



**Wessex Cave Club Journal**  
**Volume 27**  
**Number 286**  
**September 2003**

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### Membership Secretary, Simon Richards

Simon, alias Nik Nak, is shown here on last years trip to the Herault. He was one of the organisers of this year's Dent de Crolles Expedition. His job of Membership Secretary is not an easy one and it would be a great help if he were told promptly of changes of address etc. Subscriptions for club year 2003-4 should be sent to him before the A.G.M. on 18<sup>th</sup> October. Photo, Carmen Haskell.

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**Web Master** Jonathan Williams **Tackle Warden** Laurie Orr

### This Issue's Cover Picture

This is another of the Frank Frost Archive pictures, which were recently presented by John Ham. It was taken outside the Club's first Headquarters at Hill Grange between 1935 and 1940. Left to right, Hywel Murrel, Ruth Murrel and Graham Balcombe. Can anyone identify the person in the front on the right?

### Editorial

With this issue we reach the end of another club year. However the volume has another year to run. As I have previously said I am happy to carry on for a final 5 Journals but then we need a "new broom". It would be nice to have a volunteer, as an assistant now, in order to ease them into the post. On the other hand the club may wish to vote me out. It won't break my heart!

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

## Mendip 2003



The BCRA Regional meeting was very successful despite the initial lack of organisation. It was notable for 3 superb videos. The first by our Vice President, Sid Perou, featured early cave diving and this was followed by Gavin Newman's dramatic Wookey epic. Andy Sparrow concluded with his thought provoking film about discoveries at Fairy Cave Quarry, Unfortunately Phill Short, Kevin Hilton, Dave Meredith and Mark Kellaway won the Wessex Challenge—so we are lumbered next time. Silly Boys!



### A new use for the Lewis's

In June a team of archaeologists from Worcester were our guests at Upper Pitts for two weeks. Their hut fees went a long way to paying for the boiler installation and in return Phil Hendy and Brian Prewer were able to help them out by using the club's antiques (as the log entries show)

#### 8.6.03 Swildon's

#### *Stu W, Prew, Phil H & 3 Narkaeologists (Amy, Roxy & Vicky) from UC Worcs*

The Narkaeologists first experience of caving. Stu, Phil & Brian bravely led us part way down. (As far as the 20.) Took it very slowly, due to ill-fitting suits. However we enjoyed it very much Really amazing adventure – crawling, sliding & getting wet = wicked!! Our intrepid leaders did a fantastic job guiding & pulling Roxie back up. Narkaeologists returned battered & bruised though apparently not enough to be excused from a day's digging at Stan Drew! All the first timers had a fantastic time & who knows perhaps there will soon be a three person University College Worcester Caving Society!!

(Entry by dig leader – Dr Jodie) It's no good; they still have to return to the archaeological dig at Stanton Drew tomorrow – mattocks at the ready! Phil & Brian to help lift our infamous stone hopefully – fingers crossed for 4000 yr old burial underneath, if the ropes don't break. (See next entry.)

#### 9.6.03 Stanton Drew Archaeological Site

#### *Phil Brian & Narkaeologists*

Site of old mediaeval building. Problem: 1 tonne conglomerate boulder (robbed from stone circle?) lying on top of wall. Narkaeologists want to see what is underneath. Terms & Conditions: A straight, vertical lift needed on entire boulder (i.e. no bang). No chance of getting chains or ropes underneath. The Solution: Borrow set of Lewis's from Upper Pitts lounge wall. Spend morning cutting wedge-shaped hole with rock drill, cold chisels & hammers. Enter farmer, Richard, from field left, with big tractor, front-end loader & chain. Due to correct estimation of boulder C of G a straight lift is achieved with minimal damage to underlying wall. Boulder salvaged by farmer & placed in hedge for further use.



Lewis's retrieved with trouble. Only then did we tell Dr Jodie we had never done this before! No treasure or burial discovered just a section of wall. Nevertheless, a triumph for 19<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>. Century technology in combination. A nice sunny day out as well. **Photo's, Brian Prewer.**

## Fourth Time Lucky?- Digging at Thrupe Swallet

**Richard Witcombe continues the story of the dig so far. It will be continued further.**

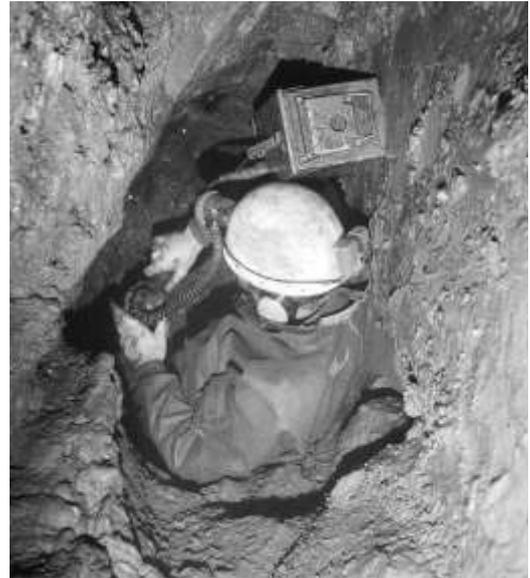
Following the boulder collapse of 13 February 2002 it was four long months before the bottom of the Rubicon pot was seen again. During this period twenty-seven visits saw the Hammerhead boulder demolished and a number of re-entry and shoring options tried. An attempt to dig into the upper end of the Rubicon failed due to constant slurry slides, and the installation of a section of railway line as heavy duty shoring came to nought when the ledges it was sitting on were accidentally demolished by a fine tuning bang! Eventually Tony Audsley provided the solution with a prefabricated cube of steel angle well braced and keyed into the best available rock. Behind the vulnerable up-dip side, steel mesh was inserted to hold back the fluid stream debris, and in June 2002 the diggers were able to return to the Rubicon fray in relative security.

The large slab at the bottom of the Rubicon pot was banged on 21 June, but an inspection on 23 June revealed only a small air space among a potentially very unstable rock pile. Before embarking on another tricky shoring operation it was decided to examine the choked bedding plane at the western end of the Rubicon above the pot. During June and July a large quantity of mud and cobbles was cleared from the area, but apart from a tiny, too tight inlet aven no viable way on was found. It was back to the "pot" once more. It was decided that the best point of attack would be in the south west corner where, if an overhanging shelf of stal could be surgically removed, there might be just enough headroom created to dig downwards without disturbing the main rock pile.

After several delicate cortex charges, a small grotto was entered about ten feet down running west along the cliff face, but again it proved to be a dead end. The main stream, albeit now only a summer trickle, emerged from the rock pile on the north side of the grotto, and then turned east and flowed into the boulders resting against the stal coated cliff. By October there was a view along a loose "passage" for about six feet to what appeared to be a slope or drop in front of an end wall. More small-scale banging and steel shoring across the base of the rock slope enabled Dave King to squeeze along to this lip on 31 October. Ahead was a two feet drop over loose rocks and a one foot high bedding some four feet wide disappearing under the solid rock end wall. To the right a tiny stalled up rift ran into the cliff line.



**Shoring at bottom of Maglite Grotto.**



**Clive North drilling Inside-Out.**

Because of the loose collection of rocks on the left hand side it was decided to enlarge access to the bedding plane by cutting into the stalled up right hand wall. By now, the stream had returned to winter levels and digging and banging in this cramped area was a very wet occupation. The bedding plane was reached on 10 November, but proved to be more of an undercut with no open way on. By probing with a bar, the stream could be made to disappear at various points along the four feet width of the back wall, but a more significant swallow hole was opened up by Simon Meade-King on 8 December. He uncovered a tiny solid rock rift in the floor trending northwest wards which looked as if it could provide a secure route into a lower streamway. A survey by Tav at this time gave a length of 297 ft (about 60 ft of which had been backfilled) and a depth of 117 ft.

The floor slot, which was loosely choked three or feet down, was not man-sized, and it took five charges to provide a reasonable view ahead. Unfortunately, this was not encouraging. The rift

seemed to peter out in the usual chaos of boulders through which the main stream randomly cascaded. On 5 January 2003 it was decided to enlarge the general area of the undercut in the hope of revealing more of the tiny outlets at the back. Banging in the floor and roof opened up a bouldery void trending back up under the Rubicon Pot area, but also more encouragingly a passage to the eastwards, this time seemingly in solid rock. After a slice or two had been taken off the roof, it was possible to crawl through to a cross passage, partly formed in a washed out shale band. To the left a small space led up towards a tiny grotto with solution tubes in the roof, while to the right an impassable silted passage led off for ten feet in a southerly direction. This emitted a distant sound of falling water.

Heavy winter rainfall brought unpleasant working conditions to this new passage, christened Inside Out after a BBC documentary programme which featured the dig at this time. Streamlets oozing from various nooks and crannies flowed along the tunnel and lengthy bailing into the floor slot below Rubicon Pot was necessary before the prone digger could scrape out a layer of sludge from the floor. With nearby dumping space mostly used up, the spoil had to be bagged up and carried all the way back up to Advent Chamber where it was dumped in the "redundant" side rift. A hand pump lent by the MNRC was tried out, but difficulties with priming and the constricted headroom for hand cranking saw it soon retired from the fray.

