

WESSEX CAVE CLUB

Journal No. 107, Vol. 9.

July 1966

CLUB NEWS

New Members

We welcome the following new members to the Club:-

Elected 8.5.66: Mrs. Susan Pearson, 111 Hampton Rd., Redland, Bristol 6.
Mrs. Denise Hart, Barberry House, Kingston Seymour, Som.
K.R. Dawe, "Rosinis", Southwick, Mark, Highbridge, Som.
P. Dando, 47 Broadfield Road, Knowle, Bristol 4.
D.G. Everett, 133 Galpins Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey.
J.G. Phillips, Battery Cottage, Upton Fort, Osmington, Weymouth.
B.E. Harvey, 114 Park Road, Stapleton, Bristol.
A.R. Seer, 18 Ilchester Crescent, Bedminster Down, Bristol 3.
T.H. Chard, Moorland Farm, Axbridge, Somerset.

Elected 26.6.66: P.J. Roberts, 34 Thornhill Rd., Sparkhill, Birmingham 11.
J.A. Smart, 10 Ormerod Rd., Stoke Bishop, Bristol 9.
R. Bignell, 101 Kinsele Rd., Knowle, Bristol 4.
A.J. Thompson, 21 Shaftesbury Rd., Oldfield Park, Bath.
S.D. Godden, 56 Harcourt Rd., Redland, Bristol 6.

New Headquarters

By now members should have received full details of the proposed building we hope to erect at Eastwater Farm. It will be appreciated that this is an ambitious project, and is worthy of the utmost support from us all by way of fund-raising activities and help on the site. The principal work phases were outlined in the previous Journal by the Hut Warden, Nick Hart, and we hope that this programme of site works can be completed by the end of the Club year this October. During the summer months ahead, therefore, we hope that as many members as possible will get in touch with Nick with offers of help.

In many ways it was probably a blessing in disguise that the notice of the Jumble Sale appeared too late for the majority of the Club to contribute their jumble. As it was we had a very successful afternoon, raising £36. for the Hut Funds and we only sold about one third of the vast and varied items collected! Local jumble sale "regulars" were very impressed with the amount of good quality jumble available, and many were frankly overwhelmed. Thanks are due to all the hard-working members who helped that afternoon.

Most of the unsold articles are "in store" and arrangements have been made for another sale at Wells Y.M.C.A, on October 1st, when the winter "jumble season" starts.

Annual General Meeting and Dinner

Most of us are very busy people, and like to have important dates in our diaries well in advance. This year the Club A.G.M. and Annual Dinner will be held on Saturday 22nd October. As on previous occasions the A.G.M. will be held at Priddy Village Hall, and the Dinner at the Caveman Restaurant, Cheddar. Once again Paul Duck will be taking bookings for the Dinner.

This seems a good opportunity to remind members that notices of motions for discussion, and nominations for Officers and Committee Members, will be required some time towards the end of September. A final notice, in accordance with Rule 18, will be circularised nearer the time. The business this year will be more than ever vital to the Club, and we hope to have a record attendance.

CLUB MEETS

Saturday/Sunday July 16th/17th Hillgrove Weekend Hut maintenance, etc.

Saturday August 6th G.B. Leader Roy Staynings, 8 Fanshawe Road, Hengrove, Bristol 4.
Meet at the Cave 3.0 p.m.

Saturday August 20th Longwood Leader Roy Staynings. Meet at the Cave 3.0 p.m.
Also Hunters Hole Leader Tony Dingle, 107 Waverley Road, Stoneleigh, Epsom, Surrey.
Meet at the Cave 3.0 p.m.

Saturday September 3rd Lamb Leer
Leader Dave Westlake, Wayside, Rectory Rd., Staplegrove, Taunton. Meet at the Cave 3.0 p.m.

Weekend September 10th/11th Visit to Sea Caves on the south coast in the Portland area.
More details from Alan Surrall, 216 Evesham Road, Headless Cross, Redditch, Worcs.
Also Steep Holm. Names to Roy Staynings, address above.
Also Easegill Cavems (County Pot/Borehole)
Names to Derek Tringham, 20B Thrale Road, Streatham, London S.W.16.

Weekend September 17th/18th Yorkshire
Details from Bob Gannicott, 52 West Town Lane, Bristol 4.

Weekend September 24th/25th South Wales
Names to Paul Duck, 13 Goodymoor Ave., Wells, Somerset.

Saturday October 1st St. Cuthberts
Leader Nick Hart, Barberry House, Kingston Seymour, Nr. Clevedon, Somerset.
Meet at the Belfry 3.0 p.m.

Weekend October 8th/9th Aggy Aggy
Names to Howard Kenney, Tudor Cottage, Beryl Lane, Wells.

Saturday October 15th Longwood/August Hole
Leader Roy Staynings, address, above. Meet at the Cave 3.0 p.m.

Saturday October 22nd Annual General Meeting and Dinner.

Hon. Secretary: J.D. Hanwell, "Chaumbey", 50 Wells Road, Wookey Hole, Wells, Somerset.
(General Club Policy)

Hon. Asst. Secretary: L.M. Teasdale, 32 Tonfield Road, Sutton, Surrey.
(Membership applications, cave keys, C.C.C. Permits)

Hon. Treasurer: Mrs. B. Surrall, 216 Evesham Road, Headless Cross, Redditch, Worcs.
(Subscriptions, Accounts)

Editor: T.E. Reynolds, Yew Court, Pangbourne, Berks.
(Journal Material)

Librarian: Dr. D.M.M. Thomson, "Pinkacre", Leigh-on-Mendip, Nr. Bath, Som.
(Lending Library & Hillgrove Reference Library)

Hut Bookings: P.W. Duck, 13 Goodymoor Avenue, Wells, Somerset. Tel: Wells 2501
(Hillgrove & Eastwater Bookings, Mendip tackle bookings)

Activities Secretary: C.R. Hobbs, Warren Lodge, Long Ashton, Bristol. Tel: Long Ashton 2127
(Offers to lead trips, requests for trips).

Sales Officer: R.J. Staynings, 8 Fanshawe Road, Hengrove, Bristol 4.
(Club Publications, badges, ties, lamp sets)

Survey Scheme: T.E. Reynolds, Yew Court, Pangbourne, Berks.
(Enquiries and sales of cave surveys)

Will all members please note that as from July 20th the Assistant Secretary's new address will be:-

47 Camborne Road,
Morden,
Surrey.

MENDIP BIBLIOGRAPHY PART II VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

The first part of the Mendip Gave Bibliography was issued in 1965 and listed articles contained in the publications of caving clubs and societies. The preparation of a companion volume, covering books, pamphlets and manuscripts (but not periodicals) is now well advanced and some 696 items have already been examined and described.

Important cave descriptions often appear not only in books and pamphlets devoted entirely to caving or archaeology, but also in guide books, descriptions of tours, diaries (published and in manuscript), biographies, geological and scientific books and sometimes even in books of theology or poetry. Once the existence of a particular cave reference is known, it is relatively easy to find a copy, even of a rare book, and record it; the difficulty lies in knowing where to look. For this reason it is necessary to examine all the publications that might refer to caves and mines.

To ensure that the bibliography is as complete as possible it is important to search all libraries that might contain material of interest. Several libraries have already been examined (British Museum, Geological Museum, B.S.A. Records, and some private collections) and arrangements have been made for the searching of others (Bristol, U.B.S.S., etc.).

Many other libraries are still untouched and volunteers are sought to help with this part of the work. No special qualifications are required apart from enthusiasm and accuracy. To avoid duplication of effort all helpers will be sent a list of the books, etc., already recorded. Almost every collection may contain items of Mendip interest, be it local or distant, large or small, public or privately owned. The libraries thought to be specially worth searching are The Bodleian (Oxford)*, Cambridge University Library*, Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, Mendip Nature Research Committee, Bath, Taunton, Bristol Naturalists, Bury St. Edmunds and West Suffolk Record Office*, Wigan*, Cardiff*, Royal Irish Academy (Dublin)*, St. Andrew's University, Edinburgh)*, York*, London School of Economics, and Ipswich Central Library. (*Those marked with an asterisk are known to contain manuscript diaries, or tours that may include cave visits. Further particulars of these can be provided).

Anyone who wishes to take part in this work is invited to write to Commander T.R. Shaw, Royal Naval College, Greenwich, London S.E.10. He would also be glad of suggestions regarding libraries that should be examined, even if the informant is not in a position to do this himself. All assistance will be acknowledged in print.

Possessors of private collections of cave books (and of caving diaries) are also urged to write to Commander Shaw so that arrangements can be made, subject to their approval, for unusual items to be recorded. Such a record would not, of course, imply that the books were available for use by other people. The location of a rare book or pamphlet would normally be published, but it can be withheld at the owner's request.

