

Wessex Cave Club

Journal 339

October 2016





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The journal after the AGM has to be largely complete before it or publication becomes delayed until mid-November, and a glance at the back cover page with the dates for this years special celebration of the J- Rat digging award and the 80th. Anniversary of Mendip Cave Rescue will show that this was not an option.

“Never start with an apology” Advice from years back, but I must apologise to Pete Hann, whose magnificent photograph of the Monte Corona lava tube was wrongly credited to Chris Binding. Maurice Hewins, among others, has chided me that the “Showcased” photos haven’t featured Mendip caves, so I make a general plea to our many photographers for suitable photos of our home stamping underground.

Journal 338 seems to have justified the effort of coming to grips with DTP and overseas printing with digital laser. The processes have not been simple, but with the system now up and running your contributions - letters, articles, surveys, sketches and photographs - should be rewarded in the quality of your journal. As your editor, I read every equivalent club and group publication that I can find; not to compete, but to learn. So I analyse what attributes I can, quite shamelessly, purloin and plagiarise to enhance the design, layout and content of the Wessex Journal. Two caving publications stand out from all the others: “Descent” and the “NSS News”. These two have set a standard for the Wessex Journal, and it’s a high one for a small club with a limited budget. By chance the most recent NSS News celebrated 20 years in post by its current editor, Dave Bunnell. I have extracted some tantalising snippets from his editorial. The first one was that ‘way back in 1996 he was able to introduce a full-colour cover for every issue, and cut the budget for the NSS News by a cool

At present the committee Email addresses are not on the Wessex web-site. They are:

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Cover Photograph:
Ingleborough Cave.
Photo: Clive Westlake

\$10,000! Good grief, what small fry we are! Then, and I quote Dave Bunnell: “My dream with the News had always been a full color magazine and it was to be a gradual process...” And :“Finally in October 2014 the News became a full-color publication each and every month”.The Wessex may operate at 40% of his frequency - we don't have 12,000 members feeding in content - but in terms of print quality the Wessex Journal is now up there with the best.

A couple of points about “Content” need to be made here, or rather re-made because I first said this ‘way back in Journal 302, in 2006.

Firstly that this is not primarily a formal scientific journal, or produced for non-members. It is “Our” journal of our club life and activities. Secondly that nobody expects literary masterpieces. This is emphatically not the place for pedantry over grammar and punctuation (OED online will do our spell-checking). If you want me to dot the “Is and cross the “Ts” then say so, but otherwise, just write - spontaneity and enthusiasm are what make your caving accounts and articles enjoyably readable.

EuroSpeleo has significant coverage in this edition. We may be the biggest caving club in the UK (?), but EuroSpeleo showed that we still punch well above our weight in the caving world, despite our trivial domestic share of the world's available limestone! Our journal should reflect that in this case “Biggest” also means “Best” and reflect not just the caving, but the attitudes, personalities and skills that make it so.

Noel

	Euro Speleo	EUROSPELEO AT THE WESSEX. MENDIP REGIONAL EVENT	
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A veritable smorgasbord of cavers descended on the Wessex from Saturday 6th to Saturday 13th August for a week of varied caving amid our beloved hills. A team headed up by Jonathan Da'Casto as Communications Officer provided daily trips to the warden caves of St. Cuthbert's Swallet, Reservoir Hole, Upper Flood Swallet, Shatter Cave and Charterhouse Cave, with guided and non-guided visits to Redcliffe Cave, Gough's Cave and Wookey Hole Cave. Templeton was also visited and wowed many of the delegates, with two led visits over consecutive evenings. Photography: **Chris Binding**

[The comprehensive printed resources printed and laminated by Jon Da'Casto, provided by MCRA.](#)

The delegates were from America, Australia, Finland, Germany, Netherlands and Slovakia.

At Wookey Hole. Photo: Chris Binding





Self-leading trips were available, with printed descriptions generously provided by MCRA and delegates visited Swildon's Hole (the most popular cave on the itinerary), Eastwater Cavern, Hilliers Cave, Bath



Swallet/Rod's Pot, GB Cavern and a guided trip to Reservoir Hole

**Reservoir Hole Photos
by Chris Binding**



Cave diving also featured strongly and set Mendip apart from much of the rest of the EuroSpeleo eventage elsewhere, with trips to Wookey Hole Cave and Swildon's Hole, headed up by Chris Jewell and his team.

Local cavers joined in many of the events (this was part of the organisers' general invitation, free of charge) to make for a more friendly and vibrant occasion.

BBQ at Upper Pitts. Photo: **Chris Binding**



CAVES AND CAVING IN THE MENDIP HILLS

Mendip Videos and Talks

Wed 10th 7pm - Tonight!

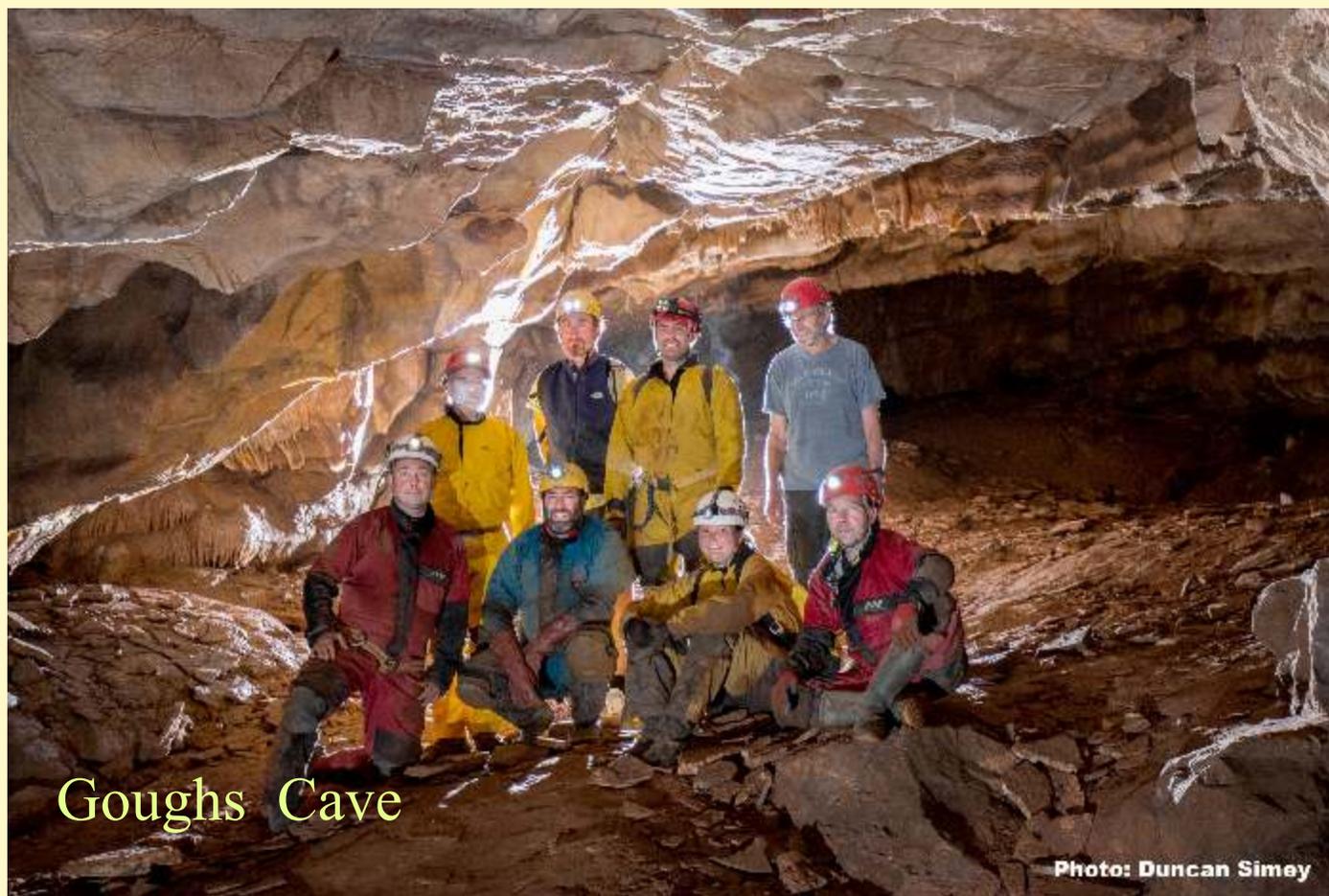
Hunters Long Room



Social evenings included a welcoming BBQ on the Saturday (and a farewell on on the Friday), a tour of the Cheddar Ales Brewery, SpeleoVideo evening at the Hunters Lodge Inn and a fabulously hot curry at Shahnaz Restaurant in Cheddar.



