

CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Whitchurch Farm Rifts

Big Sink

Vurley Swallett

Yorkshire

Otter Hole Film Project

Caving in Dorset

Matienzo 2015

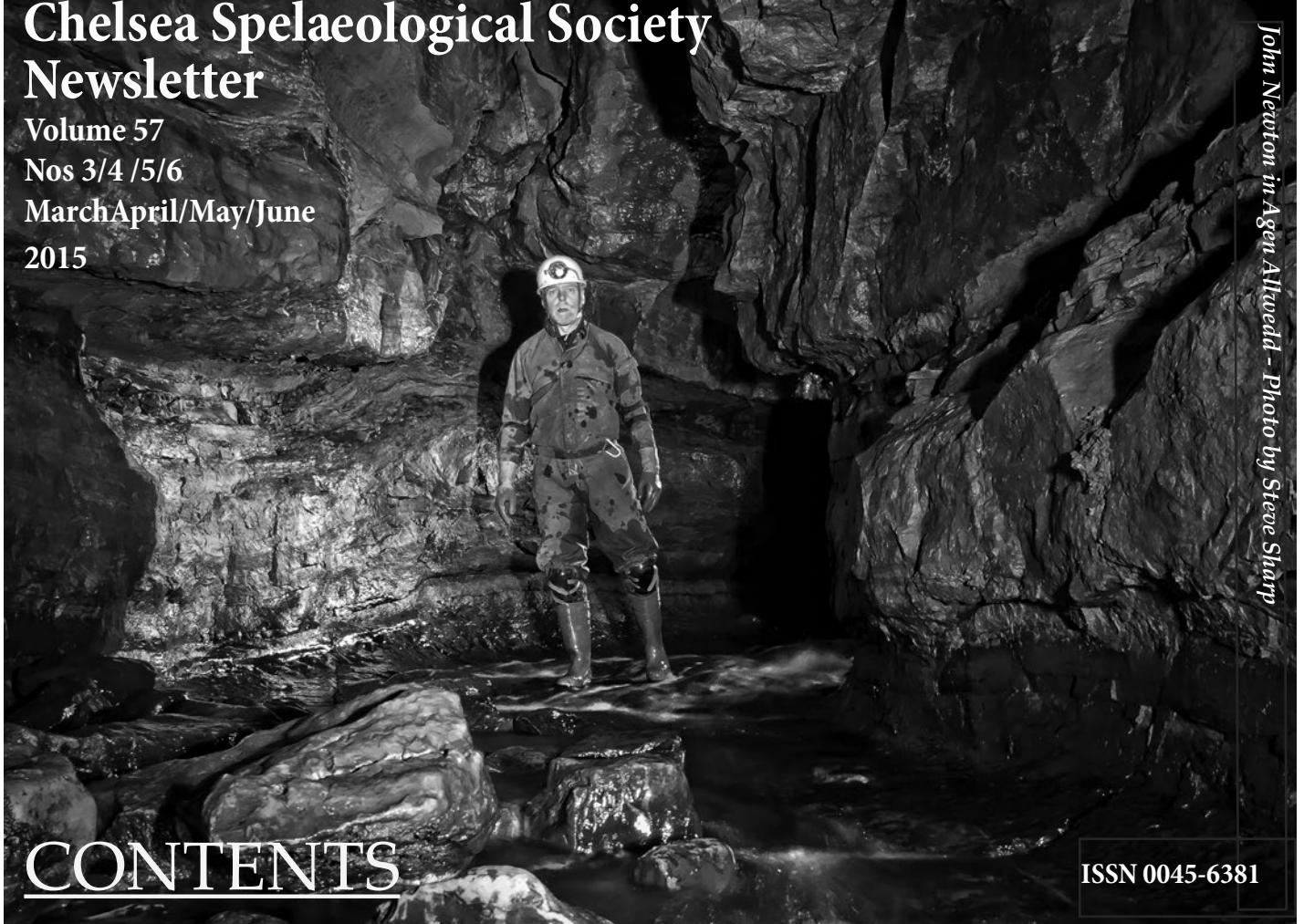
Chelsea Spelaeological Society Newsletter

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John Newton in Agen Altweid - Photo by Steve Sharp

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The views expressed in the Newsletter are those of the author of the article and do not necessarily represent the views of the Society. Photos and illustrations not accredited are by the editor.

Membership

It was in the last Newsletter, three months since your subs were due so this is the final newsletter that unpaid members will receive.”

Please send all subscriptions to:

Gary Jones, 6 West Down, Bookham, Leatherhead,
Surrey KT23 4LJ

Current rates are:

Full £30
Joint £40

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 £25 (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.

Cover Photo - John Newton in Antler Passage

Photo by Lee Hawkswell



CSS Committee Changes

Following Sunday's AGM there are several changes to the CSS committee:

Chairman - Chris Seal

Secretary - Adrian Fawcett

Webmaster - Stuart France

Other officers are unchanged:

Treasurer - Gary Jones

Meets secretary - Joe Duxbury

Librarian - Paul Tarrant

Rescue liaison - Paul Tarrant

Newsletter - Steve Sharp

Cottage - John Stevens

Records - John Cooper

Apologies if I've forgotten anyone...

Paul Tarrant

Editorial

At 2015 AGM it was decided to change the newsletter to quarterly editions, I brought the Jan/Feb journal out slightly early to fit in with the AGM. I have added No 3 March in this Quarterly edition for the sake of completeness

From now on I plan to make with your help a slightly bigger journal with all the latest trip reports and info from CSS and other interesting items we can all relate to.

Please put pen to paper and take your cameras above and below ground.

Please send in your photos and trip reports etc

Please send all material to:

Steve-Sharp-Photography@virginmedia.com

Or put on a CD and send to:

Steve Sharp

43 The Crescent

Sea Mills

Bristol

BS9 2JT

Send your text for your article in Microsoft Word format or email.

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

You could alternatively zip your work and send in as a .rar file using

www.mailbigfile.com (Free version)

Steve Sharp

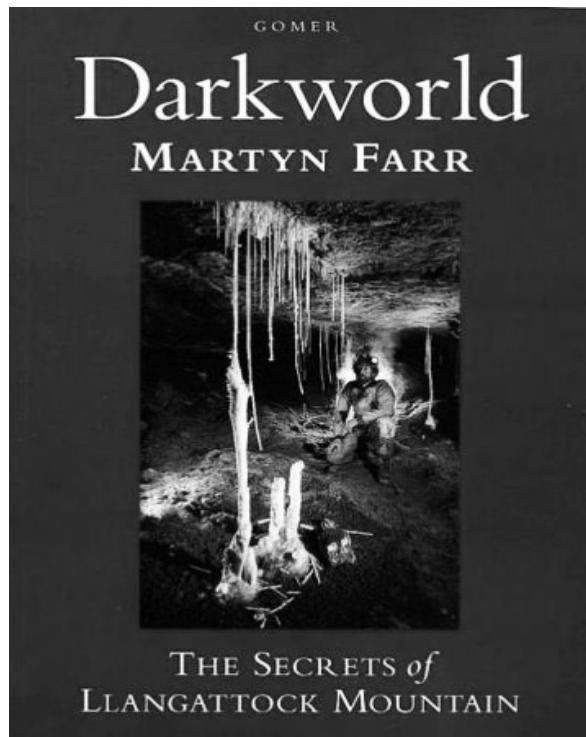
FOR SALE

Martyn Farr's Darkworld

£12.00

The club has acquired a limited number of brand new hardback copies of this excellent book for sale, written by our own Martyn Farr. The book is a history of cave exploration in Llangattock, covering the golden age of Daren exploration as well as earlier and later discoveries in Craig y Ffynnon, Carno and other places. If you have not got this book you have the opportunity to buy at the discounted price of £12 (normal retail is £15.95). The book is becoming a rarity and you won't buy this cheaper on Amazon!

Copies can be bought at Whitewalls or contact Paul Tarrant the Librarian.



Whitchurch Farm Rifts

by Mark Lumley Photos by Mark & Karen Lumley

Over the last few months there has been a great deal of landscaping work as a lake is filled in on Whitchurch Farm, between my home just outside Clapton and Ston Easton Park on the Mendip hills above Farrington Gurney.

A procession of lorries deliver huge quantities of spoil throughout the day and, to facilitate access

over the soft ground, the contractors have dug a deep pit in the overlying Blue and White Lias, using the spoil as hardcore for a track over the fields.

This has revealed a series of Gulls, or Slip Rifts at various depths along the rock face. West Country cavers will be familiar with Slip Rifts, good examples being Sally's Rift and Murhill Rift.

Main Photo: Looking North East from Whitchurch Farm towards Paulton, with the slag heap from the abandoned coal mine at Old Mills in the middle distance.



Having obtained permission from the farmer I went to take a look.

After shifting a few boulders, a body's length could be gained in a couple of the rifts, with one draughting and the other seen to continue, but too tight for progress without chemical persuasion.

The rifts are very well decorated with fine straws, stal and honey-coloured flowstone. Access could be made to several other rifts in the pit but there seems little point in working here as the pit will subsequently be filled in as part of the landscaping project.

I then invited local geologists Gareth Thomas and Kay Boreland to the site. They were extremely

interested in seeing such a large face exposed in the local Lias. They referred me to a report on Slip Rifts at Radstock¹ and suggested that this is likely to be the nature of the terrain along the northern slope of the Mendips from this area to Radstock and beyond.

I subsequently visited the site with Dr Tony Boycott and Charlie Self (UBSS). Charlie is interested in Slip Rifts on the Mendips and in the Cotswolds and, together with Andy Farrant, has written several papers on the subject².

This won't win the 2015 JRat Award, but interesting nevertheless!

