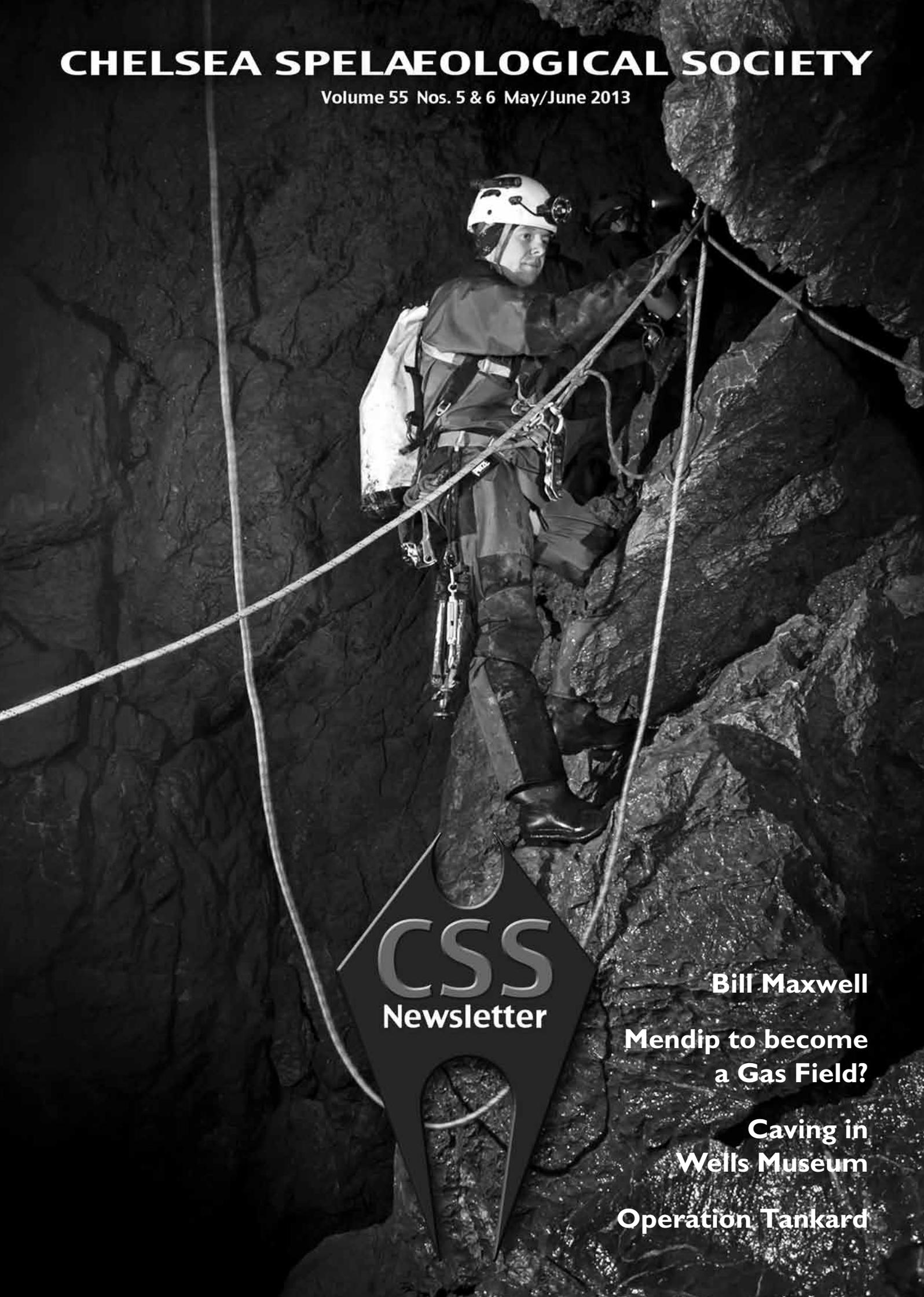


# CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 55 Nos. 5 & 6 May/June 2013



**CSS**  
Newsletter

**Bill Maxwell**

**Mendip to become  
a Gas Field?**

**Caving in  
Wells Museum**

**Operation Tankard**



CSS Committee  
 Top, John House was Chairman in 1966-67  
 Left facing, Bob Fish - Librarian.  
 Right facing, Clive Calder - Tackle Master.  
 Left sitting on chair Bill Maxwell - Secretary.  
 Right sitting on chair, Pat Browne  
 (Cornelius) Treasurer.  
 Left sitting on floor, Tony Payne  
 - Safety Officer.  
 Middle sitting, Geo Fletcher - Committee.  
 Right sitting Roy Musgrove - Hut Warden  
 Photo: Bob Fish

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Cover Photo: Stu Gardiner rigging in Thrupe Lane Swallet Photo: Steve Sharp

# Membership

Please send all subscriptions to:  
 Gary Jones, 6 West Down, Bookham,  
 Leatherhead,  
 Surrey KT23 4LJ

Current rates are:

**Full** £25  
**Joint** £33

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

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.

