

Wessex Cave Club

A person in a blue jacket and red pants is rappelling down a rope in a deep, narrow cave passage. The walls are covered in lush green moss and ferns. The passage leads to a bright opening at the top, where sunlight filters through trees. The scene is dramatic and adventurous.

Journal 351 July 2019



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ISSN 0083-811X

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Opinions expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the club or any of its officers.

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Diary

2nd Saturday, 13th July Craig a Ffynnon
Library Open Morning Fri 9th August
Cantabria 10th – 24th August 2019
Hidden Earth 27th – 29th September
AGM & Dinner October 19th 2019

Hut Bookings

Thanks to Ali Moody for all her work keeping the hut bookings well managed. For details please refer to Diary page on the Website.

Membership News

Welcome to:

Aleksandra Ciesielka	Nicola Pearce
Master Adam Fretwell	Keri Smallwood
Miss Natalie Fretwell	Miss Ami Stidolph
James Hazell	Mark (Buddy) Williams
Christopher Pearce	

=====	=====
Front Cover photo	Back Cover Photo
Dave Watts - Alum Pot	Clive Westlake – Bar Pot

Editorial

Welcome to the 351st Journal of the Wessex Cave Club. Now available in full colour in PDF Format. It will also arrive sooner as it will be available for download as soon as the Journal goes to the printers.

As always, many thanks to all the contributors for this edition. There has been a lot of caving by Wessex members since the last Journal. The 2nd Saturday's trips continue to be popular. The Cantabria Training walks have continued on the 1st Saturday of every month although not all have been written up. The club went to Derbyshire and occupied the Orpheus in force. The "Trophy Hunters" were out in force for a trip down Titan in Derbyshire with total of 35 cavers making the through trip although it may have been that not all were ready for such "Big Game".

There were also away meets in Yorkshire and the June 2nd Saturday turned into a weekend in Portland. There was a trip organised for Under 18's visiting Swildon's Hole. The May 2nd Saturday became the Annual Rescue Practice and was organised by Aidan Harrison our MCR Rep and led by Claire Cohen, a MCR Warden, in Swildon's Hole rescuing a caver with a suspected broken leg from the bottom of the 40'. Although apparently; **"you can rescue yourself from there"**.

There have been many more exploits posted on the Wessex Facebook page which have yet to be written up with some words to go with some amazing photos. There has not been much news on the digging front despite continued activity but this may just mean that they are not ready to go public with their discoveries.

Hidden Earth will be held at Glyndwr University in Wrexham 27th to 29th September 2019.

Committee News

The Committee is pleased to announce the appointment of Paula Grgich-Warke as Membership Secretary.

Recent additions to the library.

As at 18th June

Bristol Exploration Club 'Belfry Bulletin' 62, 4 (567) (Aut 2018), 5 (568) (Winter 2019) (*Kitley Caves*)
Cave Diving Group N/L 211 (Apr. 2019)
Chelsea Spelaeological Society N/L 61, 1,2,3 (Jan-Mar 2019)
Council of Northern Caving Clubs. N/L 9, (Mar 2019)
Derbyshire Caver N/L 151 (Spr, 2019)
Descent 267 (Apr/May 2019) (*Reservoir Hole, Cresswell Crags witch marks*)
Grampian Speleological Group 'Bulletin' 5th Series 3, 1 (Mar 2019)
University of Bristol Speleological Society 'Proceedings' 28, 1 (May 2019) (*Archaeology: Aveline's Hole, Screech Hole, Wookey Hole. Denny's Hole, Picken's Hole*)
Hidden Beneath the Mountains (Caves of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks) (2003) Despain J. (Donated)
Photocopy: Somerset diving accident (Inquest into the death of Jack Waddon.)
Triton Mar/Apr 1963 (*In File 22 Misc. Diving Papers*)
Hoh(l)enluft und Wissersraum (Donated B. Varns)
Die Hirlatz hohle
Limestone Geomorphology
Code of practice for scientific diving (BASC)
'How to Find' The divers swimline search
Wreck Register (BASC)
Order of Service for Bob Scammell's funeral

Memories of Bob Scammell – Phil Hendy



It was with mixed feelings that I heard of the passing of Bob Scammell. Sadness at the loss of a long-time friend, but relief that he was past suffering, and reunited with his beloved Golly.

Bob lived in Bathford all his life, and at an early age started exploring the nearby underground quarries, the stone mines. Over the years, he came to know all their nooks and crannies, and accumulated a large collection of artefacts left behind by the quarrymen. His knowledge was useful in many a rescue from the mines, usually involving people who became directionally challenged. He first joined the Bath Caving Club, with the likes of Martin Bishop and Chris Batstone, before joining the Wessex in February 1974. He married Anne Gollege, known to all as Golly, and together they caved and dug on Mendip and elsewhere. An early effort was at Hillgrove Swallet, with Pete Palfree, Keith Newbury, Glyn Bolt and others. I still have the dig badge he produced, featuring the Hillgrove ghost. Other digs included Biddlecombe Swallet, and in

later years, having become friendly with the Rich family at Whitestown Farm, they dug at St. Luke's Swallet and Crook's Hole. Bob was also involved with Nick McCamley in the short-lived attempt to turn Monkton Farleigh Quarry into an underground WW II museum.

Bobby was a great practical joker. His favourite trick, in the remoter part of the stone mines, was to encourage his party to go off and look at an interesting feature. On their return, Bobby had vanished. After a while, the group set off to try to find Bob, or at least the way out. Inevitably, they became even more lost and confused. Bob would then appear from behind a pillar, looking very concerned, saying that he had been looking for them for ages. In reality, of course, he knew exactly where they were, using his knowledge of the mine to stay just ahead of them.

Another jape was played out in the Hunters'. Surreptitiously using his mobile phone under the table, he would call other cavers, in the hope that

their own phone would still be switched on. If it was, the resultant ringing caused great embarrassment. Bob's number, of course, was unobtainable.

Bob with Golly and Paul Weston



For many years Bobby worked for the MOD (the Admiralty, I believe) as a printer. This was most useful when it came to printing 'Splat' (the newsletter of the Elsan Caving Club) which older members may remember. Later he became an "Elf'n'Safety officer", which was ludicrous in view of his own personal safety record. Who else would try to stand on a hedge while clipping it? After several years riding a motor bike, Bobby graduated to Reliant Robins, which could be driven on a motor cycle licence. Notoriously unstable, Bob rolled them so many times he considered putting wheels on the roof.

