



THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

VOLUME 25

NUMBER 262

DECEMBER 1998

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ISSN 0083-811X

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

Club News

In accordance with Mike Dewdney-York's wishes, his ashes will be scattered on Mendip on Saturday 12th December. If you would like to be present, meet at Upper Pitts at 2pm. This will be followed by a barrel at the hut in the evening which has been donated by Mike in his Will.

From Sheila and Brian Pitman: a big **thank-you** to everyone who attended their barrel to celebrate their 25th Wedding Anniversary and their daughter, Tina's, 21st Birthday earlier this year. Also, thanks to everyone for their support over the past year.

On Saturday 21st November, the Wessex entered a team for the **Axbridge Quiz Night**. This consisted of Les and Wendy Williams, Brian and Sheila Pitman, and Phil Hendy. As one of the team commented: "*We wopped the rest!*". Anyway, well-done to all of them.

The annual Wessex vs BEC **Golden Gnome Skittles Match** has again been organised by Phil Hendy over the New Year weekend. The date is Saturday 2nd January 1999 and 'ball bowling' will start at 7pm. Please come along and support the Wessex - we haven't lost the Golden Gnome yet, and we don't intend to start now!

After negotiations with Tony, the 10% WCC discount from **Bat Products** that we lost in 1995, has now been re-instated. This will cover most of his stock but it does not cover any books or magazines.

The account that we held with **Travis Perkins** has now been closed. If you make any purchases without prior authorisation from the committee you may not be reimbursed

Les Williams, Caving Secretary, is trying to organise **Meets** for next year - a Devon Meet is planned for January, and a Belgium Meet for the spring. He has also organised a Wookey Hole meet on 13th Feb and a Cheddar Meet early next year - a small charge will be made this time for this meet. If this is organised before the next Journal, please keep an eye out for dates on the notice board or contact Les for further details.

Due to price increases from the supplier, we have had to put up our prices of the following:

Rugby Shirts	£25.00
Sweatshirts	£17.50
T-Shirts	£10.00

At the **AGM** several points were asked to be brought to the attention of the membership:

First of all was the booking-out of tackle. Even if just a short evening trip, if the tackle leaves the tackle store it must be booked out. If you use SRT rope please fill in the log so that we have an accurate record of each rope's use.

The day fee issue also came up yet again. If you use the hut, even as just a car park or to change in, why not put something in the conscience box, every little will help YOUR club.

A small loss was made on the 1997 dinner, a break down of expenditure and income appears on page 9.

The maintenance costs for Upper Pitts were also queried, especially the expenditure on the bunkroom. A break down of this also appears on page 9.

How to buy from the Sales Store: First find a Committee Member with a key to either the Sales Cupboard or Under Stairs key where you can get a key for the upstairs store (T-Shirts etc). Write down what you have bought so that we can keep accurate accounts, and pay for it - *easy as that!*

OBITUARY

YORKY

We are very sad to report that Mike Dewdney-York died suddenly at work, on the 17th November.

Only the week before, he had been involved in a callout for an overdue party in Eastwater. A member for over 30 years, Mike was currently the Wessex Librarian.

We extend our condolences to his mother and family.

A fuller appreciation of Yorky's work for the club will appear in the next Journal.

A few words on Mike from the President appear on the following page.

New Members

Louise Hilton

43 Winfields Park, Hartsping Lane, Alden,
WD2 8AG Tel: 01923 850472

Simon Davies

84 Hampton St., Tetbury, Glocs.,
GL8 8LE Tel: 01666 505536

Emma Heron

73 Kenilworth Rd., Bognor Regis, W. Sussex,
PO21 5NF Tel: 01243 820871

Paul Turner

4 Westfield, Willingham,
CB4 5HH Tel: 01954 202672

Wayne Starsmore

49 Pound Close, Burwell,
CB5 0EP Tel: 01638 610672

Stewart Stuppel

Mortys, Frithend Rd., Frithend,
GU34 RA Tel: 01420 479124

Peter Murphy

17 Toll Bar Ave., Bottesford,
NG13 0BB Tel: 01949 842823

Wendy Finney

5 Avocett Close, Fallowfield,
SG19 2TD Tel: 01767 682393

Angela Thomas

14 East Ave., Heath End, Farnham,
GU9 0RA Tel: 01252 723361

A Few Words From The President

Writing on Wednesday the 18th November I have just heard of the death of Mike York, and we send our sympathies to his mother, who lives on Portland, to other members of his family and all his other close friends.

His place in the history of the Wessex Cave Club has been secure since he joined in February 1966. By the summer of '67 he was wielding a creosote brush on the old hut at Hillgrove and then he became Hut Warden for the '67 - '68 Club year. Since then I doubt if there has been a year without his attention being given to the Old Hut, to Upper Pitts or to the Library.

We should always remember old friends with affection and I always thought of him as the "Gentle Giant". In recent years I met an old accountant colleague of my brother Howard. He told me that a visit to the sticks in the '70s Howard took him to Hunters. When he was introduced to Mike, who approached him from the other side of the room, he said that "he cringed" thinking that he was about to be set upon by a stropky hippy.

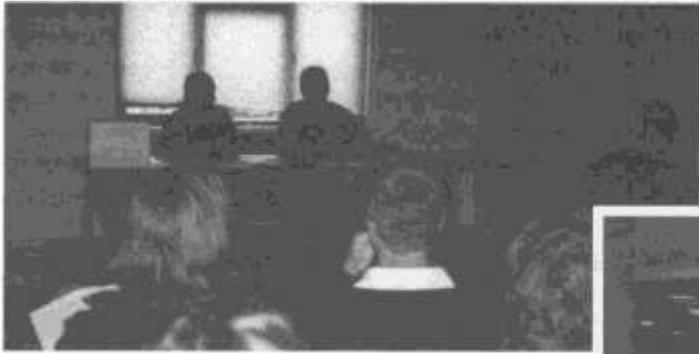
For year after year he tried at successive AGM's to raise the subscription rate to his own considered level. His great achievement was that he succeeded, with help from others, in doing just this, this year!

He held decided views on caving competency. He believed that no one should go underground unless they could use the main techniques. I told him that I hated sumps and was a poor climber - and left him to reflect that safety awareness was also important.

His lasting work for the Club lay in his book-binding techniques. Most of us are familiar with his bound Wessex volumes, but he also undertook private work. He case bound two books of mine which now reside in Wells Cathedral Library and I hope they will still be there in a few hundred years time.

The finest Club tribute that we could pay would be to see that his Library work continue in someone else's capable hands.

