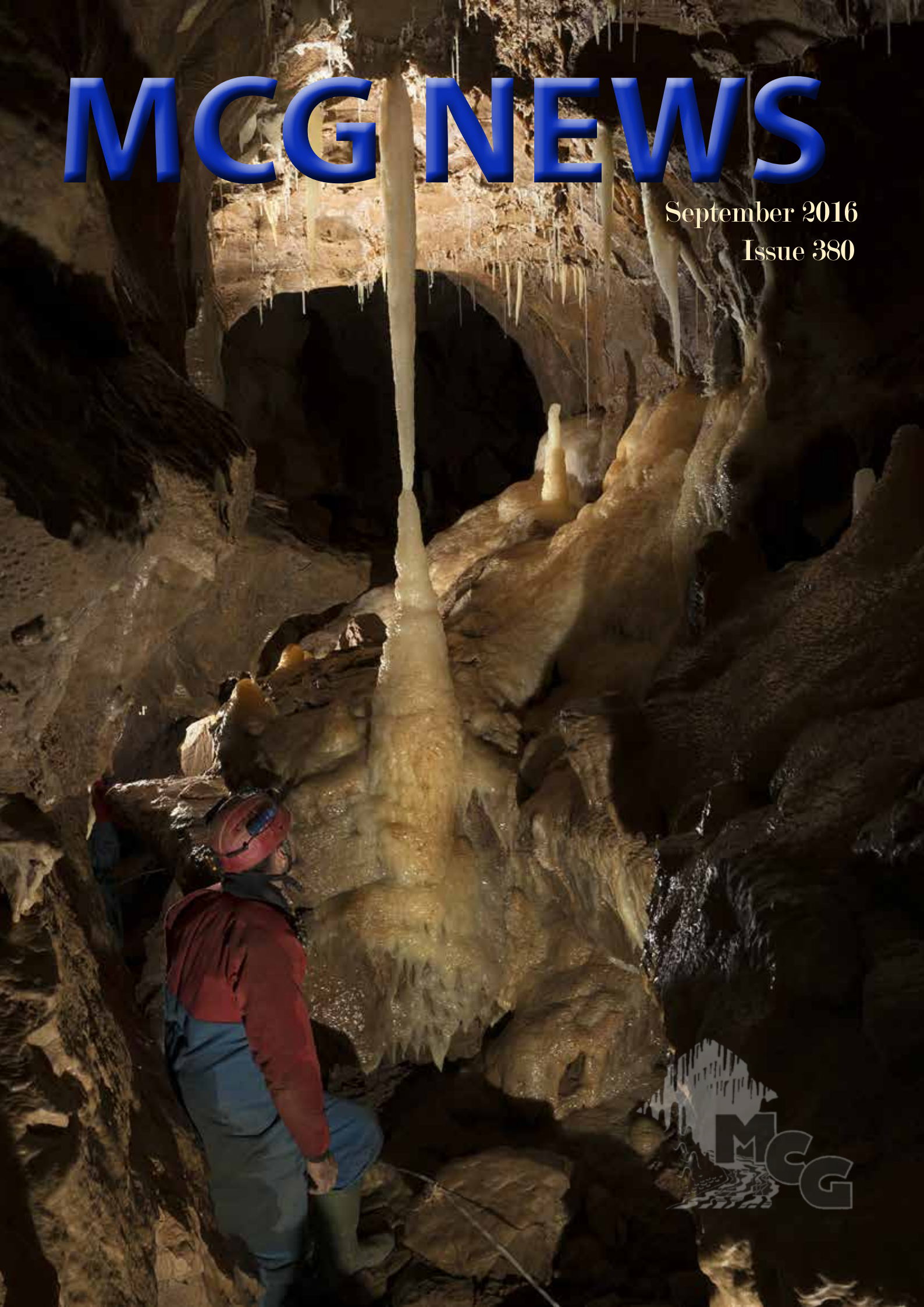


MCG NEWS

September 2016

Issue 380



Summer 2016



Bull Pot of the Witches
"Timotei" by Tom Harrison

I hope this newsletter finds you well and having enjoyed a sunny summer.

From the look of the photos I have seen, there have been some interesting caving trips, some progress made on the MCG dig sites, and

ON THE COVER:

Photo: Shatter Cave Montage 3
by Andrew Horeckyj
People: Dan Matthews



some entertaining social events at the cottage.

The MCG were well represented at Eurospeleo in Yorkshire, where we enjoyed some glorious sunshine while not underground. The weather was so good in fact that it was hard to go underground, especially with all your kit on. Some of the group found it a little too warm..... Cooling off in the water also helped, see above.

As the dig at Sandford Hill gets deeper, with some interesting metallic discoveries made, I have been researching the history of Pearl Mine. I hope it will help to give us an idea of what should lie ahead. Earlier in the year, Ed Waters and Hayley Clark went to the symposium on Volcanic Caves, in Hawaii! Ed took some wonderful photos and has given a flavour of the trip in his

fascinating article. Hawaii also provided the inspiration for the member's weekend in August.

Lots of news to cover, including Karen's resignation from the committee. This is a vital role, so well-filled by Karen. Please give some thought as to whether you might be able to step up and fill this position for the group.

A brief summary of the AGM and a celebration of this year's important events complete this issue. Happy reading!

Tom Harrison

Thanks to Ed Waters, Tony Knibbs, Andrew Horeckyj, Kev Speight, Léonie Woodward Dan Matthews and Kay Eyeington for their contributions and also to Charlie Allison, Pat Cronin, Mark Burkey, Bill Chadwick and the MRCA for their photos.

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It is emailed free to all members of the group who have provided a working email address on their membership form. If you are not receiving the Newsletter then please contact the editor.

It is also sent to all those other caving clubs, groups and societies who the MCG have an active Newsletter exchange with, If you wish to join our exchange, then please get in touch.

The Newsletter is also made available online, approximately 1 year after publication. See www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

The newsletter is usually produced 3 or 4 times a year, but this is dependant on the amount of content the editor gets. All contributions are gratefully received.

The MCG Update is a seperate publication to keep members up-to-date with news and events in between newsletters.

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The current MCG Committee is composed of the following members:

Secretary Brian Snell
secretary@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Treasurer Vacant
treasurer@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Social Secretaries Ed Waters&Hayley Clark
social@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Cottage Warden Keith Knight
warden@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Caving Secretary David Loss
caving@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Editor Tom Harrison
editor@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Tackle Master Russ Porter
tackle@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Librarian/Recorder Lisa Gibson
recorder@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

The following MCG members fill the non-committee posts

Rescue Warden: Henry Davies-Ball -
rescue@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Conservation & Access Officer: Vacant
Accounts examiners: Sue Fennel and Linda Milne - examiners@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

New Members Welcome
For Joining Enquiries Please Contact
secretary@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

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NEWS

Treasurer Resignation



It is with regret that I have to report that Karen Fendley has resigned as treasurer of the MCG. Karen has been Treasurer since 2012, having taken over from Sue Fennel. She has worked very hard, not only as treasurer, but as an active member of the committee, helping to organise many of the events and functions we have all enjoyed and doing a lot 'behind the scenes' to ensure the smooth running of the club. On behalf of the other members of the committee, and of the group, I want to say thank you to Karen for all she has done.

As Karen writes in her resignation email published below, it is vitally important that we get a new treasurer in place as soon as possible, so if you feel that you might be able to fill this vacancy then please contact a committee member!

"I would like to inform the membership that I am resigning with immediate effect from the role of Treasurer. It has been an enjoyable few years but now, due to family situations and work restrictions, I do not feel that I can give the role the time and importance it deserves. I am very aware that I have not been able to progress items recently that should have

been cleared and for that I offer my sincere apologies to both the Committee and the membership. I raised this at the recent Committee meeting and all were in favour of this move.

I would like to invite anyone in the membership to come forward to maintain this most important role. Without a Treasurer, the Charity cannot perform its proper functions and so it is important that this role is re-filled quickly. I obviously feel dreadful resigning in this way but if it is not done this way, no-one comes forward!!

As is always the case in clubs and such like, most of the work is done by the few. Now is the turn for one of the many newer members of the club to offer their services!

It has been a great few years and I thank all those who have been on the committee with me over those years. We have seen some big changes and I know there are yet more to come. It is an exciting time for the club and I think the current committee members are the best there have been yet. All are enthusiastic as both cavers and committee members.

I am happy to talk personally to anyone wishing to take on this role and will obviously help with the transition as best as I can.

Best Regards,
Karen"

How safe is your Croll?

Ed Waters recently brought to our attention an issue with the latest version of the Petzl Croll.

"For those who indulge in the subterranean dangling that we call SRT,.... there is growing concern that the new (2013) model Petzl Croll has a dangerous design fault that you may wish to make yourself aware of.

The 2013 model of this ubiquitous chest ascender is much smaller than older ones, and crucially it incorporates a thin stainless steel "wear plate" in the channel where the rope runs and is trapped by the cam. The problem, now reported by several different users, is that this that erosion of the wear plate in use eventually

leads to perforation of the plate, this perforation results in a razor sharp edge that slices alarmingly into the rope (that you are dangling on). As yet no one seems to have actually severed the rope, but even so this results in the croll being jammed on the rope. One UK caver described this happening 60m up a pitch, and the only

way of getting out of the situation being to disconnect the croll from his harness. As this would involve undoing the central connector on the harness this must have been a gusset darkening experience (would you agree Biff?).

This issue was raised several months ago by Simon Wilson who described the circumstances on UK Caving. In turn Simon contacted Petzl who claimed that the fault was caused by not retiring the unit at the appropriate time. Simon has written an excellent article about the 2013 croll which highlights the fact that it is impossible to assess the state of wear of the stainless steel plate until it

actually perforates, and this can happen very quickly.

On Thursday a post was made public on Facebook (<https://m.facebook.com/paul.debie.18/albums/10153734872318639/>) showing another example of this sort of failure during a French expedition. This occurred on brand new units after 1200m or less of prussiking – this would equate to 10 or less Dales caving trips in the UK. This in turn has led to further discussion on UK Caving about the safety of the Croll and Petzl's attitude to reporting of the problem (<https://m.facebook.com/paul.debie.18/albums/10153734872318639/>). It is

also being reported that the teeth on the cam of the 2013 Croll and Basic ascenders is also wearing extremely quickly and leading to slippage after a working life far shorter than the models they have replaced.

At present Petzl claim there is no issue, however I thought it was important that MCG members were made aware of these reports and had the opportunity to look at some of the issues before making up their own mind about whether to use this piece of equipment.

Happy 80th Birthday Tony Knibbs

Our longest serving and one of our best loved members celebrated his 80th birthday a few months ago. After a blossoming interest in caving in the early 1950s, Tony would visit Mendip and stay in Albert Maine's Barn on Manor Farm, Priddy Green. Here the founder members of the MCG, led by Malcolm Cotter, all met, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Denise and Tony Knibbs now live in France and Tony has kindly provided permission to publish his caving diaries. See pages 28 to 30 for the first part of these.

Happy Birthday Tony from the Mendip Caving Group!

Tony Knibbs at the MCG 60th
Photo by Bernard Reeves



Charnel Shaft - An earlier explorer?

Charnel Shaft was an open shaft first discovered in heavy snow by Tony Knibbs in 1963 then subsequently lost again after it was covered over for safety.

It was named Charnel Shaft due to the decaying cow carcasses at the bottom of the shaft. When it was discovered, it had a strong draught and has been searched for on many occasions since.

Charnel Passage in Upper Flood is so named as it is believed to be directly beneath the reported location of Charnel Shaft. Perhaps the

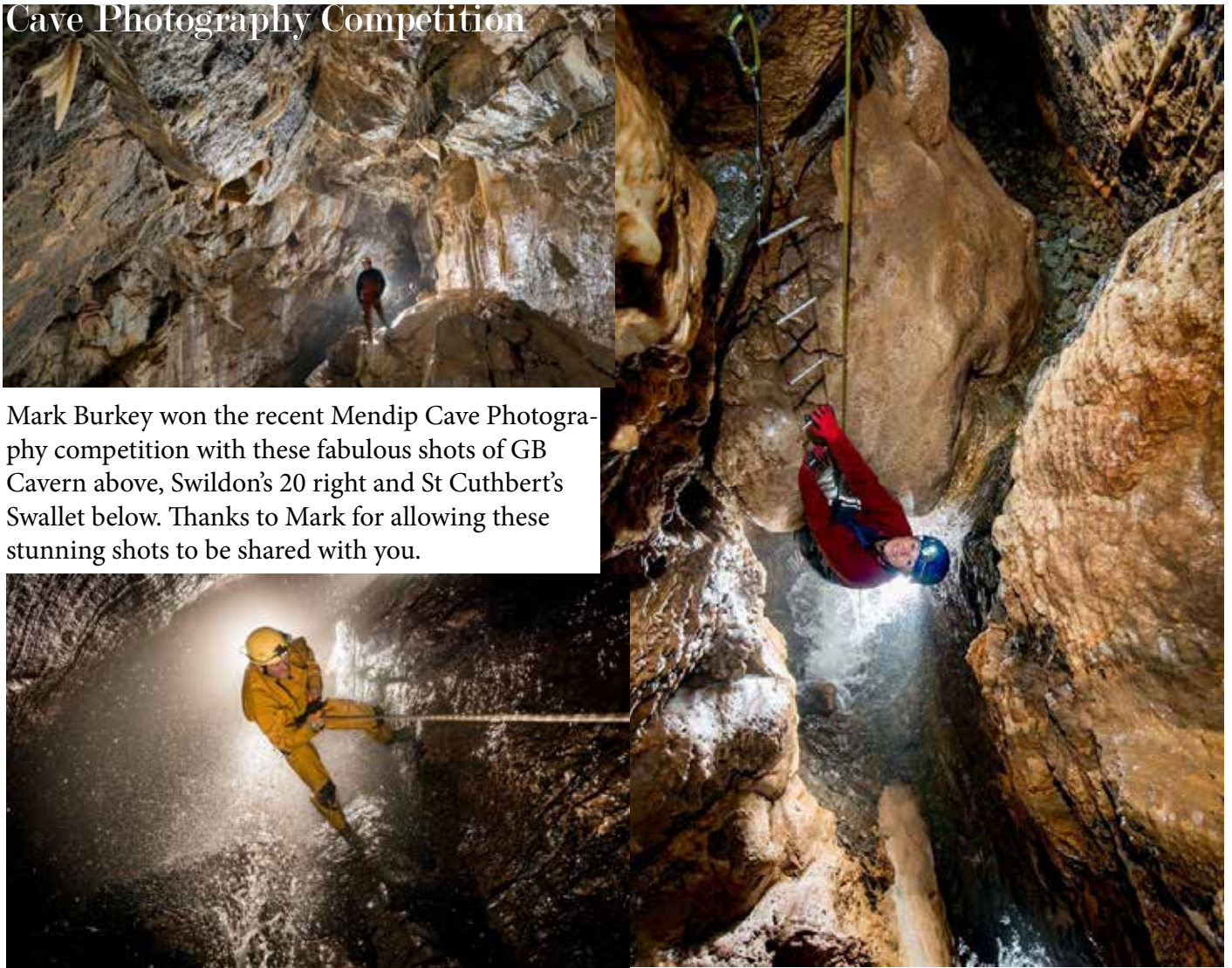
draught in Charnel is from somewhere in Upper Flood, one of the reasons why many have searched for it since it was found and lost again in the 1960s.

