

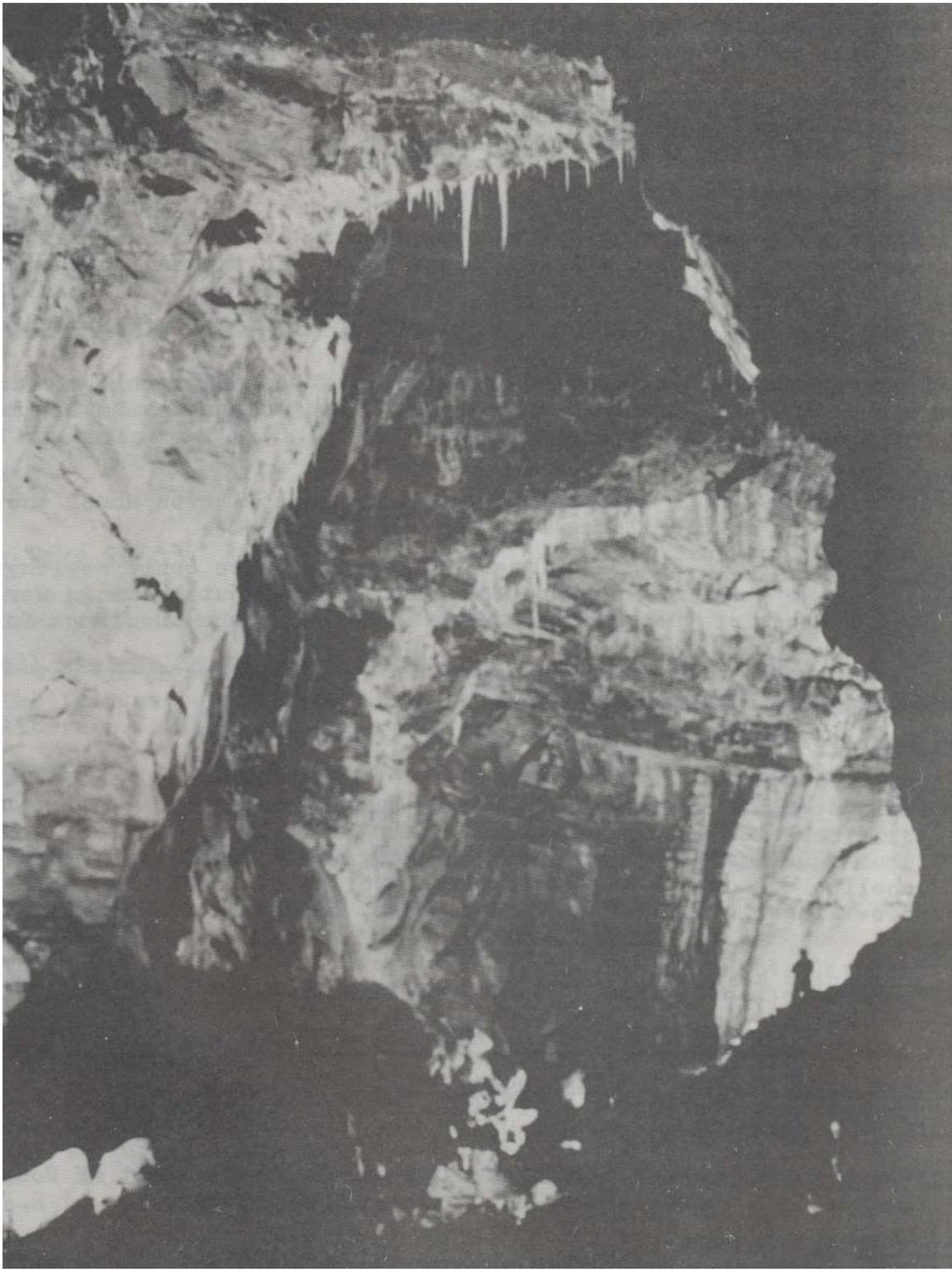
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CLUB OFFICERS FOR 1978/79

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Journal Price for Non-members: 30p per issue. Postage 30p extra.



Photographic Competition Third Prize
Main Chamber, G.B. Cave
Bob Scammel

CLUB NEWS ABSTRACTS OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 11/3/79

a) Matters arising from the meeting:

i) Tackle: A check by Jeff Price showed that we had about 300ft of ladder in good condition as well as 60ft waiting to be repaired.

ii) Hut Residence: Anyone wishing to stay at Upper Pitts for more than one month must seek the permission of the committee in writing and in advance. This is to be incorporated into the hut rules.

iii) Mid-week bookings: These must be by a member of the club except in very special circumstances at the discretion of the committee.

b) Upper Pitts progress:

i) Drainage: The soakaway in the lawn is now filled with stone. Concern has been expressed by some members as to how well it will work. They have been written to and told that the new soakaway will only be taking water from the kit washing area and possibly from the roof and any new showers that we might put in. Suitable detritus traps will be installed.

ii) Re decoration: An offer to paint the kitchen and lounge ceilings was accepted. The volunteer was authorised to spend a small amount of money if necessary.

c) Caving Politics:

i) CCC: The CCC will be changing the locks on the caves under their control to mortice locks like that at Otter Hole.

d) Treasurer's Report:

The club finances appeared to be quite healthy although we still had a number of bills to pay. Hut bookings were still scarce for the summer but we already have some bookings for 1980.

Sales: Somebody has not been using the system correctly by not recording all sales in the book.

e) New Members: We welcome the following new members:

Alan Richardson..... 25 Keswick Avenue, Kingston Vale, London SW 15

Clifford Wall 167 The Hollow, Bath, Avon

Robert Maclellan 5 Culverwell Cottages, Pilton, Somerset

Nicholas Dallman Flat 3, 65 St. Margaret's Road, Twickenham

Jacqeline Westcott 43 Garden Close, Northolt, Middlesex

Andrew Kingerlee 19 Wind Down Close, Bridgewater, Somerset

f) AOB:

i) More cave keys are to be cut.

ABSTRACTS OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 6/5/79

a) Matters arising from the last committee meeting:

i) Tackle: Samples from a rope manufacturing firm were awaited before deciding on any purchases.

ii) Dinner: Sir John Wedgewood has agreed to be the Guest of Honour at the 1979 Annual Dinner on Saturday 20th October.

b) Upper Pitts Progress:

i) Hut Tidiness: A general improvement is needed in order to keep the hut in reasonable living order.

c) Treasurer's Report: The current account balance was quite healthy but we had a number of bills to pay. People must book into the hut book when they stay at Upper Pitts.

Sales: According to the last sheet some money was not paid. Remember - NO TICK and NO IOU's.

d) New Members: We welcome the following new members:

Stewart Lindsay..... 5 Laburnum Walk, Keynsham, Avon
Derek Donnell 21 Windermere Road, Reading, Berkshire
Derek Sanderson 2 Drake Road, Poulner, Ringwood, Hampshire
Roger Wing 14 Ashford Avenue, Brentwood, Essex
Malcolm Foyle 'Malrammar', Steeple Langford, Salisbury, Wiltshire

e) AOB:

i) Publications Sales; Dave Morrison has taken this over from Richard Kenney.

Fuller abstracts of committee meetings are on the notice board at Upper Pitts.

We welcome the following New Members elected earlier:

Dick Carroll..... 4 Goldsmith Road, Wellingborough, Northants.
John E Hanwell Little Bush Close, West Horrington, Nr. Wells, Somerset
Peter and Jacqeline Holland (joint) .. 'Lamorna', 25 Lemborough Road, Buckingham
Geoffrey and Susan Lomas (joint) ... 38 Balmoral Road, Queens Park, Northampton
Julian Rowlandson 2 Langholme, Bushey Heath, Herts. WD2 1AR
Michael Skinner 130 Reynard Way, Kingsthorpe, Northampton
Dennis Taylor Barrow View, Timsbury Road, Farmborough, Nr. Bath, Avon

MENDIP NEWS

Fairy Cave Quarry

Access to the caves in Fairy Cave Quarry after Easter 1979 is via the Cerebus Speological Soc. Caving Secretary.

