

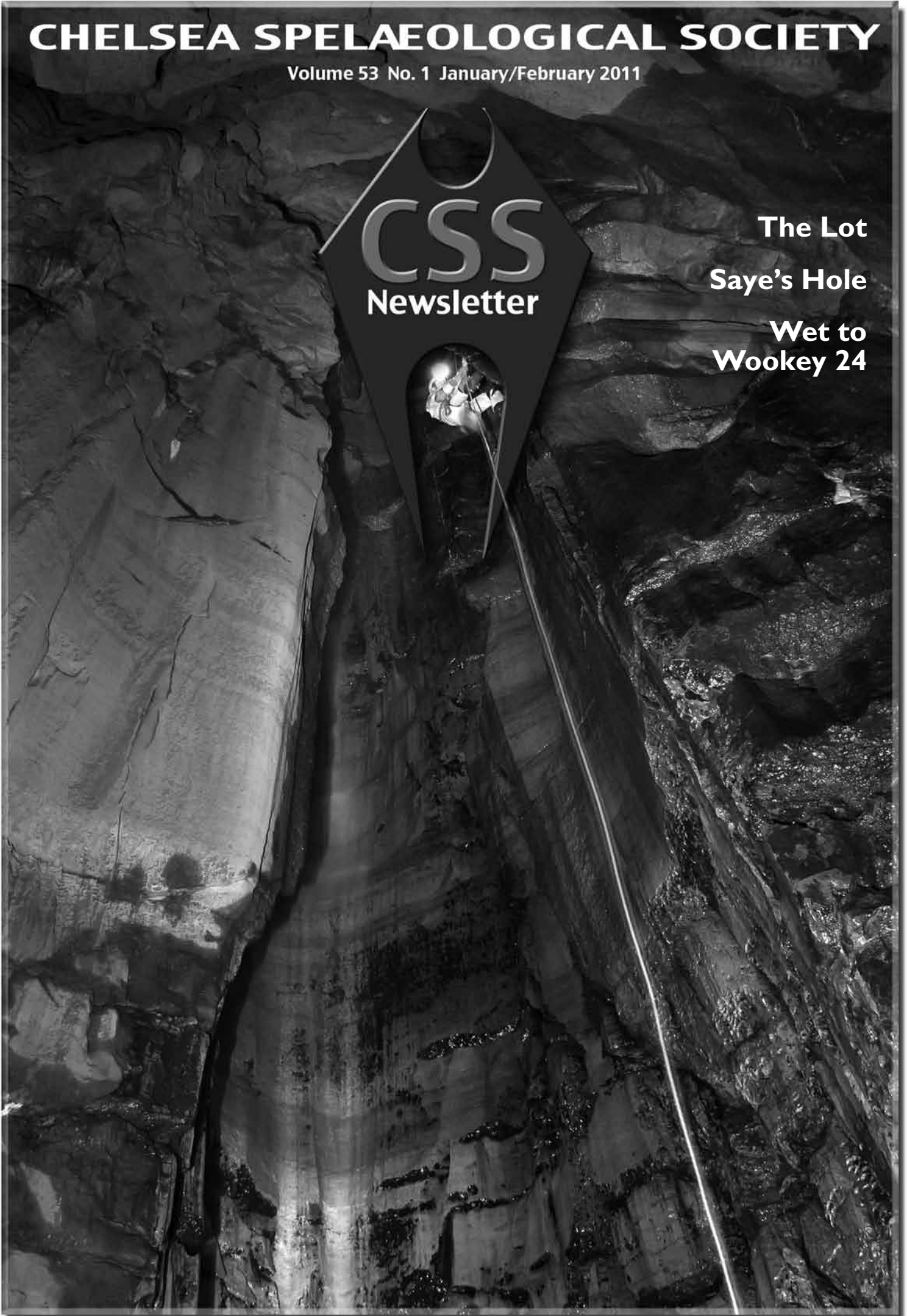
CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 53 No. 1 January/February 2011

CSS
Newsletter

**The Lot
Saye's Hole**

**Wet to
Wookey 24**



Chelsea Spelæological Society NEWSLETTER

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*Cover Photo:
Simon Moth descending
the main pitch,
Sell Hill Hole
Photo: Steve Sharp.

Photos and illustrations not
accredited are by the editor.*

Correction

Last month's Obstacle article pictures.

The Gate squeeze was rotated 90 degrees. Tony was entering cave on his right side.

Also Portal Pool and Diesel Duck captions transposed.

Membership Subscriptions are now due

Please check the CSS Website or contact the committee for clarification after the AGM

Editorial

Thanks to all those who have provided material for this newsletter.

Please keep it coming.

Gonzo Mark Lumley

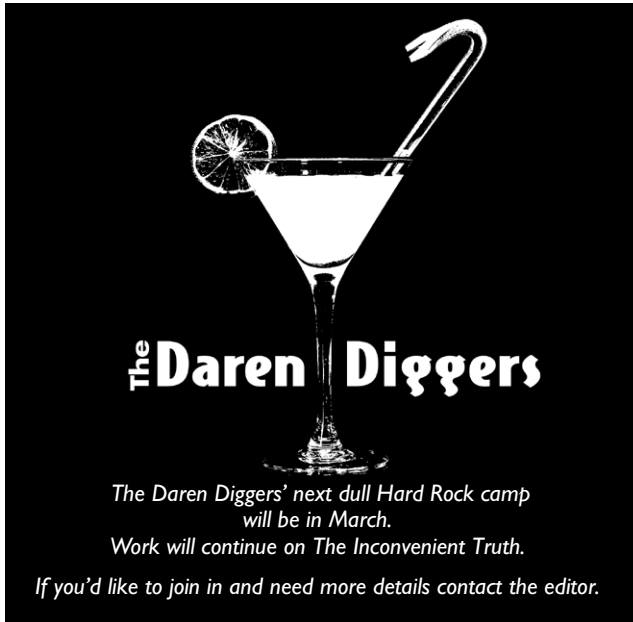
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Send text for your article as .doc or similar,
or simply send it as an email.

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



The Daren Diggers

The Daren Diggers' next dull Hard Rock camp
will be in March.

Work will continue on The Inconvenient Truth.

