

CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 53 Nos. 11 & 12 November/December 2011

**Caves of Fairy
Cave Quarry**

**Caving in the
Channel Islands**



CSS
Newsletter

Ladder climbing in Eglwys Faen
Photo: Steve Sharp

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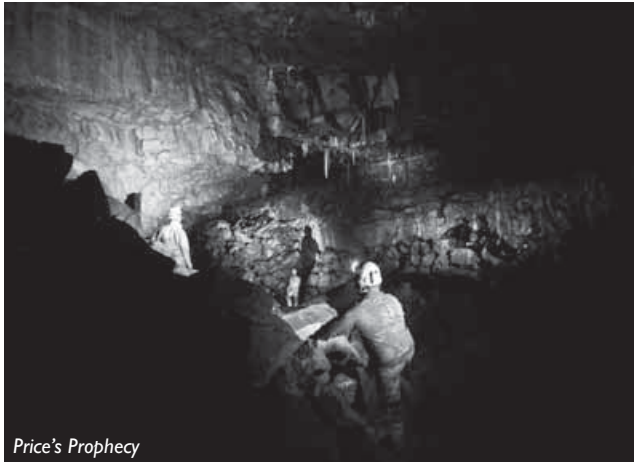
Members who have BCA membership via another club need not pay twice but should include their BCA number and membership club with their payment.

Associate £21 (BCA Non Caver already included)
Provisional £20

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

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.

Provisional membership can be extended for another 6 months if a provisional member has been unable to become known socially and as an active caver within the club. Please contact the Treasurer with any queries.



Price's Prophecy

Editorial

Thanks to all those who have provided material for this newsletter, please keep it coming.

Gonzo

Mark Lumley

Please send all material to:

mark@creativeedge.me.uk

**Mark Lumley, The Creative Edge
7 Langleys Lane, Clapton, Radstock
Somerset BA3 4DX**

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

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to decent-sized .jpeg, .tif, .psd or .eps files.**

Membership

Welcome back to **Martyn Farr** as a Full member.

The committee have proposed the following for Full membership:

**Matt Dunn, Avelina Kuenzel
Heidi Northover, Barley Turner,
Matt Wood and Sandy Wright**

Annual Dinner

The Bear Hotel, Crickhowell

The CSS Annual Dinner will be held on Saturday 28th January 2012 in the Bear Hotel. The Menu [see enclosed flyer] provides an excellent choice of meals at £26 a head. We have the large room available this year and this will enable us to have an illustrated talk in a more relaxed and comfortable fashion than last year. Rooms are currently available if members wish to make bookings directly with the Bear [Call 01873 810408 or book via their online booking service]. Mini buses will be laid on from Whitewalls at extra cost. Please complete and return the enclosed menu choice flyer and your cheques for £26 per person to Paul Tarrant no later than Monday 16th January 2012.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday 29th January 2012 at 11:00am in the Tretower Village Hall.

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CAVING IN THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

Gouliot Caves

by Mandy Voysey

While on holiday in the Channel Islands last year, Matt and I stayed on the island of Sark for a few days. At only 4.8km long and 2.7km wide, Sark is quite a small island, but the coastline is splendid and the sea very clear. While Granite is abundant in the North and South of the island, the middle is mostly Gneiss. In places the sea has eroded along the faults of this rock, making some pretty unique cave passages. There are a number of sea caves on Sark, but for me by far the most interesting are the Gouliot Caves.

This mini cave system is fantastic, with a veritable bounty of sea life to see within it. As the caves spend much of the time completely submerged, they are home to a smorgasbord of Anemones, Sponges, Sea squirts, Soft Corals and Barnacles. It's only possible for non-divers to visit the caves at low tide, and even then it's a wetsuit job to access all the sections.

The cave entrance is obscured from the casual visitor, as it's located at the foot of a steep, narrow path winding down from the cliff top. It wasn't too tricky to find though, and we were soon at the portal of a steeply descending boulder strewn passage called "The Chimney". Conveniently there was a nice flat balcony here for stashing our stuff and getting changed.

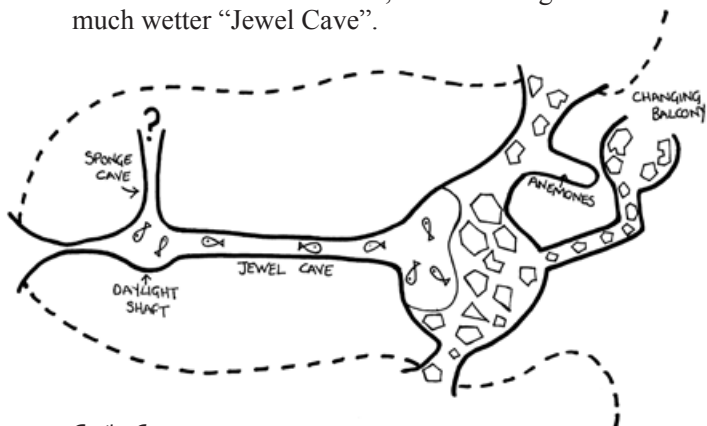
We had checked out the tide times the day before, so we were confident that the caves would be dry enough to enter. So down the chimney we hopped, wearing our wetsuits and head torches. We also took our snorkels and masks, just in case we wanted to pop out into the sea. The Chimney led into a massive chamber full of large boulders and loads of interesting creatures to look at. I was particularly impressed by the barnacles, as I had no idea that they could get so big, volcano shaped and purple! There were large open entrances to the sea at either end of the Chamber, through which the daylight was streaming in, illuminating a pool of fish in the centre. We then scamped about investigating all the nooks and crannies, marvelled at a side passage full of Anemones, and snorkelled with the fish, before setting forth into the much wetter "Jewel Cave".

This section of cave is long and narrow, with tall side walls completely covered with Anemones of assorted colours. It was really beautiful as there were lots of closed beady ones above the water, while beneath they were all fully open with tentacles out. Matt took some photos of me at the beginning of the passage, but as we progressed the walls became more and more cluttered with fine and interesting sea beasties. This was great, aside from the fact that we were seemingly unable to actually stop and look at anything. We had very soon got out of our depth, and were floating rather too effortlessly on our way. Soon we emerged into a larger area, with daylight shining through from above.

This is where the Section known as the "Sponge Cave" joins the passage. We saw the low, dripping entrance, but were unable to actually get into it. Any efforts to swim in that direction were thwarted by the swell of the sea. It seemed that we had no choice but to continue in our present direction, but it didn't look good.

