

Report on Caving Club Activities

June 2002 – December 2002

Compiled by

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Introduction

Since the allocation of our Harlington grant last academic year, the club has run a large number of very successful trips, both home and abroad. This report summarises these trips, and details the recruitment and training of new members.

The final two summer trips to France and Ireland made good use of the lightweight caving rope bought with the grant, and were a good way of rounding off a successful year.

The club has managed to recruit a large number of new members, and we started training them in rope-work in Princes Gardens early in the new term. The first couple of trips of the year were to the easier systems of South Wales, before heading to our favourite haunt of Yorkshire, the main karst area of the UK.

The advent of cheap airlines has made it possible to venture abroad more frequently, allowing the club to visit many of the classic caving areas of Europe. Early next year we are planning a trip to Co. Fermanagh where we will once again use our lightweight rope, and in May, the club will be visiting Dent de Crolles and tackling some of the world-famous through trips.

Complete write-ups of all trips and expeditions for the past few years are available at <http://www.su.ic.ac.uk/caving>

Trois Betas to Diau - June 2002

Report by Colm Carroll

We descended the cave at 5pm. It was quite late in the day, but we couldn't resist the temptation of a quick beer at the restaurant an hour back along the path. Our shocked fellow customers were glad to see the back of us - a posse of neoprene-clad cavers are not who you want to meet on a peaceful Saturday afternoon's stroll in the amazing scenery of the Haute Savoie. We had divided into two groups of 5 for the lengthy through trip from the Tete du Parmelan plateau to the Filliere valley, 700 metres below. This long anticipated expedition is described as 'probably the best caving through trip in France', and considering the French invented caving, it was definitely something to look forward to.



The team raring to go

It started, as all good ideas do, in the pub! We were all looking for an adventurous caving trip to do in the Summer, so when Hugh suggested this 650m through trip we were all for it. Flights were booked, cars were hired - a trip was born!

Two months later, Hugh, Jan, Tim, Goaty and I relaxed in beautiful sunshine as the first group descended the entrance shaft - an 88m drop into the heart of the mountain. We decided to wait an hour to allow them to clear the first section of the cave before starting the descent ourselves. After a typical English Summer, it was great to have the warm sun beating down on us, especially in such an inspiring limestone landscape. Once our skin had turned a satisfying shade of lobster, it was time to go. I pulled my wetsuit over my shoulders, lobbed the rope down the small entrance pothole, and down I went. This was my first pull-through trip, and I was slightly nervous. A pull-through requires the cavers to pull the ropes down behind them in order to use them on the next shaft. Once the first rope is down, there's no way back up - in effect burning the boats. As Jan hauled the rope to join us on the small ledge I



Huddling on a ledge

suddenly realised the only way out was 16 hours and over 5 km away. We were committed!

Disaster struck nearly straight away. At the bottom of the 88m shaft, I leaned on the rope to pull it down, but nothing happened. I put all my weight on it - not a budge. Tim came over to help, but even under the combined weight of the two of us, it still wouldn't move. This was the situation we'd all been dreading; the rope was stuck. We

had to get the rope down, as it was needed further on in the cave, and there was no other way out. Tim volunteered to ascend back up the rope to discover the problem. He quickly discovered that the descent rope and the pull-down rope had managed to

twist themselves around each other, Tim carefully untwisted them, then kept the well apart as he descended again to the floor. I once again leaned on the rope, a slight movement, then it stuck again, our hearts sank. But pulling harder it soon came free and the 70m of rope toppled down on top of me.

Another series of smaller pitches led to the biggest shaft in the cave, an exhilarating 58m free hang dropping into a spectacularly fluted chamber. A small stream entered from a tiny passage on the left, continuing onwards in a channel at the bottom of a large tunnel. We followed this in to a huge dry passage, coated everywhere with solid mud. The next section of the cave was just like an adventure playground. We swung on ropes above big drops, whooped along enormous train-tunnel passageway, ducked under massive waterfalls, and eventually ended up in the mammoth Salle des Rhomboedres. This chamber acts as a large collector for the three high altitude entrances to the Diau system. We could see where the shorter Bel Espoir entrance entered, but couldn't find the way on to the bottom. Panic ensued as we clambered all over the colossal boulders in search of it. Would we



Jan on the 58m free-hang

be stuck to wander the Diau system forever? A huge shout from Goaty led to relief by all as he found the route to the Puits des Echos, a large 39m shaft which did, indeed, echo. After a quick cuppa from the stove deposited by the previous group, we followed the water onwards.

