

CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

CSS

Newsletter

Volume 51 No. 12 December 2009



Drws Cefn

Box Stone Mine

Dead Dog Cave

Electronic Surveying

Selected Caves of France

Chelsea Spelæological Society NEWSLETTER

Volume 51 No 12

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Harriet Bennett by Crane 22, Box Stone Mine
Photo: Duncan Price

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*Cover Photo
Duncan Price in Chamber Nine*

Wookey Hole
Photo: Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley

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

Membership

CSS Subs were due in October.

Please send all subscriptions to:
Peter Ward, 33 Gertrude Street, Abercynon,
Mountain Ash CF45 4RL

Current rates are:

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

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

These rates include non-caving insurance.

Any member that has **BCA Insurance** via another club can deduct **£5** from the above rates but please let Petre Ward know their **BCA Insurance Number** and **Club**

Caving Insurance for 2010 £11

Come the end of December 2009 any lapsing member will receive their last newsletter.

Membership Cards

If you wish to have your photo on your Membership Card please send a JPEG to Peter Ward:
speleo@hotmail.co.uk

Editorial

Thanks for all the contributions, please keep them coming . . .

Gonzo

Mark Lumley



Chelsea Dinner

January 2010 30th – 31st
Tretower Village Hall

Dinner and AGM

Please fill in the enclosed form and return with your choices and payment ASAP.

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 Langleys 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.

Membership

Welcome to new provisional members:

Susan Watson, 11 The Limes,
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Welcome back to:

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steritouch.com

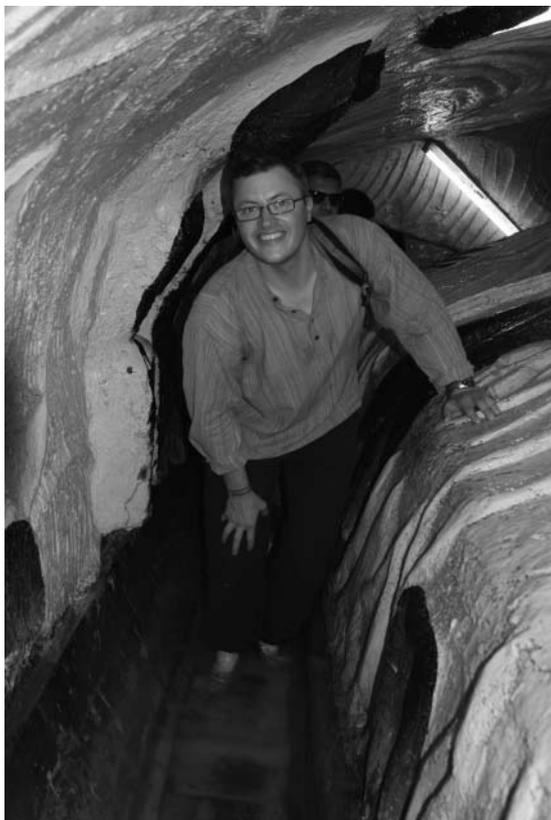
The committee now proposes for full membership **Andy Watson** and **Huw Durban**.

Any comments to the secretary.

Roy Musgrove is now available at:
21 Ffynnonau, Crickhowell,
Powys. NP8 1DB
Telephone: 01873 810747
Email: roy.musgrove@mypostoffice.co.uk



A Happy 9th Birthday to Toni Sharp who celebrated in Whitewalls with a fine cake after the fireworks on Bonfire night.



Free Tikka Anyone?

by

Tim Morgan

Photo supplied by Tim Morgan

I've not been one of the most prolific article writers for the CSS newsletter. Pretty crap actually, with, I think, one article in 12 years of membership. I promised that this year would be different ... after all I don't have a nine-to-five job at the moment. Many of you may know that I have taken a sabbatical from work to travel the world, so really there should have been a few articles by now on my caving experiences along the way. Well after seven countries and seven months, I am a little behind. So I am sitting in the Philippines, spurred on by the place being a bit of a caving mecca, playing catchup, beginning with my first three months in India...

I've done a few stupid things in my life. Many of them at Whitewalls as I am sure many members remember better than I do. I seem to remember a rather embarrassing photo courtesy of Lucy. Lucy, it is noted.

Stupid things, like the time I had a few beers, fell asleep on the train home, woke up in Brighton and decided that it might be a good idea to walk home...30 km

later I gave up, phoned a friend and got lift straight into the office for a days work. At least I can blame this event to being young, but not this time ...

I feel asleep in my hotel waiting for my two AM train from Rajasthan to Amritsar, India. Completely sober this time, I woke up at four am. Now I suspect that any normal person would have cursed and have gone straight back to sleep ... No, I decided that this being India, and that as I'm on 'Indian' time, I should go and check to see if the train had left, which surprisingly, it had. By this point I'd left my hotel room and was now stuck in a small town at four in the morning. Hmmm. So, with no trains for another 24 hours, I went to the bus stand, where, at four AM there were no buses. Hardly surprising really. Luckily I did find a travel agent (the sort who operates from a desk on the street) who was just opening for the day, probably for idiots like me. He took pity on me, sold me a ticket and let me doss in his shop floor (the street) until the first bus arrived traveling

in the right direction, at 7am

So I got to Amritsar, a little later than planned and in a lot less comfort. But I thought it was worth it; after two months traveling in India, I was going to get my first cave experience.

Ok, I use the term caving loosely. Limestone is a pretty rare commodity in most of India, with the only drool inducing quantities found in Meghalaya. But chatting to some guy in Rajasthan, I heard of a famous Hindu pilgrimage up a mountain on the border of Jammu, where in order to get to the top you had to travel through a cave with a 'mighty' river flowing through it. So I was told. That mountain was called Vaishno Devi and the cave was called 'Holy Cave'. So off I trundled to the Punjab and on towards Jammu. It sounded like it would be an interesting trip.

My plan was to visit the majestic Golden Temple in Amritsar and then travel onto Jammu to make the pilgrimage to the Holy Cave on Vaishno Devi. But after asking for some travel in Amritsar, I was told that

Draenen Entrance Code Change

by Chris Seal

The padlock combination code for Ogof Draenen has been changed. This is because the old code is now widely known and the landowners are concerned to see it published on the Internet. To prevent its immediate republication on the Internet, it has been suggested it is better not to publish the number in club newsletters (as they appear on the Internet). The new code will be posted in the key cupboard at Whitewalls and on the CSS Forum.

non-Hindu's are not allowed on Vasihno Devi. I asked if I could convert? Maybe a Tikka on my forehead would do the trick (No, that's not a Petzl). Well the chap didn't have an answer and he didn't see the funny side of it. He was kind enough to say that I could visit 'Mata Lal Devi Mandir', in which there is a reconstruction of the Vaishno Devi pilgrimage, including the holy cave! So, plan B kicked in and off I went.

