

CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 53 Nos. 7 & 8 July/August 2011



**Axbridge
Hill
Ochre
Cavern
Ogof
Cynnes**

**Diving in
Charterhouse**

**Sleepless
in Doolin**

Chelsea Spelæological Society NEWSLETTER

Volume 53
Nos. 7 & 8
July/August
2011
ISSN 0045-6381

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Cover Photo:
Matt Voysey in Doolin River Cave
Photo: Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley
Photos and illustrations not
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Rachel Dearden in Ogof Cynnes. Photo: Brendam Marris

Membership Subscriptions

Please send all subscriptions to:

Gary Jones
4 Glebe Close,
Brookham,
Leatherhead,
KT23 4DJ

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 subscription rates include BCA 'non-active caver' public liability insurance. BCA operates its insurance scheme on a calendar year basis and as an active caver you should pay **£11 per annum**, pro rata the number of quarters or part quarters remaining. **New members** wishing to join should send a cheque payable to **Chelsea Spelæological Society** along with their membership application form to the Secretary. Members who are renewing a subscription should send the payment to the Treasurer. The committee will normally consider voting provisional members up to full membership after 6 months by which time they should have become known.

Temporary membership can be extended for another 6 months, but only once, if a provisional member has been unable to become known socially and as an active caver within the club. Subscription rates of full members are adjusted for those who are members of several clubs so that their BCA insurance premium is paid only once.



Cave and Karst Science

Volume 38 Number 1 April 2011

Thematic Issue: Ogof Draenen – Britains longest cave

This special issue is of interest to anyone who has followed the exploration of this cave since the initial breakthrough in October 1994. It contains five papers detailing current thoughts as follows:-

Ogof Draenen: an overview of its discovery and exploration. By Ben Lovett.

Landscape evolution in southeast Wales: evidence from aquifer geometry and surface topography associated with the Ogof Draenen cave system. By Michael J Simms and Andrew R Farrant.

On the occurrence and distribution of bats in Ogof Draenen. By Rhian Kendall and Tim Guilford.

The hydrogeology of Ogof Draenen: new insights into a complex multi-catchment karst system from tracer testing. By Lou Maurice and Tim Guilford.

Ogof Draenen: speleogenesis of a hydrological see-saw from the karst of South Wales. by Andrew R Farrant and Michael J Simms.

If you wish to get your own copy download an order form P1 from the "Price List and Order Form P1" link on the following:

<http://caves.org.uk/payments/bca/forms/P1.html>

Cost is £8 plus £1 for UK postage.

Full details are on the order form.

Here's something to do while you're unable to go caving, you can play

The new Tomb Raider

game

"Unlike previous globe-trotting adventures, Tomb Raider now takes place on one island. Imagine the cramped network of caves combined with an Arkham Asylum overworld, and you're thinking along the right lines".

An 'Arkham Asylum overworld'? Isn't that Whitewalls?

Joe Duxbury

Membership

Welcome to four new provisional members:

Heidi Northover

Barley Turner

Avelina Kuenzel

Andrew Wright

Matt Dunn

Welcome back to **John Hunt** and **Tony Moulton**.

Editorial

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

If you are concerned that these newsletters are few and far between then please feel free to contribute.

Mark Lumley

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

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Ogof Cynnes 13/6/11

by Rachel Dearden

Another collector's item.

Keith and Brendan had been talking about Ogof Cynnes for a while, so we figured that it might lack charm and any kind of destination, however this wasn't a deterrent and so like obedient servants we turned up at Luigi's at 9.00 for breakfast. It was wet... very wet. We were all lacking motivation (although Richard and I weren't aware of why that was at that point). So, we sat in Luigi's and waited until the leak in the roof stopped... but it didn't. So then we drove to the middle of nowhere and sat in the car... but the weather wasn't going to break, so eventually we got changed anyway.

The carpark for Ogof Cynnes is located in the middle of absolutely nowhere. Ogof Cynnes itself is located even further into the middle of nowhere. We were ready to go. Brendan took out his GPS and we set off down a track following the direction arrow precisely, with the wind and rain hurtling in our faces. It was 2 km to the cave – cross-country. After a little while we saw a square of fencing and soon after Richard announced that the rain was now horizontally hitting his back. Then a car drove past on the near horizon. Keith exclaimed that he thought the cave was in the opposite direction. We all stood around, walked a little bit to the east and then to the west, turned the GPS off and then on, discussed the location of the road (which wasn't meant to be there), discussed the setting on the GPS and the meaning of the large directional arrow. We then had

a surreal (serious) conversation about whether the magnetic poles had flipped.... and then whether the GPS would be affected by this. After this discussion we changed the setting on the GPS, decided it was now giving the right answer and continued to walk, past the square of fence (actually the third passing of this fence) and continued across the soaking moor.

An hour after leaving the car we reached the cave, our average been was 2 km/h.... or was it more than 2 km via the route we took?

Ogof Cynnes means 'warm' cave. It was certainly warmer than the outside, especially once inside the entrance, which had a small waterfall cascading into it.

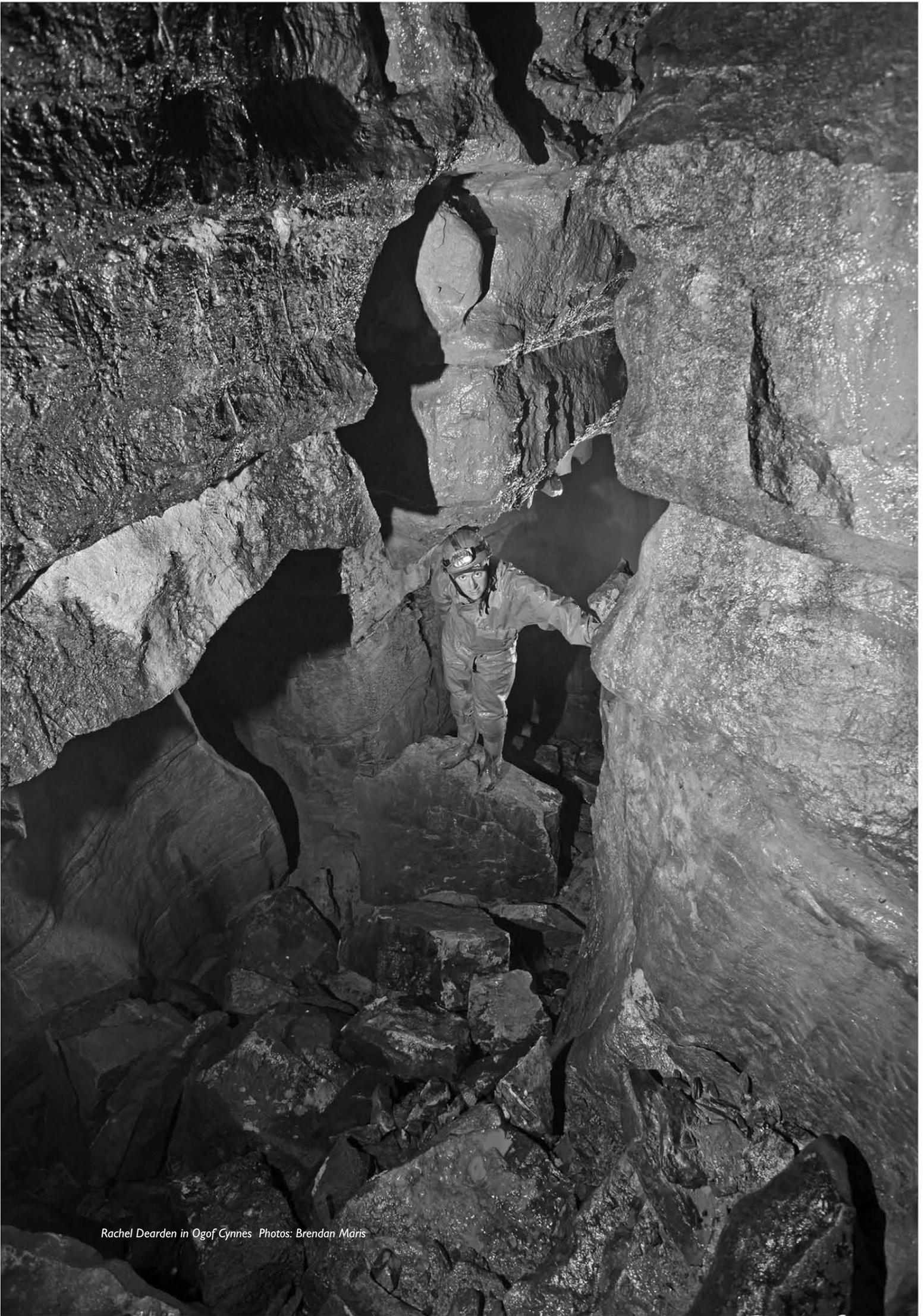
The entrance was quite fun. It entailed a tight squeeze which turned into an open-bottomed rift, which after a short time was blocked with a huge boulder that rocked. The route went through the tight squeeze, over the open-bottomed rift and then onto the rocking boulder before climbing down to proper passage. A little further on after encountering a fun down climb, we reached the Main Chamber.

