

CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Minuartia Mine
Agen Allwedd Survey

Chelsea Spelæological Society NEWSLETTER

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Andy Heath, Icing on the Cake, Daren Cilau

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Cover Photo:
Robin 'Tav' Taviner
Fairy Cave

Photo by 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 Peter Ward know their **BCA
Insurance Number** and **Club**

Caving Insurance for 2010 £11

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



The Daren Diggers

The Daren Diggers' next Hard Rock camp will be on an unconfirmed date in late March/April, when work will continue on The Inconvenient Truth and Hopping Mad North.

If you'd like to join in and need more details contact the editor.

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

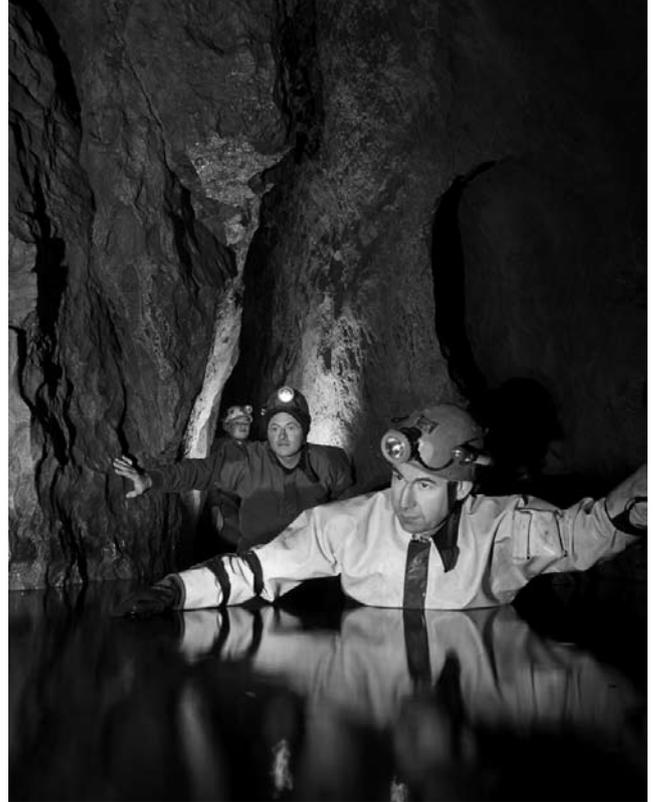
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Send text for your article as .doc or similar, or simply send it as an email.

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

Turkey Sump Pool. Agen Allwedd. Photo: Steve Sharp



A warm welcome to Tim Morgan (centre) in his new position as CSS Chairman

Chelsea Ladders on Mendip

There are now two CSS ladders and spreaders stored on Mendip for the use of CSS members caving in the area.

If you wish to use them contact the editor.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

The committee proposes **Susan Watson** for full membership.

Any comments to the secretary please.

Pottering About on Mendip

by
John Cooper

Charterhouse Cave

Saturday 13th February 2010.

Digging Sand bypass again with Pete Hann, Alison & Pete Moody. Another half metre+ gained. Digging passage about 1.5m high by 1m wide. 5+ hours.

Saturday 20th February 2010.

Digging Sand bypass again with Pete Hann, Alison & Pete Moody. Over a metre gained. Roof stepped up so we have stepped the floor up slightly more, still possible to dig kneeling at the face. The passage has turned back left again, but it's still going well. 5½ hours.

GB Cave

Sunday 7th February 2010.

Joined a Wessex CC party of Mat Jones, Dave Richardson, Marion Van De Waterbeemd, Stuart & Ged Waldren. In via the Devil's Elbow route. Over the Bridge into White Passage then left into Rift Chamber, left again into the Loop and back into lower Main Chamber via the Oxbow. Up into Ladder Dig and into Bat Passage where Marion took photos. Back out of Bat Passage and up into Great Chamber for more photos. Met John Osborne (Hatstand) & Becky Varns at the climb into Great Chamber. All out the direct route.

Swildon's Hole

Saturday 23rd January 2010.

Joined a party of Clive Westake (Wessex CC), John Taylor (Eldon PC and DS/CDG), Dan Scott (TSG and DS/CDG) and Nadir Lasson (Speleo Club de Cabrerets) on a Short Round trip in excellent wet conditions. Mud Sump slowly filling so will visit with Barry Weaver and empty it.

Sunday 24th January 2010.

JC & Barry Weaver resumed their Sunday strolls. Went and peered down the Black Hole to make sure it was still there.

Saturday 30th January 2010.

JC & Barry Weaver went and baled the Mud Sump dry.

Saturday 6th February 2010.

JC joined Phil Hendy (Wessex CC) on a short photographic trip. In via the drop at the start of the Zig-Zags into Showerbath Chamber. Into the Dry Way via Baptism Passage then up Jacob's Ladder and drop back into Showerbath Chamber. Down the Wet Way then up the Long Dry Way before climbing up above Jacob's Ladder to exit via the Zig-Zags.

Met the Voysey's leaving for an Eastwater round trip on return. Just in case they don't write up the trip I can quote Mandy "We ended up doing the West End - Morton's round trip yesterday, today I'm just a massive bruise. Excellent trip though."

Sunday 20th February.

JC & Barry Weaver continued their Sunday strolls. As there have been lots of reports recently from people doing the Short Round Trip about a funny smell we went and sniffed. We got just past the Mud Sump before a smell became apparent. Barry thought it smelt like a hot kitchen whilst I thought it was a fish and chip shop or burger van. In other words the old smell of once hot fat. We continued up The Greasy Chimney and on dropping down the other side the smell became even stronger. At this point standing up and looking forward it became apparent that it wasn't just a smell. The walls were covered with a thin film of grey mould. Presumably whatever was floating about in the air was settling out and providing an excellent growing medium for the mould. We decided that this was far enough. There were also reports the previous day from a trip into Swildon's Four that the wall below the climb up into Watergate was thick with mould. It would seem that the source could be South East Inlets which feed the top end of Watergate (which ends below and very close to The Greasy Chimney). We still don't know what it is or where on the surface it originates!

WHITEWALLS FRONT DOOR LOCK

This has been changed recently for the benefit of the new cave rescue team. But it should be backwards compatible with the existing member keys that are in circulation. If you have any problem please contact John Stevens or Stuart France.