Bob's collection of militaria caused another mishap to a Robin, when he decided to fire his black powder, muzzle-loading musket. He wanted to retrieve the ball, so aimed at a sack of coal propped against the garage wall. The intention was to look for the ball in the coal, but to his dismay, he found a hole in both sides of the sack – and in the garage wall. He found the ball on the

front seat of the car, but unfortunately, the window was wound down, so that suffered as well.

Bob was a man of many parts. He was keen on all aspects of history, playing a large part in the Bathford History Society. His research into the history of 'HMS Wrestler' was detailed and meticulous. He was a good photographer, both above and underground, and was a fan of folk music, teaching himself to play the accordion in later life. Sometimes single-minded, Bob could, just occasionally, be a bit abrasive, but his general good nature and incredible generosity meant that ill-will, on both sides, could not be harboured for long.

For all their married life, Bob and Golly lived in a quarryman's cottage in Bathford, just below Browne's Folly Mine. After a trip there, they made visitors most welcome, plying them with refreshments while we admired Bob's collection of mining artefacts and militaria – of which the larger and more lethal the better.

Bob was devoted to his wife, and although he was a terrible flirt, no-one was permitted to flirt with Golly. It came as a great shock to us all when he suddenly suffered a massive stroke, which paralysed him down one side and from which he never improved. In trying to help him, Golly hurt her back, and after examination, she was diagnosed with bone cancer. This was just before she retired, and put paid to all their plans for traveling in their twilight years. They moved to Shockerwick House near Box to be cared for, and Bob lived there alone after Golly's death on New Year's Eve, 2012. There, he was well cared for by the staff, calling the female members there 'his girls'.

Bob's funeral on April 26th at Haycombe Crematorium was attended by many friends and family, and members of staff from Shockerwick House, as well as many members of the Wessex and other cavers. He will be sadly missed by his many friends, and we hope that at last he and Golly are together again. As usual, Bob had the last laugh – as we left the service, it poured with rain.

Bob Scammell's later years - Maurice Hewins

About the time Bob suffered a stroke, which caused his left side to become paralysed, his wife, Golly (Ann) was diagnosed with cancer. She arranged for them both to move to a double room in a fine B.U.P.A care home close to their home at Bathford. Fortunately she chose well, although Golly died soon after, and Bob was to live his last eight years at Shockerwick House.

This is a Grade one listed Georgian country house set in attractive grounds. Bob made it his home and he often referred to the residents and staff as

his family. He retained his sense of humour and would always look out for the others, while never missing a chance to chat up the girls on the staff.

He looked forward to visitors, especially if they could play music to him, and he enjoyed the days out arranged by the staff. It was a tribute to his popularity at Shockerwick, that a dozen of them, including the Matron attended his funeral. The Wessex and the M.R.O. (M.C.R), of which he was a warden, were also well represented at the crematorium.

L'émergence de la Bézerne – Simon Perkins



I first visited this site back in Feb, and had decided that, provided politics didn't foil my plans, I'd try and dive here during the Easter holiday, hence I found myself in eastern France again on Wednesday.

The entry was interesting - I'd already decided to dive without a wing and upon seeing the way in I chose to leave behind my 7 litre back-up and to dive to quarters instead on my SM 12s. Having

clipped my cylinders on I had to roll forwards, bending over my fins, then twist my head and torso around to gain a flat out crawl for a few metres. There was an air space but it was very constricted so it was necessary to crawl with a reg in, face down, entirely by touch as the Vis had deteriorated to zero. A nice thick line aided this process greatly. Pretty soon though I was stuck fast and couldn't make any further forward progress, so I had to inch back, ever so slowly,

until I could fold myself up and force a turn, squeezing up and out of the water. Not knowing the condition of the line, or whether anyone had been here in the past decade, I had a large primary reel - it was this that was causing me to get wedged in and holding me back, so it was removed and abandoned, together with my large hand torch that was clipped off to a chest D ring. With both of these encumbrances removed I resolved to have another go, fearing that I might fail again and need to try some serious excavation or maybe even return with a pair of sevens. I eased myself through the crawl, digging some rocks and stones out of the way, and then found the vis clearing slightly enabling me to see the way on which was straight down past a vertical restriction. Through a combination of determination and stupidity, as opposed to any kind of ability and grace, I managed to force my way down through the opening, getting stuck upside down for a few moments until I could wriggle free, dislodging a few loose rocks and boulders in the process.

The passage opened up so I turned and was really rather relieved to find that the way back out was still open. Now in the cave proper, albeit having used a load of gas in my travails, I was able to

A Chance Meeting with Cavers on Mendip - Michael Parsons

Whilst on one of my regular trips to check our cattle on Mendip I spotted a group of people covered in wet, red mud. As it was a particularly dry spell in February I was intrigued and travelled across to them to investigate.

The lady amongst the group introduced herself as Alison Moody and her colleagues and went on to say they were exploring a shaft/pothole way across the fields, which explained why the car was parked on the grass verge. Alison then said that a couple of concerned locals had been worried that they may have just been there dumping rubbish! But I know for a fact that at least a couple of members of that caving group that I have met in the past, actually carry a bag to collect any rubbish. All a joint effort to keep Mendip special.

I have digressed somewhat, but thoughts go back to the group of people who are so interested in exploring a "hole on the top of Mendip" which is perfectly in line with where we live a mile and a half down the hill, that they might be interested in exploring "our hole in the ground". We live at

relax and enjoy myself. Visibility was a respectable 5m or so, hindered slightly by having only my head torch to use, and the passage was generally quite spacious, with the occasional moderate restriction, descending sharply down to 15m before rising up gently up again, over a combination of boulders, shingle and banks of clay and silt. The condition of the line was decent too - no wear of any great concern, though in many areas it was deeply buried under banks of silt and needed to be gently freed, with the expected drop in vis to zero.

There was a fair bit of life present too - eels, salamanders, shrimps and those weird blennie type fish. All too soon & having barely introduced myself to the cave I'd reached quarters and had to start heading back. Having turned I expected the way out to be near zero vis, yet it was quite adequate - my hand was needed to gently trace the line in a few areas, but it was typically about 1-2m. My initial ascent toward the exit was fine, but once in the restriction I found myself to be stuck again and did need a serious effort to get free. I then had a pause and relieved myself, before hauling my way upwards into the exit crawl.

Batcombe Farm that has a history going back to Glastonbury Abbey Estates where there was a house on the site recorded in 1510. There we have quite a substantial well that goes down over 30 metres. It has always been a dream of mine to go down the well, thinking there may be a priest hole, a cavern or an underground river even.

