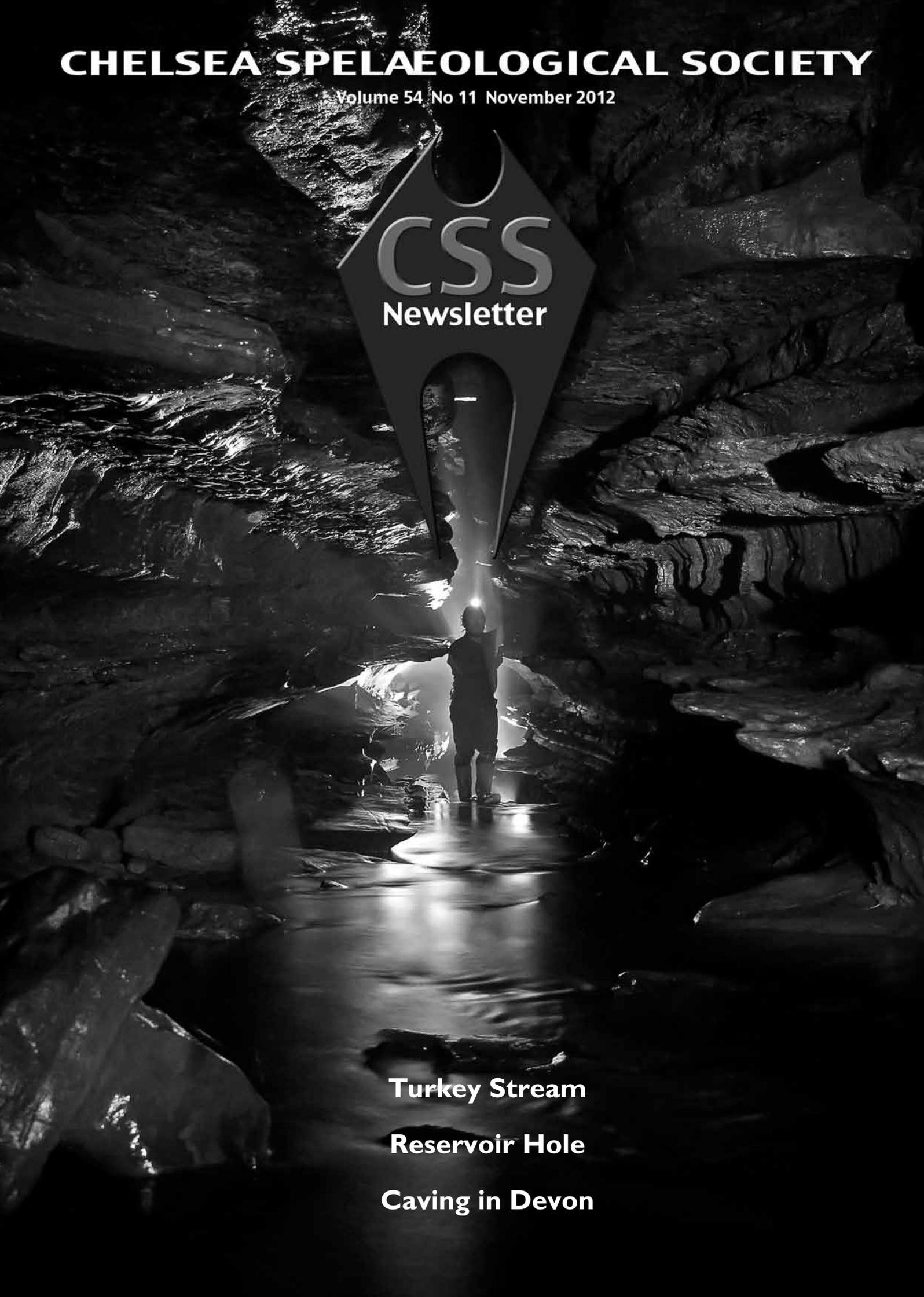


CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 54 No 11 November 2012



Turkey Stream

Reservoir Hole

Caving in Devon

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Cover Photo: Ogof Clogwyn Photo: Steve Sharp

Membership

Please send all subscriptions to:
Gary Jones, 4 Glebe Close,
Bookham, Leatherhead,
KT23 4DJ

Current rates are:

Full £25

Joint £33

PLUS your BCA subscription per person of £6 for non cavers and £17 for cavers.

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, but only once, 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.

26th January 2013

Annual Dinner

27th January 2013

AGM

Editorial

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

Goongo Mark Lumley

Please send all material to:

mark@creativeedge.me.uk

Mark Lumley,

The Creative Edge
7 Langleys Lane,
Clapton, Radstock,
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CSS Golden Oldies Meet. Crickhowell.

by Geo Fletcher

(Those CSS members, who caved, researched and finally purchased White Walls ruin, then rebuilt it whilst still trying to cave during the 1960's) Weekend of 14th, 15th and 16th September 2012.

Hi All, A BIG thank you to those who made the CSS Golden Oldies meet a most happy and successful occasion and for those who couldn't make it this time around, you missed a treat, so chalk it in your diaries for next September.

This year eleven of us stalwarts gathered for our annual weekend get together in Crickhowell on the weekend of 14th, 15th and 16th September 2012.

We arrived during the Friday evening for the big "Hello" meet in The Bear where we swapped stories and caught up on the latest hip operations, bad backs and arthritic knees before staggering back to our billets.

On Saturday small groups did their own various activities in lovely mild and often sunny weather with views over the Brecon countryside to die for. Some just had to visit White Walls again for a trip down memory lane and a sit down on Tony's seat to admire that view, others did a hike up onto Tor-y-foel from Llangynidr to gain an appetite for the evening meal and a few more literate types went off to visit the bookie town of Hay on Wye to gain inspiration.

We all gathered again on Saturday evening in the Dragon Inn where Ashley Neild prepared the meeting room for our event with a full choice menu. The service and food was excellent along with all the old CSS stories and memories from the usual raconteurs.

We recalled old friends and particularly Bob Fish and wished him a speedy recovery from his hospitalisation after his heart attack and severe foot infection and wished him a swift return to our get togethers. We also hoped that Carol Shannon (Payne) makes good progress with the brand new hip joint she had installed last Saturday.

We toasted all our absent friends and got on to more tales of our adventures over the years remembering:

The freezing cold winter trips down to Llangatock from London in Bill Maxwell's unheated Landover.

Endless stories of the rebuilding of the White Walls ruin.

Memories of having eight pints in the Horseshoe in Llangatock and the walk back up the hill in the dark to return sober.

Potholing trips down Pen y Ghent Pot carrying loads of ladder.

Laddering and climbing down the big Gaping Gill Main Shaft,

CSS's entry into the "Guinness Book of Records" for bottoming Triglav Pot in Yugoslavia, the then deepest Ice Cave in the world.

The final break though at the end of Darren Cilau entrance crawl.



Clive Calder and Geo Fletcher woodworking outside White Walls in 1964.

Note the original oak door I put on and no porch built yet!

Photo: Geo Fletcher

And of course endless tales of the exploits of Tich Morris, what a great CSS character; there is just no stopping us when we get going.

We dispersed on Sunday, some staying on another day to explore the canal system, a group of us went up to say hello to White Walls and chatted to John Stevens, the Hut Warden, after which we had a trek along the escarpment to visit Aggy entrance (Agen Allwedd) for a fond hello, and to experience again that "come on" smell of the cool exit draft and of course to have a photo shoot.

So a weekend of fine company, fine food and fine weather, what more could one ask of a weekend gathering!!!!

Thanks again to all for your support and I hope to see you again either at the CSS Western Section gathering on Mendip in March 2013 (Contact Roy Musgrove) and/or the Golden Oldies meet in September 2013 in South Wales again.

If anyone has any photos of the weekend events then please send them around or to me to pass on.

Best wishes all, Geo Fletcher.

Stoke Lane Slocker

by Steve Sharp

Two years ago (2010) Andy Snook and I planned a trip to Stoke Lane Slocker.

Reading the description in **Mendip Underground** the cave seemed easy to find and a jewel beyond sump 1.

We set off in search of the location, what could go wrong!

We arrived in Stoke St. Michael around 7.30pm and toured the country lanes looking for the lay-by next to Cook's Wood. An hour passed but still no lay-by! Eventually we found it, parked up and changed.

Stoke Lane Slocker starts in a similar fashion to Swildon's Hole (entering through a man hole cover). The first part of the cave is a stream passage which is prone to flood.

The steamway is impressive with its shiny water-scalloped rock; route finding can be tricky. I shouted to Andy "I think I've found the sump", the water was sinking fast against a right hand bend, we tried to crawl through the sump/duck into the small black space beyond "There's no way I'm fitting through there" I'm not the smallest person but this was ridiculous! We read the description again and realised we had not even covered half of Stoke 1. Note to self -study the survey in more detail at HOME!

We eventually found the mud crawl, white slab and the Nutmeg Grater (all listed in Mendip Underground), the latter being a real challenge, eventually we found Sump 1. It lies in a small, claustrophobic chamber full of doom and gloom with a small rope leading through the sump. Just before the sump is a tight constriction which requires the removal of your helmet and squeezing through a narrow slot between the rocks which is very accommodating if you lie low in the water.

Since I started caving I couldn't help noticing no-one was keen on Stoke trips due to the nature of the sump, easy going through but the risk of over shooting on the way back.

We both looked at each other and I bravely said to Andy "You go first as I have the camera gear".

We had one mask between us; Andy took a deep breath of courage and disappeared into the gloomy depths of the sump!

Five minutes later he resurfaced back to me looking like he had seen a ghost; we both looked at the time (22.45), abandoned

the sump as a bad idea and headed back the way we came in - we decided a photo trip would be a better option on a Saturday!!

August 2012

Two years have passed and I'm not allowed to mention the word "Stoke" in Andy's presence which is a rare occurrence these days! (Lord Lucan comes to mind).

I needed to explore Stoke 2 and take some photos; this is where you can always rely on Bear Grylls (Gary Kiely) to save the day!

