

CONTENTS

	Page
The Mendips <i>Edward Hutton</i>	57
Club News	58
Letters to the Editor	59
Mendip Notes <i>Wimblestone</i>	61
News from other Regions	61
Stoke Lane Slocker – Location Notes <i>J.D. Hanwell & B.E. Prewer</i>	63
Park Corner Swallet <i>Al Mills, Dave Walker</i>	66
The Demise of SRT – 2 Persistence Pays <i>Phil Hendy</i>	69
Ogof Craig-a-Ffynnon <i>Proteus</i>	71
Reviews	71
From the Log	72
Mendip's Top Thirty	74

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THE MENDIPS

That mysterious and beautiful valley which runs up from the Avon southward and which we have followed past so many strange and old world places, brings us at Chewton into the roots of the hills, the great range of the Mendips which from far and near, from the north or the south, seems to rise like a vast wall sheer into the sky and to cut off so decisively all that broken country to the north from what lies to the southward. There is nothing that remains more steadfast in the mind of the traveller on foot in Somerset than this range of hills which runs quite across the country from a little south of east to a little north of west cleanly as a wall might do from the Wiltshire border to the sea.

Mendip, as one soon finds as one trudges along its highways - for it has highways very definite, lonely, and walled with hedges of unmortared stone - or wanders along its vague tracks and byways, is a vast mountain table-land, worn to a bare stump of limestone by countless centuries of time, meagrely clothed with a shallow, poor soil; a lonely, windy place, as grey as a winter sky and as mysterious as the last few days of the year, a place of rolling and empty fields, of sudden and immense views, of a strange and grim enchantment.

For Mendip holds the secrets of men and civilisations older far than Rome, and, here alone, more enduring. Maesbury Camp, the lonely and forbidding Barrows upon Blackdown, weigh upon one as nothing that Rome has abandoned here is able to do; they seem to speak to one of a life that is so old it is an agony to think of it, and they threaten us with their enormous wisdom: the vast labour which has ended only in a few gigantic heaps of barren earth. For upon the Mendips as upon no other mountains in the world, perhaps because few are so old as they, man and his efforts fade into nothing; their futility is exposed by the emptiness of space and the passing of time. And if, as he will, the traveller turns to the sky for assurance and for comfort that sky is too often a grey immensity of cloud, of great clouds hurrying no whither before the south-west wind, laden with the memory of the emptiness of the sea.

The loneliness of Mendip is a real loneliness. A man turns to the sky because he must; he is shut away there from the great and fruitful world he knows, the towns, the villages, the plough lands, and the steadings beneath him, not only by height, but also by the breadth and flatness of the great plateau which the roads, purposeless for the most part, shepherded by their loose walls of grey stone, traverse so swiftly, anxious only to pass on their endless ways. One is caught as it were in an empty space, a featureless desolation, a solitude that is like no other solitude. A man there is utterly alone, he cannot stay, he passes on with deliberate step down the roads that only lead away. And there is no one who has persisted in the exploration of these hills but has been astonished by their silence, the absence of trees, of cattle, of sheep, of all voices, and of the sound of bells, a sound, one thinks, that might break the spell that lies over all this great desolate upland. Yet such a man will know too that Mendip has voices and sounds of its own that are a part of the silence.

For the hills of Mendip are hollow and are full of secrets; secret springs, secret underground rivers whose courses you may not know, but whose voices you may sometimes hear suddenly on a still day as you lie on the shady side of one of the many swallets or pits, a curious murmuring hollow sound, rising and falling; and sometimes as you pass by where no visible spring is to be found you will be drenched with spray suddenly in the face; but whence it comes you will not know. It is not everyone who in such a loneliness can bear such music or encounter such natural malice and still remain in firm possession of his soul.

Yes, the hills are full of secrets; they are dreadful for they are very old; they are full of caves where are mingled the bones of men and of beasts that are dateless and have no history; they are full of deserted camps and burrows that were once used and defended and meant something to someone of whom we may know nothing; every height or headland is bastioned or crowned with the work of man, work that was already crumbling, nay, already a forgotten ruin, before the beginning of history. These remain. But the work of the Romans, those deserted mines beyond Charterhouse, what is there left of them? What is there to be found of those two religious houses of the Carthusians, Charterhouse a cell of Witham, and Green Ore a cell of Hinton? Not a stone, not a single foundation. For them no man can say here they stood or there. It is as though Mendip were outside History and Christendom.

And yet on a day of wind, a clear day after rain, this great plateau which a man fears almost as much as he loves is capable of offering you endless reward. On such a day Mendip awakes; the thin grass laughs like an old man in the sun; the grey rock shines golden with lichen, the spare woods are filled with the strength and the joy of the wind, and suddenly you find as you come up southward out of the plateau on to the height, on to Beacon Hill or Pen Hill or Maesbury for instance, all the world spread out at your feet.

It is a glory that passes and yet cannot pass away. For when, as a man, suddenly and without warning, after years of absence, I looked one evening from that great height, I saw not this; I saw my home. Spread out beneath me lay a vast and mysterious plain, blue and grey and gold in the setting sun, and beyond far and far away the great hills of the West Country. To one returning after long absence that view must always be the most beautiful and the most consoling in the world, for it gives him at a glance all his childhood and his home.

*Reprinted from Highways & Byways in Somerset
by Edward Hutton
(Macmillan & Co. London 1923 First Pocket Edition)*

CLUB NEWS

Tackle

Approximately 450ft of serviceable ladder is currently in store. Further stocks cannot be made until the Club locates a source of 7mm taper pins. Failing that, we could construct ladder using pins and araldite, though this method is not considered to be so satisfactory. Tethers are again in short supply, presumably through casual loss. New stocks are to be made using 4mm instead of 3mm wire, as an added safety precaution. It has been a frequent occurrence in the past for ladder to be left in caves during periods of digging or exploration. This could lead to theft or corrosion, or even unnecessary MRO call-outs. Members are therefore requested to remove the Club's tackle from caves between trips.

Council of Southern Caving Clubs

The AGM on 6th May was a lively affair, even though only just quorate (a third of member clubs are required to be represented). The Council decided to remain within the NCA structure, but to work even harder to get its views accepted. These views are shared with BCRA and others, and are based on the opinions of grass-roots cavers. As a means of ensuring our financial independence, CSCC voted to accept NCA grant aid only to the value of the NCA subscription; all other costs will be met by member clubs. This will enable us to refuse all grant aid more easily when, as appears likely, eventually grant aid will have strings attached.

There was debate, bitter at times, over the problem of access to controlled caves and the difficulty of obtaining keys. Issuing keys can be a problem in itself, as any Committee member will testify! There appears to be no easy solution, other than to make keys more widely available, and to allow cave leaders to hold their own keys.

Charterhouse Caving Committee

There is growing unrest over the new permit system, agreed by the small number of cavers who attended the AGM. The Hon. Sec. is calling a special meeting on behalf of the WCC, BEC and SMCC.

Cuckoo Cleeves

Bob Dyke has retired, and his land has been taken in hand by Mr Masters of Easton. He is concerned at the damage done to gates and walls by visitors to the cave, who also park in front of the road gate. To reduce the damage, Mr Masters has apparently offered to provide materials to construct two stiles allowing direct access to the cave, the labour to be provided by cavers. He also wants the cave gated, though keys can be held locally, and access administered by local clubs. Failure to comply with these requirements could well lead to permanent closure of this popular system, and all cavers should co-operate, in keeping the cave locked, and by using the gates or stiles provided and parking cars sensibly.

Stoke Lane Slocker

Following radiolocation of the aven in Stoke IV it could easily be connected with the surface. This would be done primarily to facilitate further exploration by divers, though eventually, more of the cave would be open to non-divers. Al Mills was recently elected a director of Southern Caving Clubs Ltd in order to administer the access, but the landowner is now refusing permission to dig. It is likely that negotiations will be resumed sometime in the future.

Mattresses

Many of the mattresses currently in use at Upper Pitts are showing signs of age, and their numbers continue to decline. If any members can offer replacements free or at low cost, please inform the Hut Admin. Officer. Transport can probably be provided.

Upper Pitts

The long-term view of Upper Pitts progress as expressed by Meles meles met with hostility or apathy, but this was to be expected. More imminently, the workshop should soon be in use, and the existing workshop modified. Barry Gay's plan is produced later in this journal. Working weekends do not attract much enthusiasm, so it has been decided that jobs will be done piecemeal, as members feel the urge. It is notable that most work is done by the regular few. The new booking system appears to be working, and Upper Pitts is pleasantly full but not overcrowded most weekends. Committee Meeting weekends are reserved for members only but there is a guest party in residence most other weekends. Forthcoming Committee meetings will be held on September 10th and November 5th. Why not stay then at Upper Pitts, meet other members, and chat with the Committee, so that it may raise your views at the meeting?

