





# THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

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PRESIDENT	RICHARD KENNEY
VICE PRESIDENTS	PAUL DOLPHIN GRAHAM BALCOMBE
CHAIRMAN	DAVE MORRISON Windrush 42/45 Upper Bristol Rd Clutton BS18 4RH 01761 452437
SECRETARY	VERN FREEMAN 33 Alton Rd Fleet Hants GU13 9HW 01252 629621 101642.1435@compuserve.com
TREASURER & MRO CO-ORDINATOR	MARK HELMORE 01761 416631
EDITOR	ROSIE FREEMAN 33 Alton Rd Fleet Hants GU13 9HW 01252 629621 101642.1435@compuserve.com
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	DAVE COOKE 33 Laverstoke Gardens Roehampton London SW15 4JB 0181 788 9955 dave@alchemy.co.uk
CAVING SECRETARY, TRAINING OFFICER & C&A OFFICER	LES WILLIAMS 01749 679839
NORTHERN CAVING SECRETARY	KEITH SANDERSON 015242 51662
GEAR CURATOR	ANDY MORSE
HUT ADMIN. OFFICER	MAX MIDLEN
HUT WARDEN	ANDY LADELL
COMMITTEE MEMBER & LIBRARIAN	MIKE DEWDNEY-YORK
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WCC Headquarters, Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane  
Priddy, Somerset, BA5 3AX  
Telephone 01749 672310

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

# Caving News

## General

The **12th International Congress of Speleology** being held at La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland from 10th - 17th August 1997, is now cheaper with the change in currency rate - currently approx. 2CHS/£. See last Journal (Vol 23 No 252) for further details.

## Derbyshire

A gate has now been installed on the entrance level of **Ricklow Cave** about 3m in. It is a hinged gate with a self-locking mechanism and can be opened from inside or from outside by reaching through - no key or spanner is required. For the present it is intended that the gate will stay that way so that access for cavers is unimpeded but there is no risk of passers-by entering accidentally. The position will be kept under review.

The price per person per trip to **Giant's Hole** has now risen to £2. Problems have arisen from what may possibly have been an attempt to dig out the floor in Giants Windpipe - the mud pushed to the side blocked the drain holes and turned the duck into a 20ft sump! This is being cleared but if you have been doing this or any other work in the cave recently, please contact DCA.

Mr Mansfield retired and the end of September and the new tenants at the farm are Mr and Mrs Perry. For the time being, access to **Waterways Swallet** remains under the old system: there is no need to call at the farm, just use the special offroad parking place.

It is not necessary to telephone in advance for permission to visit **Oxlow Cave**, but, in case of emergencies, the NEW number for the Farm is: 01433 621953.

The Meccano Passage ladder should, by now, be removed in **Knotlow**. DMM hangers will be placed to allow a pull-through to reach Meccano Passage from the Knotlow side.

If you're visiting **Peak Cavern**, why not do your bit for cave conservation! Due to digging, scientific and other activities in this cave, there is an accumulation of rubbish which is being piled up at various collection points ready for taking out of the cave. It would be appreciated if visiting clubs could help move this debris in the direction of the entrance.

## Mendip

DMM's have now been installed in **Priddy Green Sink** for pull-through trips, but only via Bladder Pot route, not Main's and Great Aven route.

## Devon and Cornwall

At **Baker's Pit** there has been a report of a substantial amount of debris in the area just after Platform Chamber on the route to Plymouth Chamber. It looked as if there had been quite a substantial roof fall in the area although there did not seem to be any poised boulders.

## Yorkshire

A considerable amount of work has been carried out in **Ireby Fell Cavern** beginning with the new DMM's. The loose boulders in the entrance series have been stacked and the area cleaned up. Please keep to the centre of the passage.

An access change for **Skirwith Cave** has previously been noted. However there is currently concern about litter being deposited at the parking area and cars blocking the gateway. If you visit the cave, please ensure that your car is not causing a problem; the owner will clamp vehicles restricting access to the gateway.

Please remember that when visiting caves, ensure that you follow the **correct route** to the cave. Wandering aimlessly across the fell will aggravate the landowner and may restrict access. The amount of **litter** and **spent carbide** that is being deposited in some caves is unacceptable; in certain caves, spent carbide has been dumped within metres of the entrance. This is **pollution**; it is unsightly and it damages the cave environment.

There is still a problem with **thefts from cars**. The best advice is to leave as little as possible in your vehicle - hiding valuables is not a deterrent.

## Wales

A draft management plan for **Dan-Yr-Ogof** is currently being drawn up and views from cavers were sought at a slide show and workshop held recently in Abercrave - await further news.

Steps are being taken to publicise that carbide is not to be used in **Agen Allwedd**.

# Club News

## Wessex People

Congratulations to **Amanda & Dave Morrison** on the birth of their son, born just before the Committee meeting on Sunday 19th January.

Please note the following changes of address:  
**Nick Williams & Anna Whatley** have moved to:  
The Hall, Great Hucklow, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 8RG. Tel: 01298 873807

**Fez & Heather Ferris** are now at:  
214 Hull Rd., Hessele, East Riding, HU13 9NH Tel:  
01482 642862

Thanks to **Paul Hadfield & Dooley** for their card to the Wessex at Christmas reminding us of the trip in the summer to Prince of Wales Island. For anyone interested, the contact numbers are:  
Tel: 250-636-2302  
Internet: phadfiel@vines.gems.gov.bc.ca

## Hut News

The **drying room** is now **completed** and boasts ample heating and hanging space, a spin-dryer and de-humidifier. The long-dripping **showers** have also been **repaired**, as well as the shower in the ladies dorm and the ladies' preference shower. Thanks to all involved, particularly Les Williams, Mark Helmore and Max Midlen.

At Upper Pitts, a 'put you up' **SRT rig** is under construction from scaffolding which can easily be attached/removed from the fire escape on the west wall of the hut.

## Club Trips & Events

There will be a meeting for all those interested in going to **Slovenia** this **summer** at Upper Pitts on Sunday 9th March at 3pm. Also, those who are interested, but cannot make the meeting, could you please let either Les Williams or Dave Cooke know - phone numbers at the front of the Journal.

On the weekend of 19th/20th April there will be a **CSCC Training event** which will consist of 4 half-day training sessions. These cost a nominal charge of £5 and need to be booked in advance on a first come, first served basis. On the Saturday evening there will be an evening of fun & jollities including SRT races & other silly games.

## TRAINING SESSIONS

*Andy Sparrow, as CSCC Training Officer, has volunteered his services for training on certain caving techniques. These sessions are open to all Wessex members and will be run by Andy at Upper Pitts, starting at 7.30pm.*

8th March	Lifelines
10th May	Bolts
7th June	Knots

Please show your support for these lectures

A Wessex trip to **County Clare** is currently being organised for **Easter**, visiting The Burren in Doolin. The trip will be arranged for the week before Easter: Saturday 22nd March - Monday 31st March (inc). Further details from Les Williams, but if you are interested, please let him know as soon as possible so that the accommodation can be arranged.

*I'm told that the caving is excellent in Ireland, but apparently the Guinness is better!* (Ed)

On 26th/27th April, there will be the annual **Wessex Practice Rescue Weekend**. The weekend will consist of a rescue practice on one day and (hopefully) an above-ground 'play with kit' session on the other day. Please show your support for this - you never know when you may need the knowledge/expertise of your colleagues, or they may need help from you!

On Saturday 21st June there will be a Music Nite with the theme of a **Bad Taste, Fetish & Phobia Evening** organised by the Wessex which will be open to all. Make a note in your diaries - further details of this will be in the next Journal, due out mid-April.

## Other News

The owners of **Tynings Riding Stables** have very kindly offered cavers to park their cars at the stable for only £1 when caving at GB and Charterhouse - it's a lot cheaper than a broken windscreen!

The Club is rapidly expanding with the addition of **8 new members** recently - see page 28 for details.

# Unpaid Members

The following members' subscriptions are outstanding. If you have paid recently, apologies, but this list is correct as of 20th January 1997:

Mr G Parsons & Miss Samira Abbas	Richard Hooper
Tim Atkinson	Michael Hyland
Clive Barlow	Damian Ivereigh
David Barnett	Andrew Jack
Hazel Barton	Alan Jenkins
Andrew Bliss	Ms L Crockett & Mr G Kaye
Douglas & Clare Boomer	Tony King
Ray Borrett	Mark Lanney
Mr H Busby	Vince Lydon
Peter Camilleri	David Meredith
Russell Carter	Chris Milne
Noel Cleave	Anthony Neal
James Cobbett	Keith Parker
Colin Cooke	Jeff Phillips
Paul Cooper	Bob Pyke
Martin Cross	Jamie Rawlings
Ms J Westcott & Mr N Dallman	Adrian Savidge
Barry Davies	Dominic Sealy
Steve Deacon	Malcolm Silcock
John Deal	Willie Stanton
Neil Fay	Paul Stillman
Tim Feltham	Don Thomson
Milton Fenton	Ian Timney
Stuart Genders	Mr G Tudgay
Peter Haigh	John Venn
John Hanwell	Mr G Willis
Richard Hathway	Mark Wildman
Emma Heron	Mr & Mrs B Wilkinson
	Martyn Wise

The following Journal subscriptions are also outstanding:

Tony Boycott	Tony Jarratt
Iain Buchanan	Graham Mullan
Nick Hawes	Jeff Price

The subscription rates are:

single members	25.00
joint members (1 vote)	31.25
joint members (2 votes)	43.75
senior citizen rate	8.75
food box	2.50
locker	5.00

To renew your membership, please send a cheque with your name, address, tel. no. and details of the rates paid, to the Membership Secretary - address at the front of the Journal.