Richard Kenney



1998 AGM

Cookie receiving a revised version of the Swildon's survey. Barnes loop moved to the Entrance series. Without doubt the only candidate for *Navigator of the Year* award

Swildon's entrance on the weekend of 31st October/1st November



A nice sunny Mendip afternoon for the WCC vs BEC Cricket Match



Photos sent by Paul Hadfield from their yearly expedition to Prince of Wales Island, Canada



Juliet Walsh leading into new passage in "Roaring Thunder". A bold step from the top of the ladder to the right got into a hundred feet or so of high-level tube. Base of ladder is on a huge boulder, wedged 80' down a 160' entrance shaft.



Radio-location of Cavern Cave,

Minutes of the 1998 AGM

(Note: these are unapproved until the 1999 AGM)

Presidents Address:

Richard Kenney welcomed everyone to the meeting, and apologised for not being able to attend the dinner.

Election of Chairman:

Richard Kenney proposed Dave Morrison to chair the meeting, Les Williams seconded. This was agreed.

Chairman's opening remarks:

VESTIGIA NULLA RETRORSUM

Dave went on to offer a bottle of wine to anyone who could translate this before the meeting finished. Dave asked for objections to taping the meeting; no one objected. Dave asked for the sake of the records that people heckle clearly.

Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from Marion Batten, Andrew Buchanan, Pete Cousins, Tony Dingle, Paul Dolphin, Lee Ferris, Duncan Frew, Nigel Graham, Mark Helmore, Carl Pickstone, Tina Pitman, Jack Sheppard, Sir Michael Simmons, Rob Taviner, John Thomas, Richard Witcombe.

Minutes of the 1997 AGM:

P Hendy proposed that the minutes were an accurate account of the meeting. B Prewer seconded. This was agreed.

Matters arising from the minutes:

A Newport asked if there would be access to the shed since the lock was fitted. L Williams stated that it is not locked.

P Hann asked if anything had been done about the Luke Devenish Memorial Fund. D Morrison replied that this was still under consideration. D Morrison asked for help in organising this. D Morrison stated that he would raise it as a priority before the committee.

R Kenny asked for a set of keys to all areas for the trustees. D Morrison stated that he would arrange for an understairs key, as this provides access to

the keys for all areas. D Morrison commented that it is better to know when the trustees are coming so that members can tidy up.

R Fielder asked why there was no itemised list of new tackle purchases in this year's Handbook as this had been asked for last year. D Morrison stated that this was not available at the time.

B Prewer asked if the local list of MRO call out numbers could be forwarded to him as he had not seen an updated list for the last year.

P Hann asked why there had been no mention in the Journal of the batteries; members need to know what they are for, etc. M Midlen replied that the delay had been caused by technical problems, and this led to a delay in production, and that this is being done as a favour not commercially. Mention will be made in a future journal.

A Newport asked why there is still club tackle missing from the list as this was raised last year. D Morrison stated that the survey gear is being cleaned. A Morse stated that the talloretting machine is in the store, cordless drill whereabouts are unknown. D Morrison stated that booking-out should be done every time tackle is borrowed. D Sealy stated that the club relies on everybody's goodwill.

P Hann asked where the club concrete mixer is, this was also missing from the accounts. M Midlen said he may know where it is, but was not sure. D Morrison said that it is up to the committee to get it back and place it in the garage.

A Newport said that use of club tackle for noncaving purposes should be charged for. D Morrison replied that donations will be sought.

P Hann asked why the honorary members still showed thirteen. D Cooke said he had looked into this and read out a list of thirteen honorary members. M Dewdney-York said he believed that Mrs Reynolds may not be an honorary member as only her husband was nominated. D Cooke replied that the handbook showed joint membership applied, but would look further into this. J Hanwell asked if A Macmillan was still alive. The committee said they would look into this.

Treasurer's report and accounts for 1997/198:

Due to pressing work commitments M Helmore was unable to attend and answer many of the questions raised.

Questions were raised regarding the practices surrounding hut booking in and the payment and collection of payment for hut fees. It was felt that not all people staying at the hut are completing the book fully, with entries being unmarked as to payment, and monies not being attributable to entries in the book. B Prewer suggested that clearly marked boxes could be placed on envelopes.

Auditor's report:

P Haigh stated that the accounts show last year's figures - corrected accounts were available.

Discussion of financial reports:

P Haigh felt that a number of problems existed with no main area to focus on, namely that income was not attributable to records and that cash may be too readily available. Due to the nature of the problems, last year's shortfall may be difficult to recover. In future, procedure would have to be enforced.

There was a general discussion regarding previous and existing control procedures, and why these had not been followed. The meeting agreed that next year's committee should make this a priority in ensuring that existing controls are followed and new ones adopted where applicable.

P Haigh stated that the expenditure and deficits had reduced the bank balance to £4,000, and after insurance payments this would be further reduced to £2,500. This could easily be run up as a deficit in the year.

A discussion was held regarding the loss associated with last year's dinner.

P Hendy asked why the payphone costs were so high this year. P Haigh stated that the costs shown were mostly due to the rental, with little income recorded.

P Hendy asked to see a breakdown of repair and cleaning costs. P Haigh stated that this would have to be done by the committee as the invoices do not show this.

A Newport asked why a £100 donation had been made. L Williams stated that this was for the Pwll

Ddu association (Ogof Draenen).

J Hanwell proposed that the accounts be accepted, with the caveat that the next committee review procedures. A Newport seconded;

In Favour: 37
Against: 1
Abstain: 3

J Hanwell proposed a vote of thanks to P Haigh, the meeting was in agreement.

Trustees' report:

D Morrison stated that the trustees report was not open to discussion, but felt that it was a useful reminder, and thanked the Trustees for their report. P Hann appreciated the acknowledgement of previous committees.

Officers reports for 1997/198

Chairman's report:

G Bolt questioned the statement of maintaining hut usage. D Morrison said he was aware that weekend bookings had dropped but felt that midweek usage had increased. Black Wol said last years figures were high. D Morrison felt that day usage should be recorded. M Hewins stated that the caving log was rarely filled in and that day bookings would not be recorded. D Thompson stated that there is no point in gathering useless information. D Morrison stated that a period of information gathering would be useful in looking at the consumables and in helping to account for them. G Bolt stated that last year's AGM had asked for day fees to be reviewed. D Morrison stated that signs had been placed around the hut and notices placed in the journal. R Fielder stated that this should be the duty of the hut warden for weekend visitors. D Morrison asked the meeting if any present had been to the hut and logged and paid day fees? M Hewins was the only one to reply.

Secretary's report:

P Hann stated that there were a number of incorrect statements in the handbook. A list of corrections was passed to V Freeman to be incorporated into the master copy.

Membership secretary's report:

(See previous notes regarding honorary members)

Caving secretary's report:

What is caving?

Hut administration officers report:

M Hewins stated that the hut was in the best condition he has seen it in the last thirty years and proposed a vote of thanks to all those who have worked on the hut. B Prewer seconded. The meeting was in agreement.

Black Wol stated that the new bunks are missing the top upright, which provided handholds for older members. D Morrison stated that ladies often sleep on top bunks, and groping around in the dark may provide some interesting handholds.

