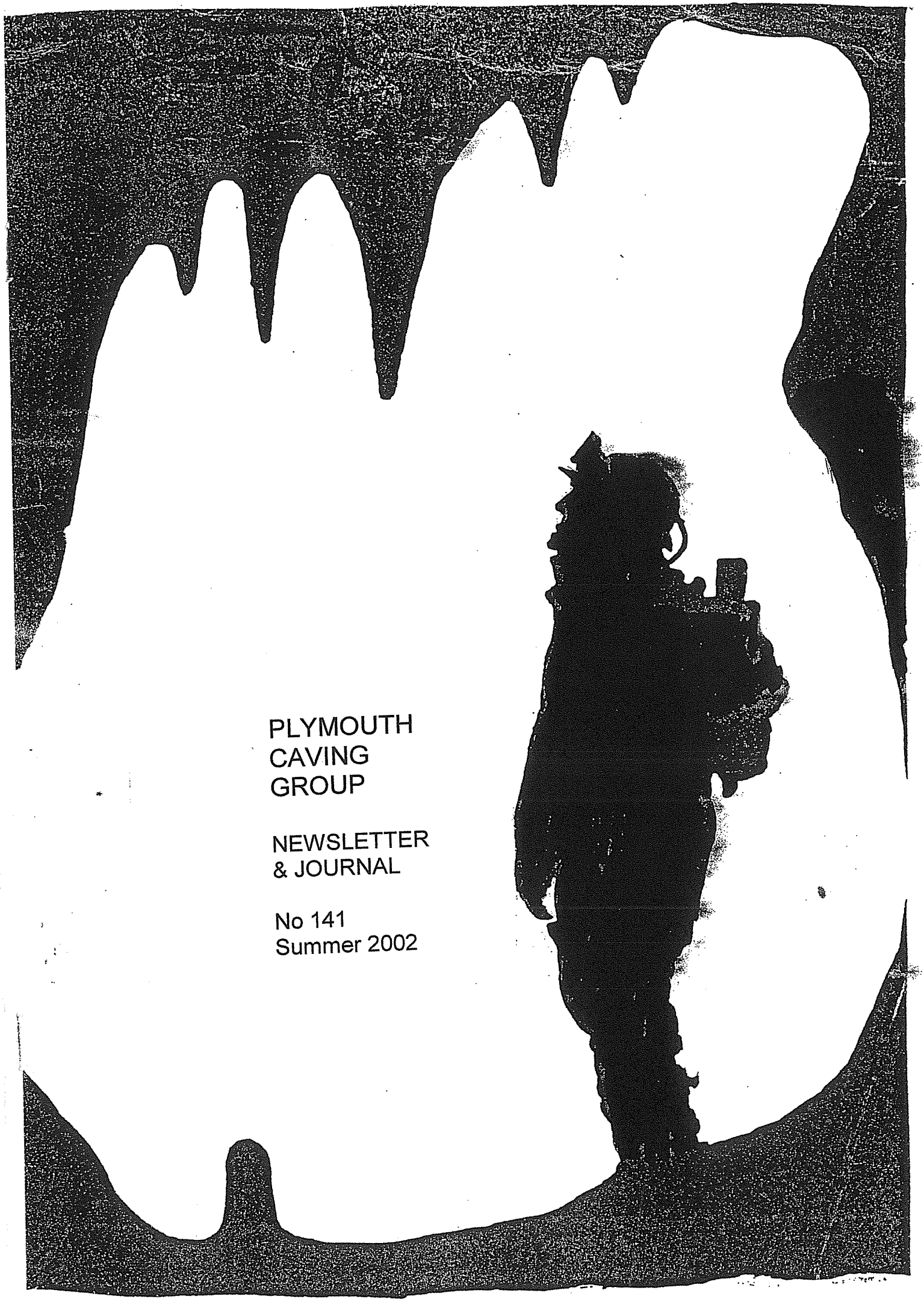


PLYMOUTH CAVING GROUP

NEWSLETTER & JOURNAL

No 141
Summer 2002

Plymouth Caving Group

Newsletter
No 141

July 2002

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For **enquiries regarding Plymouth Caving Group** please contact the membership secretary, Colin Smith, 15 Bearsdown Close, Eggbuckland, Plymouth PL6 5TX

Plymouth Caving Group meet at the Thistle Park Tavern, Cattedown, normally on the first Thursday of the month for a committee meeting, at 8 pm. This is open to all.

