



The

Wessex Cave Club

JOURNAL

Volume 31 - Number 323 - July 2011

Champion's Hole
Tenerife 2010
Pierres's Pot
North Wales Weekend
Penderyn

President:

Donald Thomson

Vice Presidents:

Sid Perou

Derek Ford

James Hanwell

Chairman:

David Morrison

Windrush

Upper Bristol Road

Clutton BS395RH

01761 452 437

Secretary:

David Cooke

3 Stars Close

Axbridge, Somerset BS26 2BZ

01944 733260

Membership Secretary: Frank Tully**Treasurer:** Aubrey Newport**Caving Secretary:** Les Williams**Hut-Warden:** Lou Biffin**Librarian:** Phil Hendy**Tackle Officer:** John Thomas**Hut Administration:** Ian Timney**Sales Officer:** Dean Scott**Webmaster:** Tom Thomson**Ordinary Members:**

John Osborne

David Murphy

Training Officer: Les Williams**Journal Editor:**

Andrew Chamberlain

editor@wessex-cave-club.org

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ISSN 0083-811X**Headquarters**

Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane,

Priddy, Somerset,

BA5 3AX,

01749 672 310

The Wessex Cave Club

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91	Editorial
91	Journal Submissions
92	Champion's Hole
93	Tenerife 2010 (part 1)
98	From the Upper Pitts Log Book
104	North Wales Weekend
107	Penderyn Weekend
110	Pierre's Pot
111	Club News / Diary / Recent Library Additions



Cover Picture:
Looking out on to Alum Pot (Yorkshire Dales) from the window in April 2011. Christine Grosart (foreground) rigs the next pitch while an unknown caver (far background) ascends the direct route.

EDITORIAL

Well, here it is at last, Journal 323. Sorry about the delay, but for a journal to happen, it needs a number of things to come together at the same time. You need articles, news, nice photographs and most importantly, the time to actually put it all together. The time taken is not just in the putting together, but in the finding, chasing and editing articles and realising what is relevant and interesting and what is a puff of smoke.

This edition, we have a wide selection ranging from the the first part of Ian Timney's account of the Tenerife Lava tubes, through the club trips to

north wales, to the new discoveries in one of the most visited caves on the Mendips, all which continues to show the varied activities of our club.

There is also the results of the survey on the future use of the fantastically renovated downstairs dormatry. Well done to Ian and everyone who helped with this.

A suggestion that has been passed around at committee meetings in relation to the journal, is the possibility of replacing the journal with a more regular newsletter (say monthly) and a feature packed journal "book" once a year. could you pass any thoughts, one way or another onto the committee so we can judge peoples opinion of this at a future meeting.

As far as future journals go, I will be standing down at the AGM in October and in such will be passing onto whoever decides to take the task on. The main reason for this is that am finding it incredibly difficult to fit the time required around what this time of year becomes a 7 day working week (oh the joys of being freelance).

Whoever takes over, I will be more than happy to help and advise and can even supply templates for and help with any of the different software you may be using.

324 is in the pipeline already, so if you have anything to go in, then please send it on, and if you have already sent me articles, then be assured, they will be in there.

AndyC

ROPE LADDERS
AS SUPPLIED TO
THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB
and many other private Expeditions
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SPECIALISTS IN SAFETY SLINGS, NEO BELAYS
ETC.

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ARTHUR BEALE
194 SHAFTESBURY AVE, LONDON W.C.2
(Temple Bar 2960)

[10]

Supplied by Phil Hendy

Journal Submissions

Can you please email your text submissions as Microsoft Word files. If you can ensure these are spell checked and correct in grammar and punctuation, then my life is easier and the article is more likely to be published (Proofs will be sent out for checking prior to publication). **Can you send any images separately** (i.e. not embedded in word files) in standard image file formats, ideally high quality Jpegs or Tiffs. All photos need to be supplied with both a caption and a credit to enable them to be used. If your article is of a historical or scientific nature, then can you ensure it is supplied with relevant references and information on abstracts. Information on how to present this can be provided if needed. As a guide, an article of 3300 words will fill 4 sides with images.

Champion's Hole

Recently Chris Castle and I have been checking copy for some Cheddar caves for the forthcoming updated edition of Mendip Underground. I mentioned the existence of a small cave near Gough's Old Cave which has hitherto not been documented. It is too small to warrant an entry in MU in its own right (though it may be mentioned under Gough's Old Cave) but as a cave it is worth recording.

Champion's Hole lies at the foot of the rock face west of The Slitter, a gully running down from Long Hole. The main entrance to Gough's Old Cave, a wide high arch, lies downslope on the east side of The Slitter. The entrance is a small crawl, 0.7m metres long, 0.5m wide and 0.5m high, at ground level. It is best negotiated on one's back, as the floor has a dip. Inside, the cave is a roomy rift, up to 1.3m wide and 6.1m long. Its maximum height is 4m; the limestone here dips 10° to the south, and a flat bedding plane roof follows the dip. The floor, cave earth and stones, rises to the south, and each end of the rift is choked with cave earth. There is a small pit in the floor, a trial pit dug by Chris in a brief attempt to find out whether there was a way on downwards. Tree roots are visible, and the cave is home to a small number of Lesser Horseshoe bats.

The alignment of the rift, 5° east of north, roughly parallels other rifts in the area, notably the main passage in Gough's Old Cave, and the Fonts, the Chimney and other cross-passages in Gough's Cave, the main passage of which is strike-orientated, running from west to east.

For a while the cave was known as Colin's Hole; possibly after a goat which took up residence in The Slitter for a time. However, it appears that Colin was one of the early bat counters, and the name was applied to identify the site when recording bat numbers. It was originally dug out by Mark Champion, who suddenly died while in his prime in 2009. A small, wiry man, Mark was for a while Head of Rocksport (the caving and climbing division of Cheddar Caves & Gorge). Fearless and indefatigable, Mark only resigned from this position because of a chronic shoulder injury, which put paid to his caving and climbing. He then took over the management of the open-top bus, which involved

driving antique buses up and down the Gorge – an activity which did nothing to help his shoulder! Mark was also a skilled flint-knapper, and was an excellent 'Stone-Age Idiot', demonstrating Mesolithic survival skills in the Museum garden at Cheddar. Universally popular, his sudden death caused great sadness amongst all at Cheddar Caves, and the cave has been named in his memory.

The survey was made using a Silva compass and Fibron tape, to Grade 2. The grid reference and altitude are approximate, as the survey was not extended back to Gough's Old Cave. In any case, I am not certain whether the location date for this is the original entrance in The Slitter, or the newer entrance in a rift opening onto the Gorge above the main complex of buildings at Gough's Cave. Incidentally, the second entrance is the one used by Jack and Nancy, and then by Richard Gough, when Gough's Old Cave was a showcave, before the discovery of Gough's.

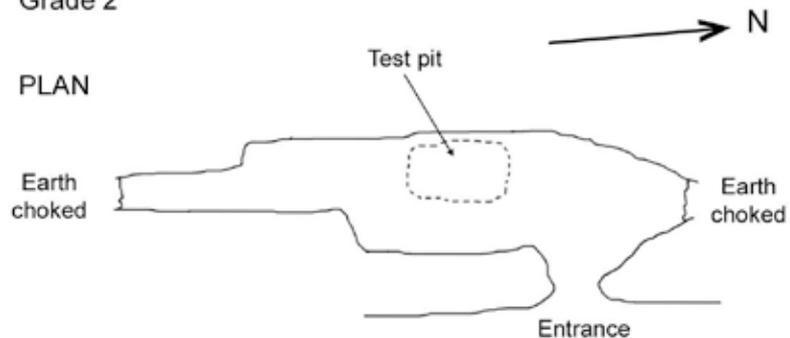
Phil Hendy

CHAMPION'S HOLE Cheddar, Somerset

NGR 463 357 A. 44 Approx.

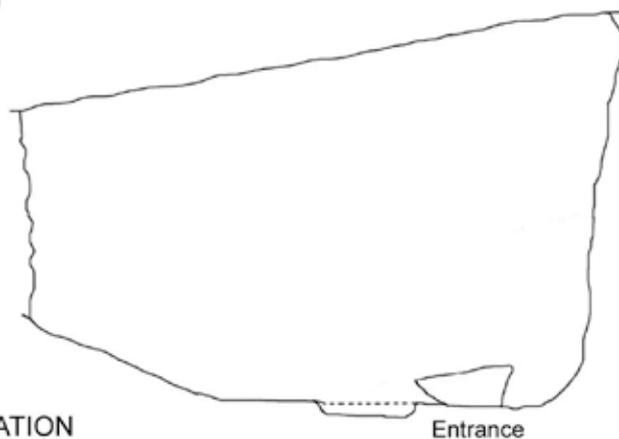
Grade 2

PLAN



Surveyed by Phil Hendy,
Chris Castle and Nicky Dennis
24.3.2011

ELEVATION



Tenerife 2010

Part 1 - by Ian Timney

Ian Timney, Chris Binding, Wendy Bollard, Hayley Clark, Dave (Cookie) Cook, Mark Helmore, Andy Morse, Carmen Smith, John (Tommo) Thomas, Frank Tully, Ed Waters, Chris Williams, Les Williams, Wendy Williams.

