



**Volume 61  
Nos. 4/5/6  
Apr/May/June 2019**



**Diving Mallorca  
First Caving Trips  
ODSS Roofing  
...and more**

**CHELSEA SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY**



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Above: Hollie Sharp in Eglwys Faen.  
Photo by Steve Sharp.

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**CaveFest 2019**  
 South Wales  
 Crickhowell RFC  
 NP81EE  
 23rd to 26th  
 August

Live Music, Bar,  
 onsite Camping ..  
 Fun for all the  
 Family .  
 • Caving Experience  
 • Treasure Hunt  
 Plus more ..

[www.cavefestuk.co.uk](http://www.cavefestuk.co.uk)

Cavefest is returning to Crickhowell this year, and Whitewalls will again serve as a base for organised visits to the Llangattock caves. Club members who are available to help out at Whitewalls or guide caving trips please contact Adrian at [csssecretary@chelseaspelaeo.org](mailto:csssecretary@chelseaspelaeo.org)

Front Cover: Gian Ameri with 'El Vigilant' in Cova de Sa Gleda, Mallorca, March 2019. Photo by Laurent Miroult.

# Editorial

Loads of good stuff in this issue, and sincere thanks to all the contributors who sent us articles and pictures, whether pressured, bribed, harassed or even sometimes of their own free will!

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

## Rock Movement in Aggy

The Agen Allwedd 2nd Boulder Choke suffered a collapse of boulders on Saturday 29/6/19 as Joe Duxbury was passing through. Luckily he wasn't injured and lives to tell the tale (see page 37). One large loose boulder was made safe by kicking it down into the stream, but there is another still in situ that may well become loose with the passing of caver traffic. So please take care when travelling through this part of cave.



## New Facebook Members Group

We now have a new Facebook members group at [www.facebook.com/groups/ChelseaSpelaeo](http://www.facebook.com/groups/ChelseaSpelaeo).

This is a "closed" group exclusive to CSS club members. To join, log in to your Facebook account and search for "Chelsea Spelaeological Society Members". You can then request to join and one of the group admins will approve you.

Members of the group are welcome to share photos, news, events, chat, and things of caving interest. There's also a calendar for keeping up to date with club and other caving events.

Don't forget we also have a public-facing facebook page for general publicity, news and information at [www.facebook.com/chelseaspelaeo](http://www.facebook.com/chelseaspelaeo), the private web forum at [cssmembers.proboards.com](http://cssmembers.proboards.com), and the official club website at [www.chelseaspelaeo.org](http://www.chelseaspelaeo.org).

**Caution:** Don't be fooled by the fake website that has recently claimed our old address at [chelseaspelaeo.org.uk](http://chelseaspelaeo.org.uk)! This is absolutely nothing to do with us, and if you find any links on the web still pointing to this address please consider contacting the webmaster and asking them nicely to correct them.

## 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:

Andy Heath, 28 Brookfield Road, East Budleigh, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 7EL.

# Pwll y Gwynt

a trip to one of the lesser-visited caves of the Llangattock escarpment

by *Andy Heath*

**Matt Voysey, Mandy Voysey, Jann Padley, Emyr Walters, Andy Heath**

The entrance to Pwll y Gwynt can be difficult to find. Fortunately Matt had been to the entrance before so knew roughly where to look. From Whitewalls, walk along the tramroad and at the point where the path turns right for the final stretch towards Agen Allwedd take the steep gully/scree heading up towards the cliffs. Just to the right of the gully, almost at the foot of the low cliff, the body-sized entrance tube can only be seen when you're right next to it. On a wet day, the gully/scree approach could be quite sporting.

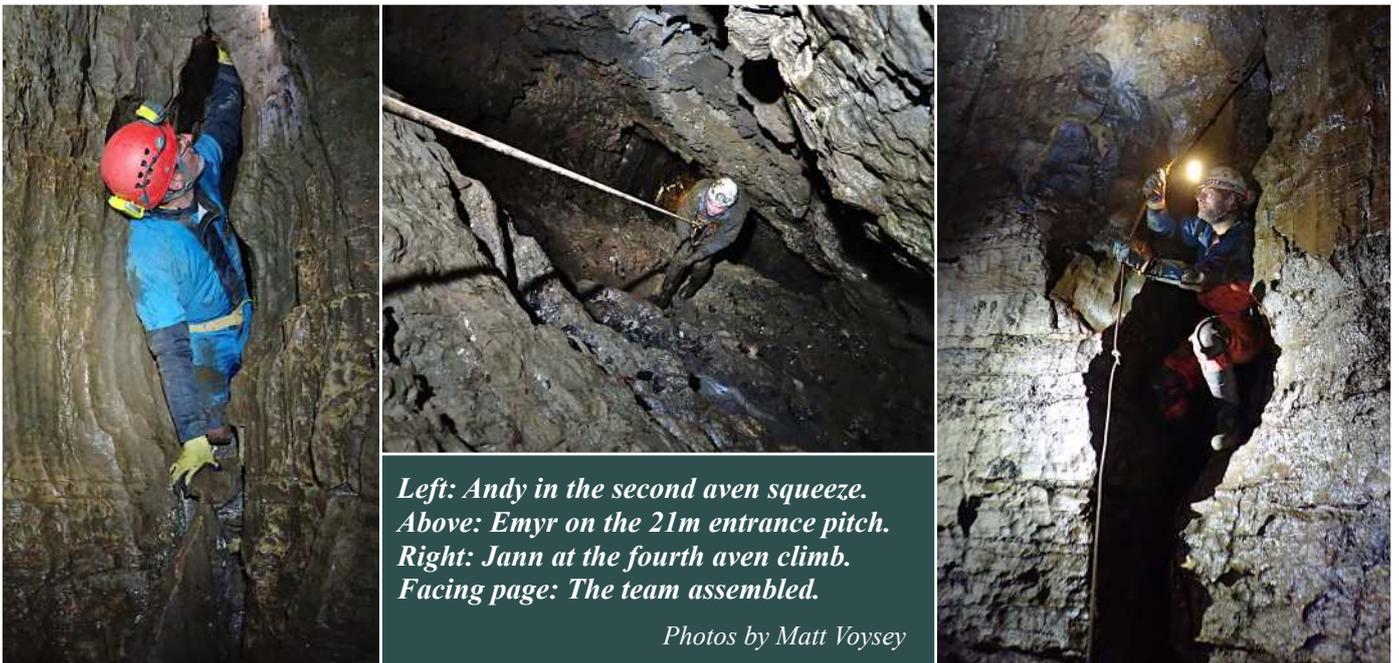
Pwll y Gwynt or 'Wind Pit' lives up to its name, both above and below ground. I don't know whether there is any opening to the surface other than the caver's entrance, but the wind certainly whistles through the place, making it quite a chilly spot to be.

Immediately inside the entrance, the rope for the 21m first pitch is rigged to a couple of scaffold bars spanning the rift. At the bottom, the way on is a narrow squeeze in a rift to the second aven, followed by a short crawl to a ledge part way up the third aven. On the occasion of our visit there were numerous bats hanging around as they are wont to do. Some of them had chosen quite vulnerable places, so caution was required.

Thankfully they all had the decency not to actually block our progress. From the third aven, another short crawl and climb leads to a window popping out part way up the fourth aven. A knotted rope assists with the descent to the foot of this impressive aven.

The way on is a low crawl opposite where we came in. From here on in, the cave gets quite muddy. A short crawl, down a small pot, left at a t-junction, up a short climb, through another narrow bit, left at a sharp bend, through a flat out squeeze (especially tight for one of our number) and the fifth aven is reached. The way on is up the aven. Assisted by a stout SRT rope of unknown vintage attached to belay of unknown quality, Emyr cautiously ascended the 12m aven. Those below retreated to safety when the brittle nature of the rock became apparent as a not insignificant foothold snapped off and made a speedy descent. Emyr rigged our rope for the rest of us to ascend.

At the top, a small tube leads via a narrow squeeze to part way up the sixth aven, where an old rope can be seen. The author was first to inspect this tube and returned (with some very helpful pulling of the ankles by Mandy) to report he wasn't too keen to commit himself to the descent because a) he couldn't see how to sensibly rig the pitch but,



more importantly, b) the squeeze was pretty tight without SRT kit, with SRT kit it could pose quite a challenge (or was he just being a wimp?) Mandy then inspected the way on, being of narrower build and more squishy. She too was less than enthusiastic (or was the author's wimpishness contagious?)

Matt the human eel was however built of sterner stuff. Advancing out over the drop, he located an eyebolt which enabled him to rig a rope. With a couple of gymnastic manoeuvres, he got on the rope and descended the pitch, alone. Several minutes later he returned, having visited the soggy crawl to the end.

Back up the rope, he successfully regained the tube by reversing his previous manoeuvre, entering feet first. I must confess to being pleased at seeing the struggle that followed, when it became necessary for me to wriggle into the tube to remove as many bits of Matt's SRT kit as I could reach since he didn't seem to be making any progress without me doing so. I hasten to add I wasn't so much pleased for Matt and his dilemma, but more for the fact that it reinforced my decision not to attempt the manoeuvre myself since I'm a bit broader than he.

The return trip was simply a reversal of the route in. An enjoyable and worthwhile trip.



#### More info about the cave:

[www.ogof.org.uk/pwll-y-gwynt.html](http://www.ogof.org.uk/pwll-y-gwynt.html)  
(photos, description and a link to a short youtube film)

CSS records volume 19 - 'An Exploration Journal of Llangattwg Mountain' (survey, description and history of exploration)

## SMWCRT Rescue Practices

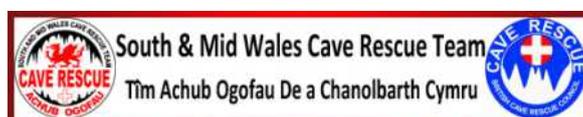
**Sat 17th August - Mid-Wales Mine Rescue Practice**

**Sat 5th October - Venue and scenario TBC**

**Sat 30th November - Big OFD Practice, Penwyllt**

For up to date information regarding the venue and focus of the above events see the team's website at [www.smwcrt.org](http://www.smwcrt.org) or speak to CSS members Paul Tarrant, Dan Thorne, Lisa Boore or Tom Foord. All practices run from 9:30-17:00 including briefings.

All members are welcome to partake in these events and learn about all aspects of cave rescue from the SMWCRT team. Whatever your skill set there will be something useful to do and plenty to learn.



# Dan yr Ogof

Wednesday 29/5/19

by Paul Tarrant

Some months back, Mandy Voysey had contacted me about doing a trip in DYO so as to learn the main route through the 37 Series to the Long Crawl. Familiarity with this sector of the cave is one of the conditions to becoming a Conservation Warden and leader, so we set up a trip for the week of the ODSS re-roofing week.

The weather forecast on the day we planned the trip was for persistent light rain, so we decided to keep the trip short. Mandy and Adrian met me at the car park, where we carried out the necessary paperwork with the very friendly show cave management people, and we went in whilst a light drizzle was falling on us.

