



Hampshire Scout Caving Club



Newsletter July 2005



photo Dave Chadwick

Phil in Alum Pot

HSCC web site URL : www.scouts-hants.org.uk/hsc

HSCC Officials

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Administrator

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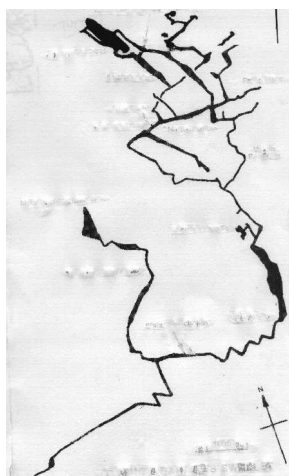
Phil Candy 10, Drake Road Bishopstoke SO50 6EU
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Programme 2005

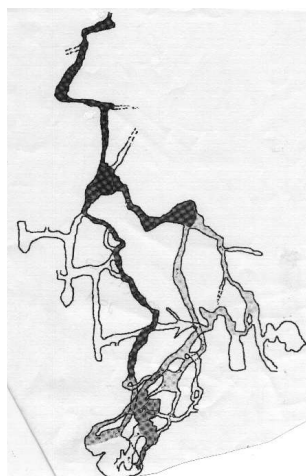
Date	Activity	Venue	Contact
26 -31 Aug 05	Yorkshire Trip	YSS	Phil
7 Sept 05	Club meeting - climbing tower	Fenny Crofts	Dave
24/25 Sept 05	Caving & Climbing Days	Mendip	Dave
5 Oct 05	Club meeting - talk	Eastleigh	Dave
22/23 Oct 05	Caving Days	Mendip	
2 Nov 2005	Club meeting - training	Eastleigh	Phil
19/20 Nov 05	South Wales	Brecon Scout Hut	Dave
26/27 Nov 05	Cavers badge - Mendip	MNRC	Dave
7 Dec 05	Club meeting - Quiz	Eastleigh	Phil
Christmas Hols	Club Trips in Mendip	Mendip	Dave
6 Jan 06	Club meeting - SRT practice	Sandleheath S C	Ros

Name the caves :

Cave A



Cave B



Hampshire Scout Caving Club Newsletter produced by Ros White. Contact: Ros@the-roost.freeserve.co.uk

HSCC Members:

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Chris Carter	H	02380 615899		Susan Lynch	H	02380 641736
	M	07788 963757			M	07773 912050
Dan Carter	M	07788 671545		Anne Parker	H	02380 652388
Michael Chase	H	01425 654161		David Sutherland	H	01252 628075
	M	07837 828695		Graham Sutherland	H	01252 628075
Gavin Clark	H	01256 468240			M	07774 189245
	M	07831 733805		Kirsty Sutherland	H	01252 628075
Paul Darlow	H	02392 240257			M	07789 983191
John Dawe	H	01264 362761		Andrew Watson	M	07781 420048
	M	07979 012957		Ros White	H	01425 654025
Lewis Goodfellow	H	02380 693962		Sally White	H	01425 654025
	M	07796 932635			M	07929 422285
Richard Gulvin	M	07813 941946				

Well done Tony Harris and Sally White who passed their **LCMLA 1 Core Skills**. Somewhere there are 6 more of you waiting to do it – let me know suitable dates and I'll try to organise it.

Congratulations to Stephen White for achieving his D of E Gold Award and to David Chadwick for passing his ML.

All Club members 18 or over need to complete a CRB check. Those of you who have positions at Group or District level should already have done this (can we have copies please?). If you haven't then see your GSL or DC to organise it. Those who are not attached to Groups or Districts should arrange a CRB through David Chadwick. You will also need to complete a Scout Association AA form so that you are

registered with the Scout Association, again see David for details of what to do.

After the whip-round in Phil and Sue's lounge before Taffs funeral the Club donated £190 to **Cave Rescue Organisation** "in memory of Colin Pryer".