A stal sample was taken away for carbon dating.

¹ A building site on cambered ground at Radstock, Avon
A.B. Hawkins & K.D. Privett (UBSS)

² Gulls, Gull Caves and Cambering in the Southern Cotswold Hills, England. Charles Self, Andrew Farrant (UBSS)



CSS Evening Trips By Paul Tarrant

Evening Trip to - OFD2 24/2/15

This was our first evening trip of the New Year and a good one it turned out to be! Four of us met at SWCC and swiftly changed and made our way to Top Entrance. This took a little finding in the dark and swirling fog did nothing to make things easy for us, but we located the entrance after just a wee Faff. Claire Vivian was our guide and swiftly led us to the Corkscrew Climb and then to Salubrious Passage where we turned right, upstream where we took a left hand passage. This took us via some scrambling to the bottom of the climb up to Arete Chamber, which I have done some while back.

We carried on down passages very typical of the upper storeys of OFD. High rifty canyon passages twisting and turning and with the occasional high fluted Aven coming in from on high. Eventually we took a smaller sinuous passage which led to Timo's Table (large detached slab) in a large passage running across our path. Going right led to Poached Egg climb where you can continue your trip to the Crevasse and the way on to OFD3 and its infamous traverses. My comment of "We used to climb down there" and pointing out the two poached egg stals was met by Claire with the comment "You can't do it now as a large block has detached itself from the climb - it was only held on by mud!" Hmmmm.

We returned to the main approach passage and carried on where the passage became smaller and a few squeezes over boulders and flakes made for slightly slower progress. It was at this point that white moonmilk lining the small stream way suggested we were close to the top end of Salubrious Passage and this proved to be the case with the passage opening up by the climb up to Corkscrew Climb. We paid a quick visit to Swamp Creek via The Trident, and then continued on to President's Leap, where we admired the fine straws in the approach passage.

A swift return up Salubrious left us with a few minutes to kill and we took a detour by the Wedding Cake formation in Chasm passage and looked at the big pitch down Arete. An athletic set of mini traverses took us straight back to Big Chamber Near the Entrance and that brought a fine end to two hours of good, fun caving. A pint in the Ancient Briton was thought by all as a fitting end to the trip!

Participants: Claire Vivian and Sion Way (new provisional members), Tim Gibbs and Paul Tarrant

Craig A Ffynnon

Tues 3/3/15

We had five people turn out for a trip in this splendid cave. Our objective was to visit Hall of the Mountain King and we reached this after an hour of pleasant caving in passages that have some lovely formations. We looked at 'Things to Come' passage going off from HOTMK which has received some digging attention in the past. Returning towards Travertine Passage, we picked up Frank who was trying out his new camera, taking photos of Chelsea members both old and new! The return through the Second Choke was quicker than on the way in due to gravity helping us and we exited at 9:30pm, changed quickly in the freezing cold and then had a good natter in the Bridgend Pub. Smashing bit of caving in one of Wales' best caves.

Participants: Claire Vivian, Sion Way (both new provisional members), Tim Gibbs, Frank Longwill and Paul Tarrant

Cave Rescue Practice at Cwmystwyth Sat 16/5/15

The South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team held a rescue practice in the lead and copper mines of Cwmystwyth. On this occasion we were assisted by NWCRO, Gloucester CRO and West Midlands CRT members so it was a good turn out of thirty plus people. CSS members in attendance were Kat Hawkins, Lisa Boore and your scribe.

Our scenario was to search for a University group of six cavers who had failed to return from an evening trip. Four underground search parties were instructed to check out all the open adits in sectors of the area and my group were tasked with checking the eastern most area which contained Taylor's adit. There were several small adits which were checked working our way back west along the valley.

The Nant yr Onnen stream has cut down through several mineral lodes and adits have been driven into both banks/sides of the valley to exploit these. Herbert's Level was the most interesting of those we looked at as the cross cut passage intersected a large lode which has been stoped out. So what did that mean? A cross cut is an exploratory passage that was driven to intersect mineral veins. When it hit a vein then the mineral would be mined out and the space left after that operation is the stope, which often would have timbers jammed across it which would have had planks laid over these to enable the removal of the mineral higher up in the vein. We encountered a spectacular stope in Herbert's which led us to what



Craig A Ffynnon - Photography - Frank Longwill

is one of the most impressive underground sights in the country. Light from the surface was filtering down from on high, lighting up the stope showing random timbers lodged across it. Approaching the light revealed a massive timber construction (not sure of its purpose) with a waterfall tumbling in from the surface a few hundred feet above us. A truly awesome sight demanding more thorough investigation and photographing.

Back to the rescue practice. We systematically explored Herbert's and Alderson's Level nearby and found two cards giving information on the casualties they represented. One card suggested someone was in Taylor's Level but a check with the control tent indicated we were not to check it just yet. We checked out Comet Level finding nothing and were then instructed to check out Taylor's Level which some CSS members visited in 2014. A cross cut passage driven into the hill contains very cold waist deep water and eventually gives access to a large stope with a steel wheel suspended across it, used for power generation. This section revealed no casualty but exploring further along the cross cut did when we found a casualty card.

At this point things got very interesting as people behind us indicated that another casualty had been located. This turned out to be a real person in the form of team member Dafydd who had a lower leg injury. Alarmingly, he then recounted in a distressed state that he wanted to immediately exit the mine as he had seen a dead bloated body floating in a pool further in the mine. It had been

there some time and had scared him and in his haste to exit he had taken a wrong turning and fallen injuring his leg. What to do with this situation? We discounted his possible use of hallucinatory substances being the cause of his claimed find, calmed him down and started his evacuation from the mine using the floating stretcher through the cross cut passage to the surface. This concluded the day's exercise.

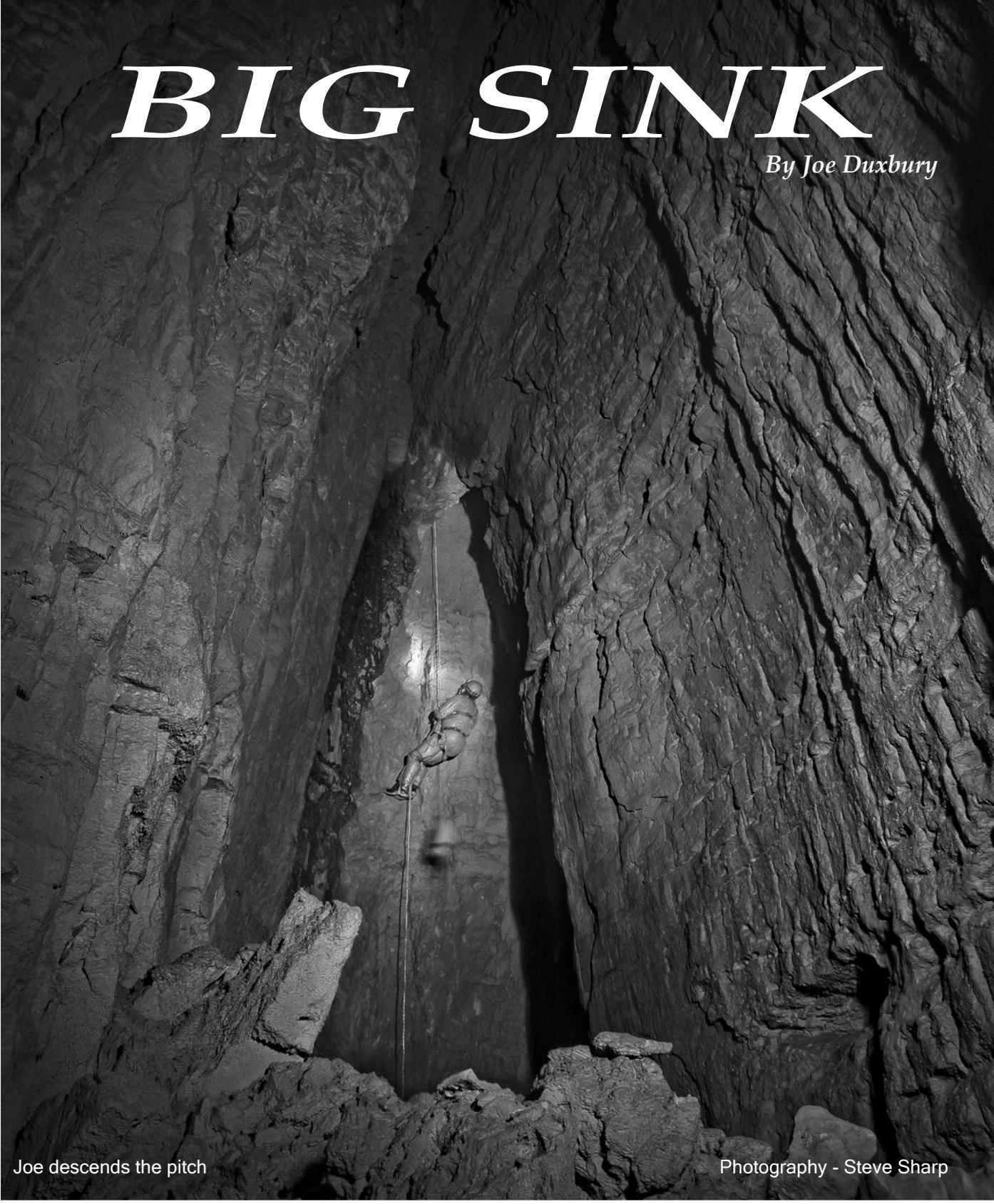
We discussed what to do in this situation with regards communicating to surface of the 'We have a possible dead person situation' as we had low frequency radio handsets which could communicate to surface. In a situation like this communication needs to be direct and discrete without using radios in case of people listening in to the airwaves. The Police would have to give their instruction on the location and recovery of a corpse as cause of death could be crime related so rescue team members would have to be careful not to compromise forensic evidence. Additionally, the presence of bad air could have been the cause of death so the team would need to ensure air quality using air monitors before effecting any recovery operation.

