

CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 54 Nos. 1 & 2 January/February 2012



**Tearing
Down
Gates**

**Faffing
Around**

**Montenegro
2011**



Photo: Steve Sharp

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Cover Photo: Green Lake Chamber, Withyhill Cave, Fairy Cave Quarry, Mendip.
Photos and illustrations not accredited are by the editor.

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Provisional **£20**

Provisional members made into Full members this year have to pay the Full member rate.

New members wishing to join should send a cheque payable to **Chelsea Spelæological Society** along with their membership application form to the Secretary. Members who are renewing a subscription should send the payment to the Treasurer. The committee will normally consider voting provisional members up to full membership after 6 months by which time they should have become known.

Provisional membership can be extended for another 6 months, but only once, if a Provisional Member has been unable to become known socially and as an active caver within the club. Please contact the Treasurer with any queries.

Editorial

Thanks to all those who have provided material for this newsletter, please keep it coming.



Mark Lumley

Please send all material to:

mark@creativeedge.me.uk

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Membership

Welcome to new provisional members:

Helen Nightingale
Aaron Potter
Anne Vanderplank

A plea from the CSS Librarian

If re-elected I plan to set aside the following dates to work on the Library at CSS (mostly cataloguing and filing):

Saturday 17th March.

If anyone is able to help I would be very grateful.

Dinner will be provided for all helpers on Saturday evening. Four people would be ideal as there is a limit to how many can fit in the Library to help at once. I won't be able to stay for the day on Sunday 18th so helpers could possibly cave then.

Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd April.

I would also be grateful of any help. I will be there for the whole weekend so may need more helpers so that some can cave one day and help in the Library another. Four people per day so potentially a maximum of eight. Again, dinner will be provided for all helpers on the Saturday evening.

No particular skills required other than basic computer literacy. However, we do have a number of foreign items to catalogue so at some point somebody with generally good foreign language skills would be a help. Definitely not essential though!

Anna Northover



LLYGAD LLWCHWR 2

THE FIRST YEAR

by Stuart France

A dry entrance to this short but pretty section of cave was made by Tony Donovan and others in 2010. This became widely known about from early in 2011, so 2011 is its first year of organised access to non-divers. Extensive and careful taping had already been done by Nig Rogers and others by the time the news and photos appeared in Descent magazine. There was a debate whether publicity was a good idea and whether the cave needed a gate in view of its easy access and the quality of its formations. In the end nothing was done except to install a logbook and an electronic caver counter on a trip that I made a trip on 26 March, then wait and see how things developed.

The logbook was originally housed in an alcove where the river passage is first met, but it was later moved near the top of the scaffolded shaft by Tony to prevent loss in severe floods. I collected the used pages on 30 December which showed 10 trips other than mine in March in December.

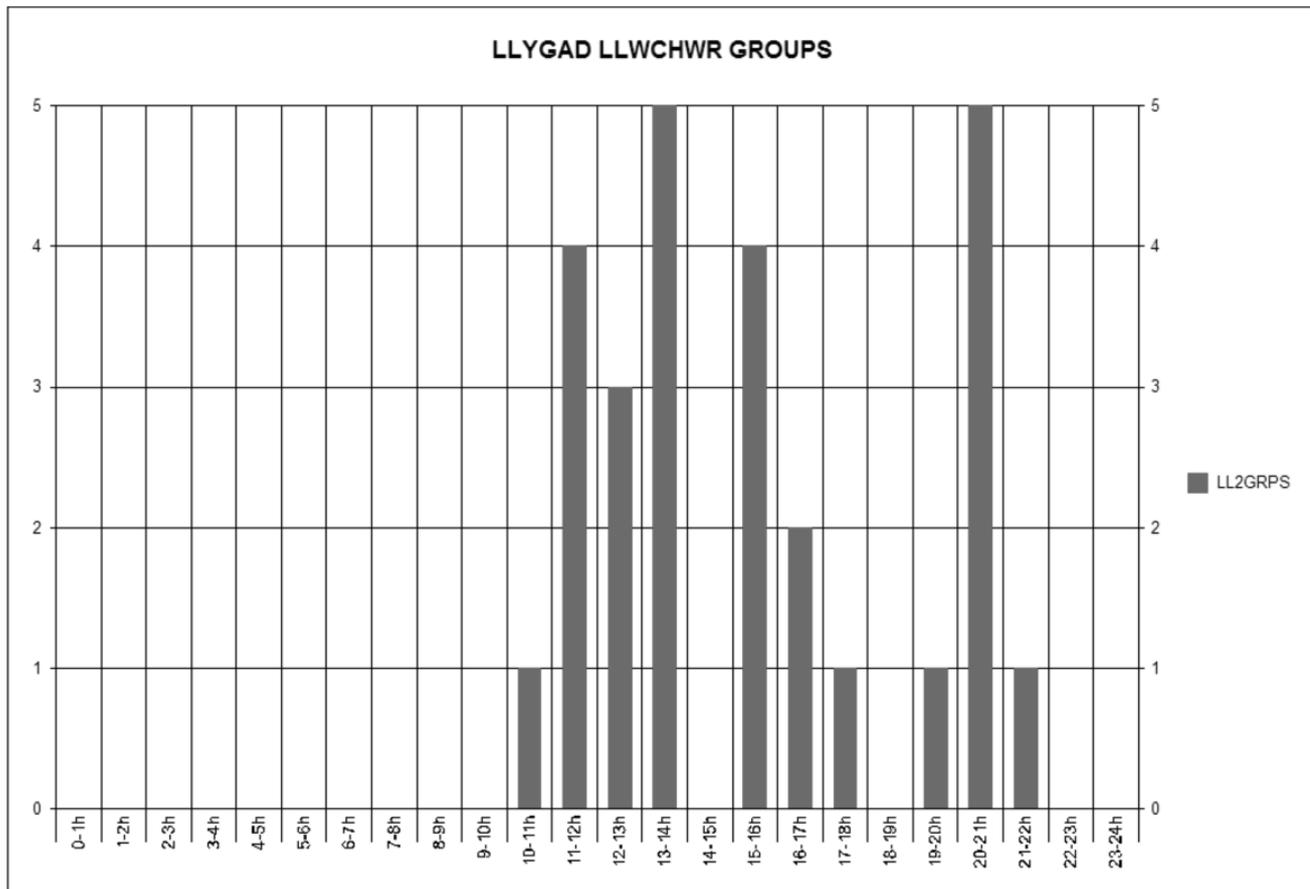
The caver counter is situated in the dry high level pretty passages, well above the river, and it will definitely be set off by anyone making a tour of the whole cave. It has a 20-second retriggerable timer that is activated by light. In other words, if there has been 20+ seconds of darkness then the next light detected is treated as being a new event and a 6-byte DD/MM/YY hh:mm:ss time stamp is created. The memory chip is 8KB, so well over a thousand events can be stored. There were 144 detections on the logger in roughly 9 months using 10% of its available memory. Sometimes the same group is detected more than once, when spending time taking photos for instance, or when its members have split up. An example of this was on Tuesday 19 April when 35 detections took place between 8.20pm and 9.15pm, the most likely explanation being a lengthy photographic session – nothing was recorded in the logbook. There were 13 detections covering a half hour period

