

# Wessex Cave Club



Journal 341  
April 2017





# EDITORIAL



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It's always tempting to use some superbly dramatic photograph for your journal cover. At the moment, however, the defining activity for the Wessex Cave Club members is digging, so it seems appropriate to highlight the sheer slogging work involved in the current digs with this photo of John Cooper hauling spoil out of Longwood Valley Sink, particularly in view of the article about recent flooding in Longwood Valley on page 203.

Following a well practised tradition, I must add another Editorial apology. The more eagle-eyed amongst you may have noticed that between Journals 339 and 340, 23 pages went missing. It would be nice to think of some future archivist musing that I had produced a journal so libellous and scurrilous that it had been deleted without trace. The explanation is (sadly) more prosaic. Working in PagePlus ahead from Journal 336 I laid out the frames and paginations of a couple of years worth of journals, and with considerable precision, cocked up the maths; another example of my modest ability to make error into an art form.

Mike K has done a lot of work on the Wessex Web-Site and on-line presence. The details are on page 211 and only mentioned here because the Email addresses which used to feature on this page no longer do; they are publicly available on-line. Similarly I have omitted the Diary Dates. I can always restore these if people would prefer to see them in the journal. Please let me know.

I am still playing catch-up with the log-book extracts, but EuroSpeleo has already been published, and the DSS meet is covered in this issue. *Noel*

## COMMITTEE AND ADMIN INFORMATION

The committee have become increasingly concerned that the rising running costs of the club have not been matched by any increase in income. Superficially the club has been accumulating reserves, but this does not indicate a sustainable model for the long-term health of the club, since there have been few significant capital expenditures in recent years and some major ones are overdue. It is important that the club does not simply "Mark Time"; we should be aiming for continuous improvement in the club's amenities, and addressing the current known problem areas - notably overcrowding in the changing room, drying room, showers and the living room. There is also potentially expensive maintenance becoming necessary for the 50 year old hut roof. A very modest increase in income now would correct the situation, but if we continue to charge below the inflation rises in our living costs (such as fuel and rubbish disposal) then we will have to impose a really major rise at some time in the fairly near future. The proposed hut fees charges are modest and will come into effect on 1<sup>st</sup>. August (to coincide with the club's financial year). They will be:

**Members £4.00      Students £5.00      Guests £7.50**

The drying room..... this one will run and run..... But at present it is misused. All manner of caving clothes are being left there long after they are dry, and the racks are inadequate for casual storage. At present the shelves at the end of the changing room seem to have become a dumping ground for bits and pieces of kit. Their intended use was, and is, for people to put their dry clothes while they are underground. The intention in future is to clear everything from the shelves, so that they can indeed be used for dry clothes. There will be a rail alongside them for dry kit removed from the drying room. The Hut Warden will clear dry kit from the drying room after each weekend, probably on a Monday afternoon, onto the new rail. Kit that isn't "Hanging" kit - such as boots, socks, gloves - will be piled onto another new shelf. If you have kit drying, then it is your own responsibility to check and see when it is dry, remove it and not leave it hanging all the weekend or from weekend to weekend.

There has to be a cut-off date for this, to allow people who know they have left kit on the changing room shelves to recover it. It will be Sunday April 30 2017. Cue squeals of outrage, but if you have kit there and cannot remove it before then, let John Cooper know, otherwise it will become landfill !!!

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Cover Photograph: John Cooper at Longwood Valley Sink.

Photo: **Ali Moody**



# CAVING IN SPAIN



It is fairly widely known that a recent trip to Andalucia ran into cave permit problems (the trip is reported on page 208) but this was only a consequence of the general bureaucratic problem of caving in Spain. Lanzarote presents a particular problem because UK cavers (mainly, but not only) from the Wessex Cave Club have become repeat, regular visitors to the island and its caves. Chris Binding has done a lot of research work, specifically on the Lanzarote situation, but which revealed that in effect all caving in Spain is illegal without a specific permit for every cave.

## Lanzarote: conservation legislation and its affect on visiting cavers

Access is a long-standing debating point within caving circles and issues regarding this are not the sole preserve of the UK, much though it may have appeared to be the case in recent times. It was a couple of years ago in Lanzarote when I first heard vague repeated references to this potential minefield by Miguel, one of the local cavers in Costa Teguisse, who was then running his own outdoor pursuits company; at the time it was presumed he was simply firing warning shots trying to dissuade any foreign competition for professional guiding on the island which would have been entirely reasonable and good business practice from his perspective, despite my reassurances to the contrary – I have had no designs on providing caving tours there in a professional capacity. The area we had under discussion was the Monte Corona system – the biggest on the island. In February 2016 I was directly informed by a Council employee on the island that permission for caving was a legal prerequisite; clearly this needed verifying so some research would be necessary...

Historically we knew there were access restrictions at Los Lagos cave, one of the more impressive sections of the massive Monte Corona lava tube, simply because it has an old rusty gate which had been long since bypassed by locals with a hacksaw. Los Lagos is something of an anomaly on the otherwise dry island because it contains lakes (hence the eponymous Lagos in its title – although so does Jameos del Agua).

Los Lagos used to pose a natural challenge for visitors in the form of a simple yet psychologically daunting and mildly risky traverse and climb around the edge of the entrance crater (photo above); this could be made safer and easier by using ropes (photo below) but for many locals it was presumably probably something of a machismo rite of passage and locally a feather in the cap of any youth setting out to prove themselves.

During our relatively extended conversation Miguel had sweepingly stated that all caving on the island was subject to the successful granting of permission and this was news to me since from experience and observations this seemed incorrect; yes, there were signs at the National Park stating that pretty nearly doing anything whatsoever off-piste was prohibited... and, yes, there used to be a sign at Naturalistas near Masdache which stated “Prohibido el Paso”, but that had also long since disappeared, along with another sign about the cave being a Natural Monument (photo below). What I heard from him just didn't seem to stack up so we simply continued innocently enjoying visiting and beholding many of the island's wonderful caves, often with assistance locating them provided by Miguel himself, and also Alexander and Javier. So, if it was OK for them, surely it was OK for us? All rather bewildering.

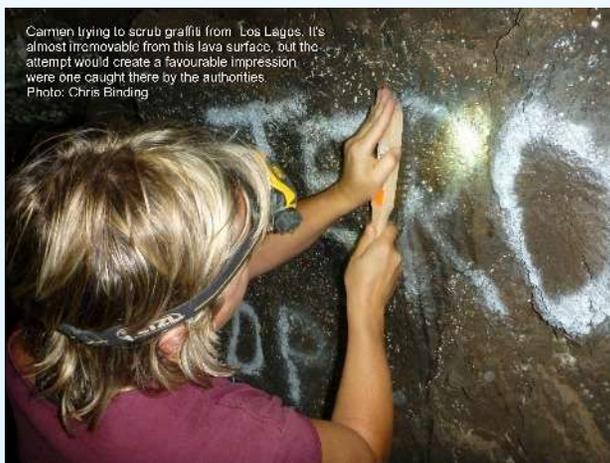
In November 2012 the entrance to Los Lagos had major engineering works done to it by the Council – a huge fence and gate was installed; we observed the workers welding and angle grinding on site and then went along after the works were complete late one afternoon to take photographs of this monstrosity and to clamber around on it enjoying the ease with which it enabled a descent into the crater. Online correspondence in the evening with a Spanish caver amusingly elicited a comment that the locals would easily bypass the gate within hours. We didn't, but someone soon did, and access to the cave became so easy that it became a risible conservation disaster – now anyone could get in whereas in the past it was only the select few who would bravely dare to attempt the climb. By the time of our next visit in Spring 2013 the gate had been breached at the base and access was breathtakingly easy. The new gate served two main purposes – it was a ladder but it was also a most emphatic visible statement that access to the cave was prohibited, even if it wasn't enforced or enforceable, and that this prohibition remained current. Overall though, it was unarguably a significant conservation cock-up.

Following a recent visit (in January 2016), online research has unearthed some useful and relatively unequivocal documentation. It took some finding, mind you, and is published in the Official Bulletins of the Canaries (Numbers 74 , 85 (1987) and 157 (1994): Canary Island Natural Areas legislation): it states that “An almost exclusive reliance of the economies of the Canary Islands on the service sector has created a model of development that cannot be maintained and risks exceeding the resilience of the natural resources of the islands. The situation requires corrective measures including the establishment of a comprehensive legal regime on



Welcome to a Lanzarote "Parque Nacional" (this particular notice is at Playa Negro, by El Golfo, where there are numerous caves, and illustrates pretty conclusively the legal conception of "Unreasonably Restricting").

the Natural Areas. This Act is the main instrument of a new legal regime, instituting a great social pact based on education and environmental awareness and defining specific conservation goals". It defines protected areas, including Natural Monuments and Protected Landscapes. The Act contains reference to certain listed offences such as camping in prohibited places, or the destruction or disturbance of habitats which might be considered relevant when visiting caves, but there does not appear to be specific or overt mention of caving, although it is certainly prohibited within the National Parks according to the numerous signs there. The Natural Monument cave of Naturalistas used to have a sign stating that entry was forbidden (but this has long since gone missing) and the hugely overt gated entrance of Los Lagos leaves no uncertainty regarding the access situation there. Failure to apply for, or gain, permission might be an offence, however, and does seem to be hinted at with the expression "without due administrative authorisation". Put another way, while it might be the case that caving is OK, caving without permission is not OK; failure to apply for permission is the offence, rather than the visit itself! One of the areas specifically mentioned in the legislation is the Monte Corona lava field, the principle caving site, including reference to the wide range of



Carmen trying to scrub graffiti from Los Lagos. It's almost irremovable from this lava surface, but the attempt would create a favourable impression were one caught there by the authorities.  
Photo: Chris Binding

different landscape structures, and that sometimes (primarily due to ignorance of the effects of insufficiently considered human

actions), there is deterioration of these. The article called for the establishment of a network of protected natural areas containing valued features in order to preserve them while not unreasonably restricting public and private activities. However, no attempt seems to be made to define the term "unreasonably restricting". From what perspective? A chilling discovery came when reading of the variety of offences; these are classed as either "minor, less serious, serious or very serious" according to their impact; presumably if there is little or no environmental damage it would be at the lower end of the severity scale. Also playing a part in the determination of the severity of the offence is their significance regarding safety, circumstances, the degree of malice, participation and any benefit gained plus the irreversibility of any damage incurred or the deterioration in the quality of the resource. The fine scale in 1989 (the most recent figures I have been able to find for the time being) gives an indication of the severity of the penalties which someone might face, namely: For a minor offence the fine ranged from sixty pounds to six hundred pounds whereas for what is termed a "less serious offence" the fine ranges from six hundred to six thousand pounds. If the offence is classed as serious the fine is tenfold, namely six thousand up to sixty thousand pounds and a very serious offence sees fines of up to a third of a million pounds. If these figures have been subject to any kind of indexation then it can be seen that even a minor offence can have an eye-watering financial penalty attached. Arguably walking through a cave would be a minor misdemeanour or based on the considerations in the earlier paragraph, but even so... that could result in a fine of getting on for a grand! The legislation was ordered by King Carlos who urged that it should be observed and enforced by all Spaniards, individuals and authorities. Because of the geopolitical instability

presently affecting historic tourist hotspots in Muslim countries, there has been a recent significant increase in visitors to the Canary Islands.. There has also been an increase in the number of incidents in the National Parks where people have been threatened with legal redress for transgressing the regulations and there may be an appetite to make an example of someone to publicly assert and reinforce the legislation.