We had now entered the Affluent de Grenoblois, a large streamway passage with glistening walls. The stone seemed to be reflecting our lights back at us. The many small drops and waterfalls adding to the excitement in the best bit of passage I've ever seen. We sped onwards and downwards in this winding passage - with everyone enjoying the route. It must have been past 3 in the morning, but the cave was too fascinating for anyone to notice.

A slowing and deepening of water indicated that the confluence with the Diau streamway was fast approaching. And though we all thought the cave had been brilliant so far, we didn't know the best was yet to come. The Diau river cave occupies a 5m diameter passage with a large, gentle river flowing through it. This passage of cave exposed another character to the all-encompassing trip: big passages, winding canyons, and now tubular river-passage; this cave had it all. We progressed easily along the tunnel, the water only knee-high, when we came across a large chamber with a tent in the corner. This area had been used as a base-camp by the original cave-explorers. They had explored the cave from the bottom up, with the high entrances only discovered by intensive searching. We had our feed of noodles and Mars bars before pressing on in the cascading passage. The deeper sections of cave had wire ropes strung across the side. We clipped in easily pulled ourselves over the water. Jan and I zoomed off, being eager to explore this fascinating passage. It was only after we waited 10 minutes for the others to catch up that we realised there were problems. Goaty's acetylene light had failed early on, and he'd been using his electric back-up for much of the cave. That eventually ran out, and he was now on his spare electric, which was dimming rapidly. I lent him my spare electric - enough light to exit the

cave, but not much more than that. This had slowed him down considerably, so we decided to stick together so he could cave by our lights.



Feeling the effects after a long trip

back in the French countryside. I couldn't wait to strip off my wetsuit to bask in the sun once again, and the others followed likewise. Paul, from the previous group, was waiting with warm croissants and fine French coffee. We collapsed in the back of the car and returned to the campsite where we quickly sorted the gear before falling into a deep sleep.

The excellent Sunday lunch of endless beef and lamb eaten in the magical village of Thorens-Glieres topped off an excellent caving trip.

The water was getting deeper now, with the strong current rushing past us. At one point we had a brief swim across a chamber, but we were still going strong and a quick look at the map indicated there wasn't far to go. Much encouraged, we stormed along the passage, leaving the river behind, we clambered down ladders, shuffled along thin ledges, waded through waist-deep pools before a glint of daylight could be seen in the distance. It was 9AM and we were

Clare - 5th and 6th October 2002

Report by Colm Carroll, photos by Jan Evetts and Colm Carroll

The alarm rang at 4:30, it felt like we'd only just gone to bed. Slowly dragging ourselves awake, we munched on toast courtesy of Darryl's flatmate, Down to the taxi, and whistling along the M4, we got to Heathrow in plenty of time for our 6:50 flight to Shannon. I was still half asleep as we negotiated passport control in Shannon:

"Are you Irish?"

"Yes."

"Fine, off you go."

and only really woke up halfway along the drive to Doolin - and I was doing the driving! The glorious sunshine and lack of rain in the previous weeks meant we could do our choice of cave - with the flood-prone Coolagh River Cave at the top of the list. A quick deviation to the surfing town of Lahinch to hire a wetsuit, we arrived in Doolin a little after 10am - just as the village was beginning to wake.

That weekend there was a Cave Rescue exercise in the area, so we were keen to avoid being press-ganged into hauling stretchers out of holes. We quickly drove along the empty Burren lanes to the entrance - an innocuous looking field. It seemed rude to go underground, with the magnificent sun warming our backs I nearly suggested we go rock climbing instead, but we were here for caving, so that's what we did.