We arrived at the lay-by (which was still hard to find!), changed and headed down to the entrance. This was Gary's first experience of Stoke!

This year we have had our fair share of rain; luckily Sunday's weather promised to look after us.

We swiftly made our way through the streamway to Sump 1; the stream was flowing quickly through pebble crawl; our lights reflected in the shiny water droplets covering the walls and water surface as we made our way through the twists and turns of the streamway. As we approached Sump 1 we had a quick brief, Gary opted to go first as he's an experienced diver. Once Gary was safely through the sump I felt a tug on the line, this was my signal to dive, I took a deep breath and emerged in Stoke 2, to my relief!!

Stoke 2 has a good size streamway - a far cry from Stoke 1!



The cave was far larger than I had imagined. As we made our way through the stream-way Main Chamber came in on our left. The large curtains are breathtaking. At the top of the chamber is a hairy traverse which leads into the Throne Room, an



easier route lies downstream climbing up through a boulder choke into Bone Chamber via Pool Chamber. Sump 2 lies at the bottom of Pool Chamber.

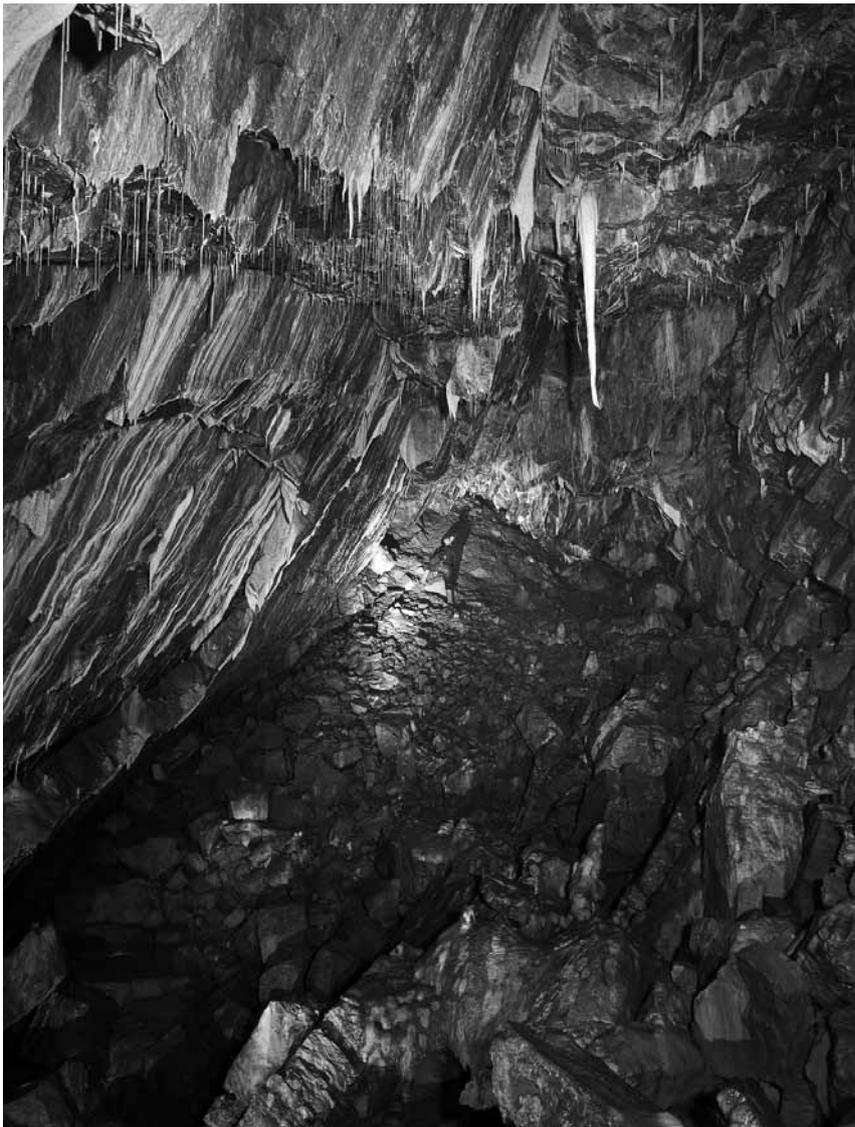
Pool Chamber gives you a chance to sit and gaze at the 10m long sump and reflect on the journey so far, various weights are laid out on a large slab of rock just above the sump.



Bone Chamber is the biggest of all the chambers and at one time would have connected to the surface, as the name suggests human remains were found by the first explorers; the floor is strewn with large boulders covered in stal, the chamber is dominated by a large flowstone wall and a large single stalactite hanging from the ceiling.

Bone Chamber leads directly into the Throne room containing spectacular formations in every direction, the room is dominated by the King and Queen two very large stall bosses.

We photographed as much as we could in the time available to us. It was getting very late so we made our way back to Sump 1. The sump is slightly tricky on the return journey and we left the sump behind us with a sense of relief and joy rolled into one. The crawl back through was interesting as we managed to get lost before the Muddy Oxbow, we were convinced water levels had risen so crawled through a low wet duck in desperation only to realise our stupid mistake. We eventually emerged from the entrance into the darkness (23:00) after a ten hour trip.



Stoke Lane Slocker is probably in the top five of Mendip trips.

If the weather is good what are you waiting for?

Photos from Left:

Gary Kiely in Stoke 2

Main Chamber

The King - Throne Room

Sump 2

Bone Chamber

Princess Grotto

All photos: Steve Sharp

Cave Hunts

during a holiday in Brixham, South Devon

by Andy Watson

I had scratched together a 'possible caves' list a couple of days before our Brixham caravan site holiday and on arrival day Saturday, 18 August I spoke to a member of the Brixham Yacht Club about possibly using their changing rooms before popping into **Coleman's Maze Cave** (GR SX94723/56589) that was opposite in some cliffs according to my GPS. On this Saturday I thought I had briefly located the cave following the advice in the updated Concise Caves of Devon (CCOD). However, I also knew this overgrown cave was "rarely visited" but not without interest and looking at the chest high brambles and nettles I knew I would need some secateurs. So up at 0830 on the Sunday and off to the nearest garden centre in Paignton to buy some. This was achieved and it was back to the two-hour parking bay up past the yacht club round the sharp hairpin bend and a walk back down the road with our caving kit to the yacht club to change, which both of us were rather apprehensive about. It went without a hitch, albeit we received some strange 'looks' as we changed into our woolly bears and left our wellies and oversuits outside. We left our change out kit in the club changing room (Thanks to Ron the member we had spoken to). Over the road, climb up by the garage roof through some nettles and brambles wielding my new cutters I found various small solution holes but none remotely body sized. The description must be wrong and the grid reference in CCOD! But my persistence paid off, the access description is wrong in the later update, although I could and eventually did find the cave entrance by this route, my hands were scratched ribbons and I was well stung by nettles. While Sue was waiting patiently in her caving kit, I ranted and raved but eventually found the entrance. The easier route is as follows: find somewhere to park around the hairpin bend, ask very politely at the yacht club, do not lean on their white steps or take any dirty kit into their changing rooms. Go out of the club down the steps and go directly across the road under the Dolphin Court flats where there are various resident parking spaces in their car park and you will find a dustbin for flat number 6 on your right and a small rocky flower garden in front of you. Go to the right of the little flower garden, taking care not to step on it, behind the bins and up the overgrown path up to the cliff aiming up and slightly to your left. Behind the hanging ivy and creepers you will find a narrow path along the cliff face that takes you the 30 feet to the cave entrance, that is an obvious slot. It is slightly tricky to get into, I went in feet first successfully and then off into a crawl takes you into the reasonable sized Main Chamber. This cave has bat roosts. The quarry face belongs to

Torbay Borough Council and they don't know about the cave, it is recommended that we try to keep it this way. These are all holiday flats now, so just be polite if you see anyone (Note: The grumpy man who used to live in the top flat is not a resident any more).

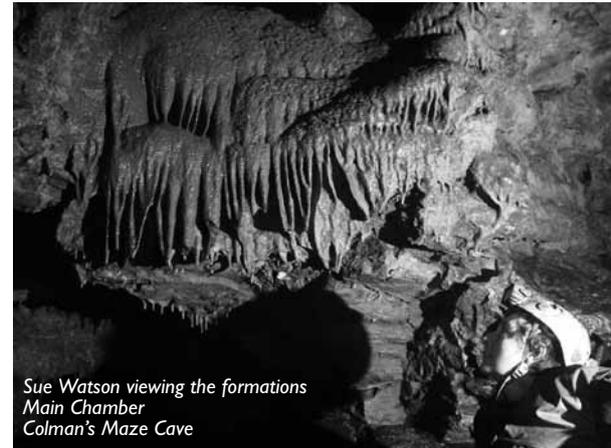


Main Chamber
Coleman's Maze Cave

Updated Formal Cave Description: The entrance is an awkward horizontal slot which, after a short squeeze, drops into a 15 foot high phreatic rift, a crawl continuing at floor level leads to the Main Chamber. Soon after entering the main rift a climb in the roof leads to the Upper Series. A short crawl leads off at roof level. A small chamber at the end of the crawl has three ways on. The Right-Hand Route passes some very attractive red stalactites. There is another crawl called Curtain Passage, with a muddy squeeze on the right. This contains some very attractive curtains and ends in a choke, through which Dry Chamber and the base of the previously mentioned squeeze can be gained.

A hole in the floor of Main Chamber on the right has a slight squeeze down into a Lower Series to a Three Way Junction. From the Three Way Junction, straight ahead is a tight squeeze into Boulder Chamber (too tight for me) although Sue got through okay into the largest chamber in the cave. It is 25 foot long, 15 foot wide and 6 feet high with some fine stalagmites. At the far end of a steeply descending rift, The Pot, leads to a draughting boulder choke. The crawl under the squeeze leads back to the crawl from the entrance rift.