Banwell Stalagmite and Bone Caves

The land and caves have recently changed ownership but access via the Axbridge Caving Group is as before.

Lamb Leer

Access to Lamb Leer is controlled by the Southern Caving Clubs Ltd. and the Wessex as a shareholder has a key. Permission to park and change in the quarry however must be obtained at Beaconsfield Farm (NGR ST 551563).

Swlldon's Hole

The cave is open again after the collapse in the Water Chamber caused its closure during early May. Care is needed in the area of the collapse.

Eastwater Cavern

The original entrance to the cave was a shaft excavated by Balch and others. Work is underway to re-open this original route into the cave as the upper section of the boulder ruckle near the present entrance is far from stable. Inquire at the Hunters or Upper Pitts for up-to-date information on the cave.

Flood

Very heavy rain fell on Wednesday 30th May onto already saturated ground. By late afternoon on Eastern Mendip the River Mells had burst its banks and was flowing into the tunnels in the old ironworks. At Stoke St Michael Brownes' Hole was resurging and the entrance to Stoke Lane Slocker was submerged under a foaming muddy whirlpool. There was severe flooding at Thrupe Lane until a collapse in the large depression helped drainage.

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

Wales

OFD The ladder leading to Upper Oxbow Series in OFD II has been removed because of damage.

Twll Gwvne Oer (Hole of the Cold Wind) is a new find by the SWCC to the east of Hobb's Quarry on the Cuewr Estate. A stream passage and a sump have been found so far and work is proceeding.

Otter Hole A rescue dump is now in a small chamber just on the entrance side of the traverses. This is only to be used in an emergency and if any of it is used the Gloucester Cave Rescue Group are to be informed.

Poacher's Cave Access is being controlled by the North Wales Caving Group.

Derbyshire

Odin Mine An extension has been found here.

Devon

Baker's Pit Access is now possible - Jeff Price has the details.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I note that owing to a topographical error I am shown in the last journal (15, 176, p.122) as being located approx. 300 yards east of Cuckoo Cleeves. Geographers should note that in fact I am usually located within 2 standard deviations of the Hunters bar, though the error may increase towards closing time. Those not familiar with locating Cuckoo Cleeves should bear this in mind when taking compass bearings.

yours etc.
Phil Hendy

WCC v BEC DIGGING COMPETITION

Finds are coming in thick and fast now, pushing the Wessex even further ahead of the BEC. As well as those reported earlier (WCC Jour 176 p. 123) which are over 50ft long, there are extensions involving Pete and Alison in Shatter Chamber, Swildon's Hole totalling about 200ft. The BEC are trying to claim a mine at West Horrington for the competition (N.G.R. ST 577477) - see the Belfry Bulletin v.33 n. 4&5 pp 16-18 - but this is hardly virgin passage!

Remember the closing date - 25th November 1979.

FRIDAY NIGHT TRIPS FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS

Aug 17th Hunter's Hole	Sept 14th Eastwater Cavern
Aug 31st Bath Mines	Sept 28th Cow Hole

Details from B.E. Prewer, East View, West Horrington nr. Wells, Somerset. Tel. Wells 73757. All trips meet at 19.30.

YORKSHIRE TRIPS FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS

Sept 29th Notts Pot	Sept 30th Rumbling Hole
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Details from Jeff Price (address inside front cover).

DIARY DATES

Sept 9th, Nov 4thCommittee meetings

Sat 20th OctoberAGM & DINNER. Forms for motions for discussion at the AGM, nominations, for officers and committee and forms for dinner tickets are enclosed with this journal.

Late in September I was back in Crowsnest, this time with my friends from the Shining Mountains Grotto, Montana. Ed Klein's big 4WD took us to the end of the Ptolemy Valley track and from there two hours hard walking carrying light packs brought us to the entrance of Yorkshire Pot. This was the Shining Mountains' first 'international' outing and because of the limiting factors imposed by the long journey involved we were aiming at a one day trip from valley bottom to cave and back. In contrast to my visit of three weeks ago when the weather was an incredibly hot indian summer, this time there was snow on the ground and a savage wind blowing over the col. The last six hundred vertical feet to the col were a quarter mile step kicking slog against the wind and spindrift. Breasting the col at 8,000ft we were in a cold white world of fantasy. The fine white powder snow was everywhere, and driven by the wind inveigling itself in the most intimate recesses of our clothing. All sense of orientation was lost and it was almost impossible even to tell which way was up, until your foot had compressed enough powder to stand on.

It was at this point that my American friends gallantly offered me the lead position, pointing out the unquestionable fact that I had been here before whilst they had not, and therefore I was the most suitable person to find the entrance. Until this point I had been following gratefully in the steps kicked out by Regan and Klein and taking what relief I could in the wind shadow provided by their ample frames. However, there comes a time when a man must recognise his fate, and this it appeared was mine.

It took only moments before I was thigh deep in powder snow, with my glasses iced up and no idea where I was. Very soon we were traversing over considerable drops on steep slopes of unstable powder and I appeared to be getting no output at all from that cave orientated gyro that all cavers should, as we know, keep set for conditions like this. Fortunately we were prevented from dying of exposure by almost falling into the entrance of Yorkshire Pot itself. The small hill nearby gave as a little shelter whilst we changed and it wasn't long before we were rattling down the entrance pitches that had been left rigged from my previous visit. It was the high level duck: that repulsed the Shining Mountains Grotto; wanting to remain dry (admittedly a sensible thing in the 1°C cave air), they refused to follow your author through it to view the delights of Green Pool Sump, so it was at this point the trip ended and our exit commenced. Mike Beer had trouble with his rig and borrowed my emergency jammer, as a result I learned a whole new repertoire of North American expletives in just six short pitches!

We surfaced just minutes before last light into weather that had fortunately moderated. Nevertheless it was a race to get changed and off the mountain whilst the weather held. What little light that remained illuminated only the snow covered peaks leaving the valleys as dark black pits. The strange feeling of disorientation returned as we groped our way back to the col in a race against the light. The descent of the snowfield to Camp Caves was a frantic slide and tumble affair and without pausing we pushed on into the trees. Even in good conditions the upper section of the trail to Camp Caves is a little indefinite and the slopes are crisscrossed by innumerable game trails and tracks. It was therefore inevitable that we should lose the trail proper and there followed the inevitable bushwhacking; groping our way down the thinly snow covered ground and stumbling over roots and rocks we were not the happiest of men. It was 'Yukon', Eugene Regan's Siberian husky, who eventually set us right and found the more well defined trail that led us back to the truck.

Two weeks were to pass before I revisited Crowsnest on the occasion of the Canadian Thanksgiving. During the interim I spent a week walking in the Rockies around Lake Abraham, north of Lake Louise. It was during this time that I spent two glorious days on the Athabasca Glacier/Columbia Icefield where we enjoyed perfect weather and climbed an unnamed peak of 9,500ft to get the most glorious of views across Mt Columbia, Mt Wilson and miles and miles of other mountains.

