



Volume 59  
Nos. 4/5/6  
Apr/May/June 2017

**Swildon's Shatter Series**

**Digging in Withyhill**

**Surveying in Aggy**

**Cornish Mines**



**CHELSEA SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY**



(Some of) The OFD Northern Lights Team  
Photo by Steve Sharp

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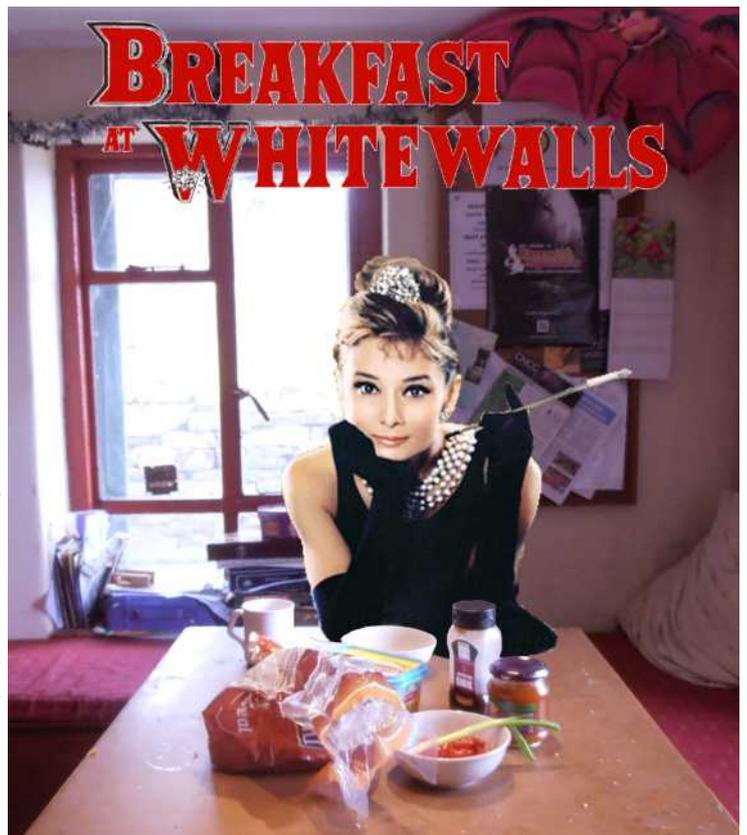
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ISSN 0045-6381

Front Cover: Mike Read in Grotte du Moulin des Iles, Jura, France. Photo by Matt Voysey

*Some time ago I saw a picture that supports a claim that Holly Golightly had breakfast at the hut of another, large caving club to the west of Llangattock. But actually all the picture shows is that she looked in through the hut window. Whereas the picture here clearly shows that Ms Golightly sat down and enjoyed "Breakfast at Whitewalls". She looks very much as if she enjoyed the comfort, and friendly ambiance, of our cherished establishment.*

*Joe Duxbury*



# Editorial

A very big thank you to all who contributed articles and pictures for this issue. Keep it coming! Don't forget that as well as trip reports we welcome items of news or general interest, gear and literature reviews, technical/scientific articles, historical accounts and reminiscences, fun stuff, entertaining stories, and anything else you can come up with.

Please submit all material for publication to [cssmattv@gmail.com](mailto:cssmattv@gmail.com)

Send high resolution photos in JPG or TIF format. For very large files or collections of items upload them to Dropbox or Google Drive and send me a public shared link to the folder, or ZIP them up and send via MailBigFile.

A **FULL COLOUR** electronic version of this newsletter is available to download from the members area of the club website. Also, if you would prefer to go 'paperless' and receive electronic copies of the newsletter in future let me know.



## CSS UPCOMING MEETS

### July 14th-16th - Pembrokeshire

A weekend camping on the dramatic Pembrokeshire coastline, with a trip to Ogof Gofan and kayaking around the sites of speleological interest along the coast.

### July 20th-22nd - Whitewalls Family Weekend

Another chance to bring your family and friends to Whitewalls, or just come along for a caving/walking social. Hopefully the weather will be nice enough for a BBQ too.

### August 4th-6th - Mendip, staying at the SMCC hut

A good dose of Mendip caving, drinking at The Hunters' and BBQ feasting. Trips to include Charterhouse, Upper Flood, and Swildon's.

### August 25th-28th - Bank Holiday Weekend at Whitewalls

Caving in one of our fine local caves on Saturday, to be followed by an evening of wine and cheese appreciation organised by Stuart. Sunday's trip will be further afield near Llandovery, where Paul will be leading us on a trip to Nantymwyn Mine.

### September 15th-17th - Whitewalls

Event to be decided. Could be caving, working or a combination of the two.

### September 29th-October 1st - Hidden Earth

This year the event will be taking place in Churchill, Mendip.

### October 13th-15th - North Wales, staying at the Lancashire Caving / Climbing Club Hut

Our mission the Croesor/Rhosydd through trip, a classic underground adventure involving zip-wires, inflatable dinghies, and Indiana Jones style rickety bridges. There are other extensive mines to explore here and plenty of excellent mountain walks too.

### November 3rd-5th - Bonfire Weekend at Whitewalls

Caving, bonfire, fireworks, food and fun with caving chums.

### December 1st-3rd - Whitewalls Curry Weekend

More caving and fun with chums, but with homemade curry and sundries.

If anyone has any suggestions of trips they would like to do on any of the meets then do let me know. The above trips are likely to be expanded on and additional events added during the year, so watch this space for updates.

Mandy - [mandola76@gmail.com](mailto:mandola76@gmail.com)

## Membership

### Current rates:

**Full: £30**

**Joint: £40**

Plus 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 reference their BCA number and membership club with their payment.

