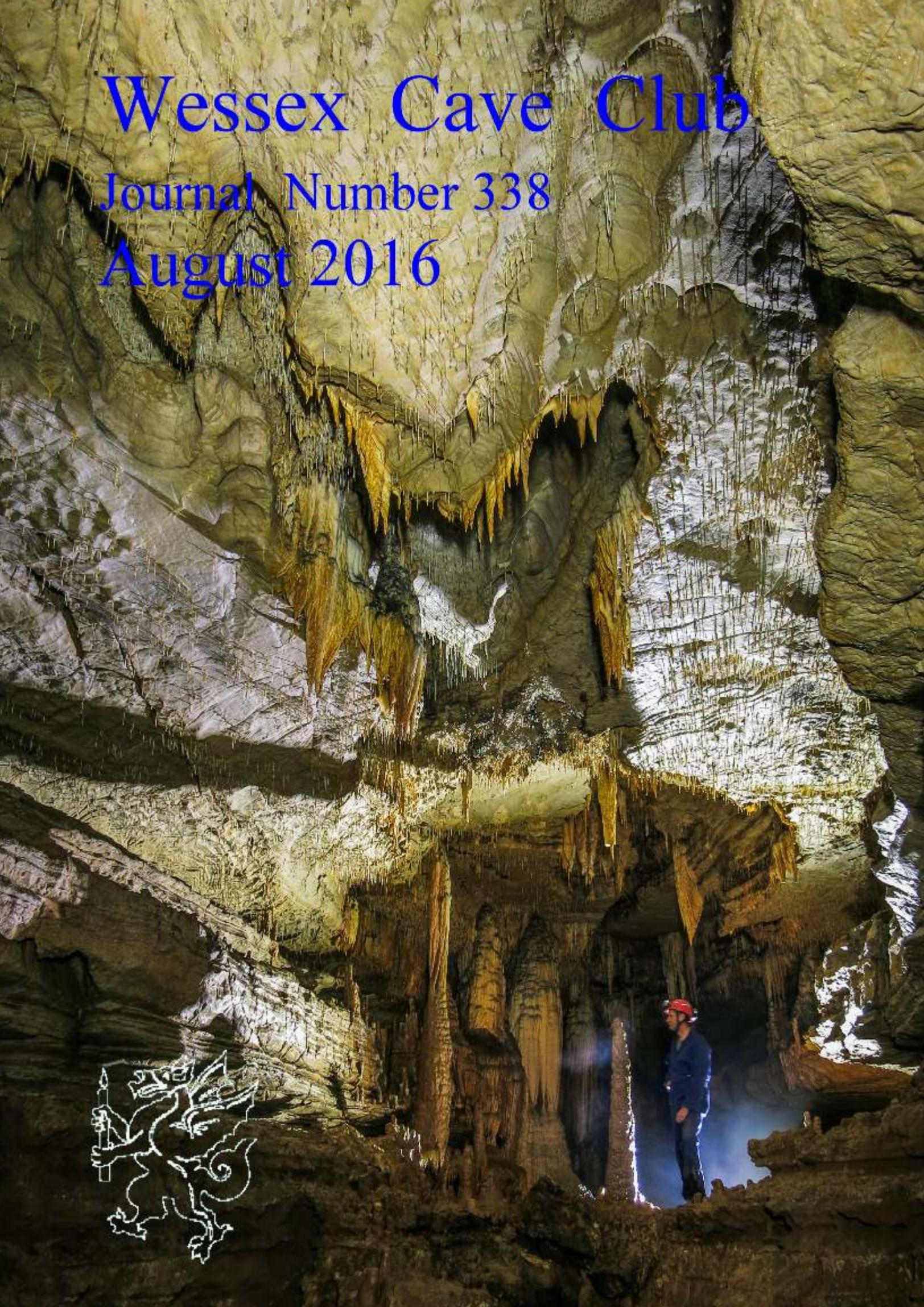


# Wessex Cave Club

Journal Number 338

August 2016





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**3** 37..... well it just about passed muster, but the keyword there is “Just”, as there were a multiplicity of layout errors. It was also 10 days late in distribution. These two problems were related, and should not affect this issue. It would be cynical to believe that most members, provided that they get a journal of some sort, and that someone else produces it, don’t mind very much how it looks. But..... here we have a distinctly jazzed up and colourful “New Look” journal and reaction to it has been very nearly a deafening silence! Specifically the feedback has been 5 positives and 1 negative reaction. Maybe members were politely reticent on the errors in 337, but lower case letters on the cover should have elicited howls of outrage. With EuroSpeleo happening at precisely the period when this journal was scheduled for compilation and printing, production has had to be brought forward, with no leeway for late additions. I could not have done this without the help and advice of Jonathan Williams, whose experience with DTP applications has been absolutely invaluable.

The need for accelerated production has affected the layout, so admin matters and final pages have been pushed to the back. There is no standard layout and no absolute rules, but I suspect that a measure of consistency is appreciated, and hope that 338 will be an exception.

I also hope that the ability to publish high quality graphics will encourage our numerous Wessex photographers to use the journal to showcase their skills. At present I am generously provided with pictures, but from a very limited group of photographers. I missed the Mendip Cave Photography Competition. 18 photographers were represented: I don’t know how many from the Wessex - surely a goodly handful ??? All contributions would be welcome, decent file sizes please (more than 2 Mbs in JPG) and all formats are acceptable. *Nael*

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**August 2016**

**Cover Photograph: Grotte du Banquier.**  
**Photo by Christine Grosart.**  
**The cover is Richard Walker**



## Lanzarote Again Aubrey Newport

In recent years the availability of cheap airfares and reasonably priced accommodation have enabled frequent trips to the volcanic island of Lanzarote. The attractions of Lanzarote include some major lava caves, warm weather and excellent walking. Good food and cheap beer are also available!

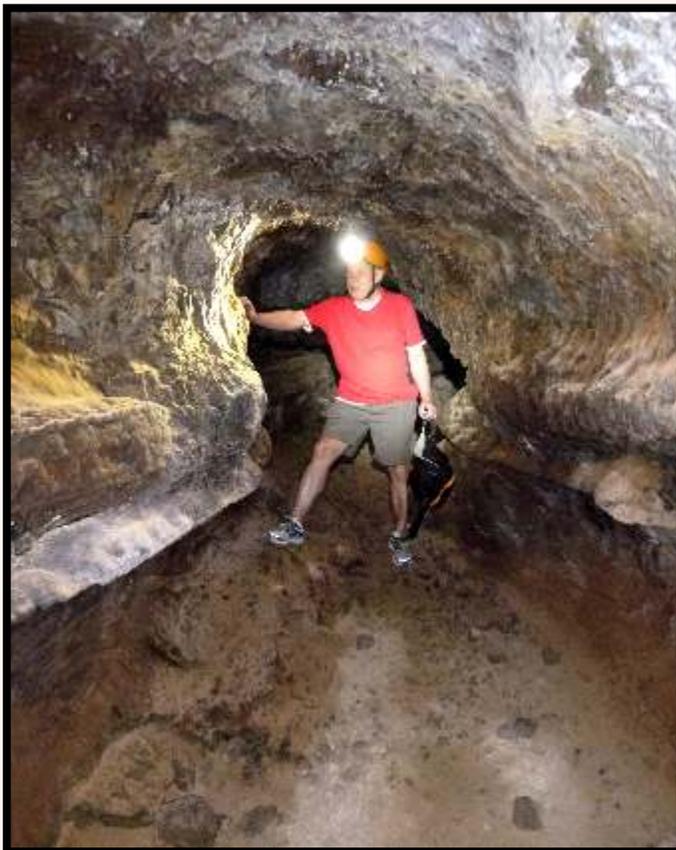
This visit in April and May 2016 was planned around Joyce's (Carmen's Auntie) special birthday. Joyce lives in Lanzarote so was again playing host to family and friends. Cavers: Carmen Smith, Wayne Smith, Chris Binding, Aubrey Newport.



Thursday April 28 2016 Chris did a solo low tide trip to the lake at the end of Los Lagos to look for a fin lost on a previous trip. Chris found nothing (No Fin?).

Friday April 29 2016 Carmen & Chris met Martin, a local who lives in one of the caves in the Montana Corona lava field. Martin showed them around some interesting sites including Charco del Palo and the nearby coast.

Saturday April 30 2016 Chris & Aubrey: Las Cuevas. A small system with several entrances, some of which have been used as rubbish tips. The lower passages are very hot and airless and definitely require knee and elbow pads. There are some nice lava flows and benching but in places the roof looks particularly unstable. The sharpness of the rock suggests few visitors.



Sunday May 1 2016 Chris & Aubrey walked up Montana Corona to find the cave in the crater Martin had described. The cave shows signs of having been inhabited and is just under the crater rim to the right when coming up the track from Ye.

Monday May 2 2016 Carmen, Wayne, Chris & Aubrey. Gentes to Puerta Falsa (the classic through trip). Wayne showed Carmen's sure footed rock hopping ability is a family trait on his second ever caving trip. Wayne and Carmen set a fast pace all the way through.

Tuesday May 3 2016 Chris & Aubrey. Cueva Tahiche. Being close to the town there is litter and broken glass just inside the entrance. This has previously put us off from venturing further into the cave but once through a squeeze the cave becomes relatively clean and worth visiting. There is probably more to explore beyond a hole in the roof of the main passage. The climb up to this looks 'interesting' and the hole is smaller than either of us thought we could pass.

Wednesday May 4 2016 Boat trip to beautiful and peaceful island of Isla Graciosa with calm seas (unlike last time). Walked along south coast and up Montana Arnarilla to enjoy views back to Lanzarote and Famara cliffs. Our walk back to the port was spoilt by the arrival of a noisy booze cruise boat in one of the sandy bays.