THE COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

Jim Hanwell.

This article has been prepared following the instructions of the last Annual General Meeting of the Club. Much of what has been accounted for is purely fact and now recent history; but at times it has been felt necessary to put forward various viewpoints in order to clarify some of the steps which have led to the formation of the different regional councils for caving. These viewpoints are my own, and whilst I have tried to embrace as wide a field of opinion as possible, it is certain that some ways of looking at each matter have been missed. If, therefore, certain comments seem to conflict and prove controversial I trust that readers will forgive my own limitations in what is after all a fast reaching subject in a state of constant flux.

In much the same way as the Charterhouse Caving Committee proved necessary to negotiate access to caves in the G.B. and Longwood areas, so in the north a Northern Council of Caving Clubs formed in 1963 to consider new access limitations imposed by landowners. In the spring of 1964 most caving clubs in the country received circulars from the N.C.C.C. and the Cave and Crag Club sounding out opinion with regard to a National Council for Caving. Briefly, the sponsors believed that this proposed national body was necessary to deal with the sporting side of caving as they saw it developing in the Pennines. The related problems of inexperienced potholers, expensive rescues, access to fells, ownership and land tenure, loomed large in their arguments, and was undoubtedly aggravated here and there by those who clung to the "freedom of the fells" principle. It was contended that these problems had mushroomed into an unhealthy almost insurmountable antagonism between potholers on the one hand and owners and tenants on the other. As the numbers of potholers and clubs proliferated, and large more powerful bodies gained control of the fells, the gulf between the two inevitably widened and deepened. The whole question crystallised into the "national body" idea at the "Safety in Potholing" Conference held at Leeds on 17th March 1964. The Conference had been promoted by The Central Council for Physical Recreation (C.C.P.R.) and one can well understand how the national body idea first evolved. After all did not most other sports, even mountaineering, have their nationwide councils and associations? And, surely liaison with the C.C.P.R. would strengthen the hand of those negotiating access, not only through the proven might of this organization but also by having the backing of the whole caving fraternity. The by-products of such a marriage were suggested as worthwhile; namely grants towards central administration and equipment.

In the Peak a Derbyshire Caving Association had already been formed parallel with its northern neighbour, and the response from other regions was delayed. Some of us in the South, after a cursory glance at the proposal, consigned the circular to the waste paper basket and carried on caving. Others considered the situation more thoroughly but with characteristic southern wariness and scepticism viewed the matter with deep misgivings. Rightly or wrongly, many sensed a

"political" move afoot, and with a strong regard for Parkinson, dismissed the whole thing as undesirable and unworkable. Then there were those who felt that we should stifle our initial fears in order to approach the proposals fairly and squarely, for at least the plea had come from our fellows in the north with some conviction. Indeed only a few were really sympathetic, but inclined to the view that if we did nothing a national body might suddenly materialize without our blessing, and that subsequently southern views would go by default. In fact this was never intended, for the sponsors laudably held to the view that any nationwide organization should only arise through the genuine support of all caving regions. A separate circular sounding out opinions in the South showed that out of 65 clubs half were in favour of a Council of Southern Caving Clubs being formed. Only three went so far as to support a national body forming immediately and the remainder held no strong views in either direction, being mainly school, college or scouting clubs with a young, rapidly changing membership. Accordingly the sponsors in the North were asked to hold fire and await the democratic decision of southern cavers. Time was on our side.

An ad hoc steering committee met several times in Bristol during the ensuing months. Simply because one had to start somewhere, its members consisted of representatives of the Wessex, B.E.C., U.B.S.S., the M.N.R.C. and later the Shepton. At least the main Mendip clubs had an opportunity to be in on the beginning. Quite informally it was generally appreciated that, if cavers in the South wanted a Southern or even National Council, then the opportunity to discuss the matter should be presented at general meeting open to any caver. A Convention was arranged at Bristol on the afternoon of January 9th 1965. Now, if only to allow those who wanted to get to the Wessex 12th Night Party at Wells that evening a respectable amount of drinking time, the steering committee concluded that the convention must have some specific direction and agenda. They submitted a draft constitution for a proposed Southern Council in the full knowledge that it might be amended drastically, or even rejected. Observers from the North were invited, and were present to state their case.

Looking back at the outcome of the convention, one gets the impression of mixed annoyance, frustration, and not a little pessimism amongst most cavers present at having yet another organisation virtually imposed from outside. The Council of Southern Caving Clubs was born that afternoon having been conceived in the North. It was not a straightforward birth, and many quietly and openly hoped the bastard would not survive the weaning period. The wit who offered the name "Southern Conferacy" contributed something deeper than a mere name, and is to be commended for his sense of history. Whilst it is very tempting to muse upon who might best fit the roles of Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant, one had better refrain from projecting the analogy too far here, and leave such provocative thoughts to the reader.

The whole constitution of the C.S.C.C. revolves around a "Live and let Live" principle (see the appendix to this article). There is no rigid system for clubs to apply for representation, and for a minimal annual subvention any group can join purely by asking. Each club represented has equal voting rights regardless of their membership numbers, and, what is more the power of veto. Thus the interests and autonomy of every club, however small is ensured. How it could be argued that such a laissez faire attitude would hardly lead to an efficient Southern Council, and that our failure to reach a united outlook on the matter would ultimately cause a national body to be steamrolled by a more determined northern group. The counter argument that without countrywide support a national body could not be formed proved generally more acceptable and thus the establishment of the C.S.C.C. was seen to provide the much needed brake. What is more the brake was firmly pressed down; not enough to bring things to an untimely halt, but to proceed at a more acceptable speed. After all many important caving regions had yet to consider the matter fully (Wales for instance). It is a tribute to the sponsors in the North that they were prepared to wait a while before discussing the differing viewpoints with us.

After doing our homework on the subject the two councils came together at Birmingham University on 29th May 1965, with observers from the C.R.G., one representative from the D.C.A. and another from North Wales. Without troubling to present a detailed report of that very lengthy and complex meeting, it is probably fair to summarize it by stating the respective outlooks of northerners and southerners on the national body idea. Broadly speaking northerners consider that a national body would be able to exercise more power and bring heavier pressure to bear upon authorities and landowners to dissuade them from taking measures to restrict free access to potholes. It would also be able to acquire Government grants for central administration and individual clubs. We in the South however contended that we had always got along best with both authorities and landowners from a position of mutual trust, consultation and agreement. Admittedly some cases had been difficult and protracted, but taken in their context, we had always got a fair deal in the long run. It was also demonstrated that grants were available to individual clubs already on their presenting a bonafide application to their local authorities; and that we wanted to preserve any group's freedom of action in this direction. Above all the possibility of a powerful and indeed professional, national caving "executive" could not be stomached by southerners, though it was accepted that as a caving fraternity we should be prepared to back each other should a common aim prove acceptable to us all.

We have all heard these opposing arguments many times and against quite different backcloths. Nearly always a stalemate is reached, though in fact it is almost inherent to the argument that the "revolutionary" view must appear more positive and direct, whilst the "evolutionary" approach seems negative in that it supports the status quo. Coupled to this "imagery" one must admit that scale effects alone in the North demand a different, if not more vigorous approach than similar situations on Mendip. This is not to underline one approach as superior to the other, but rather to reinforce the view that each area presents its own problems which are best countered by those in touch on the spot. In other words Regional Councils if needs be. If any dilemma existed at all, in point of fact, it was that here was one region genuinely seeking the support of others to solve their

own problems. Obviously the formally constituted national body was a non-starter now, and the so-called "head without a body" idea arose; namely, nationwide support under some heading without instituting a central committee.

Thoughtfully we all returned from Birmingham a great deal wiser but actually no nearer a solution and certainly not sure what steps to take next. In an attempt to resolve the impasse I set out my own personal ideas on paper, and these were brought before the C.S.C.C. I was more than a little surprised and flattered at their general approval of my suggestions and way of looking at the problem. Briefly, they were that should all regions agree to a particular policy to meet a particular problem, then there should be no objection to that policy being implemented in the name of the "Regional Councils for Caving in Great Britain" (or England and Wales or something of that sort). All the regional councils exchange minutes and information and so it would be a simple matter for any council to appeal to the others for support as and when necessary. Having gained the support of the other regions that council could then deal with the matter under the national heading proposed. The C.S.C.C. put this solution to all the other regions and by and large the method has been accepted. The national body idea thus rests in cold storage.

