

CSS
Newsletter

Volume 60
Nos. 10/11/12
Oct/Nov/Dec 2018

CSS in Mallorca
Caving in the Dales
Aggy Rescue Practice

CHELSEA SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY



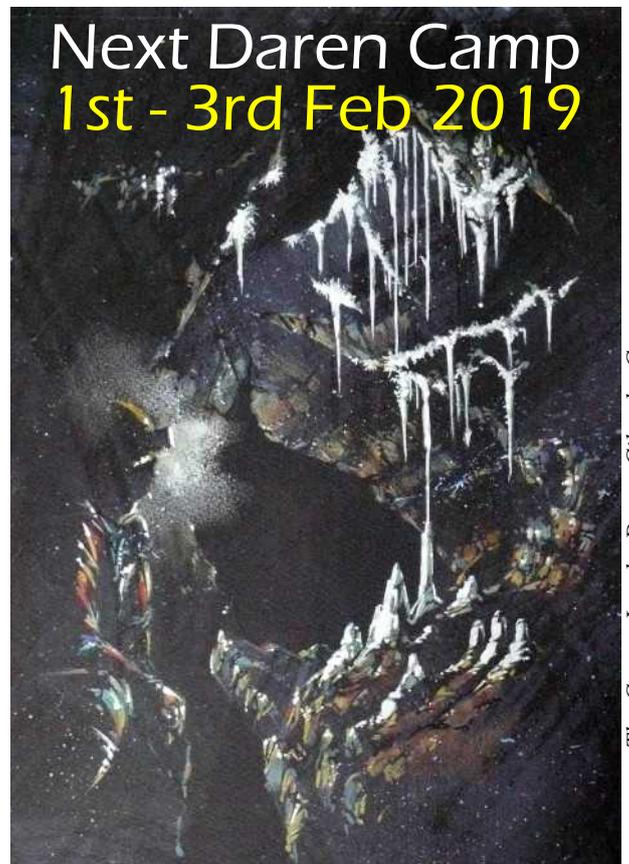
Contents

Watery Fouls - Caving in the Dales	76-78
Recharge Passage Dig	79
Capes and Caving	80
Draenen Round Trip	81
Cave Rescue Practice	82-83
Mallorca 2018	84-90
Mina de Son Creus	91-92
Agen Allwedd - Spectacles or Bra	93
Sunday School Progress	94
ODSS Working Events	95
Clydach Gorge Caves Access	95
Ogof Dwy Sir	96
CSS Meets List 2019	97
Kavers Kumfy Karpets	97
Index to Volume 60	98-99

Above: Cova Tancada des Cap de Menorca, Mallorca, Oct 2018. Photo by Matt Voysey.

ISSN 0045-6381

Next Daren Camp
1st - 3rd Feb 2019



The Crown Jewels, Daren Cilau by Gonzo

Front Cover: El Forat 502, Mallorca, Oct 2018. Photo by Matt Voysey.

**Contact Adrian (adrianfawcett@outlook.com)
or Mandy (mandola76@gmail.com)**

Editorial Once again big thanks to everyone who sent stories and photos for this edition, please keep it coming! This issue includes some great colour photos, so please take a look at the full colour electronic download version of the newsletter available through the links posted on the CSS ProBoards web forum.

Please submit all material for publication to cssmattv@gmail.com

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. 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 and the club forum. Also, if you would prefer to go 'paperless' and receive electronic copies of the newsletter in future let me know.

*Editor: Matt Voysey
Assistant Editor: Mandy Voysey*

CSS Annual Dinner Weekend

25th-27th January 2019

The upcoming CSS Annual Dinner will be held at The Bear in Crickhowell on Saturday 26th January, where I'm sure we can expect another top class dining experience. Club member and renowned adventurer Tom Foord will also be giving us a rousing talk about the new discoveries made in the Dachstein earlier this year.



If you'd like to come along to the Annual Dinner, please send Helen your menu choices before Monday 14th January. Taxis will be arranged as usual for those requiring transport to and from Whitewalls.

In order to work up an appetite, we will of course have to do some caving first. As always the Annual Aggy Bat Count will be taking place on Saturday, plus there'll be a trip to Llanelly Quarry Pot and its fine streamway. The plan is to do the pitch on rope rather than ladders, so don't forget to bring your SRT kit. If you'd like to come along for either trip, meet up at Whitewalls at 10am.

The CSS Annual General Meeting will be taking place in Tretower Village Hall on Sunday 27th January. There will be a short committee meeting at 10:30, followed by the AGM at 11am. Tea and biscuits will be provided.



Tom will be speaking about the connection of Schmelzwasserhöhle (What U Got Pot) and Hirlatzhöhle, in Dachstein, Austria. This makes the system the 9th deepest and 19th longest in the world, and one of the hardest through trips there is. The system drains meltwater from the glacier above it, so conditions within the cave are harsh. Achieving this breakthrough has taken decades of hard work by hard cavers, and has given many mortals a damn good thrashing.

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 31st at £4.25 per quarter.

Full membership information and an application form can be downloaded from the CSS website

chelseaspelaeo.org

Please send all subscriptions to:

Gary Jones, 29 Canney Close, Chiseldon, Swindon, SN4 0PG.

REMINDER: SUBS ARE NOW DUE

WATERY FOULS

Four very different trips in the Dales

by Andy Heath

Yorkshire, October 2018

Lost John's Cave

Matt and Mandy Voysey, Andy Heath

I'd been down this fine cave on two previous occasions over the years, but for various reasons I'd failed to reach the Leck Fell Master Cave each time. Third time lucky?

A small stream was flowing. Since the forecast was only for light drizzle, clearing up later, we were happy to proceed. After a false start (we stuck to the stream for too long and started taking the Monastery route, i.e. the wet way) we soon realised our error. Backtracking a few metres saw us regaining the New Roof Traverse. Several hundred metres of pleasant caving took us to the head of the short Hammer Pitch then soon to Mud Pitch and the very fine Centipede Pitch. Candle and Shistol pitches soon followed. Having not done much rigging for a few years, these provided a good opportunity to blow the cobwebs away before greater things followed.

At a sharp left hand bend the first bolt was located for the start of Battleaxe Traverse. The CNCC description states "this famous, and in places, holdless traverse has a large drop below and will test the nerve of the rigger." Personally, I didn't find it too much of a problem, in only one or two places did I feel particularly exposed. Resisting the temptation to drop the pitch (Valhalla) at the earliest opportunity, I persisted to the very end of Battleaxe to ensure a dry hang, which proved to be a most satisfactory decision. A single drop of 40m took us to the bottom of this admirable pitch.

Just beyond the bottom of the pitch, the water flows away down a steeply descending cascade. This section of the cave proved to be my downfall on my last trip when I failed to attach Mandy's brand new tackle bag to my harness and managed to drop it down the torrent. Being unable to haul it back up and, on that occasion, there being too much water to safely retrieve it, I had no option but to cut it free and leave it for some other caver to benefit from. It was a rubbish bag, anyway.

This time I made no such similar mistake. Being firmly attached to the bag I commenced rigging the short rising traverse to the head of the short final pitch. Below, a short bit of easy streamway took us to Groundsheet Junction and our goal, the Leck Fell Master Cave. The fine, though clearly flood-prone streamway was followed several hundred metres upstream to emerge in the vast Lyle Cavern. This chamber is of importance as from here several exchange trips are possible with other entrances on Leck Fell, including Notts II.

Regaining our steps and passing Groundsheet Junction, we followed the splendid passage downstream to the powerful inlet entering from Rumbling Hole. The description talks about "very deep canals and swims" beyond this point, and not wanting to get unnecessarily drenched we turned back to begin our ascent.

On arrival at the bottom of Valhalla an element of uneasiness entered my mind: "I'm sure the pitch wasn't that wet half an hour ago." With M&M still faffing somewhere behind, up I went. Sitting on my airy perch partway along Battleaxe waiting for Matt to arrive with my exit cargo gave me time to enjoy this fine location. Matt arrived 15 minutes later, so I continued my journey. On arrival at the base of Shistol Pitch another niggling concern raised its head: "I'm sure there wasn't a stream issuing from there an hour ago."

On I went, up the fine, dry Centipede pitch and Mud and Hammer Pitches. With M&M still derigging far below, I had plenty of time to convince myself that the booming sound which now assaulted my eardrums was most definitely NOT present an hour and a half ago. Resisting the temptation to leave my chums to their fate and leg it, I sat there to await our happy reunion. On arrival, Mandy supported my views that the cave most certainly seemed wetter than when we first entered. On reaching the end of New Roof Traverse we were greeted with the sight of the fast flowing, enlarged, peaty brown stream. It was a good job we hadn't chosen to follow the active Monastery Route into the cave.

As it happened my imagination proved to be far too active for its own good, since although the stream had risen, no problems were encountered in the final few hundred metres. On emerging into the warm darkness, it was still drizzling. A splendid trip.

FOUL Pot

Matt, Mandy and Andy

After yesterday's dampness, and given another drizzly day was likely, we opted for this little Fountains





Fell gem described on the CNCC website as “an excellent adventure with some splendid pitches and a few formations which can be enjoyed even in moderately wet (but not serious flood) conditions.”

No real issues finding the cave, the only real issue being the author getting bitten by the dog at Rainscar House.

A careful descent of the excavated 4m entrance shaft took the intrepid three to a miserable wet wriggle followed by a short wet crawl. Excellent adventure? Things had better change soon! Fortunately things do change for the better.

A short (4m) pitch drops into Octopus Hall with some nice orange flowstone. A bit more grovelling takes the explorer to the fine, spacious second pitch (25m). Below the pitch further progress is made by means of a narrow rift, not unlike a slightly wider version of Daren Cilau’s ‘Vice’. Skinny-boy Voysey opted to keep his SRT kit on for this obstacle, the rest of the team wisely removing said encumbrances. The rift leads on to Keel Hall, with some rather fine rock flakes. An admirable bit of vadose passage with some reasonable formations leads to a traverse where the floor starts to drop away, eventually leading to the deepest pitch in the cave, Man O’War (35m).

Matt soon had the top section of the pitch rigged and disappeared into the void. However, after some

considerable time he reappeared, having been unable to locate a rebelay part way down. Perhaps it would have been better if he’d had the topo with him from the start, rather than the author who wasn’t doing the rigging! Once armed with said topo, Matt disappeared again, this time meeting with success in finding the rebelay exactly where he didn’t expect to find it (i.e. taking the explorer well and truly into the fall of the water!) A few minutes later and ‘rope free’, the rest of the team descended.

Dampness aside, Man O’War is a splendid pitch. Almost immediately after Man O’War, the short Pool Pitch (4m) is descended, soon followed by a short upward traverse leading to the 5th pitch (25m) which descends into an impressive chamber full of large boulders. Below, a muddy scramble leads down to a grotty little streamway which is followed a short distance to the final sump.