At the end of Main Chamber on the right, forward leads up slightly to a dig and to the right is a tight squeeze section (we did not get past this) leading to a chamber and a descending parallel rift section. To the left is a cul-de-sac which leads past some formations and a dry crystal pool, aragonite crystals and on through to a



Sue Watson viewing the formations
Main Chamber
Coleman's Maze Cave

chimney section with some nice flowstone and this is also a bat roosting area. Overall this is an interesting cave and quite pretty in places, 'bag it', but do it discreetly.

After a good morning we went off to find **Denbury Sink** in the afternoon, so armed with wet and muddy caving kit and a picnic lunch we drove to Denbury by SatNav and GPS and found Lowes Farm and asked for Mr. White. He no longer lives there and the farmhouse is now privately owned by a pleasant gentleman who promptly told me about two other stream sinks in the adjacent fields that had been dyed traced by Plymouth Caving Group many years earlier with the water surfacing (Supposedly at Brixham!). These two sinks were at SX82339/68464 (an active stream sink taking a reasonable amount of water but not dug by any cavers) and at SX82230/68540 both in adjacent cow fields. The land all belongs to Devon County Council now and the farm is run as a returning 'armed forces' rehabilitation centre and farm. The main Denbury sink has a different access route, although located close by at SX82294/68550. As you come into Denbury with pub on your right (The Union) at the sort of crossroads, turn left along the narrow road and go past two large houses (the second one is called The Grange) and there is a rickety gate into an old orchard field. There is nowhere to park here, go back and park on the link road by



Denbury Sink

the pub around the village green without blocking any drive access. Once back in the Orchard Field walk straight ahead slightly, up to the left-hand side of the field and the fenced sinkhole is obvious against the top hedge. It was excessively overgrown with nettles and brambles. The entrance shaft with obvious hauling scaffolding over it has been capped and the lid bolted down using 10-12 millimetre diameter stainless steel bolts and possibly a central bolt 25 mm-ish. We had no spanner on our first visit so we could not descend. Later note: On Thursday we went back to Denbury Sink with a spanner and then I realised the lid also had a padlock underneath it, I wonder who has the key, Devon County Council or the farm office?

On our way back from Denbury village I noticed a sign to West Ogwell and recalled from the CCOD that there was a cave here and one at East Ogwell as well. We tried to locate the **West Ogwell Cave** in the old disused quarry as stated using GR SX829/700 from CCOD, but I spent about one hour looking for it to no avail, it is there somewhere, perhaps a winter visit with less vegetation would reveal the entrance. Checking later in the addendum to CCOD I realise that the entrance had actually been covered with spoil and there is now no easy access or obvious entrance location.

East Ogwell Cave is actually close to Abbotskerswell at SX849/696 near the outskirts of Newton Abbot in a disused private quarry that is used for various industrial units and businesses. Recently (August 2012) a drinks distribution business has taken the area near where the cave is situated so access is only from Monday to Friday so we have not asked yet. Later Note: Thursday we went back decided to see if I could locate and get access to East Ogwell cave (Mon-Fri) as mentioned earlier, I asked at the drink distributor in the quarry and he allowed us to go through a large blue gate at the back of the beer kegs storage compound. I hunted high and low around the back of the quarry to no avail. The area is very overgrown suspect the entrance may have been covered over with sticks or perhaps filled. If anyone knows the location of the entrance, a winter visit would perhaps find it.

Monday, off to Bovey Tracey 'Gateway to Dartmoor' to eventually find **Horsham Steps** that according to the January 1991 addendum of CCO D has a small talus cave (under the large granite boulders) of 150 feet long. The grid reference SX7590/8170 is spot on for the boulders on the River Bovey that is a hard place to get a car near. We eventually drove down a rough private track to get to the Horsham Farm buildings and asked politely if we could park in the field as we were cavers with gear to carry down to the river. The resident was very helpful, but clearly for 'moor walkers' they would not make this parking concession. The road route from Bovey Tracey is to follow the tourist signs to Becky Falls and go past

these to Manaton village and turn right to the Horsham Hamlet (not signed), going past the Manaton Gate, a substantial stone arch. Park on the field and ask at the house. From the field at the bottom of the track go through the gate and turn left along the drive to the farm buildings, turn left and go behind the old farmhouse on the left hand side and take the right fork through the footpath gate with the rubber boot sole fixed to it. Downhill for about half a mile to the river and the rocks are a short distance upstream. This is not cave really, just holes under boulders and depending on the water levels you may drown! I managed to do about 25 feet of it, having great fun and getting my over suit and wooley bear very clean without actually drowning. It was a great activity and with care it was like climbing into a washing machine. There was just me and Sue at this very lonely place in Dartmoor, so I decided not to take any risks of getting trapped. Whoever put this cave into the caving book had a good sense of humour. If you are in the area with some kit that needs washing, check it out. We came back over the moor via Widdecombe-in-the-More, famous due to the song about Widdecombe Fair which still occurs each September. We had a lovely cream tea here at a cafe with a large hanging teapot sign and then homeward bound to Brixham and the awful coastal traffic.



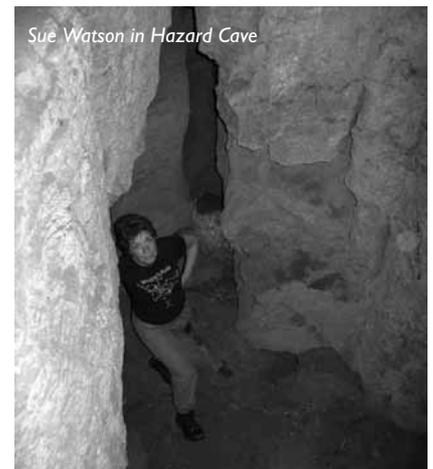
Andy Watson
Horsham Steps

Tuesday, lying in to 10 o'clock and down to do the tourist bit of Brixham, ugh! I tried to locate **Bone Cave** through a local resident at SX924/559 after another local* had tipped us off about it. This lady told us it was in a disused quarry behind Mount Pleasant Road down an alleyway which leads to a sea cadet hut (which was a scout hut in the 1970s) this is a secure fenced compound, but according to the other local* we had met previously near 'Man Sands' evening before access is still possible through the house on the left of the archway through the property's garage. The house was closed up with shutters, so no joy here today. It might be worth a winter or out of holiday season try? Although I suspect access will only be allowed after a very polite approach, if at all. Note: The old CCOD states the key is obtainable from 46 Station Hill, this is no longer true as this is a holiday house now.

In the afternoon we went to Galhampton Quay boatyard to find **Galhampton Cave** at SX881/561 but the boatyard manager would not allow us access, but a worker mentioned there are two caves here and the manager also said via the receptionist that the bats are checked in

the main cave once a year, but they did not say who by. They were generally not very receptive.

We were now going up towards Buckfastleigh and en route I found and met the farmer at Hazard Farm who after a friendly discussion said it was okay for us to have a look at **Hazard Cave** SX755/592 and the other small caves in the disused Langford Quarry (this land belongs to the farm). He said that he had to stop climbers climbing there because of one climber's fall and he got hassle from both the parents and the police. He was still okay for club cavers to have a look if he was asked and I explained the BCA insurance scheme held by club cavers. The two caves I looked at were short but interesting rifts, one had an owl nesting in it I think judging by the mouldy owl pellets.



Sue Watson in Hazard Cave



Langford Quarry Cave 1



Langford Quarry Cave



Reed's Cave, Easter Chamber with PCG members

Off to meet Plymouth Caving Group at the Pengelly Centre in Buckfastleigh for a leader trip in the locked **Reed's Cave** GR SX7432/6653. An interesting trip for Sue and I; the climb into the upper series was difficult and then I could not pass the first tight squeeze, so we both had to climb back down again. So we caught up with the other party through a series of large rift passages and on into a small chamber containing the famous 'Little Man' and a muddy drop down to a sump. The main Chamber has some grubby but very impressive pretties stained with Devon brown mud and iron colouring. This cave has a strong conservation order on it for the greater horseshoe bat roosts and the unique 3 to 4 mm long shrimps that dwell in the muddy gower pools. Thank you to PCG for allowing us to join their evening trip, especially Bernard and Richard.



Reed's Cave, Little Man formation

On Wednesday we went to a location called Forder to wash our caving kit of all the red Devon mud and it was not a ford any more, but the stream did the job adequately. Later, I tried to find **Yalberton Cave**, supposedly at GR SX861/581 which is not quite correct. Due to a small holding business and no parking at the south end of the access lane it may be better to walk down from the top end of the lane. Vehicle access, if you have a small 4x4 or old 'don't mind getting scratched' car, would be possible from the south end and you will probably be able to drive up the track and park nearer the quarry. The quarry itself, east of the track, was very overgrown and I could not locate the position of the cave in the time that I had available.

Thursday; After the various access and locating disappointments we gave up and went to the tourist show cave, **Kent's Cavern** in Torquay. This was surprisingly good and apart from the floor walkways which had been made up very well there was little obvious artificial formations or other changes in it apart from good lighting that they carefully turned on and off each time. Although it was expensive to go in, we



Kent's Cavern Bottom Chamber formations

would recommend it as our cave guide was very good and it is geologically interesting for the cave tour, about a third of a mile. Back to Brixham, where I briefly visited a short iron stone mine at GR SX93567/54736 at Sharkham Point. There are some more in the area around the point area, but alas time was short. So in a week we managed 3 caves, access is still difficult in Devon and we had hoped to get to more caves at Berry Head Quarry and Kitley, perhaps next time.

Photos by Andy & Sue Watson

Daren Digging

The next Hard Rock Camp will be from Nov 30 to Dec 2.

Activities will include digging and surveying in Forgotten Passage.

If you'd like to join the diggers please contact the editor.

Getting down with the cavenauts in training

"You just emerged from six days in a cave in Sardinia, Italy. Why were you down there?"

"I was training with an international team of astronauts."