Resignations

At the last Committee meeting, several members expressed their intention not to seek re-election at the AGM, either due to pressure of personal commitments, or in order to put some new blood into the Committee. The Chairman, Treasurer and both Secretaries will be resigning, so if you think you can fill these posts, or if you know anyone who may be prepared to stand for election, use the nomination form which appears in this Journal.

1978 AGM and Dinner

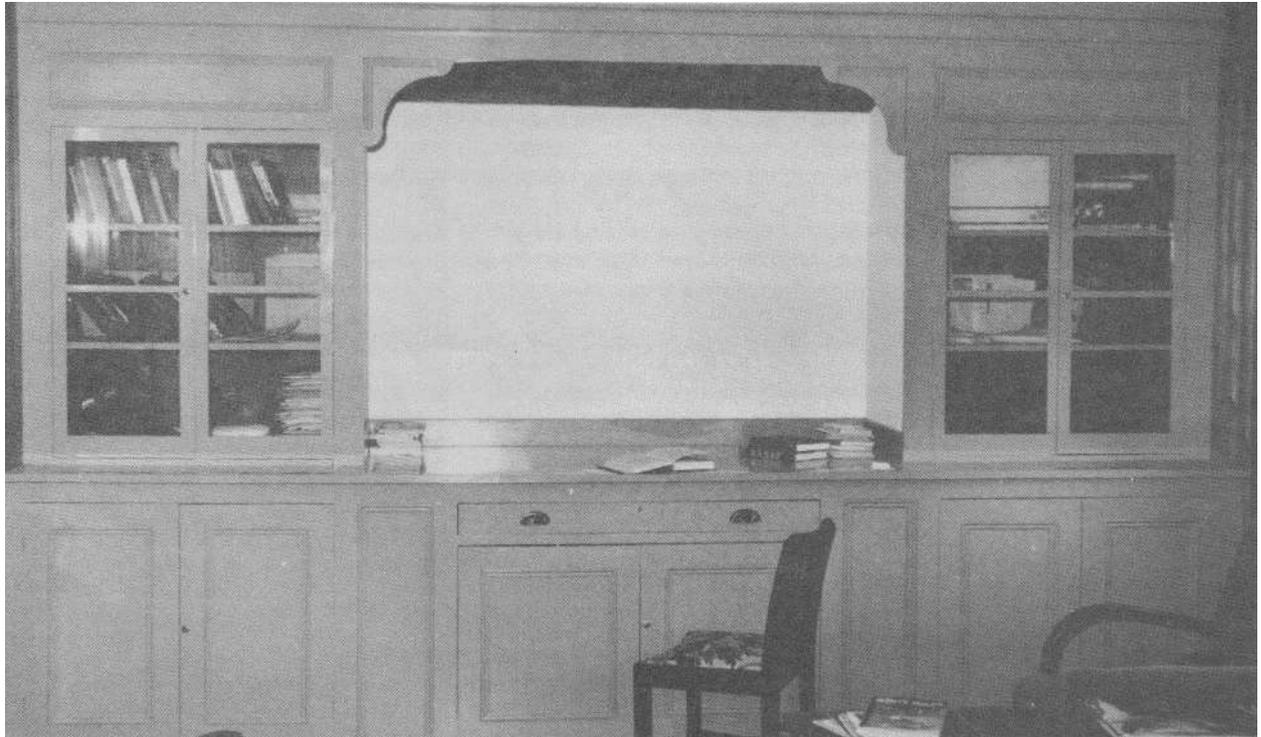
This will take place on Saturday October 21st. The venues and caterers will be the same as they were last year, and a large gathering is expected. Further details will appear in the next Journal.

New Members

We welcome the following new members, elected at the May Committee meeting:
Richard A. and Pat Halliwell, 43 Murrayfield Road, Hull.

Library

For the benefit of members who rarely visit Upper Pitts, Bob Scammell has provided a photograph to show the hard work and craftsmanship put in by some members. Barry Gay, John Ham and others have been improving the library facilities and the photograph shows the wall unit which houses literature and surveys. It also incorporates a projection screen for slides and films.



WALL UNIT, THE LIBRARY, UPPER PITTS.

Photo by: Bob Scammell

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I feel that a response should be made to the suggestions proposed by Meles meles in the article "Upper Pitts - A Plan for the Future" (WCC Jour. 171 pp 16 - 18).

I get the impression that Meles meles has a far greater knowledge of the building, and the associated problems than he likes to admit. I therefore feel a few comments on the more radical proposals would not come amiss.

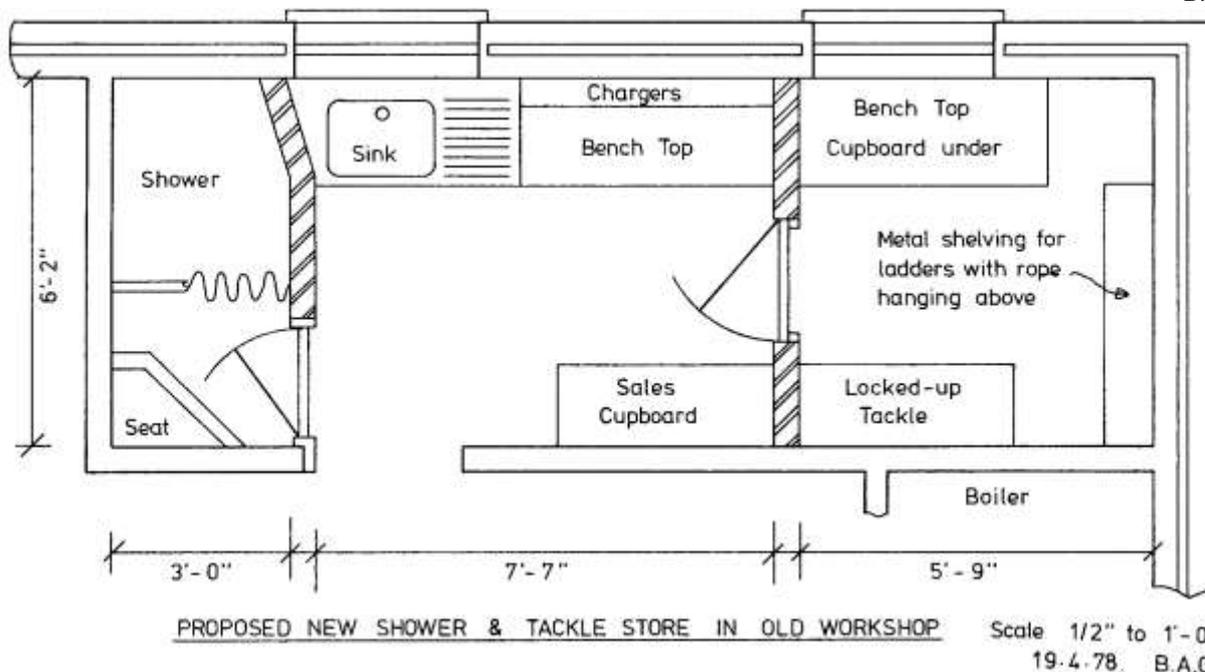
1. Consent was given by Mendip District Council for the Club to construct an extension for use as a workshop and store. Attention was drawn to the fact that no variation to this Scheme should be made without permission.
2. The proposed construction of a first floor on the new extension for use as a habitable room would require an application to Mendip District Council who are obliged to ensure that all regulations with respect to means of escape, spread of fire, fire and smoke alarms etc., are fully complied with. As the ground floor would be classed as a high risk area, there could be no hope of any relaxation of safety or structural requirements.
3. Alterations of the magnitude proposed could not be carried out by Club Members alone. We have seen the very poor response for working weekends, and the length of time required to get even quite minor jobs completed. It would therefore be necessary to employ a Contractor at a cost which would be far in excess of present Club funds.
4. We must bear in mind also that a lot of our older Members put a tremendous amount of work and effort into the existing building, and therefore may not be happy to see such changes, or even the suggestion that these could be instigated without full discussion at an A.G.M.
5. Members expect, quite rightly, to be able to use all the facilities available when resident in the Hut but with the alterations proposed the place would be in a state of chaos for months on end.

In my opinion we have a very satisfactory and functional building at present which requires very little effort, or disturbance to enhance the facilities even further. Now the new workshop is weather-tight we shall be able to utilise the vacated area in the existing building to provide a good tackle store, a third shower and a sink for washing equipment not suitable for the kitchen.

The plan of my proposals is detailed in the attached sketch which indicates the most economical use of the space and the existing services available in the area.

