



Journal of the Wessex Cave Club

Vol. 29. No. 304
April 2007



The Citadel. Charterhouse Cave. Photo: Clive Westlake

President

Donald Thomson

Vice Presidents

Dave Irwin

Sid Perou

Derek Ford

Chairman

David Morrison

Windrush

Upper Bristol Road

Clutton BS395RH

01761 452 437

Secretary

Les Williams

51, Churchill Road East

Wells BA5 3HU

01749 679 839

Membership Secretary

Jude Vaderplank

Holmwood Nurseries

Woodhill,

Congressbury BS49 3AF

Treasurer

David Cooke

Caving Secretary

Simon Richardson

Hut-Warden

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John (Tommo) Thomas

Hut Administration

Ian Timney

Sales Officer

Christine Grosart

Webmaster

Paul Wakeling

Training Officer

Les Williams

Journal Editor

Noel Cleave

Officers' Email addresses are available from our Web-Site

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**Headquarters**

Upper Pitts,

Eastwater Lane,

Priddy,

Somerset,

BA5 3AX,

01749 672 310

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A pattern seems to be establishing itself here, of starting with an apology or, indeed, several. For the record, and the few people who didn't notice, the front page of the February Journal was spectacularly wrongly titled. Behind the scenes I have already apologised formally to Clive. Putting a positive spin on it, as an apathy check it was a spectacular success! It **was** Swildons 7 and Clive **did** take the photo; and nowadays 50% counts as a pass, summa cum laude - but obviously not with you! Mustn't quote myself, but you were warned that I was short in the infallibility department (and many others). The mildest rebuke came from Fred, who pointed out that he had (a) never had such magnificent caving kit and that (b) it could never have been his silhouette.

Then there is the little matter of the utter shambles of Volumes and Issue Numbers, and that I have compounded my error with Phil's indexation. This delivery sees a correcting Index page and a corrected front page for the previous journal. 2 staples and your Journals will be correct. Mea Culpa. Sack-cloth and ashes.

Actual articles apart, current caving information comes from the Wessex Log book, the Wessex Web-Site Forum, and general browsing through a clutch of similar Web-Sites. For this, and for Meets and Diary Dates, the Journal has to be the primary source of information for the majority of Wessex members. At the moment only 57 of our approximately 220 members log-in to our Web-Site. Last November I discovered that 27 of the 138 listed Email addresses were either wrong or out-of-date. We are a long way from being able to distribute our journal, or club information, electronically. It is, however, printed from a PDF file, and a copy of this goes to our Webmaster. In theory it could be published on the Web, and with colour photographs. At around 10 Mbs, however, it is a borderline proposition.

Transcribing from the Upper Pitts Log Book is one of the most time consuming tasks for the Journal. I am impressed by our members' calligraphy: mine is infamously illegible! So the problem is rarely legibility, but omission. Missing names and authorship cause an Editorial \*\*\*\*\*

Aaaaarrgggghhhh The Committee say that I should edit the log, selecting only the more interesting entries, or more simply, rejecting the minor, routine accounts. I think that the process comes under the heading of "I wish".

Please can I have your feedback on the actual names in the log, and in the Journal. Many of us are known and addressed by our nicknames, and they appear in the log, as do diminutives of first names. Nicknames are unique identifiers; simple first names, or diminutives, are not, and it is not always obvious which Stu, Nigel, Paul..... whoever..... is which. In the sense that "We" know who "We" are, this doesn't matter, but does it when our readers are not so regularly at Upper Pitts that they know who is who? I am, regrettably, a prime example of this, and I find it slightly disconcerting to find myself typing "Suitcase" or "Hatstand" and unable to link them to the membership list. And if the Journal provides the long-term history of the club, perhaps I should publish a periodic glossary of Nicknames. What are your opinions about this? [wessexeditor@streamcotts.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:wessexeditor@streamcotts.eclipse.co.uk)

**Dave Irwin.** We were shocked to hear of the sudden death at home of Dave Irwin on March 27<sup>th</sup>. Although a long-standing and loyal member of the BEC, Dave was proud to be elected as a Vice President of the Wessex. He will be remembered for his voluminous collection of caving books, photographs and other documents, and his prodigious contribution to the literature concerning the history of Mendip caving. One of his last tasks was the writing of questions for the recent successful Cavers' Quiz Night. He will be sadly missed by us all.

Many of you will know him better than me, but here is a personal obituary.

The last time I saw the Wig was in February at the Cavers Quiz held at the Hunters. The evening was a happy and jovial occasion and we have the Wig to thank since it was his idea. He set all the questions. I could see the wicked grin on his face when he had set a particularly devious question, of which there were several. He loved that kind of intellectual challenge. I don't believe anyone had a greater knowledge of Mendip Caves. His ability to recall dates and detail was phenomenal.

St Cuthberts was undoubtedly his favourite cave. He wrote and compiled the St Cuthbert Swallet Report published by the BEC.

Under the auspices of Mendip Cave Registry, which he formed, the Mendip Cave Bibliography was produced, a mammoth task. He then turned his attention to the Mendip Cave Registry, an even greater task. He hoped to publish that this year. I hope that will still be possible as a memorial to the man.

His other great work of recent years is the History of Swildons Cave. I doubt that will be published now, but an abbreviated version, which still runs to many thousands of word will appear in the forthcoming book 'Swildons' Hole - A Hundred Years of Exploration'.

Although he was a BEC member through and through he did accept an offer to become a Vice President of the Wessex in recognition of the great contribution to caving that he made. That afforded us the opportunity to rib him mercilessly that he was now a member of "The Other Club". He never took it lying down, he gave as good as he got.

He could be a cantankerous old bugger at times, but he was a friend of mine. I shall miss him.

Dave Cooke.

## **Frank Baguley**

We are saddened to learn of the recent death of Frank Baguley of the SWCC. For many years Frank ran the Cambrian Caving Club Council and almost single-handed, and was a frequent observer at South Council meetings.

## **John 'Jingles' Williams**

John 'Jingles' Williams of the BEC has died. He was best known as half of the Belfry Boys Duo who entertained cavers over the years with their humorous songs about caving. Members who attended the Club Dinner at the Crossways Hotel some years ago will remember the light-hearted way they portrayed us in song.

**Barry Wilton**, long-time member of the B.E.C. and ambassador for Butcombe Bitter, died at home on March 3<sup>rd</sup> after a short illness. Our condolences go to his wife Brenda, and friends

**Trevor Shaw** had been offered and gratefully accepted, Honorary Membership of the Wessex Cave Club.

## **Agen Allwedd**

The gate was damaged by vandals recently, the logbook was defaced and a key hanging inside the entrance was stolen. Suspicion lies with 6 youths seen nearby on bikes. Do not leave keys or valuables inside the entrance.

## **Darren Cilau**

Gonzo reports that the Hard Rock Café camp sitw was vandalised recently. Items were used, not properly replaced and

kit was damaged. Cavers are reminded that the kit at the camp is not for general use, although no-one minds if it used, cleaned and replaced properly.

### **Pwll Dfn**

Boulders at the entrance are reported to be in a dangerous condition.

### **Swildons Book Update**

All the text is complete, most illustrations are ready and within weeks a pdf version will be circulated to printers for quotes.

### **Blacknor Hole**

While cave access problems are, regrettably, nothing new, there can have been few more dramatic and tragic circumstances than those a Blacknor Hole. Nigel Graham recounts the saga from his Portland fastness on page 12

### **Broadband**

Upper Pitts is now Broadband enabled. The WiFi set up and running. The Codeword can be found in the library and elsewhere around the hut.

### **3<sup>rd</sup>. June, "Taster Day"**

3<sup>rd</sup>. June is intended to be the next "Taster Day" for people who want to get underground for a first experience. Plainly the emphasis is on very elementary caving, but the more members who come prepared to give up their more arduous and demanding caving in favour of enticing new members into the fold, the better.

### **Novice kit**

The club now has two helmets, with lights, for novice use. The lighting source is batteries, and users should replace these (the system gives about 4 hours of light); please request their use from any committee member. Please note they are for novice guests only and not for general use!

### **Club Weekends**

This idea has been kicked around for a while. Maybe now is the time to make it happen.

This is aimed primarily at the newer members of the club who are keen to do the Mendip classics but haven't yet found a regular group of caving buddies.

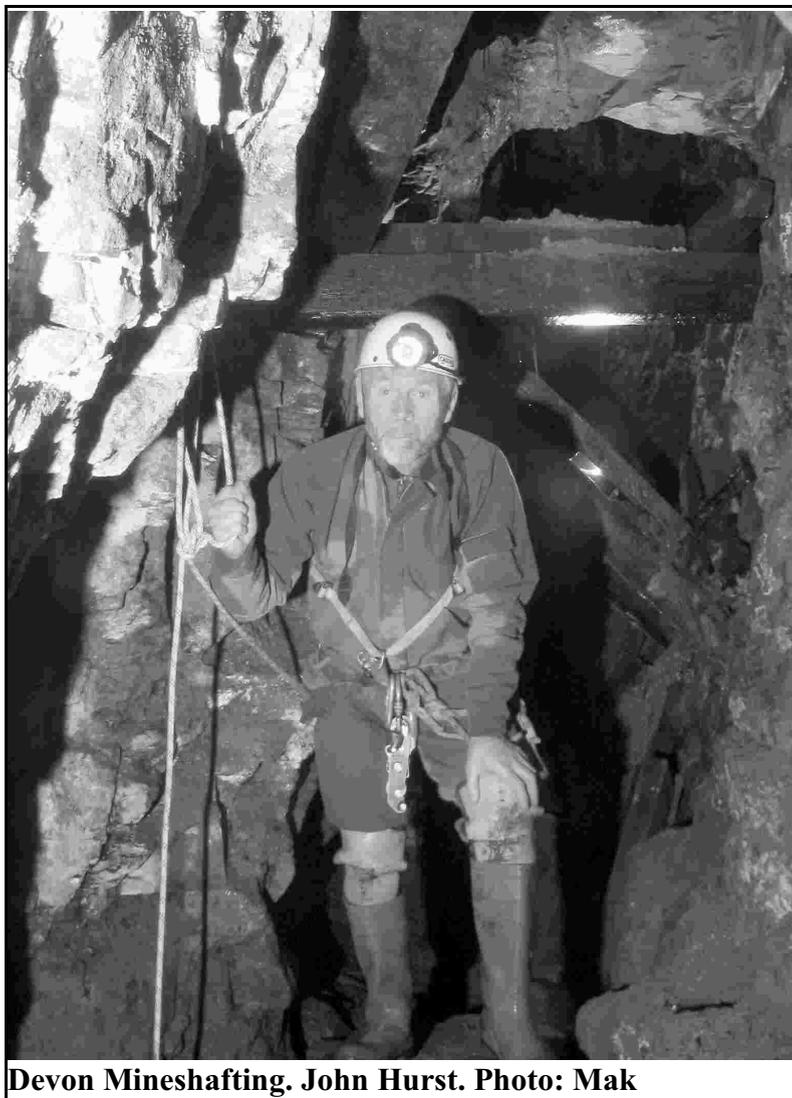
The idea is to organise a trip to a local cave every second Saturday in the month. By organising a leader and having a regular slot in the diary there is more certainty than "turn up at the Hut and see who's there".

The sort of trips being considered are Lionel's Hole, Cuckoo, White Pit, Tying's, Compton Martin, Longwood, Upper August, GB to the Great Chamber, Manor Farm etc.

So what is the general feeling on this, and who would be willing to stick their hand up to lead a trip?

### **Hut Working Weekend**

The weekend of **10<sup>th</sup> June** is designated as a hut working weekend. This is one weekend when many hands are required to make light work. The dormitory walls need to be washed down with an anti-mould, anti-fungal wash, then completely repainted. The mattresses will have to be shifted out and back. The firewood needs sawing up as a first step towards providing Tommo with a rope Drop-Testing location and it is also intended to re-insulate the lofts that weekend, so it really is important that as many members as possible come and help. There will be a BBQ in the evening. Make a note in your diaries.....**Upper Pitts 10<sup>th</sup> June**



**Devon Mineshafting. John Hurst. Photo: Mak**

### **Prehistoric gnashers**

Phil has been finding Mammoth teeth, but Dr. Currant wants Vole Teeth from Templeton. Any volunteers to sift through

approximately 200 tons of spoil looking for them? Or inventors of machines for finding needles in haystacks.....

**Journal Index.** Journal 302 was inadvertently issued as part of Vol. 28 (see the Editors apology, above) A separate index sheet for this issue is included with this Journal, as a supplement to the previously-issued Index to Vol. 28. Anyone wishing to have a complete index to this volume to include if they are having the volume bound, should request a copy from Phil Hendy.

### **Library Overflow**

The Library continues to grow. The old Sales cupboard opposite the Library has been used to store some Audio-visual and other items. The key will be kept in the Library – please lock the cupboard after use, as it is not in a members-only area.

### **Club Handbook**

A volunteer is required to maintain and update the Handbook. It is not an onerous job, as updates tend only to occur when there are rule changes at an AGM. Anyone interested, please contact Dave Cooke.