P Hendy stated that a substantial amount of work had been conducted and monies spent. He proposed that a break down of costs should be provided by next year's committee, and that future work be prioritised. Uncompleted work should be completed and the roof should be a priority if it needs replacing. D Morrison stated that all future work would have to be conducted to a budget, which would not be overspent. The roof may well require replacing in the next five years; some quotes have been received and others are being sought.

Editor's report:

P Hendy proposed a vote of thanks for the outgoing editor. A Ladell seconded. The meeting was in agreement.

Librarian's report:

No points raised.

Tackle officer's report:

P Hann asked if ropes are being returned dirty? A Morse replied that they are not.

P Hann stated that last year's meeting had mentioned that SRT ropes would not be used until a rope washer was installed, and asked if this had been completed. S Richardson stated that the rope washer was ready for installation.

Hut warden's report:

W Williams asked if the reported figures were for nights paid or nights booked? A Ladell replied that they were for nights booked.

P Hann noted that there was a discrepancy of £86

for the year 96/97 and a discrepancy of £486 for 97/98.

Sales Officer's Report:

P Hendy stated that a list of sales items would be useful. D Morgenstern replied that a list was available on the noticeboard. R Fielder asked if this could be published in the journal. D Morrison stated that no new sales had been recorded whilst increased journal costs are incurred. R Fielder stated that new items and large stock investments should be advertised. V Freeman nodded vigorously.

Election of Officers and committee for 1998/1999:

The nominations were printed in the handbook and no positions were contested.

Election of Hon. Auditor 1998/1999:

L Williams proposed P Haigh as honorary auditor, R Fielder seconded. The meeting was in agreement.

Motions for Discussion:

Membership

R Kenney stated that the proposed rule change was not very well thought out and conflicted with other rules. A discussion ensued which further supported R Kenney's views. P Haigh stated that whilst the wording was wrong the issue of delay in collecting funds should be addressed. A Summerskill stated that previous year's had worked. R Freeman asked what proportion of the members paid the early renewal rate. D Cooke replied that two thirds paid the early renewal rate. The committee decided to withdraw its original proposal.

L Williams proposed that except for the change to the new members joining fee being pro-rata (this was seconded by R Fielder), the proposed rule change thus read;

New Rule 8

Subscriptions for the coming year shall be decided by the annual general meeting.

Two rates of subscription shall be set. The first (the "early" renewal rate) shall be for existing members renewing their subscription before the end of the calendar year and the second (the "standard" rate) shall be for those members who renew their subscription between 1 January and 31 March following the AGM.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

The new subscriptions set at the AGM are as follows, but remember
'early renewal rates' are only applicable if you pay before 31st December this year.

	<u>Early Renewal Rate</u>	<u>After Jan 1st</u>
Single member	£25.00	£30.00
Joint members (1 vote)	£31.25	£37.50
Joint members (2 votes)	£43.75	£52.50
Senior Citizen rate	£7.50	£9.00
Food boxes	£2.50	£2.50
Lockers	£6.00	£6.00

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

Committee Reply

As requested at the AGM, the following show costs of both the bunk room and maintenance. There is also a break down of expenditure and income from last year's dinner.

BUNKROOM COSTS

Doors (including downstairs back door)	£814.00
Timber, plaster and nails	£163.00
Paint and brushes	£97.00
More plaster!	£63.00
Timber, mastic and window sills	£452.00
More timber!	£499.00
Radiators and screws	£144.00
Woodfiller, silicon, wire and sockets	£120.00
Cutting wheels, paint and window timber board	£111.00
Hire of space heaters	£65.00
Mattresses	£1250.00
Total	£3778.00

The rest of the maintenance costs, not on the bunkroom include:

Gas pipework and inspections
Louvre boiler room doors
Service of the boiler and power-washer

The Concrete Mixer and cordless drill are available. The Committee would like to point out that these are for caving and hut working purposes only. If you would like to borrow them for any other purpose, permission is required first. A donation to the club would also be appreciated. Contact Dave Morrison for further details.

The following are the views of the Chairman of the Wessex Cave Club, as he holds the responsibility for losses and, on this occasion, was the person who set the price for the dinner. The following attempts to explain the losses for the dinner of 1997:

Unaccountable expenditure

2 barrels - understand that there was no whip round

£20 over, on food for Sunday Both of these account for £140. This leaves a loss of £30 - basically, we'll just have to accept it. Also, it is queried whether the Raffle made enough money.

We cannot tell what the total income was as not all people pay correctly - ie, some money could've been put in the safe, or cash, etc. (This only stresses the importance of correctly labelling all monies paid to the Club). Whilst this is not wholly acceptable and it's obvious that we made a loss, we will endeavour not to do so in the future.

David Morrison

Coxley Vineyard	£1430.00
Coach/Minibus	£150.00
2 barrels	£120.00
Sunday outing costs	£100.00
Sunday food/drink	£119.85
Menu printing	£18.00
Contras:	£84.56
raffle prizes/sales goods	
Total Expenditure	£2022.41
Income	£1852.00
Loss	£170.00

The account is a true and accurate record.

The Saga of the Pot Bellied Stove

Maurice Hewins

13/2/59 Committee Minutes

David Willis reminded the Hon Secretary (Frank Frost) that Holland had written to him about the heating stove used by the BEC. The letter said that the stove was very efficient and cost about £2-10-00. Thirty cwt. of coke had been used in a year.

David Willis promised to see if such a stove could be purchased and to examine Hillgrove to ascertain the modifications required for the stove. Brenda Willis mentioned that we should get on with the plan to fit another stove and not leave everything until next winter.

11/9/59 Committee Minutes

Harry Stanbury agreed to find the prices of stoves for the replacement of the existing one at Hillgrove.

24/11/59 Committee Minutes

Harry Stanbury had obtained details of prices of heating stoves for Hillgrove but the Hon Treasurer (Brenda Willis) pointed out we are not in a position to purchase one at the moment and the meeting decided to postpone this for the time being. Mike Holland promised to let the Hon. Sec. have details of the size of the stove that would be required. It was agreed that the Florence cooking stove should be replaced by Calor rings in due course and while it was not possible to purchase new ones, at the moment, it was agreed members should try to obtain some second-hand ones, if the price was reasonable.

10/1/60 Committee Minutes

The meeting discussed the heating stove at Hillgrove and it was agreed that a new one was necessary. The gear curator (Stanbury) promised to obtain details of the sizes and prices of a type specifically recommended by the Hut Warden (Holland?) and prices of insulating materials.

28/2/60 Committee Minutes

It was agreed that a new heating stove should be purchased for Hillgrove at a cost of about £14.

25/3/60 Hillgrove Log Book

"NOTE THE DAY FOLKS 25th MARCH 1960

HALLELUJAH! HAIL O STAR OF THE EAST

IGNORANCE HAS BEEN CONQUERED

THE WESSEX HAS SEEN THE LIGHT

AFTER YEARS OF CAMPAIGNING WE HAVE;

GUESS WHAT!