One is certain that such a flexible approach is not just a compromise but really a valid method of bridging all outlooks on the matter for at least the time being. It would be quite wrong and invidious to assess what will happen from here, for only a fool would wish to prophecy the future of caving. What has been created by the regional councils is a medium through which we can disseminate information with the minimum of fuss and bureaucracy. Personally one thinks of the councils firstly as a clearing house of ideas and information in their local areas, and secondly as a means of drawing upon nationwide support if necessary. Who knows this may prove expedient at some stage! Here I confess along with many others I suspect, that one finds it increasingly more difficult to distinguish between the sport of caving and the science of speleology. We already have our national bodies for the latter, and one is pleased that from the outset there have been mutual consultations between them and the newer regional councils. Who dare foretell precisely how they will join hands in treading the common path ahead!

It may be thought that the terms of reference of the C.S.C.C. are so intangible and insufficient to warrant its existence. As far as the major clubs are concerned, this is true to a certain extent for they should be capable of looking after themselves. But, how about the growing numbers of small clubs and their younger members? How far should they be encouraged, and assisted? We certainly cannot put our heads in the sand for we all use the same caves and before dismissing them as of little consequence, or just another inexperienced group to clutter up our caves, let's be realistic remembering that once we had to start somewhere both as a club and as individuals. What is more should we object to the proliferation of new clubs, then what are we doing to encourage and channel would be cavers into existing organisations that have proved themselves over the years? The experts must have some duty towards the novice, and yet most big clubs fear the consequences of becoming too large. The regional councils obviously fulfil this vital role to a certain point by keeping us all in touch with each other.

Throughout this article I have refrained from introducing personalities quite deliberately. In conclusion however I cannot help but recall the late H.E. Balch, who would always put himself out to encourage the interested beginner to cave in the proper manner. Nowadays sheer numbers preclude the attention of one man, or even one club, but the principle is just the same - those who know must help those who want to know.

APPENDIX

The Constitution of The Southern Council of Caving Clubs.

1. The name shall be the Council of Southern Caving Clubs.
2. The objects shall be:
 - a) to encourage the exchange of information between caving clubs in the south of England and Wales.
 - b) the safeguarding of the interests of those clubs.
 - c) maintaining friendly relations with similar bodies with a view to promoting and achieving objects of mutual interest.
3. Guiding principles shall be:
 - (b) a respect for the autonomy and independence of action of all caving clubs. "Live and let live."
 - (c) the owners and tenants of property containing eaves have the right to grant or withhold access. In certain cases caving clubs, singly or jointly have the control of cave access delegated to them by the owners. In such cases access for cavers should be granted as freely as possible throughout the country within the terms of those agreements. When forced to make new agreements the appropriate body should ensure this freedom.
4.
 - (a) The Council shall consist of delegates from the members clubs. It shall meet not less than once a year to transact business.
 - (b) A meeting of the Council must be called if the Secretary receives a request from at least six member clubs, or if required to by the Committee.
5. A club becomes a member club by signifying its wish to do so.

6. (a) The Officers shall be an Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, and such others as the Council shall decide. A Chairman shall be elected at the beginning of each meeting.

(b) Officers shall be elected by Council to serve for a year and shall be eligible for re-election.
7. There shall be a Committee consisting of the Council Officers and the nominee of each club wishing to serve. It shall regulate its own business.
8. At Council meetings each participating club shall have one vote and in addition the right of veto.
9. Each member club shall subscribe a minimum of five shilling a year.
10. In the event of a dissolution, the assets of the Council shall be given to other organizations of a similar nature. A motion for dissolution, if passed by a two-thirds majority at a Council meeting, shall not be subject to veto.
11. A quorum at Council meetings shall consist of one-third of the member clubs.
12. Motions for amendment to Constitution must be received by the Secretary at least 6 weeks before the meeting, and be circulated to member clubs at least four weeks before the meeting with the agenda.
13. The Annual Meeting of Council shall take place in January.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

"Dear Sir,

With ref. to a letter, written by Donald Thomson, appearing in the last edition of the W.C.C. Journal, the article as you will remember dealt with criticisms of the M.R.O., particularly an article under the pseudonym of 'Sagacity' appearing in the S.V.C.C. Newsletter, 'Cascade'.

I too should like to voice an opinion on the subject. As an impartial observer, speleologically born and bred in the Dales, a member of the C.R.O., also very active on Mendip compared to the majority of Northern cavers, in my opinion the suggestion of a M.R.O. modelled on the C.R.O. would as Dr. Thomson suggests be impractical as the problems involved in call-out procedure within the two areas differ vastly in many obvious ways.

I did actively take part on February 12th '66 in the Swildons rescue, and all things considered, was very impressed with the speed of the operation, but the efficiency and organization on the surface was sadly lacking somewhere. May I suggest that it would be in the interest of the injured party if a little more time was spent in checking rescue equipment carefully before the rescue team descends. All this spectacular tearing across fields at hair-raising speeds in landrovers is all in vain, when, as on 12th Feb., the first rescue team to reach the 40' pitch arrived without a pulley, delaying the conveyance of this particular unfortunate individual, by about 15 to 20 minutes.

Let's face it, this sort of delay could mean the difference between life and death for someone.

Yours faithfully,

Gary Pilkington."

"Dear Sir,

A brief reply to some of Don's points concerning my earlier letter:-

1. I am not clear what is meant by the statement that the number of cave diving wardens is one, that this is C.D.G.'s fault and that there are more than one diving warden. I would re-iterate that all the wardens barring one have officially stated they have retired from diving, there is no internal dissention in C.D.G. of a nature to preclude any more diving wardens, and I certainly did not intend to imply that other divers would not turn out for rescues.

2. Concerning the reasons advanced for a non-democratic M.R.O. The point surely is that the wardens are democratically elected and not that their every decision be ratified by majority vote within the club after they are elected. Is Don merely disputing whether or not the caving populace are capable of electing a good warden who can carry out his duties?
3. In reality the number of clubs involved would not be great - only clubs based on Mendip should be eligible, they should pay an annual subscription to M.R.O. and I would suggest that the C.C.C. gives a reasonable idea of how many clubs would actually take part. A committee of 8-12 would not be unnoticeable.
4. I would visualise the committee as consisting of all the wardens but also as Don says, any specialists that may be necessary.
5. The special rescue teams for each cave would not involve 60 people standing by every weekend - I think that the B.E.C. rescue procedure for St. Cuthberts could be emulated at least for Swildons where the majority of accidents occur and possibly for August Hole and Eastwater also. All it would involve is a specific warden allotted a cave and his list of contacts (25 - 30?) to know the cave particularly well and have worked as teams on mock-rescues in it.
6. I would certainly not suggest that Mendip's ten fittest cavers automatically be elected wardens until displaced in the charts. Experience and maturity are obviously all-important. The point behind all this as Don and I apparently agree, is that despite the fact that Sago, myself and every other caver on Mendip is a member of M.R.O. and knows it, they still feel that there is a great gulf between the ruling clique and the ordinary caver who plods down the cave, and no matter what Don says I still feel that until this gulf is bridged M.R.O. will not be at optimum efficiency.

Yours sincerely,

Dave Drew."

"Dear Sir,

I appreciate the support of Gary Pilkington and think his criticism of the rescue on February 12th fair and valid. Others have made it too, and I understand it has been discussed by the M.R.O. Committee and it is hoped that such delays will not recur.

To turn once again to Dave Drew's comments. As he says it is not at all clear what the statement about the number of diving wardens means. It's very involved and I'm thankful I did not make it. I am pleased to hear that any dissention in the Cave Diving Group is inconsequential. This is at variance with my other information, but if all is well perhaps the Group can turn its attention to

providing satisfactory representation on the M.R.O. Committee. It is up to C.D.G. to suggest divers for appointment, especially if they are dissatisfied with the current list. Several of the wardens may have publicly renounced cave diving, but I am told there is nothing in C.D.G. rules to stop them diving during rescues if necessary. If Dave has a better idea let's be having it. In any case, few cave rescues have involved diving, and it seems a mistake to appoint several diving wardens in preference to wardens who know a lot of people and are familiar with most caves. Perhaps C.D.G. would make public their views on this point.

I am not disputing the electoral capabilities of the caving population. How a club appoints its M.R.O. warden is its own affair, though it seems only sensible to appoint people known to be likely to get on well with the other wardens. In the past, when a warden has resigned the secretary of his club has been asked for his Committee's views about a replacement. Surely this is not a bad system. It is democratic in that the Committee of each club is elected by annual general meeting; surely one of the functions of a committee is to appoint representatives to such ad hoc bodies as M.R.O. This system at least has the virtue of being workable, and it makes a general meeting unnecessary when a warden resigns.

In saying that the number of clubs wishing to send a representative would not be great, Dave is simply postulating figures to fit his ideas. Oliver Lloyd, as secretary of M.R.O., finds it necessary to circulate sixty clubs. One of the most distant feels itself sufficiently involved on Mendip to pay a five guinea annual donation by banker's order. One could suggest, only to condemn, that both parts of Dave's paragraph 3 (vide supra) could be combined by asking clubs to bid for M.R.O. representation. The Committee could then be selected from the 8 to 12 highest bids. Is this what you had in mind Dave?

