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## CLUB NEWS

We have the largest membership of a caving club in Britain, which is surprising in some respects as the Club's main sphere of activities lies in one of the smaller caving areas. Mendip must surely hold the record for the number of man-hours spent trying to open up the underworld, as scarcely any nook or cranny remain now which have yet to be probed, and the law of diminishing returns seems to have set in. But on paper there are many more miles to be added to the underground scene, the problem is how to get into it! With modern geological aids it ought to be possible to locate an underground passage beyond its blocked entrance and, with the Club's experience in shaft-sinking, drill a shaft into it. There are two methods of geological surveying which could find those illusive passages, Resistivity and Gravimetric surveys. For some time now the club has been loaned a commercial Resistivity meter and to date nothing has been done with it. The efficiency of resistivity surveying has been doubted in the past, but until someone seriously uses the instrument logically, for cave detection, it cannot be ignored. Is there any member willing to undertake a serious analysis of this method or must we admit failure and return the instrument? The opponents of this method of surveying are more in favour of the use of a Gravimeter, but unfortunately these are expensive instruments and it is doubtful if anyone would loan one to the club, even though we have members who are experienced in its use for normal geological surveying. Perhaps a university department may care to take up the gauntlet as a research project!

Ian Jepson brought disturbing news to the last committee meeting, it seems that the supply of Nife and Edison cell spares is drying up, as the Coal Board now use Oldham cells. The club have now bought its last batch of headlamp bulbs, so get yours now! In the future the club may consider buying new Oldham cells in bulk to reduce cost, rather than risk Ex-N.C.B. Oldham cells.

The club is buying a quantity of boiler suits which should be on sale shortly at 37p each at the H.Q.

The clubs supply of ties and badges is practically exhausted, and if there is sufficient demand we will get another batch. Could you please give Ian Jepson (7 Shelley Road, Beechen Cliff, Bath) your orders?

Our latest Occasional Publication "The Great Storms and Floods on Mendip 1968" has proved to be very popular, already it has sold 500 copies and is temporarily out of print. Further copies will be available after Easter.

### Committee Abstracts

The 262nd Committee Meeting of the Wessex Cave Club was held on Sunday 3rd January, 10.00hrs at Upper Pitts. Apologies being received from Don Thomson and Malcolm Newson.

The problem of clearing the Hillgrove site would be carried on to the next meeting as the ground was unfit due to frost. Jim Hanwell reported that the Lamb Leer timbers had at last been installed. Tony Dingle was authorised to purchase 100 boiler suits for the club. John Jones reported that the club distributed 24 Journals to other organisations, and in the light of his assessment, he recommended that two of them be stopped and all exchange journals subject to an annual review.

Mike York was authorised to spend £20 on the book scheme he was to run for the club. The latest Occasional Publication "The Great Storms and Floods on Mendip 1968" was already out of print, and would be reprinted as soon as possible. Tony Philpott would do the sales of it.

A long discussion ensued upon Chris Hawkes Librarians report, of how to manage the club's library, and Keith Barber was asked to look into the possibility of having it in Wells Public Library. He would report his findings at the next committee meeting.

Allan Green would install an automatic flush to the Gent's Urinal at the H.Q. Wally Willcocks agreed to look into the possibility of extending the Workshop and Changing Area. He was also to arrange the building of 500ft of ladder, and purchase 600ft of rope.

A Wessex Cave Club Conservation Sub-Committee was proposed by Keith Barber to look after Mendip sites of Speleological interest, in liaison with the Nature Conservancy. Its Secretary would be Richard Whitcombe.

The meeting closed at 13.45hrs and the date of the next meetings would be the 28th February, and 25th April.

#### Working Party to investigate and promote the conservation of Mendip limestone features

At their last meeting, the Committee established a Working Party to investigate and promote the conservation of Mendip limestone features. Keith Barber is the secretary, Richard Witcombe, who has recently been appointed Conservation Officer to the Council of Southern Caving Clubs, is a member of the Working Party. Quite obviously, therefore, the Club and the Council will work very closely together in this sphere. It is envisaged that the Wessex Working Party will be able to undertake much of the Council's field work for them. At this early stage, no definite plans or policies have been formulated, but the type of work possible includes the compilation of a list of sites suitable for scheduling as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, the systematic and periodic investigation of quarries, the protection as far as possible of important features from destruction or violation, the systematic cleansing of caves etc.

Anyone interested in such work or the problems of conservation relating to caves and other limestone features are invited to send their ideas to Keith Barber, 4 Catsash, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, or better still to shoulder some of the burden, join the Working Party and help establish a plan of campaign.

#### New Members

We would like to welcome the following new members elected at the last committee meeting:

RICHARD GORDON, Yew Tree Farm, Chew Stoke, Nr. Bristol.  
RICHARD D. LAW, Cheddar Road Farm, Axbridge, Somerset.  
NICHOLAS J. LADD, Windyash, Barton-St-David, Somerton, Somerset.  
BARRY WILKINSON, c/o Village Post Office, Priddy, Wells, Somerset.

#### New Addresses

William Stanton, Kites Croft, Westbury-sub-Mendip, Wells, Somerset.  
Tim Reynolds, 2 Beaconsfield Road, BRISTOL 8.

Acknowledgements At long last the H.Q. possesses a post box, thanks to Bob Lawder who has built us a splendid one to be sited at the end of the drive.

Our thanks to Barbara Brown who has very kindly made curtains for the Womens Dormitory.

Also, many thanks to Luke Devenish for a gift of Journals to the Club Library.

### CLUB EVENTS

<u>Saturday 13th Feb.</u>	Dan-yr-Ogof.	Leader Bob Pyke, 22 Pinner Road, Northwood Hills, Middlesex. Wet suits and Nifes essential. Meet at 10.00hrs at S. Wales H.Q.
<u>Saturday 13th Feb.</u>	Slide Show.	"Mexico and Guatemala" by Carl Pickstone 19.30hrs at Upper Pitts.
<u>Sunday 28th Feb</u>	Lamb Leer.	Leader John Jones. Meet at the Cave 10.00hrs.
<u>Saturday 13th March.</u>	Slide Show.	"Trans Sahara" by Phil Davies. Wookey Hole Inn, Wookey Hole. 19.30 for 20.00. Discussion follows. A collection will be made to defray cost of room.
<u>20th &amp; 21st March.</u>	Agen Allwedd.	Leader Mike York, 19 Alfred Place, Cotham, Bristol 2. (Maximum party size 10).
<u>9th-12th April</u> (Easter)	Yorkshire.	Leader Carl Pickstone.
<u>24th April</u>	Audio Visual Slide Show.	"Peru" by Dennis Kemp. 20.00 Priddy Village Hall.
<u>Saturday 8th May.</u>	August Hole.	Leader John Alder, 43 Rowlands Crescent, Solihull, Warwicks. Meet at the cave 11.00.
<u>Saturday 15th May.</u>	Slide Show on	"Slovenia 1955" by Jim Hanwell, 19.30hrs at Upper Pitts.
<u>Weekend 21st May.</u>	Devon.	Don Thomson will lead a family meet.
<u>Saturday 12th June.</u>	Llethrid Swallet.	A photographic trip. Leader John Jones. 33A Dinham St., Nantymoel, Bridgend. Meet 11.00hrs at Grandison Hotel Briton Ferry, Nr. Heath, Glams.
<u>Saturday 19th June.</u>	Dan-yr-Ogof.	Leader Tim Reynolds, 2 Beaconsfield Rd. Clifton, Bristol. Meet 10.00hrs. at S. Wales H.Q.
<u>Saturday 26th June.</u>	Little Neath.	Leader John Jones. Meet 11.00 hrs at the cave.

\* \* \* \* \*

Also some time in May Mike York will lead a trip to Portland.

Scavenging trips to clean out Eastwater, Cuckoo Cleeves and to make a start on Swildon's will be held during the weekends of 13th/14th March, 3rd/4th April and 9th/10th April.

All offers of help most welcome - please write now to Keith Barber, 4 Catsash, Shepton Mallet, Somerset.

The Friday Club are beginning to attract new members, and it will help in planning future trips if people will give me an idea of their experience when writing for a place on a particular trip.

Our major disaster so far was the trip to the Ifold Series in Eastwater, for we missed Hunters by half an hour. More haste and more speed in future.

The trip to Shatter Passage in Swildons on 4th December was halted by the need to do a lot of baling in the Mud Sump. By mutual consent we decided to try again on 16th January instead of doing Swildon's 4.

This was a pity because one poor chap found himself doing Shatter for the 3rd time and he still hasn't done 4.

No one seems keen on WIS or his benefit trips to Reservoir!

Hunters Hole on 1st January was a great success. Howard and Richard did the first part and stayed in Hunters all evening leaving the lower classes to get lower still.

Shatter Passage surely leaves everyone shattered. It has more unusual features than most Mendip caves---'U' tubes, ducks etc and should be a must for any aspiring masochist.

The last trip in the current list should read:- Friday 26th March 7.30 Cuckoo Cleeves and not the 27th.

I have graded the trips in this list so that new members will know what degree of competence is required.

The restrictions on novices are for the sole reason that speed is essential to cave and then reach Hunters before closing time.

Good Friday 9th April 7.30

At Stirrup Cup Cafe for Pine Tree Pot. Novices welcome.

Saturday 24th April 2.30

At Priddy (not Upper Pitts) for Swildons 4. Wet or goon suits essential. Fully experienced cavers only.

Friday 7th May 7.30 At the Belfry for St. Cuthberts. Fully experienced cavers only. Wet suits may be needed.

Saturday 22nd May Wales for Pant Mawr. No novices. (3 times to Swildons Sump 1 as minimum requirement). Ladder climb at entrance. Wet suits worth while.

Friday 4th June 7.30 At Priddy Green for Hollowfield or Upper Swildons. Novices welcome.

Friday 18th June 7.30

By Downhead Church 692462 for Downhead etc. Novices welcome.

Friday 2nd July 7.30 At 'The Triangle' leading down to Lower Farm for Longwood. No novices.

Saturday 17th July 2.30 Family outing to Sandford Hill Caves etc. if its a dry day. Bring wives, children and gobstoppers.

If the weather is wet the alternative is Sandford Levvy.

