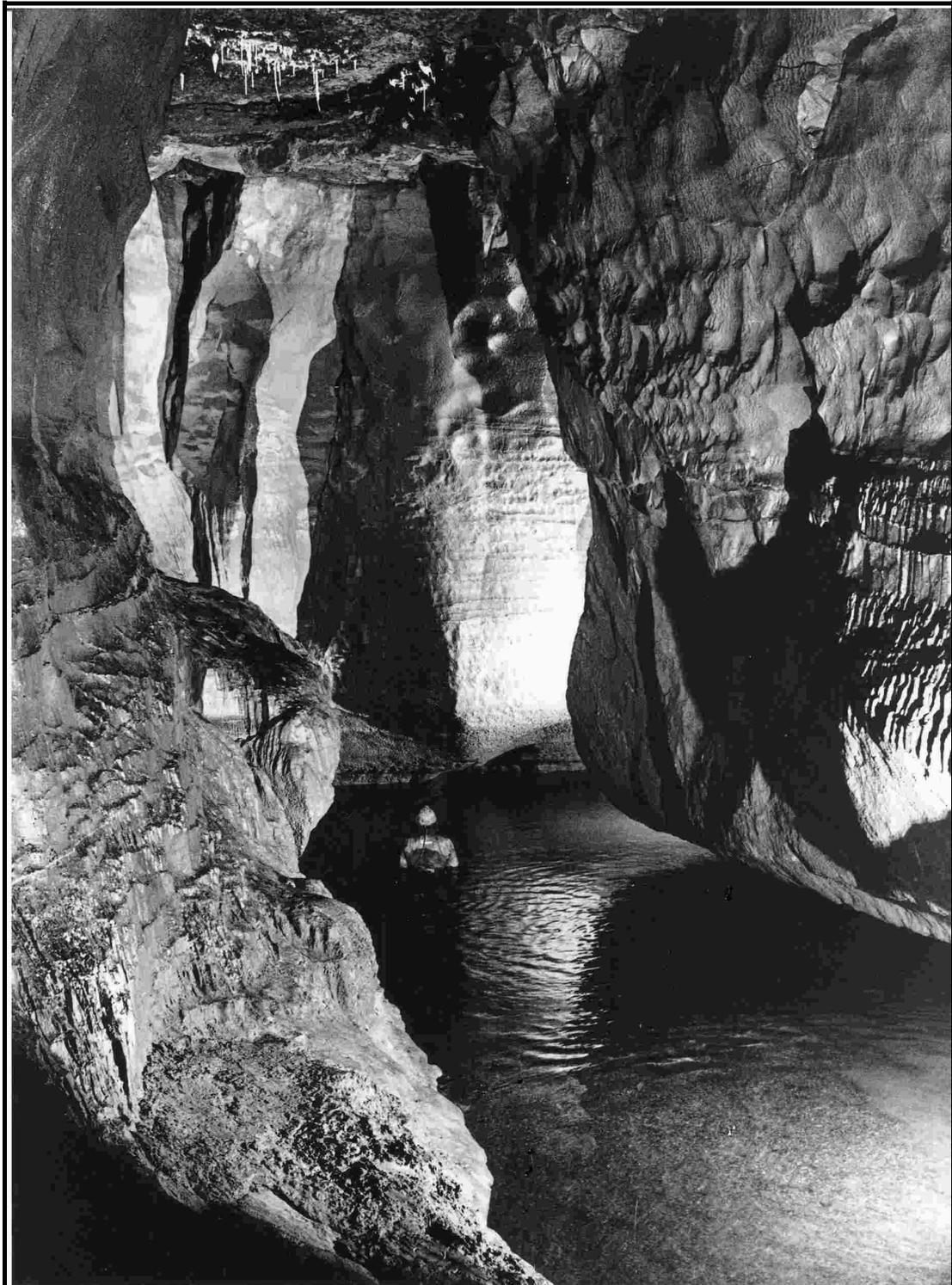


Journal of the Wessex Cave Club

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Agen Allwedd. Maytime. Photo: Clive Westlake.

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Never having kept my back issues of the Journal, or a Volume Index, I had not appreciated that the page numbering should restart with a new volume. For simplicity and to avoid confusion the current page numbering will continue through the life of Volume 30. We owe Phil Hendy - who compiles the index, and Alison Moody - who proof-reads it, a vote of thanks. It is a time consuming labour.

The difficulties of compiling a satisfactory index are compounded by the large number of un-attributed, or anonymous, Journal items. I am largely to blame for the un-credited photographs, and this has the potential to cause copyright problems. This is not a minor issue. I failed to attribute no less than 57 of the 121 illustrations in Volume 29! More surprisingly, however, of the 399 Journal text items, 65 were anonymous. I have no control over this. In an effort to minimise the problem we put a "Please remember" note on every page of the new trip log-book last January. Since the Upper Pitts log-book is written by members to record their trips this hardly seemed controversial, but someone took offence and abusively vandalised it. So this attempt was abandoned, the log-book replaced with a new one, and the cost written off.

Where I copy your caving accounts from the Wessex Web-Site there is no authorship problem, but I still have some troubles with nicknames. Eg. For Kknowme, read Gnomie (Sorry Dave!). Mistakes do intrude where I have to transcribe your handwriting from the Upper Pitts Log Book, both because I err and because your handwriting is, very occasionally, fractionally imperfect.

Ideally we'd like the photographs in the Journal to be directly associated with caving accounts. It would be invidious to praise individuals when there were 36 different photographers represented in Volume 29. Clive Westlake, however, is in another category, having given me three CDs of superlative photographs for ad hoc use in the Journal. I try to use those of caves we all know well, but the temptation enjoy his more exotic foreign marvels is often irresistible.

And having welcomed Cheramodytes back to the Journal two years ago, it is delightful to welcome a less ghostly Phil Davies (who is a seriously professional photographer) back into our journalistic fold (page 249).

Apart from enjoying the many photographs in this year's Journals, I hope that the Journals as a whole have reflected another successful Wessex Cave Club year; on which happy note, from Tuska and all your committee,



*A Very Happy Christmas*



# John Maneely - Obituary

Born in 1976, John attended King's Manor School emerging with some academic success. He enjoyed his time in the Scouts, relishing the open air life and the company of his peers. He worked for several local companies, before being employed by Ricardo Engineering, Shoreham. He absorbed and retained knowledge at a prodigious rate, becoming a valuable employee, capable of working away from base on specialist projects around the world.



**John Maneely. Photo: Brighton BSAC.**

His interests were motorcycling and then scuba diving. He was trained locally and then joined Brighton BSAC at the Sussex Yacht Club and became a reliable member, rebuilding parts of the dive boat engine and the club compressor. Ever restless he then moved on to becoming a "Regular" on BUCCANEER, gently encouraging us to discover ever more wreck sites and towards using a different dive gas to prolong and make our diving safer. He enjoyed several diving holidays with many friends, diving the Normandy shipwrecks and those around the Isles of Scilly.

The next stage was the training, purchase and use of a re-breather and that took him to more adventurous diving groups and other much deeper wrecks, mixing his own dive gases and he was happy to impart this and other knowledge to those who were interested.

Cave diving was the next passion, initially in the UK and then in France, always returning to dive with his friends in the sea on a regular basis, whilst keeping us all agog with tales of further underground exploits and difficulties of ever deeper penetration, to discover what lay beyond.

As a person he was loyal, reliable, likeable, much loved and respected by all those whose lives he touched.

Always ready to lend a helping hand, he was a joy to know. He was constantly seeking new horizons and kept a very large circle of friends of all ages and outlooks. There is a saying that “There are old divers and bold divers, but no old and bold divers”. But in this case, whilst he lived his life adventurously, he was always careful, entirely competent, looked after his equipment well and understood exactly how it worked.

He will be very much missed by his friends and family.

(We are indebted to all John's friends at Brighton BSAC for this obituary, and these 2 photographs).

### **John's caving and cave diving exploits - from some of his friends in the Wessex Cave Club.**

John joined the Wessex in spring 2007 whilst remaining an active member of the Wealden Cave & Mine Society. I first met John through a diving forum where he was asking for information on dry caves in the Lot & Dordogne area. Knowing that he already held a full cave diving qualification with Phill Short, I was impressed that someone who was primarily a diver would want to go to a cave diving mecca and do some dry caving. I gave him a stack of information and was even more impressed that he used this to knock off some cracking caves in France and also photograph them.



**John Maneely. Photo: Brighton BSAC.**



**John in Exurgence de Gourneyras. Photo: Clive Westlake**

My first caving trip with John was in Agen Allwedd. Clive Westlake, Alison Moody and myself 'took' him to Iles' Inlet to see the Courtesan and associated pretties. It soon became unclear who was 'taking' who on this trip as Clive and I sat in Southern Stream on the way home, pretending we needed to stop for a drink when in actual fact we felt the need to discuss how we were going to keep up with this 'novice' caver who was snapping at Mrs Moody's heels all the way out!

I proposed John for membership of the Wessex and Clive duly seconded him. Our next adventure took us to Yorkshire, where we did some fantastic caving and cave diving. John excelled himself on some of

his first UK cave dives and some trickier caving trips. Clive and I tried quite hard to persuade him to join our section of the CDG. Owing to his location in Brighton however, he decided to join the Somerset Section where he had many adventures and made many friends, culminating in being at the forefront of exploration in Wigmore Swallet. John joined a large cave diving contingent in France in the summer of this year and in typical style, was on a mission to do all the things he had planned as well as help in exploratory dives and carrying trips. He was a pleasure to have on the campsite and amused us with his custom-made van which he lived in for the week whilst his gear resided in the tent!

It was impossible to dislike John in any way, shape or form. He was honest, loyal, sensible and likeable. He had a fantastic sense of humour and is described as having a smile which could melt ice.

Russ Harrison, John's best friend of some 25 years says : "Johnno was always on the go, resourceful and quietly determined. A trait you all seem to have recognised in him from the off. Waiting wasn't his strong suit and he was always on the go; he's probably packed more into one glorious short life than some of us ever will."

John, you were much loved and will be greatly missed. **Christine Grosart**

Here are some trip reports from his friends' logs, which sum up John very well.

Friday May 4 2007 **Joint Hole** Clive Westlake, John Maneely, Chris Grosart

Superb conditions in Joint and a very pleasant and trouble free trip to the Cockpit. John did exceptionally well and had had to be forcibly removed from the Cockpit squeeze and sent home! A game of noughts and crosses on my slate passed the safety stop. **Christine**

Sunday May 6 2007 **Swinsto Hole/KMC Master Cave** pull through. Clive Westlake, John Maneely, Chris Grosart

Clive, John and I went into KMC first to rig the ladder pitch before coming out to go up to Swinsto. Some excellent and sportingly wet pitches and a thoroughly enjoyable trip, which John yet again managed with total ease and not a worry about his SRT skills. **Christine**

Saturday 20 September 2008 **Charterhouse Cave.** Pete & Ali Moody, Andrew Atkinson (UBSS), Mark Easterling (Bean) and John Maneely.

