

UBSS

Newsletter

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Autumn 2015

Little Neath



GETTING CHANGED IN THE SUNSHINE

Quite a long drive to Wales due to:

- a) Stu missing the Cardiff junction (twice? It felt like twice) and**
- b) Traffic due to (as Sion put) the sun making 'people unpredictable'.**

It almost felt too nice to go caving; I've never emerged to so much sunlight. We had originally planned on going down Draenan, but Stu suggested taking advantage of the good weather and for us attempt Little Neath, a cave you can't really get out of in high water. The entrance was entrenched in a river, being embedded in the riverbank itself, so the start was the most daunting part.

After Stu had disappeared in a flurry of water, Elliot soon followed and neither Sion nor I wanted to be left as last. One by one everyone headed (head first) into the narrow chute of an entrance. There was then a bit of entrance crawl, which had lots of right angle bends in it (and one part which required taking our helmets off in order to fit through.)

This was a really fun trip and I hadn't realised that Little Neath was discovered and surveyed by UBSS (by diving the sump at the end of Bridge cave). There was a nice slide-y passage which Stu and I enjoyed a lot, and this is the only cave I've ever seen plants

growing in. This was also a Cave Frog Rescue team as a frog was found in a stream (which opened up to 'The Sand Chamber', a typically Welsh grand open space bit of cave).

'The Canal' was a part Sion in particular didn't like (the only one of us not wearing a wetsuit) which was a 100m crawl through water; which realised halfway through had small leeches in it. Thankfully we went via the Canal Bypass on the way back, which lead us back to the streamway.

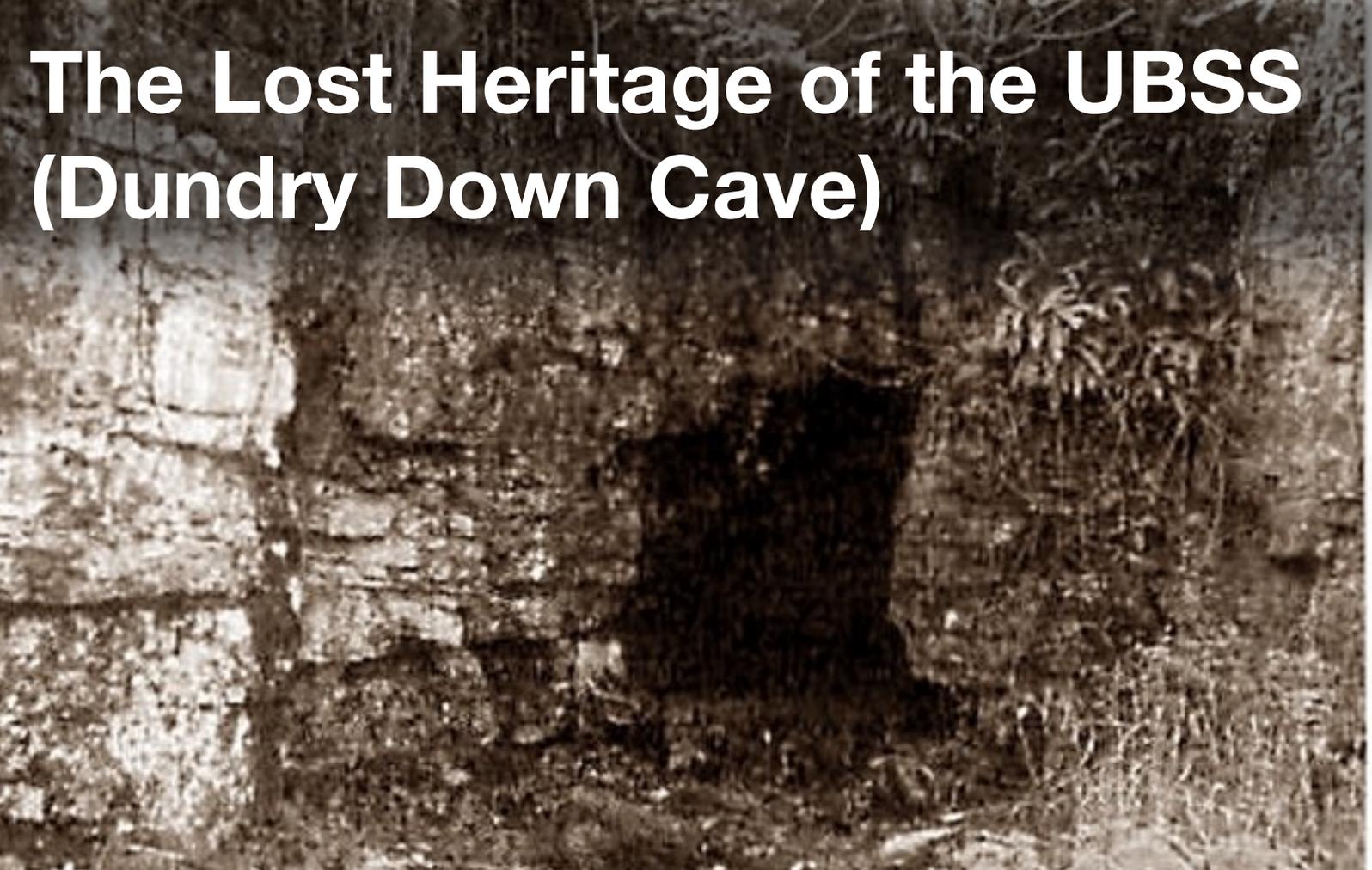
After having squeezed our way out we spent some time in the river, and Stu forgot his car keys as we walked back. All in all a very nice way to spend a Sunday afternoon: we went to a local pub after, in which Elliott had a pie with incredibly crumbly pastry.