# Yorkshire Meets -1997

## February

8th	County Pot
9th	Link Pot – Lancaster Hole

## March

9th	Big Meanie/Deaths Head Pot
16th	Long Drop Cave

## April

12th	Stream Passage Pot - Disappointment Pot
13th	Long Kin West

## May

10th	Lancaster Hole - Top Sink
11th	Cow Pot – Wretched Rabbit

## June

14th	Gingling Hole
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## July

12th	Car Pot
13th	Hammer Pot

## September

13th	Birks Fell
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## October

11th	Pen y Ghent Pot
12th	Little Hull Pot

## November

22nd	Rumbling Hole
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## December

6th	Stream Passage Pot - Flood Entrance
7th	Long Kin East - Rift Pot
30th	Notts Pot
31st	Lost Johns

If you wish to take part in any of the trips listed above, please contact:

Keith Sanderson  
Heather View, Newby, Nr Clapham  
Via Lancaster, LA2 8HR  
Tel: 015242 51662

# Summer in Slovenia

Paul Callister

There had been suggestions before summer for a caving trip abroad. France seemed a good option based on the fact that I had a caving guide book of the Vercors written in English. However, at Easter, whilst caving in Yorkshire with the Wessex Cave Club, I first heard about their plans for an expedition to the former Northern Yugoslav province of Slovenija.

This now independent state is desperate to shake off its old communist image and prefers to align itself to the West than be associated with Eastern Europe. Leaving its Balkan neighbours to bash the hell out of each other, Slovenija is busy perfecting the art of ripping off the German tourist. Situated on the "Sunny side of the Alps" (we beg to differ!) with a population of 2 million, it is about the size of Wales, but with less sheep! Almost half its area is covered in trees which made cave location a little ... challenging! Most of Slovenija is made of cave-producing limestone. Although some 5000 caves are already logged, it is accepted that the potential for cave discovery is barely touched. The caver's dream is to discover new cave ...

Back in the real world, the Wessex CC were after willing cavers for a reconnaissance trip to Slovenija with an idea to mount an exploratory trip in summer 1997. We were willing. Besides a brief excursion to Ireland none of us three Coventry cavers (Cal, Keir and LB) had caved abroad. Primarily, we were to make contact with Professor Šušteršič of Ljubljana University, an expert on karstology - the study of limestone geomorphology. Through him our aim was to be allocated our own search area for the following year. The practical side of the trip was to investigate the local area, the camping facilities, useful lingo, local talent, where to get money with a dodgy credit card, which pubs had lock-ins and discovering the fearful reputation of illegally made slivovitch (plum brandy). It would be hard work!! In terms of caving, we would have the opportunity to visit some of the popular cave systems so that we'd have suggestions for anyone next year who didn't fancy tramping around a humid, mosquito infested forest in the vague chance of finding a grubby hole which might yield new cave.

So I informed my dad that we would be using his car and proceeded to get spares, replace tyres, seal the radiator, change the oil, have the tracking done, tie the mascot to the mirror and have a tow bar

fitted. We got caving insurance, booked the ferry, bought currency and gathered equipment. We decided to take a trailer for the substantial amount of caving and camping kit. This had to be collected from LB's parents in Devon. It was a fine trailer, big and blue. We decided to buy a tarpaulin after Keir almost lost his caving kit on the M4. The planning wasn't perfect. We set off on Friday the 30th August with one days tax left and a green card which didn't cover us for Slovenija. Oh well!

By the time Keir and I picked up LB from Northampton the trailer was already looking full. Cookie's place in Roehampton looked like it had been ransacked. His 'packing' spread over most of the house. The trailer suddenly didn't seem so big as we emptied it for the night. We drilled our helmets in preparation for carbide lamps and split the currency as I was not keen on being in sole possession of over £1000 of Francs and Deutschmarks. At 3am we went to bed whilst Cookie continued packing. At 5am he woke us up and zombie-like we packed the trailer and began the 2000km (1250mile) journey to Slovenija.

The ferry was at 8am. We arrived at 8am. We smiled apologetically at the check-in then raced round Dover terminal to be the last vehicle to embark. The crossing was uneventful. We met Les, the other Wessex CC caver (Cookie is WCC), his wife Wendy and kid Chris. They were in another car with trailer. The idea was to travel in loose convoy. In reality this was very loose indeed. We arranged to meet in the first parking area off the ferry. We didn't. They got off first, we got off last, they took the wrong turning, we missed the parking area and they had the map for the campsite in Slovenija. I drove, the other three fell asleep. Keir and I had been clubbing on Thursday night, LB had been partying, Cookie was up all the previous night and all of us had been at work on Friday. I was the only one to see France. They didn't miss much. They slept as we crossed into Belgium and dozed still when Les finally caught us up. We stopped at a service station and still forgot to ask Les for the map. LB drove and I got my chance to get neck ache and dribble down my front. In Belgium, a detour took us past 'Les Grottes des Hans'. Ah ha! Our first cave in Europe! OK so it was an open-air tram trip in, guided tour of the cave and boat trip out but it was very nice. There was the usual 'fantastic' formations with predictable names - 'Tower of Pizza', 'Macaroni', 'Winter

Palace' etc. A 'short' 20minute audio visual display afterwards had at least three of us dozing. Yet again we forgot to ask Les for the map. We had arranged a rendezvous for cheap petrol in Luxembourg. But I fell asleep and forgot to tell Cookie to stop. The next time we saw Les et al was in Slovenija. We continued on to Strasbourg.

Adam is an ex-Coventry Caver. He met Marie, his French girlfriend, on a trip in 1992. They got married on Glastonbury Tor in July and now live in Strasbourg. He had rung me on the previous Thursday. The telephone conversation went like this:

*"Cal? It's Adam here. Could you send me a copy of the photos you took at the wedding?"*

*"Yes, no problem Adam. I'll bring them round on Saturday."*

*"Pardon?"*

*"Yes, I'll pop round about tea-time."*

*"err....duh!"*

We arrived at 11pm and emptied the trailer into Adam and Marie's modest flat. For this they rewarded us with beer, addictive nibbles and a handsome curry. Once fed we found a pub with a lock-in before strolling around 'La Petite France' in the rain. Back at the flat we further complicated our sleeping patterns by staying up till 5am playing 'Cheat'. The game proved inconclusive as knowing each other well enough we were paranoidly suspicious throughout.

In the meantime (we found out later) Les and family had waited an hour or two in Luxembourg, before taking a slow road to Strasbourg and stopping the night in a lay-by just over the German border a few miles from us. However, whereas they struck camp and were on the road by 8am, we managed a breakfast of 'merguez' at midday and set off at around two in the afternoon. After all, we were on holiday!

We crossed the nearby German border. Within a few hundred metres we were much surprised to see a camel munching at the verge! Next we saw an elephant! If it wasn't for the sighting of a Big Top and other circus paraphernalia I would have turned the car round and gone back to France for the sake of our sanity. Other than this, Germany was pretty uneventful. The German drivers were thankfully calm in comparison to the Frogs. With the traffic jams as well, it was like being back home. We attempted to dredge up old school German lessons and never did work out the meaning of a large sign depicting an orange, coffin-shaped arrow.

The Austrian Alps are beautiful. I know. I went there when I was 16. Unfortunately, it was dark by the time we got there. A detour into Salzburg was cancelled for the same reason and we ploughed on towards Slovenija. We passed through 28km of tunnels as we wound through the Alps constituting the longest underground trip of the holiday. The finale was the 8km long 'Karawanken' Tunnel (the Germans have a wonderful way with words) leading us to the Slovenian frontier. Apparently, Les had had to pay £30 for a green card at this border some hours before. We didn't, though from now we were uninsured until we left the country. It may have been worse as, having been waved on at the first window of the customs booth, I began to drive off not realising there was a second check. At a motorway toll booth a few miles further LB was surprised to be saluted by the cashier he'd just paid. We had heard a rumour that any young foreign men were considered to be mercenaries in the Balkan war. We hoped they would accept a polite refusal.

Slovenija seemed civilised enough. Ljubijana, a typical European city. We arrived at Logatec, the town in the address we had. The place was deserted. It was 1:30am Monday morning. The consequence of not getting the map off Les had finally materialised. The address was 'Laze 6B, Logatec, Slovenija'. We split up looking for a road called Laze. In the railway station we found life and finally one of three guards who could speak English. Apparently Laze was not a road but a village some 6km from Logatec. We drove up several roads but without luck though we had been within 2km at one point. We decided to camp out. We drove up a quiet road which petered out into a dirt track, pulled in and pitched the tents at the side of the track. A bite to eat - a good idea. We were waiting for the pasta to cook when an almighty roaring, then scraping, crashing and finally a mighty squealing announced the passage of an 18-wheel arctic hurtling down the track. We were a tad surprised. Our first lesson in Slovenija was never assume an unmetalled road is quiet. Another truck woke us at 5am and by seven a steady stream of traffic heralded the Slovenian rush hour.

