



Hampshire Scout Caving Club



Newsletter Spring 2009



Main Chamber, G.B.

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

Notes on Cave Access etc.

Goatchurch- Work has been done to stabilise the area near The Drainpipe.

Rods Pot - Recent report - care on upper (right-hand) route on the way in - there is a loose boulder - preferably avoid this route and use the lower one. The loose boulder in Rods Pot has been "carefully lowered to the floor" and can now be considered safe. Please still take care here as it may not be the only loose boulder in the area.

Thrupe Lane - No need to ask for permission now - just go in.

Access at Box Mine - Specially-fabricated bat grilles have been installed at Box Mine SSSI, funded by English Nature, in order to help protect rare bat species that use the sites for roosting. The Lady Hamilton's entrance has been permanently grilled for safety reasons and access is no longer possible. Back Door and Jack's Workings entrances have been gated, accessible by allen key (large). Jack's is to be used for emergency exit only. Very loose near Jack's and Lady Hamilton's entrances.

Swildons Sump 1 - Rope has been replaced.

Fairy Cave Quarry - Car Park - new Lock on - CSCC key required.

Parking for Longwood August and Rhino Rift - the people at the farm at the bottom of the track do not want you to park in the farm-yard or at the little triangle at the bend in the lane.

CaveClimb.com - New shop with caving equipment in Union Street, Cheddar. Also online.



GB cave

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

Caving news and updates on information can be found on the UK Caving Forum :
<http://ukcaving.com/board/index.php>

Caving UK (in association with Descent magazine) page at :
<http://www.caving.uk.com/Resources/Pages/frame.html>

Mendip caves map :
<http://www.ukcaves.co.uk/map-mendip>

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HSCC Programme

Date	Time	Activity	Venue	Contact
4.2.09	20.00	AGM	12th Eastleigh, HQ Bishopstoke	David Chadwick
4.3.09	20.00	Rigging Practice	12th Eastleigh, HQ Bishopstoke	
14/15.3.09		Scout days - Caving	Mendip MNRC /Priddy Green	Andy Watson
1.4.09		Treasure Hunt	?	Richard Gulvin
10-19.4.09		Caving - mainly SRT	Jura area, France	David Chadwick
6.5.09	19.00	SRT practice	Lyons Copse	Phil Candy
16/17.5.09		Scout days - Caving & Climbing	Mendip MNRC /Priddy Green	Andy Watson
23-25.5.09		Wales trip	Brecon Scout Hut	David Chadwick
3.6.09	19.00	Cycle Ride		David Chadwick
27/28.6.09		Forest of Dean		David Chadwick
June (Sat)		Christmas Dinner		
1.7.09	20.00	Cave & BBQ	Shrewton	Andy Watson
6-12.8.09		Yorkshire trips	YSS	Sue Chase
2.9.09	20.00	Training	12th Eastleigh, HQ Bishopstoke	Dave/Phil
26/27.9.09		Training in Mendip	MNRC	Dave/Phil
7.10.09	20.00	talk	12th Eastleigh, HQ Bishopstoke	John Dawe
3/4.10.09		Scout days - Caving	Mendip MNRC /Priddy Green	Andy Watson
4.11.09	20.00	First Aid		Ros White
21/22.11.09		Wales trips		Sue Chase
2.12.09	20.00	Quiz	12th Eastleigh, HQ Bishopstoke	