At Los Lagos the weldmesh grid which had hitherto facilitated easy access was now blocked off and significantly reinforced with a girdle of close mesh panels covering the entire lower half of the fencing. Inevitably, the local cavers have reacted by deleting the gate padlock system entirely.... making entry easier still! Meanwhile, pending finding out what the permission application process consists of, any clandestine visits to caves would do well to have a conservation purpose such as picking up litter because this would probably help to reduce any perceived offence, in the event of being apprehended, to the minor end of the scale; this has already been done as a matter of course, with litter-picking specifically taking place at the Risco de Famara Picon Cave, and attempts at cleaning off graffiti in Los Lagos. The more conservation-minded and pro-active cavers can endeavor to be in this regard, the better – not only for the caves, but for any visitors who are caught while engaged in the pursuit of their passion.

Postscript - for those who are determined to press ahead with visits, regardless of this article: an advisory approach for anyone still considering visiting caves anywhere on the island, so that you are less likely to be button-holed and get shouted at, or worse, would be to dress like hikers wearing trousers or shorts, rugged walking boots, dull-coloured clothing (not red or anything bright and easily seen from a distance – although brighter coloured clothing is most definitely preferred for underground photography); using a hiking backpack to carry all kit out of view and on arrival at a cave, quickly move out of sight and only change into caving kit once inside the entrance, not stood out like a beacon, visible for miles on the surface. Put simply, keep a low profile, do not attract attention, do not presume that caving is OK or that anyone has a right to do what they want. If visiting Los Lagos cave you might also do well to be dropped off on the road as the first available parking nearby is at the Cueva de los Verdes show cave car park and the parking attendant is aware that people often make clandestine visits to the gated cave; therefore set off in pairs, again dressed like hikers, since a large group is likely to draw attention to itself.



Aubrey collecting rubbish from the picon mine above Famara. A genuinely altruistic, but visibly virtuous caving activity.  
Photo: Chris Binding

Chris



# LONGWOOD VALLEY SINK



NewsHeadline and articles by **Linda Wilson.**

**Last updated Mon 21 Nov 2016**

The B3135 through Cheddar Gorge has been closed on safety grounds. It was shut yesterday (Sunday 20 November) due to subsidence caused by heavy rain and flooding. Water and rock are continuing to pour onto the road today, and the closure remains in place. Somerset County Council's highways team says it will reassess the situation later and sweep the debris from the route.

Photo, courtesy of Sedgemoor District Council



**B**ack in the winter of 2012/13 Cheddar Gorge flooded, damaging the road, and had to be closed for several months, until it dried out and the road could be repaired. In order to help prevent further events like that, cavers from the Charterhouse Caving Company Ltd worked in conjunction with the landowners, Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT), to reopen Longwood Valley Sink (LVS) and clear out the Longwood Swallet main sink. This work was carried out with financial assistance from the Highways Agency, Sedgemoor District Council and Cheddar Caves and Gorge. The work was successful and for the last three winters the sinks have taken all the water.

In the summer months, a digging team led by Ali Moody have been working to extend LVS and now have something over 65m of cave. Their most recent digging trip was last Saturday, 19th November, and that afternoon the main sink was easily coping with the stream. However, on Saturday night, Storm Angus deposited a vast amount of water on the side of the hill and by Sunday morning both sinks had been completely overwhelmed and water was once again flowing



2 photos showing the depth of the scouring damage from the Longwood Valley Flood



out into the Gorge. Eyewitness accounts indicate that there must have been a particularly large flood pulse during the night, which deposited large amounts of silt, rocks, dead leaves and branches everywhere, blocking the grill on Longwood Valley Sink, which ended up under at least a

metre of water. The highest levels recorded over the last two days seem to be significantly higher than those seen four years ago.



LVS completely submerged (under arrow)

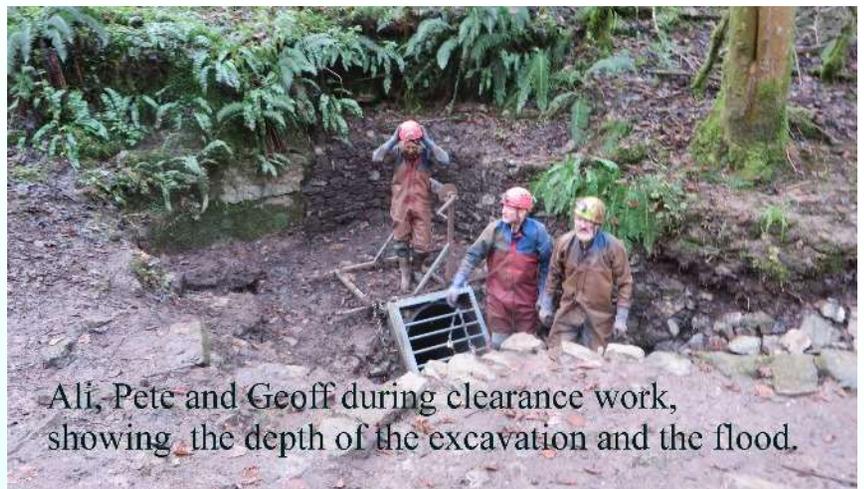
Nothing could be safely done about this until the water dropped enough to allow anyone to get close enough to the grill to attempt to clear the blockage, but on Tuesday 22nd, Ali Moody, Neil Watson and James Ozolins of SWT managed to clear most of the debris from the grill and, at the moment, the cave is taking all the water once more.



Neil Watson wet, cold and brave "Rodding the drain" of the submerged LVS

As can be seen from the photos, a significant amount of debris had collected around the LVS entrance, but fortunately it appears that neither the entrance itself nor the retaining walls around it seem to have been damaged by the surge. Doubtless, when the water has dropped enough, there will be similar amounts to be removed from the main sink, as well.

Although the original work has allowed the sinks to cope with all but the highest surges – the floods in Chew Valley and South Bristol indicate quite how severe this event was – Autumn storms can be particularly difficult owing to



Ali, Pete and Geoff during clearance work, showing the depth of the excavation and the flood.

the amount of leaf and wood debris lying around. Work at the sinks, in the valley and in the Gorge will no doubt continue for some time.

**Report by Linda Wilson.**

All uncredited Photos: **Ali Moody**

## A GRAND DAY OUT..... YORKSHIRE FASHION

### **Connor and Josh, Ireby to Notts 2**

'Ok this is really getting old now' I thought to myself, as my fins had once again got snagged on the scaffolding. I was in the entrance shaft to Notts II, with Josh Bractchley just ahead of me. We were just completing the final section of our through trip that started in Ireby Fell.

I sadly cannot remember how the trip came to be, all I can really remember was Josh and me firming up as much information as we could before heading off. The plan was as simple as it always is with me and Josh, go diving... don't die. We parked my car by Notts II entrance, as we did not really fancy the walk about over the hills in the dark. Mike Waterworth and Ellen Cooper had agreed to join and help a little, down to the first Sump. In the end only one of our cylinders got dragged down for us, however it made a difference for me; Josh however was on his own with his gear. The trip down was not what you would call fun, with myself and Josh both in dry wetsuits and the water levels were still low at the time. As Notts was rigged for the Eurospeleo event, we knew that if anything went wrong we could exit there. This meant we could treat the two main sumps we had to tackle as two separate dives, resulting in us having one larger bottle and one small as bail out. With us not having a massive team to help we had to limit the amount of gear to one bag each, resulting in our smaller bottles being carried on us along with everything else, such as masks.

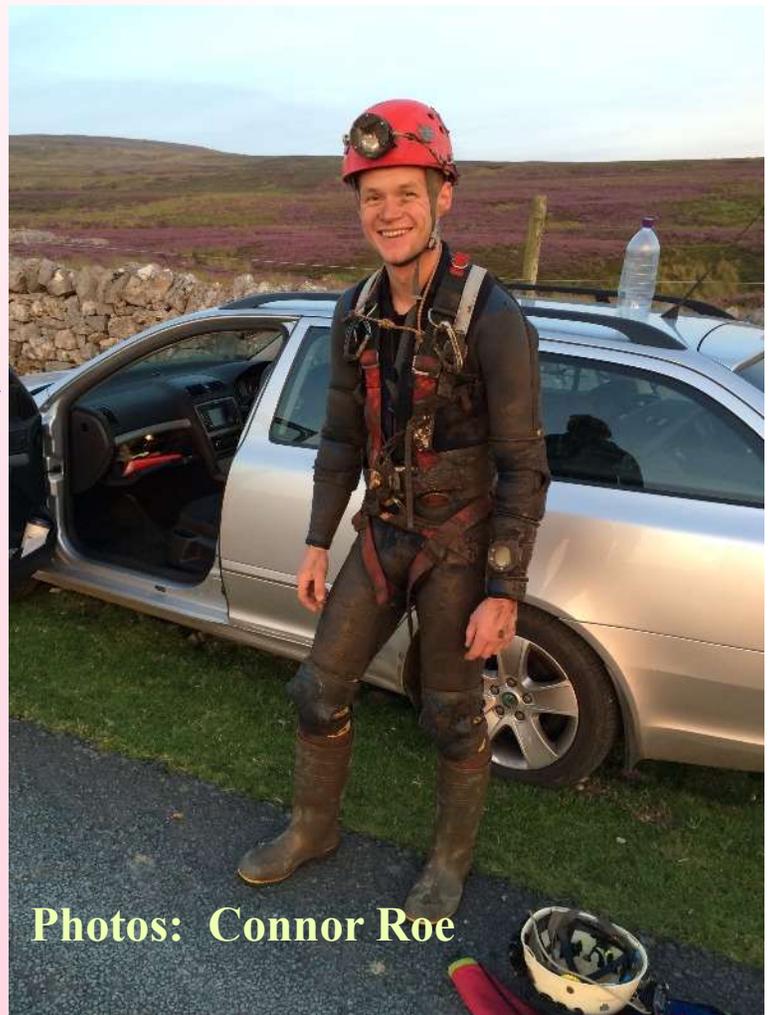
Having finally arrived at the first sump I decide to head off first, waving goodbye to Mike and Ellen as I entered. Sump I in Ireby is not a long one, but there is plenty of silt and its lays low enough to make a silt-out a pain. Once Josh and come through we headed off in search of Sump II. We only had little bits of information to aid us in our navigation, but we knew with a little work it all be ok. Having enjoyed the wonders of Ireby II, we found ourselves walking down the canals to the start of Sump II. I had chilled off quite badly in Sump I, so Josh head off first with myself following just a few minutes after. Sump II was gloomy and felt very oppressive, I never felt like the cave wanted me to be there. However, I was and was travelling through and a good speed (I had decided that fancy kicking could take a hike), though I did wonder at times if I had somehow managed to double back on myself. The sump looked the same everywhere, however I had to trust that I was travelling in the right direction. The lines in there are ok but not so great, with you finding 3 or 4 lines in places and having to try and keep them all under control. After a quick 10 minute dive, though it felt like longer we found ourselves in Notts Pot. Josh was in good spirits and