After an interrupted night we found the tourist information office in Logatec and found Laze on a map. It was easy of course. In Laze the roads had no names. '6B' was simply a house number in the village. We found '5', '6', '6A' and by deduction found '6B' half a kilometre up a rough track. We had eventually made it to 'SpeleoCamp', a campsite and bunkhouse run by a local caver. We swapped travelling stories with Les and perused our home for the next two weeks. A pleasant field surrounded by

forest with a shower block and caving kit cleaning area. There was a cabin we could use with a kitchen, common room and cellar. The only other campers were five Portuguese cavers.

We unloaded and went back to Logatec. Changed money, bought provisions, latched at local school girls and filled the car with the cheapest petrol in Europe (40p/litre leaded). Supermarket prices were disappointingly similar to Britain, though beer and wine were cheap (35p for 0.5litre of beer, £1.90 for bottle of Merlot). So we had the important things sorted. In the late afternoon we went to explore Planinsko Polje close to the camp. A 'polje' is a typical feature of Karst landscape, an enclosed valley which annually floods from the caves around the edge of the valley. The water drains back down the same holes leaving a flat fertile plain which is popular among the local farming population. We found a few of these sinks and did a fair amount of thicket caving looking for more. The place was pleasant. Flat green meadows with steep, forested valley sides.

Back at camp we met Franc Facija, the campsite owner. He directed us to the local bar where we drank his recommended brew (a Slovenian 'Mickey Mouse' called a 'Light and Dark') and perused the map he had drawn for us showing the location of nearby caves. And there we sat, and drank and talked of all the caving we would do in the next couple of weeks ...

*(To be continued)*

## **SLOVENIA 1997**

### **FANCY A HOLIDAY / CAVING EXPEDITION TO SLOVENIA?**

*The Wessex are planning to visit 2 areas of exploration in Slovenia this summer from:*

**Saturday 26th July to Saturday 9th August**

*If this article has whetted your appetite, why not come along and find out more - a meeting has been arranged at Upper Pitts on:*

*Sunday 9th March at 3pm*

*If you are interested, but are unable to attend the meeting, could you please let either:*

*Les Williams or Dave Cooke know*

*Contact phone numbers are at the front of the Journal.*

## **Slovenijan Diary**

### **Friday 30 August 1996**

Keir and Cal pick up Andy LB from Northampton  
All three drive to Cookies in Roehampton

### **Saturday 31 August 1996**

Keir, Cal, LB and Cookie up at stupid hour to drive to Calais  
Catch ferry in nick of time  
Meet Les, Wendy and little Chris  
Visit 'Grottes des Hans' Belgium  
Cal's car to Adam's in Strasbourg - eat, drink etc  
Les et al to some lay-by in Germany.

### **Sunday 1 September 1996**

Les etc. off by 8am  
Cal etc. off by 2pm.  
Germany. Austria  
Les in Slovenija by afternoon  
Cal etc. by midnight  
Cal, Keir, Cookie and LB fail to find camp  
Doss on forest.

### **Monday 2 September 1996**

Cal etc. arrive at SpeleoCamp finally - shop, walk, pub.

### **Tuesday 3 September 1996**

Cavers to forest and Jama Traverse  
Did Stota Jama, Za Teglovka and Jama na Meije  
New chamber found in second cave.

### **Wednesday 4 September 1996**

The 5 cavers to Planinska Jama - Rak branch  
Pub closed as we got to it.

### **Thursday 5 September 1996**

Cookie, Les and family to Postonja and Predjama  
Cal, Keir and LB to Bled and Bohinji  
Laze pub already closed when we arrived.

### **Friday 6 September 1996**

All 5 to Najdena Jama  
Franc told us pub was open late  
It closed at 11 as we arrived

### **Saturday 7 September 1996**

Les and family for exploratory drive  
Cookie, LB and Cal for exploratory walk - Planinsko Polje  
No caving so managed pub  
Discovered opening hours.

# Editorial

## **Sunday 8 September 1996**

Cavers, less Les, to Dim nice Jama with Stephan and Faffs  
Cal with Stephan to Lekina Jama  
Managed last orders!

## **Monday 9 September 1996**

Cavers, minus LB, to Logarcek cave - lost in entrance  
Cal found way on but others had left by the time he returned  
Introduced to Zanzibar by Stephan  
Lots of Slivovitch.

## **Tuesday 10 September 1996**

Cal hungover  
Everyone to Rakov Skojan - national park  
Explored lots of big, deep, easy holes  
Zanzibar again.

## **Wednesday 11 September 1996**

Cookie and Cal return to Logarcek and find way on  
Les and Cookie to see France äüöteröic  
Cal, Keir and LB for pizza in Postojna.

## **Thursday 12 September 1996**

Les, Wendy, little Chris and Keir left for France and UK  
Cal, LB and Cookie to Planinska Jama - Pivka branch  
Stephan's last night  
Jan's Bar in Logatec  
Illegal Slivo!

## **Friday 13 September 1996**

LB's turn for a hangover  
Cal and Cookie to Vranje Jama and Skededena Jama  
All 3 to Llubijana and fail to find Caving shop  
Managed Laze bar and Zanzibar - pub crawl!!

## **Saturday 14 September 1996**

Cookie and Cal to Gradionica (LB injured arm in Dimnice)  
Final pizza in Postojna and beers in Zanzibar.

## **Sunday 15 September 1996**

Packed, paid and left - for France  
Cal, Cookie and LB will cave again!!....

**RED DIGGING GLOVES  
NOW AVAILABLE  
Priced £1.50**

from the Sales Cupboard  
The normal blue gloves and miner's knee pads should be available shortly

After a great deal of badgering, it would seem that at last, people have remembered how to write and are putting pen to paper. Thanks to all of you who've submitted articles & please keep sending them in - they will get published in due course. If you have access to a computer, why not send them to me on computer disk; preferably saved in Word 6 for Macs, but most formats can be translated. A hard copy would also be appreciated for checking spelling, layout, etc. If you have any photos or drawings to accompany them, why not send them in as well - they will be returned.

Well done to the Wessex for beating the BEC in the Annual Golden Gnome Skittles Match held at the New Inn on Saturday 4th January. Wessex members vastly out-numbered BEC members, especially at first when it looked as if Rich Blake would be the sole BEC member, but more people did arrive to make it evenly matched. The Golden Gnome Trophy was received by Tuska and yet again resides in the cabinet in the Library.

Keep writing

Rosie

---

## **New Members**

### **Steve Buck:**

46 Woodhill Drive, Grove, Wantage, Oxon  
01235 769542

### **David Edge:**

15 Yarnbarton, Templecombe, Somerset, BA8 0JH  
01963 370834

### **Rachel Louise Edge:**

15 Yarnbarton, Templecombe, Somerset, BA8 0JH  
01963 370834

### **Carl Galvin:**

19 Farmstead Close, Grove, Oxon, OX12 0BD  
01235 764797

### **Anna Harris:**

5 Grosvenor Terrace, Wantage, Oxon  
01235 770522

### **Sally Hodge:**

15 Culliford Rd., Dorchester, Dorset  
01305 267344

### **David Edward Parker:**

5 Hamcroft, Wantage, Oxon, OX12 9ED  
01235 763474

### **Ian David Rutherford:**

1 Chelmer Grove, Keynsham, Bristol, BS18 1QA  
(Rejoining member) 0117 9085085

# The Draenen Log

Compiled by Mark Helmore

Following the discovery and exploration of the 'Wessex Extensions' in Ogof Draenen in 1995, during which well over 3km of cave was found, I have been continually harassed to write a small article for the Journal. Well here it is - it's not short! I have left it in logbook style generally as recorded by myself at the time.

## **9th September 1995 - Mark & Dom**

Dom and myself were looking around the **Rabbit Run** area, off of **Perserverance II**, when a small hole was noted in a side wall of a small chamber. A couple of hours of frantic digging and we were in. Squeezing into a small chamber gave access to a walking-size passage. Hooting our way down passages measureless we thought we had cracked it. 300ft later the passage ended at a constriction, well for me anyway. Dom squeezed through into a large cross passage complete with marker tape. A quick check revealed this to be Going Square. Never mind we thought, 300ft of passage was not a bad return for a couple of hours digging. On the way out we decided on the name **Hoo Hoo Passage**, after the Wessex underground call sign.

## **23rd September 1995 - Mark, Dom & Richard Hathway (Dom's small boy)**

A follow up trip to survey **Hoo Hoo passage** and to have a look for any further leads. With the survey work done we made our way to the **Fault Rift** area where we were temporarily put off the scent by Nig Rogers. We were soon back on the right track, though, and made our way down **Elliptic Passage**. A small muddy gravel was spotted low down in the left hand wall and a quick look revealed a passage, part-filled with sand, but appearing to enlarge within a short distance.

Some frantic digging saw us in to crawling size passage, tight in places, but still going. With Dom ahead shouting about larger passage I struggled through constrictions (one forcing me to remove my oversuit) before joining him and Rich in Stood Up Passage. A chamber in front of us, guarded by a bat skeleton, yielded no way on, but a left hand passage gave access to a large bedding chamber 7ft high and 60ft across. Dom started digging in a low northerly continuation whilst I wandered over boulders at one side of the chamber. Suddenly in front of me was a large black space. Yes I thought, this is it. Shouting for Dom and Rich to join me we clambered down over loose boulders and we were amazed to find ourselves in a huge passage 50ft wide by 15ft high with a fine cracked mud floor and with clumps of stalactites hanging from the roof. The passage disappeared into the distance, "my old

boots" and other choice phrases were muttered, and then we were off. We carefully picked our route around the edge of the passage to minimise damage to the pristine floor. We took turns at the point, passing a large passage on the left, and continued until stopped by a large choke.