Saturday of the Thanksgiving weekend saw a large party of cavers camped at Camp Caves eating a traditional Thanksgiving dinner of turkey, stuffing, baked potatoes, cranberry sauce etc., courtesy of

Linda Hastie and Pete Thompson. The following day supported by a large party of sherpas I made an intimate acquaintance with Green Pool Sump. Suffice it to say that a sump that requires a backpack up an elevation of around 3,500ft then a descent to -930ft is not going to be a pushover. Indeed I found Green Pool most unpleasant. Sited at the bottom of a large steeply descending passage the sump continued underwater at the same angle gradually filling up with silt. After 50ft on a base fed line I had reached a point where the gap between the silt and roof had reduced to 9 or 10 inches and with the water temperature only fractionally above freezing the organism revolted, decided that it wanted to go home, and I found myself headed for surface. After a ten minute shiver to warm up I made a second attempt but was thwarted by the absolute zero viz and extreme cold which made me disorientated and resulted in a couple of disconcerting collisions with the walls of the passage. Unable to reach my original far point I called it a day and we began the long crawl out. It can definitely be said that Green Pool will not provide an easy free dive into a continuation of the large bore passage whence it starts and will almost certainly require a dry suit for a more serious push.

My next outing, on the weekend of the Wessex Dinner, was a more successful affair. This was to a cave unattractively named 'Rats Nest' west of Calgary. The trip was enlivened by Pete Thompson bringing a ladder that was too short for the single 50ft pitch in the cave. However everything was eventually sorted out and we arrived at the sump located in a most attractive and well decorated little grotto. The water was crystal clear, and when I dived I found myself in an underwater chamber as well decorated as the grotto I had just left. A squeeze between a large curtain hanging from the roof and breakdown on the floor led to a continuation of the chamber and almost immediately I sensed air surface above me. Sure enough, looking up I could see my babbles breaking surface about 10ft above. I surfaced cautiously and found myself in a large sump pool. Then followed an embarrassing few moments. Those who know me well are aware that I am far from being a good swimmer and on this occasion, being out of my depth and unable to employ my usual sumping technique of 'boot on the roof and push' I was at something of a loss. There followed a frenzied thrashing until I was able to beach myself on the sloping side of the sump pool. Excitedly dekitting I found myself in a delightful little grotto of clean washed flowstone with clean white straw decorations and only just remembered to belay my line before galloping off into the unknown. As it turned out it wasn't a very long gallop. About 25ft beyond the sump pool I arrived at Sump 2 which looked as clear and promising as Sump 1 had. However by the time I had rekitting myself I decided to return to my support party to let them know the results of the dive. Except for the problem cheated by trying to get both myself and the line reel through the squeeze at the bottom of the sump simultaneously the return dive was uneventful, and it was decided to leave Sump 2 for a future visit and go celebrate the successful passing of Sump 1! This we did to very good effect in a rigorous nine hour drinking session in Banff after which I successfully drove my car into two large holes situated exactly one wheel base apart!

Three weeks later I was headed north on the 360 mile drive to Edmonton where I stayed overnight at Pete Thompson's apartment before setting off westwards for a further 200 miles to Cadomin, a small mining town south of the Yellowhead Pass. It is here that one of Alberta's best known caves is found. Cadomin Cave has been known for many years and has suffered badly at the hands of the Spray Paint Brigade. However earlier this year a novice with only a couple of cave trips behind him, found his way through a boulder ruckle and into a long complex lower level of the cave. He recruited Pete Thompson and hence the ASS to help him, and it was the sump at the end of this new series that was our objective.

The dive unfortunately did not go well. This was largely due to a jamming line reel which kept pulling me up short thus allowing disturbed silt to get ahead of me. At one point I got into a low slot which appeared to be going, but the only way I could progress was to hold the line reel ahead of me and pull off the line with my other hand. Unfortunately an over vigorous push on the reel caused it to disappear into the silt ahead of me and as a considerable disturbance to the silt by the line reel had already reduced the visibility to zero I was somewhat temporarily alarmed. However a little groping in the murk recovered the line reel but by this time little alarm bells were ringing in my brain and the organism had once more decided that enough was enough and I found myself returning rapidly to base.

The exit from Cadomin was perhaps the high point of the trip. It must have been close to midnight when we exited onto a snow covered mountain side lit by a full moon on a crystal clear night. The first part of the route back was a fantastic toboggan; sitting down in the snow and leaning back on our packs we very soon reached the tree line some 700ft below us. From there an unforgettable trek through a magical fairyland of snow covered trees with crystals of ice glinting in the moonlight led us back to our vehicles and the welcome warmth of a bottle of 'Captain Morgan's'.

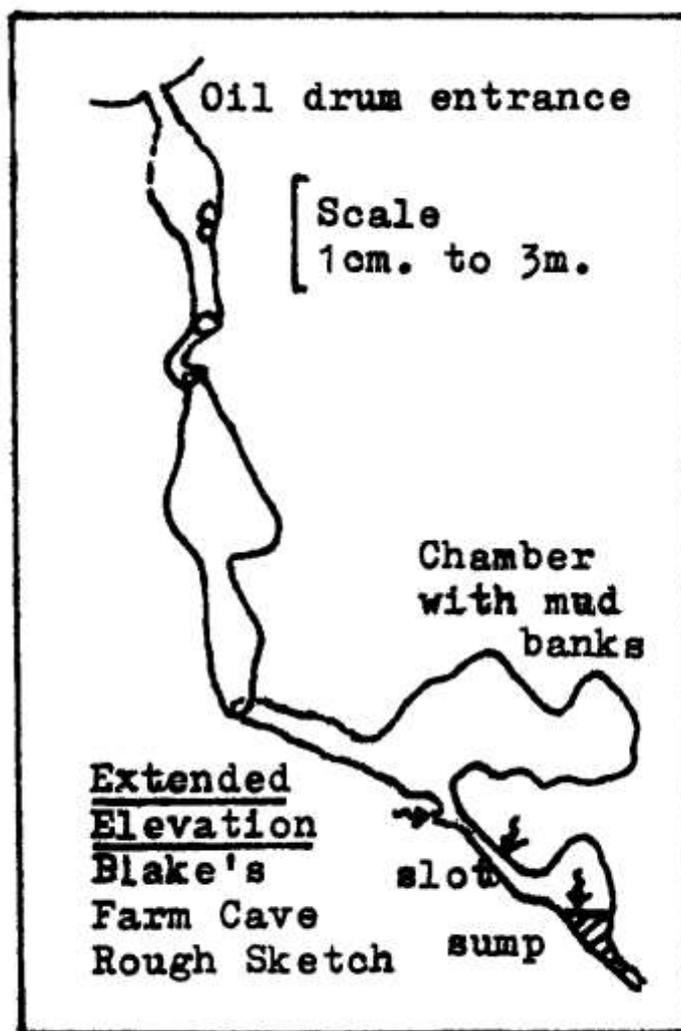
Medicine Hat 15.11.78

SOME DIGGING NOTES

Dave Walker

Blake's Farm Cave

While Dave Morrison was digging at Pennyfarthing he diverted the water usually sinking there down into the Blake's Farm Cave depression. It is assumed that this extra water helped move the mud banks deep in the cave so that on 29/10/77 Dennis Wheeler and myself found a way into a small section of streamway below the chokes. This was followed for about 30ft through a short slot to a sump pool. A second stream entered from the right before the slot and a third entered the pool on its far side from the left. Rob Harper and Chris Milne dived in the sump (see this jour, p.147). When Di Beeching and I revisited the cave on 22/5/79 the slot to the sump chamber was nearly silted up. The cave is thus c. 75 feet deep.



Eyeballs in the Sky

Work started in March 1978 at Elm Cave, Fordbury Bottom, much to the chagrin of Tuska Morrison, because we wouldn't tell him where we were digging. Al Mills, Di, myself and Colin Brimstone (who had dug there years ago with Dave Mitchell) took seven, working trips with Al's mega-bucket and pulley to reopen the route to the second chamber and the lake. We did this on the grounds that the cave might not have been completely worked out by Mitchell and Cowley before the ruckle between the first and second chambers collapsed. The lake was as Dave Mitchell had described it (MCG jour. 3 p. 32) and was soon known to us, Perishers fashion, as the 'Eyeballs in the Sky'. Pete Moody dived in this, but only in passage which later became accessible as the late summer drought started to bite and the lake disappeared, revealing more and more of the second choke.