The aim of this trip was for Pete to have a second look at the sump at the end of The Timeline, and I also wanted a few more photos for Hidden Earth. Pete dived on a base fed line, finding yet another air-bell, but no way on. The sump just appears to stal up. John was obviously itching to have a go and although only in a Neofleece borrowed Pete's diving equipment and disappeared into the sump – what it is to be young and keen! He confirmed Pete's findings but believes that it would be worth re-belaying the line and checking the right hand side of the sump – there must be an outlet for the water somewhere. He hopes to have another better-equipped attempt at the sump on his return from France. I had warned John before the trip that he would probably get wet – but I didn't expect him to get quite this wet! All except Pete continued to the downstream sump and as this was John's first trip down Charterhouse a quick tourist was made of the old cave on the way out. **Ali**

## Club News

**Maurice Hewins** presented "Movie Making within the Limestone" at Wells Museum on Friday, 31<sup>st</sup>. October. It was a successful and well attended event.

**The 2008 AGM** This was held at the Hunters Lodge on Saturday October 18. The minutes are on display in the library at Upper Pitts. Very briefly; the idea of a major club extension was rejected in favour of completing the considerable number of minor improvements and important maintenance currently outstanding. The annual subscription was reduced to £30. Lou Biffin took over the post of Hut Warden from Pauline Grosart and Aubrey Newport the post of Treasurer from David Cooke.

**The Driveway** The Driveway will be concreted in the New Year. Weather permitting concreting of the driveway will take place in January, ideally we need two clear working weeks, so the favourite timing at present is to start week beginning 12<sup>th</sup> January as we have few hut booking at that time. Immediately afterwards it will be prohibited for cars for a week, to allow the concrete to cure (and to lorries for longer). We will ensure that the Gas and Oil are adequate to carry us over the non-delivery period, but there is a very outside chance that the Septic Tank might cause problems.

**Swildon's Hole Survey.** Two all-new A1-sized versions of the survey are now available. The colour version includes a

selection of photographs of the cave. The monochrome survey has a discovery time-line, while both include a map showing the relationship of the cave to the surface topography, and enlargements of complicated areas of the cave. They are printed on heavy-gauge gloss paper, so will be prohibitively expensive to post. They are available via Committee members from Upper Pitts, and from Ali and Brian. The price is £8 for colour, £5 for monochrome, though members can purchase both for the introductory price of £10 until a month after publication of this Journal.

**Losses from Tackle Store** The tackle store is open to all members. This is a long-standing policy and reflects the unanimous wishes of the club members. There are persistent losses of tackle which is not lost to "Underground incidents" (Which are invariably reported to Tommo anyway). It would lessen casual losses if members would be conscientious and always log tackle and keys out - it would emphasise the need to return it and sign it in.

**Maillons in Tackle Store** In accordance with the AGM wishes, Tommo put 20 maillons into the tackle store in late October. There are only 18 there now.

**GB key** Normally there is one "Members" GB Key in the tackle store. Another two are held in the under-stairs cupboard for loan to guests, or use by members when there might be two non-coincident GB trips in a day. Guests must pay a **£20** deposit to take a key. Recently the tackle store key vanished and there was much Forum discussion on the subject of key transfer, and the matter was discussed exhaustively at the last Committee meeting. To nail something firmly on the head, there was not, and never has been, the slightest intent or suggestion that Members might have to pay a key deposit. The Wessex has now lost no less than 10 GB keys since the new padlock was installed. There is no obvious reason why a Wessex member should need a personal key, or to want one permanently in his or her possession, so the suspicion is that keys are walking out with non-members. It is up to you, as members, to ensure that guest keys are properly (and legibly!) signed out, charged for, and returned. If you accidentally lose a key, the please report it: it's reassuring to know that it's more probably trodden into the mud than secreted in someone's possession.

**Under-Stairs Keys.** The under-stairs cupboard houses guest hut and cave keys, CCC permits, and various other keys for cupboards around Upper Pitts. Every Committee member holds a key, as well as Dave Cooke, Pauline Grosart, Alison Moody, Aubrey Newport, Brian Prewer, Simon Richardson, (Big) Stu Waldren and Anne Vanderplank.

**"Electronic" Journals** All recent Journals are available on-line as PDFs, so they can be printed out, or read on-screen. If anyone would rather not bother to have a printed Journal distributed to them, then please tell our Membership Secretary, Charlotte, and she will amend the distribution list.

**Goatchurch** The loose boulders above the Drainpipe have been cement fixed and should be stable enough for Drainpipe access by the time you read this.

**Rod's Pot** Similar stabilising work has been carried out inside Rod's Pot entrance, and this, too, should be solidly stabilised by now.

**Sales** The Sales items price list is on view in the club. Christine is about to put in a bulk order so it there's something you need (Think Christmas! Think Presents!) Please let either Christine or Aubrey know.

**Losses and "Theft"** It's possible that standards have lapsed, or that a somewhat cavalier attitude to personal caving equipment (particularly in the changing and drying rooms) has crept in, but it is demonstrably true that people are apt to label missing kit as "Stolen" when it is simply mislaid. If this is aired on the Internet, it creates the impression that Upper Pitts has a major honesty problem. It would help dispel this if shrill accusations of theft were balanced by admissions that theft was not, after all, the problem. Items left lying around are likely to be moved around, but it doesn't imply theft. Please remember that you are completely responsible for your own equipment.

**Working Weekends** Ian Timney's two major working weekends (23 and 30 November) were adequately supported and all the planned works completed, leaving only some ceiling plaster to dry before painting. Very many thanks to all the Members who turned up and got stuck in so effectively, and most of all to Ian who organised the tasks. Tough on Lou that we reduced Upper Pitts to a chaotic shambles just as soon as she'd accepted responsibility for it.

**Books.** Tony Jarratt bequeathed his stock of Mendip Underground to the Mendip Cave Registry. They are on sale at Upper Pitts for £5; some of the proceeds go to MCR to finance a new version, the remainder goes to a cancer charity chosen by Tony. From the same source, we have a number of "Swallet Caves and Rock Shelters", Book 3 in the series written by H.E. Balch (our first president). This book describes the early exploration of swildon's Hole, Eastwater cavern, Longwood Swallet and many other caves. It is priced at £5.

#### **From the Cambrian Caving Council Newsletter October 2008**

**Dan yr Ogof.** Until further notice, during wet weather, approximately 8 cavers only will be allowed into the cave each day. The number allowed in during dry periods remains unchanged. The show-cave staff may deny access if they feel that weather or water levels warrant it.

**Tunnel Cave** is not weather dependant, access is similar to that for DY0. Ask at the showcave for an airlock key. Access to the gated Tunnel top entrance is via SWCC.

**Bridge Cave.** Unusually wet weather has caused the boulder choke to become undermined. There is now a wet flat-out crawl at stream level, leaving parts of the choke above apparently unsupported. No movement has been reported yet, but take care...

**Otter Hole.** Bookings via <http://www.rfdcc.org.uk/> and follow the links. Many 2009 dates have already been booked.

**Forest of Dean caves.** The RFDCC website (above) contains a Google map of the area with all caves located. Click on Caves in the left hand bar. Mines will be added eventually.

**Ogof Ffynnon Ddu.** Columns open day Jan 1st 2009

**Hidden Earth** Following this year's "Hidden Earth" held from Friday 26 to Sunday 28 September 2008 at Prince Henry's Grammar School, Otley, West Yorkshire, a formal vote of thanks was passed for the help given by the Wessex Cave Club.

**The Wessex Annual Dinner** Wendy Williams organised a most successful dinner, held at the Wedmore Golf Club on Saturday 18 October. Several members were heard to comment about the potential of opening up some of the small holes that could be seen on the greens outside, swearing that they were draughting. The Guest of honour was Robin Gray whose lively anecdotes and even more interesting cartoons proved very entertaining. There was a poignant tribute to absent friends before the serious business of drinking and generally having a really good time got underway. As ever our thanks to Wendy for a great "Do". Awarding the Frank Frost prize for the best Journal article this year, to Mike Thomas for his account of the caving expedition to Greece, our President, Don Thompson, reflected that Frank Frost had acquired a strange fame amongst total strangers to the caving world, as the words "Frank Frost is a b\*\*\*\*\*d, a b\*\*\*\*\*d is Frank Frost, sung to the tune of "Onward Christian Soldiers" had been heard on a troopship of all places. Sic transit gloria..... Les acted as Master of Ceremonies and believing that he had the Tiger of the Year award all sown up, held forth about everybody else's misfortunes over the last year. However unknown to Les, Mak had other plans.....

#### **The Annual Tiger Award**

When Les announced the winner of this year's Tiger, he nominated Dave Murphy (Gnomie) who had a certain near drowning incident in North Wales and some assistance with a squeeze in Afton Red Rift, amongst other incidents. Les had only owned up to another incident in Afton where he tried to emulate Vern by dropping himself down the rift. With two strikes against Gnomie and only one against Les it seemed fair that Gnomie was the recipient. But Les had failed to mention another incident involving himself jumping from wall to wall as he ran down the passage in Swildons. This resulted in him falling flat on his face and injuring his arm (although not as much as his pride). With the potential for two strikes apiece Mak felt it only fair to step in at this stage to call on those assembled to adjudicate in the matter. After explaining the circumstances of the second incident he called on those present to make their voices felt, firstly for those in favour of Gnomie; the resultant hush was only disturbed by the occasional pin dropping, then he called for those in favour of Les, the result was unanimous, and deafening, thus Les is now the proud(?) owner of the Tiger of the Year for 2008, and Mak is being fitted for a hearing aid.

**Telephone Correction** Ali Moody's correct telephone number is: 01749870278 and not as in the 2008 Membership List.

**75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** 2009 will mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Wessex Cave Club. The Committee are seeking any and all ideas of ways in which we could celebrate this event, so, thinking caps on and let us have your ideas.

#### **Templeton Update**

Just over a year ago, the Templeton winch system was being upgraded, with a view to sending the skip down another twenty feet. After the new dumper bay was excavated, several weeks were spent in walling the pit to prevent collapses, and in extending the sloping rail system over it. The bottom of the pit needed some further excavation, mainly by hand in solid rock,

but with slight assistance from a snapper and some cord. This was to enable the dumper to be driven under the rails. Tuska and Jim Young constructed an ingenious system whereby the skip is brought over the dumper and then tilted downwards to allow it to be emptied into the dumper. The winch is powered by a hydraulic pump connected to the front axle of Dave Turner's old Daihatsu 4x4.

