CHELSEA SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

CSS Newsletter

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Volume 57 Nos.7/8/9 July/Aug/Sep 2015

Chelsea Spelaeological Society Newsletter

Volume 57
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Duncan Hooper in Alum Pot - Photo by Steve Sharp

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Membership

Subs are now due - Details on page 71

Please send all subscriptions to:
Gary Jones, 29 Canney Close,
Chiseldon
Swindon
SN4 0PG

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 £24 (BCA Non Caver already included)
Provisional £20

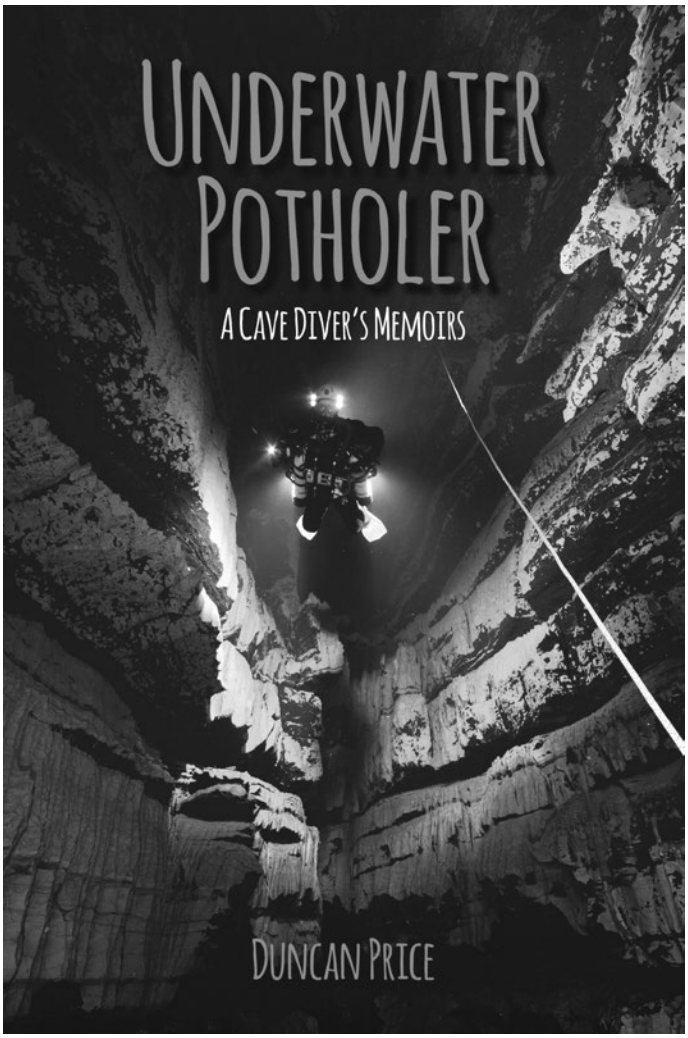
Provisional members made into Full members this year have to pay the Full member rate.

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 sent 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 - Alum Pot

Photo by Steve Sharp



Editorial

Another exciting few months with the release of Duncans books and some good caving trips.
See you all at Hidden Earth

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
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BS9 2JT

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Steve Sharp

Underwater Potholer by Duncan Price

This entertaining book is a thorough account of Duncan's progress as a cave diver. I eagerly anticipated his tales of derring-do, boulder collapses and equipment failures.
Despite Duncan's efforts to have the book carefully proofread, what did I find, as early as page 11? "Chelsea Speleological Society"! And this from a trustee, no less! What's more he got the "Spelæological" in UBSS right. But he did explain that CSS itself has been inconsistent throughout its history, so I let him off.
Although Duncan is passionate about his sport, the emotion in his writing is reserved; there is no nail-biting, edge-of-the-seat drama. Maybe this is what you should expect from a cave diver: the ability to stay calm in moments of crisis. His story sticks very much to his cave diving career. I wondered whether the absence of much information regarding his private life (as compared with Jim Eyre's autobiographies, for example) made it less compelling.
There is a lot of information regarding the cylinders and gases used on virtually every dive of his life, which at first seems unnecessary detail, but because this is, after all, a book about cave diving, principally for cave divers, it is understandable.
Furthermore, the science of cave diving physiology, and of cave formation, is plainly explained.
Another scientific snippet, that relating to Schrödinger's cat, I found to be a real amusing gem in the matter-of-fact presentation.


Duncan Price
Photo Liz Jogers

Review By
Joe Duxbury

SUBS 2016!

Believe it or not but subs become due again on the 1st of October.
As agreed at the last AGM, subs are as follows:

Full members: £30
Joint members: £40 (per couple – same address required)
Associate members: £18

As always, unless you have bca membership/cover via another club then bca must be added to the above:

Active caver bca: £17
Non active bca: £6

If you have bca elsewhere then I need to know your bca number and through which club. As previously, bca have not yet published their rates for 2016 so the deal is, if you pay before they do so, the club will honour the old rate but once published, members will need to pay any higher rate if they are still to pay up! That's reason number one to pay up nice and early. Reason number two is the committee have proposed a late payment fee of a further £5 for payments post 31st December (to be ratified at the next AGM). This is important as our postage costs are high and so bca cards are sent out with the newsletter. With the newsletter reducing in frequency, delivery of cards to members becomes delayed if not enough members are paid up by the end of December. The third and most important reason is that it makes my job so much easier!

Cheques should be made payable to CSS and sent to:

Gary Jones
29 Canney Close
Chiseldon
Swindon
SN4 0PG

Please note this is a new address so do not use any previous address you may have used!

Alternatively, payment can be made direct to the club via

30-90-02
00591115

Please e-mail me (chelseatreasurer@gmail.com) though if you pay directly so that I can tally your payment.

Nant Rhin and the children within

By Gary Kiely

I fancied a quiet weekend at Whitewalls and playing on some ropes. Nothing taxing just tipping around. Its been some time since i've been on rope properly so Friday night the hatch came up and I rigged my route up the stairs and down to the tackle store. I did think that my rigging was a bit ropey but managed the route to the floor. The return was a different matter as I had left my re-belay loop way too short. I could have cheated but I used the situation as self - training for when it could go wrong.

Next morning I bagged up some shiny new club rope (thanks Joe) some hangers and headed to a safe bet, Nant Rhin. I have been here before so was pretty chilled about doing this myself.

I knew there were knarley bits and my gear would be snagging on the little fingers of rock grabbing at you, I had accepted this. In my mind you went in the hole on the river bank round the bend and you're at the pitch head, easy peasy. It was somewhat more involved than that. To start with the size had changed. This was either to do with calories or subsidence, Im going with subsidence. I certainly never remember the large wobbly slab that you needed to shimmy under, all the little grabbey rock fingers were loving my foot loops and cows tails and this induced some choice phrases.

More choice phrases when I reached the pitch head. It was already rigged and I didn't need to haul in the bag of rope.

There was room for a party of 6 to get kitted up so crawling in SRT kit was a pointless exercise

First pitch is perfect, nice comfortable ledges to sit on and hook up, nice take off. The next pitch is about 5 metres on and is more of a hand line and would be easily free climbed, but I buckled up anyhow. This whole aven between these two pitches is worthy of 10 minutes of your time, its actually got lots of Flowstone and is very pretty.

Following the stream through it started to get a bit smaller again until it became too small. The way on is stepping left and up from the stream through a rift to a chamber where you meet the stream again. I use the term "rift" loosely, when I think of a rift I think of the satisfying sound of your oversuit gliding along smooth walls like the Aggy entrance series. Well you can forget that here. The fragils fingers were busy again and it was all a bit like hard work. I even got so far in and returned to remove my SRT kit. I know I have done this with my SRT kit on but that subsidence I mentioned earlier was especially noticeable at this point. Again when back in the stream turn around and look at the chamber, its rather pleasing. A short way on and the 2nd pitch, was reached, I cant remember much about it so it must have been easy enough.

By this point I had shouted hello to several of the other people who sounded like they were in the cave too but they were quite rude really as they ignore me the whole time. Why is it with caves with water in them it always sounds like childrens voices just up ahead, its just plain spookey! And bloody unnerving when your on your own. Third pitch was wetter than the rest, not like a Yorkshire wet pitch but refreshing none the less. I found the tightest section of the take off and forced my way through so brute force didn't give logic a chance to participate. This aven was not as eye catching as the previous two so I wasted no time looking around. The way on was a joyful crawl of twisting knarleyness. I was sure that this was it for the pitches and took off my SRT kit and stacked it on floor of the aven and got back into the crawl. I had a change of heart and thought if I met a pitch and had to crawl back that would be a pain, so I went back to grab my kit. You may be able to read between the lines and tell that I was having a real fun time today and those bloody kids running around that cave were doing my nut in so I gave into irrationality and donned my kit again for the return trip.

