



Volume 63
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Jul/Aug/Sep 2021



Treacle Mining

Dorset Weekend

Charterhouse Cave

The Devil's Cauldron

Digging in Eglwys Faen

CHELSEA SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Above: Maxine Bateman in Ogof Ffynnon Ddu II, Summer BBQ Weekend July 2021 by Jennie Lawrence

Front Cover: Helen Nightingale exiting Sandy Hole, Dorset Weekend Sep 2021 by John Stevens

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Whitewalls Update

External group bookings will resume at Whitewalls from 1st October. Although it is no longer mandatory, it is strongly recommended that members planning to stay at Whitewalls on non-club weekends continue to book with John Stevens (hut.warden@chelseaspelaeo.org) so that he can keep each booking informed about expected numbers staying at the cottage.

To minimise risk of transmitting Covid-19 at Whitewalls while infection rates remain high, it is suggested that you:

- Consider doing a lateral flow test shortly before your visit.
- Pay attention to cleaning and hygiene during your stay.
- Avoid crowding in the common room and open windows to improve air circulation.

Editorial As always a big thank you to everyone who submitted articles and material for this issue. It's really good to see reports from club trips again, a sure sign that things are finally getting back to normal. This issue includes reports on local caving and digging, away trips, wild swimming, kayaking, plus we have some proper "science" and a heartwarming story of a liberated fowl.

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

Message from the Treasurer

2021/22 club subscriptions are now due. Rates remain the same as last year, as follows:

Full Member £30, Joint Members £40 per couple, Associate Member £24

In addition, all members need to have insurance through BCA. There has been a slight increase on 'active caver', the rates now are: **Active Caver £20, Non-Caver £6**

If you pay for your insurance via another club, please let me know which club and let me know your BCA membership number.

If you pay directly to BCA, please let me know accordingly and again, let me know your BCA membership number.

It would help me and the BCA administrator no end if subs and insurance can be paid promptly so that I only need to submit one Annual Return to BCA.

As an added 'incentive' this year, it is likely that the Whitewalls lock will be changed soon to a new fangled electronic entry system and fobs/cards will only be issued to paid up members.

My preferred method of payment is directly into the club's general bank account:

Account name: Chelsea Spelaeological Society, Account number: 00591115, Sort code: 30-90-02

Please identify your payment as 'CSS subs' and if you're paying from an account that's not in your name, please include your name in the reference.

Alternatively, you can send a cheque payable to 'Chelsea Spelaeological Society' to:

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

Cheers, Andy



An Unusual Delivery

Workers on the Old Daren Sunday School were surprised at the latest offer from Travis Perkins 'Buy one dumpy bag of sharp sand, get a sheep free'.



Membership

SUBS ARE NOW DUE!

Current rates:

Full: £30, Joint: £40, plus BCA subscription per person of £20 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

Yorkshire Weekend *by Adrian Fawcett*

2nd-4th July 2021 - Adrian Fawcett, Emyr Walters and Chris Tomlin

Emyr and I set off from South Wales early on Friday morning, reaching Leck Fell at midday as planned. There we reconnoitred with Chris who'd had the shorter journey from Preston.

The cave for Friday was Lost John's. It had clearly been very dry in recent days because there was barely a drop of water flowing into the entrance, but fortunately still a pool or two to dunk the ropes. We made an early navigational error, taking the second route down instead of the third, and we were half way down Cathedral pitch before I realised why the topo didn't match reality. It was a nice enough pitch to go down accidentally, but by the time we were all back on the correct route we'd lost a good hour.

There were no further incidents on the way down, and with Battleaxe Traverse and the remaining pitches negotiated, we reached the main streamway – or at least the passage where it usually flows – and headed downstream towards the sump. We didn't linger long at the bottom of the cave because Emyr had set a callout, and also we needed to check in at the campsite before it got too late. On the ascent, Chris's footloop broke mid-pitch. As he recounted afterwards, his first thought was that the rope had broken, but then he realised he wasn't falling!

The campsite was at a farm in Chapel le Dale, ideally situated for the Hill Inn, if it had been open. The only other negative about the campsite was the number of midges. That aside, it was well chosen by Emyr, and even had lockers with plug sockets where we could have charged our lamps had we needed to. After cooking dinner, we walked the mile and a half up the road to an almost deserted Station Inn at Ribbleshead for a couple of pints.

Saturday's trip was to be a traverse of the Easegill System. After a quick spot of shopping at Inglesport and the Co-op in Ingleton we arrived at Bull Pot Farm. I rigged a rope in Lancaster Hole on the walk over to Pool Sink, our intended route into the system. Sadly, despite trying a number of different orientations, Emyr couldn't fit around the S-bend just inside the cave. So, we switched to plan B – County Pot. I didn't have a survey or route description for the first part of County, but thought I'd remember the way (I was last there in 2008). Chris hadn't been there since his student days, so had no recollection of the route.

The first part went OK, but Poetic Justice wasn't where it was supposed to be, nor was Manchester Bypass. In all, we wasted a good hour and a half in the area, going, as it turned out, all the way down Northwest Passage, nearly to Dismal Junction and the route to Molluscan Hall, getting increasingly demoralised.

Eventually we decided to retrace our steps and immediately found the correct way on from Oxford Circus to Spout Hall. We made hard work of the slippery chimney climb up to Poetic Justice, and by the time we were down the pitch the other side we were starting to wonder whether we had enough time to complete the through trip. If time had been on our side, we had intended to take the streamway route from Oxbow Corner to Fall Pot. Instead, we opted for the high-level route, and it took just a couple of hours from Stop Pot to Lancaster Hole. As we passed overhead there was another party in the stream who were clearly having great fun in the water.

Dinner and beer at the Station Inn, followed by a display of lightning and thunder as we walked back to the campsite. We'd not been back long before the storm broke and we were forced to retreat under canvas for the night.

Sunday dawned a better day than we'd expected, but the forecast was for more thunderstorms by lunchtime, so all the many flood-prone caves were off the menu. We settled on Aquamole Pot in West Kingsdale, mainly because none of us had been there before. First, though, we had a cooked breakfast at the campsite to set us up for the day. We arrived at the cave entrance just as the first downpour of the day began. We were also surprised to find a rope already in situ, and from the bottom of the entrance shaft onwards a second rope – which it turned out was there for a diving project. With a total of 3 ropes down the pitches and multiple rebelayes we took advantage of the many opportunities to get tangled up, and meanwhile an increasing trickle of water was starting to flow down the shaft. Was this trip really a sensible idea?

We met the owners of the other set of ropes on their way back up – an older couple doing their first trip in 2 years, so from there onwards there were only two ropes to contend with. In contrast with the narrow upper sections, the bottom pitch is impressively spacious, and quite a long one, with 3 deviations to keep the rope clear of the water. There's nothing much at the bottom apart from the sump.

There was an interlude in the showers so the pitches were drier on the way out, and we were able to walk back to the cars and change in the dry. The M6 on the way home was another matter. All in all, an excellent weekend's caving, with 3 successful and varied trips, and a total of about 17 hours underground.

An evening trip to W/L Cave

Fairy Cave Quarry, Mendip

by Andy Watson

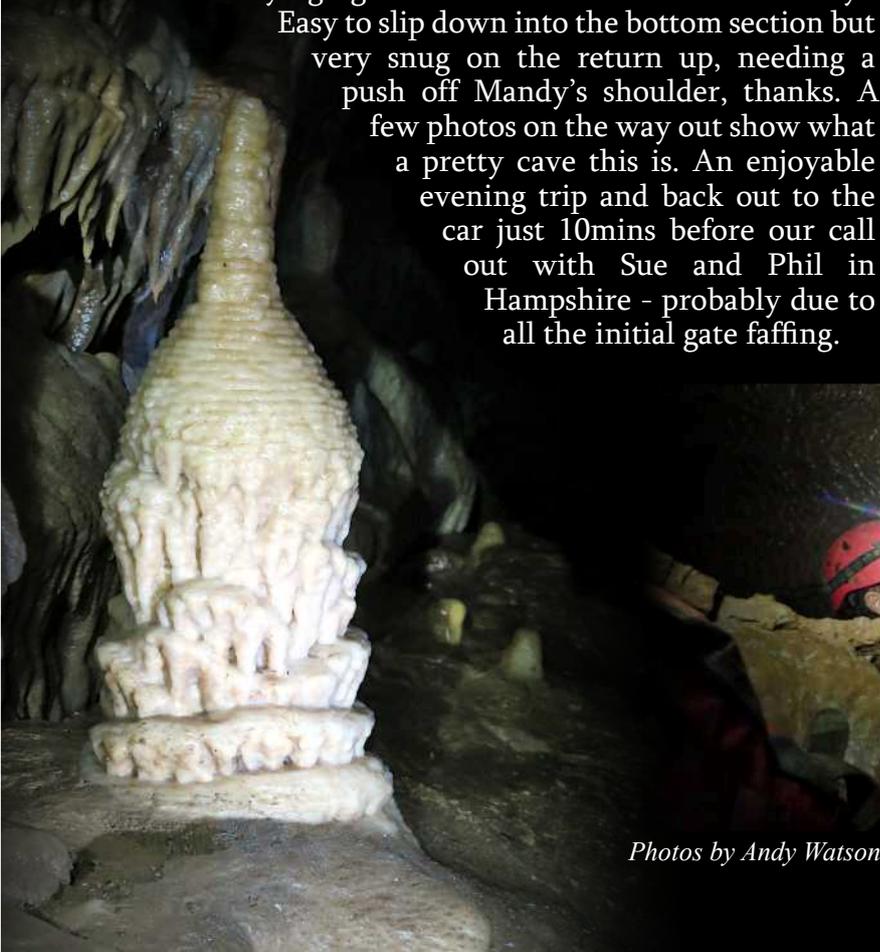


After a long day at work Sue and I set off from Andover to drive to Mendip (via McDonald's for our tea) to meet Matt and Mandy Voysey at the Fairy Quarry cavers' car park. Sue had not done W/L Cave before although we had done Fairy Cave, Hillier's Cave and Shatter Cave which are all in the same location. I had also joined Gonzo once many years ago in a W/L dig and done some digging at Balch Cave. This was the first proper cave we had done since before the first Covid lockdown, although I had done some digging occasionally.