Winning Caption from January edition: "Why did we get the job of unblocking the MNRC Sewer?" (from Andy Watson)

other ideas :

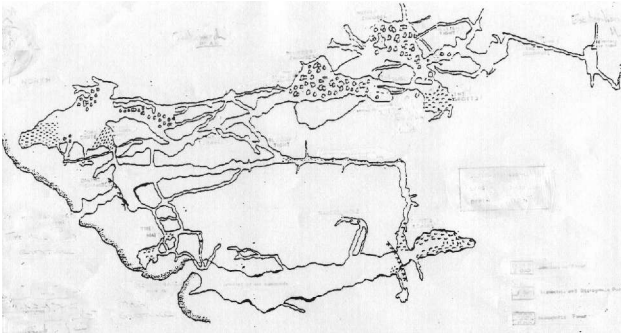
- "It looks dark & dirty, why are we doing this?"
- "That's got rid of those 2 fools, put the lid on and we'll go down the pub."
- "Not another dead animal pit? No, the aardvarks are still moving."
- "Oh dear the aardvarks have eaten him. Put the lid back and we'll go down the pub."

Name the caves:

Cave C : A 10ft scramble down the entrance rift presents the option of following a short rift passage or descending a steeply sloping passage in the floor to a small chamber.

Cave D : For its modest extent ?? is an unusually interesting cave – visually and as a sporting trip. The deep entrance pitch provides a rather technical descent to a roomy and impressive chamber.

..... awkward descent in a steeply-sloping narrow rift in knbbly Dolomitic Conglomerate.



A Short Trip into Goatchurch 05/02/05

Me, Andy Watson, a recent convert to HSCC, wanted to take my beloved girl friend Sue caving. So at the AGM at Eastleigh Darrell agreed to lead a short trip for us into Goatchurch. Phil kindly took some hats, lamps and an overall for Sue.

Sue has never been caving before (or rock climbing) but had tried a little bit of SRT recently. Sue is a fantastic, lovely girlfriend and infants teacher and it was fun when she was planning to pack a white jumper to change into when she came out, I gently suggested a darker colour might be a good idea.

Off we go in my little Rover 25 diesel with very light coloured seats (shows every drop of rain let alone cave mud!). After dropping Sue's daughter off at the Anvil Theatre at Basingstoke Theatre for a dancing show that we were going to later. I texted Darrell and he was waiting for us at 1:30 at MNRC.

Got changed, over to Burrington car park near the loos. Lots of people around as it's Saturday. Tromped up the hill to Goatchurch, Sue had some borrowed wellies and her socks had slipped right down walking up to Tradesman's Entrance. Sorted these out first and plopped in to the cave.

Darrell let me lead - scary. We stopped at the top of Coal Shute and Darrell rigged a hand line for coming out. Went down to Boulder Chamber, squeezed down in to the little wet "I can hear water" chamber underneath. Sue squeezed in and then realised she had to get out again. Most entertaining. First expression of "God, why am I here".

On down to the drainpipe, crawling and lying produced many giggles and expended energy. When we got to the end we told Sue we had to go back again. Clear expression of "Why am I here?"

Sue expended more energy coming back along the drainpipe using her elbows (you should see the bruises – knees and elbows – explained later this was all about technique). About ¾ of the way back along her wellie came off and her socked foot went in the muddy puddle. "Darrell can you bring my wellie, please" much hilarity. Oh, I had my camera convenient so if the photo comes out you can see the wellie after it was thrown up to Sue on the way out of the pipe.



Photo Andy Watson

Out of the Drain Pipe, turn right and slither to the Iron Ladder. I went down first and decided not to go further down the flat out crawl at the bottom – looked like a pointless squirm to me. Sue came down the ladder and then she had to go up again, at the top she was very tired and with short legs struggled, but with me placing her feet and Darrell helping up top she managed to get up.

