

## First Time in a Mine - a SWMBO's Perspective

(Rhiwbach - 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006. Team: Miles, Rupert, David, Sabine, Heather, Holly and Mel)

Apparently us neglected wives, partners and girlfriends of the male mine exploring enthusiast are affectionately (I hope) known by some as SWMBO's - She Who Must Be Obeyed. If this was actually true then my husband wouldn't spend half as much time as he does exploring, reading about, writing about, buying (and playing with) gadgets for, day dreaming about, producing washing from and sharing info on a hobby that to me is so utterly boring! I have grumbled to him more than once when his head has been buried in a mining book long after lights out - "you should have married a mine!"

My husband regularly frequents the many mines in our local area of northern Snowdonia, accompanied by various different interested parties and always seems to have a great time. (In a non-dubious mine exploring way of course!) Meanwhile, I am left at home with an ETA and the telephone number of cave rescue. Our fascinated friends and family members (some of which through curiosity have succumbed and enjoyed) constantly urge me to give it a go but frankly I'd rather have watched magnolia paint dry on a magnolia wall. In fact the more enthusiastic they were, the more anti I would feel. At least I had interesting and more rewarding pastimes like talking and shopping.

But finally on a freezing but sunny January Saturday, I was dragged to Rhiwbach at Cwm Penmachno. The reason? Exercise. And wanting to be sociable with my husband's sister and niece, Heather and Holly, visiting for the weekend and game for some mine meandering. The expected outcome? Apart from some laughs with the girls - Pure Boredom.



**This face says it all.**

In fact I never actually made a solid decision to go into Rhiwbach - we had an appointment with a builder that morning and if it would have dragged on, I wouldn't have gone. (I was kinda hoping it would!) I took it all in my stride and tried not to think about it too deeply. And because this was the attitude I chose, apart from expecting to be bored, I also expected not to feel particularly scared about being under ground.

The day in question started with a stonking hangover. Taking visiting family to the Stables Bar in Betws, then using up the Christmas booze in cocktails the night before and a hazy 1am bedtime did not help in climbing up the hillside to the entrance of the mine. (I think it would be called an Adit - but I'm afraid you won't find any mine jargon in this report - I'm a girl - this is all about feelings!) It was a short, not overly stupidly steep ascent that consisted of a lot of panting, puffing, pausing and palpitations which culminated in a peeling off of most layers, hastily popping paracetamol and peering into a discreet hollow to consider puking.



Me looking decidedly squiffy with Holly on the right.

So we prepared to enter the mine. Seven of us in total: Miles - (my about to be thoroughly embarrassed by this rambling report husband) Heather and Holly, (family) and Rupert, David and Sabine. (A selection of the aforementioned

interested parties.) Hard hats secured, torches at

the ready and nausea just about under control we congregated at the entrance for a photo. The adit was positioned at the edge of a forest. Even though barricaded to stop unauthorized entry, it was an alluring round opening nestled into the rock. Water drip dripped from the green mossy covered roof and trickled away as a small underfoot stream - dark evergreen trees huddled together to form the woods that spread up the gentle slopes beyond. I half expected Bilbo Baggins to open the metal barred door and invite us inside for a cuppa.

Once inside, we began the single file trudge along the tunnel that would lead us to the mine workings. I was immediately struck by an anxiety that the further we went, the further away we were from the entrance. I know that sounds obvious, but it was unnerving and I took comfort in being amongst the more experienced. If it had been the first time in the mine for everyone

present I would have turned back and not gone on. Deeper and deeper we trod through the dark tunnel in a hunched back posture, dodging the occasional bits of protruding rocky ceiling. Only one way forward, no left, no right,



further from the light behind us - which I never once turned round to look at. I tried to keep panic inducing thoughts from my mind. If it wasn't for our artificial lights, we would all be in pitch black, groping around, lost and frightened. What if water suddenly started roaring towards us filling the tunnel's space to the roof, the horror of seeing the torrent of froth rage towards us and the imminent silent drowning that would follow. I was consoled by the fact that it hadn't rained in a while but that thought was quashed by the events at Boscastle. Every time some one raised their voice above a normal level I flinched, my back and neck muscles became rigid. What if the vibrations triggered a collapse of the roof? On top of us all, on some of us, or behind us, trapping us. It dawned on me that I was anxious, but I didn't tell anyone at the time. Although my brain was drawing on the Hollywood movies I had seen, I constantly reminded myself that this was real life and perishing was unlikely. Furthermore, no amount of panicking would change the inevitable anyway.