On a visit to the provinces, tiring of the delights of Lionel's, Pete and Alison got into something new but by the time the second choke had been made safer the drought had broken and the lake was back. I know of seventeen working trips during 1978, resulting in a cave of estimated length 130ft and depth 100ft.

Brownes' Arch NGR ST 669476

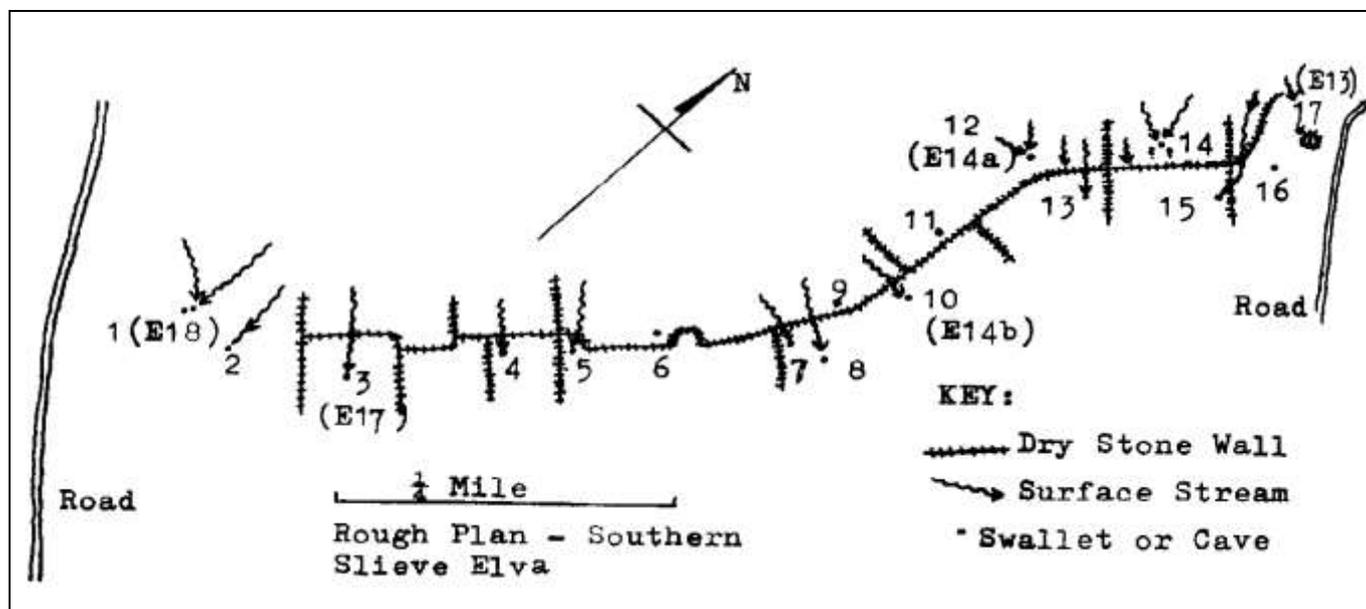
It's a popular theory that a continuation to Brownes' Hole, Stoke St Michael, exists on the other side of the valley running off west towards Stoke Lane Slocker and a rocky outcrop similar perhaps to Brownes' Hole before extensive excavations gave it its present appearance can be found in the right sort of place. The gang of four (as above) were joined by Steve and Pauline Gough for seven or eight digging trips here during July and August 1978. A fair amount of spoil was removed and although some water-worn fissures were unearthed no cave was forthcoming. A blessing in disguise no doubt, as to have found the other end of the Bayley Ward Extension in Stoke Lane Slocker might have been embarrassing.

Burnt House Swallet NGR ST 615462

Forsaking the bustle of the Mid Somerset Show to picnic on Mendip's lower flanks the Shepton faction were surprised to stumble across an extensive depression with a small stream sinking in it. The site is on the Lower Lias and initial scratchings showed little promise of cave.

Co. Clare September 1978

Having satiated our thirst for sport with St Catherine's 1 to Fisherstreet pot and our thirst for Black Gold in O'Connor's bar Di and I turned to other projects, namely a prospecting walk along the shale/limestone boundary on southern Slieve Elva between Poll Kilmoon East and Poll-cahercloggaun East, finding the area more complex than is documented by Tratman (The Caves of North-West Clare, Ireland pp 168-173). A description of the various sites follows:-



1. Poll Kilmoon East (E18 Tratman). Two Streams converge at this site, a cave 750ft long.
2. Surface stream sinking into a minute hole just up from a depression overgrown with gorse and bramble bushes.
3. (E17 Tratman?) A stream sinks into an impenetrable swallet but 30ft to the SW a hole gives access to c.12ft of small cave.
4. An interesting swallet with digging potential taking a fair stream.
5. A stream sinks in an ill-defined swallet.
6. 9ft deep chamber reached via a surface slot, with a draughting bouldery floor.
- 7&8. Ill defined sinks.

9. An overgrown depression containing calf bones.
10. (E14b Tratman?) A muddy impassable swallet.
11. A low dry tunnel impassable without digging.
12. (E14a Tratman) Poll-cahercloggaun West-1. Known cave 10,000ft long.
13. A small bouldery sink.
14. (E14 Tratman?) Poll-cahercloggaun West. An impenetrable sink.
15. A muddy swallet in boulders.
16. A dry 6ft deep collapse in earth.
17. (E13 Tratman) Poll-cahercloggaun East. Known site near the road and a stone wall circle.

Tuesday 19th September saw us visiting a site which Charlie Self of the UBSS had mentioned to us, Calf Swallet (C3a) on Poulacapple. We found this too tight after about 20ft!

UNDERWATER - UNDER MENDIP 1978

Rob Harper

This is a short resume of cave diving happenings on, or rather under, Mendip during 1978 that I have been involved with. Unless stated otherwise the divers are WCC members.

Blake's Farm Cave

The large pool at the bottom of this cave was dived by Chris Milne and myself during November 1978. We found that a tight tube led off for about 12-15 ft through boulders to a mud choke.

Mangle Hole

Early in the year I had continued the dive to a point some 150- 200ft downstream from Aldermaston Chamber and then a lack of enthusiasm and companions led to a hiatus (I can't get through the squeeze into the chamber on my own). In June Steve Perry (UBSS) dived into the downstream sump only to find that about 1 metre beyond my furthest point the water went down a too-tight crack in the floor. This was later confirmed by Chris Milne.

St Dunstan's Well Cave

This hardy annual was dived by me in January. Definitely no way on.

Swildon's Hole

Pete Moody and I investigated what might be a new passage in Swildon's 6 about 60ft back up from sump VI. We climbed into a passage about 10ft up on the right hand wall which led to about 70ft of passage with a small stream and a hopeless end.

Wookey Hole

Little or nothing new was found during 1978, however at last steps are being taken to consolidate and co-ordinate our present information. Successful radio-location of both Wookey 20 and 22 under the direction of Martin Bishop (BEC) and Richard Stevenson have given accurate points on which to fix a survey. Dave Irwin (BEC) has also conducted an accurate survey of the entrance series as far as the pool in Wookey 9:2. Dave Yeandale (BEC) and Geoff Yeadon (Kendal CC) came down one weekend and surveyed Wookey 20 to CRG grade Chris Milne and I with the help of Bob Drake have made a start on the survey of Wookey from 20 onwards both above and below water.

