



**Wessex Cave Club Journal**  
**Volume 26**  
**Number 277**  
**December 2001**

# Officers of the Wessex Cave Club

**President** Donald Thomson.

**Vice-Presidents** Paul Dolphin and Sid Perou



## Ian Timney, Hut Administration

Ian, seen here in Slovenia, joined the Wessex in 1988. At first he caved with the Knockhundred Occasionals, who were members of his morris dancing side. He has been on club trips to the Berger as well as to most British caving areas. Recently, Ian's post as Hut Administration officer has left him little time to get underground and he has put in many hours working on Upper Pitts. He would appreciate your help!

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## Editorial

This years' A.G.M. was one of the best attended for many years. It was also one of the best humoured that I can remember. Despite earlier worries about losses due to foot and mouth the Treasurer and Auditor reported that the club's finances are reasonably healthy. I hope to produce 5 Journals again this year, so please carry on writing. Fortunately I have several fairly long articles in hand, so please be patient if they don't appear at once. I congratulate Andy Kay for winning the Frank Frost Prize for his articles "Water and Mud '99.

## This Issue's Cover Picture

**Volunteer Victim, Tamsin Williams in the stretcher on the club rescue practice in Goatchurch. About 20 members attended the "callout" on Sept 15<sup>th</sup>. Taz was brought to the surface from beyond the Water Chamber in under 3 hours. The new Hey phone worked very well and valuable experience was gained by all. The haul up the Coal Shute was the most difficult part. Thanks are due to Martin Grass, the M.R.O. observer for his instruction and the debriefing. Photo, Brian Prewer.**

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# Club News

**Video Evening.** The meeting that was cancelled because of foot and mouth was rescheduled at short notice for Sept 15<sup>th</sup>, following the rescue practice. The Hunters function room was packed for a varied programme of videos by Laurie Orr, Neil Wooldridge, Eric Dunford and others Later, Pete Hann showed some slides from the trip to the P.S.M. Thanks to Roger Dors for the use of the room.

The club sends **Jim and Andrea Hanwell** its' congratulations and best wishes for the future, following their recent marriage. Jim was on the committee for many years, as well as M.R.O. Secretary.

**Steve Wynn-Roberts.** Steve's ashes were scattered on to the Swildons Stream on September 30<sup>th</sup>.

**A.G.M. Notes.** The meeting passed the motion to renumber the club rules. They now read as published on pages 17-18 of the A.G.M handbook, except for an addition to rule 5.4 to prevent club funds passing automatically to the Craven, if the Wessex should be dissolved. Following the passing of the amendment proposed by Pete Hann and Aubrey Newport, subscriptions for 2002/2003 are now due by the **end** of the 2002 A.G.M. Subs for 2002/2003 were set at £36 for a single member, the other categories pro rata.

**New committee Member** The committee remains unchanged except that **John "Tommo" Thomas** replaces Brian Pitman as Ordinary Member, responsible for Club Procedures.

**Donald Thomson** was unanimously elected President and **Sid Perou** was made a Vice-President, for his services to cave cinematography.

**The Annual Dinner** this year was held at the Crossways, North Wooton. The food and venue were excellent and our thanks are due to **Wendy Williams** for making the arrangements. It is all too easy to forget the work going on behind the scenes to make the club run smoothly. **Fred Felsted** equipped with a monstrous gavel took on the duties of Toast-Master and introduced the awards. The articles for the Frank Frost award had been judged by Donald Thomson. He awarded the £10 prize to **Andy Kay** for his "Water and Mud" series. **Aubrey Newport's** St Lukes article was also commended. When it came to the humorous? awards I found myself the proud owner of a yellow fireman's helmet (I can't think why) and **Dave Cooke** was made "Tiger of the Year" for getting horribly stuck (I can't remember where). Bob Scammell presented **Keith Fielder** with a scale model of the adjustable trailer built for the P.S.M. trip.

**John Buxton** was our Guest of Honour and he spoke of the early days of cave diving and the formation of C.D.G. John must be one of the oldest, if not the oldest, cave diver in the world and he talked about the pioneers that he knew and worked with. Among these was Jack Sheppard, whose obituary appears in this issue. John spoke of the importance of preserving records of cave exploration.

As in previous years, a raffle was organised. Also, as an experiment, an auction took place, which raised over £100. Three of the prints of **Carleton "Atty" Attwood's** drawings that had been showed at the B.C.R.A. conference went for good prices. As a result the committee are investigating the possibility of producing limited editions of several others. After the official proceedings those of us with the stamina made for Upper Pitts, there to partake of a barrel of Butcome provided by **Paul "Grey Wolf" Weston** to celebrate his 60th birthday. Some people never learn!



## The great gnome hunt.

This years mystery tour was to Longleat, where Les had hidden nine of our inanimate members in the maize. Surprisingly all of us got out in time for the coach back to Upper Pitts, where Pauline had been preparing some excellent refreshments.



**Wanted By M.R.O** One 4 inch Ammo box for the Heyphone. Please Contact Brian Prewer.

## Obituary, Jack Sheppard.

From an obituary by John Buxton, published in *Descent* No.162.

As a pioneer cave diver Jack Sheppard was less well known than Graham Balcombe and Penelope Powell, who hit the headlines in Wookey Hole in 1935 using Standard Diving Equipment. In fact it was Jack Sheppard who quietly built and developed a lightweight drysuit with all the accessories familiar to modern cave divers. He successfully used it to pass the Swildons Sump in 1936 – the first successful cave dive in the U.K., which subsequently led to a spate of sump-swimming in Mendip caves. The suit was constructed from home-made waterproof materials. It had a waist seal, lighting and telephone communication. Air was supplied through a hosepipe from a football inflation pump. It was necessary to synchronise breathing to the speed of the pump.



**Left, Jack, on the left with “Jumbo” Baker and Graham Balcombe in 1934 at an unsuccessful attempt on Sump 1. Centre, Jack’s suit, that was used to pass the Sump on 4/10/36. Right, Jack Sheppard and Graham Balcombe at Upper Pitts after a trip to Warmley Grottos, 19/10/97.**

Jack and Graham Balcombe both worked as Post Office Engineers and they became climbing partners. Jack was very phlegmatic. Graham tells of Jack being at the foot of a pioneer climb while he, Graham, cleaned out footholds and showered him with pebbles and dirt for hours on end. After some time in climbing, the pair met some members of the Northern Cavern and Fell Club, who introduced them to caving. They never looked back.

Jack spoke little of his wartime activities but recently his family found that around 1935 he had been appointed as an officer. His university course at Kings College must have been taken externally after joining the post office. Jack later served in the Royal Signals during World War 2. In wartime documents he is addressed as “Sheppard”- no “Mr.” or “Jack and years later he was referred to as Major Sheppard. What is certain is that he served in the North African Campaign.

After the war, both Jack and Graham returned to work for the G.P.O. Jack developed EDNA : Electronic Data Numerical Analysis, which used a Winchester drive for storing data- an early use of this technology. He married after the war but was always reluctant to talk about his war-time experiences to his growing family. They remember his old diving suit in the attic. He did a few bottom walking dives in Standard Equipment and was present at a dive in O.F.D. in 1946, which led to the formation of C.D.G. Jack was elected a Vice- President of the Wessex for his pioneering cave diving in 1997. He died on 14<sup>th</sup> July, aged 92. We extend our sympathies to his family.

**Dr. Rodney Pearce** has also died at the age of 79. He was the Rod of Rod’s Pot fame and although he caved with the U.B.S.S. he was a Wessex member throughout the 60’s and 70’s. Dr. Pearce was a G.P. in Trowbridge and acted as a medical warden and worked with M.R.O. His ashes have been scattered in several Mendip Caves.

**Swildons now costs £1.** Swildons is again open, following the foot and mouth outbreak but the fee has gone up to £1. It is important that everyone pays their dues because we rely on the goodwill of Robin Maine and the other landowners for access to their property. If you think £1 is expensive just remember how much you missed your Swildons trips over the last 6 months.

