



Volume 65
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Arthur Millett
Garth Iron Mines
Aggy Bolt Climbing
Sunday School Update

CHELSEA SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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*Right: Martin Lloyd on the waterfall climb,
Southern Stream, Aggy Grand Circle - Feb 2023
by Matt Voysey*

*Front cover: Mandy Voysey and Charles Bailey
in Nameless Passage, Daren Cilau - Feb 2023
by Matt Voysey*

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Check out the CSS website news page for trip reports and photo galleries for all club meets since Jan 2022

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Editorial With trip reports, geology, new technology, digging and building news, and fond farewells to former members of the club, a big thank you to everybody who sent us material and photos for this issue.

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 a public shared link to the folder, or ZIP them up and send via MailBigFile.

An electronic version of this newsletter is available to download from the members area of the club website and the club forum. If you would prefer to go paperless and receive electronic copies of the newsletter by email in future then let us know.

Editors: Matt and Mandy Voysey

Polish Exchange Trip to Whitewalls

CAVE LEADERS WANTED



CSS member Tony Moulton will be staying at Whitewalls with 10 members of his Polish caving club WKTJ from **Thursday 18th to Monday 22nd May**, and would be very grateful to any members willing to join the team and help lead trips to our local caves. It should be a fun event and a good opportunity to show some of the great wonders to be seen underground in South Wales and learn about the caves of Poland. If you would like to join the team, either for the full four days or just a trip or two, please contact Tony via the members facebook page or email (see Members' Handbook). Planned caving days are Thursday evening, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Quiz



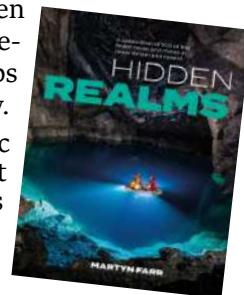
What are these idiots attempting to spell?

See page 27 for the answer

Hidden Realms

Martyn Farr's new book 'Hidden Realms' is now available to pre-order from a variety of bookshops and will be on general sale in May.

Taking you on a photographic odyssey of 100 of the UK's most impressive caves and mines, this is a must-have for every caver's bookcase and full of inspirational places to visit.



The price is a very reasonable £25 for paperback or £50 for a limited edition hardback copy.

WHITEWALLS HUT FEES

PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO RISING UTILITY COSTS, HUT FEES FOR STAYING AT WHITEWALLS ARE NOW
MEMBERS £5 AND NON-MEMBERS £8 PER NIGHT

Membership

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.

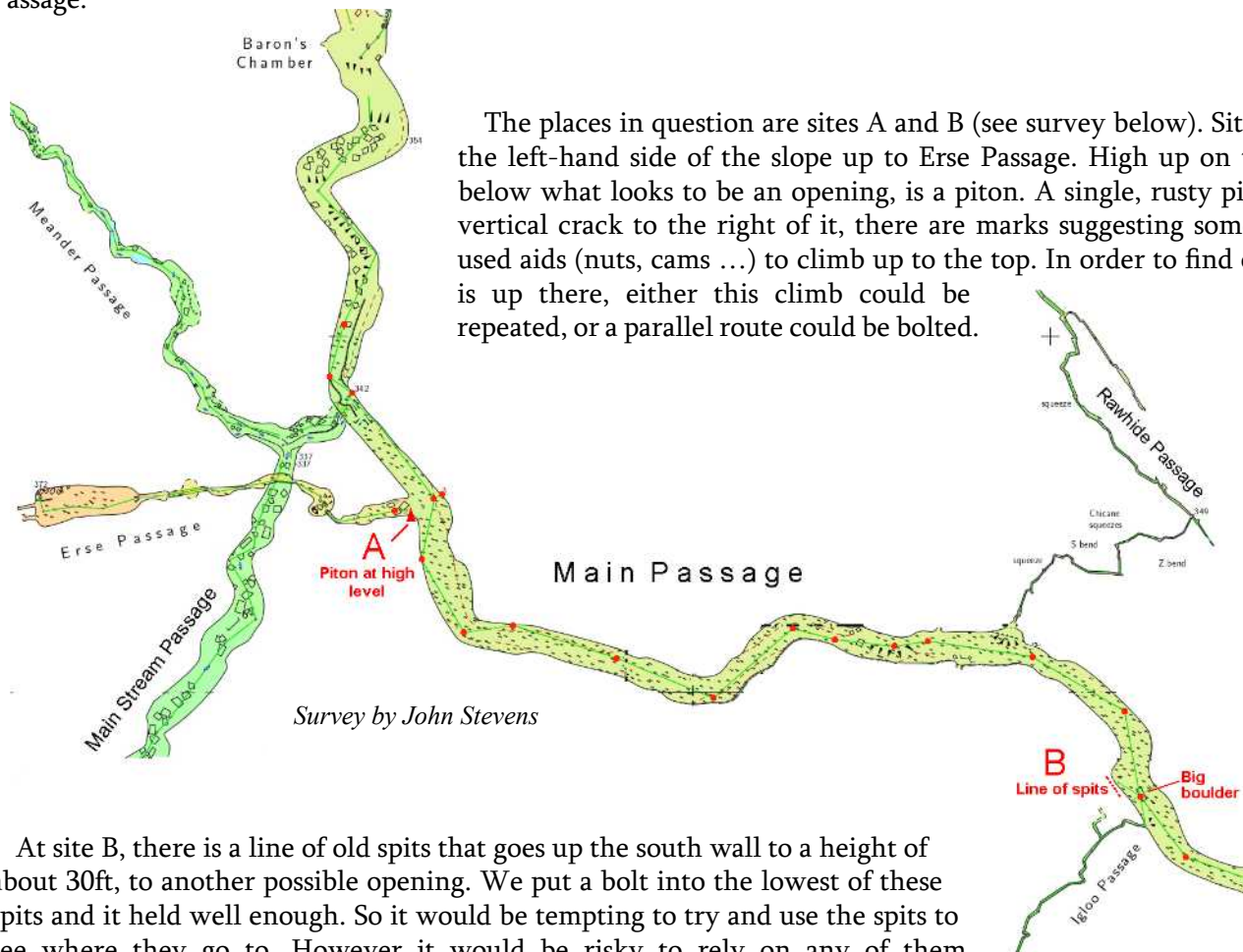
Email csstreasurer@chelseaspelaeo.org

High Level Features in Agen Allwedd

by Joe Duxbury

In two places in Agen Allwedd Main Passage there is evidence of previous climbs to high level features. Clive Gardener has told me that he thinks these are all just oxbows that loop back to the Main Passage, but whatever they are, they're not on the survey.

I came across a statement by Geo Fletcher in the CSS 50th Anniversary Journal that 'Bill Maxwell and Dave Dudley had ... maypoling trips in Aggy and found lots of upper meander-type passages.' [1] This sounded promising, but reports in CSS journals from 1962 [2,3] showed that they were all further into the cave, in Turkey Passage.



The places in question are sites A and B (see survey below). Site A is on the left-hand side of the slope up to Erse Passage. High up on the wall, below what looks to be an opening, is a piton. A single, rusty piton. In a vertical crack to the right of it, there are marks suggesting someone has used aids (nuts, cams ...) to climb up to the top. In order to find out what is up there, either this climb could be repeated, or a parallel route could be bolted.

At site B, there is a line of old spits that goes up the south wall to a height of about 30ft, to another possible opening. We put a bolt into the lowest of these spits and it held well enough. So it would be tempting to try and use the spits to see where they go to. However it would be risky to rely on any of them, particularly the higher ones. I suppose each could be tested by someone on the ground, pulling on a rope krabbed into a hanger. Or if the spits could be pulled out cleanly, the holes could be reused. It would be a pity to put in a line of new bolts as that would only add to the unsightliness. And for future use, would a series of rusty through-bolts be any safer than a series of rusty spits? Removable bolts, such as Rawlbolts, or the Petzl 'Pulse' type, would be one answer, although the latter require holes that are more precise. Concrete screws would be an alternative – they can be removed. But it would be better if the spits were pulled out first.

It seems unlikely that either of these leads to anything extensive, otherwise there would be more known about them. Nevertheless whatever is up there ought to be surveyed, and brought back into general knowledge. An advantage is that they are just along Main Passage from Baron's Chamber, and not somewhere in the far reaches of the cave. If any of you want to try to reach the top of either of these climbs, by all means, give it a go. But survey, or make it possible for someone else to survey, what you find.

References

- [1] Fletcher, G, 'Some Chelsea Reminiscences', *CSS 50th Anniversary Journal* (2006), p 18.
- [2] Maxwell, W, 'Welsh Roundabout', *CSS Journal Vol. 4, No. 11, August 1962*, pp 183-187.
- [3] Maxwell, W R, 'Two Discoveries in Agen Allwedd', *CSS Journal Vol. 5, No. 2, November 1962*, pp 15-16.



*by Joe
Duxbury*

High Level Antics in Aggy

Progress in investigation of the high level passages

On 27 January Lee Davies and Emyr Walters made a start in bolting the climb up to the lone piton above the start of the slope up to Erse Passage. ‘The Climb of the Unknown Piton’ perhaps (along the lines of ‘The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier’)? Emyr got to within touching distance of the piton, about 20ft up.

The following day I joined them and Emyr put a few more bolts in to complete the climb. He then put in some bolts for a fixed rope. I put my SRT gear on (SRT! In Aggy!) and climbed up to join him. The passage (which I’m calling ‘Lone Piton Passage’) was a classic phreatic roof tube, about 1½m high and wide, but it only went for about 5m, with a dog-leg bend about halfway. The end is choked with sediment. There is no sign anyone has tried to dig it, but interestingly, ‘CSS’ has been carbide-smoked on the left-hand wall at the end. So now we know it was ‘us’ that climbed up there, but when, and exactly who? Emyr descended and Lee came up to join me, to gaze at this splendid feature! Then we also descended, and left the rope in place.

We proceeded to the next project, a climb up what appears to be an unclimbed wall to a visible passage up on the right. A group of us had started by putting 3 bolts in here at the Bonfire Weekend. Lee and Emyr once more did their stuff, putting more bolts in at an impressive rate. Another 5 bolts or so enabled Emyr to look into the passage, and he could see a scaffold bar jammed across it. So the passage (for which my preliminary title is ‘Scaffold Passage’) is not virgin after all. Until we actually get into it, who got there before, and how, remains a mystery.

Anyway, we then ran out of bolts and time, so our bolting wizards will be returning to finish it. Hopefully there will be more to see than 5m.

Photos: Emyr on the climb to Scaffold Passage by Helen Nightingale

East Rhydtalog Mine

by Paul Tarrant

Friday 9th September 2022

A gloriously dry, hot summer had seriously depleted reservoirs in Wales. Friends with mining interests from SWCC and Welsh Mines Society suggested that water levels of the Llyn Brianne reservoir, just north of Llandovery, should have lowered sufficiently for the exploration of Rhydtalog Lead Mine, remains that would normally be submerged.

Phil Knight and Neil Culross invited me to join them on a trip to locate the mines and we met by the old chapel at Soar y Mynydd, which is halfway between Tregaron and Rhandirmwyn and in as lonely a spot as can be found in Wales. We headed south, following the abandoned metalled road on the east bank of the Camddwr river which was swollen and in flood due to recent heavy rainfall.

We found the portal of the Upper Adit at NGR SN 792 522 and it was high and dry above the current river level, although clearly this was not usually the case as when the reservoir is full, our search area would be flooded.