*I was at the head of the pitch and it was going surprisingly well considering the hash I made of it 10 minutes ago on the way in. I had found a nice ledge I could get both feet onto nice and comfortable. Hand jammer was a fist away from the Y hang, I could have easily just stepped up onto the pitch head onto safety. The rope between my chest jammer and hand jammer that had balled up a little bit as there was no real load on it now, so I pulled the slack through and was just reaching for my cowstails to clip into the Y hang loop and I dropped, it felt like a few feet but it was really only 3 or 4 inches, thankfully not as far as the lovely ledge I had been standing on which crashed to the bottom of the pitch. Just goes to show that !h$*t does happen and why we have set ways of doing things, precautions for the unexpected. Thankfully the rest of the trip was less dramatic. When I collected my rope bag I put all my srt kit in it which made the crawl 10 times easier but made the bag feel 10 times heavier as I pushed it ahead of me on the way out to the glorious Welsh mist.*

The icing on the cake for this trip happened when I got back to lovely Whitewalls and unpacked the rope bag full of rope shiny new rope that I didn't need to take. It was covered in mud!!!!! So with 2 x scrubbing brushes I spent 40 minutes scrubbing until the ropes looked respectable enough for me not to be excommunicated.

Photo's Brendan Marris

Sipun Cave Cavtat By Gary Kiely

(42°35′04″N 18°13′02″E) ish

In 2009 and again in 2011 I was on a mini Montenegro caving expedition, camping in the mountain area above Risan. Both times on the return trip we stayed in a little tourist town called Cavtat, this was to acclimatise ourselves into humanity and re learn the basics of how a shower, a tap or a flushing toilet worked, and I have to say I liked the place. I spent a good deal of my time there swimming and playing in sea caves .

Unfortunately tourists and those serving them must account for 98% of the people in Cavtat. So this year I joined the tourists for my yearly sunshine holiday. So off to the local tourist information office for my free map of the town……..Item number 9 CAVE….Surely not. In my head I'm thinking this is going to be about 8M long and 4M high and used for sheltering donkeys from the sun so I was not too fussed about it until my 2nd last day, So off I went with my cheapo headtorch and dressed in tourist attire of flip flops, swimming shorts and a skaggy tee shirt that smelt of sun cream melted off the skin in the 35 degree heat.

It didn't take long to find the entrance which is almost on the top of RAT peninsula a big sign saying that the EU had funded the development of this tourist cave and some basic stats such as the number of protected organisms in there, Entrance 24M above sea level, Depth 32M (a bit odd I thought) Length 100M , freshwater lakes, dragons etc.

It all looked pretty shut to me, and not in a "just gone to lunch " type shut. The main gate was locked but medium build cavers could easily squeeze through the bars. Anyhow I used the information sign to steady myself as I traversed the dry-stone wall and dropped down to the 12 steps between the two gates. The 2nd gate was even easier as a previous enthusiastic explorer had removed one metal bar at the side of the gate to aid entry. The entrance was closely guarded by moths and other upset flying insects. Thankfully wherever there were steps there were handrails. A lot of the steps had little LED lights to illuminate them and semi hidden halogen flood lights to illuminate items of note but all these were off, despite me playing with the lighting controls.

Another twenty or so steps down and I was in a large chamber. Roof about 12M high and the walls about 15m wide. The roof was highly decorated but was black. The predominant colour of the walls was black. I followed the path that curled back under the path that led to the entrance and followed the 12 or so steps down to a crystal clear pool of water which was about 0.5m deep, 8m long & 4m across, it continued to the left where the roof lowered. The blackness of the walls was really oppressive and swallowed the light. I turned to come back up the steps and this was point where I became conscious of something moving across my left flip flop and my bare foot. There is something disturbing when a large spindly spider with a leg span of about 4 inches scuttles across bare skin, equally there is something girley about the shrieking that followed. To my horror all twelve steps had spider guards manning the steps. I ran the gauntlet with only 2 more attacks. Back onto the safety of the flat floor of the main chamber and did a whole body shudder and a little dance. Looking over the hand rail on the opposite side of the chamber there were several huge boulders not obviously from any roof or wall collapse. Following the hand rail down a couple of steps brought me to the base of these boulders and a narrow path curved round to right between the main wall and the boulders. This ended at a 4m easy climb down to a shale floor, obviously curving to the right and the low

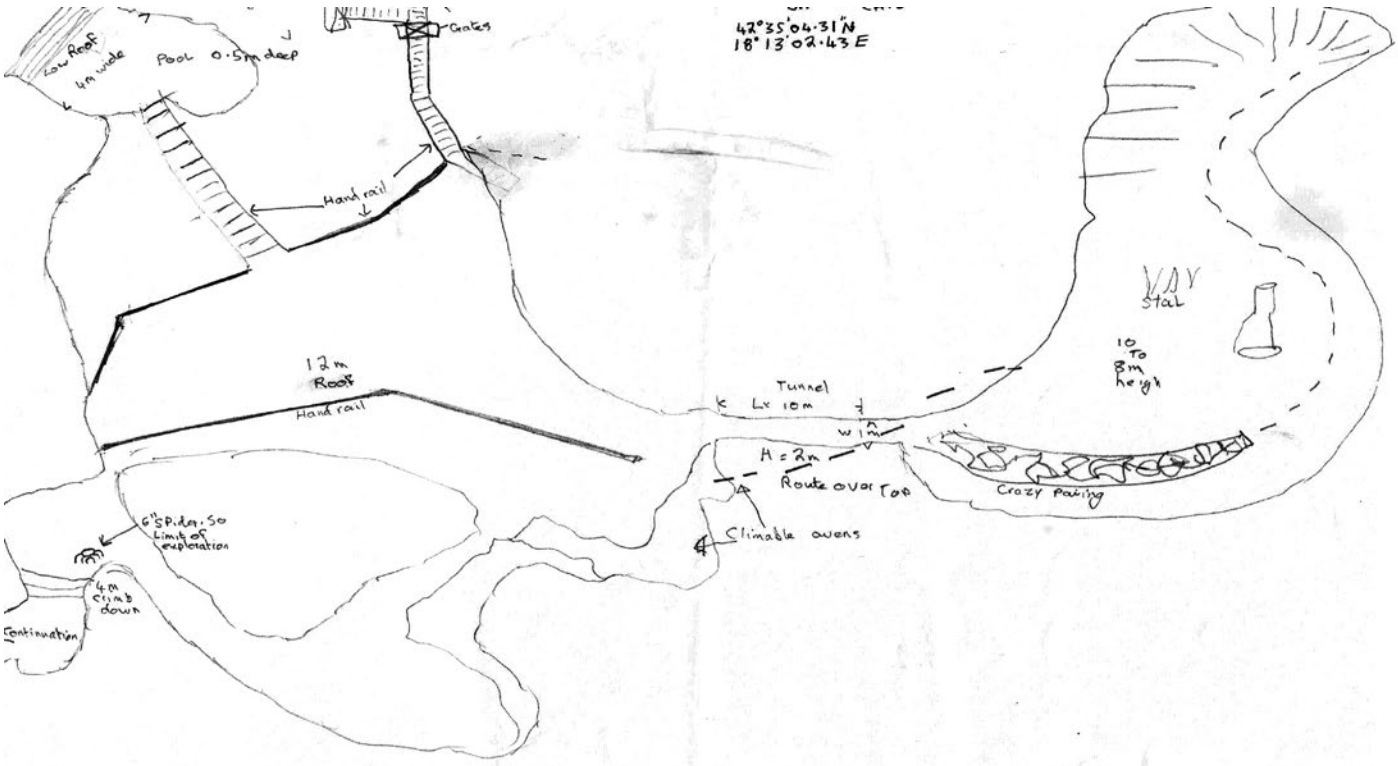
continuation. Just about to climb down and spotted another enormous spider on the only handhold. This chap was the same as the others but had muscley legs and was about twice the size as the other. Needless to say I was going no further down that route.

Doubling back to the main path and right through what looked like a 10M long section of man made passage, flat floor 2M high arched roof. Above this passage was what looked like a very climbable Aven but just not in flip flops. Out of the 10M passage into another large chamber, a crazy paving path had been laid but not cemented down. I'm not really sure what this was supposed to achieve as it was far more unstable than any of the natural cave floor around.