Ahead the passage narrowed considerably and the sea swell was daunting. We wedged ourselves against the walls as best as we could (not easy with so many things living on them) and looked at the way ahead for a while. We ascertained that there was sufficient space between the sea and the rock arch overhead to make a safe exit. Then Matt was off, riding the next wave out. For a few minutes I clung to the walls, whinging to myself. Then I let go, and whisked at speed past the remainder of festooned cave walls before getting rudely spat out into the open ocean.

We quickly decided that we should head to the right-hand side of the promontory, as we thought (wrongly) that the sea entrance to the main chamber was closer on that side. But we didn't get far before we encountered difficulties as we found ourselves in a narrow strip of sea between the mainland and a small rocky island, between which the current was just too strong to swim against. We clung to the rock edge for a while, and used our snorkels and masks to look at some of the large fish swimming



Gouliot Cave
Survey by Mandy Voysey



Mandy Voysey in the anemone-encrusted Gouliot Cave
Photo by Matt Voysey

beneath us. Then we pushed off in the other direction, aiming for the entrance that we knew to be on the left of the cave.

Though the sea was quite choppy, we did manage to progress steadily in this direction. Matt was blithely snorkelling along, while I was struck with the worry that we might get dashed against the jutting rocks if I didn't keep watching exactly where we were going. As the cave entrance came into view, I left the sea at the very first opportunity. Lunging upon the sharp, crustacean covered rocks in a bit of an over-keen and ungainly manner. After a bit of comedy rock hopping, and deciding that I didn't like barnacles after all, because they kept hurting my hands, we eventually made in back safely to the cave, and returned to the surface in high spirits.

Although there were certainly elements of peril on our trip to Gouliot, we had a great time there, and very much enjoyed seeing the variety of life forms that live within the caves. Apparently at the low of a good spring tide the caves can be easily entered by the sea entrances, or even through the Sponge Cave. This was certainly not possible when we were there, so I assume a very different trip could be had if the sea was perfectly calm.

Boutique Caves

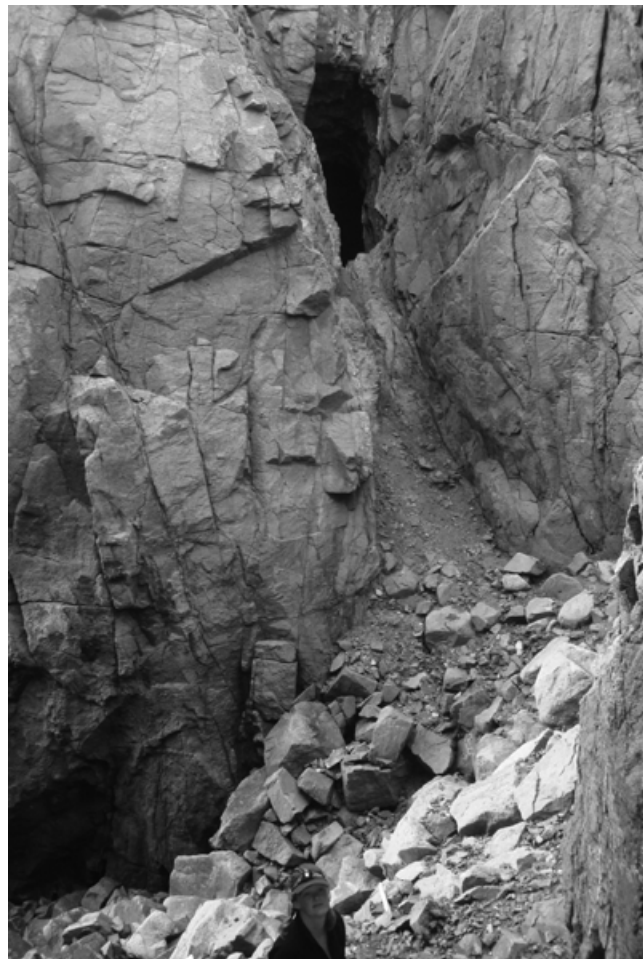
While in Sark we also visited the Boutique Caves. This cave system was very different to the Gouliot Caves, as the obvious fault collapse entrance passage and boulders of doom gave it more the feel of ancient mine workings than an undersea world.

The route to the cave is a narrow path down a scree gully from the cliff top at Eperquerie, with the cave entrance high up on the right at the bottom. Climbing up into the entrance it was hard to believe that this cave wasn't mined as it quickly opened out into a vast lofty chamber. From here there was an obvious way down, which involved much scrambling over boulders in a tall sided rift. This culminated in an ooze through a slippery cleft, and plopped us out into a central chamber with a sea view and nice rock pools.

This section of the cave would be too wet to navigate in high tide, but was easily investigated in normal clothes while it was out. There were a couple of wet, slippery side passages going off here, but the main way on was straight ahead, along a long tunnel that was so uniform in shape that it felt more like an adit than a cave. This eventually led out onto a group of rocks overlooking the sea.

Apparently this can be done as a through trip when the tide is fully out, but not feeling inclined to swim we returned from whence we came. We liked this cave, as it was very unusual in shape, and interesting in the way that the passages are interconnected. Legend has it that this cave was used by smugglers to stash their booty, which I could well believe.

*Boutique Cave
Photo by Matt Voysey*



OGOF CNWC

ACCESS UPDATE

by Stuart France

The remaining two fixed chain ladders, the longer ones, have been fitted since the last information on the project appeared in Newsletter Vol.53 nos.5-6. This more or less completes the ladders project. Many thanks to all those who have helped prepare, carry

in ladder sections, assemble and hang them, particularly as most of these cavers are relatively recent or prospective CSS members: the new engineering recruits include Frank Longwill, Tom Foord, Huw Durban, Malcolm Reid, Tim Gibbs, Andrew Wright

and Avelina Kuenzel. About 18 metres of ladders have been installed, most of it built as 1.5m sections joined by maillons, and carried in as loads of about 7kg, so I estimate the total fixtures and fittings is about 100kg.

The entrance continues to be managed by CSS, but it will be taken over by the Mynydd Llangattock Cave Management Advisory Committee when the lease from the Beaufort Estate is completed. At present, access continues on the established permissive basis. There is a new padlock: the Mul-T-Lock type. I have two identical locks and thirty keys. Keys are available to recognized clubs that will make regular use of the entrance for a contribution towards costs of £10. After MLCMAC takes over, keys will be available through Malcolm Reid. Temporary keys can also be borrowed from Whitewalls or myself by prior arrangement. There are three in the usual CSS key box. Please make sure the key is clean before you use it as mud might harm the lock. You do not need a key to get out of Ogof Cnwc. Please do not lubricate cylinder locks with oil or WD40 as it creates a paste which makes matters worse – this applies to Whitewalls doors too.