Finally, one wonders why the pseudonym Meles meles was adopted. Could it be fondness for a popular beverage, or for his nocturnal escapades, perhaps Mephitis mephitis would have been a more appropriate name.

B.A.Gay



Dear Sir,

Following tests recently carried out at Charterhouse, warning notices are to be posted at the entrance of Longwood Swallet, August Cave. Copies of the text of the notices and a statement are enclosed.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the contents of the enclosed statement to your club members. Please would you issue copies of the statement with the Charterhouse Caving Committee permits. I have enclosed a number of copies for you to use and more are available on request.

Yours faithfully,
G.J. Street
New Works Manager

DANGER!
SEVERE AND SUDDEN FLOODING IN THE
LONGWOOD SWALLET AUGUST CAVE, CHARTERHOUSE

Longwood Cave has long been known to be dangerous because
of the risk of flooding from a stream.

That danger is even greater now because the cave is likely to flood more often.

Pumps that take water from the Springs at Charterhouse will now stop
working automatically. This can cause a sudden flood wave, making some passages
impassable and the exit and entrance extremely difficult to negotiate.

There are warning notices stressing this danger at the cave entrance.

Access to the cave is controlled by the Charterhouse Caving Committee,
and only cavers holding a current CCC permit should enter the cave.

TAKE CARE!

MENDIP NOTES

Wimblestone

Lionel's Secrets

Although never high in the Burrington popularity stakes, Lionel's Hole has always been an interesting curio on account of its situation due north of the many and varied East Twin sinks. The existence of a streamway somewhere below the known cave has been predicted by many, but it took the keen ears of the BEC to ferret it out. The breakthrough was made by forcing a tight phreatic tube at the bottom of the Traverse and so far about 500' of new passage has been explored by the combined efforts of the BEC and Wessex. The stream passage does not quite measure up to Craig a Ffynnon standards, but it does offer a brace of ducks and a sump pool worthy of the name. In the absence of any midget divers, work is currently being directed towards bypassing the terminal sump, but if downstream progress proves unfeasible, the upstream prospects are just as fascinating. If East Twin, Goon's Hole, Spar Pot and Lionel's could be linked, Burrington would boast a 4000' long system. Alternatively, if the stream is coming from the Top Sinks....

The Railway Children

Still going strong are the two motley digging crews who gather on the Somerset and Dorset railway track above Shepton Mallet every Wednesday evening and pursue their independent routes into the fabled Ham Woods master cave. The Windsor Hill boys, otherwise NHASA, have heard deep within their living limestone, the sound of loud waters, and in an endeavour to reach them they are employing a compressor and rock drill capable of lancing shot holes into solid rock at a prodigious rate. The scene as the compressor is manhandled down and up the cindery railway embankment is not unlike the Field Gun Competition at the Royal Tournament, with closing time substituted for the opposing team. A hundred yards down the track, the Viaduct team has just established a Mendip first by excavating the first passage to cross under a railway line. Their tortuous system does not lend itself to mechanisation, but does boast a short but sporting streamway that might just be the start of something big.

Nature Conservancy to the Rescue

I very much doubt whether Wurt Pit harbours the entrance to a great Mendip cave system, but it will be a pity if this classic rocky sided depression becomes yet another victim of agricultural infilling. The landowner recently applied to level it using inert builder's rubble and he would undoubtedly have been given the go ahead by the planners had it not been for the last minute intervention of the Nature Conservancy Council. We must hope now that the Conservancy's scientists can make Mendip whortleberries and siliceous Harptree Beds sound like sufficiently good reasons for keeping the Pit unspoilt and unfilled.

Anyone for Marbles?

All has been quiet on the Cuthbert's front lately but the place is by no means completely played out. Marble Hall and Marble Pot, situated along the cave's major fault line, have been re-examined by some of the BEC's slimmer members with a view to pushing some very tight squeezes. The best prospect is supposed to be a 20' deep slot emitting a strong draught, which sounds fine as long as your memory does not go back to Neil Moss.

Wheel Pit Swallet

Quite a number of us stumble upon old iron when digging for caves, but Willie Stanton went typically one better when he unearthed an industrial archaeological relic in his Blackmoor swallet dig. He was sinking a shaft at the end of a miner's leat in the hope of finding that the waste water had been allowed to soak away in a natural swallet, when he struck the ruins of a water wheel pit, with the bearings and skeleton of the wheel itself still in situ. It seems likely that the wheel dates from the 19th century and operated some form of trip hammer, but unfortunately a detailed examination proved impossible in the face of repeated vandalism from weekend visitors. The iron work has been covered over for re-excavation in a more enlightened age, but the cave dig has continued alongside the site. Sure enough, a swallet was lurking there, and the diggers are already into a small, boulder choked chamber. Will this be the key to that most elusive Blackmoor system.

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

WALES

Gwydry Forest Mines (Barc, Hafna and Cyffty) There are no objections from the Forestry Commission or Ancaster Estates to people walking on the land, and hence access to the mines is implied.

Access to Castlemartin Caves There is a restriction of access to all parts of the Castlemartin Range, apart from the public paths. This has been imposed by the Ministry of Defence, as there is a danger from military activities.

Stackpole The National Trust has banned all archaeological work other than by its own archaeologists.

Ogof-y-Ci and Ogof Rhyd Sych These are in the Cwm Glais Nature Reserve; and due to the change in ownership, access should be made as follows:

1. Take the road from Cefn Coed, past Vaynor Quarries, and turn left onto the Llwyn Clisanws farm road

2. Follow the road for about ½ mile to old farm buildings, and park on waste ground on the right.
3. Go over the gate and follow the field boundary to the reserve.
4. When in the reserve, follow the stream bed to the caves, keeping off the vegetation wherever possible. A path may be staked out in the near future.

Dan-yr-Ogof A party recently left the river entrance gate off, and in the path of tourists. This is giving the management cause for concern, and such incidents should not be repeated. Leaders are reminded that parties should be in the cave by 10.00 am, to avoid meeting tourists. Access to the cave depends entirely on the goodwill of the management, so nothing should be done in the cave to antagonise them.

Old Ham Mine (Royal Forest of Dean). A large boulder is on the move in Balcony Passage - please take care.

DERBYSHIRE

"Caves of the Peak District" A course on the formation of limestone caves is being held at Losehill Hall on the 13-15th October 1978. Though not a caving course, there will be emphasis on field and underground study of relevant features. The speakers include Drs. T.D.Ford and A.C. Waltham. The course fee is £25; for further information write to: Peter Townsend (Principal) Losehill Hall, Castleton, Derbyshire S30 2WB.

Winnat's Head Cave Orpheus CC has passed the choke at the bottom of Main Chamber to enter approximately 300ft of large passage, bringing the cave's total depth to around 200ft. It is now heading towards Giant's Hole, half a mile away. Permission to visit the new extension **MUST** be obtained from Winnat's Head Farm.

Russet Well Divers have passed a tight hole at the bottom of the 10ft pot to enter a 25ft pot and a wide bedding plane.

Gautries Cave Divers have found that the upstream sump is tight, but progress has been made at a depth of 8ft.

Bagshaw Resurgence A sturdy line has been laid in the entrance sump - this is for divers only, as the sump **cannot be passed free**. Sump 2 has been dug into for 25ft at 8ft depth, to a boulder, but the way on can be seen beyond.

(The last four items were taken from the Orpheus CC newsletter **14** (2) 7, Feb 1978. This is in the Library, and may be consulted for more detailed information.)

YORKSHIRE

Haytime Hole This Kendal Caving Club discovery on Pen y Ghent (N.G.R. SD 813741) is 223ft deep and 1000ft long ending in a sump. The cave contains a 25ft pitch and tight entrance squeezes.

YORKSHIRE MEETS

Pots booked for the next few months are:

26th August

Lancaster - Easegill System

For further details contact the Caving Secretary (address inside front cover) or Rob Harper: Telephone Weston-Super-Mare 24441 (ideally on a Thursday evening).

**STOKE LANE SLOCKER -
LOCATION NOTES FOR THE AVEN IN STOKE IV
IN RELATION TO THE SURFACE.**

(J.D.Hanwell and B.E.Prewer)

Alan Mills, Brian Milton, Barry Wilkinson and Colin Williams went into the cave on the afternoon of the 30th December 1977 and transmitted from a coil placed 9" (23 cms) above the streamway before sump 4. The site had been previously radio-located in January 1976. Signals were received by Brian Prewer between 4.0p.m. and 4.20p.m. on the surface. A revised location was established 4.8 metres due west (magnetic) of the 1976 position; the difference possibly being the more accurate levelling of the coil on the second survey. A consistent depth of 35 metres below the surface was measured from three radial traverses of the receiver. With reference to the original landmarks, the revised location was:-

Sights	Using JDH's Suunto Compass 30/11/77	Using BM's Suunto Compass 1/1/78
A. To NE chimney at Moon's Hill Farm	13½°	15½°
B. To NE gable of Frog Lane Cottage	276°	276°
C. To roof ridge of Coalpit Lane Bungalow	195°	196¼°
	The above readings triangulate exactly	The above readings have an error of ½°

Hand-held readings with the two compasses were checked and agreed on site by both Hanwell and Prewer.