Over the years we have restored quite an elaborate vintage pumping system connected to the well and the restoration of the well head has been completed and the pump and pipework are all now ready to be reinstated. As I said being over 30 metres deep, it posed a major challenge for me, but led my thoughts to the "professionals I had met on Mendip". They agreed to come along and do that very thing that I had been intrigued with for the last 30 years. What a great bunch of people and they brought a great wealth of knowledge and history with them.

The first visit on 2nd April 2019 (Andrew Atkinson, Pete Buckley, Simon Flower, Martin Grass and Ali Moody) saw Simon going down to water level

keenly watched by the team and most of our family as well. With Alison supervising and taking photographs.



Simon Flower Photo Alison Moody

We knew there was about 10 metres of water in the well so it was agreed if we could pump it out they would come back again to explore further.

As I had previously and of course accidentally, dropped a piece of the pipe system down, we had hoped by pumping it dry, not only could my piece of metal be exposed and retrieved, but also any other “treasures” that had ended up down there over the years. We also hoped it might reveal any inlets/outlets etc. that were keeping the water at the constant depth, or perhaps my cavern!

So with the help of an engineering friend, we rigged up a temporary pumping system, calculated the timing of it all and managed to have it dry at the time of the group’s second visit a week later. On this occasion we were down to Andrew and Alison as the rest of the team had

other commitments. This descent proved successful in that Andrew was able to retrieve the metal from the sludge at the bottom, as well as noting that the water entered the well about 10 metres from the bottom probably via a spring seeping through. So we now have photos of that and also some of the shot holes from where it was constructed.

Alas, no treasure found, but we do know more about our well now and are extremely grateful to Alison and Martin, for arranging it all and Simon and Andrew for their interest in exploring it for us.

Also thanks to other members of the group for their involvement.



Andrew Atkinson Photo Ali Moody

We will now continue with our work restoring the area around the well and will fit the old hand pump which has been renovated, back where it used to be and (just between all of us) incorporate some modern technology too as in an electric submersible pump, to continue to use the well as a source for our cattle troughs on the hill.

Thank you all so very much and best wishes.

Additional information - Ali Moody

The well is an impressive rectangular feature some 2m x 1.5m in dimension going down to a floor of loose rocks and sludge. Before the first descent, a CO₂ monitor designed by Stuart McManus was lowered the 23m to water level. The spring enters via a tiny fissure and it took approximately 9 hours to pump the well dry with an estimated 2,000 gallons removed. It then refilled at about 0.25 metres per hour. The top 5m of the well is ginged, which has been re-pointed by Michael and below this it has been engineered out of solid conglomerate (“Draycott marble”). Michael and Lesley Parsons are doing a fantastic job of restoring the property and we look forward to seeing the well again with the pump in situ.

PS – the “rubbish” that another landowner though we might be dumping was our caving kit.....

Cantabria Easter 2019 - Mark Easterling

CALÍGRAFOS – GÁNDARA Traverse



It has taken 3 years of planning and route finding in Gándara, including avoiding the snow, and finally this year all seemed perfect; apart from being one man down. Mark was in convalescence after his self-rescue from Swildon's but that's another story for the dinner and a tiger? On the plus side, we had Hal, which brought our average age down to at least 50+.

Just in case you did not know, Cantabria is in Northern Spain and is full of limestone with superb caving trips and through trips in abundance. Calígrafos is the top entrance for the through trip and out of Gándara, 11 kilometres of caving. We had spent previous years route finding into Gándara which is mostly a dry system of large chambers and passages with some SRT.

You usually must go into Gándara and pre rig Angel pitch which is about an hour's trip, but Beardy and a few were going in Gándara to explore and camp at Vivic 1. Ultimately, this was going to save us some time. The description says the traverse should take between 12 and 20 hours depending on route finding and fitness levels, but we were 7 so who knows!

We decided to leave a car at Gándara which is located a mile from the top of the Ason gorge towards Gándara. For Calígrafos, we all clambered into one car which resembled the Ant Hill Mob out of Whacky Racers (younger



people can YouTube it). The entrance is located leaving the village of Las Machorras towards the Puerada de Lunada by the road BU-572. Once we reached the top of the pass we parked the car and found the walking signs on the right hand side of the road.

On the right is a path which you follow until you reach a small dip between hills. Climb up to the right and you can look down the valley towards Gándara. Looking to the right, Calígrafos entrance is a small black hole in the cliff in the distance. We were 7 and had a bag each with provisions for every eventuality except snowboarding! Sliding down a snow



gully with full caving kit on is good fun and quick, maybe it will be an Olympic sport one day. As I followed Hal across the other side and traversed up a gully trying not to lose height and without the aid of ice axes I suddenly lost grip and hurtled my way down the valley eventually stopping at the bottom.

With the others having more luck than me we met at the entrance and took the usual photo for the coroner that we were all suitably dressed for the adventure ahead.

Some of us had reccied Calígrafos a few years before and knew the way, it is not hard route finding but you are crawling for two or more hours with some clambering up and over boulder collapses. We eventually hit the streamway with the connection from Bustalveinte which is an easier way in but not the classic route (next time maybe!). We had covered this section an hour faster than the recommended time; I thought we might be out in under 12 hours; mmm if only I knew! From here on route finding is relatively easy with lots of markers (G for Gándara) and orange plastic posters indicate significant junctions within the system, though I would recommend keeping an eye on the description and survey.



The going is mostly stood up but complicated with lots of passages and changing levels to negotiate. We eventually got to Vivic 4 Salle de la Sardine and stopped for a bite to eat and a rest, this was a large chamber of sand dunes.

We were now headed towards Rio Viscoso which is the connection between the lower series and upper network of Gándara. Now I was imagining stomping along a big river passage but how disappointed I was. Rio Viscoso is one of the toughest sections of the whole traverse and is a low riverbed filled with potholes which have to be negotiated and goes on a bit and a bit more. At this point

Darren asked for a rest and was struggling a little. I suppose we had been going nonstop for about 4 hours. Eventually, we got to the end with some traversing over a few large holes. We left the river to prussik up an 11m pitch and a fossil gallery which leads to a descent back to the river. I tried to follow the river, but it goes between blocks so not sure if you can get through and avoid the fossil gallery.

The connection is not too far away after Vivic 3 and we came to a rope going up, I abseiled this last year but not to the bottom. Gladly they had re-bolted the pitch and changed the rope so it was now several re-belays up the 50m pitch. Getting 7 people to the top took over an hour but we were now in familiar territory having done this part of the cave several times. The Gándara section of the traverse is much larger in size and easier going but much hotter and the air is filled with a fine dust. After a while the dust rubs your skin and several of us had to take our knee pads and watches off as anything causing friction with the skin was causing discomfort.