In the early 1980s the MCG's John Roberts wrote to Hywel Murrell, (an explorer of the Rakes in the 1930s) and sent him his report on the Charterhouse Rakes which had a rough location of Charnel Shaft on it. Murrell replied that he HAD NOT descended it, but believed that it was recorded by Gerard Platten in 1935.

Mike Moxon has now informed me of the latest twist in the tale. It turns out that Hywell Murrell may well have descended the shaft after all or at least may have mentioned it in his diaries. We now know this, as it is referenced in a third caver's diaries; those of Ray Mansfield, which will be on the MCRA website in the near future.

There is some work going on to try to get hold of Murrell's diaries, so maybe Charnel will be found again and this lost and interesting shaft once again descended.....

Cave Photography Competition



Mark Burkey won the recent Mendip Cave Photography competition with these fabulous shots of GB Cavern above, Swildon's 20 right and St Cuthbert's Swallet below. Thanks to Mark for allowing these stunning shots to be shared with you.



UF Survey as a Splashmap

Bill Chadwick has come up with a great new way to bring a survey with you on a long, wet and/or dirty trip - The Splashmap.

Splashmaps are fabric maps, which claim to be "Stylish, lightweight, practical & virtually indestructible!" - Although I doubt they have been down many Caves, yet!

As a fabric copy of a map they can be folded, scrunched or stuffed away and could well be more resilient than a laminated survey. They can even be worn as a scarf!

Bill has suggested that we have the Upper Flood Survey produced as a Splashmap.

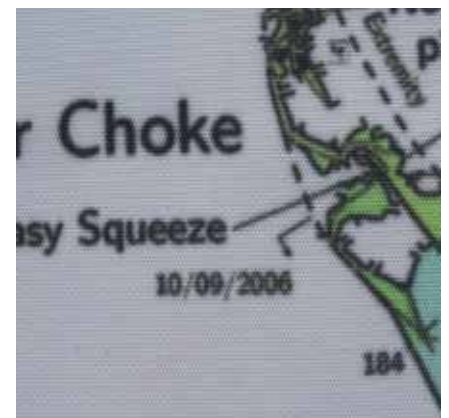
Bill brought a sample with him to the September Member's weekend and Tim Francis and Ben Cooper took it into Grebe Swallet to test it. It survived, and with a rinse was almost as good as new.

If you would like to know more or wish to order one, then please contact Bill via bill.chadwick2@googlemail.com

See also www.splash-maps.com



Photos by Bill Chadwick

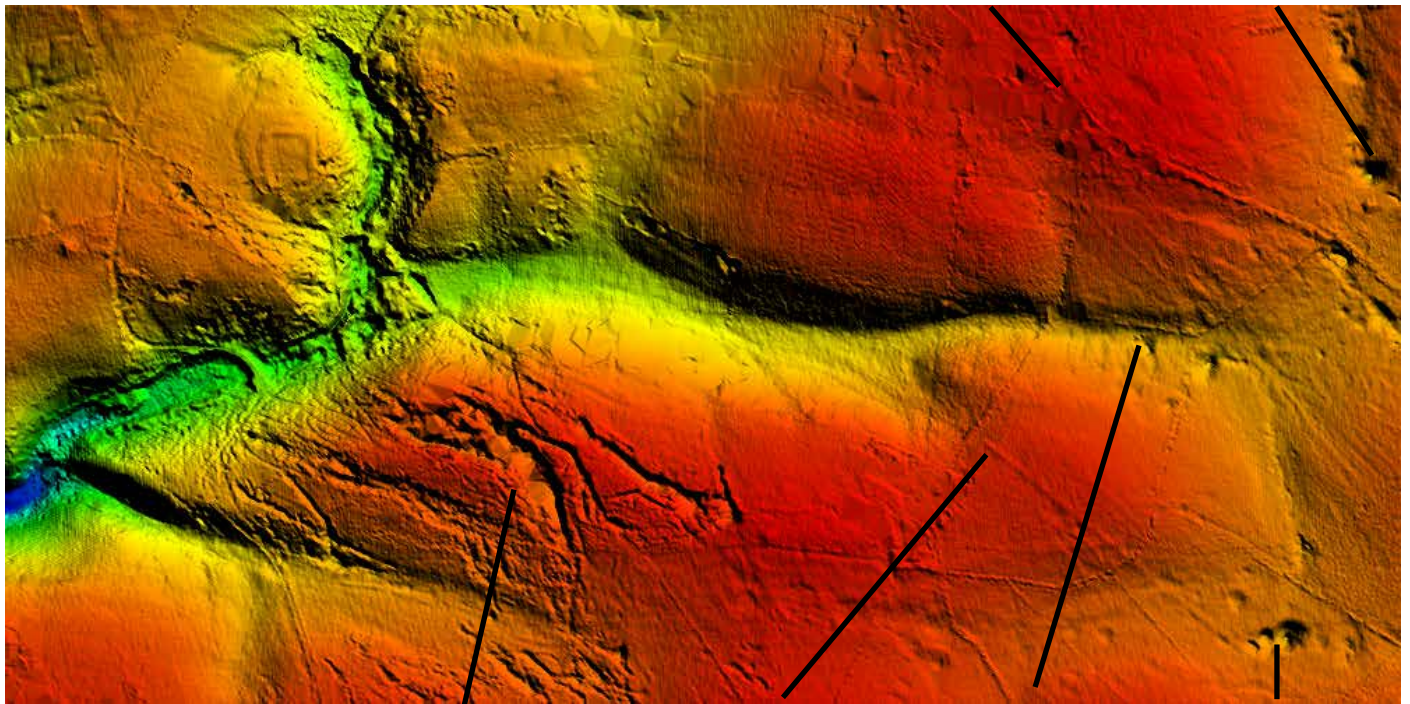


LiDAR



Imagery ©2016 Getmapping Plc Mapdata ©Google

After last editions piece about LiDAR data and my attempt at processing the data, Bill Chadwick contacted me with the excellent colourised version below. I've included the Google Earth image of the cottage, Velvet Bottom and Charterhouse for comparison (above) and marked the map with some obvious features which show so clearly on the LiDAR image.



The Rakes Roman Road Ubley Warren Pot Nordrach Cave

Pig Of Mendip(?) Lead Found

Both the BBC and subsequently Descent have reported the finding of a Pig of Lead. Metal detectorist, Jason Baker, of the Southern Detectorist Club, found the ingot of Roman Lead in Somerset. The ingot is a huge 2 feet long, weighing 38kg and is inscribed with the name of emperor Marcus Aurelius Armeniacus*. On further investigation the ingot was found

on a farm near Wells, raising the possibility it was mined and smelted at Charterhouse or at least somewhere on Mendip.

*Marcus Aurelius was emperor from 161 to 180AD and was given the Armeniacus title in 164AD according to livius.org



Jason Baker holding the ingot
Photo courtesy of New Southern Detectorists

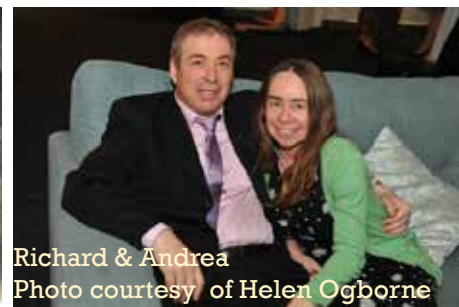
Congratulations!

Two couples from the Mendip Caving Group recently got engaged.

Andrea Brain and Richard Carey announced their engagement earlier in the year, (See the WCC Journal for their cheeky take on how it happened) while Dan Matthews proposed to Kay Eyeington on a very special trip arranged by Dan to the Frozen Deep, Reservoir Hole.



Dan & Kay
Photo by Tom Harrison



Richard & Andrea
Photo courtesy of Helen Ogborne

STOP PRESS

Please be advised that we are having a half year GM on Saturday 8th October. This was in response to questions of Club finances discussed at the AGM in March.

Going Deeper and Climbing Higher in Upper Flood

As we pass the 10 year anniversary of the big breakthrough in Upper Flood, exploration continues. A dig at Terminal 1 in the streamway is finding more passage and a new deepest part to Upper Flood, As well as a climb in Neverland finding a new grotto with some pretties. See pages 31 and 32 for more.

Sandford Hill

Sandford Hill is still slowly revealing its secrets to a team of MCG diggers.

Focus has switched to the surface to dig some of the features which might connect to the Levvy.

A trip to radio-locate the top of Hancock's shaft on the surface has also taken place. See Pages 18 to 22.

Grebe Swallet: The Battle Continues

Chris Binding's small unit of battle hardened combatants continue to attack the enemy; Mendip rock.

Andrew Horeckyj has provided some photos from the front line to accompany the latest report on the progress.

See page 26 and 27 for the latest.

UWP Dig

Tim Francis, Peat Bennett and Ben Cooper continue to work at a couple of digs in Ubley Warren Pot.

The first dig, as reported in the last edition of MCG News, has been continuing. A session in March cleared the debris up to a flake of rock which had been blocking the view onward. In May the diggers returned to make some excellent progress, hiltiing and clearing out the floor to allow onward progression.

At the end of the tube, it was reported as being, 'worrying little, a small inlet' however it does draft, but not sufficiently to clear the air

when 3 are digging.

For this trip I had lent the diggers a 'camera on a stick' to poke into the hole. The result, below, doesn't give much encouragement, but the current plan is to persevere with digging it a little longer.

A second dig was started just East of Ruckle Grotto. The dig is in a rift which it was noted extends beyond the known cave. Plan A to dig open this rift was halted when



someone looked up and noticed all the hanging death! Plan B was started to dig from a lower level in the same rift. In June this rift was widened to allow a Tim/ Peat sized push through a 'very tight squeeze into a small 4-5m extension. It is described as the usual Ubley cross rift type affair, but with a way on.

During this visit Ben suffered a Hilti related injury. A large piece of rock took offence at being blown up, and struck his Temple. The resultant bruise and lump was quite impressive by all accounts.

July's trip opened up easier access to the dig for normal sized cavers and a glimpse of some promising void ahead with a good draught!

Don't Miss The Upper Flood Breakthrough Talk!

A trip to Nordrach Cottage will be well worth it for the October member's weekend, as we celebrate the Big Breakthrough in Upper Flood 10 year anniversary (See Page 27).

Tim Francis will be giving a talk about the breakthrough which all MCG members will I am sure, find interesting. If you haven't been up to the cottage for a while then October would be a good time to go!

A very warm welcome to our newest members:

David Arlotte
Demetri Benfield
Dawn Croxson
Bob Marles
Dean Smith
Tamsyn Street

BCA Online - Have you signed up yet?

I believe that most of you reading this will be British Caving Association members, but have you logged on to BCA Online yet?

BCA Online was launched in June 2015. BCA Online allows members to login under their own membership number and set their own email contact preferences. You can check membership details and sign up to the BCA Newsletter. The BCA are encouraging all members to logon to BCA Online

Group Communications

It's not always easy to stay in touch with everyone and to make sure people know about upcoming trips, events, or news in the club. I'm often unable to put a newsletter together quite as often as I would like to!

Most of you will be aware of the newsgroup where a lot of the Group chat takes place, but did you know the Facebook group is still running, that we have an instagram account and a YouTube Channel ? No? Well to be honest neither did I!

While the newsgroup works well, it isn't perfect so the committee have been discussing ways to make sure everyone knows what

so that they can better improve communication with the membership. Even if you have provided an email address in the past, you will need to confirm this email online. Only 10% of members have signed up so far, so they have asked all clubs to publish this note.

The process isn't difficult – go to the main website (www.britishecaving.org.uk) and click on the "BCA Online" option top right hand side.

is going on. Any ideas are very welcome.

In the mean time, if you are reading this but not getting the email copy of this Newsletter or the Update, then please let me know.

For those not on the newsgroup, you will need to sign up for a Yahoo! account, then goto uk.groups.yahoo.com and search for Mendip Caving Group. Request to join the group there.

For those not on the Facebook group, goto www.facebook.com/groups/76510288037/ I will try to upload anything I haven't been able to use in the newsletters to both!

Mendip Cave Rescue 80th Celebrations

and the JRat Digging award.

A joint, MCR's 80th Anniversary and the JRat's Digging Award Presentation will be held on the 19th November at Priddy Village Hall. I believe Mark Helmore also will be doing his Mendip Roundup at the event.

CRO have Krabs and Ropes Taken

Some of you may have seen the sad news that some Karabiners and 2 red and silver Meader tackle bags were taken from the Kingsdale Master Cave just before Eurospeleo took place.

The karabiners removed were Petzl Am'D, Faders Goliat and Faders HMS, they had yellow paint on their screw-gate sleeves. If you are offered karabiners of these types at a knock-down price, please identify the thief to North Yorkshire Police, by phoning 101, selecting North Yorkshire and quoting Crime reference 12160143685.

Browne's Hole Exhibition

Frome Museum has a new exhibition starting in September, all about the investigation of Browne's Hole, in Stoke St Micheal. Browne's Hole is named after the land owner who has also donated his photographs and bone collection to the museum.

Mendip Rocks! 2016

Between 17th September and 29th October are lots of very interesting events all about the Geology of the Mendips. There are a number of highlights including a Velvet Bottom and Gruffy Ground Walk, a number of Quarry Tours and a family fun day in Frome. For more see http://www.wellssomerset.com/search/entry1303_mendip_rocks_geology_festival.html and <http://www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/category/events/> (There is a poster up in the cottage.)

Elevated CO2 in GB

Graham Mullan (secretary of the Charterhouse Caving Company Ltd) has advised of reports of Carbon Dioxide recently in GB Cavern. Please be aware of this when visiting GB and other caves!

AGM 2016

March 2016's AGM a productive session attended by 19 members of the group with 10 apologies.

After the minutes of the previous years meeting were agreed we covered the actions from the previous meeting.

- Electrical work has been inspected and Safety Certificate granted.
- Review of the Electric Tariff.
- New locks on Stainsby's and Bone Hole
- Review of Library Humidity
- New Club Equipment

The Officers reports were then read out:

Brian (2015 Secretary) noted the sad news that Ron Saunders, a highly respected and significant member of the club for many years, had passed away. As well as saving money on the electrical supplier, £480 has been saved by negotiation and changing our insurance company. Brian felt that a new IT role in the club should be considered for the club. Brian had looked to stand down as secretary, but as no one was forthcoming to take on the role, he has agreed to continue with it for now.

Karen (2015 Treasurer) gave her report. It was emphasized how important it is to fill out the hut fees sheet on arrival and to use envelopes for case! The hut fees sheets are also vital in case of a fire. Roy Kempston and Sue Fennel were thanked for their assistance.

Jeremy's (2015 Caving Secretary) report was read out and was thanked for stepping into the role and doing a great job.

Keith (2015 Cottage Warden) gave his report. Points of importance were that we have a new water meter and it was noted new windows were needed. (This has now been completed see news section).

