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# The Journal





## **Editorial**

In an article in "The Observer" of 12 May, research on the susceptibility to drug addiction was reported. Work done at London University's Institute of Psychiatry provides "compelling evidence" that "vulnerability to addiction can be tracked to genes that influence behaviour such as novelty-seeking and openness to new experiences." The conclusion drawn by the author of the article is that "People who do extreme sports are adventurous, adrenaline-seekers who might be inclined to take drugs". Examples of dangerous sports that were given were hang-gliding and bungee jumping. Despite the fact that organisations concerned with drug addiction gave the research a mixed reception, arguing that "The strongest correlation is between drug abuse and social exclusion.", and that "Genetic predisposition is a red herring", this did not deter the Observer's cartoonist, Robert Thompson, from creating this cartoon.

What is Joe Public supposed to infer from this? He already knows that cavers are inconsiderate thrill-seekers who put not only their own lives at risk, but also the lives of others who are always being called out to rescue them, and now he is told that they are a bunch of junkies as well! Thanks for nothing, Mr Thompson.



Joe Duxbury

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## **My First Caving Experience**

When I first landed in England the last thing on my mind was to go and spend 3 hours in a dark hole in the backyard of an English sheep keeper and enjoy it! Swildon's was the hole and Dudge was my guide.

It all started after a weekend trip to London where for some obscure reason the subject of caving came up. Naturally Dudge, being who he is, did not make it sound too pleasant. His description of the planned trip was like something out of "Twenty thousand leagues under the sea" without the monsters. Nevertheless I did not let him discourage me and we proceeded to the cave on Wednesday evening immediately after work.

We got to the cave area around 17:30hrs and entered the cave at around 18:00hrs. Strangely enough the adventure started off on a good note as the water level was not as high as anticipated - that was Dudge's feeling. For me it was "Gees, it's just like Dudge described; there's lots of water and the hole is not very big." I figured "Hey, I've done worse in my life and this can't be that long so we'll be out in less than half an hour."

Half an hour later we were still in there and guess what? The cave explorers' worst nightmare was happening: Dudge's light died on him. That did not reassure me at all. This is when he suggested I turn my light off to experience absolute darkness. This was quite an experience and I actually surprised myself touching my nose. Dudge changed the battery on his lamp and we kept going.

We took the dry ways in until we reached the chamber where the dry ways and wet ways meet. This is where the real excitement started. We descended the 20ft pot and were once again on our way to explore the deepest corners of the cave. We went as far as the first sump (after a quick detour to Tratman's Temple) but this is as far as we went as neither of us or another two cavers we had met en-route felt like going under water.

On the way out climbing the 20ft pot was a bit of a chore. It was literally a waterfall which we had to climb into. That is what you call a wet experience and that was only the beginning of it. There was lots of crawling involved and it was pretty shocking at times to feel the water penetrating my suit through the arms and the water coming out of my legs.

At one point I believe Dudge, who by the way kept complaining he was out of shape, must have got a little thirsty. As he turned around after talking to me he managed to swallow a mouthful of water containing an unknown substance on which he managed to choke all the way back to Cheltenham.

After 3 hours of crawling and using all forms of contortions to get through the cave, there it was, the ultimate prize of the cave explorer - the exit! We were still alive, well at least I was. I'm still not too sure about Dudge.

To feel the vastness of the night after being contained so tightly within Mother Earth's womb was like we had reached Heaven. We were quickly brought back down to Earth as we stepped into a large pile of sheep shit.

I think one of the most amusing parts of this exciting adventure was when we realised that we could find our way through the cave but got lost walking back to the car (it was a very dark night).

All in all this was experience which I will never forget and which I will undertake again with a higher level of difficulty when I return to England.

**Simon.**

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### **Down in Deepest Devon** by Joe Duxbury

23 B 24 February 2002

Another trip to visit the subterranean delights of Devon had been arranged, this time with the key to the Devon Speleological Society hut firmly in our grasp.

I got to the hut in Buckfastleigh on Friday night, and had finished my fish and chips when Andy Todd arrived. We retired to the Waterman's Arms, and Mark Tringham turned up after about 2 pints.

