

THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

VOLUME 21 (NUMBER 228) MAY 1991

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Next Issue:

**Norway 1990
Geevor Tin Mine**

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**Opinions expressed in the Journal are not necessarily those of the Editor
or of the Wessex Cave Club as a whole unless expressly stated as being so.**

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Officers and Committee of the Wessex Cave Club. 1991

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Club Notes

Apologies to Bob Scammell and Colin Shapter whose names appeared incorrectly on the unpaid members list in the last Journal.

New Members

The Wessex would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

Patricia Anders, 4 Kimberley Road, Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 5AE. 0272 566062

Paul Labourne, 27 Flodden Drive, Calcot, Reading, Berks, RG3 7EH, 0734 411249

Christopher Trueman, 4 Orchard Close, Charfield, Wotton Under Edge, GL12 8TJ.

Derek Hickey, 34 Holmes Hill Road, St. George, Bristol, 0272 518592

David Pegler, 108 Merlin Way, Chipping Sodbury, Bristol, Avon, BS17 6XT, 0454 324064

Peter Haigh, The Clock House, East Harptree, Bristol, BS18 6BD, 0761 221289

Change of Address

Nick Williams, 1 Carrington Road, Chorley, Lancs., PR7 2HD, 0257 270616

Mark Madden, 47 Crossway, Harpenden, Hertfordshire

Phil Hendy, Ashbourne House, Weston Town, Evercreech, Somerset, BA4 6PD, 0749 830802

Andy Summerskill, 16 Warren Close, Sandhurst, Camberley, Surrey, GU17 8EL, 0252 875453

In Committee

Upper Pitts progress: Steve Deacon has done a considerable amount of work on the electrics, including fitting new circuit breakers, and a new light and fans in the showers. He has also wired up the new time switch for the central heating. This is mounted on the meter board in the hut hallway, and from here it is possible to turn the heating on for one hour during periods when the heating is normally off.

Damp control in the changing room has been one of the major priorities recently. Steam boards and fans fitted over the showers have helped the situation considerably, and the recent acquisition of a de-humidifier should aid matters *[so long as my employer doesn't ask for it back too soon - Ed]*. The next step will be the removal of the heating pipes from beneath the drying rack, which will not only help to reduce heating costs but will also allow the removal of standing water from the changing room more easily.

Further measures planned to reduce the cost of heating the hut include the installation of thermostats and the boxing off of the upstairs dormitory stairs (when funds allow).

A new telephone has been purchased to help reduce the rental costs and help control the losses which the high rental on the British Telecom 'phone incurs.

The BEC have promised to come round and paint over the slogans which they painted on the kitchen cupboards recently.

Caving Notes

The wet weather between Christmas and Easter has resulted in further extensions in **Drunkards's Hole** which now has two more avens and an (upwards) pitch. About 20m has been added to the overall length of the cave after the mud and debris blocked aven in the chamber beyond the traverse collapsed. Meanwhile, work downwards continues steadily below the traverse (see From the Log).

The indications from **Swildon's**, however, are that water levels on Mendip have not yet recovered from last year's drought. Jim Rands reported that there were about three inches of airspace at Sump one on the 21 April. Is this yet another consequence of global warming that no-one had thought of?

Dave Morrison's attempts to find cave with the aid of a JCB seem to be paying off - over three weekends in April he extended the technique which has been used to successfully recover caves blocked by depression filling on Mendip to the discovery of a completely new cave in a depression which had never previously been dug. About 30 cubic metres of spoil were removed, and approximately 50 metres of passage found. The entrance has now been back filled to form a shaft, and digging in the cave, christened "Hymac Hole", continues. Rumours that this is simply a dry run for an attempt to enlarge the entrance of Drunkards to realistic proportions are completely without foundation.

Volunteers are sought for an additional club leader to **Charterhouse Cave** since Nigel Graham has decided to step down.

WESSEX	1 June, Priddy Village Hall	CHALLENGE
	Teams supporters and chariot pushers/pullers/carriers needed	
	Contact Nick Williams or Roz Fielder or Duncan Frew	
	Theme - Star Trek	
	Organised by the Axbridge Caving Group	
	Wessex pyrotechnics by <i>Gadget</i>	

From The Log

29 December 1990

Pete and Alison, Candy's Calamity, Swildon's; "A collector's item this bit of passage, body sized scalloped tube very similar to Swynne Puke. Spent a couple of hours digging at the end choke - tacky mud over rotten stal. Way on isn't exactly large. Found a working Bob Lewis type hand torch."

1 January 1991

Pete and Alison, Paradise Regained; "Went to investigate Sidcot dig again but water level was up a good bit nothing inspired."

Alison & Mark Sims and Ivan (SMCC) - Warren Farm; "Rocking boulder no longer rocks due to Mark giving a demonstration to Ivan - Ivan also very nearly lost a leg."

3 January

Nigel, Cloaca Maxima series; "...a stop at Upper Pitts would not be the same without a blocked bog to unblock...."

6 January

Mark and Max, Drunkard's; "Trip to put a bolt in the top of the new bit Noticed that a small blocked area to the right of the archway has cleared itself to reveal a very narrow rift with a small amount of water running down it."

13 January

Mark & 3 visitors, Charterhouse; "...the cave was nice and wet (especially for the two who couldn't do their wetsuits up. On returning to the car found the window smashed - the thieves are back."

18 January

Struan and HMS Seahawk; Hut rescue; "The boss....fell out of bed while trying to remove another of the group from the bottom bunk. Result - a broken collar bone."

