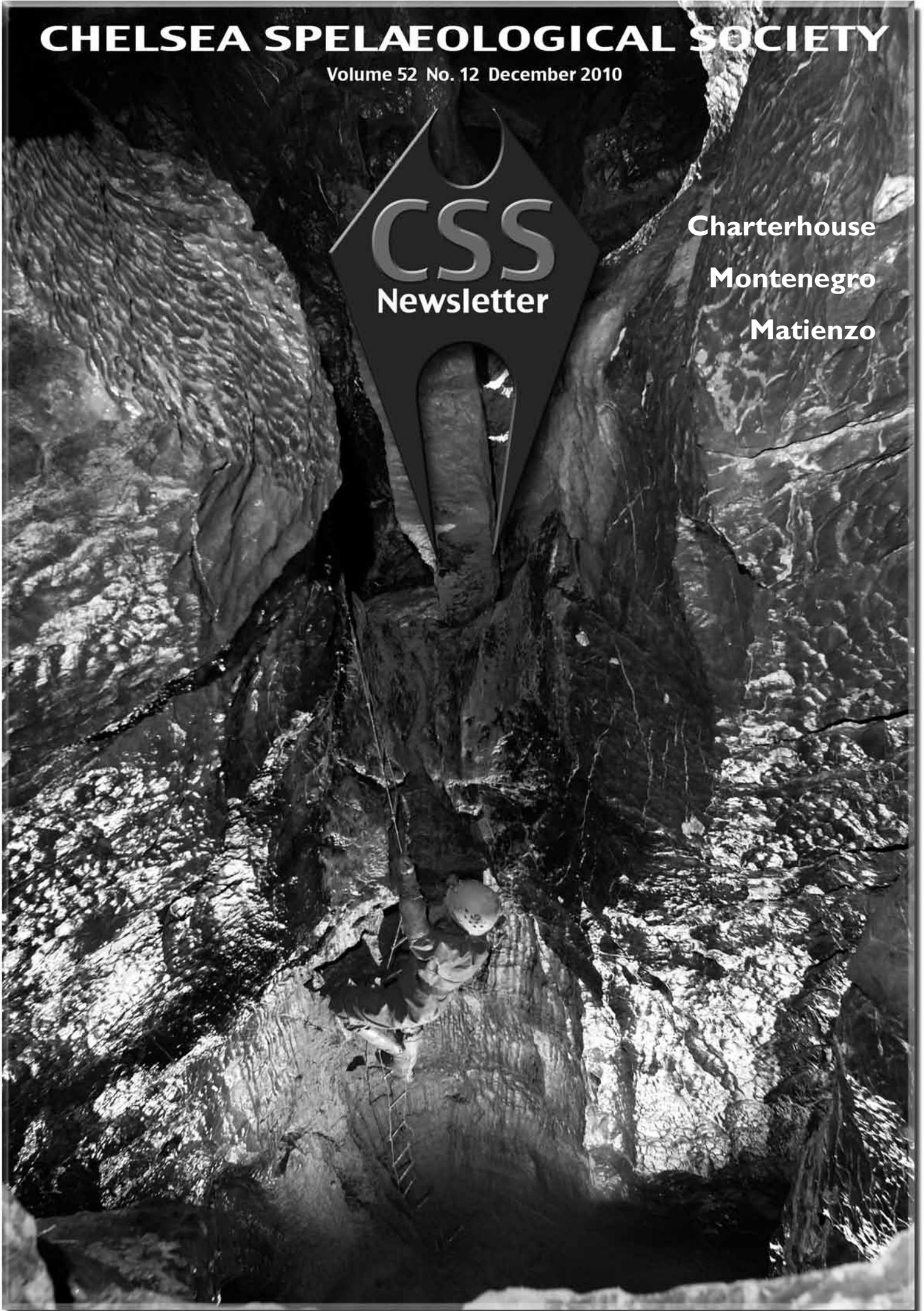


CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 52 No. 12 December 2010



Charterhouse
Montenegro
Matienzo



Chelsea Spelæological Society NEWSLETTER

Volume 52
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Bent Kent exploring the newly discovered Gower Streamway, Ezeuka Cave, Matienzo.
Photo: Steve Sharp

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Membership Subscriptions are now due

Please send all subscriptions to:
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Mountain Ash CF45 4RL

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These rates include non-caving insurance.

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Editorial

Still awake then!?

On a recent foray to the Hunters' Lodge I was approached by Hallowe'en Rift digger, fashion guru and bon viveur Alex Gee. Alex enthused theatrically about the CSS Newsletter and suggested that perhaps we could turn it into an even more useful publication if we printed it in scroll format on softer paper, using smaller pages with perforations . . .

Thanks to all those who have provided material for the newsletter over 2010. Please keep it coming.

 **Mark Lumley**

Please send all material to:



**Mark Lumley, The Creative Edge
7 Langleys Lane, Clapton, Radstock
Somerset BA3 4DX**

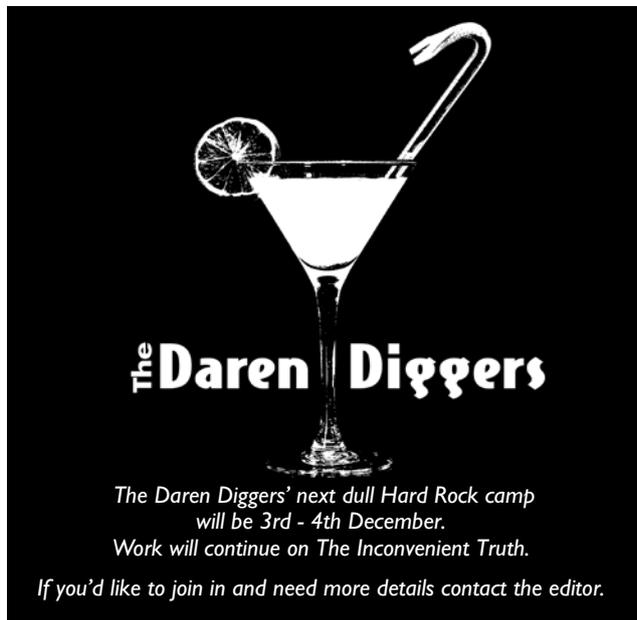
**Send text for your article as .doc or similar,
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**Convert photos, surveys and other images
to decent-sized .jpeg, .tif, .psd or .eps files.**

JRat's Digging award 2010

A good time was had by all at the Hunters' Lodge for the presentation of JRat's Digging Award on November 20th. This was preceded by a slideshow on recent breakthroughs in Charterhouse by Alison Moody and a demonstration by Graham Mullan of the benefits of 3d surveys in cave exploration.

