



Journal of the  
**Wessex Cave Club**

Vol. 28 No.299  
April 2006

Gorillas in the...First Boulder Choke

MRO Annual Report

Of Lesser Speleological Interest

From Tuska's Reliquary

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Wessex Cave Club Journal

## From the Editor

Caving has been very well represented on the television in recent months. The stunning Planet Earth Series on the BBC featured a whole programme dedicated to caves which I'm sure you all saw. The finale of which was a sequence of shots filmed during a ten day stay in Lechuguilla cave, New Mexico. Wessex member Gavin Newman was a member of the film crew for that trip. Congratulations to all involved on producing a truly stunning piece of work.

Gavin was also behind the camera in the recent Secret Underground series screened down here in the ITV West region. Caves and mines were shown including some great shots of St. Cuthbert's and the Rose Cottage dig. The Wessex again were well represented with commentary from Dave Irwin and Brian Prewer. These programmes always seem to engage public interest. I tend to be bombarded with questions from non-caving work colleagues and friends after they go to air. They do a lot to dispel the general myth that all cavers are in someway strange!

Hope you enjoy this journal. Please keep the material coming in.

Jonathan

## Next Journal

The next Journal deadline will be June 3rd 2006.

All material welcome, preferably on CD-ROM as my new PCs no longer have 3.5 inch Floppy Drives.

Please send any photographs in the highest resolution you have without annotations or cropping.

E-mail to [editor@wessex-cave-club.org](mailto:editor@wessex-cave-club.org). Or post to

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## Cover Picture

Canals in the recently discovered Frog Pot. Part of the Goyden System, N. Yorks.

Photo: R. Brooks



# Club News

## New Items in Brief

Access to Bridge Cave and Upper Nedd valley has been agreed. Park only at the Bridge Cave car park, but, as before, pay the parking fee to the Lewis family at Blaen Nedd Isaf (the farm further up the road). A secure collecting box may be placed at the car park in the future. Sporting cavers should have suitable insurance (ie. BCA card). For further details contact Cambrian CC or Ben Woodley, SWCC C&A Officer. (source: WSG N/L 2006/1)

Upper Pitts is now on a water meter. Please take care with water, and do not leave taps running. This applies particularly to the kit wash area. For your information, a full-length shower uses 17 gallons of water! Mendip DC is now only collecting household waste every fortnight. Please keep this to a minimum at the HQ, and use the recycling bins and bin for burnable rubbish.

Plans to gate Box Mines are slowly going ahead. Access will be via a special Allen key, and the gates are self-closing with grilles to allow bats to come and go but keep cats out!

Contrary to rumour, Cow Hole is open. Odd smells have been reported in Manor Farm Swallet. Check the CSCC website for full details.

There is a new stock of Club pens for sale.

West Twin Brook Adit. This is now closed with a combination lock. The combination is noted in the Tackle Store.

Phil Hendy

## Clearwell Caves Trip

At last year's Hidden Earth the Wessex Club Stand, which was arranged by Christine Grosart obtained second place. The prize was a trip for fourteen people into the inner reaches of Clearwell Caves. Subsequent negotiations with the owner, Ray Wright, and his son, Jonathan, turned this into an open house to the show cave as well. Thank you both.

Brian Prewer got us the use of two minibuses and drivers (Chris Binding and Andy Chamberlain) from the Charterhouse Centre, while other members went in their own cars. Thus it was that about 50 adults and children were able to participate. Younger members included Jack Ballard and the Biffin Twins, while the oldest to venture underground was Fiona Crozier's mother in her wheel chair!

Members of the Royal Forest of Dean Cave Club led 3 different groups into the old workings, while the less energetic of us wombled around the show cave with a very informative guide.

All in all it was an excellent club event which continued with food at Upper Pitts and skittles at the New Inn. Thanks are due to Chris Grosart and Brian Prewer for making the arrangements.

