

Wessex Cave Club Journal
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Roz, who replaced Geoff Ballard at the A.G.M., is no novice to the post. She was Secretary in 1992-94. As well as being a hard caver Roz is a very competitive hockey player. Her address is Redacted in on-line copy.

Photo Brian Prewer.

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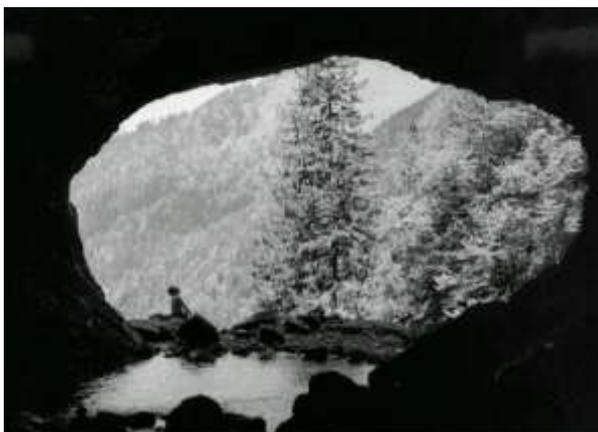
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This Issue's Cover Picture

Pete Hann photographed in the Guiers Mort entrance.

See also above left.

These pictures, as well as that of the Trou de Glaz, above right, were taken by Simon Richards during the summer.

Dent de Crolles Trip 2003

Following successful trips to the PSM, the Berger and the Herault, the Club is planning a major trip to the Dent de Crolles area in August, based in St Pierre de Chartreuse. Anyone interested should contact Simon Richards for details.

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Opinions expressed in the Journal are not necessarily those of the Club or the Editor.

Geevor Mine: Sequel and Requiem by Nigel Graham

Introduction

In March 1991 the Wessex Cave Club, under the auspices of "Tuska's Tours", visited Geevor Tin Mine, near Pendeen in Cornwall. (See WCC Journal, Vol 21, No.229, July 1991).

The mine was still operable, but on a care-and-maintenance basis while fighting a slump in tin prices after a century of very profitable working and still with high ore reserves. We entered via Victory Shaft to 15 Level, then descended further by cable-hauled tram the Sub Decline, an incline shaft to Level 21 and the rich lodes of the old Levant Mine, well out under the sea. The Sub Decline was originally planned to reach a new 23 Level, below the deepest parts of Levant Mine and over a mile out to sea.

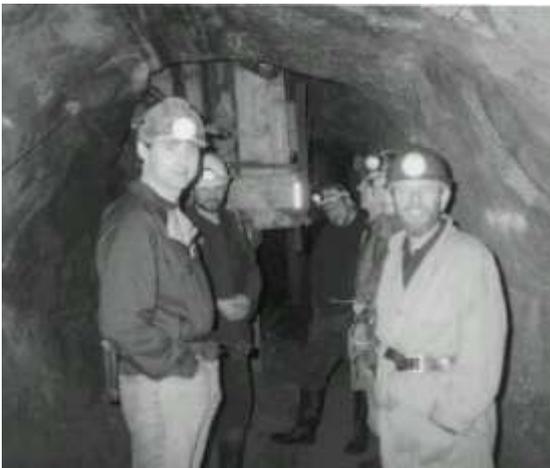
Levant had had to be drained, possible only after a complicated, highly skilled operation to seal a fissure into a stope, which had approached too closely to the seabed. The new workings encountered enormous lodes. Hanging Wall Vein, which the Levant miners had missed, was stoped up to 50 feet wide in places.

The geology of this region is fairly complicated, with the country rock being predominately metamorphosed sediments known locally as "killas", in contact with major igneous intrusions. Folding increases the north-westerly dip to nearly vertical at the depths reached by these mines. The strata are very competent, a great advantage to mining as they are structurally strong and relatively dry.



Above, the Sub Decline in 1991

On the Sunday of that WCC trip, we walked on the coast by Geevor Mine, passing the ruins of Levant and other mine buildings. A shallow depression filled with rocks and rubble was all that remained of Levant man-engine shaft, the scene in 1919 of one of the county's worst mining accidents. A man engine consisted of platforms suspended on vertical rods from a beam-engine so that they reciprocated vertically in the shaft. By stepping alternately between the platforms and stagings on the shaft walls at the top or bottom of each engine stroke, the miner was lowered or raised several feet at a time. The accident was caused by a wrought-iron strap at the top of the machine breaking, dropping the man-engine and its occupants in the shaft. Over thirty miners were killed.



Chris Milne and Paul Weston 1991

In 1990, after a brief decade of prosperity, which had reversed an earlier closure, Geevor Mine finally closed when the price of refined tin dropped to about £3000 per ton. The mine needed £5000/ton to break even, and £25000 per month just to keep the mine dry. On our Club visit, we saw the impressive pump room on Level 15, sending over a million gallons of seepage water per day to the surface. Fresh water was used in ore processing, and seawater seeping from the Levant workings, was sent back where it belonged.

One of the last people to see the Sub Decline was Paul Deakin, whose photograph of the flood water creeping up it is the tailpiece for a booklet describing the mine(1). "A sad sight", as the caption says.

In August 2000, my girlfriend, Jane Rickman, and I visited Geevor Mine Museum as tourists, during a camping holiday in the area.

Thanks to sheer hard work and determination, many locals had worked to save the closed mine before scrap-merchants had destroyed too much. Now, between the new reception and cafeteria buildings, Geevor Mine stands almost ready for someone to sky the international price of tin, and to buy some very powerful pumps.

Two tours are offered within the admission price: surface and underground. Too many museums around the country have suffered from technically-ignorant "marketing" types whose genuine

attempts to attract visitors, ruin the context of displays and patronise visitors with over-simplified labels, gimmicks and "multi-media" tat. Fortunately, this is not so at Geevor Mine - nor, incidentally at the Submarine Telegraphy Museum in the underground cable-station at Porthcurno, also well worth a visit.

Geevor Mine museum uses the former offices to display chronologically photographs, maps, diagrams, tools, and other artefacts. Complemented by a video, they detail the regional geology and the local history and techniques of Cornish tin mining. We browsed round these, then continued the surface tour, following signs at our own pace, around the Victory Shaft headgear, bank rooms, machinery houses and ore-processing mill.

One special display item is the plaque from the head of the Sub Decline, commemorating its official opening by H.M. the Queen in 1980.

The winder is as clean as its driver kept it, with his logbook awaiting his return. The penultimate entry records "Winder put to rest for the last time", underlined and signed with a flourish. A few days later, the driver recorded draining the machinery cooling system as if to remind him should the call come to report for duty next Monday morning: "Valve left open".

The Miners' "Dry" (locker room) stands empty and silent: as with other buildings and rooms, we could view, but not enter, it. A few abandoned clothes drape empty lockers. In the Banksman's room next to the shaft, notices list the shot firer's roster, and an old saucepan sits on the little cooker. Considering the nature of the work and the traditions of miners, I was very surprised by notices warning of disciplinary action following complaints of thefts of personal property and of first-aid equipment, above and below ground. The maintenance staff would find their tools and spares still neatly on the shelves. The Chief Engineer's logbooks and suppliers' address-book remain in his office overlooking the workshop.

We walked onto the boards over Victory ladder way, next to the winding section of the 1580ft deep shaft, where two cages sit on the gantries (steel trapdoors across the void). Far below us, the



water silently flowed away through the drainage adit to the sea. On the Club visit the mine engineer told us how he would anxiously watch the house lights as 8pm approached. The starting load on the pump motors as their time switches turned on would dim momentarily the lamps in the village, and he was always greatly relieved by that sign. Now the pumps lie drowned over 1200 feet lower. **Left, The Victory Headgear in April 1999.**

Some of the processing machinery in the Mill has gone, but enough remains to demonstrate it all. The raw ore, mixed with bedrock waste, was passed along a primary sorting conveyor where rubbish like lost gloves and bits of detonator wire were removed. Next, a series of crushing, screening and sorting processes separated the tin ore from the granite. The latter was not wasted, but used on the site or sold as aggregate.

Part of the separation involved passing the crushed rock across shaking tables, where the different densities of the rocks would separate them by their differing response to the vibration. A

curious, low thumping sound we could hear on entering the Mill was one such table, running to show its working, forlornly waiting for the stream of ore to come its way again.