By February it was possible to peer around a left hand dogleg ten feet in to see a clean washed phreatic tube rising slightly before levelling off and turning left after a further ten feet. The way on was not quite man-sized, but the roar of a sizable stream from somewhere just around the bend fully justified another banging campaign. Clive North started work on 19 February and clearance of the debris produced a bonus when an efficient drain hole was uncovered on the left hand side of the floor. With bailing at an end and a drier spell of weather, work speeded up.

On 5 March a second soakaway was dug out at the threshold of Inside Out, and Simon "Nik Nak" Richards squeezed forward to the second bend. Around the corner the phreatic tube, still not quite man sized, continued for a further eight feet to where a boulder almost totally blocked the way on. The stream noise was now very loud and could be distinguished as water falling over a short distance with a deeper rumble beyond. After much further banging Mark "Gonzo" Lumley advanced to the end on 19 March and managed to clear one rock from what turned out to be a small pile on the edge of a void. He lobbed a stone ahead and to everyone's delight and amazement, it dropped clear for about twenty feet to hit a ledge and then bounced away down what sounded like a roomy passage for another twenty or thirty feet.

Between 19 February and 26 March Clive drilled 53 shotholes, firing ten linked Cordtex charges, and hopes were high that the final squeeze might now be passable. On Sunday 30 March a large party of diggers – Tony Audsley, Bob Cottle, Dave King, Mark Lumley, Dave Morrison, Clive North, Simon Richards, Dave Speed, Rob Taviner and the writer- assembled in the layby at Thrupe Lane and made their way across to the dig in bright spring sunshine. The recent dry spell had considerably reduced the underground stream and the water noise emanating from the depths of the new pitch was similarly muted. Nik Nak started clearing back the bang debris but it soon became clear that the squeeze was still very narrow. After much work with the hammer and chisel, he decided that he would attempt to push through to the pitch head feet first on a tight line. For a few minutes it remained uncertain whether he could make it but with a last thrutch he emerged on the far side where fortuitously he found a small ledge to use as a temporary stance.

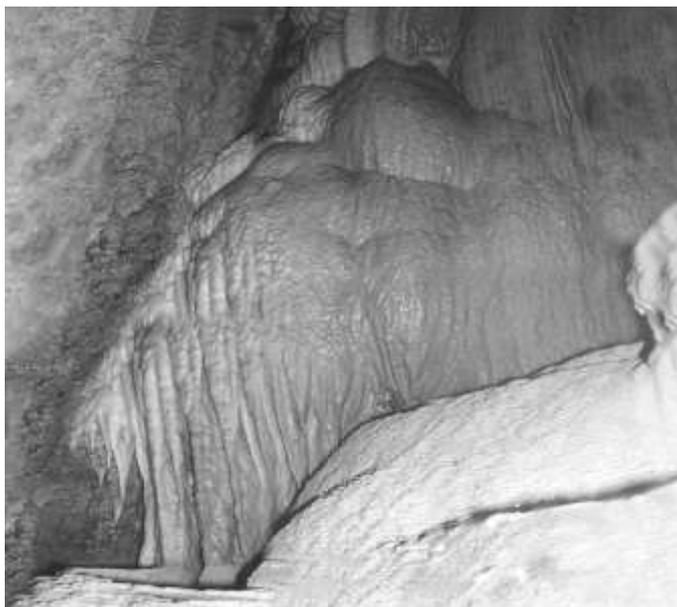
He managed to fractionally enlarge the squeeze from the far side, and emboldened by the prospect of a slightly easier return, he decided to descend the pot. At this stage he could look down for thirty feet or so to where the elliptical shaft, up to ten feet across in parts, closed in slightly. Three ladders were fed down belayed to a scaffold bar jammed across the approach passage, and Nik Nak set off down the shaft. After pausing to admire a fine grotto fifteen feet down, he continued his descent to the narrow point, where large blocks from an up-dip extension were jammed in the shaft. Below he could see a waterspout from the wall- probably the Rubicon Pot stream – and a rubble floor at a total depth of about forty-five feet. He reached the floor to find a second stream emerging from the up-dip boulders with the combined flow disappearing into a low, choked arch in the western wall.

With a sloping floor area measuring ten feet long by three to four wide, there appeared to be no other way on. Nik Nak made an uneventful return to report his findings, emerging from the squeeze without too much of a struggle. It was clear that for the benefit of the older and portlier diggers, the

approach to the pot would have to be further enlarged, and once again Clive set to with the drill and Cordtex. The shaft was christened Persistence Pot, for fairly obvious reasons.



**Richard on Persistence Pot**



**The Grotto at the bottom of Persistence Pot**

On Sunday 6 April Tav and Nik Nak bottomed the pot, the former spotting a partly concealed grotto in the south eastern corner which ascended for about twelve feet to a too tight horizontal passage. A preliminary probe in the arch itself revealed a rock and silt choke in a descending tube which appeared to level out further in. Some large cobbles were brought out, but digging proved very uncomfortable under the heavy shower from the waterspout. Gonzo paid a solo visit to the bottom of the pot on Wednesday 9 April, and Clive North, Dave King and the writer followed suit on Thursday 10 April. On his return up the shaft, Dave ventured into the bouldery up-dip void at the halfway point, but retreated when some of the rocks moved. The “passage” runs up under the stal flows.

Sunday 13 April saw digging tools and a small square of tarpaulin taken down the pot, and a week later two greenwood poles were dropped down. While Bob Cottle and the writer attempted to rig up a shute to divert the waterspout, Tav traversed around the shaft to examine a possible continuation of Dave King’s passage on the other side. It was found to be too heavily blocked with stal to be worth further investigation. On the previous Wednesday, Tav had squeezed into a fault plane at the north end of the pot floor, finding a small blind void with fine slickensides on the wall. This at least could serve as a spoil dump.

The first serious digging session at the bottom of the pot took place on Wednesday 23 April when Gonzo and Clive deepened the threshold to the archway and made some inroads into the passage fill. Inside the arch the passage broadened to a three feet wide bedding plane with a small air space extending horizontally over a silt floor for about ten feet. The right hand (up dip) side comprised stalled cobbles while the left hand side looked reasonably solid. About three feet in, a stal flow emerging from the roof seemed to have its base apparently levelled by stream action. The floor deposits were an unattractive mix of grey silty mud over heavy red clay and marls, prompting the thought that it might be more “convenient” to drop the roof using bang rather than wallow in this sludge.

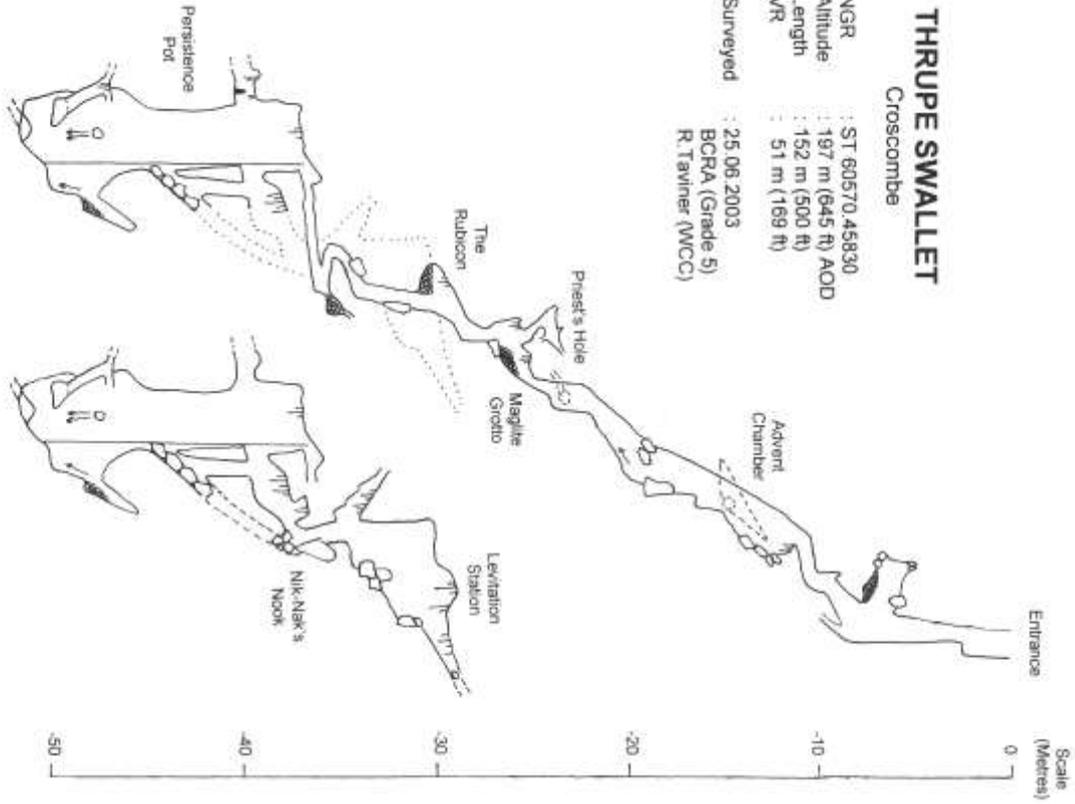
A number of digging sessions in late April and May were devoted to cutting out a lifelining alcove in the restricted tube of Inside Out, and this area, about eight feet back from the pitch head was furnished with three ringbolts for the various belays. A fourth was placed on the right at the pitch head to provide a hang for a double lifeline pulley.