Dave's special rescue teams would not involve sixty people only because they would not cover six caves. For the three he mentions he would need, as he says, twenty five to thirty, but this figure is of the same order of magnitude. It is difficult to organize half a dozen for one trip at the weekend; to know the whereabouts of thirty people even every weekend of the year is absolutely impossible, and by no means all rescue calls are at the weekend. In addition there is a positive danger too rigid a plan breaks down if several of the team are away, and the whole rescue organization then becomes unworkable.

There is a gulf between the M.R.O. and the Average Cave Plodder. It is due to inadequate dissemination of M.R.O. information and this is not the fault of the M.R.O. Secretary, who circulates all clubs known to cave on Mendip. The fault probably lies with club editors (but not ours) who do not publish, and club members who do not read, the M.R.O. circulars. Many complaints have been made about M.R.O. but few have been sent to the M.R.O. Secretary. Neither Sago's uninformed criticism nor Dave's defence of it, reached the M.R.O. Secretary before publication in the S.V.C.C. & Wessex Journals. This does nothing to make M.R.O. more effective, and generates much ill feeling.

Donald Thompson"

THRUPE DIARY

Alan J. Surrell

Thrupe swallet is located 1¼ miles above Croscombe on NGR 605457 and is in fact the easternmost swallet of a group lying on the Thrupe fault. A small permanent stream which appears from a spring runs along the surface for some 80 yds before it encounters the depression and cliff face of Thrupe itself. It actually disappears at the foot of a small cliff, which is some 17 ft. below field level.

Records show that the Mendip Exploration Society dug there in 1936 when two small chambers were encountered and a depth of some 30 ft. gained; however nothing major was discovered and digging was discontinued, partly due to instability and partly to general difficulty.

Little is known of activity in the area until 1958 when George Pointing, Dave Berry and Norman Tuck started work again. They managed to drive a shaft down to a small chamber and then on to a choked and restricted passage. Difficulty in maintaining a working party was contributory to the cessation of work once more.

1963 saw Cow Hole open once more and with the desire to keep the digging group together a meeting was held at Hillgrove on June 23rd to discuss a future site. From a short list Thrupe was selected and after a visit and discussion with the farmer on whose land it lay it was adopted as the club dig for at least two years.

The first work was during August Bank Holiday 1963, when the old windlass was resited to permit debris to be lifted from the shaft and brought clear; much the same system that had been used in the early days at Cow Hole. A fair amount of earth moving was necessary to stabilize the bank to the side of the shaft, but this was accomplished in two days. The third was occupied in removing debris from the 1958 shaft. After some 10 ft. a large boulder was encountered which would have prevented a clear lift for the buckets, so explosives were used to eliminate it. What timber still remained was pretty unstable so a new shaft lining was fitted. Fortunately one side was solid rock, which permitted the use of a compression framework, also a length of narrow gauge railway line from the previous activities helped considerably.

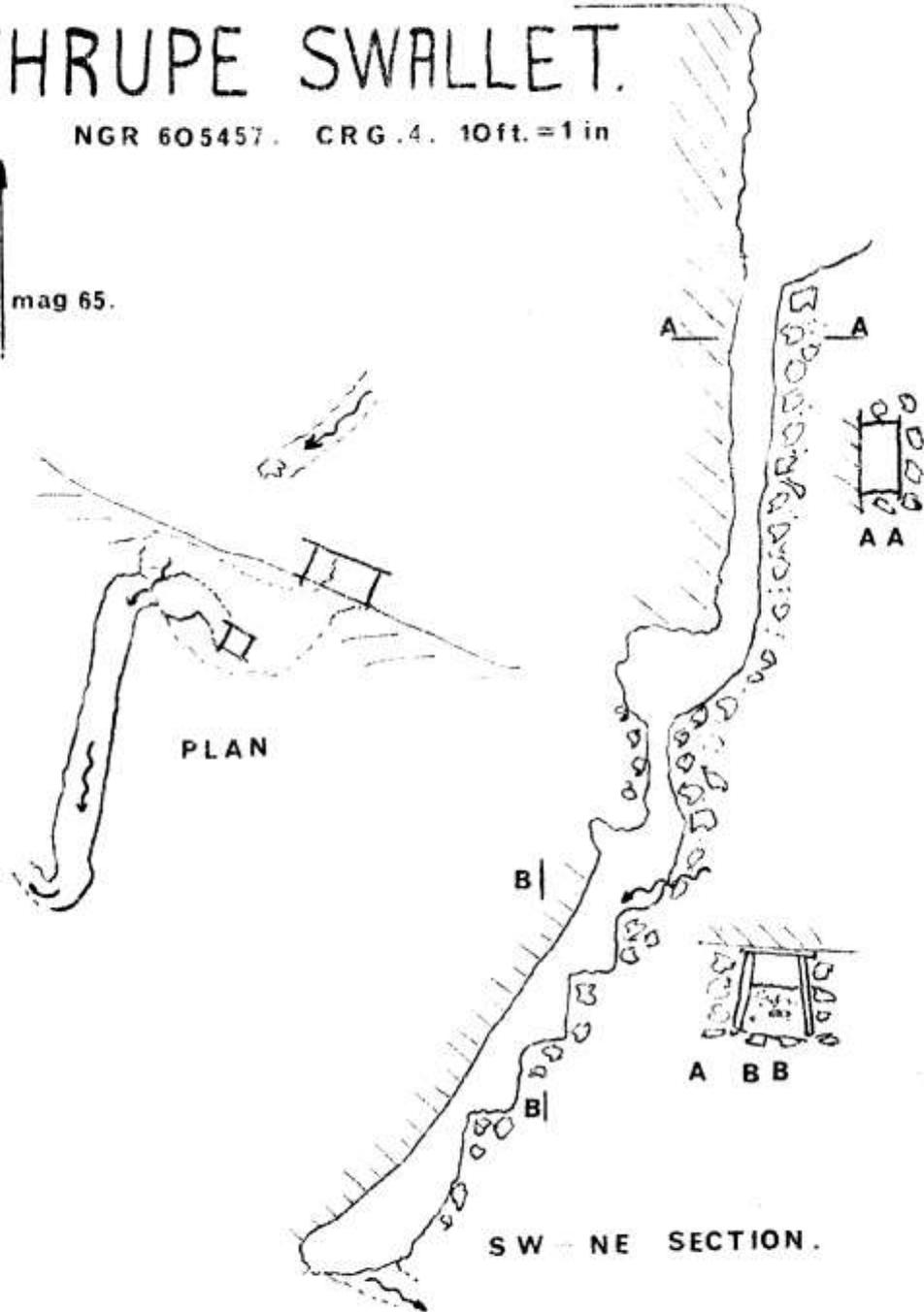
During August a further two weekends were occupied on work in the shaft and in trying to gain ground to where a small boulder chamber ran off at the bottom of the shaft. The weather had been traditional, but even so working parties numbered about eight. Explosives were also proving to be of their usual value to reduce large boulders to manageable proportions. This work was helped by the nature of the tamping materials to hand, a glutinous mud, not too wet, not too dry, which was skilfully compounded by Denis Warburton. Denis also provided two ejection seat parachutes of about 2 ft. diameter which were used very successfully as boulder nets, though their capacity necessitated double purchase, hoist working. They were also used for mud and gravel removal, though they were apt to leak over the surface party which, of course, helped the light entertainment side.

THRUPE SWALLET.

NGR 605457. CRG. 4. 10ft. = 1 in

N

mag 65.



SW - NE SECTION.

© Smith J Church 65.

Autumn is generally the time when surface digs are put to sleep, a practice which was started at Cow Hole and will be used on club digs in future, for being a club dig and having considerable surface activity it is the intention to have the family group along, making a very pleasant and sociable affair, but when the nights draw in and it becomes cold and wet then one can only expect the hard core of members to turn out. So it was that the fence along the cliff top and along the stream side was overhauled and the fixed rigging taken down at the beginning of October. This really concluded work for the first year.

On January 25th of 1964 Phil Davies and the author made an inspection. A little attention was required to the fencing but otherwise things were satisfactory. Jim Hanwell suggested that we try Ubley Saw Mill for offcut timber for shoring. This was done and an A35 van full of useable miscellaneous timber was obtained. The management of the Saw Mill generously refused payment.

The diggers were now awakening from their hibernation and on March 14th the rigging was set up, the dams rebuilt and the path re-cut through waist-high stinging nettles, etc. The first official dig of the season was April 11th/12th and a good party, including Atty and two friends and a small group from Bristol Grammar School were occupied in timbering the small chamber and starting to press on through the floor. Skilful work on plugging the dams made conditions underground tolerable for the period required for them to fill, otherwise an exposure suit was the order of the day.