Typical Burren pavement

The Coolagh River Cave has 4 entrances, and we were planning to do a through trip between two of them. We descended through the red mud of Polldonough North into a tight rift. I followed to high level tube for about 30m before the way on got tighter, and tighter, and tighter. Clearly we'd gone wrong. I managed to squeeze down the 5m to the stream, and the going was easier straight away. We followed this passage, described as 'aquatic' in the guidebook, but couldn't figure out where we were in the cave. According to the survey, we were supposed to meet a small waterfall early on, but after an hour and a half in the cave, there was no sign of it. We pressed onwards, crawling in passages half filled with water, descending a series of pristine cascades,



Colm in Polldonough North

before we reached a junction. It was only then that I realised what had happened. The survey we were using was the original map drawn by Bristol when the cave was first explored, and the entrance we used hadn't been discovered then, so we only joined the survey after 1.5 hours of hard caving!

Now that we knew where we were, everything went swimmingly. We entered the big Lower Main Drain passage, a fantastic bit of streamway.

After visiting the end of the caves, we headed back up to exit the Polldonough South entrance. We raced up the fine passage. While I was exploring a side passage up a

rope, I heard laughter from the front. Darryl had fallen into the infamous Balcome's Pot - a 5m deep pool of water. Luckily for us, this meant we'd just passed our junction, so while the others clambered up the climb to a high level passage, I swam across the Pot to see what was beyond. Up a 2m climb into more stream passage - it just kept going. I returned to others, taking a flying leap into the deep water, completely submerging myself, with my light disappearing from view. I emerged with a broad grin,

"That was fun, I think I'm going to do it again"

I was wearing a 5mm wetsuit, so didn't feel any of the cold as I jumped and slid into the Pot again and again. After a good dunking, it was time to go. We were now in what looked like fossil passage (ie no stream), but we knew the whole cave filled with water in floods. After another small section of crawling, we emerged into the middle of another Field to a herd of cows wondering what these mad people were doing.

Before returning to the hostel, we visited the spectacular Cliffs of Moher, very impressive sea cliffs just down the coast. Our amazing chef prepared fine food with only slight hindrance from the others, then it was time for McGann's, one of the three pubs in this small village. The pub was full of cavers. With the rescue practice, and one of the Dublin university clubs being down, we nearly outnumbered the German tourists! With the accompaniment of a traditional band, and the pints flowing fast and furious, I was touched by a stroke of genius.

"Who fancies a look down Fisherstreet Pot?"

Fisherstreet Pot was just across the road from the pub, and is an easy entrance to the large Doolin River Cave system. I texted Brian,

from Trinity College, Dublin, and despite it being past midnight, the trip was on. Jan had already gone to bed, and Helen was too tired, so it'd just be the five of us.

Putting on wet clothes on the Sunday is one of the worst things about caving, so I'd packed spare dry clothes. We quickly put them on outside our hostel, and wandered over to the entrance, a clump of trees. Brian and John joined us, and I belayed them all down the ladder - just long enough. Through the deep water, we entered the train tunnel sized passage. This was fine streamway, and very enjoyable. After the ten minutes I thought we'd be in the cave, we reached the junction with the Aran View passage, a route to another entrance.

"Who wants to go on?", asked Brian. "It's a bit squalid, but should only take an hour." We hadn't a hope.

We followed Brian up the passage, still big and well-decorated, bit gradually getting tighter and tighter.

"You told me we wouldn't need knee-pads", moaned Darryl.

"I thought we were only going to be in for 10 minutes", I replied.

The going was getting tougher, and it began to seem like this wasn't such a good idea after all. Then, suddenly, the air became fresher - we were nearly there. Just one last obstacle, the farmer had blocked the exit with a wooden pallet. Desperation took hold as Brian found some super-human strength. We were outside.

Back at the hostel at 3am, we stumbled to bed. Jan turning over in his sleep thought:

"3am, that must have been some session in the pub!"