Before exploring the adit, we pushed downstream, hoping to find either the Deep or Shallow Adits but we were unsuccessful finding these. Trying to walk along the upper slopes of the river bank which was normally flooded, was now overgrown in an astonishingly rich mass of Rose Bay Willow Herb and brambles, making progress very difficult and dangerous, as we could not really see where we were walking and a slip and fall into the river raging below would have had dire consequences. We were however, given a view of a long spoil tip just above the river level, but we could not get to it safely.

Phil had been able to wade across the river to inspect the flooded shaft and other associated workings which had been worked for a hundred years from 1770, producing £1,800 worth of silver lead ore. Galena is the ore from which lead is smelted and often silver is produced as a valuable by-product. The place had been worked by local miners, with one of them going by the name of Jack Jack Jacky Jack!



Neil looking down on old waste tip. Note dead tree stumps

Phil crossed the river again to join Neil and me by the Upper Level. We explored approximately 100 metres of adit which was waist deep in water. There was a flooded shaft of unknown depth just inside the entrance on the left-hand side, and on the RHS a short exploratory adit went for 4 metres before closing down. The main adit had been driven through what appeared to be barren rock, there being no evidence of a mineral vein. We returned to the surface after getting a thorough soaking and as disappointed as the original miners who had prospected the place back in the late 19th century.

Whilst the exploration of the adit had been disappointingly short, we had had a good outing in a spectacular part of mid-Wales, and would never likely see the remains again that we had explored, as they are all flooded and under Llyn Brianne water again.



Left: Neil in Upper Adit



Below: Phil emerging from Upper Adit

Caving with Home Comforts

by Tim Gibbs



Over the Christmas period I visited a friend's house. He had just got a Virtual Reality (VR) headset and was keen for me to have a go batting in cricket against the Australian pace attack in a game. After surviving and getting a few streaky boundaries I went home and enthusiastically purchased myself a headset knowing that my son and myself would make good use of it.

After my initial enthusiasm for the cricket game waned, largely down to my inferior cricketing abilities in comparison to my son, I started to explore what else was available in the "metaverse". I quickly found YouTube VR and it wasn't long before I had typed 'caving' into the search bar and began exploring caves all around the world.

The VR headset creates an immersive experience, you can look in all directions, and the sounds are recorded too, giving you a convincing impression you are there with sounds of water dripping and flowing. In fact, when you come off the headset it is a bit like emerging from a cave in that your environment changes quite rapidly and is a shock to the senses.

The videos available are normally one of two categories. The first are professionally made and take you through a cave or show caves, present static images, and cut to each new location. My assumption is that they use a tripod for the camera, and you get good images of the cave. The second type are more active with a camera strapped to cavers' helmets or handheld. The picture quality on these tends to be really poor with all the movement. These also have tendency to make you feel a bit seasick! A notable exception where motion works is the cave diving videos which are great given the movement is steady and slow.

So where have I been?

Well, I've been to Vietnam, USA, Scandinavia and France amongst others and have plenty of exploring left to do. Here are my top picks if you have VR:

The Coral cave: Sweden's longest cave (Korallgrottan)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qj5G_9b3GIM

Inside Chauvet Cave: Google Arts & Culture
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htFsh56dKIY>

Amazing Cave Diving 360 Video: Ojamo Finland
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UELpj2rDkm8>



What is VR caving good for?

If I was asked, why do I go caving? I suppose my first answer would be the beautiful sights that can be found in subterranean environments. My close second answer would be the misery, suffering and physical challenge of it all. The VR set does a great job at allowing you to see things for yourself, as if you were there. I get to look at formations and rock shapes in places I'll likely never visit.

Of course, a VR set will never replace the physical or social side of caving, the world's only non-spectator sport. But how else can you experience the underground environment in a spare 10 mins, free from organising, driving, faff, mud or pain?

Could there be future applications?

One thing that has captured my imagination while watching 'Digging for Britain' on the BBC was a feature on cobalt mines in Alderley Edge. To document what was down there the National Trust created a 3D model of the mines with laser scanning technology. Such 3D maps would be easily explorable with a VR headset in relative comfort, and I imagine would be a great asset to cave exploration. My assumption is that the equipment is both expensive and relatively fragile for cave environments, explaining why this is not happening widely already.

Of course, the other application could be for those who have decided that going underground is no longer for them, maybe through age or other reasons. The cameras needed to make 360 videos are expensive but affordable and likely to get cheaper meaning more content is likely to be made. There could also be a role for protection of very fragile environments in caves by allowing people to view formations without being there, although I'm not sure that would catch on.

Let me know if there is interest and I could bring it to Whitewalls for people to try, assuming I can get 360 VR cave videos downloaded or to run off the data on my phone.

THOUGHTS ON TWO DIGS

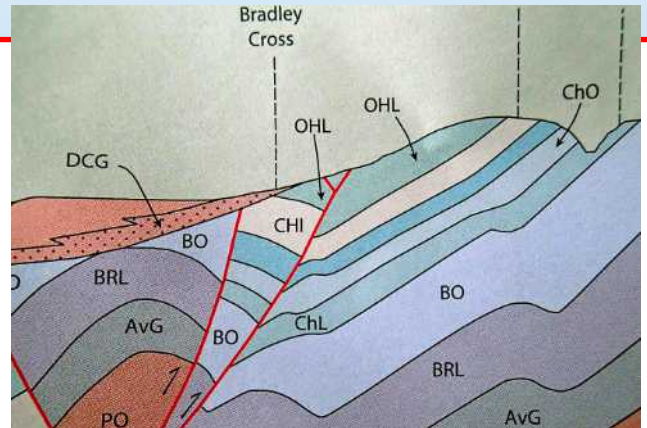
EPIGENIC AND HYPOGENIC *by Nick Chipchase*

VURLEY SWALLET, MENDIP EPIGENIC

Here we have a closed karst basin (one of several) aligned along The South West Overthrust with associated faults. The Vurley basin is the closest to Cheddar Gorge and has a low col leading into a valley in Triassic cover in the escarpment. At one time the basin was much deeper and was probably formed by solutional activity. During periglacial conditions it was sealed by permafrost allowing a glacial lake to form. The cold dry weather during the ice age allowed easterly winds to bring fine wind-blown soil to settle in the depression. This is known as loess and at Vurley lies seven metres deep overlying the Oxwich Head Limestone. Collapses over solutional features have formed dolines along the line of basins. At Vurley aggressive water seeping through the loess has formed multiple fissures and collapse in the limestone down to a depth of sixty metres. At this point one of the major faults has been encountered allowing further epigenic speleogenesis to take place. Various misfit vadose trenches are still forming in the solid limestone and many of the rocks in the upper cave exhibit sharply eroded dissolved features. The main fault rift in Vurley occurs at around sixty six metres depth with heavily eroded areas. A linear minor fault forms the chamber below the first pitch giving way to a passage running down dip with vadose trenches in the floor. A major fault is then met almost at right angles to the previous one. This has primarily been formed by drip and the tiny misfit stream. Unlike many Mendip caves this is not the result of vadose stream erosion. In fact the vertical section of Vurley Swallet (not a swallet in the true sense) is almost self-contained with just a tiny passage that has been blasted out to reach it. Drip below here in winter is quite heavy and constant, though the hydrological component has been altered by the addition of a pipe through the loess cover (at several occasions converting the cave to a true swallet and in doing that removing much of the sediments therein). A fairly high wet weather stream can now enter the cave but again this is modern and misfit. The cave continues down through Clifton Down Limestone passing through a well eroded chert bed somewhere near the one hundred metre depth. In all probability water in the cave drains to Cheddar Risings but unlike the typical Mendip swallet this will be along strike rather than down dip. Therefore the deep phreatic switchbacks we see will be replaced by boulder and mud filled rifts.

It's possible that Vurley can be aligned with sequential stages in Reservoir Hole and at Cheddar Risings. A deeper phreatic/vadose conduit could also be encountered draining other karst basins back along the overthrust. Nevertheless Vurley is unique on Mendip. Epigenic in origin but formed by aggressive groundwater draining through the loess in a large karst basin. Unfortunately these conditions mean that the cave suffers from higher than usual concentrations of CO₂ much to the detriment of future diggers.

Vurley was buried under 7m of loess. There had been small collapse dolines in the area mostly formed by solutional activity and changes in the structure of the loess by water penetration. Loess covers 10% of the earth's surface and is highly porous, and that on Mendip probably accumulated in a glacial lake at Vurley in the last ice age, its origins being continental deserts.



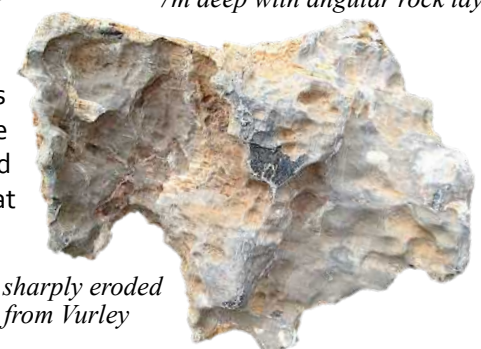
The south-west overthrust at Vurley



Start of the dig at Vurley



*The loess overburden at Vurley
7m deep with angular rock layer*



*Typical sharply eroded
rock from Vurley*

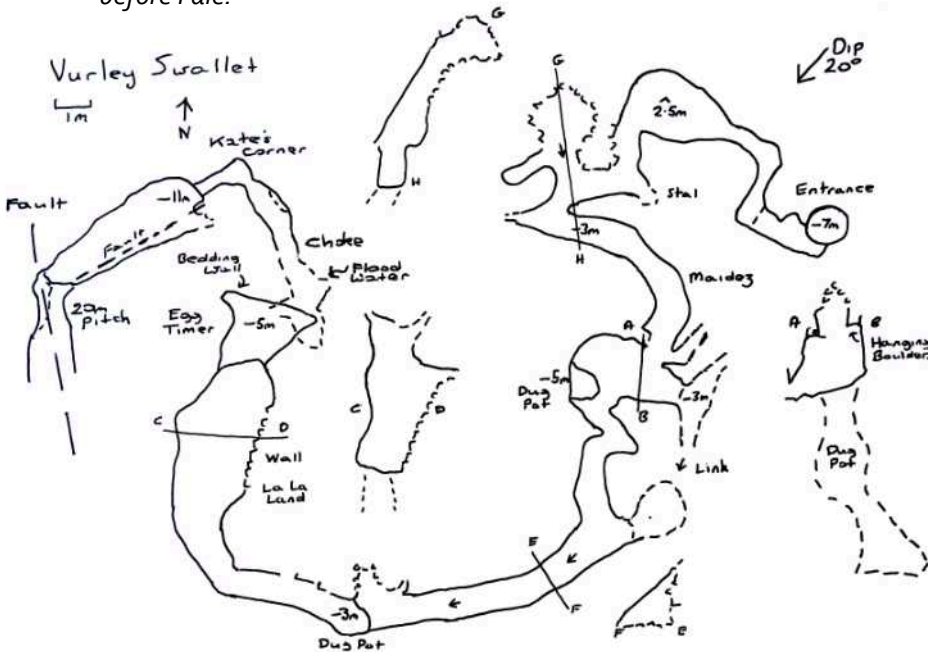
Digging Update: Sadly still in limbo after several years; the issues with CO₂ remain constant. There has been no digging, no survey and no geomorphological assessment. There has been monitoring of CO₂ levels. The digging team (in part) are still reluctant to allow visitors. I did a "naughty" trip with two non-team members in June last year and as usual got myself into trouble. We went to the bottom of the 11m pitch seemingly with no ill effects from CO₂. How we can move on from this stasis? I really don't know. I would like to see a high grade survey before I die!



