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Chelsea Spelæological Society NEWSLETTER

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Martin Grass in Victory Passage, St. Cuttbert's Swallet. Photo: Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley

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Membership

Please send all subscriptions to:
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Editorial

You'll notice that articles are thin on the ground in this issue so, if you have anything to contribute, please send it in so that we can make this newsletter an enjoyable read.



Mark Lumley

Please send all material (ideally in blocks of less than 10 megabyte) to:

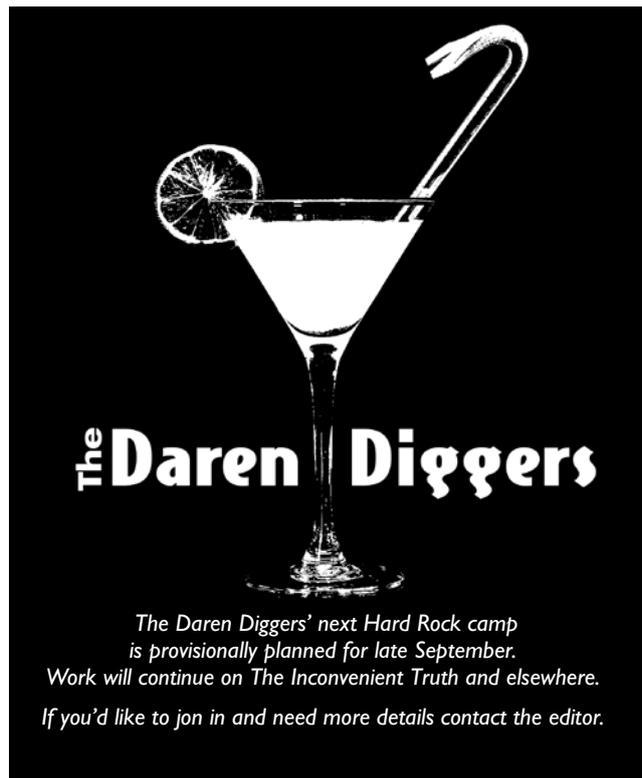
mark@creativeedge.me.uk

or put on CD (readable on all platforms as I'll be working on a Mac) and post to:

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Clapton, Radstock
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Send text for your article as .doc or similar, or simply send it as an email.

Convert photos, surveys and other images to decent-sized .jpeg, .tif, .psd or .eps files.



The Daren Diggers

The Daren Diggers' next Hard Rock camp is provisionally planned for late September. Work will continue on The Inconvenient Truth and elsewhere. If you'd like to join in and need more details contact the editor.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome to new provisional member

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Nude Caving?

Recently, I've noticed on the web several references to nude rock climbing, which is becoming a bit of a craze. I wonder if nudity will catch on in caving? I've only witnessed this on a few occasions, usually in the small wee hours of a Mendip Sunday morning, invariably with people who are now fine, upstanding pillars of the caving community!

Perhaps in time we will come to see naked time trials through Acupuncture, or starkers in Southern Streamway against the clock, or Diccan Pot in flood, using great care to protect your tackle on rub points? Personally I'll give it a miss as, being a cave artist, I need to wear my socks so that I can give my brushes a wipe . . .



Pottering About on Mendip

by
John Cooper

Charterhouse Cave

Sunday 30th May 2010.

Ali and Pete Moody, Pete Hann and myself into the 2009 passages. Today the objective was the 2009 series and the undescended pitch left on 8th May. The passage, just South of Diesel Duck is now named Skeleton Passage after a small skeleton found last time by Ali. Today Ali took a photo of the bones so perhaps someone with knowledge will stand a chance of identifying what they are from. Unfortunately there was no obvious skull to give us a clue and 600ft below the surface isn't a normal habitat. Current best guess is a frog or toad. Arriving at the calcited tube Pete H gave some projections a whack with a club hammer to make it easier. Then we all went through and dropped down a rift on the far side, about 5m. The bottom belled out but there was a convenient foot hold on one wall about 1m from the floor. Followed a rift, just about walking size before having to squeeze feet first over the skeleton into a slightly lower continuation of the rift. Another squeeze over a boulder caused Pete H to moan and say he was getting too old for this. Then he realised he was actually the youngest member of the party! Whilst Pete Hann drilled an anchor for the ladder Pete M and I gave the offending boulder and roof above it a few whacks and made the squeeze a bit bigger. Once the ladder was rigged we all descended the rift into a nice cobble floored walking sized passage. Upstream(? as there was no stream flowing) about 3m of passage dipped down into what looked like a blocked uplift. Downstream(?) was walking for a few metres then crawling in a 2m wide, cobble floored, passage which lead shortly to a nice static sump pool. Pool was about 1.5m wide, about 3m long with nice cobbled floor. Not sure how tall the sump is underwater! About 50m of passage found today which makes Skeleton Passage about 100m long. Then went and looked at the Diesel Duck Inlet. Last time Ali stopped at some straws but today she passed them to find the passage pinched right down to about 20cm high and wide. Time underground 5¼ hours. The gate worked beautifully today after the fettling done by Keith Fielder and Pete Hann yesterday.