Here, as in the rest of the mine buildings, the place has been made safe for lay visitors, with explanation boards erected, but it still retains an aura of waiting for Monday morning. A grubby jacket hangs from a nail, keeping an old coffee mug on a nearby oil-drum company. An engraved instruction-plate orders the attendant when to see to the row of grease-nipples above it, lubricating now-silent ball-mills.

At the end of the Mill we waited for the underground visit - a short walk in a late 18thC level found during landscaping the old waste-tips below the main buildings. Our guide was one of the few Geevor men still there. Some had found work locally - SW Cornwall is one of the most depressed areas in Britain, offering little outside endangered farming and fishing, or the seasonal and poorly-paid vagaries of tourism. Some Geevor miners had found work at South Crofty, others with civil-engineering contractors including in the Channel Tunnel. Still others had emigrated.

The old level has been preserved as well as possible. A kibble (bucket) hangs in the shaft (capped above and filled below), cut on the vein, which was pointed out to us. The guide showed us the

miners' tiny shelter cut into a wall, and told us of the tradition of leaving a few morsels of food for the "Knockers".



Left, Levant Coastline and Engine house.

Right, "T'owd Man's Kibble in the old level.

Photo's Maurice Hewins



According to the guide, Knockers were the spirits of earlier miners, and if respected would hopefully lead the prospector to new veins. Their name alludes to them being responsible for inexplicable knocking or tapping noises heard underground. Water perhaps? Or the sounds of internal stresses within the rock being released by the holes cut through it? Not to the miner of old, leaving the last bit of his pasty on a convenient ledge, for the knockers, and creeping back by one flickering, shared candle to the face.

According to other writers, Knockers, also called "Knackers", were altogether darker beings, and the belief has apparently changed over the years. In her book "Vanishing Cornwall" (Penguin 1972), Daphne du Maurier described them as malevolent beings of the underworld, who sought revenge on miners for the invasion of their realm by causing floods and accidents. She quotes Charles Henderson as suggesting that the Anglo-Saxon "Nicor", an underworld fairy or water-sprite, was the original being. In the 15th Century surface ore bodies and alluvial deposits, worked since the Bronze Age c.1800B.C., became exhausted and the miners had to follow the veins underground. The Knockers followed them and became thought of as the spirits of dead miners. Neither writer speculates on why these beings changed their identities or are regarded now with more affection than fear. Perhaps the latter is a 19th-20thC blend of respect due to dead colleagues with romanticism towards that in which logic dictates disbelief.

Modern cavers respect and admire "T'owd Man". However, Phil Hendy once told me of a curious uneasiness felt by the whole party when in Lamb Leer, they started ferreting around for dig sites instead of just admiring the scenery. On a caving meet in Derbyshire, I inadvertently made one local, one of our hosts as well as trip leader, very anxious by a quip about the old miners while we were in Peak Cavern. The same caver swore that his club cottage was occasionally visited by the spirit of a member who had died in a road accident, not seen but heard ascending the stairs and taking the original turn off into a room now reached by a slightly different route. I won't reveal the name of the club, but ex-chapels are not meant to be haunted!

Let us return from plumbic Derbyshire to stannous Cornwall. There had not been many other visitors on the morning of our visit, and after a foreign couple had sauntered away, Jane and I had the head of Victory Shaft to ourselves. It was all very quiet and still apart from the Atlantic breeze in the headgear and the twittering house martins under the eaves of the bank buildings.

As we turned away from the shaft, one of the birds suddenly flew out. Was it off to forage for insects like its cousins who swooped around our campsite? Or had someone startled it? Had we? Or were we not alone? We left Geevor Mine to the Knockers congregated forlornly and invisibly around the silent Dry, Banksman's room, Headgear and plant buildings, mourning their long-gone companions and their proud industry.

Footnotes: South Crofty: As I was preparing this article, in November 2001, South Crofty adit was re-opened. I am sure I speak for all of us in wishing the company well in its venture to resume commercial tin-mining.

Llechwedd Slate Caverns: Some years ago I described in the WCC Journal visiting Llechwedd Slate Caverns at Blaenau Ffestiniog. Two tours were available. One descends an incline into the deep level containing the extensive lake at flood-level. The other was in levels bordering an area being open-cast to retrieve the slate left in the original mine pillars. I understand that the surface show level has since been closed for new opencast working.

The youngest Wessex member in the Herault

By Christine Grosart

With only a handful of SRT trips to my name, it was with both excitement and nervous anticipation that I set off to the stunning Herault region of France. Whatever lay ahead, it was sure to be a steep learning curve and a whole new experience.

Up early on the first morning, I had a gentle introduction with a trip to La Folatiere, accompanying divers to the sump. This cave had a very impressive entrance and beautifully carved passage throughout, the rock becoming sharper and more fragile the further you went. The trip was pleasantly rounded up with a dip in the crystal clear river and bread and cheese in the shade.

The following day was spent in serious heat locating (rapidly thanks to the GPS) the Calven de la Seoubio. Beginning with a 30m pitch, this had some nice Flowstone and upstream and down stream sumps. Two very excited divers came back to dive them, despite very bad air. Phill Short did his bit for conservation in the area by rescuing an unfortunate lizard that had lost his tail in a fight and fallen 30m down the entrance pitch. Could this be the first prusiking reptile?!

Next day, accompanied by Suntan (Rob Delacour) (rigging) and Nik-Nak (Simon Richards), we ventured to the Aven du Bois du Bac. This was a testing little cave for all of us. Descending a 20m slope to the first pitch of 30m, you approach a short 8m pitch leading to the beginning of a sporting traverse, with two huge columns behind it. Rigged tight, you lean out from the rope over the abyss to pull away from rubs, before squatting in an uncomfortable little corner, perched on a ledge, above the next pitch of approx. 22m. (Pitch lengths are estimates and the survey of this cave was misleading in places.) At a rising traverse, this can be negotiated by using either the P-hangers in place, or a pendulum across to natural belays. We opted for the hangers after a brave attempt at the naturals by Nik-Nak. At this point, desperate for the loo, I took the opportunity whilst Suntan was busy rigging, and I had a slight accident that will be revealed in due course!

Finishing up in a well decorated gallery, I ran out of light and resorted to back up which needed to be saved for the exit so I spent much time in this gallery, unable to see a thing, whilst waiting for the boys to investigate what we believed to be the final pitch. Suntan informed us with a few choice words that he had run out of rope and we exited the cave in a huff at having not bottomed out. I, however, had a very educational trip and felt confident enough to attempt my main objective, which was to follow the next day.

Conversation with Phill Short that evening in the campsite, on returning from the laundry:

PS: Why are you washing your boiler suit?

CG: Because it's dirty.

PS: All our boiler suits are dirty. But we don't bother washing them.

CG: No, mine is really dirty.

PS: So? You still don't need to wash it.

CG: Yes I do. It's manky.

PS: So is mine.

CG: Not as manky as mine.

PS: Yeah, but I pissed in mine....

CG: **So did I !!!**

The main drop on a huge hole in the ground called the Abime de Mas Raynal had fascinated me ever since this trip to the region had come about and it was my sole aim to attempt this should I be confident enough. Again in the company of Messer's Suntan and Nik-Nak, we did lots of lying down and leaning over the edge with cameras and so forth to try and grasp the enormity of this cave, which looks fairly unassuming and humble from the very surface. It is not until you reach the first belay and begin to descend that you can really appreciate the size of it, and it's a bit bloody late by then!

Suntan spent much time arranging a three-way belay at the head of the initial pitch, which is only a few metres to the main hang of approx. 70 metres. The only rebelay available is an iron bar driven into the face of the wall, rustic looking and creaky, with a tape sling wrapped around it. A piece of metal at the end of the bar stops your sling sliding off the end! Mr Suntan ventured down first, shaking the rope to signal his arrival at the second rebelay which is situated at the head of a gully 70m below.