Dave (Tacklemaster 2015) was not in a position to give as much time as the role required, although had purchased some new equipment for the group. Dave offered to stand again but has subsequently had to step down from the role.

Ed and Hayley (Social Secretaries 2015) reported a busy social year. (See the newsletters for just a flavour of the social events we have enjoyed.) It was noted that the numbers staying overnight could still be better. Any ideas for events welcome!

I gave my report as editor for 2015. I suggested that although we have moved away from sending newsletters by post, the MCG Update might be better received by post as a formal invite to the AGM and Dinner. It has also been suggested that a 'print on demand' service might be used for those who wish to print their newsletter out.

The clubs investments were then discussed and the possible need for another meeting to discuss the way forward with these. Hayley Clark talked about the CSCC and was thanked for her representation at the CSCC meetings as our Conservation and Access officer. Hayley is standing down from this role.

Henry's (Rescue Warden) report was read out, describing the activities organized by him during the year. He mentioned ideas for the coming year and is happy to fill the role again.

The new Committee was formed as below. If you need to get in touch please use the email addresses alongside.

Secretary: Brian Snell - secretary@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

Treasurer: Karen Fendley - treasurer@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

Caving Secretary: David Lossl - caving@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

Tacklemaster: Dave Ball - tackle@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

Editor: Tom Harrison - editor@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

Recorder/librarian: vacant (Lisa Gibson has been proposed to fill the role once she has completed her full membership.) - recorder@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

Social Secretary: Hayley Clarke/Ed Waters - social@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

Cottage Warden: Keith Knight - warden@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

The non-committee posts were filled as follows:

Rescue Warden: Henry Davies-Ball - rescue@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

Conservation & Access Officer: Vacant

Accounts examiners: Sue Fennel and Linda Milne - examiners@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

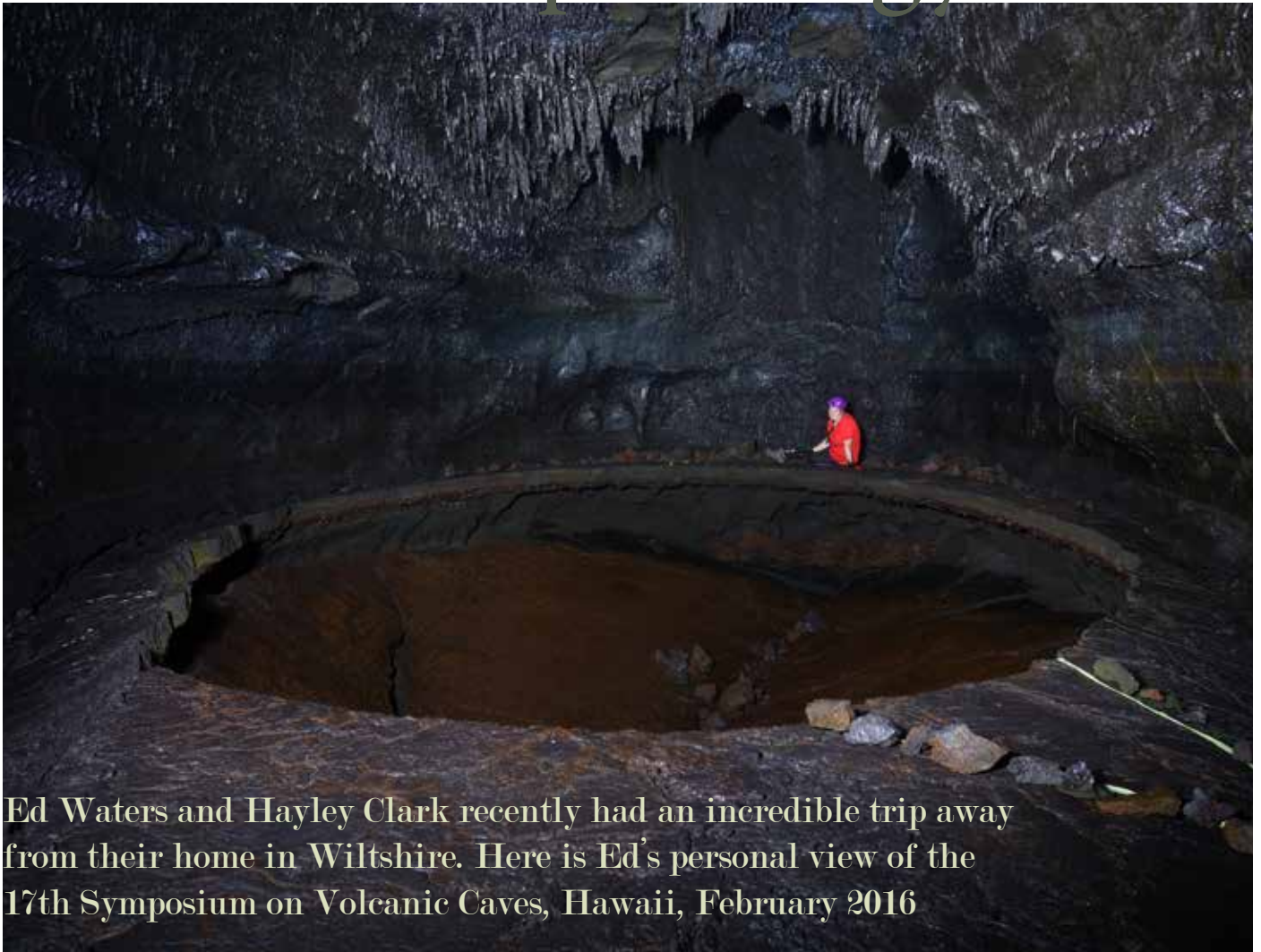
Please make a note now that the Next AGM and the Dinner will be held on 8th APRIL 2017.

The full minutes of the AGM are available from the Group Secretary.

The AGM was followed by a thoroughly enjoyable evening at the Mendip Inn, where after a delicious dinner, Charlie gave a fascinating overview of Nancy Camel and the Ritual Protection Marks found.



A Pilgrimage to the Home of Volcanospeleology



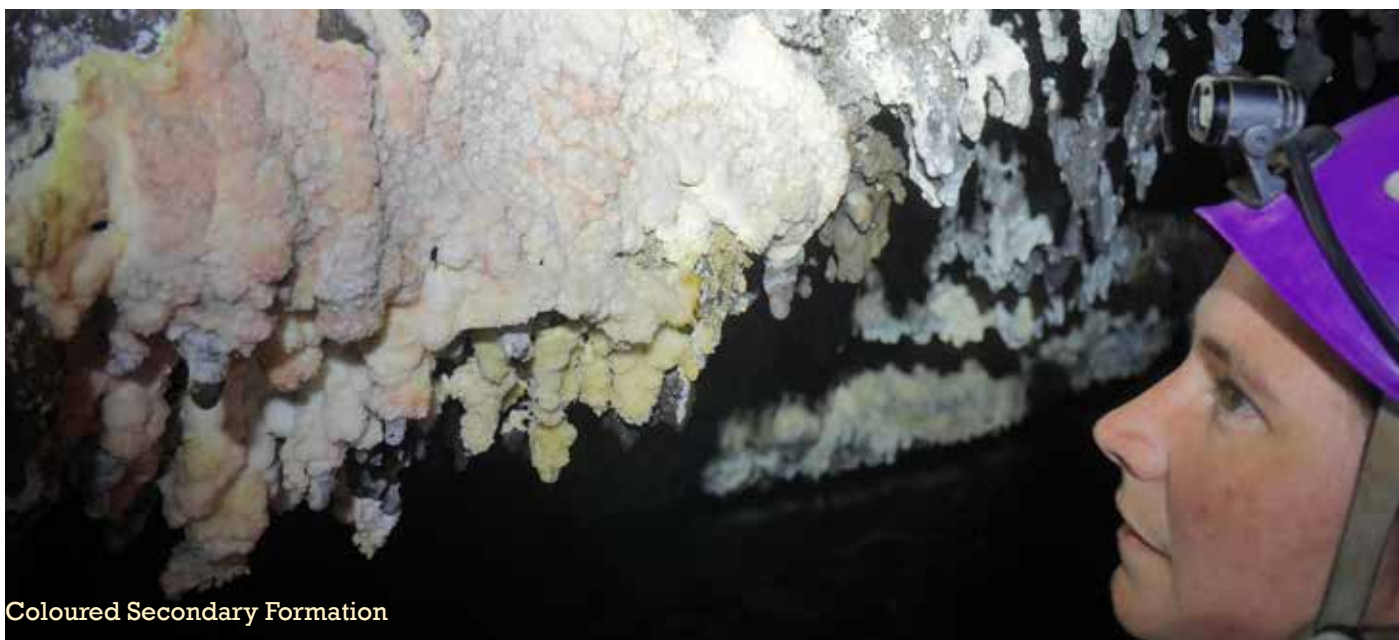
Ed Waters and Hayley Clark recently had an incredible trip away from their home in Wiltshire. Here is Ed's personal view of the 17th Symposium on Volcanic Caves, Hawaii, February 2016

I guess that quite a few of you are aware that Hayley and I have a fetish for lava tube caves that goes back about 15 years. Over this period we have travelled to Iceland, Canary Islands, Mexico, Korea and Sicily. However the spiritual home of lava tube caving has to be the Big Island of Hawaii. Of the world's ten longest lava tube caves, six are located on Hawaii including the four longest in the world. So when we heard that the bi-annual meeting of the UIS Commission on Volcanic Caves was to be held on Hawaii in February 2016 it took little thought for us to decide that we just had to go.

The conference was held in Ocean View, a relatively small development not far from the southernmost point of Hawaii (and the USA), on the slopes of Mona Loa. The event consisted of a number of presentation sessions (some half day, some whole day) interspersed with field trips (both caving and volcan-

ology based) and followed by a very full programme of evening social events. Though this format will not be a surprise to those MCG members who have attended previous commission events, it has to be said that the level of organisation was simply superb, and the conference fee was worth every cent.

Hayley and I were the only MCG members in attendance, but there was a good level of attendance from other Brits, some regular attendees. As well as Hayley and I there were three other UK couples in the form of Martin and Kirsty Mills, Phil and Geraldine Collett and Matt and Niki Adlam-Stiles. In-addition it was fantastic to catch up with many friends from the wider Volcanospeleological community that we had not seen since the meeting on Jeju Island (Korea) in 2008 and to make a whole raft of new friends.



Coloured Secondary Formation

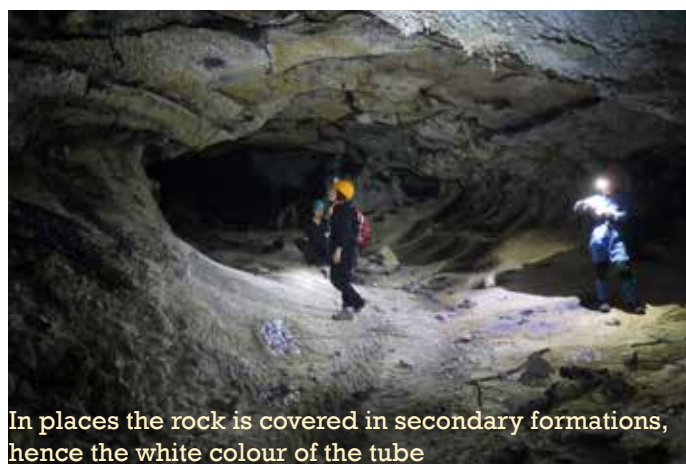


Delicate Secondary Formation

Though many of the presentations were very interesting, it was the caving that really drew us to Hawaii. As such Hayley and I took every opportunity to get underground, and we managed 19 caving trips in 16 days. The Hawaiian cavers are quite rightly very protective of their unique caves, and they prefer information in the public domain to not overtly identify caves or their locations, and I have respected this in this article.

Hayley and I stayed in an idyllic house low down in Ocean View, a few minutes walk from the home of Pete and Ann Bosted who did much of the organising of the Symposium. We arrived a few days before the symposium, and popped in to introduce ourselves, and found their house already busy with an array of eminent international speleologists. Despite being incredibly busy with final arrangements, Pete and Ann could not have been more welcoming. Indeed we were somewhat surprised to find ourselves caving within 30 minutes of meeting Pete, in a cave that actually runs under his house!

Most of the caving we did was in various parts of the Kipuka Kanohina system, which is currently the second longest lava tube cave in the world (it currently has approaching 50km of passage mapped and more is still being found). The system is remarkable in many ways, it is a maze like braided tube system that makes navigation extremely difficult, it is very dry and has remarkable white secondary formations and contains a great many archaeological remains. It also has many entrances which allow a bewildering array of fine through trips.



In places the rock is covered in secondary formations, hence the white colour of the tube



One part of the Kanohina system has been turned into a fine show cave, Kula Kai Caverns, which also offers adventure caving trips for the more adventurous. Ric Elhard and Rose Herrera who own the cave allowed us very generous access to the cave and provided a memorable evening of live music and food in a huge marquee right by the entrance.

The Kanohina system has been explored and mapped by a group known as the Cave Conservancy of Hawaii (CCH), whose members also did all the work that made the symposium such a success. The CCH is an amazing organisation, not least is the way that it purchases land containing cave entrances in order to preserve access and conserve the caves. The number of sites they have purchased is truly staggering, and their ambition even more so.



At the time we were in Hawaii the CCH was in the process of spending \$30,000 to purchase yet another entrance. I asked Mike Warner (Vice President of CCH) how they could afford to buy so many caves. His response surprised me. He said that when a plot of land containing a cave came up for sale he had two considerations. Firstly was the cave of sufficient interest to protect, and secondly was the plot being sold for a fair price. If those two factors were fulfilled then he would commit to buying it, he would then find some way of raising the money. To date, after tens of purchases, he has never failed to raise the money.



A profusion of lava stalactites

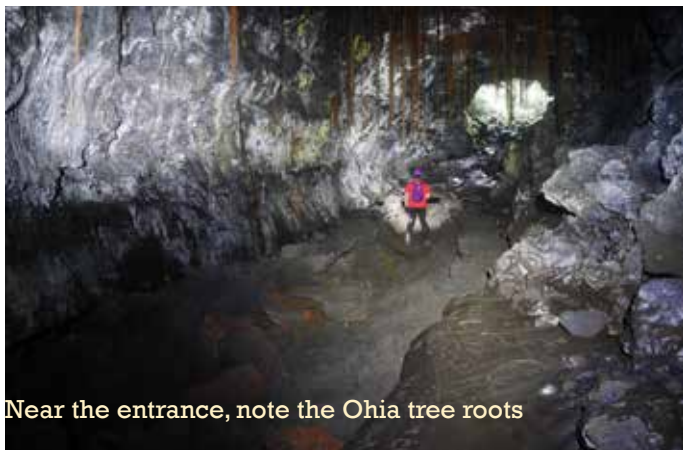
As Hawaii is a major tourist destination, there are many things to see and do around the island. However, we missed out on much of this as we spent so much time underground. We did manage to drive right round the island though, but we did take in a visit to Kaumana Caves at Hilo on the way. Kaumana Caves are located in a public park and developed as a “wild cave”. This involves nothing more than a set of steps into the entrance Puka (the roof collapse into the cave). Visitors are then left to their own devices and equipment. The cave is very popular, and has suffered appallingly, though enough remains to show that this was once an extremely fine cave, and is worth a visit if you happen to be passing with a headtorch! The cave has a couple of kilometres of passage, and you can while away a happy hour or two quite easily.



