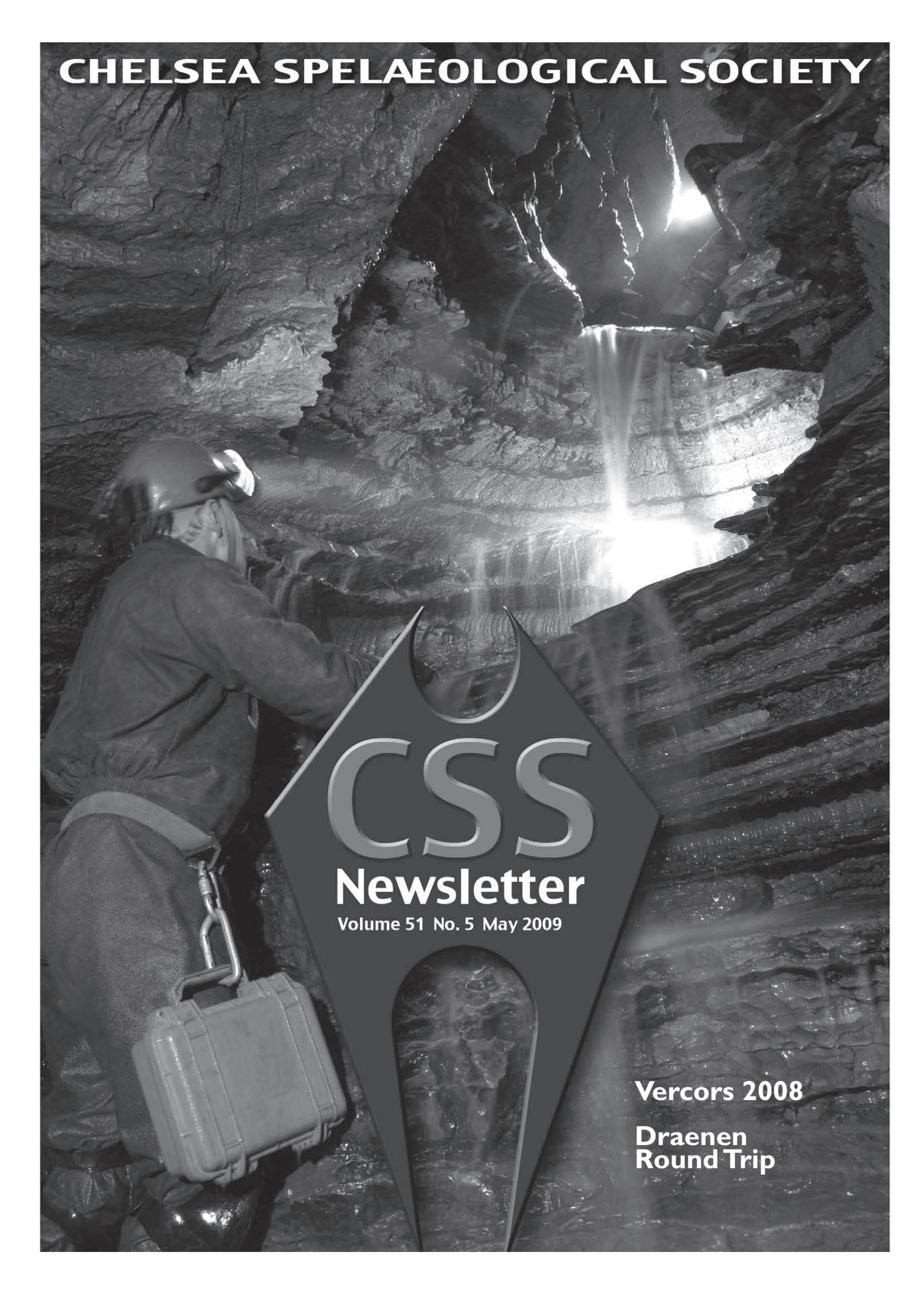


CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



CSS

Newsletter

Volume 51 No. 5 May 2009

Vercors 2008

**Draenen
Round Trip**

Chelsea Spelæological Society NEWSLETTER

Volume 51 No 5 May 2009

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ADDRESS LIST

Members are sent an address list each year. If you are shown as **Lapsed** then you will not receive further newsletters until the Treasurer informs me you have paid your subs.

Current rates are:

Full £30
Joint £43
Associate £20
Provisional £20 (for six months).

Provisional members should renew when their previous subs expire or when promoted to Full membership.

Cover Photo:
Stuart France at the bottom of
The Waterfall
Ogof Draenen entrance series
by John Stevens

Photos in the Newsletter that are not credited have been taken by the Editor.

CAVING INSURANCE

Whilst membership fees include non-caving public liability cover (unless already covered via another club in which case deduct £5 per person from the above) if you wish to increase this to **ACTIVE CAVER** level you need to send the treasurer a cheque for an additional £11.

Editorial

It's good to see plenty of interesting articles rolling in - please keep them coming.

Trip reports, cave science, updates on digs, new cave, social activities, nostalgia.

It would also be really nice to accumulate a stockpile of photographs from the Club's numerous cave photographers.