Underground, a series of blasts using cord (up to 10mm) in drilled shotholes enabled the rails to be extended by twenty feet. A lot of the debris was hauled to the surface, but much was stored around and under the rails, burying about four feet at the bottom. This was to displace water which proved to be a continual problem, although there appeared to be a maximum height at which the water stopped rising. There is now in place a series of six submersible pumps which raise the water in stages via barrels, to be released on the surface. The bottom pump can cope with a certain amount of sludge, but water from this is piped through a filter into a barrel, from where water is drawn from the top to enter a second barrel containing the second pump. In this way, subsequent pumps have only to deal with muddy water. When full, it can take up to 4.5 hours to pump the water out, so John Hill is now in the habit of turning up mid-afternoon to start operations.

We had been having problems with the generator, which was underpowered for the load drawn by all the pumps plus the lighting system, but earlier this year we were generously given a 7.5kva diesel generator by Dave Roberts. It is a 2 cylinder 'portable' (by 4 men!), and was a b...h to start at first, though we have now mastered the necessary incantations and rituals. It has proved most reliable, and has been fitted with a secondary fuel tank in view of the extended running periods. Eric Dunford has installed a 3-channel CCTV system, one screen of which is colour, with sound. We continue to communicate by radio.

Digging recommenced at the south rift, in mud and stone. Once pumping has finished, residual water is bucketed into a barrel. Top-ups are needed during each digging session, as water continues to seep into the bottom of the dig – from the north rift, down the walls, and latterly from the south end, of which more later. Once the water is removed, the sloppy mud is placed in poly bags, to be taken out. There is a possibility that it may be useful for lining reconditioned dew ponds! Digging has rapidly taken the bottom down about ten feet, to a present depth of around 170ft (52m). At this depth, we seem to have encountered a rock bottom, with vertical beds of rock, similar to those seen in the south wall above. However, a square opening at the back of the dig appears to be a horizontal passage, which is filled with rock-free clay. This, it is hoped, will continue inwards and downwards. Some water seeps from the clay fill here, but this may simply be coming from higher in the south rift. (Earlier this year, water pumped into the top dig, the Annexe, rapidly reappeared from a small opening at the 82ft level.)

Digging ceased for a while, as we dug out the floor at the north end, to lower the barrels to give the bottom pump less lift. However, we were rather premature – heavy rain resulted in the entire floor area being covered with a couple of feet of water, just when we began to have problems with the pumps. This has now been solved, and we are digging again, excavating the mud from the horizontal passage running off the the south.

Some small fragments of mammoth tooth have been found in the washout on the surface of the fill in the north rift. This summer's weather has not been conducive to pumping, though recently we have been taking out between one and three skips of spoil each digging night. With a change in character at the bottom, things are looking interesting, though we still have 400ft of limestone to go down through before we have a back door to Wookey Hole!

Regular diggers, apart from the author, are **John Hill, Dave and Paul Turner, Hugh Tucker and Elaine Johnson**, with occasional visits from **Brian Prewer, John Ham, Nick Beckett, Neil Reaich, Andy Nash and Graham Bowden**.

**Committee Meetings Summary**

At the AGM it was agreed that a short summary of significant Committee Meeting items should be included with each Journal distribution. In this instance, however, almost all these are included above under separate headings. Additionally though: The Club has purchased 200 metres of SRT rope. Two picnic tables have been purchased for when the sun comes round again in 2072. Ian Timney is drawing up a "Priorities" list for next year's Upper Pitts improvement and maintenance programme. In accordance with the wishes expressed at the AGM and in the Questionnaire this excludes

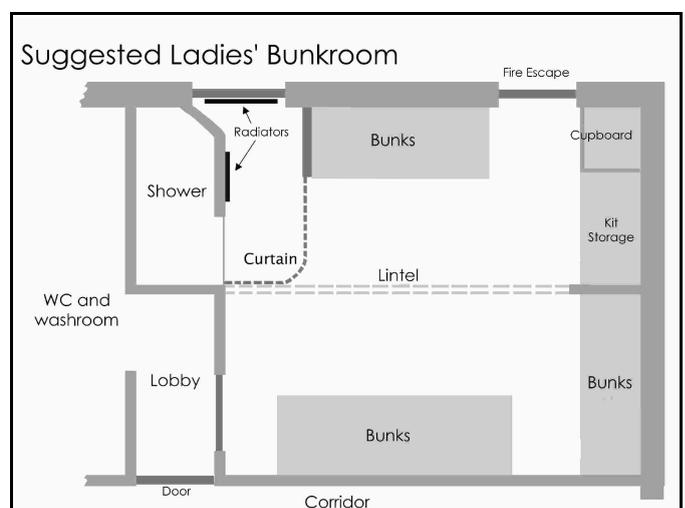
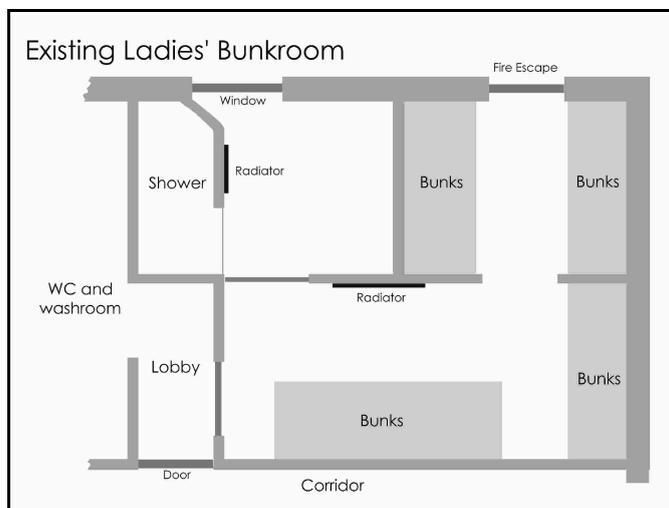


**Graham Candy & Keith Glossop. 1<sup>st</sup>. Visit to Templeton. Quote both: "I don't (expletive) believe it". Photo: Kerrin Malone.**

extensions or enlargements and concentrates on improvements to our existing building. Your Committee, and particularly Ian, would welcome suggestions such as that, below. Let us know what your Upper Pitts improvement ideas are!

**Upper Pitts Developments.**

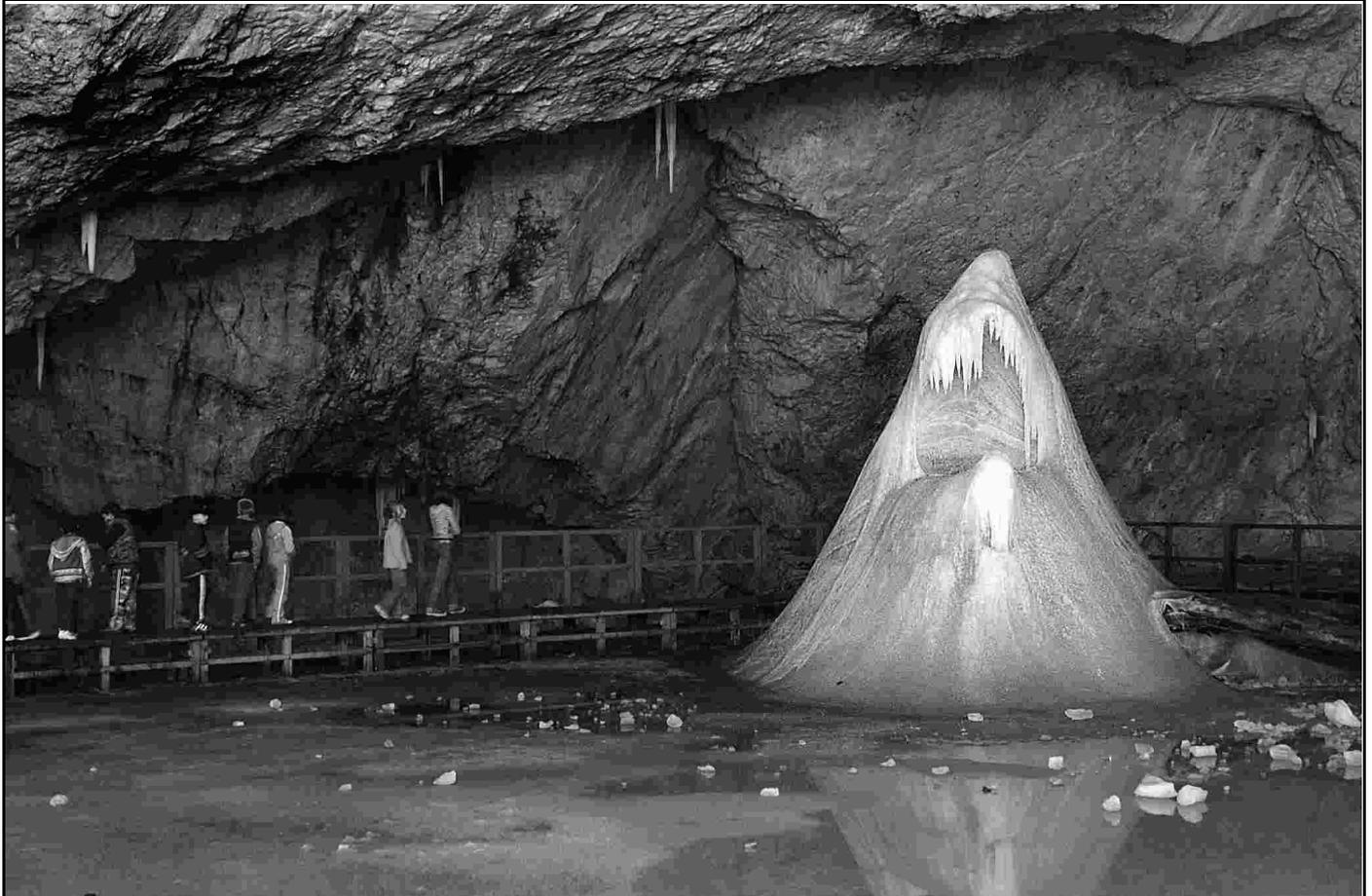
The Ladies' Bunkroom is presently cramped, dimly-lit and damp (see diagram). By removing the internal walls light would get in from the window and fire escape. The load-bearing wall would have to be replaced with a lintel. The bunks currently to the left of the fire escape could be relocated against the external wall, and the radiator would need moving (and probably upgrading). To allow some privacy whilst showering, a curtain could be fixed to the ceiling as shown. Kit storage and storage of various cleaning items is currently a problem. Some of the latter could be moved to the hall cupboards, but cupboards could also be fitted as shown - this is in any case a damp corner where people prefer not to sleep. The remaining area could then be used for kit storage, though there is no reason why a table in the centre of the room could not also be used for the same purpose. These are just general ideas, which I have kicked around with a few members. I have not made any attempt at costings, but feel that they may be worth consideration. **Phil Hendy**



## **Underground in Romania. Phil Davies.**

In his AGM report our Editor rightly considers that our Journal should not only record the caving activities of its members but should reflect other associated interests, whether sporting or social. So here goes, from an armchair, but still mobile member, my first submission to the Journal for more than 30 years.