on 26 March which was a separate group entering the cave as we were leaving. So it is safer to think of the counter results as the times of cave visits rather than trying to infer particular groupings or group size. Contact me for a copy of the raw data.

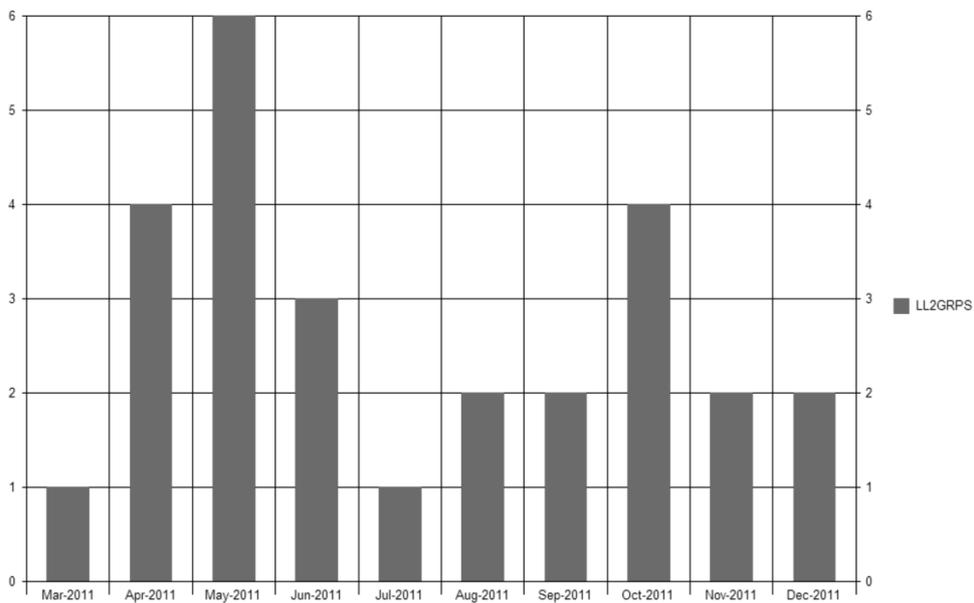
It is a fairly safe bet here that there is only one group in the cave at once, but on some dates there could be more than one. Sunday 1 May had groups of events at 2.00pm then again at 4.30pm, as did 5 May at 6pm and 8pm, so this might mean two groups were in the cave, or that one group explored the entire cave twice or that they split up. On all the other occasions the visitors did not stay for very long in the upper series.

There were nine trips recorded and four trips not recorded in the logbook from late March up to the end of August. After the end of August there is only one trip recorded in the logbook (excluding me in December) while seven others were not. So it seems that jamming the logbook behind the scaffolding near the top of the shaft has not worked in terms of visitors finding it or recognizing the bag for what it is. The counter has been left running for 2012, and someone needs to tie a big dangling label on to the logbook bag so that it attracts attention.