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

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Richard Dewsnap has been proposed by the committee for full membership

MCRA

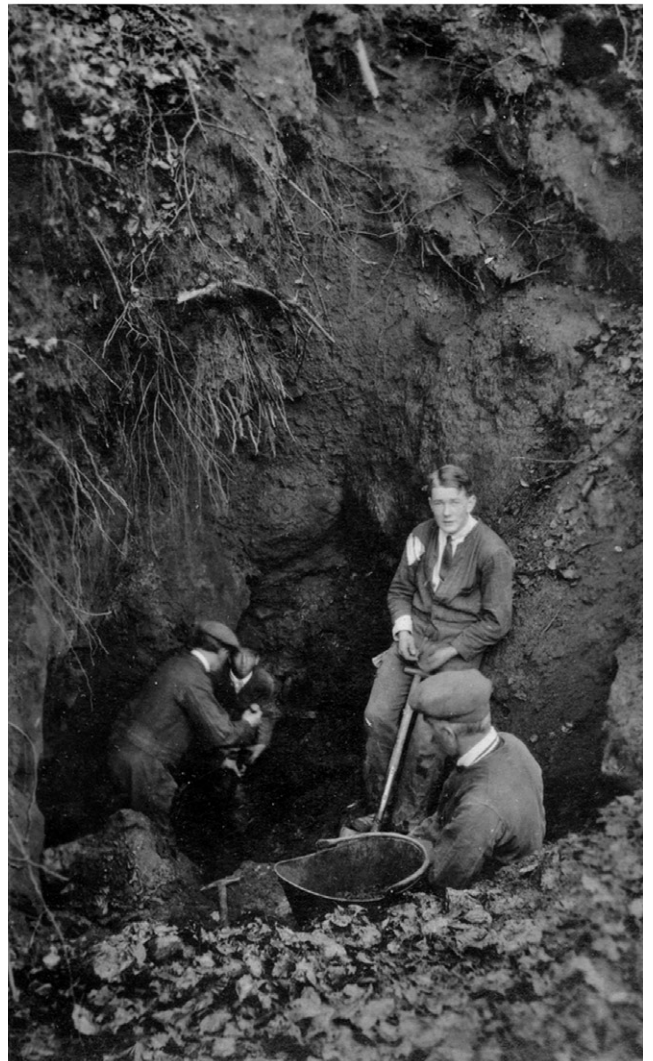
If you are interested in Mendip caving then check out the **Mendip Cave Registry and Archive**. There is a wealth of information on the site including a cave registry, bibliography, surveys, archive and history, not to mention a wonderful and ever-increasing collection of photographs. The site is managed by a number of enthusiastic Mendip stalwarts including our very own Matt (the badger) Voysey.

For more information visit
www.mcra.org.uk

Archive Hillgrove photos © MCRA



Digging at Hillgrove Swallet, 1923. From the Robert Ivens collection



Digging at Hillgrove Swallet, 1921. From the Robert Ivens collection

The Lot

2010

by Paul Tarrant

Enthused by Andy Heath's newsletter articles (see Volume 52 No. 1) on the caves of France, I decided to pay the Lot a visit in company with the South Wales Caving Club who were doing a family caving holiday to the region. Andy made comments that "As with so many areas of France you need to be a bit of a detective to find out what trips are worth doing" and this is so very true for this particular region, which incidentally is where the sport of caving was born with Martel's initial exploration of Padirac. My detective work provided no great wealth of information other than what Andy kindly passed on to me. However, we were gifted with the presence of the Groupe Speleo de Toulouse who kindly helped us out in providing information, locating entrances and getting access to some locked caves that we'd never known existed if left to our own devices. It certainly helped having SWCC Club members living in the region.

We centred ourselves on a campsite boasting average facilities on the D840 road at Issendolus near Gramat. The purchase of the Padirac IGN map indicated hundreds of gouffres, grottes and igues, the local name for caves and swallets and shafts. Most however have no access due to the proprietors prohibitions. The countryside of the Lot is a tree-covered limestone plateau cut naturally by the major rivers of the Lot and Dordogne. The caves consist of resurgences which formed along the banks of the rivers where they cut down, or up on the plateau where shafts up to 100 metres depth have formed or swallet caves which carry their streams down, via gentler ways. These are the caves we explored: -

Pictures courtesy of Jules Carter, SWCC

Saut de Pucelle

This was an incredibly easy cave to find as the entrance is shown on the map alongside the main Gramat – Figeac N140 road. There's parking in a lay-by. The river entrance was dry and there is a general understanding that you don't go down this cave if the stream is running into the entrance. On the occasion of our visit it was bone dry. Andy described the cave having a gloomy atmosphere and I must confess to not feeling this myself. Indeed any such feelings were dispelled by the bubbling stream way which was encountered after several hundred metres of large dry galleries.

The stream was a total joy and the traverse of it was just like Swildon's Hole. There are parts where we put ladders and ropes down to either assist the descent or our eventual climb back to surface. There were far too many drops and short pitches to recall but all were immense good fun and easy to descend. We stopped when our gear ran out at a 10 metre pitch. I used one of those super cheap ASDA wet suits (£19.99) and found it more than adequate for the trip although you do look like a Power Ranger due to the multi coloured panels. This trip was a good start to the holiday.

Grotte de Foissac

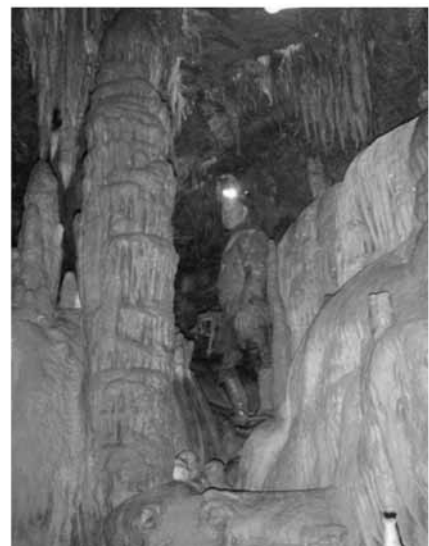
This cave is south of Figeac and is part of a popular show cave complex run by cavers for the local commune. Some of us had to get up ridiculous early to make contact with a caver working at the show cave. He showed us the entrance to the cave, literally 100m on the left-

hand side of the road leading away from the show cave car-park. He also gave us the all important direction to find a recently engineered shaft the Puit Chivardy. This was located by turning right at the show cave and driving along a country lane until a T-junction was reached.