On the 5th day of Christmas

by Gary Kiely

I was on Mendip just after Christmas, all itching to get underground. Unfortunately most of my local cronies were working between Christmas and New Year, so I was having some forced chill time. Fortunately I had bitched to Mark Lumley about this. "Where have all the cavers gone?" Fairy Quarry, as far as Mark was concerned. It was a Wednesday after all. Mark kindly picked me up at 6.30 from the Belfry (my Mendip residence) and we headed to the quarry. A few familiar faces started to appear out of the dark, Duncan Price, Antoinette Bennett, Matt and Mandy Voysey. Some of the others I had seen in the pub or at Hidden Earth. Rob Taviner, Alan Gray, Richard Witcombe, and Dave King. I was not really paying attention to the plan, but I followed Mark into the quarry.

While at Hidden Earth this year I had been to the presentation about Fernhill and marveled at the labour that went into accessing this cave and making it safe. It's always been something about Mendip diggers in general that I find quite humbling. The illogical stubbornness, and the dogged determination, just to get an extra fistful of meters between gaps in the rock. I am sure that psychiatrist would have a fancy word for this condition. I'm happy with "Endpins!"

We removed the unusual shaped cover from the entrance shaft and descended the rickety old ladder. Mark was giving me a vivid running commentary of what was involved in each section of the dig. The collapses, the close calls. I was lapping it up. If I repeat myself regarding to the amount of construction and shoring up in this place, well tough!

It needs to be seen, to be vaguely understood. It did not take long to reach the inner sanctum. The enormous multi-coloured curtains in that final chamber were breathtaking. Equally impressive was the fact that we were not that far down from the surface and these curtains survived all the blasting and heavy equipment that must have been pounding its way through the quarry all those decades ago. Mark turned to

leave and pointed out some more leads through an obvious hole in the passage, so I had a quick crawl around to see for myself. To be honest I get the vibe, that the goal had been fully achieved here. I came up the rickety ladder and Mark commented in a surprised tone that the ladder managed another trip. We locked up and headed across the quarry. We spent some time in the pools of water before the cave washing our kit. Anybody who has caved with me knows I prefer to be as far away as possible from any formations. Rock is so much more...robust and forgiving. So the words Withyhill from Marks lips had my stomach churning. Needless to say this will be a very short account, as I was watching every footstep that Mark took. It felt like my first time caving. I was so attentive to every move. I can safely say that in that cave it is rare to have a piece of undecorated rock. The intensity of the calcite increased as we progressed. Only a few of the names of passages stick in my mind. We passed Helictite Corner and on over some boulders to a nice sized chamber, enough room to relax a bit. The pretties here were on the walls and mini Columns on a slope to the left, but everything was at a safe distance. I can't tell if we continued via bypass chamber or not. The next attention grabbing display was the many delicate gour pools. The route through is very up close and personal, so no muddy drips from wellies are allowed. One pool in particular had about 75cm of headroom, a 20cm wide ledge on the left side, a gour pool with delicate rafts on them and helictics on the right hand wall. It was actually physically strenuous to keep balance and move without touching anything. I was glad to be out of that section. The signature stal in Elephant Trunk Chamber made me smile. It could be nothing other than an elephant trunk, complete with a small bit of snot at the end. From here the whole experience was so intense, it is all mixed up and if you know the cave you can work out where I was. If you don't know the cave, do something about it. There was a fun bit of climbing at one section of the cave, a hole at about 3 meters above a slope, which was peppered in small

stal bosses. This hole was completely invisible from the ground. Climbing onto a ledge, behind the visual shield and almost vertically head first until it leveled off. On the way out the exit of this hole had serious potential for caver damage. In another part of the cave Mark climbed up what looked to be a pretty looking stal cascade into what looked like a too small hole and disappeared. Gingerly I followed, I felt a bit iffy about clambering over the cascade.

The squeeze was more of a visual deterrent than anything else. I clambered up and found Mark a few meters on standing in a narrow chamber, completely silent and motionless.

We were in Green Lake Chamber. I will not insult the image of this chamber with inadequate words; I could never do it justice. Mark and I must have stood there for 15 minutes in silence. Me with my jaw dropped. It went far beyond the beauty of stal or crystal clear water. Mark's words were the only words spoken were on the way out of that chamber. "It's a bit special, isn't it"? The trip out of Withyhill seemed to be very short. There was no real stopping to look at anything, just to take care in maneuvers.

Parts of the cave seemed quite familiar to me yet I had never been in there before. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that it might be sharing some of the characteristics of its neighbor, Shatter Cave. I was there a few years ago while on one of the Chelsea invasions of Mendip. I believe it was Jackie Ankerman who led that trip. I have found it very difficult to do justice to this cave in this report. I feel that knowing the general Fairy Quarry history make me appreciate what we have here. It is not the sort of cave I generally frequent, and I feel privileged to have been taken there. Sometimes when I describe a cave with a personality, people get what I'm trying to portray. So in my eyes:

Withyhill is female, early thirtys and very sexy. High maintainance and very particular about her looks. Demands your attention and quite rightly so, she usually gets it.

She revels in making you speechless, like a little game. Yet she is not shallow and still has many secrets for those willing to dedicate their time to her.

Best of all go and sort out a leader and appreciate Withyhill for yourself.

The Agen Allwedd Survey

by John Stevens

For a long while I have not been very happy to look at the Aggy survey that has been on the wall in Whitewalls. This was put up in around 1992 as a temporary measure, and is just a blown up print of the survey I compiled for the Llangattwg Exploration Journal (Vol 19). So it was only originally drawn to be three A4 sheets and not viewed 285% larger, and this fact really shows.

The survey we still sell of Agen Allwedd today, is one that Ian Penney draw back in 1979 and updated with finds to 1984. i.e Northern Stream Passage, Trident Passage and the 84 Series (Shattered Passage). So this does not have several major finds since that date. The Gothic extensions to Maytime and the sump error that was found when this linked. Prior Road and the proximity that these passage are to Daren Cilau. The Iles Inlet discoveries bringing a new end attraction to many. Then there are many smaller finds dotted throughout the system.

Having got interested again in surveying, I would like as a first objective to create a new wall survey for Whitewalls and then move on to a secondary objective of distributing a survey, by some means or other.

So I first had to find how much data and survey drawings we had of Agen Allwedd. I delved into my files and found an old spreadsheet I had originally set up to calculate the length of the cave for the journal. This broke the cave up into all its separate passages and areas. After some changes and updates we have the table A.

This shows the length to be 30.374Km but I only have 15.889km of centreline data (survex). The remaining 14+km has come from measuring passage length from various surveys. These have been printed over many years and are to various scales and survey grades.