Congratulations to the Charterhouse team on winning the award for the second year running (or should that be crawling). If there was a wooden spoon for the event this would have gone to ATLAS who managed to lose as much cave as they found in 2010.



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Richard Dewsnap from Usk renewed his Prospective Member recently, and the committee now proposes him for full membership with members having met him for caving trips and at social events over the past year. Tel 07841 646939. richard.dewsnap@tatasteel.com

The committee also proposes **Richard** and **Rachel Dearden** as full members. Welcome to new Prospective Member

Simon Elliott, 3 Hayle, East Tilbury, Essex RM18 8RN. Tel 07540 131429. simonelliott29@hotmail.com

Helen Rider has renewed her Prospective Membership. Helen's weekend phone number: 01873 811085.

Ray Smith has re-joined and changed status to Associate Member as he is living in the USA.

Trevor Thompson's new email: trevor.thompson@scarlet.be



Matt Voysey, AKA Badgerman prepares for hibernation in Shepton Mallett!

CHARTERHOUSE

The Obstacle Course

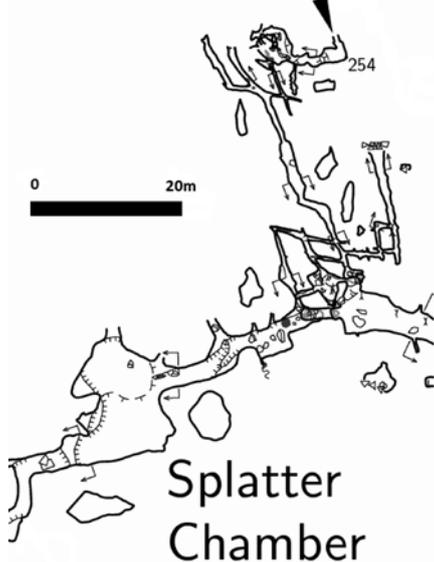
by John Cooper

(Surveys produced by Andrew Atkinson)

To get into this cave the first obstacle to be overcome is to find a leader. Access is controlled by the Charterhouse Caving Company Ltd (CCC). Axbridge Caving Group, Bristol Exploration Club, Cerburus Speleological Society, Mendip Caving Group, Mendip Nature Research Committee, Shepton Mallet Caving Club, South Bristol Speleological Society, Toby Caving Club, University of Bristol Speleological Society and the Wessex Cave Club are each entitled to have two leaders and there are also two guest leaders for use by other clubs. However not all clubs have taken up their two leaders; visiting clubs having difficulty finding a leader should approach the CCC secretary who should be able to put them in touch with a leader (look on their new web site <http://charterhouse-caving-company.ltd.uk/wiki/doku.php>). Party size is limited to leader plus 3 experienced cavers.

Next ensure that your caving gear is clean. Muddy oversuits are not allowed!

Charterhouse Entrance



The cave starts easily with a climb down just inside the gate, then a short crawl and a clamber up. A drop down through boulders then leads to the top of the first rift, a somewhat smaller version of the St Cuthbert's Swallett entrance rift. At the bottom feet are fed horizontally along then down until a standing position is achieved. This allows head first access to the continuing rift. After only a few metres a sharp turn right enters a short tight rift leading to the original gate and standing room.



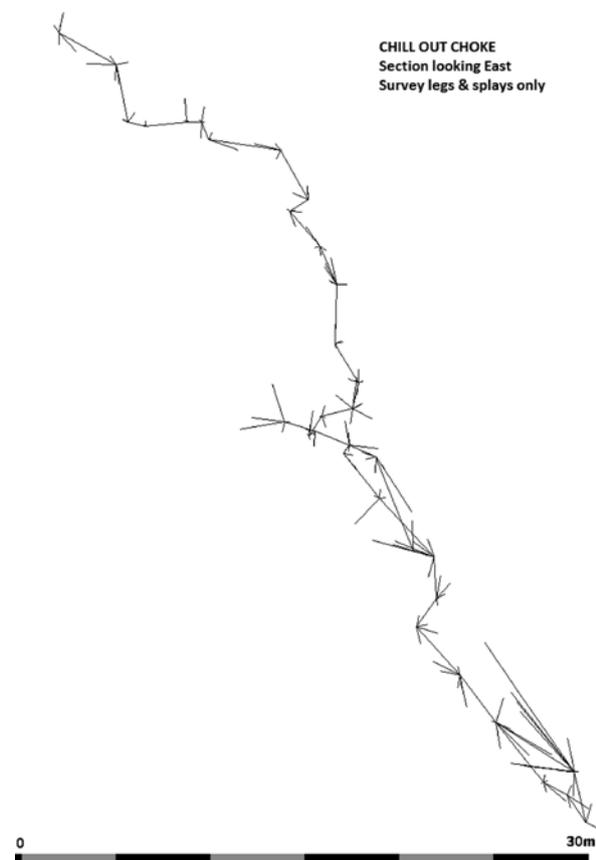
Tony Boycott emerging from Gate Squeeze
Photo: Ali Moody

Turn left and a crawly bit of passage leads to another right turn along a wet sideways grovel, yet another right turn along a short crawly bit of passage then a left turn into yet another wet sideways grovel. Another short crawly bit and finally you are into the larger passages and boulder hopping for a few minutes.



John Biffin in Aragonite Crawl
Photo: Pete Hann

The next obstacle is Aragonite crawl, a bypass dug out to prevent damage to formations on the pretty route to Grotto of the Singing Stal. Once in the Grotto refreshment can be taken from the bucket of water. There is a really nice video clip made by BEC members Stu Gardiner and Hels Warren on YouTube which can be found via <http://ukcaving.com/board/index.php?topic=9347.25> (October 17 2010) which covers the cave to this point



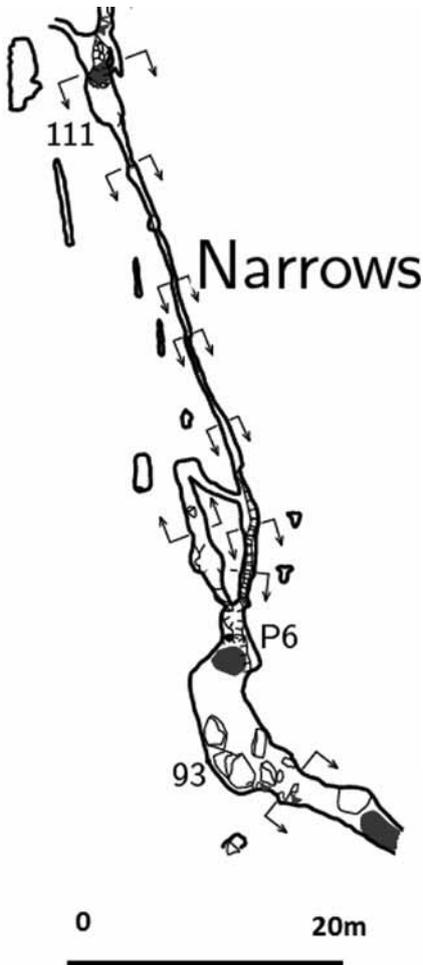
CHILL OUT CHOKE
Section looking East
Survey legs & splays only

From here a descent through Chill Out Choke is negotiated via a second gate and a short fixed iron ladder. Although well cemented in the upper reaches the voids get larger the lower one gets as can be seen from the splays on the section! For the lower part a fixed guideline can be followed through the safest route.



