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EDITORIAL

Mendip seems to be going through one of its quiet phases at the moment, though doubtless various secluded fern-shaded dells are ringing to the sound of pick and bucket. We shall have to wait to discover the secrets they conceal though doubtless all will be revealed in due course, if the fates smile kindly! Elsewhere, the Club is active, as will be shown in the pages of this journal. It is easy to think of the Wessex as a purely Mendip club, usually because that is where our headquarters are located. But our interests, and indeed our membership, covers a far wider area, as I think is reflected in this edition.

CLUB NEWS

(based on the minutes of the Committee Meeting held on June 8th)

Resignation Regretfully, Rob Harper has had to resign from the Committee. His place will be filled by a co-option from the general membership. By the time this issue is published, Steve and Pauline Gough will have moved north to take up new teaching appointments. We wish them well. For the time being, therefore, Hut Booking and Sales correspondence should be addressed to Upper Pitts.

Tackle We have 15 ladders in stock. Tackle-making materials are being bought, and July will see a concerted effort to make more ladder.

Annual Dinner Tickets will be £4 each, the venue is to be the Cave Man Restaurant at Cheddar. A coach will be available. The Guest of Honour will be Fred Davies. The date to remember is October 18th. Last bookings by the 3rd.

Wessex MRO Team This is comprised of local cavers who are not necessarily active at weekends, who can be called if need be during the week or as a back-up team during a prolonged rescue. The list is being revised, and Bob Brake is to organise a demonstration of carrying-sheet procedure at the August Committee Meeting.

Upper Pitts Some painting has taken place, though leaks in the central heating system need urgent attention. The shower ante-room floor is to have quarry tiles laid on it (hopefully in August) which should help to keep this area clean. The drainage system has received some attention, and one of the two 'illegal' parked cars is being moved, albeit part by part!

Minneries Following a 'walkabout' by members of the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation on June 16th, the annual hippy invasion has been successfully prevented, and motorcycle scrambling will be under strict control. The Trust seems happy to let other activities, including caving, continue. The Waldegrave Swallet diggers are, however, somewhat apprehensive about the abnormal gravitational pull on boulders in the sides of their dig, and are reputed to be thinking about raffling the digging rights at the Club Dinner.

Nife Cells A draw for these was held at the Committee Meeting, and the successful would-be purchasers should by now have been notified.

Mew Members We welcome the following new members, elected at the June meeting:

Ian Robert Chambers, 25 Cottrell Avenue, Kingswood, BRISTOL

Paul Dennis Jolly, 6 Hillside, Axbridge. SOMERSET

Michael Peter Leedham, 23 Rectory Way, Yatton, AVON

Mary Samantha Robertson (Rands), 17 Tillet Close, Stonebridge Park, LONDON NW 10

Paul Edward Whittington, 54 Park Road, Congresbury, AVON.

Julie Ruth Wootton, Hillside Cottage, West Dean, Salisbury, WILTSHIRE

Ben Dors – Hunter's Lodge

It is with a sad heart that I must inform members that Ben Dors, erstwhile landlord of the Hunter's Lodge Inn, passed away in his sleep on July 9th. Known to hundreds of cavers, of all ages, Ben was in many ways the Hunter's. His good humour, his kindly tolerance of songs sung with 'they words', and the friendly atmosphere in a pub which was the local to cavers far and near, endeared him to all. It was a moving experience to crowd into Priddy church the following Saturday and pay our last respects in the company of his many friends, caver and villager alike. Our thoughts and sincere condolences, will be with Mrs Dors and with Roger and Jackie. Donations in Ben's memory are being asked for the church organ restoration fund.

P.G.H.

Congratulations!!

The past few weeks have seen the births of three more prospective Wessex members. To Mike and Liz Dewdney-York, a son, Jacob Daniell; to Carol and Aubrey Newport, a son, Damian Stuart; and to Tony and Alice Audsley, a daughter, Ann. Congratulations to you all!