Since retiring from active caving with the Wessex in the 80's, and letting new generations very competently get on with administration and hut responsibilities, most of our leisure activities have been devoted to travelling and photography. Pat and I journey almost exclusively in a V.W. camper-van. Wherever we travel, whether in Europe, Asia, or in the Americas, we still cannot resist seeing what the local show caves have to offer.



**Pestara Ghetarul Ice Cave. Photo: Phil Davies.**



**Pestara Ghetarul Ice Cave. Photo: Phil Davies.**

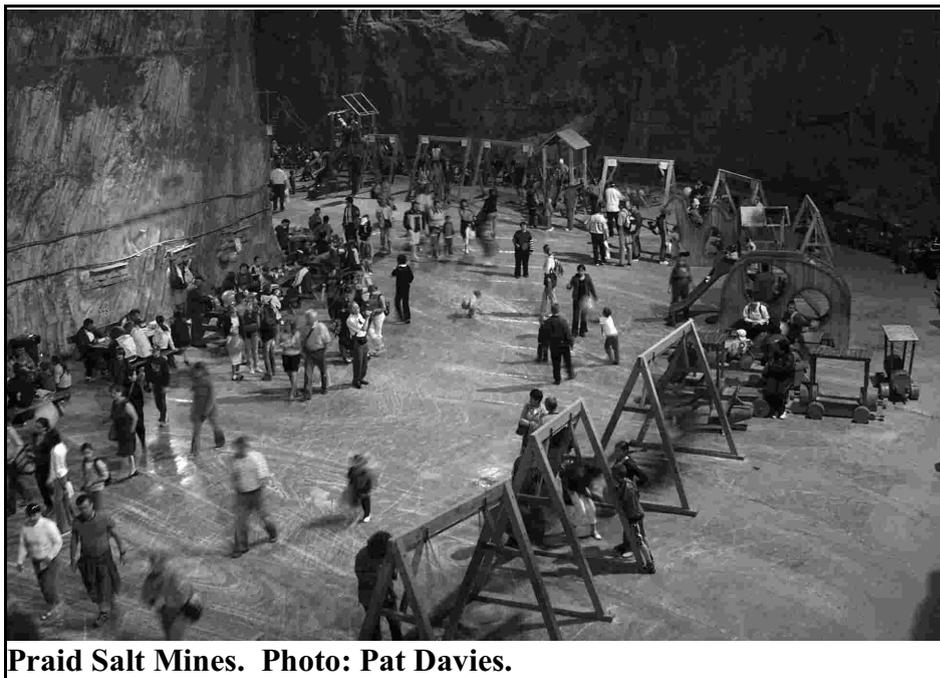
On a five-week visit in June this year to Romania (to explore the country before it becomes too much like the rest of Europe) we found a few fascinating and rather unusual underground sites to visit:- an Ice cave, the Bear cave and the Praid salt mine.

The Ice cave, Pestara Ghetarul near Scarisoara, in the Apuseni mountains (part of the Carpathian range) 80 kms SW of Cluj, is very remote. Access is either an arduous four hour walk (beyond us these days) or a ten km rugged track that proved to be almost beyond our V.W. The cave, at the bottom of a 50 m deep collapsed chamber, contains, according to local info, 75000 cu.m. of ice in places 15 m thick, some of it 3,500 years old. Wooden boardwalks above the frozen lake lead to the highlight "The Cathedral", an impressive if somewhat dirty ice stalagmite group illuminated by unflattering sodium lights. Elsewhere, very pretty, clean ice formations are in the daylight zone.

The Bear cave, Pestera Ursilor near Chiscau, is much more easily accessible, still in the Apuseni Mountains - coaches come from Oradea and Arad on the Hungarian border. The cave, opened by quarrying in 1975, was found to contain the heavily stalled partial skeletal remains of some 140 different bears from the Neolithic age One complete skeleton, possibly not all the bones from the same animal, has been assembled in the final chamber

visited by tourists (total length is more than 5 kms). Apparently the old bear entrance was closed by a landslide, trapping several bears who finally resorted to cannibalism! The hour long guided tour costs about £2. The formations are very impressive and are sympathetically and atmospherically lit - and the guide spoke some English! Stalls outside were abundantly stocked with the kind of souvenirs you don't find at Cheddar.

Salt mines are not unique in this part of Europe, but a visit to the mines at Praid - 60 kms NE of Brasov - are a surreal experience. Salt, some 3 kms thick in places has been mined here since Roman times. When the region was part of the Hungarian empire it was, and still remains, an important economic resource. Doctors in Romania prescribe a week long stay in Praid so that patients can spend several hours each day inhaling the curative properties of the atmosphere, said to help with respiratory ailments.



**Praid Salt Mines. Photo: Pat Davies.**

Entering the mine by bus along a tunnel the patient, and many day trippers, pass through an air lock into a rectangular chamber 15 m high and 24 m across which disappears into the distance. The saline atmosphere is immediately apparent! An equally large, equally well lit branch leads off to one side lined with picnic tables.

Bizarrely a children's playground, with swings, seesaws, and even a go-cart track, entertain younger patients during their four hour treatment session. Many others come as weekend tourists; they bring their roller blades, badminton rackets, books and chess sets etc. There is a church, a photographic exhibition, and plenty of information in English about the history and mining techniques. As I say, quite a surreal experience, best appreciated at a week-end when local people are enjoying themselves.

We did not visit Bucharest nor the Black sea coast, but found more than enough of interest to fill our time. In the far North, where the Carpathian scenery is magnificent, the Province of Maramures, hard on the Ukranian border, has been least affected by recent Europeanisation. Now is the time to visit as a traveller. The caves, both show and wild, certainly warrant a visit by other members of the Club. **Phil Davies**

## **The Molephone**

No sooner had Lou taken on the task of Hut Warden than she was faced with a nightmare kettle abduction. Ransom notes appeared accompanied with amputated plugs and threats of terminal melting. Kettlenapping can rarely have been crueller. Simon (Our "Hostage Negotiator") reports:

Sunday October 5 2008 0900 hrs, came downstairs on the morning after the BEC Dinner to find the kettles missing and the following note in the kitchen: "We have your kettles. Leave £10 in the BEC Bang Box and they will be returned unharmed. For every day's delay a plug will be posted back to you as evidence of how serious we are. Do not call the Police or they will be melted !! Signed "BEC - Everything to Excess"

Sunday October 5 2008 1100 hrs, delivered following note to the BEC hut: "**Lost. Three Suicide Kettles.**

- 1. One TESCO Cordless Jug Kettle. Answers to the name of "Osama".**
- 2. One 1.5 L Morphy Richards Kettle. Answers to the name of "Saddam".**
- 3. One Russell Hobbs 2.2 killer-watts....Answers to nobody!!**

**Every day's delay in their return is another day's less torture for us waiting for the \*\*\*\*\* things to boil.... Hurrah!! We will accept nothing less than £10 donation to the MRO if you want us to take them Back."**

Sunday October 5 2008 1300 hrs. Kettles returned with much laughter on both sides.... excellent.

### **Simon**

On a happier note, during the September Committee Meeting Sunday Lunch a caving visitor approached Phil to enquire why we were not caving. After an appalled silence Phil said: "We're the Committee. We have ordinary members to do that sort of thing." There has been a marked deterioration in the Wessex Canoe Club situation, however, with no less than four Committee members now directly implicated.

# From the Log Book & the Wessex Website

Saturday 28 June 2008 **Charterhouse Cave.** Ali Moody, Pete Hann, John Biffin, Jon Williams and Pete Moody (diving)

The main aim of this trip was a photo trip, but Pete M accompanied us in order to have a dive in the downstream sump. The sump appears to be descending down dip and is very silted and pretty tight and Pete was only able to make about 4m of progress. **Ali**

Saturday 12 July 2008 **Charterhouse Cave.** Ali Moody, Pete Hann, Nigel Graham, John Biffin, and Jon Williams.

Photo trip down old Charterhouse, including retaking the Citadel photo from the Balcony. **Ali**

Saturday 26 July 2008 **Black Rock Rift.** Pete & Ali Moody  
We had last worked this site circa the early 1990's and bang debris remained from this period. Dig restarted and 24 bags of spoil removed. **Ali**

Saturday 2 August 2008 **Charterhouse Cave.** Pete & Ali Moody and Tony Boycott (UBSS).

Trip to sketch on passage detail. On the previous trip Tony had been unable to pass the Narrows, but this time he took the precaution of wearing a 3ml wetsuit and passed the pinch points without any problems. **Ali**

Saturday 16 August 2008 **Charterhouse Cave.** Ali Moody, Carmen Smith, Chris Binding and Ben Morley (UBSS).

Photo trip to the bottom and also some more sketching in of passage detail. Cave pretty wet. The tarpaulin had been washed off the Frozen Cascade and was about 5m down the main stream passage. A small stream was flowing down the Frozen Cascade and the squeeze at the top was a duck with the tapes through this passage at least 10cm under water. In The Timeline another stream was noted entering from under the boulders along the left-hand wall, about 7m from the breakthrough point. These boulders are pretty unstable and while investigating the source of the water Ali had a lucky escape when the floor collapsed. The tapes were moved to avoid this area in future. Continuing downstream to the streamway sump, the gravel bank into 100 Fathom Passage had been washed clean again. **Ali**

Thursday 21 August 2008 **Charterhouse Cave.** Ali & Pete Moody, Pete Hann, Phill Short and Jon Williams.

Trip for Phill to dive sump. Phill made 3 dives; the sump proved to be very shallow but after 9m closed down to a tight bedding about 1m wide by 20cm high, with solid roof and floor. The sump is very tight and he caused us considerable alarm when his valve stated free flowing. Phill also managed to get Malc Foyle's line reel completely wedged at the end and it had to be abandoned – sorry Malc. The stream had flowed over the gravel bank into 100 Fathom since last Saturday. **Ali**

Saturday 23 August 2008 **Charterhouse Cave.** Pete Hann, Ali Moody, Dave Walker and Duncan Price.

Another photo/survey sketching trip. Photos taken in Chill Out Choke and the Narrows, also around the Frozen Cascade. Duncan, Dave and Ali continued to the streamway sump for a tourist. Using brute force Duncan managed to pull Malc's line reel out of the sump. We had been concerned that if this was not

removed asap, debris would build up behind it, permanently blocking the way on. **Ali**

Monday 25 August 2008 **Black Rock Rift.** Pete & Ali Moody.  
Most of the old bang debris has now been cleared from the bottom and the "upcave" end of the final rift appears to have pinched down to a 6cm wide crack – not very promising. **Ali**

Wednesday 27 August 2008 **Swildon's Hole.** Pete Hann, Aubrey Newport, Colin Shapter and Ali Moody.

Trip to Swildon's One and St. Paul's Series to take the final photos needed for the new Swildon's Hole colour survey. **Ali**

Saturday 30 August 2008 **Charterhouse Cave.** Ali Moody, Pete Hann, Mark (Mak) Kellaway, John Cooper.