On the way back out we went up and across the top of the narrow rift we had gone down. Darrell says "Sue don't slip down the hole". Sue, very tired now, slipped down the hole/rift and wedged about 6ft in. Ouch, but ok. Her boyfriend (me), abandoned her swiftly and Darrell (Hero) comes down to assist. I went down below and Darrell guided her down the rift to the bottom so we could have another go and come around again. He is a Hero. Tried again with great success after I wedged myself in the hole.

Better to go out the easy way, up Giants Staircase and out of the main entrance.

Shaken but not stirred, she is still my girlfriend, amazingly. Will Sue come again, you better ask her, but on a positive note, she thought the cave was very quiet and had never experienced this before.

Andy Watson,
Oakley St. Lawrence,
Basingstoke West

Hampshire Scout Caving Club, memories of Taffy

Colin started caving as an eleven-year old Scout. He took to it really well and soon every club trip started by collecting him at Chandlers Ford, no matter where we were going. On a week-long trip to Wales, when he was about 15, he forgot his car sickness pills. We took him to the nearest doctor, but he wouldn't prescribe for English visitors, so Colin had to take out Welsh citizenship. Thus Taffy he became, and Taffy he stayed.

When Taffy went to University in South Wales we visited a few times, sleeping on the floor in his room and raiding the female Spanish students' kitchens in the middle of the night, clearing them of every item of food! Mostly he was caving in Ogof Draenen then, but he spent a few months in Bristol when he finished at university, which was very convenient for meeting him on Mendip. Then Taffy moved to Newcastle and we didn't see him so often, but he usually managed to come down to the Dales when we were staying at the Yorkshire Subterranean Society hut. He would take pity on us old 'uns and carry the heaviest bag up the hill, but we still couldn't keep up!

Taffy came to Ireland on both our club trips. We managed to leave him in the pub one night, each car driver thinking the other had given him a lift. When we eventually realised our mistake and returned, he was quite happily walking the five miles back up the hill – though he was glad to see us! On the first trip he and Phil had a nasty experience with an eel, while crawling in a low streamway. It wrapped itself around Phil's wrist before swimming off around Taff's hands. The rest of the group couldn't understand what all the screaming was about!

Other memories include an irritated bat in Thrupe making life difficult while trying to rig a pitch, waiting for exactly the right moment to ask for directions from a car full of girls getting changed, many caving trips, many drinking evenings and many shared experiences.

This Easter in a travel lodge in the Ardeche, during our first club trip abroad, we sat in the corridor drinking beer and playing dominoes, and raised a bottle to his memory. We shall miss you, Taff.

Article written by Phil and Sue.

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Emerging from Bull Pot, Kingsdale



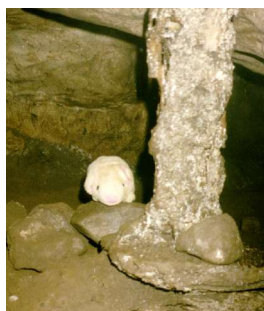
Birthday Squeeze, Swildons



Diccan



Rowten



Wookey



Gaping Ghyll

Taff – thanks for the memories

I answered the phone at about 8-30 Monday morning 14th March. I expected it would be a message about work. It wasn't. It was Sue.

"I have some really sad news" she said.

I seemed to go numb – no reaction – total disbelief. Taff - super fit, always prepared, supremely competent and ever careful. What had happened. He wouldn't panic – whatever happened he would just calmly sort it out. He wouldn't make a mistake. No – he couldn't have died – he would appear next time we visited YSS with that cheeky grin saying something like "ello unkle Filip!"

Poor Gemma! How was she coping? What had she gone through in the past 24 hours – fear, hope, despair?

The next week was spent in a haze. I am sure we were all the same. It kept coming back – it was there with you all the time in every waking moment – how did it happen – hope it was quick, what had he gone through and again – what had Gemma gone through.