was as excited as I was to have made it with no issues, and plenty of spare gas. I was really feeling the cold by this point, so had to resort to doing a few press-ups and squash with my gear on to get my body ready for another 10-minute blast. Thanks to Notts being rigged all the way to the sumps, we were able to use our SRT gear to descend rather than climb down. Arriving at the static sump which leads the way on Josh and I had a quick chat before he headed off first again, both of us keen to see the delights that is Notts II. Back in the oppressive world that is the sumps of Notts and



Ireby, this one was a definite change from the last. The visibility was still terrible, but it was running along a bedding plane which made for a much more interesting dive. At last I broke surface, Josh mentioned that I had seem to take some time, having had to head back to sort a small gear issue having just entered the sump. With myself now shivering badly with cold it was time to get moving, we quickly removed our larger cylinders and stuffed them into our bags we had brought though. Once out of the canals, Notts II proved to be the treat that we had hoped. We could not get over what a discovery it was, how amazing it would be to have been the guys from the NPC who found it. We wandered down the amazing stream way looking for this 'left hand inlet' that we had to go on for finding our way out. We were hunting high and low long the stream way, not really too sure

what we were looking for! Deciding to drop the gear and just find the exit, after around a hundred metres away from the gear stash we found what we thought was the right way. Moving fast with the excitement, we hunted around and wound up in someone's dig, myself up to my neck in thick mud. 'This is not right' I shouted to Josh, we headed back to the stream feeling frustrated, but spotted the massive obvious passage that was clearly the way on. The plan was to get confirmation that this was the exit before going back for the kit. We climbed and we climbed, finally reaching the long scaffolding shaft, and up we climbed. Josh thought he could see the dwindling daylight above, but we wanted to be sure of it first; it would be a pain to climb all that with the gear for nothing. We found ourselves on the surface as the sun was setting, feeling both pleased but a little tired at the same time. Neither of us really wanted to head down and get the gear, but we wanted to finish the trip. We could have so easily just said, let's get it tomorrow. First things was to drop off our SRT gear at the car, grab a couple of pictures in the light and a drop off water. Heading back to the gear, took what felt like no time at all. The climb out felt like a lot longer, for some reason everything seem to catch on everything! Cylinders drop themselves into annoying gaps, fins were catching on all the scaffolding as you climbed up. Finally we were out, both still grinning ear to ear. **Connor**



Photos: Connor Roe



# ANDALUCIA, SEPTEMBER 2016



## 08 - 15 September 2016.

Participants: Chris Binding, Tomasz Kawka , Noel Cleave, John Hurst (all WCC), Russ Brooks, Lisa Gibson (both MCG), Miguel Tomes , (Alcatraz/Wormwood Scrubs CC).

The mob foregathered at Malaga airport on the evening of 08 September, an event that preceded the traditional cluster-cockup on these occasions. So Mr. Binding and Messrs Russell and Lisa left the airport airside and went in search of their rentacar.... only to discover that they should have remained in international waters, as it were, and had to re-emigrate against the flow (of passengers, customs and security...) to get their wheels. On the plus side, because they went into sob-story mode, they got a worthwhile upgrade standard of transport. Meanwhile Noel and his girlfriend (AKA Miss Satnav) got lost in Malaga's concrete jungle of new over- and under-passes before finally breaking free onto the open road, some 30 minutes after leaving the airport..... about half a mile behind them. Miss Satnav, now on a high, and roads she knew, seduced them into going to Ronda over the top of the Sierra del Neves. This road has been used for some years now as a dumping ground for Spain's surplus worn-out hairpin bends. So Noel, John and Tomasz arrived 1 hour and 4 beers after the others. Plainly some catching up was in order....

Our accommodation for the week was the Hostal del Navasillo. It was the perfect base for our holiday, which started properly on.....

## Friday September 9 2016 SIMA GESM

Thanks to Miggy and Manu we secured some keys, and documentation giving us the freedom to visit..... SIMA GESM !! Wow! What an opportunity, not to be missed. So around noon, just after breakfast, we set off.... Noel will continue this story. **Chris** ..... (Gee, thanks Chris.....)

.....A slow start, with multiple coffees and some \*\*\* hangovers in evidence and while Miggy departed to collect ropes and information. When he returned he had the ropes and the news that Sima GESM was rigged and we could do it. Well some of it, like not the whole minus thousand metres. So we drove up to the summit parking area and hiked into Sima GESM. Miggy guided us to the cave. Russ noted that the (delightful) walk-in was shorter this time. Later he also observed that the notorious entrance squeeze had also shrunk. Anyway it was a lovely walk over dramatic scenery and small karst sink hollows. The entrance has an evil reputation. Just below the short drop-in pitch is (a) where a goodly proportion of Andalucias midges come to socialise, and (b) a squeeze, an honest-to-God, Mendip tight squeeze. I left my harness on, but took off the metalwork and cows tails. With Chris guiding me, it was OK, but I was glad of the guidance. The next three pitches were OK, not brilliant or long, but

easy on and off. The intervening passages are rough and scrambly. A reasonably hostile and unfriendly place. At the top of the first big pitch (110 metres), Chris invited me to pose out on the drop-off traverse, but I declined, having no wish to drop the thing. Retrospectively I should have done a couple of the drops - it has multiple rebelay off ledges. John arrived behind me and I set off out. The cave was curiously empty. Where Russ, where Lisa, where Tomasz ?? Indeed WTF are they?? Actually just below the entrance squeeze where Russ was getting un-naked and re-equipped. He had had a minor epic up there, or down there from his viewpoint, but he was safely in. Safely out remained unanswered at this stage! I



Some of the teamies at Sima GESM

dekitted and chucked my kit ahead of me through the squeeze, which was far easier going out than in. Up past the midges and into the sunshine for a snooze with half an eye on the entrance rope. Eventually it quivered so I ambled down and found John at the bottom contemplating a rope-assisted climb because his kit was behind him in the squeeze and out of his reach. Wisdom prevailed. I went back to snooze alone until Chris arrived on his way out (bearing John's kit). Tomasz had gone to the bottom of the 110; Chris had done 3 sections and opined that the ropes were shot. In due course all the others arrived back on the surface and we changed and walked out in a glorious evening, with the Med and Gibraltar visible from the road down. **Noel**

After three attempts at passing the Sima GESM entrance squeeze I decided to dispense with my oversuit. A final move with airless lungs saw me through, to cries of "Superb" and "Surprise"! I won't lie. The prospect of returning through did figure in my thoughts throughout the rest of the trip. Also I knew that Chris would be ready and waiting with his CineCam ! The best bit of the trip was the large intake of midge protein. Maybe we won't need a plate of "Meat in Sauce" for supper? **Russ**

Saturday September 10 2016 **Sima Republicano** We only had 20 hangers but a lot of rope. So we just made the best of it - got as far as the 23 m pitch, just before the long

traverse. Much fun, hooting and hollering. Miggy de-rigged. Thank you. I think everyone had a good time. Excellent post-caving food at the Villaluenga café. **Chris**

Yay. Toto Fantastico. A late start (faffing until 1208) But Miggy got the gate keys and some sort of permission to take the cars to the cave. So we did. Hot as hell until well underground and still sweating and still sweating salt into the eyes. Chris rigging brilliantly and fast despite (a) being hyper-economical with the hangers and (b) putting up with ill-judged teasing about his rigging speed!! Republicano pitches are superb; lots of traverses, deviations and

rebelays. A lovely 'slope' pitch over potholes with polished, sculpted rock. Creamy coloured and slippery, but fun. John and Noel turned back after pitch 5 - musing that it was better to regret turning back early than turning back late. Part way up the third pitch, I heard a crash and curse from below. John had a minor "Moment" losing a deviation and dropping into a pothole. Wet but unharmed. Both out comfortably for a laze in the sun. Chris appeared 1 ½ hours after us. The others de-rigged and surfaced at 1900. Back at



Lisa in Sima Republicano. Photo: Tomasz

our Villaluenga café Miggy sorted out superb Tapas to go with our beers. As a perfect end to a glorious day we had a magnificent sunset driving home. **Noel**

A wonderful cave in a stunning setting - exactly what I imagined caving in Spain to be! Big open entrance and then a lovely playground of SRT, like snakes and ladders, or and Escher painting! Lots of good rebelays and deviations, wire traverses. **Lisa**

Sunday September 11 2016 Another hungover morning at the bottom of the Black Lagoon.... Noel, Miggy and I went to do some prospecting. Miggy keen to flaunt / show / display his nasty hole at us while we were in the middle of nowhere. Undaunted by such a prospect, we all too hastily agreed to such madness, the sun blasting on us like ants under a tight focussed magnifying glass. The sweat was genuinely pouring out of my suit cuffs; a constant trickle.... nay, a significant leak. Noel found a cave, instantly named Sima Noel - a quite restrained moment of modesty for such an egotist, we all agreed. Miggy and I descended into the 3 metre deep abyss, rapidly re-named Sima Phuquall; but Miguel's real dig is gobsmackingly impressive. In the evening Salva showed Russ, Miggy,