Dave Walker emerging from Bottom of Chill Out Choke
Photo: Pete Hann

Clamber down the boulders in Rock & Roll Rift then climb down Gloop Pot and it's not long until the Narrows are reached.



I prefer to go through right side down but it's up to you. Although none of the pinch points are as tight as the old entrance gate rift the cumulative nature puts a psychological strain on any but the slimmest caver. Don't be fooled by the wider bit two thirds of the way

through, there's still one pinch point to go! A nice winding canyon then leads to the pitch. Hope you brought your ladder and lifeline to attach to the P-hangers!



Mak Kellaway in the Narrows
Photo: Pete Hann

Through a few boulders then it's a nice walking passage, apart from the bits where you must crawl to avoid breaking formations, until Frozen Cascade is reached. Just before Frozen Cascade is a slippery bit of floor so be careful. To reach the sump, grovel in the stream then leave it up a gravel bank on the right, walk along the old passage then a final grovel in the stream. This is the current end for all except the diggers.

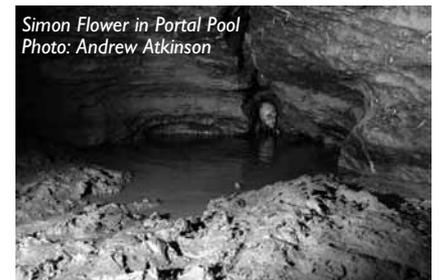
John Cooper in bedding squeeze at top of Frozen Cascade
Photo: Pete Hann

A tarpaulin protects the Frozen Cascade and from the top a tight bedding leads through to nicer passage. A couple of minutes on and Portal Pool is approached. You know you're close when the dam is reached and squeezing through a stal bedding is necessary, probably the tightest squeeze so far. In summer Portal Pool stays low but the rest of the year a pumping session using an Earby Pump (designed by Earby Pothole Club and used in Ireby Fell Cavern) might clear enough water to get you in, but will it stay low enough to get out again? Best not to risk it! This is the end of the 2008 cave.



Simon Flower in Diesel Duck
Photo: Pete Hann

Assuming it's summer there are no more obstacles for nearly an hour of walking and crawling, that is assuming Diesel Duck halfway along isn't being awkward and filling up! You know you're there by the smell of diesel. Do you really want to free dive back out through it?



Simon Flower in Portal Pool
Photo: Andrew Atkinson



Ali Moody in Gravel Crawl
Photo: Pete Hann



Approaching the end of the 2009 cave is a section of slippery boulders then a gravelly swim.

More boulder hopping then staying low reaches the Hall of Time, the end of the 2009 cave. However staying high reaches the (W)hole of Time. Here the Flyover, a roped climb and traverse with a ladder down at the end, leads into the 2010 cave. Did you bring your cows tail for safe passage of the traverse?

A short walk, a short crawl, roll onto the back then squeeze vertically up through boulders [see back page of the newsletter] and you're back into

big bouldery passage.

Lots of nice boulder hopping now. Don't break a leg, it's not an easy place to get you out of! Down the passage and turning right at Zebra Junction will eventually get you to the next pitch, currently laddered for the diggers but may well be removed before the cave is fully opened. Check if you need to bring your own. (Oh, I forgot to mention the deep water filled pots en route to the ladder pitch, one of which can be passed by climbing up over the boulders then down the handline on the far side.)

More nice ambling along to the terminal sump, just don't get swallowed by the glutinous mud on the way!

There are some serious obstacles in side passages but I'm ignoring them for the moment! Ask Pete Hann if you're really interested!

There's just one final obstacle to overcome. You're now at the bottom of the 4th deepest cave in the UK, 220m down. It's uphill to get out!

References:

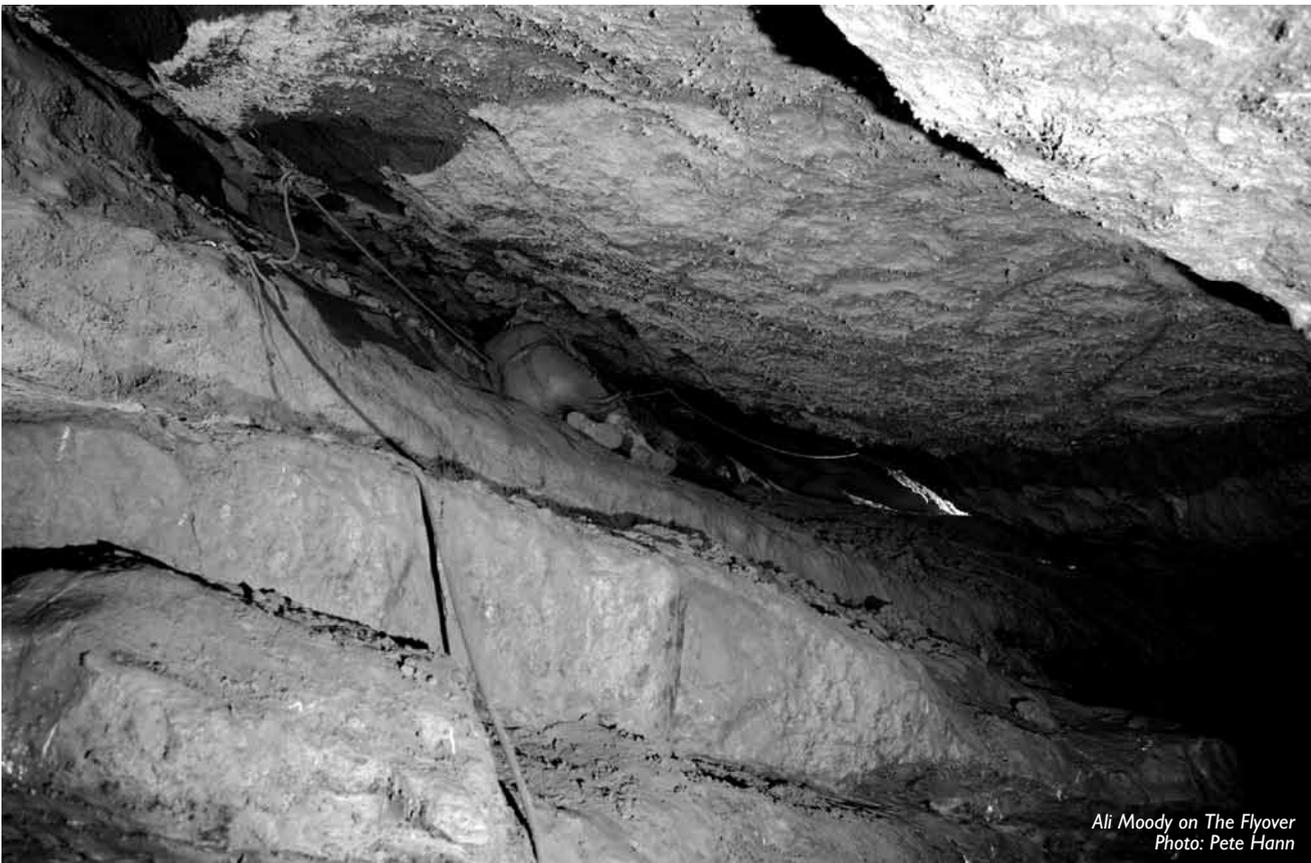
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Descent 216 October/November 2010, pp 26-28. Beyond Portal Pool by Alison Moody