Early on Saturday morning, the options for breakfast out were limited, so we resorted to the Little Chef just off the main road. We then visited the William Pengelly hut, to see if there were anyone there to give us information about current states of access. But it was deserted, so I phoned Keith Pearson, the DSS Secretary, to see about keys to Baker's Pit and Afton Red Rift. He agreed to bring at least one of these to the DSS hut that evening. The only cave with open access was Pridhamsleigh Cavern, so we drove the short distance to the farm, paid our access fee, and kitted up. The approach is through a gate just before the bridge over the dual carriageway, and along a path past a medieval dovecote. Over a fence and a bit further along, up on the right, is the large entrance.

We missed the easier way on, to the right just after passing the initial low stooping section (I put it down to our eyes not having acclimatised to the dark), but the rift swung round and rejoined the main way on. We just followed the more obvious route until I was pleasantly surprised to reach The Lake. I had expected this to be more difficult to find. Having accomplished this as the primary objective, we then set about investigating all the side passages and other tempting little holes of which there are many! At the bottom of a knotted rope we came across a pool with diving lines going in each direction, and another lake along the bottom of a rift. We crossed a horizontal rope to come back to the main passage, and climbed up into the Attic. After about 2 hours we seemed to have been to most of the obvious bits, so we returned to the surface.

Dog Hole is a short way back along the track to the farm, so we popped down that as well. The extensions are reported to be quite pretty, so are protected by a gate. As we didn't have a key, we simply followed the hole down as far as we could. The weather was still poor when we got out, so washing off in the river (cross over the bridge towards Buckfast and over the barrier on the left) was not the same pleasant task that it is on a hot summer afternoon. We cleaned the minimum necessary and returned to the hut for a hot shower.

Although it was still early afternoon, because of the sudden, heavy showers of rain, only Andy was tempted to venture out and look round the village. Keith turned up with keys for not only Baker's Pit but also Afton Red Rift, which had originally been reported as closed while its access was sorted out. Later on we went to the White Hart, and the meal and the variety of beers were most enjoyable.

The plan for Sunday was to do Afton Red Rift, then Baker's on the way back. Andy provided breakfast, and we took the route by major roads, via Totnes. Andy then managed to avoid the cave by using the "I've left my wellies back at the hut" ploy. His alternative trainers were useless; they had no grip at all. So it was only Mark and me to venture into the depths. A new route to the cave has been marked through the woods by the DSS, using blue bailer twine. This avoids the quarry with its sea of cowsh. Just inside the gate were several lesser horseshoe bats, and an impressive greater, hanging right in the way, so we had to duck under it. The steep entrance rift was as nastily polished as I remember it. The short route to the bottom of the cave (Mud Hall) was described as being below the tricky right hand bend, so I descended where I thought it might be and had a look, but couldn't find it. The rift ends at Flower Chamber, and a thrutchy passage continues to

Cascade Chamber via a tricky traverse on a sharp right hand corner over a drop to the passage below. We poked around various tubes and crawls, eventually returning to Flower Chamber. As we seemed to have looked at everything without finding the way to Mud Hall, we went back to the tricky right hand corner and descended to the bottom. Straight ahead led to Cascade Chamber, a route we failed to find the first time, but back below the way we'd come went through some low tubes to the elusive Mud Hall, which I recognised. After we'd looked around this, a climb up a short slope on the right into another tube revealed a well-worn, tight hole on the right, sloping steeply upwards. This seemed to fit the description of the loop route in "Top of the Pots", and there was a draught, so we decided to give it a go. Getting through the first bit was strenuous, as there was very little to get any purchase on. The tube then continued steeply, and at the top there was a wriggle through a vertical slot, then over a boulder, and pop! We were in the bottom of the entrance rift. Magic. From above this hole is not at all obvious, as it's below some boulders in the undercut. And although the way up requires a lot of effort, it would probably be more difficult backing down the slope and into the squeeze at the bottom. After a very laborious climb to the top of the rift we followed it out, past the bats (there were more hidden below the gate) to the weak sunshine.