The lakes beyond the show cave were very low, revealing the deep trenching in the floor at this part of the cave. The water flowing over the cascades was as loud as ever, making this a genuinely exciting bit of the cave. Our climb out at the end of the lakes was athletic and we entered the glorious phreatic tube that takes you to an impressive set of formations. We went right at this point to see the Pot Sump with its ladder.

We followed the main route through the cave and entered Boulder Chamber and located the entrapment store which is for use by anyone unfortunate enough to be flooded into the cave. Going further into the cave follows a reasonably obvious path until the start of the Longer Crawl is reached. This is a climb up into a calcited aven, made obvious by the presence of a telephone wire, installed for cave rescue purposes. You don't need to go up here but it does lead to a fascinating part of the cave which is well adorned with formations in places. Shortly beyond lay the start of the Long Crawl at which point we turned back.

We visited the beautifully decorated Corbel's Chamber with long straws and flowstone. The inner chamber is magnificent with crystal pools and a climb up on a knotted rope that gives access to a beautiful white column and a copper blue shining bit of calcite. Our return to the surface was uneventful, but rain was falling heavily as we changed in the car park and was not the light rain as forecast. Don't

believe what the BBC predict! We retreated to the Ancient Briton for a very good pint and a bit of a natter which wrapped up the day rather nicely.

*Addendum: Mandy and Adrian have now been made Conservation Wardens for the cave, so if anyone would like a trip into this excellent cave system, do get in touch. Hopefully we can arrange some extra trips for the club calendar in the near future.*

*Photos of Mandy and Adrian in Corbel's Chamber by Paul Tarrant.*



# ODSS Scaffolding Weekend

by Joe Duxbury

A very productive weekend was had over the last weekend in April, which was spoiled by some critical losses.



Although the Sunday School was successfully surrounded by scaffolding...



...some delinquents managed to remove the water tank.



Though they were seen carrying out this shocking crime, they could not be caught.



John Mazzezy was inside at the time, but he was making so much noise with a breaker, he didn't hear them.



Then some bounders made off with the chimney!



Andy Heath didn't realise it had gone, and nearly came a cropper when he tried to lean on it.

# My First Caving Trip

## or How I Began my Illustrious Caving Career

Compiled by Mandy Voysey

Inspired by Gonzo's article about his introduction to the world of caving in the last newsletter (vol 61, nos 1/2/3), I thought it would be interesting to collect more stories in this theme. So I turned up at the working week armed with a large notepad in readiness to pester people into writing their stories of how it all began. Despite the tiredness of many hours manual labour, a collection of tales was assembled. Here is part one of this compilation.



Andy Heath

'twas all for the love of a dusky maiden... Well, what happened was, whilst at Sixth Form College, our Outdoor Pursuits Society was always looking for new stuff to try. This girl that I fancied proposed caving. To be honest, the idea didn't appeal in the slightest, but not wanting to lose face, I reluctantly participated. Our first trip was to GB, there were 10 of us (remember the rules for GB are no novices and max party size of 6!). Still, we weren't to know, but the well-known Mendip caver who took us should have known better. To cut a long story short, I loved the experience and 39 years later I'm still at it. By the way, I never did strike lucky with the dusky maiden.

Perhaps appropriately, for someone later to join CSS, my first caving trip was to Music Stand in Aggy. Steve Waters, one of Cwmbran Caving Club's members, took me - I'd found out about them from a BBNP leaflet about caving. My 10th anniversary trip was Aggy Grand Circle, so when it was time for my 20th anniversary trip I had to go one better and do the Aggy figure of 8.



Adrian Fawcett



Helen Pemberton

When I was 6, I had to go to visit my grandparents who lived in Bryn, in South Wales and we went to Dan yr Ogof. It was fab! I saw the side passages where proper cavers went and I wanted to go, but my mum said no. 20 years later, I went to New Zealand. There they have a tourist cave area - you can do glow worm trips or float down an underground river in an inner-tube. I discovered they also did a more adventurous option so I did that. We got dressed up in a special caving wetsuit, the likes of which I have not seen here. It was more heavy duty, with reinforcements on the knees and elbows. We also got taught how to abseil down a nice grassy slope before heading underground with our leader. I remember crawling on hands and knees down a tunnel and being told to take the second turning. I missed it as it was so small. I had to lie down to get through, and I hadn't expected that. Then it opened out into a big chamber that we abseiled into. There was a ladder rigged up, or you could climb a cliff face. Nobody else was brave enough to try it, but it was fun. I then saw lots of glow worms on the way out. It was the best day out and I wanted to go again. Sadly I lived in Norfolk (no caves), with a man who didn't do fun stuff (boo), and had to work weekends (pants). 5 years later I ended up living in London, not working weekends, and single. London has far better caving opportunities than very rural Norfolk. My first proper caving weekend involved staying at a very odd bunkhouse in the Forest of Dean, with wild boar roaming outside and a very local landlord onsite. I was shown how to climb an electron ladder in a tree outside, and had to prove I could climb and descend 10 times or no caving. I was the only novice to pass this test, so was allowed to join the trip to Slaughter Stream. I loved every minute of it. Day 2 was a trip to Morse's Level with the legend that is Mole. He goes underground in an old t-shirt, even older jumper, and a pair of very small shorts that are small enough that his balls hang out, while we all rocked up with furry suits and oversuits. This trip was scary! Don't touch the rotting pit props. Don't go up that passage, it might fall in. Despite the evident danger, and despite seeing the massive bruises on the inner thighs of the other novices that failed the ladder test, I still decided that caving was as good as I'd imagined it would be 25 years ago.

I have been to Slaughter Stream and Morse's Level since, and have got used to Mole's bollocks hanging out of his shorts. I have been in caves probably nobody else has ever been to. Caving has led me to 3 day long pub crawls involving cable cars and 7 hour walks between bars, 48 hours underground, a hen night and a wedding underground - and I still don't understand how anyone can get such badly bruised inner thighs, and I still don't believe in knee pads.



John Newton

My first try at caving was in the summer of 1971. A friend at school had an older brother who knew some cavers, and two of them offered to take a few of us to Mendip for the weekend. We drove down in a battered Landrover and stayed at the New Inn in Priddy which did B&B back in those days. They also provided some fine packed lunches. Saturday morning we were told that it was 'dry' caving that day and we started by heading to Burrington. Dressed in old grots and boiler suits and with carbide lights, we were taken on the round trip in Goatchurch with a visit through The Drainpipe and then on to Read's Cavern where we went to Zed Alley, again using both entrances. It was after this that the Landrover showed its worth as we could travel between caves without taking muddy gear off. Next we went to

Cuckoo Cleaves. I don't remember a lot about this cave other than it seemed really short. I have been back once since to get to Lake Chamber and it was still short. Back in the Landrover and over to the Wessex where we parked and walked over to Sludge Pit Hole and Nine Barrows. I remember enjoying these the most on that first day as they seemed to have the most variety and Nine Barrows has some good formations. It is a pity that it's still closed. A good meal and a couple of 'illegal' beers ended the day and I fell asleep quickly by counting bruises. This was such a vivid memory that when I started caving regularly my first purchase was a pair of kneepads.

Sunday morning we walked over to Swildon's. This was much more like it, as it felt like a proper cave with the noise of the water and some great formations (there was far less damage 40 years ago). We reached Sump 1 and were asked if we wanted to go on to Sump 2. We all said yes and took the plunge. In those days the underwater passage was considerably larger than it is now, although just as cold. It was a great end to a fine weekend. It was about six years before I started to cave properly but I never forgot this trip and it was the inspiration to join a club.

"Where does that go to?"... "oh no, you can't go there, that's where the cavers and divers go. There are 3 big chambers and the rest of the cave down there". Me vs Mitchelstown Cave tour guide. That was my hook, and I then read "London Under London" by Richard Trench. So armed with lights, gloves, skateboard and Vicks VapoRub, my brother and I tackled our local sewer. We were knackered, dirty, smelly, but very happy. I joined the "Chelsea" straight away because they were a London club!!! (con men)... and met Stuart France at Whitewalls. I was blown away by a world of random club huts in the mountains. My first trip was into Draenen, all the way to the end of Gilwern Passage. I was so pleased that my made-up caving gear survived, and that I'd survived too. Having now done many Draenen trips, I wonder if Stuart was either a) trying to scare me off, b) trying to see what I was made of or c) just didn't like me. It felt like a really difficult trip at the time. But that was the beginning, and I still have my trip report.



Gary Kiely



Mandy Voysey

For Matt and me, it was a mix of chance and the spirit of adventure that first drew us into caving, and our first foray was Aveline's Hole. Though only a single passage that takes mere minutes for the average caver to get to the end of, seeing such an obvious cave open for anyone to explore without an entrance fee was a revelation to us. We'd only just moved to Mendip and knew nothing of caving. We fumbled along as far as the daylight lasted and thought it was great. Sometime later we happened upon Goatchurch Cavern, and enthused by this discovery we returned one evening after work equipped with torches, woolly hats and scruffy clothes. First we went to the end of Aveline's, then as far as the end of the main entrance passage in Goatchurch. We daren't go down the

Giant's Staircase as we were fearful it might lead to a pit of certain death, or at least somewhere that only professionals should venture, but we were well chuffed with our adventure. The next cave we found was Read's Cavern, and we thought the Main Chamber was huge and amazing. We visited these a few more times, still not daring to venture too far, until one day I managed to persuade a couple of chaps from my work to join us. Emboldened by extra people we actually descended the Giant's Steps and went to the Tradesman's Entrance. We had a brilliant time and formed our own caving club (the Amateur Ranking Subterranean Exploration Society), and spent the next 6 months or so caving everywhere we could find that didn't need keys or equipment. We acquired a "rope", and we used this to great effect by dropping it down anything that looked awkward, then testing if we could do it without, and if so taking it onwards. Employing this technique, and also moving slowly due to lack of helmet, decent lighting or pads, meant that every trip took hours, particularly as we used to explore every nook and cranny that we encountered. Fun as this was, we knew we really needed to join a proper club if we were to carry on with this caving lark. So we did, and very soon after realised that having some proper kit would also be advantageous. Surprisingly what started off as a bit of a Famous Five style adventurous mess-about, has really stuck, and 16 years later we're still actively exploring caves and having fun underground.

# Aggy Bat Count *by Helen Pemberton*

On 26th January, John Stevens, Peter Smith, Rhiannon Hobbs (a Manchester zoology student) and myself did the annual Aggy bat count. This has been done for over 30 years, always covering the same areas. We count all the bats we see from the entrance to the music room, including the side passages. This was a record year, with over 800 Lesser Horseshoes counted, plus 2 Greater Horseshoes and a Brown Long-Eared bat.

Aggy has been designated a SSSI because the large number of Lesser Horseshoes is of international importance. Other species known to hibernate here include Brandt's, Whiskered, Daubenton's, Natterer's, Brown Long-Eared and, occasionally, Greater Horseshoe bats. Much of Mynydd Llangattock and all of the Craig-y-Cilau National Nature Reserve is also designated a SSSI, and provides habitat and food for the bats outside of their hibernation.