MENDIP NOTES

Wimblestone

Two-pronged Attacks

With somewhat of a lull in the campaign to link Wookey Hole to the Priddy swallets, diggers and divers have recently turned their attention to that other and more elusive main drain, the Cheddar System. With the co-operation of the show cave management, digging has been resumed in the Sand Chamber area of Gough's Cave, and entry has been made into a boulder choked rift heading in the direction of Cooper's Hole, some 400ft away. The rift contains some nice helictites, but more importantly a strong draught. This has prompted a fresh look at the MCG extension in Cooper's Hole, and work is now proceeding there in a bouldery aven. A through route could well be on the cards, but it would have implications going far beyond the discovery of a few hundred feet of passage. It could provide the show cave management with a much sought-after round trip and add a new dose of development and commercialism to what is at present an unspoilt part of the Gorge.

The divers, for their part, have been looking for new ways into the Cheddar phreas. Martyn Farr has plumbed a new sump in Gough's Cave for 30ft, and reported it tight and murky but still going. In a more ambitious project, Martin Bishop and others have been probing the First Feeder of the Main Risings. No man-sized way on was found, but a start was made on a long term underwater dig involving a dustbin and an above-water winch. The Cheddar tourists are certainly going to get their money's worth over the next year or two.

Whopper Cave

This was the name chosen for the spectacular but short-lived hole uncovered recently in Batts Combe Quarry. Before infilling took place there was time for the Cerberus to explore a huge chamber 80ft high and 20ft wide, but lacking in any significant extensions. In view of its situation high up in the northernmost recess of the quarry, it seems likely that it is part of an abandoned phreatic system unconnected with the present-day drainage pattern, and since the floor of the chamber was a massive boulder choke it is possible that further sections of the cave may be revealed as the quarry face is taken deeper.

Eastern Developments

Another quarry which can boast a newly exposed cave is Rector Lane Quarry, part of the Cook's Wood complex near Stoke Lane. Birthday Cave, about 40ft below ground level in the eastern face of the workings, is the latest in a long line of cave fragments uncovered over the last two or three years. This is hardly surprising when you consider that the quarry is now passing between East End Sink and nearby Hunting Lodge Slocker, and Browne's Hole on the other side of Rector Lane. Birthday Cave itself comprises a small chamber with one passage leading off which is choked at quarry floor level, and it looks set to celebrate its own birthday as hard core on some motorway.

In the meantime, Browne's Hole is receiving a certain amount of attention from a teacher and pupils from Writhlington School, Radstock. Using the second, northern entrance to the cave, they are pushing the end of North Passage Extension, and in the process creating scenes reminiscent of child labour in the mines. The mud and sand choked passage is currently heading eastwards, parallel to the main cave's notorious Upstream Series. If not a very exciting digging site, it is at least a safe one, and already some of the apprentices have graduated to the more taxing conditions of Thrupe Lane and Viaduct Sink.

More of Manor

Following on the heels of the BEC's small discovery at the end of Manor Faun, and Pete and Alison Moody's decorated addition to the Sarum Inlet Series, comes news of another find in the cave. Home Counties cavers maypoled the first 40ft high aven in the inlet passage below Curtain Chamber which had first been climbed by Fred Davies shortly after the discovery of the cave. They tackled a stal choke which had been left by the conservation-conscious early explorers and broke into 300 to 400ft of roomy passage leading up towards the UBSS tunnels below the entrance shaft. This sounds like a repeat of Balch's Forbidden Grotto, but I will leave any moral judgement to those few who have seen the stal choke before and after the breakthrough.

DIARY DATES

22nd - 24th August	Diving Weekend, Beer, Devon
5th - 7th September	South Wales
20th - 21st September	British Cave Research Association Annual Conference
26th - 28th September	South Wales
18th October	WESSEX CAVE CLUB AGM and DINNER
26th October	Peak Cavern (fully booked)
15th November	Rumbling Hole
16th November	White Scar Cave (fully booked)
13th December	White Scar Cave

For further details, contact the Caving Secretary, Jeff Price.

