DSS (Jason Pain)  
10 people

**Sat Jul 11 10:30 AM** Library Booking  
Mendip Cave Registry & Archive Meeting

**Fri 17th - 19th** Jul Hut Booking  
Lincoln Caving Club (Tam Rennie)  
6 people

**Fri Jul 24th - 26<sup>th</sup>** Hut Booking CSS  
(Jacky Ankerman) 15 people &  
LCCC (Les Mottram) 4 people

**Fri Aug 7th - 16th** Hut Booking 3 people  
Dickon Morris

**Sun Sep 6** Committee Meeting Upper Pitts  
Members only weekend

**Fri Sep 11 - 13th** Hut Booking Essex Lorry Drivers  
(Terry Chew) 20 people

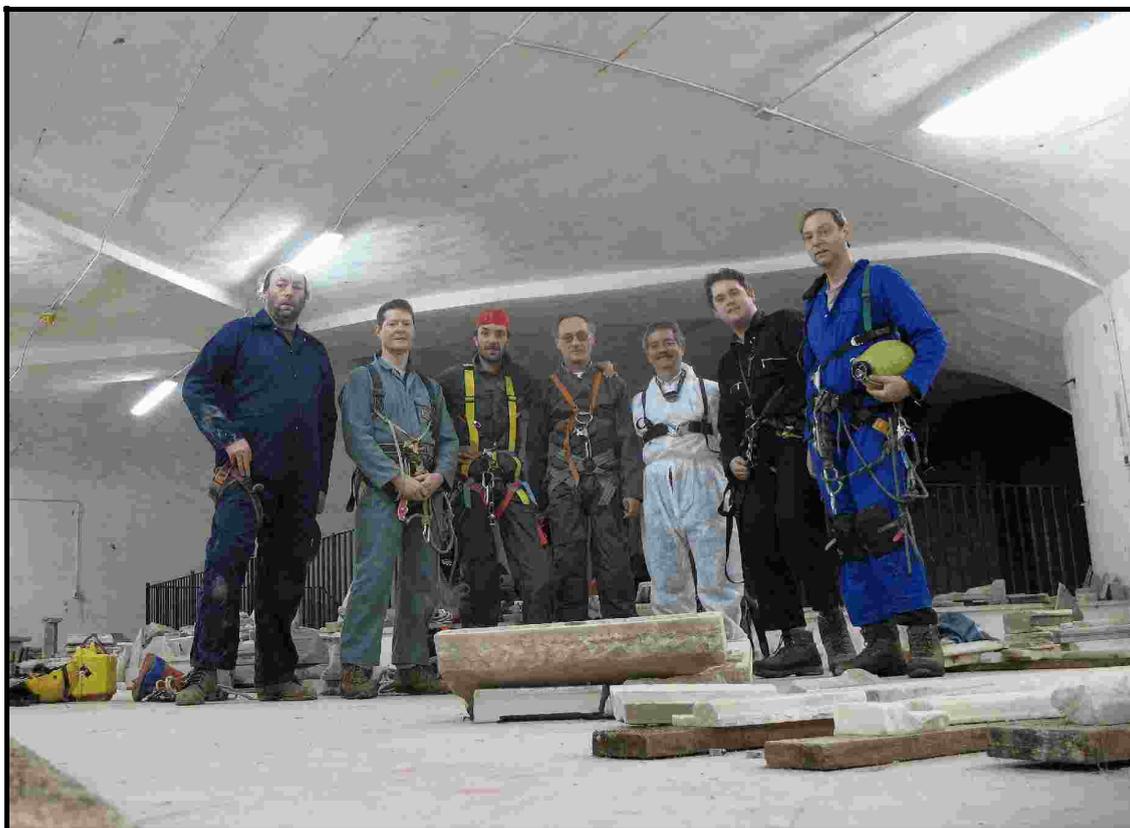
**Hidden Earth 2009 will be held from Friday 25 to Sunday 27 September** 2009 at Churchill Community School, Churchill Green, Churchill, WINSCOMBE, North Somerset, BS25 5QN