*The Lesser Horseshoe (Rhinolophus hipposideros)*

The Lesser Horseshoe bat's worldwide IUCN status has improved from 'Vulnerable' to 'Least Concern' in the last 20 years. It is locally common and is the bat we are most familiar with seeing in the Welsh caves. They can also be found in South West England and Western Ireland. Overall populations are increasing, probably due to more favourable climatic conditions over the past twenty years, coupled with considerable effort to protect and enhance roosts over that period too. It is rare to find dozens of Lesser Horseshoes hibernating in one place, so we are very fortunate to have so many in Aggy. The UK supports one of the largest populations of this species in western Europe.

The Lesser Horseshoe is one of the world's

smallest bats. It weighs 5-9g, and looks about the size of a plum. In comparison, the average mouse weighs 18-30g. Females can lose 23% of their body weight over hibernation. Newborns weigh around 1.8g – about the same as a standard playing card, or 3,300,000 times less than an elephant. Amazingly, they have been known to live for 21 years, but more commonly their lifespan may be around 5-7 years.

Lesser Horseshoes are easy to identify during hibernation because they hang upside down in the open. They are the typical Halloween style bat. They are obviously smaller than the Greater Horseshoes, and they fully wrap their wings around their body whereas the Greater Horseshoe's wings do not fully enclose the body. Both species hibernate in similar conditions, between September/October through until April and possibly May. They prefer to hibernate in caves, tunnels or cellars at around 8 to 11°C, in humid conditions. You tend not to find them above running water. The Lesser Horseshoe will hibernate far deeper into cave systems than any other species. The literature varies on spacing of individuals during hibernation. We found spacing varied according to location. Bats found throughout the Entrance Series were often in small groups of 5-10, perhaps 10-50cm apart; in Angel's Roost, Peter counted 150+ individuals in a small area; and in contrast, the bats in the main passage to the Music Room were often spread out with several metres between individuals. Last year we noticed that if a bat was seen on one side of the passage, it was very likely we'd find one on the opposite wall. They will hang at any level, from the ceiling to the cracks in the floor, and on boulders at foot level. Lesser Horseshoes are said to be easily disturbed during hibernation, but many hanging right on the main through-route appear unperturbed by cavers. It appears that early on the bats may roost in the cave overnight and continue to forage when conditions are suitable. They will then select a different site for their main hibernation. You generally do not spot a hibernating bat above a pile of guano.

The Greater Horseshoe bat is also quite rare in Britain (though its IUCN status is also 'Least Concern'), only occurring in South Wales and South West England. Populations are fragmented,



*The Greater Horseshoe bat (Rhinolophus ferrumequinum)*

and the Welsh Greater Horseshoes are particularly isolated and are losing genetic diversity, with their status in Wales being 'Near Threatened'. You are likely to see more Greater Horseshoes in some of the Mendip caves than in Agen Allwedd. The Greater Horseshoe is significantly larger than the Lesser Horseshoe, and can be more dominant, driving the smaller species out of habitats, so what seems bad for Greater Horseshoe numbers is a plus for maintaining and increasing the population of the Lesser Horseshoes. The Greater Horseshoes have seen a 90% population decline over 100 years, which may be attributed to use of anthelmintics (commonly used veterinary treatments in livestock farming) in eliminating their food, among other causes.

The Greater Horseshoe is one of our largest species, about the size of a pear, and the larger ones

being a similar size to a Chinese hamster – the species that is the stereotypical children's pet. They weigh approx. 17-34g, or a third of a deck of playing cards, or about one-two-hundred-thousandth as heavy as an elephant. If you had never seen a pear or a plum, or a Lesser Horseshoe, you could tell a Greater Horseshoe because they do not fully encase their bodies with their

wings while hibernating. You may see some grey/brown fur between the wings, and some of the distinctive nasal features, giving the Horseshoes their name. Greater Horseshoe bats have been found to live up to 30 years, and are the longest living bat of all the European species. The bats have grey fur until they are a year old, and it then turns to brown.

Like the Lesser Horseshoes, the Greater Horseshoe bat hangs upside down in the open, so are easy to see while hibernating. They are noticeably more flighty than the Lesser Horseshoes, and are more easily disturbed. They wake frequently, from every day to every 6-10 days, and will move roosts if temperatures fluctuate. Some bats have been found to move 30km during the hibernation season, in search of suitable temperature roosts. 10km is more normal. Females tend to roost alone and always return to the same roost site, while males may form small clusters – up to 300 strong in some areas.

**Thanks go to Peter Smith for providing additional information for this article, and to Andy Lewington for permission to use his photographs.**

At the recent weekend of scaffolding work on the Old Daren Sunday School, during the evening's boozing intake of alcoholic refreshment, we realised that most of the drinks being consumed had names of animals. Here is a list of them:

- |   |           |          |   |
|---|-----------|----------|---|
|  | 1. Sheep  | 2. Hen   |  |
|   | 3. Ferret | 4. Goose |  |
|   | 5. Hare   | 6. Llama |   |

Can you add the adjectives preceding these? You can find the answers at the end of this issue. The last one is more obscure.

Also suggested was an idea for the next CSS social evening at Whitewalls: animal-themed drinks. What do you think?



# Tynning's Barrows Swallet

## CSS Mendip Weekend - Saturday 30th March 2019

Joe Duxbury, Gareth Jones, Simon Perkins, Barry Weaver

This trip was arranged the night before in 'The Hunters', as I didn't fancy Adrian's choice of Rhino Rift. The new edition of 'Mendip Underground' said that 3 ladders (5, 8 and 6 m long) were needed, but I didn't pay attention to where they had to be placed. In any case, the only ones available were 9 m. We drove to Tynning's Farm, and had to cope with road works – holes being filled with endless wheelbarrow-loads of tar. Unfortunately the lady of the house wasn't in to give us the key, so we decided to wait the 15 minutes we were told she'd be. Just as we got up to go and find the entrance while we were waiting, the man who'd been mowing the lawn called us back with the key, which he'd phoned to find where it was kept.

We got changed and found the entrance quickly enough. It was clear that a ladder had to be used down the concrete pipes of the entrance, and Barry, first down, managed to thread it on down another short drop. Then we just followed the main passage. The only bit of the survey that had caught my attention was 'The Aardvark Trap', a deep hole requiring a bold step over it, which we did. All that we had to do then was keep going, negotiating a variety of short squeezes and crawls, accompanied by Gareth belching all the way! He put it down to having drunk a good share of 2 bottles of whisky the night before. We came to a short drop, that required a ladder, but it was nowhere near 6 m, let alone 8. Because we kept expecting a sizeable drop, we carried the bag with the rope all the way. Even when the bottom fell out of the bag we clipped it up with a krab and still kept it with us.

Eventually we came to an accumulation of plastic bags full of spoil, before a low crawl. Barry went to have a look, and confirmed what we had guessed, it was the end. Along the way back was a large passage, coming straight in on a right-hand bend. We went up this, and came to a small waterfall, which we climbed. This passage also ended, in what Barry described as a boulder choke.

So we made our way back, without any major problems. A good trip of about 3½ hours. When I had a good look at the description I found we had used the ladder down the entrance for the second pitch as well. Even so, none of the pitches needed a ladder of more than about 5 m, and weren't serious enough to need lifelines.

*by Joe Duxbury*



# LOOSE ROCKS

by Joe Duxbury



# IN AGEN ALLWEDD

CSS Barbecue Weekend: Saturday 29th June 2019

Joe Duxbury, Paul Tarrant, Barry Weaver

For the Saturday morning of the CSS barbecue Barry had suggested a trip to Deep Water to Paul, and I invited myself along. It had been a few years since Barry had been in Aggy, and I think this was something of a refresher trip for him. Paul asked him not to go *too* fast, and Barry said he would go slowly. Well, if the pace he kept was slow, Paul and I would have no chance keeping up if he'd opted for fast mode!

Anyway we all managed to keep together and had a brief rest in Baron's Chamber. We kept up the same steady pace to the 2nd Boulder Choke, where I expressed a preference

for going down at the boulder by the traverse line at the end of Keyhole Chamber. The others agreed that leaping over the crack in the floor was not suitable for gentleman cavers of a certain age.

When we got to Mud Rose Chamber, where the notice is telling you how dangerous the boulders are, I sat on the edge of the hole, in order to drop down into the water, when there was a rumble and a rock dropped out from under me. I quickly pulled my legs back up and took a look at what had happened. A rock had dropped from under the lip of the hole, and the one above it, right on the lip, was now loose. There's plenty of room in the streamway underneath these rocks, so we removed the loose one and shoved it upstream a bit. The rock that now forms the lip is stable enough when stood on, but you can move it slightly by pulling up on it. It would probably be best removed altogether (needing a crowbar, which we didn't have), together with the small amount of rubble on top of it. I don't think this will have a great effect on the chamber; the floor will be a bit shorter and the hole a bit bigger.

With that little bit of excitement over, we proceeded to North West Junction, and downstream slightly to Cascade Passage, where Paul took some photos, and we had a bite to eat. While we were sitting, Barry and Paul's super lights showed a high level passage above where Cascade Passage enters the Main Stream. Has anyone been up there? Furthermore, in the ceiling by there is a hole through the gobbet layer. It looks to be humanly passable. Difficult to reach, but worth a look.



*Joe and Barry in Main Stream Passage beyond Cascade Inlet*



*Barry in Second Boulder Choke*

We then made our way back, with Paul taking another few more photos. In all my trips into Aggy, I don't recall ever visiting the grille blocking off the original entrance passage. So I persuaded the others to wait for me while I went for a look. It's not as far as I thought it might be. And it's quite hideous. Be that as it may, we had a very enjoyable and sociable trip, taking about 4 hours.

*Photos by Paul Tarrant*

# *Cova de Sa Gleda*

## *Manacor, Mallorca, Spain*

*by Gian A. Ameri*

### **Foreword**

Sa Gleda is quite a special cave and Martyn Farr and Owen Clarke (UK CDG) were the very first to put some underwater cave line there (a loooooong time ago, 1990 to 1998), completing the Circuit des Pirates (about 300+ metres) in the Sala Ripoll, the first submerged room immediately past the entry lake. More than a decade ago I exchanged a few emails with Owen Clarke when I was making my first steps in cave diving and it was him who put me in the direction of Sa Gleda. I contacted him by email because I saw reference on the web to his work. He answered immediately and was very helpful. I wish I had met him to thank him in person, but back then our paths never crossed, other than over the internet.

### **February - May 2019 : Gian A. Ameri, Laurent Miroult, Sergio Jimenez Almazan (Karst Exploration and Conservation Project)**

After the initial underwater exploration by UK CDG, who became known locally as “los Galeases,” the Grup Nord de Mallorca (a local cave diving group) did amazing work further exploring and documenting the cave with limited resources. The work can now be easily accessed on the internet at <https://tinyurl.com/yymdre48> (Endins, vol. 34, Nov 2010), and <https://tinyurl.com/y2c6cstx> (Endins vol. 31, Nov 2007).