Serious rigging - Chris in Sima Republicano. Photo: Tomasz

Lisa and shafts and holes at the back of the Navasillo property - perhaps a bit of prospecting tomorrow? **Chris**

cars and adjourned for beers and tapas at the adjacent Cueva del Gato. **Noel**



Sima Republicano. Photo: Chris



Russ and Lisa. Top of Sima Cacao entrance shaft. Photo: Noel

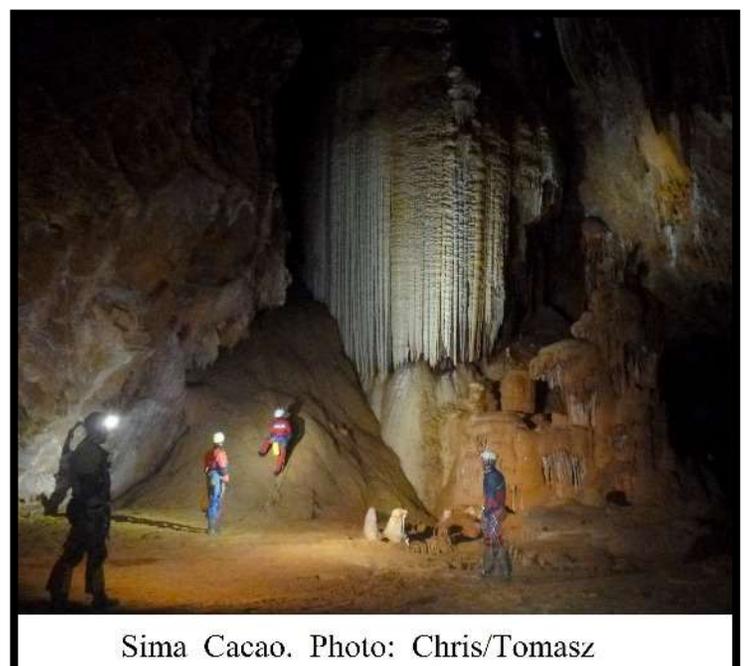
Monday September 12 2016 Hundidero - Gato  
Tomorrow I will be 77 (if I wake up alive). Now I am in my mid-90s, knackered \*\*\*\*. A fabulous trip, but for the last quarter I was motoring in neutral and by the end I was well out of it - the old problem of not pre-loading with carbs. My flotation ring ripped part way through, so I used the spare flotation, one of the "Surf boards" (which type I used 3 years ago on this trip). The ring is far better - you can look up and around and really enjoy the canals. I emerged wasted into daylight ahead of the others, and ran straight into a park warden, looking very official in a smart green uniform. He was highly suspicious and inquisitive. We collected the Hundidero

Monday September 12 2016 Hundidero - Gato  
An Epic. 6 ½ hours. Nightmares last night for many, courtesy of El Liqueur del Diablo which Salva gave us as a nightcap with an evil glint in his eyes. I think it was Absinthe.... Anyhoo, hardly any sleep is possibly not the ideal preparation for a small bimble trip such as this. There was some confusion at the start, with everyone royally confusing plans and directions, maddening Russ and Lisa, to result in them getting lost. They survived.... I think they said that they bumbled into Ray Mears and ate him. Handshakes began this trip proper and it went very well for the next 6 hours. **Chris**

Monday September 12 2016 Hundidero - Gato

After a little bit of a delayed start for Russ and I finding the cave (and the others!), I started to put my wetsuit on back-to-front (!). We commenced an epic of Spanish caving and indeed of world caving! This through-trip went by in a blur for me - apparently 6 hours it only seemed like 2 to me because the whole thing was so **GOBSMACKING!!!** The Grand Stalagmite was the dog's bollocks! Swimming, scrambling, everywhere so huge! **Lisa**

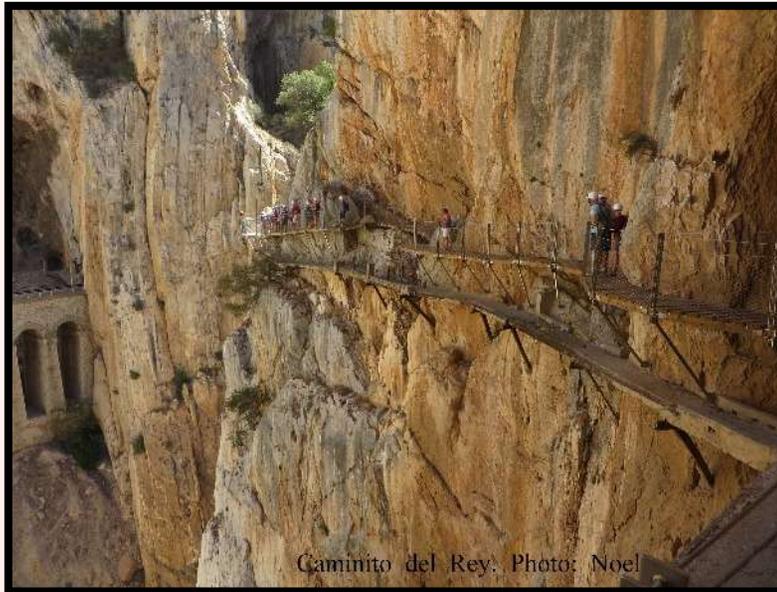
Tuesday September 13 2016 Touristing and recovery day.



Sima Cacao. Photo: Chris/Tomasz

Last night Salva showed the guys lots of 'olé s up the hill behind the building, then opened a bottle of pure ethanol moonshine. Call it what you will, it was clear, colourless neat alcohol straight from the still. Not sure of the Spanish work equivalent to Marc / Grappa / Poteen.... Orucca?? (But that might be the name of the

A wee walkie, walkie, a lush long pitch, in nice little stages, **beautiful** formations, an interesting pendulum manoeuvre, nice photo session, return trip (Squiffy cat!), views to die for on the way down, meeting Miggy's lovely lady, cake and (For now) our last night here. I love this holiday, all the caves, Spain and my lovely caving companions. **Lisa**



Caminito del Rey. Photo: Noel

corpse they distilled it from. Poor bastard). Woke in the night to find that Nava was in cloud. This morning found that some sadist had injected sand into all my joints and that I ached in places where I don't even have places. 0830 breakfast was lonely. Where is everyone?? Go into kit-cleaning mode. World cloudy. Where bodies? WTF is going on?? Andalucia is hot and sunny. Always. This is outrageous! **Chris arrives at 0840 Says that he doesn't ache.** (Lying so-and-so).

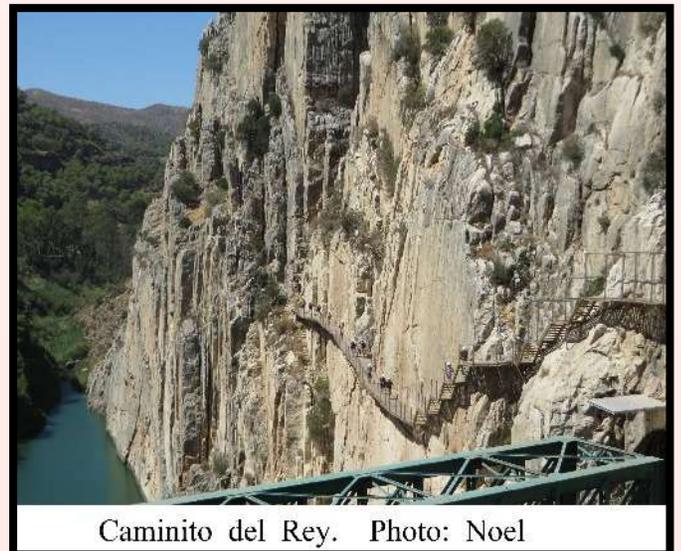
Our evening meal portions were gigantic plates of meat. By common consent the star dish was the wild boar stew with chestnuts. As a finale the guys had arranged a sort of birthday cake-of-cupcakes for me with a token gesture single candle. Then Salva hit us with another of his hyper-lethal local concoctions. Gee, thanks Man. I was recovering nicely until that hit me. **Noel**

#### Wednesday September 14 2016 **Sima Cacao**

Weather was fabulous in the morning, unlike yesterday. We had an almost full complement with Miggy taking a day out so that he could collect his lovely Rosa from the airport. We had breakfast at Villaluenga before the hard, long, arduous hike up the mountain. Sweaty! Cave rigging went AWOL as has become my new tradition, requiring some lateral thinking to resolve. Generally AOK and got some photos and film so all should be well. Safe, and mostly uneventful. Back down the mountain to meet the lovely Spaniard. Beer, cakes and coffees at Villaluenga before returning to Navasillo. **Chris**

#### Wednesday September 14 2016 **Sima Cacao**

Wednesday September 14 2016 For some reason a massive pre-cave faffing, but anyway I was still stiff from Hundidero.... old age and recovery times..... sod it. So decided not to plumb Cacao, but it was a marginal call and subsequently slightly redeemed my irresolution by persuading John to go down when he also wavered. Whatever, started late, made later by coffee pause at Villaluenga café before heading up the hill. I portered a ruc-sac full of kit and rope, but even with a load it's a lovely climb up. Can never remember which clump of trees hides the 'Olé. Watched Chris rigging - never palls - also using a new P hanger, despite Chris being scathing about the resin and mounting, then saw the mob descend, one by one. Slightly chilly when the sun was clouded. Hunted locally for hitherto undiscovered shafts....



Caminito del Rey. Photo: Noel

failed. The teamies started to surface almost 4 hours later. I'd guessed at between 2 ½ and 3. Distributed mini-Mars bars like Maundy money, and then we hiked down the hill. Met Miggy and Rosa at the café and had tapas and beer. ....**Noel**

Thursday September 15 2016 Sadly, our departure day, in various directions, but we made good use of it by visiting the astonishing Caminito del Rey. This used to be infamous as the Via Ferrata to end them all. It has now been reconstructed as a tourist trail. Touristy or not, it is seriously well worth doing, but it was great to have Miggy along to show us where they used to abseil into it in the past, and the more hair-raising bits that remain. **Noel**



# THE “ON-LINE” WORLD



**Mike Kousiounis** has done a huge amount of work on the Wessex Cave Club Online presence, which is at: [www.wessex-cave-club.org](http://www.wessex-cave-club.org) Mike is continuing to refine it, so this is an interim guide to the new and re-modelled elements.

- 1 The Members only area of the web site.
- 2 The Wessex Facebook Forum
- 3 The Wessex Email List.

## **1 The Members only area of the web site.**

The welcome page contains links to:

Journals,

Committee meeting minutes,

Membership list,

AGM Information

Committee Minutes

Forms & Permits

General Information:

Members Handbook

wcc-hut-rules-amended-oct-2012

wcc-email-contacts-sept-2012

wcc-child-protection-policy-11-9-2011

wcc-cave-leader-policy-oct-2013

wcc-ballot-procedure-v1

wcc-asbestos-register-and-management-plan-feb-2011

wcc\_online\_oct\_2013

rules-of-the-wessex-cave-club-2013-10-19

locker\_room\_layout

fire-safe-catalogue-15-8-2010

Membership List

Sales To Members

Shopping Discounts

Treasurer's Information

Online Newsletter - With the subscription/joining form.