Cliffs of Moher



Our hostel in sunny Clare

Amazingly enough, we woke at a reasonable time on Sunday. A large greasy breakfast, eaten al fresco (I know it's hard to believe, sun, in Clare, in October!). Brian and John joined us and we set off on the trip to Poll na gColm. Jan rigged the exit pothole, a 30m shaft, while the rest of us got changed at the entrance. Before long, we were all squirming through the muddy links series to reach Branch Passage Gallery, a high level passage that drops into the main streamway later on. The water levels were quite low, so we didn't have to traverse to avoid the canals - instead we ploughed straight through. We abseiled the 8m drop, pulling the rope through behind us, continued past the main junction where we joined the streamway. The passage began to get wider, and smaller, and we were soon crawling again. The water disappeared on the right, indicating the maze was coming up. This notorious bit of passage has claimed several victims, necessitating the calling of the cave rescue on one occasion. However, we had Brian and John with us, they guided us through Craven Canyon, over climbs, along the crawls, 'til eventually daylight could be seen. We were at the base of Poll Elva, the 30m pot. Jan's rope dangled just in front of us. Darryl started up as the rest of us took a shower where Upper Poll Elva streamway cascaded into the cave.

Soon we were all out, and motoring back to Shannon, stopping at Lahinch to drop off the wettie, and for a bit of seaside food. Flight left on time, arriving in Heathrow just in time to catch the last tube. An excellent trip, no doubt to be repeated. Fermanagh anyone?

Training the New Members

Report by Colm Carroll

We began our training sessions with the relatively simple ladder and life-line techniques commonly used on short pitches in Wales and Mendip. Most people picked these methods very quickly, so we moved onto the more complex SRT (single rope technique) in early October. SRT requires a few training sessions to fully master, but once learnt, the techniques are rarely forgotten.

The first opportunity to use the system in anger was on the fireworks trip to Yorkshire, and with over 25 club members present, everyone had a good time. Many of the new club members have already become proficient with the technique, and are now moving on to the rigging stage, where they learn how to place the ropes in the cave in a safe and efficient manner.

Early in the Spring term, we will start training the new members in the techniques of self-rescue and simple hauling systems. We purchased lightweight pulleys and pulley-jammers with the Harlington grant, which greatly simplifies such methods. These skills are always useful, but are essential for caving in remote areas such as Slovenia.



Rik showing how it's done



Lyndon on his way down



Adam locking off his descender

Wales - 12th and 13th October 2002

Report by Andrew Jurd

In a rather uncharacteristic moment of efficiency, we actually managed to pack all the kit and get everyone loaded in the minibus ready to leave before 8. All the equipment strapped to the roof (It ain't gonna rain) and all the new members rounded up after getting lost looking for food in the union and we still managed to leave before 8? That'll be the day! At least that meant we arrived at the Croydon Caving Club (Ystradfellte, Brecon Beacons, right) at an acceptable hour. We needed to be up early the next day as the custodians of Ogof Ffnno n Ddu (OFD, the deepest cave in Britain) in a ICU-like display of bureaucracy refuse to issue access keys after 11am.



Whitewalls Hut

By the morning the Welsh rain had gone and it was turning sunny. We decided over the morning fry-up to run 2 touristy-style trips into the top entrance of OFD, and another to Pant Mawr for those who had completed ladder training. Due to the lack of rain the walk to Pant Mawr was pleasant but the trip was soured by Jan unfortunately dropping his hideously expensive camera 20m down the entrance shaft. Well you live and you learn.



Getting changed outside SWCC



Wet wetsocks!

The two trips into OFD were less technical, but with over 50 km of passageway to explore, route finding even in the areas close to the entrance can be a process of trial and error. A couple of hours were spent looking at the formations known as the 'Wedding Cake', 'Judge' and 'Trident', and also exploring the poorly named 'Big Chamber Near the Entrance'. Andy bumped into an old acquaintance on the way out who invited ICCC over to the '18th Hole' WSG dig, although the drills and explosives sounded fun, we had some serious caving to do on Sunday.