Saturday 5th June 2010.

Ali and Pete Moody, Pete Hann and myself into the 2010 passages. Today the intention was to ferry equipment into High Time and check the "up-cave" passage. A short ladder was taken in and installed on the drop from The Flyover, freeing up a full length one for future use. Route marker pins were taken in and a route marked from the hole up into High Time for about 50m to where a large

aven entered on the East(?) side. Beyond this the passage appeared blocked. The drill and batteries were collected en-route through the 2009 passages and Pete Hann made a start climbing the aven. He got about 10m up, there's a lovely echo from somewhere above! More work needed with proper kit rather than using both ends of a ladder as etriers. Then went "down-cave" to the T-junction where a bucket, also carried in today, was installed under a drip so we should have drinking water in future. Ali had a look up a small inlet at this junction, pretty to start with but a dig at the end. On the way out Pete Hann suffered light failure and had to do the whole of the 2008 series by hand torch. It was a pity he wasn't carrying one himself as he was at the back of the party on his own when the failure occurred! The rest of us were just starting to wonder what had happened when he finally appeared with much cursing. Looks like he hadn't charged it fully after the last trip. At least by sitting and waiting a while a bit of charge built up in the battery allowing him to get within sound of us before it died completely. Time underground 6 hours 40 minutes.

Saturday 12th June 2010.

Ali and Pete Moody, Pete Hann, Andrew Atkinson and myself into the 2010 passages. Today the intention was to ferry equipment into High Time and check the end found on 15th May 2010 (CSS N/L 52/6 p92 refers). Additional ladders and a rope were taken in today as well as the usual food supplies and survey kit. Arriving at the end pot a bolt was placed and a ladder hung from it. Andrew then traversed across using a couple more bolts for protection before arriving at the far side. A natural belay was used for the ladder which he hung down the far side. Ali and Pete H. had already descended the near side ladder and Pete M and I followed whilst Andrew descended the far side one. A nice walking passage lead onwards, although there were sections of quicksand at times. Ignoring side passages we eventually arrived at a static sump pool, looked very nice and had a 10cm square airspace leading on but the passage was much wider underwater. Surveyed back to tie in with the survey done on 15th May (a couple of hundred metres). Then we climbed the ladder up the far side of the pot and followed a gradually descending passage until Andrew announced he had reached footprints! Continued on to link up with one of the side passage which Pete H had investigated whilst waiting for the surveyors to catch up. There seemed to be another high level passage going off this oxbow as well. After food and drinks we then went back and surveyed the High Time passage to the base of the aven reached last week (about 70 metres). Cave lengthened and deepened

again! Time underground 8 hours 40 minutes.

Saturday 19th June 2010.

Ali and Pete Moody, Pete Hann, Andrew Atkinson and myself into the 2010 passages. Portal Pool the same as last week and Diesel Duck still dry. Today the intention was to survey. First we did the large passage which goes off left at Zebra Junction, first entered on 15th May 2010. At the end is a large, very muddy, aven which Andrew started to climb with bolts for protection. Left it at a sloping ledge about half way up with the ladder just reaching the floor. Whilst this was going on Ali was digging a draughting sand filled passage going straight on underneath at floor level. Would be a perfect dig nearer the surface! Then went down the pot and surveyed up the oxbow found last week to tie in at the top of the pot. Whilst we were doing this Ali went and checked the sump, same as last week, and then joined Pete H looking at another side passage which went off just below the one we were surveying before joining us as we completed the survey link. Then Andrew climbed up into the high level passage noted last week. After trundling a large boulder off the ledge he placed a bolt and hung a ladder for the rest of us to ascend. This passage went to a T junction with right heading off and then dropping steeply down to join the passage Pete H had been looking at earlier. We were able to survey this link although it would be a tricky climb to actually ascend/descend it. The disto-X came into its own here. Back at the T junction a high level continuation to the left was visible but not climbed into today. Back to Zebra junction for food and drink before heading out. The cave is certainly swallowing up equipment. There is a ladder on the pitch in the 2008 series, a short ladder on the drop from The Flyover, a ladder on the aven at the top end of High Time, a ladder on the muddy aven climbed today, a ladder on the pot and a ladder on the climb up in the oxbows. Will need to take in some more! 7 hours 35 minutes today.