Mark didn't feel up to another cave, after so much effort, and Andy didn't want to change into caving gear a second time, so we left Baker's Pit for another day.

Back at the hut, a party of schoolkids had returned from Dartmoor, but we exposed our bodies in the shower anyway, then packed up and left. An entertaining and satisfactory weekend's caving.

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### **Easter in Yorkshire with the Chelsea SS**

The CSS "Old Farts" section had booked a caravan in Ingleton for the Easter weekend. At least a dozen people turned up, most of whom were only walking. We were supposed to conceal any caving activity, as the proprietor of the site has decided not to rent to cavers any more (as you may have read in the edition of Descent). But sorting out the ropes outside the caravan on the Friday morning was a bit of a giveaway!

### **Ireby Fell Cavern 29 March 2002**

Derek Davey, Joe Duxbury, Mike Read

To our surprise, there was nobody else in the cave. Water levels seemed to be normal. We had rope for the straightforward descent rather than the "shadow" route. Mike rigged. Care needs to be taken with the route at two junctions: firstly where the passage cuts into the main stream, easily missed on the way out; secondly in the wide, dry cavern at the start of Duke Street, the large passage at the bottom. The length of this was a lot longer than I remembered. I derigged. A very uncomplicated trip of about 5 hours.

### **Providence Pot - Dow Cave 30 March 2002**

Joe Duxbury, Mike Read

With everybody else off walking, Mike and I needed an accessible cave that didn't require too much kit. The Providence - Dow trip fitted these requirements. Mike drove us to the parking spot on the road near to the Dow Cave entrance, and we struck off across the hills to enter Providence Pot.

The phone cable is a good guide for most of the route through Providence. There was more water than I remembered - I thought the squalid bits were only muddy, but there are a couple of canals you have to crawl in. When we got to Dowbergill Passage, at the well-decorated Stalactite Corner, we had to refer to the guidebook to tell us whether to go up- or downstream! The way to progress along Dowbergill Passage is to take the easiest route. This is mostly at stream level. At what was probably 800 Yards Chamber, a narrow slot at stream level can be passed, but we took a higher route. Some difficult traversing was necessary. After that things started to get confused. There was no obvious route. At Brew Chamber, we didn't find the "simpler way...through the choke", so we climbed to the top by means of some manky old ropes. Sometime later we came across a lateral flake splitting the passage, with a window through which we climbed. After that we should have found the "obvious slanting climb" upwards to Gypsum Traverse, but we didn't and found

ourselves taking the waterway, the "not recommended" tortuous route. We did find a climb up, but although this led to a shale band and some dry gypsum encrustations, there was no easy way on, so we came back down. The traversing was difficult, and I kept slipping into the waist-deep water. Every time I did this, it was more and more of a struggle to pull my waterlogged undersuit out again. Finally, we encountered some ropes coming down from above, which showed where we should have been. And soon after, there was the rope that drops back to the streamway, marking the end of all the traversing and difficult bits. The first duck was avoided by climbing over the blocks that cause it, and there was plenty of airspace at the second, at the base of a splendid flowstone slope. The remainder of Dow Cave is just a stroll and a scramble to the exit. I can see how easy it is to get tired and unable to carry on, especially in the later parts of this cave. ~ 4 hours.

### **Calf Holes - Browgill Cave** 31 March 2002

Rick Box, Derek Davey, Joe Duxbury, Mike Read, Delyth Tarrant, Paul Tarrant, Barry Weaver

It was surprisingly difficult to find this cave. It had been such a long time since any of us had been there that the tracks seemed to have changed. But we sorted it out and changed in the drizzle that had started. A party of paying cavers and their guide turned up and got to the cave ahead of us, so we waited while they descended their rope. We used a 30ft ladder, which was "plenty long enough", ie the last rung was 3ft off the ground. The downstream section soon becomes low and rocky, and it took a while for us to recognise the small hole on the left that drops into Browgill. This gives an easy wriggle down through bedrock to the stream. The low passage soon becomes a high rift, halted by a pitch. This presents an easy free climb down, but only Mike and I went this way. The others bypassed the pitch by keeping up and to the right, then used a handline in place to climb down further on. More rift follows, until a duck under a roof into a low, wide area, where daylight is visible at the far end. A bit more scrambling brought us to the high entrance. Unfortunately the sun had not reappeared, so we had to endure more damp changing.