Eleanor Conole

Editors Note:

Apologies for the lack of caving photo. All the pictures I took that day failed to come out. Luckily Eleanor got a photo of Elliott inspecting his oversuit before the trip!

The Lost Heritage of the UBSS (Dundry Down Cave)



DUNDRY DOWN CAVE

As our centenary approaches, I was thinking back over what little we now know about the earliest origins of the Society. It is reasonably well-known that, although founded in 1919, the Society had a precursor, the Bristol Speleological research Society (BSRS) that was active in the days leading up to the First World War and whose finds in Aveline's Hole were the spark that led to our foundation (Williams, 2000; Rossington, 2010).

What is less well known is how the BSRS came about and what preceded it. Indeed all I can find recorded on the subject is this brief quote from Leo Palmer:

"In 1908 four schoolboys, Reg. Essery, Leo Palmer, Ted. Perdue and Reg. Read set out to explore Dundry "Caves" and they were very disappointed when they discovered the "Caves" were only Roman lead mines. It was not until four years later that circumstances brought these four enthusiasts together again." (Palmer, 1958.)

As far as I can tell, except by authors quoting Palmer, there is only one further reference to the Dundry mines anywhere in the Society's publications or archive, a very brief note of a visit there by "MHPG [Malcolm

Green], Jim & Ray" on Sunday 24th May 1965, in the Log Book until the mention in Bob Williams's paper (*op. cit.*) which is accompanied by a photo of an entrance taken by me in 1999.

This entrance is, now, the only surviving visible remnant of the mines. According to the Mendip cave Registry and Archive, five other mine entrances were recorded in an area a couple of hundred metres to the east:

All of these entrances have now been lost and the mines at least partially backfilled by the owners of the part farm, part light industrial yards which now cover the area. The most comprehensive description of the mines is probably that given by Oldham (1963). The lengths quoted by Oldham do not tally with those on the Registry database, all of which seem to be much longer, but as the sites are no longer accessible, there is now no way of telling which is correct.

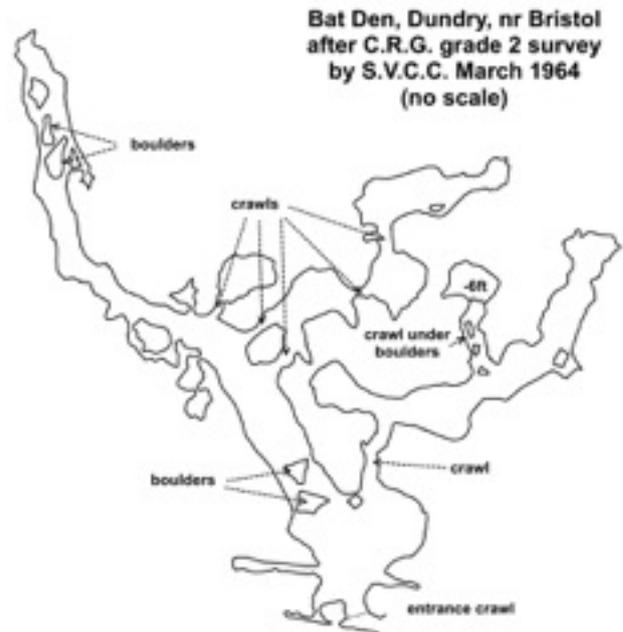
That leaves the remaining site, the one that Bob Williams and I visited in 1999. This is probably the site described by Oldham as "Small Working, length 10ft: Situated in a valley 50 yards south of Triangulation Station." It is named as "Pill Box Cave" in the Registry database and given a length of 0 m. The name

Name	NGR	Recorded Length
Twin Pot (Mud Pot)	ST 5540 6670	145m
Dundry Quarry Caves	ST 5540 66706	180m
Bat Den	ST 55407 66656	188m
Rabbit Den	ST 55418 66724	201m
Twin Cavern	ST 55444 66726	227m

relates, apparently, to a Pill Box located near to the entrance. I do not recall seeing such a structure 15 years ago and Pete Flanagan of the ACG tells me that it was not there when he visited the site on family picnics during the 1970s. He believes it is probably a film prop. I have been unable, however, to trace when, exactly the mine received this name. It seems not to have had it when Oldham was writing in the 1960s. Pete also suggested that the site be renamed; he told me "the area where the only remaining "cave" is called Dundry Down, but was always known locally as "The Tumps" So how about re naming Pill Box Cave, either Dundry Down Cave or Tumps Cave?" I think he is right & that Dundry Down Cave is probably most appropriate for the only surviving remnant of much more extensive workings.

It does, however, seem a trifle OTT to formally re-name an old mine working with no accessible passage that almost no-one will ever visit. UBSS members seem only to visit once every fifty years.

