

**Volume 59  
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**Croesor-Rhosydd  
North Wales Mines  
Old Daren Sunday School  
Surveying Central Avenue**

**CHELSEA SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY**



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*Above: Mandy at Malachite Falls, Llanberis Copper Mine East, Oct 2017. Photo by Matt Voysey.*

*Front Cover: Mike Read in Llanberis Copper Mine East, Oct 2017. Photo by Matt Voysey.*

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AUTHENTIC UNDERGROUND ADVENTURES



*'Meander Lisa'*  
by Speleonardo da Vinci  
(a lost masterpiece rediscovered by Joe Duxbury)

# Editorial

Thank you to everyone who contributed articles and pictures for this issue, please keep it coming! Remember 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.

**Matt**  
(and Mandy)

## Library Update

by Paul Tarrant

A recent audit of foreign exchange newsletters revealed several clubs or organisations that were no longer sending us their material (10 out of 13) so the club will cease sending newsletters to them and make a considerable saving on postage which will be something approaching £100 per annum. This saving enables us to purchase more books and this year there has been a rash of excellent new books released and that have been bought for the library. New acquisitions are listed below and available now for loan by members.

### Earth Colours - Mendip & Bristol Ochre Mining

By M. Clarke, N. Gregory, A. Gray published 2012

### Northern Caves - The Three Counties & The North West

By S. Allshorn & P. Swire published 2017

### Caves and Karst of the Yorkshire Dales Volume 1

By T. Waltham & D. Lowe published 2013

### Caves and Karst of the Yorkshire Dales Volume 2

By T. Waltham & D. Lowe published 2017

### The Darkness Beckons (new updated, rewritten volume)

By M. Farr published 2017

### Adventures Underground

By D. Haigh & J. Cordingley published 2017

### Caves of the Peak District

By I. Barker & J. Beck published 2010

### Selected Caves of Britain & Ireland

By D. Marshall & P. Rust published 1997

Donations:

### Underground Worlds

By D. D. Jackson, Time Life Books Published 1982

### Blind Descent

By J. M. Tabor published 2010

I introduced some simple rules concerning loan periods and so far there has been no need to penalise people for late returns, and this disappoints me as I have been trying to cultivate the cross looking librarian look for the past few months now!

The Library is looking like a comfy room to have a quiet read, what with the new chairs and computer table that have been generously donated by Stuart France and Mel Reid.



## 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: £18** 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.

# Reminder: SUBS WERE DUE IN OCTOBER!

# Croesor-

# Rhosydd

*The CSS excursion to North Wales in October 2017 saw nine members keen to sample the delights of the Croesor to Rhosydd mine through trip. Here we present two personal accounts of the event, the first from **Richard Dewsnap**.*

Attendees: Mandy & Matt Voysey, Mike Read, Adrian Fawcett, Helen Nightingale, Jeremy Petterson, Mike Green, Jann Padley, Richard Dewsnap.

We had all heard about this legendary through trip and for many of us, had not got round to doing it. For me, as soon as I had seen it advertised, I was keeping that weekend spare. It's not very often that you hear of 'bridges of death' and 'chambers of horrors' inside a Welsh mountain, you normally have to pay to do this type of thing at your local funfair.

Croesor and Rhosydd are two slate mines near Blaenau Ffestiniog in North Wales. They consist of many large chambers on different levels, linked together by passages. Spanning many of these chambers are wooden bridges. These two mines are linked

together by a single passage which was made to settle boundary disputes. Today, at least half of the mines are flooded, but there is a single route through which allows for a through trip.

Seven of us set out from the hut at approximately 11am with a map knowing that we had a 2 hour walk ahead. Mike G and Jann, were travelling up that morning and were planning to follow us through the mines at a later time. It was misty and as soon as we started to climb the hill, the visibility disappeared quickly and soon we were lost, well Adrian and Mike R said they knew where we were and we kept following them. Luckily, my phone still had signal and between the map, phone and a compass (handy app on the phone), we eventually arrived at Croesor at about 1.30pm and about 2 minutes after Mike G and Jann.



On entering the mine, it seems to be flat with tram tracks on the floor of the adit. After approximately 100m, the adit opens up into a chamber which would have been the marshalling area for the trams. We quickly climbed the incline ahead, looking at the various chambers on either side. Very quickly, we were at the top of the mine and ready for the fun to start.

The first obstacle was the first pitch, an 80ft abseil into a large chamber. The obstacle turned out not to be the abseil itself, but trying to get the stops of the thick rope. Adrian was leading and had found his way across the chamber that was littered with large boulders of slate which had fallen from the roof. Here was the second obstacle, another 80ft pitch, this time with a tidy rope on it. This turned out to be straight forward.

Next up was obstacle three, the zip wire over the lake (photo left). Here Adrian and Mike R had rigged up a pulley and a towing line to retrieve the pulley on the wire. Adrian became the guinea pig and tested the wire. Soon we were all crossing, one by one. Some opting to go across by gravity and others being persuaded by Mike R that a push start was better. The ones who had push starts soon found out that there was only one way of stopping, hitting the end of the wire and the wall it was bolted to.

By now we had reached the water level and would be staying at this level until the Rhosydd Mine. Round the corner was obstacle four, a suspension bridge built from scaffolding ladders and wire, no problems here and all were across quickly. From here it was all walking through some

worked out chambers containing the remains of old cranes and machines.

Next up was obstacles five, six and seven, the legendary 'bridges of death'. The first bridge turned out to be in the best condition of the lot and just a simple walk along a beam, 25ft above the water. There were safety lines so you always had your cowtails connected. The second bridge, well it wasn't there, and turned out to be a short traverse around a corner onto a flat standing and then a short zip wire across into the tunnel. The third bridge was much the same as the second, but we had to cross it where it stood. There being two wires across it like a Tyrolean traverse pausing at the intermediate support which is all that is left.



*Helen on the first Bridge of Death*

A short distance from the last 'bridge of death', came the 'chamber of horrors', obstacle eight, which was two chambers worked into one. There would have been two bridges and a little tunnel between but the wall containing the tunnel had been removed. The two bridges were long gone and all that remained was the intermediate supports in various states of disrepair.



*Boating across the Chamber of Horrors*

And these chambers were flooded. This obstacle involved abseiling approximately 20ft into a canoe, pulling yourself across the lake by the cord provided and then climbing a short rope into the next tunnel. This turned out to be very time consuming.

Once everyone was safely up the last pitch, around the corner was the connection between Croesor and Rhosydd, marked by a wall built across the passage. This apparently was built by the mine owners to stop miners leaving work early and

exiting via the opposite mine. It was 5pm and we knew we were running tight on our 7pm callout time, so we had to pass through this mine quickly.

There were a few twlls in the tops of a few chambers, where the mine had breached the hilltop. These lit up the mine in a strange way, especially one which was very large. We carried on and soon found the incline down to the long adit and the exit to the mine. We reached the surface just after 6pm

and it was starting to get dark. The route back to the hut was straight forward, down the valley, past lake Cwmorthin, but without a phone signal Mike R decided to run off ahead back to the hut to make sure that there wasn't a callout.

Fair play to the locals who have kept this mine rigged and since our visit, it has been reported that the zip wire over the lake has snapped.



*Next up, Helen Nightingale relates her experience of the same trip...*

**O**n Saturday, we all went on the Croesor – Rhosydd through trip. It's a true classic, and I have really enjoyed it when I have been before. The zip wires and wibbly wobbly bridges were great fun. What I had completely deleted from my memory was the walk to Croesor takes 2 hours. When somebody mentioned it, after we had finished faffing, all I could remember is that you walk past a lake and then I fell over a couple of times as the bog ate my wellies, one at a time. On Saturday morning, the weather in Tanygrisiau was a bit damp. The clouds had come down, so visibility wasn't great either. The area had had a lot of rain recently, so the river and waterfall at the top of the village were very impressive. Adrian and Mike were in charge of the route finding, and after a short distance along the country lane, they

decided the way on was over a wall and up the mountainside. Adrian-two-tackle-bags is actually a mountain goat. Thankfully a pregnant mountain goat. If he hadn't of had an extra tackle bag to weigh him down, nobody would have been able to keep up with him. The way on was becoming steeper and steeper, and looking more like a rabbit path than a sheep path. Even though it was very wet, it was very warm. Even warmer when your life jacket won't fit in your bag, and you stupidly decided to wear an extra layer of thermals. Part way up I had to take a layer off. Wandering around a mountain top wearing an oversuit with the arms dangling like I had 4 legs, dungarees with no jumper, helmet, and a life jacket, is not a good image for a country walker. This should be proper red socks, waterproof map cover and

compass territory. Only at some point we discovered we didn't have a compass, we had dropped off the edge of the map, the GPS was still at the hut, and there was not always the phone signal to run mobile phone navigation. Never mind. Adrian bounded away up the hillside and everyone else followed with varying levels of enthusiasm. It was starting to become vertical bog. Sometimes the moss you put your hand or foot on was shallow, sometimes it sunk down for a foot, and sometimes it hid sheep shit. Mostly it was a bit slippery.

The plan seemed to be to get to the top of the mountain somehow or another, and then it would level out and we'd be able to see the path that we were supposed to be on. However, the higher we got, the less of the mountain we could see. Hopefully we were going in the right direction. Eventually, after a few discussions of where we were and how far off route we were, the landscape flattened out. Excellent, easier walking. When Jeremy suddenly looked like he had shrunk by several feet, we thought he'd found a nice climb down onto a path. No, he'd been eaten by a bog. We must be going in the right general direction. A little way further along the rabbit path, the conditions underfoot varied from boggy to like walking on jelly. I



*Mandy on the first pitch. Photo RD.*

pondered if Mountain Rescue would tell me off as wellies are inappropriate for mountain walking. There were points where visibility became so bad that if you paused for too long, say if you fell over or the bog ate you, the leaders had disappeared. This is quite impressive seeing as a couple of them were wearing bright yellow boil-in-the-bag suits. If only they had been wearing red walking socks, all would have been fine. We wished we had some yellow flashing road-cone beacons to strap to their heads, so we could see them a bit better. I will confess we did discuss who would be best to kill and eat if we got stranded on top of the mountain for days.

We knew we were looking to be heading towards a hole in the ground, if we were where we hoped we were. Thankfully, before we came to any conclusions over whether a stop, a rack or a set of cows tails would be the best murder weapon, we found ourselves walking along the edge of a cliff. We were saved! The landscape gradually started sloping downhill, and the clouds suddenly parted and there was a lake in front of us. We were nearly there, we were no longer lost, mountain rescue wouldn't tell me off for inappropriate attire, and we wouldn't have to eat each other. The final challenge was not to get blown into the lake, with waves better than you get at the seaside. The wind was strong enough that it did actually pick me off my feet. There was actually good reason why I wore my life jacket.

When we arrived at the old mines buildings by the entrance, Mike and Jann were already there. We had thought they were supposed to be the latecomers. They had very sensibly driven to somewhere nearby. Not as close as the completely sensible people, who had driven right to the entrance in a 4x4 loaded up with caving and diving kit. They decided it was too miserable so drove away again. We headed underground, as having fun is a far better plan than being sensible. The mood lifted considerably once we were all kitted up and in the warm and dry, and able to see further than 2 feet. Route finding got easier too.

First came a couple of abseils. The rope was thick and stiff, and using a stop wasn't pleasant. Progress was slow, but it meant we could have a good look around the huge chambers. People in the lead had got to the bottom of the 2nd pitch before the last of the group had started the first pitch, so you got a really good impression of just how big the chambers are in Croesor. Negotiating the rope protectors was a bit faffy, but getting off the rope on the first pitch was proving decidedly challenging. Matt became boil-in-the-bag superhero, and rescued us from the perils of being stuck on the ground but still attached to a very inflexible bit of rope. Abseiling in a life jacket was more awkward than I had thought about.