I was next, coaxed by Nik-Nak, and deliberately kept my chin up through every manoeuvre to avoid looking down at the sight below me. I then changed over at the metal bar and began to descend, my immediate obstacles being the weight of the rope in my right hand and my left hand depressing the stop-and, of course trying not to look down. As I began to descend, the greenery and foliage began to wither away and the heat of the outside world did also. You descend into the chilly gloom

and trying to avoid the view below was becoming nearly impossible as the cave suddenly opens out into nearly double the size of the entrance and I could not help catching glances of the dark green gully below, with a seemingly bottomless blackness beyond it. Stopping only twice, I decided to have a good look around on the second one, at about half way, having descended 50m with another 50m still to go. I took a huge breathe to try and slow my heart beat and shush it a bit, locked off my stop (using two arms to lift the weight of the rope!) and let the rope ever so gradually turn me around to take in the size and beauty of the place.



Chris descends the Raynal

At this point it was still daylight but was getting dimmer and the surface was a long way gone, seeming miniscule with sun peeping through the trees. After a few seconds to compose myself, feeling the strain slightly on my arms, I decided that it would get easier if I continued descending at a less tentative rate and the rope would therefore become lighter and less cumbersome. I proceeded to descend and, although still no speed machine on a rope (and who needs to be?) I reached the rebelay in good form, took a welcome break and descended into the gully, below which the roaring river broke the silence.

About four or so metres from the water you swing across to Suntan, grab hold of him, nearly pull him into the water and then clamber up onto terra firma and promptly try and push him off the other side! It was at this point, having stopped swaying all over the place that I realised my very silly and now infamous error. Whilst passing the rebelay at the gully I had forgotten to shake the rope for Nik-Nak. "Rope Free" unfortunately is not sufficient in a cave of this size and the acoustics are crap. He very rightly waited at the surface, albeit getting quite p***ed off, whilst Suntan and I explored both upstream and downstream. The most gob-smacking thing for me was the clarity of the aqua blue coloured water with straws above it and some stal dotted around. We crossed a rickety ladder bridge and turned back at the point where the divers, in the cave at the time, had begun their exploration. The huge dam at the foot of the last pitch also fascinated me as to how such a monstrosity could be built so far underground and we were slightly bemused as to its purpose.

I made my way out via the multi-pitch route, which had been rigged for a few days by the divers, and on reaching the rebelay, shook the rope for a very annoyed Nik-Nak who started waving his handbag at me, shouting, "Can I come down now?"

The most amusing incident occurred when, due to the poor acoustics, Suntan was calling to know if he could make his way up and we all got our wires crossed, thus frightening Nik-Nak I called back to him, "No, wait there". He did but unfortunately, so did Nik-Nak, who thought I was talking to him. He was suspended fifty metres from the ground at the time and was not happy! I owe him a lot of beer. Surfacing alone in the heat, tired but elated to have done this trip, I had a wander around the entrance which took me about ten minutes!

After a day or so resting, we were off again, this time to the Aven du Rogues. (See, **Mike Thomas at the entrance, Right**) Malc Foyle and Pete Hann stole the limelight as they tried to widen the second pitch, which was an interesting squeeze requiring you to take your descender off and use it well above your head! Pete nearly managed to blast his hand off, unbeknown to Mike, Nik-Nak, Jo and I until we found blood at the bottom of the first pitch on our return. This was a fun SRT trip and Nik-Nak couldn't resist venturing off into crawly bits further on. The rest of us waited for him in the boulder chamber. Returned to find



Malc's land rover had gone and that, tired with waiting and with an injured dwarf, they had gone to the bar at HQ!



Chris on the Rabinal

A good few of us, including Carmen, Jo Wisely, Mike Thomas, Phill Short and Nik-Nak (rigging) went to the Aven du Rabinal, a superb SRT trip, which has a couple of shorter pitches, the last two against a slimy, green ramp leading to the main hang of approx. 60m. Had a very enjoyable descent into this very beautiful and vast cave. We went off exploring, clambering up a slippery, muddy slope (I don't get on with slippery, muddy slopes and I was unceremoniously thrown a sling). Carmen and I left the others to their climbing and made our way out for a photo shoot. Very long prusik, but hassle free and we sat out suffering in the heat for the others to make their way out.

My last trip was a jaunt to a popular cave with the French, the Aven de Barnaby. Pete Hann, Nik-Nak and I pushed on and Gordon Kaye turned back after awhile, having had enough. This was not my favourite trip of the summer and the others seemed to be in agreement. It was the deepest cave attempted, at 180m but it was an awkward little place, although quite pretty with a good draught. Had a few unnecessary tight crawls in the wrong direction before

having my first go at de-rigging on the last pitch. A good trip but I found the whole place to be a pain in the neck, despite being littered with fixed aids, including a shopping trolley!

I also managed to take in two show caves, the Grotte de Demoiselles and Clameuse, both of which were spectacular in their own ways. Canoeing with Carmen was especially entertaining. Just when we shrieked out loud how bloody good we were at it, having descended a weir singing Hawaii 5 -O, we were promptly tipped out of the canoe at the next set of rapids! I left for home, pleased as punch that I had managed to learn loads, do lots and have a holiday too, as they are hard to come by these days. My first excursion abroad with the Wessex was definitely worth it and there is still plenty more to be done out there... Can I come again?



Above, Our Northern Caving Secretary, Keith Sanderson (right) and his brother Derek in "Rubbish Dump Cave" (Event de Rognes) in the Herault. Photo, Carmen Haskell.

The finding of Madame Edith. by Garth Weston

Or the sub 4 minute round trip, except for diverse persons.

Paul and I first found the entrance to Grotte Madame Edith whilst poking about one evening in the bushes, as old cavers do, near our camp site in L'Herault. The following day we went back and followed the dry watercourse to the entrance, intent on a quick look. The entrance is in a small depression under a cliff with a large boulder jammed across the top of a shaft. This proved to be only 6ft deep onto loose boulders with a sloping passage; hands and knees crawl for some 30ft into a 9ftx9ft passage. The passage going in a northerly direction ended, disappointingly, after only 250ft in a pool 20ftx10ft



The water was crystal clear, with a rope disappearing into a far corner, below the water. Any one who has found what they think is an undiscovered cave will understand the disappointment we felt. Not only was this not a "new cave", it was very short and ended in water! Something these "old cavers" prefer to avoid!!!

Discussing our find late with Nik-Nak and Phill Short, we found willing helpers and two days later in beautiful evening sunshine, Carmen, Mike Thomas, Nik-Nak Phill Short and yours truly set off across the fields, carrying Phill's dive equipment for a quick look.

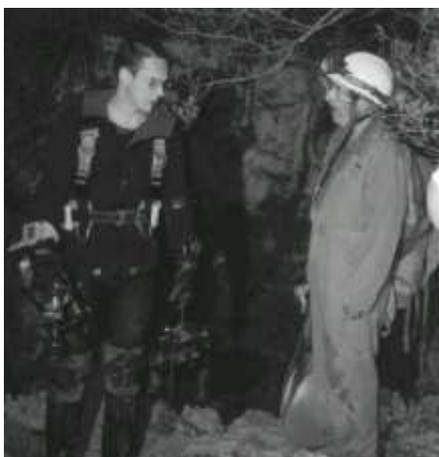
Phill went in and following the rope disappeared below the water. He returned about 10mins. later to report that he had surfaced after 20ft. in an aven with a ladder leading to a dig. Also that a line disappeared back into the water and went on. On our return to the campsite we discussed what Phill had