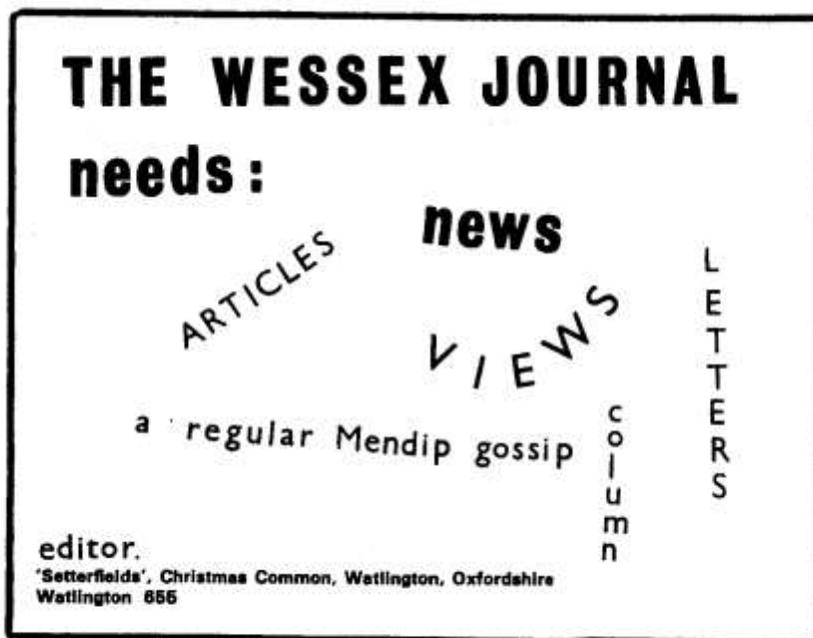
In either case meet by the main quarry entrance on the main road from Winscombe to Sandford 420590.

The great WIS will be in attendance. Anyone welcome.

Welsh trip. Names for transport etc. to me in May.

Other trips. Please let me know if you are coming.

Richard Kenney,  
'Yennek',  
St. Mary's Road,  
Meare,  
Glastonbury, Somerset.



## THE BRITISH SPELEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION CAVE SURVEYS

Copies of the following surveys are now available

NAME	SIZE	PRICE
1) Ogof Agen Allwedd.....	33" x 21"	5/-
2) Carlswark Cavern .....	24" x 19"	3/6
3) Giants Hole / Oxlow Caverns .....	39" x 30"	5/-
4) P.8. (Jackpot) .....	39" x 30"	5/-
5) Perryfoot area, including Perryfoot Cave, Sheepwash Swallet and three shafts on Coalpithole Rake ..	36" x 20"	5/-
6) Eldon Hole .....	24" x 16"	2/6
7) Lost Johns (entrance complex) .....	10" x 9"	1/6
8) Peak Cavern .....	37" x 30" approx.	5/6
9) Baker's Pit / Reed's Cavern .....	)glossy lithoprint)	4/-
10) The original 1937 Simpson & Grainger survey of the GAPING GYHLL SYSTEM. These prints are excellently produced on parchment paper and are in a very good state of preservation. They are most attractive when picture-framed.		ONLY 5/-

All surveys except the Eldon Hole survey can be sent unfolded, but orders for unfolded surveys must be accompanied by a tube of suitable dimensions. Cash in advance please. (P.O. / Cheques).

### Postage

Surveys will be sent 2nd. class. (postage free on orders in excess of 20/-). Less than 20/- : 6d for one survey and 3d for each additional survey.

OBTAINABLE FROM:-

IAN STATHAM, DEPT. OF GEOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL, UNIVERSITY ROAD, BRISTOL. BS8 1SS.



The Surveys are posted folded in a 16" x 12" Envelope. The prices DO NOT include the cost of postage and packing the extra cost for this is as follows:-

1 Survey	5 p	5 or 6 Surveys	12½ p
2 Surveys	7½ p	7 to 10 "	15 p
3-4 Surveys	10 p	over 10 "	17½ p

Back numbers of many Wessex Journals are available at 12½ p we regret however that due to increased production costs all Journals issued after number 132 will cost 15 p. Please add postage as for Surveys.

#### PUBLICATIONS

Reprint of Volume one of the Wessex Journal	37½ p	plus 10 p	Post & packing
Supplement to Vol: 8 " " " "	25 p	" 10 p	" "
Pioneer Under the Mendips - a biography of H.E. Balch	60 p	" 10 p	" "
Mendip Karst Hydrology Research Project Phases 1 & 2 (to be reprinted)			
" " " " " " 3	50 p	" 5 p	" "
The Great Storms & Floods of July 1968 on Mendip	60 p	" 5 p	" "
Water Tracing in the Severn Tunnel (U.B.S.S. offprint)	25 p	" 5 p	" "
Proceedings of the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society March 1970	£1.00	" 8 p	" "

Postage charges are subject to review, in the light of certain Post Office proposals. It has been the custom to use the First Class Mail service in the past but in future if charges rise we will probably use the Second Class service unless the faster service has been especially requested and extra postage enclosed. If in any doubt please send extra money - any surplus will be refunded Please also specify First or Second class mail.

PLEASE CROSS ALL CHEQUES AND POSTAL ORDERS AND MAKE THEM PAYABLE TO WESSEX CAVE CLUB.  
Loose cash should not be sent unless registered.

Available from:- R.A. Philpott, 3 King's Drive, Bishopston, BRISTOL BS7 8JW.

A useful method of approximately converting New Pence back into old shillings and pence. Double the price in New Pence and place a stroke before the last figure.

e.g. 5 New Pence becomes 10 becomes 1/- and 99½ New Pence - 199 - 19/9.

## CAVERS AND CONSERVATION

by Richard Witcombe

As you read this article European Conservation Year 1970 will be over, and the propagandists, with fingers crossed, will be laying aside their pens and swords to take a well-earned breather. During the past twelve months we have heard some fine sentiments expressed and the best of intentions declared, but it will be the decades to follow which will reveal just how far you and I and the powers that be are prepared to practice the gospel that has been preached. The broad principles of the conservation of the environment have been put so often before the public eye that there is perhaps a danger of over-exposure, but at risk of the reader suffering a surfeit of certain inevitable clichés, I feel that the special case of caves and conservation should at least be outlined before the year's end.

In common with many other hobbyists, cavers have an interest in natural features of the landscape and they are brought into contact with limestone country of great scenic value. In the north we cave in the Yorkshire Dales and the Peak District National Parks; in South Wales in the Brecon Beacons National Park, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, and the Gower Peninsula Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Buckfastleigh in Devon is within the Dartmoor National Park, and next year a substantial part of Mendip will be designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These labels have not been applied lightly since natural beauty is not something that we can take for granted anymore. The threat to the countryside posed by the expansion of population and industry has meant that the planners have had to resort to the zoning and grading of landscapes, an extension of bureaucracy unavoidable in an overcrowded island. When Mendip becomes an A.O.N.B. in 1971, it will be afforded the protection of not only County Hall, but of the Countryside Commission in London as well. All developments will be closely scrutinized to ensure that the wisest possible use is made of land and natural resources, and at all times a priority consideration will be the enhancement of the area's natural beauty.

Cavers should welcome the move, but more important, be prepared to meet the obligations arising out of it. Litter, dumped rubbish, and other eyesores will be targets for local authority action and one wonders how many cave digs might fall into this category. A vigilant local pressure group such as the Mendip Society might not look very favourably at the collection of old timber, rusting ironwork, and spoil heaps which adorn many of these sites. They will be even less sympathetic where the dig has been abandoned and no effort made to tidy up afterwards. To find an example of this one need go no further from Upper Pitts than the entrance to Eastwater Cavern.

Planning permission for new caving headquarters will clearly be more difficult to obtain

in the future. Building plots will be hard to come by, and there will almost certainly be stipulations regarding the materials that can be used. Reconstituted stone blocks, dark roofing tiles and so on, are going to add considerably to the construction costs, even allowing for the Government grants which may be available. Where a hut is in a particularly conspicuous position, the planners may want it screened. Conifers, hawthorns, and elders will stand up to most Mendip weather, and besides adding a touch of greenery to the surroundings, these might also act as a windbreak. Trees have recently been planted around the Somerset Education Committee's Adventure Hut in Velvet Bottom, a building which illustrates that errors in planning judgment are still being made from time to time. To site a white, prefabricated, asbestos-roofed cabin in the middle of one of the last unspoilt valleys on Mendip, is a folly which ought not to be repeated in the future A.O.N.B.

I often wonder what Balch, if he came back to life, would think of the condition of Swildon's Hole or Eastwater Cavern today. He could hardly fail to be disgusted by the vandalism and the accumulation of filth, and I am sure that he would be very saddened to think that cavers of sorts were responsible. It is no coincidence that the caves which are most easily accessible are the caves which have suffered the worst despoliation over the years. The muddy holes of Burrington Combe have taken a terrible hammering, and places like Tratman's Temple and Barne's Loop in Swildon's have been left in ruins. By way of contrast, one can consider the state of St. Cuthbert's Swallet, still in almost pristine condition nearly twenty years after its discovery. It owes its survival as we know to the attentions of the B.E.C., who through their leader system have imposed severe restrictions on access. In between these two extremes, there are a number of caves which derive some protection from the red tape which surrounds them. G.B., Longwood, and Lamb Leer, have escaped the worst of the vandalism mainly because the rigmarole of obtaining a key wards off the casual and thoughtless type of caver. The dilemma facing us is clear to see - how are we to reconcile a fair policy towards access with cave conservation.

It has already been proposed that the Council of Southern Caving Clubs should form a limited company with the object of purchasing or perhaps leasing caves or cave entrances. Let us suppose then, for the sake of example, that G.B. came under the hammer and was acquired by the C.S.C.C. Would this mean the end of the permit system, would the blockhouse be left open permanently, would it become another Swildon's Hole in fact? My own view is that G.B. is too important and too vulnerable a cave to be open to all and sundry, and that even under C.S.C.C. ownership, cavers should still be required to make a written application for the key. This may seem a rather mean line to take, but who honestly would begrudge putting pen to paper if it meant saving the cave from the fate of Burrington Combe. Of course there must be caves where no restrictions apply, if only to relieve the pressure on the protected caves. Beginners will always need a training ground, and the great many outdoor pursuits organisations which

descend on Mendip have to be provided with some sort of subterranean assault course. Nevertheless, leaving aside the minor caves, we should now be taking steps to conserve the classic examples of Mendip's underground scenery. Caves such as St. Cuthbert's, Stoke Lane, Longwood, the far reaches of Swildon's, Wookey 20, should it ever be opened to the caving public, all these must be afforded some protection, and this means restricted access. The number of people caving on Mendip is increasing at such a rate that the element of control, whether vested in an individual club or an organisation like the C.S.C.C., will have to be resolutely applied. If cavers want to visit a particular cave, then I would like to think that they were sufficiently conscientious to ask for a key and book it in advance.

There is a school of thought which believes that cave conservation is best promoted by educating the potential vandals. I would qualify my acceptance of this idea by pointing out that most of the damage and litter left underground seems to be the work of a minority of casual cavers who never come into contact with a caving club that might educate them. It is true that guide books and perhaps notices outside cave entrances can help in this respect, but we are never going to eliminate the problem if we rely on prevention alone. Even in the controlled caves such as G.B., litter and carbide are still to be found. What is needed, therefore, is some remedial action, and the most obvious form for this to take is a series of cleaning up operations underground. The B.E.C. already take it upon themselves to scour St. Cuthbert's once a year, and the M.C.G. before now have organised scavenging trips in Longwood. I would like to see all the major caves receive this treatment on a regular basis. Through the C.S.C.C., various clubs would make themselves responsible for particular caves, organising and advertising scavenging trips as they would ordinary club meets. Wessex as the biggest club could take charge of the biggest cave, Swildon's Hole.