Graham Mullan



References

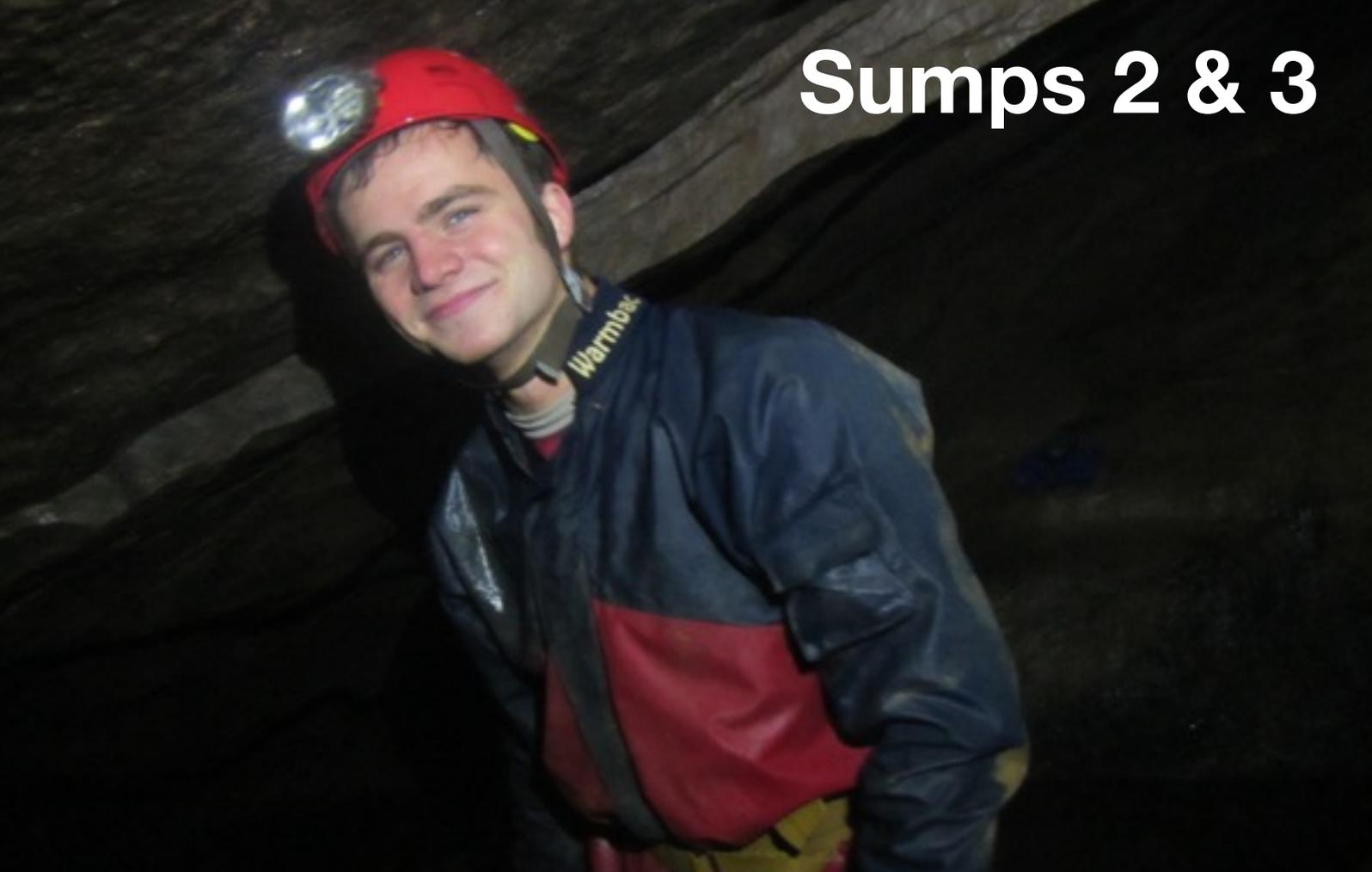
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Sumps 2 & 3



ELLIOTT IN SWILDONS, NEAR SUMP 2

Some of you may be aware of the fact that Simon and myself have recently become a bit fixated on passing sumps 2 and 3 in Swildons' Hole. After deciding that the Society - at least at student level - was lacking in 'grit', we thought it best that we start to do some more foolhardy trips.

So in late 2014 Si, Jacob and I started to create some rather fanciful plans to get to the bottom of some Mendip Classics. Atlas Pot in Thrupe Lane ranked high, along with Primrose Pot or even the Long Round in Eastwater, and of course trying to get into the further reaches of Swildons. The first was deemed best left until drier weather, and Eastwater (definitely!) needed some recce trips, with the Technical Masterpiece likely to prove an issue with the more bulky amongst us. This then leaves our beloved Swildons as the favourite 'gritty' trip.

With procrastination putting us into April, Si and I finally decided to get the Sumps done with. With wetsuits, hoods and masks we arrived in Priddy on a glorious Wednesday afternoon. We found the cave empty and made good progress down to Sump 1. Two feet later, we surfaced in Swildons 2. We had decided on jumping straight into the sump pool of number two to see if we could make out the

passage, which of course went to soup the moment we got in. We then donned some lead on our belts and tried to get to neutral buoyancy as best we could. After some time faffing, I lay down in the sump pool with rope in both hands and after a few minutes had settled down somewhat. With a "don't chicken out" to Si, I pulled my way through the eight metres of murky gloom to a reassuring knock on my head, before surfacing in the Great Bell. A quick punch of the air, followed by three pulls on the rope saw Si follow through a few moments later.

On standing in the Great Bell, we both decided it would be best just to have a go at Sump 3, rather than back up. It was rather exciting after all! Through the duck and into St. Johns Bell and we the Spring water started to sap some of our warmth. With Si going through first, he had a good poke about with his feet to make out the arch, supposedly about 6 ft down. He reckoned he had it and after a few minutes of water up to his neck, I saw his light fade off into the gloom of twelve metres of passage. The reassuring three tugs came through and I followed promptly. Down to the arch and then up you go. Knocking my head all the way made clear I was

underweighted, but I then found myself in the reassuring familiarity of Swildons 4.