# Editorial

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

*Gonzo*

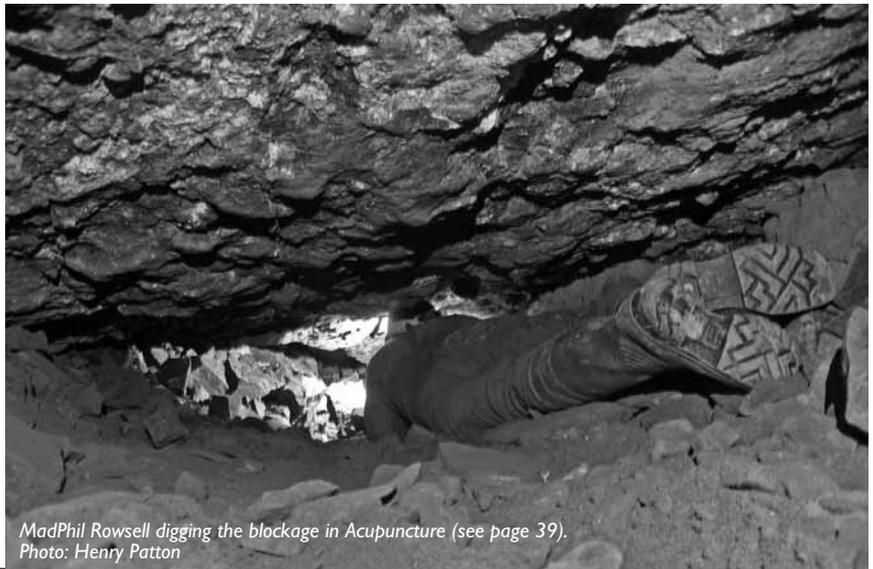
Mark Lumley

Please send all material to:

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Mark Lumley,

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



MadPhil Rowsell digging the blockage in Acupuncture (see page 39).  
Photo: Henry Patton

## Are the Mendips about to become a Gas Field?

by Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley

The Government has granted PEDL licenses (Petroleum Exploration and Development License) to UK Methane for Unconventional Gas Extraction (Fracking) in Somerset. These licenses cover much of the Mendips and surrounding area.

UK Methane have declared Ston Easton and Compton Martin (north Mendips) as areas that they intend to test drill and the likelihood is that they will be targeting coal bed methane from the Somerset Coalfield which runs beneath the north flank of the Mendips while also assessing the viability of fracking for methane from the shale.

Much of the rest of Mendip is also within the area covered by the licenses.

The potential hazards associated with drilling for methane in an area riddled with abandoned coal mines, closely associated with a caving region, a major fault and a water supply for Bristol and the surrounding area will not be lost on cavers.

The possibility of endangering the hot springs in Bath and Hotwells (water for which is believed to originate in this area) by pollution or compromise of the hydrostatic head (each well requires 500,000,000 million gallons of water and

chemicals to be pumped in, extracted and 'disposed of') is a serious issue, as is more widespread pollution as the likelihood is that there will be hundreds of wells if extraction is deemed commercially viable.

With industrialization of a beautiful rural area, log-jammed roads, well documented health risks associated with fracking and the distinct possibility of property values being reduced by over 25% there is great concern in the area.

For more information on Fracking and on how to make your views heard visit [frackfeesomerset.org](http://frackfeesomerset.org)

## Speleology for scientific research

Hello,

I have found your email address in the clubs' directory and I thought that as a caving lover you might be interested in knowing about the existence of scientific camps in which children and adolescents practise scientific speleology.

For 7-9 years old <http://www.science-camps.com/The-Heart-of-the-Caves-Level-1.html> (visit the link)

For 10-12 years old <http://www.science-camps.com/The-Heart-of-the-Caves-Level-2.html> (visit the link)

For 13-18 years old <http://www.science-camps.com/The-Heart-of-the-Caves-Level-3.html> (visiter le lien)

Could you, please, share this information to all the cavers that you know around you so that all who might be interested can be informed of the existence of these camps ?

For more information about the activities of the Association Objectif Sciences International, a non-profit organization dedicated to science education, recognized as a NGO and with the Special Consultative Status by the United Nations (ECOSOC), you can visit this website

<http://www.science-camps.com/>

Thank you very much in advance for sharing this information to other cavers in your club. I am at your disposal for any further information.

Cordially,

Ruth MORAN LOPEZ

Representant of the NGO

Objectif Sciences International - NGO

<http://www.science-camps.com/>

<http://www.objectif-sciences-international.org>

E-mail : [science.camps@science-camps.com](mailto:science.camps@science-camps.com)

# Operation Tankard

## Wookey Hole 27-02-2013

by Duncan Price

I had long harboured a desire to visit parts of Wookey Hole beyond the limits of the show cave, but not requiring diving to reach. On my first visit to the cave as a small boy, I had visited the “New Grottoes” which were then part of the Show Cave trail. These were closed to the general public after the tourist route was extended into Chamber 9 during the 1970s. It is somewhat ironic that although I have been almost (only two others have been further than me) to the end of the cave, there are nearer parts of the Wookey Hole that I have not yet explored. One of these bits is the high level series above Chamber Nine which had first been entered in 1970 as this except from WOOKEY HOLE: 75 years of cave diving & exploration tells:

*Not satisfied with his new discovery underwater [Wookey 20], John [Parker] was keen to climb and try entering the tight bedding plane which Colin Priddle had looked at half-way up the south end of the Ninth Chamber on 14th February earlier that year [1970]. Maire Urwin, Colin and John Elliot returned to 3 while John started to climb. On reaching the bedding plane, John entered it head first but soon became stuck. Eventually his cries for help were answered by Brian. On reaching John, all that could be seen were two legs sticking out of the tight descending passage. With a bit of assistance John was retrieved and confirmed that the passage was a bit tight! At this point it was noticed that the rift which had been climbed continued on up and, despite only having wet suit boots, both managed to continue up until a horizontal passage was reached. John went one way and Brian the other. John's passage closed down while Brian's progress was halted by some fine 2 feet long white stalagmites. But the way on could be seen so John was called back. 'Don't damage the stal', he said, 'I might be able to squeeze past'. With remarkable efficiency John demolished the offending stalagmites and, sure enough, he was able to 'squeeze past' followed immediately by Brian. They entered a fine balcony which looked down on the Nine sump pool some 80 to 90 feet below. A further short climb led*

*into another passage but before entering this they called down to Martin Webster and Andrew Brooks to come on up. The new passage climbed gradually, but the way on was eventually blocked by a fallen slab. The significance of the new passage became apparent when it was noticed that there were roots coming down from the roof, obviously they were very close to the surface. The total length of this new extension above the Ninth Chamber roof was about 500 feet. On 28th November 1970 this discovery was pushed by John Parker, Andrew Brooks, Colin Priddle and Paul Esser to gain access to a further 10 feet of passage. At the farthest point reached there was a good inward draught and bat droppings on the floor. Oliver Lloyd was also on this trip but decided that he preferred the sumps to the exposed climb up into the new extension. On 2nd January 1971 Phil Collett, Martin Bishop and Simon Howes surveyed the new passage accurately and recorded a total length of 659 feet including the climb out of Nine.*

*The possibility of extending the show cave to take in the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth chambers was discussed, and plans were put into operation to achieve this aim. As this project would involve drilling an artificial tunnel linking 3 to 9, and then a new exit from 9 to the valley and Mill, it was essential to have a precise fix on the Ninth Chamber and intervening passages. As the top end of 9:2 was very close to the surface, it was decided to open this up to provide a dry way into 9, thus enabling its exact location to be verified. On 5th August 1973, Martin Webster, Aldwyn Cooper and Sandy Navrady took Brian Prewer's radio location transmitter to the end of the high-level 9:2 extension. On the surface, Willie Stanton, Graham Jackson, Luke Devenish, Tom Davies and his son had the receiving coil. Once transmission started a good strong signal was picked up 175 feet east of the expected location at a depth of only 20 feet [the subsequent text says 10 ft – due to the height of the receiving coil above the ground and the distance between the transmitter and the roof there was only 5 ft of cover to be removed]. Over the period 13-15th August 1973, John Parker, Jim Durston and Peter Marshall surveyed the passage from 9 back to 5. On these trips, which were paid for by the cave management, they also took the opportunity of installing*

*ladders and ropes on the climbs.*

Dry entry was made in for the purpose of accurately locating the Ninth Chamber so that a tunnel could be dug into it from the ravine below and then the top entrance was sealed. Only a few cavers made the trip into Nine from the top (including Tim Large who did a through trip to the old show cave by diving out).

A chance conversation with my neighbour John “Tangent” Williams revealed that he'd been into the series during an archaeological visit to the cave with Dave Irwin on July 16th 1999. His logbook records the events thus:

*The plan was to search for old inscriptions in the show cave - especially in the vicinity of Hells' Ladder Ch1. We didn't find many these but (predictably) between Ch 2-3. we saw lots. -the oldest being dated 1705. Also of note was the use of the letter AE & E (circa C17th-C16th). After this the intention was to stroll back & do a quick trip through Purgatory into Bedding Chamber (dig sites?). However JRat & SH [Simon House] were keen to have a quick look at Ch7-9. One thing lead to another, and we ended up climbing into the ceiling of the 9:2 ext. This was a excellent adventure, made even more fun by the impromptu nature of the event. The climbs were easy, the passage above clean & quite spectacular. The whole trip was wonderful, & the view back down into 9 was amazing.*

A return visit was planned under the guise of a diving trip after hours when we thought we wouldn't get caught and dubbed “Operation Tankard” for secrecy (and because I had just got my own beer mug behind that bar of the Hunters' after going there for over 25 years) but the trip never got beyond “pub talk”. Meanwhile, last year's guided tour for technical divers recorded in CSS NL 54(1) had opened up a dialogue with the show cave management and during an exchange of emails over the tour I floated the idea of a caving trip to have a look around for the purpose

of updating the description in the forthcoming 5th edition of Mendip Underground. Much to my surprise, the show cave were amenable to my request but I had to wait until School Holidays, Hallowe'en, Christmas etc. were out of the way. There was a last minute hitch while I sourced the current BCA insurance documents but once the management were happy that we were covered for any damage that we might do then we were good to go. A date was set of February 27th and an invitation sent out to the ATLAS digging team.

Understandably there was a lot of interest in a "free" trip down Wookey Hole with carte blanche to go where we liked and a team of 15 (Tony Boycott (UBSS), Claire Cohen (WCC), Alan Gray (ACG), Dave King (MNRC), Mark "Gonzo" Lumley (CSS), Clive North, Naomi Sharp (WCC), Robin "Tav" Taviner (BEC), Mandy & Matt Voysey (CSS), Andy & Sue Watson (CSS), John "Tangent" Williams (BEC), Richard Witcombe (WCC) and myself) met up in the car park opposite the new Wookey Hole Hotel at 7pm and changed into caving gear. In addition to Tangent (who wore old clothes), Tony and Tav had both been to the high-level series before. In fact, Tony had been there in wetsuit socks after diving there before the show cave was extended.