20 January

Pete and Alison, Bos & Pierre's; "Bos

Swallet is blocked by a boulder which has fallen down the entrance and wedged in the top of the chimney..."

27 January

Rich Websell, Rob Harper, Dan-Yr-Ogof; "Fatty bumble trip to rising and back via lower series. Many obscure side passages en route."

Russel Carter; "First visit for a year, hut full of gnomes."

Mark, Jim, Aiden, Fester hole; "...a new entrance - that makes four in a cave 70' long."

Alison, Bob Elliot, Colin Blake, St Cuthberts; "dams were overflowing when we reached the cave so asked the BEC party who were just exiting to release them after us and then put them back at 3.00pm. Unfortunately they were late and we were early, so a wet trip back up the entrance rift with the pleasure of seeing the water reduced to a drip as we got to the top. Colin decided he enjoyed the rift so much he dropped the ladder (now coiled) to the bottom."

30 January

The Wednesday Nighters, Drunkard's; "various diggings - downwards, upwards and sideways. 3 ladders now!"

3 February

Oxford University plus Pete and Alison, Dallimores; "shown the delights of the new extensions by the Oxford. The crux squeeze is quite intimidating and technical, however it is not too bad if you know how to tackle it. There is another squeeze which is much tighter but this time is quite straightforward.. the new passage is very respectable. Currently they are stopped by a choke where the rift narrows out, the dig is most awkward to work but looks certain to go."

19 February

Pete and Alison, Pierre's; "Checked the nasty loose boulder rift at the breakthrough into the streamway - no go."

23 February

Aubrey etc, Fester; "If we have to rely on Fester Hole to win us the digging barrel we will die of thirst."

HPC, Marion, Mark + gizzard, Longwood; "The earth moved many times, not sure who for! (every time Maras fell over?)"

Steve & Colin Waite, Swildon's; "Started on short trip but mudsump was sumped. Spent hour building up dam 8" higher, water wouldn't drain and dam looked dodgy so bumbled out via long dry way."

3 March

Eddie & Dominic, Eastwater West End; "top of Gladman shaft and out."

10 March

Knockhundred Caving Morris, Eastwater "Went there, looked, banged head, went back to Wessex."

13 March

Mark, Aubrey, Pete H., Drunkard's; "Just a few words to let you know we are still putting cement in the boulders."

16/17 March Golden Oldie's Weekend

"Re-Union Club weekend, with capacity crowd in the Hunter's Odeon.... all in all a very enjoyable and successful weekend."

18 March

Mark, Zippy, J-Rat, Wigmore's; "Cleared boulders from end, followed by a bang. Went in White Man, came out Red Indian."

22 March

"The scruffy lot who, in the past stopped at the WCC, seemed to have left and a new clean tidy squeaky clean lot have moved in."

23 March

"Tuska's Tours: Geevor Mine (Cornwall)." *[Articles in next Journal.]*

28 March

Dominic, Wayne, Eddy, Darren Cilau "to Terminal Sump and World's end, 14 hours."

29 March

Nick, Jim, Mark, Murray, Mud Sump; "½ kilo of Dr Nobel's magic linctus applied to drain hole, retired and went to Hunter's."

Dominic, Wayne, Eddy, Dan-Yr- Ogof "attempts to pass beyond show cave foiled by copious wire mesh chokes!"

30 March

Jim, Ian Timney, Mud Sump; "3 hours clearing spoil and watching water gurgling down the drain hole."

31 March

Murray, Lycopodium Hole; "15 this time, but kit didn't allow me to pass a restriction. Good vis...shall return with a smaller cylinder."

6 April

Hymac Hole; "yet again the digging consortium turn a lovely grassy field upside down."

13 April

Jim, Paul Weston, Brian Pitman, John Doyle, Hymac Hole; "3 hours digging in the newest cave on Mendip, going down dip, water worn limestone roof, floor is loose fill, looks a go-er."

21 April

Twin T's, Practice Rescue, Aubrey, Tav, Nick, Leg, Jim, Nigel, Pete Lacy, Pete Hann, Pete Haigh, Tony Jay, Steve Butler, Mathew Hart, Samira Abbas, Julia Waxman (victim). "Easy but slow due to large numbers of people - 34 minutes to haul four pitches and onto surface. No moans."

Club Diary 1991

1 June	Wessex Challenge	See notice above
2 June	Committee meeting	
8 June	Yorkshire booking	Gingling Hole
9 June		County Pot
15/16 June	Devon weekend	Visit Devon's main caves. Digging and diving too!
22/23 June	Wales Weekend	Details to follow
22 June	Yorkshire booking	Ireby Fell Cavern
23 June		Marble Steps Pot
6/7 July	Portland Trip	Seaside and caving
6 July	Yorkshire booking	Little Hull Pot
7 July		Hammer Pot
14 July	Committee meeting	
27 July to August 18	French Trip	Caving and walking in the Dordogne. Contact Duncan Frew for further details.
31 August/ 1 September	North Wales weekend	Walking, but caving can be arranged!
1 September	Committee meeting	
7 September	Yorkshire booking	Birks Fell
15/16 September	Derbyshire weekend	
29 September	Committee meeting	
5 October	Yorkshire booking	Dale Head Pot
19 October	AGM and Annual Dinner	
2 November	Yorkshire booking	Juniper Gulf
3 November		Gaping Gill Main Shaft
30 November	Yorkshire booking	Rumbling Hole
1 December		Hurnel Moss Pot
29 December	Yorkshire booking	Lancaster Hole
30 December		Lost Johns Cavern
31 December		Notts Pot.