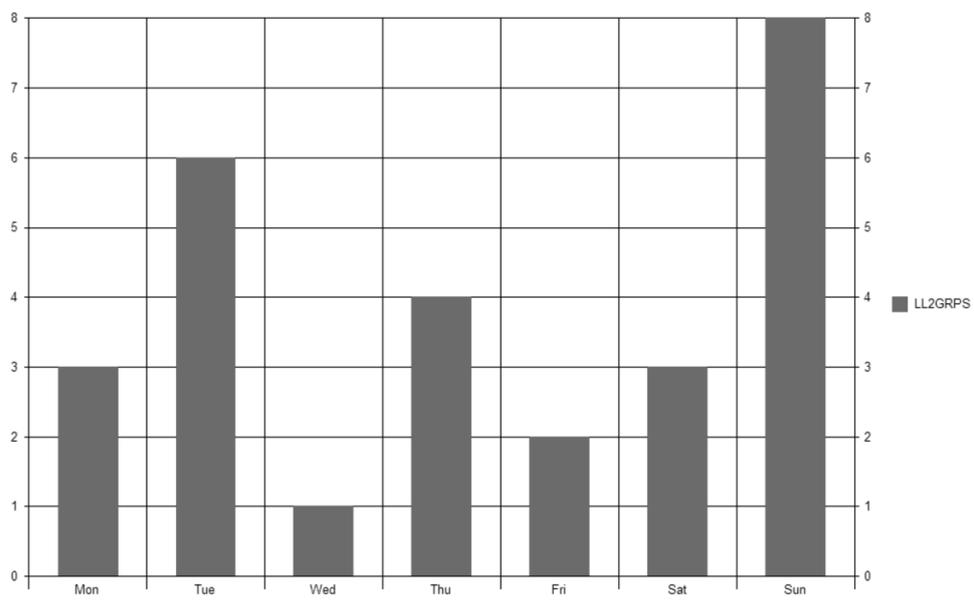
As to the cave itself, the entrance remains stable, the tapes are correct, and the formations are in pristine condition so there is no obvious cause for any concern.



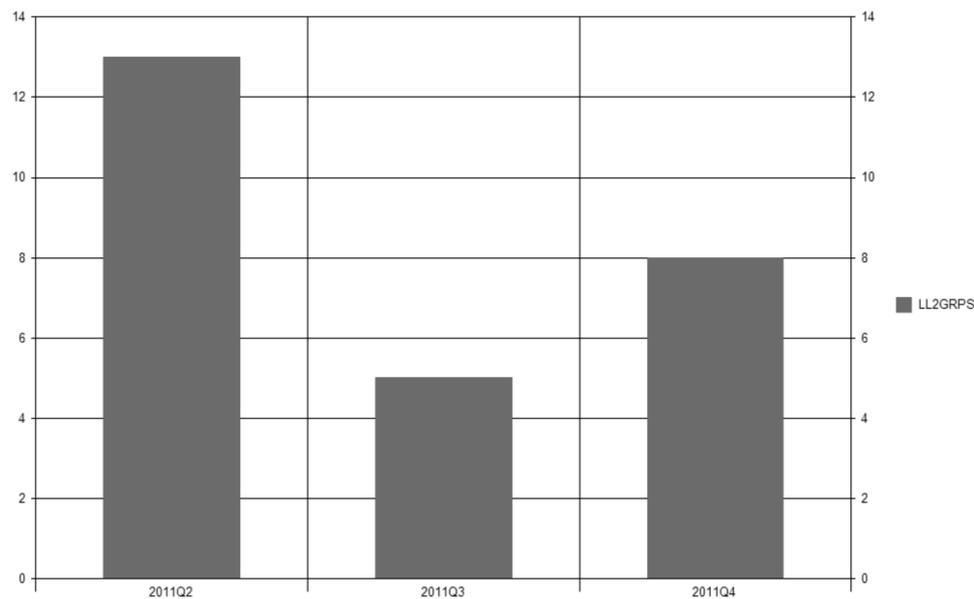
LLYGAD LLWCHWR GROUPS



LLYGAD LLWCHWR GROUPS



LLYGAD LLWCHWR GROUPS



Montenegro 2011

by Joe Duxbury



Returning to the campsite we were met by a scene that brought to mind a wartime casualty clearing station. People lying on camp beds, gathered in the shade by the edge of the field. A notice had been put up while we'd been out: 'Leper Colony. Keep out!'

During the second week of the GSS expedition to Montenegro, nearly half the team had been struck by what turned out to be salmonella. Extremely unpleasant and uncomfortable. The staff at the Tourist Office down in Risan were very helpful and told us how to find the hospital in Kotor, where the afflicted were able to get some treatment. The staff also put us in touch with someone with an apartment to rent, which we did, and so the worst-affected could get out of the heat, rehydrate, and have the use of a proper toilet. What was odd was that we had all eaten the same food and drunk the same water. Having so many people out of action meant that we could not capitalise on the many promising caves we had found. And we had found loads! Almost everywhere you went, there were holes to be looked at.

Up on top of the lapiaz, where the limestone surface was often etched into ever so sharp edges, there were potholes galore. But they were all blocked by stones and forest debris. Even the ones with good draughts ended in chokes, with the air percolating through the small voids.

The caves that did go for any distance were more likely to be found at the bottom of large rock faces. PT4 is the prime example, and this year we followed AS Meander Cave to more than 200m deep, and the area up by Jastrin do yielded three large openings: Sardine Sanctuary, Striptease Cave, and Sunbeam Hole.



Top:
The sick bay. Photo: John Stevens

Above:
Razor sharp lapiaz. Photo: Mile Read

Above right:
Sardine Sanctuary. Photo: John Stevens

Right:
Striptease Cave. Photo: John Stevens

Opposite page
Sunbeam Hole. Both photos: John Stevens



Sunbeam Hole had a good draught, and after Gary J, Lucy and Filip made a preliminary investigation, Gary went back with Joe and Rich Timms and explored it further. Unfortunately this was another example of an unfulfilled promise; after following the draught along some rubble-floored tubes, the passage opened out into a spacious 40m pitch, and then the cave closed down into a tube, blocked after about 20m. The cave passed through several bands of chert, which were also visible on the surface.



One evening we were visited by a local resident, who said he knew where there was a cave. He was wearing a 'Kameno More expedition' t-shirt, so he obviously had met cavers before, and knew something about our strange obsession. We managed to figure out from his very vigorous description that the cave started with a bit of a crawl, followed by a vertical descent, then by a lake that needed swimming, and then some cascades. This sounded very promising, particularly as this would be only the second occurrence of major underground water that we had encountered. He arranged to come and show us where this cave was.