### **MRO Team Co-ordinator**

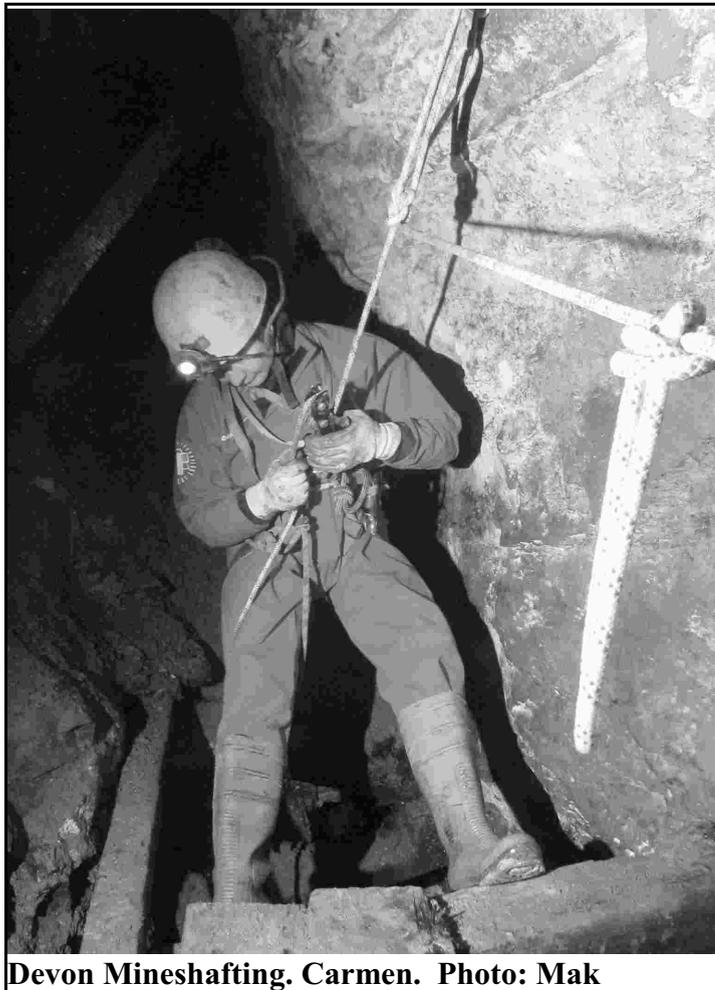
Our present co-ordinator, Rosie Freeman, has her hands a little full at the moment, and we need to find a replacement. The job involves keeping a list of members who are prepared to turn out for rescues mid-week, and also arranging an annual rescue practice – for which help will be given. Contact the Committee for further information.

### **MRO Practice - St. Cuthberts - 23<sup>rd</sup>. June**

There will be an MRO practice on 23<sup>rd</sup>. June, anyone and everyone is welcome to come and get involved. If you've never seen what goes on under and above ground, this is an ideal day to open your eyes - and join in usefully.

### **St. Cuthberts Leader**

There may be an opportunity/vacancy for another Wessex St. Cuthberts leader. Any volunteer will need to be a serious fan of the Swallet as there is a formal qualification of at least 15 trips into the cave and a demonstrably thorough knowledge of the entire system.



**Devon Mineshafting, Carmen. Photo: Mak**

### **Cheddar Extravaganza**

It is hoped and intended to have a “Cheddar Extravaganza” in June, visiting all the most interesting caves, finishing up with a post-public hours exploration of Goughs, and undoubtedly a visit to a suitable hostelry. The date is not yet fixed, so please keep an eye on the “Diary” dates on the Wessex Web-Site and the Club notice board at Upper Pitts.

**Council of Southern Caving Clubs** is planning a number of C & A events during the year. These will be hands-on sessions to repair or maintain cave entrances, but should be fun, with BBQs. Details will be posted in the usual places.

**Compton Martin Ochre Mine** has had the gate repaired by the Wessex, and Cotham CG are planning to upgrade some shoring.

**Little London Slocker** was recently used by Mendip District Council as a road-water runoff. In the process of works, another hole opened. Under the supervision of the Cerberus, the dig has now been stabilized and gated by the council.

**Cook's Wood Quarry.** English Nature is not supporting the plan to build a holiday complex in the quarry, but CSCC is not entering a formal objection. Planners are now aware of the significance of Arachnid Hole, and although Browne's Hole is to be gated, it is hoped that caver access will be maintained.

**Charnel Shaft.** The MCG have been given permission to dig **Charnel Shaft** on the Charterhouse Rakes (though

there is no real likelihood that it will break into Upper Flood Swallet.) It has now been given a nice shiny new lid.

**Quote of the Month**, from Alison Moody, digging with Pete Hann in Charterhouse Cave: “You've not made the dig big enough!”

**Swildon's Hole:** Some graffiti was recently discovered in the Old Grotto. Thankfully, it was not severe, and has been removed.

**Guests.** Members may bring one guest with them to Upper Pitts at any time. Unaccompanied guests, and parties of two or more should be booked in advance with Wendy Williams (Hut Bookings Officer) in case a large party has previously been booked in. Your hut key is for your personal use only, and may not be loaned to guests.

**The Old Grotto** was the venue for **Chris Harvey's** 65<sup>th</sup> birthday party on March 24<sup>th</sup>. **Zot**, as he is better known, is one of Mendip's characters, and we wish him well for the future.

**Ogof Draenen Parking.** Mark Helmore writes: "The usual car parking area on the left of the road opposite the pub has now been blocked off by large boulders. We parked near the pub out of the way, but there was no-one around to ask permission from, either before or after the trip. If anyone can find if there is any agreement in place with the landlord could they please advise?"

**Rhino Rift** Rhino is closed for the time being. The furthest "P" hanger on the Left hand wall, which is 50% of the "Y" hang for the descent, has failed. The failure is suspected to involve the same resin used in the whole line of "P" hangers. This is being investigated, but for safety reasons the cave is currently locked with a new padlock, and out of bounds.

**PSM Updates** There is an agreed, non refundable, charge of £35 per caver, to cover the costs of ropes and rigging materials. The gear will be inspected for damage at the end of the trip and any good pieces will get donated to the Wessex.

Cheques should be made out to "**The Treasurer Wessex Expeditions**" and sent to Cookie:

Dave Cooke, 3 Starrs Close, Axbridge, Somerset, BS26 2BZ as soon as possible.

Insurance must to be obtained before leaving the UK and shown to Malc before going underground. This can be bought from Snowcard. You must have at least Snowcard level 3 cover.

Simon is removing the PSM Training events from the Diary pages due to a general lack of response. Simon says that these walks WILL still be taking place but for reasons of personal pressure he cannot publish dates in advance and then have trouble attending them himself. Alternatively, would anyone else take it on?

#### **PSM Camp-sites**

Noel went down to the St Pierre area for a week at the end of March, to look at campsites. The project was not helped by an unusual week of late season snow. Although almost all the campsite access roads were clear, the cols and connections were not, so some long and convoluted drives were involved. Details on Page 20..

## **Tuska's Reliquary** **David Morrison**

I report with some excitement and joy, that at the Wessex Committee meeting held the day after Saturday 31st March, a large hole opened up in the library floor. swallowed the entire coffee table, a packet of freshly opened chocolate biscuits, several hut mugs of warm steaming tea and the entire and only very rare copy of this year's committee minutes. The lost minutes, whilst of some interest, are unlikely to result in the Committee not knowing where next to start or finish their.....

. What was more interesting, was the several somewhat unique techniques and utterings that were used by committee members, sat in various armchairs tettering on the edge, illustrating in several personal ways their feelings in response to this rather startling event and avoid following the coffee mugs. These techniques will be studied and recorded, collated and appear in future instalments of our Wessex Journal. For myself, I was firmly wedged in the corner by a large print hard copy of Teach Yourself Committee Meetings without Digging a Hole for Yourself. The Editor sat next to me, was as always helpful and eager for a story even though his chair was on the edge of the abyss, pressed ahead with on the spot interviews of immediate thoughts of our predicament, and whether it should be published in 12, 16 or point 8 font size to keep postage under 100 grams. A small conversation in the other corner deliberated the number of seconds, or was it minutes? "No we don't have any minutes", it took the coffee cups to reach the bottom and settled that the hole was some two hundred and fifty feet deep and with a bit of shoring provide an excellent SRT practice venue for those going to the PSM this summer. In fact given the location of the new hole various guidebooks and articles are now easily at hand for further information. Prior to this rather strange event the committee had been discussing.....

We welcome the following:

#### **New Members**

##### **Haydn Haynes,**

25 Elvetham Crescent, Fleet, Hampshire, GU51 1BU

##### **Jonathan Mason,**

24 Hillsborough Flats, Hotwell Road, Bristol, BS8 4SW

##### **Martin Piper,**

Blandford Lodge, Kingston Lacy, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 4EA

##### **Nicholas Waller,**

6 Osborne Road, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 1BC

##### **Colin Charles,**

14 Bath Street, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1DN

**Richard Crane,**

Birdwood, Bath Road, Wells, Somerset, BA5 3EW

**Jonathan Killen,**

11 Upper Byron Place, Clifton, Bristol, BS8 1JY

**Andy Snook,**

3 Ansteys Close, Hanham, Bristol, BS15 3QD

**Graham Speed,**

20 Church Road, Idmiston, Salisbury, Wilts, SP4 0AZ

**Rejoining members:**

Russell Mines,

39 Homeleaze Road, Brentry, Bristol, BS10 6BZ,

Nigel Jackson,

2 Westgate Close, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 8JP

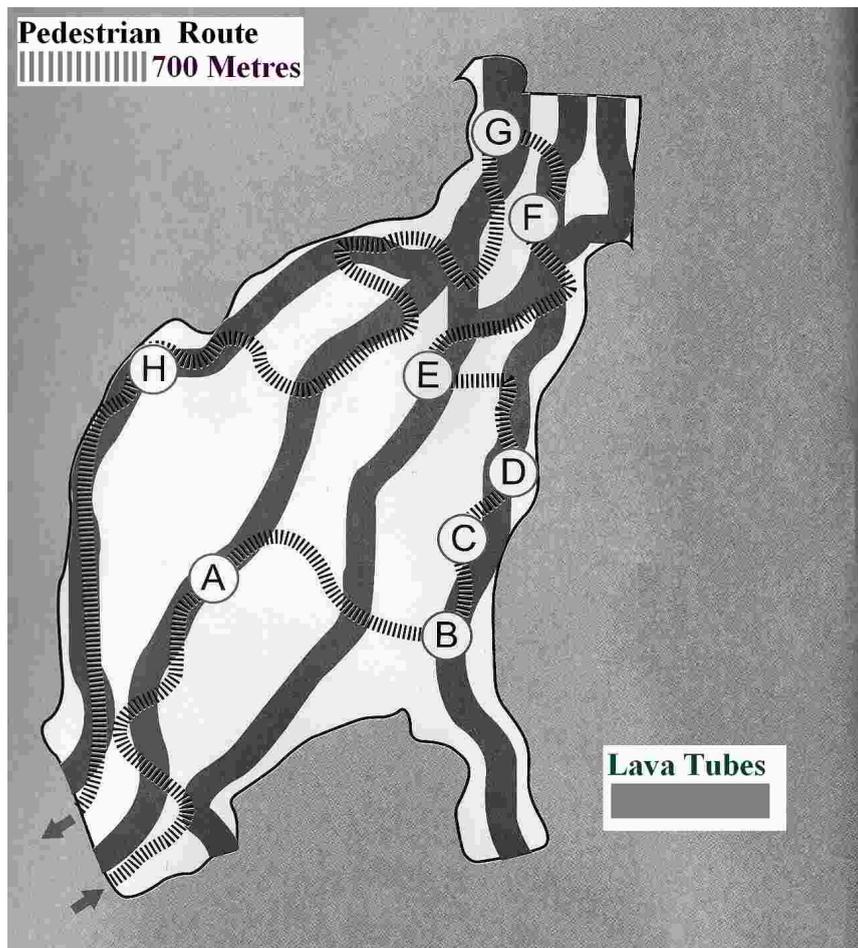
**Vulcanology for Geriatrics.**

Now that age is catching up with us, Judy and I decided to avoid the worst of Mendips winter weather and seek some Southern sun. A week on the Portuguese island of Madeira seemed a good idea, because we had heard that the irrigation network of “levadas” would provide some interesting fairly level walking. This was partly true, although some hill climbing was involved to get to the levadas.

Madeira consists entirely of volcanic rocks up to 20 million years old, and the central mountains rise to over 1800 metres. Despite the verdant semi-tropical vegetation there are exposures of lavas, basalts and multicolored rocks all around. Knowing of our interest in geology, our tour company thoughtfully arranged for us to have a textbook exposure in a cliff, which we could study from the comfort of our lounge by the heated outdoor swimming pool.