It is a big cave (an understatement) and still full of unexplored passages. The topography in some sections is very very accurate. However, in other sections there are gross errors which need correcting (10 meters error over 50 metres distance) and in some areas the topography just does not correspond with reality. The errors are due to the difficult working conditions in some sections. The layer between the fresh rain water “floating” over the more dense sea water, typical of Mallorcan anchihaline caves, is corrosive to the karst, and it is very easy just with exhaled bubbles from scuba diving equipment to displace large amounts of silt from the ceiling, sometimes falling rocks and debris, and in such conditions, zero vis, carrying out topography with traditional methods is not easy and leads to gross errors.

So, a lot of work still needs to be done both exploring and documenting. To obviate the problems encountered in the past we adopt new technologies like rebreathers and scooters (to reduce the impact on the cave and visibility) and underwater “distos” – basically devices which automate the collection and mapping of topographical data permitting high accuracy including in zero vis. (see <http://arianesline.azurewebsites.net/Home/Mnemo>).

With rebreathers the exhaled gas hitting the ceiling is reduced to a minimum. With scooters, including with traditional Open Circuit, the impact on the cave ceiling can be reduced as the exhaled bubbles are broken up and dispersed by the faster moving diver. Rebreathers and scooters, although not essential, do help given the conditions found in the Mallorcan anchihaline caves, and logistically permit longer dives and longer penetrations in relative safety with ample time to carry out exploration and topographical work.

They are also of great help for documenting with photography the state of the cave over time, as with careful planning and coordination and technique it is possible for a small team of divers in a very short time to gather a large amount of exceptionally clear and precise photographic data which can later be analysed. What the diver can see with his eyes is restricted in vision and depth by the limited field of vision of the mask and the limited light from cave diving lights, which are no match to the data which can be gathered by photographic technique.

One of the tasks we wanted to achieve first was to gather photographic data for later analysis, and so we did. We took care to try and take identical shots and angles to those that had been taken in the past so that we could have a direct comparison of the state of conservation of the cave over time, as well as focus on other areas to see what the eyes miss and cannot see.

Some of the pictures taken by Laurent Miroult are published on his website ([www.cavediving.pictures](http://www.cavediving.pictures)) at <https://tinyurl.com/SaGleda1> and <https://tinyurl.com/SaGleda2>, while the others gathered (16.6 GB of data) are still being studied and are freely available on request.

From a photography perspective, one of the major challenges in Sa Gleda cave was to deal with the almost omnipresent halocline (the intersection between the denser salt water below and the lighter fresh water above). We used remote strobes to improve the perception of the size of some passages and to add extra depth of field in the pictures, but this cannot be done “solo” and requires the help of one or more divers. These extra divers swimming in front of the camera inevitably disturb the halocline and the light with adverse effects on the image, distorting its quality. With a good pre-dive briefing and excellent coordination in the dive team, it was possible to diminish the effects of the halocline while using those remote strobes. By adopting a high-end camera with a good dynamic range and high ISO capability we were able to do away with remote strobes, including in some of the bigger sections, but this required more image post-processing later.

We'd like to take the opportunity to release some unpublished data collected in the interest of safety. Bear in mind that Sa Gleda is a large cave, with very complex navigation, very old lines, and in many cases poorly laid in difficult conditions. It is an exploration cave and not a tourist cave like many cenotes in Mexico.

The Sa Gleda cave system has been the subject not so long ago of a very serious potentially fatal cave diving accident leading to the most complex and difficult cave rescue in Spain, which in short you can read about at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-40558067>.

This has highlighted the need of identifying and knowing which of the few dry sections of Sa Gleda are respirable and can be used as potential refuge to await rescue in the event of an emergency, as it is known that high CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations are present underground in Mallorca.

To this end, in collaboration with Sr. José A. Encinas, the author of the Mallorcan cave bible, “Corpus Cavernario Mayoricense” ([www.ccmallorca.net](http://www.ccmallorca.net)), we tested a novel CO<sub>2</sub> Sensor (non-chemical, NDIR technology) capable of accurately reading up to 10% CO<sub>2</sub> (the 2% version is described at <https://tinyurl.com/yxekhasx>). We experimentally adapted with good results the 2% CO<sub>2</sub> NDIR technology in our rebreathers to manage the hypercapnia risk, and others have taken on the task to introduce this potentially life-saving technology ([www.notco2.com](http://www.notco2.com)).

With respect to dry caving applications, first we tested the CO<sub>2</sub> Sensor by lowering it down with a rope in Sr. Encinas' artificial well in his nice and characteristic finca<sup>[1]</sup> near Pollença, obtaining a reading of 7.4% CO<sub>2</sub>, and then with manned dry-caving in a particular cave known for higher CO<sub>2</sub>, Cova de les Rodes<sup>[2]</sup>. We also determined during these trials, utilising concurrently O<sub>2</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub> sensors, that there appeared to be an indirect relationship between CO<sub>2</sub> and O<sub>2</sub> levels in the test cave, with a drop of about 1% in O<sub>2</sub> for every increase of 1% in CO<sub>2</sub>.

Following positive test results, NDIR CO<sub>2</sub> sensor technology was adopted to collect data from all dry sections in Cova de Sa Gleda with the following results:

- *Sala dels Homes Vells* >2% (likely to be less than 3%, but requires re-testing)
- *Sal del Tub* 1.87%
- *Sala de les Coniques* 0.08%
- *Cambra dels Moros* 0.11%
- *Sala del Cendrar* 0.38%
- *Sala dels Templers* 1.84%
- *Sala Frances Ripoll (air bell)* 0.20%

With the best dry section to await rescue being Sala de les Coniques, not just for the low level of CO<sub>2</sub>, but for its location should the not so stable Pas d'en Judes collapse.

Be mindful that CO<sub>2</sub> levels vary throughout the year in Mallorcan caves and they tend to be higher in the summer, and lower up and until Easter week, very much linked with the solar irradiation of the surface area in question.

A lot more work in Sa Gleda is required and planned, to include documenting photographically areas to date undocumented and unpublished, concurrently measuring CO<sub>2</sub> and O<sub>2</sub> levels, and improving the topography using new technology and techniques.

[1] 123 BC, allegedly founded by Quintus Caecilius Metellus Balearicus a few kilometres to the east, but in the neighbouring bay of Alcúdia from where the war refugees who settled on the current site came from, at the mouth of the interior valleys of the Balearic islands mountains.

[2] Cova de les Rodes, o de la Palla: ED-50 31, 504380 4419050 40m. Corpus Cavernario Mayoricense, J. A. Encinas S., 2014: pág. 1034, Ediciones el Gall, Pollença I. Balears -Mallorca ; ISBN-10 84-616-8843-0; ISBN-13 978-84-616-8843-2

### **Finding the cave and access:**

UTM Grid ref: WGS84 39°29'53.4"N 3°16'32.4"E. Altitude 49 metres.

Cova de Sa Gleda was designated in March 2015 EU Natura 2000 Special Area of Conservation (Site ES5310054). Prior to any access authorization must be sought from Direcció General de Medio Natural, Educación Ambiental Y Cambio Climático (DGMA), Gobierno de las Islas Baleares, C/ Gremi de Corredors, 10 (Polígono Son Rossinyol) - 07009 Palma de Mallorca, telephone 971 17 66 66 - Fax 971 17 66 99, email: aflorit@dgmambie.caib.es. Furthermore, because the cave is located on private land in the idyllic and secluded farm of Son Josep de Baix (www.sonjosepdebaix.com), keys and permission for access must also be sought from the landowner. The drive path to the cave is protected by a locked gate and the cave entrance is protected by a further gate with three chains and locks with 24/7 internet linked security cameras in operation, this measure implemented after repeat trespassing and illegal entries at night by organised groups exploiting the cave commercially. A register of key access is maintained by the landowner, and in addition, prior to access, the DGMA requires notification at least one week in advance to the local Environmental Police (Servicios de Agentes de Medio Ambiente). Furthermore, for cave diving activities the DGMA requires notifying the emergency number 112 at the beginning and end of the diving activity. Other than for the above, reaching the submerged section entry lake is very easy, as it is a short walk down and along the sides of the dry cave section collapse, a path which in the old days was done with donkeys used to actuate a mechanical pumping system (remnants still present) to extract the surface layer of fresh rain water for sheep and other animals. The walk down the collapse is potentially risky as large unstable slabs, and trees from the upper edge of the collapse, on occasion fall down without warning. Access is best avoided in case of very strong and gusty winds. Besides Google Maps, a good public source of information for access and planning is found at <http://sigpac.mapa.es>.



*All photos by Laurent Miroult. Diver: Gian Ameri.*

# Mendip Photography Weekend

by Mandy Voysey

The 6th edition of Mendip Underground is currently in the making, and a bevy of photographers conscripted to provide enough glossy colour photos to make this guidebook not only informative to read, but pleasant and inspiring to look at too. Matt, being both the owner of a new caving camera and a fan of misery underground, volunteered our services to capture some tasty snaps of some of the more awkward, tight and gnarly delights that Mendip has on offer, and we were promptly sent a list of caves to tackle. Some of which are actually quite pleasant with just a smattering of difficulty and others quite burly outings full of unusual and interesting obstacles to overcome, from the incredibly tight, to the ridiculously squalid. This was going to be fun! Touting around the club, we acquired a hardy bunch of volunteers to pose and light for us and organised a weekend on Mendip with the objective of ticking off some of our task list for Eastwater Cavern and Swildon's Hole.

## Hunters' Lodge Inn Sink

**Friday 14th June - Adrian Fawcett, Kieran Ryan and Matt and Mandy Voysey**

Hunters' Lodge Inn Sink isn't actually on our hit list, but we thought we'd go there anyway. The four of us were game for a bonus Friday trip, and this being close to the caving hut and astoundingly close to the pub, was a very convenient choice. Plus Adrian and Kieran hadn't ever been there before and it'd been quite a while since Matt and I were there last. Somewhat unusually our first obstacle was reached before even entering the cave. Upon opening the hatch, we were surprised to see the short walled shaft without the fixed ladder that used to be there. Matt and I are sure that we had read about its removal when the cave was first re-opened, but we'd both completely forgotten. After a bit of faffing about we ascertained that a handline was all that was required (and doing it without wouldn't even be too bad); this was good as we knew we'd be needing the 2 ladders we had to descend Pewter Pot further in. We then embarked upon our subterranean journey, initially along the

steeply sloping and constricted Pub Crawl and then onto more spacious and scenic surroundings in Happy Hour Highway. This was the first time I'd been in the cave since the vandalism that occurred in 2016, and I was impressed at how neatly the stal had been repaired. There had obviously been a lot of damage that simply couldn't be restored, but the passage is still a fine one despite the sad demise of some of the natural wonders. We then dropped off the tackle at the top of the pitch and carried on to look at the bones just beyond the Barmaid's Bedrooms. Once you start looking, there are actually quite a number of bones still in situ here. These include the skeletal fragments of Pleistocene reindeer and bison, and presumably must have been washed in from some alternative entrance in the vicinity that has since become infilled. Matt had been lagging behind and the reason soon became apparent when we headed back to find he'd set up his camera and was in wait for a poser. Kieran being new to the team politely obliged, while I set off to rig the pitch. As it happens Pewter Pot is the only place I've ever experienced a ladder breakage, and luckily for me only one side snapped, as I wasn't on a lifeline at the time. Though we had our own kit this time rather than the electron ladder of unknown vintage than had previously been left rigged (until I broke it), I had disliked my previous experience enough to make sure to rig a decent lifeline.