With nowhere else to go we about turned and headed on up. I found the only real low point of the return to be the ascent of Man O’War, where I began to feel sorry for myself in my own little pool of dim misery in the midst of the all encompassing maelstrom. The final crawl is also pretty unwelcome, though being so close to the entrance and knowing beer and medals would follow soon I could still raise a smile.

Aside from the unconventional choice of rebelay on the big pitch, FOUL Pot is a well rigged cave offering a fine trip well worth doing when other places might be a bit too wet.



White Scar Cave

Matt, Mandy, Andy, Lisa Boore (CSS). Peter Dennis, Ieuan Dennis, Jessie O'Shaughnessy and Chris Gallagher (GSG).

Those in the party who perhaps have a bit of a reputation for none too early starts may have found this trip a bit of a challenge as the owners of this show cave stipulate cavers need to be in by 10:30.



Lisa Boore in White Scar streamway

At 10:29 and fifty seconds we all handed over our £2.50s and entered ahead of the tourists. After a speedy trip through the show section, we ascended the stairs up through a section of blasted tunnel to admire the impressively large Battlefield Chamber.

Back down to the end of the show cave, we climbed over the barrier and before you could say “brass monkey” we introduced ourselves to the chilly waters of Long Stop Lake. The water was to be our close companion for the next three or four hours. Those in the party who’d chosen fleece rather than neoprene were heard on occasion to question their choice of attire!

The odd side passage or oxbow were visited on the way up the streamway, but for the majority of the trip, the streamway was the only way to go. Thankfully for a lot of the way it is possible to be on wide ledges out of the water, though in other places the water cannot be avoided. After about 2km of splendid streamway, the nature of the cave changes from being vadose to

phreatic in nature. A further couple of hundred metres into the phreatic section, the roof dips down to a few inches above the water. Aware that not much further on the first sump is encountered, we opted to about turn at the duck.

There is in fact a second major branch to the cave (Sleepwalker Series), but a speedy, spread-out return trip meant we overshot it and by the time we’d regrouped there was little appetite to retrace our steps; that could wait for another occasion.

A high speed exit through Long Stop Lake, this time disregarding trying to keep out of the deeper bits led to complete submersion for at least one of our group. It was not without relief that the show cave barrier was gained and we could get out of the water. Passing a group of tourists on the way out, it was with great pleasure that we found ourselves back in the sunshine. The early start had its benefits, it meant we had plenty of time to enjoy tea and a decent bit of scoff at the Inglesport Café and still be back in Horton in Ribblesdale in time to enjoy a pleasant sunny stroll to inspect some of the cave entrances on the flanks of Penyghent.

Yet another splendid day’s caving; I would certainly recommend White Scar for anyone wanting a day off from hanging around on ropes.

Notts II (Iron Kiln / Committee Pot)

Matt, Mandy, Lisa, and Andy

The dug entrance shaft of Committee Pot is indeed a marvel of caver engineering and perseverance which gives dry access to the Notts II streamway, once only the domain of cave divers.

No need for a full description, but suffice to say the Notts II streamway is indeed a fine place; a fast flowing stream in beautifully water worn rock, liberally decorated with splendid formations and of magnificent proportions in places [see back cover]. Several inlet passages also proved to be well worth visiting.

Perhaps a club through trip to Lost John’s sometime in the future?

Another splendid trip, and once again, a pleasant change from hanging around on ropes.

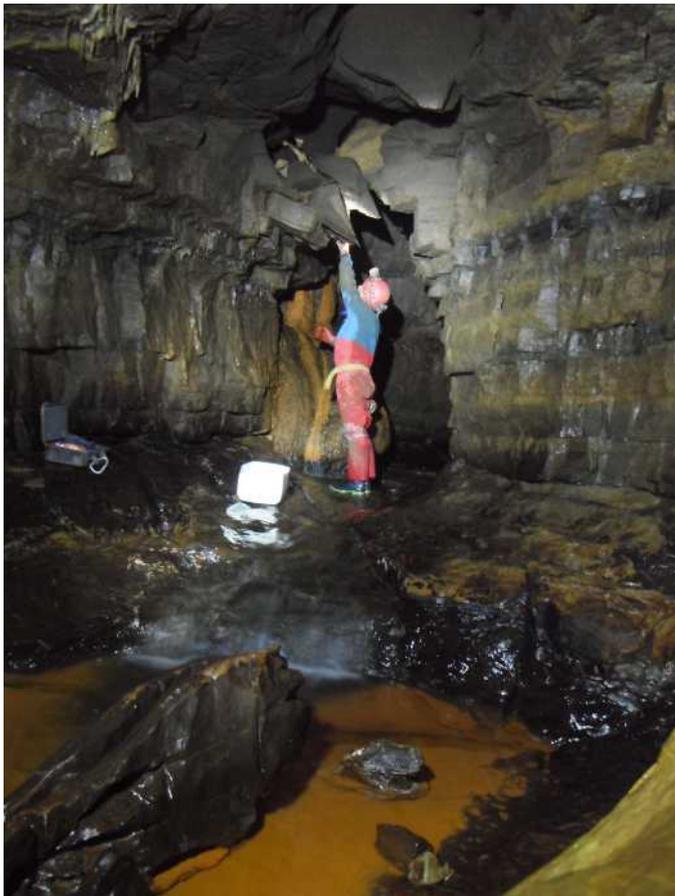
Thus endeth four very enjoyable days’ caving, I mustn’t leave it so long before I go back to Yorkshire again.



Recharge Passage Dig and Flood Levels in Aggy Main Stream

by John Stevens

Mike and I returned to Recharge with a drag tray on 5th October 18. Our trip in was delayed as we noted a foam level at the drinking cup by the Beehive in Main Stream Passage. This was some 2m up as Mike is indicating in the photo below.



So by the time we reached NW Junction the water level would have been over 4m deep. We found the foam level again at the climb into Helictite Chamber in Turkey Streamway. Here there is a carbide line made when some SWCC members got stuck in 1962. This new flood level was 1.11m above that level. This gave a flood level of 306.37m. From this I could calculate the following:

The flood was backing up against Fourth Choke some 1 km downstream from NW Junction. Standing at the base of Fourth Choke on that day, you would have been under some 17m of water. Even at the top of the choke in the low bouldery chamber, you would not have found airspace as it was some 3m further up. It would not have been until you approached Bat Passage that you would

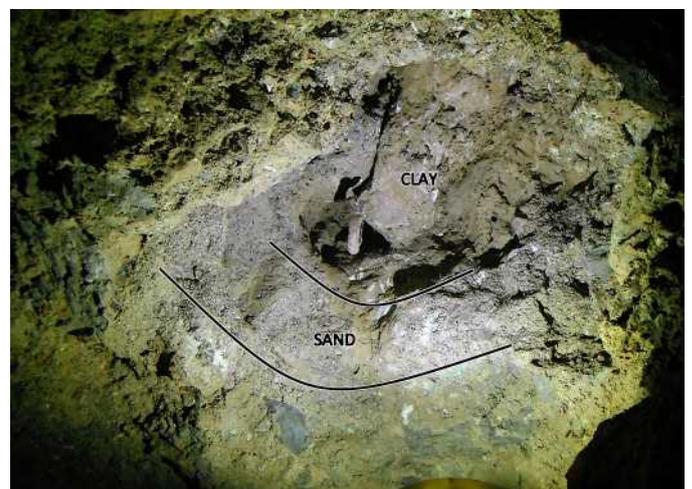
have surfaced. Here there is a too narrow trench which must have acted as the overflow. The water may have sumped the phreatic arches in Biza Passage, or could have found its way via Bat and Sump passages to reach Lower Main Stream.

So when was the downpour that created this? It seems it was Storm Bronagh, the Thursday/Friday just before Hidden Earth (20-21 Sept 18). Since then we've had another good downpour that made the Usk break its banks on 13th Oct 18, but I have not been down to NW Junction to see if it was any higher.

When we arrived at the Recharge dig we continued with the dig upwards. We widened the area at the top of the shaft as we chased around for the easiest way on. As we dug up, we came across a layer of hard sand with white grains in it. These white grains look similar to some of the crystal that T. Wilton-Jones thinks he identified in Crystal Gallery.

Mike had the final session and dug up through the sand into clean clay/mud cap. This is still between boulders but we may be getting towards the top of the fill. Both these last two layers indicate that we must be entering a passage which had some flow along it, so it's unlikely to be an isolated aven.

In summary, it's still looking very interesting and we will be returning.



The crowbar is vertical up through the clay, with the sand below. This is on top of a matrix of smaller rocks and fill.

Capes and Caving

by Mandy Voysey



Uses of capes in caves

In most cases wearing a cape in a cave serves no practical purpose, in fact most of the time it could be considered a hindrance. I definitely wouldn't recommend the wearing of these garments while ladder climbing, using SRT, crawling/squeezing, swimming, scaling rock faces or near any kind of whirring machinery such as a drill. However there is one situation that particularly suits this style of outerwear, and that is long, boulder-strewn passages like Megadrive in Draenen. The reason is simple; it just makes what could be a rather tedious journey of boulder hopping into something much more fun. I believe there is a psychological advantage too, in that looking mighty makes you feel mighty. No more stumbling from block to block wondering how much longer this boredom will last - with this one piece of fantastic superhero regalia you'll be bounding effortlessly over all obstacles and impressing everyone with your newfound skills and panache.*



Making your cape

Constructing your own cape is easy, with these step by step instructions...

- ★ First you need a rectangle of fabric. A duvet cover for a single bed is about the right size, and makes for a more luxurious cape than just using a bed sheet. Reversible ones with a different colour each side are the classiest.
- ★ Cut to length required. Fold the top down and thread a ribbon or shoelace through the gap, before stitching.
- ★ Then simply bunch the fabric together on the ribbon/shoelace, tie round your neck, and voilà you now look fantastic in your new classy caving accessory.

Note - If you're feeling super keen, then you could also make additional eye masks. You may find that you then feel pretty much invincible, but there is a definite downside in the loss of peripheral vision

*If something happens to go awry, then a cape could also come in handy as a useful bandage or stretcher.

Martin Lloyd volunteered to lead a round trip in Draenen for Cavefest Saturday 25th August. We all met at the Lamb and Fox Inn, above Blaenavon, at 10 am.

Ogof Draenen is, at 66 km, the longest cave system in Britain (other than the Three Counties System on the Cumbria/Lancashire/Yorkshire borders being connected by sumps).

After a little delay sorting a suitable light for Kate and spare batteries loaned by Beth we entered the entrance crawl, descending down the tight-in-places choke and down the 8m scaffold shaft. Instead of Wonderbra we continued straight on along Beer Challenge, a tighter passage which avoids T Junction. Once in White Arch Passage we negotiated the awkward climb up through the choke into Lamb and Fox, the start of Indiana Highway, Megadrive and Perseverance, then down the fixed ladder into Arms Park. We went into Players Tunnel then St David's Hall, taking the easily missed passage on the left into Squirrel Rifts, a really complicated part of the cave.