Maurice Hewins



Clearwell Caves Trip

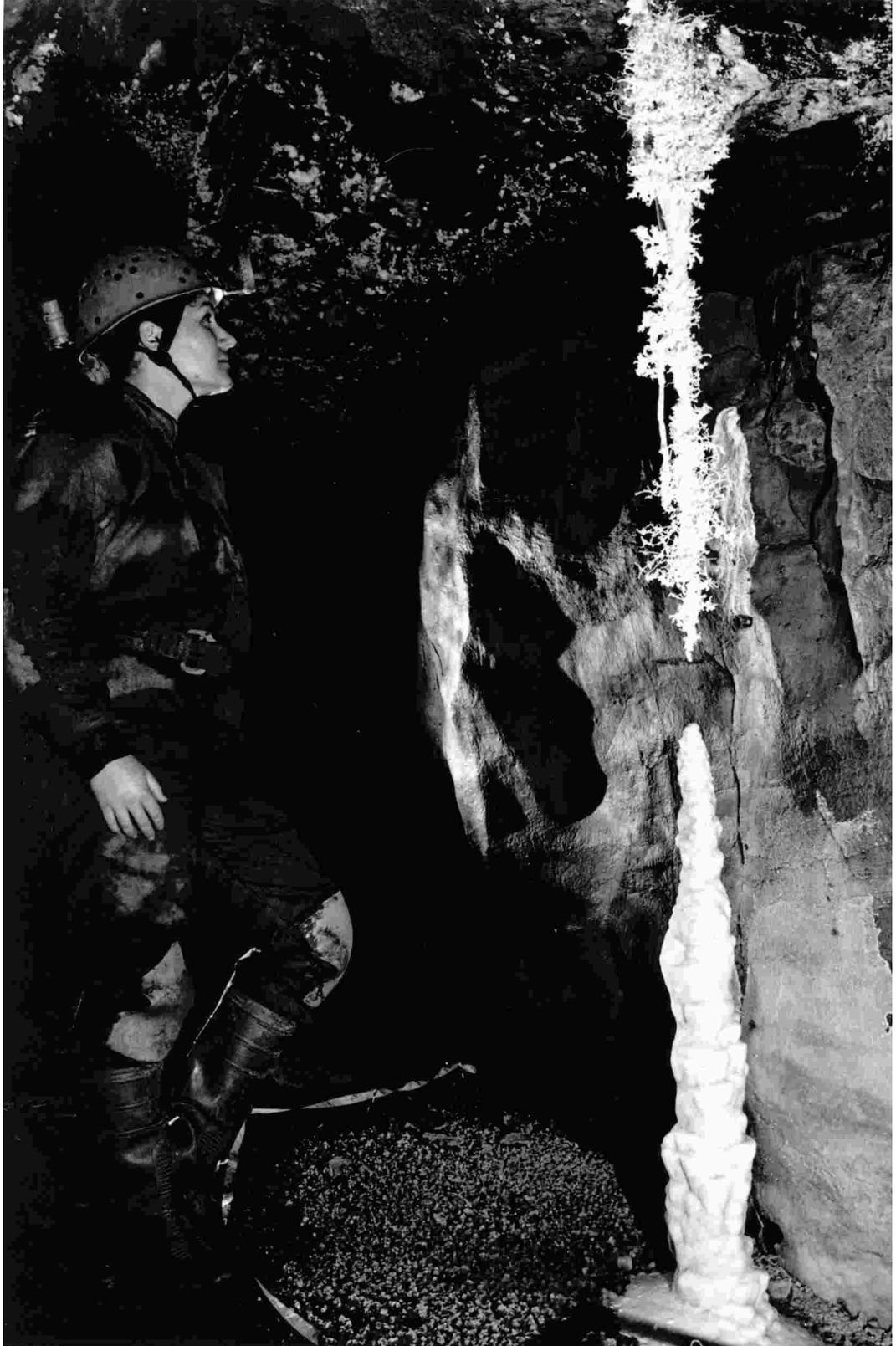
Photo: M. Hewins

# Gorillas in the... First Boulder Choke

Christine Grosart

Aggen Allwedd, 32000m of fine and assorted cave passage beneath the Llangattock escarpment near Crickhowell, South Wales, has been one of my favourite and most frequented haunts. Over the past eighteen months, Clive Westlake and I have enjoyed some superb trips in this extensive system, along with the excellent company of our caving friends and breathtaking views that we never take for granted from the Whitewalls hut. So much have we enjoyed our time in this cave, that Clive persuaded me to write an article on what we have been up to and to encourage Aggy virgins to visit this exquisite cave.

My first trip to 'Aggy' as it is affectionately known, was a digging trip with Martyn Farr and Andy Chell. It wasn't until some time later that Clive and I, along with some members of the TSG, attempted the classic Grand Circle. Unfortunately, the area around the Fourth Boulder Choke was sumped and we were forced to retreat whence we came, up the infamously slippery Main Stream. Unperturbed, we



Christine with "The Courtesan"

Photo. C.D. Westlake

returned and completed the Grand Circle, taking photographs en route. This trip was to mark the beginnings of our midweek 'Green 'n' smelly' caving team, consisting on this occasion of Vern Freeman, Emma Heron and Andy Summerskill, Clive and myself.

In November last year, Clive and I went on one of our midweek jaunts to Wales to enjoy some superb diving in Porth Yr Ogof and hatched an almost last minute plan to do some damn fine caving. As Aggy was a secret favourite of mine, I didn't take much persuading to go and do the Inner Circle and Summertime Series. This involves much fine caving along Turkey streamway, before venturing off up Selenite Needle Passage and visiting the impressive mud formations, which resemble their namesake, The 'Swiss Village.'

It was around this time that Clive received a barely coherent answer-phone message from Arthur Millett of the Chelsea - the bare bones of which could only be picked out as 'Aggy', 'New passage', 'Fantastic formations', 'Bring camera' !!!

Clive of course pursued this and we hastily arranged a 'Green 'n' Smelly' team (though this was a weekend trip and wasn't very green or smelly)! The new discoveries were of course the superb helictites found at the far end of Iles' Passage, which involves a trek down the notorious Southern Stream. Just short of the bottom of this, you climb out of the streamway and enter Gothic Passage via an easy rope traverse and undertake some crawling to reach Priory Road. It is not long after this that the benefits of being a dwarf become apparent. Normal people need not apply!

The team for this trip consisted of Malc Foyle, Mike Thomas, Kevin Hilton, Clive and myself. Unbeknown to me, I had set a bit of a precedent by cooking for the hungry team on their arrival and we duly sank a fair amount of wine and beer - as is right and just!

We got up smartly the next morning, and set off along the fine escarpment to the entrance to embark on our photographic trip. From the end of Iles' Passage, the recently dug sand crawls and U-tubes proved a little demanding and the normal people needed a little guidance and psychological persuasion! Once into larger, walking passage, we were met with the first of the 'pretties', a passage named 'Trafalgar', where we enjoyed the superb helictites and pristine formations. Many photographs were taken here and we saved the best until last.

Returning to the large chamber preceding Trafalgar, we turned right to encounter another tricky squeeze where the highlight of the trip can be seen from half way through. Malc at this point, dug his heels in and having encountered difficulty getting this far, was contemplating how on earth he was going to get home! He couldn't be persuaded to attempt this even smaller squeeze, so I went ahead and was faced with the 'Courtesan'. This fine, three foot long helictite dangles provocatively in front of your eyes and barely meets a contrastingly smooth stalagmite of the same length, four inches below it.

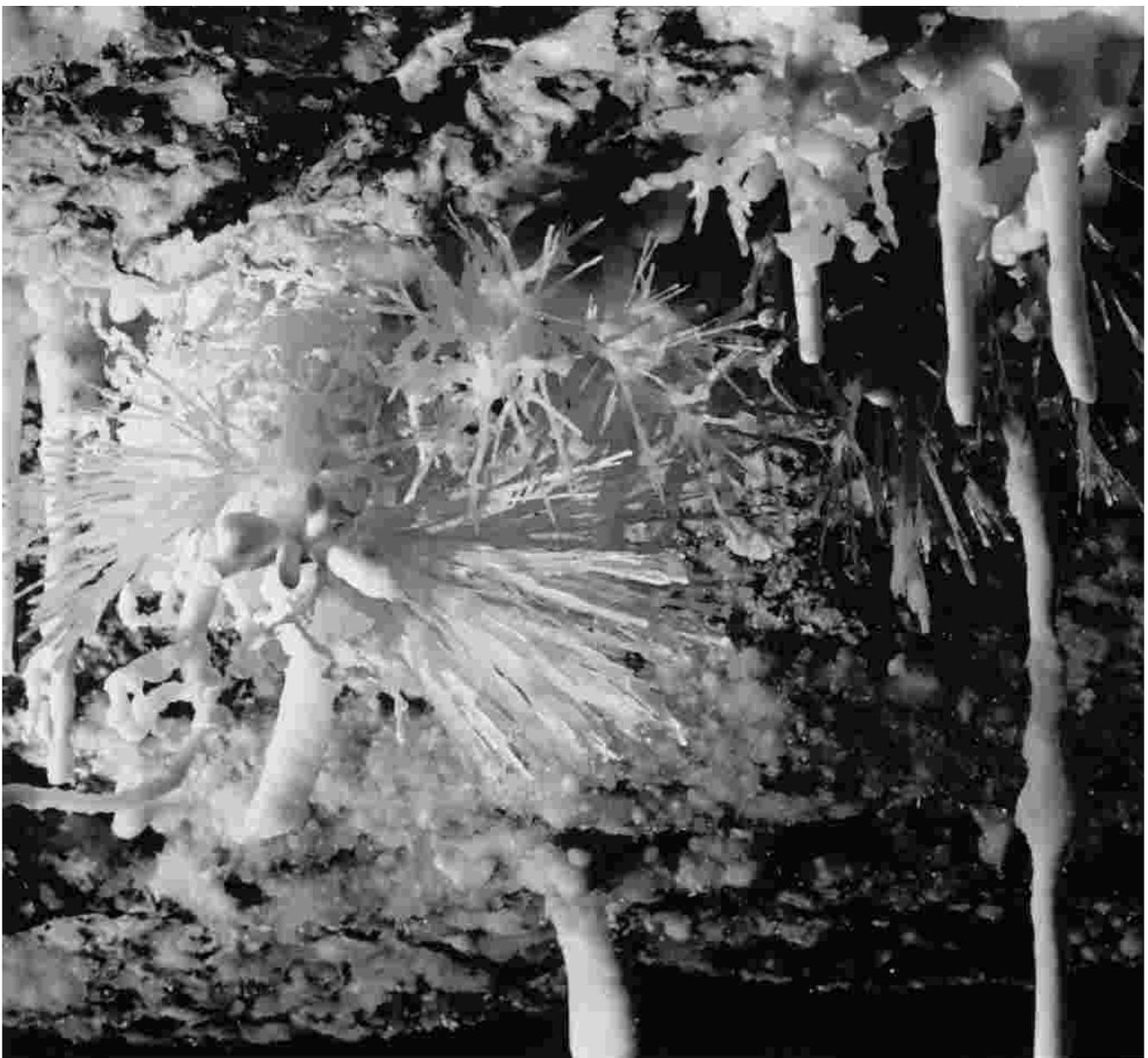
The others followed suit and we stealthily admired the other superb formations in this walking size passage with a muddy floor. In the roof can be observed some pom-pom style formations resembling crystalline sea urchins and an abundance of haphazard helictites and delicate, twinkling straws. We seemed to lose track of time in this wonderment, made all the more special by being within the first dozen or so people ever to see it.