Towards the end of April the chamber was heavily timbered and it was possible to drop through the floor into what appeared to be a small streamway. One incident serves to illustrate the capricious nature of digs. The cliff face immediately above the shaft was riven with a number of clefts of varying depth, some full of earth and others merely closing down, but none suggesting instability. However, while the party were at the Rose and Crown, Croscombe, partaking of a diggers' lunch, a slab some 4 ft. by 2 ft. by 18 inches thick slipped from the cliff face and jammed across the shaft, almost completely blocking it. This obstruction had to be blasted apart in situ, a plaster charge underneath being used. This reduced it to four manageable boulders and several buckets of small stuff.

The weather so far this year had been good and it was therefore decided to have a Whitsuntide camp spread over three days, May 16th/17th/18th, on the site. In blazing sunshine the site was prepared, Phil Davies had provided a large tent for cooking and the tents for the permanent staff were also erected. These included Glen Tomkinson, Tony Dingle, Les and Jill Teasdale, Phil and Pat Davies and their children, Denis Warburton, and the author and his wife. With so many people resident and the possibility of casual labour, a pool to supply fresh water was considered a good idea. So it was planned to widen and deepen a section of the small surface stream. A small quantity of explosive saved a lot of labour and provided the passengers and crew of a passing train a fine view of a column of mud and stones rising into the air. The experiment was repeated to produce a gash pit. Work got under way and continued until about 7.30 p.m.

During the day a new winch was assembled and made operational, having been built by apprentices at a Midland car firm. 8.0 a.m. was the starting time on the Sunday, the weather being glorious. For most of the day some 25 people excluding children were at Thrupe, and again 12.30 saw the traditional retirement to the Rose and Crown, and then another useful afternoon session, which was followed in the evening by a barbecue of beer, sausages and songs. Whit Monday started more leisurely at 10.30 a.m. The Bath group, Geoff Moore, Richard West, Ian Appleby and their friends were made to do a stint before being allowed to have breakfast. During the afternoon a few anxious moments were passed when Glen became stuck by the feet while lying full length in the newly-excavated section. However, the gentle use of a crow bar freed him. It was the stream carrying small stuff forward against the dam formed by his feet that had caused the trouble. Work had to be terminated at about 3 p.m. for the camp to be struck, the field tidied up and the party dispersed. This occasion was one of the last when the Farnham Group were together, Maurice Hewins, Terry Hall and John Thomas, the central members, had worked all the holiday, returning each night to Hillgrove; this group had worked on Thrupe with George Pointing some years earlier but fortunately had not been disheartened. Parties of various sizes worked on alternate weekends and in late June Will Edwards assisted with a depth check which came to 39 ft. Since shoring materials were again running low, a visit was made to a derelict quarry that was handy and a very useful supply of ironwork was obtained. Some of this material was immediately pressed into service for holding back a bank in the streamway. Willie Stanton also joined the party on a return basis for work done in Gough's.

For the weekend of August 15th, Ian of the Bath Group brought along a new bucket that he had made. This was based upon considerations and shortcomings of standard buckets and a diagram is shown in fig. 2. The important features are its oval shape, to prevent rolling when being dragged, handles upon the bottom to facilitate tipping, and a lock on the hoist stirrup to prevent accidental tipping while being lifted. This bucket proved most satisfactory throughout the remainder of the work and will be used on future projects.

By the end of September the tunnel below the small chamber was lengthening and following a smooth roof which was dipping steeply. No sides were detected, the material coming out was a mixture of mud and boulders, all very wet because the stream was following the dig (or vice versa). Although the dams held the water back to a great extent the diggers in the three forward positions still found "goon suits" the only means of making conditions bearable.

Once again October saw a shortage of surface parties and the site was put to bed for the winter. The winter of 1965 was not particularly severe, although fairly wet. After an exploratory trip in March a start to the digging was made on May 8th. The weather was typical - mist, rain and wind, but a party assembled including Will Edwards and Tony Dingle. Resetting the internal timbers was the first job and this was followed by some useful work on deepening the lower passage. The following day Alan Ash made a brief appearance after too long an absence. Unfortunately pressure of work prevented his regular attendance. By July a fair section of tunnel had been driven downwards at a steep angle following the smooth roof found the previous year.

PIVOT
LOCK.



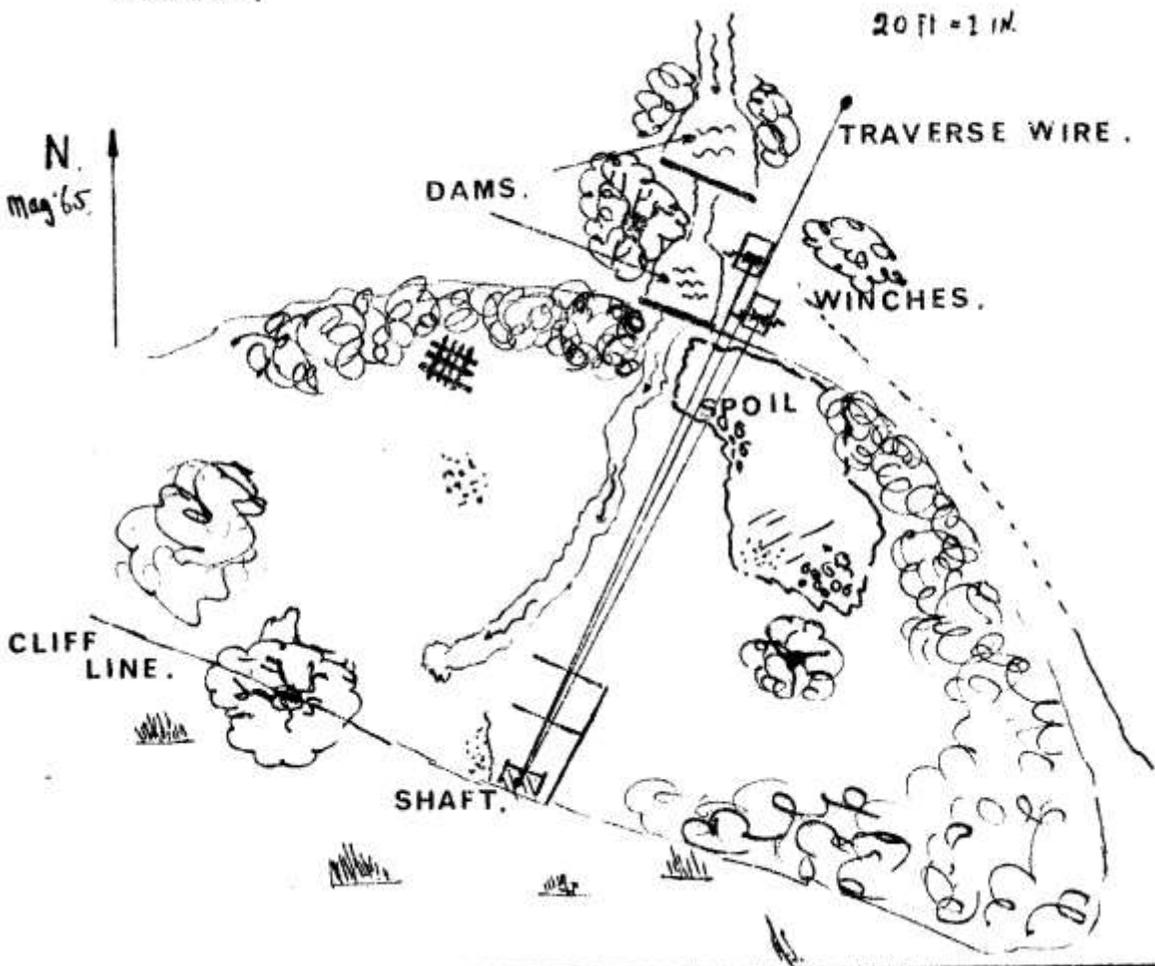
FIG 2.

TIPPING
HANDLE.

SITE PLAN. FIG 1.

20 ft = 1 in.

N.
May 65



Occasionally small cavities would be revealed between the jammed boulders, but the stream continued to flow in a random manner. This section of tunnel had its sides braced with 4 inch pit props. Undercutting was always a problem and in fact caused two run-ins. One involved Geoff Moore when a bank slid towards him, but with great agility he managed to avoid being trapped by the legs. With help from Richard and Tony he was got clear of the slide. On a similar occasion whilst in the lower tunnel Denis Warburton had a large slab detach itself from the left-hand wall and this tended to push him farther down and, of course, prevented his retreat. Quick work by Richard West with a crow bar prevented the slap from completely blocking the tunnel and allowed Denis to scramble clear. All these sort of incidents caused unfortunate delays, for the material fallen down had to be removed and more timbering put in place.