This is a really impressive rift pitch, down a lovely flowstone wall, and quite deep for Mendip. Our 2 ladders didn't quite reach the bottom, but it got us close enough and provided extra amusement at the various methods employed to descend the last bit. After this was something I'd completely forgotten about, and that was a very deep body of water. Initially crawling through wetness, then straddling in wetness, this bit is very much like Turkey Pool in Aggy. As this was only a mere evening trip and we'd hoped to keep our kit dry, we were uncertain whether to pursue this route or not, but then Kieran went through happy as an

otter, and the rest of decided that maybe we should just man-up and take it. Beyond, the impressive Broon Ale Boulevard is well worth seeing, though it would be



*Climbing Pewter Pot*

much better if it were twice as long. We then looked at a nice grotto along a side-tube, and started our journey back. Overall this was a very nice trip and the cave even pleasanter than I remember it being. We surfaced just in time to meet Emyr, and headed into The Hunters' for some late dinner and beer.

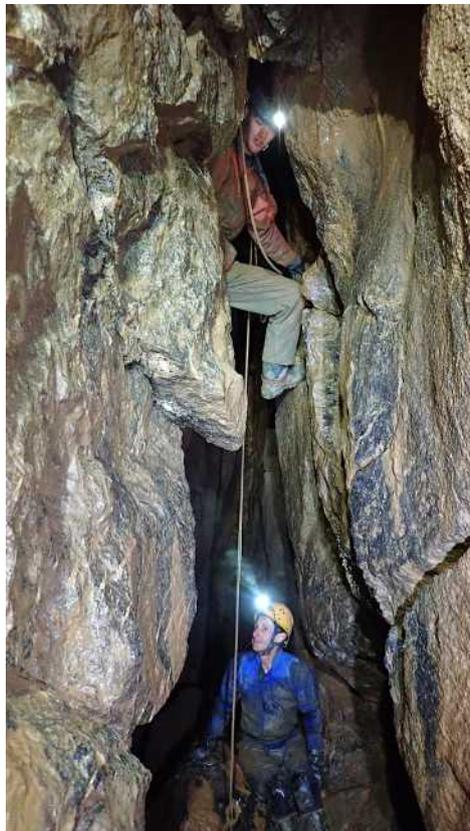
## Eastwater Cavern

**Saturday 15th June - Emyr Walters, Adrian Fawcett, Kieran Ryan, Matt and Mandy Voysey**

We had a number of photographic objectives in Eastwater, and we concocted a plan to tick off three in one hit. So the rough plan was as follows: go to Dark Cars and Sunglasses, then Beechen Series and Mud Escalator, and up the 13 Pots. We had a choice of routes to achieve this, and that was either to descend Dolphin Pot, the 35ft Pitch and the Bold Step or take our SRT gear and do the Twin Verts route. For some reason I thought the latter would be quicker (wrong!) and everyone was in favour, so we plumped for that. The weather was suitably unpleasant enough to make us happy to be heading underground and we entered the cave with Matt and I telling tales of how the entrance used to be awash with flowing water, but is now always consistently dry as the water sinks elsewhere. We decided we would take the traditional route across the Upper Traverse; this wasn't strictly necessary, but it is a major feature of Eastwater and one that everyone should endure if they've not been in the cave before. Then more wriggling, thrusting, squeezing and general bending at that interesting angle that is ever present in Eastwater, and we were soon at the top of the Twin Verts route (via a minor accidental detour to Dolphin Pot). Here we dropped off our kit and then continued on to First Rift Chamber and our first objective, Dark Cars and Sunglasses. I'd heard a lot about this part of the cave, but had never been sure where the climb up is actually located. Matt and I had been scouting around here before, and Matt had once found himself perched on nothing but a suspended ledge of mud after climbing up at completely the wrong place, so this time I sought some extra instructions from someone in the know beforehand. As it happens, it was much easier to locate the climb than we expected as there was a rope hanging down, but I'd say that without this clue it wouldn't be obvious at all. The climb starts off as quite a wide straddle, and then continues up as a generally awkward wriggly thrutch climb ascending a

narrow rift with an increasingly large drop below. This was tackled with relative ease by the team, of which the longer legged generally found the rope to be more of a hindrance than a benefit, but I must admit that though I'm sure I could do it fine enough without, I did quite like the rope being there.

Above this, the next obstacle is a trio of tight squeezes. Emyr, despite his generally slender appearance, has been known to plug gaps very well and have the rest of us marvelling at how things that previously looked quite roomy can suddenly look so small when filled with a broad-chested Welshman. With this in mind I made enquiries beforehand and was told 'if your fat bloke can get through the first squeeze, he can probably get through them all' (a statement that Kieran and I later agreed was not strictly true as the second one was most definitely worse on the exit). However it transpired that the first squeeze was actually very tight, and despite a valiant effort Emyr was thwarted. The remaining four of us continued, and having been told of the wonderful formations and decorated passage, my eyes were preparing for a feast. My expectations were perhaps a little high as what we actually found was what I would describe as 'well decorated when compared with the rest of Eastwater'. Certainly prettier than the knobbly rock, mud and squeezes that otherwise abound, but not exactly the temple of wonder I'd envisaged. Nonetheless we did our duty and Adrian and Kieran posed in the somewhat cramped confines of the most decorated area, before we all headed back to Emyr at the bottom of the climb, who was now rather cold.



*Climbing down from Dark Cars*

Next port of call was Beechen Series/Mud Escalator, located off the side of the main tourist route at the bottom of the 13 Pots. To get there we went back to the Twin Verts, where I learned two important lessons. **1 - Never assume that SRT will ever be quicker than ladders when tackling short pitches, and 2 - Always read the kit list properly.** Having taken this route down a couple of times before, and not remembering any difficulties with rigging, I (wrongly) assumed it was P-bolted. From this oversight much faff ensued while we rigged the two pitches without the aid of the perfectly placed spits, using a medley of slings, naturals, very obscure deviations and tackle bags under rub points instead. Somehow we all made it to the bottom and more importantly my brand new rope wasn't destroyed in the process. We turned left and were very quickly at the unobvious climb up to the Beechen Series. I'm not

sure that we'd ever been to this part of the cave either, it's basically a series of awkward muddy tubes, climbs and squeezes. Sort of fun and sporty, but somewhat lacking in photographic wonders. Adrian went to the end and thought there was nothing much to see, Emyr found another impassable squeeze about halfway, and I stopped for a chat, thus leaving Kieran (obviously politer than the rest of us) to pose for Matt.

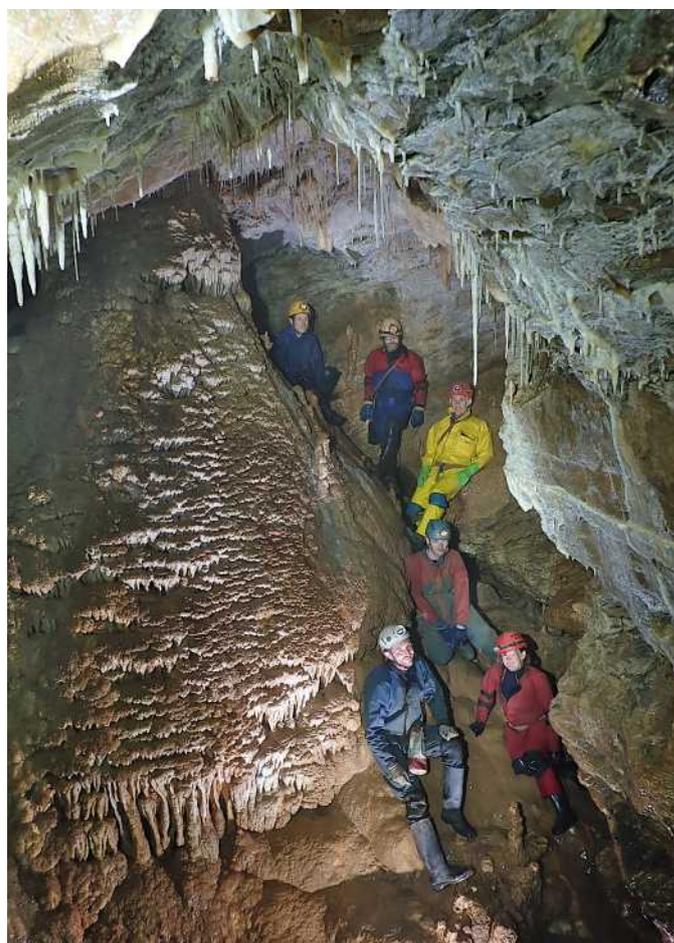
Then we squeezed out, with some of us taking the alternative route down Jack Brownsey's Passage, and headed on towards the next challenge, the 13 Pots. This part of the cave is ace. We all enjoyed the climbs a lot and much fun was had with the various techniques deployed on the last (and trickiest) pot. There wasn't even anywhere Emyr could get stuck in! More photography here then it was time to exit, back up the pitches and out, taking the shorter route via the Woggle Press. We were cruising on easy street now, except that my light was getting quite dim and the way out through the boulders was now obscured by a veritable wall of water. There must have been a massive heavy downpour while we were underground, as I haven't seen water here for many years. Luckily with all the splashing, gushing and water generally flooding into our caving suits and screaming mouths, Matt and I were unable to hear the comments from those who remembered us saying that water never comes into the cave nowadays. All in all a nice sporty ending to very varied trip.