So far, I hadn't entertained the idea that I would be scared and I was. Not hyperventilatingly scared, but uncomfortable scared. I had also predicted I would be bored, then through the furious darting illumination of my head lamp I spied the stalactites...

They weren't Geography textbook impressive, but they were there in person none the less. A slimy white seepage on the ceiling flowed into short pencil thin nodules hanging above our heads. No big deal but it was noted and I had to admit to myself that by noting, I must be interested. Not much else was

going on in the tunnel as far as flora and fauna was concerned. Seemingly stationary water hovered along the edges of the old cumbered wagon track and apart from the odd limestone friend, the rocks were bare. It was strange that no creepy crawlies were seen to be hiding in crevices and no weeds rooted themselves to the stone. The sparsity of life was bizarre in a positive way. The emptiness was clean and uncomplicated, the simplicity was refreshing. Damn - noting, interested, must keep up the indifferent attitude, else god forbid, I'll end up converted and never live it down!

Shortly we all stopped to look at a rusty old wagon. An abandoned relic of a time gone by. In a cliché type of moment I imagined the atmosphere as it would have been, the panting efforts of the pusher, the dirt and sweat in the air, the hollers of men barely heard above the clanking machinery and blasts that shook the walls, then the settling of dust and the silence of half a century. What this wagon must have witnessed. Either Rupert or David - (it was pretty dark!) said that the wagon was designed to have axels that followed the inaccuracies of the width of the track so that it would never de-rail. How clever is that? Uhm cough, I mean - how dull. Yawn.

"You alright?" Miles asked over his shoulder as we trooped onwards. "Um hm" I replied. An uninformative exchange that took place now and again throughout. "Here we are" he announced. The area around us opened out and on the left was a small lake.

Miles immediately set about arranging his tripod on a ledge overlooking the water and busily adjusted the angle of his camera. I rolled my eyes. Here goes the next half an hour - "Do you guys have to put up with this all the time?" I enquired. "S'ok" Rupert or David replied. (It was still very dark!) Simon is just the same. ..

During the pit stop, I found myself scrambling around for a good footing to view the lake. It was azure blue and very very still. People's conflicting head lights criss crossed like searching strobes across the chamber ceiling and walls. Still not having got the hang of directing my own beam successfully, I got frustrated when something I began looking at, was promptly propelled back into darkness without warning. I was the first to grab the big torch to have proper look around on my own terms. Not for long of course, battery conserving and all that.

Miles politely asked for cooperation while taking his picture. (I supposed he meant no pushing each other in, deliberately caving in the ceiling or switching on the main light.) But we all stood in awed silence while he held up the flash. Poof, poof, poof echoed around our ears. Huge blasts of light illuminated the entire chamber for much shorter moments than the naked eye could appreciate and then it was done - the scene immortalised on camera.

The unstirring water reflected the walls so accurately that it was easy to assume that it was transparent and it was to an extent. People made various comments about the lake being scarily deep/freezing cold/not the place for a paddle, shudder. Conversely I found it to be curiously inviting and was relieved to discover something that I wasn't recoiling from for a change. In fact, if it wasn't for the fact that I'd look like a complete raving moron, I was tempted to wade right in. I've always had a positive and fearless relationship with water and the temperature has never bothered me - I can withstand the coldest of morning showers if the hot water has failed where as my husband runs screaming from it, arms flailing wildly above his head and dives back under the duvet.

Rupert, David and Sabine had moved on round to the next chamber and Heather and Miles soon followed. Holly and I stopped in unspoken unison to squint into a small pool of water that rested in the rocks at the side of the tunnel. It was so motionless that I actually believed it could have been solid ice. I threw in a stone - it rippled. We looked at (blinded) one another and smiled. Cool.

With urgency we half ran to catch up the others, I was now last and so aware of the thick blackness stretching out behind me. I shuddered and decided then that I didn't want to be first or last - I thought of our friend Kathy, another hardened mine explorer and reflected on how she likes to be last. Crazy woman.

Having caught up, Heather and Holly needed to change the batteries in their headlamps. We stood amongst scattered rocks and stones on the huge chamber floor while Miles produced truck loads of batteries from the most unlikely of places! Do you know he has a whole drawer dedicated to batteries at home? And he always heads to the battery section in any shop or supermarket, and crouches down next to them mesmerised. When I stand

above him arms folded, tapping my foot and complaining about the cost, he assures me he's only looking as all his batteries are rechargeable anyway. And yet his stock suspiciously continues to grow. I just don't get that.