On another note I understand that someone was offended by something that appeared in the April Newsletter. I'm not renowned for my tact, nor do I have a reputation for being politically correct so please accept my humble apology and my assurance that in future I will only use the acronym **SWCC** where it is absolutely necessary.



Photo: Steve Sharp

Gonzo

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:

Mark Lumley

The Creative Edge

7 Langley Lane

Clapton

Radstock

Somerset BA3 4DX

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.

Harry Pearman kindly sent in the following information:

New Tunnel Database

The British Tunnelling Society has launched an on-line UK tunnelling database at

<http://www.britishtunnelling.org.uk/database.php>

There are details of some 200 UK tunnels constructed over the last 30 to 50 years. It includes road, rail, metro, water, cable and sewage tunnels.

There are plans to add many more.

26 attributes are recorded including:

Dimensions

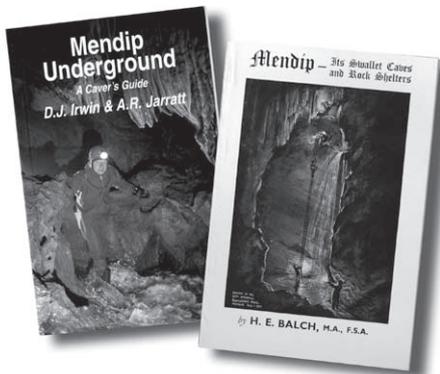
Geology

References



J-Rat's Bequest

Tony Boycott has asked me to mention that people ordering the books featured in April's Newsletter (Vol 51 No.4) should include £2.50 postage for both, £1.50 for one.



COTTAGE BOOKINGS

- 2-3 May **Exeter Uni SS**
- 22-25 May **CSS Whit BH**
- 27-28 June **CSS BBQ**
- 4-5 Sept **Lost World CC**
- 14-15 Nov **Devon SS**



CSS Website

If you have any photos you'd like to put on the CSS website then send them to the Webmaster, Stephen Newton at snewton@ukonline.co.uk

Don't forget that you can keep in touch with other CSS members, voice your opinion on Club matters and more via the Members' Forum <http://cssmembers.proboards85.com>.

Goatchurch Cavern

A Thursday evening caving trip with the Axbridge Caving Group

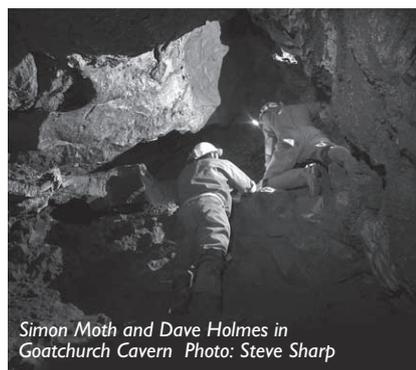
by Steve Sharp



Aveline's Hole, Burrington Combe
Photo: Steve Sharp

With the lighter evenings upon us, we decided to take a stroll up to Goatchurch Cavern in the Mendip Hills, Goatchurch has a reputation as a beginners cave but holds a few secrets in its further reaches.

Our first port of call was a quick look at the entrance to West twin brook adit, a failed project which began back in 1941; the Adit is not far from the entrance to Goatchurch.



Simon Moth and Dave Holmes in Goatchurch Cavern Photo: Steve Sharp

Onwards and upwards, we took a typical route into the cave heading to the Water Chamber and down towards the Drainpipe. This part of the cave has had recent stabilizing work to make the route safe.

We crawled through the 12m drainpipe to the start of the short climb up into a tight crawl with a few nasty

bends towards the Dexion shoring, a simple but effective frame work holding back the boulders, climbing up through the dexion can be a little tricky and almost impossible on the return. It's an easy mistake to try and approach the crawl on your stomach; I tried this technique the last time we visited Goatchurch and got completely wedged in the crawl for about ten minutes, how embarrassing is that

Once through, an awkward climb leads up into a chamber with a few taped off formations and two parallel digs. I have been told by a reliable source there is still further passage to be found if you know where to look. This section of the cave is definitely not for beginners and makes an interesting evening trip.

Membership

Have YOU paid YOUR subs for 2009?
If you are marked as **LAPSED** on the 2009 Address List then this could be your last Newsletter ...

Swildon's Hole Shatter Series

by Steve Sharp

Simon Moth, Andy Snook and Steve Sharp

Thurs 16th April, a more adventurous trip planned into Swildon's Hole and a second visit to the Shatter series. My first visit here a couple of years ago was halted by a sumped duck, I had been told the duck could be passed with care!

We met at the Wessex club house courtesy of Andy Snook and were greeted by a couple of members who had just returned from a digging trip to Tumbledown just beyond sump four.

The weather was good, we set off around 7.20pm. On the approach we saw Andy Ruming in the distance. He and a colleague had been collecting water samples to analyze the various forms of life in the cave system.

We entered the cave, passing a party of novices who had just had a thoroughly good time!

Simon raced through the entrance series down to the Twenty, leaving us for dust!