Tenerife is renowned as a hedonistic tourist destination with cheap accommodation, booze and all year sun. However, the finer delights of the volcanic landscape and caving have been largely neglected.

Andy Morse and Les Williams have been going to Tenerife for several years now gradually gaining information about the Tenerife caves and had got to know a local caving/climbing club called Tajinaste (named after Tenerife's national flower). These trips were part exploration but mostly holiday.



A Tajinaste plant in full bloom (All un-attributed photos are by the author)

In 2006 and 2007 I joined in on the jollies and one evening in 2006, Andy, Les and I visited the Tajinaste club, in order to gain information on the whereabouts of more caves, and how we might get access to the gated ones. Despite the fact that we spoke very little Spanish

and they spoke no English we got on famously, they showed us lots of photos lent us ropes, plied us with cold beers and gave us all XXL Tajinaste T shirts. They are more interested in canyoning than caving so they gave us the phone number of a bloke called Alfredo Láinez.

Well the gods were smiling on us that day because Alfredo turned out to be the main man, he pretty much runs the caving scene on Tenerife, and is the leader of the Benisahare caving club. Alfredo has the keys to many of the gated caves on Tenerife, in fact he gated them, gates that only the most determined and tenacious cavers will be able to unlock, (more of that later).

This year's expedition promised to be very different right from the start. Previous trips had consisted of a small group in one villa and most of the caving involved following vague clues gleaned from the internet, and trying to establish contact with Alfredo. This year there were 15 of us and we had managed to pre-arrange some caving trips. On top of that there were a reasonable number of known caves to visit, so a full two weeks of caving beckoned. Most of us were located in Los Silos in three villas. Les, Wendy W, Chris W, Tommo and myself were in the Operations Centre; Andy, Wendy B, Ed and Hayley were in the Science villa; with Mark, Frank and Cookie in the Tigers/Mincing villa. Meanwhile Carmen and Chris had arranged their own accommodation in Los Gigantes. This year Andy had managed to contact Alfredo Láinez of the Benisahare and officials of the Tenerife National Park, so we had definite objectives for this trip.

June 14th Tuesday

I drove down to Mendip after work, had a couple of pints with Les and Wendy at the Hunters, then off to the hut for some sleep.

It was going to be a short night, Tommo, Mark and I had to be up at 4.30am as we had to check in at Bristol Airport at 6am.

June 15th Wednesday

Les, Chris and Wendy drove to the airport in their car, Mark, Tommo and I were chauffeur driven by Bean, "Thanks mate".

We got checked in, then had bacon butties and coffee in the departure lounge; where we were joined by all the others 'except that is Frank Tully,' until our flight was called.

What happened was.... We were all stood in the boarding queue, all that is except the 'Late Frank Tully,' when Chris Binding marched past in a spectacular display of queue jumping. Brandishing a bright orange card,

he informed us that he had paid extra for speedy boarding. So there he was stood on the tarmac at the foot of the front boarding stairs, we were at the half way point in the queue when an air hostess beckoned us to board at the rear stairs. As I quietly recalled our clubs motto “Ubique Primus”, we all simultaneously seized the advantage and ran for the stairs, unseen by Chris. We were very quickly seated with our baggage stowed away before Chris set foot on the plane. He walked up the aisle towards us, to calls of “Is that yourself?” It was a hell of a funny and a good note on which to start our holiday, but he wasn’t the last to board the plane ‘The Late Frank Tully’ was! The only slight disappointment for some of us was that we didn’t have our usual pilot “Johnny Quest” as he had defected to another airline.

For me the flight was uneventful, as I was asleep. We collected our baggage without too much of a delay, made the short walk to the car port, collected our vehicles, met up with Ed Waters and Hayley Clark, and set off in convoy. Our accommodation was on the far side of the island, at the seaside town of Los Silos, near to the most North Western point of Tenerife. We stopped on route at a little bar we know at Vilaflor, for a quick beer or two and a snack, and then continued our journey, making another stop to have a look at some short lava tubes by the roadside at Samara up in the coronal forest. The forest completely encircles the island as a



Chris Williams emerging from a small roadside tube.

inhabitants of Tenerife with their fresh water.

We then completed our journey which took about two hours in all. We all got settled in to our villas, then headed off en mass to the neighbouring seaside town of Garachico and had a slap-up dinner at the Restaurante Avenida. Delicious food and drink was taken.

Wednesday 16th Mark’s birthday

I don’t know how the others started their day, but in our villa we kicked off with the “Full Monty”, it was such a glorious fry up I had to have a lie down afterwards. Our first port of call today was the Cueva Del Viento visitor centre to make contact with our friend Alfredo; we hadn’t seen him for a couple of years so it was great to see him again.

We decided to visit two lava tubes called Cueva Punta Blanco (200m) and Cueva De San Marcos (1800m), which would make a good introductory trip for the lava tube novices. Both situated 50 meters up a cliff face, overlooking the attractive cove of San Marcos, a little east of Garachico. From the cave entrance you get a bird’s eye view of the bar, which after a few hours scrambling about in lava tubes is a most welcome sight.

The caving party consisted of Les and Chris W, Mark, Morse, Cookie, Frank, Tommo, Ed, Hayley and myself.

The caves are approached firstly by driving up a short, steep abandoned road to a parking place in front of a high fence which prevented further progress by car. If you take a look at the roof of this abandoned house just below the road you will understand why the road is now closed.

Fortunately you can crawl through a hole in the fence,



Planning the days caving at the bar in Vilaflor.

narrow band of pine trees at about 2000 metres altitude. It’s only there because, at the same altitude there is a permanent cloud bank sitting like a slipped halo on the island’s shoulders. Rain and water vapour are collected from the cloud bank then channelled in covered concrete troughs called Gallerias, to a network of tanks and reservoirs. These in turn irrigate small scale subsistence level terraced farming on its way down to the banana plantations near the coast and, of course, to supply all the



The abandoned house beneath the cliffs of San Marcos

walk up the boulder strewn road for a few metres, slide down a dusty slope, down a little climb to the top of a disused water reservoir, pirouette around the rim of the reservoir (with a steep scrub covered drop on your right and a ten foot drop into the tank on your left), slide along a short length of pipe (which used to supply the reservoir), then along a short ledge to the entrance of San Marcos. This consists of a low arched entrance and a crawl into stomping great passages.

A slightly lower path leads to a short climb up to Cueva Punta Blanco.

Both caves sport a wide range of volcanic features, the best of which is a large chamber in Cueva San Marcos the like of which you will seldom see. It has a mind boggling variety of volcanic features, including an amazing lava sump, from which we had to rescue

Les Williams.

We had a wonderful time exploring and photographing both caves, but it was getting close to Beer o'clock so Les, Mark, Tommo, Chris and I extricated ourselves from the cave at 5.30 pm. The others had gone to explore a side passage to the other gated entrance in a banana plantation that Les and I had done on a previous trip. We got changed back at the cars and waited for the others for what seemed like a very long time. Mark was heard to say, "Its 6 o'clock, it's my birthday and I haven't had a beer yet!" Our eyes were constantly scanning the cliff face, waiting with anticipation for the emergence of the others, willing them to appear on the ledge so that we would know they were safe and had returned from the bowels of the earth.

"Right", said Mark, "there are five of them, they can all fit in Haley's car, I am off to the bar". Mark then made a neat pile of their belongings against the wall and set of on a mission to slack his thirst. Well we couldn't let him go alone, Tommo elected to



The rescue of Les from a lava sump



Ed Waters just inside the entrance of Cueva San Marcos

stay behind to inform the others of our whereabouts so we jumped into the cars and buggered off.

The others soon joined us at the bar. We had plates of chips with diced cheese and ham mixed in, and more beer, before heading of to the supermarket at La Caleta de Interián to buy all the food and booze we would need to last the night in celebrating Mark's birthday. We did this in great style with Spag Bol, Chilli Tacos, Fajitas, various puddings, and a birthday cake complete with candles and all.

It was very good of Mark to provide us with an excuse for such a glorious piss up which lasted long into the night. As day's go they don't come much better than this one.

Thursday 17th



The safe return, Andy, Ed, Hayley, Cookie and Frank emerge from the entrance of Cueva San Marcos

We all slept late after the previous night's over indulgences. In our villa we whiled away the morning after another great fry-up, sorting photos and reading. Andy and Wendy had gone with our passports to the National Park Office in Santa Cruz, to try to get permission for a trip into a vertical system called Sima de Vicky. This is at 2,480metres, on the Montaña Rajada, in the Parque Nacional Del Teide, La Oratava.

For the rest of us today was a tourist day. Les, Wendy, Chris and I set off for the massive Las Cañadas caldera above the coronal forest and the clouds. Frank, Tommo, Mark, Cookie, Ed and Hayley did likewise but continued up to the Teleférico, high up on the side of Mt Teide, and took the cable car to a few hundred feet below the summit.

If volcanology floats your boat, there can't be many places on earth better than this massive, beautiful, spectacular 17 km diameter caldera, out of which mount Teide, the third largest volcano in the world, has grown. Looking at the size of the caldera the mind boggles at what the original volcano was like.

Interestingly it was not an eruption that formed this

caldera but the collapse of the 3000 metre high domed volcanic structure that formed the islands summit. It sank when the magma chamber beneath it emptied, the roof of which could no longer support the edifice above.