With light restored, we slid along the other side of the lake. We shone torches into the water to try and differentiate between reflection and what really lay beneath. Again conflicting beams made it confusing to see but



Me trying my best to look extremely happy.

David (illuminated in the conflicting beams as he spoke!) demonstrated that a torch beam aimed below a 45 degrees angle showed reflection and above this angle it revealed what lay under the surface. In this case, not a lot.

We continued through another short tunnel which opened up briefly and conservatively midway and to the left was a crumpled heap of beams and rubble.

Jumping to conclusions, my heart pounded with fear as I thought Omigod - that looks like a past collapse of a tunnel ceiling! Rupert said "That looks like a past collapse of a tunnel ceiling." In my frozen stance I looked up at him in horror as he proceeded to casually pick loose chunks of rock from the roof above our heads. He chuckled something along the lines of (and it probably wasn't this bad but through traumatised memory recalls it as) "And I expect this ceiling could collapse at any moment too. Look how loose these bits of rock are? (Demonstration.) People keep telling me I shouldn't do this - it alarms them....." Terrified, further negative comments, their originator unknown flew about and battered my brain like frantic birds wings. I caught echoing words like "cave in", "collapse", "we're all going to die" (well, maybe not that.) And felt the onset of panic. I think I must have said something to Heather, as when I next felt almost calm she was busily reassuring me and I could feel myself being comforted back to normal. As for Rupert, I think he was grabbed by the collar and shoved backwards into a dingy corner where he was duffed up. Not really. He is far too much of a nice bloke. But I discovered later that he was asked to cut out the scary talk!

Re-composed, we walked on a few yards and another expanse opened up before us. This chamber also had a small turquoise lake and a narrow ledge to the left which was squeezed between it and the wall. All seven of us stood huddled together at the edge of the lake until at one at a time, we cautiously eased along the ledge while gripping onto the guide rope that was anchored to the rocks for safety (if you were female - if you were a man you skipped along the ledge at high speed whilst remaining oblivious to the rope.) Ha! Look at me! I thought as I negotiated the path without plunging to my death. This is a cinch! Once on the opposite side we looked back at the lake now behind us and David shone his torch into the mirrored water. Before the beam reached a 45 degree angle the world of rock and stone beneath was floodlit to reveal that the vertical left hand wall (opposite the ledge) ceased completely just below the surface. We could see submerged tunnels leading off in different directions swallowed by the motionless blue water. This meant that this lake was probably linked to all other lakes as an exposed surface of one entire flood that had infiltrated chambers, stretched into tunnels and drowned every nook and cranny of an entire level below our feet. The eerie silence of the still water coupled with the teal coloured illuminations of forgotten passageways was reminiscent of a scene from Titanic. The only thing missing was aimlessly drifting seaweed and algae covered apparatus, even a floating wide eyed body or two wouldn't have looked out of place.

Then Rupert pointed out something very interesting. That the platform opposite us where we had all congregated on the edge of the lake before we had eased or skipped along the ledge, was actually only inches thick. A depthless expanse sat beneath and behind it. Well - Fancy



The ledge of death.

that! I was so glad to have that pointed out! I was beginning to notice a pattern forming here- rising panic, coping, rising panic, coping - I found out later that I was not the only one to suffer the cycle of horror - but this particular "lots of people unwittingly standing on potentially unstable platform" horror had a darker, heart sinking element to it which sent a cold wave through my whole being. This is what my husband gets up to all the time and I wish I was still none the wiser. Something had changed forever and not in a good way. This may be the only time I go into a mine and I expected any fears to abate as soon as I reached the daylight. But I will never totally lose the anxiety I experienced in Rhiwbach as long as Miles continues to visit this and many other mines again and again. I now understand the meaning of ignorance is bliss -it's easier not to worry when you can't clearly picture the dangers. However, although I didn't venture into Rhiwbach especially to dispel fears about Miles' safety, I always generally believed that when you are ignorant of something you are more likely to fear it - this is why I supposed people scared of flying were shown around a cockpit and in the same way, I imagined that it would put my mind at rest to see first hand how a loved one practices a risky activity. On this occasion, that philosophy didn't work for me.

If you're still reading, you must a) have a lot of time on your hands and b) be thinking what a jumpy old scaredy cat I am. Believe me, I have been much worse in the past, many a glass was half empty and Chicken Licken was not a patch on me. I found out later that Miles was impressed that I even put on my hard hat without protesting let alone stepping foot inside the adit. So I'm doing ok. We pressed on.