A climb down the Twenty, Barnes's loop and Tratman's Temple, through the crawls and water filled passages. A strong draught was present at one of the squeezes indicating that we would

probably not need to bail the Mud Sump which can add a fair amount of time to an evening trip. The Mud sump was cold but passable with care. On further investigation a new pipe has been installed beyond the sump redirecting the water to cut down the amount of bailing required.

We reached the head of the pitch to Shatter and rigged a ladder and lifeline; this was to be Andy Snook's first visit to this section of the cave.

If you have never been to the Shatter Series it is full of interesting mud floored passage, comparable to an ice rink, so hold on tight! We reached the previous point of exploration and fortunately the water level was low enough to pass. On reflection an attempt to pass in high water would have been foolish to say the least! We squeezed through, noses pressing against the rock, to explore the further passage. Shatter makes an interesting trip and there are plenty of places to explore. We arrived at a second duck which was fun and wet! Further passage led to various avens and another sumped duck that needed bailing, buckets to hand Simon passed the water to me and it turn I threw it all over Andy who although shocked returned the favor - Lol.

This duck was an awkward move, sliding down on your back into the cold water whilst making a tight turn; we decided this was a good place for a photo! You can always count on Andy to keep still in the cold freezing water.

We decided this was to be our turn around point and headed back to the mud slopes sliding down like overgrown children. I lost control and nearly crashed into Andy! Some of the return climbs were testing and quite exhausting, you could easily loose a footing and slide back down to the start.

We made our exit at 10pm in good time for a shower and the Hunters for a pint of Potholer!



Pottering About on Mendip

by
John Cooper

Swildon's Hole

Sunday 12th April 2009

As Barry Weaver was away in Yorkshire for the weekend JC was expecting a nice relaxed Sunday. However a phone call from Lee Hawkswell led to a very pleasant Short Round trip. Very quiet, didn't meet anyone until we returned to the top of the Twenty where a pair were preparing to descend. In the Dry Way and out the Wet Way. Syphoned and bailed the First Trouble but everything else passed as found. The pipe beyond the Mud Sump was trickling water out at the far end and has been fixed up in the roof since my last trip.

Swildon's Hole

Sunday 19th April 2009

A routine trip with BW to Mud Sump. Took in some Denso Tape and repaired the hose emptying the top bucket. Emptied a couple of dams full from the Mud Sump leaving about an inch of hose pipe sticking out above water.

CAVING TERMINOLOGY EXPLAINED

CAVING CLUB

A primitive digging implement.

CANAL

Anglo Saxon phrase used when suddenly immersed in cold water.

CNWC

A Welsh expletive loosely translated as 'back way in'.

DIGGER

A hydrophobic cave explorer.

DUCK

An urgent warning when transporting unwieldy tackle.

EXPEDITION

A useful way of converting Sports Council grants into beer.

FLOOD PULSE

An unfortunate reaction to too many beans.

FOSSIL

A dried-up old virgin.

HELICTITE

Adenoidal complaint about confined spaces.

LINE REEL

Underwater folk-dancing.

MEANDER

Late-night, beer-induced pontification.

(See also **SLURRY**).

OVERSUIT

To miss a turning with a tooth missing.

PERMIT

What caving's 'governing bodies' do with their blue-rinsed hair.

Vercors 2008



Photo: Doug Thompson

by Paul Tarrant

The 4th European Spelaeological conference held in late August 2008 was hosted by France and centred upon Lans en Vercors. There was a full lecture programme, various film showings, gear and bookstands and the Speleo Bar. This latter thing was a 90 metre-long tent which housed several excellent food stalls, bars and a stage, all of which provided the essential evening social focal point for the conference. Some nights the Speleo Bar was great, other times it was quiet but all in all, it was good to meet people you have not seen for a while.

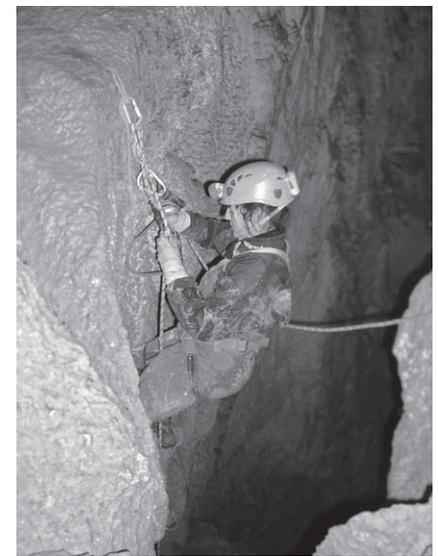
All the above was great, and the gear and bookstalls especially so. The money could certainly flow easily from one's pocket, buying all those books and things which you convince yourself you need. To prevent your impending bankruptcy, the French also kindly pre-rigged 18 of the Vercors' best caves which were made available to conference delegates to explore. So long as you paid the appropriate registration fee and took out insurance you could register to descend any cave you so wished.