Litter underground poses no real problem; it simply has to be brought out of the cave, either in a sack or an ammunition box. Dumped carbide on the other hand, especially in the waterless recesses of caves like Eastwater, is a very much more difficult item to get rid of. Where scrubbing fails to remove it, it can sometimes be buried under piles of stones or at least muddied to make it less obtrusive. There is some evidence that carbide lamps are gradually losing their popularity, and it may be that they will disappear completely over the next decade. In the meantime, it has been found necessary to prohibit their use in a number of particularly well-decorated caves. Damage to formations, often due to carelessness, is almost invariably irreparable, although it did prove possible to reconstruct the famous Collonades in Lancaster Hole by means of Araldite. Where stalactites and flowstone have simply been muddied, a scavenging party can often make a good job of cleaning them. To 'restore' a cave such as Swildon's Hole to an acceptable condition is obviously no small task, but once achieved, it might well bring about a marked improvement in caving standards generally. If a caver finds himself in an unspoilt grotto, he is going to think twice about leaving his chocolate

paper.

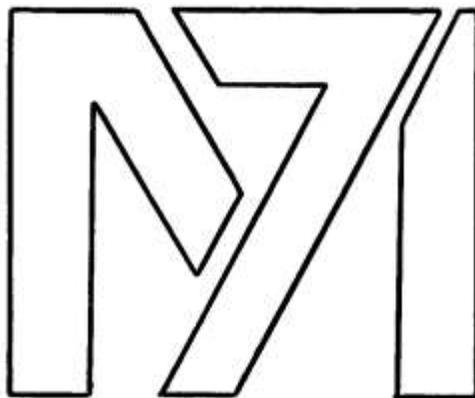
Of all the problems associated with cave conservation, perhaps the most fundamental is the threat of complete destruction posed by limestone quarrying. On Eastern Mendip, the fate of Stoke Lane Slocker has hung in the balance for many years, and we have seen how in Fairy Cave Quarry caves have been discovered in one month only to be obliterated the next. Cavers in South Wales are at this moment fighting to save Great Britain's longest cave system, Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, from being cut in half by the expansion of the Penwyllt quarries. The situation is every bit as acute in many parts of Derbyshire. In attempting to deal with such a problem, the first thing that cavers must realise is that their numbers and consequently their voice are very small. If we want to be heard, we must have loyal sympathisers and supporters and we should be going out of our way to cultivate them.

The staunchest ally of the caving world over the years has been the Nature Conservancy, now part of a more wide-ranging government organisation known as the Natural Environmental Research Council. One of its most important functions has been to keep a watchful eye on the many hundreds of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, including caves, scattered up and down the country. The original list of geological S.S.S.I's was compiled by a Geological Sub-committee of the post-war Nature Reserves Investigation Committee and was published in 1945. Sites on Mendip included Cheddar Gorge, Burrington Combe and Ebbor Gorge. In about 1955 the Cave Research Group proposed an additional list of caves and this was duly accepted. As with an A.O.N.B. a Site of Special Scientific Interest is more than just a name. When a site is scheduled in this way the owner and the local planning authority are notified of its scientific importance. The planning officer must then consult the Conservancy if he receives any development proposals, and is given advice on the effect of the proposals on the scientific interest. Should the owner wish to pursue the development application further in the face of opposition from the planning department, he may call for a public enquiry at which the Conservancy will appear and put forward the scientific case. Needless to say, public enquiries are the exception rather than the rule since the Conservancy prefers to work behind the scenes and use its powers of persuasion. One must stress here that S.S.S.I's remain private property. The Conservancy cannot demand public access, nor indeed can it prevent a cave from being commercialised by its owner, Giant's Hole, an S.S.S.I. in Derbyshire, is being badly mauled in the process of turning it into a show cave but the Conservancy is powerless to intervene. On Mendip, we should also be concerned about the caves not yet included in the schedules. Longwood, Eastwater, Read's Cavern, and many other important sites were for some reason omitted in 1955, and we must ensure that the C.R.G. has an up-to-date list to put before the Conservancy when the schedules are next reviewed.

During the course of the fight to preserve Stoke Lane Slocker, a rather unexpected ally emerged in the form of the Bristol Waterworks Company. Their water supply at St. Dunstan's Well was at stake and they showed themselves to be as anxious as the cavers to preserve the underground streamway intact. Since then, co-operation in water tracing experiments and the fight against the grosser forms of pollution have brought the two parties even closer together, with the result that the future of caves on waterworks land now seems rather more secure. At a time when cavers are thinking seriously about acquiring their own small parcels of Mendip, we would do well to

keep in touch with the other conservation groups who are doing the same. The Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation, who campaigned so vigorously to save Crook Peak, are now managing nature reserves in Longwood Valley and Asham Wood, and the latter reserve, significantly, is leased from a quarry company. There are grounds for hoping that the planners at County Hall are at last beginning to realise just how important it is to avoid any further clashes between the quarrymen and conservationists. Working on the principle that a wise use of limestone resources constitutes conservation, they recently called a meeting at which all interested parties, including for the first time cavers, were invited to express their views on the future development of the industry on Mendip. Nobody expected a simple formula to emerge from this brief exchange of ideas, but enough common ground was established to suggest that compromise rather than conflict could be the pattern of the next decade. If the County Council is prepared to put a value on science and discovery as well as on concrete and road stone, then most of Mendip's caves may yet survive into the 21st century.

The crux of this conservation issue, as with all movements for reform, is going to be popular involvement. Some years ago, a Cave Preservation Society was formed in the North of England to combat vandalism. It folded up within a year because it divorced preservation from the everyday activities of a caving club and turned it into a specialist subject. We do not need Cave Conservation Groups, but we do need every caver to be an active conservationist. At this moment, on Mendip and elsewhere, a vast amount of time and effort is being expended in the search for new caves, but what will be the use of finding them if we fail to preserve those that we already have. On my last trip down Eastwater Cavern the route to Dolphin Pot literally stank of decaying rubbish; when next I go underground in that cave I am putting it in writing that I am taking a sack.



This is a symbol which will come to mean a lot to cavers on Mendip. In a year following the high-minded, far-away ideas of European Conservation Year it is time to look at home. The above article on cave conservation and the one which follows on Sites of Special Scientific Interest are written by Mendip people who care. Their interest will be fulfilled this year by the Exhibition "Mendip 71", whose trendy monogram appears above.

Mendip 71 is an exhibition which will present the total character of the Mendip Region, illustrating all the pressures threatening that character and putting forward suggestions for the

future use of the region. It will be held at the Bishop's Palace, Wells, during September this year. The Patron is Peter Scott and the sponsors are the Mendip Society. Between £7,000 and £10,000 will be spent, if it can be found, to ensure that the region's pride is not insulted by half measures. The organiser is Mrs. Blakeney Edwards, Cyder Cottage, Kent Street, Cheddar, Somerset. Donations may be sent to The Treasurer, S.G. Limb, Westminster Bank, Cheddar, Somerset.

The Wessex Journal hopes to follow the progress of the money raising programme and will bring details and possible previews of the events and topics which are scheduled. Already Members William Stanton and Jim Hanwell are consultants for geology, quarries and land-use, soils and climate respectively. This could be the chance we need - M 71 is not just another motorway, but it could be!

### **EVERYONE CRIES, "MORE S.S.S.I.s"**

(‘Geological Highlights of the Westcountry’, compiled by W.A. McFayden, Butterworths, London, 296pp. price £3.0. Reviewed by Jim Hanwell).

The book lists and describes 90 named Sites of Special Scientific Interest (S.S.S.I.) scheduled in the West Country since the relevant National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. Amongst other things it sets out to be 'an authoritative guide to the fascinating geological and cave phenomena of South West England'. It therefore clearly represents official records and views on the subject of caves held by the Nature Conservancy since the compiler was once the Conservancy's Chief Geologist. Authorities who co-operated with McFayden were Gordon Warwick and other groups associated with speleology in our region. The style is in the form of a handbook, though one would hardly commit one's three-quid's-worth to field use.

S.S.S.I's in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucester and Somerset are described in separate sections. The 'league table' of sites is a fair tribute to the speleologists who have made successful claims for scheduling caves. Cornwall's 15 sites include some old mines, Devon's 23 include 3 small Chudleigh Caves, Pridhamsleigh, Reed's/Bakers/Joint Mitnor and a detailed account of Kent's Cavern, Torquay; also described are the Haytor and Smallacombe iron mine adits and levels near Bovey Tracey. Though Dorset's 18 sites are mainly coastal (why don't Portland caves yet qualify?) the section is the most striking because of the illustrations - noticeably lacking elsewhere. The digressions into the stratigraphy and palaeontology of the area are useful but the compiler's own interests are allowed rather too free a play. Even in Cornwall structure, mineralogy and petrology are given less emphasis than palaeontology! Gloucester's paltry 10 sites ought to arouse those with knowledge of potential sites in the Forest of Dean and on the Cotswolds. The

Trias-Lias succession takes pride of place (at Aust) but the Avon Gorge is put with Somerset.

Somerset is credited with an impressive 24 sites, of which all but 6 are associated with the Carboniferous Limestone. All the major gorges and their caves are scheduled; namely the Avon Gorge, Burrington Combe, Cheddar and Ebbor Gorge. Added to these are the specific cases of speleological sites at Holwell (Quantocks), Banwell Bone Cave, G.B., Swildon's Hole, St. Cuthbert's Swallet, Lamb Leer, Wookey Hole and Stoke Lane Slocker.

The Avon Gorge account is, understandably, one of the key ones in the book, including a useful correlation of the classic faunal zones of Vaughan with the more practical lithological units adopted by Kellaway and Welch for the current Geological Survey maps of the area. However, both systems are used thereafter and this becomes confusing at times. Many sections have apparently been drafted some time ago and not up-dated prior to publication. This gives rise to a few statements which recent work will contradict, e.g. Banwell Bone Cave which is 'now being re-worked', the Swildon's stream is 'thought probably to issue at the Cheddar rising', Roman Cave is used for Long Hole and the Karst Police will be hurt to read that 'it is impossible to define an exact surface catchment for the Cheddar River'. It also gives the wrong impression that G.B. 'is not normally accessible'.