For the full story visit www.newscientist.com/article/dn22275-getting-down-with-the-cavenauts-in-training.html

Roy Musgrove

Radon Monitoring in Daren Cilau

by Adrian Fawcett

For one month during the summer, radon detectors were placed at 6 locations in Daren Cilau from the Old Rift Passage to the Restaurant at the End of the Universe. It was expected that the radon levels would show some degree of correlation with those in Agen Allwedd, given the similar geology and hydrology.

The results showed that REU was the highest, and Old Rift Passage the lowest, but the range was actually not all that great. What was a big surprise, however, was that all the Daren Cilau measurements were very substantially lower than the Aggy results. At this stage we have no theories as to the reason – and perhaps even a measurement error cannot be ruled out. Therefore, at this stage, we are not publishing the actual numbers.

Ideally, the next step would be to monitor radon levels simultaneously in each of the main Llangatock caves. The radon monitoring exercise has been performed on behalf of CCW, and a further study would depend on their agreement and ability to leverage funds for another batch of detectors.

NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE

NOVEMBER 2012

Stuart France Hon. Secretary

New Full Members.

The committee proposes Dan Thorne, Lisa Boore, Stephen McCabe, Helen Nightingale, Paul Shea, Richard Smith and Anne Vanderplank as full members of CSS.

Please send any comments to me.

Full Member Procedure.

The committee invites your views on how well the present system is working and any changes you would like to see. This is advance notice of this topic being on the 2013 AGM agenda. Some other clubs have a more formal procedure than we do - such as the obligation to attend certain meets, and/or needing to find a proposer and seconder, one of whom needs to be on the committee, and a month or two written notice being given in a newsletter or on a club notice board or club website.

CSS subscriptions are now due. Please remit to Gary Jones, £25 single member without BCA insurance if taken out through another club, £42 with BCA active member insurance or £31 with non-active member insurance. Joint Members at the same address pay £33 plus any BCA premiums. Associate Members pay £20 for publications.

Club Member Database

If you need a copy of your entry, please ask me by email to send a copy to you. Send any updates such as your new address or preferences to me.

Whitewalls Library

Anna Northover and Adrian Fawcett now have all the books and many magazines shelved and in a growing computer catalogue. It is clear we have too many magazines to store in Whitewalls and not enough quality books, especially those published in the last 20 years when library access had been difficult and interest perhaps waned. Members are invited to suggest to Anna which periodicals to keep as paper copies, and how far back, and any we should aim to subscribe to electronically, with copies downloadable from the members-only area of the CSS website for example. We are also looking for copies of interesting caving books to add to the library – please discuss any potential donations or your purchasing recommendations with Anna.

Whitewalls Bunks

Members are reminded that bunks at Whitewalls are allocated on a first come first served basis, so on busy weekends it is advisable to bring camping gear just in case there are none left, and also be aware that children are expected to give up bunks for adults when asked to do so.

Children at Whitewalls

It is expected that some members will bring along their children to social meets such as the summer BBQ and autumn bonfire. Non-members are not allowed to bring children to Whitewalls. Other meets, which include a communal meal (e.g. the annual dinner or curry night) or where there is a more than just a passing interest in alcohol (e.g. a wine or spirits evening) will be adult only. For other types of meets, please discuss your children attending with the meet organiser. At present, families may use Whitewalls when there is no club meet or external booking, but please discuss this in advance with John Stevens - and be aware that other cavers may still arrive unannounced and their leisure plans and timetable may not harmonize perfectly with yours. There is a minimum age of 18 years to join CSS.

Whisky Evening

I will be running another mid-winter spirits tasting evening on Saturday 23rd February at Whitewalls. Please bring along some samples to share and enjoy. There will be caving activities as well earlier in the day to instill a desire for developing that inner glow.

Snowdonia Mines Weekend

While only four of us went on the September trip, it is felt worthwhile repeating this in 2013, based at a comfortable climbing club hut so there can be a social side too, such as an evening meal in a convivial atmosphere. If this interests you then please contact me so that I can judge the level of interest, any date preferences, and book enough bunks at a suitable venue. As to activities, a number of people have already asked about doing the Croesor-Rhosydd through-trip and certain other interesting mines which I cannot name here for various reasons you can imagine.

Brno - Czech International Caving Conference

Remember this is also in the summer of 2013 and a few members are already laying plans including Joe Duxbury, Mel Reid and John Newton whom I am sure would like to hear from like-minded members.

Training

Just a reminder that CSS does not provide formal caver training and all those who participate in club activities do so at their own risk. Clearly, all those on a caving trip will frame their activities to accommodate the abilities and interests represented within the group, and this may provide informal opportunities to learn from peers.

Turkey Stream

- Sumps 1 to 5

by John Stevens

Over a number of years I have dug in the Turkey Sumps area. After diving Sump 2 and its subsequent bypass, I realized my survey of the area was wrong and would require some major adjustments. A dig to bypass Sump 3 was begun and we had hoped this would go quickly, but something did not seem quite right. Other digs had now started to highlight the area as being interesting again and I thought that to really progress things I needed a better survey.

The Survey Trips

22 April 2011.

On the day we gained a further member which would be very useful for the carry up to the sumps. I thought I had a caving wetsuit at Pant y Rhiw, but could only find a two piece 6mm diving suit, so I would carry this up and change at Terminal Chamber. This is where there were a couple of small tanks that had been there for longer than I care to remember (circa 10yrs). Duncan Price would dive though all the sumps with the kit while Mike Read, Andy Heath and myself would use the bypasses. This gave Duncan the chance of using the old air first, seemed only fair. First problem for me was getting changed. Neoprene seems to get tighter by the year and this was going to be very tight. A quick wallow in the water, to try and make it more comfortable, then on towards the bypasses. In Sump 1 bypass the extra thickness of 24mm of wetsuit made the squeeze so tight I had to breathe out and push myself forward. At this point the attached hood caught on a rock projection, breathing in was not an option, but a bit of a struggle and thrash got me though. Sump 2 bypass is not so tight, but for anyone with long legs it is a distinct problem.

At Sump 3 I dived through using one cylinder, followed by Duncan who then dived back with both to allow Mike to come through. This left Andy on his own to look at the dig that may bypass Sump 3.

On the other side of Sump 3 we all got moving to warm up. Water levels were low but it was still easier to free dive the duck than attempt to use the minimal airspace. The next duck is not as low and we quickly got up out of the water into the higher level passages. A few climbs and traverse got us to Sump 5. The survey was going to be quick as we would soon start to cool off. Mike was on the DistoX and, with Duncan sorting out the stations, they were soon supplying me with all the data I could manage.

At Red Sump Duncan tried to climb up to the high level that leads back down to a second sump that is on the same level. The mud was very slippery and we had to keep the survey moving along so this was left.

By the time we got back to the climb down to the water it was obvious we could not complete all the passages in one trip as Mike and Duncan were really feeling the cold. I however had the extra thick wetsuit on, so I was fine and could still operate the PDA without the shivers ruining the diagrams. The last two stations were marked and we exited, again with Duncan diving the sump several times.

After my problems in the bypass on the way in I decided to remove the jacket of the wetsuit, but this allowed every grain of sand to enter. So with bare arms with elbow pads I made my way back though the gritty bypasses to Terminal Chamber. Here Andy was waiting with a huge slab of Rocky Road and other food. I peeled off the still too tight wetsuit and rinsed all items in the stream to get rid of the grit, a dry furry and oversuit were heavenly.

Andy, while we had been away, had had a look at the Sump 3 bypass. He then wandered back down Turkey Stream and investigated some other side passages, rebuilding a cairn that helps with a rope climb up to an ascending passage which overlooks the Terminal Chamber. From this view point a traverse is apparently possible to reach Pete's Café (though I would not attempt it without a rope and putting some bolts in for protection).

The cylinders were left for another day as there was still enough air in them for another trip.

stats :- 46 legs, 771 measurements, 10 hours

2 June 2011.

This was an eventful trip for me and David Stevens. He started by falling off the ledge as you pass down the left side of Main Passage. Fell only a meter or so, but it started the day off in the manner that it was going to continue. Next was my turn. At the rope climb by second choke, I thought it might be possible to do it in just two steps. I did not take account of the fact that I can't do the splits. So I duly fell a metre or so, landing heavily on my rear. This was going to ache for the rest of the day. The rest of the trip to Terminal Chamber was uneventful.

We started the survey here as I knew where Peter Cousin's prime point was. Rapid progress was made to Sump 1 where we spent some time looking in vain for the prime point that is located there. We even had its height above the floor with us and still failed.

Next, up through the Sump 1 bypass and down to the start of Sump 2. Some steel around here so we had to make sure the DistoX was nowhere near any of it. Then up through the contorted loose Sump 2 bypass. We then headed back towards Pete's Café and as David climbed up the boulder bank a large slab moved on him. A cut glove and sore ankle was a lucky escape as the rock was huge and a break here would have been a serious problem (it was much larger than the washing machine sized rock that broke Paul Stacey's foot, but this time I wasn't above it so couldn't get the blame). The survey continued with the high level passage and then down to the streamway.

Just after the low section in the stream a small inlet was spotted in the right wall. After a couple of rocks were removed I entered a wet crawl that ascended to a choke. Water was entering from low on the left and also falling down the choke. As this had not been looked at before, it might pay a second look (see Survey), K.

We reached Sump 3 and left a station as the bolt attaching the dive line. Finally we ascended to the choke that we thought might be a dig to bypass Sump 3. Since I was last here a large block (~100kg) had fallen out of the roof in the dig, but the way the draught goes was still diggable, J.

stats:- 53 legs, 499 measurements, 10½ hours

11 August 2011.

This was going to be just Duncan and myself. I had found my caving wetsuit, but this too was very tight so I opted to cave in furry gear and get changed again. Quick progress was made to Terminal Chamber and we picked up the two cylinders again, got changed, and set off. Again Duncan taking the wet route and me the dry.

The survey continued with the dry high level passage we hoped would be heading directly for the Sump 3 bypass dig, J. This starts large but at a junction reduces to a bouldery crawl which Duncan had reduced some boulders in a few years ago. It ends in a tight rift which requires further widening, H. Then back to the water and headed up to Sump 4. This was small and not very inspiring to me. More cooling stream passage, with a duck, and then a bit of relief as we knocked off another small side passage.