SpeleoVideo Poster by
Jonathan Da' Casto



Goughs Cave

Photo: Duncan Simey

Trip statistics:

Leader trips: 33 delegate visits

Cave:	Number of visits:
Upper Flood Swallet	**
St. Cuthbert's Swallet	***
Reservoir Hole	*****
Shatter Cave	**
Charterhouse Cave	*

The Trips Board at Upper Pitts
Photo: **Chris Binding**



EUROSPELEO AT THE WESSEX - MENDIP REGIONAL EVENT



EUROSPELEO ON MENDIP: THANKS AND PERSONALITIES

For leading trips and general assistance many thanks are due to the following:

Christopher Binding
Richard Carey
Christopher Castle
Peter Glanvill
Martin Grass
Alan Gray
Chris Milne
Dave Morrison
Mike Moxon
Duncan Price
Duncan Simey
Tommo
Jude Vanderplank
Jonathan Williams
Barry Wilkinson

Diving:

Josh Bratchley
Claire Cohen
Malc Foyle
Chris Jewell
Simon Richardson
Ben Wright

Thanks are also due to:

Andrew Atkinson
Maxine Bateman
James Begley
Laura Benn
Hannah Bennett
Mark Burkey
Tom Chapman
Nick Chipchase
Ben Cooper
John Cooper
Fairy Cave Quarry Management Committee
Stuart Gardiner
Mrs. Gibbons
Pauline Grosart
Pete Hall
Lee Hawkswell
Mark Helmore
Andy Horeckyj
Mr. & Mrs. Main
Gavin Newman
Alison Moody
Brenda and Brian Prewer
Simon Richardson
Estelle Sandford
Andy Sparrow
Elaine Tucker
Roger, Jackie and Nigel at the Hunters Lodge Inn
The Management at Cheddar Showcaves & Gorge
Warmbac
Babs Williams
Daniel Medley at Wookey Hole Cave



John Gisborne's latest sales items: Left a new Wessex sweat shirt. Right a new Wessex "Polo" style shirt

5TH. EUROPEAN SPELEOLOGICAL CONGRESS



Photo: Paul Geddes

Les' comments on EuroSpeleo occupied all of 5 ½ lines in this year's AGM handbook. This may be modesty... or more probably battle fatigue. In fact it would merit an entire journal to begin to do it justice. The sheer scale of the Congress was breathtaking. It would have been good to have a true vertical aerial drone photograph of Dalesbridge with the giant marquees, camping areas and parking to show just how huge it was. The human organisation behind this physical infrastructure was phenomenal, with the Wessex volunteers providing an unquestionably numerical majority in support (which is not to deny, for a moment, the volunteers from many of the UK's other caving clubs and organisations). Given the space limitations in this Journal, these accounts and photos will have to paint the picture, but the final statistics should tell the real story!

EuroSpeleo Various people's accounts.

Sunday August 14 2016 Alum Pot Mike K, James Collings, Mike Thomas.

In via Long Churn and Dolly Tubs, direct route out. My first proper SRT, other than Thrupe Lane.

Monday August 15 2016 Simpsons Pot Mike K, James Collings, Mike Thomas.

Tuesday August 16 2016 Gaping Ghyll Mike K, James Collings, Mike Thomas, Noel Cleave
Stream Passage Pot, winch out. Great to see people descending Dihedral on the way out.

Thursday August 18 2016 Jingling Pot Mike K, James Collings.

Well worth a visit... a collectors piece!

Friday August 19 2016 Lost Johns Mike K, James Collings, Mike Thomas, Derek, Noel Cleave (For a while).

Me and James went to the bottom of Battleaxe.

All the above accounts: **Mike Kushy**

Friday August 12 2016 Just the 7 hours (!) from Crudwell, arrived in Clapham pissed off with the motorway system. Raining on arrival to help make things perfect; however Bridge Cottage B&B is a seriously good choice.

Saturday August 13 2016 still dumping Yorkshire Sunshine when I went to Dalesbridge to check in. Amazed to find that 100% of the check-in team were Wessex, also during the morning met: Clive, Tigger, Mak, Jo, Les, Wendy and dog, Biff, Lou and the twins, Jonathan and family, Paul Wilman, Pat Warren, Mad Phil, later Jonathan and the main Wessex mob with the Greeks and Francois when he arrived. This was plainly going to be a sociable week! Booked myself onto a Lancaster trip for the morrow.

Sunday August 14 2016 Lancaster - County Pot Two Red Rose Guides and 6 Dutch cavers (4 guys and two ladies) and myself.

Standing at the top of Lancaster I reflected that I'd last done this traverse, but in the other direction, on ladders, some 56 years ago. This information caused a certain amount of hilarity. Bits and pieces of the cave came back vividly, notably the main stream passage and the Minarets, but much of it had fled the memory. At Fall Pot one of the guides had an SRT hang-up: a slippery and awkward rig. The stream passage was a glorious as ever and we found our way up through the boulders OK, so avoided Stake Pot. Met two parties coming through the other way, and with sundry snack breaks a pleasantly leisurely and sociable trip. Coming out I was glad of a kindly shove getting into the Water Spout! Into sunshine after 6 ½ hours, having thoroughly enjoyed the trip. I showered and changed at the Red Rose, which was very civilised.

Monday August 15 2016 Recovery day.... I need these, nowadays! Shopped, enjoyed EuroSpeleo, listened to some lectures, watched competitors on the tower, looked at the photo exhibition.

Tuesday August 16 2016 **Gaping Ghyll** Mike K, James Collings, Mike Thomas, Myself

Getting old, the hike up with a full ruc-sac was hot. We checked-in, changed and walked over to SPP. I'd forgotten how awkward the corner between the entrance shaft and pitch 1 could be. Then no problems until the big pitch (pitch 3), where I waited at the top while the Dutch group ahead struggled with the big deviation. When I arrived there myself I discovered, the hard way, that they had untied the rope foot. It was impossible to pull myself across to the deviation because the lower rope had no anchorage. By the time this was obvious I had a loop of about 15 feet of rope below me, and couldn't get a pendulum going in the right direction, so I dropped 10 ft or so until I could reach a wall and claw myself across. Back onto Jumars to climb back to the deviation level..... and struggled to get it all set up again properly. Kushy waiting patiently and watching from above, but Mike Thomas, who is not a fan of exposure and drops, decided enough was enough and headed back out with James. Kushy and I re-anchored the rope foot, dropped the last pitch and enough memory remained



Photo: Noel



Photo: Gary Douthwaite

for me to lead us through the Sand Cavern to the Portcullis, where we collected a French party on their way from Bar Pot to Main Chamber. We all stopped for lots of oooh and aaaah. Then up the winch into sunshine and discovered that the Dutch group ahead were my group from Lancaster. I confess to feeling weary enough when we got back to Clapham.

Wednesday August 17 2016 Rest day, needed all my strength for the great evening banquet! And which was phenomenally successful and well organised. The sound system in the main tent was brilliant and even I could hear and enjoy Tony Waltham's

marvellous speech afterwards, which had us all in stitches.

Thursday August 18 2016 Walkies. Left the car at the YSS at Helwith Bridge and walked up Penyghent, then along to Plover. Dropped down the path and then back via Hull Pot to Horton, where I had a welcome pint and met up with Bean, Jacob and Jo on their way to Sell Gill Holes.

Friday August 19 2016 **Lost Johns** (sort of) Mike K, James Collings, Mike Thomas, Myself, sundry others. Typical Leck Fell sunshine so got wet changing in a force 6 breeze. Having rigged Cathedral and Dome with Bob Pyke some years ago, I volunteered to lead the mob to the Roof Traverse. "Some years ago..." was probably 10 to 15, and I did all sorts of interesting roof climbs and traverses looking for the tube in entirely the wrong places. By sheer chance another party was exiting from Centipede and showed us the way. Taking my egg-covered face I crept back out to daylight.