The next day he came and collected me, Dave, and Gary J in his beat-up, but very serviceable, pickup. It turned out he was 'the dog-man' who in 2009 had stopped us using the track past his house by blocking it with his JCB. Needless to say, we kept quiet about this.

We collected a friend and spent some time wandering round the hillside to the south of the track. While I kept our guide (Ljuba) and his mate company and struggled to understand what they were saying, and make meaningful conversation, Dave and Gary found a tube above a large blocked arch, reached by a tricky traverse across a steep slope. It was clear this cave had been found before, as 'P B 25' was painted on the rocks opposite.

Gary entered the cave, passed through two chambers of increasing size, and reached the top of a big, open pitch. There was evidence inside of previous exploration; '17' had been written

on the wall of the second chamber, and there were bullets on the floor. On the other hand, Ljuba was conspicuously unable to find the cave he was looking for, and was quite embarrassed. After a beer (or two?) he treated us to a display of macho pickup driving on the way back.

The second day he did not turn up when he had said he would, so Mike R, John, Uroš and I went up to his house to find him. His wife told us he was up on the hill with a mate who 'really knew where the cave with the lake and the cascades' was. So we walked up the road through the tunnel and up the track. We found them too far west, and when we described Gary's Tricky Traverse cave, they decided it matched what they were looking for. Even with the GPS co-ordinates it took a while to find, but we eventually got there, and there was the paint on the rock.

I went into the open tube with a rope and had a look round, but didn't get any further than Gary had. While I was doing this, Ljuba decided the approach to the cave was too tricky, and started constructing a good, safe path across the top of the loose slope.

I came out to the sound of avalanching rocks and found a two-lane highway had been built!

So now when we come to revisit this cave (the prospect of an active streamway can't be ignored) it'll be easy to get to. Ljuba said that the initials 'P B' were those of the woman caver who'd found it, and that she was remarkable because of her large knockers!

However when I made enquiries about this cave within Serbian caving circles, it proved to be more likely that the initials 'P B' stood for the caving club Proteus Belgrade, which was active in the 60s but was now defunct. None of my enquiries have produced a description of the cave, so it looks like we'll just have to explore it all over again.

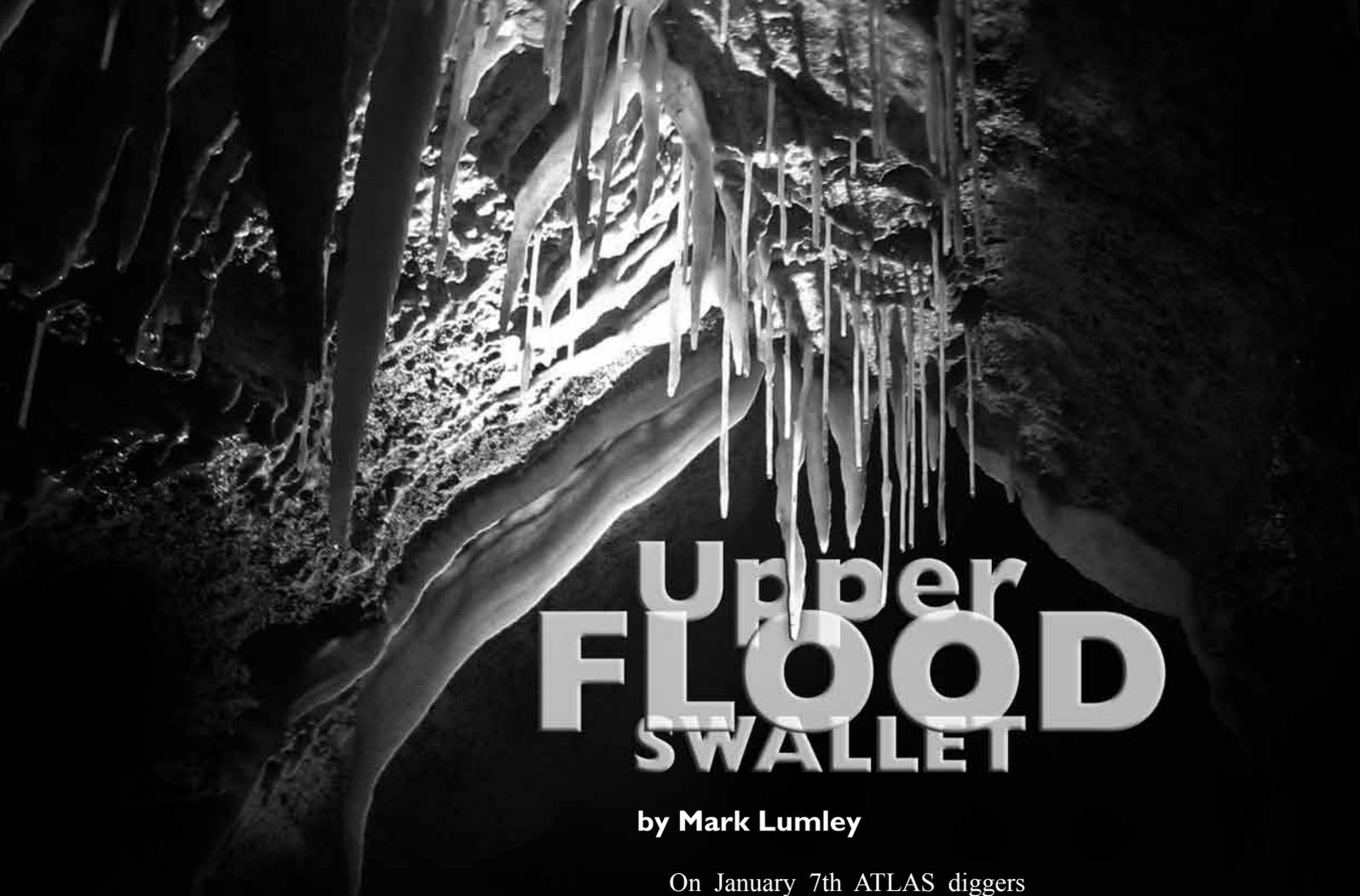
Habitation Cave was another example of a large chamber at the base of a cliff. It showed signs of previous use: walls, bones, and the remains of fire. But there were no ways on.