**Both Photos: Las Cuevas. Photos by Chris Binding**

# Underground Budapest

Michael Thomas

I have travelled to many cave and karst regions and most of them are in the mountains or rural areas of the world, this cave diving trip was a little different as the two chosen underground venues, one a mine and the second a cave are located in the centre of Budapest.

Budapest is actually two city's Buda and Pest located either side of the Danube river, Buda to the west and Pest to the east. It's a city of much history, unfortunately since the second world war until the end of the Soviet communist occupation much of that history has been war torn and bloody. Many buildings still show ordnance impact marks from either WW2 or the resistance to Soviet occupation in the 1950's. The Buda hills and city to the west are full of natural caves and close to the river the caves supply the Thermal waters for the Turkish bath houses. This is the site of Molnar Janos the thermal cave we had come to dive. To the east in Pest is located the extensive limestone mine of Kobanya our other chosen site.

I had been invited on the trip by members of the Polish Diving Explorers based in London. Once

we arrived in Budapest and settled in to the hotel five cave divers used taxis to go cave diving with varying degrees of success depending on how much the taxi driver tried it on with the fair!



## KOBANYA MINE Budapest

Divers: Michael Thomas, Greg Chimiak, Andrzej Ceo, Pi Maj, Maciek Ogrodnik

This Mine is located in the Kobanya city district of Pest in a really rather unsavoury part of town. The entrance gates are Soviet era 10m high solid steel with barbed wire topping and we shared the wait to get in with a gentleman with a serious facial wound waiting to get into the government run hostel next door! We regretted paying the taxi driver off leaving us standing around with many expensive dive bags! After a while the dive operation owner turned up and let us in shutting and locking the gates behind us. Once in we found a reasonable dive operation and our hire cylinders and guide. The Limestone mine is over 700 years old and has a huge amount of history in its large maze like complex, much of old Budapest has been built from material from this mine but as I mentioned earlier the recent history is a little grim, during the siege of Budapest in 1945 the mine was used as a German/Hungarian hospital, store and air raid shelter. But when it was captured by Soviet forces very few escaped the mines alive. After loading the equipment into a van we followed on foot to the first of two dives sites located within. All of us found the 15-minute walk rather sobering as the mine was large and showed signs of conflict, maybe it was just the cool damp atmosphere that made it feel rather unfriendly. The first dive site was entered by walking down a flight of stairs and then continuing to swim down the stairs to a depth of 10m. Below the stairs are two large impressive rooms with mine gantries and workings reaching a depth of 33m. The second dive was more horizontal with around 200m of narrow but very high corridors split with various floors of dubious nature reaching a depth of 26m. Large rooms at either end provided some great photo opportunities. This dive site and operation requires recognised diving certification in cave diving and diving. The guides phoned a Taxi for us at the end of the day collecting us from inside the gates and taking us back to a more friendly part of the city.

## MOLNAR JANOS CAVE Budapest

Divers: Michael Thomas, Greg Chimiak, Andrzej Ceo, Pi Maj, Maciek Ogrodnik

I had wanted to dive this cave for many years and am very thankful to the Polish Diving Explorers for the invite onto their trip. Things have changed in the running of the cave as a dive operation since the original explorers and then a long time of very restricted access. The cave is now run as a commercial cave diving operation and requires Cave Certification and Dive Certification Unfortunately CDG certification cards are not recognized or excepted, be



warned if you travel to the cave expecting to dive! You are allowed to dive any configuration including rebreathers after your checkout dives on open circuit back mount cylinders as long as you have the certification needed. It was explained to me that these are requirements set down by the government department that issue the permits for diving in the cave. After arriving at the cave in the very nice, Turkish bath area of Buda, we were shown around and

thoroughly briefed on the planned dives by our guide.

Molnar Janos is a thermal cave and is formed from the inside out, the hot thermal waters eating away the cave walls constantly and forming superb crystal formations. The cave passage size is generally very large and only increasing, the cave layout is maze like making navigation potentially difficult.

Diving in crystal clear water of around 22.c all divers found themselves very impressed by the cave and crystal formations. Two dives were carried out leaving the same dive base but going to



different parts of the cave. Huge canyon passage and wide bedding planes are the order of the day. The dive lines are superbly laid keeping you away from the formations and giving lots of information as to distance and direction from the dive base, so with some understanding of the cave survey to start with it should be difficult to get lost!

Despite the Certification paperwork to overcome and rules to follow it's well worth the effort to cave dive in Molnar Janos and the dive set up is superb.

After finishing the dives I spent the rest of the evening exploring the old part of Buda with Aleksandra Ciesielka in a monumental thunderstorm and getting disapproving looks from a Hungarian policeman for hiding in the doorway of the presidential palace !



# Templeton Update

Phil Hendy

It is a while since the last Templeton update, and much has happened in the meantime. The dig is quite ecumenical, with the Axbridge, NHASA and BEC providing the main diggers, with occasional help from others, and some labour-only subcontractors from the Craven from time to time. In May 2006, at a depth of around 154ft (47m in new money) the dig flooded, and although we were able to get to a depth of 166ft (50m) by May 2009, this was only because a series of pumps had been rigged, to take the water in stages up to the surface.

A bedrock floor was found, but this sloped away to the south, where a squalid tunnel was dug open. When this was pumped dry, there was an eerie glooping sound for twenty minutes as air entered a small aven at the back. Beyond, we dug a small passage which decreased in size and was filled with semi-liquid mud. It was not a popular place, and was soon abandoned. Then it was noticed that there was a maximum water level; a crevice at the south end of the dig seemed to take water. Enlarging the crack with Hilti caps enabled us to push a water pipe into it. We found that pumped water entered the crack, and did not return. Encouraged, Hugh and Elaine Tucker spent the next 16 months enlarging the crevice with caps.

In the meantime, Dave Turner began to clear rocks from the floor at the north end of the shaft bottom; it was not long before he realised that the bedrock floor had ended, and the shaft continued downwards. From July 2009 to July 2013 digging continued here, until the shaft was 82ft (25m) deep, bringing the total depth of Templeton to 248ft (75m). The shaft was fluted and waterworn, so had obviously taken a fair-sized stream at one time, but the fill was mainly liquid mud. The shaft narrowed at it went down, which made digging awkward. At one point, a bulge in the wall had to be removed, to allow a bucket to pass. In the Templeton tradition, platforms were constructed at 200ft and 223ft (61 and 71m), reached by fixed ladders. All the while, the shaft flooded between digging sessions, so before work could start the water had to be pumped out. Initially this was temporarily stored in the abandoned South Passage dig, but was later pumped directly into the south crevice.

In the meantime, excitement was mounting in the south, as capping continued and the crack was seen to be getting bigger. Pumped water could be heard cascading down a fair-sized drop – but would it be caver-size? Eventually, in November 2011, it was possible to look down into a large open shaft. The first descent was not made until 20<sup>th</sup> February 2012, as adjustments had to be made to the passage dimensions, and a ladder belay drilled into place.

South Pot, as it was named, was 35ft (11m) deep, with a sloping ledge halfway down. The walls were covered in flowstone, and the boulder floor sloped down to a choke. We were ecstatic; the first breakthrough,

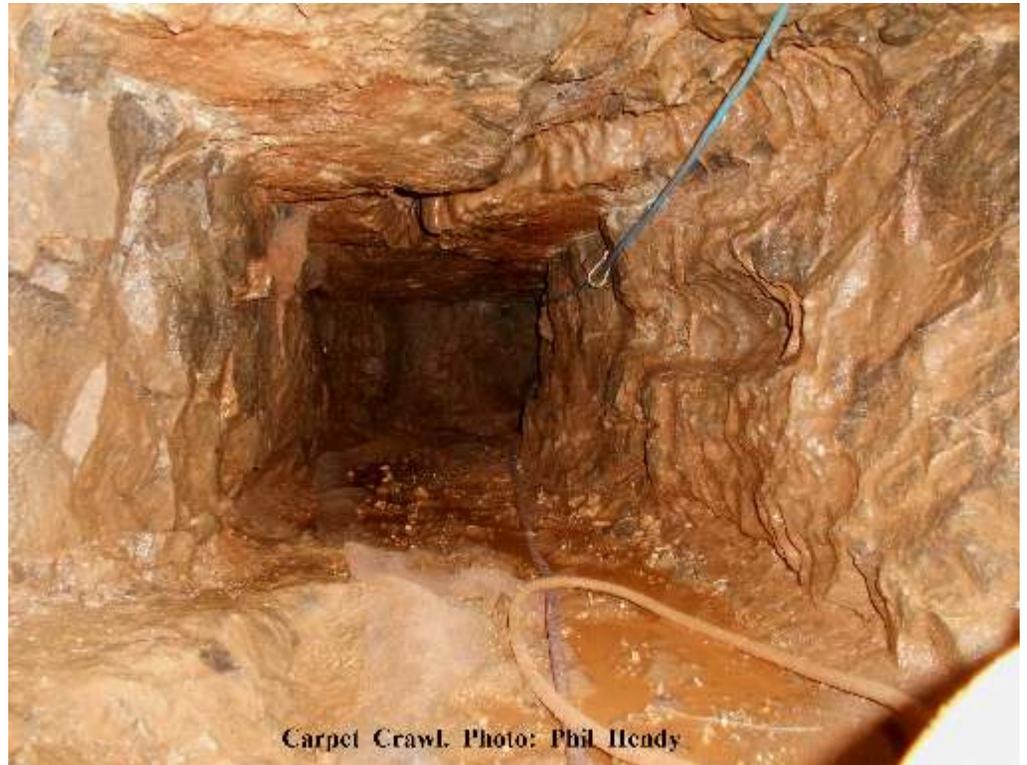


# THE DIGGING SCENE Continued.....

with a promising lead at the bottom. Further digging and exploration had to wait, however, while Clive North banged the passage (South Tunnel) to make access easier. Jim Young and Dave Morrison then engineered a steel ladder to the bottom, which doubled as rails for a skip to bring spoil up. The skip was powered by an electric builders' hoist from Lidl.