This chamber is highly decorated and most of the flow-stone is black, much of it looked like broccoli growing from the walls. The peak of the Aven has 3 or 4 stalactites of about 100mm in diameter at the base, which have sadly been cleanly sawn off. I have never seen a cross section of a stalactite but very surprised to see that the inner parts were ivory and only the outer part was black. The main individual feature is a stal boss of about 3M high but no corresponding formation above it. The chamber curves off to the right and the floor raises to the roof level in total I would say this cave is about 120m long but how it formed I have no idea as I would have said that there is no more than 15m of rock above any part of this cave so not much fuel to feed the formation of stal.

Having been a little intrigued by this cave I did a little internet research and found that there are a few lakes in there and are fresh water on the top and salt water in the bottom. It was re opened to the public after the war in 2012 after European union investment but I cannot find any dates as to the closure of the cave. It could have been closed for conservation reasons as some of the sea snails in this cave only occur in one other location in another cave in Croatia. However I'm am not sure how much clout that Croatian conservation has over financial gain. I did keep a close eye out for bats while in the cave but saw nothing.

I would say if you are flying from Dubrovnik airport and have a couple of hours to kill, I would recommend a visit to Sipun cave its only about 4km from the airport and no gear other than trainers and a light are needed. You can even park in the Cavtats main car park which is only 800m away.



Three trips in the Peaks (31 January, 7

The plan for the first trip changed several times. Charles Bailey is now also an Orpheus member, and they also had plans for a trip 31st January. Eventually it was decided we would join them on a JH to Peak exchange, however the weather conspired against us. Snow had closed Winnats Pass on the Friday, and there were doubts whether access to Rowter Farm would be possible, so a Peak Cavern round trip was the only sensible option. There was about 6 inches of snow on the ground in Castleton, but the main roads were all clear so we all arrived at TSG at the appointed hour: myself, Chris Tomlin, Charles Bailey, and another three from Orpheus whose names I've since forgotten.

The trip started with a detour to Moss Chamber, then we did a circular route visiting most of the sumps. Good to have a leader from Orpheus who knew where he was going!

The second trip took place on 7th March in rather less wintry conditions. Nevertheless it was rather breezy on top at Rowter Farm. I picked up Chris Tomlin at Hope Station who had nobly carried 156 meters of rope along with all his caving gear on the train from Preston. Our plan was to do Rowter Hole first, then go over to Nettle Pot if we had time. We were aware that Rowter would only take a couple of hours if we couldn't get into the extensions which were reputedly only passable to small cavers.

Having been pointed in the right direction by the farmer, we quickly located the lidded entrance shaft. Without any ledges to stand on inside the shaft it's a little tricky to open and close the lid while on the rope belayed to the scaffold bar across the shaft because you're too low down … or maybe I was just missing something obvious?

We therefore started by exploring the 'old' cave and mine workings before investigating the draughting hole by the bottom of the entrance pitch, which led to the extensions. After a laddered scaffolded shaft comes real cave passage. Soon we were at a short boulder choke where a sign warned to avoid flailing limbs, and the reason was obvious. The boulders looked so precarious it seemed a miracle that the diggers had managed to install the scaffolding – but to be fair they had done an excellent job of it!

Far from going into a tight crawl, the next section was a big chasm, with a couple of broken pitches, both pre-rigged. Including the various climbs we were now well over 150 meters down. There was typical Peak District plumbing at the bottom, diverting water from going into a passage leading to a sump, but we ignored that and carried on in the dry stuff, and soon we were at the start of the Ice Cream Trail.

This is quite a sporting phreatic rift passage with some good calcite decoration on the walls in places. But it is also quite tight in places. In one place it is necessary to squeeze backwards to a pitch head with an electron ladder – a little tricky on the return because you can't push off an electron ladder sideways. Chris had several attempts here while I carried on a bit further. Reaching a similar obstacle about 100 meters further on, and with little hope of anyone coming to help if I got into difficulties, I went back. Reading up about the Rowter extensions later, I learned that there were several other fairly technical obstacles beyond that, and really you need to take a small bag for SRT gear as you need it again at the end.

Anyway, it's a perfectly decent trip just going as far as we did, and I'd definitely like to go back sometime and try to get to the very end.

A fortnight later, on 21st March, Chris and I were back again – this time to descend Nettle Pot. There was no answer at Oxlow House when we called for permission – the place looked semi-derelict, but the dog and vehicles parked outside confirmed that the farmer did live there. We thought about leaving our "trespass fee" on the window sill, then decided we'd go back after our trip. As it happened, the farmer came past as we were getting changed by the road side. He'd been out to collect the carcass of a cow which had died in the night, and now it was draped across the prongs on the front of his tractor.

We located the entrance to Nettle Pot without difficulty – a concrete slab with a metal lid at the edge of a field. Chris rigged the first pitch which requires a series of rebelays because it is mostly quite narrow and otherwise there would be problems with rope rub. Suddenly the cave opens out at a muddy ledge, below which is a wide rift and below that Elizabeth Pitch drops away. We

March, 21 March)

By Adrian Fawcett

did Elizabeth first – a not quite free-hang: there was nothing convenient to deviate off so had to tolerate a slight rub. The bottom pitch was not P-bolted and we only had 3 hangers, but with the addition of a sling around a natural thread we made it down – to an extremely tight wet squeeze. I wasn't sure I'd fit through, and the idea of being firmly wedged in a narrow rift in about 4 inches of water didn't really appeal. Fortunately the other side was accessible by going up Elizabeth and back down the parallel Beza and Crumbles pitches. These are so narrow in places that a series of deviations are needed to re-direct the rope to follow the only body sized route. These pitches supposedly needed 50 meters rope, but we needed to extend my 60 meter rope to get to the bottom.

Below this is a steep slope with an in-situ rope, then a fairly complex area of cave passages. I eventually found the other side of the wet squeeze which looked just as ridiculously tight from this new angle. Chris didn't follow as it was preceded by another tight crawl.
Descending a further 9 meter pitch and some crawls brought us to some big passage. Another crawl went to Bingo Pitch which we didn't descend. Time was getting late, so we also left the Flats for another day.

A really interesting trip. Recommended, but not for the larger caver.

Skeleton Passage Charterhouse Cave

Skeleton Passage lies off to the east of the cave just below Diesel Duck. There are two ways to get there - the first is a very awkward tight passage which ends in a 3 m climb down or a static sump off of Quicksand Chamber which dries up in drought (John Cooper has been through this). At the other end of Skeleton Passage lies a sump which according to JC looked "short and shallow". The route takes a substantial flow of water in the winter and has swallowed several digging buckets. On 6th June, Andrew Atkinson (supported by Duncan Price) dived Quicksand Chamber Sump putting a line in it and continued into Skeleton Passage Sump for about 20 m passing a couple of tight squeezes en route before deciding that a cave diver of more experience was required. On June 16th, Duncan Price passed the sump after 25 m by surfacing in an "airbell" that Andrew had spotted on his earlier dive. This turned out to be a pleasant walking-sized passage which Duncan followed for about 30 m before it changed character into a keyhole cross section with a slot in the floor and mud coated walls.
After a few false starts, a return was made by both divers and a second sump was reached after a somewhat arduous traverse of the keyhole section passage. Another sump was found up a side passage and a climb was made up into a high level inlet which closed down. The total length of new stuff is about 200 m including the first sump. A more comprehensive report will appear in the next newsletter. With deteriorating weather conditions and the floodprone nature of the lower reaches of Charterhouse Cave the explorers are relieved not to be able to return until next summer.

By Duncan Price

Full Report in the next newsletter

Alum Pot

By Steve Sharp

Andy Brown descends the lower pitch

Every year I team up with a group of friends for a caving trip to the Yorkshire Dales, The trip is organised by Andy Brown a military man, as you can imagine every detail of the trip is covered with military precision. The aim of this trip was to visit three different caves in the area which all involve SRT, Yordas Pot, a highly entertaining trip encompassing an active stream way a couple of good piches and a tricky traverse above the stream in the centre of the cave. This trip was designed to be our warm up for the weekend to make sure everyone was fit and well and in full control.

The highlight of our weekend was Alum Pot a large open pot with magnificent views and a waterfall crashing over the top edge, when the sun is shining Alum Pot looks like a scene from Lord of the rings making you feel like a true adventurer. We kitted up by the entrance for our epic trip, the core team was made up with four of us with another two members choosing to only go as far as the first open section of Alum pot which gives magnificent views of the waterfall and the deep pitches below.

Photography in the outer part of Alum pot can be tricky when the sun's rays are pouring in as the camera finds it difficult to pick a constant point of light.