~1½ hours.

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Those of us who have caved with Americans know that they take an extraordinary amount of food with them on caving trips. But what do you think of this: in a recent report to the Cavers Digest, a well-known (even notorious?) caver told how he packed "1.5 liters of water, macadamia/dried-date gorp, bread, beans, fish steaks in red sauce and a pair of micro-nuked taters".

Well now, we can't have the poor chap going hungry, can we?

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The South Wales Caving Club have announced that caving clubs that have permits for OFD must collect a key before 11 am on weekends. This will allow the duty warden to go caving.  
(Blast, there's another excuse gone).



*Once upon a time, the British army used to use British caves for "training" its soldiers. Although this practice has been discontinued, there is now a new hazard from a similar quarter, as this headline from "The Telegraph" shows:*

## Euro army caves in Britain

By ANDREW  
EVANS-FRITCHARD  
AND GEORGE JONES  
IN BARCELONA

"Break or break" for  
the world have low

THE European Union's new  
military force was on the way

### BACK ISSUES OF GSS NEWSLETTERS

IF THERE ARE ANY MEMBERS WHO ARE  
MISSING BACK COPIES OF THEIR  
NEWSLETTERS, AND WHO WOULD LIKE TO  
HAVE A COMPLETE SET, CONTACT STEVE  
TOMALIN, WHO HAS SPARE COPIES

BACK ISSUES OF DESCENT MAGAZINE  
ARE AVAILABLE FROM DAVE APPLEING

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### Breakfast at Tesco's

Dave Appleing, Joe Duxbury, Jon Maisey, Steve Tomalin  
8 & 9 June 2002

Jonathan had arranged a trip into the Halkyn Mine system on Sunday 9th with the Grosvenor Caving Club, so on Saturday morning he drove Dave and me to North Wales. After a visit to the cafe in Tesco's in Mold for some lunch, we proceeded to Hendre, just a bit further along the A541 from the site of the Olwyn Goch shaft. Steve had told us of another mine in the area that he had visited earlier in the year, that was easily accessible. We parked beside the pub, and went to look for the mine before changing into caving gear. Just past the pub, a track led off just where a side road joined the main road. This track went behind an engineering works, and climbed slowly upwards into the woods. After 200 yards or so we came to some derelict buildings up on the left. The entrance shaft we were looking for was somewhere higher up the hill. We poked about the area for a while, coming across blocked adits, depressions in the ground, and a stone-lined shaft, until at last, near the top of the slope, we found what we were after. Two ladders, one in a poor state of repair, dropped into a wide, 20 ft shaft. We returned to the car to change, then entered the mine, delighted with the prospects of Jon taking photos! The horizontal passage running across the bottom of the ladders was blocked in both directions, but a draughting hole in the left wall descended to another, large passage. Passing a laddered hole in the floor, we followed the passage as it got narrower and angled upwards. It ended in a climb up with daylight visible at the top - and a plastic firehose trailing down from above! Up the climb, and onto a wide ledge around the side of a deep, natural shaft. At the far end of the ledge, another ladder back down into the mine. We entered a whole series of passages, stacked vertically, linked by laddered shafts. We examined all of these that we could, eventually reaching water level. Jon took lots of photos - I think he's been practising, all his gear worked and he didn't get cross with any of it! One shaft we did not investigate was covered with an array of metal poles, with a wooden platform partially covering

them. It was not possible to tell, from ten feet or so above, whether the area of “floor” around it was solid, so we left it.