Howard Kenney

Those of us under the spell of Wells, its great Cathedral, charming museum and, especially, the caves beneath Mendip know that Howard Kenney cared for all of them. With his untimely death at only 53 years of age, a cloud passes over their magic; a humbling reminder of our frailty and brevity amid strengthening and lasting surrounds. This splendid blend of Man's and Nature's sublime works was his real home. Although his profession eventually drew him towards business, commerce and work in Bristol, he was no merchant venturer and returned to his own city after a while. Away from this he revelled in underground adventures for which we shall remember him here.

We would like Edith and her family to know that our sympathy goes far beyond this little appreciation of Howard to hope that there are no more cruel blows to endure. To Richard, a fellow caver and friend, we hope that memories of happy hours underground and digging on Mendip will brighten the gloom of losing a brother who shared his interests.

Anecdotes about Howard and his own accounts in Journals spanning over thirty years are so many and varied as to deserve some way of bringing it all together: the sort of committee tribute that he himself relished conceiving when something lasting needed doing. The present emptiness can best be filled by recalling just a little of what he did especially for the Wessex and MRO until recently. His general commitment to caving, cavers and their clubs would also be equal to the task. Indeed, it was this same approach to so many other activities, individuals and organisations that probably proved too much.

In many ways he was out of one's ken. His fresh, almost boyish appearance and enthusiasms were arresting because of measured speech and carefully chosen words. Few, too, have matched his gifts of participating keenly whilst being enterprising and business-like in gaining local respect for Mendip cavers and caving. When things went wrong, it was usually Howard who treated and put them right. The first of several stints on the Club committee started in 1948 after his National Service during which he was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Pay Corps and spent some time on the remote tropical island of Mauritius. He was our Chairman from 1963-66 but is probably best remembered as Club Auditor for most years between 1952-78; a growing task which Tim Reynolds did much to relieve the burden of during the seventies. Without his grasp of our affairs at the time, I doubt whether the bold move to build Upper Pitts as headquarters would have been so successful and it was fitting that he became a Trustee when we moved in. Throughout most of the post-war years in the Wessex, then, he was really its conscience, chief counsellor and the confidant of many members. For this he earned the apt yet affectionate "dogsbody" title from Luke Devenish at several annual general meetings. These were good years for us too!

As for most of his vintage, it all began and flourished with Herbert Balch. Schoolboy devotion to HEB at the Badger Hole excavation on Saturday afternoons in wartime was rewarded by Jack Duck taking both Howard and Richard around the Dry Ways in Swildons on their first real trip underground. This led them into the small circle of active MNRC members who were to push Swildons 2 and discover the Black Hole Series soon after the last war: Luke Devenish, the diver; William Stanton, the climber; Howard Kenney, the squeeze-pusher, and Colin Vowles as the "steadying influence". They were in the van of modern caving and it was typically the unflappable Howard, for whom "any eventuality" were watchwords, who Bertie Crook saw as the ideal young caver to adapt MRO for more demanding work ahead. Maybe looking back to getting badly stuck in a minute calcified fissure in Tor Woods, Wells, when only 7 years old was a lasting lesson of the possible dangers in new cave exploration.

When Bertie Crook decided to retire as the Honorary Secretary of MRO, Howard was clearly the natural successor and he must take much of the credit for its present organisation and good relations with the Police. In bringing this about, he saw clearly the need to have local cavers from the existing clubs rather than a separate body as might do easily have happened at the time. Financial support would be sought from the caving community alone. If anything, cavers would help the local people rather than them having to help us and he was always alive to opportunities where his own caving interests would prove handy. Once on an army initiative test, for example, he confounded the observers and other participants

struggling to improvise bridges over a simulated electrified fence on a bank by simply squeezing through an unnoticed drain to the other side! To Howard more than anyone else we are indebted for bringing together Mendip clubs for a common purpose. Moreover, he took the brunt of call-outs and I have counted nearly a hundred from the records in which he played an active part. To be awakened by the 'phone, then the ominously calm, "Howard here ..." will never be forgotten.

