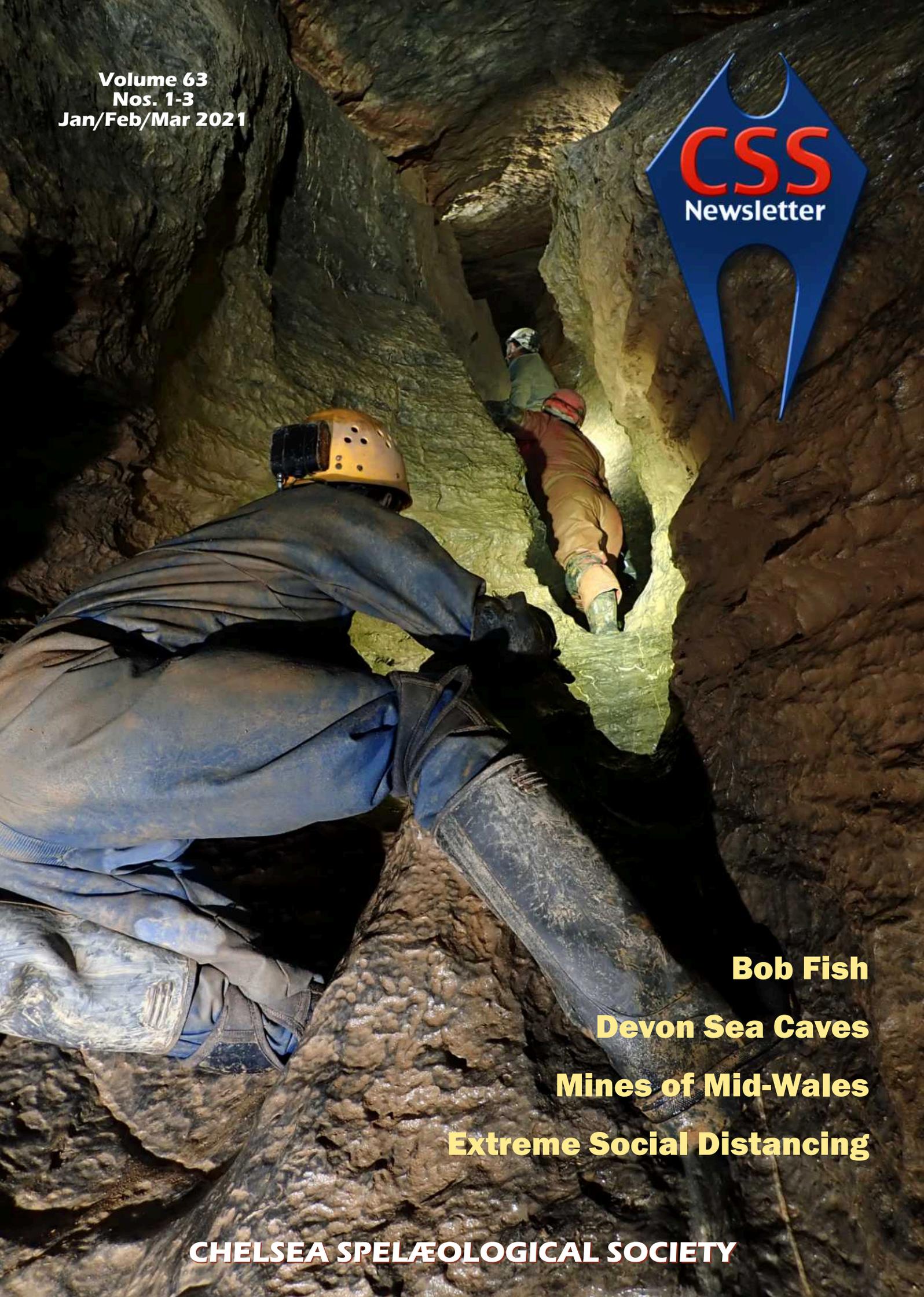
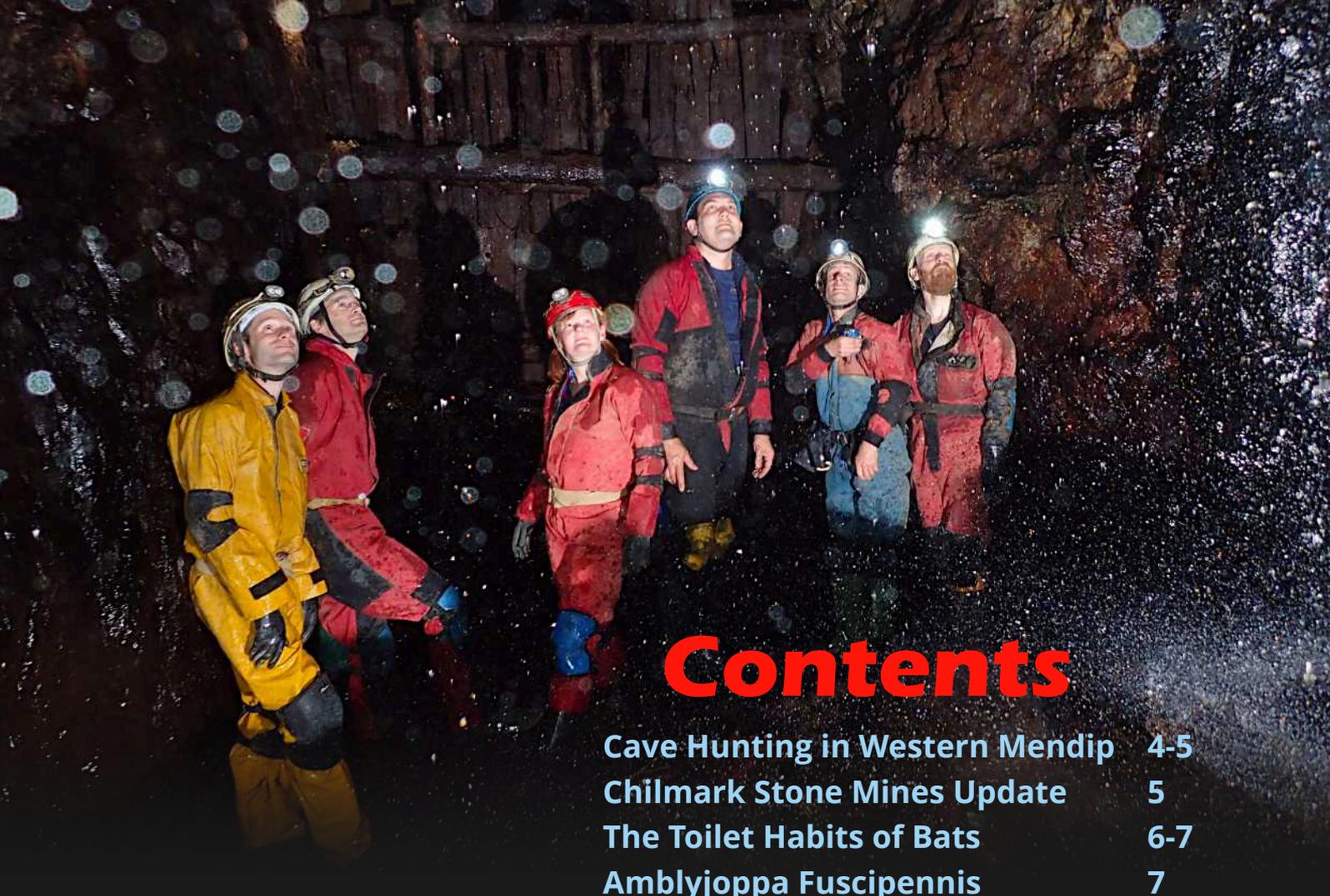


**Volume 63
Nos. 1-3
Jan/Feb/Mar 2021**



**Bob Fish
Devon Sea Caves
Mines of Mid-Wales
Extreme Social Distancing**

CHELSEA SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY



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Above: Matt, Chris, Mandy, Jason, Adrian and John in Herbert's Level, Cwmystwyth Lead Mines, August 2015. Photo by Paul Tarrant

Front cover: Adrian, Mandy and Emyr climbing the 13 Pots, Eastwater Cavern, June 2019. Photo by Matt Voysey



Whitewalls Access

During the coronavirus pandemic we are permitting strictly limited use of use of Whitewalls in compliance with Welsh and UK social distancing requirements. If you are planning a visit it is essential that you contact John Stevens (hut.warden@chelseaspelaeo.org) in advance to ensure that space will be available – and that goes for camping in the garden as well as staying in the cottage. Whitewalls is available for use by members only while these restrictions are in place. Details of the current access arrangements are available on the CSS website and will be updated as the situation changes.

Editorial Another big thank you to everyone who sent us material and photos for this issue. Hopefully club underground activities curtailed by Covid will resume with a renewed passion as this year progresses. We're looking forward to it, and of course we're looking forward to hearing all about it from you too.

Please submit all items for publication in this newsletter to cssmattv@gmail.com

Remember that as well as trip reports we welcome items of news or general interest, gear and literature reviews, technical/scientific articles, historical accounts and reminiscences, fun stuff, entertaining stories, and anything else you can come up with. Send high resolution photos in JPG or TIF format. For very large files or collections of items upload them to Dropbox or Google Drive and send me a public shared link to the folder, or ZIP them up and send via MailBigFile.

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

Editors: Matt and Mandy Voysey

Welsh cave name **Anagrams**

1. Darn it now
2. Wye flanges
3. Angry food
4. Unequal proton nearby
5. Cravat itches
6. Unclean vet
7. Two rotten anthills
8. Wyoming poofter
9. Alf goes phony
10. Lethal dirt wells
11. Hags are cleverest
12. Loo tether
13. Wangled deal
14. Comedy advert wows cows
15. Badger vice

by Adrian Fawcett

Answers on page 26

Caption Competition



This is a cartoon I found on the website of an Italian caving club, the GSS (Gruppo Speleologico Savonese). I'll leave it to you to translate the original caption*. Which isn't all that funny. I hope someone in the CSS can come up with something better.

Joe Duxbury

* According to Google translate this reads "I have not yet been able to think of a way to prevent the change from falling out of my pockets".



Zoom Socials

**Virtual Pub Night
8pm every Tuesday**

Contact Helen for password and further details.



stai zitto faccia da maiale



Membership

Current rates:

Full: £30, Joint: £40, plus BCA subscription per person of £17 for cavers or £6 for non-cavers.

Associate: £18 to receive publications, plus £6 for BCA non-caver insurance.

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

Members who have BCA membership via another club need not pay twice but should reference their BCA number and membership club with their payment. Full membership information and an application form can be downloaded from the CSS website www.chelseaspelaeo.org

Subscription renewals become due 1st October yearly. Please send all payments to:

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

Email csstreasurer@chelseaspelaeo.org

Cave Hunting

by Andy Watson

IN WESTERN MENDIP

SUNDAY 30TH AUGUST

Sue and I were waiting for confirmation of our house move date from a somewhat traumatic chain. Our house was packed and we had two storage containers full of stationary engines, garage equipment, caving equipment and other garden paraphernalia and were rather bored aside from the usual work/house routines. I optimistically suggested over the three-day bank holiday weekend we could have some 'cave hunt' adventures. This led to my suggestion early on Sunday morning to take a picnic rucksack, some loose caving kit in a rope bag and go walking in Western Mendip. Having done many of the caves in Western Mendip previously and having recently read quite a lot of the new Somerset Underground volume 2 book I decided that there were some caves that I would like to revisit to photograph the entrances and also visit some obscure holes that we had never been to. Ones we had done previously over the years are **Loxton Cave**, **Loxton Quarry Cave**, **Lost Cave of Loxton** (all further west than today's walk), **Coral Cave** (a good 2x ladder or SRT trip), the small **White Cliff Cave** that we discovered on a wintertime snowy walk in Waverley Down area some years back, **Denny's Hole**, adjacent to the footpath up to Crook Peak (National Trust and popular walk and pleasant picnic spot with great views) along with its associated **Fox's Hole** (now covered with removable logs almost on the footpath presumably to avoid people losing children or dogs), **Sandy Cave** (a short photogenic cave suitable for children in the small quarry on the left-hand side, lower down the footpath from Denny's Hole), **Supra-Sandy Hole** (a short rock shelter on the way down to the quarry from the footpath), **Supra-Scragg's Hole** (a small, low bedding mostly blocked with blocks, but just accessible if you need a nap, 5m south-west of Denny's) and **Scragg's Hole** (a large double arch about 30m south-west of Denny's down-slope with a galvanised tin bath and bucket probably from the last occupying caver).