We had heard that there is a lava cave open to the public at Sao Vicente, which was on the route of a coach trip included in our package, so we chatted up the local rep. When we got to Sao Vicente the coach stopped and the rep announced; - “We have two members of a cave club who are getting off to see the caves.” Nobody else even knew they existed. Of course we missed our 3-course lunch in the village; but what the hell. We know how to rough it in the Wessex.

Although the lava tubes were first reported in 1885 they have only been open to the public since 1996, when a Brit, James



Yates Johnson, evolved a plan to show the caves to best advantage. He did a good job, and the tour is preceded by a visit to an excellent visitors’ centre. This includes the best stereo film presentation I have seen. (And I know a bit about stereo) We were both ducking in our seats dodging volcanic projectiles apparently hurled from the screen.

The show cave itself takes in sections of four connecting lava tubes. The 700-metre route is constructed partly inside the largest of these, but in places the man made passages cut across smaller tubes, so that visitors can look along undisturbed sections. There are good examples of solidified flows on the floors, and lava “stalactites” (made from dripping molten rock). The showpiece is a large boulder (H on the survey). It had fallen from the roof and been carried down the tube on the molten rock until the lava stream cooled and trapped it.

The friendly girlie guide gave good commentaries in Portuguese and excellent English with an American accent. She was quite happy to allow me to tail end the party and take video and photos. The cave and volcano centre were well worth the 8 euros

and anyone visiting Madeira is recommended to visit Sao Vicente. The levada walks are also worth exploring.

**Maurice Hewins**

# MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION. SECRETARY AND TREASURER

## Annual Report 2006

This has been an evolutionary year for the organization. The introduction of the Casualty Care Course into the MRO training programme has brought a new dimension into the theatre of underground rescue on Mendip.

The MRO focus is and always will be on the rapid and safe extraction of those who have the misfortune to require our services. The clue is in the title; the majority of wardens have completed or are booked on to courses in the near future. Understanding the principles of Casualty Care means that surface and underground controllers are able to work more closely with those administering it and vice versa. This synergistic approach will I am sure be of great benefit to our future customers.

Do not think that the MRO are going soft, they are still impervious to the screams of pain, but now they know why you are screaming and may give you something better than a dirty look to relieve it.

I must also add that being rescued is still an unpleasant experience and should be avoided. Personal Care is much to be preferred than Casualty Care.

The second initiative impacts the way that the MRO interrelates with the Emergency services. Following the introduction of the Fire & Rescue Services Act, the Fire Service has requested that we agree a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with them detailing our working relationship. A small working group has been set up within MRO to develop this and good progress is being made. We have now been requested by the Police to work on a similar document with them. The working group are now proposing to extend the scope of the MOU and make this a joint agreement between Police, Fire, Ambulance and the MRO. Our primary objectives are to agree better and simpler Call Out procedures, ensure the other agencies have a good understanding of the MRO and cave rescue, and set up a platform for better communication and liaison for the future.

R.J. Cork  
Hon. Secretary and Treasurer.

Incident Report 2006  
Summary

| Day      | Date                     | Location            | Problem        |
|----------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Tuesday  | 17 <sup>th</sup> January | Swildon's Hole      | Non Rescue     |
| Sunday   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> April    | Hunter's Hole       | Overdue        |
| Sunday   | 30 <sup>th</sup> April   | Box Mines           | Search         |
| Sunday   | 30 <sup>th</sup> April   | Upper Flood Swallet | Fatality       |
| Saturday | 9 <sup>th</sup> December | Wookey Village      | Surface Search |

### Call-out and Rescue Details

**Tuesday 17th January 2006 – Swildon's Hole- Non Rescue**  
MRO were requested to attend an incident at Swildon's Hole by Taunton Police. This followed a local MP receiving an e-mail from a person wishing to protest regarding certain matters. The protestor had indicated that they would enter Swildon's Hole with a minimum of food and protective clothing. They would stay there until such time that they became incapable of refusing assistance, unless their demands were met. Rich West, Bob

Cork, Tony Jarratt and Dany Bradshaw met with local police on Priddy Green. Alison Moody and Brian Prewer also attended. BC adjourned the initial MRO response and requested a private meeting with the police. At this meeting, the MRO team explained that under these circumstances the MRO position was that they would not be prepared to be involved in any forced extradition of the person from the cave. The MRO was prepared to assist the police with this matter by setting up a

communications link should it be required and advising names of medical personnel who may be able to assist. The MRO also stated that in the eventuality there was danger to the persons life or they sustained an injury, they would effect a rescue under these circumstances, subject to validation by appropriate medical personnel. The officer in charge fully understood the MRO position and agreed with the proposals.



**MRO GB Cave. Practice Rescue**

In the interim period a caving party undertaking a trip in Swildon's Hole made contact with the protestor and informed them that the Police and the MRO were involved and had been on the surface when they descended.

On hearing this information, the protestor exited the cave and said that they had made it clear in the original e-mail that there should be no inconvenience caused to any rescue team by their action. This was the primary reason why they had decided to abandon their protest.

An MRO medical warden who had been requested to attend arrived on the Green at the time the person exited the cave. The police officer in charge decided to take no further action and abdicated care to the MRO warden.

#### **Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2006 – Hunter's Hole – Overdue party**

Richard West received a call from Taunton control at 19.26 reporting two people had gone to Hunter's Hole and had left instructions for a callout to be instigated if they had not come out by 19.00.

R. West advised that they were not excessively overdue at that time but would initiate appropriate action. He contacted Roger Dors who confirmed that the cavers' car was still in the car park containing clothes and a dog. R. Dors confirmed that he had seen them changing at 16.30 and had left a note for them to see him before they left.

Ivan Sandford was requested to go to the cave and shout down the entrance. Ivan reported a few minutes later that the cavers were exiting the cave as he arrived. Two police cars also attended from Frome Station.

#### **Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April – Box Mines – Lost**

Bob Cork was contacted by Wiltshire Police and Fire service at 17.23. Two females plus three dogs were reported lost in Quarry Hill Mine, Box, Corsham. They had entered at approximately 16.30 and had been missing for 75 minutes. Their children, who had been left on the surface, contacted their father who then

raised the alarm.

Bob Scammell was contacted at 18.15 and asked to assemble a search team; he in turn called in Derek Hawkins, Chris Batstone and Nick McCamely. Bob Cork contacted Chris Smart and requested that he also attend.

The team were obstructed on the way to Quarry Hill by Road Closed and Police Accident signs.

On approaching via a different route they found similar signs at the other end of the road, this time they ignored them. The team made contact with the husband of one of the missing women and after a short discussion it became clear that the missing ladies had no knowledge of the mines. Given this information they decided to commence the search from the entrance to Jack's workings, assuming that the womens' and dogs' footprints would be easy to follow. The ladies were known to be carrying hand torches and also a number of candles. At this point Bob Scammell was advised by Richard West that MRO had also been tasked to a second incident at Charterhouse on Mendip. CH and DH made contact with the Fire Service and Police at the entrance. Fire crews had laid a line along one main passage before the arrival of MRO and had found one tea-light and a few unlit ones.

CB and DH made a circular route search around the general workings area and came back to the entrance to report nothing found further than the single tea-light, already found. CB and DH then commenced a search of the straight route as far as Black Horse junction.

Two Fire Service specialists in line searching arrived at the entrance and suggested that RAF Rudlow Manor, which was close to the site, had a very large reel of line should the MRO require it. The Fire crew then decided to lay lights through the woods to act as a guide for when it became dark.

At this point Chris Smart arrived at the entrance.

A short time later CB and DH arrived with the missing party; they had found both women and their dogs at Black Horse junction just beyond the roof fall.

The ladies reported that they had taken a pack of ten tea-light candles with them which they lit and left to mark their return route. Unfortunately, most of them had gone out. They also used paper markers but these only served to confirm they were going round in circles and for this reason they became lost.

Total search time 15-20 minutes; the team retired to the Quarrymans' Arms for a de-brief.

#### **Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2006 – Upper Flood Swallet – Fatality**

Whilst in the process of organizing the call-out to Box Stone Mines, Bob Cork received a second call from Avon and Somerset Police asking if the MRO were able to attend another incident. The police officer was aware of the Box incident and wanted to know if the MRO had the resources to attend a second shout. The officer informed BC that a suspected fatality had been reported in Upper Flood Swallet. The victim was believed to be a 72 year old male and it was suggested that he had suffered a heart attack. The officer relayed that the informant was Tim Francis and he was contacted direct. TF confirmed the nature of the incident and BC contacted Richard West to take over the callout whilst he went to Charterhouse.

Martin Grass, Richard Marlow, Ivan Sandford, Phil Rowsell, Graham Johnson, Roz Bateman, Nigel Taylor, Mark Helmore and Adrian Vanderplank were requested to attend. They were later joined by Mark Ward, John Dewbury, Mark Lumley, Tom Chapman, Sarah Payne and Andy Sewell.

Dany Bradshaw and Darrel Instell also attended.

BC arrived and made contact with the police officer in charge

and the senior fire officer. Two fire appliances plus a support vehicle were already on site as were a number of police vehicles. Richard Marlow was also in attendance having been called in his professional capacity by the ambulance service.

Martin Grass and Richard Marlow entered the cave at 19.40. BC agreed with the fire officer that the support of the fire vehicles was not required and they could be stood down.

On reaching the casualty RM informed the police 'life extinct' at 20.17. Phil Rowsell and a team entered the cave at 20.20 taking in spare batteries and a drag sheet. BC requested permission from the police to move the body, this was agreed after some discussion. The police asked if there was anybody under 18 involved or if this was a professionally-led party, and did we consider any requirement for the HSE to be involved. BC replied that he could see no reason why this should be necessary as this was a sport caving incident.

The body was prepared for the outward trip and placed in the 'Major' drag sheet at 21.20.

Members of the deceased's family attended the scene on the surface whilst the underground carry was being progressed. They were accompanied and guided by MRO surface wardens. The casualty was brought to the surface at 23.15 and after a short period with the family was passed over to the senior police officer on site. All MRO personnel had exited the cave by 23.20 and police control informed that all had been stood down.

#### **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2006 – Wookey Village – Surface search**

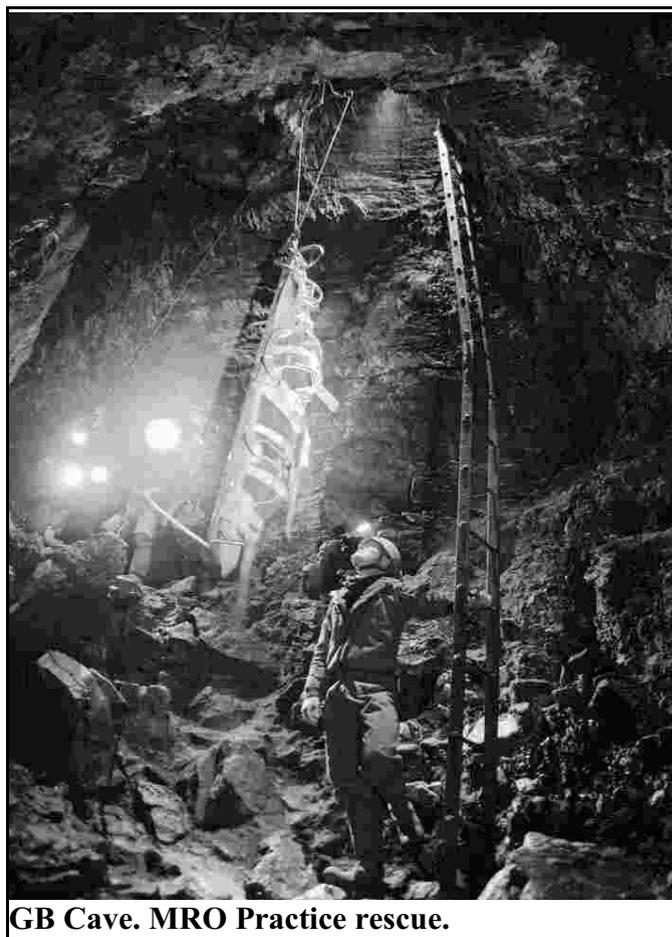
Rich West received a call at 21.25 with a request for assistance from Taunton Police. They reported a 70 year old naked male missing on a farm. No other details available.

MRO agreed to respond and liaise with Inspector Paul Richards. Bob Cork, Dany Bradshaw, Richard West, Ivan Sandford and Darrel Instrell congregated at Wells Police Station, taking with them radios, first aid kit, Little Dragon and various forms of lighting.

They received a revised brief saying that a 60 year old male of mixed nationality was the missing person. He was known to the Police having been arrested the previous day for minor offences in Wells and Glastonbury. They had received a call from a local farm saying that a semi-naked man had been found in an out-building interfering with a boiler. From the description they were assuming that this was the same individual.

In view of the winter conditions, the suspected mental health of the person and his state of undress the MRO were requested to carry out a local search. A team of police officers was bussed in from Bristol to assist.

The Police helicopter and a dog handler had carried out searches earlier in the day and suggested that the search area should be centred around Burcott Mill. Farm buildings, slurry pits and grain stores were searched in this area by combined MRO and Police search teams.