After a bit of route finding we arrived in Haggis Basher and on to a well decorated passage leading back to Agent Bloreng and through the Sewer. Then the awkward high rifts, protected in the most exposed part by a rope to cows tail into. This was nerve wracking for us all, but particularly for Kate who hadn't done anything like this before. I particularly didn't like hanging over a large and what appeared to be bottomless hole! Dropping (not literally!) back into Agent Bloreng again we joined the main stream, nice but cold. We went through the second boulder choke to T Junction, then up Wonderbra and Cairn Chamber where we signed out. On exiting we had been in the cave around seven hours, not bad for such a challenging trip. Kate and I were both cold after being in the streamway as we needed in places to duck down and got a thorough wetting! It was cold, windy and started to rain heavily, I didn't envy Beth and Kate camping. Apologies for any mistakes I've made in describing our trip/route, please don't use it for your own trip! We all really enjoyed this challenging trip, and Martin was particularly happy that he'd remembered the way mostly, with only a couple of mistakes.



The Team: Martin Lloyd, Kate Lesley, Beth Knight and Jennie Lawrence.



Above: An awkward rope climb down into the continuation of Agent Bloreng gets to a duck or a very awkward climb in a tight rift, and then easy passage to beyond the streamway. Martin did the awkward climb, the rest of us got wet!

Cave Rescue Practice

by Helen Pemberton



On Saturday 8th September, the South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue team held a rescue practice in Aggy. I'd gone to Whitewalls as Trevor was away and I didn't fancy sitting about at home all weekend not doing much. The rescue team were more than happy for me and another caver from SWCC to join in. On Friday night we had formed a very vague plan to go caving, but this plan didn't last very long. I failed to get up at the crack of dawn, so I was still drinking my coffee as the rescue team assembled, and somehow ended up in their briefing. The sitting room was packed, but lots of key people were saying how low on numbers they were, and some of the planned tasks would be a struggle with so few people. I had thought there were loads of people but I soon realised I was wrong.



The basic story was a caver had fallen in Baron's Chamber and injured her leg, so 4 cavers went to get help, but 2 got lost on the way out. The highly skilled jobs got divvied out first – like first aid, surface and underground controllers etc, and then who wanted surface roles and who wanted underground roles. I was given some pencils and waterproof paper and joined the search team. The people needed first, and those with slow jobs like laying comms cable, were sent off, and then we were briefed along with those on the sherpa team. I discovered the bag for the stretcher is about the same size as me, and that there is a large amount more kit than I realised that needs carrying in. I also hadn't thought about how much sheep like to eat comms wire, and the difficulties in keeping communications operational.



We headed into the entrance series, the 4 people on the search team splitting into pairs at each side passage. We'd agreed where to meet once we had searched the side passage allocated to us so that nowhere got missed. We also practised looking for clues such as stirred up mud in water so we could predict if we would find the missing cavers in the passage we were searching, or if we thought they would be elsewhere. I found one "lost caver" down a branch of a side passage. It was a gingerbread caver in a sealed bag, with instructions on what to do. We decided to search the other side branch in case they had chosen to search one branch each to try and find the way out. This was a bit of a

Photos by Claire Vivian

collector's passage, with the man working with me having been there only once, 50 years ago. It was quite wet and muddy, and we failed both to find the other caver and to keep our undies dry. When we returned to the main passage, we met up with the other search pair, who had the 2nd lost caver. That lost caver had actually been found by the sherpa party on the main passage, where there are upper and lower routes to the same place. They passed us the 2nd lost caver and we went to find the comms team to let Control know they had been found, showing the lost souls the way out as we did this. Laying cable through the cave looks quite painstaking to make sure it doesn't get snagged or damaged. We headed back towards the entrance to find the comms team. If they had overtaken us we could have just clipped the phone into the wire. I had never seen a France Phone before. It was pretty impressive how well they worked. We reported to control, then went off to help the stretcher team.

When we arrived in Baron's Chamber, the casualty had been carefully wrapped in blankets and strapped into the stretcher. It was surprising how many people it took to lift the stretcher and pass it forwards. The casualty had barely moved and was already disorientated, despite knowing the cave well. It sounds like being in a stretcher isn't a very pleasant experience. Passing the stretcher through the boulder choke proved to be a very delicate and challenging task. Some of us were waiting in a section of the choke to be used as 'rocks' to slide the stretcher over. This got pretty cold, especially being a bit damp from the search for the lost cavers. It really makes you appreciate the lengths the rescue team go to, and how hard and uncomfortable their work is. We sat for an hour while others wiggled and jiggled the stretcher about to manoeuvre it around awkward boulders, while making sure the casualty was OK. It brings home to you why stretcher carries take such a long time, and how tiring it is. It is much harder stretcher carrying in a cave than it is in a mine. Time also seems to go much quicker than you think, but must

really slow down for those needing to be rescued. Before long it was time to stop and get back to Whitewalls for the debrief and an auction.

It was a really worthwhile experience going along to see what happens at a rescue, and very much an eye-opener. It hits home how you really don't want to hurt yourself and get rescued through being an idiot, but is very reassuring how good the team are if something does go wrong. If you haven't ever been on a rescue practice, you really should. I hadn't joined the team as I thought Reading would be too far away to be any use, and that my skills and cave knowledge would not be good enough. I was definitely wrong. There are so many more tasks that need doing that you can help with, even if you are not a hard-core burly caver, than I had realised. I also hadn't realised just how many people would be needed for a stretcher carry. Those living further away could take over when the more local people have got knackered and need a rest. The other thing that was made really obvious was how useful the small agile female cavers are, for squeezing into smaller spaces around the stretcher where the big burly men can't fit. If you were to sign up, it does seem like the rescue team could find a job for you, whatever your skill set.

After the debrief and tea drinking there was an auction of retired kit to raise funds for the team. I got a load of decent rope, a hand jammer in really good condition, a jacket to take into Hard Rock for camps, a lot of magazines, a cave rescue mug and pin badge, and helmets for club beginners to borrow. There was loads of decent stuff to buy for not a lot of money, and some very entertaining tat. Some of the stuff had never been used and was still in the packaging. It felt a bit like Christmas. If you don't want to go to a rescue practice, go to an auction and contribute some dosh. You never know when it might be your or your friends that end up needing a rescue, and it would be good if we all tried to put something back into our community and those that help us when we need it.

Easy Fundraising for Cave Rescue

Anyone who shops online should consider signing up with easyfundraising.org.uk. When accessing many popular shopping sites via an easyfundraising account the shop gives a percentage of the purchase price to the charity of your choice. Somehow I spent 84p on eBay and cave rescue got a 42p donation. There are lots of shops that earn a donation, from Tesco Direct to Decathlon, and it doesn't cost you anything. In the last 30 days [at time of writing], cave rescue received £13 in donations at no cost to the easyfundraising supporters. It doesn't sound much, but they've received over £800 through this scheme so far. Support the South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team via easyfundraising at www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/smwcrct

MALLORCA 2018

by Mandy Voysey

Mallorca is well-known among British cavers as a good destination for a caving holiday, ideal for having not only decent caves, but a wealth of other outdoor pursuits on offer, and the added bonus of sunshine and plenty of cheap but decent booze. The vast majority of caves on the island are not exceptionally long (with the notable exception of Cova des Pas de Vallgornera which is a whopping 70+kms), but what they lack in length they make up for with interest, beauty and diversity. There are hundreds of caves all over the island, some horizontal, some predominantly vertical, in all different landscapes ranging from jagged mountain bluffs to coastal coves necessitating a swim to access them. Most of the trips involve a bit of a walk, which means you get a good dose of scenery and activity top-side as well as underground. Another major plus point to caving in Mallorca is the ambient temperature underground, which is most definitely warm.

The week before our trip Mallorca hit the headlines in the UK following huge rainstorms and severe flooding. Undaunted, and hoping for more clement conditions, a team of 10 of us, Helen and Trevor Pemberton, Mike and Dawn Read, John and Helga Stevens, Matt and Mandy Voysey, Paul Tarrant and Tony Moulton, headed over to this fine land. There were a medley of activities done by various people, but here's a write up of the caving trips that I took part in...

Avenc del Canal de Coma Freda

UTM Grid ref: WGS84 31S 513107 4420741

Finding the cave: The cave is located on the Formentor Peninsular and can be reached by footpaths and tracks from the main road (Ma-2210). We parked by the entrance gate of Cases Velles and went through the open gate on the other side of the road, taking a path to the right well before the farm house. However we became unsure if this was the correct way or if we were accidentally trespassing, particularly as we found the gate closed on our return and had to clamber over the top. Looking at the map it seems that there are alternative routes to get to the same footpath. Our route went uphill, initially through woodland, then through general rocks and vegetation to reach a ridge. The entrance is obscured by a large boulder, but there is a narrow track winding through the foliage that leads right to it.



Rigging: 35m rope, 1x hanger and bolt, 2x maillons. At the time of our trip there was a hanger in-situ on the slab of rock on the right-hand side of the pitch. A direct descent from here would involve some very serious rub points so we used the spit on the flat wall a short distance down the pitch to put in a rebelay. We also started our rigging with a back-up line to a boulder further back for extra safety.

15th Oct 2018 - Matt and Mandy Voysey, Paul Tarrant

This was a really good first cave for our week in Mallorca. It had a pitch in which we could acclimatise ourselves to the Mallorcan way of rigging, lots of pretties to marvel at, and it was relatively short giving us time to visit the local supermarket and stock up on Spanish goodies and boozes beforehand.

We found the cave without any problems at all, but had a slight detour to a large rock shelter/goat's toilet on the way to take refuge from a band of heavy rain that swept over most inopportunately when we were out in the open, battling with wet foliage and slippery rocks. I'd worn shorts on the way over as it was actually quite warm, and so began my collection of scuffs, scratches and scabs that adorned my legs throughout the week. Anyone contemplating caving in Mallorca and new to the environment there, be warned - pretty much everything is either sharp, scratchy, or bristling with thorns when you're travelling off the beaten tracks.