Another problem is that although I have some centreline data for many passages (and even LRUD data) I am missing plan sketches. So the question is, can I create a survey with what I have or do we need to go back and survey some 14+ km. Therion, a survey package I have started to use, because it has some useful features that allows me to join printed plan surveys without data to a normal survey with all the data in place. However the detail of the survey would then be dependent on how detailed the printed plan I was working off was. As many areas only have a 1:5000 survey available, this would create some problems. The other point in working with printed copies and not the data, is that loops, error and altitudes are rather hit or miss.

So to practice with my new survey gear, I started on some passages I thought I would not get anyone else to help survey. It was also small enough to do solo. Upper Southern Stream was my focus and with help of John Newton and Mike Read we have already logged over 1km of passage. This also found that the I.Penney survey had missed a passage totally and brought a bit of history to light. Southern Stream was originally explored via Upper Southern Stream to drop down an exposed climb just upstream from 1st inlet. The old survey took this route as well and only much later was the upstream choke dug open to create our normal route in that we have today.

The survey shows a square 200m x 200m of the start of Southern Stream with a bit of Main Passage and the first bit of Sandstone Passage on the left, to a squeeze, the passage continues for another 300m (also known as Innominate Passage and Upper Southern Stream !). Upper Southern Stream is very narrow and don't run directly over the streamway as I had presumed but meanders in places. It was also noted that 1st Inlet was some 75m further upstream than that shown on the published

Agen Allwedd		Cave Total	30374 metres	Centreline Length	15889			
19/2/10			18.873 miles	Resurvey Required	14485			
Area	Passage	Length feet metres	Area Total	Source Grade	paper metres	Centreline Survey	To Do Length	Reference
Ent Series								
	Ogof Gam - Baron's	508	VI			508		by P.Cousins
	Allwedd Ent	107			85		107	off B.Price survey
	Toothpaste Tube	79			73		79	off B.Price survey
	Stream Pas.	219	V + 20			199	20	GV by JS & SA 23-6-91 + 25m unsurveyed side
	Guano Pas.	15			15		15	off I.Penney survey
	Angel's Roost	97	V			97		Gll by JS 1-6-91 & GV JMorris 27-9-92 (checking required! Short?)
	Queer Street	134	V + 5			129	5	GV by JS & SA 3-5-92
	Draught Pas.	74	II				74	Gll by JS 1-6-91
	other side pas.	16	II				16	Gll by JS 1-6-91
			1249			933	316	
Main Passage								
	Baron's - N.Wing	1194	VI			1194		by P.Cousins
	Erse Pas.	146	VI			146		by P.Cousins
	Reclusion Pas.	8	memory				8	by SA & JS
	Rawhide Pas.	331	III +40			291	40	Glll & II by JS & SA 30-8/5-9-92 +40
	Igloo Pas.	417	III			126		by SA
	Trav. Rift	13	memory				13	includes side pas near Erse
	Northern Stream	801	V +35			801		GV 766 + 35 Gll from D.Ramsay
	Southern Stream	1850			1850	460	1390	363 - Gothic to SS/LMSP Jn GV by DR, 460 GV by JS
	Upper Southern Stream	507	V + paced			432	75	GV JS + 75 paced
	Sandstone Pas.	460			460	134	326	off I.Penney survey, 134 (GV JS)
	Upper Lower Southern Stream	200	I				200	J.Parker says 200-400 upstream of waterfall (requires checking)
	Trident Pas.	755	V + 3.5			755		GV 751 from D.Ramsay
	Trident Stream	500	II				153	Vol 4 p202

Table A

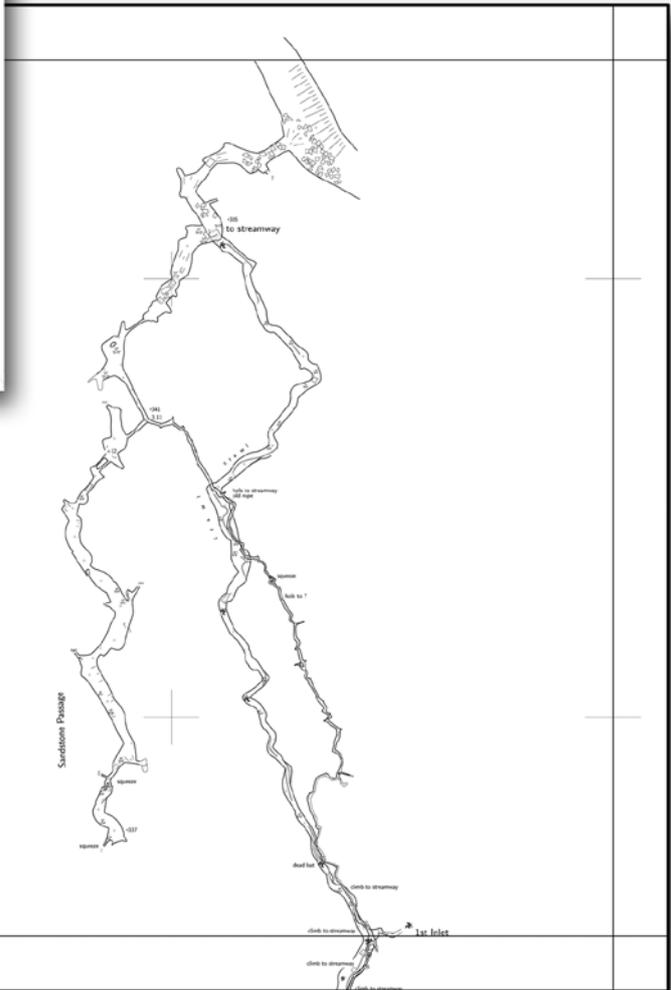
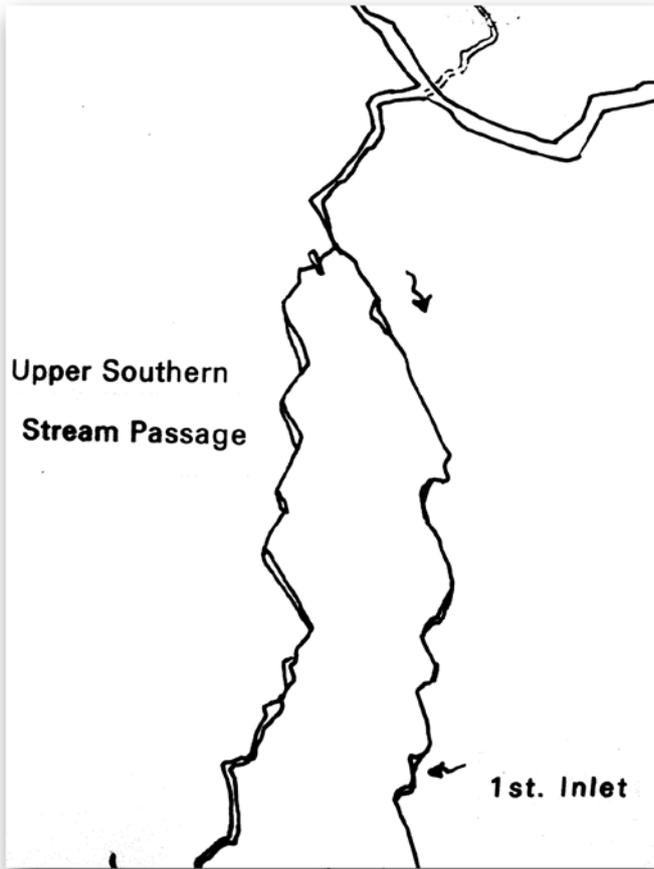
The table is a subset of the full table but gives you the magnitude of the task required