A few other remarks seem pertinent concerning the cave accounts in the Somerset section. Five small excavated caves on the south side of Brean Down (not in 'The Complete Caves of Mendip') are mentioned - along with nearby Uphill Caves. Aveline's Hole, Plumley's Den, Whitcomb(e)'s Hole, Goatchurch (Cave), Plumley's Hole and Sidcot Swallet are described in a short account entitled 'Caves and Potholes' of Burrington Combe. Plumley's Den, or better Foxe's Hole has a small inaccuracy in grid reference but the Easting figure for Cheddar Risings puts them over ½km. out! The six major archaeological sites in the lower parts of Cheddar Gorge are mentioned but Bridged Pot is the only one dealt with in the Conservancy's own reserve at Ebbor. One finds the use of 'Ebbor Rocks', rather than Hope Wood somewhat misleading in relation to the thrust fault. It is surprising that Gough's 'Mines of Mendip' is not referred to during a section on the mineralogy of the Higher Pitts workings. Considerable attention is given to Wookey Hole and the sites in the outlet valley. The mean daily flow of 23 million gallons is on the high side, so is that quoted for Cheddar resurgences. Balch's speculation about the name of Wookey - and that of Mendip itself - is repeated, as is a memorable section on the bath-water experiment used to simulate the 'terrifying noises' of Wookey.

The book concludes with an annotated timescale of the British Pleistocene and Recent successions. This sort of information is extremely valuable, especially for those unfamiliar with the confusing synonyms and correlations which bedevil the European

literature. Despite the statement that it is a 'provisional rough guide' and is dated 1967, one is a little surprised at the conservative dating - e.g. the beginning of the Pleistocene is now put much earlier than 1500 years ago. A fair glossary and almost 500 references complete the book. As the latter are 'only a selection of the more important and more recent papers' consulted one can well imagine the great amount of research which must have been undertaken to compile the volume. That a few mistakes have been made is annoying to the local but one cannot help being pleased with the overall effort - a more complete approach would have produced an impossibly tedious text.

A final point is that many more sites need scheduling. Whilst there is nothing inviolate about S.S.S.I's they offer some protection against unscrupulous development. The Cave Research Group and Nature Conservancy are known to be anxious that cavers should apply to schedule sites. We should obviously help: how about North Hill Swallet figuring in the next edition of 'Geological Highlights of the West Country'?

### **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

18 Stowberry Avenue,  
WELLS.

28th December, 1970.

The Editor,  
Wessex Cave Club Journal.

Dear Sir,

I wish to refer to the article on p. 172 et seq of the W.C.C. Journal which I received today entitled "From the Standard, 3rd March 1905". The footnote thereto from my old friend Eric Hensler invites guesses as to the identity of the writer of the article, and the names of those who took part in the trip.

There is no shadow of a doubt in my mind that the writer was E.A. Baker, D. Litt, and that the trip he describes took place around Christmas 1904. The style and the phrasing are undoubtedly his, and in very many places complete sentences are identical (or nearly so) with his chapter on Swildons Hole which appears in the "Netherworld of Mendip" (Baker & Balch) published in 1907.

In fact when my eyes fell on p. 172 of the Journal and I read "An insignificant crevice, a hole scarcely wide enough to tempt a fox, alone gives admittance to what is perhaps the wildest and most magnificent cavern in Britain".. I thought, "Hallo, what's this? If they are going to reprint chapters from the Netherworld they should be a bit more careful, for that book says ..scarcely wide enough to tempt a DOG or a fox.."

It was not until I had reached the end and read Eric's footnote that I realised that very many

cavers of the present and even the last generation may never have read this book as it has been out of print for many years. Having, so to speak, "cut my teeth" on it, and could repeat many passages verbatim, the author of the newspaper article was immediately identified.

Since the date of the article is 1905, and "Netherworld" was not published until 1907, the remote possibility of some enterprising and not too particular individual hashing up an article from the book for the newspaper, could be dismissed.

To me, it is beyond doubt that the article is Baker's who, subsequently agreeing to write a book in collaboration with Balch, made use of his earlier writings as the foundation of his subsequent effort. The Netherworld tells us that the members of the exploring party were, in addition to Baker, Messrs Troup, Bamforth and Barnes, and that they expected to be joined later by H.E. Balch, and a Mr. Slater. They did not get beyond the Forty Foot Pot on that occasion owing to very wet conditions. The newspaper article however goes one better than the Netherworld. The latter, in Baker's inimitable prose describing the end of the trip, says ..."The stars were shining from a clear sky, and a keen frost was on the fields, but the excitement and the success of our adventure were stimulant enough to keep out the cold". The Newspaper article informs us "We had come to the cavern at noon; between ten and eleven we stood once more under the stars. Hoar frost covered the fields and a keen wind was blowing; we had been drenched from head to foot for many hours, but a brisk four miles' walk down the hill to Wells restored the circulation". After closing time, too!

Yours sincerely,

Jack W. Duck.

Bath,  
Nov. 6th, 1970.

Dear Sir,

### A VISIT TO HÖLLOCH

Hölloch in Muotatal, Switzerland, is the second longest cave known in the world. More than 100kms of passages have been mapped. There is more than 2,000 feet of relief in the system. In this respect, and others, it is a greater challenge than the longest cave of them all, Flint Ridge in remote Kentucky. Hölloch is in a charming alpine valley just one hour's drive east of Luzern and the entrance is only five minute's walk from the car park of the local pub. There are few formal restrictions on the entry of competent cavers, though the cave is gated. With all these merits it is surprising that British cavers, who are invading the Continental regions in increasing numbers, do not visit it. On a recent trip there I was told by the Swiss that they scarcely ever do.

There are several possible reasons for this neglect. Hölloch has only one entrance, which is at the downstream end of the system. It is prone to drastic summer flooding. At least one Swiss party has been trapped for more than a week. Therefore it is a place for Autumn and Winter exploration, but this could be combined with a skiing holiday at the many resorts nearby. Hölloch's lack of popularity may reflect the fact that its exploration is being pursued very vigorously by the Swiss themselves. The principal team is led by the famous speleologist, Dr. Alfred Bögli. The team makes one big expedition each year, working out from remote underground bivouacs. Recent discoveries have been obtained by hundreds of feet of maypoling and free climbing up great avens. The next expedition at the New Year, will involve some 45 explorers and surveyors supported by more than 400 sherpas! Casual foreign visitors are unlikely, therefore, to make any major new discoveries. But the known cave offers fine sport of every kind and few of the passages display the wear and tear of much traffic that is so common in Britain.

Hölloch is developed in two thick plates of crystalline limestone that compose a complex alpine "nappe" of overthrust. Big chunks of glauconitic sandstone were mashed into the limestone during the thrusting and outcrop in passage walls and floors occasionally. The rocks generally dip NW at 12° - 20° and the cave is a maze on dip and strike, draining SW. It consists of a major system in the lower thrust plate overlain by three higher, smaller, complexes in the upper plate. From the entrance to the most remote eastern parts the cave extends some six kms back into the host mountain. It is like nothing so much as a gigantic version of Paradise Regained and the Shattered Series in Swildon's Hole: (the genetic significance of this observation will not escape certain readers).

In October this year, Dr. Bögli and others gave me a fine tourist trip in Hölloch. Its temperature is 5-6°C. and standard Mendip caving clothing proved adequate. I was just able to keep my feet dry. In 23 hours of reasonably-paced exploration I was shown some 15kms of different passageways, encompassing most of the variety of form and scenery in the cave. From the Entrance, the first km. is liable to total submersion in summer. We twisted and turned in large, black, scoured galleries until we were 200 feet below the entrance level, (The Cellar). Here there was a 120 feet climb up excellent fixed ladders. The climb is an open rock face and I take my hat off to the man who first ascended it. It led to "Seen Gang", the first of many clean elliptical galleries of comfortable walking height. Seen Gang swings up and down aslant dip and strike with a pool to be avoided at the bottom of every down. It led to "Dome Gang", a long slippery ascent to a fine wet aven, "Wasser Dom". With further ascent we left the region of the cave that is swept clean by summer streams and entered silt-floored passages of the Paradise Regained type, dry and warm. At the end of six hours we were, in vertical terms, 1200 feet above our lowest point in the Cellar, and some two kms south of it.

An entertaining squeeze gave access to the "Gallery of 1001 Nights". A mixture of stooping and hands-and-knees work took us through delicate grottos where many vividly red stalactites are to be seen. Dr. Bögli stopped to work there and I was sent on with a couple of keen youngsters to complete a round trip. The crawling began with a vengeance. We had to get across ½ km. of unmapped maze, missed the correct turn and spent a couple of hours in nose-scrape-the-roof flatteners of uncomfortably steep gradient. "I think this is new ground", said the guide. I wasn't surprised.

When we did hit the right route, ("Trait d'union"), there was 200 feet of sporty rope descent mixed with little overhanging pitches back up again. They brought us to another long series of elliptical passages, "Roll Gang" and "Solitude". There were good erratics of gypsum efflorescences. Then we arrived at Bivouac II, which is halfway between the entrance and the innermost extensions of the cave. It's quite a set-up. The walls are whitewashed, there's a stout table to sit at and abundant foam rubber mattresses to lie upon. The elaborate kitchen was scrupulously clean. There was even a standard transistor receiving radio. Its serial consisted of a single strand strung along 200 yards of passage. Reception was excellent although we were much farther inside a rock mass than you can get in any British cave. All of the active Holloch bivvies have these radios because teams are underground for ten days at a time and weather forecasts may be important. We tuned into a Luzern pop station and brewed up.

After Bivouac II a lake crossing in a rubber boat brought us to "Titan Gang", one of the largest passages of the outer cave. It was another allipse-shape, twisting up and down aslant strike for hundreds of feet at a time. We turned off to look at more helictites, (Polypgang"), and then traversed the "Innominata", a smaller version of Titan Gang. This stops at the Styx, a difficult lake where the rubber boat was missing. So we detoured up a gruesome muddy crawl and then slid happily down into Seen Gang and out of the cave. The sun shone from a sharp blue sky and mist shimmered against tall limestone walls. It was 9 a.m. on a Sunday morning but the pub served us litres of beer and then huge plates of ham and eggs. It was a great trip.

I hope that others will go along and have a look. There must be more sport to be had in the one hundred or so kilometres of Hölloch that I didn't get to see! As a courtesy and a matter of common sense, intending visitors should contact Dr. Bögli. His address is: 6285 Hitzkirch, Luzern.

Derek Ford.

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### An Apology

The Editor regrets that many Members have not been receiving their copy of the Journal until most of the news is stale. The problem has been that finding someone to replace Brenda Willis has been held up. Brenda did an excellent job and we extend to her our thanks. Maurice Hewins is now to takeover postal duties, while Wally Willcocks has agreed to deliver copies to those whom he is sure to meet during a Mendip weekend. Ron Foord, the printer, did an excellent stop-gap job just before Christmas by posting all the inland copies after the power dispute had ruined his efforts to print the Journal early.

## Wessex H.Q. Book Sales

For the last year a pilot book-sales scheme for members has been running at Upper Pitts H.Q. Financed by a member of the Club, the profits are used to buy more books for the Club Library. The following books have been donated by the scheme to date:

The Caves of N.W. County Clare, E..K. Tratman (Ed).  
Radiant Darkness, Bögli and Franck.  
Complete Caves of Mendip, Barrington-Stanton.