Saturday August 20 2016 **Yordas** (not really). Another walking day, along the Turbarry Road, and finally put on a helmet and went into Yordas chamber. Lots of water, the whole floor covered, and the final pitch in looking splendidly wet and noisy. I saw that they had rigged the traverse lines above as far along as they would go, and the rope was well clear of the waterfall. Had a sudden, genuine, wish to do it again. Again??? Another 56 years "Ago" and on ladders!

All above accounts: **Noel Cleave**



The extraordinary artificial squeeze tube - normally full of children! Photo: Noel

From **François Tollemer**

Friday 12th of August 2016, whereas I had booked early for the Eurospeleo congress, in the end of 2015, now, the “D-Day” has come so that I will leave France today afternoon by taking the ferry from Dieppe to Newhaven. Excitement is on top. After having a beginning of night crossing the Channel in the boat’s lounge, I land at Newhaven. About one hour driving later, I arrive to the hotel. After a good and quiet sleep, Saturday morning starts under a very nice sunny weather that I will appreciate during the entire driving trip to Austwick. The end of the day happened, synonym of arrival to Austwick. Just on time to rig the tent (thanks for the help) and to be at the opening meeting of the Eurospeleo congress. With so good opening speeches and a so good time as a... Delegate ;-) there is no doubt that the next week will be very funny and... short! In such a nice atmosphere, it’s time for having a break, faffing and drinking nice beer according to an accurate promise of the organizer’s team. It’s very cool to be a... Delegate !!!

Monday 15th of August is the time to have a first caving trip from Lancaster Hole to Wretched rabbit with Andy, Barry and Peter. We began at 11 o’clock and went down, crossing two pitches, we found then our way between the rock blocs. Before, we saw the lovely white Brilliant columns. Impressive! Next, we walked in a rather muddy and slippery but pretty meander including two other pitches. And we went out by Painters plates, very nice hole. We ended our caving trip around 5 PM.

Joining on Tuesday 16th of August a group of nine person including Jim, Barry, Peter, ... , we left the camp at 10 o’clock to go to Long Churn cave. We began the trip in the cave doing an amazing trip in the opposite side of the stream whereas the sunspot was entering in a large part of the cave. We went out of the cave by a large passage, fighting easily the small water pressure thanks to a rope. After this funny time, we went down to another entry and followed the stream passage, with a pretty little cascade. That was very lovely and enjoyable. As we thought it was a pleasant area, we decided to enter for a second time in the first entry but taking, this second time, the same direction taken by the stream. After this quiet trip near the surface level but however underground, we walked back to our cars enjoying the nice weather and sunny day. Then, we came back to the camp taking the touristic road so as to see the magnificent of “The Three Peaks”, to discover the famous bridge, the big field, Ingleton,... Great thanks to Jim. After a so good trip, 3 o’clock was a good time to enjoy... an English beer !

Yet Wednesday is rising with still a sunny and shiny weather, in a word, a good opportunity to visit Pen-y-Gent Pot with Kevin and Clive. Early in the morning, the nice walking approach gives the time to appreciate a very cracking view. After the entrance in the cave, we had to negotiate the first 300 meters horizontal by crawling fortunately with knee pads, we went down a suite of nice wet pitch. Amusing rift! Just before the sump, we met another team of three cavers living at Liverpool. After a kind short faffing, we looked at the flooded sump and decided to go up.

Next day, Thursday 18th of August was another great day, as we had planned with Kevin, Charlotte, Simon and Carroll a trip to Didhedral and a return by the stream passage. Unforgettable is the brilliant and bright full vertical during 98 meters! And it’s at the same time a good place to look at the winch in motion! At the bottom, the arrival conveyed the impression as if we were landing “on the moon”. And the film makers of Channel 5 seemed to be there. Impressive! After such an interesting trip underground and then a way out by stream passage, tea time had arrived, in the sun.

Friday 19th of August at 6.45 in the morning, it’s time to go and discover Alum Pot with Kevin and Charlotte, a bright full cave that make me feel like a remake of Gaping Gill although it is smaller. But as everybody knows, small is pretty. We walked back and just after swapping our clothes rain started, for the first time of this week.

Saturday 20th of August, at night, everything is all right after such a good week. And with such a brilliant disc-jockey, it would have been very difficult not to spin the wheel of steel! Very warm atmosphere on the dance floor compared with the rainy weather and the swamping soil outside. Good time I will never forget.

As a conclusion, thanks a lot to all the caving mates with whom I had very good time when caving, all the organizer’s team, the friends, the good lecture time and the volunteers who made this event possible to happen. Great job for Great fun. And all the best for the next Eurospeleo congress !

François Tollemer



Thank You, Les !

Monday August 15 2016 Little Hull Pot Jonathan Williams, Andy Judd, John Demis, Angelo (both Athens Speleos), Dave Watts, surface support Pete Hann.

After booking the only cave on the sheets with no other parties booked, we arrive at the entrance to find 2 others already there! A combination of errors meant that only Dave reached the bottom. A welcome warm shower at the Dump after was the highlight of the day. **Jonathan.**

Tuesday August 16 2016 Alum Pot Jonathan Williams, Malc Foyle, Andy Judd, Kevin Gannon (CPC), John Demis, Estamatia Lybadis (Athens).

Nice low waterl conditions made an uneventful and enjoyable trip down Diccan. Clear blue skies above illuminated Alum Pot itself - a delightful sight. Out via Bridge Pitch and Dolly Tubs. **Jonathan**

Tuesday August 16 2016 Gaping Ghyll John Williams, Andy Judd, Vasillis Trisenis, Estamatia Lybadis

Stream Passage Pot. Straightforward trip down stream. On reaching Sand Chamber we were met by an international team of French and German cavers all searching for the way to the Main Chamber. After a small route-finding issue we all made it safely to the winch and out to another glorious summer day.

Jonathan.

*Jonathan encouraged the Greek contingent to write up their accounts in Greek, which courtesy provided me with this page of script. I know, groan, but it's all Greek to me..... ! So I visited my nearest Greek restaurant, in Bath and they kindly did their best to translate it for the journal. **Ed.***

Monday August 15 2016 Sell Gill Holes Vasillis Trisenis, Vaso Yarkou.

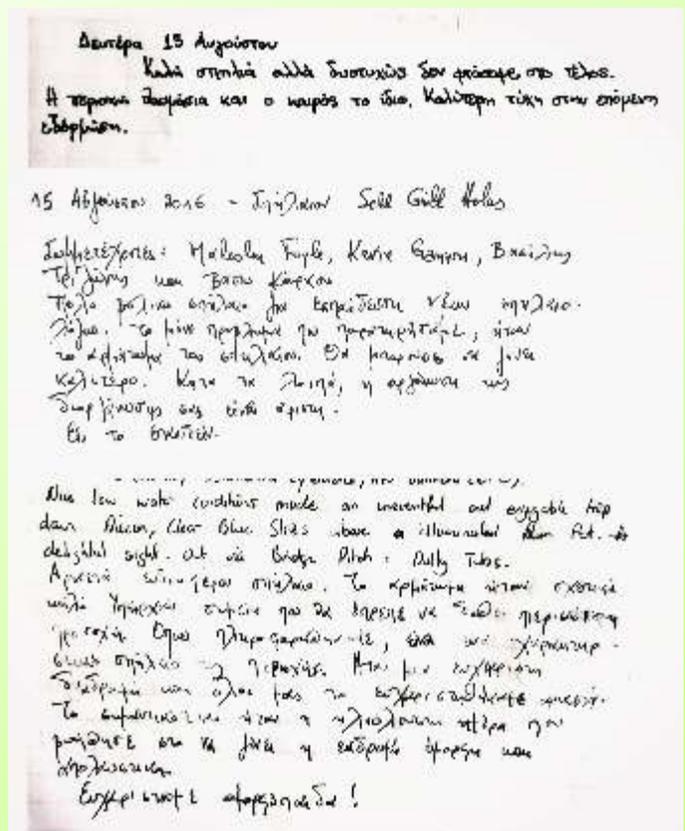
Very good cave for the education of new cavers. The only problem we noticed was the cave rigging. It could have been made better. However the organisation was very well done. Excellent. See you soon.

Monday August 15 2016 Little Hull Pot Jonathan Williams, Andy Judd, John Demis, Angelo, Dave Watts.