Hunters' Lodge Inn Sink Sunday 20th June. John Cooper,

Joe Duxbury & Barry Weaver. As Joe was down for the day he persuaded John and Barry to divert from their usual Sunday morning jaunt down Swildon's Hole and descend a cave he hadn't done before. We obtained the key from Roger and descended the fixed iron ladder,

locking ourselves in to ensure no unauthorised visitors. With Barry in the lead a steady pace down Pub Crawl until he descended a hole instead of continuing along to enter Happy Hour Highway. We then followed the much larger passage to the bottom and up the other side into Barmaids' Bedrooms. We skirted round Pewter Pot as we didn't have 15m of ladder with us and weren't sure whether we could climb back up with just the in situ rope. Up to the end and a quick look at the low passage on the left before turning round and coming out. About 1½ hours.

Manor Farm Swallet Friday 4th June 2010.

John Cooper, Katharine Goddard & Chris Seal. Ladder practice for Katharine who has agreed to write the trip up for the newsletter!

Swildon's Hole Sunday 23rd May 2010.

John Cooper, Lee Hawkswell and Barry Weaver. Decided to go and peer down Vicarage Pot. Low water conditions and not too many people about. Met a party of 2 on their way out above the Twenty so put our ladder down. Once up into Vicarage Passage the mould became obvious. It could be seen in the passage leading to The Troubles but we went the opposite way. Mould was found all the way up the sloping passage as far as the bend to the left which we took. No mould from then on. However looking up the bedding at that junction mould could be seen leading on upwards. Looked down Vicarage Pot then came out. A knotted rope had been abandoned at the top of the Twenty which closely resembled that last seen a couple of weeks ago at the 10ft overhang leading to the Black Hole. Presumably someone brought it out that far then ditched it so we brought it the rest of the way out.

Sunday 6th June 2010.

John Cooper and Barry Weaver. A quick trip to Sump 2 and back in very dry conditions. Met Mike Read coming out as we were going in and then met him going in as we were coming out.

Sunday 13th June 2010.

John Cooper and Barry Weaver. Through the Mud Sump to visit Keith's Chamber.

Mendip Meet 23rd - 25th July

by Jacky Ankerman

John Cooper has booked the Wessex hut for this meet. There will be various trips on offer for Saturday including Charterhouse 2008 extensions and Longwood August. On the Saturday evening there will be a BBQ, please bring your own meat and drink - everything else will be provided for a nominal charge. Sunday morning will entail the obligatory trip to Swildons. If you want any further info, please contact Lee (or Jacky!).

Ibbeth Peril Cave

Sunday May 30 2010

by Chris Tomlin

I hate setting the alarm for Sunday morning, but I had to do so to catch the Dalesrail train direct from Preston to the Dales! The service has a nice atmosphere, usually as loads of spry 60+ year old walkers are on it, and it did today. After a long trip I got off at Dent Station and staggered down the steep hill. After a lovely walk beside the river and a less pleasant one along the road for ages, I got to Ibbeth Peril Cave. The entrance is in the side of a large plunge pool on the River Dee and someone had dug it open again through a large bank of flood debris. Lucky for me as it would have been very difficult to find otherwise.

A slightly constricted entrance leads to a short, very worn crawl and stooping passage and then the Main Chamber after a short distance. The size of the chamber is impressive but its floor consists of huge jumbled limestone blocks and is difficult to walk over. I climbed up the waterfall that spills into the chamber and went along a lovely phreatic tube. But it wasn't so nice in there as the stream in the tube is quite polluted and smelly so I turned back when I would have had to crawl in the water to get any further. Then I climbed down through the floor of the chamber to try and find the lower streamway. All I found was a series of low crawls and beddings that all became full of flood debris after a while. The sole exception was a nasty vertical squeeze that I didn't like the look of, especially as there was no-one else to fish me

out if things went wrong.