A good cheer and a bloody cold embrace marked our success, before we made our move for Blue Pencil passage. A few kilos of lead slung about your hips proves to be a pain here, with Si opting to take off his belt, only to drop a few weights. Back down he went whilst I caught my breath. With lead re-united, we passed the Troubles, gracefully plopped onto the Landing and returned our lead to the cache. Our way back out saw us feet first through Sump 1 (more 'grit') and feeling pleased as numerous groups commented on our attire and trip. Three and a half hours underground was longer than expected, but still saw us in The Hunters before nine o'clock. On to Sump 9!

Elliott Smith





ABOVE: ELEANOR AND JACOB IN GB, MENDIP

BELOW: ADAM CLIMBING BACK OUT OF WATERWAYS SWALLET, STAFFORDSHIRE





**ABOVE: ELEANOR IN BOX CAVE, BATH
BELOW: SOME OF THE NEW FRESHERS AFTER A TRIP DOWN SWILDONS**



Wolves Hole



DOG SKELETON IN WOLVES HOLE

WOLVES' HOLE WAS FIRST GIVEN THIS NAME BY DONAL GILHUYS AND RICK PARKER IN 1971 AS PART OF AN INVESTIGATION OF ALL THE CAVES IN THE CONG AREA BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE EXCEPTIONALLY LOW WATER LEVELS IN THE AREA AT THAT TIME (GILHUYS AND PARKER, 1972.

Their report states that the cave had first been explored by E.A. Martel in 1897, a reference that was missed by Coleman (1955, 1965). A glance at Martel's drawing (1897, p100) shows that it is certainly the same cave, even though the water levels were too high for him to have got far. Interestingly, Martel made no mention of the dog bones that Gilhuys and Parker found in profusion in the Gour Passage, many of which were still *in situ* when our surveyors visited in 2013 (Podesta, 2013).

The 2013 visit took place as part of our information gathering for a new edition of our book on caves in Western Ireland which, it is intended will be expanded to take in Co. Mayo and the parts of Galway not previously covered by us. Our survey of the dry section of the cave was also made in relatively low water conditions and covered the same ground as had been seen in the 1970s.

The sumps in this cave were investigated by Martyn Farr in the early 2000s and two of them passed to further above water chambers. Martyn has recently kindly sent me a copy of his drawings which has enabled me to digitise his data and add that to ours to produce the plan shown here. The expanded dataset, for both this cave and for Pigeon Hole, which he first explored back in 1992, has also been added to the 3d models of the caves of the area which may be found on the Society's website at http://www.ubss.org.uk/cave_survey_archive.php#CoMayo . Downloadable copies of the survey and of the similarly re-drawn Pigeon Hole survey can also be found there.

Graham Mullan





References

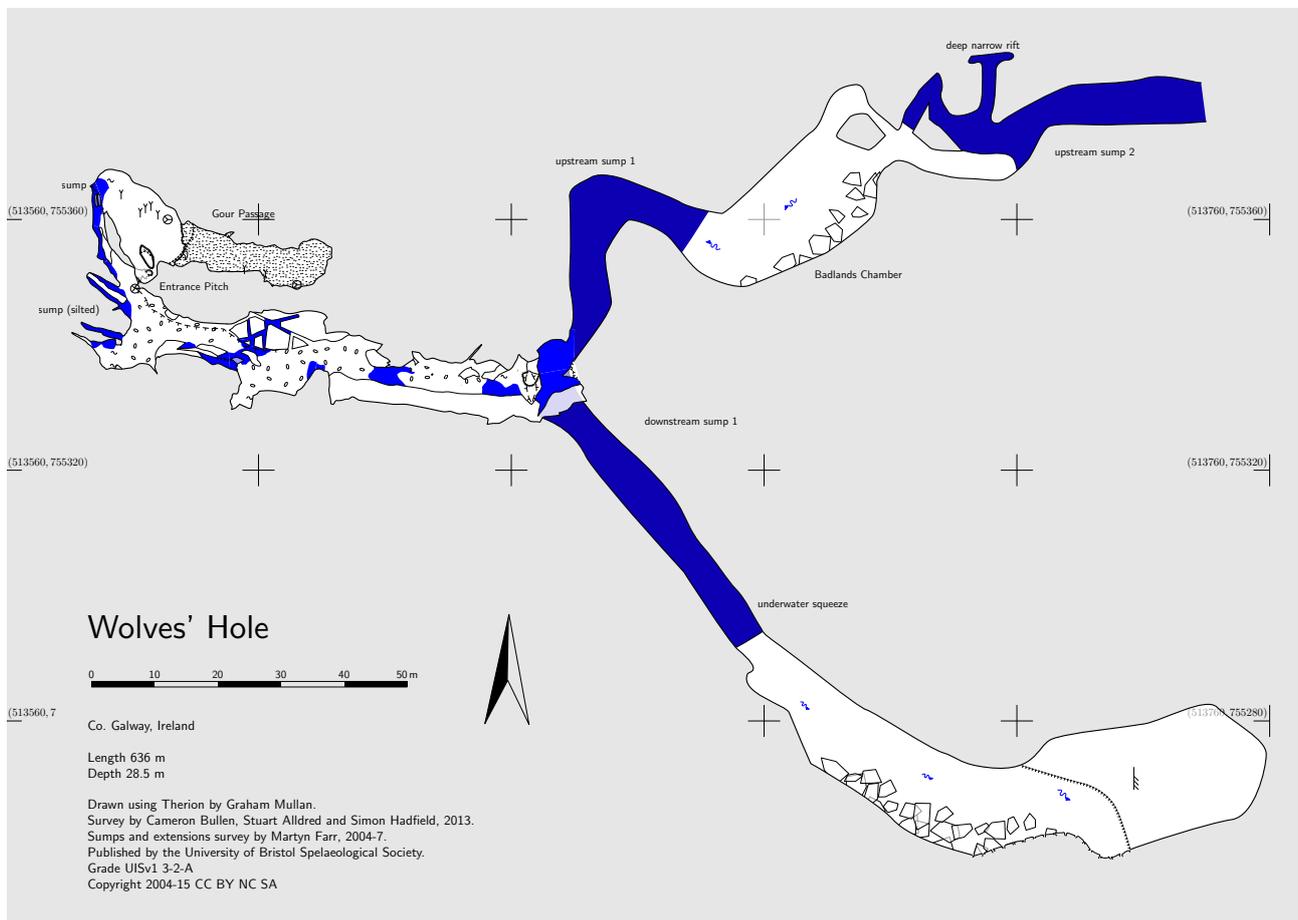
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AGM 2015