This was an excellent practice in a fascinating mine complex and with a challenging thought provoking end game. The next rescue practice will be held at Agen Allwedd on 3rd October where we will be testing out the search plans for the cave drafted by Tom Foord. Why not join us?

By Paul Tarrant

BIG SINK

By Joe Duxbury



Joe descends the pitch

Photography - Steve Sharp

Saturday 25 April 2015

Joe Duxbury, Tim Gibbs, Steve Sharp

Apparently Chelsea has not had an official club trip before to Big Sink, in the Forest of Dean, so I nobly/stupidly suggested it to Paul Tarrant.

We all met successfully at the Forestry Commission car park at Symonds Yat, despite said car park being the size of Kensington Gardens. Tim had to briefly depart to find somewhere to get cash for the parking meter, but once he'd returned we collected our gear

and headed for the cave.

The directions (taken from The Caves of the Forest of Dean) were excellent, and we found our way straight to the entrance. We followed the advice in the CotFoD to change at the entrance, and then lowered our bags of clothes down to the first convenient spot. We rapidly descended shafts with scaffolding in various stages of terminal rust, and took the obvious route down a final shaft into a blank chamber. Referring to the description, it said this was Chernobyl Chamber, an unsuc-

cessful dig. Tim informed us that ‘You shouldn’t wear shorts in Ukraine because Chernobyl fallout.’ Actually, the only fallout likely there was rocks from the roof: it says in CotFoD that ‘The roof ... is in an extremely bad condition and is best left well alone.’ So we retreated and took the obvious way along a scaffolded crawl to the left, leading to more scaffolded shafts. As we descended, there was an abrupt and remarkable change in the bedrock to a white stratum of limestone.

After a bit of crawling, and avoiding pushing the rope and other tackle down a deep, but narrow, hole with a scaffold pole over it, we arrived at the pitch. We kitted up here, I rigged the rope (30 m) and we descended the fine, open pitch. We took off all our SRT kit, then followed the stream into a low crawl. Although this got larger after a while, and we could stand up, it degenerated into the narrow ‘200 Metre Rift’. I think this has been deliberately mis-named, in much the same way that Greenland was so-named by Erik the Red; it’s clearly much longer than 200 m. It’s an everlasting struggle along a tortuous, tight, gnarly, rift. On the floor to start with; then, when that becomes impossible, at roof level; then down again. A final climb back up again before a rope came into view, at the drop into the Second Chamber. We had brought a 13 m rope with us (as per the instructions) but we didn’t need it.

We continued to follow the stream, and when that disappeared off to the left, we squirmed up a muddy tube to the right. This took us to a chamber with the onwards passage turning back on itself. At an obvious junction, the way up to the left over boulders led to Yorkshire Pot, to where I directed Tom and Steve to go and have a look. I think they were impressed. I couldn’t understand why Steve was shouting ‘Below!’ – they were supposed to be at the bottom of a 25 m shaft, not the top. Silly me. He was shouting ‘Hello!’. Unfortunately our way was straight on through a series of dry, flat out crawls and small chambers. Here I said I’d had enough and let the others go on ahead to see the nice formations blocking the way on.

When they returned we had something to eat (I was glad I had a super-duper energy bar, and not just some chocolate) and set off back. Steve needed an extra knot tying in the rope up out of the Second Chamber, but that was the only difficulty encountered on the way. I had less trouble going back along the rift (thanks to the energy bar?), and the redeeming feature of the return trip is that you can see the stream in the floor getting ever closer.

Back up the pitch, where Steve took a couple of photos, and soon we were out. A fine trip of about 6 hours. We took our kit back to the car park to change, to the interest of passing walkers and abseiling groups. Hot coffee from my flask did much to revive Steve. Tim had to leave for home as his day permit was running out, and Steve and I drove on to Whitewalls.



The Big Sink depression



Joe and Tim descend the entrance shaft



The first sign of solid limestone in the lower shafts

Send in your trip report with pictures, the CSS Newsletter is a great place to tell your story. Old or new we'd love to read about it.

Vurley Swallet *By Nick Chipchase*

Eventually all the necessary permissions came together for this dig in the western most close depression along the South Western Overthrust faults. A digger was hired and as luck would have it we found a supply of abandoned concrete pipes not far from our site. A huge hole was excavated down to bed rock at six metres depth. At four metres there was a band of angular rubble then another metre of silt. Some large boulders were found during the dig. These depressions were glacial lakes when the permafrost prevented water sinking into the limestone. The silt appears to be a wind blown loess according to some authorities.

The whole project took three and a half days to complete costing somewhere north of £1000. The seven metres of pipe was positioned over what appears to be a choked rift. At least we are hoping that to be the case or it will be a very short dig. The farmer has given us the use of an abandoned pumping hut in the depression.



The digger arrives at the depression



Closed basin near Vurley Swallet



Grass land in the closed depression viewed from the limestone ridge

Vurley Swallet was named after the field in which it lies. Close by is a large pond which appears to be artificial. One of several dew ponds etc that lie on this area of the plateau. The pond was on the 1880's OS map so is quite old. The adjacent shed was built as a pump house to supply troughs in the otherwise dry basins. On the western edge of the depression is a limestone ridge that was quarried in the 1800's. A well preserved lime kiln is situated at the northern end. Farming took place here in the 1800's and many stone walls survive. A ruined farm lies further to the south. The sediments within the depression allow grass to be grown over extensive areas but where the limestone out crops there are rough areas and gorse. The West Mendip Way footpath and others run close by.

The Mendip Cave Registry lists Vurley Swallet at NGR 47994 53397. Reference is made to collapses here that the farmer has filled in over the years though there was little evidence of that in the sediments. Water only sinks here in very wet conditions when the pond over flows into the depression. The site has attracted attention from cavers over the years and a little digging was done. Currently all interested parties have formed together into "The Vurley Mining Company" whose shares have provided funds for the excavation. Expected to be around £1500. Currently not a metre of natural cave can be promised though geological conditions appear good.

The South Western Overthrust fault follows the escarpment for a considerable distance and along this there have been identified some sixteen closed depressions. Ford and Stanton did work relating to these features some years ago. The closed depressions contain known cave sites with White Pit being the largest. Other sites have been dug. One in the adjacent basin (Middle Down Drove) was dug by Devenish et al in 1949 but repeated collapse of the sediments meant little depth was obtained. There have been other attempts notably by Stanton himself at Brimble Pit. Brimble Pit is currently being dug by Wessex Cave Club members and the adjacent Locke's Hole by Bristol Exploration Club members. Another site is at Cross Swallet. The basins were formed by dissolution when glacial lakes formed above the permafrost. The caves in the area were formed in warmer interglacial periods when water was able to penetrate the limestone. A short distance to the north east of Vurley Swallet lies Totty Pot, an ancient cave relict containing important archeological deposits.



The first concrete ring in position

During May several digging trips have taken place below the pipes. Currently the fear of having just bedrock below has receded. We are now 2 metres into a boulder and mud rucke with good prospects of going down further. Over the years the farmer has seen about 20 cubic metres of soil disappear down the swallet so slow but sustained progress is expected. The site hut has been partially refurbished and currently everyone is happy. Quite a rare achievement for a Mendip dig.



The Hut



Digging at the base of the pipes



The final ring in position

We are indebted to the farmer for his kindness in allowing this project to move forward. Also to work behind the scenes by others to comply with regulations regarding the protected nature of this site (An SSSI). Whether all this work will lead us into natural caves will remain to be seen. The old Mendip adage " Caves be where you find 'em " . Certainly applies.



9 metres to the bottom



Work on the hut though the hot tub has yet to be plumbed in

Photos - Nick Chipchase

Yorkshire - Easter 2015

Matt and Mandy Voysey, Andy Heath, Chris Tomlin with thanks to Paul Tarrant and Judith Mullington for acting as our call-outs.

This was an Easter change for me: 4 days of proper caving.

Day 1 Pippikin Pot/Mistral

This was a long walk! Pitch 1 was rigged with an old in-situ rope. We got down this, then over an amusing hole where you have to perch on a bar to avoid falling down a blind shaft. This is followed by an awkward downward squeeze where it is difficult to avoid falling out of it down a 2m pot and then a tight squeeze where I lost my nerve and so we retreated – Andy had to do the squeeze twice where I retreated. It also took me a good few minutes and considerable help to get up through the awkward squeeze – it wasn't really tight but just difficult to get upwards through it. It also didn't help that we had pulled down our rope from the first pitch so we had to go back out on the in-situ tat. Sorry to all as I did Pippikin Pot in the early 90s when I was slimmer and a lot more confident and was sure it would be okay a second time – maybe so, but my nerve failed. Then a tramp down the fell where we went into Mistral Hole and had a good tour of the lower part of Pippkin – Dusty Junction, Hall of the Ten, Hall of the Mountain King with its abundance of gloopy mud and the super streamway to Cigalere (sharp rock and a deep cold canal comes as standard). We also managed to find where Pippkin comes in, to a narrow streamway. I acted like an idiot throwing mud at Mandy. Such a team player.