Next comes the zip-wire across a lake. The water is beautifully still and clear, and I remembered the zip-wire being awesome fun. Mike was supervising the pulley and pull-back string. When I arrived, I wanted to go nice and fast, because I am actually a 12-year-old boy. As Mike told me I wouldn't hit the wall on the far side, I decided to take a running jump to gain a good bit of speed. I giggled away as I zoomed across the lake at high velocity...

WHHHHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE  
AAAARRRRRRGGGGGHHHH  
OUCH!

After I had gone past the bit where I expected to slow up, I realised I was still accelerating, and a very solid wall of slate with a squishier Adrian standing in front of it was coming closer scarily quickly. Miraculously, Adrian managed to duck out of the line of impact and catch me enough to slow me down, and saved us both from becoming extra-



*Rich on the suspension bridge. Photo MV.*

large sachets of tomato ketchup. If the worst had of happened, somebody would have had sauce to go with their cannibalistic dinner. I had only stubbed my toe on a bit of rock several feet above standing level. If any more serious injuries had occurred, at least cave rescue couldn't tell me off for being inappropriately dressed. Apparently, nobody before me had got anywhere near the wall. Mike's instructions to people behind me changed a bit. "if you go too fast you will hit the wall"; "you might hit the wall at the other end"; "put the brakes on when you get near the end"; "don't worry, you'll be fine..."

Next comes the wibbly wobbly suspension bridge over another beautifully clear lake. It has been known to fall in, and has been repaired several times over the years. Thankfully it was in place and in good condition. Still a bit wibbly wobbly, just enough to be fun rather than lethal. Somehow, the safety line for your cows tails had got caught up and I couldn't reach it. This is where I remembered by problem with the trip last time. Some places have very clearly been rigged by a tall person. When crossing the Bridge of Death – a rotting wooden plank high above another lake with sheer vertical walls on all 4 sides, with very little holding the bridge up, I had a bit of a problem. There was a rebelay in the middle. I looked at it and thought it looked a bit high up. The trip leader said, "don't worry, you'll be fine". As I approached the rebelay, the safety line started rising too high and I couldn't get off, or reach to transfer my cows tails over to the next rope. The trip leader had to come and rescue me. He literally had to lift me up, unclip me, shuffle around a bit above the middle of a lake while standing on a very thin bit of rotten wood, then clip me back on. It wasn't the best bit

of the trip. Remembering this, I extended my long cows tail using a spare krab, and attached my donkey's dick as a third, extra-long cows tail. This certainly helped on the first bridge, which is a little bit better than the Bridge of Death. Next came a bridge that is missing altogether, with a traverse line around the edge of the cavern to get around the lack of a bridge. Since my last trip, somebody had put in a new traverse line as well. This had to be tried. Keeping up with the tradition of rigging for tall people, I had to get a lift to get on to the zip-line, and again to get off. I made a big effort not to turn myself into tomato ketchup on this one. It was much more fun than the traverse was. Now follows the actual Bridge of Death. I didn't remember it looking as horrible before. The rigging had been changed since last time, and there is now a thick wire across the ceiling to the rebelay, and a wire string to walk across like a trapeze. This looked impossible for anybody to rescue me from if I got stuck in the middle. This bit was the not fun part. The first section wasn't so bad, and at the rebelay there was some nice chain my short cows tail could clip into. As I wasn't hugely enjoying myself, I fuffed a bit. I will blame Mandy for starting to pull the first pulley back while I was still attached to it. I'm not sure if it was Mandy, but I'm blaming her anyway. I made a complete mess of clipping into the second pulley, but got sorted in the end. After a bit of pathetic shuffling, the pull-back string got tangled up, so I had to go back to the middle and untangle it again. I think I was probably swearing by this point. I slowly shuffled back across the



*Mandy on the first Bridge of Death. Photo MV.*

trapeze wire, feeling fed up as I wanted to be on firm rock and not wobbly cheese wire. Every step I took, I had to shove the pulley along. It wasn't running very fluidly, my hand started to hurt and my arm was starting to ache because it was stretched up. I was very relieved to get across and have the others lift me off the safety line. It turned out I had really messed up on the second pulley and attached myself wrong, but at least I didn't need rescuing. Everyone else whizzed over it.



*The second Bridge of Death. Photo RD.*

I soon cheered up again as it was the Chamber of Horrors. What can be better than abseiling into a boat? At the moment, there is a really nice 2 seater canoe in the lake. When it was my turn at the pitch, Mike was ready and waiting in the boat, with it held nice and securely ready for me to land in. I was especially pleased about this when I found that this pitch was a lot easier at the bottom than the previous ones, as the rope was slightly too short. You sort of plopped into the canoe when the rope finished, rather than having to do battle with your stop while sat in a very wobbly boat. This is where the life jacket was quite useful – but it's even more awkward to loosen off your chest harness which is underneath a life jacket, while you try not to capsize the boat, than it is on solid ground. The boat did contain a few very manky looking life jackets, just in case you planned on falling out the boat after you have plopped neatly into it. Along with the manky life jackets was an oar. Well, the paddle part of it without the handle. Paddling was so much more fun than pulling the bit of baler twine, so I gondoliered Mike across the lake. I'm not sure if he agreed that it was any more fun, but we got safely to the other side, and he prusiked out the boat without me capsizing him. Back on the other side of the lake, somebody misheard his shout of "rope free", thinking he said "boat free", so they started pulling the pull-back string. This meant I got an extra boat ride. Even more fun. I did mention that I am really a small child. It meant that Jeremy also got a gondolier ride. I got told off for having too much fun, so I prusiked out the boat on reaching the far side 2nd time across. It's even more awkward prusiking with a life jacket on, as it rides up over your head. Maybe Tony Seddon should sell chest harnesses that inflate on contact with water.

This was the end of the childishly good fun stuff.

It was happy stomping through the Rhosydd part of the through trip. There's a section where you head towards large openings onto the outside world which look very much like the way out. Here the key is to keep going left, rather than get tempted by daylight, as the ascent is supposedly too steep. From what we could see of the outside world, the weather had cheered up a bit. The last bit of the trip was all very pleasant, as was the walk back to the hut. The clouds had lifted, and it was a much shorter and easier walk. There were actual proper paths, ones that were also frequented by normal people.

When I was checking the internet for information on the Croesor-Rhosydd trip, to make sure this write-up is fully truthful and accurate, I learnt a few things. Walking to Croesor without going via Rhosydd is not at all recommended. There will be zero visibility and it is very steep indeed. However, ignoring this information made a much more memorable walk than going the suggested route. The suggested route doesn't have bog that is made from jelly. The internet also tells you that when you do the zip wire, don't go too fast, and use a sling to make a brake, or you will hit the wall. Many, many trip reports tell you how very scary and dangerous the trip is. It really is a place of legends.

There should be a few morals to this story:

- When Mike tells you that you won't hit the wall, always believe him. He's 100% trustworthy.
- Never believe everything you read on the internet.
- If you are anything below lanky height, take 2 long cows tails.

*Mike Read, Matt Chinner, Richard Dewsnap, Matt and Mandy Voysey - 15 October 2017.*

I'd never heard of this mine before, but we were tempted over by the recommendations of Matt Chinner (a Cwmorthin Guide, local man-in-the-know, and currently our newest member). Matt and his chums had only just recently bolted this mine for SRT, so this was an excellent opportunity to do something new and unusual.

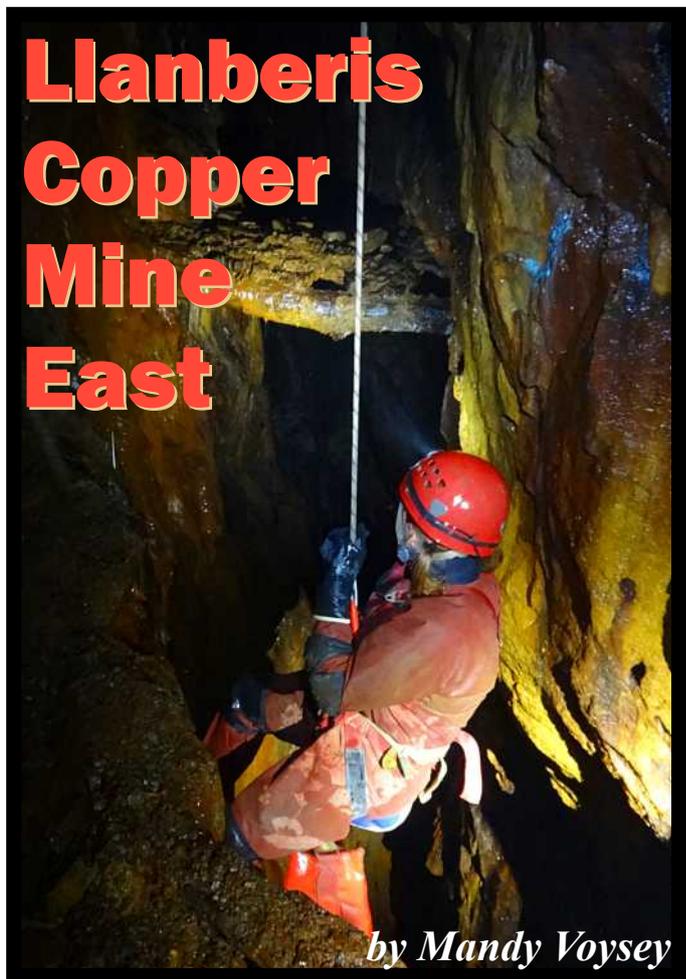
So on Sunday morning while Adrian, Helen, Mike G, Jann and Jeremy were getting ready for their trip to Cwmorthin. Matt, Mike and I hurriedly packed and headed off to meet Matt C and Rich at a layby by Llyn Peris, where we discovered that in the rush to gather all our kit, we'd also accidentally gathered kit destined for the other team's use. Luckily Jann has spares of everything in his car, so producing an extra rope wasn't a problem and I was saved from a stiff telling off.

The mine entrance was very conveniently close to where we were parked and also very easy to spot, being an obvious dark hole above a scree slope of mining debris. However, the angle of ascent was somewhat less convenient and the scree was the type that likes to move. I was feeling slightly the worse for wear after a heady mix of cider, wine and beer the night before coupled with the onset of a rotten cold. So I was very pleased that the rocks were interesting enough to merit a couple of pauses to regain my composure on the way up.

Inside the mine the entrance tunnel was fairly roomy, and after a short distance we reached a small chamber where the way on was on the left. Everything here is a nice orangey colour with rusty looking stal and generally very friendly. Beyond this the first pitch was soon met, just past a low wall. Here the bolts start quite a distance before the actual pitch-head. The reason for this is that the floor here is most definitely false. In fact it looks from the underside as if it's held up by mere sticks! Something that Matt V quickly ascertained when he romped over for a closer look before meekly retreating back to safety. Rich then set to with the rigging while the rest of us clambered up the boulder pile straight ahead to look at the end of the passage. This was quite pleasant and had some nice blue flowstone splats on the walls. These formations were just wasted on Matt C, as it turns out he's colour blind so can't really appreciate the blue.

