



Wessex Cave Club Journal
Volume 26
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December 2000

Officers of the Wessex Cave Club

President Richard Kenney

Vice-Presidents Paul Dolphin and Jack Sheppard



Chairman David Cooke

“Cookie”, seen here after his election to the post of Chairman, was previously Membership Secretary. He has caved in many parts of the world and has been an important member of the Wessex team in Slovenia. Dave took a leading role in arranging the recent “Hidden Earth” conference in Bristol and is active in caving politics. He is also a member of The Charterhouse Caving Committee.

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Editorial

The A.G.M. marked the end of an era, Dave Morrison stood down from the post of Chairman, which he took over, six years ago, from Aubrey Newport. By and large, it has been a successful period for the club and Dave deserves all our thanks. Dave Cooke and his incoming committee will need the full support of all members to maintain the momentum, especially as Mark Kellaway has retired as Secretary at the same time. Mak too, deserves our thanks.

Last years committee noted that membership is, at best, static and funds, while not depleted, will need careful management. (see treasurer's notes, in this issue) It is to be hoped that that the small but necessary increase in subscription next year does not drive members away. It is against this background, that the position of the Journal needs to be judged. It is not cheap to produce and Malc. Foyle suggested, at the A.G.M., that it could be replaced by a simpler newsletter. Someone went so far as to suggest E-mails!

Over the years, the Wessex Journal has been constant and outstanding as a place to record discoveries and changes in the caving scene. It has become a major historical record, in a way a transient web site can never be. Can our club continue to publish a worthwhile Journal? Because I believe that it can and should continue, I have agreed to take on the job of Editor. This may have been premature, as I have yet to master the new technology. Vern and Rosie are a difficult act to follow but with their help I will do my best.

To achieve this, I will need regular contributions. So, please get writing. My "snail mail" is always open (preferred even) or you can E-mail Vern, for the time being. If we fail to produce good and regular Journals, it is more than likely that we will loose many of our older and overseas members. After all, that is the main thing they receive in return for their subscriptions. So, let's give it our "best shot".

**The real
decision
makers**



Secretary Wanted

The club is currently without a secretary and a volunteer is urgently needed. The main requirement is simply the ability to write a reasonable letter and communicate with other clubs and organisations. **Apply Within!**

Club news

New Members

We welcome the following new members (elected 21/10/2000)

Alexander Burns, Bicton Colledge of Agriculture, Budleigh Salterton, Devon, EX9 7BY
01604 716768 (answer machine) milenco-7@hotmail.com

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Louise Biffin , 2 Madeira Croft, Chapelfields, Coventry, CV5 8NY 02476 674158
cex216@coventry.ac.uk

Change of address

David Upperton, 45 Blaison, Locking Castle, Weston-super Mare, Somerset, BS22 8BL.

Keir Clark, 130 Northfield Road, Stoke Coventry, CV1 2PB

Kathryn Hall, The Annex, 26 Hill Farm Road, Marlow, Bucks SL7 3LU 01628 487234
kathh@bcs.org.uk

Grant Lindsay, Cumberland House, Upper Wood, Matlock Bath, Derbyshire, DE4 3PB
01629 57927

Colin Shapter Nutwood, 81C Westend, Street, Somerset, BA16 0LQ 01458 441602

Dave Mason, 52 Deerswood, Kingswood, Bristol, BS15 4QA 01179 091621

Dave Meridith, 79 Tidesway, Marchwood, Southampton, SO40 4LE 02380 873099
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Malcolm Campbell, 13 Albion Place, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1LH 01227 751723

Journal Binding

Phil Hendy is arranging to have Journals professionally bound, at the cost of £16 per volume. Sets should be given to Phil, by the end of January, together with your cheque, made payable to him. Please note, they should be dis-bound and arranged in the order required for binding.

Vote of Thanks

A great deal of work was put in to make the Dinner weekend the success it was. The club would like to thank **Wendy Williams** for arranging the excellent evening, at Cox's Mill. We are also grateful to **Les Williams** for keeping us all guessing on our way to the Water Works.

Cover Picture Our previous Chairman, Dave Morrison, in the shaft at Thrupe Swallet. This was previously dug in the early 1960's by George Pointing, Dave Berry and others but it became too unstable and it was capped in 1965. See Article by Alan Surrall in Wessex Journal No 107, Volume 9, July 1966.

