

CHINESE SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Steep Holm

**Busman's
Holiday**

**Daren's
Through Trips**

**More Caving
in France**

Golden Oldies



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Gary 'Hopalong' Kiely (before injury) in the Canyon, Daren Cilau. Photo: Steve Sharp

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Membership Subscriptions are now due

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

Current rates are:

Full	£30
Joint	£43
Associate	£20
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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 next Membership Card please send a JPEG to Peter Ward:
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Editorial

Ever wondered how the **CSS Newsletter** is perceived by other clubs? This is how it was described to BEC members by the editor of the **Belfry Bulletin**:

“...for example the Chelsea mag is OK but definitely Jack and Jill, so Mendip with the odd Grand Circle in Aggy and the odd Daren dig update. Its dull beyond compare some issues...”

Hmm . . . Daren Cilau and Agen Allwedd articles for a Llangattock-based club journal? ‘Potterings’ from Mendip’s most important discovery in decades just days after the breakthrough trips? Sounds like a good read!

Or perhaps we should include a section for white wine spritzer recipes, crash diets for rotund cavers and how to prevent one’s club mascot being kidnapped by terrorists (**You Tube - Bertie Bat Ransom**).

Please keep your ‘dull’ articles coming.

Gonzo **Mark Lumley**

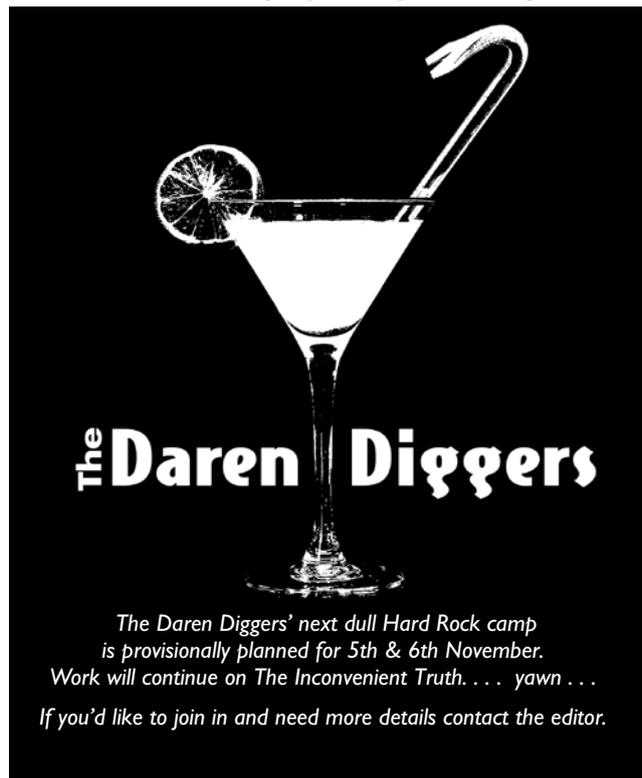
Please send all material to:

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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.



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

The committee proposes **Matt Emmett** for full membership.

If you have any comments please contact Stuart France.

COMMITTEE NEWS

Child policy

1. CSS will not accept persons under 18 years of age as club members or on club caving trips or in Whitewalls except when accompanied by their parent or legal guardian who is themselves a full member of our club.

2. CSS will not accept visitors under 18 years of age at Whitewalls as part of an external booking even if they are themselves members of another club or accompanied.

Training and Leadership Policy

1. CSS does not provide training in caving practice to anyone. Members wishing to become trained should contact a professional organisation able to provide it.

2. Club caving trips are organised on a concensual rather than a leadership basis and participants are responsible for their own safety. Those going underground must purchase the BCA Active Caver insurance to cover potential third-party liabilities.

PAT AND PAUL CORNELIUS

I am sure we all send best wishes for a speedy and full recovery to Pat and Paul following their car accident late July. I believe Paul suffered a cracked sternum but Pat suffered a dislocated neck. Prompt and professional care by the medics means Pat is now recovering at home. The dislocation was reduced by traction followed by an operation to pin the vertebrae. She will be in a neck brace for some weeks yet, but the prognosis is for a full recovery in time.

John Cooper

Steep

Steep Holm is a small island in the Bristol Channel just over 5 miles west of Weston-Super-Mare, geologically an extension of the Mendip Hills limestone ridge as it extends beneath the channel from the end of Brean Down, then on via the nearby Flat Holm and into south Wales. There are a number of tiny known caves on the island, and also the obligatory old legends of a “lost cave” tunnelling for measureless distance beneath the sea, festooned with stalactites...

Back to reality, and on a Saturday morning a mixed group representing several caving and non-caving agencies, including CSS, WCC, MNRC and ATLAS met up in a carpark in Weston-Super-Mare ready for a trip to Steep Holm kindly organised by Paul Stillman (WCC/ATLAS).

A volunteer group, the Kenneth Allsop Memorial Trust, takes responsibility for care of the island and coordinates tourist trips. Sailings are infrequent and governed by the tidal conditions: for details of planned trips see the website at <http://www.steeptholm.org.uk> for the schedule and other useful information.

Around 60 people were waiting at the quay for the trip, mainly outdoor types sensibly armed with waterproofs and walking boots. After waiting for the tide to rise sufficiently so the boat could get close enough for boarding (the sea is rarely present in Weston, I think it's the first time I've seen it closer than a mile away), we were off on our voyage towards Steep Holm, which took a very long time, presumably since we were fighting the famous tidal flow. So slow that certain people resorted to checking GPS to check we were actually moving.

Our vessel, the *Westward Ho*, resembled the Normandy landing craft famously depicted storming Omaha beach in Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*. As we approached the steep shingle beach, one of the few gaps in the towering fortress cliffs of the island, the engines were cranked up to full ahead, the boat pointed straight at the beach and the front ramp lowered. We ploughed into the steep shingle and everyone surged across the ramp to shore, thankfully without accompanying German gunfire. A moment or two later and the boat had reversed, full speed astern into the fierce currents, to be swept out of sight in no time, marooning us all on the island. Well, at least until teatime.



On arrival we met several members of the Shepton Mallet Caving Club, who had been staying on the island (in the barrack building) since the previous Thursday with permission from the trust for the purpose of “assisting with scientific exploration”. They were keenly awaiting our visit in order to a) get home again, and b) partake in the cakes and refreshments brought along by the trust members.

The first stage of the visit necessitated climbing up a steep disused tramway zigzagging from the landing beach to the top of the cliffs. Then along the mown path to the barracks where the trust had already opened up the exhibition centre, gift

shop, mess hall and cafe and were busy selling tea, coffee and cakes. And, I was glad to note, there was a small bar serving beers, wines and spirits. This building would act as a vital refuge on a wet weather visit, but today we were blessed with fantastic blue skies and sunshine, and a gentle warm breeze.

After quantities of teas and cakes and half of our packed lunch we headed off on a clockwise tour of the island, which is not long in distance but offers plenty to occupy your time, so long as you explore everything carefully.