INSTALLED A ROMESSE STOVE!!!

AND THE LORD SAID LET THERE BE HEAT

AND THERE WAS HEAT

YOU COULD FEEL IT FOR MILES AND
MILES AROUND

CALOO CALHAY

OH FRABJOUS DAY

Written in the hand and style of Holland?

3/4/60 Committee Minutes

The committee congratulated those members who had painted the hut and fitted the new stove

12/10/98 Letter Hewins to Hendy

Judy and I were at Upper Pitts this last week end and noted that the above mentioned antique had been installed in the restored fireplace. It was positively gleaming with its graphite finish.

Yorcky was sitting in the corner with a smug "I told you so look".

The stove was giving so much heat that some members commented that it was too hot in the lounge!

We do miss the sight of an open fire but at least you can make a good roaring noise if you open the damper!

Resurrecting The Dragon

Phil Hendy

The original open fire at Upper Pitts has given good service over the years, but the frequent conflagrations that it was subjected to took their toll. Last Spring, after a BEC-inspired inferno, it was found that the firebricks at the back had burnt through, and that there was also a hole in the concrete block wall behind it. Examination of the outside wall of the HQ showed that the intense heat had been reaching this.

Further examination showed that the fire had burnt the blockwork out so that flames were able to enter the cavity in the wall, possibly reaching upstairs floor timbers which may have been bridged across it. There was also some indication that flames had charred the inside of the wood panelling, which was originally part of the Hillgrove hut. It was an unacceptable fire risk, and forthwith a renovation plan was initiated.

The old firebricks were removed, and the alcove enlarged. In the process, it was found that the lowest section of ceramic flue liner had been subjected to such intense heat that it crumbled away on exposure. The cavity between the fireplace and the safe was also opened up. Jammed in this void are a lot of hanging deaths - original builders' rubble, and the cavity is filled to a depth of about one metre with rubble. Attempts to initiate a dig for the legendary Lost Bottle of Blotty's Whisky were abandoned as foolhardy and dangerous. The walls of the alcove were then

rendered, and the surround extended with matching blocks. Atty's Dragon shield was carefully washed, and replaced on the wall. The old Hillgrove pot-bellied stove was then repaired and cleaned, and fitted into position. At the time of writing, it is operative, although the flexible flue will be replaced soon with a purpose-made stainless steel flue.

Many will no doubt regret the passing of open fires at Upper Pitts, but the pot-bellied stove is much safer. Unlike at Hillgrove, it will not be required as the sole heat source; the central heating is very good, but it is nice to have some extra form of heating in the lounge, both for the heat and as a focal point. There is criticism of the fact that it will be impossible to see flames (the upper lid should be kept closed when the fire is lit) but if anyone can acquire a wood-burner with doors, it could always be replaced. Such a stove should have solid doors, as glass or mica panels will soon shatter if they are closed on pieces of wood that do not fit completely into the burner.

The pot-bellied stove is multi-fuel. It will work quite satisfactorily on wood, and a full load will last for some considerable time if the draught is closed down. It will use coke or special coal, but this is expensive, and will burn quicker. It may take a bit of getting used to, but like most things, there is an art to it. The Heart of the Dragon will give good service, and lots of heat.

WESPAK

Specification

3x1.5v Dry Cells
Rechargeable Panasonic Batteries
Moulded Resin Case
5hrs Halagen Light (approx.)
£25 per unit

Description

The batteries are fully encased by the resin and maintenance free. They are generally stored inside a slightly modified Petzel Case, (£6 approx), which is attached to rear of caving helmet.

This enables you to use either standard flat Duracell or "WESPAK" batteries without the need to change the set-up on your helmet.

For further details please contact Mark Helmore

Product of the Wessex Technical Department 1998

The Heart of the Dragon

The Dragon

Well, it's nice to see the light of day again. I'm not quite sure where I am, though I think I'm still in a caving hut. The noise and the beer are the same, but most of the people around me are strangers. Still, I recognise one or two people - the large one with the big beard and matching stomach, and the thinner one with the beard and packets of photographs. By and large, these unknowns seem to be a good bunch, so I'll stick around and see how they treat me.

It seems a long time since I was last in such company. I used to live in a large wooden hut, where I slept most of the time. At weekends, though, I was surrounded by cavers, who fed me and treated me very well. In return I gave them heat - and much needed it was too, especially in the depths of winter. They used to feed me on wood, mainly, but on certain occasions I was fed lumps of hard crunchy stuff - coke, I think they called it, or sometimes coal. Then, my fires grew, and they worshiped me as some kind of god, huddling round me, stretching their cold hands out to me, and when they left me for some place they called 'Hunters' they often hung wet clothes around to me, to steam and dry in my benevolent warmth.

Then I was summarily taken apart, and moved to a dark cupboard in a far-off place. No-one came to visit me, and my belly grew cold, and spiders hid in it. How are the mighty fallen!

I spent several years in exile, then recently, I was taken out into the light again, cleaned and blacklead, and installed in a place of honour in an alcove in this new caving hut. I hope it's a permanent position - it's generally light and airy here, though I am not needed all the time, as I was before. The room has some flat white things fixed

to the walls. These also give out heat, though not as fierce or welcoming as mine. But I'll show them! Just feed me, and see what I'm made of.

First, screw up some newspaper, and push it into my mouth. Drop some small kindling wood on top of that, and open my er... nether orifice... and push in a large twist of burning newspaper. Make sure both my portals are closed (you can leave the lower one slightly open by moving it to one side) and open the horizontal slide on my flue. Then stand back. If I like what I have eaten, you will hear me begin to roar, and after a few minutes, you can feed me again, with bigger bits of wood this time. I really like coal or coke, but can be a bit greedy with it - wood takes longer to digest. Just make sure my top door is closed (unless you are feeding me) and by adjusting the bottom flap and the flue, I will roar away for ages, just like the old days. I will also eat paper and some plastic, when I'm well-fed, but I don't like glass bottles or these new-fangled beer can thingies. When I have gone to sleep and am cold (usually in the morning) you can clean me by opening my lower door and shovelling out the ash. A small lug pokes down from the top of this lower compartment - by rattling it, more ash can be made to fall down.

If I am looked after, I will continue to roar for you, and keep you warm. I won't let you know I'm not by glowing, but take care - I do not suffer fools, and should only be handled with care when feeding - or I'll leave my mark on you. I think I'll like it here - as I said, these cavers are a new lot, but they still do the same daft things and talk the same amount of bullshit. And I won't be lonely any more, there's a nice jolly gnome living in a niche above me, so when the last humans have gone away on a Sunday night, we can have a good old natter about what we've seen and heard.