We descended the pitch without problem and

# Llanberis Copper Mine East



landed on yet another false floor, though this one looked less obviously worrying. The next pitch was offset from the first and only a short distance from where we landed. Mike was loitering around waiting his turn, but let me bunk in ahead as I had the next bag. This pitch landed on a ledge overlooking pitch 3, which was being rigged by Matt C as I landed. Beyond this rather deep looking hole there was a solid stone level heading off, so I carefully danced around Matt and Rich to reach safer ground and took my turn at sightseeing down the tunnel. This was quite short, but pleasant enough and adorned with more blue stal smears and a brighter blue knobbly offering that could be viewed through a window in a boulder pile at the end.

The third pitch was really nice. It was reasonably deep (30m), but both comfortable and scenic. The walls were smooth and nicely coloured with blues, greens, yellows, and russets, and the wedged in stemples made it more atmospheric. Part way down there was a kind of square of timbers that we had to abseil through, which I really liked [see front cover – Ed.] At the bottom there was just one way to go, down the solid mined tunnel leading to Malachite Falls (Pitch 4). This tunnel was lovely and had some very fine examples of flowstone in both

bright blue and an attractive lime green, I was well impressed.

The next pitch was quite a short one, dropping into a canyon style passage with a rubble slope floor - which is again apparently false. Descending this slope the 5th pitch is reached. This is a very short drop, and looking across at Matt and Rich I wondered why we really even needed to rig it properly. But the reason soon became glaringly apparent when I saw the yawning void that lay beneath. This was one of those abseil down then swing across jobs, and the final pitch was directly below.

We didn't descend the final shaft just yet as there was more to explore on this level. So we regrouped and went off for a wander. This turned out to be basically one main passage with some short spurs heading off from it. There was also a very ominous looking void that needed to be trod around carefully. It looked very deep, but as the edges also looked quite crumbly I sensibly kept my distance. As you may expect Matt was less sensible and stood on the very edge for a good view, thus proving that dodgy as it looked it was at least able to support a small chap weighing around 9st.

Our final descent was quite a notable one. Not only was it quite long, but it was also rather moist. At the pitch head ready to descend, Matt C looked down the shaft and said "we're going to get piss wet". I too glanced over, but optimistically thought "that doesn't look too bad". However, it turned out that Matt was correct and we all got very, very, wet. It wasn't like being beneath a pounding waterfall or anything, more like just very heavy rain. I could tell that the view would be very pleasant, if I could only lift my eyes without getting massively sprayed in the face. Glimpses of lime green passed me by, but I was unwilling to loiter. Landing at the bottom I was keen to get out of the falling water, and popped under an arch to join the others. I thought it was odd that Matt, Mike, and Rich all choose to hang around and wait around in thigh deep water, but it transpired that pretty much everywhere was filled with thigh deep water at this level. Matt C informed us that there was a flooded shaft just a short distance from where we had all landed; normally this would be visible, but today it was completely submerged and un-detectable by eye. Beyond this was a water-filled tunnel leading to a grilled entrance. This isn't openable but can usually be reached by carefully crossing the flooded shaft on a scaffold bar placed over the top. Matt C gave it a go, trying to proceed by feel alone, but then

sensibly abandoned the idea.

As my spouse and I were the last two down, we went off for a wander in the other direction through the deep water to see what was further down the passage. After a while we reached an area where we could see the holes in the floor dropping down to flooded levels below. Matt continued undeterred, but noticing that all movements here clouded the water I decided it would be wiser to remain on the safer side so as not to obscure the view of underwater hazards. I didn't really enjoy being sensible while Matt was dancing his way on to possible wonders, so I was secretly pleased that just shortly out of view the passage ended in a collapse. We then headed back to a miniscule pile of boulders that seemed to be only place in the passage higher than the water level. We dubbed this haven "Luxury Island" and had some nuts while we waited our turn to ascend.

Prussiking up again wasn't actually too bad, I quite liked it really. After all I was already soaked, so a bit of extra spray lash wasn't a problem. We all made it up the pitch in good time really so luckily no-one got overly chilled, and we then progressed out in a reasonably efficient manner. I de-rigged and passed the bags on when full, and nobody dropped any rocks on anyone, or fell through the floor.

Back on the surface we climbed down the scree slopes (perhaps the most hazardous part of the whole trip) and had a look at the grilled lower entrance we had seen from inside, which lies further along the bottom of the mountainside. This had a large pool of water in front of it, which Mike immediately set to trying to drain in his usual manner. When he was satisfied that he had at least drained *some* of the water, we headed back to get changed at the car park, where tea was provided from the back of Matt's van. This was luxury indeed!

I very much enjoyed this trip and found that dangling about on ropes and dodging rotten floors was the perfect antidote to any discomfort caused by greeting alcohol with too much enthusiasm and catching cold germs from a spouse. The colours in the mine were really good, and the SRT was friendly. Though all the pitches needed to be treated with care, there was nothing too technical or anything dodgy to deal with. All in all a good fun trip. Maybe when Matt's bolted Llanberis West we'll come back and do that too.

No problems finding this mine – the wide track up to the lake leads straight in to the entrance! And there was a “Go Below” group heading in just in front of us. Although we had surveys of the mine, it quickly became apparent that these represented a steeply-inclined slice through a complex 3-dimensional system. There were far more passages than shown, and not all the fixed aids indicated were usable.

Our first route-finding challenge was to find our way down to the bottom of the Old Vein Incline. The survey appeared to show two ways to get there, but the first one we tried seemed to be in the right place according to the survey but presumably too high. The alternative route took us down the incline, but there was nothing on the survey to indicate whether to go on down a loose rubble slope or continue along more-inviting large horizontal passage. Turned out it was the former. We’re not sure which way the commercial groups came back up but it can’t have been via the Old Vein Incline. Next problem – how did we know when we were at the bottom, as indicated by the survey? Each intersection looked basically the same, and progress was blocked at the bottom because the mine workings were flooded to the roof.

# Cwmorthin Mine

We found a handline and steps down into a long horizontal passage, locating us precisely on the survey again, and continued down here to the visitors book at the old compressor. The enticing “Do not go” passage marked on the map turned out to be the furthest extent of the mine covered by the Go Below lease. Presumably the passage eventually came to an adit entrance somewhere down the valley, since water was draining in that direction.

Navigation around the bottom of the mine was comparatively easy, and we plotted an intended route. The first fixed aid we were supposed to use turned out to be a heavy-duty ‘electron’ ladder. Judging by the way it was hooked behind a bar near the top, we guessed it was probably out of use. No matter – we’d go via the waterfall climb instead. However, this turned out to be a climb up directly through the waterfall. Mike gave it a try, but it was clear we’d all get soaked and enthusiasm for this was in short supply. Sadly, we had now run out of possible routes into the other section of the mine, containing the long sequence of zip wires, so we headed back the way we had come.

The next fixed aid that turned out to be a no-go was the “Cheese Climb”. There was a roped climb which I went up, but couldn’t find any way on at the top. There was definitely a trade route at a much higher level, but no way to get there. We also found the place where the commercial trips come down – we passed one of these groups on the way there – but apparently they do it as a pull-through as there was no rope in place.

Returning up the Old Vein Incline, we detoured to see the Bridge of Death – a suspension bridge across an awesome chasm, beyond which was a zip wire across an even more awesome chasm. Earlier in the trip we’d probably have gone across, but collectively we were now running out of steam. Mike and I went across via an alternative route – a long exposed rope traverse around a sheer wall. Thankfully this route had metal bars to stand on. I suspect the traverse was installed for the group leaders to use rather than their parties! Beyond were more ropes and “via ferrata”. We went on a little way, far enough to suss out what the route onwards to the abseil point was like, and to conclude it was an exciting route to do on another occasion. But the others were waiting back at the Bridge of Death, so we needed to turn back.

The route out was uneventful, and we emerged from the adit after 5 hours underground. An enjoyable expedition, and definitely worthy of a return visit.

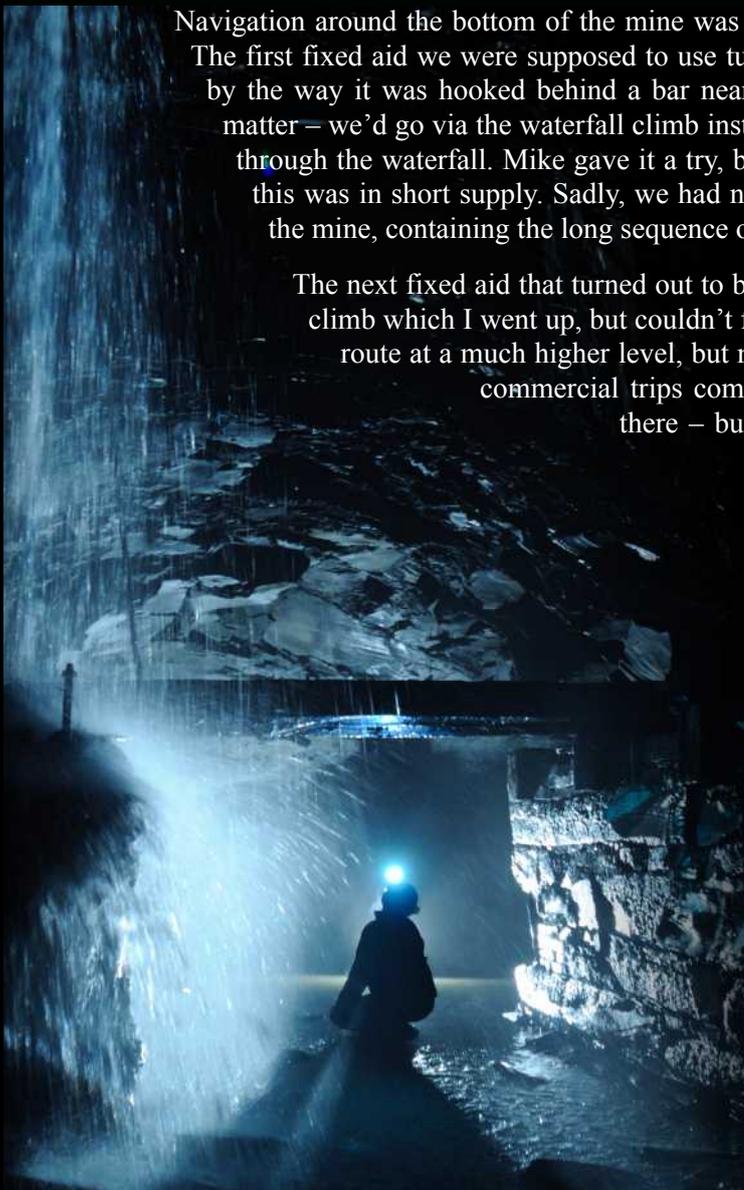


Photo courtesy Go Below Underground Adventures Ltd

# Central Avenue – Summertime – Agen Allwedd

by John Stevens

Central Avenue links from the far end of Selenite Needle Passage, through a loose choke to emerge part way up Sand Caverns. This creates a loop of over a kilometre in length and will be a very useful check for the accuracy of the survey.

Last year Adrian Fawcett, Matt and Mandy Voysey had a look into Central Avenue and said the choke looked very loose so didn't proceed through it. Instead they looked from both sides but couldn't see the same features, so concluded the choke may be loose over quite some length. They also entered some passages that oxbowed which didn't make sense from the survey.