surveys. The insert show the I.Penney survey which is still the best i could find.

As those around for the dinner may have seen, I have run these off at 100m x 100m per page to help find errors and leads. Dave Ramsay did a similar thing with the Aven Series using a drawing package several years ago. He also include detailed informations in the legend for each tile. In this way an atlas of the cave can be produced at a very detailed scale.

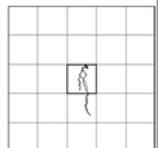
The grid box at the base of the survey square shows this tiles relationship with surrounding tiles. Upper Southern Stream has not had so many visits in a long time, a dig in an old BNS dig was restarted. This has gained a couple of metres and may produce a quicker way into the further reaches of Sandstone Passage.

So if you have any information (surveys or passages I don't know about) or corrections then please let me know. I will put a few more survey trips in to see how it progresses and find if there is any interest in continuing this idea. If you would like to come and learn to use the DistoX and Pockettopo or even want to convert some of the passage data and drawing we have into Therion, then please let me know.



-6 -7 (3)

2
4



100 m

The revised survey with a section from Ian Penney's survey overlaid for comparison

GATHERING AND INTERPR

By Stuart France

The traditional approach to monitoring cavers' visits is a logbook in the cave, a ticket system, or trip report forms. Examples of these methods are seen at Agen Allwedd, OFD and DYO respectively. Most frequently the research aim is just to obtain the cave footfall figure: the number of people using entrances. What these cavers do next and the areas they visit are not often analysed any further even if they have been recorded.

The report form system would be the most accurate in terms of areas visited and caving activities as it is written after the event, assuming people bother to file one or others chase them for this information if they forget to write up a visit. The ticket and logbook systems, being written before the trip, bring safety benefits because a rescue team then knows where to start looking, particularly in large caves when the book is positioned at or near the entrance. Otherwise, obtaining vital information for planning a major rescue is delayed.

But people do not necessarily fill in a logbook at all or completely or truthfully, as they might want to avoid publicising certain projects or they object to this type of monitoring where names are linked to places and dates. Plans also change - people get tired, lost or distracted en route - so the information on the ticket can be more aspirational than factual. The harder it is to get to an intended destination - OFD3 or Dollimore's for example - the less likely it is that the plan for the day is carried out fully.

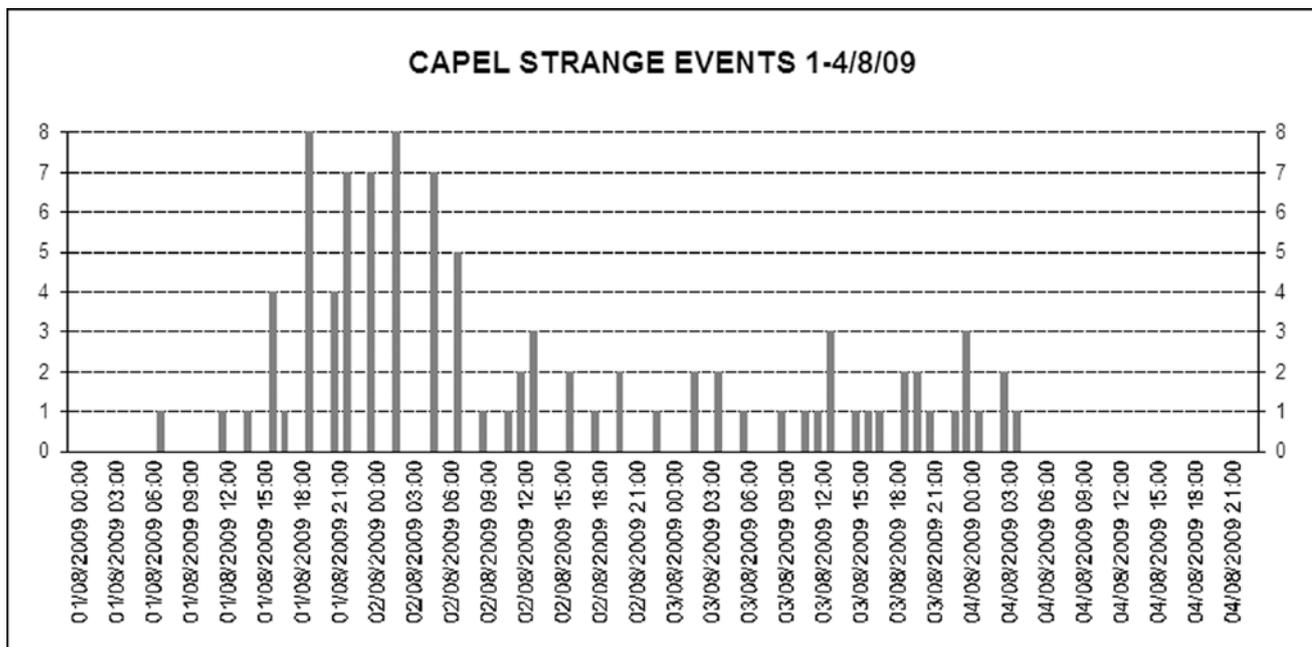
In some small ungated caves it is impractical to use a logbook, such as at Eglwys Faen. This is where electronic counters can be useful. First, the data logger faithfully records where people went and when they were there rather than people's intentions. Second, the data is anonymous. The counter sees only cavers' lights or body heat and has no idea who the people are. When used in a cave with paper records, the efficiency or compliance

with the logbook or ticket system can be checked.

