



**Wessex Cave Club Journal  
Volume 27  
Number 284  
April 2003**

## Officers of the Wessex Cave Club

**President** Donald Thomson.

**Vice-Presidents** Paul Dolphin and Sid Perou



**Hut Bookings Officer, Brian Prewer.**

Brian has been caving on Mendip for over 50 years and is still a key member of NHASA. He was a Warden with MRO for over 30 years before retiring in March. This year he has taken over as Hut Bookings Officer from Wendy Williams. Please help by giving him plenty of notice if you wish to book in groups of friends.  
His phone number is 01749 870678.

<b>Chairman</b>	Dave Cooke	3 Saxon Court, Moorland Street, Axbridge, BS26 2BA 01934 733260    chairman@wessex-cave-club.org	
<b>Secretary</b>	Roz Fielder	Redacted in on-line copy	
<b>Treasurer</b>	Mark Helmore		
<b>MRO Co-ordinator</b>	Jonathan Williams.		
<b>Caving Secretary</b>	Les Williams	01749 679839    caving@wessex-cave-club.org	
<b>Editor</b>	Maurice Hewins	31 Badshot Park, Badshot Lea, Farnham, GU9 9JU 01252 329302    editor@wessex-cave-club.org	
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**This Issue's Cover Picture**

John Biffin photographed by Andy Morse in Great Consoles Mine on the January club trip.

Left, On March 15<sup>th</sup> Marion Wilkinson took her father, Barry Gay, to Swildons Sump 1 to celebrate his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. They were accompanied by Barry Wilkinson, Jude Vanderplank and Adrian Vanderplank, who took the photo.

W.C.C. Headquarters, Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane, Priddy, Somerset BA5 3AX    Tel. 01749 672310  
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 Opinions expressed in the Journal are not necessarily those of the Club or the Editor.

## Club trip to Devon 25<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> January by Andy Morse.

Les Williams, Kevin Hilton, Emsy Heron, John Biffin, Lou Biffin, Mark Kellaway, Jo Diamond, Dave Cooke, Jo Wisely, Mike Wisely, Simon Richards, Simon Richardson, Vern Freeman, Rosie Freeman, Ken Dawe, Andy Morse

The Devon meet has become an enjoyable annual event despite, (or because of?) the lack of large, well known cave systems in the area. Friday night saw about a dozen of us descend upon the Kings Arms in Buckfastleigh, to enjoy the usual hospitality and arrange for breakfast the next morning.



**Left, Les Williams in Great Consoles Mine.**

**Right, leaping the leet.**

**Photo's Andy Morse.**



On Saturday we were taken by Ally Neil and Hugh & Trish Browning (of the Plymouth Caving Group) down Devon Great Consoles mine. In its day this was the largest copper and arsenic mine in the world. This was essentially an SRT trip down various shafts and through holes in false floors to the lower levels. A fascinating place with many unusual formations, although it had an overall feeling of being very unstable.

On Sunday we visited Buckfast Abbey, then went for a walk on Dartmoor. We investigated the entrance to an underground leet. A possible through trip but it would involve a submerged thrutch under the gate – may be something for next time!

Overall, a great weekend and a chance to catch up with our friends from the DSS after the Berger.

## Library Acquisitions to 14/2/03

Cave Diving Group N/L No. 146 (Jan 2003) [DIY flashing LED tags]

Chelsea Spelaeological Society N/L 44, 10 – 12 (Oct – Dec 2002)

45, 1 (Jan 2003)

Craven Pothole Club.Record 68 (Oct 2002), 69 (Jan 2003) – incl. colour suppl.

2002 photographic awards

Descent 168 (Oct 2002) (*Cave insurance, Mud Sump, Eastwater, Hunter's Lodge Inn Sink*)

Grampian Speleological Group. Bulletin 4<sup>th</sup> Sries Vol. 1 No. 3 (Oct 2002)

Grosvenor Caving Club N/L 122 (Oct/Nov 2002)

Mendip Caving Group N/L Nos. 300-308 (Aug 2001 – Jul 2002)

Mendip Nature Research Committee N/L No. 92, 93 (Oct 2002 – Jan 2003)

(*Latest issue: Powering a 4v LED with a 1.5v battery*)

NSS News 60, 8 – 12 (Aug -Dec 2002) [*Guano mining in the Grand Canyon in 12*

Journal of Caves & Karst Studies 64, 3 (Dec 2002)

Regards (Bull d'information de la Societe Speleologique de Wallonie (Belgium)

No. 45 (Nov/Dec 2002), 56 (Jan/Feb 2003)

Speleological Union of Ireland and the Irish CRO 'Underground' 55 (Aut 2002)

UBSS N/L 18, 2 (Feb 2002), Summer, Autumn 2002

Proc. 22, 3 (Dec 2002) Plus Index Vol. 22

Westminster Speleological Group N/L 2000/4 (Oct 2002). No. 2003/1 (Jan 2003)

White Rose Pothole Club N/L 21, 4 (Dec 2002)

Also various back-issues DSS, UBSS Newsletters. **Donated D. Thomson**

Alpine Caving Techniques (2002) Marbach G. and Tourte B.

Deep, Dark and Dusty (*Bathstone quarries video*)

Out of the Rock (Bezzant N.) (*History of Bath and Portland Stone*). **Donated G. Weston**

Secret Underground Bristol (Watson S.)

Map: Autrans – Gorges de la Bourne (Vercors) **Donated N. Williams**

Survey: Ridge Mine (Corsham) G.B. and P.L. Weston

New York Public Library: Science Desk Reference (1995) **Donated P. Hendy**

Blind Descent (1998) Nevada Barr. Murder mystery in Lechuguilla **Donated by Brian Prewer**

Also various back—issues DSS and UBSS Newsletters. **Donated by Donald Thomson.**

MISSING I have been made aware that all surveys relating to Avon / Wilts. Stone mines appear to be missing from the Library. Their return would be appreciated.

**Web Watch:** check out the following:

The Virtual Journal of Speleogenesis and Evolution of Karst Aquifers

[www.speleogenesis.info](http://www.speleogenesis.info) ( not yet examined – PH)

Virtual tour of Ogog Ffynnon Ddu:

[www.ogof.net](http://www.ogof.net) - an excellent photo tour (don't get lost, like I did!)

## The Great Swildons Duck Race Dec 28<sup>th</sup> 2002

On a grey damp afternoon 22 cavers gathered in the Water Chamber to await the arrival of a squadron of assorted plastic ducks, which were released into the cave by Vern Freeman. The first “duck” to arrive was Brian Prewer’s clockwork racing swan! One duck was reported missing presumed drowned. Despite some protests, Prew was declared the winner and everyone was served Christmas cake and wine. The cavers and surface party later retired to Fountain Cottage, where Pete and Alison Moody provide further convivial hospitality. **Photo’s Brian Prewer.**

**Below, The surviving Ducks.  
Right, In the Water Chamber.**



## Russia 2002. By Phill Short

Having visited Russia last January to dive a cave system in the Caucasus mountains to the East of the Black sea, North of Georgia I was lucky enough to be invited back this year by the same team led by Alexie Rechetniak to continue exploration of Podmenzaya Hosta, the cave we had dived last January. As before the trip was planned for January to ensure the coldest conditions to get the lowest possible water levels in the cave so the day after New years day saw me head off to Moscow again.

When I was met at the airport I found out we had all the snow we could handle, over 4 meters of the stuff in Moscow and a similar amount in Sochi on the Black sea coast, where we were headed. To avoid the 58-hour drive taking 3 days out of my trip Alex and the others had set off in 2 four by fours with all the gear and the support cavers had set off on the train several days before. This left Julia and I to fly down to Sochi where we haggled with a mad man in a clapped out Lada to take us to Hosta our base for the expedition as last year.

We arrived at the house around 10 at night and set off for the cave before unpacking to check out the water levels, which the locals said were very high, not good! The walk through the forest along the lip of the gorge in thick snow by head torch was fantastic after 2 days of travelling and we soon arrived at the climb down into the gorge, which we did with a hand line. Water levels were high,

almost at the base of the fallen tree bridge that had been totally dry for most of last years trip, but the bridge and remaining exposed bank were several feet deep in snow. An hour later we arrived at last years camp in the mouth of the cave and entered the cave to find the water level backed up to the base of the entrance passage way above the climb. The line was tied off at a depth of – 86meters on the final dive last year and in these conditions that point would now be at over –100 meters, we would not be diving here this trip, time for plan B.

Alex had already arranged an alternate site to check out about 2 hours drive South of Hosta so we set off next morning to see what it had to offer. The cave was called Guba Yar meaning deep cleft and had been dived ten years previously by a Russian cave diver called Peter. Peter had passed the first 3 sumps and dived the fourth to be turned back by depth, other than this very little information was available.