Very nice cave but unfortunately we didn't manage to reach the end. The place is wonderful and same for the weather. Better luck on our next trip.

Tuesday August 16 2016 Alum Pot / Diccan Jonathan Williams, Malc Foyle, Andy Judd, Kevin Gannon, John Demis, Estamatia Lybadis.

Very interesting cave. The rigging was approximately good. There are some spots where it should be given a little bit more attention. As we were informed it is a cave with characteristic features of that area. It was a very pleasant walk land we all enjoyed it quite a lot. The most important thing was the very good weather that helped us have a very beautiful and enjoyable trip. **Thank you, beautiful people.**



EUROSPELEO SUMMARY - THE FACTS AND FIGURES

On Saturday evening, following our final meal in the main marquee, there was a pleasantly informal farewell, with appropriate speeches and presentations to people who had made particularly notable contributions to the success of the event (and repeated reminders that we were duty-bound to drink the final few barrels in the bar dry - which we did). In summing up, Les had compiled the following statistics. Les and his team have made this EuroSpeleo a **very hard act to follow!**

1300 delegates

36 countries

800 campers

698 group trips underground

400 users of the GG winch

2kms of total ascent in the course of

460 prussiking ascents

49 people attempted the tower 75 metre rope prussik climb

135 attempted the prussiking obstacle course -

(and Simon came within a few seconds of winning it).

110 talks, demonstrations, lectures, workshops and presentations.

11 Field trips

21 Guided trips

800 meals per day

450 sat down for the banquet

118 barrels of beer

1310 toilet rolls - 47.21 kms. - Too big for the standard "Nelson Column" or "London Bus" measurement, so it equates to 5.35 Everests)

Spanset provided 6 kms rope (enough for 6 Berger rigs)

176 pitches were rigged by

30 caving clubs

2480 metres of electrical cabling

377 metres of water piping

380 "Person/Hours" at reception

1050 metres of Security Fencing to keep us in.

PUTTING THE WESSEX JOURNALS ONLINE

By John Cooper

In an earlier Journal (Wessex Journal Volume 33 Number 333 April 2015 page 219) I reported that a telephone call from an ex-member, Andy McGregor, in February 2015 had started me on the task of putting the old journals online. I can now report that the task has been completed. It has been a tedious and time consuming task enlightened only by the job of proof reading all the old reports. I have learned a lot about the history of the club and members along the way.

Just for the record I thought it might be worthwhile recoding the steps involved:

1 Convert paper to electronic image.

2 Convert electronic image text to rough text in Microsoft Word.

3 Correct text

4 Scan diagrams and photographs.

5 Clean up diagrams and photographs.

6 Insert diagrams and photographs into document and correct layout.

7 Convert to pdf format.

8 Load onto WEB.

One basic problem throughout was having to work with bound volumes of the Journal. It was not always possible to get a good image of the parts of the page in the spine. This resulted in gobbledygook from the OCR stage which

needed a lot of editing. One thing for Journal Editors to keep in mind is that the Librarian likes a big centre clearance so that Binding doesn't hide information. *(Noted, Noel!)*

The first stage was to convert a paper sheet into electronic form. I used an Epson scanner and the ABBYY FineReader OCR software which allowed the first two steps to be combined to produce a Microsoft Word document. There is a choice within the software to produce an "Exact Copy" or "Editable Text". The former keeps the text in frames which maintains the layout better whereas the latter is simpler to correct. The quality of the OCR varied considerably. The older Journals done using a typewriter and stencil had lots of errors introduced that could be picked up with simple proof reading so I used Editable Text for these. In general I tried to retain a similar pagination so that the Indices matched the final result. As diagrams and photographs became more common and the quality of the print improved I used Exact Copy to maintain the layout. I also took the decision to rotate complete pages where necessary to permit viewing on screen without having to continually switch orientation. For the very latest journals where good quality electronic pdfs already existed I did not have the capability to do that.

Diagrams and photographs were scanned separately using the Epson Scan Software and inserted back into the document after cleaning up. Diagrams were normally just black and white and could be scanned as such. These were cleaned up to remove specks etc. using Paint. Photographs were scanned as grey scale images. Normally these would be saved as .png files.

Once I had decent .doc files I used the inbuilt facility of Microsoft Word 2013 to export a .pdf file. (Early on I had discovered that a .docx file sometimes resulted in additional blank pages being inserted into the .pdf file so I always used .doc files.). I chose the option of minimum file size for online publishing rather than standard which is used for printing.

For many of the later Journals a good quality .pdf file already existed and I would like to thank Maurice Hewins and Noel Cleave for letting me have copies of these. Pete Buckley, Andy Chamberlain and John Osborne (Hatstand) also supplied journals they had done. As some were very large files I used a free online service from foxyutils.com to compress them.

As I worked through I kept updating the upperpitts Google Drive with both .doc and .pdf files and these will be kept for future use.

The final step was to load the .pdfs onto the Wessex web site. I would like to thank Jonathan Williams for setting me up with a user id and then running a short tutorial to give me the basics of WordPress, which is what our site uses. I've kept the Indices and the odd Newsletter separate as you'll see when you go to:

http://wessex-cave-club.org/?page_id=230

The current year is only available to members. You will need to use the password on your membership card to access the page of links to those.

I'm sure they have not been converted without introducing errors so if you find any please let me know so that I can correct them. Enjoy browsing through them.

Now what's the next project?

Editorial comment: John doesn't need a "Next Project". From reading the Log-Book it would appear that he has appointed himself custodian of the Mud Sump, with some kind of obsessive -compulsive disorder compelling him to keep it bailed dry at all times. I think we should all be grateful for this usefully harmless eccentricity!

With the advent of photographic pages printed in Landscape orientation, John Cooper has pointed out that this makes for awkward viewing of the on-line journals PDFs. Quite a lot of modern PDF viewers include the facility to rotate the page, but if you need a free, and excellent such viewer this is available:

<http://www.tracker-software.com/product/pdf-xchange-viewer>

BOB GANNICOTT - OBITUARY

Bob (Robert Alan) Gannicott was a member of the Wessex for many years, although I'm not certain if his membership was continuous. Certainly I caved with Bob in 1964 - 1965, but not again until, extraordinarily, his very last ever caving trip. This I wrote up at the time in the Wessex Journal 310: "*The informal collection of antiquities, with a core Wessex membership, caving as the "Wessex Geriatric Group", graced the South Wales Caving Club with their presence on the weekend of Saturday February 16 th. 2008.*"

Bob had one of his staff design a WGG motif specially for the occasion and presented us all with a T Shirt. This was a happy occasion although I doubt if any of us dreamt for a moment that it was to be Bob's caving swan-song. Nor do I think that it qualifies me to write any kind of obituary for Bob, and my efforts to locate



OFD entrance. Bob's final caving trip. Bob is central (white helmet), between Ken Dawe and Noel Cleave

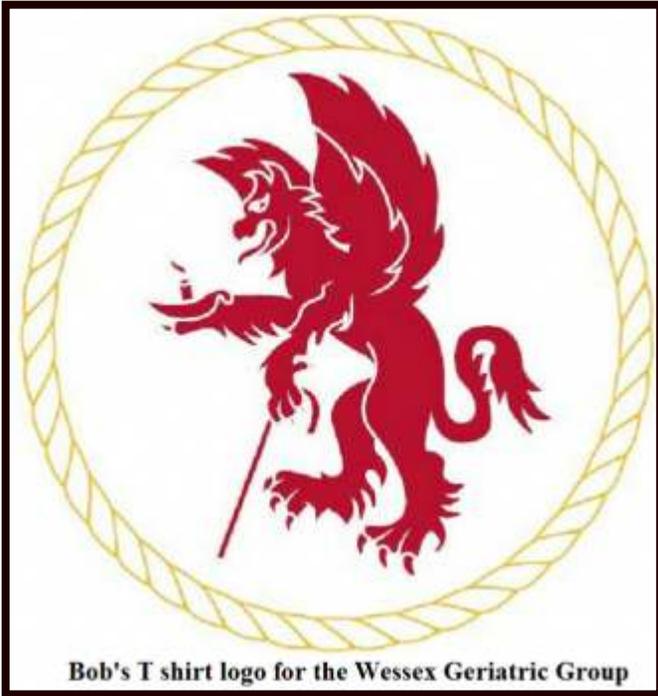
any other Wessex member who knew Bob better, and more continuously, drew blanks, but Bob Pyke was kind enough to add a few lines and approve this text.