Please contact Keith Sanderson (address at front of the Journal) if you wish to attend any of the Yorkshire bookings.

All trips will include novice instruction if requested - contact the Caving Secretary or another member of the Committee

If you have any ideas for a Club activity, contact the Committee for help with organising and publicising it.

DEVON WEEKEND

Accommodation: camping or
Hut near Buckfastleigh

Caving: caves near
Buckfastleigh or digging at
Kingsteignton

Contact Aiden Williams
0761 412896

Contact Nick Williams
0257 270616

15-16 June

CAVING IN WALES

22 - 23 June

Accommodation at the WSG Hut, Penderyn

Agen Allwydd Permit applied for

Contact Andy Summerskill (0252 875453) for further details

Gunong Api Connection

*In the last **Journal**, Ric Halliwell described how he and the six other members of the Expedition had arrived in Mulu and set up camp in the jungle. In the concluding part of the article he takes up the story after a night in the camp, situated beneath the fifth tallest tree in the world*

Ric Halliwell

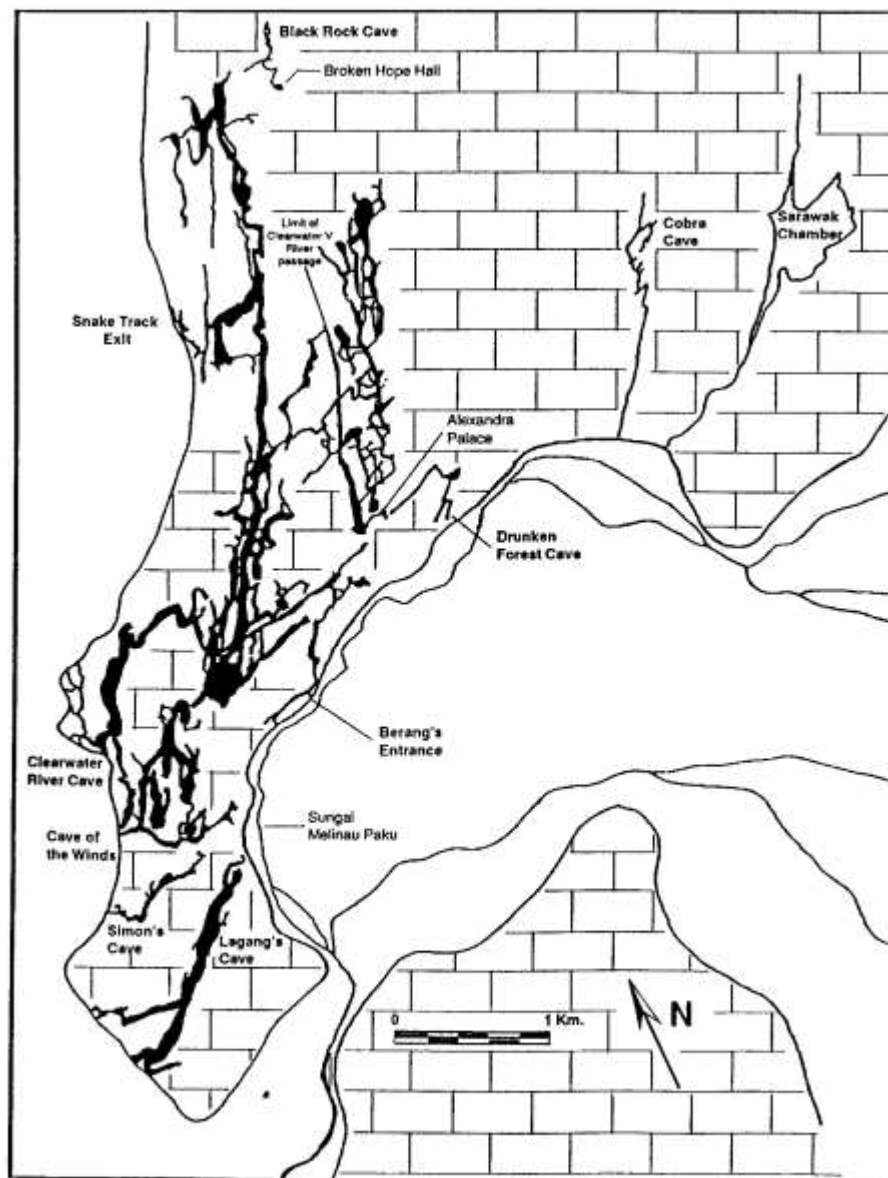
The next day Paris, Paul and Steph went off to prospect Snail Cave which we had great hopes could be pushed through a tight bit into the large passages seen beyond. The rest of us went into Clearwater and after marvelling at the streamway, with some difficulty we found the climb up into Realm of the Yeti and the way into the higher levels. In some of the larger passages Simon was navigating by survey and compass, a novel experience for all of us and another indicator of the sheer size of the place. Eventually we reached the Scumring campsite and dumped the camp cooking equipment. Alan, Tony and Simon went off to try and rig the two shafts, Ronnie's Delight (100m) and Deep Thought (undescended but believed to be about 100m). It was hoped that these shafts would provide a route into the top end of Clearwater V close to the limit of exploration whilst avoiding a kilometre swim. However the large amount of loose rock on the shafts persuaded them that it would not be safe to rig this way as a major route into the cave, we would have to go the long way round. Whilst this was going on Becky, Nick, Wilson and I were busy exploring various ramps which looked very promising on the survey but all of which only seemed to go short distances before closing down. Thus it was a tired and slightly depressed group who arrived back at the jungle camp to be met by the news that Snail Cave had clapped out.