Various military emplacements with decaying remnants of artillery are dotted at regular intervals around the island, almost all with dark and dank underground rooms that those with a torch, like us, are free to investigate. Since the island is not easily accessible by disenchanted youth, these bunkers and tunnels are unfettered by the usual collection of cans, broken glass, graffiti and urine; instead they are the happy abode of large numbers of cave spiders, carefully tending their hanging gossamer egg sacs.

Other highlights of the island include the large number of dead birds and rusty cannons you will see. And several flights of wartime concrete steps running down the steep edges of the island to look-out stations and tiny mooring points. These are all void of any hand rails and resemble an M. C. Escher engraving, making for an interesting descent and ascent.

200 Steps Cave is located a couple of flights down one of these sets of steps (which actually has 208(ish) steps) on the northern side of the island. The cave proved rather difficult to reach due to the persuasive defences of the thick brambles that cover almost the entire island, but I think I could see the small entrance from a few feet away.

Holm September 11 2010 by Matt Voysey

Photos: Matt Voysey

Later we visited Parson's Cave, which is a small rock shelter reached by descending a path marked "DANGER STEEP PATH" halfway between the barracks and the top of the path down to the landing beach. This cave was reputedly used by smugglers and has a small dry stone wall (clearly not contemporary) across the entrance. We found the skeleton of a young muntjac inside – this tiny non-indigenous deer species apparently runs a happy riot on the island, but are never seen when people are visiting.



Parson's Cave

The same steep path can be followed all the way down on a rusty tramway to remnants of a mooring and the impressive limestone shelving and boulders that make up the foot of the island. From here it is possible at low tide to navigate west around the island to find a quarried area with winch foundations on the cliff above, to the right of which is Reservoir Cave. This is an opening in the cliff face containing a dangerously slippery climb up into the rift above (not attempted). A walled basin in front of the cave was used to collect the water that used to issue from this cave.

After returning to the barracks for a welcome pint of scrumpy we went along to the remains of the tiny Augustinian Priory for an informative talk summarising the 30 years of archaeological excavations that have taken place there. Roman, mediaeval, Victorian and wartime artefacts have been found in this spot, many of which are displayed in the exhibition at the barracks. We were even proudly shown the spoil heap (at which I suspect the ATLAS members present were all thinking "call that a spoil heap?!").



Reservoir Cave

Apparently after 30 years the team are just about ready to move on to new dig on the very top of the island, the site of a possible Roman fort at which some new finds had recently been made.

Soon we were back on the landing beach, with some anxious moments waiting for the boat to arrive while the tide quickly rose towards us. It arrived in spectacular style, bow ramp carving into the beach, and everyone streamed aboard as if it was an emergency evacuation. As we sailed away we were treated to a beautiful view of the sun setting directly behind Steep

Holm, a prime photo opportunity. The return journey to Weston was a rather quicker than the trip out, although on arrival we had to linger off the jetty for at least 10 minutes waiting for the tide to rise enough to allow us to disembark, bobbing up and down in choppy seas as the sun set while the tastefully lit Weston Eye (Somerset's diminutive answer to the London Eye) slowly revolved before the entrance to the new pier building.

Overall an interesting, unusual and memorable trip to a part of Somerset (and the Mendips) not often visited, although make sure you get fine weather for it.



PS. The Shepton didn't manage to find the fabled mega-caverns, and despite a quick poke around neither did we. There are an awful lot of brambles though, and who knows what could be under them?

Ogof Cnwc to Daren Cilau through trip description

by John Stevens

Ogof Cnwc (Price's Old Dig) [21063 14925] is located in a quarry to the west of the sheep dip junction. The normal approach from Whitewalls is to ascend to the tramroad that follows the base of the Daren Cilau Quarry and to follow it south about 600m beyond Pen Eryr. The entrance is behind a hillock at the base of the cliffs and is triangular in shape. A gate is just inside, (key available from Whitewalls) which can be opened without a key from the inside.

A short length of stooping passage ascends into the first low chamber which has a signing in book. Bear left through a low crawl across shallow pools to emerge in the roof of Calcite Chamber. There is a 2m climb down the flowstone before following the rift on the left. The rift links to a tube on the right to a bend where it becomes a tight vertical rift. A crawl continues to a slope up to a shaft. Descend the shaft and through a choke to emerge in a walking passage. In very dry weather, a sump at the base of the shaft can be followed to also emerge in the walking passage.

After 50m this enters Price's Prophecy (decorated chamber) and the taped route is followed to the left and across boulders to reach the main Busman's path. To the left is some 200m of passages ending in various digs but the way on is to the right. This descends to cross an area of calcited floor (narrow taped path) past formations. The path continues easy with a trickle of water passed on the left as the route drops down boulders to the right. A boulder slope rises up and right to easy going. The roof lowers to a crawl with a taped off oxbow ahead forcing you to go left

into stooping passage. This reaches the other end of the oxbow, which is a loose climb. Only 20m beyond the route is a crawl on the left, ahead is a choke with a route to some lower passages. The crawl is mainly hands and knees but lowers over blocks at the far end just before entering a chamber. From the chamber a climb up through boulders gains the continuation which passes through a fault controlled section with various routes at different level. All reunite and come to a high level side passage on the left, at this point a boulder ruckle hides the way on to the right. If this is missed the passage ends after 15m in a wet choke. Once in the ruckle a rope climb is soon found, An easy climb but lifeline very useful. At the base a chamber leads down and to the left into a wet choke (loose), which is followed round to the right, down a hole, to emerge into Antler Passage.

Antler Passage is walking but has numerous boulder obstacles, some have some very old aids that should not be trusted and a travelling line for these is recommended. There are three main features to overcome. The first is an energetic climb up a narrow rift which for the larger caver means being more exposed as you climb up and out. (old rope may still exist) This is followed but a short climb down a few meters later. The next feature is an overhanging block which creates a 4m climb on its left. Footholds on this are sparse! (rope recommended). At the next bend left, Man in the Roof enters high on the right with a rope hanging down to help you access it if you choose that option. Normally Antler is followed and narrows at a calcite blockage. Here you need to go high and pass some stal to reach

a rift in the floor. This becomes a 6m pitch. A red rope ladder (2008?) and line are rigged. Antler Passage then passes the Antlers at a corner. Urchin Oxbow on the right is reached, please do not use this route as it is taped off, (but much damage has been done by the ignorant, The urchins are all accessible from the other end of the oxbow). A small climb and short crawl then emerges into Epocalypse.

Head right to the Kitchen and follow a trench around a bend to where the taped path splits. To the right is a route to Urchin Oxbow. Epocalypse is followed to White Company and the route splits again. Both routes are taped and have reflective markers, these reunite at the start of Epocalypse (a lower section) near the signing in book for Daren which is down to the right.