On other Thursdays we usually meet in the Seymour Arms (near the Art College) from about 9pm.

Trips to local caves and mines are held on alternate Tuesday evenings. Trips at weekends are held, often to other areas. Please contact the Meet Secretary (details below) for details.

The club has a stock of equipment including lamps, belts, helmets, rope, electron ladders and other equipment. Please contact the Tackle Warden (details below) for further details.

We also hold an extensive library of books relating to caving, mining, and related topics, maps, surveys, mine plans and Journals and newsletters exchanged with other clubs. For details please contact the librarian.

Plymouth Caving Group Subscriptions 2002
Full £12
Family £15
Junior/Student/Unwaged £6
Temporary £2

Club Officers 2002

President. Bob Cawthorne

Chairman. Alasdair Neill, 97 Mount Gould Road, Plymouth

Treasurer & Membership. Patrick Hanlan, Demelza, Tremaba, Dobwalls, Liskeard PL14 6JT

Secretary. Chris Kelland, 78 Durham Avenue, Plymouth PL4 8SR

Meet Secretary. Tom Miles Phone 07929 640293
Note:- Colin Smith is currently performing this role (address below)

Rescue Warden. Roger King, Old Orchard, South Milton, Kingsbridge, Devon
Phone 01548 560604

Librarian/Recorder. Alasdair Neill, 97 Mount Gould Road, Plymouth

Conservation Officer. Vacant.

Tackle Warden. Colin Smith, 15 Bearsdown Close, Eggbuckland, Plymouth PL6 5TX

Membership Secretary. Colin Smith (address above)

The club has access to a sites for which keys are necessary including Radford, Afton Red Rift, Baker's Pit (currently closed), Devon Great Consols, Bedford United (Marquis Lode), South Tamar Consols, and Great Rock Mine. The club has leaders for Read's Cave (Buckfastleigh) and Dan yr Ogof.

Any contributions for the newsletter should be sent to:
David Jean, 13 Tor Road, Hartley, Plymouth PL3 5TE

Editorial

It is not often that I get moved to provide an Editorial but two episodes of the past month have caused me to do so on this occasion. Firstly, I received a letter from Tricia Browning, which has been reprinted within these pages at her request, and, secondly, I ran into, and those of you who know me will no that this is in the literal sense, Martin Prince.

There are not many of us left in this organisation that can remember caving back in the 1960s, in fact many members weren't even born then! But Tricia was and she was one of those instrumental in the formative years of the Plymouth Caving Group. Over the years she and, of course, Hugh, have been active in their support of the club and their exploits, both locally and abroad, and articles, have filled many pages of this Newsletter.

An issue that has been raised at a number of recent Committee Meetings is that when people volunteer for a role then they should seriously undertake that role and not ignore the responsibility. A club like ours, and it is our club, is dependant of the goodwill of those who give their time and expertise to carry out tasks and keep the club going. By undertaking these tasks it is a way of putting back something into the club and not just taking advantage of the facilities such as the many access agreement the club has negotiated on everyone's behalf. We all lead busy lives but we volunteer for these roles to enable the club to continue to move forwards. It is therefore sad for everyone when jobs that we say we will do are not done and we all feel let down.

Tricia feels particularly let down after spending many hours producing a definitive article on the Exploration of Devon Great Consuls which was intended to make an excellent Occasional Publication for the club. Many of those involved in this sorry saga have left the club but some of us are left and I think it is incumbent upon all of us to do what we can to salvage some respect for ourselves and the club by completing to our best ability the tasks we have agreed to do, both then and now. Hopefully, someone somewhere will know of what has happened to Tricia's document and we can get things back onto an even keel. In the meantime, I hope that Tricia does not carry out her threat to refuse to write more articles. Those of us that know Tricia and remember the articles will know how they have enlivened these pages and we realise that Tricia has a lot still to offer the club and newsletter.

I also mentioned that I recently bumped into Princy who has, for the past few years, had to devote his time to duties for his Sealed Knot Regiment. It is good to hear that in the autumn these duties will lessen and he will be able to, once more, devote time and energy to the club and we look forward to his refreshing participation.

I hope that everyone enjoys their summer of caving and, like Princy, will come back in the autumn with renewed energy and enthusiasm to support our club.

Good caving *Dave Jean*

Letter from Tricia Browning

Dave,

I would like the following included in the next PCG Newsletter. I'm afraid it's a grumble!