Mata Lal Devi Mandir is a Hindu temple complete with a winding tour of stairs and passageways that have an eerie resemblance to a ride at Disneyland, complete with miniature mountain and a fiberglass cave system. Oh and there was a Hindu god at every corner, which needed blessing, meaning this place turned into a Swildons 20 traffic jam at every corner. To reach 'enlightenment' the cave had a squeeze machine, which would only really test the likes of John Prescott. But the highlight had to be the flowing river which got lower and lower until a crawl ensued. Then you get wet, very wet. After which I thought I was half way down southern stream passage. But rather than arriving in Aggy's main stream way, I popped out to a Hindu Brahmen, got plastered with a Tikka and went on my merry way.

DRWS CEFN

by Stuart France

This former CSS dig beside 'The Tumble' stream yielded about 100m of new passages during the first half of 2009. There are sizeable chambers and rifts with on-going leads, including a stream below a rift that is currently too tight to climb down. The initial break-through came after digging through about 10m of extremely arduous, wet, tight, flat-out rift or tube just before a large chamber.

Drws Cefn then doubles back on itself and continues for some distance as walking-size rift passage or hands-and-knees winding crawls over sandy mud floor to a 4-way junction. Since the winter weather arrived, the sandy passages of the summer have become a few inches deep in water in places. One branch of the junction climbed up a compacted sand/mud slope to some solid infill which was thought to be close to Ogof Draenen. A group was sent to the Draenen side and they could talk easily through this floor to a group in Drws Cefn below.

This point was dug through and it became possible to come up through the floor into a narrow passage not far from Wyvern Hall. The toughest digging both here and elsewhere was carried out by two local independent cavers who were assisted by a larger group from several clubs, principally Garimpeiros.

A decision was made to put the discoveries into the public domain as there was already word of a new entrance on internet forums and in Descent magazine. There then followed a marathon meeting of PDCMG on 1st November. Their intention is to hold another meeting during December after a round-table discussion with the diggers and land-owners consultations with which the Cambrian Caving Council is providing valuable assistance.

PDCMG accepted the diggers' offer to organise a gate and padlock and to let them look after things for a while. So the new entrance was gated on 16th November by 12 cavers from several clubs (again some independent) from as far away as Dorset and Swansea. It is a basic gate that requires a key to enter or leave the cave. At the time of writing, Garimpeiros have all the keys and the entrance is closed except for activities in Drws Cefn itself.

Note:

1 Garimpeiros decided on having a gate when the new entrance was made public knowledge in October.

2 The Drws Cefn entrance had been measured up and a gate ordered before Garimpeiros met with PDCMG.

3 Cambrian Caving Council has kindly agreed to fund this new gate, padlock etc, and will re-imburse the digging team.



Photo supplied by Stuart France

Selected Caves of France

by Andy Heath

In parts one and two of this whirlwind speleological tour of France, we were in the Franche-Comte. This month, we've gone 120km due south.



Part Five: Vercors

continued

In part four, I gave a very brief summary of five trips that I've enjoyed/endured in this splendid region, including a few trips that offer a fair degree of horizontal caving. In this, part five; we've definitely gone vertical...

Glaciere de Carri

Not a huge cave, but still one that gains a respectable depth of 380m. The 'Glaciere' in the name is a bit of a misnomer, or certainly was in September 2007. There's supposed to be permanent ice at the bottom of the 15m entrance shaft. No such thing at the time of our visit, just mud and tree trunks. Once at the foot of the entrance pitch, a short bit of thrutchy down and up leads to a curious triangular window that pops out onto the top of an inclined shaft split into five short pitches. The inclined nature necessitates many rebelay; shame about the quality of many of the spits. We found descending this shaft very satisfying, easy and aesthetically pleasant. The following shaft of 33m was also aesthetically pleasant, though not as satisfying. In fact, I found rigging the shaft downright scary! I think the main spits at the head of the shaft were put in by a 7 foot giant. At one point I found myself chimneying out at full stretch above the void on a slack line and above my last bolt; not a comfortable position to be in! Having said that, once rigged it's a fine pitch.

Two thirds of the way down this shaft the nature of the cave changes. A pendulum into a low, narrow tube is necessary, not an easy manoeuvre; in fact it took me four attempts in gradually increasing arcs to gain the tube. A short, tight pitch follows, down into a tiny chamber with just enough room for a couple of cavers. The floor and far wall of the chamber comprise loose boulders, not least one of which we christened the 'Boulder of Doom'. We anticipated that this boulder weighs at least half a tonne. We were alarmed to note that it appears to be held in place by nothing more than a couple of 5mm wires attached to very rusty bolts. Quite how much weight these wires are actually taking I wouldn't like to say, but the whole thing looked less than ideal. Unfortunately the way on is down a tight slot beside this rock. However, throwing caution

to the wind I squeezed past the offending rock, closely followed by Mandy. Two more tight vertical squeezes followed leading to a fourth, ridiculously tight vertical squeeze. Removing SRT kit, I attempted downward progress but quite frankly, I wasn't going to fit (or if I did, the return would have been exceptionally difficult). Since I wasn't the largest member of the team, there was little point in continuing, so once again I was thwarted in my attempt at bottoming a Vercors cave!

Had we got through, we'd have been treated to an apparently fine 44m pitch before the cave degenerates into a couple more short pitches and tight squeezes.

Scialet des Sarrasins

Not a cave to visit if you've an aversion to a long march with a very heavy rucksack. It's a good two-hour hike to the entrance, very much uphill. However, a very early start on the day of our visit meant that we were treated to a fantastic sunrise as we arrived at the col near the entrance. Speaking of which, it's a bit of an adventure in itself just gaining the entrance; a 60m traverse along a narrow ledge before you even arrive at the top of the 13m entrance pitch.

Pitch 2 follows immediately. As with many of the caves in the Vercors, we found the bolts to be quite frankly pretty poor. A Y-hang off suspect bolts leads quickly to a rebelay off a single, equally suspect bolt; a very poor arrangement since once you're 15m short of the bottom of the pitch, a wide pendulum is necessary to gain a small side passage. Swinging on a single bolt of dubious quality certainly focuses the mind! Thankfully there's an in-situ bit of tat that aids the rigger to pull across the shaft.

A short, narrow and incredibly draughty tube leads immediately to four pleasant pitches of 5, 5, 11 and 4m. Thankfully, using a combination of spits and natural belays, these can be rigged a lot more safely. The 'big' pitch soon follows, the 'Puits du Croquemitaine' (Shafts of the Bogey-Man) a 50m shaft split in two by pitches of 18 and 30m with a large, loose bouldery ledge. Impressive in its dimensions, the edge is taken away from enjoying it to its full extent by the fact that once again many of the spits are of poor quality. In fact, we found that the best-placed ones at the pitch head were stripped, so I had to revert to using less than ideally positioned ones. Below the bouldery ledge, things get exciting, where once again a rather large pendulum is necessary. This time, there's no tat to grab, so it's a case of a combination of kicking off the wall and pulling across the shaft on tiny flakes until you reach a small knobble which you can hang onto with one hand whilst screwing in the hanger with the other. If ever there's a case for P hangers, this is it.