The following survey data in the Stoke IV Aven were obtained by Milton, Mills, Wilkinson and Williams using Milton's Suunto Compass at the time of the radio-location:-

Stations	Distances	Clino	Forward Compass
1 to 2	13ft. (3.96m)	+19°	110°
2 to 2a	2ft. 10in. (0.86m)	+45°	244½° (Recorded as a backbearing of 64½°)
2a to 3	c. 80ft. (24m)	+73°	176¾°

Station **1** was 2'6" (0.79m) above the centre of the transmitting coil in the streamway. Station **2** was on a slope beneath an overhang with Station **2a** offset to gain a sight up the aven and the distance up the aven was estimated. No closures were made. (Original notes and sketches were provided by Brian Milton). Station **3** is a prominent boulder jammed in the aven whose height was estimated. The inclination and alignment of this aven conforms to the local dip at the Carboniferous Limestone as seen in the nearby quarry; thus, it is almost certainly an enlarged high angle bedding plane.

On 1st January 1978, Hanwell and Prewer revisited the surface site with the cave survey notes and Milton's Suunto compass. They set out the survey on the ground using the following computed data:-

Stations	Horizontal Distances	Vertical Distances	Forward Compass	Eastings from 1 (Magnetic)	Northings from 1 (Magnetic)
1 to 2	3.75m	+1.29m	110°	+3.52m	-1.28m
2 to 2a	0.61m	+0.61m	244½°	+2.97m	-1.54m
2a to 3	c. 7.02m	c.+22.95m	176¾°	+3.37m	-8.54m
Total rise =		c.+24.85m			

Thus, the jammed boulder in the aven lies 3.37m East (magnetic) of the revised location of 1 and 8.54m South (Magnetic). It is about 25m vertically above the streamway and, therefore, some 10m below the ground surface according to the radio-located depth measurement with the coil. Since the ground surface slopes gently northwards, a value of 11m is more probable.

Assuming a uniform dip of the bedding plane of 73° , the aven was extrapolated upward along the bearing of $176\frac{3}{4}^\circ$, for an additional 11m THIS POINT WAS MARKED BY PLANTING A METAL PLATE BELOW THE TURF WHICH CAN BE REDISCOVERED BY A METAL DETECTOR (this was tested at the time). It is 3.56m East (magnetic) and 11.89m South (magnetic) of **1**, the radio-located point, and about 8m into the field from the barbed wire fence. Triangulation data are:-

Sights	Bearings (using BM's Suunto Compass)		
A. NE chimney at Moon's Hill Farm	$12\frac{3}{4}^\circ$	Error of triangulation is $\frac{1}{2}^\circ$	More distant landmarks given good visibility
B. NE gable apex Frog Lane Cottage	277°		
C. Roof ridge Coalpit Lane Bungalow	198°		
D. Downside Church / Abbey Tower	$345\frac{3}{4}^\circ$	Accurate triangulation	Original landmarks used in previous locations
E. Monument east of Radstock	$56\frac{1}{2}^\circ$		
F. Pen Hill TV Mast	$282\frac{1}{2}^\circ$		

Fig.2 is a scale plan using a magnetic north grid. It shows approximate depths below the surface for each station. The dig site is, therefore, c. 190m above sea level. The error involved is probably no more than 20cm (- 10cm) in the survey, which should be good enough for a large shovel!

Fig.1. (below) After sketches by BM 30.12.77 (not to scale).

Fig.2. (right) From a 1:50 scale plan by JDH.

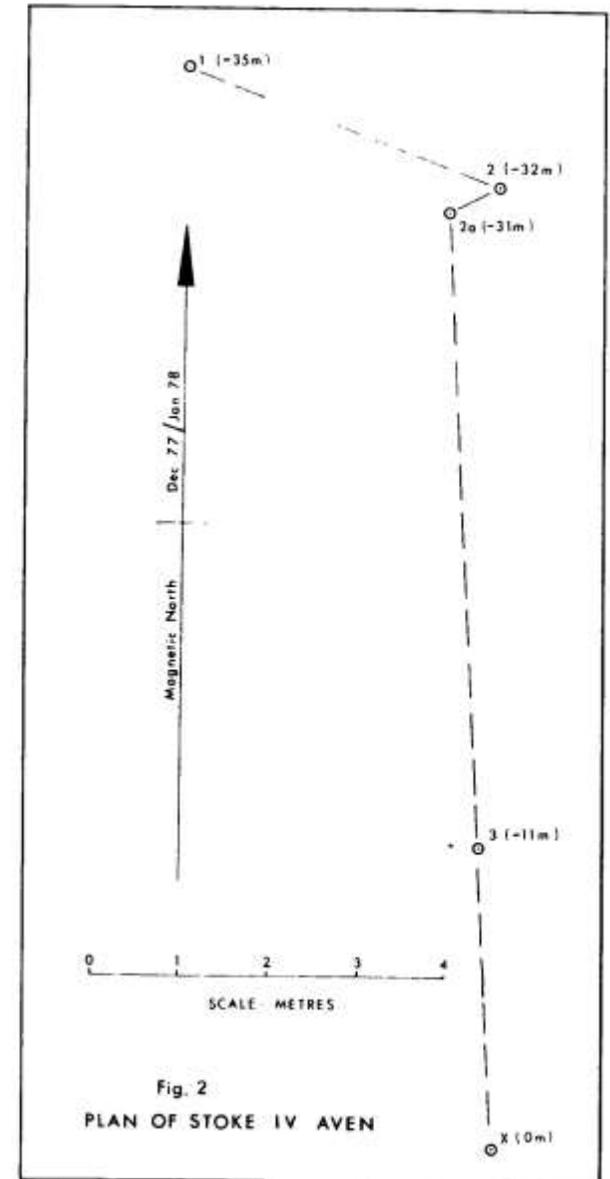
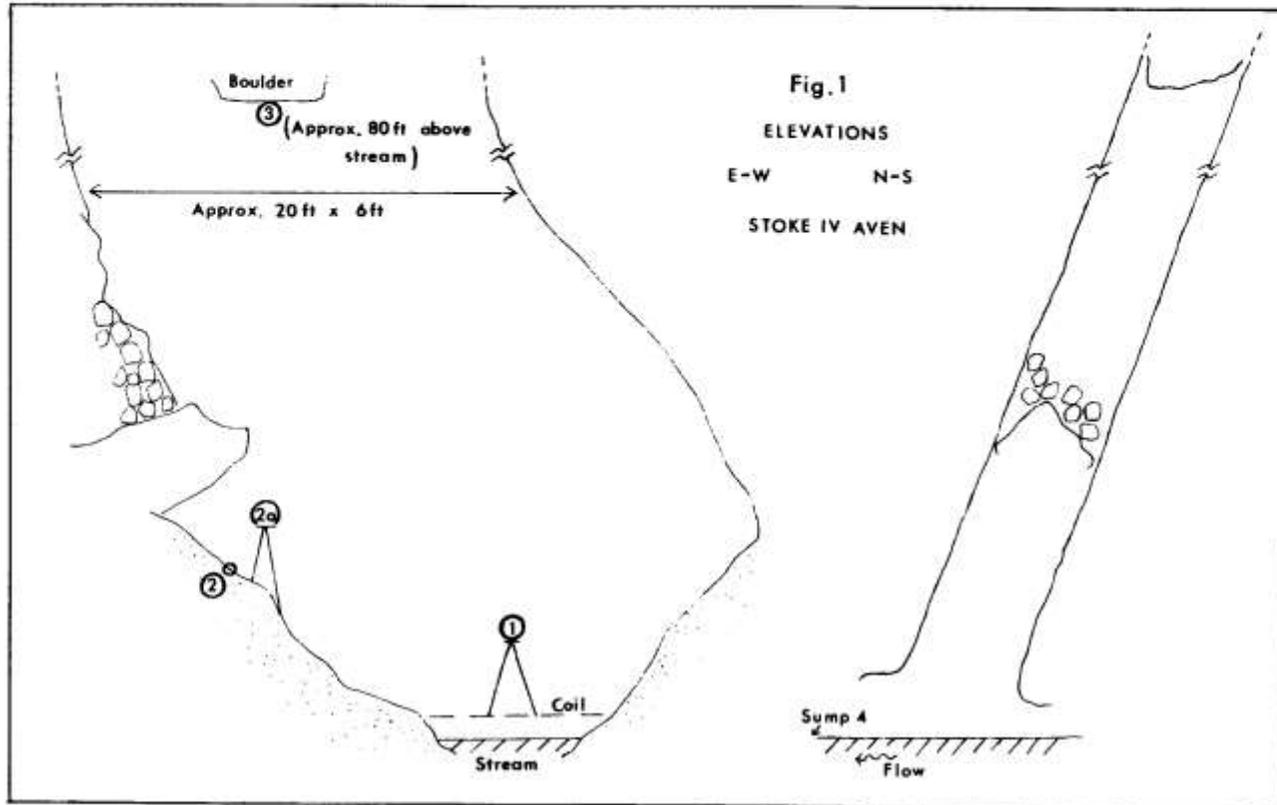
Station 1 Revised radiolocated site in Stoke IV streamway on 30.12.77.