Whilst the search was in progress, a second sighting was phoned in by a resident from a nearby residential development. MRO and the Police team went directly to the scene and the missing person was located after about 10 minutes hiding in the boot of a resident's car. The missing person was taken into custody by the Police and the MR

## **Cambrian Slate Mine in Glyn Ceiriog, North Wales ST45774 Geoff Ballard**

So there I was kitted up, standing in the sump pool and with a reel in my hand. I guess I had volunteered myself and now understand what it means to be a victim of circumstance.

"Off you go then boy" called Martyn as he wandered off to pack away his camera equipment.

What! I wasn't ready; I hadn't done the customary pre dive battle with the doom demons of my imagination that normally takes place during the quiet time one spends kitting up. Surely I couldn't dive without beating myself up first but the routine is well practiced. What was it now, a good primary belay, oh yes that's it.

Taking photographs, we had trashed the 'vis' in the pool yet I had a good primary belay and the left hand wall for orientation. The water was black and ate my lights as I submerged. On the far side of the pool at a depth of 6 meters I

discovered a good secondary belay, and dropped out of the cloud and was amazed to find a descending slate staircase. I was all wide eyed – it was a wow moment much like the first time you see a turtle and feel that you have finally experienced the ‘underwater world of Jacques Cousteau’ – or perhaps I’m sharing too much.

It was Ron Mahoney that had tipped off Martyn earlier in the year, of the previously unexplored slate mine at Glyn



**Cambrian Slate Mine. Geoff Ballard. Photo: Martyn Farr**

Ceiriog, and so it was on the way back from photographing another site for Martyn’s new book that we decided to detour into North Wales. Glyn Ceiriog is the largest village in the Ceiriog Valley and lies at a bend in the river, and marks a prominent change in the landscape, from an open flat-bottomed valley to the East, and a narrow enclosed gorge upstream to the South. The population almost doubled in size during the later part of 19th century supported by the thriving mining industry of which there are almost no visual traces. Above the village

are the ruins and relics of a once thriving industry that seems to have been forgotten, apart from the few black and white photographs in the local pub, as any evidence has been engulfed by woodland. We parked the car in the only clearing, which fortunately was exactly where we needed to be, and decided to go and have a ferret.

The entrance to the mine is impressive with its collapsed structures and old boiler yet the slate is of generally poor quality and crumbles to the touch. The mine has a typical ‘grid’ formation with chambers connected via a series of partially railed adits. Martyn discovered that two link into neighbouring quarries creating a vast network with many relics; collapsed structures, boilers, a giant cam shaft, and gears – possibly remnants of a pump.

Almost all mines required pumps to keep water out and with them turned off, the mines slowly filled with water thus most disused mines in the UK are partially flooded. It was decided that, although a number of pools, we would look at three and with that returned to the car for our kit.

Following the obvious track back from the car it didn’t take long to reach the top of the small, yet steep sided quarry.

Oh what fun; glissading on mulch covered wet slate with a load equal to your own body weight yet twice your height. As nimble as a “It’s a knockout” contender I could hear the unmistakable Mr Hall laughing; “*hah, hah, hah, and the English are in disarray!*”

Humping it all back out, well what a joy. I wish I could do this repeatedly with copious amounts of kit...and they say wishes don’t come true! We did on several occasions and became quite used to it – or is it that I’m now sitting in the warm with a coffee some months later.

With our kit ferried into the mine and each of us having territorially found our own space we silently ready for the off. It seems that everyone that I dived with has their own pre-dive ritual even down to which glove goes on first. I have a left hand bottle and a right bottle and I guess it’ll come as no surprise to discover that similarly I also have a left and right hand valve configuration that never changes. All my kit goes in the same place every time and goes on in the same order. This behaviour, although bizarre and highly amusing to my caving friends that don’t dive, is reassuringly common place in the cave diving fraternity.

So there I was kitted up, standing in the sump pool with 80 meters of line on my reel - it was time to do it. I slowly sank into the murk. Helen followed behind me yet misunderstanding my signals remained at the 6 meter belay until I returned. The slate stairs, approx 1½ to 2 meters wide, appear to end in a collapse at around 18 meters. The visibility deteriorated

quickly as exhaust bubbles bring down a blizzard and in hunting for a belay amongst the rotten timber and crumbly slate I decided to take a sharp deviation across to my left and soon found the opposite wall, improved visibility and better belay options.

With the small split in my mouthpiece I was lucky enough to have the fully experience; not only could I taste the oil in the water, cunningly disguised as a halocline, but as I de-furred some of the metal work when securing the line I even got to taste the rust whilst being engulfed by a cloud of orange...did I mention my neck seal?

I cautiously continued onward; heading down on a 45/50 degree angle aware of the sloping floor and initially the left hand wall very aware that my lights were of no use beyond my gauges. So when I reach a small ledge at 22 meters I stopped and looked over the edge onto...well, nothing; just blackness my lights picking out not a glint of a reflection. Unsure of what might lie before me and with yesterdays bottles on I decided to err on the side of caution, secure the reel and return with comfortable margins.

On breaking the surface there were very obvious signs on oil on the water and the chamber smelt of oil which was something that we were pleased reduced more and more during our future visits. It was my turn to sit in silence wondering what would be discovered as Martyn and Helen disappeared from view. Martyn collected my reel and continued vertically down to a horizontal level at 27 meters. Swimming out a further 10 meters they discover a flat bed cart, upright on rails that continued off into the gloom both left and right. Securing the line to the cart both divers returned, Martyn seemingly delighted with his find. In the thirty something years that Martyn has been exploring flooded passage it's the first time he has come across an upright cart on tracks.

Finished for the day it was decided that a visit to the local ale house was necessary to our investigations, as clearly there would be a wizened old man that would be able to answer all our questions; telling us stories of a bygone age and how it used to be. Bar the few black and whites on the wall we were out of luck and on our return visits this customary teller of folklore has eluded us. Later speaking to Mike Moore, NAMHO Chairman, he outlined that the nature of similar mine working were on three distinct levels and if this practice has been adopted here then there would be a deeper level.

Like moths round a light eight weeks later we were back and this time I brought walking poles - "goat Peter, eat your heart out". I was up and down the quarry like a gazelle; a nimble, long legged athlete native to the lowland hills of North Wales?! Or was it a Yak; a hairy, short legged, over burdened plodder - I forget.

We had a plan - to capture our finds on film, yet rapidly deteriorating visibility and equipment failure reduced the chances of any success on this attempt. So we surfaced the camera equipment and Martyn and I decided to return to the cart with the remaining air, collect line reels and whilst I ran out reel to the right Martyn did the same in the opposite direction.

Martyn very soon came across a ruined structure of slate and timber with graffiti and what we surmise are the tally markers relating to those carts that were removed. Once through the structure Martyn followed the rails and continuing up slope eventually surfaced in a different part of the mine.

I on the other hand following the rail into an audit, approximately 2½ meters square, continuing passing a spur in the railway running off to my left at the second of three carts, 10 meters beyond the first. I continued beyond the third cart for a further 40 meters to a rail wedge diagonally across the passage. The way on continues, seemingly horizontal at 27 meters yet the track appears to have been removed beyond.

I secured the line and decided to call it a day. After all, the finds are great but it's a serious place to be poking about - as soon as your exhaust bubbles hit the roof the blizzard starts!

It was a short day and before settling in for the evening at the local Inn Martyn and I decided to 'pop up the road' to take a look at a number of interesting features marked on the o/s map; a huge, now dry reservoir, and a couple of pools. Leaving Helen, on her own, and at the mercy of the landlady she was unable to resist the Cider. We were gone some time and when we returned I'm not sure if it she was her first pint of re-hydration or third?!

After an 'all the trimmings' breakfast there was a sudden moment of deja vu and as if I hadn't been away there I was back in the mine, kitted up at the waters edge. Determined to get some photographs, Martyn outlined the plan and how we were to creep up on the carts.

We three entered via the alternate route previously discovered by Martyn to take photographs around the structure before

we rushed the first cart to grab the small visibility window that is becoming the norm. Our time was up, Martyn took the flash guns from me and returned to the surface with Helen allowing me to continue to my reel and run out a further 20 meters of line before exiting with the same equipment issues from the previous day, which strangely enough hadn't gone away over night even though I'd tried really hard to forget about it – weird!

Whilst I was have fun and games with a value that didn't want to be my friend in conditions similar to driving with main beam on in driving snow, Martyn had exchanged his camera equipment for a line reel and grabbed the opportunity to jump in the third of our three pools. Following a passage at 2 to 3 meters depth he reached a vertical drop to 17 meters. Poor visibility from our previous dive halted his exploration which confirmed our suspicions that this route would come onto the area close to the structure we had swum through earlier, maintaining a typical grid formation and account for the deterioration in visibility.

*“Contrary to popular belief, lemmings do not periodically hurl themselves off of cliffs and into the sea. These deaths are not deliberate "suicide" attempts, but accidental deaths resulting from the lemmings' venturing into unfamiliar territories”*

So anyway, like Lemmings we were here again. Martyn and Helen recently returned from The Lot and Russia and I from the Pyrenees and the Ardeche.

Martyn outlined the shots that he'd like to take yet now very familiar with how this animal works we discussed how as team we needed to move; break off from the group and re appear on the target. So down the slope, through the ruined structure, round the right hand bend, and following the rail to the carts yet as usual the visibility very rapidly deteriorated so that, as the third diver with the flash guns, I was unable to see Helen's fin tips let alone Martyn with the camera. To retake the photos on the steps we had to exit and re-enter via our original dive base – the 'vis' lasted long enough for Martyn to get off two shots!

Reels in hand, Martyn returned to complete the link to the bottom of the slope whilst I returned to the third cart. On previous dives I had completely missed a second staircase almost opposite the left hand fork in the track.

This new staircase winds upwards accompanied on occasion by the remnants of its wooden banister, to a depth of 16 meters, where it appears to prematurely finish at what seems to be an archway onto a ledge with open space beyond. Having remained stationary for a moment in order to try and establish some orientation, the remnants of what visibility remained from the previous days dive disappeared, and this time the particulate matter was so dense that I could hear my exhaust valve gurgling as the flakes clogged the vents – the decision to leave wasn't a difficult one and I surfaced a little less composed than when I had last seen Helen. She informed me that she had heard my bubbles from a neighbouring pool and was clearly animated and expectant that I should want to continue exploring.

I'm not surprised she heard the bubbles; I must have been chuffing like a steam engine in my bowl of soggy corn flakes. Needless to say my Muladhara Charka was somewhat calling the shots. So as I clambering over the rocks I mentally recomposed, entered, and dropped to the obvious level which continued through an arch to the left and down a gentle slope to circa 16 meters where the visibility made any continuation pointless albeit that I was convinced that having run out 60 meters of line that these two ends are within just a few meters of each other, but that was me done for yet another trip so my theory will have to remain unanswered.

Martyn, having successfully made the connection, continued to the third truck and exploring the left hand spur proceeded to run out 45 meters of line to a T junction with ongoing passage to his left and right.

What a superb entry to Martyn's new book; a site with ongoing leads and some remarkable artefacts! **Geoff Ballard**

**Fontaine de Truffe** Lacave, Lot, France. 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> February 2007

by **Christine Grosart**

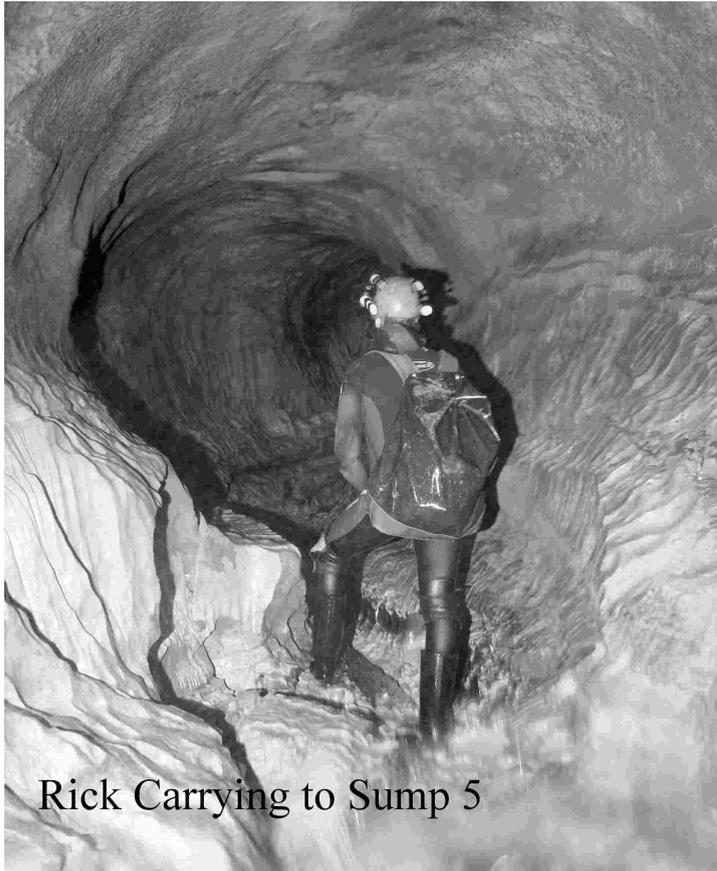
**Technical Weekend Assault Team**

Pushing divers : Rick Stanton, John Volanthen

Supporting divers : Pete Mulholland, Dave Haseldon, Jason Franks Christine Grosart (WCC), Nadir Lasson (France), Johan Enqvist and Martin Nordin ( Sweden ).