The gate needs servicing as the hinges are seizing, but it is still easily opened – albeit with more



Richard Dewsnap climbing the 6m ladder nearest to The Antlers formations. Photo by Matt Emmett.

force than normal. The logbook is now in a plastic bag in an alcove just inside the gate. There is a cave rescue telephone junction here (box no.1) and the cable continues through to Prices Prophecy (box no.4). The other two boxes are at the former tight rift, now widened somewhat so that nobody should again have trouble with it, and the top of the scaffolded shaft. The dry connection to bypass the sump has not been modified. It is intended to scaffold this, but in the meanwhile the rocks in the roof should be checked before passing through. More than average care should also be exercised throughout the whole of the route described as there are many loose blocks and unstable-looking roof which can be avoided by keeping to the sides.

The description of the route is written from the perspective of entering the cave system from the Ogof Cnwc end. There are two spare finished rungs left over and these will be deployed at the top of the first ladder, dropping from Busmans level into Antler Passage level, to make its descent feel more secure. This ladder

was bolted about 1m higher than intended in order to find good rock for the anchors. Consequently there is now a long section of chain with no rungs visible at the top, and this is where the extra rungs will be put to make the take off onto the vertical part look more straightforward. The other three ladders worked out as planned and they fitted the pre-drilled anchors and reached the floor perfectly.

Some spare chain and a couple of right-angle plates have been attached to a huge fallen block at a chasm near the upper end of Antler Passage. This obstacle can now be passed easily by cavers of any height. One more right-angle plate has been fixed on the steep wall rigged with an old handline just before the second ladder where Antler Passage makes its first significant turn to the right. You also pass an exposed down-climb half way through Antler Passage which now has a short fixed handline and a strategic chockstone placed in a boot-wide crack to provide a timely foothold.

So overall, this route is now

quite straightforward to use for dry access into the main cave system, especially to get to the Antlers and Epocalypse areas, or for a classic through trip, or for exploration activities. Thanks go to BCA and Cambrian Caving Council for funding the ladder materials, and I am pleased that this project is being cited a good example of how one should be run – with a clear proposal, showing a prototype, writing a proposal, an interim grant payment, completion of works, and reconciliation all within the same financial year.

I was surprised though by how much it all cost, over and above the donated materials, and the purchasing details are shown in the table below. However the raw materials are all quality items and it is expected that the chains will last several decades, while the rungs, bolts and hangers being stainless and substantial should last indefinitely. The padlocks and keys are extra and they are being funded through the club key system, as noted above, not via CCC or BCA.

DAREN ANTLERS PASSAGE LADDERS COSTING (FOR 4 LADDERS AND 2 FIXED AIDS)						Invoice
Date	Item	Qty	Unit Cost	Total	Notes	Total
01/01/2007	Chain 10mm link mild steel /m	7	0.00	0.00	Donated by TD	
01/01/2007	Chain 10mm link mild steel /m	14	0.00	0.00	Donated by TD	0.00
15/04/2011	Chain 10mm link mild steel /m	10	6.12	61.20	Chain-Supplies	
15/04/2011	Maillon rapides 10mm galv	16	1.94	31.04	Chain-Supplies	
15/04/2011	Carriage	1	7.99	7.99	Chain-Supplies	100.23
03/03/2011	Acetal blocks 19x10x1000mm	10	14.76	147.60	Amari. To make link-widgets.	147.60
28/02/2011	Stainless M12 threaded bar /m	10	7.38	73.78	Screwfix	
28/02/2011	Stainless washers M12x35mm	200	0.28	55.40	Screwfix	
28/02/2011	Stainless locking nuts M12	1	21.04	21.04	Screwfix	
28/02/2011	Stainless normal nuts M12	1	18.56	18.56	Screwfix	168.78
24/02/2011	Stainless washers M12x25mm	200	0.14	28.80	Just Stainless	
24/02/2011	M10 double eye turnbuckle A4	3	11.94	35.82	Just Stainless	
24/02/2011	Carriage	1	10.20	10.20	Just Stainless	74.82
01/02/2011	M8 maillon rapides A4	10	8.82	88.20	S3i	88.20
01/05/2011	Rope for lifelines /m	30	0.00	0.00	Donated by SF	0.00
01/03/2011	Shrink sleeve /m	12	2.50	30.00	S Kirby	30.00
01/02/2011	Rubber tube /m	4	5.00	20.02	Hoseworld	
01/02/2011	Delivery	1	7.80	7.80	Hoseworld	27.82
15/04/2011	Rubber tube /m	10	5.00	50.04	Hoseworld	
15/04/2011	Delivery	1	7.80	7.80	Hoseworld	57.84
01/02/2011	M10x80mm A4 sleeve bolts	10	2.67	26.70	Linatop	
16/06/2011	M10x80mm A4 sleeve bolts	10	2.67	26.70	Linatop	
16/06/2011	Washers M12x35mm A4	1	8.77	8.77	Linatop	62.17
01/02/2011	40x40x5mm A4 angle /m	1	69.22	69.22	Metals4u. To make hangers.	69.22
	TOTAL			826.68		826.68

Peak Cavern

by Frank Longwill

My second caving trip ever was a Peak Cavern adventure. A NUCC trip to Moss Aven. I remember being impressed with the large streamway and the long series of obstacles required to reach Moss Aven. The trip to Moss involves a crawl followed by a steeply ascending muddy tube to a tricky (at the time) letterbox rift squeeze. The squeeze chucks you heartlessly into a rift and elbows on a ledge are key to returning to an upright position.

The TSG hut seemed to have moved since I last visited it but I eventually located it. Shortly after this my companions from Chesterfield caving club arrived. Sarah's leopard print undersuit was just the sort of thing you need to help you through the 9am start required so you can enter the cave before it's open to tourists. I think Neil had possibly used his local contacts to get us this midweek trip. Anyway John Beck the access officer took our signatures for the indemnity forms and collected the 3 squid access fee that goes into the cave maintenance fund. This helps maintain the various fixed ladders and ropes that are required for the cave.

Suitably attired we walked up

and signed in with the showcave staff. The cave dog, a friendly Staffy accompanied us to the end of the showcave and would have come with us but his mum had a showcave to run.