## Swildon's Hole

**Sunday 15th June - Mike Read, Jann Padley, Kieran Ryan, Emyr Walters, Adrian Fawcett, John Cooper, Barry Weaver, Mandy and Matt Voysey**

Our objective today was to take photos in the Shatter Series. We had no idea how far we'd get or how much bailing would need to be done, but figured as long as we got a picture of someone getting soaked in the ducks plus some snaps of anything notable on the way that would be fine. Our number was boosted in the morning by the arrival of Mike and Jann and we were all ready with tackle assembled to meet JC and Barry at their usual Swildon's Sunday meeting time of 10am at Upper Pitts. JC and Barry, being more organised, headed off first with words of 'I'm sure you'll catch us up.' Those of us remaining knew this to be very optimistic; there were 6 of us and we hadn't even finished faffing! We all piled in the cave and headed down the general quickest route to the ladder, where there was no queue. No Barry or JC either, but their ladder was there at least, so we left ours at the top and carried on down. Then up the climb to Tratman's Temple where we very soon bumped into the duo returning with news that the Mud Sump was sumped. The bailing pools were also full, so it seemed that Eastwater wasn't alone in having a significant increase of water in the recent rains. We dropped off our kit and went off to investigate. It'd been a while since I was last in this part of Swildon's and I

was impressed with how nice it all is. I'd forgotten that there were quite so many formations, so I was well impressed. At the Mud Sump all agreed that there was no way any of us would attempt that dunking, and luckily it's un-photogenic enough not to bother trying. However we didn't get off completely scot free as we did have to do our duty and pose in a puddle on the way back. Then more posing for a team shot around the massive stal lump that is the 'Temple' of Tratman's Temple. With our objective for the day now scuppered, we thought we may as well head on down to Sump 1 as we were there, just for a bit of fun. So we all filed down, looked at the immense pool of uninviting brown foam and then headed back out the Wet Way, with some people diverting up Barnes' Loop on the way, some getting trapped in a group of bods generally shilly-shallying, and some exiting through the tree. A fun trip, somewhat lacking in photographic achievements, but jolly none the less.



*The team at Tratman's Temple*

We've still got a number of interesting places to visit yet, so if anyone fancies joining us for a bit of posing in Mendip caves do get in touch. We have another weekend scheduled for 13th-15th September, with the objective of tackling Tynning's Barrows Swallet and some Burrington caves. No doubt there'll also be another bonus Friday trip on the cards too.

*Photos by Matt Voysey*

# Epocalypse Chokes

by Gary Kiely

Wednesday, 8th May 2019

It was the first time I've managed to escape to Wales mid-week for over a decade! Wales welcomed me with cold, wet and miserable arms. Steve Sharp had been going on about Epocalypse Chokes for months and finally wore me down, next thing I know, I have a big bag on my back with tripods and other photographic gear traipsing off to Ogof Cnwc. January was my last trip so I wasn't in tip top caving condition, so I was glad that we were not going in through Daren main entrance.

Contrary to how I remembered it, Ogof Cnwc is not exactly a walk in the park either. It was a welcome break to finally be walking upright again in Busman's Holiday, which looks a bit like a passage full of pasta carbonara covered in melted cheese. The boulder hopping gets a bit tedious but it was followed by a fairly long but wide crawl and pretty quickly the boulder hopping passage has been forgiven. The next section of note was the approach to the first ladder, a luxurious thing indeed. I seem to remember this climb as an electron ladder with a few rungs missing in just the wrong places, God I sound old!... no comments please.

The slight spread of the chains at the top of the ladder make it easy to get on... so long you have taken the bag off your back first. I wedged myself in nicely before I gave in to the cave's recommendations and lowered the bag down on its drag cord. I'm glad that Sharpie had the expensive camera kit as my bag dropped further than I expected and went off on its own journey and rolled to nearly the bottom of the chamber. The route was round to the left on a narrow ledge of permitted path. I have rubbish cave direction and memory and was weirdly elated to come to a chamber that I knew very well, mainly because in the past I crawled through every conceivable aperture trying to find the way on. Obviously I was very proud and annoyingly vocal about my route finding prowess... for this one tiny part of the cave. So it was a discrete crawl to the left-hand side of the chamber into an inclined tube that is very bag resistant, a drag cord is a blessing here and I'm sure I told Sharpie this a few times along the way... it's kinda my revenge for him making me do big trips. Anyhow this annoying tube opened out into the most dramatic change in the cave. It's a chamber with water flowing from the top and all the rock is black, it's almost like



going through a coal seam/chamber.

A little while after this, the passage becomes a nice tall passage, maybe 8m high and 4m wide and fairly bouldery, until it inclines to, well, nothing really. How do passages of such size just stop? If you are not fully focused, the way on is not entirely obvious. However it's through a calcite encrusted hole on the left. Looking through the hole the passage turns 45 degrees left and becomes a narrow rift that is deep... really deep. Steve was the eager beaver and hunting around for the way on while I hit a wall... a knackered wall.

It's weird when your negative head goes into overdrive. I was plotting the route in my head. We were just about to enter Antler Passage and I was not doing so good... no, I was feeling crap! And still a fair bit to go on the way in, then a photo trip, and then the trip back out... I considered how much a barrel of beer costs for cave rescue... And then I came to my senses! What was I thinking?! Adrian Fawcett was our callout and our hero so he would just come and save me all on his own. So technically that's only 6 bottles of beer. Yeah, I could afford that.

Steve must have sussed something at that point and asked how I was, and I told him in no uncertain terms. "Not much further now..." Hmmm, that old chestnut! So, we were in Antler Passage. Look at it on a survey, its lovely, straight and wide, but why oh why are there so many tedious climbs? Focusing on the job in hand I kept my head down, pre-planning my footings and the climbs up and the climbs down. What an absolute pain in the ass that passage is, up/down, up/down, up/down, up/down (...I actually love caving). There were also a few sneaky hidden ways on that had us pause for thought.

We got to The Kitchen and I asked permission to stop and have food... permission refused. So we clambered on to the Epo chokes, and to be fair it was much easier going than Antler Passage. We finally arrived and I was grumpy but we had a little bit of food and I had brought a flask of hot water and some Cup a Soups – trust me

it's the future of cave rescue, forget the dragon! Cup a Soup, you heard it here first.

We stayed on the upper level and walked past the old camp, it was kinda odd seeing a camp that has not been used for 30 years or so. I wonder, was it as fun as Hard Rock is? Or was it as serious as the Restaurant? Apparently it was a camp set up by a group of female diggers; was this because all the boys were focused on taking the low hanging Darenberry fruit? Steve set up a Facebook page to revitalise the interest for this area of the cave and apparently he has had communication with some of the cavers who spent time in this camp. Wouldn't it be great to get an original story from one of them?

Just beyond the camp there was a large junction with 5 ways, one of which was a huge hole in the floor that led to another huge passage with loads of breakdown running with the main flow of the passage, and to my untrained eye this looked like it could be a 20m+ drop. Steve and I took the right-hand fork, which after a little easy walking dropped into a comfortable rift that bells out up high and creates ledges about 4m below the



smooth roof line. The high level ledges looked a bit exposed, and too wide to straddle, so I carried on forward and climbed up where the walkable rift ended. Thankfully the left-hand ledge had more room and I got onto safe ground again.

Meanwhile Steve had a look the opposite way on in the rift and it went back underneath the way we came in. That part looked like a dramatically different cave, as I saw for myself on my way out. It was a sandy floor dipping down to a large chamber which in turn had a smaller hole at the base leading on, shaped a bit like a funnel. The strangest part of this was the texture and colour of the rock – it was like a fossil passage but everything else around it was dramatic breakdown. Back to my “above and beyond a rift” passage: straight on went up a loose scree slope under what looked like the final roof of the passage. There is space

up there but it is very, very loose, so I backed off and went around to the left of this where there was a steeper slope up into a comfortable-sized hole with plenty of space beyond, and a freshness to the air, but the hole was edged with caver crushing rocks balanced on fresh air. I backed off and wandered back to the left again and was in an almost parallel passage that ended at a blank wall. There is a weird feature here, one for the geologists – a thick line of white rock perfectly horizontal that runs along both sides of the passage, and when you're looking it turns up everywhere, like a tide line but in a white crystal-esque layer.

Steve had caught up to me after his exploration, and he found a little hole to the right-hand side of my first scree slope. Off he went and I found a comfortable spot, switched off my light and had a cheeky wee power nap, rudely woken by Steve shouting down every little hole he couldn't fit through. There was a point he sounded like he was about 3m below and 4m forward of the primary scree slope. I'm not a natural digger and can never see how a cave flows, but this place is screaming for attention and when looking on the survey it's on the edge of a vast nothingness. We returned back through the camp passage, and down to a take-off platform. Here we rigged a ladder to take us down to the lower level that we saw earlier in the hole in the floor. This is a breakdown passage that follows the general trend of the passage above. Getting down the ladder and turning right lead into a passage with a rising roof that ended in a big chamber with a huge scree slope going up the roof line again. This has to be underneath the rift I walked through earlier... but that wouldn't make sense, there are a lot of things here that don't make sense and would be intriguing to a digger with “the knowledge”.

Steve started to do some photography here and I climbed right up to the roof line. Plenty of people have been having a go here, with various holes into the roof and heaps of smaller scree from those disturbances. We got going again after about 20 mins and bounced past our ladder to the other end of the passage, which would be heading back towards The Kitchen. Another few photo opportunities for Steve here. About 45 minutes later we were rolling up the ladder. We rationed out our food carefully for the return trip. I was apprehensive to



say the least. I set a relaxed pace on the way out and we made steady progress. Antler Passage I felt was the most energy sapping section, and a fly on the wall would have thought Steve and I were giving each other the silent treatment, but it was just deep focus for the pre-planning of foot and hand holds to minimise excessive energy consumption. It's mean I know, but seeing that Steve was no longer the bouncy springer spaniel he was on the way in was quite comforting. We both had silly bags that had a conspiracy to pin us down in every crawl. This time I held back on saying how good a drag chord was... I'm not all evil.

The long crawl just before Busman's was particularly energy sapping, there is just no efficient way to do that passage. We sat at the end for some time in silence. I'm not sure what was going through Steve's head, all I was thinking was "surely Adrian would like nothing better than to come and rescue us when he got home from work." I mean, to be fair we had made it that far, it's

not like he had to carry us very far!

So! Back to reality, the sign for Ogof Cnwc was a lovely thing to see. The crawly snagging of the passage was not so lovely. Ok then, maybe I am evil... It was thoroughly entertaining hearing a grown man absolutely lose the plot with his bag. You know, the sort of bag that does not have a drag cord. There were words used that I had to Google when I got home... Yes it was a colourful time. Finally, the story ends on a remote hillside in soggy Wales with two grotty, unfit, broken cavers lying on their backs, starfished on the grass in the rain, laughing and talking gibberish. 10 hours ago it was a great idea.

Disclaimer:

Contrary to the views expressed in the above, caving is a fun-filled pastime.

No cavers were harmed in the making of this article.

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## CSS MEETS 2019

### July 26th-28th - Mines of Mid-Wales

Camping at a remote but pretty campsite within easy walking distance of Cwmystwyth Mine, which has interesting levels to explore for both SRT or non-SRT options. There'll also be the chance to see the recent breakthrough in Henfwlch, and many other sites of interest.

### 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

This event will be an opportunity to gain knowledge in many aspects of cave rescue including First Aid and casualty care, technical rigging, and use of the comms. Workshops will be held both above and below ground. See [www.caverescue.org.uk/bcrc-rescon-2019](http://www.caverescue.org.uk/bcrc-rescon-2019) for more information.

### September 27th-29th - Hidden Earth

Wrexham, North Wales. See [www.hidden.earth](http://www.hidden.earth) for details.