Anyhow, I wanted to check which it was of Scragg's and Supra-Scragg's that I had a photo of from previous years and I also wanted to investigate **Wolf Den** and **Barton Shelter** on the north west side of Crook Peak to photograph the entrances for the MCRA website. So we parked in what I think was Barton village and followed the footpath uphill that's well marked with yellow discs (off the road it follows a track to start with over two cattle grids and up past the National Trust building/office) then at a footpath T-junction turn right, follow along through a gate and over a stile into a grazing field and head up-slope on the path, but cross over to the right hand fence and this takes you up to a footpath crossroads. Go right along the edge of the hill circa 200m to the second obvious steep (ish) gully between low cliffs. Here, I left Sue sitting in the sunshine and descended with some bramble secateurs, caving helmet, 25m rope (which I anchored initially at a small hawthorn bush some 3m down on the left and lower down again on a tree) which gave me just enough to safely land at the **Wolf Den** cave entrance. Getting back up the hand line rope was very useful and reassuring.



Barton Shelter



↑ *Supra-Sandy Hole*

Scragg's Hole →



Once photographed and briefly explored, I proceeded down to the left, north-west along the base of the cliff, where I found some big ivy type sticks and **Barton Shelter** complete with its more recent sheep bones and skull. (Note: when Willie Stanton investigated and dug both these caves in 1944/5 he found horse and wolf bones). Back up the way I came with bramble scratches and nettle rash, I found a very relaxed Sue at the top. Two more short holes were explored.

Then we drove round the end of the hill to the obvious parking area where you can walk up to the caves (**Denny's Hole** etc) as indicated on the National Trust information board. At **Denny's Hole** I didn't fit through the squeeze that allows access to the second and third chamber anymore – very disappointing, but clearly my chest does not fit or 'give' enough! We visited **Scragg's**,

Supra-Scragg's, Sandy Hole and Supra-Sandy Hole and took some entrance photos.

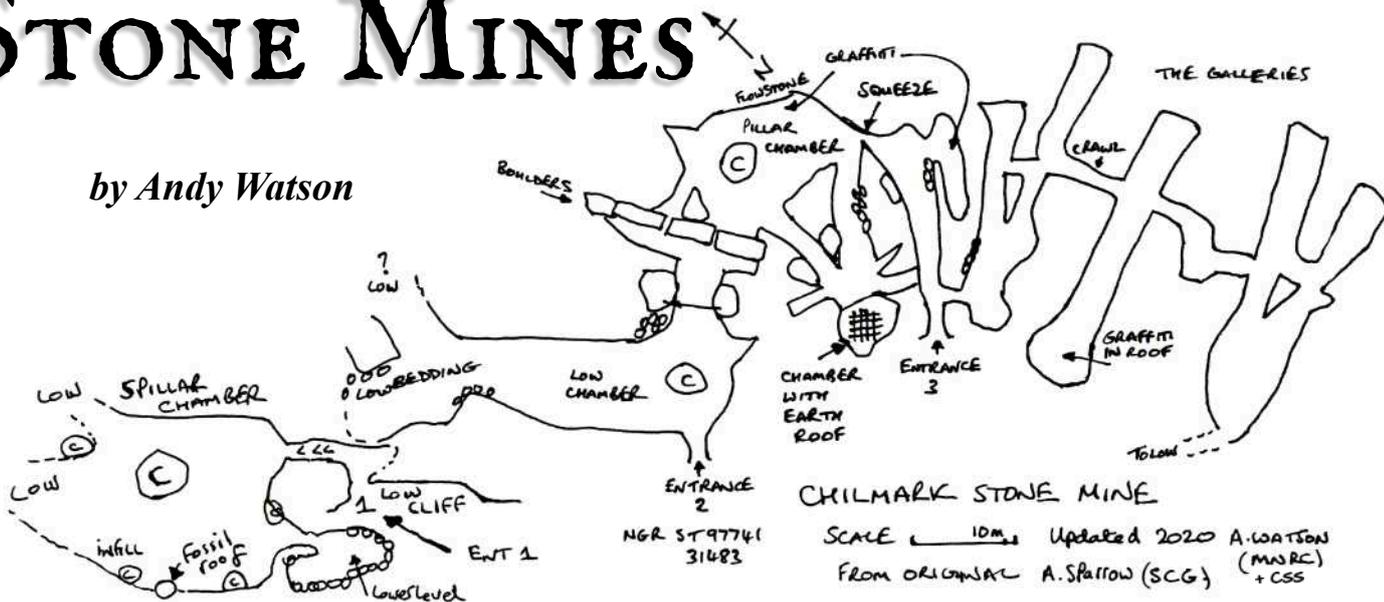
On the way back we stopped in Cross and walked up the footpath to Cross Quarry and checked out the **Cross Quarry Geode Hole** (a good hidey hole) visible up on the left-hand side as you enter and accessible by an easy scramble, but interesting. This quarry is a lovely safe (ish) place for a picnic with children or grandchildren and we picked some good blackberries. All in all a successful cave hunt and a good picnic.



Cross Quarry Geode Hole

CHILMARK STONE MINES

by Andy Watson



UPDATED SURVEY



From some logbooks of the Salisbury Caving Group I discovered that Andy Sparrow originally dug open and visited part of the mine through Entrance No.3 early in 1973 and then led some SCG tourist trips with friends later during April and June that year. The SCG also visited Ammonite Rift and Fonthill Stone Mine in the area, amongst some other places.

The entrance I use is No.2, which I wriggled through in 2011 initially. Entrance No.1 at one end of the low cliff actually goes into another mine, at a slightly lower level. This probably used to connect somewhere but has been backfilled with deads and soil I suspect. Above is the latest survey. I'm happy to show people the mines if they fancy a visit.



*Above and Left: Pillar Chamber
Photos by Andy Watson*

The Toilet Habits of Bats

by Helen Pemberton

One late autumn evening, John and I saw a few bats flying around Whitewalls. As it was supposedly hibernation season, neither of us had our bat detectors with us, nor our ID guides, and we weren't entirely sure what species we were watching.

A visit to the library did not give us the information we wanted to improve our rough IDs, but I did find some other interesting facts. The information following has been taken from **Field Study Books: British Bats** by **Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald**. It is the first book to be published on British bats, and was published in 1949, back when the author believes bats were common.



NOCTULE BAT

“When alighting, this bat lands head up, gripping with the thumbs, and then immediately turns round to hang head downwards by one foot. An elaborate toilet is then undertaken before the normal position hanging downwards by both feet is adopted. Great care is taken over this toilet and the fur of the Noctule is always spotlessly clean despite the strong smell.”

LEISLER'S BAT

“Alights head upwards and goes through the same routine as the Noctule.”

SEROTINE BAT

“Alights head upwards, gripping by the thumbs, and then turns head downwards to undertake the toilet which is prolonged and thorough. The long, silky fur is always spotlessly clean.”

PIPISTRELLE BAT

“Alights head up.”

BARBASTELLE BAT

“Alights head downwards as a general rule, turning a somersault in the air just before making contact with the resting place. Makes a careful toilet.”

DAUBENTON'S BAT

“Alights head up or head downward impartially. Makes a very thorough and prolonged toilet.”

WHISKERED BAT

“Alights head up, gripping with both thumbs before turning head downwards for the toilet. This is neither so prolonged nor so careful as with other species.”

NATTERER'S BAT

“Natterer's bat alights either head up or head down impartially. If the latter it turns a somersault in the air before reaching the resting-place, but it is not very good at this trick and frequently misses its mark, falling a few inches before recovering itself. Makes a long and careful toilet.”

BECHSTEIN'S BAT

*No information given. Much less appears to have been known about the Bechsteins in the 1940s. However the author does mention he found one in a cave in chalk near Henley-on-Thames in 1901.**

GREATER HORSESHOE BAT

“When alighting, this species turns a somersault in flight and lands head downwards, gripping with the strong claws of the feet. The animal is extraordinarily accurate in its judgement of distance and very rarely misjudges the roosting-point, nor does there appear to be any slackening of speed as it approaches the object chosen for roosting. The toilet is brief, but fairly thorough – though Greater Horseshoes are not as a rule as clean as other species – and then the wings are wrapped around the body, the ears folded and the feet brought close together, and the animal settles down to rest looking for all the world like an empty glove.”

LESSER HORSESHOE BAT

“Alights as does the Greater Horseshoe, but before settling down makes a prolonged and very careful toilet.”

LONG-EARED BAT

“Alights head up. A careful toilet.”

See <https://www.acerecology.co.uk/bat-droppings/> for a handy guide to bat droppings

Bats of Britain and Europe by Christian Dietz and Andreas Kiefer is the main book used by bat enthusiasts and bat workers for bat ID these days. Mine was published in 2014. It's interesting to see how descriptions of the UK's bats have changed in 65 years. In *Bats of Britain and Europe* you will not find descriptions of each species toileting habits, nor how they alight onto their resting places. However, more general information on bat droppings is given, and is summarised below:

“Bats have a very rapid intestinal tract, the remains of a meal are usually excreted within two or three hours. The chitin of the prey is not digested.”

“Due to the rapid intestinal transit droppings are generally excreted during the night, often at night-resting sites or while perch hunting. Only the remains of the early morning hunting phase are excreted in the roost.”

“Small colonies, such as those of the Bechstein's Bat, produce nearly a centimetre-high layer of faeces in a bird or bat box used during a period of approximately one week. The prey remains in bat droppings can be sorted, with much experience, into prey species... More recently, the prey can be identified by genetic methods. The intestinal cells in the faeces of bats also allow a genetic identification of a bat.”

Many photos of species-specific bat droppings are readily available, and many bat ecologists will also carry a droppings ID chart with them. While I have stood in a wood and examined bat droppings, I have never watched a bat ecologist wait to watch a bat poo on landing.

I hope that next time you crawl on by a load of guano, you might give some thought to the careful or less so toileting habits of the bats that deposited that guano, and ponder whether their acrobatics in reaching their perch were successful or not. At least if you are looking at droppings underground, it is likely to be bat droppings not mouse droppings (unless it's a Berkshire chalk cave, in which case it could very likely be a rodent dropping, but that's another story).

** At the time of writing, during full lockdown, I'm driving to Henley to look for a chalk pit that may not still exist to see if there are still Bechstein's bats roosting, and if so, to observe their toileting habits on alighting on their resting place may not be considered appropriate and may result in a £200 fine. As I know you will all be eager to discover how a Bechstein poos, I will update you should I ever find out.*

CAVE WILDLIFE

– *Amblyjoppa fuscipennis*



by Helen Pemberton

During a trip to some of the Berkshire chalk pits, we found some interesting parasitic wasps, which are most likely to be *Amblyjoppa fuscipennis*, belonging to the rather large family Ichneumonidae. These large, distinctive looking wasps were easily noticeable against the pale chalk, and were occupying many shallow crevices. They are black, with small white spots by the eyes, and females have a larger white/cream spot on the thorax. The abdomen is reddish and the legs orange. They reach around 25mm long.⁽¹⁾ All of the individuals I saw had this white spot – male Ichneumonids are rare.⁽²⁾

Amblyjoppa fuscipennis actively flies June - August in gardens and woodland,⁽³⁾ so it was interesting to see them over-wintering underground, although the chalk pits are not at all extensive. *A. fuscipennis* are parasitoids, and they prey upon the small elephant hawk-moth and convolvulus hawk-moth in the UK, and death's head hawk-moth which is found elsewhere in Europe but not the UK.⁽⁴⁾ Parasitoids kill their host, whereas true parasites feed upon their host without killing them. *A. fuscipennis* consumes the whole of their moth pupae and caterpillar hosts with the exception of the skin.⁽⁵⁾



The Ichneumonidae family contains over 24,000 species, many of which are very difficult to identify.⁽⁶⁾ Because of the complexity of identifying these parasitic wasps, they remain understudied and under-documented,⁽²⁾ so further information on them is proving hard to find. It appears that the host moths' habitat includes chalk grassland, and the BCRA cave biology group reports numerous sightings of *A. fuscipennis* overwintering in chalk pits in Cheshire.

1. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/amblyjoppa_fuscipennis
2. donegal-wildlife.blogspot.com/2008/08
3. naturespot.org.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/british-ichneumonid-wasps-id-guide.pdf
4. cabi.org/isc/datasheet/4713
5. szmn.eco.nsc.ru/personal/logunov_2016_AlderleyEdge.pdf
6. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ichneumonidae

Inset photo by Helen Pemberton. Title picture by Malcolm Storey / www.discoverlife.org

Caving Quiz

There are 20 questions, some with more than one part. The number of points for each question is given in brackets

by Adrian Fawcett



Q1 (1)

Most caves are found in Carboniferous limestone. How long ago was the Carboniferous geological period?

Q2 Name the caves (2)

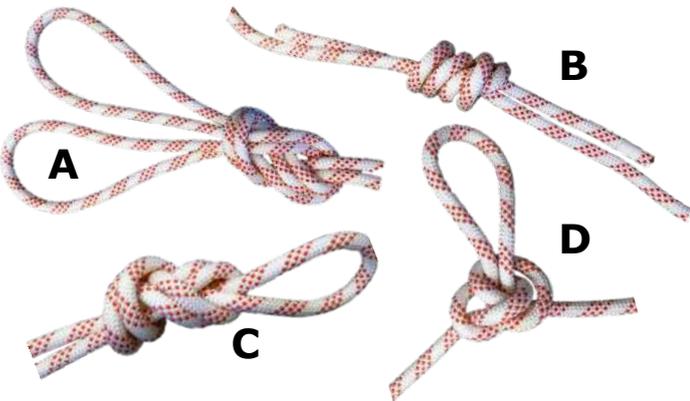
Name the cave: "an active swallet whose water resurges at the Sion-Sieffri Reservoir to the south of Trefil village"

"A narrow rift leads to a small chamber aptly named The Coffin where a large boulder forms the roof"

Q3 (1)

What happened at Sunset Pot in October 1967?

Q4 Name the knots (4)



Q5 (2)

In which cave would you find the "Soggy Dishcloth"? And how long is it?

Q6 Which is the odd one out? (1)

Tiptoe Traverse
Ferrets End
Peats Playground
Frozen River

Q7 Place in upstream order: (4)

Maypole Inlet
The Confluence
Top Waterfall
First River Chamber
Great Oxbow
Marble Showers
The Wee
Splash Inlet

Q8 (1)

What chemical compound is aragonite?

Q9 (2)

Under which county boroughs do the two Daren camps, Hard Rock Cafe and Restaurant at the End of the Universe, lie?

Q10 (2)

In which year was Dan Yr Ogof discovered? And in which year did it open as a showcave?

Q11 (2)

Who was the first person to descend to the bottom of Gaping Gill Main Shaft? And who made it half way down in 1842?

Q12 (3)

Which British Caving organisations were formed in the following years:

1967
1973
2005

Q13 What and Where? (2)



Q14 (1)

What is the full name of ANUS cave (in the Assynt region of Scotland)?

Q15 (1)

Phreatic cave passages are totally filled with water during their development. What is the word that describes development of a passage while partially filled with water?

Q16 Match each Yorkshire pothole on the left with the connecting one on the right (4)

Large Pot	Alum Pot
Deaths Head Hole	Big Meanie
Box Head Pot	Short Drop Cave
Gavel Pot	Rift Pot
Marilyn Pot	Disappointment Pot
Diccan Pot	Lost Johns Cave

Q17 (1)

Which Welsh cave has the most entrances?

Q18 (2)

Trou du Glaz is one of the main entrances to which French cave system?

For the second point, name one of the other 6 entrances to this system.

Q19 In which Peak District caves will you find the following... (4)

Elizabeth Shaft
Surprise View
Garlands Pot
The Ice Cream Trail

Q20 Which caving clubs' huts are these? (4)

The Old School
Godre Pentre
The Chapel
The Mineries

Your total for the quiz is out of 44

The score to beat is 28, Tom Foord's winning score on the CSS Virtual Quiz night

Prospects of caving trips during the first half of 2020 were bashed by Boris, *by Charles Bailey* crushed by Covid-19 and dashed by disease. So, with the first lockdown easing, I made an escape to the countryside, wild camping and narrowly avoiding upsetting locals in the process.

Sated for the time being, a summer of outside jobs and cautious optimism followed, but with a sniff of the second lockdown in the air, I escaped again – this time in the presence of my daughter.

The exact location chosen will remain a mystery, but anyone who knows the Lake District will work out that it was somewhere in Upper Eskdale – a largely ignored part of the national park.



The Great Escape Part 1

Our first excursion was made in mid-June when travel for exercise was unlimited, provided you didn't stay in another home. Nothing was further from my mind, but suppressing a little guilt at the possible definition of 'home', I planned our 4 day trip. The forecast was for fine weather, with clouds bubbling up and the potential for late afternoon/evening thunderstorms for several days.

Parking near Jubilee Bridge, we set off in hot, humid and thundery weather. The 'we' being Soay - our Border Collie - and me. At 3 years old she was already a veteran wild camper and had completed the coast to coast walk with Judith and I in 2019.

The afternoon walk in was a classic boil-in-a-bag occasion, trudging the 3.5 miles up 350 metres with a 20 kg rucksack in the rain, albeit with gradually improving weather. The 'crack' team managed to overshoot the camp site, get dehydrated on the way up, and struggled with a fickle stove (I'd lost the vapouriser element in an overzealous cleaning exercise prior to departure). Oh, how I laughed.

Not to be outdone, we were up before 6am to fine weather, and scrambled up the crags to confirm 360 degree social distancing for at least 5 km! Off at 7:30 for a grand day out in the mountains – along Crinkle Crag, Bow Fell (where we passed our first human), Esk Pike and beyond. The weather was hot in the valleys, cooler and breezier up top, with no rain. We made around 10 miles, with 1150 metres of altitude gain/loss in 6 hours on the move (7.5 total). Upper Eskdale was blissfully devoid of other walkers and wild campers.

Back at site, a splendid meal was had late afternoon by both despite stove problems, and all tidied away before the brief thundery rain came in... and stayed! I hunkered down in the tent with Soay, mulling over options. Unfortunately, I didn't get a weather update on the ridge and there was quite rightly no signal in the valley. A rough night was had by both, with the rain replaced by strong winds overnight, before more rain came in. Soay cuddled up close with her head on my airbed, frequently startled by me turning over. With the stare and deep sighs that dog spoke a thousand words.

Low cloud and drizzle completed the gloomy picture at dawn. With no sign of improvements, no operable stove in the wind, and limited enthusiasm I decided to head home a day early. Soay didn't object. The weather did brighten up as we descended, so we got to the car a few grades down from soggy. However, heavy rain followed that afternoon and evening, and grim the following day so I think it was a wise move to exit.

The only human we saw on the walk off was a local farmer. We chatted briefly, he enquiring about my car. No animosity, just curiosity, he being happy to clear up a mystery. Locals and the park wardens were rightly concerned about muppets camping by the roadside, creating a disturbance and leaving litter and mess. Clearly my discrete parking had been spotted, but I was relieved not to find national park or police notices.



The Great Escape

Part 2



Oh, the furloughed hordes and 'staycationers'! England's favourite places were packed during the summer, so home improvements and local trips took precedent. As the nights drew in, the crowds retracted, and the schools went back, a chance for a revisit presented itself as the weather improved before winter

closed in. Plans were made for Judith, Soay and me to camp mid-September – then belatedly my daughter Jess had an opportunity due to being furloughed, and Judith kindly offered to step back.

I negotiated parking at the Woolpack Inn in Eskdale, and we had a nice lunch before setting off. This added an extra mile walk in but a more secure parking place. Each human had 20 kg and Soay her usual 1.5 kg in panniers. In marked contrast to the earlier trip, the weather was fine and sunny. We headed for the same location, which looked completely unchanged in the 3 months – the masses clearly hadn't got that far.

An 'ok' meal due to dubious rehydration was but a prelude to the late evening entertainment – a drama featuring Herdwick sheep highlighted against the skyline in fading light and one adventurous/lost soul, complete with poor imitations of a David Attenborough voice over. Well, it kept us entertained.

A good night's sleep prepared us for a trip along the Crinkle Crag/Bow Fell/Esk Pike route and beyond, this time with a little scrambling, in perfect weather. On the way back Jess bravely enjoyed a bit of wild swimming whilst I volunteered to get the kettle on. After a fine meal, finished off with port and stilton, we spotted a couple of other wild campers along the valley – kindly keeping at least 1 km social distance.

The second walk day was a bit of an epic, taking in Upper Eskdale, Sty Head, Corridor Route, Scafell Pike, Lords Rake, Scafell and a long walk off to the south swinging back around to camp. We managed around 2000m altitude in all, over 11 miles on a 10.5 hour trip, with yet another fine weather day. A few people were seen in Upper Eskdale, loads on the route to Scafell, and zero beyond Lords Rake!

Jess had a second bout of wild swimming before the wind picked up in the late evening. The troupe of Herdwicks sadly didn't reappear. A wonderfully mellow walk off followed the next day in yet more grand weather via the west bank of the Esk, finishing up with a fine 3 course meal in The Woolpack.

Final part 2 statistics for the geeks :

- Equivalent to 3 full days walking.
- 23.5 hours on trips
- 29 miles
- +/- 3900 metres
- Used 0.5 L fuel for the stove.
- Consumed 4-5 kg food (humans) and 1.5 kg for Soay.



As they say in film making, no animals were harmed during the production.
As for Covid? It all ended in tiers.



Mid-Wales Mines Spectacular

by Mandy Voysey

Part 1

For much of my time as a caver I must admit to not being overly inspired by mines, and a venture into our local Wiltshire or Mendip mines every so often was a nice change but somewhat lacking the drama, challenge and scenery to be had in the caves of the area. The mine entrances we happened upon while roaming the mountains on our holidays to Cumbria and North Wales did nothing to tempt me either, being more often than not too wet, grubby and possibly unstable to be appealing. However after discovering some real gems like the Coniston Copper Mines and some of the fantastic slate mines of North Wales, we became increasingly interested in the amazing man-made realms of the underworld and developed an appreciation for the history, artefacts and dramatic formations often to be found. Though North Wales is probably the primary home of top-notch big mine exploration, Mid-Wales also has some excellent trips on offer, generally of more modest proportions but full of variety and fascinating scenery.

As information for these sites can be hard to find, I thought it might be useful to write up the trips that I have done in the area, with (hopefully) enough detail to be of use for anyone planning a trip. The following has all been written retrospectively from my terrible memory, so there's a chance it may not be wholly accurate, but who needs accuracy when you can go and explore for yourself!

Ystrad Einion Copper Mine

Cwm Einion/Artist's Valley, Grid Ref: SN 707 938.
Entrance located up the grassy slope behind car parking area (before the forestry boundary).

This was the first Mid-Wales mine I ever visited and is also a really decent one to start off with. I had no knowledge of mines in the area at all until the Grampian Annual Dinner in October 2014, which that year was being held at Machynlleth with accommodation in Corris. The weekend was also complimented by a smorgasbord of trips into some interesting and diverse mines of the local area organised by Pete Dennis (GSG/SWCC), so we were keen to go along and check them out.

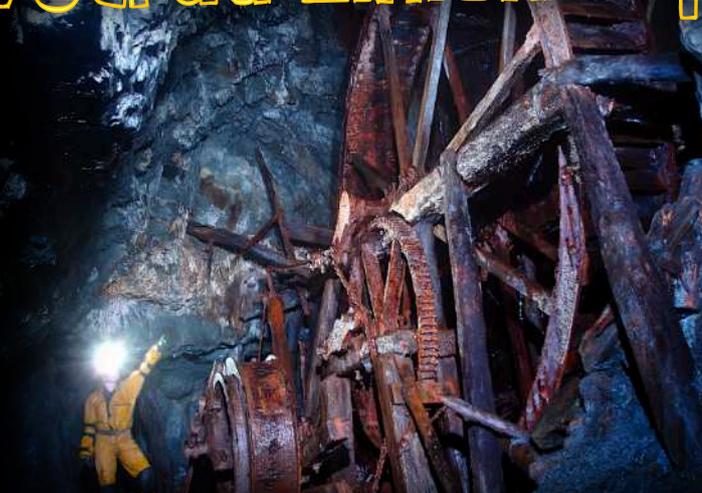
The Saturday morning saw Matt and I along with a motley crew of other GSG members rocking up at the

Artist's Valley. Our primary mission was to do Bwlch Glas Mine (a short drive away), but as Ystrad Einion came highly recommended and was theoretically only a short trip we decided to take a swift tour of the workings there first.