Between the top of the 50m and Vivic 1 are several pitches up and down with some traversing and large galleries, eventually you get to a 15m abseil, split into several pitches. Now Darren was feeling the trip more than most and got caught up on a re-belay which caused several expletives and 'toys out of the pram' moments, but with a helping hand and throwing his bag down the pitch (I don't think he was aiming at me) he made it safely to the bottom. At this point we decided to plod onto Vivic 1 hoping Beardy and the others may still be in the cave. By now we had lost all track of time so when we approached Vivic 1 and started 'who whooping' we woke all the happy campers up at 12.30am. They did not seem too disgruntled and Stu and Lisa made us tea in true Wessex style but lacking cake.

After exchanging stories, we made our way towards Salle de Angel which is a large chamber with superb helictites (and easier to approach from Gándara entrance). With only Pitch of Angel to negotiate which had 3 ropes that made prusiking hard work. At the top we proceeded and we all got to the traverse before the boulder slope to daylight at the same time (well it was 4.30am and pitch black).

The trip had taken us 18 hours of superb caving, one of the longest through trips we have ever done. Beers were consumed by all, well apart from Hal who enjoyed a healthy smoothie. This may not be the best through trip for pitches but it's one of the longest, **and it's a long way.**



Wayne Starsmore, Mak AKA Mark Kellaway, Pete Hellier, Aidan Harrison, Darren Chapman, Hal Green and Bean AKA Mark Easterling.

Swildon's Hole for the under 18s – Richard Carey



Front. Aaron & Jamie Varley, Adam Fretwell, Abigail Osborne, Andrea Carey. Behind. Jim Burridge, Natalie Fretwell, Paul Wilman & Richard Carey

A special day for the under 18s.

There were four adults and four children as Natalie was going with Footleg to Sump 1. The plan was to go down the Long Dry Way and then climb up to the top of the 40' and abseil down. This went wrong almost immediately as we ran into a large group fully equipped in SRT kit going that way through the Zig Zags. Rather than get stuck behind them as they were very slow we opted to go down Jacob's ladder and follow the Short Dry Way instead. The Water Chamber was soon reached and after a short climb arrived at the top of the 40' where Paul set up the lifeline and abseil.

I went back down to the 8ft drop to collect them and very soon all had abseiled down and we then headed back up the cave. Back at the Water Chamber we stopped for chocolate and then divided with Paul taking Adam out via the Old

Grotto and the Short Dry Way. The rest of us opted for the Wet Way as far as the Lavatory Trap where Andrea took Aaron and Jamie into the Oxbows. I mistakenly believed that Jim would not fit so continued with him and Abigail (my great niece) up the Wet Way and waited for them at the exit.

To my surprise Jim decided to go for it and went through to Butcombe Chamber to wait for them. He had no problems getting through although Andrea had become disoriented and had re-emerged where she went in and had come out the Wet Way as well. All back together we exited the cave and returned to the Wessex for tea and cake. My great niece although very tired really enjoyed it and wants to come again although as she is going through a growth spurt may not be able to borrow Andrea's spare kit next time.

A seriously enjoyable and rewarding day.

Second Saturday 13th April Black Hole Series, Swildon's Hole – Frances Porter

Group 1 Richard Carey, Nick Parham, Jake Tebbut, Colin Shapter, Tony Molski and Frances Porter

Group 2 John Cooper, Simon and Izzy Perkins, Damon Fenton, Jim Burrige and Aaron Varley

We 2nd Saturday people split into 2 groups with my group led by Richard Carey setting off 1st with the 2nd led by John Cooper.

Courtenay James and Mitch Parry were already in the cave and left the ladder and line at the Black Hole. The 20' was rigged by Chris Williams. Jake led us through the Zig Zags and into the Long Dry Way. Unfortunately Colin's light failed just before the 20' and since his spare was "unreliable" as well Tony offered to escort him out of the cave.

Beyond Sump 1 I managed to sail across the Black Hole with no worries. Although I did not find it so easy on the way back as I couldn't see the

footholds and was shoving my head at one point to steady myself.

Across the Black Hole we followed the obvious passage past a dig until we met up with Courtenay and Mitch. On returning we passed John's Group. We slid down a slippery slope accidentally into Mayday Passage missing the way home on the left. Overall, a great trip, the Black Hole was cool and I would love to share it with my friends.

2nd Saturday Cave Rescue Practice 11th May 2019 – Richard Carey



The pre- rescue briefing led by Claire Cohen with Aidan Harrison, Wayne Starsmore, Simon Richardson, Monica Bollani, Damon Fenton, Tony Molski, Shane Rice, Pete Hellier, Alba Ni, George Blackburn, Abby Adam and Darren Chapman. Tom Chapman not in photo.

The Wessex Annual Rescue Practice started with a briefing led by our own MCR Warden Claire. She explained that we would simulate a rescue for a suspected broken leg at the bottom of the 40'. Abbey volunteered to be the casualty and then we all got changed and divided all the kit needed between us and carried it into the cave. The route

taken was down the Short Way to the Water Chamber and then on to the 40'. We began to appreciate just how awkward some of the kit, especially the stretcher and its ancillary parts, were to manoeuvre down the cave.

Once we had arrived at the bottom of the 8ft drop things began in earnest. Wayne was despatched to rig the 8ft drop with a safety line while Claire supervised the assembly of the kit. She explained that we would haul the stretcher without a casualty. I believe this demonstrated that given the tightness the casualty would need to be removed from the rigid stretcher as it was extremely awkward to manoeuvre it round the bend. Between the top of the 8ft and the Water Chamber space was found to lay out the stretcher and the real work began. 1st was the assessment of the casualty. She had fallen and hurt her leg. Once assessed as unable to move under her own power she was securely placed in the stretcher. 2nd. Two groups were despatched to set up communications with Cave Link. Pete Hellier set up in the Water Chamber and Monica and I set up in the Old Grotto. Given the numbers attending there was no surface control. Cave link is text system and has removed all confusion of misheard messages etc. Messages were texted between Pete and Monica. At first I thought I might have a problem reading the instructions as I need glasses to read but they were also in the box.

With the Casualty duly packaged she was then moved up the cave. Once in the Water Chamber, Pete messaged to say that he was now closing down and joined in the carry. The team shortly arrived at the Old Grotto and our station was also shut down. The Short Dry Way is the shortest route out of the cave and under Claire's supervision no real difficulties were encountered. We did have to stop from time to time to allow people at the back a chance to leap frog the casualty. Once again Wayne had moved forward to rig a safety line at Jacob's ladder and once Abbey was at the top she suffered a miraculous recovery and was able to leave the cave unaided. Mission accomplished and back to the Wessex for debrief and tea and cake. I think we all learned a lot and feel confident that if the worse was to happen I would be happy if this team arrived to assist me.