In coping mode we passed a few chambers on our way to the incline. The air was warm and pure as we twisted this way and that through passageways as if on a ghost tour at Alton Towers. We stopped in one chamber where there was a huge tip of rubble leading up about 30ft to the ceiling from the rocky floor. Rupert decided to scramble up it to see if there was anything up there. At this suggestion several of us shone our torches to the top and muttered "nope" "nuthin there". And off he went, clambering precariously up the scree to see what there was to see, which after reaching the top, he deduced was nothing. The rest of us stood around yawning, casually kicking our feet, whistling and examining our finger nails as he hopped and skidded back down. Miles threw a torch beam on him, which could have been mistaken

as a nice thing to do to help him see his way. In reality we were tutting about what a shame it was that no one had a camcorder as we could have made a quick 200 quid from "you've been framed" if he tripped - but decided to watch for a stumble none the less to entertain ourselves. Nothing doing, we padded forth.

We arrived at the incline which was more like a small waterfall. The clear bubbly stream tumbled energetically over the rusty coloured rocks. In single file we kept a pace with one another as we climbed the ascent by thrusting our feet into foot holes and balancing on rocks. Once again I was struck by the simplicity of the scene. Water, rock and a tint of orange. No moss, algae or complex grasses and abundant creatures - it was easier to concentrate and more relaxing for the mind somehow. Not being very welly savvy, I had to work on trusting the placing of my feet. Occasionally when I found myself on an awkward footing and resembled Scooby Doo on a Twister board - the boys helped me out and I gained confidence. But something was missing from this strange experience of scrambling up a waterfall and then Heather hit on it. It wasn't slippy! I know it's not exactly revelation of the century but your brain would usually associate water, rocks and up-ness with slippy and it was fascinating that due to the lack of flora, it was not.

We exited sideways onto a higher level and proceeded into a tunnel. We entered a chamber on our right where Miles busied himself in setting up a picture of another blue lake. While he squinted through the lens, stepped back and rubbed his chin, squinted through the lens and stepped back and rub his chin, we began one by one in unspoken agreement to attack the packed lunches. After David and Sabine had established with much debate that neither of them minded who had the sausage flavour, we munched rolls and sandwiches while chatting amicably about vegetarianism, fish and our general food likes and dislikes. And Miles dropped in an innuendo or two to attempt to put us off our fodder. For the first time I wasn't thinking about the possibility of the ceiling collapsing and nestled back against the wall grazing contentedly. I could have been anywhere.

Then we were off again and on guard with my eyes darting nervously, we rounded back into the tunnel. Suddenly, there ahead of us, at the far

reaching end of the passage, staring straight back at us were a pair of evil red eyes caught in our flashlights. For those of you who are thinking "oh yeah, the red eyes joke", or if you are the person who installed the red eyes and have been rubbing your hands in glee thinking "if the tunnel/chamber/lake/ledge/rock thing freaked her out wait till she gets to the red eyes he he!!!" I was forewarned - so there! No freaking out here - well not too much anyway." Miles set up a camera shot in another tranquil lake filled chamber to our left. (Hang on a minute; how come there are lakes here when we just came from a non-flooded level? Maybe the water is rising behind us?! )

As we hovered around, talk turned to Werewolves, naturally. It was probably Rupert who started it - he must be getting a complex by now- but it ended abruptly when I shut my ears to it. In rising panic mode I was reminded of scenes from Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban which as a recent convert, I had only just read. The scenes in question featured dark tunnels, moonlit lakes, villainous transforming rats and flesh ripping werewolves- well it's almost the same.



Conversing about werewolves.

While we visited the next chamber I finally broke my silence, I sidled up to Miles and said "Er, I know this is a small mine and we've loads of time, but don't feel like you have to drag it out on my account - what I mean is, urm, I think Holly has had enough.

Actually, yes, I'm

pretty sure she has. It's not fair on her Miles- wind it up eh? (Wink and encouraging nod.) So, through no protestation of the others we set off for the exit - for Holly's sake of course.