I found myself camped in Villard de Lans amongst a large contingent of Eldon Pothole Club. They were very friendly and keen to maximise their visits to the caves of the area. They invited me to join them on a trip to the Pot du Loup on the Herbouilly pastures. This was a straightforward warm-up SRT trip & was very easily located by our party of five. This had



the right hand side gave a straight forward drop after a rebelay. We looked around the large mud-walled which had further pitches dropping between large boulder blocks, but did not go further as our youngest party member (Rowan aged 12) had seen enough (according to his dad! Rowan begged to differ with his dad on this point.) We exited via the Gour Fumant where the pitches were not nearly so good as the Faux Gour. This was a good straight forward trip without complication although we had to be wary of a rope in the Faux Gour which had its sheath severed. The French had put a knot in the rope to provide a solution to this problem! Hmmmmm.

*Left: Pot Du Loup - Entrance Pitch
Below: Pot Du Loup - Toni on final pitch
Photos: Paul Tarrant*



a direct 19 metre pitch (easily located) with a secondary entrance joining at the base of this pitch. Immediately, a short 3 metre climb up took us to the head of a 38 metre pitch, immediately followed by 12 and 10 metre pitches. The head of the last pitch had not been rigged for some reason and Eldon's Jules Barratt had rope sufficient to bottom it which is what the others did. This part of the cave was very well decorated with white calcite which made it all very pleasant.

Now for the return and boy did I struggle. My exertions to climb the 38 metre pitch saw me expending far too much energy for relatively little gain and there was clearly something wrong with my SRT rig. I'm reasonably fit but was well and truly whacked by the time I got to the pitch head. My EPC friends didn't say anything but complained of the cold which is the polite way of saying "You took your time pal!" The rest of the trip out was trouble free

and we changed back at the cars with the silence of early evening creeping through the surrounding pine forest. A good trip to start as it pointed out problems I had to attend to with SRT gear & technique.

Tuesday saw us visit the Faux Gour – Gour Fumant system, again on the Herbouilly pastures. We found the cave easily after a bit of a search and dropped Faux Gour which was described as having the better pitches. These were all quite short but straightforward and dropped us into a large trunk passage which was the Gour Fumant. There were different ways to progress deeper and I dropped down the letter box pitch which was a bit tight with all the SRT gear on. I could barely get my hand to my Petzl Stop handle. Other people in our party joined up with us in a large passage with a choice of two pitches which descended to a large muddy hall. A ledge traverse on the left provided the more aesthetically pleasing drop whilst the pitch on

A funny thing happened on the way to St. Glace, but I'm not laughing!

I had made a booking of the Trou Qui Souffle -St Glace through trip for Jules Barrett, Tam and Leanne from Lincoln Caving Club. When booking the trip I was given a topo, and a description in English which clearly had lost something in translation because I could not make head or tail of it. My inquiries as to what the trip was like received the comments that it was an excellent trip, well-marked, straightforward and could take six to eight hours for the traverse. Right, we were on for this on Friday, with an

early start so we could exit in time for an Eldon PC BBQ planned for that evening to celebrate the last night, and Eldon's successful bottoming of the Berger the previous day.

We were in the roadside entrance of the TQS at 9:30am and progress through the cave was easy and rapid. Several fluorescent markers pointed the way even in the most obvious of places. A 30 metre pitch provided an airy drop with a choice of ropes and I remembered thinking that it was good that we need not climb this on our return. I had sorted out my earlier SRT problems in the Pot du Loup - My sit harness had developed too much slack in the waist strap.

A squalid series of muddy crawls [Laminoire du Bassine] led to a tight [well, for me it was] squeeze which led to further short drops and then a crucial window which was the limit of the previous day's exploration by Tam and Leanne. So far so good! What followed was the 'Meander Francois', providing an hour-and-a-half of purgatorial traversing at the top of a meandering canyon passage some 15 metres deep. These were continuously roped ensuring safety but were a major expender of energy since some of the moves were very athletic. Leanne was not keen on these which Des Marshall in "Caves of the Vercors" described as 'Superb' and I think she will beg to differ with him on his description, since they were muddy, and the whole place was freezing with a howling gale blowing through this sector of cave.

The end of the meanders was marked by 15 metre pitch into the 'Conciergerie' a huge airy chamber with large blocks and a malodorous stink of stale piss and carbide. Not the best of places to have a picnic! What followed was a lot of easy large passage which saw us make rapid progress, eating up the kilometres on the survey. Eventually a short five metre rope climb on the left, led us to the large 'Salle du Soupirail' which led to the even bigger 'Salle Hydro Kast', an enormous chamber which is possibly as big as the 'Salle a Verna' in the Pierre St.Martin. We could see the passage dropping towards a sump but our path lay up an 11 metre rope climb in the Salle on the right-hand wall. This passage we entered was heavily scalloped and indeed the roof of the Salle Hydro Kast had masses of huge scallops in its roof. This

was a true giant of a place, being both awesome and austere since the sump at the bottom can flow uphill alarmingly on occasion.

We checked the time and found we were almost on target with six hours having elapsed. We had to be a bit smartish in the next section as there is a key passage to locate to lead out via the Saint Glace. But why worry? There would no doubt be loads of markers, as there had certainly been plenty to point the way in from the TQM.