We thought it would be a good idea to return and comfort Malc once the photos had been dealt with. He was still pondering whether he would be consigned to Iles' Passage forever, but the type of persuasion applied on the inward trip, plus the promise of more beer and wine, seemed to do the trick. Despite his worries, he slipped through the outward squeezes without much bother - but with much swearing!

The return trip up Southern Stream required much knee-pad-swapping for the normal people and we got a bit of a beating in the smooth First Boulder Choke on the way home. We popped out of the entrance after some 10 1/2 hours caving, welcomed by twinkling stars and a bright moon.

The post-trip email-swapping provided much amusement, mostly due to Mike complaining about getting beaten up by the Gorilla which lives in the First Boulder Choke. Apparently it was lurking in waiting and then proceeded to jump out on him and give him a good hiding! He was not alone!

The outcome of this email was that nobody actually felt too disabled after the trip and Mike was soon hatching a plan to go to the famous Maytime streamway a couple of months later. So, at beginning of March this year, we arrived at Whitewalls en mass. Clive and I cooked a curry complete with condiments, which resembled 'the Last Supper', and Mike, Malc, Andy Judd, Kevin Hilton and Emma Heron were treated to a slideshow of mountains and caves, plus some historical reminiscing of the discovery of the Llangattock systems.



Helictites in Trafalgar Passage

Photo. C.D. Westlake

We awoke to a crisp and sunny morning, with a view of the snow-capped Black Mountains and Kev could not resist a headfirst tobogganing display as we set off in the snow towards Aggy. The entrance was decorated with long icicles and it was inevitable that I should get walloped on the backside by a snowball....

Off we set down Southern Stream again, reinforced kneepads at the ready. This section of passage seems to get easier with familiarity - but not shorter! Up into Gothic Passage and continued straight ahead into some long - very long - sandy crawls. These seemed to be relentless and if it were not for the good humour of the company, could be quite intimidating. However, Foyle was well and truly intimidated in a particularly low sand crawl and became grounded, wedged between the sand and the bedding plane. Kev and I dug as much sand out as we saw fit, but the Mendip Beer Monster became grounded again and decided it was time to call it a day. He made his way home at a leisurely pace while we pressed on through some even more intimidating corkscrew squeezes, which would have finished off Foyle even if the preceding one hadn't!

To our relief, there was a little bit of walking passage and this was well decorated, even with a juvenile 'Courtesan' in residence. Stooping beneath some low ceiling, we emerged into the noisy and mightily impressive Maytime streamway. Lunch and photos were calling, so we dealt with these and waded off down this remote and historic passage. We paused to collect our thoughts at Sump Four, recounting the history of exploration here and of course the sad fatality of Roger Solari.

The journey home was always going to be a tough one, crawling through stubborn sand, painfully slowly, feeling much like a newborn turtle on its way down to the sea. Emsy made the quote of the trip and lightened the atmosphere somewhat. Having crawled for nearly an hour, she observed, 'Sandy, isn't it...!!!'

We collected Foyle in the Main Passage and the team caved out together, sneaking past the gorillas in the First Boulder Choke and got back to Whitewalls for hot tea, hot showers and then dashed into Crickhowell for the best fish and chips I think I have ever had! And then of course, we had to visit The Bear for a swift half.....

# MRO Secretary & Treasurer Annual Report

2005 has been a busy year for the MRO although thankfully not on the rescue front.

The highlight of the year was the hosting of the BCRC Conference on Mendip. The event was based on a similar format to the previous conference held a decade ago. A tented village was erected at Eastwater Farm and over 100 cavers attended the weekend. The mixture of workshops, training above and below ground combined with a balance of socialising worked well. Many people helped to make the whole event a great success. We owe a particular thank you to Dorothy and Ivor Gibbons who made the whole location available to the MRO without charge.

The Wardens have also been active looking at the future needs and structure of the organisation. A framework document detailing the operating principles of the MRO has been drafted. Primary changes include increasing the numbers of wardens meetings, the implementation of monthly training meets for club teams and wardens and as you will see from the annual meeting agenda an increased number of officers. This document is designed to be the platform for the way forward and will be built upon as we progress.

On a more sombre note; the MRO lost one of its supporters during the year, Martin Bishop who was a warden for many years and brought to the MRO his skills and knowledge of in particular the stone mines, sadly died at an early age.

Monies collected in his memory were kindly donated to the funds of the MRO. The finances of the organization are in good shape. The conference did threaten to make a loss but when the bar takings were added up we managed to show circa £500 income over expenditure. This included a £250 "pump priming" grant from the South Wales Rescon fund. I suggest that the meeting votes to pass a sum of £250 onto the next conference organisers. This will leave us with a surplus of approximately £250 from the conference. A very healthy result: it is not intended to be a profit making exercise.

Income from rescued parties is much increased this year. This is primarily down to donations to the MRO on behalf of the late Darren Foster. Darren was not a caver but sadly died due to an unfortunate accident. He fell into the turbulent waters of the River Mells whilst it was in flood. The MRO were called to assist with the search for him and located his body a distance downstream from where he was last seen. His family and friends requested that all donations were to be in favour of the MRO. The Talbot Inn at Mells also held a fundraising event in Darren's memory which raised £600 for the MRO. This brought the total amount donated to £1865.