GETTING READY POST-AGM

Presidents remarks

Firstly I am going to keep this short, so we can get on with the talk! I would like to start by thanking the committee for all the work they have put in, and particularly our two secretaries, Jacob and Elliot, for running things so well, and of course thanks to everyone else who has run trips.

Furthermore I'd like to congratulate everyone on what has been an excellent year, we've sorted the tackle store, sort of of, even if its not that satisfactory, its good enough.

Secondly we've more or less, I hope, fingers crossed, got permission to use the Union for SRT training again. I just hope that all works out, but many thanks to Linda and to Cara for persevering.

Last years Ireland Expedition worked out well, and congratulations to all of you who went for a successful trip, and for lots of surveying.

I should also say thanks to Tony Boycott for all the work he's put in, once again, in the library, to Linda Wilson for the great deal of work she puts into keeping the museum going, and lastly to our esteemed treasurer, both for the enormous amount of time that goes into keeping the accounts, and for keeping us all up to date with subs and insurance and all the other backroom work.

So in conclusion, before welcoming our speaker, I would like to remind everyone to try and be on time for dinner tonight, and to try and remember to pay their corkage! Personally I will be in the for 6pm, *and now to introduce our speaker...*

Bob Churcher

Treasurers Report

This is the 30th Annual Report that I have delivered as Treasurer. Hmm. Over that time, much has changed in the way that the Society both receives its income and spends it. In 1985 we received more in grants from the Students' Union than in total subscription income, students, staff and graduates. We now receive the majority of our regular income in subs and the tax rebate on Gift Aided subs and no income at all from the Union in grant aid. This situation is largely outside the Union's control and I am not in any way criticising them for this, far from it, we still receive much other support from them for which we are grateful. However, it does demonstrate that, from a financial standpoint, the nature of societies such as ours has changed and this needs to be acknowledged and understood. We could not function without the significant support that we receive from our Alumni members. I cannot emphasise this point enough.

In the current year we have also received significant grants from the Oliver Lloyd Memorial Fund, the University's Tratman Fund and the Alumni Foundation. The first two of these were set up, in whole or in part, specifically to support us, thanks to the good offices of one of our past Presidents, Bob Savage. The third is a body that distributes funds raised by donations from the University's many alumni and friends. This is the second time that we have received aid from this body, but although it is both generous and helpful, it does not cover either regular or repeat applications. This year it helped fund the upgrading and replacement of our electronic cave survey equipment. The results of this can be found not least in the reports coming back from the repeat visits to Co. Mayo.

On the subject of income, I mentioned in previous reports that *Caves of Co. Clare and South Galway* had sold out. It has, yet income has started appearing again. This is due to the publication of an ebook version of the 2003 edition to act as a 'filler' until the next enlarged edition can be prepared. Sales so far have been small but steady. All income will, of course, be applied to the next edition. It is also the case that Tony continues to sell the 1981 edition!

One further small sum of income needs mentioning. Our stand at Fresh received a £100 award from the Union. This has not yet been spent. Come on, guys!

On the expenditure front, little change from last year, the increase in insurance costs is mainly down to increased membership numbers, not increased rates. Indeed, after consultation with BCA I believe I can shave this down a tiny bit for next year, as well.

One final change in the layout is the appearance of a Pen Park Hole a/c on page 2. This comes about because we have taken financial responsibility for the access to this cave. This actually saves us money as we effectively get the relevant PI insurance free, instead of paying 1/3 of the bill, along with the WCC & BEC.

Finally, I must once again thank our auditor, Derek Allen, whose sound advice and work are a great help to me.

Apparently I am willing to stand again...

Graham Mullan

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST JANUARY 2015

2013/14	<u>Receipts</u>	2014/15
£		£
2,800.00	Members subscriptions	3,061.00
615.00	Student member subscriptions	795.00
750.00	Grants	3,990.00
560.10	Interest on investments	60.80
431.80	Sales of Publications (not C.of CC)	658.47
1,859.00	Donations	144.00
701.30	Tax refund on Covenants	585.30
0.00	Sales of Charterhouse Permits (net)	0.00
527.00	Personal contributions to PI Insurance	527.00
0.00	Key Deposits	0.00
0.00	Miscellaneous	124.01
8,244.20	Total Receipts	9,945.58
<u>Payments</u>		
2,371.00	<u>Proceedings:</u>	2,270.00
544.07		527.73
119.78	<u>Tools & Equipment</u>	1,953.58
30.00		0.00
252.44	Library Acquisitions	142.50
0.00	Sessional Meetings	0.00
0.00	Other Postages	0.00
65.00	Stationery & Duplicating	68.39
1,389.00	<u>Insurances</u>	1,514.00
299.08		307.92
156.00	Subscriptions	167.00
25.00	Donations to Mendip Cave Rescue & PDCMG	35.00
275.00	Surplus /Deficit on Annual Dinner	245.87
123.68	IT expenses	10.00
0.00	Fresh	0.00
0.00	Miscellaneous	0.00
750.00	Tratman Grant	1,500.00
500.00	OCL Mem Fund Grant	-
6,350.05	Total Payments	8,741.99
1,894.15	Surplus/Deficit for year	1,203.59