The entertaining slide down to the muddy walking passage leading to five arches was still there and provided a bit of old school childish fun. The easy ducks of 5 arches brought out the obligatory expletives as the cold water penetrated our kit and after a bit of scrambling around at the Treasury we located the start of the route to the Trenches.

A long iron ladder led up to a fantastic slimy muddy stoop crawl squirm. This really is a fantastic bit of squalor, it goes on for a bit but is quite fun and has no hard edges. Another iron ladder brought us down to the Large Speedwell streamway and a very cold bath as we cleaned ourselves up to minimise the amount of mud we carried up to the prettiest. The rigged route up a large Aven began with a easy rope climb then went vertical past a couple of deviations and 5 rebelays. At the top a fantastic pristine flowstone cascade provides a taste of what is to come. A slippery traverse protected by rope leads to a muddy crawl where

most of the mud we had frozen our knackers off removing is replaced. The crawl breaks out into Heaven, a superbly decorated 4x3 walking passage. Numerous stalactites, floor deposits and a few small helictites, not the same as Llangatock's exotic crystal bush structures but good old fashioned cave decorations. This pleasant passage continues for a bit past several traverses over death in the floor to the White river itself. A trench in the floor is filled with a spectacular crystal and calcite raft formation. It's slightly spoilt in a few places where inevitability and a bit less care than was required has knocked some mud down but large sections remain pristine and it's a truly impressive bit of cave. After the river an obvious passage off to the left leads to the route back down. 4 pull throughs deposit us back in the Trenches about halfway along it. The second pitch requires an awkward traverse (rigged). The route back through the trenches is slightly downhill, so easier.

All in all a superb varied trip with a must see decorated section. A pretty cold trip though with quite a bit of waiting on pitches so wrap up warm and keep the party size down/operate in small teams.

In his article 'The Dave Pike Incident' in the latest CSS Newsletter (Vol 53, Nos 9 & 10, p. 82), John Cooper reproduced the statement that 'all he [Dave Pike] could remember was Oliver Lloyd's words about "wet" and "dry" drowning'.

To me, as a non-diver, these are strange words. I thought: 'What on earth is "dry" drowning?' What were Oliver Lloyd's words?

I asked this question of John, and circulated it to the other Chelsea cave divers.

For other bemused readers like myself, here are the (edited) answers.

Wet drowning is the result of inhaling water; this then has to be removed from the lungs and consequently resuscitation is more difficult. The problem is when you initially get water in your lungs the coughing reflex causes you to inhale even more water. It is a very painful way to go. Even if you do recover the water can cause lung damage (oedema).

Dry drowning is most likely to be caused by muscle spasm - typically an inrush of cold water hitting the larynx causing it to close up. This leads to anoxia, unconsciousness and death. It's much easier to bring you round as there is no water in your lungs and you are less likely to suffer from lung problems.

Or you can basically hold your breath until you pass out from anoxia.

"Dry" & "Wet" drowning were something I learned about when I started to dive in the early 1980s. I'm not sure if it is taught now.

Duncan Price

Alternatively:

I believe the simplest way to achieve "dry drowning" is to swallow your tongue, effectively preventing water entering the lungs. Can't say I've ever tried it!

John Cooper

So presumably, faced with a painful end by 'wet' drowning, Dave Pike took the alternative option and held his breath until he passed out. But wouldn't your breathing reflex kick in once you had passed out?



Another year with ATLAS

by Duncan Price



*Dave King (MNRC) and Mandy Voysey enjoying the feculent delights of Carpal Tunnel, Balch Cave.
Photos: Mark Lumley*

At the end of 2010 the ATLAS diggers (which include several CSS members including our newsletter editor) had found a grand total of 6 m of passage in their dig in Balch Cave, Fairy Cave Quarry. This amount would have been 3 m but the dig had filled itself in and had been re-excavated so it counts twice. This year's story paints a similar picture...

Meanwhile, over at Ore's Close in the shadow of the Mendip TV transmitter, a promising draughting dig known as TJ's Swallet had

been excavated (this was initially dug by Andy Watson on his own). Open cave had been entered during November 2010 but in the true spirit of ATLAS, this had been backfilled and efforts directed at shoring it up with a stout wall so that digging could continue in a downwards direction in the hope of bypassing the dodgy area. With bats in residence over at Balch this became the focus of attention until the end of April 2011 when the prospect of midges moving in for the summer and the lure of the feculence of the Balch dig became

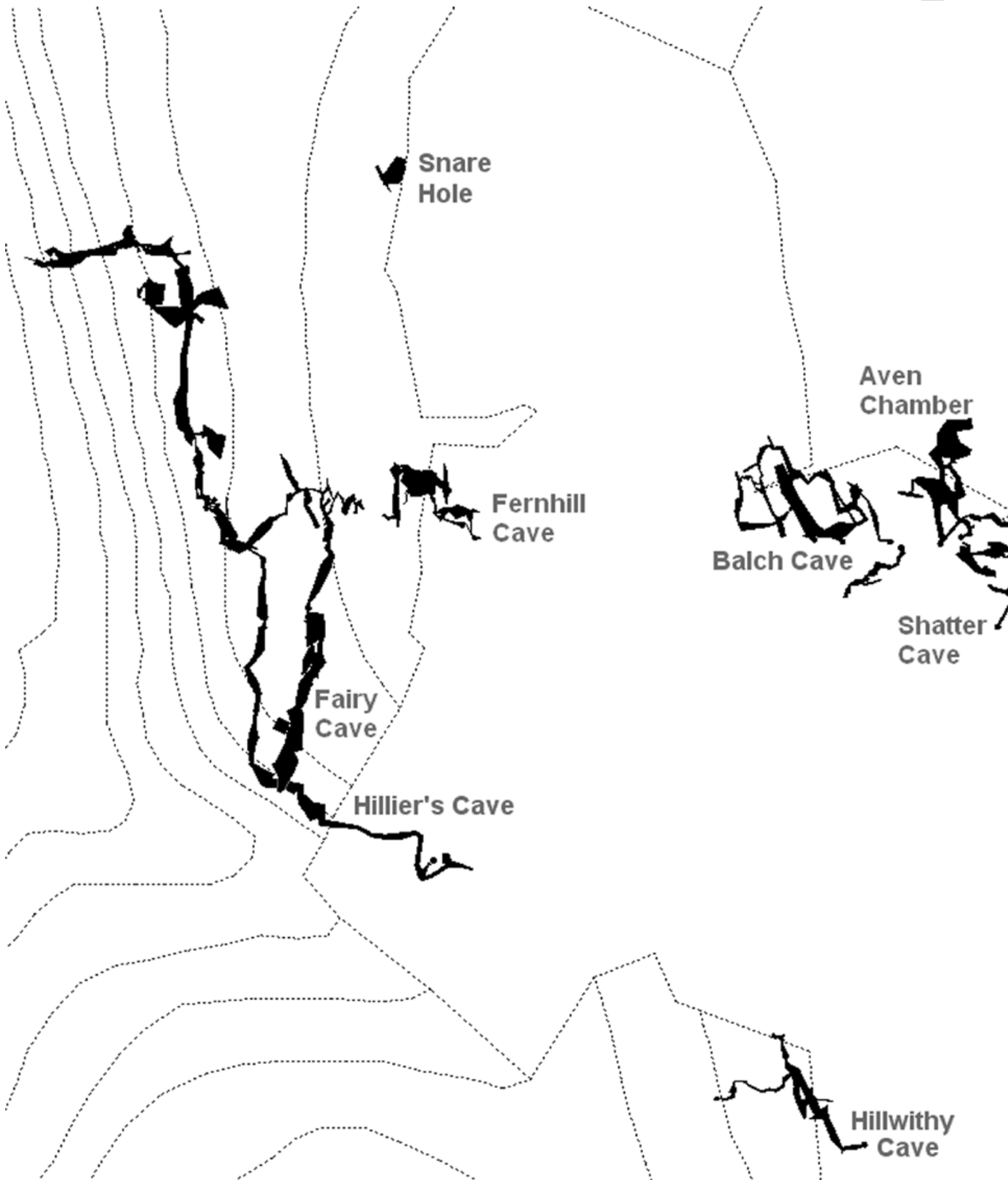
too much; tempting the diggers eastwards once more.