**Associate: £24** to receive publications, plus £6 for BCA non-caver insurance.

**Provisional: £10** for any 6 months plus BCA active caver insurance to Dec 31<sup>st</sup> at £4.25 per quarter.

Full membership information and an application form can be downloaded from the CSS website [chelseaspelaeo.org](http://chelseaspelaeo.org)

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

# North Choke Withyhill

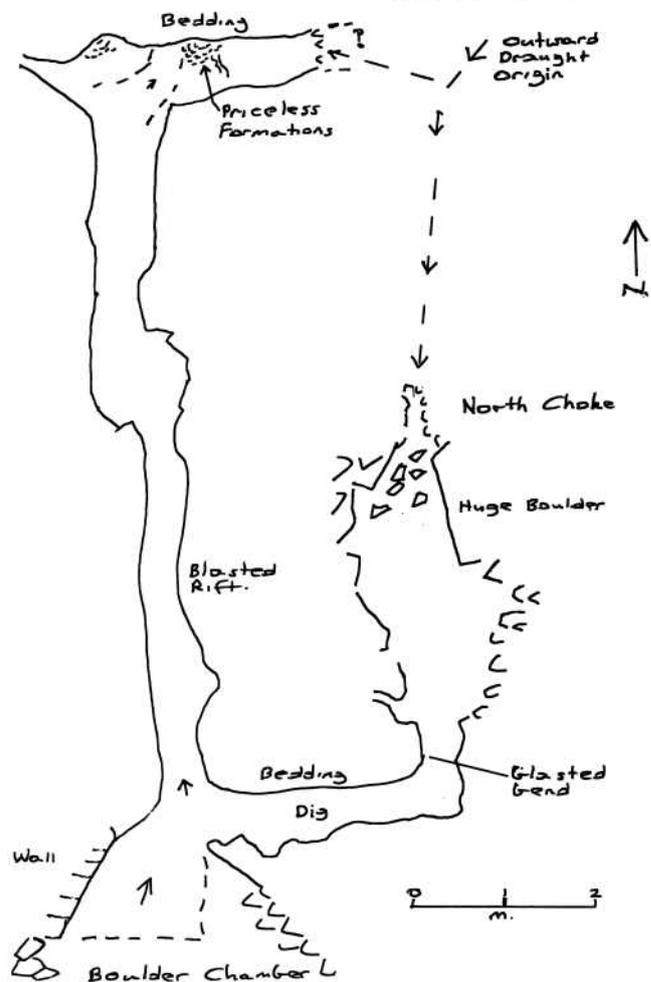
*By Nick Chipchase*

In the last newsletter I discussed the possibilities of a link between Withyhill and Shatter caves and smoke testing the draughts in the vicinity of the likeliest link points. I did a rudimentary smoke bomb test in the boulder chamber beyond Jonathan's Chamber in Withyhill in May 1988. This showed a slow draught towards the North end of the chamber as there was an in going draught in the squeeze up into the chamber. This prompted Graham Price and myself to bang open a narrow rift at the end of the boulder chamber later in 1988. For various reasons the dig was abandoned. Another team took up the task in 2000, usually in the form of Mark Lumley and Tony Boycott. Other projects lead to a break in proceedings and a return in 2009 when a cross bedding running East West was discovered containing superb formations. This area became known as "Priceless Grotto". Rather than destroy the formations the dig was abandoned and the bang wire (by now stal covered) was recovered at a later date.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016 myself and Chris Milne revisited the boulder chamber to carry out more smoke testing with a canister spray. Again the draught was inward and careful testing showed the smoke not entering the Priceless Grotto rift but disappearing in boulders to the right of it. On this occasion a bat was also seen in the boulder chamber, the only time I had seen one here. On 20<sup>th</sup> December Chris Milne, Nigel Cox and I undertook a trip to the end of the Withyhill streamway leaving Chris Milne at the awkward squeeze beyond Icing Flake Chamber. It's a tight right-angled bend and can only be bypassed by crossing conservation tapes below the Icing Flakes. This, of course, would not be allowed so Chris waited for our return being a rather beefy fellow. Chris left the cave after this and Nigel and I returned to look at the boulder chamber dig. Some progress was made along a bedding wall through boulders until a small mud choke was reached. Another dig in December 2016 saw the mud choke removed and a tight left hand slot into a boulder choke uncovered. The draught on this and subsequent occasions was blowing outward. The bend was enlarged and digging took place in the boulder choke on another four trips.

These were Thursday day time trips following digging at Vurley all day Tuesdays. Needless to say the two days digging a week at my age was getting the better of me. We used snappers to demolish the boulders, which worked a treat. Unfortunately the further we got into the boulders the bigger and more unstable they became. On the final digging trip a huge boulder crashed down on Nigel while he was drilling it. Only the drill pinned underneath saved his hands from serious injury. The drill bit was bent at right angles. We decided then to weigh up our

PRICELESS GROTTTO + NORTH CHOKE  
WITHYHILL CAVE



*Tape survey of North Choke and Priceless Grotto*

options. Our line survey showed that we had another 3 to 4 metres to go in the choke to reach the Priceless Grotto bedding. On only one occasion during digging did that area draught. That came from beyond the formations heading East where a boulder choke could be seen. Both our choke and

the Priceless Grotto choke were draughting, suggesting a common origin somewhere in that bedding beyond the chokes.

Withyhill Cave has many superb formations so the thought of dragging in any form of scaffolding was discounted. In most other instances that would have made the dig feasible but not here. We did not relish the thought of pushing on through unsupported bedding collapse for 4 metres, and to be honest the effort was taking a toll on both of us. We also felt that a siege dig was not justified just to link the two caves, though the possibility of encountering another inlet remained. We had one final trip on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017 to clear up the dig site. It was then back to Vurley dig once a week (encountering even more difficult boulder conditions and the collapse of our final shaft losing us 5 metres of depth). Maybe sometime in the future others will take up the task in Withyhill but it wont be us.

Nick Chipchase, April 2017.



*Priceless Grotto with draughting choke beyond*



*Nigel Cox drilling in North Choke*



*Nigel poking boulders around the bend*

# Brotherswater Lead Mine

Solo visit to Brotherswater Lead Mine (NY 3947 1195), Patterdale, Lake District, 05 March 2017.

*by Chris Tomlin*

After Judith and I attended the annual dinner of a walking club in Patterdale, I decided to take advantage on the way back to have a look at the above site. A walk there years before showed there to be many shafts and adits present. I had no underground gear on that day so I stayed out of the workings, but this time I was properly equipped...

We parked at the small car park at Cow Bridge on the A-road and I headed south along the shore of Brotherswater. It felt odd to be walking along a flat Lake District footpath in a caving oversuit but it sure is a beautiful walk. I passed through Hartsop Hall and then shortly afterwards headed rightwards up the hill. After a few minutes I arrived at the lower end of the mine remains: a few walls and floors showed where buildings had been. Spotting an adit, I headed underground. This was the lowest entrance I found that day. It was easy walking and went straight for 50 metres or so in ankle-deep water and then turned right. I saw something pink at the corner which turned out to be a stuffed toy carefully placed there, not dropped. Odd. The adit ended after a few more metres and someone had placed at least a dozen more stuffed toys on rocks and in alcoves at the end of the adit. It was quite creepy. There was

nothing more here so I went out and then headed further up the hill, passing various depressions that are likely collapsed workings.