A small amount of spoil was cleared from the lower passage on 7 May by Tav, Nik Nak and Alison Moody, and on his way back up the shaft, Nik Nak investigated another up-dip inlet, this time opposite the grotto. He followed a roomy, rising rift passage past several large boulders and good curtain decorations for over 50 feet to a partial mud and rock blockage giving a view beyond into a larger version of Maglite Grotto. He did not try to clear the rocks for fear of trapping himself. The

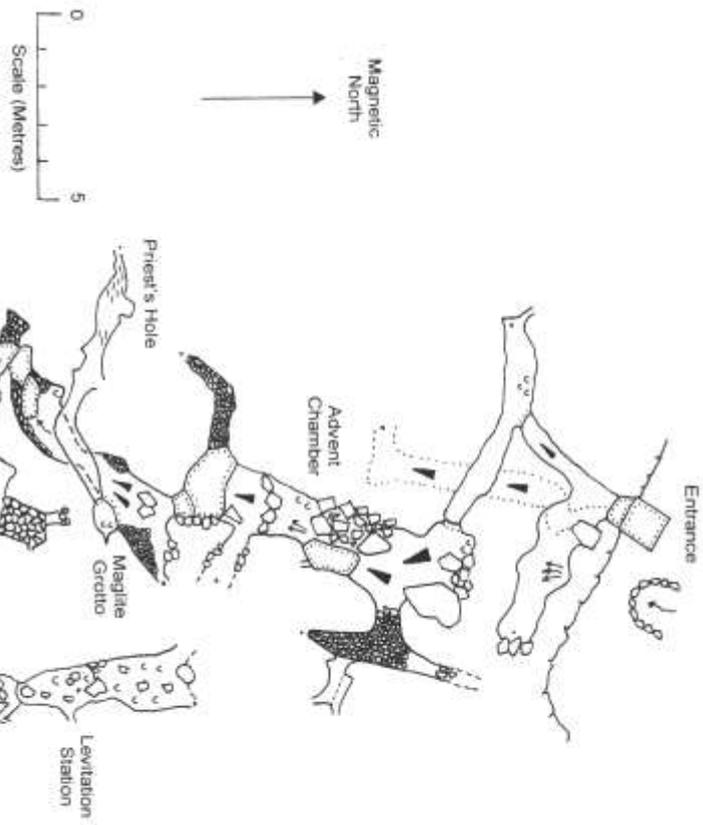
# THRUPE SWALLET

Croscombe

NGR : ST 60570.45830  
 Altitude : 197 m (645 ft) AOD  
 Length : 152 m (500 ft)  
 VR : 51 m (169 ft)  
 Surveyed : 25.06.2003  
 BCRA (Grade 5)  
 R.Taviner (WCC)



## ELEVATION E-W (270)



## PLAN

# THRUPE SWALLET

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passage - Nik Nak's Nook - was revisited by Tav and Nik Nak on 4 June, but it was decided that further exploration would have to await some shoring of the many loose boulders.

Meanwhile Clive experimented with a new waterspout diversion system, based on a length of plastic drainpipe and various plumbing accessories. After much trial and error, most but not all of the annoying shower was persuaded to cross to the other side of the pot and pour down the wall behind a flake. The bang wire was re-rigged to the bottom of the pot, with a new detonation point in Maglite Grotto, and the "enlargement" of the exit passage started on 4 June with a five shothole charge in the roof.

Further bangs took place on 8 and 12 June, and Nik Nak and Tav and the writer descended the pot on 18 June to update the line survey and clear the spoil. By the end of the session, it was possible to crawl six feet into the blasted passage and peer along the natural continuation, a tiny sculpted tube veering first to right and then to left and out of sight. Ahead was a three or four feet low section, but beyond that it looked as though it might just be man-sized. The cave was now 169 feet deep, still 326 feet above its resurgence, St Andrew's Well, over three miles to the southwest. With water levels very low, an all out digging effort was now needed to force this tight streamway before the autumn rains turned the bottom of the pot into a giant washing machine.

## **Extracts from the Upper Pitts Log, by Brian Prewer**

### **26.3.03 Goatchurch**

*Ali Moody, Dave Warman & Others*

Trip to celebrate Dave Warman's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. Refreshments of champagne, beer, chocolates & coffee cake in Boulder Chamber. I like this sort of caving.

### **30.3.03 Crook's Hole**

*Keith F, Paula, Steve, Bob & Golly & M & J Hewins*

Sunday afternoon concreting & BBQ. Fantastic summer weather & a great place to be. Hard work controlling the mixer, but the job got done. Mr Hewins came, & not only gave his seal of approval; he also got his hands dirty. He also got his good jacket covered in cement & Mrs Hewins had to stop waving a video camera around & walk the full length of the field in order to do some washing in a cows' drinking trough. We 'oldies' also did a tour of 3 fields of depressions & dig sites, which Maurice instigated,

### **1.4.03 Swildon's, Shatter Series**

*Ali Moody, Andrew Moon & Tom Stearn*

Tourist trip, final duck needed bailing. Detour up to Pirate Chamber then finishing at Shatter Chamber. Out at 11.10pm so we missed the Hunter's – very bad timing!!

PS Suitably impressed with Mr Williams' boulder below the Forty. But you could have stacked it more tidily Les!

### **2.4.03 Crook's Hole**

*Keith F, Carmen, Paula & Bob S*

The new lid is on, which will probably make NASA scientists scratch their heads on very sunny days as it glistens like polished silver. The tri-pod is at last in action & on the dig front a hole has appeared for the 32<sup>nd</sup> time & for the 32<sup>nd</sup> time it looks promising.

### **4.4.03 Withyhill**

*Vern, Nik Nak & Garth Weston*

(Not April 1<sup>st</sup> although Vern's games with the key suggested it might have been). Excellent trip, lots of pretty stuff, tight in places. Taken very slowly for Vern & the 'Old Fat'. Worth another go with cameras.

### **5.4.03 Pierre's Pot**

*Ali & Pete Moody & Nik Nak*

Cleared the start of the sump bypass passage to make access easier. Good grot around the roof tubes on the left-hand side of the downstream aven. Noted a possible dig site for a future visit.

### **5.4.03 Lygad Lichr**

*Andy Chell, Steve Marsh*

Finished digging in resurgence, have broken through & connected with Martyn Farr's line. Now possible to dive into this cave making it very much easier to push the slot & other sumps next. Looking forward to going back. Really fab place. Have been digging here since Christmas – taken out 200+ barrels of stones & several very large boulders using lifting bags.

### **6.4.03 Hillier's**

*Chris G, Brian Hansford*

#### **Fairy Cave**

*Kath Glenton, Stuart Waldren*

CG & BH aiming to find connection Hilliers→Fairy & meet other two in the middle but passed start of connection & went to end of Hillier's, finding red stal - much time spent thruthching, crouching inverted & grovelling only to get annoyed & came back out, by-passing the connection again!!. Stu & Kathy went as far into Fairy as they could before returning to await the very bruised & muddy pair returning from Hillier's.

### **8.4.03 Cuckoo Cleaves**

*Alison, Dick and Nik Nak*

The challenge was set! Could Nik Nak get to the Lake? It was 30 years since the Lake was discovered, one of Alison's first finds & years since her last visit. At the approach crawl to the Lake Alison went in first, feet first. After 10 minutes of thruthching & the sound of a helmet hitting rock came the news she was there. Nik Nak's turn – the fat b\*gg\*r couldn't get past the first bend in his oversuit. An interesting confined strip followed in which Nik Nak lost his boots or at least couldn't retrieve them. Only just managing to squeeze around the bend Nik Nak continued to blindly follow Alison to the Lake not being able to see where his feet & the rest of his body were going. Finally popped out in the Lake Chamber only to make the rash promise to return again in another 30 years. For those who may be considering the visit - it's easier on the way out!! Thanks to Dick for being there – nice to know someone can get help if all goes to pool!

Nb (by Alison) I was suitably impressed that Nik Nak was able to find enough room to strip off in the passage. As his oversuit & then wellies came off – wondered what next! I thought for a moment that I was about to witness the first streak to Lake Chamber. Once Nik Nak was safely back on the surface I then informed him that my last trip down there had been a rescue from the Lake when two blokes had refused to come back out the approach passage. Date for next trip has been arranged as 8<sup>th</sup> April 2033!

#### 10.4.03 Arachnid Rift, Twister & Hurricane

**Nik Nak, Ali M & Gonzo**

General grot about in the Cook's Wood Quarry cave with Gonzo as guide.

#### 12.4.03 Swildon's Shatter Series

**Pete & Ali Moody, Geoff Ballard & Mad Phil**

Quick check on the Sidcot U-Tube on the route in. This would be about a 4' free dive at present but rather choked. A project this summer will be to bail this open & to dig out the bottom of the U-Tube, hopefully to be able to keep the route into Renaissance open as a free dive. Good tourist around Shatter Series & Passchendaele.