I went out again, didn't bother to do a flat-out crawl in the side of the chamber as you go in. Exiting, I went down the dry streambed of the Dee, intending to do Broadfield Cave but I could not find it. I gave up and looked for Ibbeth Peril II but could not find that either. I had forgotten the photocopy of the cave description from the 1970s Dalesman guide but, looking at it later, I was looking in exactly the right place. I wonder if floods over the winter had blocked the entrances with cobbles and no-one had dug them out since. This really bothers me and think I will look again for the entrances on a bike ride!

Abandoning the trip I went back to the car park, had some lunch and chatted to a local guy in a van who told me helpfully that the entrances to the Ibbeth Peril caves were very difficult to find. Then it was time for an excellent pint of Dent in the Sportsmans Arms at the top of the dale, a struggle up that horrible hill to the station, a doze in the waiting room and back to Preston. Not a bad day all told, first time I've been caving in Dentdale and it certainly is a lovely dale. Short walk from the road too, for a change.

Looking around the internet later I gather that Broadfield, the Ibbeths and some of the Hackergill caves all connect, making nearly 3km of cave, but with tricky navigation and lots of crawling..."

Manor Farm Swallet

by Katharine Goddard

Returning to caving after twenty-something years has awakened me to the fact that I am no braver now than when I belonged to Reading University Caving Club years ago. My legs are no longer either (I'm still only 5ft) and my 'get up and go' probably got up and went at the university bar. However, with the help of my good friend and university buddy, Chris Seal, I am slowly progressing onto bigger and better caves.

Chris suggested we go down Manor Farm Swallet in order that I get a spot of ladder practice in before attempting Daren Cilau in a fortnight's time (my first trip to Hard Rock Café). We met with John Cooper in the Wessex Cave Club car park – and for all of you who know Chris, let it be noted that we arrived 30 minutes early!

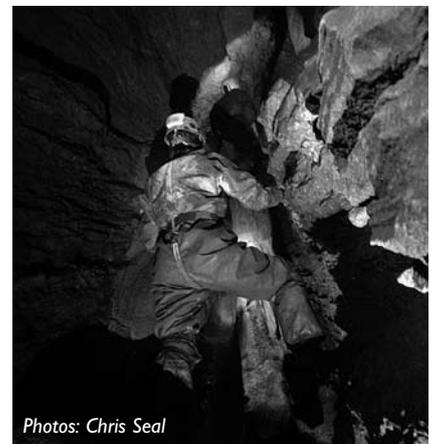
The entrance shaft of the cave was expertly rigged by John and Chris, so all I had to do was jump on the ladder and climb down. Luckily, there weren't many midges on this trip. After a short way, we quickly reached September Rift. The guidebook suggests using a 6m handline but Chris and John very kindly rigged up another ladder for more practice. A handline perhaps would have been better for those of a larger stature as the ladder kept swinging into a rather

tight nook, but for me it meant extra confidence.

On seeing a rather small 'curtain' we were unsure as to whether we'd reached Curtain Chamber, however on venturing further into the cave the real curtain soon became jolly obvious and impressive. For many experienced cavers, the simpler formations may not seem that exciting but I feel so privileged to see any of the formations and I truly appreciated the undulating folds of stalactite. We later also saw a cascade of black flowstone, plus several straws, stalagmites and stalactites.

Further into the cave, we reached a 6m pitch that is free climbable but we negotiated it with the use of our third ladder. Luckily the shorter ladder just reached the floor, with the lifeline having a few inches of rope to spare. Further on, Albert's Eye was a quick wiggle for me but proved more of a squeeze for Chris. We then climbed down the 'sporting' decent past Sarum Inlet and up into NHASA Gallery. This is a huge walking space that seemed much larger than anticipated. We walked to the end and then had a gander at the streamway to see if there were any nooks and crannies that lead forward. The effluent was quite deep here and the number of worms was, to say the least, interesting. Taking an

about turn towards clearer passages, a waterfall proved a great photo spot, encouraging Chris to take a series of images as we climbed back out – usually involving me hanging onto a rock or climbing a ladder using a variety of non-caving techniques.