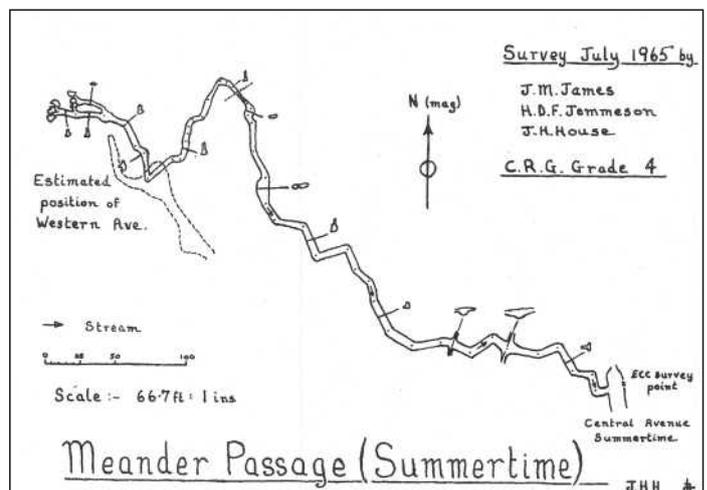
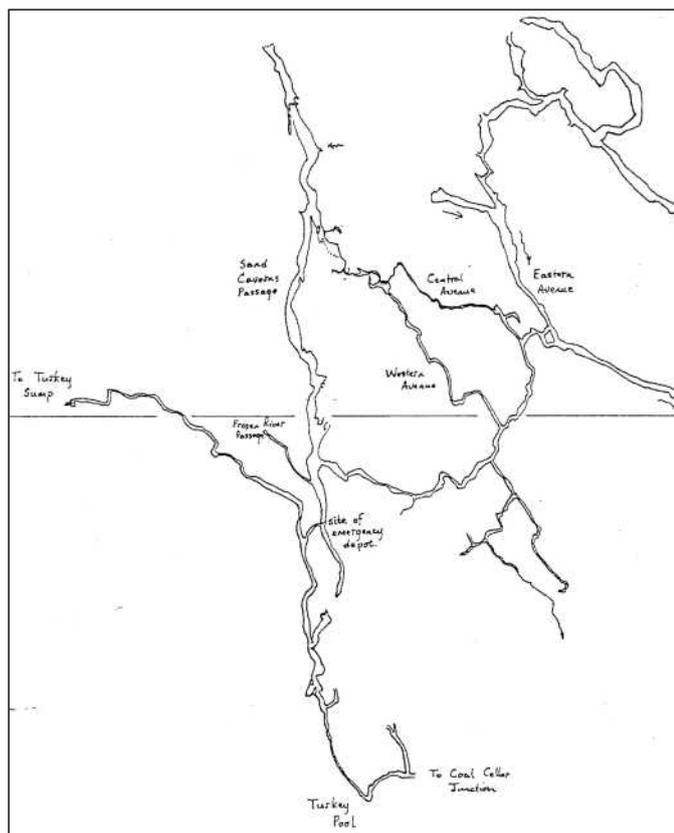
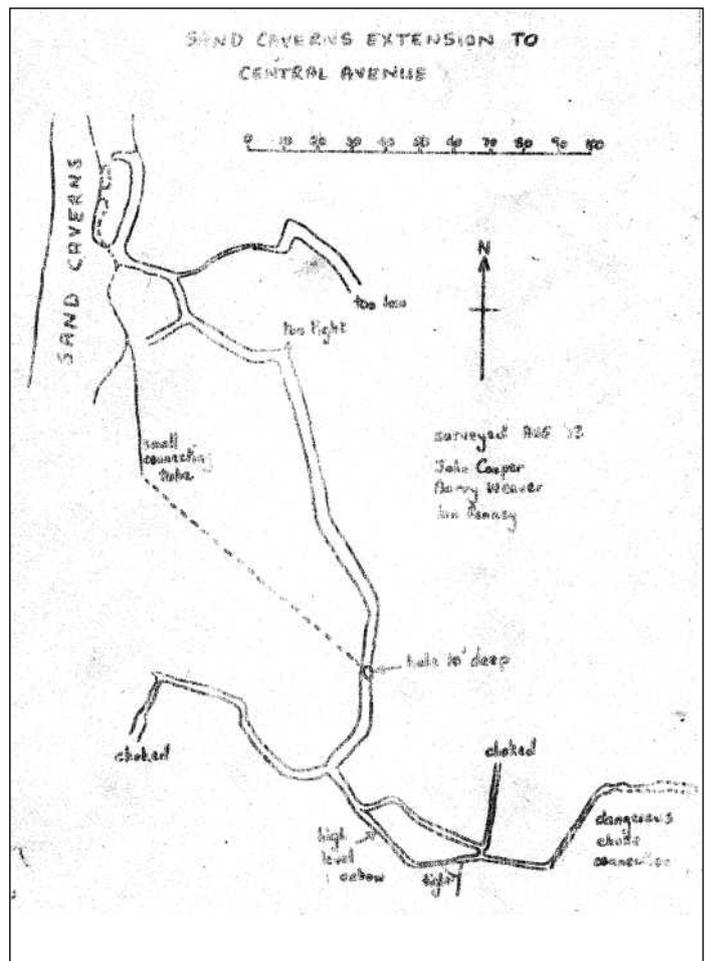
All these surveys and the older Leitch and Lord surveys, show no side passages and the position of the end of Western Avenue being below (or above) part of Central Avenue.

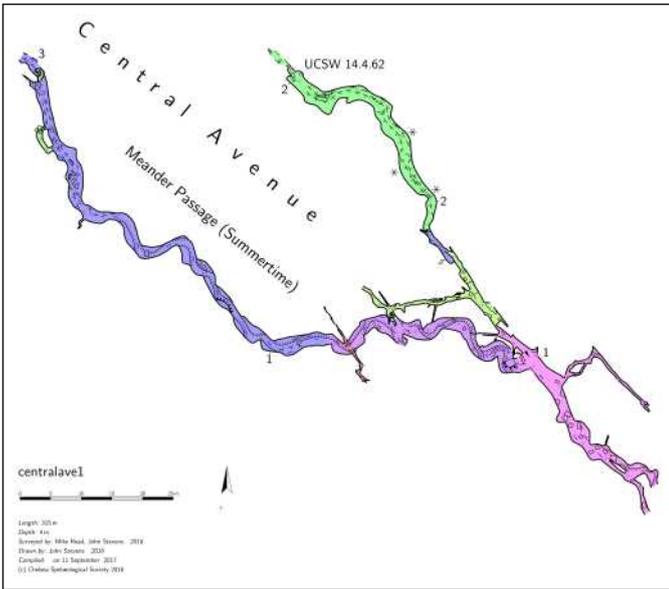
The fact that Western Avenue is dashed had always suggested it was below, but the new survey was to correct that perception.

*The published surveys are based from the '73 Ian Penney survey (fig. 1, below), which in turn is drawn mainly from the '73 survey of the eastern part (fig. 2, right) and the '65 survey of the western section (fig. 3, bottom right).*

Western Avenue was surveyed first on the 18th April 2015 by Mike Read and me. The passage has some fine crystals in places but is quite vulnerable to damage as it is quite narrow. The end section was quite different to the previous survey with the passage looping behind a large choke. This loops within just a couple of metres of the choke with no sign of it.

The end choke is upwards into an area of breakdown. 249m surveyed during a 9 hour trip.





***Eastern end of Central with rediscovered passage (compare to fig. 3)***

The survey of Central Avenue proper started on 23rd January 2016. Mike and I started at the prime point at the junction of Selenite Needle and Eastern Avenue and surveyed back to the start of the passage. As there are two routes in we had a loop quickly completed. We would survey side passages as we went, so that everything is picked up and we don't have to come back and find it only went a couple of metres more than we could see.

After doing the first right side passage we reached the junction with Meander Passage on the left. We left a good survey station and continued though a small section to find another branch on the left. Was this really Meander as the survey didn't show a second branch? This was where Adrian and the Voyseys must have got to.

We would continue straight on and pick this up on the way back. Ahead through a few boulders we dropped down into a wider, mud floored passage with very few signs of a previous visit. It seems we were the second party as we surveyed along this section. Again some interesting mud formations in a passage with an inverted T section. It ended with a boulder obstacle with some carbide writing UCSW 14.4.62. Beyond was a view into its continuation past a couple of boulders which would need removing but it may be passable beyond.

Back to the survey, we retraced our steps and did the right side passage. This ended in a dig but had two rifts on the left to connect with a parallel passage. Only one was negotiable but proved to link with Meander Passage. Another loop completed before picking up a high level rift that crossed the passage. This was too tight northwards

and the south branch doglegged before splitting into too tight rifts. Meander Passage continued as its name suggests, reaching a point with several ways around an obstacle. When these reunited we left a final mark for the day and exited.

An interesting day with some passage rediscovered after 54 years with prospects for extension, and a few metres of high level found during an 11½ hour trip.

The objective for the next trip was to pass the boulders in the rediscovered passage. To this aim on the 28th February 2016, we dragged in my 12V drill and capping gear, along with a lump hammer. We picked up a crow bar on route. After about 3 shots we had widened the rift and broken up the two largest boulders. The route on was still boulder strewn and these had to be pulled back and stacked. The boulders got less but the mud floor would require digging out to make further progress. Some 4m had been gained, a bit disappointing given the effort to get the gear there.

So to continue the survey, we went back to Meander Passage. We had just done the third leg of the day when I asked Mike if he had looked behind a large block on the right at the corner. This boulder seems to have moved as it looked like a person has squeezed over it, now impossible. We still had the crowbar and hammer, having left the drill and other gear back at the main junction. A few minutes work and this megalith crashed out and opened up the side passage. A squeeze soon



***The boulder blockage. The amount the top rock moved can be seen as it was directly above the middle boulder.***

followed and then it was blocked by a set of boulders. As Mike was in front I went back for the bar and hammer as he could see past it and even though they were large, they may just move. Much hammering and levering by Mike moved it slightly but we had a loose boulder at the base which would not come out. It always looked like it would only take a few more minutes, so going back for the drill and capping gear was not really considered. In hindsight that 30-40 minutes to get the stuff would have been the right solution.

We would give it till 6.30pm then head out, so with ten minutes to go, we swapped positions. Not easy in this narrow rift. I hammered away but to no avail. Time to go but first I would see if I could squeeze up the rift to see if I could ascertain what was beyond. I was up and could move one arm. On top of the block was a smaller split triangular boulder blocking the view. I managed to get the crowbar into the crack and lever. It moved. So did the huge block which I was squeezed up against. Was it making my space smaller, I hoped not, as it was pretty snug as it was. Another gentle leveller, it seemed to be going across me, maybe squeezing me a bit on the left but giving a bit more room to my right. Another couple of small movements and the top block was loose and could be pushed forward to drop off the main block. The end of the main block had a point to it and it should be passable if that was removed. A few good hits with a lump hammer and a large

flake fell away. Once over I was in a small sandy floored area where I could easily turn round and attack the block some more to make the exit easier. Ahead the passage continued around a bend in a crawling sandy floored passage.

Onwards with the survey, we might miss our callout time, but as it was a Sunday, we thought no one would be staying at Whitewalls, so we should avoid a callout. Anyway they might have fun finding us, but they did have our breadcrumb trail of left gear in various places!