Below this big shaft, three more enjoyable pitches of 19, 6 and 17m soon follow, leading to the first real horizontal bit of caving in the cave, the Meandre de la Secade. It was in this meander, 177m long, that we decided the guidebook could have been a bit more informative. Initially, although narrow and jagged, there is no real problem, the way on is at floor level. However, the

second half becomes more sporting, where it is necessary to thread yourself on various levels to find the widest bit. In places, there is quite a lot of flowstone, which drastically reduces the dimensions. To cut a long story short, there is one stal squeeze in particular that makes a very effective filter for the larger-than-average caver. The book, although talking about the stal banks, doesn't actually use the word 'etroiture' (squeeze). Anyway, this effectively meant that we had to turn back at this point, since one of our team was slightly larger-than-average. Shame really, as we weren't far from the final pitches and what is supposed to be some very large, extremely well decorated horizontal passages. We felt especially cheated since we still had a completely unused bag of rope to haul all the way out again.

So once again, another Vercors cave that I've failed to bottom. I think this is one that I would very much like to go back to and try again with a thin team!

Scialet Vincens

Before I go any further, I must point out that I never intended to get to the bottom; there weren't enough of us on the trip to carry the necessary 470+ metres of rope and 84 belays.

The cave begins as a small doline, the entrance being approximately 2m x 3m. A choice of trees serves as the first belay. Use a tape or bit of rope that you don't mind becoming soaked with sap! Once inside the entrance, a muddy slope has been shored up with timbers. Three or four rebelays lead to the top of a 32m pitch, broken by a large ledge a third of the way down, where it is necessary to pass under a huge fallen boulder. An easy 13m pitch soon follows. Pitch Three starts initially as a tight meandering slot, a bit of careful knot adjustment ensures the rope misses both walls. This 38m pitch is a beautiful elliptical shaft, belling out as one descends. We found the acoustics here to be quite phenomenal; I don't think I've ever heard an echo quite like it.

Although virtually dry at the time of our visit, I got the impression that at times, the cave could possibly get quite wet from here on.

The easy 3m Pitch Four follows almost immediately. The biggest pitch in the cave, the 57m Pitch Five also happens to have the worst belays that we encountered in the cave! Thankfully, the first couple of spits seemed ok. However, once out over the pitch proper, all the best-placed spits were stripped, so I had to make do with some less than ideally placed ones. Unfortunately, my limited choice of spits meant that the rope was brushing the wall for some considerable distance; however the rock was so smooth I calculated that there wouldn't be a problem, as indeed there wasn't. What was alarming however, though I wasn't aware of this until later, was that after I'd descended, Matt followed and must have loaded the rope in a slightly different direction to that which I had done. To his consternation and no doubt alarm, one of the bolts that I'd already tested and been down on, popped out! Fortunately no other bolts failed, and he was able to locate an alternative.

A short section of horizontal, meandering passage leads to the next couple of pitches of 38 and 9m. A

junction at this point marks the route that the water takes, had there been any. The main (dry) route continues with another couple of pleasant pitches of 9 and 10m.

A short meander leads to the very attractive set of four pitches known as the Puits de l'Opera. Clean, easily rigged and short. This was vertical caving at its most enjoyable. It was almost a disappointment to arrive at the bottom, as this was where our rope ran out. We'd carried as much as we reasonably could, deciding that the base of the Opera pitches was to be our destination for the day, at a depth of about -300m.

I say disappointment, but there was another reason for stopping here. At floor level, a low, wet tube marks the way on, and quite frankly looked very uninviting. Had we continued through this wet tube, another couple of short pitches lead to a sandy bedding plane. A further couple of short pitches lead to a decorated chamber, with yet a further two pitches and a ramp terminating at a muddy pool at a depth of -403m.

References:

Vercors Caves. Des Marshall. Cordee. 1993

Speleo dans le Vercors. Tome 1. Caillault, Haffner & Krattinger. Edisud. 1997

Speleo dans le Vercors. Tome 2. Caillault, Haffner, Krattinger & Delannoy. Edisud. 1999

Speleo Sportive dans le Vercors. Delannoy & Haffner. Edisud. 1987

So that concludes my short selection of just a few of the caves in the Vercors. A fine area, both above and below ground, and somewhere I'm keen to return to, if only to bottom a cave!

For the next and final stage of my tour, we'll be heading west to the Dordogne/Correze/Lot, with perhaps a very brief stop-off in the Ardeche with another cautionary tale of when not to try to go caving in France

Editor's Note

While you're there Scialet du Pot 2 is an entertaining 'day off' trip as well.

A single shaft of 319 metres with the first belay around a convenient tree and a few simple rebelay on the way down. Worth the walk!

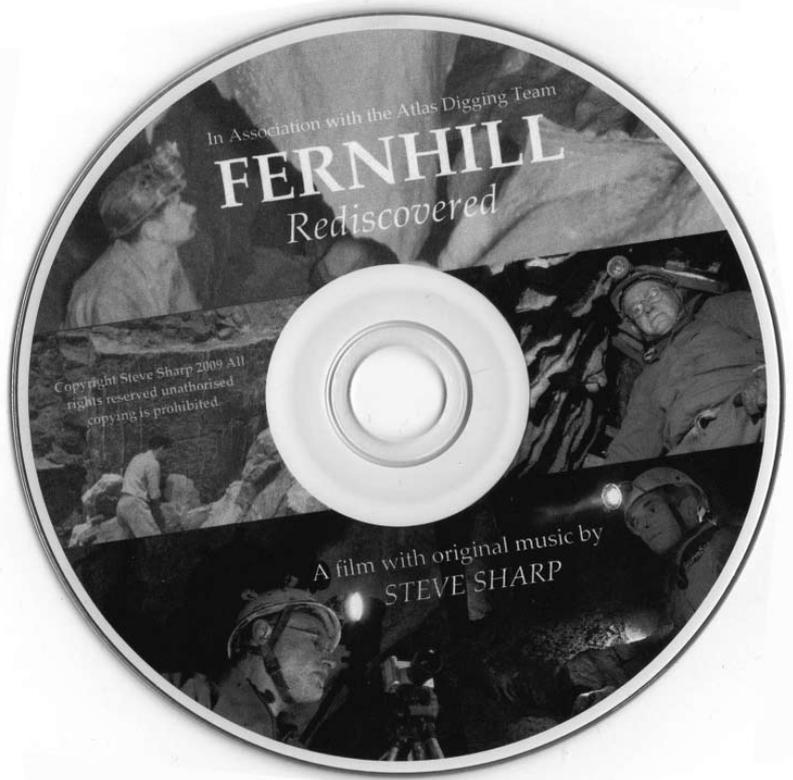
COTTAGE BOOKINGS

04/12/2009

Curry Weekend

22-23/1/2010

Cambridge University CC



Fernhill Rediscovered

A film by Steve Sharp

Steve's entertaining film shows the Fernhill project right through from the early days to the breakthrough. It features interviews with the diggers, an account of the history, geology and surroundings of the cave by Alan Gray, Richard Witcombe and our very own Duncan Price.