Higher up I found a steep funnel down to a steep adit floored with loose rock and small boulders (avoiding boulder surfing was tricky) and then the workings went vertical down a wide shaft. There were some iffy SRT bolts in-situ. In the adit there were two stainless 10mm bolt shafts sticking out of the rock with nuts but no hangers while out over the pitch there were at least two 8mm spits with

hangers, but with rust streaks. I left quickly as it looked dangerous with those hangers and the loose rock.

Next adit I went in looked promising so I braved the waist-deep water to find it ended in a collapse after 5m. Annoying. At this point I was getting close to my turn-around time so decided to look in one last adit. This was quite high up and to the right (facing the hill) from the lowest adit. After the usual 50 metres the adit reached a T-junction. At the junction was a local enlargement with a shaft entering through the roof. The shaft looked fairly sound from the bottom although I could not see any hangers on it. Right at the T-junction was one of those passages that make mine exploration such a delight: the passage consisted of a floor of rotten timber over a deep flooded stope. There were several gaps where the timbers had disappeared so I could look right down into deep water. I managed to traverse off the floor and over the first gap in the timbers but then realised I was being very stupid and reversed back to the T-junction. Going left led along a sound adit and a brief flat-out bit to emerge in the side of a high stope with workings above and below. There was a line of sound-looking 8mm hangers leading down. I could not see bottom or top of the stope, it looks a nice spot for SRT (dry too). There is likely a still higher adit leading into the very top of the workings. I had run out of time though so I headed out and back to the car.

That was a pretty good short trip. I'd like to head back if anyone is in the area and fancies a look. It is only about 1km walk from the Brotherswater Inn opposite and could be a decent rainy-day trip in the Lakes...



# Suckered Back to Big Sink!

*Saturday 3 June 2017*

*Joe Duxbury, Matt and Mandy Voysey, Paul Taylor (GSS)*

Some time earlier this year, during a discussion of caves rarely visited by CSS, someone said they hadn't been to Wet Sink. So I cheerfully said that I would organise a trip there.

When I asked Paul Taylor if he would supply a key, he asked if he could join us, and I said he could.

In the event, the only people to turn up for this trip were Matt and Mandy, who weren't the people who said they'd not been! Mandy had already suggested Big Sink as an alternative, Paul was happy with it, and so I resigned myself to giving the Voyseys the opportunity to experience the delights of Big Sink.



*Joe enjoying/enduring the rift*

We drove to Symonds Yat and used Paul's concessionary Forestry key to drive almost to the cave. We had only just started unloading when a couple of walkers arrived, wanting to know if it was far to the main road. One of their party had slipped over and badly twisted his ankle. Paul generously offered to go to the rescue, and drove off to transport the injured man to the end of the Forestry track. When Paul got back he said the man's ankle was **really** swollen. So after that bit of excitement, we changed and entered the cave.

Down through all the scaffolded shafts, and with Paul leading, we avoided the wrong turn into Chernobyl Chamber. We kitted up at the pitch, Matt rigged the rope (30 m) and we descended to the slightly wet chamber at the bottom. When we had taken off our SRT kit, we entered the low crawl that is the start of the '2000 (*sic*) Metre Rift'. It's still a never-ending struggle along a tortuous, tight, gnarly, rift. Until, at last, the rope-aided drop into the Second Chamber.

Along the stream, and then up a muddy tube to the right to a chamber where the way on is a passage turning back on itself. Next comes an obvious junction where the way up to the left over boulders leads to Yorkshire Pot. Paul took Mandy and Matt to

the bottom of this 25 m shaft, and recounted his exploits in bolting to the top. Which unfortunately had all been in vain, as all the channels up there were inaccessible.

Our way was straight on through several dry, flat out crawls and small chambers. As the way on to the nice formations blocking the way on is very muddy, we turned back at that point. We had something to eat and set off back along the rift. This time I found the rift really hard going, constantly trying to stop slipping down into the narrow part. But I got there in the end. And then once I got back up the pitch, into straightforward climbing and crawling, I felt a lot better, and soon we were out. A fine trip of about 6 hours.

After changing, we adjourned to the New Inn at Shortstanding, for some refreshment. Paul returned to Gloucester, Matt and Mandy were camping in the Forest for the rest of the weekend, and I continued on to Whitewalls to do some kit organising.



*Joe, Mandy and Paul at the entrance*

*by Joe Duxbury. Photos by Matt.*

# Inner Circle – Summertime – Agen Allwedd

by John Stevens

The first large loop we closed on the resurvey of Agen Allwedd was the Inner Circle. This included a section of Peter Cousins' work from Selenite Needle Passage junction with Eastern Avenue to its junction with Swiss Passage. By completing this loop we could check out various calibrations and see if we were really achieving a good grade of survey.

Some twenty five years ago, I published the CSS Vol19, Llangattwg Journal and one of the early comments bugged me for a long time. The Agen Allwedd survey still had a mistake in it I was told by one of the older members, but he wouldn't let on where. It must be obvious as the survey was at 1:14000 scale, so it must be a big mistake! Lets see the older works first and see how it got passed down through the years.

Figure 1 is the April 1960 survey by D.E. Leitch, which shows the Inner Circle but is still connected

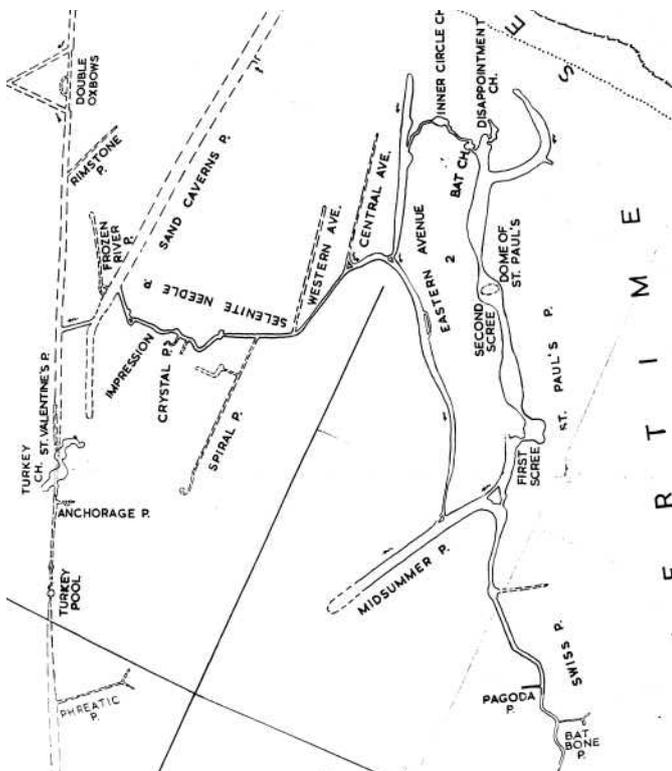


Figure 1 - D.E. Leitch 1960

to the rest of Agen Allwedd by estimated surveys. It does however have the names we still use today.