LIBRARY - RECENT ACQUISITIONS

As at 30 October 2000

Eastwater Cavern - Cavers Cave. Video by **Neil Wooldridge**

The Club has acquired some items from the estate of the late Rich Websell. These include:

British Regional Geology. North Wales (1961)
British Regional Geology . The Hampshire Basin (1982)
Die Falkensteiner Hohle (Guide in German)
White Scar Caves (Tourist Guide)

Thanks to Bob Scammell for the donation of copies of The Caves of Mendip (1962, 1964) Mendip Underground (1977) and Mendip - Cheddar, its Gorge and Caves (Balch)

Received journals include:

Bristol Exploration Club Belfry Bulletin 51, 3 (No. 508) Sept. 2000

BCRA Caves & Caving No. 87 Spring / Summer 2000

Cave and Karst Science Vol. 23 No. 1 (Apr. 2000)

Bulletin Bibliographique Speleologique (Speleological Abstracts No. 37 (1998)
(Also on CD-ROM)

Cambrian Caving Council 'Red Dragon' 2000

Cave Diving Group Newsletters 134 (Jan. 2000) 135 (Apr. 2000) 136 (Jul. 2000)
137 (Oct. 2000)

Chelsea Speleological Society N/L 42, 8/9 (Aug. / Sep. 2000), 10 (Oct.2000)

Council of Northern Caving Clubs. Eco-Resin Rigging System No. 1

D.C. Speleograph 55, 11 (Nov. 1999), 12 (Dec. 1999) 56, 1 (Jan.2000), 2/3 (Feb./Mar. 2000)
4 (Apr. 2000), 5 (May 2000), 6 (Jun. 2000)

Derbyshire Caver No. 105 Spring 2000, No. 106 Summer 2000

Descent No. 155 Aug./Sep. 2000. No. 156 Oct./Nov. 2000

Devon Spelaeological Society News No. 20 Aug. 2000

Grosvenor Caving Club N/L 105 Jul./Aug. 2000, 106 Sep./Oct. 2000

MNRC Newsletter No. 79 Aug. / Sep. 2000., No. 80 (Oct./Nov. 2000)

NSS News Vol. 58 No. 7 July 2000, 9 (Sep. 2000)

Norsk Grotteblad No. 35 (May 1999) No. 36 (Aug. 2000) (thanks to Barry Wilkinson)

White Rose Pothole Club N/L Vol. 19 No. 2 May 2000. No. 3 Aug 2000

Map: French Carte Tourisme Local 2642 ET Top25 1:25,000
St.-Guilhem-le-Desert / Cirque de Navacelles (Ex. Libris M. Foyle)



Our Esteemed Librarian in the Swildons Water Rift, taken in 1994

First in France

Garth Weston

We had breakfast, in the pretty town of Ornans, which lies in the valley of the river Loue in the French Jura. Our hoped for destination was the “Grotte de Chauveroché” , picked almost at random from the “ Spelio Sportive dans le Jura” but also because it is mostly horizontal development and our lack of kit. Our misread directions took us to a track, across open ground, ending abruptly at the top of a several hundred foot cliff, with no obvious continuation. Well only one !!!

Local enquiries suggested that there was an old quarry track down the cliff but the elderly landowner had never been down it and did not know where it started. A walk along the cliff top persuaded us that this was not the way, so we returned to Ornans for lunch. Some deliberations with the map and guidebook suggested a possible route through the forest at the base of the cliff, following the river of the Valley Bonneille. Within thirty minutes, we stood at the bottom of the cliff, the river emerging from the base and a fixed ladder leading up to an obvious cave entrance.

Now, almost confident that this was indeed Chauveroché, it was kit on and in. For 1.3 km. (guide book) we ambled along, through a meandering sand floored passage, some 12ft high and 16 ft wide, reminding us of Agen Allwedd, in pale limestone, with little decoration. At last we came to the river, the roof dipped down into the water, with a small arch, giving about 2ft. of clearance. We were quickly through and followed the river, with little pots, rimstone pools and short, enjoyable waterfalls, until at about 2.4k, we came to a large, deep pool, which, according to the guide book, was quickly followed by several more. We had been down for a couple of hours and were a little cold, wearing only boiler suits and old woollies.

We agreed to return to the sunshine and reached daylight, inside the hour. For a first trip in France, this trip had been great fun, there had to be more.



After Chauveroché



Source of the Loue

The Cateye Altimeter

Derek Sanderson

During the summer, I was asked to test ride a mountain bike, for Viceroy Cycles of Poole. They were looking for a geriatric, who poodles around the New Forest, at embarrassingly slow speeds, apparently. And a very comfortable ride it proved to be. Pity I couldn't afford to buy it.

On the handlebars was one of those computerised gadgets, which tell you how slow you are going and how far you haven't been yet. Amongst other things, what intrigued me was the fact that you could tell how high you had climbed and what your altitude was – provided you set it correctly, at the start of your trip. Being curious as to whether it would work underground, I got permission from Viceroy Cycles to test it out.

The first test was in G.B., in the company of Terry Waller and Malcolm Davis. On this occasion, I set the altimeter to 0m. at the entrance and took readings at the five spot heights indicated in figure 1. I was annoyed to find that it registered about 2m out, at each station, implying that I had set it wrong at the start.