COLLAPSE IN THE WATER CHAMBER, SWILDON'S HOLE

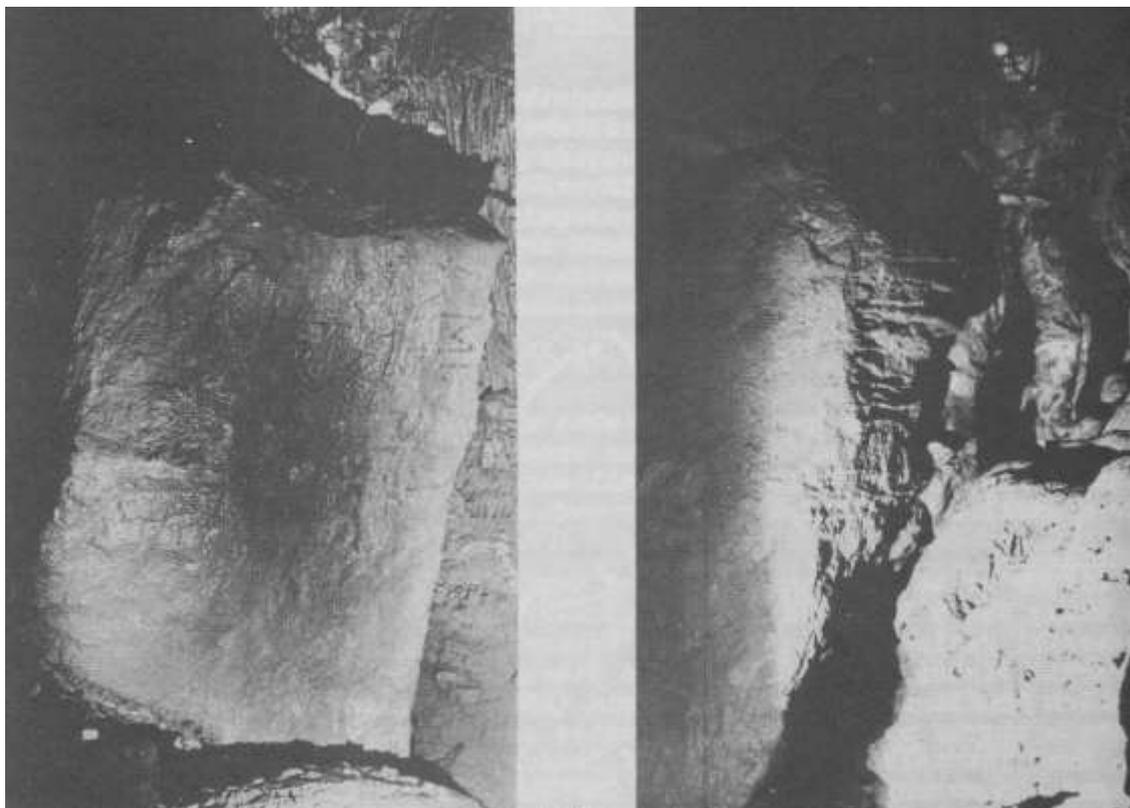
Photographs by John E Hanwell. - Copyright retained by photographer



Above: The collapse before alterations four to five days after it had happened. Photograph taken 4th May 1979 looking from the Wet Way down to the Water Rift. 'MW' 12 inches high.

Below left: The huge boulder swung through 90° up against the Water Rift to stabilise the collapse. View from the Dry Way entrance to the Water Chamber 22nd May 1979.

Below right: Steve Gough traverses to the right of the boulder 22nd May.



A MATTER OF TIME

Lotte la Nempsh

Great and varied though the history of Mendip undoubtedly is, it will come as a surprise to many that the eponymous term 'Mendip' is likely soon to be absorbed into the vocabulary of scientists dealing with the Theory of Relativity, and in particular with the concept of four dimensional space time.

In this context a 'Mendip' type phenomena is one in which an individual (or as in a recent case reported from Japan, a group of individuals) is by some coincidence of probabilities apparently displaced through time, whilst remaining geographically in the same relative position. In the past occurrences of this kind have been variously put down to witchcraft, reincarnation and so on, but recent work by experts such as Professor Lillsam and Dr Jan Poinés suggests that equally strange but more objective forces may be at work. One of the most striking pieces of evidence to support their case was discovered on Mendip three years ago. That it is only now possible to make it public will be understood when one remembers the propensity of some of our leaders to interpret anything out of the ordinary as the plotting of some hostile foreign power.

Firstly however we must go back to 1973. In September of that year a student called Allen Teapidson disappeared from his home in Bath. He had been caving for about six months, during which time he had become very keen, and had actually submitted an application to join the Wessex. However there was nothing to suggest that his disappearance was in any way connected with the sport. He has not been seen since.

In February 1976 members of the Speleological Society of a small local teaching college were pursuing a rather unpromising dig in an ascending choked rift near Damascus in St. Paul's Series, Swildon's Hole. Persisting with this enterprise in spite of much ridicule they broke through on February 29th into a short passage which went quickly to a hopeless stal choke, and which, predictably, they christened 'Leap Year Passage'. The passage was unremarkable, but what it contained was not. Indeed within a few hours Detective Inspector Tony Gallier of the Serious Crime Squad, and Captain Roy Tarjant of the Bomb Squad were hurrying to the scene.

At the far end of the new passage, in a shallow depression, were a number of bones including a skull. More remarkably nearby was an ex-army ammunition box which was half covered by a layer of stalagmite. When this was broken free and examined under a microscope faint but still detectable scratch marks showed up on the side, including the words 'water', 'more', 'passage', 'changed', as well as the initials AT, and 21973.

There may well be a rational explanation of all this. Indeed Mendip being what it is it may all even be a huge practical joke, although it seems a lot of trouble to go to. Yet there are many unanswered questions. Professor Marvin Doosser has tested the bones found in the dig in an attempt to establish their age. On every occasion the results indicate specimens of such a great age as to call for a total reappraisal of the conventional scientific view of human evolution. Perhaps therefore one should take seriously his suggestion that the bones in the dig are those of Teapidson, and that having gone caving alone on the 21st September 1973 he underwent what Doosser calls a 'chronoquake'. Thus he was unable to escape from the cave as it was no longer the cave he had entered, but rather the same cave much earlier in its evolution. With the entrance non-existent, and water flowing through St. Paul's, he would therefore have no alternative but to crawl into an abandoned inlet, which was later sealed. In any event it is certain that water did once flow through St. Paul's, and many cavers say that in the long abandoned passages in Swildon's Hole strange babblings and whisperings may be heard....

CARE NEEDED IN BATH STONE MINES

Bob Scammell

With the rapid influx of cavers into the stone mines around the Bath area over the past few years (due I am sure to recent publications such as 'Mendip Underground') I feel a word or two on the dangers to which many, even experienced, cavers seem totally unaware with regard to these old workings. A rescue callout in the event of an accident would undoubtedly involve the police and fire services more so than a cave rescue on Mendip, and could result in the entrances being blocked off altogether.

Cavers going down well visited caves such as Swildon's, G.B., Goatchurch and the like, only notice the roof either when they hit it or when it goes up a considerable height-above them. 'If it has been there so long it's bound to stay in place' the subconscious tells them. A mine is completely the opposite. The roofs fall down, and very often at that. Every year without fail there are new falls, in particular in Box, especially in late winter and early spring, due I imagine to percolation of water. This stone was used for building because of the ease with which it can be cut and chiselled. Because of its softness when a roof slips it makes very little noise and therefore gives little or no warning.

In the twenty years since I first entered one of these mines I have never been in the vicinity of a fall actually occurring, though often I have come across some very fresh ones. I have also heard some first-hand accounts from men who worked in the mines. Recently I was shown a newspaper cutting of an accident in Brown's Folly Mine dated 1886 where four miners were walking away from a working area where they had just installed a prop to fetch another, when a piece of rock weighing around one hundredweight fell from the roof and shattered, some pieces cutting the nearest man and knocking him down. Immediately a block weighing one ton fell on him killing him outright. It is only luck that this has not happened in recent years.