Entrance located, Matt then rigged the 26m shaft. This was quite a pleasant descent down a daylight-lit fluted tube. It did seem somewhat unusual having the main hang from a single spit, but it appeared to be in good condition and was well backed up, so it was all fine. At the bottom a stoop soon led into a wonderful well decorated chamber, festooned with pure white columns and stalactites. Initially we thought this could be the

Photos by Matt and Mandy Voysey

end of the cave, but a low crawl squeezing between formations at the end of the chamber led us to another larger and even more grandly decorated chamber. Here we wandered around on a scenic foray along the small well-trod routes to the different areas and formations. We found it a feast for the eyes with stalagmites, stalactites, flowstone, curtains and helictites all around. It was also very interesting to see the different stages of development within the cave, as some things had clearly shifted position quite dramatically and then continued growing calcite deposits at a completely different angle from those formerly developed. This was the end of the cave, but a long time was spent taking photos. On the way back we found a few other routes to investigate in the vicinity of the entrance shaft and lots of botryoidal coatings on the walls there. Heading back I think that the shape of the shaft caused a sort of optical illusion, as from halfway up it seemed to be exactly the same distance to the surface as it had looked from the bottom, but we were all back onto a humid but dry surface soon enough and well chuffed with our trip and the wonders beheld.



Cova de sa Campana

UTM Grid refs: Parking - WGS84 31S 483203 4410564
Cave - WGS84 31S 483772 4410581

Finding the cave: This cave is notoriously difficult to find, but having successfully found it twice, I think it's actually not a problem as long as you set off from the correct place and keep your eyes peeled. The place to park is down the Ma-2141, a particularly steep and windy road full of tight switchbacks leading down to Sa Colobra. This road is incredibly popular with cyclists, coaches and tourists so it can be both stressful and slow to travel. The parking layby is on the right, next to the 9.5km road marker.

The cave is about a 1km walk from here on an ill-defined track; the only way to find it is to follow the cairns. The starting point isn't obvious as it's all quite overgrown, but heading up a narrow rocky track on the left at the rear of the layby should bring the first marker cairn into view. From here it's just a case of brushing up the mountainside, from one cairn to the next. There's a bit of scrambling involved, and lots sharp fluted rocks and razor grass to be wary of. At the top of a col the route briefly becomes less obvious as the track winds through foliage in a small valley before descending to the left, then contouring around the mountainside to reach the cave.

Tackle: We used the rope lengths quoted in the Mallorca Caves, An Interim Guide booklet by Des Marshall with the following rope lengths: P1 - 35m, P2 - 65m and P3 - 27m. There are a further 2 pitches, P4 - 65m and P5 - 60m, but these are only worth doing if you're determined to get to the bottom as the cave becomes less pleasant from here on.

Rigging: P1 - Tie the rope around the massive stalagmite near the entrance. P2 - 2 spits for a Y-hang, deviated to a sling on a natural opposite. Reblay at the balcony using naturals. (2x hangers and bolts, 3x maillons, 1x karabiner, 2-3x slings). P3 - Apparently what we thought was P3 needn't be rigged at all, but if you choose to rig it there are 2x spits at the top for a Y-hang (2x hangers and bolts, 2x maillons). The real P3 is further on and is rigged off a large stal boss (or you can just scoot down it with the aid of a sling as we did).



16th Oct 2018 - Paul Tarrant, Tony Moul, Mike Read, Matt and Mandy Voysey

Matt and I had been to Campana before back in 2004 and thought it was the best cave we did on that caving holiday. Keen to share the wonders with the others, we decided it could be a good destination for a foray underground with a team of 5. A distinctive recollection of the cave was the vastness of the passages, and sheer scale of everything within. Back in the day we were equipped with 7-LED Speleotechnics headtorches, which though relatively hi-tech for the time, failed to illuminate much of the huge open space surrounding us. We were very much looking forward to seeing what kind of vista would await us with the increased lumens that modern lighting provides... However, very quickly our hopes of viewing a panoramic spectacle of wonder were dashed. It was just as before, moving like a tiny glow worm through an abyss of inky blackness.

The actual cave entrance is surprisingly diminutive and hard to spot until you're right on top of it. There are some rusty remains of an old gate just inside the hole and a row of dusty stal columns, one of which is the obvious rope attachment point for the first abseil, which is pretty much just a downwards walk down a knobbly stal wall. Very soon we were amongst large stalagmites looming overhead in a vast cavity with a floor made of dry gour pools. Mike had rigged the first pitch, with me being next down, and Paul third. I shouted back to Paul that Mike and I would carry on to find and rig the second pitch, then the two of us pressed on past wonders that I'm sure would have been truly magnificent if we could but illuminate them well enough to see their full splendour. This part of the cave is called "Sala de Gracia" or "Grace Room", which is presumably a reference to the beauty of the formations rather than the elegance of cavers. Mike had some kind of problem with his newly purchased light, which meant that the glow was actually pretty weedy. Regardless we bumbled our way around and looked at the formations which were close enough to view, and I started to wish that I'd waited for Paul as he was the wearer of the brightest head piece. I located a way down that looked effectively like a slippery slope of doom, but luckily it transpired that this wasn't the recommended way. Our fellow cavers coming into view and heading in a more promising direction showed that I'd strayed somewhat off route.

Now back on track, pitch no. 2 was duly found and looked familiar enough to be sure of it being correct. Though requiring the rigging of a rope, this is more of a steep slope than a pitch, and the sort of thing that seems nigh on impossible to do with any degree of grace. After the initial descent, a small plateau is met before the next downwards slope. Here the rope can be re-belayed to a stal grille, but in the absence of proper anchors it was quite tricky to avoid all rub points. The slope continued down to reach yet another lofty chamber, but we got off the rope part-way down at a large flat section as the remainder was easy enough without. Well, it was for those of us with boots that still had tread on them anyway. Tony in his 20 year old walking boots put into retirement due to lack of grip, careened down the slope like a rag-doll on a bumpy slide. Luckily he was unharmed, so Paul was able to give him a good telling off for being such a footwear miser.

The chamber ended with a pleasant grotto to admire and enjoy before heading into the lower, and annoyingly gritty and muddy, connection with the next pitch.* This is only a short abseil landing into yet another vast chamber, but this one has a ceiling low enough to see the magnificent helictites attached to it. There were great clusters of formations very much like "The Geryon" in Ogof Draenen looming overhead. Worried that time was ticking on and not wanting to do the over-ground mountain traverse in the dark, Paul and Tony decided to start heading back out at this point. Matt, Mike and I chose instead to ignore the impracticalities of dallying longer underground, and ran off ahead before we could be rounded up. At the end of the chamber we stooped through an arch into another section which I think of as being the "Realm of the Mammoth". Here there is a slope down to a flat floor with a huge looming rock which looks very much like a mammoth. The real name for this part of the cave is "Sala de Gegants" ("Giant's Room"), and it's reputedly large enough to accommodate Palma Cathedral with room to spare. The slope was quite tricky to descend, but we picked our way carefully down and lashed a sling



round a boulder at a particularly awkward section. At the bottom we had a good roam around and looked at all the interesting helictites before heading back for the return journey. Mike's light got even dingier, and we all got a bit disoriented on the way out. We were trying to hurry so that the others wouldn't be kept waiting too long, but it felt like we were going in circles in the large chambers. However we managed in the end, and popped out on the mountainside to find the weather still pleasant even if the sun was lower on the horizon than would be ideal. Now there was just the epic traverse of sharp rocks and sharp foliage with heavy tackle sacks to deal with. We got a message from Paul saying he and Tony were back at the car when we were about halfway down, and we joined them there just as the daylight was fading. Perfect timing, and now it was dark there were no pesky cyclists, slow cars or tour buses to deal with either. All in all, a successful day.

*Turns out that this may not have been pitch no. 3 at all. The route is correct, and the spits placed for the purpose of rigging made it seem like it fitted the bill at the time. However, re-reading the descriptions afterwards it seems that this should be free-climbed, and the rope used on the slippery slope at the Sala de Gegants instead.

Smaller Caves of the East Coast

UTM Grid Refs: (WGS84 zone 31S)

Cova des Mular - 526491 4373434

Cova de Cala Falco - 525785 4372765

Cova des Xots - 525719 4373201

Cova de sa Balma des Quarto - 526420 4374120

17th Oct 2018 - Matt and Mandy Voysey

After the previous day's full on activity of a caving trip with an additional mountain hike with a heavy tackle sack, Matt and I thought we'd go for something more sedate. We noticed that there were quite a few small caves that looked quite pretty and needed no equipment along the east coast in the Manacor direction, so we decided to check some of them out. Another factor in this decision was the chance that heading to a further and flatter part of the island might possibly avoid the rain predicted to hit later that day.

The morning was gloriously sunny, ideal for a bit of messing about on the coast. Our first port of call was a harbour front bar in Porto Cristo, where we browsed through our various sheets of caving info and collected all the grid refs of the caves in the area that a) didn't require any tackle, b) didn't need a permit, and c) looked like interesting places to visit. These we tapped into an app on Matt's phone [Maverick for Android], which showed them all on a map. We then devised a circular walk that took in 4 of these sites, finished our beer and headed off to our starting point at Cala Romantica. The caves we had chosen to visit were Cova des Mular, Cova Cala Falco, Cova des Xots, and Balma des Quarto. Unfortunately, due to the excitement of sunshine and the lure of more coast walking, we ran out of time to do the last cave, which was a bit of a shame as it looked like it would be quite a nice one too. The caves we did do were small scale but pleasant, and quite reminiscent of days spent furling around the caves of Cheddar Gorge.



Cova des Mular was situated on a rocky shelf in the sea cliffs, near an area that had been quarried for stone. The entrance hole looked just like a circular pocket in the rock and a very unlikely place for a cave. Inside the walls were coated in stal formations and there was a really nice sandy floor. Next up was Cova Cala Falco; this had a bit of a scruffy climb to negotiate while dodging waves, as the sea was quite choppy, and a nice water feature inside. Cova des Xots we did on the way back; this was full of pretty, but gnarly formations and a slippery mud slope on which

you could easily scoot straight into the pool at the bottom. The highlight of this cave was that we saw lots of tortoises on our way there. All in all a nice day, somewhat devoid of the rigours of “proper” caving, but a good jolly none-the less, and we succeeded in missing the rain too.

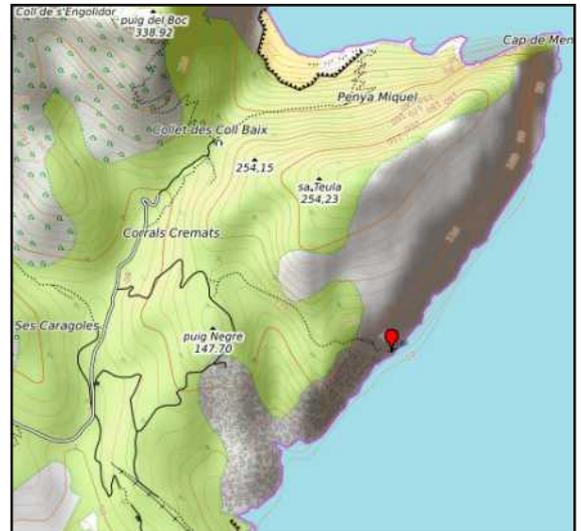
Cova des Coloms (UTM 525868 4372545)

This is a well-known cave and considered to be one of the more beautiful caves of the island. It's located along the same stretch of coast that we were walking, but requires a swim to access it and preferably calm waters. The stormy weather we encountered on our week in Mallorca meant that the sea conditions were generally choppy and a visit to this cave would have been most unwise.