We located the 'Toboggan', a rising passage with tatty rope to decelerate your descent if things get out a hand. This we followed upwards until we reached a large piece of red and white marker tape. There seemed to be two ways on. The passage was a canyon type passage not unlike OFD's 'Maypole inlet'. We all started climbing in the roof but soon our progress was halted by deep holes in the floor with an absence of protection. Surely this was not the way? The way on via the lower part of the canyon, seemed to tie in with the Des Marshall description which Tam had a photo copy of. He was following a small stream but then he found the passage impossibly tight and awkward and he returned to us after 10 minutes of thrutching, not convinced he was in the correct passage. What followed was five hours of searching for alternative passages to lead the way out. I believe we pushed every obvious passage we could find, but to no avail. What was evident was the fact that we'd lost the draft in the 'Toboggan' and a system the size of TQS would have a gale howling through it to indicate the way to the surface.

We returned again to the tight canyon as the marker tape seemed so obvious. Jules and Tam re-traversed the passage and soon were out of earshot. Leanne forlornly said to me "I don't think I can do the 'Meandre Francois' again. I'm dreading it." and I tried to say something encouraging but also thought to traverse these again would be no picnic. Jules and Tam's absence offered encouragement perhaps of finding the correct route and I tried convincing myself that we would possibly just make the barbecue before it finished. The return of the lads dashed this hope as Jules confirmed the route he had taken had been impossibly tight and showed no

hint of being a major trade route. His words "I think we need to prepare ourselves for a very long, slow return back via the way we came in." struck home with stark realisation. A brief council of war showed we had a little food, and plenty of light (we were all on LEDs with some spare batteries). The only thing we lacked was supplies of drink.

The return to TQS was long and slow. We started to return at about 20:00 hours so we had been going already nearly 12. There was nothing to worry about. We would inevitably instigate a rescue call-out, miss the barbecue by a mile, but we were in control of the situation and making the correct decisions to extricate ourselves. As long as we kept going slowly, we would be fine. The 'Meandre Francois' certainly did not make for swift progress going in. Reversing this took fully two and a half hours to get along it. Cursing helped!

Eventually we made it to the foot of the 30 metre pitch near the entrance. The thirst I had led me to drink from some dirty splash pools and I remembered thinking "What the hell. Sickness due to dehydration or drinking unfit water would not matter. I'll be out before the effect of either can kick in."

I found myself at the bottom of 30 metre pitch as everyone else had climbed the two ropes. No matter how I tried I could not get my chest Croll to ride up the rope. I could not grip the rope between my feet and I couldn't tie my tackle bag to the end to weight it as the rope was tied off to a rebelay for the next pitch. Ashamed to say I had to ask for assistance from one of the others to help weight the rope necessitating one of them abseiling back down the pitch. Jules obliged without complaint and I was able to ascend without further drama.

The return to the fresh-air of a 6:00am morning was cold, and dark but a mighty relief. We rejoiced at the return to the entrance, and then noticed the black car parked by ours. The 'Speleo Secours' sticker on the back revealed two rescuers catching some sleep before instigating a search. They woke quickly when my lamp shone on one of their faces and they were as relieved as we were that we were out. A quick message sent



Megadrive, Ogof Draenen Photo: John Stevens

Draenen Round Trip

For the larger-built caver
by John Stevens

John Newton, Stephen Newton, Jason McCorriston, Stuart France, John Stevens and ?

The 21st February was billed at a club meet to do the round trip. Of those that showed up, only Myself and Stuart had done this before. After discussion the long round trip was deemed too small for Jason to fit through. So off six of us went. Myself and ? took cameras along, so it was not to be a quick trip. A stop at the waterfall in the entrance series and on to the rope climb and a wish that we had brought a ladder. Another stop in

Lamb and Fox and then onwards to have lunch in Arms Park.

Now could I remember the way though Squirrel Rifts as it had been several years since I had come this way. It all came back pretty much and we got to the double climb down that enters the final crawl into Haggis Basher. I lead the way through and it was smaller than I remembered and Jason soon saw how tight it looked on Stephen and rightly said, *No way*. I knew there were numerous passages in this area but the only one I could remember that bypasses this squeeze, had a

pitch in it.

The party split and Jason, John and myself reversed the route out, arriving about half an hour after the others.

Only when I got home could I have a detailed look at the multilevel passages in the connection area. There is an easy bypass to the squeeze but I had only been along it once to survey it some ten years ago.

Alternative route for the larger build.

Use the normal route through Squirrel Rifts and do the first half of the double climb down at the end of the rifts. (this is the one with a jammed boulder at the bottom). At the head of the next climb down, cross the hole into a crawl. This turns left after just a couple of metres and then arrives at the base of a rift after another 10 m. A climb up of 4m leads to a multiway junction in Life on Mars. Bearing right and then straight on passes a side passage that overlooks Haggis Basher, through to the top of a large slope that descends to rejoin the normal route.

A second route to avoid the squeeze would use the 10m+ pitch which drops almost on top of the junction with Haggis Basher. This route leaves the main Squirrel Rifts route about 10m before the double climb down. Once the side branch is taken, keep right generally until the pitch is reached. Some very thin pull cord is on the drop but this is totally unsuitable for any use.

The survey has had some overlying and lower passages removed for clarity, but it still remains complex.