So once back on the incline we didn't stop at the final level but pursued the ascent towards the exit. I must have had someone behind me with a

particularly strong headlight beam as this time I was stumbling blindly in my own shadow, missing foot holes and muttering to myself frustrated. It didn't surprise me in the slightest to learn that my own headlight was naff in comparison. That kind of thing always happens to me, especially in the circumstances where it's the luck of the draw. On leaving the house that morning, Miles had produced truck loads of hard hats with pre attached headlamps from the same suspect places the batteries later emerged. He handed me one for Heather, one for Holly and one for me and told me to choose and dish out. Early was the hour, hung over was the head, grumpy was the mood - don't want to go down no stupid mine - arms folded, sulky hrumph and scowling eyes. Then - hmmm I mused, turning each one this way and that - I could at least compensate my misery by choosing the best one. But which one is the best one? I know nothing about torches. I lay them in a row on the bed and scrutinised each one carefully. One, two, three. Stood back and- The Red One! Obviously. The other two are white and red will create a flash of colour in my otherwise destined to be unawe-inspiringly tedious day and at least I'll look like Bob the Builder and amuse myself when looking back on the photo's. (I've since discovered that Bob the Builder wears a yellow hat - that should have been my first clue.) Well 'n holy Schmoley - I've the naff hat! The light don't work proper and that's kind of fundamental. I could have asked for more batteries I suppose but I was reluctant to be exposed to that disturbing batteries from behind the ears of spectators demo again. So I put up with it. I had to because I did mention it, several times in fact but it didn't draw much response. Unless you include male grunting which could mean anything from "Don't worry, we'll sort out the problem as soon as we stop", or "Huh?" or "Save it for someone who gives a damn", or "it must be getting on for tea time."

So with my red hat bobbing above me (which it did regularly because looking up to avoid head butting the ceiling forced the strap to widen.) we continued. An interlude of interest lay ahead in the form of a steel grate barring the way of the tunnel all but a little hole which was about the size of my head. Now I don't know about you, but my backside is sizably larger than my head - Ok, there are some people out there where it's the other way around - you know who you are - but I quickly did the math. One by one, bods maneuvered with suppleness through the gap and as my turn approached, I felt the beads of anxiety form on my brow. Long gone were the worries of dying a long

painful death by crushing, dismemberment or drowning - this was far more serious, this was a case of dignity, feminine grace and being able to wrench my butt through the hole without people noticing that it was an issue. Even though I chose a foot hole too low to give enough momentum to my swinging the body up action, had to depend on my husband to grip my hand and yank me forward, and witnessed his abrupt halting as I became wedged in the doorway and awkwardly wriggled free with mutterings about January diets and early days - I think I pulled it off.

Once we were all through and after we had plodded on for a short while we stopped to discuss exit plans. There was one exit which apparently was quite a tight squeeze and another which involved using the door for which Miles had borrowed a key. Rupert, David and Sabine choose the tight squeeze way out for which I of course, now a mine exploring veteran, ripe for adventure, also opted for. Are you mad? Show me the door and I'll know how to use it!!! Miles, Heather, Holly and I trundled round to the official exit and a scene of breathtaking beauty and wonderment stretched out before me. It was white and bright and very enticing. It was daylight.

Miles paused for a photo at the entrance to the exit chamber which was huge and magnificent. Ahead of us was a tip of crumbled slate that rose up about 30 feet and led



Holly facing the pearly (red) gates that led to freedom.

to the glorious way out to the right. The tiny door in question existed humbly within a massive red coloured grill installed to keep out the unsavory

members of the human race. Brilliant light streamed into the room through the bars of the giant barricade that must have been at least another 40 foot high and with my ordeal almost over, I was delighted to discover that there was indeed light at the end of the tunnel! (Now you didn't possibly think I wasn't going to drop that one in somewhere?!)

As us girls shielded and adjusted our eyes while the angels sang in high pitched chorus, Miles sent Holly on ahead and asked her to pose for the picture on the brow of the tip facing the exit. The lucky swine was already nearly there, mission almost accomplished while I was still below in the dark. As the two most nervous team members, I felt united with her through our shared anguish and I ached to be up there too. She was dwarfed by the scale of the grill and space around her and it made for a sobering scene.

Right. Photo shoot over, we began the modest ascent in single file up towards salvation. Those pitch dark passageways and silent chasms, now robbed of our luminous torch light were plunged back into obscurity behind us. The aura of the ghosts of history, abandoned and returned to nothingness as we made for the gates of heaven with faces lifted towards the light. Then, it all happened at exactly the same time. On the back of my neck I felt the devils breath. It had swished noiselessly along from the deepest levels, the remotest tunnels and past the loneliest chambers to touch my skin- I realised that nothing separated me from the blackness behind. I also realised that I was last. I also realised that Miles was exclaiming: "Oh, I've forgotten the torch!" Mid ascent, we all halted and turned around to squint back at it's whereabouts and there it lay, quite a big, useful torch - stranded and looking up at us with it's pleading reflector- on a rock right at the entrance to the exit, next to where a black tunnel led off back into oblivion. Then I realised that everyone was looking at me.