Bob Gannicott was a huge character with massive achievements as a geologist and businessman, so I have been able to tap into the Internet, and also the obituary published in the Wells Journal of 11 August, which the editor, Andrew Doyle, has kindly allowed me to plagiarize. His memorial service was held at Priddy on Thursday, 11 August and the church was packed. Having spent his life travelling the globe, his lifelong affection for Mendip brought him back to Priddy in the end. He was a skilled and strong caver who was prominent in the Swildons Hole discoveries in the early 60's. Bob's life reads like a tale from the days of the Gold Rush with a touch of Mills and Boon.

Bob was born on June 11, 1947, in Sandford. His mother, Ida, was a school teacher and his father, Ivor, was an engineer who was in submarines in the Royal Navy during the Second World War. Bob won a scholarship to BGS,

which led to university. Bob met Geraldine (who was at Redland Girl's School) on the school bus when he was 15, the two became inseparable, and they became Mendip cavers.

Bob studied mining engineering at the University of Nottingham, but when he and Geraldine announced they wanted to marry, their parents forbade it. "We should have just gone ahead with it, but you felt you couldn't do that back then," Geraldine said. Bob dropped out and left to work at the Giant Mine in Yellowknife, Canada, and the couple didn't get back together for more than 30 years. Geraldine said. "When he dropped out he asked me to come over but I wanted to finish my education," It wasn't to be at that time in their lives, they forged ahead on separate paths – though they remained in contact.



Young Bob Gannicott landed in Montreal in 1967 and was so broke that he jumped a freight train to get himself to Edmonton. In Winnipeg, the railroad police nabbed him, but upon learning where he was headed, they gave him a train ticket to Edmonton in exchange for his watch. The mine paid for the rest of the trip from Edmonton to Yellowknife. Once he received his paycheque he sent money to get his watch out of hock.

He worked underground first, at the Giant Mine, then above ground as a prospector, staking claims in the wilderness for Precambrian Mining Services. The sites where he would search for minerals were so remote that on longer trips he would arrange for an aircraft to drop in supplies. Like an explorer from another era or a Hudson's Bay factor from the 19th century, he grew to cherish the isolation of the wilderness and fell in love with the Arctic.

After several years in Yellowknife, however, he decided he needed more formal education, so he enrolled at Carleton University in Ottawa and earned a degree in geology.

After graduating he went to work for the mining giant Cominco, then owned by Canadian Pacific. He worked in Belgium for a

while and at the Black Angel Mine in Greenland. The site was on a deep fjord and the mine was on one side and the ore was taken by a cable car to the mill on the other side.

Bob eventually decided to work for himself, and started prospecting in Greenland. He founded the company Platinova, which was listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange.

Nicknamed "Mr. Greenland", Bob spent about 12 years exploring in Greenland, even discovering a zinc deposit at Citronen Fjord. It's at 85 degrees north, probably the most northerly mineral deposit in the world. Bob had a terrific imagination and a sense of adventure. He once convinced a charter airline to land a Boeing 727 on the ice in Greenland. After decades of grafting, Bob ended up discovering diamonds and founded one of the world's biggest diamond-producing companies. He also became very, very wealthy.

But as Geraldine explained, diamonds were not on the radar.

"He had staked his own claims for gold, and he was looking for other minerals including plutonium," she said.

The first diamonds Bob discovered are now in the Natural History Museum; carrot-shaped rocks with clusters of diamonds in them.

It wasn't until 17 years ago, nearly 40 years after they courted as teenagers, that they finally made a home together.

"It's real Mills and Boon stuff," said Geraldine. "We had kept in contact. But he sent me a ticket to Venice and told me to meet him there. He was such a romantic," "By this time I had Parkinson's Disease – early-onset like Michael J. Fox – but Bob didn't care."

Bob gave Geraldine a ring featuring a four-carat pure white diamond from the Diavik Mine, surrounded by other stones, but Geraldine insists that Bob didn't live to make money. Not just a keen caver and lover of the wilderness – he was simply fascinated by diamonds and precious stones. "He never did things because he wanted to make money - he was very driven, but it was about the beauty of diamonds." And "He had an adventure for a life," - and what a marvellous epitaph that is:

“ He had an adventure for a life”

Stu Genders - Obituary

Stuart Genders: 19th April 1941 – 3rd September 2016
From Grant Lindsay

Stuart was about 36 when I first met him, so my knowledge of his early life is a bit hazy. But I do know that his father died during the war. And that after his mother remarried, Stuart didn't much like his step-father and fought tooth and nail with him. He didn't much like school either, but nevertheless, went every day and behaved himself: had he misbehaved or bunked off, there would've been hell to pay when his mum found out. I met her just a few times: a lovely lady, but you didn't mess.

Stuart did, however, leave school as soon as he could to go to work, beginning as an apprentice bricklayer. He was still quite young when he married Margaret, and although he was by then a qualified and able brickie, she encouraged him to go to night school to gain more qualifications. Later on, he also lectured at night school. By the time I met him, he was managing whole building sites and construction projects. Wherever he worked, whatever firm he worked for, and whoever he worked with, he very much enjoyed his job.

By the time he was in his 50's, with recessions and boom-and-bust situations having negative effects upon the construction industry, Stuart became self-employed – irrespective of the economic climate, there is always work for a good builder – and developed loose partnerships and deep friendships with Dick Peace and Andy MacBain. They worked on many jobs together ranging from cellars to roofs, putting up new, and repairing the old and broken. As he approached retirement age, he talked of easing up on working, but never actually did. Someone else he worked with is an old friend called Mick Biggin whom Stu had first met in the early days of the Derwent Mountaineering Club, of which more anon. Since Mick retired, he has spent many hours rebuilding the dry stone walls on the farm where his wife Jenny is still working. Stuart has spent many a day helping Mick walling, and together they restored an old derelict lime kiln on the farm. Their latest project has been restoration and repointing of a bridge on the Steeple Grange Light Railway near Wirksworth.

It might sound so far as if the only thing Stuart ever did was work. Far from it. He loved books and reading: probably the most widely read bricklayer in the world. He enjoyed motorsport and with mates from his local went to many a Formula One grand prix. They always took copious quantities of beer and had a riotous time: it would take until Thursday for them all to be properly sober. Before his son Mark was married with his own family, the two of them would go off to watch the RAC Rally. With the car boot full of beer, they drove miles to catch stages where they could, spending the week unshaved, unwashed, drinking the beer and sleeping it off in the car.

Since the early '60's, the Boxing Day Raft Race, organised by the Derbyshire Association of Sub-Aqua Clubs, has taken place every year; starting on the River Derwent half a mile upstream of Matlock and finishing four miles downstream at Cromford. Once upon a time, Stuart had been a member of Chesterfield Sub-Aqua Club, had done some diving, and would have known about the raft race. It's a charity event raising money for the RNLI. It was after the Penlee lifeboat disaster, 19th December, 1981, that Stu committed to taking part. His first raft event quite probably only one



week after the disaster, and I began doing it with him in maybe '83. The only ones we missed were those everyone missed: those few cancelled because heavy rain meant the river was too high. Going back to the early '70's when he worked at Shands, Stuart met Dave Jordan. Dave, already a very keen rock-climber, invited Stu to join him one evening and give it a go; he was hooked immediately. Stuart began climbing regularly with Dave and his brother Mick, and with Chris Worthy; and in 1972 with George Fowler, they started the Derwent Mountaineering Club. Lifelong friendships developed, and for Stu, a lifelong love of climbing too. Whilst the Jordan brothers were never really tempted by caving, both Stuart and Chris were; and with Jim Ballard – who had set up The Bivouac, climbing gear shop, in Matlock Bath, and had written The Spur Book of Caving – had their first forays underground. Quite possibly, not to mention literally, they were blundering about in the dark. It was about this time that Len Dawes and his family moved from London to live near Matlock. Len, many years a member of both the BEC and WSG and whose exploits digging Blue Pencil Passage in Swildon's are well documented, also joined the DMC and met Stuart. Another friendship that lasted forever. Long before this though, while Len was doing National Service with the RAF, stationed in the north-west, he had had opportunity with fellow serviceman Ray Barker to explore many a Yorkshire pot. Len brought with him a wealth of experience and expertise, and with developments in SRT, Len's caving gained a new lease of life; and for Stuart, caving, like climbing, took off.