Another draw to Hawaii for us was the active volcanism. We had never seen a proper eruption, and we were hoping to see flowing lava during our visit. Though the eruption from Pu’O’O was ongoing (as it has been since the 1980s) the lava flow was poor and the lava breakouts were a very long way from civilisation. Just a few months before our visit the lava was flowing close to the town of Pahoa, indeed a couple of guys from the CCH had a unique experience when recording archaeological remains in a cave at risk of being buried by the new lava when the lava entered the cave they were in. Fortunately there was another way out...



Colourful lava stalactites



Near the entrance, note the Ohia tree roots



Lava Runners

Halem'aum'au by day



Despite this, there is still the lava lake in the Halem'aum'au crater on Kilauea. The crater lies in the bottom of the Caldera, below the Hawaii Volcanoes observatory (which we were lucky enough to visit as part of the symposium) within the national park. There is a viewing area and car park from which the crater can be view, about 1 mile away. At the time we were there the lava lake was some 37m below the crater lip, and as such the lava was not directly visible. During the day all that could be seen was a vast quantity of gasses being expelled. At night however the crater was illuminated by the glow of the lava lake, and just occasionally (with the aid of binoculars) lava fountains could be seen spattering into vision. Certainly the night I stood watching this most amazing spectacle, incidentally my 45th birthday, is one that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

At the time of writing this article, the lava conditions are simply fantastic on Hawaii. A major breakout has occurred, and a lava flow has progressed through the national park and entered the sea. All this is easily accessible for viewing.

Amongst the highlights of our trip, and one of the major reasons for going in the first place, was the chance to visit Kazamura Cave. This is the longest and deepest lava tube cave in the world, with a surveyed length of 66km, depth of 1100m and 101 entrances. The cave is very different to the Kanohina system, in that it is largely a single main sinuous tube and totally lacking the white secondary formations. We visited several sections of the cave, but even so only saw a small fraction of the overall system, there cannot be many caves in the world with two entrances 19 miles apart as the crow flies!

Kazamura is simply the most fantastic cave. It has fine passages, pitches and the most amazing array of

And by night



lava features. Part of the cave has been developed by Harry Schick as an adventure cave, and Harry allowed symposium attendees a special discounted rate to visit his section. Harry takes a great deal of care to conserve the cave, and provides a fascinating commentary on the features in the cave. Given the amount of time he spends in the cave he has developed theories on how features develop, some of which are contrary to the accepted view but sound very convincing when Harry talks! Along with Kula Kai Caverns, this tour is highly recommended to any caver who finds themselves on Hawaii.

After the symposium we had a few more days on Hawaii. Before the trip I had emailed Pete Bosted about the potential to go caving after the symposium was over. Peter had replied that as long as we didn't mind crawling or digging that there would be lots to do, and that although he could not guarantee a find, that on average the CCH maps over 10 miles of new passage year...



Typical Hawaiian Lava Tube

Tomislav surveying a lava fall discovered only a few minutes before.



We therefore teamed up with Tomislav Gracanin and his wife Vida Hackell to help them survey a new cave. It was a real eye opener, as Tomislav brought with him a map showing tens of cave entrances that had been recorded but not yet entered. Within 10 minutes of starting the survey Tomislav had found a going lead, and we surveyed a couple of hundred metres of fine new passage. In the following days we pushed this further until we connected the new cave with a previously known one to make a system in excess of a mile in length. For me this original exploration was one of the highlights of the trip.



'The Snowball' a unique secondary formation discovered on our surveying trips.

All too soon our two and a half weeks were up. We drove back to the airport (managing to get in a sneaky tube or two on the way) and were winging our way half way round the world to home. The trip was immensely enjoyable and unforgettable. The caving was superb, the talking about caves just as good and the company second to none. There are far too many people to thank individually for this event, everyone who was there made it what it was. However I must say a special thanks to Mat and Niki for their friendship in sharing driving, Drinking, caving and photography. We met for the first time in Ocean View, despite having exchanged emails over lava tubes for many years, and even on one occasion sat opposite each other in the MCG lounge without knowing!

Ed Waters, July 2016.



Sandford Hill

by Tom Harrison

Digging at Sandford Hill by the MCG has this year switched to the surface and the to top of the hill.

After all of the exciting discoveries, both speleological and archaeological in Sandford Levvy, Ed Waters is keen to prove the hypothesis of a connection between the Levvy and Pearl Mine. (One of the Shafts at the top of the hill.) See the last issue : MCG News 379.

We are certain that Hancock's shaft was dug from the surface. This is the shaft discovered in 2015 by the MCG Digging team of Ed, Mike, Graham and Buddy. This shaft was named Hancock's shaft, as at it's base, a clear smoke mark says Hancock, with 4 numbers underneath: 17 followed by 3rd and 4th less clear numbers. This indicates it predates Sandford Levvy which was driven circa 1830.¹

So what do we know about Pearl Mine? Which of the shafts or depressions on the hill is Hancock's shaft? And what progress has been made at these sites by the MCG this year?

Swarbrick and Geoffrey

For anyone who has been walking on and around Sandford Hill, they may well have spotted the many shafts and signs of mining that still exist on the hill today.

In 2015 the Mendip Caving Registry and Archive (MCRA) published online, "A Survey of the Lead, Calamine and Ochre Mines on Sandford Hill by T Geoffrey and J Theodore Swarbrick 1948-1951".

John Theodore Swarbrick and Thomas Geoffrey

actually spent much of their childhoods on the slopes of Sandford Hill and as members of the Sidcot School Speleological Society they were both active cavers and mine explorers. Between 1948 and 1951 they explored and surveyed many of the old mine workings on Sandford Hill, and their hand written report on their findings was sent in 2014 by Mr Swarbrick to the Sidcot School who passed it onto the MCRA.

This survey provides a wonderful snapshot of the state and locations of the shafts before many were filled in, probably by the owners of the land and the quarry on the Western End of Sandford Hill. (The remains of the quarry, closed in 1993, can be seen in the photo at the top of the page.)

Rift C

In the survey, Swarbrick and Geoffrey sort their findings by 'Rift' or rake that the miners were working. These run across the longest width of the hill, east to west, with 'A' being the most northerly and 'F' being the most southerly. It is 'Rift C' which sits above the first crossroads of the Levvy and is therefore of most interest to the diggers.²

In March, after receiving permission for a dig on the hill, Ed, Mike Moxon and Mark 'Buddy' Williams went up to look at a depression which appears to be Shaft 3 on Rake C of Swarbrick and Geoffrey's survey. This shaft is described in 1951 as being 50ft deep, with a log wedged 15ft from the bottom, and a "possible continuation blocked." The shaft had solid earth covered walls and interesting 'evidence of rope cuts into the rock are just visible', where the shaft bends below the wedged log and shortly before the blockage. This implies hauling from below the level

of the pre 1951 blockage, that this shaft does continue. Could this be the top of Hancock's Shaft?

When Ed, Mike and Buddy reached the shaft believed to be Shaft 3C, they found that the rather large boulder positioned over it, estimated to be over 5 tonnes and used by the Quarry company to block the shaft, couldn't safely be dug past. Plan B was hatched, visit another known Rift C shaft, Pearl Mine and see if that can be dug open.

Digging commenced that day at the depression believed to be the filled in Pearl Mine. So what do we know about Pearl Mine?

A Brief History of Pearl Mine



Sidcot School Speleological Society 1951 or 1953
Photo by Nick Barrington courtesy of the MCRA

It's hard to pinpoint exactly who was 1st to descend this mine shaft in modern times, but it is highly likely that it was Askins, one of the members of the Sidcot School Speleological Society (SSSS) in the late 1940's.

With some assistance from the ever excellent MCRA, I was able to review the entries for trips to Sandford Hill with relative ease, and on one such trip, three different shafts were visited, with the final one being Pearl Mine. 'T Jacob' wrote this entry in the SSSS logbook in 1949:*

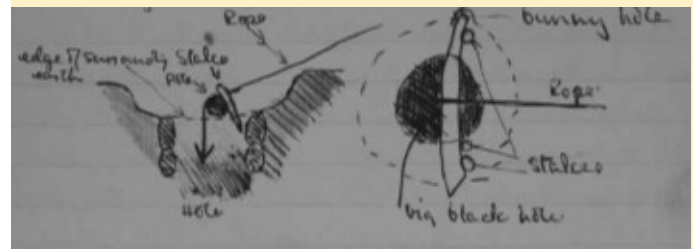
"Sunday 29th (May) A group consisting of all the cavers in the club set out over the fields to Sandford. We were guided by G Swarbrick to a small hole near the surveying triangle which Askins descended into. After this the whole party went to the rift cave which afforded very good opportunities for the younger members to improve their climbing and chimneying. Our(?) final attempt was the lowering

of Askins through a 'dirty little hole' in the ground. It was perpendicular and as we only had a 40' rope he was unable to reach the bottom, he estimated the depth to about 160' and incidentally dropped his carbide lamp down. T Jacob"

The following Sunday, the 5th June 1949 a return trip was made and this unnamed report appears in the logbook: (Although as the Carbide Lamp is mentioned, we can assume Askins must be the writer.) *

"On returning from Sandford last week we decided to revisit and get to the bottom of the last shaft visited. So accordingly on sat we tested extra lengths of rope so that we had a total length of rope approximately to the length of the boys playground.

On Sunday the weather was fine so a party consisting of Copestake, Swarbrick, Pittard(?), Hickson (on reform), Butt (Not on reform) Southall and Myself set off for Sandford with the ropes and an axe to cut a pole to act as a pulley over the shaft. On arrival Swarbrick set too and cut down a suitable tree to go over the shaft.



This done I prepared to descend. After about 30' I stopped to dislodge a large boulder which was wedged across the hole in a V dangerous manner, slowly I was lowered down until I reached the first landing, 2 passages led off on either side and the way down was blocked with debris and the large boulder I knocked down from above.

I could not clear all this alone, so Bol was next lowered down. On his arrival we decided first to explore the passages which proved on one side to be quite extensive. Having returned to the entrance shaft, we cleared with the help of those above on the rope, the debris and the boulder. So finally I was let down the final 20' or so on the pile of mud and everything else one ever finds under the earth including my carbide lamp at the bottom. Bol followed me and we explored through two tunnels which led off in the same plane as the 2 above. This time one of the tunnels was very extensive. After exploring it (in the process of which we had a small adventure with a very lively bat) we were hauled up to the top again. "

Dr William Stanton joins the party on 9th July 1949 and describes; the trip in, finding Gours “one of the most beautiful cave formations I have seen”, “an exquisite cascade” and Askin’s discovery of the Cave Pearls which give the Mine its name:*

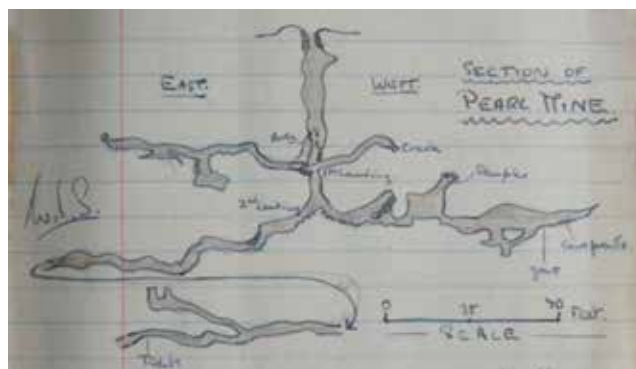
“.....Askins, Hickson, Swarbrick, Burt, and I set off on bikes for Sandford, with 65’ ladder, 80’ rope (mine) and 120’ rope (Sidcot’s). On arrival we lugged all this tackle up to the hole (No.1) on the far side of the plantation..... S4 had gone down this and partially explored it before.

After consuming part of our lunch packets we set up tackle and Askins went down to the first landing. I followed. The shaft is rectangular in cross section, and (after 8’ of walling) they have simply excavated one bed in the strata, about 10’ by 2’. The dip here is 75° N, which makes the climb rather awkward.

At 50’ down I rejoined Askins at the 1st landing. To the West a passage goes about 35’ to a small crack; to the East a bigger series leads 150’, with a small drop in the floor. This is dangerous due to loose rocks. There are several small cave pearl cavities, both tunnels undulate a lot and follow a 6 to 9 inch vein of calcite. At the very end of the East one this appears to degenerate into Ochre. To the S of the first landing is an interesting 20’ natural Aven. When the others had joined us Askins Burt and I went down to the bottom, a 20’ muddy drop. Landing on a cone of debris I saw that 2 more passages lead off, East and West, following the strike as before. I explored the West one and soon realised that this lower series is to a large extent natural, widened artificially. After 30’ I got to the top of a boulder slope. Coming down Burt pointed out a choked hole at the bottom, which I excavated and got through into a small passage whose roof was the boulder slope above. Horrible. A few feet further I entered a small chamber. In the roof stemples held up a boulder floor, probably something to do with the west passage of the first landing. A hole in the floor lead over a 15’ drop into a narrow rift and descending a 3’ drop we were confronted by one of the most beautiful cave formations I have seen - perfect gours descending a 6’ slope. We quenched our thirst, but behind them Skins noticed another gem, a nest of perfect white cave pearls as big as pigeon’s eggs with 10 big ones and scores of smaller. The rift resounded with our praise. Close by, beyond, was an exquisite cascade. I photoed the pearls, I hope successfully.

We returned and I blocked up the entrance to the

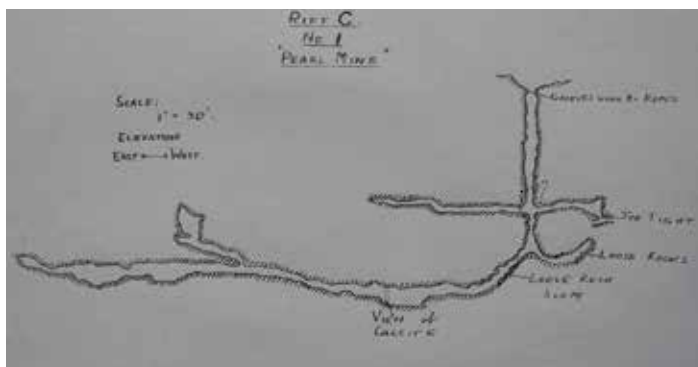
cave pearl passage again. Exploring the tunnel we went for several hundred feet up and down with the strike in a widened natural passage with a few stalactites. It ends (for me) at a tight squeeze. Swarbrick went some way up a chimney further back. While I was struggling in the squeeze my lamp went out and I had to crawl back in total darkness. We all climbed out without much difficulty and then sanguinary Askins left his helmet on the edge of the hole and I knocked it in and had to go down and fetch it. This was rather tiring.....”



Above: Dr Stanton’s logbook sketch
Reproduced with permission from the MCRA

Messrs Pittard, Woolly and Askins surveyed Pearl Mine in March 1950, although the survey wasn’t included in the logbook.