Tangent lead off and I followed trailing a rope behind me. After a false move from Tangent, I took the lead and traversed up a gully to find a tatty bit of rope hanging down which I employed to reach the bottom of a knobbly chimney. This was about 6 m high and gained a low bedding. A short ladder was used to replace the rope and a procession of cavers started to follow me up. I lost the lead by exploring the bedding while Tav and Tangent correctly identified a tricky climb which required long legs (or a person below) to get into a decorated crawl between stalactites that opened out onto a balcony overlooking the sump pool of 9(2) some 20 m below. Doubling back reached a climb up a stalagmite which had a ladder put down it. A nicely decorated grotto snaked away at the top (complete with a notice placed by Willie Stanton imploring visitors not to cross the tape as there was nothing to see – a survey was shown just to emphasise this).

The way on was up a further climb and again, the first person up had put a 10 m ladder down for us to use. At the top a fine rift to the right reached a little slot beneath a stal flow and a short crawl into the continuation of the rift. The passage was developed in conglomerate with some fine reddish deposits. At the far end of the rift the passage narrowed and dropped into a little chamber with some nice formations. Above this was a short bolder ruckle which ended at a wall of rocks which were neatly arranged across the passage – the blocked top entrance. Having satisfied myself that I'd seen what I came to see, I headed back to find that Gonzo was busy taking photographs and I was stuck behind everyone. Fortunately I managed to

leapfrog the creativity and take my own photo from the balcony over Nine of Andy Watson below. He, Sue, Alan, Richard & Tony had not been up the climbs but had been looking around the East Series above the show cave entrance.

Time was getting on and we were eager to make the pub but I had to wait until everyone was accounted for so that I could lock up and drop off the keys to the show cave office. A few people thought they'd head off without me but I found them locked in by the access gate by the side of the mill building and I had the key for this. Rather than head over to Eastern Mendip for our usual drinks at the Waggon & Horses we opted to visit the Hunters' which made an appropriate close to the trip.



Photo: Mark Lumley

# Bill Maxwell

1928 – 2013

by Geo Fletcher

**Bill sadly died on Sunday 24th March 2013 after a fight with bowel cancer.**

Here are some of my own reminiscences of Bill in the CSS.

We still exchanged Christmas cards over the years and I sent him a special 80th birthday card a few years ago.



*Bill Maxwell topping out the roof of Whitewalls, 1964  
Photo: Colin Holdsworth*

Bill was a founder member of the Chelsea Speleological Society at its formation between the older London Speleological Group and the scouting group who formed themselves into the CSS.

Harry Pearman in his article "A History of the Chelsea Speleological Soc Part 2" wrote; "A quiet lad from the LSG called Bill Maxwell came along."

So Bill was around in September 1959 at the founding of the new "Chelsea Speleological Society", as we know it today, and remained a member all his life.

Bill was a rather enigmatic and private person but showed leadership and organisational skills in developing the CSS. I don't think Bill had what you would call good friends but he gathered around him inspiring people who were movers, shakers and had that get-up and go and carried out lots of interesting ideas and projects in caving with him. He didn't often join

in with social side of caving or join us down the pub but he often provided a good taxi service.

When I joined the Society late on in 1960, Bill was the Honorary Secretary and ran the show; well he was the only car owner and to get some regular caving in it was a good idea to get a trip in Bill's car; later to be replaced by a cold and noisy Land Rover.

Bill continued the early founding members' exploration of the Llangatock Escarpment and used to have regular trips using the Old Darren Sunday School as a base. With others, I spent many a Christmas at the Sunday School organised by Bill, in freezing conditions and often deep snow outside but we still did lots of caving.

Bill got us exploring the far reaches of Aggy when Terminal Chamber and the Forth Choke were beyond many cavers abilities. He had his own May Pole in Aggy (he would take in and out in a haversack, the joining clips so that

others couldn't use it.) and discovered and surveyed many upper meander passages. He did lots of dye testing of the streams in Aggy with many interesting results.

Bills expertise as an administrator served the Society well during the national caving politics of the mid 1960's. I went to many meetings with him and he wouldn't say much at the time but his powerfully worded letters afterwards were noted in high places and the CSS grew in stature from his good council.

With lots of work and discoveries going on in Agen Allwedd we all felt it was time to get the CSS an established base to keep up with this urgent work. The Sunday School was getting booked by many other groups as was the Hereford Caving Club cottage, which we sometimes used but was a long way from the caves.

Over many months in 1963 A small band of Bill's pilgrims, myself included, search the Llangatock area for dwellings, hovels and ruins and researched the ownership and whether they might be up for sale and costs and so on.

Then the obvious struck us, the ruin next to the Traveller's Rest above the Sunday School which we later found out was named White Walls, and although needing masses of work done on it, would be ideally place for the Society's caving activities.

This is where Bill was at his best and negotiated with the owner and the Duke of Beaufort Estate to sign and purchase the lease hold and the freehold of White Walls for the Society in 1964.

We all threw ourselves into the renovation and rebuilding of White Walls all project managed by Bill Maxwell until Roy Musgrove took on the task of the first Hut Warden.

Bill was a great influence in the early development of the Society and his good work and memory should be preserved.

Those of us who caved in the 1960's still gather in Crickhowell during September each year and meet to renew our friendship and Bill's name comes up regularly in our tales and reminiscences.