Puit Chivardy – Note superb gate with Jean-Marc & PT in attendance

The obvious capped shaft was in a field adjacent to the D87 road at the T-junction. The shaft is not gated [the lock's broken!] and this dropped via a 17m pitch, tight at the top, to a ridiculously muddy streamway which prompted a few howls of derision from our party. One was clad in traditional SWCC OFD2 exploration gear of T-shirt and shorts, based it had to be said, upon sound advice provided by our French chums, that the cave was very warm. However, this streamway gave on to a continuation which became quite pleasant after some initial crawling.



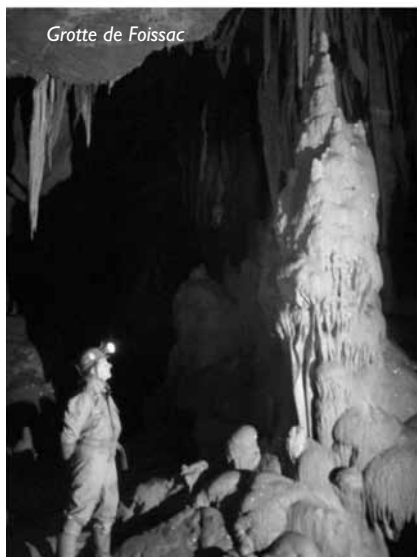
Grotte de Foissac

A choke on the left-hand side of the passage provided the way in and had us making reasonably quick progress as we splashed along the stream passage which was very well decorated.

The area of Foissac was apparently subject to earthquake movements which separated the showcase section of the cave from the river system. It also sealed in people living in the show cave about 6000 years ago and their skeletons can be observed in the show cave.

We progressed along this streamway until we met our other party who had come into the cave via the roadside entrance we noted earlier. On looking at how muddy we were, they passed up the offer to go out via the Puit Chivardy and instead tagged on to our group as we intended to look at some big chambers that Jean-Mark and Michelle, our two French guides remembered seeing on a previous trip earlier in the year.

These chambers were huge and soared up above the stream way. Formations in this sector were truly magnificent and some of the biggest I've seen. We eventually got to the best chamber which boasted massive stal flows and stalagmites, some of which appeared to be climbed by vandals unknown. We saw no evidence of taping and this must be considered a bad thing as these formations, massive though they are, will deteriorate in due course if not positively protected. We saw some mind-blowing stuff including some coffee pots stals which have formed with differing water levels so that the stalagmite resembles old style coffee pots as were used in the old Wild West of America.



Grotte de Foissac

After satiating ourselves on the splendid views, we needed to carry on with our journey to the second entrance and this is where the fun began. Jean-Mark from Toulouse led us off to the right, away from where we had entered the chamber.

After a few wriggly crawls we seemed to return to the same place and then Jean-Mark revealed that he had done the trip only once before and was having memory problems. However my initial fears that we would have to backtrack to the Puit Chivardy proved groundless as we eventually saw tell-tale signs that the entrance was near by—we merely followed the draft and the flies and moths on the walls and returned to a sunlight drenched entrance. This was a good trip that had taken us five hours.

Igue de Saint Sol

This is an interesting place situated very near the village of Le Cave. The cave was located by following a track going uphill to the right of a small cemetery on a bend in the D3023 before the village of Le Cave. The three French guys I was with drove along the track for a hundred metres, leaving a walk of about the same distance up the hill. The cave is off to the right of this track and about 30 metres up the hill with the large entrance being fenced off.

The daylight pitch was roped by the French who were slightly unimpressed that I insisted we used 10mm SWCC rope for the 66m daylight shaft. There was no way I was happy to prussik on their 8mm stuff! Andy H. made reference to the difficulty in finding the

P-hangars at the shaft mid-point but our pitch rigger Didier swiftly bottomed the cave using the spits at the far end of the pitch head. The descent was easy and the pitch had three rebelays which dropped us into a huge passage. There was a considerable quantity of rusting steel containers lying on the floor. My initial thoughts as to why this rubbish had not been removed were soon dispelled when it was explained to me that they were the containers used by the RAF to parachute weapons to the local maquis during the dark days of France's occupation during the war. Apparently the containers

were hidden in the cave. The containers took on a new, important significance. Vive la Resistance!

The passage off to the right was large and pretty with massive formations. There was a large slab table and 10 chairs set around it in the middle of the passage and this is sometimes used for New Year's Eve speleo parties. The French are obviously following the Daren Hard Rock Café lead!

The end of the passage revealed an impressive array of clay models. Some were extremely rude. There were two clay dogs doing things that two dogs would do, as well as models of castles, Bosch drills, willie's and a host of other things. Our way was blocked by a huge clay devil sporting a trident and an unfeasibly large appendage. The source of the clay blocks the way to the La Cave show cave which is 100m distant. The passage directly aligns on the show cave but no one will dig this through as to do so will guarantee the loss of the St. Sol to cavers.

We returned back to the shaft and carried on to the left-hand branch of the passage. This was equally large and spectacularly adorned with formations. The passage just seemed to suddenly end. The return back up the shaft was slow for me but was uncomplicated. This was a brilliant short trip to do in the morning. My French friends Didier, Michelle and Jean-Mark asked if I was happy to drive around a bit to find a suitable place to wash our caving gear. We then spent the next hour-and-a-half driving along the lanes and tracks that bordered the Dordogne. I never could establish why we never stopped at the multitude of suitable spots to stop and wash the gear but it was nevertheless an amazing trip back to the campsite via extremely scenic tracks and roads that your average tourist would never find.

Event de Miradol

This was one of those places we would never have descended if it had not been for the help of our French friends. They managed to get the key to the cave from a caver working for the tourist steam railway that runs from Martel to Gluges. There were slightly bemused looks from the rest of us when we were handed train timetables. It seemed that we would

have to be aware of these trains on accessing and exiting the cave. Hmmm!

We changed by the side of the single-track railway. One party was already in the cave when we arrived and one other group of our bods was just descending the cave entrance in the cutting along from where we changed. At this point a train emerged from a tunnel at the end of the cutting, clanking and filling the cutting with steam and smoke.



*'Bu**er caving I fancy a kip!'*

Ian and Tim (SWCC bods) joined me to descend the cave with our intention being to descend the cave down to the stream way at 70 metres depth from the cutting. Tim had not done any SRT before so this was a good opportunity for him to try it out.

A short pitch down from the railway cutting dropped for about 8m to a rebelay and a further drop of 17m. At the bottom of the shaft we met three of the people who descended earlier including an ex-CSS member Steve Tomlin. They had decided the place was a bit too bijou for their personal comfort and too high in CO2 levels. So what were we about to find? Basically, small passages that had been blasted and were very reminiscent of the Long Crawl in Dan Yr Ogof.