J T Swarbrick and T Geoffrey’s survey, used in their report, is reproduced below courtesy of the MCRA.



Looking at the Survey it is interesting to note the differences between it and Dr Stanton’s survey. Although their description of Pearl Mine mentions the ‘remarkably fine cave pearls’, the survey doesn’t show the Pearls or any of the Western extension beneath the boulder slope leading to the Cave Pearl Passage which Dr Stanton says he ‘blocked up the entrance’ to. They describe the Western Passage as blocked by a large roof-fall after 30ft. However, in 1952, a party from the SSSS described another visit to Pearl. R Woolly writing, “Keeble Copestake and I unwallled the Pearl section. We explored the section, and

found the pearls in very good condition. We were very struck by the gour formation just before the pearls.”

In 1954, Gordon R Williamson along with other SSSS members again describes, unblocking the passage to visit the pearls. He describes, “ 12 big white ones, 1 big yellow one and many smaller ones. Really they are magnificent.”

The Shepton managed to find and photograph a nest of 13 Cave Pearls in a visit in 1955 according to Extracts from The SMCC Hut Log-Books Part 1, Although this may have been because the party included Nick Barrington, a former Sidcot School Pupil! This is possibly the same photo used by him in the 1st Edition of ‘The Complete Caves of Mendip’

The survey and the descriptions thus give the impression of a deliberate act of conservation or possibly guarded SSSS action of keeping the location of the Pearls a secret, and my suspicion to this regard was seemingly confirmed by the next recorded entry stating, in Nov 1956, “we went(?) to block off the Pearls so UBSS would not find them.” and indeed in 1958, D Mage (?) writes”.....we searched for the Pearls which are known by Sidcot cavers only to be behind(Sic).” At this point they will not even record in the logbook the position of the Pearl passage.

In 1956 the Mendip Nature Research Club (MNRC) wrote a “Report On Investigation of Mineshafts on Sandford Hill” and as well as surveying Pearl mine which they called Mineshaft No. 7, they did a radio communication test with inconclusive results, although a party at the 1st crossroads believed they could hear those in Pearl mine. Again their survey doesn’t show any of the Western part of the lower level. Had it collapsed, was it not explored or was it deliberately blocked off? Interestingly the report states that the mine shaft had been partially explored on an earlier trip to a depth of 60’ and also states that in Winter 1947 a cold draught flowed through the Levvy with ‘Steam’ coming out of Pearl mine.

There was an aborted trip in 1960, then, in 1964 a party visited from SSSS to look at the Pearls. Their logbook sketch indicates the main shaft blocked, as they only draw the 1st level, so they were unable to find the Pearls.

A November 1965 entry confirms the debris blockage and that a dig was started. Unfortunately, having cleared some of the mud and rotting bones, they returned a few months later to find that it had all filled in again. In February 1968 a logbook entry records that, “some fool had dragged half a lorry there and thrown it down.” This is the final Pearl mine reference from the SSSS.

On 13th April 1968, Stanton takes a walk and notes “Pearl Mine (I think) is still open, the entrance much collapsed and blocked by an old car body.”

Others certainly visited the shaft. Pat Cronin, Cave Diver, Caver and Digger, remembers having to pass a ladder through the doors of a car, possibly a light coloured Austin. He also recalls that some members of the Axbridge intended to dig the debris blockage until they found the shaft completely filled in. Tony Jarratt’s logbooks confirm this, stating a dig was in progress in 1969.

In 1971 British Caver No. 58 published a letter from Roger Gosling that a group from Aldermaston Caving Club found the entrance, “filled in with earth, by bulldozer, or tractor, judging by all the tracks.”

Pat Cronin kindly gave permission to use his photo of the collar of the shaft from 1972, after it was filled.



So there you have it, a brief history of the mine from the records I have seen so far. From the sounds of it, this could be fascinating mine with potential for it to connect to the 1st Crossroads in the Levvy and some very interesting and impressive natural features to be re discovered.

¹ Mines of Mendip- JW Gough PP173

² Sandford Levvy: A survey and some observations by Ed Waters 2004.

*Minor typographical changes made

Digging Pearl Mine



March 2016, Ed Buddy and Mike went to Pearl Mine the 'plan B' dig site for that day. Digging trips, have continued since then and steady progress is being made at what has been described as "the most civilised dig on Mendip,"

An A frame has been set up to assist with the removal of spoil from the shaft. The digger loads buckets at the dig face usually with mud and rock, although on occasion toads, frogs and other small creatures get a ride. Steady progress is made each of the sessions.

Things took a more interesting turn in July when Keith found a large (1+ metre) piece of vehicle. We are still trying to work out what this exactly is, although we believe it to be aluminium attached to a block of wood. Hypothesis ranges from the step up into a lorry cab, to part of a land rover. Have a look at the picture right and if you recognise the part then please let us know!

Photos:

Top Left
Civilised Digging
Mike Moxon

Top Right
Here it comes
Joan Goddard

Right
Piece of a Vehicle
Joan Goddard

Bottom Left
Entering the Pearl
Mine 2016
Tom Harrison

Bottom Right
Entering the Pearl
Mine
John Tucker
Courtesy of the
MCRA
C1960s



This find helps to confirm that we are digging in the right place with the reports of bits of cars/lorry dumped in the hole, although we are still too shallow for this to be the car, possibly an Austin, that had to be descended through, in the late 1960s.

Further confirmation that we are digging the correct



Pearl Mine Entrance 2016
Tom Harrison

shaft comes from the photo of John Tucker's titled "Entering the Pearl Mine." The ledge a few metres in, matches the ledge shown in my photograph. There are also rope grooves in this ledge which match descriptions given throughout the history of the mine. The below left photo of the A frame at the dig, also compares well to Pat Cronin's 1972 photo, below right.



Pearl Mine Entrance 1972
Courtesy of Pat Cronin

Radio Locating Hancock's Shaft

As discussed in the last issue, Brian Snell had free climbed the 25m high Hancock's shaft and rigged a rope so the shaft can be enjoyed by the rest of us who aren't experienced climbers.

The Shaft is the most conclusive evidence that at least some of the pre-Levvy workings were connected to the Levvy.

The small group of MCGers who have been to the top of the shaft all agree that digging the blockage at the top of this shaft from underneath would be a very dangerous undertaking. To create a very interesting through trip from the surface and then out the Levvy, we would need to find the top of it on the surface. Time for some Radio Location!

In May, Ed and I carried Graham Prices' radio location equipment into Sandford Levvy in his specially constructed tackle bag. It was tricky and awkward in the mined passages off of the 1st crossroads and even trickier Prussiking up the shaft with stacks of loose miner's Deads (rock with no ore) alongside you. (See Graham's pictures MCG 379)

I reached the top, where the shaft changes direction. I arrived a lot later than planned, so quickly levelled the equipment and starting transmitting. Here I could see many roots coming in through a crack.

We had discussed having the equipment on for between 15 and 30 minutes. I must admit that after 20 minutes of pondering about the structural integrity of the stacks of Deads I packed up and gingerly abseiled back. Hopeful that it had all worked and the surface team had located the signal, Ed and I walked back up to the Pearl mine dig to meet them.

The Radiolocation was a part success. They had managed to trace the signal to a minor depression in front of a pair of trees. However whilst trying to calculate the depth of the signal I had switched off and packed up. Oops. Next time I would very much prefer to be Radiolocating from the surface!



Roots in Hancock's Shaft
Radio Locating
Selfie!
Tom Harrison



Shatter Cave



“Sunday, 3 July 2016

Ed Waters, Mike Moxon, Kay Eyeington, Dan Matthews, and Andy Horeckyj.

A standard round trip via the Ring Road to pillar chamber.

Slight drama at the start as a couple of chunks of the roof fell immediately in front of me (1 ft ahead), as I emerged from the entrance pipe on the way in. The bits were approximately 10 and 5 kg, So big enough.

The early part of the cave with its “hanging” bedding planes as a result of quarry activity, is a little lively and liable to shed rocks if encouraged. Beautiful cave throughout, extensively decorated, worth taking the camera and flashguns I think. Andy H”

All Photos and the Trip Report by Andrew Horeckyj.





Grebe Swallet - The Battle Report

August 2016

Foreword by the patron of the dig, Gen. Sir Archibald Wypynge KCVO.

“After a relative lull in hostilities, a new and vigorous campaign has started to yield results. The new front in Perdition that was identified fortuitously on the Mendip digfest weekend, has continued to push the enemy back – thanks in large part to a sustained artillery barrage from gunner Price and sweeping-up operations from the rest of the team. The recent Royal Ordnance Survey suite by Lieutenant Perryman, has confirmed the direction of the campaign.”



1 - The way ahead at the end of June. This narrow hole would give way to a view up into what appeared to be clear space, which required a bit of persuasion to grant access.



2 - The view ahead at the top was encouraging... and needed a lot of mineralized fill to be raked out to get in. (Photo by Graham Price).



3 - The void was opened into useful working space, from which the way on was found to be blocked by a lowering roof. Spoil from this narrow pit needs to be lifted out to gain access to the undercut roof ahead...see next image...



Report and photos (except for Graham's above) by Major Andrew Horeckyj

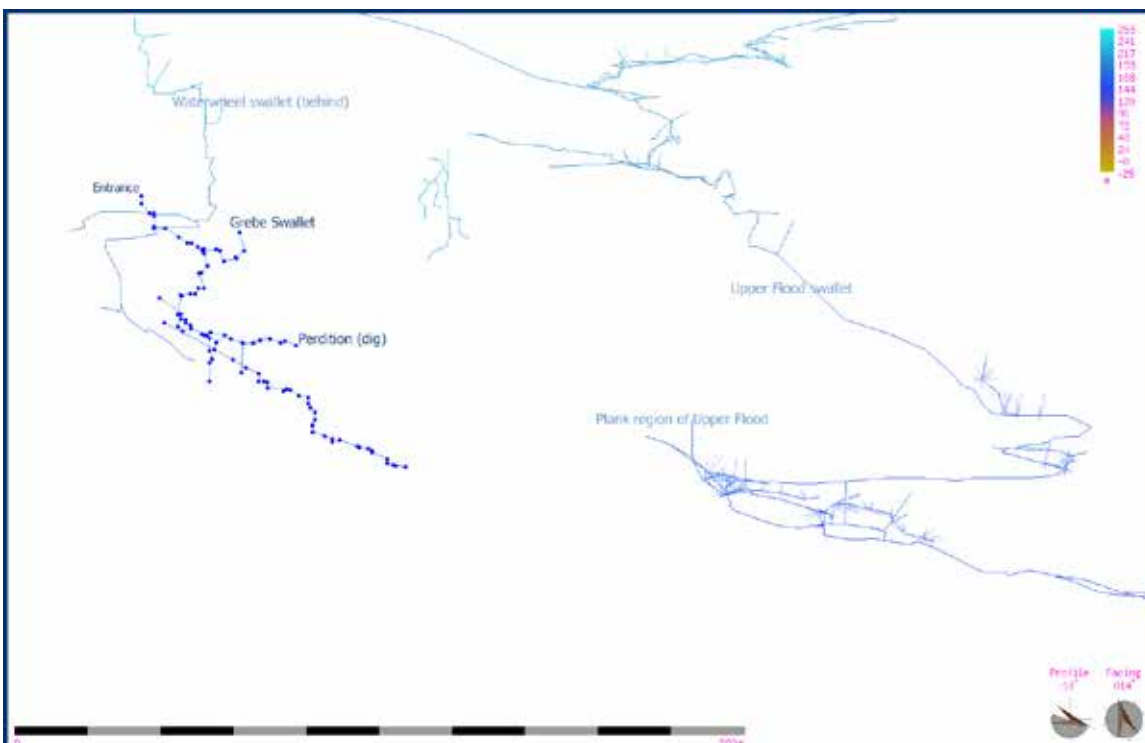
5 - This is the way on...though the pile of spoil in the foreground will need to be shifted, before anyone can climb down so that work can continue.



6 - Checking the survey results whilst still in Sidcot chamber.



7 - The recent survey included on the local network of caves. The heading of the perdition dig is still in the general direction of Upper Flood, though no positive conclusions can be drawn from this. There is still a lot of space between the two caves for anything to be found.



Tony Knibbs Caving Diary

As we mark Tony Knibbs 80th Birthday, I felt that this was a suitable time to publish the 1st part of his Caving Diaries. From a first trip to Kent's Show Cave on a family holiday in 1950 to leading trips into Swildon's Hole in 1953 this part charts Tony's pre-MCG caving adventures.



Tony in Priddy on a Swildon's Hole trip 1981
Photo from MCG Archive

1950

July/August During a family summer holiday in Torquay, I visited Kent's Cavern show-cave.

1952

August Based on information given by two boys who lived in my road, I located the chalk mine in the North Downs, which they had called Box Hill Cave. It is situated in the old working face of a chalk quarry (ref. TQ 15 1660.5190) about a half-mile west of West Humble railway station, which is reached by turning right off the A 24 Dorking road just south of Burford Bridge.

September I cycled back to 'Box Hill Cave' with Peter Weedon. We explored the chalk mine and began to make a sketch map plan of it.

1953

February Peter and I completed the rough survey of Box Hill Cave (chalk mine near West Humble railway station, north of Dorking), begun in 1952. Points of interest were: a solitary bat in a beehive-shaped chamber near the entrance; an insect rather like a crane fly on the south wall of the Anticline Passage; and extensive fresh-looking fracturing looking east near to 'Cat-hole 3'. The fracturing may be associated with the collapse which occurred 50ft inside the entrance later on in April when two boys were trapped in the mine and were rescued by firemen. Total trip time 3 hours.

April 23 With Peter Weedon, I started exploration of Godstone (East Surrey) hearthstone mines. I sketch-mapped the area around the two most obvious entrances in a little valley tram-road west of the A 25 main road from Caterham to Godstone. The presence of some short stalactites and associated crystals was noted Total trip time 3 hours.

April 26 Cycled to Godstone again with Peter Weedon, checked and modified the sketch map started on first visit. We met a group from Croydon who had a survey of the mines. They took us on a circular tour, during which we were shown a major passage which had, so far, escaped our attention. This passage was the connection to the more distant parts of the mine and we emerged at the Quarry Saw Mills entrance. On the return Peter took some photographs of various calcite formations. Total trip time 5 hours.

May 27 Cycled to Godstone with Michael "Spud" Harris. We sketch-mapped some of the more distant parts of the mine previously visited with the Croydon group. We noted several small bats and numerous white mineral veins exposed by recent-looking roof-falls in the distant section. Total trip time 4½ hours.

June 28 Cycled to Godstone with Cliff Boarer, Martin "Mart" White and Tony "Doormouse" Dorman. This was a leisurely stroll around the mines to introduce school friends to caving. We discovered a previously unseen passage which led to where a small stream that runs into a muddy water-filled passage blocked by a roof-fall. Here, we were joined by three members of the Balham Wheelers Cycling Club. Together, we found our way to the Quarry Saw Mills entrance. During this exploration we touched on another new (to me) section of the mine with numerous roof-falls and blockages. However, owing to the complicated nature of the area and lack of time, I did not make a sketch-map. On returning to our original entrance, we decided to take a quick look into the mine-workings in the hill to the west of the main road. We succeeded in getting effectively lost for about an hour. Total trip time 5 hours.