The latest offer from the scheme is Baker's 'Caving', first published in 1935. List priced at £3/3/0 members who collect it from the H.Q. can get it for £2/15/6. Other discount prices are:

Radiant Darkness, listed at £3/3/0 ... our price £2/15/6.  
Complete Caves of Mendip, listed at 15/- ... our price 14/-  
Pioneer Under the Mendips, Stanton, ... 12/-  
Wessex C.C. Jnl. Vol. One, Reprint ... 5/-  
" " " Supp. to Vol. 8 ... 5/-

If there is a particular book that members want please contact Michael Dewdney-York - he may be able to get a discount if three copies are ordered. Thus, if you can find some friends in the Club who also want the book . . . Strictly money with order. The scheme benefits both the Club and you!

## Lucky Escape for Nick and Roly Barrington



The A38 nearly claimed two more victims when Nick and his wife were 'sandwiched' at Christmas time. Both have got over the shock and remark on their good fortune at emerging relatively unhurt from their own 'Squeeze Machine'.

## THE CAVES OF CUMBERLAND

by Glenn Tomkinson

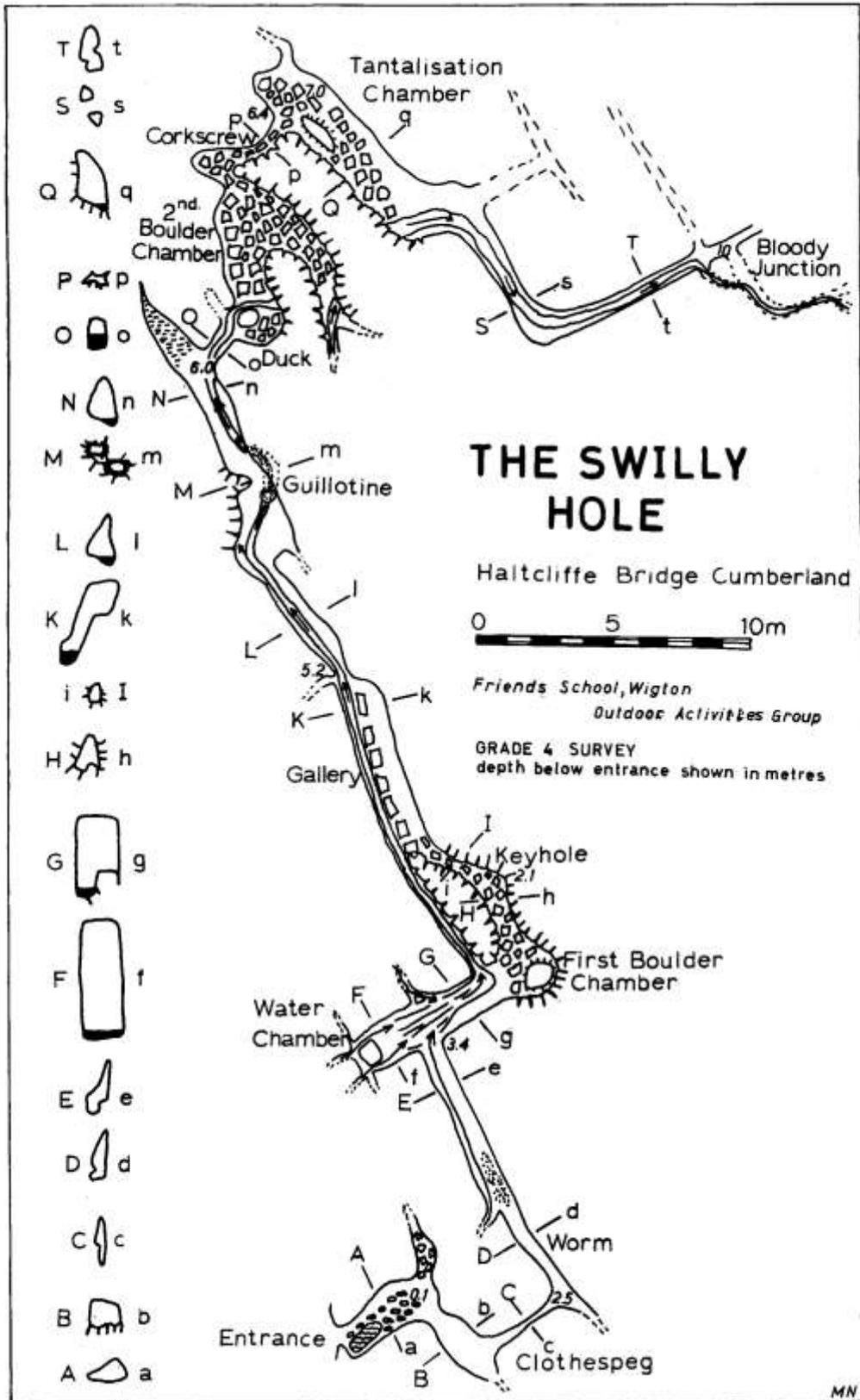
Yes, there are some! And yet more before long I hope. Soon after I came to the district I noticed some depressions by the side of the road near the village of Caldbeck. Having moved to what I thought was a cave-less county I could hardly believe that they were just what they appeared to be - swallets. Sure enough the geological map showed a familiar blue strip around the northern fringe of the Lake District and I soon remembered reading a reference in 'British Caving' to a small cave choked by boulder clay near Cockermouth.

With boys from the Outdoor Activities Group at the Friends School, Wigton, where I teach, I have since had good cause to curse that very boulder clay, but we have found one fair sized cave and several smaller ones. Our efforts have been concentrated in three main regions; the limestone pavement area east of Blindcrake; the Mickle Rigg, Aughtertree Fell, Faulds Brow areas in the Caldbeck Fells and the Caldew valley between Sebergham and Mosedale. Much of the limestone of the area is very impure, containing beds of shale and calcareous sandstone. The whole area is covered by boulder clay except where it has been removed by streams, or on hill tops. As a consequence of the impurities in the rock most of the caves are small and unpleasant to explore, the limit often being a bed of shale or a bifurcation in the stream.

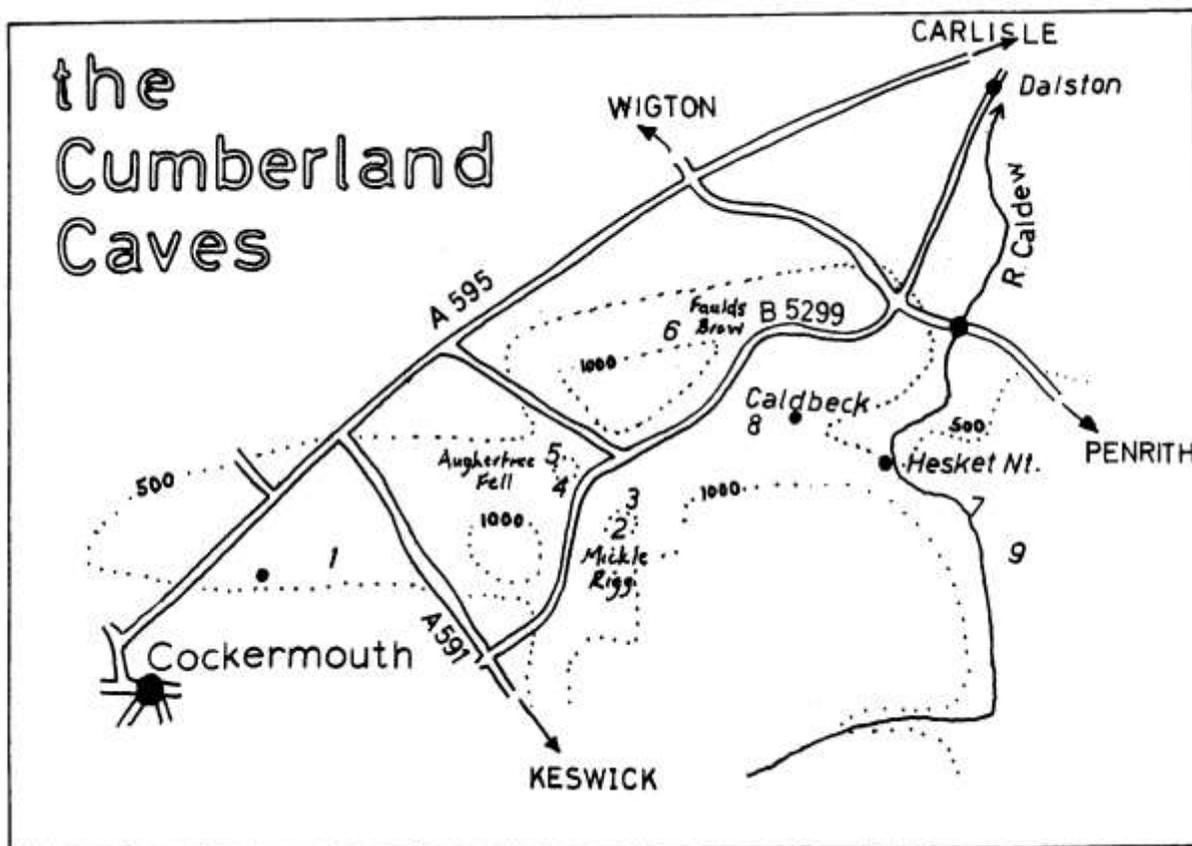
In the Blindcrake area there are a number of resurgences below the limestone pavement which might be worth investigation. There is a small cave, Sunderlands Head Pot, at the eastern end of the area where a small stream sinks into a wooded hollow, augmented by a field drain. A steeply inclined bedding plane leads to a sandy floored chamber where the streams seeps away.

On the Mickle Rigg, Cox's Hole gives access to what appears to be the top of a mud and boulder-choked shaft. Digging continues. Nearby a fair sized stream sinks at Frog's Swallet but repeated efforts to enter the cave which undoubtedly exists here have been frustrated by the unstable nature of the entrance. On Aughtertree Fell, Second Hand Hole also takes a fair volume of water but becomes too tight to follow after twenty feet or so. Cross Pot also becomes too tight after a short distance. On Fauld's Brow, Doctor's Pot is a twenty-five foot deep shaft with unstable boulders at the bottom. There are innumerable small sinks in the area, many of which would probably give access to small caves but, with the exception of Cox's Hole which has definite scalloping on the walls, they all appear to have been made by small streams and are of recent origin.

In dry weather the River Caldew disappears about a mile above Heskett Newmarket and reappears just above Sebergham. The first sinking point appears to be just below Haltcliffe Bridge at a place known locally as the Swilly Holes. Here we have found an interesting and sporting cave about 400 feet long which is our one important discovery to date. It is very probable that there are more caves to be found along the valley. Above Haltcliffe Bridge a large stream sinks at Bishop's Pot (oddly enough the local name for the area is Bishopspot, pronounced Bishop's Spot!). We are still digging here and have high hopes. There are also two small caves in a gorge called The Howk in the Cald Beck.