Great Team work all round with special thanks to Tom Chapman for his advice and hints on the rigging and also to Simon Richardson on the setting up of the Cave link. Abbey did mention that although her physical comfort was attended to she would have liked to know where she was in the cave as her view was very different to everyone else's.

Scrote Holing in Portland - Noel Cleave

8th - 9th June. The normal "Second Saturday" trip turned into a weekend down in Portland.

Tim Rose is mainly to blame for this extended excursion. To quote his web-site words: "Caving on Portland is somewhat of an acquired taste. The caves consist of a mixture of phreatic tunnels usually requiring crawling, and rifts which usually require thrutching. The largest caves exist where various rifts and tunnel intersect. Chambers or walking passage is rare and active stream ways non-existent. Formations are not hugely common, but where they can be found are often magnificently coloured consisting of various shades of yellow & orange. Other features include moon milk and some impressive fossils". And followed this up with "..... Collector's pieces best described as 'scrote holes'."

However, a few hitherto unpublished Tim quotes merit an airing here: "What the caves lack in formations is made up for in bruises. The best bit of the trip is getting to the entrance. All the caves are horrible it's just a question of which is worst."

And a Richard quote: "We've all agreed we hate caving". I think the word masochism is lurking in there somewhere!

Saturday 08 June For some reason the following Wessex Members found this description attractive and arrived determined to go Scrote Holing with Tim, Sas and Richard (who are all dedicated scrote hole diggers): Monica, Wayne, Nick, Courtenay, Damon, Nick, Colin and Noel. We met at the Chesil Beach café (which does excellent breakfasts) to decide on the day's activities. Tim took the hard guys - Monica, Wayne, Nick and Courtenay - to the Sandy Hole to Blacknor through trip, which lived up to its reputation as a tough traverse. Sas and Richard took the cerebral mob - Damon, Colin and Noel to sample the delights of the Grove Cliff Caves. *Delights*, well, think Goatchurch, then subtract all the nicely polished rocks, and the stal, and the roomy bits and in their places add abrasive, chert, snagging, sharp, rifted and constricted etc. etc. But it was a fun place, interesting and different. With Sas and Richard as leaders we did, individually, varying amounts of it.

There are lots of entrances, so we went in, came out and went in again.....To quote John McEnroe: "You.....cannot.....be.....serious" because yes we did, go in again and again, before common sense and thirst called a halt and we retreated to the Chesil Beach café for beers. These were doubly welcome because the Portland caving is very hot work and we all wound up absolutely dripping.

Noel

Did a very tiring and physically challenging trip today (Sandy - Blacknor through-trip), following Tim and accompanied by Wayne, Monica and Courtenay. So much crawling and very tight passages (note to self.... "Lose weight!"). Darren didn't come; this is his idea of Hell apparently! Three or four very tight squeezes that I almost didn't get through, also had to rest for 10 minutes to get my breath and strength back, 3 or 4 times. I enjoyed the 20 metre abseil, in 40 mph winds, to get out of the cave. I had the rope bag on my back to avoid being blown off the cliff. I thought it would be challenging, but in fact it was OK. Thanks to Wayne for getting me to this point where I have sufficiently been able to overcome my fears and manage some of this SRT stuff! **Nick Butler**

Sunday 09 June **Steve's to Hopeless** Tim, Richard, Laura, Aimee and Colin. The trip summary reads; "A fairly tough through-trip (Needs a good head for heights)". It lived up to this, and Laura confessed that the final climb finished her arms off! Tim and Richard have completely pre-rigged the cave. Sunday was windless and roasting hot. Noel declined to go underground while overheating on the walk in, and the prospect of long delays on the various pitches and climbs. More usefully he changed, collected some beers and spent the afternoon watching the climbers, some of whom were

Bunkhouse companions, until the cavers emerged after 2 ½ hours of sweaty caving to enjoy the Heinekens!

Some general points from this Portland visit.

Saturday was a Westerly gale. Seen from Chesil beach, Weymouth harbour was a mass of kite-and wind- surfers. For them a paradise day of a full gale on flat calm water, and they were a sight. Then from the Bunkhouse where Nick and I stayed, the Portland Bill Tide races were equally dramatic. Colin drove up from Cornwall with Jo, who did a five mile walk on Saturday while we were underground. Plainly her new "Tin Hip" is a brilliant success; she's also been doing some long-distance cycle rides. It was good to see the female leader of the Viet Kernow in such fine form! The Portland Bunkhouse was once an auxiliary power station, so it's a rather strange building just above the lighthouse. Plus points: very comfortable bunks, supplied with duvets and pillows. A lovely airy kitchen with doors out onto a large BBQ patio with chairs and bench-tables. A very comfortable sitting room. Free Wi-Fi. Lots of parking space and skylarks above the kitchen meadow. Minus points: no windows in the bunk-rooms, so totally pitch-black when the doors are closed. The showers don't work at all (Top of the hill and too many houses on the supply). Just below the Bunkhouse is the "Pulpit" pub. Nick and I ate there on Saturday night. It is beyond appalling; absolutely the worst pub grub I have ever encountered. Tim: "Apologies - in my bit about where to eat I should also have mentioned a few to avoid... The Pulpit & Royal Exchange are top of the list.)"

And many thanks to Tim Rose, Sas Watson, Richard (?) and Wayne Starsmore for arranging and leading us on this rather different caving weekend. **Noel**

The Derbyshire Weekend, Saturday 23rd March, Sunday 24th March at the Orpheus Caving Club – Noel Cleave

Wessex Cave Club Members -Antonio Emmanouilidis, Reginald Matthew, Nix, Claire Cohen, Damon Fenton, Darren Chapman, Dave Watts, Gerik Roden, Hallam Greene, Ian Parkin, Jacob ("Jake") Tebbutt, Jemma Overstolz, Mark Easterling, Mike Kushy, Mitchell Parry, Monica Bollani, Nick Butler, Noel Cleave, Paul Wilman, Pete Hellier, Robert Curle, Sam Storrar, Samantha Drake, Sarah Payne, Tom Chapman, Tom Williams, Tommo Thomas & Wayne Starsmore. **OCC** Lisa Wootton & Stephania, **BEC** Mike Raffe & Louise Hull, **YSS** Keith Masson, **Brighton Explorers** Andy Philipson & Simon.