'Almost 6 years ago I presented the PCG with an article for an 'Occasional Publication' on the 'Exploration of DGC'. This was accepted but needed to be made more presentable (not having a computer of my own). To date it has gone through Keith Jackson, Graham Hart, Pia Benson, the sketches were supposedly being drawn by a student of Roger King's who I believe has since moved away and so have my sketches, and finally to Calum Beeson (ex PCG). During all this time my photos, including some by the photographer J Watton (via A Neill) have been lost or stolen, including some of the text.

So I am no further forward in presenting the above for publication. The PCG asks for articles for the newsletter. I have made an effort and spent a lot of time on it, but no-one is interested in making it presentable for publication. Presumably the above people volunteered to undertake the task. What do people do with their expensive computers?

I am now thoroughly fed up with the whole thing and refuse to write any more articles for the PCG. I have now lost interest.

Whoever has the missing photos and diagrams I would like them back please.

Tricia Browning

If there is anyone out there that can help resolve this situation then please let me know, Editor.

Don't Forget

If you haven't already done so it is time to pay your

2002
MEMBERSHIP!

If members would like their copy of the
NEWSLETTER
To be delivered by e-mail then just let me know
At davidjean@tinyworld.co.uk

The advantages include

- Delivery will be hot off the press
- Illustrations will be in colour
- The print will be sharp and not photocopied

Fund Raising Coast to Coast Walk

On a dreary morning in June, 6 sponsored PCG members, namely Dave, Colin, Lucy and numberless Hanlans set out to walk the 15 miles from Devoran to Portreath along the Mineral Tramway to raise funds for the club.

First problem – how to avoid having 6 PCG members walk all the way back again. So after taking photographs of the finish (crafty move) 6 people squeezed into a 5-seater car and headed for Porttreath. Second problem – we know where the path starts in Devoran but not where it starts in Portreath. We collar some likely looking walkers but they're from Devon for heaven's sake and they don't seem to know either! Fortunately Dave had the foresight to bring the guide and after taking photographs we're off through the pub car park and the docks before picking up the path out of the village.

We're doing fine with nice scenery and an easy gradient and a fine view of the back gardens of Portreath. Your brave walkers trudge on with some light banter and the beginning of a slight sweat as the track climbs inexorably upwards. We need a tram but there's never one around when you want one. We pass lots of trees and other natural things and then there's the excitement of seeing a mine building!! (Yes it was getting a little bit dull and we should get out more). Looks like it's lived in, so no chance to check it out for shafts. About halfway we stop to 'do' lunch. James and Lucy produce a feast from a rucksack together with 3 flavours of tea to choose from and, for all I know, liqueurs and malt whiskey to follow. The rest of us manage with basic fare like sandwiches or biscuits. A horse was an interested observer.

Now approaching the top of the ridge we pause just outside Scorrier to eat strawberries from a stall (& yes we paid for them), then past the Rodda cream factory and a rather dinky range of miniature mine buildings in a bungalow garden. Over the A30 and past the wonderful Crossroads Motel (say hi to Benny) and at last we're on the downhill slope through yet another pub car park. We're so motivated and focussed that we don't even stop for refreshments.

Now we're into mining country and we come to some woods with a serious warning about dangerous mine shafts. What an excuse for a detour! We find a gated shaft and drop stones down it (how juvenile) and then send James up an adit so that we can see his head appear at the bottom of another shaft. That'll teach him to bring a head light. We pass a lake and yet more mine workings and then James and Colin disappear to check out an engine house. They're gone for ages and it turns out they were cornered by a bunch of bullocks and didn't like "...to risk their mood". Hooray for our brave boys!

Down now into United Downs and a chance for Foxy-Fox to show us his paces. He's already been to the beach at Portreath and has scared lots of dogs that we met along the way (was that you barking James?). For his next adventure Foxy-Fox emerges unscathed from a deep shaft wearing his caving light and they he bravely hangs by his braces suspended from a cable over a rushing torrent. He is so death defying, so courageous. And in one more act of conspicuous bravery he lies relaxed on a lily pad over the bottomless waters of a murky pond.

We're running out of steam by now and one or two of us are looking rather pink and wondering whose stupid idea it was in the first place and what happened to the rest of the club members and how did they get notes from their mums to be excused and suchlike uncharitable thoughts.