The walls that form the outer rim of the caldera on the south side rise to a height of 500 metres but would have stood even taller. The original caldera has partially filled up by natural erosion and lava and ash from subsequent eruptions. It is also possible that there were in fact two calderas separated by the Roques de Garcia.

The north wall has been buried by later eruptions and now forms part of Mount Teide. The collapse also triggered a massive land slide which swept down the north side of the island, leaving in its wake the massive "Valle De La Oratava" and sending a massive tidal wave north towards Spain and Portugal.

During historic times Tenerife has experienced an eruption roughly every hundred years; the last eruption was from the Nostrils of Teide on the side of a volcano called Chinyero in 1909. It is well overdue for another blow.

Mount Teide is at present the only active volcano on Tenerife, constantly emitting sulphurous gasses from its summit, but more alarmingly, according to Alfredo and Drago, a bulge is forming on the north slopes. It is believed that when it blows the eruption will go pyroclastic, very much like the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79. It is



One small corner of the caldera

reckoned that the subsequent tsunami will flood southern Britain!

The Canary Islands remain one of the world's most volatile volcanic regions. The Lanzarote eruption between 1730 and 1736 was one of the biggest in Earth's history.



Mount Teide in the background overlooking the Roques

Apart from the worrying bulge on the side of Teide, there is a rift that runs north to south through the island of La Palma which will one day split the island in two. It is thought that the western half will drop into the Atlantic Ocean sending a massive tidal wave in excess of a half kilometre high, across the Atlantic, that won't stop until it hits the eastern seaboard of America. There is also a new island under construction, erupting from the ocean floor that is due to break surface in about 300 years.

We all had a great day, at all times totally in awe of our surroundings. We took hundreds of photos between us, because everywhere you look, in every direction, there is another interesting, bizarre, spectacular, beautiful sight to be seen. Thank heavens for the digital SLR camera!

We eventually met up with Cookie, Frank, Mark and Tommo at the restaurant in Garachico for a fine evening meal and a very mellow end to the day. Oh, I forgot to mention the cold beers at lunch time.

To be continued.....

Ian Timney



Pico Viejo and the Nostrils of Teide (Mt Teide in the background)

From

The Upper Pitts Log Book

Friday December 18 2009 **Priddy Green Stink** (sic). Mad Fi, Matt, Mike, Richard, Jan.

Well, it had to be done. I had not been down there in a good while so I managed to talk my four friends into doing this wonderful trip. The snow was a couple of feet deep and we had to find the entrance, then dig it out and then at last the hatch was open and we all descended into the warmth below. It was a nice dry entrance and the passages were as good as ever. My four friends really enjoyed themselves and are looking forward to doing it again. **Fiona**

Saturday December 19 2009 **Priddy Green Stink** (sic). Mad Fi, Jess, Dan.

Oh this wonderful place!! I could not resist the option of doing it again when I had two more, willing, victims ready and waiting at the bit. The snow was off the entrance, as we had already cleared it yesterday, but the lock was frozen solid. A couple of minutes later the lid was open, ready to receive its victims for the day. In we all went and straight down to business; had a cracking time through all the crawls. Jess and Dan flowed through like butter on the melt. They really enjoyed all this cave has to offer, down those lovely pitches one by one, then on to the streamway. Up the chain and out the normal way.... Oh Happy Days! **Fiona**

Sunday December 20 2009 **Hunters Lodge Sink** Mad Fi, Jess, Dan, Naomi Sharp

A nice evening trip into a fun cave. Interesting drive in the snow to get there, and snow all down the entrance shaft. Slid our way down an inclined bedding plane, climbed through some boulders - some of which were held up with scaff bars. Some nice pretties in places and you have to be careful where you put your head in some of the stoopy places. Quite muddy and bouldery (is that the word?) at the start and then we climbed down some black jaggedy rocks with scallops to reach the squeeze crawl to Fi's old dig. This sometimes sumps but was dry today. Some huge fossils in the black rock, and some white calcite veins, at the bottom of the cave. A lovely climb up this bit. There is a handline but I preferred to climb as there are plenty of really solid holds. Got a bit warm on the way out, and faceplanted the 8" on new snow at the top of the entrance to cool down! Note to self: Base-layer and Furry is definitely overkill! **Naomi Sharp**

Wednesday December 23 2009 **Priddy Green Stink** (sic). Mad Fi, Naomi Sharp

Oh yes, again, I never get bored with this trip. With so many different sections in it, it ticks all the boxes and hits the right spots every time. This time my willing victim was Naomi. The snow was still thick on the ground and the lock was frozen shut. It took some kind cavers to get it to yield but in the end it gave in and the hatch was open for some more hours of Christmas fun. Down we both slid into the comfort of the warm and the lid was closed to keep the chills outside. On we both went through the lovely passages, Naomi relishing every moment as we went on. We arrived at the drops, all the ropes at the ready for a merry slide. Oh how we both enjoyed it... really looking forward to my next trip down. **Fiona**

Thursday December 24 2009 **Swildons** Naomi Sharp

Trudged across the fields in the snow with a bag of diving gear and a 3L cylinder. Caved down to Sump 2 with the cylinder crabbed to my belt, which worked quite well. Kitted up and got in with 6 kgs of lead, but with light trouble and a free-flowing reg. Decided to back out and come back another day. 2 piece wet-suit was toasty warm, but a pig to cave in as struggling to bend my arms and legs! **Naomi**

Thursday December 24 2009 **Priddy Green Stink** (sic). Mad Fi, Kev Speight

Oh, here we go again, another go down this wonderful place. This time my willing victim was Kev Speight. Oh he was keen! Off we go and the snow is still white, and the lock still frozen solid. A bit of tender care and the lock was off, hatch was open - and the warm cave inside. Down we went, all good down the climbs, then through the first narrow bit and on to Clitoris Crawl and poor Kev tried and tried. The suit came off and he tried feet first, but still the cave would not let the poor fella through. After a good few goes we retreated up those wonderful climbs. Oh what fun. This place give you even greater fun going back up to Priddy! Kev has vowed to have another go, to finish the job. Wicked. **Fiona.**

Friday December 25 2009 **Swildons** Naomi Sharp

Got up, went to get my cylinder, came out. The view on the way back was stunning. Not a cloud in the sky and still

sparkly snow thick on the ground. A lovely Christmas morning trip. Sat down on the rock in the washing pot for a mince pie on the way out! **Naomi**

Friday December 25 2009 Eastwater, mini "Round trip". Naomi, Hatstand.

A quick evening "Dinner burner" trip saw us setting off through the snow in the dark. After slides along Eastwater Lane, and a Snow Angel (fail) by that, we slid down through the boulders and through the Woggle Press into boulder chamber. Had a little look at the first pitch of the twin verts, then carried on round. I may have had some approach issues at Hallelujah Hole, but got there in the end! Sang "God gave Rock and Roll to you" most of the way round and there were strange turkey smells coming from in front, too! A fun trip. **Naomi**..... But what actually happened..... I did indeed fail to make a Snow Angel, but only because the snow had frozen solid which meant that my attempt merely created a small area of crazy paving style cracking! Oh, and we went caving. Eastwater was in fine form although there was some very bad air in places. Bizarrely, since it was Christmas day, the said bad air smelt of turkey. Naomi is being a little harsh on herself, I think, with her description of getting through Hallelujah Hole. She actually got through like a greased weasel. There was **no** thrutching, **no** swearing, **no** lamp or helmet issues and she definitely did not use the "C" word; meanwhile I gained a new description.... Heading up the Primrose Path, Naomi took one look at the beginning of the Traverse and decided that it couldn't be the way on, but when I dropped into it she decided that apparently I am 'deceptively small'. I am not sure whether this is a compliment or not! It was a great little Sunday trip for a Saturday afternoon ??? **Hatstand** (Deceptively Small)

Tuesday December 29 2009 **Swildons; round trip.** Emma, Geoff, NikNak,

I was walking across the foggy fields of Priddy thinking that hmmm..... what am I letting myself in for? I have been in Swildons once before but that was at least five years ago and then we stopped at the ladder pitch. My other little caving experience was Fairy Cave, last month with Geoff, which I really enjoyed - but, much to Geoff's disappointment was very dry! (Fairy / Hilliers link). I must admit I was a bit apprehensive about the amount of water there might be after the snow melt. And friends looking disapproving when Geoff mentioned that he might take me on the round trip instead of Fairy Cave. But the trip flew by really quite quickly and I really enjoyed it. I was not sure how I'd get on in the troubles and Sump 1, but actually they were fine. And I'm looking forward to my next trip! **Em**

Friday January 1 2010 **Sidcot Swallet.** Ali Moody, John Cooper.

Trip to check the Guide Book description - preparing for the new edition in a couple of years time (Mendip Underground). **John**

Friday January 1 2010 **Darren Cilau** Mad Fi, Jess, Dan

We had a wonderful trip. It was my first trip back after 2.5 years. My last visit was on my 36th birthday, on a Darren camp. It was just wonderful to go in the entrance again. It was Jess and Dan's first trip into Darren so we planned a shorter trip to give them a taste of what was to come later. They really enjoyed the entrance and I could hear squeals of delight from them both. Then we all popped out at the other end with some pleasure and big smiles all round. We move on to the Big Chamber Nowhere Near the Entrance and for a few minutes I struggled to get onto Eagle's Passage as I had forgotten the way. After a short time all was well, the passage found and on we went. Oh the fun of the sand crawls and then on to the ladder. Those lovely ladders. They tower into the darkness above, taking you to the next level of blackness. I went up those lovely rungs and Dan followed, but sadly the ladders this time were a bit much for Jess, who was a little off-colour today. So we slid back down and made our way out. They cannot wait for the next trip. **Fiona**.

