

**JOURNAL
Of The**



Winter 2006

£2.50 to Non Members

G.O.E.S. Journal Winter 2006

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G.O.E.S. NEWS IN BRIEF

From the Editor

Welcome to the Journal! Firstly I must thank those who have kindly offered articles for the journal. The time and effort of those who contribute is always appreciated. There would not be journal without you!

You will have noticed that again this year we have only been able to put out one Journal. It is our custom to put out one journal in the late Spring /early Summer and then one around this time of year. The purpose of this timing is that a Journal reaches you in good time to publicise the Summer Walks and then a Winter edition comes out in time to publicise the Christmas meal.

This is **YOUR** Journal and as such it can only happen if **you** send in articles, news items etc. Please keep them coming otherwise we can't go to press!

Please don't wait until a journal is in production, just send them as and when they are written.

Phil Barratt
Editor@goes.org.uk

Ty Gwyn Trips

A number of local groups have enjoyed trips into the Ty Gwyn Mine recently. Thanks to all those G.O.E.S. members who turned out to be hosts & guides

The Penmorfa was broken into about six weeks ago & both locks cut off. The resident's in the area did not see anything.

Crewe Caving Club is about to visit at the end of November for a trip into Roman's.

New locks are being installed on a lot of the entrances as part of our ongoing maintenance work.

Tony Davies has continued to go out to local groups to give illustrated talks about the work of the Society, the most recent being to Llandudno Stroke Club.

The Summer Walks were again a great success with members and non members enjoying a full programme. Our grateful thanks to Ali for putting the programme together and to all those who added their expertise on the walks!

Very Best Wishes from all members of G.O.E.S., to Mark Beardsall following major surgery recently. Mark still has to have some follow up treatment for quite a while and so we just want to make sure he knows we are all thinking of him. All the best Mark!

Best Wishes Also from all G.O.E.S., members to Dave Broomhead, our P.R.O. following a period of serious illness. We wish you the best as well Dave!

Some Sad News was received in hearing of the deaths of two G.O.E.S. members. Obituaries for Shaun Costello and Geoff David are to be found elsewhere in the journal. The Society offers its condolences and best wishes to both families in their loss.

Our Thanks once again to Ali Davies for organising the Christmas Meal at the Victoria Pub on Church Walks. Some pictures would look good in the next journal!

The Pen Morfa Chronicles

Visitors....

On November 27th 2005, we showed a party from the Grosvenor Caving Club around Penmorfa. The ten or so visitors soon divided into two groups. Those few who could keep up with Gaz quickly vanished high up into the system for a whistle stop tour of everything. The more discerning who wanted to ponder awhile in the chambers, looking at the stunning rock architecture, mineral formations and industrial artefacts, stayed with Brian and myself, (by coincidence they were the older, more weighty and cautious!).

Waiting for people to catch up, to take photographs or finish discussions, provides an opportunity for GOES members to take a closer look at parts of the mine we might otherwise take for granted, finding hidden corners and noticing overlooked details. It is also the case that though we have much to say, our guests have much to tell us.

Having so many first time visitors can be an excellent time to reassess safety issues, for example, the lack of hand-lines in certain areas was highlighted as a problem we need to address in the future.

We spent some time looking at all the interesting locations within the First Rift before eventually reaching the Stemple Shaft and completing a circuit via the Devils Head Chamber to the Calcited Passage. Once back down to tramping level a brief trip was made to see Rift Three before we made our way out. Needless to say there was no sign of Gaz or the others until we got to the pub!

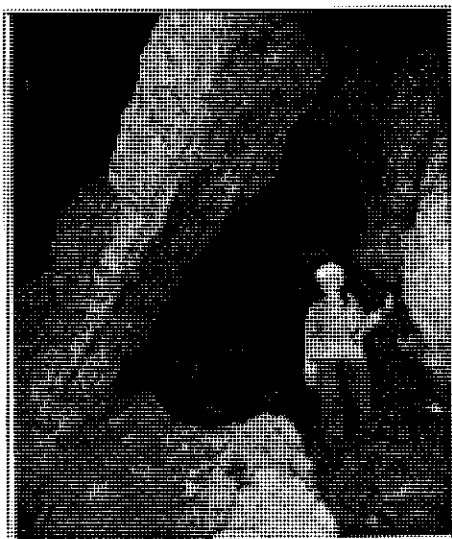


Lets hope it goes in!

Skylight....

On May 28th 2006, Brian, Ali and I had a connoisseur's tour, exploring the merits of a new route into Pinnacle Chamber. At the same time a battered piece of aluminium ladder (found discarded in a car park after being driven over) was dragged up to the Skylight Shaft at the top of the First Rift. This allowed easier access to continue with my dig. (Journals No1 2001, No2 2003). The roof of my excavation was still in place. With increased confidence, perhaps desperation, I began to dismantle the stony pillar which had previously been left as a measure of security. This allowed me to remove assorted rubble from further back. A larger GOES team was being shown around Penmorfa on the following Sunday, June 4th, and I was able to make further progress.

At the end of these two digging sessions, I had to leave with no firm conclusions as to where things were going. The back wall runs left into a passage which has been packed with rocks up to a solid roof. At the far side there are shattered rocks lying in layers that don't appear to have been placed, rather to have fallen, a bad sign. The roof would seem to be made of softer materials but for obvious reasons I haven't hacked into it too much.



Ali & the Connoisseurs Flying Buttress

Nothing New...