The first pipe Matt crawled into was actually Shatter not W/L, so apart from the padlocks being very awkward to get at through a square hole in the cave door at the end of the 660mm pipes, it was also the wrong cave. However we did rescue a newt that was likely to get squashed. We laughed and transferred to the W/L piped entrance instead and Matt eventually got the padlocks

off before coming out to let me open the door bolts. Hurray, we are in the cave! After the pipe there is a signing in book, duly signed and then along the decorated rift, past the Lily Pads and taking great care to avoid damaging or dirtying any formations, into the Great Rift Chamber with a look at the pretty Pink Pool Chamber, then up to look at an old dig in Hammer Rift and a look for any possible new prospective dig sites. Up a climb on the left of Great Rift Chamber is a descending passage through flowstone that goes to a horizontal old dig going towards Shatter. On the right is a dropping two stage rift that needs a rope ideally to safely descend and return. The first drop is straightforward with footholds, the second is rather snug for me, having put on some weight during lockdown and my aging ribs don't bend so much these days.

Easy to slip down into the bottom section but very snug on the return up, needing a push off Mandy's shoulder, thanks. A few photos on the way out show what a pretty cave this is. An enjoyable evening trip and back out to the car just 10mins before our call out with Sue and Phil in Hampshire - probably due to all the initial gate faffing.



Photos by Andy Watson, except bottom right taken by Matt Voysey

EGLWYS FAEN:

MY ATTEMPTS TO GO BEYOND

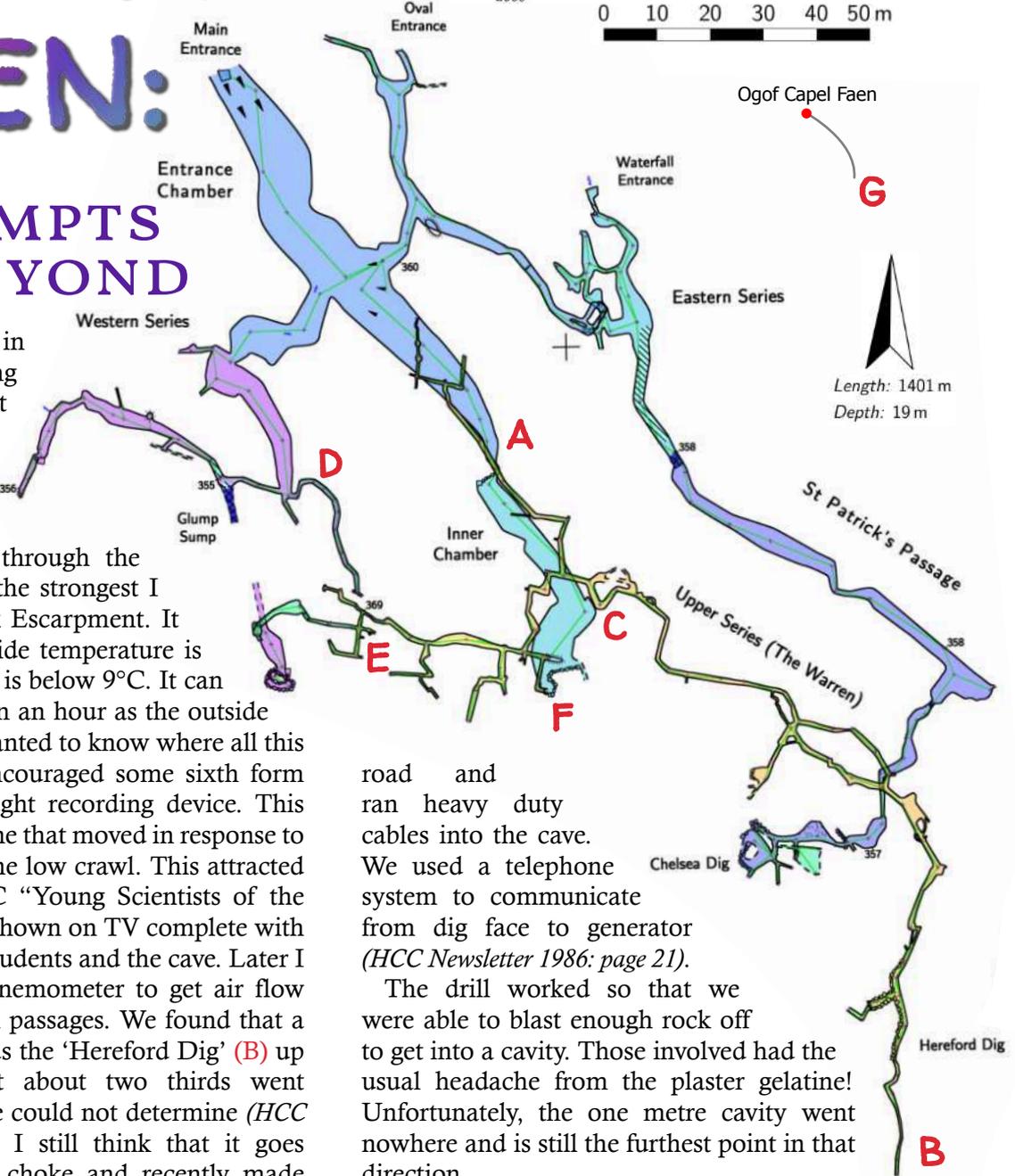
I have been interested in the possibility of extending Eglwys Faen since we first walked down Main Passage in Agen Allwedd a long time ago.

The draught blowing through the low crawl (A) is one of the strongest I know on the Llangattock Escarpment. It blows out when the outside temperature is above 9°C and in when it is below 9°C. It can reverse its direction within an hour as the outside temperature changes. I wanted to know where all this air was going to, so I encouraged some sixth form students to make a draught recording device. This consisted of a damped vane that moved in response to the speed of air flow in the low crawl. This attracted the attention of the BBC "Young Scientists of the Year" presenter and was shown on TV complete with on location shots of the students and the cave. Later I used an ex coal board anemometer to get air flow readings in all the known passages. We found that a lot of the air went towards the 'Hereford Dig' (B) up in the top passage but about two thirds went somewhere else which we could not determine (*HCC Newsletter 1975: page 17*). I still think that it goes through the big boulder choke and recently made another attempt to find a way through.

However, an early attempt to see if we could follow the water was made in the inner chamber (C). We decided to operate on a shift basis over the weekend until the job was done! Water flowed down the boulders and disappeared in a crack at the bottom of the chamber. I had access to plaster gelatine and was well able to break individual rocks but for this job we needed to drill 25mm holes so that we could take chunks off the walls. For this purpose, we arranged to hire a petrol generator and large drill. But when we went to collect it they only had the larger version with four carrying handles. A lot of people (22 turned up) had reserved that weekend to help with the clearing so we had to accept the large generator. With some difficulty, we carried the generator along the tram

by Paul Hartwright

Surveyed by: John Cooper, Tim Cranmore, Ian Penney, Dave Ramsay, Stuart France, Arthur Millett, John Stevens, Lynn Frusher, Peter Cousins 1976 - 2000



road and ran heavy duty cables into the cave. We used a telephone system to communicate from dig face to generator (*HCC Newsletter 1986: page 21*).

The drill worked so that we were able to blast enough rock off to get into a cavity. Those involved had the usual headache from the plaster gelatine! Unfortunately, the one metre cavity went nowhere and is still the furthest point in that direction.

The next major effort to extend the cave was in the Western Series (*HCC Newsletter 1985: page 9 and HCC Newsletter 1986: page 22*). We knew that a very good draught came from a 3cm crack at the end of a very constricted passage in the upper level (E). Our plan was to get into the area by digging the mud floor in the narrow passage (D) below. It needed a large team to steer a tray around the corners but we persisted over a number of months. We eventually gave up because the length of the passage was about 35 metres and the air space became smaller. Much later some skilful diggers worked in this area and got into a small amount of new passage and a chamber from above. They must have had considerable difficulty in disposing of the blasted rock that they had to clear. They did not manage to follow the draught through

another boulder choke.

I mentioned that the 'Hereford Dig' (B) draughts well. The end of this higher-level passage is well under the mountain and is a hands and knees crawl for more than 100m on mainly soft sand. When we started digging, it ended where the draught disappeared amongst boulders in a narrow passage. We tackled the boulders enthusiastically knowing that we could break them into fragments by using an electric drill with a NiCad battery and then filling the hole with corded explosive.

This worked well for a while and we made satisfying progress into the boulders. The dig felt good because the draught, in cold weather, took the smoke away in front of us within seconds. We knew that it was going into "caverns measureless to man" that had never been explored. But as we progressed, we had to transport the rubble further back because we did not find any spaces (*HCC Newsletter 1977: page 32*). When we became short of man power one day and were frustrated by the slower progress we knew that desperate measures were necessary. Someone had the idea that we should contact the Army training camp in Crickhowell for additional help. And one of the officers was happy to help... He organised a troop of about a dozen young 'volunteers' to come into the cave and position themselves along the last 30 to 40 metres of the restricted passage.