The main pitch consisted in climbing over a large boulder which at some point in time had fallen in the pot creating a large impressive bridge like structure across the centre section. Once over this section we abseiled into the depths below via a 40m pitch. The lower

Traversing across the rock bridge

Kitting up

sections of Alum Pot follow the stream way to a few caverns below ending in a sump. The noise of the water in this section of the cave can be quite overpowering, the final pitch guarantees you a good soaking, all in the spirit of the true adventurer. The return journey prusiking up the pitches can be quite tiring and very exposed as the daylight illuminates the shaft below.

We always stay in a youth Hostel when we visit the area this caters for all of our needs and includes a drying room which is essential after a hard days caving to keep our clothes and ropes in a fit state for the following days trip.

The Hostel was in the village of Hawes a great place to stop off with a collection of pubs and restaurants for the hungry caver.

Our final day's caving were a cross over trip in Sell Gill Holes, the walk up the hill to this cave can be quite energetic. Half way through this trip my light decided to fail, I enjoyed an entertaining ten minutes trying to fix it in the darkness, not recommended within the close proximity of a deep pitch.

All in all a fantastic weekend and a big thanks to Andy Brown for organising the event.

Alum Pot

Event Organiser - Andy Brown

The Eglwys "potato masher"

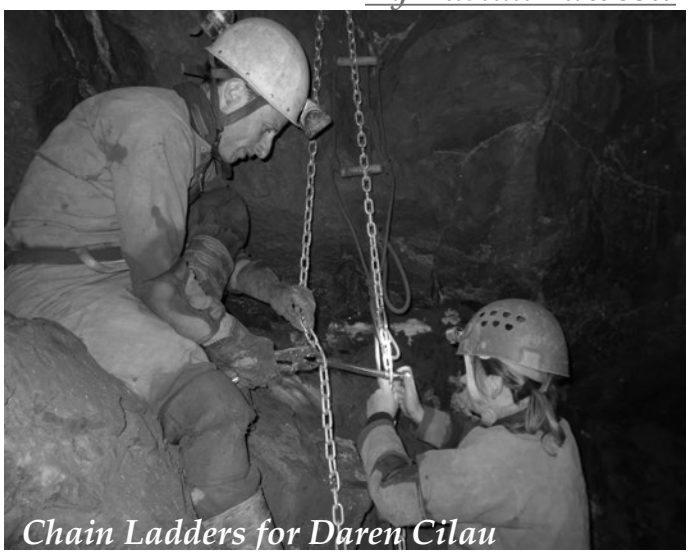
By Adrian Fawcett

Beyond the sump in St Patricks Passage in Eglwys Faen there is another bailable sump leading to a breakdown chamber which may be the continuation of the main passage, and nobody's been there since the 1980s. That's what we were told, and we realised that if we wanted to check it out, we needed a solution to empty the sump in St Patricks passage. And so was born the "potato masher".

The idea was to make a pump along the lines of the one used in Ireby Fell, where several people haul on a rod that pulls water up a tube. The concept was simple enough, but we didn't know what the exact design looked like. John Stevens had a suitable length of rigid plastic tube in his garden, and Matt and Mandy sourced some flexible tube and a set of drain rods. Meanwhile Adrian sawed, bent, drilled and riveted together bits of aluminium sheet and attached a couple of rubber flaps – and so was born the potato masher (because that's what it looks like).

The first attempt – to pump water out of the Whitewalls storage tank – was quite successful. Underground was a different story. The water needed to be lifted about 1.5 metres, and there was too much leakage of air into the joint between the pump and flexible tube. There was also too much leakage of water back out of the pump. Also we'd only brought one drain rod, and it was simply too knackering for one person to operate for more than a minute.

After a few performance enhancements, the addition of a second drain rod, and the substitution of a piece of cordura oversuit with a leg off Gonzo's old wetsuit, and on 24th May we were ready to try again. We were disappointed to find that water had been trickling through the dam, and the sump was fuller than last time we'd visited. However, the pump did the business,



Chain Ladders for Daren Cilau

and gradually the water level dropped. There were a few comical moments while pumping, as the mud in the canal grabs your boots rather firmly…

Beyond the sump is a roomy but rather squalid passage. We soon arrived at a small passage entered via the second sump, which was in fact a duck with a couple of inches of air space. Stupidly we hadn't brought the bucket through St Patricks sump, so had to go back for it. Eventually we had bailed it enough to go through into this largely flat-out crawl and another very wet puddle. Beyond this, there are several possible directions to go, following horizontal and vertical joints. Maybe the continuation of Main Passage is here somewhere, but where? There is no obvious place to dig, and if I go back I'll definitely take a compass next time. This is perhaps not the easy route into the mountain we had hoped for!

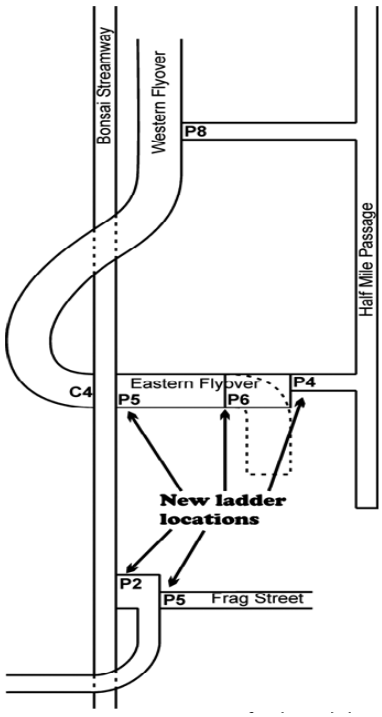
We left the pump in situ at St Patricks Passage, so anyone else can go and have a look. You will need to take a bucket to prime the pump, and ideally some sort of scoop to help empty water from the second sump into the bucket.

More Chain Ladders for Daren Cilau

By Adrian Fawcett

It was a familiar story – original electron ladders at the end of their useful life, needing removal before they became a serious hazard. And the question – was it worth replacing them with something more permanent which would remain safe for use for many years to come?

The locations of these ladders are about 3 hours into Daren Cilau – at Frag Street and at the Eastern and Western Flyovers. Although the number of trips going to these places is not great, they were deemed strategic enough to warrant chain ladders similar to the ones installed in Antler Passage. The new ladders have been built to a slightly lighter weight design, using 8mm galvanised chain with M10 stainless rungs covered with PVC tube. Bolts and fixings are stainless steel throughout.



Funding for the project was available via Cambrian Caving Council. It was decided to equip the Eastern Flyover connection to Half Mile Passage but not the Western Flyover connection so that the project didn't grow out of all proportion. As it was, 52 metres of chain and 80 rungs were required altogether. Anyone wanting to use the Western Flyover connection can hang their own ladder from new stainless bolts which have been installed at the pitch head – sometimes the diggers may leave an electron ladder there.

At Eastern Flyover, the three ladders (5m, 6m, 4m) connect Bonsai Streamway with Half Mile Passage, giving an alternative route parallel to Bonsai Streamway. For anyone not familiar with this route, it is a beautiful part of the cave. Half Mile Passage is of substantial proportions throughout its length, initially sand floored, then rocky. After the traverse over the top of Crystal Oxbow there is a change in level of the passage – straightforward enough going north, but trickier in the other direction. Nameless Canyon is superb, and leads to the Meeting Room and impressive descent into the void of the Time Machine. It is hoped that the installation of the ladders will encourage more parties visiting Hard Rock Cafe or Terminal Sump to return via this alternative route.

The two Frag Street ladders (2m, 5m) give access to Frog Street, Perseverance Passage and Forgotten Passage. Frog Street contains the beautifully decorated grotto "Helibeds" which is a worthy destination in its own right.

The five ladders were installed in 3 trips totaling 32 hours between 24th July and 30th August by Adrian Fawcett and Matt and Mandy Voysey. There were an additional two portering trips because the materials amounted to about 80 kilograms, and in addition various tools were required too. The ladders were assembled on location – this was easier for transport and making adjustments.

More Chain Ladders for Daren Cilau

Bradshaw's Cave, Asham Wood Quarry

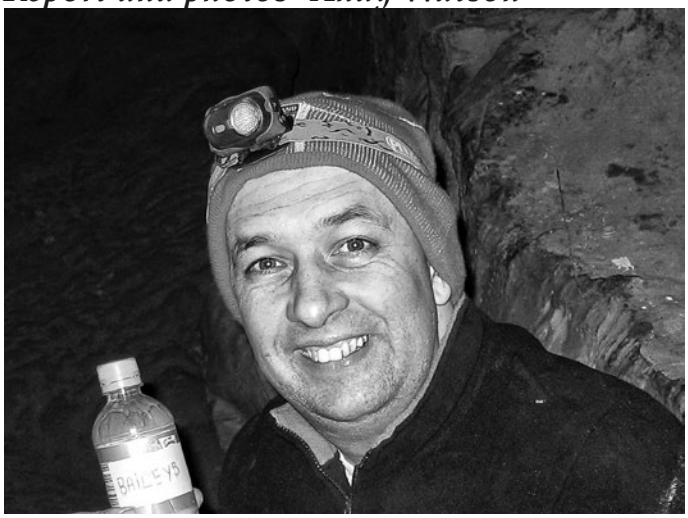
Introduction: Named after Dr. Reg Bradshaw who was Head of Geology at the University of Bristol who informed Willie Stanton c.1970 about several 'open tunnels' in the lowest part of the quarry closest to Seven Springs. He apparently made a considerable contribution to Mendip regarding geology and its caves.