The Fontaine de Truffe is a popular haunt for most cave divers visiting the Lot region of France and was one of my favourite training dives when I visited the area last June for two weeks of caving and diving. My plans to join the Titan

/ JH trip on 3<sup>rd</sup> February were soon thwarted when I received a text message from Rick Stanton, asking if I could help with some sump-donkeying on his and John Volanthen's weekend expedition to push the end of the system, aiming to pass a narrow rift in Sump 12 at -30m. The reply to this was something like "Does a duck swim ? Do bears s\*\*t in the woods ?" So the following couple of months were spent trying to persuade one of my colleagues to swap shifts at work to enable



Rick Carrying to Sump 5

me to go and fortunately it paid off. On 1<sup>st</sup> February John, Rick – complete with a cold – and myself were in John's truck accompanied by twenty something cylinders, two rebreathers and much other diving gear, heading to the south of France.

After an uneventful 15 hour journey we showed up chez Pete Mulholland, whose hospitality was much welcomed and appreciated. In the morning we set off to Lacave to find water conditions perfect for the task. High water levels were required to make the journey from Sumps 2 to 3 less strenuous and the same was true for the gear carrying further into the system.

We embarked on a set-up dive to get as much of Rick and John's kit as far into the system as possible and also to support Dave Haseldon and Jason Franks, who were carrying gear forwards to Sump 8. It was the kind of effort where the sherpas needed their own sherpas and I was quite relieved in hindsight that I wasn't required beyond Sump 5 !

I got into the water with a 12l, 3l and a 4l plus a 7l on my front and a 3l with some of Rick's kit in a bag, clipped to the side. The Truffe suddenly seemed a little smaller in places with all this clobber and it was a relief to find Pete Mulholland at the end of Sump 2 to help ferry kit forwards to Sump 3. We dived this and John, Rick and Pete went ahead and I caught up with Martin who helped shift some

gear to Sump 4. Pete put me into the water with instructions to pick up Rick's rebreather on the far side and take it to Sump 5. He then went home to buy a chicken (!) and I surfaced in Truffe 4 streamway to shed my gear and find that there was no sign of any rebreather. So, after 15 minutes of fishing, I gave in and presumed that one of the others had taken it forwards, which they had.

So I had a leisurely trip to Sump 5 where we put Dave and Jason into the sump to see them off to Sump 8. We all had a pleasant journey home, though Sump 4 concentrated the mind somewhat with three extremely loose lines strewn haphazardly about the passage in less than a metre viz. I made some attempts to tidy these up.

Once everybody was home safe and sound ( apart from Dave and Jason who were going to be considerably longer ) we went back to Pete's to force John to have a shower and for Rick to practise his squeeze-passing technique. This involved squashing him up against a wall with a therm-a-rest, with the weight of Pete and John behind it ! We then headed off to the pizza restaurant in Gramat and the team had a grand evening in the company of Dr Jerome Meynie and pals and Nadir Lasson, who showed up to help the next day. Dave and Jason turned up impressively in time for their pizzas ! We returned to chez Mulholland to find our wetsuits completely frozen ( there was still snow on the ground ) and able to stand up on their own !

The morning of the push, Rick and John set off early to get on with it and the sump donkeys entered the water at staggered intervals to meet up with the outward bound gear at various places. Pete was furious to have ear trouble and could not dive – though this did leave him plenty of time to cook a chicken – and myself and Nadir made our way to Sump 5 to meet Rick and John. We waited for about 3 hours and amused ourselves by making pidgin English / French conversation and poking around in some sandy side passages just of the streamway.

The boys returned quite tired, pleased that they had passed beyond the rift in Sump 12. Rick had squeezed through a tight section on open circuit then reverted to the rebreather and laid 120m of line to surface in a chamber. John had caught up and continued laying 90m of line into this new sump, 13, until this too surfaced. Both then investigated some small, impassable percolation tubes and were satisfied that this was the terminal point of the system. A break in the line at -30m on the way back home had forced Rick to retreat to the new air-bell between Sumps 12 and 13 to wait for the visibility

to improve. By investigating an aven, he fortuitously found a bypass to Sump 12. This episode caused the delay in their exit but was quicker than having to wait for the silt to settle.

We dragged their gear out through Sump 4 and tidied some more line. I was pleased to be met by Johan who helped ferry gear home and after a Mars Bar, orange juice and a gossip, carried the rest of the kit out to surface at about 9pm.

Pete had cooked a wonderful roast dinner, with wine which was much appreciated and we could begin to relax in front of the fire, job done, before the long journey home.

For anyone wishing to dive here, information on the Fontaine de Truffe is available on websites such as [www.plongeesout.com](http://www.plongeesout.com) and a good starting point is Andy Ward's 'Guide to the Lot and the Dordogne' which features many of the popular resurgence-flopping sites.



Another day..... another dive

For general information ( normal conditions )

- Sump 1 : 160m / -12m
- Sump 2 : 180m / -10m
- Sump 3 : 85m / -15m
- Sump 4 : 118m / -7m

Obviously, in high water conditions the sumps are considerably longer, as they were on this trip. The remaining sump lengths can be found in the aforementioned guide.

Everyone appeared to have a wonderful time and enjoyed being part of possibly the last ever push in a very well known system. Personally, I got an awful lot out of it and learned a lot and my thanks must go to Rick, John and team for that and also to Pete for looking after us and making us so welcome.

## **Portland Saga** by Nigel Graham.

I was surprised to see the item about the hanger for Blacknor Hole. They've gorn! At least the cliff-top ones have. This issue also affects any WCC members who also climb.

Several years ago, friction between the owners of Blacknor Fort (divided into two homes) and climbers came to a head, with the householders removing all belays and painting "Climbing Prohibited" along the cliff foot as far South as Steve's Endeavor Rift's North entrance. They only own that in front of the Fort (by Land Registry map) - but that's the cave entrance area.

The last straw after problems from a minority of climbers and a genuine misunderstanding over cave access (I own up - on my part) was a gaffe by Dorset County Council's Coastal Ranger Service. It set up the "Portland Rock Forum", initially for ornithologists and climbers to agree seasonal restrictions. I mentioned the PRF to the owners, Mr & Mrs Vranck, and Mr. Hoskins, assuming that they had been invited onto this informal body. They had not, by accident - not design, so feared it was some mysterious bureaucracy taking over their land, and relations went rapidly downhill.

Next some lawyer read their liabilities towards cavers' and climbers' safety, a prospect so frightening that they banned all access. Being a public footpath means nothing: legally you have the right only to walk along a footpath ("No Stopping" signs on a garden fence against a twitchel among houses elsewhere on Portland are silly, but legally sound!).

Mr Hoskins "Remembered" a former work colleague's relayed son's tale of a blasting trip in the cave, with Hardye's School Combined Cadet Force. HSCCF found and jointly explored this cave with Dorset Caving Group - I was there! I investigated, including asking Mike O'Connor, one of my works superiors, and other former DCG member. I tried to reassure the Vranck couple that their story was wrong. The DCG would have known of any HSCCF blasting on this shared project, and there is no evidence in the cave (the Confluence choke, beyond the fort's boundary, eventually yielded to

CSS-member Mike Read's chisel). In fact the householders were more concerned about school children being on such an expedition. So we lost Blacknor Hole, except by the hard way - from Sandy Hole (I've not managed it!).

The next development stopped all negotiations, out of respect.

Mr Hoskins invited Mr Vbranch into his home to discuss a private property dispute - and fired a shot-gun at him. Fortunately Mr Vbranch survived, so it was for Attempted Murder that their neighbour, a retired prison officer, became his erstwhile colleagues' guest. The Vbranch family publicly expressed their understandable fears over his eventual return but Hoskins settled the sad affair by taking his own life while still in prison.

From his increasingly vitriolic letters to me, thrashing around the island to find any reason to stop us playing on "His" cliff (I think the entrance is on Vbranch land) and finally his crime, I had pictured him as lonely and very bitter, with scant respect for others. Mr Vbranch once stopped him from cutting a climber's top-rope! Finally, he lost all respect for his own life.

In December 2006 I had a tentative work with the new Coastal Ranger, Lyn Cooch, over re-opening access negotiations, but I hold out little hope. The couple living over the cave are, I think, genuinely afraid of being prosecuted or sued if we were injured below their best Axminster, and that alone is enough to deter them. I think that any requests may anyway have to be from a more independent and skilled source.

Finally back to the original point.

Mr Vbranch removed our cliff-top anchors. He disc-cut one, but told me he could pull the other out! I was on the placement team so can vouch for the care taken, but it's just possible that the resin did not adhere fully to the rock in that hole. I wonder if the limestone (a close grained Oolite?) Is sufficiently porous either to have been damp during placement, or subsequently to dissolve around the resin. (A few tens of  $\mu\text{m}$  may suffice).

I did thank Mr Vbranch from telling me this.

Thinking about it, I may be able to follow up this lead by basic absorption tests - asking in the right places! Literature searches will reveal porosity and solubility measurements on Portland Stone, but no sedimentary rock is absolutely homogenous and consistent across its bed, so I would have to investigate local samples. Alternately, of course, the resin may have deteriorated in some way. Perhaps this is something that installers of resin anchors in Oolitic limestone and other non-crystalline sedimentary rocks will have to consider. **Nigel Graham.**

## **Heart bypass surgery - end of caving – not on your life. Herbie Plant**

It was 2 years ago now that I started to have chest pains after a mere 5 minutes walking, if I slowed down the pain went away. Time to see the doc.

'Seems like you may have angina' I was told. Take these tablets and take things easy – no squash, no severe exercising and definitely no caving. Well I know that some people may ignore such sound advice; however I'm not one of them and duly took things easy and went for the treadmill test (6 months later). That led to me having an angiogram (another 5 months) the result of which was to inform me that I was a good candidate for bypass surgery. Another wait of 3 months and hey presto, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2006 found me under the surgeons knife. I won't bore you with the details, suffice to say that the first two weeks after heart bypass surgery aren't much fun but by persevering with all the exercising and walking (not allowed to drive for six weeks – so not much option anyway) that they recommended I was fairly soon on the way back to my old self again.

After some three months I got back to doing the old DIY (all the jobs that had had to wait) and continued to get fitter and healthier. Then on 9<sup>th</sup> November I get an email from Steve Spratt (cave section leader of a scouting expedition trip to the Picos de Europa back in 1982 – I was also a cave leader on that) to say that Dick Lawrence (another cave leader of the same expedition – now resident in New Zealand) was coming over to the UK for the last two weeks in November and would like to have a (nostalgic) trip underground.

Well, how can one refuse such an invitation. I may be 62 years of age and it may be merely 8 months after heart surgery – but I was always up for a challenge!

So November 24<sup>th</sup> saw me at the club hut trying to smoke the place out by lighting the stove and forgetting to pull the chimney dampener out (Phil Hendy wasn't much amused on his arrival), and to organise the hire of necessary caving equipment.

November 25<sup>th</sup> Steve and Dick arrived on schedule and we all got changed and went down Swildons Hole. I forgot to mention that I had cunningly invited a young lad of 21 (Steven Campbell) to join us on this trip, as he hadn't done any of the Mendip caves. So guess who carried the ladder and the lifeline (OK, so we didn't need them either 20 years ago!). Amazing, Swildons just never loses its charm. Just the right amount of water to make it interesting without being diabolical about it. It was still as I remembered it (apart from the entrance boulder ruckle of course) and we all thoroughly enjoyed our 3 hour's underground. The other 3 went through sump 1 and on to sump 2, I opted to wait the sensible side of sump one (not going to push too hard on my first trip after the op.).

We returned to the hut and after showering scoffed the spaghetti bolognaise that I had prepared earlier.

A very nostalgic and much enjoyed trip.