While the infrastructure was being installed, progress was continuing in the North Pot, and in April 2012 the dig self-drained. Tramping about at the bottom soon plugged the drain hole, but further digging opened the drain once and for all. Some calcited boulders were removed, to reveal a narrow cleft some 20ft (6m) deep, at the bottom of which the optimists could see water – possibly running. However, this dig was again temporarily suspended, when the fabricators in South Pot completed their job, and work began at the bottom.

The South Passage entered the pot about halfway down, and some effort was made to complete a hairy traverse over



Carpet Crawl. Photo: Phil Heady

the drop, to enter an aven, which to this date has not been climbed to the top. But we wanted to go down, not up. The boulder floor was removed over several weeks to solid rock. In the fill we found parts, but not all, of a massive stalagmite, broken into several pieces. There was a small boulder-filled pit in the floor, but at the very bottom, a small crack took all of the water which dripped or was pumped into the Pot. This was obviously the way to go. Work started here in March 2014, initially with caps. This was slow work, and there were a few incidents when caps fired prematurely, or 'duds' were accidentally drilled into and went off. Despite the diggers wearing safety goggles, one more than one occasion minor facial wounds were caused by flying rock fragments; Jon Riley caught a chip of rock in the eye, and a splinter of metal cap penetrated Dave Turner's finger. Enough was enough, and the services of Vince Simmons were enlisted, to use something more powerful, that could be detonated at a safe distance. Gradually the crack was enlarged to a man-sized crawl. To make working a little more tolerable, the floor was covered with a length of old carpet, so the passage became known as Carpet Crawl. Eventually, in February 2015, expectations were raised when a loud booming echo could be heard at the end of the dig, and a little later, falling water was heard to splash into a pool far below. All the while, there was a strong inwards draught, which sucked drill dust into the unknown. Eventually, on May 6<sup>th</sup>, Echo Pot was plumbed to 42ft (13m); it was first descended on May 27<sup>th</sup>. The ladder descent was free-hanging, as the pot belled out, being 4-5ft (1-1.3m) wide and more than 6ft (2m) long. Bang debris had obscured the pool, but at the bottom, a rift descended at each end. The southernmost was estimated at more than 20ft deep (6.5m), but both were too tight to enter for more than a short distance. At 270ft below the surface (82m) this is the deepest part of Templeton, and the very bottom is below the bottom of North Pot. However, water pumped into the north end was not seen or heard in the south, and it seems that at present, we have two parallel systems, both trending southwards in the general direction of Wookey Hole. In the summer of 2014, Jim Young started gating the top of the main shaft, no mean feat in view of its size.

This is to deter casual visitors and unofficial cavers, and also the odd toerag – a winch was stolen from part way down the north pot. A ring of steel was welded around the shaft, with more to support a weldmesh cover. This also protects us from largeish rocks which may peel off the side of the depression, while allowing water and possibly bats to gain access. Ledges in the shaft have also been used by nesting birds. The top of the second ladder now has a locked gate, while the skip run is similarly gated and locked. A contact switch prevents the skip from operating when the gate is closed.

There have been a few incidents, usually when the generators or dumper play up. Both the 7.5 kVa generator and dumper engines have been overhauled, and the spring in one of the dumper fuel pumps broke, which caused severe starting difficulties. The pumps have also had their moments – the Lidl versions have proved

more reliable than the Drapers, although one pump caught fire, and another exploded between Dave and Hugh, sending a jet of high-pressure steam between them. Some electric winches are better than others.

Overheating has been the main problem (solved by spraying with water, and increasing the downtime) although currently



there is an earth leak on one of the switches, causing the operator to experience a ‘tingle’.

The worst catastrophe took place on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2015, when inexplicably one of the team fell head-first down Echo Pot, sustaining severe rib injuries, and breaking some neck vertebrae, amongst other damage. The subsequent rescue took several hours, involving a large MCRA callout, aided by the Fire Service HART team, and largely hindered by a plethora of ordinary firemen and three ambulances. The specialist trauma doctor, dropped in by helicopter, was however a life-saver – literally! Amazingly, only a month later our casualty was back at the dig, though in a purely observational role.

Work on Echo Pot has been put on hold until the necessary infrastructure has been installed. Dave M wants to drill a long pilot hole from the bottom of South Pot to near the end of Carpet Crawl, about 12ft (4m) below. Then a shaft will be blasted, so that spoil can come straight up Echo Pot to South Pot, avoiding the Crawl. Echo Pot itself will have a fixed steel ladder, with probably a platform halfway down. Then the bottom can be enlarged. Vince has banged South Pot a few times to make a level surface for the pilot drill, and work has also restarted in North Pot, which looks promising, as the rift appears to widen at depth.

Templeton is situated almost halfway between the known ends of St. Cuthbert’s Swallet and Wookey Hole, and is south of the fault which water from all of the Priddy swallets has to cross before it can drain to Wookey. It is thus in an ideal position, although there is still a long way to go down before we hit the water table. To put it into perspective, the bottom of Templeton is probably at about the same level as the bottom of Barnes’ Loop in Swildon’s. So far, the site has been dug for fifteen years, but enthusiasm is still high. Gains have been hard-won and slow to achieve, but the prospect of finding the Priddy master cave keeps us going.

# .....AND STILL MORE DIGGING.....



## Editorial Note:

Impelled by curiosity, a few weeks back, I visited Mitchell's Dig with Nigel, Adrian, Pete and Barry. The location and appearance are both surreal. In the middle of a huge field, with sheep grazing, there's a tripod hoist and the top of a shaft. There's only the slightest hint of depression in the expanse of grass. One's immediate reactions are why there? The clue lies back in the past, when there was apparently a major swallet hole there, and it's worth repeating the account in journal 334:

**Sunday 20 April 1997** - Dave Morrison, Dave Speed, Rob Taviner, Graham Bromley, Bob Cottle, Paul Stillman, Pete Hann, Keith Fielder, Tony Audsley, Richard Witcombe plus other vistors Work on the dig resumed at 9.30 am and the digger trenched eastwards at a depth of 25' to 30'. At 11.30 am, a small area of solid rock floor was uncovered roughly in the centre of the depression and close to the location of the earlier digs. The bucket then revealed a small hole approximately 1' in diameter, which readily swallowed the loose earth around it. PH and RT went down in the bucket to examine it and pronounced that it was in more or less solid rock and was fretted by water erosion. It appeared to bell out below the lip, but was largely filled by a cone of earth and mud. A decision to safeguard and pipe it was quickly reached and DS and helpers were sent off to Little Crapnell Farm to bring back the stock of concrete pipes. Starting at 4.30 pm, eight 1' 9" high pipes were installed and the surrounding pit backfilled. Work ceased at 7 pm. A slight draught was detected emerging from the new shaft.



**Wednesday 23 April 1997** - Dave Speed, Graham Bromley, Rob Taviner, Paul Stillman, Pete Hann, Richard Witcombe, Keith Fielder DS had brought over eight further pipes and seven of these were installed during the evening, making the shaft some 27' deep. The excavator then completed the backfilling of the depression. The winch was unloaded but not set up.

This is its bizarre appearance now, and photos of some of the core digging team. We owe many thanks to John and Bill Small for allowing the diggers to drive across their fields directly to the shaft head.



## *Digging in Sludge Pit Hole : steady progress on several fronts*

### **Geoff Newton writes:**

“Please find attached update on the Sludge digs. A survey will follow in the post as before. Maybe some photos too. Duncan Simey and Mike are doing a complete resurvey of the whole cave using DistoX but this is not yet finished or in a publishable form and so the survey sent will be a photocopy of MU survey with new bits drawn in. The new survey we hope will be the basis for a separate article an edition or two down the line.”

A lot has happened since Issue 335 of the Wessex Journal, where I covered some background to the cave and why we were digging where we were in the cave. I left the story at a point where a small new streamway had been opened up and extended to a length of maybe 5 metres by digging out sediments and the use of small amounts of explosives, undertaken in wet and cramped conditions. Passable passage appeared to be visible ahead but it could not be reached because of an intervening too tight section 2 or 3 metres long. The roof was also lowering and the depth of water and mud fill increasing. The open passage was apparently at either a T-junction or sharp bend.

Ali Moody reckoned that it would take 2 or 3 banging sessions to reach the open passage, which I privately thought was a little optimistic. Fortunately, the rock ahead proved to be a little less hard than before and with vigorous hammering the too tight section was reduced to 1.5 metres. Water could be seen trickling down from above in the other side of the constriction, and when a pulse of water was sent along the passage, the whooshing sound of falling water could be heard ahead. Working conditions were most unpleasant. Some relief was found by lowering the water level by removing sediments with a long handled hoe. Eventually a rock barrier was encountered ahead and no further lowering of the water level became possible.

During the first year, digging was carried mainly by myself and Mike Kousiounis with occasional technical help from Ali Moody. This has continued into the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Other cavers have helped out but until recently nobody has lasted more than 2 or 3 sessions. The 4<sup>th</sup> bang took us to the point where the roof was rising again and we could see that a small mud filled passage was descending to meet us from above, probably the same as a too tight rift next to the mud tube dig. On 20 November two bats were seen flying around the cave, but fortunately they did not try to roost for a few weeks longer. This was an added incentive to crack on.