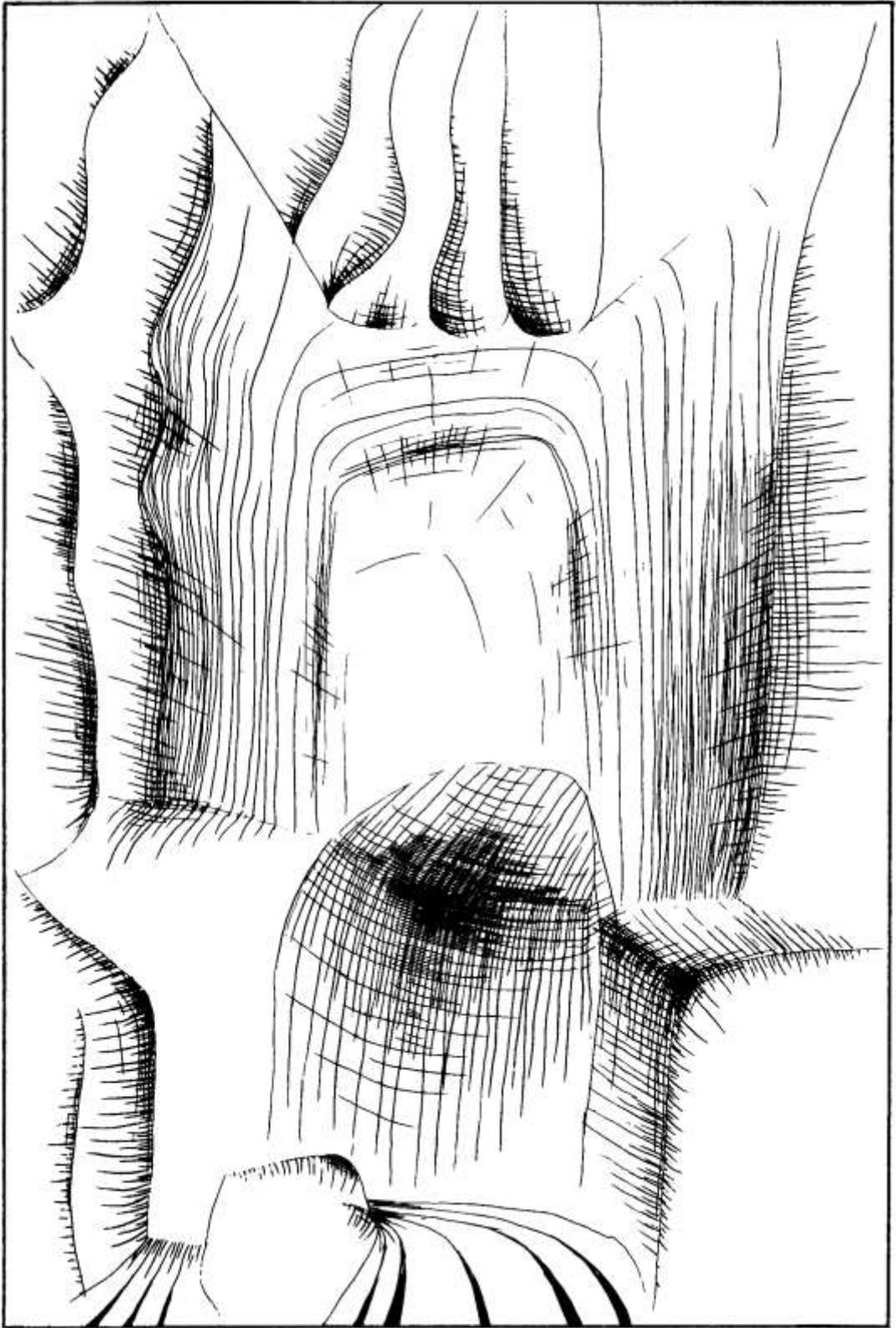


As yet the Swilly Hole is the only considerable cave in Cumberland but it is likely that more discoveries are to be made in the Calder Valley. The other areas, although interesting, are probably unlikely to produce large caves except at Cox's Hole, where the cave has all the appearance of being part of a fully developed system.



Key to the Caves

1. Sunderland Heads Pot NY 168356
2. Cox's Hole NY 273369
3. Frog's Swallet NY 274373
4. Second Hand Hole NY 265377
5. Cross Pot NY 264380
6. Doctor's Pot NY 291407
7. Swilly Hole NY 367367
8. Howk. NY 319398
9. Bishop's Pot NY 375361



The Water Chamber in the Swilly Hole

## MORE AFRICAN CAVES

by B.L. Hansford

### Sinoia Caves Rhodesia (The Sleeping Pool)

An elephant hunter first visited these caves in 1877 - he thought it was an ancient mine working on seeing the great hole in the ground. His mistake is easy to understand by anyone who has seen the enormous cavity left by ancient copper miners a few miles away.

The pool when viewed from the bottom of the inclined passage appears to be blue, though in fact the water is incredibly clear - as can be seen from the gallery of the Dark Cave. From this gallery one can see down through the water and pick out details of the rock face far below. Even so the water does appear blue close to the rock and this turns to green the further down into the water you fix your gaze.

Recent explorations of the caves by the Rhodesian Sub-Aqua and Speleological Research Group have shown that the depth of the water in the pool varies between 265 and 300 feet (80 - 90m) - which is the greatest depth so far explored. Several underwater passages have been explored but they return to the main pool again. The Cave of Bats has three outlets; one leads to a small cavern known as Blind Cave, accessible to divers only. The second connects with the main pool some 175 feet (53m) below the surface, while the third remains to be explored.

Samples of silt from the floor of the pool have yielded several rare types of microscopic creatures, one of which is a new species. The Research Group believes that the water in the caves is connected to a bigger body of water as the temperature never varies from 72°F. (22°C). It is hoped that evidence of primitive man may be found, for similar formations in the Transvaal show that these caves were used as homes by the Southern Monkeyman, who walked erect and used antelope bones for weapons.

The Sinoia Caves are situated five miles north of Sinoia on the fully-tarred Great North Road between Salisbury Rhodesia and Lusaka Zambia. Sinoia is named from the Chief in whose possession the elephant hunter found the caves, with a stockade built round them to act as a retreat during raids by the Matabele. In African language the caves are described as the Pool of the Fallen (Chirorodziua). In the 1830's a tribe moving north surprised people nearby and threw them all into the pool.

### Kapongwe Cave, Zambia

During my stay in Zambia I visited two caves; one, the Chipongwe Cave, I have already dealt with briefly (Wessex Jnl. 10/123, June 1969). However, Kapongwe Cave was the first cave I visited, along with other members of my firm.

Kapongwe Cave lies east of the township of Kafue, and is very close to the Kafue River. Local legend has it that during visits by warring tribes the locals would don their caving kit, enter the caves and emerge some half a mile distant by the banks of the river.

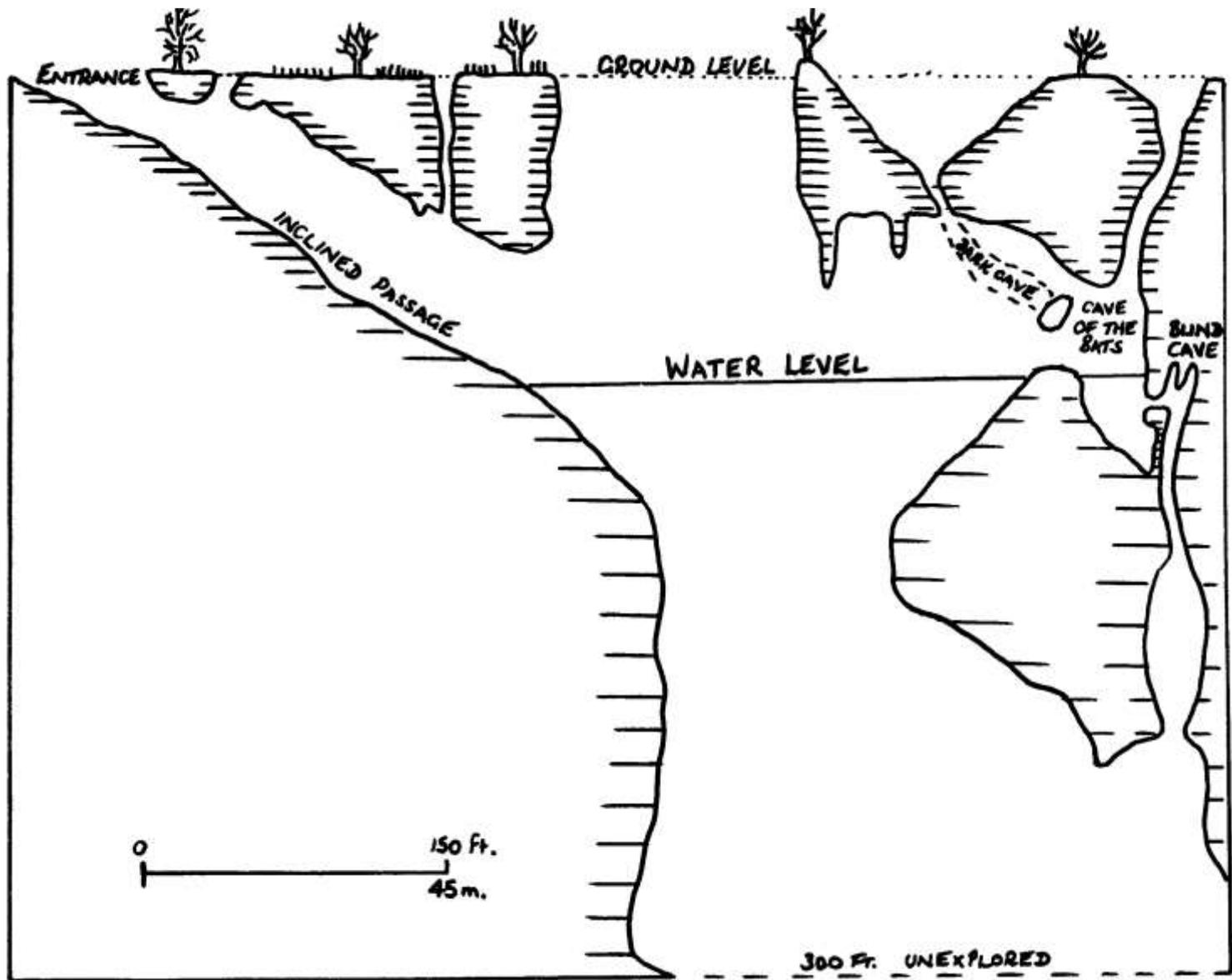
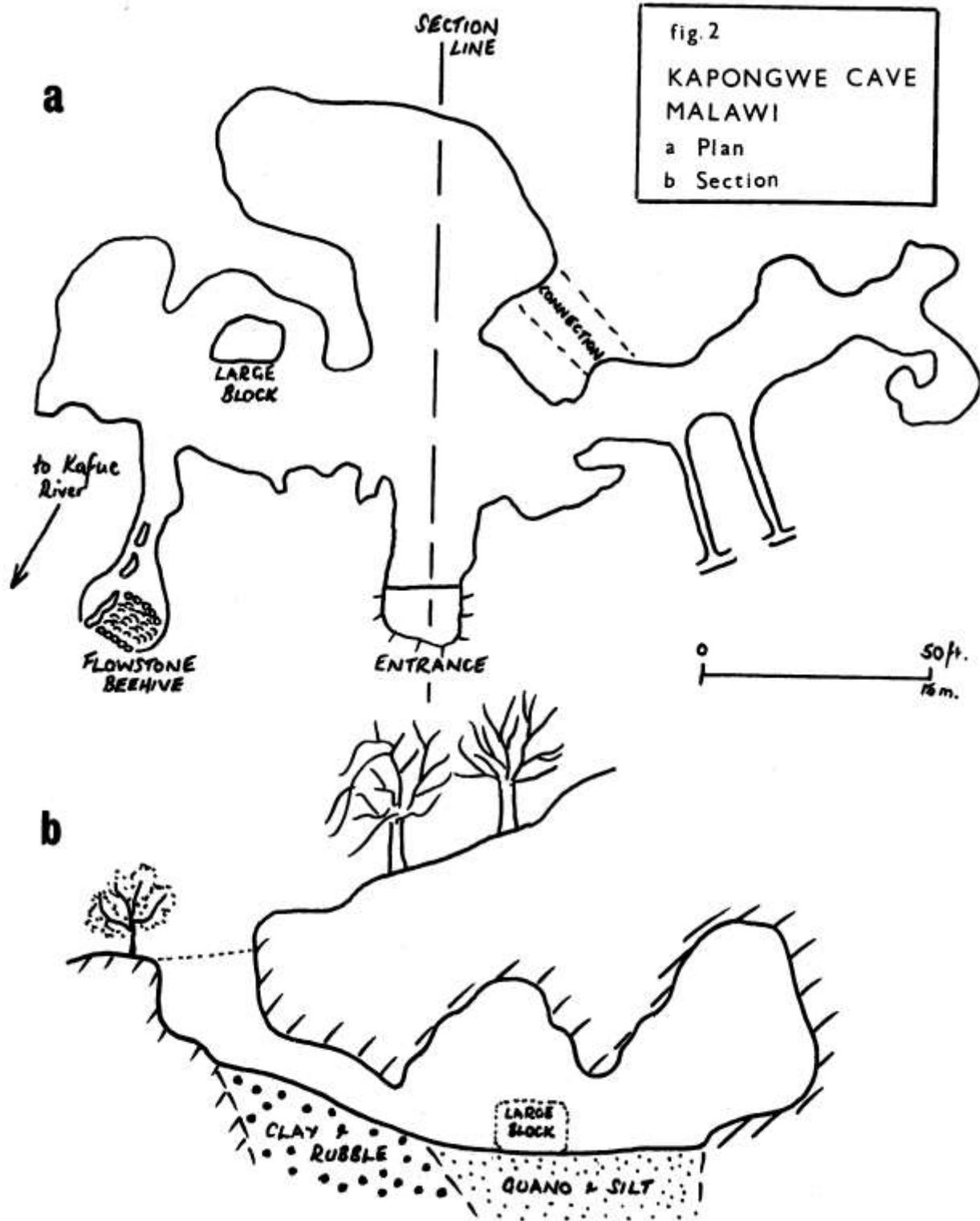