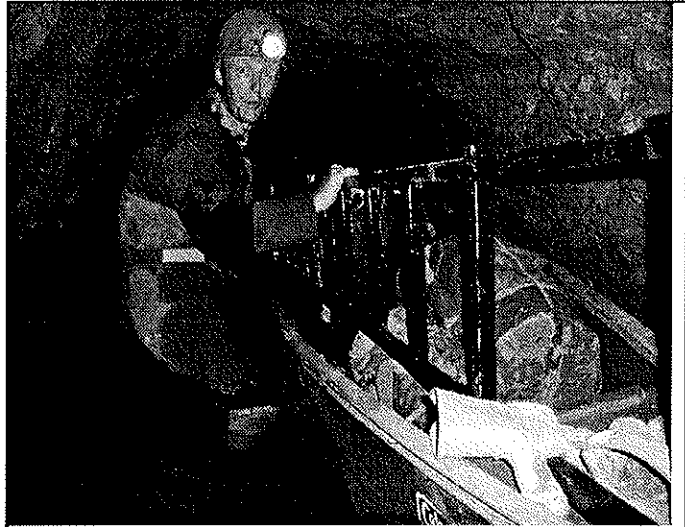
Whilst descending during the last of these trips Brian and I discovered the impressive 'Internal Shaft'. It could be accessed from just below the Ice Bridge but extended up to the flying buttress on our connoisseur's route. We were quite excited, pacing the main tramping level in an effort to work out where it might possibly come out. We were disappointed to learn later that it was well known. In the past, it was a regular abseil route until a rock fall blocked the lower egress into the adit. It was also very clearly marked on the survey.

We are keen to take a look down the shaft and perhaps remove the blockage. The obvious abseil point doesn't appear to have any bolts in position so it looks like we will have to get drilling. The fact

that well known details and features are easily forgotten by the next generation of explorers is quite worrying and emphasises the need for good communication, documentation and mapping.

Useful additions....

On July 30th, I finally got rid of the battered Canadian canoe that had been decorating my garden for far too long. It had always been my intention to get it into Penmorfa, to ease the movement of gear and people down the water filled adit. By removing seats and thwarts, I was able to tightly strap the plastic body around two barrels, reducing the cross section considerably. Thankfully, the 4m long



Dave with his "Useful additions"

On the same day Brian took into the system a ladder which he had welded together at home. Although the boat wasn't fully fitted out, we were still able to make use of it, floating the ladder and our bags down the adit. His ladder was then usefully installed at the entrance to Rift Two which had always proved an awkward climb to negotiate.

Loose ends....

On October 1st, Brian and I found ourselves back in Penmorfa. Initially this was an opportunity to fix the seats and thwarts back into the canoe. We were then able to enjoy being the first passengers to glide down the adit, keeping dry, avoiding cricked necks and being entertained by the novelty of the experience. Pushing off the wall was found to be sufficient propulsion although it became tedious after a while, especially as the walls got rather too far apart in places, (the use of ski poles to punt has now become fashionable).

A small collapse of soft mud and rocks which had been noticed before, close to the breakthrough point, was found to have got worse. Some time was spent attempting to reduce the level of the ponded water beyond but we still got wet feet when we waded through.

Brian had the idea of manhandling a long, heavy, metal ladder lying in the tramping level up to the chamber above the Ice Bridge where we could use it to reach a high level ledge. A rope proved invaluable to coax the ladder up several difficult sections and much grunting and groaning accompanied its metallic clattering. After an hour or so the successfully installed ladder allowed access to a stunning balcony, heavily decorated with white flowstone streaked by blue azurite. To one side was an ascending rift where, in a small cavity, I discovered well preserved finger imprints left by the miners when scraping out the mud - a useful resource for sealing shot holes, attaching candles to walls and hats etc. Even higher I was intrigued to hear Brian's muffled voice. Removing numerous large stones revealed a 'rabbit hole' in the floor and by dropping through it I was able to rejoin him, close to where the penguin heads are on display (Pingu ice-cream containers from Nino's!).

There was still time for a visit into Rift Two by way of Brian's ladder. I wanted to re-check the voice connections that we had made in 2004 between Rift Two, Rift Three and the Carpenter Series (Journal No1 2004). I scurried round to the top of Rift Three. We were able to chat through the wall of deads but could not see any chinks of light that might have led us to pinpoint a place to initiate a route through. I then went into the Carpenter Series sliding down its loose infill. I had expected to make good voice contact, having extracted quite a lot

of rubble since our previous success, but Brian's voice was barely audible. A link here seemed unlikely without much effort, for no real gain. Retracting my steps and reunited again we found the flooded winze taking some photos before making our way out.

On October 22nd, Steve Lea, Brian and I were back again. Our main aim was to attack the muddy blockage and lower the water level beyond. A makeshift wall of rocks was constructed to hold back most of the mud and a channel deepened to allow better drainage. One large rock may need breaking with a lump hammer in the future but for now the water flows below it. Satisfied with our efforts we continued into the system.

I wanted to know where the 'rabbit hole' rift was running. Eventually it was found to lead up into the chamber containing an old wooden ladder. Several other connections were then rediscovered, including a large square cut shaft, its bolt showing that it had been climbed in the past. The whole place is a warren that any self respecting rabbit would be proud of!

We then joined Steve in his quest for an elusive passageway that ran on from Rift Three. It apparently contained wooden ventilation ducting, still intact along the roof and was frequently visited in the past. Don't be confused by the passage at tramming level, the lost one was up the tiny ladder somewhere. We searched all the hidden corners and grovelled around in a number of crawls but found nothing. A Penmorfa myth? I am assured not. Or another case of a well known feature in danger of being forgotten about?