So many memories come back – sitting in the rift in Diccan with Taff while Dave tries to find the deviation. It takes ages. There are rocks thundering down beneath us – taken down by the water. The noise is deafening and we both just sit there patiently waiting till the pitch is rigged. I remember Pol an Ionian, when we lost him near the start of the trip – only for him to reappear in the chamber with the Big Stal at the same time as us. Then there are memories of Swildons – he could never resist another trip round Swildons, home from home. Caves were where he came alive. The person who wouldn't climb above ground – even with a harness and rope – but was fearless below ground. In Ogof Hapse Alyn we had a wonderful trip – jammers full of mud – we sat under a tiny trickle of water trying to clean them up so the rope would fit in for the return. That's where he fell off the ladder, hurt his back and went to casualty to get some "elephant pills" - apparently they were wonderful, not only took the pain away but made you float about as well!! He also got into trouble in Ireland – in Prods Pot with the comedy rock. Dave could not fit past it – but Taff wanted a look at the bottom. So he went down by himself. The broken rib was caused by him tripping – not even falling – but it made getting back over the comedy rock fun!

In Draenen he was in his element – racing around whilst the rest of us slithered about on those awful boulders. He did get lost (briefly) at the far end of the round trip, we had to hunt

about a while to find the way on – but he had only done it once before at that time.

The Lancaster system was another where he seemed to know every nook and cranny. He ambled around totally at home – not at all phased by drops, climbs or slipperiness.

We always lost him on trips – he would go off on his own – and reappear some time later – amazing sense of direction in caves. Why didn't he get lost?

On our last trip in Yorkshire we went down Pillar Holes and afterwards Gemma and Sally found some interesting looking holes nearby and started practising rigging in the top. Taff was not impressed by Gemmas rigging and re-rigged it before going down to join her on a ledge. He made some succinct comments about the hole they were playing in – which turned out to be Long Kin West - an 80m drop!

He was always there when we went to Yorkshire - looking after us at YSS - so full of energy and life.

Another visit to the Caving Diving Group web site to try to find out what had happened – and what I found were those amazing words from Gemma - "Thankyou everyone for bringing back my monkey. He's a bit cold and needs a shave, but he's out"

A thought for all those involved in the recovery – what an awful job to have to do.

I printed some of these messages out for Sue and Phil (still in the dark ages with no internet). I tell Sue – "just make sure you have a tissue at hand before you read them – no – I think a whole box of tissues before you read Gemma's".

How many times did I live that dive (no I have never been cave diving and don't intend to), going through all the different scenarios? I couldn't get away from it. I went through the routine of all the daily chores I had to do – but all the time one part of me was elsewhere – in a muddy, silted up sump in Yorkshire.

The funeral was all that a funeral should be. The church was packed – standing room only – and not much of that. So many wonderful memories recounted from his friends and family. And again Gemma – bringing him alive for us. I have never seen so many men looking so uncomfortable in posh clothes. Cavers just don't feel happy in a suit – unless its an oversuit!

- Taff has gone – but we won't ever forget him.

Ros

Ardeche 2005

On the evening of Thursday 24th March we left Southampton for Dover in somewhat sombre mood. Planning for our caving trips had been neglected over the previous 10 days as no-one could concentrate. The funeral now behind us we started to look forward to our first club trip abroad.

As usual I had insisted on leaving far too early – so we got to Dover with hours to spare! The journey across to Calais and down through France went without a hiccup. We relied on communication by mobile phone to locate each other and more by good luck than any sort of planning met at the services before our overnight destination. We went in convoy from there as only David had the address or directions to it!

We continued in similar vein on Saturday, admiring the Ardeche Gorge and then an interesting tour of various small villages set atop steep hills, with streets marginally wider than the Land Rover but corners that could only be negotiated by “shuffles”. We eventually arrived at Sanilhac to be greeted by roars of laughter from the owner of the apartment at our route (apparently not the ideal approach)!