#### 12.4.03 Black Shiver

**Paul Wakeling, Kate Lavender, Simon Exley & Nik Nak**

First trip to the cave for everyone – nice to explore rather than being shown. Ric & Pat Halliwell gave us a good start by showing us to the entrance. We got to the top of the large pitch part way down Black Rift – we will return to finish off.

#### 13.4.03 Marble Steps

**Paul Wakelin & Nik Nak**

Just spending a couple of hours on a Sunday morning exploring the top part of the cave via the Gully Route. We would both like to return soon & take the Sidewinder route & bottom the cave.

#### 15.4.03 Swildon's Mud Sump

**Nik Nak, Dick Crane, Mad Phil, Ali M, Richard (MCG)**

Clearance trip to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mud Sump – placed bags of mud under the flexi hose to give it extra support. Removed the spare flexi hose & old metal pump to the surface. Replaced some of the bailing buckets, which were starting to split.

#### 6.4.03 Crook's Hole Dig

**Bob S, Carmen**

Afternoon digging – started lowering the floor & by the end of 3 hours the floor had lowered itself a further 18-20ft - totally open rift. Needs gardening around the top before venturing to the bottom. Still have 18-20ft of loose stones/mud to clear the whole rift, but at least it's wetted the appetite & a couple of knickers! Paula came & sealed her approval before we retired to Templeton on a tourist visit to impress the diggers with our amazement Never thought we'd see Mr Prewer operating a powered winch & a big jobby at that. (As a qualified & certificated Gaping Gill winch driver, I was the obvious choice & it's easier than grovelling in that squalid mud at the bottom.) Crook's is not quite Thrupe but it's getting there.

#### 19.4.03 Charterhouse Cave

**Pete & Ali Moody**

Trip to look at the end dig to see if it is possible to inspire Pete again. Looks quite good as there is a solid left-hand wall & roof. Three boulders will need to be banged in the floor & the right-hand wall needs to be stabilized with cement. Also had a poke about in the upper part of the boulder choke – not nice!

#### 19.4.03 Swildon's

**Maurice H, Phil H & Tommo**

I (MH) suddenly realised on Monday that today (Sat) was the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my first caving trip (to Swildon's). Rang Tommo's wife to see if he could come out to play with me & Phil & she said 'Yes'. So we returned to said cave with a video camera & shot some footage to compare with our 1962/4 8mm film of said cave. Had 2 hours wallowing in nostalgia & what little water was flowing after 5 weeks drought. Unlike 45 years ago we didn't go below the 40', except Phil who went to see Les Williams' boulder.

#### 20.4.03 Swan & Ridge Mines

**Stu W, Kathy G, Pauline G & Phil H**

The younger element wanted to go caving – I (PH) refused to do anything arduous or laddery. We compromised on Swan Mine - a good trip round all of it, photographing the cranes etc. Quick drink in the pub (to show willing) then off to Ridge Mine. Not remembering the place, I took the RH wall all the way round, then took a few haphazard routes into the central region – finding No1 Slope Shaft, the collapsed lift shaft, the winch platform & lots of graffiti. Also some horrendous roof falls. 2hrs & 1½hrs.

#### 20.4.03 OFD Top

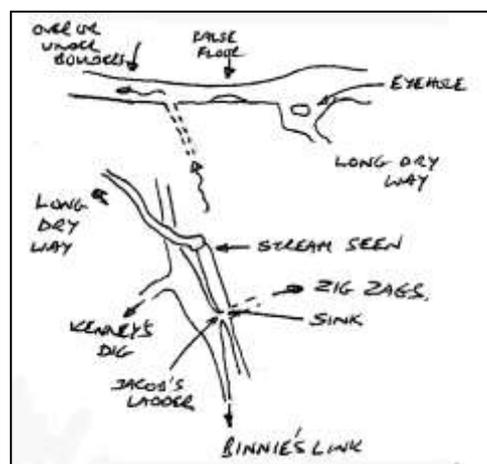
**Ric Halliwell & Steve Gough**

Had a good wander before dropping into the streamway & up to Top Waterfall. Saw a large white trout in the streamway. Used equally obscure (unless you know it) route on the way out so only had to use the first 50ft or so of passage twice. Then back to Steve's for dinner.

#### 26.4.03 Swildon's

**Phil Hendy**

Solo trip to investigate the stream sink at the foot of Jacob's Ladder (JL) noticed last week. The stream (small) was sinking with a pool under the wall in an alcove. Digging the floor out did not affect the level. About 30ft down the Short Dry Way (SDW) the passage turns left at a big boulder jammed in the floor, immediately beyond this is a dry pothole. However, by the side of the jammed boulder I could hear running water. Clearing some stones & silt I uncovered a level stal' floor with a gap of about 1½" between it & the wall. Squinting into the gap I could just see running water. Since the SDW below the drop is dry, the



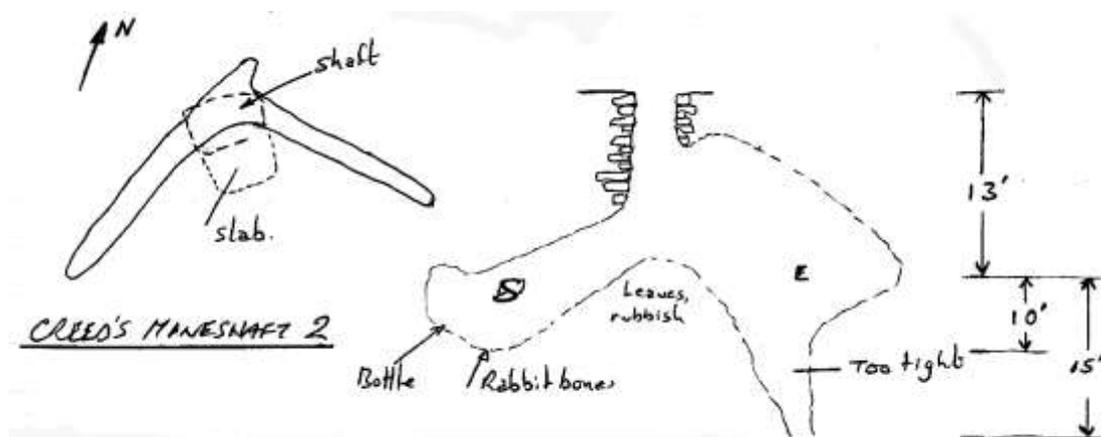
small stream sinking in the floor of the SDW below JL must flow to the rift along a joint at the head of the pothole. (A small trickle enters in the floor a few yards before the Old Grotto (OG), but this is not associated.) I went on down the SDW to the OG, then back up the LDW (*you can work that one out*), noting that the water entering the OG from the LDW was discoloured (less than 10 minutes after I had disturbed the sink in the SDW.) This water enters the LDW at the upper end of the section where it is easier to climb high in the roof over boulders & stal' than to crawl in the water at stream level. The inlet (water flow = that sinking at JL) is from a narrow rift in the left-hand wall. It runs straight for 30ft at the end of which can be seen a 2ft cascade. So, connection proved by muddy water. Probable difference between the two ends about 30ft, but non-caveable. Top end is far too tight, the lower end is Alison sized, but would still need some knobbls taken off.

### 26.4.03 Rookham Mineshafts

**Phil H, Prew, Kathy G**

Went to investigate a mineshaft found in 1984 & located a few days ago. Approx NGR ST5424 4820; just inside the wood under a hazel bush, partly protected with barbed wire. The mine is at an angle between two rifts. The wall is ginged to where the S rift goes off, the E wall is partly ginged, the bottom stones being jammed across the E rift. The top of the shaft has a 4" limestone slab to the SE side of it. A 13ft ladder descent lands on a cone of leaf litter & branches & soil in a rift about 30" wide. To the E the rift is about 15ft long sloping downwards, but too tight to enter. The cross rift peters out quickly to the N, but runs for about 20ft to the S, at a steep angle & about 18" wide to enter a stoned floor wider part of the rift. It may go deeper with digging. Total depth 40ft; length about 50ft.

Slightly higher up & 50ft to the NE (bearing 68°) is Creed's Mineshaft 1 which in 1984 was partly capped by a limestone slab, & protected by old bedsteads. It is now covered with a steel lid surrounded by concrete, & protected by a strong lock.



There is no indication as to who has done this. On our earlier visit, the 1984 NGR for Creed's Cave (another 1984 dig) was located by GPS as a stony patch

in the field. However, between two yew bushes & a bearing of 286° from Creed's Mineshaft 1 approx 100ft away we located Creed's Cave under outcropping limestone at the very edge of the wood. It was backfilled after being dug, but is currently about 8ft long & 6ft deep running at an angle into the hill. A successful afternoon tying up a few loose ends, although we got a little damp on the walk back

### 2.5.03 GB Cavern

**Weston Bros**

Lost in entrance, fell in the water, mud in Devil's Elbow. What more would you want? Two pints in the Hunter's! Tested for CO<sub>2</sub> (BDI). None found.

