

# WILLIAM PENGELLY CAVE STUDIES TRUST



## Newsletter



Number 138  
October 2023

# WILLIAM PENGELLY CAVE STUDIES TRUST



<https://pengellytrust.org/>

## William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust Newsletter

**Issue 138**  
**October 2023**

Editor: John Wilmot

[newsletter@pengellytrust.org](mailto:newsletter@pengellytrust.org)  
[johnwilmot@btinternet.com](mailto:johnwilmot@btinternet.com)

01579 370736

---

The William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust is registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) number 259303. The registered address for the Trust is

Zennor, Throwleigh Road,  
South Zeal, Okehampton  
Devon EX20 2QA

---

The contents of this Newsletter are  
© William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust

ISSN 0309-9180

---

## In this Issue

Editorial . . . . .	1
We need volunteers! . . . . .	1
Annual Meeting 2023 . . . . .	2-5
Friends of the Trust . . . . .	6-7
Centre developments . . . . .	8-10
Trust website . . . . .	10
Bristish Caving Association . . . . .	11
Kents Cavern . . . . .	11
Visitors to the Centre. . . . .	12-16
Buckfastleigh Christmas Fair . . . . .	16
Spiders evolving to go blind . . . . .	16
Neanderthl cave engravings . . . . .	17
<i>Norsk Grotteblad 79</i> review . . . . .	18-19
Pengelly and Chelsea. . . . .	20
Trust Library . . . . .	21
Trust publications. . . . .	22-23
The Trust and Centre . . . . .	24-ibc
Officers and Council members . . . . .	ibc

All articles, notes, comments, reviews and news items are welcome and should be sent to the Newsletter Editor. Authors are responsible for the contents of their articles which do not necessarily reflect the policies of the William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust.

This Newsletter is published online in pdf format on

<https://pengellytrust.org/> where  
copies can be downloaded

---

Front cover picture: Museum display at the Pengelly Centre; photograph by John Wilmot.  
Back cover pictures are captioned separately and are by an unknown photographer.

## From the editor

Like many voluntary organisations the William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust struggles to recruit enough help to do all the things that it would like to do. Whilst its finances are a great deal more secure than they were in the early days, it has become difficult to maintain a sufficiently broad support base. Moreover, what started in the early days as a unique experiment operating on a national basis, has now become much more local to Devon and the south-west of England.

The problems are reflected in this newsletter which is almost wholly focused on what happens at the Centre in Buckfastleigh. We have not succeeded in maintaining strong contacts with the wider world of speleology although we have been increasingly successful in bringing members of the public into the Centre and giving them some insights into cave studies.

Included in this newsletter is an item about the Friends of the Pengelly Trust scheme that is a consequence of the conversion of the Trust to a CIO. This scheme has the potential to widen the Trust's support base by bringing individuals and organisations into contact with the Trust on the basis of their interest and contributions to our work, rather than simply on their willingness to pay an annual subscription.

Getting this scheme up and running has, so far, been an uphill battle. But it's a battle that the Trust cannot afford to lose since, in the long run, our viability depends on the breadth of support that we can muster rather than on our capacity to run public events at the Centre or bunkhouse facilities for visiting groups.

Please pass this newsletter on to anyone you think may be interested in what we do.

*John Wilmut*

## We need volunteers!

We need help in a number of areas:

- To clear a maintenance backlog at the Centre
- With publicity and marketing publications
- With guiding at the day walks in August
- In organising events outside the Centre

If you can help  
please get in touch  
- details inside the  
back cover

# The Annual Meeting, June 2023

In the last Newsletter we reported the successful conversion of the Trust to a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) and the adoption of the new constitution. The Council decided that, although there is now no specific requirement for a traditional AGM, it would nevertheless be appropriate to hold a General Meeting to which reports of Trust activities and accounts would be submitted. Here then are the reports from the Secretary, Alan Finch and Treasurer, David Jean as presented at that meeting, held on 3rd June 2023.

## Secretary's Report

Since the end of the Covid crisis the Trust has been slowly getting back onto its feet. Guided walks were able to take place during August and there were requests for other visits to the quarry and museum. While numbers were reduced slightly it was a positive response giving hope for the future. A major concern is the deteriorating condition of the timber boardwalk in the quarry which will have to be seriously reviewed in the future.

The centre has also had a steady increase in residential bookings and the future does look bright. Many regulars groups have returned and advanced bookings are improving. The buildings are in excellent condition and there are continued plans for improvements. Grounds around the centre have been cleared, tended and looking far better than they have for some considerable time.

Liaison with Devon Wildlife Trust has been sporadic, though lines of communication are still well established; as a result there have been almost no meetings regarding the management of Higher Kiln Quarry. The constant changing of their reserve staff has added to the problem.

The planned conversation from a Limited Company to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) was much delayed by Covid and the working practices of the Charity Commission. This was compounded by Patrick Boylan's period of ill health. At the meeting following the 2022 AGM I was instructed by Council to try to expedite the process.

Contact was made with the Charity Commission and the circumstances explained whereupon they made every effort to break the log-jam. The

case officer led me through the corrections to the Constitution necessary for the CIO and ensuring that they were compatible and acceptable by Companies House before they would remove our Limited Company by Guarantee status. This was very time-consuming, working in an area I was totally unfamiliar with.

Eventually on 10th September 2022 at an Extraordinary General Meeting was held at the Centre, Buckfastleigh, where the necessary resolutions for conversion were voted on, accepted and signed by the Chairman. The papers were then submitted to the Charity Commission for approval and then they liaised with Companies House on our behalf. On 20th September I was notified by Charity Commission's case officer that the process had been completed satisfactorily and we did indeed now have CIO status. A check at Companies House showed the WPCST Ltd had now been closed and converted to CIO on 23rd September 2022. Ahead now lay the problems of how the Trust will adapt to the new standing.