Location: In Asham Wood Quarry lower section not far from the Main Spring (of Seven Springs) into Whatley Brook. Locate Main Springs resurgence (often dry) at ST7102.4528 and back track walking down slope on the obvious old vehicle track for about 100m turn left into a quarry entrance area with large rocks across the entrance to prevent vehicle access. Stay to the left of the open area for about 35m and enter the unkempt hedge area through an obvious gap/rough path over some rocks to a flat area. Turn left and walk towards the cliff face and climb over some large rocks and brambles and you will find a low arch down a 1m drop at the base of the cliff. This is the entrance to the cave. Just to the left is another hole that is choked after 1.2m. Dug open fully during April-July 2015 by AW/PS.

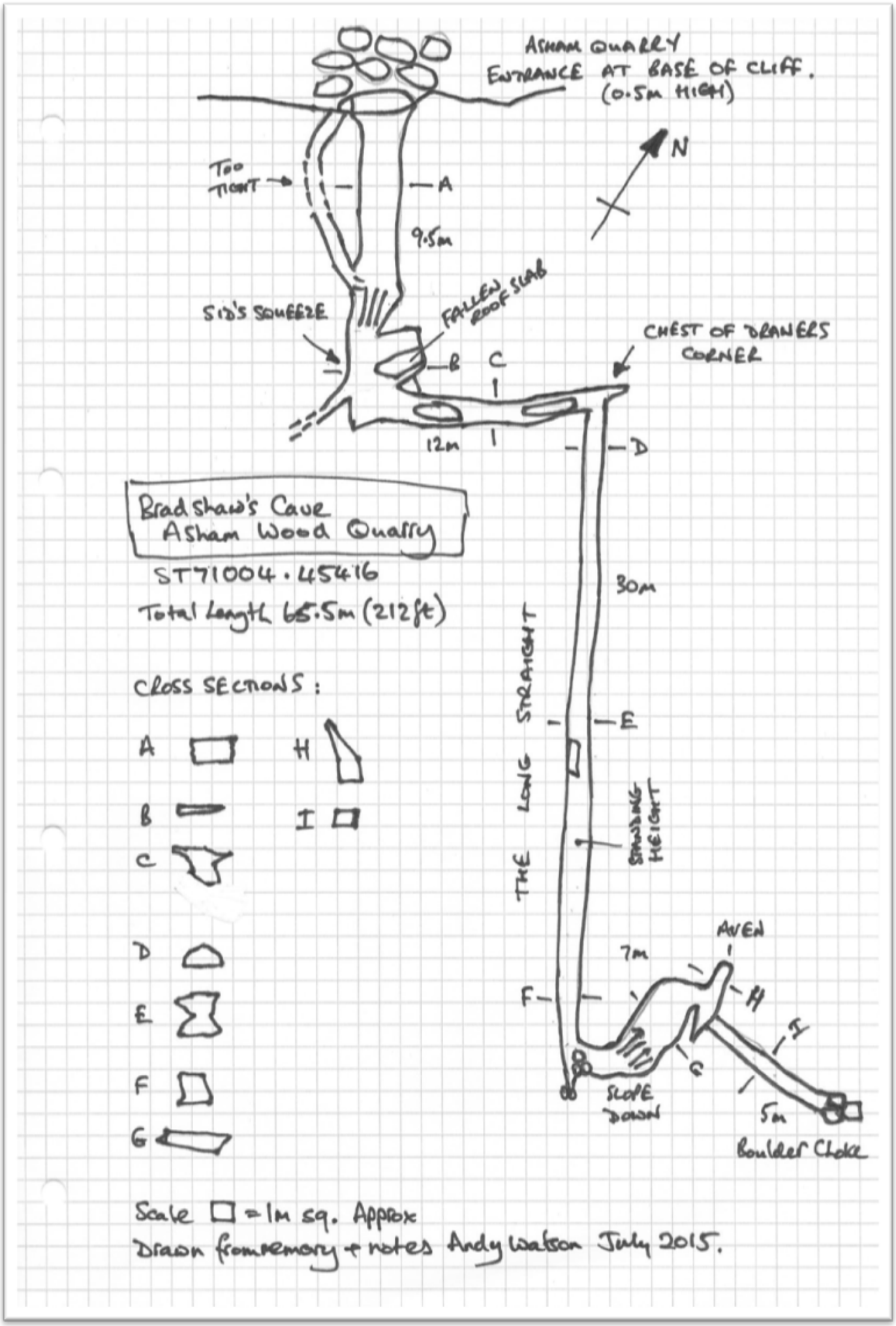
Road Access: Park at Dead Woman's Bottom at ST715.462 (do not leave valuables in your car) and walk up to the Seven Springs Main Spring on the vehicle track alongside Whatley Brook this takes about 20-30 minutes and mobile phone reception is poor in the quarry.

Description: A low arched entrance at the base of the cliff behind a pile of large rocks. A drop of 1m to the entrance that is 1 metre wide and 0.5metres high and it slopes downwards into a low water worn tunnel 0.75m high with a soil and loose rock floor with some small rock shelves on the left hand side some 3 metres in. The entrance tunnel has been frequented by badgers at some point. The length of the initial entrance tunnel is 7.5m where it rises up and meets a cross bedding. Looking back to your right, a low bedding passage leads back out towards the cliff face near the entrance and is too tight and choked. Forward is a small low chamber with a fallen slab and a water worn boulder. This area has a strong draft. Straight on is Sid's Squeeze requiring a push and twist to the left. A clamber over a small boulder leads to an easy crawling passage for 12m to a sharp right hand turn, Chest of Drawers Corner, and right is the start of a 30m passage, The Long Straight. One careful climb over a low large balanced boulder is required about halfway along. The end closes down in size with boulders, but on the left under an immature curtain on the edge of a roof slab is a muddy downward slope 1.5m wide and this drops about 2m over a 5m length. At the bottom, which probably sumps a right turn leads into the base of a small aven 3m high, 1m wide and 2-3m long. Straight ahead and slightly right at a height of 1m from the floor the passage continues for another 5m until closing down in a boulder breakdown area. This passage has some plant roots so is fairly near the surface. This is the end of the known cave so far.

Report and photos- Andy Watson



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.


ASHAM QUARRY
ENTRANCE AT BASE OF CLIFF.
(0.5m HIGH)
N
TOO TIGHT
A
9.5m
SID'S SQUEEZE
FALLEN ROOF SLAB
B
C
CHEST OF DRAWERS CORNER
12m
D
Bradshaw's Cave
Asham Wood Quarry
ST71004.45416
Total Length 65.5m (212ft)
30m
THE LONG STRAIGHT
E
STANDING HEIGHT
CROSS SECTIONS:
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
AVEN
7m
F
H
I
G
SLOPE DOWN
5m
Boulder Choke
Scale □ = 1m sq. Approx
Drawn from memory + notes Andy Watson July 2015.