Sadly, hard work, long hours and other ties meant that he did not seek or need the social company of the very strong local caving community that he had helped to create. Friendships were forged underground and he invariably caved with a purpose. He was at the start of the Reservoir Hole epic, also dug in Wells Hill Plantation Swallet, now Lobster Pot, and at Middle Down Drove Swallet, or Tiddle-tum-tum. On joining the Wessex at the age of twenty whilst in the army, he became a regular attender of Club meets: to Yorkshire at Easter on his motorcycle; occasionally to Derbyshire, and frequently to South Wales which was quite a journey before the Bridge. Many of us would eagerly have swapped seats with him in Luke's Jeep on the colourful second Club Trip to the Pyrenees in 1949: Mendip Musketeers abroad no less! Thereafter, he passed on the tradition back home by organising and running many Club trips on Mendip and in South Wales where he was one of our OFD leaders. He enjoyed a romp around Agen Allwed too. More recently, he was the founder of the still flourishing Friday Night Club; but, even this free time from other work had been sacrificed in later years. In the early years he kept a diary of all his caving activities and, in wishing to put it to good use as always, developed the idea of his own cave registry which grew into the Mendip Cave Registry.

In less pressing times, we know something of the joy he had during a remarkable era of cave discoveries on Mendip. His most spectacular achievement was undoubtedly in passing the vicious squeeze at the end of the Primrose Path in Eastwater with fellow accountant Vincent Stimpson from Wells and so being the first man down the Primrose Pot on 16th April 1950. Although in three stages, this 185-foot pot is still really Mendip's longest ladder pitch; a suitable even if rather academic tribute to Howard's first official position in the Wessex at that time as our Gear Curator. Almost certainly his most satisfying work was in Swildons, however. Appropriately, this starts with the joint effort with Richard in 1947 to open up Kenneys' Dig in the Upper Series. It continued deeper in the cave with what is best called Howard's Dig, sometimes Kenney's Dig, to ease access to the Black Hole and was crowned by his work with Oliver Lloyd in Vicarage Passage in 1962 which helped create the classic Round Trip in Mendip's finest system. Here is epitomised the Mendip tradition of prediction by the theorist, in this case Derek Ford, and the faith of the digger. Not that he was lacking his own theories either for, among other skills, he claimed the gift of dowsing. These powers had been subjected to the most searching tests whilst being carried on Luke's back above Ludwell Rising and, lately, used even more credulously with Peter Stewart and others in a vain search for a hoard of gold supposedly down a deep well at Beeston in Cheshire.

Richard recalls how their caving began in humorous fashion and hopes that Howard will be remembered in this, vein. Soon after their introduction to Swildons by Jack Duck, both had returned alone but, lacking suitable kit or parental permission, they had chosen to wear cricket flannels including the spiked boots. On getting home in filthy whites they ventured the lame excuse of having fallen accidentally into Priddy Pool after the "match"! He would prefer us to think of the draught from Swildons as the ghostly wake of brother Howard whose speed out of the cave from Sump I was considered to be rather phenomenal in his day. Much satisfaction was gained from moving through caves efficiently.

We are reminded by Frank Frost that Howard died within about a week of his thirty-third anniversary of joining the Wessex. Even for the many who knew him well for this time and attended his funeral service in Wells Cathedral on 21st July, the tribute by the Dean to his work there and for all national cathedrals came as a surprise. He was clearly packing more than one life into his fifty-three years. So, posterity for Howard has begun before its allotted time and it is difficult to believe the oft-quoted nineteenth century clergyman, Caleb Colton, that:

"Contemporaries appreciate the man rather than his merit;
posterity regards the merit rather than the man,"

J.D. Hanwell

DEATH'S HEAD INLET EXTENSION

Trevor Faulkner

The Dales Diary trip to Lost John's on March 15th 1980 took advantage of the relatively dry conditions, and pressed on down to the final sump without delay. With time to spare, the inlet passage used by the Death's Head stream was climbed into (not as easy as it appears !) and the large passage followed upstream by four of us to a junction. Turning left, the stream was followed up to a draughting but pretty hopeless boulder choke composed of large blocks and gritstone boulders. On the way back, the other passage from the junction was examined. This was dry but just as big, and ended at another boulder choke.