July 3/4 This weekend was organised by Eric Corner (Woking District Youth Officer) as an introduction to caving for youth clubs in northeast Surrey. I had the good luck to be put in contact with the Abbey Barn Youth Club in Chertsey from my local club in Wal-

ton-on-Thames. The event was to be used by the BBC to obtain sound recordings for use in their "Summer Parade" programme. Travel from Chertsey to Mendip was by a covered three-ton lorry. Arrival on Mendip was in bright sunshine – the drystone walls were most attractive.

On arrival at lunchtime on the Saturday, we pitched our tents in the paddock at Manor Farm, Priddy. The first cave we explored was Eastwater Cavern. The guides (Dave England and John Stafford) and tackle were supplied by BEC. This had been arranged by one of the helpers at Abbey Barn, Urban 'Jonah' Jones who was himself a member of BEC. During the descent of the entrance Boulder Ruckle in Eastwater the BBC people started to do a recording. However, this task came to an abrupt end when the batteries parted company from the tape-recorder and dropped into the Canyon! We got as far as the bottom of Dolphin Pot rope climb. On the way out the party of about 25 split into two groups. The last group had some difficulty with route finding up through the Boulder Ruckle. All having emerged safely, we made a quick exploration of the "New Inn" on Priddy Green. Total trip time 4 hours.

Sundays trip (July 4) was to Swildon's Hole. This was led by Dave England and the aim was to reach the first trap. However, we lost so much time at the tight sections in the Water Rift before the Forty Foot Pot, and at the ladder climbs that we had to settle for a trip to Barnes' Loop. The return journey was quite tiring and it was nice to emerge into hot sunshine. The BBC people continued their recording while we were wringing out our saturated clothing. I think that the interviewer might have been briefed because she asked me about my helmet, which I had made myself using an aluminium colander suitably modified for the purpose with a simple electric lamp powered by an Ever Ready No. 126 bell battery in a belt-mounted tin box. This admission was greeted with some derisive hilarity by some other cavers who possessed proper mining helmets. Total trip time 6 hours.

August 2-16 'Jonah' invited myself, Mick Perham and 'Tilly' Taylor to learn more about caving so that we could lead other youth club trips on Mendip. 'Jonah' duly took us down to Mendip in his Morris Eight for a caving holiday. We camped at Manor Farm again. Our learning process began with route finding in Swildon's Hole Upper Series. We took candles to leave at each junction as we progressed through the cave. After some doubts, we arrived at the old Grotto. Following and retrieving our marker candles we returned via the Short Dry Way. Total trip time 2 hours.

August 5 We revisited Swildon's Hole to refine our knowledge. This time we added The Long Dry Way to our capability. We found the area around the top of Jacob's Ladder rather confusing, Apparently this is not uncommon. Total trip time 2½ hours.

August 7 Another Upper Swildon's trip; this time with 'Jonah'.

From the Water Chamber, we decided to come out via the Wet Way just to add that route to our knowledge. However, 'Jonah' preferred to stay dry and decided to come out via the Short Dry Way. We quickly returned to the entrance following the stream, then we did a quick return to the old Grotto and came out via the Long Dry Way satisfied that now we really knew the Upper Series. Total trip time 2 hours.

August 9 We now felt that we were ready for some rather more challenging route finding, so we went to Eastwater Cavern. We successfully reached the top of the Canyon. 'Jonah' and Mick had doubts about this actually being the Canyon, so we returned to daylight. Total trip time 1½ hours.

August 11 We had the pleasure of leading two members of Orpheus Caving Club (Stan Gee and Arthur Ball) into Swildon's Hole on a photographic trip to Barnes' Loop. We were loaned some wire ladders from BEC for this trip. This was the first time we had used anything but the rope and wooden rung ladders. Mick was so displeased with these that he swore that he would never again use anything but the old type. This unfortunately was to end his period of caving. We all stopped at Barnes' Loop where Stan and Arthur served us a good meal of tea, rum and sandwiches. They then set about taking flash-powder photographs of the abundant formations. Back at the Forty Foot Pot we met a party of scouts using WS4 wire ladders much more fragile-looking than ours. Total trip time 4½ hours.

August 13 Reconnaissance trip to Burrington Combe. We started at Sidcot Swallet where we did as much as we could manage of this tight and uncomfortable cave. After this we did a more pleasant trip into Goatchurch Cavern. Total trip time 2 hours.

August 14 Back to Burrington Combe, this time with Dave England, Stan Gee and Arthur Ball and two other BEC members. We explored Goatchurch Cavern again and another cave further down the Combe, Aveline's Hole. Total trip time 3 hours.

August 15 'Jonah', Mick and I returned to Goatchurch. 'Jonah' took a lot of flashbulb photographs. We also started to dig at a small rift just before the Drainpipe, removing some dry rubble. Total trip time 3 hours.

August 16 For the last caving trip of the holiday, Dave England accompanied us to Burrington again. This time we explored Rod's Pot. Points of note were: the tight entrance; the impressive Boulder Chamber; the terminal 60ft bedding-plane which had some fine formations (stalactite flows and curtains). Only 'Jonah' and I descended this steep, low bedding-plane using a rope to reach a terminal grotto. The return climb was extremely difficult. Dave and Mick looked on and laughed while we were thrutching back up. Total trip time 3 hours.

September on the Saturday we explored Goatchurch with a party from various youth clubs including Abbey Barn. on returning to daylight we split into two groups: one coming with me to Rod's Pot while the other went down the Combe to see the 'Rock of Ages' and Aveline's Hole. Total trips time 3½ hours.

September The Sunday trip was with a party of six led by Dave England and I to Swildon's Hole. I had a lot of trouble self-lifelining myself down the Forty Foot Pot because the rope wouldn't run easily through the karabiner, consequently I arrived late at the Twenty Foot Pot. Two of the party decided to go no further, so I lifelined the others down before bringing these two out of the cave. The descending group turned back at the Double Pots. Total trip time 3 hours.

October Priddy again with Abbey Barn Youth Club and people from other Surrey youth clubs. on the Saturday I took three cavers into Sidcot where one of them successfully lost his helmet down a hole in Purgatory. We eventually reached the Water Chamber. After returning to daylight we followed the rest into Goatchurch, We caught up with the others led by 'Jonah' in the Water Chamber. I decided to do a bit more clearance at the little rift before the Drainpipe. I could only persuade two others to stay with me. The tight working space obliged me to work by candlelight without my helmet. Unfortunately I inadvertently blew out the candle; I passed it back for relighting to the chap holding my helmet with my carbide lamp still working. He pushed the candle onto the lamp jet, effectively blocking it. The electric lamps of my companions had been reduced to glow worms, so we were forced to make our exit using matches! In the confusion the candle was dropped into a narrow fissure and could not be retrieved. Total trip time 3 hours.

on Sunday we set off to visit Eastwater led by Dave England. Having passed the Boulder Ruckle, we entered the 380 Foot Way which was a rather jolly sloping passage carrying a pleasant stream. We left this via a short bedding-plane to reach Boulder Chamber then continued to the Canyon. Dave was suffering from a headache which had worsened as we descended. We reached the two Rift Chambers. Without my being aware of it I wandered off into a side passage and stopped at the brink of the 90 Foot Vertical. After some tortuous progress along narrow crawls, we returned to the Boulder Chamber where Dave took a long rest before we returned to the surface Total trip time 2½ hours. on our return to Manor Farm we discovered that 'Jonah' and his party were still down Swildon's. We quickly refilled our lamps and set off into Swildon's Upper Series to join them. Total trip time 1½ hours.

October 'Jonah' took Mick Perham and I to Priddy with a group of Rover Scouts from Chertsey. The three of us acted as guides and instructors during a weekend best remembered for the excellent food prepared by their skipper Alf Williams.

on the Saturday we visited Burrington Combe. I selected three suitably slim rovers and set off into Sidcot where we managed to force our way down to the Water Chamber. From here I and another rover followed each other the really severe squeeze leading to the top of the 30ft chimney. Lack of footholds on the return added to the fun Total trip time 1½ hours. After Sidcot we went into Goatchurch where we spent an hour or so sampling the varied sport to be found in this intricate cave.

on Sunday we did trips into Swildon's Hole. I took my party through everything in the Upper Series including Greenhorn's Prow. The remarks provoked by such pleasant diversions were occasionally most un-rover-like. Total trip time 3 hours.

Tony Knibbs

Thanks to Tony for his permission to publish his caving diaries. Next part: 1954.....

The Big Breakthrough

Upper Flood 10th September 2006



This September is the 10 Year Anniversary of the Big Breakthrough in Upper Flood. To commemorate this, below are the trip reports from Tim Francis and Julie Hesketh from 10 years ago, along with the latest exploration news from the 2016 logbook.

Tim Francis wrote this “Yesterday (10/09/2006) Mike Richardson, Julie Hesketh and I did another one of those Sunday afternoon sessions in Upper Flood. Hopes for another breakthrough were high but nothing on the scale of what we have actually found. Mike busied himself widening the most recent batch of squeezes - these are now passable - whilst Julie and I headed to the end. This was a nasty looking bit of choke that Peat Bennett and I left last time. The expected way on looked much too dodgy but I spotted a small crack on the right hand side. This was excavated and hammered for 30 minutes or so before a desperate vertical squeeze was forced. Julie followed after I had confirmed that the breakthrough really was worth seeing.” Tim Francis 2006

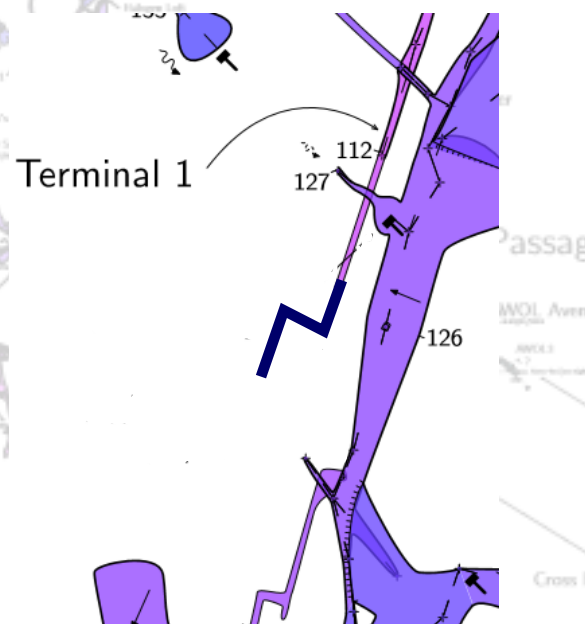
“To say I am flabbergasted is an understatement. Who would have believed that we would make such a find in Upper Flood! Yesterday (10/09/2006) was the caving trip of my life! I would have been happy with 10 additional feet of boulder choke - what I had expected to find. The dig into the boulder choke was impressive enough and there is a fair old amount of (pretty unpleasant) passage between Golden Chamber and the latest breakthrough point. So to find what we did was just unbelievable!!!! Hundreds of metres of yomping passage in Upper Flood! The new section of Flood partly reminded me of GB in parts (in scale and prettiness) and in parts is reminiscent of Longwood (the stream) and the rift-like nature of the final part of the cave is very typically “Upper Flood like” as the stream heads off into a dark rift ahead (though definitely a “going” rift).” Julie Hesketh 2006

Terminal 1 Dig

Straight after the breakthrough, Julie had to make a mad dash to the airport and so some of the new parts of Upper Flood received airport based names, such as the Departure Lounge. The main streamway heads off into Terminal 1 while the larger way on goes up into Royal Icing Passage.

Recently Andrew Atkinson has been leading a dig at Terminal following the streamway. I can attest that this is not a pleasant place to get to, squeezing through a tight rift, however progress is being made as the passage heads right down a small waterfall and then left where the dig continues. Discussions with Andrew at Eurospeleo suggest good progress is being made and they are now at the deepest point in Upper Flood. I will try and find out some more before the next issue.

(See my crude sketch, right, of the continuation of the streamway.)



Upper Flood Exploration

“2 July 2016 UFS bolt climbing Neverland - Kev Speight, Mike Waterworth, Ben, Alice and UV

Lugged another huge load of clutch in, this time to climb the lead spotted further up the Pork Pie slope when I last had a (fruitless!) bash in 2014. Steady progress despite loads of gear with the trip serving a first visit for Ben and Alice.

Long story short I got about 25 foot up before arm strength gave out (I must shell out for a lighter drill!) and cold set in with the grounded members of the group. I'd say I'm just over half way up, with the remaining distance looking much more climbable, requiring fewer bolts. The lead looks as if it's actually two leads, with what looks like horizontal passage leading off roughly back in the direction of Neverland's continuation, plus a drippy vertical Aven in the roof. The drill, rope and climbing gear have been left in situ for a return soon.

9 July 2016 UFS bolt climb in Neverland - Kev Speight, Mike Moxon, Mike Waterworth, Andy Horeckj

The follow-up trip to the excursion of July 2nd, the idea being to complete the climb to investigate the possible lead, then completely de-clutter the site.

Approximately a two hour trip in. Having completed the climb with only minor amounts of faffing and no near death experiences, Kev reported a couple of short but well decorated grottos which regrettably close down rapidly with no further progress obvious. It was suggested that the camera and light be hoisted up to him, to take a record shot but this proved to be a “faff too far “and didn't occur. The climb was derigged and the site cleared and thanks to Mike Waterworth's mobile phone for music and my filming strobe light, the first Neverland rave took place at the base of the climb to help us to keep warm! (And the go pro footage exists!)

The drill was left at Royal Icing Junction for further projects/later retrieval. Lots of cargo brought to the surface. A splendid trip echoing the lost golden era of Upper Flood exploration. No doubt when the Grebe bypass (TM) opens in early 2017 (subject to final completion), A new golden era of UFS extension will move a pace. Andy H”





This years Eurospeleo saw 11 members of the MCG make long journeys to Yorkshire to be involved in this incredible event.

The base for the week was the Dalesbridge Centre, near Austwick and Clapham, on the south side of the Dales. Here were the trade stands, the lectures, the entertainment and the other goings-on you would normally get at a Hidden Earth event, but set over a full week.

Not only that, but many of the classic Yorkshire trips were pre-rigged, saving lots of the time, skill and effort usually associated with visiting them. A caving tent and a brilliant printed guide were invaluable in planning what to do next!

Of the MCG contingent; Lisa Gibson, Russ Porter, Dan Matthews and Kay Eyeington had mobile home style accommodation to luxuriate in, whilst Kev Speight, Mike Moxon, Ben Cooper, Léonie Woodward and myself slept under canvas. Graham and Chrissy Price had a cottage! while Mark 'Buddy' Williams as one of the volunteer/organisers stayed in the Dalesbridge Centre's accommodation. We even saw Julie Hesketh over the weekend!

From arrival on the Saturday to the different departure dates of group, I think everyone is in agreement that it was a very well run and thoroughly enjoyable event and our thanks must go to the event organisers and those who rigged all of the caves. The following pages give an idea of just some of the trips enjoyed by the group.