After a bang on 28 November 2015 it was possible to squirm up into the roof onto a ledge at the start of the open passage and to see ahead. The passable passage ahead was seen to bend sharp left and to descend steadily as a metre diameter tube for about 8 metres or so before it went out of sight. Alas there was no standing room. The falling water was seen to be coming from a too tight inlet at roof level on the right. Unfortunately, we could not enter the passage as our way was blocked by a long coffin sized boulder. Mike was able to turn round but I had to reverse back and I managed to damage one or two of my ribs as I went back over the edge of the ledge.

The next weekend in preparation for a breakthrough we cleared most of the spoil stacked in various places back to the stacking chamber. The next day on 5 December 2015 Ali banged the junction and the boulder ahead to make the continuing passage fully accessible. This was a difficult and complicated process which only someone as small as Ali could have managed. Finally, on Sunday 6 December 2015 we all went in. What we found only confirmed our distant view of the previous weekend. The passage subsided into soft mud after 8 metres however there did appear to be a small air space of some sort and there were no signs of the passage sumping. The ribs I damaged the previous weekend were not improved by the work of this weekend, but there was no way I was going to miss out.

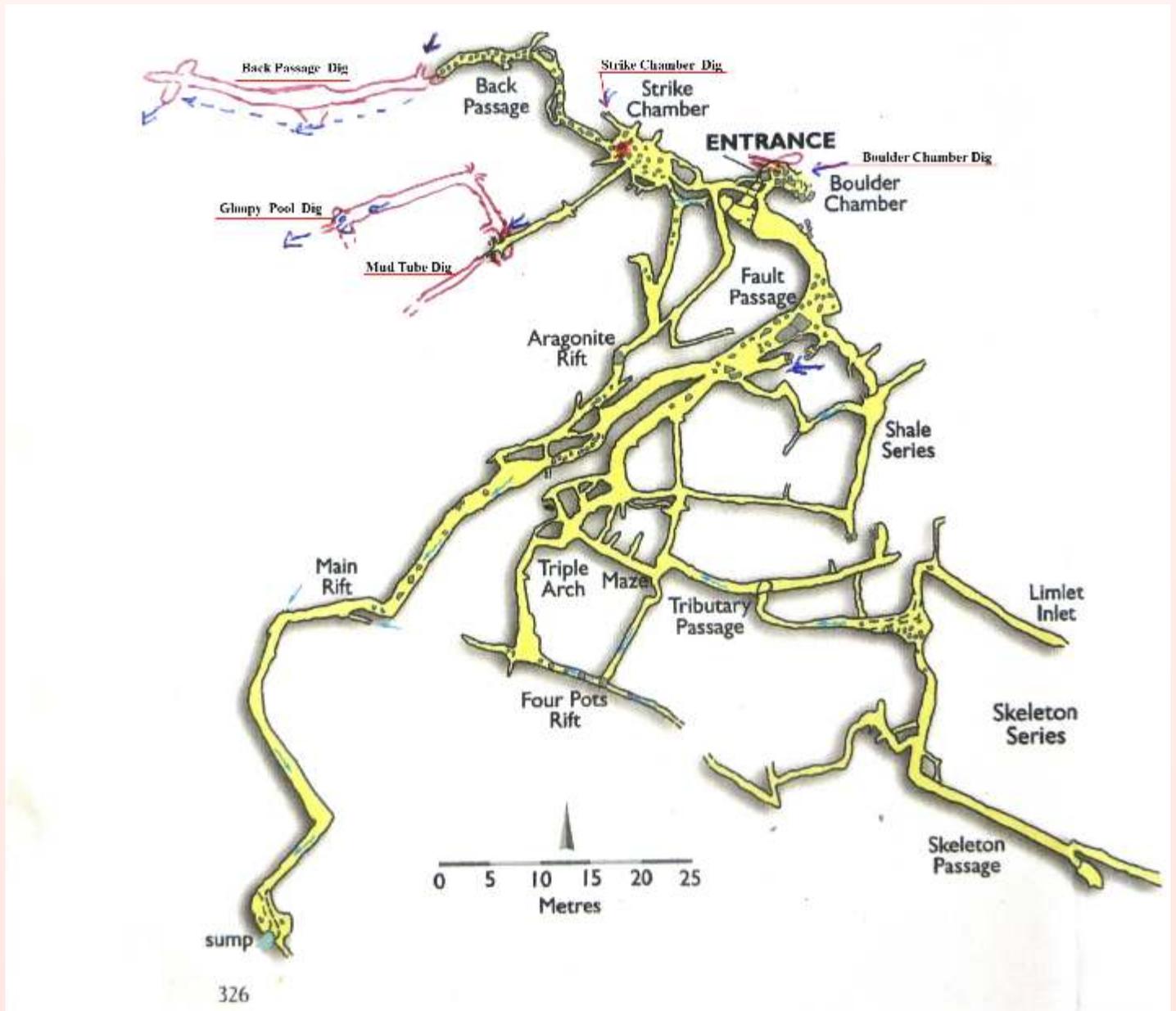
This was not the breakthrough we had been hoping for. Instead of romping along a decent sized streamway, we were faced with the prospect of a long and difficult dig. We were running out of stacking space and we would soon have to take spoil all the way back to Strike Chamber. Conditions at the sharp end were going to be horrendous. Mike went in with Alex Nicholls over the next two weekends whilst my ribs recovered. Some useful preparatory work and trial digging was carried out but little progress was made. Meanwhile my thoughts turned again to other possible dig sites in the Strike Chamber area, which might yield more easily.

On Christmas Day (sad old git that I am) I went in to have another look at the end of Back Passage, the relatively large phreatic passage that rises up at the far side of Strike Chamber and eventually descends steeply into a rift. At the bottom of this a “manhole” drops into a short extension of maybe 5-6 metres of crawlway, dug into at some time in the past by persons unknown. Here a trickle of water made a brief appearance before running into a too tight slot on the left. The end of this extension was a

very low bedding plane, which extended impassable as far as the eye could see. The floor of this looked solid but levering it with a crowbar revealed that it was in fact composed of long, thin interlocking slabs extending ahead into the darkness. I was able to lift one end of each slab but they were far too big to take out and they would have to be broken up before removal and alas I had no hammer with me. So I contented myself with removing as much mud as I could from the floor and disposing of it into the too tight streamway, which was emitting an enticing rushing sound.

On Boxing Day I returned with Mike K armed with hammer and crowbars. The slabs were reduced in size and more mud was removed. Eventually Mike was able to crawl in a little way and see that the airspace continued as far as the eye could see. We were tiring by then and retired to the old stream dig doing odd jobs like rearranging spoil storage and taking in a long handled tool for lowering the water level at the sharp end.

On Wednesday Mike went in on his own and carried out more hammering and mud clearing and he returned more optimistic than before. On New Year's Day we both returned armed with hammer and crowbars and with Mike sporting a massive hangover. Mike took the lead to take his mind off the hammering going on in his head, whilst I disposed of spoil. Eventually we removed enough slabs and mud to be able to wriggle through (with our helmets and belts removed) into a continuing narrow rift. Three ways on were visible. Straight down was a drop into the too tight stream way. Ahead was a descending



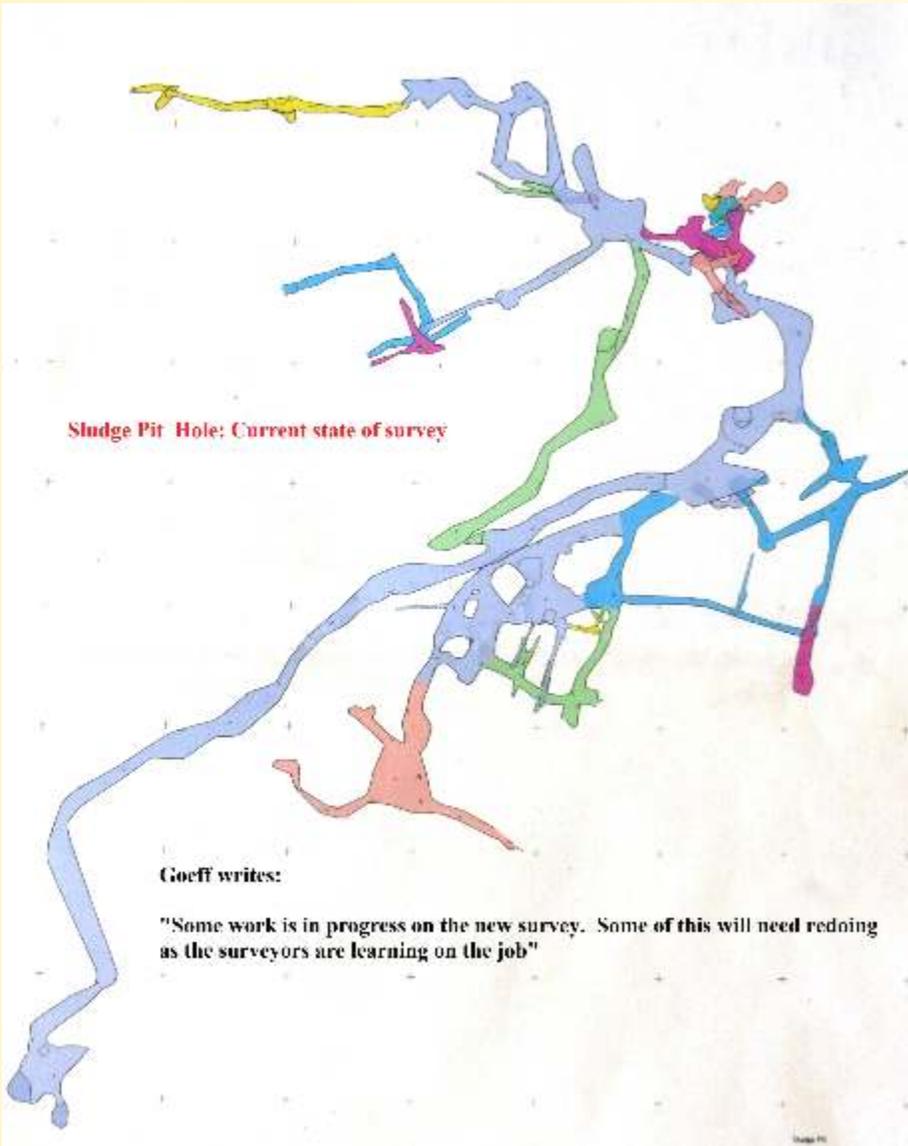
crawl which became too tight after passing the skeleton of a small animal about the size of a rabbit. Ahead was also an upward continuation of the rift which bore slightly to the left. However, this was partially blocked with mud, rocks and fragments of calcite false floor. At this point we were feeling tired and we called it a day to return on Sunday 3 January after the usual Saturday dig in LVS with the Charterhouse crew.