Driven on by the need to quench their thirst with the consumption of copious amounts of fermented apple juice (though sadly the Waggon & Horses no longer stocks Addlestones Cider) the diggers removed about 1300 bags of sloppy mud from the semi-flooded dig at the end of Carpal Tunnel (Balch Cave) in search of the mythical "Sand Aven" which our speleological savant, Mr Robin "Tav" Taviner, predicted would shower us in speleological glory. Instead, it showered us in sand, mud and latterly large boulders which have been left alone over the winter (along with the bats) while we decamp to another dig in Ham Woods, near to Shepton Mallet.

Ham Woods Shelter has the distinction of being slightly less muddy but smelling of badger poo and is approached across a boggy field with convenient parking available in a popular dogging area. Initially excavated solo by Chris Pollard, the team has taken up the crowbar and other more energetic means in search of caverns as yet unmeasured. So far we haven't actually made it any shorter but only time will tell.

On the subject of measuring stuff, a splinter group of mainly me, aided and abetted by Tony Boycott, Jon Beal and whoever else I could con have steadily been re-surveying Shatter Cave (Fairy Cave Quarry). Mandy Voysey & Naomi Sharp were variously employed to delineate parts of the cave not accessible to those of a fuller figure. Despite the promise of an encouraging echo and the permission of the management committee to ease access, no significant discoveries were made. A "forgotten" chamber in Hillier's Cave was revisited and measured after a 50 year break (this time by Matt Voysey) as well as a trip into Snare Hole (a minor cave in the quarry) in August. Work is almost done here apart from the gap between Hillier's cave and Hillwithy Cave which is still largely blocked with quarry sludge making it an uninviting survey project.

Caves of Fairy



Cave Quarry

Caves of Fairy Cave Quarry

Grade 5c survey by ATLAS/CSS 2008-2011

200 m



W/L Cave

Withyhill
Cave



DIDN'T WE HAVE A LOVELY TIME, THE DAY WE WENT TO FROG STREET

Day trip to T.I.T. dig, Frog Street, Daren Cilau. Again.

by Charles Bailey

If you think you've read this before, well – not quite. I turned out a Daren day trip article back in March. This, of course, is a far better read, so don't turn that page!

It dawned on the addled brains of Hard Rock campers early this year, that best progress at The Inconvenient Truth (T.I.T.) dig, in Frog Street, Daren Cilau would be gained by alternating camps with day trips. The latter would, with a typical two man crew, move aside the spoil from the last camp's exploits without extracting fully from the dig, and do their own bit with drill and battery (pun intended). The next camp team would have much to stack, amongst camp revelries.

A cunning theory, relying on diary choreography, good equipment, and volunteers (or as it was called in the formative days of England's naval superiority, 'press ganging'). Being local to Whitewalls and battery custodian, I seem to be particularly prone to enlistment.

So, it came to pass, on 19th November that Andy Watson and myself embarked on a wee excursion to T.I.T. The exploits of the last campers hadn't been that successful. The manful battery, (in it's prime capable of drilling 9 full length holes), had seen it's penetration prowess dwindle dramatically. Only 4 short holes were drilled at the end of the last camp. So, I made REALLY sure it was fully charged, and this trip was a bit of a tester.

Andy led the way, off through the crawl like a greased lemming, and I followed 5 minutes later with the battery. Daren aficionado's will know that the best way to get through the entrance, sane and roughly in the same season, is by carefully choosing your accompanying mental 'soundtrack'. Evil 'friends' often hum the 'birdie song' in a bid to dislodge a chosen track prior to entering the crawl, but I didn't have this problem this time around, as the surrounds were silent.

20 metres in and 'Sweet Child of Mine' was replaced, for some inexplicable reason, by Jasper Carrot's 'Day Trip to Blackpool'. Why, oh why, this was dredged up from some recess in my grey matter is truly inexplicable.

"Didn't we have a miserable time, the day we went to Blackpool."

An 'orrible day, we got drunk on the way, and spent our money on chips and bingo ..."

The 9 Kg battery wasn't proving that bad. I just had a single daren drum sack, so was able to roll the squat cylinder in most circumstances in the crawl.

"... Oh Eric and Me, we wanted a pee, so we climbed up on the band-stand."

We recycled booze, all over our shoes, and quite a lot over the band as well..."

There were vague rumblings from ahead, but I certainly wasn't gaining on Andy. He was making decent pace, despite complaining about having to carry my exquisite sandwiches.

"Oh do you recall the thrill of it all as we organised a gang bang."

Under the Pier, with a bottle of Beer, and an inflatable doll called Vinyl Vera.

It ruptured the two at the front of the queue and then it came to my turn,

But I couldn't begin 'cos the tide had come it

And the rain came down..."

Luckily, at that point, I exited the crawl.