From the book, boulders are crosses to enter Jigsaw Passage with it's small stream. Misfit is passed on the left and a taped route goes through a number of puddles on its way. Please keep to the tape, you will be wet soon anyway. A wriggle is passed and then a calcited choke is encountered. This is the 84 breakthrough choke and emerges in the Old Rift Passage. Straight across and down into the undercut reaches the entrance passage. A blockage is bypassed by the second short oxbow. A junction is reached with the exit to the right. Almost straight away the calcite squeezes are encountered before easier going quickly covers a good distance. The passage gets smaller as the Dry Way enters from the left and more squeezes and crawls leads onwards to the Vice. Now only 80m to the exit and final wet flatout crawl.

Daren Cilau to Ogof Cnwc through trip description

by John Stevens

Ogof Daren Cilau [20521 15301]. From the car park, follow the track beyond the old lime kiln. A path between spoil heaps leads into the quarry. The entrance is situated at the base of the quarry face, at the westerly (right hand) end, with Ogof Pen Eryr at the other end.

A flat-out crawl through a pool sets the scene for the 517m crawl. It starts as awkward crawling with occasional boulders to pass. The Vice is about 80m in and is a squeeze in a rift. Two main inlets are passed, the first can only be followed for a few metres before it becomes too small, another often overlooked, impassable inlet is also passed before the second inlet proper. The going eases off and stooping is possible until a series of calcite squeezes are encountered. The last of these pops out into a larger passage. Left goes via a short oxbow to a boulder floored chamber. The way out is up to the left, which emerges in the Old Rift Passage. Going left leads to a dry crystal pool and formations, but no way on. To the right leads to Old Main Chamber.

The way on is straight across to a flat-out crawl into a downward choke (caution). The final drop lands on the top of a calcited ramp of boulders at the start of Jigsaw Passage. From here on in the cave, many passages are taped, so please keep inside them. Jigsaw is mainly walking but about half way along is a short squeeze, The Wriggle. Towards the end of Jigsaw is Misfit Passage on the right. Jigsaw then enters Big Chamber Nowhere Near The Entrance in an area of large boulders with the logbook straight ahead.

After ascending a boulder pile, a crawl on the left enters Epocalypse

Way. To the right is the main part of Big Chamber.

The crawl at the start quickly opens up into walking passage with a choice of ways which later reunite as it becomes an easy walking passage. Soon the White Company is seen on the left with other formations. A choice of taped routes along this wide passage passes Urchin Oxbow, which has delicate formations. The end of this oxbow is barred by tape. The two taped routes unite and a trench develops in the floor. In the side of the trench are selenite crystals growing from the mud. A small stream is met flowing across the passage at The Kitchen.

From The Kitchen the passage rises up a boulder slope. To the left is the entrance to Antler Passage, while ahead leads to crawls.

Antler Passage is entered via a crawl to a short climb down or a lower crawl through boulders on the left, into an easy walking passage. On the left Urchin Oxbow is passed, beyond is a climb up. The passage undulates, and passes the Antlers on the left, to a right-angled bend. This corner is supposedly the closest point to Ogof Craig A Ffynnon, but it is totally calcited up. A 6m climb / pitch up (red rope ladder) leads to a traverse into a boulder floored passage and a bend to the right, this is where Man In The Roof enters. Continuing up Antler, another climb is encountered, a 4m overhang around a large block (rope recommended). Another rope climb up and down are come across during this boulder section. Antler ends in a large choke with the stream emerging from the right. This is followed up into a wet choke. This emerges in a chamber with a slope up

to the right where a rope is hanging (caution). This free climb and crawl then emerges in Busman's. Heading left through chambers with a variety of routes reaches a slope up, then a climb down through boulders. Beyond the next chamber a low crawl on the right is followed. This eases off before rejoining the main passage. Head right past an oxbow and lower section before walking is regained. The passage drops and is followed up a boulder slope with the sound of water off to the right. Head left, which soon enters Price's Prophecy, with its calcite floor. The left tape of the marked route goes off into a side passage. This indicates the way to Cnwc. The side passage reaches a choke and is passed by a crawl to the base of a scaffolded shaft. Near the top a ramp down enters a crawl which passes a squeeze and a bend before reaching a chamber. Here a 2m climb enters another crawl to the logbook and the exit down to the right. The gate does not require a key to exit.

Surveying Busman's Holiday

by John Stevens

One of the main tasks once the route into Busman's via Cnwc was secure, was to resurvey the area. A grade 2/3 was done many years ago by Martyn Farr and co. but the passages have been extended since then.

The first trip was done on 3rd Jan 2009 with A Fawcett, A Snook, D Stevens and myself. This started in Price's Prophecy and headed east towards the interesting digs in that area. In April I went to Penwylt to attend a Cave Surveying meet where I was introduced to paperless surveying (DistoX and PDA). This had several advantages for cave surveying and the accuracy of the instruments had caught up and probably passed that of the Suunto instruments I used.

By the start of May, I had bought and put together a full set of electronic instruments and was eager to try them out. The first real test was a three hour evening trip on 28th March with M Read and D Stevens joining me. We

headed west from Price's Prophecy to finish with a small loop around an oxbow. Next I managed to get John Cooper to join David and myself on 10th August to continue along the main passage and link with the end stations of Antler Passage. We then started working back, picking up side passages, finishing just before the crawl.

New Year day saw M Read, A Heath and myself complete the link with Cnwc and eventually finding a small pencil mark in the roof of Cnwc that was Dave Ramsay's end station. We also did the major side passage near the crawl, which is the continuation of the main passage before it chokes.

The end side passages at the eastern end were finished off by David and myself on 21st April and the final other side passages in the western branch on 9th May, solo.

The statistics of this work are :-

219 legs, 1309m of centreline over 6 trips.

Daren Cilau to Ogof Cnwc closure error 1.48 E, 6.21 S, 1.67 Alt = 6.598m

The underground survey length, entrance to entrance of the through trip is 3283.07m (421 legs), gives a 0.2% closure error (or 1.57cm/leg) if we assume the entrance coords are accurate. [These entrance positions were surveyed to grade 6 by Pete Cousins and Denis Warburton using a tripod mounted compass and clinometer.]

Daren Cilau has also increased its vertical range. The low point is still the terminal sump at 207m with the low point at -22m (185m). The new high point is in the eastern branch of Busman's, the stal chamber at 416m. With the Daren Cilau entrance at 399m, we have a range of +17m, -214 ; total 231m (758ft).