## **2. The Wessex Forum**

Wessex Cave Club has an open group on Facebook. Any current member of the group can authorise a new member's application to join the group.

## **3. The Wessex Announcement List**

The Wessex Cave Club Webmaster maintains two Announcement lists. One is used to email details of upcoming caving trips. The other is used to disseminate general club information. You may unsubscribe to either or both if you do not wish to receive emails from the club. If you wish to use this facility you should send your email to the Webmaster who will distribute it for you. All current members were initially subscribed to both lists. New members should indicate their wishes on the revised membership application form.

**T**here is now an immensely informative and entertaining web-site:

“Darkness below UK” <http://darknessbelow.co.uk/about-us/> which proclaims itself to be your one stop site for caving, mining and other underground news and events. In practice it already is well worth visiting and plainly will become ever more valuable with time and contributions.

And another most interesting on-line resource is at <http://www.mcra.org.uk>. Maurice Hewins refers to it below, and mentions that Jonathan Williams has put a lot of work into this. Again, this is obviously an ongoing and developing resource, so if anyone has material which they think is worth adding, please would they contribute to it.



# Letters to the Editor



*Dear Noel,*

I expect you have found the new Film Archive Channel on MCRA. If you have but not yet subscribed yet, would you please do so. It won't cost you anything and we need 100 subscribers.

As a means of reaching all the members, but particularly the older ones, I have submitted the attached article and a couple of related photos for the next Journal.

Best Wishes

*Maurice*

## Wessex history on YouTube

Caving equipment and techniques seem to be improving at an increasing rate and nowhere is this more obvious than in making films underground. Now all you need to do is put a GoPro next to the Scurion on your helmet and you can have a tolerable shot at filming in a cave. This was not always so.

If you want to see how things used to be, just go to M.C.R.A. (Mendip Cave Registry Archive) on line and click onto films. With Jonathan Williams' expertise an increasing number of quite remarkable epics from the collection at Wells and Mendip Museum can be viewed in the comfort of your own home.

As an early dabbler in the subject I am constantly amazed at the efforts of Professor Tratman and his UBSS team caving with candles in Burrington in 1933. For lighting they used Tilly lamps. Tratman recruited Wessex members to strengthen his team in 1937, when he filmed in Lamb



Wessex on the gantry at Gaping Gill Bradford winch meet 1961

Leer. Wessex are also credited with assisting the Axbridge team, who filmed in G.B. in 1951. For this they ran a power cable in from a generator at the entrance. They had enough power to light the whole of main chamber. How many of you remember film speeds?

What were the Wessex doing in the 1960's? Well, now you can see the likes of Phil Davies, Tony Dingle, and Nick Hart in action. Relive the banter at the Hymac openings of 18 Acres and Honeymead Hole. Some of you who are still around looked so much younger then. On a more serious note you can see the pioneering work that John Hooper (Ali Moody's dad) did filming bats in Devon Caves. You can even see Ali's early caving prowess!



Terry Hall and Tim Reynolds testing cine lights at the Swildons 40ft in 1964. Photo by Tony Dingle.

Seriously though, the MCRA is a valuable source of all round caving information. Have a look for yourself. And please, please, subscribe to the new channel. (It doesn't

cost anything) If we can get 100 subscribers it will be a great help.

**Maurice Hewins** Tue 14/02/2017 23:47

From Paul Hadfield to Dave Walker

*Hella Dave,*

Just got the journal with the photo of me in it. (Ed: Journal 340, page 192)

If it was taken after you and Dianne left (28th March 1978) then there are a number of places it could be. However, I did not cave with the Spelio Orion after your departure. If you could pin down who or what group took the picture I could pin down the location accurately.

The candidates are :-

**Grotte De Bournois** : done with Spelio Club de La Universite de Louvain

**Aven de La Grotte de Rochasse** : done with Hans Klose and Hans Weber

**Figarolles** : with Christian Paulet

**Grotte du Sabart** : with Spelio Club du Haut Sabarthez, Didier Verdu, Jehovah Anglade, & Patrick Perez

I did a whole bunch of other stuff but it was either solo or in Germany with Franzyorg Kreig in places like the **Falkensteiner Hole** or the **Elsachbroller** which are generally long low and wet with no real vertical stuff involved.

Extract from my journal about part of the Elsachbroller :- "200m of unremitting misery"!

My money would be that the picture was taken in the **Ariege (Grotte du Sabart)** because I remember words being exchanged when the Sabarthez guys saw me put on my Gibbs rig.

"Zat will nevair werk eair"

"Look carefully mate 'cos all you'll see on the way out will be my boot heels - that's if you can keep up".

Come and visit sometime. I might be able to show you a hill or two we could climb (vertical relief from the house here to the tops is 8,500ft).

All the best.

*Paul*

## RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

### As at 17<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Bristol Exploration Club 'Belfry Bulletin' 61, 1 (560) Winter (Jan) 2017)

Derbyshire Caver 143 (Winter 2016/7)

Information Circular 2017/1 (Oct 2016 – Jan 2017)

Derbyshire caving Association. Minutes of meeting 22/10/16

Descent 254 (Feb/Mar 2017) (*Mendip's ice caves, J-Rat Awards*)

MNRC N/L 146 (Winter 2017)

~~~~~  
Death Sentence Boyd, D. (2016)

*A murder mystery featuring the Wessex Cave Club, Upper Pitts and Swildon's Hole.*

~~~~~  
Book Review: by **Phil Hendy**

**Death Sentence**, by Damien Boyd (2016) Thomas & Mercer [Seattle]

Skulduggery down Swildon's? Unpleasantness at Upper Pitts? Perish the thought!

It's not what we expect when we visit the HQ to go caving – and fortunately this is fiction, although the Club and Swildon's Hole are pivotal to the story. The tale begins in the dead of winter, when a dog walker discovers a corpse in a pillbox beside the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal. With hands tied behind his back, and a mysterious brown powder on his face, there is no obvious cause of death.

Enter DI Nick Dixon, based at Bridgwater Police Station. He must identify the body, establish how the man died – and then discover why. The hunt takes him to from West Wales to London, and Weymouth to Birmingham – with heroic (and not so heroic) deeds during the Falklands War central to the investigation.

This is author Damien Boyd's sixth Nick Dixon mystery, and he knows his Police procedure well – and the ins and outs of the legal profession. Nick himself is a qualified solicitor, which experience stands him in good stead as the plot gets more convoluted.

The caving scenes are gripping and realistic, as you would expect, since Boyd explored Swildon's himself, with the assistance of three Wessex members. Purists may rankle at the reinvention of some of the cave's features and the layout of Upper Pitts – but the atmosphere remains authentic, so it would be churlish to criticise.

From the outset, the story moves along at a rattling pace, though there is still time to visit Nick's home life, with partner Jane and dog Monty. There is a copy of the book in the Library – please do not hang on to it any longer than necessary if you borrow it, because I am sure many members will want to read it. As for the denouement – well, thank goodness for the car park light!

**Phil Hendy**

## MISSING LIBRARY BOOKS 2017

These books cannot be located in the Library at the moment, but some may simply have been misplaced. However If any of you have any of these items (not booked out) then please return them a.s.a.p.

### Librarian Number

00003	Book	Cave Diving Balcombe
00008	Book	Coldharbour Smith
00011	Book	The Complete Caving Manual Sparrow
00016	Book	Subterranean Climbers Chevalier
00021	Book	Travellers Survival Kit. (East) Clarke
00025	Book	The Blue Holes of the Bahamas Palmer C. Cohen 11/01/2009
00033	Book	Touring Guide to Britain Anon
00045	Book	Living Underground Kemp.
00058	Booklet	Welcome to Waitomo Caves New Zealand Anon.
00063	Book	An Introduction to Caving and Potholing for Novices Bryant
00067	Book	Gouffe Berger Expedition
00089	Book	L'Autre Padirac Philippe
00091	Booklet	Waitomo Caves Arrell
00174	Book	Geological Excursions around Bristol Savage
00175	Book	The Darkness Beckons Farr D. Upperton 31/12/2010
00187	Book	Beneath the Mountains. [Asturias] Rose
00200	Booklet	Appin Cave Guide Young
00202	Book	Explorando a Cuba 20 Anos Nomez
00220	Book	The Caves of Ireland Coleman
00229	Book	More Years under the Earth Casteret
00233	Book	Gaping Gill Beck
00249	Booklet	Habits and Movements of Cave Dwelling Bats Hooper
00274	Booklet	A Number of Guides to France Anon
00288	Booklet	White Scar Caves
00292	Book	Challenge Underground Bruce
00301	Book	The Descent of the Pierre St Martin Casteret
00361	Book	Men of the Pierre St Martin Attout
00400	Book	Mendip Underground Irwin
00451	Book	War Underground 1st World War Barrie
00470	Book	British Caving Cullingford
00494	Book	The History of Tunnelling Sandstrom
00499	Book	Caves and Caving Anon
00501	Book	Yorkshire Caves and Potholes. Mitchell
00502	Book	British Regional Geography. Welsh Borderlands Dunham
00504	Book	Bristol and Gloucester District Kellaway
00523	Book	An Intermediate Text Book of Geology Lapworth
00530	Book	Mendip Underground Irwin
00675	Book	Aspects of Karst Geomorphology etc.
00682	Booklet	Council of Southern Caving Clubs. Handbook & Access Guide
00689	Book	Views of the Caves Near Ingleton, Gordale Scar & Malham Cove Westall
00693	Book	Caves and Cave Life Chapman
00938	Book	Hand Book and Access Guide Irwin
00944	Book	Some Caves of Cyprus Jones
00958	Booklet	Caving Report: St Cuthbert Swallet Report Part A. No. 13 Irwin
00959	Booklet	St Cuthbert Swallet Report Part E. Rabbit Warren No. 13e Irwin
00964	Booklet	Caves of Cyprus BEC
01012	Book	The Story of Wookey Hole Thornycroft
01051	Booklet	Cave Preservation Davies
01093	Book	Most Splendid of Men Brown
01098	Book	British Caving Cullingford
01141	Book	Cave Men Sharp
01151	Book	The Lake Villages of Somerset Bulleid
01163	Book	L'or Des Gouffres Siffre
01171	Booklet	Horseshoe Bats Hooper
01173	Booklet	Prusiking

## DEVON MEET. 27 - 29 JANUARY 2017

Participants: Les & Wendy Williams (and the dog!), Jude VdeP, Rich Marlow, Noel Cleave, Simon Richardson, Cheryl Lindeman, Kevin & Charlotte Hilton, Gerik Roden, John Biffin, Nick Butler, Sam Storrar, Carmen Smith, - All WCC, Stuart Emmett (Viet Kernow), Chris ? (DSS)

Friday January 27 2017 Pridhamsleigh Cave Les, Chris, Stuart, Carmen, Jude, Noel, Rich, Gerik.