During 2022 the Trust's Council continued to meet regularly as the restricted practices imposed became more flexible. Using a large screen monitor and the ability to use on-line conference facilities, meetings were productive. Current officers agreed to remain in post to help ease the situation.

The original voting membership of the Trust, that was essential while we remained a Limited Company, has slowly declined over the years, but no longer exists under the CIO conversion. Now efforts are required to develop the planned Friends of Pengelly as proposed before the resolution to convert was passed.

Dave Warne continued as the Trust Chairman and provided support on maintenance issues at the Centre when repairs or replacements were needed. Under his leadership the Trust met all requirements of Charity Commission and Companies House, also ensuring we met all our obligations under the Trust's Articles of Association.

The William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust still remains one of the constituent bodies of the British Caving Association (BCA). Meetings are predominately on-line thus removing the need to travel to the Midlands.

The Trust librarian, Richard Vooght, has continued cataloguing and reappraising the contents of the library housed in the Centre at Buckfastleigh. Richard also manages the access to the caves of Buckfastleigh

and supervises the approval of Reeds Cave leaders. As well as those duties he looks after access to other important Devon caves on behalf of the Trust. Educational visits during 2022 were restricted both for adults and young people. It is hoped that these will pick up in the future

The newsletter has been produced regularly under John Wilmot's skilled hand and circulated to those members/friends of the Trust. Articles for the newsletter are in short supply and additional material would be welcome.

At last we are coming out of the Covid pandemic and I would like to thank everyone in the Trust for their efforts to keep everything running as smoothly as possible. The next year will see the Trust adjusting to the new status of CIO and the changes that it will bring.

*Alan Finch*

### **Treasurer's Report**

The balance sheet for this year shows that our funds decreased from the record of last year to just below £38,000 which was due to continued Covid restrictions for part of the year. Once again, despite closure for part of the year, I would like to begin my report with thanks to our volunteers whose efforts, as Alan stated in his report, across the whole membership of the Council and Centre Executive Committee have resulted in our funds remaining healthy. Together they continue to bring a variety of skills to the Trust working to ensure the Centre is kept alright for our visitors, ensuring that we comply with all legislative requirements, keeping the library as an integral part of the Trust's work, providing and updating publications, acting as leaders for Reeds Cave, keeping our internet services updated, carrying out the administration required to keep the Trust going, attending meetings, these days on Zoom, on behalf of the Trust, checking and updating our electrical systems, booking groups into the centre and showing visitors around the place. That list is not exhaustive but I have, once again, run out of breath writing it!

The accommodation charges last increased in 2017 and we decided to raise them in 2022 as inflation rapidly increased. With the accommodation being open for the second part of the year our income from accommodation did increase.

The figure for subscriptions paid by members has declined slightly and again, I would point out that unlike many similar organisations, the subscriptions have not increased for many years. The amount of income

from interest has decreased as, although the Trust continually reassesses its investment policy, interest rates have dropped substantially for 2022. Members will notice that overall expenditure has increased from the previous year. Mostly due to expenditure on a staircase at the southern end of the quarry to allow a better visitor flow.

The cost of Managing and Administration of the Trust shows a decrease of about 50% on the same costs last year. By far the largest part of the administration costs remains the cost of reimbursing travel expenses to those volunteers who give of their time to attend meetings and carry out other work on behalf of the Trust and maintain its profile which has continued and even this shows a decrease from 2021 and reflects the fact that many meetings these days take place by Zoom and that our volunteers that take the Guided Walks often don't claim the expenses they would be entitled to.

*David Jean*

#### **BALANCE SHEET**

31 December 2022

	note	2022	2021
		£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Tangible Fixed Assets	(5)	12	12
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash at Bank			
Centre (Devon) Account		14,439	20,879
General Fund		5,613	5,302
Shawbrook Bank Bond		17,662	17,540
		<u>37,714</u>	<u>43,721</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		37,714	43,721
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<u>37,714</u>	<u>43,721</u>
<b>FUNDS (unrestricted)</b>		<u>37,714</u>	<u>43,721</u>

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees

David Jean 3 June 2023  
Director and Hon Treasurer

# Friends of the William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust

In the last Newsletter (February 2023) we described the scheme that, now we are a CIO, would take over from the membership arrangements under the previous constitution. This is the Friends scheme that allows individuals and organisations to support the Trust in a variety of ways that include paying an annual subscription, volunteering to

6

## BECOME A FRIEND OF THE WILLIAM PENGELLY CAVE STUDIES TRUST

Caves are very interesting places and cave studies is something really different and special to be involved with.

Have you enjoyed visiting us here at our Cave Studies Centre? Would you like to find out more or maybe join the team involved in the Trust's work?

Here at this Centre in Devon we have something very special and we'd really value your help and your involvement.



THE WILLIAM PENGELLY CAVE STUDIES TRUST IS A CHARITY THAT AIMS TO SUPPORT CAVE STUDIES THROUGH EDUCATION PROGRAMMES, RESEARCH AND CAVE CONSERVATION. IT MANAGES THE CAVE STUDIES CENTRE AT HIGHER KILN QUARRY, BUCKFASTLEIGH, DEVON.