Digs and Ideas on the Busman's Area

The obvious idea that most people will have is how close is it to the Promised Land in Ogof Craig A Ffynnon. Busman's undulates a bit but the survey on the face of it seems to show it rise from west to east. So the Eastern end is very much higher than the end of OCAF. The corner in the Promised Land is 368m which is about 40m lower than the passages in eastern part of Busman's. So where is



Main Pic and left:
Prices Prophecy.
All photos: John Stevens

this old passage going? The eastern end is dominated by breakdown and is quite heavily decorated. This is probable due to its shallow depth, a surface valley is cut into the hillside above this area, which has allowed extra percolation in. In places the original phreatic main passage can be seen with some large undercuts and notches. Using these as a better estimate as to the passage dips rather than the breakdown, the phreas seems to dip steadily to the south. The passage also crosses some minor faults, one at the Antler end, a second which comes from the Cnwc passage across to a high level passage, and a third in the eastern end where we have been digging. If the large phreas continues dipping south, then it should hit 4th Choke in OCAF after another half kilometre.

The question here is whether or not the breakdown is too massive to allow one to directly dig through to the continuation or if it is better to go further away from the escarpment and valley to gain more stable rock. To this end we started digging the obvious side passage at the eastern end. Along some of this a fault is clearly visible and this controls its alignment. This passage takes a draught, but becomes too narrow, the floor is heavily calcited with hard clay. As the size has decreased considerably, I would hope this may indicate it maybe one of a number of parallel phreatic rifts. Just need to find the linking arch.

To the west of Price's Prophecy, a hole down reaches a small streamway. The initial chamber here has a nice, sweeping curve to it with little collapse. The streamway is very wide with the water running in a trench in the mud next to the east wall. The passage has obviously

backed up in flood and ends too low. Of note is the direction, that being, it has swung westward and may drain the main passage. Where it flows is interesting to speculate but I doubt if it goes back to Antler Passage.

During the survey we came across a high level passage just to the west of Price's Prophecy. Unfortunately this is beyond a taped area of calcite floor. A 4m climb gains a crawl which was dug into a small chamber. This was then dug by Joe Duxbury, Dave S and myself, through mud fill to reach a boulder choke. The passage and choke seem to all be aligned with a roof feature seen in Busman's and the entrance passages of Cnwc. The stream mentioned earlier should hit this feature very soon if it is a fault, which may explain why it has become blocked and backs up.

Just before the high level dig, water enters from a calcited aven. In heavy water conditions (sump in Cnwc was full and flowing down the inside passage) a sizable stream was entering. I expected this to flow and pond in the low mud floored area of the main passage. However this water tumbled into the boulders and vanished! The boulders are large in this area and some calcite is a problem but work to follow the water will continue.

The crawl in Busman's is obviously not the main route which can be followed into a choke. By dropping down in the choke, wall features can be seen but a large continuation is accessed by turning right. This emerges in a short section of trunk passage which hits another choke. On the right wall a layer of ochre is seen (I have looked in Pen Eyr for this layer but failed to find it). Down on the left side of this passage, an undercut can be entered. This leads to a flat out crawl to a loose chamber/choke.

Once you go through the crawl you enter an area of breakdown with a fault on the south side. To the north another crawl heads back east but ends too low. Pen Eyr is some 90m away, so a quick link here seems unlikely.

The fault can be followed through the next high chambers where it creates a high rift, and a shale run in at one point. In the chambers a series of oxbows and shelves on the north side show a series of development in this area. The fault is the same as the one that terminates Antler Passage and allows water to enter from above. The side passage just before the end is a nice phreatic rift ending in a mud dig. The first of the digs was passed and the second begun.



Stal Chamber, eastern branch

The prospects

All three digs on the south and west side have had some attention. At the easternmost, I would be looking for a phreatic arch into a parallel rift for it to continue. The middle is just a boulder choke on a fault and should be easy enough progress through. The western dig is close to Antler Passage so the potential may be less.

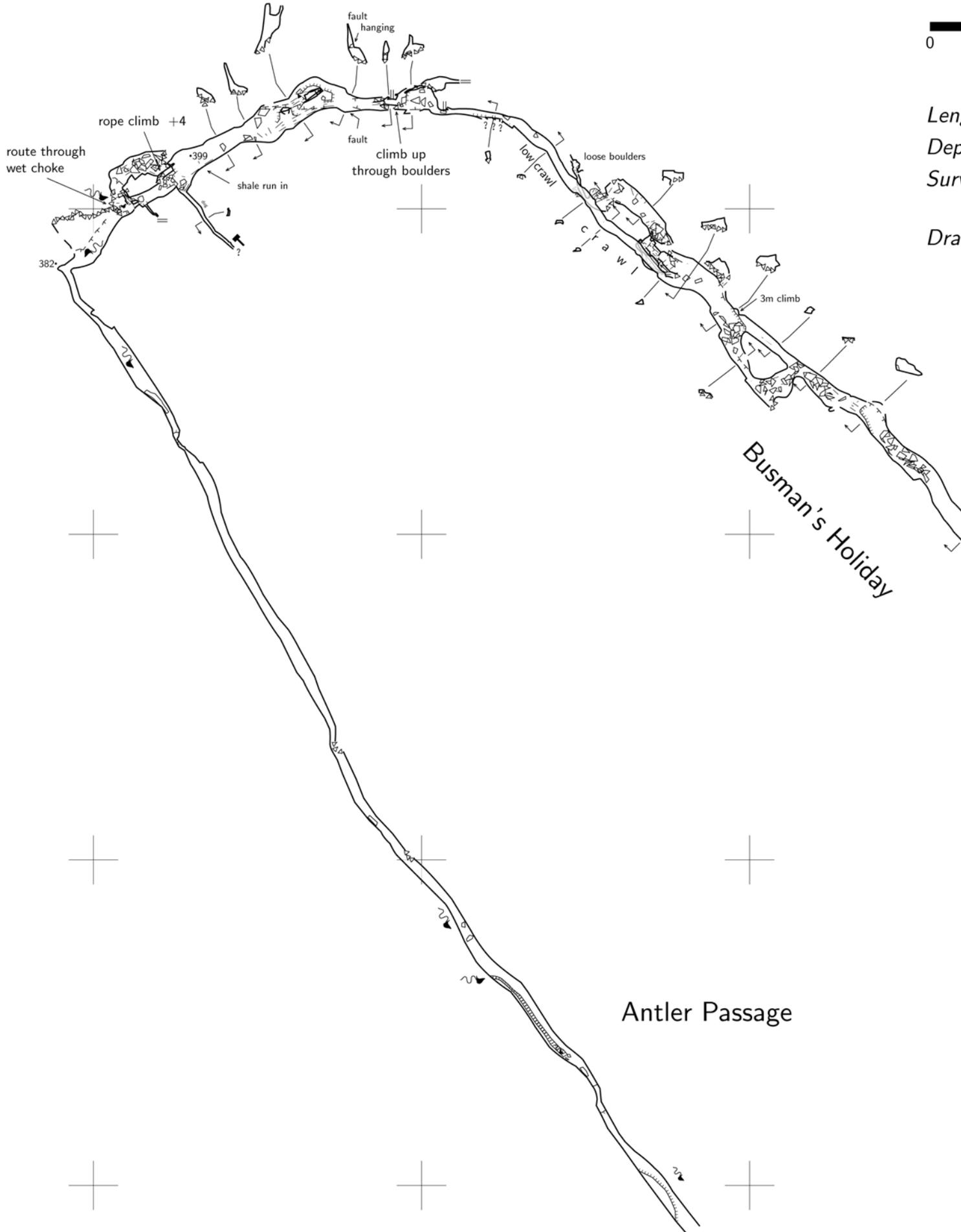
The eastern end of the main passage I think is too shattered to make much progress in, without heavy engineering.