We set off through the forest with basic caving kit to do a reconnaissance of the route and the cave up to the first sump and found that the easiest way to the entrance was to walk along a water pipeline built in the second world war by German POW's that ran to the entrance of the cave. This consisted of two 12 inch diameter steel pipes 12 inches apart on metal legs running along the cliff wall over the river, quite precarious as we were to find over the next two weeks, especially when carrying twin sets.

The pipes followed a gorge and after an hour of walking rounding a corner the gorge ended in a 50-meter waterfall roaring over the cliff above. Behind this was a large black void as the cave entrance involved traversing round the waterfall. Looking back out through the curtain of water flanked by row upon row of meter long icicles to the snow covered gorge and blue sky was stunning. Beyond the waterfall a canal lead through deep water 100 meters into the cave where a second waterfall was found inside the cave. The plan was to rig for SRT pitches up the wall of the cave connecting a series of ledges to reach the head of the internal waterfall and the stream way leading to sump 1 beyond. Andre Leonov and the team of support cavers got this rigged in no time and then began to rig a wire haul line diagonally through the cave from the entrance to a broad dry ledge at the head of the internal waterfall, this would be used with a series of pulleys and jammers to haul all the dive gear and cylinders to the head of the waterfall, with a large dose of hard work thrown in.



**Left, Nickoli at the entrance of Guba Yar.  
Centre, Phill traversing over the entrance lake to the first pitch.  
Right, Phill in the first sump.**

Whilst the haul line was being rigged we climbed up the pitches to the head of the inner waterfall and then followed the stream through large passage of light orange rock via a series of deepwater pools and cascades to the first sump. This was a crystal clear pool around 15 meters long and 5 meters wide with the flow welling up from it to pour noisily down the stream, conditions were perfect. On exiting we had a good look around the passage leading back to the pitches and noticed that there were many hundred bats within the cave.

The next morning saw the whole team carrying multiple loads to the cave entrance ready for hauling up the wire into the cave and after several hours we had enough gear at sump 1 for Alex and I to make a reconnaissance dive in sump 1. On entering the water I found the line tied off in the pool at about 3 meters of depth and from here set off into the sump which descended steeply for around 20 meters to –14 meters where a side line leading off into boulders on the left was passed

beyond here the line was followed over a clean gravel floor with a series of ledges to the terminal belay at -30 meters. Here I tied on a new line and followed the floor down to a large boulder pile where I was able to wriggle into a small slot which was the elbow of the sump. From here a low narrow bedding sloped up ahead of me, which was too narrow to enter, but the whole flow was coming from it. I turned here and removed the line I'd laid and returned to the sideline. This was followed through a boulder choke in static water and poor visibility to surface at the base of an inclined rift, here an awkward climb led to a series of ledges at the first of which I removed my kit whilst Alex waited in the pool and climbed 40 meters up the rift to a low hands and knees section of horizontal passage which led to a 75 degree mud covered boulder slope. Climbing down this unstable slope led to an uninviting brown pool, sump 2. From here we exited the cave carrying all cylinders to begin filling for the next days dive.

The first task on our next trip was for Alex and Yuri to rig hand lines up the rift and down the boulder slope so they set off first with rope and a bolting kit. I followed with a set of twin 15's and slowly climbed my way through to the top of the boulder slope, here due to the unstable nature of the slope a Stop was used to descend to the water.

I set off into the sump and found that on descent it quickly narrowed to a restriction at 12 meters like dropping into a funnel. This had to be entered feet first and took several attempts to pass with the double 15's and as I was to find out later gravity assisted me significantly on the way in. Beyond this fairly roomy passage led on through boulders gradually descending to 30 meters where the visibility changed to crystal clear and the walls vanished, the choke was passed and I was back in the mainstream. Right led to the other side of the tiny slot at the elbow of sump 1, but the way on was left into the flow. Over a 70-minute dive the line was found to be broken and was replaced 5 times before surfacing in a large air bell, around 10 meters across and 15 meters high with no dry passage. This led straight into sump 3, which sloped down, sloped down at 45 degrees to a horizontal section at 15 meters where the line was again broken; here on thirds a turn was made. The exit was uneventful until reaching the squeeze, which against gravity in zero vis took 12 minutes to get through. After a very unpleasant climb up the boulder slope we exited the cave at 02.00 am after a 14-hour trip.

The next trip into the cave was after a rest day used to fill all the cylinders and carry them back into sump 1, I took a set of double 12's of air and a 10 Ltr of oxygen for any deco generated. This made the passing of the squeeze in sump 2 much easier as the stage was pulled through behind me and the 12's were much slimmer than the 15's. On reaching the previous limit I repaired the line in two further places before surfacing beyond sump 3 to find the river exiting from a tiny slot under a boulder pile but with a low hands and knees muddy crawl leading over the top. This was quite an awkward struggle with a drysuit and twinset and a second trip was needed to carry the stage and fins over, beyond was a deep canal, which ran for 150 meters before becoming sump 4. I swam into this leaving my deco stage at 6 meters, and dropped down a series of shafts and ledges of white limestone with a gravel floor to the terminal belay at the head of another shaft at 50 meters depth. This was the limit of exploration reached by Peter the Russian cave diver 10 years earlier and I turned here on thirds. We now knew that the line was in tact to this point and were now ready to try and further the knowledge of the cave.

On the next dive of the trip John, Andrej, Alex, Yuri and I passed sump 1 and John and Andrej carried all the gear to the second sump. Alex and I then dived through to sump 4, with Alex leaving all his kit beyond sump 3 and helping me carry over the choke to the canal. I entered the 4<sup>th</sup> sump with twin 15's of Trimix 17% He 40% O<sub>2</sub>, a 10 Ltr Stage of 32% O<sub>2</sub> and a 10 Ltr stage of Oxygen and removed the Oxygen at 6 meters and clipped it to the line, from here I carried on down to 40 meters before swapping to the Trimix and continuing to the end of the line where I tied on a new reel and continued. The passage was around 4 meters wide and 2 meters high and after an initial vertical drop of around 5 meters the passage sloped down over gravel at around 45 degrees. At 65 meters of depth a large car size boulder blocked the passage, but I was able to pass it to the left through a small hole where the passage continued to 75 meters where the ceiling lowered to 1 meter above the floor and the passage became more horizontal. This was the maximum depth for my gas so a turn was made here after tying off the line and 70 mins of deco was completed before rejoining Alex for the swim back through sumps 3 and 2.

We then spent an hour in the dry chamber where John had made a brew and some food before exiting sump 1 to exit the cave.

It took the next 2 days to strip the cave of all our gear, de rig the haul wire and pitches and carry it all back along the pipes to base. As always we had run out of time again and were heading back

home with tantalising black spaces of on going passage in our minds to return to next year. Guba Yar shows more promise than Podmenzaya Hosta for us, as we now appear to be at an elbow giving some chance of passing the 4<sup>th</sup> sump to dry cave beyond.

The trip would have been impossible without the hard work and support of the Russian covers carrying all the gear every day for 2 weeks and there efforts are greatly appreciated. Also thanks to Alex for inviting me again and organising the trip

## **Ridge Mine Survey by Garth Paul Weston.**

Ridge mine lies in a narrow belt of oolitic limestone which runs from Portland in the south, diagonally across the country to the Wash and includes such stones as Ham Hill, Ancaster and Ketton as well as the better known Bath and Portland stones. (Ref 1).

The Bathstone of Ridge is a chemically precipitated limestone of the Jurassic period and within the Great Oolite series. Oolitic limestones are formed in warm shallow seas, when evaporation causes concentric layers of calcium carbonate to form around a fragment of shell or a grain of sand.

Bathstone has been used for building from at least the Roman period. The method of extraction whether above or below ground is generally described as quarrying operations rather than mining.

Extraction at Ridge commenced in 1875 in Old (west) Ridge and in 1881 in New (east) Ridge. The mine covers an area of some 12 acres with 3 or 4 beds of good building stone. It has two slope shafts and steam winches pulled the extracted block to the surface.

A fault line runs east/west through the mine with a vertical displacement of some 20 to 30ft., the upper and lower levels being connected by a staircase and two inclined passages. To the north is a link with Monks Park mine, which is still operated by Bath and Portland Stonefirms. Ridge was originally worked by one of the masonry companies which combined in 1887 to form the The Bath Stonefirms (Ref 2) later to become Bath and Portland Stonefirms, now part of the Hanson empire.

The mine was used by various government agencies during both World Wars for the storage of munitions. (Ref 3). It was abandoned by the MOD in 1975 and reverted to it's original owner, The Neston Estates.

The mine divides into two very different areas ; West Ridge, not used by the MOD for munitions, but partly filled with waste stone, called "deads" , cleared from East Ridge during wartime occupation. The passages that are open are typical of stonemines of the period, but unlike Box, are without the modern graffiti and roof falls.

East Ridge, much modified during wartime use comprises a series of main passages surrounded by galleries and separated into districts by blast walls. The almost complete absence of modern graffiti is offset by an abundance of drawings and inscriptions from the Second World War.