By 1963, H Lord had produced a more detailed survey of the area but an error had crept into the

data. That was most likely logging a bearing at 50 degrees instead of 150 degrees or similar. A 100 degree error created a nice dogleg as can be seen in Figure 2. This I.G. Penney compilation survey of the area seems to use Lord's work but fitted to the newer prime centreline by P. Cousins. I then used this as a base with even more additions for the Llangattwg Journal.

Peter had left a series of prime survey stations at major junctions, so we would use these to fix all the new work to.

The first survey trip was on 31 July 2011 for eight hours by David Stevens and me. We started at Eastern Passage junction with Swiss Passage and progressed up Scree Passage before ascending the 1st Scree Slope into St Paul's Passage. At the top of the slope there is a further slope up that reaches a nice dome. On a version of the Lord Survey, this

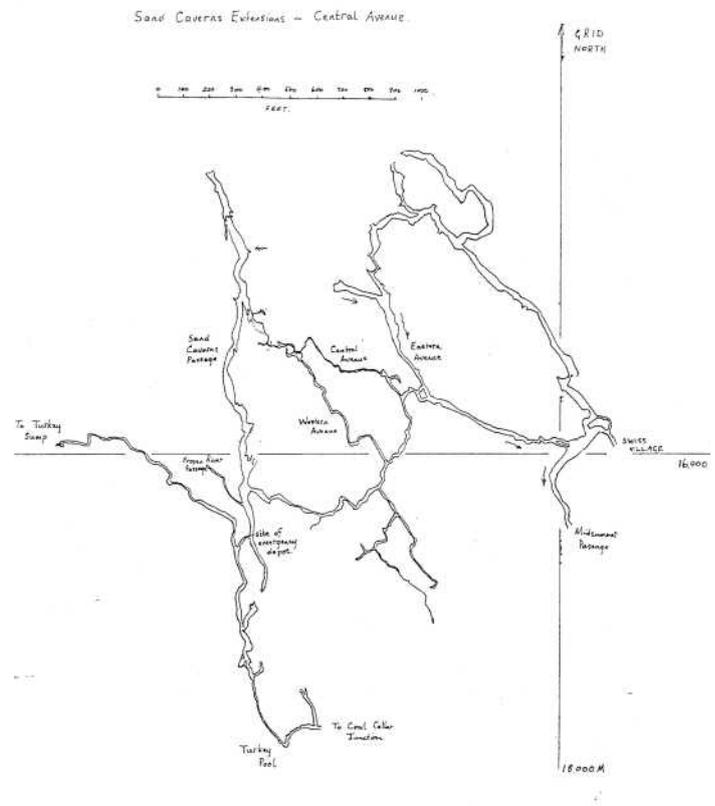


Figure 2 - I.G. Penney 1973

is mislabelled as the Dome of St Paul's. A bouldery section is then followed to reach the next slope up. Just before this a large undercut chamber can be reached on the left. This chokes at both ends with

little prospects. Up the Second Scree slope reaches the Dome of St Paul's. The roof here is almost the highest altitude we have measured in the resurvey at 385m. We finished for the day at Gigantic Junction, this name was used on one of the early surveys and I thought it should come back onto the new survey.

On 13 August 2011 Mike Read and I continued surveying the loop for eight and three quarter hours. We started at Gigantic Junction and continued up the main passage towards its choke which issues a small stream. On the right side we passed a nice display of various coloured calcite flows over mud, a 'painters pallet'. The end choke came on very abruptly and seems to mark a strong joint or fault. It had not been dug but the right side has a roof tube that may be a good starting point for an investigation. It was on this section we found the lack of a dogleg seen on earlier surveys.

Back at Gigantic Junction we now continued past the route to Bat Chamber and into Disappointment Chamber. This has a sand floor, which is a contrast to the clay and boulders we had earlier. A couple of short side passages on the right quickly choke, but the end of the chamber has been dug upwards for some distance. This dig has a good draught and

ascends up under various roof shelves. At the top it may be easier to break up the boulders under the roof shelf rather than continue breaking up the rocks directly up. This is the highest point we have reached so far on the survey at 386m.

The next trip was again by Mike and me for some twelve and a half hours on 16 November 2012. We started at the junction of Eastern Avenue and Selenite Needle Passage and progressed northerly. A short oxbow and very small side passage were done on route to the main choke of Eastern Avenue. This issues a stream and consists of large blocks and is probably on a fault. We continued up into Inner Circle Chamber, which is larger than I thought and rises some 13m to the inevitable large choke. Near the top of this ramp, on the right, is the way on to Bat Chamber and the link with the previous survey.

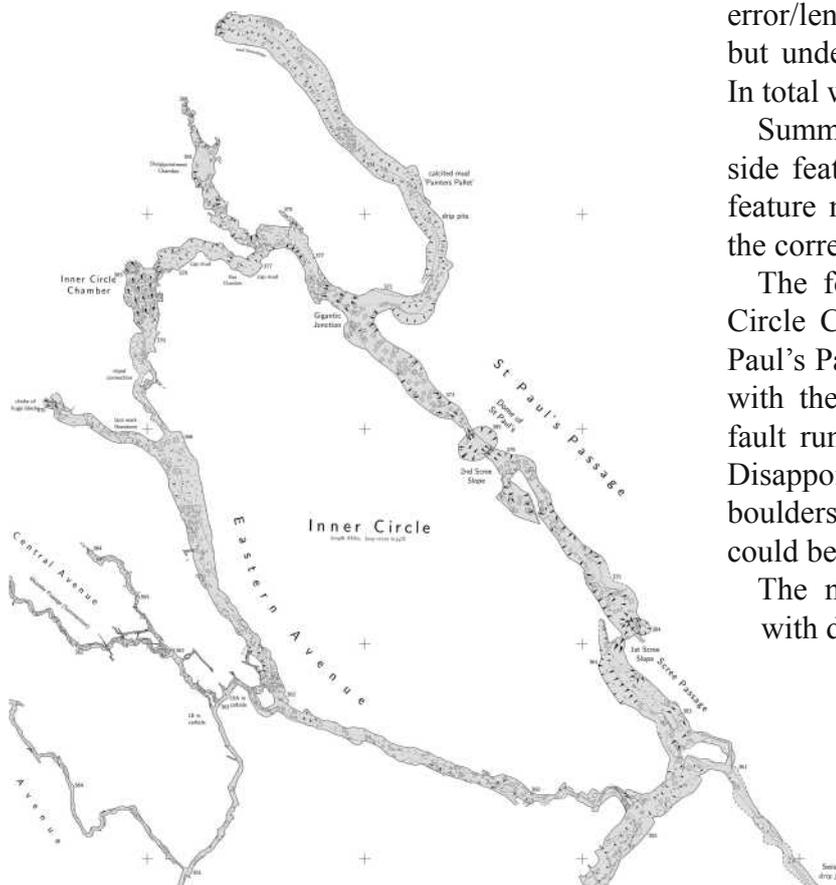
The resurvey ended with an eleven hour solo trip on 2 March 2013, to add detail onto Peter Cousins' centreline and dimensional data. This trip did all of Selenite Needle to Swiss Passage before starting on the Midsummer Passage survey.