With the sound of a streamway, somewhere under us, we pursued a small continuation to one side of the choke until it too closed down.

While Dom and Rich tried to find a way down to the streamway I couldn't resist wandering up the large side passage. Expecting it to close down I was surprised to find it got bigger and stepped up into a boulder floored chamber with several passages leading off.

Calmly waiting until Dom and Rich joined me, we started to check the leads. Disappointingly, all seemed to close down, except the last one. A stooping height passage, complete with selenite coated walls, was pursued until a sand constriction forced a halt. With a strong draught emitting from the constriction, Dom rabbit-holed his way through, only to be halted at a further sand dig. With all of us beginning to tire, we made our way out. Stopping at **Tea Junction** for a hot drink we met Nig Rogers who tried to interrogate us. We tried to be suitably vague, but it was hard work. Having made him jealous we left the cave and returned to Upper Pitts where we revelled Mike York with tales of passages measureless to man, but he wouldn't believe us.

Note: Between this trip and the next one detailed below, there was a trip involving Dom, Rich Websell, Andy Sparrow and Rob Harper, but as they failed to find the way on and as I have no details of this trip, it does not form part of this report.

## **7th October 1995 - Mark & Les**

A short working trip to do some surveying and taping in **Wyvern Hall** (the name given to the large section of passage). Passing Arthur Millett and co who were starting the Grade 5 survey of our finds, we continued to the first chamber where the bat skeleton was taped off. Just before the bedding chamber we cleared some boulders from the floor of the passage to reveal a keyhole passage 8ft high and 3ft wide. We followed this passage, past a short branch passage, and up into a large boulder filled chamber - oh - the bedding chamber.

Moving on to **Wyvern Hall** we tried to access the streamway, but to no avail. Some visitors appeared in the form of Ali Garman, Ben Lovett and Sue Mabbett who had come for a look around (with a

crow bar!). The streamway still proved impossible to access so we moved on to dig at the sand constriction, with garden trowels. After digging it big enough for us 'fixed rib' cavers to fit through, we decided to call it quits for the day. On the way out Les looked at the northerly continuation of the bedding chamber, but when the roof 'talked' to him he decided it really was time to go.

**14th October 1995 - Mark, Les, Andy Morse, Cookie & Ian Timney**

A large contingent of Wessex members descended on **Wyvern Hall** and the extensions. With some retaping carried out we moved on to the sand constriction - **The Trowel**. With this passed, a walking height passage was followed to the second sand dig. Work was started on clearing this constriction, whilst a climb up in the roof was followed into a large rift with several cross rifts leading off. One of these rifts was pursued by Les and Cookie through a choke and into open passage beyond.

With the whole team called together under starters orders, we were off into the complex rift passages on the far side of the choke. Every junction gave several options, with no obvious main route, so the pole position kept changing, with everyone having a turn at 'first footing'. Most branches closed down fairly quickly, but there was always a way on. With a main route now more obvious, at times 40ft high and 4ft wide, further side passages were ignored in the march south. The main passage, now square but with remnant phreatic features, increased in size to 10ft wide and 10ft high and kept going, if a tad loose in places. A temporary halt was called at an awkward move across a deep rift, but a bypass was soon discovered and the way on regained.

At a large chamber with several passages leading off, a halt was called as concern was growing over our light resources. Whilst the others were preparing to turn round I looked down one of the side passages - it went big. I was off down a 20ft high by 8ft wide passage hooting with delight. With the others now in pursuit I stopped at a junction with a lower passage. This was followed until it lowered to crawling height. That was definitely it, we turned round and worked our way back through the maze of passages. Surfacing after 13hours, the topic of conversation was on the date of the next trip.

**28th October 1995 - Mark, Dom, Les, Andy, Cookie, Rich (small boy), Ian Timney & Steve Swabey**

A busy trip to the extensions with several projects including surveying, photography, taping work and of course pushing the open leads.

Dom and myself, having escaped from the slower moving camera crew to get on with some taping work, found ourselves at the start of an unentered side passage, 10ft high by 4ft wide. We thought we had better check if there were any formations

requiring taping. Disappointingly the passage choked after about 100metres.

With the group back together and at the large chamber near the 'end' the real work started. An interesting climb out of the chamber gained a high level route to some stunning formations which guarded the way to further passage. A decision was made not to push past these formations in the hope of finding a less damaging route.

Whilst the surveying was being carried out from the far reaches of the southerly trending passages, a route out of the large chamber accessed a passage 7ft high by 3ft wide with a serated calcite band part way up the walls. The passage 'ended' at a 70ft pitch which was bottomed by Dom and Les to reveal a fine lower series with a dry mud floor, bat skeletons and formations and about 300metres of passage complete with open leads.

With the planned projects done we started out and on the way passed A Millet and co surveying their way to the large chamber.



Photo by: Cilve Westlake

*Pond Life*

**4th November 1995 - Mark, Max & Sue Bonar**

A quick trip before the Priddy fireworks to show Max and Sue the wonders of the Wessex extensions. Near the end we spent two minutes digging and then squeezed our way into passages measureless to man (Sue reckoned about 150ft). Still it's nice to get up at least one virgin every trip.

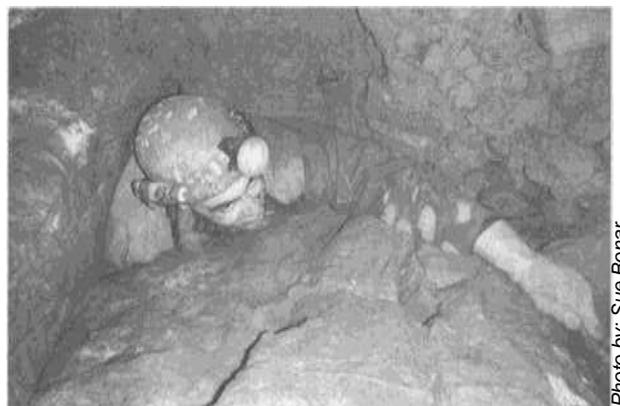


Photo by: Sue Bonar

*"Mark Helmore getting up a Virgin!"*

**18th November 1995 - Mark, Les, Mad Al, Mark (Bean) & Suntan**

A working trip to bolt and rope the 70ft pitch and continue the surveying. On the way we decided to clear up some unvisited side passages in the complex rift area, before the Chelsea survey team did. The first passage closed down after about 150ft but in the second passage a 20ft deep hole was found. Les free-climbed down to see ongoing passage, so a rope was rigged for the rest of us to descend (with the exception of Suntan who wasn't feeling up to it - tart). At the bottom a quick dig gave access to a small streamway, a rarity in this area of the cave. It went small so we decided to try the open passage behind us. We strolled down a fine passage with many formations and then entered a small chamber with several passages radiating off, some guarded by fine stal formations.

The next couple of hours were spent wandering around the maze of passages and chambers that comprise this find. There were more formations than you could fit in a large rucksack! A large fossil streamway was followed to a hideous choke emitting a strong draught.

With the exploration called to a halt we surveyed our way back to the pitch, a total of approx 750metres. At the top we found Suntan a trifle cold, what a tart. Naming the find **The Land Down Under** we made our way out - the 70ft pitch would just have to wait.



Photo by: Clive Westlake

Rich Websell in Land Down Under

**25th November 1995 - Mark, Mak, Cookie, Andy & Tonic**

Another working trip to survey the **Ponderosa** area (as the large end chamber had become known) and to look at the unentered northerly trending passage beyond the pretties.

With oversuits off to protect the formations we squeezed past clusters of fine needle like formations to enter a large passage dotted with superb formations and a large stal boss. Named **Mark's Garage** (don't ask why - I can't say) the passage soon bifurcated. Right led to a passage, partly blocked, with the way on visible over a mud bank. Leaving this for the future we took the other

passage and entered a large bedding collapse area with a big hole in the floor, unenterable due to loose boulders, walls, roof and floor. The passage continued on the far side of the hole, but time had run out so we turned around and surveyed our way back to **Ponderosa**.

Meanwhile the others had looked at the southerly trending passage from **Ponderosa**. This passage has many fine formations and when the way on involved pushing through the formations a halt was called. With bolts installed at the head of the 70ft pitch, and with some more surveying done we decided we had done enough and hurried (slowly) out to the local refreshments.

**2nd December 1995 - Mark & Max**

A short trip to tape off formations in **Land Down Under**. With this done, and some photos taken, we had a quick look around and found a way on. We dug and squeezed - well, me anyway - our way into about 500ft of new passage, complete with a fine stal curtain and a crystal pool (**The Billabong**). Getting bored we left several leads for the future and made our way out, quite contented with the days work.



Photo by: Clive Westlake

Mark Helmore in Land Down Under

Subsequent trips have seen most of the obvious leads pushed, although there are numerous sites that only need five minutes work - honestly!