Smizzling and drizzling out, so basically changed at the DSS and drove over



Nick, Sam, Gerik, Les, Rich at the DSS. Photo: Noel

(which proved too snug for Les). While regrouping there, Kevin and Charlotte appeared having arrived just too late to leave the DSS with us. My last trip into Prid was 60 years ago, so about the only remaining memory was of the lake itself and an accurate impression that the place is

at... must have been about 1900 ish. Chuntered gently down to the lake for a long nattering and faff session. Prid as slippery and squalid as ever, but some water levels were low, and we came out via a canal route that would normally be a duck. This time it merely meant wet legs, to a nicely polished squeeze out of the water



Hyper-activity in the DSS. Photo: Noel



In Baker's Pit Cave. Photo: Gerik

a 3D maze of muddy tubes. Great fun, however, but not improved by emerging into proper Devon rain at 2045. That and Buckfastleigh being a parking nightmare! Noel

Saturday January 28 2017 Bakers Pit Les, Gerik, Nick, Sam, Noel, Rich.

A nice sunny day for the walk up the hill, enlivened by Les forgetting his knee pads and having to return for them, and Noel developing some worrying knee pains around a repaired joint.... so the Halt and

the Lamé arrived at Bakers Pit and, eventually, Les persuaded the key to work. We clambered down the Gentleman's Shaft, encouraged by a pleasantly warm updraught. We RV'd in the entrance chamber and wombled off. It's all a lot more civilised that Prid; also hyper-taped to preserve the pretties, and some of the tapes are now embedded in newly deposited pretty. Personally I decided to favour my knee rather than visit the further reaches of Bakers, so had 90 minutes of pleasant snooze, slightly disturbed after an hour by noises and lights as the explorers by-passed the entrance en-route to other caverns Measureless to Man. Nick and Sam returned a bit earlier than the rest, so we headed up the shaft into a hailstorm. Yeah, genuine, little frozen balls of ice rattling down the shaft and off our helmets! It was cold outside, so Nick and Sam departed to the DSS while I sheltered in the ruined church before greeting Les as he led the others up into the hail. We arrived back at the DSS at the same moment that Simon, Cheryl, Kevin, Charlotte, Biff and Jude arrived back from their walk (around Dartmeet). They'd enjoyed the hail/snow experience even more than we had! In the evening all 15 of us ate (very well) in the Abbey Inn. Les arranged the booking, and it was an excellent social evening, so "Thank You" Les for this, as well as the overall weekend's caving and walking. Noel

Our Illustrious Leader. Photo: Gerik



# Who are our Cave Leaders ?



As a cave leader for several caves on Mendip I am often surprised when people express opinions that it is hard or difficult to arrange trips to leader-based caves on Mendip. The information below is largely extracted from the public domain (Mendip Underground or the Internet). Many of these caves do not operate a “Club Leader” system, but members of the Wessex just happen to be leaders. If a booking system exists, it is always best to use the system rather than contact members directly. Don’t forget to buy your leader a pint or two after the trip!

## Mendip

### Fairy Quarry Caves (Shatter, Withyhill, W/L, Fernhill)

Leaders are not club-based so please contact The Fairy Cave Management Committee via Martin Grass Tel: 01934 742710

Email: [m.grass@btinternet.com](mailto:m.grass@btinternet.com)

Wessex Cave Club leaders include Jude Vanderplank, Jonathan Williams, Mark Helmore.

### Reservoir Hole

Contact: Martin Grass Tel: 01934 742710 Email: [m.grass@btinternet.com](mailto:m.grass@btinternet.com)

Wessex Cave Club leaders include Aubrey Newport, Pete Hann, Alison Moody, Jonathan Williams.

### St. Cuthbert’s Swallet

The Wessex Cave Club leader is Alison Moody. Mark Easterling (Bean) is becoming qualified.

### Charterhouse Cave

Wessex Cave Club leaders include Jude Vanderplank, Mark Helmore, Pete Hann, Alison Moody, Emma Gisborne (who is a guest leader for CCC and not just the Wessex).

### Warren Farm Swallet.

Contact Alison Moody

### Upper Flood Swallet.

Wessex Cave Club leaders include Jude Vanderplank, Rich Carey

### Tween Twins Hole

Please use the on-line booking system at [www.tweentwinshole.org.uk](http://www.tweentwinshole.org.uk) To request trips.

Leaders are Jonathan Williams, Barry Wilkinson, Pete Hann, Adrian Vanderplank.

### Pen Park Hole.

Wessex Cave Club leader is Dave Cooke (Cookie).

## Wales

### Dan-yr-Ogof

Wessex Cave Club leaders include Clive Westlake, Geoff Ballard, Jude Vanderplank.

### **Brian Hansford**

The Committee are delighted to offer Honorary Membership to Brian Hansford in recognition of his many years of service as a Trustee of the Wessex Cave Club Headquarters.

~~~~~  
**Paul Cooper** has most kindly donated his rigging set of Maillons and Petzl bolts and hangers, together with a considerable collection of publications.

~~~~~  
**Hidden Earth** for 2017 will be held here on Mendip at the Churchill Academy from Fri 29 Sept. to Sun 1 Oct.

The Wessex should have a stand there, but **we need volunteers** to organise the club’s participation and to man our stand.



# LOG-BOOK EXTRACTS



Saturday July 9 2016 **Brimble Pit** Pete Buckley, Ali Moody, John Cooper, Geoff Newton, Mike K.

A session spent clearing the 'sugar' from the last banging trip and also removing some of the slumping mud. This allowed safe access and to descend the open pot that we have been enlarging the top of for the last few trips. The vertical section of the pot is a 2m drop to a sloping floor. Work at this point regained the draught and, thankfully, dispersed a fair amount of the CO<sub>2</sub>. The way on is a narrow rift that appears to spiral downwards. More bang will be required. 2 1/4 hrs. **Ali**

Saturday July 9 2016 **Singing River Mine** Dave Walker, Derek Sanderson, Damon Fentham, Monica Bollani, Matt Wadler, Wayne Starsmore.

Really good trip, went to both West and East ends. No water in Stinking Gulf, and East Chamber dry - only a small puddle. Didn't get lost (much)! 2hrs. **Wayne**

Saturday July 9 2016 **Hillier - Fairy** Helen, Sam, Ali, Tim, Emma  
Good trip down Hilliers, struggled to find Red Room: we now know where to go next time! So went through Fairy and found link fairly easily. In Hilliers we found ourselves in the dig (instead of the link). The key is not to continue down when you get to a gravelly dig..... you've gone too far! Fairy - Hilliers is easier. **Anon**

Saturday July 9 2016 **Swildons** (Resurvey continued). Footleg, Paul Wilman, Thomas Starnes.

Having started drawing up the Wet Way and realising we needed the Wet obstacles on the same sketch, this was the main goal for the day, but avoiding getting wet first thing, we started in the Water Chamber. I wanted this on one sketch, as each trip previously we did it from the perspective of coming in one way or another, but never sketched all the detail in one drawing. Thom was our latest surveying trainee so he took on the drawing on the PDA. We covered the chamber and all the digs going off. That done, we headed up the Wet Way as stream level to cover the 3 wet obstacles. Water levels so low that we stayed dry through all of them, apart from Paul who claims that we made him lie in the water with our choice of some survey stations. Job done, Paul decided to head out, but Thom was up for some more, so the two of us headed for Oxbow Junction in the Upper Oxbow to survey the bits going off above there. Turned out to be quite a bit up there, getting more awkward the further we went. Completed one route, one still to do next time.

**Footleg**

Sunday July 10 2016 **18 Acre Swallet** Maurice, Murray, Jonathan Williams.

Interesting little cave and not as unstable as I was led to believe. Archive video of the 1991 Hymac excavation at the site in the cave cine archive at Wells Museum (as is a lot of the Mendip material).

**Maurice**

Monday July 11 2016 **Spider Hole** James Collings, John Cooper, NikNak,

42 loads hauled the bottom shaft and left at the bottom of 4 Ton Shaft. 1 bag of cement taken in and some old bags brought out. 2 1/4 hrs. **John**

Thursday July 14 2016 **Sludge Pit** Duncan Simey, Mike K  
Surveying in the Maze. 2 hrs. **Mike**

Friday July 15 2016 **Sludge Pit** Geoff Newton, Mike K, Duncan Simey, Monica Bollini

Digging in the Boulder Chamber Dig. Drier conditions today. The stream almost dried up. We can now see a few metres ahead. The passage continues as described for the week before, before it bends out of sight. We will have to take out a lot of spoil to get as far as we can see. Monica claimed to enjoy this, her first dig and she did well. **Geoff**

Saturday July 16 2016 **Mitchell's Dig** Barry Wilkinson, Pete Hann, Nigel Graham

Short session, BW and NG as mortar monitors for PH stabilising loose boulders. **Nigel**

Saturday July 16 2016 **Swildons** Ali Moody, Lee Venning, Pete Buckley

A quick look at a very interesting squiggle off the Muddy Oxbows. \*\* A little concerned at the start, when Ali commented "I don't remember this....." in particular "This" was a lovely muddy duck, full of very unsolid mud. We looked at the squiggle and then struggled out to the main passage for a confab. We foolishly decided to drill a hole or two, and lay a charge. Back through the muddy duck with kit (a couple of times) - it's now a little less of a duck (though still as muddy). A fantastic reverberating, oscillatory echo! Spent about 40 minutes in the Double Pots trying to get the mud off the inside of my oversuit. Another fun-filled hard-graft session! 3 hrs. **Pete**

\*\* This is an old "Moody Dig", enlarging a small passage that would, hopefully, by-pass the first Mud Sump. **Ali**

Saturday July 16 2016 **Sludge Pit** Mike K, Duncan Simey

Surveying from the Maze to Tributary Inlet. Inlet and Skeleton left to complete the survey. Bottom of one pot heads very close to Main Rift (streams turns North). 4hrs. **Mike**

Sunday July 17 2016 **Sludge Pit** Mike K, Duncan Simey.

Yay!!! The survey of Sludge Pit is now complete! It has taken many trips for myself, Andrew Atkinson, Mike K, Geoff Newton, and John Cooper. The results are being added into Cave Registry. Check it out and have a look.

Also, today we were doing the final piece of the jigsaw in Skeleton Series when Mike found a whole new passage heading out of the chamber at the start of Skeleton Passage. It is going to be interesting to see how much new passage has been added since the 1970 survey: best guesses are that there could be 800m or surveyed cave now. Watch this space !! **Duncan**

Saturday July 23 2016 **St Cuthberts Swallet** Ildiko Groditeki, Monica Bollini, Christian Balogh, Sylvia Auth, Lee Venning, Ali Moody.