We could see why the others were not keen to push on. However, we continued on downwards dropping small pitches until we reached another deeper shaft of 12m leading to further small blasted crawls. This was not really what we'd come to France to see!

Then the passage took on a muddy floored aspect. Traverse lines

led us along a larger passage which then broke into the mainstream via an eight metre rope climb. Going downstream for about 150m led to a sump. A climb up to the right led to a bedding plane crawl which gave us access to a huge passage in the same proportions as Daren Cilau's Time Machine. We came up against another sump which had provided the way in from the Source de Briance on the banks of the Dordogne. We turned back at this point and retraced our steps back to the pitch and quickly looked at the upstream section which continued for about 25 metres with chest deep water.

We did not go far up the muddy passage leading to the continuation of the streamway but instead chose to return to the surface. You can explore a further kilometre of wet cave up to the top sump.

This return journey was made very interesting when a train went past just as I was 3m from the entrance and on the rope. The talking of excited tourists could be heard from the carriages and the clanking of the train made for a slightly alarming experience as the whole cave passage resonated and shuddered. Fortunately, the strong outward draft ensured the cave's air-quality did not deteriorate with the smoke and fumes. Again we returned to a sun-drenched Dordogne.



Pete managed to wake up in time.



Mirandol Streamway

Grotte de Jonquille

This was a fascinating cave. Not only did the cave form part of one of the area's longest caves, and not only was the entrance a small nondescript entrance in the middle of a wood, the car-park was also a well-known dogging site, much frequented by members of the area's gay fraternity. So we did not hang around when we got changed! Michel decided to put on a pontonniere. I must explain what this is. Basically, it is a long set of thigh waders that stretch all way up to chest level and is made out of thin latex. It should be worn over a fleece suit and under an overall. It made Michel look like a huge Durex! Some of the characters lurking furtively in the woods looked a bit excited at this. Michel must have picked up on their interest since he then decided to change into more conventional caving gear.

The entrance to the cave is a small manhole cover in the woods with zero indicators that this is caving country. The first two metres of the cave are oil drum lined and provide a snug fit when descending – so much so that one of our party decided not to descend. After that a short drop of three metres led to a cramped rebelay and then a 15m continuation of the pitch ensued. There was a deviation set to avoid rub points. The pitch dropped us into a high rift passage 3m wide. It was well adorned with gour pools, large stalagmites but was extremely muddy. We traversed this for about 300 metres until we reached the junction with the streamway. We chose to go upstream along a passage that was heavily eroded and fretted with much sharp rock. This section of cave reminded me of the Lakes section of Dan Yr Ogof, except that this bit went on for about half kilometre, and seemed on the way in to be an energetic obstacle course & we followed our French chums who were dead keen to stay out of the water.

The stream way's characteristic then changed. The stream passage altered quite radically to a beautiful phreatic ellipse about six to seven metres wide and four metres high. The stream snaked between sand and gravel banks and continued in the manner for about half a kilometre more until we met the inevitable nice looking sump which signalled the

turnaround to retrace the passage. We had a food stop a la mode Francaise and our French chums brought out a veritable feast which they kindly shared with us after mocking our meagre and sad looking chocolate bars. They had a point, as chocolate grain bars did not really compare with the array of cheeses, dried sausages and Tupperware containers full of gnocchi.

The way back to the entrance seemed to take much less time and soon we were back at the cars changing and providing the furtive lurkers in the woods with a further spectacle of naked flesh! This was a great trip taking five hours to complete.

Apart from the caving, we did the obligatory canoeing trip on the Dordogne and also visited the show caves of Padirac and Pechemerle. The former is an excellent trip down a 70 metre deep entrance shaft and boasting a boat trip along the well decorated galleries of the cave. The latter was an extremely well decorated cave boasting magnificent cave paintings from 10 to 26,000 years ago. This place is a must to visit and well worth a slight inconvenience to making a booking in advance (Only 700 people a day are allowed down there).

There are hundreds of other caves in the region to explore. I know Andy Heath mentioned that finding data on them is difficult but if you can gain help from local clubs then there would seem to be endless possibilities for other trips that will keep you fully occupied for months.