Phill Short at the sump pool

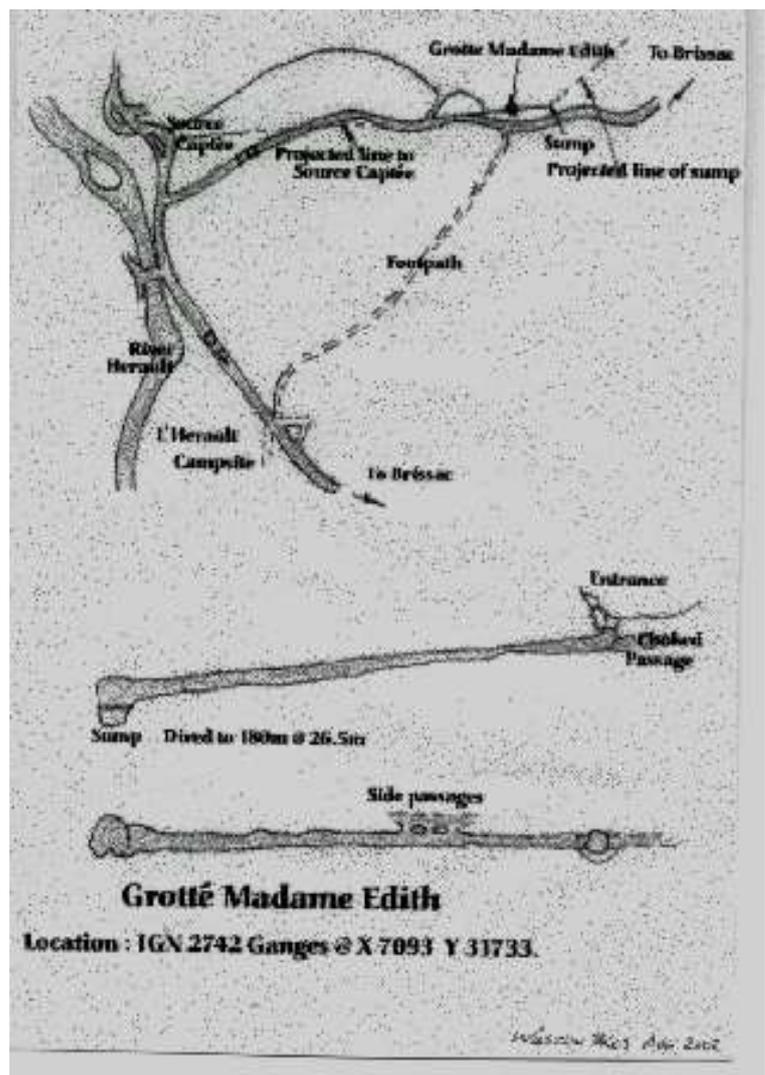
found with Malc Foyle who then offered to have a look the following week, time permitting. We quizzed Dimitri Falondry aka "Monsieur Cooker" a local caver, about the cave, but he had no knowledge of its existence, not too surprisingly in this land of plenty.

So, on our last evening we assisted Malc and Jonathan (Monkey) with Dr Joe, Judith and Maurice Hewins, (camera person and assistant), down to the sump for another quick look.

Monkey went in followed by Malc. Malc sorted out the line and Monkey went on.



Monkey and Paul after the dive



He returned 25mins. later to report he had gone 180m beyond the dig at a max. depth of 26.5m, the line continuing in a good size passage.

Sorry Rita we didn't mean to keep Malc out so late!

That's nearly the whole story, just one or two bits more, Nik-Nak noticed that the passage continued back beyond the entrance, blocked with boulders. This got us thinking when we returned home and some work with an enlarged map section and compass suggests that the entrance we found is a collapsed roof of the "Source Captee" which rises on the banks of the Herault. Between the entrance and the sump there are three small side passages leading into a parallel low passage, choked with gravel. Dr Joe thought it might be a good place for a dig.

What lies behind the sumps! Perhaps the French know.

As to the name, "Ello Ello"—but how do you get the cheese out of your ears!

Letter to the Editor from James Cobbett

Dear Sir,

Contrary to popular opinion, Panama is not a cave-free Zone, as you can see from two pictures I took yesterday, in two short separate caves. These are on the Madden Lake, circa 30 minutes by car, followed by circa 30 minutes by cayuca (a type of canoe with outboard engine), from my home in Panama City. There is a loosely associated group who have found a number of caves in Panama, the longest of which, on Bastiementos Island goes for 800 metres to a large sump, awaiting a large cave diver!

Beer is 20 pence a can in Panama and rum £4 a bottle! Do you think we can start planning a Wessex expedition for early 2003?

Hope you can find a place for this, especially the photo's in your comic (cheeky sod!!- Ed!) as this would be the first record in British Caving literature of Panamanian karst. I will write a better story, when I have more to write about.



Library Aquisitions to 1/12/02

Chelsea Speleological Society Newsletter Vol 44, 10 (Oct2002) and 11(Nov2002).

Craven Pothole Club Record 68 (Oct2002).

Descent 168 (Oct 2002) (*Cave insurance, Mud Sump, Eastwater, Hunters Lodge Inn Sink*).

Grampian Speleological Group. Bulletin 4th Series Vol 1, No. 3 (Oct 2002).

Grosvenor Caving Club Newsletter 122 (Oct 2002).

Mendip Caving Group Newsletters Nos. 300-308 (Aug 2001 –July 2002).

Mendip Nature Research Committee Newsletter No. 92 (Oct/Nov 2002).

N.S.S. News, Vol 60, 8 (Aug 2002), 9(Sept 2002) and 10(Oct 2002).

Journal of Caves and Karst Studies, Vol 64,3 (Dec 2002).

Regards (Bull d'information de la Societe Speleological Wallonie Belgium No45(Nov/Dec 2002).

Speleological Union of Ireland and the Irish CRO "Underground" 55 (Aug 2002).

Westminster Speleological Group Newsletter 2000/4)Oct 2002).

Alpine Caving Techniques (2002) Marbach G and Tourte B.
 Deep Dark and Dusty (*Barhstone quarries video*).
 Out of the rock (Bezzant N.) (*History of Bath and Portland Stone*) **Donated by Paul Weston.**
 Secret Underground Bristol (Watson S.).
 Map: Autrans – Gorges de la Bourne (Vercors) **Donated by N. Williams.**

Club News

Most Club Logbooks are now available on CD-Rom in the Library. To access the Clubs' computer, when asked for a password, just click "cancel" to get in.

Upper Pitts is still being found empty and unlocked and with the lights on. Please check if you are last out and if so turn lights off and lock up.

A Hut Users Guide is kept by the front door for the use of members and guests. It should contain answers to all questions about using Upper Pitts and lists the Hut Rules.

Photographic Competition. Following the successful competition at last year's Dinner there will be another competition this year. Watch out for details. Also the Frank Frost Journal Prize will be awarded for the best article in this years Journals. Keep writing. It could be you!

Blacknor Hole, Portland. The bolts for belaying ropes to access this cave have been sawn off by idiots unknown. Access is impossible until they are replaced. (CSCC is working on it).

Journal Index Many thanks to **Andrew Kingerlee and Phil Hendy** for offering to prepare an index for Vol 26. Phil just beat Andrew to the contract but I very much appreciate both offers.

Atty G.B. Prints. Following the auction of the last three copies at the Dinner the profit on the limited edition totalled **£172 for the Boiler Fund.** A4 copies of some of Atty's other prints can be ordered from the Editor at £5 each.

Laurie Orr's Berger Video is now available price £8. Contact Laurie if you are interested.

Rescue in Swildons Sat 7th December A caver found that after resting at the Double Pots, one of his legs was numb and immobile. The call-out was made by Rich West. Shortly after the Heyphone was set up at the entrance and a small team of B.E.C. entered the cave. The casualty was met by two Wessex members returning from trips and a combined effort got him out within two and a half hours. He largely made his own way out, apart from assistance on the Twenty. Warmth and a rest enabled a full recovery by next morning. - It is thought that he had trapped a nerve. Thanks for the Rescue Beer afterwards

The clock in the library has disappeared become invisible or stolen. Perhaps it will replace itself!

Changes of Address

Phill Short	The Flat, Hillside House, 1 Primrose Place, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 2JW	
Mike Cooper	40 Lillebonne Close, Wellington, Somerset, TA21 9EX	01823 666512
Carl Galvin	143 Jackman Close, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 3GB	01235 206590
Andrew Buchanan	Free Hill House, Westbury-sub- Mendip, Somerset, BA5 1HR	01749 870404
Andrew Kingerlee	4 Connell Court, Wodonga, Vic3690, Australia	(02) 6059 6230
John Cordingley	1 Greenacres, Newby, Via Lancaster, LA2 8HR	015242 51032
	JNCordingley@aol.com or j.n.c@btinternet.com	
Dave Edge	Crystal Diamond, Bawn Road, Rush, Co. Dublin, Eire.	00353 879161828
Clair Morton	58 Kensing Gardens, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7RF	
Sue Bonner	70 Moulder Street, Orange, New South Wales 2800, Australia	
L M Plant	10 Pennine View, Morecambe Lancashire, LA4 4QB	
Pete Mulholland	25 Steart Avenue, Burnham on Sea, Somerset, TA8 1DB	01278 785193
Chris Hayward	Newhaven Cottage, Sparrow Pit, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK 17 8ET	01298 813783

Congratulations to Clair Jenkins (Now Tomaszewicz) who has recently married and is living at
 44 Fallofield, Montgomery Estate, Colchester, Essex.