One of the last items to be found was quite close to the new road. Jill Brunson and John Stevens were avoiding large spiders' webs while bashing through the scrub, when they came across Eye Spider Pot. Thrown stones rattled and banged loudly for over 10 seconds, so it is very promising. It is easily reached from a track that passes a farm by the road.

All these new and promising finds made up to some extent our disappointment in finding the sump at the bottom of PT4 to be impassable; it was blocked by sand at a depth of about 2m. And we did manage to push AS Meander Cave to a depth of over 200m down to a large chamber, that unfortunately had no exits.

In summary, we located more than 80 pits, shafts and cavities. Among these are several promising sites close to Grkavac which have not been fully explored: Eye Spider Pot, Arch Cave, and PB25. So the prospects for 2012 are very good indeed.

For further details of the 2011 expedition to Montenegro, you can read the official report, as submitted to the Ghar Parau Foundation, which been deposited with the CSS library.



Upper FLOOD SWALLET

by **Mark Lumley**

On January 7th ATLAS diggers Dave King, Mark Lumley, Mandy and Matt Voysey were taken on a trip down Upper Flood Swallet by fellow digger and Mendip Caving Group member Mike Richardson.

After the recent rains the Lavatory Trap needed bailing, then we were off through the Red Room and away to negotiate the 'squeezes' into the new extension. In fact these notorious constrictions were easily negotiable as they have been recently enlarged.

Beyond the impressive Departure Lounge a finely decorated streamway led us to a junction where we dumped our kit before visiting the squalid, mud-lubricated confines of South Passage.

A few photos and a snack later and we were off to East Passage with covetous, diggers' eyes!

If you get the chance to visit the cave take it. It is a magnificent place, more like a Welsh giant than a typical Mendip cave and the progress made is a credit to the MCG.

Photos from the streamway and the start of South Passage by Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley





Streamway, Outer Circle, Agen Allwedd. Photo by Steve Sharp



Tearing Down Gates

by Paul Tarrant

"We will soon be out of here and down the Brit for hot food and cold beers." Famous last words! As I said this to my pal Chris Smith I turned the key in the lock of the Aggie gate and it snapped off in my hand. "B*locks, forget what I just said!"

The day had started quite promisingly with us getting to Whitewalls early. There were a few folk there including JC. We intended doing a photographic trip along the Aggie Grand Circle and were not happy to find the Aggie keys had been recalled as part of a replacement exercise. There was, however, a new key made available for cave rescue, and it was suggested by someone that it might be used "But I did not tell you that!" So with the new key in hand and JC's words ringing in our ears we set off along the tram road.

The trip around the Grand Circle was great. After the cramped confines of Southern Stream passage the junction with Mainstream Passage came as welcome relief. We visited the downstream sump and took some photographs there before heading upstream towards Quarry Corner. The streamway is attractive, photogenic and great fun to traverse and the immensity of Quarry Corner was very impressive.

Biza Passage was just a bit of a thrutch and 4th Choke did not impede me in those days as I sort of fell down through it. The rest of the trip through 3rd Choke, Deep Water and then North-west Junction back towards the entrance was straightforward enough.

We had arrived back at the entrance at 7pm and the calamity with the lock had occurred. In those days there was no self opening gate. We soon realised we were well stuck. We checked out the old entrance only to find its gate an impregnable barrier. I reasoned that we would be marooned until the early hours of Sunday

morning as I had put call out time down as 21:00pm and of course everyone would be at the pub by 20:00pm. The thought of people eating and drinking and merrymaking down the Brit really hurt.

I wrote a message on some paper and scrunched it around a stone and placed it just outside the entrance. The pair of us then retreated into the cave to the first practical spot where we could set up a bivvie. Fortunately we both had bivvie bags and bits of food. Unfortunately we were both clad in wet suits which soon had us cooling off due to the breeze blowing through the Entrance Series. We both dozed off only to be awoken by JC at about 0100am. He was not happy! He had come back from the pub to find us still in the cave and he had come to look for us. Finding our note by the entrance he had returned to Whitewalls to get a hacksaw to remove the gate. He reckoned we should have gone back to the entrance sometime to check things out but we did not do this as we were fast asleep. JC crawled in to us in his everyday clothes and these were a little wet and grubby.

Eventually our day ended with a bite to eat at Whitewalls and a kip for what was left of the night. The key I had used had completely sheared off in the lock as it was made of very soft metal alloy. It was not fit for purpose. The stub of the key was to be awarded to me at a subsequent Chelsea Annual dinner as a reminder of my trip or my own strength; I'm not quite sure which.