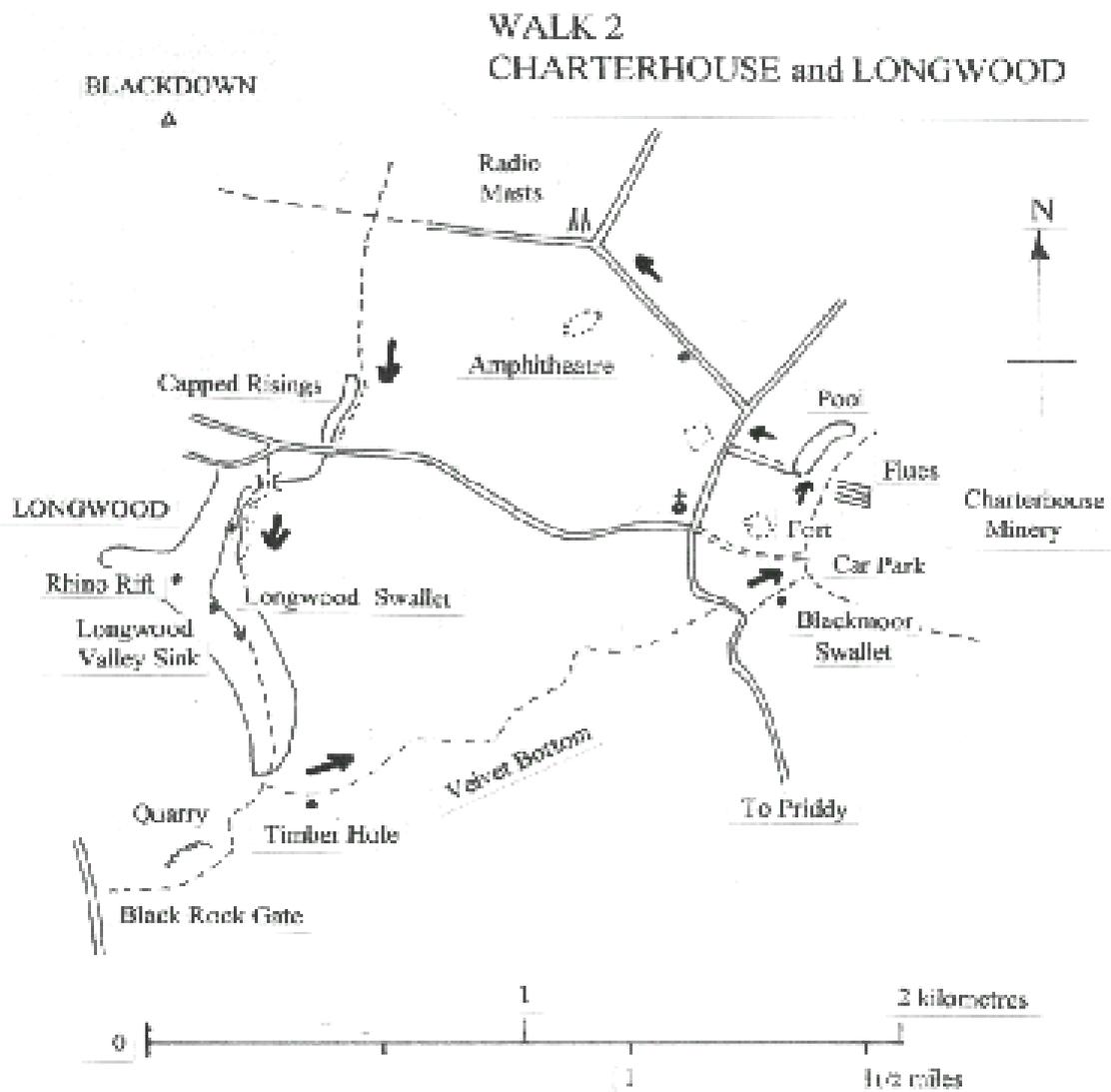
**Hidden Earth 2001.** This year’s conference, at Buxton, is thought to have been the best attended ever, possibly because many Northern caves remained shut. The technical team and reception staff were again predominantly Wessex Members. Thank you to all concerned.

# CHARTERHOUSE AND LONGWOOD

Phil Hendy

The second of my short walks with a caving theme is less than 4 miles long, and makes a pleasant two hour thirst-creator on a Sunday morning. Parts of the walk are on tarmac or good gravelled tracks, but parts are very muddy - and possibly aquatic. Welly boots may be preferred over ordinary walking boots. Park in the Charterhouse Nature Reserve car park along the track by the side of the outdoor centre. Leave nothing of value in the car - beware drivers from the North (Bristol). Take the path up the side of the valley. It is surfaced with crushed lead slag, the glassy black stuff. Note the gated cave on the left just off the track near the car park. There are several gated caves and mines in the area, but they are not visible from the path. Note the settling tanks in the valley bottom. Keep to the left on the main path, past a barrier and ignore the signed 'byway' path to Nordrach on the right. Here the path is repaired with incongruous limestone chippings, unlike the original, which was laid with black slag. Coming to a reed-infested pool on the left, keep walking towards the ruined building by the large beech trees, and then bear left past the fenced area containing the ruins of the old condensing flues. Follow the obvious path past the large blocks of slag and the covered cisterns to the pond. It is possible to continue and have a circular walk through the woods and back to the large beech trees. If you do, then walk down to the dam at the end of the pool.

If the pleasures of walking through the woods (which have no speleological or archaeological interest) do not appeal then walk back to the slag blocks, and keep the pool close on your right. This is inhabited by a variety of birds and other creatures, including a spaniel if you have one. Walking over the dam and a footbridge, enter the field at a stile and continue close to the wall up to the road. Turn right and walk 200 yards to a metalled road leading up the hill. As you go, notice the faint traces of the Roman settlement in Town Field on the left adjacent to the road.



The road now leads you uphill and past a cottage on the left to two obvious radio masts. In the field away on the left, above the cottage, you will see the earthworks of the Roman amphitheatre. Note that the dry stone walls are now constructed of sandstone not limestone.

At the masts, keep left and take a muddy track leading towards Blackdown, where the trig point should be visible. This track eventually widens to a drove. Take care, it is popular with cyclists. At the lowest part of the track, it is intersected by a footpath. Cross the stile on the left, by an obvious ditch.

This is the watershed, and to the left is the beginning of the Longwood stream. Walk about 50 yards out from the ditch and follow the contour to a small wooded valley. Keep this on your right, to a gate and stile. In the wood and on the banks of the stream you will see several capped risings. Although there is a footpath leading back towards Blackdown, the wood is out of bounds. However, if you ignore this advice, you can follow an overgrown track in the wood past the risings to a brick pumphouse. The stream bed is in shale, and near a (locked) gate back into the field there is a mass of black slag. This is not, however, the site of a smelting works, but is hardcore brought in to construct the track.

You will have to take my word for this, though, as of course you will keep to the main path, which leads down the field past the wood to a stile onto a road. Turning right, you will soon come to the turning left for the Longwood Swallet parking place at a small triangle. Walk down here, then turn left (as for Longwood) down a muddy track, over a bridge, and then right up the hill keeping to the edge of the field and eventually entering the Longwood Nature Reserve. By this time, the walls are made of limestone again.

Muddy steps lead down into the bottom of the valley, where a large path is met with after crossing a footbridge. Turning left, you will pass (as if I need to tell you) Longwood Swallet entrance, and then the stream sink. The Somerset Wildlife Trust has recently cleaned the sink out, and built a dry stone wall around it. Unfortunately for them, the wall materials are a handy source of stone for the morons who are gratified by lobbing stones into the water. The path continues, and after heavy rain parts of it will be under water - when the SWT decided to tidy up the path in the valley bottom, they clearly thought that the water would not follow the line of least resistance but flow along the valley side.

A short detour up the inlet valley on the right allows a glimpse of the entrance to Rhino Rift. Back on the main path you come to the abandoned dig at Longwood Valley Sink. After heavy rain, much of the overflow from the Longwood Swallet sink will disappear here, but it is still possible for the water to flow beyond this point, gradually sinking in the valley floor but occasionally flowing on the Black Rock Gate and Cheddar Gorge. Sandstone cobbles are common in the stream bed / path.

The path eventually enters a field, and the main route will lead past Black Rock Quarry and the limekiln to the Gorge. However, to return to the car, turn left up the inlet valley of Velvet Bottom. Crossing a low wall, the gated Cerberus Timber Hole dig will be seen. Never a very promising site, it is likely to be abandoned due to flooding. Cross another low wall, and then a retaining wall (with a small gated shaft on the right). In total there are four retaining walls to be climbed, above all of which are level areas, possibly old settling ponds, because the Charterhouse smelters had the same problems with pollution at Cheddar as those at St. Cuthbert's had with Wookey Hole. Just below the last and lowest wall there is a level platform on the right, which may have been a base for machinery. At the upper end of the last level area a low wall curves in from the right. Cross this, and walk past what looks like a large dry swallet. The whole area has been so altered by mining and the dumping of waste that it is impossible to envisage the original state of the valley.

There are various paths up the valley. Note some buddle pits on the left, and then an extensive area of black slag. Pass the youth hut, and note more buddle pits in the valley floor. The line of pits along the edge of the field on the right are most probably small surface quarries, used to extract stone for wall building. Such pits are common on Mendip, and can fool inexperienced cave hunters. Of course, there are always exceptions ... Stay on the track to the road (Small Bros. often block the tunnel under the road to keep their sheep from straying). From the road walk up the valley, keeping to the right and passing the fenced shaft of Blackmoor Swallet. When you come to a t-junction of paths, bear left. At the outcrop on the right there is a flue (partly covered with stone

slabs) up to the base of a chimney on the top of the knoll. At the foot of the outcrop are the foundations of buildings. A few more yards, and you are back at the car park where with luck your car will be in the same condition as when you left it.