From here we explored everywhere. None of the passages really went anywhere and none of them were particularly remarkable... that is except for the mud. There was some pretty good mud... that is, extremely glutinous, adhesive and well, phlllllurbt. It not only formed the most gelatinous swamps, but also quite structural walls, slimy

coatings, and well-modelled statues (and horns). The walls were perhaps the most amazing. We encountered one of 8 feet, one of 10 feet and one of 12 feet! These were rather fun to climb, but less fun to down-climb. Keith made a particularly hasty gravity-driven descent from one of them. Thankfully, Brendan's box of flashes survived the ordeal despite making a slightly faster descent (which ended with them falling into a rifty bit).

After a good look around we retreated towards the entrance and out of the 'warm' cave into the welsh rain and drizzle. The precipitation was welcome as our 30 minute walk (note, we took a relatively straight line route on the way back!) across the moor was sufficient to wash all the mud from our oversuits (aided by dips in a number of marshes). The weather was sufficiently wet that I even managed to wash the rest of my gear in the small stream that flowed down the road.





Rachel Dearden in Ogof Cynnes Photos: Brendan Maris

NSS Conventions

what are they all about?

by Joe Duxbury

I have been fortunate enough to have attended 6 Conventions of the (American) National Speleological Society (NSS), and offer here some descriptions and comparisons with our own Hidden Earth.

Firstly, of course, the Conventions are much larger – they last for a week and the attendance is around 1000. Our annual meeting is now run by the same organisation every year; the relatively small distances that have to be covered in Britain make this possible. But in the US, caving clubs (or ‘grottos’) across the country compete for the honour of holding the annual Convention. So it is run by a different team every year.

Most of the activities on offer are, understandably, the same. There are lectures (again, many more, running in several parallel sessions), salons (photographs,

films, artwork, cave ballads, etc.), and competitions. The first day’s proceedings are wound up with the Howdy Party, organized to welcome people from out of state, and further afield. The main attraction of this event is: free beer! The closing Banquet is open to all (it’s not an extra), and is the occasion at which the NSS announces its awards to its members who have given exceptional service to the Society.

The NSS is very conscious of its continuing membership, and to this end it has created the JSS – the Junior Speleological Society, and arranges activities at Convention for the children of its adult members. Whereas at HE, parents are expected to amuse their children themselves.

The biggest difference is that the longer duration of Convention allows caving trips to be indulged in. For the whole of the week, trips are arranged to nearby, and sometimes not-so-nearby (a 2-hour drive is not considered unreasonable), caves. Here is an opportunity for the local grottos to show off their best caves. Some trips are led by guides, others you can simply go, armed with a survey, and try and find your own way around. In addition to the trips held during Convention, there are week-long camps held before and after.

Another advantage of the week-long Convention is that there is time for a hot tub and a sauna to be constructed. These are very popular, and allow you to relax after a day’s hard caving.

And then there is ramen wrestling! Ingredients: a child’s inflatable swimming pool; lots of ramen (instant) noodles; a suitable amount of water; and young (usually) cavers of both sexes, with or without swimming costumes, possibly under the influence of alcohol. I’m not sure of the point of it all. There are definitely more onlookers than participants. Because it is very messy, this event has to be held outdoors. So it probably would not catch on for HE. Britain (Leek? Churchill?) in September is not Texas, or even Maine, in July!

At the moment caving in the US is severely disrupted by WNS (White-nose Syndrome), and having to take the decontamination measures into account makes the simple joy of going caving very difficult.

However, pick a year when the Convention is in an area that has plenty of good caves, TAG for example, or the Virginias, and go along and have a good time.

Crackpot Cave

Swaledale, Yorkshire
by John Stevens

In April this year, I took a week break in Wensleydale with Helga. On the wet days I was to be allowed out to have a roam around by myself. So on the first of only two wet days I found myself walking through low cloud, rain and strong winds down a valley in search of Crackpot Cave. Even though I had done a lot of caving in the Dales in the late 70's and early 80's, I had not been to this cave.

The Main Entrance is supposed to be a large unstable opening in the top of a boulder pile. What I found was an overhang that had collapsed in recent years and again this winter. I was not going to start and move large blocks around looking to open this entrance, when a small crawl in entrance was only some 12m away. This Kneewrecker Entrance is an easy crawl with a short spur back towards the main entrance choke. The crawl reaches a reasonable sized stream, (it was that day with all the rain) across a walk led to a choke with a route through it back to the main entrance, but I did not go any further this way.

I went back to the stream and followed it up through a couple of chambers with quite a few straws and wall calcite around. I passed a side passage going to a choke, to reach the third chamber. This chamber is dominated by a fine column. I took several gloves full of clean water from the stream and washed, muddy hand marks off it as best as I could. The way ahead split here, one was with the stream through a low airspace duck to a choke, not that day though. The other was left behind the column, up through a chamber with its floor covered in muddy stal bosses to reach a slope back down to the streamway beyond the choke. Near here is a plaque to someone, a good landmark for me as I explored the end chokes and digs. The longest was scaffolded in places and followed the water upstream to where it emerged through boulders. Another went to a loose upward choke that is meant to be associated with a surface collapse.

I now got my camera out and started making my way back. This was my first trip with my updated (re-leded) Scurion, taking it from around 400 lumens to around 700 lumens. This extra light gave me the chance to get some reasonable solo shots. So if you have an old Scurion P4, then it might be worth spending £20 to upgrade the leds. <http://ukcaving.com/board/index.php?topic=11049.0> gives a step by step guide by Biff to doing this. This upgrade uses a bit less power than the old leds so battery life is a bit longer and you get a lot more light. Scurion will also upgrade the leds and other bits of a P4 to make it roughly the same as a 700 but for quite a few quid more.

I had good fun setting the shot up and then quickly getting in the photo as the self timer beeped away. On exit it was still raining and as I sorted my stuff out ready for the walk back up hill, I tapped my camera box. It slid and tumbled down the hill, I chased after it and managed to stop it before it reached the swollen stream to get washed away. I slowly climbed 20m back up the slope and checked the camera was OK. The box had done a good job at protecting it, so I then carefully picked my way up the next slippery slope and back to the car. A pleasant two hour tour of a good cave to practise photograph in. It is well used by caving groups and some damage is evident but still very nice.