We retraced our steps past the open shaft to the first level, and descended the ladder we had initially passed, but there was only the one passage below, and it did not extend far. So we returned to daylight, and spent some time poking around the abandoned workings, trying to sort out what processes had been carried out by the various bits of rusting machinery. We learnt the next day that the mine was **Lloyd’s Spar Mine**, and what had been mined was a vein of quartz. This had been crushed in the plant we had looked at, and been used for pebble dashing. The interesting thing was that while the mine occupied a vertical plane, running directly into the hillside, the line of depressions plus the shaft that we had found earlier, ran at right angles to this, and were not joined at all to the workings we had entered. Nor had the Grosvenor club descended the obvious open shaft (which looked like a ventilation chimney).

After changing, we had a short tour of the countryside of North Wales while we searched for the Colomendy Arms. This is tucked away down a side road behind the village of Loggerheads so it took some time. Here we met Steve and Elise, fresh from Australia, and repaired to the bar to sample the wide range of beers (but no food). They allowed us to camp in the back garden, so we found the only level bit at the top and pitched in the dark and wet.

Sunday morning we returned to the in-place to be for breakfast, the Tesco’s cafe in Mold! After stoking up on carbohydrates we continued to the Olwyn Goch site, where we met Tom Jones from the Grosvenor Caving Club. The winch that was supposed to be operating in another shaft, to pull us out, hadn’t been completely installed, so we would not be able to do the advertised through trip (unless we prussiked out the 500 ft shaft!). Added to which Tom was standing in at short notice for another G.C.C. guide, and could only spare about 2½ hours before having to be on standby for work. Therefore the trip that we would take was going to be less ambitious than the one we’d planned. Elise stayed on the surface, hoping to meet another Slovakian woodcutter. So Dave, Joe, Jon and Steve were team Gloucester.

We descended the wooden ladders of the Olwyn Goch shaft to Level 12, at which we proceeded towards the junction of several passages called Piccadilly. Before we reached it, we turned off left into a series of workings not usually seen by visitors. We walked along passages, climbed shafts, inspected ore chutes, clambered over collapses, until at last we emerged in the Milwr Tunnel, upstream of the Olwyn Goch. Still further upstream was the shaft where the winch was being worked on. The water level was a bit high, the walkway being about ankle deep in water. We set off downstream, and passed several ore “tubs” still on the rails beside the path. When we reached Olwyn Goch we had a look round the workshop area - Dave had not been here before, and so it was his first sight of the relics. Many of the wooden structures in here have collapsed, rotted away since our previous visits, so it did not look anywhere near as “abandoned 5 minutes ago” as it used to.

From there we went on to the “limestones”, the area of huge limestone workings. Passing the diggers and other derelict equipment, we climbed up the side of the passage to a hole in the wall. This led to a series of ledges around a vast ore chute, up ladders, until we arrived at Piccadilly. There was then just a short walk to the Olwyn Goch ladders, and after an energetic 4 minutes (the record for the full 500-something feet is 8 minutes) reached the top.

When we got back to the cars, Elise told us a G.C.C. person had come by and said that the winch was working. Although it was too late to contemplate a trip down, Tom volunteered to take us to where the winch was. We followed him round a maze of narrow country lanes until we drove into a field where lots of other cars betrayed the presence of the Grosvenor working party. We found that the winch was not actually ready for use, the guide wires to guide the cage past the bend in the shaft (which was not vertical) were still being anchored. But the view down the 500 ft to the lights of those working at the bottom was impressive. We had a lot of discussion about the work being done and the prospects in other mines in the area, then it was time to leave.

We could not resist yet another visit to Tesco’s, for some light refreshment, then it was back to the road and home.

**Joe Duxbury**

### **Ogof Draenen**

Dave Appleing, Joe Duxbury, Gareth Jones, Paul Taylor, Steve Tomalin, Mark Tringham, Steve Whiteman  
23 June 2002

The seven of us gathered outside the Lamb & Fox pub, on the bleak Gilwern Hillside. Paul, who had come in Steve Tomalin's car, with Gareth, could not spend long underground as he had to be back in Gloucester early. So it was only the other four of us who embarked on the round trip. We all took the same route as far as Tea Junction: through the damp entrance passages and the scaffolded boulder choke, down the Spare Rib slot and the roped climb down to Cairn Junction, into the low, taped passage up to the left, and down the hole in the right hand wall leading to under the Wonderbra rock.