## **LIBRARY - RECENT ACQUISITIONS** As 28 October 2001

La Vallee du Cro-Magnon (*Reproductions of 180 early postcards of the Dordogne*) Donated by Bob Scammell

Mines of the Lake District (John Adams, Publ. Dalesman) Donated by Garth Weston

Ireland 2001 (Video) Donated by Neil Wooldridge

BEC Belfry Bulletin 51, 6 (No. 511) (Jul 2001) (*Stocks House Shaft and Hunter's Lodge Inn Sink*)

Caverndish (N/L of Nelson Spel. Gp., NZ) (May 2001)

Chelsea SS Newsletter 43. No. 7 (Jul 2001), 8/9 (Aug/Sep) (*Article on cave diving in France*), 10 (Oct 2001)

Craven Pothole Club. Record. No. 64 (Oct 2001)

Derbyshire Caver No. 107 (Autumn 2000), 108 (Winter 2000), 109 (Spring 2001)

Descent No. 161 (Aug 2001) (*Hunter's Lodge Inn Sink*), 162 (Oct 2001)

Devon Spelaeological Society Newsletter No. 25 (Sep.2001)

Grampian Speleological Group. Bulletin. Series 4 Vol. 1 No. 1 (Oct 2001)

Grosvenor CC Newsletter 113 (Jul 2001), 114 (Aug/Sep 2001)

Journal of Cave and Karst Studies (NSS) 63, 2 (Aug 2001)

MNRC N/L 85 (Aug/Sep 2001) (*Incl. cheeky reference to Wessex in Editorial*), 86 (Oct/Nov 2001)

NSS News 57, 6 (Jun 2001), 7 (Jul 2001), 8 (Aug 2001), 9 (Sep 2001)

Pholeos (Wittenburg Univ. SS, USA) 19, 1 / 2 (May 2001)

Plymouth Caving Group Newsletter & Journal Nos. 132 – 135 (Dec 2000 – Jul 2001)

SUI (Ireland) Underground No. 50 (Summer 2001), No. 51 (Autumn 2001)

White Rose Pothole Club Newsletter 20, 3 (Aug 2001)

## **Flash Back to 1087**

The Doomsday Book for Somerset records:-

**“XX1. Terra Rogerivs Comitris. Comes Rogerivs ten de rege Hunters. Valuit. XV. Lib TRE. Modo. X11.Lib. Non geldau nec hidata fuit. Hoc M redd firma uni noctis cu omib cfuetudinib fuis”.**

This is generally taken to mean: Roger closes at ten in Hunters. He pays no taxes, other than one free night per year. He was worth £15, but is now worth £12.

Which all sounds a bit far fetched, especially the bit about losing £3, and what's that about a free night? !!!!!.

**Dr. Johnson in his “Rambles about Mendip”, don't we all, says: “tis a place of some characters”.** We don't know who he specifically refers to, but he did meet a Mr Duck and a Mr Rat. This sounds more like “Wind in the Willows”, which may not be far from the truth. We can guess who Mr. Toad is.

**William J.J. Lambgasper in his now forgotten “I hear Voices”** recounts how he considered it a place of some quality, because he met **“Diverse persons of some note, all talking at once, and telling such stories as I could hardly believe.”** We don't know what stories these were, but I expect we've all heard them.

Many persons are said to have visited the establishment, they come and go like bats in the night. Some have been known to fall down, and some have reached great depths (see “I hear Voices”), but whatever your poison, it is unique, valued (£12), old, cheap etc. just like you in the twilight of your caving, keep it up and if you can't, buy a splint.

**Friar Westone (Minor).**

## **Herault Caving and Diving trip, Summer 2002**

Malc Foyle and Mike Thomas are arranging a caving/diving trip to the Herault region in South Eastern France, about 40 km. North of Montpellier.

There will be a slide show on this rarely visited area of France at the Hunters Lodge on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> January, at 8-00 p.m. Anyone interested in joining is welcome

The Region has some stunning caving, with a good chance of finding something new. For further information please contact Malc or Mike.

# Fancy a Potholing trip.

By Malcolm Foyle

We were sat around one day in 99 just pondering the world and life as you do, being lazy buggers and not wanting to go caving on Mendip, finding all the excuses under the sun. Myself, Mike and the Dwarf (his legs gently swinging quietly to and fro under the chair) were idly chatting away, I was thinking about future holidays and I suddenly blurted out "I've always wanted to do the SC3 to Salle Verna through trip in the PMS before I get too old". Mike, (the Boy) said that he'd never done a big trip like that before and he fancied it. Pete, (the Dwarf) said "oh f---ing hell here we go again". We thought a few of us could do the through trip and Saga could come with us and play around in the bottom end. And so the trip was born.

We knew that ARSIP, the French club controlled access to the PSM, but how to contact them and who to contact well, we didn't have a clue and me converse in French? Not a bloody chance. Enter our secret weapon, Andy Kay. He's a strange dishevelled looking character who lives in the Dordogne and spends his spare time grotting around in some of the less savoury caves in the area. One phone call and bless his little cotton socks he knew exactly who to contact and even volunteered to make the call (good job too.) So contact was made and we were told there would be no trouble getting access. This really pissed the Dwarf off because now he had to try and photograph the Verna.

The original plan was to have the whole thing nice and low key with a few proper size people, Saga and maybe a couple of dwarfs to take the piss out of. It was going to be a fat and over forty trip. We decided that the Boy could come along to push me out of the bottom end in my wheel chair because by then I reckoned that rigor mortis would have set in. So we set about mentioning the trip to a few people and of course to Saga. Not long after, we were over in Wales prating about in O.F.D when we bumped into Derek Sanderson and Terry Waller. We got chatting and mentioned that we were thinking about going to the PSM. Both of them jumped at the chance to come along and promptly asked if we had any info about the cave. A couple of days later this huge envelope thudded on to my carpet and Derek who had done the trip before photocopied his information and sent me it (the star), so I had a bit of bed time reading. Through trip 9.1 km long and 983 metres deep, shit, that's a long way and SC3 Jesus that's a lot pitches and no horizontal passage. Still at least we have got plenty of time to get fit for it.

Now we're in to the Millennium. We thought that it was about time to get something official about the PSM. Another call from the Dishevelled One was made to ARSIP and we got our official letter giving us permission to descend SC3 and our dates were 20th to 27th August 2001. Now it was getting serious and it became very real. What's the area like? Where are we all going to stay? What about this? What about that? I suppose that we had better go and have a look. Another phone call was made to the Dishevelled One. With a bit of huffing and puffing on several dozen Camel fags the Dishevelled One and I finally decided that we really ought to go to the Pyrenees and check the place out. The Boy duly organised the tickets with the help of a prominent Saga member. On the allotted day he taxied me, the Boy, the Dwarf and Buddha, complete with Bertie the Boil to Stansted. We jumped on a plane bound for Biarritz with the hope that the Dishevelled One would be there to meet us (would he remember or had the Camels rotted his brain?).

On arrival we collected our rucksacks and Buddha's Tesco bags and wandered through the terminal, looking at the hoards of Plod about. "Reckon they're looking for the Dishevelled One" said Mike." Won't find him" said the Dwarf, "he's got his own smoke screen". Then, sure enough there he was, slouched against the wall, fag in gob, the Dishevelled One. "Bloody raining" said Andy. (He likes stating the obvious). We stepped out of the terminal building. The Dwarf stepped straight into a 100mm deep puddle and nearly drowned, Fielder was chuckling to himself muttering something about Bertie travelling for free. Chucking all our crap in the back of Andy's motor we headed for the Pyrenees.

After a Kay guided tour of Europe and a bit of shopping where we bought the normal supply of alcohol and Keith picked up an operating kit, we arrived in St Engrace and, yep it was still pissing down. We pulled up outside this bar and bunk room. "What's up?" I said. I reckon I've booked us into the wrong place' said Andy. 'More Camel sucking and a bit of head scratching and Andy said "the place I booked wasn't called this", pointing at the building in front of us "but this is the place that we always stay in", (meaning the speleo club Perigueux). Then, as we started driving back

down the road we saw a sign for the Gite D'Etape. "That's it", said Andy. We pulled up outside this little white building and the Dishevelled One got out. We all gingerly followed not sure what we were going to find. By now Andy was ranting to this little French woman and beckoning us to pick up our bags and follow him. We walked in and looked. The place was superb and as one we said "If all your cock ups are like this you can make as many as you want". We all picked our bunks and went for dinner and beer.