Station 2 On slope at the foot of the Stoke IV Aven.

2a

Station 3 Jammed boulder seen at top of Aven with estimated height.

Station X Surface point (c. 190m O.D.) extrapolated from sight up Aven on 1.1.78.



PARK CORNER SWALLET or ROCK FOLLIES OF '77'

a) The Dig

Al Mills

On 20th Jan 1977 Dave Walker, Rich Websell and myself were doing our usual thing of consuming beer! After having one too many we talked each other into digging at Park Corner, so there and then we traipsed around to see Mr Thomas, the farmer on whose land the swallet was situated. Having obtained permission (God only knows what he thought) we then popped around to see the new dig. The active swallet had a large tree-stump blocking the way on so we decided to remove it with the magic hammer. Although this was very successful it also defeated the object as bits of the disintegrated tree stump had turned into a soggy mass and stopped the water sinking. We were now faced with a ready made swimming pool and drastic action was required.

On 6th Feb. We talked Barry Wilkinson into taking his life into his hands and placing an underwater charge somewhere at the bottom of the pool. After firing we were surprised to see the depression emptying itself as if the plug had been pulled out, to reveal a 2" x 9" hole. We were now in business, and with Barry and Marion Gay, started to hack away at the hole. Unfortunately the banks were soon collapsing about our ears so, not wanting to be buried alive, we dug away a 10' square around the entrance.

On the 8th. I introduced Glyn Bolt to the dig. He became very enthusiastic and wanted to dig every night thereafter. Although we gained a few feet of passage the author found it to be the driest week ever experienced due to Glyn having no wish to partake in any refreshment.

The 12th. was an unlucky day for a member of our party, namely Barry W. who had been able to crawl into a standing space. The dig curtailed any enjoyment of the find by depositing a somewhat large boulder on his person and pinning him to the wall. It was unfortunate that there was only enough room for one person at a time, so the rest of us were only able to shout helpful or obscene remarks of encouragement. To our and his own relief Barry managed to free himself and crawl shakenly out.

On 27th. Roger Mean joined the team and a sump was discovered. The author, reluctant to dive, placed a large amount of bang in it and in so doing transformed it to a 15' pitch! At the bottom of this the way on could be seen through a small vertical rift. Although very tight there was a very good draught so we kept digging and banging.

On 13th March Dave was able to squeeze through wedged boulders some way along the rift to enter passage below. With the help of Rick Whitcombe and Simon Meade-King we attempted to engineer a direct route down with plaster, blocking the original route but opening up the 'End of the World' squeeze, forced by Rich W. to enter the lower rifts.

The End of the World squeeze consists of an awkward S bend descent with a waterfall coming down it making the whole issue into a vertical descent which is most unpleasant to wriggle through. Dropping out of this one lands in a standing-room only passage, with its walls encrusted with fossils but lacking stal. One way closed down, but the stream flowed on down another tight rift. For working in this rift we put in some new banging cable, but after wiring everything up we couldn't get the bang to go off, so Dave decided to try with his car battery. When he couldn't get this out of his car he drove it into the depression. Although the charge went off successfully we had Hell's own job getting the car out of the dig!

We sorted out the problem of more loose boulders threatening our buckets, and on one trip Roger took some photographs while Dave and I did some surveying. Digging continued along a low tube leading off from the lowest rift which took the stream. On the 24th June Rich passed this tube into a further extension appropriately named F Hall. This section is 10ft high, 4ft wide and about 20ft long with some stal flows on the walls. The way on was at ground level in another small tube which was extremely difficult to dig because of the fast flow rate of the water.

On the 28th June we fenced the entrance with barbed wire which the farmer provided for us and on 30th July returned with Peter Moody, Alison Hooper, Jeff Price and Jane Wilson (BEC) to survey and push the end. Pete muttered something like 'eugh' at the way on, so until summer days are here again

b) Observations and Ruminations

(Dave Walker)

Park Corner Swallet is one of the most easterly swallets to sink on the Lower Limestone Shales/Black Rock Limestone boundary on the north flank of the Beacon Hill pericline. A stream flows over a deposit of Head (Pleistocene mud and boulders) overlying the Lower Limestone Shales before sinking in the extensive depression at 540 O.D. The cave is in the base of the Black Rock Limestone which dips about 60° to the north here. Lower Limestone Shales are exposed in the base of the south wall of the chamber beneath the 'End of the World' squeeze.

Water seems to have sunk in several different places in the depression at various times, enlarging frequent joints and bedding-orientated fissures in the steeply dipping limestone to form narrow vertical cross rifts. Collapse has followed so

that the walls of the cave are often no more than very large slabs leaning against each other. In wet weather water still enters by several routes to unite before a strike orientated crawl, the first pronounced horizontal development, which then enters the final rift.

The survey was done with the Wessex hand held Suunto clinometer, compass and Fibron tape. The compass was calibrated on the surface. The survey is a poor man's grade 5, because the unpleasant nature of the task was not conducive to accuracy. Passage totals about 114ft and the depth about 44ft.

Park Corner Swallet is one of a number of swallets, Finger Farm Swallet, Finger Slocker and Halecombe Swallet (1) which drain to a staircase of springs in the Finger Valley. The Finger Valley stream is a tributary of the Mells River. The Park Corner stream was traced to the Finger Springs complex and the down valley Cobby Wood Spring (14 hours travel time) by the Bristol Avon River Authority in 1973 (2). In summers however the water table lowers and these springs dry up. The swallet water is in all likelihood transferred to the Inferior Oolite which unconformably overlies the Carboniferous Limestone to the east, to supply the Oldford borehole north of Frome (3,4).

References:

- (1) Stanton W.I. *A Water Trace at Chantry, East Mendip* WCC Jour 142 Vol 12 p 156.
- (2) Barrington N. and Stanton W.I. (1977) *Mendip, the Complete Caves and a View of the Hills* p 121.
- (3) *ibid* p 119.
- (4) Stanton W.I. *Water Tracing Notes* WCC Jour 171 Vol 15 p 15.



ABOVE THE END OF THE WORLD SQUEEZE.