So if anyone out there is awaiting heart bypass surgery I can assure you that it is well worth the couple of months of discomfort it brings, as when you get over it, even caving is back on the menu, even at age 62. **Herbie Plant**

## From the Log Book & the Wessex Website

I commented in my Editorial that transcribing from the various caving logs was the most time-consuming task for each Journal. At our last committee meeting there was a near universal agreement that not every trip, not every log entry, needed to go into the Journal. Keyword there, "Near". I was the standout. I remain unconvinced. Given my natural indolence, and that editing at its most basic involves selection, it's fair to ask why. A fatter Journal is not necessarily, or probably, a better Journal - and it costs the club more to print and post. Yet few things demonstrate the vigour and life of the club better than the sheer variety of the caving trips of its members (and their friends and guests). When Upper Pitts is buzzing, the Log Book is in constant circulation - by readers. It presents the most immediate account of our caving activities. Each Log Book, filed in the library, presents only entire account (which is why we ask, beg, implore our members to write-up their trips). A multiplicity of trivial trips may be more important than a week in the Berger, or the PSM and on balance I suspect they are, and that the Journal should show that. Editing is my responsibility. I accept that I procrastinate for England, but on what grounds should I exclude "Yet another" Swildons, or Goatchurch? Major trips, or major dramas, are unusual. Our members who cannot, or do not, frequent Upper Pitts, depend on the Journal to reveal the life of their club. Then there is the little matter of encouraging Journal contributions of every sort, and not alienating you - the real authors of this Journal. Before the library floor fell in during our last committee meeting I heard various helpful suggestions as to how to placate irate writers when their caving accounts were not selected for Journal publication. I am particularly indebted to your caving secretary for reminding me of words such as: pathetic, mis-spelt, trivial, contemptible, ungrammatical, boring; and phrases such as "12 hours scarcely counts as a caving trip", but I have to say that all your committee offered me a wide variety of similarly emollient comments. So with the moral cowardice which I find so soothing, I will vacillate on the matter. Few people vacillate better (or more modestly). Yet again I take refuge in the words, "What is your opinion"?

Sunday January 28 2007 Warren Farm Ali & Rich Marlow.

Trip was delayed for an hour as the entrance gate was buried under 2' of flood debris including a few large rocks. There must have been a considerable amount of water across the field recently. The gate is also very stiff and needs some attention. **Ali**

Wednesday January 31 2007. Swildons Hole. Andy, Jonathan, Fiona, Geoff, Rich, Clarie.

Fi went to drop off some kit for a dive. Down to Sump2 and back, the boys did the sump just fine, and Jonathan bounced off the walls because of the Mars bars. **Clarie**

Friday February 2 2007 Thrupe Lane Swallet. Ann, Hanna, Fiona & Jane.

A great little trip, down ladder into Perseverance Pot then down Marble Stream-Way to the drop off. Really nice little trip. **Fiona**

Saturday February 3 2007 Upper Flood Prew and Phil

We spent a pleasant day in brilliant sunshine on Charterhouse Rakes trying to radio-locate parts of the cave. Only two of three locations tested and inconclusively. Poor and absent signals gave a series of "Nulls" roughly parallel to the rakes but no nulls at 90 degrees. So positions could not be given for anything. We suspect that the presence of lead ore bodies is distorting the signal. We waited by Charmed Shaft and two other shafts nearby in case smoke released underground drifted up to the surface - but it didn't. (Oh, nearly forgot. Half-a-dozen MCG were there plus Tim Francis and his team, underground, and a MRO team checking Heyphone location points. **Phil**

Saturday February 3 2007 Upper Flood Paul Wakeling, Vern

+ Doug & Mike (MCG).

Trip to the end of West End with Heyphone to check reception and working. Then back to Royal King and back to Departure Lounge. All three locations had good reception and comms. with surface. Boulder choke has some committing bits but on the whole, not too bad.

Main passage like something from Wales. Formations are out of this world and the MCG should be very pleased with their find, as all their hard work has paid off. Well done Lads! Shame about their showers! Finished off the day/night with some beer for Ann's birthday, then on to the Shepton for a pint or two with Butch. Back to the Wessex for a mid-night bounce under the moonlight! **Paul or Vern ?**

Saturday February 3 2007 Swildons 9 - 12 Stu, Fiona and Jim Lister.

Had a really good trip to 9. I was hoping to go through 9 to make 12. Stu came to 9, went through the by-pass. I started through 9 and came across a restriction. Made 4 attempts, but failed to pass it. Jim went through and on to 12. I tried again, but no luck. I think I had not got in the right position and had not dropped low enough to pass it, so 12 was not happening today. Will have another go again soon. Many thanks to Stu and Jim for a pleasant trip. **Fiona**

Saturday February 3 2007 Charterhouse Cave. Pete Hahn, Ai: Malc (Entrance series)

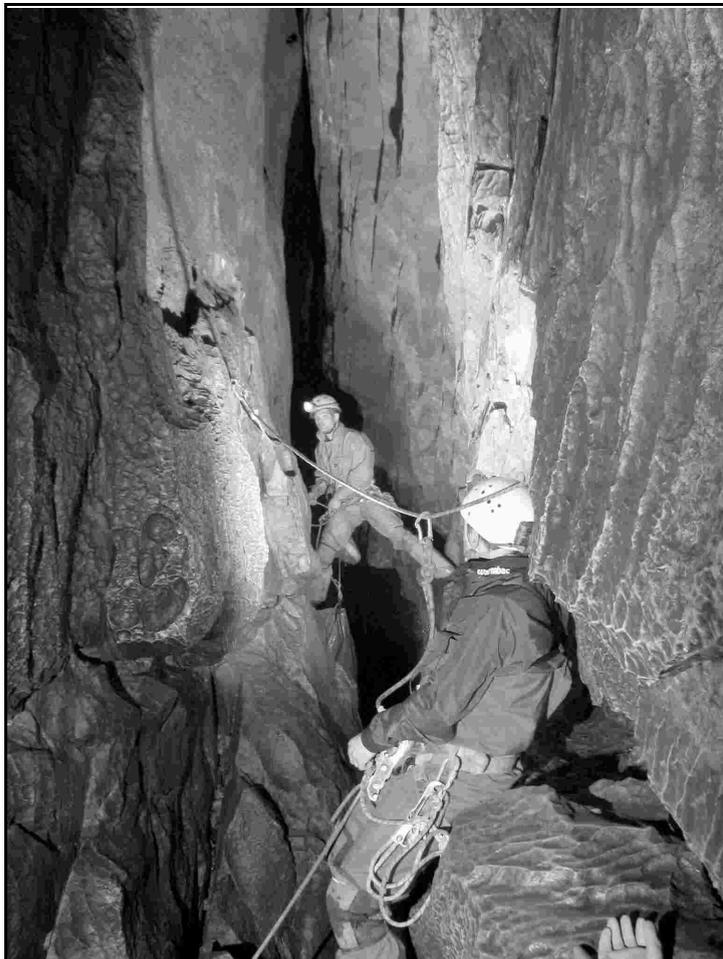
Quick trip to inspect the remains of the boulder demolished on 20/01/2007. Unfortunately, plenty more boulder to go! Cementing session now required. Extremely cold, strong draught at the dig site; both of us were freezing within about 10 minutes. Must wear some thermal underwear next trip! (Perhaps we could

divert some of the draught to Tumbledown). **Ali**  
Monday February 5 2007 Swildons 2. Jane & Fiona  
Trip down to sump 2 to do a bottle exchange. A really nice trip.  
**Fiona**

Wednesday February 7 2007. Swildons Hole - Geoff, Charlotte, Fiona, Clarie. Fi and Clarie Did the short round Sump1 first, Jude, Jonathan, Anton, Andy did the short round Mud Sump first. It wasn't a race, but we won. Trip time: 3 hours.  
**Clarie.**

Date unknown. Swildons round trip in reverse Fiona, Geoff, Clarie, Charlotte.  
Excellent fun. Jude, Anton, Andy and Jonathan went the other way and we all passed in the middle. **Fiona.**

Saturday February 10 2007 Eastwater Cavern, round trip, Fi, Simon, Ian, Clarie  
Fi and I took Simon (my friend who came caving last week) and Ian (young guy who is looking for a club) down Eastwater. Ian was quite experienced, but I was glad of Fi's presence - she's very



**Stream Passage Pot. Bean & Mark. Photo: Mak**

good at explaining how to cave - where to put feet, how to move. Simon was exhausted at the end - he's quiet all the way through which is unnerving as it's hard to gauge how he's finding it. Still, Eastwater round on your second ever trip is no mean accomplishment. Back to hut for tea, cakes, and celebrating Charlotte's birthday. **Clarie**

Saturday February 10 2007 St. Cuthberts Jude, Ade,

Rich, Vern, Clive.  
Vern took us round Rocky Boulder Series. Coral Chamber goes up for ever and there are several places not much bigger than Ade. On to Upper Curtain Chamber where Clive took some complicated pictures down to the Curtains. Tea served by Pauline within milliseconds of our return to the hut. 3 1/4 hours. **Anon**

Saturday February 10 2007 Templeton Phil  
Solo trip to look at progress since my last visit in early Jan. There is a 'beach' of bang debris to the N and a pot to the S filled with 4 Gall containers full of water. Removing these will allow rapid dropping of the water level to allow digging. The little rift as the S appears to be widening. The bank at the top of the depression has slumped, depositing mud onto the bridge and into the annexe. A lot of this has been removed. Found some small Mammoth tooth fragments (small fragments, not small Mammoth !) And quartzite pebble on the spoil heap. **Phil**

Monday February 12 2007 Eastwater. Jane & Fiona  
Upper Traverse, Lower Traverse - nice round trip. **Fiona**

Tuesday February 13 2007, Swildon's Upper Series, Rich, Andy, Simon and Clarie.  
Took Simon on his first ever underground trip, and asked Rich and Andy to come along for the trip. In the entrance, down long dry way, up short dry way, through Binny's link into Oxbows, via Butcombe chamber and soft squeeze back to the stream way, and out the Wet way.  
Simon enjoyed it (I think!) but looked exhausted - I think he tried to keep up rather than setting the pace himself at first, which is not good!

Tuesday February 13 2007 Swildons Upper. Andy, Rich, Clarie, Simon & the writer (!)  
My first caving experience. An immensely enjoyable time and quite a challenge for a Novice. Thanks. **Anon \*\*\*\*\***  
Aaaaarrggghhhh Editor \*\*\*

\*\*\*\* Later revealed (by Clarie) to be Simon Miles.

Tuesday February 13 2007 Swildons 2. Fiona and Jane.  
A "Fun Run" to 2 and back. **Fiona**

Tuesday February 13 2007 Rocket Drop. Ali, Andrew Moon, Steve Franks, Steve Turner, Steve ? & Graham Speed  
Very pleasant evening bimbble once we had located the entrance in thick fog. Good general poke about and also visit by Ali to the end dig below the third chamber. The air throughout was absolutely fine, in fact quite fresh. **Ali**

Thursday February 15 2007 Rods Pot Rich, Geoff, Jude, Charlotte, Stu & Fiona  
Had a fun trip down Rods Pot and new Eyeball Rift. Excellent bit of cave passage - very distinct. Nice cave. **Fiona.**

Saturday February 17 2007 Swildons Hole Upper. Phil, Prew, Helen and the "Terrible Twins".....Izzy and Becky.  
Down via short dry way for refreshments; up to look at Lavatory Pan and out via SDW. Girls enjoyed themselves leading out, getting cold and wet but not caring. I always get wetter on this type of novice trip than when I am caving properly. **Phil**

Saturday February 17 2007 Charterhouse Cave Ali, Doctor Jo, Pete Hahn, Nigel G.

Productive trip, three buckets of cement into choke. The ladies visited the Citadel while Pete and I finished off and cleaned the tools. **Nigel.**

Saturday February 17 2007 Swildons 6 Geoff, Ade, Fiona, Stu. Down the streamway via sumps 1,2,3 and 4. Some bottles were left in 4 for a future 12 trip. Collected some digging tools from the end of Tumbledown before moving along through Buxton's Horror and sump 5. On the downstream side of sump 5 we spent about 1 ½ hours digging out the streamway in order to lower sump 5. On returning the level in 5 had dropped by over three inches. **Stu**

Sunday February 18 2007 Hunters Lodge Inn Sink Kevin, James & Fiona

Had an excellent trip down Hunters Lodge. Went down the main pitch, over the water and onwards. Those pools are just so crystal clear... they look so inviting. One of the best caves on Mendip.

**Anon**

Tuesday February 20 2007 GB "Saudi"

Today I will be mostly be laying in bed in hospital in Saudi having just fallen off a roof and fractured my spine.

\*\*\*\*\* Aaaaarrggghhhh Editor

Wednesday February 21 2007 Eastwater. Clarie, Simon, Ian & Fiona.

Great little trip, the short round (Upper Traverse) trip. **Fiona.**

Friday February 23 2007 Hunters Lodge Inn Sink

Today it was nice and wet. **Very** wet, with an added streamway. Went down Rocking Rudolf, then the pitch. Tried to cross the water but the water was meeting the ceiling, other than an inch or so; went then to the other dig site... it was sumped. Oh what fun! Went up to visit the bones and end. Very good trip. **Fiona.**

Clarie's Week at the Wessex, (Sun 25th Feb to Fri 2 Mar)

Monday February 26 2007 Pierre's Pot Andy, Clarie, Fiona

Had a nice trip down Pierre's Pot, went down to Hanging Garden, really nice cave, what a place!