Congratulations to Ken Marshall and Sarah Clark, who have also married and now live at
 Hurst House, 57 Westbury Road, Edington, Wiltshire, BA 4PG. 01380 830121

We welcome the Following New Members, elected 8th December and 9th February.

Jim Phillips	Beechwood, Higher Wilton, Curry Rival, Somerset, TA10 0JE	01458 25510
	James.Phillips@talk21.com	
Steve Gough	14 Berryfield Rd, Bradford on Avon, Wilts, BA15 1SX.	01225 862757
Graham Bowden	Old Mellow, 6 old Christchurch Rd, Everton, Lymington, SO41 OJJ.	01590 645186
Andrew Trevan	38 Hatchlands Rd, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 6AT.	01737 761475



**Left: Welcome to the Biffin Twins, George and Andrew, born on 9th November.
Photo by the Proud Parents.**

**Below: When two cars collided at the Hunters crossroads recently the occupants were fortunate that the Club's very own paramedic, Carmen Haskell was driving by. Happily there were no serious injuries.
Photo by Brian Prewer.**



Letter to the Editor From Nigel Graham.

Dear Sir

I spent my first night for some years at Upper Pitts recently, and was impressed by the work, which has been done on it, and by its current state. Just a couple of items missing though from the Club's "museum": two photographs which graced the lounge wall until fairly recently.

The first was a portrait of "Meecho" the cat - the Club's name for the Gibbons' pet, and apparently derived from a Spanish word for cat when the Club was active in the Picos de Europa. Like many cats, Meecho had found a second home, Upper Pitts in his case. Some members disliked cats anyway but others adored him. I may be wrong but I think Al Keen took the photo. What has happened to it?

The other photograph, by Mike O'Connor in 1975, shows a caving scene which is now just a fading memory to those of us fortunate to have seen it: the gour pools that formed the top of the "Medusa" climb from the entrance lake in the Grotte de Gournier (Vercors). The photograph had former member Ian Wolff by them for scale. In the late-1970s rescuers blasted the entire top of the formation away to facilitate bringing out two rescues while the cave was in high flood. The Medusa had apparently created a long, deep lake behind it. Traces of the gour remain on the passage wall, and a huge block of flowstone is visible in the deep water below. I think the print was knocked off the wall by accident one rumbustious night, breaking its frame. Where is it now?

It would be fitting if these photographs of two very different aspects of Wessex life could be restored to their rightful places.

Letter to the Editor from Noel (not so Elderly) Cleave.

Dear Sir,

You recently published my accumulated wisdom (all of it) on the subject of SRTree training headed S.R.T. for the **Elderly**. The Hell with it. I am relying for retirement income on the forthcoming publication of my opus magnus, "Caves for Zimmer frames" (there is one, modified for caving, in the tackle store- Ed.) In the meantime in the absence of Elderly status- and common

sense, I have to report that the efficacy of the Cleave Willow Tree has been independently tested and verified by Bob Pyke (also **not Elderly**). Mind you, I've added a traverse beam and a high level "Y" hang since I first wrote. The longest drop, no, descent, is now 29 feet to the stream bed. (The young work in Metres. –Ed).



Bob called in en-route to a Rhino trip with Ken Dawe and me on 16th October and was persuaded that an afternoon on the SRTree would be a sound investment. Well, he avoided the world-famous flooded wellie manoeuvre but almost at the expense of the wet pants alternative. Not by fear but misjudgement.

Unfortunately I was laughing so much that I missed the photograph. He then insisted on attempting the Cleave Swimming Pool Traverse. I did warn him that the water temperature was a bracing 50F.

With matchless courage and considerable skill, however, he set off wearing only bathing shorts, and a determined expression. The initial move is testing, even for someone of Bob's atrociously distorted leg length but he made it and only ran into serious problems passing the waterfall (whose volume I had kindly reduced), which was also at 50F.

Thereafter his performance deteriorated, inexorably, to a dramatic climax, which I, with my elderly reflexes, missed. I managed to control the laughter shakes to photograph the immediate consequence.

Bob wishes it to be stated for the record, that:

- 1.It is far more difficult than it looks.
- 2 Water at 50F is unsuitable for general swimming.
- 3.The pool is ridiculously deep.
- 4.He wants to try again.
- 5.In the summer.

If any Wessex members want to train on the SRTree they would be most welcome but the Swimming Pool Travers is now a wet suit project (an SST grading?)...and how about you trash-can the "Elderly" epithet for the next few years....(at least until you get your winter fuel payment like I do! Ed.)

Extracts from the Upper Pitts Log Edited by Brian Prewer

The following extracts concerning Sump 12 in Swildons have been put together.

13.7.02 Swildon's

Greg Brock, Andy Judd & Phill Short

Straightforward trip to Sump 12.Placed explosives in squeeze of Sump 12 & detonated from near Sump 11. Large bang, lots of fumes so we left. Back soon to check what it's done.

20.7.02 Swildon's 12

Phil Short, Andy Stewart, Andy Judd & Richard Dolby

All down to Sump 2 then Andy Judd & Richard Dolby exited, Phil & Any Stewart to Sump 12. Dive to check out results of bang from last weekend. Roof of squeeze gone but the debris created has blocked it. However it is manageable size rocks & gravel & will be a straightforward dig. We'll be back after the Herault.

10.8.02 Swildon's 12

Phill Short, Greg Brock & Andy Stewart

Carried six 7litre cylinders & three 3-litre cylinders to Sump4 ready for digging weekend at Sump12 next week. Left 3 3s at Sump3 for tomorrow's exit from Priddy Green. Exited via Blue Pencil & A look down Lower Fault Chamber to see if the bail works (it does). All free climbed the 20' & the 40' direct. Exit via Oxbows & Wet Way. Excellent trip.

17.8.02 Swildon's 12

Phill Short, Greg Brock & Andy Stewart

Digging trip to Sump 12. Removed 9 drums of gravel & bang debris over 2 hours of dive time in Sump 12 between 3 divers. A few more trips like that & we should be there.

Swildon's 12 2.11.02

Phill Short, Greg Brock, Andy Stewart, Steve Marsh, Steve J Marsh & Jo Wisely

Oh-my-god! Yes, another Phill trip! Steve uses the great excuse that he & Jo were going to get there together to have a girlie trip rather than keep up with the speedy mob. Air very dodgy the whole way through, so good excuse for 'girlies' not to continue. We marvelled at the digging system, drank their hot Ribena then headed out. Just in time, while the next digger was in the water, level rose 2½ft in Sump 12 (over 30 minutes!) so the rest of the team followed. Got rather sporting when the 7 bypass was sumped, then Buxton's Horror became a nightmare. Found a dodgy old piece of rope to use as a guide so found the exit. Left proper rope coils for the others when it was all sumped half-an-hour later. Put on a bit of pace on until past Sump 1 (which we all needed full dive gear for!). Then we realised that the water was just getting too strong so Steve & I left our kit bags & cylinders. The others joined us just in time to be belayed up the 20', then up the waterfall at Jacob's Ladder. So we didn't have to camp at 6 after all & they cleared loads of bang debris to open up 12 even more.

12.7.02 Box Stone Mines

Weston Bros

In Jack's, REM's Crawl, Cathedral, 'secret places' & Staircase. Lunch enabled Weston senior to bring a musical flavour to the proceedings. (It is hoped that Weston junior will bring his recorder next time!) The joys of retirement. 3 hours.

17.7.02 Star Mines

Phil H, Prew, Paul Weston

Checked GPS mine locations with tape & compass, confirming presence of previously unrecorded shaft – not yet descended. Prospects not good for great depth however.

17.7.02 Chancellors Farm dig

NHASA diggers

Cemented up a dodgy looking rock & pulled out some more spoil. John Ham built a wooden lid for the shaft. Went to look at a hole discovered by Kate Lawrence under a fallen tree root in West Wood. Descended by John Hill & Kate. 10' to mud floor (mostly fallen in) & 12' bedding plane extension. The shaft is in a rake but is narrow & may be natural – it does not follow the line of the rake.