**Fri 9th - 11th Oct** Hut Booking Leeds Uni Caving Club  
(Sally Joseph) 20 people

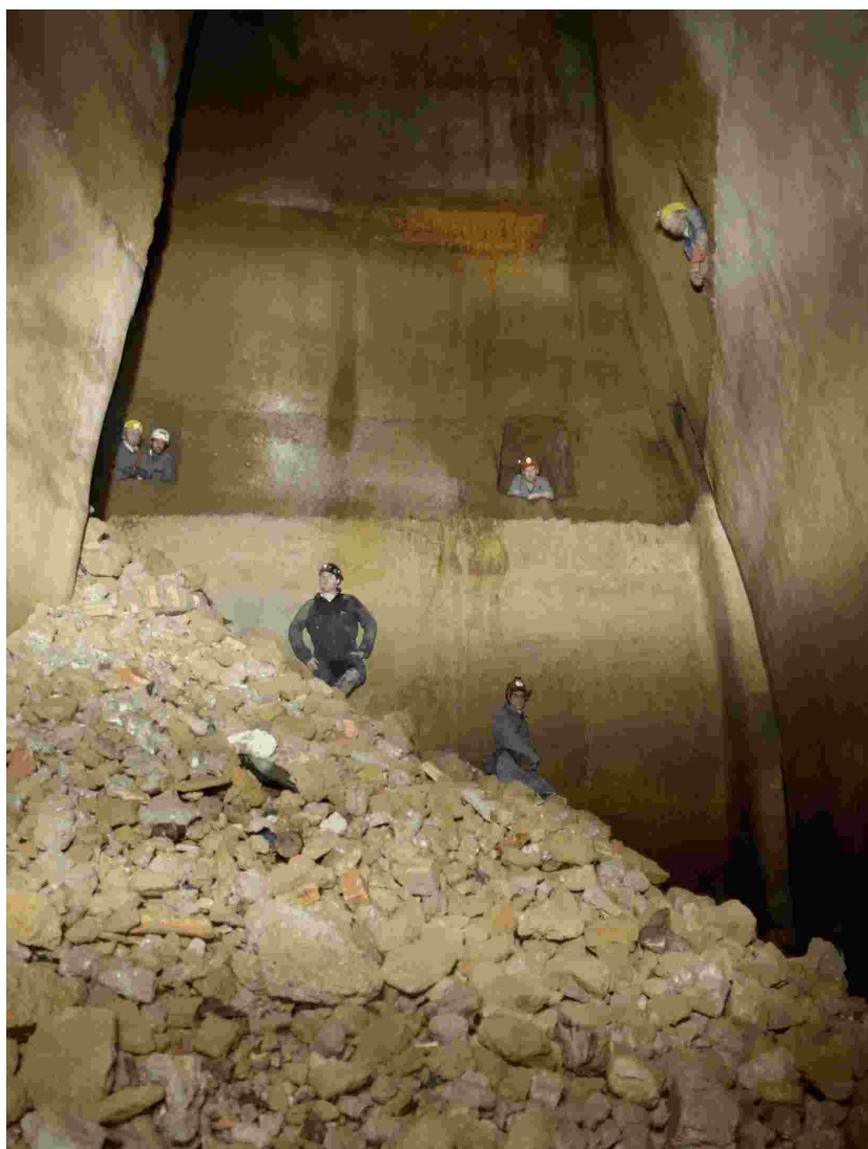
**Sat Oct 17 10:30 AM** WESSEX AGM  
Hunters Lodge, Priddy

Sat Oct 17 3:00 PM Committee Meeting Upper Pitts

Sat Oct 17 7:00 PM ANNUAL DINNER



**Above:** Les, Cookie, three Neapolitan hosts, Gnomie, Andy.  
**Photo: Dave Cooke.**



**Left:** The “Huge cistern chamber with various holes in the walls”.  
**Photo: Andy Morse.**

| <b>Contents</b>                  |            |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Editorial</b>                 | <b>282</b> |
| <b>Club &amp; Committee News</b> | <b>283</b> |
| <b>Mendip Cave Survey</b>        | <b>285</b> |
| <b>Underground Naples</b>        | <b>286</b> |
| <b>From the Log Book</b>         | <b>292</b> |
| <b>Mendip Knowledge</b>          | <b>295</b> |
| <b>Mendip Cave Rescue</b>        | <b>295</b> |
| <b>Library Additions</b>         | <b>298</b> |
| <b>Diary Dates</b>               | <b>299</b> |