The entrance is just a short walk from the parking spot and there are quite a lot of surface remains still to be seen here too. The mine is initially a neat straight tunnel and it's not long before the major spectacle of the mine is reached. An enormous waterwheel, one of only two still in-situ in the whole of the UK.* As you can imagine, such an impressive chunk of history is a sight much photographed and there were loads of photographers on our trip, plus lots of cavers in general, so we were milling about here for a while.

I got conned into assisting Toby Speight in his photographic endeavours and we spent quite a while faffing with flash lights at a hatch revealing the flooded stopes below along a short passage to the right of the mighty waterwheel. When we returned there was not a soul to be seen. Not spotting any further passages to explore, we headed back out. On the surface there was still no sign of our fellow cavers. We thought it odd but figured they must all be looking at the surface remains so we went off in search and found a large open shaft covered with a sturdy metal grille, and beneath this was the rest of the team!

So with clear instructions to actually look behind the waterwheel for the way



on this time, we headed back into the mine. Finding the way on easily we continued down mined passage, crossing wooden planks over flooded levels below as we went. We were soon at the base of the large daylight shaft we had seen from above, some of the team had already been to the end and were on their way back. The way on was up a knotted rope climb conveniently situated beneath a waterfall. Beyond this there is not a great deal of distance to explore, but what it lacks in mileage it makes up for in colour with all kinds of yellow, green and orange formations adorning the passage walls. Another notable feature is a huge metal kibble, big enough to climb inside. With so much to photograph Toby and I were still lagging behind, so upon meeting up with other members of our party I managed to swiftly hand over the flash and run, in a bid to make sure that I'd actually make it to the end before we all had to depart.

With our "short trip" over, it was now time for a cup of tea before the next foray into the underworld. According to Pete, tea is an essential post-caving component and an opportunity for tea drinking between trips ought not to be missed, so we all piled into his house in Talybont for a spot of lunch. This (like our trip to Ystrad Einion) took longer than anticipated so we decided to scratch the plan to do Bwlch Glas (SRT always takes ages after all) and head to the nearby Allt y Crib Lead Mine instead.

** The other waterwheel is in Brewery Shaft, Nenthead.*

Trip Highlights: Historic waterwheel, lovely big kibble and brightly coloured formations.

Allt Y Crib Lead Mine

Talybont (Ceredigion), Grid Ref: SN 6535 8938. My memory of the route to the entrance is vague, but we took an obvious footpath from the village and the entrance is marked as "shaft dis" on the OS map.

This mine is conveniently just up the road from Mr Dennis' abode, so it was only a short walk to the entrance. This is in the form of a wide open chasm, the air shaft for the mine workings. The angle of descent is a friendly 55° (ish) and is apparently free-climbable, but we had a rope rigged from a tree as a hand-line. We'd been told that we wouldn't need SRT gear as Pete's son Ieuan climbs it all the time with no problem, but I did wonder while descending if getting back up might be problematic, though being an optimist I thought it'd probably all be fine...

At the base of the pitch our descent continued in more confined dimensions down a series of ladders and shoring. Roy Fellows seems to have done a sterling job improving this section in recent years as from the photos I've seen I'd say it's much nicer now than it was. At the time of our visit the damp timbers were very liberally adorned with the furry fungus of dry rot plus a fair bit of loose matter prime to be knocked down by anyone climbing carelessly.

Once free of the hazards of loose rock and fluffy timber, horizontal walking height passage was gained - this is Talybont Deep Adit. The mine tunnels here can be easily explored, some sections have water to wade through and others are dry. Artefacts to be seen are a kibble and the remains of an angle bob and a horse gin. Though interesting, these are mostly just rusty fragments so lack the wow factor of the stuff in Ystrad Einion, but something that is really worth seeing is the fantastic stone-lined passage, which is incredibly neatly constructed.



We took quite a few photos here, then returned to join the others who we found stood in a cluster at the base of the shaft. Though Pete had made it up ok, the rock was rather slimy with autumnal wet leafy matter and had proved to be problematic for some, so a re-rigging mission was in progress and ascending gear was also fetched for anyone wanting to prusik rather than climb.

Rather than risk the embarrassment of trying and failing, we sat tight until a life line was rigged up. To be honest when we came to do it, the climb wasn't too bad after all, but using SRT kit probably would have sped things up somewhat. As there were at least 10 of us on the trip, the extraction of all the cavers in the party took quite

a while and in the usual manner of Annual Dinners we were cutting it very fine to get back in time and ended up with mere minutes to throw on our smart garb and brush off the mud before the bus departed.

Rigging for SRT: This can be done by belaying a 40m rope to a tree. To avoid rope abrasion, clip onto the hanger after the first section then traverse across to a second hanger to re-belay for the final loose slope.

Note: There are more mine entrances that can be explored in the area if you want to make a day of it (including Myddleton's and Wilkinson's Adit), but the air shaft is the only way to access the Deep Level. I've also been told that widening of the forest road has recently revealed another shaft that drops into a level with tramway track still in place with waist deep water much of the way.

Trip Highlights: Impressive stonework on the lower levels and interesting entrance pitch.



Aberllefenni Slate Mine



Near Corris, Gwynedd, Grid Ref: SH 772 106. There's space for car parking to the left of the road just before the big spoil heaps (if coming from Corris direction), from here cross the road and follow the bridleway around the back of the hill to reach the tramway entrance next to a deep excavation with a gantry crane.

Our next excursion to the mines of Mid-Wales was in June 2015, where we visited this fine mine with a mixed bunch of BEC, SMCC and GSG cavers. This time we stayed in the rather unusual coastal resort of Borth, in a campsite that had the advantage of being both cheap and within easy walking distance of the beach and pubs. There was one major disadvantage though, and that was the railway track right next to the site. We had been told that the trains wouldn't be running during the night, but this turned out to be wrong!

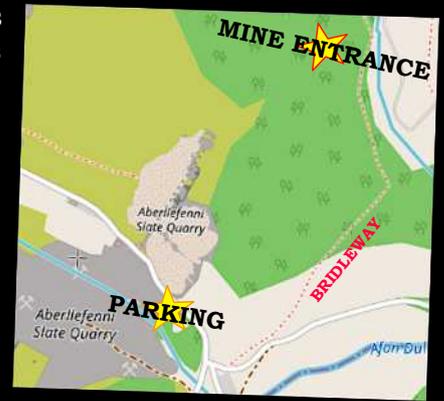
Aberllefenni is ace, a truly awe inspiring place for fans of big impressive chambers, lofty views and underwater lakes. Even the entrance is impressive, located next to a very big crater in the ground with a massive crane sticking out of the top. The first section of the mine is probably quite typical of big slate mines in comprising a series of large chambers seemingly miles high, with large piles of slate to clamber over and full of slabs you could accidentally find yourself slateboarding* on. Beyond this we reached a tramway and were able to split into two groups and head in different directions. We took the right-hand route to descend to the lower level, this is gained by a very long fixed ladder within a succession of metal hoops. We rigged a life-line for anyone wanting a bit of reassurance for this bit, as it was sufficiently long enough to be taxing on the arms and took longer than the average ladder climb. This led down to the more modern sections of the mine where there was plenty to see, and lots of it was BIG. Underground slate extraction ceased here in 2002 and there's quite a lot of old machinery still hanging about in this area. There are also huge cranes and mine trucks that still run on their rails when pushed. Another big feature are the lakes that now fill the hollowed chambers and shafts with deep, clear blue water. I felt this could be improved with the addition of fish as a few rays and dogfish would make it just like going to the Sea-Life Centre, but notwithstanding this obvious deficiency the scenery was still full of interesting stuff. Some of the chambers had metal gantries pinned to the walls high above the water to walk along. There used to be another entrance into the workings at the end of this section, but this is now blocked. After visiting all the sights here we headed back up the ladder to investigate the older workings to the left of where we'd joined the tramway. This part of the mine was very different to the



lower levels. Though containing remnants of mining activity in the form of rails and mysterious hanging chains, it had none of the more contemporary artefacts found in abundance below. Instead it had more of a 'Mines of Moria' feel to it,‡ with large chambers, sheer walls, and occasional sunshine streaming in through swirling mists. We did a circuit here where at the bottom of a shaft that looked like a dead end, we climbed a fixed metal ladder up a slippery wall to get to higher level workings. Heading left here takes you back out to the surface via another entrance (entry here is discouraged to avoid annoying the landowner), while right leads past scenic viewpoints and more chambers to re-join the route back out to our entrance.

* Just like skateboarding, but sliding on a piece of slate instead. Usually only achieved accidentally.

‡ If you ignore the lack of fantasy architecture and Balrogs.



Trip Highlights: The true majesty of seeing such impressively deep chasms and such lofty heights, the flooded sections were also brilliant, and the trucks were really good fun.

Cwmystwyth Lead Mines



Cwmystwyth, Ceredigion, Grid Ref: SN 8021 7457. Bonsall's Level Fawr is just a short distance from the car parking spot upslope and beyond the ruined mine buildings.

Trip 1 - The next day we went to Cwmystwyth Mine or more specifically Bonsall's Level. Despite this being a very enjoyable trip, I found when I came to write about it I couldn't remember much at all of the route we took.

The entrance is very obvious and also a very neatly made portal, just inside this is a plastic tube to enter the mine proper. A straight passage with a bit of shallow wading follows, and there's an old wagon in a chamber part-way along. Beyond this I can't remember the sequence of what is where, but I'm pretty sure exploration is part of the fun, so you can always go there yourself and figure it out. Much of this mine can be done without the need for equipment, all you need is a set of cowstails and a good dose of dexterity for the dodgy bits. At the time of our visit there was a second plastic tube, which was more fun than the first with the double discomfort of being both smaller and having a knee-trapping gap in the middle, however this piece of jollity has since been replaced by something more practical after a collapse in the area, and is now walking sized and reinforced with girders.

After this I recall there are rails in the floor and a really good wagon still perched upon them. Somewhere to the left around here is the connection to Level Fawr down the old skipway, but as this bit does require SRT kit (which we didn't have on this trip), we saved this part of the mine for another day. What we did instead was a really interesting circuit full of daring do and adventure, much like an Indiana Jones film. Well, that's how I remember it anyway. Happening upon an old wooden ladder heading into the darkness above we wondered if ascending it would be either a) brilliant fun, and an interesting link to somewhere fantastic, or b) foolhardy, stupid and a dead-cert for injuries incurred by broken ladder and incompetence. Luckily this predicament was resolved by Sean Howe testing it out and confirming the ladder as sound. I believe there's a rope alongside the ladder that can be clipped into for safety, though you may wish to take your own and send an expendable member of the team up first if you prefer the security of using something less 'vintage'. The ladder is actually quite long and care needs to be taken at the top not to knock down any loose rocks. Beyond this the next notable obstacle is a sort of bridge of doom, or maybe just a plank of possible jeopardy. This feels quite narrow and spans quite an immense drop, but it is short and luckily has a traverse line in-situ to clip onto. From here, by some means or another, we completed a circuit and re-joined the lower level. I believe this was at a section to the right of the main passage where rails cross over a drop and by an old ore chute, but I could be wrong. Plenty more exploration was had, it's all lost in the mists of time now but I do recall this being a good Sunday trip into quite a varied mine.