Fig 1 SINOIA CAVES RHODESIA



The cave is owned, along with the surrounding land, by the local farmer-come-publican, who also runs the Kafue Fishing Club. His permission must be sought to enter the cave as he is mining guano therein. A nineteen mile journey (30km) south of Lusaka takes you to the cave, signposted to the fishing club, along some of the worst dirt road I drove on in Zambia.

Having asked the owner we were granted permission and were also accorded, by means of a kick, the use of the cook boy to take us there. After leaving us at the entrance he walked away muttering and shaking his head. On first seeing the entrance I was highly delighted, imagining Swildon's Plus and wishing I had a nife cell. The hand-held torch and candles were to prove adequate!

The cave was quite dry and showed no signs of water in any amount. One small chamber had a very fine beehive flow, with organ-pipe stalactites joined to its apex and a curtain effect at the base. Hanging from the roof and nearly touching the right of the beehive was a stal curtain. These were the only decorations in what was otherwise a singularly drab cave.

The first rift type tube on the right of the entrance I managed to push to the end but found the cross rift too tight to penetrate. The legendary connection with the Kafue River did not reveal itself. There is no indication on the present level floor of the cave of where it might be.

While we were poking around one of the party nearly collapsed with fright. A giant bat had nearly knocked him down as it flew past. Trembling, he pointed to where the giant bat sat blinking his owlish eyes at us, not in the least shaken by its encounter with a caver. It is interesting to note that while bats were everywhere in the cave there were no fruit bats. They were plentiful in the district - the owner having trouble with them in his orchard. Horse-shoe and Leaf-nosed bats were definitely there, but not in very large numbers. Also missing were the cockroaches, found in profusion down Chipongwe Cave.

After the trip yours truly nearly lost the party in the bush - taking an hour to find the way back, instead of the nonchalant twenty minutes when led on the outward journey by the cook boy. On returning the owner provided cold beer and his wife sandwiches - she also showed us a rich collection of semi-precious stones from the neighbourhood. A worthwhile trip, if only for that beer!

N.B. Kapongwe and Chipongwe Caves were visited in the dry season - an intention to visit them during the wet season was abandoned in view of Caves Disease mentioned in the Chipongwe write-up.

## REVIEWS

'Reflections by "Alfie" with drawings by "Jok". A look at the "Spelaeodes" and other caving sagas'. Published by Barton Productions in conjunction with the Cheddar Valley Press and Printed by the Oakhill Press. Price 12/- (60p)

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Barton Productions and the Oakhill Press have done it again! Those of us who have unforgettable, if somewhat hazy, memories of the now departed cavers' room at The Hunters will greatly appreciate this collection of "Alfie's" delightful "spelaeodes" and other ditties which, to quote the remark immortalised by Ben, do not contain "Them Words". Nowadays, perhaps, greater sobriety and certainly lack of opportunity, limit recitals to a few favoured high spots each year; so, the publication of "Alfie's" works is timely and effectively seals his undoubted position as Laureate.

Those who recall most, if not all, of the actual events which stimulated Alfie into his ingenious verse will be able to nod knowingly at the innuendoes and improbable antics of his central characters. The new generation, undoubtedly unaware of the whole repertoire, may rediscover some of the close community atmosphere which was the hallmark of Mendip caving until sheer numbers brought less spontaneity. Thus "Reflections" is an apt title, for it embodies the essential element of nostalgia as well as its more obvious summary of the contents.

But, to interpret "Alfie's" poetry as merely verbal comment on the state of caving does it less than justice. Indeed, to treat it seriously at all is to contradict the spirit in which it was written and the very manner under which it has been traditionally performed.

Such is the dilemma surrounding much Folk Lore - it has always seemed appropriate to your reviewer, and one suspects "Alfie", that erudite is preceded by erudition in most dictionaries! Suffice it to say that the presentation of this 91-page book and its printing are first class, the illustrations superbly apposite and the main cause for publication most worthy.

Every caver should have a personal copy to turn to when things are getting somewhat tedious. Let's hope "Alfie" himself gets over his dose of Iambic Tetramorrhoea very soon.

J.D.H.

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Editor's Note; Members will note that Nick Barrington is allowing discount to the Club on this book. He is contributing profits to the Belfry Fund.

‘Some Problems of a Karst Area in the Eastern Transvaal, South Africa’ by Margaret E. Marker. *Trans. Inst. of Brit. Geographers*, N° 50 (July 1970), pp. 73-85.

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This paper deals with some of the landforms characterising the pre-Cambrian Dolomites in the upper Blyde Basin, 435 km. east of Johannesburg. The dolomites form the Great Escarpment between the undulating plateau of the Highveld and the Lowveld plains to the east. The Blyde valley occupies a deeply dissected elongated basin in the former and is controlled by rift faulting; its outlet is via a spectacular canyon. Strong relief helps to produce over 1000mm. of rain a year and hence perennial streams.

After a glance at the geology and a resume of Lester King's erosion cycles in South Africa, attempts are made to describe, explain and date the distinctive conical hills, intervening valleys and their infill. Although the hills appear merely as interfluves, they are in fact variants of tower and cone karst produced during a wetter past. Small caves, perched high above present water levels are cited as evidence. Lateral erosion and spring sapping are said to account for the wide basins, yet there is no indication of their occurring today, even after exceptional rainfall. Thus valley fill is considered important in dating such processes. Terrace material, particularly on the older, higher levels, suggest a hotter and wetter past, during which karst processes were very intensive. The author concludes by debating the possibility of the development being Miocene and Pliocene.

Little is mentioned of the caves in the area. Although the difficulties of exploration here are only too clear the caves probably conceal key features which would have aided the interpretation of the other elements. The overall impression is that of a rather sketchy, speculative approach.

J.D.H.

‘The Limestone Pavements of the North Crop of the South Wales Coalfield’. By T.M. Thomas. *Trans. Inst. of Brit. Geographers*. N° 50, (July 1970) pp. 87-105.

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The author has mapped in detail and studied 214 separate pavements along the northern outcrop of the Carboniferous Limestone in South Wales, Their frequency appears greatest where the dip is gentle and on the upper strata of the north-facing benches or cuestas. Contrasts are drawn with the classic versions in Yorkshire which display more distinct hollows and fluting: those in South Wales exhibit angular and flaggy blocks. It is agreed that this disintegration provides a measure of post-glacial solution here. A sequence of progressive solutional widening along minor fracture planes (rather than joints or grikes) leading to collapse of the intervening tabular clint surface is proposed.

Different rates of disintegration are evident on the various lithological units of the limestone, being up to 0.75m on the fine-grained oolites and 0.40m on the ‘standard’

limestones. Comparisons with areas blanketed by drift reveal lowering taking place as well - particularly, of course, where dolines have developed. However, there is some evidence for drift giving protection elsewhere. One imagines a lot depends on the type of drift! A neat and simple examination of removal beneath erratic blocks of glacial origin is attempted in order to confirm the lowering rates. Microclimates created by such blocks complicate matters but the theme is worth pursuing for they must also have a bearing on clints and grikes.

It is concluded that the study supports other general assessments of the lowering of limestone surfaces over the last 10,000 years in this country. For example, independent techniques based on the chemical analysis of cave waters give values of the order of 0.5m.

J.D.H.

'The Story of Wookey Hole', by E.J. Mason (published by Mrs. G.W. Hodgkinson), 3rd. Edition, May 1970.

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As perhaps befits a site whose earliest record has been ascribed to Clement of Alexandria nearly eighteen hundred years ago, the story of Wookey Hole Cave and its surroundings is rich in legend and history. Add to this the natural grandeur of the cave and countryside, the drama of diving and the doubling of the system's length last year and one has the ingredients of a fine guide book. The author, Ted Mason, himself a well-known archaeologist and early cave diver, has the obvious qualifications to write the book.