MRO funds also benefited from donations made in the memory of Joan Bennett and Colin Pryer. Joan, wife of Roy Bennett and a long standing BEC member and Mendip Caver was well known by the majority of the caving community and will be much missed. Colin Pryer lost his life to a cave diving accident; it was his partner's wish that the MRO received a proportion of the money donated in his memory. Colin caved in all regions of the country but he had a special affection for the caves on Mendip. A substantial donation and a presentation tankard was received from Mr and Mrs James in gratitude for the rescue of their son from Priddy Green Sink.

The above donations and increased cash flow owing to the conference have substantially increased the turnover this year, £8k in comparison to the £1k norm. Operating costs are also up in part due to the conference but also owing to increased equipment purchase. The

enhanced spend on kit will also project forward into future years as we replace end of shelf life items.

Finally I apologise for not attending the meeting this year. A feeble excuse; but my work commitments have been such that the only slot for a winter holiday has clashed with the meeting date. I am prepared, if elected, to continue in the role of both Secretary and Treasurer for 2006/07.

However, I have been in this role now for ten years and I give notice that I wish to stand down from the position of Treasurer next year. The MRO fiscal year is Jan to Dec therefore I suggest a handover should take place on 1st January 2007. This does mean that you should consider a replacement at this the 2006 annual meeting.

R J Cork Hon. Secretary & Treasurer.  
Mar 2006

## Incident Report 2005

### Summary

Day	Date	Location	Problem
Tues	24th February	Rhino Rift	Overdue party
Thurs	3rd March	Goatchurch Cavern	Trapped
Sat	14th May	Priddy Green Sink - Swildon's Hole	Fall injury
Sun	29th May	OFD	Fall injury
Sun	16th October	General	Overdue

### Details

#### **Rhino Rift 24th February 2005**

Overdue party reported by Graham Mullins of the UBSS. Some difficulty was experienced with the callout owing to an anomaly in the published callout instructions. Overdue party called in safe and well before MRO contacted by police.

#### **Goatchurch Cavern 3rd March 2005**

Personnel involved: Alan Butcher, Richard West, Dany Bradshaw, Vince Simmons, Roz Bateman.

AB received call from Brian Prewer at 1.45pm to say that it was reported that there was a male caver trapped in Goatchurch. He said that the call out had come an unusual way and advised that an MRO warden should go directly to Burrington. On arrival at 2.10pm AB made contact with ADO Hutchings from Avon Fire and Rescue who was in charge of five fire engines, three having arrived from Bedminster. In addition there were two ambulances on site.

AB advised that the road, which was blocked by the engines, should be left clear for MRO personnel to arrive and at 2.20pm RW and DB arrived followed by RB and VS.

RW collected kit from the store and DB and VS entered cave at 2.50pm with lump hammer, chisel, Bosch drill, etc. RW remained with the Fire Brigade whilst AB and RB took station at the entrance. The casualty, R Millier who was with a party from AvonBanks OEC from Exeter had been wedged by his leg in one of the small passages at the bottom of the Coal Chute. After breaking away surrounding rock the casualty was released and all were out of the cave by 4.40pm. It was noted that the Bosch drill batteries were not charged and the drill unusable. The call out had been complicated at the 999 call centre because the casualty had been said to be trapped and so the Fire Brigade was called, it was after this initial call that the the MRO were contacted.

### **Priddy Green Sink- Swildon's Hole 14th May 2005**

At about 13.30, while abseiling on the through trip from Priddy Green Sink to Swildon's, 19 year old Cardiff University student Paul James took a 20 foot fall which ended with a pendulum into the pitch wall shattering his kneecap.

Richard West was contacted by Taunton Police Control at 14.45 and so started what could have been a very protracted operation. Greg Brock, who was with Paul, had the foresight to lower him down another pitch so that he would be accessible from the Four streamway. Once rescuers had reached Paul and lowered him down Cowsh Aven into the Four streamway and splinted the injury the choice presented was stark - the extremely tight Blue Pencil Passage and back through Paradise Regained or a trip through sumps III, II and I. Whilst Paul was not a cave diver he did have some open water experience so the choice was obvious and after a crash course and with the close attentions of 4 cave divers he was safely on the upstream side of Swildons I by 18.45 and back into "normal" rescue territory .

Progress was extremely fast mainly due to the fortitude shown by Paul and the hard work and efforts of the many underground and he exited the cave at 20.40. He was despatched to the Royal United Hospital in Bath where it was discovered that his kneecap was in 5 pieces. Despite initial fears that he would have to have the patella removed he underwent an operation the next day which successfully wired the jigsaw back together.

What could have been a very complicated and protracted rescue came to a satisfactory conclusion after the efforts of 30 cavers underground and 10 people on the surface with many more standing by in case the nightmare "Blue Pencil" option had to be taken. The speed of the rescue is a testament to lots of hard work underground and by Paul's determination.

Those involved underground were Greg Brock, Simon Richards, Phil Rowsell, Joel Corrigan, Adrian Vanderplank, Ed Waters, Neil Walmsley, Laura Walmsley, Hayley Clark, John Moore, Robin Brown, Keith Savory, Carol Tapley, Martin Grass, Tav, Andy, Steve Marsh, Mark Kellaway, Mike Addinall, Crispin Lloyd, Reece Davis, Richard Carey, Phil Hendy, Gordon Kaye, Judith Vanderplank, Anne Vanderplank, Mark Helmore, and Geoff Ballard. On the surface were Vern Freeman, Alan Butcher, Ivan Sandford, Tony Jarratt, Nigel Taylor, Dany Bradshaw and Richard West whilst Martin Ellis arranged the Shepton Mallet CC to stand by in case their annual dinner was going to be left to go cold.

Paul has since made a good recovery and visited Mendip with his father during the Cave Rescue Conference when was able to express his thanks via a generous donation to the MRO funds and copious amounts of Butcombe.

### **29th May 2005 - Rescue from the Smithy (OFD)**

Bob Cork received a call from Martin Grass at approx 4.30am requesting assistance from the MRO for a rescue in OFD. Teams were raised from the Wessex Cave Club, the Shepton Mallet Cave Club (camping on the Gower coast) and the Bristol Exploration Club.

In summary, a young lady had fallen 6m down the Smithy at approx 14.30pm on 29th May, a callout was instigated at 15.15. Potential pelvic injuries were diagnosed and a full stretcher rescue decided upon via the OFD Two stream way, stretcher haul pitch at Maypole Inlet and then out of the Top Entrance.

MRO teams entered the cave late morning on 30th May and the casualty was brought to the surface and evacuated by air ambulance by 18.00, approximately 28 hours after the initial accident. A full report of the incident has been published by the West Brecon Cave Rescue Team.

### **16th October 2005 General Alert**

Richard West was contacted at 19.27 by Avon & Somerset Police who had received a call from the Hampshire constabulary re. a caver exceeding their ETA. Brian Prewer checked the cars on Priddy Green and various phone calls were made to club huts.

Eventually the miscreant was located at the MCG Hut and "advised" about estimating over-due times and proper procedure.