### 3.5.03 Swildon's

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

See Journal 285, P68

### 4.5.03 (am) Swildon's

**Phill Short**

Quick solo trip to Sump 4 with cylinders & gear. Left all gear at Sump 4 free dived 3 & 2 on exit. Preparations for survey trip in Sump 12.

### 4.5.03 (pm) Swildon's

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

Down to 4 to pick up gear dropped earlier on today. On to 12 dropping the 7 ltr cylinder for future digging trips. Re-surveyed cave from Sump 9 to the current end which was thoroughly unpleasant as we spent 2 hours laying in the stream getting cold. Measured the underwater passage of Sump 9 with a tape on way out & met Andy as we were leaving 9, he helped us carry out. Sump 4 (due to the low water & no flow) was disgusting; you could feel the worms crawling over your lips & face as you rushed through the semi-liquid cowsh.

### 5.5.03 Swildon's

**Phill Short, Andy Judd, Michelle Dance & Steve Pierce**

Hero Phill escorted pretty damsel on her first cave trip whilst Andy gets muppet who breaks his glasses half way through! Bimble down to 2 & back via Wet Way. Michelle's scariest moment – back up ladder Phill whispers in her ear, "How's it going?" Michelle turns round narrowly missing Phill nuts to see him straddled across the ladder pitch!! Michelle's best moment.

Nb (MD) An outstanding experience to be taken down the dark scary cave by three hero men. One to be recommended for sure. Feeling pretty euphoric about the whole adventure. Will probably do it again.

### 7.5.03 Crook's Hole

**Bob S, Paula, Carmen & Steve**

Last week in heavy rain & hail we carried on digging the floor out. Hole at one end, 3 metres drop that we put a metal ladder down. Suddenly the floor slipped away & a large rocky boulder had slid sideways & trapped the ladder. We are now digging with lifelines! This week, a second hole has appeared on the opposite end of the rift similar to the first, now we are digging a pile of rocks & boulders between the two. It's looking good but getting down & up is starting to look hairy especially to older people.

#### **7.5.03 St Luke's**

**Aubrey, Pete Hann, Colin & Keith F**

A special turnout to have a good spoil removing session – it takes 4 people now. Good progress.

#### **9.5.03 Bath Stone Mines**

**Weston Bros**

The search for the Northwest Passage, alias Hazelbury Mine. In Jack's Entrance with passages off to the right very fully explored, also outer environs including Hell's Crawl. Nothing new found so we exited via Back Door convinced that we had been in Hazelbury as it is part of what is currently known as Box Stone Mine.

Adjourned to Quarryman's Arms

#### **18.5.03 Hut Warden's Yorkshire Trip**

**Pauline, Nik Nak, Alan,  
Roz, Keith & Liam Fielder**

Went to cave called Kingsdale. My new suit was christened by paddling & crawling in the streamway – good job I've invested in kneepads as well! We found a big, long drop with a river at the bottom. Had to hold Nik Nak back as he was going for it. Then there was this waterfall – had to have assistance to get up it, much shoving & pushing but they got me up there somehow! At the top was a knotted hankie (sic), Nik Nak went up to the top of it, looked at the view & rocketed back down again. Then, I had to go back down the waterfall – got a soaking. Roz pushed me & I fell into the arms of Alan – brave man! Found a long dry passage, someone was digging it out. I had a little lie down whilst the rest of the crew explored further. It's lonely & dark down there. On the return we crawled back & got into a deeper passage from where we swam out. There were so many rocks & boulders on the way that I moved them to one side as I departed. Nik Nak told me to stop 'tidying up' & get a move on! A good trip, most enjoyable. The exit out, this large empty tin of beans, was the hardest. I had to be pushed & hauled out by Keith & the welcoming party. The rain had now stopped; the sun was out, what a glorious end to a brilliant weekend. Gaping Gill next. Can't wait.

#### **20.5.03 Swildon's – SE Inlets & Lower Fault Chamber**

**Dick Crane, Ali M,  
A Moon, T Stearn, Mad Phil**

Trip to check if the Lower Fault connecting duck into Watergate was open – it was. Rope into Lower Fault was broken halfway down – must have been exciting for someone!

#### **21.5.03. Crook's Hole**

**Bob S & Mr & Mrs Fielder**

The day started badly with just Mr S, but help was promised later from Mr & Mrs Fielder, as they knew Mr S wouldn't last alone. First Mr S transported a generator, drill (heavy), ropes & all the paraphernalia required for the job from the truck across the field by wheelbarrow. He then took the truck back to the farm, changed & walked back along the lane, across the field to the dig. That's where he found that he had forgotten to ask for the key. After trying a hard-luck line with Mr Fielder & getting a basic "bog-off, we're not ready yet by about 1½ hours", it was decided the only thing was to walk back to the farm & get the key. Later, after drilling rock in thick dust Mr & Mrs Fielder turned up to drill yet more rock. Mr S, meanwhile, took the key back to the farm & found that he had both the normal key, which had been in his pocket since last week, & the spare key that he'd walked back to the farm for! The moral to this is, 'don't trust your brain until you check every other avenue! There is a rock avalanche to be removed or concreted up for safety & the floor, although a bit tight for Mr S is still looking promising.

#### **23.5.03 Swan Mine**

**Weston Bros**

Round trip! Swan Mine is 5km long. In via top (low crawl) entrance opposite bus stop & pub car park. A low short crawl into mine passage, (beware of hanging death just inside on the right) then through-trip into what is generally known as Swan Mine. The connection is found by keeping left then right through arch into apparently blind, worked out ends; slot on right & upwards leads into main part of Swan. A right turn takes the route near the exit. Enjoyable trip, adjourned to the Quarryman's which was heaving.

#### **23.5.03 Swildon's**

**Phill Short**

Couldn't find anyone to play with so went off to play with myself! (*That's what it says in the Log!*) To St Paul's & Mud Sump having free-climbed down the 20' Pitch on to Sidcot U-tube (water level low). Was having fun so came out via the Round Trip & an excursion to Sump 2 & Black Hole. Very low water in the cave, which meant it, was crystal clear at Sump 2.

#### **24.5.03 Cuckoo Cleeves**

**Phill Short, Nik Nak, Ali Moody & Mad Phil**

Followed Ali down to the squeeze through to Lake Chamber. Unexpected & very inviting (*I think he means the Lake not the squeeze*). Back out again with much struggling against gravity.

#### **24.5.03 GB Cavern**

**Ali Moody's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Caving**

I (Pauline) was invited to go to the 'do', my first trip into GB. I had much assistance from various volunteers to get me down the long drops & back up again. Got as far as the Bridge & the Waterfall where we had a picnic with various lemonades. The Main Chamber I found impressive, most of the guests were amazed I had made it so far. Not as amazed as myself! The return was entertainment for all; Suntan & Phill Short helped me back up the 'drop' by a new technique not tried before. Thank goodness for rope & Phill's super strength! So glad to see the Sun at the top, & the field carpeted in bluebells. Oh, my aching body!

Nb, 2 trips in 1 week!!!



**24.5.03 GB Cavern**

***Ali & Friends***

Ali M & some friends went to the Great Chamber etc. This is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Alison's first weekend at the Wessex & first Mendip cave. Lemonade & cake in Main Chamber to mark occasion. Mrs Prewer's fruitcake was very well received.

**25.5.03 Swildon's – Watergate**

***Pete & Ali M, Geoff Ballard, Mad Phil & Suntan***

Lovely place, must go again. I'm not available now for quite some time. Shame that! But I do recommend it – eyeball licking that is. Many thanks for a great day out. Suntan.

**25.5.03 Swildon's – Short Round Trip**

***Tash & Phill Short***

My first introduction to Somerset. First stop was the Hunter's last night, apparently a compulsory part of every trip – the site where, after a few alcoholic beverages, (I'm sure they were light ciders) a plan was hatched to go to Swildon's after closing to leave a ladder at the 20' Pot. The merry band included Nik Nak, Carmen, Abigail, Jo, John & Mike. We made our way to the 20', at which point there seemed no point in turning back so 5 of us in our merry state, clambered our way to Shatter Pot. It was a fun introduction but did end up in a late night; got to bed after 4am. By 8,30am. was ready for more. Fuelled by bacon sandwiches we headed back to the scene of the crime, where surprisingly enough everything looked slightly different! Did the Short Round Trip, taking a detour down Blue Pencil Passage to see the lovely passageway between 3 & 4. I must say I did find the little critters in Sump 4 fascinating, a huge ecosystem, blood worms, banded worms, little white thread worms, mini leaches on rocks contracting themselves along, big green shrimps copulating with little yellow ones. Lying on my belly in this sump for about 15 minutes Phill thought it very amusing. Had my first free dive through Sump 1, it was shorter than I had expected (7 seconds to be precise) & emerged to an audience of about 10 cavers. Battery started getting low & was propelled onwards by promises of sausage sandwiches, which really hit the spot. I had a great first trip & fantastic guide. Am looking forward to coming back & poking around some more. Caving hut is impressive. Must go as Hunter's is calling.