To say that this was “Well Attended” would be a wild understatement. Officially the Orpheus cottage can provide 18 bunk spaces for weekend visitors. No less than 27 Wessex Cave Club members turned up and somehow fitted in, although there were a couple of tents pitched in the Garden, and Paul and Sam had their mobile home to sleep in. Added to our members however we had guests from the BEC and YSS, not to mention actual Orpheus members who were guiding and assisting our caving, notably Stephania. With so many visitors, Wayne and Claire with a few other helping hands, laid on a cooked breakfast both days so that we could crack on with caving without kitchen chaos starting, and delaying, our activities. When Claire was counting breakfast eaters she came to a total of 35 mouths to feed.

There was no waste of caving opportunity this weekend, which actually started on the Friday, when: “Bean, Darren, Pete H, Hal Greene, Keith Mason and Lisa Woottson did a JH to Peak Traverse and established rope in JH and both ends of White River. Also, critically, checked that the connection between Titan and Leviathan was open with a proper airspace in the duck. **Pete Hellier**

Saturday 23rd was the main caving day for major trips, all into the Peak system. Groups and routes were set out, but changed so much that my attempt to record who was going where and with whom came to nought. So the following suggestions may only contain vestiges of truth..... But here goes! At least I can start with two accurate accounts because Wayne wrote up his trip, as follows:

Saturday 23rd. March **Titan to JH** Simon, Mike (Both BEC), Tom Williams, Wayne Starsmore Claire Cohen, Wayne Starsmore, Reginald Matthew, Emma. - Got to Titan entrance at allotted time of 1030, but there was a cast of thousands waiting to descend. Finally got our first team member down at 1245! Bill, Emma and Tom decided to go to JH instead and take photos. The remainder all down Titan without issue. Followed Keith Mason’s instructions and got to Leviathan in JH with no problems. Bill, Emma and Tom met us at the bottom for some photos. Started the long haul up. Mike was unsure of the route to the Workshop, but soon resolved this. Claire had a problem with a nasty deviation on Bitch Pitch but solved it with a knife! First team back on surface

at 16.45, the rest within the hour. **Wayne Starsmore**

Saturday 23rd. March **JH to Peak** Keith Mason, Sarah Payne, Gemma Overstolz, Louise Hull, Jake Tebbutt, Noel Cleave, Damon Fenton and Gerik Roden.

There was no body-ruckle at the entrance to JH. We got underground at about 1130. Gemma, Louise, Jake and Noel were JH virgins, but we bottomed Leviathan unbloodied and, I suspect, elated. Bits of the Cartrace are badly designed, leg-length-wise for some of us, but not insuperably. Sarah started down bloodied (literally) following a standard issue contact with the TSG doorway. JH is a brill SRT trip Downhill! So 600 odd feet down in Leviathan we met an assorted motley mob who’d come in via Titan and there was a grand coalescing of parties. At which point Keith and Jake, fed up with slow-time and the delays of numbers, departed at speed for Block Chamber and other remote reaches. Stephania took charge of eventually, I think, some 14 cavers including Nick and Sam who had loved the Titan entrance. Somewhere in there are 6 anonymous bodies! We stumbled down the Speedwell streamway and enjoyed the Bung. One forgets how deep and cold the water is. Also how flat-out the short by-pass is.... but nobody ever forgets how long the Colostomy Crawl is, or how long and glutinously horrible the Trenches are. That mud gives a whole new meaning to the word “Squalor”. The Mucky Ducks, while a welcome clue that the trip is almost complete, do nothing to wash it off. That task requires a mass wallow with the scrubbing brush provided there at the dam where the main Peak Show Cave water comes in. It’s a shame that we had no photographer to record the sight of 14 cavers splashing like hippopotami. (“And these people elect a Government and vote for or against Brexit....”). Eventually, relatively un-muddied, we came out of Peak after about 5 ½ hours of dangling, stomping and thrutching. Speaking personally, this was a trip that I’d long wanted to do. It’s an absolute cracker! **Noel Cleave**

Those two accounts tot up to 15 bodies. Since almost everybody at the Orpheus went into the top end of the Peak system, there must be something approaching 20, that’s Two Zero, other personal trips involved here. I think that Bean took a cohort upstream from Peak to JH as well. Given enough time, I could probably sort the

other bodies and trips out, but I think it's irrelevant. This can best be summed up as a

superbly successful Wessex Cave Club / Peak Cavern day underground.

Yorkshire Meet Alum Pot – Jake Tebbut



Photo Dave Watts

The day of caving on Saturday started with an excellent cooked breakfast at Helwith Bridge. After breakfast, we all packed up our kit and headed to Selside where we took a rather rocky road up to the parking for Alum Pot. After everybody had got ready we headed up to the entrances for Long Churn Cave and Diccan Pot, where our groups split into different rigging teams.

After following Tom down Long Churn and down the Dolly Tubs we opened out into Alum pot. Having taken in the view Jacob and I headed down towards the Greasy Slab and onto The Bridge and down towards the bottom of Alum pot. Once we had got to the bottom we decided to go up and out of Diccan Pot. When we emerged out of Diccan Pot we were surprised to see nobody at the top so we headed back over towards Alum Pot to have a look at the big pitch. After seeing somebody on the pitch we decided that we would go down the South-East Route, followed by another pitch to the very bottom. By this time it was getting close to the end of the day so we decided to make our way out of the cave. After everybody had left the cave we all went to the pub for a meal; a great way to end a cracking weekend.

Hut Working Weekend – Colin Shapter

We had a good weekend. The new stainless steel corner pieces in the kitchen are now fully fitted. (I ran out of drill bits last time). The men's toilet walls were repainted and the rotten plaster in the window repaired. That small bit still needs painting. Radiators were painted.

New sockets were placed by the telephone for the new card system and the temporary extension

lead removed. The end wall of the locker room all the holes were filled and the wall repainted and other walls were touched up. In the new locker room toilet the plumbing was completed and the seat refitted. We cleaned, replaced and added new filter media bags as required in the sewage system. The fire escape railings were welded up.

Thank you to Frank Tully, Jake Tebbut, Tommo, John Cooper, John Thomas, Geoff Newton, Bob Cross, Ali Moody, Chris Williams, anon and anyone I have forgotten and to Jonathon for the barbecue and Marion for the cakes.