## Denis Warburton

Denis Warburton, who died in February was a club stalwart in the years from the early 1950's to 1975 Denis was a man of small but sturdy build and he was an excellent fell walker as well as a fine caver.

In the company of Alan Surrell, Phil Davies and others Warburton was responsible for many classic cave surveys including those of Lamb Leer, Eastwater and Cuckoo Cleaves.

As well as experimenting with 8mm cine Denis was an experienced digger. He was a leading member of the Wessex team which laid siege to and briefly reopened Cow Hole in 1962. Later he dug at Fairman's Folly and was part of the team that opened and surveyed Nine Barrows Swallet in 1967.



Denis Warburton (on the left)

Denis became heavily involved in the building of Upper Pitts, and his strong Birmingham accent and pronounced sense of humour always made him fun to be with.

## John Cornwell

John Cornwell, who recently died in hospital was another Hillgrove regular, who was involved in opening Nine Barrows. He indeed had a strong digging record, having dug at Hillgrove Swallet, Rhino Rift and Warren Farm. Although John was a Wessex member from 1963 to 1979 he was also very active in St Cuthberts Swallet as a member of the BEC.



John Cornwell

In subsequent years he went on to photograph coal mines, using a technique of "painting with light" using a torch beam. It was against safety rules to use flash guns because of the risk of explosions. Several of his books are still in print.

## John Ifold

Another veteran Mendip caver and BEC member John Ifold has also died. He will always be remembered as the discoverer of the Ifold Series in Eastwater.

# Of Limited Speleological Interest

The dry caves of the Maltese Islands

Michael Thomas

The Maltese islands are better known for saga holidays and the bucket and spade brigades that infest the beaches, rather than a target area for caving. Although the scuba diving around the islands is good and allows divers access to many superb underwater sea caves very little is recorded of the dry caving on the islands, primarily as there is really very little there, which is a little frustrating considering the islands are all limestone lumps. Over many years of trips to the islands, primarily to dive and holiday, myself and Thomas senior have scratched around looking for the master cave, or anything really that is more than a rock shelter of which there are literally thousands. If you find yourself on the islands and fancy a trip underground in a proper cave you have a limited choice, none of which will blow you away but are interesting nonetheless. Apart from a torch and maybe a helmet no caving kit is required.

On Malta you can take a tourist trip into Ghar Dhalam. This 144 metre long large diameter passage has been excavated for years by archeologists, who have removed many hundreds of animal and human bones dating back through the ages. The cave has also provided the earliest recorded data for human habitation on Malta going back some 7400 years. These artifacts are now in display in the small museum next to the cave. Thomas Junior stated this was his least favourite cave as it was too easy and boring (for a five year old!)

Also on Malta and of much more enjoyment for small boys is Ghar Hasan Cave. The cave is situated on the cliffs overlooking the sea on the south west coast next to the old Naval airfield of Hal Far. The guide at Ghar Dhalam told us that Ghar Hasan was closed several years ago



Robert Thomas in Ghar Calypso Gozo

Photo: M. Thomas

and a fence erected around the area due to the supposed unstable cliff edge. But on arriving we found a large hole in the fence that was used by fishermen and the romantic couple we found in the entrance after some privacy! Ignoring the unstable cliff signs and side stepping Romeo and Juliet we entered the cave. 387 metres of cave make up Ghar Hasan. The cave is formed along two passages that make up a cross shape with two other entrances out on to the vertical cliff at the end of the eastern branch. Unfortunately due to the easy access to the entrance passage and eastern passage graffiti exists, some very old and some a little more modern! But saying that the inner east passage is still clean and provides a little round trip that includes stooping if you are not four feet high. A warning to all saga cc members that may visit this cave and insist that a light is not necessary to cave with, the floor of the cave is uneven and slippery. A certain Thomas senior found this out by taking a rather ungraceful fall and then being guided out by a concerned child!

Back on Gozo the hunt for dry caves continues, two springs with some development are known to us. One at Dwerja has about 5 metres of passage in knee-deep water before closing down; the second near Xlendi is the water supply to an old washing room complete with stone slabs. As this washing room is still in use the cave is gated and access forbidden, but a tantalizing crawl in the stream can be seen on the far side of the gate.

Two semi show caves exist on Gozo, Ghar Ninu and Ghar Xerri both of these well decorated but small caves are in people's houses. Ghar Ninu is in the back garden and Ghar Xerri in the front room of the house. When visiting the caves if you find the owners at home a small fee will acquire you a guided tour and some history behind the discovery of the caves. Both caves were found when the owners were digging wells looking for water. The final dry cave of note on Gozo is Ghar Calypso this is located high on the cliff top overlooking Ramla Bay. Calypso cave has around 60 metres of passage. After avoiding the unofficial cave guide (who can be located standing next to the government sign saying do not pay the unofficial guide!) Descend the stone steps by the railings to a large chamber in very shattered rock (don't look up), with another large entrance in the cliff over looking the sea. A passage off to the left leads to the rest of the cave in stooping then crawling passage to a final boulder choke.

Most of the best caves on the Maltese islands are underwater, at some point I may get around to putting them into print, but the dry caves are definitely worth the effort if only as a collectors item.

#### Reference:

<http://www.showcaves.com/english/mt/showcaves/Dalam.html>

<http://www.showcaves.com/english/mt/showcaves/Hasan.html>

<http://www.showcaves.com/english/mt/caves/Calypso.html>

<http://www.showcaves.com/english/mt/showcaves/Ninu.html>

<http://www.showcaves.com/english/mt/showcaves/Xerri.html>

## From Tuska's Reliquary

Six months as Chair has gone, as have three committee meetings. Thank you for the opportunity, the enjoyment of getting back into the challenge of democratic decision and the importance of equally sharing the chocolate biscuits, is most welcomed. I have, I hope, listened and represented well those of you who have raised issues with me. Trusting too that I have understood correctly what the messages were for those issues and there has been a change for the better as a result. Thank you for being patient, if I haven't understood them, my apologies, the Hut is to be painted bright green on Friday! I understand this is a very auspicious "in" colour these days.

Some of the issues raised suggest that more work is needed and whilst I may have some ideas of my own to resolve them. Perhaps though, before I upset nearly everyone (although that's not like me, it generally is everyone). I wish to ask of you all a question:-

What are your aspirations and/or needs for the short (2 years), medium (5-10years), and long term (10-20 years) as regards all aspects of the club, further I would welcome your ideas as to when, where, who, why and how you feel those needs and aspirations can be met?

Any form of communication accepted, a good one might be the Wessex Web Site Forum, if more comfortable with direct e-mail ([chairman@wessex-cave-club.org](mailto:chairman@wessex-cave-club.org) or [david.morrison@ukgateway.net](mailto:david.morrison@ukgateway.net)) than postcard, Windrush, Upper Bristol Road, Clutton BS39 5RH or perhaps by phone on 01761 452437, whatever it would be good to hear from you.