**25.5.03 Swildon's 9**

***Mike Thomas, Jonathan, Nik Nak, Dr Jo & Clive Westlake***

Gentle plod down to Sump 9 for Nik Nak's first cave diving adventure. Shrimping net would have proved useful at Sump 4. Anyone for Potted Wessex Shrimps? Sump 6 proved exciting for JW. Please send reports of phantom divers to phantom@l'veleftmyhelmetinthesump.com.

**30.5.03 Shatter Cave**

***Phil & Dan Hendy & Jamie H***

Dan led most of the way – no problems route finding. Boys in & out via Z-squeeze – Jamie temporarily stuck. Phil out via Ring Road.

Then on to Erratic Passage (*Balch's Cave*) No 'big moths', Dan then led Jamie along Bullrush Way – reported lots of big black spiders.

**1.6.03 East Twin & Lionel's (Goon's)**

***Chris G & Stuart Waldren***

Had a bumble around Burrington to have a look at East Twin dig. A lot more work since I last saw it. But still not happy enough to go right through. Ventured a short way down Lionel's. Need more time really. CG had a poke in Goon's. Will take a handline next time & inspect boulder choke.

**3.6.03 Singing River Mine**

***Jude, Adrian & Rob Vanderplank, Dick Crane, Ali M & Kermet***

Excellent trip thanks to guided tour from Kermet, who knows the place extremely well. Water levels very low in the Gulf – possible to paddle across to the end.

#### 4.6.03. Crook's Hole

*Steve, Bob S, Carmen, Keith F  
& Pete Hann & Colin on loan from St Luke's*

The 'snappers' last week cracked rock but not powerful enough for the amount of rock to be removed (to enable minimum Scammell width passage). The small stone! gives the St Luke's digger the 'willies', so we've promised to cement it up. It will make the load resting on a lot more safe. Floor still going straight down 15' open but only 6" wide at the moment. A winch is in the offing to raise the technical quality of the dig.

#### 8.6.03 OFD

*Mark & Bean*

A quick trip Top to One trip plus a diversion to Waterfall Series. Well worth it. Did the Traverses, as the streamway was too low to be sporting.

#### 9.6.03 Stanton Drew Archaeological Site

*See Page 83*

#### 10.6.03 Draenen War of the Worlds

*Nik Nak, Tav, Simon Richardson,  
Ali Moody & Mad Phil*

Excellent trip to the War of the Worlds 5¼ hours to get to WoW & do Sendero Luminso & Wow North & South. All impressed with the curly stal formations in SL. Surprisingly there were also many slippery boulders in WoW – we think that it should be 'bring a boulder out of Draenen' instead of 'take a boulder in'! From Wow back to entrance 3½ hours & we even made the Hunter's. Tav did the whole trip in a neofleece – he did look a little hot at times.

### **SRT for Improvers by Noel Cleave (assisted by Stuart Waldren)**

I read Stuart Waldren's entry/article in Journal 285 re his first underground SRT, and it stirred memories of my own first underground SRT in Rhino, where my reactions were similar. Indeed I had to tell Ken Dawe that my actions were sensibly methodic, and their glacial speed did not mean that I was frozen with terror. Now, of course, I am Vastly Experienced Expert with an astonishing 3 Rhino's and a Thrupe under my belt. Despite this expertise and familiarity, I felt that a quick nerve tingler and sphincter tightener before looking down yards and yards (OK, metres) of sod-all and blackness in some French abyss might be a brilliant idea. Stu is coming down to the Dent de Crolles, so I suggested a Rhino brush-up to him (Unselfishly thinking of the old saying "Terror shared is terror doubled"). So off we went on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>, accompanied by Nik Nak. We deliberately went for the Right-Hand route, to introduce Stu to bolts and vertigo. It certainly refreshed my ability to find and fit a bolt, with my left hand when (a) I am right-handed, (b) the said left hand is shaking violently and (c) I am having severe neuro-muscular problems as between brain and body on the wisdom of going forward rather than back.



Down the pitch itself, however, I found the elusive deviation bolt and was feeling moderately pleased with myself until, despite an enjoyable pendulum session, I failed to find the rock spike deviation to get us across into the cleft traverse above pitch 2. Nik Nak talked Stu across the moves on the pitch 1 bolt traverse, so in due course Stu joined me at the bottom where I opined that he looked somewhat pale and strained. He noted that he seemed to be in good company. With matchless elan, however, I rigged pitch 2. Badly - but then what good training for Stu, and in due course Nik Nak supervised him onto it and past the rebelay. I had murmured to Nik Nak that he would be quite astonishingly welcome to de-rig pitch 1 if he wished to spare an old man's limited supply of adrenaline, but, bored stiff with our excessively methodical progress, he departed Rhino with some footling excuse about feeding his cat. I came up pitch 2 first in case Stu needed words of wisdom (some hope!), borrowed his camera and photographing him coping admirably with my dog's breakfast rig of the rebelay. He was beginning to show signs of serious competence by this time, but I said that I would head up pitch 1 and position myself to talk him across the traverse. The unsubtle sub-text here being that I gave him my bolting spanner and safety cords and asked if he

would be kind enough to de-rig the deviation en-route, but that I would de-rig the traverse when he was safely across it. At the triple “Y” hang, off the rope and on his cow’s tails (without needing a word from me) he offered to undo the far bolt while he was hanging around. Then the next bolt, then the next bolt..... By which time he was on a serious high and going for the traverse mastery medal, with oak leaves. Unselfishly, I allowed him to complete the de-rig in toto. To add insult to injury, while we were packing the bags, he showed me two hands, held out, rock steady.... not so much as a quiver, let alone a tremor. I think I might ask him to hold mine if we encounter something spine-chilling under the Dent de Crolles.

## **Eastwater: really the end? from the log by Alison Moody and Phill Short.**

### **31.5.03 Eastwater – Westend/Southbank**

*Ali M & Mad Phil*

Trip to check the end of Tooting Broadway, on a beautiful sunny day. The sun was definitely not shining at the end of Southbank but the final perched sump discovered last August (Canary Wharf) had dropped 3'. Possible to get in about a body length but seems quite silted & would probably need digging to get through. Not a very good or hopeful diving prospect. Also had a look at the passage above the sump but this just loops back towards the way we came in. The pea gravel dig on the left of Tooting Broadway was flooded with a black & orange slime – not nice, so we left well alone. The main down-stream sump (with the water from Lambeth Walk) actually looked quite inviting for once – clear & no slime. Worth a dive (it has never been dived) but will probably hit silt as the water backs right back up to the roof of the approach passage. It was also interesting to note several clumps of fairly fresh looking grass by the sump pool, very similar to the ones in the entrance ruckle. This suggests that the water route from the entrance to Lambeth Walk must be fairly open. Slithered & scabbled back out to the sun. We’re going off this part of Eastwater – I think another 12-year break is called for before next Westend trip!

### **3.6.03 Eastwater**

*Alison Moody, Nik Nak, Phill Short and Laura.*

To West End Series to dive the West End Sump. Carrying diving gear to the remote end of this cave was brutal on the way in, which was down hill. Replacing the two short ladders on the pot and climb beyond Lolly Pot. Arrived at West End, kitted up and entered the sump with Alison’s wrist as the belay as there was nothing else. Feet first forced into a 45 degree slope which levelled off at about 4m depth. Got stuck at this point, so removed kit and carried on with it in hand. Soon got wedged again in gravel and mud slope. By feeling with feet found that it was blocked all round with stream debris. Unworked myself and crawled out.

De-kitted and followed the liquid mud passage off Tooting Broadway with Alison, whilst Nik Nak and Laura waited at West End. Got to the sump (water level very low) and entered feet first up to throat without kit and found it to be totally blocked as well. Return trip again battled with the gear. Totally exhilarating trip. Many thanks to Alison for taking me there and to Nik Nak and Laura for support.

## **The Otter Hole Rescue : Phill Short’s report from the Log.**

**22<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> July**

*Gavin Newman, Jo Wisely, Laura Trowbridge, Steve Marsh, Nik Nak, John Knight, Frank, Mike Thomas, and Phill Short.*

Aim to do an over tide trip to film the Hall of Thirty. Entered cave at 10.00 and made good progress to Mendipian Way with large amount of gear. In small chamber just prior to the final squeeze to the pretties Laura slipped and fell damaging her pelvis. Jo did an assessment and got her stable on a flat rock wrapped in survival bags. Nik Nak and John went back to the rescue dump and returned with all the useful gear. On return Laura was placed on 2 Karri mats for further thermal protection. Nik Nak and John then set off to the exit to call for rescue. Mike Thomas took Frank out at the same time.

Gavin and Phill went to the camp beyond Hall of Thirty to retrieve any other useful gear and returned with two further Karri mats, which were cut up to wrap over Laura. After a couple of hours, Jo and Gavin exited due to Jo getting very cold. Steve, Laura and Phill awaited the rescue team, making a hot drink each hour.

The first team arrived and their doctor gave Laura some painkillers and she was placed in a spine board and stretcher. A slow but efficient and very professional carry was made through the crawls of the Mendipian Way and on along the stream and came to the fixed ladder, just prior to the sump. Here the rescue team and doctor exchanged and the carry continued through the right squeeze

and mud. The last 50 metres of exit was especially difficult but a superfast exit was made at 16.30 on day 2. After 31 hours in the cave.