But we're at the railway viaduct and nearly back at the cars and relief for blisters and bleeding toes in sight. After final photos and mutual congratulations 5 people pile into a '2 and 2 dwarves-seater' coupe and drive back to Portreath to play on the beach and to eat chips. James flies his kite and Patrick scares himself climbing the cliffs to look in a hole. Foxy-Fox relaxes as is his due.

Patrick Hanlan

Matienzo, Easter 2002

Easter this year saw about 50 people basking in the sunshine of northern Spain and as usual finding lots of new passage. The PCG were represented by myself and Bob. New passage was found in Valline, Uzueka, Hidden Hole, Fresnedo, and elsewhere, and a lot of shafts on the mountain of Muela were dropped.

The following is a diary of the trips I went on.

26th March Cave 408. Ali, Pete Eagan. An inlet passage at the head of the 90m Hoedown Shaft was pushed up to chokes heading towards surface. This totalled 82m

of passage, mostly quite large but containing much fill. This passage was reached by an awkward traverse round the right hand side of the pitch.

27th March. Cave 408. Ali, Pete. Last year the bottom of Hoedown Shaft had been reached and Pete had pushed to the top of another pitch. This time we pushed along to the head of the pitch, the connecting passage being a very high but very narrow rift, in which finding a route through entailed climbing up and down at various points to find wide enough sections. One tight corner had to be dug out before I could get through. At the end a pitch dropped down to where an inlet came in, followed by a further pitch where a stream flowed down a draughting but too – tight outlet. Large openings in the roof head back towards Hoedown. This was a very disappointing end to this cave; and with no real leads left we de-rigged it.

28th March. Ali, Pete, Dave Biggs. We looked over an area of hillside to the east of Cueva de Concebo (12), the huge entrance on the slopes of Mullir seen from the road heading towards Ramales. Two new shafts, 1726 and 1729, were found, one being a shallow shaft worth returning to.

29th March. Valline. A cast of thousands carried diving equipment to the Double Dutch pitches in preparation for Martin Holroyd diving both the upstream and downstream sumps in the Rio Rioja. Most of the equipment was required for the upstream sumps, which had been pushed for a considerable distant by Rupert Skorupka and Martin in previous years. However Martin decided that day to do a short dive in the downstream sump, in which Phil Pappard had made an exploratory dive in the early 1990's. Leaving the others to go upstream, Martin, Mike Alderton and myself took equipment to this sump, entailing 600m of sporting streamway. This ends at a choke (the way on to Valline II), from which none of us knew the way to the sump. Eventually we found the way, about 60 m of disgusting muddy crawling which led to a section of streamway dropping immediately into the sump. Martin started to kit up, Mike and myself proposing to carry on to look at a passage in Valine II.

However Martin had a problem with an O-ring blowing for which he had no spare. A temporary repair made, he decided to do a quick recce to see the state of Phil's line in the sump, so Mike and I decided to wait expecting him back very shortly. As is usual in the sumps in this area, watching him dive off was amazing – the visibility being perfect and the sump large.

Several hours later we were getting slightly concerned, in view of the lash – up of Martin's equipment and the fact we had only been expecting him to be away for a few minutes. During the wait I discovered Mike (who I had not met before) comes from Calstock and is also a cave diver, active in Dan yr Ogof at present. Eventually the sound of exhaled air and Matin's lights greeted his return. He reported that he had passed Phil's previous limit, eventually getting through four shortish sumps to surface in a stream passage (larger than the Rioja) which he followed for about 300 metres to a further sump.

Martin then went upstream from the muddy crawl to a sump. He dived this to emerge in a previously undived sump pool at the base of the choke. There was no need therefore to carry gear through the muddy crawl.

30th March. Mullir. Carol Smith, Ali, Jenny Corin, Bill, Dave Biggs. One-Sock Pot (the shaft found on the 28th) was descended. About 8m deep, a tight rift was pushed through to a further tight drop where a continuation needed opening up to enter.

We then went over to Cueva de Cuatribu (13), a roomy cave about 250m long. The entrance is very well hidden in the woods and is barred by a series of pens containing large numbers of goats and a (very friendly) dog. Braving the stench of years of accumulated goat poo, we went in as far as deemed advisable seeing we only had three lights between five of us. The main reason for visiting the cave was achieved, locating the entrance by GPS. This proved it to be several hundred metres from the location previously given.