A week later, we were back for a second trip. This time I set it to the height above sea level (253m) and the readings proved to be remarkably accurate. (also see figure 1)

G.B. CAVE			
Station	Height (m)	Trip 1	Trip 2
Mud passage/Gorge	199(-54)	-52	199
Bridge	180(-73)	-71	181
Rift Passage/Whitehall	196(-57)	-54	196
Top of oxbow	166(-87)	-84	166
Main Chamber	142(-111)	-108	143

Fig.1

Pleased with these results, we headed for Swildons to see how the altimeter would fare in a wet environment. I carried it in a small B.D.H. bottle, along with some other bits and pieces but it still got soaked. Figure 2 shows the results. We took readings at the Washing Pot in both directions and the 3m. error registered both times. Maybe I got the wrong pot!

SWILDONS		
Station	Height (m)	Reading
The Folds	188	188
Washing Pot	151	154
Sump 1	123	123
Sump 2	115	113

Fig.2

Conclusion

I don't imagine that the altimeter would satisfy the rigorous demands of the grade 5 survey freaks but if you like to know how deep you are, give or take a metre or two, then this gadget would seem to fit the bill.

Does it work in the really deep stuff? I'll let you know, after the P.S.M. next summer. I see no reason why it shouldn't.

How does it work on the surface? It works well but it needs re-setting, at the start of every trip, as it is very sensitive to changes in the weather. My house is about 35m. above sea level but one morning, it informed me that the house is now at -4m!

Would I buy one? At a few pence short of £50, probably not but then there is always Christmas and then my birthday and that wedding anniversary and.....

When Mendip was on the Equator

Pete Cousins

The first Saturday in September dawned bright and clear, as a convoy of six vehicles left Upper Pitts for a journey into the past. Our destination was East Mendip; but a region with a radically different climate to today's. For this was the second Wessex excursion into the geological history of Mendip and we were to start 350 million years ago in the Silurian period.

Our experienced guide explained that the oldest rocks on Mendip were lavas from ancient volcanoes that had erupted in the Silurian period, when what is now Southern England was far South of the equator. Later, we were to be shown desert sandstones (Devonian) and guided past some transient shales, to the more familiar Mountain Limestones (Carboniferous). Each outcrop told a story of ancient warm oceans, shallow seas or arid deserts.

Fortunately the present intervened and seventeen thirsty cavers descended on the Jolliff Arms at Kilmersdon for refreshments.

After lunch and by now probably just North of the equator, we tried fossil collecting, in the Coal Measures (Upper Carboniferous) before visiting yet more deserts in the shape of some cliffs of Dolomitic Conglomerate (Permo-Triassic), that covers much of Mendip. Finally, ignoring the slight problem that someone had lost the Liassic (Lower Jurassic), we discovered a useful outcrop of Inferior Oolite (Middle Jurassic) lying unconformably on familiar Mendip Limestone.

Altogether, we had covered, in the course of a single day, a remarkable 220 million years of geological history, without straying more than 15 miles from the Hunters. We learnt that, during aeons past, Mendip has migrated from the temperate regions South of the equator steadily northwards, to its present position in the Northern Hemisphere. Also, it simply cannot make up its mind to which continent it should belong. Modern day Eurasia was once Pangea, part of which was previously.....and so on, back to Rodinia!

Thanks are due to our guide, Les Williams, who must have spent weeks researching and planning our itinerary; and to the owners of several farms, who had given permission for our party to wander over their fields. Ironically, thanks are also due to several quarry companies, past and present, who have conveniently left behind exposures of Mendip's rock stratigraphy.



Class List

Dave Cooke, Peter Cousins, Vern and Rosie Freeman, Maurice and Judy Hewins, Kathy Glenton, Joan Goddard, Brian and Brenda Prewer, Ian and Daniel Timney, Paul Weston, Les and Christopher Williams, Simon Richards and Simon Richardson.

The study of geology is often said to have been founded by William Smith, who studied the Oolites around Bath, in the late 18th century. Born in Oxfordshire, he worked on the Somerset Coal Canal, which formerly ran from Limpley Stoke to Paulton. He sometimes lodged at a farmhouse on Bungay's Hill, near High Littleton, where a plaque records his stay and his unique contribution to geology.

The A.G.M. and Dinner Weekend

Emma Heron

Having been told, by many, that Friday night in the Hunters is often the best night for chatting and catching up with other Wessex types, we intended to arrive nice and early. But just like the best laid plans, we drove past the Hunters at 11.15 p.m. and decided that we may push Roger's patience, by asking for a beer at this time. It was good, therefore, to arrive at the hut, to find a good few sober people, who had the same intentions as us but who had arrived early enough to fire up the pot-bellied stove for our arrival.

Next day, most people managed to arrive at the Hunters, for a prompt start to **the A.G.M.** For those that have never been to a Wessex A.G.M. (and this being my first), I recommend you go to at least one. It certainly is an interesting gathering of all generations of Wessex cavers. Oh, and Neil Wooldridge has some good video of our treasurer in various degrees of unconsciousness. (He was not a well boy). So, get your copies now.