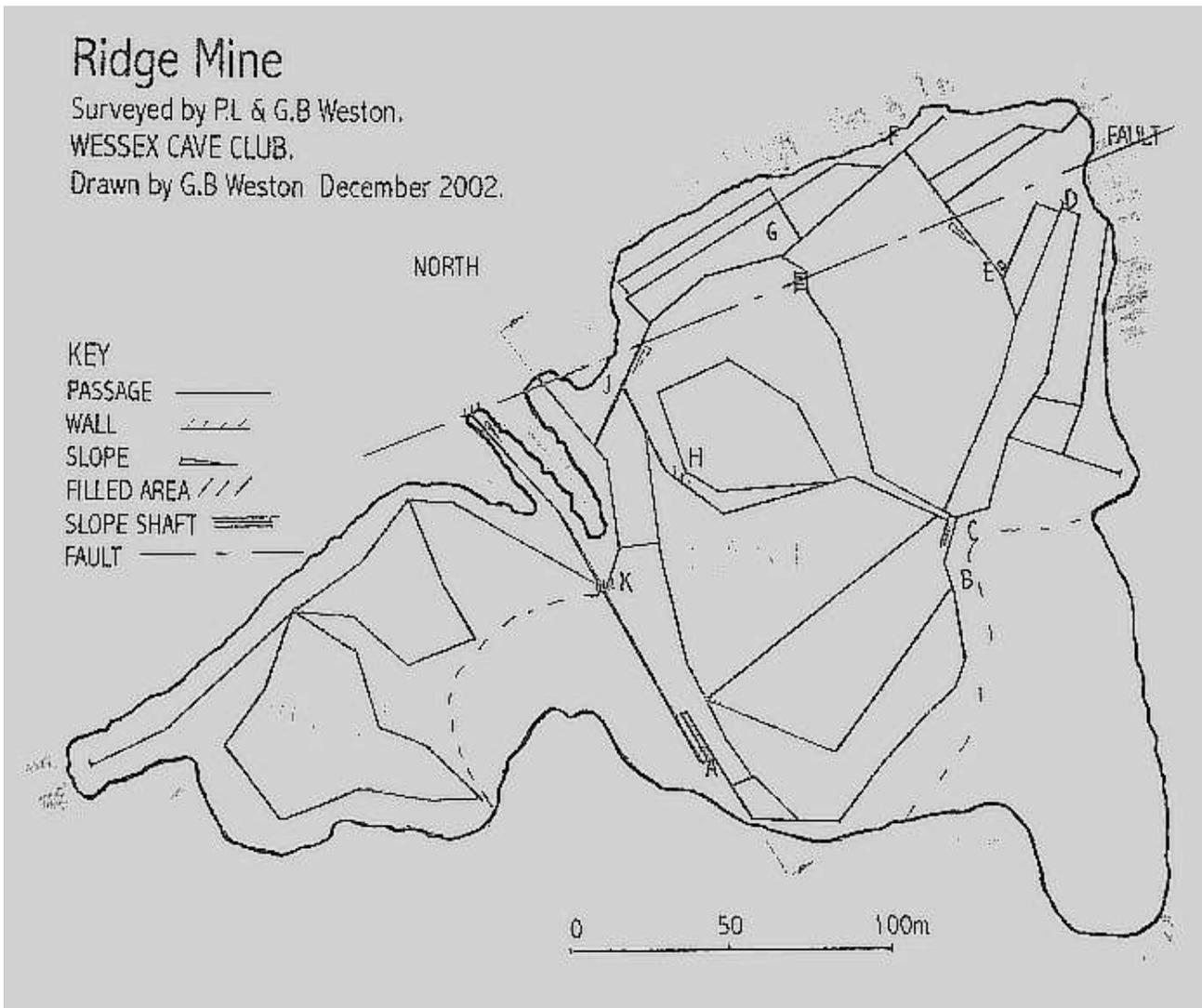
One records the death of George Fall of Portland, who was struck by flying debris when three trucks carrying 500lb bombs up the slope shaft broke free and ran back down the shaft and hit a pillar. The scrap merchants have been at work and most of the railway has been removed, the mine having contained a decouville 2ft gauge system with a rail link on the surface to the sidings at Corsham. Some of the pillars have been encased in concrete, but this practice was abandoned because of escalating costs.

To walk round Ridge today is to travel through two distinct periods of our history, that of the 19<sup>th</sup> century minor with his oil lamp and hand tools, working in near darkness and that of the two World Wars in an equally dark period.

Ridge had of course been surveyed before and the marks of a 1940's Royal Engineers survey can still be found but in order to make this unique piece of history more accessible a different and simpler survey was required. This survey was carried out between August and December 2002, using a Suunto compass and a Fibron tape on the centre line of the main passages, the galleries not being included. It is possible to get lost in Ridge! But you are never far from a main passage and some well placed MOD "EXIT" signs will lead you to the entrance.



**Second World War graffiti in Ridge Mine. All photo's by Brian Prewer**



**General Notes**

This survey covers the main passages in East and West Ridge. Access is via a slope shaft hidden behind old buildings and near a telecommunications shaft. The entrance is on private land and no access agreement exists. The passages in East Ridge are surrounded by galleries used during both World Wars for storage of munitions. The solid outer line on the survey indicates the approximate limit of the old workings.

This mine contains many drawings of historical interest and little modern graffiti. There is no route marking, however some well placed ex MOD "Exit" signs will get you back to the slope shaft. If you

visit the mine please leave it as you find it and DO NOT add graffiti or damage the drawings. To avoid future access problems please observe the privacy of those who live nearby.

**Warning old stone mines are dangerous**, please take care.



**Suggested route** Having negotiated the entrance descend the slope shaft and at the bottom A go straight ahead, following the main passage past the junctions at B and C. It is worth exploring the galleries between C and D, where there is some interesting construction work and drawings. Continue to E and the small building which housed the winch used to pull trucks up the incline between E and F. At the bottom of the incline you will pass through a fault running east/west, where the beds are displaced vertically by some 30ft.

Continue to F and turn left towards G The galleries to the north of this position contain some drawings. Turn left at G up a staircase and follow the passage to C. There are galleries on either side of this passage and more drawings. The area around C includes a blocked slope shaft and a large pile of stone/timber, which is the site of a filled lift shaft. There is an area of roof fall which should be avoided.

From C proceed towards J and in a small gallery at H you can climb through a hole in a wall to explore a circle of galleries. Continue to J which is at the top of another incline passing through the fault.

Turn left towards K and climb the wall to enter a very different area of the mine. This is West Ridge which was not used by the MOD for storage, however much of this area was partly filled with mine debris from East Ridge during the MOD period as they filled the galleries. The open passages are worth exploring as they contain some mining artefacts and some unusual formations. The contrast with East Ridge is very marked. Return to K and follow the main passage to A at the bottom of the slope shaft.

Having returned to the surface head for the Quarryman's Arms at Boxhill for a well-earned pint and an interesting collection of artefacts.

#### **References**

1 John Ashurst and Francis Dimes "Stone in Building".

2 N Bezzant "Out of the Rock".

3 N McCamley "Secret Underground Cities".

## **Space Ship Morse and the Brotherhood of the Ledge by Stuart Genders**

In mid 2001 a small piece of paper arrived at my home headed "Joint Wessex Cave Club / Devon Spelological Society Expedition to Gouffre Berger 2002", little did I know, as I started to telephone around, that this expedition was to provide me with memories to last a lifetime, and friends that I hope will last just as long. Having expressed my interest in joining, and whilst awaiting confirmation of the booking, (due around Christmas 2001), I set about the task of getting fit, The next few months saw me carrying a heavy rucksack all over the Peak District and the Yorkshire Dales

The confirmation was duly received, and at the end of July 2002 I arrived in London at what came to be known as spaceport Roehampton, with all my gear on my back, looking for my lift to the Vercors. After introductions and handshakes all round, we had a preliminary gear sort, drank some beer and retired to our respective pits, wherever we could find a piece of floor space big

enough to lie on. Early next morning the gear was loaded, C.B. coms established, and the fleet rolled, 4 ships in all, call sign "WATCH YER PILCHARDS."

My transport was Andy Morses "space ship", 2IC to captain Les Williams, the crew, Andy, Neil Wooldridge, and me Stu Genders were happy just to GO, over the next few hours we drove, laughed, slept and read our way down through France to the Vercors, following the unerring navigation of captain Les, and filling the air waves between the fleet with coded messages, "TWO SQUARE HEADS, THEN ALL CLEAR", "AHOO", "AND THEN, THEY INVENTED ROCK", "CAPTAIN LES TO STOP GO", "WHERE ARE YOU"?, " STO- G—TO CAP—LE—WE HAV- YOU VIS--- AHOO," "CAN ANYBODY SEE COOKIE"?, "SPACESHIP MORSE TO CAPTAIN LES, WE HAVE HIM VISUAL", "AHOO", "WATCH YER PILCHARDS".