We had stacked a vast quantity of rocks ready for the event and passed them backwards, one at a time to the first recruit. He passed them on to the next one, and so on, until all the rocks were neatly stacked in a suitable chamber further back. That must have taken about 2 hours. They did not complain but just accepted the rock from in front and passed it back to the next recruit. No one asked where they were coming from or where they were going. When all the rocks had been moved the lads were told to reverse and made their way out. Unfortunately, we soon had the same problem again with too many rocks and eventually gave up. Others have continued to dig further into the passage but with no success so far. It's a pity that the Army camp is no longer there!

We had developed some expertise with using scaffolding to stabilise loose rocks whilst sinking the shaft into Crochan Sion Hopkins so we decided that this technique could make it possible to dig into the boulder choke in Eglwys Faen.

Years before (in our young and foolish days) we had dug upwards into a chamber with a very unstable roof (F). This is near the usual climb up to the higher-level passages. Whilst one of our group was poking at some loose boulders in this chamber, one large boulder became detached and jammed into the hole that provided access. We had some difficulty in removing it before he could get out.

For our new assault on the choke, we carried scaffolding along the tram road and created a

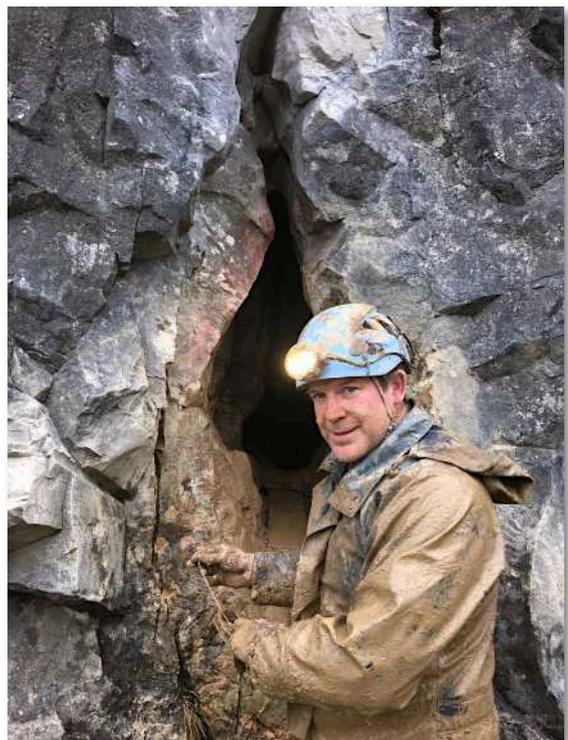
framework so that we felt safe in the chamber. We then used our usual technique to remove boulders whilst following a left hand wall. Technology had advanced and we were now using a powerful drill with Lithium Ion batteries. There was no problem getting rid of the fragments of rock because they easily fell out of the access hole. Once again, the smoke quickly cleared into the boulder choke.

Although we followed the wall for about 6 metres and used scaffolding as necessary, we eventually encountered a solid limestone wall without finding any significant cavity. There is a draught in this area but not much where we were digging. So that was the trigger that once again made us look for 'pastures new'.

When talking to Tom Williams one day, he told me that he and a friend had been looking into Ogof Capel Faen which is a small hole in the cliff face about 40 metres to the east of Eglwys Faen (G). As with countless cavers before him he was unable to progress because it was too narrow. It's certainly an interesting area so I offered to take some rock off the walls to widen the passage.

It also became apparent that it would be more accessible if some rock was removed from the top of the U-bend and if some of the mud was moved out. We did this and after several visits had shoulder width from the entrance to the corner beyond the U-bend. There are two slightly wider spaces and both have an annoying puddle in the floor. And as you can see in the photo below these cause the entrance passage to be very muddy.

This is the current dig. We can see ahead to a small rock arch and will soon be able to look through...



Grant Hartwright outside Ogof Capel Faen

DORSET WEEKEND

by Helen Nightingale

Mike and Dawn kindly invited CSS to have a Dorset trip, with some accommodation on offer at their house. Mike suggested a date when Portland would be less busy with family holidaymakers, but still nice enough weather to enjoy the weekend, and he excelled with these. Abseiling off the cliffs with the rope flying upwards in the wind does not sound pleasant

I met up with everyone at the local pub on Friday night for a catch-up, then back to Mike's for plotting Saturday's caving. He ran through the surveys for Ariel to Sandy Hole, and generally made it all sound rather pleasant. He waited until we were eating our bacon rolls for breakfast the following morning to tell us how the seagulls use the entrance for nesting and generally hanging out. And that in a crawl, they are rather large birds and you are in their house. I'm sure it didn't mention any seagulls in Mike's book, or in the Portland guide online.

After a suitable amount of faff, Mike took us through a housing estate and parked up next to the children's playground. It was the strangest place to park up and get sorted for a caving trip, and must have confused a few small children. Too many kids were about, so we couldn't stop to play on the swings. A few side roads later, we came out on the cliff path with fine sea views to one side, and a council estate and prison to the other. All very different to what we are used to in Wales. A gentle stroll along the clifftop in fine weather took us to a slightly worn looking patch of limestone, which would have been easy to walk past if you didn't know where to look. Mike made short work of rigging the pitch over the edge, and as John and Emyr were descending, some slightly confused tourists stopped to watch. Let's say the swing into the



entrance part-way down the cliff and getting yourself off the rope was "interesting". And if you don't quite get it right, swearing is the way to fix things. The tourists may have been slightly more confused. Sure enough, once we'd untangled ourselves from the cluster of rope, bags, srt kits and slings to clip into, we found we were crawling through seagull droppings, shed feathers and remains of egg shell. It was a good thing it was not nesting season, and thankfully we only found evidence of seagull habitation.

Caves on Portland are in Jurassic limestone, which has a completely different feel to any other types. The passages were mostly white, with dark chert bands and yellow calcite. We found fossils and an ammonite indentation which was great to see. We carried on crawling past various different rock formations and nice calcite, with Emyr uttering a few good words in places. He is very good at re-arranging passage to make himself fit, but these caves are mostly rather solid – except where they aren't. It was emphatically stated that this trip was one for those with short legs – until it wasn't. There were a few rather long steps between boulders jammed in rifts in a few places, for which mobile foot holds came in very useful for me. Aside from the occasional rather long leg stretch, we did quite a lot of crawling. Comfort Crawl was rather more comfortable than expected. After a while, the crawls opened into rifts, although nothing of significant width. At one point we lost Mike. He'd



thrown a bag over a boulder, and it fell down the rift. He went to retrieve it, but was unsure if there was a way back out. The Portland Caves website description sums up this part of the cave better than I can:

“Continue straight ahead through a small tunnel which forms a flat out crawl. After approx. 10 m you drop out of this oxbow into a very unstable area. Much care is required – don’t touch

anything as you progress ahead. It’s probably best to avoid looking too hard as well! Beyond, a choss free tunnel is regained which is crawled along passing a couple of constrictions between boulders. A wide rift must then be traversed over (care is required to avoid dropping tackle sacks as retrieval would be near impossible).”

When the description says wide, this appears to be wide by Portland standards, not Smith’s Armoury standards. Thankfully Mike found his way out of impossible rift, along with his bag, to lead us through Squeezy rift. Squeezy rift, in my opinion, is inappropriately named and described. Squeezy Rift is a serious undertaking and only passable by the thin. A good head for heights and experience at traversing rifts is required. Mike’s instructions were to stay high. Emyr seemed to sail through, whereas I completely messed up. The high part of the rift was quite wide – well too wide for my shoulders to brace across and I slipped down several times. At the key narrow part, I slipped at precisely the wrong moment and managed to get a thigh wedged and couldn’t find anything to push off to raise myself up and out of the tightest spot. Mike came back with the fantastic mobile footholds again. They really are very good.

The cave is described online as generally very clean, but after squeeze rift, this description falls down. There is mud. Proper mud. Better than Otter mud. I believe the point at which the cave turns from clean to squalid may be where Ariel becomes Sandy Hole, described thus: “Despite being connected to Blacknor Hole (the best cave on the island), it’s fair to describe Sandy



as the worst. The cave is filthy, there are seldom locations to sit up, even fewer to stand and little to look at. Furthermore the floor is littered with stones and chert providing a most uncomfortable experience.”

It was great fun. For a brief respite from crawling through goo, we went to Brownsea to play reverse Jenga with a cairn. All of us could stand up in the same chamber. We were

soon at the exit, and a small abseil down the bottom third of the cliff. The very scantily clad, young and elegant climbers close to Sandy Hole were slightly bemused by the sudden appearance of 4 very muddy oiks appearing out of the side of a cliff.

We spent too long taking photos, admiring interesting rocks, and throwing mud at each other to have time to go to the beach afterwards, but we did stop off on the way back for an ice cream and to see the old prison in an old underground fort. Then off to the pub for dinner.