Next morning it's raining horizontally and being keen we decide to walk up to the EDF tunnel. Andy said that he would drive up later and meet us (poof). We all get dressed up in Gortex and the rest of the kit for this crap weather. Keith, he's got a Pack-a-mac, flat cap and 20 year old leather boots (laugh). We set off for the tunnel and after a minor deviation we get on the track. Then we hear Andy's tank approaching. Keith who was getting some grief from Bertie jumped into the tank and had a lift as far as you can drive, but we did it the proper way! Arriving at the tunnel door we decided that it might be foolhardy and dangerous to venture in with only two and a half lights between 5 of us, but we did any way. The Verna is monstrous.

Later, we went up to the ski station on the top of the hill. This is where we had planned to base ourselves for the forthcoming trip, but on looking at it I said "if we stay here my misses will kill me." The place was the pits, so it was back to the drawing board.

Another night's sleep for some, Mike went next door and Andy slept on the kitchen tiled floor in just a Woolworth's special, Buddha and Dwarf had been drinking that evening. Andy the next morning was a sight to behold. Not looking too good at the best of times, today he was in shit state. It was caving day and again we were off nice and early this time with full kit and sufficient light.

We were all looking forward to having a bit better look at the PSM, we might not all be young but we were keen. We set off up stream with a good deal of enthusiasm. There was a lot of water in the cave, La Verna was full of mist and even there the noise of the water was quite awesome.

We carried on up the cave through the all weather route trying to find a way across the river. Eventually we managed to find a climb down on to some large boulders and cross the river with some care. The noise was amazing, even being only a yard or so apart you had to shout to communicate, normal you may say, when talking to dwarfs. So we went a way up stream and eventually got a bit clear of the water. There we realised that the Dishevelled One was not with us. We could just make out a dim light down the passage (what was that you say, the lamp's like its owner!) I got volunteered to go and see what was wrong so back down the river. I went and there was Andy sitting on a rock. He decided he didn't fancy it that day, so I went back to the others to report. Keith volunteered to go out and keep Andy company because Bertie was being a bit of a bugger. The rest of us were going to carry on and said that we would be back at the entrance in 6 hours.

We got, we think, up to or just after the start of the Metro. The whole place was monstrous. Pete was having a job to see over even the small rocks, so every now and again we stood him on the top of a boulder so he could see where he was going. We arrived back at the entrance on time after a quite interesting trip out. It was one of those where you were sure that the water had come up quite a lot but were frightened to say. Our taxi wasn't there when we arrived at the entrance so we started to walk down cussing Andy and threatening not to pay the fare. Then we heard the now familiar clank of the tank coming up the track. Yep, you got it, they had been to the pub. Over dinner that evening, again cooked for us by Madam, superbly too, we were taking the piss out of Andy whimpering out on a one and a half dwarf climb, when it came to light that all three of us had noticed that the water level had risen quite considerably and not said any thing.

That evening we were also thinking about the more serious matter of accommodation for the forthcoming trip when it came to light that Madam also owned the building next door and it had a self contained flat and five double rooms as well as a camping field. Bingo! The Wessex are coming. Now all we had to do was find Mr Fielder a swimming pool. Luckily we didn't have to look very far, because down the valley there was a village with a hotel and a pool.

Next we went up to find the Lepineux shaft, which is just down the road, right on the border. We parked up near to where we thought it was and a few yards away, down over a snow bank we could make out the outer door of the shaft. I believe it is inaccessible nowadays because of the politics. Three of us climbed down the snow slope to try to get a look down the shaft and it's not until you get to the door that you realise that they have roofed over most of the base of the depression. Once back at the road Mike and I ended up in Spain and Pete was in France

(Lepineux is literally right on the border) so, you got it, an international snowball fight, (what kids!). One more job to do today was to try and find SC3. On the way back up the hill there is a huge hole right on the side of the road so we just had to stop and have a look at it and it was a bloody big hole, so we chucked a few snowballs down it and it was a long time before they landed on any thing. "Christ" I said 'I'm getting nose- bleed just thinking about going down there. We jumped back in the tank and set off up the hill. We had already decided that we would not try and get all the way to SC3 because there was about 450 mm of snow on the plateau.

The last day dawned and it was just pack up and go. We loaded up the tank and went to pay our bill. Andy was chatting to Madam and the subject of accommodation came up. If we could book it there and then, we wouldn't have to bother about it at a later date. It was decided that we could book four rooms and the flat. Andy told her that we would want the camping field and some spaces in the Gite d D'Etape as well. We were instantly her best friends. Time to go. Back at Stansted we, and our Saga taxi driver managed to stand at opposite ends of the airport for a couple of hours until we finally bumped into each other. Then we had the pleasures of the M25.

It's amazing how much fun you can have just doing things on nearly the spur of the moment. With the accommodation sorted, and the cave booked, all we had to do was sort out who were going to have the misfortune to be asked if they wanted to come and join in the fun the following August. Apart from the five of us and Saga, we had all ready conned Kev and Emma. Also we had Keen Bean, Mad Mark, the Smoking Dwarf (to keep the Dishevelled One company) and the Manic Rigging Dwarf all showing a lot of interest (what a team ?? ). The numbers started to grow and the planning continued all be it at a slower pace.

By now foot and mouth had well and truly reared its ugly head and all our thoughts about having plenty of time to get fit, for the trip, were looking a bit dubious. So I started to sort out a tackle list. I decided to base our list on the Topo produced by the Craven Pothole club after their 1995 trip. The whole thing mostly made a lot of sense. There were a couple of things that I couldn't quite make sense out of so I thought I needed some expert advice. So I photocopied all the relative information and sent it off to the Manic Rigging Dwarf and after a few phone conversations and a couple of sessions at the hut we had a plan!

By now foot and mouth boredom was well and truly setting in. No caving, no walking. What the hell were we going to do to get fit for the summer? Mike had a good idea. He, Kev, Emma and Nick Nak decided to bugger off to the Pyrenees for the Spring Bank Holiday for another reccy trip. (See article in Journal 276 Ed.) By now boats were booked, lifts were sorted out and the team was steadily growing. The North was represented by 'Dylan', Those of you that know Dylan will agree that there is little to say about him other than it is an interesting experience just knowing him. The kit was packed on the week- end of the cricket match because we knew that there would be a lot of people about so we could iron out any last minute problems. After a lot of head scratching and some rebellions by the workers, we had all the ropes in bags hopefully in the right order, two boats blown up checked and packed, ladders, belays and all the other assorted kit sorted. Now all we had to do was get there and hope that we had good weather.

On the 17th of August, Rita and I set off for Poole and the Condor ferry across to St Malo. On the same boat as us we had two dwarfs, one normal and one of the smoking kind. We drove up the ramp on to the boat and we could see the Smoking Dwarf doing an impression of Kilroy trying to look over the rails. With the Smoking Dwarf there were two members of Saga. Can you think of a worse combination to have in a car, two old gits and a short person? The dwarfs got all excited as usual when we finally got underway, they ran around making little squeaking noises and reminded me of Springer spaniels in a field of long grass. Four and a half hours later we arrived in St Malo and set off southwards to our pre-booked hotel. A leisurely breakfast and we resumed our journey south. A few miles north of Bordeaux, the Dishevelled One phoned. He said that Christiane had already left for St Engrace and he would follow in a day or so, once he had plucked up courage to face the huge climb that had stopped him some 10 months earlier. After making only one cock up route finding, we arrived in St Engrace, where there were already a fair number of the group bedded down in various parts of the village.

Needless to say the bar was the focal point and that evening, it was a French version of the Hunters. All you could hear was Speleo-Anglaise ranting and the occasional dwarf could be seen

darting from table to table. Monsieur and Madam were casting worried glances to each other behind the bar, wondering what on earth they had let themselves in for. Everybody was keen to get on with the caving. Keen Bean, Mad Mark, the Smoking Dwarf, the Mad Rigging Dwarf, Taz, Simon Richardson and Patrick Warren (Craven Pothole Club) had decided that they were going to put the boats in. Mike had sorted out the Saga chain gang for road maintenance. We were hoping to start rigging SC3 on the following day as well but unfortunately it was still rigged by a previous group



**Left, Dylan with the chainsaw. Right, Dom, Debs Mike and John at the E.D.F. Hut.**

Sunday dawned and people were up at the crack of lunch stirring me into action, making sure that all the kit for the bottom end of the cave was sorted. By now the chain gang was already in action under the watchful eye of Mike. Eventually we had all the kit ready in one heap. I jumped in the Land Rover with Mike to have a test run up the track towards the tunnel. The idea was to transport the gear up as far as we could for the lads going into the cave. We only had to galvanise Saga into action once when we got stuck. Other than that the old buggers had done some sterling work. The only remaining problem was a tree that had fallen down just before the turn around point, Buddha had fetched half of B&Q with him, so it would not take long to remove it. Where was Mr Fielder? I hear you ask. We were wondering that too.