31st March. Valline. Martin, Mike, Dave Foxton, Marcus.
Sufficient equipment was carried in to enable Mike to dive with Martin, to survey the new dry extension and for Martin to dive the end (sump 6). The rest of us went on into Valline II to look at the Rope – Climb Series off Toc Gallery, which had been first entered some years ago by Keith Jackson.
On the way Dave noticed a very obvious but previously unentered passage in the roof of the first large chamber in the extensions. An easy but loose climb entered a 3m diameter tube ending at a stal choke. Down to the right a descent through blocks entered two chambers pushed to a tight tube.

At the end of Keef's passage it was hoped to get through a tight slot, but this will require much work to get through. At the top of the rope climb, Marcus managed to get across to a passage visible on the other side of the high stream passage. This proved to be just an oxbow.

We carried on up Toc Gallery to see the Tocadome, an incredible aven probably 25m in diameter and perhaps over 100m high, with a stream of water down the middle. On returning through the choke we met the divers who had just returned. Martin had dived sump 6, finding an inlet surfacing in a large but very muddy passage left going, while the sump continued to a large steeply descending ramp requiring bouyancy to descend.

1st April. Muela/Mullir. Carol Smith, Juan, Penny and Jenny Corin, Bill, Miranda, Dave Biggs, Angus. From the col at the head of the Llueva valley we walked along a track along the north eastern slopes of the mountains of Muella and Mullir, to one of many areas of located but undescended shafts. Thick mist meant that these would have been impossible to locate without GPS. Sites investigated were numbers 1731 to 1740 (many of which had previous numbers, but require a return in better visibility to identify). Those shafts descended were up to 26m deep.

2nd April. Valline. A large party returned to remove the diving gear and detackle the cave. Martin and myself had a look at a passage a had noticed on the last trip, opposite where the way from Double Dutch pitches enters the Rio Rioja. This proved to be a generally very narrow inlet, with a good draught, left after about 60m but continuing. It passed two avens, the way on from the first being in the roof of an otherwise very narrow rift.

3rd March. Cueve de los Cefrales (42). (Previously known as Dofrades). This is a short but impressive cave, with two entrances, the lower being just a few metres from the new track built up to a reservoir taking water pumped up from the resurgence cave of Comediante.

A trip earlier in the expedtion into Hidden Hole, by Pete Eagen and some of the Danish and Swedish cavers, had discovered a passage which the survey indicated ended within 25m of Cefrales. The Scandinavians had gone into Cefrales

subsequently and located two dig sites, and produced some very instructive video of how not to go about enlarging a too – tight passage. This video was shot by their tame Bin Laden.

I went in with Torben and Louise to the second dig site. From the bottom entrance, a short pitch drops into a large chamber. A short crawl emerges under an amazing deeply scalloped wall, from which point in the claw scratches of what appear to be a bear can be seen at various places in the cave. Large passage is followed to a couple of awkward climbs up. From here a muddy passage ends at an enlarged squeeze round a stal boss, followed by a short sandy passage. At the end a short dig saw us into a a section ending at a longer term dig. It probably requires parties in both caves attempting to communicate to establish if this is the point to pursue.

Alasdair Neill

PCG MEMBERSHIP LIST AT 4/7/02

NAME	ADDRESS
Pia Benson & Martin Prince	7 Marchants Way, Meavy,Yelverton, Devon, PL20 6PW
Jane Blackwell	25 Lower Farm Road, Plympton, Plymouth PL7 1JJ
Hugh & Trish Browning	2, Sandy Park West, Tavistock Pl19 0JL
Bob Cawthorne	Partida Cuta 107, 03727 Jalón Alicante Spain
Sian Davies	9 Burnham Park Road, Peverell, Plymouth
Selena Daw	Flat 3, 12 Trematon Terrace, Mutley, Plymouth PL4 6QS
Tom Ford	Summer Court, Old Road, Pensford, Bristol BS39 4BB
Ruprt Goddard	97 Mount Gould Road, Lipson, Plymouth PL4 7PX
James Hanlan	10, Clayton Place, Plymouth
Patrick Hanlan	Demelza, Tremabe Lane, Dobwalls, Liskeard PL14 6JT
Neil Henderson	Flat 1, 61 Embankment Road, Plymouth PL4 9HX
David Jean	13 Torr Rd., Hartley, Plymouth PL3 5TE
Chris Kelland	78 Durham Avenue, St Judes, Plymouth PL4 8SR
Roger King	Old Orchard, South Milton, Kingsbridge S Devon
Tom Miles (Home)	Rose Cottage, Lower Durston, Taunton, Somerset TA3 5AH
Alistair Neill	97 Mount Gould Road, Lipson, Plymouth PL4 7PX
Adrian Parson & Annabelle Ozane	Old Library Cottage, Oreston, Plymouth
Mark & Joshua Salter	3 Arscott Lane, Hooe, Plymouth PL9 9HP
Colin & Bev Smith	15 Bearsdown Close, Eggbuckland, Plymouth PL16 5TX