FINAL photo trip – 6 hours! Ripped my oversuit again – this place is extremely expensive on caving kit! **Ali**

Thursday 11 September 2008 **Black Rock Rift.** Pete & Ali Moody.

All the bang debris has been removed and the bottom of the rift has been cleared out, but unfortunately there doesn't appear to be an obvious way on. The site will be rechecked once the weather gets colder and the draught starts blowing again. **Ali**

Saturday 13 September 2008 **Charterhouse Cave.** Pete Hann, Nigel Graham and Ali Moody.

Cementing trip with the aim of completing the ladder pitch bypass in Chill Out Choke. Nigel mixed while Ali built a retaining wall to stop clatch falling down the bypass and Pete H enlarged and cemented the bypass. Unfortunately things didn't go quite to plan when at the end of the session Mr H assisted the choke in rearranging a couple of large boulders in the bypass. Ali was down a small hole directly below it the time – you missed a good opportunity Pete, better luck next time! A further cementing session will be required to complete the bypass. **Ali**

Late September 2008 **Portland Caves.** Nigel Graham.  
Geological. Collected several samples of flowstone from quarried-out rifts, for Dr. Phil Murphy (Leeds Uni) for Isotopic dating analysis as comparison part of his work on the Windypits (Similar mass-movement caves) of North Yorks. **Nigel**

Saturday 4 October 2008 **St. Cuthbert's.** Ali Moody, Natalie Field, Andy Brander, Begonia Chamorro, Russell Porter and Giles Martin.

Tourist trip for the MCG. The upper surface dam had been left in by a previous party and the buckets for the dams were missing on Gour Rift and Sump I. Usual route down through upper Mud Hall, Pillar Chamber etc and then out via Rabbit Warren. A very pleasant Saturday bimble. **Ali**

Sunday October 5 2008 Bath Swallet. Jude, Adrian, Aubrey.  
Usual Sunday night digging trip. It's fun digging upwards through the mud, rocks and sand. If you get high enough, or close to the roof, the rocks do not fall so far before they hit you! There was a band of large, water-washed cobbles which we thought might be the top. Alas, more mud, stones and sand on top of them. **Aubrey**

Monday 6 October 2008 **Lionel's Hole.** Ali Moody, Gina Moseley and Andy Farrant.

Andy is preparing a paper on the Burrington caves for the next UBSS Proceedings, and the principal aim of this excursion was a guided Lionel's Hole Round Trip. Andy had not visited the further reaches before and (to my surprise) really enjoyed the cave and gave Gina and myself a fascinating insight into the geology. **Ali**

Tuesday October 7 2008 **Bath Swallet** Jude, Adrian, Aubrey. Took down some fixed ladder sections, provided by Mr. Fielder. Makes getting up the dig a lot easier. Moved lots of mud, rocks etc. etc. etc. Still going up! **Aubrey**

Friday 10 October 2008 **Tickenham Ridge Reserve.** Phil Hendy, Ali Moody and Keith Giles

Phil in his role as correspondent for the Mendip Times had been contacted by Keith Giles of the Avon Wildlife Trust, re a couple of cave entrances on Tickenham Hill. Mark Helmore had previously checked them out but we agreed to also have a look. One entrance is in the base of one end of a shallow trench. This starts as a very low crawl and is obviously used by a badger who has made a bed where the passage widens after about 2m. Fortunately Mr Brock was not at home. Beyond this point the cave swings gently downhill to the left and appears to choke. At present the first part of the cave is too tight to check this out properly and would need to be excavated. The second entrance is larger and a geologist had told Keith that it was a phreatic passage. The cave slopes steeply downwards with a floor of leaves and branches that had fallen in from the trees. It is about 1.5m wide, 3m long and could be a phreatic remnant or just a rock shelter. It would be worth a digging session to check it out. **Ali**

Saturday 11 October 2008 **Charterhouse Cave.** Nigel Graham, Pete Hann and Ali Moody.

What else is there to do on a Saturday? We finished the bypass route in Chill Out Choke which now means that the climb down the "hanging deaths" is out of bounds and will be taped off – thank goodness. Not a moment too soon as this would have killed someone sooner or later. The mixing station was then moved to the base of the choke and Pete H continued cementing the traverse bypass while Ali continued work on the section of the choke above the Sugar Lump. We have run out of sand again but one more session should see the cementing work completed for the time being. **Ali**

Sunday October 12 2008 **Bath Swallet.** Jude, Adrian, Aubrey. Still going up until we met a rock. Wiggling with a crowbar didn't have the desired effect, so we will have to resort to !!B\*\*G!! **Aubrey**

Sunday October 12 2008 **Upper Canada Cave.** Aubrey, Nick Richards, Adrian.

Aubrey and Adrian as sub-contractors to the BEC. Our second attempt to remove a boulder blockage in the roof of this cave. The two Nicks believe that there is a major, or upper, series that may link some more of these caves / mines together. Or even lead to the lost cave of Hutton. A satisfying thud was heard, but we were unable to retrieve Aubrey's wire due to the amount of bends in the cave. **Adrian**

Friday October 17 2008 **Hunters Hole** Dave Mason & Andy Jackson.

We decided to do a quick Friday night trip down Hunters Hole

to get some more SRT practice in as we hadn't really done much since Derbyshire earlier in the year. We left Bristol around 17:30 and did a slow battle with the M5 southbound to eventually arrive on Mendip around 18:30. A quick courtesy call in the Hunters and we were soon kitting up. The nights are definitely drawing in and we are back to kitting up in the dark. We headed for the cave and soon had a rope down the entrance pitch. Andy rigged the first pitch down as far as the ledge and I then followed with a second length of rope for the main pitch, locking off on the first rope allows easy rigging of the second pitch. I'm finding that my confidence in the kit is definitely growing even if I'm still a bit slow rigging, but I'm sure with time and practice this will come. The traverse was soon rigged and I then transferred on to the traverse line and then passed the "Y" hang and started the main descent. Somehow I missed the deviation and decided to head on down and let Andy rig it on his way down. We stopped for a quick chat and a breather and then it was time to head out and head for the pub for a beer and a natter over a chilli. For me the practice was good and I plan to try and get plenty in between now and next spring ready for our annual trip to Derbyshire (or perhaps we'll try Yorkshire for a change?) ready for some real shaft bombing! **Dave Mason.**

Tuesday 21 October 2008 **Tickenham Ridge Reserve.** Phil Hendy, Ali Moody, Keith Giles plus 2 wildlife volunteers.

A good digging session at the larger of the two entrances. Signs were that Mr Brock was still using the other cave and he was left in peace. I was in charge of digging while the rest of the team did an excellent job of carting away my spoil. A considerable amount of debris was removed, initially leaves and branches but then sandy mud. The far end of the cave pinched out and the main development was a vertical rift. Unfortunately after a couple of hours work a solid floor was hit at a depth of about 3m. Future prospects are not promising but Keith and his helpers intend to excavate out the rest of the floor near the entrance in the next few weeks and it will very interesting to see what they find. **Ali**

Saturday 25 October 2008 **Swildons** Paul Allen, Keith Glossop, Noel Cleave. Hilary Grieve.

The WGG being hardly quorate, we allowed Hilary to enrich our group as far as Trats, where she departed to do some solo nonsense in Shatter. This nonsense included, amongst other things, retrieving diving bottles from Sump 2 at some stage. As they say, "Go figure". Before that, however, Paul had had enough of our company and bade us farewell from the top of the 20 to pay a nostalgic visit to the Long Dry. Keith and Noel had a slow-time, look-around amble to the sump, where we encountered the pathetic rump of Pyke and Dawe's crack team, who had chickened out of immersion. Not wishing to make them feel inadequate we unselfishly decided not to go through. We came out of the Wet Way, which was wet (!) and fun, thus completing Keith's first full Swildons for something like 35 years! It would be interesting to add up the ages of this team (excepting Hilary) and those in the following account. **Noel**

Saturday 25 October 2008 **Swildons.** Bob Pyke, Ken Dawe, Alistair Gordon, Stu Genders, Tigger (Alan Allsop).

A gentle trip down the stream-way. Bob and Ken went as far as Sump 2. The others rested at Sump 1 until we returned. Came out of the Long Dry Way for old time's sake. While at Sump 1 we were fleetingly visited by Noel Cleave and Keith Glossop. **Bob Pyke**

Saturday 25 October 2008 **St. Cuthbert's**. Ali Moody, Nigel Jackson plus 3 Combined Services.

The water level in the dam nearest the entrance was fairly high as the valve was not working and we were unable to release it to drain the pool. Pleasant, but fairly damp tourist to Gour Rift via the Everest Passage route. A quick inspection was made of Sump I before exiting via Rabbit Warren. A detour was made into Maypole Aven Series before continuing down Sentry Passage. Then out via the Water Chute and Lower Mud Hall. **Ali**

Thursday 30 October 2008 **Charterhouse cave**. Ali Moody and Hatstand (John Osborne).

Tourist trip for Hatstand – the catch being that he had to carry a bag of sand down to Chill Out Choke. I think that he initially thought that I was joking! **Ali**

Saturday 1 November 2008 **Charterhouse Cave**. Ali Moody, Pete Hann and Nigel Graham.

Final cementing trip (for the time being) in Chill Out Choke. We have stabilised everything as much as possible and will now just have to wait to see if anything moves! **Ali**

Friday 7 November **Swan Mine**. Ali Moody, Phil Hendy, Kay Chambers, Rich Hobbs.

Tourist trip with also the aim of assessing the suitability of both the mine and the Swan Inn as the venue for the Wessex Christmas trip. There are some excellent relics in the mine including a complete jib crane (impressive) and also a very squashed crane (sobering). Exited via the tunnel of school desks – excellent trip. The landlord at the Swan was extremely helpful re the Christmas Event. **Ali**

Saturday 8 November 2008 **Sidcot Swallet**. Ali Moody and Pete Hann.

Tourist trip for Pete Hann with the aim of inspecting an old Moody Dig at the end of Purgatory. Pete was suitably impressed and work will start again at the site asap. Also quick trip into **Avelines and Milliar's Quarry Cave**.