NB Well done Tony Jarratt for 70m passage found in Hunter's Lodge Inn Sink. 15' wide walking passage, decorated floor & walls, ending in draughting choke. It is nearly underneath Alfie's Hole

9.7.02 Goon's & Lionels

Alison & Pete M, Mad Phil (BEC), & Carmen

Alison & Phil down Goon's to resurvey cave & also to see if there was any aural connection with Pete & Carmen who had gone to the Traverse area in Lionel's with a whistle. Absolutely nothing was heard between the two parties. The recent survey work also indicated that Goon's has already completely passed over Lionels into the 'unknown'.

12.7.02 Read's & Goatchurch

Maurice & Judy H & Tommo

Resumed underground filming after 34 years gap. Still 8mm but now video, not cine. Used Read's & Goatchurch as studio locations. Very appropriate because our last effort was in Goatchurch in 1968.

14.7.02 Porth y Ogof

Bean, Taz & Scrumpy

New to caving "Scrumpy" on his first trip swam all the way through Porth. Dragon are currently making a wet suit to fit.

22.7.02 Hunter's Lodge Inn Sink

Carmen, Tony Jarratt

Photographic trip to see the finer points of the new 200ft of huge cave passage, finally broken into on the previous Wednesday night by Tony & his team of diggers. Spectacular (for Mendip) fine formations & plenty of further opportunities. Plenty of pics taken, hopefully will appear in BB, WCC bulletins & Mendip roundups – Fab!!



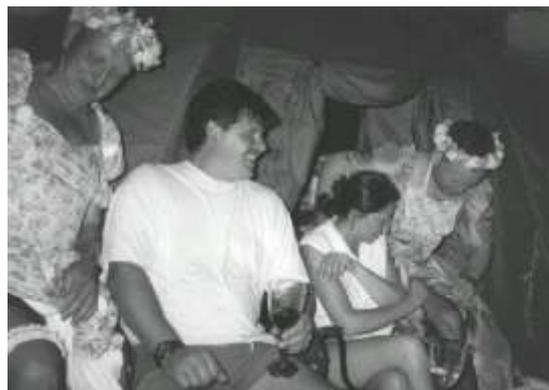
.26.7.02 to 10.8.02 The Herault Trip (1)

46 Wessex & friends in L'Herault. Good caving, diving, canoeing, walking, snakes, food, wine, swimming etc. Be prepared for death by boredom in the Hunter's (full reports, photos videos etc). Shame about the weather, Berger team! (We had hot, hotter, dry with occasional thunderstorms - 35°C+ most days. PGH.



**Left,
Lydia and Tabitha
Frew in Aven de Vitalis.
Alias Cheese Cave.**

**Right,
Bridesmaids
Philippa Hendy and
Simone Richards at
Malc and Rita Foyle's
"Second Wedding".**



26.7.02 to 10.8.02 The Herault Trip (2)

Four caves, 2 showcases & a long snake with a good 5 feet on it down an unknown cave in a quarry that we found. Dad & I accompanied by Mr & Mrs Prewer (*who*) ventured into the unknown with 200 ft of easy walking passage. It finished with a tricky squeeze. After researching snakes of France I think that the snake was an evil viper! Fun, fun, fun. **D Hendy.**

10.8.02 Swildon's Mud Sump

See Journal 282 p12.

11.8.02 Swildon's Mud Sump

See Journal 282 p12

11.8.02 Swildon's/Priddy Green Sink

Down Priddy Green to Clitoris Crawl. Andy Stewart turned back here due to size. Phill & Greg carried on down pull-through pitches to Cowsh Aven & 4 streamway. Andy met us here having come in from Swildon's. Then we all dived out with gear left at 3 yesterday. Not too much cowsh but lots of unidentified white slime.

11.8.02 Swildon's, Double Troubles

See Journal 282 p12 **Bob Pyke, Noel Cleeve**

12.8.02 Thrupe Lane

Bob Pyke, K Dawe & Noel Cleeve

Two hours after surfacing Noel urgently called to birth of grandchild No 1 – Pyke & Dawe who have 7½ between them regard such incidents as pretty routine, & not to be used as an excuse for not doing another cave tomorrow.

13.8.02 Swildon's

Bob & Mark Pyke

Down to Sump 1 & to inspect Mud Sump engineering. Sorry Alison forgot to take a bag – pretty high on the pathetic excuse index!

14.8.02 Swildon's Mud Sump

Alison Moody & Mad Phil

See Journal 282 p12.

14.8.02 Dig next to St Luke's

Paula, Steve (TNWM), Carmen & Bob S

All day digging, BBQing & installing metal tube. Max arrived in evening. The hole just opened up in the field, vertical sides – no run-in, it is easy digging with solid rock walls almost all the way round except where the two rifts run off. Mr Fielder kindly loaned one of his generators to run our cement mixer, so whatever you say we think he's OK for a Londoner!

16.8.02 Box Stone Mines

Weston Bros

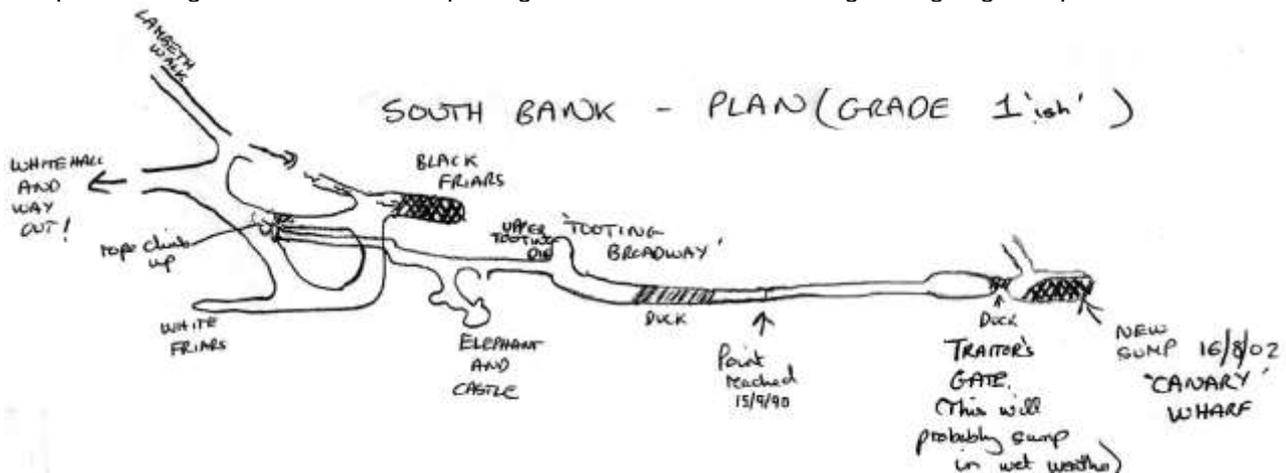
No sooner have we returned from the Grottey Madam Edith in the Herault than we're back in Box- Corsham area for our winter project. Need to discuss with some "experts" a.s.a.p. – Bob & Golly.

16.8.02 Eastwater Southbank

Alison & Mad Phil

(We must both be mad) 'Careful' trip down Greek Street – on ladders that are probably at least ten years old. The two down Gladman's look OK but the ones down Lollypot & beyond are not nice & rather rusty. Cave was extremely dry & much to our surprise Waterloo didn't have any water in it. The bottom sump (Blackfriar's) was growing a red slime in it & there was considerable evidence of recent flood debris right up to roof level. The approach to the sump was knee-deep mud. Then onto Tooting Broadway to check out the 'open' passage that had been left unpushed due to very bad air on 15.9.90. No one had been back (I can't imagine why?) & we were able to push (slither) onwards for several body-lengths to a semi mud-choked arch. This was quickly dug out into more slithering to a second arch – again dug through into a small chamber where you could actually sit up. This ended in an unpleasant duck under yet another rock arch. Some mud wallowing (all very easy digging with the mud peeling off in large slabs) & we reached a second small chamber & a clear static sump. The pool is about 6' x 4' & looks quite deep. This definitely checking with a bottle, as we are now way beyond the downstream sump at Blackfriars. An ascending passage up to the left will be pushed on the next trip & requires a bit of digging. The air in this area is OK at present but not draughty. Also had a look at the end of Lambeth Walk before exiting. 7½ hours. New passage length approx 25m. Mr Short, I think that the new sump has your name on it!