A few weeks previously, Mike had suggested he might like a go on my paddleboard, and I have always fancied trying out kayaking, so on Sunday we headed to the beach. Dawn and Mike took their sea kayaks, and I had my tourer paddleboard which is ideal for rivers. We did a few miles following the shore, and found some swell that was friendly for sea kayaks, but large by river paddleboard standards. It was then time for swapsies. John had talked himself into wanting a go, so Mike got him loaded into his kayak and sent him into the waves, then we gave each other a crash course in how to hold each other’s paddles. Mike then sealed me into the kayak and pushed me into the waves to join John. Sea kayaks are huge and very noticeably hard to steer! They also seem very stable,

and it was great fun playing in the waves, not having to worry about balance. Wave size was increasing, so we found a more sheltered, shallow area as Mike was up for stand up paddling as opposed to kneel down paddling. He did the standy-uppy bit very well, but this lead to several falling in



moments. After he got thoroughly soaked a few times, it was John's turn on the paddleboard. He mastered the stand up part, but also became rather soggy. By the time we'd finished swapping around, the waves had definitely got bigger. It was good for trying to kayak surf – up until the point when I discovered kayaks suddenly like to turn sideways. I also got very wet. So back onto the large inflatable float for more playing with waves. SUP surfing was great fun – but standing and paddling into waves proved too much for my bravery levels. I'll forgive myself as conditions were described by those better than me as “challenging” and “too choppy”. If things get hard when standing on a giant float, at least you can just kneel down (voluntarily or accidentally) whereas when kayaks decide to turn sideways, the extracting yourself from them is rather harder, especially when you are laughing too much. We all had great fun getting wet in water very noticeably warmer than cave water.

We headed back to Dawn and Mike's for more ice cream, kit washing facilities and rack manufacturing, followed by Dawn's veg chilli for dinner. Hospitality was amazing, caving was nowhere near as grim as the description made out, and the sea was warm. All in all, a most excellent weekend.

Descriptions taken from the online guide here:

<https://sites.google.com/view/the-caves-of-portland/ariel-cave>



Helen's kayaking adventure before and after by Dawn Read

*Page 70-71 photos by John Stevens
(seagull added by the editors)*

Little Neath River Cave

by Joe Duxbury

Sunday 29 August 2021 – Matt Chinner, Joe Duxbury, Helen Nightingale, Mandy Voysey.

Helen had put a trip to LNRC on the club calendar a while back, and I put my name down for it, as it's such an entertaining cave. She was at SWCC for an auction of kit the night before, so she went to the cave direct. Matt left Whitewalls some time before Mandy and me. I thought I knew the way from Glyn Neath, but I mistook the road and spent far too long on wrong turnings.

We eventually arrived about 12:30 (instead of 11:00. Pathetic!) Matt had come via Penderyn, a less complicated route, and had arrived fairly quickly. Helen had overindulged at SWCC and was feeling a bit poorly, which manifested itself as some serious technicolour yawning as we approached the cave.

We boldly plunged into the entrance and battled along with the water, which was fortunately not cold. The route is fairly straightforward; there are a couple of climbs, one down a waterfall, to deal with, but there's nothing too taxing. I waited at the rescue dump while the others went to look at the Bridge Cave sump, where Matt saw a trout. Then into the Canal. There was plenty of air space, the water was warm(ish), so it was relatively easy going. Helen decided to stop some way after the Canal and the rest of us continued to the downstream sump. A short section where you have to climb into a tunnel above the stream gives this part a bit of variety. At the sump the roof gets very low and you have to crawl over cobbles to get to the dive line.

We returned to Helen and carried on to the entry to The Bypass. This has a very fine example of a phreatic roof tunnel, and there's an attractive grotto in a side rift with a delicate false floor. We soon reached the entrance passage, which I find more annoying on the way out – everything seems to catch your oversuit.

Back on the surface, the car park was thankfully free of midges, and so changing was uneventful. Mandy and I went back via Ystradfellte (or 'I straddled and felt 'er', as Mandy likes to call it!) and we just had to stop at the ice cream van on the Penderyn-Brecon road. Then back to Whitewalls for tea.



Colin The Cockerel Released From Captivity!

22nd August 2021

by Charles Bailey

After 15 years underground, Colin the cockerel has finally been released.

Back in the early 2000s, I paid a significant transfer fee to sign the services of Colin the Cockerel for a number of gigs at Hard Rock. He became a minor celebrity in his own right, entertaining the crowds with his famous song and dance routine.

Colin spotted an opportunity to play a key role at camp as a genuine alarm clock, waking lazy cavers up for a day's exploration, a role for which he was truly gifted. It's widely believed that without Colin's expertise, breakthroughs in "Where The Sun Don't Shine" and "Frog Street" would not have been achieved.

As his role then diminished, he was groomed and coerced into the shady world of 'exotic dancer' by one HRC regular, adopting the stage name of "Charles' Coq". He claims he was the world's first genuine underground exotic dancer.

At this point I started a campaign to free Colin, under [#Free_The_HRC_One](#). Unfortunately, this gained little traction as I couldn't get a signal. So, plans were laid to release Colin and this was finally achieved on the August 2021 camp.

Colin was discretely extracted from Hard Rock using a tailored escape pod (see picture). This wasn't as technical as Mr Musk's submarine, but it did fit through the entrance.

He was mobbed by well wishers and the paparazzi on his exit, but would only comment "I spent most of the time sleeping to be honest".

Colin is now enjoying his well earned freedom in an undisclosed location due to fears of further press intrusion. Security measures have been enhanced, and we hope his request for privacy is respected. He has flatly denied rumours of a come-back concert.



Admirers flock in on news of Colin's release



Colin showing his escape pod



Colin enjoying a little speckled hen



Colin enjoying another little speckled hen

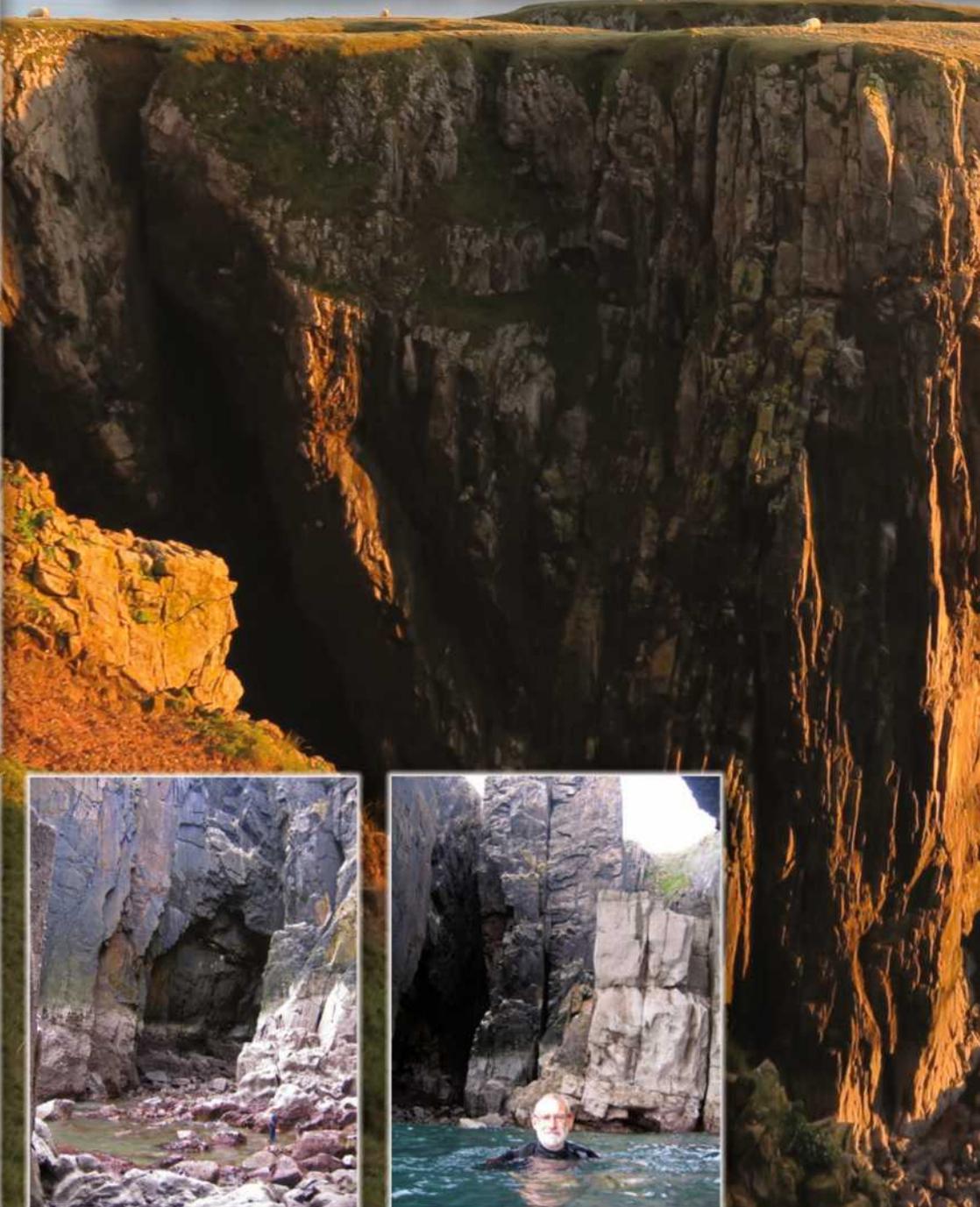


Colin inspecting his new security staff



SUPPING FROM THE DEVIL'S CAVE

CASTLEMARTIN RANGE EAST · PEMBRO





ULDRON

KESHIRE by Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley



A few hundred metres along the coast path through Castlemartin Range East from the car park for the Green Bridge of Wales you will find a trio of impressive, 3 metre high ramparts marking the outer defences of an Iron Age promontory fort known as Flimston Bay Camp. Promontory forts are quite common along the Pembroke coast and their significance relates directly to the importance of this strategically key stretch of water for trade and defence. Behind the ramparts there is evidence of hut circles. At the end of the promontory are the remains of a 19th century quay used for the transportation of limestone from a quarry that has, regrettably, removed a section of the eastern end of the ramparts. Alongside the fort is the sheltered beach of Flimston Bay, now only accessible by swimming, abseiling or scrambling down an unstable slope with a handline but it is easy to imagine that this was more accessible in earlier days and would have been a useful place to launch and moor boats.