FRIENDS OF THE TRUST ARE PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS THAT SUPPORT THESE AIMS AND WHO WANT TO HELP THE TRUST TO ACHIEVE THEM

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Turn over to find out how you can become a Friend of the Trust



## HOW DO FRIENDS SUPPORT THE TRUST?

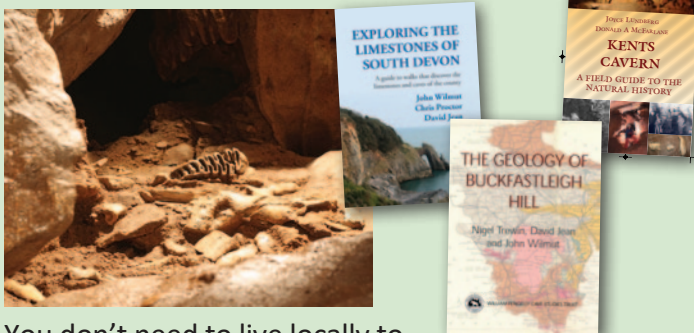
They give support in a variety of ways such as:

- undertaking voluntary work for the Trust at the Centre or elsewhere
- making a one-off donation in support of a particular aspect of the Trust's work
- by a willingness to commit to an annual subscription to the Trust
- organisational sponsorship that may be in general support for the work of the Trust or linked to a specific project
- providing technical or other advice to the Trust.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING A FRIEND?

Apart from the satisfaction of contributing to a unique charity, Friends have the advantage of

- reduced Centre overnight charges
- priority booking and reduced fees for events
- access to a Friends section on the website and involvement in an annual meeting
- public acknowledgement of their contribution
- occasional concessionary benefits.



You don't need to live locally to become a Friend. If you'd like to find out more or to get involved and contribute to this unique Trust we'd be delighted to hear from you. Do please

- speak to anyone at the Centre and ask for a Friends application form
- or write to the Secretary at Zennor, Throwleigh Road, South Zeal, Okehampton EX20 2QA or email to [alan@alanfinch.net](mailto:alan@alanfinch.net)

work at the Centre or elsewhere, sponsoring projects or donating materials, or advising on aspects of the Trust's work. As a result of this, visitors to the Centre during the summer were given a leaflet inviting them to become Friends of the Trust and this is reproduced on the left.

We intend to make this leaflet (or one like it) as widely available as possible and to use the Friends scheme to build a body of support for the Trust. As a first step all those who were members of the Trust before it became a CIO have (unless they opted out) transferred to the Friends scheme.

# Cave Studies Centre developments

*The items in this section of the newsletter reflect developments since the beginning of 2023 and plans for the coming year, as discussed at September meetings of the Council and Centre Executive Committee.*

## Boardwalk

We reported the deterioration of the boardwalk in the February newsletter. During the spring and summer a group of volunteers from the Devon Wildlife Trust did repairs to the most damaged sections using timber purchased by the Trust. This included some improvements to the steps leading down from the car park into the quarry though these are still in a poor state. The boardwalk did stand up to the heavy use by visiting groups and during the guided walks in August but a section then failed during a September event.



The aim now is to get the platform in front of Reeds Cave replaced over the next few months. Wooden or concrete sleepers, backfilled with chippings, will be used for the steps while the ash tree by the new stairs may need topping. In due course, the boardwalk in front of Rift Cave will need replacement.

## Joint Mitnor

The lighting in Joint Mitnor showed some faults during the guided walks in August; these were not serious enough to inhibit the visits but there is now the additional problem of a difficulty in getting replacement parts for the 110V system, some of which dates back to the 1960s. The Trust is now considering whether replacement with a LED-based low voltage system would be appropriate and affordable.

The steps into the lower passage inside the cave need to be repaired as does the fence to the entrance platform.

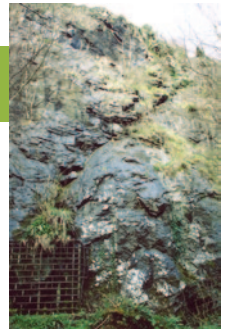


photos by John Wilmut

## Caves

### Rift Cave gate

A closer inspection of the gate showed that the steelwork had not deteriorated as much as had been thought, so no further action will be taken on this.



### Cleaning

While visiting groups staying at the Centre generally leave the building in a tidy and clean condition there is a need for occasional deep cleaning and for regular checks on the state of the public areas during the summer visiting period. This is being organised and funds have been allocated to cover the costs.

### Routine maintenance

Gutters are regularly blocked by leaves and have been cleared and some fixings repaired. The hornets nest has been removed and the rocks in the geological garden have been pressure washed (and look much better for it!)

The Centre toolbox was stolen some time ago and will be replaced.

Faulty window locks on the upper floor of the south barn have been replaced.



## Buildings

### Electrical system

The damage to some of the plastic socket boxes in the building continues to be attended to.

### Heating and plumbing

The water stop cock is being moved to a more accessible position. Radiator thermostats are about to be installed. There is a possibility that a remote heating switching system can be installed.

### Centre storage and access

The general reorganisation of storage continues and publications and other museum storage has been reorganised. The internal keybox has become unreliable and will be replaced and some key locations changed.

continued ►

**Museum**

New displays for the museum will recognise work carried out at the Centre on interpretation of the lamprophyre the dyke and the evidence of tuberculosis found in a bison bone. Some of the bat photographs taken by John Hooper and displayed on panels on the museum staircase have been damaged by mould because of dampness in the wall. Whilst the negatives have been lost, replacements will be sourced from filmed copies filed in the library.

**Chairs**

Damaged chairs continue to be repaired and reupholstering will be done on some others.

Due to significant increases in energy and insurance costs the Trust will, with regret, raise its charges for groups using the Centre. Residents will need to pay £14 per person per night with a minimum group size of 12 people. Friends (members) will pay half that amount. People wanting to book the Centre for day rather than residential use will pay £100 for the day. These charges will come into effect on 1st January 2024.