Nb The ladders on Lollypot & below are dangerous & a detackling trip is required. The emergency food dump at Charing Cross also needs replacing – some of it looks as though it is going to explode!



17.8.02 Ridge Mine

Weston Bros

Better than Box, entrance well hidden. A local showed us the way. Quarryman's for refreshments.

24.8.02 Swildon's

Mark, Andy & Dave

After 14 years caving Andy Morse finally did the Short Round trip to connect all the bits up. Very dry trip until the first of the Troubles. A classic trip for an all-round workout.

25.8.02 Swildon's

Sarah Clarke (soon to be Marshall) & Ken Marshall

Pre-wedding trip – rather dry – Water Shute is a dribble. Sump 1 freezing. Good trip. Getting married on Sept 7th so wish us well. (But once married I can make him take me caving!!)

25.8.02 Swildon's Shatter Series

Roz Fielder & Alison Moody

(Two Log entries for same trip – entry 1 by Alison)

General tourist trip to Shatter Chamber. Many thanks to the SMCC who bailed the Shatter ducks yesterday (that was excellent timing). Also up SE Inlets. Sidcot dig was sumped at the bottom of the U-tube.

(Entry 2 by Roz) Four-hour trip of which 3 hours in muddy crawls & ducks. Reached Shatter Chamber – small & muddy (used to French size chambers where you cannot see walls or roof!!) Most difficult part was separating 4 vacuum packed yellow buckets – needed for Mud Sump en route. Popped into SE Inlets – more mud. Super trip.

28.8.02 No Name Dig next to St Luke's

Paula, Carmen, Steve, Bob S & Max

The dig in the field next to St Luke's is still waiting for a proper name! Concreted a roof to Steve's rift & cut out the top 3' off the entrance tube using Mr Fielder's monster metal cutting machine & genny. All set to resume digging again. Digger Carmen going on leave for a short while. Max going on leave to visit his wife for a bit longer.

28.8.02 St Luke's

Pete, Colin, Aubrey & a visit by Max

Back digging at St Luke's on Wednesdays. Bad air at bottom of cave (not just Colin's bottom). Max saw most of cave before his return to Southern Hemisphere.

22-26.8.02 CPC Gaping Gill Winch Meet

Various WCC Members

I have seen GG at its best (blazing shirt-off sunshine) & at its worst (cascades going down the Main Shaft). This was on Saturday when I was evacuated due to a mini flood in the morning. After an hour the water fell & winching resumed. Prew & I were at the bottom as Whistler & Whistler's Ass. (Is it legal & do you need protective clothing?) Still wet, cold & draughty – glad our stint was only 90 minutes. Within 10 minutes of surfacing the big tap in the sky was turned on. Fell Beck rose above the dam diverting water down Rat & Mouse Holes & a brown seething cascade poured down the shaft. Boulders could be heard rumbling down the back above the roar of the flood. Winching ceased (the gantry was uninhabitable) leaving 14 down the cave. A rescue party hauled 10 out of Bar Pot (including 2 tourists who asked for CPC application forms!). The others sat it out, watching waves lapping against Telephone Corner (about 20' above floor level) until the winch could be put back into operation.

A great introduction to the system. Being winched down the shaft is an experience. Main Chamber is strangely familiar. Lots of big stuff, pity it's all connected by crawls. Full use was made of the Trenchfoot Arms, in spite of beer & cider rationing. Wessex included Brian & Brenda P, Nik Nak, Suntan, Malc & Rita, Leg (engaged to Karen (CPC) thereby planning to amalgamate the two clubs!). Also various BEC, SMCC & ACG (forced to ladder up Bar Pot instead of prussiking up the lifeline). Met Paul Duck (founder Jack Duck's son). A very good welcome from Carven, for which many thanks. PGH

31.8.02 Swildon's Sump 2

Jo Wisely & Andy Chell

Took tigger-like Andy to do his first sump! Had to get his new ladder dirty as well. Low water levels – good fun.

1.9.02 Swildon's

Suntan, Nik Nak, Chris G & Gary

Planned a short trip to Shatter Pot but found it occupied so carried on around short round trip with a detour down Blue Pencil To Sump 3 & 4. Chris put the gremlins to rest & went down Barnes' Loop – the normal way

this time! She also nearly had a sense of humour failure climbing back up the chain into Blue Pencil & threatened to punch Nik Nak! Had fun going through Trouble Series – Suntan was convinced CG's arse wouldn't get through so he was told to !?#* off; old age before beauty & all that! Had a wee & sweetie stop between sumps 3 & 4. Some bad air between Sump 1 & entrance, also up towards Shatter. Not bad but noticeable. Thoroughly enjoyed this trip (CG). About 4 hours. These old farts can't keep up!

14.9.02 Shatter Cavern and Withyhill

Mark Helmore, Scott (Aussie), Chris Grosart

Afternoon pottering around Shatter with photo-stops and then on to Withyhill. Very pretty with impressive columns and beautiful Green Lake at the end. Well worth the sore knees.



Mark Helmore



Scott Hall

17.9.02

Roz Fielder and Mr Hansford

Swildons was very dry all the way to the Sump. Arrived back at the 20 puffing like a train keeping up with Hansford, sorry, Fielder only to about turn at the Mud Sump. Very ornate fish ponds and sculptures, very much as I recall 20 years ago and then a nice steady stroll out to very nice September weather for Mendip.

18.9.02 St Luke's

Mr Fielder Mr Hansford and Colin

Three's company, five's a crowd so Fielder and Hansford outed to Mr Scammell's Dig. Hansford lowered the floor by about 2ft and then it was time for the pub.

15.10.02 Swildon's

Uppy & 2 Guests

Bloody wet at last! Water coming in 6 inches into top pipe. Down to 40' but one guest cold & not sure. Exited for tea & hot showers.

15.10.02 Crook's Hole

Paula, Bob S, Steve, Aubrey, Pete H & Colin

The name given to our dig. Named after the farmer not the owner of the field. He almost drove his tractor into it after it opened itself. It was ½m deep on one side & 1½m deep on the other when we started at the end of April 02. This Wednesday Aubrey, Pete & Colin came over & gave a hand. Suddenly holes appeared in the mud & rock floor, this was not for the first time we already knew that there was a draught but this had been lost by the run-in. This time it was dead impressive as the two digging were creating a lot of steam (wet overalls from St Luke's, sweat & general breath). Suddenly the air cleared completely, absolutely clear when a hole in the floor opened up. We still have lot of mud & stones to clear before going deeper.

16.10.02 Swildon's

Derek Sanderson & Terry Waller

To Fault Chamber Avens. Terry's 59th birthday so I paid the goodwill fee! Lots of evidence of recent flooding. Shute out of Washing Pot totally blocked & we had to do some serious gardening to get through.

19.10.02 Swildon's Shatter & Passchendaale Series

Phill Short & Andy Stewart

Took one set of diving gear between the two of us. Had to bail both ducks for some time to get through. At the first Passchendaale squeeze (by the black pipe) Andy wouldn't fit so Phill self-carried to the sump. Dived through to surface beyond where line was found to be cut/severed. Plan to return in a few weeks to replace line & check out dig potential of Passchendaale II

20.10.02 Redcliffe Caves

43 Wessex Members, many with hangovers

Couple of hours searching for gnomes, then back to Upper Pitts for lunch. Thank you Pauline & her small band of helpers for tidying up & preparing food.

25.10.02 Ridge Mine

Weston Bros

Further surveying, we have closed the outline of the main through route in the former MoD/War Dept area & closed survey lines through this area (now divided into 3 sections for further surveying.)

1.11.02 Ridge Mine

Weston Bros

Final survey leg of MoD/War Dept area completed, but needs to be checked for accuracy, Short investigation of East Ridge, which we intend to start surveying shortly.

2.11.02 GB Cavern

Phil Hendy & Jon Williams

Went on a fact-finding tour to test CO₂ levels (with lungs & candles). A very wet day (Priddy Fireworks postponed) – could not get out of car for a few moments! Good stream in Tynings Farm Swallet. Good flow in the Gorge. Took Oxbows to below Waterfall. The bottom was sumped, rising about 1" in a minute – foam was about 5-6' higher than that on the wall, the water was about 4' below the foot of the Ladder Dig. A candle would not light at the top of the Gorge (wet matches!) & the only difficulty in breathing was noted by Phil on the uphill stretches (age & lack of fitness). However, we met Tony Boycott who said he had just

measured 2% CO₂ at Bertie's Pot. The bottom of the Waterfall was spectacular, & we were surprised to find a fair stream flowing in from the entrance when we came out. Some moron has bent the locking handle on the door. Tyning's stream had come up a good foot & there was water all over the road on the way back to the HQ.