Brief update on other things:

The woodworm have all but been evicted or they will be when they poke their heads out the hole. The loft insulation has nearly all been replaced, willing or even unwilling volunteers may be requested to help complete this warming task. Whilst on warming and to improve armchair caving comfort, the rest of the downstairs windows are to be replaced soon with double glazed units. We are considering too the issues of safety and the options to improve the Library and accommodation. The Club Website is being overhauled, many thanks to Paul Wakeling, a very useful tool for communication in future.

Thank you  
All the best  
Tuska

## August Bank Holiday Weekend - North Wales Meet

Excellent hospitality at the pub in Dolphin courtesy of Pepe & his staff. In easy walking distance of 'campsite'. This was a very slopey paddock with flat area at top & excellent 'death-slide' which we made full use of over the weekend.

Saturday Some to Spar Mine, others to Milwr Tunnel via Olwyn Goch Shaft. A trip to the lake & out via the limestone workings was the chosen route. Much time was spent at the lake while those with SRT kit went to look for new passage. While waiting, Mad Mick Murphy of the Grosvenor regaled us with various tales - I can't say I knew what he was on about as some of us were busily concentrating on freeing up the wheels of the ore trucks & riding them as far up the passage as we could. The return trip up the tunnel was fun & then it was time for the train. This was great fun & well worth a visit. Out via the limestone workings & on to Prestatyn for a dip in the sea, kite flying & chips. Another good evening in the pub.

Sunday The shaft in the campsite was opened & the winch operating for the day down half of the 500ft shaft to a platform & mine workings. Some opted for SRT with Tash getting off to a good start by 'abbing' down the safety line by mistake only to find it was a few metres short of the platform. Thankfully there was a knot in the end & the transfer to the correct rope was eventually made. The tunnels to explore are largely uninteresting but the highlight was getting to throw a rock over the edge & hearing it booming on its journey to the very bottom of the shaft (scaring Kev who was prussiking up at the time).

Monday Packed up tents & set off for ODB. A pretty cave broken into by mining. The green stal was interesting & amongst all the big stumping passage we managed to find some grovelly crawls for those of us that were missing Mendip. Out to tea & cakes at a tearoom at the back of beyond, aptly named area called Worlds End, then home.

Thanks to Mad Mick, Dougy & Glen of the Grosvenor for giving up their time to take us underground.

Present: Mr Dave, Simon, Mark, Jane, Beaner, Kev, Em, Mak, Jo, Tash, Ladyboy Wakeling, Les, Wendy, Chris, Andy Morse, Taz, Cookie, Tommo & Clive. For those of you that didn't go - you definitely missed a good one. Go next year at least for the train ride.

## 27.8.05 Swildon's - Watergate?

Ali M, Bob Pyke, Noel, Ken Dawe, Graham Candy, John Hurst & Steve

Alison tried with limited success to fire us up for a Watergate trip & came along to put the boot in.....

The Watergate pitch was laddered at Fault Chamber & the duck said to be OK for exit. Unfortunately, John tried some subterranean aerobatics from the chain into the 4 streamway, lacerated his hand quite nastily & twisted his ankle. Alison then tore off her T-shirt & bravely staunches the bleeding. John, Noel & Alison started out & the others did a tour of the streamway before following out. All thoughts of Watergate providentially abandoned. I think someone pushed John.....Most of us had a great time, including Steve on his second caving trip.

## 7.9.05 Otter Hole

Clive Westlake, Sarah Payne, Tom Chapman, Emma Heron, Ann VdP & Chris Grosart

All went to Hall of Thirty & a bit beyond. Successful trip without incident, though we had to wait 20 mins for the sump to open. Mud, mud glorious mud. Nothing quite like it - knackered gloop then sparkling stal & that hill on the way back!

## 10.09.05 Simpson's Pot to Valley Entrance

Nik Nak, Geoff Ballard, Tash Mitchell, Jude & Adrian VdP.

After a short "French" moment where we temporarily misplaced the top entrance, we started down in clean washed, grey, scalloped limestone. The top half of the cave is relatively low but soon becomes more stream-like as we descended a series of cascades. Some short pitches (max 15 metres) led to Storm Pot, followed closely by an uninviting duck though the cool off was quite welcome! Three more pitches and then Slit Pot which is described as "very awkward for some". Techniques vary as to how you get through the squeeze at the head of the pitch. Firstly you must attach yourself to the rope before the squeeze, Jude and Tash could tackle it at floor level, but I found it easier to push my chest through at head height then Nik Nak picked my legs up and pushed the rest of me through! Being first down a major pitch was a superb feeling and to watch everyone else coming down was excellent if rather damp! One wet pitch later and we were into Kingsdale Master Cave, a fairly flat piece of streamway, we soon reached the pitch we had previously rigged and crawled/stooped our way out of Valley Entrance.

#### 11.09.05 Lancaster Hole to Wretched Rabbit

Geoff, Nik Nak, Tash, Jude and Adrian

Such a fine sunny morning no one (except Nik Nak) was in any hurry to descend this fine 30+ metre abseil! Once at the bottom we made the short detour to the Colonnades. I had a quick go at trying to photograph these with my new digital slave gun but for some reason or other it didn't want to play! Shame it would have made a good picture. After some thought provoking traversing in a high level passage (the thought being "I'm not sure I want to be here") we crossed a boulder bridge and up a dry mud slope with steps carved in (I knew an ice axe would be useful - they had them in the film "The Cave" didn't they!) We went along Montague West and Wilf Taylor's passage noticing foam tidemarks on the roof - but it's well worth a visit. We followed the main streamway (I wish this was on Mendip) up cascades, past pools and over boulders until a huge boulder choke blocks the continuation. Then we climbed up to gain the fossil series and the Minarets (aptly named) and finally down into Wretched Rabbit, which people call tedious but I though was quite fun. You have to walk a bit like a crab but after all I am a 'Cancarrian'! Two rope climbs to test the arms are still working and we were back in the sunlight in Easegill Valley.

#### 15.9.05 Box Stone Mines & Ridge

Weston Bros

Gating has been delayed. Maybe next summer. Key holders not resolved. Many new roof falls. New sculptures at junction B12-B11. Stonehenge & Dwarfs!  
Ridge Mine re-opened.

#### 23.9.05 Box Stone Mines

Bob Scammell, Steve & Pete

Trip from Jack's Workings to Back Door via MoD constructions & sculptures. Back Door has a gate (unlocked) & we found 5 bat wings in front of this! The bats get used to entrances being open & will crash into new gates. So at least 3 have been killed here.

#### 1.10.05 Ludwell Cave

Chris G, Clive Westlake, Pete Eckford & Ken James

The aim of the trip was to dive the resurgence sump & survey it. Pete & Ken re-laid the tape while Chris completed the underwater survey, made more comfortable by the presence of a small airbell. Water levels low. Surveyed chamber & dig, which is still rather snug. Dived back out through restriction which requires a little more thought on exit. Clive, Pete & Ken completed the loop above water while Chris transferred the data.