Bit like Eyeball Rift in Rods. This place is on my "Must do again Caves". Many thanks, **Fiona**

Tuesday February 27 2007 Daren Cilau Jane, Clarie, Fiona

Had a good trip to Daren today, through the entrance passage (fairly wet), then through JigSaw passage to the Large Chamber Nowhere Near the Entrance. Then through Valentines Chamber and Preliminary Passage to where a large 60 foot ladder waited us. I climbed it. Wow! What a ladder, I haven't seen one like that before. You are on a section of the ladder from the ground and then as you climb higher you see the next section..... I climbed to the top, had a look round and then came back down. We made our way out. Really looking forward to going there again. The entrance was the best. **Fiona**

Tuesday February 27 2007 Darren Cilau Fiona, Jane (from the BEC), Clarie.

Finding the escarpment and the cave were easier than I'd thought, as was doing the entrance passage. Darren has a reputation for its awkward, 600m long, tight entrance crawl. But it isn't all crawling, and I could even stand up once or twice. I'd forgotten the 'lying on your side with water up to your chest' bit though. Beyond the entrance we navigated successfully to Preliminary

Passage (on the way to the Time Machine) using photocopied pages of the guidebook and the survey. It was a good route finding exercise, with enough squeezes which Fi loved and pretties which Jane loved. The description was superbly accurate and understandable so I hadn't had any worries about coming to 'a fixed ladder', I've seen fixed ladders in caves before. They are about 5 - 10 foot high and solid steel metal things, no handline necessary. Or at least that's what I thought... this one was a 60 foot, exposed, dangling, awkwardly angled in the middle climb up the cliffs on insanity.

So we sent Fi up first - luckily Jane and I had both brought belts and a krab, though we'd not thought we'd need to. I've never seen Fi scared, so her comments as she reached what appeared (to us) to be the top, about 40' up, that she was nervous about the next bit, were hardly reassuring. Jane decided at the bottom that she wouldn't have the strength to do it and would wait for us there. Me, I got 20' up, exhausted, disco-leg, looking at the same difference again just to get to the horrible jutting out midway boulder, and decided then I'd gone quite far enough.

So Fi descended, and told us tales of having to step on to the ladder as it leans back, on a diagonal, and we decided next time, we'd be more prepared. Or would SRT. Or something. So we caved on out, and drove back to Priddy, declaring the trip a success and a joy. I think it was my first all-girls trip too, which I loved. **Clarie**

We arrived to find the previously deserted car park full of cars - concerned there was a rescue I poked my head round the door to be greeted with the full Swildon's Book Committee staring at me. I beat a hasty retreat till it was all over. Ade introduced me to John and Peter Hurst, who were up for the night and had done the Swildon's round that day and I offered to take them to Eastwater in the morning.

Tuesday February 27 2007 Swildons (Short round trip) John and Peter Hurst.

Our intended trip was to include Blue Pencil Passage, but our navigation wasn't up to the job. Two months after being lead around we tried it on our own and were surprised by how little we remembered. An enjoyable trip although it took us half-an-hour longer this time. **John.**

Wednesday February 28 2007 Eastwater Upper Series round trip. Clarie, John & Peter.

A pre-Breakfast sprint around is Clarie's idea of fun. We didn't realise that the day started so early. We were back just after 0900! It was our introduction to Eastwater, too. A double First. **John**

Sunday February 25 2007 Swildons. Aubrey, Adrian, Jude, Clarie.

Went down to Rolling Thunder, Aubrey's dig in Swildons'. They graciously allowed me to tag along and carry kit for them. **Clarie.**

Sunday February 25 2007 Daren Cilau. Emms, Mad Phil, Andy Kuszyk, Rhys Davies

2 night-stop in REU to continue with ongoing dig in Painkiller Passage. Entered cave at 2100 on the Friday night, nearly sleeping when we started through the Time Machine, but woke up again in time to arrive at REU at 0200. Good day digging on the Saturday and then out by 1800 on the Sunday in time for the last of the weekend's daylight! Excellent trip. **Emms**

Monday February 26 2007. Pierre's Pot. Andy Snook, Fiona, Clarie.

We went to Burrington to explore the mysteries of Pierre's Pot. After a short Lionelian labyrinth in the top, we squeezed through the slot down to the hidden lower part of the cave. (Well, Andy squeezed. I didn't think it was that bad..... going down.) There's a stream way down there! and stal! All very exciting, and not at all what you'd expect from a Burrington cave. Coming out was interesting - Fi managed to get up and out through the slot fine. Andy stood on my head to get out. And after a valiant attempt, Fi came back through to allow me to stand on her head so I could get out. **Clarie**

Tuesday February 27 2007 Tynings Barrow Swallet Carmen and Clive

We went down in company with plenty of water, which made the cave quite splashy and fun - my first trip down this moderately interesting place. We were made very welcome by the guard dog at the farm. **Clive**

Wednesday February 28 2007 Eastwater, Round Trip. Clarie, John & Peter Hurst.

A pleasant trip round, replacing my battery at the start. Down about 45 mins - out by 9.15am. Met Laurie and some of his friends, heading out to Eastwater as we returned. Spent the rest of the day in recovery, reading. **Clarie**

Wed eve, and the usual suspects arrived - Ade and Jude, Rich, Geoff, Andy, Charlotte, Jonathan, Fi, Ian and his dad Stuart and even Stu appeared, leg in bright purple plaster from where he broke his ankle (and back) in Saudi. I opted for the barrel formations in The Hunters with Stu and Rich, and the rest went to Singing River Mine. **Clarie**

Thursday March 1 2007 Upper Flood Swallet. Clarie, Rich  
First trip to Upper Flood today (old not new). It was beautiful. Midnight Chamber made me stop and stare. Glad my legs are short enough for the passage to be kneeling and not thrutching. There was airspace in the Lavatory Pan, all ½ " of it, which I decided wasn't enough, especially in a Fleecy and after 4 days of caving. So left the glories of UFS to another day and returned home to Upper Pitts. **Clarie**

Thursday March 1 2007 Upper Flood Swallet Rich, Clarie.  
Did the old cave, very pretty, very impressed. Decided not to go past the lavatory pan - half an inch of air in the duck, a fleecy and my fifth caving trip in as many days added up to 'let's leave something for next time'. 2 hours. Came back with all the intention of having a nap, but the peace was disturbed as 14 Dutch film crew descended. Had a late and very enjoyable evening in their pleasant company, extolling the delights of caving and of many stupid hut games till the early hours of the morning. **Clarie**

Friday March 2 2007 Swildons. Old Grotto. Ali, Clive Westlake, Clarie.

I got to hold the flash, Ali got to stand in the water rift. Fair enough to me. (Mike said to get in the photos I just needed to prove myself so incompetent with a flash gun that Clive would insist I stopped trying and make someone else do it) Now I've contributed I guess I'll have to buy it - if and when it ever appears! Underground about an hour. **Clarie**.

We followed this trip with a visit to Kermit at the Warmbac

workshop, who I can thoroughly recommend as an excellent host, a friendly guy, and a maker of rather good caving and diving gear. All in all, had a lovely week - met loads of club members I'd never seen before, and was surprised by how busy Upper Pitts is on your average weekday - a day didn't go past without someone turning up to go caving (or drink tea). **Clarie**

Saturday March 10 2007 Swildons Mak and Tommo

This was intended as a Ladder Testing Trip. Tommo and I took Tommo's shiny new ladder down to the 20 to check it fits. It does, perfectly! A very happy Tommo did, however, comment that the cable was too thick and everyone is bound to moan that this bomb-proof ladder is too bulky, so I believe he plans to make an identical ladder but from normal cable.

For me, this trip answered in no uncertain terms the SRT vs Ladder debate for short pitches... ..we took SRT kit because Tommo wanted to rig the ladder, then ab down and inspect it in-situ - not a bad idea however next time Tommo we'll try that without getting you tangled up and hanging in the waterfall for 10 minutes shall we??? Fortunately, we managed to get everything looking at least slightly normal, before Mark \*\*\* and Bean strolled along and made the whole exercise look utterly futile by waltzing down the pitch without any aid whatsoever.

**Mak**

**\*\*\*Editorial note, this Website entry was followed up with the following posting:- "That was me not Mark and yes swildons is an NTR (no tackle required) trip for all but the furthest reaches"**

**(Signed) Mark. Since 1 Bean = 1 Mark, I gave up at this point in my transcription!**

Saturday March 17 2007 Ogor Draenen Both Marks.

Bean (Mark) and Myself (Mark) had a good trip in Draenen on Saturday visiting the War Of the Worlds area of the Cave - about 4 hours from the entrance ! Things to see on the way include the snowball gypsum formation, the washing machine boulder encrusted with gypsum crystals and the Reactor with its green wall caused by staining from a copper vein ! The highlight of the trip is the formations right at the end of the War of the Worlds North passage in a side passage known as Sendero Luminoso. These formations are simply stunning and a just reward for the hours of stooping / crawling / boulder hopping it took to get there - and back ! Overall trip time was about 8 hours of good solid caving (it felt like more !) **Mark (Helmore)**

Saturday March 3 2007 Shatter Cave Phil.

Solo photographic trip to Canopy and Diesel Chambers. Strong inwards draught. Did I get a wiff of diesel in Diesel Chamber?? Shot a film playing with different exposures and lighting positions. **Phil**

Sunday March 4 2007 Rhino Rift Kev, Clive, Jon Beal and Charlie Reid-Henry.

RH route for pitch one and two rigged by Kev, then LH for final pitch to speed things up. De-rigged by Charlie.

Saturday March 3 2007 Charterhouse Cave Pete Hahn and Ali.  
More work at the dig at the end of the boulder ruckle. The choke is now becoming much loser with a disconcerting tendency to throw boulders without warning. Pete can vouch for this after a large rock landed on his ear. Good cementing session and I think there will be plenty more of these in the next few trips. Absolute

gale blowing through the choke but I think that if either of us wear any more thermals we will not fit through the entrance series.

Quotes of the trip:

Pete, wrestling with a large boulder: "My belly keeps getting in the way"

Ali, trying to get through a squeeze in the boulder ruckle with a bucket of cement; "I wish you would dig the bloody passage bigger" **Ali**

Tuesday 6 March 2007 **Lionels** Tom Stearn, Andrew Moon, Steve Turner, Graham Speed, Ali Moody

Usual round trip – through West Low Level and the Second Duck Bypass. Quick detour under Sandwich Boulder to visit the end the sump. Completed the round trip by exiting through the connection boulder ruckle to Junction Chamber and then out via East Low Level and Boulder Chamber – all good fun. A special mention must be made of Steve, who having left his oversuit at home completed the trip in a hurry over his neofleece – I think that I would have just gone to the pub!

Still some time left to play so the evening was completed with a trip around the upper Pierre's circuit. **Ali**

Friday March 9 2007 **Eastwater** Hatstand, Jonathan, Clarie, Andy, Fiona, Charlotte

Fi convinced that we did this in reverse (Woggle Passage first, up Hallelujah Hole, Upper Traverse last), however conversation over beer with Bean had us unconvinced. Bean convinced that we did it the normal way round. Whatever, a cracking trip. Hat nearly got left in the Hallelujah Hole. He was finding it rather snug (fat git) until Charlotte stepped into the breach and gave him something to push against! Out in time for the pub, so that's all right then. **Clarie**

Undated.....!! **Cwm Dwr**. Pony, Geoff, Andy Judd, John, Russ, Andy Jackson and Fiona.

We all had a good trip. The entrance to Cwm Dwr is excellent, the nearest thing I've seen to a loo pan! Fantastic start to the trip. Nice passages. Had a look at the sumps. The streamway was in good condition. It's great to hit the water.. **Anon** \*\*\*\*\*  
Aaaaarrggggghhhhh

Saturday March 10 2007 **Swildons Hole**. Ali, Clarie, Rich, Clive, John Cooper (Chelsea SS)

Down at the 20 we met Hatstand and Tommo trying out a new ladder, then we went on to Tratman's Temple in search of steam-free pictures. Next we did a complicated photograph from the bottom of the Black Hole with John on finger-toe-tip pose across the traverse. As Clarie hadn't been before we caved to the end of Fools Paradise. Back in Swildons 2 we went to the Landing for a final picture, when thankfully the film ran out. 5 ½ somewhat purposeful hours but a laugh a minute. **Clive**

Tuesday 13 March 2007 **Eastwater (Dark Cars and Sunglasses, and Unlucky Strike)** Andrew Moon, Tom Stearn, Steve Turner, Dick Crane, Graham Stone, Richard Carey, Ali Moody

Ali, Tom and Andrew had visited Lucky Strike of the Second Rift Chamber last autumn and this was the original plan was to repeat this trip. However, I suggested that we went to Dark Cars and Sunglasses in the First Rift Chamber. Tom and Steve kindly

offered to do the climb and put a ladder down for the rest of the party. Unfortunately the first squeeze "thinned" (sorry excuse the pun) out the party and only Ali, Tom And Rich were able to continue. Three more squeezes and Tom and Ali reached the terminal sump. I had forgotten how well decorated this section of passage is – with some good formations and helictites (honest). While the officially thin members of the team extracted themselves from Dark Cars the others all visited Unlucky Strike but unfortunately were unable to descend the pitch down the final rift as we had the ladder. **Ali**

Wednesday March 14 2007 **Tynings Barrow Swallet** Andy, Clarie, Charlotte, Jonathan, Ian and Stuart.