I was introduced to rock-climbing by a work colleague in the autumn of '76 – a mostly enjoyable and certainly exciting experience – and went on to join the DMC the following spring. For my first couple of years, I bumbled along happily enough on club meets, but only properly began to know Stuart in March '80 when I joined him and Len – by this time I was working shifts alongside Len – on a trip to Glencoe for some winter climbing. Stuart told funny stories about people and situations at work. He described epics on rock-climbs in Wales with Mick Jordan and Chris Worthy, having to traverse off a route into a murky gully as the light failed, to blunder down in the dark with one barely flickering torch between the three of them. However scary it sounded, I found myself wishing I'd been there as well. He was quite knowledgeable about the birds we saw and inspired me to take an interest, not just in seeing eiders and mergansers on Loch Linnhe, but in the sparrows and robins at home.

As for the climbing that trip, we didn't get much: the weather wasn't cold enough to keep everything frozen and avalanche risk was high. But on one day the three of us walked up to Stob Coire nan Lochan, and whilst Len was urging discretion, it's a bit warm, Stuart was throwing caution to the winds. He decided Right Fork of Forked Gully was on and set off. We soloed up to a snowy stance the size of a table tennis table and belayed. Stu led off, climbing quite quickly and apparently oblivious to any difficulty; all the while the sound of trickling water getting louder. Stu topped out, belayed, and Len climbed next. By the time it was my turn, my stance had thawed to the size of a table tennis paddle, water was running everywhere and I found myself scrabbling and paddling up streaming wet rock and collapsing sugary snow. It was, to say the least, not a little scary, and it wouldn't be the last time I would think of Stuart as having more neck than a brass giraffe.

One evening in September '82, Stu and Chris led a motley crew – some like me, complete novices, and some with a little caving experience – on a mob-handed descent of Merlin's Mine, Stoney Middleton. Wet and muddy in places, but with wall to wall laughter; the two of them were relentless and merciless in their mickey-taking, and not just of each other. They shared whatever knowledge they had of the mine, thus making it interesting as well as funny. By the time '82 morphed into '83, my caving was progressing quite nicely.

Stuart was always enthusiastic and his enthusiasm carried people along: I'd be quite wealthy if I had a tenner for every time I'd turned out to help him take whoever-it-was-this-time-from-his-pub down P8 or Carlswark or wherever. He also sensed enthusiasm and fun in others and met them halfway: with my shift work, I couldn't make the same evening every week, but Stu didn't care. We'd decide on what we were going to do and meet up on, say, Tuesday at 6:30 or so and do it. And the week after with my free night on Thursday, he'd be there: we rarely failed. During the dark evenings of winter, we went underground, and with the light evenings of summer we climbed.

Throughout this time we also did weekends away to the Lakes or Snowdonia – over the years, these must have run into hundreds – always camping where there was a nearby pub for the evenings. In the Lakes, we often camped in Langdale with the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel on hand for beer. Stuart would often have a particular climb in mind that he wanted to do, and one such was Bowfell Buttress: successive weekends of bad weather meant it took four goes to climb the whole route. He had a stubborn streak and didn't give up. A highlight from weekends in Snowdonia was wild camping beside Llyn Eigiau in the Carneddau – for this we took our own beer – and walking up to Craig Yr Ysfa. There we soloed Amphitheatre Buttress and then roped up for Stu to lead Mur Y Niwl – another of his must do climbs. This climb includes a very airy – some might say scary – traverse: Stu made the whole thing look easy whilst I was scared half to death.

In '83 or '84, through Len, we met Ken Dawe and Bob Pyke: various trips to the Dales followed. In November '87 a group of us were staying at the Craven Hut. Some of the group were steady, and light drinkers; and one night while the steady ones were still in the hut making tea, Ken, Stu and I were already next door halfway down our second pint. Ken was telling Stu and myself about The Berger – he and Bob had been there with the BEC in '86 – and having waxed lyrical long enough that we were nearly at the bottom of our third pint, he paused, cog-wheels obviously doing

something else.... When he started again, he said, "The Wessex are going to The Berger next year, why don't you two join and go with them." Which is exactly what we did.

The whole of the Wessex Berger '88 was a terrific experience for both of us, which is why we both kept up our membership. Stuart went back to the Berger again, and the PSM. With our now almost non-existent caving group in Derbyshire, he went to the PSM and the Trou du Glaz. In 1990, Ken's son Angus was still studying at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Stu and I had a holiday staying with Angus whose friends took us into some big systems in Tennessee and Alabama.

Stuart spent two years writing to the Carlsbad Caverns National Park Authority asking, begging even, for an opportunity to get into Lechuguilla. His persistence paid off, for in 1994 he was offered two places on a two week exploration and surveying expedition. I still feel touched that he offered the second place to me, and lucky that we were able to go there. Of the rest of the team – all Americans – the one who stood out was Jim Yancey who became another of Stuart's lifelong friends. Jim was able to come here in '96 and join us at the Trou du Glaz.

And through these years, Stu and I each went places and did stuff on our own. He went more than once to climb in Yosemite, and a thread through this has been the postcards. On one from Yosemite, he made up a story of an encounter with an Indian whose bow and arrow "just went off", making a slit in the card where the arrow landed. From the Wessex Berger '95 meet, I sent him one which I'd smeared with mud from a molehill to simulate Berger mud. More recently, the 'card' he sent from Nepal was a foot-shaped beer mat pinched from the Rumdoodle Restaurant in Kathmandu with a tale of a brief encounter with a yeti.

The post cards began in '84 with one he sent to Mick Jordan from Lundy Island where we had a very warm dry week and some fabulous climbing. Stu charred the edges of the card with his stove – that's how hot Mick was supposed to think it was – and wrote goodness knows what nonsense on it. It was me who came up with the silly idea of sending one to each other, both of us penning insults and innuendo. He always said these cards were what finished off his by then struggling first marriage: Margaret never believed either of us were soft enough to sit on the same campsite at the same time and write the other a card... perhaps if she'd seen some of the drivel that came later....

In 2005, Stuart got together with Heather and adventures continued: they sailed in the Med; they went to the States to see amongst other things, the Grand Canyon. During the period between Stuart's first diagnosis for cancer in 2009 and commencement of treatment, they went to Africa and climbed Kilimanjaro. Stuart had always dreamed of going to the Himalaya, and through Trailfinders they booked a trek to Everest Base Camp. Their guide was a man called Suppri, and it didn't take long for the professional arrangement of guide and two clients to turn into three mates on a walk. For their subsequent trips, they arranged the trek directly with Suppri, using Trailfinders only to find flights.

Paraphrasing from Suppri's letter to Heather, he writes, "I can't believe Stuart is gone. He was a very good person, calm and very fond of doing adventure and I cannot forget how strong he was when we went to Everest Base Camp. Being a Buddhist, we believe in reincarnation and that he has now left his old clothes and is looking for new." And Heather's daughter Claire wrote, "Stu has been an intrinsic part of our family since he and mum got together... so where is he now... unfortunately no longer with us physically, but his personality and enthusiasm still lives on in our minds, memories and hearts."

Wessex people who knew him well will have your own memories and stories. I'll end by saying thanks for some silly post cards and great times.

Grant Lindsay.

Raft Photo: Grant Lindsay

PEN PARK HOLE

Pen Park Hole is the subject of a major article in "Descent" issue 252, complete with dramatic photographs. For those who haven't been into it, it is the most extraordinary cave and well worth a visit. The entrance now boasts a very fine information board, provided by Natural England.

Pen Park is controlled jointly by UBSS, BEC, and Wessex. It has recently been re-gated with a properly designed, long-life gate. The Council have requested a commemorative plaque (About its discovery and re-discovery) there with a Wessex logo, which will be done. To defray some of the new gate costs there is now a £2.00 per head entry fee, which will be collected by the leaders (Cookie for the Wessex) of each trip.



THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB ANNUAL DINNER



The 82nd Wessex AGM was held at the Hunter's Lodge Inn, Priddy on Saturday 15th. October and was well attended. Our president, Don Thomson was unfortunately indisposed and unable to attend. Les Williams was re-elected as Chairman. The meeting was remarkably uncontentious, and took under 2 hours.