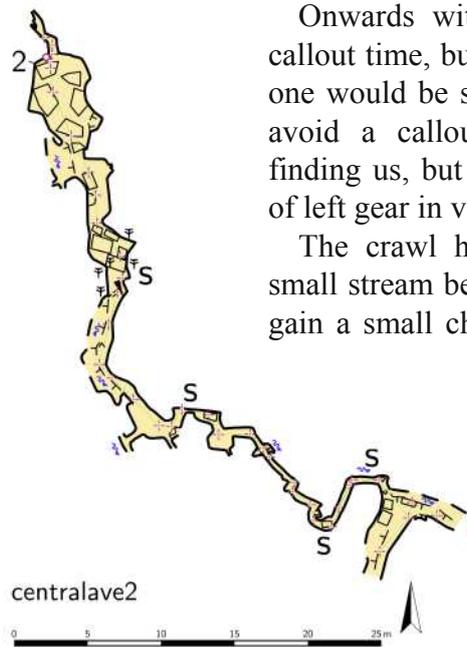
The crawl heightened to a narrow rift with a small stream before I had to dig a mud bank out to gain a small chamber. Ahead was a bouldery area with a too narrow rift but a widening could be seen low down. Mike soon had this open and we were off again. It regained the stream and was larger with an undercut on the left. We were soon standing with a sizable white flowstone formation on the left and small urchins on the ceiling nearby.

The next obstacle was a large block we had to squeeze over, the problem was the fine array of crystals, helictites and urchins on the roof. We had to guide each other through.

The passage now changed to be over boulder collapse in a much larger passage which reached a chamber. This was very shattered along a joint or fault. Mike grovelled into a crawl on its far side while I sketched.

Time was now really getting on, so we called it a day as the crawl would need work on it to progress.

We started headed out. The first problem was the squeeze back over the block with the helictites all around. The mud on the block glued you very effectively into position. Very careful placement of



Length: 68 m  
 Depth: 4 m  
 Surveyed by: Mike Read, John Stevens 2016  
 Drawn by: John Stevens 2016  
 Compiled: on 9 September 2017  
 (c) Chelsea Speleological Society 2016

*New side passage. 'S' marks a squeeze.*





the feet and arms were required to not damage the formations and pull yourself through. I found climbing back over the original blockage was awkward as I had tidied away the boulders that would have helped me get back over it. Mike speeded things up with a helping hand/foot/knee. We were now back at our boxes for some food before picking up the rest of the gear and heading out. 13 hours for 4m gain in a dig and 57m of new passage with still some potential. Unfortunately I had left my camera back at the passage start so we don't have any snaps from that day.

A return to Central Avenue on the 27th March 2016 would try and make it through the loose connection choke. But were there more unknown side passages to distract us?

We started back at the junction with the new find and it was not long before Mike spotted and was into a new side passage on our left. This went round a few doglegs and after 9.5m got too small but a rift was seen to continue for a further 3m. Back on the main route we passed a small aven which didn't go, before we got to a divide which was on the old survey. We must now be close to the choke. Right did lead quickly to a choke with a connection back to the left branch. This turned to the left and the roof and walls all became unstable.

We spent some time stacking boulders to support the roof and deepen the main route so you didn't need to touch the walls or roof. One more block would be need to be rolled back to open up a muddy lower rift route on the left (probably the safest way). But we went for a gentle squeeze against the more stable looking roof. Unfortunately from the other side the roof looks dire. We were now in a chamber with CSS scratched on the walls a few times but, not a place to hang about. The survey continued up the slope where you could

look up and see plenty of hanging death in the rift above.

Of note are the wall colours. One is a lovely pale grey and the other is beige. The grey limestone is nicely scalloped while the beige is more like a conglomerate mix in places. It has small angular chucks embedded in it. This is very typical of fault breccia and here the layer is about 2-3m wide and runs vertically along the passage until we leave it on its far side. This fault explains the very loose nature of this region and the sudden end of Western Avenue.

As we descended the slope we came across a digging rope emerging from under the mound of debris that must be 1-1.5m thick. The passage does a small dogleg and the beige wall turns to grey again and everything is quite stable again.

We then arrived in a complex area which was on two levels. A blind side passage on the left was completed on route to a balcony over the lower passage. As time was getting on we went back and descend to the lower route and finished at the next major junction just a few metres away. We had left a higher passage for next time but our first concern was how to get out as neither of us had been here before. Two options, north or westward? Westward was taken as it started off walking. It reached the base of a loose boulder slope which I ascended to a larger passage. This quickly came to a balcony overlooking a large passage some 10m below, but a



*The right side is the grey limestone, left is the beige fault breccia [web version of the newsletter will show this in colour].*

route down seemed possible, surely that was Sand Caverns but this connection was not on any survey I had seen. I called Mike to follow and the boulder slope up moved significantly on him, so great care is still needed in this area. The descent to Sand Caverns was easier than it looked and we were now in familiar territory, so a quick exit followed. Just 10 hours this time.

The final surveying trip to complete the loop took place on the 2nd December 2016 by Mike Read and me again. This time we entered from the Sand Caverns end via the route we took when we exited previously. Extra care was taken descending the loose boulder slope that had moved on Mike.

First was the higher level passage we had left at the end of the previous trip. This went less than 10m before ending in a boulder choke running in from above.

Next was to follow the passage north from our previous end into an area neither of us had been too. Almost immediately this split into two levels and we followed the lower one. This passed under a connecting hole in its roof and was floored with mud that gradually became quite sandy. On the right an arch was noted that could be dug. The passage then had a few too tight fissures as it turned to follow a fault. This was small in places but broke out into Sand Caverns at the start of a large choke. We continued the survey around the choke to link with a permanent station in Sand Caverns. This was by the scaffold pole climb back into Central Avenue. So this is what we did and created another couple of small loops for the survey. The climb up the pole is quite slippery and seemed a bit exposed. Side passages were surveyed as we proceeded. The first on the left, went via a couple of tight sections to a boulder choke with no obvious place to start as it was moving up into the gobbet layer.

The next was on the right and headed back to the Sand Caverns choke.

A cross rift was passed before getting to a sandy

floored hole. This lines up with the arched dig in the lower passage, so no prospects there. Another too tight cross rift and then we linked back to the lower passage.

We now only had the passage with the loose boulder slope to do. This was quickly done and found to also be on the fault. At the south end a tight aven may be pushable for a small person.

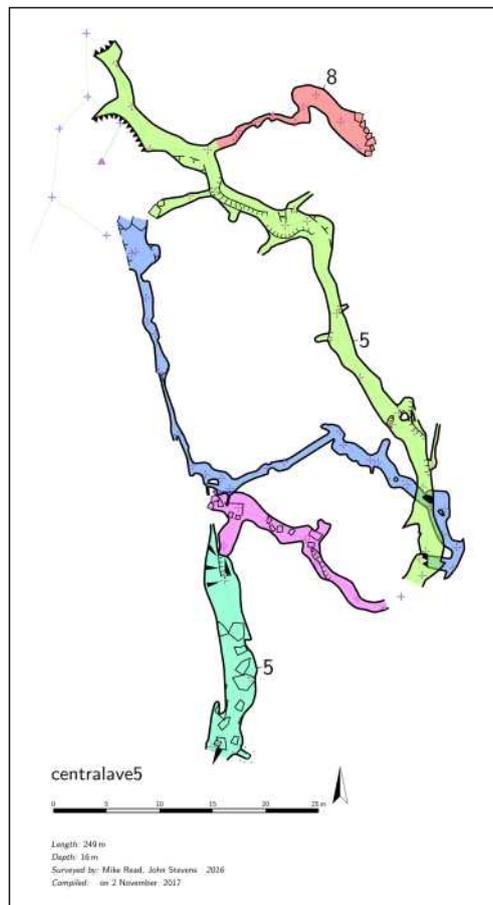
Finally we needed to link this passage back to a known station, which was achieved by surveying up Sand Caverns to a station we had created earlier that day. But this was not to be the final bit of surveying for the day. At one point, Sand Caverns has several different routes, but we had only mapped one. The higher route still needed doing, and as this had not appeared on any survey to date, it may give some more leads.

Starting at a known station at the southern end of the oxbow, we ascended up a large ramp to find the right wall was along a fault. This was followed to a choke which you can carefully climb to emerge in a circular

collapse dome. Below this the route drops through a couple of boulder chambers to reach the sandy floor of the Caverns again.

I returned to Central Avenue on 11th November 2017 to take the photographs for this article and check out the end of the new passage. Mike was correct, the end would need quite a bit of work to progress, probably capping to get into a body sized keyhole that could be seen beyond. On the day, a stream was running well along the passage and the end might just be able to be bypassed by digging into the stream undercut several metres back. This would be quite wet and very muddy to follow and not something I was going to start doing on a wet day solo. The Central Avenue choke still needs a lot of care in two locations and is probably best avoided.

This was the second Summertime Circle to be completed. As Central Avenue links at four places to Sand Caverns, it has created several closed loops for the survey. The shortest large loop is 1032m



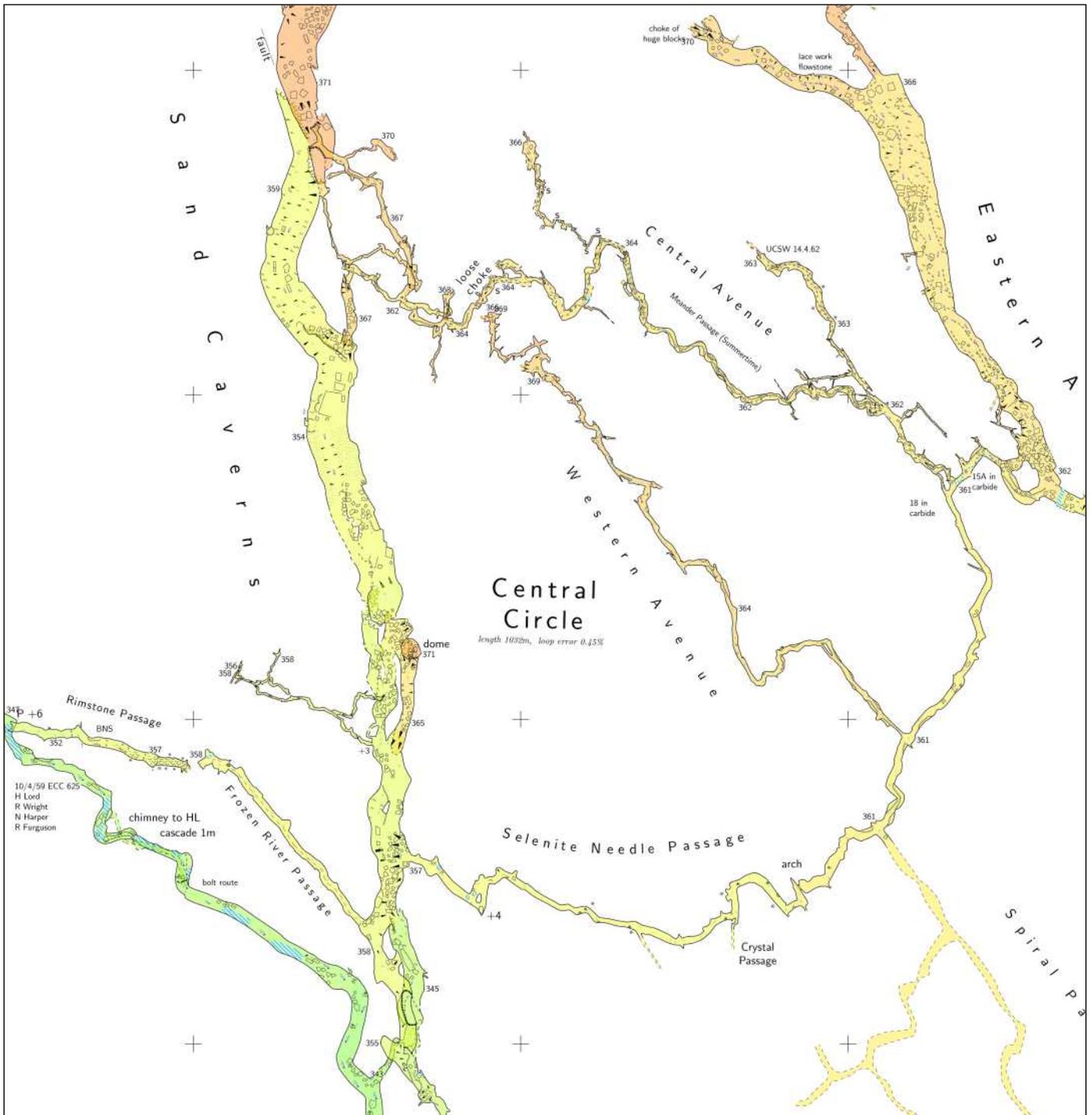
***The western end of Central Avenue with its links to Sand Caverns (compare to fig. 2)***

194 legs, with short loops of 210m and 145m. These with relative % errors of 0.44, 0.30 and 0.34. Not an ideal way to express the loop error but easy to understand, the smaller the better. In total some 8 loops were created, the shortest was only 22m long.