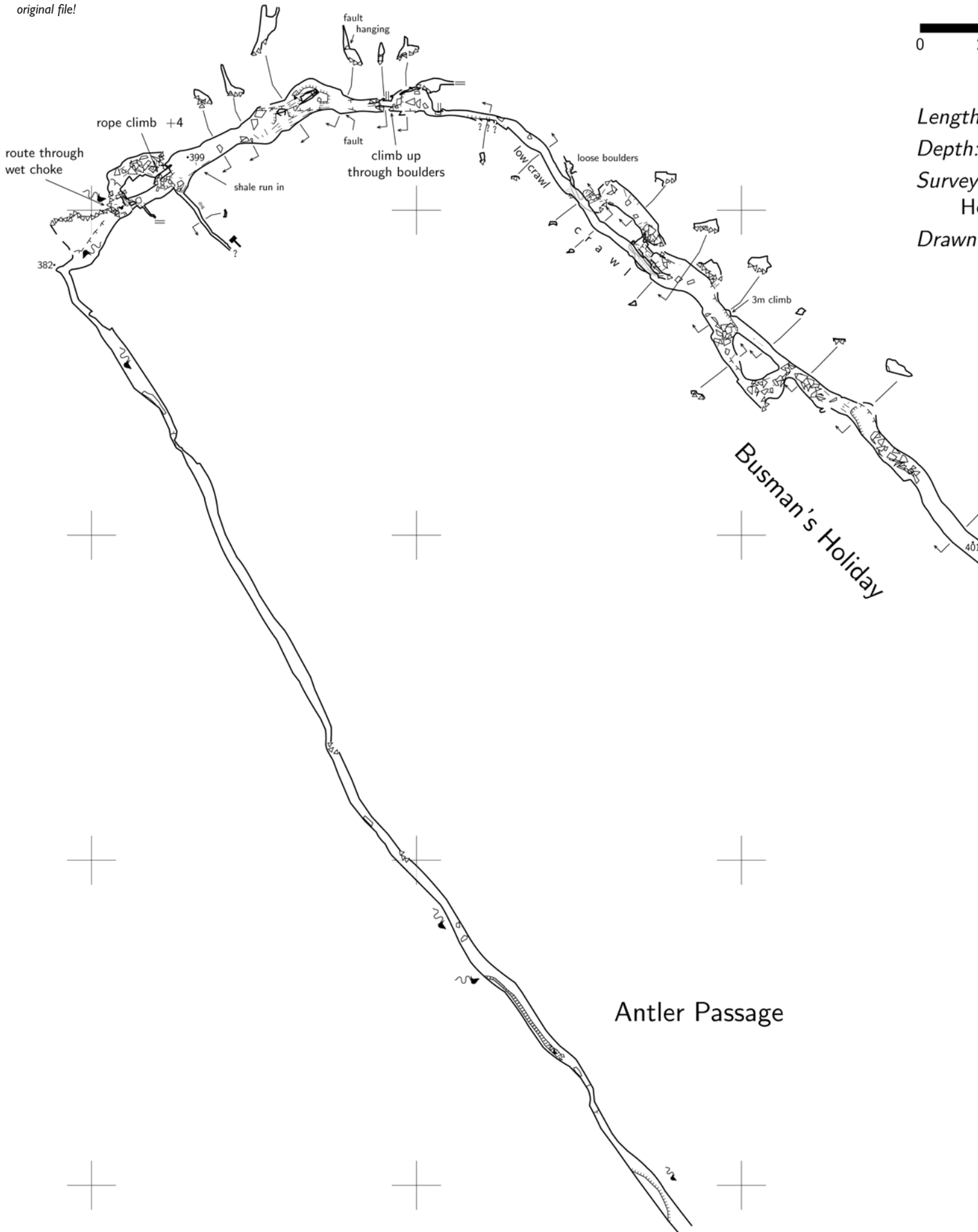


Back by popular demand
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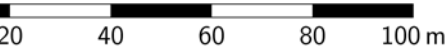
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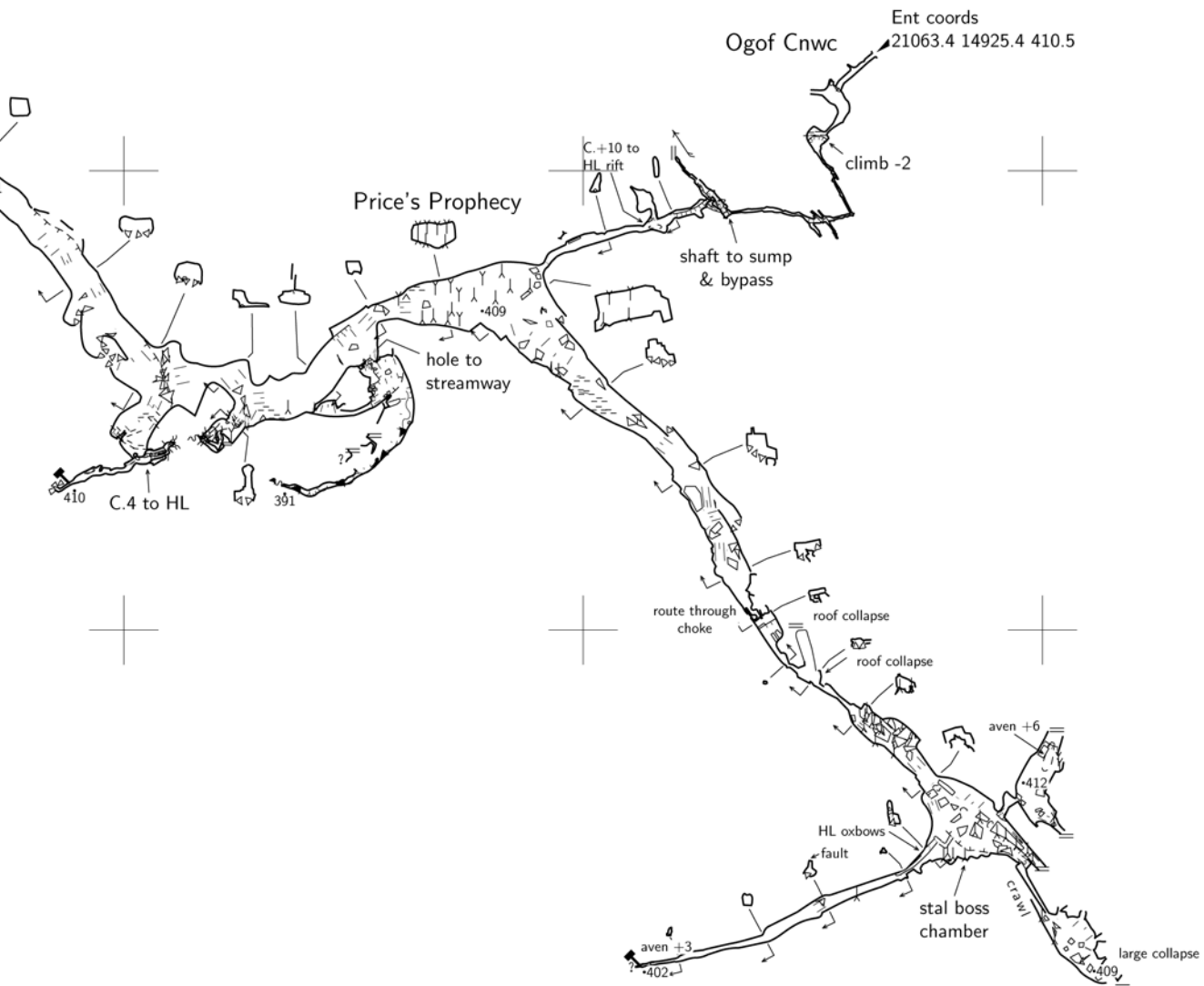


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ed by: John Stevens, David Stevens, Mike Read, John Cooper, Adrian Fawcett, Andy Snook, Andy
eath, Arthur Millett, David Ramsay, John Wilkinson 1984-2010

by: John Stevens 2010



Saye's Hole

– in search of the backdoor to Gough's Cave

by Duncan Price

Visitors to Cheddar Gorge can hardly fail to notice the large, imposing cave entrance just up the gorge from what is now the National Trust shop. This is Saye's Hole - named after to a Bristol Waterworks employee who used to live in a nearby cottage, now demolished. In the 19th century, it was known as The Hall or Cheddar Hall, and Strachey in 1736 mentions that it was "often a habitation for strolling players." At the back of the large entrance shelter, a tube gives access to a lake below which is a short section of the Cheddar River Cave.