Educational visits that include the quarry and Joint Mitnor Cave will, in 2024, be £8 for an adult and £4 for a child of school age. Younger children will be free of charge.

Prospective residential visitors and day groups can discuss their requirements with David Jean while prospective educational visitors should speak to Sheila Phillips (contact details for both inside the back cover)



## Website improvements

The website is a principal means by which potential Centre users access information about Centre events and availability. In reviewing the guides walks programme in 2023 (see pages 12-13) the Council agreed that the site would benefit from some improvements. A draft site will be prepared in time for the a Council discussion in December, allowing time for revisions to be made well before the 2024 visiting season. This is expected to include new arrangements for keeping the site up to date.

# British Caving Association

*The Trust is a constituent body of the British Caving Association (and has been since the inception of the former National Caving Association in 1970). Richard Vooght represents the Trust at the Association and also convenes its Conservation and Access Group. David Jean represents the Devon and Cornwall Underground Council which is one of the constituent regional caving councils. The notes below are taken from David's summary of some matters discussed at the BCA Council October Zoom meeting.*

- There was again concern that individual caving club members do not know (and probably don't care about) what is going on at BCA. The number of vacancies on the BCA Council is building up.
- It was agreed that, from next year, individual club members will no longer be issued green BCA membership/insurance cards. A system will be introduced in 2024 where individuals will be able to pay their own subscriptions. Clubs will still need to keep their membership data updated with Katie Eavis at BCA Membership. The BCA membership subscription for 2024 will remain at £20.
- The Council of Northern Caving Clubs wanted to upgrade the amount they could claim for conservation and access, without the scrutiny from other regions, from £750 to £3000. There were objections to this so the agreed amount that regions can claim in one go is now £1500.
- The *Hidden Earth* conference took place over the weekend of 15/17th September at Portishead.
- The next meeting of BCA Council is scheduled for 5th December 2023 and will again be on Zoom.

The British Caving Association is at <https://british-caving.org.uk>  
The Devon and Cornwall Underground Council (on which the Trust is represented) is at <https://dcuc.org.uk/>

## Kents Cavern

In August we heard that Kents Cavern at Torquay had been sold. The Tudor Hotel Collection Ltd are the new owners. The Trust has always valued its contact with Nick Powe and his family and we pass our best wishes as they retire after a very long family connection with the site.

## Visitors to the Centre in 2023

*Centre visits are a central part of the Trust's educational programme. They are of two sorts: public guided walks and group visits made by special arrangement. Following the downturn during the Covid pandemic, 2023 has seen a welcome upturn in visitor numbers.*

### Guided Walks

The 2023 guided walks programme consisted of 20 day walks (morning and afternoon on five Wednesdays and five Thursdays) and 5 Thursday evening bat walks. Guiding was shared between John Brodribb, Keith Coventry, Sheila Phillips, Alan Finch, Skip Greenwood, David Jean, Jenna Kingston, Richard Vooght and John Wilmut. Skip and Jenna were new guides in 2023 and John Brodribb had previously helped with the walks in 2022 and



had now joined the Trust Council.

The great majority of visitors pre-booked their visits via Eventbrite; a few paid on the door. Most bookings were made very shortly before the walk and 80% of these came via the link from the Trust's website. Numbers for all day walks were limited to 30 and for all bat walks to 20.

Each day walk consisted of an introduction, visits to the limekilns, quarry, Joint Mitnor Cave and museum and visitors generally stayed for about 2 hours. Each bat walk had an introduction which included information about how to use the bat detectors, after which the group was taken to the top of Buckfastleigh Hill where bats (mostly greater horseshoes and pipistrelles) were flying in considerable numbers.

This was the most successful programme for a number of years with 371 visitors in all. The day walks were about 50% full and the bat walks over





90% full. About a quarter of those coming were children of school age. Around half of the visitors were from Devon and Cornwall - the rest were from all parts of the UK with a few from the near continent.

In looking forward to the 2024 programme, the Council has discussed a number of issues.

- The walks place the Trust on a clear commercial basis that requires a commitment to continue to deliver a quality experience that is efficiently and safely run whilst continuing to be informative, friendly and informal.
- Whilst the walks are not primarily a means of raising income, rises in costs mean that prices will increase in 2024 to £8 per adult and £4 per child of school age.
- Publicity should cover a wider area and include notices in local and regional publications and on social media. Upgrades to the Trust website will help.
- The bat walks are very popular and more could be offered in 2024.
- It will be essential to recruit more guides and provide them with pre-walk briefing so that they can function as quickly as possible.
- Some provisions at the Centre need some upgrading or improvement to deal safely and effectively with the increased visitor numbers.
- Whilst the walks are clearly a way of introducing people to aspects of pre-history and the cave environment, the Trust also needs to use them as a means of building support through the Friends scheme.



Photographs in this section by Richard Vooght and John Wilmot: (opposite from the top) at the limekilns; at Rift Cave; at the entrance to Joint Mitnor cave; (this page from the top) inside Joint Mitnor; in the museum; introduction to a bat walk; part of a bat walk.

## Visits by special arrangement

Sheila Phillips manages group visits to the Centre. The groups requesting these are very varied and she arranges programmes to suit their needs. Many group visits have a programme that is similar to the public guided walks programme but some use the Centre facilities but do not go into the quarry and bone cave.

Below is a summary of the group visits in 2023.

**Schumacher College** Degree course students. 'Mind, Movement and the Environment'. A walk around the hill; Centre quarry and cave.

**Dawlish U3A** All aspects of the hill and Pengelly Trust site.

**Teign Valley Local History Group** All aspects of the hill and Pengelly Trust site with an emphasis on human local history.