Entering OFD

It was another miracle which saw us at the infamous South Wales Caving Club (SWCC) HQ to sign ourselves in for another trip into OFD. The hut has changing rooms and lovely warm showers, which was welcome as the weather had taken a turn for the worse. The trips were all going to be in OFD, 5 minutes from the hut. No-one wanted to go on the 40 minute walk in the rain to Pant Mawr. Visibility decreased, the rain got heavier, and the wind picked up. We were glad to get underground where it was actually warmer and drier! Even those of us who ended up in the

main streamway wading in waist deep water were glad to be out of the freezing wind. The efforts of those who managed to climb down a taxing rift, and down a waterfall using an iron ladder had their efforts rewarded by experiencing one of the finest streamways in Britain. A trip upstream led to the Top Waterfall, a visually impressive wall of water, and the limit of exploration in that direction.

Clewin's team ventured into Cwm Dwr, the middle entrance of OFD, just a couple of hundred metres from the SWCC hut, perfect! After experiencing the 'Grade 2 Confined Space' (where was that sign stolen from?) the time-honoured ICCA tradition of getting lost in the Cwm Dwr Boulder Choke was accomplished. Meanwhile the remaining party entered OFD top with the specific aim of completing the Selenite-Edward's Shortcut roundtrip. Did they complete it? Err, no.

The drive home was really unpleasant. A pant-filling moment in the high winds on the way over the Severn Bridge was the low-light, while Shed discovering the eat-as-many-strawberries as you-can at one of the service station on the way home was the highlight (for all concerned).



Jan eyeing up the 6th punnet of strawberries.

Wales - 26th and 27th October 2002

Report by Colm Carroll

Got away from the union in a decidedly dodgy union van (aren't they all dodgy?) and off on the motorway to the valleys. Made it to the Aberdare Tesco just before closing time, so managed to stock up on a bit of booze. The WSG hut was it's usual freezing self, so, much of this booze was consumed to warm us up! The spin off of this was strange practices with the common-room table (right).



Table-traversing

Saturday

The first job after the greasy cavers breakfast was to fix the holes in the roof of the van using duck-tape. Duck-tape, is there anything it can't do? After that we went on a mad driving spree to get to South Wales Fascist Caving Club before 11am to get the keys.



The Minicolumns

Colm, Moritz, Philipp, Jani, and Darryl took the usual route down Gnome to Trident and Judge *via* Salubrious. Feeling keen, we motored on to the streamway, taking the climb down to maypole in our stride. After a quick splash upstream (no dwarf-traps), we returned *via* the minicolumns to find that Pete's group had nicked the ladder, so we got a bit of free-climbing in before exiting the cave.

Pete's group had a surprisingly similar trip – the only excitement being a blown bulb whilst thrashing around in the streamway.

Sunday

Most of us went into Cwm Dur in search of the holy grail – the confluence with the main streamway. The unsuspecting Freshers seemed not to enjoy the entrance series on the way in, I wonder why? Tackling the boulder choke with ruthless efficiency meant we had enough time to faff on the climb down to the small streamway. With bad weather outside, the water was running higher than usual, so we turned around a bit early, Pete, Rik and Neel continued to the confluence, with Neel getting completely soaked climbing the waterfall on the return. Everyone was even less impressed with the entrance crawl on the way out, with multiple light failure indicating a good weekend's caving



Jani in a pointless squeeze

The Darryl faction went in OFD top, managing to get from Selenite to Edward's Shortcut – an IC³ first!

Fireworks Trip - 10 and 11th November 2002

Report by IC³

Saturday

Simpsons

Jan, Pete, Mark

Plan was to do Simpsons - Valley Entrance and derig on the Sunday, but due to the cave having too many pitches, it turned into a 'how many pitches can Pete rig on a single rope' trip.