Photos: Chris Seal

It was a very enjoyable trip and I finally feel I've grasped the 'one leg in front and one leg behind' ladder ascent. However, on exiting the cave we met an experienced caver who apparently goes down Manor Farm several times a week with no ladders at all! Thank you to John for coming with us and acting as a very reassuring and helpful 'instructor'. My arms still ache from ascending the 15m-entrance ladder to Manor Farm Swallet, so I hope Chris will be patient when I climb up the 'beast' in Daren. Wish us luck!

Daren Cilau/ Ogof Cnwc Rescue Practice

22 June 2010

by Tom Foord

Daren Cilau has always been one of those places where you really don't want to have an accident. The woes of the original entrance for an immobilised casualty have been known about ever since the cave was discovered. But thanks to the opening of a second entrance via Ogof Cnwc, there is now an alternative. Although that might sound hopeful to the prospective casualty, it does also come with its drawbacks. Firstly, the new entrance will significantly increase the traffic through Busmans Holiday and Antler Passage with its nasty boulders and exposed climbs, therefore increasing the risk of an accident in this area. And secondly Ogof Cnwc can be a bit of a pig itself!

But how much of a pig? Nobody had ever tried to extract a stretcher casualty from Cnwc before. It was a bit of an unknown. We needed to find out. And since a large contingent of the **South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team** (the new amalgamation of the old West Brecon and Gwent teams) are not all that accustomed to the nature of the Llangattock caves, this would also be a perfect introduction for them to the delights of Daren Cilau.

So it was that a large crowd of eager cavers (and strangely even more eager casualties!) gathered outside Whitewalls on the morning of Saturday 22nd

June. It was great to see a number of Chelsea members present and keen to get involved. Not least our very own Gary Kiely who, already immobilised by his torn achilles, was determined to be our victim for the day. Sadly for our would-be hero, the powers that be decided against this (something about soggy plaster), and another valiant volunteer stepped forward to put his life on the line.

And so a plan was formed. The scenario was a stretcher carry from the far side of the low crawly section in Busmans Holiday, out to the entrance of Ogof Cnwc. After the obligatory faff we divided up into teams. As well as the underground stretcher carriers, there were also people dotted around on the surface with walkie talkies and heyphones, others underground laying cable for the FrancePhones and operating the other ends of the Heyphones, and the whole lot was coordinated back at base at Whitewalls where some newfangled computer software was being used to keep track of everything that was going on.

The first eager party of stretcher bearers headed underground and strapped their casualty in for the carry out through the crawl in Busmans. It wasn't long before things started going wrong. They had been sent in with the longest and least flexible of the available stretchers, on the basis

that this crawl was all relatively straightforward. And this was our first big lesson of the day. The crawl is not as straightforward as it seems. In fact it is distinctly un-stretcher-friendly in a couple of places, to the point that the long stretcher simply does not fit. But being keen, our fearless team decided to make it fit, after all the aim of this exercise was to find out what is and isn't possible in Daren. And you can guess what happened. It jammed. Properly jammed, in a position where nobody could even get near to it to release our poor casualty from the straps that were holding him firmly in. Our pretend victim was suddenly in danger of becoming a very real victim, and I think people were getting genuinely concerned (not least the casualty himself!) This went on for quite some time, but eventually with a lot of pushing and pulling and wriggling and manoeuvring he was released from the grasps of the crawl. We had learnt our lesson: never underestimate Daren, not even the 'easy' bits. A lot of time had now been lost, so a decision was made to skip over the next bit of Busmans Holiday back to Prices Prophecy which is all nice and big with no real obstacles.

Meanwhile the various communications teams were all doing great jobs, and were having a far more successful day than the stretcher party. The Heyphones were working well in multiple locations, and a FrancePhone line had been laid right from the entrance to Prices Prophecy. Information and instructions were flying back and forth across and through the mountain. There were also experiments in using walkie-talkies to communicate along the length of Busmans Holiday, although this wasn't quite so successful as we'd first hoped. The results of all of this were being meticulously recorded back at base.

A new stretcher team now assembled at Prices Prophecy ready for the really fun part, the carry out through Ogof Cnwc. This would be the real crux of the exercise, with its tight thrutchy rift passages, scaffold shaft, and tight corners. A new (smaller!) casualty was picked and strapped into the shortest of the stretchers, one that left his legs free to bend. There is no way we would get anyone out through here fully rigid.