Saturday January 8 2011 **St. Cuthberts** Ali Moody, Tim Rose, Aiden Harrison, Pete Buckley, Adrian Bennett.

Again, Upper Pitts was very busy, although this time some of this was due to working on the hut. After very little faffing we were caving by just before 11.

Dropping down the Entrance Rift I followed the instructions - "Just descend in a controlled way". As instructed, I controlled my fall down the rift and it was, as I remember from a previous trip, fun. Across the boulders, down some ladders and into Arete Chamber.

We followed one of the main 'tourist' routes and, as St Cuthbert's is a complex cave, I was quickly lost to where we were and how we got there. I really must pay more attention in future!

Dropping down into the main streamway, for a flat out crawl in the wet, got us into Sewer Passage and then from there to Beehive Chamber. Up and over the flow stone via the fixed chain and into the impressive Gour Chamber. Dropping down Gour Rift is much easier than it looks.

Sump 1 was a duck - so, as we were wet already, we went through and had a quick look at Sump 2. Cuthbert's 2 is a very different cave.

Coming back under the Gour Hall this time and through the Rabbit Warren into the Railway Passage and Harem Passage. Up the lovely Water Chute (worth the trip just for this!) to have a look at Pulpit Pitch.

Eventually we were faced with getting back up the Entrance Rift - not quite as much fun as coming down it.

We were able to see all the relevant pretties - fantastic. A brilliant trip all round. Tim , Aidan, Adrian and myself were lead by Ali M - a big thanks to her. **Pete**

Saturday January 8 2011 **Hunters Lodge Sink.** Jude Vanderplank, Wayne Starsmore, Sarah Watson. John Cooper,

A pleasant trip down, and then up, to the end of Bones Passage before returning and descending the 50 ft pitch. Traverse the pool and then up to the sign warning of loose boulders before we all came out again. **John**

Friday January 14 2011 **Darren Cilau. Camp.** Mad Fi + 5 (?)

48 hours underground. It was my first Darren camp for 2.5 years. So was really delighted to get into the best cave going. We got in late on Friday night; had a good trip into the camp. With a heavy bag full of supplies got into camp. 3.5 hours later we arrive at camp. What a lovely sight, the warm glow of the Tilley lamp, the kettle on the stove and the tea in the pot - that really is a good cuppa! Stayed up to a pool (?) 2 am and had to head off to my pit. My things were still all OK and sleeping bag all good. I sleep quite close to the stream in a cosy spot that I call home. At 0500 I hear loud footsteps and the rest of the party were only just heading off for bed; they won't be moving 'til mid-morning. But I cooled the breakfast bacon all round, washed down with the best cave tea. Luncheon was prepared and at mid-day off we all went to our dig at Frog Street. It is a cracking dig with a flat-out crawl that takes ages to get there. It's the best. We are in a narrow rift, removing rocks and it's the best dig going. Back to camp in the evening for a lovely curry, and Christmas pudding and custard. God that was good! Later after making some cocktails as night turned to morning, headed off to my pit for another good sleep. Next was up on the breakfast time, and packing up camp. Good trip out and surfaced to rain and a thick fog. Looking forward to the next one. **Fiona.**

Saturday February 12 2011 **Eastwater** "2nd. Saturday" trip:

Dolphin route team: Wayne Starsmore, Clive Westlake, Sarah Payne, Chris Lloyd, Steve McNad.

Twin Verticals route team: Rich Carey, Andrea Rouse, Jude Vanerplank, Pete Buckley.