Bill also helped with Dr. Antony Sutcliffe to establish The William Pengelly Cave Research Centre in Devon in 1969.

Geo. Fletcher  
April 2013

# Miss Grace's Lane Cave

4 May 2013

by Joe Duxbury

Rachael Cottam, Richard Dewsnap, Joe Duxbury, Tim Gibbs, Matt & Mandy Voysey.

We all managed to meet at the right place at about the right time, and we used Matt and Mandy's rope and slings to rig the entrance. Everyone opted to abseil down the entrance shaft. We took off our SRT kit at the bottom, and I led the way. Just as well, because the rest of the party would have missed the sideways step into Spring Fever.

First of all I just ploughed on in a straight line, from Breakdown Chamber, through Dome Chamber and Nurden Hall to the dead end. So, back to Dome Chamber and we found our way to Dog Tooth Chamber, where we admired the crystals of Dog Tooth Spar. We tried a couple of holes in the floor (I was trying to find the La-La Slide, but failed) and got nowhere, except back to Dog Tooth Chamber. Then

I read the directions, instead of trying to interpret the survey, and we found the right hole in Nurden Hall. This got us to the Shattered Drop, and we went to look at the Phreatic Causeway: nicely phreatic. On to Six Way Junction, across the Satanic Traverses (much better ledges than the Traverses in OFD III) to Fin Pillar Junction. More of the canyon, all the way to Plummet Junction. Then into some small meanders to Deep Rift, where we stopped, because the description advised us that to go any further would get us wet and muddy. We went a little way back into the meanders, and found a convenient spot to eat whatever food we had.

On the way back I tried to follow one of the canyons at floor

level; not a particularly good idea, as it became completely blocked by boulders and I had to be given a pull up at the handhold-less top. However we did opt for the Phreatic Drop route back from Six Way Junction, just for variety, and made our way steadily back to the entrance, without visiting Dog Tooth Chamber again.

Once we had rekitted, we all chose to either prussik or self-line up the shaft, and so there was no need to alter the rigging.

If the interval before the next trip is not too long, we might remember enough to have a look at some of the other passages: the New Year Series, the La-La Slide

...

A fine trip of about 5 hours.

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## Daren Cilau

### Collapse in Acupuncture Passage by MadPhil Rowsell

On last weekend's trip to the REU, Daren Cilau, the Fat Belly Boys discovered that a large section of the roof had collapsed in Acupuncture. The collapse was over 5ft in length with over 1m in thickness of the roof collapsing. It was not possible to pass the collapse. Thankfully, no one was under the collapse or trapped beyond.

After a long session on Saturday, the collapse was partially removed, but the roof is still in a highly unstable state. The passage has now been left to settle and remedial work will be undertaken in due course to stabilise this area. Due to the tight nature and size of blocks that fell it would have not been possible to have cleared this collapse from the far side.

Furthermore, the group has been aware that an area towards the exit of Acupuncture (near the Micron) was very dubious in nature, with blocks having fallen on members and blocks often being discovered in the floor on the way into camps. It was initially thought that it was this area that had collapsed. On partial removal, however, it was apparent that it was an area of the crawl previously thought stable, much earlier in the passage. No one (including me) was prepared to squeeze past the collapse and see if the exit of Acupuncture was clear or had also collapsed.

Acupuncture is currently moving, and is still highly unstable. It is requested that people to do not go past Western Union and DO NOT enter Acupuncture until the group report that the passage has been stabilised. A rescue from such a collapse and being so far in to the cave would not be pretty!!

It has left members somewhat spooked that a previously assumed stable passage, one in which we have travelled through many times and one that has seen a significant amount of traffic over the years has been the site of a significant collapse!!

# HSCC club trip to Devon

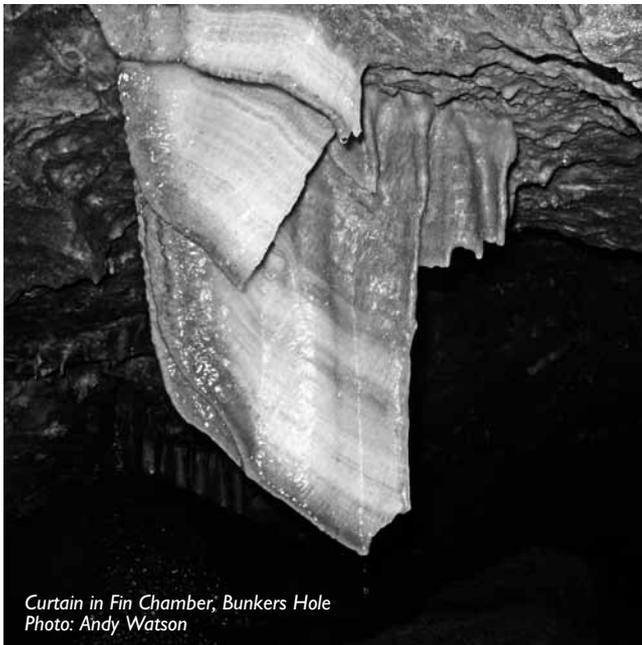
## April 2013

by Andy Watson

We all met up at the White Hart in Buckfastleigh and stayed at the Devon Speleological Society bunkhouse, now known as the South Dartmoor Bunkhouse and there were 14 of us on this club trip. On the Saturday I had arranged for a leader to take us to Bunkers Hole which is one of the prettiest of the Devon caves; it has two entrances that are not gated with a squeeze in between them and then a locked gate before a tight squeeze section that leads into the pretty Fin Chamber. The squeeze into the chamber is quite tight and unfortunately we had a refusal from the Philip and David, the rest of us managed with a lot of pushing, panting and grumbling. There are a number of fine formations in Fin Chamber, a lovely curtain some good flow stone and many crystals.