Cova Tancada des Cap de Menorca

UTM Grid ref: WGS84 31S 516348 441558

Finding the cave: The cave is situated on a rocky shelf above the sea at Sa Cova Tancada, along the stretch of cliffs heading towards Cap de Menorca. The nearest town is Alcudia, and from here the best way is to take the Carrer de Xara road and turn right at the Bodega del Sol onto the Carrer de la Muntana. This road becomes narrower and more scruffy as you go along, then turns into a gravel track. The road ends at a car park with a short walk to the refuge at Coll Baix, but before this point there is a wide track heading off on the right with a chain across it. Park anywhere around here and walk up the track. This heads uphill, and at the top the path to the cave heads off on the left towards the coast. This leads directly to the cave, with steps cut into the cliff side for the descent.



18 Oct 2018 - Matt and Mandy Voysey

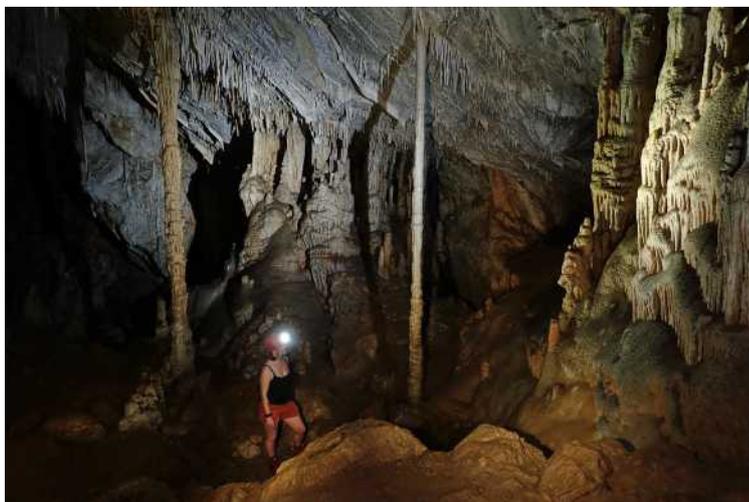
After a bit of a rainy night, the weather was still stuck on foul-mode in the morning. Most caves in Mallorca involve a walk of some length to reach the entrance, but being reluctant to get a full on soaking before reaching the sanctuary of the subterranean world, we spent rather a long time in the morning flicking through our caving info hoping to find somewhere we could get to quickly and easily and also not involve any time consuming rigging from the surface. We had some difficulty with this as none of the options in the area seemed to fit the bill, and in the end Helen, Trevor, Paul and Tony decided to go to the Coves de Campanet showcave instead. The walking party had long since departed, which left just Matt and I still faffing. As there was now only the two of us to please, we decided we'd just brave the elements and trudge to the entrance in our waterproofs. We selected this cave as it was a relatively short drive away and sounded like a pleasant and scenic trip.

As luck would have it the rain ceased while we were driving over, and the sun had come out by the time we'd set off for the walk so there was no need to don full waterproofs after all. The route to the cave was actually very pleasant, with a saunter through pine forests followed by some good rugged coastline and a gusty descent towards the foaming sea below. The cave was

easy to find as the steps carved into the cliff edge lead right to the entrance. Though we didn't know it when we set off, it soon became apparent that this was the same cave that Helen and Trevor had done a couple of days before while the rest of us were in Campana, as the route exactly fitted what they'd described.

Somewhat surprisingly, given its remote and steep location, this used to be a showcave. Though this may have given the cave a less natural look and feel, it had the bonus of providing some real “luxury caving”. The handy little pathway and carved steps meant we barely had to pull any caving moves at all while weaving through some really quite spectacular formations. From the entrance the constructed path meanders along through a few small decorated chambers and grottos. Though pleasant enough, we were thus far underwhelmed, feeling that we could see stuff just as good back home. Then we passed between a pair of stal columns and found ourselves suddenly looking into a vast and lovely chamber full of wonders. There were a couple of tall and fine columns nearby that looked similar to “The Colonnades” in Easgill, and further on a cluster of what our description called a “pineapple” of columns and stalagmites. We heard a faint boom from up ahead, like a heavy footfall, and concluded that there

must be more people further in. Then we continued on along the right-hand side of the passage (not noticing the actual path heading up and threading between the huge formations), and met the path again further on. We could still hear sounds from up ahead, so were surprised when we saw the way on was a low slide down a stal ramp. At the bottom of this we found ourselves in a small chamber with a low hole that further investigation proved was just a dead-end. So where were the people we'd heard? Now we were at the lowest point of the cave, it became obvious that it was the booming of the sea we could hear. We then retraced our steps and returned to the big chamber along the made path this time, making a nice scenic round trip. Matt had



to scope out the best position for his camera, so I said I'd just pop down a hole nearby for a look. This turned out to be a little bit of Mendip, awkward, confined and definitely not suitable for shorts and vest. Returning to the big chamber after my mini-adventure, we took some photos, looked in the other direction which was mostly just a breakdown of blocks and mud, then headed back out. Apparently there's another route heading off along the way that reaches a window overlooking the sea, but we couldn't find it. In summary, I'd say this is an excellent cave, with a lot of pretties on offer for not too much effort. It's also incredibly warm inside, so shorts and t-shirt is really all you need to wear.

El Forat 502

UTM Grid ref: WGS84 31S 515245 4421770

Finding the cave: Take the Ma2210 road heading to Formentor. After passing through the tunnel, park at the small pull in on the left. From here walk up the road a hundred metres or so to access a track that heads back along the flank of the mountainside on the right. Follow this until it reaches a wider track at the col, which zig-zags down, then back up again in the direction of Puig Gaballo. Leave this track at the 4th uphill bend and take the small ill-defined track heading towards a rocky outcrop on the left. The cave entrance is easy to find, but not obvious from a distance.

Tackle: P1 - 50m rope, 2x hangers and bolts, 5x maillons, plus 1x sling and karabiner for deviation. P2 - 10m rope, 2x slings and krabs.

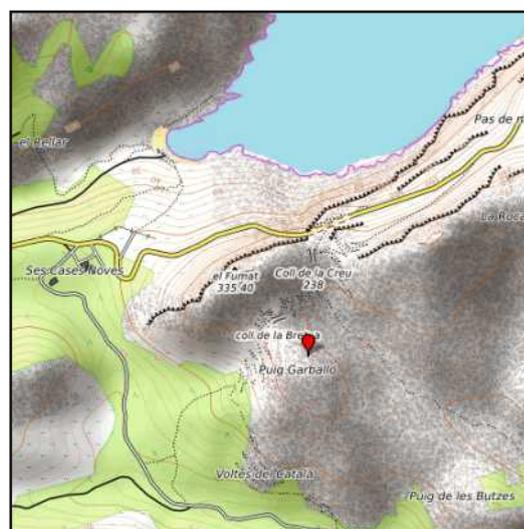
19 Oct 2018 - Helen Pemberton, Tony Moul, Matt and Mandy Voysey

I'd been quite keen to do this particular cave, partly because it's got an unusual name, but mostly because it's got a calcified goat skull as one of its points of interest. Other aspects of note were also mentioned in the description, but it was most definitely the skull that captured my enthusiasm. The reason this cave is so named is that it was the very next discovery after the J.A. Encinas guidebook "501 Grutas" was published, and Forat is Catalan for hole.

It was a reasonably long walk to get to the cave, but for much of the way the track was very well defined. We went a little awry at the point we had to leave the path and forge across the scrubland to the cave. This was partly because we'd taken a few short cuts and missed the 4th bend where we should have headed off, and partly because the description mentioned the entrance being obscured by a Mastic Bush and we had no idea what a Mastic Bush looked like. Anyway, after a bit of a false start we were soon on the right track heading towards an obvious rocky outcrop and duly found a hole beneath a glossy Mallorcan shrub. With cave located and additional



knowledge of Mallorcan botany noted, the next step was to rig our descent. There were a couple of very chunky P-bolts next to the shaft for the initial Y-hang, and yet another mighty bolt under the Mastic Bush. This was looking good! However the following two re-belay points had single spits rather than hangers, but at least they were nice new shiny ones. Further below one of the major features of the cave was soon encountered, an enormous fallen column leaning against the wall of the shaft [see front cover]. You land right on the top of it when abseiling down. Initially I was a bit flummoxed here, not



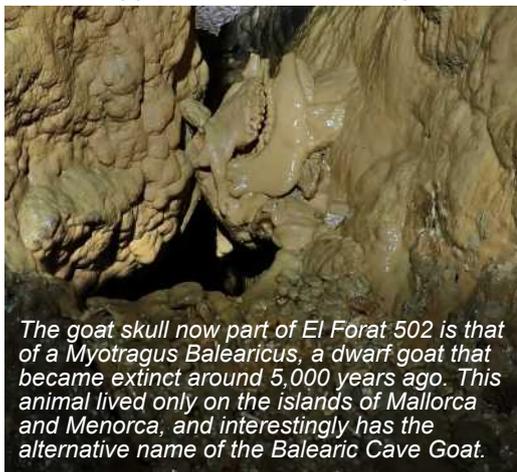
knowing whether to go left, right, or over the top of it. In the end I just opted for the side that looked like it would incur the least rub and put in a sling deviation further down.

At the bottom I wandered around in a fruitless search for the skull, to be joined shortly after by Tony who spotted it almost instantly, wedged between two calcited rocks towards the bottom of the massive jumble of boulders that filled most of the area hereabouts. The next task was to find the way on, which though seemingly obvious on the survey, had us scampering around for a while before finding the correct route by clambering up the boulder pile. Shortly afterwards the full team was reunited and the next point of interest encountered, a lovely little nativity scene in a small stal grotto. Then a bit further on we reached a lofty perch overlooking the "Sala Voltors" (Vulture's Room). This is a large and well decorated room, reached via a short abseil rigged from nearby sturdy looking stalagmites. The formations in this chamber were very much of a red/orange/brown hue, and at the bottom there were some impressive clusters of large botryoids that looked quite like coral or some kind of solidified seaweed. Below this a small wriggly route necessitating the removal of SRT kit leads down into "Pou del Coral". Matt and I both went



down here for a look, but had to be very careful not to damage anything on the short climbs as the walls were covered in a medley of massive botryoids and other nodular items. It was a bit like being in a pool of bladderwrack, but prettier.

This was the end of the cave, so we headed back to the fallen column. To the right of this were some formations that looked very much like the tentacles of an octopus, and we all agreed that it was very reminiscent of the gourmet seafood paella that Trevor had cooked up the night before. Then we all set off back up rope and down the mountainside, with Matt and Tony getting back to the car before dark, while Helen and I had an exciting time accidentally attempting a direct route down and not getting back until it was quite dark and thunder was rumbling ominously in the distance.