After a nights roadside bivvy, and an alfresco meal the following day, we arrived at our campsite in the Vercors, close to the village of Autrans. Our first, and last pleasant surprise on arrival, was the information that the last team were to vacate the hole two days early, effectively giving our expedition two extra days. Les immediately started the ball rolling, organising sherpering trips to the hole, and listing the rigging teams. The Devon put the first team of four into the hole to rig to camp 1, I was to follow some hours later with a team of four, to rig from camp 1 to Vestiare. The team comprised Neil Wooldridge, Des McNally, Allan Allsop, and me, two others, Ian Timney and Stop Go decided to add their weight to the team, using their trip to drop their bivvy gear at camp 1, in readiness for their attempt at the "big one". Around mid afternoon we arrived at the entrance, geared up and after my usual speech about keeping voice or light contact in the "big stuff" and hating dead heroes we set off.

As I have said many times before the hardest thing to do on any expedition is to clip into the top of the entrance pitch rope, once you have your head around that the rest is easy, so with the usual struggling, squeezing, cursing and the occasional "AHOO" we made our way down the pitches and through the Meanders. On reaching the bottom of Gontards we caught up with the back of the Devon team and after some discussion, decided to leave all our tackle bags at the bottom of the pitch, and retreat to the surface for a few hours. After making sure that the front two Devon lads were ok we turned around and headed out, along with the other two members of the Devon rigging team.

Allan Allsop, Ian and Neil were in front, then me, then Des, with Stop Go, and the Devon contingent bringing up the rear. As I approached Cairn chamber, closely followed by Des, I heard a roaring sound, not usual for this quiet part of the cave, " "what the f--k is that" asked Des, (pity I can,t type an Irish accent )"sounds like BIG f--king water to me" was my reply as we entered Cairn chamber, focused our lights on the pitch rope, and stopped dead, the words, "f--king hell" trailing to nothing from gaping mouths. What confronted us was a very large waterfall, with the pitch rope in the middle. Stop Go, looking as laid back as ever, added "OH" to the open mouthed staring, (he sure is cool), but "OH" did the trick and broke the open mouthed spell. "I'm going to give it a go" I said, "if I can get to the ledge, maybe it'll be ok from there", with the decision made I waded into the watery mayhem and immediately wished I hadn't, within seconds, before I had even clipped onto the rope, let alone set off ascending I was soaked to the skin, as the old saying goes if I hadn't had a hole in my arse to let the water out I would have sunk. The next few minutes of ascent were some of the very worst of my caving life, the battering water and intense cold were awesome and the ledge arrived none to soon, shivering and cursing I stood on the ledge and holding on to the rope, shouted back down the pitch, replying to Des's " what's it like"?, with "f--cking vicious, stay down there, keep dry and keep the others with you , I'm staying here on the ledge, it's no better from here on out". I turned around to try to find a comfortable spot out of the draught and saw Neil huddled in the corner, "hey up youth, thought you were out, I'm f--king frozen", I said "get yourself down here", he replied, and the brotherhood of the ledge was born, I sat down, and we huddled together trying to keep warm and shivering in unison, watching the thundering torrent 3 feet away. Neil had just been starting up the pitch, when he began to take serious water on his head. Now taking serious water on the head is bad enough in its self, but when it contains lumps, well there is no answer to that, so he retreated to the ledge and let the lumps of limestone and water thunder down Cairn main pitch. "Did Allan and Ian get out", I said, "Don,t know", he replied "they could be sat just above", the noise of the water prevented contact. We sat and watched the s.r.t rope jerking and gyrating around in the thundering water like some perverted, demented being, and hoped that it would not be ripped from its hangers or cut by a lump. After what seemed like hours of shivering and trying to get closer to Neil, (with the best of intentions), the pitch rope from Cairn went tight, "some crazy bastard,s trying it", I said, then shouted down the pitch, "stay where you are", the rope continued to jerk up and down and at last a

figure appeared on the ledge, wet, cold and cursing with an Irish accent. Des moved into the corner, the brotherhood had gained another member. Now we all got closer and shivered in unison, Des produced a Hex stove and asked for water to brew, (only an Irishman could ask for a bottle of water in that situation). The brew was finally produced and we passed the billy around, I can't speak for the others, but what passed between my lips from the scalding billy was just about the most beautiful drink this side of a pint of beer. Now we three huddled under the survival bag and watched the waterfall, trying to spot some lessening in the flow. Some time had passed in the shivering, noisy, dampness when the Cairn pitch rope went tight once again, "f--k me, don't they ever listen", I said, "stay where you are" we shouted to somebody, but the rope continued to strain until Stop Go appeared and clambered onto the ledge, as laid back as ever. "Get the f--k under here", somebody said, and he promptly squeezed under the survival bag, and took up the last practical place on the ledge, closing the door on any more prospective members of the brotherhood. The next shivering, talking, watching time seemed like hours, we had devised a plan to keep rotating the outside members of the brotherhood to the warmer places in the middle of the huddle, but this seemed not to work as we sat in our own thoughts and watched the water. "F--k it I'm going", I said, when I thought the deluge had lessened, "If I stay here I, ll be hypothermic, I, ll prussic up and see if it gets any better, it can't be any f--king worse". I reluctantly squeezed out from between what passed for warm bodies and asked myself why I had opted to leave the differently shaped warm bodies of my past to involve myself in caving and climbing. Stiff with cold and shivering violently I walked into the torrent and clipped into the rope, it was sh-t or bust. After what seemed like an eternity, I had prussicked up about 15 ft and moved clear of the water, it was now running down the walls, the relief was just overwhelming, I sat on the rope and shouted back down "its OK after 20 feet tell everybody to get the f--k out", then I continued to the surface.

Alan and Ian were on the surface, and looked mighty relieved to see me. They had arrived on the surface just as the storm had hit, and had been confronted by torrential rain, however their relief at being out of the cave safely was short lived, lightning strikes like artillery fire had peppered the ground around them, and as the karst had started to drain down the hole, they assumed the worst and had contacted Les by mobile phone just before the storm wiped out all contact. As the rest of the party straggled to the surface, Les and Andy arrived out of the darkness and after some discussion about the conditions below ground and our thoughts on the two missing Devon lads we headed back to the campsite leaving Les, Andy and Alan to their vigil, confident that now that the water had begun to recede, the two Devon lads would be on their way out. Our last instructions from Les were, if we hadn't heard from him by 8.30 a.m. next morning, to push the button and get all the good cavers back to the hole.

I awoke around 6.30 a.m. to the sound of gear packing and organising, bleary eyed, I struggled out of my tent and joined the discussion. It transpired that the Devon lads had not surfaced, so the button had been pushed two hours early. Because of our recent epic we were stood down into reserve, and left to sit around the campsite and wait, a task which we accomplished admirably, but I for one would rather have been in the cave. The rescue team also accomplished their task admirably, pulling the two Devon lads from beyond Lake Cadoux, which had risen behind them and cut them off, so apart from sitting at the wrong side of Lake Cadoux all night freezing their more delicate parts off, they surfaced not much the worse for their ordeal, "well done lads".

All this, in the first two days, we didn't know it then, but the rest of the expedition was to get no better, but I leave it to others to tell their story, suffice it to say, that many more cold hours were whiled away underground in survival bags, and no doubt other brotherhoods were formed

The remaining expedition time seemed to be swallowed up in trying to salvage some success, but ultimately such luck as we had had, ran out and we sacrificed our pride and some of our gear to the hole. True to Wessex form though, as we lost face against the elemental forces we gained considerable "street cred" with the French, when at the last night meal we drank the campsite bar dry ,(600 + bottles)

The desultory clear up happened as it usually does, with friends and acquaintances leaving at various times over the next few days, and sight seeing capers becoming more bizarre and frequent, culminating with space ship Morse and captain Les trekking up through the Auvergne, trying to see a volcano through the clouds. The air waves were once again sprinkled with liberal amounts of "WATCH YER PILCHARDS" "AHOO" etc, and the mandatory references to square heads coming out of the sun to monopolise the roads, as they do sun beds in Spanish resorts. After a last nights bivi under a breathtaking display of incoming meteorites and a daytime visit to a German wartime space port, we landed back at space port Roehampton to disperse to our respective normal lives.

I have been on several caving and climbing expeditions to Europe and the U.S.A., not all of which have gone well, but, although the conditions were not ideal throughout the 10 days, I never once saw this expedition come seriously unglued. Cavers continued to try to “make it go”, overcoming their gut feeling of a stalking danger, the credit for this must surely go to the captain, “cheers Les”, its never easy to keep focused when necks are potentially on the line. As the other saying goes, “when you are up to your arse in alligators, its difficult to remember that your initial objective was to drain the swamp. Even though many arses were in danger of being chewed this time, everybody kept trying to drain the swamp.