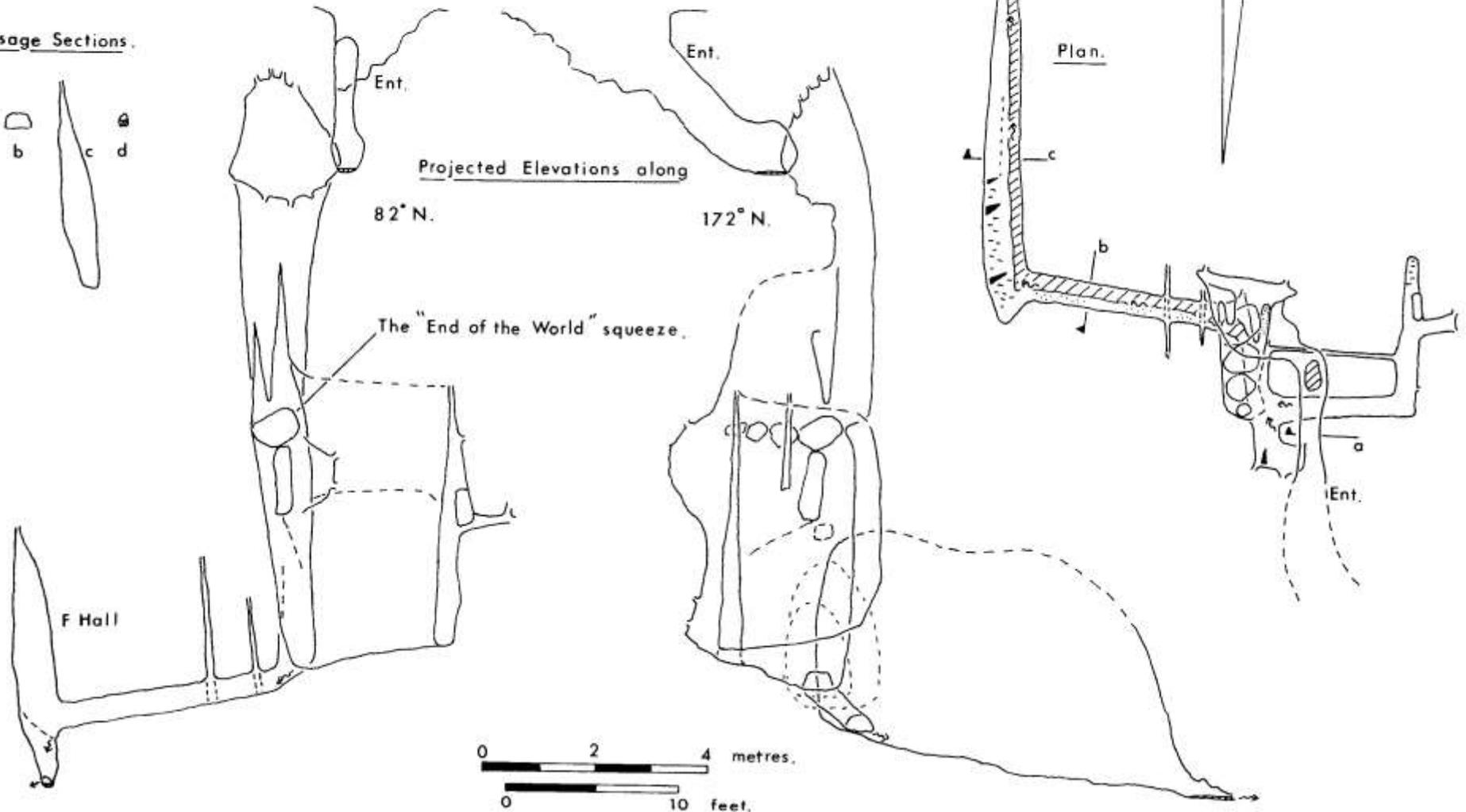
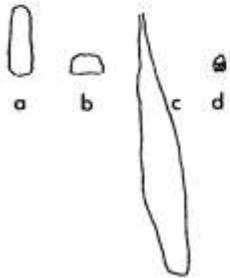
Photo by: Roger Mean

PARK CORNER SWALLET.

LITTLE ELM. EASTERN MENDIP. N.G.R. ST. 707473.

Length 112' (34m.) Depth 44' (13.5m.) 1977.

Passage Sections.



THE DEMISE OF SRT - 2. PERSISTENCE PAYS

by Phil Hendy

Pleased with the success of the Rigid Untilting Notched Grip, fixed between two knotted ropes for descending pitches, further R & D went into decline while I tested the full potential of my invention. A major fault soon came to light - namely that on long descents, the caver swung about and, unless efficiently lifelined, could fall off. In attempting to overcome this disadvantage, I turned into a blind avenue of research, but one which nevertheless is worth recording. I argued to myself that if the R.U.N.G.s could be made of wood, why not replace the ropes with the same material? The result was shown in Fig.4; I called it the Solid Treaded Elevator for Progressive Speleologists, or S.T.E.P.S. for short. An interesting feature was that a belay point at the top of the pitch was no longer needed; all you did was to stand the foot of the S.T.E.P.S. on the floor at the bottom of the hole. This would no doubt allow us to prop the device up against the walls in caves, and explore those passages which we could see tempting us at roof level.

We tested the prototype in the entrance shaft of Cuckoo Cleeves, and found no faults at all in the concept. By making a series of S.T.E.P.S. (a 12ft length was found to be an ideal man-load) with half-lap joints at the ends, we screwed together a 60ft length of S.T.E.P.S. and successfully descended North Hill Swallet, which we had estimated as 60ft deep by using a brick on a length of string. In fact, the hole is 60ft 3in. deep; the error was later found to have been caused by forgetting to allow for the thickness of the brick, but it made little practical difference. This cave had, to our knowledge, only previously been descended by the skilled but reckless use of gravity. Congratulating ourselves, we prepared to stride forth into the unknown. A little later, and a bit subdued, we thrutched slowly into the unknown low tunnel leading off one side of the shaft. We were quickly halted by another abyss, which obviously required a further set of S.T.E.P.S.. A week later, we were back at the foot of the entrance pitch, with a number of standard 12ft lengths of S.T.E.P.S.. Unfortunately, we were quite unable to get these round the bends in the passage, and had to cut them into short lengths, joining them together with lengths of cord (Fig. 5.). When we got to the second pitch, we found that we now had no practical advantage over the prototype of rope and wood - we had to fix a bolt at the top of the pitch, as the S.T.E.P.S. wouldn't stand up straight, and as before, the whole affair swung like mad as it hung in the void.

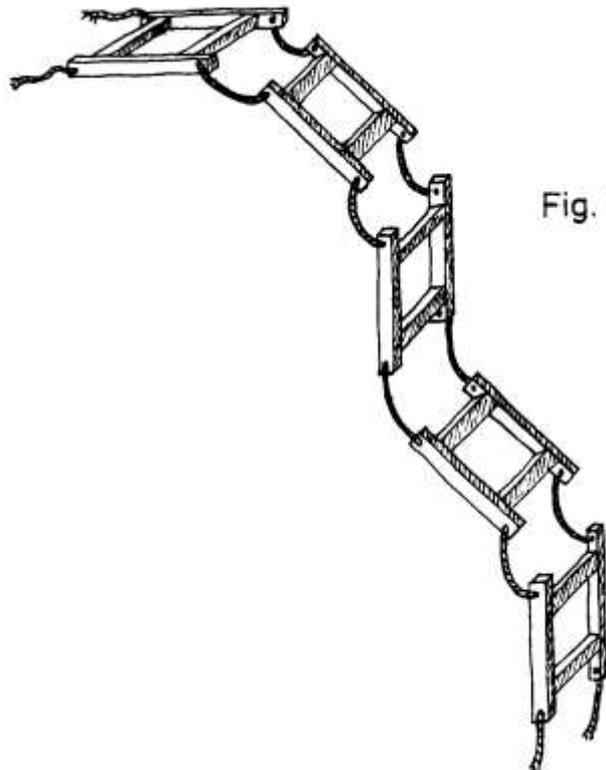
Sadly disillusioned, I returned to the surface, and would have forgotten all about the matter had not a friend showed me a large coil of aero wing strut wire which had been obtained at the BAC Concorde Works closing down sale. This was lighter, stronger, and more hardwearing than rope - could I use it for caving? Since I had a lighter rope, I decided to make the R.U.N.G.s lighter as well and cut some obsolete copper central heating pipe into 6in lengths. Tying knots in the wire was difficult, but I found that I was able to solder the R.U.N.G.s onto the wire. Other inventors who have climbed on the bandwagon use pins or araldite to fix the R.U.N.G.s, but I prefer solder, as quick repairs can be made, even while the device is in use, provided that a blowlamp is carried underground. Space-age technology should be able to devise an oxy-acetylene cap lamp, thereby combining the repair kit with the main lighting source - but this is outside the scope of my work, and I digress.

Fig. 4

S.T.E.P.S.



Fig. 5



Copper R.U.N.G.s were quite good and light, but they did tend to bend easily, and I had to give them up when the price of copper rose. Fortunately, I now obtain offcuts of aluminium tube from a TV aerial construction company. The Economic Lightweight Easily Climbed Tubular Rods Offer Notable Strength, so I call them E.L.E.C.T.R.O.N.S. The whole device is now light, strong, and relatively cheap, and I believe that I have invented the ultimate Lightweight Ascending and Descending Device, (Electron-Runged), which most people call L.A.D.D.E.R. (Fig. 6.) A simple improvement was to fit slotted pieces of chain to the end, allowing the rapid joining together of various lengths, to suit requirements. Ladders are now, I am pleased to say, standard items in most club's tackle stores, and, once all cavers learn the ladder technique, the SRT will be declared well and truly obsolete. Yet research does not end here. An interesting observation, made by chance on the Alum Pot pitch during a thunderstorm, has led me to devise a ladder with insulating nylon rungs, and a helmet with special sliding contacts which move along the aero-wires as the caver climbs up or down (Fig. 7). A similar device attached to the top of the ladder will allow telephonic communication to be maintained between climber and lifeliner on even the longest, wettest and noisiest pitch.