We finished lunch and got ready to attack the fallen tree. By now Dylan had surfaced. Saga were still grafting away on the track, so we stopped to give them a bit of a hand, Mr Fielder was still noticeable by his absence. Eventually, his Blue 110 turned up. He had only driven up the wrong track, there was only one sort of turning where you could possibly go wrong and he had done it twice. We set about attacking the fallen tree with the array of weapons that Keith had brought. Farmer Dylan dismantled it with a chainsaw and with the help of the trusty Land Rover it was dragged off the track.

Earlier in the day all the keen lads had rushed off into the cave, with the exception of the Smoking Dwarf who sort of staggered along at the back, to put the boats in. They had to be installed at the "Tunnel du Vent", which is over 4 km from the entrance, just a stroll for Keen Bean, Mad Mark and the Mad Rigging Dwarf. But the Smoking Dwarf, well, you should have seen him some 10 hours later, when he finally stumbled out. He was even shorter than usual because he was on his knees. In between times, the Dwarf, Mike, Dylan and I went to find the downstream continuation of the PSM from the bottom of the Verna. We had a bit of a scratch round but couldn't find the passage. We did manage to circumnavigate the chamber. It took us about 1.5 hours. The place is just vast.



**Left, Rita and Jane at the Lubens Memorial on the Balcony in La Verna.**  
**Right, Malc on the ladder out of La Verna. This was put in as a Saga aid.**



The next day was SC3 day. First team in was myself, Patrick and the Mad Rigging dwarf. The plan was for us to take the first 3 bags and rig down, taking it in turns to hang the ropes. Next, Pete, Mike and Kev were to follow us taking photographs. Then Debs, NikNak and Emma were to follow with the last 3 bags of rope and hopefully arrive at just the right time for us to carry on rigging. We were all up at the crack of dawn and at the entrance not long after 8 am. Dom nicked bag No.1 so he could do the honours on the first pitch (git). He rigged the traverse line and started to descend. Don't you just hate it when you see a dwarf with that little glint in his eyes. You know that you're in for a bit of a fun day. We set off down this French classic and the Mad Rigging Dwarf defiantly had the bit between his teeth, determined to stay at the sharp end. I reckon that if we had tried to get a rope bag off him he would have just jumped down the pitches. All the bags arrived at about the right time. The Dwarf got some good photos and the Mad Rigging Dwarf, well he was in heaven. Me, I got down to the last but one pitch and by then I was thinking 'shit its a f---ing long way out, So Patrick and I decided that maybe we should start out. The Mad Rigging Dwarf said that it was all right for us old farts to start making our way out., because now he had our secret weapon, NickNak with him (another one of these young keen types ). So we started out slowly, 1 Gaping Gyll, 2 Gaping Gylls, Christ only another one and a half to go. Needless to say when I eventually arrived at the surface I was just a tad tired. Dom had done a sound job rigging SC3 and getting out in about 7.5 hours. Me? I just wanted to go to the pub and die in the corner. However, all was now set for the first through trips.



**Left, The S.C.3 entrance; Centre, Pete Hann descending and Right, Emma Heron in the shaft. Photo's by Mike Thomas.**

It was decided that Bean, Mark and Taz would go for it the next morning (Tuesday), while the rest of us recovered from the rigging and sorted gear. Over the next two days 22 people from our group completed the through trip and three members of the Belgian SC Avalon also did the trip on our gear. (See the extracts from the Log – Ed). The trip is an absolute classic there is no doubt about it, being 9.1km. in distance and 983m. in height difference. We had people from just over twenty to just under fifty (Messieurs Sparrow and Harper) do the through trip and I think that every body else achieved pretty much what they set out to do. Even the Dishevelled One conquered his 200 m climb just up stream from the Verna and managed to drag that finely tuned body up to Lepineux.

All that was left to do now was to detackle. Mark, Bean, Taz, Rob Harper, Suntan and NikNak volunteered to drag the ropes out of SC3. Patrick, Mike, Pete and I got the job of getting the boats. Emma said that she wanted to come along because Kev had damaged his ankle on the through trip and he still couldn't put much weight on it. The Dwarf was packed into the Land Rover at 7.30 am whinging and we set off. We had a pretty uneventful trip in apart from the fact that I found out that curry and French beer make a bit of a dodgy combination so the trip was a bit smelly for all concerned. One significant thing did happen. Recently, dwarf numbers have been a bit depleted so we thought that we should co-opt a new member to this most esteemed group After much discussion and putting it to the short grumpy person in the party, it was decided to co-opt Emma to the now famous group within the Wessex. So short people you now have a dwarfette on your group. Take good care of her. The boats were duly recovered and we went to the pub.



Left, Madam listens as Tav tells Simon how easy it was.



Right, Paul, Andy, Mark, Tav, Simon, Bean, and Taz at one of several "Last" dinners

All in all I personally think that the trip went off very well. Everybody achieved their goals and the area was absolutely fantastic, Our French hosts were great and I would like to thank everybody there for making it one of the most memorable holidays that I have been on, Finally, a special thank you must go to Andy and Christianne Kay. Without all their hard work this trip may well of not happened.

Dwarf decoder :- Normal Dwarf/ Dwarf = Pete Hann; Smoking Dwarf= Rob Taviner; Mad/Maniac Rigging Dwarf = Dominic Sealey. (Ed.)

## Extracts from the P.S.M. Expedition Log Book and Trip Book

Edited by Judy Hewins

Members and Friends who joined the expedition in August 2001 :-

**Malc Foyle and Rita, Andy and Christianne Kay, Pete and Sandy Hann with Sarah and Myrna, Mike Thomas, Maurice and Judy Hewins, John Thomas, Rob Taviner (Tav), Paul Weston, Andy Summerskill (Leg), Brian and Sheila Pitman, Brian Hansford, Dom Sealy and Debs Morgenstern, Kevin Hilton and Emma Heron, Simon Richards (Nik Nak), Simon Richardson, Mark Easterling (Bean) and Tamsin Williams (Taz), Mark Helmore, Vern and Rosie Freeman, Rob Delacour (Suntan), Dave Crane, Andy Ladell (Badvoc), Andy Sparrow with Jamie, Nigel Graham with Jane, Gordon Kaye, Ros and Keith Fielder with Janine and Liam and Mr. & Mrs. Fielder senior, Sue and Brian Norton (Dylan) with Hannah and Izzie, Patrick and Jo Warren, Rob and Helen Harper.**

**17.8.01**

**Mike, John, Maurice and Judy**

Arrived St. Engrace ahead of schedule at 7.30 in time for a few beers and a meal, before crashing out. Found Dom Sealy and Debs Morgenstern, Dylan and family already here with tents up.

**18.8.01**

Around beer o'clock

**Mark, Bean, Taz, Simon get here.**

**Tav, Brian and Paul W.** arrived late afternoon ( Would have been here earlier but for a trip to Winchester)

**Before all this**

**Debs and Dom**

**14.8.01**

Went to do Odita Lecia ( also called Gouffre de Heyle) . Found the 50x30m. huge hole with the help of a friendly French caver – you'd never have found it in the woods without directions. Dom dangled his bottom over the gaping void that was the first pitch (155m.) and decided wisely against it. We ran away. Hope to return with a bigger team.

**15.8.01 Trou Souffleur**

Cave pre-rigged by nice French caver – they are on exploring trips in there – it has now reached 54. 9 Km. We just dropped the pitches, the tops of many of which have been blasted, so are a tad tight. Pretty shitty cave to be honest – reminiscent of Priddy Green Sink, but a good warm up.

**18.8.01 La Verna**

**M.T. J.T. D.S. D.M.**

Exploratory probe into La Verna. Carried 2 ladders and small rope to aid the geriatrics and tired cavers when exiting after the through trip is carried out. Very impressive. 2 hours total.

**19.8.01 E.D.F.Tunnel to Tunnel du Vent.**

**M. Helmore M. Easterling T. Williams D.Sealy S. Richardson P.Warren Tav.**

Time in 11.30. Time out 20.30. Route finding, rigging, dropping off boat, top trip.

**19.8.01**

**Brian and Sheila Pitman**

Arrived 17.00 hrs. 918.3 miles from Bottesford to St. Engrace. Great drive Good Navigator No Errors.

**19.8.01**

**Paul John Judy and Maurice**

The "Pensioner Pioneers" plus the Fielder County Council engineering dept. reopened the E.D.F. road as far as the top turning place One large tree blocking the road was removed.

**19.8.01 E.D.F. Tunnel and bit of the Cave**

**Sparrow Jamie Bri**

**19.8.01 E.D.F. and La Verna**

**M.Thomas M.Foyle P.Hann Dylan**

In 13.30 Explored down stream Verna Out 17.30

**20.8.01**

**Mark Bean Taz Simon**

Into Spain with no passports. On realising this U-turn but "Ai Ai Ai Les jambons sont a la frontier" Winged it and ran.

**20.8.01 SC3**

**Dom Malc Patrick Debs Em NikNak Kev Pete Mike**

Went rigging SC3 with racing snake. Je suis foutu – trip went well rigged to Liberty Bell in 7 hours. Never spent so long on one piece of string in my life. Just like a giant Yorkshire Pot hole. Cracking Ho! Time in 11.30 .Time out 20.30.