James Hall Over Engine Mine to Speedwell Caverns (Saturday) and Hillocks Mine (Sunday) 4-5 June 2011

Participants: The Voyseys, Andy Heath, Chris Tomlin

by Chris Tomlin

An early start on the Sat, on the road before 9AM. Things must be serious. On we went up to Rowter Farm, Andy got the key and paid the fees (£2 a head, better value than Speedwell). Kitting up we toddled off to the hole and Andy was volunteered to rig. Nice one. He did a good job too.

Turns out I was the only one of us four that hadn't done James Hall or Speedwell before. James Halls starts with a 50m mineshaft that, for an engine shaft, seems narrow and is a tiny bit off vertical (unlike say the Engine Shaft in Knotlow Mine which is as straight as gravity). At the bottom it is then a long straight trudge along a narrow rift under a lot of stacked deads to Bi*ch Pitch and that pitch is just the same rift - really a worked-out lead vein - continuing downwards. At the bottom things are a little more interesting with a few artefacts in The Workshop. Below there the place opens out into the tremendous Leviathan Pitch which seems all the bigger after the endless narrow rift that precedes it. It's certainly great to swing around a bit on the rope rather than sliding down a narrow rift where the SRT kit finds new and painful ways to jam itself. Leviathan has been heavily modified though, first by the miners who dug all around in it and later by cavers who have installed debris nets, dams and a fair length of pipe to carry the water away, leaving a lovely dry airy pitch. There is some loose rock around still, we had to do some gardening on the way down.

At the bottom of Leviathan there is a very heavy-duty scaffolded shaft leading into Speedwell Caverns. Contrary to what I was telling the others, James Hall was in fact explored/dug from the engine shaft downwards, the breakthrough into Speedwell occurring at the bottom of Leviathan (it was the Assault Course/Pilkington's Caverns that were explored upwards from Speedwell). According to Descent #126, James Plumtre probably descended this same mine to Speedwell in the late 1700s. It was most likely a working mine then, how different a trip that must have been. We certainly saw plenty of old stemples in the rifts and pitches, going down Leviathan on wooden ladders with lanterns must have been something!

Going down some awkwardly-spaced fixed ladders, you emerge in Speedwell Main Stream which is a mud-covered canyon at that point. We went upstream and visited the beautiful deep sumps at the Main Rising and the Bathing Pool and spotted Secret Sump (apparently 40m deep although it looks like a puddle). We also saw the miners' graffiti and headed all the way up to Cliff Cavern where new-looking fixed SRT ropes go a long way up into the gloom.

Returning downstream from the James Hall connection we had a good look at the show cave gate - pretty solid that - then down the fixed stainless steel ladder at the Bung (an 8m high dam that keeps water levels up high enough for boats to be used in the Speedwell showcave) and down Bung

Streamway. Water levels were so low that The Whirlpool was just a deep pool rather than a mini-Niagara as the others told me it usually is.

Bung Streamway was hard going. The water flow in there was so turbulent while it was forming that the floor is a series of eroded spikes, pits, pots and pools so walking is difficult and it's hard on the arms too. At Puttrell's Pool (a duck) I had a good look at Treasury Sump - so good that I was walking along the passage neck-deep in the water, thinking it was a long duck. The sump starts off as a more or less horizontal passage but after few bends I was getting cold and retreated to the Bung where I went chasing the others downstream. Lower Bung Streamway is, in my opinion, even worse than the streamway before: it is quite low so I spent most of it on hands-and-knees or stooping. There is a very hard layer of limestone that roofs the streamway - it is so little eroded that you can't really stand up anywhere. I met the others coming back from the sump and they kindly waited (and waited) at Petteril's while I gratified my ego by hobbling down to the sump. Not much sign of low water there.

Along Bung Streamway we also noted Block Aven (start of the White River Series I am told) and went up a mighty long ladder at Egnaro Aven to Colostolomy Crawl. Even Andy only went a few feet into the crawl, saying it was rather unpleasant. Hmm, 'Egnaro' is 'Orange' backwards. Wonder what the story is behind that name.

Heading back to James Halls the others went and had a good look at Whirlpool Passage - must have been nice as they were gone a long time. Shame I didn't go as it has the ebbing and flowing spring from its impressive sump (Whirlpool Rising).

During the trip we bumped into another party who were part of a Titan-James Halls exchange trip. That meant that James Halls was going to be double-rigged, as we found when we got back to Leviathan. Still that pitch wasn't bad with two sets of ropes on the same p-hangers. It was at Bit*h that things got interesting. I was derigging and got up to the first rebelay via two deviations. Hauling the tacklebag up the pitch I managed to twist it around the other rope so it couldn't get past the lower deviation. The other party were following behind us so one of them pruisiked up on their rope and freed the tacklebag. That was great but it then meant that her weight on the belay was jamming our maillon against the rock, so I could not undo it. Luckily she managed to get her weight off the rope so I could free it.

After all that I hauled up the gear, packed the bag, went up a little further and was concentrating so hard on keeping our tacklebag out of their rigging that I forgot to unclip the long cow's-tail and pruisiked up against it, jamming myself in place as I had stupidly made the cows tail so long that I could not unclip it, so Mandy descended on their rope and freed me. She also took over the derigging as I was getting a bit frazzled - my fading light wasn't helping either. So I went up to the pitch-head, had a rest and sorted my lamps out. Mandy and I then scraped along the wretched rift. back to the entrance shaft and I took an absolute age to get up that last 50m - must do this sort of thing more often. Unfortunately

the day had turned and it was somewhat grim outside - Matt was sheltering inside the pitch head and only moved when I got to him. After a swift change we went back to Orpheus for a lovely slap-up tea prepared by Sarah thank you thank you. I kept nodding off in the chair and went to bed before anyone else...

Sunday: Hillocks Mine

After a very long sleep on the Sat night we decided to do Hillocks Mine rather than having a wash in Knotlow Mine next door or dropping the shafts in Whalf Mine. I had only done Hillocks to the odd-looking first pitch so was interested to see what was in there. So with much less kit this time, and me in the world's smelliest furry after Saturday's efforts, we fought to the pitch head through a flat-out bedding with a silly little pool in it that is unavoidable. Once again Andy got to rig. Lucky man. The first pitch is I think had dug though very solid limestone and it has a peculiar narrowing about 4ft above its base - it is like a little hatchway and is awkward to get through. After that it is only a few feet to the next pitch which is really several little climbs that follow one after the other but with some horizontal bits that are fun in full SRT kit. At the base of this there are mined passages going everywhere. The others had a good look at Meccanno Passage (the crawl leading to Knotlow) - I hung back as my knees had had enough of a battering the previous day - and we also spotted a few frogs below the engine shaft from Whalf. Looking up this shaft we could see daylight at the side of the shaft cover and there was enough light coming all the way down the shaft to very dimly illuminate the chamber we were in. We also

went a little way up the climbing shaft from Whalf, until it went vertical that is. There is also quite a long stope off the base of this shaft and we even did every side passage we could find off it (two). Then a quick de-rig and out back to Orpheus for a bit more rope-washing, kit sorting, knot-untying and some very clever packing of cars and bicycle panniers to get all that in. I went back via a pub (The Quiet Woman) at Earl Sterndale that looks like it hasn't been decorated since about 1975, but the beer is good and the pork pies are fantastic...



CAVING ANTHEM

Does anybody have any more suggestions for a caving anthem?