Eroded walls on the 11m pitch



Below the pitch – as with most of the cave a total absence of water born sediments and stalagmite



Ungraded survey showing the faults

THE QUANTOCKS HYPOGENIC



Hypogenic deep and undescended shaft on a baryte vein at Cannington



Porifera sponge fossils about 2 cm long from the natural part of 'The Caverns' dig

We have come to realise that many very large cave systems in the world have a different origin. This we call Hypogenic being almost the antithesis of the standard form of speleogenesis we call Epigenic. The latter has surface derived water often contained as a phreatic conduit under hydrostatic pressure but then becoming vadose as water tables drop in the local catchment. Both Cheddar and the St Dunstan's Well catchment exhibit this classic phreatic - vadose transition. The St Dunstan's origins being probably in the Hoxnian interglacial period 400,000 years ago. Both catchments have caves with later periglacial cryogenic speleothems.

The Quantocks have no known open cave systems. All have been found by quarrying or mining. Holwell Cave is a classic maze structure formed by hypogenic solution. The rising thermal waters opening tubes and chambers along the faults and bedding planes at the juncture of the Devonian limestone and slate. We see similar at Cothelstone.

At the water table cave formation has taken place because as the warmer water cools it becomes more aggressive (the Preferential Horizon). Also as air spaces are formed more speleogenesis takes place driven by condensate from the thermal water. With a containing ceiling of Triassic rock in places there is no recharge from the surface and the water



Where the main shaft has intercepted the natural section



The baryte lode



View from the dig – the preferential horizon a quarter of the way down

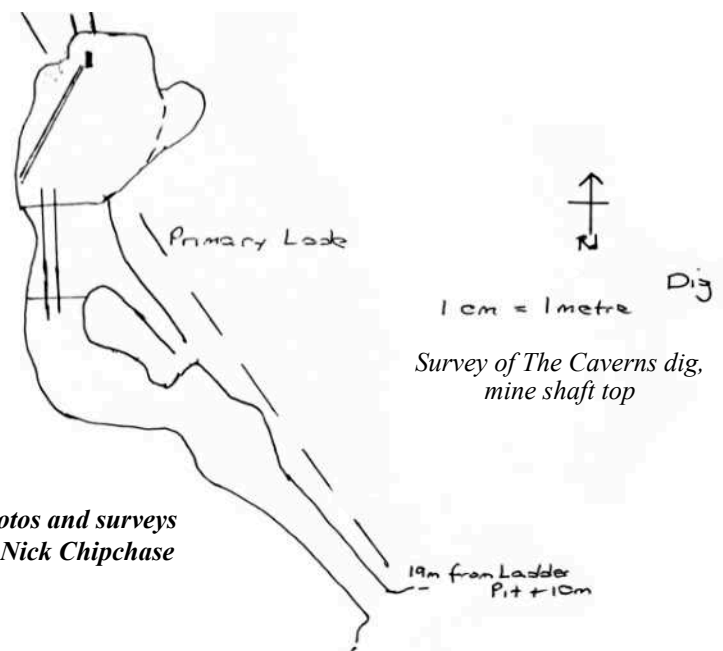


Spoil disposal shute into the main shaft's flooded depths

disperses in an upper aquifer. The condensate can go further creating open voids like dome pits, cupolas and dendritic passages. The rising waters usually contain hydrogen sulphide and carbon dioxide. In Lechuguilla there has been aerobic respiration at the water surface where bacteria can convert the hydrogen sulphide to sulphuric acid. Some Quantock caverns have developed between a lower aquifer and upper aquifer (high permeability zones) which equalises the flow pattern allowing recharge from many different points and so aiding cavern development. Residue from speleogenesis is not removed in most hypogenic structures so settles within the confines of the dissolved portions of limestone. We see further evidence of dissolution on the boulders within the fill.

All Somerset caves not readily classified as swallets (i.e. those draining the impervious Mendip periclinal with streams sinking near the shale / limestone boundaries) might be classified as hypogenic. Two instances being Pen Park Hole and Lamb Leer. The tendency to pigeon hole everything is best avoided as caves can form from a variety reasons. Transitional phases can occur with sub aerial erosion exposing long closed caverns to the surface and with stage levels dropping within catchments altering water flow and creating stage levels within the cave itself. Ultimately it's quite ironic that cave diggers have converted a long closed system to a true swallet in very wet conditions.

“The Caverns” Digging Update: *We are two years into a three year licence to work at a mine on a private estate. Part of the licence demands anonymity as none of the sites are on a footpath. Clearly it's fairly well-known with the caving community where we are. We just can't tell you! So far we have laddered and fitted platforms to three deep shafts. We have also bridged another internal shaft. All four shafts (with others) were capped and buried two hundred years ago. Currently we have about a hundred and eighty metres of well-preserved mine and some fifteen metres of natural cave. The "cave" has to be dug out following a baryte lode as it's full of hypogenic metamorphic boulders and clay. Around 1795 the miners encountered large caverns adjacent to the baryte lode. They were well described in two summaries in 1795 and 1816. These are our ultimate objective. We hope to find them before the licence expires after which we do not know what the estate will want us to do with the locked entrances we have constructed.*



Photos and surveys by Nick Chipchase

HERON POT

by Paul Tarrant

15th September 2022

Some of the CSS Old Guard went for a short week holiday in the Yorkshire Dales. We stayed at a splendid place called Warth House just south-west of Ingleton.

Following a bitterly disappointing episode when John and Cath Addison, Andrea and Paul Tarrant went for a walk from Ingleton to Chapel le Dale via Twistleton Scars, only to learn that the Hill Inn now only opens on Saturday and Sundays, we decided we had better do some caving rather than trusting to once loved pubs being open at the end of a walk. So, we decided upon Heron Pot in Kingsdale which is a bit of a classic pull down through trip.

Current members Barry Weaver and Paul Tarrant were joined by ex-long time members Rick Box and John Addison, changing at the side of the road in the quiet of Kingsdale, but regrettably without the accompanying sound of curlews that used to be commonplace there.

Our walk to the lower entrance of the cave was easy enough, and enabled us to establish that we could exit the cave via that entrance. We carried on up the hill following a wall at one point and finding the upper entrance near to it.

What followed was a delightful trip in a classic streamway, typical of Yorkshire, with stooping and a bit of crawling along the initially small streamway until a series of cascades made for walking size passage. Then we encountered the two pitches with the first being 6m and relatively simple. The second pitch was a little deeper at 9m and descended into a fairly large, spray lashed chamber. Dropping this pitch was interesting as we could not afford to mess things up getting ropes jammed on the pull down. I tried taking photos but there really was too much mist for a decent shot. We all descended without incident and followed the stream's steady course to a long section of canal passage that ensured a thorough wetting before disgorging us by the entrance which proved to be no problem for us to exit.



Barry abseiling the final pitch



Yay, we found the entrance! L-R Barry Weaver, Jon Addison and Rick Box

We all agreed Heron Pot had been a fine short trip, well worthy of Yorkshire caving, which we will have to do again in another decade or two! We changed swiftly and made for the Marton Arms where our recovery was ensured by a couple of pints of refreshing ale.

GARTH IRON MINES



by *Tim Gibbs*

Firstly, I must apologise to Dan Thorne for taking so long to write this article and getting his photos into the newsletter. All pictures underground are credited to Dan. The trips described were done just under 10 years ago at a time when the mines were open. It looked at the time like easy access would be lost, which then happened. The most likely cause for this was their popularity with local adventurers catalysed by social media, meaning the quarry owners felt they needed to remove a potential liability. I was reluctant to publicise the place much further at the time. Access is now very difficult and only possible I believe via the main shaft. However, I have been asked to move on by security while eating sandwiches with my kids near the top of the fenced off main shaft while out on a family walk, suggesting that security is pretty tight nowadays. Further fences have been put up with an abundance of new warning signs in and around the area.

I had also misplaced a publication about the Iron workings produced by the Pentyrch and District Local History Society. When I say

misplaced, I mean my better half had “tidied” it away and despite searching for several hours many years back I couldn’t find it. The other day while sorting out some of my caving literature I found the booklet. With access already lost and the literature to hand I no longer had an excuse not to write this.

Many of you will have heard of the Lesser Garth cave on the outskirts of Cardiff and will have sampled its delights, but fewer people are aware of the extensive mine workings on the other northern side of the same, now mostly quarried out hill. The geological sequence is similar to that of the Forest of Dean, with high grade haematite iron ore being the prize that drew people underground. There are several other locations in South Wales where this same band of iron ore was mined with the last mine at Llanhari ceasing operations in 1976.

It is rumoured that the iron workings in the area began with the Romans, but direct evidence is somewhat lacking. There is plenty of evidence for early human activity in the area with Lesser Garth Cave thought to be a Neolithic burial site.



The Main Shaft



Entrance to adit now blocked with large boulders



View of the quarry from near the main shaft of the mine. The corner that can be seen is the location of Lesser Garth Cave and Ogof Pen y Graig.

Evidence abounds for Bronze Age occupation of the caves with pottery and other finds. On the neighbouring Garth Hill there are also Bronze Age barrows, said to have been the inspiration for the film 'The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill But Came Down a Mountain'.

Presumably any exploitation of the iron ore for smelting purposes could have occurred from the Iron Age onwards and it's likely that the Romans would have recognised the potential and may have begun mining. There is evidence for iron workings using blast furnaces from the 1560s, but local historians think that lower grade ironstone ores from the coal measures were used based on contemporary accounts. The evidence for the mine we explored starts from the early 19th century, probably after 1825.

The iron mines are strongly connected to the Melingriffith Tin Plate Works in modern day Whitchurch. There was a tramroad built between the two, a section of which is preserved on the Taff Trail. It was known that the Melingriffith Tin Works needed pig iron with low phosphorus content to avoid the iron breaking in the manufacturing process. This was only possible from the high grade haematite ore, preferably smelted using charcoal. Interestingly, it appears that such ore was imported to the area from Lancashire, the Forest of Dean and even internationally for several centuries before the major mining operation began in 1800s.