After tea and cake at the Wessex the fourth trip of the day was a visit to **Upper Swildon's** to assess the feasibility (as part of the Rat Fest next weekend) of moving the flexi-pipe to Cistern Dig. Unfortunately we concluded that the lift for the water would be too great. After disconnecting the plumbing in the Upper Oxbow we continued to Water Chamber Dig, which has had water flowing into it for the last six months. This had clearly been sumped to the roof at the end, but with no stream flowing into it the water level dropped extremely rapidly – about 1 metre in 45mins. The foam was floating off to the left at the end and there is a possibility that something has been washed open. The downside is that everything is now covered with a thick layer of disgusting slime and the dig is now a complete shit hole. **Ali**

Saturday November 8 2008 **OFD**. Clive Westlake, Paul Allen, Graham Candy, Keith Glossop, Doug MacFarlane, Noel Cleave. The “Wessex” Geriatric Group (well, 50% Wessex and 100% Geriatric) headed to Penwyllt for a long-planned uphill through trip. Our devoted readership may have noticed that our intentions tend to differ somewhat from our achievements. While human frailties may play a part in this, the sodding weather is even more influential. On the Saturday OFD was in flood. Penwyllt was full. We had bunks (although we'd bought tents), but there were two University visiting groups, and it looked as though the easier and more popular areas below the Top Entrance might well be crowded. So, we opted for a visit to the

Nave, with “Meandering Time” built in. Only Clive had been to the Nave before, and the pitch dimensions are not specified on the survey. We set out with one 49' and one 16' ladder, one 20m and one 18m rope, and Noel's goodies bag. The nave is a genuinely nice piece of passage, with the gentle drama of Swamp Creek half way along to the pitches down to the second oxbow in the OFD stream-way. With three picture-perfect thread belays and lots of slings, Clive soon had the 40' pitch rigged. Clive is properly strict on the subject of lifelined ladder work. Our ropes were inadequate for double lifelining, but Noel convinced Clive that as last man down, Noel would self-lifeline on an Italian, and as first man up, use a jumars for self-safety. So far so good (if somewhat iffilly....). Alas for our hopes: the 16' ladder, even on a generous belay, was inadequate for the second pitch. So the bugles sounded for retreat with Noel and Doug up aloft - which was as well. Aged, halt, maim and lame, some of us appreciate a helping pull on such ladders. Luckily Noel's goodies bag had pulleys, jumars, slings and Crabs and in short order we had a heave-ho up-we-go in action. Clive derigged, and on his advice we explored up the Swamp Creek inlet on the way back to see some beautiful formations. What struck us all was just how much good passage there is littered around that area, but which we never take time to visit. Back at Salubrious we took half an hour to detour down to the top of the Maypole top ladder. Since Salubrious was in full spate, the ladder looked like an interesting proposition..... which we all declined! So we meandered up the meanders and outwards. Within sight of freedom, as it were, just short of the Brickyard, Mr. Allen allowed the boulders to lead his feet astray and suffered a badly torn ACL. He hobbled out under his own steam, but is hors de combat for a while. **Noel**

Saturday 1 November 2008 **Brown's Folly Mine** BS with Paul Deakin and two others.

Taking fancy coloured photos for 6 ½ hours. While walking up the road at Farleigh Rise we were accosted by Police Officers in a 4X4 who asked where we had been and were going. I told them, and was not totally surprised by a: “If you attempt to enter the mine workings, we will have to arrest you” I think he said for conspiracy to trespass. Well anyway I explained that the mine entrance gate is unlocked and there are no signs outside to say that anyone will be accosted by the Police or anyone else, and that I had been going in there for over 50 years without the slightest hassle, and that my Grandfather had worked there.... and he'd had no hassle. It all fell on deaf ears. The main reason given is that the Police have been asked to patrol and, if possible apprehend, cavers and us others so that civil action can be brought; owing to silly people breaking into the Ammo Dump, which is a secure warehousing facility - and then idiotically putting their prowess on the Internet. W\*\*\*\*s. We had a stroll through the woods instead, but a dark hole beckoned.... **BS** (anon!)

Wednesday November 12 2008 **Browns Folly Mine** Steve Watson, Bob Scammel.

Armed with soft brushes and small holders for water/stone slurry, we decided to have a go at the modern graffiti done in coloured spray and white gloss paints that have so far resisted removal by our £1 wire brushes (Spray paint costs several pounds per colour, whereas wire brushes cost £1 and remove various colours). The intention is to show those who are small-minded enough to want to spoil the mines for their own temporary needs that it isn't necessary and is a waste of their time. Allied to the Weston Brothers tidying team over many numerous occasions over the

years, the area mainly worked on this time was mostly the Northern end of the front passage where it starts to connect with the old workings, and also a wall of obscene "Art" (to the less informed) near the remains of the old crane. 3 ½ hours of solid work.

The mine is becoming a pleasure to walk around again now. It looks almost as it was in the 1970s, pre caving guide-book days when very few people went in there. The best of the cave pearls disappeared in the 1970s, as also many of the areas of beautiful floor formations that were trampled to dust underfoot by sporting cavers and others who had very little interest in the actual workings, or preservation of the old workings. The few saws that were there also vanished. Before the 1970s no one needed spray-painted arrows and filth to find their way around, and it is certainly a better place now when compared with the Box Stone Mines which are, throughout, akin the very worst and smuttiest of public toilets and slum area brick walls. My Grandfather worked for the quarries as a Carter from 1920 until 1938, when the conversion was made into the underground ammunition depot, and my Father drove ammunition lorries from 1939 until the late 1960s for the then No 2 Monkton Farleigh ammunition depot, and sister ammunition depots in the Corsham, Chippenham and Gastard areas.

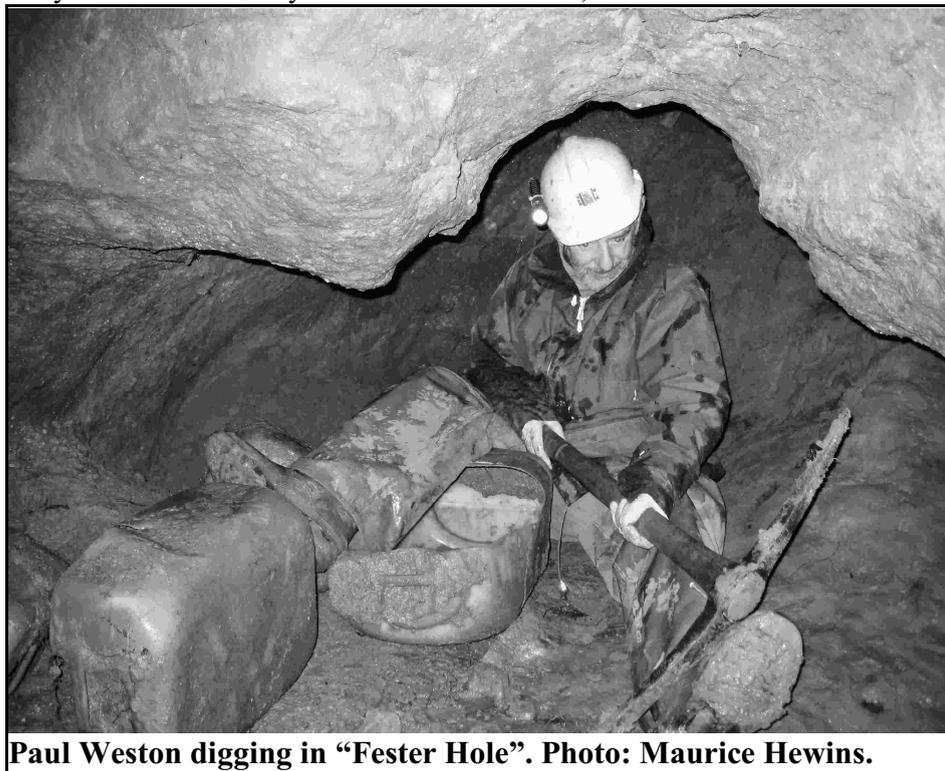
I suggest, if anyone is interested, to take a wander in the Box Stone Mines and have a good look at it, even if you have to

follow Les, and see just how much is actually noticed - probably a bit every half-hour when stopping for breath. But try and see how much has been spoiled beneath the brightly coloured graffiti. Then take a wander in Brown's Folly (without a spray can). Much more of the surroundings (and even the current state of the roofs) when finding a way round without having a dozen or so petty navigational aids at every turn, and junction, and the spaces in between.

When my then next-door neighbour and I were 13 and 14 in the 1950s we found our way into the mines and dug through several dry-stone separating walls to find our ways around the old workings using only torches made from stout Hazel sticks wrapped with pieces of old shirt and wire, a bottle of paraffin and some matches; later paraffin road lamps minus the red lenses. Yes, we got lost, and no, we didn't wear the latest designer caving apparel, but we were always home at tea-time and our parents never knew where we had been. Just look behind now and then and recognise the way you've come. Big boys and girls don't need to follow arrows, and they don't need to state: "We've been here" in loud coloured paint. Otherwise try a bit of spray paint down Swildons, Eastwater, GB or Shatter to try and understand why people get upset! **Bob Scammel**

### **"Rat Fest", 15th November 2008**

The day was arranged to celebrate the life of Tony Jarratt, who died on 31<sup>st</sup> August aged 58. True to his BEC traditions Tony had wanted his day to be done "to Excess", and indeed it was.



**Paul Weston digging in "Fester Hole". Photo: Maurice Hewins.**

That the Wessex should have been well represented was very fitting, because he had been a member for nearly 20 years, following his election in March 1969. Several hundred cavers from clubs all over Britain congregated at Priddy, resulting in the Hunter's busiest weekend for many a year. J-Rat had many friends but no enemies.

His record as a digger will probably never be surpassed and Saturday morning was devoted to sending diggers underground at as many sites as possible. At lunchtime the pub was packed. Later a large crowd gathered round Hunter's Lodge Sink, the scene of one of Tony's many discoveries. After the BEC song had been sung, parts of his ashes were tipped down the shaft, (followed by a libation of beer.) Other ashes were scattered in Wigmore, in Scotland and on North Hill.