Again, a fresh draught blew out but it was soon apparent that not many rocks needed to be removed before the choke could be passed at roof level. Whilst Steve Gough returned to console Bob Harper and Rich Websell who had decided to crawl halfway up the Rumbling Hole Inlet passage, Keith Sanderson and Colin Davis egged on the writer to withstand an onslaught of falling bombs and clear a route upwards.

After twenty minutes a man-sized hole was engineered over a rocking block one foot cube, and virgin passage entered. It seemed disappointing at first, with a phreatic tunnel soon ending at a mud sump. However, looking back, a large ramping gallery was seen going up in the other direction. We soon climbed into it to reach a lofty and rocky sloping chamber. A small aven went up even higher, and some time was spent clearing rocks out of another potential upward dig with a fine draught and sound of the Death's Head stream in the rocks ahead but at a lower level. Without tools we could progress no further here, but we did make an attempt to drain the mud sump before going back.

Spurred on by the thought of establishing the Death's Head - Lost John's connection, a return trip was made at a later date by Pauline and Steve Gough, Keith Sanderson and Trevor Faulkner. This time Lost John's was bone dry and we soon started attacking the second dig using a crowbar. This was going well until Keith climbed into Swessex Aven and spoke through a horizontal crawl tube halfway up. His voice emerged from the boulder choke at a place higher than the digging point which was therefore abandoned. A low opening to the left was cleared out instead, into a low 'bedding' opening to the left of the rocks, but discontinued when the scale of work required could be seen.

Pausing to consume various hunger preventatives, a small 'inaccessible' roof passage was then noticed on the far side of the chamber. Its inaccessibility eventually succumbed to long legs and logical cunning and a seemingly blind crawl was entered. At the last moment the crawl revealed a tight Z-bend and then continued in its original direction to the lip of a large circular hole in the floor. A fine stalactite two feet long was suspended from the roof and a white calcite flow descended into what appeared to be a large lower passage. An easy traverse around the hole showed that the crawl continued on the far side but soon became too low due to sediment infill.

Realising that the first part of the roof crawl and the passage to the mud sump followed the same central fault line or joint, the lower passage seen from above just had to be the continuation beyond the sump. Steve organised a sump draining and digging operation and after half an hour wallowed through the 'Chocolate Pool'. We could almost have been on Mendip! On the far side was a circular chamber (Echo Beach) with mud on the floor one foot thick, threatening to slide back into the duck. We edged our way along the right hand wall to avoid spoiling a spectacular dripstone formation resting on the mud in the middle of the floor, formed by concentric rings of moonmilk around a central mound of white stalagmite. We were clearly directly below the shaft seen before, but soon found that there was no way on at this level either. With rough survey notes made and the fault line bearing read as 100 magnetic, a rather slow exit was made with failing light to complete an interesting 9½ hour trip.