In stark contrast to Stuart's melodious offering in the last newsletter I would suggest that the perfect cave diggers' anthem might be Tom Waits' masterfully cacophonous rendition of 'Heigh Ho', the dwarfs' marching song from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4_zaz3utUY

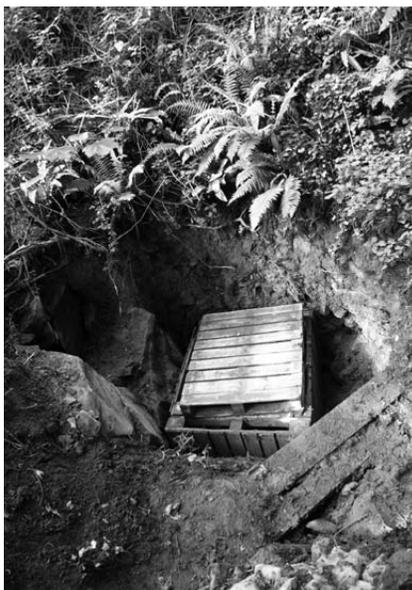
Day 5.

Shortly after 8 we went fishing at Oughtdarra. I caught mackerel off the rocks while Pete made lavish offerings to Poseidon of my fishing tackle.

In the afternoon Pete, Matt, Mandy, Tony and I went down **Fisherstreet Pot** and spent the next 3 hours taking photographs and admiring the eels, fish, leeches and insects in **Doolin River Cave**, the first time I had been down since lowering a bike down Fisherstreet Pot and cycling up to the Aille Cascade in the 1980s.

Day 6.

Robin Sheen *Clare Caving Club - clarecavingclub.wikispaces.com* took Matt, Mandy and I on an SRT trip down their recent discovery **Poll Na Gonzo** in the Carran depression. This is a terrific cave with 3 pitches (sorry about the rock shower Mandy!), a strong draught, and which has much promise for further extension. Pete and I then headed to Poulfaicaislean to admire the square palette frame that Pat, Tony and Cheg had installed in our absence.



Palette frame in Poulfaicaislean

Day 7.

Having packed away what was left of my tent we said our good byes and Pete headed for home with me feeling like a sleep-deprived kipper.

Thanks again to Pat and Pauline for their hospitality, to Pete, Tony, Matt and Mandy for the entertainment, to Robin for the Poll Na Gonzo trip and to the tolerant people who endured our singing and vulgarity.



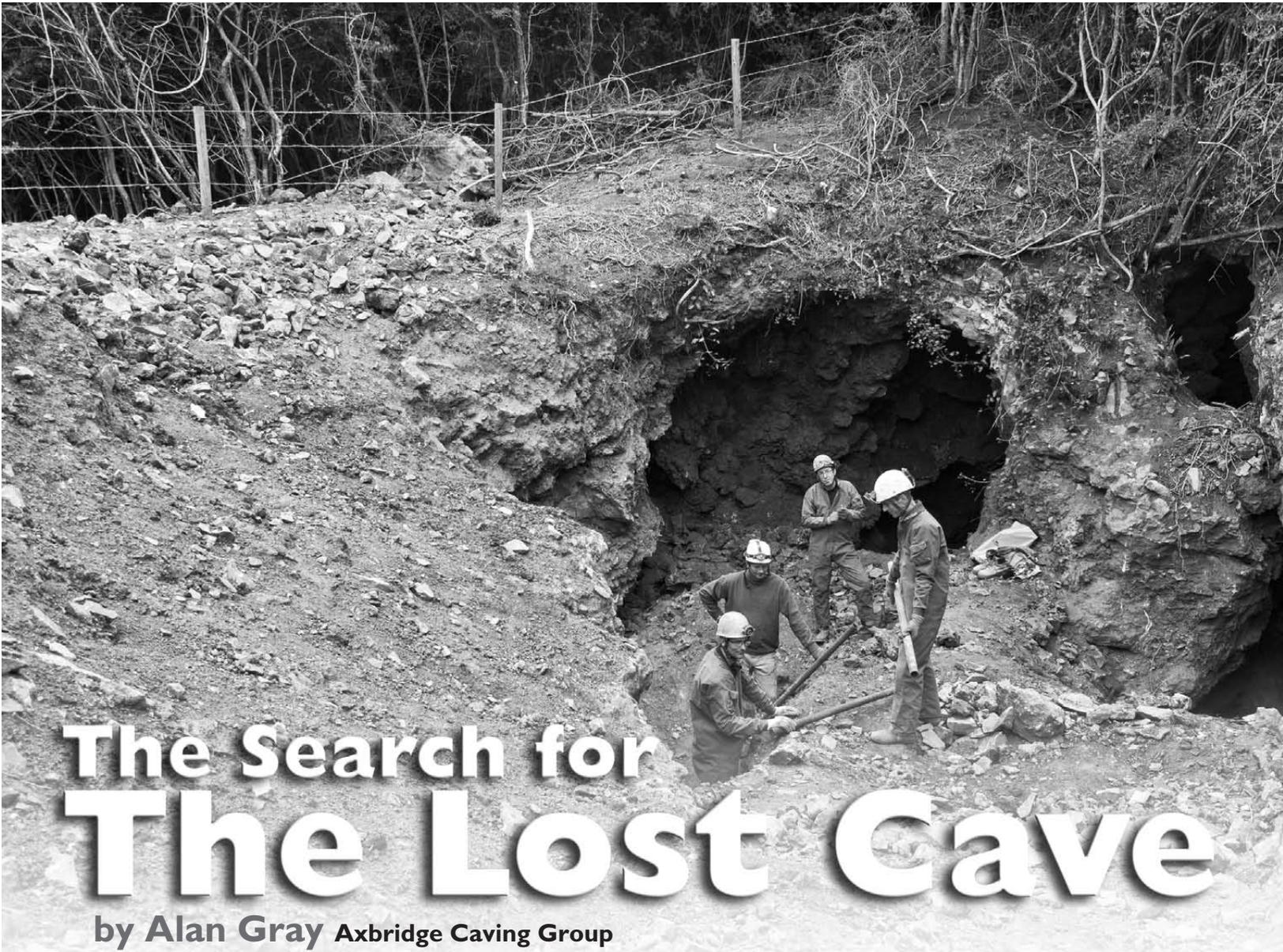
Doolin River Cave

Above: Matt and Mandy Voysey by the Aille Cascade

Left: Mandy in the streamway

Below: Matt in the streamway





The Search for The Lost Cave

by Alan Gray Axbridge Caving Group

Yellow ochre has been mined on the hills to the north of Axbridge from 1685 if not earlier. Mining at Axbridge ceased in about 1920 but continued in Cheddar area until the mid 1930s. In 1949, a founder member of the Axbridge Caving Group (ACG) was told of a cavern discovered by the Axbridge ochre miners, which they claimed to have been 'as big as Axbridge Square' and when the miners had completed their excavations a dry stone wall had been built across the entrance and the whole filled up level with the surface.

For two years the ACG dug in an area suggested by one of the old miners only finding two small caves Triple-H and Large Chamber Cave.

Now we move on to 1992 and about a mile along the hill to the

west and after only four hours digging Shute Shelve Cavern (SSC) was entered (length 262m, vertical range 56m). Only the first of three chambers had been entered by the miners who left pit props behind as evidence. At one time it was thought that this could be the lost cave but the first chamber was not large enough.

At this time I was made aware of the legend of the lost cave and so started a twenty year search. The first dig was at Carcass Cave 100m to the south of SSC and after several years digging 150m of cave was discovered that mainly consisted of small passages with no signs of mining.

The next dig was at the Rift (now called Myatt's Mine after one of the ochre miners) which is 60m vertically above SSC. This rift is extensively water worn with

scallops 1m long, 0.75m high and 0.4m deep. This was dug for over four years creating a tunnel 10m long and two small chambers. There is very little evidence of mining activity but more would probably be revealed if the centre portion of the rift was dug.