Cave Artists at Work

A few months before Vern's unfortunate accident he and Rosie had commissioned Gonzo to draw them in Cuthberts. By a strange coincidence the location was that same pitch in Maypole series.

Gonzo has generously allowed us to reproduce the picture here.

Gonzo is a prominent member of I.S.S.A. (international Society for Spelaeological Art),

The Secretary is Wessex Member, Ian Chandler and any interested caver is welcome to become a Friend for £5 per annum.

I.S.S.A. holds several meets each year for interested artists. Dates include the Winch meet, 22nd/25th August and Late October in the Forest of Dean.

“Below the Surface”

Cave Art by Ceris Jones and Robin Gray

Wells Museum

3rd to 22nd March 10am to 4pm

Dent de Crolles Trip 9th to 24th August 2003 Simon Richards.

The focus of this year's club trip will be the classic through trips of the Dent de Crolles in the Chartreuse region of the French Alps, just North of Grenoble. The trip will be taking place from 9th to 25th August 2003. The through trips themselves will require a good grounding in SRT and a reasonable level of fitness, as some are very long (potentially even longer if route finding problems are encountered). For those of you who do not wish to take part in any SRT the cave system has several accessible entrances from which you may explore as far as you dare. A hike is required to each entrance, however the stunning scenery makes up for this energetic inconvenience. The region has many other caves, including other through trips. From a caving standpoint there is plenty to keep us occupied for two weeks but just in case, the Vercors is only an hour's drive away.

Our base for the fortnight will be the campsite at Martiniere, 2km distant from the main village of St Pierre de Chartreuse and only 10-15 minutes drive from the locations where you begin your walk to the cave. The site has full facilities including swimming pool, small bar and shop from which bread may be ordered daily. Directly next door to the campsite is a hotel with a bar and an excellent restaurant. St Pierre de Chartreuse itself has many bars and restaurants, from Crêperie to full a la carte. There is even a cinema for those who may be into French films?

As well as caving the area offers outstanding beautiful scenery, fantastic walking and the opportunity to try other sports such as bungee jumping, via ferrata, rock climbing, canyoning and para- gliding. If you would like to join us on this trip, please either let me know in person, by telephone or send an e-mail to niknak@bifieldroad.freeserve.co.uk. Campsite booking forms are available in the library and should be fully completed (signed on the first and second pages) then sent to myself along with the deposit of £3(55 euros). If you do not wish to camp and require details of either hotels or Gîte D'Etape I can give this to you.

Chairman's Column

Welcome

This will be a new regular feature to the journal with a view to improving communications within the club. Let me explain, at the AGM comments were made about the supposed secrecy of The Committee that concerned me. Committee members provide their time and skills to ensure the club is managed effectively for the benefits of all members of the club. The issues that they discuss are sometimes mundane and the roles themselves take them away from doing the actual caving which most would rather be doing! The committee is there for the benefit of all the members and should be used by the members. I don't believe the committee is secretive, however there is always scope for improvements and we aim to consider all the needs of our members.

You will have noticed a Questionnaire with this Journal, which is one idea to be implemented. I will explain the questionnaire in more detail later, however firstly I think it worthwhile explaining the role of the Committee and existing lines of communication.

What does the Committee do?

The committee consists of a dozen individuals who undertake various roles to include financial issues, administration of the club, its membership, and the hut, production of the journal, insurance, landowner liaison, library facilities etc. The list is endless and quite often the meetings seem endless too! All the individuals involved do so on a voluntary basis and, I believe do a sterling job despite some hiccups, learning curves, and day –to- day problems. The individuals are all named in the journal and any one of them is available for you to speak with if you would like further information on our activities.

Existing communications

When The Committee meets, although we shut the library door to avoid the noise, we are open to anyone who wishes to "sit in" and participate. Alternatively, if you have issues that you wish to be discussed, then either write, email, or speak to one of us and we will raise these as required. The minutes of all these meetings are displayed on the wall of the library and posted on the web site for anyone who is interested.

What most people appear to see as the route for raising their comments is the AGM. Although this is a good forum for discussion, this happens only once a year. If pressing concerns and decisions are to be made during the year, The Committee will act on behalf of the members. This works well in most committee situations including the Wessex however in order to act in the interests of the members we have to know what the membership wants! The lines of communication are there already, but do not appear to be used in both directions.

The Questionnaires

These have been produced to assess the current members' needs to ensure that we are addressing them correctly and to obtain some feedback from the membership, and hopefully open some two-way communication, whilst doing so. We have also taken the opportunity to try to assess the changes with in the club such as ages and geographical locations so that we can obtain a better picture of our membership and likely future changes so that we can keep functioning to the benefit of all.

We realise that several members have views that they may wish to pass anonymously. Please use this opportunity for constructive criticism and bear in mind the voluntary time spent by the committee to address all unconstructive or spurious issues!

So, please take a few moments of your time to complete the questionnaire and return it to Upper Pitts. I hope you will see the advantages of this process and help us to act for the benefit of the club. The results of the whole process will be published in a later journal so you will be able to share the benefits of the exercise.

I will continue to write a (shorter) article in each journal to update members on the main activities of the committee for those who don't wish to read through the minutes and have no particular views at present. I hope this will make the whole process more transparent and be useful. We need your input to benefit you!

Easter trip to Scotland (Skye and Assynt) by Les Williams

Come and visit this beautiful part of the country, the classic Cuillins Ridge and some good caving in the Skye area (and some distilleries) followed by a move to Assynt for some classic caving walking and drinking. Accommodation is to be arranged on Skye and the GSG's cottage has been booked in Assynt. This promises to be an excellent week. Spaces are limited and numbers need to be known for booking accommodation on Skye and we need to let GSG know our numbers as well.

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Forthcoming Events

Committee Meetings, 30th March, 8th June, 17th July, 7th September and 18th October.

MRO Practices.

Sat 29th March, 10.00. Swildons, Sump 1 to Surface. Followed by evening debrief and kit demo.
Sun. 15th June 10-30. Surface rescue practice to coincide with Cavers' Fair.
Sat 11th Oct 10.00. Thrupe Lane, from top of Atlas to the surface.
Sat 15th March MRO General Meeting (all welcome) Hunters Lodge, 8.00pm.

Hut Working Weekend

Sat/Sun 15th/16th March
 Northern Meets,

Easter in Scotland

12th to 21st April

South Wales (Penderyn)

2nd to 5th May

15th March, Flood Entrance/ Dihedral.
 3rd May, Long Kin West, 4th May, Hurnal Moss Pot.
 11th Oct Stream Passage Pot/ Disappointment Pot, 12th Oct, Bar Pot.

Mendip 2003, 14th to 15th June Ideas and helpers wanted

Club AGM and Dinner Sat 18th Oct



New Year, from the log.

About 20 sat down to a sumptuous 3-course feast, laid on by Jonathan. All well fed and surplus cash to the Boiler Fund. New Year seen in, in traditional fashion- Auld Lang Syne in drizzle outside the Hunters. Various shenanigans back at Upper Pitts-music, pole dancing, massage, plus a huge cold buffet. Holiday remarkable for various personal disasters and illnesses. Let's hope the New Year brings improvement.

At least Vern Freeman is recovering well from his fall. However he did need some kit to get him seated. See photo, left, by Pauline Grosart.

Club sweatshirts, rugby shirts, wallets and fleece ski hats.

Sales Officer, Paul Wakeling, is about to place an order. If you are interested contact Paul by phone on 01934 853185 or E-mail on sales@wessex-cave-club.org ASAP.

Special offer for Dwarfs

Paul has a few remaining thin sweatshirts in blue, green or black (small size only) only £5 to clear.

Stop Press

Congratulations to Sue Bonner and Martin Scott on the birth of their son Finn.

There are access problems at Blacknore Hole on Portland. Please keep away until further notice.

Many Thanks to Phil Hendy for producing the index to Wessex Journal Volume 26