As can be seen from the full survey, Western Avenue stops just short of Central Avenue and is higher than it. While going through the loose section of choke in Central, you can see up several metres into areas of jammed boulders. These must be close to Western Avenue but digging through seems very hazardous.

If attempting the circle, I would recommend going anti-clockwise and gardening a bit more of the choke before going through and not dragging anything behind you.

The next loop to complete is the Outer Circle but I need one more trip to complete the Coal Cellar Section of the loop. This will contain the first survey of Easter Passage, just a few metres of new passage and some realignment of some old sections.



*The new survey of the area of Central Avenue with just Spiral Passage and its associated passages to do.*



## Daren Camp Update

The HRC camp on 10th-12th November went very well with a good range of digging activities, tourist trips, injuries and excellent scoff and cocktails. The digging team this weekend consisted of Charles Bailey, Adrian Fawcett, Dave King, Richard Dearden, Matt Chinner and myself. With a bonus cameo appearance by Gary Jones who boldly dived in with a spanking new cooking pan.

As with the camp before we opted to dig in Half Mile Passage, tackling both Kilburn Highroad and Flyby at the same time as they are only a short distance apart and we had the numbers to do so. Both sites are progressing well. Kilburn continues to yield easy digging along a mostly sand filled tube, and Flyby is now without many of the rocks and boulders that previously resided there. Unfortunately our digging here was cut short by Dave and his gory finger after an incident involving a large rock, a solid wall, and an unfortunately placed digit. The result was a fracture and lot of blood. Luckily Charles was on hand with some top-notch first aiding and Dave was soon patched up. We then had lunch, wrapped up the digs and headed off down Half Mile Passage so that Dave could be escorted back to camp avoiding the ladders. Dave, Charles and Richard then dropped down into the

Time Machine while Adrian, Matt and I went off to Beyond Time and had a poke at a dig site that we'd earmarked earlier in the year. We cleared an amount of spoil from the front and just pushed it aside to ascertain whether it was worth further efforts. The digging was easy and a draught definitely present, so next time we'll bring a skip to start digging in earnest.

Then we headed back via a mystery route that we knew existed but had never found before, the link between Beyond Time and Crystal Oxbow. We managed to find it just where we expected it to be, and then wove our way through some lovely but narrow winding passages to emerge beyond the pretty flowstone river and delicate needles of Crystal Oxbow. Heading back down to Bonsai we met Richard taking photos, then we then took Matt to see the wonders of the Western Flyover before heading back to camp for more fine food, drink, and merriment.

Generally a good weekend was had by all. Dave even managed to get out of the cave, shower at Whitewalls and drive back to Mendip with his finger dressing still intact. A good testament to both Dave's bravery and Charles' binding skills.

**Next camp 16-18 Feb 2018**

# Return to Totem Aven

by Mike Green

Mike Green, Sion Way. 12 Aug 2017

This was a follow up trip to one we did a year or two before where we'd been up into the high level passages above Totem Aven. In particular one area was full of flies, and there was a small aven which I had bolted up some 20 years previously but could not remember how it ended.

We initially met up with Richard Dewsnap to pick up the bolts, hangers and drill bits we would need and then headed off to the cave in my car. This was made somewhat harder by the total closure of the Heads of the Valley road between Crickhowell and Brynmawr. Luckily Sion knew the back roads (as he lives in the area) allowing us to skirt across the A465 and head over the other side up Llanelly Hill. We parked at the small car park just up from the abandoned railway arches as this is better overlooked by the road and the car less likely to get broken into, though I covered everything in the boot with grubby bags and dirty tackle bags to make certain.

Whilst changing, we had a short conversation with a dog-walker who mentioned a cave nearby he had always wanted to enter. He must have thought us mad as we described the tight entrance rift and streamway below since we realised later he was referring to some small blind entrance along the cycle track.

We were laden down with two large tackle sacks containing both our SRT kits, 30m rope for the main pitch, 10m rope for the attic climb, drill and batteries plus bolting kit. The entrance in the corner of the quarry was the same as ever, having been dug out in the last year or so after a cliff collapse but no visible signs of damage to the structure holding up the mass of loose debris.

Going down the initial tight rift wasn't too bad due to gravity assist but we knew this would be an issue with our large bags on the way out. This is

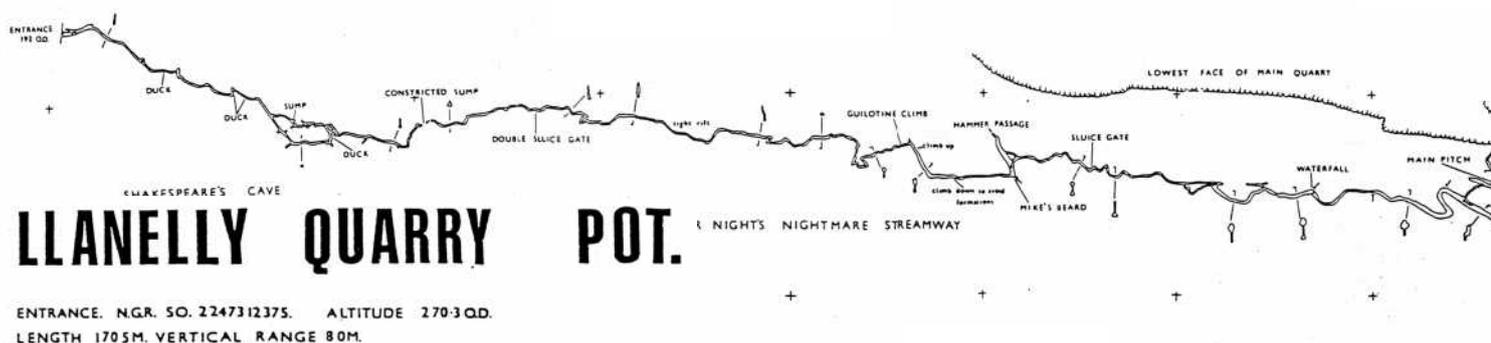
followed by a short section of pretty but muddy stream, then Sion rigged up the main pitch using the in-situ hangers and a nice free Y-hang. We were both soon at

the bottom, one rope lighter, and repacked the bags fairly again.

I was relieved to see that the scaffold shaft down the back wall of the main rift had not changed, and despite the masses of rust none on the bars seemed to be rotten through ... yet. Given the weight they hold back and the stream that runs down there in flood it can only be a matter of time before it collapses. Another project that needs undertaking, though maybe digging at the old Parker dig further along the rift might be a more stable way in.

After dropping out of the body sized tube into the main stream, we headed on upstream with our bags getting stuck on every rock flake (of which there are many) until we got to the totem formation and the draughting aven opposite it. We left the bags and I climbed up the chimney with the spare rope dangling behind thinking back to the first time I (and anyone) had done this on my own. Not many holds but careful wedging and I reached the first ledge with just enough rope to reach the bottom to haul up the bags. Sion then joined me and I tackled the next climb up through the tight squeeze and again hauled the bags up. Sion being slightly larger I lifelined through the committing squeeze and we then carried on up the loose slope to the bottom of the next obstacle, another 15 ft climb with a knotted rope. This used to be rigged for SRT but someone had now rigged it with footloops. We climbed up using the rock and the rope as a handline as that's all it really needs.

We were now on the landing and could look up the final muddy sloping climb into the Attic. This had the original nylon rope I had left years ago to allow a pull up as well as another knotted rope someone else had added. Sion decided he would tackle this by using jammers to scale the rope and then lifelined me up, myself using the knotted rope. The top is extremely slippy with no holds, and its a



bit of a drop. This part of the cave is now in a totally different limestone bed with marbled gobbets.

We re-packed the rope and carried on through the dug out crawls to reach the end choke. A quick look at this confirmed our conclusion from the last visit that it looked both a long shot as well as long term.

We instead dropped down into the hole on the right hand wall under a gravity defying boulder and crammed ourselves into the sandy crawl. This is where we really had bag issues; Sion ahead dragging the larger drill bag got it stuck and I came in to assist carrying mine but luckily feet first. I foot massaged his bag free only to have him declare that he was breathing heavily and that it must be due to bad air. I exited the crawl expecting him to quickly follow but he eventually declared it was just in the dip and fine where we needed to go. Due to this however and the issues getting the bag through the next crux section in the crawl I left my bag after removing the short rope which I tied onto myself to drag behind and the bolting bag which I pushed in front this time head-first. We then manhandled the bag with the drill through the tight and dog-legged section which is hard enough getting your body through let alone a large bag. I could only think that we didn't have a drill in the days we dug this so maybe didn't take bags with us, just digging kit, or perhaps we are getting soft.

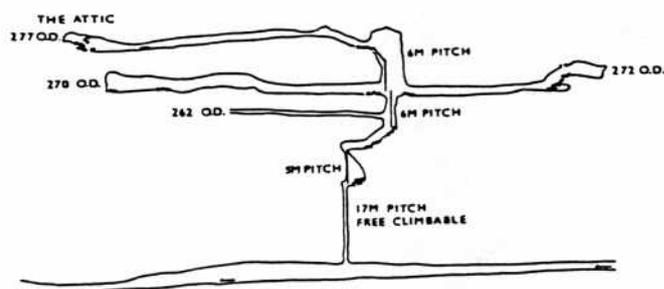
Once through this section we carried on into the walking but gloopy muddy passage beyond. It ends in a short crawl up into a calcited choke. There are flies everywhere, dead and alive in this whole section. A concerted effort at the calcite choke, which does have small gaps above, would most likely reveal more, however it does require somewhat more than just digging implements as it is heavily calcited.

We then back-tracked and negotiated the short squeeze and climb up in the right hand wall and reached the small aven with the climb we intended to re-scale. You can look up and see a flat roof above and a possible passage leading off. It looks very promising. Also at the base of the

aven there is a very tight slot leading off under the wall in the same direction as the possible high level passage.

Sion got to work using

#### TOTEM AVEN SERIES



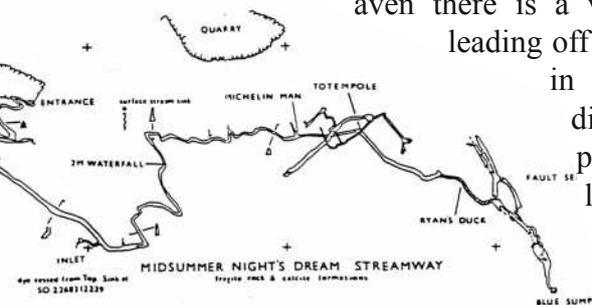
his drill to place anchors up first the right and then left hand walls. This was made somewhat more difficult by the occasional covering of calcite which flaked off. Interestingly it took him 5 bolts to reach the top as opposed to my original 4 hand driven spits. I still think that for a quick recce such as this spits are best as they require much less kit to carry and also leave evidence behind.