Rescon British Cave Rescue Council Conference 2019

Priddy 6 – 8 September - James Begley

ResCon is the British Cave Rescue conference, which is a bi-annual gathering of British cave rescue volunteers (and others with a passing interest in caving and cave rescue techniques and equipment) to be held on the Mendips, over the weekend of the 6th to the 8th September 2019. Participants will have the opportunity to attend lectures on rescue techniques as well as join in surface or underground practical workshops including specialist techniques such as cave diving (for divers and non-divers), vertical hauling, underground communication technology and gas monitoring. We are planning on holding some sessions for people who have had little involvement with cave rescue, but are interested in finding out how cave rescues are organised. Saturday night will include a bar, hog roast (and veggie alternative) and music, along with this year's "Wessex Challenge", which is a team obstacle course that has become a Mendip caving tradition, this year hosted by the Wessex Caving Club following their fine win last year.

Tickets are now available, priced at £50 for the weekend, with a reduced price of £40 if you buy a ticket before the 1st of July, or are in full time education. Tickets include camping, food, tea & coffee - basically everything except drinks at the bar. Tickets are now available from <https://rescon.eventbrite.co.uk> and more information will be available very shortly from the website at <https://www.rescon.org.uk/> or from Facebook at

RESCON

BRITISH CAVE RESCUE COUNCIL
Conference 2019

Priddy

6-8 September



<https://www.facebook.com/ResCon19>.

Tickets for just one day, or just the Saturday evening, are also available.

Mendip Cave Rescue are hosting the conference this year, so will be looking for volunteers to help out over the course of the weekend to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

Paul Hadfield's Caving Log-Books – Noel Cleave

Some time ago, in June, 2016 I reported that Paul Hadfield had been having a chat with the Grim Reaper and wanted a good home for his caving log-books. He sent me some photocopied pages to transcribe, which I did, and also published in Journal 337. These excited quite a lot of interest, but were hard to decrypt from Paul's handwriting (which shares the same non-relationship to calligraphy as my own). Happily, Paul told the GR to sod off, and we had time to exchange image and text files and decode the mysteries of his photo-copies. The GR did not go with a good grace, however, but clutching various bits of Paul's digestive system, and has recently been

seen lurking around, so Paul reactivated the idea of finding a repository for his log-books. Phil Hendy and I agreed that the Wessex Cave Club library would be ideal, and Paul sent them to me with the idea that I might transcribe them for posterity. Being acquainted with "Paul's Scrawl", I was certain that they would only ever be read, and valued, as printed text. Faced with three volumes of originals it dawned on me that I was facing a major problem: 185 pages of it, to be precise. Plus that now Paul didn't have his log-books; we couldn't confer about illegible names and events. The best solution seemed to be to get Paul record himself reading his log-books aloud,

and building on this idea, for us to go through them together, making notes as needed. For various reasons, the period for this became limited and had to follow my return from caving in the Dordogne on 03 April; in the meantime the family nailed me to the floor for the Easter weekend. I finally flew out to Canada, clutching the much-travelled log-books on Friday 26th April. Paul lives in the wilds of British Columbia and flight connections dictated a stopover in Vancouver before a rendezvous at Terrace airport on Saturday. The drive to his home in Kitwanga revealed that the area is startlingly beautiful and littered with serious mountains, rivers and views. Not being there to "Tourist" However, we got stuck in on Saturday afternoon working out how best to achieve the required audio-visual enlightenment for the transcription task ahead. We finally set it up with two computers, side by side and a quality microphone for Paul. We had two back-up systems because I also bought a small hand-held voice recorder as an emergency measure, which we never used. The days were not all work, as Paul also took me to several favourite viewpoints to savour the scenery. I think that "Visual Overload" sums the place up. From Paul's garden we could see a gloriously snow-capped peak where Paul had deposited some of the late Ian Jepson's ashes; it's pleasing to know that the Wessex has a real and continuing presence there in BC!

I felt rather better when we discovered that Paul had considerable difficulty in reading his own

writing! Over four days we numbered the log-book pages, photographed them all, and Paul recorded them. We doubled everything up with Paul having all the photocopies on his computer and all his recordings on mine. Each page was recorded as discrete file so they can be played, paused and replayed as required. Every page photo was trimmed and enhanced, but I will probably need to individually contrast control them because Paul wrote them with a variety of inks and pens - luckily none in pencil - so I couldn't batch process. The audio files are .WMA, and not too large for Email, but I could compress them to .MP3. The page images are .JPG.

Hearing Paul reading his texts, and then listening to the recordings, it became apparent that his diction was brilliantly clear. A trained audio-typist could transcribe them without the photocopies. A human audio-typist, that is: together we tried a variety of voice-to-text applications. The results were hilarious, but useless. Possibly the acknowledged leader in this field, "Dragon Dictate" would work, but it is expensive, and this is a one-off task. It is, however, just that, a task and a major one for which the old dictum that "Many hands make light work" applies..... And you can see this coming from a mile off..... I would really appreciate it if some kindly volunteers would step up and accept a few pages to transcribe. My email is nhcleave@btinternet.com. Paul's log-books are very much part of the Wessex history. You could contribute this to our club..... Please!

Vurley Swallet Part 2 - Nick Chipchase

Summer 2015 saw numerous loads of rock being brought up the pipe via a tripod fixed to the top. The first chamber was entered in August with a tiny draughting hole leading on. Fixed ladders were put in place in the pipes one being donated by my late brother's wife. More digging and cementing was done in early autumn and another chamber discovered at a higher level. From then on things became awful. No obvious way on and no draught.

After some 18 digging trips mostly putting sloppy mud into sandbags and hauling them to the upper chamber we hit a band of gravel. Meanwhile Mark Helmore and his team had built a fine wall to stop the 3 metre hole from collapsing. Mark et al dug

into gravel on May 1st 2016 to reveal a downward sloping passage (M'aidez). Two days later Nigel Cox dug out a small hole to enter yet another chamber with a boulder floor and evil looking big boulders "stuck" to the wall. Yet again the cave had saved us just as stacking space was running out. Another dig was started in the boulder floor where the draught seemed strongest. It took 8 digs and lots of engineering to reach a rift some 4 metres down. This terminated in a tiny loose chamber. Chris Milne capping like mad and using 40 caps in one session. Eventually another descending passage was revealed but it meant crawling under a horrible boulder we called "Damocles". Using over 10 buckets of cement Nigel Cox built a supporting pillar under

“Damocles”. A load more engineering took place and by the end of 2016 we had reached a solid choke with no way on though floodwater had run down the passage to disappear in the floor.

In January 2017 the “terminal” dig had reached a depth of 3m. From there we could see into a truly horrible choke with massive loose boulders. On 28th February (my 74th trip) we managed to pass the horrible area after much capping and engineering. Chris Milne then revealed a small hole with a draught. Had Vurley provided us with yet another “present”, just as things were getting awkward? To be honest Chris and I did not like the look of the hole so we called Peter Glanvill forward who was loitering at the back. He went through feet first and promptly disappeared.