Dave Wrennall Nov 2006



Brian at the Flooded winze in Rift Two

The Little Orme has its Secrets

Some time ago whilst walking on the Little Orme in Llandudno I met up with an old friend who was sheep dog trainer. He has teaching a pair of dogs to herd sheep, one from the right and one from the left, so as not to send the flock over the edge of the cliff.

John Jones sat with me on a rock near the top, surveying the scene and said, "See that pipe? You probably wont believe it, but when the tide comes in, fresh water comes out of it!"

"You're having me on," I said. "No," said John, "My brother and I played a lot up here when we were young. One day our grandfather took us on an adventure. He gave us a jam jar each and a supply of candles and away we went. We were taken to a cave entrance big enough to stand up in."

John could not remember where the cave entrance opened up as he had been so young at the time.

"Anyway," he continued, "we lit our candles and grandfather took us down this tunnel. We walked for some time until grandfather came to a halt. 'You have to be very careful at this spot' he said, and shining our lights on the ground we saw a deep black fissure which we had to jump across. Apparently when the tide comes in, fresh water is pushed through the gap from below and comes out on the top of the Orme as a fresh water spring."

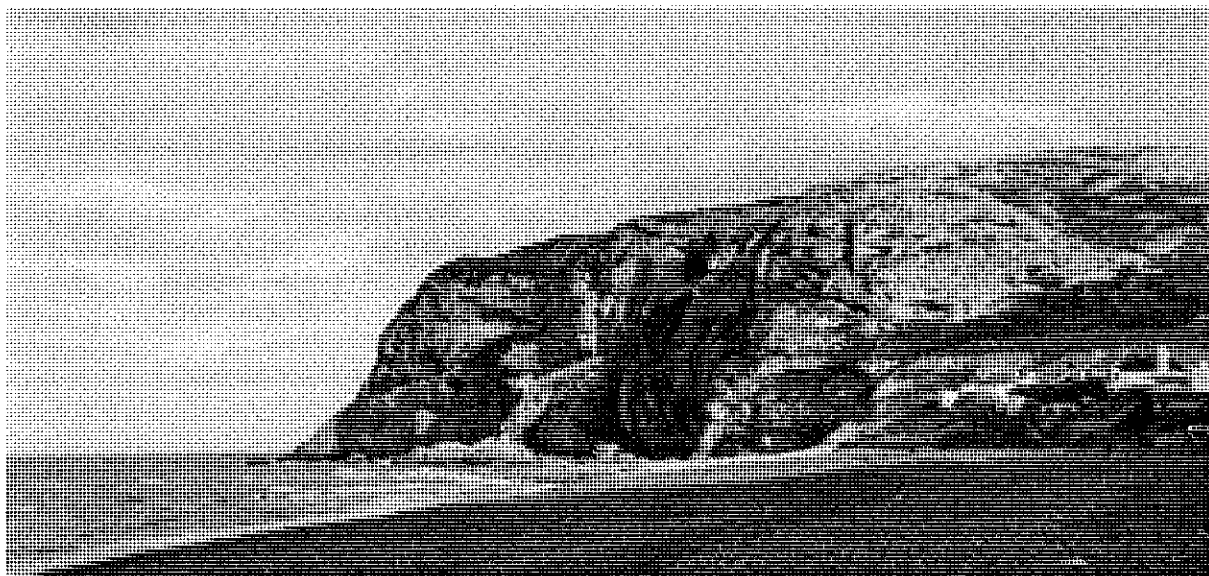
"We continue down the underground path for some time until at last we could see daylight, but on closer inspection the light was a mere slit in the rockface. We could hear the sea below us."

"Then grandfather said, 'Come and hold your lights up.' What a sight! All around the walls were animal carvings. We stared at them for ages. I don't think either my brother or I have ever told anyone else about them."

This was John's secret he has kept all these years. He had never been back to find the cave but remembered that it had been well hidden. John has since passed away, but he has left me with a mission. It is a place that I intend to search for!

Ramon Rainford
August 2006

(Can any GOES Members tell us more? Ed)



“Over the Rainbow”

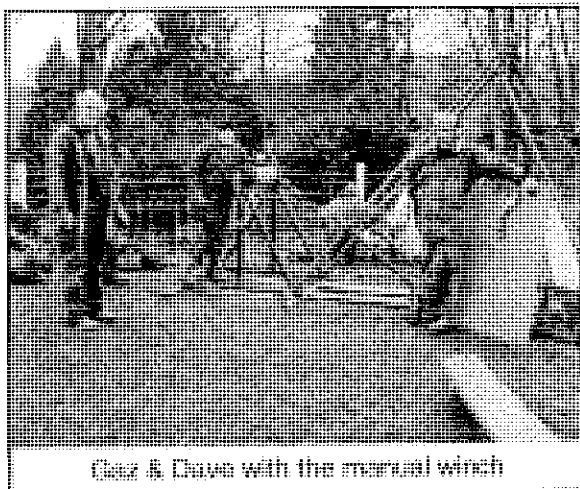
On the 5th of February 2006 a small team from GOES travelled over to Loggerheads to help Grosvenor Caving Club in the investigation of a shaft which appeared quite unexpectedly in the middle of a field last year. With only four people on site it was clear our help would be welcomed.

When the hole was first discovered in October 2005 the local farmer had apparently used some telephone wire (he was once an engineer with BT) and determined its depth as being 503ft! However, since then, material lying directly above the solid rock at 4m had slumped and slipped into the shaft, creating a wide crater on the surface and a blockage in the shaft 10m below. Despite some scepticism about the accuracy of the initial plumbing, particularly as the vertical shaft would have changed to an angled underlie at something like 300ft, it had to be assumed that the farmer had measured something substantial. Leases were eventually negotiated with the mine owners, The Representative Body of the Church in Wales, and the landowner to explore the site.