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST JANUARY 2015

2013/14			2014/15
£	<u>Assets</u>		£
15,560.10	<u>Investments:</u>	Barclays Investments	15,620.90
12,182.71	Current Bank Account		13,387.09
38.57	Cash in Hand	Hon. Treasurer	39.67
<hr/> 27,781.38	Total Assets		<hr/> 29,047.66
	Represented by:		
	<u>Reserves</u>		
3,355.63	<u>Hut Fund -</u>	brought forward	3,401.01
45.38		add/subtract year result	<hr/> 131.00
			3,532.01
	<u>Printed Publications</u>		
3,830.00		brought forward	3,830.00
0.00		Tfr to R&P reserve	<hr/> 0.00
			3,830.00
	<u>Library & Museum Fund</u>		
647.12		brought forward	974.87
13.78		Tfr from CoCC Res.	7.54
		Tfr from R&P Res.	450.00
313.97		add/subtract year result	<hr/> 381.72
			1,050.69
	<u>Equipment Hire Fund</u>		
1,018.32		brought forward	1,389.40
371.08		add/subtract year result	49.50
			1,438.90
	<u>Pen Park Hole a/c</u>		
		initial receipt	218.42
		add/subtract year result	<hr/> 29.99
			188.43
	<u>Caves of County Clare Reserve</u>		
11,738.26		brought forward	11,862.19
13.78		Tfr to Lib & Mus	7.54
137.71		add/subtract year result	<hr/> 75.48
			11,930.13
	<u>Receipts & Payment Reserve</u>		
4,429.76		brought forward	6,323.91
0.00		Trf from PP Fund	0.00
		Tfr to Lib & Mus	450.00
1,894.15		add/subtract year result	<hr/> 1,203.59
			7,077.50
<hr/> 27,781.38	Total Reserves		<hr/> 29,047.66

HONORARY AUDITOR'S REPORT:

I have examined the above Receipts & Payments

Account for the year ended 31st January 2015, and the attached Balance Sheet as at that date, and certify that they are in accordance with the Society's accounting records and explanations provided.



honorary auditor

Yorkshire Weekend



FUN IN THE SNOW

Day 1: Jingling Cave

(OR SO WE THOUGHT)

Elliot Smith, Rosie Tulloch, Simon Hadfield, Ben Hardy, Magnus Bennet, Eleanor Conole

In some ways this was quite a difficult trip: a large group (composed of three SRT novices, myself most definitely included) in a long vertical system with a few rebelay in the freezing cold.

Jacob's adjacent trip looked more fun. Grass is greener etc.

After spending what felt like a good hour searching for the cave in question, we stumbled upon what we assumed must be Jingling cave. Elliot seemed confident "it matches the survey!" he said, and disappeared into the semi-darkness to set ahead rigging the start. The cave was actually Rowten Pot, which may have explained why we (and by we I mean the SRT-novices. I think Si and Rosie just got a bit bored) were so rubbish at it. Abseiling down was pretty fun, though in all honesty it never really felt like we were underground as there was still a fair amount of

daylight from the entrance (even if this was a good 60m above us).

This was, however, a freezing trip. The worst decision I made was either going in first out of the Freshers (and getting stuck for ages) or leaving first (and getting cold for ages). Thinking about it, I think my favourite part of that trip was prussiking out because it was the only time I was close to being a normal temperature.

Simon emerged soon after I'd escaped and put a sheet of corrugated iron over us both as shelter from the wind. It wasn't great and he quickly went back to help the others for something to do. I then spent a good solitary 40 minutes where I can't remember thinking about much except about how cold I was. Ben Hardy came out first, Magnus second. Ben looked begrudgingly back at the cave saying something about never going down 'that forsaken hole' again. After Rosie came out we numbly made our way back to the road leaving Si and Elliot to do the last of the de-rigging.

People having not had much opportunity to practice SRT didn't cause much danger – everyone had enough energy and strength to get out – but it definitely slowed us down.

Hanging around was not fun. Why are Yorkshire trips scheduled for the winter?!

So the Saturday evening people were quite tired, although one caving game surfaced after we had something really good and warm to eat. I hadn't experienced this one before, so I didn't know what to think when people started embracing weirdly and climbing over people's backs. I don't know what it's called, but it involved pairs of cavers having only one point of contact with floor and trying to place a tin can as far away as possible. I think Jacob and Adam won, although there was a unanimous agreement that this was a bit of an unfair victory as Jacob's an unnaturally long human.

Day 2: Alum Pot Trip: (MUCH MORE FUN)

Ben Wilson, Rosie Tulloch, Adam Henry and I set off as the first group to go caving on the Sunday morning, keen to stay positive and set off early (we did have Rosie with us) after quite a disorganised Saturday's caving. All was going well – the plan was to break UBSS tradition and get underground before midday – till we realised Ben didn't have a helmet.

So having found the cave went turned round and went back to the YSS and Ben ran back to the van to grab his helmet. Take two: we're 5 minutes into the journey now, and Ben decides to check that his helmet does actually work. It doesn't, there's a feeble amount of light from the halogen but no LED, so we turn round for a second time and Ben gets a helmet, this time with working batteries. Take 3: success, we arrive at Alum Pot, get changed quickly, and get underground by 12:15pm. So Ben is to blame for UBSS-never-underground-before-midday legacy continuing.