Trip 2 - Just a couple of months later we returned to the Cwmystwyth mines, but this time it was a Chelsea trip organised by Paul Tarrant. Undeterred by the long drive from Whitewalls a team of 9 (Paul Tarrant, John Stevens, Tim Gibbs, Adrian Fawcett, Jason McCorrison, Chris Tomlin, Joe Duxbury, Matt and me) all journeyed over for a day of mine exploration and adventure. On this mission we had three goals, and they were to explore Herbert's Level, Alderson's Level and to descend the pitch to Level Fawr in Bonsall's. Following our esteemed leader who luckily knew the way, we forged up the hillside to find our first entrance, which was the neat adit entrance to Herbert's Level located next to the stream. I've no idea what the grid ref is for either this entrance or Alderson's, but by plugging up the hill and following the course of the Nant yr Onnen stream you should find them easily enough. Herbert's itself isn't that long and I don't recall there being any artefacts or formations to see either, but none the less it's an interesting place to visit with lofty stopes, lots of stemples and some mighty timber shoring holding up the false floors. This ends at a big chamber with a large timber ore shoot and both daylight and water spilling down from above. The mine continues beyond this point, but it's no longer accessible due to a collapse. Back on the surface we went to the top of the stope above this chamber and enjoyed looking down it too, before continuing our journey to mine entrance No. 2. Alderson's Level is below Herbert's with the adit located further down the stream. This is an obvious entrance with a gate that isn't locked. This was very similar to Herbert's and was quite pleasant, mostly easy walking in stopes with stemples.

After lunch we embarked on section 3 of our mission, the return to Bonsall's Level Fawr to explore the lower reaches. As it was only a short time since we were last in this mine, we found the skipway that was our means of descent no problem and soon rigged the rope. However, though not technically difficult this pitch was a bit of a faff as there's lots of stuff that just gets in the way. You basically just walk down the 75° angle following the rails that are still in-situ, but a medley of timberwork framing makes it a bit of an interesting assault course. Not everyone had brought SRT kit, so with a slightly diminished team we embarked upon a thorough exploration of this level, and in the midst of nosing about in one of the less-obvious side routes we released a nasty rotten egg smell. Paul quickly piped up that he thought this to be hydrogen sulphide and we all fled the foul and stinky scene sharpish - there's a chance it could have been merely a tangy 'air biscuit' laid by one of team, but we didn't want to hang around to find out. The rest of the trip was hazard free and we saw quite a few interesting bits and pieces along the way, and we even had time for a swift circuit around the upper levels before heading home.

For further information on these mines see Paul Tarrant's trip report in CSS Newsletter Vol. 57 Nos. 10-12. There are also a number of other entrances and trips to be had in Cwmystwyth, so there's plenty more to explore in the area.

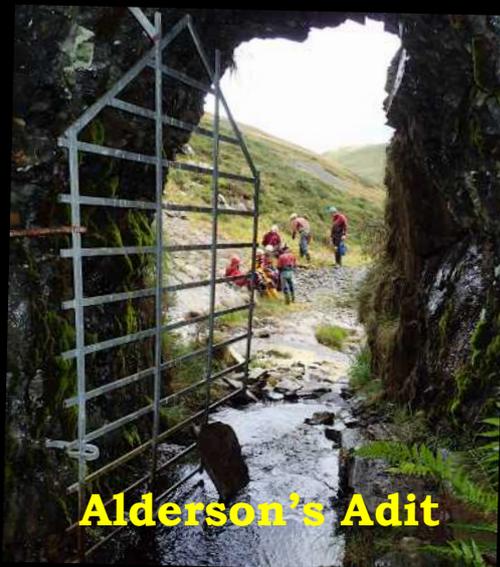
Rigging for SRT: There are 2 in-situ hangers at the top of the skipway to rig a Y hang, and a rope protector is a good idea to prevent rubbing at the top. The actual descent is 22m, so I'd guess something like a 30m rope would be ideal.

Trip Highlights: I really liked the adventurous stuff like going up the old ladder and crossing the plank, and the abseil down to Level Fawr is also really fun.

Mines featuring in Part 2... Bwlch Glas, Wemyss, Nantymwyn, Frongoch and Temple



Herbert's Adit



Alderson's Adit



Jason in Herbert's Level

All photos by Matt and Mandy Voysey except page 11 title photo by Toby Speight and above photos of Jason and Alderson's Adit by Paul Tarrant

THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS

by Nick Chipchase

The old folk resumed digging in Quarter Way Up Hole (QWHU) at Fairy Cave Quarry on the 2nd Jan 2020. Well four of us are now over 70. We blocked the connection we had made into Withyhill, and Brian Johnson got trapped by a fallen slab and had to strip off to get out. Work then commenced going up into an aven, "Mr Trundle's Staircase". Eventually, this reached a chamber with a nice stalagmite, "Mr Trundles I Scream Parlour". This to do with the racket a certain person made when a boulder fell on his hand (not me). To escape raining boulders I did a clean-up trip into Withyhill to clear bat guano off "The Icing Flakes", my two favourite lady cave models accompanying me (err sorry Mandy). I have a feeling that bats are entering the far end of Withyhill from Withybrook Slocker as there is more bat guano in the terminal choke. I did not have a good photo of the big chamber at the end of the other branch passage so we called in there as well (a good high-level draught here at times). We discovered that chamber nearly 50 years ago but never got around to naming it.

Back at Quarter Way Up Hole we eventually managed to connect it to Half Way Up Hole via a very tight squeeze (only one person has been through it). In March we found a good size chamber above QWUH which we called "Three Quarter Way Up Chamber". So we had connected three caves and created a figure of eight trip some 80 metres long. We found a good many bones in the process. Now if this all sounds confusing don't blame me because I have not any idea of what is going on here either. At the end of March caving at the quarry ceased due to C-19 (I won't mention it again). Swildon's remained open and I got conned into accompanying Peter Glanvill on a clean-up in "Barne's Loop" in July. Thinking I might get some photography done we lugged in the pressure washing gear and two camera boxes. After five minutes of washing the passage looked like fog bound hilltop on Dartmoor. I got cold and bored watching the proceedings. Scrambling out with all of the gear I then fell into one of the "Double Pots". A soggy trudge back across the fields to the Wessex Hut followed.

July also saw us back at Fairy Cave Quarry. We did some work in "Three Quarter Way Up Chamber" but the roof looked horrid at the end. On one occasion a metre long boulder leapt out of the roof and fell on my foot. Without steel toecaps I would now be toeless. We decided to let that area lie for a bit and started a dig going down in HWUH. That reached ten metres depth until things again put an end to the proceedings. Some hairy times were had and some scaffolding and a ladder have been put in place. Another big boulder leapt out of the wall onto my leg. It hurt horribly and I thought it was broken. Pete Rose's sniggering was halted by some vile abuse from me. In September I took a Shatter trip with Claire Cohen. She very kindly drove my car home



The Elephant's Trunk, Withyhill



Big terminal chamber, Withyhill



Natalia in Withyhill

when my hand got squashed in Reservoir Hole (it still does not work properly). September also saw me at Pridhamsleigh pressure washing "Bishops Chamber" with Peter Glanvill, some people never learn. This was interrupted by the arrival of two non-cavers without any proper gear who had read about the cave in a walking guide. They were promptly kidnapped and taken to the Lake Chamber for more arduous pressure washing and photographs. There they remained for a very long time no doubt having time to consider the absurdity of their predicament (sorry Molly from Bideford).

I had read about Snare Hole over in the East part of Fairy Cave Quarry but had never seen it. We tried to find the entrance from below but it was covered in brambles and bushes. Martin Grass using GPS left a ribbon on the quarry fence where Snare Hole was supposed to be. Going down by that point we found the entrance some eight metres down. It was partially blocked by a boulder but Pete Rose and I got in and down the short pitch into the roomy chamber. Possibly there could be a dig in there somewhere as the cave was draughting. Another day perhaps. More digging in HWUH followed over autumn. Again digging at the quarry was halted before Christmas.

Observing the rules Brian Johnson climbed up to Snare Hole and rigged a line for the 11m climb in December. It took us three hours to remove the boulder at the entrance. The same month Pete Rose and I visited St. Dunstan's Well Cave. It's the 50th anniversary of our discoveries there in 2021. I just made it through the first wet squeeze then along the rift down a tight bit to "Domestos Bend". It looked about nine inches high mostly full of water. In fact much far too small and horrid (twas ever thus). As ever, the cave was draughting well and I thought that it might make a project for the summer. A fair bit would need enlarging though. We never did locate the origin of the draught in the sump chamber. I was amazed to see my old digging tray at "Domestos Bend". It has been there now for 50 years and still looks serviceable. Well, that's it and good riddance to 2020. We might have a few projects now for summer (well whenever). Most are within ten metres of the entrance which suits us old folks just fine. In the meantime it's quiet here in the home. Nurse will be along in a while with the meds. Looking forward to the job very soon.



Top: Withyhill Cave
 Middle: Peter Glanvill Cleaning Barne's Loop, Swildon's Hole
 Bottom Left: Trusty skip in St Dunstan's
 Bottom Right: Peter cleaning Pridhamsleigh Cavern

SEA CAVE ADVENTURES

PART 3

by Andy Heath

Mandy's recent articles on coastal adventures reminded me of a selection of sites of underground interest in my own neck of the woods. I originally wrote these reports around 12 years ago for another club journal but have resurrected them here for your edification and enlightenment...

THE SIDMOUTH TUNNEL

The following tale relates to a railway tunnel built in the mid 1830s. Whether all the facts are true is open to debate, but it makes a good story anyway.

In the year of 1835, whilst constructing a new seawall at Sidmouth, East Devon, it was planned to also build a harbour. The piers were to be constructed from stone quarried a mile and a half further east along the coast at Hook Ebb. The engineer assigned to the task was a certain Henry Habberley Price who decided the easiest way to get the stone from the quarries to the building site would be via a railway along the beach.

The railway was 3'6" gauge, the rails were of timber construction, 6 1/2" x 4" in 19' lengths, with a wrought iron strap on the top face. The round sleepers were roughly at 3' intervals. The railway ran from the harbour site, along the seafront to a timber viaduct where it crossed the river Sid. The line then entered a tunnel (more of that later) for around a third of a mile before emerging onto the beach. It then ran the remainder of the way along the foot of the cliff on the shingle beach to Hook Ebb. Obviously a shingle beach is not the best thing to build a railway on, so timbers were let into the rock face and piles were driven into the beach.

As for the tunnel, this is where the story becomes amusing, though probably not for Price at the time. A local blacksmith built the original machine for transporting the stone from the quarries to the harbour. However, being only 'foot propelled' it was under-powered, so Price decided a steam locomotive should be used. To add a bit of Welsh interest to this tale, Price was a partner in Neath Abbey Ironworks, where the locomotive was built. The locomotive duly arrived at Sidmouth beach by boat. The boat was grounded so that the locomotive might be unloaded. Unfortunately, the engine was too heavy for the available crane, so the vessel was floated again and headed off to the docks at Exmouth, five miles to the west. Once unloaded, the locomotive was then, to

quote 1870 historian Peter Hutchinson, "drawn over the hills to Sidmouth which place it entered decorated with laurels as if in triumph amid the greatest enthusiasm". One can only imagine the look of horror and embarrassment on various faces, especially Price's, when it transpired the locomotive was too big for the tunnel.

By this time, the project was already losing the support of its backers, so the whole scheme was abandoned. To this day, Sidmouth still doesn't have a harbour. The tunnel was sealed and forgotten until the mid-1990s, when a cliff fall revealed the tunnel once again.

OUR VISIT TO THE TUNNEL

Date: 28 June 2008

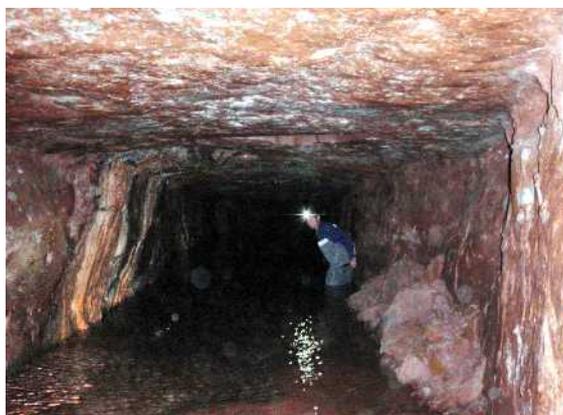
Party: Mandy & Matt Voysey, Andy Heath

A short walk along the beach, past a very recent cliff fall (more of that later), entry to the tunnel was gained via a 3m climb up greasy, crumbling red marl, with the waves almost lapping at our heels. A short, low passage leads for four or five metres to break into the main tunnel. Presumably this short passage was built simply for access when constructing the main tunnel, or maybe perhaps for ventilation; I'm not really sure.