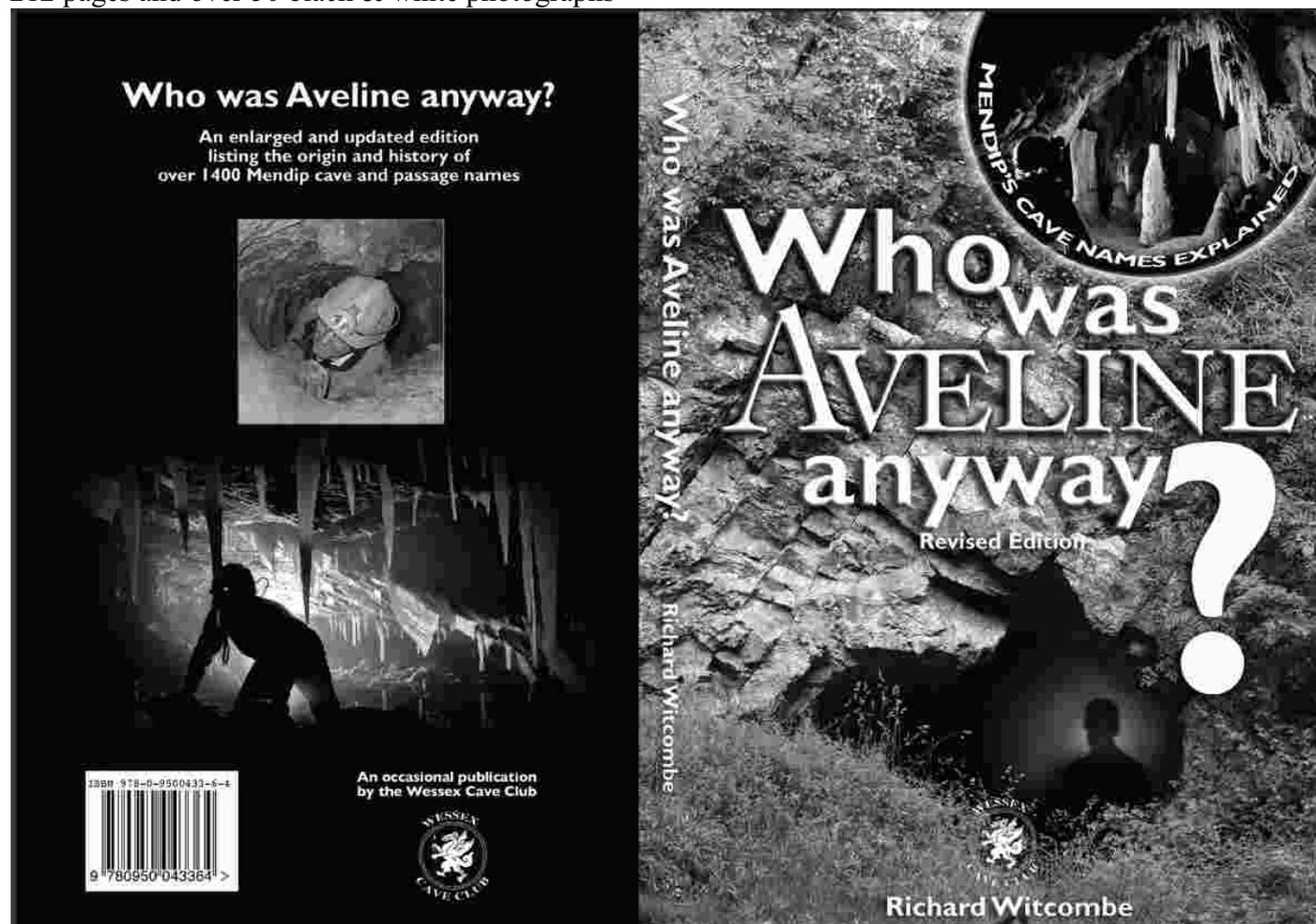
Later an even larger crowd met at the Village Hall, where Alan Gray presented a series of videos covering many aspects of J-Rats caving life. In the first he featured, as a lad, in the Axbridge film "Discovering Mendip" (1975). Other films showed him underground in Megalaya and Scotland, as well clips from TV programmes in which he had appeared. Naturally, there was a bar and an excellent pig-roast, followed by musical entertainment in its widest sense. A band performed some customized folk songs, when Paul Weston on the viola was almost overcome by the trio of attractive young ladies on cello and violin around him.

This was followed by the unaccompanied singing of traditional “backroom songs”, many of which it must be confessed contained “they words”. James Cobbett sang a ditty he probably collected on a trip to the oilfields of the Middle East (though so far oil has not been found in Jerusalem). And Phil Hendy performed a Victorian ditty about a unfortunate waif called Angeline and her encounter with the Squire. It was not exactly PC by modern thinking perhaps, but it was nostalgic to those of us who remember the old days in the Backroom. It was just what J-Rat expected. All in all, an exceptional tribute to a remarkable explorer. I am glad I was there. **Maurice Hewins**

## **WHO WAS AVELINE ANYWAY?**

Mendip's Cave Names Explained. Second revised edition 2008 By **Richard Witcombe**

212 pages and over 50 black & white photographs



Ever wondered what the Aveline of Aveline's Hole looked like? Or the Barnes of Barnes' Loop or the Rod of Rod's Pot? Rich Witcombe's second edition of Who Was Aveline Anyway? will satisfy that curiosity and answer hundreds of other queries about the origins of Mendip's cave names. The book first appeared in 1992 but this second edition has been completely revised and updated and contains three times as many entries - over 1400 cave and passage names are explained from A Day in Tynning's Barrows Swallet to Zebra Aven in Upper Flood Swallet. Throw in the origin of some of the less obvious caver nicknames and the explanation for such terms as aven, gour, slocker and swallet, and you have a pocket-sized compendium of Mendip cave history to sit alongside your copy of Mendip Underground. Available for Christmas from Upper Pitts priced £10 or by post from Brian Prewer (small P & P charge).

## **Review: Who Was Aveline Anyway?**

(Richard Witcombe, Revised Edition. Wessex Cave Club. 2008)

Those of us not of the satnav generation still navigate by landmarks – left at the lights, second right after the Red Lion, then 100 yards past the Library etc. As cavers we still use landmarks, if only to be sure that we are in the right place, or when describing a cave to others. ‘Down the entrance, under the jammed block, straight ahead over the Showerbath, through Binnie’s Link, over Jacob’s Ladder, and into the Long Dry Way’.

These names are not arbitrary; they were for the most part coined by the original explorers or diggers, and seldom change. Barnes’ Loop, for example, was discovered by Ernest Barnes in 1921, and being a friend of H.E. Balch, this passage was named in his honour. No so the grotto which was pirated by the young upstart Tratman on a so-called surveying trip. It was named by Tratman and his co-discoverer Norman Cooper ‘The Temple’, but Balch preferred ‘November 12 Grotto’, being peeved that youngsters

should find such a beautiful place by subterfuge, and not allowing them to name it. However, common usage soon linked both the original name and the discoverer, and Tratman's Temple it remains to this day.

The origin of the name of most of Mendip's well-known caves are well-documented, but others are more obscure. Who was the Locke of Locke's Hole? How did the Sparrow Trap get its name? What flights of fancy resulted in names such as Fenneario, or Tiddle Tum Tum, or Dark Cars and Sunglasses? Where is the Smartie Tube?

Thanks to Richard Witcombe, all of these mysteries can be solved. Way back in 1992 he published the first edition of 'Who Was Aveline Anyway?', which gave the origins of the names of 377 caves, mines, passages, chambers and digs. Now in 2008 Richard has produced an all-new version, this time with more

than 1400 entries, new photographs, and a lot more detail. There is now no excuse for wondering how Chiaroscuro Passage or The Old Wells Road came to be named – you can look it up.

The book is a superb compilation of information from many sources and individuals, and collates it into a single source. Some of the derivations might be doubtful, but since some of these places were first named back in the mists of time, this is only to be expected – at least it will stimulate debate. At £10, and available from Upper Pitts (and certain other outlets) 'Who Was Aveline Anyway?' is a must-have addition to anyone's collection of Mendip caving books. Not only is it an excellent reference book, it also makes good reading, if you read it cover-to-cover, or just dip in at random. **Phil Hendy**

## Encore Les Catacombs de Paris

Saturday November 22 2008 **Paris Catacombs.** LesW, Cookie, Gnomie, Walrus, Laura and Root.

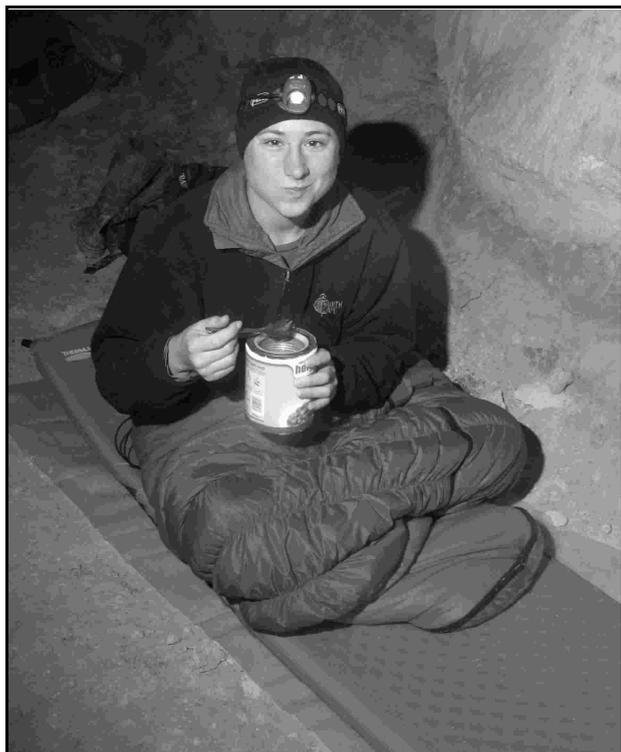


**Paris Cataphiles. Photo: Cookie.**

The Paris Catacombs are quarries under Paris going back to the Roman times... This is the story of a group of WCC and Darkplaces members (mostly both) who ventured to this forbidden place on the 22nd and 23rd of November in the year 2008. Our plan was to explore the Paris Catacombs - Great Southern Network.

As if by magic (and a lot of posts and talk in pubs) we all gathered at St Pancras station with plenty of time for pancakes to be eaten, Les attempting the world record for number eaten in a single session. Soon we headed to the departure area though security were the fun began. LesW's petrol stove was 'removed' from him for safety as well as PMR Radios inspected and items sniffed for explosives. While this was going on Laura took a photo and was immediately collared by

security for taking photos in sensitive areas. Oh how me and Gnomie laughed at the situation..... and the trip had only just begun.



**Cataphile breakfast in bed. Photo: Cookie.**

and helmets and overalls are pulled on while I locate where we are on the map and in which direction we need to head, we need to get moving before the cops pop down the shaft and nab us! We march NORTH...

We arrive at the Ossuary Crossroad where countless bones were dumped as the Paris cemeteries filled up. Everyone pops in for a look, here Walrus pops his head out. We head north/west then south/west and drop down to a lower level down some steps. A few wiggly passages and we meet more steps going back up and we head for the Feast Room or Pigs Room. Here people are milling about. This room has some seats, a table (all in stone) and a bar!

Next we head to and though the The Round About (Octagon Junction) then head south/west to the Fallen Pillar to wonder and amaze us.... Retracing our steps we head north then east then north up to the Raspail Crossroad where we turn right to the Grate Collage Crawl which is not a crawl any more. Turning Left we visit Le Local.

Moving on we Visit the Rats Bar & Notre Dame Des Champs Stair & Fountain. We retrace our steps past Cottage Crawl (no more) and head for the Pharmacy Shelter through a little window. Stopping for 5 mins then moving on and by sheer luck after stopping Les from simply wandering in any direction ;) we head for a little room which is handy to sleep in and is kept very neat. On arrival we find a tea-light still burning... Cookie and Les consult the maps to make sure I haven't got everyone lost (which I haven't) and looking for other places to visit.

We stop at Philibert Aspairet Grave, then head for the INRI Chapple and the 3 Chairs Room which was as I remembered an anti-climax. Back out to the main route then left and we head into Feuillantines Shelter through a hole in the wall. I haven't seen this before; not that I remember.

We exit and head south on a long fast pace march to the Mineralogy Office for a look and a break, we hear music and see lights, I forget about the Miners gallery further south instead turning east and down to a lower level to the Bookshop which has been trashed sadly!