The iron was mined from the surface downwards giving the mines their character. The dolomitised limestone is stable and allowed great caverns to be dug out with a distinct absence of stemples or stopes. The vertical nature of the

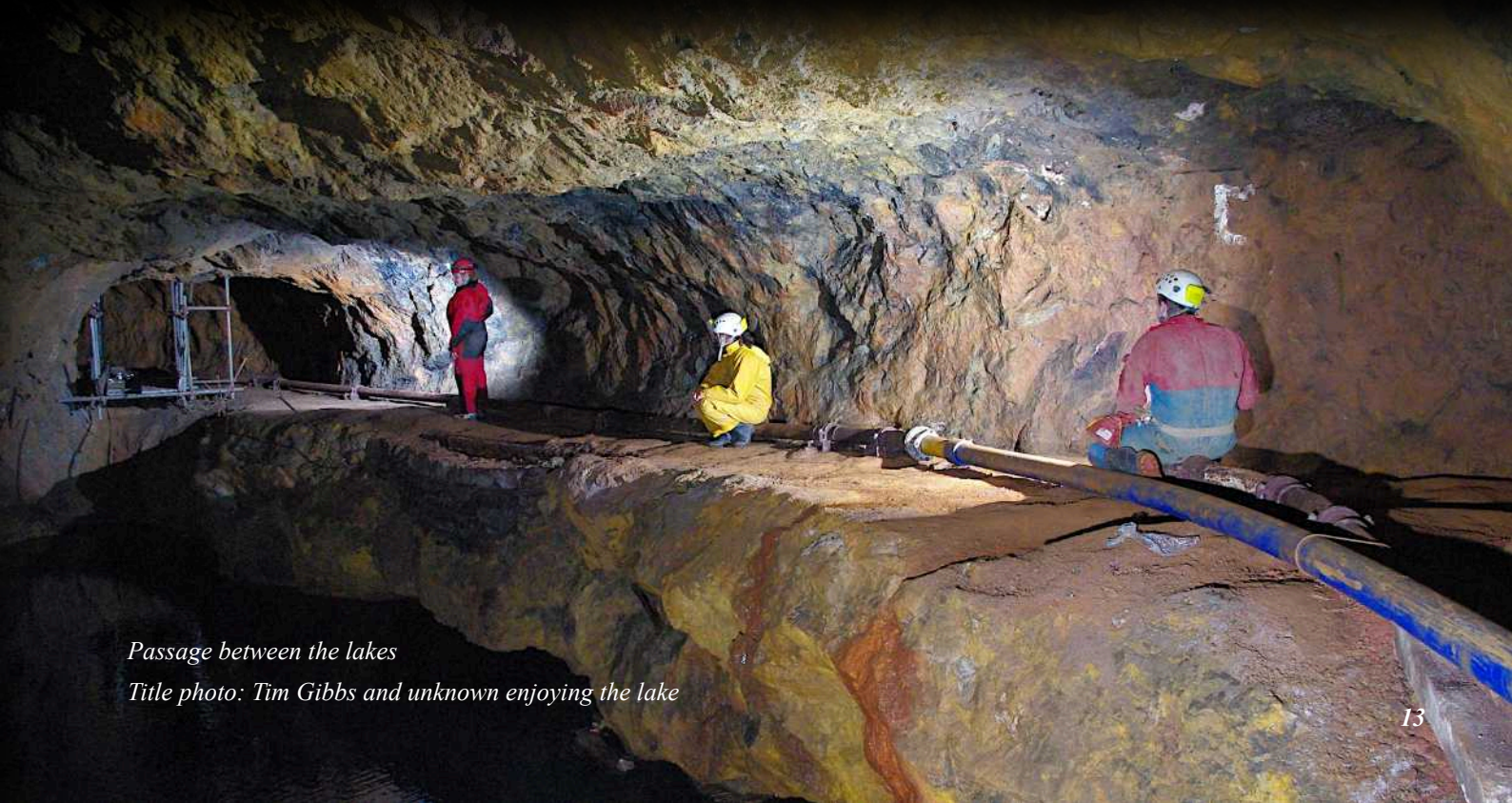
mines inevitably led to flooding after a certain depth, and later operations employed adits and pumps to further deepen the workings.

If memory serves me correctly I did 2 or 3 evening trips to the mine with Dan Thorne, Lisa Boore and Liz Winstanley, with a few others whose names I have since forgotten. Entrance to the mines was gained by an adit that has now been sealed. The adit is walking to stooping height and there is evidence of past plans to open the mine to the public as a show mine with electrical cable and light fittings in the adit.

No doubt, I would have told the group the story of when a body was found in the mines. The body of a female that had been presumably thrown down a shaft. The remarkable thing was when the woman was identified she was last seen alive little more than 24 hrs earlier as she worked the streets in Cardiff. Theories abound in the village about who was responsible, but to my knowledge nobody has been brought to justice.

Along the length of the adit are some nice formations as well as mineralised pockets with large and well-formed calcite crystals similar to those on display in the National museum of Wales from the adjacent Taff's Well Quarry. These pockets are big enough to fit your head and upper body in comfortably.

At the end of the adit the mine opens into far larger proportions. It is here that a diving station set up by CDG is reached. Originally the mine had a pump at this level that allowed deeper workings, but with that unoperational the mines have long since flooded. Some of the industrial archaeology was still in situ with pipes, old pump and gauges present.



Passage between the lakes

Title photo: Tim Gibbs and unknown enjoying the lake

I remember the visibility of the undisturbed water in the lakes was fantastic and peering down into the blue depths was really quite eerie and strangely inviting. I think I read somewhere they go to around 60m deep and were used by CDG for practice.

On one of the trips, we took a dinghy to access passages on the other side of the main lake. From memory they didn't really go anywhere above water and were a bit of a disappointment. However, it was jolly good fun and somewhat of a novelty rowing around the lake. On other trips we did some wild swimming but the water as you can imagine was very cold which kept those ventures rather short.

There is a second lake reached at the same level and on the left named golden chamber because in the daylight, the yellow ochre on the walls is lit up giving the place a golden appearance. I'm fairly sure our trips were in spring and were done when the sun was too low in sky in early evening for us to see that effect.

On one trip we managed a through-trip to the top of the main shaft from the main chamber, reached from the adit. Bearing left and then climbing up led to another level, and from there a further set of exposed climbs (that some of our party refused) led to the base of the rubbish strewn shaft with direct daylight. At the furthest end of the shaft (southern end) where it was steeply sloping and more vegetated, but not quite as vertical, progress could be made upwards. The final part was assisted by a thick hemp gym rope. Having reached the top we noted that it was fun, and likely because we had some party members in the mine we returned out the same way.

I have since found some surveys of the mines which suggest there was some passage we didn't reach to the west of the main lake, but not a lot. It is a shame that the mine is not now accessible as it is a fascinating and beautiful place of an unusual character and I have fond memories of the trips we did which were perfect for an evening.



Launching from the CDG diving platform



Above: The entrance adit

Left: Liz Winstanley and others at the old pump



*Underground photos by Dan Thorne
Surface photos by Tim Gibbs*

10th September 2023

I joined Martyn Farr, Rachel Smith and her friend Linda Windham for a photographic trip down Bridge Cave. Martyn is having a new caving book published in early summer that focuses on the beauty of caves and mines in the British Isles, so the purpose of the trip was to set up one shot from the actual bridge, looking upstream to the very large stream passage. Due to the noisy nature of the streamway, and the extended length of the passage being photographed, Martyn had brought along hand held radios to conduct photographic operations.

Progress through the cave to the large river passage was easy enough, and I had quite forgotten just how impressive the place is. Martyn climbing up onto the bridge near the sump and setting some high-powered LED lights certainly emphasised just how big and magnificent the streamway actually is, although trying to understand Martyn's instructions on the radios was made difficult due to the background roar of the streamway.

I think Martyn took six shots from up on the bridge, introducing subtle changes in lighting to get the desired effect. I tried freeloading some photographs with my hand held camera but was shooting into the light so my results were average at best. Martyn's photos however looked fantastic and will look great in the forthcoming book.

We moved from the streamway to look at the passage on the RHS which contains the waterfall. Rachel was the only one of us wearing a wetsuit, so she was suitably volunteered to stand under the full force of the fall whilst Martyn and I took some dramatic shots, with Rachel managing to keep smiling the whole time!

Martyn wanted a shot near the watery small passages leading back to the entrance and it was here that one of his LED lighting blocks slipped from my grasp and was swept quickly downstream. I gave chase and managed to rescue it and the light appeared to have not suffered at all from the ducking it received. Martyn regaled me with a story of a similar, recent incident when he had lost a light in the lake at Powell's Lode in Milwr Tunnel.

We exited the cave after about 3 hours and were left reflecting on what marvellous caving Bridge Cave provides. I can't wait to see Martyn's book when it is published.

Photos by Paul Tarrant



BRIDGE CAVE

by Paul Tarrant



Sunday School Progress

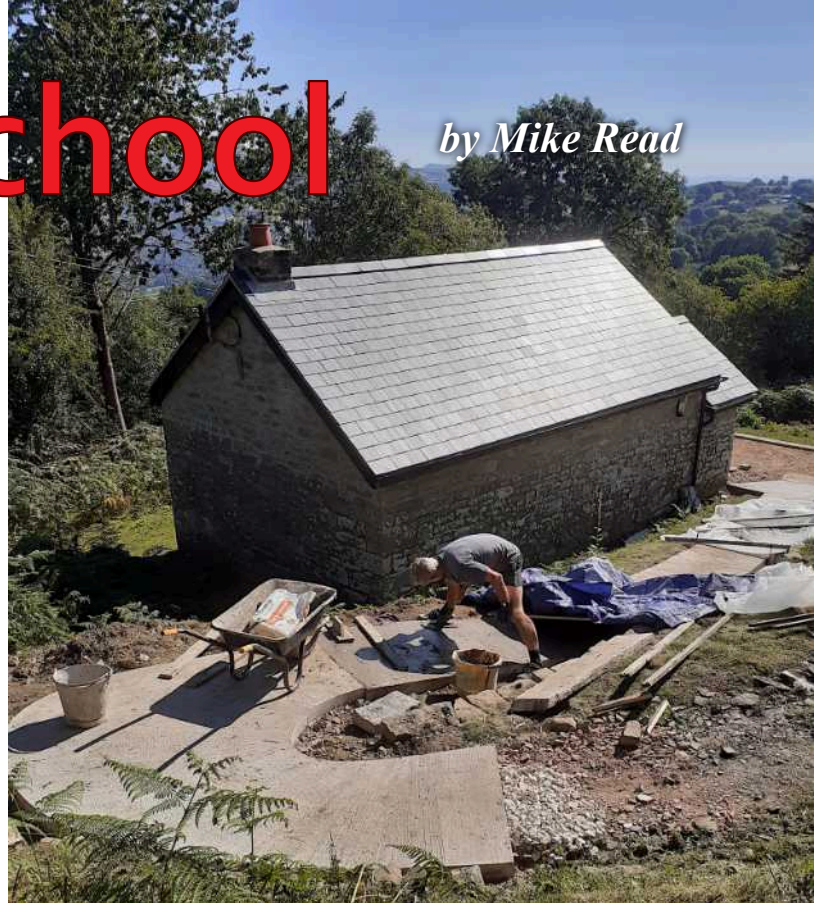
by Mike Read

Andy, John and myself had a few days working on the Sunday School in mid-October and managed to cast the last section of the switch-back path down to the patio area. We had to dig out some more at the top by the tramroad to avoid a nasty steep section for the last couple of metres. The local wildlife were keen to leave their mark despite our best endeavours to protect the concrete and left their footprints, identified as sheep, cat and what is believed to be a male Devon Homo sapien. This section was completed in cold and wet conditions unlike the earlier section in the summer heatwave. Previously we started very early to avoid the peak heat – this time we were limited by daylight and cold temperatures.

John has test driven the switch-back path with Helga, and I am pleased to report Helga was still in her wheelchair on reaching the bottom and John was able to push her back up the slope avoiding the need to take up residency in the Sunday School. Andy has yet to try and cycle up and down the path on his unicycle.

Andy has also been busy over the summer and we now have a splendid finished patio ready to relax on when the project is completed. I am sure the sheep will also enjoy the warmth the paving will bring. Adrian's bench now stands proudly on the patio.

Unfortunately, the flow test on the sprinkler system was lacking so we need to decide how best to proceed. Various options need to be investigated including pumped storage tank, larger diameter water mains connection; up-sizing the pipe from the tramroad or hoping the proposed upgrading of the water pipe up the hillside does the trick. An uprated stopcock and meter is the mostly likely solution.