With an inside that looked more similar to Swildon's than I expected, we started to explore the cave. Neither Rosie nor Adam had been to Alum Pot via this particular entrance before (potentially Long Churn), so we were advised to keep looking back in order to find our way out. Already being quite cold, coming across huge pots of neck-deep water ("it looks like a Cess Pit!" – Ben) did not seem inviting, so we took a bit of care in getting around these. The thought of plunging into one and then doing SRT was not fun. Thankfully, even with tackle sacks in tow, we didn't have much trouble. There was a bit of a climb that we

used a pull-through on, though actually it wasn't all that necessary. Rosie rigged the first re-belay that involved SRTing in a bit of a waterfall; on the way back up Adam put in a deviation to make this easier. Getting to the bottom was a huge surprise. The scene – a huge open shaft with mossy walls and a huge boulder, which must have once fallen in – looked like something out of Lara Croft, and for a moment I think we forgot we were in Yorkshire.

We exited via Diccan Pot and I cannot say this was my favourite part of the trip. This involved a 5m crawl through a river and I made a lot of noise. Freezing doesn't quite describe it; I think there was some comment about me sounding like a dying cat. Emerging from this exit was bizarre: from icy water to a landscape of white, the snow fall while we'd been underground was much more than I think anyone expected.

The drive back involved a chance encounter with a homeless-caver at a service station (who seemed far more interested in whether we'd attempted the Cheese Press than if we had any spare change), me falling asleep causing Ben to have a dead arm, and abandoning Adam at Stoke Station (from where he narrowly caught the last train home).

Eleanor Conole



Book Review

LAST WORDS by Michael Koryta
Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton
Published Date: 27 August 2015
ISBN-10: 0316122637
ISBN-13: 978-0316122634
Price: £17

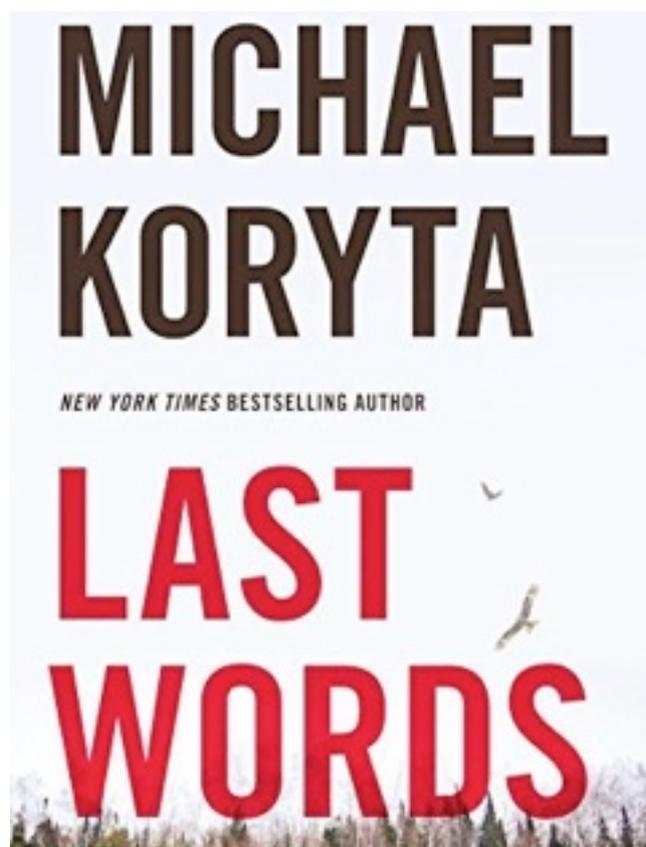
Mark Novak works as a private investigator for Innocence Inc., a firm that specialises in taking on death row cases on a pro bono basis and winning them, so when he's sent into the wilds of Southern Indiana to talk to a man who hasn't even been convicted of anything, let alone sentenced, he really can't see the point of the trip. But his boss is adamant. Whether he likes it or not, Mark's going.

Certain that the real reason for his temporary exile is to keep him out of the way while the board of directors decide whether he can keep his job or not, Mark goes, with very bad grace. His problem is that he's still haunted by the death of his wife five years ago in a seemingly senseless shooting, and Mark's been engaging in some distinctly extracurricular activities in an attempt to find her killers.

The case Mark has been sent to investigate is that of Sarah Martin, a 17-year-old girl who went into a local cave system, Trapdoor Caverns, with her boyfriend. Something spooked them and Sarah's boyfriend told her to hide while he went to investigate, but when he went back to look for her, she'd gone missing. The rescue teams brought into search for the girl found no trace of her, and finally the local police chief called in loner Ridley Barnes, the man who was meant to know Trapdoor Caverns better than anyone.

Barnes struck out on his own, and for several days he was believed to have been lost as well, but then he came back, hypothermic and practically out of his mind, carrying Sarah Martin's body in his arms. She'd been handcuffed and beaten, but Barnes couldn't say where he'd found her, or how, and although he was always the front-runner in the murderer stakes, nothing could be proved, and Barnes has always stayed silent on the subject. So when he says he wants Mark to investigate the coldest of cold cases, to discover what really happened in the cave, local feelings soon starts to run high on the subject, and Mark discovers that Ridley Barnes isn't the only person in Garrison who's been keeping secrets.