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Ali Moody on The Flyover
Photo: Pete Hann

TJ's Swallet, Ores Close

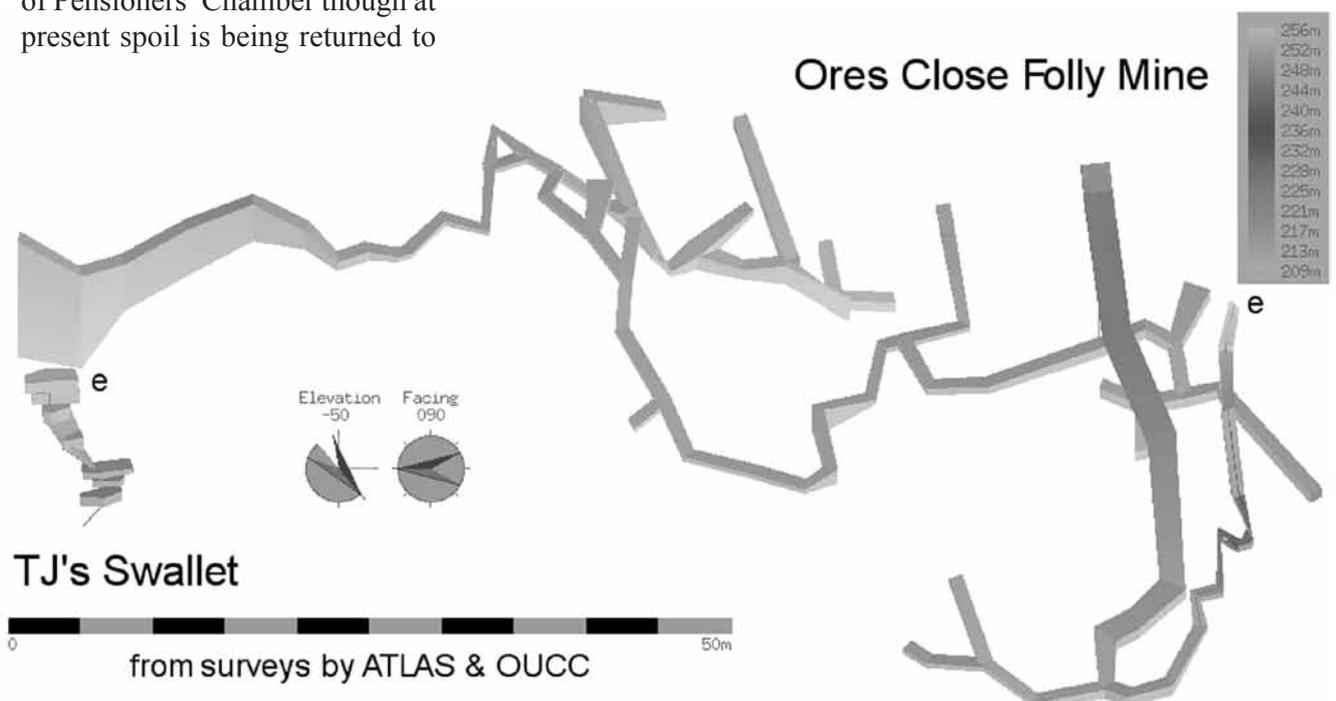
by Duncan Price

The CSS ATLAS contingent have been beavering away at Ores Close near to Pen Hill with their dig at TJ's Swallet – first started by Andy Watson and described in a previous edition of this ~~drive~~ newsletter [Vol 52 No. 6]. Aided by assistance from Dr Nobel on occasion, a strong draught was revealed with a view into an open black void. Several more trips were required to engineer a route suitable for the more well-nourished digger and on 13th November this loose and very dangerous chamber (Pensioners' Chamber) was gained. About 5m of depth was gained with an ongoing tight rift from which the draught came. The extension was considered too dangerous to dig and once it had been surveyed the entrance to it was blocked and work started on a retaining wall to secure the old part of the dig. The intention now is to dig straight down to intercept the continuation of Pensioners' Chamber though at present spoil is being returned to

the cave to construct the necessary reinforcement. We know that there is cave to be found in this area from reports in the 1930s (see *Belfry Bulletin No 517, Autumn 2003* - available online from the BEC website for more details) and there is the nearby Ores Close Folly Mine in the garden of the farm house that awaits further investigation once a more person-friendly gate has been installed. The length of TJ's Swallet was extended to 16 m with a depth of 11 m but is more like half of this at present.



TJ's Photo: Paul Stillman



ANGLO-IRISH TEAM RESCUE AMERICAN CAVERS FROM MAMMOTH CAVE.

by Charles Bailey

During our late summer holiday in the USA, leaving Zion canyon national park and heading for Bryce canyon national park, I was surprised to see on the tourist map, Mammoth cave marked. As Judith was a confirmed non-caver, I hadn't planned to venture underground during the holiday, but here was an opportunity we couldn't turn down. Anyway, we'd only be in the big show cave, not real caving.

Navigation by the free (but inevitably therefore poor) map went surprisingly well initially, and as we turned off onto 'Mammoth road', we were clearly on the right track. The approach road was, well, more of a dirt track; not quite in keeping with a major international tourist attraction and World Heritage Site, but approach roads to Blaenavon aren't exactly impressive either.