Very pleasant tourist trip, taking in Curtain Chamber, the Fingers and Gour Hall. Quick look at Sump 1 - which was very low - then out via the Rabbit Warren, Railway Tunnel and **Haven**. **Ali**

Saturday July 23 2016 **Mitchell's Dig** Pete Hann, Nigel Graham, Barry Wilkinson.

Straightforward spoil hauling session, though slow and labourious for PH on his own at the bottom. Very little clutch though, almost all clean rocks. **Nigel**

Sunday July 24 2016 Sludge Pit Geoff Newton, Mike K, Duncan Simey.

Mike climbed the impressive aven at the junction of Skeleton Passage and Limlet Inlet. He confirmed that it pinches out to a 4" square hole. The top of the aven is excessively muddy and loose. Assistance given by GN and DS. Photos taken by DS. First recorded ascent?? **Geoff**

Thursday August 4 2016 "2016-08-04" The International Date Convention.....

Hallo from the USA! Amy, aka Cave Bunny as I am now called, back again! Yo'all can't keep me away. Came down to Mendip with Mr. **Ferret** and we just popped down shatter cave with Dr. Glanville, wonderful little cave, loved the red formations and the lovely ribboned curtain. I always love how crystal white your cave formations are here. We spent about 5 hours underground - guess that happens with 3 photographers on one trip, but we had a lovely time bimbbling about. Only here for one day, so that's only one doing this time. While GB is nice, I think that Shatter is my new favourite. I've been in 4 Mendip caves now. Shatter, TFD, GB and Swildons. That's my rank order. So..... off to Wales next. Until next time, stay awesome Wessex! Amy, Cave Bunny (Amy Hinkley)

Friday August 5 2016 Sludge Pit Geoff Newton, Monica Bollini, Wayne Starsbridge Mike K.

The bang of 30<sup>th</sup> July at the end of the mud tube had not taken out as much as we thought it might have done, but Mike was still able to progress a little further, and I got a good look ahead as well. The passage has turned into a steeply descending narrow rift, which is too tight at the present time. Various even tighter inlets come in at this point. The cave is still not giving up without a fight. Monica and Wayne came in half-way through the session, so we were able to get most of the spoil out to the stacking chamber. They also had a look at the gloopy pool as a "Reward"! **Geoff**

Saturday August 6 2016 LVS Pete Buckley, Ali Moody, Lee Venning, John Cooper

Took across the first two bits of conveyor belting. Needs holes drilling and cable ties to hold it in place. Large leech rescued from Tennis Ball Rift pool. 1 hr. **John**

Saturday August 6 2016 Brimble Pit Ali Moody, Pete Buckley. Quick trip to check CO<sub>2</sub> levels. Air quality not too bad and we managed to spend an hour hauling rocks out of the final pit. The air was quite fresh at the deepest point. **Ali**

Saturday August 6 2016 Goatchurch Matt Wadler, Sarah Wadler, Monica Bollini

Sarah's first trip. Made it all the way to the Drainpipe before a sense of humour failure! Got through it with plenty of "Cave Enjoyment" noise - and is even talking about going again! Good trip. **Monica**

Sunday August 7 2016 EuroSpeleo Jonathan Williams, Maurice & Judy Hewins, Walt (from the USA, EuroSpeleo delegate).

Pleasant 1 hour wamble in W/L Cave. Formations still in good order. Took some video on my new camera, using Jon's LED light. Nice to have a wide-angle zoom. **Maurice**

Tuesday August 9 2016 Rods Pot - Bath Swallet John Cooper, Damon & Liam Fentham

Very enjoyable through trip, in cave that Liam and I didn't even know that were there. We even got to do some SRT practice on the way out. **Damon**

Tuesday August 9 2016 Eastwater Damon & Liam Fentham

We decided to go out for an evening trip to the 13 Pots. By the time we round our way to the 35' pitch it was getting late, so we decided to head back. The Pots will have to wait for another day, but at least we are making progress with navigating our way around. **Damon**

Sunday August 14 2016 Lime Kiln John Cooper, Aubrey Newport. Whilst Aubrey drilled a hole at the end of the canal, John cleared spoil out at the foot of the ladder, so that Murray could drill and bang the drain hole this coming Wednesday. 1hr. **John**

Friday August 26 2016 Sludge Pit Geoff Newton, Mike K  
In the Back Passage dig. The streamway has levelled off now, and pinched in. We had hoped to dig out the floor and move forward, but, alas, the floor is pretty solid. Further progress would need to use several metres of banging and there is no room to stack the debris, so this dig is on the back burner now. A pity as we can hear water falling ahead and an echo, and there is a good deaught. Also dug a little in the Strike Chamber dig, which warned us off by a boulder falling from the roof. **Geoff**

Saturday August 27 2016 Eastwater Kevin Hilton, Mike K, Geoff Newton.

Down to Sump 1 in Southbank via the Technical Masterpiece. My thanks to Kev for his help and assistance to an old man. Nice to have done it, but I won't be going back again. If Mike wants to dig at the bottom he will have to recruit someone else! **Geoff**

Saturday September 3 2016 Mitchell's Dig Pete Hann, Nigel Graham, Barry Wilkinson, Ade VdP

3 large rocks at bottom of the rift capped with varying degrees of ease. 30 buckets of a mixture of mud, clatch and capped rock sent up. Interestingly there was a discussion between Pete and myself as to whether we are in bedrock or extremely large boulders (car + trailer size). At the end of the session, a gymnastic Mr. Hann was able to see round a corner to see a small hole going vertically down again. The plan at present is to bang and arch so that we can easily access the hole. Quite a lot of crinoids appearing in the rock at the bottom. **Ade**

Sunday September 4 2016 Fester Hole Maurice Hewins, Jonathan Williams, Craid (Plymouth Caving Club).

The trip that had to be done, but nearly wasn't when the lock gave trouble. Eventually opened with WD40. Then I slipped at the entrance to Radnar's Revenge and fell on Jon - a near miss. The all went like clockwork. I took some video with my new £13 Ebay floodlights and a few stills. Jonathan's second attempt at 3D pictures using the slide method. The cave was much drier than when we broke in in February. Noticed lots of nice mud formations, which will probably change when the wet weather comes. Made a better job of climbing the Stannah Stairlift on the way out, protected by Craig with a life-line. No need to go back! **Maurice**

Monday September 5 2016 Eastwater Mike K, Dave Ball (MCG)

Dark Cars and Sunglasses... found it! Tough climb to begin with, had to put my brave hat on, rigged a handline for Dave to join me at the top. Unfortunately only I got through the squeezes. Terminal point very dry. Note very echoey / draughty (there's more cave to be found here!). 2 hrs. **Mike**

*PS. When I arrived on Tuesday afternoon 06 September, the above party were still on the board - not overdue as they had put 2300 hrs on 06 as a call-out time! Need to put the day on, or get a calendar! **John Cooper.***

Saturday September 10 2016 Swildons John Cooper, Geoff Newton, Alan Kingshott, Monica Bollini, Matt Wadler, Ade Bennett, Damon Fentham.

Lovely "Second Saturday" down to Shatter Series. Air a bit feisty, but good. Pushed us all. Geoff and Ade got left bailing the sump, as die-hard cavers. We needed warmth, hot tea and cake. **Monica** Alan said I had to add a bit: Good trip, fresh air and totally underrated! The best bit was watching Alan climbing up a muddy slope and sliding straight back down again. Pity we didn't try the ducks, but next time we will be more equipped! **Damon** Geoff and Ade went through the gour duck but got lost afterwards. By then Geoff was feeling the lack of a wet-suit and time was running a bit short, so we retreated. **Geoff**

Friday September 16 2016 Attborough Swallet. Geoff Newton, Mike K

We were supposed to be drilling holes in the Sludge Pit, Mud Tube Dig, but Mike had mislaid his drill bits so we had a poke around Attborough. A first visit for us to this unusual, sporting and entertaining little cave. **Geoff**

Saturday September 17 2016 Mitchell's Dig John Cooper, Mike K, Geoff Newton, Barry Wilkinson, Jude VdP, Pete Hann (with a visit from Malc Foyle and Ade VdP)

40 loads of spoil hauled out before more spoil created. 2 ½ hours. **John**

Saturday September 24 2016 Mitchell's Dig John Cooper, Pete Hann, Mike K, Nigel Graham, Ade and Jude VdP.

50 loads of spoil hauled out, some rather heavy! No need to create any more today. 2 ½ hrs. **John**

Saturday September 24 2016 Longwood Swallet Jeremy Rawlings, Andy Morse.

Easy trip down - but gravity helps! Explored both directions along stream bed. Water low but still got quite wet. Now for the climb out, lots of elbow and knee work required - hard work for novices! Couple of very tight squeezes, then the vertical bit to the entrance. Fun trip, but hard work. **Jeremy**

Sunday September 25 2016 Bath Swallet - Rod's Pot Jeremy Rawlings, Andy Morse.

Our first attempt at the through trip. Rigged in Bath and visited the Great Wall of Bath. Then on out. No rope at Purple Pot but managed to get up using Cow's Tails and Foot Loops on hand-line. Out of Rod's Pot after a bit of route-finding. 1 ½ hrs. **Andy**

Sunday September 25 2016 Reservoir Hole Mike K, James Collings, Nick Chipchase.

A look at Golgotha, Herbert's Attic, Jill's Slither and Andrew's Dig. If you've never been to Golgotha, but have been to the Frozen Deep, then you really should arrange another trip! **Mike**

Friday September 30 2016 Attborough Swallet Geoff Newton.

Looked at a couple of potential dig sites, all looking difficult and long-term. Will be sticking to Sludge Pit for the time being. Looked at the entrance to His Lordship's Hole, but it needed a pair of pliers to get in, which I didn't have at the time, so I saved it for another day. **Geoff**

Mid - August France Derek Sanderson, Terry Waller

**Grotte de Garnie** 1 ½ hrs. Warm-up trip. Said Bonjour to the bats.

**Perte de la Creuze** 2 ¼ hrs To start of the Maze. Excellent formations. Water levels very low. Lots of last year's vegetation in the roof.

**Event de Baut de Pucelle** 2hr. 50 took in three ladders, reached the Cascade des Nymphés

**Event de Mirandol** 3 ¼ hrs. Stupidly wre one ladder short of reaching the streamway. Excellent pitches.

**Event de Baut de Pucelle** With son Andrew to Cascade des Nymphés. 2 hrs. Quicker this time as the French had rigged everything.

**Grotte de Garnie** 1 ½ hrs. Same as before. **All Derek.**

Saturday October 1 2016 LVS Ali Moody, John Cooper, Pete Buckley.