In March this year I encountered a party of four adults and about twelve to fifteen very young children. The children wore helmets and carried hand torches. One of the adults asked me if they were in the 'front passage' clutching a Xerox copy of the relevant pages of 'Mendip Underground'. They were then still in the old workings. If a roof fall had occurred even some distance away the result could have been disastrous with such a large party of inexperienced youngsters. Imagine them trying to get out of the way of falling rock, and in the general panic falling over one another and losing torches, let alone anyone being hit. A roof fall can be as little a half a hundredweight or up to fifty tons and over. In recent years whole lengths of passage have come down, up to fifteen feet thick and fifteen feet wide.

Other dangers come from old machinery still left in the mines. Cranes still standing look solid enough though a close inspection of the bearings, particularly the one fitted into the roof from which the cranes swing, it will be noted that they are rotten on every crane and on the point of giving way. Yet some visitors will insist on swinging them, and trying to pick up blocks of stone. From all accounts when the top bearing gives way the whole weight of the crane is balanced on one similar bearing in the floor and will come crashing down in any direction endangering anyone standing within ten feet of the base.

Similarly the old props which were once very solid have rotted right through and people seem to delight in ripping them apart or pushing them over. These props were put there for a purpose in the first place.

Another problem with these mines is that there are hundreds of passages in a relatively small area creating a maze in which a novice to the mines can easily become totally lost as has happened in the past on a number of occasions. With the growing number of visitors to the mines there is a greater risk than ever before of an exposure case from someone lost or worse.

The descriptions and plans of these mines in 'Mendip Underground' should not be taken lightly. In comparison with caves which usually have only one or two entrances and a few main passages, these mines had many entrances in the past though most have now been filled in leaving many unsafe dead

ends from the inside. When exploring workings new to you try to note 'landmarks' along the route to remember on returning i.e a certain prop or pile of stone or peculiar shape of passage. It really is easy to come straight back onto a passage you may have left minutes before and believe yourself to be on a completely different route altogether. Keep one eye on the roof at all times, you'll be surprised at the fresh white cracks you see. Also the floors have holes and unguarded wells of varying depths.

Those amongst us interested in photography will appreciate that once a crane or prop is down and broken, a wall spoiled by carbide, or the wood completely ripped from the winch in Box, then the pictures taken will lose most of their interest let alone the fact that someone could be hurt, or even that someone else would have liked to have seen them as they originally were.

Brown's Folly, Swan and parts of Midford Mine have somewhat small but very fine formations, many of which have already succumbed to the trample of careless feet and dirty fingers. So while you keep one eye on the roof keep the other on where your feet are going. It will be a shame if these mines are reduced to nothing more than somewhere to go on a wet Sunday afternoon where as little effort as possible is needed.

One last word, when leaving a note of where you have gone, either on the club board, with your vehicle or at home etc., don't just say "Bath Stone Mines" or "Box Mines", try to say the particular area especially with regard to Box i.e Cliff workings, Jack's workings, Cathedral, B12 etc. as between them as well as in each area there are hundreds of passages and it could save hours in an emergency.

RENASCENCE SERIES, SWILDON'S HOLE PART 2 - RENASCENCE

Pete Moody

On 26th November 1977 Dave Walker and I broke through the choke at the end of Sidcot Passage. Straddled in the shaft which had been excavated upwards through the fill it was possible to see into what appeared to be a low passage with continuations both to the left and the right. Before we could explore the new passage a return to the surface had to be made in order to fetch Alison Hooper who for once had not felt up to the trip. It was not long before the three of us were back at Sidcot Passage and climbing up out of the dug shaft eager to explore caverns vast and measureless to man.

There was no passage to the left but to the right the passage rapidly increased in height and width. After thirty feet it swung to the left and a scramble over boulders and past a crumbling right hand wall led us into a fine sandy passage five feet wide and fifteen feet high. The way opened out still further but shortly beyond a downward sloping ramp the passage divided. A crawl went off to the left while to the right, up a stal slope, was an aven and choke. It took only half an hour to dig through the choke and into a low roofed chamber but another choke barred the way on. Returning the following week the second choke was quickly passed but five feet further on was a third choke, a more formidable barrier of stal flows coming to within four inches of the roof and overlain with thick mud.

The next Friday the magic hammer was applied and on the Saturday Herculean efforts by Rich Websell managed to clear the way on over the cracked up blocks of stal. The three chokes form a section named the Stoopees; although now considerably larger than when they were first passed they still add a little sport to the trip through the extension. Beyond Sugar Lump Squeeze, as the third choke is called, some crawling and flat out sections led into a tube three feet high and four feet wide with a pleasant sandy floor and a few delicate stalactites. After fifty feet it was possible to stand again and on the first exploration it seemed the extension was really going to go on and on. Alas it only went fifteen feet to a chamber where

the way split and ended in solid chokes.

By the end of 1977 all the obvious leads had been checked but none gave any significant length of passage. The avens in the final chamber were too tight to pass as was the splash aven near the Stoopes. The left hand fork before the Stoopes did go for forty feet before becoming very narrow and choked. Interestingly the survey (1) shows the passage to be very near Damascus in St. Paul's Series. In 1972 Stewart McMannus and I tried to widen a tight rift leading north east from Damascus but the dig was abandoned, with little progress shown, when Mac left Mendip to live in Derbyshire. It seems certain that a route could have been engineered into Renascence but the cost of the necessary explosives would probably have been too much for our pockets.

Renascence Series is formed along a major joint and runs parallel to St. Paul's Series but on average seventy feet higher and is heading straight towards Barnes' Loop. The terminal chokes are only five feet higher than the top of the U tube in Sidcot Passage which is about the same level as the streamway in the Double Pots area. The source of the formative waters for Renascence is open to conjecture, if, as it seems likely, the passages connect with the modern streamway in the area of Barnes' Loop then it is difficult to explain the later formation of St. Paul's Series. Alternatively the passages could continue over the streamway, perhaps only linked to it by a small capture passage, and a climb towards a swallet near Priddy Pool. However this would mean the continuation of Renascence would be very close to Fools Paradise, Black Hole which is part of another ancient streamway probably contemporary with Renascence. A breakthrough at the terminal chokes in Renascence would be most interesting; unfortunately they do appear to be long term digging propositions and access at the moment is rather difficult.

The large sandstone cobbles found in the Sidcot Dig led Stanton (2), Ford (3) and Atkinson (4) to believe that beyond the choke would be discovered a relatively open inlet series rising steeply to an ancient swallet down valley of the present entrance to Swildon's. The passages found so far were completely unexpected but the theorists may yet be proved correct. One hundred feet from the point of breakthrough into Renascence there is an insignificant-looking side passage in the east wall. Explosives were required to open up the entrance to the passage which had been almost buried under first layers of cobbles and other stream debris and then stal, but beyond the blasted squeeze one realises the passage must have once been a major inlet. The passage is well scalloped and at one time was at least eight feet high and up to three feet wide but has now been considerably reduced in size by stal deposition. Fifteen feet from the squeeze there is a sump which I found too tight to pass after twenty feet but in the roof heading directly over the sump is a heavily stalled up passage with a very strong draught. It was banged open as far as a squeeze through which stones could be thrown into a pool in a much larger passage. The squeeze has never been passed for on 9th April 1978 Dave Valker, Alison Hooper and, on our way to Renascence, found that the mud shaft excavated in the Sidcot Choke had collapsed and the route was blocked with a river of liquid mud. Alison and I together with a large team from the Shepton Mallet Caving Club reopened the route the following week but before a return could be made to the inlet passage a further collapse occurred and the passage into Renascence has remained blocked ever since.