The most exciting, is the chance of following the water that enters part way along, so efforts will initially be focused here. But I still need to confirm it doesn't run NE and enter the low level stream passage.

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Ogof Cnwc, Daren Cilau - Busman's

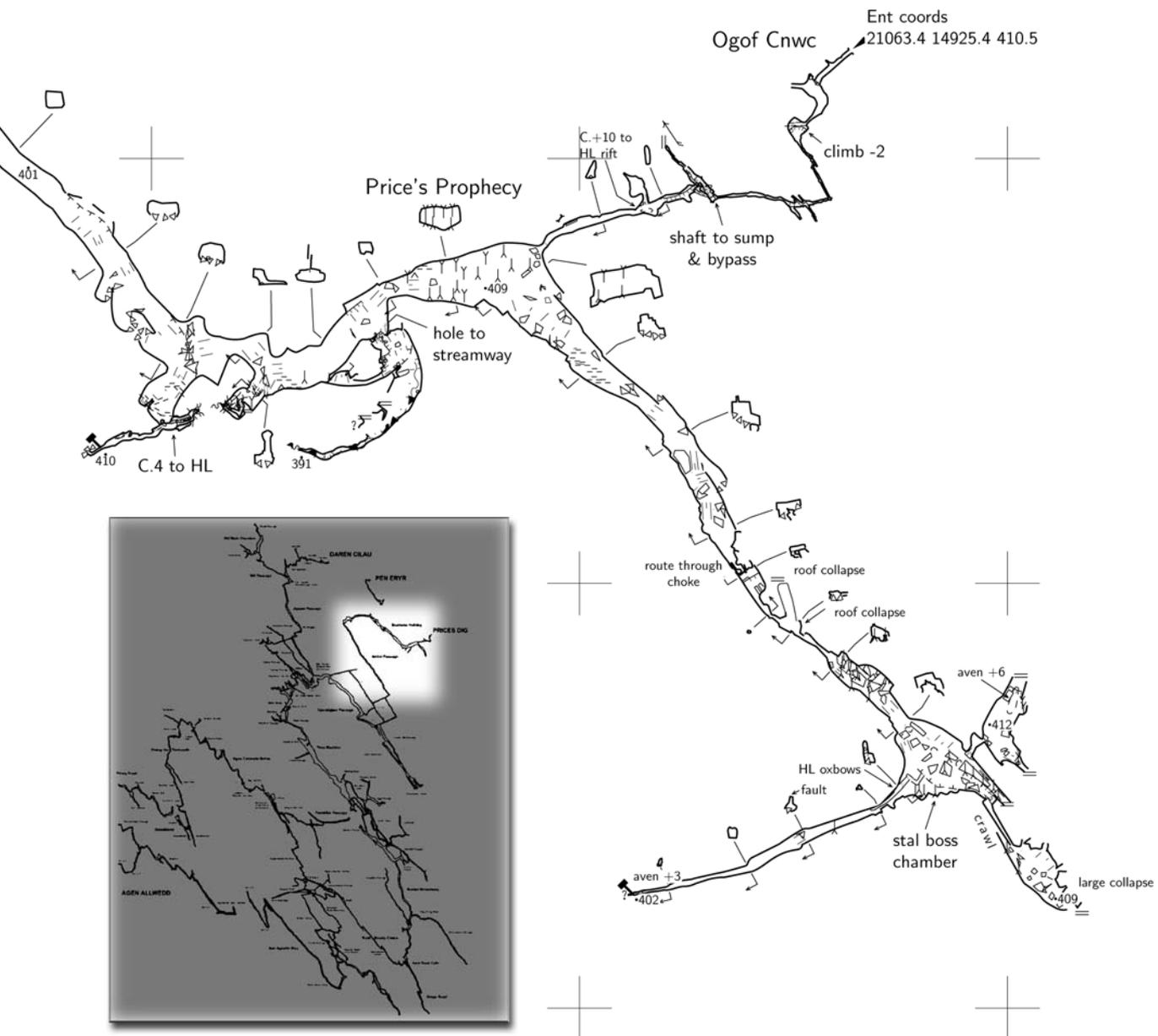


Length: 2274 m

Depth: 75 m

Surveyed by: John Stevens, David Stevens, Mike Read, John Cooper, Adrian Fawcett, Andy Snook, Andy Heath, Arthur Millett, David Ramsay, John Wilkinson 1984-2010

Drawn by: John Stevens 2010



More Caving in France

by Paul Tarrant

Following on from Andy Heath's excellent articles on France I provide information on various trips to the country which were done in the last few years but not written up for the newsletter.

Grotte du Coutal Tarn Gorge

Co-ords X:670,880 Y:220,080

I spent a pleasant two weeks holiday, camping in the Tarn Gorge in August 06. The objective was to walk, show cave, sight see the Causse countryside, read and relax. I saw some cavers from Speleo Club Lille on the campsite and tried engaging them in conversation. Beers seemed to help the translation both ways! One evening I was eating excellent pizza cooked in a wood fired oven (suggestion for the club's next outside building project??) in the campsite restaurant when one of the French cavers asked me if I wanted a trip into the Grotte du Coutal in the morning and I leapt at the chance of a trip into the area's longest cave. Rain beat down incessantly that evening & I was fearful that the trip might be off but no chance, the sun shone in the morning and Fred, Jean, Lewic and his son turned up as promised. The trip was on!

We drove to a place called Les Vignes and took the D995 road, parking the cars by the first bend just by some recycling bins. We took an ill defined path which ascended up and westwards and made for the Roc de Quille (unmissable rock tower feature). The cave was just above this in the cliffs. The entrance led down

some steps cut in the rocks in what had been a magazine used to store explosives during the building of the road in the gorge. Fred told me the Germans had great difficulty finding the place during the war and that it had been used to store weapons for the local maquis who were possibly the Bir Hakeim group who got involved in a big fire fight with the Nazis after French police informed on them. There's a monument to this engagement at La Parade not too far from Les Vignes. The maquis lost 34 men in the battle and 27 survivors were executed the next day. Vive la France! Vive la Liberté!

The cave started as an easy traverse over the top of a blind pot. The pitch proper was around a corner out of view around a traverse and was 7m deep. This dropped us into a passage and we turned left and down into a series that was largely a descending choke with much calcite. This I was told had taken many years to blast out. It was all a bit muddy and small and not what I had come to France to see but after a particularly muddy squalid wallow over some planks, the going got much easier. We gained a larger passage with gour pools which was far nicer.