I did actually consider leaving it there and hesitated before descending back down the tip towards the sorry torch. As I turned to leave the others who were going further up as I was going further back down I couldn't help but be reminded of those horror movies when you think its all over and they're free but one of them stupidly goes back at the last minute. You just know it's going to be bad. Warnings echoed in my head in slow deep drawl like a cassette walkman running out of batteries. (Which would be unlikely with Miles in the vicinity.) "Dooooon't goooo baaaack" "Noooooooooooo" "Thaaaat's

the waaaaaay to cerrrrtain death!" And I could imagine all those spotty pop corn scoffing teenagers in the audience pushing their spectacles back up their nose and saying; "Hey up, she's gunna get it now..."

Heather told me later that she would have been well freaked out to have been the unfortunate soul going back for the torch and would have bolted there and back. But I took it controlled and steady. Mainly because I wanted to keep my wits about me but I was also fascinated and half amused by my reaction. I mean, what did I honestly expect to happen to me? However, knowing that the others were exiting through the door of life to safety while I was back tracking towards the black silence where the air that brushed my exposed skin connected me to the air haunting every silent space in the underground maze beyond, was a powerful sensation. It was the most poignant moment that I experienced during the day's adventure. The moment when I alone was linked to the whole of Rhiwbach.

I picked up the torch carefully and walked rigidly back to the tip and began the ascent once again and gathered speed as I tried to catch up with the others. I squeezed through the miniscule doorway in much the same fashion as the previous gap in the tunnel. I had survived! Once outside, I took off my hard hat and posed for a picture. (With my eyes shut again. Miles says that I must blink a lot more than the average person as my eyes are shut 50% of the time in photographs!) We met up with Rupert, David and Sabine and we all strolled amiably along the picturesque path back through the quarry down to the car park in Cwm where the above mentioned three departed and we other four set off for home. Don't you just hate it when the author has obviously lost interest and races to the end of the story? Or maybe you're glad because you've read enough prattle for one day. Tough!

Once settled in the lounge of our little Snowdonian cottage that evening with the open fire happily crackling away, I detected a dark atmosphere about me. I felt somehow rattled by the day's events but couldn't put my finger on it. The torch rescuing moment kept creeping into my consciousness and I concluded that the experience of staring a mine, my first mine, in its face, one to one, was a special intimacy that to this day, I haven't decided was good or bad.

So all in all I stand corrected. I wasn't bored, I actually found aspects of the day quite interesting or if I was to push the wagon out - fascinating.

Part of the reason I wasn't bored was because I didn't have time. I was too busy being scared out of my wits. Another correction on my "not bovered" prediction. Would I go down a mine again? (Not on my team I hear you plead - that woman talks even more than mine does!) I haven't decided. If you're a fellow SWIMBO and you're asking me for advice, I'd say this is the one time in your life you can try the first one, then try all the others and decide the first one was the best and your mine explorer other half won't complain.

Well, I'm finished now and I'm off to bed. Talking of the land of nod; apart from reading mining books right into the dead of night, my husband has another really annoying habit. If he needs to get up for anything - he uses a headlight. No, honestly! Whether it's to go to the loo or to see what the cats are meowing about, he actually affixes a headlight to his head and wonders about the darkened house like that. If one of his numerous headlights aren't accessible from the bedside, he'll use a torch instead. Now I come to mention it, he likes to have a bath by gas lamp light. Not candle light - he favours anything that resembles an industrial light source. And we do have scented candles and electricity - I think he's in a permanent state of delusion. Whenever he wakes me in the night with the flashing beams of his headlamp, I croak at him in a dry mouthed state; "what are you doing?" and he turns to me and promptly blinds me with his unnecessary strobes. I tell him; "Take that off you lunatic, we do have mains electricity you know. Turn the bedroom light on!" But he ignores me completely and continues on his quest. Now, I'm sorry folks but if I'm a SWMBO then my husband is definitely MINE MAD - Man In No Ears Mode Avoiding Discipline



**MINE MAD!**

**The End**

**By Jennifer Moulding.**