Tuska's speech, as he stood down as Chairman, was poignant, moving and memorable but what he said, I can't actually remember. For any of you, who have lived in a box, for the last few months, the committee has had a spring clean, with Pauline as Hut Warden. (A good move (sorry Mr Pitman, the flowers stay.)) Maurice is now Editor. But, the question must be asked, Will we really be safe, with this man as Membership Secretary?



Photo Emma Heron

Simon (Nik Nak) Richards has taken on the jobs of Membership Secretary and Assistant Secretary. He would like to remind members that subscriptions became due at the A.G.M. and he is now ready to accept late payments. When everyone has paid up to date, Nik Nak has agreed to cut his hair.

After a long lunch, in the Hunters, there were only a few willing to go underground, for what had to be a whistle-stop tour of the Primrose Path, before out and a lukewarm shower and change for dinner. **The Dinner** was, of course, an excellent evening. The waitresses did a very good job of keeping their patience with trying to feed so many hungry mouths. We did show our appreciation, though, when Badvoc's collection amounted to a pint glass full of tips.

Phil Hendy was perfect in the roll of compere and by splitting all the presentations, between courses, managed to keep us entertained, from start to finish. Pete Glanville was our guest speaker, with a carefully prepared slide presentation on Devon caves, that rounded off the speeches perfectly. All that was left for the rest of us to do was drink a lot and chat. Finally, the traditional barrel was drunk, back at the hut, till the wee hours, and then, miraculously, when all but a handful of hardened drinkers were left standing, a second barrel appeared- or was it hidden as an après-barrel.

Next morning, those that could drag themselves out of bed, made their way (slowly) to the Coach at the bottom of Eastwater Lane, that was waiting to take us on the "**Mystery Tour 2000**". As the coach turned off the main road into the Bristol Water Treatment Works, we could only wonder at Les's state of mind on deciding this year's trip. All became clear, when our guide for the morning explained that we were going into a tunnel, that was bored into the hillside, to avoid taking a mains water pipe over the top. Although the tunnel was not very long, it contained some small formations and several lesser-horseshoe bats. The tour continued with the filtration and settling tanks, before ending, in time to grab the coach back to the hut ,where a tasty lunch had been prepared. A perfect end to a fine weekend.



BERTY THE BOIL EXTRAPOLATES IN THE P.S.M.

The story of a yard of crisps and a bursting boil
Michael Thomas

The team :- Malc Foyle, Pete Hann, Mike Thomas, Keith Fielder, Andy Kay (and Not forgetting Bertie the Boil)

14th Oct 2000 Ryan air flight 372 from London Stanstead arrived, on time, in low cloud and heavy rain at Biarritz airport Southwest France. On board sat, amongst the clean people, were four cavers and an infant boil ! While the aircraft was taxiing to the terminal we noticed a rather large concentration of police and army personal patrolling the airfield. We hoped they weren't there for our benefit. The boil started to have growing pains. After clearing security, baggage reclaim and yet more security, we were met in the arrivals lounge by our French connection, Andy Kay. He explained the large police presence was not there to catch cavers but was in fact on duty to protect Europe's political leaders, going home after a summit on how best to completely bugger up the British Isles, or some such other worthy cause.

After some creative packing of Andy's Landrover and some childish discussion on who was going to sit in the front and who was going to fight for space, between a dwarf and a troll in the back (Yes Malc you are that troll), we escaped from the airport and headed for the Pyrenees. The drive to Saint-Engrace, the village that was to be home for our short visit and also conveniently close to the PSM, was about two and a half hours drive from the airport, although it took us closer to three hours, due to the atrocious weather. It was clear from the start that Keith Fielder was to have the spare front seat of the Landrover, as he had just announced to us the presence of his boil, that was growing at an alarming rate on his upper left thigh, just below the naughty bits. He said it was not too much of a problem, it just hurt a bit and he could not close his legs! The team soon named the sixth member Bertie. Keith said it had said it had to go.

On the way to Saint-Engrace, we decided we ought to do some shopping and stopped at a convenient intermarche. Large amounts of junk food was bought and plenty of alcohol. Keith Fielder topped the junk food list, when he succeeded in buying a bag of crisps that was at least a yard long. (We were all still eating this bag of crisps three days later!) The most important thing that was purchased on this shopping expedition was the DIY boil removal kit.

We arrived at Saint-Engrace, just after dark and booked in to the local Gites Etapes that cost £10 a day, including evening meal. Andy Kay headed for the bar, and Keith performed the first operation to try to remove Bertie the boil, with his DIY medical kit. The net result of this operation was copious amounts of blood and pus and lots of F's thrown into the equation. Malc, Mike and Pete agreed that it looked bloody painful and went to dinner. Keith hobbled along later.