Once settled in (and a rapid exit to the supermarket to get food before it closed) we got out the various caving books, topos and surveys to have the usual game of “what about”.

It was decided that one group should try Fontaine de Champclos and the other Grotte du Barry (we were looking for non SRT trips for some of the group). The mountain of rope was raided, bags organised and the following morning we had a reasonable early start for our first attempt at locating French caves.

We had an interesting few hours scouring various hillsides before finding Grotte du Barry, but then, after squeezing David through the entrance, had quite a fun trip. There were some little climbs and a large chamber with lots of formations including a large number helictites.



Helictites in Grotte du Barry



Photo - Dave Chadwick

Very impressive and not a bad start.

We got out fairly early so decided to do reconnaissance on another proposed trip for later in the week - Aven des Neuf Gorges. We quickly found the area of limestone pavement on which it was located, and went fairly directly – if somewhat slowly and bouncily – towards it, about 10k of limestone pavement track! Every so often our expert on French caves (also known as fat Sally) would make a useful comment like “oh yes – this looks familiar!” We negotiated narrow tracks, large boulders, overhanging bushes, more boulders and ruts and by use of the GPS parked only a couple of hundred yards from the cave entrance. Sally, high on 4 Milky Ways, grabbed the GPS and danced down the hill towards the cave, declaring, as she spun round in circles - “it keeps showing different directions!”. We pointed out that if she stood still briefly it would have a chance to sort itself out, but if she kept rotating it got a little confused. Off she danced again (note - don't let her have more than 2 Milky Ways in future) and with amazing efficiency we located the cave.

A pretty entrance of interconnected holes set in a depression surrounded by trees and other vegetation. The first re-belay looked fun – quite a long sideways move!

Having found the entrance we returned to Sanilhac.

Phil and co. had had an enjoyable trip in Grotte de Mont Blanc and its resurgence entrance, Fontaine de Champclos. There was lots of calcite in the cave and newts outside the resurgence entrance. The cave, already rigged with traverse lines, had a huge cavern with 'Mont Blanc' in it and an amazing striped wall. This made a good trip for those not ready for major SRT trips, just a ladder in then cowstails on the traverse lines.

Grotte de Mont Blanc



Photo- Dave Chadwick

Phil attempted to drown himself in the supposed connection to Fontaine de Champclos, shown on the survey, before being told that it had not been open for at least 5 years.

Sally and Richard in the Resurgence Entrance - Fontaine de Champclos



Photo – Dave Chadwick

On Monday Phil led a group round Grotte des Chatagnier (a cave with some interesting traverses and a comedy climb), while the rest toured Grotte de Mont Blanc and Fontaine de Champclos and then went to reconnoitre Event de Peyrejal.

Tuesday was our opportunity to find Neuf Gorges again. This time we had to negotiate a herd of goats and their goatherd. We did not take the same route, but still found it reasonably easily. ²

Dave rigging the entrance of Aven des Neuf Gorges

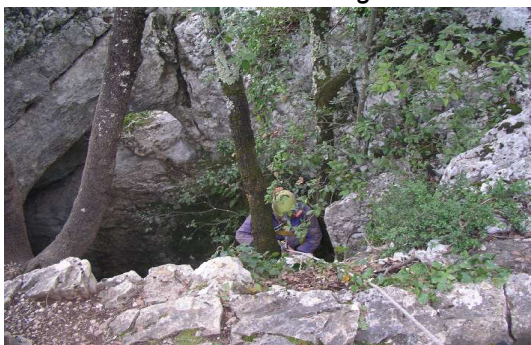


photo Ros White

This is one of Sally's favourite caves, despite the bumpy and prolonged approach. The first pitch is in daylight down one of the 9 holes, but as you go down you can see daylight and vegetation in varying numbers of the holes above you (more impressive on the way out).