Saturday 13th August - Kev Speight, Russ Porter, Lisa Gibson, Mike Moxon – Death's Head Hole

Having arrived reasonably early on site, we laid claim to a suitable plot on the site and established camp for the week. Russ and Lisa's passion wagon was the clear focal point for the camp and the envy of us paupers under canvas. Being the dynamic go-getters that we are, we opted to crack straight on and chalk up the first caving trip. With so many classic pots rigged for the enjoyment of delegates, plus relatively benign weather, we were spoilt for choice, though keen to avoid queuing on pitches. Luckily, the caving tent 'nerve centre' was an invaluable source of information, with a simple booking and callout system enabling delegates to de-conflict during busy periods. Additionally, pre-printed route descriptions in plastic sleeves were available. It was becoming clear that the event organisers had put some serious thought and effort into helping everyone get the most from the week. Predictably, Lost John's (our first choice) looked to be rammed, so the marvellous volunteer coordinators suggested we have a bash at Death's Head Hole; another splendid way in to the Leck Fell system.

As expected, the parking on Leck Fell was in short supply, but our timing was good and we quickly inherited a space from a group recently out of Lost John's. Our intrepid group were soon kitted up and the short walk across the fell was a snip without kilometres of rope and tonnes of metalwork to carry. (Actually, I quite like lugging kit, but then I always have been a bit of a sick puppy.)

The entrance is an impressive 64 metre surface shaft in a fenced off depression. The rope was belayed to a fence post, leading down a typically lethal grassy slope to a gnarled tree which clung to the edge of the main drop. As with many similar shafts, the top was adorned with lush vegetation which quickly gave way to smooth limestone walls. The rebelay on the descent all had convenient, though slightly greasy ledges, making progress straightforward. The entrance shaft lands in a chamber of impressive proportions, before another short pitch leading to a scaffolded shaft. This is a brilliant bit of engineering, although the wooden shuttering (which holds back a gargantuan quantity of excavated boulders) was bowing inwards alarmingly in a couple of spots! God knows how this will be replaced when it finally gives up the ghost. I suspect a complete re-excitation will be needed.

Leaving Mike to enjoy the impressive main chamber, Russ, Lisa and I pressed on down the shaft to a series of short, down slope crawls into the Death's Head inlet passage which swiftly deposited us in the Leck Fell Master Cave. The water flow was pretty strong after recent rain, but with the forecast improving, we opted for an entertaining splashy stomp downstream to the sump before heading out to re-join Mike and regain the surface.

Kev



Sunday 14th August - Ben Cooper, Dan Matthews, Kay Eyeington and Tom Harrison - White Scar Cave

Sunday morning and no lie in for us, as we set off to one of the three open show caves in the area: White Scar Cave: The longest Show Cave in Britain.



This was a Eurospeleo organised, led trip beyond the show cave so when we arrived we joined the 40+ other cavers! and walked a good way in before leaving the tourist trail of raised metal and concreted walkways.

Climbing over the railing, you plunge into the neck deep water which was very cold in comparison to the air temperature. Unbeknown to the rest of us, Ben had a minor epic here as the cold shock caused his Diaphragm to go into spasm making it very hard to breath. A good lesson here for all of us about cold water shock !

We carried on through the deep water, swimming or pulling ourselves along using the guide ropes and electric cables (which power the lighting in the massive Battlefield Cavern above us). After a small boulder choke, the depth of the water reduces, and you find yourself in a fine walkable streamway, reminiscent of big Mendip stream passages. This part is well decorated with curtains, flowstone and big fossils.



Eventually the passage roof lowers to a series of ducks some with only a few inches of air space. Having come this far, they weren't going to put us off, so we pressed on and eventually found the end to the non-divers cave, and with the diving line, disappearing off behind Ben in the photo below right.

We had a pleasant journey out the same way we had come in, with a couple of detours. The 1st to see the fine straws up a short climb, the 2nd to visit the immense Battlefield Cavern of the show cave.

Out to a late lunch in the show cave Cafe!

Tom



Sunday 14th August – Kev Speight – Diccan Pot to Long Churn

Despite Saturday's excitement and exertion, I really struggled for sleep, despite the relatively comfortable foam mattress I'd brought for the tent. At 4.45am, I gave up trying to nod back off and decided to pop out and do something constructive instead. I left a digital callout with the sleepyheads, grabbed my 3mm wetsuit and struck out in the direction of Selside. It turns out that horse flies and midges are particularly ravenous in the early hours and they gave me hell as I hopped around Alum Pot Lane trying to pull on kit. The little sods didn't give up on the way up the track either, easily finding the chinks in my neoprene armour. Relief was to be found by diving headlong into the Diccan entrance crawl, which quickly saw me at the head of the first of the pitches. The awesome noise of the tumbling waterfall was genuinely felt deep in the gut. Diccan has the distinct feel of a place that could chew you up and spit you out in tatters if you were to get too cocky, but far from feeling intimidated, I was utterly invigorated! I found myself mildly disappointed that I didn't have the added technical challenge of rigging this absolute beast of a pot, but nonetheless whooped and giggled to myself the whole way down. Stopping briefly at the bottom to admire the final pitch waterfall, I decided that Diccan was by far my favourite UK trip on rope to date.

Not having a watch on me, I decided not to linger and headed up the cascades leading to the bottom of Alum Pot. I briefly considered going out via NW direct, but having done it a few times before, opted to go via Long Churn instead. I really ought to shake off my automatic disdain for caves considered to be novice trips; Long Churn is really pleasant and good fun! I was surprised to bump into another caver near the entrance and we both agreed that having the system to ourselves was a real privilege, given the 1300 odd cavers camped just down the road. (Although most were probably still snoring at the time!)

Kev

Kev Speight, Russ Porter, Lisa Gibson, Mike Moxon – Simpson's Pot – Valley Entrance

My return to Dalesbridge was well timed (after a de-tour to Settle for supplies and cash, whereupon the bloody cash machine swallowed my debit card; thanks for bailing me out RBS – Royal Bank of Sprout!) as I found the group frying up bacon and eggs and buttering white sliced. After a session of duelling banjos, I was despatched to the caving tent to select a trip. Simpson's Pot seemed reasonably quiet and was a first for most of the group so I signed us up.

Predictably, Kingsdale was a hive of activity. Enjoying the glorious views on offer, I pondered whether the band The Waterboys were cavers and drew inspiration for the 1985 hit 'Whole of the Moon' from trips in the Kingsdale valley? I guess we'll never know... Anyway, once we'd all kitted up, we struck off up the steeply sloping west side, shunning the obvious and comparatively easy terrain of the defined path in favour of breaking trail (and ankles) through the dense heather and bracken. Several times the group enthusiastically voiced their appreciation of my navigation. Well the caving was all going to be downhill, why make it too easy? Our navigating issues didn't end at the Turbary Road. I'd wisely opted to leave the map in the car, favouring the time honoured method of 'stumbling around the fell until a likely hole is found'. Thankfully, no one was assaulted and a hole was eventually found. (For every other Eurospeleo rigged cave, a laminated card was provided at the entrance confirming identity. For some reason, the Simpsons one was missing.)

After some easy crawling, we came across the infamous 'Pit' which has no way on at the bottom. Cavers on pull through trips have been known to maroon themselves here, requiring rescue. The correct route is to traverse over the top and continue. An in situ safety line was present here and after some minor tribulations we were all across and pushing on to the start of the many fine pitches. The first major obstacle, which lies at the bottom of Storm Pot, is a refreshing duck that requires a more or less full body submersion. We met a group on their way up here and exchanged pleasantries. The next obstacle is the 23cm wide head of Slit Pot. Thankfully, there is an alternative route! Mike may have fitted, Lisa would fit easily if she

squidged 'The Twins' through one by one, but Russ and I would probably have had to wait a couple of weeks to starve our way through! The bypass involves a short climb up, then a slightly awkward and constricted abseil through a calcite chute until you emerge spectacularly in the roof of Swinsto Great Aven. The view from the bottom as the team emerged one by one was worth the effort of the trip on its own.

A handline assisted climb down a greasy slope, followed by a few short crawly bits saw us gain the Kingsdale Master Cave, which we stomped and splashed along until reaching the short pitch up to the balcony. Again we met more cavers, this time a novice and a lady out for an easy trip due to recovering from injury. All that remained was a fast stoop out through valley entrance to emerge in afternoon sunshine within spitting distance of the car.

Kev



Kev Speight, Mike Moxon, Russ Porter, Tom Harrison – Diccan Pot, again!

The Entrance to Diccan Pot

A trip so enjoyable I did it twice! With the newly arrived Tom champing at the bit to get underground and my rave reviews from earlier, we saddled up for Selside and schlepped our way up the hill past Alum Pot to Diccan. It was nice to have company this time, but I couldn't resist the temptation to be first in to zip down the nylon highway. Re-convening at the bottom, I decided to prussic out via NW direct in the name of completeness, while the others did Long Churn. Heroically, Tom had driven up to Yorkshire after a busy night shift of not letting planes hit each other or the ground, and was pretty tired, so the Long Churn group were taking their time. Rather than wait on the surface, where the temperature had dropped a fair bit, I opted to pop back underground and re-unite with everyone for the short trip back to the surface.

Kev

Kev ready for his 3rd trip of the day



Monday 15th August

Bull Pot of the Witches

Mike Moxon, Kay Eyeington, Dan Matthews, Ben Cooper and Tom Harrison

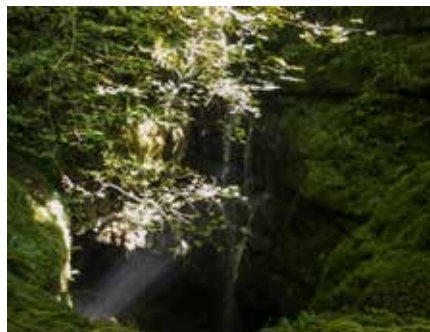
After my fun and games of the previous evening, struggling on a tight deviation in Diccan Pot, as well as the fact that Kay and Dan are new ish to SRT, Mike Moxon kindly offered to take us to Bull Pot of the Witches.

Here we could do some practice in a quiet cave as it one of those not rigged for Eurospeleo.

The sunlight entering the Pot at lunchtime made for some spectacular views.

Mike led us down and rigged a nice simple route with some rebelay to practice on.

We certainly took a nice easy pace to get to the bottom! Here we had a look at the streamway which can be dived to enter the Ease Gill system before heading back up and out.



Monday 15th August – Kev Speight, Russ Porter, Lisa Gibson – Hunt Pot

A leisurely breakfast was called for after the previous day's exertions, but once we'd all consumed a couple of pigs and a loaf each, the itch to be up and at it returned. We opted for a dual trip taking in Hunt Pot and the nearby Little Hull Pot as recommended by the excellent Eurospeleo guide book. We pit stopped at Inglethief first, having noticed that my harness was looking a bit second hand (or was falling apart at the seams, depending on your interpretation). I couldn't quite bring myself to abandon the old girl so unceremoniously; we'd been through a lot together, so I decided this would be her last hoorah.

The glorious weather made the 1 ½ mile stroll up to the flanks of Penyghent from Horton-in-Ribblesdale a pleasure and we soon arrived at the utterly idyllic entrance shaft of Hunt Pot. The open shafts in the Dales really do add an extra dimension to the start of a caving trip. Pissing about with uncooperative padlocks and fiendishly complex gate mechanisms on Mendip... not so much.

Russ dropped in first, followed by Lisa, while I did my best to look heroic for a group of passing walkers. One young lady was a particularly enthusiastic spectator, to the point where I wondered if I might have to deploy a shitty stick to preserve my virtue (her eyes weren't painted on, obviously). Thankfully, I got the cry of 'rope free' before she could overpower me and dropped in to join the others.

Unfortunately, the cave hadn't been particularly well rigged and Lisa was having a bit of an issue with a tricky free hanging re-belay. Russ was at the bottom of the shaft, but yelled up not to follow as the rope was more or less fully in the waterfall and he felt it was dodgy. Luckily, there was a convenient ledge behind Lisa that I could sit on and provide assistance in the form of offering a knee to stand on to help release a troublesome cowstail. This simple fix worked a treat and we were soon back on the surface basking in sunshine, chatting with a couple of other ES delegates who had come to check the state of the rigging. (They subsequently agreed that it wasn't the best they'd ever seen!)

Russ and Lisa wisely opted to enjoy the sunshine for a while before heading back into Horton for a pint, but I still fancied a crack at Little Hull Pot. I'd have to find it first! It should have been so easy. The guidebook said the two caves were but 5 minutes apart and I even had the OS map with me. I reasoned that it couldn't be too far from Hull Pot (a seriously impressive open pot!), but spent almost an hour struggling around boggy moorland trying to find the damn thing. I'd almost given up and was re-tracing my steps when I met Russ and Lisa heading back down to Horton. I said I'd give it one more go, then write it off as a bad job. This time I pretty much went straight to it, although more by luck than judgement. The entrance is in a very modest depression that looks just like the 2 million others in the area. It gives little clue as to the fantastic trip that awaits!

With a fairly tight callout, I guzzled a Lucozade to try and replace the fluids lost in my search for the entrance, ditched everything that wasn't absolutely vital and set to work. The initial easy meandering passage quickly gave way to a short crawl in some shallow pools, followed by more meandering before meeting the spectacular first pitch head. The rope swung out after a couple of metres, directing me through a giant window in the rock to the far side of the shaft. The guidebook had promised 'engaging situations' and the cave was delivering! The next pitch wasn't far from the bottom of the first. It begins as a short climb up in the streamway before a head first squeeze (with cowstails clipped in to an approach traverse) deposits you on a very exposed balcony at the top of the shaft. A truly epic pitch head this one, followed by a really nice free hang with optional deviation down the shaft.

The caving after this was mostly in a long, narrow rift, with a pretty unpleasant section which forced me to wallow at stream level; a more or less complete soaking. With the rift seemingly going on and on, I turned around after a further 5 or 10 minutes of crabwalking, giving me reason to return to finish off this absolute classic.

My exit was uneventful save for having to rearrange my metalwork to pass the squeeze at the top of P2, and I emerged back into the warmth before trotting back down to Horton to join Russ and Lisa for a quick pint.

Kev

Mike Moxon, Léonie Woodward -Gaping Gill Dihedral

On my second morning at Eurospeleo, before I'd even finished my first cuppa, Mike asked me, "Do you fancy a really big abseil today?"

Of course, he meant Dihedral, the "cavers' route" into Gaping Gill.

So, in glorious sunshine, we headed up to the main entrance, bought our winch tickets for the way out (I'd have been up for the 100m prussick back up, but sadly it was one-way only during Eurospeleo), and took up position at the top of the pitch.

Mike disappeared down the hole with alarming speed, given that I'd not done much SRT for a while, and might have been grateful of a few reassuring words before setting off. When I asked him afterwards if he had vanished so quickly so that I couldn't change my mind, he said no, it was so that HE couldn't change HIS mind!

Joking aside, it was the most amazing experience. Descending during the winch meet meant that the main-chamber was flood-lit, enabling us to see right to the floor, the equivalent height of two Niagara Falls. Tiny moving lights flickered as the cavers on the floor below wandered about admiring the enormity of the chamber.