Squirrel Rifts main route

4m down to crawl

bypass

4m climb down

Haggis Basher

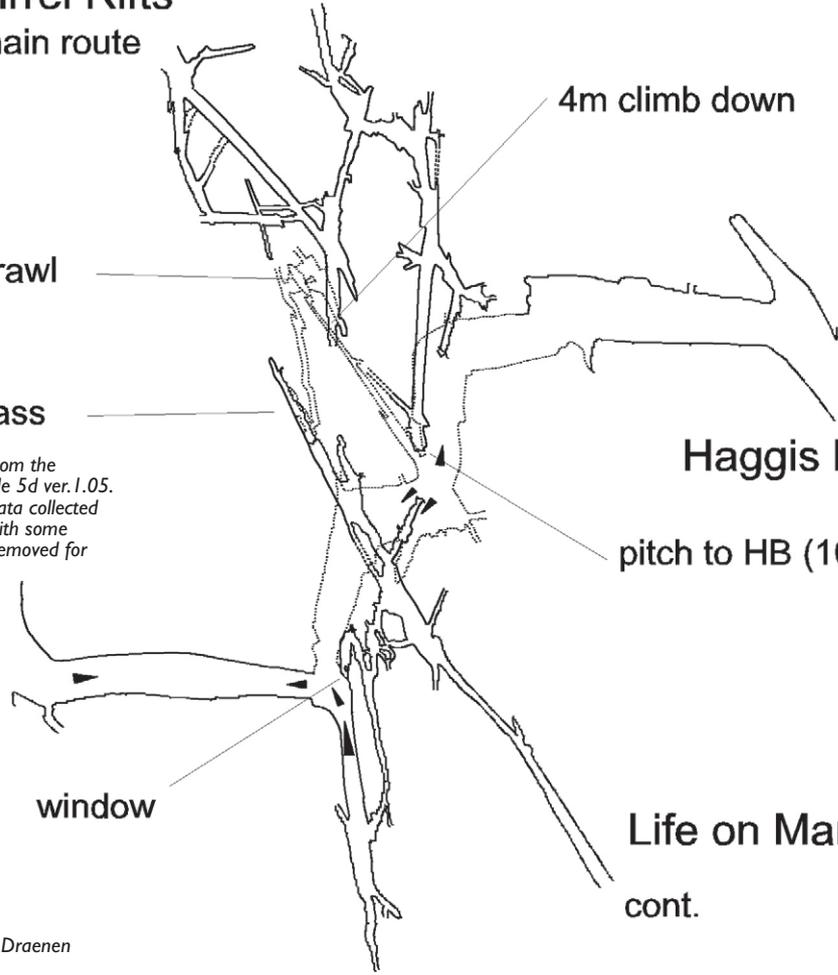
pitch to HB (10+m)

window

Life on Mars

cont.

The survey is a small extract from the published Draenen survey grade 5d ver. 1.05. Drawn by John Stevens from data collected by CSS members and others with some overlying and lower passages removed for clarity. This area of Squirrel Rifts remains complex with several routes through possible, even using some of the removed passages!



Lamb and Fox Chamber, Ogof Draenen
Photo: John Stevens



Priddy Green Sink

aka Priddy Grim Stink* 21/12/2008

* Cartoon by Chas Wethered Fig 1.147 p107
Swildon's Hole, 100 Years of Exploration'

by Gary Kiely

It was going to be my last session of madness before I retired for Christmas, so I wanted something with a bit of bite, to eat up all the pies before I would over the Christmas week. I had been discussing options on Mendip with Andy Snook to satisfy my criteria.

I had heard some nasty things about Priddy green sink. The first paragraph in the new Swildon's book for Priddy green sink is wonderfully accurate. It sounded great! The weather had been quite dry recently, so it was possible. I was very excited about this trip. By the time the weekend arrived, a few other people wanted in, too. We had effectively doubled the sensible number of 3 for this trip. We were going to deal with this by having 2 groups of 3 with about a half hour gap between us. First group was

Richard Carey (WCC), Andy Snook (CSS), Gary Kiely (CSS) The second group was to be Alan Brady (CSS) Mad Fi (CSS) and Laura Trowbridge (CSS) Unfortunately while getting changed, Laura got a call from work and had to leave us. We all believed her honest! Once down the entrance ladder, a whiff of not very fresh air hit us, so far the descriptions were accurate! Once accustomed to the odour there was a pleasant hands and knees crawl to a hole on the left that brings you into RAF aven. The hole on the left was easy to miss as Richard found out. Beyond this a low narrow tube descends, steeper than you would like considering you are headfirst. A calming sigh and knowing Andy's route finding skills eased the twitching in my stomach at this point. Virgin series was pointed out, described, and promptly left behind. It was not long after here it was the make or break point. We had reached Clitoris crawl. Getting two people to the head or this crawl requires reversing into an alcove to let the 1st victim curl around the first lip. I managed to slide my helmet in and then snake my shoulders in so I could watch Andy's method, couldn't see much really only wellies not moving a great deal. However that familiar cry of "its not tight just awkward" didn't make it seem any easier. Knowing what direction the bends are does help, once you choose a side to inch along on. The steep slope and narrowness of the crawl made sure that you are committed to that decision. A kink in the middle of the crawl followed by a too tight bit in the lower floor makes life more... Colourful. Once out of the