Editorial

First of all I would like to thank Mak for getting the minutes to me quickly, and everyone else for their articles especially Phil Hendy who has several pages in this Journal - I already have one of his articles for the next Journal. So if anyone else would care to write something either scientific or topical please do; on disk preferably but just copy will be fine.

At the AGM it was mentioned about the Journal becoming more of a platform for members' views. So if you have any, on any subject from hut fees (day or night), Upper Pitts, the committee, finances, caving into the next century or anything else, don't just leave it to pub talk, write a letter and I will publish it in the Journal.

The Discovery and Exploration of Honeymead Hole part 1 Richard Witcombe

The 1995 JCB dig on Little Crapnell Farm, near Maesbury, as well as providing a year's worth of excavation and exploration for the Wessex/ATLAS digging team, and adding a 1000' of sporting and quite well decorated cave to the St. Andrew's Well catchment, also brought local farmer, Dave Speed, back into the caving scene after an absence of almost 15 years. It was through Dave's contacts with neighbouring farmer, Sandy Keen, and landowner, Commander Somerville of Dinder Estates, that the diggers were able to shift their attentions in the spring of 1996 to the field to the south of Little Crapnell Swallet, where a number of shallow depressions held out the promise of further easy pickings for the tracked excavator.

Accordingly, at 9 am on Saturday 27 April the team assembled with "Slim" the Hy Mac operator, and after weighing up the options decided to tackle a wide but shallow depression 200 yards to the south of Little Crapnell Swallet. Slim commenced trenching from side to side but it soon became clear that any karst features were going to be buried much deeper than at the swallet site. Digging continued all day Saturday, encountering indeterminate rock faces at depths varying from 10' to 30'. The infill was a very consistent dry orange/brown loamy soil, with few loose rocks and only occasional patches of moisture.

Work ceased at 7 pm with an irregular, west facing, north east/south west cliff uncovered but no cave passage found. On Sunday digging recommenced at 9 am with further clearing of the cliff face. Some water erosion features were visible at the north end but disappointingly no cavities were seen. Just after lunch a solid rock floor sloping at the angle of dip (approx 25 degrees) was encountered at a depth of 20' and followed down to 25' to a point where the main cliff appeared to meet a more broken area of rock at right angles. It did not look at all promising, but before giving up on the site, Dave Speed and the writer descended for one last check for any rift development at this junction. Nothing was found in the rock angle, but the removal of a few rocks in the broken rock face by Dave revealed a small draughting hole about five feet above the floor.

More slabs were quickly pulled off the face and an irregular rift passage some 2' wide by 3' high was uncovered. It appeared to be choked by broken

slabs after 8', but the presence of cobbles and a film of mud were clear evidence of a former streamway. Pete Hann ventured inside to report reasonable possibilities of digging into the choked floor, and the team happily made the decision to safeguard the hole and backfill the excavation. The entrance was encircled by dry stone walling to a height of 6' before a halt was called at 6 pm.

On Wednesday 1 May the team was joined by a large NHASA contingent, and backfilling commenced in earnest. An RSJ beam was placed across the unstable southern "cliff" face, resting on a slab of the dry stone wall on the right and jammed into a cleft on the left, and then a series of 2' deep concrete rings were stacked up courtesy of the Hy Mac, and linked by H sections of steel to keep them in a vertical position. Further stabilisation was provided by rough dry stone walling around the outside of the pipes. Working on through a heavy drizzle with illumination provided by Dave Speed's farm loader, the eighth and final ring was put into place at 10.30 pm and a halt was called to the proceedings.

The crater was backfilled the next weekend, and the ground picked clean of stones. On the following Wednesday, some large limestone slabs were laid around the lip of the shaft, and the redoubtable ATLAS winch - veteran of Thrupe Lane, Viaduct Sink, Longwood Valley Sink and Little Crapnell - was set up ready for further service.

On Sunday 12 May, Dave Speed, Clive North, Graham Bromley and the writer commenced the underground dig. Initially mud which had dropped in during the backfilling exercise was sent up, followed later by fallen slabs and a few cobbles. The diggers uncovered a number of small holes in the passage floor from which a slight draught seemed to emanate. The left hand wall appeared to be undercut bedrock, but the right hand side was a very unstable looking collection of large slabs or possibly slumped bedding.

The next Wednesday, assisted again by a NHASA contingent, the team cleared a large amount of mud and rock from the passage, but by the end of the evening, the roof area was giving cause for serious concern. Overhead, a nearly horizontal slab, some 4' by 2' by 18", seemed to be suspended by a pile of

stones at the far end and a pinched 9" cube of rock sitting on a 2" ledge at the near end. Substantial shoring was clearly urgently needed.

Days of heavy rain followed, with water ponding in the depression. Some settlement of the concrete rings occurred, and at the foot of the shaft, several large rocks were found to have split under compression and some smaller stones had been squeezed out of the wall.

On Sunday 26 May Graham Bromley, Bob Cottle and Dave Speed managed to insert a section of RSJ and a piece of telegraph pole across the passage in the form of a St Andrew's Cross, the ends resting on the best of the poor ledges available. A longer section of pole was laid longways beneath the roof slab resting on the RSJ at the near end and a small stack of rocks at the choked end.

The following Wednesday, the writer cemented the various poles onto the ledges, and built up sections of stone and concrete walling around the chamber walls. Work then shifted to the bottom of the pipes where a substantial buttress was constructed to support the pressure cracked rocks. Inevitably a good deal of previously excavated stone had to be sent back down from the surface!

Judicious digging resumed on Sunday 2 June, but the small chamber was taking on a very unstable appearance as more rocks were pulled out. It was decided that to make any further progress, one of the floor boulders would have to be banged, but unfortunately most looked as if they were holding the rest up. Whilst cleaning off a large, relatively free standing block on the right, a tiny passage was opened up heading horizontally beneath a bedding roof for 8' or 10' in a south westwards direction. A second slot descended towards the threshold area.

The block itself was eventually declared non-load bearing, and the decision was made to risk a very small bang. Clive North duly laid and fired a half slab of plaster. Thankfully the crack of the explosion was not followed by any other rumblings.

The next Wednesday an inspection revealed that the bang had neatly split the boulder with no apparent collateral damage. The blocks were stacked out of the way, and the mud and small rocks sent to the surface. This clearing work showed the south west "passage" to be little more than a gap in the boulders, and the best prospects once again seemed to be in the floor.

Further clearing on the Sunday opened up a 5' drop between a reasonably stable left hand wall and a less secure right hand wall. The floor area was loosely choked with large slabs, one of which was selected for part demolition. Clive duly laid and fired a one slab charge.

The regular diggers now comprised Dave Speed, Graham Bromley, Dave Morrison, Clive North, Bob Cottle and the writer, assisted periodically by Nigel Hellyar and "Buddy" Williams of the Shepton Mallet CC.