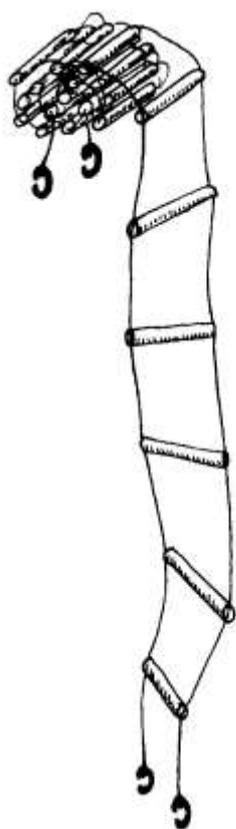


Fig. 6
L.A.D.D.E.R.

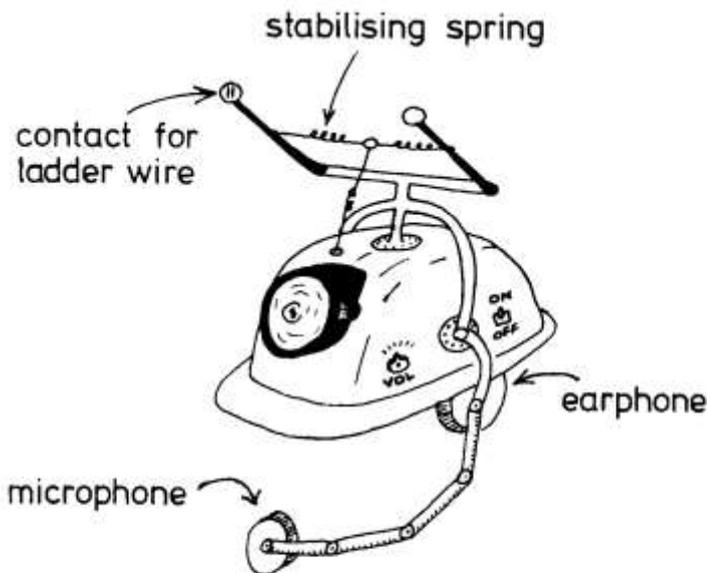


Fig. 7 PHONOHELMET for communicating on ladder pitches

It is only the stick-in-the-mud attitudes of the present generation of cavers which leads them to maintain their old-fashioned preference for SRT instead of ladder, and the energy-wasteful NiFe cell instead of my Clean and Non-Dangerous Lighting Equipment. Yet the change will come, and caving will be the better for it. Da Vinci was ahead of his time - so, I believe, am I!

This paper is based on a lecture delivered at the 1977 Annual Philosophical Symposium of the North Hill Association for Speleological Advancement. The work was supported by a grant from the NCA Special Subcommittee for Tackle and Equipment. References to early subterranean rock-climbing will be found in Balch H.E. The Mendip Caves' Vol.III. I am indebted to several friends for their help and encouragement, and to various late friends for their assistance in field-testing.

SHORT FIND FOR THE WESSEX IN YORKSHIRE

(Rich Websell)

On Saturday May 27th while exploring the caves of Penyghent Gill some Wessex members took a look at Upper Hesleden Cave 1 N.G.R. SD 864739. Pete Moody and Alison Hooper explored a tight inlet on the right just inside the entrance and forced this past two squeezes and a stal blockage. The rift continued tight for 20ft until it opened into a large aven. Rich Websell was called for and with great difficulty reached the aven and with some assistance climbed this 25ft to a passage at the top. This became too tight after 20ft. with no prospects.

The extension is about 100ft long, awkward and tight, but shows the value of pushing things in the less frequently visited parts of the Dales which are often referred to as too tight or too low.

Ogof Craig-a-Ffynnon
Blackrock, Gwent
(Proteus)

A personal account of a trip into the cave on the 29th April 1978 by Pete Moody, Alison Hooper and Dave Walker, with Tim Large and Martin Grass of the BEC who arranged it with leader Bill Gascoine.

A crawl leads off from the entrance through a smelly pool to a small straw decorated chamber with a low crawl leading off. This is fairly deep in water, about 10ft long and could flood. On from here the stream is followed for about 500ft to the First Boulder Choke, along a passage floored with boulders and stalagmites. When passing the choke one is aware of the work that has been put into it - underground dry stone walling and shoring much in evidence. Sections of crushed ladder visible under boulders help one cave gingerly up for about 30ft to the passage above - Gasolene Alley.

Not so far along here are two sumps on either side of the passage. The roof of the left hand sump, Flood Rising, has been blasted in dry weather to reach about 2,000ft of streamway to a boulder choke, but on our visit was a clear turquoise blue pool. Gasolene Alley finishes in two climbs of 10ft and 15ft (laddered) up to the Second Boulder Choke.

A tortuous much blasted route emerges in a 40ft wide passage which is bouldery in places and mud floored in others. On from here the active water is lost and formations become very spectacular as the passage enlarges. Eventually one is in a huge passage. The walls tower up, the floor dips down and then rises. The roof gets more defined, beautiful gour pools are met, and then one is in the Hall of the Mountain Kings, another huge space floored with calcite and several large bosses. The breakout dome in the roof sports calcite flows and large convoluted pendants. A dramatic spot indeed.

On from here the Third Boulder Choke is encountered. A crawl on the right of this wall of boulders is followed for about 600ft, and one notices the same greenish shale found in Agen Allwed's Southern Stream Passage. At the end of the crawl the Severn Tunnel, a selenite decorated rift passage, goes straight for 800ft enlarging gradually.

A passage leads off on the right and we followed this past the 70ft free climb down to the Blean Elin streamway to another large passage. Masses of mud cover the floor, occasionally having slumped to make curious circular depressions several feet in diameter. To the left was the small hole leading via 15 and 40ft pitches to the Lower Series and ahead lay the massive final boulder choke, which at the time of our trip had been penetrated for 270ft. Pete and Tim visited the Blean Elin streamway while the others returned to the Severn Tunnel and followed the route straight on from there. This leads to another junction with both passages ending in chokes.

The reader must look to reports by the diggers and explorers (John Parker, Jeff Hill, Ann Franklin, Bill Gascoine and others) for a better description and fuller account of the cave. Access is at present with one of the leaders primarily on working trips. On our visit, Bill was sampling Flood Rising and Second Choke waters for analysis. Lack of damage reflects this system, together with early and judicious taping of routes.

There are about four miles of passage to the cave with many mysteries still be unravelled. The most tantalising question is perhaps what lies beyond the chokes at the present end.

REVIEWS

The Burren: A map of the uplands of North West Clare, Eire.

Produced by T.D. Robinson

Produced by T.D. Robinson

Published by the Irish Tourist Board.

This is a new map of the Burren based on the Ordnance Survey of Eire map of the region. It is produced on a larger scale (1.8 inches to the mile) in black and white and shows a tremendous amount of information. The map is unconventional in its style, using hatching instead of numbered contours but gives a very good impression of the relief of the area.

Some caves and karstic features are shown but perhaps reference to Tratman's map from the Caves of N.W. Clare would put cave sites into perspective. It lacks a grid system but this is marked in the margins and could be drawn on if desired. For anyone caving it would be recommended to refer to Tratman and mark entrances and the grid system onto the map. The black and white format also lends itself to easy marking using a coloured system.

This map is essential for anyone intending a visit to this area and is far superior to any other in its scale and amount of information. It would make an excellent base for any speleological fieldwork that one may undertake or as a basis for the caving tourist to the area.

R.A.W.

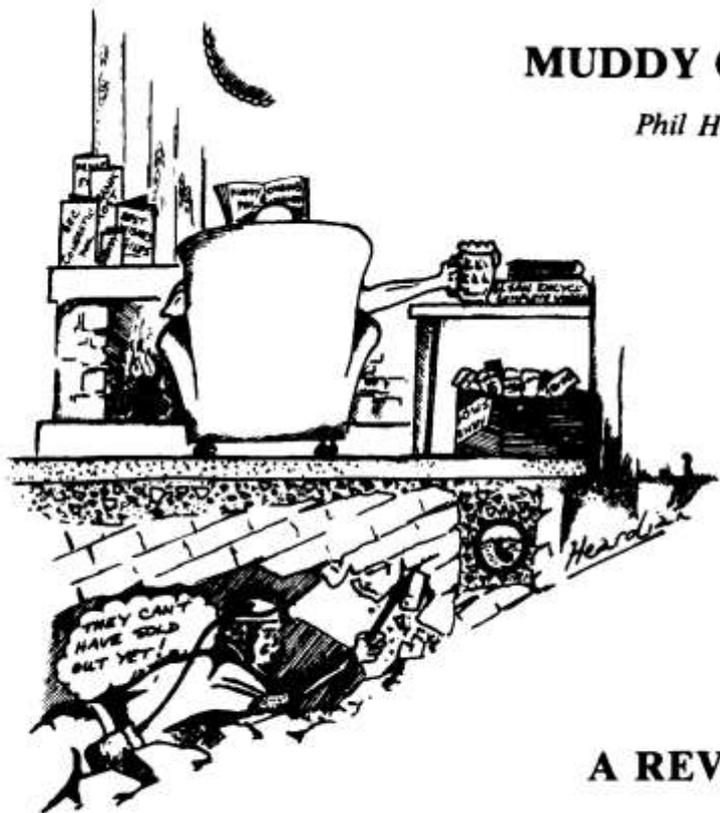
Other relevant literature:

Caves of North West Clare, Ireland. Edited by E.K. Tratman. David and Charles, Newton Abbot.