15th Oct 2000 Much to Andy's disgust, Pete, Malc and Mike were up and out the door by 10.00a.m. It wasn't raining. By 11.00a.m., we were all soaked to the skin and puffing our way up the EDF track to go and find the bottom entrance to the PSM. Our main reason for walking the EDF track in the rain was to check out its suitability for driving a 4*4 up the mountain, before we committed our only mode of transport to the track. After a while Andy and Keith caught us up in the Landrover (Andy had spent some time in the village seeking permission for us to use the EDF track and the tunnel.) The Landrover and its three occupants passed the walkers and left them in the pouring rain. After a one and a half-hour steady walk from leaving Saint-Engrace, we came across the Landrover, parked up, as this was where the track turned to a path. The EDF track is drivable but with care, some places have the ability to do serious damage to the underside of your vehicle. We all agreed that before we commit vehicles to the track next year we would do some gardening first. The EDF tunnel was reached after a further 15-minute walk from the parked Landrover and a total height gain from Saint-Engrace of 400m. The EDF tunnel is at an altitude of about 1050m. At the entrance to the EDF tunnel we found an old works shed, in which we took shelter from the rain and decided it would make a good campsite for trips coming out of the PSM late at night.

As we were all at the entrance to the EDF tunnel, Andy suggested a quick trip to La Verna! We had no caving kit and only three small lights between us, 700 metres of stumbling later, we stepped out into the fifth biggest chamber in the world, with what amounted to buggler all light. We did wonder about our intelligence levels but we could not resist a quick look at the place. We could not see much but you could sense it was big. What was noticeable was the rather large river and waterfall, that was obviously in flood. Andy said it did not look too good for a trip up the cave tomorrow. With that, we left the cave and headed back down the mountain, to find some dry clothes and food. Over a late lunch Keith said he did not want to walk any further as it was aggravating Bertie the Boil, who was still growing!



**Pete, Keith, Malc and Andy
Can You Make out Bertie?**



**Our base in the village of
Saint-Engrace**

That afternoon, we drove up to the Pierre St-Martin ski station, to have a look at the accommodation. It was far from ideal. It's a long way from anywhere, at an altitude of 1700 metres, on a barren limestone mountain, that was covered in snow (in October). A decision was quickly made that we would be far better to base ourselves down in the valley. Before leaving the PSM ski station, we drove down to the Spanish border and had a snowball fight, near the Lepineux shaft. That night over dinner Keith got ill. In fact he was in a shit state. Berty the boil had grown to the size of an orange and was starting to poison him. At about 10.30 p.m. we got a little concerned and Andy called a doctor. Andy told the doctor our problem and the fact he had some elephant dropping painkillers. The doctor said, give them to Keith but no alcohol (a bit late for that!) and if things are no better in the morning, take him to the nearest hospital (about 40 KM away). We gave Keith the huge tablets and went to bed and hoped for the best.

16th Oct 2000 This morning we awoke and found that Keith and his Boil were still alive. That actually impressed us! He also said he felt much better and the swelling had gone down, we decided not to have a trip to hospital. Andy, on the other hand, was a little under the weather. He was so worried about Keith, he'd not managed to get enough sleep! But nevertheless, we had a caving trip to do and we forced Andy out of the house by 10.00a.m. It had been raining all night. Every bump and dip on the half-hour drive up the EDF track appeared to be hurting our driver and still he got no sympathy.

The five of us entered the cave at 11.00a.m. and made short work of the EDF tunnel, (There is one junction in the tunnel on the way to La Verna, turn right, as going left takes you to another cave called Grotte d'Arphidia.) On entering La Verna, we were struck by an awesome noise: the PSM in flood! The Verna chamber was full of spray. Our top French explorer started to whimper; the rest of us started to swear.

We made our way upstream, using the all weather route on the left through boulders. Using the normal route, at river level, would have been suicide. Soon it became obvious that to find the climb out of La Verna and into Salle Chevalier we needed to cross the river and continue on the opposite side for a while. Malc found a reasonably safe place to cross, which involved a two metre climb down on to a rock, a bit of balancing and a bold step. Soon, Pete, Mike and Keith had joined Malc but there was no sign of Andy. Keith volunteered to go back and find Andy and leave the cave if necessary. He found him at the top of the climb down across the river, apparently a hangover had kicked in and the two-metre climb had visually turned into something far bigger. Either that, or he was scared of the water! We find that hard to believe with Andy being a top French cave explorer and all that!

So with Keith and Andy on their way home, the rest of us decided to carry on and see just how far we could get. We gave ourselves three hours before we would turn around. We found the seven-metre climb up into Salle Chevalier. There is a hand line in place but putting a ladder on it would be far safer. We continued down through the immense Chevalier tunnel and on into the even bigger Adelle passage and about half way along Queffelec, before we ran out of time and turned for home. Route finding in this rather large cave was not as bad as we thought it would be, as long as you take care to spot the route markers before you move! One thing that did help us with route finding was carrying a bright electric light such as an FX5, as well as carbide lights. A 6w or 10w bulb was a great help in spotting markers.