**Home Educator Groups** Industrial archaeology, limekilns, history of the Centre buildings and quarry.

**Buckfastleigh Wild Spaces Group**

Regeneration of the nature garden, propagation of Deptford Pinks (taken from a planting by a local resident after the Open Wildlife Gardens visit organised in conjunction with the *Buckfastleigh Action for Nature* project) and Mediterranean Acer as climate markers.

**Chudleigh Local History Group** All aspects of the hill and Pengelly Trust site with an emphasis on human local history.

**Moretonhampstead History Association** A full guided walk.

**Exeter University Environmental Science student** Bats' natural environments, roosts and moth pollinated plants.

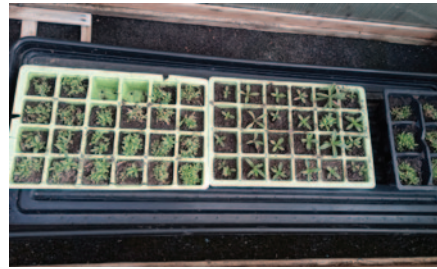
**Devon Wildlife Trust, Bovey Wildlife Group** Bats

**Buckfastleigh Scouts** Weekend exploring the site and craft activities.

'**Hello Summer**' *Healthy Activities and Food*. A government supported holiday project for children from disadvantaged families. Exploring the local area.

**Sound Art Radio** A Dartington initiative for local artists.

**Tavistock U3A** General interest in the local history





of the hill and the Centre.

**Churston Local History Society** Geology interest and focus on latest science based on the lamprophyre dyke.

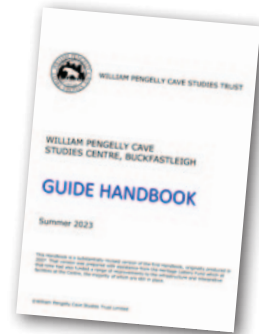
**Buckfastleigh 'Ranger Ralph' project** Dartmoor National Park activity day on fossils; videos, 'model' fossil making and Joint Mitnor cave visit.

Interests registered for 2024 include **Schumacher College, Totnes Potters, Steiner School, Newton Ferrers U3A, Scouts** and a **Home Learning Community**.

## Guide Handbook

The first version of the Guide Handbook was produced in 2007 and was badly in need of updating. John Wilmut and Sheila Phillips expanded and updated it ready for a guide briefing session in the early summer of 2023. Although that briefing did not go as well as had been hoped, the Handbook is now a reference source that provides

- background information about the Trust and Centre
- factual information so that guides can provide an informative and accurate interpretation of the site and surrounding area
- essential information about Centre and local facilities that guides need in order to create a safe and supportive environment for visitors
- detailed information about resources that are available
- advice about providing an effective guiding service.



## We often get thanks and praise ... at least some of us do ...



This is from the Better Places newsletter of B Buckfastleigh:

“And to top it off I got to enjoy not one BUT two trips to Pengelly Caves with the wonderful Sheila Phillips. It was fantastic to see so many people enjoy this one-of-a-kind place and learn so much from Sheila and all they do at the William Pengelly Trust. It really is not to be missed! Check out their website

([pengellytrust.org](http://pengellytrust.org)) for more information on how to visit.”

## ... and we contribute to a local science book

Colin White is producing a book entitled *Science in the South West* that seeks to describe how the westcountry has influenced the progress of science and technology. The book will cover a number of developments, one of which is the work done at the Trust Centre at Buckfastleigh. Sheila Phillips has reviewed a draft of this section and provided advice.

## Another Buckfastleigh Christmas Fair



The Trust will again be participating in the Buckfastleigh Christmas Fair which this year will be held in the late afternoon and early evening of Wednesday 6th December. Once again we will be in a central position, thanks to support from John Brodribb.

Every year we get local visitors to the Centre who tell us that they had no idea that the Centre is local and part of the town. That's despite the fact that we've

been at the site for over 60 years! The Christmas Fair is one of the ways that we can make ourselves known in the community and build more local support.

photo of the 2022 stall by John Brodribb

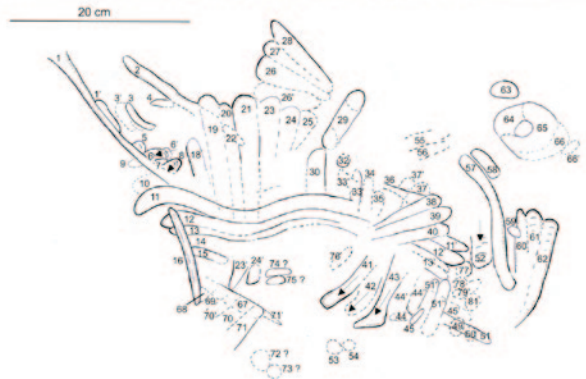
## Spiders in Dark Caves Are Evolving to Go Blind

New research\* has found seven new species of funnel web spider across several caves in Israel all of which are at various stages of evolving to be blind. To study how they evolved, researchers examined the spiders' body plans and extracted DNA samples to compare them to other species. Five of the seven new species were found to have reduced eyes and two were completely blind, their eyes having almost entirely disappeared. It seemed that spiders that had lost their eyes could not survive outside of the darkness of the cave, so that there was very little mating between deep cave and cave entrance populations. Deep-cave spiders were also more closely related to deep-cave species in the Mediterranean than they were to their much closer cave-entrance neighbours in Israel.