The collapses have occurred because inadvertently the outflow of a small trickle of water in Renascence was disturbed and the whole area around the mud shaft became impregnated with water. Slumping now appears to have stopped and possibly all the mud which could have come down has now done so. Unfortunately water now flows into the U tube and is only able to drain away slowly (via an unknown route). On a recent visit to Sidcot Passage there was evidence to suggest that the U tube only a few weeks earlier had been sumped to a depth of nearly twenty feet. Although it will be technically possible this summer if the dig dries out at least one hundred and fifty man hours work will be required and on last summer's showing the necessary help will just not be available. The search is now on for another way back into Renascence which will not require so much labour. One possibility being investigated is the choke/sump in the chamber reached by climbing the aven in Sidcot Passage. It is about the same level as a small passage which can be seen heading back towards Sidcot Passage from just within Renascence. 1977 was not the best year for Mendip discoveries; Tynning's Barrows Cave was found in February of that

Our glimpse into the future came as a revelation on attending the inaugural meeting of the South West England Rescue Association at Honiton, Devon, last October. The Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall addressed the various rescue bodies represented including the RAF., Coastguards, Mountain and Mine Rescue Teams. What emerged was the need for a common approach whilst maintaining the expertise and autonomy of each specialist unit with local knowledge, There are good technical reasons for this trend which we will have to consider carefully.

The audited annual accounts have been published with grateful thanks to all cavers and clubs who support rescue work on Mendip. Apart from increases in postages and stationary through buying in stocks that will last for a while, most items of income and expenditure are on par with those in recent years. Despite hardships apparent elsewhere, therefore, MRO can be satisfied with the healthy state of its funds.

As we move into the last year of the seventies, it is worth reviewing the record since the beginning of the decade as follows:

	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	
Serious accidents	3	1	0	5	2	1	1	5	0	18
Minor incidents	6	4	18	2	1	3	3	4	1	42
General alerts	3	0	4	8	5	4	4	7	6	41
	12	5	22	15	8	8	8	16	7	101

Thus, during the last year we have topped over one hundred call-outs since 1970. The following log based upon the reports received by the Wardens Involved brings us up-to-date with the details of each call-out.

Sunday 5th March 1978 Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer received a call from the Police at Frome ten minutes after midnight. A Mr Cooper from Bristol had raised the alarm from Priddy Green about two friends still in the cave. All three had entered the cave about 5pm the previous day for a trip to Swildon's Four. Cooper had intended going via the streamway to rendezvous with his friends in Four; however he turned back on reaching Sump Three and had lost contact with the others. Whilst Prewer was in conversation with Cooper over the phone, the overdue pair arrived. They had lost their way on the return journey and had been delayed.

Thursday 14th and Friday 15th September 1978 Wells in Glastonbury

Fred Davies, Brian Prewer, Martin Bishop, Rich West and Jim Hanwell assisted the Police in a search of old wells in and around Glastonbury for a body reported missing. They were joined by Chris Bradshaw and Bruce Bradford on the second day. Nothing was found and the search was called off by the Police when no positive clues could be found.

Sunday 17th September 1978 Read's Cavern

Tim Large received a call from the Police in Wells at 2.55pm. A Mr R.S. Liddiard from Shipham had informed them of a party of scouts overdue from Read's Cavern, Browne-Stewart Series. The troop had gone down the cave at 10.30am led by Chris Liddiard aged 19, the others being Steve Mansford (17), Pete Cornish (13), John Benson (13) and Gavin Munnery (12). All lived in the Shipham area.

A strong party comprising Tim Large, Chris Batstone, Martin Bishop, Nigel Taylor, Tony Jarratt, Stewart MacManus, Trevor Hughes and J. Crick went from the Belfry to conduct a search of the cave. Richard Gough remained at the Belfry phone and Dave Irwin stood by at Priddy in case others were needed. The

search party was joined by Rich Websell, Pete Moody and Alison Hooper at Burrington. Nigel Taylor and six others went underground at 3.30pm and soon made contact with the scouts. Apparently, they had lost their way and lights on returning through the boulders in the Browne-Stewart Series. Their shouts had been heard by another party who had been unable to direct them out of the predicament other than to surface and warn MRO. Nor did they use the call-out procedure posted outside the entrance!

The lost party was brought out of the cave by 5.30pm and everyone stood down. This was the only occasion during the year that MRO had to go underground on a rescue call!

Sunday 1st October 1978 Mangle Hole

A call was received by Brian Prewer at 8.00pm from Chris Bradshaw who had heard that a party was overdue, probably from Mangle Hole but not definitely so. Bradshaw offered to go and look for the car belonging to the cavers concerned and to report back. Meanwhile, Prewer notified the Police that the search was being made. Soon afterwards, he received a call that the party had been found.

Monday 2nd October 1978 Lamb Leer

Frome Police contacted Brian Prewer at 4.30pm with information that a Mr Rolands had reported a party of seven from the Royal Army Pay Corps overdue from Lamb Leer. He had expected them thirty minutes earlier! Whilst explaining that this was not unusual to Rolands over the phone, Prewer was told that the party had emerged.

Saturday 9th December 1978 Swildon's Hole

Wells Police alerted Brian Prewer at 7.30pm that a Mrs Baggoti in Bristol had informed them of a party overdue from Swildon's as she had expected one of them to phone her at 6.00 p.m. Prewer contacted Alan Thomas at Priddy to check for cars on the Green. At 8.00pm the informant rang to say that she had heard from the cavers concerned.

Sunday 31st December 1978 Evacuation of snowbound party at Charterhouse

A party of six 9-11 year old Red Cross Cadet girls with two adult instructors was reported as trapped by heavy snow in the Venture Hut at the head of the Velvet Bottom valley. The children had been holidaying in the area from Sussex but were not caving and did not know Mendip. Their leader Mr P. Avery of Burgess Hill, Sussex, had alerted the Police at Weston-super-Mare that they only had food and heating for another day. The Police requested MRO to assist in evacuating the party since severe blizzards were forecasted. Brian Prewer received the call at 10.40 am and alerted cavers at the Belfry. Whilst a party would set out for the hostel on foot from Priddy, it was understood that climbers from the Cheddar Gorge Cliff Rescue Team were approaching Charterhouse from Burrington with a Police Land Rover.

Nigel Taylor assembled a party comprising Chris Batstone, Alan Thomas, John Dukes, D. Bradshaw, Jane Kirby and Jess Carson, a medical student, for the 'overland' journey. With radioed permission from Somerset County Council, Taylor requested a snow plough which got to the Castle of Comfort before deep drifts prevented further progress. The rest of the journey was made on foot across the fields and the party reached the stranded cadets at 2.30pm. The Burrington rescuers arrived twenty minutes later having left the Land Rover only a mile away at Paywell Farm. Taylor decided that all should make for the Land Rover as the children were in good spirits. This was accomplished successfully by 3.40pm and the Red Cross party was driven to Weston-super-Mare for the night. The Belfry party reached Priddy at 6.45pm ready for New Year's Eve festivities.

J.D. Hanwell, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer,
'Chaumbey', 50 Wells Road, Wookey Hole, Wells, Somerset BA5 1DN
10th February 1979

WALDEGRAVE SWALLET - ANOTHER CHAPTER IN THE SAGA

Phil Hendy

Inspired by the BEC's recent discovery in conglomerate at Wigmore, and intrigued by the apparent twin resurgences at Wookey Hole and Rodney Stoke, a small team, of Wessex has recently obtained permission from Waldegrave Estates Ltd. to re-open Waldegrave Swallet.

The diggers are led by Adrian Vanderplank, and include Phil Hendy, Judith Withers and Lynne Williams. Work started just after Easter continues every Wednesday evening. Because the curious Public abound on the Minneries, our first task was to install a strong lockable gate. We found that when the dig was abandoned a few years ago the steel shaft was capped and covered with boulders. This capping was cleared away and a cemented collar of stones was built to bring the entrance up a couple of feet to present ground level. The gate was cemented into place and the area at the back of the depression is to be walled off to retain spoil.