More rock clearing and concrete walling took place during the next three sessions, and about 4' of downwards progress was made. Attempts to remotely "re-arrange" some of the bottom boulders using the winch cable were partially successful, and various tiny holes were opened up down which stones rattled away for 8' to 10'. The insertion of a 4' length of steel angle beneath a sagging threshold boulder gave added security and a reasonable draught emanating from the floor was a spur to digging.

On Wednesday 26 June, more gaps in the ruckle were filled with concrete grouting and a section of steel U channel was inserted across the rift beneath one of key boulders. Graham Bromley continued digging downwards, doubling back under the upper chamber, following a reasonably solid left hand wall. By the end of the session, a narrow - perhaps one foot wide - open rift could be seen ahead, and stones dropped down it seemed to fall for 15' or so.

The next two sessions saw unsuccessful attempts to break up a large flake barring the way on. The rift ahead could be seen to drop away at a steep angle for about ten feet but it was only six inches or so wide. More intriguing was a hole off to the right. Stones could be thrown through this and they sounded as though they were dropping five or six feet into a larger void.

Aubrey Newport neatly demolished the flake on Friday 5 July, firing a Cordtex charge in two small shotholes. Bang debris was cleared on the Sunday, allowing a better view into what looked to be a man-sized rift five feet off to the right. Access was prevented by various inter-dependant slabs and more very careful demolition and walling was deemed necessary for a safe approach.

Clive North drilled three shotholes and fired a one stick charge on the next Wednesday afternoon. In the evening the rubble was cleared and most of it used up in grouted walling in the lower section of the dig. The remaining slabs preventing access to

the right hand rift still could not be moved or banged safely, and it was thought that the whole mass might have to be cemented together before a route could be "cut" through. For the time being it was decided to continue excavating downwards in the floor of the narrow rift.

On Wednesday 17 July, the regular team, joined now by Paul Stillman of the MNRC, dug through the remaining bang debris and uncovered layers of stream debris and small cobbles. Off to the right, a possible lower route into the right hand rift was uncovered. It was guarded by a large slab that would probably require bang, but looked a safer option than the higher level route.

Clive North carried out the necessary demolition on the Sunday morning, and the afternoon team cleared back the debris, much of which was cemented into the unstable walls. In due course, Graham Bromley was able to crawl through a 5' connection under the right hand wall into a short section of open, man-sized rift. While Graham evaluated the way on, the writer inserted a quick concrete and rock support under the threshold to the crawl.

Graham reported a steeply descending rift passage parallel to the approach passage. Stream debris - eroded rocks and cobbles - partially blocked the way ahead but stones could be rolled for about 10' into what sounded like a small chamber. To the left was a too tight entrance to another rift which seemed to be deeper. Upstream and overhead were chokes of loose slabs. After visits by the rest of the team, the way on was left for a major push on the following Wednesday.

On 24 July, a team comprising Dave Speed, Nick Speed, Kate Powell, Paul Stillman, Clive North, Bob Cottle, Dave Morrison, Graham Bromley and the writer assembled at the cave. Graham quickly cleared a small amount of stream debris from the floor of the new rift and crawled on downwards at a steep angle to emerge after 15' in a small bedding plane chamber, 20' long by 10' wide and 3' to 6' high. Halfway down the chamber was a hole in the floor, partly filled with loose rocks and without an obvious way on. The chamber terminated below an area of roof collapse in a mud choke with a fine stal flow above it, while to the right a man sized inlet passage fringed with further stal led off.

The rest of the party came through to the chamber, and after a photographic session, Graham shed his boiler suit and crawled carefully into the inlet passage. It rose parallel to the main passage, terminating after 30' in a choke. The cave draught

was detected emerging from a small hole at the bottom of the chamber, and an hour's digging through collapse material of mud, rock and broken stal revealed a reasonably solid left hand wall and some evidence of a passage continuing under the stal flow.

Meanwhile, Graham had tackled the narrow slot on the left at the top of the rift, but was only able to make 6' of progress before seeing it became too tight and well choked with slabs. The party adjourned to the Hunter's, well satisfied with the night's work. The decorated, slab strewn chamber was christened Slab House - Kate Powell was then working in the Slab House pub restaurant.

The following Sunday with the regular team augmented by Rob Taviner, a major assault was begun on the terminal choke, and by the end of the session a 6' deep pit had been excavated, unfortunately surrounded by a very unstable sliding mass of rubble and mud. After half an hour's work on Wednesday 31 July holes began to appear beneath the digger's feet and stones fell away into what sounded like a sizeable void. Dave Speed was working alongside what he took to be a safely stal cemented mass of rock when it suddenly collapsed with a roar into an open 15' to 20' deep rift. Other stones slid off the walls of the pit and a very serious collapse looked imminent, causing Kate Powell to strongly insist that Dave should come out of the pit at once if he wanted their relationship to continue. Dave reluctantly handed over to Dave Morrison, but he too was forced to retreat after another noisy collapse. All of the party withdrew to a higher part of the chamber to await developments.

Further minor rock falls occurred, but after a quarter of an hour, Graham Bromley decided that the worst was over and gingerly clambered down the rift. He reached a rubble slope after 10' and proceeded steeply downwards under a very unstable roof until he reached a too tight left corner obstructed with stream debris. Crawling upstream, he passed a tight, muddy slot to enter an ascending rift with a pot on his right hand side. The rift had a good voice connection with the hole in the floor of the upper part of Slab House, and continued upwards to a choke.

Graham free climbed the 15' deep pot to meet a further rubble choke in a descending bedding plane with a tiny trickle of water entering from the left. Not surprisingly perhaps, no one else felt inclined to follow Graham's footsteps and a halt was called to the night's activities. A further 30' of depth had been gained, and another 60' of passage explored.

Bonding, Blagdon and Beam Engines

Phil Hendy

In spite of the weather forecast, this year's Club bonding session, masquerading as the AGM and Dinner weekend, was drier than expected, though blustery. The Club masochists who like waiting for a coach in pouring rain with mud up to their knees were to be sadly disappointed.

Blustery could fairly describe the AGM, for which there was a reasonable turn-out. Most of the discussion centred on the Club's finances, and it is a pity that the Treasurer was not able to be present to clarify the accounts. Basically, it seems that income < expenditure in the last year. Part of this is due to the high level of spending on Upper Pitts, and part due to reduced HQ revenue.

It is likely that major expenditure will be needed on Upper Pitts' roof in the next five years, and therefore no new building projects are to be started until funds have accumulated. The bunkroom and pot-bellied stove are now in use, and only minor expense will be involved in finishing them off. Anything else, other than vital repairs and maintenance, will have to wait.