The passage got progressively bigger until we had to climb over some very large blocks. We then traversed over a large trench like feature in the floor which was a pitch. The rock in many places was a black friable cherty type of stuff which would break away as soon

as look at you. Although black on the outside, the rock was white on the inside – most strange. The passage did a bit of a hairpin bend on itself and then assumed very large proportions as it became a high rift passage with bands of black chert aligning on both sides of the passage, interspersed with a coarse grainy limestone. The whole place was very eroded and the silt on the floor was extremely fine. Clearly masses of water once flowed dramatically through this place to create the sort of passage not seen anywhere in Britain.

We stopped at an obvious junction with steeply descending passages, all filled with the same fine silt seen earlier in the Rift passage. From here it is possible to gain access to the wet Réseau de Provence. We at this point had lunch and then retreated to the entrance after about 4 hours worth of excellent, easy caving. Jean insisted we had a beer at the hotel situated by the Coutal's resurgence, he claiming that it was a French tradition and I expressing mock surprise at this. A good trip to do in the area but I must admit to being totally surprised at the eroded nature of the rock in the cave as I'd half expected to see massive limestones like you get in Aggie or OFD and which you certainly see in the pitch systems higher up on the plateaux of the Tarn area. A good trip done in very good company.

with what we'd seen already, we decided to return to the surface which we regained after four hours of extremely good fun caving in this 8 kilometre long cave. I suppose we saw about 1.5 kms of it. Clearly I have started something as the chaps wanted a trip in the...

Abime de Bramabiau

Co-ords – Follow the road signs - It's a show cave!

Rick and Tessa Box, Pete and Phil Dinn and I were seen off by a large party of ex CSS onlookers as we entered the Perte de Bonheur, the huge sink for the cave after seeking permission from the show cave manager.

The entrance started dry but on entering a side rift off the main entrance passage, we dropped into the very aqueous passages that take the full subterranean flow of the Bonheur through to the Bramabiau. Several large tree-trunks were seen and considered for lashing together into a raft but we got swept past them by the sheer force of the water.

Then we were swept into the area of the show cave and clearly there was more water than we really had been prepared for. We followed the river which had carved out a very eroded water course through the mountain. The rocks were quite sharp and we had to hang onto small ledges and handholds to keep up out of the water where we could. The lights of the show cave were tantalisingly close, but way out of

reach. There then followed a series of cascades where Tessa decided to make things more exciting than they already were by falling off a cascade and plummeting into the plunge pool where she disappeared for a second or two. Scary stuff! Ropes were then used from here on out which was achieved fairly soon after this event. This highly aquatic episode of immense fun took us one and a half hours to traverse and is similar in some ways to a trip in Porth yr Ogof, but with four times more water. This was a great trip which required many beers to celebrate afterwards.

There's more to come in the next newsletter. I visited the Lot with SWCC in August and managed to do some other caves not described by Andy Heath as well as some he did.

Trapdoor and Vespers Pot

18-19th August 2010.

Participants: Mike Read, Matt and Mandy Vosey and Chris Tomlin

by Chris Tomlin

It was a nice day when I got up rather early and cycled to YSS one Saturday morning to join Mike Read and the Voyseys on their trip. After a cup of tea and some discussion, we decided to do a fairly new pot called Trapdoor. The hole is between Long Kin West and Boggarts Roaring Holes i.e. below Little Ingleborough. We parked at Cold Cotes and I went off first 'to locate the pot'. Having totally failed at this, the others caught up and we eventually found the right shakehole. The cave description is in the '50 Harder trips in the Dales' guidebook which I don't have, so

the following is from my hazy memory.

Trapdoor starts with a squeeze around a flake leading onto a drop and on into the narrow entrance series. Mike Read volunteered to rig and did a super job throughout. Thanks Mike! I had a go at taking out Mandy by kicking a fist-sized rock down the pitch which just missed her, luckily. It made quite a thump when it landed. Sorry Mandy! From there it has a few awkward climbs, in our case enlivened by a dead sheep in the entrance series that was just starting to smell (luckily we didn't have to go

too close to it), before getting to the first real squeeze: the Gripper (I think). This isn't super-tight but it is awkward. I had to take off all my SRT gear except the harness and be in exactly the right place to pass it. The squeeze is just before the first pitch.

After the pitch, Trapdoor continues to be tight everywhere. The second pitch is quite awkward as it is a drop through boulders, then immediately a squeeze to a free-hang follows, so you find your upper body is still in the squeeze while your legs are waving around in space. I managed to press my Petzl stop into

my chest while passing the squeeze, it was quite painful.

Somewhere after the second pitch is the second named squeeze: the Ripper. To be honest I don't remember exactly what squeeze this was (there are so many) but it might have been a tight rift below a waterfall. Then there was a few tight bits in a rift, including a tight drop down through a boulder choke followed by a convoluted rift before we got to the third named squeeze in Trapdoor: the Stripper. To do this, you drop down a fairly tight rift before turning 90 degrees and going along the rift. I was last of the

party and passed my tacklebag and helmet through to Mandy before attempting the squeeze headfirst. I didn't manage this as I could not get my legs past a tight bit at the bottom of the squeeze. So I climbed up a bit and had a go feet-first. I might have gotten through this way but got very worried when I got stuck for a few seconds, so fought my way back out of the squeeze to the starting rift. At this point I gave up and headed back out, leaving the others to actually bottom the cave (there are two more pitches past the Stripper, including a big one (40m?). In retrospect I should have examined the problem more closely as there were probably footholds I could have used to get headfirst through the squeeze. Still, it was quite nice to take my time to get back out of Trapdoor as all the pitches were rigged and I had no tackle to carry! As before my helmet seemed to be more off my head than on it as it kept jamming in the tight rifts and squeezes, it was very lucky that I'd decided to bring a Petzl Duo lamp rather than a Kirkby kidney pack! And as before I had to keep taking off my SRT gear to get through all the squeezes and putting it back on to get up the pitches. It took me a long time to get through the Gripper as I could not find the right bit to attempt it. Then I popped through and nearly fell down the awkward climb on the other side (the squeeze is a rift and the tight bit is only a few inches long). Climbing over the pitch where our smelly chum lay, I made

my way back out - or so I thought as I climber up high in rifts that didn't go anywhere. Actually finding the right squeeze in all those rifts took me a few minutes as well before I emerged in the sunshine and made my way back down to the car. I changed, had a snooze and was just heading back up the hill to meet the others when they appeared over a rise. They had bottomed it but apparently Pete Voysey had a bit of an epic in the Stripper, getting jammed in it temporarily with a tacklebag and turning the air blue. This cheered me up no end!