The rescue teams, doctor and everyone involved were fantastic, a high level of morale was maintained throughout and kept everyone going to the end.

### 26.7.03 Otter Hole.

**Gavin, Phill, Nik Nak, Suntan, (Tom +2, South Wales)**

A return trip to pick up all the filming gear and rescue gear left over from Laura's rescue. A massive 18 bags were carried out by the 7 of us. Those that had not yet seen the Hall of Thirty went for a tour. Nik Nak made the mistake of stating that he had been more impressed by stal in Eastwater. The mud in the entrance series was extremely sticky and most of it was removed from the cave on overalls.

## Club News

### The showers and kitchen boiler.



The new LPG boiler, which will give instantaneous hot water to the showers has at last been installed. The new regulations unfortunately meant that the club had to pay a £600 fee to have the boiler fitted.

However most of the work has been done by Ian Timney, who has given up good caving time to help the club. We all owe him our gratitude.

**At the time of writing, the showers are working at 42 degrees but please read the INSTRUCTIONS**

**Other work at Upper Pitts.** In addition to the boiler, the sockets in the boiler house have been replaced. The old header tank in the attic has been disconnected, and the central heating header tank has at last had an overflow pipe fitted. The attic over the lounge has improved access (and a light) and more insulation has been laid. The kitchen waste pipe has been boxed and insulated. In the Changing Room, a rack for kit ("gnomes' bunkroom") has been built, and the drying room has been cleaned and repainted.

The picnic tables have been refurbished, the hedge trimmed and branches removed from the vicinity of the overhead power cable and the car park light. Work has started on preparing the windows at the back of the headquarters for painting. The site for the new wood store has been cleared. Most of this work has been done by Phil Hendy, Brian Prewer, Dave Meridith, Tomo Thomas and our friend from "down under", Max Midlen. However don't panic- there are enough jobs left for anyone to help at the next working party on 20/21<sup>st</sup> September. Watch the mailing list!

## Using the Wessex E-Mailing List

For those of you who have not yet used the system and would like to receive urgent club updates Paul Wakeling has drawn up these instructions.

**Subscribing.** You need to send an e-mail to **Majordomo@tpp.org** The subject box must be left blank. In your main message box you need to type the word **subscribe** followed by a space, then the list you wish to subscribe to, in our case it would be **Wessex**.

If you are setting up the list from a works computer and you would like the information to be sent to your home computer then type in the home computers e-mail address after Wessex in the main body of text. **E.g. Subscribe Wessexany@body-isp.com** When completed and sent you should then receive an e-mail to say that you have been placed on the list.

**To unsubscribe** from the mailing list do the same as before for subscribing but write Unsubscribe instead.

## Library Acquisitions at 28/7/03

B.C.R.A. Bulletin 'Speleology' #2 (May 2003)

Chelsea Spelaeological Society N/L 45, 6 (Jun 2003) (*Article on LEDs for caving*)  
45, 7 (Jul 2003)

Craven Pothole Club 'Record' #71 (Jul 2003)

Descent # 172 (Jun-Jul 2003)  
 Devon Speleological Society N/L #29 (May 2003)  
 M.N.R.C. N/L 96 (Jun/Jul 2003)  
 N.S.S. News (USA) 61, 5 (May 2003)  
 Plymouth Caving Group N/L 16 issues, (1984-2003)  
 Regards (Belgium) 48 (May-Jun 2003)

### Changes of address

**Christine Grosart,** 15 Salisbury Road, Marlborough, Wilts, SN8 4AB. New mobile 07971 441551.  
**Michael Partridge,** Flat 3, 25 Broad Street Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 8BT.

### We welcome the following new members, elected 27/7/03

**Phil Rowsell,** 31 Rougwood Grove, Weston-Super-Mare, BS23 2VA 01934 413972  
 P.J.ROWSELL@VIRGIN.NET  
**Michael Barns,** 10 Little Silver, St Davids, Exeter, Devon, EX4 4HU acesumper2@hotmail.com  
**Nick Lewis,** 45 Station Road, Waterbeach, Cambridge CB5 9HT 01223 520869  
 nick.lewis@polesapart.org  
**Robert Hardiman,** 33 Lena Street, Easton, Bristol, BS5 6DB. 0117 9414495  
**Steve Marsh,** 29 Wrington Mead, Congresbury, North Somerset, BS49 5BH. 01934 832381  
 steve.marsh@tinyonline.co.uk  
**Laura Trowbridge,** 13 Orchard Rise, Fivehead, Somerset, TA3 6PB, 07732 809654  
 laura\_trowbridge@yahoo.co.uk



**Otter Hole Rescue. Members will know that Laura was injured in the cave on 22<sup>nd</sup> July. We all wish her a full and quick recovery and congratulate everyone involved in the rescue. See you back in the Hunters soon Laura.**

**Phill Short's log book account appears in this Journal. (Page 94)**

**Photo Stuart Waldren.**

### Leg and Karen's Pre-nuptial Mendip Bash

**June 5<sup>th</sup>** saw many of Leg and Karen's friends from the north join us at Upper Pitts to wish them both good luck. The event gave Pauline a welcome chance to rearrange the furniture and we are grateful to Simon Richardson for providing a new sofa and chairs. Miraculously the old ones (plus a few extras!) were disposed of overnight!  
**Photo, Brian Prewer**



**The Boiler Fund.** now stands at £1159. This would have covered the whole job if it had not been for the unexpected installation costs. The total bill was £1560. There is thus a shortfall of £401 to make up.

**The Club's rock drill.** This has now been located and the terminals modified. The batteries are now fully compatible with the MRO and NHASA drills. It should be kept in the tackle store.

**Mendip 2003.** This event was widely judged to have been a great success. It made a useful profit of £138. This has been donated to MRO.

**The Annual Dinner** will be at The Crossways Hotel, North Wooton on Sat 18<sup>th</sup> October.

**Kit Clearance** There is a lot of caving clothing apparently abandoned in the changing room and drying room. It is intended to have a clear out at the September working weekend. If any of it belongs to you, then either remove it or store it tidily, otherwise it will be disposed of.

### **The Mendip Cave Collectors Club: inaugural meeting. by Maurice Hewins**

Despite the unseasonable weather 18 people turned up for our first trip on 26<sup>th</sup> July. The idea is to visit the lesser-known Mendip caves and Alan Gray of the Axbridge had been contracted to show us around Shute Shelve Cave. For the more energetic there was the chance to see Carcass Cave as well.

I had bought a video camera and Alan rose to the occasion by giving us an interesting talk on the history and geology of Shute Shelve. Pete Glanville, Tomo and Phil Hendy also took a number of still photo's that hopefully will appear in a future issue.

Alan, inevitably followed closely by Alison, led headfirst down the entrance crawl via an old way in and we assembled in the first chamber. This had been reached in the 1920's by ochre miners, who had entered via Pit Prop Passage, which leads back towards the surface. There are tree roots in the roof and floor. Several blackened props are still there. There is also a fine geode in the roof.

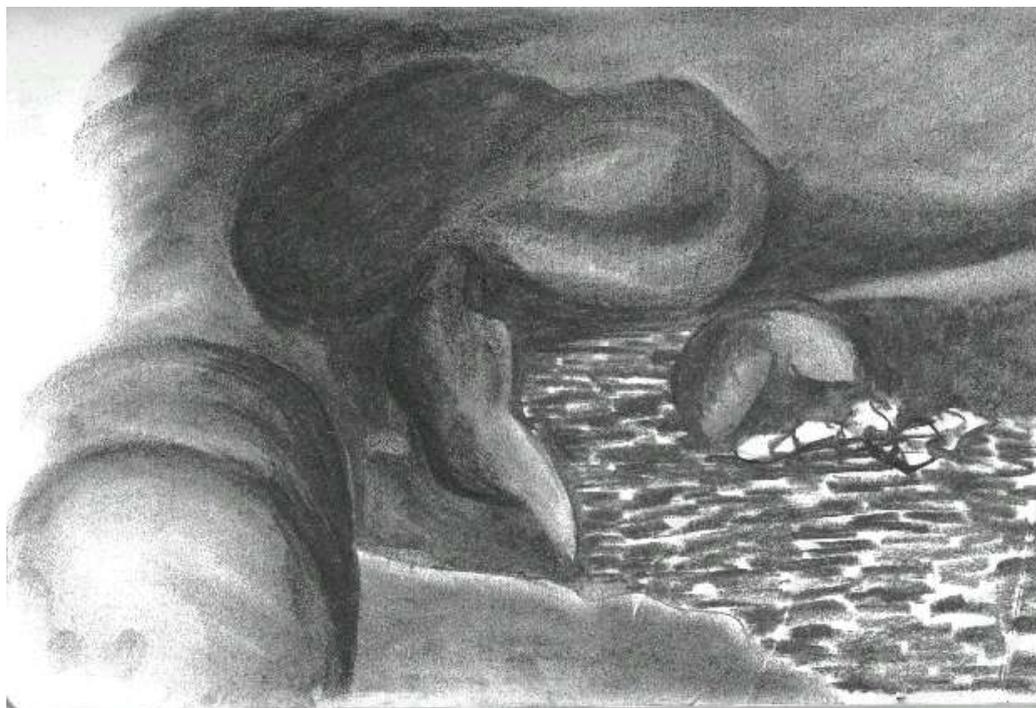
The way on is down through a boulder ruckle and Brian Prewer was rather relieved to find that a squeeze that had troubled him on a previous trip no longer exists. We emerged into a fine chamber with a wide bedding plane roof. Most of us were surprised it was so large. The boulder strewn floor descended to a steeper section where a scramble down led to the final large phreatic chamber, which is believed to be one side of a large u-tube. The Axbridge have dug here but the National Trust ban on the use of bang has inhibited progress.