Whenever it was practical the roof end walls were made to support themselves by back filling or stone walling, for the compressive strength of rock exceeds by far that of wood and does not suffer from microbiological decomposition. Also during July John Church made a transistorised communication system; this used moving coil earpieces supplied by Tony Dingle for surface reception, and a speaker and amplifier underground where the noise level was much higher. Certain teething troubles were experienced, but it was later improved. Atty brought two friends along to help, it being their first time underground it is to be hoped it did not deter them too much.

It was becoming more and more obvious as the weekends slipped by that there was no particular way on, although the stream was still following a steeply descending course. With only one solid rock surface and that at some 40 degrees dip, it gave the impression that the route being excavated had no particular significance, but that it was a large boulder and mud filled cavity with many possible routes by which the water could descend until it finally entered the limestone proper. In these circumstances and with the very large team needed to work the site it was decided to conclude operations. These had occupied over two years and had yielded the swallet shown in fig. 1.

Therefore during August 1965, under extremely heavy water conditions underground, a survey was made and tools and gear removed. The shaft was blocked halfway down with angle iron, etc., and the top half was filled with rock. The winches were removed and the cables taken down and the fences put to rights, so leaving the site tidy. One day with better techniques for digging, or if some system of geophysical surveying proves the existence of a substantial system, then I am sure that Mr. Keene would be willing for the site to be reopened, for as a club activity the Thrupe dig had been most successful, many people have spent a great number of happy hours associated with the various aspects. It is the author's hope that many of these people will be seen at the next enterprise, and that next time it may end in success.

MENDIP NOTES

Cheramodytes

G.B. Cave Ladder Dig Extensions

I said it was our turn on Mendip for great things, and we have done then. The G.B. extensions are the most notable of these. Persistent digging and banging by members of the U.B.S.S. was rewarded on 11.5.66 by a break-through in the terminal choke of the Ladder Dig. This has added a further 900 ft. of passage to the known parts of the cave, together with a large chamber above a boulder ruckle. The general trend is west of south along the major jointing. After 450 ft. is a stalagmite choke in the floor very similar to those which stopped progress on the two previous occasions. In the first half a lofty boulder ruckle is encountered, while in the second the passage is high, wide and handsomely decorated. It is called Bat Passage, since the skeletons of about six bats were found here, some of them cemented in stalagmite. At the end a roof passage leads into a rift 80 ft. long of almost pure stalagmite.

The boulder ruckle is remarkably dangerous. The way to the Great Chamber is straight upwards for 90 ft., with solid rock on one side and boulders on the others. The chamber is about 200 ft. long, 100 ft. wide and high in proportion. The boulders are piled high on to the side by which one enters (N.W.) and many are loose. At the foot of this pile all the way round the edge the Chamber is beautifully decorated. It is about twice as big and twice as lovely as the September Series Chamber in St. Cuthbert's.

Naturally the U.B.S.S., as responsible bods, are rather at a loss to know under what arrangements to let in cavers from other clubs. The new system is kept locked. My own guess is that they could only allow cavers whom they knew and trusted to lead parties there, the numbers not to exceed five. Cavers with no experience of boulder ruckles should not be allowed there; it would not be fair to M.R.O.

Manor Farm

The U.B.S.S. had rather less than good luck with their Charterhouse dig. This swallet has been dug by them on and off since 1955, and before that by Peter Stewart. Two years ago a shaft of concrete pipes was fitted, and progress was made to a depth of 30-40 ft. Always shoring has been a difficulty as the ruckle is waterwashed and treacherous. On 12.6.66 they broke through into the master cave at a depth of about 50 ft. but almost at once the entrance began to collapse, and after a day or so became irremediably choked. A new entrance is now being blasted through solid rock, a little further along.

Wookey Hole

The next most important Mendip advances have been in Wookey Hole. On 30.4.66 Dave Savage and Oliver Lloyd were diving there, when Dave made the first real progress for about two years. The line from the Ninth Chamber upstream ended at a belay in what was called the Fourteenth Chamber (or Fourteen, for short). Beyond this was a steeply sloping "slot" called by Oliver Wells "Fifteen". Beyond this no-one had been. Murky water in January had caused the diver to go round in circles.

Dave Savage, using twin tadpoles with a second tadpole in reserve with separate demand valve, dropped through the slot into 15. This is quite small and has a vertical wall in front. The way on is 90 degrees down right. This bit ("Sixteen") is at a depth of 90 ft. All the way from Nine the way is muddy, but from here there is a long ascending passage (Seventeen) rising steeply at first, then more gradually. It has clean walls and floor, with sharp scallops the size of my hand. It is generally more than 6 ft. high and from 10 to 20 ft. wide. Dave followed it until the gauge recorded 10 ft. of water, when his line ran out, so he jammed the reel in a crack and returned to Nine. Oliver Lloyd had a look next, but didn't go quite so far, as it felt such a long way from home.

On 26.5.66 the divers returned and Dave Savage pushed Seventeen another 100 ft. to a small air bell (Eighteen) in a rift sloping down from the left. The bell is only large enough to admit one head and is clearly not the way on. Mike Wooding had a look at it also. This dive is about 580 ft. long and is easily the longest sump that has been dived in this country. It is dangerous for this reason and also because of its great depth. Both Savage and Wooding had severe ear pain on the return, through being unable to clear their ears properly.

The solution to the problem will lie in the use of new bottles, which the Cave Diving Group has now got. These are small and light but have a working pressure of 2250 p.s.i., which gives them a capacity of 40 cu. ft. (compared with the tadpole's 26).

Hairy Passage

The third notable achievement has been in Hairy Passage, which is just off the far end of Vicarage Passage in Swildon's Hole. Some months ago Mike Wooding and others made some progress here by smashing a stalagmite floor and reached the mysterious stream, which so many people had heard through so many holes in that system. His way was barred by a flake of rock. This he banged at the end of May and was able to get into a small chamber, about 10-15 ft. long, sloping down at an angle of 40 degrees. The bottom end chokes. There is, however, a "window" in the side of it which was too tight. This also was banged and access could be gained to a rift running parallel with the chamber and at the same slope. Downslope the rift choked after 1 ft. but upslope the view was very promising. Unfortunately no-one could wriggle into it. On the way home it was noted that bang fumes came from a side passage halfway between Hairy Passage and Vicarage Pot. This is one of the places where one can hear the stream, and a connection had already been postulated. The 1964 survey shows the two to be very close above one another.

Dan-yr-Ogof

Delay in allowing access to the new system here has been causing a rumpus in the South Wales Caving Club. The research projects undertaken by the microbiologists of the C.R.G. have been somewhat held up by bad weather and flooding, so that, as late as the end of June, ordinary members of the S.W.C.C. had not been allowed a glimpse of the discoveries. At a committee meeting in May unkind words were spoken, and certain people were reminded that they were elected to their posts by members of the Club and not by the C.R.G. However, reason won a temporary victory, and research is to have the place to itself for another two months, after which a progress report will be expected.

Giant's Hole to Oxlow Mine

The great break-through between these two systems was achieved on May 8th 1966 by Clive Westlake, Paul Deakin and other members of the Eldon Pothole Club. For weeks they had been digging vigorously from the Oxlow end in wet muddy conditions. Now they have a joint cave system which is at least 640 ft. deep from the entrance of Oxlow to the final sump in Giant's. This makes it the deepest cave in the Country. It is a very arduous through trip. Not the least of Paul Deakin's contributions to the success of the venture was an accurate survey, which showed gross faults in the original by B.S.A.

Swildon's Drainpipe

May 27th/28th saw the re-appearance of the pipe at the head of the 40 ft. pot, but not the one we were expecting, the 10 inch pipe given by Mr. Main was not used. Instead the Ashford Spelaeological Society brought in a 6 inch pipe of their own. This will prove quite effective, as long as there is not much water going down, but as soon as the level rises we shall have a wet pitch again. It looks as though it will have to be replaced by Mr. Main's 10 inch pipe, but nevertheless the Ashford chaps are to be congratulated on their public spirited action.

In the meantime two rawbolts have been fixed on the opposite side of the pot, so that people will not need to hang ladders from the bar.