The straps were tightened and our new victim was posted feet first up the slope into the sump bypass. He slid through and popped out perfectly the other side in a nice upright position at the bottom of the scaffold shaft. Next no less than 7 cavers wedged themselves into various positions in the shaft and guided the stretcher past as it was hauled from the top. It's only when you hang around in places like this that you realize how little everything appears to be held up by. But he made it to the top and the walls were still intact, even after we removed the giant plug of cavers that appeared to be holding it all in place!

So far so good, we had made it safely up the shaft. Our victim was now launched headfirst down the 45 degree wood plank from the top of the shaft - I'm not sure this was his favourite bit as we left him upside down with the blood rushing to his head. The wet muddy floor of the next crawly section acted as a perfect lubricant and we flew along, only slowing to lift the stretcher and slide it over our bodies to get past some narrower bits. Manoeuvring a casualty through passages like this is all about logistics and forward planning. You need all the right people to be in the right places at the right times. There is no use in ending up with the whole team stuck the wrong side of the casualty, unable to do anything

to help. There was a plenty of squeezing and wriggling over, under and around each other in order to get to the right positions. It was all very cosy. But things were going well and we were moving swiftly.

But now we came to the really awkward bit: a narrow uphill rift, with an acute left corner at the top straight into a longer section of narrow thrutchy rift. To be honest we were a bit doubtful that we could manage this with the tools we had available, but the plan was to give it a go anyway to find out what does and doesn't work. The casualty had to be slid into the rift on his side, but unfortunately the stretcher we were using didn't wrap right around his sides which meant we were dragging him with all his weight on his arm... an arm that was attached to a very temperamental shoulder. We tried several different techniques, but unfortunately it wasn't happening, there was too much friction, he wouldn't budge, and we didn't particularly want to wreck his dodgy shoulder and end up having to rescue him for real. And so it was that we were defeated.

But all is not lost. We learned a huge amount from this exercise, and we now know what to expect in a real rescue situation. Perhaps we'd be able to get someone out through Ogof Cnwc with a slightly different stretcher setup, or with some sort of hauling rig that lifts them off the floor of the rift. If the worst came to the worst, maybe the passage would have to be enlarged slightly (clearly not a desirable solution). So there is plenty to think about. We also had a lot of fun - it definitely wasn't all pain and misery! But I think the biggest lesson of all is: Don't get injured in Daren Cilau!

Thanks to everyone who came along, it was great to see so many keen people getting involved. If

you haven't done so already, why not consider joining the team's callout list? You don't have to be a rock hard caver, or even know the caves well, there are always plenty of vital surface roles that need filling too. We've got a couple more rescue practices coming up, firstly a mines rescue in Mid Wales on 19th June, and then Ogof Draenen on 19th September. For more info about the team, and details of how to join, please see the new website at www.smwcrt.org.



Your Newsletter Needs You

If the membership still wishes to have the newsletter as a monthly publication then please **CONTRIBUTE** as it is a pointless and costly exercise without worthwhile, topical content

Meets List 09/10

This is an outline of the meets for this year.

April 10th – 11th

South Wales

Working Weekend.

A lot of small jobs to be completed.

Also work in the Library.

May 1st – 2nd

South Wales

Saturday will be an OFD1 to 2 through trip
(Paul Tarrant)

May 27th – 31st

Yorkshire (YSS)

Booked for 5 nights for 10 people

No caves booked as yet

June 26th – 27th

South Wales

Saturday will have a trip into DYO (Paul Tarrant)
BBQ and Barrel on Saturday night

July 24th – 25th

Mendip (Wessex)

Charterhouse & Longwood on Saturday

Swildons on Sunday

BBQ will be arranged for Saturday night

August 20th – 22nd

Yorkshire (YSS)

Booked for 3 nights for 10 people

September 25th – 26th

Hidden Earth

(Location to be confirmed)

November 6th – 7th

South Wales

Decide trips on Friday evening and then change them
Saturday morning.

Fireworks on Saturday night

December 4th – 5th

South Wales

Curry Extravaganza #6 on the 4th

Decide on your own trips

January 2011 | 29th – 30th

South Wales

Dinner and AGM

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