An important concept to grasp concerning electronic visitor counters is that they count instances of people behaviour, not actual people. The positioning of them, the sensor angle of view, and the speed and separation of cavers then determines how accurate they might be if the aim is to count individuals rather than groups. Counting caver groups is a far simpler task because the data logger can be front-ended with a long timer. The counter in Eglwys Faen is like this. It has a 4-minute re-triggerable timer so that 4 minutes of darkness is required before it will register a fresh count. This assumes that a whole group will pass with less than 4 minutes between the individuals and that there will be more than 4 minutes between different groups.

I have put 8 counters into Ogof Draenen since late 2009. These are strategically positioned in the original Entrance Series, Gilwern Passage, Indiana Highway, Round Trip, Rift Chamber, Lucky 13, Drws Cefn, and Wessex. These are front-ended with a 5 or 10 second timer according to the characteristics of the passage and they all record timestamps. My intention is to study overall caver numbers in Draenen and also be able to comment on trends in zone usage within the cave. Given the small numbers of cavers who now visit the cave and long battery life in the loggers, I could leave it several years between my visits to collect the recorded data, but it would be better to collect it each 3-6 months, say, in case of a breakdown or other mishap.

The counter in Ogof Capel is also set up to collect timestamps. It has been there about a year. It detected every group that used the cave and signed the logbook. It also detected one caving group that did not sign in on Sunday 8 November 10-11am. Curiously, it detected an odd series of events in August 2009 for which there were no logbook entries. These went on over several days, at all hours, starting early on a Saturday morning. It is difficult to dismiss this as spurious because at all other



OGOF DRAENEN CAVE VISITOR DATA

times for almost a whole year the counter data has simply mirrored the logbook entries. At times, many weeks have gone by with no events logged or entries made in the logbook.

Ogof Capel April-Dec 2009	
Date counter triggered	Logbook signed
Thu 02/04/2009	yes
Sun 21/06/2009	yes
Sun 12/07/2009	yes
Sun 19/07/2009	yes
Sat 25/07/2009	yes
Wed 29/07/2009	no
Sat 01/08/2009	no
Sun 02/08/2009	no
Mon 03/08/2009	no
Tue 04/08/2009	no
Wed 16/09/2009	yes
Sat 03/10/2009	yes
Sun 08/11/2009	no
Mon 16/11/2009	yes
Sat 19/12/2009	yes

The Capel sensor uses body heat. In retrospect this is not as good as using light to detect cavers. It is just possible that bats could set off a heat sensor. It is also easier to detect light since it scatters widely and there are ultra-low power simple detector circuits. I shall change the Capel counter to use a light sensor in due course.

Manual logbook or ticket data can be entered on to a database of caver numbers versus destination and date, in the same way as joining up the timestamp data from electronic counters. A good analytical software package can then be used to overlay a variety of views on the underlying raw data. This is the approach I took with the Ogof Draenen logbook data for 2006-08 which is publicly available. Martin Laverty had typed it up as an Excel spreadsheet with columns for date, destinations, club, group size etc. The advantage of having it in a database is that queries like "calculate the quarterly totals for all the visits to zones A, B and C between these two dates" become simple to obtain. One can easily experiment with views on the data. The benefit is that an unwieldy body of raw data then becomes useful information to inform cave management.

The present management group for Ogof Draenen, PDCMG, put forward the argument in December that the new Drws Cefn entrance would result in the cave being over-run with visitors. Their own visitor data from their logbook suggests otherwise. The total number of cavers is now pitifully low and falling year on year. Destinations in the eastern zone now see hardly any visitors at all. Cave exploration has been throttled, and I am prepared to argue that a more convenient and well-managed entrance will encourage responsible exploration and cave science by competent cavers, not have the cave over-run with novices. In any case, cave usage can be monitored accurately by means of the counters and the

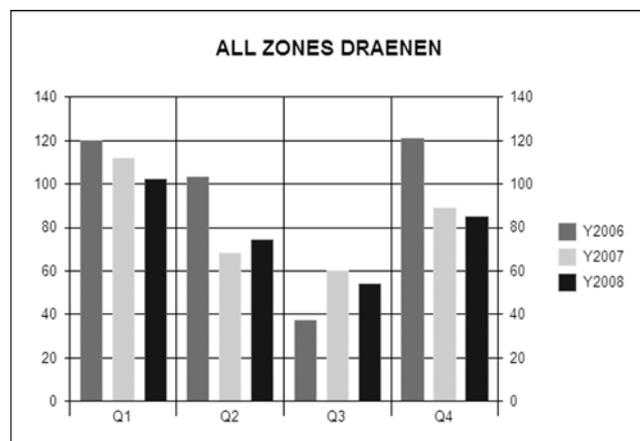
cave management strategy adapted to any changing circumstances. This requires that the management team meets regularly and uses the data that is available, unlike the way PDCMG has been operating for many years.

Last December's PDCMG meeting was shown two PowerPoint presentations of mine, now available as downloads from their www.pdcmg.org.uk website, plus one of PDCMG's on why Drws Cefn should be blocked up. The first of mine presented their most recent logbook statistics for the three years 2006-08 organised by zone visited and totalled in various ways, and the second presentation was photos inside Drws Cefn. To date there have been about 200 downloads of each my presentations and about 100 of theirs. That is a different kind of visitor statistic, but nevertheless a telling one.

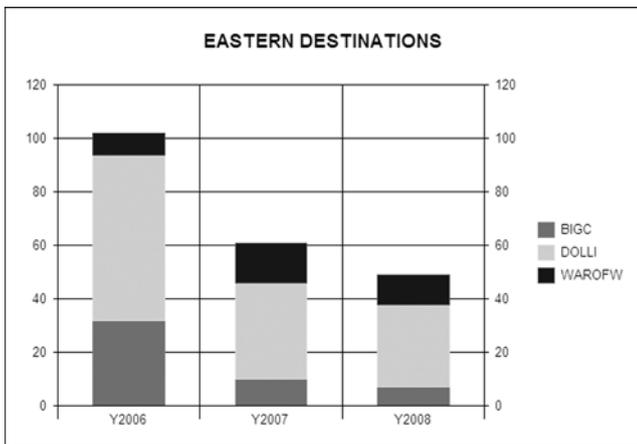
Below are some of the results of queries on my database of logbook entries and the interpretations I put on them. I expect to collect the first electronic counter results from Draenen in March and more in August. Perhaps further exploration of this subject of monitoring and interpreting cave usage data for cave management purposes would be a suitable lecture topic for the Hidden Earth conference in September.