Turning right, we followed the main tunnel for a hundred metres or so in ankle deep water. Occasional sheets of flowstone and a few short straws brighten up the otherwise dull red passageway. Dressed only in swimming shorts and trainers, I halted when the chill water reached a critical level. It looked as though the passage continued with about 2m depth of water and only half a metre or so of airspace. However, since we knew the tunnel would soon end, I opted to call exploration to a halt. Neither of my fellow explorers objected.

Retracing our steps, past our point of entry, daylight was visible ahead of us. The recent cliff fall had exposed the tunnel, thereby creating another

Title photo by Mark Lumley



Andy inside the Sidmouth Tunnel

entrance. Around 50m or so of passage gains the new entrance. Thirty seconds of digging and I was able to crawl out into the bright sunshine and scramble down the fresh scree back to the beach. Matt followed, shortly after by Mandy. Just to remind us that crumbling cliff faces are not good places to hang around, a fairly sizeable chunk of marl, big enough to cause serious injury or worse, hurtled past Matt, missing him by only a couple of feet. It didn't take long for Matt and Mandy to join me on the beach. I would strongly suggest that any would-be explorers do not use this exit, or maybe even better, go and find a real cave to explore!

Update February 2021: Last year saw some significant rockfalls in the vicinity of the tunnel. I haven't been back since, so it may be that the tunnel is no longer accessible.

THE CAVES AND MINE OF BEER HEAD

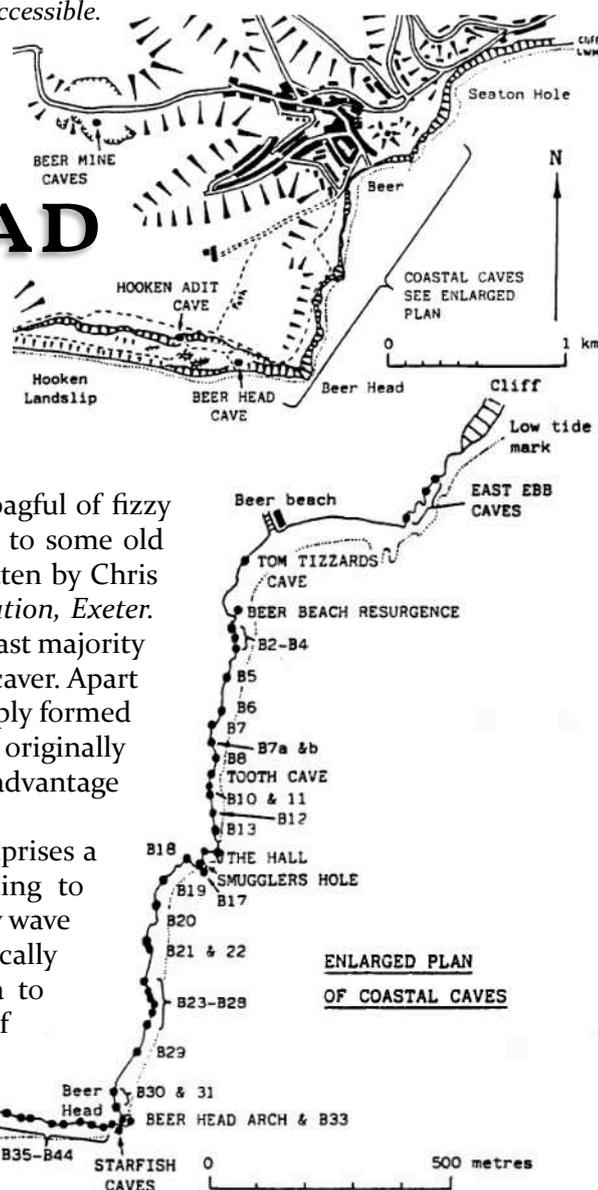
To continue our 'Subterranean Esoterica of East Devon' weekend, following on from our trip into the Sidmouth Tunnel, Matt, Mandy and I headed off to the nearby fishing village of Beer to visit the many short caves in the cliffs around Beer Head.

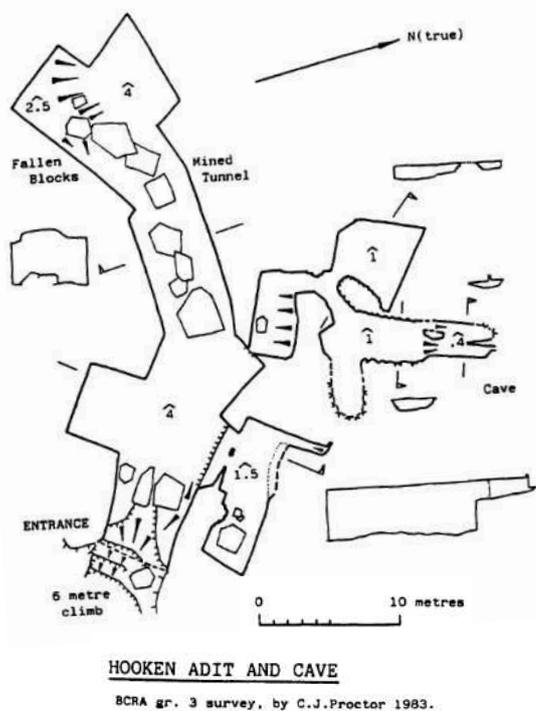
Suitably equipped with a couple of sit-on-top kayaks and a bagful of fizzy sweets, we took to the high seas and headed west. According to some old photocopies that had been given to me taken from a book written by Chris Proctor (*Proctor, C.J. 1987. Caves of East Devon. Private publication, Exeter. 39 pages*), there are 44 caves (numbered B1-B44). However, the vast majority of these are only a few metres long and of limited interest to the caver. Apart from perhaps two or three of them, they would appear to be simply formed as a result of erosion by the sea, although maybe there may have originally have been some kind of solution feature that the sea has taken advantage of and long since eroded away.

Our first port of call was B14 or 'The Hall'. Basically, this comprises a small headland perforated with many entrances (10, according to Proctor). The Hall would appear to have been created entirely by wave action. Hardly a sporting trip, never out of daylight, but aesthetically pleasing, and all the more pleasant in that we had the area to ourselves. At low tide it is possible to walk here, but for much of the day this part of the coast is inaccessible on foot.

Back on the boats, we hugged the cliffs as far as Beer Head. The coastline here takes a ninety-degree bend, and the shelter of the cliffs is lost. A bit more wind and swell made for harder paddling. Beaching our boats just around the headland, a couple more caves were entered (B40 & B42). Several small features suggested that although these short caves were predominantly formed by the sea there might also have been some phreatic influence in the past.

At the time of our visit, another feature of interest about half a mile offshore were the rusting remains of the 62,000 tonne MSC Napoli container ship that was deliberately grounded in shallow water in January 2007 after she split her hull and was in danger of sinking. Not much remained and salvage vessels were working on the hulk. Sadly, a legacy of this was the rubbish on the beach, though thankfully this is now a negligible amount.





Back on the water, we continued our journey westward for a couple of hundred metres to beach ourselves once more at a point where the coastal path drops down to beach level. Our next venue was to be a cave/mine, Hooken Adit and Cave (I've also seen it referred to as Beer Stone Adit or Connett's Hole).

Cursing our choice of attire (wetsuits), half a mile of sweaty progress through the 'jungle' of the Hooken Undercliff landslip took us upward to where the large 4m x 3m entrance can be seen in the cliff face. Aided by a bit of tatty string we scrambled up the dusty gully to the mine entrance. Similar in method of extraction to the Bath stone mines, the Beer stone is a soft Cretaceous limestone, which was

worked by picking out a header by hand and then sawing the stone out in large blocks. Some small but quite nice fossils can be found if you look hard. On a previous visit I found a couple of small sea urchins and a perfectly preserved shark's tooth.

The adit extends into the cliff face for around 40m. A particular feature of interest is that the mine has intersected what appears to be a small natural cave. It is perhaps possible that there might be more mine/cave beyond a collapsed area; certainly the strong, cold draught evident on our visit would suggest this could be so.

Returning to the boats once more, we commenced our homeward journey, stopping off at one more cave, B9 or 'Tooth Cave'. I found this cave of particular interest insofar as it looked to me as though it is of phreatic origin. A 25m passage heads straight into the cliff. Looking up to where the sea has not eroded the walls, clear phreatic scalloping is evident. Sharp flint nodules make for uncomfortable caving, and wearing a buoyancy aid doesn't aid progress in the tighter bits, so in order to preserve the cave (and my skin), I left the exploration to my eyes only.

Since the tide was now well and truly on the way in, I was able to undertake a through trip of 'The Hall' by boat. Then back to the beach for a well earned beer, a pleasant end to an unusual and most enjoyable caving trip.

Update February 2021: Since writing this article in 2008, I have found an account on the interweb which reckons the Hooken Adit was exposed by a landslip; this is not the original entrance, that was somewhere inland. Whilst I find this theory highly improbable, it could possibly explain the strong draught. Once this pesky lockdown is eased, I intend to revisit to check every inch of the place to see if there could be any merit in the above theory. Watch this space.

Surveys and map have been reproduced with kind permission from Chris Proctor



Top: Hooken Adit entrance climb
Middle: Mandy in Hooken Adit
Bottom: Josh Heath in the mined crawl towards the natural cave
Previous page: Matt silhouetted in a seacave entrance

Photos by Andy Heath

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Bob Fish: An Appreciation of “A Lovely Man”

by Roy Musgrove

Anyone attending a CSS Tuesday evening meeting at World’s End Community Centre down the “wrong” end of Kings Road in the 1960s soon learned that Bob was where the outburst of hilarity was, and had usually started it. He was one of life’s natural comedians. He often told stories at his own expense. Enlisting in the RAF for his compulsory two years “National Service” before he learned to drive, he was naturally taught to do so on RAF Fire Engines at Manston Airfield. One day he reversed one into a hangar door. Fortunately the clued up instructor had Bob drive to the other side of the airfield at speed before the door crashed to the runway and drew everybody’s attention to it.

Bob was a Londoner through and through, growing up near Leyton Orient Football Ground not far from Shepherd’s Bush Green. Having later in life to look after elderly parents, he never moved out north, west or abroad like the rest of us, though he was a regular attender of Western Section and Golden Oldie reunion dinners until his stroke. On a personal level he did once become engaged to a woman he met at another member’s party. She came from a family highly active in the local Labour Party. Bob realised before it was too late that it wasn’t for him and called it off. Sometime afterwards he plaintively remarked that “everyone who was at my engagement party, except me, has got married.” He never had another serious relationship.

In his early days he was an enthusiastic caver and dug in St Patrick’s Passage with its liberal supply of mud. In contrast, Joe Duxbury recalls being told a tale of an OFD trip: He was on a trip to OFD (probably) with some other people, but as he was feeling a bit knackered, he found a comfortable dry bit of passage and let the rest of the party go on, and sat down to wait for them to return. He pulled out a book to read. While he was there, another group came past, and he asked them something simple, like ‘Is it still raining?’ (it hadn’t rained for days). This gave them the impression he’d been there some time. And the book he was reading: Jules Verne’s ‘Journey to the Centre of the Earth!’ It has to be said that this has the hallmarks of embroidery, if not invention, by Bob’s sense of fun.

He participated in the CSS expedition to Czechoslovakia in 1968, when the party were woken up by their Czech host at 7am one morning to be informed that “We have had visitors during the night”. The

Warsaw Pact armies had invaded to end the so-called Czech Spring of politics there. However, prior to this an energetic time was obviously had by the party. Mick Butterley explains:

There was an outbreak of people lying on their backs and going to sleep on this expedition. We had put the frog on Bob’s chest so he had someone to talk to when he woke up. You can see the look of eager anticipation on the frog’s face.



Bob with frog in Katerinska Jeskyne, Moravia, Czechia 1968

Another serious trip was down Southern Stream Passage, which gifted the Newsletter editor the title for the trip report: “FISH seen in Southern Stream”! This is recorded in Colin Holdsworth’s photo of the party, with Bob showing what the well-dressed caver of the time wore. Note that carbide lights were still in use then.



Geo Fletcher, Clive Calder, Bob and Bruce Bedford in Southern Stream, Agen Allwedd

However, Bob’s most serious cave event occurred in 1968 on an Outer Circle trip whose attendees are not to hand but included Geo and Twink Fletcher. Descending from Summertime into Coal Cellar Bob became wedged by his lamp battery. He was stuck for some considerable time until Twink managed to free him by hitting the battery repeatedly with a rock. The incident gave Bob claustrophobia and introduced a new caution when he went underground. He later told Roy Musgrove that he was even having a problem as an electrician working in confined spaces.