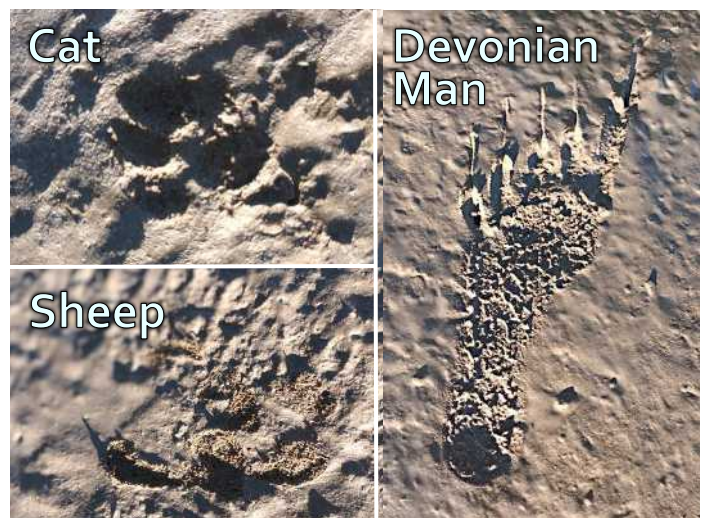
The nature of the work is now far more fiddly and time consuming. Even fitting the shower extractor has taken ages due to limited floor depth.

Tiling of the shower and toilet was completed in December but awaits grouting. The cutting operative was complaining about working conditions outside, but inside the log burner / heater were easily keeping the place cosy. The insulation really does make the place easy to get warm. Our grouting specialist (Andy) might make a visit during January.

Gary and Helen have made good progress with the electrics and are waiting for us to complete the shower so they can continue. Some of the sockets have been wired up, but you have got to be in the know as to which to plug into at the moment. All the lights are working, although the outside lights are too enthusiastic so we are looking at less sensitive PIR units.



Andy and John laying the concrete path



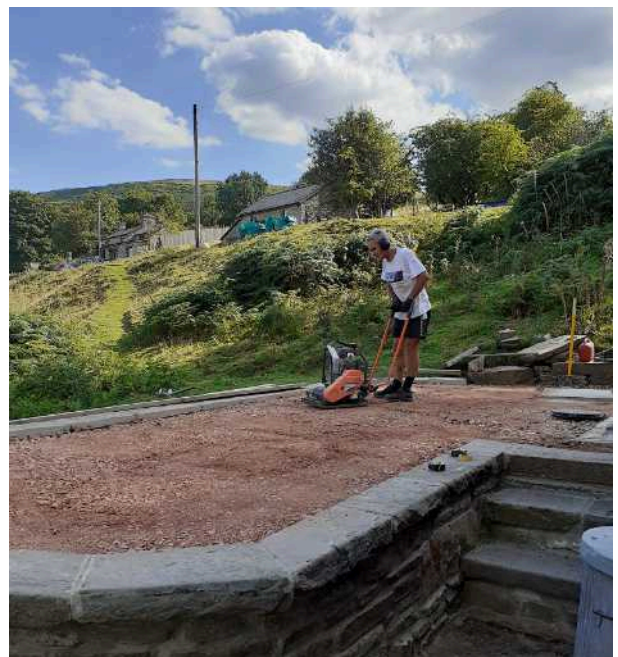
The animals that used the path before it had dried

The steps at the fireplace end have been installed after much discussion about angles and tread sizes. A basic mock-up of the furniture layout was constructed using anything to hand and a lot of imagination. It had been intended to have the steps on the outside of the mezzanine but concerns were raised about users under the influence of the odd tippie or two climbing the ladder and falling off. Having the ladder on the outside also meant there would be a gap in the balustrade. With a loft hatch arrangement, the less sober climber can't easily fall back once they've got partway through the hatch opening. Whilst the opening does reduce the floor area to potentially 3 bodies it does provide space for rucksacks. Bodies can also access the ladder without stepping over others. John set about attacking the ceiling and floor that Andy had just varnished. He did check for bats, pipes and cables first using his endoscope.

A straw poll of members gave a clear preference for a wooden spindle balustrade as opposed to solid ply or glass (expensive and limits air circulation). This needs to be 900mm high and reasonably robust to meet building regulations. There was no support for steel wire balustrade.

A decision will have to be made on the type of kitchen cupboards and worktop in the relatively near future. I have circulated a number of possible kitchen options to a number of members, which as always got lots of differing comments. There appears to be a general consensus to go for a laminated worktop, but with differing thoughts on how best to ensure good access to the shelves below. We will construct a mock-up and do our best to take on board as many of the comments as possible.

Clearly we are making progress and the jobs are getting slightly less messy. We even now have a front door mat!!! There is still plenty to do including finishing the electrics and lots of 2nd fix carpentry, plumbing and kitchen fitting. A final top coat of paint will be required on the walls and ceiling. Hopefully we will be inviting building control back before the summer for the completion check.



Compacting the patio base



The finished product complete with picnic bench



Mocking up the kitchen with cardboard and imagination



Completed hatch and ladder



Cutting the access hatch for the mezzanine level

Photos by Mike Read and Andy Heath

Wookey 24

by Alex Randall

Warden Trip

Back in November there was a post on UKCaving asking for volunteers to become wardens at Wookey Hole to lead caver trips to the sections found or accessible since the show cave blasted a tunnel through to Chamber 20, allowing dry diggers to get there.

Fast forward to the Sunday before Christmas, myself and the other would be wardens met local legend Duncan Price in Wookey at the unreasonable hour of 9am, so we'd be in the cave before the tourists. Most of the wardens had already visited the Land of Hope and Glory, so the target of this trip was to take the dry route to Wookey 24.

The route there is easy going through the show cave to Chamber 20, where a small path leads off the tourist route. This is mostly walking with some traversing over pleasant calcite slopes, with crawls over boulders. Past the turning for LoHaG we get to one of the highest points of the route, about 50m above the passages in 24, and not much more than that horizontally. The route descends steeply here, and is tight in places, but with gravity helping, progress is easy going. This ends as a rift which opens out to a climb down to Sting Corner in Wookey 24. Right takes you to static sumps leading to Wookey 23, and left to the River Ax, which can be followed upstream by swimming. Straight on and up a stemmed climb leads to a traverse (cowstails recommended) which offers a non swimming route to the upstream end of 24 and the diver's campsite.

While waiting for a Trangia to boil we went to explore. Upstream ends at a large lake, concealing the route to 25 under the surface. Here 'Uncle Duncan' had provided a dinghy to get a better look around. After I'd been for an enjoyable and uneventful voyage across the lake I returned the boat for the others to have a go. They decided to test the dinghy's two person rating, fortunately for those watching the extra draught caught a sharp bit of cave as they launched, promptly deflating and capsizing the pair of them into the cold water.

By now the water had boiled and certain people metaphorically scolded for sinking Duncan's boat (it cost him a whole £10), it was time to head out. A couple of us took the swimming option back to Sting Corner, to cool down in preparation for the return journey back to chamber 20. Against gravity on the way back this is much harder, sections that were slid down on the way become more than a touch awkward.

After regrouping at the top of the connection we made our way back to the now open show cave (no touching the tourists), and back to daylight.

Caver trips are available for both Wookey 24 and The Land of Hope and Glory. The 24 trip takes about 4 hrs, and the LoHaG about 2 hrs. Combining into one trip is possible, but generally best avoided as getting back from 24 is fairly strenuous. To request a trip either email myself (randall77@hotmail.co.uk) or the CSCC Conversation and Access Officer (canda@csc.org.uk). Party size limited to 6 plus the warden. I'll also be organising a trip as part of the CSS Mendip Weekend March 10th-12th. There are plans for a more durable inflatable conveyance to replace the boat.

Other CSS Wardens for Wookey Hole include Duncan Price, Connor Roe and Tom Williams.



Photos by Mike Moxon

CSS Annual Dinner

The Bear Hotel, Crickhowell

28th January 2023

This year's attendance at the Annual Dinner was the biggest for many years, an impressive 44. The dining hall was packed, and it was great to see the place buzzing with conversation. The food and veg arrived together, piping hot. Dan Thorne presented SMWCRT long-service awards to Adrian Fawcett and John Stevens. There was one for Stuart France, but he wasn't there to receive it. Then Matt Voysey gave an excellent 'slide show', a round-up of CSS activities during 2022. I think it was a very successful event.



by Joe Duxbury

Some of the diners enjoying their meals at The Bear

Cave Rescue Awards for CSS Members



by Paul Tarrant

Long Service Award and Distinguished Service Award certificates were given to CSS members by the South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team Chairman, Dan Thorne at the CSS Annual Dinner held recently at The Bear. John Stevens received a certificate for providing 25 years service to Cave Rescue, whilst Adrian Fawcett and Stuart France received certificates for 25 years service and also Distinguished Service Awards for Adrian's previous work with Gwent Cave Rescue Team and Stuart's work in developing the innovative France Phone. Paul Tarrant received a Long Service Award for 40 years service, and a Distinguished Award certificate for work done over a period of 49 years with Gwent CRT & SMWCRT. Paul's certificates were awarded to him at the recent SMWCRT AGM by the outgoing Chair and CSS member, Tom Foord.



John Stevens (above) and Adrian Fawcett (below) receiving their awards at the CSS Annual Dinner



Above: Paul Tarrant receiving his award (photo courtesy of SMWCRT)

Right: Stuart France was presented with his awards by Paul Tarrant on 'Whisky Appreciation Night' on the February Whitewalls Weekend

Photos by Matt Voysey

Remembering Arthur

by John Stevens

Arthur Thomas Millett
7/2/48 – 7/2/23

I first met Arthur the weekend I turned up to Whitewalls on spec on the 4th October 1986. The cottage was locked up, so I asked the neighbour at the end of the track if I was in the right place to find the cavers. Alan said that they drank in The Britannia on Friday nights, so off I went to see if I could find them. After getting a pint, I had a look around and tried to overhear the chat going on. I very quickly introduced myself to a table including several well-bearded folk. I got myself on a trip the following day with John Hunt, Simon Abbott and others to look at Cascade Inlet and Deep Water in Agen Allwedd. A fortnight later I was back and this time Arthur was looking for help to reduce some boulders in Aqueous Chokes, Daren Cilau. I squeezed into my old wetsuit and would have to get used to an electric lamp (having been a stinky user) as I followed Arthur through the entrance crawl and onwards. His knowledge of the cave and dig potential of the various passages he showed me that day was inspiring as I was more interested in digging and exploration than tourist caving. After Aqueous Chokes we moved on, and he showed me the White Company, Urchins and selenite crystals in Epocalypse. By then I thought this confounded electric light I had made was playing up and we exited.

We only really started caving together when the dig in Ogor ar Olygfa Braf became a long term Sunday project. John Cooper with his new Bosch drill made this dig possible but as it went further, the spoil removal became a problem. It was then that the railway from Channer's Dig (Ogor Gwaliau Gwynion) came to light during the club's 50th celebrations. It took a couple of months for Arthur to install the railway and transform the dig into something that was fun to operate. Last year Arthur and I had a look at it again and dug out some of the silt that was covering the track up. It has survived well, just some of the screws had rusted away and a few sleepers would require replacing. I was going to dig and widen one of the previously draughting rifts the line had crossed and we had backfilled. Arthur found the truck again and replaced the timber and greased the bearings, but we never got to restart the dig.

There were numerous other digs that Arthur was involved in, but I will only go through a few briefly.

Turkey Sump bypasses, Pwll y Gwynt, Northern Stream, Trident Passage, Shattered Passage (84 Series), Daren Cilau, OAOB, Rawhide Passage, OGG, Cnwc, Draenen... The



Arthur admiring helictites in Epocalypse Way, Daren Cilau

digging projects were quite spread out as well. In the 90s I was doing several digs with Geoff Newton and Arthur would join in on occasion.