The low duck was fun to survey through, no instrument station there. Finally back to the dive line and finishing with a station at the upstream bolt. So the only bit missing from the centreline is the 6m of Sump 3, but we have a good estimate for that.

Final dive out and back to get changed. The wetsuit was so tight that Duncan was required to pull it off the shoulders. At least I didn't have the grit to contend with, quite a bit cooler though.

stats :- 58 legs, 398 measurements, 9¾ hours

Passage Description

From the Terminal Chamber a tall narrow stream passage leads off. It has a 2.4m waterfall which is easily climbed to reach a small chamber. To the left is a wet crawl and ahead is a narrowing rift. Both reach Sump 1. This is a short dive to a chamber with a crawl to reach Sump 2. Another short dive can be an alternative to the crawl. Sump 1 can be bypassed by a crawl that leads off on the left just before the sump. This is tight in places and enters a collapse area with holes down to Sump 2 and a rift on the right which is the Sump 2 bypass.

Sump 2 is a 27m long shallow dive, mostly in a roomy rift. The bypass however starts tight and twisty, with limited leg room. This then emerges at the base of a loose boulder shaft. The left wall is solid but the top rim of boulders is loose, so caution is needed. Once up in the high level passage, south leads past a few formations to reach a choke. This has been dug on the right where it ascends. The survey now shows that digging in the left, M, may open a route to Pete's Café. The roof height of

Terminal Chamber is the same as the roof height here. (Unfortunately I have not been up to Pete's Café so I don't know how extensive this is or its direction.)

The opposite way in this passage eventual lowers, with collapse forming the right wall, L. An obvious hole down beside a massive boulder leads down a sandy passage to emerge in the streamway right beside the upstream end of Sump 2. Walking upstream soon lowers at a puddle with an inlet on the right and water emerging from straight on. The way on is slightly left over boulders, which have dropped from another high level passage. This second high level has a choke at both ends, with the northern one having been dug. The draught goes straight up a short way into the left hand side dig, J. Sump 3 however is back down the boulders to enter a water filled rift.

Sump 3 is only about 6m long but drops steadily before ascending sharply. The stream beyond is small, passing a side rift on the right which probably would connect with a short side passage above. The duck is best free dived and then another side passage can be climbed into on the left. This ascends to a choke which is associated with a similar passage and collapse above.

The next side passage issues the stream and this is a crawl to Sump 4, E. This consists of three sumps. Sump 4a is 4 m to 8 m of canal. Sump 4b is 13 m to 6 m of narrow streamway. Sump 4c is 4 m to a blind rift airbell becoming too tight below water.

Ahead in the stream is a choke, but a hole just back from it on the left is a climb of 4m up to the high level passages.

Heading south (left) passes a side branch on the left, this lowers to a crawl over mud to a dig, F. The next side passage is in the floor of a trench, where the way on is up. This side passage is sandy floored and ends in a boulder choke which is close to another side passage.

After the trench is passed a ramp leads up to the left, G. This has some huge blocks at the top, but it does suggest the main conduit stepped up at this point. The slump in the floor at this point indicates the presence of the two side passages below. Ahead the passage lowers and continues to reduce in size. A number of boulder obstacles have been removed but it still ends in a too tight rift, H.

The north way from the climb up quickly reaches a ramp which is only a couple of metres from a chamber above, D. The route on is round to the left and then onto various ledges to cross trenches and other obstacles until a climb down is reached. On the left is a further ramp down under a rock bridge to Red Sump.

Red Sump – A static sump dived for 17m to -7m to shingle blockage. Just before Red Sump is an awkward climb up to an obvious high level. This leads down to second static sump, C, which is probably associated with Red Sump.

Beyond is easier going to a junction on the right. This is an easy walking passage up to a chamber with a number of formations.

The passage is now larger and has a low oxbow on the right and run ins on the left, B, A. This may indicate a possible dig site as the passage loses size quite rapidly after passing these run ins. It now also shows signs of activity in flood conditions as it approaches Sump 5. This

is down a sand bank with a small rift on the left taking the normal flow. Sump 5 is some 45m long with a squeeze near the start.

Leads

I have already mentioned some in passing but I will expand on some ideas here.

The run in at A is around a pillar and the loose slope would be initially be easy digging. The roof area by B, may need a closer inspection as well. The passage decreases in size beyond and begins to trend more northerly rather than follow the rough line of the fault that seems to control most of the passages in this area. So if a Sump 5 bypass exists it should be in this area.

The second static sump, C, may well be associated with Red Sump and both these are almost the same altitude as Sump 4. I, however, do not know the orientation of the passages beyond the start of Sump 4. These add up to some 35m of passage, so they are closer to each other than the survey suggests. The water from Sump 5 drops quite a few meters (~6m) before it emerges at Sump 4, so there should be open passage between the two.

The ramp, D, and chamber with formations, could be linked to make an easier route, as they may only be 2m apart. But no real new passage there.

The ramp at G suggests it leads up to a high level passage and the dig at F, may well be an easier way into it. This has not been dug. The end dig at H now seems to be offset from the dig at J, so the theoretical high level may be a better option. The draught at J goes straight up, also indicating that something may exist at a high level. This together with the level ceilings of chambers at D and L, may indicate roughly how high it will be.

The inlet at K, was only found on one of the survey trips and I haven't been back to investigate it further. The odd fact is it has water falling down from a higher level. Again this lines up with a fault(?) that seems to run through this area.

Pete's Café was the first site of a major attempt to bypass the sumps. I don't know if the dig was upwards or not. But the survey now shows that any dig here should be level and try to hug the correct wall. No digging has been done on the left wall at M, so it may be easier than expected.

References: Welsh Sump Index 3rd Edition

Ogof Carno

Access to the tunnel and cave has been withdrawn due to concerns of the water company, including their fear that planned or unannounced releases from the reservoir into the adit might be a safety risk.

Elsie Little

Reservoir Hole

by John Cooper

Tuesday 30th October 2012.

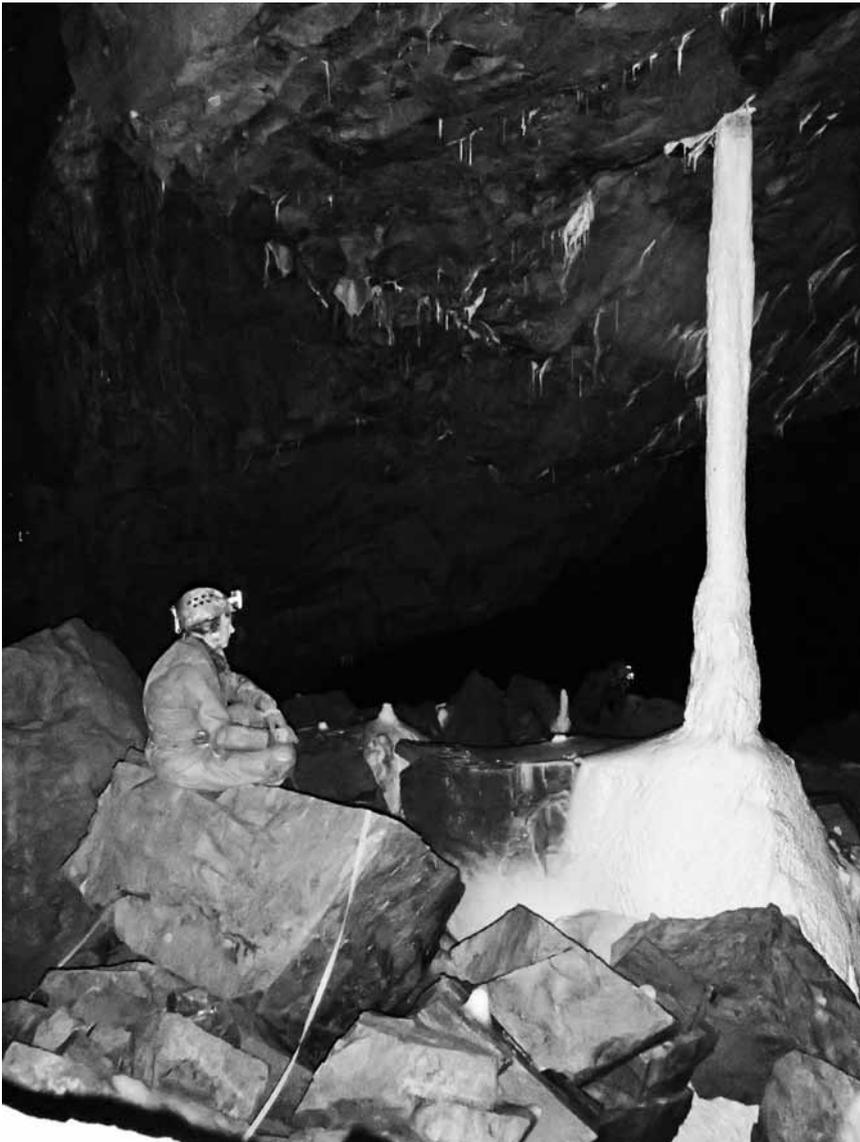
Nick Chipchase, John Cooper and Ali Moody.