The two parties stayed together along White Arch Passage as far as the Lamb & Fox Chamber. Here the smaller group turned back, to take a look at the delights of Gilwern Passage.

Armed with Gareth's trusty, veteran laminated route guide, the four of us continued up the chamber wall on the right to the traverses of Indiana Highway. We all kept to the left hand ledge at the end, preventing any of the trepidation on the right hand like we had on the previous trip. Before we entered Mega Drive, we made the first of our consultations of the guide. We then found that the print was so small that only Steve could read it – the rest of the old farts' eyesight was so poor they couldn't! At the end of Mega Drive we had a bit of uncertainty, when we were not sure we had reached Windy Junction, and which passage was Perseverance II. We must have got it right because soon after we arrived at the Balcony Pitch into The Arms Park. Here the Players' Tunnel leads from the bottom of the ladder eventually to St. David's Hall, an "impressive chamber with a perfectly flat roof". Here we sat to eat; Mark his great wad of sandwiches, others their measly Mars Bars.

Back on our way, we initially looked too far down the chamber for the small hole in the left hand wall into the Squirrel Rifts. I could remember no details of these, and as before we found our way almost by default.

Fortunately, in the chamber at the end of the rifts, there's a notice telling you that Wooden Spoon is to the right, and the way on is to the left. It was a great relief to find this. The way on soon leads to a 5m climb down a chimney, with a short, tight squeeze at the bottom into Haggis Basher One. Just downslope from here we met the water again, and followed it downstream. We got a bit bewildered at a waterfall chamber where the exit was a very tight rift. Mark managed to squeeze through it, then from below was able to tell us of the parallel rift, entered through a hole in the left hand wall (clearly stated in the description) that all four of us had failed to see! The Sewer was not as wet as I remembered from the last time; although it was low and gloomy, it was only about crutch deep. After some more traversing and climbing we came to a duck – that was the wet bit I remembered! The rest of the Agent Bloreng is an interesting piece of streamway, with climbs down waterfalls, and open, meandering passage.

At last we reached the junction with the main Beyond a Choke stream, and started off upstream on the long haul out. The two chokes were passed without problem, and several sections of fine calcited walls were admired. These tend to be forgotten, but they are really very nice. When the stream disappeared below the bouldery floor, I thought we must be close to the Tea Junction. But as we continued, the stream remained audible, and we all thought there had been no sound of it on the way in, so we carried on. However, when we reached a bit I recognised, we realised we had overshot the junction, and were actually retracing our route up White Arch Passage. We turned back, and there were the tapes we had completely missed! From Tea Junction it was about half-an-hour's continuous slog to the exit, which we reached about 6:15 pm.

The total trip time was about 7½ hours. Although a fine trip, some of the passages do go on a bit: the Squirrel Rifts, White Arch Passage, and the Beyond a Choke streamway.

### **Joe Duxbury**

The following are the current committee of the Society. If you need to contact any of them, the details are given here.

**Hon. Chairman**

Joe Duxbury

Up Hatherley,  
Cheltenham,

chairman@gloucester-speleo.org

**Hon. Secretary**

Dave Appleing  
128 Brooklyn Gardens,  
Cheltenham,  
Glos. GL51 8LW

01242 581385  
secretary@gloucester-speleo.org

**Hon. Treasurer**

Jonathan Maisey

Whaddon,  
Cheltenham,

01242 233400  
treasurer@gloucester-speleo.org

**Hon. Librarian**

Steve Tomalin

Quedgeley,  
Gloucester,

**Training Officer**

Gareth Jones

Churchdown  
Gloucester

**Tackle Officer**

Paul Hogan

Bourneside,  
Cheltenham,

**Newsletter Editor**

Joe Duxbury

**Ordinary Members**

Maurice Febry

Charlton Kings,  
Cheltenham

Elise Jones

Gloucester

Chris Backhouse

Ross-on-Wye  
Hereford

And don't forget, the club's website is  
[www.gloucester-speleo.org](http://www.gloucester-speleo.org)

The noticeboard is there to announce trips, and pass on any other information on club activities - please use it as much as possible