As well as doing all the filming Steve has spent endless hours editing the piece and producing his own soundtrack. Steve had hoped to enter the film for the competition at Hidden Earth but it was not accepted by the judges as, unfortunately, it was submitted just after the competition deadline.

If you would like to buy a copy Steve is selling them for £6 including p&p.

You can contact him at stevesharpkitchens@blueyonder.co.uk or at 16 Woodview Close, Shirehampton, Bristol, BS11 0BE

New Year at Whitwealls

Stuart France will organise 3-course dinners on New Year's Eve and/or New Year's Day at Whitwealls, according to demand, for anyone who fancies some caving and good food at the end of the festive period.

Please use his 01874 730016 number and not email after 18th December as he doesn't use the internet unless he is at the office.

Pottering About on Mendip

by
John Cooper

Swildon's Hole

Sunday 4th October 2009

John Cooper and Barry Weaver on a visit to the Mud Sump and back.

Sunday 18th October 2009

John Cooper and Barry Weaver on a visit to Sump 2 and back. Expected to see CSS down there but no sign of them.

Sunday 1st November 2009.

John Cooper and Barry Weaver on a visit to look down the Black Hole. Following heavy rain overnight the streamway finally had a load of brown frothy water rushing down it. Much nicer than a couple of weeks ago when it was bone dry. Had to skirt carefully round the new hole just below the slab! Still slumping in and the water is scouring all the boulders/cobbles out. Means the water sinks into the Wet Way 10ft nearer the entrance than it used to.

Saturday 14th November 2009.

Joined a Wessex CC party of Adrian Bennett, Richard Carey, Andy Chamberlain and Andrea Russe on a Short Round trip. As it was the weekend of the storms it was all rather wet! However the Mud Sump pipe was still working well, just a small trickle coming out at the far end, which meant only a couple of inches of water in the sump itself. Met two parties at The Greasy Chimney, one turned round but the other, a couple of lads from Weston, followed us. Water flowing out of the first Trouble so started the syphon then baled until reasonable airspace (enough to go through on back)! Didn't bother with the next two. First time I've seen water flowing down Glistening Gallery! Once back in the streamway detoured to admire the foam on Sump 2 before heading for Sump 1. As AR had not done the sump before it took some time for her to settle enough to go through, receiving cheers on the upstream side from another party that had just arrived. Out after about 5 hours.

Sunday 15th November 2009.

John Cooper and Barry weaver on a quick trip down to Sump 2 and back. Water about 30cm lower than yesterday. Very busy.

Charterhouse Cave

Saturday 10th October 2009.

Whilst Pete Hann and Nigel Graham rehung the gate at the top of Chillout Choke John Cooper mixed cement and Alison Moody rebuilt a section at the bottom of Chillout Choke. 3½ hours.

Saturday 31st October 2009

Andrew Atkinson, John Cooper, Pete Hann, Alison and Pete Moody. Had intended to go to the end to check the high level continuation. However AA coughed and spluttered his way as far as the start of The Narrows before opting to leave. Portal Pool was pumped as it was six inches higher than last weekend. Able to go through with just one wet ear on way in. Looked at a high level passage near the Rip Rift area which didn't go. Went and photographed the cascade below the sump before checking Diesel Duck. Might have been an inch of airspace but a very nice stream flowing

into it! Photographed it. Back out through Portal Pool on my back getting both ears wet as it had filled up quite a bit even though we'd only been the other side for 1½ hours. That might be it as far as Diesel Duck is concerned until the spring unless we get a dry winter. 4½ hours.

Saturday 7th November 2009.

The final conservation trip before the 2008 extension is officially opened. It is intended that the qualified leaders will only lead their own club members for the first six months before other clubs can ask for trips. There are 10 clubs in the Charterhouse Caving Company and each is entitled to 2 leaders. To date only 13 of the 20 possible leaders have undertaken a trip to the 2008 extension, a precursor to being given a key to that part of the cave. I was not expecting a trip down this weekend but owing to one of the leaders dropping out of their qualification trip I was able to fit in. Then on the day another dropped out so John Osborne (Hatstand) joined Pete Hann, Alison Moody and myself. We went in rearranging and adding extra tape as we went. Rather wetter today, so much so that at one place we noticed the water falling down is shredding the tape. Will need to replace that with some orange coullene string or something similar. At the Frozen Cascade AM took JO to show him Portal Pool, a couple of feet up on last week and well sumped. When they came out we removed the tarpaulins and washed off any muddy marks. Then I showed JO the sump before we came back up and spent an hour digging at the Sand Dig. 5½ hours.

GB Cave

Saturday 24th October 2009.

John Cooper, Paul Tarrant and Barry Weaver on a 3 hour amble round. Took the Devil's Elbow route in to The Gorge. Up and over The Bridge and followed White Passage up to the end. Back down and took a right into the Loop rejoining The Gorge through the Oxbow. Up into Ladder Dig Extension where JC and PT visited Bat Passage, very pretty. Out straight up The Gorge and took Mud Passage route to exit.

Withyhill Cave

Sunday 25th October 2009.

John Cooper and Paul Tarrant joined Antoinette Bennett and Duncan Price on a survey trip. Whilst getting changed we were joined by a very pretty abandoned cat which we left in the car park.

Fernhill Cave

Sunday 25th October 2009.

On our way back from Withyhill Cave we walked over to look at the entrance of Fernhill Cave. As it was open JC, DP and PT went and admired the curtains in Curtain Chamber. Very impressive. Back in the car park and the cat was still there. AB persuaded us to go and get it some food so DP went into The Wagon and Horses, coming out with some very nice chicken, at least the cat thought so. Finally AB succumbed and the cat was put in the boot of the car on its way to a new home somewhere. Last seen at 29 New Square, South Horrington, Wells!

Box Stone Mine

17th October 2009

by Duncan Price



*On the way out
Box Stone Mine
Photo: Duncan Price*

Stuck behind a Landrover Freelander driving at 40 mph on the outskirts of Frome it was obvious to Antoinette, Harriet and myself from the National Trust sticker on the car ahead that its occupants weren't going to drive any faster. We speculated about the filling of their sandwiches (egg & cress on wholemeal bread) and the breed & name of their dog (Sophie or Barny the Labrador). By the time we reached Bradford on Avon it was apparent that we were going to be late so I called ahead to John Newton to tell him that we were on our way. On reaching Box village, we had to stop to ask the way. I was surprised when the old gentleman we spoke to replied in metric for the distances. "Ex-Army?" was Antoinette's suggestion but his directions were spot-on and we soon arrived at the Quarryman's Arms where Gary Jones, Jason McCorrison, John & Steven Newton, Lucy Northover, John Stevens and Mike Read were already changed and waiting for us.