Pots and pitches duly rigged and the 13 Pots enjoyed as an exchange was made. **Rich**

~~~~~  
After not much faffing - and trying to find a suitable spit to take with us - we set off in a very well organised couple of groups. In fact, so organised were we that Andrea took the collected fees to Eastwater farm and was very rudely forgotten about (sorry - I reckon it was my fault 'cos of chatting!)

Carefully down the most treacherous part of Eastwater - the grass / mud bank down to the entrance and into the boulder ruckle. I can't really have been concentrating as I didn't notice the little detour made. Through the Woggle Press (for the first time this way for me) and down to the Crossroads.

Twin Verts team:

Rich, Jude, Andrea and myself headed off to the Twin Verts. Rich and Jude rigged the pitches for us (whilst I pootled around trying to figure out where I was). We met the Dolphin Pot group at the 'Bold Step' - swapping pleasantries before heading down Muddy Oxbows. I managed to give myself a lovely dead leg on the slide down, an experience which is not recommended. Back up the 13 Pots - a true caving experience - with the added attraction of being a spare step on occasion.

Up and over the Bold Step - with more pleasantries exchanged with the other team. Back up Dolphin Pitch (which was de-rigged by Rich and Andrea) and then up another classic, Dolphin Pot. I love this section of cave!

Through the Woggle Press and up and out of the boulder ruckle - it seemed easier coming down!

Thanks to Jude for organizing the 2nd Saturday trips, to Rich for leading and to Rich & Jude for rigging the Twin Verts. Thanks also to Wayne and Co for rigging the Dolphin route.

Again, thanks to all for a truly excellent trip - I'm planning a rematch to Dolphin soon. **Pete Buckley.**

Sunday February 13 2011 **Swildons Upper Series** Chris Grosart, Clare and Alastair Pooley

Clare and Alastair Pooley are cave divers. They have done hundreds if not over a thousand cave dives between them in Florida, Mexico and France - both are rather accomplished at what they do and had completed the Deep Circuit in the Emergence de Ressel - twice. Despite all this, to my horror, but not surprise, they had never been dry caving.

Now this just won't do.

So I promised Clare at the Eurotek dive conference that I would take her and Al somewhere nice - not for a beasting - but to enjoy the cave without rebreathers on their backs and scooters in their hands.

I completely broke Clare by doing some ladder practise on the tower outside and once her arms were about to drop off, the technique wasn't quite there. So we opted to go around the Upper Series of Swildons, the perfect excuse to take my camera and shoot some video and take some pictures to record their day out.

I don't believe in making novices wear crappy kit - making them hypothermic on their first trip is not the best way to encourage them to take up the sport and most may never come back.

So I gave Clare my bestest going out AV suit and a 3mm wetsuit of her own and my good helmet and light, whilst Al used Rich's wetsuit and helmet and light. I, meanwhile, grubbed around in the dark with my old helmet and light and holy wetsuit, wondering how on earth I managed all those trips all those years virtually blind!

We took some photos, some video and met up with Joe and Oz, who already knew Clare and Al through their cave diving in much warmer climes than the UK.

We caved together to the 20" and back out the wet way, where I haven't been for several years. It was fun, there was much laughter and enjoyment and it does rather make you feel a snob when novices comment on 'wonderful' and 'beautiful' formations in, erm, the entrance series of Swildons!!!

I seem to have sorted the focus problem on my Canon G7 - thanks to Al who knows a thing or two about digital photography - and produced my best pictures underground yet.

This has given me the confidence to really run with my photography and I'm keen to try and take something nice in GB tomorrow and in Wookey Hole underwater, now that Clare has taught me a sneaky way of getting strobes to play nicely together!

Will they go caving again? I dunno, but there seem to be a few smiley faces in the pictures I took yesterday... **Chris**

Saturday February 19 2011 **Swildons** Stu Genders, Alan Alsop, Jim Borrington, Noel Cleave.

This was my first trip out to Upper Pitts for something like 20 months, and it was great to meet up with so many regulars. I hadn't planned the outing at all - it was a Friday afternoon impulse, so it was a delightful surprise when Stu and Tigger walked in, dragging Jim Borrington, (who is a Derbyshire caver) on his first visit to Mendip. Stu himself, who has been seriously ill, was on his own first outing for a couple of years, so a gentle Swildons 1 looked like the perfect trip. And it was indeed. We got underground at about 1000 as the first party of the day, so we rigged the 20. While there another party arrived. Usual conversation about ladders and return times. Reassured them that there would be lots of later groups and that the pitch would be laddered for their return, one way or another. Hmm... keyword there, "Another" because this group pressed a squashy bag into my embrace and asked me to drop the pitch with the contents. I declined, rather puzzled, and bade them use our ladder and lifeline. Then we departed downwards. Somewhat later, pausing for a look-around breather in Barnes, the following group arrived and asked if this were Trats - they were planning to visit PR. So on we went and I paused at Trats to direct them up in the right general direction. We went down to the sump, which was full and frothy, and returned in slow and steady fashion, looking at the pretties. We passed Kevin and his party, amongst whom Jude had the temerity to bad-mouth my standard, minimalist, ultra-professional, 20 foot rigging. So when we got back to the 20 there was yards of spare ladder littering the floor and the rungs went right up to tippety-top by the P hanger. What a waste of electron. However, on full view, nicely entangled with the electron was a thick purple, rope with long loops knotted into it by way of a - literal - rope ladder. The rope was about the stretchiest dynamic rope I've ever felt - about one up from bungee jumping stuff. It had also been draped down the slot, directly under the waterfall. The mind boggles. Did those guys really come down it? Kev and Jude had very kindly rolled up my ladder, so we were able to bag up our kit easily as another inbound party arrived. At the old Forty, surprise, surprise, a nice purple rope draped down in the splashway from an anchorage 'way up in the roof of the Water Rift, where we spent several entertaining moments playing "Pass the Party" in the narrowest possible bit. Altogether it was an interesting take on normal Swildons rigging!

Anyway this was the perfect "Welcome Back" Swildons trip. The naturally modified slabs make the entrance and exit appreciably more sporting - I suspect that juvenile parties are pretty much limited to the Zig-Zags to Jacob's Ladder. Stu - well outside his comfort zone - immensely cheered and heartened to have been able to do it after 2 years of Chemo and inactivity.

Later we checked with Phil, and took Jim to Tumbledown to show Derbyshire what a proper dig looks like. Score one up for Mendip. **Noel**

Tuesday February 22 2011 **Shatter Cave** Ken Dawe, Chris Baker (Son-in-Law), James and Dan Baker (Grandsons), plus Jackie Ankerman as our leader.

All very enjoyable - I still found the cave formations absolutely staggering. It was Dan's first trip and although initially apprehensive, was both impressed and delighted. Many thanks to Jackie for giving up her time to accompany us and for being such a pleasant companion. **Ken**

Saturday March 5 2011 **Pierre's Pot**. Claire Cohen, Kev Hilton.

Both divers through the sump, and 38 metres of new passage surveyed and explored. 1 very small inlet (dripping with flowstone). Passage low and backs-up. Sump at end open and has room to dive. Full article being written up for the Journal. **Kev**

Sunday March 13 2011 **GB** Dave Barrett, Andy Ladell

Bimble through GB to remind ourselves what a wonderful cave GB is. Trade route, up to White Way and then down to sump. **Dave**

Friday March 18 2011 **Wookey Hole, Chamber 24**. Clive Westlake, Christine Grosart, (Sherpa) Pauline Grosart.

The aim was to take photos in Chambers 23 and 24, of the limestone/conglomerate boundary for Alex Gee's paper. Mission accomplished (we think) and some parts of 24 visited for the first time. Water levels average, visibility stunning.

Chris took some videos for her film and got some great shots and interviews with Clive - covered in mud. Chris didn't take her HID and missed it. **Clive**

Saturday March 26 2011 **Swildons to Sump 2** Dave Barrett.

Lots of airspace today, and clear. Dave.

Friday March 25 2011 **Wookey Hole, 20 and 22.** Chris Grosart, Mad Phil Rowsell.

Lots of work to do in 22 & 20 and underwater in 19. Photos needed taking for Alex Gee to prove the location of the conglomerate and limestone boundary. Took lots of underwater photos and some decent ones in 20 of the Rilles and 22 near Cam Valley Crawl. Phil did some good sketches, and hopefully now the paper will be complete by the end of April. Christine noted lots of litter underwater on the deep route and all over Chamber 9. A clean-up operation might be in order. **Chris.**

Saturday March 26 2011 **Manor Farm Swallet.** Paul Stillman, Adrian Hall.

First trip for Paul into Manor Farm for over 15 years. Southampton Uni CC turned up as we were rigging the entrance pitch. A good efficient trip into the cave and down to the end of NHASA Gallery. Out in under three hours.

Tuesday April 19 2011 **PriddyGreen/Swildons** John Osborne, Kevin Speight, Pete Buckley.

### **"Slaying Dragons"**

I've been trying to arrange a mid-week caving trip with Hatstand for ages .... so when the "fancy a trip to Shatter series or somewhere" call came it was an opportunity to good to miss.

Meeting up at Upper Pitts in the glorious afternoon sun (of an Easter summer) saw us joined by Kev Speight and, although the trip was still Swildon's bound, the focus was now to be on Priddy Green Sink. Previously, a Christmas Eve trip had stumped Kev and he was very keen to prove he could get through Clitoris Crawl. Warning bells should have been sounding as I was encouraged up on the practice tower to refresh my Italian hitch abseiling. This could be a 'fun' trip.

A very prompt turn around had us ready to cave by half three – Kev had been down and hung a ladder on the twenty – and, without any further faffing or complaining we were down the entrance shaft of PGS. Crawling passed the "Now wash your hands" sign and onwards towards Barrel Passage (with a quick detour into the Virgin series for the lucky) and then to the crux of our trip – Clitoris Crawl.

The book advises on a feet first approach, if there is any doubt and, with Kev's previous visit uppermost in our minds, this is how Hat tried, at least a few times, to tackle this section. After a while, Kev was keen to try it head first "just to see". So whilst he did this Hat had a wee rest. Kev went through, with running commentary (quite a trick!) and emerged into Barrel Aven. Success, Kev does fit through and he'd slain his dragon. Hat, not to out done, was sure that the feet first approach was the right one although, finally, went head first and slipped into the crawl. A minor snag to get the tackle bag to him and beyond. Once round the snug corner Hat only had to curse and thrust and was through.

Myself, I went head first and slipped through without any problems – can't think what all the fuss was about. Apart, that is, from a 'minor' panic when I landed on the tackle back and wedged it firmly. This induced a bout of fluent anglo-saxon self encouragement phrases. Kev helped retrieved the stuck bag and then a final grunt and I was into the aven as well. Much joy all round and all agreed that that was a very interesting crawl!