In the middle of the enclosure is a huge fissure, the Devil's Cauldron, plunging 25 metres into a deeply inset cove with two impressively large passages cutting through the promontory to a rocky bay with cavernous cliffs stretching west to Elegug (Guillemot) Stack Rocks.

There is no surface water along this stretch of coast between Frainslake, 4k north west of here and the large Star Rock resurgence at Broad Haven, 5k to the east, so I was intrigued to hear from a local climber that he had drunk from a freshwater spring at the bottom of the Devil's Cauldron.

A well-defended, well-placed promontory fort in fertile land, with a beach to launch from and a deep water mooring would have been prime real estate around 800BC and access to the only water supply for 9k of coast, accessible from within the fort, would have been significant.

I decided to take a look and, rather than abseil in, Karen and I availed ourselves of rare, calm waters and the recent fledging and departure of the 19,000 guillemots that nest along these magnificent cliffs and opted to swim in from the end of the promontory.

On entering the water at low tide we immediately encountered a huge army of very large, randy spider crabs which kept us literally and metaphorically on our toes before a short swim with breathtakingly beautiful views took us to the base of Devil's Cauldron. En route we noted the exposed traverse to an entrance described in 'Caves of West Wales' along with another large, swim-in entrance, several other small holes in the cliffs and even in the high arched entrance of the Cauldron. There are several passages running at various heights in numerous directions from the main cavern.

After an enjoyable time spent sight seeing and enjoying the acoustics it became clear that we would have to return for a longer visit, better equipped with lights, rope, a decent camera, and armed with a brace of Voyseys and a Heath.

Before swimming out we located the spring, issuing from a small hole on the easternmost of the two main passages. It was freezing cold but salty, so we'll come and check it out later on after a neap tide to see whether or not it runs clear, as described by the climber, after it has had time to flush out properly between tides.

If you're interested in exploring this area be aware of firing range restrictions, and climbing restrictions, especially during nesting times. There are also access restrictions later in the summer and autumn when the seals are pupping on the beaches beneath the cliffs.

Also be aware that these are dangerous, treacherous waters which can transform within minutes with strong currents and spectacularly huge seas and that calm waters and settled weather are the exception, not the rule in this part of West Wales.

There are belay stakes at the top of Devil's Cauldron and details on climbing routes can be found in the climber's guide - Pembroke Range East: Stack Rocks to Hollow Caves Bay.



Camera-clicking Capers in Charterhouse Cave

by Mandy Voysey 

THE CAMERA CREW: Martyn Farr, Rachel Smith, Linda Windham, Clive Owen, Andrew Atkinson, Matt and Mandy Voysey.

Martyn Farr is currently working on a new book which will be a photographic odyssey of some of the best caves and mines of the UK, and this has seen him and Rachel gallivanting about underground in all manner of interesting places around the country, including Mendip. Martyn got in touch to ask if Matt and I would be interested in joining them for a trip, and as it happened, we were able to make it along to help out with their venture to Charterhouse Cave.

Charterhouse is a really interesting and varied cave; it's also the third longest in Mendip and most definitely the deepest. I like it a lot, but as I tend to be a bit lackadaisical with arranging trips that need prior arrangement in our local area, I hadn't done very many trips here at all. In fact I'd only ever been to the new extensions once, and that was back in 2010, and at that time we could only go as far as the end of the 2008 extensions (everything beyond was then off-limits to all but the digging team). So I was looking forward to a revisit.

Martyn had two definite sites in mind to photograph and they were 'The Citadel', a fantastically atmospheric and lofty chamber above the streamway in the old part of the cave, and 'The Blades', a notable pair of stalactites towards the end of the 2008 extensions. There were no plans to go any further, but that would be a good trip in itself.

So at 10 o'clock on a Wednesday morning we met up with the team at the G.B. layby. Andrew and Clive were our leaders (it's a leader plus 3 system), and between us all we had a bevy

of small tackle bags and peli-cases to transport through the cave, plus a tripod and selfie stick. I was given a peli-case labelled 'Divers Flats' to carry, which Matt and I thought might hold Martyn's post-diving espadrilles or flip-flops, but disappointingly contained only lights. Something I'd forgotten about Charterhouse Cave was the amount of crawling through narrow rifts there is to do – I remembered that there were one or two sections, but it turns out there's loads. The squeezing, thrutching and oozing starts quite soon after entering the cave, and the old gate a short distance in is actually the tightest part of the trip, so a good gauge to check if you'll fit through the remainder of the obstacles or not. Somewhere just past this is the climb up to Midsummer Chamber, which is a really nice part of the cave that we didn't have time to visit on this occasion, but is worth a detour if you're not on a mission.



Martyn in the Narrows



Rachel, Lynn and Andrew in the streamway



Left: Martyn and Mandy at Dragon Pitch

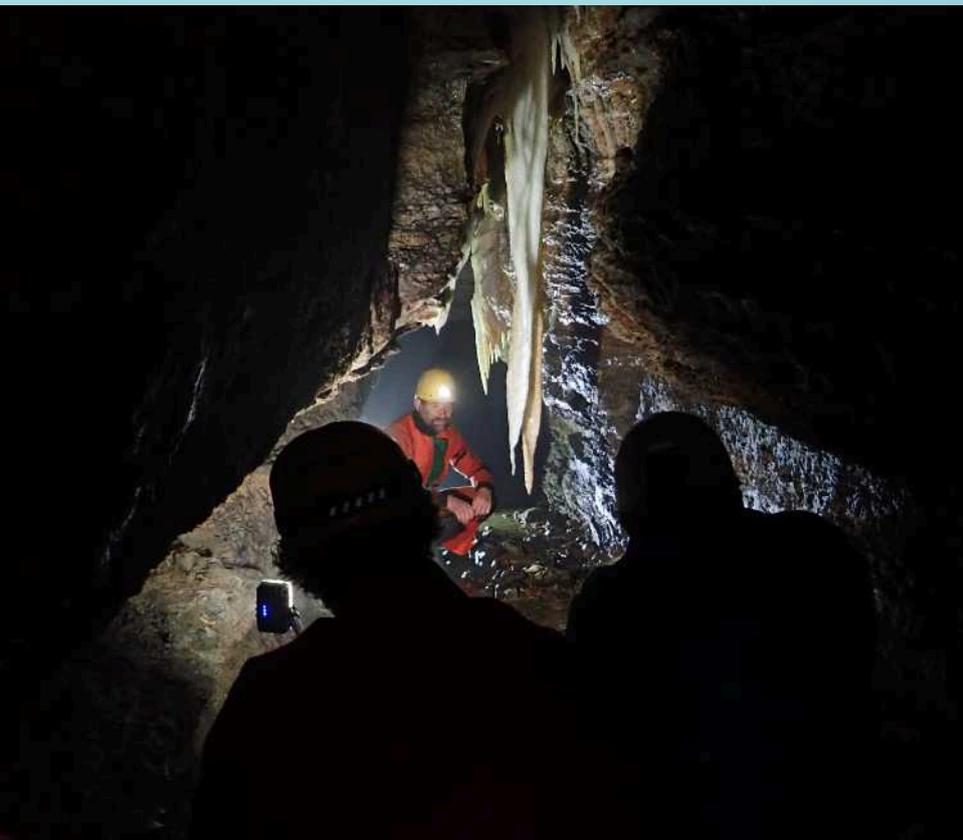
Continuing on our journey beyond the initial crawls, the caving became more comfortable in a streamway of more lofty proportions. Here a short climb up on the right took us to our first port of call, The Citadel. This is really rather big, and the formations on the floor are called 'The Blobs', which is quite nice. Martyn set up his camera and tripod here, while Rachel posed on the impressive balcony and everyone else shone bright lights about. Andrew and I climbed back down to the streamway to illuminate from below, where I failed to hear any instructions shouted my way due to the stream noise, but eventually the photographic masterpiece was complete. While the lights and equipment were being packed away, Matt and I managed to sneak off for a peek at the formations in the nearby Chiaroscuro Passage with Andrew. Here there are some notable cave pearls which initially I pooh-poohed as being just crappy stones with a bit of calcite on, but there were some really top-quality ones in the mix that looked a lot like Mint Imperials.

Our journey continued on following the streamway, then a bit more crawling to reach the Grotto of the Singing Stal. This is named after a small stal column that looks rather worm-eaten and gnarly. Under certain conditions, if the water flow is right, this sings, or rather makes squeaky noises as the water runs through the holes. However it wasn't singing (or squeaking) for us as we loitered in the chamber. Beyond this is Chill Out Choke, which is the start of the 2008 extensions. This part of the caving trip goes on for longer than you might expect, consisting of multiple squeezes, corkscrews and other gymnastic endeavours for passing through boulders, before finally emerging into something more sizeable. I'm not sure everyone

particularly enjoyed this bit, but I quite like wriggly caving and thought it was quite fun. Beyond this, the respite is only brief before the next arduous section... yet more wriggling, crawling, sideways creeping and thrutching through 'The Narrows'. This, just as the name suggests is the sort of place where it's not always possible to even turn your head. Classic Mendip!