There was an amusing postscript to this event. I had gone home on Sunday and phoned Bill Gascoigne of Brynmawr Caving Club to tell him of what had happened. Bill was also the permit secretary as well as the grand fromage of the Gwent cave rescue team

so I had to fess up to the fact there and then that I had used and rodgered the cave rescue key and that CSS had hack-sawed the Aggie gate off to get me and Chris out. He was not happy at all and said something along the lines of "Well, you had better go back and pick up the gate and bring it back to me so I can repair it"

So I did this on the Monday as I was not at work. I carried the gate back (it weighed a tonne) along the tram road using a rucksack frame and I put the gate in the boot of my car and started driving along towards Brynmawr. I then bumped into Steve Pedrazolli, another important cave rescue bod and Brynmawr Caving Club member. The conversation went something like this. "What you doing over here on a Monday Paul? Unusual to see you over here midweek. You got a secret dig or something!" "Do you want to see what I've got in the boot of my car Steve?" "Tarrant have you gone bloody insane or what? What have you done?"



I came out with something about caves needing to be left in a natural state without the hindrance of gates etc. and that all cave gates should be torn down just to heighten Steve's anxiety and then I let him have truth of the matter. We had a bit of a giggle out of that and I then managed to talk Steve into taking the gate back to Bill (he lived close to him) so I did not personally have to face Bill's wrath.

This incident was probably the catalyst that had the Aggie gate replaced with a self-opener. You can thank me for that next time you see me!

Pottering About on Mendip

by
John Cooper

Bath Swallet

Saturday 14th January 2012.

Richard Carey (MCG), Darren Chapman (WVCC), Bev Ford (WCC), Aidan Harrison (WCC), Richard Marlow (WCC), Duncan Price, Andrea Russe (MCG), Naomi Sharp (WCC), Wayne Starsmore (WCC), Jude Vanderplank (WCC), Dave Walker (WCC) and self. Some went in Rod's Pot but I was in the party that did Bath Swallet. We laddered the pitches, went through into Rod's and up Purple Pot into Main Chamber. I went up Eyeball Aven and along to a sharp left turn into a small tube. Came back from it and dropped down to look at Hanging Rock Chamber. Back into Main Chamber and back down Purple Pot into Bath Swallet. Took a look at the dig face (not the really muddy one!) before returning to exit Bath Swallet. 2 hours.

G. B. Cave

Saturday 24th December 2011.

Peter Buckley (WCC), Ali Moody (WCC) and self. A Christmas Eve potter. Thought about Longwood but decided it would be a bit wet so GB instead. In the Devil's Elbow route which was wet so our choice had probably been sound. Up and over the Bridge into White Passage then the Loop and Oxbow back into Main Chamber. Up into Ladder Dig and into Bat Passage. On exit went up into Disappointment Chamber, none of us had been in it before! Then down and up into Great Chamber. Once back down the Ladder Dig took the Mud Passage route out. Just over 3 hours.

Lionel's Hole

Saturday 17th December 2011.

Andrew Atkinson (UBSS), Pete Buckley, Ali Moody and self. Pete and I followed Andrew and Ali on a round trip. Pete and I waited in Sump Chamber whilst the other two checked out Stick-in-the-Mud Passage. About 1½ hours.

Pierre's Pot

Saturday 17th December 2011.

Andrew Atkinson, Pete Buckley, Ali Moody and self. Whilst the other 3 did the lower passages I looked around the upper ones. The squeeze at the top of the rift down defeated me, I dread to think what the one at the bottom was like. 1½ hours.

St Cuthbert's Swallet

Friday 30th December 2011.

Pete Buckley, Rob Mitchell, Ali Moody, Tim Rose, Sas Watson and self. Followed the Old Route down to Mud

Hall ie, Entrance Rift, Arête Pitch, Ledge Pitches, Wire Rift and Mud Hall Pitch. From here we dropped down into Lower Mud Hall and then the streamway. We followed this down the Water Chute and along to Traverse Chamber. We ignored the streamway (it is usually choked) and climbed up into the Traverse Chamber Bedding Plane. We then took a left into Bypass Passage and dropped back down into the streamway. Followed this down but took a look off to the right into Cerberus Hall. Returning we continued down the streamway through Sewer Passage, past Plantation Junction where another stream enters from the left, eventually reaching Beehive Chamber. Up and over the top into Gour Hall then along Gour Rift to the dam. Put the bung in but only went as far as Sump 1. Back up Gour Rift having removed the bung and took the lower route under the Gours to Beehive Chamber. Turned right up the Plantation Stream and then up into Rabbit Warren and onwards and upwards into Railway Tunnel. I think we then admired The Fingers and the Cascade before taking Strike Passage into Boulder Chamber. Here we admired The Octopus before continuing up Quarry Corner past Kanchenjunga and up into Pillar Chamber. Then a climb down into Mud Hall to complete a circular tour. Back up the fixed ladders and the Entrance Rift to complete a 4 hour jolly. Many thanks to Ali for the route finding, any errors in the write up are all mine!

Saturday 7th January 2012.