kink, undulating over the narrower stuff is rewarded by a wide bit of passage, a stomping 60cm wide, allowing you to lie flat for a moment. I forgot about my legs and dropped them into narrow section. As I sprinted through the vastness of the tube before me, I was recoiled by the teeth of this crawl, and had to manipulate my ankles to free myself. All in a days caving!. We all rested in the next chamber for a few minutes before the next on slaughter. I took the lead now. I mean we had not been lost once yet, and what sort of caving trip would that have been? More wriggly stuff brought out into an aven with what looked like many possible ways off. Rich and Andy were been nice to me and started looking in all the wrong places. I had a poke down a slot with a slight gravel base, continued for a body length and found the way on to the left hand side. It had a huge neon arrow with "the way on " I had to be right. It looked most pleasant indeed. A bit of straight passage square in shape, smooth and polished, slightly lower than hands and knees, with a little moisture to cool the knees. Oh yes it was all going well now, stomping on ... in Priddy terms that is. Until the next left hand bend. Hmmm! The chirpy confidence in my voice draining away ever so slightly. The tube now became polished from the bellies and backs of cavers past.

It got lower, and wider, with a deep gash full of teeth ready to eat your bag or knee pad. This seems to go on for an age and three quaters, especially when there is doubt in your mind if this is really the way forward. Finally the top of the tube evolved into an aven and the trench moved over to the edge of this aven. The trench was wider now and about 3 meters deep. It was going to take some trial and error (mostly error) to find the widest parts and commit to gravity. I gave in, and asked Rich if this looked right. I hoped he would say "no" and that there was an easier way...it wasn't tight as such, but just committing. This led into another aven and here we kitted up into our SRT kit for the 1st pitch. The most dam awkward pitch head ever to get to with kit on. Only to find that it is for a pitch that in reality is an easy enough free climb. The next bit that was truly memorable was the stinky crawl to the head of El Crapitan. This stinky crawl must be experienced to be believed. Gentle deliberate movements stop this grey murky crap going up your nose. The pitch following this is the fastest 6m pitch I have ever done. This is mainly a response to the smell. I was glad to move on from here.

I'm not selling this well an I? A slot in the floor with a switchback manoeuvre brought one to the edge of a slippery traverse. A welcome traverse line does a lot for confidence on this one. Longer legs help too. Its not difficult, just the potential for a painful descent is huge. The next section of note was the descent of Cowsh-aven into the familiar Swildon's four stream way. It was like having an old friend waiting for your return. I was pretty cold by this point. Priddy green sink in all its treachery does not allow much option for an occasional speedy blast to warm up. I expressed my chill factor, and we headed off at a good pace. All the familiar landmarks become comforting no matter how awkward or generally, yuck they are in their own rite. Everything arrived quicker than expected, and I was nice and toasty by the time we reached mud sump. Hoods were donned, and Rich went through with great finesse. I got so far and got impatient, so I ploughed through the last bit... with my own unique style! We stopped at Tratman's temple to look around and offer it the respect it deserves. People just use it as a landmark on the short round trip, and wander on past it. The next time you pass it just take 2 minutes to realise what a magnificent piece of nature's sculpture it is. Dropping down to the Swildon's one motorway, you can almost smell the surface. We all bounced around the happy, chatty stream way. I took the left hand climb up at Barnes loop, it's a personal thing between Mr Barnes and me, since the day he pushed me off the top. Andy and Rich went low and tried to race me to the pit lane exit. No chance! When we got to the ladder, we arranged our highly complicated **out** signal on the ladder. I laugh now at the length of time we had discussed the placing of a krab for this signal. This piece of fantastic cave unfortunately gets shorter and shorter each time I do it. We took the short dry way out. Arriving out into the fading daylight was no way as comforting as the arriving in the Four stream way. The icy wind was whipping around our faces. Even though our neoprene hoods were soaking wet they were heaven when walking back to the WCC. We balanced carefully as we tottered over the styles, not wanting to take our hands out from our armpits Nice!

By the time we were in the beautiful showers of the Wessex, Alan and Fiona arrived; they made much better time than us, to catch us up like that. We were jabbering on 10 to the dozen, all fired up by the best trip on Mendip. No contest!



chelsea Working weekend

April 4-5

with apologies to those who worked hard but who don't appear on this page of photographs!