Another observation needs to be put on record, the caving lesson of this trip seems clear, all caving clubs vie for bookings to the Berger, which, most times gives a good holiday / expedition trip, for all grades of cavers, but beware when the hole growls, it growls loud, maybe groups of cavers entering the hole in the future, for bottoming trips, need to be advised to examine their competence a little more closely, Future expeditions may not have the luxury of having such a high percentage of competent cavers as this one had.

Finally the account of this minor epic is recorded as I remember it, but a few pints have passed my lips since the event, so if I have misrepresented or left out any salient facts that cause the participants any embarrassment or pain, I unreservedly apologise, for my part, the people who sat with me on that ledge, will always be met in the future, with that special handshake and hug that speaks without words, and I am pleased to have been associated with them, several pints await our next meeting.

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### **Digger (mechanical) rescued from Templeton Pot**

Dave Morrison and Jim Young really dug themselves into a hole when they ventured too deep with their digger. It was left 30ft down with no line of retreat. It required the services of a heavy duty Sparrow crane to lift it out. It was fortunate that frost on February 15<sup>th</sup> made the ground hard enough for the crane. Digging now continues with NHASA in the team. **Photo's Brian Prewer**



### **M.R.O. Incident Report 2002.**

**Manor Farm Swallet, Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 2002. Problem exhaustion.**

Call received from Taunton police by Brian Prewer requesting assistance for a female stuck in Manor Farm at Charterhouse. Ivan Sandford, Bob Cork, Vince Simmons, and Dany Bradshaw attended, whilst a support team including Ian Tooth, Pete Stacy and Rich West were contacted.

Cork and Simmons made contact with the casualty and her colleague, who had raised the alarm in September Rift. The party had been returning from a trip that was abandoned at Albert's Eye due to high water conditions. The Casualty was unable to climb the rift using the single rope in place and had requested that assistance be summoned.

The casualty was rapidly hauled up the rift and assisted in climbing the entrance ladder. Both members of the party were then evacuated to the Charterhouse Centre for hot drinks, no further medical attention was required.

Radio communications as usual were difficult from this area, the Charterhouse radio was again used as a relay for messages to Priddy. Our thanks to Les Davies and the Centre for use of the facilities

### **St, Cuthbert's Swallet, Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2002. Problem, injured person.**

The initial callout for this rescue was convoluted owing to an initial short-circuiting of the procedure and bypassing 999 call. This however did not create any time delay in the response to the incident, which proved to be one of the most serious the MRO has dealt with in many years.

At 10:15 Tony Jarratt, who in turn recruited Richard West to help with the call out, received the first call. Cork, Sandford, Savory, Bradshaw, McManus and Andy Carruthers were contacted and requested to go to the cave. Rob and Helen Harper were also advised.

Initial report indicated that an experienced caver had fallen from above the first pitch in Maypole Series and was now lying at the bottom with suspected leg and back injuries, being attended by two of the cavers who were with the original party of four.

First team entered the cave at 10:50 carrying first aid, hot air, communications and hauling equipment. A second team was also dispatched comprising Chris Haward, Gwilym Evans and Tyrone Bevan carrying ropes and rigging kit.

Alan Butcher received the official call out from the police and to control at the Belfrey, also in attendance on the surface were three of the ASCRT, Karen Lumley, Rosie Freeman and Les Davies who manned the radio at the cave entrance. West endeavoured to contact a doctor and finally managed to contact Dr Peter Glanville and requested his attendance. Dr Donald Thomson stood by to offer advice if required from the surface. Blake, Sparrow and Long entered the cave with SRT and rigging kit. Surface Heyphone was attended by Jo Diamond

Initial report as follows. Casualty fully conscious with sensations in all limbs. Spinal and internal injuries suspected. Need to prepare for a major incident. Urgent request for a medic. Requirement immediately for oxygen, Entinox, spinal collars and splint, pain relief medication, full stretcher and hauling rigs, food and hot drinks. Water levels in the cave are high and a weather report is required and relayed to underground control. Rescuers must be briefed before entering the cave to expect a long arduous trip in wet conditions and they must be suitably equipped.

Rob Harper, Andy Carruthers, James Wier, Rosie Freeman, Chris Harvey and Kate Lawence entered the cave with extra kit.

Underground – decision by Cork, Harper and Bradshaw, agreed by the casualty to start evacuation ASAP and do it as rapidly as possible. Risk assessed against the suspected injuries, water levels in the cave, predicted weather, risk of hypothermia and risk to personnel.

Casualty collared and stretchered, and administered with pain relief. Evacuation started at approximately 13:15. Lowered down from bottom of first pitch by conventional handling methods. Onward lowered into main stream from Maypole Aven using mechanical breaking techniques. Route was rigged in advance via the streamway to the Water Shute to bottom of Pulpit pitch.

Chris Hayward and Paul Brook accompanied Dr Peter Glanville into the cave and reached the casualty at 14:25 Glanville examined the casualty and attended to him during the remainder of the rescue.

A succession of long hauls followed to extradite the casualty up Pulpit and Arete pitches and the entrance rift to finally land him on the surface at 18:05.

On the surface the decision was taken, that given the forecasted weather conditions, the watercourse should be over-pumped to reduce water levels underground. Attendance of the Fire Service was requested and appliances from Wells were rapidly tasked to the site supported by an officer from Bridgewater. They very quickly set their kit and efficiently dispersed the water to the ground to the rear of the Belfrey. Their support was invaluable and our sincere thanks for their help, especially as the national strike was due to start at 18:00, which they totally ignored.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to Community Paramedic, Mike Gray, Richard Marlow and the Ambulance Service who supported the incident. The arrival of the emergency services also bought the incident catering unit. Thank you for the added bonus of sausage egg and chips served in the Belfry car park.

The scale of this incident created an amount of disruption to the local area. We thank the local landowners for their tolerance and support with extra car parking etc. and apologise for any inconvenience caused, particularly to the Belfry's neighbours, the Selway and Foxwell families. Surface support afforded by Helen, Fiona, Karen and Lesley was also much appreciated.

This rescue involved many people not all mentioned above. I apologise to those who have been missed but rest assured your contribution is appreciated.

### **Swildons Hole, Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2002. Problem, pre-existing medical condition.**

15:02. Call received by Richard West reporting a trapped caver with a suspected leg injury at the Double Pots. Sandford, Johnson and Bob Smith collected kit and attended at the cave. Phil Hendy, Vern Freeman, Jarrat, Butcher, Simmonds and Savory also tasked to the incident.

Contact was made with the injured party, who was on his first caving trip. Although physically fit a pre-existing condition was presenting him with a problem. The chap was escorted/assisted by the team to the surface. The operation was concluded by 18:00.

Also in attendance underground were Domonic Gane, Mark Helmore and Jim Phillips.

Richard Marlow from the Ambulance Service attended on the surface and took charge of the casualty post rescue. Bob Cork March 2003.

## **Thrupe Swallet on TV**

It's always good to see caving intelligently shown on television and a recent BBC program, Inside Out, earlier in the year was a good example. It was made by a TV journalist friend of Clive North, Alan Sinclair, who accurately conveyed the atmosphere of a Mendip dig; mud, water, draughts, grovelling and all. Wessex members Richard Whitcombe, Rob Taviner and Simon Richards featured in the program about the diggers at Thrupe Swallet. Although the site was twice dug by the Wessex in the 60's it is now the domain of ATLAS.

Hopeful reports have been heard recently in the Hunters on Wednesday evenings and at the time of writing a 50ft pitch has been descended. Richard has promised us a full article in the near future.

Follow the Saga at <http://freespace.virgin.net/t.audsley>

## **New passage in Swildons 11**

**From the Log 22/2/03**

***Greg Brock, Phill Short and Andy Stewart***

Uneventful trip to Sump10 other than unusual good viz, so able to get a picture of what the sumps look like. At Sump 10 Phill ran to the end to get in Sump12 before the viz stirred up. With over 5 meters of viz it was the first time we had seen the layout of what we had been working on. Sump 12 is a steeply descending elliptical tube with a silt and gravel floor. This is around 2 meters wide and half a meter high. This ends in the now significantly enlarged letterbox, which is now half a meter square. There is a wall of bang debris beyond, which we now need to remove but the new passage leading on horizontally found last year was clearly visible.

After this we climbed the aven above the bypass to Sump 11 to the previously reached tube. From here a very tight ascending tube leads for 20 meters at which point Phill got stuck so Greg carried on for an additional 15 meters to an unexplored chamber, leading to a second larger chamber which had an aven in the ceiling. We will return here on our next digging trip to 12 to climb the next aven and survey the passage.