**Get in there!**

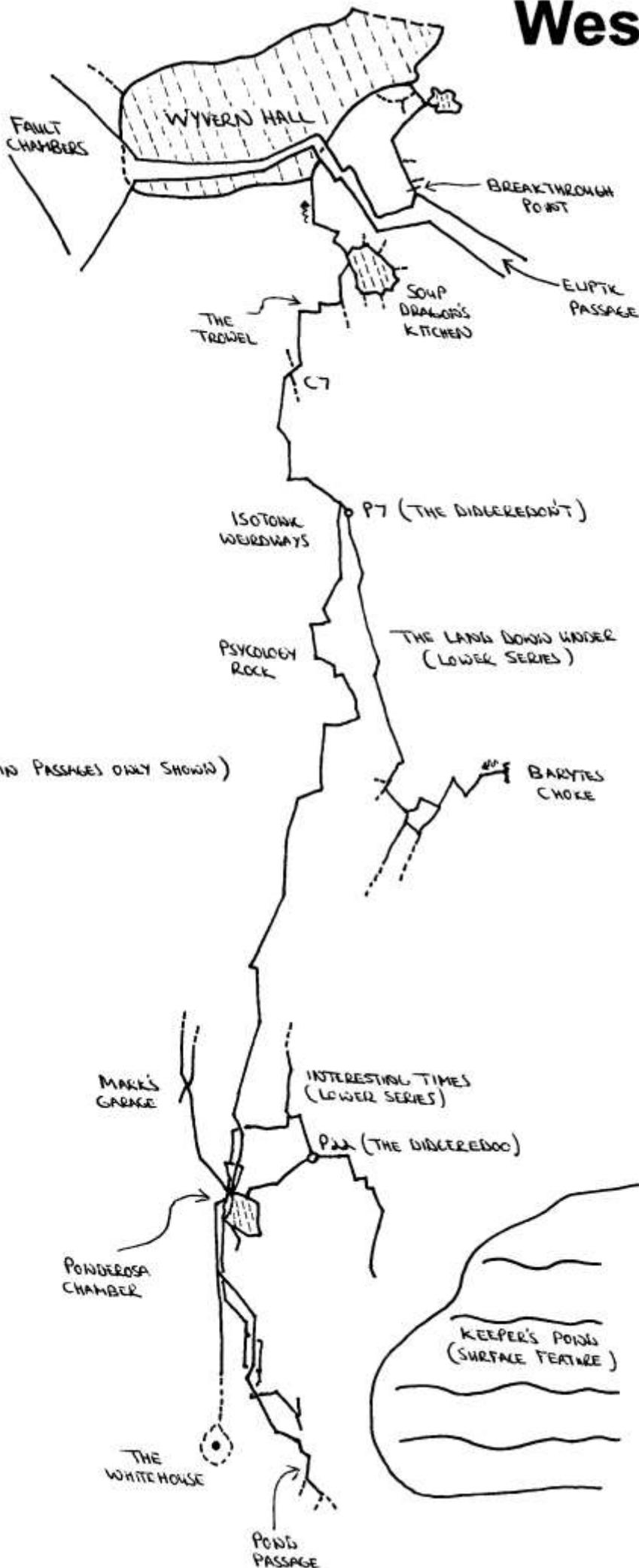
NB. Since our last visit the Chelsea have continued the Grade 5 survey and have extended the passage at the bottom of the 70' pitch by a further 3-400 metres, and it's still going.

**Tackle Required:**

- Didgeredoo Pitch - 25m (rope length)
- Didgeredon't Pitch - 10m (rope length)

Treat all belays with caution and do not use any tackle found in situ. When visiting the Extensions, be aware of the 'loose' nature of certain areas. Care should also be taken to protect the formations and features found there.

# Wessex Series



(NOTE: MAIN PASSAGES ONLY SHOWN)

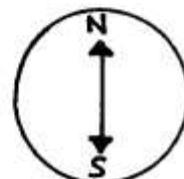
SURVEY TO BCRA GRADE 2/3  
 DRAWN BY M HELMORE  
 DATA BY W.C.C. 17/1/96  
 SURVEY LENGTH 1500M

ORIGINAL SCALE (NOW REDUCED)

1:1500

40M

PLAN



# Ogof Draenen - Wessex Extensions

## Glossary of Names and Their Origins

**Barytes Choke** - the draughting choke at the end of the fossil streamway in Land Down Under where the mineral barytes was found

**Dead Bat Passage** - the first section of passage between Elliptic Passage and The Dragon's Lair, named after the bat skeleton found on the first trip

**Death on a Twizzle Stick** - the hole at the end of Mark's Garage

**Dragon's Teeth Passage** - the passage from Ponderosa to the 70ft pitch, named after a serated calcite layer part way up the passage walls

**Interesting Times** - the passage at the bottom of the Didgeredoo, taken from a novel by Terry Pratchett

**Isotonic Weirdways** - the complex rift area. The name had been thought up years ago. We had just been waiting to find the right place - this was it

**Mark's Garage** - the northerly trending high-level passage out of Ponderosa, named after it's alleged similarity to a well-known location in Paulton

**Nothing** - the formations guarding access to Mark's Garage. When asked what they were called, the reply was "nothing"

**Ponderosa** - the chamber near the end of the extensions, so called because of its relationship to Keeper's Pond, a surface feature almost directly above

**Pond Life** - the southerly trending passage out of Ponderosa, named after its strange formations

**Psychology Rock** - a small rock placed under a large hanging death that you have to wriggle under, part way through Isotonic Weirdways

**Soup Dragon's Kitchen** - the first chamber up the inlet from Wyvern Hall, used as a food base during exploration

**The Billabong** - the fine crystal pool in the extensions of Land Down Under

**The Didgeredoo** - the name given to the 70ft pitch due to its tube-like nature

**The Didgeredon't** - the 20ft pitch to The Land Down Under

**The Dragon's Lair** - the bedding collapse chamber before Wyvern Hall so called because of it's likeness to a dragon's lair!

**The Land Down Under** - the series of passages at the bottom of the 20ft pitch partway through Isotonic Weirdways. Well, it was down and under

**The Trowel** - a flat-out squeeze through a sand constriction dug out with garden implements

**The Whitehouse** - the chamber at the end of Pond Life passage which has a large pure white stal boss at it's centre

**Timney's Turn** - a 4-way junction in the main passage where Ian Timney was given first option

**Wyvern Hall** - named, obviously, after the Wessex emblem

## Other Draenen News

Installation of the **new Ogof Draenen gate** has been completed and the gate will now be kept locked at all times. All parties will require a **key** to enter the cave. Access will be controlled strictly in accordance with the policies of the Pwll Du Cave Management Group. Copies of the latest access procedures are available from the Permit Officer (Huw Jones). The current set of keys will still work, as the old padlock is being used. The new gate is installed at the entrance to the cave, and can be opened from the inside without a key. The design is very similar to that used on Ogof Fynnon Ddu.

The **log book** will be situated in a compartment inside the gate, accessible from the surface once the gate has been opened. Cavers are asked to use the log book - it is important for rescue, cave management and conservation - but please remember that the log book should not be relied on as a call-out system! When leaving the cave and

signing out, do not obliterate your entry in the book - it will be needed for records.

Tim Long (Conservation Officer, Pwll Du Cave Management Group) would like to know how people get on with the new gate, so please let him have your comments. Also, problems, malfunctions or any difficulties experienced need to be reported to him for attention: 4, Brynlefrith Cottages, Llantrisant Rd., Llantwit Fadre, CF38 2HD  
Tel: 01443 207549

Please note that Tim no longer deals with access enquiries or keys. Such matters are now dealt with by the Permit Officer, Huw Jones. He may be contacted (by post, enclosing SAE) at:

34 Bryn Seion Street, Rhymney, Gwent, NP25EW

# Letters

The following letter was sent to Maurice Hewins, but he thought that the Club might like to read Graham Balcombe's response to the dinner.

Dear Maurice

Apologies for the delay. I am temporarily inundated. A thousand thanks for the Wessex gift of the Swildon's Survey. It is magnificent!

I have contacted Jack Sheppard (Jack is now showing his years, (an almost inevitability) and I have sent him one of the copies, so we can both rejoice and indulge our reminiscences.

I cannot claim that either of us really knew what we were triggering down at Sump 1, but for myself, I do claim to have had some vague hopes and ambitions: hence the CDG, in the particular way it came into existence. I seemed to recognise, if dimly, that the time was historically correct for an assault on cave water barriers - sumps is too specific a word. That that proved to be correct is due to the energy, courage, determination and enthusiasm of the cave-diving fraternity in the subsequent years. I have the greatest admiration and respect for you all.

I find the situation reminiscent of the two power station controllers, when one of them had accidentally blacked out the town and half the state - a Yankee story, of course - the other laconically enjoined: "Gee! that was some button you pressed!"

Likewise with Swildon's Hole, by good fortune the sump was remarkably simple and a straightforward one; while with every recognition to Jack as its successful pioneer, for "firsts" are ever vastly more formidable, of the outcome we can truly say "Gee! that was some button we pressed!"

We are proud of it, but I hope not boastful.

Regards to Dave

Yours

Graham (Balcombe)

***Reprinted courtesy of Maurice Hewins***

Dear Rosie

As one of those members for whom weekends at Upper Pitts have had to become irregular treats (until Mystic Meg gets her act together anyway!), the Annual Dinner becomes that much more an event to anticipate.