Unfortunately the top revealed a very tight rift of no interest and explains why I totally de-rigged it; shame I couldn't remember really. However by this time it was getting late and Sion needed to be back for a wedding... not his apparently. We packed up and headed out, the bag being its usual pig but forewarned is forearmed so we were better prepared to 'gently' push, pull and manoeuvre it through the tight bit.

We left the short rope rigged from the Attic pitch as SRT and abseiled down, removing the old nylon rope I'd put in years ago as it was not now required and gets in the way, and using it to lower bags as required on the way down from the landing to the streamway far below.

On the way out I picked up some old scaffold clips from the main rift before we ascended the main pitch, Sion pulling up the bags and me de-rigging. On the way up the entrance rift we realised we needed to haul out the extremely large unwieldy and heavy tackle bags and would need the rope to haul. As I unpacked disaster struck and half my SRT kit fell down the impenetrable rift into a space below.

Luckily it was a simple matter of dropping back out of the rift and climbing underneath to retrieve it. We then used the rope to haul up the bags and push and pull them through the tight bits. We were soon back on the surface and on checking the time had made Sion's Wedding deadline. The plan next is to try and determine where the calcite choke is on the surface to see whether a top entrance is a feasible project as this would make an excellent and classic SRT through trip.



# Old Daren Sunday School Progress

by *Adrian Fawcett*

If you have visited Llangattock Hillside recently, you may have noticed some clearance work outside the Sunday School – the steps have been excavated and several re-set, a trench has been dug out alongside the back wall, and vegetation cleared. From inside, various junk has been disposed of.

Apart from that, little tangible progress is evident. However, options are being discussed and plans starting to be drawn up. We want the Sunday School to be a multi-functional space – available for meetings and social events, for example – though more often it will be useful as overflow or family accommodation. The challenge is, how to achieve all this within such a limited footprint?

There had been some thought given to using the iron-clad outhouse for toilet and shower, but anything that would affect the external appearance and aesthetics of the building would require approval from the National Park, and it is possibly doubtful we would be successful in this. So, it is more likely we will keep this as a shed. To get the space inside, Mike Read is proposing a mezzanine level at one end, or maybe both, to serve as sleeping lofts. This would entail raising the existing ceiling. Kitchen area and shower would be underneath the mezzanine at the end nearest the door.

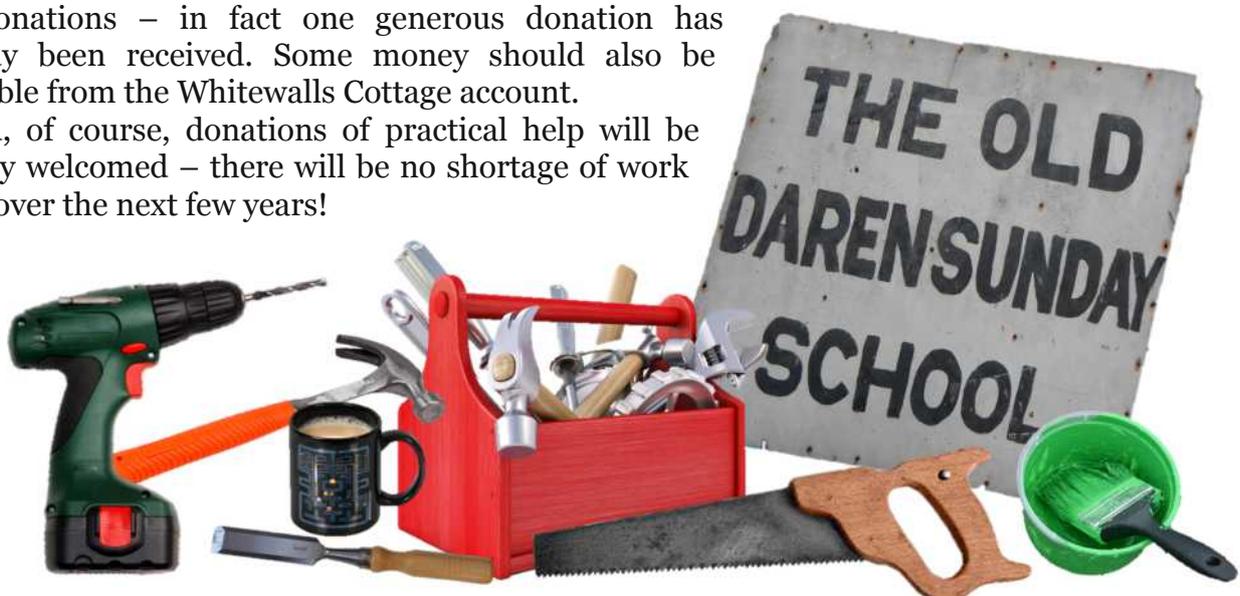
Mike is aiming to get a draft proposal together by the time of the AGM at the end of January for members to have a chance to scrutinise it, the objective being to submit a plan for building regs approval early next year. This is completely different from a planning application, and concerns only technical compliance. This will not tie us down to the finer details of the renovation, but will cover the major structural alterations and the proposed sewage pumping system. To bring it up to current standards, we also expect to have to install a lot of insulation.

Before the internal works get under way, we also need to attend to the external fabric of the building. While the Sunday School is essentially water-tight, Mike reckons the roof is perhaps not in as good a condition as we had previously believed. So, we will probably start by renovating that.

One job which can be started right away is the renewal of the shutters, which are somewhat decayed and, having previously refurbished the Whitewalls shutters, I have volunteered for that task. Because there is just one shutter per window, each is quite heavy and difficult to slide – so we are looking at the possibility of fitting rollers in addition to the tubular sleeves.

So, what is all this going to cost and how will we pay for it, I hear you ask. We have yet to prepare a rough budget for the works, and once we have that it is expected there will be an appeal for donations – in fact one generous donation has already been received. Some money should also be available from the Whitewalls Cottage account.

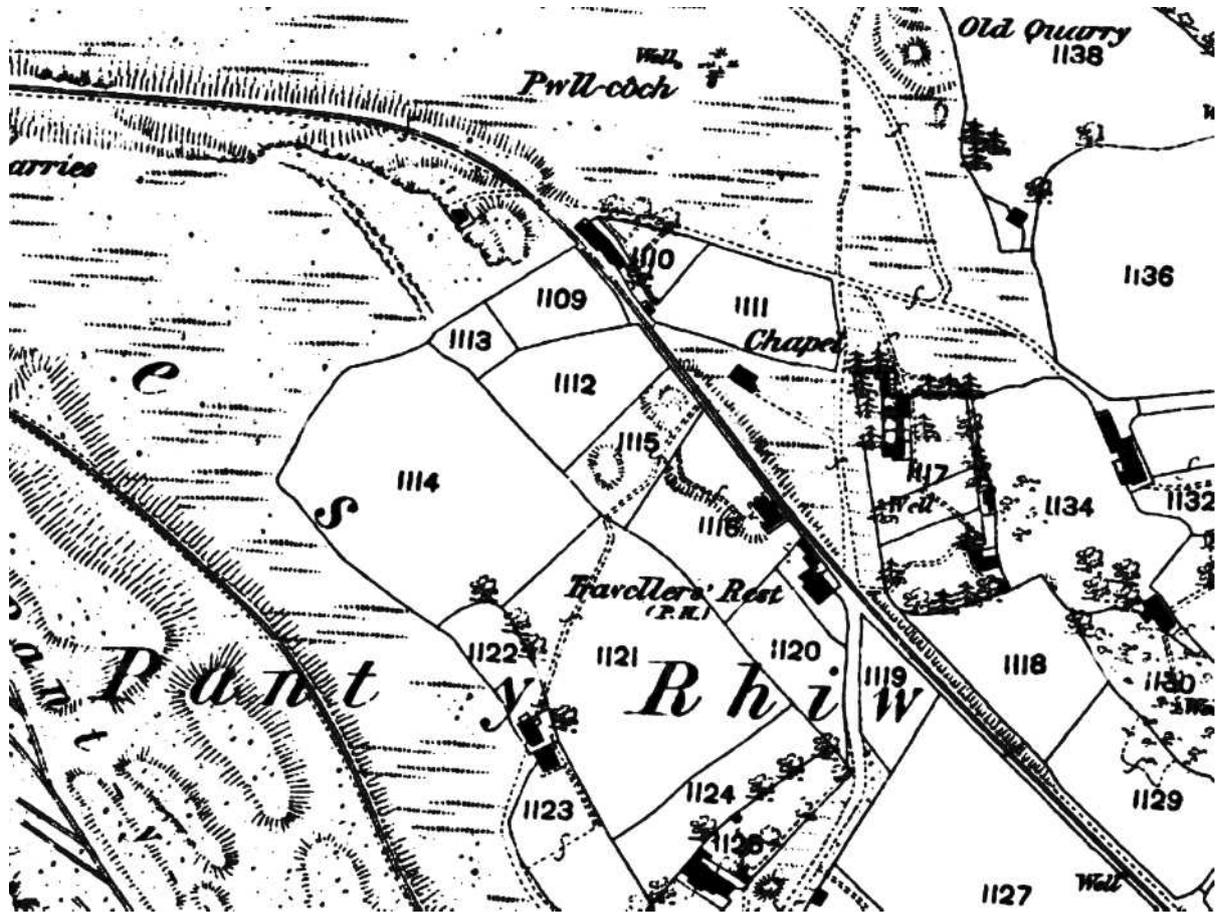
And, of course, donations of practical help will be equally welcomed – there will be no shortage of work to do over the next few years!



# Some Daren Sunday School History

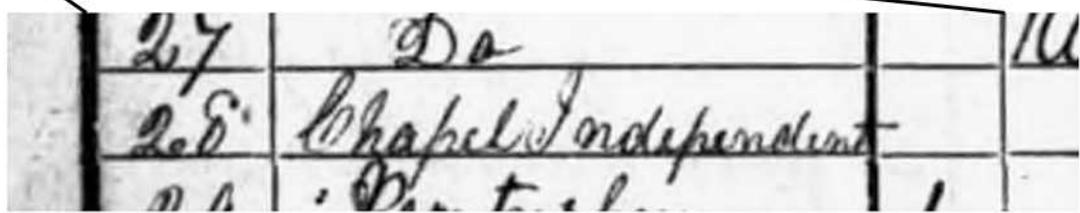
by Joe Duxbury

The purchase by CSS of the Old Daren Sunday School led me to look into its history. When was it built? Who used it?



It is shown on the 1889 OS map above as a chapel, and then it first appears in the 10-yearly censuses in 1891, listed as an 'Independent' chapel (see below). It does not say which particular nonconformist church it belonged to. In 'American Interior', by Gruff Rhys, he says 'The rebel denominations [i.e. the nonconformists] would meet at informal locations – ... even in caves – but eventually their familiar box-like stone chapels mushroomed across Wales'. Exactly the description of the Daren Sunday School.