**From the log 9/3/03**

***Phill Short, Greg Brock, Andy Stewart***

Down to Sump 9 with single 3 Litre cylinder. Pick up 7 litre cylinder left there, then through to 11 bypass. Climb up to ledge above 11 and change into dry gear. Climb up to previous limit then continue through squeeze to small chambers reached by Greg two weeks previously. Climb next aven for 10 metres into horizontal passage to a final too tight aven. 30 meters of new passage beyond last trip limit, so 60 metres in total heading towards 12 but 9 inches wide so no chance of a bypass.

## **Club News**

### **Committee Notes**

**First Aid Kit Monitor.** Pauline Grosart will take on responsibility for keeping a check on the first aid kit.

**Acting Treasurer.** Brian Prewer will take over the routine tasks while Mark Helmore is in Australia.

**Hut Warden's New Henry.** Pauline now has a new vacuum cleaner for hut use only. It will be locked away when not in use.

**Toaster.** Roz Fielder has donated a toaster for the kitchen. Thanks Roz.

**Members Handbook.** The current one is out of date and Vern Freeman has been asked to make a revised edition.

**Committee Minutes.** Members are reminded that these can be inspected in the library. They are not secret.

**Ridge Mine Survey.** Weston brothers have given the Wessex the copyright to their survey.

**Trustees appointments.** It was proposed that **Richard G Whitcombe** and **John A Thomas** be appointed as Trustees to the Club and that we accept the retirement of **Donald M Thomson**. Agreed unanimously The documents are now with Mike Thompson.

**Mendip 2003, 14/15<sup>th</sup> June.** The Club will be involved. Your help and ideas are needed now. It is being arranged by Les Williams and Andy Sparrow The Cheddar Caving Group are hosting the "Challenge".

**AGM and Dinner,** Wendy Williams will arrange the dinner (thanks Wendy) Dr John Franklin will be Guest of Honour. It is also hoped to run a photo competition but an organiser is needed.

**Journal Binding.** Phil Hendy will be arranging to have Volume 26 bound for the library. If you would like yours bound please contact Phil.

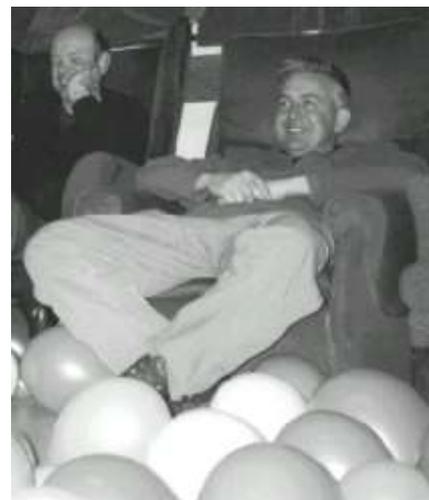
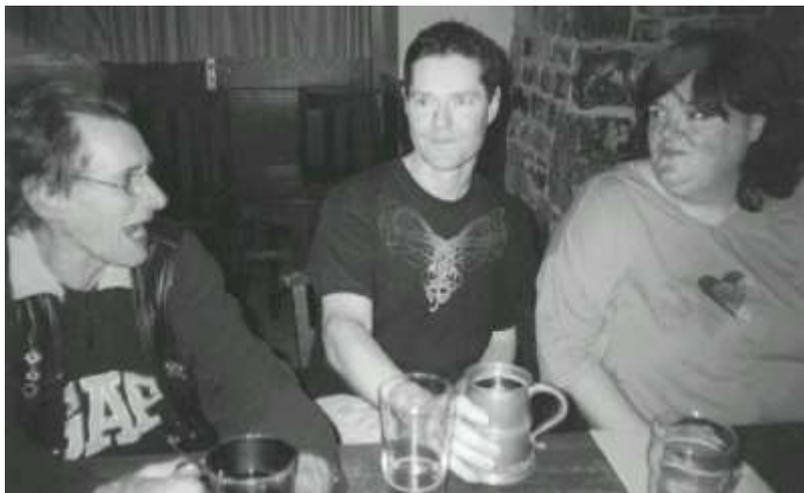
**Boiler Fund.** The new boiler for the showers has been bought and paid for with money so far raised from the boiler fund. More help is still needed to cover the costs of fittings etc.

**Ladder Lengths** following a change of policy, some 30ft ladders will be made available for use in specific places. (Eastwater West End etc).

**Pictorial History of Swildons Hole.** Brian Prewer has donated a copy of this collector's item. It will be auctioned at the annual dinner. Other auction items would be welcomed.

### **Growing old dis?gracefully**

We have had a run of 40<sup>th</sup> birthdays. Perhaps that is why the cut off age on Cookie's questionnaire was 41 ! There was a memorable triple barrel party at Upper Pitts on 22<sup>nd</sup> March to celebrate **Dave Cooke** and **Wendy Williams** reaching 40. **Jim Rands** was a little older and celebrated his 64<sup>th</sup>. Sensibly one of the barrels was exchanged for some excellent food. It only cost one sofa. The photo below was taken beforehand in the Hunters.



**Mark Kellaway**, pictured on the right at the "triple bash", provided his 40<sup>th</sup> barrel on 28<sup>th</sup> March. An excellent time was had by everyone and we still have all the furniture!

### **Politics**

**The NCA/ BCRA proposed merger.** The motion that "The Wessex believes that the BCA should be the only national body, a one stop governing body for British caving" was put. It was agreed by 7 votes to 0, with 2 abstentions.

**The voting structure of the new body.** Three possibilities were discussed. 1, Leave it as it is. 2, Allow individual voting and club voting (the two house option. It was noted that clubs that contain the majority of cavers can be outvoted by a relatively small number of individuals who attend voting meetings). 3, Allow one member one vote with club proxy voting.

This put as a motion :- The committee agree that 1 is not workable, we can not support 2 and that option 3 is the preferred choice. The motion was passed by 9 votes to 0, with one abstention.

### **Wessex Calendar for 2004**

We would like to produce a 2004 calendar comprising either serious or humorous caving photographs from any trip or event in 2003. Photographs need to be of as good a quality as possible and suitable pictures must be given to Nik-Nak (Simon Richards, Membership Secretary) or Christine Grosart by 15<sup>th</sup> September at the latest. The best 12 photographs will be printed in the calendars to be ready for sale at the Wessex Annual Dinner (18<sup>th</sup> October). Profits will go to the boiler fund. For further information, please contact Christine Grosart on 01672 516634.

## Working Weekend 15/16 March

It was amazing how much work was done, helped by perfect weather. The hut surrounds have never been tidier after the scrap metal and rubbish was removed in a skip, which thanks to Prew we got at a very good price. Please help to keep the place tidy now. The fire escape is now resplendent in red oxide paint following work by Tomo, Paul Weston, Nigel Graham, Judy Hewins and others. Ian Timney and Peter Jenkins rendered the porch and Brian Pitman and Phil Hendy did some electrical repairs. Paul Wakeling has fixed the sales display cabinet and the outer dormitory door. Brenda Prewer has painted most of the window frames and the new MRO aerial is wired in. The car park light now works again at the top of a red oxide painted pole. Thanks to Jonathan Williams and Simon Richardson. Other members did bits and pieces and it was all completed with good humour.



Jonathan Williams rewarded the workers by cooking a splendid meal for 20 on Saturday evening. The rest of the club owe a vote of thanks to those members who turn out on these occasions.

### Letter from Scoff (sorry for the delay Ed.)

**Dear Friends,** Just a brief note to say a big “thank you” for having me as guest speaker at your Annual Dinner. Not only was I made to feel so welcome at the hut and at the dinner, but the reception you gave my talk was brilliant- you were without doubt one of the best audiences I’ve ever come across. Many thanks to all concerned. Yours Scoff.

### New Members

**We Welcome the following New Members elected 30/3/03**

**Simon Exley.** 36a Woodlands Rd, Lancaster, LA1 2EE 07904011774 Simonexly@hotmail.com  
**Kate Lavender.** 50 Chapel View, Overton, Morecambe, Lancs, LA5 3EP 07739211204  
klave@mailucsm.ac.uk

### Changes of Address

**Mark and Taz Easterling.** 16A High Street, Buith Wells, Powys, LD2 3DN. 01982 553409.

## Extracts from the Upper Pits Log by Brian Prewer

### 2.11.02 OFD 1 to Top

Jim’s first trip in this classic cave, & what a day to do it. Heavy rain made the streamway somewhat exciting with teamwork needed to pass obstacles. Outrageous!

*Mark H, Paul Wakelin, Bean, Taz & Jim*

### 2.11.02 Swildon’s Shatter Series

*Suntan & Nik Nak*

Mission to take a 3l cylinder to Shatter Chamber for Phil Short’s future exploration of the Passchendaele sump. Nik Nak’s first time down Shatter Pot & beyond. Everything OK until we reached the first duck! Bailed the duck to give 1½ inch air space & then went for it – not very nice. The second duck was bailed dry & far more pleasant. On to Shatter Chamber to drop the cylinder at the agreed location & forward to Passchendaele as far as we dared – until it got quite tight & neither of us fancied putting muck more effort. On the way back explored Causer’s Calamity to reach Grit Sump (the air becoming very stale) & Pirate Chamber. On climbing out of Shatter Pot we both felt we could do with a little more exercise & decided to continue on the Round Trip. When we reached Swildon’s 2 we discovered that perhaps it had been raining outside – the streamway was ‘honking’ & sump 1 was very interesting.