The goat skull now part of El Forat 502 is that of a *Myotragus Balearicus*, a dwarf goat that became extinct around 5,000 years ago. This animal lived only on the islands of Mallorca and Menorca, and interestingly has the alternative name of the Balearic Cave Goat.

Useful Info

Unfortunately there are no English guide books currently available, so it can be hard to find accurate up-to-date information on the caves. Trip reports from other clubs seem to be the way to go, but these often lack information such as grid refs and rope lengths. A really good Spanish source of information is the website www.mallorcaverde.es which has loads of online surveys and cave descriptions complete with grid refs and tackle info. Aside from the odd language anomaly (like "monkey" instead of oversuit), these descriptions were still very good when converted to English with Google Translate, and the grid refs we used were all spot on. Another website I liked was bttersmallorca.com which has loads of trip reports by a chap called Rafael Minguillon. This is quite good for having lots of photos and info for some quite unusual places, often with grid refs and tackle details, and is also quite an amusing read. CSS also has a copy of *Corpus Cavernario Mayoricense* by J. A. Encinas in the library (kindly donated by Gian), which is an epic tome (in Spanish) detailing all the caves on the island.

In the decade since Matt and I last went caving in Mallorca, a permit system has been introduced for certain caves. These include some of the usual go-to caves for the British caver such as Cova Cal Pessó, Cova Can Sion and Cova des Diners, but overall the list is short compared to the number of caves with open access. At the moment the Vallgornera system is out of bounds to all non-local "sport cavers" (i.e. cavers without any scientific objective), and the application process for the other protected caves is not straightforward. On the plus side, if you don't mind a protracted wait, there is a chance that permission will be granted for certain caves, and if you'd rather not have the faff there are hundreds of holes more readily available.

Mina de Son Creus, Mallorca *by John Stevens*

During the Chelsea October trip to Mallorca we also visited a mine near Bunyola.

Helen Pemberton, Mike Read and I were on the trip. Helen had done the research on the mine and found a description, survey and GPS location of one of its entrances. The description was not of much use, saying it was complex and any description given may be misleading, so none was given.

We set off from the road on a 20 minute walk to the entrance location we had. Mike with his GPS was taking a direct route, while me and Helen wandered around a bit. I came across a couple of other entrances but didn't enter them. Apparently

there are about 30 entrances, some don't go very far though. As Mike's GPS pinged to say he was at the location he saw the entrance just a couple of metres ahead. Without the GPS we would have hunted around for some time in the scrubby woodland on the hillside.

The entrance pitch lead to a hand picked level with steps cut in. The size and stepped nature of this passage was common in the first section of the mine. It was interrupted a few times with small chambers.

Off one of the first enlargements was a shaft going up. This had footholds cut into opposite sides and went up to another series of passages. We were going to come back to these but missed the climb on our way out.

Several of the galleries ended in blind ends but we eventually dropped down into a larger set of passages. These were much more level in nature and in one direction led to some crystals.

Beyond these we found a circular shaft that went up to the surface and down a long way. We later found that this shaft was over 90m deep in total. At the end of the passage it got into a different strata, with some softer rock and some water worn limestone that had scallop marks but was totally sediment filled.

When we went in the other direction in this larger passage we eventually reached the surface. But other branches went into a more complex area with several climbs into chambers.

One chamber had a daylight shaft which also continued down. This may be the area of the connection to the lower section of the mine, but we had no tackle with us for going further. We retraced our steps and emerged out of the top entrance after some three hours. I found the entrance shaft was free-climbable, but the rope was really a must for the descent.

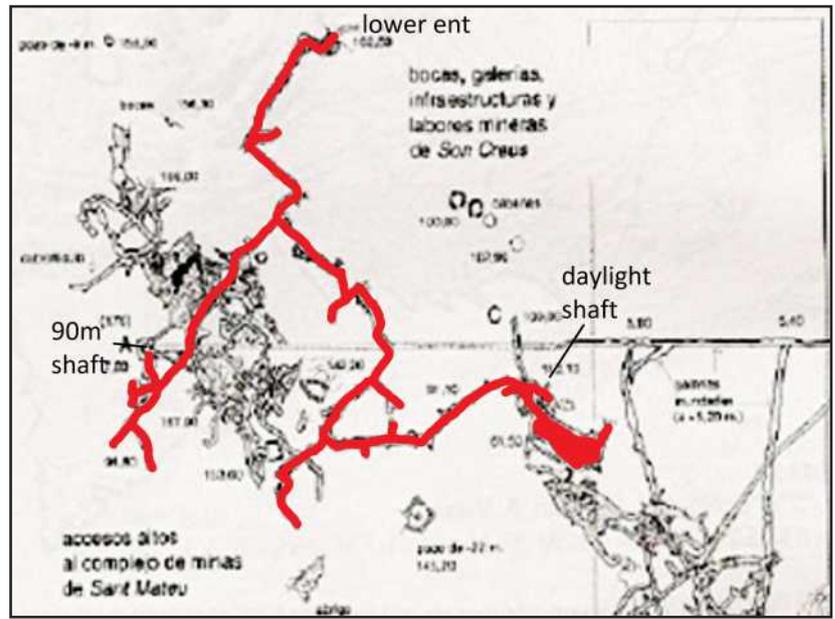


Mike in the Entrance Pitch

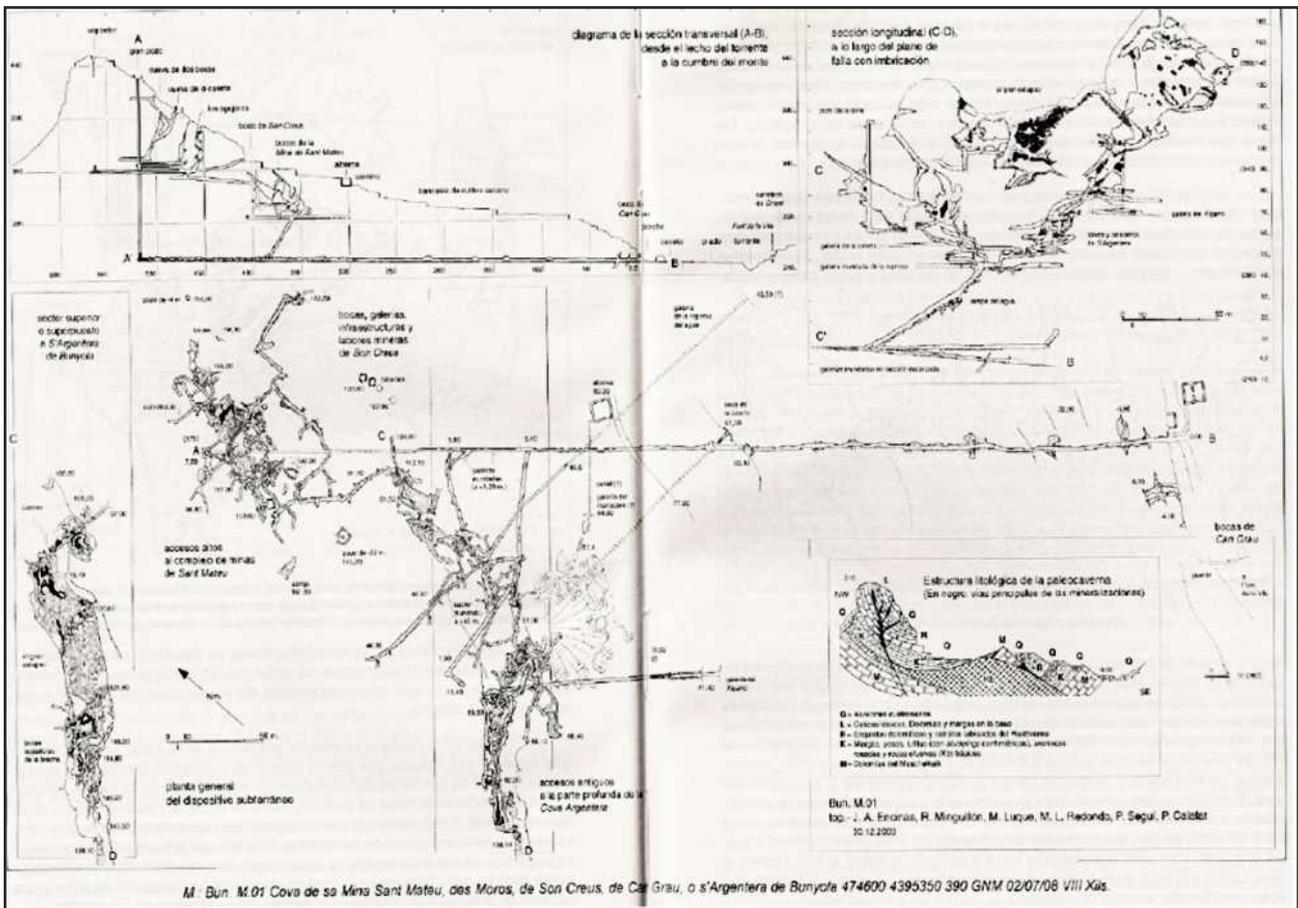


We then went looking for the deep surface shaft and found its 90m drop totally unprotected.

The map of the mine at the scale we had made the maze of upper passages so complex that it's hard to know where we went.



To make it slightly clearer I have highlighted the larger main horizontal level on the map above, with the shaft and lower entrance marked. The top entrance is still too obscure on the map to make out, but we joined the main level just at the top of the maze area. We had also reached the 90m shaft by one of the higher passages.



Survey of Mina de son Creus, from 'Avances en el estudio historico de la Mina de Galena de Bunyola'.

SPECTACLES OR BRA AGEN ALLWEDD



by Jennie Lawrence and Adrian Fawcett

3rd November - CSS Bonfire Meet

Team: Adrian Fawcett, Joe Duxbury, Martin Lloyd, Helen Pemberton, Emyr Walters, Gareth Jones and Jennie Lawrence.

Agen Allwedd is one of the longest caves in Britain, with long sections of stream way and large mainly dry passages, with lots of interesting features including amazing formations such as the Courtesan. We are so lucky to have it right on the doorstep of Whitewalls.



Everyone assembled a little late, possibly after a good session Friday night? A large group including Steve Sharp and his daughter Toni went in before us, taking novices to the Music Room but showing them part of the stream way as well. We overtook them in the entrance series. The aim of today's trip was to reach Sand Caverns.

The trip was billed as 'bra or spectacles' following on from a previous discussion about the shape of a certain part of the Aggy survey - that being the Inner Circle and Central Avenue / Sand Caverns loops, with the end of Sand Caverns and Disappointment Passage being the straps, or whatever. Anyway, there was no realistic prospect of doing all that before the bonfire and fireworks when the party finally left Whitewalls at around 11 a.m. The actual trip was something more of a monocle.