Most of the way Debs, Em , Kev, Pete and Mike to various depths carrying bags and taking photos, Proper job trip rigging all the way on resin anchors. Trip enjoyed by all, I think, well worth doing as a down and up trip.

**20.8.01**

Arrival of Andy "speleophobe" Kay intent on going further in the P.S.M. this year than last!

**20.8.01 E.D.F. to Lepineux**

**V. Freeman R. Freeman A. Ladell**

Time in 12.00. Time out 9.15 p.m.

**20.8.01**

**Maurice Judy Paul and John**

Walked to Kakuetta Gorge. Paid 250F each to walk the catwalks and paths to the resurgence at the head of the Gorge. Some interesting dry Stal and columns with an interesting lake beyond. Entertained the tourist while testing the flash equipment for tomorrow. All O.K.

**21.8.01 Through trip**

**Mark Helmore Mark Easterling Taz Williams**

SC 3 to E.D.F. In 11.30 a.m. out 22.30. twere top trip twere.

**21.8.01 E.D.F. to Lepineux**

**K.Fielder Leg Gordon**

In 12.30 Out 16.00. Also J.T. to La Verna. Kev and Em into la Verna at 1.30 and out at 7.00p.m.

**21.8.01 La Verna**

**Brian P. Judy Maurice Weston and Hansford**

Brian Pitman drove up the E.D.F. track and we walked up to the tunnel. Into La Verna. It's truly a Girt hole. Took some 30 pictures of the tunnel and some boulders on the balcony with electronic flash. Complete cock up with Mr. Prewer's bulb kit. Failed to fire at all. Back for a re-think.

**22.8.01 Through trip**

**Rob Harper NikNak**

Through trip P.S.M. Time in 4.30 a.m. Time out 12.00 noon

**22.8.01**

**Andy Kay**

Doing transport for through trip cavers is very similar to dye tracing .....Take cavers up the hill to the hole, pop them in & watch them disappear underground, then wait at presumed resurgence for them to reappear. No lab. Analysis needed though.

**22.8.01 Through trip**

**M. Thomas M.Foyle P.Hann Dylan**

Time in 8.00a.m. Out 23.00 p.m.

**22.8.01 Through trip**

**Patrick Sparrow Simon Tav Dom**

Time in 8.00 a.m. time out 8.00 p.m.

**22.8.01 Through trip**

**Mario Lebbe Oswald Tjerle Dalhuisen**

Two Belgians and one Dutchman on the through trip. Took us 13 hours to Verna. Thanks a million for using your tackle, great service! Thanks and enjoy the beer!

P.S. one of us lost his climbing gear and drinking bottle, between Tete Sauvage and Salle Cosyns. Hopefully one of you might find it.

**22.8.01 Through trip**

**Em's Kev Suntan Dave**

In at 10.00 a.m. Out at 2 a.m. with a sprained ankle.

**23.8.01 Through trip**

**Vern Rosie Andy L.**

Time in 7.00a.m. Out 2.20 a.m.

**23.8.01 La Verna**

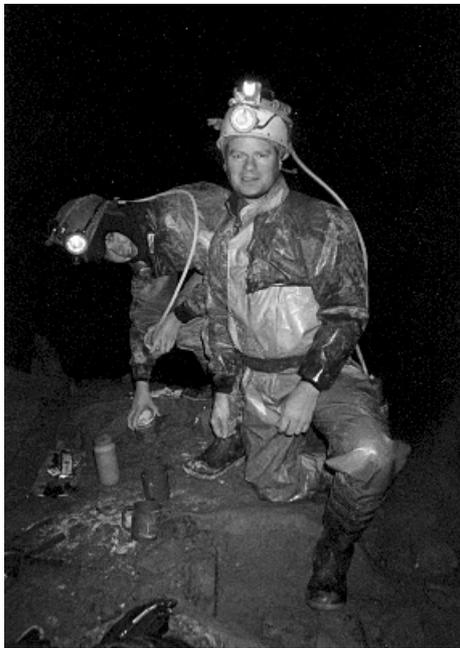
**Maurice Judy Paul John Andy Sparrow**

To help Andy Sparrow photograph La Verna using digital camera. Picked up 2 Birmingham university Speleos at entrance as extra help. Fired lots of electronic units on balcony and down near waterfall. Fired a dozen white PF 60's and PF 35's from lower balcony. Andy hopes to build up a composite photo from the bits. Also took a few stereos of close ups. Out after about two hours.

**23.8.01**

**Taz NikNak Suntan Dave**

A blowing hole on hillside.



**Rosie and Vern Brew up on their through trip. Photo Andy Ladell**

**23.8.01 Lepineux *Keith Ros Bri Gordon the Gourmet Andy and Nigel***

Objective Lepineux. Nigel didn't fancy the traverse into Adelie and Keith started feeling post-operative, so then we were 4. Did a complete circle in Adelie before finding way on. Gordon decided to call it a day at the end of Loubens and wait for the others: probably due to his large rucksack full of excellent cherry cake! 3 made it to Lepineux and very happy to have done so. Boulder-hopped out, with Brian demonstrating Grey wolf expertise in lifelining on Metro ladder pitch. Ros set storming pace throughout, Gordon ensured we didn't lose too much weight. A.K. well knackered by the end due to over heating. Super trip.

**24.8.01 SC3 *Rob H. Bean Taz Mark***

Derigging. Suntan Dave aand Niknak derigged the bottom two pitches.

**25.8.01 E.D.F to Tunnel du Vent *M.Thomas M.Foyle P.Hann E.Heron Patrick***

In at 7.30 in the morning to retrieve the boat.

**25.8.01 Couey Lodge *Bean Mark Taz***

Also all the next day. Suntan Dave and NikNak derigged in the evening.

**26.8.01 La Verna *Vern Rosie***

In at 13.30 and out at 15.30.

Suntan Dave NikNak and Jamie (Edinburgh) Maitaus ( Germany) in 11.00 out 14.00

**27.8.01 La Verna and beyond**

Cast of 5 Land Rovers full to Verna and beyond. Maurice and Judy photo trip. Joined Pete Hann for final salvo of PF100's. Cave may be wounded but it didn't surrender.



**27.8.01 Sue, Dylan and family plus Brian Pitman enter La Verna *Chevalier Grey Wolves P.W. J.T. with M.T.***

Grey Wolves J.T. & P.W. led by M.T. through Chevalier lower route into the start of Adelie where we had lunch & returned on the high route to meet up with Mr Hann and help with photographing the lower end of Chevalier, returned to La Verna and again assisted Mr Hann and Mr Hewins photograph La Verna. Exited after 4 ½ hrs. a long trip for grey wolves these days.

**27.8.01 Grotte de Betharram via Haute Pyrenees**

**27.8.02**

**Rose Vern Kev Em NikNak**

Doing the touristy thing. The roads are fantastic in that area. Very "Italian Job" coach ride. The show cave was very good. Excellent formations and a cracking windy river passage. We had great fun playing guess the name of the stal in which NikNak excelled himself ! The boat ride is a waste of time but the train ride deserved much hooting. Thanks to Vern for driving such a long way and Rosie who makes a very good navigator.

**28.8.01**

**Brian P.**

Homeward bound – what a holiday – Great food – Great beer – Great caving- Great country – but above all Great friends. Many thanks to you all for making Sheila and mine a great holiday. See you all on Mendip.

**28.8.01 Pic D'Anie**

**Gordon Tav NikNak Em Ros Keith Brian H. Maurice Judy**

We set off as 2 separate groups one leaving at 7.30 a.m. the other at 8.00. All very thankful to catch the cool morning air before the sun was turned up. It's a great trudge up in which Pic D. looms large (and along way away !) We shared the summit with several other tourists and ate lunch watching the Vultures circling high above the valleys. Came back a different route that was much more windy but cut out most of the gully hopping. We got back to the cars in the full glare of the sun and were all very grateful for air conditioning and the thought of Grande Panache back at the Gite. Excellent days walking. ( Judy and I stopped well short of the summit, but had a magnificent walk of 6 hours. Maurice)

**28.8.01 Ehjarre Gorge**

**John T. Paul W. ( Grey wolves)**

To the gorge and return on the marked route through meadows and woodland. Hard work but well worth it.

**29.8.01 La Verna**

**Bean Taz**

**29.8.01 Quickening Hole ( Spain )**

**Mike NikNak**

Hole first entered by persons unknown. Visited by Mike, NikNak, Kev and Emsy in May. Returned today with the aim to reach the bottom. Using one original foreign bolt, two new bolts of our own and a few natural belays reached a choked bottom at 50M. from surface. No way on.

**29.8.01**

Final working party making good the E.D.F. road. At least it looked tidy when we finished.