In Last Words, Michael Koryta paints a vivid picture of small-town America and an even more vivid picture of the hidden world underground. The descriptions of Trapdoor Cavern have the unmistakable ring of authenticity, and the caving sequences are consistently well-handled. The plot



has as many twists and turns as the caverns themselves and I was soon as thoroughly lost as Mark Novak is when he gets dumped in the cave system in an attempt to get him to back off from his investigation.

It's rare to find underground descriptions as good as these in a book, and believe me, I've read enough of them! I have nearly three metres of bookshelf devoted to caving novels and this will soon be finding a home there as well. And if you're here for the crime and thriller side of things, and not just the caving, you won't be disappointed, either. Koryta has a deft touch with characterisation and plot as well as description. As a caver, the only part that didn't ring true for me is the emphasis on how being along in caves can lead even experienced people to start hallucinating and 'communing' with the rock. Whenever I've caved alone all that happens is that I become more aware of what the consequences of an accident would be. I've never met any caver who's come even close to the type of experience non-cavers seem convinced by in books. Despite that niggle, Koryta is definitely on top form with Last Words and I galloped through the entire book in two sittings. Mark Novak is someone I'd like to see more of. There's still a mystery at the heart of his life to be solved, and he doesn't seem to be the sort of man to let it drop.

Linda Wilson

Another Book Review

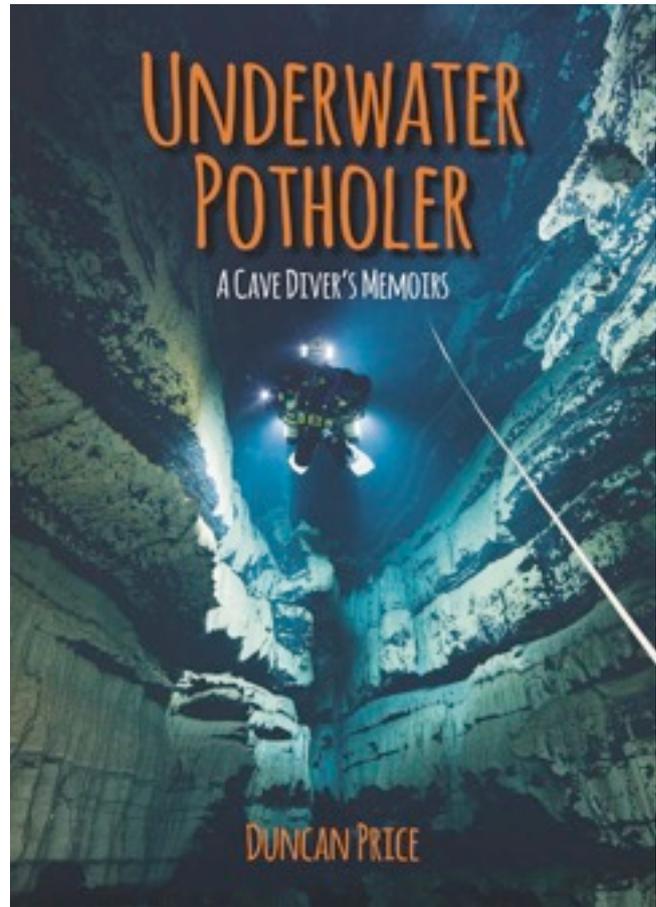
ISBN 978-184995-158-6 Published by Whittles Publishing Ltd Caithness. £18.99/\$24.95.

This book is Duncan's highly personal account of his career as a caver and, especially, as a cave diver.

It covers just about all the underwater exploration that he has been involved in from Daren Cilau to, Reservoir Hole and is written in a personal and very chatty style. As he says "anything that you read in *Underwater Potholer* should not be used as a guide to safe cave diving practices (or for that matter - any example of how to live your life)".

There have been a number of similar memoirs written by British cavers over the years, most recently that by Carol Whalley and also Dave Yeandle's, published posthumously, going back to *Down to a Sunless Sea* by Mike Boon. It seems clear that they have a market but it is difficult to see how big it is. To me, most enjoyment has come from reading about people that I know, that I have caved with, and stories that I have already heard a little of. This seems, to me at least, to be rather different to the market for translations of classic French caving authors, such as Pierre Chevalier, Jean Cadoux and, of course, Norbert Casteret which were so prevalent in the 1950s and have been cited as the reason that many of us took up caving. It may be that the British style of writing is more likely to appeal to those who are already caving than others, but maybe that's just another way of saying that I enjoyed it? Maybe we should give it to a clueless fresher to read & see what they make of it? I'd be interested in the result.

As an aside and in the light of Duncan's disclaimer, given above, he gave a description of the cave-diver's 'thirds rule' for conserving their air and stated that it had been developed by the late Sheck Exley in Florida. This did not quite match my memory, both of the way the rule worked and when it was introduced so I asked amongst some of the more senior members of the Society, who were cave diving around the particular period, the late 1960s early 1970s (thanks guys) and can safely say that the rule was developed around 1968, certainly not much earlier and certainly pre-



dates the use of twin sets. There has been some interesting detail, in passing, about how it was observed as well! However, once twin independent sets became commonly used the rule seems fairly quickly to have morphed into something more similar to that described in Duncan's book where the sets were used in turn, 1/3 at a time. This seems to have been a logical development of a pre-existing rule in the UK rather than having been introduced from abroad, as Duncan implied. Maybe some of our people should write their memoirs.

This is a nicely produced book; some of the photos might have reproduced better, but I suspect that this is down to the quality of the originals and it is, of course, impossible to re-take historic shots from many years ago. I enjoyed reading it, I smiled a lot and learnt some things I did not know before. For one thing I have never noticed the size of Rick Stanton's nose!

Graham Mullan