In the same wooded quarry there is a small short cave by the Limekiln called Shaky Hole which and Gavin, I and Richard went in and we found a small stream and some pretty formations.

Geoff Dommett our hallowed leader for Bunkers Hole then took us to Potters Wood M/Cave and showed us the entrance and then he had to leave. The mine entrance, an old oil drum leads to a sizeable passage some 6-7 feet high and 5 feet wide which has about 14 inches of water on the



Curtain in Fin Chamber, Bunkers Hole  
Photo: Andy Watson

floor and after about 120 feet or so it closes down. On the right-hand side there is a climb up on precarious boulders which leads to a wriggly connection to Potters Wood Cave which comes out in another part of the hill close by. Ralph climbed up this and nearly plummeted and decided it was too slippery. Gavin then tried climbing up and was successful and I followed him up and we managed to get through the slightly awkward and rather dirty connection tube through to the main Potters Wood cave which is very muddy. We came out of the other entrance slightly worse for wear and met some of the others coming in to have a look.

On the Sunday we split into two groups and went to Afton Red Rift and Bakers Pit. Our group went to Afton Red Rift and it has not improved very much since our last trip. After this we drove to Chudleigh where I had the contact name for somebody who lived and worked in the Rock Garden Centre With tearooms! and was also a Devon caver. Kindly John showed us round the caves from the artificial Rock Garden Cave which is a 'made up' Victorian grotto, along to Chudleigh Cave No.21 which is a short corkscrew rift, then to Little Africa Cave which is a reasonably sized wide rift albeit short in length. After this we went to John's dig which they have renamed as Big Breeze Cave and the dig is quite promising and has some pretty formations. We progressed onto Chudleigh Cavern which is the short show cave and went to the end and down below into quite a deep rift 'not without interest'. We briefly looked at the excavated cave to the left of Chudleigh Cavern entrance but did not go in.

We then left the garden and went into the Clifford Estate where there are a number of caves on the cliffs on the northside of Kate Brook (the stream) the largest of which is Pixies Hole, a gated cave, which at this time of year has restricted access due to the roosting bats. Just past here is Bruce's rift where John was trying to prove that I was rather fatter than he was and I promptly went in the wrong way up and got rather stuck and decided that this was not really a cave and it was notable that we have no other volunteers. From here we went across Kate Brook to look at the caves on the far side namely Clifford's Cave which I had read the description of and this had put off all other cavers in our group; However, John was very enthusiastic and we, John and I, spent about an hour in the cave it was a very interesting stream cave albeit rather tight and muddy. I will revisit his cave at some point in the future without a doubt, but having done Afton red rift in the morning and being rather short of time I did not carry out a full trip.

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**"I love Chelsea and I'm living for Chelsea.  
Chelsea is my club!"**

Frank Lampard

# Auction OF CAVING KIT

by Tom Foord

**Roll up, roll up!**

The South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team will be holding a fundraising auction at Whitewalls on Saturday 29 June (the CSS barbecue weekend). Planned start time will be 5:30pm. All are welcome!

A wide range of quality kit will be available for purchase... from tackle sacks, to ropes, to metalwork, to camping kit, and much much more. Come along, support your local rescue team, place a bid and grab yourself a bargain!!

## 50th Cottage anniversary t shirts available

by Mel Reid

I need to order this week for delivery at the BBQ/ cottage celebration.

£11.

Choose your own colour (Fruit of the Loom S-XXXL or possibly bigger).

Pay me at the BBQ.

If you can't make the BBQ, send me your order and a cheque made out to CSS. (see CSS address list)

Chelsea Spelæological Society



**50 years at Whitewalls**



The exhibition area before work commenced.



Jacky Ankerman from WCC, Clive North and Rich Witcombe from ATLAS, Dave King from MNRC. The team was supported by retired caver and geologist Jim Hanwell, museum Curator Barry Lane, museum electrician Rupert Thorogood and a number of cavers and other volunteers.

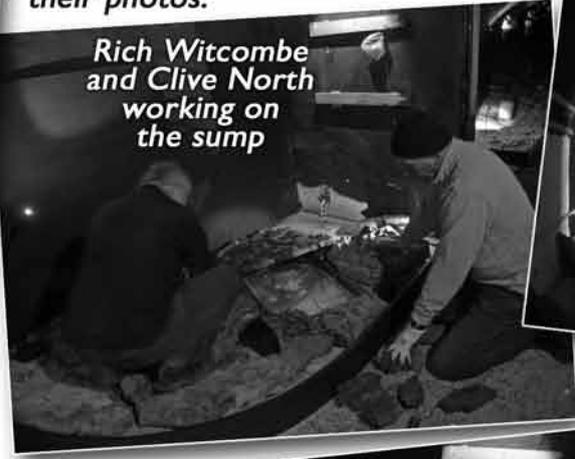
The exhibition area was a small cellar that had been used as a tackle store for MNRC in Herbert Balch's day. After an initial meeting work began in earnest and over the next four months the place was a hive of activity with endless preparatory work required to support the exhibits and supply power. Jacky applied herself to the daunting task of raising sufficient sponsorship from local businesses while the ATLAS contingent ferried and washed countless loads of limestone from Fairy Cave Quarry and stream gravel from the Thrupe Lane stream. Once the framework was in place the team began to build a cave dig and a sump under the watchful eye of Rich Witcombe and his considerable skill with limestone walling. BEC cave photographer Stu Gardiner and myself worked on photographs for lightboxes and backdrops and other cave photographers, including Steve Sharp let us use their photos.