The following day we agreed that the only easy way into Clearwater V would be via Drunken Forest Cave which the survey suggested was only separated by a few metres. The problem was that everywhere in Clearwater draughted whilst all the reports of Drunken Forest said there was no draught. It was agreed that Alan, Becky, Paris, Simon and I would go into Clearwater Cave whilst the rest would go into Drunken Forest. We would then blow whistles from each side between 3 and 5 pm in an attempt to find the link. The rest of the day was spent packing food and gear for the underground camp.

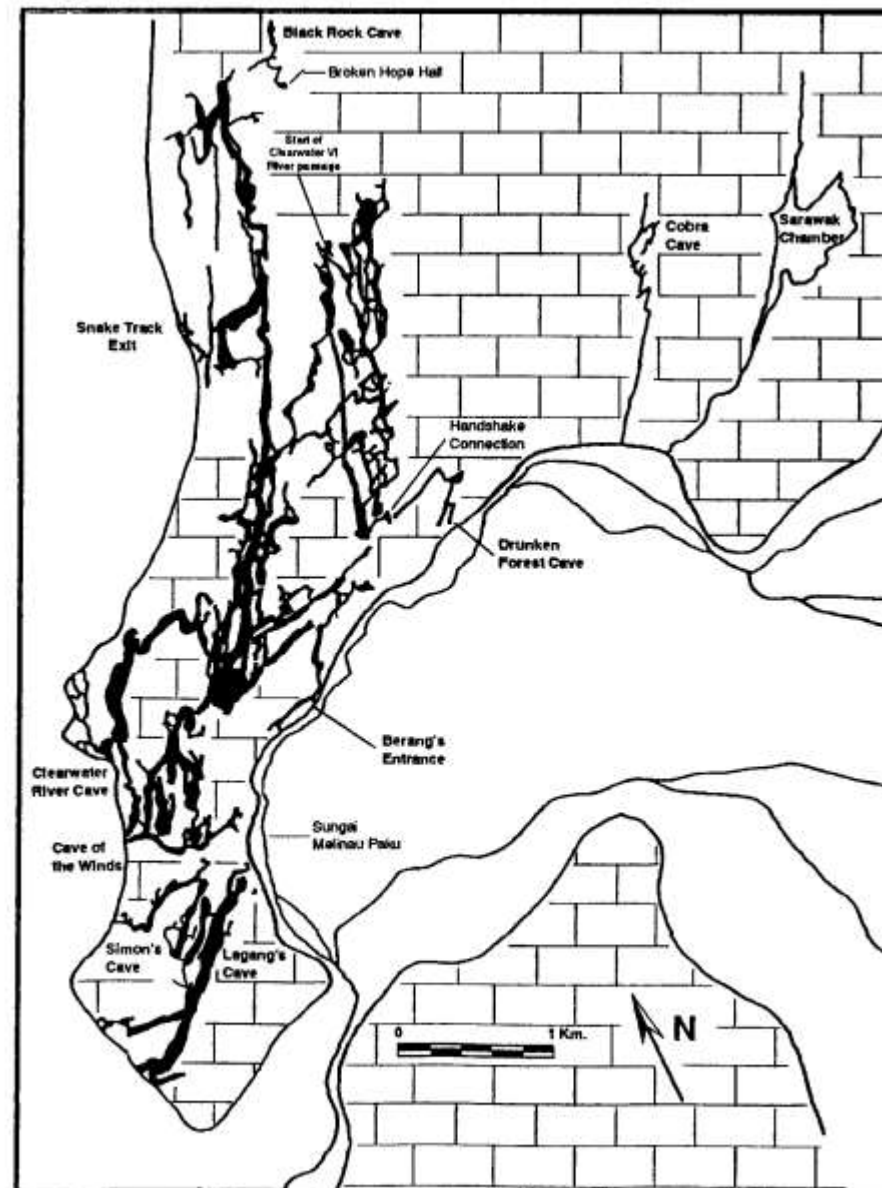
The second trip to Scumring seemed shorter than the first but was equally confusing. Simon and

Wilson took the opportunity to look at the opposite sides of the larger passage to those seen two days before and so it was almost a different cave in places. Thus it took us seven hours to reach Alexandra Palace, the nearest point in Clearwater V to Drunken Forest, an hour after we should have started to whistle. However this was no problem, we heard the whistles from Drunken Forest almost immediately and with rising euphoria we rushed around trying to track down where the sound was coming from. This was made more difficult by the loud roar of the wind (not a mere draught) blowing from Clearwater into Drunken Forest. The right spot was soon located but proved to be a tight slot with a right angled bend and totally impassable in spite of some digging. We passed a piece of red marker tape through the connection and as a tribute(!) to Victor named it 'Getting through the Red Tape'. Our feelings were well summed up by Paris' wish "to be very small" and Alan's comment that "the Drunken Forest group didn't seem to have the same sense of urgency about opening the passage up as did the Clearwater party". With the final thought that we would be able to open it up when the battery packs arrived for our Bosch drill there was nothing for it but to start the plod back uphill to Scumring. On the way we explored a few side passages which had looked promising on the survey but they all went nowhere.