\* see <https://www.newsweek.com/spider-cave-israel-going-blind-evolution-1782480>

## Neanderthal engravings on cave walls

Researchers have reported on Neanderthal engravings on a cave wall at La Roche-Cotard in the Loire Valley in France, made more than  $57\pm 3$  thousand years ago\*. Following human occupation, the cave was completely sealed by cold-period sediments, which prevented access until its discovery in the 19th century and first excavation in the early 20th century. Cave closure occurred significantly before the regional arrival of *Homo sapiens*, and all artefacts from within the cave are typical Mousterian lithics; in Western Europe these are uniquely attributed to *Homo neanderthalensis*. They conclude that the engravings are unambiguous examples of the earliest known Neanderthal abstract design.

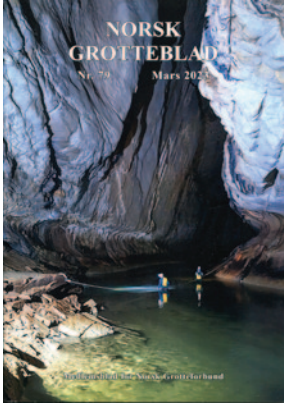


The cave was formed by karst processes in a yellow, sandy, more or less crumbly limestone that is usually poorly cemented. There are several 'panels' of finger markings. The picture shows one of these panels accompanied by a legend that identifies specific engravings. The panel is 70 cm long and 50 cm high. It includes 84 traces of variable lengths, from 33 to 10 cm. Many of the shorter traces are grouped together and are sometimes associated with dots. The arrows indicate the direction of the passage of the finger.

\* see <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0286568>

## Review of *Norsk Grotteblad* 79, March 2023

Pub. Norsk Grotteforbund Postboks 1301 N-8602 MO Norway. ISSN 0332 6810. 36 pp inc. Colour photos and maps. In Norwegian and Nkr150 to non-members. A copy is held in the Pengelly Trust library though, unlike earlier issues, this one does not include a summary in English .



This issue comes close to home for me. The first article is a summary of the 28 or so south Nordland expeditions. These expeditions drew on members from several British caving clubs, mostly cavers who were personally known to Trevor Faulkner or me. A total of 64 cavers were involved, with a nucleus of 6 who attended at least 10 times. There is a complete list of references which will be invaluable to anyone interested in the area.

Trevor defines south Nordland as that between Grong in the South and Mo-i-Rana. Most of this lies within the area known as Helgeland. The approx. 28 expeditions covered the period of 1974 to 2011. The expeditions explored and/or surveyed more than 760 of the 826 marble caves in the area known to Trevor with a total passage length of c. 53 km out of c. 63 km. There is a comprehensive table covering the caves of over 125m in length. There are only 4 caves of 1000 m or longer, the longest being Toerfjellhola at 1896 m. However, the caves proved to be an ideal opportunity for Trevor to develop theories of speleogenesis for Norway's marble caves.



With the demise of the North Sea ferries it will be difficult to put on expeditions like these again.

There is a very well -illustrated article on the Caves of Mulu (Sarawak) Expedition in 2022 organised by Andy Farrant.

Prominent Norwegian speleologist Stein-Erik Lauritzen was on the expedition and has provided an insight for Norwegian cavers on what participation in the expedition involves, on the magnificent caves, the spectacular surface scenery and profusion of wildlife.



The number of cavers in Scandinavia is too small to allow for a big get-together like Hidden Earth. However, Norsk Grotteforbund organises a weekend summer camp each year in a different area when Norwegian cavers socialise, meet, explore and survey caves, practice rescue techniques etc. In 2022, the camp was in Verdal in Tromsdalen in mid Norway, which is not noted for major caves, but offers equal travel opportunities from both the North and south of Norway as well as from Sweden. Lille Svartfossgrotta was surveyed, and extensions were made to Svartfossgrotta

in the innermost labyrinth. On Friday Upper and Lower Ramsåsgrotta were visited. The well-illustrated article gives flavour of this event.

*Geoff Newton*



Photographs from the Mulu expedition: (left) Clearwater Cave by Christos Pennos and (top) Rat Cave by Stein-Erik Laurithzen. Then above in Lower Ramsåsgrotta, Norway by Cheslaw Szura

## Pengelly and Chelsea

There is a steady flow of publications into the Trust library and we have, from time to time, reviewed some of these. In a recent browse through a pile of recently arrived material I came across a recent issue of the newsletter of the Chelsea Spelæological Society (one of the few caving clubs that retains the classical spelling).



Now I was a member of CSS in the 1960s in the days of Bill Maxwell, Harry Pearman, Bruce Bedford, Julia James, George Fletcher, Bob Fish, Pat Browne and many others. And it was there that I met Antony Sutcliffe who was recruiting support for his new Devon venture at Higher Kiln Quarry. Many CSS members contributed to the Trust's early development and Bill was splitting his time between building work in Buckfastleigh and more at the newly acquired CSS Whitewalls cottage, now the club's headquarters.

But then I saw a report of a CSS Mendip meet where some members had been visiting the caves in and around Burrington Combe. That was where my (not particularly illustrious) caving career had started, as a schoolboy in Bristol. It's clear that some things had changed - Rod's Pot and Bath Swallet are now connected, Bos Swallet and Drunkard's Hole now seem worth a visit (we ignored them in my day) and Aveline's Hole now has an interior gate. But Goatchurch (my first ever cave) and Sidcot Swallet sounded much the same though I doubt that I'd now want to squeeze into either.

A few years later it was an accidental meeting at the London Transport depot at Ruislip that brought me to CSS and some more serious caving here and in France, Austria and Yugoslavia but I eventually gave it all up in favour of the Pengelly Trust. I'm not sorry about that but it was good to re-connect with CSS via their well-produced and glossy newsletter - a million miles away from winding the handle of the Gestetner machine in Chelsea's Kings Road as Bill Maxwell produced the early version of this Newsletter.