Being the most efficient and well organised group in the Kingsdale faction we were first underground, paying respects to Dave Elliot on the way. The streamway looked ok in Valley Entrance so we chucked a ladder down and headed to Simpsons. The start looks worryingly Swinstow like (ie. wet crawls), so it was a relief to get to Five Steps waterfall, we rigged it with one rope and thinking we had saved a rope overkilled on the next unexpected obstacle, a 2m traverse, with a 17m length. Buoyed on by our expert skills, we forged ahead, Jan polished off his ropes and Pete took over with just a 25+65m in the bag we decided smugly the end must be near. On the next pitch Mark attempted the old Fresher Clutch-and-Plummet Technique, only thwarted by his long cowstail. Next up was the duck, with cave air rushing through 2 inches airspace you were practically sucked through it. We moved on considerably wetter, one rope left and we were expecting the Great 40m Aven instead we got a twatty 15m pot. Pete rigged down with 65m, at the bottom there was a climb and the rift continued to a similar hole, so on he rigged, again the rift continued and down a few climbs, by this point Pete had disappeared in a fruitless, rigging frenzy, while Jan and Mark were left following a trail of rope! And surprise a little further on another small annoying pitch. A pleasant streamway exited at the bottom and we met Pete coming back, having found the Great Aven, we had succeeded in miscalculating our rope by three pitches! (some kind of record). To add insult Petes Crunchie had mysteriously completely dissolved. We exited to a clear night and lots of dew on the ground so we oversuit surfed down the hill (Which must be attempted in a more serious capacity, due to being excellent fun). Only to have to climb back up to rescue the Jingling team. Top trip.

Jingling

Colm, Ben, Pui Yan, Fish

First SRT trip for the girls. Bottomed it, and emerged in darkness with various tanglings on the way.

Bull

Clewin and Tom led another first time SRT trip in Bull Pot, they even managed to exit the cave before the Jingling team!

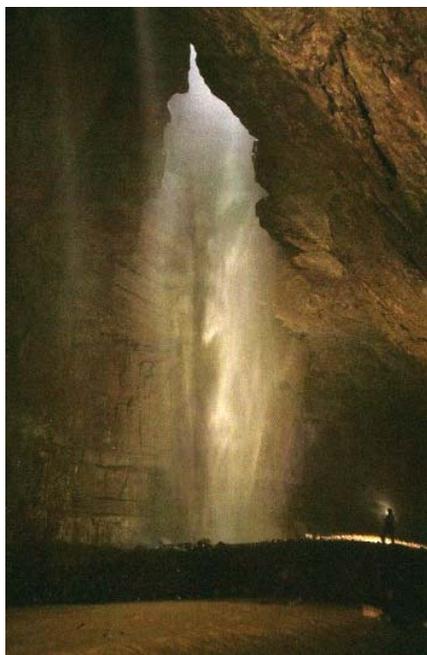
Flood - Bar exchange

Flood: Darryl, Shed, Dave, Rik, Lyndon

Bar: Andy, Goaty, Moritz, Neel

Saturday saw us do a Flood-Bar exchange trip, so we walked up Ingleborough and had a look at a very wet Gaping Gill before heading to our respective entrances. I wanted to practise my rigging so I rigged while Dave checked my knots. Everyone conquered pitch 1 easily, despite the awkward takeoff, and we headed into the crawl between pitches 1 and 2. Down the very short pitch 2 brought us to my favourite pitch of the cave - an excellent free hang, where you can just whizz down the rope. It took

more time to get my stop off than to get down! Through the rift and down another short pitch brought us to South East Pot, the big pitch, and Shed took over the rigging. Obstacle out of the way Rik continued and Dave went down while Lyndon went to the rebelay. I watched Lyndon do the rebelay from the top of the pitch. I was getting cold so I put my generator down my oversuit and to my horror, managed to push the carbide tub out and down the pitch.



Gaping Gill

“Shit, BELOW” I cried, hoping it would miss everyone, which, unfortunately, it did, although I couldn’t understand how it missed Lyndon who was making a big target at the rebelay below me. I then made my way down rather sheepishly and recovered the offending pot of carbide, which had nearly hit Shed at the bottom of the pitch.

Dave headed out with the Bar group up Flood, while the rest of us went to have a quick look at Gaping Gill main chamber before de-rigging Bar. Bar is quite strange in the fact that you go up 2 pitches and a slope, and yet the cave is as deep as Flood, which has 5 pitches and a lot of crawling. Anyway, it wasn’t long before we were at the bottom of the 1st pitch. I headed up amid complaints from Shed that he needed his spare battery as he had no light. Too late, I was half way up in the awkward bit, and I wasn’t about to go back down so I waited at the top, shining my light down the pitch while he struggled up.