Day 2 Dowbergill Passage

This was an Easter change for me, Chris Tomlin; 4 days of proper caving. We parked in Kettlewell near the river and had a long walk to Providence Pot. We planned to do the traverse starting from Providence Pot to avoid the risk of not being able to get out of Providence Pot at the end of a long trip if rocks had been piled on the lid. I think it is easier in this direction as well. The trip starts with a steep descent down through dismal cave until you plop into a muddy canal through a squeeze which is the start of Blasted Crawl. Then we got into Dowbergill Passage proper. Andy led with the excellent description from the 'Not for the Faint Hearted' guidebook (what is particularly useful are the timings in the description rather than distances). Mandy had laminated the copy

so it was waterproof, which turned out to be quite important in the streamway where we spent a fair amount of time wading. We kept as low as possible in the traverse and were rewarded with a long cold canal. I had a bad moment in a watery squeeze that I did feet-first – nearly lost my glasses in the water and shortly after I lost my nerve for watery tight stuff – luckily there was a rope leading upwards so we went over the top of what Matt, scouting ahead, reckoned was nasty with limited air space, so I reckon we would have gone high at that point even if I had squeezed through.

There are large numbers of fallen blocks in the streamway leading to awkward manoeuvres; it was bit like doing 3rd Choke in Aggy over and over again. At times I felt like a cartoon character getting through tight slots where only their fingers and toes can propel them forward. But others had fun too: Andy's Duo headlamp made a bid for freedom (and nearly succeeded) in a boulder ruckle and Matt explored a holdless oubliette in the streamway that was also in deepish water - that may have been Hawkins Horror – not that anyone else was going to go down and see! At several points there are fixed ropes leading upwards out of sight so you can indeed do the traverse at any level. Eventually after an awkward up-and-down on ropes we landed in a pretty, wide canal, passed the large stal boss (the Temple) and emerged in Dow Cave which is spectacular, like a French cave, and unlike any cave we had done so far that day. A very pleasant bimble through this brought us to daylight about 4½ hours after we had entered Providence Pot – not bad. I reckon the others would have done it in under 4 hours without me. Next time we'd like to do the rest of Dow Cave – we didn't do all of it - and perhaps Dowbergill Passage until it gets unpleasant.

Day 3 Black Shiver Pot

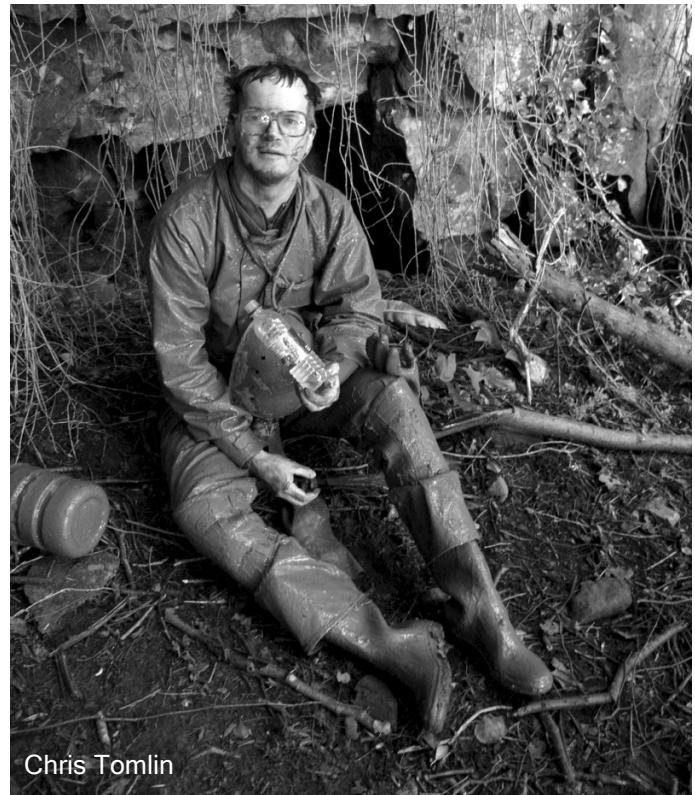
After that trip I slept like a corpse, not even hearing some noisy people in the hut. Well it was off to Chapel-le-Dale to do Black Shiver. We had quite a time finding the entrance which was much lower down the hill than we thought – should have brought a sighting compass or a GPS. Paul Tarrant very kindly acted as our call-out with no notice whatsoever. Andy started off rigging and we followed. We used whistles for signalling in the pot, the first time Andy used one I thought a fire alarm was going off, it was so loud. Black Shiver is a bit of a scrabble to start with, there's nowhere much to even stand until you get to the top of the main pitch and I had my usual

fun time at Pitch 3 (I have to go over the top as I am too porky in SRT gear for the stream route). Andy had good fun with the rope on the big pitch with it going everywhere. Because there were four of us we decided to do the pitch with a rebelay at the big block rather than dropping the whole thing in one. Below the block there is only one useful deviation although I confused matters by rigging a second, useless deviation on the way up. The pitch foot was very well-watered from the stream and none of us fancied the duck so we turned around at the point. I was impressed with speed of the Voyseys who were ropewalking while I used the classic Frog rig and I also had fun at top of 3rd pitch but I passed the squeeze by myself for a change. Andy went up first and galloped off into the mist to contact Paul by our agreed time, not much of a phone signal at the entrance. Then an easy stroll back to the car. We only saw other cavers at Sunset Hole that day.

Day 4 Simpsons Pot

This was an easy day: a short through-trip & then a long trip homewards. Andy and Mandy went in Valley Entrance and rigged the drop while Matt and I lounged in the sun (it's a hard life). We contacted Judith who kindly agreed to be our callout (again, with no notice). We struggled up the fell and found the correct entrance without too much trouble. We use 44 and 45m ropes for the through trip, works well but there is a lot of friction sometimes when it is being pulled down, you have to be very careful with the twist. The rock shapes in Simpson's are beautiful, good as any stal in my view. Splitting into two teams of two worked great as one team rigged while the other got the rope down, coiled it and then passed it forward. After a nice nearly flat-out duck we got to the top of the big pitch – not Slit Pot but the Great Aven Pitch itself, it is about 36 metres. There is a small chamber at the top of the pitch with much old tat to rig the pull through to and we sacrificed a sling for safety. The pitch starts down a slot and bells out magnificently after about ten metres and then it is a super free-hang to the boulder floor. Andy went first and I followed. After I came down, Andy made sure he could pull the ropes down - Matt and Mandy would have un jammed the ropes and gone the Slit Pot route instead if the ropes jammed. In fact they ran more freely than the single ropes on the other pitches. So we all got down and moseyed on out. But Philosophers Crawl is a pig, where is East Entrance Passage? After we emerged in the sun we called Judith back and headed back to the hut and a last cup of tea before heading home. Thanks to our callouts, to Mandy for organising to Andy for doing most of the rigging and to Matt for his excellent taste in bluegrass music!

By - Chris Tomlin



Chris Tomlin

Reservoir Hole

By Nick Chipchase

A lot of effort has gone into the Skyfall dig this year with very little gain to show for it. However the diggers feel they are now at a critical point having demolished most of the heavily stalagmitized choke in the upward continuation of the rift. The “roof” is now what appears to be the underside of a stalagmite floor covering the original choke. Holes drilled through this appear to enter airspace after eight inches though at present the size of the void above this is unknown. We could have a chamber there or we could find the rift pinching in.

In the meantime I have been walking the plateau to the South East of Reservoir Hole where there are a series of closed basins formed along the South Western Overthrust. Here glacial lake sediments overlie the limestone and there are several large shakeholes. There is also an active swallet, Vurley Swallet, which is a kilometer from Skyfall at about 220m OD and therefore 120m above Skyfall choke. This is a wet weather sink that occasionally gets filled in by the farmer. Interestingly Vurley Swallet is right on the overthrust fault near to the point where the glacial sediments give way to limestone on the surface. Only two possibilities come to mind for the water in Skyfall - percolation water or Vurley Swallet.

Both my operations are getting better now but I shall not know how much union I have in the ulna break until 7th April. I shall then ask about caving prospects. Not that this will be the ultimate decider I still have the wife and daughter to get past.

Otter Hole trip report

By Steve Sharp

Saturday 9/5/2015

The opportunity had come up to Join Paul Taylor on a epic Film Trip into Otter Hole accompanied by 11 fellow film assistants to help carry all of Pauls filming equipment into the cave.

Due to the tide times our arrival time at the car park was 6.45am; we quickly changed and entered the cave at 7am. Weather conditions were good for this over tide trip. We quickly made our way through the entrance series Unfortunately one of the cavers bailed, feeling unwell as he entered the cave, He was carrying the largest and most awkward bag at the time which was quickly passed onto me!

The entrance series was more muddy than usual so squeezing through the boulders was effortless even for the larger than life caver. We soon arrived at the tidal sump and braved the cold water as we made our way through. The next section of the cave with its climbs and traverses along the stream way was a welcome change from the flat out crawls in the entrance series. We stopped at the foot of the climb into the upper series to wash all the excess mud from our caving suits. This helps preserve the condition of the cave and the pristine formations in the next part of the cave.

The aim of the trip was to fly a Go Pro carriage through the Hall Of Thirty.

We made our way up through the rift passing bags as we made our way up into the upper series.

A few members of the team had not seen this part of the cave before. On arrival we all had something to eat and started to unpack the filming equipment. The next

Photos
Steve Sharp
(GoPro Stills)



few hours were spent setting up the Go Pro carriage followed by capturing footage of the Hall of Thirty. Once filming was over we made our way out of the cave and headed back to the Forest of Dean rescue centre spending a evening together discussing the events of the day followed by a meal and some drinks.

Paul has written an exclusive account of his film project to date for the CSS journal.



The Go Pro carriage in the hall of 30



Otter Hole Film Project

By Paul Taylor

I first became involved with filming in Otter Hole when Sid Perou decided to make a film in the cave in the early 1980's. This was after John Elliott took him into the cave for his first trip.