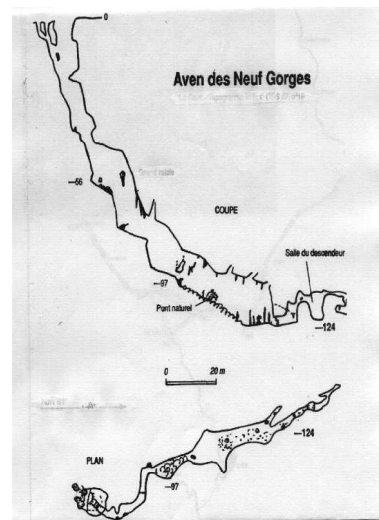
First Pitch - Neuf Gorges



Photo – Dave Chadwick

We encountered yet more wildlife, a not-very-well toad covering on the boulder-slope near the bottom of the cave.

Formations in Neuf Gorges



On the way back to Sanhilac we took a short-cut via a bridge with a 2.5 ton limit. I declared this quite borderline for the LWB Land Rover with people, rope and kit. "Think light" I said as we approached. "Maltesers" replied Sally – this being her first thought on weight reduction! It did work though – for the rest of the week every time we went over the bridge we all shouted "Maltesers" and the bridge survived.

Phil's group went to Event de Peyrejal, where they turned left too early and wandered for ages down a fossil passage finding lots of mud, but failed to find the "classic" phreatic tubes!

Wednesday, with the weather still fine, we decided to go kayaking to see the Ardeche Gorge from the water. The water level was quite low – but there was still enough to cause amusement.

David surfing on the Ardeche



Photo Ros White

It is a very scenic area, but Dave and Richard were too busy trying to get on waves in the huge sit-on kayaks to notice their surroundings. This caused considerable amusement to the playboaters in their very expensive, posh, diddy boats, all toggled up in dry kags and helmets.

"La Pont d'Ardeche"



Those who took their caving seriously could not go a whole day without going underground and so took the opportunity to visit Event de Peyrejal.

This cave is famous for its "classic" phreatic tubes. They are impressive and worth visiting. Unfortunately the atmosphere was dusty and the photos did not show them up at all well. There were also some large gour pools – which did photograph ok.

Dave & Richard at the entrance to Event de Peyrejal



Photo – Ros White

Gour pool in Event De Peyrejal



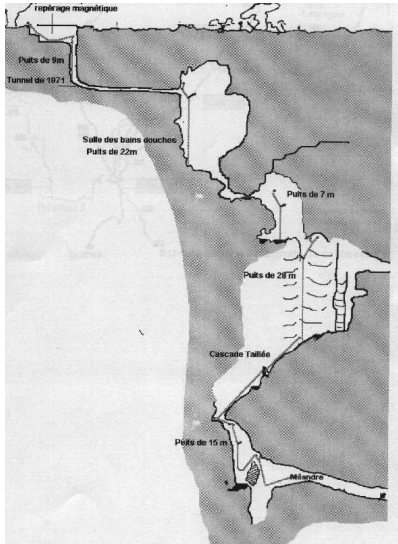
Photo -Dave Chadwick

Thursday was another day of scouring the french countryside, actually the Ardeche Gorge, looking for a cave. Event de Rochas looked quite near the road, but we were soon to realise that the entrance was a sheer 100m almost directly below the road – we had to find the way down to the right level then traverse along. The entrance to the cave was a polished slit at the back of one of the many rock shelters lining part of the gorge. The cave was memorable for long pitches with grim spits and an elephant!

Phil, Sue and co choose to go for a pretty cave. They found a non-SRT cave with lots of little waterfalls – Fontaine du Vignal.

Friday everyone did various bits of Aven de Despeysse (a fun SRT trip with some impressive

Aven de Despeysse



Aven de Despeysse



Photo Dave Chadwick

itches and excellent formations) and Grotte de St Marcel (provides access to the show cave of the same name, huge passages with vast quantities of calcite). Some did just the top, some did just the bottom and some did both. Unfortunately we did not have time to attempt the through trip – 9 hours if you are fit and know the way.,

We all decided it was a very successful and amazingly cheap trip. There were only a few problem areas – the drive down through France was long and tedious, they don't speak English and there was no Taff or Gemma with us.