The new Committee is to look at the Club's finances under four main headings. *Firstly*, new members need to be recruited. The traditional source (affiliated clubs and students) has almost dried up. Maybe a reduced subscription rate for full-time students would help to attract new blood. *Secondly*, there is the perennial question of the subscription rate. There is always a rush just after the AGM to pay subs at the temporary 'reduced' rate. While it is nice to get some quick cash in the bank, the Club suffers because the overall subscription income is not as high as it could be. A Committee motion to try to resolve this was withdrawn when it was realised to be too ambiguous, and the Committee hopes to bring a better version before the next AGM.

Thirdly, although the usage of Upper Pitts remains high, which mirrors the activity of members, this is not reflected in the income generated from hut fees. Raising overnight fees is not the answer, as this could send guests to cheaper (but inferior!) huts. The Club now has a large local membership, who use the HQ but do not stay overnight. Casual users, both members and guests, often do not pay day fees; possibly through ignorance of what day fees are for, possibly because they feel that just changing does not put any wear and tear on the

HQ, and anyway, they pay 20p for a shower, don't they? *Lastly*, late payment of hut fees (which may lead to non-payment) can cause a significant deficit in cash flow. We learned, for example, that the hut fees situation was significantly distorted by the payment of large sums of hut fees after the end of the Club's financial year. These problems will be addressed by the Committee, and their findings announced in due course.

The afternoon was spent in various ways; some hardy individuals even went caving! The new Committee settled into its first meeting, and a small group plus dog walked over North Hill in sunny but windy conditions to the Minneries, where brief investigation of the cooling tunnels allowed us to claim that we had been underground. We made a surprise reconnaissance of the new Belfry Bar. Very nice - there may now be a move to install an espresso machine and gingham tablecloths at Upper Pitts! Since the only drinks on offer at the bar were some dodgy-looking liqueurs, the Wessex beat a hasty, but dignified, retreat.

The Dinner evening at the Mendip Centre, Blagdon, was very good. We ate in a large light and airy room, only slightly marred by being on two levels. The view of Blagdon Lake from the restaurant is fantastic, but we found that it loses a lot of its magic at night. My personal view of the dinner was somewhat influenced by the fact that yet again I was prevailed upon to be MC. This may have something to do with the fact that I am the outright owner of a dinner suit, but if there are any volunteers for next year, I will step down gracefully.

Generally, the food was good. The individual cheese and biscuits were large enough to serve a whole table! We welcomed guests from the BEC, Shepton, MCG and two dubious-looking Craven members, as well as Mr and Mrs Gibbons from Eastwater Farm. Nigel Taylor toasted the Club and gave W... W... a momento of her attendance at the BEC Dinner. Guest of Honour was longtime member Fred Davies, who reminisced about Mike Boon, and the exploration of Cowsh Avens. Just the thing to help the dinner go down!

After the speech, the awards were presented mainly by Bob Scammell and Les Williams, who have formed a mutual appreciation society. Award recipients included Brian Hansford (Gardening, Rockery section), Cookie (Navigation), Paula from

Whitestown Farm (a souvenir of St Luke's dig), Aubrey Newport (Blind Digger) and Les (Bar-room Lecturer). Les gave a special award to Bob, for his work in trying to eradicate Bath of open-topped buses, a topic which I am sure is close to every Wessex member's heart. No doubt Bob or Les will explain the citations to anyone who is interested. There was the usual raffle, and the traditional serious drinking and talking, which as usual continued at Upper Pitts into the wee small hours.

The next morning dawned bright and breezy - too bright and early for some! A motley crew gathered at the bottom of the lane for a coach - which arrived this year! Off we went on Tuska's Magical Mystery Tour. On approaching Blagdon, we thought we were going back to the restaurant to apologise and do the washing-up, but the coach took us on to the Bristol Water Pumping Station below the dam at Blagdon Lake.

This was built about 100 years ago to pump water from Blagdon to Bristol, and was originally powered

by four steam-driven beam engines. Two have been replaced by modern electric pumps, which now do all the work, but luckily last-minute appeals by conservationists saved the other two from destruction. Only one is now working, albeit under electric power, but we spent a long time watching the machinery in motion, marvelling at the superb Victorian engineering and the sheer power of it all. It was not strictly a caving outing, but very good for all that - a smaller version would be just the job at Clay Hole. Apart from the beam engine, there was a fascinating exhibition of water supply and usage, local wildlife and forestry. We were also able to walk around the parkland surrounding the plant, and look at the trout ponds.

Back at Upper Pitts, we were able to feed the inner caver, thanks to Mike York who had put together a filling meal of soup, bread, cheese and pate. All in all, a very good weekend, only spoilt at the end when we learnt that Sheila Pitman, who was taken ill early on Sunday morning, had suffered a stroke. We wish her all the very best for a speedy recovery.

Swildons Mud Sump: The Final Episode

Mark Helmore

Following on from the last trip on the 30th July:

August 8th arrived with Dave Edge, Justin (yet another prospective member) and myself pumping away!! until yes! the sump was broken. With the draught now blowing through Mud Sump and the Pub near to opening closing, a hasty retreat was made for a victory drink. Two further trips on August 11th and 18th have seen Mud Sump pumped dry (dry enough even for Les!) and various old buckets etc. removed from the cave.



Photo by Dave Edge

Future Prospects

Having had a good look at the old drain hole (which appears to be well blocked) it has been decided to leave the pump and hose installed, at least for the short term, until further works can be carried out to clear the drain. So on past performance, expect to see the pump in situ for the next few years.

We are also intending to rebuild the dam and generally tidy up this area as it currently bears more resemblance to a builders yard than a classic Swildons site!

Thanks must go to **** * whose employers generously donated the pump (don't tell them) and to the BEC for the loan of the hose.

NB: It has been noted that if Mud Sump has not been recently pumped it will take some time to make it passable and this may require more than one visit.

Letters to the Membership

Hidden Earth '98 National Caving Conference and Exhibition

Dear David

I would like to thank members of the Wessex, and Les Williams in particular, for the help they gave us with this year's annual conference at Southport.

For the second year running the club provided the majority of the Technical Support team and several of our Reception Staff. Les and his team make a major contribution to the smooth running of a successful conference and we look forward to seeing them again next year.

The same team also set up a most original and restful Club Stand which attracted a lot of attention; although sadly it did not win the prize. I believe however that a Wessex team was successful in the surveying competition.

I would be grateful if you could spare a minute to read out this letter at the AGM as it is unlikely that I will be able to attend in person.

Best Wishes

Conference Secretary
Pete Cousins

Dear All

As you will know from the journal, I organised some original exploration in the McGregors in the early eighties. It's an enormous karst area that's largely unexplored.

This note is to warn you that the BEC are thinking of coming out next year to scoop the Wessex - except of course that I shall be there to represent the "Auld Griffin". Can I expect any support from Upper Pitts do you think??

Incidentally, we now have the beginnings of a good ski season here in BC. Two killed in avalanches already and the snowpack building! Anyone for a springtime ski tour in the coast mountains? Talk to Jepson for details - he's already tried it with me.

Ubique Primus !