This initial film was in no uncertain terms a disaster for many reasons but fortunately did not put Sid off and he came back a couple of years later with a much more secure financial backing and we again got involved and the Realm of Darkness Film Otter Hole was produced. Fast forward to 2005 and I commissioned Nicky Bayley from the RFDCC to produce a film for the opening ceremony of the 2005 Forest Caving Symposium. I had seen quite a bit of Nickys work and was very impressed. I wrote for want of a better word the Screen Play and the script and between us we filmed it and Nicky put it together. Two years later and Rose my wife and myself were booked on a cruise. However not your normal 2000 passengers calling at Twenty different locations in 2 weeks.

This was 10 Passengers in 6 Star accommodation on a working ship Trinity House Patricia. Best not to ask how much it cost for the week but you could buy a very nice second hand car with it. Prior to departure I decided to buy a Video Camera and record the trip. This was my first venture into filming for myself. We had a great time and produced quite a reasonable film out of it. As well as learning a lot.

When I bought the camera I said "This will not be going caving" however the temptation was too good and it was not long before underground filming was taking place. I also bought a Head Cam. Again best not to ask how much that cost but 3 Gopros would just about cover it.



Paul Taylor

Then in 2009 a long standing caving friend of mine Dave "Sparky" Parker of Otter Hole fame out of the blue asked me "How about a trip into Otter Hole for me" To be honest you could have knocked me over with a feather, I was completely taken aback as Dave had made it quite clear in the past that he would never go back into Otter Hole. I did not dare question him as to why he had changed his mind but just said "YES". It is worth pointing out that Dave was the very first caver to go underground at Otter Hole in 1970 and he was also now 72 years old.

Fast Forward again to May 22nd 2010 and with Nicky Bayley & myself running two cameras and a team of 6 other supporters Dave now aged 73 made a 12.5hr trip back into Otter Hole and visited for the first time the Upper Series and saw some of the formations it contains including the Hall of Thirty.

Out of this trip came the Film "Otter Hole Cave 40 Years 1970 - 2010" two showings of the film at the Palace Cinema in Cinderford, Trips in Stretch Limos and raising £1000.00 for charity. Along with third prize for the film in the Napoli Film Festival.

Gary Cullen Filming in the Hall Of Thirty



Formations in the Hall Of Thirty



*Photos
Paul Fretwell*

Making that film and thinking back to Sid's film made me realise that Otter Hole had so much to offer. There were so many things about the cave that most people did not see or know. The seeds for a second film or fourth if you count the others was sown and the new Otter Film Project was underway. I was however well aware that this was something that I could not undertake on my own and I made contact with Gary Cullen who had in fact been in the cave in 2010 when we were filming and supplied some footage for my film.

Setting up filming equipment



I asked him if he would be interested in helping out. It did not take him long to say YES and he in turn suggested that we invite Footleg to get involved. So he was approached and like Gary was very quick to say yes please. With these two onboard I started to mull over what I wanted to achieve and film and I hope you will not mind if I do not divulge all of the details as we wish it to be a surprise.

However the main thing that we had seen in the years that had followed on from 2010 was the greater use if not total use of Digital Filming and so this started to have an impact on the cameras we were going to use. Digital SLR cameras with very high quality video functions have become part of the kit, alongside more advanced Digital Video Cameras and of course Gopro Cameras.

So now I have a Cannon SLR Camera, a small Panasonic Video Camera and two Hero 3 Plus Cameras complete with LCD Backs. We have also started to look at ways of reaching places in the cave that are not normally possible so "Selfie Sticks" have been looked at but with a longer range. Also taking the Gimbal Technology from the Drone that I have. We now have a Gopro Camera that is fitted to frame that has a Gimbal Mounted on it plus full Radio Remote Control of the Tilt and Yaw and then add FPV Video so we can place a camera in the middle of a chamber and move it and control it as well as being able to see what it is filming. Lighting is also changing from Heavy Duty Lead Acid Batteries powering large Halogen lights that you could only run for a few minutes to now LED Flood Lights



that we can run for many hours on much smaller Lipo or similar batteries.

Our sound recording equipment has also been vastly improved using small radio Microphones and a very Compact and efficient Digital Recorder that I purchased having completed some work on Merlin and filling my time chatting to the sound engineer. Of course all of this has lead to requiring a much larger team of sherpas to move the equipment in and out of the cave. Some trips we are as many as twelve and with 11 - 12 hr trips each time they are long hard and at times very cold. However the rewards although not financial as I could not pay even £2 / hr for those

finished for a World Premier in June next year and then to take it to the European Congress in 2016 in Yorkshire. Yes it would have been nice to have had it finished this year but in 2014 the slight technical problem of me having a Heart Attack put us back a bit and also recent events have shown us that we can produce even better footage so why rush. This is a very big project which we all want to get right. So how can you help.

If you have a trip booked into Otter Hole please be tolerant with us. We have a lot of filming equipment in the cave and in some cases it might spoil your photo. It will all be removed later.

If you visit the cave when filming is taking place you may be asked to keep quiet for a few minutes but for this you will be rewarded by seeing that part of the cave lit up like you will have never seen it before. All who are involved in the project are investing a very large amount of time energy and money into it and all of the equipment. New cameras alone have cost a fortune and although we are not asking for a contribution towards the cost of these. You can help by if you have not already bought a copy of the 2010 version of the Otter Hole film then please buy a copy. The cost is £12 + £1.50 p&p and it can be ordered by sending an email to redhouseproductionsglos@redhousefod.co.uk along with your address details. All of the proceeds from the sales of the DVD are used to provide for the welfare of all of those taking part in the filming trips.

If I was to list all who are involved with this project then it would take another page. They all know who they are. However I would like to give special thanks to Judi Durber, Footleg and Gary Cullen for all of their support. Especially in May 2014 when I thought my time had come or at a minimum the project was going to stumble and fail. Without their encouragement we wopuld nopt be where we are today. Watch this space.



The GoPro Carridge

involved have been more than money could buy. For them seeing the Hall of Thirty lit up with over 1500 Watts of light for almost 3 hours leaves you completely speechless and with views and memories that very few people have or will ever see.

This project has brought together a great team of people to all of which I am very grateful as I could not even produce 1 % of it on my own. We are all learning so much from it all and we are doing things with cameras that very few around the world have done. We are seeing things in the cave that NO BODY has ever seen before. So when you may ask will you be able to see the results. Firstly I hope to be able to have a short section of footage available to show at Hidden Earth this year and the film



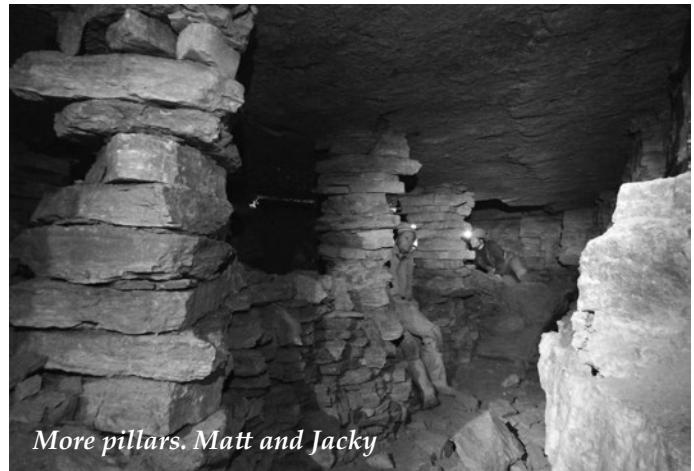
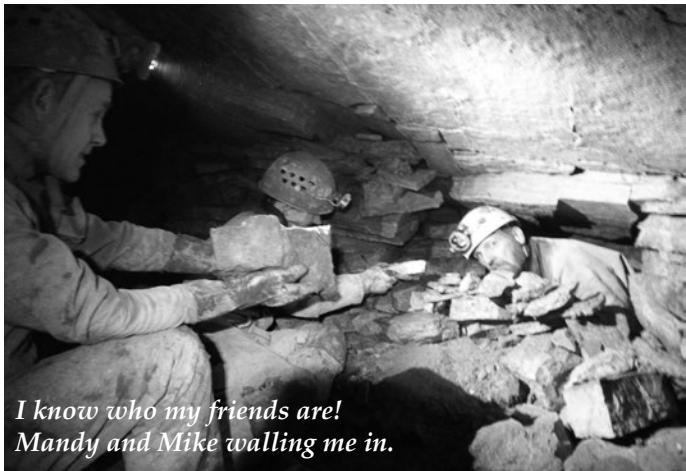
A select crowd gathered on Friday night at Mike Read's house after a visit to the local hostelry. Lee and Jacky were to arrive in the morning, as did Derek Davey from just down the road.