Trip down to the Fort after Stalagmite Choke. Some really nice stuff down there that we spotted - bones, glittery stal. Etc. First time down cave for all except Andy and Clarie. We all like it. **Jonathan**.

Sunday March 11 2007 **Peak Cavern** Buxton Water, Ink Sump, Dooms Retreat. Chris Grosart, John Taylor.

Superb trip to look at Jim Lister's dig and penthouse! The boulders on the downstream side of the airbell in Buxton Water have moved significantly - care required. Easy carry to Ink Sump, where the visibility was amazing - Gin clear. 200 metres or so later we emerged in "Chez Jim" and Christine could not stop giggling at the comfy little "Second Home" he's built himself! Good effort. End boulder choke still very unstable with +++ hanging death. **Chris**

Saturday March 10 2007 **Rift Mine** Phil Hendy

Re-visit after 20 + years. Two parallel rifts with 20' drops. Found a way to the bottom but did not do all of the drops and squeezes as I was solo. Charnel Shaft has a nice shiny new gate. **Phil**

Saturday March 17 2007 **Ogof Craig a Fynnon** John Beale, Mike Thomas, Wayne Starsmore, Christine Grosart, Malc Foyle, Clive Westlake.

Proceeded to Green Ore Café, not wholly successfully as it's closed. On to Clydach Gorge much more happily as we went down OCAF to see the usual sights of this fine cave. Back via darkest Bedminster - to visit the world's biggest Spring Roll emporium. It was shut. **Clive**

Tuesday 20 March **St Cuthbert's** Ali Moody, Dick Crane, Graham Speed, Andrew Moon, Tom Stearn, Richard Carey Trip to Cuthbert's Two.

Sump I was very low – hardly more than a puddle. However, there had obviously been a considerable amount of water down the cave since the trip that Clive Westlake and I had done to Sump II last October as the area just before the sump was covered in a very slimy layer of silt where the stream had backed up. Rescued a very unhappy looking frog from by sump II. The logistics of getting Mr Frog out of the cave was solved by putting him in a glove, sealing it with a rubber band, which Andrew then offered to put in his helmet – rather him than me. Route into the cave was via Stal pitch so exited through Rabbit Warren. At the Wire Rift a second frog was rescued and Andrew did the final part of the trip with two gloves each containing a frog (as they wouldn't share) in his helmet! **Ali**

# The Molephone.....an ear to the Underground

*Some idiot unleashed Clive on one of this Journal's articles:*

**CG:** "Bloody Hell, Clive, I've never had a piece of work back with so many corrections. I'm so glad you weren't my English teacher"

**CW:** "So am I"

~~~~~  
And an uplifting saga of the British love of animals.....

West Dorset Recycling Saves Dog Trapped Down Cave

On Sunday 17th September a dog was winched to safety after becoming stranded at the bottom of the Aven du Rouet - a deep resurgence shaft on the Hortus plateau in the Hérault region of Southern France. The dog, which was found in a healthy condition, had no identification attached to it but was wearing a radio location collar. It is not known when the dog fell the 10m into the sump pool or how it managed to swim to the only dry ground available, where it then sat down to await its fate.



The dog was discovered by Mr Jon Beal, part of a team of cavers on holiday in the region at the time. 'I went to climb back up the ladder at the bottom of the shaft and saw these two blooming great eyes staring at me. It took me a moment to work out what it was' said Mr Beal. 'There was no way that the dog could get out on its own and of course we couldn't leave it down there. So we had to think up a way of getting it out.' Mr Mike Thomas, interviewed shortly after the incident, said 'me and Jon had a chat and we decided that we needed some kind of basket in which to haul the dog up. Kev's large council recycling come caving box was ideal.' When questioned as to whether Mr Hilton's caving box was volunteered Mr Thomas commented 'no, Kev did not want the box to be used. He moaned like an old woman about the possibility of the dog having fleas and the fleas then getting into his caving kit. But we used the box anyway.'

35 minutes after discovering the dog it was successfully hauled to the surface in a basket constructed from a West Dorset Recycling Scheme collection box and a good length of rope. Mr Charles Reid-Henry who was also present and assisted with the hauling was heard to offer other solutions for the dog and the suggestion that the rescue was followed up with a good barbeque. However these were not acted upon and Mr Reid-Henry was unavailable for further comment.

Upon its release an eye witness account described how the dog wandered over to the nearest bush, cocked its leg and then sauntered nonchalantly off along a hedgerow. It has not been seen since but it is assumed that it is now happily reunited with its owner.

Cheramodytes

I was going to pontificate on the subject of Tetanus this time, but something far more important has arisen... the suggestion that our emblem might be a Wyvern. Just as well that I have come back to keep an eye on things. This is what I wrote in Wessex Journal Vol 7, No 83. February 1962:-

“The Wessex Dragon

In a shower of gold the Wessex Dragon flew in a my window and looked over my shoulder He was furious. As he can't hold a pen in his claws he asked to write and say how angry he is with the Editor for having allowed him to be described in the last issue of this Journal as a “Wyvern”. A Wyvern is an altogether inferior beast, having but two legs (the front two), while our Dragon has four, two to get along with and two for holding a lighted candle, that most dependable illuminant. He acknowledges the red Welsh Dragon as a child of his, in much the same way as the South Wales Caving Club is a child of the Wessex; but it was as a golden arm-band that he was worn by the Earls of Wessex before the conquest. Here is his description: Head and snout like nothing on earth, unless it be that of a crocodile with pointed ears; tongue barbed, body and tail covered in scales like a lizard, small one behind and large plates in front; small scales cover the legs, which end in claws like a bird (three in front and one behind); wings like a bat; tail barbed at the tip and always pointing upwards. (Tail between legs signifies “Coward”)**. Cheramodytes**

Campsites for the PSM Noel

My Recce of the potential campsites was hindered by snow. The roads to and around **Arette la Pierre St Martin** were either blocked or required chains. The campsites themselves, being in the valley bottoms, were largely clear. The road above the **Kakouetta** were unswept and impassible without chains, so I couldn't visit the actual **St. Engrace Gite d'Etape**. Accommodation and camping reservations there have been made by Andy and Christiane Kay, but in correspondence with Andy I have been unable to get any details. Essentially the situation is that for everyone who was on the last such PSM camp, nothing has changed. My concern was, and is, for those (like myself) who don't know the set-up, or who do, but want an alternative.

There are alternatives. Touring the area revealed a number of sites which do not appear on any Internet search, in any guide, or on any map that I've seen. The two which seem most appropriate do, however, although the most convenient one offers few details. This is **Camping Ibarra**. Its Web-site comes up directly from a Google on “**Camping Ibarra**”. This is a level riverside meadow. There is a facilities block with separate female and male showers, basins and toilets. There seem to be 1 squattie and 3 normal toilets in each. Outside are dish-washing basins and a (very French) male urinal. There are electrical outlets (both international caravan and French 2 pin) scattered around the site. It ostensibly offers 40 “Emplacements”, but these were not specifically delineated and seemed somewhat informal. A handful of trees may provide some shade, but without designated pitches shade may be awkward. There is a pretty, shallow, splashy river on one side but no swimming as

such. It's a very attractive site and probably rates 1.5 Stars. Although it had no built-in café or bar, there are both within easy walking distance. Shopping is at **Licq-Atherey**, 8 kms down the valley. The huge advantage of **Camping Ibarra** is that it is only 5 kms from the PSM “Base” as it were, up at the **St. Engrace Gite d'Etape**, so it would be easy to go up there in the evenings to socialise and liase with Malc.

For anyone wanting a proper camp-site, the only realistic alternative is **Camping Baretous-Pyrenees**. This is at **Aramits**, some 25 kms from **St. Engrace**. It's well described on the 'Web. Medium swimming pool, sunbathing deck, bar, café. Pitches are well shaded. Electricity points for all. The village has bars, shops, cafes and a hotel restaurant. The Manageress stressed that it was vital to book early, but agreed that we could pack pitches with extra tents, and could earmark a block of sites for us. My feeling is that it is inconveniently far from **St. Engrace**, and that I would prefer to be at **Ibarra** and accept the lack of pool or bar. I will, of course, provide the usual charging and domestic electrical boards, and carbide disposal bin wherever we camp.

Time is of the essence here. If I am to book a block on pitches and make a deal on tent numbers and a group rate, then I need to do so as soon as possible, so please let me know if you would like me to include you in such a booking, and/or whether you would accept the distance drawback in favour of the more luxurious **Barretous-Pyrenees**. **Noel**

Recent Library Additions

Philip Hendy

Bristol Exploration Club 'Belfry Bulletin' 56, 1.52 (Mar 07)
BCRA Cave and Karst Science 33, 1 (2006, publ. 1/07)
Bulletin 'Speleology' 8 (Dec 06)

Cave Diving Group N/L 162 (Jan 07)
Chelsea S.S. N/L. 49, 2, 3 (Feb, Mar 07)
Craven Pothole Club. Record. 85 (Jan 07)
Descent 194 (Feb/Mar 07) (Upper Flood, Swildon's Hole Grand Tour)
Devon S.S. N/L (Feb 07)
Grampian S.G. Bulletin. 4th Series Vol. 3 No. 1 (Oct 06)
Grosvenor C.C. N/L 137 (Dec 06), 138 (Jan 07)
MNRC N/L 111 (Xmas / New Year 07)
Plymouth C.G. N/L / Jnl. 147 (May 06), 148 (Jun 06), 149 (Dec 06)
Speleo-Club de Perigueux. Bull. 'Speleo Dordogne' 176 - 179 (1st - 4th quarters 2006)
S.U.I. (Ireland). 'Underground' 69 (Winter 06)
U.B.S.S. Proc. 24, 1 (2006, Publ. Jan 07)
(Possible mammoth engraving in Gough's Cave)
N/L Third Series 3 (May 06), 4 (Aut 06)
Cooper M. (2006) Not for the Faint-Hearted (50 harder caving trips in Yorkshire)
Lawrence J. (1955) The Caves Beyond
Atthill R. (1971) Old Mendip
Lovelock J. (1969) Caving
Cadoux J. (1957) One Thousand Metres Down
Chevalier P. (1951) Subterranean Climbers
Attout J. (1956) Men of Pierre Saint-Martin
Casteret N. (1962) More Years under the Earth
Tazieff H. (1952) La Gouffre de la Pierre Saint-Martin
Hardy T. (1981) Our Exploits at West Poley
Trombe F. (1951) Les Eaux Souterraines
Laming-Emperaire (1951) L'Art Prehistorique
Ballard J. (1974) Derbyshire Caves, Potholes and Mines
Farr M. (1985) Wookey / the caves beyond
Quarrying in Somerset (1974) Somerset County Council Policy Document

Kindly donated by Trevor Shaw:

Hill C. & Forti P. Cave Minerals of the World (2nd Edn). 1997 NSS
Shaw T.R. Foreign Travellers in the Slovene Karst 1537 - 1900 (2000) Zalozba ZRC [Ljubljana]
Shaw T.R. Names from the Past in Postojnska Jama (Postojna Cave) (2006) Zalozba ZRC [Ljubljana]

Vol 18 of the Wessex Cave Club Journal is missing from the Library. Would whoever has this item please return it asap, as it is required for research.

We are still searching for the negatives for the Frank Frost photo collection? They were given to someone for printing some years ago, and have never been returned. Some are the property of Don Thomson.

Wessex Cave Club Yorkshire Meets.

Saturday May 26 2007.	Top Sink - Lancaster Hole.
Sunday May 27 2007	Cow Pot.
Saturday June 23 2007	Birks Fell
Saturday July 14 2007	Gingling Hole
Sunday July 15 2007	Washfold Pot
Saturday September 8 2007	Hammer Pot
Sunday September 9 2007	Little Hull Pot
Saturday October 13 2007	Lancaster - County
Sunday October 14 2007	Pool Sink
Saturday November 10 2007	Notts Pot
Sunday November 11 2007	Boxhead / Lost Johns.
Saturday December 15 2007	Rumblilng Hole
Sunday December 16 2007	Short Drop / Gavel Pot.

Anyone wishing to use these permits, please contact our Northern Secretary, Keith Sanderson, Telephone: 01524 251 662 or Email: keithsanderson@btinternet.com

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Diary Dates	
5 - 7 May	Penderyn Weekend
03 June	Committee Meeting
03 June	Taster Day
10 June	Hut Working Weekend and BBQ
23 June	MRO practice/Training. St. Cuthberts.
07 July	Cricket-V-BEC & BBQ
04-18 August	PSM
06 Oct	Ali's Boat Race - Full details in next Journal



Kingsdale Master Cave - Valley Entrance Duck. John Hurst. Photo: Mak



Swinsto. Bean on rope. Photo: Mak