Our annual dinner was held at The Wellsway, Harptree Hill, with slightly fewer attending than last year. Wendy Williams organised the event again, and as always it was a most enjoyable and entertaining evening. Our guest



speaker was Les Davies MBE, Chief Mendip Warden of the Mendips AONB and a long-time friend of the caving community. He had a fund of stories from his warden duties, finishing with a splendid one involving our treasurer, Aubrey Newport. Les Davies had a hard act to follow, as Alan Butcher - himself once a memorable guest speaker - had replied to the toast to our guests as only he can!

Les and Alan in full flow !!!
Photos: Noel



MAURICE HEWINS NEXT ARCHIVE FILM SHOW

Will be at Wells and Mendip Museum on Saturday 3rd. December at 7.30pm. Entry is £3.00 and there will be a bar. Films will include some from the 1950's, through to the present day. Much of the archive material has not been shown for many years, if at all.

And a plea from BCA, to club secretaries: “Will you please help us by including the following item in your next newsletter or by sending it directly to the members of your club”.

BCA Online was successfully launched at the beginning of June 2015. BCA Online allows members to login under their own membership number and set their own email contact preferences. They can change their email address and password as necessary. They can review their membership details (membership status, insurance status, address, etc) as held by BCA. If those need to be updated they can email the Membership Administrator. This provides BCA with a verified and maintained list of email addresses and crucially, to remain legal, the consents to use them. This mailing list has been used to distribute the BCA Newsletter to members since Issue 23, Oct 2015.

Unfortunately fewer than 10% of members have registered to receive the Newsletter. BCA Online is being continually improved with particular effort being spent on tidying up the records and spotting inconsistencies in the submissions from the clubs.

We are particularly keen to communicate better with our members but of the 6,022 member records only 3,795 have email addresses (63%), only 478 have opted in for the Newsletter (8%) and only 124 (2%) have registered online.

By supplying BCA with an email address, members can receive administrative email that is necessary to run BCA/BCRA, for example renewal notices. But to receive other more promotional material, such as the Newsletter, members must also register with BCA Online and update their email preferences accordingly. This slightly frustrating way of working is as a result of the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (PECR), an act passed with the laudable but vain attempt to protect us from spam.

Hopefully more members will opt in as time passes. The process isn't difficult – go to the main website (www.british-caving.org.uk) and click on the “BCA Online” option top right hand side. Then click on “Request Login Details”, fill in your email address and click the green submit button. If your email address is found, the system will send you an email with a link to allow you to set your password and log in. If your email address isn't found please follow the instructions on the screen.

Once you have logged in you can click on “Email Preferences” to opt-in and receive the BCA Newsletter direct to your inbox. Please note you can opt-out of email communication at any time by using the same screen.

Whilst there you can also quickly click on “Your Profile” to check that BCA has your correct contact and insurance details.

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

As at 15th October 2016

Bristol Exploration Club ‘Belfry Bulletin’ 60, 557 (6), 558 (7) (*Diving in OFD I, Reservoir Hole, Tween Twins Hole*)

BCRA ‘Cave and Karst Science’ 43, 1, 2 (Apr., Aug. 2016) ‘News’ (Oct.2016)

Chelsea S.S. N/L 58, 4/5/6 (Apr. – Jun. 2016) (*Tween Twins Hole, Wigmore Swallet*)

CNCC N/L 4 (June 2016). (*Electronic version on CNCC website: www.cncc.org.uk*)

Derbyshire Caving Association ‘Derbyshire Caver’ 141, 142 (Summer, Autumn 2016) Information Circular 2016/5 (Aug/Oct 2016)

Descent 250, 251, 252 (Jun/Jul, Aug/Sep, Oct/Nov 2016) (*Hunters’ Lodge Inn Sink vandalism, Tween Twins (Fester) Hole (Gaping Gill survey, Mossdale Caverns, Lechuguilla) (Pen Park Hole, Home Close Hole, Wookey diving)*)

Devon S.S. ‘Deep in Devon’ 166 – 170 (Winter, 2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012 / 13, 2013/14)

South Wales Caving Club N/L 132 (Apr. 2016) (70th Anniversary Edition)

NSS (U.S.A.) ‘News’ 74, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (May, June, July, Aug, Sep. 2016)

‘Journal of Cave and Karst Studies’ 78, 1, 2 (Apr, Aug 2016)

Shepton Mallet Caving Club ‘Journal’ 13, 5 (Spr. 2014) (*Romania expedition, Iceland lava caves*)

U.B.S.S. ‘Proceedings’ 27, 1 (Jun 2016) (*Reservoir Hole, Totty Pot*)

Westminster Spelaeological Group J. (Bulletin) 10, 1 (Jan 2016) White Rose P.C. N/L 35, 2, 3 (June, Sept. 2016)

Dincolo de lumina (Beyond the light). Puscas R. (2014) Donated by Romanian caver Oana Chachula (Photographs of Romanian caves)

The new leaflet ‘Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines’, giving advice on minimising damage to caves while digging and exploring etc., can be downloaded from : www.british-caving.org.uk

EXTRACTS FROM THE UPPER PITTS LOG-BOOK

Saturday April 16 2016 Swildons Rhodri Meredith, Andy Morse.

Trip down to Sump 4. The Mud Sump was dry. Got to the Troubles and started the syphon before tackling Blue Pencil. Visited Sump 4, then 3 before exiting via the Mud Sump and the Dry Way. **Andy**

Saturday April 23 2016 LVS Pete Buckley, John Cooper, Mike K, Chris Milne, Ali Moody, Lee Venning.

JC on surface, Chris at top of rift and the rest in Triassic Tunnel. 66 loads removed, 5 holes drilled and destroyed. 3 ½ hrs. **John**

Sunday April 10 2016 Ogof Craig a Ffynnon Wayne Starsmore, Mike K, Bean, Aidan Harrison.

To Promised Land and Helectite Passage. Had a look at the aven closest to Daren Cilau. 5 hrs. **Mike**

Saturday April 23 2016 Mitchell's Dig Ade VdP, Nigel Graham, Pete Hann.

20 buckets of spoil out, 3 buckets of cement in. **Ade**

Sunday April 24 2016 Lime Kiln Dig John Cooper, Murray Knapp, Barry Wilkinson.

Water only ankle deep in bottom tunnel. Murray drilled another long hole on opposite side of drain hole. Will see what effect this has. 1 hr. **John**

Monday April 25 2016 Spider Hole John Cooper, NikNak, Ade & Jude VdP.

Hauled spoil up bottom shaft for an hour. Draught appeared when loose end of rift was cleared. 1 ½ hrs. **John**

Thursday April 28 2016 Sludge Pit Mike K, Lee Venning. Got Lee to the very sharp end (does not need enlarging!). Cleared debris from bang. 2 ½ hrs. **Mike**

Saturday April 30 2016 Mitchell's Dig Ade VdP, Nigel Graham, Pete Hann.

27 Buckets of spoil out, 2 buckets of cement in. We can now see down about 10 feet into what might be solid roof dipping down about 30° with a very strong draught at times. **Nigel**

Saturday April 30 2016 LVS Pete Buckley, John Cooper, John Gisborne, Mike K, Ali Moody, Lee Venning, Geoff Newton.

Last week's charge had achieved a considerable amount of damage. All cleared. Holes drilled by PB & JC and demolished by Ali. Good progress being made. Many passing visitors because of the Bluebells. 50 loads of debris. 4 hrs. **Ali**

Sunday May 1 2016 Swildons John Cooper, Barry Weaver, Lee Venning.

Bailed the Mud Sum dry. 1 ¾ hrs. **John**

**** **Editors Note.** This represents many such entries by John; only a few are printed in the journal.

Sunday May 1 2016 Sludge Pit Geoff Newton, Mike K,

Hammering and spoil clearing from the new dig at the end of Back Passage. Contrary to first appearances, the end now appears to be a downwards continuation of the rift, rather than an ongoing horizontal passage. **Geoff**

Monday May 2 2016 Sludge Pit Mike K (solo).

Clearing out spoil and stacking full. Nice iron ore vein (1 ft wide) on right. Rift split along 10ft length, lots of spoil from this. Can see further than before, looks like passage is taking another kink, and dropping more. 4 hrs. **Mike**

Tuesday May 3 2016 Sludge Pit Terry Waller, Derek Sanderson.