I caught Andy up at the log book (at 6' 3" I move quicker in large spaces!), and we had a very nice trip down to Frog Street in about 3 hours. Sadly, there was very little debris to clear from the last camp, and although we generated some more with tools, Andy moved this back on his own in an hour. Pretty soon we were ready for the drill.

After a previous disaster, Dave King had re-worked the battery, but again we had a break in the cells. A bit of hot wiring later, and we had a working drill. Sadly, not for two long. We managed 5 holes, a couple at full length and the rest partials, before it petered out. If there was no other result from the trip, we'd proven without doubt that we need a new battery that's robust and has decent capacity.

Nevertheless, the job was done. And what a time for a technology failure: the way on is opening up, and the draught is improving!

An injection of blood sugar in the form of chocolate brazils and yoghurt raisins at Bonsai ensured I had a nice trip out. More comfortable than energetic, but not wrecking, despite the fact (yet to be backed up, I admit, by scientific proof) that batteries certainly gain weight when empty.

Andy again led the way out, whilst I carefully selected my sound track...

"Didn't we have a miserable time, the day we went to Blackpool..."

Shuffle mode! Damn, not again.

Bonfire Weekend

by Paul Tarrant

This year's Bonfire Party saw the biggest gathering of people at Whitewalls since the 50th anniversary party with over 50 people attending the Saturday night party. This was an excellent evening coming after several caving trips were done in Draenen, Chartist's, Aggie, Daren King's Road and two large parties doing Cnwc to Daren Cilau.

This latter trip is excellent and is fast gaining a reputation as a classic south Wales trip, easily rivaling, in my mind, the OFD 1 - 2 through trip. I did the trip with Joe Duxbury & Rachel Dearden and started at the Cnwc side of the equation with the advantage that we would be cleaned up by the damper exit through the Daren entrance series. Stuart France's ladders and other bolted aids and Via Ferrata add the right degree of confidence to this trip. I particularly liked the way the old assorted tat had been left in situ alongside the new aids as this subtly convinces you that it was absolutely the right decision to put the new equipment in place.



Two of the evening's three birthday cakes
Photo: John Stevens

The atmosphere at the party was brilliant and the firework display was one of the best we've seen in a long, long time. It was good to see our neighbours attending and enjoying our company. The beer ran out early but the food did not due to Jacky Ankerman's superb organisation in the kitchen. Everyone was well fed.

Thanks to Stuart for organising the beer, to Jacky and everyone who turned up to make this such a great evening.

Photo: Mark Lumley

Pottering About on Mendip

by
John Cooper

Bath Swallet

Saturday 29th October 2011.

Peter Buckley (WCC), Ali Moody (WCC) and self. As preparation for the Rod's Pot to Bath Swallet through trip went in and laddered the pitch with 2 x 8m ladders (1.5m short) from the in situ eyebolts. Had to descend 2/3rds of way to ensure it wasn't caught up. Came out and went to Rod's Pot. 30 minutes.

Charterhouse Cave

Saturday 5th November 2011.

Peter Buckley, Pete Hann (WCC), Ali Moody and self. Made a start on the winter digging campaign at the Riser. This high level passage goes off Highway 120 in the 2008 series. A climb in the roof of Highway 120 has a handline rigged. At the top a low dug out crawl leads to the bottom of a calcite flow. Another hand line is rigged on this and once at the top a further hand line leads up another slope to the current dig. This is a horizontal passage full of goeey mud and boulders. The top 50 cm are being removed. The spoil is dragged back from the dig face using one of the trugs used at Sand Dig. The spoil is then transferred to a bag which is loaded onto a cut down 5 gallon container so it can be slid down the two calcite slopes, to the nearest stacking space. Needs a minimum of four people to operate, one at the dig face, one each at the top, middle and bottom of the calcite slopes. 5 hours.

Saturday 26th November 2011.

Andrew Atkinson (UBSS), Peter Buckley, Ali Moody and self. Continued the winter digging campaign at the Riser. The dig is getting very squalid, the bags of spoil wobble like a blancmange as they are lowered. It was found easier to put the bag in the top trug and fill it at the face, the top nicely goes over the edges which means we don't have to double handle the spoil. A large piece of calcite floor was removed but it sank in the spoil heap! 4¼ hours.

Eastwater Cavern

Thursday 27th October 2011.

Peter Buckley (WCC), Stuart Hagley and self. A rather wet day but undeterred we dropped down the entrance hole and followed the line on and down through the boulder ruckle. We followed the 380ft Way down before heading across the Upper Traverse and out the slot at the end. Uphill then until an aven was reached. I think we took Baker's Chimney Bypass to enter the Canyon. We followed this down, gradually using the bedding plane on the left rather than the canyon until we reached the Crossroads. Here we turned left through a crawl to a T-junction and another left turn to Dolphin Pot. We dropped a handline down this but in the end we only used it to haul the tackle sacks back up. Down a bit more and the 35ft pitch was reached. The book says 12m ladder and long belay so we had two 8m ladders with us. Actually there are anchors at the head of the pitch and one ladder is plenty. So we had carried in double the amount of tackle we really needed! From the foot of the ladder we went up a boulder slope into Harris's Passage. We then followed this down the vadose trench until a tube on the left lead to the bold step. Once across this we followed the rift down until another left turn lead into the Muddy Oxbow. We dropped down this until it reached a T-junction where we turned right to rejoin the streamway. From this point we went up the 13 Pots streamway to reach the bold step and reversed the route in until we reached the Canyon. Rather than reverse the Baker's Chimney Bypass etc we took the Woggle Press route direct to the entrance boulder ruckle. It was even wetter going out than it was going in! 2¾ hours.

G B Cave

Sunday 23rd October 2011.

Joined a Gloucester trip lead by Joe Duxbury. Arrived to find the gate unlocked, the padlock had been fastened without dropping the flap first. We went in the Devil's Elbow route then up The Gorge to look at the vehicle remains. Back down and over the Bridge into White Passage. Up to the boulders at the end then back down and into Rift Chamber. Took the Loop and Oxbow route back into the main route (although I did have to stop Joe from exploring Rhumba Alley) to enter just up from the Ladder Dig. As this was already laddered (12 inch rung spacing) we were able to ascend, leaving our ladder and rope at the top. Through the wet bits and then along through the choke and into Bat Passage. On returning back to the choke we went straight up and found our way into Great Chamber, passing the other party just coming down. A quick look round and out we came. The other party were just preparing to swap over to our ladder, one side of theirs having broken on their way down! We let them swap over before we descended, the last person sliding down a doubled rope. We arrived at the bottom of the wet climb just as the other party were completing it. We caught them up again at the turn off into the exit passage where we overtook them and didn't see them again. A very pleasant 3½ hours.