The Inner Circle survey loop consists of 92 legs covering 933m. A rough and ready idea of the quality of the work is a 0.44% loop error (absolute error/length). Not an ideal way to measure quality but understandable to most, the smaller the better. In total we had 160 legs covering over 1400m.

Summing up, no new passage found but a few side features added. An old error corrected. Some feature names are back on the survey and now in the correct place.

The four end chokes of Eastern Avenue, Inner Circle Chamber, Disappointment Chamber and St Paul's Passage, all lie on a straight line. This, along with the nature of some of the chokes suggest a fault running across the system at this point. The Disappointment choke has a draught but requires boulders to be broken up, while the St Paul's choke could be dug with bars and rope.

The next article will cover the Central Circle with discoveries and rediscoveries!



*Figure 3 - J. Stevens 2013*

# Shattered in Swildon's

*by Gary Kiely*

These days I struggle to pre plan caving trips as something always crops up and I can't go. So gate-crashing trips seems to be the way I roll. Sunday 14th of May was one of those days.

I met up with Steve Sharp about 09.00 at the Wessex and had some breakfast. Now what is the Wessex known for? - yes - tea drinking! Now I scoured that kitchen from top to bottom and not a single teabag was to be found, even a used one. Loads of coffee but no tea and when you want tea, well nothing else hits the spot. Either the club is trying desperately to shrug the stereotype and all members are on a tea detox, or it's all kept in a safe somewhere or the BEC lot raided last night and stole the tea bags.

Anyhow 09.45 and the Yoda of Swildon's, Sir Cooper, arrived to rouse the troops. Steve refers to him as Super Cooper. 15 mins later Barry Weaver arrived and two people I had never had the pleasure to meet before, Ros and Calum (didn't get as far as surnames).

All fees paid and we headed over to Swildon's and without faff all piled in, "Good morning my old friend, it's been some time."

Barry has had a bit of time out from caving and suggested he would be slow. I've always liked Barry. However this was not at all obvious as we bounced down the stream way and I was sweating by the time we got to the 20. We must have been the first people in the cave that day as John had to drop our ladder. I think we were all very efficient and whizzed past this minor obstacle. We left the stream way and climbed up past Tratman's Temple and followed the round trip route. Mud Sump had a splattering of water in it but nothing like it used to. It was easy going until Shatter Pot where John life lined us all down the ladder. Shatter Pot is an impressive thing, 8m deep and from the top of the ladder rising about another 6m to the roof. When we were all down Barry said he would stay back to keep an eye on the ladder. The cave changes dramatically after Shatter Pot. With several compacted mud slides up and down, the lack of any hand or foothold makes this very energy sapping. We passed through the Junction Chamber, which brought back haunting memories of getting proper stuck in a side tube / rift after Matt Voysey's expression of "It's interesting down there, worth a look."

We passed through this chamber and it all got big again until we came to the 2.5m climb assisted by the old metal drill bit on the top as a hand hold. Now I currently have the Swildon's book next to me to help with names of passages and the like. I have just seen the most apt comment I have read in this book "Ahead the passage goes downhill (in all meanings) and shrinks to a low wet crawl through a shallow pool" I had been here before, and the sensible Voyseys looked at this pool and quite rightly said "Sod that" or something to that effect. I'm sure we have all been to a place where you are following somebody, secretly thinking "I hope they don't make it through so I don't have to either." This was one of those moments with great big bells on.

John ruined this thought and just slipped through without hesitation, repetition or deviation. Head first, face up, helmet off and held in hand. Sharpie followed and shouted back "It's not that bad." I have learned to totally disregard those words over the years, especially from Sharpie. Callum went next and just glided through with effortless precision... I was gutted... I had to go. I removed my Mars Bar from my helmet, there are some things you can't risk losing!

While immersing myself in the pool and as the cold water hit the back of my neck I could hear the conversations in my head...

Reason : "Woooo what in the name of God do you think you're doing?"

Cave Head : "Shut up, I'm trying to focus here"

Reason : "Dooh! Don't do it and no need to focus... simples"

Cave Head : "Too late .. Bye"

Reason : "That's it, I'm leaving"

So now I'm in, nose in the ceiling, inching forward and my back is flat on the ground. Now I get to a bit where my chest is wedged. I scan the ceiling 2 inches from my face for a higher section and it makes me dizzy trying to focus that close, but it's pretty flat so no advantage. So I breathe out to deflate my chest, but now the water is higher, beyond my ears and just below my eyes. I'm inching through all the time. I think of deflating my chest a bit more but need to keep some air in case I get water up my nose. In all the focus I dropped my helmet and it all went dark. So, in the name of distraction from the oncoming heebie jeebies, I lay there with my arm gently sweeping the water to find my helmet again, nothing like a bit of housekeeping in odd situations to bring some calm. Well it worked, helmet back in hand I inched through and gradually the ceiling got further away. I was through and had enough room to spin round to climb up the awkward slot at the other side. My head was spinning from the cold water on my neck. But now I was standing up in the clamber with Sharpie and Callum.



Reason : "You tit!"

Cave Head : "Eat my shorts"

Photo by Steve Sharp

Needless to say Ros glided through without a ripple. John was somewhere in the area but I couldn't pinpoint where, the sound of him scraping and banging something was everywhere - but distant. Callum spotted some wet footprints which we followed to find a crazed John in a hole throwing buckets of water at us. Callum went to the business end and started taking buckets from John to bail the water quicker. I took over from John and bailed way more than was needed, but I didn't want a repeat of the previous duck. Gour Pool Duck had an interesting access, lowering oneself headfirst down into a 2 foot hole with the remaining water and back crawling for 3 metres to a slot in the roof. A proper U tube, Sharpie went first and I followed, I think Ros may have been next.