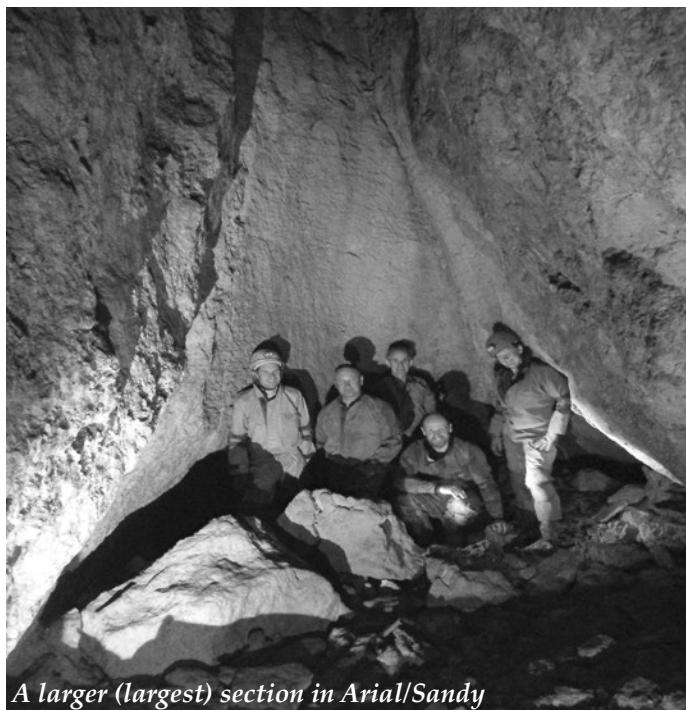
Saturday was to be the classic through trip from Arial to Sandy Hole on the Portland peninsular. The two bolts were set close to the edge making the take off interesting, but not as spectacular as pulling ones self into the cave entrance part way down the cliff. Mike was the first to descend and had the added hazard of a Small Gull on its nest in the entrance. By the time I got down it had vacated and left is large white egg behind. Lee, Matt and Mandy then followed before Derek pulled up the rope, committing us to the through trip. The through trip was varied with a few (three) squeezy sections which Lee being the largest may have had a problem with. But all things went smoothly . Mandy was on the look out for fossils and we eventually found a few as we approached Sandy Hole.

The cave was quite varied with the old phreas crossed

by rifts which seemed to allow some formations to be formed. As we got closer to Sandy Hole it became more crawly and some sticky mud managed to coat most things.

Saturday Evening, Mike and Dawn put on an excellent BBQ with a small barrel provided by Lee and Jacky. Sunday was going to be very different, as we headed out towards Swanage and an old limestone mine. Mike and I had previously surveyed over a kilometre of this and there were still a few question marks on the survey to investigate. The party size was increased with the addition of Derek, Dawn and Jacky. The incline was fitted with a rope and we soon all gathered at its base. Some fresh rubbish was found and later removed to limit its contamination to the mine. The mine lanes are walking height and well walled in most part, so progress started quite quickly until a light problem occurred and two of the party decided to exit and join John N on the surface. Mike and Derek then looked at the first possible lead but a bit more work was





A larger (largest) section in Arial/Sandy

required. The next lead was open but through a loose area. Mike and I started surveying this while the others went to see if the water had dropped in another section of the mine. The water had vanished and revealed a couple of hundred more meters of workings.

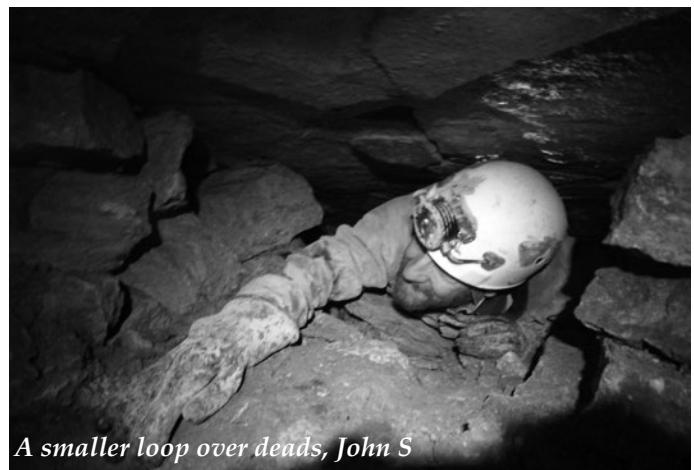
By the time we had surveyed to the end of our bit, Matt and Mandy had joined us, so we exited even though an extension in this area may also be in the offing. Lee, Jacky and John N had to get back early to the Mendips which left the rest of us enjoying a pint and ice cream in the Square and Compass pub.

Mike and I have now surveyed several mines and caves in the area and will produce a Dorset special newsletter when they are complete (or nearly).

By John Stevens



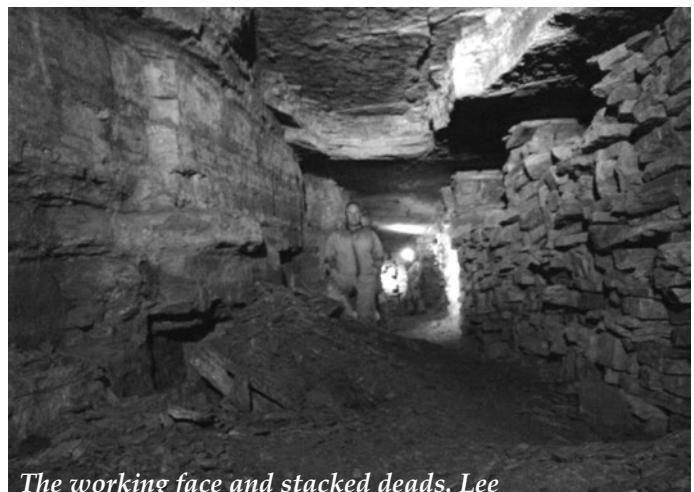
Dawn descending the incline



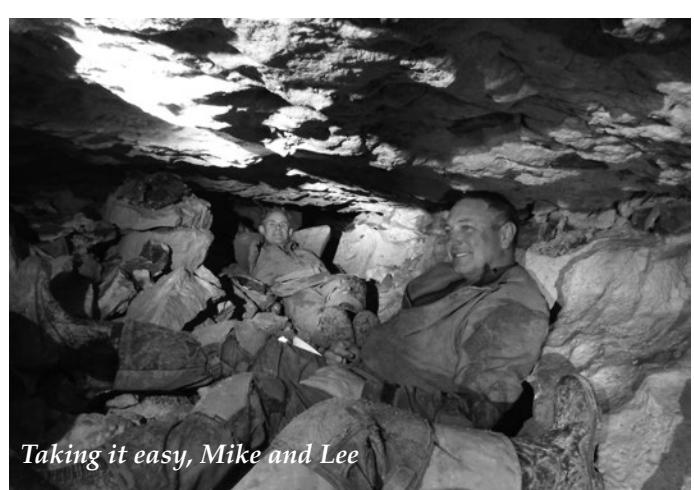
A smaller loop over deads, John S



Matt with some pretty bits before we got muddy



The working face and stacked deads. Lee



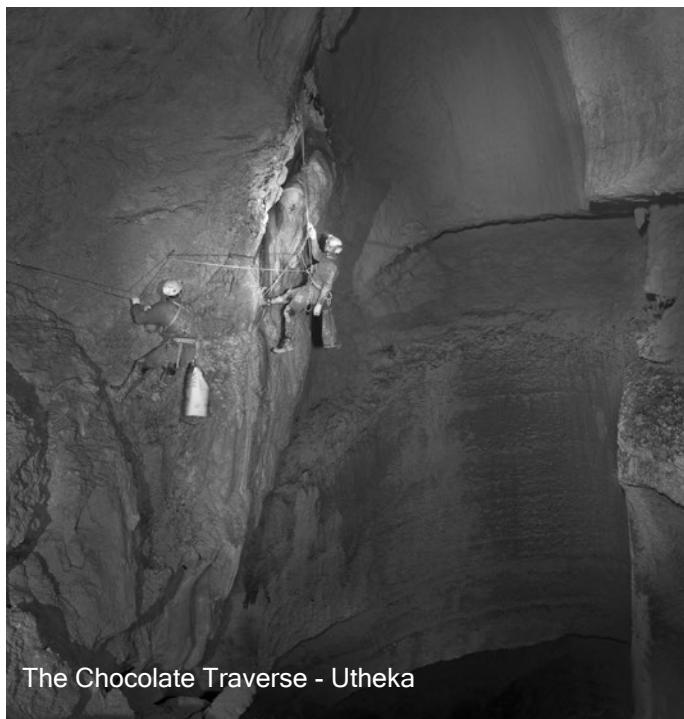
Taking it easy, Mike and Lee

Matienzo 2015

By Steve Sharp



I first visited Matienzo in 2010 with Paul Fretwell and co taking the car share driving option through France. 2010 saw exploration of the Cueva de la Hoyuca system via the Giant Panda entrance series. 2010 didn't disappoint with the exploration of a high level inlet stream above the Chocolate Traverse, it's name relates to the instability of foot holds and its similarity to traversing around the top of a chocolate covered chocolate cake!



The Chocolate Traverse - Utheka

Five years had passed and a trip back was long overdue.

I planned to join the others on the ferry from Portsmouth to Santander, unfortunately the cabins only held four people, the only option left to me was to fly. On comparison flying worked out slightly cheaper, I

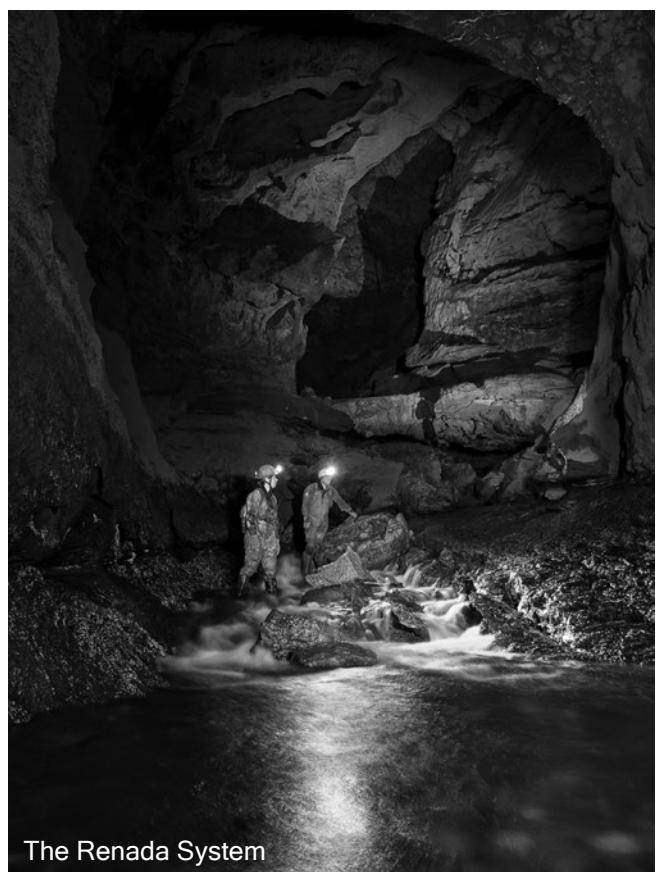
travelled to Stansted by coach and then caught an early Sunday morning flight to Santander.