Ros White,
with a little help from David and Sally.

Phil Rigging in Despeysse



Photo- Dave Chadwick

Helictites in Grotte du Barry



Photo Dave Chadwick

Hampshire Scout Caving Club - Scout trips 2004

Caving days – 34 trips for about 125 Scouts / Explorer Scouts
Requested trips – 20 trips for about 80 Scouts / Explorer Scouts

Gruffies get Sally!

On a misty, murky Wednesday evening earlier this year, Sally decided to inflict the glories of Tynings Barrow Swallet on a couple of novice UBSS cavers. Having phoned home to get directions, where to park, how to get to the cave, how to rig it and where to go in the cave, she was collected by her victims and set off for Mendip.

They made their way in thick fog, (you couldn't see your hand in front of your face apparently), parked at the riding stables and set off for the cave.

She had been told to look for a stile in the hedge, go over it, veer slightly to the left, over the ploughed field a short way and look for a sink-hole with a concrete tube.

Having gone over a stile next to a gate (she recognised it so it must be right!) she wandered across the field, stumbling in the coarse, tufty grass, before falling (still clutching the key tightly) down a large hole with a stream at the bottom. She struggled out of the hole, went across the field searching for the cave only to discover that not only was there no cave, but also that the Tynings key had gone!

She and her colleagues searched the scrub in the field for the key for an hour before giving up, visiting the pub (they found that ok) and returning to Bristol .

Reporting back it was decided that the Gruffies had stolen the key. Sally was mystified – until it was revealed that the description she had given was of going to GB in the Gruffy reserve and not Tynings (in a ploughed field).

We decided that the Gruffies had seen a real wally wandering across their reserve towards GB with a Tynings key (it certainly would not get her into GB). Plainly this person was fair game – trip them up and steal the key!

Sally wrote an apology to the farmer about loosing the key (is it the only one?) on the back of the directions to the pub.

A few weeks later we directed her to the GB stile (way past the Tynings one), where she retraced her steps, and in glorious sunshine located the key straight away. Well the Gruffies aren't really mean – they just wanted a bit of fun.

She still has to lead Tynings – but intends to let someone else look after the key next time.

Caption competition



Entries to Ros.

Name the Cave:

Cave E : crawl with short inlet to left and two short drops to a further crawl becoming wet where a chink of daylight is seen to the left.

This is a summary only - the full article can be obtained from Ros if you are interested.

Accidents Caused by Rock Falls and Boulder Collapse in British Caves

Introduction

A brief glance at statistics on causes of accidents and injuries in caves will initially lead you to believe that rock fall and boulder collapse are of minor significance. Further study, however, indicates that although relatively infrequent, such incidents are often serious and should therefore not be dismissed lightly!

Incidents and Statistics

Table 1- British Cave Rescue Statistics for Rock Fall and Boulder Collapse

Statistics for recorded British Cave Rescues involving rock fall and boulder collapse in Britain 1983 to 2002 (total numbers of all recorded incidents/fatalities for each year in brackets). (Taken from BCRC Statistics)

1983 -2002	Number of incidents of rockfall	Number of Fatalities from rockfall
total	25 (843)	5 (44)
%	3%	11%

The incidence of reported rock falls may not be high, but when they occur they are serious!