Once everyone was ready, we set off to the Backdoor Entrance which is

situated in the garden of a posh house with a tennis court. There was some debate whether we should be going in this way, but the pub had said it was OK when John N. got the key. We were all quiet anyway, although there is a commercial opportunity for a range of camouflage caving gear (the old Daleswear suits were always good for going places you shouldn't be).

After sweeping the entrance for eight legged creatures we all went underground. The Cathedral was our first port of call where Spanners and I took photographs. Then we headed off towards Crane Country to follow a route suggested by the SMCC on their survey. Mike was acting as our guide and we paused along the way to play with some of the artifacts - which included a kid's tricycle which was too small for (even) the smallest child in the group (though this did not prevent the event being recorded for posterity).

Mike was doing a good job at shepherding the disparate team which tended to scatter to the four corners

of the mine at regular intervals like a flock of cats. Some of us stopped for lunch near to the end of one working where there were interesting fan shaped fungi growing on the wall. I say "some" because not everybody had brought food - Antoinette and I had expected a shorter trip and had only brought water; so we just sat and got hungry until Jason proffered us some strangely flavoured crisps. Our guide saved the day by producing a packet of Black Jacks which afforded the necessary sugar rush to keep us all going as we headed around Crane Country.

Our first crane was number 22 - another photo opportunity - then we saw all the others in descending order, finishing up at number 1. I am, of course exaggerating, but we saw an awful lot of cranes - although I liked the winch truck myself best of all. Strangely, the females in the group seemed to lose interest in industrial archeology after the first crane with one in particular being more concerned about getting out in time for the shops...

Our far point from the entrance was Windy Drill Hall where there are scores of vertical drill marks in the walls and a plaque in memory of one of the miners who used to guide tourists around the workings. Mike was doing a good job of taking us on the circuit and we were soon on our way out. A long adit provided another photo shoot and we followed this to a steel gate though which we could peer into the outside world through a window big enough to admit a nine-year old but not the rest of the group so we all had to make our way back to the Backdoor and stealthy walk to the pub car park after being underground for 4½ hours - topping Harriet's longest caving trip so far by about 3 hours!

We were obviously very hungry and dehydrated after this amount of exercise and fortunately the Quarryman's Arms provided the necessary sustenance. Antoinette, Harriet and myself headed back to Glastonbury to feed the cats and ourselves whilst the others decamped to the Mendip plateau to stay at the SMCC hut.

Altogether a most enjoyable day out - although I think that we agreed that we'd seen enough of Box Stone Mine for a while!

Dead Dog Cave

by Joe Duxbury

Dead Dog Cave has a small entrance in the face of an old quarry by the tramroad to Brynmawr, south of the junction with the Llanelli Church road. It was first explored by Brent Durban in the late 1960s. It is currently being dug by Grwp Ogofeydd Garimpeiros.

I have been helping here occasionally, and as the survey on the wall at Whitewalls is unquestionably out of date, I suggested to John Stevens that it would be a useful, short exercise for the Saturday of the CSS bonfire. Mike Read was also keen to do something, and so we set off after we had built a magnificent bonfire, taking advantage of the dry morning.

With John's new electronic surveying devices, we proceeded remarkably quickly. The DistoX was a great advantage in the narrow passage that is most of Dead Dog. You can set survey stations right on the wall without having to worry about sighting from them, with the error (possibly cumulative) that that entails.

At the end of the cave the passage has been closed up by a calcite flow from the ceiling, but at the top there was a small gap emitting a draught. Small stones dropped down through it rattled away, presumably into the continuation of the horizontal passage. The gap is currently being enlarged by removing calcite lining the slot.

The survey now gives the cave as 36m long, and although it's not heading directly towards a side passage in Ogof Craig a Ffynnon, it's in the general right direction.