DRAENEN ZONE	Y2006	Y2007	Y2008
EASTERN	113	69	61
MIDDLE	113	121	132
UNKNOWN	29	36	42
WESTERN	126	103	80
TOTAL	381	329	315

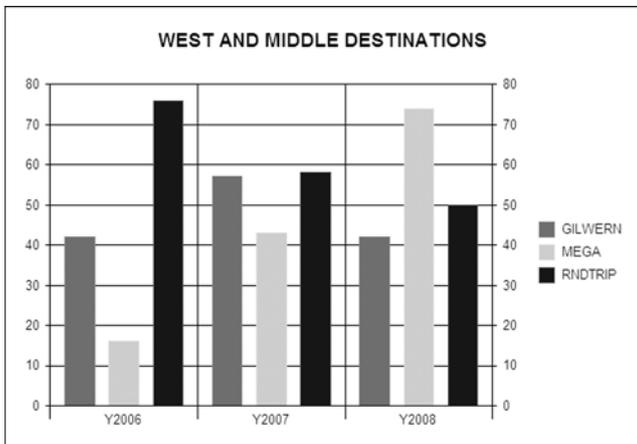
The table above shows that in recent years around 300 cavers enter Draenen annually, and most of them write a destination into the logbook which I have simplified as the East, Middle or West zone. The annual numbers are in decline. It is astonishing that a mere 60 people per year now visit the vast area of the cave beyond Lucky13 (i.e. the Eastern zone). If the average party size for such a trip is four, then it is getting close to just one trip per month.



The chart above shows a picture of declining interest in the cave. Generally every quarterly total is down on the same quarters in previous years.



Turning now to the Eastern zone in more detail, the chart above shows some well known areas such as Big Country, War of Worlds and Dollimores now get under 50 visitors per year between all of them. Fewer people now claim to do the Round Trip, but more put Megadrive as their destination, and there is no clear trend for Gilwern Passage, as is seen in the chart and table below:



	GILWERN	MEGA	RNDTRIP	TOTAL
Y2006	42	16	76	134
Y2007	57	43	58	158
Y2008	42	74	50	166

Visits to these obvious and easy destinations nearer to the main entrance, when taken together, have increased a bit. But the numbers are nevertheless very low, and the impression is that cavers have lost interest in Ogof Draenen, by far the longest cave in Wales, even those parts that are easy to reach. Compare this result to Eglwys and Ogof Clogwyn which together get over ten times more visits per year, albeit by instructed groups.

The decline in cavers occurred in the late 1990s according from the PDCMG website. The figures in the table below are cavers not groups. I am afraid that why each of their years starts with June baffles me. Perhaps this reflects the dates of their meetings. The gaps are presumably where the logbook system failed or documents were lost. The autumn and winter are generally the busiest time of the year to visit the cave. March 2001 was when the Foot and Mouth epidemic started and access to the countryside was closed for most of the rest of the year. Talking to the landowners recently, I learned that they think there are more cave visitors (on the basis of parked vehicles) than are recorded in the Draenen logbook.

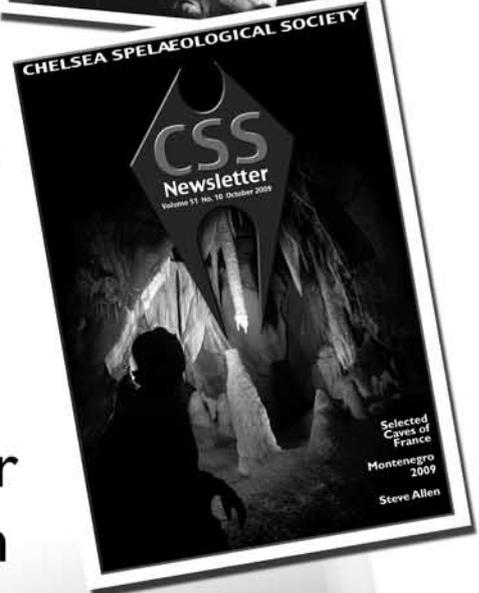
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Jun	150	?	56	30	33	12
Jul	98	?	45	27	18	22
Aug	157	?	20	41	16	3
Sept	39	?	54	11	29	?
Oct	98	74	59	34	89	?
Nov	152	134	18	8	30	3
Dec	145	62	61	51	24	39
Jan	110	70	120	16	60	47
Feb	147	90	61	53	35	27
Mar	178	103	71	26	?	45
Apr	121	77	57	68	?	30
May	153	69	61	3	?	25
TOTAL	1548	679	688	368	334	253

Editor's Note

Since becoming editor of the CSS Newsletter I have tried to accommodate the varied interests and opinions of all members of the club in a fair and even-handed manner. I am well aware that there may be articles which express opinions about aspects of caving with which other members and other cavers may fundamentally disagree. I also recognise the fact that a CSS member has a right to express his own opinion in his club's Newsletter.

If you feel that you have an alternative viewpoint to that expressed in any article that appears in the Newsletter, and that would be of interest to the readership, feel free to email it to me and I may publish it, at my discretion, if I feel that its inclusion is warranted.

Please also respect the fact that it is my intention to keep the newsletter as non-political as possible and above all, to make it an enjoyable, diverse, non-partisan read.



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Drws Cefn
 Box Stone Mine
 Dead Dog Cave
 Dynamic Surveying



Mangle Hole

30th January

by Andy Watson

Over the weekend of 30 January 2010 Sue and I were planning to go on the Winter walking weekend but unfortunately Sue's mum passed away recently and we had to carry out preparations at church on Sunday for the funeral which was on the Monday. However on the Saturday there were some HSCC people at. I had contacted Phil Candy and Sue Chase a couple of days earlier to see what they were doing on the Saturday. He said he had thought about doing a SRT trip in Rhino and I suggested that I had talked to Sue some time ago about doing Mangle Hole on Sandford Hill.

So we met up and made our way to Rhino. However, just as we got to the pothole another group were going in, so we decided that we would go over to Mangle Hole and do that as an SRT trip instead. Waling back from Rhino we met another pair of cavers going to Rhino. It was a glorious sunny morning and the sunshine obviously brought out the cavers.