Rescue from Swildon's IV

When the Westminster S.G. were doing their original exploration of Swildon's IV, eyebrows were raised. What, it was asked, are we going to do, if somebody gets badly hurt? Is cave rescue via Blue Pencil Passage possible? To test this M.R.O. and the W.S.G. had a practice on 23.11.58, from which it was evident that the answer was, No. We only qualified this by saying that "under the impetus of reality" more might have been achieved. Soon after this the W.S.G. gave up their exploration, and their place was taken by the Shepton. The Cave Diving Group passed sump 4 and Mike Boon and others passed sump 3, which had hitherto been regarded as impenetrable. The suggestion was then made that cave rescue from IV by way of the stream passage might be possible. On 15.9.62 the Research Sub-Committee of the M.R.O., assisted by Mike Thompson, Steve Wynne-Roberts and Fred Davies, studied this problem. It was considered that rescue might be effected by this route, if the subject with self-contained apparatus was taken through by divers. The apparatus would consist of one air cylinder between the legs, done up in the carrying sheet, a short length of high pressure hose, a reducing valve, a pressure gauge, a suitable tap for turning to air and a Normalair full face mask (no gag for the non-diver or unconscious subject). Work on the project was halted by Jack Waddon's fatal accident a few weeks later.

However, since early 1965 there have been a number of new divers active on Mendip, so the project was revived. M.R.O. bought the new apparatus for £26.10.0. and it was assembled and tried out in the Bristol Lido lake on 13.7.65, when it proved satisfactory. It was demonstrated at the Buxton meeting of cave rescue organisations in October and the specification was published in the December 1965

Newsletter of the C.D.G. On 4.6.66 a full scale practice was held in Swildon's Hole, and the apparatus proved wholly satisfactory through Sumps II and III. Oliver Lloyd acted as subject and the two divers were Dave Savage and Paul Allen, assisted by Fred Davies and Dave Drew.

There is every reason to believe that Sump IV can similarly be passed, so that cave rescue from all parts of Six is practicable, as well as from Four. The apparatus can be used through Sump I in Stoke Lane unaccompanied by divers, since it is so short.

I think we may claim with a tinge of pride that this is the first time such a thing has been done. It is true that the Upper Wharfedale F.R.A. have similar self-contained apparatus for use in the sump or duck in Dow Cave, and that they have had it for longer than us, but this is so short that divers are not necessary, and the subject can be passed through from hand to hand.

The Somerset Section of the C.D.G. and the M.R.O. will be demonstrating the apparatus at the B.S.A. Conference in Bristol on 11.9.66 in the University Swimming Bath, anyone wishing to act as subject should come ready stripped.

Trogs

In the middle of April 1966 a number of newspapers published accounts of beat cave dwellers in the neighbourhood of Matlock. From a distance it was not quite clear whether this social aberration was harmless, or whether it was part of the criminal fringe. So I asked one of my Derbyshire caving correspondents. He was in no two minds about it. The public class them as "potholers" and the genuine caver has to bear the brunt of the public reaction. After the D.C.R.O. A.G.M. which was held in Matlock early in May the genuine cavers had a dance which finished at 12.30 a.m. By a curious coincidence all the Trogs left their caves at about 2.30 a.m. and spent the night in the streets of Matlock, looking for somewhere to sleep. I can't think why this should be, can you?

WATER TRACING ON EASTERN MENDIP

D.P. Drew

During the past year a fairly intensive programme of water-tracing has been carried out on Eastern Mendip as a joint venture between Bristol University Geography Department, Bristol Waterworks Co., and the Bristol Avon River Authority. In effect this has been a pilot scheme to ascertain the viability of the tracing method (lycopodium spores) prior to its use on a large scale in other areas so the article following is intended merely as a brief summary of the method and the results so far obtained rather than a full scale "exposé" of East Mendip hydrology. This particular technique was evolved by Dr. Josef Zötl of Graz University (1) and proved extremely successful in tracing subterranean stream courses in the Dachstein Alps, but had not previously been used in this country.

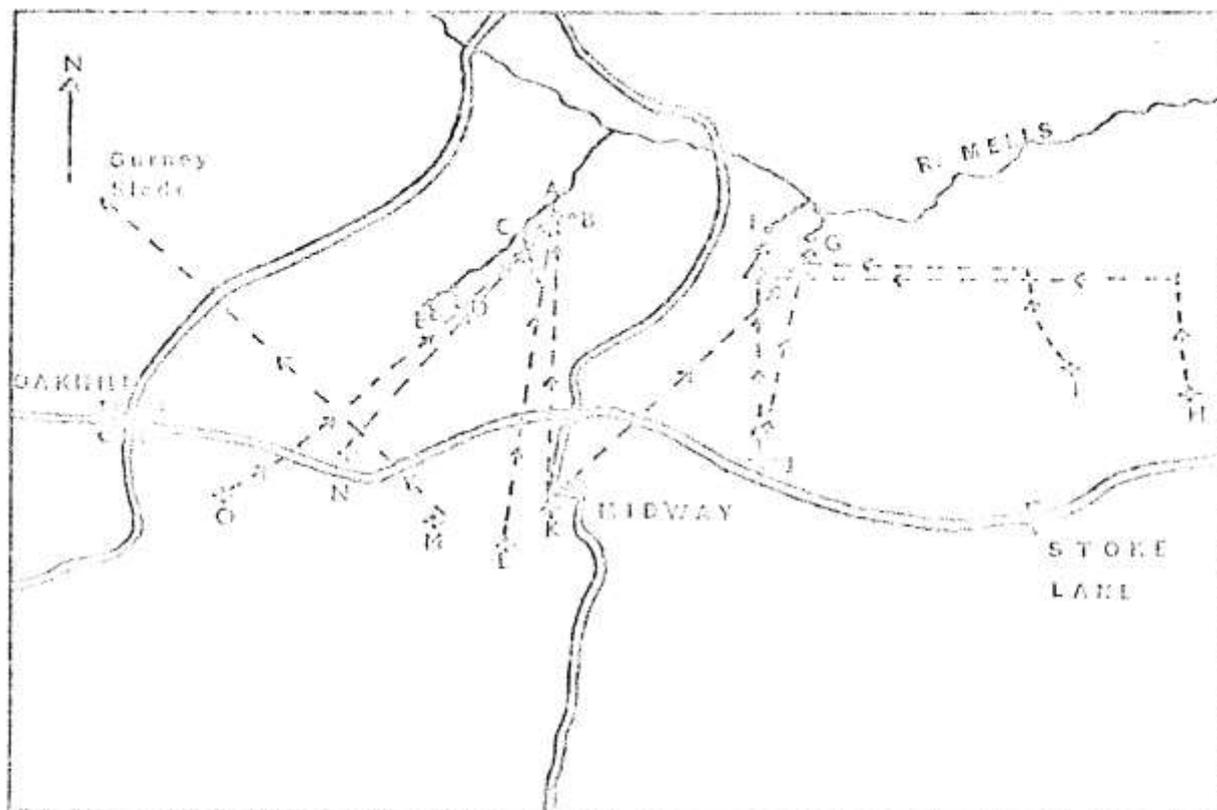
Method

Lycopodium powder consists of the spores of Club Moss. They have a distinctive shape, easily recognizable under the microscope, and are apparently well-nigh indestructible under cave conditions. Their size - 30 μ means that several millions may be introduced at a sink with ease, and in theory only one has to survive the journey to the rising to prove the connection. Before testing the spores are dyed to enable several different sinks to be tested simultaneously, and then given a carbamide resin coating for protection against excessively acidic or alkaline waters. The amount of lycopodium needed per sink has proved very difficult to estimate, but generally a ratio of 1 kg. of spores per 4000 galls/hour flow has proved satisfactory.

The spores are collected in plankton nets placed in the risings. The nets themselves are funnel shaped, the diameter varying with the discharge of the rising, and consist of very fine mesh nylon; these act as filters concentrating the spores. Samples are taken as required by removing the net from the rising, allowing the water to drain away and collecting the residue (5-15 cc's) in a glass tube.

Post-collection treatment consists of adding concentrated hydrochloric acid to the sample to remove any stray organic matter, and then centrifuging to concentrate the spores. Samples of the residue are then made into slides and examined under a microscope at X200 magnification. The dyed spores are then easily recognisable and a count may be made if required. The chief advantages of this method of water-tracing are:-

1. It does not colour the water, nor is it harmful to life.
2. The Water Authorities approve of its use.
3. Many sinks may be tested simultaneously.
4. It appears to give a truer estimate of the time the water takes from sink to rising than any other method.