Finally a 'Mammoth cave' sign, and we were turning into the car park. Mid-morning, on 'Labor Day', and we were the first there. A glance at the tourist information, and well, it wasn't as big as we thought. However, five entrances meant we had the option for multiple through trips. Things were looking up! With a spurt of enthusiasm, we geared up with woolly hat and head-torches, and completed the first epic through trip in ten minutes, including photographing the historic event. At this point, Judith decided that a 10 minute caving career was more than adequate.

By this time, the crack American team had shown up. The area was a haven for off-road bikers and associated family members, and bit by bit, the car park filled

up to bursting point (10 cars), overwhelming the one composting toilet.

As the elite teams of America's finest descended, slowly it became apparent that more attention should have been paid to the light arrangement than the burger stall. One half of the visiting Anglo-Irish team volunteered to perform a heroic rescue mission (Mum and Dad were a little concerned as little Jonny and chums hadn't appeared yet), whilst the other half elected to stay on the surface to man the camera.



Charles Bailey, international cave rescuer extraordinaire assesses the magnitude of the task ahead.

So, two impromptu bits of cave guiding later – to the same group of lads – and it was time to leave. By this time, hordes of international media must surely be on their way, so we elected to make a quiet exit.

If you're ever over that way it's worth popping in, but quite frankly, you'd be better looking up the real Mammoth Cave. That's in Kentucky, by the way, not Utah!



The Crack American Team Photos: Charles Bailey

Welcome to Mammoth Cave!

This popular cave was formed by cooling lava and water. It has five entrances and over 2,100 feet of passages.

Entrance to Mammoth Cave

Fringed Myotis
See to Right

Mammoth Cave is a popular recreation site with forest visitors. The cave is also frequented by seven species of bats, including two state sensitive species bats—the Townsend's Big-eared Bat and Fringed Myotis. Other species of bats observed at Mammoth Cave include the Long-eared Myotis, Big Brown bat, Long-legged Myotis, and the Eastern Long-eared Myotis.

Pottering About on Mendip

by
John Cooper

Charterhouse Cave

Saturday 23rd October 2010.

Ali Moody (WCC), Pete Moody (UBSS) and myself. Heavy rain meant the GB Inlet was delivering a mass of brown water into Highway 120 at the Confluence. Setting up protective tarpaulins at the Riser was today's objective with a spell on clearing at the top. Two bolts placed and hand lines installed up the second climb. Will not be an easy dig. 4½ hours.

Saturday 6th November 2010.

Three parties in today, one digging, one surveying and one a leaders' consolidation. I was with Andrew Atkinson (UBSS) and Ross Hemsley (UBSS) surveying. The previous Saturday had done from Singing Stal Chamber, the end of the 1982 cave, down through Chill Out Choke to the top of Rock and Roll Rift before the Disto-X stopped working. Today we were able to start there and go all the way to link up with Frozen Cascade where we stopped on 9th October. There was a loud bang when we were surveying beneath the Riser! I'm told there was an even louder one earlier at the Sand Dig. 5¼ hours.

Saturday 13th November 2010.

Pete Hann, Ali Moody, Glenn Phelps (Devon Speleological Society) and self on a spoil clearing trip to Sand Dig. 4½ hours.

Saturday 20th November 2010.

Peter Buckley (WCC), Pete Hann, Ali Moody, Adrian Vanderplank (WCC) and self. All down to Sand dig where Pete and Adrian were left to complete the shot holes started last week and then demolish them whilst the rest of us went and cleared spoil at the Riser. Had to be out early as it was the JRat digging award presentation in the evening. 5 hours.

Charterhouse Warren Farm

Swallet

Thursday 11th November 2010.

Andrew Atkinson, Ali Moody and myself. The intention was a modern survey of the cave. The actual was the entrance shaft, including the Corkscrew, and part of Mitchell's Chamber before the Disto-X decided it's batteries were running too low. 2 hours.

Swildon's Hole

Sunday 24th October 2010.

John & Barry on a trip to Sump 2. Still very dry, no water going in entrance despite yesterday's downpour. Sump 1 still has a good airspace as has Sump 2. Cave heaving with many different groups today, novices to experienced all in evidence. With just 2 of us we managed to overtake anyone in our way so weren't held up.

Sunday 7th November 2010.

John & Barry on a trip to look down Shatter Pot. At last there was a stream flowing into the entrance! A good job too as the muddy mess at the bottom of Jacob's Ladder is going to need a few floods to clean up! In Tratman's Temple noticed a good flow of water from an inlet on the North-West side. Looks like someone's had a dig here in the past but only for a couple of feet under/into the stal flow. The smell of Diesel was first noted after going past Balch's Forbidden Grotto and got stronger as we went in; it was draughting towards us today. Another good flow of water was going into the First Mud Sump. It was coming down the stal flow on the left hand side of the passage just after clambering over the boulders after going through the deep water, the St Paul's Grotto area. Three inches of water in the Second Mud Sump yet the base of the aven on the far side was dry and the pipe was delivering a steady trickle out the far end. Met several parties as we came out but not held up once.

Sunday 14th November 2010.

John & Barry on a trip to the Mud Sump. En route checked out the climb up to Tratman's Temple as there were reports of collapse in the area. We found one boulder about 50cm square by 30 cm thick had slid out of the top wall and was sitting on the ledge. There was a bit of mud and a couple of fist sized rocks left hanging which fell out when touched, one narrowly missing a party below. However the rest seem OK, or at least as safe as they've always been.

SWILDON'S HOLE

Just a word of caution ... the boulders 10 metres inside the entrance have shifted yet again and various holes in the floor have opened up. The cave has clearly taken a considerable amount of surface water over the last week.

The short dry way, which all summer until now has been taking more water than the wet way, is now dry again. Moreover there is a new route from the bottom of Jacobs Ladder up into the entrance chamber; avoiding Jacobs Ladder altogether, but it looks decidedly dodgy.

Take extreme care in this section of the cave.

Matienzo

2010

by Steve Sharp

Early on Fri 6th Aug 2010 a car full of characters headed for Dover. With me were Paul (Footleg) a keen photographer who runs the photo salon at Hidden Earth, Nick Fincham a student and Tony Radmall a funeral director. I will leave the next 24 hours to your imagination!

This was to be my first caving trip away from the UK.

In the early hours of Saturday morning we crossed the French - Spanish Border. Matienzo is only a couple of hours away. We stopped at a local supermarket for a couple of bottles of wine (at least 45). I was left at the checkout to the amusement of the Spanish who all thought I had a serious drinking problem!