Galaway Bay. Suirbheircacht Ordonais No. 14, ½inch to 1 mile.

MUDDY OXBOWS

Phil Hendy



A REVIEW

FROM THE LOG

17.12.77 WIGMORE SWALLET

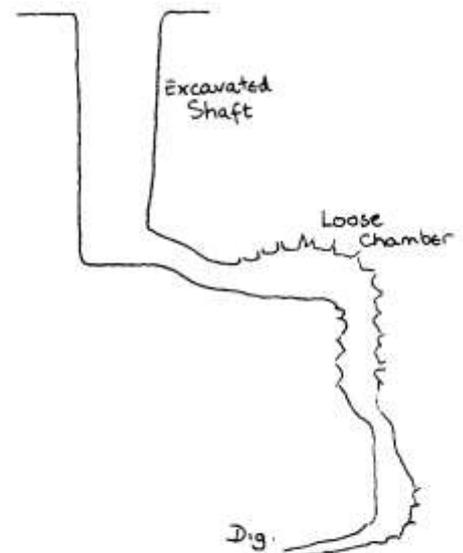
Phil Hendy by invitation to Wigmore Swallet which 'went' for about 100ft. last week. I arrived to find Stewart (BEC) and J-rat ferreting at the end. At the foot of the ladders in the entrance shaft a drop of a few feet and a gravel leads to a loose 'orrible chamber with loose cherty walls, jammed boulders and a general air of instability. From here the cave gets nastier. A wriggle through boulders leads to a 10ft. free climb, another wriggle and a 12ft. free climb, with lots of portable chert footholds. The floor is a pile of loose rocks but a crawl under a solid flat roof leads off.

P.H.

17.12.77 WIGMORE SWALLET *addendum:*

'All lies, its only RELATIVELY loose'

A.J.



c 30ft.

Rough sketch after P.G.H.

2.1.78 SWILDON'S HOLE

Pete Moody, Alison Hooper and Steve Short (BEC) to Crystal Passage in II. Dug choke away and Alison managed to pass a squeeze and, with her above it, were able to dig enough mud away to allow Pete through. New passage twisted up steeply and then levelled out to another choke which Alison dug through in a few minutes. Beyond the passage was much larger but after a duck became tight once more, with the sound of the main streamway very clear. It seems that the new passages come in very high up in the roof just downstream of the Old Approach.

P.M.

7.1.78 SAINT DUNSTAN'S WELL CAVE

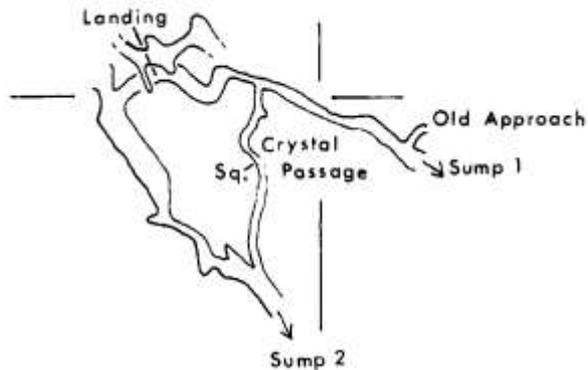
Rich Websell and Rob Harper - sporting gravel to the sump. RH dived and explored thoroughly but could find nothing but 6ft of tight rift at one end which quickly choked.

R.H.

18.1.78 SWILDON'S HOLE

Jeff Price, Pete Moody and Alison Hooper. Managed to sort out where Crystal Passage comes back into the streamway. We didn't have a hammer or a crowbar to open the route but Alison was able to shine her light down the streamway and Jeff was able to chimney up to within 10ft of her.

P.M.



CRYSTAL PASSAGE, SWILDON'S HOLE

From a rough sketch by P.M.

19.2.78

LOST:- Three snowploughs. Will finder please return to Somerset CC.

2.3.78 BONE HOLE

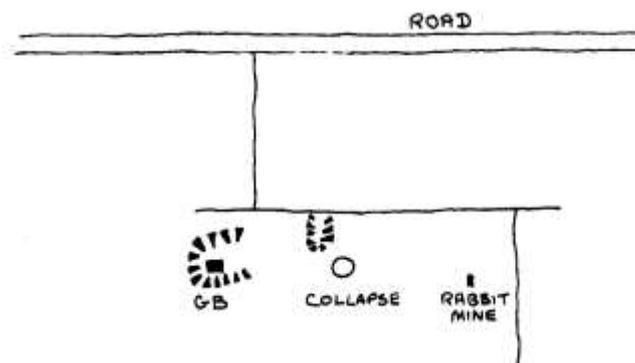
Lynne Williams, Di Beeching, Martin Bishop (BEC) and Tony Jarratt. Scramble down 40ft rift to interesting skulls and pretties.

D.B.

27.3.78 RABBIT MINE, CHARTERHOUSE

Phil Hendy and Lynne Williams. First known (recent) descent of mine shaft found in the G.B. field, 60ft from the G.B. collapse and diametrically opposite the G.B. blockhouse. Lynne went down first after gardening a stone out of the way. This proved to be the top of some gingling, well built at the bottom but loose at the top. The other walls are solid. After 10 to 12ft a steep muddy slope leads to a smaller chamber. A slot in the foot of this leads via a 4ft drop to a 15ft long rift approx. 4ft high.

P.H.



Plan after P.G.H.

MENDIP'S TOP THIRTY

The latest vital statistics of Mendip's big systems.

LONGEST

		Feet
1.	Swildon's Hole	25700
2.	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	21800
3.	Wookey Hole	11000
4.	Stoke Lane Slocker	7150
5.	G.B. Cave	6400
6.	Longwood Swallet	4850
7.	Shatter & W/L Caves	4460
8.	Eastwater Cavern	4450
9.	Tynning's Barrows Cave	4300
10.	Fairy, Hillier's & Hillwithy Caves	3820
11.	Gough's Cave	3750
12.	Manor Farm Swallet	3100
13.	Thrupe Lane Swallet	2750
14.	Reservoir Hole	2700
15.	Withyhill Cave	2530
16.	Goatchurch Cavern	2460
17.	Sludge Pit Hole	2170
18.	Lionel's Hole	2000
19.	Lamb Leer Cavern	1920
20.	Read's Cavern	1900
21.	Balch Cave (partly destroyed)	1850
22.	Mangle Hole	1100
23.	Rhino Rift	1050
24.	Bleadon Cave	1000
25.	Brownes' Hole	900
26.	Banwell Stalactite Cave	880
27.	Cuckoo Cleaves	850
	North Hill Swallet	
29.	Blackmoor Flood Swallet	780
30.	Long Hole	770

GREATEST VERTICAL RANGE

		Feet
1.	Swildon's Hole	548
2.	Longwood Swallet	540
3.	Manor Farm Swallet	497
4.	Rhino Rift	473
5.	St.Cuthbert's Swallet	465
6.	G.B. Cave	440
7.	Tynning's Barrows Cave	433
8.	Eastwater Cavern	420
9.	Reservoir Hole	390
10.	Thrupe Lane Swallet	385
11.	Wookey Hole	350
12.	Cuckoo Cleaves	280
13.	Banwell Stalactite Cave	250
	Cow Hole	
15.	North Hill Swallet	228
16.	Lamb Leer Cavern	220
17.	Read's Cavern	216
18.	Sludge Pit Hole	203
19.	Gough's Cave	199
20.	Heale Farm Cave	195
21.	Goatchurch Cavern	180
22.	Hunter's Hole	172
23.	Tankard Hole (closed)	170
24.	Mangle Hole	160
25.	Rod's Pot	149
26.	Balch Cave (partly destroyed)	145
27.	Bleadon Cave	144
28.	Lionel's Hole	140
29.	Pine Tree Pot	133
30.	Ubley Hill Pot	127

Acknowledgements to the Mendip surveyors.