Channer's Dig, which we now know as Ogor Gwaliau Gwynion, other than the work to get to the breakthrough point (which again was done by a main team of myself, Geoff Newton, John Cooper and Arthur), what I recall was after we broke through we had a very low calcite crawl to the end. Unfortunately Arthur's barrel chest was too large. He had several trips breaking the cauliflower calcite with a lump hammer on its side as there was

not enough room to swing it effectively. After this Geoff and I found a series of low passages, so a naming scheme accidentally evolved.

In Agen Allwedd, Copper Passage was found and dug mainly by Geoff, but with myself on many occasions. The final main dig was dug to a reasonable size as we had to pull the spoil by hand over 20m back (a rope had too many corners to go round). A final squeeze broke through to Porkies Paradise – a larger passage and chamber where the more rotund would be happy. An aven here was climbed to be named Pigs might Fly. The theme was set.

Pwll y Pasg, from Geoff Newton's article (*CSS Vol. 34, No. 5, p 61*):

22nd Feb 1992, GN, JS, AM. The main aim was to photograph and survey the extension. On learning about the discovery, Arthur invited himself along on the trip. Arthur was most welcome, both for his expertise in surveying and for the entertainment that was expected when his barrel chest encountered Koshier Passage (pork free). GN and JS ensured that they were ahead of AM on entering the extension and waited for the air to turn blue. They were not disappointed.

Whilst AM dug his way through the low section using the trowel provided, the others dug the end of Koshier Passage, gaining a short open section after about 3m. When AM was able to join the others a lunch break was called to enable him to regain his composure. The pleasant bit of Parsnip Palace and the Red Gate was then photographed and surveyed. Finally the Koshier Passage dig was pushed 3 or 4m further.

Ogor Cnwc, 2002. 44 trips in the connection year, 24 solo by Arthur. I made a short video of this dig, VHS (C) format which I later transferred and edited. The dig involved making the cave friendlier by removing a duck, so you could get to the dig face dry but still muddy. At first the draught was followed into a tight rift where blasting was the only option. Stuart France then redirected the effort by his radio location work. A full description is in *CSS Vol. 44, No. 12, pp 127-132*. Once Mike Read broke up through a calcite floor with a fist sized hole, we knew we would get through. Arthur did not mind Mike being the first one



Ogor ar Olygfa Braf

through as long as he was the first to exit the Daren Cilau crawl. Which he duly did. We then started digs in the Busman's area but no easy extensions towards Ogof Craig ar Ffynnon were found.

After I compiled the Llangattock Journal, it was a given that any surveying that was required, my name was on the short list to join Arthur. So we racked up survey trips to Maytime – Agen Allwedd, Dweebland – Daren Cilau, Carno Adit (almost the entire system), Pwll y Pasg, and finally Ogof Draenen.

Draenen – The statistics of the survey we did in Ogof Draenen do not really reflect the effort we put in. There are several very memorable trips we did. The stats for Arthur are 168 survey trips taking 1984 hours.

On the 3rd July 99, we started with just 3 survey legs to pick up a side passage off mainstream before moving to the next side passage. On route to this, Arthur slipped or the rock broke underfoot, causing him to fall on a rock pinnacle and then into the water. He quickly stood up but realised something was wrong. I thought he had winded himself but as he started stretching it was obvious he was in pain. We thought it may be a collar bone and a couple of ribs being broken as he was unable to lift one arm and raise his knee. This made climbing over boulder obstacles hard. As we progressed out of the cave, he surmounted one problem for me to inform him of the next one. By the time we approached the 4m rope climb, Arthur's language was very religious as he swore continually to push himself up the climbs and through the squeezes of the entrance series. Once out, I had to help him out of his caving gear as he was not going to have it cut off in A&E. At A&E we were asked when the fall happened, we said about 5 hours ago but it had taken us over 4 hours to get out of the cave. It was then a second opinion was called and a ruptured spleen a possible diagnosis, later confirmed with several large blood clots in his abdomen (two at 10cm diameter). He must have been approaching the blood loss when things start to go downhill rapidly. On visiting him in hospital, instead of grapes in his bedside cabinet he had tins of Guinness. He was caving again by the following weekend!

On a previous survey trip, 8th May 99, Paul Stacey got his foot broken. Another self-rescue from the far reaches of the Cantankerous Surveyors Series and trip to Nevill Hall Hospital. So by the time Arthur and Paul were back to strength, we went back to push some leads we still had going in the far north of Draenen. We had found several kilometres of passage off Baron von Carno area called the Red Baron. At the end of summer we found a static sump had dried up and we passed it into a large passage with a chamber we called Nevill Hall, after the hospital visits. On the second survey trip into this passage we were very lucky not to get sealed in by a very large flood pulse that hit the cave after some 81mm of rain in 24hrs. If Paul had not been so insistent that we got a move on, we could have been there for quite some time. The sump probably shut well inside an hour, maybe 15 minutes, it did not open for around 8 months! There were only four people who knew the way into the series and three would have been trapped, the fourth was out of the country. We did dig a bypass to the sump, but doing this from the inside without the drawn up survey would have been a challenge. But if the worst did happen, as a team we had the best chance of self rescue.

The passages in this area make it time wise the most remote area of Draenen. The loop around the sump bypass is half the length of the Daren Cilau entrance crawl but takes twice as long.

An advantage of surveying with Arthur is that we went to many new passages and we frequently were surveying down virgin passage. Because we leap-frogged the instrument and tape station, we kept swapping the lead to look down the new passage or peek round the next corner. In that way we first-footed many kilometres of passage. Exploring passage at the rate of the survey does mean that you look very carefully at what you have found and don't miss any leads that go off.

When we were digging Isles Inlet in Agen Allwedd, we had gone through a number of digs but the passage had just leapt ahead in the last couple of trips, so a large team descended for the following week. Arthur was in the dig ensuring it was of a suitable size, so when he broke through the dig became a crawl then a stoop until standing passage was reached. He called a halt so that every one was present. He asked if anyone had not first-footed some passage. Keith Pearson had not, so was put in the lead. He led the way under and passed some wonderful urchins and helictites to a point where calcite covered the floor. Arthur was given the lead back to make the route of least destruction as the ribbon of cavers progressed past many more formations. This was Trafalgar Passage and shows the generous and sharing side of Arthur.



The Hydra formation

The Hydra, Daren Cilau. This is a formation high on the wall of White Passage just downstream from the Crown Jewels. Arthur and I went in with camera kit plus a full set of bolting, SRT kit and a ladder so we could get close enough to photograph it. One bolt for me and the camera and another for Arthur and the flash gun. We came up with the name The Hydra as it looked like a colony of the small water creatures.

We have also found and named several other formations and passages. In Draenen, one of our early large finds was the Cantankerous Surveyors Series (CSS). Mike Read and I found this

and we debated whether we would tell Arthur that we had some good or bad news. We had found lots of new passage, good news, or bad news we needed several more surveying trips to this remote area. Within this we had the Geryon, again keeping the theme of Medusa. Geryon was the grandfather of Medusa, who had three bodies and heads.

The Courtesan in Agen Allwedd, a discovery made after some considerable effort in Isles Inlet. I was on holiday when Trafalgar passage was found on the 200th anniversary of the battle. Arthur had noted a small rift on the way in to the new find but had forgotten about it on the exit. I too had had a solo midweek trip to see this new find that was meant to be well decorated, which it was. So the following weekend we both had eyes on this rift, so we set off early, a third team member would follow on an hour later. At the rift, Arthur quickly inserted himself in and all I heard was a lot of huff and puffing, was his barrel chest getting the better of him? It then went silent. I thought he might back

out and give me a try, but no. Arthur just said "it's a camera job". Do you want conservation tape and your lunch box as well? So I entered with boxes pushed in front of me, so I could not see much ahead. I somersaulted out of the rift and found myself in a very well-decorated chamber. We set about taping it, to minimise future damage, then sat down to eat, Arthur with his trademark doorstep sandwiches. Our third party member then found us after a few yells got him into the side passage. He was not lost for words, but they were mostly expletives. And there were the two of us with grins like Cheshire cats casually eating our sandwiches.

One of these formations we had found warranted a name. We would like to keep the Trafalgar theme. If it had been a formation from floor to ceiling, then Nelsons Column would have been an easy choice, but this had a large stalagmite at the base and a stalactite adorned with numerous fine white helictites. So Admiral Nelson and Lady Hamilton was a starting point, but too long. So The Admiral and Lady or Lady and Admiral, both these just didn't run off the tongue. Later in the week, Arthur rang me with a suggestion, not quite true to Lady Hamilton, but the term was good and unique. So we now have The Courtesan, a destination point for many cavers to visit. A few will know how it got its name, but to me it's a bit of Arthur that will go on and to remember him by.

Sarah MacDonald Rescue – 29th Dec 91 from just beyond the Restaurant in Daren Cilau.

Arthur was caving with Sarah, when on a small climb before the pitch down to the far reaches, she dislocated her shoulder. Arthur quickly took charge and put her shoulder back in before they returned to the Restaurant for her to recover and organise. Arthur meanwhile caved back to Hard Rock to inform the party there of the situation. This party would then spend the night digging out all the squeezes in the Hard Rock Cruise. Arthur continued out to raise the alarm and set the cave rescue into operation. It had taken him just four hours from leaving the Restaurant to exit the cave. I went back in with Arthur and many others to rig the pitches for the stretcher haul up the 70 and down the 65. We then exited with Sarah after a further 14hrs caving, myself doing the entrance series in reverse as I was pulling Sarah with a sling face to face. Someone else had to stop me moving towards Sarah by holding my legs or just standing on me,



Arthur and The Courtesan

while someone else pushed on her feet. We did have one memorable moment when someone opened a hip flask and the smell reached us. It was deemed that Sarah needed some for medicinal purposes, but a sip was removed by everyone as it passed by.

Gonzo produced some fine artwork in 93 and a character called Konrad Vresku. He ended up on some mugs, to help promote some cave rescue events. Can't think who it caricatured...

Arthur was CSS Chairman from 1992 to 1999 for 7 years and Whitewalls Warden from 1975 to 1994 (19 years). Before I joined the club he had already installed the gas central heating to replace a pot bellied stove. He had a card system to tally up how much you owed, but did not chase you too hard to clear your debt. It was a bit of a game to see if my tally was higher than someone else. I replaced it with an envelope and fees box system when I became warden.

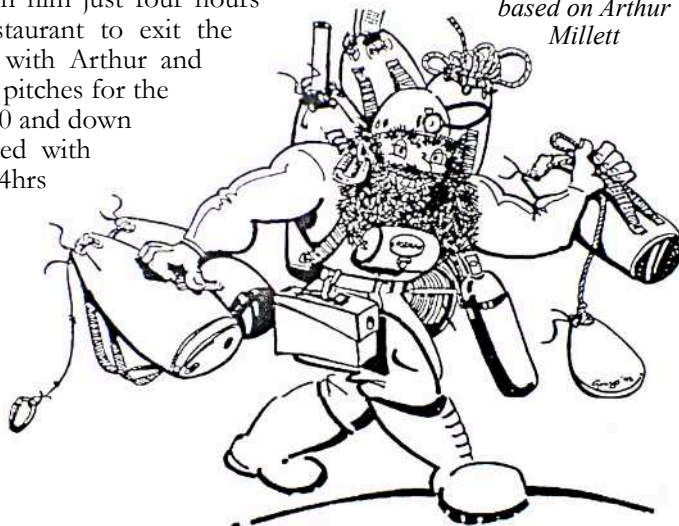
When the library was being constructed we first dug out two parking spaces, a requirement from the planning authority. Arthur was a good dry stone waller as proved by the condition of the walls and steps into the garden. The tank side wall, I suggested we put a curve on it to help turning into it. Arthur then quickly created a forma from blue plastic pipe to build the wall up to. We even put some foot holds to give an option to climb on top (not much use coming down). We spent many weekends with him putting the steel into the base and walls and cutting back the bedrock in foul weather. In summer with the better weather he was good at block and timber work, insisting things were level and vertical to utmost precision.