An excellent publication – the Somerset Sump Index – gives the details of exploration of this site. I have long held a desire to have a look at the passage as the description of the underwater passage was confusing. The problem here is that Saye's Hole is both a Winter bat roost and also a Summer breeding site so that activities can only take place when the big moths are not sleeping or fornicating. A chance meeting with Martin Grass and the local bat guy at Fairy Cave Quarry reminded me of my aspirations and a recce was arranged for Monday 20th September 2010 in the company of John Volanthen (co-diver) with the assistance of Jacky Ankerman, Lee Hawkswell and Martin.

John and I got changed into drysuits outside the cave and donned the rest of our gear underground. Beyond the roomy entrance a gated rift leads to the dive base in a lake chamber with assorted Dexion beams supporting the remains of a project to do radon sampling of the River Yeo. I dived first, down a narrow slot into a low bedding which closed off almost immediately downstream. A low, grovelly route with parallel diving lines lead off upstream and I soon reached the terminus at a vertical upwards slot in a wide area where I thought that leverage with a crow bar might make progress. My exit was quite worrying at one point when I failed to pass a particularly low bit but I eventually managed to

Duncan Price & John Volanthen in Saye's Hole Photo: Martin Grass



back out. John dived second and confirmed my optimism for progress.

A week later on September 27th we were back with just Martin and also Chris Castle. This time we thrutched to the sump fully kitted-up. Mindful of the minor epic from the last dive, I let John go first and he spent 40 minutes examining the potential for progress. The promising ascending blocked rift was discounted and instead John dug out a pit to the right of the end to expose a tight descending rift from which the water appeared to come. I dived second, and peered into the route which would require substantial excavation to enlarge. Stacking space is at a premium:

putting spoil some distance from the dig face would be advised at the start to make life easier – there is not much room though. We decided that it was probably not a good project, though in retrospect another visit is worth it. I dispelled a few ghosts on exit, finding the route out easier than last time. Both dives were conducted in very low water – both the First and Second Feeders being dry. The downstream route from Gough's Cave ends in a tight upwards rift which was last visited by the pair of us in November 2007 and hopes are high that a connection might be forged.

We'll have to wait until late Spring 2011 to go back... those bloody moths!

Caving (sort of) in Sri Lanka

by Andy Watson

My caving trip started with a passing comment regarding caving to a colleague who I work with in Sri Lanka. It was quite a surprise when my colleague, Wasantha suggested that we should go out on the Sunday during my visit. He contacted his uncle and asked if he knew of a cave that we could visit. His uncle's father had visited a cave a couple of times many years ago and roughly knew of its location.

We set off at 5.30 in the morning in a work 4x4 Jeep that we had borrowed for the day and headed for his uncle's house, which was an old British survey house handed over to the shrunken government at the time of independence. It was built in 1890 and had a great deal of character about it.

When we arrived the uncle's wife had prepared as much English food as she could for breakfast including sliced white bread, Bernard Matthews turkey burgers or some equivalent, tomato ketchup from Heinz and of course the obligatory fish curry.

We headed off with myself and Wasantha in the front seats the grandfather, the uncle, and his daughter piled into the back. The younger son was not allowed to come as he had to attend a Buddhist Sunday school. We drove for about 50 more kilometres on reasonably good roads through a small town where we stopped and looked at a gemstone mine and met the miner. We then turned off onto the back roads which were very narrow, hilly and had several hairpin bends. As the road got narrower and rougher some 7-8 kilometres from the main road we then came across a sign which was an old Sri Lankan tourist board sign pointing towards the cave. The road got decidedly dodgy with large parts of concrete being washed away and it was only just wide enough for the Jeep with one wheel on the vegetation and the other hanging over a precipice in some areas, we were descending deeply into ravine and clearly this was right on the edge

of the rainforest and jungle.

We ended up among a few very poor houses and driving adjacent to a dried up riverbed and were greeted by some villagers and upon questioning found that we were in the right place to visit the cave. There was no running water and no electricity in the village at all and the houses were built using bricks which they made themselves from digging clay out of the ground and then putting them in a kind of charcoal oven. I have to say this was rural poverty to the extreme; the staple diet appeared to be rice from the little paddy field and bananas. The small kiosk at the end of the track sold Pepsi-Cola in very old looking bottles, small stunted bananas and onions. There was a school building which had 20 pupils ranging from 4 to 18.

After some discussions in Sinhalese a local man and his friend turned up with milk bottles with burning rags and a very old and fairly ineffective Tilley lamp which was obviously from the man's house. We walked the 400 m down to the cave; the temperature was some 35°C and the humidity was probably 80 to 90%.

The cave itself was at the bottom of the valley and as we approached

a 4-5 foot alligator slipped off the rocks into the waters.

In the cave there were clearly a large number of bats. We climbed down a vertical cliff to gain access to the sinkhole and the main chambers; it was rather hairy and slippery particularly to the grandfather and the young girl.



Photo: Andy Watson

We made our way in with the burning milk bottles and climbed down into the base of a large chamber (30-40 metres high) which had many bats flying around, some flow stone on one wall with a waterfall and a rather large number of cockroaches on the bat droppings some of which were also dropping on me. We went in about 50 metres before we reached a flooded area; I was told I could swim if I wanted, I politely declined.

I survived, a bit smelly and dirty!

Guhawa Coheada means **where is the cave** if you ever visit!



Photo: Andy Watson

Wet to Wookey 24 – an update

by Duncan Price

I like diving Wookey Hole – perhaps my favourite underwater excursion is to enter the cave at the Resurgence and dive upstream to Chamber 22. It is a trip that I've done many times: in 2009, Claire Cohen, "MadPhil" Rowsell and I repeated the climbs in Chamber 22 via this route as part of their CDG tests. Last year, I did the dive a couple of times with various tourists. Unfortunately to get to Chamber 24 one has to do a modicum of caving and endure the muddy squalor of the flood overflow route of Chamber 23 and some static sumps. It would be far nicer to flipper stoutly the entire distance...

Progress to follow the course of the River Axe upstream of Chamber 22 is the subject of a chapter in Wookey Hole: 75 years of cave diving & exploration – I had last dived there in 2004 and halted exploration at a cross-rift which seemed to be as far as I wanted to go. A return was always on my mind but held in abeyance while the Wookey book was in preparation so as not to make it out of date. My hand was forced, however, by an email from Adrian Hall who had been to the end of the line here after curtailing a trip to Wookey 24. He was diving with Claire and had used one of her small tanks in combination with one of his own to take a gander at this tight and intimidating passage. In the process of doing so he'd lost part of Claire's regulator and made his escape on a single set. With the offer of a modest reward for retrieval of the missing item and

the prospect of competition, the time was right for a rematch.