On Sunday it was my turn to lead and I dug through the rising choke into the continuation of the rift which carried on undulating crawling progress for a few more metres to meet another partial choke. This I soon dug through only to find a shaft immediately the other side. Crawling carefully into the shaft I saw a number of ways on. Directly opposite on the other side of the shaft

was a rift (you have guessed it) partially blocked by a choke of mud and rubble. Coming in from the right at roof level was a too tight inlet emitting a dribble of liquid mud. Directly down the free climbable shaft was a boulder choked slot leading to the streamway. Down and forward was a sloping muddy crawl way which became too tight. At this point a bat took up residence in the dig and we transferred our attention back to the old digs until it decided to move on, after a couple of weeks.

Subsequent visits cleared the continuation rift only to find that it pinched out to a tiny inlet after turning sharp right. The lower sloping crawl was too tight. However, the slot into the streamway was cleared out, to reveal a stream way which is awkward and tight but potentially passable but blocked by loose debris. Prospects here are exciting as there is a good draught and sound of falling water ahead, but the dire shortage of stacking space makes this a difficult long term dig. Over the succeeding months the tight spots in this extension have been eased so that normal sized people will have no problems getting to the end, but it remains a sporting bit of passage. The current length of this extension is in the region of 30m.

Back Passage is in my / our opinion the oldest part of the cave and appears to have been an undulating phreatic inlet for most



of its active life, formerly disgorging into Strike Chamber. At some stage it has drained and a thick calcite false floor formed over the residual sediments. Subsequently a major event such as snow melt at the end of an ice age has scoured out and broken the 3cm thick false floor and left it as a part of the various partial chokes found in various locations. Other components of the chokes are fragments of crystals, conglomerate, multi-coloured shales and sandstone. Truly a superior brand of digging spoil. The current vadose stream, which more or less exploits the same line of weakness as Back Passage flows in the opposite direction to the original phreatic passage and flows more or less parallel to Main Rift.

Back at the old stream dig we had four excellent digging sessions, the first with Sarah Payne and Mike Waterworth, the second and third with four members of the Hungarian Caving Club London and the last at Dig Fest with a mainly MCG crew. Removal of mud and gravel from the dig face revealed that the passage was getting wider and deeper. Naturally the space vacated by the mud and gravel has been filled with water forming a deep "Gloopy Pool". Working this requires a wet suit and determination and mostly means that it's Mike at the sharp end. On Dig Fest weekend he broke through into a small chamber. Ahead the stream disappears into a

10cm wide clean washed rift and left is a much larger rift which would be passable if it were not mostly blocked with mud. The area draughts well. The large mud choked rift will probably intersect the continuation of the Mud Tube dig. As work progresses we have started clearing spoil all the way back to Strike Chamber and have installed PVC sheeting as an alternative to conveyor belting on the haul up to Strike Chamber. However, as work proceeds here we now need about 8 or 9 people to dig the end and take the spoil all the way out to Strike Chamber

The adjacent Mud Tube is also being widened by use of explosives. Plaster charges proved ineffective so it has become necessary to use cord in drilled holes, so we have had to start further back at the very start of the tube and work forwards towards the tight spot which has barred progress to date. Jon Williams joined the team and has drilled and banged this site on several Sundays. This has created large amounts of spoil which threatened to overwhelm us, as it all has to be taken out to Strike Chamber. Steady progress has been made and at the time of writing the tube has been enlarged past the original tight spot, but needs some further enlargement. Current exploration is halted by a projecting curtain of rock. Beyond this the passage appears to change to a gently rising and possibly passable narrow rift with a muddy floor and is draughting well. This offers the best short term prospect of all our digs.

A fourth dig site emerged in March. The small stream which enters Strike Chamber sinks under the boulder floor of this chamber and Mike thought that it might be possible to follow this. We got into a small bouldery passage descending fairly steeply. On the assumption that this runs into one of the stream passages we have already dug into, this has been left for the time being.

Further distractions have been provided by surveying as we were keen to see how our extensions related to the existing cave and the Main Rift in particular. Me and Mike first did a rough survey using traditional methods which confirmed that things our extensions were mostly heading towards Swildons, parallel to Main Rift but further to the North, and would possibly pass fairly close to but well under the Lime Kiln Dig. Shortly after that the extensions were resurveyed using a DistoX by Andrew Atkinson and Mike, with the intentions of attaching them to the existing ULSA survey. However, then Duncan Simey acquired a Disto and offered to resurvey the connections back to the entrance as well as the Main Rift. Significant inaccuracies and omissions were found in the old survey and the project has morphed into a complete resurvey of the cave. When you resurvey a cave you find all sorts of interesting things.

ULSA had not surveyed the Boulder Chamber. Whilst surveying this Duncan and Mike saw a possible extension close to the lowest point of the choke. On 26 June 2016 Mike and I pushed through this into a small space against the far wall of the Boulder Chamber. A little more work got us into two “upstream avens” each about 4m high with water dripping from the roof. This water ran into the initial breakthrough space and sank against the chamber wall. We dug here and followed the water into what has become a sort of bedding passage with solid roof, floor and right hand wall with progress blocked by incursions of mud and rubble flowing in from the left hand side. Mike and Tom Terbrett stabilised the choke in the vicinity of the breakthrough using concrete and scaffold bars. An ongoing dig has started and we have been helped by Tom, Duncan Simey and Monica Bollani. This dig needs a team of three or four. It draughts well. Currently the spoil is stacked in the new avens. The water has been traced to an inlet on the right hand wall of Main Rift. This is close to the junction with Aragonite Rift. As the water enters from cracks here it is assumed that these cracks have captured the water from the passage where we are digging, so there is still hope that we might find significant passage going who knows where, although the incentive to dig is less than some of our other sites in the cave.

Which of the five digs is worked on a given day depends on who is available to help and whether assistance with explosives is available. A team of 8 or 9 is best for the original “gloopy pool” dig. There is something for every occasion. We can find employment for all shapes and sizes of people. If you are physically able to get to Strike Chamber we have work you can do.

When the new survey is complete the surveyed length of the cave is likely to be approaching one kilometre, a big increase from the current 660m. I must add that probably less than half of the increase will be from our new finds to date. The other extra length is due to open passages not on the previous survey or to passages which the previous surveyors did not count towards the length because they were sketched in rather than surveyed. More about all this in another issue of the Journal.

*Geoff*

**And an editorial apology for a disgraceful omission from Journal 337, I should have included this photograph of the triumphant Fester Hole digging team celebrating with a dinner at Jonathan William’s abode in Priddy.**





## A VISIT TO CARNSHALLOCH LIMESTONE MINE, AYRSHIRE

By Jonathan Da'Casto Background notes by Alan L. Jeffreys

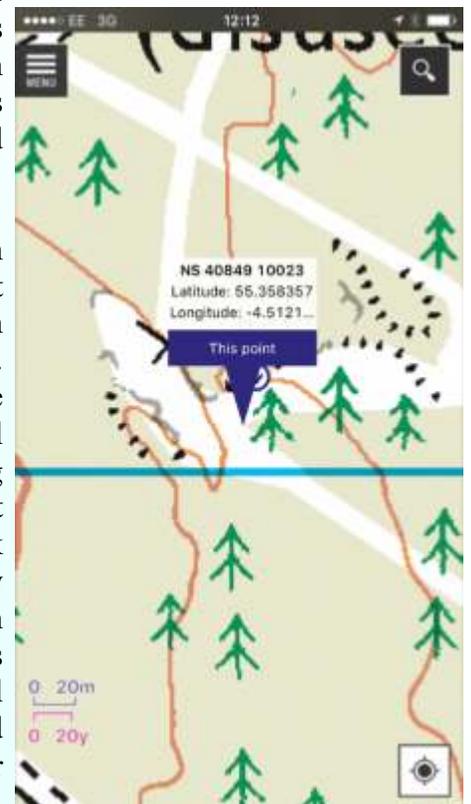
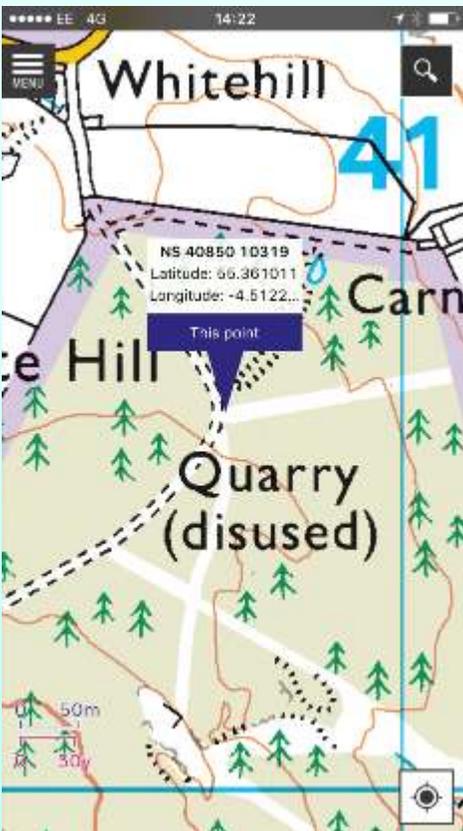
Limestone mining, for use in agriculture and the iron-smelting industry (with a little for building) used to be extensive throughout south Ayrshire in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Substantial deposits of Carboniferous limestone occur in exposures running roughly north east to south west, with further exposures south of Kilmarnock outcropping in isolated strips from the north-west to the south-east. According to Robertson <sup>(1)</sup> by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century there were more than 50 such quarries in operation, but today that figure has shrunk to almost none. The remains of this once thriving industry are not obvious, apart from ruined kilns, and entrances into various mine workings are usually overgrown and otherwise concealed by decay and modern landscaping.