Somewhat bedraggled and bruised, the team emerged victorious at the top of Dragon Pitch where for the first time in quite a while we were all able to gather in the same place at the same time and have a chat. The pitch is only short and has a lot of ledges so it's sort of easier to hold the ladder but climb down the rock. From here on the cave is quite attractive and easy going, the kind of stuff that everyone likes, and soon we were at our second port of call, The Blades. Here Martyn once again set up his camera and lights were unpacked. The conservation tape here is clipped on for easy removal for photography, so that was quickly dealt with. Matt missed his chance to star in the photo as he happened to be otherwise engaged watering the streamway when he was beckoned, so Andrew posed while we quaffed lunch. Theoretically the mission was now accomplished as both target areas had been thoroughly photographed, but we continued on as we still had time and were soon at the magnificent Frozen Cascade. Martyn really liked this and decided that another photoshoot here was a must! Unfortunately for him most of the kit was already being ferried through yet another section of crawling up ahead. So it was decided that we'd continue on to look at a passage with nice gours near Portal Pool, and then take photos of the Frozen Cascade on the way out.

At Portal Pool it was suggested that Matt and I



could nip through into the 2009 extensions for a quick tour if we fancied it. This was an unexpected bonus, so as it seemed we wouldn't be needed for the next photoshoot we enthusiastically took up the offer. Clive agreed to take us on the tour and Andrew set off the siphon. This was amazingly effective and the uninviting pool lowered quite quickly. The worst bit is beyond what you can initially see, where a gravel through water reaches a low rock arch before ascending into dry passage. This had been a committing duck, but with the siphon going we got through with wet limbs but dry heads. Beyond this the cave was completely different in character to what we'd seen thus far, with really attractive canyon passages sculpted by water; the most notable being Onion Passage, which really is sort of onion shaped. Not wanting to lumber the rest of the team with all of the bags to ferry out, we whizzed around pretty speedily and were soon at Diesel Duck. This part of the cave is known to be problematic, with a risk of being sumped in during wet weather, but according to Andrew and Clive that's no longer the case. Apparently nowadays Diesel Duck is fine, but a section a short distance further that used to always be dry is now always sumped instead. So with our bonus mini-adventure complete we headed back out, and by now Portal Pool was completely dry. There was no sign of the others at the Frozen Cascade, but we caught up with them a short distance later whereupon they gladly handed over some tackle bags for us to porter.

The vertical range of Charterhouse Cave is 228m, with only 6m of this being the ladder pitch. So unsurprisingly there's quite a lot of uphill action encountered on the return and progress was somewhat slower than on the way in, but the Singing Stal was sort of humming this time as we passed through which was really nice. Eventually we all emerged into the humid evening air, feeling like we'd had a proper work out, but still smiling.

Martyn sent us some of the photos afterwards, and they look really good. To see them for yourself you'll have to buy the book, the photos in this article are the opportunist snaps that Matt took during the trip.

Previous page photos – Left: Rachel and Martyn photographing Andrew at The Blades. Right: Mandy at The Blades



Mandy in Onion Passage



Smoking Bat!

by Joe Duxbury

Friday 13 August 2021 The Daily Telegraph

6 News
Hunt for the 'smoking bat' and how Wuhan lab leak theory went from conspiracy to credible

I saw this headline in the Daily Telegraph. And I thought "Oh no! It's Bertie! He's the 'smoking bat' they're looking for! I caught him at it!" And attached is the photographic proof. What shall we do? We should turn him in. But it's Bertie!

If you put this in the CSS newsletter, they'll know where to find him. What a dilemma.

A TRIP TO OGOF FFYNNON DDU II

by Joe Duxbury



Joe abseiling

Saturday 31 July 2021- CSS Summer BBQ Weekend

Maxine Bateman, Joe Duxbury, Adrian Fawcett, Jennie Lawrence, Will Leszczynski, Martin Lloyd, Chris Seal, Emyr Walters, Tom Williams.

Two parties of CSS stalwarts met up at SWCC Penwyllt and proceeded to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu II Top Entrance.

My preference for getting to the top of Gnome Passage is to take a hole down on the right at the Brickyard, rather than

trending left and climbing up over some fallen blocks. Chris was taken in by my apparent competence, and followed me down the wrong hole! The gap of several months had obviously clouded my mind. Anyway, after grovelling around a bit we rejoined the rest of our group and carried on down Salubrious Passage to the Trident. Here we carried on, crossed Swamp Creek, and found the first pitch already rigged. P-hangers allow for a Y-hang, but for our pull-through purposes the natural on the right was used.

On to the next pitch, which also has P-hangers installed. One of these was used and down we went. This pitch is very well decorated – the whole wall is covered with beautiful stal flow. A slope then leads down to the last pitch, which drops into Pendulum Passage. A deviation is set up on this pitch, and when it came to the pull-through the rope got hung up here for a while.

The plan was for us to go upstream to look at Top Waterfall, but I was not bothered to do this (I've seen it before) so I had decided to go downstream and return to the entrance. Tom joined me and off we went.

The OFD II streamway is always a delight – the finely-scalloped walls, the way the water slooshes round the bends, the veins of quartz. We reached Maypole Inlet and climbed up into the passage above. My recollection of Maypole Inlet was that, once you've climbed up you go along the sinuous passage for a bit, then climb up at a chock stone. Once more my memory failed me! After climbing up at a wrong chock stone, I realised it's actually a lot further, but eventually all the familiar landmarks came into sight and we climbed up where a bit of tat is hanging.

I confess I had to have a little sit down when we got to the climb up to the Corkscrew, but we kept going up to the entrance. But not without taking a strange route back to the Brickyard. What is it with that part of the cave? Has someone been moving the rocks about?

Once back at Penwyllt we had a bit of a wait for the others to return (which meant there was no rush for the showers) and then it was back to Whitewalls for the barbecue.

A great trip – thanks for organising it, Adrian.



The Team L-R: Tom, Emyr, Maxine, Adrian, Joe, Jennie, Chris, Martin and Will



*Above Top: Adrian rigging the first pitch
Above Bottom: Retrieving the rope*

Photos by Jennie Lawrence

A TRIP TO A TREACLE MINE



by Helen Nightingale

Last weekend (at the time I started writing this, now a weekend many moons ago in a different reality), I was very excited to have been invited to join a friend on a trip to a couple of treacle mines. He is working towards his Scouts cave and mine leader qualification and was in need of somebody to lead for his log book.

I should probably explain why I was so pleased to go along. I grew up in a treacle mining area, and have generally lived in treacle mining areas. One of my grandads was a Wealden treacle miner before the War. Grandad worked in the highly secretive mine in the Mole valley, near Dorking, and was occasionally drafted in to work in the other treacle mines in the local area. He enjoyed it when he was sent to the Sompting works. He would often say how the sea washed the treacle off better than the murky waters of the river Mole. The canal where I keep my boat was partially dug to carry coal, but was also vital in carrying treacle mined in the Midlands. The nearest town to the mooring is locally known as Treacletown, due to its sticky history. The canal also served the treacle mine at Foxton. When I left home, I moved away from the Weald and spent some time in Norfolk, near to both the Sporle mine and its sister mine at Long Statton. Visitors to the Sporle / Long Statton Docks were often confused by the lack of water in these towns. The docks actually served the underground canal linking the two mines, dug due to frequency of armed robbery when the treacle was transported by road. There was good reason that treacle was known as brown gold during the late 18th century. Moving back down south after a while, I even ended up digging close to the now sadly inaccessible treacle mines in Godalming, back when I first started caving and went digging with the Wealden after work. We always drank Bovril, Marmite, Oxo and treacle (not mixed together, that would just be wrong!) as it was symbolic of hope, that next week, we'd dig through the last of the Surrey hearthstone and into treacle. My most local mine here in Newbury is pretty close, at Tadley, but because it is now under a housing estate built for the Atomic Weapons Establishment, it remains under military surveillance.

Having spent most of my life near treacle-holes and never having been in one, I was very much looking forward to finally gaining access. We had managed to get access to a couple of places near Box mine, Wiltshire (not the Box in Surrey, another of the mines in the Dorking Gap conglomerate operated by the DAFT group of miners – that which my Grandad was a member of) – now also heavily guarded by the military in places. Treacle mining was often part of an underground movement, and the DAFT miners were a secretive offshoot – the fifth toe – of the Dorking Association of Fowlbreeding Trust.

A list of the mines of Great Britain along with further information on them, can be found here:

<http://www.treaclemine.com/locations.htm>

The history of treacle mining and how treacle came to be underneath Southern England is a fascinating one, although the recent history is not well documented.