My return to battle took place on the 24th October 2010 in the company of Dave Garman and Gary Jones. While the others dived to 22 to romp around, I continued exploration of the inlet passage. The cross-rift turned out to be a slot in the roof following the strike for 4 m to a pillar of rock dividing the passage. This was passed to a more roomy pocket in the passage whereupon the inclined bedding plane which forms the passage was observed to be narrowing in width. The route was still in the flow and shallow (ca. -3-4 m). Claire's exhaust shroud from her Poseidon Cyclon second stage was recovered around 5-10 m from the previous end of the line, another 7 m being laid on this visit. A couple of pints were put behind the bar for me in the Hunters' as a consequence.

On that dive I spent nearly an hour up the passage which is like the Traverses in Eastwater but totally underwater. The problem was that over the course of exploration the lines were a mix of qualities and not accurately tagged. A couple of lunchtimes were used up at work in the gas cylinder store doing a good job to marking up 150 m of line with numbered tags every 5 m.

The next dive took place on 4th December – John Volanthen went off to repair the line from Wookey 24 to Wookey 25 which has been in a sorry state since before the pushing dives in 2004-5. I headed up the inlet in 22 with

a full line reel and relined the first 100 m leaving the line reel in situ with 50 m of new line left. I used a small stage cylinder to get to the start of the inlet just below the start of the branch line in 22 and my return was hampered by the fact that I did not have a very good knife for cutting the old line out (I removed the last 35 m of line originally laid by Mike Thomas – who found the way on – but the rest of the sump has both old and new lines cable tied together).

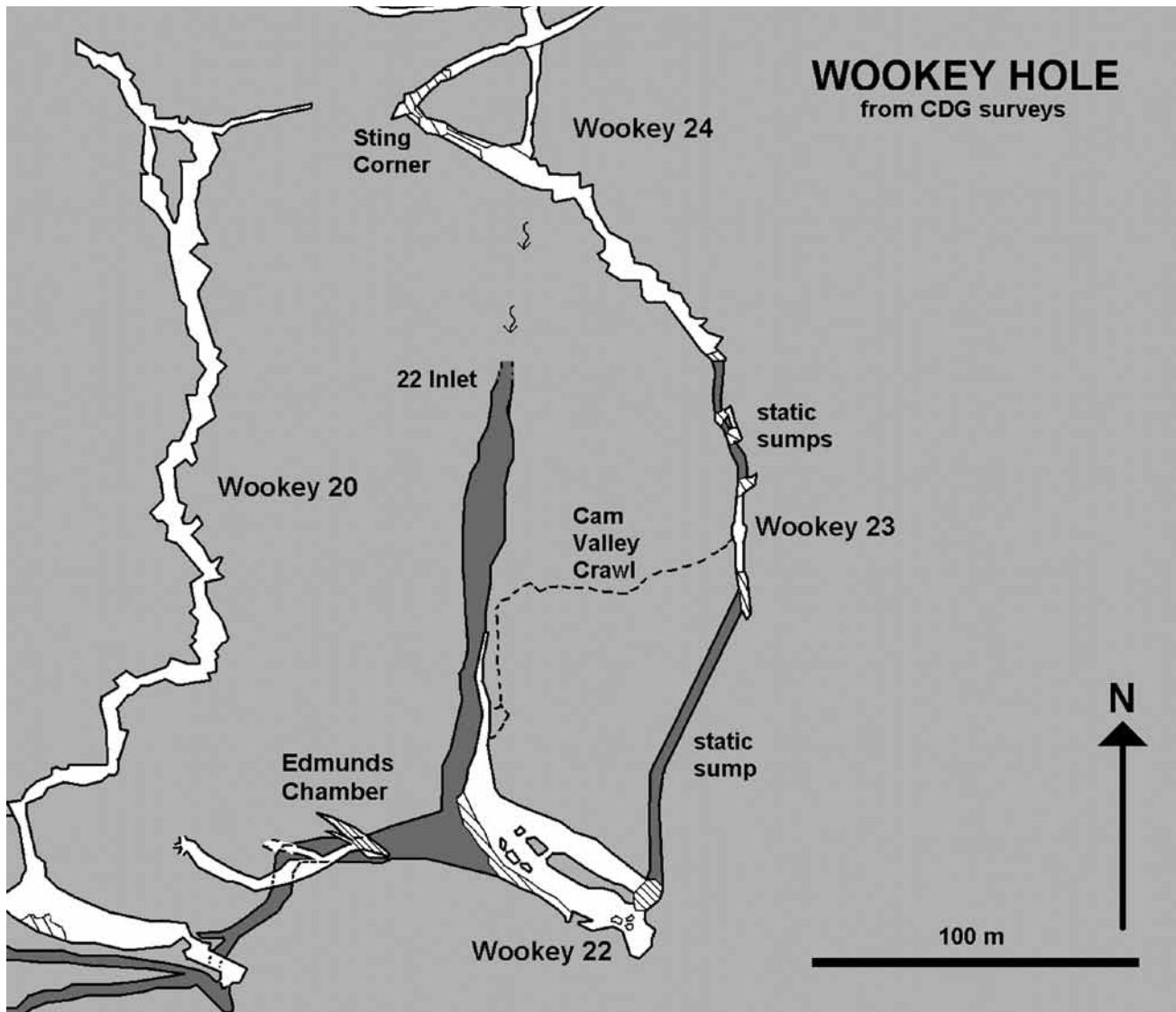
The next dive to place on 12th December, spurred on by the need to remove the line reel and use it for another project. Rob Franklin dived with me to 22 to test out gear. I continued re-lining the 22 Inlet passage, reaching the "end" at exactly 140 m from the junction. The remaining 10 m of line was loaded onto the existing reel and belayed securely. Air margins, lack of bog pipe stemples and my inclination did not permit further exploration. The current terminus is about 60 m from the downstream sump in 24. On exit we retired to the Resurgence where I launched some water bottle rockets underwater out of the pool and up into the large cave opening. Rob experienced post dive tooth failure whilst eating supper: half a molar on the right side fragmented, dropped out and was swallowed. The tooth had previously been filled and he suspects that descents to 20+m were responsible. The tooth gave him no grief during the dive.