On returning to the surface the keener ones went into Carcass Cave before we retired to the Lamb for well-earned refreshment.

Another Cave Collectors club meet is provisionally planned for Sat 1<sup>st</sup> November. Details of time and place have yet to be finalised. In view of some confusion this time it is advisable to check the mailing list or phone Phil or myself before turning up.

### **ISSA trip to Matienzo (13<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> April 2003) by Andy Morse.**

Over Easter Ian Chandler organised a trip on behalf of the International Society of Speleological Art to Matienzo in Spain. Whilst there, we joined in with the Matienzo Expedition and trips were arranged to Renada, Coventosa, Jivero, Cueva del Agua, Cueva de Picon and Papa Noel. Lots of drawing and painting opportunities were to be had, suitable for the non-caver up to the most experienced.



**Drawing by Wendy Bollard.**

The highlight of the stay were several trips to caves containing prehistoric painting which gave several of the artists inspiration for further work. The charm and the movement of the painted animals had to be experienced!

The Matienzo expeditions have been exploring the valley for over 30 years, finding many impressive caves. There is still much potential. Several ISSA members managed to find a new 60' shaft whilst out for a walk! Further information about the Matienzo expedition can be found at [www.Matienzo.co.uk](http://www.Matienzo.co.uk).



**Wendy at work**

## **The latest exploits in Swildons (from the Log, Phill Short et al)**

### **15.6.03 Swildon's – Passchendaele**

***Phill S, Andy Stewart, Andy Chell & Laura***

Return trip to Passchendaele 2. Repaired the line in Sump 1 (Passchendaele). Water very low - fantastic vis on entry swim with two large air-bells. Passchendaele 2 is a truly hideous place, Sump 2 undiveable & dry passage above would require major modification over multiple trips

### **5.7.03 Swildon's Damp Link**

***Ali & Pete Moody, Nik Nak, Phill Short, Andy Stewart & Tash Mitchell***

Trip into Swildon's 9 & out through the Damp Link. Took 3 litre cylinders to dive Sumps 2, 3 & 4. Andy kindly dived back through 4 to leave our gear there so we had unencumbered onward journey which was a good thing because that bypass of 6 was hard going however it was great fun getting to 9. We then took a side trip up Thrutch Tube until I got totally jammed & thought it would be a nightmare to get out. Alison of course made it to the very end with Phill close behind. However coming out was easier than I thought, as it was so wet & muddy & downhill. Had a good soak in 9 & then headed out via the Damp Link which was quite a challenge but I'm glad I did it – some quite tight squeezes & long crawls. Came out from Shatter Series to complete the Round Trip, which was utter luxury at that stage; standing up again was fantastic. Phill waited for Nik Nak & Andy at Sump 2 as they were retrieving our gear via Blue Pencil. Alison & I went on out via the long dry route. An exhausting trip but a good sense of achievement to have done it.

### **10.7.03 Swildon's – Damp Link**

***Suntan, Mr Dave (alias Butch) & Nik Nak***

Suntan & Nik Nak dived through Sumps 1, 2 & 3 to meet Mr Dave in 4 having arrived via Blue Pencil. Nik Nak dived 4 first followed by Suntan – then both back again having decided we would all free-dive. So Suntan first then Nik Nak with the dive kit – collected mask from Suntan & took it back for Dave. Nik Nak dropped kit & both free-dived to 5. Down to Sump 9 whilst waiting for siphons to do their work on Gloop Sump in the Damp Link. On our return we found an unpleasant duck rather than an empty sump. The air in the Link wasn't very fresh; most of it must have been used up the Saturday before (see 5.7.03). The good news was that no bailing was required on Grit Sump so our escape was a little quicker. Once out of Shatter Pot Suntan & Nik Nak went back via Blue Pencil to dive back through Sumps 3, 2 & 1. Mr Dave detackled Shatter & exited via the Mud Sump.

## Swildons Radio Location and banging in 12

### 12.7.03 Swildon's Radiolocation 12

**Phill Short, Greg Brock,  
Gavin Newman & Andy Stewart**

#### Entry 1

The 'Psycho', his mate, his 'monkey' & a cameraman had a successful trip down to Sump 12, where upon the climbing of Victoria Aven began. We eventually made it to Sandwich Chamber at 15.10hrs (4 hours after entering the cave). Much to our surprise we got communications with the surface immediately. (*Why a surprise, have they no faith in my equipment!*) For the next hour we waited for the surface team to do the location while we tried to light the stove by shorting a battery because some 'monkey' had left the lighter by Sump 12. After the location we headed back to 12 filming Desolation Row en route. We then set up the charge & 5-4-3-2-BANG – all the water then jumped out of the sump, which gave Gavin some excellent film footage. The trip back to Sump 2 was hard work with all the gear & we were pleased to see the hordes of WCC members there to help us. An excellent, exciting but very hard trip.

#### Entry 2

Oh how they lied...."We're going to blow up Sump 12, why don't you come & film it ", they said. "Great idea", said I....stupidly! Comes the day...."Oh, by the way, we're going to do a radiolocation at the same time.....at the end of Desolation Row....". "Where's that", says I "Oh, somewhere just beyond the end of Mendip", says Phill..... "Oh f\*\*k", says me, its going to be one of those trips!! Result – 30 minutes of nice footage from somewhere I'm never going to again & also a broken body.... Thanks to the guys for putting up with me making them crawl through that bit just one more time.

### 12.7.03 Swildon's Radiolocation – Desolation Row

**Underground - 4 Divers  
Surface – 3 Locators & 2 Film Crew**

#### Location details: -

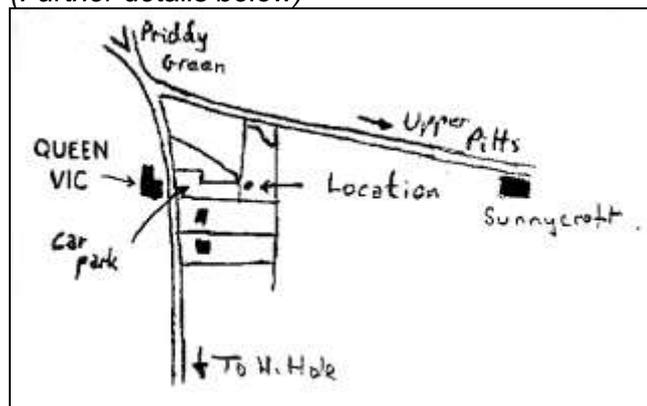
Underground aerial located Sandwich Chamber. The surface location point was in the field behind the back wall of the Queen Vic car park, 4.3m from centre of wall.

NGR ST 52850 50753 Alt 788.6ft (Using GPS)

Depth 77.3m

Bearings: - 121° (True) to Pen Hill Mast: 89° (True) to NW corner of cottage (*Sunnycroft*) along Priddy Road (*strictly speaking it's the 'Wells Rd, Priddy'*)

(Further details below)



Photo, Phil Hendy

### 12.7.03 Swildon's Radiolocation

**Phil H, Kathy & Jonathan  
Anne & Dennis (film crew)**

A brilliant fix, the nulls were total. Extreme working conditions – blazing sunshine & mini tornadoes lifting hay to treetop height. Best bit was telling underground team we had finished & were retiring to the Queen Vic for a cold beer – they were unable to brew below as some 'monkey' had left the lighter at the bottom of Victoria Aven!

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**Hut Working Weekend  
20/21 September.**

**Club Rescue Practice  
(Provisional Date)  
Sat 27 Sept  
10.00 at Upper Pitts.**

**Congratulations to Andy  
Summerskill (Leg) and  
Karen Lane, who were  
married on 12<sup>th</sup> July.  
Max Midlen was Best Man**

### Forthcoming Events

**Committee Meeting 7 September and 18 October**

**MRO Practice at Thrupe Lane from top of Atlas to surface. Sat 11 Nov at 10.00  
Northern Meets**

**Sat 11 Oct, Stream Passage Pot.**

**Sunday 12 Oct, Bar Pot**

**Sat 1 Nov, Lost Johns/Boxhead.**

**Sat 6 Dec, Notts Pot**

**Wessex AGM and Dinner Sat 18 November**

**Mendip Cave Collectors Club Sat 1 November**

**Please check mailing list or phone to confirm details of these events.**

# Hidden Earth

# 2003

Hanley Castle High School  
Upton upon Severn

3rd ~ 5th October

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