Then it was standard small crawly Mendip tube and went on and on and on. Some muddy crawls upwards sapped more energy. At about 20m from Shatter Chamber I had a moment in some snug passage and needed to reverse into some space to catch my breath. I did this section on my back and got through, but I was mentally broken now. I found a nice comfortable chamber and curled up to let everybody go past. I could hear Sharpie in the distance exclaim he was in Shatter Chamber and it was huge and awesome! From my cosy chamber I could hear everybody stomping around in the chamber and at no point did I think "I want to be there too".

Ros came back with the giggles "It's a chamber, with boulders ... that's it, that's why we came here".

Happy days, we were on our way home, but I was very slow and ploddy, the Gour Pool Duck was grand, the next one was less horrible, the fact that I needed some Mars bar and it was at the other side helped. The return journey out of Shatter Series felt a lot quicker and I was very happy to see Barry the ladder keeper. There was nothing out of the ordinary on the rest of the way out other than I became considerably chattier once we were at the top of the Shatter ladder.

We exited the cave after just over 3.5 hours and I loved every minute of it.....

Thanks to everybody who put up with my faffing and hesitancy and especially to Ros for understanding when I needed space and generally keeping an eye on me.

*And now for an alternative account of the same trip...*

## **Sunday Morning so it must be Swildon's Hole**

*by John Cooper*

Sunday 14th May 2017 - Swildon's Hole, Shatter Series

Caving - John Cooper, Gary Kiely, Steve Sharp, Callum Simmonds, Ros Simmonds and Barry Weaver.

The previous Sunday, on a gentle trip to Sump II in Swildon's, Ros had mentioned she would like to do Shatter as it had been a long time since she had visited that area of the cave. Steve immediately picked up the idea and "conned" Gary into coming along. Ros brought along her youngest son as he'd got a new oversuit that needed a workout.

We entered the cave just after 10.30am and took the Dry Way in. We had to ladder the Twenty as there was no-one ahead of us in the cave. After climbing out of the Streamway at Tratman's Temple we made steady progress, passing a fairly dry Mud Sump and arrived at Shatter Pot. We laddered this and life-lined everyone down. At this point Barry decided he wasn't fit enough after his 2 month break in the USA, Australia and New Zealand so decided to wait for our return. I did warn him that we would be at least an hour!

The rest of us continued down then up muddy crawls and squeezes before reaching the climb up using the old drill bit (it just sits horizontally in a groove so can only be pulled down on) and then a short walk to the first duck. We didn't bail this, just passed it on our backs with helmets off and nose against the roof. At the end it is necessary to sit up and wriggle upwards through the boulders to exit. We then followed the passage along and up to reach the Gour Pool Duck. This we bailed for about 20 minutes to achieve lots of airspace. I'd not been past this point before so Steve took the lead though the next bit of Shatter Passage, a series of crawls, grovels and squeezes until we finally reached our objective - Shatter Chamber. By "we" I'm afraid Gary had succumbed to the too many pies effect part way along so it was only 4 of us.

Steve was all for heading onwards but what I'd read of the next sections, Fracture Rift or Passchendaele, made me say no.

It seemed much shorter returning, but then it often does. We collected Gary and finally Barry after an absence of 1½ hours. Took our tackle off the Twenty and still no-one else about. Finally met more cavers at the entrance after a very enjoyable 3½ hour trip.

Missed the Hunters' so had to visit the Queen Vic instead.

# Cornish Mines Weekend *by Mandy Voysey*

## Bellan Mine – 25 Feb 2017

*Attendees - John Stevens, Mike Read, Andy Heath, Jann Padley, Jennie Lawrence, Matt and Mandy Voysey.*

I had been to this mine before, but that was over a decade ago, and we hadn't on that occasion journeyed up into the higher levels. So I was looking forward to this trip, partly as I was keen to see the extra stuff that I'd previously missed, and partly because I wanted to see how much I remembered in the bits I had done before. My route finding memory is notoriously bad, but luckily I'd had the foresight to write a description on my last venture which included the vitally important notes of how to actually find the entrance. Armed with this, a grid reference from Adit Now, and the knowledge that I'd been there before, surely there was no way we could go wrong...

It turned out that my description was vague, my memory poor, and the grid ref was for the shafts above our entrance point, but at least the weather was nice so nobody seemed to mind too much. After quite a bit of scampering about the hillside Jann eventually found the entrance in a depression that was practically invisible until you were in it.

Once inside the next step was obvious, we were in a large chamber with only one way on, down the massive open shaft. This was easily rigged from a very sturdy beam overhead, then all descended to the level below. There's no need to abseil down to the very bottom of the shaft as the way on very quickly becomes blocked. Instead swing into the passage just a short distance down. This what we all did, with the exception of Matt who had to retrieve the camera case he dropped while leaning over the pitch. After a short distance of stomping passage the next obstacle was soon reached, this was a traverse over a false floor and a wooden plank leading to the next short pitch.

From then on we were in the mine proper, with lots of big passages to stomp along and explore.

We roamed around randomly exploring everywhere, with the exception of a wet passage that became increasingly deeper as we went, this we decided that we might come back to at the end of our trip as our depth gauge (Mr Heath) was becoming more deeply submerged than looked pleasant for a otherwise dry trip. The most interesting artefact on this level was a large kibble, the capacity of which was tested with the insertion of Andy.

After a bit of a lunch stop we took a short climb up on the right at the junction with the wet passage, here the passage character changed slightly with intermittent small stals of blue, yellow and black appearing. This part of the mine basically consisted of a main central passage with side passages at crossroads along the way.

The side passages were quite varied, interesting and all of different lengths. At the end of this we found a choice of three ways up to the higher level, we opted for a route on the left where a fixed rope and a section of wooden ladder made it possible to climb between stemples to the hatch at the top. Matt was first up, and as we had an extra rope we decided to rig it as the in-situ was a little on the scruffy side. This section was even more varied, fluctuating in size and with more in the way of formations and artefacts. Soon after the rope climb we came to another, shorter ascent to scale a high bank of rocks; this was where my light failed, but luckily I had a back-up with me. At the top of this there was a chamber with some mine truck rails, the floor had collapsed beneath much of it leaving the rails suspended mid-air. Beyond this the route continued, with a short easy traverse and bit of clambering to arrive in a passage with a really impressive truck sat on its rails. This was in really good condition and a good deal of posing for photos was done here, there was also some very nice yellow stal in the shape of lightning. The short passage beyond this was where our trip ended as there was nowhere further to go. Rather excellently though, this was also the best bit as this passage had a bumper load of the bluest, blue stal ever. We were thrilled! We then exited the way we came in, ate bread pudding, and discovered we were actually quite late. Dawn had been waiting to return back with us, and had been forced to take refuge in the pub after being kicked out of the local tea shop.