A new team is assembled (Mark Ireland, Nick Richards, Doug Harris, Nick Harding and myself) and we move back along the hill to a spot 15m away from Large Chamber Cave where four ochre pits have been dug in a limestone cliff. We concentrated on the lowest one digging through (what we thought was) miner's spoil. Unfortunately this created a precarious bank of rubble and soil behind us so thanks to Dave Morrison a 7.5 ton digger was employed for two days. A massive hole was created and a

of Axbridge

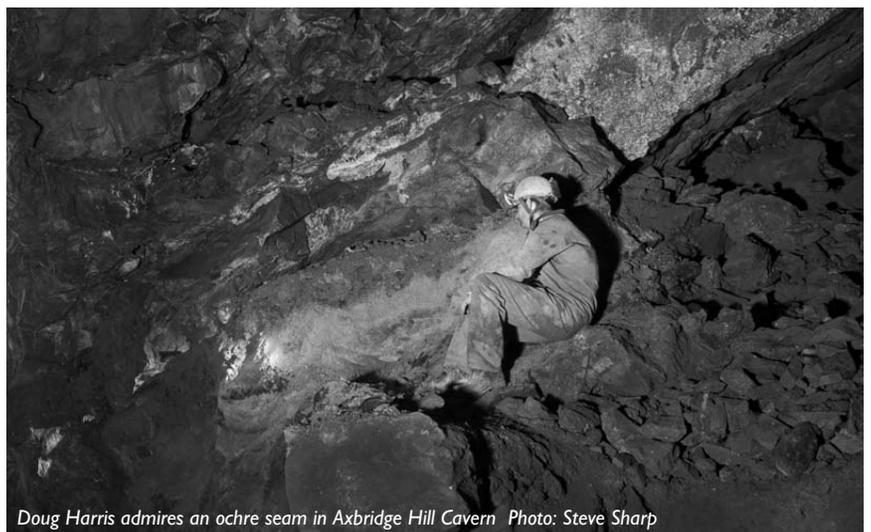
very small cave was found 2m in diameter and a meter high! We were disheartened but continued digging by hand in a small alcove. This continued for several weeks and a deep hole was created but when we returned on one occasion the rope to our hauling bucket had been stolen. No work could be done but one of the diggers dug in the most unlikely of places for only a few minutes and hit air space. The hole was enlarged and 4m down could be seen a pit prop. This shaft was laddered and a chamber 22m long 10m wide and 11m high was entered. There are extensive signs of ochre mining and an old miner's shovel and Derby Boot were found. The boot has been dated thanks to Clarke's Shoe Museum to late 1800's to 1920's.

Close to the entrance is an

old miners' dry stone wall and the hole had been filled up to the surface. Although this chamber is not as large as Axbridge Square (it is about half the size) to the miners illuminating this cavern with candles it would have looked much larger.

Many many diggers have been

involved looking for this cave for the past 60 years and it is due to all their efforts that the Lost Cave of Axbridge (now named Axbridge Hill Cavern) has now been re-discovered. Finally I would like to thank the Scott family (the landowners) for their permission to dig.



Doug Harris admires an ochre seam in Axbridge Hill Cavern Photo: Steve Sharp



Axbridge Hill Cavern Photo: Steve Sharp

Charterhouse Cave Diving Update

by Duncan Price

Following my initial investigation of the sump at the end of Hippo's Delight on 30 April (*CSS N/L 53 (5-6) p 42*), plans were made for a follow-up dive at the end of July. The digging team were keen to complete even climbing before allowing me to dive, so I had ample time to prepare. Several 6 l cylinders were acquired from Rob Franklin & Clive Westlake and the rust on them hidden below several layers of paint. A couple of these were cached beyond the Frozen Cascade by Andrew Atkinson (*UBSS*) and Naomi Sharp (*WCC*) in early June. Adrian Hall (*WCC/CDG*), Ali Moody (*WCC*), Naomi & I moved these forward (along with my harness, buoyancy jacket, fins and line reel) to the top of Jet Pitch on June 25th. The dive was due to take place on 23rd July and a team was organised by Ali to support me. Then it rained...

By the Thursday before the due date it was apparent that getting past Diesel Duck was questionable so the trip was cancelled. Andrew Atkinson went down the cave on the Saturday and found the duck sumped so it was just as well we didn't go. With good weather forecast for the following week, the dive was rescheduled and Stu Gardiner (*BEC*), Steve Sharp (*ACG/CSS*) and Naomi conscripted to assist.

So on 30th July we all met at Upper Pitts and set off in the company of the digging team of Pete Buckley (*WCC*), John Cooper (*CSS/WCC*), Pete Hann (*WCC*) and Ali who were going in ahead of us to work on the Sand Dig bypass to the Frozen Cascade. They had already opened up a crack through into the Timeline from the blasted

tunnel and were going in to make it caver-sized. I travelled in unladen so as to be fresh for the dive but this hardly made any difference as I was wearing my diving wetsuit long johns which severely restricted my mobility – I might as well have worn a suit of armour! The others carried personal bags of food and drink in addition to a tacklesack containing my regulators, instruments and the jacket of my wetsuit.

At the Timeline we passed Ali and Pete H who had already opened up a sizeable route through the bypass dig. We picked up a haul rope in High Time and proceeded to Zebra Junction where I changed out of my oversuit (worn over my wetsuit bottoms) and put on the wetsuit jacket. I put on my harness and buoyancy compensator at the bottom of Jet Pitch so as to make kitting up at the sump easier and we made our way to the dive base.

Reaching the sump, a length of plastic pipe was driven into the mud to act as belay for the dive line (this was put in directly below the final survey station) – optimistically I was equipped with 180 m of line. With help from Naomi – who acted as dresser – I was fitted with my cylinders and filmed by Stu. 3 hours after leaving the surface I was ready to dive.

Entering the sump it was apparent that the silt cloud I had created getting into the water was rolling ahead of me. I quickly went in 10 m and to a depth of 5 m where I jammed a silt screw in a mud bank on the right hand wall. After freeing myself from a slight tangle with one fin around the line, I pressed on. The passage ahead swung to the left and then developed into a rift which curved

right. At 30 m from base at a depth of 9 m the rift ended and the only way on was a slot at floor level on the left over the mud, too small to back into beyond my knees. A second silt screw was used here to belay the line which was cut free (at the 30 m tag) and line reel removed. It was impossible to see anything on exit so any survey will be from memory. 11 minutes after entering the water I surfaced and was helped out of my gear. No go.

The trip out was a slow slog with as much gear as possible being taken out. The reel and two blocks of lead were left at Zebra Junction along with the haul rope. Steve got lost in the Hall of Time at one point and we spent 20 minutes looking for him. The two cylinders (one unused and the other with 150 bar of air in it were left on the "out" side of Diesel Duck for future use in the sump at the end of Skeleton Passage. After Portal Pool we took the new route out through the Sand Dig into 100 Fathom Passage (bypassing Frozen Cascade). Stopping for a picnic Steve discovered another block of lead in his bag so we left this behind. Everyone was cussing at the tacklesacks – particularly the one with my fins in – through the Narrows but the slimmer members of the team did sterling work getting them through. We got out at 19:30 – almost 8½ hours after going in – and headed back to Upper Pitts for a karabiner amnesty. Steve headed off to Whitewalls to join his family and the rest of us decamped to the Hunters' for sustenance.

Sadly the sump did not live up to its promise but Charterhouse Cave is now 228 m deep.

Pant Mawr Pot

by Steve Sharp

Another action-packed weekend at the CSS cottage.

Saturday's trip was **Pant Mawr Pot** with Paul Tarrant, Gary Kiely, Jason Maccorrison, Matt and Mandy Voysey, Chris and Barley Seal, Steve Sharp.

We set off around 10am and headed to South Wales Caving Club HQ where we signed in, changed and made our way up the hill towards the cave, feeling fit, strong and well prepared for the long scenic walk ahead of us. The weather was good and the views were breathtaking, ongoing digs paved the way to our destination, leaving everyone curious as to what might lie below!

The walk to Pant Mawr took just over an hour; we could see the entrance in the distance surrounded by an old rickety fence!