So, I would like to thank everyone involved in organising this year's WCC Dinner, including Sunday's Club trip and lunch, for what many members remarked on being the best we have had for many years, for quality of venue, food, speeches and entertainment. (Our table had extra entertainment: Nick Marachov and "Leg" singing in Russian!)

On behalf of Mike O'Connor as well as myself, I would like to thank the Club's publication department who turned our typing into the "Caves of the Isle of Portland" book. I believe SWCC member Mick Day also helped, by copying my mss files from 3" to 3½" discs.

The book has had an elephantine gestation. An early draught described cavers visiting Flagpole Rift being treated to the spectacle of motor-torpedo boats exercising off Grove Point. The Royal Navy have not had those for many years. More recent evening trips to link all the Grove caves together were characterised by the whine of modern frigate's gas turbine engines. Now, there is no Navy Base at Portland ...

I went home clutching not only our copies, but also two ordered by friends. Since then I have used it, preparing comments and references - including to the book itself - for correspondence to a geological journal.

This was for Roger Cooper, a friend, fellow-caver and geology lecturer, whose intended reply raising doubts about a recently-published paper on the island is based on our studies of the rifts. (Roger's work on fissure caves is listed in the book.) The paper's authors have not visited the caves, but one is a Portlander. They applied to Portland a mechanism identified in the Appenine Mountains, to explain the formation of the fissures and of related (?) surface hollows, but we are not convinced ...

Oh yes, before you tell me .... I have seen it! "Poetic Licence", not "..... License". Sorry!

Good Caving

Nigel Graham

# Library Acquisitions

## **MORGANNWG CAVING CLUB JOURNAL No 4**

The addictive nature of caving  
Search for early cave & mine references

The Treforest Railway Tunnel - a mass trespass and what we saw  
Extracts from Hungary, 1993 - the diary of a visit

The SRT Disaster Song (to tune of ABBA'S "Take a Chance on Me")

Carbide Lamps & Safety

The Great Caving Misadventure  
Ogof Draenen - a history of operations at the site

Geology & Hydrology of Pwll Du  
Ogof Cynnes, South Wales - latest discoveries with surveys

The Re-opening of Ogof Mynydd Llangidr - brief history to date & plan  
Cave Avoidance in the Dordogne  
The Cave at Tresilian, South Wales

## **MORGANNWG CAVING CLUB JOURNAL Sept 1995 No 5**

*Ogof Draenen* -

Exploration, history & passage names. Access. Dye Traces. The October Breakthrough. Geological Conservation. Survey as of June 1995, length 27,408m BCRA Grage 2/3. The Mystery of the Lost Gamma Logger - if you find a long metal tube with a bayonet fitting, leave it alone & tell the British Geological Survey  
The Morgannwg Lamp - a versatile low-cost electric light

Review on Cave & Karst Sites in Britain

Cambrian Cave Registry

Show caving in Belgium & Dordogne

## **REGARDS 1996/24 BULLETIN DE L'UNION BELGE DE SPELEOLOGIE**

Approach to the pollution of Chimique du Systeme Hydrologie Chawresse, Belgium - a study in cave pollution & possible solutions  
Tilff: L'Anticlinale - description of the new speleo-training site, diagrams, photographs & access conditions

The Smoking-out of Resistors to French Rule in the Dahara caves (Algeria) during the French Colonization in 1845

La Grotte de Warre, Belgium - a description of the cave, brief history, survey, photographs & map of this tightly-restricted-access cave

Discussion on the merits and demerits of the Explorer E70 lighting system compared to other systems

## **CAVE SCIENCE (BCRA) August 1996**

Combined Indexes volume:

• Index to the Transactions of the BCRA volumes 1-20 (1974-1994) Parts 1 and 2

• Index to the Transactions of the CR group of GB Volumes 1-15 (1948-1973)

## **MENDIP CAVING GROUP Occasional Publication 1995 No 1 Belize '94**

A report on the group's expedition to Belize. What they achieved, the area they worked, logistics, new discoveries, maps, surveys & photos

## **MENDIP CAVING GROUP Occasional Publication 1995 No 2**

Low-voltage tungsten Halogen bulbs for caving use

Czechoslovakia Expedition 1991 (Main area explored was Moraia) - handy guide for others wishing to follow in their footsteps, plus a couple of surveys

Lechuguilla - hints & tips

Coahuila, Mexico: the Cutting Edge Project - a multi-national project to explore the cave potential of Mexico's second biggest limestone area, in the Ranch el Nevado

Battle of Britain Series, Dan-Yr-Ogof - the collation of various reports in newsletters put together to provide a clearer picture of what has been achieved

## **NSS NEWS**

### **May 1996 Vol 54 No 5**

Slaughter Canyon Cave, Carlsbad Caverns National Park - the identification of some 50 archaic-style photographs on dark zone rock  
Devilstep Hollow Cave; a southern cult site in mid-Tennessee - brief history of the cave & the finds, illustrated with photos & drawings  
The frog ascending system - a detailed description with photos

## **MENDIP CAVING GROUP Occasional Publication 1996 No 3 En Chartreus**

Articles on the club's trip to the Chartreuse Massif & the Dente de Crolles System - handy publication for any group thinking of caving in this area, with maps & a survey, rigging guides & route finding

## **JOURNAL OF CAVE AND KARST STUDIES (NSS)**

### **Aug 1996 Vol 58 No 2**

Special theme issue on *Belize*: Speleology. Introduction to Cave Exploration. Value of Small Expeditions to Regional Cave Research: a reconnaissance to the Cayo District of Belize. Cave Archaeology. Karstification on the Northern Vaca Plateau. Geologic & Hydrologic Controls on Karst & Cave Development. Conservation of Karst. Biology of the Chiquibul Cave System & Guatemala. Bibliography of Belizean Caving

## **ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN CAVING CLUB (EX) Autumn 1996 No 119**

Ireland, 1995 - dubious deeds of the Doolin Dosser's club trip to Ireland  
Mallorca, 1996 - a weeks caving and climbing in Mallorca  
Three Amigos in America, April 1996 - a visit to W. Virginia  
Yorkshire weekend  
Club news & AGM reports

## **NSS NEWS**

### **June 1996 Vol 54 No 6**

Cuban Caving '95 - report on the 55th Cuban Speleological Congress & some world-class Cuban caves with photos

Showcave matchbooks prove fascinating - a well-illustrated article  
Cave Vanity Plates - this is a variation on personal number plates. Examples & a list

How elevation can affect you: altitude sickness, acclimatisation, diving at high elevations - drinking is the key to success (we all know this to be true!). A very general article with photographs

## **PLYMOUTH CAVING GROUP NEWSLETTER AND JOURNAL Aug 1996 No 126**

Spain, 1996 - Matienzo Trip diary  
A Lava Cave on Lanzarote - history description & comparison with Iceland

Conservation of a Cave - out take from CSS News

Bats & Bat Conservation

Dog Hole Gating and Restoration

Hilti Bullets - out take from various publications

SWAC Dig at Dog Hole - history

The re-opening of Toorbridge Cave - an access problem harmoniously solved

### **CRAVEN RECORD**

**Oct 1996 No 44**

Centenary Way, GG, 1996 - prospects zero!

South East Pot Extension, GG - record of the work carried out in this area of the cave & future prospects  
Great Excavations (or a tale of two diggers) - a dig site near May Day Hole. With a dog named Sweep eating the archaeological remains, one has to ask, was this article submitted in April?

Water Tracing in the Malham Area - a major water tracing project organised by the YSS in which the Craven took part

Sunburn in the Rain, Norway 1996 - an account of the trip with details of the work carried out

Some observations on Scottish Hill Walking, Mountain Tables & Other Phenomena

### **THE GRAMPIAN SPELEOLOGICAL GROUP**

**BULLETIN Third Series**

**Oct 1996 Vol 14 No1**

Limestone features north of Ord, Isle of Skye - descriptions, survey & a map

Some alternative views on the caves of Staffa from 1885 - out take from the Scottish Geographical Magazine 1885

Assynt Descents - featuring several well-known Mendip retrobates

The lost cave of Slanes - the continuing saga from the last couple of issues. Map & surveys

OSL dating of cave sediments

The discovery of Claonaite 8 - history & description of this part of the cave, with a survey

The caves of the Creag Nan Uamh: part 1 - history, exploration & survey

### **UNDERGROUND PHOTOGRAPHER**

**Dec 1995 No 1**

Photography, Video, Lighting, Art. If this publication stays at this high standard, it is a 'must be read' for anyone with pretensions of being an underground photographer

### **MNRC NEWSLETTER**

**Oct/Nov 1996 No 56**

White Fish & Yellow Submarines in Penyghent Pot - pushing trip in the 'Friday the 13th' Extensions area

Underground with the T'owd Man - NAMHO weekend - mine visit to Kelly Mine surface workings, then on to Great Rock Mine for an underground trip & the Sunday visit to Pence Slate Mine

Virtual caving - the way ahead?