One interesting example is the Carnshalloch – or Cairnshalloch – limestone mine at Patna, Keir's Glen, situated in the local Hurllet Limestones (NS 40849 10023, 220m ASL). The adjacent Patna village was largely created for mine and iron smelting workers, and its curious name arose because the local entrepreneur William Fullarton's family had close associations with Patna in Bihar State, India in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It is widely accepted that he named his workers' village after the original Patna, although another theory states that it derives from the Gaelic *Pait 'n Ath*, 'The water of the eminence' (presumably Carskeoch Hill). William Fullarton began extracting ironstone, coal and limestone along the banks of the Doon River a few miles south of Skeldon in the early 1800s. The Carnshalloch limestones were of a very high purity (up to 97% CaCO<sub>3</sub>) but seams were only three to four metres deep, and mining had ceased at this location probably by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

From a speleological point of view, the mine came to the attention of the now defunct Glasgow Speleological Society in the mid-1960s, and they produced what looks like a detailed survey of the mine in 1967 <sup>(2)</sup> but which, on a recent visit, appears to be either a sketch only, or altered by subsequent collapse. Stone extraction had been followed down a steep gradient, with passageways some 3-6 metres width. Sections were very well decorated with calcite and limonite formations but little else was reported by this society. Even then, passages were obviously very decayed, with current voids occupying spaces where the roof had originally been, due to thin beds collapsing in on themselves.

On Thursday 2nd June 2016, Wessex member Jonathan Da'Casto paid a visit along with Andrew Hay (Bristol and District Caving Club) and a local friend Chris Hamilton, after reading a reference to it in *Mines in Scotland* (2008)<sup>(3)</sup>. His report refers to the Glasgow survey, Fig.1, with circled areas specifically described below:

It took us quite a long time to find the main entrance – we'd overlooked it initially as it was set in shadow below the grass line and in any case we had expected it to be bigger. Incidentally, the forest just beyond the entrance, shown on Google Maps aerial photography, has now all been felled leaving the ground looking like a tsunami has swept over it. We didn't search for the 'Back Entrance' due to time constraints but now know we would have found it behind us in the tree line. The back entrance series joins the main route at two points. First is a small squarish passage where the thin roofing bed has collapsed in a V-shape. Nearby the floor





rises to near the ceiling with about 40cms of space to pass through, however, there was a lot of 'pretty' brown coloured stal which would have been destroyed by the passage of cavers so we didn't attempt to force a route through.



Proceeding deeper into the main mine, although we had noted the small connecting route marked at '2' we failed to spot it from either direction.

The area just looked like a large heap of collapsed deads and limestone blocks and a way through could certainly exist. Penetrating down a main line southwards, area '3' is shown as much too narrow in

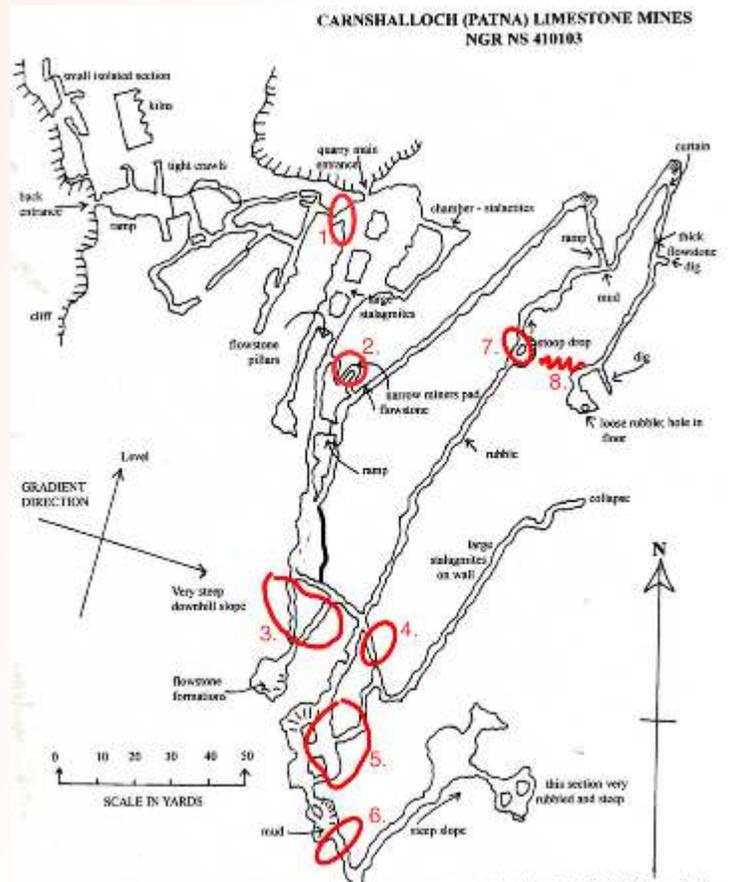


the original survey; it is far broader and is terminated in a run-in of broken blocks which were difficult to climb safely and in any event looked as though it filled the way on to the ceiling. A lower passage on the left continued onward and deeper into the mine but trying to relate this area to the survey was confusing. Perhaps recent collapse has either blocked or re-configured the workings here. Passage at '4' was not seen, and after turning left and left again to gain some 40 metres of passage we arrived at more run-in collapse which is possibly point '6' on the survey. It appeared to us that the survey bears little or no relation to this section as we found it. We climbed the run-in to the right where a slope of spoil went down to a lower level passage. However the gap was all of 30

cms and the run-in very unstable. To continue would require some clearance and stabilisation to remove the immediate danger of the gap being filled up by further run in from above. Further left the run-in led to a crawl into a respectable chamber from whence no onward route was visible.

We then retraced our steps to point '3' and continued generally northwards. Another roof run-in (possibly the 'rubble' shown on the survey south of point '7') was scrambled over to give access to the 'stoop drop'. Andrew and I crawled through a narrow passage across the collapse to the other side while Chris waited for us, and gained the continuation of the main passage with silty, sloppy mud around 15cms deep. After some 50 metres this passage sharply doubled back on itself, as shown, and the old dig site was then reached, complete with a clay word 'TOE' written on the left side. Chris thought he could hear us talking at this point so there may be an audible, if not physical connection to the 'Stoop Drop' chamber. I have indicated this with a wavy line at point '8'.

Reversing our route from the dig embraced a diversion up the 'ramp' indicated on the survey, from whence we moved rapidly down via points '2' and '3' to rejoin and collect Chris. Having now toured most of the mine, we



The above plan is of the Carnshalloch limestone mines situated at the 850ft level on Carnshalloch Hill, Patna, Ayrshire. A farm track leads directly to the mine from the old smithy at Whitehill about 1/4 mile outside Patna on the Patna/Kilbricken road. The remains of the lime kilns make a suitable landmark.

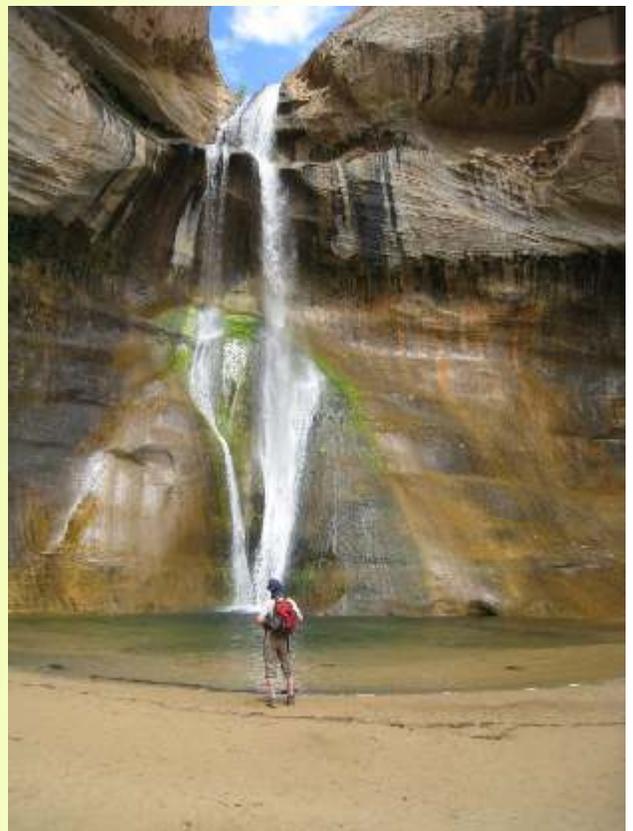


headed out up the steep passages, with one detour to look at some nice brittle peanut flowstone in a side chamber of the upper series. My overall impression is that in barely any portion of the mine are you now walking on the original floor. Extensive collapse of thin limestone beds has completely changed the topography. There is a nice range of stal throughout the mine, with a plentiful range of colours and shapes. All in all, a pleasant caving trip in a region not overblessed with natural limestone systems, with the exception of Cleaves Cove, some 30 miles to the north near Dalry.