Andy's version:

Some fresher stole my wellies so I borrowed Pete Hambly's which were a size too small. Hobbled up Ingleborough and then proceeded to rig Bar Pot. This would have been easy, were it not for the three SRT parties and one Mendip ladder party who had got there before us. Bastards. Quintuple rigged first pitch, a tight squeeze at the best of times (well, for lard-arses) and painfully made it through infamous 'Bar-Pot Wormhole'. Rigging would have been OK had I been able to get a maillon through P-hanger already crowded with crabs. Goaty was under fire from ladder party throwing ropes with crabs on the end 30m down last pitch. Bastards. SE pot looked wet with no sign of the others, so we ran off to the main chamber to catch the last glimpse of daylight up the shaft. When we got back to the bottom of Flood entrance the others were just arriving. Froze tits off waiting for them to come down (while being bombarded by carbide containers, bastards). Rope got caught round a flake, so after Moritz expertly reversed prussiked back down I went up to free it (with a bit of help from Goat-man pulling me into the waterfall. Bastard). Quick exit with Goaty derigging was only hampered due to a bat trying repeated to fly into my face. Then painful walk back down to Clapham.

Saturday Night

Saturday night is what we were all looking forward to. Once we got back from the cave, the lags had the food ready, so we demolished that very quickly and awaited the GG crowd who had taken the tap for the barrel! In the mean time, Pete was perfecting his aim with the carbide and Pringles container mortar. As soon as Shed pulled into the carpark, Pete aimed a beer can at him, while Colm wrenched the tap from his grip - the beer was ours.

We were lucky in that there were 6 Belgian cavers staying who'd brought a generous supply of Duvel, Geuze, and Hoegaarden. Yum yum. We abandoned our warm English beer quite rapidly. Fireworks ensued, a bit pathetic, but then the serious stuff got going - Carbide Bin's. All those of us inside could see was the occasional fireball illuminating the gleeful faces outside. Rik and Andy worked on the ultimate carbide explosion (ongoing research...) Unfortunately, the fun had to stop by 2AM as the farmer is notoriously bad-tempered and has been known to spray the assembled cars with manure!

Sunday

Aygill Cavern

Jan, Edd, Neel, Joachim

Quick trip down the little known Aygill, smoothly negotiated to the bottom of the first pitch, where Ed and Neil chickened out of the tight slot into streamway crawl, admittedly I was bit nervous in case it rained some more. Joachim was keen so we just went to look at the top of the second pitch, far enough to hear the roar of the main drain. Hyperactive Ed went for swim in the river after we got out. Good trip, easier with SRT.

Bull Pot of the Witches

Colm, Mark, Fish, Pui Yan

Easy Sunday wander through BP of the W. A couple of ladders for the bottom pitches would have been handy, but the are free-climable.

Cow Pot - Rigging Group

Pete, Lyndon

Riggers managed to bottom the cave without many problems. Pete managed to forget his jacket in Red Rose meaning a 45 detour on the way home – lovely.

Cow Pot - Second Group

Darryl, Rik, Moritz

This trip was meant to be a Lancaster trip, but when we got to the entrance there was a 9-person queue, so we headed into Cow Pot on Pete's rigging instead. In and out in an efficient 2 hours.

Dossing in the van

Andy's feet hurt too much (tons of gushing blood) to go caving on Sunday, so he had a snooze in the van, then went to rescue Pete.

Tom's neofleece got stolen, and my bed was swiped by some unscrupulous member of some shitty Mendip club, but I'm not linking the two at all.....

Yorkshire - 14th and 15th December 2002

Report by Colm Carroll

An elite force left stores at a surprisingly early 7pm and hit the M40 in no time. The new policy of shopping *en route* seemed to pay off, as we arrived at the NPC before 1am - surely some sort of record. After a couple of bevvies, we hit the sack in preparation of our mission the following day.