Table 2- Details of Fatalities caused by Rock Fall since 1900

Taken from "A Century of British Caving" 1900 - 1999 and BCRC statistics

year	Fatalities	Location	Area
1936	1	Alum Pot	Yorkshire
1959	1	Dow Cave	Yorkshire
1960	1	Eastwater Cavern	Mendip
1969	1	Easegill	Yorkshire
1971	1	Weathercote Cave	Yorkshire
1977	1	Blayshaw Gill Pot	Yorkshire
1986	1	Longwood Swallet	Mendip
1988	3	Easegill	Yorkshire
1994	1	Lost John	Yorkshire

There is not enough information to look at probability of accident/injury/death at particular locations, times of year etc. Nor is there enough detail to study the causes of rockfall (digging, people dislodging rock, ropes, water etc) or the significance of the weather prior to the incident. It is clear however that Yorkshire and Mendip are the predominant locations for serious rock falls. This is possibly something to do with the geology/geomorphology of these areas!

Discussion

Statistics are interesting and to most people accident statistics do not have any real meaning - "it won't happen to me". The significance of the danger can only be realised by description of actual incidents with names of real people. The description is usually enough for you to relate to the situation, look back and remember similar situations when it could so nearly have happened to you!

- a caver deciding to free climb the 3rd pitch at the bottom of Rhino Rift dislodged some small rocks. As we heard them clattering down towards us we ducked behind a rock, which was fortunate as the leg loops, still attached to Phil, but trailing back to where we had been stood, were now sliced through!
- the large rock which came adrift as the last member of our party (Phil) traversed across Gulf Crisis in Thrupe Lane Swallet - crashing to the floor below, only just missing David, who was with the group at the bottom.
- a large rock bouncing its way down underneath us as we waited in the traverse above the last pitch of Diccan, which then plummeted down the last pitch, missing our rigger, on that pitch, searching for the deviation.

Of course, as no-one was injured such incidents go unreported, as do many others. The statistics give no indication of "near misses" or of minor injuries where the caver was able to get out with assistance from colleagues. The dangers are clearly there however.

There are specific problems associated with rock fall accidents.

As they occur in unstable areas, and further falls are always a possibility. This is a particularly horrendous thought if a stretcher is needed.

Rocks may be moving from a height and therefore fast, so even small rocks can cause serious injury.

Also large rocks which trap casualties cause crush injuries. After 20 minutes or so there is always the problem that medical assistance is necessary as soon as the weight is removed to prevent the accumulated toxins in the blood in the trapped part of the body, circulating to the major organs!

Of course, people may be trapped in the cave by the fall. Rescue may then be lengthy as digging, shoring etc. may be necessary to free them. Although rock falls are unpredictable there are some precautions which can be taken to reduce the probability of being seriously involved in one (see Risk Assessment).

Summary

About 3% of reported caving incidents involve rock fall, however there are many near misses which go unreported. What is significant about rock fall accidents is that those reported tend to be serious, resulting in injury or death, being 10-15% of incidents in this category.

As rock falls do not occur randomly, but tend to be more common in certain areas, caves, unstable areas in the cave and below cavers moving about, then there are various measures which can be taken to reduce the probability of being involved in a rock fall accident.

In particular, avoiding known problem or little-used locations, moving about carefully and avoiding being in the area below where other cavers are moving about seem sensible precautions.

However, caves are dynamic systems, constantly changing, so however vigilant, the danger is there, but we don't necessarily know where!

Risk Assessment

for rock fall (generally small rocks) and boulder collapse (large rocks).

Risks: being hit by a falling rocks

being crushed or trapped by a falling rock or boulder

being trapped in the cave

being knocked off a climb

can lead to: injury

hypothermia

unable to get out

precautions: avoid hazardous areas if possible

wear suitable helmets

check information - surveys, guides, local knowledge

reconnaissance of area/route

brief the group on the need for care

move one at a time on loose areas/ pitches

take care in rigging - so the rope doesn't cause a problem

don't stay at the base of a pitch if someone is on the pitch

don't stay underneath where others are moving

carry ropes etc. in a bag and do not throw the bag about

First Aid training

take a First Aid Kit & survival bag

take food, spare light etc

keep the group sizes small in hazardous areas

constant visual and physical inspection of hazardous areas

vocal warning to others if anything amiss

leave a call out