The interesting part of the trip was the loop from Sand Caverns Passage, first crawling and stooping along Selenite Needle Passage then, after it becomes an easy walking passage, taking a narrow meandering passage on the left - Central Avenue. There are a few junctions, but we located the end choke without difficulty. I had been to the other side of the choke about a year previously and had decided it looked too unstable to risk going through. So it was with a little trepidation that we approached it this time, and a relief when we were all past it without incident. For a few minutes we weren't sure Emyr was going to fit through, but he managed to move a couple of rocks to enlarge it a bit.



Beyond the choke there are a number of ways to go, and it took a few minutes before we were all going the right way. This passage enters Sand Caverns via a balcony above the sloping passage below, and an inclined scaffold tube providing the only route down. From the top it appears rather precarious - that you might slide down the pole out of control and topple over - but in reality it's not that bad. A good photo opportunity all the same. From there, it was a stomp, plus one short grovel, down Sand Caverns Passage, and back to the junction where we started the loop.

Photos by Jennie Lawrence

Sunday School Progress

by Mike Read



Working Weekend 5th-7th Oct

John and I managed a return trip to Recharge to dig upwards in the choke on Friday, which had interesting bands of sand then clean clay. This was good practice for digging holes through the gable end wall of The Old Daren Sunday School, and trying to support it whilst removing the wall below. Thick stone walls are never easy to support as it is difficult to form holes through them, and they're filled with rubble which keeps falling down. Also the lintel effectively sits on the top of the outside wall not leaving any gable end so we ended up supporting a 2.5m long

cantilevered wall. Anyway, apart from a few cracks in the mortar we got the lintels in on Saturday. After tea we packed up the lintels to support the wall. This very seriously affected our beer drinking, as we didn't finish until after 10pm. Meanwhile in the rain, Adrian persevered and built a low wall at the edge of the path adjacent to the manhole. This started to tidy up the area and formed a good seat for tea breaks.

On Sunday we carefully removed the supports through the wall, one by one back filling with stone/bricks/blocks while the demolition team took down the wall below. Shortly after lunch the gable wall was fully supported and the wall below removed. Clearing away the rubble and tidying up took a long time as always, and as expected we had to remove the porch roof to gain access to the gable wall so this had to be reassembled again.

All in all, this was a productive weekend. We were a relatively small team, comprising John Stevens, Adrian Fawcett, Peter Smith, Mike Read and Paul Hartwright, and the weather, along with the difficulty getting in and out of the Sunday School with the tower scaffolding and props up, meant we were limited on what we could tackle. Next time we hope to finally complete the drains and back fill.

Over the winter it would be good to get the block work up for the shower, as this will help to create a platform for working on the roof. Next year I'm thinking that a whole working week, probably in May, would be the best way to tackle the roof. Prior to that a weekend to erect scaffolding and get organised will be required. If anyone has any more scaffold we can borrow that would be helpful, as we're likely to be a little short to scaffold up everything at the same time.

Bonfire Weekend 2nd-4th Nov

Further work was done on the Old Daren Sunday School on the weekend of the CSS Bonfire Meet.

We set out the shower and toilet walls to locate the waste outlets. This required more of the concrete floor to be broken out and some more tunnelling under the porch wall. We then installed a new manhole and connected the shower, toilet and sink waste pipes to the pumping station. We also built a below ground wall across the porch doorway to enable a proper threshold to be installed. We remembered to install a duct for the power supply to the pump, but I forgot my core drill so couldn't fully backfill the external trench. Inside we set the shower trap and sink outlet in concrete and surrounded the pipes in gravel.

The porch only has a brick floor with no hardcore, so we'll need to dig this out next time so we can place some hard core, install a damp proof membrane and cast a concrete slab.



There appears to be a pair of legs missing a body! I don't recall cutting anyone in half this time. I see why it took so long to clear up.

ODSS Working Events 2019

April 26th-28th - Scaffolding Weekend

The plan this weekend is to install all the scaffolding needed and get everything ready for the big re-roofing project.

May 24th-June 2nd – Re-roofing Week

A whole week of working activity, with the primary objective of dismantling and rebuilding the Sunday School roof with a steel lintel and new roof rafters. Other tasks include fitting the insulation and constructing the mezzanine levels.

This is quite a mammoth task and a major stepping stone in making the ODSS a habitable accommodation. All help will be gratefully received, whether you are a skilled builder, a keen demolisher, handy with a tool kit or just good at making tea.

We're also in need of more scaffold bars: please contact Mike or John if you have any you can make available to the project.

john@k-stevens.co.uk

mikewread@btinternet.com

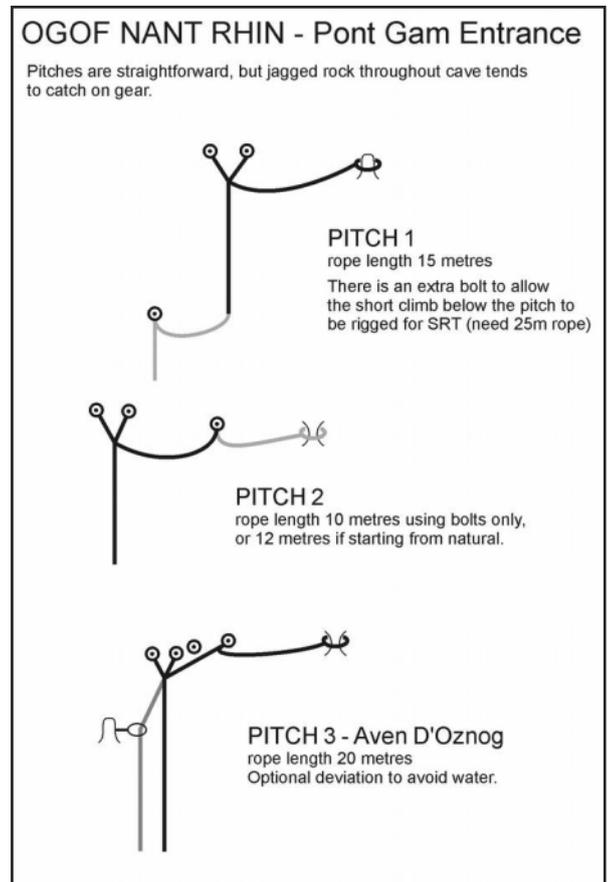


Access to Clydach Gorge Caves

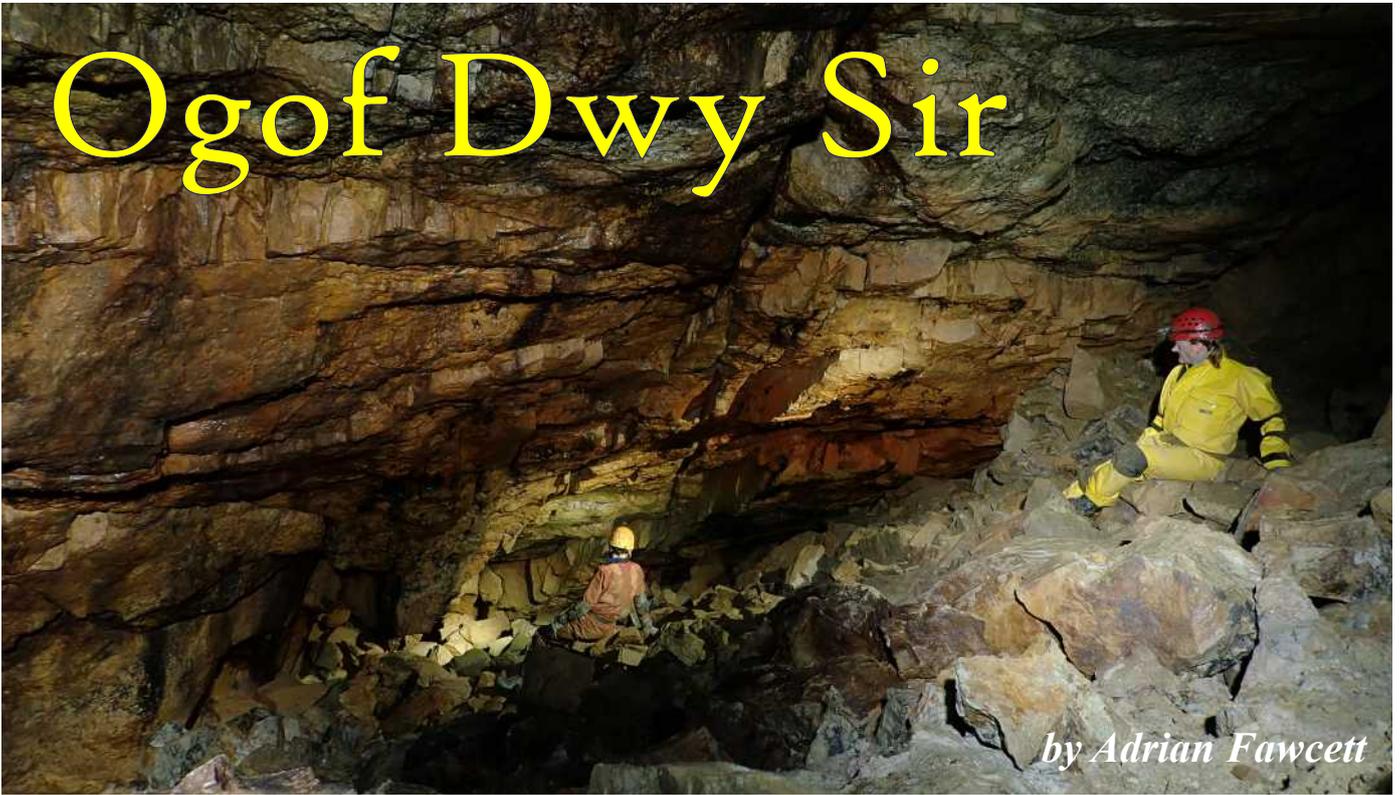
Costain are now working on the section of the A465 that passes over Ogof Capel, so have announced that Ogof Capel and Ogof Gelynnen are closed to cavers from now until mid-2019.

There's no problem with visiting Ogof Nant Rhin and Ogof Pont Gam, except that there is no convenient parking for Nant Rhin. There is, however, a bat tunnel under the A465 next to the Nant yr Hafod stream culvert that is accessible to cavers, so it is feasible to reach Ogof Nant Rhin from the old Clydach road – useful if doing a through trip. The other way to get to Nant Rhin is to go upstream from Ogof Clogwyn, though it's a longer drive from Whitewalls.

Here's Adrian's handy rigging topo for anyone thinking of doing the through trip.