Pant Mawr starts with a large depression leading down to the head of a pitch which slowly opens out into the large main stream passage around 20m below.

We all kitted up then Mandy and Paul headed down first to rig the pitch. In the distance we could see another large group of cavers heading towards us!

We made our way down to the head of the pitch, slowly one by one. Barley didn't like the look of the pitch so went for the plan B option a trip to OFD with the other group of Yorkshire Cavers who felt our descent was taking far too long for their liking!

Once in the main streamway Paul led us downstream to explore! Impressive would be an understatement; the water was roaring all around us as we headed to the first boulder choke.



We were slightly disorientated at this point but felt the way on was straight ahead (a big mistake!).

We squeezed through the choke. It was tight for some of us, even Gary shrieked! Jason forced his way through. Once through Paul quietly stated we'd gone the wrong way. Jason looked horrified as the way back now looked smaller than before! Gary made two exit attempts and just made it through. Jason made noises some of us had never heard before as he pushed through the pain barrier! While I watched Gary and Jason I noticed a gap in the distance. On further investigation it was large and provided an easy way out of the choke. We eventually found the way on under a sloping rock back into the streamway.

The trip included a few climbs to see stunning formations and a trek downstream to take in the sights. Time was not on our side at this point so we made our way back to the entrance pitch.

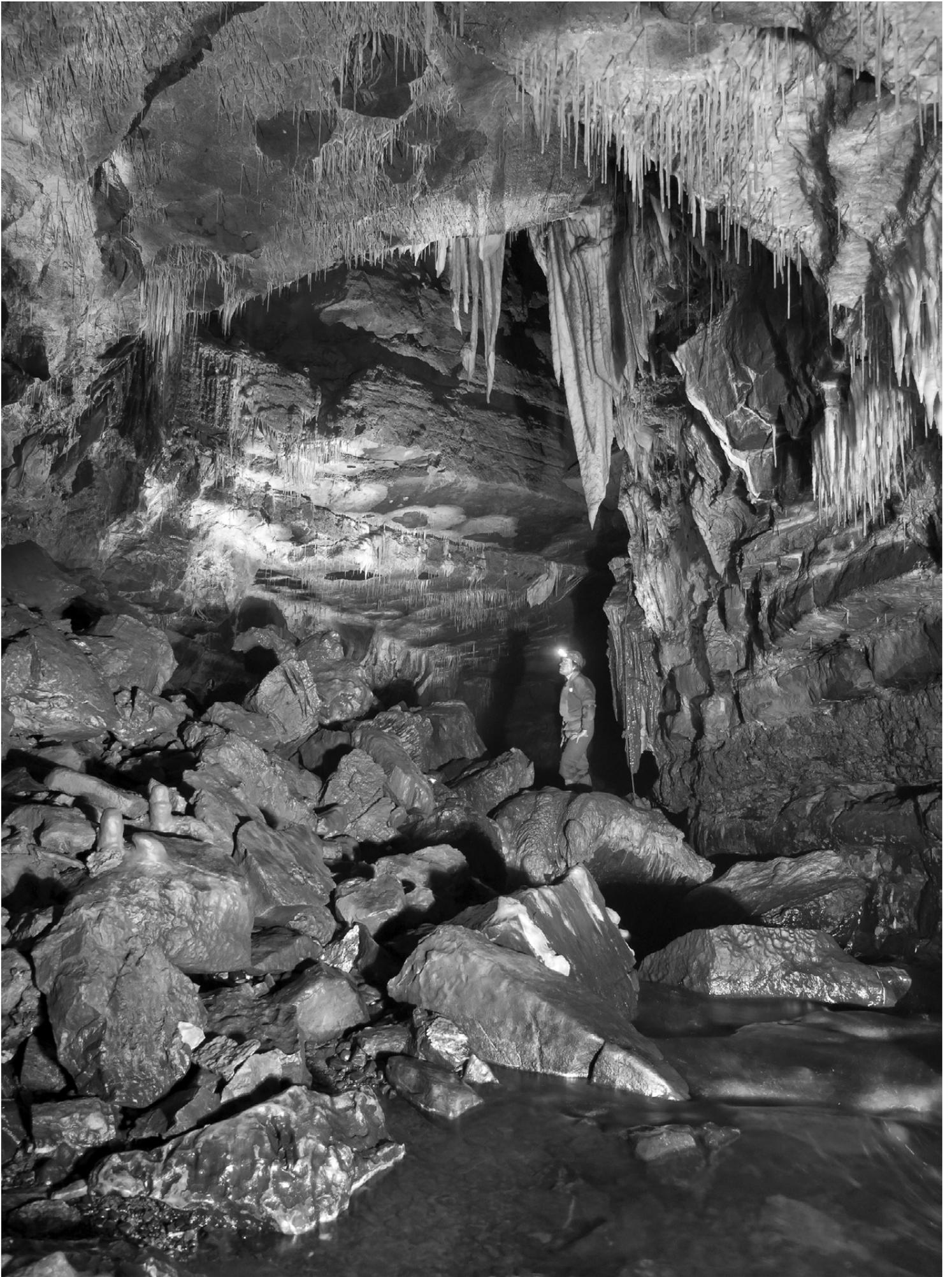
Matt de-rigged and we all set off back to SWCC.

All in all a great trip soon to be repeated.

Left: Mandy, Matt, Gary, Jason, Paul and Chris at their finest.

Above: Jason prepares to descend the pitch.

Right: Chris Seal in the Pant Mawr Pot streamway.



Pottering About on Mendip

by
John Cooper

Charterhouse Cave

Saturday 28th May 2011.

Pete Hann (Wessex CC), Ali Moody (Wessex CC), Pete Moody (UBSS) and self. Carried in spare oversuits and boots to investigate Rhino Passage, a lead going off north-east from Rip Passages (part of the 2009 extension). It had been left on 18th July 2009 where formations had to be crawled through (CSS N/L Vol 51 No 10 October 2009 page 130). We removed our muddy oversuits and boots before going through this area in just undersuits and socks. Once through we then put the spare suit and boots on. About 150m of rifts found, loose and muddy. There were some interesting mud stalactites hanging from the roof, needle thin and about 2cm long, which wobbled when disturbed. Before coming back through the formations the now muddy oversuits and boots were removed and left in for the survey and photography trip. Once past the formations we dressed again and visited the washing pool to clean off before coming back through Portal Pool. There was a good inward draught today, both through the entrance and through Portal Pool. 6 hours.

Saturday 4th June 2011.

Tom Chapman (Wessex CC), Pete Hann, Ali Moody and self. Two more ropes carried in plus drill and batteries. Portal Pool still low and Diesel Duck dry. The water in Quicksand Chamber had dropped by about 1m since last checked on 30th April. Tom started by climbing aven number 7 in Route 66 (Cow Splat Aven). Bottom section about 8m to base of second aven/rift. This was climbed for about 15m through a rather narrow section to a horizontal too tight phreatic tube. Rope left on top section (bolt and hanger) and ladder on bottom section (separate bolt and hanger) for survey purposes. Then moved on to aven number 9, the bottom section of which had already been climbed and left with a rope. Once Tom was up the bottom section a bolt and hanger were inserted and ladder hung down for the rest of us. Once we were all up Tom continued upwards, looked after by Pete, until it pinched out. Meanwhile Ali fed herself and two ladders down a rift going off and then down. A rather tight takeoff, but once she was down I followed. The base was a muddy funnel leading to a narrow slot. Seemed to be lower than Route 66, so it's probably a connection to the immature streamway below. Rather a struggle back up but a separate thread belay has now been arranged by Tom to make it a bit easier for the survey party. Finally Tom took a quick look up Aven number 8 which simply ran back over the top of Route 66 before ending too tight. There was a light connection though the floor to the roof of Route 66. Coming back up Rock & Roll Rift (2008 Series) several large boulders moved under Tom! 7 hours.