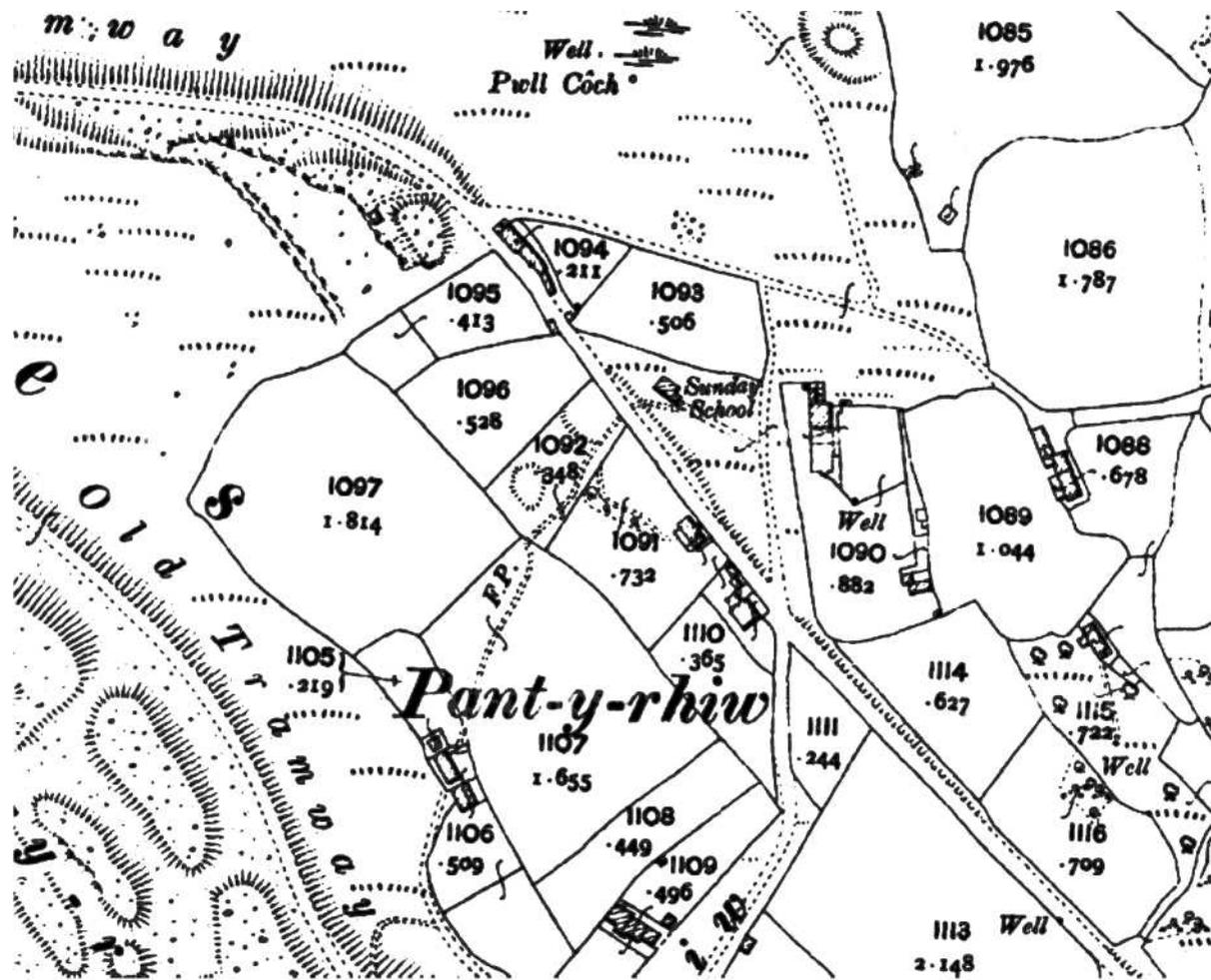
Administrative County of <i>Deicon</i>																			
The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the																			
Civil Parish		Municipal-Borough			Municipal Ward			Urban Sanitary District			Town or Village or Hamlet			Rural Sanitary District		Parliamentary Borough or Division		Ecclesiastical Parish or District	
<i>Llangattock</i>											<i>Wickhowell</i>			<i>Deicon</i>		<i>Llangattock</i>			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17			
No. of ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES	Number of rooms	Number of windows	Number of panes	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON- DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	(1) Deaf and Dumb	(2) Blind	(3) Lame, Imbecile or Idiot	Language Spoken					
<i>27</i>	<i>Do</i>	<i>11</i>			<i>0 0 11</i>			<i>1</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Do</i>									
<i>28</i>	<i>Chapel Independent</i>																		



In the 1901 census it is listed as 'Darren Sunday School', presumably because there were no longer enough worshippers to maintain it as a chapel.

Administrative County of Brecknockshire		The undermentioned Houses are situate within the boundaries of the										84 Page 1					
Civil Parish of Llangattock Lower		Ecclesiastical Parish of Llangattock with Stowey		County Borough, Municipal Borough, or Urban District		Ward of Municipal Borough or of Urban District		Rural District of Crickhowell		Parliamentary Borough or Division of County of Brecknock		Town or Village or Hamlet of Llangattock Lower					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
No. of Houses	ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Uninhabited		Name and Surname of each Person		RELATION to Head of Family		Age last Birthday of	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	Working at Home	WHERE BORN	1. Dead and Dumb 2. Blind 3. Lame, etc. 4. Idiots, Paupers, &c.		19. LANGUAGE spoken at Home		
1	Darren Sunday School Hillside, Llangattock Lower				Emily Williams	Head	M	30	Coal Miner - Haver	Worker		Brecknock: Beautiful					Wales

Its function as a Sunday school is substantiated on the 1904 OS map. It continues to be labelled as such on the OS maps up to 1964, but in 1969 it has no identification. The 1895 Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire and S Wales lists, under 'Places of Worship' for Crickhowell and Llangattock (p. 295), a 'Mission church' at 'Hillside' (see extract right). This could well be the Daren chapel.



In conclusion, the Old Daren Sunday School was probably built between 1881 and 1889, and served first as a nonconformist chapel. The denomination of its congregation has yet to be found out.

Places of Worship, with times of services.

St. Edmund's Church, Crickhowell, Rev. Henry Plantagenet Somerset M.A. rector; 11 a.m. & 6 p.m.; wed. & fri. 11 a.m.; holy communion at 11 a.m. first & third sundays, 8 a.m. other sundays  
 St. Cattwg's, Llangattock, Rev. Thomas James Bowen B.D. rector; Rev. W. Lloyd Harris M.A. & Rev. James Jones L.D. curates; 11 a.m. & 6 p.m.; wed. 7.30 p.m.; daily at 8.40 a.m  
 Mission churches at Ffwddog & Hillside, served from Llangattock; services: sundays 11 a.m. & 6 p.m.; tues. & thurs. evening, 7.30 p.m  
 Baptist (Bethabara), Bridge street; 10.30 a.m. & 6 p.m  
 Calvinistic Methodist, Castle road; 10 a.m. & 6 p.m.: mon. & wed. 7 p.m  
 Congregational (Bethesda), Llangattock; 10 a.m. & 6 p.m.; mon. & fri. 7 p.m



Above - Extract from Kelly's 1895 Directory  
 Right - Tich Morris outside the ODSS



Photos and story sent by Simon Ashby:

A few years ago my Father-in-Law (Jim Catt) visited Old Darren Sunday School as part of trips from Bognor Regis Grammar School led by Brian Price in the late 50's / early 60's.

We were in Bognor over the weekend and Jim gave me some photos from one of these visits.

He thinks the trips were in 1959/1960 and recalls it being called "The Adventurer's Club".

Above: Brian Headly (on R of 2 boys in front of ODSS)

Below: Mikey Russell (single boy in front of ODSS)

Ian Cordez and Lenny Simpson were also on the trips

They used to drive up via Newbury (I'd assume to get on the A4 as the M4 wasn't built then) and stop at a bakers there for freshly baked lardy cake. This seems to be one of his strongest memories!!! Not surprising I guess since he grew up in the post WWII rationing period. Quite like a bit of lardy cake myself; I think it's a west country thing :-)



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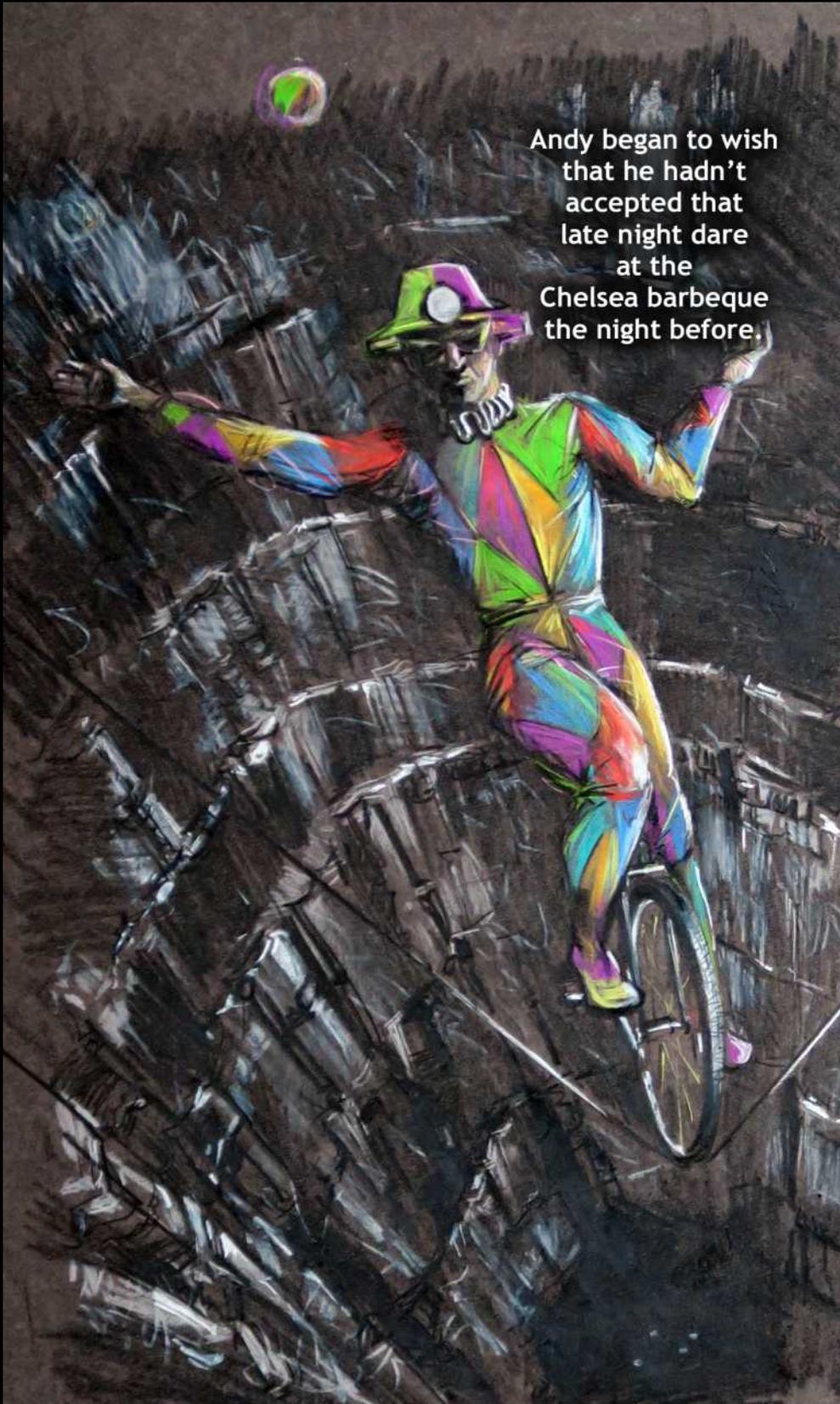
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Above: Ogof Gofan - July; Top-Bottom: Bellan Mine - February; Ogof Gofan - July; Scotland - April.



Andy began to wish  
that he hadn't  
accepted that  
late night dare  
at the  
Chelsea barbeque  
the night before.

*Artwork by Gonzo*