The following day Alan, Becky and Simon set off to push the Clearwater V river described to us by many people as the world's best going lead. Thanks to low water levels, at least a metre down on the previous visit by Simon, most of the river was a wade rather than a swim and the river was explored for 400m to a sump. A dry bypass to this was found and in order of decreasing likelihood of going all the side passages were explored and surveyed (total 400m). By Sod's law the least likely and last explored passage proved to be the way on to the river and Clearwater VI. However time was pressing and they had no alternative but to leave the open passage and head back towards Scumring reaching camp 13 hours after setting out. Paris and I had meanwhile spent the day surveying the ramps explored on the previous visit. Running out several 30m survey legs up the greasy 35 degree rock slabs gave me some of my most worrying moments on the trip whilst Paris seemed to just bound up and down them. I was much relieved when later in the expedition Paris confessed that he too hadn't been too happy - "If you had slipped you wouldn't have died but you would have been hurt a lot" (total survey about 300m). The next day we returned to the surface to be told that the others had been to Lagang's Cave to try and find the connection with Simon's Cave from underneath but all to no avail.



The Caves of Southern Gunung Api 1989



The Caves of Southern Gunung Api 1990

After a day spent photographing Clearwater III, and an evening of tropical downpour it was time to get ready for another trip into Clearwater V. But before that we had the joy of a visit from two Koreans who were part of the group which had sent in the large Prospectus that Victor had shown us. This was an interesting visit because although they could read and write English they couldn't speak it. However Wilson found that if he shouted at them in Berawan (a local language) and especially if he waved his parang about then they seemed to understand. It soon became obvious that they knew very little about caving as they photographed us and all our gear, knee pads, wellies, carbide lights, tackle bags, etc. If they ever do get permission then no doubt they will all arrive with glasses and beards as these were obviously part of everyone's kit, except for Becky.

After this interesting interlude Alan, Becky, Paul, Simon, Veno (from Tropical Adventure), Wilson and I set off for another 3 day camp at Scumring. Our aim was to photograph Clearwater V and to push the river in VI. Whilst we were doing this the others would strip the jungle camp and transfer all the gear back to the Benerat Inn meeting us on the far side of the mountain 3 days later. We spent a long time photographing in Alexandra Palace and other areas although unfortunately some of the shots didn't come out. Alan, Becky and Simon went up the Clearwater V river but found it much harder work as the overnight rain had raised the water levels to those on Simon's first visit. This meant that they had to swim much of the way and when they got to the dry bypass it was a sump with a strong river issuing from it. That night back at Scumring camp the water supply increased dramatically and it was obvious that a major storm was happening on the surface. We agreed that with the large packs of camp equipment we would not be able to cross the river in Clearwater I and so we would have to exit via the Snake Track Entrance. This was a relatively easy way out but it then involved a two hour walk through the jungle with no parangs to help cut our way. A memorable end to our work in Clearwater.

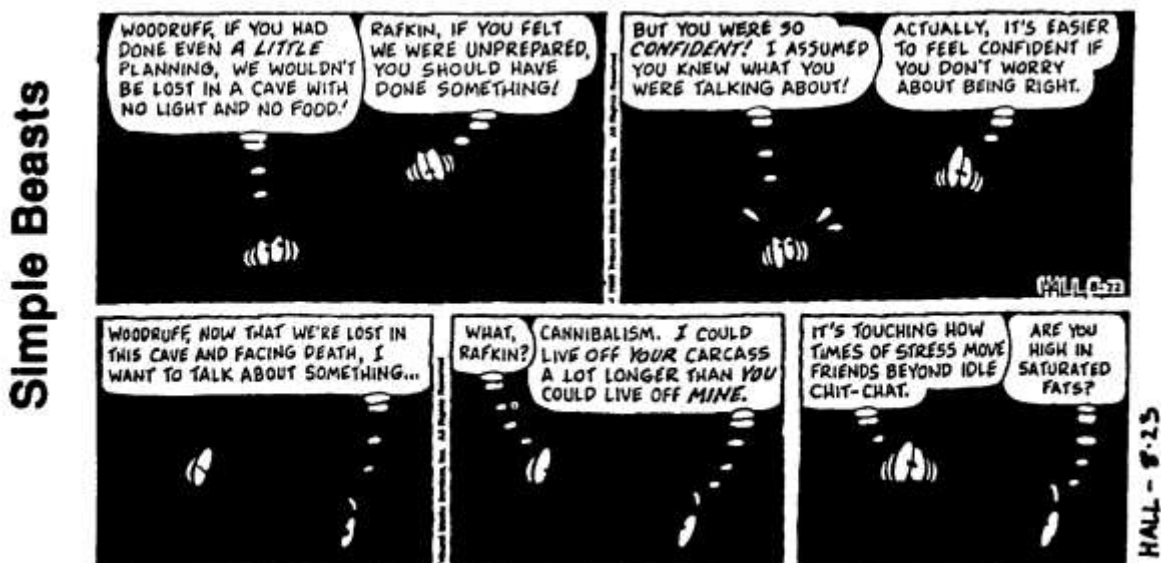
We spent the next few days working in Simon's Cave and then after a farewell barbecue with an enormous number of chicken wings it was time to go back down river

When we arrived back in Miri there was a message for Paul at the airport asking him to call at the lost luggage office in Kuching to speak about his battery packs. When we got to Kuching we spent a few days talking to local officials as part of the buttering up process necessary for any return visit. We also did a lot of shopping for cheap clothes and books and maybe this was why when we finally booked in for our flight back we had 250Kg of luggage between 5 of us. It was a good job we had persuaded MAS to allow us excess luggage. Also as we were leaving Kuching Paul picked up his message about the battery packs, it told him to call at the Security desk in Kuala Lumpur whilst we were in transit. When he pointed out that this would be outside normal hours he was told, don't worry there will be some one there to meet you, and there was. Paul was taken off the airport to meet Malaysian Special Branch who said "Oh about your bomb, we blew it up". Not really feeling in any position to argue Paul had to accept this fact and he was returned to the airport.