A Half-Term week and most of the "Tuesday Diggers" were away leaving only Nick and Ali so I was roped in as an extra pair of hands. I'd done the old cave just over a year ago, see N/L Vol 53 No 9/10 p 91, but today was to work in the new parts. Nick was carrying a bag with a couple of ladders and his camera, I was given a 5 ft long steel scaffold bar to carry which was to be used in constructing a platform part way up a pitch and Ali had a bag with assorted conservation bits and pieces. The cave starts with lots of crawling then climbing down and down and down before reaching Grand Gallery. Near the bottom of this we took a left and started climbing upwards into Topless Aven. Rather than take the next left into the climbs up to Golgotha we kept right into the Topless Aven Dig with all its crawls. Ali wanted to measure the length of the recently dug out bit here so there was a slight delay before continuing. We didn't look backwards into Great Expectations but kept crawling through Hard Times until Resurrection, a large loose boulder slope, was reached. Climbing up this finally lead to the ladder pitches which drop into The Frozen Deep. Because the pitch is down a boulder filled rift the ladder is hung out on the side wall, with a platform part way down allowing the second pitch to be even further out on the wall. Once at the bottom the first view is of a very impressive rift chamber with a lovely stal coated wall. We started on a tour around the marked route, putting in stainless steel pegs to support the conservation tape which is used to mark the "Trade Route" round this chamber. It's very difficult to get a real impression of the size because its not a nice flat floor, it's more like a large rift chamber with another much larger chamber tagged on the side. On the way round we dropped off the ladders and scaffold bar and moved some bits of stal from the danger zone below a recently climbed aven, Ascension. We then went towards Pickwick Passage that descends to the sump but rather than drop down we kept up in The Frozen Deep and started work on the choked high level continuation of this rift. Ali and I pulled lots of boulders down around ourselves in this rift until we'd had enough for the day. Looks very promising to me. Chocolate bar and wash off then took a look at the calcited bat bones, noting our 4th live bat of the day not far from them, before completing the round trip and heading out. Out after a 4¾ hour trip.



Above: Peter Glanvill in Pickwick Passage.
 Above right: Andrew Atkinson at Heaven's landing.
 Below: Alison Moody and the Pillar in The Frozen Deep.
 Right: Nigel Cox in The Frozen Deep on the day of discovery.
 Bottom right: Miranda Krestovnikoff on WISyouwerehere pitch into The Frozen Deep. (WIS are Willie Stanton's initials).
 Photos: Nick Chipchase

Further extensions to the cave and the survey will be made public at the J'Rat digging awards at the Hunter's on Mendip on November 17th.



Age and inactivity will be the death of me!

by Gary Kiely

The youngsters in the club will not understand where I'm coming from, but I think this may strike a chord with those who have been crawling around in the hills for a while.

There I was, fit as a fiddle, caving every weekend and at every opportunity, digging, and looking for the knarley trips to see what my limit looked like. Caving was my life, and life was good, I felt indestructible. Then wham! One little accident and I'm out of the scene for over a year. The first tentative steps back to the darkness were a great feeling. One or two minor injuries here and there, nothing to really stop me for any great period of time, but I wasn't caving. What was stopping me caving?

I had created a new social circle locally and the more people you get to know then the more birthday parties there are then weddings and christenings then anniversaries.

The more of these events you go to, the more people you meet and the circle grows and grows and suddenly your free time, the time you do things you love, the YOU time has turned into commitments and things you MUST do. It's a slippery slope people.

So a year or two out, away from the caving scene and you think you can return, back to top form think again.

Having been a frequent happy camper at Daren Cilau's Hard Rock and getting hooked on digging trips, the recent opportunity to do a trip to Spade Runner with Gonzo and associates was more than I could resist, so I blew out a 4 years old's birthday party to go on a fairly full on trip in a cave that I love.

For weekends like this people head in at different times of the day depending on how early they can finish work etc. I arrived at Whitewalls fairly late and the crew that I was going in with was Helen Nightingale, Frank Longwill, and Alys Rook.

As we headed off one of the straps on my bag broke so I said I would catch up, so a quick fix and I headed off up the hill and got to the entrance, where another strap broke dooh! I was on my own, the others had obviously got to the entrance and headed straight in with great efficiency. It wasn't how I expected this to start. There is always some faffing before caving, it's the rules! Feeling slightly "billy no mates" I prepared my disabled bag and myself to head in. but then I saw the motley crew approaching over the mound to the quarry as if they were approaching from Brynmawr. Yep they got lost going from Whitewalls to Daren Cia. No comment, but I was a much happier chappie for their misdirection.

There is no point in me describing the entrance series as its been done so many times now. The only difference was this time by the

time I got through the Vice I felt like a man of 80. It was a little disconcerting to say the least and by the time I was released from the jaws of the entrance series, I was ready for a nice massage and my bed. This was not a good sign! Resting here we had a drink while I did a permanent repair on my bag.

In the past I had a couple of interesting trips with Frank and Alys but I had never met Helen before and her chilled out manor mixed with dark humour and a crassness that can only come from a true caver made me feel quite at home with this bunch. The pace was a gentle one which I was not used to, so as I felt I had the beans and Alys was a bit cold we split up and picked up the pace.... Or so I thought. While Alys and I had a drink at the ladder bar in Approach Passage, Frank and Helen caught us up. So much for me, and my extra beans eh!

I belayed two people to the top of the ladder after which my arms were dead. Actually no! They were busy doing their own little shaky thing. This is followed by the little voices "Hmm no arms? Nice! Interesting climb then". I finally recovered in a gracefull heap at the top of the ladder, and while Helen was engrossed in her new mud sculptures of something rude, my legs joined my arms in their little spasm party. On we went around the traverse and the rope climbs. There really is no elegant way to do them. It was all downhill from here. I had forgotten how long Bonsai Stream way was.

I was tired now and starting to ache. In between the weird and wacky conversations my mind projected to tomorrow, to the long trip ahead of me and how I was currently feeling. I preferred the weird conversations. We collected some brown water from Crystal Inlet and waddled with our containers like Umpa Lumpas down the last part of the streamway before camp. I was very happy to see a very merry Andy Watson and Dave King who had both outlived Gonzo in whatever death by cocktail game had been played that evening. Andy made a fuss over us and made tea and heated up some food. It's a great feeling when you go to get your dry clothes and sleeping bag and find that everything is in good condition. I think we finally crashed at about 4am not that time has any great say over anything in this environment. I woke up to an extremely chirpy Gonzo bribing me with a cup of tea after what felt like 1 hour in my bed.

Breakfast was a fried feast and after cup of tea number 3, I was able to make rational decisions. I decided against joining everybody on the planned trip as my body was so battered that I just would not enjoy it and I would whinge and moan all day long. So I decided to do some housekeeping, some knitting and some solitary confinement while the others headed to the remotest place in Britain.

Andy had battered his knee on the trip in and had opted to head out that afternoon so I kept him company to the ladder and belayed the

brave little soldier to the bottom of the ladder and we went our separate ways. Back at camp I was having a great time going through all the food drums seeing all the weird things that people thought would be a useful to bring in. Oh how I worry! Dried beans that take 2 days soaking before they can be used. Rusty tins in the desert section with no labels on. Uncooked poppadoms that needed to be deep fried and even a microwave meal, well that's what it looked like and the only readable instructions were microwave ones.

Now I like a challenge and with all the wacky stuff before me I picked the poppadoms and the Bombay potato mix to complement the Thai green curry I was attempting for hungry troops who were due back at 11pm. Its weird being at camp for hours on your own, it's usually all hustle and bustle. Now it was just the happy hissing of the tilly lamps and the odd snort when I realised I had dozed off and woke myself with snoring.

The first wave arrived home at midnight then 2am then 3am.

Everybody was in good spirits considering the 15 hour caving trip that some had done. Helen had found that kneepads were an over the top luxury and if Acupuncture was fine without them then the rest of the cave was fine too. That girl has no nerve endings and probably no skin on her knees. By 4.30am I was pooped as I had a really full on day so I left them to their cocktails and random jokes that were hilarious in the time and place but were totally lost on me.

I crawled into my pit, and after a little shuffling around I found the comfortable sweet spot. It's amazing how a correctly shaped rock can make an excellent pillow.

It had been a satisfying day. True I didn't achieve what I had come here for but made the best alternative use of my time possible.

In the morning I think it was Andy's singing that woke me, but I could only hear it when I dozed off. It took some real effort to piece together the facts that Andy was at home in his comfortable bed and his singing was only in my head. This place does things to you.

At breakfast we realised that we may have brought in a little too much breakfast food and we had to eat it all. Oh well! When needs must I suppose.

Gonzo and Dave were keen to get away fairly sharpish after breakfast but us youngsters were feeling a little nostalgic and didn't want to leave. Yep we were faffing. I felt we left camp clean and tidy and everything in its place. It's not nice when the tilly lamps have been extinguished, it's like the life has gone from the place and it's just another section of rock in another cave. We headed out at a gentle pace and at the Time Machine, Alys and I said our goodbyes and soldiered on while Frank and



Helen stayed behind to do some photography. It was all going according to plan and Alys had safely descended the ladder. As I pulled the knot to the top for me to clip into the lifeline it got jammed and knotted in the ladder, and no matter how much hauling or swearing I did it wouldn't budge I tried it back and forth, and each time it seemed to get tighter. I needed to climb down to detangle it. I was faced with a dilemma; use cows tails for the whole ladder climb or chance the hauling rope for my lifeline.

I had a good old inspection of the hauling rope and it is reasonably solid and it is backed up in a fashion but wow! What a fun swing that would be if I needed the lifeline.

It took ages to sort out the proper lifeline on the way down and bless Alys for not getting bored and leaving me. It always seems easier on the way out of this place, although from the ladder I noticed that I started to plod along a bit, I suppose it was to conserve my energy should there be any knarley bits I may come across on the way out.

I sent Alys out first so that she could be showered by the time I got there as there was only one shower in operation at WW.

I did have a little fight at playschool. I think having lost my technique and gained some waist, may have been contributing factors.

I was slow but steady in the crawl and The Vice came and went. Oddly my body gave up just after The Vice and the last 80 metres seemed to take an eternity, I was battered.

Daylight and warmth,

Shower and some tea.

Back on the road to reality.

Photo (from an earlier camp):
Steve Sharp



SNOWDONIA MINES

by Stuart France

Four members – Paul Tarrant, Richard Dewsnap, Tim Gibbs and I – enjoyed an interesting underground weekend in North Wales during September 2012. We were based at Glan Dena in the Ogwen valley, a palatial climbing club cottage belonging to the Midland Association of Mountaineers: a perfect venue for a steak and wine dinner on the Saturday night and in every other way taking good care of our comforts.