Saturday

Marble Steps

Andy, Joachim, Moritz, Lyndon, Colm

With the weather surprisingly good, it was decided a posse trip to Leck Fell was in order. According to Huge, Ireby was busy, so a last minute change to Marble Steps was arranged. A quick shopping stop in Bernies where we failed to get Lyndon to buy an SRT kit, we arrived at the roadhead to find a plethora of teams heading down Marble steps. Luckily they were all doing the lame gully route, which left the more interesting sidewinder to us. Splitting into two groups, the Andy faction started with gully, dropping into sidewinder before the big pitch. The Colm faction took the wet route, straight into sidewinder, with Colm rigging the excessively P-hanger big pitch to the bottom of the main chamber.

At the bottom we met a Derbyshire caver who'd had multiple light failure - his carbide was out of water (but he needed a piss, can someone explain the problem to me), and his light bracket had broken leaving it dangling in his chest. He motored out, while we waited for Andy to arrive with the second tackle bag. Onwards through a fine bit of passage to Stink Pot, where Andy was a bit too keen to get stuck in (literally) to the Intestines. Colm rigged the 90, managing to make a complete mess of the tight take-off, and quickly bottomed the cave while the others started out. Arse was dipped, and Colm started up again, taking forever and a day to get through the tight pitch head, where Andy was waiting to take the tackle bag - lifesaver! Back to the surface, with the Colm faction taking the gully exit, thus completing the exchange. Exiting the cave at a respectable 9pm, meant we had time for a nostalgic pint of Sheep in the Marton, sadly taken over by families, and not much sign of cavers. Back at the hut, the usual massive chilli was wolfed down before hitting the sack.



Marble Steps Entrance

Sunday

Rowten

Colm and Joachim tackled this Kingsdale classic. The entrance pitches were rigged with ease, and Colm was half-way down the big pitch when he ran out of rope. As Joachim hadn't passed knots mid-rope, Colm prussiked back up to attach the 90m rope, and continued down, having minor problems with the brand new rope twisting around itself. Quickly joined by Joachim, we continued down the interesting route to the head of the final pitch where the 90m ran out. Luckily we'd packed some tat as an afterthought, so we bottomed the cave, said 'Hi' to the albino fish, dipped our arses and headed out. Daylight could still be seen at the top of the cave, but by the time we exited it was quite dark. Another excellent trip in a good SRT pot.

Yorkshire - 14th and 15th December 2002

Bull Pot

Andy, Moritz or Lyndon to write about this - hopefully.

Got back to the hut by 5:15, packed, ate the last of the chilli, and were on the road by 5:45. Made it to London by 10:40 - less than 5 hours, another record?



Entrance pitch – Bull Pot

Future trips

Spring Term

Derbyshire

We'll be heading to the other classic caving area of Northern England early in the new year. Some may be tempted by the biggest pitch in the country, the mammoth 110m Titan, others will probably be more sensible and exceed their annual Radon dose in Giant's instead.

Fermanagh

Back to Ireland - we can't keep away. Excellent caving, tasty beer, it's going to be one of the best weekends of the year.

Yorkshire

Hopefully most of the trips this term will be to Yorkshire.

Easter Tour

Mallorca

We return once again to the Balearics for a taste of what caving's really about. With plenty of shorts and t-shirt trips, and amazingly beautiful formations, this is what Easter tours were made for.

Summer Term

Dent de Crolles

We're hoping to take advantage of the CAF meet in May to complete some of the best through trips in the world.

Notts Pot

During the second May bank holiday we'll rig this monster cave for multiple exchange trips.

Bel Espoir

We're hoping to do another 48 hour mission to the Diau system, this time descending the Bel Espoir entrance.

Summer Expedition

Slovenia

Back to Slov to discover more caverns measureless to man. This is, without any doubt, the highlight of the year. Guaranteed to go where no-one has ever been before. We'll be exploring below Friendship Gallery in Gardener's World, which will necessitate an underground camp. All the skills and techniques learnt throughout the year will be cemented together, to form lean, mean, caving machines!



Colm deep in Mig