Part way down the first pitch the winch passed me, travelling at an alarming speed. I felt quite relieved to be in control of my own descent! As the next one went by I heard a young boy wailing either in fear or exhilaration, it was hard to tell; and Mike's encouraging call to him, "It's alright!"

The ledge part way down gave an opportunity to rest my left hand, aching from the grip on the stop, and admire the surroundings; truly awe-inspiring to be in such a colossal chamber, with a stunning view of the waterfalls.

The final descent was equally impressive and, although conscious not to hold up the cavers following us down, I admit to pausing more than once to spin for a 360* view and to soak in the atmosphere.

The combination of a ready-rigged route and the fantastic lighting gave what was probably a once-in-a-life-time Dihedral opportunity, and this was definitely a trip I will never forget.

Léonie



Left: Gaping Gill Entrance

Above Background: The main shaft

Right: The top of the Dihedral route into Gaping Gill

All Photos by Léonie



Tuesday 16th August – Kev Speight, Pete Hall, Ola Lofquist – Meregill Hole

In the true spirit of Eurospeleo 16, an opportunity to cave with an overseas delegate was not to be missed. In this case, my Cheddar CC pal Pete Hall had been caving all week with Ola, a gnarly looking Swedish caver. In the time honoured tradition, they invited me to tag along the following day and drunken plans to tick off something a bit more technical were made in the beer tent.

We met in the caving tent at 9am and set our callout for Meregill Hole. The cave is notoriously flood prone, but with glorious weather and a stable forecast, we were comfortable that we wouldn't need to evolve gills anytime soon. I chatted with Ola on the way to Chapel Le Dale and decided that I really liked the cut of his jib. Ola lives in Gothenburg and works for Volvo as an analysis engineer. He's also tall, blonde, exceedingly polite and disgustingly fit and good looking. You could say the bloke is a walking stereotype! A typical caving trip for Ola involves waiting until mid summer, when the snow in the northern mountains has receded enough to be able to access the entrances, taking a 20+ hour train ride to the North, chartering a helicopter, then spending a week under canvas at high altitude, hundreds of miles from civilisation, pushing gnarly cave systems in snowmelt and utterly frigid air temperatures. In other words, Ola is nails!

On arrival at the layby, I discovered that I had a chance to prove my status as 'hard' (stupid), due to the fact that I'd forgotten my sodding wetsocks. Being hot and sunny, we were all in flip flops so I couldn't even scavenge normal socks. Oh well, goodbye skin, hello blisters! I was given further opportunity to prove how resourceful I am on the walk in, when it became apparent that large quantities of beer and cider was giving my digestive tract cause for complaint. It turns out that discarded tufts of sheep's wool, as found on bits of exposed fencing or tufts of vegetation, make excellent emergency loo roll. I would stress EXTREME CAUTION however, if using this technique in areas where thistles abound...

There are a couple of ways in to Meregill; the aquatic Mere entrance, or the dry but technically awkward and tight Aven entrance. The volunteer riggers had only rigged the Aven entrance, where the rope begins just inside in a body sized, body length slot which emerges straight over a sizeable pitch. Given that protection here is an absolute must, removing my SRT kit wasn't an option. With some trepidation about how I was going to fit, I clipped in my cowstails and tackled the slot head on, superman style with one arm extended and one by my side. This rapidly saw me firmly wedged by my metalwork and unable to proceed forwards. Luckily I was free to inch my way back to a point where I could extend both arms and try again. Predictably, I jammed again, but this time decided failure wasn't an option and gave it all I had by exhaling and pushing with my feet. It took me a couple of goes, but I finally popped through, accompanied by the squeal of metal on rock and a souvenir bruise on my pelvis. The others followed without incident and we were soon whooping our way down the cave.

The pitches in Meregill are all airy and typically have free hanging re-belays. A couple of times I played my 'get out of jail free' card and used a spare sling to pass them. In between pitches were numerous deep pools where the options were either technical traversing around the overhanging passage walls or swim! Thankfully, we all managed to avoid a complete drenching and reached the final couple of short pitches, which drop into the main drain in under an hour. If I'm honest, I found the main drain a bit dull in comparison to the ropework. It consists of a seemingly endless meandering stream canyon with occasional cascades. There is one significant inlet on the left called Torrent Passage, from which the Black Shiver stream emerges. Apparently there is an interesting round trip to be had here, which emerges further back, close to the final pitches. One for next time perhaps. The one thing I did find impressive in the lower cave was the amount of obviously fresh flood debris stuck to the roof of the cave! Not somewhere you want to be in a thunderstorm! The guidebook informed us that the passage lowered to a wet, cobbled crawl a couple of hundred metres before the terminal sump. We briefly debated going for it, but by this point my feet were feeling pretty second hand, so despite losing my 'hard' status, I probably reduced the 'stupid' slightly.

We met with a couple of inward groups as we headed out, but hold ups were brief and we were soon at the entrance pitch. We decided that Pete should go out ahead of me, just in case he could help me through the squeeze by pulling my arms, but in the event, taking my Stop off my central maillon and stashing it on a gear loop made it far easier and I wriggled through without issue. Ola of course barely touched the sides and he emerged looking like he'd been out for an afternoon stroll in the park. Sod!

Joking apart, the main gain of the trip was getting to know Ola and appreciating that the love of caving transcends cultures and language barriers. There are comparatively few caves known in Sweden and those that there are require huge logistical challenges to be overcome to explore them, yet the caving community is thriving, if small in numbers. I'm delighted to report that Ola has subsequently invited me to join a summer expedition in 2017. I'm going to do everything I can to make it happen.

Kev

Tuesday 16th August - Heron Pot and Yordas Pot and Cave

Lisa Gibson, Russ Porter, Dan Matthews, Kay Eyeington, Ben Cooper and Tom Harrison.

It is hard to pick a favourite day of the Eurospeleo week but this was at least a joint first for me! We drove up to Kingdale in two cars and parked near the entrance to your Yordas Cave to get changed in glorious sunshine.



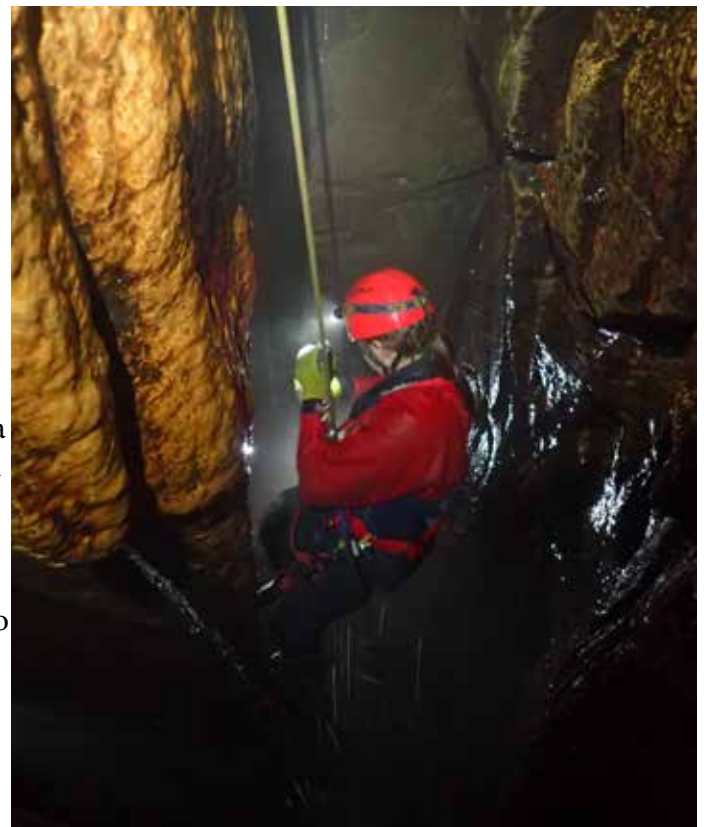
Once again it almost seemed a shame to be going underground. (Not really!)

We first walked across the valley to the entrance to Heron Pot. This was a cracking shortish through-trip starting in a wonderful piece of stream passage with easy walking for 20 minutes to reach the ropes leading to the main pitches. There are two options here the traditional route or the high-level traverse.

We opted to do the traditional route first. This is two short easy pitches, close to the waterfall, with a fairly straightforward rebelay, made easier by Russ' sling. When we had all made it to the bottom, Ben, Russ, Lisa and Dan went back up the same pitches to do the high-level traverse. I am told this has a tricky airy part to it, before the longer pitch, away from the water, is reached.

We all played around on both pitches until we decided to complete the through trip, involving a long crawl to a short duck to get back out to daylight. This would be an unwise route in very wet weather!

We continued our day with a walk back to the other side of the valley and into Yordas. Here we split into two groups; Russ, Lisa, Ben and myself, went to the middle entrance while Dan and Kay entered the cave to take some photos. This was a very fun short section of SRT. With some thought needed for each of the parts of the traverse leading to the main waterfall pitch. Tom



Wednesday 17th August - Long Churn - Lisa Gibson and Russ Porter
 Alum Pot North West Route - Kev Speight, Dan Matthews and Kay Eyeington



Buoyed by the fun they had had the day before; Dan and Kay fancied a longer abseil and so Kev offered to guide them down into Alum pot via the North-West route. Here they planned to meet Lisa and Russ at the bottom, as they took the Long Churn Route in.

I was there as a (jealous) surface photographer before I had to make a quick drive to Manchester to pick up Beverley.

Russ and Lisa took my camera with them and disappeared off to the Long Churn entrance.



We really were being spoilt with all of the great weather and it was another beautiful day in gods own country.

Too hot for an oversuit.....



Or a fleece.....





So with Kev in his pants, the three of them headed off underground, to meet up with Lisa and Russ at the bottom. From all accounts they had another brilliant trip, and when I received my camera back it transpired that it was hot underground as well.....



Thursday 18th August 2016
Stream passage pot to Gaping Gill

Russ Porter, Lisa Gibson, Dan Matthews, Ben Cooper, Tom Harrison, Kay Eyeington.



A pleasant walk up to Gaping Gill in the sun with Bev, Tom's girlfriend, who was going to descend via Gaping Gill Winch whilst the rest of us made our way in via Stream Passage Pot.

We passed Mountain Rescue on the way who gave Ben and our bags a ride for about 100 meters.

We assembled our full kit at the entrance of Gaping Gill after several members of our party had paid an invigorating visit to the luxury toilets provided by the Craven Pot-hole club. It felt like a bit of a Highlander moment having a crap up there pre caving trip.

We entered via a small vertical shaft after rescuing a yellow spider. We crawled and traversed along to the first long pitch. There was then some delay on the deviation as those behind in the tunnel had to stay lodged in contorted positions whilst the caver below (who will remain nameless) completely f%*@ed up a deviation and had to be rescued by Russ sending up a sling. At this point, Tom went back up the shaft to meet Bev and alter the call out time for the cavers behind us.



Three pitches later we arrived at the bottom and followed a stream then left it to go to Sand Cavern and to some confusion about what was the way on.

Following a comparatively muddy squeeze where Russ had to remove gear to get through, we were met by Tom who'd entered via the winch. A walk through led to the bottom of Gaping Gill where we were winched up one by one like something out of War of the Worlds (more recent movie) but much more pleasant, with laughter and a green mossy view at the top with sunlight and old fashioned kit washing in the diverted stream. A lovely trip, ending with a Clapham hedgehog rescue.

Kay



Saturday 20th August 2016

Notts Pot with Mike Moxon, Dan Matthews and Kay Eyeington.

A windy and rainy trairpse over the slippy heather like a police evidence search party to find the entrance of the cave. Eventually found by Mike and straight on the rope to walk backwards down to a short descent then a crawl into the cave. Follow the passage to a rift with a handline and followed the stream way to the first main pitch. A pleasant descent with no issues down several other pitches with deviations and a traverse then ascent/climb back up, one part a climb/prussic, another had a squeeze involved with deviations, until the top where a crawl led back to the top. Easy to get lost at this point as Dan found out. Nakedness on the road ensued afterwards, whilst changing.

Kay and Dan

Malham Cove, Malham Tarn and Malham Beck. But where are Malham Caves?
Tom Harrison and Beverley Allen

On the Wednesday evening at Eurospeleo Ben, Kay, Beverley and I took a lovely walk around Malham village, seeing the beautiful Janet's Foss waterfall, Malham Cove and the limestone pavement above it. With heavy rain all day Saturday, I persuaded Beverley to take another walk in the same area to see the water sink, Goredale scar and to see the entrances to the many caves which this Karst landscape must contain.



Sun setting behind the Cove



Far left: Malham Cove Rising



Left: The divers entrance to Malham Cove

We had a very nice but very wet walk. We saw the water sink from Malham Tarn, we saw Airdale Springs and We found the divers entrance to Malham Cove, but apart from a few holes in the limestone and some rock shelters we found no caves!

To answer this riddle I turned to the excellent guide produced for Eurospeleo and the online parts of the second volume of Caves and Karst of the Yorkshire Dales dues out in December.

I expected these guides to show the locations of local caves were but it turns out there is very little . Malham cove has over 1800m of mostly submerged passage and Malham Pot a now back filled dig.

It is a fascinating, famous Karst landscape. As Phil Murray, the author for the Malham section of Caves and Karst of the Yorkshire Dales, states, there is 5km distance and over 300 m depth between some of the sinks and their risings. There must be a very major system, hiding behind and beneath the famous cove. Well worth pondering on a visit to this must see site.

Tom

OCTOBER 2016

Fri to Sun 7 - 9 Member's Weekend

Fri 6:30pm Nordrach	7	Early Arrivals Trip Anyone planning to arrive Friday and fancy a trip? Please leave a message on the Newsgroup.
Sat 10:00am Nordrach	8	Grebe Swallet Come visit this delightful gem of a cave which was mined up to the 18th Century. Contact Ed Waters social@mendipcavinggroup.org limited space
Sat TBC Nordrach	8	Half Year General Meeting Group Finance and Investments Discussion
Sat Nordrach	8	Finding Neverland: Upper Flood 2006 Breakthrough Talk & Chilli Hear all about the Breakthrough 10 years ago.....

NOVEMBER 2016

Fri to Sun 4 - 6 Member's Weekend

Fri 6:30pm Nordrach	4	Caves Close Trip: Ubley, Pinetree, Waterwheel or the Rakes Evening Trip to one of the caves within walking distance of the Cottage. Email Tom Harrison editor@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Sat 10:00am Nordrach	5	Somewhere Horrible With Tim Francis! The Title says it all really. Check the Newsgroup for more information!
Sat Nordrach	5	Entertainment/Social Evening TBA

DECEMBER 2016

Fri to Sun 2 - 4 Member's Weekend

Sat Nordrach	3	Christmas Dinner The Plan is to squeeze everyone into the Cottage, but to ensure you don't miss out, there will be an opportunity shortly to reserve your spot. Details will follow in the next MCG Update.
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APRIL 2017

Sat	8	AGM & AGM Dinner Keep the date free in your diary and see you all there!!
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Some of the recent Cottage Social
 Events
 Games Night
 Hawaiian Evening
 BBQ
 Frisbee Golf to name a few!

Photos by Charlie Allison