### 3.11.02 Swildon’s

*Jo Wisely, Andy Chell, Steve Marsh & Andy Stewart*

Short Round Trip to retrieve the bags left in 1! Know why Birthday Squeeze is so called – Steve ended up in his pants!

### 6.11.02 Crook’s Hole

*Paula, Steven & Bob S*

Most of a good Wednesday. Finished concreting rocks around the entrance shaft & dug until lights failed, generator ran out of fuel & BBQ ran out of food. Then to the Wessex for a cup of coffee before starting

evening shift. If it impresses no one else it impresses us. Mr Fielder's evening visit to cast a weathered eye on the proceedings.

**8.11.02 Swildon's**

**Mark Helmore, Alan Allsop & Nik Nak**

To Sump 1 & back. Timed the flood pulse just right – outrageous. Jacob's Ladder was a whiteout – Long Dry Way on exit – no choice.

**9.11.02 Charterhouse Cave**

**Ali Moody, Nik Nak, Jo Wisely**

Squeezed in to admire the blobs & pretty stal! Nice chilly puddles & stream. Nik Nak had a rummage in Pete's (*Moody*) dig but didn't look very enthusiastic. My hips make an effective dam for the waterfall!!

**9.11.02 Swildon's**

**Steve Marsh, Andy Stewart, Andy Chell, Izzy Imset & Nick**

Andy & I had opportunity to accompany Marsh & Stewart to Sump 9 assisting in lining Buxton's Horror, 5 & 7 Bypass. Suddenly realised these guys are 'supermen'! Though barely managed to keep up. Sump 6 awesome – loved the near-flood ambiance of the water but pretty demanding getting back!

**10.11.02 Rhino Rift**

**Izzy Imset, Andy Chell & Chris Grossart**

After very pleasant walk around Mendip found the cave & Andy eventually rigged first pitch. Quite a bit of water, bat sat right on the deviation laughing. After a comedy of errors, had a bloody good laugh & a fun trip. Want to come back ASAP.

**15.11.02 Ogor ap Robert (dig)**

**Izzy Imset, Andy Chell, Martyn Farr & Richard**

One day trip to revive John Parker's dig from 12 years ago. 2 mile walk either way in Welsh marshland & among huge shake holes. The muddiest cave we've ever been to! Worst than Noxon. Found old dig & had a go at two places. Boulders very loose & extremely unstable. A new experience but when to or why return?

**16.11.02 Swildon's – Shatter Series**

**Suntan, Mak, Dave Crane & Nik Nak**

First caving trip for the three of us after Vern's special day on Wednesday. We told Dave to be careful as the three of us have form! Decided to visit Shatter Chamber just for the hell of it & Arête Chamber on the way out – unfortunately the crawl to it was sumped. Came back through Mud Sump on the way out & out the Wet Way for a wash. Very enjoyable bumble around trip, no rush & used a lifeline on Shatter Pot!

**16.11.02 Swan Mine (labelled Kingsdown Mine)**

**Brian Pitman, Phil H, Fred Felstead & Marcus from Germany**

Mendip Underground description of entrance stinks – it does not have a steel gate & is wide open. Mine quite straightforward – we kept following successive branches to the end. Lots of roof falls & many dodgy looking areas. Explored all walking passages, seeing bottles, stone trough, small collection of artefacts, saws, boot & hoof marks & a superb crane. Mine very wet in places – heavy drips. Good cambered wheel ruts. Second entrance is a tunnel made of old school desks, not a low wide arch.

Missed Swan by 15 mins, but Crown was open all afternoon. Good 6X. A pleasant couple of hours spent trundling around.

**17.11.02 Porth yr Ogor**

**Izzy Imset, Andy Chell & Martyn Farr**

Dived down to Esser's Passage junction & spent 2 hours in tunnels & air bells. Andy had freeflow on way out & despite some entanglement problems an excellent cave diving trip.

**17.11.02 GB Cavern**

**Andy Chell, Izzy Imset & Nina Hukkanen**

Took down 18w HID lights & video system. Celebrated birthday & took loads of video. Spectacular to be able to see the whole of GB with these lights. Helactites at Grotto are a "must see".

**18.11.02 Noxon Mine**

**Izzy Imset, Andy Chell & Martyn Farr**

Water levels incredible low (by 15 metres) added to the experience. Dived down to bottom at 35 metres, ducked tunnels & air bells. Muddy & very tiring trip but worth it!

**23.11.02 Darren Cilau – Time Machine & Antlers**

**Nik Nak, Mak, Ali Moody & Jo Wisely**

Had a lovely bumble around this really impressive cave. Did like the White Company. Didn't like the upside down ladder, admired the mud figure collection with the Hunter's! I did get a bit knackered for the entrance series on the way out so slowed things down a bit & the air may have turned blue a few times but generally an excellent day, excellent flapjacks.

**23.11.02 Aggy**

**Mike Thomas, Andy Judd & Phill Short**

Innocent cavers given severe beating by gorilla, as Aggy bumble turns nasty. Decided to do the outer circle. Phill had this really good idea to do the trip the wrong way round. We have found that reading descriptions backwards makes it harder to navigate. Phill without his glasses has a tendency to point at random areas of survey. Mike replies with suitable phrases. Mike has now decided (again!) to give up.

**24.11.02 Hunter's Hole**

**Izzy Imset, Andy Chell & Chris Grossart**

After last trip to Rhino (*10.11.02*), decided to put some more practice in at Hunter's Hole & look at tunnels, digs & upper bedding planes. Chris practiced de-rigging. Rather short trip that led to multiple headaches afterwards!

**27.11.02 Crook's Hole**

**Paula, Steve & Mr S**

Lots of rocks out tonight plus a good few buckets of dead sticky mud, which turns gloves into shovels. Weather good to us tonight, it was supposed to be high winds & rain – the stars were out. Holes keep appearing in the floor. Optimism breeds enthusiasm, which quickly fades after 20 buckets of mud & a slippery rope. Backache & headache – so I must be getting fitter.

**30.11.02 Manor Farm Suntan,**

**Nik Nak, Alex, John & Tom**

Thorough trip around the cave, absolutely everywhere with the exception of Florence's Bath Tub. There has been a slump just before the wet crawl. Lots of large rocks ready to fall in - be careful.

### **30.11.02 Swildon's 2 'Girlie Trip'**

**Izzy, Andy & Nina**

Targeted Sump 7 but after crossing One, Nina decided "Err, no thanks!" Turned back from Sump 2. Good practice for Andy & me as ended up carrying all kit & cylinders too. Water was crystal clear at Sump 1 & could even see! What a girlie trip.

### **30.11.02 Rhino Rift**

**Kev & Em**

Good trip on the right – until Em was locking the door on the way out & was assaulted by a small twig. In the eye! Twig to be burnt.

### **4.12.02 Crook's Hole**

**Paula, Steve, Mr S & others from St Luke's**

The prodigal digger returns to the fold – Carmen is back!

### **7.12.02 Aggy, Grand Circle**

**Nik Nak, Alison, Mak,  
Gavin & Jo "Snotty" Wiseley**

Jo was a bit under the weather with a cold (*she should see a doctor*) even before starting, so the gorilla singled her out for the biggest kicking in Southern Streamway! On rejoining the main streamway-bypass dig all got an extra dip in the freezing water over the head. Lovely! Took wander down a passage with lots of bats before picking the right large passage home from Southern Streamway.

### **11.12.02 Rhino Rift RH Route**

**Noel Cleave & Ken Dawe**

Found the bastard!!

### **14.12.02 Cuckoo Cleaves**

**Suntan & Nik Nak**

Tried every hole & thrutch until we had no choice but to go for the Lake. Gave it a go but had enough by then so gave up at the first bend. Will go back & try for the Lake first next time. May not be a very big cave, but very enjoyable.

### **15.12.02 Eastwater**

**Chris G & Mark H**

If going caving at 8.00am on a Sunday isn't keen – I don't know what is! Very wet but enjoyable trip.

### **20.12.02 Ridge Mine**

**Weston Bros**

First survey legs of 'Old Ridge' & again going round in circles. Much of 'Old Ridge' seems to be filled with the rubble of the MoD/War Dept area. A most enjoyable time was again spent in the Quarryman's Arms which was heaving (& we got free drinks!). While there Mark (the Manager) showed us the Shepton's latest efforts in Monk's Park – we felt very demoralised at this – still we persist with our own efforts.