Dead Dog Cave

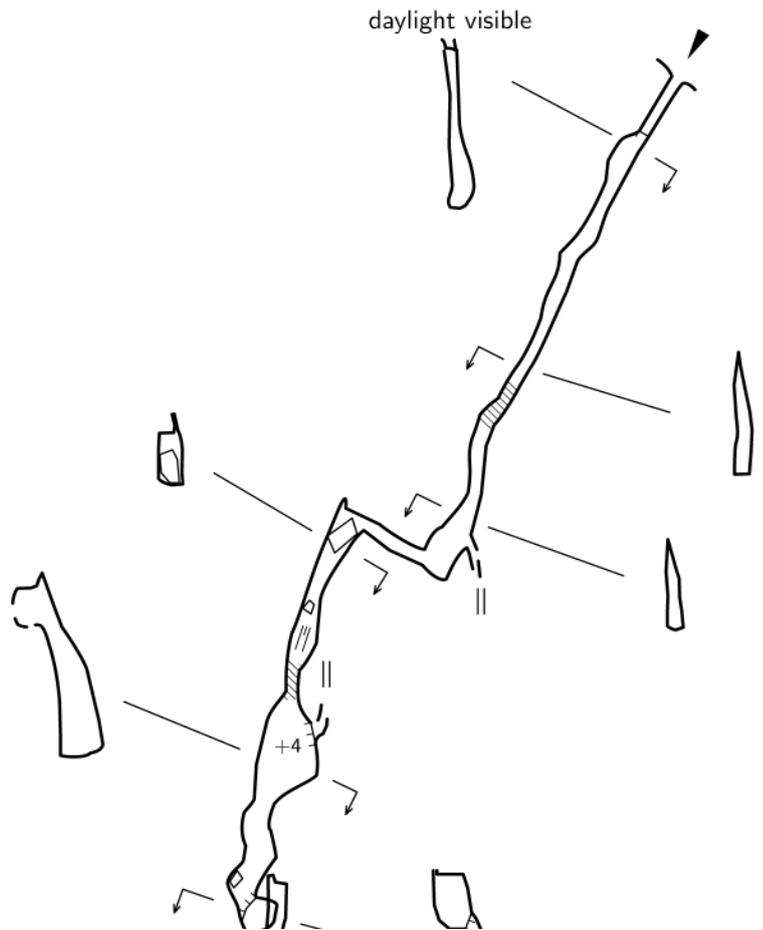
10 m

Length: 36 m

Depth: 6 m

Explored by: Grwp.Ogofeydd.Garimpeiros

Surveyed by: Joe Duxbury, Mike Read, John Stevens 2009



Dead Dog Cave Extended Section

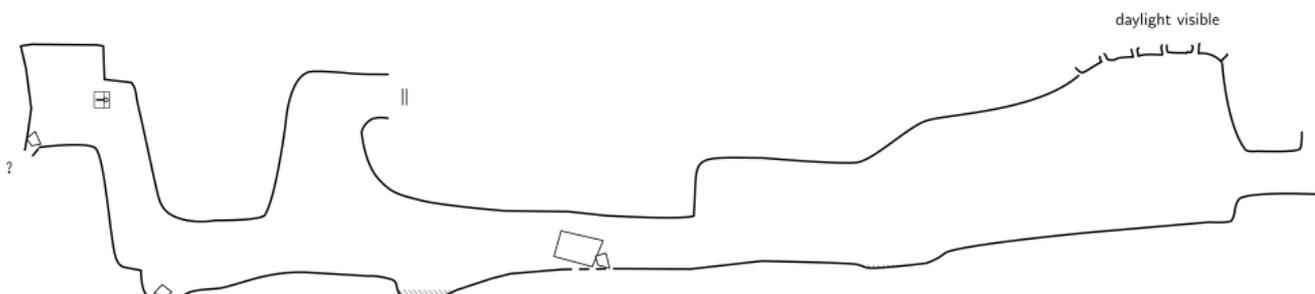
10 m

Length: 36 m

Depth: 6 m

Explored by: Grwp.Ogofeydd.Garimpeiros

Surveyed by: Joe Duxbury, Mike Read, John Stevens 2009



Electronic Surveying

by John Stevens

In April this year I attended a Cave Surveying Group meeting over at Penwylt. About ten people were around on the Sunday for the practical part of the meeting which David Stevens and myself went for. In Top Entrance we went to the Big Chamber and started surveying around a short loop of passages using four different methods but exactly the same stations.

- a) **Compass, clino, tape and notebook.**
- b) **Shetland Attack Pony (SAP), disto (laser tape measure and notebook**
- c) **distoX with Palm running Auriga**
- d) **distoX with PDA running PocketTopo**

Shetland Attack Pony (SAP) is an electronic compass, clino with a laser guide

distoX is a disto A3 with boarded added to it to make it a compass, clino, tape, and Bluetooth device.

Other than a cock up on the first couple of legs with the compass and clino, the loops were all completed to get a reasonable closure. (will have to wait see that published by CSG). The main difference was the survey you walked out of the cave holding, as the Palm and PDA plotted the legs as you went along. Auriga plotted the legs and LRUD data to form a wire frame model as you proceeded, but unlike PocketTopo, you could not draw passage detail in. This is where PocketTopo excelled. The data was plotted to a zoomable scale, which the detail could be added in various coloured pens.

The distoX and PocketTopo was developed by Beat Heeb, who sells the distoX board for 180euro (you need to fit it and have an disto A3) Examples of the set up can be seen at : [_ http://paperless.bheeb.ch/](http://paperless.bheeb.ch/)

So in May I ordered a board and by the end of the month had it ready to install. The Disto A3 was off eBay (prices vary from ~£80 to £130) and a PDA with a reasonable sized screen that ran Windows Mobile version 5 or 6, (also about ~£100 off ebay, some

phones could do the job, but screens are rather small). A nice box to keep the PDA dry (£40). So the whole lot for a bit over £400. Sounds a lot but a suunto compass and clino will set you back around £200-£220.

So my first outing with the system was an evening trip on 29 May 09 with David to Egwyls Faen. In the oval entrance and out the main to link up with the prime point on the tram road. A nice loop that took about one hour for 17 legs. David was using the PDA and for his first survey on the "book", its not bad. The loop closure was 0.4m over the 162m = 0.25%.

As the raw diagram shows, the method of taking measurements is a bit different and this needs to be learnt to make best use of the extra functions the devices and software.

So for each station we start with taking the passage dimensions (LRUD), so we can be backward compatible but as each measurement has a direction we can do more than the basic four, so that any extra features are picked up. Thus you can use splay shots to get a better feel of the cross-section. PocketTopo draws these splays so you can then join up the ends to make the section.

Next, splays to pick up passage features you missed from the last station, the plan and longitudinal

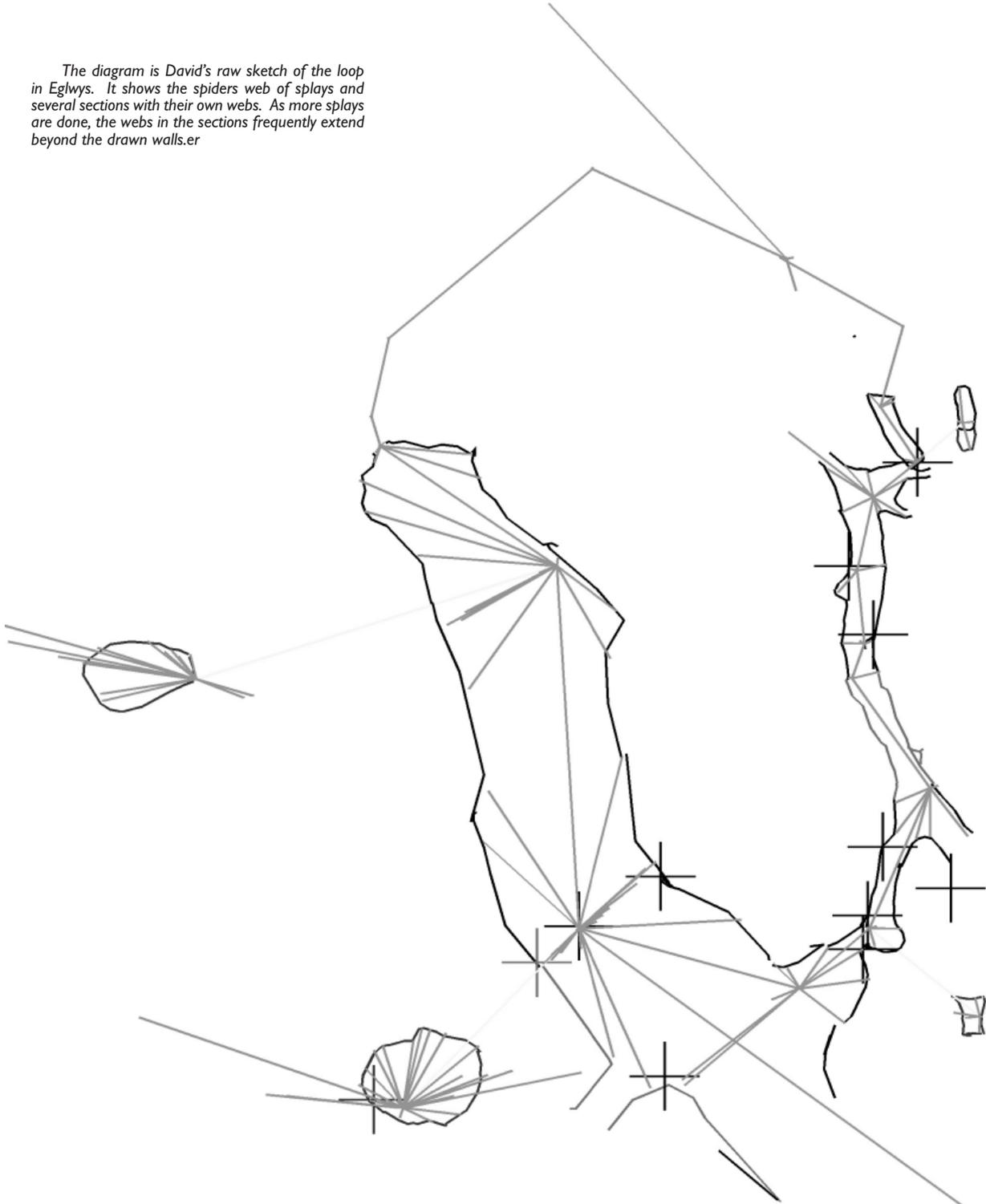
section from the last station can then be drawn. Forward with splays picking up more features towards the next station and then the next leg. This is taken three times so that the software automatically recognises as a leg rather than a splay. (it averages the three readings). Then start all over again. If the distoX user is too keen then passage splays begin to appear on the cross section diagram before the outline has been drawn. It then takes longer to sort out which line is which and slows the process down. So the book needs to keep giving feedback, and what data they are ready for.