*John Wilmut*

Photograph: Cavers (not from CSS) entering Goatchurch Cavern (it didn't have a label in my day but the wall is a remnant of a Victorian attempt to make a show cave of it.



Dr Trevor Shaw is a long-standing Trust member and a distinguished scholar who, in 1992, became an honorary research fellow at the Karst Research Institute at Postojna, Slovenia. His first career was as an engineer in the Royal Navy, exploring caves as a recreation and eventually studying the history of their exploration. This culminated in a PhD at the University of Leicester analysing the continuity of karst research and cave exploration in Slovenia. His subsequent research covered many other countries but his main interest was in the central European region, part of the former Austro-Hungarian empire. His considerable body of published work eventually resulted in the award of a DSc by the University of Leicester.

Trevor has very kindly donated a number of publications to the Trust library. These included his own work:

- Names from the Past in Postojnska Jama (2006)
- Foreign Travellers in the Slovene Karst 1486-1900 (2008)\*
- Aspects of the History of Slovene Karst 1545-2008 (2010)\*
- Slovene Karst and Caves in the Past (2015, with Alenka Čuk)
- Škocjanske Jame 1920-1940 (2018)

\* these were previously reviewed in *Studies in Speleology*

and a number of other works from the Karst Research Institute:

- Abstracts and Guide from the 26th Karstological School *Show Caves and Science* (2018, edited by Mitja Prelovšek)
- Skrita Jama (2021, by Jasmna Čeligoj Biščak, in Slovenian)
- Abstracts and Guide from the 28th Karstological School *Regional Karstology - Local and General Aspects* (2021, editors Matej Blasnik et al)
- Karst, Caves and People (2021, by Nadja Zupan Hajna)
- Abstracts and Guide from the 29th Karstological School *Speleology* (2022, editors Asrid Švara et al)
- 75 years of the Karst Research Institute (2023, by Institute members)

The Trust is very grateful for the donation of these publications.

# Trust publications

Publications of the Trust may be obtained either from **Alan Finch** at 'Zennor', **Throwleigh Road, South Zeal, Okehampton, Devon EX20 2QA**. Telephone **01837 840259** or by ordering online at <https://pengellytrust.org/> or from the Centre bookstall.

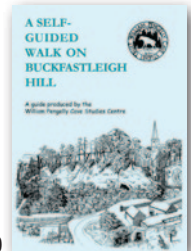
Here is a list of the books, booklets and leaflets available. Prices include postage and packing.

## A Self-Guided Walk on Buckfastleigh Hill

*John Wilmut, David Jean and Sheila Phillips (2004)*

This is one of two guides for use at the Centre. Over 14 pages it describes a self-guided route that starts at the Centre and introduces the walker to the principal features, structure and geology of the hill and its caves. It is well illustrated, has a map and is a valuable summary of the more detailed information in other Trust publications and in the Centre museum.

£2-50

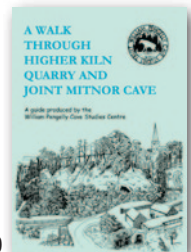


## A Walk through Higher Kiln Quarry and Joint Mitnor Cave

*John Wilmut, David Jean and Sheila Phillips (2004)*

This is the second of two guides for use at the Centre. Over 12 pages it provides a summary of the principal features that visitors see in the guided walk through the quarry, in Joint Mitnor Cave (the bone cave) and in the Centre museum. It forms a companion guide to the self-guided walk, limekilns and geological garden publications.

£2-50

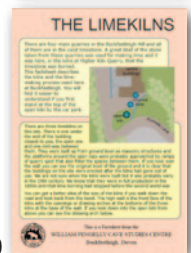


## The Limekilns

*Wilfred Joint and John Wilmut (2005)*

This is a 4-page supplement to the information boards at the Centre. There are four main quarries in Buckfastleigh Hill and all are in the coral limestone. Much of the stone taken from these quarries was burned for making lime in the kilns at Higher Kiln Quarry. This factsheet describes the kilns and the traditional lime-making process that was used at Buckfastleigh.

£0-50



## The Geological Garden

*Bob Symes, Sheila Phillips and John Wilmut (2007)*

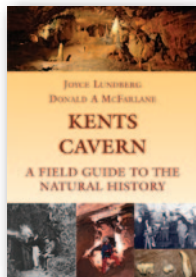
This is another supplementary 4-page leaflet. In the courtyard of the Centre there is a group of rocks from the local area, set out as a geological garden. They give some idea of the range of rocks that visitors see on and close to Dartmoor. The leaflet gives detailed information about the rocks and where they came from.

£0-50





Articles from back numbers of **STUDIES IN SPELEOLOGY** or from this **NEWSLETTER** are available. Please contact the librarian to enquire about copies.

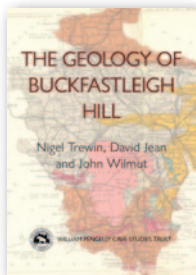


### **Kents Cavern: A Field Guide to the Natural History**

*Joyce Lundberg and Donald A McFarlane (2008)*

Over more than 150 years researchers at Kents Cavern have discovered a sequence of deposits that cover a half-million year history, making this cave one of the most important cave sites in the world. Here the authors show how the cave first formed and developed and they describe the excavations by William Pengelly. The Guide then takes the visitor on a tour of the show cave. At each stop the authors describe the evidence on which our understanding of its development is built.