#### References:

- Robertson, T. *et al* (1949) *The Limestones of Scotland*. Geological Survey Memoir Vol. XXXV, pages 61,67  
[Thomson, S.F., Ed.] *Carnshalloch (Patna) Limestone Mine*. Glasgow Speleological Society Newsletter, Oct. 1967, pp. 1-2. Also *G.S.S. Journal* 1(2) (1964) pp.19,21.  
Jeffreys, A.L. [Ed] (2008) *Mines of Scotland*. Produced for NAMHO conference, pp. 26,54

Dr. Bob Pyke, who enlightened us on our eyesight in journal 336, now prefers to do his caving in daylight. On a recent holiday, exploring canyons (roofless caves.....) in Utah, he took this stunning photograph in Negro Bill's Canyon. Then while walking in Montenegro, he happened upon this unmarked (and locally considered unremarkable) resurgence.



Saturday March 12 2016 Manor Farm Swallet “2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday Trip”. Jude, Damon, Rich, James, Nick, Beth, Kate, Colin.

Surprisingly, this was my first time on a “2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday” trip. Manor Farm is a classic trip. Ladder pitch, climbing pitch, low bits, good formations, water. We split into two groups, one led by Jude, the other by James. We arrived at Manor Farm as the first group were changing. We made our way to the entrance, which is also the first pitch. Waited for the first party to descend and clear the pitch, then followed down the 40ft ladder. At the bottom of the pitch there is a short crawl to the main passage. The 1968 flood entrance was refilled shortly after it was opened. At the bottom of it there used to be a Hillman Imp - XAE 151. In the 70s and 80s the Imp was substantially complete and clearly visible, upside down at the bottom of the filled flood pitch. This time I only saw one battered wheel. The main passage quickly leads to the second pitch, September Rift, which we free climbed down. We continued down and made our way to the fluted pots and bypassed the pitch, using the Albert’s Eye route which rejoins the main passage with a crawl underneath the waterfall of the fluted pots. Following on down, we climbed up into the NHASA gallery and continued until the cave became quite small and muddy. On the way through we admired the superb curtains. The climb back up September Rift is interesting but easy; about 7ft up the hand- and foot-holds become rather small, but soon increase again to a good size.

Quote: “It would be nice to be hauled up the last pitch”  
Reply “After the way you came up September Rift, no chance”

..... ah well, it was worth a try!

Thanks to Jude and James for a great trip. **Colin**

Friday March 18 2016 Rod’s Pot John Cooper, Rich Marlow, Jude VdP.

Placing signs in Rod’s and Bath for tomorrow’s rescue practice. 1 1/4 hrs. **John**

Saturday March 19 2016 Mitchell’s Dig Pete Hann, Nigel Graham.

Short engineering trip to install fixed ladder. PH measured the dig’s depth - 20.4m so far. NG measured tripod parts for building a winch. One bucket of mortar in, one bucket of spoil out. **Nigel**

Saturday March 19 2016 Goatchurch Michael Meal, Tony Massey

Sunday March 20 2016 Rod’s Pot

My first time caving and didn’t know exactly what to expect. Lots of flowstone and stalagmites and

stalactites, even a pillar. Looking forward to going again soon! End of the weekend I was battered, bruised and aching all over from scrambling through the natural “Assault courses”. **Mike**

Sunday March 20 2016 Swildons Damon Fentham, John Cooper

My first trip to Sump 1. A very enjoyable day out at Swildons. I got soaked through, but enjoyed every minute of it. Can’t wait for my next trip. **Damon**

Monday March 21 2016 Spider Hole James Collings, John Cooper, Mike K, Ade & Jude VdP.

Hauled 21 loads up 4 Ton Shaft to pit and then onwards and upwards to the stacking space. 1 1/4 hrs. **John**

Wednesday March 23 2016 Swildons Damon & Liam Fentham, John Cooper, John Gisborne

We had a very enjoyable trip to sump 2 and back. It was the first time that Liam and I have been that far into Swildons. Tired and soaked through, but really enjoyed it. **Damon**

Wednesday March 23 2016 Sludge Pit Mike K

Drilling holes, 3 in Back Passage, 4 in old dig. 2hrs. **Mike**

Friday March 25 2016 Reads Cavern Jake Parrish, Pete Buckley

A jolly jaunt in and around the wonders of Read’s. Firstly admired the beautifully decorated area in Junction Chamber before strolling down via Zed Alley (passing through the squeeze with ease). A few loose rocks moved, take care not to dislodge any. While were there we thought we may as well take in the delights of Dogend and Alzheimer’s Pool before sauntering out to the awaiting sunshine. 2 hrs. or so. **Jake**

Friday March 25 2016 Sludge Pit Geoff Newton, Mike K, Tony Massey.

An excellent session in the old dig moving spoil back to Strike Chamber. Tony then



had a look at the dig face, which showed more bravery than sense. **Geoff**

Saturday March 26 2016 Swildons Bean, Jo, Katie, George, Louis, plus Ben, Sam and Joe Cooper.

In via the ZigZags into the Long Dry, then headed to the New Grottoes. Bean put the small people to the test of fitting through the tightest passage he could find. On to the 20 to look at the view then back to Water Chamber where Joe created clay sculptures. Out the Wet Way with Ben and George going through the Ripper. Finally George exited via the tree roots while the rest of us watched. A great trip and a big "Thank you" to the Cooper family for keeping us company. **Jo**

Saturday March 26 2016 LVS Pete Buckley, John Gisborne, John Cooper, Mike K, Tony Massey, Ali, Geoff Newton, Barry Weaver.

41 loads hauled out (two week's worth). 4 holes drilled and more spoil created. Some flood debris removed from the entrance. 2 ½ hrs. **John Cooper**

Sunday March 27 2016 Upper Flood Swallet John Cooper, Lee Hawkswell.  
Visited Royal Icing. 3 hrs. **John**

Sunday March 27 2016 Sludge Pit Mike K, Ali, Geoff Newton, Tony Massey

Setting up charges in Mud Tube and Back Passage following drilling. No problems, ran both reels to Strike Chamber to detonate. Heard bangs from both. **Mike K**

Monday March 28 2016 Spider Hole John Cooper, NikNak, Ade VdP.

With reduced numbers, emptied the bottom of spoil, 42 loads moved up to bottom of 4 Ton Shaft. 1 ½ hrs. **John**

Early March (written up retrospectively). **Sandford Hill** Derek Sanderson, Terry Waller

Quick trip to entrance pitch of **Mangle Hole**, to see what it was like on SRT. Found it cramped and awkward. Used 9mm rope which was unwise due to the serious rub points in the top of the shaft. Then to **Sandford Levy** to have a fresh look at the climb up into the new stuff (left branch from the first cross-roads). Top part looked horrible, so we went to the pub. **Derek**

Monday March 21 2016 Hunter's Lodge Inn Sink Derek Sanderson, Terry Waller

Good trip to Brown Ale Boulevard. Water level in the canal seemed up. **Derek**

Friday April 1 2016 Sludge Pit Geoff Newton, Mike K

Clearing and hammering at the sharp end of the Back Passage dig. Good draught and sound of a stream ahead, but it's going to be a slow job making progress - typical Sludge! **Geoff**

Saturday April 2 2016 LVS Ali, John Cooper, Mike K, Tony Massey, Geoff Newton, Pete Buckley.

34 loads to surface - tunnel now big enough for cats. Easy to sit up and work - can also pass each other in the passage, and to turn around. More holes and more debris made. 3hrs. **Pete**

Friday April 8 2016 Swildons John Cooper, Jim Burridge, Aaron Varley.

Aaron's first trip. Quick romp down to Sump 1. Most enjoyable. **John**

Friday April 8 2016 Sludge Pit Geoff Newton, Mike K

Mostly hammering and clearing at the end of Back Passage dig. A little bit of work on the belting of the old dig, as well. Mike dislodged a largish boulder part way up the shaft at the end, which landed on the top of my head . Fortunately no harm was done. **Geoff**

Thursday April 7 2016 Tankards Hole Sarah Payne, Duncan Simey, Mike K.

Breakthrough at the Well! 125ft + into natural cave with the mine passage to the West. Natural cave descending and heading North and slightly East. Very strong draught..... TBC! **Mike**

Saturday April 9 2016 Sludge Pit Geoff Newton, Mike K, + 4 members of the Hungarian caving club (Atti, Gabi, Kris, Citram).

Removing mud and stones from the end of the old dig out to Strike Chamber. Water level lowered at the sharp end. The others then went to Swildons to wash off. **Geoff**

Saturday April 9 2016 LVS Pete Buckley, John Gisborne

Filled, really filled, 18 buckets and left them for next time. **John**

Saturday April 9 2016 Mitchell's Dig John Cooper, Pete Hann, Ade VdP

Dropped floor by a couple of feet. 50 loads hauled out. 2 ½ hrs. **John**

Sunday April 10 2016 Swildons John Cooper, Wayne Starsmore, Clive Westlake

Short Round Trip with photographs at the Troubles (X 3), Non-Glistening Gallery squeeze and the actual Glistening Gallery squeezes. 3 hours. Accompanied as far as Trats by Lee Hawkswell and Barry Weaver on their way to Sump 1. **John**

Monday April 11 2016 Spider Hole James Collings, NikNak, John Cooper, Ade and Jude VdP.