Matienzo lies within a large depression in Northern Spain; the area has many vast cave systems and huge potential for new discoveries.

During the weekend a fiesta was organized to thank the locals for their hospitality towards cavers over the last 50 years; events included a tug of war, football and many other competitions.

The Spanish won the football and almost everything else!

Our first trip was a short trip to Ezueka cave via the Giant Panda Entrance (found and dug by Les Williams in 2008) on Sunday morning to see who would fit through the squeeze. Giant Panda has three pitches and cuts two hours journey time from the main entrance which is low and wet for most of the duration.

Our first major trip was on Monday - an epic 18hr trip into Ezueka cave

to the far reaches of the Gower inlet. The previous year saw Footleg bolt the Chocolate Traverse which leads up to a high level, virgin stream passage.

We spent the rest of the day and well into the early hours exploring many high level leads which led to some high avens containing many varied formations; the whole area contained a huge amount of loose boulders.

We arrived back at the apartment at 06.30 to warm up Spaghetti Bolognese which went down well with some red wine at this unearthly hour.

On Wednesday a few of us explored Riana cave which lies in the next village, Ezueka and Riana cave link up through a tight connection (not

for the faint hearted). Riana cave is an old fossil system; our mission was to find some virgin passage! The evening was spent with good food and wine in Pablo's Bar.

The rest of the week saw a photographic trip and more exploration in Ezueka cave yielding some new passage and an excursion into the Thunderdome, a huge conical-shaped chamber.

Matienzo is well worth a visit if just to explore some of the many vast systems, the real fun is the huge potential the area holds for new discoveries

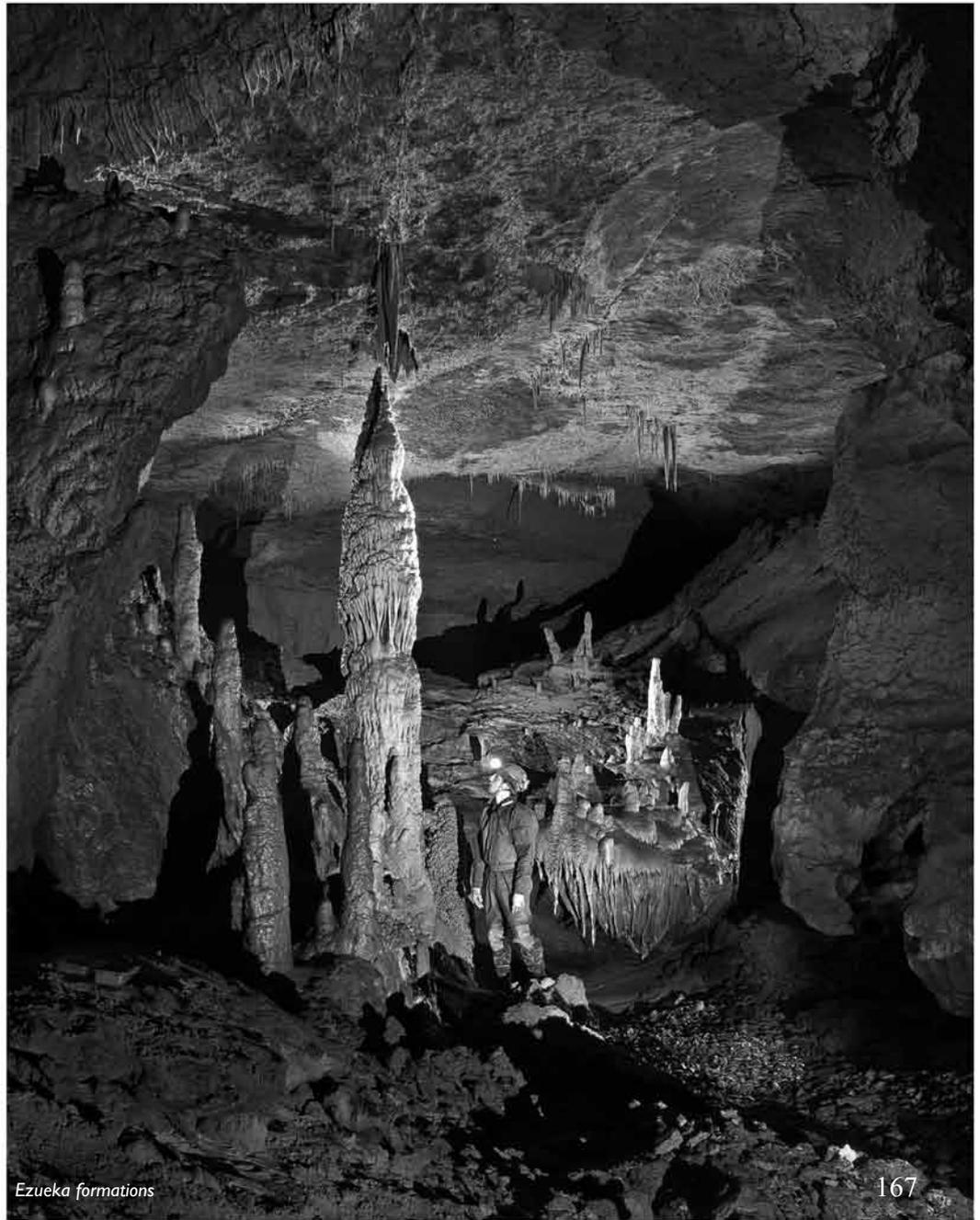
I can't wait to get back



*Ascending new discoveries
above the Gower Inlet.
Ezueka cave.
All Photos: Steve Sharp*



Riano Cave



Ezueka formations

Montenegro 2010

by Joe Duxbury

The expedition to Montenegro in 2009 resulted in the cave PT4 being extended to a depth estimated to be over 400m, with a huge black space in front. So this year we went with a larger team, to see what lay ahead.

The travel plan was much as it was in 2009: four of us (John Stevens (Chelsea), Paul Taylor, Robin Weare (Hades), and myself) drove a 15-seater minibus, with 3 seats removed, out with the caving and camping gear, and picked up the remaining eight (Dave Appleing, Chris Backhouse, Tom Baker (Craven), Chris J Binding (Cerberus), Mike Bottomley (Craven), Fay Hartley (Burnley), Carmen Smith (Wessex), and Mark Tringham) at Dubrovnik Airport.