Saturday 11th June 2011.

Andrew Atkinson (UBSS), Ali Moody and self. Surveying Rhino Passage (see above – 28th May). As we

couldn't find the closest survey mark we had to start back a few metres from the end. Trip surveyed nearly 190m of new passage, over 200m total. Still one small passage of about 10m to do but that will be dug at the same time as survey is done – it draughts nicely. Too knackered to go to Washing Pool on exit so got most of the mud off in stream by Frozen Cascade. 8¼ hours of hard work.

Saturday 18th June 2011.

Andrew Atkinson, Ali Moody and self. Surveying Beyond Time Aven. We had already had one attempt at this, on the discovery trip 2nd October 2010 when Disto-X failure stopped us (CSS N/L Vol 52 Nos 10 & 11 October/November 2010 page 154). Just over 100m, with a vertical range of 25m, and it was even worse than I remember, I must have blanked out the nasty bits. Pete Hann and Naomi Sharp (Wessex CC) were with us but went and worked on the Sand Dig whilst we were surveying. They cleared 18 trays of spoil, drilled four holes and once we were reunited the holes were charged and fired. NOTE: each digging trip to Sand Dig requires carrying 2 heavy boxes of batteries (one set used for chiselling and one for drilling), a bag with bang and another with dets plus a supply of food and drink, so not easy trips! 6¾ hours.

Saturday 25th June 2011.

Two teams again today splitting at Frozen Cascade as last week. Ali Moody, Adrian Hall (Wessex CC & CDG), Duncan Price (CSS & CDG) and Naomi Sharp took in a bag with fins etc and a line reel then collected lead and two cylinders (one from Frozen Cascade, one from Diesel Duck) and deposited it all at Jet Pitch in the 2010 stuff. Diesel Duck rose a couple of inches whilst the team were the far side, the stream was running into it on exit but not when they went in! Meanwhile self, Pete Hann and Peter Buckley (Wessex CC) dug Sand dig (26 trays of rock and 3 of mud) before drilling new holes. Once the others were back the holes were charged and fired. Ali reported that cracks are starting to appear in the wall of The Timeline! 6½ hours.

Saturday 2nd July 2011.

Andrew Atkinson, Peter Buckley, Pete Hann, Ali Moody and self. The aim of today's trip was to check the Stone Roses boulder choke in the 2010 extension. To assist we took in lump hammer, chisel and crowbar together with string for route finding (and of course ample food and drink). Portal Pool was down a fraction from last week and the water had gone from Diesel Duck, leaving just the mud. Once through the squeeze into High Time in the 2010 passages Ali did some more route marking as we progressed towards Stone Roses. Once there Andrew and Pete H inspected one lead whilst Ali and Peter B looked at another, both leads going off low down on the right, whilst I stayed at the junction to pass messages. After a while Peter B came back for the crowbar and not long af-

ter that came shouts from Ali asking for Andrew. It took a while for Andrew to extricate himself from the tight passages he'd been looking at but once out he went to see what Ali wanted. Unfortunately whilst squeezing along a narrow rift under a boulder Peter B had managed to dislodge it and several others onto his legs and trapped himself. Peter's description later was "I was pinned in place in-between two slabs of rock – one of which had slid onto me when I kicked the chock stone out. This slab was on my leg just behind the left knee. The weight of the rock held me tightly down and not too comfortably on my chest." After about 20 minutes of Andrew and Pete H trying to free Peter B, I was tasked to go back up the cave for a rope, another hammer and a bolting kit. It took me about 30 minutes to go back through the High Time squeeze and over the (W)hole of Time traverse into the 2009 passages looking for a bolting kit but there wasn't one so I returned with just the rope and another 2 hammers. Just as I arrived back at the choke I heard them coming out. Andrew and Pete H had finally managed to smash a bit of wall off, which enabled them to get the point of the crowbar in and lever up the slab far enough for Peter B to wriggle forward. Once his legs were out of the way the slab was dropped to where he had lain and he was then able to get back over the top of it. I reckon he'd been trapped for well over an hour! A short discussion on whether to go straight out but Ali and Andrew decided to continue past where Peter B had been trapped as the dodgy squeeze was now "safe". Ali returned after about 30 minutes but Andrew completed a round trip via some high level passages previously entered from another direction. At least the string marks the route round for a survey party. Back to Zebra Junction where we'd left the food then a steady trip to the Washing Pool then Frozen Cascade for more food before a final climb out of the 2008 passages. Peter B's final thoughts on the matter "All told, I'd been stuck for an hour. My legs, particularly the left one, and my chest were very sore. My left leg was either in cramp or I had a nasty dead leg. Getting back was fine, except for the squeezey bits (of which Charterhouse has plenty). My leg and chest were causing a lot of pain. The really hard bit for me was bending my left leg against the muscle cramping – this made the slog up the entrance boulder choke, er, 'fun'." A total 7¼ hours, but it could have been a lot longer for some of the party! Peter B was lucky to escape with just bruises.

Saturday 16th July 2011.

Andrew Atkinson, Peter Buckley, Pete Hann, Ali Moody and self. As there had been rain overnight the intention was for Ali and Andrew to do a quick trip through Portal Pool and check the streamway downstream from The Crossing (start of Route 66) while the rest of us continued with Sand Dig. Ali dug through the arch which had been the previous end and the two of them surveyed nearly 46m of very immature passage which runs under Route 66 (Ali says she's not going back). We cleared 27 trays of rock and 1 of mud, could have been more but we ran out of time. 3 more holes drilled, charged and fired. Spare drill brought out (we're using a Hilti TE7 as the main one for drilling holes now and a Hitachi 24V for chiselling). A bit over 6 hours.

Saturday 23rd July 2011.

Andrew Atkinson, Peter Buckley, Pete Hann, Ali Moody

and self again. As there had been rain for a couple of days the intended dive of the Terminal Sump was postponed. Instead we continued with Sand Dig. On arrival it was obvious something had happened as water was trickling along the floor. Once the really loose debris was removed and the face reached the source of the water could be found seeping out of the latest cracks. After a while Andrew and Ali departed for the Timeline, Andrew had to collect his SRT kit from just this side of Diesel Duck and Ali wanted to see what effect we'd had in the Timeline. On his return Andrew reported that Portal Pool was about 4cm deeper this week and that Diesel Duck was completely sumped. Ali was able to see a small crack in the hole where we drain the water when we pump Portal Pool and after more work voice communication was established with Sand Dig. This was ordinary volume talk, not shouting. In fact when Andrew returned I could clearly hear him talking to Ali even though he was the opposite side of the passage. Once 40 trays of spoil had been removed we decided the roof was getting a bit too delicate so the charges were set and fired (1 drilled hole and a couple of rifts/cracks). I wouldn't be surprised if there was a hole through next week. 5¼ hours.

Saturday 30th July 2011.

Peter Buckley, Pete Hann, Ali Moody and self. Finishing off Sand Dig. On way in I retrieved additional hammer, long chisel, crowbar and pick from The Riser dig whilst Ali and Pete H rushed straight to Sand Dig. By the time Peter B and I arrived they had both checked the Sand Dig face then Ali went round into Timeline and opened up the hole sufficiently for Pete H to squeeze up, first through trip completed. They both stayed cleaning up in Timeline whilst Peter B and I cleared spoil from Sand Dig. By the time we left it the hole was 1.1m wide and 0.8m high, plenty big enough for anyone to get through! The mined passage is 5.4m long. The diving party passed on their way in about 45 minutes after we had arrived, we had left them following us in at the entrance. Hilti TE7 brought out, more tools to remove next weekend. 4½ hours.

Fairy/Hilliers Cave

Saturday 9th July 2011.