As the distoX is a Bluetooth device the measurements are all transferred when within range. So it is all rather quiet without numbers being called out and the chance of transcription errors. You could write down the displayed figures off the distoX and use a normal book but this would lose half the beauty of the system. The choice of stations is much wider as you don't have to get you head into some strange position to sight, just the instrument. As taking a leg is quick, you tend to add an extra leg rather than struggle though some tiny sighting hole. Shorter legs normally means more detail is pick up. The slowest job is still the drawing but as you don't worry about the numbers, just make sure they keep in touch to give the data over automatically.

The next outing was the following evening with Mike Read and David. We spent three hours in Busman's and after a slow start, myself on the PDA, Mike distoX, David target, we managed 31 legs. The following week I tried a bit of solo surveying at the start of southern stream in Agen Allwedd. It was then I noted the distoX had a problem and with one of the sensors. The board was taken back by Beat Heeb and now works fine. A couple more trips in upper southern stream and then John Cooper came over and we continued with Busman's to link with the top of Antler Passage. Here we found two stations we thought maybe from the old survey. We made this leg with the 8.894m 230.5 +1.4 (with 2 degrees declination) but many years earlier it was 8.88m 234 +1.5 (with 6 degrees declination), so I think we got a link.

From the fact above, you might have gathered that the distoX reads the instruments to a higher degree

The diagram is David's raw sketch of the loop in Eglwys. It shows the spiders web of splays and several sections with their own webs. As more splays are done, the webs in the sections frequently extend beyond the drawn walls.



of precision. It displays the length to mm and angles to 0.1 degrees. But it records them to an even higher precision with angles to 0.01 degrees. But the actual accuracy of the system depends on the instrument calibration, (laser to sensors) and then the laser to grid north. The calibration of the laser to sensors is longwinded but worth getting as accurate as possible. This needs to be done every time the batteries are changed and an accuracy of 0.5 degrees is the minimum acceptable. I got 0.24 last time I did it. To reduce the number of times this is done, lithium batteries are advised, as

these have a high capacity and small magnetic signature. Unfortunately rechargeables, change their magnetism as they discharge and are charged, so are of no use. Still on my first set of lithium batteries, and they are still showing full.

Because the sensors are very sensitive, steel needs to be kept at a good distance at all times, so thought must be used when surveying though scaffolded sections, with a leap frog when needed. Otherwise the need for leapfrogging is basically eliminated as you can get to sight in nasty positions and the repeatable human errors of reading the instruments has

also been done away with.

So in conclusion, the system produces a very nice result underground and you can see where the passage is going as you explore/survey it. If the system survey data is also loaded onto PocketTopo, you can see possible interconnections and distances when you are there. The distance you can survey (not meaning long legs) is increased and transferring the data to the drawing package is easier as well. So does anyone want to go surveying, I'm sure we will find a few more sites to work on shortly.



Adrian Fawcett
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16 November 2009

Dear Adrian

I regret having to write to you but I need to complain in the strongest possible terms about content in the last two issues of the Chelsea Newsletter. Both concern items written by your editor, Mark Lumley.

In the October issue in the item 'Recent work in Fairy Cave Quarry' I take great exception to the statement "banned from the quarry by the landowner" in reference to myself. It was completely unnecessary to mention this, however if it was relevant in the context of the article then it should have been qualified with a reason.

Although I have been told by certain cavers that I am banned I have not had any contact with the owners. Apparently they hold me personally responsible for them not obtaining planning permission to develop the site as a show cave and leisure complex. It is true that I represented the caving community when we fought the application which was subsequently turned down, and it is nice to think that I held such power and that the caves are now accessible to cavers which they might not otherwise have been. Perhaps some recognition would not go amiss. Of course the application was also opposed by the Nature Conservancy Council and the Highway Authority.

Also in the same article the discovery of 'Priceless Grotto' is mentioned. The naming of this chamber by Mark Lumley has been an to many of the Atlas diggers. Rich Whitcombe, Tony Boycott and others said that it was never seriously intended to be called this and it was a private 'joke' in the pub resulting from Mark Lumleys "warped sense of humour". This may well be very amusing to him but he has little concept of the damage it has done to the relationship between Atlas and our own digging team, Team Withybrook. These statements are antagonistic and he has clearly abused his editorial privilege to satisfy his own inadequacies.

Unfortunately he has not been able to leave things alone and further aggravated the situation in the latest issue of the Newsletter in his article 'Withyhill Drainage'. In this he says the flooding problem in the cave has been 'intensified by heavy rainfall together with improved drainage of surface water into the system at Withybrook Slocker'. This is complete and utter rubbish and he clearly has no idea what he is talking about. The Team Withybrook diggers have taken very great exception to the statement.

The heavy rainfall is entirely speculative which would require supporting evidence. Drainage into the system is certainly improved, and Somerset County Council estimate that the final cost of the works will be in the region of £500,000 in what can primarily be considered by us to be a cave conservation scheme. The situation is much too complex to go into here but suffice it to say that the works have been undertaken by close liaison and cooperation between ourselves, Natural England and Somerset County Council. There is no possibility of flooding being made worse by the scheme which has been designed to alleviate the problem and generally improve the situation.

cont.....

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Editor's Note

I apologise to the Club Membership for taking up valuable space in the newsletter with this letter but I passed a copy on to Martin Grass of the Fairy Cave Quarry Management Committee who has spoken to him regarding the accusation of 'outright lies' that was made against the 'group of people' (FCQMC)

With regard to the complaints regarding two of my articles I only have the following comments:

1. *Graham Price was indeed banned from Fairy Cave Quarry by the landowners in the 1980's and has been banned ever since.*

This was confirmed recently to Martin Grass by Hobbs Properties Ltd.