Bob also played his part in running CSS. By 1967 some members felt that Bill Maxwell was treating his long-

running secretaryship as a personal fief for his own purposes. George Fletcher was persuaded to stand against him and Volume 10 of the Newsletter records the consequences:

Sensation at the A.G.M

Bill Maxwell, who has been C.S.S. Secretary for yonks tied twice with George Fletcher in the election and was re-elected by the chairman's casting vote.

That Chairman was Bob Fish and his decision to re-elect Bill, he told Roy Musgrove afterwards, was that if he maintained the status quo, matters would sort themselves out. He was right of course. Bill Maxwell got the message and never stood for office in CSS again. This may well have been the most important thing Bob ever did for the club in that it prevented splits and faction.

During his career as an electrician Bob was self-employed at one stage and had a contract with a well-known Chelsea photographer from which he used to regale us with stories. He was very chuffed when his electrical installation at White Walls was approved by the building authority and the inspecting officer commented that he hadn't seen an installation of this quality for years.

On another occasion when he was alone at White Walls two policemen arrived to inspect the property for an immediate use explosives licence. When they had approved it and gone back to their car Bob saw on the table a policeman's helmet. "I'd wanted one for years," he said, "but I knew it would cause too much trouble." So he went out with it and waved it at the car as he walked up to them outside the Travellers Rest. The passenger window was wound down and the helmet sheepishly accepted inside and the constable who was driving made Bob's day by remarking "I don't know why they make 'em sergeants!"

Bob always preferred doing good work to doing it fast and this became apparent after a notorious Western Section Dinner at the Miners Arms when it snowed heavily during the evening. Although some attendees were stuck there until Wednesday, Wells residents and their guests made it back off Mendip. Conditions were such that Bob couldn't get back to the job he was working on until the following Thursday. Mary Drake and Cath Clarke explain what happened:

"We had to stay in the Drake household until Wednesday. Bob had terrible trouble explaining to the staff in Windsor Castle that he was unable to get into

work where he was installing central heating into the Queen's Dolls House! As he made his apologies and explained that he was snowed in in Somerset, Cath and I would take it in turns to whisper (none too quietly) and seductively (as far as we were able) in his ear words such as "come back to bed Bob darling" and "I'm waiting for you big boy" and other naughty things combined with much girlish giggling in the background. Bob was a bit concerned for his job but I think it boosted his street cred just a bit."

Bob's interests were never narrow. Roy Musgrove and Russ Cullender took him up to a very wintry Wasdale for what it turned out was his first visit to the Lake District.

On one occasion we went up Sty Head and turned up Aaron Slack at the back of Great Gable. Bob was always a very strong walker, and it was a surprise when he dropped to hands and knees in the snow. That was until they too met head on the gale blowing through the col from Ennerdale. On the other side of the crest was a Herdwick sheep covered in snow on one side and bare fleece on the other. "It looks like a before and after advert," commented Bob. He was so taken with the Cumbrian Fells that he went on to buy a caravan at Threlkeld below Blencathra and spent many happy times there with his other London friends. By the time ageing parents meant that he could not

get up there and he sold it, he probably could have written a Wainwright Guide to the Pubs of Lakeland.

Bob was always interested in new people and places and one summer he hired a car and went with Roy Musgrove and Beryl and Clive Calder to Austria. Determined to do the job properly instead of being just another English tourist he bought a course on disc and

began learning German. Although the car only had 6000 miles on the clock, somebody had been doing nefarious things to the wheels and Bob became quite proficient at asking in German "Do you have a new inner tube?" Sometimes he had problems remembering vocabulary but got

round this as only Bob could. On one occasion he couldn't remember the word for chicken so did a Fish-style imitation with clucking and waving his arms like wings. The people in the shop were highly amused and Bob got his chicken. Even more outstanding was the time he forgot the word for half. Never mind he would ask for 500 grams instead of half a kilo. Of course he mixed it up and ordered 500 kilograms of sausage. The whole shop



Bob working at Whitewalls



dissolved in hilarity but they knew what he meant. For the rest of the holiday whenever they passed a big artic and trailer road train Bob was reminded “they are trying to deliver your sausage Bob”.

After he retired Bob took up Egyptology in which he had long had a vague interest. Like all his activities he worked at it and paid several visits to the country with his Society, as well as Egyptian collections like Kingston Lacy in Dorset. Latterly when talked to about a recent television programme, he would delight in pointing out the errors, which he was well equipped to do. He also attended with a friend winter evening science classes in Chorleywood.

Then came his stroke. It was at that time that the cheerful happy funny Bob left us for ever. The effect of feeling totally out of control of himself and the fear that it might happen again pulled him back ever more to familiar landmarks so that eventually he didn't even leave his house. The impact mentally was perhaps comparable with the failed engagement and being stuck in Coal Cellar. Although he largely recovered physically, and 40 email addresses were being issued with medical bulletins to start with, people gradually dropped out of contact until only a few were speaking to him regularly. The

friendly, sociable, funny Fish became isolated and lonely. He was quite philosophical for a long time and as physical ailments from his past reappeared and he got less able to look after himself he formed a strong new relationship with his carer of Nigerian ancestry, Godwin. All went relatively well for some years until Godwin needed an operation himself and had to resign. His replacements were never satisfactory to Bob. Also he began to fall over with increasing frequency so that the ambulance crew who arrived to pick him up in response to his alarm got to know him as more than a passing acquaintance. His most recent fall prompted his last admission to hospital where he contracted Covid-19 and passed quietly away over a few days of increasing unconsciousness.

The portion in quotes of the title of this essay was how one of the nurses who cared for him in his last days referred to Bob when talking to Gill Wilde. Thanks for the privilege of your friendship Bob. Your troubles are over at last. Farewell our ol' mate.

*Written with contributions from Mick Butterley, Cath Clarke, Mary Drake, Joe Duxbury, Geo Fletcher and Colin Holdsworth.
Photos by Colin Holdsworth except Bob with frog by Mick Butterley.*

OUR GOOD FRIEND BOB

One of the qualities of CSS that remains memorable to me (Gill Wilde née Whitelaw) today is that age doesn't matter. I was only 18 years old when I was first introduced to the CSS fraternity at the Community Centre in Chelsea in 1970. Most of the members must have been 15 – 20 years older than me, including Bob – but it didn't matter and I was welcomed. Bob got on with anyone and everyone and we formed a friendship from very early on. His CSS friends were very important to him and he viewed them more like a family. He said that friends he made in other walks of life, such as Egyptology, just weren't the same. Bob was made an Honorary member of CSS in 1982.

The following is a trip down memory lane, in no particular order, from his many friends.

Bob was always part of the CSS activities. He enjoyed life and being part of whatever was going on. Frequent weekend trips to Whitewalls, where, when crossing the border into Wales, Bob would look at the Welsh border sign 'Croeso y Gymru' and announce 'Creosote your Gumboots'. Bob was there at the CSS annual dinners and the special anniversary dinners, often doing a trip in Eglwys Faen on those occasions. Paul remembers Bob taking Sian on a few of these trips.

Barry Weaver - “Bob's interjections during speeches at club dinners were always great fun, he and Bruce Bedford were a delight at the Western Section dinners. Like all great people, he had a fund of amusing stories; my own particular favourite was how he punctured his blow up rubber woman 'cos he'd forgotten to take off his

crampons. Like all of us I could go on and on. Bob leaves us with memories of great times, hilarity and a good few pints; not to mention “The Bob Fish Bum Hold” which he showed me how to do on one of our trips into Aggy.”

Clive Gardener - “Saturday 29th January 1983 saw a large Chelsea S.S. party, including Bob Fish, Mark Noel, Doug Thompson and myself, arriving at the limekilns on the old Blackrock road above the Heads of the Valleys road in the Clydach Gorge. We were to be led into Craig a Ffynnon by Arthur Millett, who had obtained the key to the cave's notorious Fort-Knox-like gate from Jeff Hill, secretary of G.O.C.A.F.”

The following two recollections from Clive have been reproduced for us from the 'Llangattock book'. “Bob's cave



exploration project in the Eastern Series of Eglwys Faen yielded St Patrick's Passage, when he was accompanied by Harry and Heather (née Morrison) Pearman, Bill Maxwell and George Fletcher: "we cannibalised an old draining board from the hut and it fitted perfectly in the bottom of the dig, while Bill sacrificed one of his biscuit tins to the cause. We dug for a further three hours, and, at 2.30 p.m., Bob, who had again done most of the work and had dug himself into such a position that he could now only go forwards, was able to crawl up into a negotiable passage. The dug section is twelve feet long. Also Bob helped out at the C.S.S. 4th Boulder Choke dig in Agen Allwedd on 5th May 1962, for which his professional electrician's expertise and sense of humour was called into play for installing an electric telephone. On the first occasion the large C.S.S. party consisted of Clive Calder, Peter Chambers, Rane Curl, Bob Fish, Bob Fowler, Julia James, Ian Keith, Bill Maxwell, Tony Payne and Peter Thompson. Four dinghies were used to operate a ferry service through The Narrows. This time Ian and Bob Fowler did the honours by remaining behind and watching the water level at the 3rd Choke. Meanwhile, Peter Thompson and Bob Fish ran a telephone wire from the 4th Choke back through the 3rd Choke, which was intended to provide an 'Early Flood-Warning System'. Clive, who had been making a tape recording of the proceedings at the end choke, began to wonder what had happened to the line-laying party. Out of a mixture of curiosity and impatience he picked up the telephone handset at the 4th Choke, charged up the generator and immediately connected with Bob Fish, who was standing in a deep pool of water, holding the bare ends of the wires in his hand! Bob uttered a bellowing response, which hardly needed an electronic apparatus to span the distance!"

Every summer there was a CSS trip somewhere and Bob was part of it. My earliest memory of one of these was to Scotland in May 1976, where we stayed in the Grampian hut in Assynt and went up Ben Nevis on the way home. Bob F was the driver for Bob Channer and myself and did the drive on the way home in one hit as we all had to get back to work!

There were many trips to County Clare in Ireland. **Dave Mills** - "The memory I have of that is him flying his kite from the campsite at Fanore (v windy) up over the mountain. It went so far that we could no longer see it and then there was an "uh oh!" from Bob as the line gradually went limp and he had a very long walk across the main road and up the mountain to recover it."

Paul Tarrant - "I was talking to Rick who related how we moved Bob's huge frame tent across the sand dunes at Lahinch so he could be with the rest of us. Quite a feat."

Bob Channer also recalls on an Irish trip, possibly in 1977, Bob "having us all in stitches flying some chap's "knickers" on his kite as a kite-tail, and us all wondering if

said knickers were a gonner because the kite was flying low and far out over the sea".

John Addison - "My first meeting with Bob was also on the Clare trip. I wasn't a member of Chelsea but was out in Ireland caving with the Pegasus. I turned up at your campsite which I think was near or on the beach as I was trying to find the entrance to Slieve Elve or something pot which I believe the Chelsea had found and surveyed or was it Glasgow SS. Bob was really helpful and introduced me to everybody, gave me some information and more to the point gave me some beverage to drink. What a guy!"

He also tried to explain why somebody was either trying to, or had tried to put their head down a rabbit hole (Pete Bull after a good session?) Everybody was quite merry and even tried to have a game of I think it was volley ball. Don't think I made it back to the Pegasus... I saw him later in O'Conner's ... Canny club this, me thought at the time, must look them up when I move down to London. I had much fun with him later when we did move, mainly on social events... Boy could he snore!!!"

Mick and Beryl Starr - "One day, as an alternative to caving, Beryl decided that we should all go horse riding. We ended up at Willy Daly's, where we were to camp in 1972. The horses were a mixed bunch, but Bob was given the biggest, called Eleanor. We set out for a ride and after a short while Bob decided he'd had enough and would go back. The rest of us continued for some distance before stopping for lunch. About 15 minutes later we heard a clapping sound, as Bob rounded the corner. It transpired the horse had other ideas and wouldn't turn round, but followed us instead.