The only drawback was a four hour wait at Stansted airport in the early hours of Sunday morning.

On arrival at Santander airport I was kindly picked up by Steve Martin a long time Matienzo explorer.

Matienzo has a good community of cavers and trips to suit all abilities and plenty of systems to explore.

The possibility of finding new cave/passage is very high.



The Renada System



The Matienzo Depression



Photography - Steve Sharp

Traverseing the lake - Renada

The first couple of days saw Paul Dold finding a brand new cave whilst taking a wander around a local farmer's field, this turned into a project for some of the younger members of the team, a Bear skeleton was also discovered in the cave.

The main aim of the expedition was to explore deep into the Vaca system via a second entrance that was discovered a couple of years ago.

This year we all decided to camp in Matienzo in the field behind Pablo's Bar, this location is a great place to meet cavers and join trips, I was invited on a trip to the Villine system to help carry out a dye test. A large amount of water travels through the cave from an unknown source. This particular trip involved a spectacular 35m pitch leading to a fine stream way terminating in a sump. Tom Howard and myself were given the job of pouring the dye into the sump.

A couple of days later I joined Pete Smith and Steve Martin on a trip into the Renada system to look at the charcoal bags that had been left by Pete on a earlier occasion, this system contained fine passages



Giant Panda entrance shaft



Pete Smith in Castle Hall - Renada

and formations at every turn. The samples proved negative on the trip but a few days later the Renada sump confirmed positive. The Main Resurgence was positive. a few other locations that should have been positive were negative posing more questions than answers!

On the evenings we spent many a late night in Pablo's bar drinking the night away. The Matienzo team always put on a expedition meal for all the cavers, Goat was on the menu, a first for me; the goat was delicious and top marks to the chef. During the expedition we spent a day trying out Via Ferrata, not something I would recommend if you are scared of heights, the route took us up the side of a mountain and included a walk across a wire traverse line. The views from the top were breathtaking and well worth the climb up.

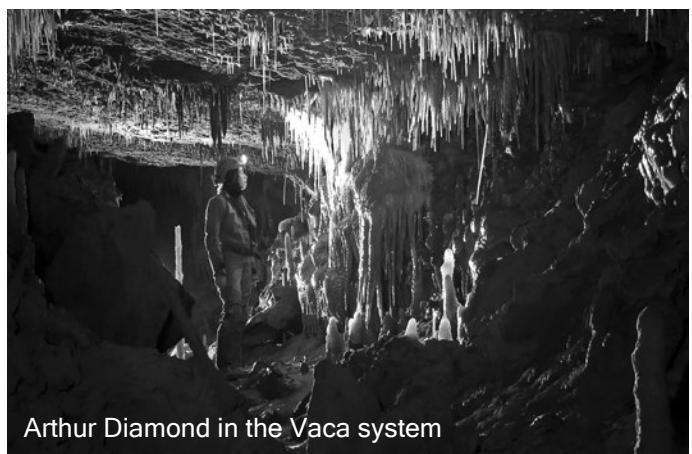


Clouds trapped in the Matienzo depression



A group shot after a trip in Villine

I'd like to say a big thank you to Steve and Susie Martin for making me so welcome on this expedition putting me up on the final night and inviting me round for a meal.



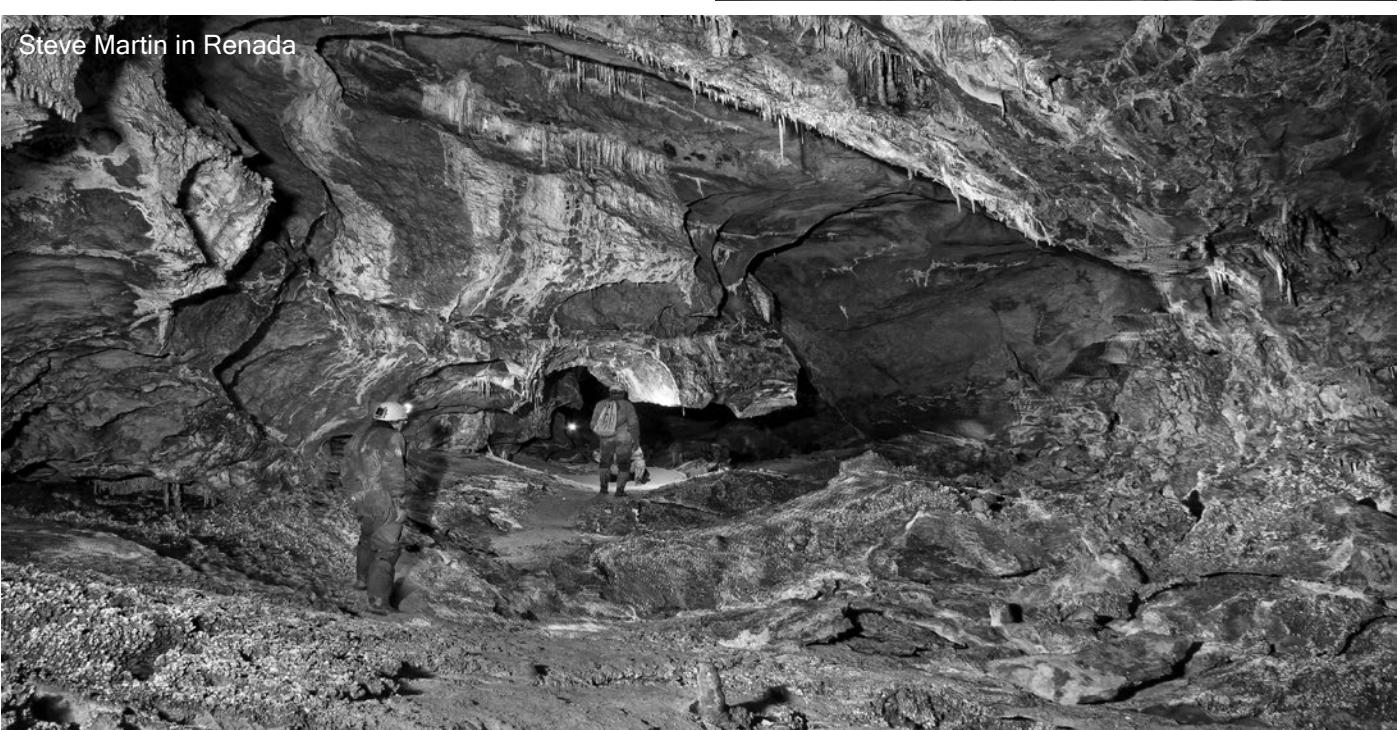
Arthur Diamond in the Vaca system



Via Ferrata



Pablos Bar



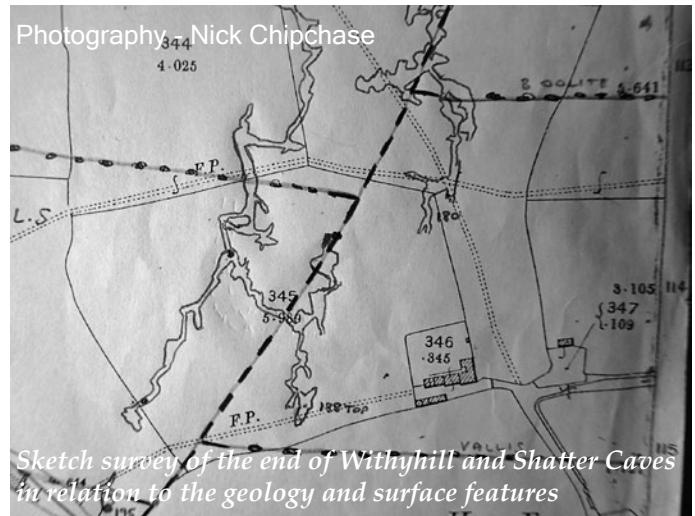
Shatter Cave

By Nick Chipchase

My first proper caving trip for six months accompanied by Vurley shareholders Nigel Cox and Pete Rose. The latter for a shorter trip. I wanted to try out my arm, take a few photos and smoke test the end of the cave. We arrived to find the cave recently retaped Reservoir style by Chris Binding et al. Nice white fencing tape right to the end with a "gate" at Pillar Chamber for trips allowed any further by the management committee and cave leader. I tried and failed to find a little pineapple formation seen by another Mendip caver who had a photo of it. Somewhere in Helectite Rift low down. Ahh well never mind then slowly onward to the end of the cave taking a few shots with my selfie stick arrangement. For a few read 178 of which 38 were saved. All done rapidly on the assumption that some will be good. In any case backwards looking stick photos are very hit and miss though it's an interesting technique. The same can be said for overhead shots. Come the end Nigel must have got bored with it all because he spayed smoke all over the far end of the cave making photography impossible.

Well the smoke testing did prove to be unusual. Nothing obvious anywhere near the end chokes but blowing well through the squeeze below Plug Hole Chamber. Now comes the odd bit. At first the smoke blew inward then it stopped then it blew hard outwards. What that means I really do not know. Perhaps a nearby surface connection or going around in circles via Withyhill. Certainly one of the strongest draughts in Withyhill can be experienced in the dig through the false floor beyond Jonathan's Chamber.