Vespers

The next day we decided we would do a nice relaxing pothole. Then we decided to do Vespers instead. We were the only car parked up in Kingsdale (on a Sunday? Where are all the cavers? On expeditions?) until two blokes turned up. They wanted to do Vespers as well but graciously let us do it and went to do Brown Hills Pot instead. So we walked up to Breda Garth farmhouse and got permission from the farmer to do the cave. It took a bit of finding this one, it is in a manhole with its cover missing, in a dry gully that contains Spectacle Pot and Growling Hole. Vespers starts with a supposedly tight crawl but it isn't too bad, even with a tacklebag - after Trapdoor it was a doddle. The cave gets slightly bigger and then becomes a rift streamway to the first pitch. You have to traverse out to get down this pitch, it's too tight to follow the water. After

that there is quite a tight twisty canyon to the next pitch. I had an interesting time in this bit as I had to figure out where to go to get around the bends and through the tighter bits. Then Mike had an interesting time too rigging the next pitch as it is tight at the top & then opens out into a rift. From there it is easy going until the cave opens out spectacularly into the two final pitches where it joins Spectacle Pot.

The rigging between the first and second pitches is interesting, it's quite hard to find all of the P-hangers but we got it sorted in the end.

The last pitch is especially nice - if you get the deviations right and rig a reblay to avoid rubbing - and the landing is at the foot of the so-called 'Great Rubble Heap'. This is really a slope of extremely loose (eh Mandy?) and sharp rocks at the foot of a rift. It is so bad that we decided only one person should be on the slope at a time and even then every one of us bar Mike nearly triggered an avalanche. Mandy completed the job by finding the only loose rock on the last pitch and sent it down, luckily no-one was at the foot of the pitch at the time.

After the loose rock shenanigans we headed out. I had an even more interesting time in the canyon, finding I had to go a different way out than in to pass it. Then I got into some difficulty at the head of the first pitch until Mandy helped me get to the pitch-head proper and so avoid the tight bit (I was quite tired

and trying to follow the water up the pitch, to no avail.

Then we went out very slowly to the fresh air. The entrance crawl outwards is awkward with a tacklebag but do-able. The biggest problem is getting hold of it to lift it over the rocks in the crawl - I found turning the bag end-over-end worked best. Then it was back through the farm where I was nearly attacked by one of the dogs & back to the cozy YSS hut after a super day.

The others had taken the Monday off so there was no time pressure for a Suay trip. I was able to get up early the next morning and get an early train and went straight to work. Cycling along at dawn was super (I saw an owl finishing off its nightly hunt, gliding noiselessly) and rounded off a great weekend.



Bonfire Weekend 6th/7th November

General caving or apathy on Saturday followed by bonfire and fireworks (please bring along a couple of rock shattering specimens). Jacky will be providing chilli of varying strengths including veggie, jacket spuds and puddings for a nominal charge. There may also be evening entertainment for the brave-hearted. Headache tablets will be available on Sunday morning.

CSS Golden Oldies* weekend meet in South Wales 11th and 12th Sept 2010

*(Those CSS members who caved during the 1960's)

by Geo. Fletcher

For all those who made the Golden Oldies weekend in South Wales a **BIG THANK YOU**; thanks for making the effort, thanks for your company, thanks for the reminiscing about our "boldly go" days of caving, I look forward to a repeat of them all next year and most of all thanks for your friendship.

For those of you who couldn't make it this time around, thanks for your apologies and news. Most of us met up in The Bear on the Friday evening where we exchanged reports of all our ills, medical conditions and operations; with Bart awaiting his double hip job in a few weeks time.

On Saturday in glorious sunny weather groups and individuals did various walks and sightseeing around the area and we all

gathered at the Dragon Inn to be joined by more Golden Oldies, and seventeen of us sat down to eat our way through either a two or three course meal over loads of stories and anecdotes of the best of our caving and climbing exploits.

On Sunday in even more glorious sunshine many of us gathered up at White Walls to continue our trip down memory lane. John Stevens, the hut warden showed us around the new White Wall two floor extension out the back. We viewed the new carpeted library and the picture archive of White Walls and caving activities on the PC. We were able to give names of places and name people from the past and present.

After using the new 5 star upstairs toilet we said our fond

farewells and many headed home. Some took in Aggy entrance and in the evening a few hardy souls stayed on for more liquid refreshments in The Bear and had a very nice meal.

Thanks to Roy Musgrove for sorting out the logistics and numbers for the evening meal with Ashley at the Dragon Inn.

It seemed that all wanted to continue this Golden Oldies September meet and repeat all our old stories again lest we forget them, so keep 10th and 11th September 2011 free in your diary.

If any of you took any photos then perhaps you could email us a copy to enjoy.

Thanks again for your support, best wishes,

Geo. Fletcher.



Previous page

'Tich' Morris outside White Walls ruin, 1964

Photo: Geo Fletcher

Tich was a great CSS character whom we still talk about at all our reunions. He was a tremendous caver and potholer and did a lot of the early exploration of Aggy. When wetsuits came along he was renowned for putting his wetsuit back together with "Evostik" the morning of the caving trip. He was the main plasterer of White Walls as well as being a well qualified carpenter. He went off on an expedition to discover and survey the caves of Jamaica. From there he went on an expedition to Castle Guard Ice Cave in the Canadian Rockies, which was the deepest Ice cave in the world. He now lives and works on Saturna Island off B.C. and has attended some of the Golden Oldies meets.



Above. From Left to Right:

John House did some serious caving and potholing with the CSS as well as putting a lot of time into the building of Whitewalls in the early days. He, Jane and I did the survey of Flood Passage in Aggy. Later he camped in Whitewall's field with his family to work on the building at weekends. John now lives mainly in France and came over for the Golden Oldies get together this year.

Jean Musgrove, Roy Musgrove's wife who supported him throughout his tenure as Hut Warden.

Geo Fletcher. I was one of those who was instrumental in searching out the owners of White Walls and its purchase. I was the main carpenter of the project and built many of the things still seen in the building today. My late wife, Twink, with our family, would also camp in White Wall's field and work weekends to improve the building.

Jane Bonner nee Tyas. As well as being a good caver and climber, Jane put in many hours of building support on White Walls. After travelling in the far east she too would bring her family to White Walls to work on the improvements.

John Stevens

Bob Fish. A big character in the CSS. A terrific caver. Bob was on the first club trip to the end of Southern Stream Passage. Bob spanned the generations and received a worthy Honorary Membership. He did all the electrics in White Walls and his neat, professional work can be seen to this day.

Roy Musgrove. Roy joined the CSS and did many severe caves and potholes with us. He later took over the role as first Hut Warden which he did for many years and has left a terrific legacy of improvements to the building.

Colin Holdsworth. Colin took the library photo. Colin was a brilliant caver and potholer and has a great capacity for common sense organisation. Colin was one of the main driving forces in the purchase of White Walls. He searched out building material from many different sources, hired lorries to transport them down to White Walls and gave a tremendous amount of time to the reconstruction of the building.