*Jann Padley walking the plank - photo by Matt*



*John Stevens looking wistful in Bellan Mine - photo by Matt*

## Cligga Head Mine – 26 Feb 2017

*John Stevens, Andy Heath, Matt and Mandy Voysey.*

As this mine is up by Perranporth and we were staying in the St Just area, we decided to do it on the way home. This is another trip that I had done before, again I had a description from my previous venture to aid us, but this time I was somewhat less confident about my ability to actually find the mine. However, on this occasion the route finding was surprisingly unshambolic, and everything was as I remembered. We found the narrow cliff-top path straight away, which wound down towards the boulder strewn beach below, with occasional scrambles and exposed sections. I was dead chuffed we'd found it so easily, that was until Andy pointed out how rough the sea was and the likelihood that it would reach the entrance when it came in fully. Ordinarily both the entrances and the route to access them would be out of the tidal range, but today was a different matter. The sea was most definitely

raging, foaming, and coming in from all directions. After a bit of a moot, we decided the most sensible plan would be not to risk it. We then decided not to be sensible and to go for it anyway, but with a plan of not venturing too far and not staying in too long. Jann and Jennie joined us on the walk down the track, but then headed off for a coast walk, while Matt, Andy, John and I sped off into the mine, wearing our normal clothes but with a caving helmet to save time.

Though I'd been to this mine twice before and thought I'd seen it all, it was much bigger than I remembered and I was very impressed by the scale. Knowing that there's more to see in the upper level than the lower, we headed there first. To get there we turned right at the first junction, carried on until we reached another opening with a drop to the beach/sea below, then climbed up through a collapse hole on the left hand side of the passage. We were soon wandering through massive lofty chambers with sandy floors, there were

### **BELLAN MINE**

Location: Porth Nanven, Cot Valley. Entrance is in an obscured depression on the hillside to the right of the road as you're facing the sea.

This is between the two car parks and directly opposite an adit in the stream next to the road. Grid Ref: SW 3581 3086

Rigging: Pitch 1 - 20m rope. Belay to massive beam, and back up to a P-Bolt in wall (note: descend only as far as passage on the left, part way down). Traverse and Pitch 2 - We used 46m rope, can be split with 30m traverse and 15m pitch. This is not P-bolted, and needs to be rigged with 5x 10mm hangers and nuts (not usual 8mm ones). Climbs to Upper Level - There are two pre-rigged ascents to gain the Upper Level. 1x 15m and 1x 10m would be needed to rig own rope.

### **CLIGGA HEAD MINE**

Location: Cligga Head, near Perranporth. Cars best parked outside the commercial buildings nearby. The mine entrance is at the foot of a cove ringed with cliffs that can only be accessed by a narrow track winding down the cliff edge. The path starts at the old concrete foundations above the cove and follows the right hand cliff edge. Part way down there is a choice of ways, left with an easy scramble dropping down to the big boulders at the bottom, or right through a short tunnel leading to the beach. There are fine views of the multiple mine holes in the cliff opposite on the way down. Grid Ref: Path SW 7380 5365, Mine Entrance SW 7380 5356



*Upper Level Cligga Head Mine - photo by Mandy*

quite a few enticing climbs up to side passages to explore, but we thought it prudent to save these for another occasion and continued taking the main route until it deteriorated into crawls. I know that it's possible from here to take a route up to balcony high up on the cliffs, but we didn't think it worth getting stranded for. Returning back to the entrance we took a view out to the sea and decided we had time for more exploration, and so did a circuit of the lower level too. The first part of passage was filled with shallow water that soon got

beyond the depth I could do comfortably in normal shoes, in a moment of un-characteristic chivalry John offered to give me a piggy back over the deep section. Matt was very concerned about the impact my weight might have on John's poor knees, but apparently I'm not as heavy as I look! This area was generally more "miney" than that above, with more stemples, suspended rocks, metal bits and large cables abound. We checked out everything that could be done without grovelling at a relatively swift pace then returned to the coastal path, thankfully without being engulfed by the sea. Looking back at the cliffs we could see that it was riddled with holes, like a cheese. There must be much more to this mine than I had previously thought!

All in all an excellent weekend was had. We did a bit of coast walking as well as mine exploring, basked in sunshine (despite it being February), had a nice time staying at the climbing hut in Bosigran, ate pasties and ice creams, and got shoot spuds from a homemade cannon.



*John at Cligga entrance - photo by Mandy*

## Alternative write up by Andy Heath (age 55¼)

We went down a mine in Cornwall and we was very brave just like ~~that~~ that Poldark bloke.



# Holwell Cave

Quantocks, Somerset

by Andy Watson

When I was about 11 or 12 years old the Northampton Education Authority used to run summer holiday adventure weeks for kids. My sister went first, and she did a mixed activity week, canoing, walking, climbing, horse riding and caving. I followed her in the following year, whilst she did a weeks' caving in the second year. I liked caving too so the following summer I did a weeks' caving. The instructor for both of us was Bill Gascoigne (deceased) of Brynmawr Caving Club. Known to some members of CSS no doubt. So a few years later after I had joined a Northampton Caving Club (mine exploration mostly) and had a caving buddy but before I could drive I persuaded my mum to take me (solo) to find Holwell Cave and she filmed me using a Standard 8 Cinefilm camera about 1977. The first picture is a still from the cinefilm of me coming out of the cave. Some three years ago I wrote to the farmer, enclosing the younger version picture, saying I would like to re-visit the cave and had a return telephone call saying I would be most welcome. Sue and I had a free day so we bimbled to find the farmer's address. He had moved house, but with the help of the postman we located his wife at a nearby farm house who very kindly walked us up to the quarry where the cave is located. The cave is pretty neglected and the lower series is pretty blocked up, as are all other entrances except the main one. Anyhow we walked through the wild garlic and located the cave and explored the passages. Very pleasant. So, the second photo is 40 years on in May 2017 when I finally re-found the cave and met the farmers wife and obtained permission again to access it. During the intervening years it was very difficult to get access permission from the current farmer's father (now deceased) due to problems with cavers during the late 1970's and early 1980's. Access now is not really a problem if they are asked politely and care is taken. If anyone in the area needs a digging site then there is a lower series of crawls that needs clearing out, along with two other entrances. Perhaps a good Wednesday evening project?