Wookey Hole - Tunnel to C

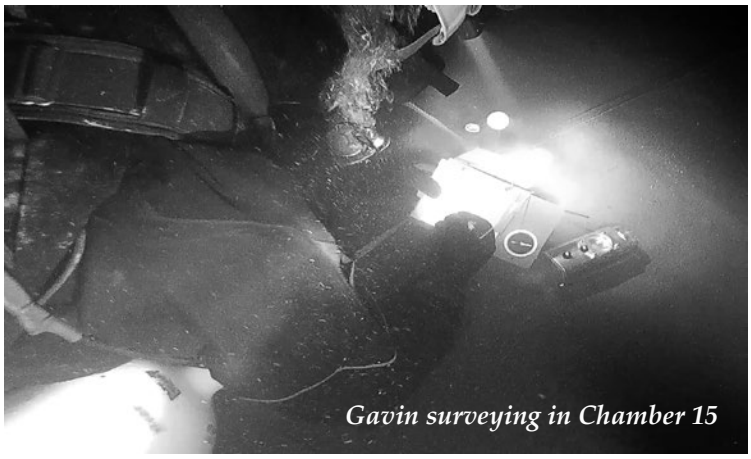
I've got "previous" for making sump bypasses: before I took up cave diving I had helped bypass several hundred metres of sumps at the bottom of Agen Allwedd, a bypass to Turkey Sump 2 in the same cave was established in 1996 and in 2008 I climbed up in the roof of Wigmore 10 to find a way around most of the final three sumps in this cave. Despite successes elsewhere, my net contribution to UK underwater cave exploration was already decidedly in the red even before I got involved with a project to drive a tunnel from Chamber 9 in Wookey Hole to enter Chamber 20 and therefore extend the show cave trail open to the general public. I should probably be drummed out of the CDG for this one…

Sparks fly in Chamber Nine

This was not the first time that artificial tunnels had been dug to intercept parts of Wookey Hole only accessible to cave divers. In 1974 a route from Chamber 3 to Chamber 9 was forged to create a circular tour whereby visitors could leave the cave via another tunnel which took them out to the canal by the resurgence. A potential high-level way into Chamber 9 had been discovered and this was opened up specifically to allow dry cavers to accurately survey the route. We were not as fortunate with the new tunnel as the only way to get to Chamber 20 was by a 140 m long dive starting from Chamber 9. Before the work could start the show caves wanted an accurate survey of Chamber 20 – that's where I came in as I'd already done some underwater survey work between Chamber's 3 and 22 as part of a practise for surveying the sumps in Gough's Cave. Andrew Atkinson & I had collaborated on this and our long term aim after Gough's was done had been to start surveying in Wookey Hole. Since we were going to do it anyway, we were pleased that the show cave were even prepared to pay us a modest amount for the survey data so that they could see whether the project was worthwhile. Gary Jones, Connor Roe and Malcolm Stewart came along to help and after three trips most of Wookey 20 had been surveyed save for a couple of nasty side passages. In between survey trips, Gavin Newman and I did a quick photographic tour up the main route to document the passage – until then I had never been to the very end of this part of the cave – having only got out of the water in Chamber 19 no more than a handful of times in the past 25 years of cave diving there.

Mendip, being Mendip, the plan to extend the show cave appeared to be an open secret and I received an inquiry asking if I had any radiolocation data for Wookey 20. I was rather curious about this request as it came via an intermediary and was told that it was for "people who care about such things." My response was that I wasn't going to provide this information to anonymous individuals for an undisclosed purpose, but I could confirm that, as far as our surveys showed, the cave (save perhaps for the bitter end beyond Chamber 25) lay entirely below land owned by Wookey Hole Caves Ltd. I cheekily added that I didn't actually know the

Radiolocating Chamber 20 (photo Tom Chapman)



Gavin surveying in Chamber 15

Chamber Twenty By Duncan Price


Exit tunnel and extraction system


Claire with Grunterphone

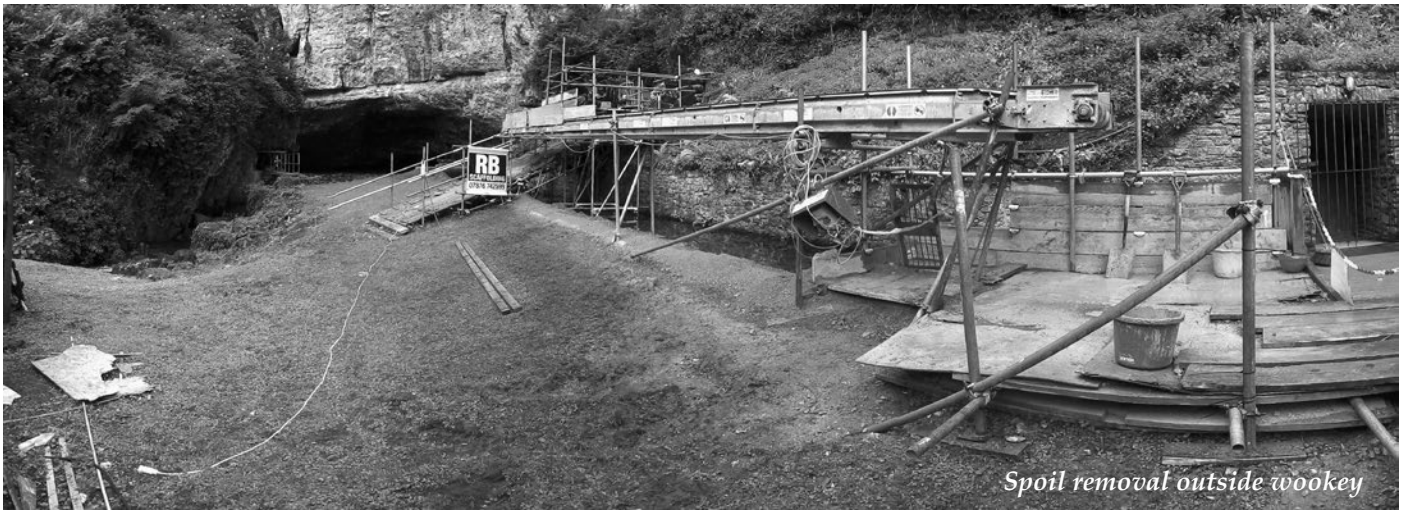

Tom & Gavin in Chamber 13

radiolocation points and if anyone found this out perhaps the information could be passed on to me!
At the beginning of March 2015 a formal planning application made to blast an artificial tunnel from the far end of Chamber Nine to emerge near to the Lake in Chamber 20. Although I had an underwater survey from Chamber 9 to Chamber 20, it was deemed not to be of sufficient accuracy and we would have to come up with something better. Gavin had the bright idea of putting a DistoX in a waterproof housing and using this. Tests with the bare unit placed in the vegetable box from Gavin's fridge in the canal outside the cave showed that we could get sensible readings shooting through water (provided we corrected the distance measured using the refractive index of water at the laser wavelength). Gavin made a non-magnetic housing out of aluminium and glass so that the DistoX could be used underwater at tested it in a pressure chamber to some stupid depth. Gavin did a quick dive with Tom Chapman which showed that two divers could work together like a normal survey team with one person aiming the laser at a target held (on the guideline) by the other. The data could be downloaded later.
In practise we found this didn't work very well as any silt stirred up tended to hang in the water for an ages which meant that in an hour Gavin & I only progressed 20 m from Chamber 9. A change of plan was adopted and I set off along the line attaching my 100 m tape measure to it with cables ties. A series of ping-pong ball floats were attached to this to act as targets for the laser so that once the route was prepare one diver could the job solo, heading upstream so as get the best underwater visibility.
In one dive Gavin surveyed the Deep Route from Chamber 9 to 19, a distance of 140 metres with a maximum depth of 22 m, using 50 ping pong ball stations. The traverse took two hours and at one point Gavin's dive computer indicated that he would have to decompress before surfacing - though thankfully he cleared these stops on the slow ascent into 19. Some of the final legs were understandably of dubious accuracy since Gavin was very cold at the end. These had to be repeated on a subsequent dive and it took one more surveying trip to link the underwater survey to the above water one. I had to do this with Gavin's help as I had surfaced in the Chamber 19 sump pool but had lost my pencils: fortunately Gavin turned up with his camera and I was able to dictate the notes to this for later transcription.
Before the tape measures and floats were relocated to do a survey of the Shallow Route, I made measurements of the passage dimensions using a hand held sonar wand with up to 8 splays

done at each station in order to define the cross-section. This process took three 1 hour dives and then attention moved back to Chamber 20 for a filming and photography trip to the Lake Chamber where the tunnel was due to emerge. I didn't get much of a look-in on this as Gavin was making a documentary of the project and Claire Cohen, Chris Jewell & Connor Roe were obviously easier on the eye. My starring role came when I got to act as "hand model" for the DistoX laser spot at the point on the wall of the cave where the tunnel was supposed to come out. When some of the footage was shown on the TV, neither Andrew nor I were featured – typical!