Whitewalls 2010
Photo: Geo Fletcher

Pottering About on Mendip

by
John Cooper

Charterhouse Cave

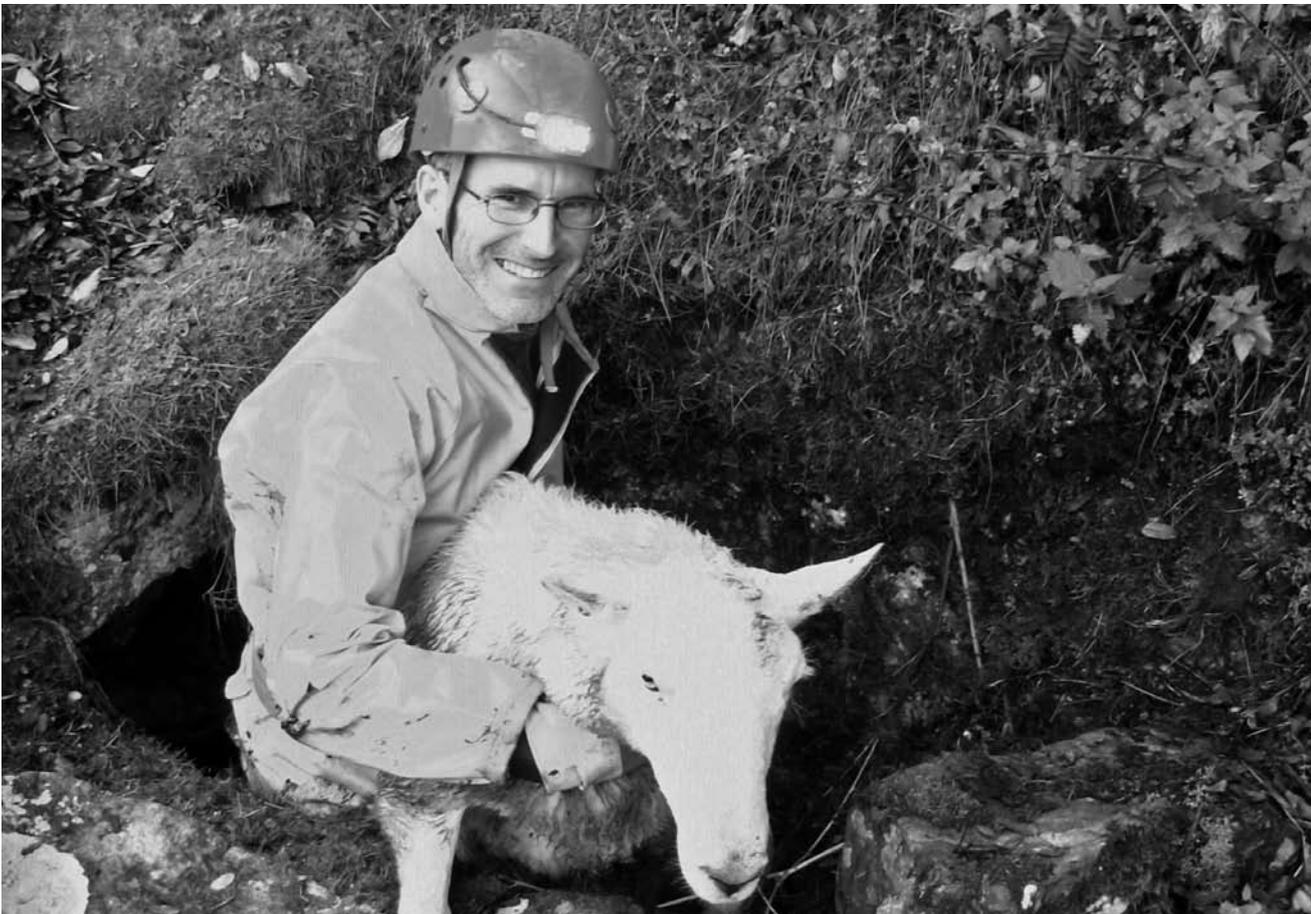
Saturday 2nd October 2010.

Andrew Atkinson (UBSS), Pete Hann (WCC), Ali Moody (WCC), Pete Moody (UBSS) and myself. With the onset of the rainy season we were unsure just how far we would get today. We had no intention of going as far as Diesel Duck but thought Portal Pool might be OK. Fortunately it was passable, although up at least 5cm from 2 weeks ago. Decided to survey an aven previously climbed by Tom Chapman (WCC) so Andrew was sent up it to hang a ladder down for the rest of us. Whilst he was doing that I was sent into Route 66 to find the survey marker paint (aka nail varnish) which was with the pile of climbing gear. By the time I returned a ladder was hanging down the aven and Ali was on her way up it. Unfortunately our attempt at surveying failed as the Disto-X refused to play, it seemed to have totally lost calibration. Back out with Portal Pool having risen further. 4¾ hours.

Saturday 9th October 2010.

Andrew Atkinson, Pete Hann, Ali Moody, Pete Moody and myself. With a working Disto we hoped to return and carry out surveying where we had failed last week. Unfortunately Portal Pool was sumped and there was a noisy stream running into it so the consensus was not to try pumping it out. Instead Ali and Pete Moody went to check out Sand Dig and the Riser whilst the rest of us started a re-survey of the 2008 passages to pick up more detail. We surveyed from Portal Pool up the Timeline then down to the terminal sump. Whilst the new survey matched the plan the elevation revealed a difference with the old survey. 5¼ hours.

Correction to previous report – Michael Butcher is of course SMCC not BEC



Andy Heath going above and beyond the call of duty to make a trapped ewe happy

Meets List 09/10

This is an outline of the meets for this year.

April 10th – 11th

South Wales

Working Weekend.

A lot of small jobs to be completed.

Also work in the Library.

May 1st – 2nd

South Wales

Saturday will be an OFD1 to 2 through trip
(Paul Tarrant)

May 27th – 31st

Yorkshire (YSS)

Booked for 5 nights for 10 people

No caves booked as yet

June 26th – 27th

South Wales

Saturday will have a trip into DY0 (Paul Tarrant)
BBQ and Barrel on Saturday night

July 24th – 25th

Mendip (Wessex)

Charterhouse & Longwood on Saturday

Swildons on Sunday

BBQ will be arranged for Saturday night

August 20th – 22nd

Yorkshire (YSS)

Booked for 3 nights for 10 people

September 25th – 26th

Hidden Earth

(Location to be confirmed)

November 6th – 7th

South Wales

Decide trips on Friday evening and then change them
Saturday morning.

Fireworks on Saturday night

December 4th – 5th

South Wales

Curry Extravaganza #6 on the 4th

Decide on your own trips

January 2011 | 29th – 30th

South Wales

Dinner and AGM

Officers of the Society:

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Dead moth colonized by fungus, Ogof Carreg Wen

Photo: Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley

www.chelseaspelaeo.org.uk