Following last week's epic this was to be a day off with Peter Buckley and Ali Moody. We entered through Hilliers, down the drop and headed off right (downstream, although there was no stream today). We followed the main route through Tar Hall and eventually reached the turn off to Fairy Cave, which we ignored. Shortly after this we took a wrong turn by not going left and up but instead went on through a tight tube. It doesn't go! It's also hard to get out of! Back to the correct route and we were soon in Cambridge Grotto. Continuing onwards we passed Brenda's Chamber and entered Suicide Choke. Once through this we entered the Red Room where we climbed back over ourselves and up to the top where there were lots of nasty boulders. Back out meeting several other Wessex CC parties until we reached the turn off to Fairy Cave. We then followed the obvious passage, passing over the top of Drop Out Rift before a wet crawl was reached, only a couple of cm of water today. Continued on before finally it got bigger and eventually tree roots then daylight were found. A very pleasant 1¾ hours.

Swildon's Hole

Sunday 22nd May 2011.

Barry Weaver and John Cooper on the usual Sunday morning jaunt. There were hordes massed on Priddy Green and Steve Sharp said lots had already departed for the cave! However once we were changed and at the cave we were able to fit between two parties through the actual entrance and then bypass everyone by going in the Wet Way. So successful were we that we had to ladder the Twenty! We went up to Tratman's Temple then on to the Mud Sump. Could tell we hadn't been recently as there was at least 10cm of water in it – will clear it out next time. On to check the route to South-East Inlets. There is a ladder and rope on Maypole Aven and there was at least 20cm of airspace through the Sidcot U-tube. Back out removing our ladder and lifeline and hanging ones from the top of the pitch in their place. Managed to get out without too much delay from all the others in the cave. 1¾ hours.

Sunday 29th May 2011.

Barry Weaver and John Cooper were joined by Lee Hawkswell on the usual Sunday morning jaunt. Visited Sump 2, going in the Dry Way and out the Wet Way. Just after the final small waterfall approaching Sump 1 some boulders have collapsed leaving one large rocking boulder on the floor, looks safe to me. Sump 1 was a sump on entry but by the time we exited it had become a duck.

Sunday 12th June 2011.

Barry Weaver and John Cooper visited Vicarage Passage. About 200ft before reaching The Landing there was a lot of water coming down the right hand wall, more than we've ever seen before. Also from this point onwards the stream, previously clear, was a grey/brown colour. This was the only sign of increased water flow in the cave even though it had been, and was still, raining heavily. Met Mark Lumley as we were going out. 2 hours.

Sunday 19th June 2011.

Barry Weaver, Lee Hawkswell and John Cooper visited Sump 2. In the Dry Way and out the Wet Way without seeing anyone else in the cave! The inlet mentioned in last week's report was back to normal dry conditions today. 1½ hours.

Sunday 10th July 2011.

Barry Weaver and John Cooper visited the Mud Sump and bailed it dry, 35 buckets of water. Both dams left empty. Cave still very dry. 1¾ hours.

Sunday 24th July 2011.

Barry Weaver and John Cooper visited Fault Chamber, nice drip coming in following rain in the week. The level in the Mud Sump had gone up about 3cm. More mysterious was that the upper dam was full to overflowing. Bumped into Andy Watson and party as we were on our way out. 2 hours.

Thursday 28th July 2011.

Peter Buckley, John Cooper and Stuart Hagley. Short Round trip. Mud Sump had a couple of inches of water in it, Troubles low so no bailing required and Sump 1 had a couple of inches of airspace through. 2½ hours.

Upper Flood Swallet

Saturday 21st May 2011.

As the Charterhouse diggers were all attending an explosives user group course I tagged along with Richard Carey (MCG) and party to peer into the continuation of Wall Street. A nice outward draught at the end and a way on visible, even though a bit small at present. The formations will have to go. 4 hours.



Daren Ladders

If you could spare the time and would like to help with the installation of the fixed ladders in the Busman's/Antler route in Daren Cilau please contact Stuart France.



POLISH CAVERS AT WHITEWALLS

by Stuart France

The long weekend of 16-19 June saw a visit from Tony and Marietta Moulton who now live in Poland along with 12 other cavers from Wielkopolski Klub Taternictwa Jaskiniowego. They all arrived quite late on the Thursday evening and split into various groups on Friday to explore OFD. John Stevens, Paul Tarrant and Tony Moulton led groups in OFD2 while Stuart France took those with wetsuits on an upstream through trip. The river, despite a wet spell earlier in the week was only 'mildly sporting'.

I had toyed with laying on a barrel of real ale, given the rumoured capacity of Polish Cavers for enjoying themselves, but I was assured they would not like British beer. That turned out not to be the case with all kinds of drinks in free flow during the Friday night, so much so that one of our hosts had to sleep it off until the following afternoon.

Their group split into two parties of seven on Saturday. One of these went into Ogof Craig a'r Ffynnon led by Malcolm Reid from Brynmawr

Caving Club and the other went with Stuart France on a through trip from Ogof Cnwc to the Daren Entrance. We later watched some after-dinner caving films including the Steve Sharp Daren video which I had been told to show only after my group had vanquished the entrance crawl. Another one which produced a lot of laughs was an Oxford University trip to Spain in the 1960s, complete with an RP voiceover, and not quite correctly digitised so it had a slightly faster than normal playback speed giving a Tom and Jerry feel to it.

Sunday morning was spent tidying up the hut and all but Tony and Marietta, who were staying for the week, got away from Whitewalls by 10:30am to catch their return flight.

An invitation is extended to CSS members to go caving with them in Poland, but we are warned that there are no strategically placed cosy cottages, and that the Tatra Mountain caves involve long walk-ins and the caves are far colder than ours!



Lost on the moor, the Pant Mawr Pot team test out their new 'human compass'. Photo: Steve Sharp

Meets List 2011

This is an outline of the meets for this year.

19th March

CSS Western Section Dinner

Hunters Priddy – Organiser: Roy Musgrove

26th March Whitewalls

Caving during day at **Llygad Lluchwr I** & the newly opened **LL2** [Wetsuits advisable].

Cheese & Wine Party in the evening

Organisers: Paul Tarrant & Stuart France

22nd April Whitewalls Easter Bank Holiday

Local caving to include **Bridge Cave**, **Little Neath River Cave**.

Work on Whitewalls and the Library

Organiser: Paul Tarrant & Anne Northover

27th May Whitewalls Bank Holiday weekend

Pant Mawr Pot which involves a 45 minute walk in and 20 m entrance shaft

Organiser: Paul Tarrant

17th June Mendip Caves to be confirmed but possibly **St. Cuthberts Swallet**

Staying at the Wessex with BBQ on Saturday night

Organiser Jackie Ankerman

2nd July Whitewalls Summer BBQ weekend

[Note the change of date so as to avoid Glastonbury W/E]

Dan Yr Ogof [BCA Insurance needed] and or **OFDI**

Messrs France & Tarrant will be your leaders.

30th July Whitewalls Local Caving

3rd September Kayaking on the Wye

Organiser: Mel Reid

24th September Hidden Earth

Caving Conference – south Wales

1st October Whitewalls Black Mountain Caves

Ogof Pasg & Ogof Foel Fawr

Organiser: Paul Tarrant

5th November Whitewalls Bonfire weekend

3rd December Whitewalls Curry Night

Organiser: Stuart France

30th December Whitewalls

New Year Celebrations

28th January 2012 Whitewalls

Annual Dinner and AGM Weekend.

Note that we will try and obtain a booking to the superb Pool Park shaft on Minera Mountain near to Llangollen in north Wales. Access is arranged through North Wales Caving Club who set up a winch for the 140m deep shaft which gives access to interesting mine workings and natural cave. Details will be entered here.

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Pant Mawr Pot
Photo: Steve Sharp



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