Earlier that same day we visited an extensive lead mine. A short walk from the road passing several gated entry points led us to an adit (a horizontal tunnel used for mine railway access and water drainage) where over the years it has become easy to gain entry to the entire system. Presumably a blind eye is being turned to this practice. Once inside, one soon finds the old railway tracks which lead along a level rock platform in a steep stope (a near vertical rift) which once contained the mineral band of commercial interest. The 3m wide stope rises at a steep angle for about 30m above one's head and there is the constant view of old pit props and the remains of the wooden platforms on which the miners had worked out the ore, cutting upwards as they went and dropping the winnings towards the railway line below. Sometimes the stope is a continuous cut and in other places some rock pillars have been left. The ore ultimately fell downwards into roughly constructed wooden hoppers positioned above a mine railway line from which the trucks could be loaded by means of knocking out a few substantial retaining planks though in some cases the ore dropped on the floor and was shovelled into wagons fitted with tilting sides.

The stope continues downwards on one side of the railway for perhaps 50m. This big drop is not always visible from the tracks because the miners have left pillars in place, but in between these pillars are yawning holes, either deliberate ore passes (holes to drop ore vertically) or simply collapses of the floor on which the rails sit, deep into the black void. Occasionally some local explorers, it seems, have installed traverse lines for the faint of heart as one steps across sections of obviously dubious false floor. Eventually all of this leads to a complete collapse of debris from above. Someone has actually dug through this fall, constructing a short section 5m long of timbered dug-out leading to one of the main shafts that was used for pumping out the entire mine at this level through massive pipes heading upwards to who knows what passages and connections in the roof. The pipes certainly cannot be climbed as they are and bolting the shaft walls would be a big job. The wooden pump rods still hang there in the shaft along with the various bobs and pulleys and levers to make it all work.

One of us had explored further into the mine in this direction in years past, when he was a younger man and much bolder, and it then led to sections of false floor, with the railway lines still in place, that were held up only by ancient chains bolted to the walls. But on this occasion we decided that discretion was the better part of valour and we turned back here, taking care not even to breathe on – let alone touch – any of the ghostly wooden ore hoppers bearing their tons of rubble once loaded up from the floors above, and now awaiting the wagons beneath that will never come rumbling through the silent darkness.

At the other end we found a mine ladderway which took us down perhaps 30m into an intermediate lower level, its broken sections being passed by SRT, and from here after another 10m or so vertical SRT drop we arrived in an empty hopper just above the main haulage and final drainage level of this mine. Locomotives would have been used here, unlike the upper railway already described where the wagons were probably pushed around by the miners themselves. The main railway tunnel, however, becomes more flooded, and even the most ardent explorers amongst us gave up at chest deep.

By contrast on the Sunday, while heading back for South Wales, we went to Cwmorthin Slate Mine, already described by Richard Dewsnap in a recent newsletter. This was after the recce trip that he and I made during July for the meet weekend's activities, along with checking out a few other candidate metal and slate mines whose names, entrances and inner secrets will remain unknown except to those that come on the next Mines Weekend that I hope will run in 2013.

Pottering About on Mendip

by
John Cooper

Charterhouse Cave Saturday 8th September 2012.

Pete Buckley (Wessex Cave Club), John Cooper and Pete Hann (WCC).

Pete H needed to photograph the Sand Dig tunnel so carried in camera and flash guns. On arrival in 100 Fathom passage we measured the CO2 level which peaked at 2.1%. Pete B and self waited there (we didn't want to mist everything up) whilst Pete H went down to the start of Sand Dig and set up his camera/tripod. Once done photos were taken, including setting the syphon going. Pete H then went along Sand Dig deciding what photos he wanted and at the same time carried the CO2 meter into Timeline. Portal Pool was full, as usual this year. We then continued with photography along Sand Dig. 30 minutes after starting the syphon running there was a sudden alarm from the CO2 meter, triggered at 2.5%, and a sudden increase in the draught (outwards). This was Portal Pool sump breaking. We noted a peak reading of 2.9%, confirmed later by examination of the log files. We continued photography for another 20 minutes by which time the level was down to 2.2%. We waited until the syphon had been working for 60 minutes and departed with it still emptying Portal Pool and CO2 still at 2.2%. 3½ hours.

Eastwater Cavern Sunday 16th September 2012.

John Cooper, Lee Hawkswell and Jude Vanderplank (WCC).

Upper Traverse, Hallelujah Hole, Lower Traverse, S-Bend, Cross Roads, Canyon, Woggle Press. 40 minutes.

Sunday 30th September 2012.

John Cooper and Emma Gisborne (WCC).

Route as above. In addition we detoured from the Cross Roads to have a peer down Dolphin Pot. 1 hour.

Friday 12th October 2012.

Beth Berriman (WCC), John Cooper, Emma Gisborne, Rowan Scott (Craven Pothole Club) and Wayne Starsmore (WCC).

A 13 Pots trip. Very drippy entrance ruckle. This time turned left after the Upper Traverse and took the Baker's Chimney Bypass into the Canyon. Down to the Crossroads then a left to Dolphin Pot, handline, and then Dolphin Pitch, ladder belayed to in situ hangers at top of pitch and lifeline belayed round boulder using 2m tether. Up into Harris's Passage and across to trench which was followed down until the small tube on the left. Through to the Bold Step, some more bold than others! Down and then the first left into Muddy Oxbow which was followed down to a T junction where we turned right to rejoin the small stream. Followed this up the 13 Pots back to the Bold Step. Then reversed all the way until we reached the turn off into Wind Tunnel at the head of the Canyon. Into Boulder Chamber and out through the Woggle Press. Back through the drippy boulder ruckle. 2¾ hours.

GB Cavern Wednesday 26th September 2012.

John Cooper and Emma Gisborne.

In the Devil's Elbow route; a nice stream joined us just before the Elbow! Followed it into the Gorge then down the Gorge. Left it

to go over the Bridge into White Passage. Up this then a left into Rift Chamber and took the Loop to the Hall then the Oxbow into Lower Main Chamber. Downstream to see the foam on the chain that leads up into Ladder Dig before returning up the streamway and out the Mud Passage route. 1½ hours.

Sunday 21st October 2012.

John Cooper, Emma Gisborne, John Gisborne (WCC) and Barry Weaver.

In the Devil's Elbow route. A little look around Boulder Chamber before continuing down to the Gorge. Straight down to the bottom then up and out via Mud Passage. Much drier than last time. 2 hours.

Goatchurch Cavern Thursday 25th October 2012.

John Cooper and Emma Gisborne.

Entered the Main Entrance and followed the top level Eastwards along to the end. Back slightly and descended the Giant's Stairs. Back Westwards along the second level and checked the Tradesman's Entrance location. Did a few circles in The Maze before descending to the third level and Boulder Maze. Wandered around lots of passages heading generally Eastwards again through Boulder Chamber and Water Chamber. Found one bit with a fixed rope and rigid ladder which had a trowel and crowbar at the bottom. Another bit had a nicely cemented boulder wall and eventually we found the start of the Drainpipe. Reversed some bits of the way in as we made our way out via the Tradesman's Entrance. It's quite a confusing cave! 1½ hours.

Read's Cavern Saturday 22nd September 2012.

Pete Buckley, John Cooper and Ali Moody (WCC).

Another look at the route into Zed Alley then Junction Chamber. Showed two family groups around bits of the cave. 3 hours.

Saturday 29th September 2012.

Andrew Atkinson (UBSS), Pete Buckley, John Cooper, Pete Hann and Ali Moody.

We all carried the first load of sand and cement up to the cave then Pete H started cementing the route into Z-Alley. Meanwhile Ali and Andrew surveyed the main chamber and the two routes in whilst Pete B and John ferried more bags of sand and cement up to the dig. 2½ hours.

Saturday 6th October 2012.

Pete Buckley, John Cooper, Pete Hann and Ali Moody.

We all carried the first load of sand up to the cave then Pete H started cemented the route into Z-Alley whilst Ali started cementing the route back out through the squeeze. Meanwhile Pete B and John ferried another couple of bags of sand up to the dig. It was all much more drippy than last week. 2 hours.

Saturday 13th October 2012.

Pete Buckley, John Cooper, and Ali Moody.

We all carried the first load of sand/cement up to the cave then Pete and Ali cemented the route into Z-Alley. Meanwhile John ferried another three bags of sand up to the dig. It was much drier than last week. 2½ hours.

Saturday 27th October 2012.

Pete Buckley, John Cooper, John Gisborne, Pete Hann and Ali Moody.

We all carried the first load of cement and digging gear up to the cave then Pete H started capping the route into Z-Alley watched by John G and Ali. John C and Pete B went and collected another couple of bags of sand. Pete B and John G then swapped roles and the two John's then ferried the next six bags of sand to the dig. By this time the cappers had vanished into Z-Alley and were running a marker line down through the lower part of Z-Alley and rigging Splash Pot. After a quick look at the top part the two John's then mixed mortar and cemented boulders into place on the approach to the squeeze. When the others returned we finished off the loose cement (total of four mixes) before retiring for tea and cake. 4½ hours.

Pen Park Hole

Wednesday 31st October 2012.

Andrew Atkinson, John Cooper, Marcus Dobbs (BGS), Andy Farrant, Ali Moody and Clive Owen (UBSS).

Before anyone complains that this is not a Mendip cave I know, it's in Bristol! There's talk about building over this cave again so it was necessary to establish how close to the surface parts of the cave were. Whilst John, Marcus and Andy wandered around the park with a Leica total station fixing the surface and entrance Andrew, Ali and Clive were using the DistoX to survey underground. After a couple of hours the surface party had just completed a closed loop and established that the total station unit would not fit along the underground passage whilst mounted on the tripod, even the small one, when Andrew re-appeared to collect the tackle for the pitch. The surface team followed him down to the top of the pitch. Once rigged the underground teamed continued with their survey whilst the surface team watched. John descended the pitch and traversed the ledge but then returned to the pitch head to life-line whilst Andy escorted Marcus out, he'd got to be back in Nottingham that afternoon. Andy came in again with his camera. It's a very interesting cave with lots of large crystals on the walls. It definitely looks geothermal in origin. 2 hours underground for me, 4 hours for the underground survey team.