### October 18th-20th - Peak Distict TBC

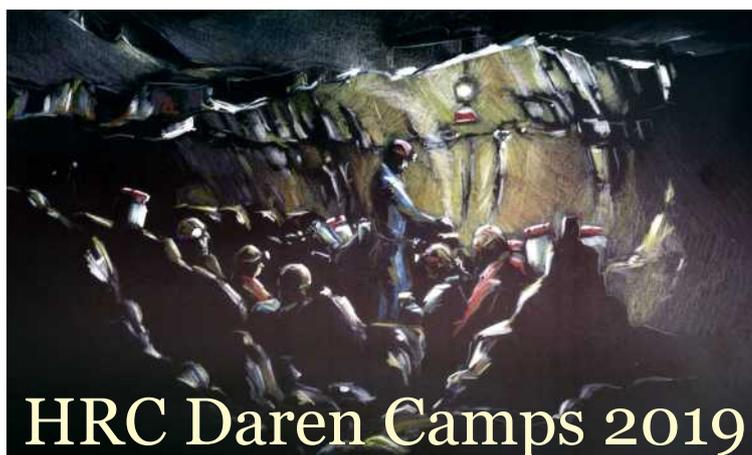
### November 1st-3rd - Whitewalls Bonfire Bash

A weekend of caving, fireworks, fire and feasting

### December 6th-8th - Whitewalls Curry Night

A caving and home-cooked curry themed weekend.

More activities will be added throughout the year, so watch this space. For more information on any of the above trips please contact Helen Pemberton at [helenlnightingale@gmail.com](mailto:helenlnightingale@gmail.com)



9th-11th August

4th-5th October (revised date)

8th-10th November

The main focus of the upcoming camps will be our dig sites at Half Mile Passage and Beyond Time. New diggers always welcome. Contact Mandy [mandola76@gmail.com](mailto:mandola76@gmail.com) or Adrian [adrianfawcett@outlook.com](mailto:adrianfawcett@outlook.com) for more details.

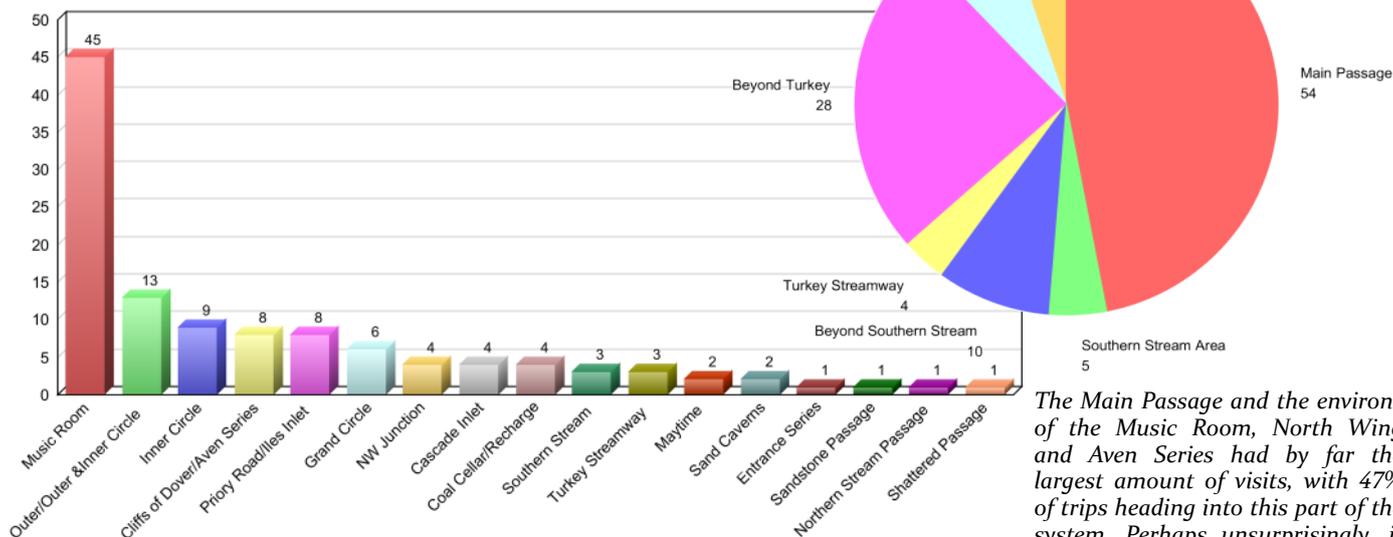
# Aggy and Daren Trip Statistics

by Mandy Voysey

When Adrian told me that he had the signing-in logbooks (previous to ones currently in situ) for Aggy and Daren, I thought it would be interesting to see which trips are the most popular in our local large cave systems. So I got him to send me the data and used it to put together some charts. Obviously this kind of information can never be entirely accurate, but it does capture a window of time and the destinations that inspired the many various cavers into visiting these caves. The numbers shown are the recorded number of parties rather than individual cavers, and destination is based on the furthest part of the cave encompassed within the trip.

## Aggen Allwedd

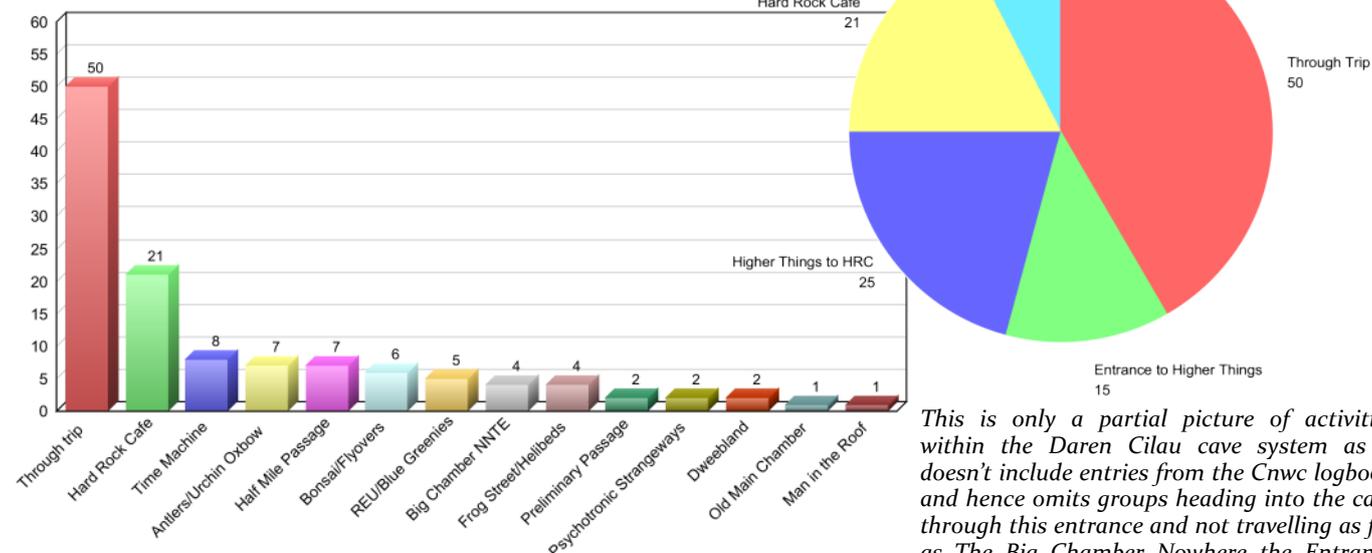
Logbook entries from May 2017 to June 2018  
115 trips in total - average 8.2 trips per month



also appears that nobody fancied tackling the 650m of endurance crawling required for Trident Passage during this period. The next most popular area is the zone beyond Turkey Streamway encompassing the Inner and Outer Circle routes, Recharge, Sand Caverns and Central Avenue, with 24% of trips heading that way. Beyond Southern Stream (including Maytime, Priory Road, and Iles Inlet) accounted for almost 9% of trips, and surprisingly the Grand Circle only 5%.

## Daren Cilau

Logbook entries from July 2015 to August 2018  
120 trips in total - average 3.2 trips per month



(where the Daren logbook is situated). In the cases where people have stayed at the camps other intended destinations from this base have generally not been recorded. But even with these anomalies it's easy to see exactly which of the trips is the most popular with almost 42% being the through-trip between the Cnwc and Daren entrances. This figure would certainly be increased if the Cnwc logbook was included in the data, and the 12% of groups visiting the sites before the ladder up to Higher Things (including Antler Passage, Old Main Chamber, Big Chamber and Man in the Roof) may also see an increase. However the number of trips beyond this point is likely to be unchanged, with 21% of trips heading to various points between Higher Things and HRC (including The Time Machine, Bonsai Streamway, The Flyovers, Half Mile Passage and Helbeds), 17.5% of groups destined for Hard Rock Café and 7.5% heading to various excursions beyond.

# The ODSS Big Roofing Week

by Mike Read

23 May to 2 June 2019

Following the success of the 'Big Dig Weekend' when the pumping station and septic tank were installed, plans were concocted for the 'New Roof Week' (never did manage to come up with a funky name). Initially it seemed a long way off, and even after booking leave, it didn't bring home the scale of the challenge ahead. Peter and John did an 'emergence and return' bat survey and identified a common pipistrelle and long-eared bat using the roof, so a bat licence would be required. This can take forever and there was concern that the works would have to be postponed. Planning continued and Natural Resources Wales issued the licence in plenty of time. However, as I started ordering up materials and producing lists of tools to take and tasks to do - reality started to dawn. I then decided to produce a basic program and the phrase "so much to do and so little time to do it" started to resonate in my mind. I decided to book another day off before the week to undertake some preparation works.

Having ordered all the bulky materials for delivery on the Thursday and Friday with explicit instructions to approach from Brynmawr along the tram road that contoured around the hill my confidence started to build. Well Thursday arrived before you could say 'New Roof' and I started to load the car and trailer before the unearthly hour of 7:00. It soon became apparent I was too optimistic about how big my car was so more had to go on the trailer. This meant I had to restart loading the trailer again from scratch. I kept thinking of more things I needed to take and it soon got to the stage I had to start taking other items out and prioritizing. I knew that the very item I removed would prove to be the key tool / item for the job. Tying all the odd shapes, pipes, flues, timber, trestles, saw bench etc. proved quite challenging. I then realised I had forgotten to pack the caving gear but did manage to squeeze a minimalistic set in by removing a 'just in case' piece of timber.

The journey was uneventful. I did get a call from Robert Price (RP) saying they were in Crickhowell trying to find the way up the hillside. I suggested to him that trying to get a lorry up the hill was not a good idea(!) and that he should approach from Brynmawr. Well, this took a while to explain as he didn't have a map and didn't know the area. Eventually he recalled the road works in the Clydach Gorge and the new arch-

over bridge so there was hope.