We found our way back to the EDF tunnel, with no problems. On the way out we had a quick look into Grotte d'Arphidia, this turned out to be a virtual link with Mendip! The cave starts like Longwood and soon turns into Thrupe Lane. We did not stay there very long, in fact Malc never left the entrance. On regaining the surface, we found the sun trying to brake through and we could see the tops of the mountains, for the first time. We started walking back down the EDF track and after about 45 minutes we met Andy and Keith, coming up to look for us. The hangover was apparently better!

17th Oct 2000 The sun was out and so were we, again by 10.00 a.m. Andy was starting to hate us! The plan was to drive back up to the PSM ski station and possibly go and look for the top entrance SC3. But on arrival and looking at the snow conditions and what little mountain gear we had, we decided it would be a bad idea. So instead we drove a little way over the border into Spain, to look at the views. I say a little way, because when our driver found out that none of his passengers had passports with them, he threw a fit and fled back to France, saying we could all be arrested by the Spanish police, for being terrorists! Back at the border Malc, Pete and Mike amused themselves, by climbing down to the top of Lepineux shaft, to look at the memorial to Marcel Loubens. On the climb back up, those that held the high ground started another snowball fight. Luckily, with the help of a troll, we won..

The afternoon was spent in the local villages visiting tourist information centres and the odd bar or two, collecting information on accommodation and camping sites. You can stay in the area using anything from four star hotels to camp sites.

18th Oct 2000 Today was the day we had to fly home. Our short and slightly decadent recognisance to the PSM was over. But we all felt it will help a lot, in planning next year's through trip. Apart from not finding SC3, we got to know a lot more about the area and the lower end of the cave. The Gite was tidied up; the bills paid and Andy drove us back to Biarritz airport. On the way we were treated to some fantastic views of the Pyrenees and surrounding low lands. We left Biarritz on time and landed back at London Stanstead an hour early. All that was left to do was show the country boys what the M25 is all about at rush hour.

In the words of Keith Fielder and Berty the Boil " They gave some Pratt a medal for this". Thanks to Andy Kay for driving us around and putting up with our early mornings.



Treasurer's A.G.M. Comments

Mark Helmore

At the A.G.M., due to technical problems, (no car keys to name but one), I was unable to issue this hand out. I apologise for this. I did, however, run through the figures and tried to explain my thoughts behind the proposal to increase next year's membership fees by £2. I explained that this increase would only cover inflation and would not contribute towards money required for major repairs and planned projects and the various ways we could try and raise these moneys.

The A.G.M. decision, to raise fees, by £5, will go some way towards increasing these funds and the committee decision to increase guest fees, by £1 per night, will also contribute, in both the short and the long term, to financing the hut and should also ensure the continued well being of the club headquarters.

During the meeting, I touched briefly on my thoughts on reviewing the way in which the costs, associated with the hut, are distributed between hut fees and membership fees. My proposals are published below.

A.G.M. 2000/2001 Accounts

Increased costs, this year, have cost the club **£400**, for which no allowance was given at the last A.G.M. The **£3 rise** in membership costs, for this year, agreed at the last A.G.M. will increase income in the order of **£600**.

This may seem quite a healthy increase in income, however, increases in costs will more than make up for this, as detailed below :-

Increase in gas costs (proposed @ 20%).	£300
Increase in electricity costs	£75
Increase in water and sewerage	£60
Increase in rates	£30
Increase in insurance	£65
Increase in member's insurance	£45
Increase in telephone rental	£20
Total additional costs	£595

This results in no real additional revenue, towards the hut.

The £2 rise, proposed by the committee for the year 2001/2002 is purely to help offset any inflation, during the year. (It equates to approximately 7%, which is similar to last year's inflation and similar to this year's estimated inflation) and will again result in no additional revenue, towards the hut.

Hut Maintenance Costs 2000/2001

The costs for hut maintenance are best divided into two separate headings. These are:-

1 General Maintenance Costs

Including any running repairs carried out on the hut, such as:-

- Glass replacement
- Painting and decorating
- Consumables (light bulbs etc.)
- Toilet seat repairs
- Minor repairs and alterations (up to £100 per job)

These costs, by their very nature, vary from year to year but for an “average year”, the total cost of this work is **approximately £1000**.

2 Major Repairs and Renovations.

These include, planned maintenance projects and improvements, together with any unforeseen large expenditure. Currently the planned list included the following:-

Heating boiler replacement	budget cost	£1800
HWS boiler replacement	budget cost	£1400
Urinal replacement	budget cost	£400
Porch repairs	budget cost	£400
Roof repairs	budget cost	£2500

The cost of these work are quite substantial, so we would plan to raise these over a five year period, which equates to **£1300 per year**.