We parked at the Avon Ski centre with its various onlookers (before and after the trip) and then walked up the access road and across the side of the hill on the public footpath and just past Sandford Levy and slightly higher up we found Mangle Hole. We belayed off the tree and used a sling and karabiner at the top onto the scaffold pole to get a good hang and then I descended the nasty knobbly and

muddy rift into the depths. Phil said he thought it was only one ladder length to the shelf and I said I thought it was probably 1.5 or 2, I think I was right it was a good distance to the middle platform. We then had to use two natural belays with slings and krabs to go across the top of the next slope as a traverse before descending the third section sloping down into the main chamber. The whole descent is fairly muddy and slightly constricted in places but I did remember it pretty well from my last trip there some four years earlier. At the bottom I tried to use my sling ladder to get into the main pot, but it wasn't quite long enough, at which Ralph Candy said he thought it used to be full of water and led to a sump, it just looked like a muddy hole now with no apparent water. We also did a bold step and found a pair of hangers which gave us access down another pitch about 6 m below, I used my spare rescue rope to safety line Sue across the bold step, as she only has short legs, with Ralph precariously balancing over the hole and then we used the same rope to abseil down to the next level. This led us to the beginning of a very slippery, muddy slope which went down about another three and a half metres and after a short squeeze leading to another quite large rifty chamber which had a high mud bank in it and a tiny hole on the left-hand side with a trickle of water in it, I assume this is probably the way on to the lake, it looked very tight and I decided not to venture any further.

We made our way back out using SRT with Ralph getting caught in the first 3 m and then the rest of us did a short free climb to bypass that bit after watching Ralph struggle, and picked up the rope higher up from a muddy, rather exposed shelf

Overall a very enjoyable caving trip and it is worth a visit if you get bored anytime

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Minuartia Mine

by Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley



Looking up the 20 metre shaft, Minuartia Mine. Photo by Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley



Robin 'Tav' Taviner laddering the 20 metre shaft, Minuartia Mine. Photo by Paul Stillman

Minuartia (*sandwort*) Mine, on Yoxter Rifle Range near Priddy was first 'discovered' in July 2009. A concrete cap and gate were fitted and a brief descent of the shaft was made by the people who capped it. Since then it has remained undescended and was reputed to contain some natural passage.

The site is in an interesting location above the projected drainage from Wigmore Swallet and other feeders to the resurgence at Cheddar.

Having dug with the BEC at Wigmore Swallet in the 1980s and for many years with the BEC and solo at the nearby Bowery Corner Swallet (adjacent to the field in which Derbyshire dowser Tony Blick was hopping with excitement at the results he was getting, which suggested to him that there was a huge East-West main drain at about -400ft!), the mention of natural passage in the mine made it a place worthy of a visit.

Towards the end of 2009 Paul Stillman (WCC), Robin Taviner (Grampian CC) and I were invited by our friend Kate Lawrence, Somerset Wildlife Trust's Mendip Hills Officer, to visit and explore the mine.

After a 'dry run' shortly before Christmas (due to the fact that Paul never arrived with the ropes and ladders and Kate forgot the key to the gate!), on Sunday 7th February, the four of us, together with Dave 'Tuska' Morrison (WCC) and two of Kate's colleagues on surface, arrived at the entrance. Tuska's giant, magnificent, 1,500,000 lumen torch showed us an inviting, 20 metre deep and mostly free-hanging entrance shaft.

The shaft leads into a short level, (presumed by its nature and by the shot holes we saw to have been excavated by lead miners in the 19th Century). In one direction this comes to an abrupt end after 6 metres, but in the other a short, gravelly slope opens up in a spacious, hollowed out calcite vein. One roof extension was seen to close down quickly, while another, 5 metres overhead will require a subsequent visit with a ladder. A gravel-filled crawl at floor level may also yield results although we were not inspired by the potential. There are possibilities that it may connect to other shafts, evidence of which can be seen on the surface.

Many thanks to Kate for arranging the visit, the pie, tea and biscuits!



Tav at the top. Photo from Paul Stillman

Tav and Paul in the hollowed out calcite vein. Photo by Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley



Ice on the hard rocks

by Gary Kiely

This was going to be no ordinary camp. This camp at the end of January had been hit by loads of issues, some work, some weather, and unfortunately some personal. I had been so looking forward to this camp that I was going to really push the boundaries to make it happen. My brother John drove Steve Sharp and I to WW on Friday night. This in itself was an experience. We knew that the tram road would be interesting following all the recent fluffy stuff. Thankfully John seems to have more control over cars than me. "Not difficult really" I can hear you muttering. We got a lively run onto the tram road from Brynmawr. The ice was about 6 inches deep in places but the tracks worn through the ice meant that you could drive without needing to steer at all. That was when you had the luxury of enough traction. On our first attempt we met three cars all close together, and had to reverse a long way back to the road that led directly to Brynmawr. Next attempt we made it all the way to WW only to find that there was no possible way to get outside WW. The snow was 2 to 3 foot deep from Mr Thomas's house to WW. So we parked directly behind Mr Thomas's car and decanted into WW. Leaving a very pleasant note for our neighbour re the car. Steve and I kitted up and said good-bye to John, who seemed happy enough to tackle the neighbour in the morning! Steve and I were the only 2 going into camp that night. Three others were due in on Saturday



morning. The weather forecast was for no more snow or frost but general thawing for the rest of the weekend. At least we wouldn't be iced in on Sunday evening. Climbing the snow-covered hill was entertaining to say the least. That short walk to the entrance probably knocked more stuffing out of us than the whole bloody entrance series! The track into the quarry was thigh deep in snow; mind you I lost Steve completely on a few occasions. Immersing myself in the low entrance and into the icy water created the same contorted facial expressions as the first bite into a bitter lemon tart. Oh yea it was real sharp. It took more than just your breath away! I was looking forward to the vice for a bit of thrutching, nothing warms the soul like a good bit of thrutching. Water levels were high. It was the cold that was a new factor. I suppose we were in effect crawling through melt water. The logic voices were really shouting loud in my head today" turn back, the heating is on at WW!" That logic stuff is overrated. I had suggested to Steve it would be an hour in the entrance today and I was correct to the minute. Absolutely no hero points for thrashing myself in that place. There was nothing out of the ordinary on the trip in, other than the guesswork of Bonsai Stream way in the heavy waters. Approach to camp was flooded so it was arms in the air to keep balance. A little bit deeper and it would be a swim for it job. As I approached camp it was a big let down. There was no smell of

cooking or tilley lamps, the place felt cold and uninviting. The bigger worry was that the toilet area was under water so 1st job was to rebuild the perching platform. We got changed and set up a light camp, Steve cooked chilli and rice, and I played with the tilley lamps and made tea. I normally complain about arriving here late at night and having to do the trip solo, but to be honest I would prefer that to arriving to a camp without a pulse. Steve and I crashed out about 4am. While we slept the water levels at the toilet area were continuing to rise. Steve woke me about 8am to say the water was 18 inches higher and the new platform was gone. My bladder was hanging in there and I had no intension of getting up until I needed to. Steve was fretting about the water levels. I wasn't ... and duly went back to sleep. 9 am Steve was up again looking at the water. His bladder must be knackered!