#### 8.10.05 Notts Pot

The Two Bs Rigging Show: Eight Wessex (Butch, Bean, Mak, Simon, Keith Sanderson, Pete

Jenkins, Ken Dawe and Noel) plus Kate? from the Kendal Caving Club  
Butch and Bean laid on an impressive demonstration of seriously professional rigging. We split into two groups. Bean rigged Adamson's route for the geriatric trio of Ken, Keith and Noel, while Butch rigged the Twilight Zone for Mak, Simon, Pete and Kate. We duly met up at the route junction and Butch rigged on down to the sump. These lower pitches involved some dramatic high level traverses and it was remarkable to be able to look down through the floor slots and watch Butch consulting his rigging diagrams in mid-air. We derigged each others' routes to provide two round trips. The end result was to provide a series of delightfully technical pitches down and up, replete with pendulums, rebelays and deviations galore. Speaking personally, and never having been to Notts Pot before, I found it completely fascinating and huge fun - and now I know why Notts is described as a vertical maze. Noel

22.10.05 Dan yr Ogof.

Geoff Ballard, Jo Wisely, John Hurst, Mike Wooding, Noel Cleave.

Reading the Wessex Log Book entries, it's obvious that there are no rules on how caving trips are written up. Style and content are free fire zones. At its most basic, then, Geoff Ballard took us on the standard round trip. It took under 3½ hours and was fun; no big deal. But to three of us, at least, it was a BIG, BIG, deal. For John, Mike and myself - it was our first visit to DyO, and it was sensational. For a start, it had been raining for days, and the sky was putting down some serious water on Friday, so the Tawe (like the M4, M5 and M6) was in raging flood. The denizens of Penwyllt made us wonderfully welcome, but opined en masse, and in detail, that with the moorland bogs completely saturated DyO would be a no go area, if, indeed, the entrance sumps were open and the management would let us in at all. At some time in the night, the heavens - plainly exhausted - quit with the raining bit, so on Saturday morning in the course of doing some retail therapy at the Dragon - we took a sneaky peek at the Tawe, and at the DyO and Tunnel streams. All looked civilised and caver friendly. Penwyllt opinion was still so seriously negative that I signed out a Top Entrance key to give us a fall-back option, but Geoff was much more positive to a point. Well, to two points. The first was, correctly, that any shower would see us trapped, and the second that the archway defining the lake sump, would be intimidating and that this had to be unanimous go/nogo decision. The management made the entrapment point again, but let us in, and we variously looked at the arch, which as Geoff had predicted, offered about 4" of airspace. Actually it offered about 4" of flood froth and foam space, with a howling gale blowing the froth away from time to time. Just how much drama do you want with your caving? We went for it. Shortly afterwards, sitting nattering and resting for a moment, there was a noisy flood pulse from a slot in the roof just by us. We looked at this unwelcome waterfall for a while, debated, and went on for some more of it! Such "Conditional" events apart, the "Round Trip" was, I suspect, routine, if anything so varied and enjoyable can be described as routine. I, personally (with memories of the Last Sandwich in Draenen), had expected to find the Long Crawl claustrophobic and demanding. In fact it was... fun. Well, fun-ish anyway. It demanded more vocabulary than endurance! Geoff (micrometer eyes) Ballard, said that the water level had dropped when we reached the lake arch, but it was a different sensation anyway, wafting downstream on the current with foam blowing up one's nostrils! DyO's own crack cocaine?? Instant addiction and an insatiable need for a fix of the Far North. Noel

North Hill Swallet

30.10.05 Kev, Em, Mac & Big Stu

Stu got stuck before Rumble & Plonk & we escorted him out before returning to the bitter end. Cave was clean & the stream was clear - don't know why people don't go there more often. Superb, albeit short, little trip.

29.10.05 Pant Mawr. or on losing one's marbles.

Bob & Noel

This is going to take some believing, but remember that the protagonists are Bob and Noel, senior citizens, WGG and OAPs etc. etc.. So we went over to Penwylt hoping to bag ourselves a nostalgic mega-bimble around OFD1 (where Bob once had leadership status). We had an opportunity to join a straightforward through trip, but we'd both done several throughs in the last couple of years and decided on a Pant Mawr instead. Bob hadn't done it at all, and Noel not for something like 40 years. Also some 40 years ago Noel had spent three hours blundering around in the mist and failing to find the hole. Nostalgia demanded a re-run. We spent three hours in the mist blundering around with map and compass but we did eventually find it. Nostalgia may also have persuaded us that ladders were the way to tackle it. We tethered our ladders from the massive iron post outside the safety fence and discovered a perfectly good set of P-hangers above, and in, the shaft. The shaft is fun (\* see later). The cave is a bit of a curate's egg, good in parts, and ultimately feels disappointing, promising much but petering out rather anti-climatically. With 7 or 8 miles of peat bog under our feet, we were glad to get back to Penwylt in rain which was becoming torrential. The plus side was that we were completely sure that we now knew exactly and precisely how to find Pant Mawr in future. So on Sunday, in rain way beyond torrential, we went and did just that. And yes, we had lost our marbles but there was a minimalist grain of logic in this madness.

On Sunday, well, think Katrina, think Noah's ark. That sort of rain. OFD streamway was plainly going to be OUT. We'd come a long way and only done one trip. What would be interesting, since we couldn't get into OFD1 just to look at the flood, would be to go up to Pwll Byffre. Pwll Byffre is more than halfway to Pant Mawr, so why not tick off the entrance shaft SRT option? I mean other than little things like common sense? We were sure going to get 'way, 'way wetter walking than we were caving, so we solemnly toggled up in caving glad-rags and hiked up to Pwll Byffre. It was worth the effort. The entire quarry floor was a lake, as was the bog on the opposite side of the road. Water was simply pouring into the ground all round the quarry perimeter. The streams and distant river views were sensational. "Roaring. Brown. Floods" would understate it. We continued to check out our Pant Mawr-in-mist-and-rain skills. Faultless. We dropped a rope down the shaft and got the SRT tick. Actually it was worth it, because it was wet and noisy down there, very, both. Then we walked home. Two Pant Mawrs in two days is one too many. We are definitely losing it. Them. Our marbles, I mean. Noel

12.11.05 Swildon's, Swyne-Puke

Kev, Em, Wayne, Rich Carey & Jude VdP

Down a fairly wet streamway to discover a team already bailing the Mud Sump. We joined in & after a further half an hour we were through. Up to the SE Inlets to the bottom of Swyne-Puke Rift. Some energetic thrutching saw all but Jude at the top of the rift & we headed off down Swyne-Puke Passage to pull-thru the two pitches to rejoin Jude who was waiting for us at the top of Shatter. The pendulum across isn't difficult although the head of the pitch is a bit hairy.

29.11.05 Porth yr Ogof

Clive W & Chris G

Snowy day in Wales. We braved thousands of schoolchildren - none of whom wanted to carry our cylinders. We ventured into Porth Tradesman Entrance. CG base fed the line whilst Clive located the existing line. Both dived in moderate viz, surfacing in Rawbolt Airbell & Four Ways Airbell. Returned with much fun carrying gear back up the hill on snow & in the dark.