## New Caving Exhibition at Wells & Mendip Museum

by Mark Lumley

Back in December 2012 I was invited by Martin Grass, Chairman of Wells & Mendip Museum, to oversee the construction and design of an exhibition that was intended to show Mendip's caves and caving to a wider audience.

The team was selected from local cavers from a number of clubs including CSS (Lee Hawkswell, Matt Voysey and myself) with Alison Moody and



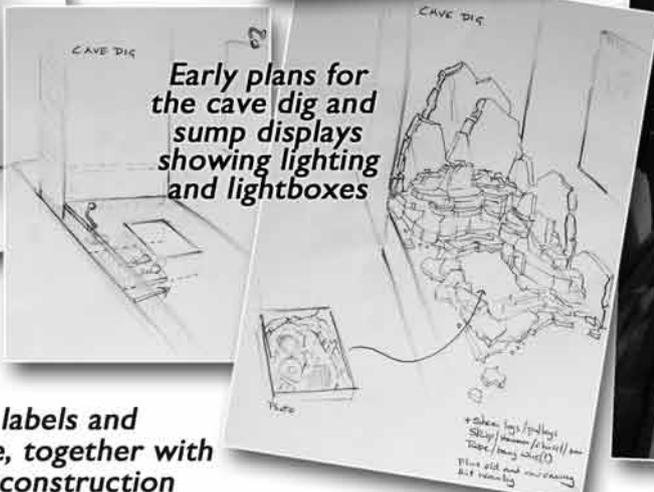
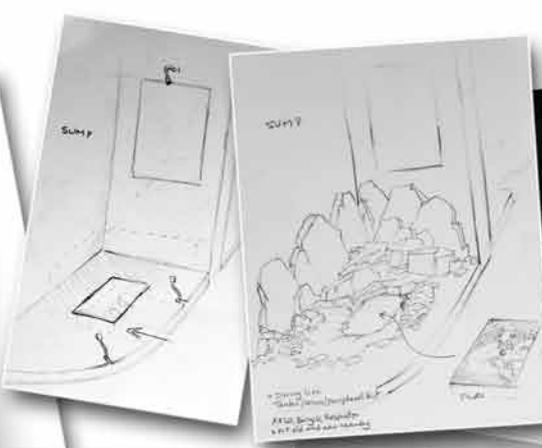
Rich Witcombe and Clive North working on the sump



Rich Witcombe dressing the diver



Dave King does his Freddy Mercury impersonation



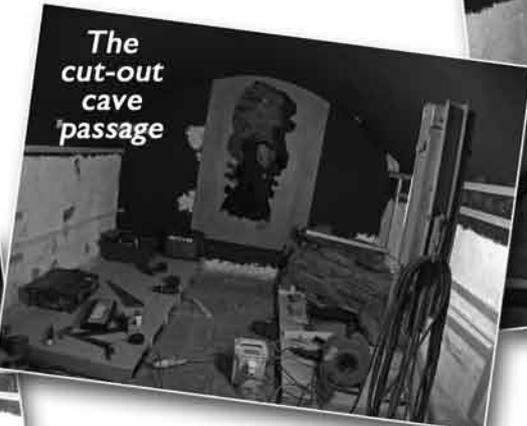
**Early plans for the cave dig and sump displays showing lighting and lightboxes**



**Dave King and Lee Hawkswell constructing the floor**

Graphics for the information boards, labels and supporting literature, together with the huge amount of construction work and preparing the exhibits seemed to take an eternity but we were finally ready for the opening party on April 26. This was a great success with a good turnout of cavers, cave divers and the local invitees. The exhibition was opened by BBC Springwatch's Martin Hughes-Games.

Many thanks to all who helped with the exhibition. I think we have demonstrated that, in a twist to Fred Davies' old adage, 'caves be where you build 'em!'