### **NSS NEWS (EX)**

**July 1996 Vol 54 No 7**

The Fossil Gold Mine, S E Alaska - fossilised bear bones in Alaskan caves. Map of area & photographs  
Carters Pit Gating Project - the gating of a 100ft pit. Technical description with photographs

Constant air flow anyone? - worldwide ranging discussion, theories & possible solutions discussed on the Internet

The Union International de Speleologie (will change bring a brigher future?) - reprint from International Caver No 12)

Gypkap, New Mexico; a photographer's perspective - project dedicated to the research & mapping of 5000 square miles of Karst in the SE of New Mexico. Description of a few caves and photos

A diving story - you either believe or you don't

### **CDG NEWSLETTERS**

**Nos 117-120 Oct '95-July'96**

There is so much contained within these excellent publications, it would fill a complete Wessex Journal to review - just read them!

### **LANCASHIRE CAVING AND CLIMBING CLUB JOURNAL**

**1996**

Gladys Sellars - obituary

Eigerwand 3970m, August 1993 - a fine, clearly-written account of a climb to the top of the Eiger, via the North Wall

The Hares versus the Tortoise - annual walk/run in the Austrian Alps  
An account of an attempt to climb the Glacier Du Casset Ice Fall

Trips to Karakoram, August 1993 and the Caucasus Mountains, Russia, August 1994

North Wales, 1994 - a brief description of the caving potential  
How to become an Alpine lightning conductor - map & hair raising picture

Climbing on a big wall in Colorado - East face of Longs Peak

In the steps of Showell Styles, through the Oberland

Skye Underground - brief description of the caving delights of Skye

Left Wall - a classic mountain day  
Ireland, Spring 1994 - a love affair with County Clare

Italy, 1995 - caving in the Col des Siagneurs region, close to the Piaggia Bella cave system

Turkish Delight; the Corycian Caves - brief description & area plan  
Sport climbing for all

### **CHELSEA SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER (Ex)**

**1996 Vol 38 No 10**

Flatners & Hissworms - the Aussie Caving Scene

News, publications & book review

### **NORSK GROTTBLAD**

**May 1996 No 31**

Rescue exercise in Storstein Cave, South Nordland - cave discoveries 1984-94 in South Norway

Stupfors Cave, A Bear's Lair, Looking for caves in Sorfold South Burfjellet - a clarification

Exploration in Atlantide Cave - out take from The Darkness Beckons  
Meeting concerning the management of limestone areas & formations

Burial chambers - finds of human skeletons found in caves in the Salten area

### **STALACTITE**

**2/95**

**Holloch:-**

The results of radio communication experiments over a number of years. A brief history of exploration around early 1900's, with a collection of contemporary photographs, plus a survey dated 1902. A study of what bugs were found in the cave water in various parts of the cave system

A history of the exploration of the Le Sukiloch system with a survey

The results of 20 years of exploration (1974-1994) of the Schwyzeschacht - very fine photos & superb two page survey

A hydrological study of the region of the Siberen, the Bisistal & the Klontal areas

### **WSG NEWSLETTERS**

**Nos 16, 17 & 18 1996**

Internal club news

Life-lining techniques

Dye & Spore Tracing - future projects in South Wales

Under Hastings, down a Victorian sewer

### **SPELEOLOGICAL ABSTRACTS**

**1995 No 34**

International Union of Speleology. This is the publication that replaced Current Titles and is the first stop on any hunt for information

### **SA/BBS/CTS CD-ROM No 1**

*Speleological Abstracts (28-34)*

*Bulletin Bibliographique*

*Speleologique*

*Current Titles in Speleology*

The catalogue of the Swiss Speleological Library

# Library News

The following is a list of books **donated** to the Wessex by various members, for which thanks are given. As requested by the 1996 AGM, any books actually **purchased** will be marked by **B**. To show exchanges, **EX** has been used. Thanks to **Pete Hann** for the donation of Journals including British Cavers. If anyone has any odd back journals or publications that they no longer have any use for, the Librarian is always pleased to accept.

*First and Last* - Peak National Park in words and pictures. PNP 1980  
*In Scotland Again* - H W Morton. Methuen 1933  
*In Search of Wales* - H W Morton. Methuen 1936  
*Mitstone Grit* - Glyn Hughes. Futura 1975. A journey through the West Riding of Yorkshire and East Lancashire  
*The Lost World of the Kalahari* - Laurens Van Der Post. CBC 1958  
*First Overland* - Time Slessor. CBC 1957  
*The Silent World* - J Y Cousteau. BS 1954  
*Journey Through Britain* - John Hillaby. Paladin 1978  
*Journey Through Love* - John Hillaby. Constable 1976  
*The Monster of Loch Ness* - James Cornell. Scholastic Book Services 1977  
*The Great Orm of Loch Ness* - F W Holiday. Faber 1968  
*Loch Ness Monster* - Tim Dinsdale. R&K P 1968  
*The House on the Hill* - Olivia Fitzroy. Collins 1946. Children's fiction with odd cave thrown in. A collector's item

*Haunted Britain* - Anthony Hippisley Coxe. Pan 1975. Mentions the odd cave

*The Hunters of Prehistory* - Andre Leroi-Gourhan. Translated by Claire Jacobson. Atheneum 1989 New York. Illustrated with photographs and diagrams. A nice uncomplicated book, a very basic guide.

**B** *One Thousand Metres Down* - Jean Cadoux et al. Translated R G G Irving. This being the original exploration of the Berger. Book bought as a replacement for one removed from the library, not booked out - £10

**EX** *Speleo 'Zin* - Speleo Club "Dubovac". This came by way of an unsolicited exchange, which, with the committee's blessing, I hope to continue. There is a brief abstract in English at the end of each article. It is a shame we will not be able to extend the same courtesy to Dubovac cavers. This is a well-illustrated publication & is well worth a study

**EX** Binding of *Sf Cuthbert's Swallet* - D J Irwin  
**EX** Mendip Caving Group Occ Pubs 1-3  
Morgannwg Caving Club Journal Nos 1-5 1986-95

The Club has a quantity of **Back Journals** - almost a complete run of them. If anyone wants some, they cost 50p, up to and including, 1990. Contact the Librarian, Mike Dewdney-York for further details.

## WCC Meets

The traditional annual booking at the **WSG** cottage in the Ystradfellte area has been made for **2nd-5th May**. To *find the cottage*: make your way to Hirwaun at the junction of the Heads of the Valley road and the A4059. Continue west along the A465 to the next roundabout & take the road to the industrial estate. At the next roundabout turn right. Follow this road through the industrial estate until a long straight section with a small river on the right. At the end of the straight section, turn right over a hump-back bridge, just before a caravan store yard. The WSG cottage is on the left 200- 300m along this lane. Parking is quite restricted so people are advised to share transport where possible. The pub is called the Red Lion & is about one mile further along the lane. *Caves to visit include*: Little Neath River Cave, Bridge Cave, Pant Mawr, Tunnel Cave, OFD and Dan Yr Ogof. Although some of these caves are dependant upon the weather, there are plenty of wet weather alternatives.

The Wessex also has a club meet to **North Wales** on **23rd-26th May** over the **Spring Bank Holiday** and once again we will be camping at the Red Lion public house in Rhosesmor. There are no facilities but the landlord has said he will do breakfast and snacks in the evening if required. *Location*: from the A55 North Wales after Queensferry and approx 400m after Little Chef, turn left signposted to Rhosesmor. At the Britannia pub on bend, turn left. After approx 800m is a T- junction, turn left. Follow road over cattle grid to the Blue Bell pub on the right Carry on past the Cross Keys pub on the left to a playground and waste ground on the left. The Red Lion Pub is on the left and camping is in the field behind the carpark behind the pub. Tel 01352 780570 (in emergency, ie lost etc).

If you are **at all interested** in the trip to North Wales, you must contact the Caving Secretary as soon as possible so that numbers can be arranged.

# Blast From The Past!

(previously printed in Wessex Journal No 169 Vol 14 1977 Page 154)

## EQUIPMENT NOTES

*by Paul Hadfield*

### **Super Rack**

The Super Rack has been developed in the States for some five years, but has only recently been seen in Britain. I recently had the opportunity to try one out, since, to judge from the literature, there are two schools of thought concerning the device. The dispute seems to hinge on the 'controllability'; other factors such as its increased strength, heat dissipation, resistance to flexing etc, are agreed.

The rack is currently larger than the current Mendip favourite, the 'Goldlock', and was found to be much easier to thread. There is no doubt that on the short descents possible in the 'workshop' at Split Rock Quarry, the Super Rack gave a much smoother drop, approaching that of a whaletail, but total control would not easily be exercised solely by manipulating the bars, as on the conventional device. It was, in fact, a requirement that the rope below the device is snubbed across the thigh for full and safe braking to be achieved. However, I consider that on the bigger drops, this device will probably prove superior to the conventional rack while there is a sufficient weight of rope below for the adjustment of the bars to provide the braking, while the usual rope snubbing only becomes necessary when the weight of rope below is reduced.

The Super Rack is locked off in the same way as with the normal rack by lifting the tail of the rope over the top.

### **Shoulder Hang**

My interest in the shoulder hang began when I swapped a somewhat tatty Oldham for a three point Gibbs rig that had, reputedly, been down 'Drinas. Been down, possibly, but make it go up anything, I could not. Having been made aware of the problem, I have been looking for some time for a system embodying the factors of safety, simplicity, comfort and efficiency.