Paul and I collected the minibus on Thursday 1 July, and loaded it with Chris Backhouse's help that evening. The next morning we drove to Newbury and picked up John and Robin, and more gear. We then drove to France by the Channel Tunnel, then successively through Belgium, the Netherlands (see, we added another country this year!) and into Germany. We dosed overnight in the first parkplatz of our tour (we really ought to produce a dossers' guide to Europe) and the next day we crossed into Austria and Slovenia, and we reached Croatia by nightfall. For that night's stop we found the same rest area as last year. On down the long coastal motorway to its end (no more has been built since last year), through the short stretch of Bosnia Herzegovina, and to Dubrovnik Airport.

Despite the minibus being restricted to 60mph, we had only encountered one large traffic jam, and we were there almost on time. Unfortunately there was no-one from the Kotor club PKP to meet us, and there was not room in the minibus for all twelve of us. So four of us (Dave, Chris, Mike and Tom) took a taxi for the short journey to the border with Montenegro, and the rest stayed with the minibus. Once at the border, the taxi group walked through, while those in the minibus drove through and continued to Risan. We did have a problem with the green card being invalid, because it was out of date, so we had to pay €30 to get a valid one.

From Risan we drove up into the hills to the farm at Ledence, and found the farmer's wife. She took us to an older man (her father, or father-in-law?) and although we didn't completely understand each other, he agreed to let us camp on the same field as last year.

We unloaded, and Paul drove off to pick up the remaining four, now ensconced in some bar on the road to Herceg Novi. The rest of us set about putting the camp together. Carmen had bought a splendid marquee, and this was a great advantage. It



Location of campsite relative to Risan

meant the GCRG Khyam could be used solely for cooking, and the marquee for eating and drinking. We had to take the sides off because of high winds, but it served its purpose very well. We went up to the bar at Grkavac, to announce our presence, and I expect they were glad to see us: think of all the extra income they would have! And the beer was still only €1 a bottle! 'Mole' was still in his usual place.

We had to go to Risan and get registered the next morning, so most of us did this and some shopping, while the rest started to sort out the ropes and tackle for PT4. When we returned after registering and shopping, 2 teams set off to start rigging PT4, and later on, I went up with Dave, Fay and John with more gear. We set up a tarpaulin shelter 'to keep the rain off' gear that would be left outside the cave, rather than taking it back to camp.



Pištet Pot. Photo: Dave Appleing



Montenegro



Location of Risan

While rigging of PT4 was being continued, Dave, Fay, John, Robin and I went to Pištet Pot. For an 'obvious pot' it took some time to find, as the trees must have grown.



Pištet Pot from below Photo: Dave Appleing

As the others rigged and descended it, John and I continued towards Pištet village and relocated the spring and the adjacent sink. There was hardly any water coming from it. We took photos and GPS readings and returned. Pištet Pot didn't go far, but a live artillery shell was found in it!



Unexploded shell in Pištet Pot Photo: Dave Appleing

On the way back to camp, we passed through a shaded area that was distinctly cool. So we looked around and found a draughting hole. Dave and John went in a short way, and considered it worth a further look.

So the next day, the same team took some tackle to Solinski Hole (named after the hill it was on the side of), and I went to Terrace Cave to sort out how the undescended pitch should be rigged. It didn't take long to do this, so while I was waiting I climbed up over the rock



John Stevens in Solinski Hole Photo: Dave Appleing

outcrop above the entrance. Not far away I found a wide rift with a cave entrance at one end, dropping down a shaft. Unfortunately, this had already been located, and was in fact PT3. Solinski Hole developed into a big chamber, but ended in a rift that was too tight.

So they returned with me to Terrace Cave. Soon after, Paul arrived with a drill and I put a couple of bolts into the wall of the draughting rift. A descent of 5m enabled us to continue along the rift, up and over piles of debris, and the draught was lost. Further on, we came out at the bottom of a daylight shaft. It was the bottom of PT3. We confirmed this when Dave went through and John and I, at the top of the entrance pitch, were able to see him below.



Terrace Cave Photo: Dave Appleing

Meanwhile, in PT4, Chris Binding, Mike and Tom got to a sump. The survey showed this to be approximately 435m below the

entrance. It looked wide open, and is still well over 200m above sea level, so the prospects are still good.

Mark had identified a closed depression on the map, in an area to the north and west of the main path, just to the north of PT3. So our initial prospecting efforts were concentrated in this area. John and Dave had come across a chain of sinkholes here, so Dave, Fay, John, Robin and I went for a look. One deep sinkhole had cold air in the bottom, and vegetation could be seen blowing gently. We dug against the left hand wall for a time, but the rocks we were pulling out were small, and there was no prospect of them ending. So we continued northwards. Dave and John went off to the left, and Fay, Robin and I found a deep rift on the right hand side of sinkhole no. 4. Robin went down but it was blocked at the bottom.

So that we didn't have to lug all our kit back to camp every day, we took to leaving it hidden up on the hill. Unfortunately, one day we can't have hidden it very well, because some rope, kitbags, and Robin's lamp were stolen. Our host, the farmer, had his suspicions, but we never found the offender.

At last I got to visit PT4. I went with Fay to have a look at the alternative way on to the left, at the top of pitch 8. Descending the cave was just as awkward as I remembered from last year, especially with a drill, but we got to the new route eventually, and I put a bolt in at the top of a boulder slope. At the bottom of this was a drop of about 5m, which I also rigged with a bolt. This drop took us into a chamber with a low mud dam on the far side. Climbing over this, down a short muddy slope, we got into a larger chamber, which we descended down a long tilted slab of grey rock. There were several ways on from here, most of them leading to yet another chamber below. Two of them were steep drops, but one could be free climbed, and we ended up in a long chamber, with a sheer side wall. Facing this wall, to the right was a clean-washed area, with drops to a floor that could be seen maybe 15m below. To the left was a series of muddy holes, with black voids below. Lobbing rocks and shouting produced a huge echo. It must be 20m or so deep. Does this lead to an upstream series,

while the clean-washed area drops down the aven at the bottom of Mud Slide Pitch? Without another rope to get any further, Fay and I started out. We met Tom, Mike, and Carmen at the bottom of pitch 7, and Mike took the drill out for me.



Stipsa Pot entrance Photo: Dave Appleing



Stipsa Pot from inside Photo: Dave Appleing

I managed to negotiate the pinch point near the top of pitch 5 much more easily than before, and using CJB's advice to use only a chest jammer and Pantin on pitch 3 made that, too, a lot easier.

On 11 July we drove to Kotor to pick up Uroš Akšamovic, and took the opportunity to have a rest day. Some of us wandered round Kotor, others just sat and drank beer while watching the tourists from the cruise ships. Then we drove back to Perast, where some went for a swim, and we ended with a meal in a restaurant.

Dave and John had found a deep rift which they gave the provisional

name of Alum Pot, because it had a bridge visible below. It was later renamed Stipsa Pot, 'Stipsa' being Serbian for 'Alum'.