KEY

Rivers: ————

Rising: ————

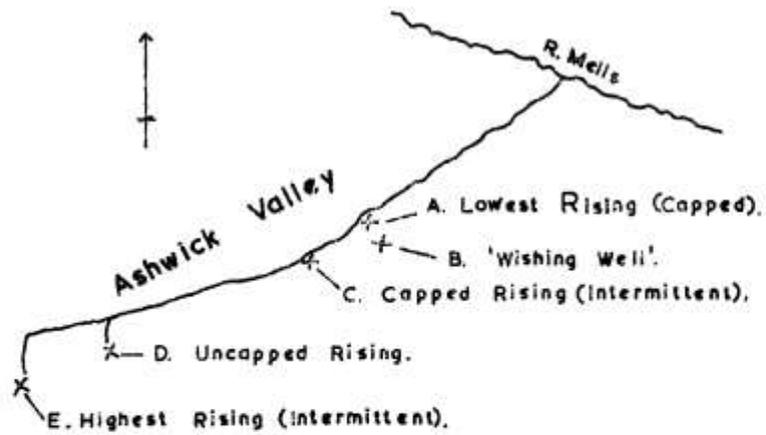
Sinks: ————

Flow lines: - - - ->

Half Mile

Scale

- | | | | |
|---------|---------------|---|--------------|
| A, B, C | Aswich | I | Larkspoll |
| D, E | Bishops | M | Blatter Farm |
| F | Dunston Left | N | Springfield |
| G | Dunston Right | O | Ganhill |
| H | East End | | |
| I | Stoke Lane | | |
| J | Withybrook | | |
| K | Midway | | |



SKETCH PLAN OF ASHWICK GROVE RISINGS - fig 1.

TABLE OF RESULTS - fig 2.

	EAST END	STOKE LANE	WITHY- BROOK	MIDWAY	LARKS- HALL	SPRING- FIELD	BLAKES FARM	OAKHILL
ST. D LEFT	6.00 hr. 6.00 hr.		6.00 hr. 7.30+ hr.					
ST. D RIGHT		8.00 hr. 8.00+ hr.	3.00 hr. 7.30+ hr.	2.00 hr. 7.00 hr.				
ASHWICK A				8.00+ hr. 8.00+hr.	4.00 hr. 4-6 hr.	5.30 hr. 5.30+hr.		5.30 hr. 6.00+ hr.
ASHWICK B						5.30 hr. 6.00+hr.		
ASHWICK C D & E								
GURNEY SLADE							Under 2 days	

The disadvantages are:

1. It is expensive - the spores cost 30s. per kilo, the nets some £2. each.
2. It is time consuming.
3. Great care must be taken to avoid contamination.

However, for serious attempts to understand the hydrology of an area this method is probably the best evolved to date.

Results

After initial trial runs in G.B. cave it was decided to use the method in an attempt to delineate the underground catchments of the Ashwick Grove and St. Dunstan's Well risings on the northern flank of the Beacon Hill pericline. The western portion of this area had previously been examined by Hanwell and Thompson (2) and the testing would provide a useful check on their hypotheses. The swallets tested (east to west) were: East End Stream, Stoke Lane Slocker, Withybrook Slocker, Midway Slocker, Larkshall Swallet, Blakes Farm Swallet, Springfield and Oakhill Swallets. Nets were placed on the two sources at St. Dunstan's Well and at the five main Ashwick Risings (see fig. 1). In desperation towards the end of the tests Gurney Slade Rising was also checked!

The results are summarised in the separate map. The two sources at St. Dunstan's Well have been placed some distance apart for clarity though in fact only 3-4 foot separates them.

The times taken by the spores are shown in fig.2, the top figure giving the time taken for the first recorded arrival and the lower figure showing the peak; distances in most cases are comparable except for Stoke Lane Slocker and East End Stream (1 mile) and Gurney Slade Rising (1 mile). In the table, St. Dunstan's left and right is in the geographical sense, i.e. facing downstream.

It is not proposed to discuss the results in any detail, but several obvious points may be made:

- a) The extreme complexity of the drainage patterns within the area, especially the St. Dunstan's rising.
- b) The apparent ability of underground stream courses to cross one another and remain discrete.
- c) The extremely rapid passage of water from Midway and Withybrook to St. Dunstan's Right.

The Blakes Farm - Gurney Slade link is to be treated with some reserve - one run using lycopodium and another two using fluorescein/ activated charcoal failed to give any result at Ashwick or St. Dunstan's, but a faint fluorescein positive at Gurney Slade - however, it is proposed to repeat this run using larger quantities.

It seems safe to assume that the two lowest Ashwick risings are linked but entirely separate from the two highest (also linked) - one of the more grotesque findings is that the two top Ashwick sources apparently have no feeders - an examination of Stout and Little London Slockers seems called for. It would be foolish to make wider speculations on limestone hydrology in the area without other relevant data, but at the risk of incurring Stantonian wrath it might be suggested that in this area at least, current theories concerning the water-table in limestones may need some re-appraisal.

It is hoped that this project may be extended to Central Mendip in the near future with the Swildon's drainage as the obvious target. In conclusion I would like to thank the many people without whose assistance it would have been impossible to carry out these tests. In particular Mr. W.E. Rennie (B.W.W), Messrs. Whittaker, Lavis and Hunt (A.R.A.), Messrs. Atkinson, Gannicott, Stanton and Wooding (W.C.C.), and Messrs. Ingle-Smith, Nicholson, High, Hills, Greenwood and Hocker (U.B.G.D.).

References:

- 1) Maurin & Zötl: Die Untersuchung der Zusammenhänge unterirdischer Wässer mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Karstverhältnisse, Graz 1959.
- 2) Hanwell, J.D. & Thompson, M.M.: Notes on the Drainage of the Binegar-Oakhill District of Eastern Mendip. Jnl. W.C.C. No. 82 Vol. 6, Dec. 1961. pp 314-322.

BOOK REVIEWS

"THE MENDIP CAVER" Vol. 2, Nos 1-6, 48 pp, cartoons and plans, Published monthly by A.D. Oldham of 17 Freemantle Rd., Bristol 5, at 7/6 for six months, post free.

Since its inception this new publication has performed a very useful service in providing really up to date news of caving activities on Mendip, together with book reviews, and editorial comment on any material of caving interest published in the local press. It has scooped publication of all new discoveries on Mendip since the first issue, and must represent a considerable expenditure of hard work and effort on the part of its publisher. Most publications of this sort die an early death, it is to be hoped that this one does not follow.

My only criticism is that its sense of humour varies between the ponderous, and the adolescent, and its targets would seem to have little opportunity to reply in kind, otherwise its an excellent publication.

G.A. Roberts.

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Journal of THE SHEPTON MALLET CAVING CLUB, Series One; Jan 1954 - July 1957, Series Two: May 1959 - November 1960. Republished 1966 at 5/- (plus 1/- postage) from B.M. Ellis, Knockauns, Combwich, Bridgwater, Som.

The front cover of what is otherwise a very fine reprint is unfortunately marred by a lack of ink. The words "Mallet, Club" and the latter part of the word "Journal" are barely visible.

The first two series of the journal were published for circulation to club members only and this reprint is mainly for the benefit of recent club members who wish to read accounts of yesteryear. It is also of considerable interest to non-club members as it contains many interesting articles on a diversity of caves.

It is difficult to pick out any three or four 'top' articles, as they are all of some special merit, like Mike Boon's solo Pollnagollum, or the 1960 Yorkshire Trip, with accounts of dives in Inauguration Caverns, Clapham Cave, Lower Gunnerfleet Cave etc., or the Rodney Stoke dive, both articles being by Mike Thompson.

Apart from the aforementioned lack of ink on the front cover, this is an excellent account of original explorations undertaken by the club.

A.D.O.

Geology of the Country around Wells and Cheddar. G.W. Green & F.B.A. Welch. H.M.S.O. 1965 pp. 225, 5 pp. 19 Figs. Price 35s. Obtainable from H.M.S.O. York House, Kingsway, London W.C.2.

This sizeable book produced by the Geological Survey provides the explanation to the G.S. 1" Sheet 280 recently published and as all of Mendip is included excepting the eastern and western ends, it is of considerable importance to the caver.

A brief geological history of the area is followed by detailed lithological and areal analyses from Silurian to Holocene. Other geological aspects of the region are also covered but of these the only ones likely to be of special interest to the caver are those concerned with water-supply (Chapter XI) and a faunal succession in the Burrington limestones (Appendix I). The latter section is perhaps the book's weakest section - the subject is treated with a superficiality which precludes accuracy while many of the facts concerning discharges are incorrect.

Obviously the section of prime importance to the caver is that dealing with the Lower Carboniferous rocks. In the only previous modern work on the area (B.R.G. Bristol & Gloucester District 1948), the Mendips are described using a palaeontological classification of the limestones; however, in the present work the more (speleologically) useful lithological classification is used. The Mendip periclinal areas are each subdivided into smaller areas, e.g. Lower Farm - Charterhouse - Cheddar, and detailed descriptions given of exposures and borehole results.

Overall, in company with other G.S. works in the series, it is a work of reference rather than an easily digested guide to Mendip geology. Its style makes no concessions to the non-expert reader and for this reason as well as its strictly geological rather than geomorphological approach; it will perhaps be of limited value to cavers, but as a standard work on the local geology it is both informative and comprehensive.

D.P. Drew.