Reservoir Hole

Tuesday 30th October 2012.

See article on page 104

Sidcot Swallet

Thursday 11th October 2012.

John Cooper and Emma Gisborne.

Roads awash on the drive over to Burrington and chucking it down whilst getting changed. Followed the descending passage from the entrance past the original entrance to Purgatory, a nice looking passage on the right, through a squeezey rift to reach a T-junction. Ignored the passage going right for the moment, the new route to Purgatory, and turned left. Followed along and dropped down to the right at the end to reach the Tie Press. Through this into Boulder Chamber. Down and across this to reach a hole in the floor. Slid down this to reach Water Chamber. Fastened a 10m rope round a good thread belay then slid down the Lobster Pot into Paradise Series. Followed this to the end aven, ignoring the tight squeeze on the right leading to Garden of Eden and Waterfall Grotto. Back up the Lobster Pot to meet another group on their way down. Back up the way we had entered but this time took the new route to Purgatory. A narrow twisting route down lead into larger passage and a little circular route. We descended as far as the nicely cemented wall before calling it a night. 1½ hours.

Spider Hole

Saturday 15th September 2012.

John Biffen (WCC), Pete Buckley, Tom Chapman (WCC), John Cooper, Pete Hann, Gary Kieley, Aubrey Newport (WCC), Sarah Payne (WCC), Elaine Tucker (Axbridge Caving Group), Hugh Tucker (ACG), Adrian Vanderplank (WCC), Jude Vanderplank and Barry Wilkinson (WCC).

Another load of sand ferried to Cheddar Gorge by Barry Wilkinson and then we all carried it to the cave entrance. Once there Barry left and Adrian Vanderplank brewed tea on the surface whilst the rest of us ferried the sand (33 half bags) and a bag of cement to the bottom of the hole. Pete Hann did some cementing of the boulders at the bottom. 2 hours.

Swildon's Hole

Wednesday 5th September 2012.

John Cooper, Emma Gisborne and John Gisborne.

Went and poked about in the Oxbows. Came out the Long Dry and Zig-Zag. 1½ hours.

Sunday 9th September 2012.

Beth Berriman, John Cooper, Helen Dear (WCC), Emma Gisborne, Wayne Starsmore and Barry Weaver.

In the Dry Way to Sump 1 then through and up to the Black Hole. Laddered and descended. Some came out the Wet way, others the Dry Way. Ours the only ladder on the Twenty. 3 hours.

Wednesday 12th September 2012.

John Cooper and Emma Gisborne.

Went and started the syphon on the first of the Troubles. 2¼ hours.

Thursday 20th September 2012.

John Cooper, Emma Gisborne and John Gisborne.

Went in the Oxbows and Butcombe Chamber route to the Twenty. John G then returned to the surface (he'd earlier dropped a tractor battery on his foot) whilst the others went to Sump 1. There was about an inch of airspace through the sump. Back out the Dry Way. 1¼ hours.

Sunday 23rd September 2012.

John Cooper and Emma Gisborne.

Visited Fault Chamber. 2¼ hours.

Thursday 4th October 2012.

John Cooper and Emma Gisborne.

Sump 1 via the Forty. Note: the low down spit at the top on the left has a stripped thread. We used the low down thread on the right with a 1m tether. If a 2m tether had been available a better hang for the ladder would have been possible using the big thread by the drop down. Sump 1 a proper sump again. 2 hours.

Sunday 7th October 2012.

John Cooper, John Gisborne and Barry Weaver.

Had intended to head off Mud Sump way but as we exited the Inclined Rift the smell of "diesel" became noticeable. After climbing up into Tratman's Temple and heading towards St Paul's the smell was strong and the pools of water displayed a film on them. There was a good outwards draught at this point. This "pollution" seems to be noticeable after any good flood. We turned round and went to Sump 1 instead. Came out the Long Dry Way. 1½ hours.

Sunday 14th October 2012.

John Cooper, John Gisborne and Barry Weaver.

Did the trip we intended to do last week. We went and peered down Shatter Pot. En route we emptied all the water out of the Mud Sump. 2 hours.

Thursday 18th October 2012.

John Cooper and Emma Gisborne.

Down to Sump 2. Quite wet. Emma found Duncan's old gloves on the way back up the streamway, he'd been to Sump 1 earlier in the afternoon. 1¾ hours.

Saturday 28th October 2012.

John Cooper and Barry Weaver.

To Fault Chamber, emptying the water from the Mud Sump again. Cave quite busy. 1¼ hours.

Upper Flood Swallet Saturday 3rd November 2012.

Andrew Atkinson, Pete Buckley, Ben Cooper (MCG), John Cooper and Ali Moody.

MCG had subcontracted a dig to Andrew who had subcontracted some of the portering to us. On a very wet Saturday morning we col-

lected large box containing drill, second large box containing batteries, tackle sack containing demolition gear and a final tackle sack with food and drill bits. Fortunately it stopped raining for the walk from the MCG hut to the cave but it was still cold and windy. A slow trip through the entrance series, 1¼ hours, then another hour to the dig face in West Passage. Whilst Andrew, Ben and Ali drilled etc Pete and I went and viewed the nasty choke at the end of West Passage. Once everything was done we ran away, leaving the drill for use again next time. 2 hours had passed since we arrived. With one less case to carry we made it out in 1¼ hours. Glad the Lavatory Trap is now permanently open with a good 15 cm of airspace. 6 hours total.

OGOF CRAIG A'R FFYNNON FIXED AIDS

by Stuart France

Following the installation of the Busman's Holiday / Antler Passage ladders in Daren Cilau, Richard Dewsnap and I turned our engineering attention to OCAF with Adrian Fawcett helping too. This is a cave where Adrian and I had improved the fixed aids to a degree when MLCMAC took over the access management some years ago. We had fixed some previously loose ladders with bolts and short lengths of chain so they could not fall down if accidentally kicked. But the problem of the top of the 2nd Boulder Choke pitch remained, where the climb goes vertical up a slippery narrow crack.

This test-piece has had various bits of knotted rope of unknown age and origin on it, and the inclination was to pull on to all of them to be sure. I replaced one or more of these old ropes with a length of the thick chain (as was used for the Daren ladders) a few years ago and fitted some high stainless bolts at the same time. This chain was later removed and actually used in Daren for the shortest of the new Antler ladders, thus reverting the OCAF 2nd Boulder Choke to its former tatty rope status.

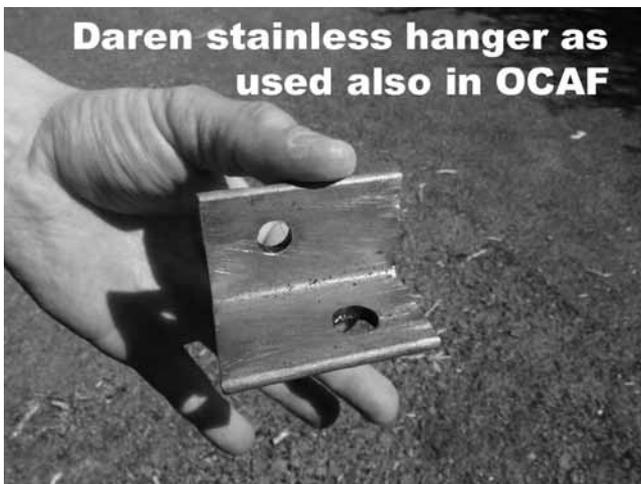
BCA kindly provided some new rope in the summer of 2012 under its rope testing programme and we decided to fit it from top to bottom of the pitch along with removing all the old rope and drilling a couple more bolts in better places. These new bolts are 100mm long M10 stainless with 50x5mm stainless 'angle iron' hangers that we had manufactured and were left over from the Daren ladder project. At the same time we fitted four mild steel wall plates on the smoothest and muddiest section of the climb. These plates are about 200mm long, stick out 120mm, and made from 12mm steel with two holes for M10 stainless bolts making it easy to climb provided that the new rope is trusted for pulling on and balance, but use of a belayed safety rope is advisable too.

As with the Daren ladders, we have had positive feedback from cavers about the new fixed aids, including from those who had never experienced the former tatty ropes.

Adrian Fawcett fitting a plate

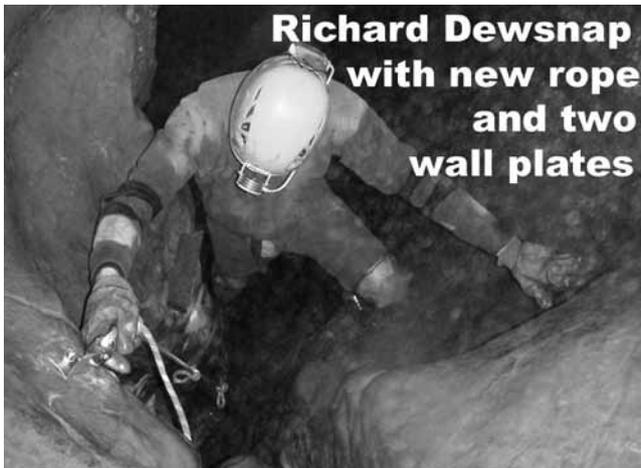


Daren stainless hanger as used also in OCAF



Photos: Stuart France

Richard Dewsnap with new rope and two wall plates



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Meets List 2012

17th November 2012

Derbyshire Peak Cavern, Bagshawe.
Organiser John Newton

7th December 2012

Whitewalls **Curry Night**
Organiser: Stuart France

29 – 31st December 2012

Whitewalls **New Year Celebrations**

Saturday 26th January 2013

Annual Dinner

Sunday 27th January 2013

AGM

23-24 February

Whitewalls
Whisky Tasting Night



CSS

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Mike Richardson (MCG). East passage, Upper Flood. Photo: Steve Sharp