The shaft, which was marked on several plans, had been lost for over a century. It had been used to haul lead ore from the Gwernymnedd Mine which was worked by Brunner Mond and Co between 1896 and 1903. The productive seam was known to lie at 300ft and it was thought that numerous artefacts would still be in place. When the mine closed the shaft was covered over with old railway lines, rocks and soil. In all probability, when the Victorians later used the land as an ash tip, the shaft's location was totally hidden under vegetation. Over the ensuing years weight from the ashes and groundwater had bent the rusting rails. This, together with the rotting of a wooden collar above the level of the shaft, led directly to the sudden collapse and a dramatic reappearance of the hole.

The site was well organised. A large square outer fence protected the working area; containing the manual winch and a dozen huge builders sacks full of extracted rubble, from animals and inquisitive visitors. Within this an inner fence surrounded the hole, with its shuttering and scaffolding set across the solid rock below. Here a detachable ladder and lockable trap door completed the defences.

Based on the size of the crater and the dimensions of the shaft, the blockage was estimated to be only 4m thick. The material, consisting of sticky mud, a lot of rocks and some wood was heavily compacted. Digging a small pit in an attempt to minimise the amount needed to be extracted proved awkward, as was the necessity to be tied on in case the whole blockage suddenly collapsed. Fortunately the dubious smell, probably from a nearby bungalow's broken cess pit, wasn't so noticeable after the first few minutes!



Clare & Dave with the manual winch

An electric winch powered by a small generator situated on the surface was absolutely fantastic for taking filled buckets up to the top scaffolding. Purchased from Macro for just £35, the gearing in the winch sounded knackered but it kept going. The manual winch was then employed to raise the buckets to field level. Grosvenor had made the well-used buckets using medium sized drums laced with rope around the entire drum to provide a handle and excellent security. Despite the difficulties of digging it was even harder at surface to claw the mud from the buckets and get it into



Dave enjoys some fresh air!

the sacking.

I spent over an hour at the sharp end digging and loading buckets. I was ready for a rest when I eventually returned to sunshine on the surface. The fresh air was very much appreciated. A stove was on hand, providing hot water for cuppa soups and a selection of chocolate biscuits appeared. Whilst the hauling and tipping continued we discussed the history of the mine and the merits of the dig. It was progressing slower than expected. A scaffolding pole which they had driven in the previous week suggested the blockage was deeper than had been predicted. Digging during the day we should have found the pole, but we hadn't. There were time constraints on the use of the field and other club commitments to consider. Early enthusiasm had waned to some extent and Grosvenor would have to make a decision in the near future as to whether or not to carry on.

At about 2pm we said goodbye to our hosts and left them to continue digging. Apparently it is normal to keep working until dusk! We returned to our vehicle just 200m away, conveniently left in a pub car park. After a quick change of clothes it's into 'The Rainbow' for a swift beer before departure, much more in keeping with the GOES tradition than grafting 'til sundown!

As for the pot of gold...

During the Spring of 2006 when the shaft had been excavated 13.5m below ground level another attempt was made to drive scaffolding poles through the blockage. Sadly even after over 16m of hammering there was no hint of a void below. Grosvenor had to accept they had neither the time nor the resources to dig that much material out, and, in all probability the shaft had been completely backfilled when originally capped. Although the farmer had been genuine in his enthusiasm he must have been misguided in his calculations. The dramatic collapse and the resulting conical hole had been the result of settlement within a totally filled shaft. The site was subsequently cleared. All the arduously extracted fill was bulldozed back into the shaft and arrangements made to add a concrete cap prior to landscaping. The 'golden artefacts', if there are any, remain hidden.

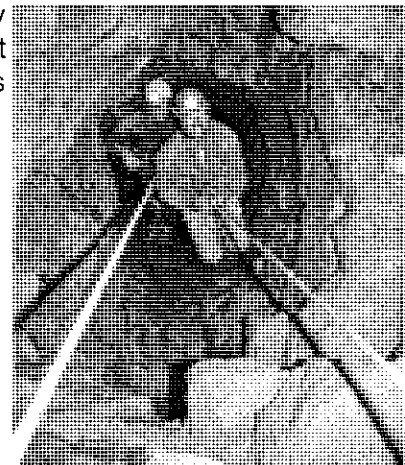
Dave Wrennall October 2006

OBIT :: Shaun Costello

The club was very sad to learn of the untimely death of Shaun Costello whilst he was on holiday in Turkey during the summer. He had been an active underground member for many years, always very enthusiastic about the outdoor life, keen to join in or simply hear about our explorations. He was a good friend and I really miss calling in at Thomas Cook for a quick chat. Having got used to seeing him in a scruffy boiler suit, it was always amusing to find him in smart work clothes.

Shaun was the sort of individual that the club is in dire need of, someone aware of their own limitations but wanting to be involved. The club's dwindling numbers reduced to a few 'experts' is a recipe for disaster. There is strength in numbers and we have lost a valuable colleague.

Dave Wrennall
November 2006



GOES on the Telly

In 1986 members of the Great Orme Exploration Society campaigned vigorously for permission to excavate the Tŷ Gwyn Mine site on the promenade. Members lobbied local councillors, and by various, often dubious, means eventually succeeded in gaining access to the site.

Shortly after the GOES members entered the old workings, a television team from S4C presented a programme from the site. Gwyn Llewelyn, the presenter, was very impressed, and over the ensuing years often expressed a desire to visit the Tŷ Gwyn again.