Gough's Cave

Saturday 10th December 2011.

A large WCC party split into two groups. First went for a bumble round the adventure touring trip. From the tourist path we went over the rail up a very short fixed ladder and into Black Cat Chamber where a rope hung down from the ceiling. We ignored this and went across into Mushroom Chamber, then Sand Chamber and then down a 12m fixed ladder, split into 2 sections, into Boulder Chamber. We spent about 30 minutes here waiting for the real adventure caving party to move on, they were being ultra careful lifelining all the fixed ladders. We killed time looking at little loops and drops. Eventually we moved on and ascended the 5m fixed ladder in Far Rift then an easy squeeze down and another 5m fixed ladder up then a final traverse, fixed wire, to return to Sand Chamber. (Hope I remembered all that correctly!) We then returned to the tourist path and some of us took the route up then down to the water surface in Lloyd Hall. All in all a pleasant couple of hours, although the cave is very warm. The other group did Lloyd Hall first.

Longwood Swallet

Saturday 8th October 2011.

Peter Buckley, Aidan Harrison (WCC), Wayne Starsmore (WCC), Jude Vanderplank (WCC), Dave Walker (WCC) and self. I'd not been down this cave since sometime in the 1970s so couldn't remember any of it. However as it hadn't rained too much we all chose furry suits rather than wetsuits. The first difficulty was the padlock. Although the key turned fine the hasp was very reluctant to leave the body. A bit of jiggling it about finally released it and 5 minutes playing with it on the surface got it to work easier. It's important it works as the gate cannot be opened from the inside without undoing the padlock. Also noticed one of the hinges was completely rusted through so I reckon the lid needs replacing completely with one that will open from the inside without a key! Once inside it was simple to drop down the entrance rift and follow along through the Letterbox squeeze. It was much harder coming back out of the squeeze as the sharp turn left going in is shaped correctly but coming back it's a sharp turn right and the head and legs are not in optimum positions! A ladder was rigged on the first Ten Foot Vertical using a 5m wire belay. The second Ten Foot Vertical was free climbed. At the bottom we turned left and went

down through Showerbath and another drop into Great Chamber. Here Wayne rigged a safety line along the right hand wall. Once across this we continued along and then up to Christmas Crawl. A climb down boulders led to the head of Swing Pitch which was laddered for the descent into Fault Chamber. We climbed down Fault Chamber to reach the main streamway. This was followed downstream through very well decorated passage, although there was some crawling involved. We turned round when the cobbles came close to the roof, although there was still a slight airspace above the water. A few metres up stream was where Renold's Passage goes off for the real masochists! Must go back and have a look at the upstream sections. 2¼ hours.

Read's Cavern

Saturday 29th October 2011.

Peter Buckley, Ali Moody, self and four KUCC. Having completed the Rod's Pot to Bath Swallet through trip we wandered across to Read's Cavern and did the through trip there (in the dry entrance, along Main Chamber and out of the stream entrance. 30 minutes.

Rod's Pot

Saturday 29th October 2011.

Peter Buckley, Ali Moody and self. Having laddered Bath Swallet ready for our exit we entered Rod's Pot. A little way inside the entrance we met a party of four Kent University Caving Club kitted out with full SRT gear. We suggested they left the rope and ascending gear behind and tagged along with us. We all then descended to Main Chamber by the easier left hand route. Whilst I located the way to Purple Pot the rest checked out the bouldery bits leading off the bottom of Main Chamber. When they returned we all abseiled down to the bottom and pulled the rope down. We then made our way through to the bottom of Bath Swallet. Peter and Ali had a look at the start of the dig whilst the KUCC party ascended. I stationed myself halfway up to ensure the lifeline could be thrown down to its limit (we'd not planned on using a lifeline on this pitch so it was too short to reach the bottom!). Once everyone was up we detackled and headed for the surface. 2 hours.

Spider Hole

Saturday 22nd October 2011.

Joined a Wessex digging party ferrying bags of sand down. I just did the entrance crawl, the first cemented shaft, the feet first crawl into the rift and the clamber down the boulder rift, including the short ladder pitch. Exited after the last bag was lowered down the final SRT pitches. 2½ hours.

Swildon's Hole

Sunday 9th October 2011.

John Cooper and Lee Hawkswell to Fault Chamber. Very quiet going in, had to use our own ladder on the Twenty. On coming out noticed the stream was muddy just up from Tratman's Temple and found additional tackle on the pitch so a party must have passed by en route to the sump. Two more parties met just after we climbed the ladder, a solo caver at the Water Chamber and yet another party close to the entrance. However we were not held up at all. 2 hours.

Sunday 30th October 2011.

John Cooper and Lee Hawkswell. In at 10.30am with a large party on the Green partly changed. In the Short Dry Way and had to ladder the Twenty. Went and peered down the Black Hole, then looked at the Bold Step to Approach Passage before visiting Sump 2. On our way out met the large party at the top of the Twenty. Removed our ladder leaving them to rig. Met a couple more parties on their way in before we detoured into the Wet Way. 1¾ hours.

Sunday 6th November 2011.

John Cooper and Barry Weaver on a trip to Sump 1. Very quiet, didn't see anyone else in the cave. 1¼ hours.

Sunday 27th November 2011.

John Cooper and Lee Hawkswell. Short Round trip. In the Dry Way, didn't meet anyone although the Twenty was already laddered. Set the syphon going at the First Trouble and bailed it to give good airspace. Lee got through the Glistening Gallery Squeeze without a push so maybe next time we'll have to include Blue Pencil. From Sump One out met lots of large parties but we

weren't held up. Out the Wet Way and met two more parties in the entrance chambers! 2¼ hours.

Saturday 3rd December 2011.

Peter Buckley and John Cooper. Short Round trip and Blue Pencil. In the Dry Way catching up with an MCG party laddering the Twenty. As they were going the same route as us but weren't too sure of the location of the climb up to Tratman's Temple we stayed behind them. At Tratman's Temple we left them and continued on our way. The Mud Sump is slowly filling up, Barry and I will have to have a session there soon. Left our cave packs at the start of Blue Pencil and continued down to Sump 4 then back up to 3. Back up Blue Pencil and a well deserved chocolate bar. Over the traverse and to the Troubles, even fuller than last week! Set the syphon going and then a good 20 minutes of bailing to get the water down to the same level as last week. Both the second and third pools were slightly deeper but easily passed on ones back. There was a stream flowing down through Glistening Gallery, only seen this once before. Through the old Birthday Squeeze, even wetter than last week, into Vicarage Passage. Down into the streamway and upstream to Sump 1. Met a party of relative novices here but finally managed to talk the last one through, she was worried about losing her contact lenses under water. Hope she kept her eyes shut as instructed! Out through Barnes Loop before meeting the MCG party again in the Water Rift. Seems one had found out why the Greasy Chimney got it's name. She seemed to manage fine on one leg, just a bit slower. Rather than come out the Wet Way we stayed with them through the Dry Way just in case help was needed, it wasn't. A pleasant 3½ hours.