So, having had a quick stand up, it was time for more crawling. Tin Can Alley, down the vertical squeeze at the connection (in which, Hat found a wedge to overcome), over the traverse (that rope doesn't look up to much) and into the lovely Kens Crawl. At last, some nice passage. Down Bladder Pot and then Boss Pot – I dropped into Boss Pot to the strangely mad sounds of Hat singing his Muppet Chickens piece. Weird but somehow apt for this trip!

From there it was fairly plain caving down into Swildon's IV other than Kev managing to leave one of Hat's krabs on the final P-bolts.

I'd never done Blue Pencil passage and was a little fazed by it's reputation. Following Kev up and through it proved relatively easy. A fine passageway – very Eastwater like (perhaps it should be nicknamed Blue Water passage). A quick breather, drink and a bite to eat at the top and, with pub-time looming a quick dash out via Sump 1.

Hat and Kev helped me through Sump 1 – my dragon, even though it was really a duck. Thanks!

All in all a fantastic trip. We all left the cave with a huge sense of achievement ..... and a few bruises! This is a trip I'd do again (honest). **Pete**

Saturday April 30 2011 **Charterhouse** ("No Footprints") Ali Moody, John C, Duncan P and Pete Buckley

This was a working trip to check on water levels in the 2009 and 2010 extensions and to allow Duncan the opportunity to explore the final sump.

Since November I've been down Charterhouse 4 times. Each of these times has been a working trip to the dig site (Sand Dig), so I've only gone down to the 2008 extensions.

The entrance series and, particularly, the entrance rift have always given me my first obstacle. This time I followed

John's advice and, at the bottom of the rift, went feet first until I could stand before switching to head first. No problem! Thanks John.

Through the gate squeeze – the pinch point for this cave; if you fit through this you should fit through the rest of it! Through the wallows and calcite squeezes and then through Aragonite crawl and into the Grotto of the Singing Stal and a quick drink. Cork screwing down through Chill Out Choke, along Rock and Roll rift leads, finally, to The Narrows.

This obstacle is only about 30 metres long, none of the pinch points are as tight as the gate squeeze but the cumulative effect is quite daunting! Right hand side down (for me) and keeping low to stay in the wider section through a little wallow – at least it gets you cool from all your exertion. There are a few places where you can catch your breath and realign your angle of attack. Exiting the Narrows (phew!) down a lovely canyon and pitch and you are then joined by the GB stream.

Thankfully it's larger passage now – although there are a few bits where you need get low and careful to avoid formations. At Frozen Cascade we dumped some food for the return trip and then scooted off up over the tarpaulin (there to protect the cascade) and into the tight bedding squeeze and then into some nicer passage.

Portal Pool was passable – the flow stone dip down to it has another little pinch point. Through the relatively easy Pool squeeze and then into some lovely passageway to (H)our Chamber, an impressive large open section. At the Crossing we joined Route 66, a nice (mainly) walking passage.

It was from here onwards that we were walking in 'fresh' passage - there was no sign of any footprints. A real buzz for me, which I might have mentioned once (or twice) on the trip. Charterhouse must be a very active cave during the winter to scour out and wash away the summer's footprints.

Diesel Duck was open, so onwards and boulder hopping leading onto gravelly crawl and then into Hall of Time. Clipping into the line along the Flyover above the (W)hole of Time and a rather interesting squeeze through boulders. Once more the passageway (High Time) is surprisingly large. At Zebra Junction the route changes to large canyony stuff. Fantastic plunge pools with rather nice mud features in them. For me, these pools and section of the cave were the highlight of this trip. Down Jet Pitch and then into Hippo's Delight before the mud takes over. I was, at last, at the low point of the deepest Mendip Cave.

Just ahead of the terminal sump, Duncan got himself kitted up and then dived through the sump archway. No sooner had his lights faded than they reappeared and he returned. At this point I was nervous ..... had he found that the sump was short and could be tackled by us all? Would I have to overcome my dislike of sumps and push on? Obviously, I was excited as well.....

Duncan emerged from the water his beaming grin and excitement obvious. Luckily, for me, I wasn't going to be faced with sump diving. I guess Duncan might be back in Charterhouse sometime soon though.

On the way out a quick detour into Quicksand Chamber. We picked up the buckets that had been washed in during the winter water flows and then headed out. Next stop was the plunge pool at the Crossing to clean off our rather muddy oversuits. For this brief interlude I was glad I had my wetsuit on. A quick 'hunt the sling' to keep Duncan happy and then back to the Frozen Cascade for more food. The trip back to the surface was the normal hard slog – it is only a 600 foot climb.

#### Observations:

This was the first trip I'd worn a wetsuit. It took me a while to get used to the different mobility and 'feel' through the tight upper section. I didn't overheat (anymore than with a furry) and, more pleasingly, didn't come out battered and bruised. In fact, my only noticeable injury was due to my right knee pads. I'd over tightened the outer pad and it has pinched my tendon.

Following a left handed person is very definitely different! The lines and angle of attack are all unfamiliar to a right handed person. It also means that giving tips on the route through are trickier.

Overall a fabulous trip in fabulous company; thanks guys! Charterhouse is wonderfully varied, there seems to be at least four or five different types of cave within it. Strangely, the cave starts out tight and ends up in huge passages.

**Pete**

*A huge thanks must go to Noel Cleeve for transcribing these entries from the Log Books. The Log Books are the clubs history, so please ensure that whatever trip you do, however big or small that it gets written up for future generations to see. There's more for next time. Thanks again Noel and keep up the good work.*

*AndyC*

# North Wales Weekend

27th - 30th May 2011

Les Williams, Frank Tully, Carmen Smith, Darren Chapman, Wayne Starsmore, Steve McCabe, Mark Whyte, Noel Cleave.

We arrived at Pentredwr Community Centre by various routes and times after universally horrible journeys in stop-start traffic. Supper in "The Moors" pub revived us nicely.

## Saturday May 28 2011 **Croesor to Rhosydd**

Les, Frank, Camen, Darren, Wayne, Steve, Mark, Noel.

This is the classic slate-mine fun trip, but it was quite a long drive across to Croesor, so the passengers were grateful to Wayne and Darren for providing the transport. The day was cool and windy. The walk up, and back, is simply glorious. Some changed at the cars, some up at Rhosydd exit before we hiked over the crest to look down on our own Machu Picchu, the

remains of the old Croesor workings. Although this classic through-tip has featured on many North Wales weekends, and appears in videos on the Wessex Forum, it doesn't seem to have been described in the Journal. For those who've never been into a slate-mine before, it is a mind-blowing experience. For openers, it is HUGE. Even the extraction tunnels and adits are gross compared with our more familiar lead mines. And..... another Wessex miracle..... Les actually *whispered* "Rope Free" to Noel (who is deaf). This was on the first pitch, which happens to be in the most notoriously unstable and dangerous chamber in the system (The Chamber of Horrors). The idea that a small sound could bring down the roof was unsettling, to put it mildly! Everywhere there are relics of the mine's working days, some of which provide hair-raising traverses over deep, crystal-clear, aquamarine lakes.. A modern industrial relic now lies in one of them..... Darren's shiniest,



*Moel Fferna general view of large passage and superb roof*



*Moel Fferna "The Cog"*

newest carabiner. Frank carried an 'in-case' rope, but the pitches were all rigged. Two 75' pitches were conventional, but the next dropped 20' into a plastic dinghy. Between these lay the various over-lake Zip-Wires and teeters. The "Bridge of Death, of Death" (a properly re-emphasised name) required us to clip a Zip pulley onto the second part while balancing on a single, ancient and wobble railway line. The Dinghy manoeuvre tasked Les to disentangle a pull-back line from a stupidly tethered drum-and-pallet raft while dangling fractionally above a 60 metre deep lake. On the far side, Frank discovered a fine Canadian Canoe, and went paddle-about while we did the dinghy crossing,

one by one, although Carmen crossed in style in Charon's canoe. Noel spared them his rendition of the Barcarolle, but the scene deserved a serious photographic stop.

The exit series, as it were, was dramatic, as the route passes through 3 enormous daylight shafts up into the Twll. It is possible to exit that way, with a difficult slippery climb, but Les dived back deeper underground to exit by Adit 9 where the drainage flows out of the system. This is much better, with a final half-mile towards the distant pinpoint of light. Out after 5 hours and back to Pentredwr for a mega-Spaghetti Bolognese. Many thanks to Les for the trip and Frank and Les for the nosh.  
**Noel.**

Sunday May 29 2011 **Ogof Pool Park** Les, Carmen, Mark, Darren, Noel, Wayne, Frank.

The North Wales Caving Club arranged to rig the entrance shaft winch for the first "Round Trips" of 2011, as the lower part of the cave floods completely in winter. So an unusually early start saw us on the bleak Minera moors at 0930 in the drizzle where the NWCC were setting up the winch with obviously practiced expertise. Two of them would be

stoically manning it for the entire time we were underground. Mike Klim of NWCC guided us underground, so to him and to the surface team of Tony Baker and Tony? our sincere thanks. Doug Thompson (UCET) and Mark Carny (UCET, NWCC) joined the trip to make up numbers.

Pool Park was amazing. The entrance is a straight, free-hang 300' mineshaft. The top 30' is immaculately walled, the rest excavated. The winch is an ex. Gaping Gill machine, although we were suspended in our SRT harnesses (no GG cage for this one). From its base a long mine



*Moel Fferna Frank Tully on the original "Bridge of Death"*

adit leads splashily to an eventual dramatic entry to a major natural cave streamway. In fact Pool Park has no 'natural' surface entry or exit. This is a big, major, system with lots of variety: crawls, stomping great passages, fine streamways, slippery climbs, super-squalid mud. We dumped our SRT kit at the shaft foot: no kit was needed for our round-trip. The NWCC had a separate group doing the same round-trip and we staggered our departures and arrivals at the shaft to minimise our waiting time, but actually the cycle time was only 6 or 7 minutes per person. Once up we helped as much as we could with the winch dismantle before adjourning to stow it away at Peter Appleton's cottage. There Peter showed us his detailed surveys of the cave and its overlying landscape, and also gave us welcome mugs of tea. We adjourned to "The Moors" again for supper. We would have liked to host our hosts, as it were, but none could make it. We are heavily in their debt! **Noel.**