On the twenty sixth of July this year, twenty years later, he realised his wish. The Tŷ Gwyn featured in the programme, 'Wedi Saith' (After Seven). This is S4C's nightly magazine programme, broadcast from Monday to Friday and featuring the latest stories and gossip from all over Wales and beyond.

At nine thirty the GOES team, starring Gareth Davies, with a supporting cast of Mark Beard-sall, Brian Edwards and Tom Parry arrived on site. Some time later Gwyn Llewelyn, and the film crew appeared. The television contingent looked like something out of a Police drama series, when they donned white paper coveralls, as worn by scenes of crime officers. The camera man operated a very large and very expensive looking camera which he skilfully and carefully manoeuvred, into all manner of constricted spaces whilst ensuring that at all times it was kept spotlessly clean. He was closely followed by the sound engineer who wielded a long pole on top of which was something resembling a large woolly caterpillar. To add to his problems he had forgotten to bring his wellies, and his shoes have probably never been the same since! These two were the undoubted heroes of the operation and displayed excellent teamwork, professionalism and good humour during the morning's grovelling. Gwyn Llewelyn seemed delighted to be back, and master-minded the whole operation. His easy going manner, sense of fun, and enthusiasm was infectious and put the four celebrity wannabees completely at ease immediately.

In the course of filming all is not as it appears in the eventual programme. The initial filming of the team entering the mine was quite a complex operation. Firstly Gwyn Llewelyn and the GOES four were filmed, from above, climbing down the ladder, and the cover was seen being replaced from inside. Then everyone climbed out to allow the film crew to go down and film the entry into the mine from below. This set the pattern for the morning with the camera crew and the participants constantly swapping positions

Filming took up most of the morning as progress through the mine was rather slow. It had been decided to keep grovelling to the minimum, and only to advance as far as the Tŷ Gwyn shaft. The whole operation went well and by midday filming was completed. The programme was broadcast shortly after seven that evening. The mine sequence was followed by a short, live, conversation between Gareth and Gwyn Llewelyn, standing on the shaft lid. By this time both had been home to clean up and not a spot of mud was to be seen on either of them!

A short time later GOES received a DVD of the programme and a cheque for £200. Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of the DVD should contact Ali, and the journal editor will be pleased to translate the dialogue for non Welsh speakers.

Twm Parry. Nov. 06.

(Diolch yn fawr Twm!! Mi fydda i'n trio!.....Ed)

The Principal Principle (A story in three parts)

One...

Half open gate, spacious damp passage, and playful pipe crawl.

A jolly team reacquainted with an old friend.

Laughter at a navigational error, tales from the past and talk of the future.

Air pipes and enthusiasm led them upstream, the principal mineral lode, a monstrous soaring cavity their ever close companion. Further still further. An old sketch, faded memories and mysterious stories of spectacular formations, add to the occasion. Over a kilometre in, rock fall and ponded water suggested a change, just beyond an old hopper on the right has collapsed, total blockage. Bent and crumpled pipes pressed to the floor a framework through which the stream bubbled.



Stones in excess

As explorers and unofficial guardians of these mines we should attempt to access passages that would otherwise be lost, preserving their historic, cultural and amenity value. It is a fundamental principle and the challenge was obvious. Stones were rolled, shovelled and thrown, releasing brown waters from a hidden lake. Care was taken not to disturb a second dubious hopper. Hopes were high, but the rocks many and time ebbed. We left it to drain, planning an early return.

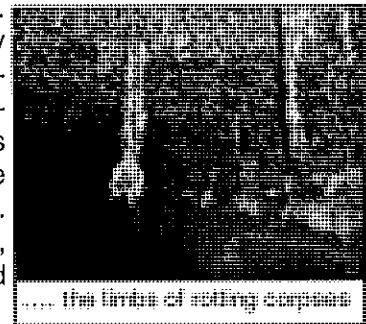
Two...

Alone, quietly focused, stumbling in half lit darkness, with heart-beat and foot splash as companions reviving the commitment shown in younger days. Eager to re-evaluate last week's efforts and make some additional progress. Less distraction, but less margin for error as I crouch under hanging rubble, straining to reach distant obstructions. More water pours and the isolated tunnel begins to beckon. Now the water's flowing beneath the pipes washing away grit and smaller stones, but thankfully the pipes continue to support the larger rocks above. Should the equilibrium be broken an avalanche would certainly reseal the window.

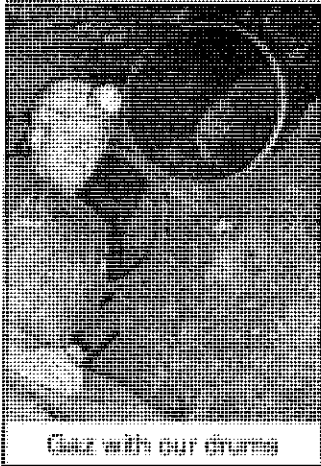
My balance of daring and caution is a fine line to tread; and satisfaction eventually gives way to fatigue. Enough headway to see our principal goal could be realized, sufficient danger remaining to know that a team would be required to do it safely. I'm happy to make my way back towards daylight.

Three...

An enthusiastic gang assemble the following weekend. Two cut down plastic barrels are compressed and squeezed with us through the gates. At the dig they are riveted together and gradually inserted into the excavation. They offered a good measure of protection from the treacherous rocks, a safe route even if there was a collapse. Squirming through I enter the lost passage wading into a cold muddy chest deep lake. Walls stained brown tell of even higher waters. Several hoppers appear. Interestingly they have switched to the left wall alongside the pipes which now run intact at head height. Gaz joins me and we continue excitedly. The water gradually lowers to knee depth, at which point we stop to gaze in astonishment at the dripping ochre encrusted pipes and a roof festooned in delicate straws, the famous 'inverted porcupines back of brown stalactites' we had read about. Others were large like the limbs of rotting corpses. Truly an amazing sight. But for our efforts they would have remained lost, worse still, the rising water level behind the dam could have destroyed them entirely.