HSCC trips 2008: These include : SRT practice at Sandheath Scout Centre, Afton Red Rift, Aveline's Hole, Bakers Pit, Bath Swallet, Boxhead Pot, Bridge Cave, Bull Pot, County Pot, Craig a Ffynnon, Cwm Dwr, Dart River Caves, East Twin Swallet, Eastwater Cavern, Eldon Hole, Foel Fawr, GB, Goatchurch Cavern, Giants Hole, Goyden Pot, Hilliers, Hillocks, Home Close Hole, Honeyhead, Hunters Hole, Hunters Lodge Sink, JH, Jangling, Knotlow, Lancaster Hole, Little Crapnell Swallet, Little Neath River Cave, Llygad Lluchwr, Manchester Hole, Manor Farm, Marble Steps, New Goyden, Notts Pot, Notts II, OFD II, Otter Hole, Pierre's Pot, Pwll Dyfn, Radford Cave, Rhino Rift, Rods Pot, Rumbling Hole, Sidcot Swallet, Singing River Mine, Slaughter Stream (Big Sink & Wet Sink), Swildons Hole, Symonds Yat Caves, Thrupe Lane, Titan, Town Drain, Tynings Barrow Swallet, Waterwheel, White Lady, Wimore Swallet. Let me know of any others please.

Gypsum and Selenite formations

Gypsum (calcium sulphate) and related calcium sulphate minerals are next to calcite in abundance as cave formations. Some caves, although they are developed in limestone, have extensive passages lined with gypsum growths. They appear in the same areas as gypsum flowers. In other caves, selenite (a less common variety of gypsum) forms long transparent rods or nests of fibrous crystals.

Selenite is a soft, colorless-to-slightly-coloured, transparent mineral. It is a crystalline variety of gypsum (CaSO_4) mineral gypsum ($\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$). Gypsum is a mineral containing both calcium and sulphur and so is a sulphate speleothem. Selenite has a hardness of 1-2 and a specific gravity of 2.3 to 2.4.

Selenite needles appear to form from a seed crystals on the floor of a cave. They are not attached to anything and occur in loose piles. Fine selenite-crystalline gypsum-needles form when a sulphate solution percolates up through cave floor silt.

Gypsum occurs when the carbonate (CO_3) portion of calcite (CaCO_3) is replaced with the sulphate ion (SO_4)²⁻ and two water molecules (H_2O) yielding calcium sulphate (CaSO_4) + $2\text{H}_2\text{O}$. This can happen in several ways but commonly occurs when calcite and CO_2 laden water is introduced to the sulphate ion as the water percolates through the earth. Sulphate is highly reactive and can readily substitute itself for carbonate in the presence of water. When this calcium sulphate solution enters a cave environment the formation is not made in the same way as calcite deposits. Gypsum ($\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$, or calcium sulphate) is left behind as a product of evaporation of water, not deposition from water. This happens when the calcium sulphate rich water seeps into a cave passage and evaporates, leaving behind the mineral compound. It can be in the form of gypsum crusts on cave ceilings and walls. Gypsum flowers also form this way, but differ in that a flower has parallel strands of calcium sulphate crystals all growing from a common centre point. Water seeps out of the rock and pushes the older crystal out of the way as the new crystal forms beneath it. The curves in gypsum flowers occur when the growth rate is uneven in the crystal strands, forcing the "petal" to one side.



Gypsum needles grow directly from soil that is saturated with calcium sulphate-rich water. As the humidity in the cave environment drops, the soil is unable to hold as much water and it evaporates from the soil. Gypsum literally grows out of the soil as the water evaporates yielding crystals that can look like frost heave and crystal needles that can reach over three feet in length.

Quiz!