That's the state of play at present. I'm a bit "Wookeyed out"

right now and am inclined to defer to Adrian Hall (who has done a lot of pushing in the similarly tight confines of Malham Cove Rising in Yorkshire) to have the next go. Equipment configuration is a bit of a compromise: a diver wearing small cylinders and a wetsuit can

make rapid progress to the end but I have adopted to dive in comfort with larger tanks and a drysuit. A reappraisal of the other end from Wookey 24 is desirable since Mike Barnes reports reaching a depth of 12 m in the downstream sump (below Sting Corner) whereas the

active passage upstream of 22 is much shallower. I had a look at the Sting Corner Sump many years ago while waiting for Rick Stanton & John Volanthen to push upstream. On one trip I lost a diving torch to the river and hope one day to recover it.



Pottering About on Mendip

by
John Cooper

Charterhouse Cave

Saturday 11th December 2010.

Andrew Atkinson (UBSS), Pete Hann (WCC), Ali Moody (WCC) and self. All down to Sand dig where we cleared spoil then started another set of holes. 5¼ hours.

Saturday 15th January 2011.

A four week gap caused by snow and ice over Christmas and New Year. Andrew Atkinson, Pete Hann, Ali Moody, Pete Moody (UBSS), John Walsh (WCC) and self. PM and I cleared spoil in the Riser dig whilst AM & JW visited the 2008 end before joining us. AA & PH banged Sand Dig tunnel before PH joined us whilst AA left the cave. Cave rather wet today. 4 hours.

Saturday 22nd January 2011.

Andrew Atkinson, Pete Hann, Ali Moody and self. Clearing spoil from last weekend's bang and drilling some more holes. 4 hours.

Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet

Thursday 25th November 2010.

Andrew Atkinson, Ali Moody and myself. Continued on from our aborted trip of 2 weeks ago. Completed the top level of Bone Chamber and Mitchell's Chamber then down Rocky Horror Pitch to the lower levels. A couple of loops including past the Wedding Cake and Secret Garden before arriving back at bottom of the pitches. At least one more trip required, it's quite difficult surveying everywhere in a boulder choke of room size boulders! (It'll be even harder for AA to draw it up!) 5 hours.

Gough's Cave

Wednesday 22nd December 2010.

Antoinette Bennett, Tony Boycott (UBSS), Clive Owen (UBSS), Duncan Price and self met up in the café. Intention was for DP to reline Sump 1A (from Dire Straits to Lloyd Hall) with a tagged line and then survey it. None of the party were very familiar with the cave so it wasn't the most direct route to Dire Straits but eventually the bottom of the dry rift was reached using a 25ft ladder, DP was kitted up with a full 200m reel of tagged line and off he went. The rest of us then took a devious route to the top of Lloyd Hall (having decided the sloping bedding was too tight to be the route I was forced to retreat from Boulder Chamber). Eventually met DP in Lloyd Hall and brought out the line reel and remaining 40m of line leaving him to survey back out. Back to Dire Straits to retrieve all the kit and out to the café again. Lots more surveying to do. 2 hours.

Hunters' Lodge Inn Sink

Saturday 8th January 2011.

As Duncan Price had enough porters for his Gough' cave dive I joined a Wessex Caving Club trip down HLIS instead. The party was lead by Jude Vanderplank and had Wayne Starsmore and Sarah Watson as well as myself. Having obtained the key from the landlord we descended the fixed iron ladder and grovelled down Pub Crawl into Happy Hour Highway. A gentle walk down to the walls of stacked deads was followed by a dug out climb down then up again to reach the top of Pewter Pot. We left the tackle here whilst we followed the main passage, Barmaids' Bedrooms, up until it petered out in tight bedding (left) or small dig (right). Back to Pewter Pot which we laddered with 50ft of ladder fixed to a big ring bolt. Although the ladder was 6ft short there were sufficient ledges to descend the bottom bit safely. Once everyone was down we crawled and then traversed Slops 1 & 2 into Broon Ale Boulevard. This was follow upwards until a sign warning of falling boulders was reached. Turned round and came out without investigating Drip Tray Sump.

Sidcot Swallet

Saturday 1st January 2011.

John Cooper and Alison Moody on a trip to check out the Mendip Underground description as part of the work preparing the new version – expected in a couple of years? A 20m handline was used to get AM down the Lobster Pot bypass whilst I used it on the easier Lobster Pot. Both ascended via the Lobster Pot, having not done the duck at the end (needed bailing) nor the tight wet slot leading to Waterfall Grotto and Garden of Eden. On the way out descended to check out the description for Purgatory, where a couple of sleeping bats were noted. 2½ hours.

Swildon's Hole

Sunday 5th December 2010.

John Cooper & Barry Weaver joined Alison Moody (WCC) and Martin Draper (novice) on an introduction trip to caving for Martin. In the Long Dry Way as far as the Twenty then out the Wet Way.

Sunday 2nd January 2011.

John Cooper & Barry Weaver joined Alison Moody (WCC) to carry Pete Glanville's birthday cake to the Old Grotto. Several other cavers carried in the plates, cups, champagne, helium cylinder and party balloons. Out then to wait on Priddy Green for Pete's arrival in his pink stretched limousine! By this time over 40 cavers assembled. Once Pete and family arrived he led over 30 cavers in to party. An excellent time was had by all.

Noticed John & Stephen Newton and Lee Hawkswell who included a detour to Sump 1 in their trip. Also noted (pointed out by Carmen) a lesser horseshoe bat roosting just above the drop down to the Wet Way!

Monday 3rd January 2011.

John Cooper and Paul Tarrant in the Dry Way, went and looked down the Black Hole, viewed Sump 2 and came out via Barnes Loop and the Wet Way. We took a rope for the 10 ft overhang but someone has already installed another one. Nobody else in the cave! Bat still there.

Sunday 23rd January 2011.

John Cooper & Barry Weaver to Sump 1. In the Dry Way and out the Long Dry.

Green Ore Swallet



Photo and information courtesy of Mendip Cave Registry & Archive (MCRA)

“Green Ore Mine (or Cave?) Mendip (100yds south of Green Ore cross-roads, 4 mile from Wells). A narrow shaft, of which there was no local mining record or tradition, opened out recently and was heard of by Platten. In March, 1933 he and two others were lowered in turn by rope 140 feet, the shaft being probably 250 feet in all. Platten, E E R Wigmore, Devenish and Bowsher, in September put over ladders and found a choke at 120 feet, probably owing to the curious throwing down the many large stones lying handy. An 80 foot communication by sound was cut off and a telephone would have been necessary.”

**For more information visit
www.mcra.org.uk**

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Sell Gill Hole
Photo: Steve Sharp

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