Tynings's Barrows Swallet

Saturday 12th November 2011.

Peter Buckley, John Cooper and Dave Walker (WCC). One of the many Mendip caves that I'd never been down. We gave the rigging party lead by Wayne Starsmore a half hour start but still caught them up at the entrance, they'd had to obtain the key and the two entrance ladders slowed them down. The first 5m pitch was laddered from the locking bar. A short twist then lead onto a slide onto the second 5m pitch, rigged round a boulder on the floor. We then followed the passage downwards, ignoring all the side passages. Having passed under a large wedged boulder, The Book, we stepped across a hole in the floor, Aardvark Trap, and soon reached a larger section of passage, Shit Hot. We caught the rigging party again as they were descending Pyramid Pot so we went back upstream to where some rope was hanging down the right hand wall. Up this and we looked around Bertie's Paradise Extension to kill time. Back down the rope and down Pyramid Pot and still onwards and downwards, ignoring the major inlet on the right. Finally met the rigging party again just short of the end, they were on their way back. We continued to the final end, a low crawl on gravel with a sharp turn right looking along the water to a 5cm triangle of airspace. It had taken us about an hour to get this far. A little way back from the end I was able to climb up into a higher level and follow it back upstream quite a way before dropping back down to the stream. Heading outwards we followed the major inlet, Drunken Horse Inlet, to reach a boulder choke which we left for another day. We detackled Pyramid Pot and continued on out over Aardvark Trap and under The Book. Just after that we climbed up ahead into Paton Place instead of turning left. I think I went up White Dog Passage because I ended up looking down a 5m drop above the streamway. We also looked at several other twisty little passages in this area. Back down to the main route and we continued on out with just one more detour to look at Sheep's Jaw passage. We didn't do the final climb up into Dragon Chamber. Out after a very pleasant 3 hour trip with no real difficulties.

Just to ring the changes would someone like to volunteer for a regular

Pottering about on Llangattock column?

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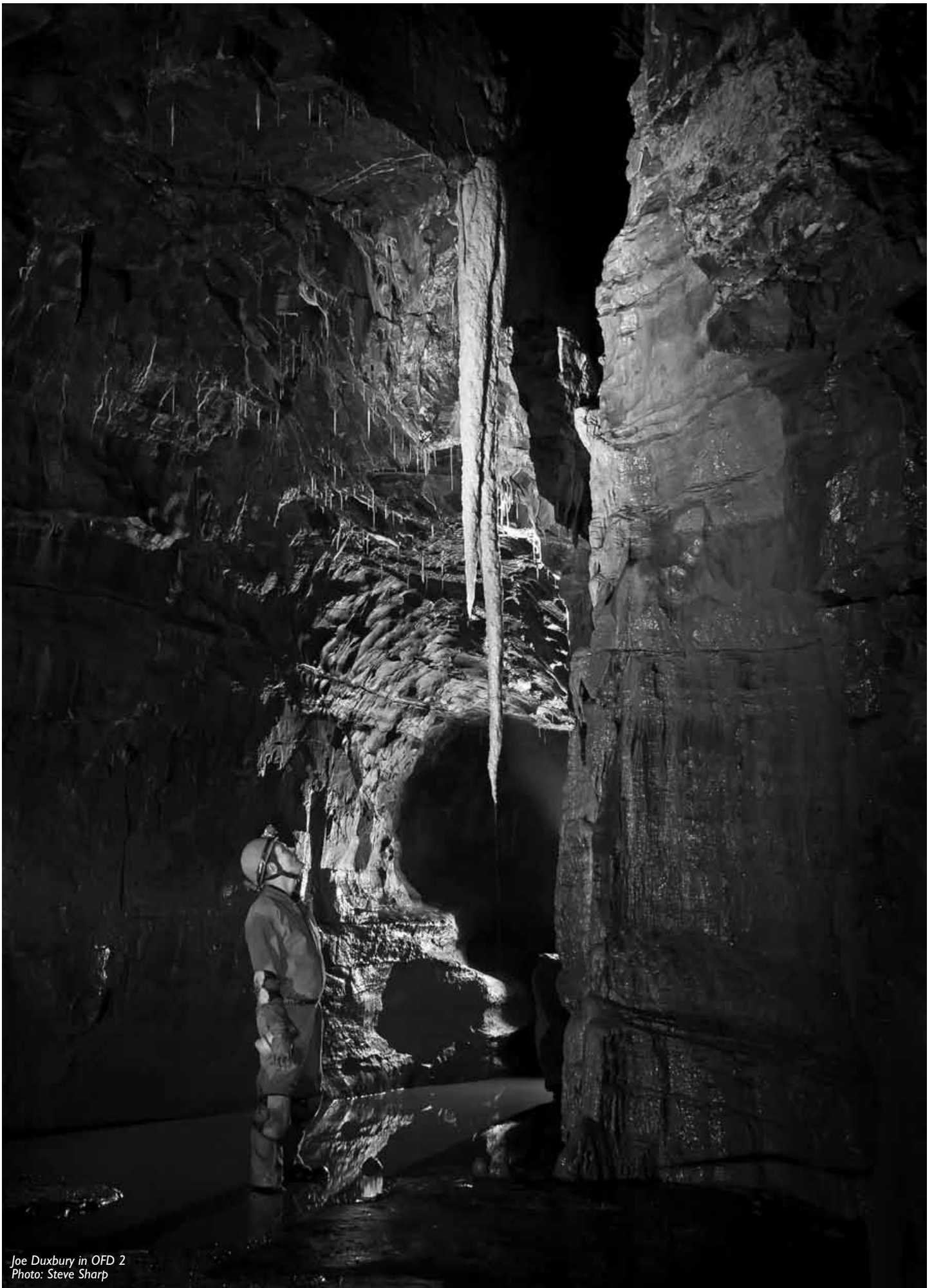
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Joe Duxbury in OFD 2
Photo: Steve Sharp

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 Llchwyr 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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