The Weald Basin, running East – West between what is now the North and South Downs, commenced its formation 300-350 million years ago, during the carboniferous period. Carboniferous means coal bearing (Carbo-coal and fero-bearing, in Latin), and as the name implies, it was during this period that much of our coal deposits were laid down. There was more oxygen in the atmosphere than today, and plant life thrived. Much of Europe was richly forested with lush, rainforest like growth. A relative of today's tiny club mosses

had trunks 30 metres high and 1.5 metres in diameter. The Wealden base rock, unlike the calcareous uplands and heavy clay plains of today, supported swamp conditions, enabling the deposition of coal. These coal seams were then overlaid by Triassic sediments. After this period of sedimentation, the region underwent a time of uplifting and faulting. To the South-East, areas of chalk rose to form the Downs, whereas to the South West, what was known as the Cornubian Massif formed. This mountain range was subject to far higher forces than in the South East, generating enough heat to enable the metamorphosis of the rock. Very little metamorphism occurred to the East, with where is now Wiltshire forming an approximate border between the zones of differing morphology. The Weald subsided throughout the subsequent ages of the Jurassic, Cretaceous and early Tertiary, and sedimentary rocks and mud were laid during this time. To the West, to modern day Cornwall and Devon, upheavals continued and magma was able to intrude into the sediment, creating areas of granite. Differing geography means treacle lodes are rarely found west of Wiltshire, and the metalliferous mines of Cornwall do not reach much further East. Northern mining areas are not covered in this article, with North being North of the M4. Northern Treacle formation was enabled by different geomorphology. Should you taste unblended Northern or Midlands Treacle and compare to Southern Treacle, you'd be able to tell the difference, just as you can tell apart honey from different areas.

I have stated that climactic conditions and lush plant life enabled coal to be laid down in the Weald. However, this area is not well known for its coal production. The area contributed to the industrialisation of the UK but in many other ways than providing the fuel for the furnaces and transport. Boreholes drilled in the 19th century failed to find any evidence of coal in the region. The reason for this has been found to be two-fold. Firstly, coal-rich areas have been found to have been rich in plant life, but differing in species to those found in the Weald. Regions containing coal seams supported what we would recognise as primordial trees. Trees can be defined as having woody bark containing lignin. Plants began to evolve the ability to support themselves better by developing a lignin outer layer around 360 million years ago, when Southern England was warm and swampy. There were not the fungi in existence to break down dead wood and bark as there is today, so partially decomposed trees laid in the swamp until over millennia they became coal. Due to localised climactic variations, trees did not establish in Southern England as early as they did in, say the coalfields of South Wales and the Forest of Dean. In the Treacle Zone in the South East, grasses were the predominant plant life at the time trees were beginning to flourish elsewhere. You need no botanical education to know that grasses are much less rigid than trees. Cellulose plays an important part in the structural support of grasses (and other green plants without bark), rather than lignin. Grasses also contain a far higher ratio of water soluble sugars and more complex molecules. Grasses decomposed far more rapidly than the trees did, too quickly to allow the breakdown products to solidify under the immense pressure of the increasing sediment and mud overlying what was swamp during the time the plants were alive. The warm and damp growing conditions plus high levels of oxygen enabled huge grasses resembling modern day sugar cane, now grown only in tropical regions, to thrive in the Weald. These plants, sometimes referred to as Sargo, were so efficient in how they utilised nutrients in the swamp, they grew larger than any modern trees do. On dying, they would liquify into the swamps into which they fell. Simply put, coal can be found in primarily wooded ancient habitats, whereas treacle can be found in areas of predominantly Sargo. Throughout South

Eastern England, where swamp supported Sargo growth, found above Oolitic base rock, and capped either by chalk or sedimentary strata and mudstones, great subsurface lakes of treacle were formed. As millennia have passed, temperatures have gradually fallen and subsurface pressures increased. During the Carboniferous, sugar laden water in the swamps would have resembled that in today's peaty bogs. As time has gone by, the sweet lakes have significantly reduced in viscosity, resulting in a thick, dark brown goo.

Over geological time, the landscape has continued to move and reform, time and time again. Various faults have formed in the sedimentary rocks, and intrusions of other rocks forced their way through the chalk downlands. A combination of erosive forces and the land structures continuing to shift restructured the landscape.

In the Wealden clay basin, fissures gradually opened up in the sediment overlying the treacle seam. Wealden clay is a particularly heavy, sticky clay, referred to in local dialect as "stoachy". If you have ever been for a walk in an area of wet

Sussex Wealden clay and not lost a welly, you have done well. Folklore tells of the people gaining long legs because of the forces of the mud sucking their feet down and refusing to let go. Should you be a skilled Stoach-walker, you would have done well to take your Treacle-tracker, a tool similar to a dowsing rod, across the stoach and over to the nearest woodlands. Early metalliferous mines were often discovered using methods including identifying specialised plants growing only where mineral veins were to be found close to the surface, or by "flushing", a process involving washing loose stones away from the surface and looking for ores. Because plant life is minimal in stoach, and adding any more water is the last thing any sane person would do, treacle mines were often found using methods more suited to the locality. These days, the treacle mines found anywhere near stoach will often be found in woodland near clay soils. On downland sites, tree rings on higher chalkland can indicate a fissure birthing treacle. Imagine a gloopy round pond basin on top of an otherwise well drained hillside, surrounded by the telltale trees. Chanctonbury Ring is a good example of such a site. Less obvious sites without the tree rings atop the downs can be found in areas of greater upheaval, where fissures have moved away from vertical. These mines were often found where treacle exudate leached out onto the surface stoach, leaving telltale brown liquid puddles in the poached areas, and always in areas bordering wooded areas. It gave the early mines clues of where to start digging. My poor Grandma had to wash the stoach from my Grandad's clothes, when the mud was thick and strong enough for his clothes to stand up on their own after a day on the surface. Imagine the mud from an Otter trip, but as a normal part of your working day.

Ring sites would give rise to mines of a far more vertical nature than those found on the edge of woodland on a hillside. Although Stoach sites were harder to gain, they tend to be more horizontal in nature, and hence were often more profitable because of the comparable ease of hauling the treacle trugs to the surface, despite the initially squalid conditions.

Historically, treacle had to be actively dug, but as technology developed enabling treacle to be sourced from abroad more easily, and as treacle mines became commercially spent, the Southern mines gradually became abandoned when they became less economical. As with many mines, the pillars and stoping employed to maintain the structural integrity of the

workings become affected by the growing pressures of the hanging-walls (gravity-defying ceilings), and over the last century have gradually degraded. Shifting pressures and unnatural voids have changed the geochemistry of the mined areas, and enabled both secondary and accessory mineralisation to occur. While the rather unique and highly acidic landscape of Parys in North Wales has resulted in conditions suitable for rapid remineralisation and the formation of snottites, so giving spectacular sights for the mine explorer, the very different geochemical makeup of the treacle mines often means the mines can be quite dull in comparison.

Secondary and accessory mineralisation is accelerated where water can percolate from the surface, far more rapidly than in limestone based cave systems. The acidic nature of the bedrock and metalliferous ores which dissolve in the water and subsequently solidify through evaporation or high heat and pressures produce many complex and often highly colourful formations resembling coloured calcite. However, the basic

nature of the Wealden clay and calcareous country rock is less conducive to leaching of minerals into percolate water. The more vertical treacle mines are rather beige and boring looking if you like calcite type formations. The horizontal treacle mines often have many metres of country rock with a heavy layer of stoach above the cavities. Calcium-rich water does not easily percolate the rock, except for where fissures have formed, and the water can then obey gravity relatively rapidly. We did see pools of liquid treacle puddling the floor in some main tramways, in an area of a highly fissured hanging-wall. Where the water is able to pass rapidly through fissures with little impediment, pooling may occur. Where water is more restricted in its passage, some secondary mineralisation may occur. The primary secondary mineral of pressure and heat hardened treacle exudate is Saccharumite. This may often be grey coloured, but depending on the abundance of non-grass species lain to rest in the carboniferous swamplands, it may vary according to localised feeder sources for forming accessory compounds. It does resemble secondary deposits of arsenopyrite and sphalerite in appearance

(but not chemically). In some of the metalliferous mines, such as the copper mines of Cornwall, and the lead mines of Nenthead, the explorer can see many stunning colours and metallic glints when head-torches light up galena remnants. Hydrozincite is a common secondary mineral which easily identifiable by its blue-white, whiter than white brightness that washing powder advertisers are envious of. The exact opposite phenomenon can occur with saccharumite deposits. It is well worth taking a UV torch with you into a treacle mine, because the basically formed deposits are far more colourful and easy to see. It's just as spectacular as hydrozincite with secondary mineralisation colouration when seen under UV light; Saccharumite is often found alongside a splatter of a purple coloured mineral, which is very hard to photograph with a phone camera, and remains unidentified.

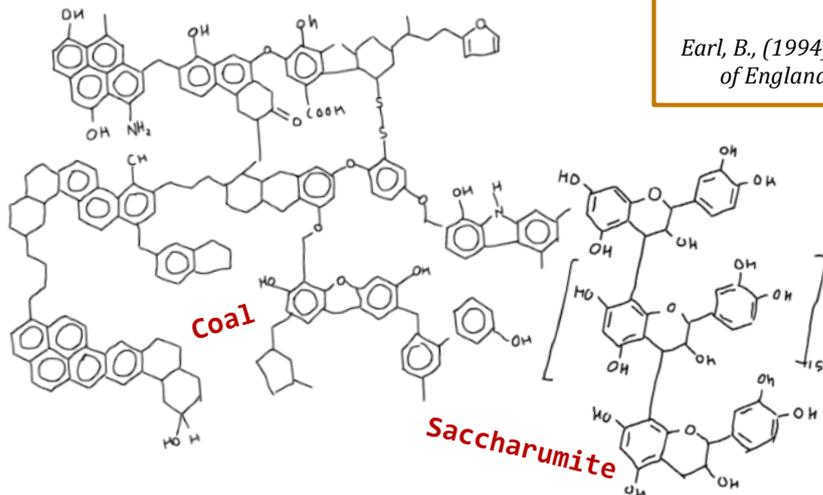
In very specific and isolated areas, the fortunate explorer can see mineralised syrup deposits. Syrup is manufactured by removing "molass" from treacle – that is all of the minerals contained within treacle, from both the sargo, the swamp it laid in, and subsequent chemical absorptions. By-products from the manufacturing process are used to make brown sugar and pre-prepared coloured icings. The inspiration behind the manufacturing process was the discovery of a golden coloured secondary exudate found by a mines inspector in 1947. In



Treacle Pumping Tower (interesting fact, there are 69 steps inside)

areas of rapid air-flow and high pressures – often areas at junctions and corners, where air moves faster than average in recent years, combined with increasing pressures from hanging-walls exerting higher pressures due to the deterioration of stopes and flakes of sedimentary rock falling to gallery floors, the molass has been forced out of the saccharumite, creating a unique accessory exudate which happens to be rather tasty.