At last, I think, I have tried a rig which fulfils these parameters to a large degree, if not perfectly. Simplicity is the keynote. Simply attach a Gibbs to a length of wide tape, and the other end to the main sitharness. When standing upright the tape length is such that the Gibbs is a few inches above the head. On clipping the Gibbs to the rope, insert the body between rope and tape so that the tape passes from the front attachment point, round the left side under the arm, across the back, and over the right shoulder to the Gibbs.

Using a standard foot and knee Gibbs attachment it is now possible to walk up the rope whilst the body is held close to it, and almost vertical. With a bit of trial and error, the tape can be adjusted to exactly the right length - this is critical. For breakovers, resting, or sections out of the vertical, it is easy to slip the body out from the tape, and, holding the Gibbs with the hand, feed it up the rope whilst walking with the feet. It is equally easy to reinsert the body into position while hanging from the rope. Problems such as climbing over knots, bolts or other bodies on the rope, require an extra jammer for absolute safety during the period when the shoulder hand is off the rope; this depends on the vagaries of individual rigs, and there are no doubt other valid solutions.

One delightful bonus is that changeovers are made very safe and easy, and for those who use a safety cam on rappell this arrangement serves both purposes.

### **Neil Box**

I recently evaluated this piece of equipment at Split Rock, and found it to perform very well with both a Mitchell and Ropewalker system. Eliminating the chest-to-seat link gives a more upright, comfortable and faster climbing position, if the box is attached to a good chest harness.

The drawbacks appear to be mainly in the flexibility of the system under abnormal or difficult conditions. Changeovers, for example, are much more difficult, and it is not possible to thread and unthread the box when the rope is loaded. In emergencies, this could prove critical, and in fact it will make movement up inclined pitches difficult when the chest harness is adjusted properly.

To overcome some of these difficulties and to improve the safety factor, I would recommend that a further jamming device, ideally a Gibbs, is attached to the rope and climber, and allowed to 'float' either above or below the box according to personal preference.

# Logbook Extracts

## 25.9.96 - Swildon's to Sump 1

*Fez, Andy, John & Gorik*

... what's the definition of a duck and a sump? Semmed to be the same down here!

## 29.9/96 - Eastwater

*John & Gorik*

Someone mentioned about a passage that you can stand up in!

## 29.9.96

Met an *Andy Sparrow* after "Fly Safe 1" - seems the safety element had gone. No skin on shoulder, chunks missing out of hand & 4 butterfly stitches in bonce. Seems a rock flew into him!

## 4.10.96 - Box Mines

*Andy & Fez*

35 miles of passage? Was that to the left or right? or maybe ahead! What a place to play - awesome.

## 5.10.96 - Wookey Hole

*Malc Foyle, Mike Thomas & Robin Brown* All divers up to Wookey 24 to extract MB from the terminal sump and give him a lift out! A serious load of kit was also removed by Wessex divers as Mike's other support divers could only manage to remove themselves.

## 5.10.96 - Brownes Folly Mine

*Fez, Andy & Fleather*

Found lots of entrances but none for the mine. Retraced steps and found No 2 entrance. Had splendid trip and made exit via No 3 entrance ...never did find entrance No 1.

## 5.10.96 - BEC Dinner

*Rosie & Vern*

... no time to posh up as only found out about this do' the night before ... the cider had to be sampled (and it was) & the venue sorted out in preparation for the Wessex dinner in 2 weeks time. Good food, good evening ... thanks to the BEC for inviting us eventually!

## 5.10.96

*Andy, Carmen, Colin & Fez*

Called out to Belfry to help search for an overdue barrel. Lots of BEC wandering around aimlessly looking very worried. Barrel never found, presumed dead. A quiet night.

## 12.10.96

Who got a very bruised bottom lip from snogging with a plastic dolly? Not even a good looking one either! - don't ask Max, he might blush.

## Late Sept '96 - Blacknor Hole Entrance Pitch

*Nigel*

Annual inspection of the P-hangers put in on WCC trip to Portland last September... near-gale made things a little fraught! I was thrown about on the rope, the rope & cows-tails, etc were blown up in a huge tangle all over me, and my helmet was blown off as I struggled back up over the cliff edge in the "Tempest" conditions which inspired the passage name "Ariel". Great fun !?? Hangers OK though.

## 22.10.96 - Sandford Levy

*Paul Lambert & son Jack*

Jack's first caving trip (apart from Gough's) ... following in tradition ... the Hunters for lunch.

## 16.10.96 - Thrupe Lane

*Dom & Nick (BEC)*

High Atlas in Flood - it gets very very wet!

## 3.11.96 - Upper Pitts

This could be a great caving club but for people going caving. Members of the club must stop going on away caving trips - it's wrecking the club's reputation. Weather wet & windy - so were the guests.

## 9.11.96 - Singing River Mine

*Les, Cookie, Maurice, (Mad Dog) Sealy & Steve (prospective member)*

Went to Singing River Mine to repair the ginging at the top of the shaft - tart lorry driver would not drive up the lane so we had to barrow 1 tonne of chippings & 6 bags of cement all the way up the lane. Repaired the ginging - proper job. Where are all the other 44 caving clubs!!! WCC rule OK.

## 1-3 Nov '96 - WCC Trip to Derbyshire

*James Hall over Engine Mine to Peak Cavern exchange trip (via Speedwell)* - done it. WCC UBIQUE PRIMUS ... we went to Giant's (in search of cold female cavers to warm up). **TSG firework display** - when you get bored of bouncing the rockets off the garden wall, you can rick o'shay (well-known Irishman) them off the tree branches.

## 10.11.96 - Upper Pitts

Silly games both evenings. The Chairman encouraged members & guests ... but ended up being tied up with string to another member.

## 8.11.96 - Brown's Folly Mine

*Les, Scammell, Cookie & Steven*

Went looking for a bad smell that Scammell had spotted a few months previous - could this be the body the police are looking for? No, just another story.

# Club Diary

## 16.11.96 - Swildons

Maurice & Eleanor Hewins, John & Mike Thomas ... took Liz on her first trip. As an extra precaution we took our own MRO warden, Mr Prewer... Mike measured the 20 by sending Eleanor down.

## 9-10 Nov '96 - Yorkshire trip

Captain Yellow, Tall Graham, Mak, Jo, a couple of OU people & lots of semi-students (=10)

Mak inspired them all with lots of confidence - he was suffering from a hangover from the excesses of the night before - & at the top of the pitch in Calf Holes said "How do you tie an Italian Hitch?" ... Mak convinced us the bottom entrance was in the next field, however half an hour later we found ourselves back at the top entrance - "it was a nature ramble honest, I was never lost, I always knew where I was! I blame the whiskey from the night before".

## 7.12.97 - St Cuthberts

Vern, Jo, Mak, Andy, Tom & Mark Short trip after Andy decided to fall down the gours & bugger his ankle - he got no sympathy all the way out.

## 7.12.96 - GB

Weegie trip with 7 novices, all under 16 & using carbide. Met Linda & Graham (UBSS) & checked their permits, all seemed OK.

## 8.12.96 - Swildon's Short Round

Not man enough to go caving with Andy "Leg Breaker" Ladell... Mud Sump appears to be a tad wet. Despite extensive dam repairs & a mad session of turbo bailing we could only create an inch of air space!

## 14.12.96-Wales

J Thomas & M Thomas

Met Steve Thomas for dive in Hush Sump OFD1. JT managed to get himself locked out of cave then fell in the Bathing Pool & destroyed a camera. Not bad for a return trip after 35 years.

## 15.12.96 - Thrupe Lane Swallet

Andy (Captain Yellow), Cookie & Tall Graham ... down Lateral Aven (a refreshing shower) even with Andy's deviation. Tackle sack makes for an interesting exit.

## 21.12.96 - Swildon's Short Round

Dom & Debs

... thwarted by very sumped Mud Sump so ran away - well actually stumbled and staggered.

## 22.12.96 - Manor Farm

Simon & Steve, Carl, Dave & Geoff (prospective members) Left them to get on with it ... followed this with a portering trip down 18 Acre with Tuska. It's amazing what prospective members can be conned into.

## 1997 February

- 8th MRO Lecture - Legal Aspects of Cave Rescue  
15th WCC Bath Stone Mines Meet

## March

- 8th WCC Training Session - Lifelines  
9th WCC Committee Meeting  
9th Slovenia Meeting 3pm  
14th MRO AGM  
15th MRO Lecture - Communication across Eastern Mendip  
15th BCRA Cave Science Symposium University of Huddersfield 22nd NCA AGM  
22nd-31st WCC Meet in County Clare

## April

- 5th CCC AGM  
19th/20th CSCC Training Event  
26th/27th WCC Practice Rescue Weekend  
27th WCC Committee Meeting

## May

- 2nd-5th South Wales Meet - WSG  
10th WCC Training Session - Bolts  
23rd-26th North Wales Meet

## June

- 7th WCC Training Session - Knots  
8th WCC Committee Meeting  
21st Bad Taste, Fetish & Phobia Evening  
23rd-27th NSS Convention, Sullivan, Missouri

## July

- 14th-17th NAMHO Conference, Matlock  
20th WCC Committee Meeting  
26th WCC Slovenia Trip

## August

- 10th-17th International Congress of Speleology  
22nd-25th WCC Yorkshire Meet

## September

- 7th WCC Committee Meeting  
12th-14th BCRA Conference, Bristol

## October

- 18th WCC AGM and Dinner Weekend