2. *The Priceless Grotto dig was not an ATLAS dig but was dug by Withyhill Cave leaders and members of various clubs, some of whom happen to be ATLAS cavers. One of the original diggers was also invited to join us when we started the dig several years ago.*

It is unfortunate that Mark Lumley has decided to contribute to the misinformation that seems to be rife concerning Withybrook, despite the recent article in Descent and the fact that he should clearly know better having direct involvement with the caves. Unfortunately his actions have created considerable bad feeling which is likely to lead to major problems due to the necessity to raise the profile of the entire matter; and it probably does not help that he is part of the group of people who told the owners of the quarry outright lies as a lever to get the caves reopened.

I believe that you as a club need to look very closely at the actions of your Editor and how he is clearly abusing the privilege of his position. He has personally created a situation that is clearly going to have consequences.

I would also hope that you will set the record straight in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Yours sincerely,



Graham Price

In the October issue of the News 'Recent work in Fairy Cave Grotto' I take great exception to the comment 'damned from the quarry by the landowner' as it is a reference to myself. It was completely unnecessary to mention my name in the context of the article since it should have been qualified with a credit.

Although I have been told by certain sources that I am beyond I have not had any contact with the quarry since they hold me personally responsible for those who obtained planning permission to dig the quarry. It is true that I expressed the desire to dig the quarry when we first discussed the matter, and it is not to think that I should have done so. The quarry was approved by the Natural Environment Council and the Highway Authority.

The name of 'Priceless Grotto' is mentioned. The name of 'Priceless Grotto' was suggested by the Alan Diggers, Rich Winterson, Tony Boycott and I am sure never actually intended to be called this and it was a private joke in the pub making the 'Priceless Grotto' name. This may well be very amusing to you but for the little grotto, it is done as the landowner's name Alan and our own digging team, Tony Winterson. These grotto diggers and the quarry should be allowed to dig the quarry to satisfy the landowner's requirements.

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3. The name 'Priceless Grotto' has been extremely well received by countless cavers, and others on Mendip and beyond. The name also has the landowner's wholehearted approval.

4. No criticism of the Withybrook project was made. With the faster run-off now that drainage into the system has been improved FCQMC with the backing of Natural England are working to improve drainage out of the system which was already prone to flooding. I am sure that if Natural England require Graham Price's input they will contact him directly.

Mark Lumley.
Editor.

ORIGINAL MOUNTAIN MARATHON 2009

by Martin Beale

The OMM is a 2 day mountain marathon held in a different location every year. The goal is to visit a set of checkpoints over mountain terrain in the shortest possible time, covering over 50 miles in two days. Competitors have to carry all their own equipment, including a tent, sleeping bag and cooking gear for the overnight camp which is invariably located in a cold, wet and draughty location.

This year the OMM was held in the Elan Valley which made Whitewalls an ideal base camp on the Friday night. I was to run the event with another Martin who, despite being an accomplished runner, was a novice as far as mountain marathons are concerned.

We had Whitewalls to ourselves when we arrived at 9pm. The main room downstairs was absolutely ideal for kitting up. Martin had one of the tables for his gear, while I had the other. Having lain everything out that we wanted to take with us (bearing in mind that we were forecast a wet and windy weekend), we then began the kit audit. Out went virtually anything that wasn't on the kit list. Out went those little luxury food items (like a normal chocolate bar when a Powerbar has a better calorie to weight ratio). Out went that thermal top. We could use the survival blankets if we got cold at night (a survival bag is a silvery sheet of very thin plastic that is specially formulated to rustle in otherwise quiet locations. It is especially useful when you do not have a dripping tap or creaky central heating in your chosen sleeping location). The tent pegs were paired to the absolute minimum and then a couple more pegs were rejected for good measure (there's bound to be a few spare twigs at the campsite).

After packing, we looked longingly at a couple of cans of Grolsch. I remembered fond returns to Whitewalls after long Aggy digging trips when we would sit around the tables, warming ourselves by the radiators with a glass of the golden throat charmer clutched in our hands. As mountain athletes, we were unable to indulge in these pleasures. It took a lot of willpower and hard work to say no. A flick through the Whitewalls logbook revealed all the trips that have been going on in my recent absence from the underworld. Reading of John Stevens's digging exploits in Aggy made me hope once more that the phone would ring and we'd be back down to Broadside (and beyond) with the team. There was no time for idle dreams and we had to get an early night for the weekend ahead.

We woke before 6am to a dark, wet and windy morning. These conditions are typical of the OMM. We drove for less than an hour to Builth Wells through the rain, looking at the low clouds on the mountainsides, worrying about how this would make navigation so much more difficult. At the event centre, I bumped into Mike

Read who was bouncing around, waiting for another crack at the A course: he's done quite a few by all accounts. We wished each other luck and headed off to the buses that would take us to the start.

The OMM itself was all a bit of a blur of mountains, bogs, maps, clouds, rivers, compasses and sheep. There were tussocks too. There were lots and lots of tussocks. Day 1 took us just under 7 hours. It is hard work and stressful at times when you're making route choice and navigational decisions on claggy featureless mountainsides, but there is a certain sense of exhilaration and a sense of achievement at having successfully traversed some very wild and beautiful mountainscapes.

The overnight camp was in a damp field by the side of the main Elan Valley river. The field was full with maybe 1000 tents: tents just large enough to fit two people inside - a hooped pole and a flimsy bit of fabric against 25 mph winds and the rain. Somehow these tents take the punishment while their more substantial brethren can get knocked away. Less is more. I slept well for 4 hours after the evening meal (dehydrated camping food cooked on a mini Trangia: not a cocktail in sight). The howling wind drowned out the soporific sounds of rustling survival blankets and so I just lay there in my sleeping bag, listening to the wind and the rain, trying to count tussocks in my head to get me back to sleep.

The second day is a challenge for tired limbs. There is often a place to defend (we were 21st overnight and really wanted to come in the top 20) and so there is motivation to run well, navigate well and not do something stupid that would ruin all the hard work from the first day. I had my stupid low point on the second day ten minutes after the start when I tripped in a deep, long puddle and ended up drenched from head to foot in 6 inches of muddy water. This seems to be what it's all about! Things improved during the day as the sun came out and the finish line got closer. About five miles from the finish, we passed very close to the second highest point in the Elan Valley (Gorllwyn). It is just over 200ft high. Although I was concerned that we might be losing time, I just decided that we had to go to the top. So we ran up, touched the trig point and scanned a 360 degree panorama of wild and seldom visited mountains: well worth it. It was downhill all the way to the finish from there. After a final sprint, we crossed the line an hour later and were soon drinking hot soup and excitedly talking with our fellow competitors about the fantastic adventure we'd just been through.

I did not see Mike at the finish, but I know he came 32nd in the A class. Martin and I were 14th in the elite. This was a very creditable performance from the fell running wing of the CSS!

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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

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- Section 3 – Montenegro**
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Editor's Note: Many thanks 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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Photos of the Month

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



Harriet's new trike
Box Stone Mine
Photo: Duncan Price



Chelsea Girls! Photo: Steve Sharp



Priddy Green

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