A respectful trip into Sludge seeing how many others seem to be trying to blow it to bits. Mind you, we did explore the dig. Not used to the fumes, toxic or us, so didn't reach the end. Nice encouraging notice at the entrance to the dig. Down to bottom, then out via Shale Series. **Derek.**

Tuesday May 3 2016 Spider Hole James Collings, NikNak, John Cooper, Ade VdP, Tony Seddon.

42 loads hauled up 4 Ton Shaft. At least the same again still there. 2 hrs. **John**

Saturday May 7 2016 LVS Pete Buckley, John Cooper, John Gisborne, Chris Milne, Ali Moody, Lee Venning.

42 loads of spoil removed. 5 holes drilled and destroyed. 4 hrs. **John Cooper**

Thursday May 5 2016 Sludge Pit Mike K, Tim Clements, Jonathan Williams.

Johnathan drilled 3, 1 metre holes while Tim and I cleared spoil from dig to intermediate stacking. After Jon had drilled we cleared back again to Strike Chamber. All cleared. 2 ½ hrs. **Mike**

Sunday May 8 2016 Lime Kiln John Cooper, Murray Knapp, Aubrey Newport, Barry Wilkinson, Colin Shapter.

A somewhat staggered start, but while Murray drilled a couple of long holes to assist drainage, the rest moved spoil up to the bottom of the railway. 1 hr. **John**

Photo Showcase. Peak Cavern. Photo: Christine Grosart



EXTRACTS FROM THE UPPER PITTS LOG-BOOK

Monday May 9 2016 Spider Hole John Cooper, NikNak, Tony Seddon, Ade & Jude VdP.

SRT ropes re-installed after a good wash, then spoil remaining at the bottom of 4 Ton Shaft cleared (33 loads). 1 ½ hr. **John**

Penderyn Weekend, 27 - 30 May

Les, Wendy, Dog, Simon, Cheryl, Craig (Holdstock), Nick, Sam, Dave, Noel

Saturday May 28 2016 OFD Noel, Nick, Sam, Dave.

The plan was to do an OFD 1 round trip, in up the streamway and out over the escape route wires. We went in as two parties, giving ourselves a 30 min start over Les and his group. The water level was moderate, with the water peat-stained but not really in flood. This was Sam's first trip into OFD, so we ambled up enjoying the scenery to the boulder choke, where we paused and made the slab rock. Climbing the ropes into the escape route involved some slightly undignified pushing and pulling, then we thrutched our way up to Roundabout Chamber and on through the crawls. Short of Pi Chamber we waited for Les, as planned, because Noel wasn't sure of the rest of the route down to the wires - it was some 58 years since he last did it. Les and Co kindly allowed us to tag along down from Pi, although once into Pi's boulder floor there is no problem route finding. Noel improvised a safety harness with Cow's Tails for Sam, and Nick and Dave also made some, being unsure of the demands of the wire traverses. The traverses were fine and fun. Les and his group were planning photography on the second traverse wire, so Noel and Co left via the dugout. One way and another it was a cracking good trip for all of us. **Noel**

Saturday May 28 2016 OFD Noel Cleave, Nic Butler, Sam Storrar, Dave Walker

Arriving at the Westminster Hut I gather the trip is the OFD One streamway then back through the Upper Series including the wire traverses. That should be fun, I know I've been that way once before even if it was a few years ago. Our party is Noel, Nic and Sam. I've caved with two of these good people before and we quickly find our pace. The streamway is grand, not as sporting as in OFD Two but spectacular nevertheless. In a furry suit and Cordura oversuit I'm warm. Not like in my old home-made wetsuit of yesteryear with the rips and split seams. Up to the rocking boulder and back down to the climb up to Lowe's Passage. I recall

a chain being here before rather than ropes. I remember a lot of the route – the Selenite on the roof of Roundabout Chamber is just as beautiful as before. Now we are in an area I don't recall – the big rocky breakdown chambers of Rawl Series. We follow a steeply descending rift, the sound of the stream increases and we are onto the wire traverses. My cows tails are useful – I don't suppose I had more than a tape and a carabiner before, and none of us are lugging around Oldham cells on our belts either! I recall the distinctive iron girder bolted across the passage and all too soon we are off away from the noise of the stream to the Dug Out crawl and out. A really enjoyable few hours.

At home I look at my caving logbook. Hmm. My previous trip had been on 8th April 1973. I'd been on a party including Andy Freem and Andy Sparrow sherpering for Martyn Farr. He had dived downstream in Dip Sump and some of us had made out way out along the 'escape route'. I find it reassuring that at least four of our party are still caving, and the cave looks as good as ever. **Dave**

Thursday April 28 2016 High Pasture Cave. Skye. Dave Walker.

Found entrance easily enough, despite heavy snow falling, and quickly followed the stream to the low passage beyond the shower inlet. A great waterfall, very pretty gour pools and attractive mottled limestone. Looked at Tin Can Alley, the area of archeological excavation. 1 hr. **Dave**

Saturday May 14 2016 Mitchell's Dig Nigel Graham, Pete Hann, Adrian VdP, Barry Wilkinson.

17buckets of spoil out, 2 of cement in. We can now see into a bedding plane about 4" high dipping at 30° for about 10', solid roof and floor. We can now call it a cave! **Nigel**

Sunday May 8 2016 Portland Nigel Graham.

Walked the tracks above Inmosthay Quarry, which, over the years had broken into a phreatic network and heavily fragmented it. Scene of devastation with nothing recognisable left. Hardly any open faces - most covered in back-filling. Saw one or two features of geological interest, but all the caves have gone. **Nigel**

Sunday May 15 2016 Sludge Pit Mike K, Jon Williams.

Set up charge, strolled over to Lime Kiln. Bish, Bosh, Bash. 30 mins. **Mike**



Club News and Admin Matters



Your annual subscriptions are due now !

A reminder that your membership Subs are due on **31 Oct**, and will be so overdue by the time of the next journal that you may be caving uninsured by the BCA . There is an absolute cut-off date which is 31 December.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members:

Master Aaron Varity
James Burrige
Craig Holdstock

Welcome back the following returning Members

Matt Jones
Adrian Dorney

Diary Dates

WCC Member Types 15/10/16

Honorary	12
Joint Honorary	6
Joint Members	58
Senior Citizen	10
Joint Senior Citizen	6
Student	10
Under 25	5
Under 16	10
Single Members	167

Total 15/10/16 284

Nov 11, 2016	Fri		Hut Booking 11th & 12th Nov	KUCC (9) Hannah Bailey
Nov 12, 2016	Sat	10:00 AM	2nd Saturday Mendip Meet Rescue practice	WCC Rescue practice More info
Nov 12, 2016	Sat		Top Sink/Lancaster Hole	Yorkshire Permit
Nov 13, 2016	Sun		Pool Sink	Yorkshire Permit
Nov 18, 2016	Fri		Hut Booking 18th & 19th Nov	DCC (8) Joel Colk
Nov 27, 2016	Sun	10:00 AM	Committee Meeting	Upper Pitts Library
Dec 10, 2016	Sat		Notts Pot	Yorkshire Permit
Dec 11, 2016	Sun		Lost Johns' /Boxhead	Yorkshire Permit
Jan 20, 2017	Fri		Hut Booking 20th & 21st Jan	KUCC (9) Hannah Bailey
Jan 22, 2017	Sun	10:00 AM	Committee Meeting	Upper Pitts Library
Feb 17, 2017	Fri		Hut Booking 17th & 18th Feb	KUCC (9) Hannah Bailey

A lighter vein of calcite....

During EuroSpeleo in the course of a strenuous Penyghent Pot trip, an exquisitely courteous foreigner, observing that Christine might appreciate a major shove upwards, asked: "Christine Is it OK if I touch your bottom?" The answer was: "Yes Please"!

Paul Hadfield reports from Canada that the secret dig from the newly accessed Wookey 20 has broken surface near him..... just the 3840 nautical miles from Wookey. Must be some kind of dig record !



Mendip Cave Rescue

**80
YEARS**

& 2016 J-Rat Digging Award

Saturday 19th November 2016

Priddy Village Hall

19.00: Food available

20.00: MCR a celebration of 80 years of cavers rescuing cavers

20.30: Films and presentations of the finds of 2016

21.30: Presentation of the J-Rat digging award

22.00 to midnight: Disco

Bar all evening.

Proceeds to MCR