**30.8.01**

**Well people we did it. Superb trip. Thank-you everybody for making this Classic Cave another trip I will never forget. Cheers Malc.**

**We Welcome the following New Members**

Elected on 2/9/2001 and 20/10/2001.

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| <b>Sarah Clarke</b> , 97 Church St. Hilperton, Trowbridge, BA 4 7RL , 01225 77613,  | sarahclarke@wiltshire.gov.uk |
| <b>Michael Hamworth</b> , 79 Boroham Rd, Warminster, BA12 9JX, 01985 211458         | Michael@logicdevices.com     |
| <b>Petra Dobbs</b> , 14 Cheques Road, Gloucester GL4 6PN                            | 01452 384236                 |
| <b>Neville Acland</b> , 7 St. Christopher Road Colchester Essex, CO4 4LA            | 01206 843544                 |
|   | Neville@acland-family.co.uk  |
| <b>Gillian Acland</b> , 50 Keelers Way, Great Horkelesley, Nr Colchester, CO6 4EF.  | 01206 273415                 |
|   | letitia@acland-family.co.uk  |
| <b>Christopher Perkins</b> , 27 Long Plough Aston, Clinton HP22 5HB.                | 01296 630922                 |
| <b>Julia Hamworth</b> 79 Boroham Rd, Warminster BA12 9JX. 01985 211458              | julia.hamworth@genie.co.uk   |
| <b>Steve Robotham</b> , 14 Waddeston Green, Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury, HP21 9ES.  | 01296 431772                 |
| <b>Christine Grosart</b> , Cornborough Manor Farm, Sherriff Hutton, York, YO60 6QN. | 07967 452544                 |
| <b>Ian Gallop</b> . Stone Ash Cottage, Mells, Frome, BA11 3RH.                      | 01373 812625                 |
| <b>Martin Moore</b> . 2 Sandy Lane, Beckington, Frome, BA3 6ST.                     | 01373 830788                 |
| <b>Chris Haywood</b> . 9 Rough Stubbs, Witham Friary, Frome, BA11 5HT.              | 01373 452116                 |

**Changes of Address**

- |   |  |                        |
|---|--|------------------------|
| <b>Mark Kellaway</b> ,  | 2 Old Station Close, Wrington, Bristol, BS40 5LY                     | 01934 863432           |
| <b>Jo Diamond</b>   | 2 Old Station Close, Wrington, Bristol, BS40 5LY                     | 01934 863432           |
| <b>Mel Barge</b>  | E-Mail melndave26@hotmail.com  | 02380 873099           |
| <b>Nick Williams</b>  | E-Mail nick.williams@conformance.co.uk                               |                        |
| <b>Cat Burrows</b> 29 Stainash Cresent, Staines Middlesex, TW18 1AZ | mfcs@ic24.net  | 01784 460748           |
| <b>Jonathon Damrel</b>  | 9 Cock Road, Kingswood, Bristol, BS15 2SJ                            |                        |
| <b>Tamsin Williams</b>  | First Floor Flat, 5 Smithfield Road, Buith Wells, Powys              | 01982 553409           |
| <b>Mark Easterling(Bean)</b>  | First Floor Flat, 5 Smithfield Road, Buith Wells, Powy               | 01982 553409           |
| <b>Bruce Fraser</b>   | 77 Sandy Lane, Fair Oak, Hants, SO50 8GA                             |                        |
| <b>Grant Lindsay</b>  | Uplands, Thorcliffe Avenue. Darley Dale, Matlock Derbyshire, DE4 2HU | 01629 734800           |
| <b>Roz Lunn</b>   | 3 Hazel Court, 58 Goldsmith Avenue, Southsea, Hants PO4 8QU          | 07973 117862           |
| <b>Dr. Jo Wisely</b>  | 30 West Way Bournemouth, BH9 3ED                                     | 01202 520393           |
| <b>Dave Edge</b>  |  | Mobile 00353 879161828 |

# On taking on the Presidency

Donald Thomson

At the last Annual General Meeting I was invited to take on the post of Club President, an offer which I felt very honoured to accept. Having done so it seemed important to work out just what the job entailed. Still thinking about it there is very little to go on. The Club has had few presidents, perhaps not enough to establish related customs. I have profound respect for all the previous incumbents. Herbert Balch was the first, an appropriate choice because of his deep knowledge and love of Mendip, and for all he did to explore and describe many of the systems. We admire perhaps most of all for his efforts in establishing the Wells Museum and his extensive archaeological work.

Frank Frost followed when Herbert Balch died. Frank had been Secretary of Wessex for years, and felt that he must shoulder most of the responsibility for running the Club even after he ceased his secretarial duties. He had done a great deal for the Club, his extensive network of contacts often proved useful and so did his engineering skills, run from a veritable factory behind his sitting-room. He clearly found it difficult to let go. Frank was followed by an interregnum. It was generally felt that perhaps the Club did not need a President, and that this was an opportunity to give it some thought.

When Luke Devenish was asked to take on the Presidency he seemed a natural successor. Very much a larger-than-life character and known to everyone, he took on the presidency with some reluctance. He was very much a practical person and perhaps he saw this office as a bureaucratic institution. Luke will always be remembered for some spectacular explosions around Mendip, due usually, but by no means invariably, to conventional explosives. Some were due to Luke's conviction that photographic exposures had to be adequate, and used quantities of flashpowder appropriate to that requirement. Many legends about Mendip seem to present Luke as the central figure. When Luke became unwell he felt that he was not able to do all he would have liked for the Club, and asked that his resignation be accepted. The Club regretfully understood, and Luke's resignation was accepted.

After a time Richard Kenney was asked to take on the task. Richard was well known in the Club. He had taken over the Friday Nighters' caving trips and ran these with his customary efficiency for several years after his brother Howard died. Richard was always well organised, and the evenings ran very smoothly, keeping many middle-aged people caving beyond the time when most would have stopped. His efficiency continued in the Presidency, which he combined with Trusteeship of the Club. He did all he could to maintain contact with the Club, even when his last illness began to overwhelm him.

My initial feeling is that the Presidency has to be played by ear. There are some legal duties to be followed. Richard did make a catalogue of these, but it is not obvious which of these are obligatory and which are Richard's ideas about what should be done. We are trying to clarify these points now.

I would like to keep myself informed about what the Club is doing. There are several sources of information, but it would be a good thing if members would feel they could contact me whenever they wished. The easiest way for me to find out what is happening is through e-mail to the wessex-cave-club.org site, which is, I think, being extended to include my job. The post, and conversations in The Hunters', also works. There is also work to be done on archiving the photographic record. I have quite a few photos the details of which I have forgotten. I do not think I am alone in this. We ought to establish an exchange of pictures to see if gaps can be filled in. The trouble with history is that it gets longer.

## **Caving Based First Aid Course ; Weekend 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> February.**

John Heath will shortly be running a comprehensive first aid course helped by a team of willing casualties, who can be relied on to act realistically. The course is designed to help you deal with situations as you find them, rather than learning umpteen different ways to call M.R.O. The cost will be £5 per head and numbers will be limited. Please contact the Caving Secretary if you are interested. It's first come, first served!

## Committee Notes Meeting, 20/10/2001

**Upper Pitts Handbook.** This explains how the hut systems work. It is kept by the phone.  
**Bath Swallet** This dig by Aubrey Newport and Pete Hann has been accepted as a "Wessex dig".  
**Mother Ludlam's Cave.** Waverley Council may soon be sponsoring an archaeological dig in the cave, repairing the roof and fitting a gate. Maurice will keep a caver's eye on developments.

**Theft and damage to Upper Pitts.** At the beginning of October an intruder got into the hut early one morning. **Although no money is left overnight** the idiot forced open the shower meters and did some costly damage. It is possible that a door had been left unlocked. Please check all doors when you close up the hut. Don't make life easy for criminals.

**Stop Press. Congratulations to Murray and Angela Knapp on the Birth of daughter Lucy.**

### Berger Meeting

A well attended meeting of Wessex and Devon S.S. members was held at the Hunters on 18<sup>th</sup> November. Slides of the last D.S.S. trip to the cave were shown and Pete Hann showed some fine pictures he had taken on previous Wessex expeditions there. Over 20 people present expressed an interest in going and a committee of six, three from each club, was set up. A non-returnable deposit of £30 per person is needed to secure a place. If the bids for dates for the Berger are unsuccessful, an alternative location will possibly be found.

A training program will be arranged in the new year by Andy Morse. Details from him or the Caving Secretary.

### Shower Pot – Bath Swallet

#### Aubrey Newport

In June some of the foot and mouth restrictions were lifted from areas without livestock so Pete Hann and myself went to look for a dig to keep us occupied until we could resume work in St. Lukes. Burrington was an open area and so our first stop was at Bath Swallet, where Max and myself had been forced to abandon work in the wet winter weather of 1996. We found the walling to be in perfect condition and the bottom looked quite promising because it was now obvious where the water drained.