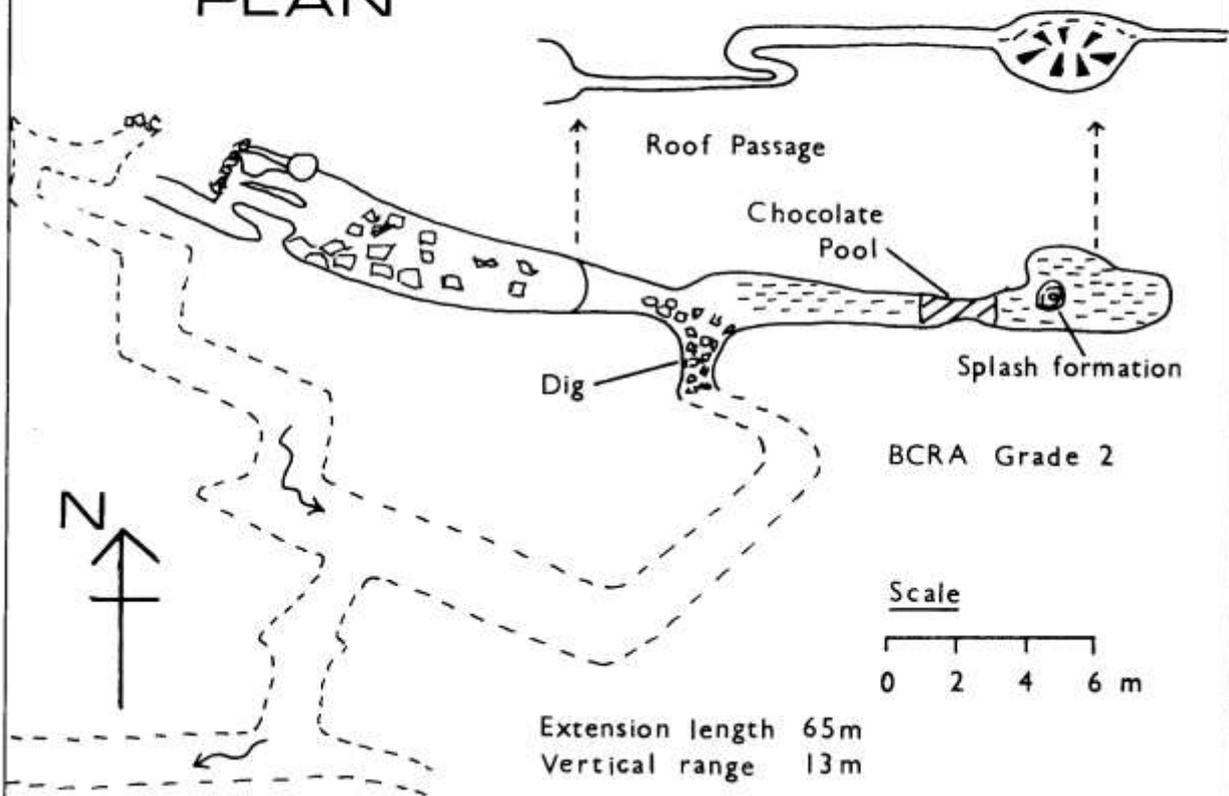
DEATH'S HEAD INLET

LOST JOHN'S SYSTEM

EXTENSION

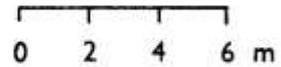
NGR SD 670786

PLAN



BCRA Grade 2

Scale

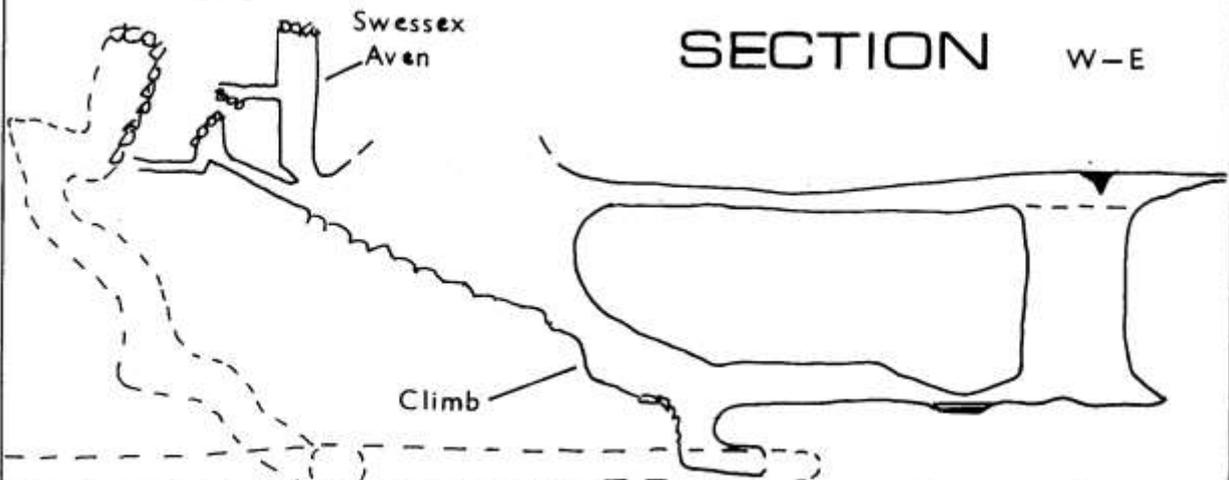


Extension length 65m
Vertical range 13m

← To Lost Johns
Master Cave

Previously known passages are shown pecked

SECTION W-E



T. Faulkner 1980

Conclusions

The attached survey is a sketch of the 65m extension passages and shows the relationship to the left hand branch of Death's Head Inlet as drawn on the survey of the Leck Fell Cave systems by A.C. Waltham in 1970. The sketch shows the proximity both horizontally and vertically, of the boulder chokes terminating the left hand and right hand branches. A simple voice test is all that is needed to confirm that both branches actually end at the same boulder collapse in the Death's Head Fault. With Death's Head Main Chamber still some 35m above the highest points reached, the most obvious place to attack is the top of Swessex Aven, but the digger will be given no protection from the rocks poised vertically above his head.

The phreatic natures of the roof passage and Chocolate Pool Passage are interesting as they indicate a stage of development not previously anticipated. In the Leck Fell chapter of 'Limestones and Caves of NW England', Tony Waltham proposes a Phase Ia with a main trunk route via Death's Head East Passage into Big Meanie. His Phase Ib then diverts water from Death's Head Main Chamber via the Death's Head Inlet Passage bedding plane into the lower end of Lost John's. A short intermediate phase can now be postulated as flow at lower levels in the fault zone before the bedding plane route was opened. Whether the new phreatic passage continues east at the lower level would have to be determined by digging, as any floor level continuation beyond the circular chamber is below the level of the deposited mud. The smaller roof passage continuation could be dug, at the penalty of destroying the floor deposit below.

NORTH AMERICAN NOTES

Paul Hadfield