**The cut-out cave passage**



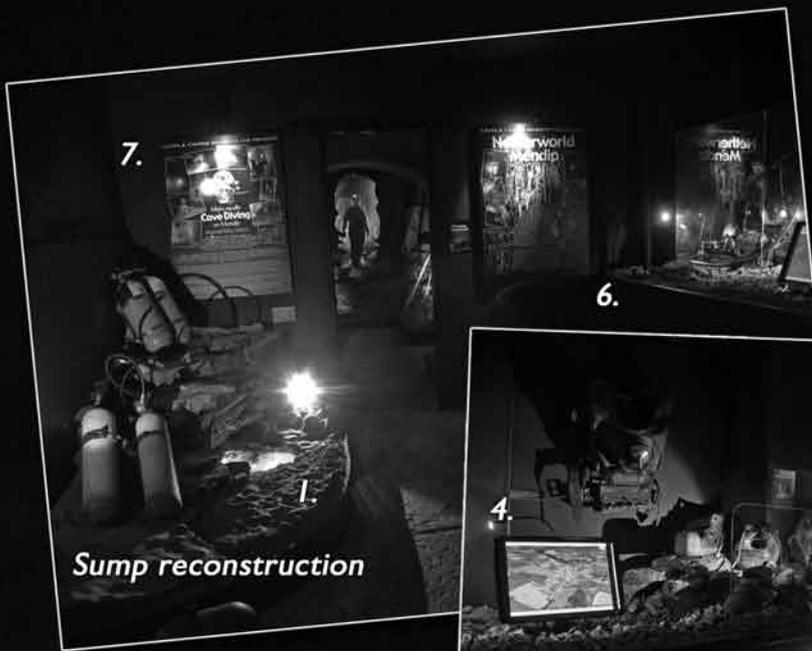
**Rich Witcombe building the dig**

Photos for the lightboxes:  
 Left: Mandy Voysey & Clive North 'digging' in Shatter.  
 Photo: Mark Lumley  
 Right: Duncan Price in Wookey 9.  
 Photo: Stu Gardiner.  
 Below: Stu taking the sump shot in Wookey 9.  
 Photo: Mark Lumley



**Dave King & Darrel Instrell at work**





**CAVES & CAVING BENEATH THE MENDIPS**



13.



10.

14.

**Far Room**

- 8. Reconstruction of a cave dig, with suitable props and a lightbox image looking down into the dig,
- 9. Stu Gardiner's photo of a caver in a stream passage at the end with stream sounds.
- 10. Early and Modern Caving Helmets and Lights.
- 11. Display of caving ladders through the ages and SRT kit.
- 12. Background sound of heavy drip from the left.
- 13. Information boards on the Cheddar Catchment, Reservoir Hole, Searching for Caves.
- 14. Monitor displaying a lazer-generated 3D flythroug of The Frozen Deep, Reservoir Hole.
- 15. Second Monitor showing Chris Binding's film on cave digging.

**First Room**

1. Reconstruction of a sump using a photo looking down at a cave diver. Display of typical diving kit of the last 30 years. Background sound of bubbles rising.
2. Bob Davies' 1940s AFLO and Graham Balcombe's Bicycle Respirator - (used in Swildon's Hole in 1934).
3. Mannequin kitted out in cave diving kit from the late 1940s alongside lead boots, chest weight and 1950s UBA (Universal Breathing Apparatus).
4. Monitor displaying Matt Voysey's Google Earth 'flyover' of Mendip showing all the known caves.
5. Monitor showing an assortment of cave photography from old images to modern day photographs.
6. Pump wheel and flywheel from early dives in Wookey Hole.
7. Information boards on the Wells catchment, Cave diving on Mendip & Caving on Mendip.

**Support Graphics:**  
 Leaflets  
 Posters  
 Invitations  
 Information Labels  
 Geological Overview Booklet

CAVES & CAVING BENEATH THE MENDIPS  
**The Netherworld of Mendip**  
 You are cordially invited to the opening of our new permanent exhibition.  
 Friday 26th April 7.30  
 Refreshments and for the evening  
 £1.50  
 Wells & Mendip Museum, Queen's Hall, 218  
 To: 01759 875477. [www.wellsandmendip.org.uk](http://www.wellsandmendip.org.uk)  
 A New Exhibition  
 WELLS & MENDIP MUSEUM

CAVES & CAVING BENEATH THE MENDIPS  
**The Netherworld of Mendip**  
 A GEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW  
 by Jim Hanwell

Exhibition now on



CAVES & CAVING BENEATH THE MENDIPS  
**Why Wells?**

The City of Wells takes its name from a series of deep springs which lie between the east end of the cathedral and the Bishop's Palace. Several Wookey Hole shaped springs - known collectively as St. Andrew's Well - are fed by a series of smaller streams which form an arc sweeping from Upper Milton and Blidiscombe in the west, along the banks of the Malsbury, to Windsor Hill in the east above Shepton Mallet.

Since the Second World War, local divers have excavated many of these wells and have been rewarded with significant cave discoveries. The biggest, Thrupp Lane Swallow (144m long), Little C. Swallow (290m), Honeyhead Hole (90m) and Thrupp Swallow (225m), is situated on a major faultline, which was explored in 1974, with an impressive waterfall flowing down its lower half, and has been proclaimed as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Wells

Today work in the area is continuing with a new dig at a major swallow at Windsor Hill. First prosbed in the 1970s, this 24m sink has a flow through time of only 24 hours from swallows to St. Andrew's Well, suggesting the possibility of a major cave system beneath.

Shepton Mallet

**Display Panels**

15.



O F Dalek  
Photo: Steve Sharp  
(with a little help from Joe Duxbury!)

OFD

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## Meets List 2013

### June 28-30th June

BBQ Weekend and 50th  
Anniversary Celebration of  
Whitewalls. Caving in Dan yr Ogof.

### July 26-28th

Mendips - Staying at Shepton  
Mallet Caving Club Hut.

### August 23 - 26th Bank Holiday

Caving in Wales based on  
Whitewalls.

### September 13 - 15th

North Wales Mines - Organiser  
Stuart France.

### September 27 - 29th September

Caving in Wales based on  
Whitewalls

### November 1 - 3rd

Bonfire Weekend.

### December 6 - 8th

Curry evening

### New Year

Whitewalls.



[www.chelseaspelaeo.org.uk](http://www.chelseaspelaeo.org.uk)

*John Haynes and Ron Sargent in Banwell Bone Cave. Photo: Mark Lumley*