This edition is far better than its predecessors on many counts, not the least being the improved format, printing and the colourful B.I.C.C. cover picture looking across the First Chamber. Also, the survey in the centre of the book has been brought up to date as far as possible. However, most of the text remains intact and still tends to read as though no stone can remain unturned. Readers are told what they ought to do and see rather than be encouraged to find out for themselves; for example, "Should we have to wait for a few minutes for a party to assemble or the last party to emerge, we can sit here on one of the seats and marvel at the limestone (sic) cliffs in which the cave lies" .... and so on. For your reviewer at least, this style proves a little tedious and conceals the informative nature of the book.

Most of the factual history and archaeological findings stem from H.E. Balch's classic monograph and it has been usefully condensed. However, it is a little odd to find the account of the discovery and exploration of the Twentieth Chamber tacked on to the section entitled 'The Museum' rather than the following one on 'Cave Diving at Wookey Hole'. Despite the fact that last year's finds have proved perhaps the post-war highlight

of events at Wookey, the latter section is devoted to operations and techniques which became outdated at least a decade ago. One feels that this ought to have been updated.

Typical of the pervading 'completeness' approach is a four-page section on 'How caves are formed'. Again, this is somewhat dated and, annoyingly, phreatic is persistently misprinted as 'phraetic'. The final two pages are devoted to brief mention of notable sites in Wells, Glastonbury and nearby Ebbor. Thus the booklet is more than just a guide for casual visitors; it describes a great amount in detail and seeks to explain and instruct concerning the mystique which has always been one of Wookey's attractions. For a few shillings (or should one say a few Pence?) it is a good buy.

'Limestone Morphology in Ireland' - in 'Irish Geographical Studies', Ed. by N. Stephens and R.E. Glasscock, Queens Univ. Belfast, Geography Dept. Price £3.

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This Chapter (VII, pages 105-124) in the volume prepared as a tribute to Prof. Estyn Evans, was written by Paul Williams. One might have expected the author's name after reading the title. Together with those whose work he copiously references in the chapter, Paul Williams has been responsible for the proper study and latterly the publicity of some of our most outstanding karst scenery - that of Ireland.

The first section, on geology, reminds us that virtually three quarters of the Island is not Emerald but sky blue - the colour we reserve for Carboniferous Limestone. However, much of the middle is covered by glacial material. Williams stresses the importance of stratigraphically subdividing the Lower Carboniferous rocks, particularly with respect to impurities in the Limestone - chert bands and shale often show up importantly as guiding lines to landform development. The importance of the mantle of glacial deposits is also stressed. The statement that almost all modern caves contain in situ glaciofluvial deposits (with the example of Poll an Ionain) is fence-sitting on the pre/post glacial origin controversy. The tacit implication is that a pre-glacial origin is likely. This would receive short change in a certain bar!

In a section on erosion rates Williams does us the service of tabulating all the results obtained by different workers in different parts for the rate of lowering. He rightly mentions that detailed study reveals that perhaps only 25% of solutational erosion is at the surface in the Fergus Basin but that most is effected by the percolation system, especially where limestone is the only rock. 'In calcareous systems the streamway is a mainline of solute transport, not a locus of corrosion...' This is certainly borne out by recent Mendip investigations. There is also a graph relating discharge to total load removed in solution, in grams per second. The correlation coefficient is 0.941, positive. Thus the flood is the temporal localisation of erosion.

Many of us, who were taught historical geomorphology and then discovered the mind-blowing joy of process studies, feel we owe it to the old school to make historical interpretations from our results. Paul Williams has no qualms about this - wading into the problems of whether the erosion which reduced the limestone in mid-Ireland to a low plane was Tertiary or not. Process studies provide handy but negative evidence about the origin of the lake basins in Ireland - in many the water is supersaturated with limestone and a solutional origin is therefore impossible under present geological and climatic conditions. One all the time senses that the final confrontation with historical geomorphology will come when all climatic erosion regimes have been quantified and the full pattern of Tertiary and Pleistocene climatic change elucidated.

The section on the Burren obviously pays tribute to the work of the U.B.S.S. It is not often that even members of that organisation remember the unique contribution to karst study it has made under Dr. Tratman. By labelling the Burren surface as structural and mentioning the poorly organised groundwater system in the area Williams advocates a youthful karst - a seeming contradiction of his earlier generalisation about great age of erosion in Ireland. He stresses that limestone pavements are not, despite text-books, particularly karstic - they are glacial forms. He also mentions the role of vegetation and vegetation changes in pavement formation.

Altogether a useful summary of the author's Irish work. One feels loathe to criticise chapters in books such as this - nobody will take a chance with new or controversial results - and the author has done well to make such a comprehensive an account so free of generalisations.

M.D.N.

### CAVES: THEIR ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

University of Leicester, Department of Adult Education, in cooperation with the Cave Research Group of Great Britain present:

A One-day Symposium, Saturday, March 6th., 10.00 - 18.30.

Programme includes lectures by T.D. Ford, A. Bögli, A.C. Waltham, L.G. Bray, D.I. Smith, D.C. Ford, M.D., Newson and G.T. Warwick, with discussion from the floor after each paper.

Fee £1.00, with full-time students £0.65.

Details from: The Secretary, Vaughan College, St. Nicholas Circle, Leicester, LE1 4LB.

## **THE COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS: A.G.M.** **JANUARY 9th 1971**

As in previous years this meeting took place in the Geography Department at Bristol University. Some 40 people were present and Jim Hanwell took the Chair.

Up-to-date information was given to the effect that Box Hill Mines were not gated as had been previously rumoured and that the UBSS had decided that their guides were no longer a requirement for G.B. trips by non-Charterhouse Caving Committee clubs. Oliver Lloyd, as the retiring Honorary Secretary/Treasurer then gave his annual reports; the most important points arose from the National Caving Association Meeting already reported in W.C.C. Jnl. 11,132, (Dec. 1970) pp. 169-70. Specific issues were then dealt with:

- 1) It was suggested that the CSCC propose that the admission of new members to the N.C.A., together with finance and constitutional matters be subject to a 90% majority. However, those present felt it desirable that CSCC delegates should not be mandated to this proposal.
- 2) Following a discussion on the Conservation survey to be undertaken under the auspices of the N.C.A., a Border Caving Club proposal that the CSCC appoint a Conservation Officer to enquire into these matters was carried unanimously. A distinction was drawn between cavers' own standards in cave spoilation and liaison with outside bodies concerning access and controls. It was felt that the former could only rest with individuals and clubs but that there was a pressing need for closer contacts with those bodies whose decisions could have a bearing on caving activities.
- 3) After weighing up the advantages or otherwise of obtaining a grant from the Sports Council, it was decided that the CSCC's activities to date did not justify such an application.
- 4) The meeting concurred that it was the correct thing for the N.C.A.'s scientific bodies to go ahead with the framing of a proposal for an International Speleological Congress in Britain in 1977.

Divergent views were expressed concerning the possibility of a shaft into Bone Chamber at Stoke Lane Slocker, an S.S.S.I., protected by the Nature Conservancy. This had been provisionally proposed by the local quarry management. Though more information was needed it was agreed to let the Conservancy protect the interests of cavers 'in their own way'.

Howard Kenney then tabled his momentous recommendations for the Council to promote the Council of Southern Caving Clubs Company Limited. The justification for such a body, and how it would work, had been discussed at length throughout the year in committee and in member clubs; for example at the Wessex A.G.M. last October. Howard's proposals were carried unanimously and the first Directors instructed to proceed with the Company's formation and to report back with further details. The Directors until January next are Jim Hanwell, Tony

Knibs, Howard Kenney (also Secretary), Oliver Lloyd, Alan Thomas and Frank Murphy.

Following the Company appointments the officers of the CSCC itself were elected: namely, Oliver Lloyd (Hon. Sec. and Treas.), Eric Catherine (Asst. Treasurer) and Richard Witcombe (Conservation Officer). Oliver announced his intention to resign at the A.G.M. on January 8th. 1972 since he would then be over sixty and felt that someone younger must take over. The last business before the meeting closed was to confirm that it was no longer a legal requirement to sign across a postage stamp to acquire, e.g., Charterhouse Caving Committee Permits, or Lamb Leer Blood Chits.

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### **STOP PRESS!**

#### A Notable Success for the M.R.O.

On Sunday, 24th of January, about 10.a.m., eleven Midsomer Norton scouts went into Swildon's Hole, accompanied by their driver, Dudley Soffe. Mr. Soffe, whose son was on the trip, had never caved before. He was lightly clad. In the tight rift at the head of the Lower Oxbow (Upper Series) his 14 stone (6' 3" tall) became jammed. The M.R.O. were alerted, as Soffe seemed unable to help himself, and Howard Kenney raised a party led by Peter Franklin at 13.30.

Meanwhile a Fred Davies party was emerging from work down below and joined in. Though the smallest were able to touch Soffe from either end he was unable or unwilling to help himself and remained stuck. Someone complicated things by suggesting that Soffe was epileptic, but this was found to be false on telephoning his doctor. By 15.30 he was being given Dexedrine and glucose. Fred Davies came out at 16.00 and was very pessimistic about the chances of rescuing Soffe, although ropes has been secured fore and aft. More glucose, together with chocolate and hot soup were sent down and a medical warden requested. A full-scale call-out was initiated because of Soffe's deteriorating condition and the forecast of heavy rain.

From then on the teams received the sort of co-operation and co-ordinating control which is the aim of all rescue organisations. The Police brought lights and radioed for other necessities, the Fire Brigade stood by to pump if rain came, R.A.F. Lyneham gave hourly weather forecasts for Priddy, based on the European synoptic situation, Wells Red Cross provided 10 hot water bottles which were insulated with fibreglass and sent underground with gas cookers to heat replacement water. Compressed air jack hammers were used to enlarge the passage - Luke Devenish arrived with the equipment and RNAS Yeovilton (plus a BBC sound engineer!) provided ear muffs. Inner tubes and Lilos were sent in because the rescuers hoped to jack up Soffe's body by inflation.

Dr. Bob Everton went down at 17.45, followed by a new shift with more equipment. Soffe was given muscle relaxant at 18.45. Dr. Parker replaced Dr. Everton. William Stanton enlarged the passage from below while ropes and hauling techniques were used from above. By 22.30 Soffe had not budged.

However, at 23.00 came reports that he had been fractionally moved. Stemples provided by the Fire Brigade had enabled ropes to be fixed from above and the patient had been lifted instead of pulled. Rapid progress followed and Soffe was brought out in an exposure suit. The cave was cleared by 01.00 on the 25th.

This rescue proved far more difficult than envisaged. Such a large man, thirty-eight years old and with no experience, is difficult to move, especially if he will not help himself when he can. Later he became a very serious exposure risk, spending 10 hours in light sodden clothes. It is a tribute to the persistence of those underground and the willingness of surface workers of all organisations to co-operate that Dudley Soffe is still alive.