The idea of spreading the deliveries over two days was to avoid lorries having to pass each other – I should have known it wouldn't work. The redirected RP arrived first with the steel beam but it soon became apparent that lots was missing. Later it transpired that due to the weight they couldn't fit it all on one lorry, but no notes on the delivery slip. Before he could make his getaway another very disgruntled lorry driver arrived with the slates. No risk of meeting the RP lorry as he had come up the hill from Crickhowell, losing a wing mirror in the process. He then went on to rant about the crates the tiles were on as they were old and battered and difficult to get his trolley under. Apparently, he always gets new crates when there are only one or two small items on them. I was impressed with his ability to swing the trolley onto the far too small lifting tailgate, but I think that the HSE would have a few words to say. Fortunately, they were no mishaps but the crates, weighing in at over a ton, were not easy to move on the tram road; fortunately the captive audience of the trapped RP driver, who happened to know the slate lorry driver, meant there was just enough muscle of sorts to get the pallets to the edge of track. Following further rants about the roller doors and the location of the control switches he was dispatched back along the tram road to Brynmawr.

John and I then installed new window lintels before retiring for a beer or two. Peter Smith arrived on Friday and following the required briefing we set about removing the old slates. The workforce was now boosted by John Newton and by the end of the day all slates were removed and either stacked on the tram road



or filed under rubble. The priority job for the day was buying the barrel of beer which was successfully achieved, although it took its toll on John's back. Friday saw the arrival of the roof insulation as planned. We had to provide directions but a suitable sized lorry



arrived with fork lift. However, no signs of the battens, slate hooks or nails. Yet more phone calls and a promise that they would arrive Tuesday. Saturday with more bods saw rapid removal of the battens and careful removal of the felt, always looking for bats. All was going to plan until a nest containing 7 eggs was

uncovered on the gable end, to the right of the porch. This came as a big surprise as we had seen blue tits using the far gable end during the scaffolding weekend but there had not been any recent sightings. We had also seen blue tits using the oversized bat hole but had decided that we wouldn't be disturbing them, but no sign of other nesting birds. Helen volunteered to watch the nest and relaxed back in a chair drinking what I was assured was tea. We were beginning to think that it must have been an old abandoned nest when a bird was sighted disappearing into the wall. After some discussion we decided that we could cut the rafters off and just leave a small section of roof without unduly disturbing the nest.

Removing the rafters was relatively straightforward and even removing the purlins did not pose too much of a challenge. However removing the old A-frame did require more pondering. Andy utilized his gardening prowess with a pole chainsaw to cut the timber into sections whilst other brave souls supported the remaining parts. With plenty of manpower this was safely accomplished, probably due to cameras ready to catch a clip for You've Been Framed.

However demolition was not over as we had to establish a sound base for the wall plate. The old roof had a thin wall plate on the outer edge of the walls. The top of the wall was flat and the inside had simply been built up with loose stones, no mortar in sight. Work started on forming the mezzanine level which required



more nails to be purchased from Screwfix. John helpfully volunteered. By now the building was looking a little dishevelled so we retired, as by now the beer had been classified as ready for consumption. Sunday saw the inside skin of the gable ends built up to the underside of the ridge beam level. Masons also started to build up the outside of the gable end.

It was critical to get the steel ridge beam install before the 'weekend workforce' clocked off. We had measured the beam several times as it sat on the tram road, it definitely looked short!!! Once sufficient troops had been mustered from other jobs, tea drinking, cooking breakfast, faffing etc. we assembled a similar number of people on each side of the beam and carried the beam down the upper section of path with relative ease. After much discussion about how best to get the beam onto the scaffolding without losing too many bods down the slope, the hand rail was removed from the scaffolding and with a surprisingly coordinated effort the beam laid on the scaffolding parallel to the ridge. Due to the loose nature of the rubble gable walls various trestles were located so the beam could be lifted up in a series of small lifts without touching the gable walls. All this was recorded on time lapse photography

including the grazing sheep. Then the obligatory photo of people sitting on the beam was taken. The tide had turned, we were building not demolishing, and the building looked less like a derelict ruin.

We could now start the task of cutting the roof timbers and building up the gable ends stone work. It was very apparent that the building was not square but we were keen to ensure that we didn't have to cut too many slates. The first attempt at setting out the rafters failed – we placed the timber on the wrong side of the line. Whilst the skilled carpenter worked through the problem there was far too much input

from the stone bashers (they like to call themselves masons). Anyway, the problem was quickly resolved and harmony returned to the labour camp. Once some of the rafters were installed by those highly skilled and underappreciated carpenters then it was possible to start





building up the walls between the rafters. The stuffers having developed their skills of filling on the gable wall also worked hard to fill gaps between and around the rafters. For those unfamiliar with the stuffing trade this involves placing material between the facing stones/blocks using rubble and as little mortar as possible. At the start there seems to be loads of rubbish stone, but as it is used up there is potential conflict with the masons as what is deemed facing stone or rubble.

Pencils were constantly being hidden by the pixies (or dropped/lost behind one's ears/left in some obscure place). Andy bought a whole pack of pencils, and fortunately they were different colours so it was possible to claim your colour. One drawback of the new pencils is that they didn't stay tucked behind the ear. To ensure that your pencil wasn't 'borrowed' the trick was to squirrel it away secretly. However, many of these stashes were raided and it became important to be very coy when accessing your hideaway. I managed to break several, which had the advantage you had two and they were easier to fit behind the ear. Problems weren't limited to pencils as there were never enough tapes. The masons also had their problems with bucket theft, and to cap that all it wasn't unusual to make a barrow load of mortar, use just a bucket full, and then find the barrow had been raided. With so much to do the days were long, some starting at 6:30 and finishing at 20:30. Despite this the first barrel was finished in a few days and a replacement purchased. However energy levels were becoming depleted and people started to go to bed earlier and drink less beer. Concerns mounted in some quarters that there would be an excess of beer, but with troops reinforced for the big 'Glamour Night' event there was no cause for concern.

Deliveries continued not to arrive and I spent far too long on the phone only to miss return calls when I went into bad reception areas. Eventually we cancelled the batten order and reordered from RP along with more sand to quench the unfillable demands from the stuffers. After more phone calls more nails arrived instead of the slate hooks so we cancelled that order as well as they couldn't deliver until the following week. We had hoped to get the building inspector in on Friday but one was on leave and the other at a funeral, but we were

told to continue.

The weather over the week varied from very hot to chilly, dry to wet, but work continued relentlessly. With lots of people working around each other, a funny shaped building and not being used to roof building, we often found that some things didn't quite work out and we had to go back a few steps and refit bits in order to achieve the high standard demanded by the site foreman. While frustrating, this was all taken in everyone's stride. More stuffing, more wall building, more tea and coffee, more beer and lots more skilled carpentry continued relentlessly and by late Saturday we were ready to start insulating and felting. This was eventually finished later than planned on a wet Sunday.

Despite sterling efforts, the birds, the weather, and too much to do meant we didn't get the roof battened. However we did achieve far more than most people would expect and the locals were impressed offered us more work. Everyone from masons to tea makers to chippies should give themselves a pat on the back, and



those clearing up at the end of the week deserve special praise when everyone was keen to get away. In addition to the roof Adrian also managed to find time to work on the ramp and the garden walls and John N filled the depression around the old septic tank which was far larger than you would think. Apologies to anyone I haven't mentioned as everyone's efforts were a key part in getting the work done.

**The Work Force** - Mike Read, John Stevens, Andy Heath, Adrian Fawcett, Mandy Voysey, Matt Voysey, Roy Musgrove, John Newton, Joe Duxbury, Gary Kiely, Paul Hartwright, Peter Smith, Helen Pemberton, Trevor Pemberton, Gareth Jones, Jake Jones, Andy Tyler, Gary Jones.

Addendum: Further work has taken place since this article, with extra effort put in by a medley of workers both before and during the BBQ weekend. You can read all about this, and some of the caving trips that took place, in the next issue.

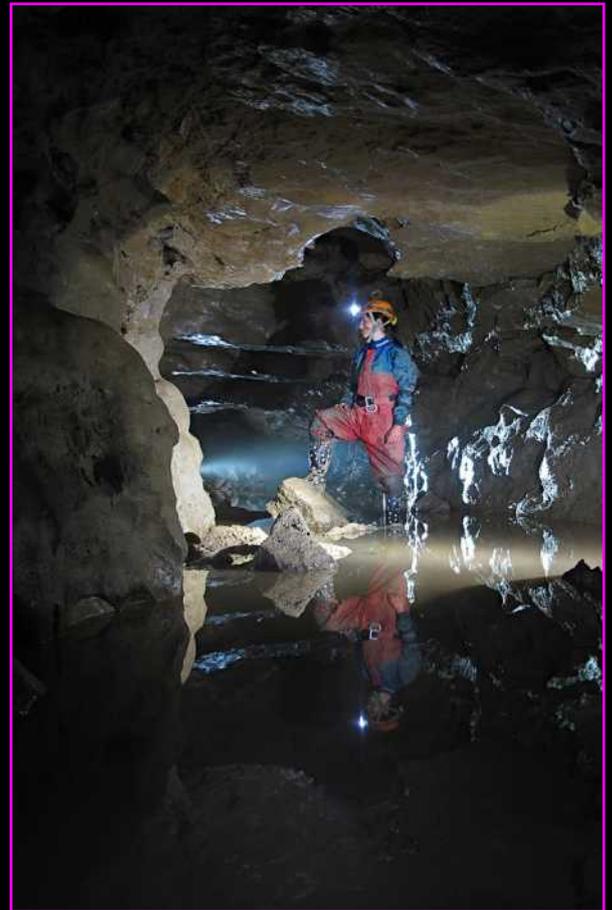
# My Review of Eglwys Faen

by Hollie Sharp

As I walked into the opening of the cave my eyes went wide with amazement. I clambered in to find myself looking at the most beautiful chamber. This is where me and my dad (Steve Sharp) took some very fascinating most brilliant photos and I was quite interested. We then went further into the cave, I was excited to see what was coming next as I was only little when I last came in, or younger than I am now anyway. Me and dad now entered a crawl; it was tight but so elating. I pushed myself through looking at many of the formations along the way, they may have been small but by far they were great. I loved how the rocks were formed and also the pretty stalactites.

I remember the Gloop Room; my boots were sinking in and it was hard to walk, but it was well worth it because at the end was a place where the miners had tried, and may still be trying to get through to another part of the cave. This cave may lead on to Aggy, but no one knows yet. We went through many rocks filled with such interesting edges and corners made from once rushing water eroding the rock along the way. I really loved the crawls that we faced, some that were a struggle, but that's what caving's all about, the great times and the challenges along the way.

At the end, we went out of an entrance with the most stunning waterfall. My eyes were peeled open as I sat staring when the water fell and tumbled down the rocks. There's still so much more to discover that has not yet been found. Maybe one day I will find something new and unique in Eglwys Faen.



Photos by Steve Sharp

Joe's Corner Answers: Black, Speckled, Furry, Golden, Hopping, which are all beers, and Laughing, a Chilean red wine.



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Cova de Sa Gleda, Mallorca  
Photography by Laurent Miroult



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