I found the whole trip fascinating. The caves were mind blowing, very large, very warm, very loose and very sharp. I wrote off a pair of wellies and a pair of boots in three weeks caving. The people were friendly and the guides were extremely competent cavers, everything was "No problem". Because they don't get days off in many ways we were just their excuse to be allowed to go caving. We did suffer a surfeit of chicken wings which may be why Paul wasn't too pleased when he got home and found that Jan had cooked a chicken for tea. We are starting to think about another trip to Sarawak in 1992, I'm sure that it will be equally memorable and enjoyable.

Expedition Team: Tony Bennett, Steph Gough, Ric Halliwell, Paul Norman, Nick Thompson, Alan Weight (Leader), Becky Weight.

Concluded



The Wessex Cave Club Annual Dinner

will be held at

The Star Hotel

High Street, Wells, Somerset
on

19 October 1991

7.30 for 8.00pm

Menu, price and details of events in next Journal

AGM, 2.30 pm, Hunter's Lodge Inn

CLUB HANDBOOK

Following comments at the 1990 AGM
a new issue of the handbook is due for publication.

Would those people who had corrections or comments on the last edition
please send them to the Editor as soon as possible.

Book Review

The Limestones and Caves of Wales. Trevor Ford (ed).

It is now sixteen years since I reviewed the first book in BCRA's Limestones and Caves series. Tony Waltham's Limestones and Caves of North-West England has long since become a classic. Although the format has now changed to A4 this latest, long awaited volume on Wales is a worthy successor.

The 'South Wales' book has had a chequered history since work was started over a decade ago. A series of editors had in turn to pass on the part completed task; and at times no obvious successor could be found. Three of the most important contributors sadly and unexpectedly died before their work on this book could be published; also compounding the already difficult editorial task. The publishers of the first two books - David and Charles - had long since relinquished the series and after a long search this volume was ultimately published by Cambridge University Press - a new name in caving titles.

In common with the earlier volumes in the series Limestones and Caves of Wales starts with an up to date summary of the geology and geomorphology of South Wales. Although in principle the rocks have not changed recently, the nomenclature has! Thus David Lowe's summary of the geology of the region is essential reading for those schooled in the old zonal classification. Likewise much has changed in our understanding of South Wales geomorphology since Brown's (1960) book. John Crowther has written a modern summary of the post Cretaceous and Pleistocene chronology of the region, highlighting some significant changes in our understanding of glacial events. The summary of the regional hydrology by Bill Gascoine which follows includes much field information that I have not seen in print before and will provide many pointers to future exploration.

The editorial policy throughout the series has been to include chapters on the relatively unpopular topics of cave archaeology and biology. Although expected to be dry, these chapters have often proven surprisingly interesting to us 'jobbing' cavers, and the present volume is no exception. The late Geoff Jefferson's chapter on cave biology is superbly readable, and contains a fascinating discourse on the relationship between South Wales and Mendip cave fauna. Three varied chapters on cave archaeology follow, bringing up to date the record of fossils and artefacts found around the coast of the principality by our colleagues who excavate with trowel and brush.

Rounding off the first part of the book, a short chapter by Martyn Farr on cave diving is an unexpected and profound disappointment. Much that could have been written has already been published elsewhere and is presumably copyright; but I do not think that the best solution to this dilemma was found.

The next ten chapters examine each of the main caving areas or individual systems in turn; generally giving a full account of the exploration of that area and usually including an overview of the local geology. Particularly welcome was BCRA's decision to publish the late Alan Coase's chapter on Dan yr Ogof. I believe that Alan based his Ph.D. thesis on a detailed study of this system, and his chapter in 'Limestones and Caves of Wales' is a much more convenient record of his work, as well as a fitting memorial now that it has finally been published. A complimentary chapter on Ogof Ffynnon Ddu has been written jointly by Pete

Smart and Noel Christopher.

These authors have carefully re-interpreted over forty years of work on this system including several recent - and previously unpublished - research theses. Regrettably their interpretation of the complex geomorphology is constrained by

the lack of altitude data with the current (1969) survey. However they suggest a complex sequence of phreatic and vadose captures, leading to the present streamway, and finally postulate an age of 1-2 million years for the cave.

The chapter on Agen Allwedd, Craig a Ffynnon, and Daren Cilau has been co-authored by Pete Smart and Clive Gardener. Although I do not entirely agree with the sequence postulated by Pete for the formation of the Llangattwg caves, his text has certainly provided the basis for continuing discussion. Clive's work prior to writing this chapter deserves a special mention; in order to get an accurate account of the exploration of the mountain he systematically interviewed all the main players - and in the process collected a unique anecdotal record. This chapter also includes the first published plan showing all the caves of Llangattwg in relation to each other, although the predicted connection has yet to be realised.

As we would expect the Forest of Dean, Otter Hole, the Neath, Mellte and Hepste valleys are also covered in detailed and well illustrated chapters, to which no less than ten authors have contributed.

continued on page 32

By Pete Cousins

Pwll Pen - y - Mynydd

The Pot at the Top of the Mountain

Early in the summer of 1990 Nick Pollard and myself decided to take a good look at Chartist Cave, near the summit of Mynydd Llangynidr high above the village of Trefil. The potential of this site and its surroundings has long been known and many attempts have been made to discover the caves that must exist here.