By the beginning of May planning permission had been granted for the work to start although in anticipation of this a gantry had already been built across the chamber and a sump tank installed below it to trap any slurry from the drilling. During the construction a load of scaffold poles had fallen into the sump which gave Gavin and I an interesting time recovering them. The work was due to start after the national and local elections - this would seriously curtail diving operations. On Saturday 9th May Ashley Hiscock, Claire , Gavin and I took Brian Prewer's "Grunterphone" radiolocation kit through the sump to get a precise fix on the

Digger in the new tunnel

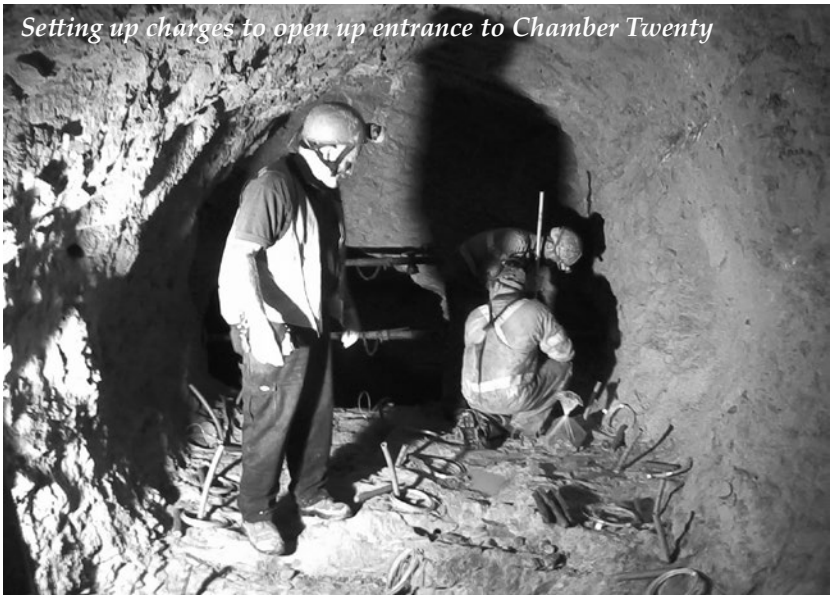


Spoil removal outside wookey

proposed breakthrough point. A geological survey of Chamber Nine recommended that the start point of the tunnel was moved from the far end of the chamber by the gully up to the high level entrance to Nine dug open in 1974 to a point on the wall of the chamber across the rock pile dividing the 9:1 and 9:2 sump pools.

The work got off with a load bang on Wednesday 13th May. This which was shown in slow motion on local TV. Unfortunately, careful monitoring of the roof of the chamber showed that a massive flake in the roof weighing several tonnes had moved slightly so a high tensile net had to be made to measure and strung up beneath it at an extra cost of £25,000. Ten metres along the tunnel, the wall of Chamber 10 was breached creating a window into this airbell which lies a short distance into the upstream sump. Railings and lighting were later installed to make this a feature and the course of the tunnel was adjusted to avoid it intercepting Chambers 12 and 13.

Diving in Wookey Hole was severely restricted during the blasting due to concerns that there might be high levels of bang fumes sitting at water level in Chamber Nine (notwithstanding someone letting 20 kg of high explosives off whilst we were underwater!). I visited the place one evening after work with Andrew Atkinson to test out a radiolocation beacon that Ken Smith had shipped over from Australia. This device was designed to be used in a sump – the transmitter being waterproof and very compact but we had opted to use the


Setting up charges to open up entrance to Chamber Twenty

same mistake a week later when trying to radiolocate Chamber Three though I did discover that the receiver could also pick up a regular "chirp" from the quartz movement of my diving watch. Finally, after testing the range of the beacon on a local playing field (much to the bemusement of my neighbours), I managed to get a fix on the (then) end of the tunnel. Gavin was dispatched into Chamber Twenty to repeat our original radiolocation – finding it within a couple of metres of the first point.

Having proved that we could accurately follow the progress of the tunnel meant that we could help guide it towards the exit point in Chamber Twenty. Tom "Grunterphone" instead as it also allowed two-way communications. Unfortunately the latter was now out of service due to a faulty crystal and would be expensive to repair. Cautious of the atmosphere in the cave I had brought along some air sampling kit from work. Nitrous fumes were not an issue, but the tunnellers were using diesel motorised wheelbarrows which made working conditions rather unpleasant (these were later replaced by electrically driven barrows that improved matters no end). Andrew and I set the transmitter up at the end of the tunnel in the dry and then headed out to the surface to where I thought it would be directly beneath us. En route, I almost fell in the river as we jumped across it rather than use the swing bridge. Although we could detect the signal we didn't get an accurate fix as I was insistent that the beacon must be below the wrong field. I made the


Surveying kit


Chamber Twenty with patially completed walkway

Chapman thought that the rock here was too shattered to make a good location to come out, so target was shifted nearer to the lake by putting a sharp right turn in the direction of the tunnel. When everyone was confident that the dig face was close to breaking through, a 6 m long pilot hole was drilled hoping to emerge into the chamber. To everyone's dismay the end was in still solid rock until a longer drill bit was attached and it went through after a further 0.3 m. Gavin and Claire dived though to Chamber Twenty see where it had emerged (in the wall directly above the lake) and the drill was moved to a different position on their advice to emerge at a more favourable spot and I went back with them to see where the second hole had appeared. This meant swinging the tunnel back to the left sharply to pop out where it was supposed to.

A blast in the early hours of July 15th finally broke through into Chamber Twenty and it was fitting that John Parker and Brian Woodward (who were the first cave divers to enter the chamber in 1970) were present to be amongst the first people to go there without diving. In the haste to get down into the chamber, the rigid metal ladder that divers used to climb down into Chamber Nine from the walkway was accidentally dropped into the 15 m deep lake and hasn't been seen since! A day later, be special arrangement, Gavin, Claire and I took well-known cave diver, Jill Heinerth into Wookey Hole for a dive. All the works in Chamber Twenty had messed up the visibility downstream of The Slot and at one point Jill took the wrong line and ended up surfacing in Chamber 10. Conditions were much better further upstream and we went as far as Chamber 22. Despite enjoying the dive, the highlight of Jill's trip was the chance to fire a charge to open up the exit point into Chamber Twenty. Another smaller charge was also used to widen the window into Chamber 10.

One of the conditions of the planning consent was that a "cave scientist" must visit "to record the presence and state of interest features (including sediments and speleothems) found in Chamber Twenty". A few days later Andy Farrant was taken in by Andrew Atkinson and accompanied by Naomi Sharp and myself to do this. The beginnings of an elevated walkway was already taking shape in the Lake Chamber and Dr Farrant went to the very end of the main passage (almost certainly the first non-diver to do so) whereupon he was able to inform us that "caves are formed underground…" adding "mostly by water!" The water levels in the cave had been lowered by opening the sluices at the resurgence so that the canal could be drained and the scaffolding used to make a route for the dump truck dismantled. Naomi and I travelled overland to Chamber 19 to collect some plastic pipes that I'd left behind which has been used to lay out the "Grunterphone" antenna and also to untie a field telephone cable so that Gavin and Claire could recover it. It was quite strange to get to the sump pool and find that underwater line junction high and dry. A dive along the Shallow Route a few days later while the water was still down found a section of dry land which I had to crawl over. Andrew and I are continuing to progress the high grade survey of the cave to the end and the show cave management has kindly shared some 3D laser scans of parts of the cave with us. The top entrance to Chamber Nine was reopened for the work and I was lucky enough to do a through-trip from the top and out of the show cave exit tunnel whilst we were also re-surveying this

Chamber Twenty was opened to the general public at the end of July in time for the school holidays. The project cost £500,000 and used 2½ tonnes of explosives. Natural England required that Andy Farrant's SSSI report was placed in the public domain and it can be downloaded from http://nora.nerc.ac.uk/511665/1/CR15071N.pdf . Andy makes some very sensible recommendations about the use of the place for "Adventure Caving" activities which can equally be applied to recreational caving. Plans are afoot to allow wider access for bone fide cavers as there are several promising leads which will be a lot easier to tackle now there's a sump bypass. As far as cave divers are concerned the tunnel offers no benefit for getting to the further reaches of the cave as it is much easier to enter the water from Chamber Nine (or indeed Chamber Three) though as Nigel Taylor remarked "[the dive from Chambers] Wookey Nine to Twenty can now be classed as a training dive…"

Duncan Price
Photo - Paul Stillman

THE CSS ANNUAL DINNER SATURDAY 30th January 2016

The club will be changing the venue for this year's Annual Dinner. It will be held in the Old Rectory Country Hotel in Llangattock, which we have used several times in the past. It is a very good venue, and has a great bar offering three different Ales (hopefully 6X, Doombar and Rev. James) and is within easy walking distance for those staying at Whitwalls. The hotel offers accommodation at a range of prices for people who want more comfort than a crowded Whitewalls can offer. The price of the dinner will be £23.50 and will be a set menu which is included below. Entertainment will be a couple of very short caving films. The order form will be sent out with the next newsletter, but please book this prestigious event in your social calendars now.

Starters

Tomato & Roasted Red Pepper Soup
Or
Garlic Mushrooms on Toasted Ciabatta

Mains

Lamb Shank, Bubble & Squeak Mash, Roasted Root Vegetables, Minted Jus
Or
Chicken Parma Ham, Buttery Mash, White Wine Cream Leek Sauce
Or
Beetroot & Goats Cheese Tart Tatin, Buttered New Potatoes, Dressed Leaves (V)

Something Sweet

Apple Crumble, Granola Crumb, Crème Anglaise
Or
Sticky Toffee Pudding, Butterscotch Sauce, Caramel Ice-cream

CSS Meets List 2015 *By Paul Tarrant*

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).