Our belated “present” had arrived in the shape of a large chamber with a solid rock wall. We called it “La La Land” as that film award fiasco took place then. In any case if you wondered around singing “La La La La” you might not have noticed the loose boulders hanging around. (Now mostly supported by a large wall). As usual there was no open way on just a pile of large boulders jammed in a rift at the lowest point. Spring 2017 saw us working down the boulder floor engineering as we went. In April I stuck my head through a hole at the

bottom of the shaft to see into a chamber. Horrified I also saw a large and cracked boulder supporting the entire choke up into La La Land. We demolished this resulting in the collapse of the entire dig. At least we had a name for it now, “The Egg Timer”. So now it was basically give up or start the dig all over again.

My 100th digging trip saw a new 9m deep “Egg Timer” reaching a point some 61m below the surface. By late November 2017 we had bypassed the lower “Egg Timer” choke by digging out a vertical pot in solid rock. Vurley has consumed some 100m of scaffolding 60m of which were kindly donated by “JR Diving Services” at Cullompton. Mesh for the gabion boxes in “The Egg Timer” was donated by “Galmington Social Club”. After 4m our new vertical shaft in solid rock (now with fixed ladder) became reacquainted with an old friend. The “La La Land” choke looking more horrible and loose than ever and extending upwards for some 15m. On 28th November 2017 Mike Kushy came to visit. I poked the choke which collapsed with a mighty roar. Mike and I beat a hasty retreat accompanied by more rumblings higher up. With stacking space again at a premium all seemed lost. We ended 2017 doubtful that this final obstacle could be overcome.

Sandy Padgett Award. – Jim Burridge

“So apparently if your dad is daft enough to break a rib and get stuck in a cave, and you have to get your little brother to the surface and call for Mendip Cave Rescue, they give you an award.”
Aaron Varley

Some of you may know the story, but about a year ago Aaron aged 12 Jamie aged 8 and I (old enough to know better) went on a little trip to Sidcot Swallet. Unfortunately I popped a rib in the Tie Press and then got stuck trying to get out of the Lobster Pot. After 45 minutes of trying to extract myself I had to make the hard decision to send Aaron for help. Aaron not only found his way out but also helped his little brother who by this point was very scared, and made the call for help. When help arrived by the boatload, he then explained the situation very clearly, and offered to help with my rescue. Some weeks ago he was nominated for the Pride of Somerset Award. The ceremony was on 10th May and Aaron was awarded the Sandy Padgett Award and afterwards was interviewed live on Radio Somerset with Charlie Taylor.



Dordogne Week: Saturday April 6 2019 - 13 April 2019 – Noel Cleave

Messrs Dave Barrett, Kushy, Nick Butler, Noel Cleave.



Cottage complete with “Caver Modifications”

This trip was a recce visit for all of us, but would have been a waste of time without Clive’s invaluable help. He sent me his entire file/portfolio of Dordogne caving information - a massive wodge of notes and surveys. I photocopied and printed it all out, but lacked time to digest and analyse it. When we arrived in Autoire, I gave this to Dave, Kushy and Nick and left them to determine which caves, where and when to put on our hit-list. Autoire, our base village, is close to Gramat, the de-facto centre of the Dordogne caving area. Autoire itself is tourist, picture-postcard Dordogne perfection. We rented a delightful cottage via Airbnb. We left it immaculate, but during the week it became more typically “Caver-Modified”!

During the week we visited the Igue de Saint-Sol, the Saut de Pucelle, the Event de Mirandol, the Gouffre de Reveillion, the Gouffre de Roc de Cor,

the Grotte de Foissac and, inevitably, the Gouffre de Padirac. Dave, as is his custom, made copious notes in, or about, all these caves. The guiding light and headest honcho of the local caving is called Bob Ascargorta. We met him and he could not have been more helpful and positive. He is also the president of the caving club of Miers, which is the main one in the Lot district. He was the chief of the group which took 7 years to open up the Ayrals entrance to downstream Padirac, and is the custodian of the reference library which is in the “Refuge de Speleos”. He also knows absolutely how to gain access and permission to all the caves. We discovered this “Refuge de Speleos”, very close to Autoire, and it would be a perfect base for a larger group caving in the Dordogne. So quite apart from the pleasure of caving there, this was a most valuable visit and we can provide a lot of useful up-to-date information to anyone planning a Dordogne visit.



Saturday 08 June 2019 Cantabria Walk - Noel Cleave

Rich and Andrea, Darren, Tom, Jake, Noel, Nick.

This was a small turn-out by the standards of recent "Club Walks". A small but very select group set out from the MCG cottage to walk to Rowberrow and back. There was some discrepancy between the various GPS gizmos on the walk, but it was probably about 11 miles in all. The weather was perfect. Our first waypoint was the Blackdown trig point for the duty photo pose, and then gently down towards the Twin Brook

Valleys of Burrington and on to the Swan at Rowberrow. Re-invigorated by chips, wine and beers we had - for once - a *gentle* uphill to regain our height as we meandered back to Charterhouse and to Nordrach some 5 hours since setting out. With an hour off for our pub break, this was a most civilised outing. Many thanks to Darren for organising and plotting this one.

A Letter from Brian Hansford

Dear Wessex

Many thanks for my elevation to Hon. Member of the Wessex. Chuffed I am indeed and thank all involved. I might only be 5'6" tall, but I feel 6ft and am very pleased. Many thanks for my promotion. Safe caving guys and gals.

Brian H

MENDIP ROCK CAKES - Marion Wilkinson



(As eaten by discerning diggers)

This recipe is used weekly to provide sustenance to the club's regular diggers. Those aiming to reach the dizzy heights of 'digger' should give this a try.

This recipe makes approximately 12 rock cakes.

Ingredients

8oz (236g) Self Raising Flour
4oz (118g) Salted Butter (cubed)
2oz (60g) Caster Sugar
2oz (60g) Light Soft Brown Sugar
5oz (148g) Sultanas
2 Large Eggs (beaten)
Pinch of Salt
Add Mendip rocks of your choice to taste

Method

Sift the flour and salt into a bowl.
Rub the butter into the flour until it resembles fine bread crumbs.
Add the sultanas and sugar and mix together.
Add the beaten eggs and mix (mixture will be fairly stiff).
Place 12 equal rocky mounds of the mixture on a greased and lined baking tray.
Bake in the centre of the oven at 180C (160C Fan)/gas N^o 6 for 18-20 minutes until golden brown.
Cool on wire rack.

When cold, place in box and hand to hungry diggers.