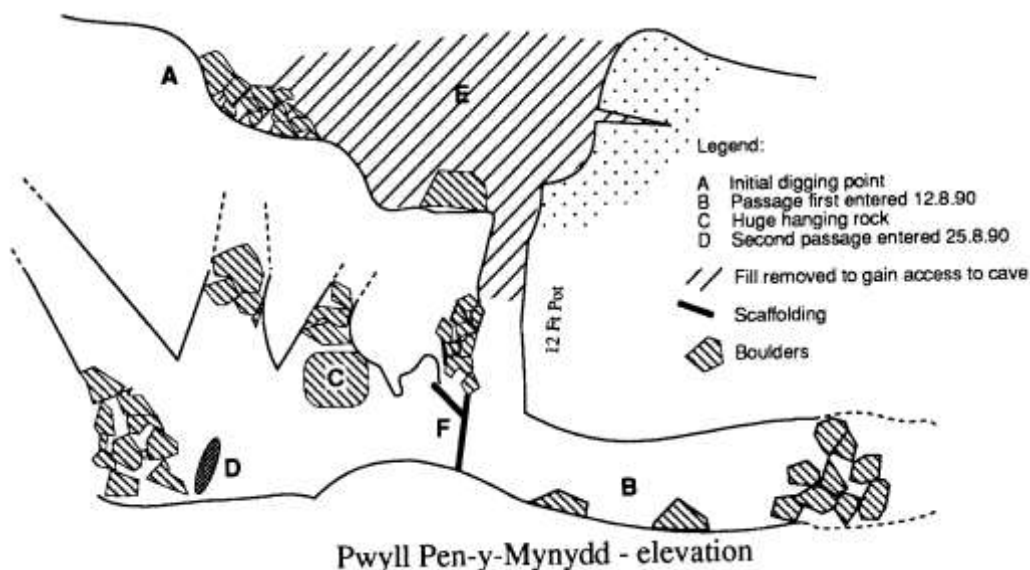
by Rob Taviner

As we tramped up the hillside conditions deteriorated and in driving rain and appalling visibility we were soon lost. For several hours we wondered around in circles without finding the summit of Llangynidr, let alone Chartist Cave. What we did find however was the mountain at its best, with dozens of swollen streams disappearing into the swallets and shakeholes that litter this bleak plateau.

Imaginations fired we returned on the 14th July, conditions were the complete opposite to our previous visit, which enabled us to find the cave without difficulty. The cool draught blowing out of the entrance was very welcome after the long, magnificent walk in full caving kit beneath a blistering sun. A couple of pleasant hours were spent exploring this fine complex of large passages, admiring the neat digging work, both past and present. We soon reached the conclusion however that the best leads were already

being pursued whilst others were probably heading back to the surface. The cave appears to be formed in a dome of rock and hence is relatively shallow. The strong draught however indicates that a significant length of passage is still to be discovered.

Following the ridge from the cave towards the Old Trefil Quarries the plateau develops into a broad, shallow dry valley, flanked on the right by a prominent escarpment and on the left by the main bulk of the mountain. Numerous swallets have developed in the valley floor. These are typically either small circular depressions filled with loosely packed grit boulders and peat or tiny rocky shakeholes. About half a mile from the cave a distinctive spur is passed on the left and concentrated area of small shakeholes is reached. We investigated a number of these until, on climbing onto the ridge above the valley floor, we found a small shakehole that caught our interest. Three factors set this apart from the rest. Firstly, the shakehole was not so much a shakehole as a collapsed rift filled with surface breakdown, and had a distinct oblong shape. Secondly, the limestone on the ridge reached right to the surface, the grit capping having been weathered away. The shakehole was only about six feet long and three feet wide and was visible only as a slight slump in the ridge side, sloping to the north at an angle of about 20°. It appeared insignificant and normally we would not have given it a second thought except for the third and most important factor, a strong cold draught emitting from a fist sized hole in one corner, a sure sign of a cave. This demonstrated well the luck involved in finding caves.



Walking two feet above or below the collapse it is not even visible and on another day we wouldn't have crouched down to feel that draught. Indeed on a cooler day there would probably not have been a draught. We spent two hours digging which revealed nothing more than a tiny choked fissure. At this point it appeared unpromising but was still interesting enough to warrant a further visit, with more adequate tools

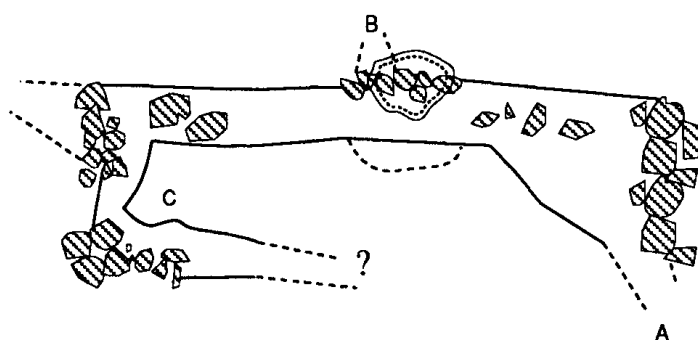
for removing the dense fill from the shakehole.

On the 4th August we returned, armed with a bucket, rope and 'the mother of all crowbars' a huge, heavy bar borrowed from Vince Simmonds (BEC). This proved a nightmare to carry up the mountain but by wielding it in a manner of a jack-hammer speeded up fill removal dramatically. In no time we had removed half the fill from the shakehole, revealing a layer of boulders beneath. One thing was immediately clear. If there was a cave, it was located at the opposite end of the collapse to where we started, completely buried beneath the fill. Turning our attention to this side brought immediate results, the bar penetrated much deeper, with no apparent solid blockage. By the end of the day we had revealed what seemed to be a small sloping passage obscured by rocks but with the sound of stones falling.

Feeling confident, we returned the following day and within two hours we had completely excavated the fill. The small, sloping passage proved to be a narrow, fluted vertical pot. Despite Nick's manful attempts to descend it, the pot proved to be impossibly tight. We were disappointed not to have broken through immediately but excited by the draught which had become a veritable gale following the fill clearance. We could see down the pot for 12 ft to a ledge and rocks thrown down seemed to drop beyond the ledge for a similar distance.

To achieve further progress it was obvious that more persuasive methods were required. Back in the Hunters Lodge, Nick Williams was fed the usual lines about caverns measureless to man, howling gales, one bang and we're in etc... until the bait was taken.

Returning on the 12th August the one bang and we're in line proved to be incorrect. In fact two bangs were required before Nick Pollard was able to force himself down the last few feet of the pot to the ledge, which turned out to be, not a ledge, but the bottom. A low arch led into a well-developed passage, 3-4 ft wide, 4-6 ft high ending downstream after a disappointing 12 ft to a total choke. There appeared to



Legend: A- Keith's Passage; B - Small unentered passage; C - Draughting squeeze - limit of exploration at present

Pwll Pen - y - Mynydd - Plan View

be no way on, so where was that draught so evident in the entrance pot coming from. Back at the base of the pot it soon became clear that the passage continued upstream but was unfortunately choked with surface collapse and large boulders. At one time the rift must have been exposed to the surface as no solid roof was visible. Five minutes work with a crowbar revealed an enticing black space and the draught was regained. This encouraged more frantic digging until we realised that the big boulders we were trying to collapse would fall onto the base of the pot, effectively blocking our exit. Shoring was required.

A week later we were back. Nick Williams rigged up a scaffold frame and encouraged some of the more horrible boulders to drop onto this wedging them successfully out of the way. The remainder were 'encouraged' to the floor, leaving only one massive floating boulder which refused to drop. The continuation of the passage could be clearly seen, of similar length and size to the downstream end, but required crawling beneath the huge block to enter. Death or glory spirit failed to materialise and so a retreat was made, the plan being to return with a long scaffold bar so it could be successfully detached from a safe distance.

On August the 25th, Nick Pollard and myself returned to the cave, which by now we have christened Pwll Pen-y-Mynydd (The Pot At The Top Of The Mountain). Miraculously the hanging boulder was still there, apparently suspended by fresh air as you could see over it, under it and round it, quite clearly. Figuring that if it was going to fall it would have done by now, Nick Pollard entered the new passage which terminated after only a few feet in a horrible boulder pile. Black spaces can be seen through this pile which extends for twenty feet towards the surface but this has not been pushed. An attempt at a vocal connection between this point and a tiny surface collapse proved negative, the draught, very much our carrot to follow in this cave, did not come however from the boulder pile but from a constricted passage on the left just to one side. More

chemical persuasion would be required to follow its draught. To date, this is about the sum total of cave passage entered though more can be seen. On the 1st September, Keith Savory opened up a small hole to the right of the downstream choke where 15 ft of negotiable passage can be seen but requires a bang to enter it. A small passage exists near the base of the entrance pot but has not been entered as it is immediately below the worst of the hanging death and does not appear significant anyway. It is no longer necessary to crawl beneath the large suspended block as a route to the left has been excavated under the protection of the passage wall.

The main effort has been directed at the draughting squeeze to the left of the upstream boulder pile which has not yet been passed but can be seen to lead into a similar, parallel passage beyond 8 ft drop through boulders. The total length of the cave is in the region of 60 ft and is very promising. Potential is of course excellent, although it is unclear which particular resurgence this could be associated with. Situated at an altitude of around 1700 ft the cave could well go deep should the hoped for breakthrough materialise. Typical of Llangynidr caves, we need to drop some depth to be free of the surface fill and breakdown which has hampered progress to this point. Once clear of this, there is every chance of finding a nice addition to the caves of South Wales and if we can avoid the all common boulder choker the very real possibility of reaching a major, unknown system. Atrocious winter weather curtailed digging operations somewhat but another concentrated push is planned for the Spring and Summer. The main passage has been named the 'Dangling Doom Room' after its nature.

Book Review

Continued from page 29

The final thirty pages of the book are devoted to North Wales. Peter Appleton has skilfully described both the geology and caves of this unlike region. Although the limestone here is slightly younger than that of the southern outcrops the caves discovered in recent years are just as impressive. Many of these systems were flooded until drained by miners only a century ago and provide a unique chance to see 'working' phreatic systems.

Overall, Trevor Ford and his co-editors are to be congratulated on an excellent addition to the caving literature. I wonder if we shall ever see another book in this series - only Devon, Portland and Scotland remain on the mainland - or will BCRA grasp the nettle and update them all in this new format?

The Limestones and Caves of Wales, 257pp A4 Hardback. Published by Cambridge University Press, 1989. Price £40.00.

Notes for Contributors

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The main requirement for photographs is that they should not have too much contrast as otherwise they are unrecognizable when printed. Prints in black and white or colour are acceptable, but bear in mind that they will come out as black and white prints when they appear, so if the colour is an important feature the effect may be lost in printing. Please make sure that your prints or transparencies are clearly labelled, and send the appropriate captions for each label on a separate sheet.

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