Fox Holes

Destination: **The Fox Holes Near Ludlow**
Date: **Sun 15-4-02**
Party: **Colin & Work Mates Ali Bruce & Al Clark**

In Brief:

Following a Conversation with Ali Neill, regarding an imminent visit to Clee Hill, Colin was dispatched with a beer mat covered in Ali's Hieroglyphics and the challenge was on -'Find The Fox Holes Cave'.

Details:

To Prove my worth as a caver I accepted the challenge, set off with the beer mat description and trusty friends from work, who are not cavers, but were up for giving it a go, having packed old clothes, wellies 'n' all.

After a hard days work at the nearby radar site, we set off for the caves.

First stop - Ask at an Outdoor Adventure centre, they're bound to know of the caves - err no they didn't! Not a good sign, they suggest asking in a pub in Oreton (consult the beer map, ah yes that could be Oreton).

Drive to Oreton, Stop at a great little pub, 'The New Inn', it's an Omen I think. I ask Peter the landlord, he sizes me up, is a little cagey then produces some documents and a photo from the sixties detailing a considerable dig, survey and geological study of the sink at The Fox Holes and the Resurgence over a mile away. Great we've hit Gold. He gives me the name of the land owner 'Jim' and his phone number.

This is too good to be true, I called Jim, told my tale and asked if we could come and have a look at the caves. Jim invites me to come and have a look, but thinks the sink might be blocked (I've heard that one before, some brambles and a few stinging nettles). A short drive from the pub to Jim's place, to be met with open arms by Jim & his misses, a very nice couple.

A walk down the field to where the sink should be and..... Jim had been more than correct, the stream that sinks into The Fox Holes was a gentle trickle disappearing into it's sandy bed at a point 5 meters from a large flat area of sand that was once the entrance to a cave!

The steam flows over sandstone that sits above a layer of limestone. The sandstone has broken down and completely filled the sink, this has been compounded by a land side complete with tree close to what was the cave.

Jim is almost apologetic and says one day he might get his JCB down to try and dig it out, but it's not high on his priority list. I suggest contacting any nearby caving club who would probably be more than happy to give it a good go.

So ended the quest for The Fox Holes, but the evening was young and the resurgence now beckoned, once again good fortune smiled on us, Jim gave me directions to another local gent who new where the resurgence was located.

A ten minute drive and we were there, dogs barking, doors open, horses stirring, but no Frank to be seen. Kicking our heels, so close yet so far away - well that was that, it was back to the hotel for post non-caving beer.

Ali & Al took great pleasure in telling our colleges about their clean-fresh clothes & wellies brought all the way from Gatwick for nothing.

Although We didn't get underground, we did met some very nice people, had good laugh (mostly at my expense) and can state categorically that The Fox Holes is at present no longer a caving trip!

Thanks to Ali Neill for the original idea & map, Peter from the White Hart for the beer and Jim & Misses for their welcome, good chat and access to the sand pit!

Colin G Smith

Forthcoming Events

PCG Trips

Meet at Bretonside at 7pm for all and please contact the organiser

30 July	Bakers Pit	Patrick 01752 303490
6 August	Digging	Colin 07764 536251
13 August	Great Rock or Local Mine	Chris 07930 829182
20 August	Digging	Colin 07764 536251
27 August	Afton Red Rift	Ali 07808 486507
3 September	Digging	Colin 07764 536251
5 September	Committee Meeting (All Welcome) Thistle Park Tavern 8pm	

Hidden Earth

Hidden Earth

This year the venue for the National Caving Conference is Monmouth and the date is the weekend of 27-29 September.

Kents Cavern

Throughout the summer Kents Cavern, Torquay, is hosting the first underground exhibition for the International Society for Speleological Art. The exhibition, opened by Torbay MP Adrian Sanders, is being held in the Great Chamber of the cave. By kind permission of Nick Powe the event is also being used to raise money for DCRO. Colin Smith has already represented the PCG.