identify the cave

1. *The cave is located 50m west of the Bath-Wells road, near the road to Priddy, in a depression 300m east of Ores Close Farm. The 6m entrance pitch (ladder and medium wire required) drops into a short descending crawl leading to an annoying puddle.*
2. *- - - - A 200ft crawl leads to a lovely second pitch, Yorkshire-like, but in a pale yellow limestone. Further crawling eventually brings you to a large bedding plane with the small stream meandering through the blue mud deposits. A couple of side passages lead to big avens, but about 1000 ft downstream a tight squeeze marks the point where the trip gets a bit more serious.*
3. *A 20 metre climbable shaft using alloy ladders and concrete blocks leads to a small chamber and round the corner to another 20 metre free climbable shaft. This lands in a chamber and over to the right a 10 metre climb down leads to a low section through to a junction.*
4. *It offers a short but sporting trip, and contains a notorious corkscrew squeeze near the start which is not passable to cavers of large build. The cave is almost completely dry.*
5. *After the low wet entrance crawl, and helmet off duck carefully negotiated to avoid any obstacles of the bloated, rotting, fleecy variety we followed the main downstream passage.*
6. *The entrance is closed by a small metal door and is just large enough for one person to squeeze through. The first section of the cave is very tight with lots of crawling and squeezing which is not for the claustrophobic. It was a fairly tough crawl and for over an hour there was not a single place where you could stand up on the way. The cave got increasingly muddy and when we could finally stand up we are all completely soaked in cold mud.*
7. *. . . the guide book does not lie when it says the way on is big enough for a 'motor coach'. A ridiculous amount of crashing streamway to romp down and fantastic acoustics gave two of us the power to sing Ilkley Moor like a choir of fifty. My only concern is these cheeky Irish cavers who go around sticking flood debris to the ceiling in the most impossibly unlikely places, in one place they must have made a pyramid of cavers 8 men high just to try and scare you into thinking that the whole cave floods to the roof.....*
8. *- set into the bank beside the West Twin Brook, this narrow cavern once swallowed up the Brook, before it dropped to a lower level in its current gully. The swallet can be entered, but this is a job for properly equipped, experienced pot-holers. An ominous notice at the cave entrance gives emergency phone numbers to be called in the event of accident.*
9. *. . . a single open shaft of 45m, with an interesting underground route to the bottom called Lateral Cleft. Rigging the belay from a tree which overhangs the shaft provides for an interesting ascent when it can be heard creaking!*
10. *. . . is a deep narrow rift, about 120 ft. in length. There is a high but rather narrow entrance, half blocked by a boulder. The floor for the first 20 to 30ft. is of gravelly clay, but this gives way to a rift extending downwards, 5 to 15ft. in depth; about 40ft. from the entrance the cave begins to slope downwards, quite steeply in parts, levelling off at about 100ft. from the entrance.*

An Excerpt from Sue's rigging log

Yorkshire - Tuesday 19th August 2008

We had a permit for Rumbling - but it was very wet - so we did County/Lancaster again -from the other way. (CNCC Book 1)
Sue, Pip, David & Roslyn. David rigged Lancaster Pot and Sue de-rigged.

P-hangers. Y-hang from hangers on large rock by the entrance. We used to shut the lid after us - but now we leave it open, and just hope the sheep don't fall in. It is very difficult to open from the inside as one of the strap-hinges is broken and missing (mind you don't get one leg each side!)
Y-hang, re-belay on a ledge - there are spare p-hangers here! Then drop to floor. We don't usually bother with dv.

CNCC says rope length 55 m, but 50 metres would do it.

On this occasion we managed to link up with where we had got to a couple of days previously, Monster Hall - so Pip is now confident that he could manage a through trip.

Lancaster end was very wet and extremely slippery - especially the rope climbs for Fall Pot and Stake Pot - but you couldn't trust your feet anywhere - and there are a lot of ominous big holes and steep drops every where you go. We decided that the Minaretttes are about half-way and a through trip would probably take 5-6 hours underground at least!

5 maillons, 1 karabina 50+m rope.

Wednesday 19th August 2008 Wet again!

Marble Steps - to Main Chamber - Side Winder Route (CNCC Book 3).
Sue, Pip, Roslyn and David. David rigged, Roslyn de-rigged.

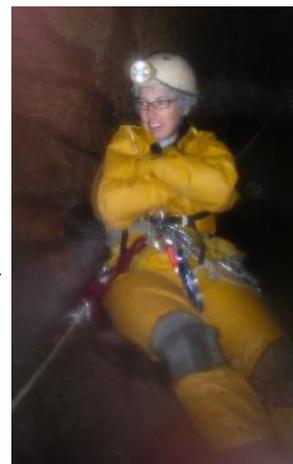
Lots of water - the gully was very slippery, so we started rigging straight away from the top. We had a 16m rope for this, but it wasn't long enough, and we had to join the next rope on at the bottom of the gully before we crossed the stream. A 25/30 metre rope would be better, and a karabina and 3 maillons extra for this. It was very steep to be carrying a heavy bag, and is probably worth rigging this way, even when it isn't so wet.