Officers of the Society:

Chairman

Adrian Fawcett
5 Ambryn Road, New Inn, Pontypool
Torfaen, NP4 0NJ
(01495) 763130 (Home)
07973 815050 (Mobile)
adrianfawcett@talktalk.net

Secretary

Stuart France
The Smithy, Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1RD
(01874) 730016 (Home)
css@linetop.com

Treasurer

Peter Ward
33 Gertrude Street, Abercynon
Mountain Ash, CF45 4RL
07749 235985
speleo@hotmail.co.uk

Cottage Warden

John Stevens
14 Kiln Close, Hermitage, Thatcham
Newbury, Berks, RG18 9TQ
(01635) 200879 (Home)
john@k-stevens.fsnet.co.uk

Tacklemaster

Gary Kiely
22b St Johns Road, Isleworth,
Middlesex, TW7 6NW
07958 039721 (Mobile)
gkiely72@mac.com

Newsletter Editor

Mark Lumley
7 Langleys Lane, Clapton, Radstock
Somerset, BA3 4DX
(01761) 419246 (Home and Work)
mark@creativeedge.me.uk

Librarian

Anna Northover
42 BrynGwyn Road, Newport, NP20 4JT
(01633) 678833 (Home)
anna@pnorthover.freemove.co.uk

Meets Secretary

John Newton, 39 North Park Grove
Roundhay, Leeds, LS8 1EL
(0113) 293 3807 (Home)
jnewton5@csc.com

Records Officer

John Cooper
31 Elm Close, Wells, Somerset, BA5 1LZ
(01749) 670568 (Home)
csspub@googlemail.com

Web Master

Stephen Newton
68 Myrtle Avenue, Long Eaton, Notts, NG10 2LY
(0115) 972 9029 (Home)
snewton@ukonline.co.uk

Committee Member

Mel Reid
3 Bryntirion Terrace, Llangollen, LG20 8LP
07711 943492 (Mobile)
melrei@hotmail.com

Committee Member

Jason McCorrison
72 Christchurch Road, Penmaen Estate
Oakdale, Blackwood, Gwent, NP12 0UX
(01495) 221479 (Home)
jason_mccorrison@talktalk.net

Whitewalls

The Hillside, Llangattock, Powys, NP8 1LG, UK

Meets List 09/10

This is an outline of the meets for this year.

February 21st – 22nd

South Wales.

Draenen Round Trip.

March 28th – 29th

South Wales.

Swansea Valley

(DYO subject to weather).

April 4th – 5th

South Wales.

Cottage building weekend.

A lot of small jobs to be completed.

April 25th – 26th

Derbyshire (Orpheus).

Nettle Pot/Oxlow/Bagshaw.

May 23rd – 25th

South Wales.

Otter Hole on Saturday 23rd.

June 27th – 28th

South Wales. Decide your own trips.

BBQ and Barrel on Saturday night.

July 25th – 26th

Mendip (Wessex).

Banwell Bone/Stalactite Caves as an option on

Saturday. Eastwater as another option on Saturday.

Swildons on Sunday.

BBQ will be arranged for Saturday night.

August 15th – 17th

Yorkshire (YSS The Old School House).

Lost Johns/Birks Fell

(Days will be confirmed when permits booked).

Please contact me for any other requests.

September 26th – 27th

Hidden Earth (Location to be confirmed).

October 17th – 18th

Mendip (Wessex).

Box Stone Mines on Saturday.

November 7th – 8th

South Wales.

Agen Allwedd obscure passages.

Fireworks on Saturday night.

December 5th – 6th

South Wales.

Curry Extravaganza #5 on the 5th

Decide on your own trips.

January 2010 30th – 31st

South Wales. Dinner and AGM.

For all non Whitewall events except Hidden Earth, I need to know numbers to book beds etc, so please phone or email me to reserve a place. Also certain caves such as Otter Hole have number restrictions so it will be first come, first served.

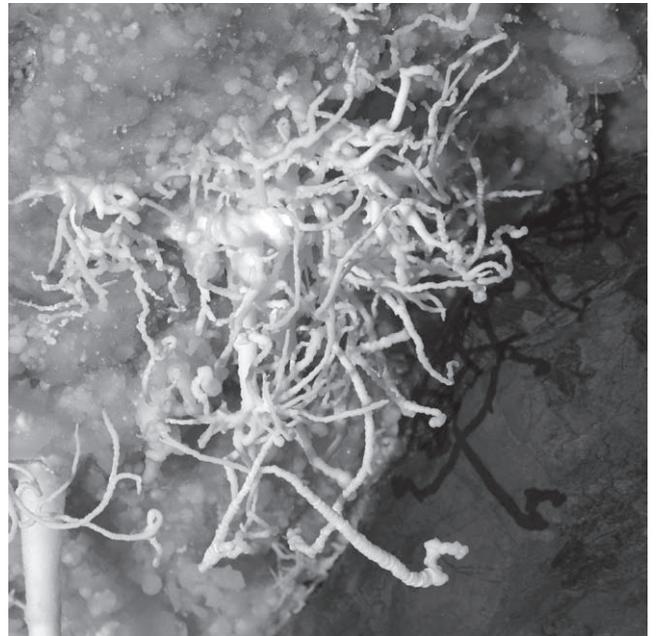
John Newton, Meets Secretary

Photos of the Month

Please send in your current, topical photos as it would be nice to have a wider selection to choose from.



*Simon Moth in Goatchurch Cavern
Photo: Steve Sharp*



*Formations,
Helibeds, Frog Street,
Daren Cilau
Photo: John Stevens*

*Andy Snook in Shatter Series, Swildon's Hole
Photo: Steve Sharp*





Eastern Flyover, Daren Cilau

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