Pete Buckley, Ali Moody and self. Down the Entrance Rift and fixed ladders into Mud Hall. Straight across and up the climb into Pillar Chamber. then down into Boulder Chamber. We kept left and down a small climb into Upper Traverse Chamber. We crossed this keeping low to a climb up to enter Harem Passage which we followed down into the Railway Tunnel. Across and down the tubes into Rabbit Warren. There was a lot of grey mould growing on the mud banks throughout this area, very like that in Swildon's some time ago. There were also some round black spots, up to 2cm diameter, scattered throughout. After climbing up the 1st Stalagmite Bank we detoured down into the Main Stream to view the climb to Stalagmite Pitch before returning to climb the 2nd Stalagmite Bank to reach the start of Rabbit Warren Extension. Here we started heading north via some low passages, Erratic Chamber and Chain Chamber junction. We ignored Tin Mine straight ahead but did have a quick look down Helictite Passage on the right before climbing up to the left. Continued on upwards past Octopus Chamber to The Vice. About 10m beyond The Vice we detoured right to visit Continuation Chamber. Where the water enters this chamber was a rivulet of black and a smell like diesel. Back on route we continued upwards through 'T' Junction Chamber and Cross Leg Squeeze into Catgut Rift. . Onwards and upwards until boulders reached, the September Boulder Ruckle, which started with a very tight

upward squeeze (for Ali) and a zig-zag bypass for Pete and I. Continuing through the ruckle we first went down into Illusion Chamber (note: there was no black or smell in this part of the streaway which is upstream of Continuation Chamber) and Cone Chamber before returning and climbing up into Paperweight Chamber. Another climb up and we were in September Chamber, one of the largest chambers in the cave. We followed this South and dropped into Victory Passage to admire the formations. On our way back we viewed the South-West section of September Chamber (Trafalgar Chamber) containing Nelson's Column and Trafalgar Aven, then the North-West section containing The Wedding Cake and The Balcony. Back through the boulder Ruckle but rather than drop back down Catgut Rift we took September Squeeze into High Chamber, back through Upper Traverse Chamber and into Boulder Chamber. Then Pillar Chamber, Mud Hall and out. 3½ hours.

Swildon's Hole

Sunday 18th December 2011.

John Cooper, Lee Hawkswell and Barry Weaver. Went and bailed the Mud Sump as it was gradually filling up. 1¾ hours.

Thursday 29th December 2011.

John Cooper, Ali Moody, Rich Warman, Vibz and Gurtaj (neither of whom had been underground before). Once Vibz and Guttaj had been kitted out in borrowed furries and oversuits it was a walk from Upper Pitts to Swildon's entrance through a sleet blizzard. It was much warmer underground, especially as we went in the Long Dry Way. The Twenty was already rigged and we made our way down to Sump 1 via Barnes' Loop. After a bar of Chocolate at Sump 1 we made our way out via the Inclined Rift and the Wet Way. 2¼ hours.

Saturday 31st December 2011.

Pete Buckley, John Cooper, Lee Hawkswell, John Newton and Stephen Newton. The intention for the final trip of the year was a Short Round Trip taking in Blue Pencil on the way. However it was not to be. The cave was really nice and wet with lots of fresh foam about. However in the high water John N got rather cold. By Shatter Pot he'd had enough so went back out with Stephen. At the start of Blue Pencil Pete announced that his back was playing up, it's not recovered since Ali Moody dragged him down Pierre's Pot a couple of weeks ago, so stopped and rested. Lee said his leg was also damaged following the Walk Ali had taken him on earlier in the week so he and I just went down Blue Pencil to the pots. Back up to the Troubles then and started the syphon and bailing. Even though a party had been down the day before the First Trouble was overflowing. Once we had it down to a reasonable level we went through. The Second was the usual depth, I think it overflows into the First. However the Third was slightly lower than last time, I think yesterday's party must have bailed it. Into Glistening Gallery, nice stream running down it again, through the squeeze and on into Vicarage Passage. Through the choke and dropped down the Landing into the streamway where we stopped for a chocolate bar. Back up the streamway and out via the Wet Way. 2¾ hours.

Monday 2nd January 2012.

John Cooper and Barry Weaver to Sump 1. Didn't meet anyone until the entrance on our way out.

Sunday 8th January 2012.

John Cooper and Barry Weaver to Mud Sump. Lots of recent flood debris but level down on Monday. One other party of 3 met below Double Pots on our way out.

Sunday 15th January 2012.

John Cooper, Lee Hawkswell and Barry Weaver were joined by Barry's stepson, Tom Clements and two of his friends, David Clegg (never been underground before) and Rob Slocombe (done Swildon's a couple of times some years ago). In the Dry Way and down to Sump 2. Back out via Barne's Loop and the Wet Way. 2 hours. Having cycled up yesterday, Saturday, Tom, David and Rob then left to cycle back home to Blandford, about 2½ hours away!

A little bit of coal mining in South Yorkshire

by Andy Watson

During the summer I visited my family in Yorkshire and my sister said she had found that some small coal mine entrances that had been filled in a number years ago and had been reopened, probably by the local youngsters. Knowing Sue and my interest in underground holes she took us there.

We parked the car near some old stone terraced houses and then walked up a steep, bricked track towards some woods. When we got up quite away we circled off on a footpath around the contour of the hill. Further around (at about NGR SE1169 2252) and high above a chimney pot manufacturing factory there were some narrow entrances in the base of the cliff.

It was drizzling and the muddy entrance banks were slippery, so, donning our caving equipment, we ventured up the slope to become intrepid mine explorers, leaving Heather and her dog on the outside.

We discovered a network of criss-cross passages. There was a one metre high coal seam that had obviously been mined in a matrix pattern with many drift passages going a significant way into the hillside. The coal mine was showing signs of ageing as there were a number of roof and wall collapses, although the ventilation was pretty good due to the draught between other entrances and one shaft upwards. There were still some old coal trucks and narrow railway tracks in place.

The mine was on a hillside above the chimney pot works (still selling chimney pots today) which probably used the coal at one time to fire the pottery kilns. It was some 150 metres uphill from the canal and a pub called the Miners Arms, on Park Road (A6025) between Elland and Brighouse, not far from Elland and the M62, where we also sampled the real ale later on.