10.12.05 Wookey Hole

John Volanthen, Duncan Price, Gavin Newman,  
Chris G, Rick Stanton & Clive W

Various cylinders from this summer's pushes needed bringing back from 24. In poor conditions - rubbish visibility, strong current in active sumps, high water in static sumps - JC, DP, GN & RS brought everything back to 22, where CG & CW showed up & helped on the way

back to 9.2.

#### 17.12.05 Agen Allwedd

Clive W, Chris G, Mike Thomas, Kev & Malc Foyle

Excellent 10½-hour trip to take photos of the newly found formations in the extension of Isles Inlet, just off Priory Road. This involved 4 hours to get there, down Southern Stream & much fun trying to make Foyle fit through the sand crawls & snug U-bends. Reached a pretty passage & spent 2 hours photographing fine helactites & then on through a small narrow rift into the chamber with the 'Courtesan', a fine 1m long helactite almost adjoining a 1m long stalagmite below. marvelled at these with care before making good progress home up Southern Stream again & stomping along the fine main passage.

#### 29.12.05 OFD Top to 1

Geoff B, Nik Nak, Rich Carey, Martyn Farr & Jude & Adrian VdP

After a short mix-up with the keys all down the Top Entrance, down main route to Maypole Inlet. Water conditions low for a pleasant trip through to 1, where upon exiting it was found to be gently snowing.

Compare Geoff & Nik Nak's above trip in OFD with Simon & Mark's trip the next day.

#### 30.12.05 OFD In & Out Top via Pendulum Pull-thru'

Simon ?, Mark H, Paul W, Mak & Dave M

Seemed like a good idea until we hit the streamway! Water depth varied from waist to over head height & might have been just a tad dangerous. We spent an hour in the maelstrom before reaching Maypole Inlet & even this was a raging torrent. Having died several times already & long since lost all feeling in my willy I volunteered Dave to fight the water up the ladder & drop a rope for the rest of us. As near death experiences go, this one was quite exciting. Won't go there again - this year!

### **Wessex Cave Club - Yorkshire Meets List 2006**

May 6th	-	Top Sink/Lancaster Hole
May 7th	-	Pool Sink
June 10th	-	Birks Fell
June 11th	-	Penyghent Pot
July 8th	-	Washfold Pot
July 9th	-	Deaths Head/Big Meanie
Aug 12th	-	Notts Pot
Aug 13th	-	Little Hull
Sept 9th	-	Lost Johns/Boxhead Pot
Sept 10th	-	Rumbling Hole
Oct 14th	-	Lancaster Hole/Link Pot
Oct 15th	-	Cow Pot
Oct 28th	-	Gaping Ghyll/Flood Entrance
Oct 29th	-	Long Kin East/Rift Pot
Dec 2nd	-	Juniper Gulf
Dec 3rd	-	Disappointment Pot

Anyone wishing to use these permits, please contact our Northern Cave Sec.

Keith Sanderson

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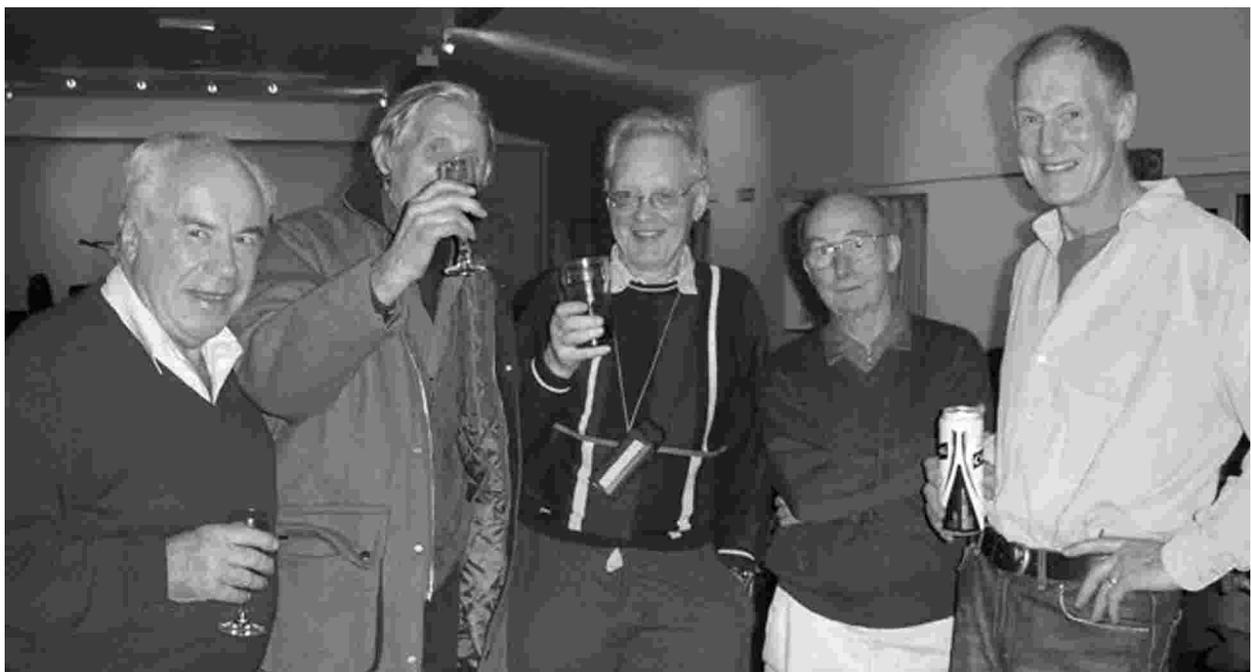
## Club Diary

April 29th -1st May	South Wales - WSG - Trips TBC
April 22nd	MRO Rescue Practice - Swildon's Hole
May 27-29th	Gower, S. Wales - Camping - Trips TBC
June 3rd	MRO GB Workshop
June9-11th	NAMHO 2006
July 22nd -4th August	Pink & Fluffy Trip to France
Sept22-24th	Hidden Earth 2006
For Yorkshire Meets list please see p159. The best place see the most up to date club dates is via the club website.	
For further details on any club meets contact Dave Meredith: melndave26@hotmail.com	

### MRO Rescue Workshop in GB, Saturday 3rd June

The usual format is small groups at separate stations in the cave, each learning a technique such as Pitch Hauling, Stretcher Carrying, First Aid, etc, demonstrating a range of kit that the MRO has in its store.

If there is some particular task or equipment that you'd like to see demonstrated or just know about, please let me know & I'll speak to the MRO wardens to see if they can arrange it.



Jim Hanwell's 70th Birthday Party, Priddy Village Hall.

Photo: B. Prewer

Left To Right (Jim Hanwell, Mike Thompson, Ken Dawe, Len Dawes, Bob Pyke).