The following Wednesday we started our usual downward digging method of removing mud fill and building cement and stone walls. The remainder of the St. Lukes team were invited but were not interested. They had become known as the "Teletubbies" (partly because of their Wednesday evening habits!).

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> August was our sixth digging trip since recommencing and the first time we could easily dig into a narrow alcove from where we had removed a rock flake. I was laid flat out filling the buckets with spoil when a smallish hole began to appear in the floor as the mud and pebble fill rattled off downwards. After a few minutes probing the hole was getting bigger and I was getting nervous and in need of fresh underpants, so I retreated for Pete to have a look. At first he thought I was exaggerating but after some bigger stones fell away and bounced ... and bounced ... and bounced ... Pete also retreated to regain his composure. We had a diggers nightmare! (or dream?). The digging rope was pressed into service as a safety line while the hole was opened up to a size we thought we could get through. It was pub time and we could do nothing more without some tackle.

On Friday evening we returned with ladders, ropes, drill, bolts and various other tackle. At least we had a proper lifeline while Pete fixed a bolt at the top of the pitch and we cleared some of the loose stuff from the edge of the hole. Pete descended first but found that two ladders did not reach the bottom and so returned to lifeline me down to a ledge from where we could free-climb down and do some imaginative rigging to re-belay one ladder and reach the bottom. The take-off at the top of the pitch was desperately tight and it was almost impossible to find the ladder rungs with our feet. Getting out again was a struggle!

The pitch is about 70' deep from the breakthrough, with the first 12' or so being free hanging. It is in a large water worn trench cut into a wide rift. At the bottom it comes out into the side of a large phreatic passage, which is blocked in both directions by major collapses. To the left is a large water worn inlet, which we believe to be the main Bath Swallet (left hand entrance) streamway. We broke up a boulder blocking the bottom of that inlet and Pete free-climbed up about 20' to a car-

sized boulder, which deterred further progress. To the right the stream sinks in sand and mud after about 50'. The flood debris indicates this has backed up to a depth of 5 feet or more. We intend digging an obvious overflow rift. There are several inlets and small high level passages giving a total length of well over 100 feet below the pitch. The total known depth is estimated at 115'. Since the breakthrough we have concentrated on building walls to stabilise the pitch head area and enlarging the very top of the pitch. This has proved quite time consuming, even with a bigger digging team. We plan to replace the various 'digging bolts' with resin anchors and survey the whole cave.

## Extracts from the Upper Pitts Logbook

Edited by Brian Prewer (Only a short extract because of P.S.M. entries)

16.6.01 Eastwater

**Mark & Dave**

First proper trip fer ages!! Down to Mud Escalator & up 13 Pots – Ace!!

16.6.01 Read's Cavern

**Phil H & Prew**

Photographic trip in Main Chamber – Phil's flashgun strobing (*he means faulty*), but some pictures taken. Met a party of 3 adults & 3 kids, 2 torches, no helmets – foolhardy & dangerous or spirit of caving? We decided the latter. Showed them around. Explored first part of Z-Alley, Browne-Stewart & holes in the floor. Frighteningly unstable. Cave dry – good stream but sinking at Entrance.

16.6.01 GB Cavern

**Andy Morse**

Round trip & Bat Passage. Good to be caving again.

16.6.01 Eastwater

**Andy Morse, Neil BW**

13 Pots – still good to be caving again. One hour & forty minutes – No sweat – harder than rock

17.6.01 Rhino Rift

**Dave Uppy, Chris H**

After leaving key & maillons in car we tagged up with some Shepton CC guys who were rigging Rhino. We waited whilst it was rigged & when we eventually got to the head of the pitch & on the Y-hang there wasn't enough slack to lock off, the rebelay had an undetermined knot on it so after reaching the first slope we decided to count our blessings & leave before risking any more.

23.6.01 Goatchurch

**The Prewers (Brian, Stephen, Jo, Curtis & Amy)  
plus Phil Hendy & Fred Felstead**

Fred had new & borrowed tackle on his first trip in 12 years. Photography was performed in various locations. Flashgun now fettled & working well. (see Read's on 16.6.01). All to Boulder Chamber & out via Tradesman's. P & F through Bloody Tight & down to the Water Chamber. Rock very smooth, Coffin Lid very thrutchy on the ascent. A pleasant if sweaty trundle. Met Herbie Plant & 17 on our way out. Mövenpick ice cream was consumed at the Burrington Inn, followed by Mrs Prewer's cakes. Exceedingly good!

10.6.01 Longwood August

**Dom, Mak, Andy Laddel & Jo (prospective new Member)**

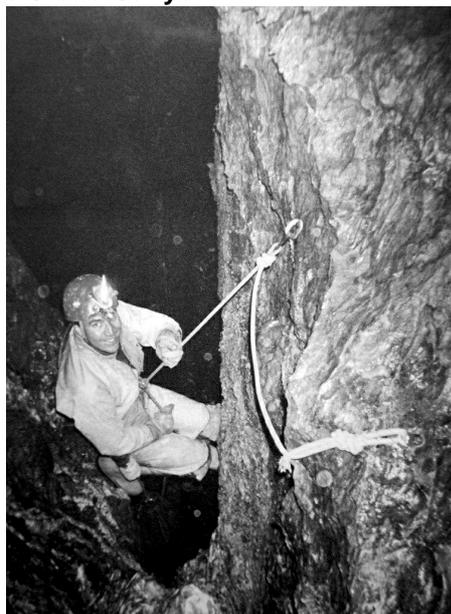
All down August Hole, Dom & Mak out August just for fun! Andy & Jo out Longwood. Good trip, nice walk up from Blackrock Gate

23.6.01 Rhino Rift

**Dom, Debs, Biff, Nik-Nak & George (part time)**

Dom, Debs & Biff down right-hand route (RHR). Biff down LHR, Biff then popped back up LHR to drop RHR. All four out via RHR then George dropped LHR & derigged it for us. Top man! (*Confused? – I am*)

Patrick Warren on the short climb near  
The Grand Canyon



The Smoking Dwarf near the Metro



STOP PRESS – LATEST PICTURES FROM THE P.S.M. Andy Sparrow.

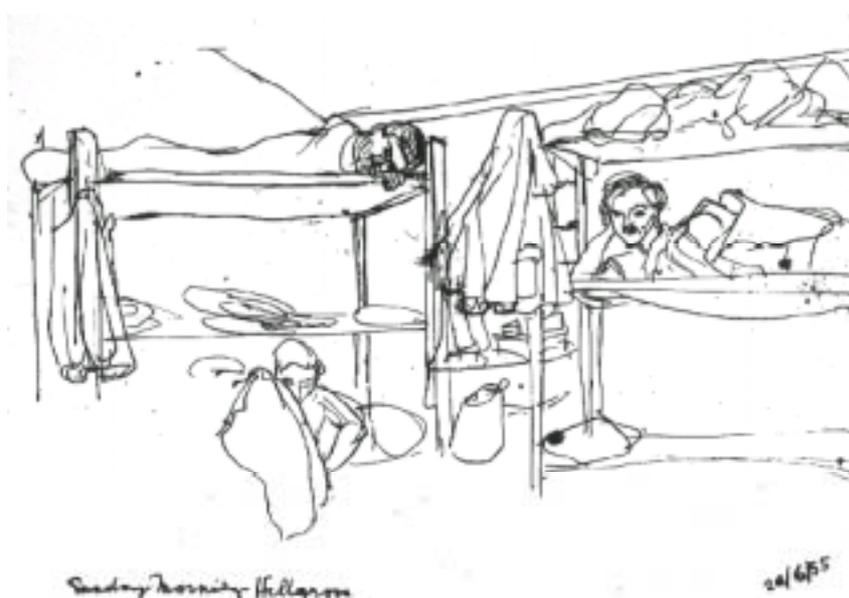
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## Forthcoming Events

Committee Meetings, Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> 2001: 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2002: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2002: 14<sup>th</sup> April 2002: 9<sup>th</sup> June 2002: 14<sup>th</sup> July 2002 and 1st Sept 2002. Heralts Meeting, Sat 19<sup>th</sup> January, at Hunters Lodge, 8.00p.m. Devon Trip, Weekend 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> January, staying at the D.S.S. Cottage at Buckfastleigh. Caving First Aid Course, Weekend 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> February. Details Page 117.

For details of the Berger training, contact Andy Morse. See page 118



Hillgrove, 26/6/55  
By Carleton "Atty"  
Attwood. One of the  
collection of  
pictures Exhibited  
at Hidden Earth  
Buxton.

### Buy a Sweat Shirt and help the Club

The Sales Officer, Jonathan Williams, is about to order T-Shirts, Sweat Shirts or Rugby Shirts with Wessex Badges He can take customised orders in several colours. This is an excellent way to help offset losses caused by foot and mouth, or raise money for the building repairs. (You can of course give a donation instead! )