CASTLEGUARD Derek Ford's annual Castleguard outing this year has added approximately 1 kilometre of new passage to the survey. 'Le Grand Goule' went down about 475 ft in a series of drops to a downward-trending sump. The 'Ooley Gooley Pit' in the new section went down around 117 ft and choked off. The other pit, 'La Trappe' was choked but at the top there is a similar type of lead to the original way into this section - a good looking hole needing a bolt traverse (naturally there were no bolts left to do it). There were two low crawling passages which continued for quite a distance each, and just got smaller. It is unlikely that Derek will mount another expedition.

GUATEMALA A party of Alberta cavers, plus Fran Bagenal of MIT visited San Ramon, a resurgence cave. The river was measured at 30 cumecs!! (mucho agua) No go at water level so Mike Boon masterminded an extremely technical high level traverse that got the party 300 ft into the cave before tackle ran out. It is reported to be an extremely impressive piece of cave but probably not possible without tackling the whole thing.

CANADA The Alberta Speleological Society was the prime mover in an Alberta Government decision to deny a request by Summit Lime Works to develop a limestone quarry in the Ptolomy Creek Valley. The quarry would have been located in the ridge containing Cleft Cave and Yorkshire Pot. The ASS contacted people outside Alberta and Canada for assistance in this task, and were most gratified by the response and assistance they received. The drive to preserve the area was picked up by both the Alberta Wilderness Association, the National and Provincial Parks Association, and other environmental groups, including the Great Divide Trail Association.

The immediate result of all this activity has been the favourable decision to keep the prime protection zone intact but it has also generated a wide interest in an area that is certain to suffer increased use.

(continued on Page 53)

THE CAVE PHOTOGRAPHIC RESEARCH GROUP

Keith Robins C.P.R.G.

Pete Hann, a caver for three years, wanted to take photos underground, so he pestered the living daylighters out of Keith 'Harold' