

THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

VOLUME 23 NUMBER 248

FEBRUARY 1996

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| LIBRARIAN | <i>MIKE DEWDNEY-YORK</i> |
| COMMITTEE MEMBERS | <i>NICK WILLIAMS</i> <i>DEBORA MORGENSTERN</i> |
| TRAINING OFFICER | <i>DOMINIC SEALY</i> |
| SURVEY SALES | <i>MAURICE HEWINS</i> |

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Opinions expressed in the Journal are not necessarily those of the Club or the Editor.

Club notes

Wessex People

Tony King can now be found at:
Heatherlands, 49 Middle St., Brockham Nr.
Betchworth, SURREY, RH3 7JT Tel: 01737
843032

Colin Shapter has moved to:
Dulainn, Burtle Road, Burtle, Bridgwater
Somerset. TA7 8ND

Following on from the last Journal and the article about the Wessex Dinner and the awards presented, it should be noted that **Tony King** shared the award for "Life Before My Eyes" with **Max Midlen**. This was due to his main maillon deciding to come undone when he was halfway up the pitch upon exiting Lancaster Hole.

Congratulations to **Nick Williams and Anna** who are getting married on 25th May this year.

New Members

Richard HATHWAY: 59 Furzebrook Rd.,
Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5AR
01929 554223

Mark Patrick LANNEY: 62 Gwyneth Grove,
Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex, TN40 2RQ
01424 221556

Christopher Michael WILLEY: 94 Melville Rd.,
Gosport, Hants, PO12 4QX
01705 588745

Hut news

It is planned to install a sink in the kitchen at floor level which should make things easier for cleaning.

Due to the recent cold weather, the firewood stocks are becoming a bit depleted. If anyone has any wood suitable for use as firewood, please bring it down to Upper Pitts - it will save us burning the sofas!

The bunks in the main dormitory are being reboarded due to deteriorating springs! If anyone has any wood suitable to be used as slats, or otherwise, please bring it to the Wessex and feel free to offer assistance or continue with the work already done.

Forthcoming Events

The **Wessex Challenge** will be held on 8th June 96 and this year is being organised by the MCG.

Following on from the success of the recent skittles match, a **WCC vs BEC cricket match** is currently being arranged. It will be held on Priddy Green and it is hoped to follow it with a BBQ - provisional date is Saturday 6th July.

A trip to **Box Stone Mines** has been arranged for Saturday 16th March. Contact Les for more information and to book places.

A trip to **Banwell Bone and Stalactite Caves** is being organised for Saturday 18th May.

Mendip Meets (see facing page - 27th/28th April) are also planned for June 1st/2nd and 22nd/23rd June.

A meet in **North Wales** is planned for July 13/14th. It is hoped to cave in Ogof Hesp Alyn/ Milwall tunnel

A trip to **Assynt, Scotland** has been organised for 11th-13th October, staying at the Grampian Caving Club - more details nearer the time.

Another Derbyshire weekend has been arranged for Nov 1st/2nd, visiting **Peak Cavern** on the Saturday.

Dominic Sealy is hoping to organise a trip to **Monts du Vaucluse** sometime in the coming August/September, but this will depend on the amount of interest shown. There will be the chance for some spectacular SRT caving with pitches in excess of 100m - yee hah! If you're interested, please contact Dom on:

01749 679754

Task list for 1996

Upper Pitts continually needs work doing on it for safety and hygiene reasons. Below is a list of jobs that need to be done during the coming year. If you feel able to help with any of these, please contact the hut admin, officer, Max Midlen, or just go and do the job! Beware, this is not a definitive list, but any offers of help or materials, no matter how small, would be much appreciated.

Outside:

1. Block down-pipe (end of changing room)
2. Paint fascia board (rear of toilets)
3. Fill gap at boiler end of fascia board
4. Fit padlock to boiler room
5. Render and splatter above boiler room door
6. Finish fitting window bars
7. Finish render at bottom of ladies fire door
8. Fill underneath newly fitted window sills
9. Replace outside window sills as necessary
10. Repair brickwork above porch door
11. Fit drain pipe end cap at 2 places (corner of porch)

Changing room:

1. Replace shower door
2. Replace door to open outwards in ladies shower
3. Clean ceilings in main area & both showers

Ladies dorm:

1. Clean mould under bottom bunks (bleach)
2. Paint around new fire door
3. Paint wall above top bunks
4. Fit window rubber in new fire door & fire door between hall & dorm

Kitchen: - Just Finish It !!!!!

Lounge:

1. Insulate ceiling area
2. Fill all dents and dings in walls prior to painting
3. Paint windows

Upstairs:

1. Plaster stud-walling around top of stairs
2. Finish fitting fire door
3. Replace fire door (leading onto fire escape)
4. Replacement of mattresses (fire-resistant)
5. Insulate between floor space

WCC bookings

WALES: 8th-10th March

The Pwll Du outdoor centre at Blaenavon can be found on OS Landranger map, sheet 161. NGR = 246117. For directions, see previous Journal, but basically follow signs from the A40 for Big Pit.

SRT TRAINING - 23/24th March

Provisionally, we hope to use the Blue School gym on the Saturday and then go down Hunter's hole on the Sunday. This is similar to the rescue practice weekend where much was learnt and a good deal of enjoyment was had by those who attended.

YORKSHIRE MEET: 5th-8th April

At Easter, if anyone is interested in coming to stay at the YSS cottage at Helwith Bridge, Ribblesdale, you need to confirm your place with Les before March 10th at the latest

Any time after this, the places will not be guaranteed. The cost will be £3.50 per night, at 4 nights = £14 per head. The cottage is fully equipped including a superb drying room, and is right opposite a pub which does good food. Caves booked for the weekend include Long Kin West, and GG Main shaft, Dihedral, Flood and Stream Passages.

MENDIP MEET - 27/28th April

If you've been meaning to go to a 'restricted access cave' or a 'collector's cave' that you've wanted to 'tick off for ages, why not use this weekend as the time to do it. Contact the Caving Sec. to arrange as some of these caves need a fair amount of notice to obtain access.

REDHOUSE SWALLET - cancelled

This meet was originally booked for 8th June, but due to the Wessex Challenge also being held on this date, it has had to be changed. It has been provisionally rebooked for 20th July.

Caving notes

GENERAL

The new **CSCC Handbooks** have been published and are available from Dave Cooke (address at front of Journal) or Bat Products in Wells.

The NCA has recently published its **Cave Conservation Policy and Handbook**. Copies of which are available from the NCA

The BCRA Cave Radio and Electronics Group with the help of David Gibson is producing a one-off journal devoted to cave photography - **Underground Photographer** - possibly leading to a regular publication if enough interest is shown.

MENDIP

News of the Weald Issue No. 18, Dec. 95 reports that **Swildons Hole** water level is now lower. It also states that the entrance is now safe - however, caution still recommended.

DERBYSHIRE

Hangers have been installed in parts of **JH** and **Hall. Long Rake** is still to be done.

Still advisable to check that the entrance to **Cumberland Cavern** is open if a through-trip is being attempted from Wapping Mine.

FOREST OF DEAN

After the sale of **Croes Bleddyn Swallet** and **Itton North Swallet**, there are not likely to be any changes to access arrangements.

SCOTLAND

A new cave - **3D** - has been found.

YORKSHIRE

Meregill Hole has now changed through a huge collapse.

There is a possibility that **Hagg Hill** and **Deepdale Rising** connects.

A new entrance - Bye George Pot - has been discovered from within **Pippikin Pot**.

WALES

More news on the proposed leader system for **Dan yr Ogof** - it is intended that the system will be in operation by April 1st, although there are still some administrative matters to be resolved. The Dan yr Ogof Cave Advisory Committee agrees that the aims remain the same - to provide access 365 days a year- while working together to maintain the cave in the best possible condition. The access rules from the old system remain materially unchanged but there will now be 'leader-permits' that last for 3 years. For further information, contact the secretary to the CAC:

E Little, Hennoyadd Villa, Abercraf, Swansea, SA9 1UR.

At a recent meeting of the OFD Management Committee, it was suggested that a Cave Conservation Trust may be set up, starting with **OFD** as a pilot scheme. There was general approval of the concept, but this will be considered at a later date.

One year of intensive surveying has been done in **Ogof Draenen** - the total length surveyed is now 39.0km.

Welsh Water nearly made an additional entrance to **Porth-yr-Ogof** whilst laying a new water main!

The **Ogof Capel** choke is still unstable, but access to this cave may be affected by the roadworks.

A telephone cable in **Daren Cilau** entrance passage is being installed.

editorial

Well, I've survived the first Journal, so here's the second one. Comments so far have been favourable but please feel free to suggest anything that you would like to see done differently as there's always room for improvements.

Please keep sending any articles, letters or snippets of information to me as the Journal can only be as good as the material that's sent in. Although there's usually a few articles lurking in the background ready for the following Journal it's good to have a few extra ones to play around with.

As mentioned in the last Journal, it is hoped to do a Berger special following last year's expedition. A couple of people have said that they will write articles for it, but nothing has arrived in the post yet. If you are thinking of writing an article on the Berger, please at least let me know sooner rather than later so that I know if it will be feasible to do a special edition or not.

And now for something completely different:

"I had even developed a special loathing for speleologists, who had the nerve to fill the front page of our newspapers, and whose activities nauseated me. Striving to descend two thousand feet at the risk of getting one's head caught in a rocky funnel (a siphon as those fools say!) seemed to me the exploit of perverted or traumatized characters. There was something criminal underlying it."

Albert Camus
from *The Fall* 1956

Found by Dave Morrison

subscription news

Un-paid subscriptions as of:
24th January '96

| | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Doug Adams | Richard Hooper |
| Niki Adlam | Ian Jepson |
| Caroline Allen | George Littleton |
| Peter Bentley | Mr J G Miell |
| Andrew Bliss | Jim Moon |
| Sue Bonar | Trevor Moore |
| Ray Borrett | Brian Morgan |
| Iain Buchanan | Graham Mullan |
| Russel Carter | Anthony Neal |
| Noel Cleave | Geoff Newton |
| James Cobbett | John Parkes |
| Cohn Cooke | Brian Parkin |
| Martin Cross | Rodney Pearce |
| Fred Davies | Jeff Price |
| Steve Deacon | Bob Pyke |
| Andy Ewels | Mr R Saxton |
| Neil Fay | Willie Stanton |
| Milton Fenton | Adrian Vanderplank |
| Shane Fry | Colin Waite |
| David Garlick | Terry Waller |
| Mr S Genders | Richard Warman |
| Chris Giles | Julia Waxman |
| Dave Hall | Martyn Wise |
| Ben Hayday | |

Jackie and Nick Dallman
Andy and Christine Hayter
Murray and Angela Knapp
Stoods and Denise Stoodley

Please send your subscriptions to Dave Cooke
(address at the front of the Journal)

I hope the above list is accurate, but mistakes can happen. They mostly occur because payments are not made directly to me, but via a third party. If you believe you have already paid please let me know.

The subscription rates are as follows:

| | |
|-------------------|-------|
| Individual Member | 24.00 |
| Joint 1 vote | 30.00 |
| Joint 2 vote | 42.00 |
| OAP (Non-caving) | 7.20 |
| Journal only | 12.50 |
| Food box | 2.50 |
| Locker | 5.00 |

If your name is not on the above list and you have not received a sticker for your membership card, please contact me.

library acquisitions

CAVE AND KARST SCIENCE Vol. 22 No 1. Aug. 95

Toerfjellhola and other caves at Vevelstad and Bronnoy, Norway. New caves surveys, geology and caving history
An analysis of sediments in caves in the Assynt area, NW Scotland

Pseudokarst in the Western Cape, South Africa: its palaeoenvironmental significance, history, geology and cave surveys

Evidence for two phases of Late Palaeozoic karstification, cave development and sediment filling in south-eastern Australia. Covers Bungonia Caves and Jenolan Caves in NSW and Lune River Quarry and Exit Cave in Tasmania

L'OR DES GOUFFRES Michel Siffre

Discoveries in the Mayan Jungles 1979. Description of the area, its caves, history and people. You would need basic French to read this. Michel Siffre also wrote 'Beyond Time'

CRYPTS, CAVES AND CATACOMBES Derby and Notts area

Basically a bit on caves, mines and tunnels from a variety of sources. The usual "if it's underground, then it's cold, dark and full of unknown fears".

CAVE DIVING GROUP

Most of the new series Newsletters have been bound into volumes. The last current titles and the new speleological abstracts

The conservation of the Library continues with the binding of the bulk of material held by the cave diving group

NSS NEWS

The incredible cave hoax of 1927 by Larry Matthews - a historical account of Laurence S Ashley and his 'adventure' in Nick-Jack Cave. This is a story on the level of how I was abducted by aliens, written by the last person to spot Elvis Presley

Los Juanitos, Mexico - exploration, history and photographs

Front cover is a very clever piece of photo-composition

DC SPELAEOGRAPH Vol. 50 Nos. 5-12 1995

A variety of interesting articles covering everything from expeditions and SRT trips to sump diving and lava tubes, together with some excellent front cover cave drawings by Linda Heslop.

CAVES AND CAVING No. 70 Dec. 95

Speedwell and James Halls' linked, a brief history of the digging operations, etc, survey and route finding guide

Welsh news, recent cave finds, Dan-Yr-Ogof news of access management

Re-opening of Grey Wife Hole, Newby Moss - description and survey

Cuetzalen '95 Mexico Cuetzalen area - exploration, description, photos and survey

Matienzo '95 - the 25th year of exploration, history of exploration, description of new discoveries, photographs, surveys and a cave to the surface map

Boxhead Pot, Leck Fell - new route into the more remote parts of Lost Johns - history, survey, photos and route finding
George Cornes - a very fine obituary for one of the old time greats who was still caving in his early 80's

DERBYSHIRE CAVING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER No. 89

Peak Caverns. A dry route to far sump extension. History, description and survey
Hangover Hole, Stoney Middleton, Derby - surveys
Gian Risings - dye test results
Mandale Mine - a part of our heritage

This is the last Derbyshire Caving Association Newsletter we shall receive as the DCA Library is now combined with the BCRA to form the new "National Caving Library" and they no longer feel the need to exchange with the Wessex. This is a shame as it takes away from the library a useful publication. So if we have a club member, who is also a member of DCA and would like to donate their DCA newsletter to the Wessex library, I would be most grateful

BELFREY BULLETIN Vol. 49 No. 1 Xmas

Club news and AGM reports
Streams feeding St Cuthberts Swallet

Climbing in Rhino Rift, Rob Harper with a description and sketch of the route

A day in the life of an expedition - Silawesi - Rob Harper and Walkman - a full report is to follow soon

Practice rescue in Rhino Rift
Little Crapnell Swallet, Dinder, Somerset - NGR 60124627

A grade 5 survey by Stillman, Legg & Colyham, drawn by A Legg - plan and section

WSG NEWSLETTERS Nos. 12, 13 & 14 1995

Club and cottage news and AGM report

The club's potential expedition in 1996

Visit to the PSM

Huntsville Grotto Goes Hollywood - the story behind the set building and filming of the Movie "Tom Sawyer" in Cathedral Caverns. Photos of the set, men throwing boulders about, etc

Record year in Hawaii - William Halliday

Extensions to the worlds longest lava cave tube - photos, description, history of the exploration and a survey

**DESCENT DEC 1995
No. 127**

BCRA Conference in Southport Last of the Summer Wine - obituary of George Cornes who passed away at the age of 83 - a great character of the Northern caving world

Due South - more news about Ogof Draenen, Wessex series, etc

The Beresford Link - Ricklow Cave and Lathkill Head Cave connection It would appear that the link is very prone to flooding and does not sound too much fun unless you are a mud and grovel freak

Mendip notes - Wessex dinner gets a mention. A very complimentary review of the revised Swildon's survey Little Crapnell Swallet

**CHELSEA SPELEOLOGICAL
NEWSLETTER Vol. 37 Dec. 95**

CSS club doings, potential extension of Whitewalls for a library

Report on IGS Bloreng Borehole - see next article for enlightenment

The mystery of the Gamma Logger, by John Hunt

Agro from the locals, newspaper cuttings, reports of meetings with the locals, cavers and the local MP

One year of surveying in Ogof Draenen and a letter from Morgannwg Caving Club re: second entrance to the cave

Index to Vol. 37

**CHELSEA SPELEOLOGICAL
NEWSLETTER Vol. 38 No. 1
1996**

A cave diving holiday in Florida by Duncan Price - wish I was there

Club activities and reports

**CERBERUS JOURNAL
Vol. 23/3**

Large chunks extracted from other publications: West Wycombe Caves (Hell Fire Caves) and Sub-Brits at Manchester - manmade caving trips - sound like trips for the Wessex Zimmer Frame Group

**CERBERUS JOURNAL
Vol. 23/5**

Mining remains on the Isle of Man

The Larks Hill Slocker Nodules - description of the nodules and the results of some tests on the same

Gua Tempurung, Perak, West Malaysia - a brief history of the cave, geological sketch map, plan and sections

SPELEO NEDERLAND (Pierk)

A trip to a Dutch coalmine Hypothermia; based on information taken from NSS caving accidents

Canyoning in the Gorges d'Amondans

A blow by blow account of a weeks caving in France - mud wallowing seems to have been the main attraction

A review of Andy Sparrow's Cave Safe video - a translation is being sought which, if not libelous, may appear in the next journal

Gouffre Berger - an account from the Dutch lads that went on the Wessex trip of the epic events - a translation is being actively sought

Discussion on the possibility of the EEC laying down standards for certification and the potential effects on cavers

**NCA SPELEOSCENE
No. 20 Dec. 95**

Successful test of new resin for DMM anchors

Access and conservation around the regions

BCRA news

Mining diary dates

NCA nominations and proposals for 1996 AGM

NCA training bulletin No95/2

Bob Scammell has presented the club with copies of "The Caves of Mendip" - H E Balch 1st edition, Folck Press No. 26 and "Mendip, the Great Cave of Wookey Hole" - H E Balch 1929

Other donated items include:

Underground in Furness (Eric G Holland - 1967)

Conison Copper Mines (Eric G Holland - 1991)

Limestones and Caves of the Mendip Hills (Edited by DI Smith, assisted by D P Drew)

The Hidden Side of Swaledale: the life and death of a Yorkshire lead mining community (John Hardy 1980)

Limestones and Caves of the Mendip Hills (edited by DI Smith, assisted by D P Drew - 1975 - for the BCRA)

**PURBECK SHOP
Eric Bewfield**

Concerned with mines and quarries of the Purbeck Hills, Dorset. Scraper board instructions and black and white photographs. Reprint of a 1940 editions with extra text and photographs. *Donated by M W Dewdney-York*

**THE HEART OF MENDIP
FA Knight 1915
Reprint 1971**

Being an account of the history, archaeology and natural history of the parishes of Winscombe, Shipham, Rowberrow, Churchill, Burrington, etc. *Donated by Alan Constance*

Quest for a Paper

Rosie Freeman

The Friday night of New Year weekend started out just like any other - people arriving at Upper Pitts, making their way to The Hunters, drinking, chatting and catching up with Christmas gossip. Everyone seemed in high spirits, but whether this was due to alcohol consumption or in anticipation of the impending festivities was unclear.

Surfacing on Saturday morning with good intentions of a trip to Wales we found reports of atrocious weather conditions outside – ‘Mendip’s Frozen Wastelands’. Reliable sources (thanks Mr Postman) told of freezing rain and icy roads. The motoring organisations (via Les who phoned the hut - on more than one occasion!) were giving out bad weather warnings advising people not to travel unless absolutely necessary. The windows at Upper Pitts were covered in a layer of ice and it was a decidedly dodgy trip to the woodstore - as Debs almost found out to her cost.

Some brave souls - Dom, Andy M and Damian, Viv and Chuck (or was it Hank) who were here to sample some good old British weather - had ventured to South Wales early in the morning for a trip to Ogof Draenen. Presumably they got there alright but at lunchtime when it was reported that the M4 was closed no-one knew when, or how, they were going to return. From our point of view, on hearing the bad weather timings we decided against the trip to Wales and it is here that the quest begins

Not believing that the conditions were really that bad we opted for a trip into Wells - mainly just for a wander and to say Hello to Tony in BAT Products. A few of us ventured outside to de-ice the cars while others vaguely thought about how not to go caving. (Handy tip here - if you want to see what skiing is like, try sliding down the ramp outside the changing room). Ten minutes later the ice could be chipped off but came off in sheets 1/4" thick. Just as we were leaving, Mike York’s voice pipes up “Please could you get me a paper”. “No problem” we reply.

The driveway wasn’t too bad - probably due to the potholes already present - but Eastwater Lane proved a different matter. The gentle slope (that you normally don’t notice) suddenly seemed like a

black run in the Alps, but at least the grass verges functioned well as temporary brakes! Across the bottom of the lane were a couple of tyre tracks veering off at some strange angle. We managed to stop before the junction and tried to turn left - the wheels didn’t grip, the steering wheel spun and the car slowly moved across the road coming to rest on the wrong side of the road, facing the wrong way and stopped by a grass verge - it was just like being on the dodgems. After deciding that Wells didn’t really need our presence we decided to turn back.

After a few more wheel manoeuvres and intimate contacts with more grass verges we managed to point the car in the direction of upstream Eastwater Lane. Then the problems really began to start..... wheels on the grass it took 15 minutes to get back up to Upper Pitts which involved one person driving and one pushing/lifting the rear of the car. Whilst changing drivers/pushers, one fell over but scored no points for their technique on the ice! Having said that, it didn’t help having a light-engined petrol car with caving gear weighing down the boot!

We arrived in the car park and talked to Colin (still trying to clear the ice from his van) who then turned off the engine and gave up his idea of travelling anywhere. After apologies to Mike for failing to get his paper, we thawed out in front of the fire - Mak continued his role as ‘Resident Pyromaniac’ by stoking the fire (all in the cause of keeping the hut warm of course) and Mike York acted as safety officer by putting sand and ash down on the cemented areas around Upper Pitts - the trip to the woodstore was then only rated as 95% lethal!

The Quest continued Having decided that caving was out of the question - too cold, too slippery, and all the other usual excuses - we managed to get a group of seven expedition members together (Mak, Jo, Vern, Pete, Andy, Debbie and myself - not forgetting the dog) for a mission to Mendip Heights in search of a paper! and to deliver some Journals to Brian Prewer. Maurice offered a few helpful hints such as “I think it will be shut” but we weren’t to be deterred and wended our way outside to brave the elements again.



Stunning
scenery
despite
the cold

Photo courtesy of Carmen Smith

The drive proved OK (as long as you walked on the verges) but the cattle grid was entertaining. Eastwater Lane was traversed at the edges without too much bother and so we went onto the next obstacles - the frozen cow pats and mud grooves from tractors in the fields. However, the best was yet to come - have you ever tried climbing over a stone stile which is covered in 1/2" of frozen rain? - not to be recommended unless prior booking of a bed in the nearest hospital. A bold step across a frozen stream and we were almost to Swildon's. The mandatory walk to the entrance was made passing the resurgence from the Pumping station - here the water was steaming as it left the pipe and there were some ice formations on the overhanging trees. Next obstacle was the gravel outside the village hall which was frozen together (no grip there then). The tarmac then provided a chance for us to show off our skating skills - we ended up traversing around the edges clinging onto the stone wall! The rest of the walk was non-eventful until we got to the door of the shop - it was shut - we turned around! The expedition then split; three returning to Upper Pitts, the others onwards to Brian's house.

We passed a couple of cars that foolishly thought they could drive on solid ice, then reached the crest of the hill down to Brian's. For future reference, this is best approached with feet firmly placed on the ground whilst crouching on all fours, thus ensuring that if you do fall over, it's less distance to fall and therefore less painful. We happily slid past Brian's and waved as we went past but after a bit of

effort, managed to ascend the hill, traverse the grass and approach the door. Brian welcomed us with the offer of coffee which we gratefully accepted and after exchanging stories about the weather, the abandoned Range Rover just outside and the tractor that was last seen moving backwards down the hill, it was time to return.

We reversed our route across the fields and arrived at Upper Pitts a short while later to a very strange sight - Wessex members were attacking the tree outside the hut by beating it with sticks from below, while Carmen was up the tree attacking it from above! Apparently this wasn't an act of vandalism as it had first seemed, but an effort to save the tree from the ice upon it causing it to bow to the ground perhaps once too often, never to return upright again.



Photo courtesy of Carmen Smith

This action explained we then had to face the most awful task of the whole weekend; break the devastating news to Mike - the mission had failed, there was no paper!

As a postscript to this saga..... in the evening, a further mission was attempted - a trip to the New Inn for food by Mak, Jo, Vern and Rosie. The same route across the fields was followed although this time in darkness which made the lethal factor of it all increase tenfold. Having said that, we survived to force down a few bevvies (as well as food) in the hope of nulling the pain in the event of an injury. However, after I'd fallen over and uttered the classic line "I've hurt my bottom!", the theory seemed to have failed. After a severe case of 'Van Aerial Disease' (it was our car, honestly), we arrived safely back at Upper Pitts.

Note: the tree has now fully recovered and is standing resplendent in gratitude to the Wessex.

Sales news

PRICE LIST

CLOTHING

| | | £ |
|-------------------------------------|----------|-------|
| Sweatshirts | S M L | 15.50 |
| | XL | 16.00 |
| | XXL | 17.00 |
| (older type in bottle green M only) | | 10.00 |
| T-shirts | S M L | 9.00 |
| | XL | 9.50 |
| | XXL | 10.00 |
| Rugby shirts | S M L XL | 18.00 |
| | XXL | POA |
| Polo shirts | S M L | 15.50 |
| | XL | 16.00 |
| | XXL | 17.00 |
| Acrylic sweaters | S M L XL | 16.00 |
| | XXL | 17.00 |
| Pure wool sweaters | S M L XL | 32.50 |
| | XXL | 33.00 |
| Ties | | 4.50 |

OTHER GOODS

| | |
|------------------|------|
| Mugs | 4.75 |
| Enamel car badge | 2.00 |
| Car stickers | 1.50 |
| Stickers | 1.50 |
| Cloth badges | 1.75 |

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Ammo box 6" | 3.00 |
| Ammo box 3" | 2.00 |
| Food boxes | 7.50 |
| Digging gloves | 0.50 |
| Wellies | 8.00 |
| Miners knee pads (small) | 7.00 |
| Miners knee pads (large) | 8.00 |

PUBLICATIONS

| | |
|--|------|
| Swildon's Surveys (non-members: £5.00) | 3.50 |
| Mendip Karst Hydrology Project | 0.50 |
| Below Belize | 3.50 |
| Great Storms and Floods | 1.75 |
| Who Was Aveline Anyway (non-members: £5.00) | 4.00 |
| City Pit | 1.00 |
| Journal back issues (each) | 1.00 |

WINTER CLEARANCE SALE

In order to make space for new stock, several items are being sold at a greatly reduced price. These prices are available for a limited period only.

T shirts and Sweatshirts - size S
in Royal blue, Pale blue, Grey and Black:
T-shirts £7.00
Sweatshirts £12.50

Jubilee T shirts - size L
in Grey: £7.00

Jubilee Sweatshirts - size M
in Black: £12.50

Thinner Sweatshirts - size M
in Bottle green:
£10.00

Older style, antique printed-logo Sweatshirts size S
- in Black or Royal Blue:
£10.00

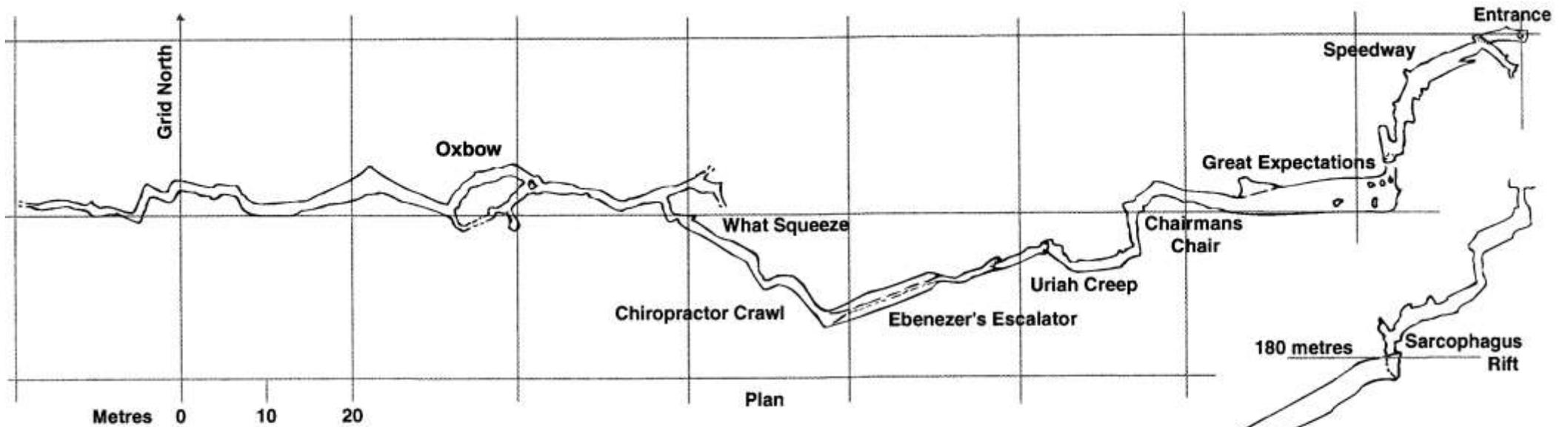
Dunlop wellies in a variety of sizes:
£5.00 per pair

THERE IS ONLY ONE WESSEX

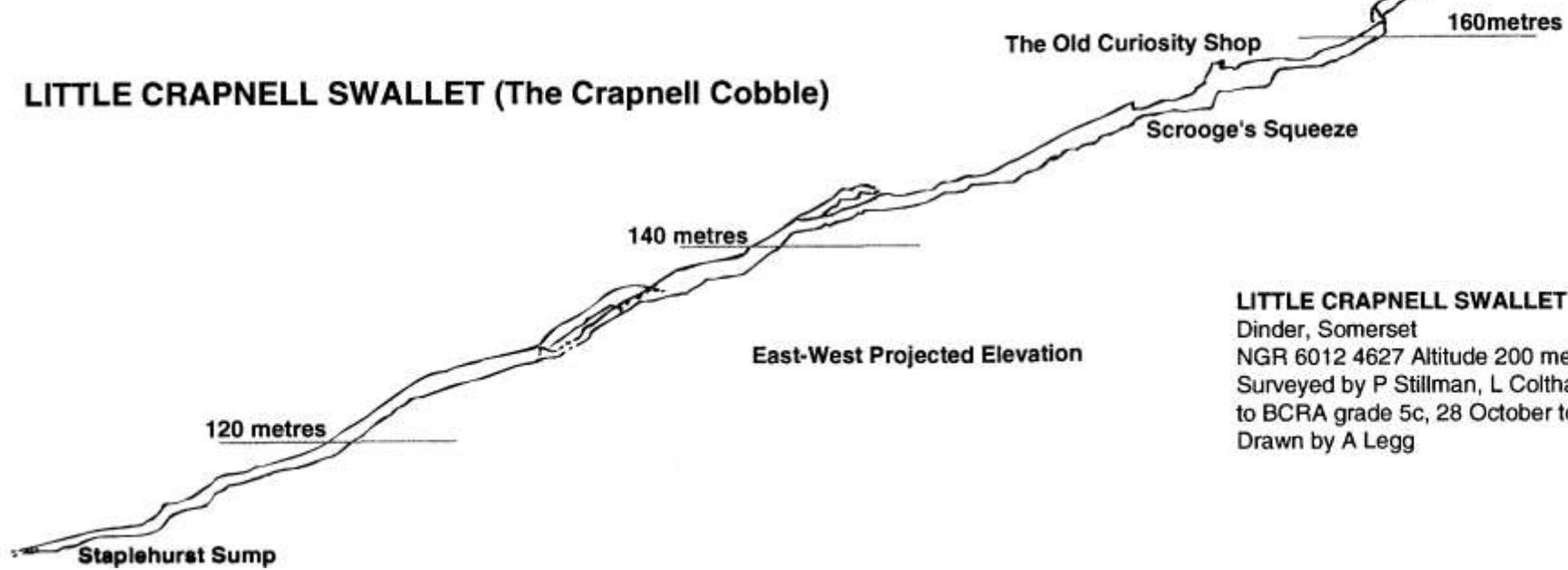
THERE IS ONLY ONE SALE

For more details, contact Debs on:

0181 202 8991



LITTLE CRAPNELL SWALLET (The Crapnell Cobble)



LITTLE CRAPNELL SWALLET

Dinder, Somerset
 NGR 6012 4627 Altitude 200 metres AOD
 Surveyed by P Stillman, L Coltham, A Legg
 to BCRA grade 5c, 28 October to 19 November 1995
 Drawn by A Legg

The discovery and exploration of Little Crapnell Swallet

Richard Witcombe

St Andrew's Wells spring, close by Wells Cathedral, is the third largest rising in the Mendip Hills, after Cheddar and Wookey Hole, but its swallet feeders have kept their secrets for far longer than those clustered around Priddy and Charterhouse. Until 1974 when Thrupe Lane Swallet yielded over 3000' of passageway, no significant caves had been discovered in the broad St Andrew's catchment area from Biddlecombe in the west to Windsor Hill near Shepton Mallet in the east.

The discovery at Thrupe stimulated digging in the area, and NHASA at Windsor Hill, the BEC and Cerberus at Maesbury and ATLAS at Viaduct Sink, all laid siege to active swallets in the late Seventies and early Eighties. The rewards were comparatively meagre with 100' "engineered" at Windsor Hill and finds of just over 300' at Viaduct and Maesbury. ATLAS returned to Viaduct Sink in 1990 to search again for the big streamway which must surely lie beneath the Longwood-like Ham Woods Valley. They tackled a boulder choke in Downside Aven and burrowed down to a small stream flowing out of a bedding plane and into a tiny rift, a few inches wide. The passage appeared to get no wider for at least twenty feet, and with spoil removal a real problem 150' into the cave, the team decided to "rest" the dig and seek pastimes new.

Half a mile to the northwest of Thrupe lies Little Crapnell Farm, situated on the edge of a steep dry valley leading down to Dinder Combe. The approach track divides a field containing half a dozen shallow depressions, the most northerly of which lie close to the shale/limestone boundary. It was known that a seasonal stream flowing down a nearby roadside ditch entered one of these depressions by means of an underground stone lined culvert, and a trial dig by NHASA and the local tenant farmer's son, Dave Speed, in about 1980 intercepted this tunnel 6' below ground near the southern end of the depression. The dig was not pursued.

The ATLAS team inspected the site several times in the early 1990s and marked it down as a possible

candidate for a mechanised JCB dig. The depression with the culvert measured 100' by 50' and was about 10' deep at the southern end. Access from the farm road for a tracked vehicle would be very easy, and the absence of any rock faces would not handicap a large scale excavation.

The landowners, Dinder Estates, through their agents, Cluttons, were amenable to a "tidy" dig, and Dave Speed was very keen to have a second crack at the site. Accordingly, at 9.45 am on Saturday 29 April 1995, a JCB tracked digger organised by Dave "Tuska" Morrison and piloted by Malcolm Lambert, trundled into the depression and commenced to peel back the turf in front of an assortment of ATLAS and by now also Wessex diggers.

Given the underground south westerly water flow to St Andrew's Wells, and the 25 degree dip in that direction, the digger was set to work to trench from east to west across the southern end of the depression.

Within the hour, an irregular southern cliff face was uncovered beneath 6' to 7' of soil and subsoil, interspersed with funnels filled with rocks probably picked from the fields and dumped in minor collapses over the years. A rock floor was encountered at a depth of 15' sloping westwards to a depth in excess of 20' - the bottom was not struck at that end. On the northern side of the trench, under a 2' layer of presumably tipped top soil, a much larger agricultural infilling was uncovered, consisting of field stones and also mortared material from an old building. At the base of this, 5' down and resting on a natural thickness of clay, was the stone built culvert reaching nearly to the southern cliff face.

The 25' long limestone cliff face contained at least three waterworn rifts (the third only spotted on Sunday morning), about 6' apart and trending southwards. None was man-sized but they were progressively larger in the westerly direction. At the limit of the westerly excavation, a cliff at right angles to the southern cliff was uncovered, and at

the junction of the two cliffs was a further rift, 18" wide and at least 15' high, dipping away towards the west. At the top of the cliff, the rift was solidly choked but from 5' down, the fill became progressively looser, comprising blackened sandstone cobbles and more angular slabs. The tipped building material rested on the top of the western cliff, suggesting that this rock face and perhaps the rift itself were visible in the recent past.

All the diggers agreed that this most westerly rift looked the most promising and should form the basis of the long term dig. The next day, prior to the commencement of back filling, some preliminary excavation of the chosen rift took place. Much loose cobble material was pulled out and at a depth of 8' below the cliff top and 15' below the present land surface, an open passage was revealed. A small rift with a wider bedding plane below could be seen to descend at a shallow angle for at least 10', with only stream debris of mud and cobbles preventing caver entry.

It was decided to preserve access to this passage by walling across the front of the rift using large rock slabs lowered by the JCB. The wall was built up over several days on an inward overlapping principle so that a reasonable working chamber at the bottom was reduced to a smaller diameter shaft at the top. At the cliff top level, a thick concrete slab pierced by a manhole was laid across the wall and cliff, and two concrete rings took the shaft up to the old ground surface. By 4 April the depression had been totally backfilled and levelled.

Serious underground digging commenced on 6 May and the next five months saw a sustained twice weekly effort by a team comprising Dave Speed, Clive North (ATLAS), Bob Cottle (ATLAS), Simon Meade-King (ATLAS), Dave Morrison (Wessex), Graham Bromley (Wessex) and Richard Witcombe (ATLAS/Wessex), supported by casual visitors from the Wessex and Shepton, and the entire NHASA team when Army activity prevented their Wednesday Lodmore visits. During this period 790 buckets of rock and spoil were brought to the surface (total weight approximately 22 tons).

The small section of open passage found on the 30 April soon degenerated into a very narrow (less than man-sized) rift topped by a very low bedding plane, with only a rat-sized way on. Several slipping boulders on the right had to be demolished, and over the months the rift was widened by shotholes and

charges in the wall beneath the left hand bedding plane, all courtesy of Clive North. A few animal bones were recovered from the stream debris in the floor, together with four 17th century pottery shards (dated by the British Museum) and a clay pipe stem.

Haulage to the surface was made easier by the installation of a hand winch, which had already seen service at Thrupe Lane, Viaduct Sink and Longwood Valley Sink. Some of the spoil was used to restore the original contours of the depression, but much of was taken away and spread elsewhere on the farm by Dave Speed.

Fifteen feet in from the foot of the entrance shaft, with the way on straight ahead still less than 6" wide, it was decided to switch attention to the passage floor. Blasting the left hand wall, a shaft was excavated and at a depth of twelve feet, prospects began looking up. Small holes appeared amongst the floor debris and on 24 September a space was uncovered into which it was possible to insert a head. Downdip was choked but directly back towards the entrance was a wider 18" section of rift loosely blocked with broken rock and large cobbles. Up to the left (facing downstream) there was a 6" high extension over what looked to be a large dropped roof block and beyond that a narrow rift with tantalising black spaces in the distance.

These passages almost certainly represent the streamway level associated with the true bottom of the natural cliff face, which was not reached during the JCB excavation. The air in the new hole was fresh and the diggers detected draught pulses probably related to the very breezy weather on the surface.

On Sunday 1 October, following a further bang to improve working dimensions, large amounts of mud, rock and cobbles were cleared from the floor of the lower passage. Working on alone in the evening, Dave Speed continued to probe the floor, unearthing large cobbles - up to a foot long - and almost losing a crowbar through the holes that started to appear. By stockpiling spoil all around the terminal rift, Dave finally uncovered the opening to a significant bedding plane dropping down for 6' or 8' beneath the left hand buttress. It looked as if it might be man-sized.

Unaware of the promising state of the dig, the NHASA contingent turned up on the following Wednesday, 4 October, and joined Dave Speed,

Clive North, Dave Morrison, Graham Bromley and Richard Witcombe in a two and a half hour session which saw fifty two buckets of spoil brought out of the cave. At last Dave Speed, working largely out of sight at the bottom of the 12 drop, pronounced that a man-sized passage was now open for exploration.

The large team trooped down one by one to peer into the bedding plane and all pronounced it to be "promising". Following a short adjournment on the surface, Dave as "cave owner" was given the privilege of leading the exploration party, and after much squirming and snagging of battery and belt buckle, he slid through the entrance squeeze and down an inclined slab into a bedding plane up to 6' wide and 3' high. The rest of the party followed close behind.



What the Dickens! - if you're going to dig a hole, use a big shovel

David 'Tuska' Morrison and Bob Cottle - plant early deep rooted potatoes



Christmas 'Carol' in The Old Curiosity Shop

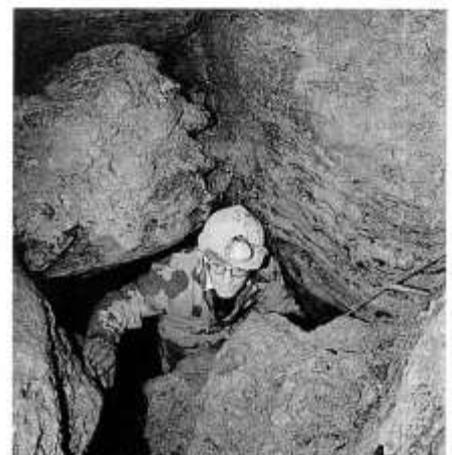


Simon Meade-King, Dave Speed, Bob Cottle and Richard Witcombe - Great Expectations 'four filled'



Clive North - drilling at the end of the Entrance Rift prior to chemical enlargement

Richard Witcombe at the head of Sarcophagus Rift



After 15' or so, the passage swung left and continued as a low crawl past a nest of roughly shaped cave "pearls" and a few formations before enlarging into a short section of walking height passage. Beyond a choked inlet on the right and a small, bouldery high level chamber, the passage closed in to a 6' climb down into a narrow 18" wide rift with a fringe of formations below on the left, some appearing to be flood damaged. Ahead a flat out crawl over silt and rocks led to a small slot through which stones fell for about 15' into what sounded like a sizeable passage, and to the right before the crawl was a parallel rift about 15' high with a small hole in the ruckle floor. Encouragingly, the sound of a stream could be heard from below the boulder floor, although there was no water entering the field culvert.

It was clear that some careful boulder shifting would be necessary to make further progress, and a halt was therefore called to the evening's work. The return to the surface was made easier by a handline rigged on the now very muddy inclined slab at the breakthrough point, soon to be christened Speedway in recognition of the explorer and the swift descent of all who followed.

Sunday 8 October was a warm, sunny day following two days of prolonged heavy rain. A small stream was disappearing into the culvert and this was matched by a stream emerging from under the right hand wall of the Speedway bedding plane and sinking under the stal grill below the 6' drop. A much larger stream could be heard below the terminal boulder choke.

Dave Speed, Dave Morrison and Richard Witcombe, joined later by Bob Cottle, spent the morning shifting boulders and completing a rough sketch survey. By lunchtime, the diggers were looking down a blackened rift, 3' to 4' wide and about 15' deep. One particularly large "coffin slab" threatened the descent and it was decided to adjourn to the surface for a break and a rope.

Joined now by Simon Meade-King and John Hill (NHASA), the party returned to the rift with a tow rope, and the two Daves and John succeeded in hauling back and tying off the great slab. After much gardening of loose material, Dave Morrison clambered down the rift - Sarcophagus Rift - and announced that he was in large passage descending steeply to his right. Four others descended, leaving John above as a safeguard against a boulder collapse into the rift. Later, after a roof inspection

revealed nothing more than the average "hanging deaths", John came down to join the pushing party.

The team followed a small stream down a large clean washed chamber up to 20' wide and 10' high, descending across the strike westwards at about 35 degrees. Decorations were absent apart from the occasional stal flow and short straw, and there were comparatively few boulders on the floor. Like the rift above, there was much evidence of shale in the walls and the void may represent a large washed out shale band.

After 80' or so, the dimensions closed right in and the floor levelled, and just beyond an attractive stal flow, a partial rock choke was encountered in a passage about 2' high and 3' wide. Dave Speed cleared rocks back, and the choke was passed in five minutes. With Bob Cottle in the lead, a potholed, descending tube was followed around several bends for a further 100', where progress was halted by a 12" to 18" high bedding partially filled with water. Bob reported that the roof appeared to rise after about 8', but it was decided to leave pushing it to the following Wednesday.

A large team, included the NHASA diggers, turned up on 11th October and, after a certain amount of tourist activity in the new chamber, Great Expectations, sorted themselves out into various working parties - some to clear more of the mud out of the entrance passage, others to search the upper part of the cave for possible inlets and side passages, and a small (in both senses of the word) team comprising Richard Witcombe, Graham Bromley and Bob Cottle to push the terminal wallow. Dave Pullen, one of the NHASA diggers, had gone underground earlier and had already attempted this crawl but did not push the squeeze on the far side.

Arriving on the scene, Richard Witcombe, followed by Graham Bromley, passed through the flat out wallow and squeezed over a mud bank to emerge ten feet further on in a narrow, heavily decorated cross rift. To the right was a stal choked inlet, while on the left the floor dropped 8' and was just wide enough for a restricted crawl along the bottom of the streamway. On the right hand wall and overhead was a fine collection of pure white flows, curtains and small pagoda formations. After 12' or so, another 5' to 6' pot presented itself below which the constricted rift continued. The roof and right hand wall at this point were covered with so much stal that the passage could not be negotiated without

damage. The way on could be seen to continue for about 15', after which the passage appeared to turn right.

The left hand wall of the rift contained a certain amount of very crumbly black shale, and it looked possible that it could be enlarged by hammer and chisel to save the stal. The name The Old Curiosity Shop was chosen for the passage in continuation of the Dickens theme. Prospecting higher up in the cave failed to reveal any significant side passages.

The next Sunday, 15 October, saw the "small team" return to the lower cave. There had been no significant rain for a week and the cave stream had vanished leaving only puddles. The wallow - christened Uriah Creep - retained its water and proved resistant to attempts at either enlargement or drainage. The floor of the far end squeeze which acts as a dam comprises a thin layer of mud over very hard rock and it seems destined to remain a "sporting" feature.

Graham commenced hammering away at the left hand wall of the terminal squeeze, taking great care not to clout the curtains alongside, and after twenty minutes was able to squeeze along the level floor and down through another corkscrew constriction to emerge in a much larger passage.

Richard and Bob joined him beyond Scrooge's Squeeze with some difficulty and the three set off down a descending, potholed trench - Ebenezer's Escalator - cut into the floor of a dip passage 8' wide and 6' to 10' high. Above the entry point, an upstream continuation was choked by a profusion of stal flows and straws and there were other formations at intervals down the passage.

After 60', the trench widened into a low, level floored chamber and the way on degenerated into a flat out, cobble strewn crawl along the strike. Graham undertook a solo reconnaissance of this passage - Chiropractor Crawl - while the two geriatric members of the team recovered from the exertions of the squeeze.

Twenty feet further on, Graham negotiated an awkward 6' drop into a down dip rift, which he followed in meandering fashion, mainly by crawling, for about 100'. He called a halt at a letter box constriction which would require some chipping away, but he could see slightly larger passage continuing ahead. On his right,

an inlet with gour pools led up for 10' or so to a stal choke.

The party made their way out, with Bob and Richard struggling mightily in the squeezes, and met up with Dave Speed in The Old Curiosity Shop. He had attempted the final squeeze but was too large to get through.

Graham Bromley returned to the cave on Friday 20th October in the company of the young and fit Max Midlen. They attacked the slot with hammer and chisel and managed to widen it sufficiently for Graham to get through, but the squeeze still proved too tight for Max to pass. Graham pressed on alone down a stooping and crawling potholed passage, decorated in parts, for approximately 150', stopping at another tight section. He passed several inlets, including a man-sized passage on the right leading up to two holes in the roof after 15'. A probable ox-bow passage was also noticed but not entered.

Sunday 22 October saw various tourist and photographic tours of the cave, and a trip to bang the letterbox squeeze by Tony Jarratt and Estelle Sandford of the BEC and Graham himself. However, due to the excesses of the Wessex and Grampian dinners and various barrels, a very hungover J-Rat had forgotten the detonators and the party had to content themselves with leaving the battery and bang wire in place. On Monday 23 October, Tony returned to the squeeze and fired a small charge in a Bosch drilled shothole.

In a solo visit on Wednesday 25 October, Graham found that the bang had not significantly enlarged the squeeze, but he passed it again and proceeded to the constriction reached on 20 October. He squeezed through this into another 50' of passage, still meandering downwards but at a slightly steeper angle. He passed under an aven bringing in a few drips before stopping at a further squeeze. Backtracking, he examined the probable oxbow noted on 20 October, and explored it for 20' past a tiny silty chamber to a point where there was a visible link with the main passage on the right and a diggable route straight ahead.

During this period of exploration, work continued with hammer and chisel to enlarge Scrooge's Squeeze, and on Wednesday 1 November a Wessex party comprising Aubrey Newport, Pete Haigh,

Max Midlen, Roz Fielder and Pete Hann attacked this constriction and Graham's letterbox. Unfortunately the attempts at enlargement of this far squeeze resulted in a large flake of rock being levered into a position where it seemed to block the way on.

Sunday 5 November saw two parties working in the cave. A BEC team comprising Tony Jarratt, Richard Blake and Adrian Hole proceeded to the far reaches of the cave to bang the rock flake. Richard found he was able to squeeze past the obstruction and he proceeded beyond Graham's exploration limit. Just a few feet further on, he peered down a tube like passage to see a pool of water with extensive silt banks - a probable sump. On his return, Tony placed a one stick charge on the slab and detonated it from the foot of Ebenezer's Escalator.

Meanwhile, Clive North, assisted by Richard Witcombe, was conducting a video camera experiment in the strike passage close to the Speedway breakthrough point. A miniature camera and lighting unit attached to a number of drain rods was inserted along the bedding plane above the fallen block and guided first into the mouth of a small chamber and then adjusted to look down a rift just beyond the block. A live and very clear picture was transmitted down a cable to the video view finder cocooned in a protected box. Scale could be guessed by reference to what the naked eye could see, and the view suggested man-sized spaces. Unfortunately the flexibility of the drain rods meant that the camera drooped just as it entered the threshold of the chamber, giving a view of a boulder in the floor rather than the way ahead.

The team were sufficiently encouraged by the camera work to consider how best to dig into the new area. Banging the fallen slab would not be an easy option as it appeared to be supporting a number of boulders under the entrance passage and a lower approach was sought. By looking up to left of the Speedway entrance squeeze, black spaces could be seen amongst the rocks. A number of very large cobbles were easily removed, producing a strong outward draught and giving a view into a blackened man-sized rift descending down to the right and out of sight. Although little more digging was needed to break in, the hour was late and it was decided to return fresh on Wednesday evening.

On 8 November, Clive North and Dave Speed quickly dug into the new passage. A squeeze

beneath boulders for 10' led to the convergence point for a number of tight, blackened shaly rifts. Above was a 5' climb into the space seen by the video camera, leading to various inlet rifts which quickly became too tight to follow. Clive climbed up into the roof for a further 12' to a point close to the bottom of the entrance shaft. The only way on was a small hole in the floor of the convergence chamber through which a small rift could be seen leading off.

With Richard Witcombe now present, work started on enlarging this hole. Small rocks were moved with no difficulty, and flakes were chipped away from what was thought to be the bedrock roof above the rift. It became clear that a particular two foot square slab would have to be levered out to make entry possible, and, after mutterings from Dave about the stability of the area, a crowbar was duly inserted. The "bedrock" promptly dropped a small but perceptible amount and the walls and ceiling around vibrated slightly.

Three diggers suddenly decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and gingerly edged their way out of the newly christened Coroner's Inlet. A crowbar was left "psychologically" supporting the roof. From the comparative safety of the Speedway bedding plane, it was decided that the hole in the floor probably did no more than connect with some impassable rifts entering the left hand wall beneath the Speedway boulder.

Meanwhile, a separate party were making their way to the end of the cave. The letterbox squeeze had been totally "eradicated" and was duly christened What Squeeze. Graham Bromley reached the pool seen by Richard Blake on 5 November and entered the water to confirm that it was a sump. Pete Hann and Roz Fielder arrived later, having had to use a lump hammer to pass the narrower sections. The underwater passage seemed to be horizontal and reasonably roomy but there was much silt present and muddy evidence of water backing up for several feet.

Further up the cave, Dave Morrison and Carmen Smith made a token start on the excavation of a choked inlet at the head of Great Expectations, about 12' to the left of the current stream inlet. The latter is an impossibly tight rift but the choked passage seemed wider.

After their retreat from the slumping boulder, the Coroner's Inlet party moved on to examine the side

passage on the right just beyond the cave pearls. It extended for at least 10' at right angles to the main passage but was choked to within a few inches of the roof. A superficial excavation suggested that the passage might not be an inlet as it appeared to drop down a few feet at the end, but serious digging was hampered by the discovery of a floor of cemented cave pearls at the back of the passage.

Richard Witcombe returned to the site on 11 November but after an hour's careful digging concluded that the prospects of a small extension did not justify the almost certain destruction of the pearls. The passage is probably no more than an oxbow leading down to the Sarcophagus Rift area, and the dig was accordingly abandoned.

On Sunday 12 November, Dave Speed and Graham Bromley visited the cave and found very wet conditions after several days of heavy rain. After inserting some wooden shoring beneath the slumping boulders of the Coroner's Inlet series, the two gingerly entered to find the narrow rifts bringing in a lot of water, most of which disappeared into tight rifts off to the left of the Speedway area. This water probably reappears as the tiny stream inlet at the back of Great Expectations, suggesting the possibility of another, albeit very immature, streamway somewhere to the left of the main system.

On the following Wednesday, the digging party peered into Coroner's Inlet to find that the shored area had collapsed leaving part of the right hand wall and roof now lying on the floor. After a careful check, the route through appeared to be marginally safer than before, but the rotten state of the rock in this area and the weight of water hitting it means that this series should be regarded as a risky optional extra for anyone visiting the cave.

There was much less water in the cave than at the weekend, and Graham Bromley and Max Midlen proceeded to the sump to find that it had backed up 6' or 7' above its former level. The possible dig site near the bottom of the oxbow was taking water, but seemed to be no more than another loop off the main passage.

In the meantime, Dave Speed, Kate Powell and Richard Witcombe carried on excavating the choked inlet at the head of Great Expectations, but after 5' of easy digging in gravel fill and cobbles,

large jammed rocks were encountered. The prospects of significant "upstream" passage are not great and do not justify the use of bang in this potentially unstable area. It was decided therefore to abandon the dig.

With most of the loose ends tied up, there remained the question mark over the sump. Was it perhaps a short, perched sump, or was it something nasty and terminal. On Sunday 17 December 1995, Andy Legg of the MNRC, supported by Adrian Hall, Malcolm Nicol and James Thackray, inserted himself into the murk with hand held kit, and descended a low bedding plane at a shallow angle for about 25'. At this point, he felt silt all around him and returned to the surface.

Whilst the Coroner's Inlet area will probably yield a little more upstream passage, the prospects for any significant extensions now seem at an end. The cave as it stands provides a varied and quite demanding trip, with good formations in a number of places. Where these occur in tight passageways, great care should be taken to avoid damaging them.

Cave Statistics

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| NGR: | 6012 4627 |
| Altitude: | 656' |
| Length: | 950' |
| Depth: | 305' |

Access Arrangements

The cave is locked and the key is held by Dave Speed at Little Crapnell Farm, situated at the end of the concrete track which passes the cave.

Cavers wishing to visit should call at the farm for the key. Parties are limited to four, one of whom should have visited the cave before. No carbide lights should be used and great care should be taken to avoid damaging or muddying the formations.

Do not park anywhere on the concrete track as it is used by milk tankers and wide farm machinery. There is space for several cars on the grass verges of the lane to Dinder.

25 years ago

Journal No. 133, Vol. 11 February 1971

CLUB NEWS – p179

We have the largest membership of a caving club in Britain, which is surprising in some respects as the Club's main sphere of activities lies in one of the smaller caving areas. Mendip must surely hold the record for the number of man-hours spent trying to open up the underworld, as scarcely any nook or cranny remain now which have yet to be probed, and the law of diminishing returns seems to have set in. But on paper there are many more miles to be added to the underground scene, the problem is how to get into it!

The club is buying a quantity of boiler suits which should be on sale shortly at 37p each at the HQ.

Committee Abstracts – p179/180

The problem of clearing the Hillgrove site would be carried on to the next meeting as the ground was unfit due to frost.

Tony Dingle was authorised to purchase 100 boiler suits for the club.

Mike York was authorised to spend £20 on the book scheme he was to run for the club.

Allan Green was to install an automatic flush to the Gent's Urinal at the HQ. He (Wally Willcocks) was to arrange the building of 500ft of ladder, and purchase 600ft of rope.

At their last meeting, the Committee established a Working Party to investigate and promote the conservation of Mendip limestone features

At this early stage, no definite plans or policies have been formulated, but the type of work possible includes the compilation of a list of sites suitable for scheduling as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, the systematic and periodic investigation of quarries, the protection as far as possible of important features from destruction or violation, the systematic cleansing of caves etc.

CLUB EVENTS – p181/182

Various slide shows on:- Mexico and Guatemala (Carl Pickstone), Trans Sahara (Phil Davies), Peru (Dennis Kemp) and Slovenia 1955 (Jim Hanwell).

Club trips to Dan-Yr-Ogof, Lamb Leer, Agen Allwedd, Yorkshire, Portland, August Hole and Little Neath, plus a photographic trip to Llethrid Swallet and a family trip to Devon with leaders including Bob Pyke, John Jones, Mike York, John Alder and Tim Reynolds.

The Friday Club our major disaster so far was the trip to the Ifold Series in Eastwater, for we missed Hunters by half an hour. More haste and more speed in future.

Hunters Hole on 1st January was a great success. Howard and Richard did the first part and stayed in Hunters all evening leaving the lower classes to get lower still.

Shatter Passage surely leaves everyone shattered. It has more unusual features than most Mendip caves — 'U' tubes, ducks etc and should be a must for any aspiring masochist.

I have graded the trips in this list so that new members will know what degree of competence is required. The restrictions on novices are for the sole reason that speed is essential to cave and then reach Hunters before closing time.

ARTICLES

Cavers and Conservation - by Richard Witcombe - p187
The Caves of Cumberland - by Glenn Tomkinson - p199
More African Caves - by B L Hansford - p203

REVIEWS – p192 and p207 - reviewed by J D Hanwell and M D Newson

"Geological Highlights of the West Country" compiled by W A McFayden
"Reflections by 'Alfie' with drawings by 'Jok'. A look at the 'Spelaedoes' and other caving sages"
"Some Problems of a Karst Area in the Eastern Transvaal, South Africa" - by Margaret E Marker
"The Limestone Pavements of the North Crop of the South Wales Coalfield" by T M Thomas
"The Story of Wookey Hole" by E J Mason
"Limestone Morphology in Ireland" edited by N Stephens and R E Glasscock

A Notable Success for the MRO - p213

Mr Soffe had never caved before. He was lightly clad. In the tight rift at the head at the head of the Lower Oxbow (Upper Series) his 14 stone 6' 3" tall) became jammed The MRO were alerted and Howard Kenney raised a party at 13.30.

..... very pessimistic about the chances of rescuing Soffe ... although ropes had been secured fore and aft. More glucose, together with chocolate and hot soup were sent down.

..... Wells Red Cross provided 10 hot water bottles which were insulated with fibreglass and sent underground with gas cookers to heat replacement water Inner tubes and Lilos were sent in because the rescuers hoped to jack up Soffe's body by inflation.

Soffe was given muscle relaxant William Stanton enlarged the passage from below while ropes and hauling techniques were used from above. By 22.30 Soffe had not budged.

However, at 23.00 came reports that he had been fractionally moved
Soffe was brought out in an exposure suit ...the cave was cleared by 01.00.

This rescue proved more difficult than envisaged It is a tribute to the persistence of those underground and the willingness of surface workers of all organisations to co-operate that Dudley Soffe is still alive.

WCC logbook extracts

18.11.95 - Goatchurch and Sidcot Swallet

Andy, Debs, Cookie, Paul and Owen

A tight squeeze even for me! Spotted a new dig that someone has been pushing. On the left just before the drain pipe there is a 10' ladder down to a horizontal low passage half full of water I would describe it as cold wet and squalid but my companions who went first described the water beautifully blue and "well worth a look". Ha! The second dig is much more interesting; past the dexion climb beyond the end of the drain pipe, which I have just discovered is written up in the latest Mendip Underground so you can read about it there.

19.11.95 - Ogof Draenen

Tuska, Cookie, Debs, Andy, Owen and Paul

Went to Draenen and had a look on the surface near the Wessex series. Chelsea have been digging there for 3 weeks, just above Dead Rat Chamber. Had a bit of a dig further down stream until it got dark.

18.11.95 - Lost John's

Dom, Richy Websell, Male. F, Kev Gannon, Bob Pike, Ken Dawe and 7 others

Dom, Rich and 1 CPC man in Monestary route down to LFMC.

Dom and Rich up Lost Pot inlet

Malc and Kev Cathedral route to LFMC.

Bob & Ken Centipede route

Some interesting rigging due to Mr Foyle forgetting a cross over rope for the monestary team? Still, all good fun.

18.11.95 - Ogof Draenen

Mark, Les, Suntan, Mark (Bean) & Mad Al

A working trip - well it was supposed to be. Found a 7m pitch on the way to the end of the Wessex stuff. Dropped into 0.5 - 1km of outstanding pretty passages, including an active stream. Surveyed out well happy. Called it the Land Down Under - well it's down and under. 12 hrs.

25.11.95 - Ogof Draenen

Mark, Cookie, Andy M, Mak & Tonic

Went in to both the 23m pitch and check the continuation of the pretty passage at the end of the extensions. The North continuation went about 100m. Still very pretty. A 30' pitch was found but needs gardening before dropping. Surveyed back and put the 2 bolts in the 23m pitch. 11.5 hrs.

25.11.95 - Swildons

Tall Graham, Jim, Debs, Samira & Gareth

Digging in Hensler's Dig. Gained a couple of inches

9.12.95 - Swildon's to Sidcot U-Tube

Rich Websell, Debs, Cookie, Vern & Rosie

Bimble around Swildon's to see how the entrance has changed & for something to do late on a Sat. afternoon. Down to Airless Oxbow then in amongst the mud (so Rosie was happy!) to the sump - crystal clear but high water levels so didn't bother going through.

PS Malc should've been on this trip but somehow managed to bring his dustbin full of rubbish instead of his barrel - classic excuse!

10.12.95

It is official. We are now the WCCC - the Wessex Cave & Computer Club. For more details contact Cookie, Nick Williams or Vern.

13.12.95 - Rhino Rift

Dom & Martin Ellis (SMCC)

Right hand route pl&2 then final pitch left hand route. Noted five flying creatures? at various points in shaft so cave quietly?!?!?!?

17.12.95

M & J Hewins to Mr Avelines for photographic experiments - watch this space!

22.12.95 - Allt Nam Uamh Stream Cave Mak, Jo and Roy (Mak's bruv.)

Braved the blizzard & horizontal driving sleet to get to the cave. Did most of the cave, wandered around, went through Parallel Squeeze/Crawl - not for fat buggers. On the way back went in Otter Hole - also not for fat buggers as Mak said; "Thin people shouldn't dig and tall people shouldn't rig". Had to turn back when faced with a big puddle which we would have had to get soaked in. Unfortunately we didn't manage to get snowed into the pub at Ullapool.

22.12.95 - Thrupe Lane Swallet

Les & Dom

Down to Cowsh (Crawl) Duck!! & on to Slither Pot. Slither Pot gone and a sump put in its place - cave was a tad wet (see advert on next page). Surfaced to find more rain promised and returned to Upper Pitts. Just avoided extra deluge.

**LOST - IN THRUPE LANE
SWALLET**

*Slither Pot. Classic 90' pitch.
Gone missing.
If anybody finds it can they return it.
No reward offered.*

25.12.95 - Flood Entrance to Gaping Ghyll

Andy, Debs, Cookie, Damien & Viv

Reached GG in darkness. On the way back up the big Pitch, the 1st deviation decided it was bored of its surroundings and leapt at the space by Debs' left shoulder as she prussiked up. No call of "below" was sounded, but fortunately, on hearing Debs yell "Oh My God" Andy dodged out of the way.

In their way back up the first pitch (rift pitch) Viv reached the rebelay on a ledge, detackled all her SRT gear and walked along the rift & couldn't work out why she couldn't find the entrance. It was up that bit of rope, Viv!

28.12.95 - MRO Callout @ 0100 hours to Grotty Hole (near St Cuthberts Swallet)

Receive a call from Brian Prewer. Can Wessex attend a callout at above location? Dispatched a team to investigate, found 4 distressed cavers (& dog) cowering near entrance having fled from fireball ruckle & unstable BEC members. Evacuated distressed cavers to Upper Pitts for comfort and sanctuary. Kept overnight for observation.

28.12.95

Chris W, Joy W, Janet Halliday, James Smith

Sought refuge from Belfrey, some nice people from the Wessex came round and rescued us at about 0100 hours from the Pyro's.

Thanks to Debs, John and the others for making us welcome, nice change from the BEC, application form in the post!!

28.12.95 - Longwood

James, John, Oz, Graham & Debs

Four Knockhundred occasional & one Wessex made it down the entrance series as far as the letterbox where the fat old sod had no bloody chance of getting through and no hope of going out backwards round the elbow. With the help of James managed to get turned round and made it out to the entrance. Debs took Graham and Oz down as far as the main chamber and returned with no problems. The Fat Sod is now restricted to the larger chamber of GB and a bit of Swildons provided everybody gets out of his way.

29.12.95 - GB

Three Knockhundreds - *John, James & Oz* - in GB to see if John (TFS above) could get stuck. He didn't, but his light went out. James & Oz went on round & back.

30.12.95 - Ogof Draenen Wessex Extensions

Dominic, Damian, Vivian, Andy, Dave (token Shepton member) and Chuck

Farther extensions in Land Down Under approx 200m passage. Lowish phreatic stuff, however small way on still going. The end of the main passage (Ponderosa) was passed by pushing a technical squeeze which required the removal of lamp belt, etc (This squeeze is only passable to thin cavers) to reach a large swirl chamber with a superb white calcite boss (12ft by 10ft approx). All had great fun and exited back through the iced and snowed up entrance after 11 1/2hrs underground. This was followed by a nightmare journey back to Mendip. 10 out of 10 to Damian for staying awake.

1.1.96 - Traditional New Years Day trip - OFD.

Various trips to suit various appetites. *Vivian, Damian, Mark, Les and Max* had a rip-roaring good time doing a bit of pretties sight-seeing, some cave running, some rift dancing, some slithery belly wriggling and some right-on stream-jogging. A+ Our friendly cave elf entertained us with mischievous disappearing and reappearing tricks (Hoo! Hoo!) We almost lost this nymph off the roof rack on the ride back to the hut.

Andy, Chuck, Mak and Jo apparently had a good time as well in Upper Fossil passages.

4.1.96 - Swildon's

Damian and Vivian

Took some photos, admired the beautiful Christmas tree - photo-sensitive twinkle lights worked beautifully. I hope my strobe triggered them fast enough to get them on film! The water was apparently low. We did still manage to make good use of our wet suits. We took a side trip down Blue Pencil and took a gander at sumps 3 and 4. Nice stream passage down there! We continued around the circuit route and then sump 1. That's quite an interesting trip for a California caver who hangs out in warm dry caves whenever possible. The sump was a nice little adrenaline rush.

4.1.96 - Charterhouse

Mark, Mark, Damian and Viv

One cave a day isn't enough. Damian and I were back from Swildon's long enough to grab a sandwich and change from wetsuits to fleeces and

oversuits before heading off to Charterhouse. Nice formations. Thanks for taking us Mark.

6.1.96 - Swildon's

Andy, Cookie, Ian and Maurice

Down to the old 40' to recover the Christmas tree and remove decorations. Hauling out tree was good rescue practice. Victim now making a full recovery in garden. Song composed for the occasion:

*"On the twelfth day of Christmas
Yorkie sent to me:*

- 12 committee whinging
- 11 diggers digging
- 10 riggers rigging
- 9-ty cavers drinking
- 8 sofas burning
- 7 members moaning
- 6 scouts drowning
- 5 Ni-cad cells
- 4 carbide lamps
- 3 shower cells (not including the ladies preference shower)
- 2 cows tails
and a bat in a Christmas tree"

13.1.96 - Holcombe Quarry

Rob, Malc, Mike

CDG Training dive with the boys' new secret weapon. After the dive, Rob had a little problem and Malc's concern was noted: you stupid *!z* you could have hit you head on that rock! The rock was undamaged.

21.1.96 - Manor Farm

'Nice but damp' and 'the last boy scout'

Took a good trip into Manure Swallet alias Manor Farm. Impressed with the whole cave, "God! its steep!" Still some very nice formations (intact!). Beautiful curtain. NASA gallery, quite impressive, although not impressed with the marauding shrimps (possibly another book for Shaun Huston, author of "slugs!")

24.1.96 - Swildons Short Round reversed

Dom

Taking in Swildons 4 streamway via Blue Pencil. Started down Shatter Pot but flickering light suggested exit wise. Note WCC ladder on Shatter Pot still, however it appears to be in reasonable condition??

27/28.1.96 - Derbyshire Weekend

Well?! ask Les

This story will run and run - an epic by which all other epics will be judged!!!

Club diary

1996

March

- 3rd WCC Committee meeting
- 8/9/10th Wales Meet – Blaenavon
- 16th NCA AGM, Stafford
- 16th Box Stone Mines
- 23/24th SRT Training meet

April

- 5th-8th Yorkshire Meet
- 20th Slaughter Stream Cave
- 21st WCC Committee meeting
- 27/28th Mendip Meet

May

- 4/5/6th Wales Meet – WSG
- 11th CDG AGM
- 18th Banwell Bone & Stalactite Caves
- 24th-27th West Cornwall Meet

June

- 1st Mendip Meet
- 2nd WCC Committee meeting
- 8th Wessex Challenge
- 14th-16th Devon Meet - Buckfastleigh
- 15th BCRA Forest of Dean Seminar II
- 22/23rd Mendip Meet
- 28th-30th Yorkshire Meet

July

- 6th ? Cricket Match & BBQ
- 13/14th North Wales meet
- 20th ? Redhouse Swallet

August

- 3rd-9th 1996 NSS Convention, Colorado

October

- 11-13th Assynt, Scotland

November

- 1st/2nd Derbyshire Meet

1997

August

- 6th-20th UIS International Congress of Speleology, La Chaux de Fonds Switzerland