The minimum surplus required to be raised, each year, is therefore the sum of the general maintenance costs, plus the annual portion of the major repairs, which would equate to $£1000 + £1300 = \mathbf{£2300}$ per year

- This assumes that maintenance costs remain fairly static, at or around the £1000 figure, and would have to be reviewed at each A.G.M.
- These funds, if raised, will be put towards the projects detailed above in order of priority and will not be available for other projects, which may require additional funding.

Financing of the Hut Costs

If we take this year’s accounts, as an example, we would see the following:-

Surplus before general maintenance costs	£1307
Planned surplus requirements (shown above)	£2300
Shortfall on requirement	£1007

Using this year, as an average year, we would thus be well down on the planned target. There are several ways of raising the shortfall in funds, the most obvious being:-

- Increasing membership costs
- Increasing hut fees
- Increasing sales goods prices
- Money raising events
- Reducing Journal costs (fewer Journals)
- Reducing budgets (tackle and library)

As none of these will, on their own, raise the full amount, then we must look at a combination of all or some of these.

In my opinion, the only viable options, out of the above, would be to increase hut fees , to guests and to increase membership costs, as follows :-

Increase guest fees by 50p per night = £350
Increase membership costs by £3 = £600 (based on 200 members)

It should be noted, that these figures are based on this years accounts and would need to be reviewed at the next A.G.M. to check that we are meeting our plan.

It must also be born in mind that these costs relate purely to hut maintenance costs and that inflation costs need addressing separately.

The £3 increase, agreed at the last A.G.M. will only take account of inflation for the years 1999/2000 and 2000/2001.

The committee proposal, for a £2 increase for the year 2001/2002 is purely to take account of inflation for that period.



The Wessex Hillgrove Hut

Before the war, the club had an out- building at the Castle of Comfort for use as headquarters. This was superseded by another one at Beechbarrow . In the 1960's, the Wessex had two huts, a small one above Eastwater Swallet and the Hillgrove Hut, photographed here, in 1961. Rainwater was collected from the roof and stored in the tank, just visible on the right. The chimney on the left was connected to a coke stove: the actual pot-bellied stove at Upper Pitts, in fact!

We congratulate **Emma Heron and Kevin Hilton**, on their recent engagement (see Log 5/8/00) and **Geoff and Dawn Ballard** on the birth of their new son, Jack (**Stop press**)

Extracts from the Upper Pitts Logbook

Edited by Brian Prewer

22 to 29.7.00 France

Derek Sanderson & Terry Waller

Caves visited:- Jerusalem, Reverotte, Petit Siblot, Lanans, Cavotte, Baume Archee & Deschamps. Good week.

27.7.00 to 13.8.00 Slovenia 2000

Cookie, Jo (OUCC), Stop, Morse, Wendy, Dave (Nottingham CC), Neil, Cath, Russ, Laurie, Biff & Louise (just married) + assorted Coventry CC folk.

Excellent time. Made good contacts with local caving clubs. Pushed Almighty Hole to over 200m depth. Found an amazing cave shrew living on the ice plug – new species? Lack of man or girl power meant that the windows in the shafts were not pushed. Morse's car expired – RIP. The pizza place in Unec has shut - the slivo in Zanzibar is still just as lethal.

2.8.00 Gough's Cave

Mike T, Robin & Sean

All divers to Bishop's Palace. Mike & Robin completed the climb "Alex didn't make it"! Unfortunately it turns into a lot of small rifts & does not go. Nice view though. The climb was then derigged. This was to cause some excitement especially when Robin fell again!

3.8.00 Iceland

Maurice & Judy Hewins

Found a small cave at the viewpoint in Asbyrgi Gorge. No light but had to do it as far as daylight reached.

5.8.00 Eastwhere – Go there

Kev, Emsey, Nik Nak

Regent Street, Gladman's Shaft & Lolly Pot – Done!! Ladder taken out from Dolphin Pot.

Emsey's Note:- On the way back home Kev proposed – said YES!

5.8.00 Swildon's 12

Phil Short & Mike Thomas

Quick trip on Friday night to drop 4X3ltr cylinders at Sump 2. Back in Saturday morning for a thoroughly unenjoyable trip

to Swildon's 12 & back. Sump 1 line damaged**, Sump 2 & 3 muddy but OK, Sump 4 & 5 worms & sh*t & more worms, Sump 6 tight – needed to dig to get through, Sump 9 – don't ask, Sump 10 no line, Sump 12 looks like somebody has been digging here – the BEC! The end is still as it was and probably as it always will be.

(**Sump 1 line now replaced, Sept 2000 – Log Ed)

12.8.00 Swildon's 2

Kev, Emsey, Ian Bridges

A quick trip to look at the Troubles via the Landing. Water levels are very low at the moment. Sump 1 is only just a sump. First Trouble is easily passable. An ideal time of year for a trip to Swildon's 4. Nik Nak, take note, we'll be going & this time there will be no BEC people with dodgy broken ankles at the Double Pots.