I can't remember if Bob went caving or not on that first Ireland trip, but he did enjoy walking. The Burren is a fantastic limestone landscape for walkers. One day Bob found some old horns from a dead cow, which we attached either side of the roof rack on the minibus. The following year, 1972, we were welcomed back in Lisdoonvarna as the "people with the horns on the van". I think it was on that second Irish trip that we tried to find a wife for Barry."

Barry Weaver - "Bob did go caving on our Clare trip in 1971, he told me not to be a wimp and get on with it down Faunarooska. I wasn't that keen on doing the final 80' pitch. I am fairly sure he came down Pol an Ionain and possibly some other caves as

well. I think he had been to Clare with Chelsea prior to our '71 trip as he knew about O'Connor's and The Roadside Tavern."

Ken McLeay - "I remember my mum knitted the brown jumper Bob is wearing with the CSS logo on the front and Ian Penney said that my mum made one for him too."



Co. Clare 1971 - John Cooper digging a hole for the water supply, while Bob, Barry and Nick White watch



CSS in County Clare 1980

But it wasn't just the summer trips that he was part of. As his caving days gradually came to an end he took up walking and loved the Lake District and Wales. These trips attracted his CSS friends. There were annual trips in October to celebrate Bob's birthday to climb Cadair Idris, often with a bit of kite-flying. Plus annual trips to the Lake District at Christmas/New Year.

The trip to the Dolomites and Monte Rosa in August 1976 was for walking and not caving, even though most were cavers! I remember, we had to beat a hasty retreat off the mountain as there was a thunder storm.

Phil Dinn remembers "Bob had the night time recurrence of using a footpump to blow up his lilo which he always told me was his blow up doll."

There were a few trips to the Isle of Skye. We (John and Gill Wilde) lived on Skye for a while and CSS were regular visitors. Bob was an avid real ale drinker and on one trip to visit us, along with Harry and Jane Stead and others, we were asked to buy some barrels of beer - this involved a trip to the brewery in Inverness. They said get three barrels and sent up the money. We thought they'll never drink that much and John reduced it to 2.5 barrels. It all got drunk! And the other half barrel would have gone too! On later trips to Skye, after we had moved to Wales, we rented a cottage next to the Talisker distillery and a real ale pub.



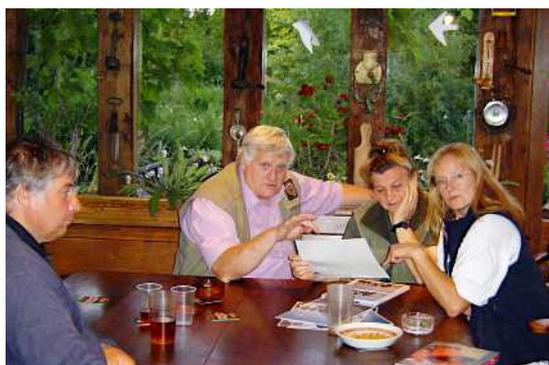
Birthday guests outside the gothic hotel we stayed at in Dolgellau



Celebrating his 50th with champagne on the top of Cadair Idris in September 1984

Real ale pubs did feature a lot in where Bob went and stayed! He was always talking about the 'blow up (inflatable) pub' he carried in his rucksack, when a real one wasn't around for lunchtime.

And then there were the parties, where Bob was always the 'life and soul'. He had a fantastic sense of humour and was always making us laugh. John and I had a party at our house in Wales to celebrate our 40th birthday. Somehow a life size blow-up doll appeared. Bob was always swooning over a 'blow up rubber woman' and this 'rubber woman' was put on the island in the middle of our lake for him to retrieve. And there was Dorothy Bromley, his 'sweetheart' who never materialised but always turned up in conversations - another of his jokes.



There were Christmas parties, held in various people's houses. Again Bob was very much part of these.

Pete Spink recalls "Bob turning up here for our Xmas bash with a blow up Egyptian doll - taking his interest in Egyptology a bit far perhaps!"

Bob was a very intellectual and well-educated person who had a

lot of interests. Photography was one of his main ones and he used to develop his own pictures. He told me recently that he used his bathroom as a dark room.

Paul Tarrant - "Dear old Bob wrote me a letter after Sian died, sending me a lovely photo of us together. Made me quite tearful when I saw it and Bob admitted to feeling the same way when he processed the picture in the darkroom". Bob was a sensitive and compassionate person.

Another passion which came after caving was Egyptology. He made many trips to Egypt and joined an Egyptology Society and was an active member. He became very knowledgeable and we had many chats about Tutankhamun.

Barry Weaver - "He had quite a deep knowledge of Egyptology, including some of the lesser known aspects; pre dynastic and biblical histories. He also went to some of the lesser known, off the beaten track sites on his trips to Egypt with the Egyptology Group, which I know he enjoyed, although he said they could be a bit upright. (Dick said the same about the U3A. Can't think why). They apparently didn't enjoy Bob singing "The Sexual Life of a Camel" when on a visit to Giza."

He was also very interested in science/physics and astronomy and attended some U3A courses in Rickmansworth. Bob, being an electrician, believed that the energy that you produce carries on when it leaves your body and eventually goes out into space. So he is out there, somewhere.

Bob was also a gardener and very knowledgeable about plants. He did a lot of work in his garden at Hayes, including grafting and planting unusual species. I recall a few trips to the RHS Horticultural Show at Hampton Court with Anita Spink.

Another passion was Pink Floyd. He was really into their music. In 1994 I bought some tickets for their Division Bell

gig in Rotterdam. Three of us from Skye Instruments (mine and John's company), plus two friends left Wales in our yellow transit, drove to London, picked up Bob and drove on to Rotterdam. Bob didn't know anyone apart from me, but you wouldn't have known. We didn't stop laughing from when we picked him up to when we dropped him off after the gig. This typifies Bob – great fun, can get on with anyone and with a great sense of humour.

A few weeks later I managed to get three tickets for the Division Bell gig at Earls Court for Bob, Ian Carpenter and myself.

Very sadly, the stroke he had 10 years ago in many ways finished the life he enjoyed and wanted. Although, in medical terms, he recovered quite well, he lost the confidence to drive and never drove again. The car was his lifeline. It enabled him to take part in CSS activities, attend the Egyptology meetings (which I think were in Brighton), and go to his science classes. His health slowly deteriorated and he had to use the services of care workers – one of whom did become a friend. I visited him a few times, the last time was in September 2019, when John and I both went and when he was still able to walk about. He was the 'same old Bob' with his great sense of humour, despite his situation. We were due to visit again in March 2020, but it wasn't meant to be due to the pandemic. But Bob and I had some really good chats – I used to phone every Sunday – about all sorts of things. He was sad about the passing of Dick Lawrence, as they were of a similar age, but he was impressed by Dick's obituary in the CSS newsletter and said to me that he hoped he would get a good one. I said that I would make sure he did, not realising it would be so soon. I hope we've done it for you Bob.

Thank you Bob for being a friend to all of us and for giving us some great memories. It has been a pleasure to know you and be part of your life. May you rest in peace.



Bob and the inflatable mummy

Caving Quiz Answers

Q1 - 300 to 360 million years ago (any dates in the range 300 to 400 MYA will do) (1) Q2 - Ogof Ap Robert, Ogof Rhaedd Ddu (2) Q3 - The first documentary film about a cave rescue (Sid Perou) (1) Q4 - Rabbit knot/fig 8 on the right, Double Fishermans knot, Figure of Nine, Alpine Butterfly (4) Q5 (2) Pol-An-Ionain (County Clare), 6.7 metres (anything from 6 - 7 metres gains the point) (2) Q6 - D. Frozen River (They're all in OFD, but the others are passages in the Northern Lighs) (1) Q7 - The Confluence, First River Chamber, Marble Showers, Splash Inlet, Great Oxbow, Maypole Inlet, Top Waterfall, The Wee (Score 4 if you got them all right. Subtract 1 for each out of place. No negative scores!) Q8 - Calcium Carbonate (CaCO₃) Formula is optional (1) Q9 - HRC is in Monmouthshire, REU is in Blaenau Gwent (2) Q10 - 1912, 1939 (2) Q13 - Robert de Joly's ashes, Aven d'Orgnac, France (2) Q14 - Allt Nan Uamh Stream Cave (1) Q15 - Vadose (1) Q16 Large Pot - Rift Pot, Deaths Head Hole - Big Meanie, Box Head Pot - Lost Johns Cave, Gavel Pot - Short Drop Cave, Marilyn Pot - Disappointment Pot, Diccian Pot - Alum Pot (6 pairs correct = 4, 4 pairs = 3, 3 pairs = 2, 1 or 2 pairs = 1) Q17 - Porth yr Ogof (Caves of South Wales says it has 15 entrances) (1) Q18 - Dent de Croiles. Any of: Gaiers Mort, Grotte Chevalier, Grotte Annette, Grotte des Montagnards, Gouffre Therese, P40 (2) Q19 - Nettle Pot, Peak Cavern, Giants Cavern, Rowter Hole (4) Q20 - YSS, Croydun CC, TSG, Shepton Mallet CC (4)

Welsh cave name Anagram Answers

1. Town Drain 2. Eglwys Faen 3. Dan yr Ogof 4. Blaen Onneu Quarry Pot 5. Charitist Cave 6. Tunnel Cave 7. Itton North Swallet 8. Ogof Porth yr Mleirw 9. Ogof Hesp Allyn 10. Leithrid Swallet 11. Lesser Garth Cave 12. Otter Hole 13. Agen Allwedd 14. Coed y Mwsstwr Woods Cave 15. Bridge Cave

Joe's Corner



Joe showing what the best-dressed cavers wore in the caves of Turkmenistan during the 1990 CSS expedition. Apparently he's wearing respectable swimming trunks, not just pants.

I have come across a heavy metal group from Romania called 'White Walls'. Here is the cover of their current album. I listened to some of their music on their website. Perhaps we could sell an idea for a gig to their agent: 'White Walls at Whitewalls'!



'It's all Greek to me'

I've just read a book with a section in it that dealt with the creation of scientific words from Ancient Greek. One of them was pelotherapy, 'the application of mud as a therapeutic treatment.' This can be changed by using another of those Greek endings to give pelophilia, a love of mud. We can be more specific, and develop it into speleopelophilia, a love of cave mud. You will now be able to amuse/confuse your friends by admitting to be a speleopelophile.

Bat Sandwich

Here's an interesting image for the newsletter. It's part of an advert for the Australian company 'Boating Camping Fishing'. The ad got them into trouble with the Oz advertising authorities!



Article Review In Deep:

by Joe Duxbury

The dark and dangerous world of extreme cavers

By Burkhard Bilger. Published in The New Yorker, April 14, 2014

I found this article when looking for something else. It's a very balanced report of a 2013 Bill Stone expedition to the Sistema Chevé in Mexico. The author (who is not a caver) successfully manages to convey the highs and lows of caving expeditions, without resorting to sensationalism.

The article concentrates on the passing of Sump 4 by Marcin Gala and Phil Short. Some of the sentences written by Mr Bilger really struck home. They just brought to mind how caving grabs you.

For example, after having been exploring Chevé so long, Gala could nearly navigate it blindfolded. **'On the steepest pitches, certain rocks almost seemed to smile and wave at him, and to reach for his hand. He would grab them, thinking, Old friend!'** John Newton reckons he knows rocks in the Entrance Series of Aggie by name!

On another trip, the two divers **'seemed to be at a dead end. They were cold, tired, and disoriented, and their air ration had nearly run out. There was no choice but to head back ... Then they heard the waterfall.'** Yes, that magic moment when the cave speaks to you, and lets you into its secrets.

Phil Short told the author **'People often misunderstand. All you find is cave. There is nothing else down there.'** Well, there is cave 'stuff', all those stalactites and stalagmites, cave pearls, walls sparkling with crystals, delicate helictites and gypsum flowers ...

Unfortunately Mr Bilger could not refrain from trotting out the old chestnut about the ground above; he attributed the following to Marcin Gala: **'He felt the weight of the mountain above him—a mile of solid rock'**. Did he really? I know of no experienced caver ever giving this a second thought.

That said, this article is worth reading. Not many of us are 'extreme cavers', but it provides some vicarious excitement, especially when reading about it is as close as we can get to the real thing at the moment.

To read this article for yourself, see: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/04/21/in-deep-2>



*Jason McCorriston in Herbert's Level,
Cwmystwyth Lead Mines
Photo by Paul Tarrant*

www.chelseaspelaeo.org