We crossed the stream on the traverse line, and up over a ledge/step, into the cave. David wasn't sure where the route went from here - there were no obvious p-hangers. He used a natural to drop down a short pitch, but didn't see the rusty but serviceable hanger in the roof beside it. We decided a y-hang off the natural (sling over a big thread) and the rusty bolt would have been best. This joined us up with a gully in the wet route. The "worms" say that this bit is free-climbable - but I was glad there was a rope there.

We picked up the p-hangers again, traversed along and a drop y-hang to a deviation, quite critical in length so that the rope does not rub either side. A lot of faffing here to get it right, but it was fine once we had. Then drop to a pendulum for a re-belay on a large butress of rock. Then down a slope with 2 re-belays in the ceiling. This was as far as we went.

2 bags. Ropes: 16m (needed 25+), 45m, 72m (60 would have done). 6 karabinas, 21 maillons, 1 long deviation (other 2 were in situ) +2 short dvs in case they are not.

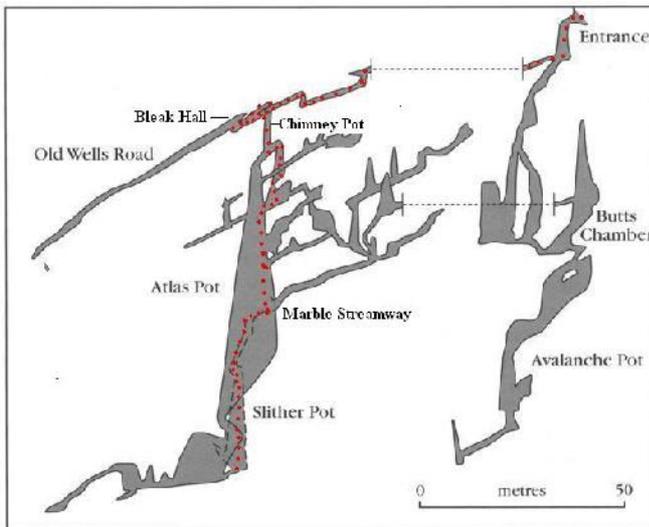
from rigging log by Sue Chase



A Slightly Damp Trip to Wuthering Heights in Thrupe - by Ros

Saturday 17th January was reserved for a caving trip. David had done the Wuthering Heights route in Thrupe Lane Swallet a few weeks before, when I was busy with the family. Feeling I had missed out I decided that we should do this. Sally was keen to join us as she has not done much in Thrupe at all and was to bring Andy, new boyfriend, along to be inspected! A couple of dry weeks augered well for the trip - until the few days before, when it bucketed down. We knew we were in for a slightly wetter trip than David's 3 weeks earlier.

We arrived at Thrupe at 10am, cleared the drain and still had water running down into the cave. Not too much though, and a blue sky - so we decided to go ahead. I rigged the first little pitch, then waited for Sally. A phone call or two later she arrived having been directed to the cave from the circuit of Mendip Golf Club she was locked in to! 11am start!



Danglers off after the entrance pitch to enable easier thrutching along Plaster Passage etc.

No problems along the Railway Series (Andy & Sally went off down a side passage by accident for 5 minutes, but soon re-appeared). Through the grim, muddy puddle and on to Bleak Hall. David squirmed through he squeeze into Chimney Pot and disappeared. I followed - but in Chimney Pot there was a torrential rain storm and I could see nothing other than ledges below me to climb down. Surely this was not right, but there was no-where else to go. Sally and Andy were following - unconvinced that Chimney Pot was the right way. An in-situ rope persuaded me that I was on track. As both Sally and I have hearing problems communication was impossible with the noise of the water surrounding

us. We continued on down and thankfully after 10m went up and away from the main flow. Now all soaking wet and shivering we pushed on to try to warm up, but soon found David at the top of a pitch, putting his "danglers" on and waiting for the bag with the hangers in. As David rigged we took it in turn to squirm around in the small space to kit up for the pitch.