Monday May 30 2011 Moel Fferna Slate Mine.  
Les, Frank, Darren, Noel, Douglas Thompson (UCET)

Out last day saw a reversion to the "1030 is crack of dawn" schedule, but Moel Fferna is not far away. Hmmmm. Les was route-finding and pointed the luckless Darren, who was driving,

up the narrowest, steepest lane imaginable. Eventually the combination of front-wheel drive and muddy verges forced a halt to the nonsense and Darren had to reverse (which was a considerable achievement) down this horror. We found the alternative, correct route up and parked a mile or so from the mine. The walk up was pleasant and easy. Frank did it twice.... the first time minus the entrance rope. Some minor misunderstanding between himself and Les. While waiting we read the excellent information panels by the mine adits (which were deliberately collapsed when the mine closed). Eventually reunited with the rope Les rigged the entrance shaft which is actually trivial. It would be fine with about 15' of ladder. The rest of the mine is anything but trivial. The slate extracted chambers, voids, call them what you will, dwarf those in Croesor or Rhosydd. There are no roof falls here and the place seems (sorry) rock solid. The roof defines the entire mine, being a single seemingly faultless layer at about 15 degrees. Beneath it the mine was excavated in 40' depths. At each step you can look down at least that 40' and often 120' into immense caverns. All are accessible by simple scrambling and the horizontal tramways are easy to follow. It also boasts a "Bridge of Death" (Note the singular "Of Death" - the only differentiation between various claimant bridges!). The mine is dry, in contrast to Croesor, so we could walk the 40' under this bridge. Even Les admitted that we should have had a photographer along, and indeed we should, but it would have needed big, and multiple, flashes. For all that mines seem to be intimidating mazes, this one gave the impression that one could always re-find the route out. We did so after 3 very pleasant hours underground. Later we cleared up Pentredwr Community Centre, helped by Doug (UCET), to end a fascinating weekend of completely different underground interest. Enormous thanks to Les for organising this one.

*Noel*

*All Photos by Les Williams*

# Penderyn Weekend

April 28 - May 02 2011

This was, by any standards, a really great weekend. The weather was glorious - perfect for something like a wedding - but even better for getting underground. Weeks of drought resulted in about the lowest water conditions ever.

Thursday April 28 2011 Lots of Wessex arrived at the WSG Cottage: - Les, Wendy and Chris Williams. Noel Cleave, Kerrin Malone, Graham Candy, Naomi Sharp, Dan Pearce and Jess Kirk, Stuart and Jed Waldren, Darren and Becky Chapman, Matt Jones - So a cast of thousands, joined later by Simon Richardson and Cheryl, Frank Tully, Claire Cohen, Keith Glossop, Pete Jenkins, Dave and Anna Barrett (Sorry about any omissions, must be some!)

Friday April 29 2011

**OFD1. Railton Wild and the Eagles Nest**  
Stuart & Jed Waldren, Les Williams.

A gentle trip for the first day of the weekend for me and Dad, and with us being the only takers for Les's OFD trip. We thought that we would explore some of the lesser visited areas of OFD, and after many cups of tea at the SWCC. We were decided.

We entered the main streamway via Pluto's bath and down to the step. When I say stream, it truly was. With it being the lowest that I have seen it for a long time. Les then taking us up into Railton Wild series. With Les not having been there for a while. A slight route finding exercise was required to find our way on towards the end of the escape route, and after a while exploring the dead ends and muddy passages that Railton has to offer we finally came out on the large ledge opposite the chain at the upstream end of the escape route. After Les's masterful display of that little known caving ability known as levitation, we were able to finally re-enter the streamway. On the return trip to the entrance, we decided to revisit the Eagles Nest, (having on a previous trip entered

via the airy fairy traverse and the climb up the aven), with Les assuring us that there would be less water in the passage than what there was on the previous trip. Thankfully, this was the case and after a few minutes in the 'nest', we started to make our way back to the surface. All in all, an ideal little trip to start the weekend with. Next stop Little Neath. **Jed**

Friday April 29 2011

**OFD 1 to Top.** Noel Cleave, Kerrin Malone, Graham Candy, Keith Glossop, Dave Walker. This was a long anticipated and planned "Through Trip" for Graham, Kerrin and Keith. Dave was as welcome last-minute addition although he had done the trip many years before. His caving was OK, but he was hopelessly underqualified as a Wessex Geriatric. Les let us in and took us to the rocking boulder before returning to take Stuart and Jed on their own OFD1 bumble. The hard work starts at the boulders, so we took it gently but popped out on the far side without problems. The needles in the connection passage had our tame geologist, Graham, pondering on their chemistry and formation, but after that we did all the usual thrutching with a short break to admire Pwl Twl. As geriatrics we claim certain privileges, such as a lifeline on the climb and an etrier at the letterbox but there is no gentle alternative to the horrible thrutch up to the Diver's Pitch rope. A therapeutic snack pause in Piccadilly put us in the mood to enjoy the yomp up the OFD streamway. It was, as always, enormous fun and worth the effort of passing the connection. Other than almost dropping Graham into the stream at the end of the oxbows, we avoided anything too exciting and met up with Flip Flop and company at the Maypole climb. We allowed them a reasonable start..... and successfully avoided treading on their heels on the way out. Indeed we managed to allow them something like 30 minutes by the time we surfaced. Let no one suggest that the geriatrics are anything other than gentlemen.

Friday April 29 2011 **Cwm Dwr - Top Waterfall**



- **Top Entrance** Dave Barrett, Naomi Sharp, Matt Jones, Frank Tully.

Raced up to Penwyllt at 1000 to meet Les. Les arrived at 1100ish. We decided to change from an OFD1 through trip to a Cwm Dwr through trip. Popped into the Cwm Dwr sewer tube, disturbing the fitting of what will become a very fine gate. Arrived at the Cwm Dwr choke remembering that you go in on the right and cross over to the left, and stay low. Changed mind half-way through, to go a little higher. Ended in a very well polished chamber..... which doesn't go! Decided to re-think plan and went into Dwm Dwr as intended. Managed to find a new route from the Smithy to Piccadilly (!). The water was low and we made a swift trip to the Maypole. Decided to have a look at the Top Waterfall, as it is only 10 minutes further on. So 30 minutes further on we reached the Top Waterfall. Got back to the Maypole and decided that Smiths Armoury would be another day. Met Noel and the Geriatrics at the Maypole and left ahead of them to exit without incident. **Frank**

Saturday April 30 2011 Little Neath River Cave  
A Cast of Thousands:

Les, Chris, Darren, Becky (Darrens daughter), Noel, Stu, Jed, Frank, Dan and Jess, Pete.

Everyone was keen to make an early start so in normal Wessex style we trooped off in three cars at the crack of 12.30pm. Dan, Jess, Becky and myself went in Darren's car. The sun was shining, the scenery was lovely and a good trip was being looked forward to when Dan revealed his cunning plan to avoid going underground..... he had left his and Jess's helmets back at the cottage! Well we were not allowing that so after a quick back tracking we finally got to the river at about 1.30. While getting changed some of us took the opportunity to raid Stu's mobile cave hire van where he distributed gloves, kneeling pads etc.

This was perfect Little Neath River weather.

*Darren concerned that Becky was not to get cold or tired so everyone agreed to keep an eye on her.*

Everyone negotiated the crawly first section and all got a tad damp. The first entertaining obstacle came next, that is the duck, though today it was a cinch as the water level allowed a relatively easy pass, but at least most got properly wet. Some of the younger members were able to go over the duck. Once through it is a good place to watch and encourage following people. Becky cheated and went over the top.

Then into the cave proper which has some uncomfortable stooping and bending following the river for most of the time.

The next rest up is at the Beach. Here is an emergency food store and phone line in the event of flooding. Dan, our tour photographer, spent some time at his craft, then we all took a look at the Canal, 150m flat crawl in about 30cm of water. It could have done with a little more water to aid floatation as opposed to a gravely wet crawl, however all seemed to enjoy going through.

The next section was easier going in most parts with some big passage, we did not explore the side passages but headed straight to the sump for a look.

*Becky concerned that Darren did not get to cold and tired, so we all agreed to keep an eye on him.*

On the return it was by a clear majority vote that the canal by-pass was the exit route. Here, probably the best formation was seen. Then it's a simple reversal to the duck, and then a welcome exit into the sun and river. Dan took the obligatory picture of each of us emerging from the cave. It was nice to have an over-suit cleaner at the end of the trip than at the start.

Just time for Claire, a late arrival, to purchase B.B.Q food for evening!

All in all a nice trip with a good mix of people.  
**Pete**

### From the Molephone

Little Neath River Cave revealed a miracle, well two actually as even by Les-at-Penderyn standards this weekend, today marked faffing around of spectacular quality. Miraculously we did get underground..... eventually. Originally intending to watch us go underground, Naomi and Anna eventually despaired and set off for a riverside walk....."The River" however, was bone dry. The real miracle was that somehow Becky was provided with a neoprene suit to wear. Becky must be about 18" shorter than anyone else at Penderyn. So: a miracle and the Wessex has a tame saint. Next miracle, please, a volume control for Les. Actually Becky was the star of this trip, as she caves like a rocket, despite being vertically challenged and having a minimalist caving light. Jed was brilliant, keeping an eye on, and unobtrusively helping, her on the bigger climbs. On the other hand she cheated rotten in the stoops and crawls, since she strolls along upright. Dan asked us to play statues for his underground photos. Pete won the "Smile-on-exit" prize.



# Pierre's Pot

A project was unfolding as Kev & Charlotte took a new year's walk in 2010 on Mendip with Pete & Ali Moody. Kev was looking for a diving project & Pete was the man with a plan. The Pierre's pot sumps had last been dived back in 1988. Both Pete Moody & John Cordingly had undertaken a few dives in these sumps but apparently no one had been back since Mmm....Can't possibly think why?

Kev & I decided we'd have a recce of the cave with 3 objectives in mind 1) would we fit through the rift close to the entrance? 2) Could we find the partial bypass to the upstream sump in which we intending to push the further 3 sumps found in 1988. 3).Would we be able to extend the cave at it's down stream end thus getting closer to its resurgences both at Rickford & Langford Risings. After slithering down the rift and a bit of rummaging & repeated "that can't be it can it?" we found the up stream sump partial bypass. It was the type of passage that