While Adrian moved spoil away from the edge at the top of of 4 Ton Shaft, the rest of us moved spoil from the very bottom to the base of 4 Ton Shaft. 2 hrs. **John**

Saturday April 16 2016 LVS Serial Drillers. John Cooper, Pete Buckley.

A successful drilling session. Loads of holes drilled, mainly by John and his Ober drill. (My solitary hole is as close to the ongoing pinch point as possible). Quite a bit of hammering / chiselling also undertaken - lots more spoil created. All ready for application of loud noise. (Ali: 6 holes = approx 3 sticks). **Pete**

Friday April 15 2016 Sludge Pit Geoff Newton, Mike K

Drilling holes in the Mud Tube dig. Hammering rock flakes in the streamway at the end of Back Passage dig. Moving some spoil. Very slow progress. **Geoff**

Sunday April 17 2016 Lime Kiln John Cooper, Murray Knapp, Aubrey Newport, Barry Wilkinson, Jonathan Williams.

While Murray drilled a 900mm hole, parallel to the drain, the rest moved a token bit of spoil from the bottom canal to the bottom of the railway. 1 hr. **John**

Sunday April 17 2016 Swildons Tony Massey, Wayne Starsmore

My first lead to Swildons to Sump 2. Great fun rigging and de-rigging ladders and lifelines. Water was nice and 'cool' draining through the fleece in Sump 1. Sprinted to Sump 2 to keep warm, to check weights for later dive. No mistakes. Feel good. Ta to Wayne, enjoyed the trip. **Tony**

Monday April 18 2016 GB Tony & Darren Massey

My first trip into GB as a Wessex Guest (been there many times). Firstly, not as wet as I thought. Went over the bridge down to the dry muddy bottom, on way back up did ladder pitch to Bat Passage, then made our way out after traverse and East / West passages. Cheers Bro - good lead. **Darren**

Monday April 18 2016 Spider Hole James Collings, Tony Seddon, John Cooper, Ade & Jude VdP.

42 loads hauled up 4 Ton Shaft. Plenty left. 1 ½ hrs. **John**

Tuesday April 19 2016 Swildons Tony & Darren Massey

Trip down the "Dry Way" (Ha!) carrying regulators and bottles (diving cylinders!) to the 20, for our first dive through Sumps 2 and 3. Sump 1 was as inviting as every, but clear. Getting a bit chilly in my 3mm shortie, so picked up the pace to Sump 2. Used a couple of weights each, from the store there. A few head-bashing moments later through Sumps 2 and 3. Quick run down to the Archway. Came back through the sumps nice and clean and quick - and out in time for tea and biscuits in the sun! **Tony**

Wednesday April 20 2016 Swildons (Round Trip) John Cooper, Damon Fentham.

My first attempt at the Round Trip today. It was a very enjoyable trip. I must admit that I struggled a bit at the third trouble, but after some coaching from John I got through it OK. Then all was fine until I had a minor mishap near the 20, where I fell and landed straight on my rear end. But once again John came to the rescue and he soon had me back on my feet again. Next time I'll try and have a mishap-free day! **Damon**

Thursday April 21 2016 LVS John Cooper, Ali Moody with Mike K guarding the entrance.

Eight holes charge and fired. There should be lots and lots of spoil to clear on Saturday. 1 1/4 hrs. **John**

Friday April 22 2016 Sludge Pit Geoff Newton

Hammering rock flakes at the end of Back Passage dig and moving spoil from the streamway there. Slow, steady progress. **Geoff**

**PHOTO SHOWCASE. ABIME DE MAS RAYNAL.. PHOTO: CHRISTINE GROSART. THE CAVER IS ASHLEY HISCOCK**



Photo Showcase. Abime de Rabanel. Photo: Clive Westlake.





Connor Roe has written to say:

“It is with a heavy heart that I write this email. With my work becoming more and more time intensive, along with next year looking like I will be on operations. I have been forced to conclude, that I'm unable to commit the full-time to my role. Please therefore see this email, as my official resignation from my post. I'm very sorry to have to put the committee and Wessex in this position, however my work is only going to intensify in the build up to next year.

Regards  
Connor Roe”

To which Frank Replied on behalf of all the committee:

Dear Connor,  
Thanks for all the hard work you've put in over the last year,  
It is appreciated, It will be hard to replace your enthusiasm and dedication.  
I look forward to going caving with you in the future,

Best of luck with operations.  
Frank Tully  
Secretary Wessex Cave Club

## Upper Pitts – Access Control System by John Cooper & Aubrey Newport

### In WCC Journal 266 August 1999 p 97 Phil Hendy wrote:

*“The existing system of issuing hut keys to members and bona fide guest groups works, but it is becoming increasingly more difficult to keep track of who has keys, and it is practically impossible to recover keys when members leave the Club. Members also lose keys from time to time. It must be remembered that a hut key not only allows people into Upper Pitts; it gives access to tackle and cave keys, and to the Library.*

*Consideration was given, therefore, to the possibility of replacing the locks on the front and changing room doors with an electronic key pad.”*



The electronic key pads

If you want to keep your old key for sentimental reasons or have lost it you can buy your dongle for £10. It is no longer necessary for the club to keep theoretical control of keys by holding a deposit for each key so we are selling the dongles.



The “Control Room”

Well, the Committee takes a long and thorough look before deciding to spend money but finally we decided it was time to proceed.

Some thought went into the design of the system which operates two external doors and 3 internal ones. Two specific requirements were that members would not be locked out of club facilities as soon as the locks were changed (i.e. there would be a changeover period) and that the external doors have lock override switches so that people can just walk in when the hut is occupied.

We found we could save a significant amount of money by installing the cables between the doors and control panel ourselves. This was done by Barry Wilkinson, Vern Freeman and Aubrey prior to the visits by locksmith and engineers who did the technical stuff. Barry and John Cooper did some other preparatory work such as fitting a panel to mount the electronic control units.

We now have a new system using electronic proximity tokens (dongles) to unlock the doors and members can exchange their current key and its deposit for a new dongle.

The new system has three levels of access. “Guest Access” will only open the Front and Changing Room doors; “Member Access” will open the Front door, Changing Room door, Library door and Tackle Store door; “Committee Access” additionally gives access to the Under stairs Cupboard.

Where the information exists, dongles have been created in advance so it is a simple matter to exchange a key for a dongle. Simply ask one of the Under stairs key holders. We have found the records are not complete and it may be necessary to create one on demand. Postal exchanges are also available by sending your old key with your name and address to the Treasurer at Upper Pitts.

The existing doors have been used where possible but a new Front Door is required. During the changeover period access via the Front Door is by the existing key, via the changing room is by dongle, to the Library and Tackle Store is via either. Under stairs will be fully converted once a security plate is fitted over the lock.

To open the Changing room door apply the token to the reader then push the door to close up the draught excluder strip before pulling the door open. When you apply the dongle to the reader the lights will change to a single green light for a short time while the door catch is unlocked. There is an override switch for each outside door which leaves the door continuously unlocked while the hut is occupied. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THIS IS SWITCHED TO THE LOCKED POSITION WHEN THE HUT IS UNOCCUPIED. An indicator is to be installed to show when the door is unlocked.

The new system has the ability to “Lockout” tokens when Members lapse and also to monitor access in through doors (so if you open the Tackle Store and don’t use the booking out sheet the Equipment Office might wonder what’s happening!!!)

**We welcome the following new members**

Tim Kent  
 Dan Kent  
 Monica Bollini  
 Ildiko Katalin Groditeki (“Citron”)  
 Tibor Nagi

And Welcome back Matt Jones, *rejoining*

|              |     |          |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                            |
|--------------|-----|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aug 25, 2016 | Thu |          | <b>LIBRARY BOOKING</b>                                                                                              | 7pm MCR FIRST AID TRAINING<br>ALL WELCOME                                                                  |
| Aug 25, 2016 | Thu | 7:00 PM  |  <b>2nd Saturday Mendip Meet</b> | WEBSITE GLITCH - PLEASE IGNORE                                                                             |
| Sep 10, 2016 | Sat | 10:00 AM |  <b>2nd Saturday Mendip Meet</b> | Swildon's Hole - Shatter Series.<br>Meet at Wessex at 10am<br><a href="#">More info</a>                    |
| Sep 10, 2016 | Sat |          |  <b>Penyghent Pot</b>            | Yorkshire Permit                                                                                           |
| Sep 11, 2016 | Sun | 10:00 AM |  <b>Committee Meeting</b>        | Upper Pitts Library                                                                                        |
| Sep 11, 2016 | Sun |          |  <b>Little Hull Pot</b>          | Yorkshire Permit                                                                                           |
| Sep 30, 2016 | Fri |          | <b>Hut Booking</b><br>30th Sept & 1st Oct                                                                           | Terry Chew (20)                                                                                            |
| Sep 30, 2016 | Fri |          |  <b>Yorkshire weekend meet</b>   | Staying at the Bradford Pothole Club<br>Friday 30th Sept - Sunday 2nd October<br><a href="#">More info</a> |
| Oct 7, 2016  | Fri |          | <b>Hut Booking</b><br>7th & 8th Oct                                                                                 | YSS (10)<br>Keith Mason<br><br>RDCC (6)<br>Ian Goodall                                                     |

Back cover; Lanzarote. Monte Corona lava tube system. Photo: **Chris Binding**