£4-50

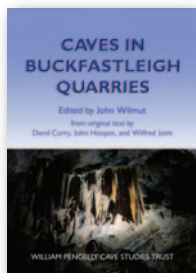


### **The Geology of Buckfastleigh Hill**

*Nigel Trewin, David Jean and John Wilmut (2007)*

The origins of Buckfastleigh Hill go back 350 million years and its story embraces tropical seas, volcanoes, coral reefs and the building of a massive mountain chain. Caves in the hill's limestone provide evidence of ice age erosion and of warm periods when lion, elephant, hippopotamus and other animals roamed the Dart valley. This illustrated booklet provides a detailed description of the geological history of the hill.

£3-50

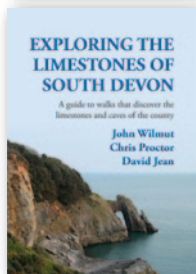


### **Caves in Buckfastleigh Quarries**

*Edited by John Wilmut (2012)*

This booklet has been produced by the Trust as an updated and extended replacement for two of its earlier publications. It includes descriptions of the history, geology and exploration of the caves that will be of interest to anyone who has visited the area and particularly for those who have seen some of the caves at the Centre.

£5-50



### **Exploring the Limestones of South Devon**

*John Wilmut, Chris Proctor and David Jean (2014)*

Created when Britain lay south of the equator, Devon's limestones are as exciting and interesting as any rocks in Britain, as are the caves which have been formed by the action of water over thousands of years. Research in the last two centuries has yielded much information about our past climates and about the people, animals and plants that once inhabited this area. The walks are described in great detail and the book can be used to combine the walks in ways to suit the walker.

£7-00

# The William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust and Centre:



The William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust is a charity, originating in 1962, when Higher Kiln Quarry at Buckfastleigh became the site of a cave studies centre. The quarry contains several caves including Joint Mitnor Cave where there are the remains of animals dating from the warm period between the last two ice ages. The organisation is named after William Pengelly, a local man who, in the mid-19th century, excavated local cave sites including Brixham Cave and Kents Cavern at Torquay.

He was responsible for establishing excavation methods and records that became a model for all modern archaeology.

Joint Mitnor Cave was first entered just before WW2 when bones were found and identified as the fossil remains of animals that had once been present in this location. The cave was excavated in the 1940s and 50s but a large part of the deposit was left in place and this can be viewed by visitors.

The picture shows a tooth from a juvenile straight tusked elephant and bones from bison and red deer. Other species include hippopotamus, lion, hyena, wolf, and bear.



Other caves at the Cave Studies Centre are closed to visitors either because of their fragility or because they are used by hibernating bats.

There are other local caves that are used for recreational purposes.

## What we do

### Research

The Trust supports a range of research in areas such as cave water percolation, cave location techniques, palaeontology and bat studies.

### Education

The Trust provides information about cave studies through visits, lecture programmes, publications and displays in the Centre museum.

### Conservation

The management of the quarry and caves is consistent with good conservation practice.

# what we do and how you can visit us

How you can visit the Centre

## Group visits

We welcome visits from student groups, children and special interest organisations. These can be at any time of year although visits to the caves are not possible from mid-autumn until mid-spring. Your visit can be tailored to your specific needs. To arrange, please contact **Sheila Phillips** on **01752 775195** or email [danehurst@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:danehurst@tiscali.co.uk)

## Specialist visits

These are visits from those individuals expressing interest in the Trust's work. Please contact **Sheila Phillips**, details above.

## By joining public day walks

Held during August, widely advertised and lasting for a couple of hours including a cave visit. Book via our website <https://pengellytrust.org>

## By joining a bat walk

Held on August evenings, these are an opportunity to see bats and hear the ways in which they use echolocation to navigate and catch insects. Book on <https://pengellytrust.org>

## Residential visits

We can accommodate just over 20 people. These visits are especially suitable for groups interested in environmental activities. Book or enquire on <https://pengellytrust.org> or to **David Jean** on **01752 700259**

## Officers and Council members

<b>President</b>	Professor Patrick Boylan	
<b>Chairman</b>	Dave Warne	<a href="mailto:dave.warne@blueyounder.co.uk">dave.warne@blueyounder.co.uk</a>
<b>Secretary</b>	Alan Finch	<a href="mailto:alan@alanfinch.net">alan@alanfinch.net</a> 'Zennor', Throwleigh Road, South Zeal, Okehampton EX20 2QA
<b>Treasurer</b>	David Jean	<a href="mailto:davidjean1@btinternet.com">davidjean1@btinternet.com</a> 13 Tor Road, Hartley, Plymouth PL3 5TE
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	John Wilmot	<a href="mailto:johnwilmot@btinternet.com">johnwilmot@btinternet.com</a>
<b>Librarian</b>	Richard Vooght	<a href="mailto:richard.vooght@hotmail.com">richard.vooght@hotmail.com</a>
<b>Friends Administrator</b>	Beth Cramman	<a href="mailto:membership@pengelly.org">membership@pengelly.org</a>
<b>Webmaster</b>	Keith Coventry	<a href="mailto:keith@kcoventry.co.uk">keith@kcoventry.co.uk</a>
<b>Visits Organiser</b>	Sheila Phillips	<a href="mailto:danehurst@tiscali.co.uk">danehurst@tiscali.co.uk</a>
<b>Council Members</b>	Charles Bird, Patrick Boylan, John Brodribb, Ben Hall	



In 1950 Pathe News made a film about Greater Horseshoe Bats in Reeds Cave, with members of Devon Speleological Society demonstrating the collection of data about these creatures. These are two photographs taken during the filming; in the top picture Wilfred Joint and C. King are weighing a bat, whilst below cavers and the Pathe team take a tea break in what is now the Centre car park.