..... the limbs of rotting corpses



Claz with our drums

All smiles, we clatter along the drying passage, a short parallel tunnel to the left leads intriguingly to an incline that vanishes into a flooded section. The main level reaches a very distinctive square pillar, wood with rock infill supporting the roof. It's vaguely familiar. Ahead a region of major activity, big stopes and many collapses. Metal plates bolted to the walls suggested problems in the past. It's the end of safe exploration. Time to report back to the others, take photographs of those decorations and escape through the barrels. A successful conclusion 300m of passageway reopened, the fantastic formations found, saved from inundation and recorded for posterity. The principal principle upheld.

Later I ponder my old sketch and see a square clearly marked at the far end of my explorations. I had after all been there in the early 80's, twice, once solo. As for the stalactites I didn't recall passing them, but then I was a youth and maybe hadn't an eye for such things.

Dave Wrennall
March/April 2006



Staws in excess

REMEMBER THE BIG ONE?

Titan Shaft in the Peak District is presently in the news, discovered in 1999 it is the biggest vertical cave found so far in the UK 143m / 475ft. (Previously Gaping Gill in the Dales was thought to be the largest at 103m / 340ft)

The completion of a 46m surface shaft that has taken 4 years to dig has allowed easy access direct to the top of the chasm. The media have taken an interest with articles in most newspapers and a film crew has at last been able to highlight the immensity of the place.

A GOES team were there on the 6th July 2003 but they took the long way round! We entered the system via Peak Cavern crawling arduously through to Speedwell before scurrying around in a labyrinth of tunnels and chambers towards the foot of Titan. Rather like scaling Everest, not all the team made the summit. After the final boulder choke the survivors emerged to stand at the foot of the shaft. Here is an extract from the 2003 Winter Journal.

Our torches lit up little more than the initial damp well sculptured walls stretching up into the darkness, beyond our beams faded to nothing. Only our imaginations could reach further to the 'Event Horizon', a narrowing at 65m, above which there were some big ledges and a widening shaft extending to the final roof. It was like a magnificent geological hourglass with a waterfall cascading noisily down one wall recording the years. What a magical, inspirational, energetic place. Our smiling faces ran with the droplets that had fallen from afar. We ran our fingers across the roughly textured rocks, looked into the various alcoves and marvelled at it all. We spent perhaps ten minutes absorbing our surroundings, etching them to our memory before it was sadly time to go. With some hesitation, one small piece of rock made its way into my pocket as I said farewell to Titan and followed the others back down through the boulders.

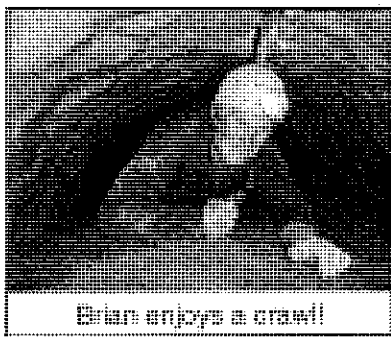
The section was subtitled 'hallowed ground'. We certainly felt privileged to be there, a place of reverence. One of the earth's secret gems had been revealed. If you would like to share in the experience go to the BBC web site and search for 'Titan'. Find the link entitled 'Inside the UK's deepest cave' for an enthralling 12 minute video.

Dave Wrennall : November 2006

Ogof Nadolig (Christmas Cave)

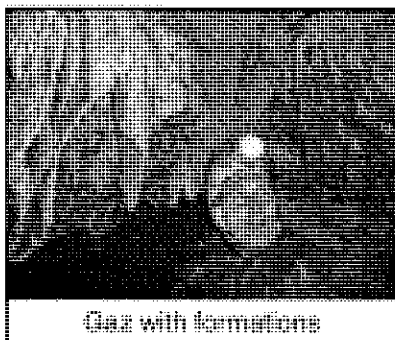
On May 7th 2006, an entertaining day was had in this small but varied cave situated in the Alyn Valley near Cilcain. After parking we walked half a mile alongside the dry river-bed, Gaz showing us the other cave entrances in the area, notably, Poachers and Ogof Hesp Alyn.

The location of Ogof Nadolig had proved elusive in the past but we now had more accurate directions. Although we never found the blue reflectors that were supposed to guide us, we eventually found the impressive, industrial pipe entrance, well hidden, on a steep, densely wooded hillside.



Inside the entrance a series of offset pipes created an 8m stairway, negotiated with the help of a hand line. At the bottom a corridor soon led to a junction. Left was the main passageway, heavily silted and providing an increasingly demanding and photogenic crawl. The passage opened out before reaching a splendid aven. Here a 6m climb up an in-situ rope allowed access to the upper series. Several tight crawls led onto a balcony and various chambers. There were plenty of fine formations to be discovered throughout this section. One tunnel arrived at a vertical shaft with a climbing pole. This led up to a locked lid on the surface from where we could glimpse woodland.

After retracing our route through the upper series we descended to the foot of the roped aven. Here our attention turned to a very tight squeeze, clearly enlarged by blasting. Gaz and I wriggled through, to find ourselves in a corridor that immediately fell away into a pitch. The 12m drop led down to a section of mined passageway, but having no rope we were unable to descend to take a look. Squirming back through the squeeze we rejoined the others and continued to make our way out.