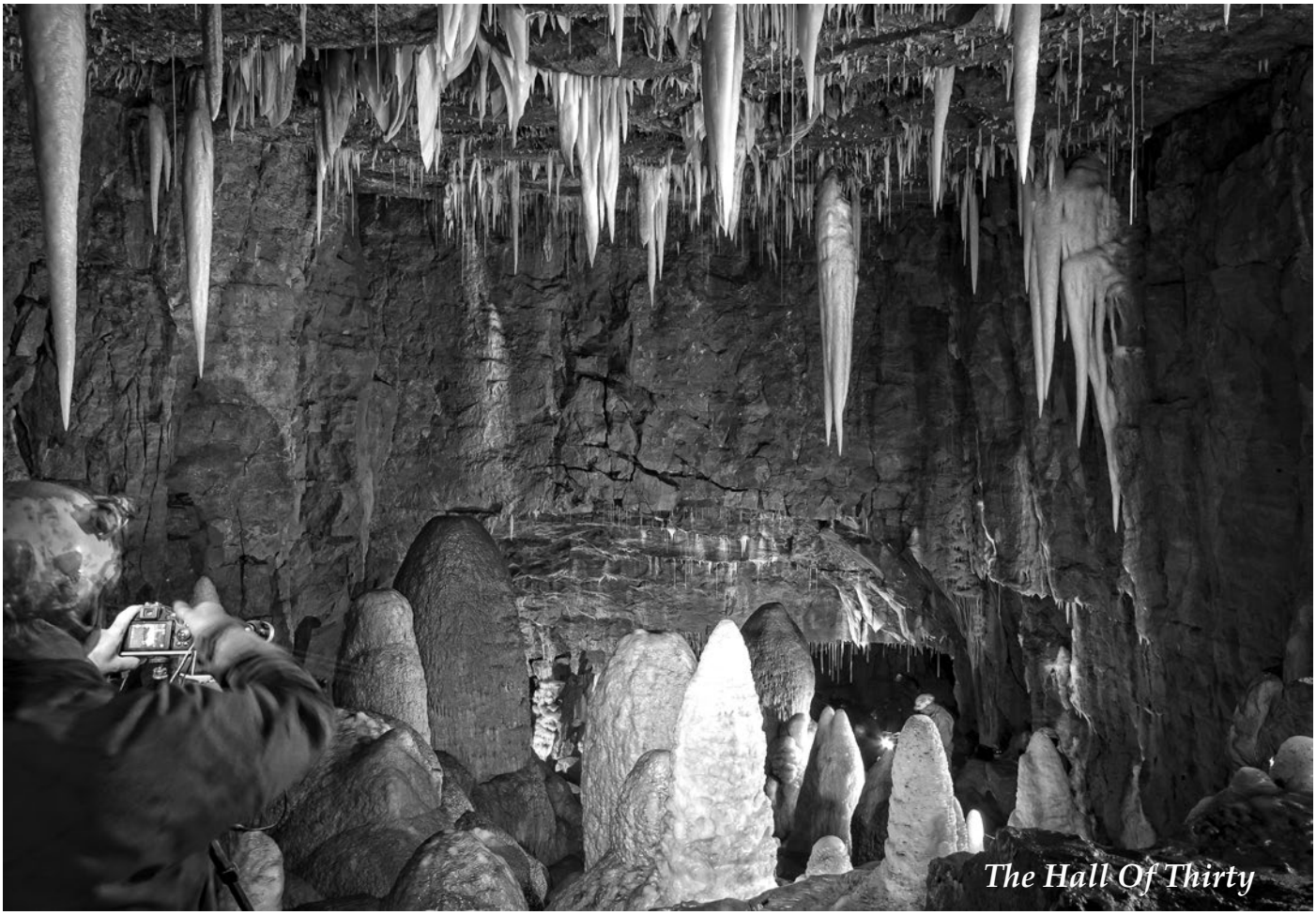
5/12 The Curry Evening

Caving in Ogof Draenen, Ogof 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

Otter Hole Film Project Update

Work is still continuing on the Otter Hole film project by Paul Taylor, The previous trip encompassed footage from a Go Pro camera mounted on a gimbal remotely controlled on a purpose built carriage above the Hall Of Thirty, The footage from this was better than expected, On a recent trip in August we tried a higher resolution camera in the same location producing fantastic results, this is no easy task by any means and requires a dedicated team to carry gear in and out of the cave for the filming to take place. When the Hall Of Thirty is lit up the view is breathtaking. Work still continues, hopefully the film will be ready for next year.



The Hall Of Thirty

Officers of the Society:

Chairman
Chris Seal
Throckmorton House, New Road, Draycott,
Cheddar, Somerset, BS27 3SG
css@chrisseal.net

Secretary
Adrian Fawcett
5 Ambryn Rd
New Inn
Pontypool
TORFAEN
NP4 0NJ
(01495 763130)
(07973 815050
adrianfawcett@talktalk.net

Treasurer
Gary Jones
29 Canney Close,Chiseldon
Swindon
SN4 0PG
(01372) 450958 (Home)
07979 854059 (Mobile)
garyrobertjones@hotmail.com

Cottage Warden
John Stevens
14 Kiln Close, Hermitage, Thatcham
Newbury, Berks, RG18 9TQ
(01635) 200879 (Home)
john@k-stevens.co.uk

Tacklemaster
Joe Duxbury
16 Coombe Glen Lane
Up Hatherley
Cheltenham
GL51 3LE
01242 237378
jduxbury@blueyonder.co.uk

Newsletter Editor
Steve Sharp
43 The Crescent, Sea Mills
Bristol BS9 2JT
07768 367060 (Mobile)
(0117) 9040587 (Home)
Steve-Sharp-Photography@virginmedia.com

Librarian
Paul Tarrant
10 Llwyn y Golomen, Parc Gwernfadog, Morriston
Swansea, SA6 6SX
(01792) 795600 (Home)
07867 820507 (Work)
ptpeaty@yahoo.co.uk

Meets Secretary
Paul Tarrant
10 Llwyn y Golomen, Parc Gwernfadog, Morriston
Swansea, SA6 6SX
(01792) 795600 (Home)
07867 820507 (Work)
ptpeaty@yahoo.co.uk

Records Officer
John Cooper
31 Elm Close, Wells, Somerset, BA5 1LZ
(01749) 670568 (Home)
csspub@googlemail.com

Web Master
Stuart France
The Smithy, Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1RD
(01874) 730527 (Home)
css@linetop.com

Rescue Liaison
Paul Tarrant
10 Llwyn y Golomen, Parc Gwernfadog, Morriston
Swansea, SA6 6SX
(01792) 795600 (Home)
07867 820507 (Work)
ptpeaty@yahoo.co.uk

PDCMG Liaison
Chris Seal
Throckmorton House, New Road, Draycott,
Cheddar, Somerset, BS27 3SG
css@chrisseal.net

Committee Member
Mel Reid
3 Bryntirion Terrace, Llangollen, LG20 8LP
07711 943492 (Mobile)
melrei@hotmail.com

Committee Member
Jason McCorriston
72 Christchurch Road, Penmaen Estate
Oakdale, Blackwood, Gwent, NP12 0UX
(01495) 221479 (Home)
jason_mccorriston@talktalk.net

Committee Member
John Newton
39 North Park Grove,Roundhay,Leeds,LS8 1EL
(0113 2933807)(Home)
07796 696916 (Mobile)
johnnewton2@virginmedia.com

Committee Member
Lucy Jones
6 West Down,Bookham,Leatherhead,
Surrey,KT23 4LJ
01372 450958 (Home)
07880 738790 (Mobile)
lucy_n@tiscall.co.uk

Whitewalls
The Hillside, Llangattock, Powys, NP8 1LG, UK

Cottage Bookings

25-27 September Chesterfield Caving Club (8 Bunks)
25-26 September - Red Rose Caving Club (4 Bunks)
2-4 October - FFC (12 Bunks)
9-11 October - Shepton Mallet Caving Club (10Bunks)
16-18 October - Kent Uni (9 Bunks)
24 October - 1 November - FFC Exclusive booking (All Bunks)
13-15 November - Exeter Uni (10 Bunks)
27-29 November SWCC (6 Bunks)

Crown Jewels - Daren Cilau

Mark (Gonzo) Lumley

www.chelseaspelaeo.org.uk