*Above: Outside Holwell Cave circa 1977 – note the woolly jumper, cloth overall and carbide light [and undue enthusiasm - Ed]*



*Right: Outside Holwell Cave in 2017 – 40 years on!*



*Richard admires formations in 6th Heaven Chamber*



*Mandy in Lost River Passage*

Saturday 24 June 2017

Richard Dearden, Matt Dunn, Joe Duxbury, Gary Kiely, Tony Moulton, John Newton, Jann Padley, Freyja Sears, Dan Thorne, Mandy and Matt Voysey

## Ogof Draenen Waterfall Series

*by Joe Duxbury. Photos by Matt.*

Just like the recent OFD trip in March, this was another well-attended club outing. Several car-loads gathered opposite the Lamb and Fox, and we were actually able to change in the dry!

A ladder was put on the climb in the entrance series. After we had all assembled at Cairn Junction, we turned left into what was for probably most of us, new territory. Past the rope hanging down from Big Bang Pitch, up a long slope almost to the ceiling, where there's a run-in from somewhere higher up, and down the other side. After a narrow rift, and a short crawl, we climbed up into a narrow rift, followed by more tight climbs. The start of Waterfall Series is up a rope beside a waterfall on an overhang, which Gary boldly climbed so that another ladder could be placed. We followed the stream for a short way, before turning off left into an obscure small tube. At a small chamber, with several ways on, the route was straight upwards, a slippery climb, with a fixed rope, in a corner. The ladder had been brought with us and was hung from a spit, which didn't look all that trustworthy. So people were urged to climb smoothly, without sudden changes of weight.

The way on passed some isolated gypsum flowers, and after a climb up we reached a series of

low crawls. I got stuck in the smallest, as a result of going in with two arms in front, and fortunately Gary was able to give me enough of a pull to get me free – thanks Gary! I didn't make the same mistake on the way out.

Some traversing and more climbing eventually got us to Knees Up Mother Brown, a long passage with a fine, flat grey ceiling and sandy floor, in which John Newton said you could run, so I did! This came to a sudden end at Lost River Passage, where the ceiling, in total contrast, is a chaotic jumble of brown lumps. We shortly reached a climb up into 6th Heaven Chamber, with collections of lovely aragonite clusters. They aren't large, but there are lots of them, very delicate and wonderful.

Some of the team carried on down KUMB on the way back, just to look at the start of Padlock Passage, but I joined the rest on the way out. We reversed the rigging of the ladder, and steadily retraced our steps to the entrance without incident.

Back on the surface, it was a relief to get to the top of the hill, where there was a good breeze, and the midges disappeared!

# Little Neath River Cave

Saturday 27th May 2017

I led a visit into Little Neath River Cave on a bright morning during the Bank Holiday Weekend while we were staying at Whitewalls. Gavin with Ralph and Susan in one car and Sue and I in the other. We drove up to the farm and paid our dues (£1/caver) and went and parked by Bridge Cave. Susan and Sue saw us off and went walking. Ralph and I had done the cave before a few times, the last time being May 2010; it was a new cave for Gavin.

The entrance series seemed to have more boulders washed in than previous, or I am slightly larger! The duck was also fuller of water and narrower than I recall! No worries, Gavin managed the narrow top bit and Ralph and I practised breathing water, kicking some rocks out of the way whilst holding our helmets. I suggested we might benefit from a rope on our return to assist. This might have been the first visit to the cave this year perhaps? No worries, we were in, the Blaen Nedd Isaf Passage on the left as you get in did not smell of diesel this time. However, the main stream passage with the flat flooring before the Canal Bypass flowstone was very slippery underfoot in some places – be warned, we all nearly tumbled in places. Up the Canal Bypass the team started grumbling in the low bits, so near the end I showed them the pretty gower pools and their very cold water at the beginning of North East Inlet Series and went round the short oxbow back round to the Canal Bypass passage through Junction Chamber, on the right being the main return trip route later on, The Canal. Carrying straight on down Main Stream passage pretty big and impressive and I was looking for the entrance up to the Old World Series from the Genesis Gallery, a sloping sand bank on the right and we found the stony crawl this time. Gavin and Ralph waited while I explored and called them through from the rift. Grumbling again... We found some old camping gear (stove, saucepans etc. and a first aid dump). I did not push my luck with the 3D Maze to get to the Old World Series; perhaps next time.

Back at the Main Stream we headed towards Sump 2 which was further than we remembered. Going back up stream through Bouncing Boulder Hall on the higher route this time past the sand banks and right into The

Canal. Water level was middling height and not too cold and we saw one frog but no blind see-through fish. After the duck at the end we kept left and went along the Sump 1 connection with Bridge Cave, then back up the sandy section to the right of the main rescue dump (notably refurbished since our last trip – good work guys out there) into the main stream. After crawling for a short period we thought we remembered that there was a climb up flowstone on the left, so doubled back and climbed up into Mud Hall, a fairly pretty area but actually a dead end. Back in the stream again we continued further and realised this was the correct route and the climb up on the left was much later on. Past the Canal Bypass on our right now and further on to the climb up and turning left past the growing grass seedlings we got to the entrance duck. Gavin again demonstrated his nimble technique to take a rope end and stay mostly out of the water, but made it look rather difficult before fixing the rope for Ralph and I which proved helpful for both of us. Pushing my emergency bag against the water and snagging it on submerged boulders and some washed in branches proved rather exhausting, and after about 4 hours we emerged to a rather wet and misty afternoon; it was meant to be sunny! All in all a good and enjoyable trip.

*by Andy Watson*



*Ralph and Gavin looking at pretties*



## Upcoming Daren Camp Weekends

- 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> August
- 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> September
- 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> November

*New diggers always welcome*

Contact Mandy: [mandola76@gmail.com](mailto:mandola76@gmail.com)  
Or Adrian: [adrianfawcett@outlook.com](mailto:adrianfawcett@outlook.com)



The Working Weekend on 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> May was a great success, with plenty of willing volunteers doing a multitude of useful tasks. Pretty much everything on the task list was achieved including fitting kitchen splash backs, plastering the ceiling by the back door, re-laying part of the front patio, laying a rear patio/gin drinking lounge zone, tiling sink splash back, constructing and fitting a new side gate, tidying the garden, general nettle removal, chiselling back rear wall, fitting of door closers, making a new BBQ, and lots of stinky cess pit maintenance. Thanks to all those that took part.



*Photos by Matt Voysey*



# WhiteWalls Working Weekend

*Why not come and stay to see if you can spot the changes. Remember the cottage is ours to enjoy and an excellent opportunity to mix with both fellow members and visiting clubs.*

*by Mandy Voysey*