Ogof Dwy Sir



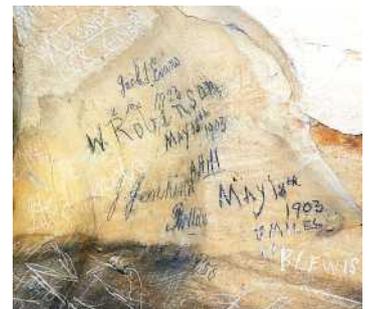
Adrian, Matt and Mandy, 2nd December 2018

When I mentioned I was planning a digging trip to Ogof Dwy Sir, I got the same response from near everybody – where’s that? Meaning “Two Counties Cave”, it lies under the old Monmouthshire / Brecknockshire border on the north side of Gilwern Hill, high up in the limestone sequence. The cave was presumably discovered through quarrying. It was not documented by cavers until 1951, but some of the graffiti on the walls is much earlier.

Until the mid-1990s, the cave was basically a single passage of varying dimensions and very little sediment until the last 20 metres or so, terminating in solid fill. I was involved in a Cwmbran Caving Club dig, excavating a continuation of the passage, and reached a narrow draughting slot in the floor. Before we had properly investigated this, there was a collapse just at the entry to the dig, nearly trapping one of the diggers the other side. The collapse came from somewhere we had previously thought to be an aven, and had dismissed as being of little interest. Following the collapse, it suddenly looked more interesting, and the spoil from that was kicked down into the ‘old’ dig – blocking it, we thought, for good. After 2 further digging sessions, the ‘aven’, now just a steep slope, gave access to an inclined bedding chamber of substantial proportions – named Queen of Hearts Chamber [see photo above]. Digging continued at various sites around the chamber, and one modest extension was made.

Fast forward to 2018, and I decided it was time to have another look at the first dig, with its enticing draughting slot. I persuaded Matt and Mandy to come with me to excavate some of the infill. Of course, we had to pay a visit to Queen of Hearts Chamber first since Matt and Mandy had never been there, and for the last 15 years neither had I. Afterwards we dug for about 2 hours. To start with, it was hard work mining out the compacted gritty clay, but it got progressively easier. And, finally, a small black void appeared. Not quite as exciting as a breakthrough into virgin passage, but very positive all the same. Before we left, I sealed up the hole again... We will be back!

I am intrigued to know where the draughting slot goes. While Queen of Hearts Chamber has much in common with Boulder Land in Ogof Draenen, about 120 metres away, the end dig is heading in a different direction to any known passage in Draenen, and I think it is unlikely to connect. One theory we had back in the 90’s is that it connects with Rift Cave in a quarry on the east side of the hill, about 200 metres distant. Or, on a slightly more southerly bearing it could go the length of Gilwern Hill. Who knows? Cave digging would be far less fun if we knew the answers beforehand.



CSS MEETS 2019

January 25th-27th - Annual Dinner/AGM Weekend

With caving trips to Llanelly Quarry Pot and the Annual Aggy Bat Count followed by dinner at The Bear, and the club AGM on the Sunday.

February 22nd-24th - Whitewalls Weekend

This will be an "off the beaten track" weekend, where we go to all the really random bits of our local caves that we'd normally march straight past. Helen is keen for the challenge of Trident Passage in Aggy, but suggests the alternative of "put the tail on the survey" on Friday after some beers, and go wherever the pin takes us. Saturday night will be a booze themed evening with the beverage of choice yet to be decided; so far contenders are Rum and Brandy based spirits or cocktails.

March 29th-31st - Mendip

April 19th-22nd - Easter in North Wales

April 26th-28th - ODSS Working Weekend

Scaffolding and preparation for the upcoming re-roofing work.

May 24th-June 2nd - Old Daren Sunday School re-roofing week

A week of working in the glorious Welsh sunshine, supping beer and constructing a roof of magnificence that we can all enjoy. Helen has commandeered Saturday 1st June to be our first CSS "Glamour Night" so bring along your sequined outfits and classy cocktails. Suggested caving trips for this weekend are Little Neath River Cave and Ogof Rhyd Sych.

June 28th-30th - Whitewalls Summer BBQ

A fun packed weekend of caving, beer and barbequed food.

July 4th-8th - NAMHO Conference Mid-Wales

July 26th-28th - TBC

August 23rd-26th (Bank Holiday)

Caving in the North York Moors -Trips to include the Jenga/Excalibur Pot through trip, which has only been possible since 2015 and has some good unspoiled formations to see. Hopefully we should also get the chance to visit a recently discovered jet mine, and Bogg Hall Rising, which has fish and an otter in residence (wetsuit needed). This will be a good weekend for doing some more unusual caving trips. In the absence of caving huts it's likely that we'll be camping, and Helen would appreciate it if people would let her know they're coming in plenty of time for her to organise this (bearing in mind this is a Bank Holiday Weekend and will be busier than usual).

September 6th-8th - Rescon Cave Rescue Conference - Mendip

September - Hidden Earth - Date and venue TBC

October - TBC

November 1st-3rd - Whitewalls Bonfire Weekend

A weekend of caving, fireworks, fire and feasting.

December 6th-8th - Whitewalls Curry Weekend

A caving and home-cooked curry themed weekend.

More activities will be added throughout the year. For more information on any of the above trips please contact Helen Pemberton at helenlnightingale@gmail.com.



The prize for photo of the week on the CSS Mallorca trip surely has to go to Trevor Pemberton, who went to the fantastically decorated and popular Coves de Campanet and took this inspirational gem.

KAVERS KUMFY KARPETS

Tired of cold, wet feet on those Whitewalls floor tiles?

Are your feet dirtier after the shower than they were when you went in?

You need

KAVERS KUMFY KARPETS

Just a small square of soft, luxurious carpet will take care of these problems.

Try our special samples, specially customized for CSS members.

Be the envy of your shivering friends.

Get a Kumfy Karpets of your very own from KaKka. plc

Advertisement by Joe Duxbury

Index to Volume 60

Index to the following Chelsea Spelaeological Society Newsletters (ISSN 0045-6381), published in 2018:

1/2/3 - Jan/Feb/Mar	4/5/6 - Apr/May/Jun	7/8/9 - Jul/Aug/Sep	10/11/12 - Oct/Nov/Dec
---------------------	---------------------	---------------------	------------------------

The index uses **Newsletter number:Page number** (with newsletter number being the first of each issue, 1, 4, 7 or 10). **(P)** indicates a photo, **(S)** indicates a survey.

Section 1 - UK

A

Agen Allwedd,

- Main Stream Passage Flood Levels, 10:79 (P)
- Recharge Passage, 4:34 (P), 10:79 (P)
- Rescue Practice, 10:82-83 (P)
- Sandstone Passage, 1:10-11 (P)
- Spectacles or Bra, 10:93 (P)



B

- Bagshawe Cavern, 4:39
- Bradshaw's Cave, 4:40-41 (P)
- Bwlch Glas Mine, 4:42-43 (P)

C

- Capelcleugh Mine, 1:7-8 (P)
- Capes and Caving, 10:80 (P)
- Carr's Mine, 1:5 (P)
- Coniston Copper Mines, 4:25 (P), 4:30-33 (P), 4:48 (P)

CSS

- Joe's Corner, 1:22, 4:41, 7:68,
- Library, 4:27
- Meets, 1:16-17, 4:46, 7:68, 10:75, 10:97
- Message Board, 7:65
- New Flyer, 7:51
- Weddings, 4:39 (P), 7:50 (P)

Culver Hole, 7:54-56 (P)

Cwmorthin Mine, 7:60-61 (P)

D

Daren Cilau - See Ogof Daren Cilau

E

Eastwater Cavern, 4:44-45

F

FOUL Pot, 10:76-77 (P)

G

- Gaping Gill, 4:28
- Giant's Hole, 4:39
- Gonzo Artwork, 1:2 (P), 10:74 (P)

H

Hunt Pot, 4:28-29 (P)

I

Illusion Pot, 4:29 (P)

L

- Little Hull Pot, 4:28-29
- Little Neath River Cave, 7:64-65 (P)
- Lost John's Cave, 10:76

M

- Mendip Cave Fest, 4:44-45
- Milwr Tunnel, 7:69-71 (P)
- Mona Mine, 7:58-59 (P)

N

- Nenthead Lead Mines, 1:4-8 (P)
- Notts II, 10:78, 10:100 (P)

O

- Oakeley Mine, 7:60-61 (P)
- Ogof Daren Cilau,
 - Entrance Boulder Fall, 1:23 (P)
 - Hard Rock Café Camps, 1:12-13 (P), 7:63
 - Cave Beasties, 4:26 (P), 4:43 (P)
 - Extract from Steve Milner's Log Book, 7:66
 - HRC Sound System Gear Review, 7:67
- Ogof Draenen Round Trip, 10:81 (P)



Top: Nyth Brân, OFD - February; Above: Parys Mine - July.

Ogof Dwy Sir, 10:96 (P)
Ogof Fynnon Ddu, 1:1 (P), 1:2 (P), 1:24 (P), 7:50 (P)
 Prokofiev and Nyth Bran Series, 1:14-16 (P)
Ogof Nant Rhin/Pont Gam, 10:95 (S)
Old Daren Sunday School,
 History, 1:18-21 (P)
 Renovation, 4:35-38 (P), 7:57 (P), 10:94-95 (P)

P

Parys Mine, 7:58-59 (P)
Paviland Cave, 7:54-56 (P)

R

Rampgill Mine, 1:6 (P)
Reservoir Hole, 1:9 (PS)

S

Swildon's Hole, 4:45

T

Tween Twins, 4:26(P), 7:62 (P)

W

White Scar Cave, 10:78 (P)
Whitewalls, 4:38 (P), 4:47 (P)

Section 2 - Outside UK

Kenya,

Mau Mau Stone Age Caves, 1:22 (P)

Lanzarote,

Cueva Covon, 7:49 (P), 7:53
 Cueva Esquileto, 7:53, 7:72 (P)
 Cueva Gentes, 7:52 (P)
 Cueva Los Lagos, 7:53 (P)
 Cueva Los Naturalista, 7:53 (P), 7:72 (P)
 Cueva Pico Partido, 7:52

Mallorca,

Avenc del Canal de Coma Freda, 10:84-85 (P)
 Balma des Quarto, 10:87
 Cova Cala Falco, 10:87 (P)
 Cova de sa Campana, 10:85-87 (P)
 Cova des Coloms, 10:88
 Cova des Mular, 10:87 (P)
 Cova des Xots, 10:87-88
 Cova Tencada des
 Cap de Menorca, 10:74 (P), 10:88-89 (P)
 Coves de Campanet, 10:97 (P)
 El Forat 502, 10:73 (P), 10:89-90 (P)
 Mina de Son Creus, 10:91-92 (PS)



Above: Timmo's Table, OFD - February; Top-Right: Coniston Copper Mines - March; Bottom: New septic tank - May; Others: Mallorca - October. Photos by John Stevens, Matt Voysey, Trevor Pemberton.



*Notts II Streamway
Photography by Matt Voysey*