The Dragon Room is too small to sleep in so we head up a short ladder and down to the Human Bomb Room which has several small rooms, people start to settle for the night, I decide to not inflict my snoring on the others and move a couple of rooms up into the actual Human Bomb Annex room.

I slept well just waking now and then thanks to storm-troopers steaming past at 5am. I finally woke at 7.30am, now I'm

We meet with Paulo who is heading over to meet with OT, and have some beer. We arrive at Gare Du Nord and head to the lockers where we meet up with OT who has new maps for me and lucky for LesW a spare stove to lend LesW, our jokes about cold tea and cold pot noodle are rendered useless. I chat to OT about a new entry point. Repacked and kitted up we head onto the ParisMetro arriving near our entry point so decide to grab a McDonalds and a McPoo before splitting into 2 person teams for the entry. The entry was an open manhole with a big fence around it in one of the busy main routes in Paris, workmen had left it open pulling out cables, in pairs we hopped over or opened the fence and through and down the 70ft? or so of shaft on metal rings, the warm air initially blinds me by fogging up my glasses so it's all feel for a bit. I'm part way down when Walrus heads down, his leg speaking to him as LesW tried to check if we were clear from a Radio back in McHQ. 2 by 2 we arrive at the bottom



**Paris Catacombs. Photo: Root.**

well trained in 'getting my shite together quickly an being ready' so at around 8am I decided everyone else should be up. By 9am I think this was still the picture. Gnomie packing his gear, Laura with a hotcan, Walrus taking photos of everyone in bed still. Then LesW, having had his petrol stove removed from him at St Panc. got lucky with OT who loaned him a little baby burner so he could have his Pot Noodles (the breakfast of champions) and Tea..... Still in bed.

Cookie was off taking photos of things and being mocked for not having brought a sleeping bag but instead using a foil blanket, a very noisy one apparently. Finally we're off and head for the Dinosaur Room, the Zlard Room the romping south, turning west to La Boutik were a poster was pinned to the wall. Onwards West then south on a major junction down to another Junction were we used Rue Sarrette to hit the BAS Room though a window. Exiting we left Les but he caught up and we turned left into a crawl into the back of Le Cellier. I was followed by Gnomie who reported back to Les how it was a flat out crawl in water and he might get wet! Much moaning ensued from such an experienced caver until he found out it was a joke.

Everyone checked the Flower Room and the Porn Room, yes the cata's have a porn room! Then LesW got wet in Rue Sarette HEHEH, left past all the annoying cable hangers down to Port D'Orleans (near were we got caught by the police the last time), turned right (west) to go visit the shaft we were badly life lined up. Then onwards to the Goat Room which had annoying low passages.

Finally we scampered though the low passages and back to the main passage to romp east, turning for a quick south trip to see a broken statue of the guy coming out of the wall, back to the main passage and as if by Magic we were outside! Changed as best we could we gathered ourselves to get out of the area. It was snowing! We quickly found a Metro and headed back to Gare DU Nord. Kit was picked up from the lockers, dryer and less smelly kit was put on as well as deodorant, then we had a go at squeezing as much kit as we could into one locker.

Off we dashed in the snow to get fed at the cataphiles favourite kebab place who cleared tables for us, we feasted and thoughts of visiting Paris topside were quickly drowned by expensive beer with OT and team in the Pub Next door. Many Euros were spent and the staff helped us with translation and historical questions, finally the time came to go home... Here ends the story as tiredness kicks in...

Thanks everyone for making it a brill trip, we really covered a LOT of ground. Thanks to OT for the extra maps, entry info and lending LesW a stove. **Root (Chris Davies)**

## We welcome the following new members

Marion Van De Waterbeemb  
& David Richardson (joint)  
2 shepherds Orchard  
Springfield road  
Wantage  
Oxfordshire  
OX12 8HD

David Haselden  
12 Peninsula heights  
27 Bessborough Road  
Poole  
BH13 7JS

Richard Hobbs  
1 Martins Close  
Wells  
Somerset  
BA5 2ES

Antoina Rochowski  
(joint with Andy Summerskill)  
16 Watren Close  
Sandhurst GU47 9EL

## Tuska's Reliquary

**David Morrison**

Somewhere under this rock is a reliquary, somewhere under this water is an inspiration, somewhere through this squeezzzzzze is a bigger bit of passage and somewhere down this pitch is.....my blooming pen along with everything else that fell out of my pocket yesterday when I peered over the edge. Washing the mud out of your hair in a bucket of cold water is exhilarating! getting your head out of the bucket challenging and to shift rock with a draught behind most exciting. I wonder what was in that pocket? Find out no doubt if we keep digging. Best wishes to you all for a new fruitful caving year. Tuska

## Your New Committee Members in their own Write:

### Lou Biffin, Hut Warden.

As most of you will be aware, I was elected as hut warden at the recent AGM. Thank you for your support. I hope I can come up to scratch. I'm already enjoying being involved with the Committee and am looking forward to contributing new ideas. I'd like to take this opportunity to offer the thanks of the Club to Pauline Grosart who held this post for a number of years. I'd also like to mention Brian and Brenda Prewer who work tirelessly around the hut, and I appreciate their continuing support. Similarly, Keith Fielder who keeps the lawn mowed.

Since the AGM, I've been up to the hut on a number of occasions and am pleased to report that I have found it consistently clean and tidy. Keep up the good work. There is of course plenty to get stuck into and I have lots of plans. That said, at the end of the



Lou. Photo: John Biffin.

day it is your hut, and your input is vital. With this in mind, I asked Paul Wakeling to set up a new Forum Category, 'Upper Pitts', which has been up and running successfully since mid November. This will facilitate regular updates regarding Upper Pitts and provide a responsive platform for discussion of hut related ideas. Due to the anticipated sticky nature of some threads and the issue of hut security, access to this category is club members only. I'm looking forward to reading lots of threads and thrashing out some new ideas with you. One of my priorities is that we should take a fresh look at the hut rules and the various instructional notices around the hut with a view to rationalising both of these. Some notices, such as the MCR callout procedure, are of course essential. This has been updated, which should be of considerable comfort to some! Other priorities include Black Wals and the Ladies dorm.

Black Wals Cupboard has now been stocked with various tasty treats including bottled ale, savory snacks, chocolate and posh soups. There are also Lucozade pouches and industrial marigolds for anyone wishing to venture underground. Please make use of this facility and let me know what you would like to see made available. I realise that access to Black Wals can be tricky, and have been looking at ways in which this might be resolved.

The Ladies dorm has long been overdue a revamp and this is one of my priorities. Ian Timney has already put considerable thought into this project and we are looking forward to working together to improve this facility. This will also provide an opportunity to review the use of this area of the hut.

By the time that this article hits the Journal, there will have been a couple of hut working weekends led by Ian. The changing area

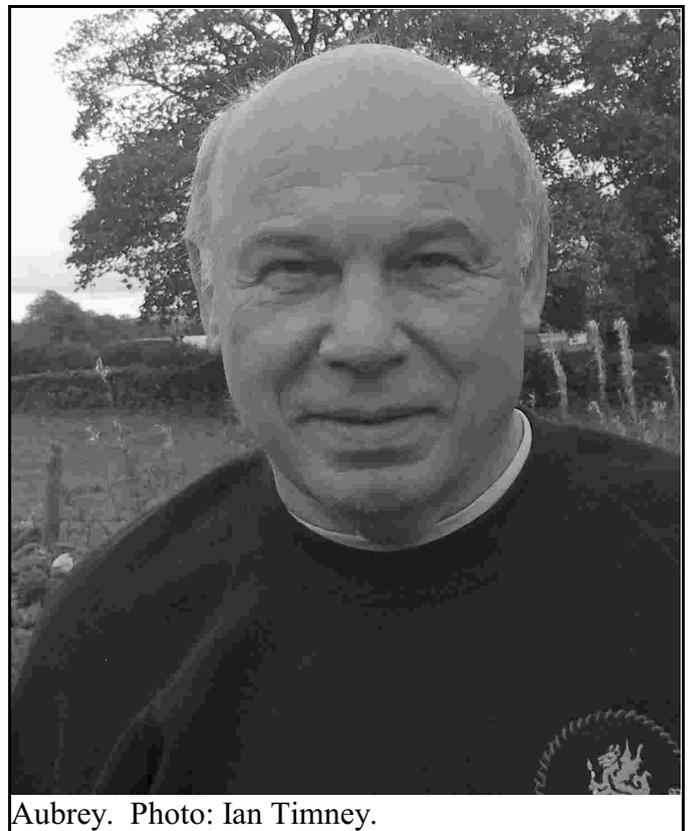
and drying room have been overhauled, and the common room refurbished. Thanks to all involved. Following this refurb of the common room, it would be great to see the return of the many photos documenting entertaining behaviour over the years, which are significant in defining the identity of the club. It would also be good to see some of the regular après pub activities returning. This is an important element of caving hut culture which we should be passing on to new generations. We must also endeavor to promote and maintain Upper Pitts as a friendly welcoming environment for club members and guest cavers alike. In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that anyone with a contribution to make should not hesitate to contact me. Please feel free to collar me at Upper Pitts, telephone me or email me at [lou@bifandlou.plus.com](mailto:lou@bifandlou.plus.com). It is now also possible to contact the Hut Warden via the club website.

Anyway, that's enough about Upper Pitts, enjoy your caving.

**Lou Biffin.**

### Treasurer, Aubrey Newport

I started caving in 1960 by cycling from Bristol to Burrington with some friends and doing Goatchurch using a cycle lamp and school cap stuffed with newspaper. During the next 6 years I caved with my school caving club (Fairfield) and members of another Mendip club. I was introduced to digging by Alan Thomas in Hunters Hole and Wigg in Cuthberts dining room dig. I joined SWETCCC in 1966 and the Wessex in 1970. In 1973 I became Wessex treasurer and went on to serve periods as secretary and chairman. I was a qualified member of CDG in the 1970's. I have been a regular Wednesday night digger for many years and this has resulted in discoveries in Bath Swallet, St.



Aubrey. Photo: Ian Timney.

Lukes, Drunkards, Welshes Green etc. I also help other local clubs by providing sub-contract rock breaking services in their digs! **Aubrey Newport**



Swildons 1<sup>st</sup>. Trouble. Christine Grosart. Photo: Clive Westlake.

| Diary Dates                                           |                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Havenbanks OEC, Ian Dovey. 12.                        | 10 - 12 Dec         |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> . Sat. Meet. Eastwater. Dave Cooke    | 13 Dec.<br>1000 Hrs |
| WCC Christmas Caving Trip. No further Hut bookings.   | 13 Dec              |
| DSS. Jason Pain. 15                                   | 12 / 14 Dec         |
| Brighton Explorers. Craig Olive 12                    | 19 / 21 Dec         |
| Committee meeting                                     | 01 Feb              |
| Jim Rands 70 <sup>th</sup> . Members and guests only. | 20/22 Feb           |
| Kent Uni. Louise Philips. 18                          | 27 Feb/ 01 Mar      |

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