**The door in Ridge, G Weston**

**Copy of wartime graffiti, G Weston**

**Stal in roof of Ridge**

### **22.12.02 OFD**

**Andy Chell & Martyn Farr**

Took cylinders for an upcoming dive. 8 hour round trip. Went in at OFD 1, very wet conditions – knee-deep (borderline!) at Step but luckily first choke was not sumped, so we managed to get through. Looking forward to returning to dive once the water levels have eased.

### **24.12.02 GG – Stream Passage Pot**

**Debs, Dom, Mr Dave (Butch)**

Good dangle, rather dribbly followed by womble through to Main Chamber. Pleased to *be out!*

### **26.12.02 Notts Pot, Twilight Zone, Leck Fell**

**Debs, Dom & Mr Dave**

Excellent dangle down this underrated cave – not as much water as expected & were even able to visit the sump.

### **27.12.02 Swan Mine**

**Pauline G, Phil H, Dan H,  
Brian Pitman & Bob Scammell**

(Entry 1) Left Sheila Pitman with Annie Scammell & collected Bob. Had a very pleasant trip around the mine. We saw a complete standing crane & a crushed one. Bob showed us parts of the mine I have never seen before. Back to the Scammell's for a feast.

(Entry 2) This trip gave the Hut Warden a chance to field-test her new Xmas pressie (a Petzl Zoom). Dan found a few hundred feet of walking sized passage by crawling under a very dodgy hanging roof section. Squeeze 1, Pitman 0 (claimed over-indulgence in mince pies & bubble & squeak – not at the same time).

Phil's photo session not 100% effective. Found several more horseshoe prints & hobnail boot marks. On the way out via the Bolt Hole looked at several old bits of the mine & saw 2 bats – but no ball, so game abandoned. Death by cold buffet at Clematis Cottage – thanks Ann.

### 28.12.02 Large Pot, Masongill

*Dom, Mr Dave, Em & Kev & Rob (Mr Pops)*

Eight years since my last visit & cave is still not large. Through to Collosus Pitch & connection with Rift. Still a cracking sporting trip. Exchange trip with Rift sometime!!

### 28.12.02 Swildon's Duck Race (see page 44)

*23 Assorted Bronze, Silver & Golden Oldies*

### 28.12.02 Tynings Barrow

*Suntan, Dave Crane & Nik Nak*

To the end & back, taking in all the crawls on the way. Climbed up to Dragon Chamber & came back via White Dog Passage. Suntan decided to take a small crawl rather than the more obvious larger passage, got stuck & Nik Nak had to dig him out – up to his old tiger antics.

### 28.12.02 Salisbury A&E Dept

*A Judd & M Thomas*

Studying nurses' quarters for alleged cave shaped object while Malc Foyle had lungs pumped & was even attached to this machine that went 'ping'.

### 28.12.02 Llygad Llwhwr

*Andy Chell, Izzy Imset, Nina Hukkanen & Martyn Farr*

Spent 4 hours at the cave while Andy & Martyn did an underwater dig to reveal a new passage. Nina stayed put as surface support & baseline feed. I explored the sumped chambers for about an hour. A very interesting cave indeed & quite promising as a possible link & new passages look likely. Fighting floodwaters & low visibility does not help. Will return when waters ease & push it as a team.

### 29.12.02 Agen Allwedd

*Andy Chell, Izzy Imset, Martyn Farr & Nina Hukkanen*

An amazing trip where we lost count of the Lesser Horseshoe bats after 100! Spent 4 hours travelling main passage & North Wing & another 4 hours taking turns on a tight & quite unstable dig. Managed remove boulders with scaffold support. The draught is very promising, but boulders highly tricky. Will return with more wood & scaffold to follow the draught. The walk back in a storm & rain was immensely exciting.

### 29.12.02 Pant Mawr Pot

*Andy Judd & Mike Thomas*

Lovely wet & windy walk. Only made possible by Malc persuading us not to go yesterday (see previous entry). It was also misty but luckily 2 souls on the moor bumped into the surrounding fence posts. Lots & lots of water. Up to look at the pretties. Mike took some nice snaps. Nice stroll back in waist high bog!

Pant Mawr Pot N51:49:57.8 W003:36:39.7. If you ever need to find Pant Mawr in the rain & fog (& snow)!

### 29.12.02 Swildon's

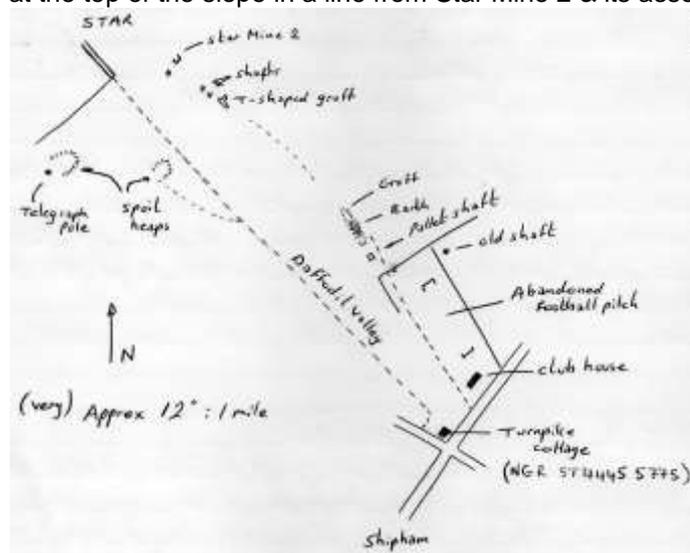
*Dave, Mark, Andy & Malc*

Cave very wet, stream throwing rocks at us as we went down the Wet Way. Lavatory Pan full of sticks & branches! Decided to exit as water rising rapidly (level rose 6" in the short time we were there!!) Ace trip to finish the year on!

### 31.12.02 Star Mine Area

*Phil H, Mark H, Christine G*

After compulsory lunch in the Star Inn we walked up Daffodil Valley to Shipham. Did not see the two mines which were located in the valley bottom but located two flat-topped spoil-heaps on the SW valley side. One at the top of the slope in a line from Star Mine 2 & its associated rift. It has a telegraph pole on top. The other



is smaller & lower down, reached by a track which goes off from the main path & ascends gently in the field. There are other spoil-heaps on the hillside on the NE side of the valley, some associated with a line of pits running parallel to the valley bottom under a low rock face. There are lots of shallow pits on the level ground just above the path. At the crossroads in Shipham we walked a little way up the road & then returned via the footpath adjacent to the abandoned football field. We easily located the old shaft shown on the pre-1960's 2½" OS map. The NGR is accurate; the shaft lies under boulders in the field corner. Stones dropping showed at least 10' depth. Just over the stile, on the left, is a gruff running

NNW-SSE. A loosely choked shaft has a wooded pallet protecting it; earth is being dumped nearby to fill the rest of the gruff.

Looking near the T-shaped gruff we found another open hole near the one previously located to the NNW, about 10' away. How come we missed it in the summer (*too large a "lunch" in the Star Inn!*)?. We could not conclusively locate Star Mine 1 even though the bracken etc. has all died down. No open hole could be located. The "rectangular pit" can now be seen to be an oval depression – unlikely to be a building foundation. Star Shaft was found to be flooded several feet deep at the bottom. Nearby we found an old jar the base of an old whisky bottle, & a large nut & bolt. A productive afternoon, somewhat damp, but at least it got some fresh air into our lungs.

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## Forthcoming Events

**Committee Meetings:-** 8<sup>th</sup> June, 17<sup>th</sup> July, 7<sup>th</sup> September and 18<sup>th</sup> October.

**MRO Practices**  
 Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> June at 10-30 am Surface rescue practice to coincide with Mendip 2003.  
 Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October at 10-00am Thrupe Lane, from top of Atlas to Surface.

**Northern Meets**  
 Saturday 3rd May, Long Kin West and Sunday 4th May, Hurnal Moss Pot.  
 11th October, Stream Passage Pot and 12<sup>th</sup> October, Bar Pot.  
 Saturday, 1st November, Lost Johns/Boxhead.  
 Saturday, 6th December, Notts Pot.  
 Mayday Bank holiday, Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Mon. 5<sup>th</sup> May. South Wales at the WSG Hut Penderyn.  
 Weekend 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> June, Derbyshire at the Orpheus, Berger reunion but all welcome.  
 Wessex AGM and Dinner, Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October.



Left, Bob Scammell and Keith Fielder fitting the new lid to Crooks Hole. 30/3/03.

Bob has recently taken early retirement from MOD and no doubt he will be giving more time to caving activities.

Photo, Judy Hewins.

Below,  
 The workers on 30<sup>th</sup> March.  
 Photo, from Pauline Grosart.

### Hidden Earth

31<sup>st</sup> Oct to 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov  
 Aireville School  
 Skipton

Mendip 2003  
 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> June.

Dent de Crolle  
 9<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> August



International Cave Rescue Conference, 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> July, at South Wales Caving Club, Penwyllt.