Everyone involved (Gaz Davies, Brian Williams, Ben Atkinson and Dave Wrennall), had an excellent day out; the cave although not extensive was full of variety and interest. Well worth the drive, perhaps another team might like to tackle Poachers or Ogof Hesp Alyn next time?

Dave Wrennall
October 2006

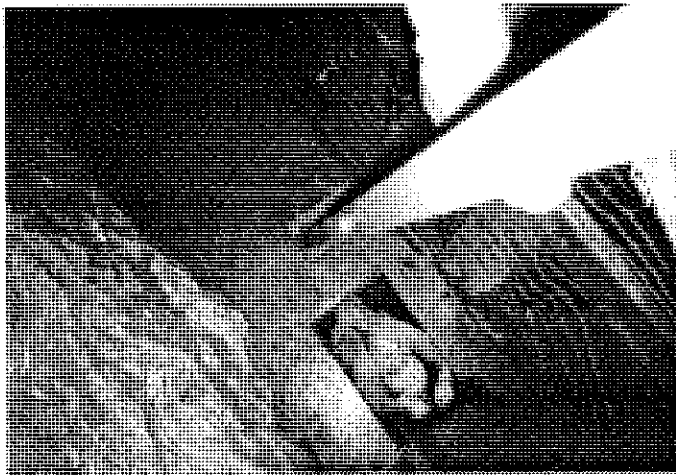
MILWR

Apparently it had been six years since my last trip with GOES into this cavernous mine system. This was the mine that in January 1917 the miners broke through into a flooded cavern (not sure whether this was accidental – in which case they must have had a huge shock!), which subsequently drained. 11 hours later a disbelieving local population discovered that the legendary St Winefride's Well, to which generations of pilgrims had visited for its medicinal properties, had dried up! Because the water coming out of St Winefride's was used for other local industries, they had to initially supply the well by pumps. St Winefride's is now supplied with water from the Holywell Boat Level. This is also the mine with a 10 mile long main adit and umpteen miles of adjoining passage, not to mention the 440 ft shaft that we had to navigate both on the way in and on the way out. I was far from fit in those days and remembered being absolutely shattered by the time we reached the surface – vowing 'Never Again'.

Then on 2nd July of this year GOES were given another opportunity to go back... only this time I considered myself much fitter, and we had been told that the custodians, Grosvenor Caving Club, had created a diesel 'train' that would be able to transport us along the many miles of passage to save our legs from all that walking. Easy Peasy!... so I jumped at the chance!

There were 4 of us from GOES – Brian, Steve, Gaz and me. We arrived a little late, after taking a wrong turn on the way, but soon met up with our hosts from Grosvenor and got changed into the necessary underground uniform of overalls, wellies and lamp. By mid morning we had left the scorching heat of a beautiful summers day and entered the cooler subterranean world of utter darkness, and the familiar smell of damp soil and rocks.

Shortly after entering the mine we came to the top of the Olwyn Goch shaft – all 440 feet of it. We were given the opportunity to take a peek over the edge, but with my absolute fear of heights, I declined. Instead, I waited my turn to start descending the fixed ladders that would take us down to Sea level. There are 24 ladders in total in sections of about 20 feet and separated by wooden staging. For safety, only one person was allowed on a ladder at a time. This meant all that could be heard for a while were the shouts of 'Clear' at various depths of the shaft, as people were exiting one ladder and making their way to the next. The deeper down the shaft we got, the more spaced apart the voices sounded. The sound of water got increasingly louder too, cascading in from somewhere above us. I had to keep trying to obliterate the knowledge that all that was separating us from the vast drop down the shaft, should we fall off the ladders, was a wall of netting... which thankfully wasn't easy to see through. I think I would have frozen to the rungs had I been able to see what I was descending.



The staging on the Olwyn Goch ladders, taken by Brian Edwards

Once safely at the bottom we had to wait while a couple of people disappeared out of sight. After a few minutes there was a loud engine noise... the new addition to the mine was being fired up. It slowly appeared out of the darkness, chugging along the rails with its headlight on full beam. Wow! What a machine! It had been cobbled together out of a diesel engine, the wheels of an old ore truck and some large pipes. The

latter would serve as both seats and storage containers to transport tools around.

There were 9 of us took our positions on this 'train' and sat, rather uncomfortably, straddling the

pipes. Off we went, at around a brisk walking speed, down the 10 mile long Milwr Tunnel. The headlight lit the way ahead really well and way off in the distance we could see the light bouncing back off a reflective plate on the wall. This I was told was an emergency telephone and what we could see was phone number 1. Our destination was at Phone number 10. I started counting down the phones as we made progress, with the river Alyn flowing to our left. After phone number 4 the novelty was starting to wear off. The phones were a long, long way apart, the engine was very loud, making conversation virtually impossible, the seating was giving me an extremely numb posterior, and the diesel fumes were choking.

All of a sudden there was a jolt, and the engine tipped to one side. We had hit some stones on the track and had been derailed. Thankfully, the engine hadn't tipped right over, or worse, into the river. It didn't take long to get going again, only now I was making sure I was in a position to jump off in the direction of dry land, in case it should happen again!

I had eventually lost count of the number of telephones we had passed when we stopped again. We were going to take a tunnel off to our right and had to get off the train while the experts changed the points on the track. Soon we were heading down the Rhosesmor Branch on the way to Powells' Lode, and it didn't take long to reach our destination. It was such a relief to dismount and have a good stretch. We were in a large chamber which housed an enormous lake. This lake is thought to be bottomless. It is believed that when the mine was being worked tons of spoil was tipped into it, yet there is absolutely no evidence of that spoil to be seen. I threw in a stone and watched it slowly descend the depths until the beam of my lamp couldn't reach it anymore. We all sat in this chamber and had lunch.