Faffing around in GB Cave

by Andy Watson

On the last day of 2011 Sue and I decided once again to look for Disappointment Chamber in GB. We went in the easy way to the Canyon, over the bridge, up White Passage, down and back round to the bottom of Main Chamber near the sump. Water was fairly low.

Up to Ladder Dig and through the duck with 4" water in it. I climbed up before Bat Passage into the Boulders but failed to find the way on, so we went up into Great Chamber and still failed to find the way through - found some new bits (to us) and found some good helictites.

Back down the squeeze, we went further along Bat Passage and climbed up into a large rift with choked boulders, climbed up about 80 feet but still failed to find the way on. I was a bit worried with all the twists and turns that we might get lost in the choke - it has some interesting fall potential. I think at least we found the start of the route but we had run out of time.

So back through the duck, Sue first, then my camera box. Then I passed the bag through, then me. Through the short crawl back to the top of ladder pitch. I clipped myself on with two slings and a krab and lined Sue down, then I dropped the ladder to Sue and unclipped myself, leaving the slings and krab hanging from my belt. I abseiled the double robe until... the krab on the end of my slings jammed itself in a flowstone wedge on the top of the pitch with me half way down, now not abseiling, but with my full weight on the slings and jammed krab.

Bottoms!

I managed to pull myself up a bit and reach the chain, just, and hauled myself up on my rope and the chain taking out some slack as I did to reduce any plummet factor. I eventually stood in the chain loop and managed to free the krab and thus the slings. I re-abseiled down to the bottom. Sue had coiled up the ladder, but where is my camera? Perhaps it was left by the duck?

Bottoms!

Uncoil the ladder and climb back up ladder dig, lower the ladder down to Sue so she could roll it up and go back to the duck to find my camera box. I could not find it and I convinced myself it must have slipped to the bottom of the bag under my rescue kit drum. Back at the pitch I abseiled down to Sue who had kindly rolled the ladder very neatly and put it in the bag, it being a rather tight fit. No camera in the bottom of the bag, where was it?

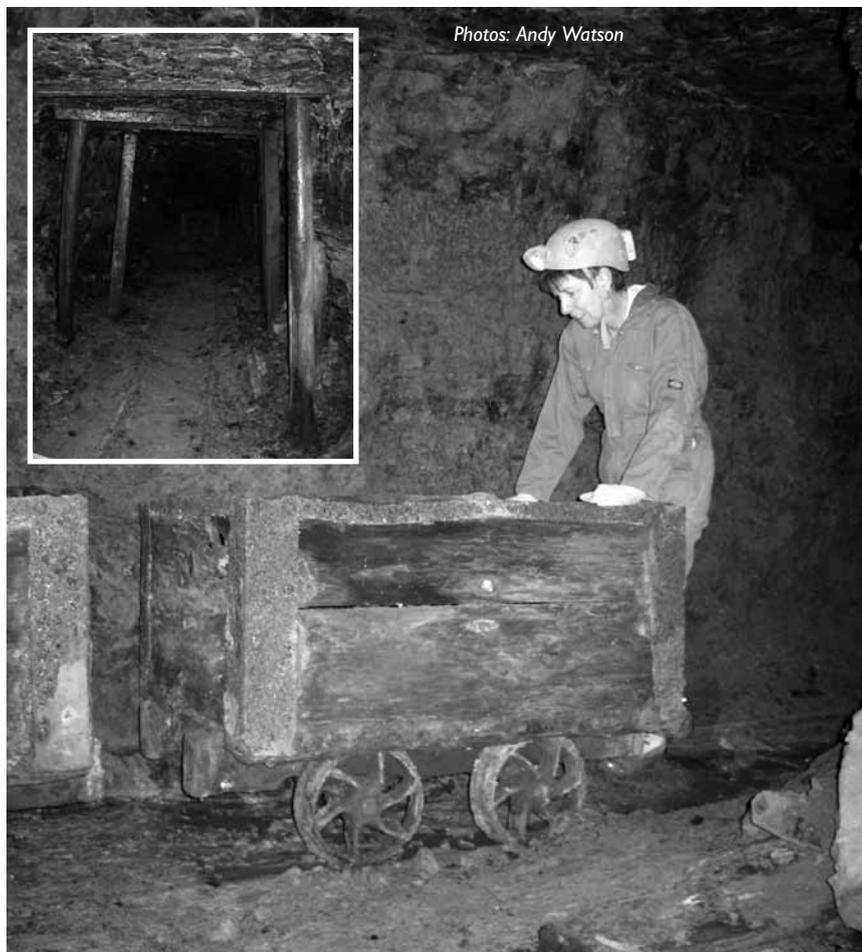
Sue asked "Did you take it out of the bag at the top of the pitch?" Ah, the only explanation. Better take the ladder out again, up the pitch again (good practice this), I am quite good at putting a ladder on this pitch now.

My camera was there in its dull and muddy plastic box hidden in the rocks and I dropped the ladder to Sue again, she is better at rolling ladders tightly now too! Wow, worn out now and pushing it to be out by our arranged ETO. Made it; we were just out in time.

A fun trip, with but a few learning points:

Put your camera in a yellow, easily visible box, don't abseil with karabiners on a long sling dangling from your belt, allow enough 'call out time' for mishaps; we did but only just enough.

I hope that gave you all a smile.



Photos: Andy Watson

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Friday 27 July to Sunday 29 July
Mendip Meet. Upper Pitts

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Pitch head, Daren Cilau Photo: Steve Sharp