14.8.00 to 20.8.00 Dent de Crolles, Massif de Grande Chartreuse

Cookie, Jo (OUCC), + assorted WSG

Two classic through trips from the Trou de Glaz to the Guiers Mort. First time rigging (13 hrs) & second time de-rigging as we pulled through (10 hrs). Thanks to the WSG for letting us gatecrash their 50th anniversary trip.

20.8.00 Swildon's

Debs, Dom & Geoff Ballard (soon to be a new member)

Down to Sump 2 then up the Landing (Short Round in reverse) as far as Birthday Squeeze. Geoff proved to be a sound caver. Good fun had by all.

23.8.00 Priddy Fair Day

Paul Weston

Left home in Wells at 7.30am to come up to the Hut to check that everything was OK. Stopped on outskirts of village. 'Road Closed' by security men! You cannot pass. *Me* – "I'm going to the Wessex Hut to check security". *Security man* – "are you on my list, do you have a pass". *Me* – I don't have a pass but I'm going to the Wessex Hut". *Security man* – are you on my list? *Me* – no reply. *Security man* Ah! Cave rescue!! Pass.

23.8.00 Lodmore Dig

P Weston et al

A most hectic evening on the bottom winch (as usual). If it wasn't, 'send us down some rocks', it was sending up muck interspersed with the sending up & down of hammers, chisels, pug(cement) etc, etc.

Quite knackered at the end & had a job to move on Thursday. Still Jonathan (Riley) promises a breakthrough "soon".

24.8.00 Eastwater

NBW & Jonathan

Video trip. Dry as a bone, very little water. Good test of the "Speleo head camera". Another Eastwater virgin broken in! Best cave on Mendip.

25.8.00 Manor Farm

Weston Bros, Mr Ray Deasey (who lately resides in Australia & who we have not seen since 1965) & Mr Roger Tucker

Weston Bros rigged everything possible while Mr Deasey & Mr Tucker explored. Thence to the Hunter's. We may go underground again next week when our ageing bodies have recovered. Mr Deasey is most keen.

August Bank Holiday - Yorkshire

25.8.00 Gaping Gill Winch Meet

Maurice & Judy Hewins & cast of thousands from Mendip.

Walked up with Judy to Craven Camp by 9.30am. Down GG at 11.00. Judy explored Main Chamber while Prew & I spent 2 hours with the stereo camera getting all the way to Sand Cavern! Took photos of Wessex thousands in various parts of cave. Rejoined Judy at Prew's tent & had tea with Vern etc before walking down in rain. The Wessex went swimming in Fell Beck swimming pool & we have photos to prove it.

26.8.00 Whit Scar Show Cave

M & J Hewins

Tried to get photos in Battlefield. It really is a fine chamber, excellent straws etc. Lighting well done as well.

25.8.00 White Pit

Cookie, Jon, Tommo & Kathy

Nice trip, had lots of lighters to check CO2 levels. Was present in places.

27.8.00 GB Cavern

Kathy, Jon, Tommo & Jon's mate Geoff

Went to see Ladder Dig – a few laughs en- route, up the Waterfall & out to the pub for a good old pint of Butcombe.

28.8.00 North Hill Swallet

Nik Nak, Jon & Kathy

Nice ladder pitch & some crawling.

30.8.00

Jim & Mary Rands

Called in for a cuppa on way back from Cornwall – hut clean & tidy – still looks well used. Granddad

1.9.00 GB Cavern

G Weston & R Deasey

Lots of water but not backing up at the bottom. Nice to show an Ozie some of the wonders of Mendip.

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Forthcoming Events

Committee Meetings :-10th December 2000, 4th February, 11th March, 15th April, 10th June, 15th July and 2nd September 2001

M.R.O General Meeting 16th March at 8p.m Hunters Lodge. **All Welcome**

It is important that we get these dates out to **all members** of the club. Yes, I know we have the website at www.wessex-cave-club.org and it's useful, particularly for late entries and cancellations. But over half of us are not on the net. So, please try to let me know direct if you are arranging a trip or event. (personally, I prefer a letter or phone call.) By all means put it on the Web site, as well.

Stop Press

We have just heard, on the electric grapevine, that **Andy " Leg" Summerskill** has been injured in a para-gliding accident, in Australia. Leg received chest injuries but he is expected to make a 100% recovery. We all wish him well. He was "Down Under" to attend the wedding of **Max Midlen and Christine Lumb**. We also send them our best wishes and hope Leg met up with them, ok.

A friendly reminder

Subscriptions became due at the A.G.M and unless you are paid up, by January 1st, this could be your last journal. Please pay up, as I would hate to loose a reader. Ed.

Les is planning a Devon trip on Friday 26th Sunday 28th January. Numbers may be limited, so please contact him, for confirmation. Also there may be a trip to Wookey in early February . Again, ask Les nearer the time, or check the website.

Politics

You are invited to comment on the report on the proposed B.C.R.A./ N.C.A. merger. Details are on website <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/nca/miscdocs/caf.htm>

Let the presses roll!