Drilled one hole going forward - the one that will allow us to see clearly all the caverns measureless to man that await us..... Ali, 9 holes charged and set-off. Unsurprisingly it was loud! Heavy rain on the walk back cleaned the kit off. **Pete**

Sunday October 2 2016 Sludge Pit Geoff Newton, Mike K.

Mike digging in the the first pot dig (of Four Pots Rift ), Pulled all the mud out of the rift which ended up about 7ft tall, 15 cms wide approx. Unfortunately it didn't widen much as I dug lower, so I gave up. Geoff hammering the rift at the bottom of the second pot (handline useful to get down the climb); the corner is now wide enough to be able to drill some large bulges in the rift. Other than the said bulges the rift is 20cms wide and easily passable after some extra persuasion to remove the bulges. **Mike**

Monday October 3 2016 Spider Hole Ade & Jude VdP, John Cooper, Mike K, James Collings, NikNak

50 Buckets hauled in good time. Having not been for a few months (I think!) the first ladder pitch came as a bit of a surprise. I was not expecting it to be as deep. More solid looking at the dig face, nicely waterworn in parts. **Mike**

Thursday October 6 2016 Sludge Pit Mike K, Nick Butler, James Collings, Mike Butcher.

Boulder Chamber dig, pulled roughly 25 loads up to the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Pot. Very gloopy, turned rough pretty quickly, hard to figure out what's going on. Some more solo/dual trips needed to cut drainage channels out of the rock, and perhaps move some boulders to make access to the dig face more comfortable. Also need to take a light, strong, pole to poke into the puddle as it just seems to keep on going down. **Mike**

Friday October 7 2016 Sludge Pit Mike K, Nick Butler

Climbing the rest of "Shaven Aven", and got into a chamber at the top: "A Close Shave". The climb has 3 bolts and a very decent natural belay at the top, but it is still a decent grade climb and a slip would mean a direct fall. "A Close Shave" looks to have been travelled before but above this, and through a squeeze a really attractive chamber continues upwards. Then a downwards trending passage heading off the fault line is passable, bar a stalled boulder (needs a bar). A traverse across at high level finds a second chamber, which does not show so much promise. Estimate 30+ metres of extra passage and a height gain from the stream of 23metres. **Mike**

Saturday October 8 2016 Mitchell's Dig John Cooper, Nigel Graham, Pete Hann, Ade VdP, Barry Wilkinson.

15 loads of spoil hauled out, then 2 loads of cement put in. 2 hrs. **John**

Saturday October 8 2016 Sludge Pit Ali Moody, Mike K

Trip to bang the bottom of the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Pot in Four Pots Rift. Took the corner off, which should allow Mike and Geoff to make further progress. Then to the Mud Tube, off Strike Chamber to achieve some further enlargement. **Ali**

Saturday October 8 2016 Fairy Quarry. "2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday Trip". Jude VdP, Derek, Laura, Liam, Damon.

Although not physically demanding caves they were well worth a visit due to the fantastic formations. Shame none of us took a decent camera with us. It was a very enjoyable day out for all present. **Damon Fentham**

Saturday October 8 2016 Charterhouse Mike Butcher, Alish (YS), Nick Butler.

Down to the sump, which had no airspace. Started the siphon, but after about 20 minutes the water level had hardly dropped at all, so we made our way back out of the cave. **Nick**

Monday October 10 2016 Spider Hole John Cooper, Jude VdP, James Collings, Mike Butcher, Tony Seddon, Nick Butler.

1<sup>st</sup>. Visit to Spider for Nick. Hauled 44 loads of spoil up for 2 hours. John reported very dry conditions at the dig face. James de-rigged to allow cleaning and inspection of the ropes. 2 hrs.

**Jude**

Wednesday October 12 2016 Snake Pit Hole Nick Butler, Mike K

PS Padlock seized on adjacent 5 Buddles Sink. Padlock OK on adjacent Stocks House Shaft. **Nick**

Wednesday October 12 2016 Compton Ochre Mine Nick Butler, Mike K

Right around the mine, 45 - 60 minutes. Entrance gate broken, allowing easy access without key. **Nick**

Thursday October 13 2016 Sandford Levy, King Mine Nick Butler

Walked around Sandford Levy and did not attempt to climb up from the crossroads, although plan to return with company. King Mine has an easily free-climbed entrance shaft and the use of a ladder is awkward. Had a poke around some of the mine. **Nick**

Friday October 14 2016 Sandford Levy, King Mine Nick Butler, Sam Storrar

Quick trip to King Mine to see the crystals and ochre. Then a climb back, which Nick rigged with a lifeline for me. Then a nice easy trip to Sandford. Walked to the end and back. **Sam**

Friday October 14 2016 Sludge Pit Mike K, Geoff Newton, Sam Storrar, Nick Butler

Clearing out bang spoil from the Mud Tube, good load taken out. You can now see the continuation of the passage (head-first) without any commitment at all. Also clearing spoil from 4Pots dig, managed to squeeze, head-first to the next corner; continuing passage to the right, fossil, but very zig-zaggy, need to water trace. **Mike**

Saturday October 15 2016 (1<sup>st</sup> trip) Brimble Pit Ali Moody, Pete Buckley, Geoff Newton, Lee Venning.

A double charge put into the start of the rift leading off from the terminal pot. **Ali**

Saturday October 15 2016 (2<sup>nd</sup> trip) LVS Team as above.

A good clearance session at the end of Triassic Tunnel with the spoil stashed on bridge until it can be moved to the surface. **Ali**

Sunday October 16 2016 Swildons Noel Cleave

Post Annual Dinner, needed to burn off some alcohol calories. Underground at 0835 and had the cave to myself. Some kind person had left the 20 rigged. Very little water, so an aged

gentleman's trip! Lots of airspace in sump. Met Aidan and Mark at the entrance, then Francois just setting out from Upper Pitts on his way to Swildons. Down the Short Dry, up the Wet. 1 hr. 20. Getting old and slow. **Noel**

Sunday October 16 2016 Sludge Pit Mike K, Wayne Starsmore  
Thanks Wayne for helping belay me up the aven in Main Rift after WCC dinner the previous evening. Dug as much loose out as possible. Can see a chamber but to get to it you'd have to take spoil back to the aven and then drop it down the Main Rift. Not an easy dig, unfortunately. **Mike**

Tuesday October 18 2016 Sludge Pit Mike K, solo

Drilled 8 holes in the Mud Tube, dug a channel in the Boulder Chamber to drain away standing water, did a good job - the water seems to be draining away in the distance for a good while. Lots of spoil to clear. **Mike**

Monday October 17 2016 Spider Hole John Cooper, Ade VdP, Mike K, NikNak

2 mixes of cement prepared for Adrian to use on top of the wall. NikNak rigged the now clean SRT rope. John and Mike hauled a few rocks out from the bottom and then, when joined by NikNak, cleared all the spoil that had been created. Now it's at the bottom of 4 Ton Shaft. 2 hrs. **John**

Friday October 21 2016 His Lordship's Hole Geoff Newton, Mike K

First visit to this interesting little cave. Started a trial dig in a side passage, which looks interesting. **Geoff**

Saturday October 22 2016 LVS John Cooper, Mike K, Ali Moody, Lee Venning, Geoff Newton

Hauled 60 loads out before 4 holes drilled and more spoil created. 4 ½ hrs. **John**

Monday October 24 2016 Spider Hole James Collings, John Cooper, Ade & Jude VdP.

25 loads removed from bottom to bottom of 4 Ton Shaft. 1 ½ hrs. **John**

Friday October 28 2016 East Twin Swallet then **Eastwater** Aaron Varley, Jim Burrige

East Twin / Spar Pot. A massive load of digging equipment! Eastwater - Aaron's first trip down Eastwater. Very sharp! **Aaron**

Saturday October 29 2016 LVS Ali Moody, Geoff Newton, Mike K, Pete Buckley, John Cooper, Lee Venning.

Installed the conveyor belting brought here last week. Then cleared 23 loads, drill and bang. **Geoff**

Saturday October 29 2016 Hunters Hole Bean, Jo, Jacob

2 routes rigged - right-hand route and Sago's Pot... up and down a bit, then up and down a bit more! Really enjoyed by all. **Jo**

Friday November 11 2016 His Lordship's Hole Mike K, Wayne Starsmore

Continued digging the "Inlet" just beyond the Gentleman's Urinal, on the right. Opened up an easier passage to access the dig site, so we can now haul spoil through this. Mainly making the dig face more comfortable on this trip. Not the best air today, but slightly better than on my previous visit. 2 ½ hrs. **Mike**



# LAST MINUTE NEWS

**We Welcome the following new members:**

**And welcome back returning members:**

Steve Sharp  
Lara Strainer  
Iona May Rowe  
Paul Carruthers  
Anton Mark Petho

Paul Wakeling  
Raymond Heathcote (Hector)  
Carmen Smith

## **A NEW RECIPROCAL CLUB ARRANGEMENT**

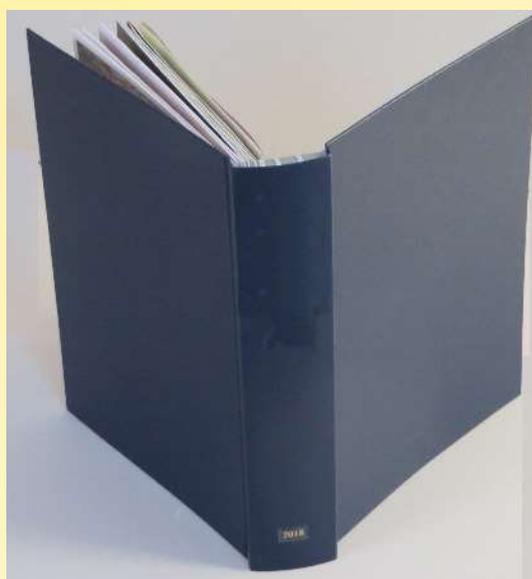
Anyone going to visit the Lancaster / Easegill system, can base at Bull Pot Farm because we now have a "Reciprocal Club" agreement with the RRCPC, so our members can stay there for the same fees as those for the RRCPC Members. Up to 5 WCC members can visit without prior booking though ensuring availability before travelling is sensible when possible.

Access will be allowed to the RRCPC "membership only" areas when available space allows. There is no access to the RRCPC Tackle or Library. Only bona fide Wessex Cave Club members are included in the agreement. We will also exchange our Journals or Newsletters with them.

**(A full list of all our "Reciprocal Clubs", and details, will be published in Journal 342)**

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*Back Cover Photo. Sell Gill Hole*

*Photo: Clive Westlake*