Paul Hadfield

Logbook Extracts

25.7.98 - Swildon's

Mark, Les, Cookie, Morse

Working trip to install pump at Mud Sump. Borrowed hose from water chamber and bolted pump to wall adjacent mud sump. Had a quick pump and got the hell out.

28.7.98 - Mud Sump Follow-up trip

Mark & Les

... to do some more pumping. Pumped a good 12"!! and just made it to the pub. Air getting poor, hopefully next trip will break sump.

4.8.98 - Swildon's to Trat's

P Lambert & 1 novice

Just thought I'd see if I liked caving. It's still the same after all these years! Might come again.

29.8.98 - St Cuthberts (Pulpit to streamway)

Vern, Rosie, Mak, Mike, Stewart

Went to Cuthberts, it's still Cuthberts. 3 people said they felt like they hadn't been caving. 2 were completely shagged - who's who?

30.8.98 - Swildon's Short Round

Vern, Rosie, Mak, Mike

Nice now Mud Sump is drier; would've been nice if they'd left some Kleenex. Troubles low but baled them anyway. Steady trip - Rosie's bum aches.

28.8.98

Simon and Steve arrived at Upper Pitts to the disappointment of Rosie and Vern who were hoping for a noisy night alone in the hut.

SAT & SUN - South Wales

Met up with Mark Helmore, Bean, Shag, Rachel & Naomi. After much laughter and fondling of this nether regions we managed to get Mark into his wetsuit and keep him there for a Porth-yr-Ogof through trip. Met some lads from the BEC who lent us a tent... to show our gratitude we gave a free demonstration in the art of fire making and having a good time. They didn't really get to grips with either concept and went to bed at 9pm.

Spent a very pleasant day 'canyoning' up and down the river Neath visiting Bridge Cave, Cwm Pwll Y Rhyd, White Lady and Town Drain. Finished with an excellent trip into LNRC. As warm as bathwater! warmer even! kettle water! In fact just bring your own mug, tea bags and milk. What a pleasant way to go caving (PM BEC staying at the Croydon 'cos their airbed went down!!!)

5.9.98 - Swildons, short trip to Sump 1

Mak, Jo & Pob

... supposed to be Sump 2 but I found myself all alone on the wrong side of the sump.

12.9.98 - GB

Maurice, Mike & Sarah

... expensive trip - wiped out flash gun (flash gun now superbly repaired by Mr Prewer - he's good with electronics).

12.9.98 - GB: the Simon Birthday trip

Nice and steady since age is becoming an issue.

20.9.98 - Swildon's Round Trip

Mike, Kevin, Jaine, Stuart, Paul, Wayne

We've been to hell and back ... smiles, smiles and more bloody smiles. I take this girl to the most God-awful places and she still smiles. Life is just not what it should be! As a dive it needed more water. As a cave it needed more air.

26.9.98

Maurice & John

Pensioner's potter from Rock of Ages to Reads' Cavern ... experimented with tripod.

Sept 98 - St Lukes

Now 67 1/2 ft deep and still going down!!!

4.10.98 - Yogi Pot

(working name for another Les dig)

Les, Wendy, Mak, Jo, Emma, Chris Toplier, Cookie
Dug about 2' of sandy mud and rocks from the bottom of the shaft. Started dry and sandy and became wet and muddy when we hit the water table ... Christopher was worried about the bear at the bottom, so Mak bravely killed it with his big stick. Who will Baboo play with now.

2.10.98

Joan Goddard and Geoff Beale of the MCG came to stay the night. It was very nice to have their company. We obviously offered them cups of splendid tea, etc.

"Why are you not staying at your own hut?"

"Ah, well, we can't get in. The electronic lock has failed and will not respond to our electronic key".

Did we sympathise? No.

Did we laugh? Yes.

10.10.98 - Ogof Tardiadd Rhymney

Max & Mark

Got the NGR from Descent and found it in a well 'ard quarry. Looked like Iceland. Better cave than we thought. Ideal Sunday bimble ...

14.10.98 - Shatter Series (intention anyway)

Rich Websell, Rob Delacour, Bruce

Got to Mud sump - but the pump don't work ... 'cos there is too much water flowing in! 45mins pumping lowered level by 2-3" ... need another pump! and perhaps some yellow GAS BOARD hose - 50m or so.

25.10.98 - Longwood

Simon, Steve & Tricky

A scientific trip to study the effects of flood water on the 'average caver' (unfortunately only the word 'average' applied to this lot). Les (far from average) Williams provided a control by not going ... the result: we got wet and my undies are soggy!

24.10.98 - Agen Allwedd

Cookie, Julie Hesketh & 3 MCG

Radio said "don't go to Wales it is wet", so we had to go and see - it was! ... we couldn't pass the second boulder choke since the passage was virtually sumped.

31.10.98 - OFD Pendulum Passage

Les Mark, Cookie

Pull-through & then up & out the pre-rigged Nave. Totally dry trip completely avoiding the deluge that was the OFD Streamway.

31.10.98 - Swildons

Les, Mark, Sparrow, Cookie

The water was right up and flowing down the manhole in the blockhouse. An opportunity not to be missed despite the time (midnight). It was outrageous. Every passage was taking water ... The lavatory pan was a vertical sump ... exhilarating! ... totally wet trip.

4.11.98 - St Lukes

Aubrey

Solo trip ... the others had excuses! Chemical rock breaker used to remove lump which was filling half of bottom of shaft - bit of an after rumble - whoops!!! PS My light worked OK again - perhaps Bob & Max did not turn up because their lights both went out last week. Bob's did not last 5 minutes; unlike his speech at the dinner!

7.11.98 - over 60's outing to Goatchurch

Maurice, Prew & John T (prospective geriatric)

Spent 2 hours with cameras and flash units among the boulders and hordes of youngsters led by paid (professional?) leaders. The rope I put over the Coffin Lid (only as a photographic prop of course) proved invaluable on the way out. Was it always that greasy?

11.11.98 - St Lukes

Bob B'stard, Aubrey, Max

Yes the bang dented the wiggley tin removed the rock and cement.

Caving Events

December

12th Mike Dewdney-York's Barrel
18th Axbridge Stomp, Priddy Village Hall

1999

January

2nd Golden Gnome, (WCC vs BEC Skittles) 7pm New Inn
30th BEC Stomp, Priddy Village Hall

February

6th CSCC Meeting, Hunters 10.30am
13th Wookey Hole
20th Jim and Graham's Barrel
27th Max & Christine's going away party

March

20th NCA AGM

April

10th CCC Ltd AGM, Hunters 10.30am

May

1st/3rd WSG South Wales
15th CSCC AGM, Hunters 10.30am

June

12th/13th BCRA Regional meeting
Swaledale, Yorkshire

July

12th/16th NSS Convention, Twin Falls, Idaho

September

10th/12th BCRA, Hidden Earth, Leeds