Ten feet lower down, at the bottom of the shaft, we found the floor to consist of stones, gravel, and mud. The roof of the small chamber was unstable, but wooden shoring, a legacy from the previous diggers, protects us from the impending doom. There is an area of instability behind the shaft, which is unfortunate, as this is above the spot where we consider the rift to be largest. The floor is slowly being dug out, and the water is draining away freely between gaps in the stones. The walls are conglomerate, whether solid or large boulders we are unsure. Only approximately a third of the water sinking is seen at the foot of the shaft.

Since writing the first draft, Mendip experienced very heavy rainfall over several days, particularly on May 30th. The following day I had a look at the site to find a heavy stream flowing out of the pond. It was too voluminous for the normal stream channel, and flowed as a sheet over the old spoil heap (now partly collapsed) and directly into the shaft. I am not looking forward to our next digging trip, as it is likely that the underground scene will not be a pretty sight. Watch this journal for further news of our progress....

DIGGING WITH A THERMIC LANCE

Alan Mills

This is a method of boring holes in rock etc. by means of heat generated by a chemical reaction. A pipe is packed with materials which give off heat when oxidised, the temperature is raised at the end and oxygen is passed down the pipe.

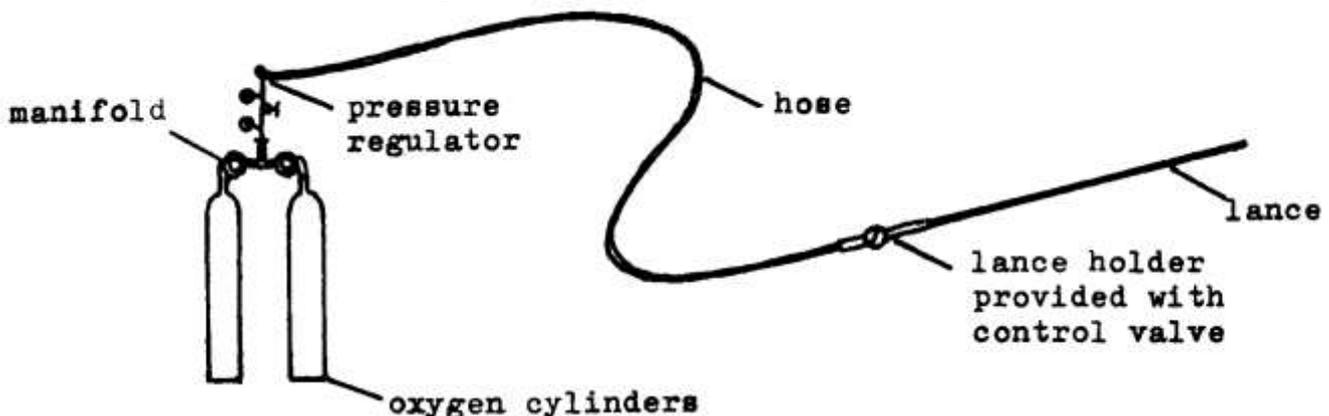
The pipe which forms the actual cutting element of the lance is simply ordinary iron or steel gas pipe, 1/8, 1/4, 3/8 or 1/2 inch in bore depending on the material to be cut and it is packed with steel wire, magnesium and aluminium. The pipe may consist of one or several sections joined by couplings depending on the length needed and the part of the pipe nearest the operator should be threaded to fit a reducer. Compressed oxygen is used and economy demands the use of a heavy duty type of regulator at some point between the oxygen cylinders and the lance. The regulator should have ample capacity to supply the required amount of oxygen, and it would be advisable to use two or more cylinders of oxygen connected by a manifold. Armoured heavy duty oxygen hose, not less than 3/8 inch in bore should be used for carrying the oxygen from the regulator to the lance.

For hole boring there are three methods of starting the operation:

1. The lance itself can be heated at the end to the kindling temperature.
2. A shovel full of hot coals can be put on the spot to be drilled.
3. The spot to be drilled can be pre-heated with an oxy-acetylene flame.

Local conditions would however dictate the best method.

Once either the lance end or the material to be drilled is red hot a slight flow of oxygen is started. As the reaction begins to pick up, the oxygen flow is gradually increased. It is important that you do not turn on the oxygen suddenly. As rapidly as the material is melted by the heat produced it is blown out of the hole in a stream of slag. The end of the lance pipe advances into the hole as the lance is consumed and thus the hole deepens. Drilling is very rapid and approximately two minutes should be sufficient to make a hole 2½ inches in diameter and 1 ft deep.



The oxygen pressure should be kept as low as possible to achieve rapid cutting. It is increased only enough to blow the slag out of the hole as it deepens, approximately 125 lb per sq inch at the regulator is enough, not forgetting the actual pressure at the end of the lance is not very much above atmospheric pressure and does not increase materially as the regulator is adjusted for higher pressure 'working much the same way as a demand valve'. Excess of oxygen may actually retard the cut by a chilling action.

The operator should be protected by a shield and protective clothing (not a wetsuit!). Using the lance in a confined space would make breathing impossible. The author having had past experience in using oxy-acetylene underground was not amused.

REVIEWS

Wild Water Canoeing. 1979 Paul Esser Memorial Lecture

The eighth Paul Esser Memorial Lecture was given by John Liddell in the University of Bristol on February 28th, 1979. We had originally invited Dr Mike Jones, who had been leading expeditions to the Orinoco and down the Dudh Kosi River from Mount Everest. Unfortunately he got drowned in August 1978 but we managed to get another member of his party to give the lecture in his place.

A history of the British Wild Water Canoeing expeditions abroad was practically a history of Mike Jones and this was the way John Liddell treated his subject. Starting with the River Inn we were next taken down the Colorado River in 1971 and down the Blue Nile in 1972. Then after an interval from 1972-6 while Mike was studying medicine he led in 1976 the expedition down Mount Everest. This was followed by the Orinoco in 1977 and the latest Karakoram expedition in 1978, in which he lost his life while saving that of another member of his party on the Braldu River.

The high light of the lecture was undoubtedly the film of men canoeing in white water, which was beautiful and exciting by turns. A lot of it was shot in slow motion, which allowed one to appreciate the detail but made the work look easier. The factor which must have appealed to all members of the audience, who have ever tried to do anything abroad - caving, mountaineering - was that which is common to all expeditions, namely the job of getting out to the place at all. We had pictures of a transport breakdown in Turkey, a lorry overturned in the Himalayas and a long winding goat track up the mountains dotted at intervals by canoes. The impression I got was that the most effective transport was that which was properly funded. The Everest expedition cost them £30,000 and was a great success by any standards.

When shooting rapids they can manage waterfalls of up to 20ft, provided there is a deep plunge pool. But the cataract on the Blue Nile was too big for them and it was a long and painful business working their way to the bank against a swift current. Other hazards were crocodiles and bandits. Their support parties kept as close as possible, which meant somewhere within 200 miles. They usually carry no luggage in the canoes, as this upsets their performance.

The party will be returning to Karakoram to complete the descent of the Braldu River in 1980 and they have our cordial good wishes.

O.C.L.

Photography and Cave Life. Institute of Biology meeting.
Bristol University 27th March 1979 Mr A.E.Mc.R. Pearce

For many years Mr Pearce has been taking photographs of cave organisms as a hobby and uses many simple and effective techniques to achieve superb results without a huge budget. He addressed a meeting composed primarily of people interested in biology and photography and held us enthralled with his descriptions of methods and of course a fabulous slide show.

By employing such simple techniques as using some string of the correct length tied to the camera to obtain the correct focal length he is able to produce fine photographs - he prefers colour transparencies - of fungi, spiders, bats, and insects of many kinds including springtails and moths.

For those unfamiliar with Mr Pearce's work a selection of his photographs were published in 'New Scientist' (21st Sept 1978) in a review of his lecture at the British Association in Bath last year. Anyone having the chance to hear Mr Pearce talk should do so.

D.A.W.