you wondered if actually diving the 18 metre known sump would actually be easier. Crawling backward on your side in liquid mud caused both cavers a certain degree of vexation especially as we were then presented with a fine view of the remaining upstream sump. A liquid mud body sized puddle. Fun was had digging the liquid detritus in order to make future diving trips slightly more palatable. Our second trip and it was time to dive, both feeling slightly nervous at the prospect of entering somewhere that possibly no one had entered in 22 years. The 4 metre dive was tight & we both agreed it was the worst sump we'd ever dived in but glad of the bombproof line still intact placed by John Cordingly. Beyond the upstream sump we only managed to find 1 of the 3 sumps originally found; perhaps the other 2 had dried up due to the very dry weather? What we did find was a narrow rift passage that seemingly carried the main stream. This was originally discovered by P.Moody & J.Cordingly but no progress could be made into it due to the winter high water levels at the time. The water now looked low enough to make progress through. More sideways crawling, this time with the added bonus of chert nodules that chewed at our wetsuits and anything else it could get its teeth into. Eventually after many a profanity we found ourselves staring into an azure sump pool. We dived this sump a number of times but unfortunately our enthusiasm

started to wane due to its severe tight nature and the absence of anywhere to dispose of the silt blockage found at -2 metres in its near vertical shaft. And the fact that a vital piece of breathing equipment had managed to fall apart in a muddy stream at the wrong end of a nasty sump! All was not lost though. We still managed to survey the newly explored passage with its Azure sump & Kev dived the static sump in upstream Pierre's 2. This we found that due to its surveyed position, may not link with the Azure sump. Work now done we both agreed we would leave upstream Pierre's 2 - it was now time have a poke around in the more palatial by comparison, down stream sump. Equipment portorage was far easier going to this site and standing up was even an option at one point.

The down stream sump had also been dived in 1988 by Pete Moody & was found to go approximately 8 metres in length until the passage felt too tight for further progress. The down stream sump resurges just over 1km away. Tracer tests & hydrological evidence indicates that the flow from all Burrington stream sinks unite into a single as yet unexplored conduit. Could there really be a Burrington master cave? We set about using a base fed line to explore the sump to start with. We decided on the less committing feet first approach with the diving line looped around the diver's wrist & the diving line being paid out when needed by the second diver on the surface. This we found to work well for the first 8 metres or so of exploration. To our amazement we found the sump open and ongoing, relatively wide but low and more straight forward in its nature than the upstream sumps. Armed with a Derbyshire tube recommended for use by John Cordingly we started to lay line in stages taking turns to dive with one set of diving equipment (the sump being too small to safely allow for 2 divers). As the sump grew in length so did the concentration of the mind to try to lay bombproof belays in zero visibility. At approximately 15 metres in length an air space could be heard above but was too tight to enter. A trickle of water could also be heard entering the sump on the right hand side. Could this be the water entering from Flange Swallet? At this point we found we had to do a bit digging to enlarge the sump slightly. "Surely this sump's got to go" We found ourselves repeating on each



consecutive trip. "A sump doesn't 'have' to do anything" was the reply to this comment from a particularly well know cave diver! Thankfully the sump did go. Kev returned from his dive with the news "It goes but to be honest, it's a bit of a poo pit" .....well, no change there then! With both divers agreeing yes it was a bit of a poo pit; yes we did only have one set of dive gear & yes we were a little on the edge now and wasn't it time for tea & cake anyway. We left to return another day fresh faced & with 2 sets of gear.

The day came quickly and half the dive kit had already been despatched into the cave the day before. An uneventful dive was taken through the sump for both divers carrying survey gear, bolting gear and a camera. The meandering stream passage beyond did look like there may be a sump at every turn of corner yet the hands & knees crawling stream passage still looked far more promising than it's sister – upstream

Pierre's 2 ! A small inlet was discovered along with probably the passage's only endearing feature, a small calcited ledge and a few muddied straws. After 38 metres of surveying the passage unfortunately ended in another sump. This was found to be open as far as about 5 foot. After spending nearly 3 hours grovelling around in the mud it was time to head for home. Again another uneventful dive out with a quick note to self. If you don't want your BDH to feel like a fat puppy that refuses to go for a walk, weigh it down with more than just a rock! More Trips will be undertaken to dive the new down stream "sump 2". The new survey data at present shows Pierre's Pot trending in a North Westerly direction not as yet in the North Easterly direction of Rickford Rising. Surface radio location may also be a useful task if the second down stream sump is past.

*Claire Cohen*

# Club News

## Diary

2nd Saturday trips - These happen (as the name would suggest) on the second Saturday of each month. Usual meeting time and place is 10am at Upper Pitts. These are a fantastic way for members old and new to cave with people they otherwise may never meet. for more details please contact Les Williams (your Caving Secretary). August 13th - Banwell Baone and Stalactite Caves.

Unfortunately, no other events or dates were provided for this journal. please contact Les Williams for more information

## Anne Lawder

It is with sadness that we report the death of Anne Lawder on 4th March. Anne was a Club member from 1953 to 1973; a very quiet lady, the daughter of a vicar, she was wife to the rather more ebullient Major Bob Lawder. Bob joined the Club in 1948 and was a member until his death in 1990. Older members will remember his spirited renditions after the pub or especially after Club dinners, of Tennysonian odes such as Bare Bum and the Case of Mrs. Bridget O'Donovan v. Mr. Patrick O'Flaherty (heard in the Dublin High Court). As the son of a naval Commander (P.B. Lawder, member 1948 – 1977) Bob regaled us with the saga of the Boatswine, and taught us the Canadian history of the spirited Eskimo Nell. On a religious note, Bob often read the lesson (taken from the fourth crate, beginning at the third bottle) regarding the prophet Daniel. Quietly supportive in many ways, Anne hid in the background during these recitals, never seeking the limelight. She was, nevertheless, an interesting woman to talk to. She remained living in Chiselhurst after Bob's death.

## RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

*As at 6th July 2011*

Bristol Exploration Club 'Belfry Bulletin' 57 (5) No. 537 (Sep/Oct 2010), 58 (1, 2,3) Nos. 538, 539, 540 (Nov 2010, Feb, Mar 2011) - BCAN/L 14 (May 2011) - BCRA Cave and Karst Science 37, 3 (2010), 38, 1 (April 2011) - Speleology 17 (March 2011) - Cave Diving Group N/L 178, 179 (Jan, Apr 2011) - Chelsea SS N/L 53, 1, 3&4, 5&6 (Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, May/Jun 2011) - Craven Pothole Club 'Record' 101, 102 (Jan, Apr 2011) - Descent 218, 219, 230 (Feb/Mar, Apr/May, Jun/Jul2011) - Grampian S.G. Bulletin 4th Series 4, 5 (Mar 2011) - MCG News 365, 3566 (Feb, May 2011) - MNRC N/L 131, 132 (Winter, Spring 2011) - NSS (USA) 'News' 69, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (Jan - Jun 2011) - Journal of Cave and Karst Studies 72, 3 (Dec 2010) 73, 1 (Apr 2011) - Plymouth Mineral and Mining Club. Journal. 40 3 (Feb 2011), 41, 1 (Jun 2011) - Soc. Spel. de Wallonie (Belgium) 'Regards (Speleo-info)' 73, 74 (Jan, Mar 2011) - South Wales CC N/L 127 (May 2011) - Speleological Union of Ireland 'Underground' 78 (Autumn 2010) - Westminster Spelaeological Group Newsletter 2010/3, 2010/4 - Wittenburg Univ. S.S. (USA) 'Pholeos' 30, 2 (Mar 2011) - MCR Meeting Handbook 12th March 2011 - Chapman J. The Story of Banwell Caves (2011)

Donated from Alan Ash (Member 1952 – 1968):

Britain Underground (1953) - Northern Caves Vol. 1. Wharfedale and Nidderdale (1979) - Northern Caves Vol. 2. Penyghent and Malham (1976) - Northern Caves Vol. 5. The Northern Dales (1977) - Raistrick A. The Lead Industry of Wensleydale and Swaledale: Vol. 2 The Smelting Mills (1975) - OS One-Inch Map. Askrigg & Settle (1947) - OS Six-Inch Map. Old Ing Moor (1910) - + Misc newspaper cutting and photographs

## Cave Keys

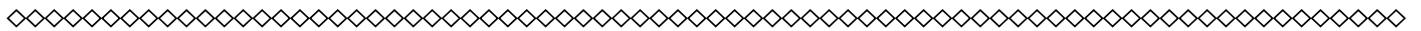
It has been brought to the committee's attention that some keys are being signed out for an unreasonably long time. Please can members return keys as soon as is possible as to enable others to use them.

The *MCRA* have asked to put scanned copies of the *Upper Pitts log books* on their web site. If members have any opinions on this, can they let them be known to the committee before the next meeting.

Vern Freeman reports that our *St Cuthbert's Leaders* (ali Moody and Ric Halliwell) have grandfather rights. Therefore the two club leader positions are available to be filled. Please contact committee if you are interested.

## Storing Personal Items at Upper Pitts

Please could all personal items be removed from Upper Pitts following your stay. It is not permissible for people to store personal items on a permanent basis under bunks or in areas of the hut. If you require storage space you need to pay for a locker or food boxes in the Kitchen. There are a number of items under bunks and in general areas which have been there for some time. Please can the owners remove these items by the AGM weekend. Thank you for your cooperation.



## RESULTS OF LADIES DORM QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you to the 56 members who responded to the questionnaire. Following the meeting on the 10th April 2011, the committee wish to formally announce the majority opinion was for the dorm to become: A GENERAL USE DORM FOR MEMBERS AND GUESTS. This is from immediate effect.

I would like to take this opportunity again to thank all involved in the hard work to revamp the room which I'm sure will be well used.

Lou Biffin

TOTAL RESPONDENTS = 56 - Men = 31 - Women = 25

For change = 36 (64%) - Stay as Ladies dorm = 20 (36%)

Change To:

General dorm = 20 (57%) - Members dorm / or if not general dorm = 7 (20%)

Member only dorm = 5 (14%) - Mixed family dorm / general dorm = 3 (9%)

Women:

Stay as Ladies dorm = 8 (32%) - Change = 17 (68%)

Men:

Stay as Ladies dorm = 12 (39%) - Change = 19 (61%)

Ladies for change:

General dorm = 12 (71%) - Members dorm / or if not general dorm = 2 (12%)

Members only dorm = 1 (5%) - Mixed Family dorm / general dorm = 2 (12%)

*Requests for use of the downstairs dorm for other requirements will be considered on a case by case basis, and should be made directly to the Hut Warden.*



## Improvements for Upper Pitts

The roof will be re-done at Upper Pitts in the near future. The Committee are also considering installing Solar Panels. The roof is a maintenance issue which needs to be done. Installing solar panels would have many benefits including: it would pay for its self within 10 years, we would be able to realise approximately £1600 savings per year following this period, and savings on heating bills. Please forward your comments to assist in making the decision as soon as possible to the committee regarding the installation of Solar Panels.