The arm held up well though I was careful not to use it too much. Leaning down hard on where the plate is hurt a bit. It also tired me out using unusual techniques to pass the tight bits. We spent five hours underground whilst the rest of the Vurley crew added another metre to the depth there. Still in mud and boulders. Great thing about Shatter is that you always see a new little wonder even after 45 years of caving there.



Overhead view of The Plug Hole and new tape



Backwards stick photo of straws in wall alcove.

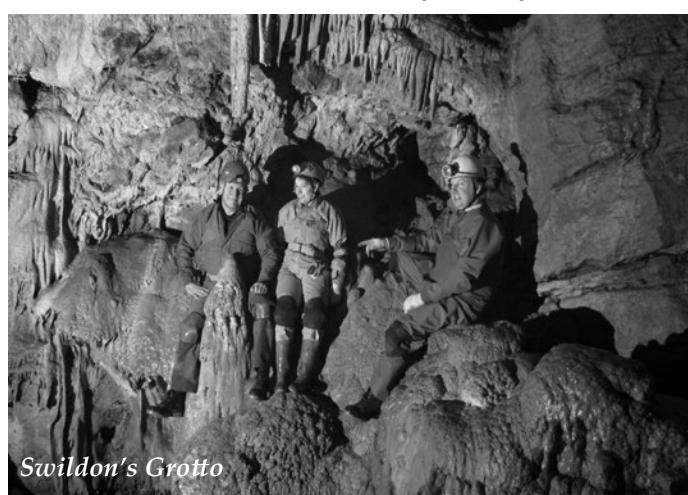
HSCC Club trip for potential new leaders to 'try caving' in Mendips September 6th & 7th 2014

We stayed at MNRS (Mendip Nature Research Station) Dave, Ros, Phil, Sue, Andy, Sue, Darrell & Susan. We were joined by 3 'newbies' and John Crowsley (caving trainer). The scout leaders trying caving & cave leading were Amanda, Darren & Russell. Saturday morning: We all went to Swildon's Hole and John Crowsley led the three newbies around the top end and down to the top of the 20ft pitch. The rest of us played with rigging and ladders in the Long Dry Way. In the afternoon we all went to Burrington and Philip took the 3 newbies into Goatchurch Cavern and the rest of us went to Pierre's Pot with JC and discussed interesting ways of providing more adventurous and challenging trips for Scouts. Saturday evening we all ate together. Darren & Russell had to go home due to work, family and other Scouting commitments.

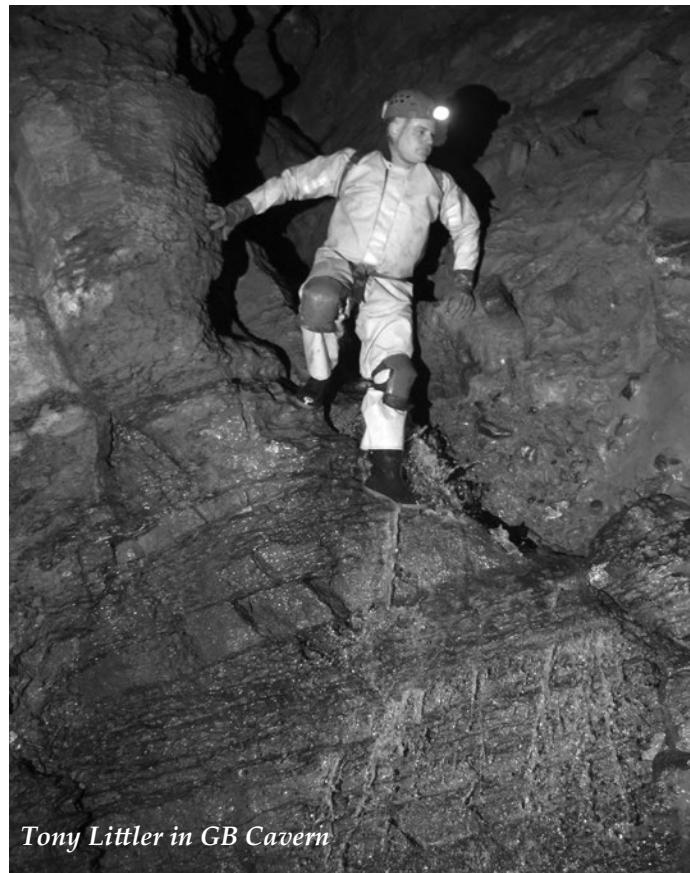
Sunday: Andy, Susie, Susan and Amanda went to GB to do the standard round trip with no eventful moments. The water was very, very low though with only a trickle in the main passage and a lot of accessible passage below Ladder Dig on the main route down to the sump. About 2.5 hours and very enjoyable. The rest went off to do ladder practice with JC at Rod's Pot.

Andy Watson CSS/MNRC/HSCC

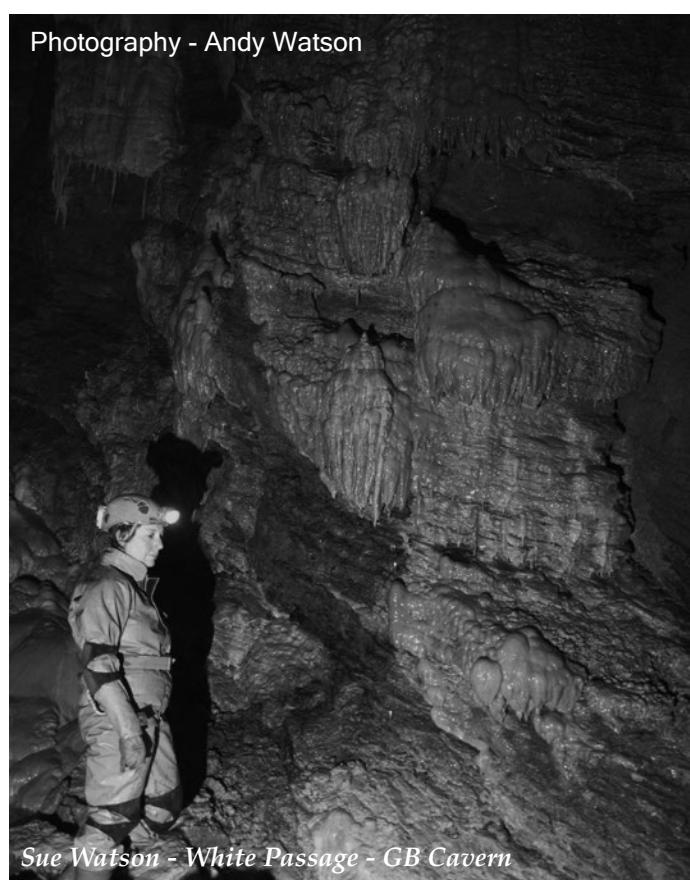
By Andy Watson



Swildon's Grotto



Tony Littler in GB Cavern



Sue Watson - White Passage - GB Cavern

CSS Meets List 2015 By Paul Tarrant

12-14 June - Forest of Dean

The BCRC/BCA AGM weekend with caving and mining trips and fun activities at the site. Less than an hour away from Whitewalls if you don't want to camp at the forest venue

20/6 CSS BBQ

The second social meet of the year with the BBQ in the evening. Caving wise we will try to visit Dan Yr Ogof and if the weather prevents this, we will go to OFD.

27/6 Yorkshire Dales

Join Chris Tomlin, and Adrian Fawcett, staying at the YSS hut and visiting the classic caves of the Dales. Details of caves to be confirmed but provisionally thought to be Penyghent Pot and a Leck Fell cave.

18/7 Mendip BBQ

Lee and Jacky will again host the CSS Mendip BBQ, with accommodation booked at the Shepton Mansion. There are plenty of caves in the vicinity which will be booked for this ever popular weekend. Jacky has again kindly agreed to provide food for the event and the Hunter's have agreed to lay on ample supplies of Butcombe!

29/8 Bank Holiday Weekend Whitewalls - Cwmystwyth Mines

Caving around Llangattock and Blaenavon. You have an extra day available to you to do those long trips in the mega systems of the area. I am happy to take a party over to Cwmystwyth Mines to explore places left over from the May 2014 trip. What's involved? Mainly walking in large mine passages with some ladder pitches to gain access to lower and upper levels. Fascinating place.

26/9 Hidden Earth Churchill Mendip

10/10 Yorkshire or Derbyshire

Details of this weekend are to be confirmed but will involve the Voyseys or Adrian Fawcett arranging a trip Up North before it gets too cold.

7/11 Bonfire Party

Burning Guys in the evening, drinking beer (barrel of 6X) and eating Jacky's chilli and chocolate bats, and caving during the day in the Swansea Valley (OFD, Tunnel).

5/12 The Curry Evening

Caving in Ogef Draenen, Ogef Craig y Ffynnon, followed by evening Social at Whitewalls where we each create a curry which can be shared with members.

30/1/16 CSS Annual Dinner

31/1/16 CSS AGM

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Cottage Bookings

5 - 7 June - Masson Caving Club (5 Bunks)

12 - 14 June - Cambridge Climbing Caving Club (8 Bunks)

3 - 5 July - Devon Speleological Society (6 Bunks)

17 - 19 July - EECC (10 Bunks)

25 - 27 September - Chesterfield Caving Club (8 Bunks)

2 - 4 October - FFC (12 Bunks)

24 October - 1 November - FFC Exclusive Booking (All Bunks)

W/L Cave Mendip
Photography Mark (Gonzo) Lumley