After quickly exploring this area we got back onto the train and retraced our journey. By this time the diesel fumes were becoming unbearable and my eyes were stinging. I spent most of the ride with them closed!

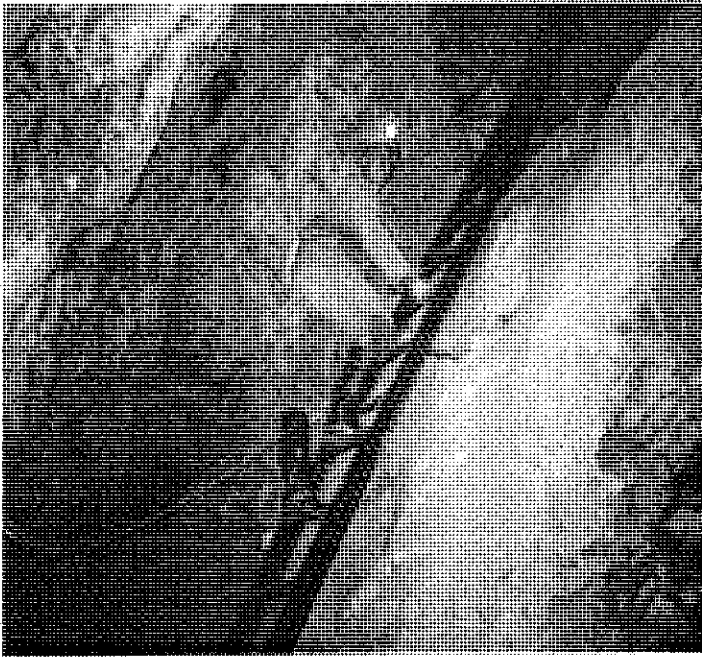
At some point on this journey we stopped again, leaving the train while we went off up some recently installed ladders and into a mass of workings. Precisely where this was is a mystery to me, perhaps because I had done most of the return journey with my eyes closed! It was a really enjoyable detour and we managed to drop off some equipment into an area where the members of Grosvenor were going to continue with one of their many projects. The passages in this area were much narrower and at one point we had to cross over a gaping chasm by means of some very rusty looking pipe work. I was smiling on the outside for this photo, but inside I was a quivering wreck!



Ali on the rusty pipe, taken by Brian Edwards

After several hours clambering around we headed back to Olwyn Goch to make the climb out into fresh air. Before heading back up the ladders we took a quick look around this area. There was the old office, which still had the original desk and some paperwork in it, and several huge ammunition rooms. We came to an absolutely enormous chamber, which had been blasted out of the whitest limestone I had ever seen. There were more discarded ore trucks and mining equipment and huge, empty ammunition rooms. This place really is fascinating!

Ali on one of the newly installed ladders, taken by Brian Edwards



Unfortunately there weren't enough hours left in the day, or energy left in our bodies, to continue, so we made our way back up the ladders. Again the calls of 'Clear' could be heard on the way up. Whoever had taken the lead must have been very fit as his voice rapidly became more and more distant. We reached ladder 12 and stopped for a welcome rest. From this point there was another opportunity to take a look down the shaft... and this time I felt brave! Oh, what a huge drop!

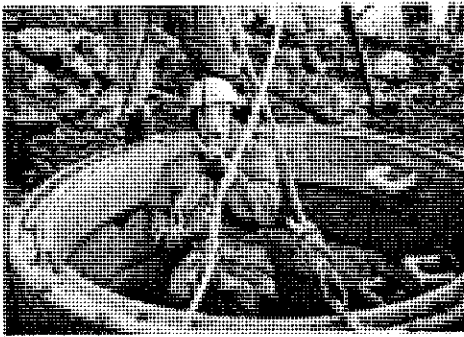
The final push was soon over and we were making our way out into the lovely warmth of a summers evening. I was shattered again, only this time I felt good, and would definitely take up an offer to go back another day. I am not so sure I

would be as keen as the members of Grosvenor Caving Club though. Remarkably, they do this trip every week... and sometimes even twice a week. Now that is dedication!

Ali Davies Llandudno November 2006

Geoff David

On the 7th July, Geoff David died at his home in Glan Conwy at the age of eighty three. One of the founder members of the Great Orme Exploration Society he was a popular and charismatic figure.



Educated at Winchester College, he served as an officer in the Royal Navy during the war years from 1940 to 1945 and saw service in most theatres of operation. He was then employed in the oil industry. At the age of thirty nine he entered Glasgow University and qualified as a teacher, eventually being appointed to St David's College, where he became the Head of Geography, and Outdoor Pursuits Instructor. It was in this post that he became involved with the group of cavers and mine explorers who were the nucleus of the Great Orme Exploration Society.

Upon his retirement from St. David's College Geoff worked as the resident archaeologist at Great Orme Mines. His archaeological records and diaries were precise and meticulous and reflected his, expertise, enthusiasm and sense of humour. In any discussion about Geoff David, the word gentleman was invariably and deservedly used. He was always fully at ease in any, and in all, company. He certainly possessed the 'common touch' and 'walking with kings' would not have caused him the slightest problem.

At his funeral service in a packed Llanrhos church the Reverend Tim Hall said, "Geoff has called us all together, we do not all know each other, but we all knew Geoff. We all hold Geoff in deep affection, and we were all known closely by Geoff and have at some stage during his life, shared it with him . . ." The memory of a serious and profound stare followed by a huge smile will be long remembered and very sadly missed.

Twm Parry Nov. 2006.