Again fretting about water and the calcite squeezes in the entrance. I got up at 10 am and levels were starting to drop. However we did have a devastating set back, the floodwater stole our hand sanitizer. I am sure the divers will appreciate it as they clamber out of Pwll Y Cum. We didn't know when Nick and his team were arriving so I left them a note, asking them to sign if they had been. This would also indicate to me how many I would be catering for that night. Steve and I went off for a photographic adventure. I ended up wading back and forth through the

icy water near camp for “the perfect shot”

Thankfully numbness sets in really quick so the pain of the cold is gone. But when I was out of the water, my skin was burning. It was on a par with the water in DYO in the green canal, which to all southern softies it is the coldest water on the planet. I set the pace up to crystal inlet; this was to get my core temperature back up to a sane level. It actually took about 30 minutes for me to get toasty again. It is very reassuring to know that just by working hard your body can recover from extreme cold.

Steve and I went to all those passages that neither of us had been to before. The ones that are ignored by most groups because they just don't go anywhere. In and around the meeting room and Aggy Passage areas. The view down into Time Machine from the meeting room is quite stunning. Loads of interesting stuff to climb and chokes to explore. Its so weird when your in a significant place you have never been in, you go scrabbling about a bolder choke you have never seen before for 20 minutes and end up in passage you know really well... or so you thought.

We took quite a few photos at the meeting room and in Nameless Canyon. And headed back to camp via Crystal Inlet. I went for a wander up Crystal Inlet itself. I didn't feel guilty about stomping through our water supply, as crystal inlet was more like peaty soup today. It went on and on and on quite nice stream passage, which constantly seems to switch back on itself. I didn't get to the end of it, as I was aware that Steve was waiting for me, to get back to camp. On the way back to camp I wanted to try and see if it was possible to get past the flooded section without getting in the water. I was doing really well and there was one leap of faith that would complete the flood traverse. The more I looked, the more impossible it seemed. Either way I was getting wet. Just the flying squirrel route would terminate in a dramatic splash. I launched myself and made it to the opposite wall in a state of shock. I sat on a nice dry rock and smugly watched Steve wade through. Justice at last for the earlier photo session. We expected to see Nick at camp when we got back, because his planned trip for the day was not far beyond Hard Rock. Even

though there was a small “N” signed on the piece of paper I left out there was no kit lying about etc. I hung out dinner as late as I could to allow the others time to return so they could have a good hot meal when they returned. They never showed. It was very odd. I was a bit concerned to say the least. While doing dinner I was clucking around like a worried parent! Straining to differentiate the sound of chirpy voices from the stream rolling over the toilet perch. I was starting to wonder if I could smell a rat in the camp, was it Steve who was the phantom “N”? The more I think about it, the more it makes sense. After coffee and chocolates I tried to make an improvement on the lux levels of the tilley lamps but I think I made them worse.



Cooking at Hard Rock. Photo by Steve Sharp

An early night tonight, bed by 3am. After breakfast the next morning we started to dismantle camp. It seemed to take ages before we were on our way. The trip out seems to get shorter each time I do it. All plain sailing to the ladder. When I was all hooked up to go and Steve was all cows tailed in, Steve said he had no idea what it felt like when the rope was on full load.

So standing on the top of the ladder I gave Steve the nod and launched off the ladder. As I dangled there, 70 feet above the deck I turned to see Steve all diagonal and stuck in the system. It just goes to show how important it is to secure yourself at the top of the ladder. I carried on down and belayed Steve from below. Halfway down I asked how

the lifeline was for him. Some like it really tight and some like it quite free.

“Yep it feels real secure”

“Good stuff, do you want to load the rope like I did”

I heard the click of Steve's cowstail on the ladder and he shouted “Ok” Next thing my rope is slack and I'm frantically taking in. My stomach dropped! “Steve! ... You Ok?”

A slightly high pitch nervous tone in Steve's voice. “dunno what happened there”.

“You numpty, you never clipped in properly” Strange thing was that Steve had to unscrew his krab to re connect to the knot of the lifeline. It just goes to show that

one small mistake could make a big difference. I think this incident will make me check my own stuff much more thoroughly. After our dramatic descent we stopped for a drink and there was something odd here as well, a third bottle at the drip dispenser? This was not here on the way in. Very odd, I decided to leave it there in case others left it for a reason. I was really keen to get to the logbook to see who had been in the cave over the weekend. When we got to the logbook, it gave no clues as to the owner of the bottle or the mysterious “N” because Nick had not been in the cave and the only 2 others that had been in all weekend were on a Prices to Daren through trip, Nowhere near the base of the ladder. It was turning into a weekend

of Cludo in Daren that would be an interesting themed camp wouldn't it? I suggest that Gonzo killed Charles in the toilet with the music on the ipod. Anyway! Steve's tackle sack was on its last legs, the bottom section was held on by 3 inches of stitching, and an escape of daren drums was imminent. That would be a right pig to sort out in the entrance series. The blast of icy air drifting in after the vice was incredible, its times like this you think that the entrance isn't so bad. Steve and his invalid bag made

it out in one piece. I arrived out and the wind chill with the thaw bit me hard. I wasn't a happy camper. Steve took a couple of photos at the exit, as you can see I aint bloody smiling. Actually if you look carefully at my expression you can read, "I'm going to shove that camera somewhere really uncomfortable in a minute". On the way back down the grassy slope Steve had recovered from a few near falls (in great style of course). I told him I would get in right trouble from his better half if

he hurt himself, as I was given strict instructions to look after him. It was the moment after that last syllable left my lips that I was flat on my back staring skyward. With Steve in uncontrollable laughter, I had to manage to get up myself. I stayed quiet for the rest of the walk down to WW with Steve still in tears.

Shower, tea, and a snack before leaving WW. It had been a strange camp but, still quite productive, some good photos, a bit of personal exploration, and a general good laugh.



Photo: Steve Sharp

The Editor's condolences go out to Gary who has his leg in plaster for the next six weeks and will be out of action for the next few months with a torn Achilles tendon suffered while attempting a late night room traverse in the Belfry - The BEC hobble everywhere eh Gary!

Officers of the Society:

Chairman

Tim Morgan
53 Coldershaw Road
London
W13 9EA
(07989) 595430
Tim@TerminalSump.com

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.freereserve.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

Cave Rescue Liaison

Tom Ford
138 Habershon Street
Cardiff
CF24 2LD
(02920) 355130 (Work)
07766 605827 (Mobile)
tomfoord@gmail.com

Whitewalls

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

Dave Garmin in GB
Photo: Steve Sharp



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