I hope my brief description of the history of treacle will make you see the humble foodstuff in a different light, and enthruse you to join me on another trip underground to see treacle mining history.



Apologies:

This article is less accurate than a story in The Sun. Some of it is true. Some of it is completely bastardised. Some is complete fiction. I'd like to apologise to any geologist, mineralogist, palaeontologist (that might be the wrong word, but it's one I can spell), industrial historian, mines historian, botanist... who may read this.

Photos and diagrams by Helen Nightingale

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*Top: Rare Syrup Exudate and Treacle Miner's graffiti
 Right: Pool of Treacle*

New Cave in Pembrokeshire

by Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley

Gourmet's Cave

Location:

Devil's Cauldron (Stack Rocks)
 SR 931 944

Length: ?

Tackle required:

Steel toecaps, Cricket box, Chain mail gloves, Hammer, Stove, Wok, Tabasco, Lemon Juice



CSS MEETS 2021

October 15th-17th - Whitewalls Weekend

Trips for this weekend to be decided, but if there's anything in particular you'd like to do, let Helen know. Alternatively just come along and bring your ideas.

November 5th-7th - CSS Bonfire Weekend

Fire, frolics and caving fun. Bring a stonking firework and do your best anti-rain dancing. Caving trips to be decided, but it will include a range of options for all abilities. As usual there'll be a communal feast for after the fireworks, barrels of beer and a huge bonfire to enjoy.

December 3rd-5th - Whitewalls Curry Weekend

The annual evening of home-made culinary curry delights with a selection of caving trips on offer to work up an appetite. Bring along a curried concoction to share, be it a vat of curry, a spicy side-dish or some tasty sundries.

For more information on club meets contact Helen at chelseameetssecretary@gmail.com

Additional trips are also being planned on the members' ProBoards and Facebook pages, so check that out if you'd like to do extra caving trips or to arrange your own and invite others to join you.



Yorkshire Week 2022

by Adrian Fawcett

I am wondering whether there would be interest in a "Yorkshire Week" sometime in 2022. The idea would be that people could come for all or part of it, and there would be opportunities for trips to suit all abilities and inclinations. It would be a chance to learn or practise SRT rigging, or to spend a day or two doing non-caving things in the area. We could also get permits for some of the more obscure or outlying caves.

Let me know what you think. For now I just want to gauge level of interest to know whether to take the idea further.

For more information or to confirm your interest visit the members' ProBoards page or contact Adrian at adrianfawcett@outlook.com



Taken some photos on a club trip? We'd love them for the newsletter

*Above: Emyr at the entrance of Lost John's by Adrian Fawcett
Right: Pwll Estrys scaffolding antics with Mandy, Andy, Matt and John by Matt Voysey*

Above: Tom abseiling down The Knave, OFD by Jennie Lawrence

Top: Adrian, Jennie and Martin heading to Draenen and Adrian in Draenen by Jennie Lawrence

CSS Tackle Update

Novice Caving Kit

The club now has some basic caving kit suitable for beginners. This is freely available for any member to borrow when taking trips for potential new members wanting to give caving a try before committing to joining the club and buying kit of their own. CSS members are also welcome to use this kit to introduce friends and family to the joy of caving.

Anyone using a helmet and light will need to provide their own batteries (2x AA and some spares to take with you), and all kit must be booked out and returned clean the same day. If needed for longer please contact Mandy.

Please note: This kit is to be used strictly for the purposes outlined above. Please don't use simply because your own kit is muddy, wet or full of holes!



**Warmingb Centre
Oversuit**
1x small, 2x
medium, 1x
large

Caving Belt x2

**Helmet fitted
with Petzl
Pixa 3
headtorch
x3**

Batteries not included

**Warmingb
kneepads x2 pairs**

Modelled by Buffy the Vampire Slayer

A TO Z of Caves

by Andy Watson

who was very worried! We met the Coastguard walking along the cliff path towards us and stood them down with a big apology. I made a guilty donation to the Coastguard later.

A. Afton Red Rift, Devon

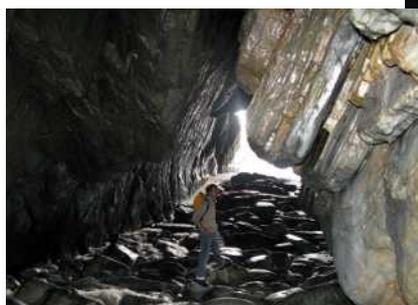
- A descending slightly scary rift (if you correctly stay at the top on the way in) and if you decide to drop down to the floor of the rift into the lower route the round-trip is very tight in places. This interesting rift cave terminates in Cascade Chamber which has some very pretty red flowstone formations.



Sue at the entrance

B. Baggy Point Sea Caves, North Devon

My son and I climbed down to these from the cliffs while Sue sat in the sunshine at the top of the cliffs. As the tide came in and we did not reappear from one of them she called the Coastguard; we eventually came out and re-climbed the cliff round the corner and found Sue



Steve in Whitings Hole, Baggy Point



The Carno Adit

C. (Ogof) Carno, South Wales

- Unfortunately this cave system is now closed with no access, but it is a good trip and this is a cave system developed accessed by a long man-made adit tunnel in the lee of the Carno

Reservoir which has also now been refilled. I can recall quite a wet section that can sump in wet weather prior to the drier passages by the rescue dump, an enjoyable caving trip.

D. Daren Cilau, South Wales

- A seriously good trip for a weekend or a longer trip if you are feeling fit, lots of variety from the 570m entrance crawl through to the impressive Time Machine if your light



Andy Heath in the Time Machine

is bright enough! Formations are abundant in some areas of the system from the bonsai tree section of Bonsai Stream Passage through to 12 o'clock High just off from the Western Union junction.

E. Eastwater Cavern, Mendip
A good trip down through the entrance boulder ruckle, through the Woggle Press, on to the 13 Pots and back up the Mud Escalator among other parts. An enjoyable trip on the whole.



Curtain at the end of Fernhill



Sue on the 35ft Pitch, Eastwater Cavern

F. Fernhill Cave, Mendip - A re-discovered vertical cave in Fairy Cave

Quarry with some lovely curtains, well worth the effort of re-opening.

G. Gaping Gill, Yorkshire - Various good trips to be had, especially if you go on one of the Winch Meet weekends and go down into the Main Chamber on the Bosun's chair. I recall you do need to get up very early to walk up, register and get in the queue.



My caving team on a trip from Bar Pot to Main Chamber

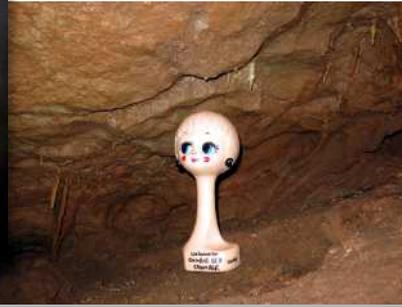
H. Ham Hole, Mendip - This short cave system has a lovely small arched entrance in a low cliff, but is an example of a cave with some potential/interest but a poorly dug vertical shaft section which was left unsupported for some time means things in this area have moved around, so take extreme care if you do visit and there is quite a pretty small chamber at the lowest point down a slippery muddy elliptical passage.



Formations in Ham Hole

Editor's Note: Ham Hole has since had a serious collapse and only the first few metres are currently accessible!

I. Iffe Hole (also known as Willet's Lane Hole), Mendip - I dug here for a few years and cleared out



Sally in Double Bed Chamber

a 1980s collapse and extended a side passage into a new bedding chamber that I called Double Bed Chamber. Just because a double bed without legs might just fit in, but it was too low for you to lie on top of it. I left a wig display head there too called Sally in memory of my first real girlfriend who was killed on a small motorbike near her home about 44 years ago.

J. Johnny Nash's Hole, Mendip - The only J I could think of, I looked but never found it; a small phreatic tube in Burrington Combe. No Photograph

K. Kangaroo Swallet, Mendip

A swallet/sink hole dug in an Oolite rift to about 20 feet of depth, located just north of Welsh's Green. I had a little look once, lots of roots.



Entrance to Kangaroo Swallet

L. Lots of Cave systems starting with L but let's go for the first one in my pictures: Lancaster Hole, Yorkshire - You know, the one with the lovely columns. A great system I visited a few times between 2000 & 2010 with the HSCC.



Sue near The Columns in Lancaster Hole

Photos by Andy Watson

To be continued...

A CAUTIONARY TALE

I recovered this krab a few years ago from the top of Jacob's Ladder in Daren. It was still being used with the in situ rope. Beware of fixed aids; it's a long way from the end of Ankle Grinder to the entrance with a broken leg or worse!

by Andy Heath





www.chelseaspelaeo.org

*Mandy Voysey in Main Stream Passage
approaching 2nd Choke, Agen Allwedd.
Photo by Matt Voysey*