KonRad Vresku by Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley, a character based on Arthur Millett



Arthur and Mike working on the library construction



Reflections on a cantankerous surveyor

by Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley

My first visit to Whitewalls was in the mid 70s. We were greeted by an exuberant, friendly, pocket-sized Brian Blessed of a character who went out of his way to make us welcome and suggested suitable caving trips for our rag-tag, novice-heavy crew before drinking us under the table with consummate ease.

Over the next few years Arthur and I became firm friends, enjoying some great caving together in the Dachstein, Ireland, Mendip and, of course, his beloved Llangattock. He was a demanding character who pushed himself to his considerable limits in everything that he did, and demanded no less from those around him. I recall his terse response to my suggestion that, as it was well past midnight and we'd been caving all day, we might suspend the survey of the Ankle Grinder Bypass and avail ourselves of a good curry and fine libations at the Restaurant at the End of the Universe; needless to say we carried on surveying!

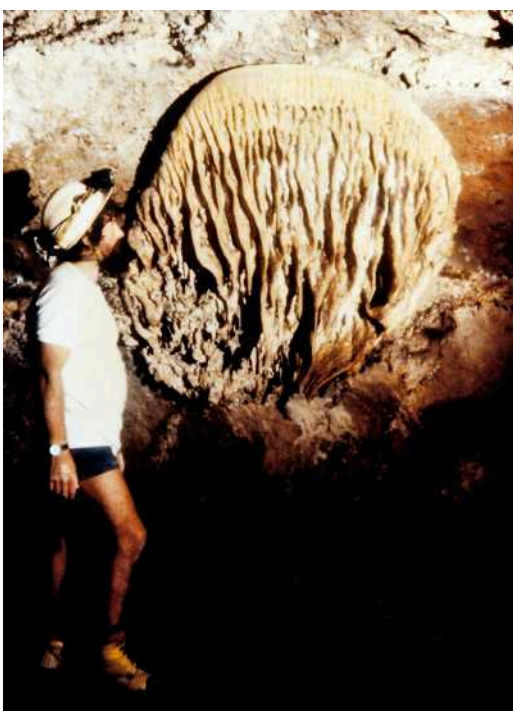
Arthur was a jovial character, a great raconteur with a mischievous glint in his eye, and convivial company. He was also a plain speaker and delighted in being dismissive of braggarts; a boastful claim of having done the entrance crawl in 30 minutes would be met with derisive laughter and his recollection of the time that he did it in 20... with an Oldham lamp strapped to his waist... and a tackle bag.

Arthur's tenacity and indomitable spirit (plus the fact that he possessed one of the few bang licences in CSS!) also made him a formidable asset for the club's diggers and his efforts have contributed more than most to our knowledge of what lies beneath Llangattock mountain.

Sadly, the bloody-minded self-belief and determination that made Arthur such a great caver brought him into confrontation with others and contributed to the sorry state of affairs (no doubt covered at length elsewhere) that blighted the last few years of his life. He'll be missed by many and, as you read this, he is probably arguing with Moses about the accuracy of the Ten Commandments and telling Noah that his design for the Ark wasn't up to much.



Arthur featuring in a cartoon strip from the mid-80s of exploits in Daren Cilau drawn by Gonzo



Arthur on expedition in the Soviet Union

by Joe Duxbury

Arthur was one of the Chelsea team to visit Soviet Central Asia as part of the 'Kugitang 90' expedition. In Turkmenistan we camped by a waterhole called Kainar Bobo. After one night's drinking session, most of us had gone to bed, but Arthur stayed up and got into a discussion with our Soviet hosts about the different political systems we lived under. He was obviously asked why the Queen wasn't more dominant, so Arthur explained, in his loud Welsh accent, that, as constitutional monarch, she had **'No power! No power!'** He ignored all requests to shut up and let the rest of us sleep!

Arthur Millett in Kap Kotan - Photo by Joe Duxbury

Agen Allwedd

Midnight Passage Dig Update

by Andy Heath

In the last newsletter I was pleased to report a small discovery above Midnight Passage in Agen Allwedd dubbed Spider Chamber. It would be nice to say I can now report further discoveries. Unfortunately that's not the case (yet), but the dig is progressing well.

Monday 3rd December 2022 - John Stevens, Peter Smith, Matt Voysey and Andy Heath.

Whilst John and Andy started the survey, Matt and Peter commenced digging the most likely way on. Following a low airspace, Matt wormholed his way for around four metres or so where he reached a small 'aven' where he could stand up. The dig was duly enlarged to enable those of normal proportions to reach the same point. Looking ahead at floor level, the passage continued at least another four metres or so. We also enlarged the original breakthrough point, though it's still reasonably constricted.

Friday 28th December - John, Josh Heath and Andy

The passage dug on our last visit was further enlarged to sensible dimensions. The fill mainly comprises several inches of clay overlying loose dry sand. Forward progress was hampered by an annoyingly large boulder in the floor.

Monday 23rd January 2023 - John and Andy

Assisted by plug & feathers, the boulder was dismantled and removed. A further metre was dug before a second boulder halted progress.

Saturday 28th January - Matt and Andy

With recharged batteries, the second boulder was duly dispatched. The way on looked encouraging; another four metres or so to what looked like a corner.

Thursday 9th February - Mike Read and Andy

Dug as far as the corner; the first few metres to sensible proportions, the last bit wormholed. Passage width was disappointing. Sensible forward progress would necessitate quite a bit of rock removal. Peering around the corner however raised our hopes again; the passage appears to enlarge (still small though).

Saturday 25th February - John and Andy

Returned with the appropriate equipment for passage widening. Three batteries and two drill bits later and we're now possibly one trip away from getting round the corner.

To be continued...

Midnight Passage

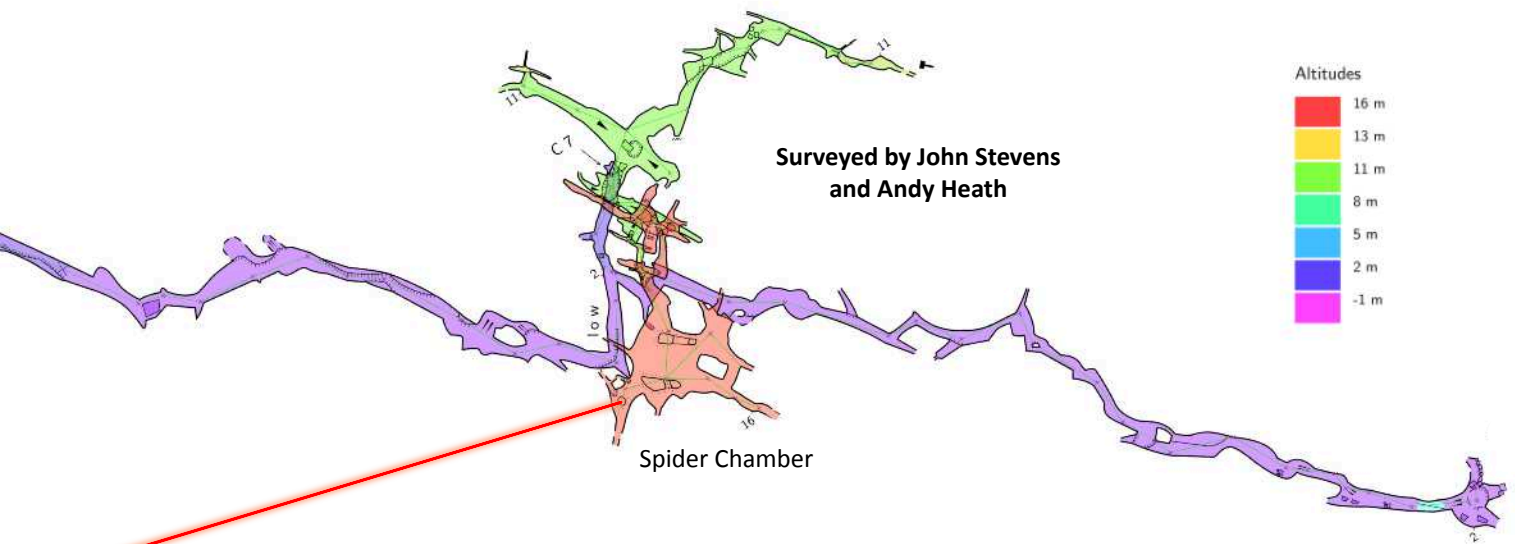


Top: John surveying Spider Chamber

Below: Andy and a pile of split boulders

Bottom Left: Plug and feathering the obstructing boulders

Bottom Right: Mike peering round the corner into the unknown



CSS MEETS 2023

Paris Oomadath, our new Meets Secretary, would appreciate feedback and trip suggestions for the meets list below. So if there's anywhere in particular you would like to go, drop her a line to let her know. You can do this either by email at cssadmin@chelseaspelaeo.org using the reference **Attention: Meets Secretary** or via the new WhatsApp group. All members should have been sent the link to join this group already, but if you haven't received this, check out the members' facebook page or contact Paris.

April 7th-10th – Easter Whitewalls Weekend

Search for the Easter Bunny. Caving trips and activities to be confirmed. Contact Paris for further details.

May 5th-8th (Bank Holiday) – Whitewalls Weekend

Trips to be decided, but with plenty of caving options and other activities available there should be something for everyone. Stuart has offered to cook a Beef Goulash and organise a wine tasting evening on Sunday, please confirm with Stuart if you would like food.

May 27th-29th – North Wales Meet (TBC)

A Bank Holiday weekend of mine exploration in North Wales with trips provided by UCET. Possible trips include Cwmorthin Slate Mine, Milwr Tunnel and Rhyd Alyn Mine. Please confirm with Paris if you'd like to attend this meet.

June 23rd-25th – Whitewalls Summer BBQ

Adrian will be supplying a barrel of free beer so we can all celebrate his 60th birthday. Caving trips followed by flames and food in the Whitewalls garden. As usual BBQ accompaniments including buns, salad, spuds, sauces will be provided (for a small fee). Just bring your own meat/veggie lumps to cook on the BBQ.

July 28th-30th – Yorkshire Weekend

Trips and caving hut TBD. Contact Adrian for further information about this meet.

August 26th-28th – (Bank Holiday) Whitewalls (TBC)

A family friendly weekend with camping and activities for kids and adults alike. (Note: this event may be changed to an alternative date, contact Paris for more information on this meet).

September – Hidden Earth

Date and venue yet to be announced.

October 20th-27th – Italian Dolomites (TBC)

A week in Trieste, Italy. Paris is organising this meet and knows the area well. Activities to be decided. Please let Paris know if you'd like to come along, the date may be changed if there is a preferred alternative.

November 3rd-5th – Whitewalls Bonfire Weekend

Paul Tarrant will be providing a barrel of free beer for us all to celebrate his 50th anniversary of caving. As usual there'll be a huge bonfire to enjoy and everyone should bring one big firework to add to the display. A feast of dinners and puddings will be provided for a small fee.

December 1st-3rd – 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. Caving trips to be decided.

December 23rd-26th – Whitewalls Weekend

Christmas caving weekend - Searching for Santa!

December 31st-January 2nd – New Years Eve Party at Whitewalls

Regular Wednesday evening trips are also being organised via the WhatsApp group.

Additional trips may be added during the year, so check out the CSS website, and members only WhatsApp group, ProBoards and Facebook page for updates.