I went with them and Fay to explore it further, but we didn't have enough rope, so we returned the next day, joined by Roman Hapka and Uroš. I put some bolts in the right hand wall and we were able to reach the bottom. But it was also blind. John surveyed it. Roman had a near miss when a large rock came crashing down while he was on the rope; he was very angry, but no-one had dislodged it, it had just fallen spontaneously.

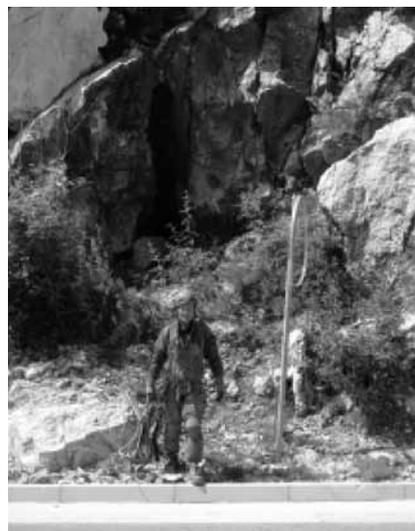
Not far from Stipsa was a hole Dave found, which looked out over a shaft lit by daylight from a higher opening. John and I visited Daylight Hole, and I entered by a third, lower entrance which could be clambered into. At the bottom there were strongly draughting holes to both left and right, but they both closed down to narrow slots.



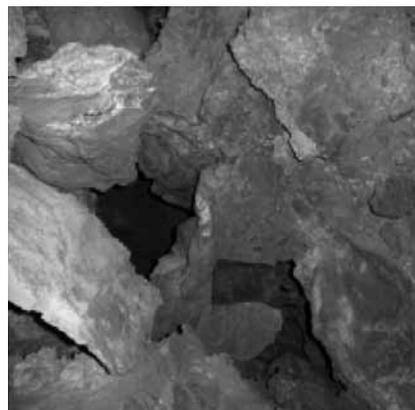
Daylight Hole from inside Photo: John Stevens

On the way up to Stipsa with John and Uroš, we encountered a 'horned viper' lying across the path. It didn't respond when I poked it with a stick, but slid off quickly when I started to step over it. Vipera Ammodytes is reputed to be one of the most dangerous European snakes!

On the new road from the coast, we had noticed a gaping hole in the cliff right by the road. This had been given a preliminary look by Chris, Mike, and Tom, and at the bottom of a 17m entrance pitch was a rubble-floored chamber with tantalising holes at the far end. I visited Road Sign Cave with Robin, taking another rope.



Road Sign Cave entrance Photo: Uroš Akšamovic



The hole in Road Sign Cave and the rock we moved Photo: Chris Backhouse

We managed to move some rocks, including a large one which we levered down the hole below us, producing an impressive booming noise. We stuck a rope down, and Robin went down to investigate, but after about 15m he reached the end of the rope without getting to the bottom. We retreated and walked back to camp.



Entrance pitch, Road Sign Cave Photo: Mark Tringham



The next day we went back with more rope, joined by Paul, Mark, and Uroš. The second pitch was about 30m to a chamber. A slot from the bottom of this led to a pitch of about 15m to a cross rift. The upper end was blocked by a flowstone slope with a gour pool at the bottom, and the lower end led to a hole in the floor, which Uroš and Robin partially descended then crossed to a rift. This took them to a chamber with no way on. Opposite the third pitch was what looked like a blind pot, but when I roped down it there was a small hole at floor level. Entering this feet-first, pushing the rope behind me, I got over the edge and went down a pitch of about 11m, past a chamber. The rift at the bottom was choked by formations. Because no-one had stayed at the bottom they had reached, it wasn't certain whether this was the same place. We surveyed the cave, took photos, and left.

As this was our final evening, we went to Perast and had some drinks at the beach bar, then finished off with a meal at a waterside restaurant.

Paul, with Mike riding shotgun, drove Uroš to Kotor, and Mark to the airport at Tivat, while the rest of us packed up. We finished well before Paul returned, so we took refuge from the sun in the ever-moving shade. After loading the minibus, we went up to the bar for a farewell drink, then left for the frontier with Croatia. To our disbelief, we were stopped here for the very same reason Paul had been stopped last year – we were accused of being a bus for hire. But once again we convinced them that we weren't, and carried on. At

Cavtat we in the minibus dropped off the team members flying home, and once we had made sure they had found accommodation, we set off on our long homeward drive. That night we got as far as Modruš (“Mad rush”), the same parkplatz in Croatia as we had used on the way down, but the northbound side was not as comfortable as the other. Besides, we were woken by rain, which rapidly became a deluge and threatened to come in over the sill of the tent. (Rain was a strange experience after 2 weeks of blistering heat).

In 2009, we were informed that a Slovenian caving club, Jamarski Klub Krka (JKK) had descended PT4 the month after us, but had not got any further. I made contact with Tanja Podrzaj, the JKK secretary, and arranged to meet on our way back through Slovenia. As we had made good time we were early, and although 10am on a Sunday was a bit much, Tanja was good enough to meet us. She took us to Krka, where JKK help with the showcave, and, while we told her of the latest developments in PT4, gave us a very welcome breakfast. She told us that they would be returning to PT4 the very next weekend.

[Note: when JKK got to the sump in PT4, a preliminary dive showed the sump to be short, and the passage continued.]

So then there was no choice but to carry on through to Austria and on to Germany, and despite some heavy traffic at times we kept moving. We found another parkplatz somewhere between Würzburg and Frankfurt. In the morning we ran into what may have been the Frankfurt rush hour, so foiling my idea of trying the main route up the Rhine Valley. However we managed to turn off and took the quieter road that we had come down on. Things went well until we met another traffic jam just before Aachen, and we had no choice but to sit this one out. We got to the Tunnel about 18:00 and I was home before midnight.

In conclusion, although a sump has been reached in PT4, it is still well over 200m to sea level, and we have not seen a passage capable of taking the vast amount of water that resurges at the coast. There are still inlets, and the huge void on the upstream side, to investigate.

We connected Terrace Cave to PT3, and made the first through trip. None of the other caves that we descended went to any great depth, despite their promising cold draughts.

We have found other promising sites much closer to Grkavac than PT4, and there remain vast unexplored areas to the south and east of Pištet.



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Editor's Note: Many thanks once again to John Cooper who compiled most of this Index, and thanks too for his sound, prudent advice on matters relating to the newsletter throughout the year.

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Photo: Steve Sharp

Meets List 09/10

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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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*Pete Hann looking up through boulder squeeze into High Time
Charterhouse Cave
Photo: Ali Moody*

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