There followed 2 short pitches with a scramble between and then 40m pitch to the end of Marble Streamway (spouting an impressive waterfall) - then along the traverse to the ledge to the short (but VERY wet) pitch down to the muddy passage to Slither.

Slither, thankfully, was dry - and now p-hangered - so the bolts did not follow me down the pitch as in previous descents. There was a brief argument at bottom about who was to de-rig. Sally and Andy lost.

I set off back up Slither and straight on to Wuthering Heights to avoid holding de-riggers up and David followed. No problems - just all very wet. Waited for Sally, (and the Slither rope) then moved on. Chimney Pot was no place to linger, you could feel heat being taken out of you as you ascended the cascade. At the top, still in the full force of the water, there were bags to haul. Once down we lurched into Bleak hall and down - head first with water running inside the oversuit and running out off the chest jammer. I thought may as well wait till cascade out of oversuit had abated a little before moving on. David appeared - wet and bedraggled. After an age Sally arrived - worried as Andy was still not up last SRT pitch (still untangling 100m of rope).

Wait. Cold. Wait. We persuade David to go see what problem was, Wait. Cold. Wait. Sally worried. Wait. Hear voices (Sally can't). Wait (balaclava on, everything done up and huddled to avoid getting colder). Voices louder. Wait. Sally now convinced they are on the way up. Sound of water on oversuits and voices. David appeared, then Andy.

Everyone was very cold, so we went quickly out (or as quick as we could having ceased up). I free climbed the entrance pitch as usual - just to convince myself I still can. We all changed quickly. (Fortunately dry and not too cold). A quick slurp of hot coffee, then on to a tea-room in Shepton. This I can recommend - if not the caving trip.

Funny thing - I have lots of caving photos - but not a single one taken in Thrupe!

HSCC 2008

Approximate number of **Scouts on Caving trips** (including Scout days) : **288** from about 26 different groups (this is bookings through Andy Watson and does not include those booked directly with other leaders).



Scout days in Mendip (whole club involved) : **6**

Caves we have taken Scouts / Explorer scouts into in 2008: Goatchurch Cavern, Sidcot Swallet, Avelines Hole, Rods Pot, East Twin Swallet, Manor Farm, Tynings Barrow Swallet, Swildons Hole, Pierres Pot, Singing River Mine, Waterwheel, Fairy Cave, Bridge Cave, White Lady, Town Drain.

Our Explorer members have also done trips in : Eastwater Cavern, GB, Bath Swallet, Craig a Ffynnon, OFD II, Cwn Dwr, Bakers Pit, Afton Red Rift, Radford Cave and done SRT training at Sandleheath Scout Centre.



New Equipment : 200m reel of rope for SRT, oversuits, harnesses (for Scouts in Singing River etc), krabs, maillons, tikka head lights, 4 tackle bags, knee pads, 6 belts.

Equipment help by the group includes: helmets, lamps, belts, oversuits, belay ropes, slings, krabs, bags, ladders, spreaders & tethers for ladders, SRT rope, maillons, hangers, chargers for lamp batteries, BDHs with First Aid kits, bivvy bags.

Number of HSCC members : **27** (including 3 under 18)

Trained/ Qualified leaders :

LCMLA 1 training	3
LCMLA 1	3
LCMLA1 with Mines training	5
LCMLA 1 with training for LCMLA 2 & Mines	2
LCMLA2 with Mines module	2



Thanks - Andy received a letter from 1st Headley Scouts :

"Please extend our thanks and appreciation to the HSCC for organising and giving of their time to offer Headley and Kingsclere Scouts a very special and memorable experience at Burrington Caves last weekend.

"Without exception, the scouts thoroughly enjoyed the event and clearly gained something from the experience."



Photos on this page are HSCC Explorer Scout members caving - in Mendip and South Wales.

HSCC Members 2009