TRIBUTE TO DAVE A. DADLEY

by Pat Cornelius (née Browne)

Dave Dadley already had an interest in things underground when he went to university and he immediately founded the Cardiff University Caving Club. Later the members joined Nigel Clarke and others from Newport to form the Llangattwg Caving Group, based on the Llangattock hillside – setting out to explore known caves. Their first base was an agricultural outbuilding, best described according to Nigel Clarke as the pig sty. Later, in July 1964, they rented a barn for 5/- a month. When asked about the club constitution, Dave was said to have replied “what constitution?”, rather preferring that the group was most akin to an anarchic syndicate commune à la Monty Python.

In 1961, at the start of his Ph.D, Dave acquired an explosives licence, showing he was already interested in “energetic materials”. I can attest to the effect a couple of ounces has on a large boulder. Dave became the go-to man when a cave passage needed a little chemical widening or a boulder removing. One of our members, Brian Plimmer, says he remembers Dave distinctly over one experience with him. He says, “We were in a boulder choke and Dave had to blow a way through. Anyway, I had to retreat to a safe distance and was just going through what one could describe as a U-bend when the shock wave hit me and propelled me through the U-bend – no toilet brush required!”

In 1961 Dave had also joined CSS as an associate member and when the club later took on an old ruin in September 1964, land behind and at the side of the cottage was cleared, and an estimated 65 cubic yards of soil and boulders was shifted. The necessary explosive skills for removing unwanted stone from a quarry to the left and rear of the cottage were provided by Dave. In order to help keep the anxious next-door neighbour happy, plenty of earth was packed as tamping on the biggest charge. Of course, the thump brought the neighbour running out, but he was pacified when he saw his walls were intact and unmarked. What he didn't notice, for Dave kept his eyes averted, was the profuse covering of soil which the roof had sustained. However, the plentiful Welsh rain soon dispersed the evidence.

Dave took part in different exploratory trips in Aggie. In 1960, a group of Cardiff University cavers led by Dave discovered Erse Passage – containing a large impressive chamber some 12m in diameter.

In 1961 and 62, Dave took part in exploration in another part of the cave looking at high-level passages. To aid this, a maypole was put together using scaffolding poles. For some months Dave had been constructing the longest maypole in Britain at 50ft in length. Failed attempts to erect the super maypole and get a man to the roof of the chamber resulted in the proposed attempt becoming known as ‘Dadley’s Dilemma’. Help came from CSS members to adapt the maypole, but the trip had to be aborted due to a high volume of water and Dave then lost interest.

There are several cave entrances in the Llangattock quarries. After a low cave entrance with a strong draught, called Ogof Pen Eryr, had been abandoned by previous explorers, Dave and others used explosive to remove a large boulder and a conveyor system was installed to remove spoil and extend the passage by 160m. Over 22 months during 1963-5, 60 lbs of explosives and 120 detonators were used. Following a successful breakthrough to reach almost the known end of the cave today, the team finally gave up when they were unable to locate a satisfactory end draught to continue following. There were several other digs between 1963 and 1968 where Dave also cheerfully used his celebrated pyrotechnics.

After I had been on a trip into Dan-yr-Ogof, a cave in the Black Mountains further into Wales, Dave said to me that there was a small passage there that he would like me to try. We never did get there together to do this, but this was the Long Crawl and the entrance route to the large beautifully decorated cave extension, reached by Eileen Davies – yet Dave had appreciated its potential.

One of the CSS members, Bruce Bedford, later founding editor of the major caving publication *Descent* and playwright for BBC radio, organised an expedition to the Slovenia area of what was then Yugoslavia. This was to explore a pothole near the top of Slovenia's highest mountain in the Julian Alps – Mount Triglav – over 9,000ft in height. The potential was for the world record for depth between the entrance on the mountainside and the river resurgence in the valley. Dave was one of the expedition members and part of the support team. Unfortunately, the pothole was ultimately blocked by ice.

Dave took part in many CSS trips and digs. His own special dig was Pen Eryr which has yet to be finally extended but would link up with the vast cave system of Daren Cilau that has since been found beneath Llangattock Mountain.

I think I first met Diana, Dave's wife, after she and Dave married, when they spent their first night on the dining room floor of a flat which I rented in Holloway on their way to their honeymoon destination. That flat seemed to be a magnet for cavers especially from Australia after one of our CSS members, Julia James, who had shared the flat with me, emigrated there and we often used our dining room as a dormitory.

When my husband, Paul, and I found that Diana and Dave were living in Sevenoaks, only about ten miles away, we started to keep in touch. Not frequently, especially when we had health and family issues, but we were distant neighbours nevertheless.

We will miss Dave and his past enthusiasm for caving and life, but we have our memories and he will live on in those.

N.B. Much of the caving detail has been provided by Clive Gardener who is writing a book about the caving and industry of the Llangattock area.

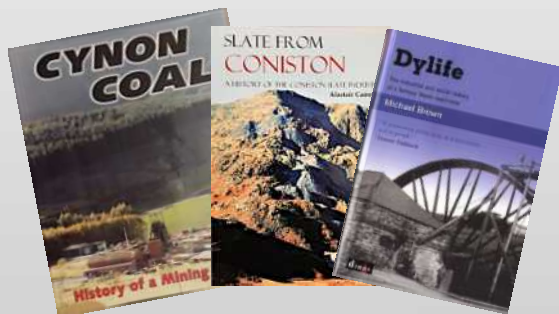
New Library Acquisitions

by Paul Tarrant

Duncan Price has generously donated several of his caving books to the club library which should prove interesting reading for club members. There are 3 books published after the Thai Cave Rescue providing differing perspectives on the incident. Many thanks Duncan!



The 3 books shown on the left are mining books which have been donated. A friend from another club kindly donated Slate from Coniston, whilst Cynon Coal and Dylife are books on coal and lead mining in Wales, with the former being a bargain obtained from my local Oxfam shop in Swansea, and the Dylife book is surplus to my requirement.

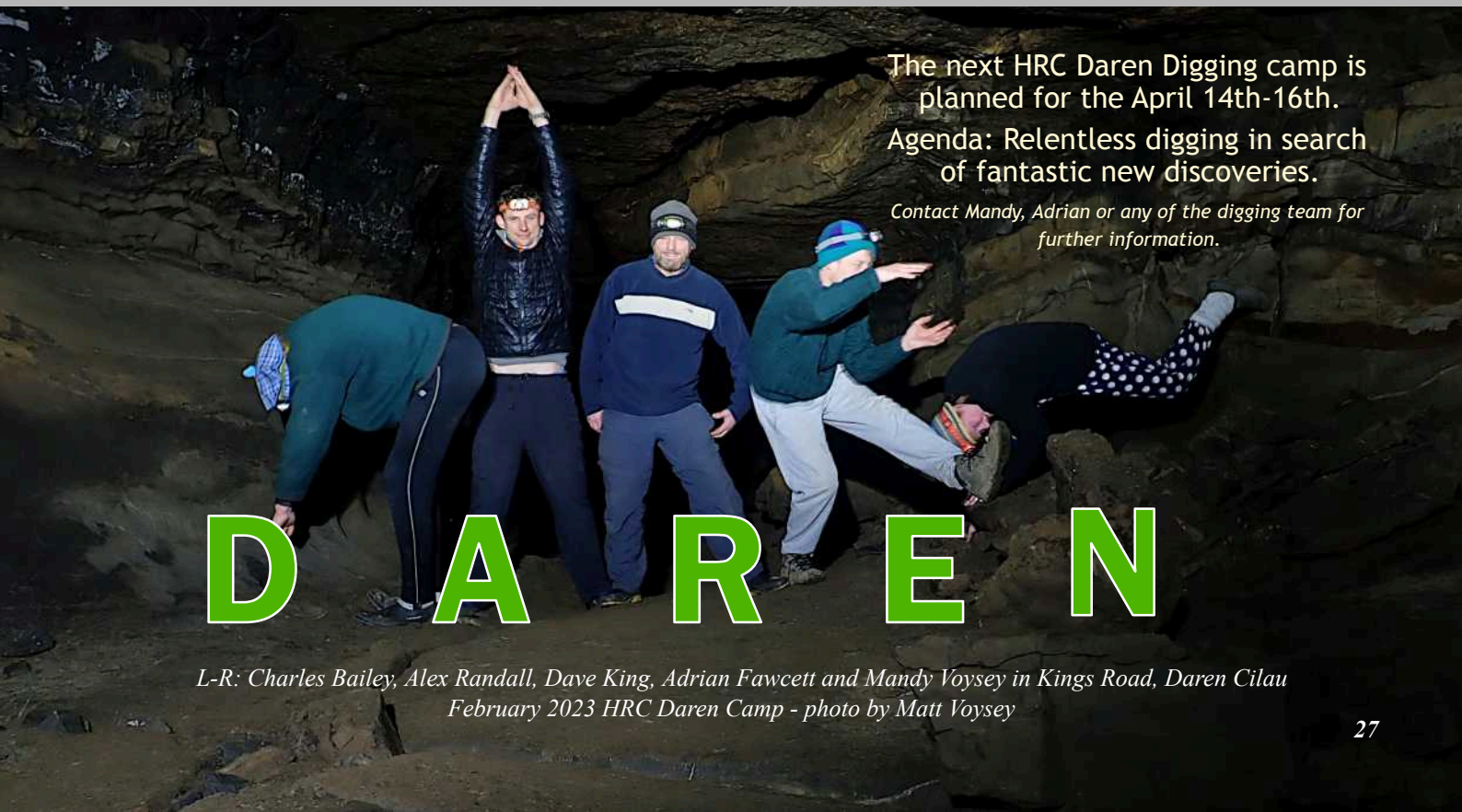
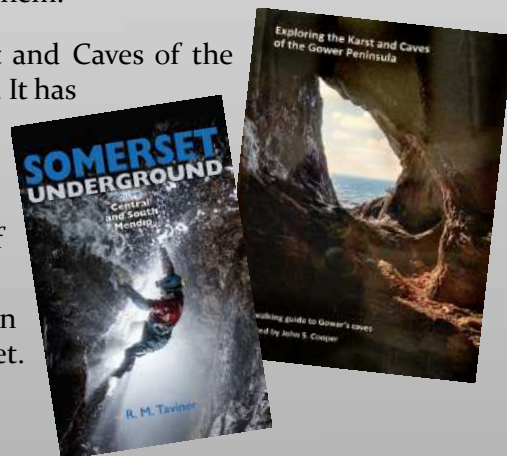


The books donated still need to be catalogued before being put out on the shelves for loan, but if you can't wait to read one, email me and I shall let you know where you can find them.

The BCRA have just launched their new book 'Exploring the Karst and Caves of the Gower Peninsula – A Walking Guide to Gower's Caves' by John S. Cooper. It has been bought for the library and should whet anyone's appetite for a trip in the recently re-opened Llethryd Swallet.

The book is a welcome addition to the series of excellent little booklets that the BCRA have produced over the last 20 years on a broad range of cave related topics. They are all stored in cupboard 1 of the library.

Another new addition is Somerset Underground Volume 3, the third in a four part series covering all known caves and karst features of Somerset. This volume details the sites of Central and South Mendip.



The next HRC Daren Digging camp is planned for the April 14th-16th.

Agenda: Relentless digging in search of fantastic new discoveries.

Contact Mandy, Adrian or any of the digging team for further information.

DAREN

L-R: Charles Bailey, Alex Randall, Dave King, Adrian Fawcett and Mandy Voysey in Kings Road, Daren Cilau February 2023 HRC Daren Camp - photo by Matt Voysey

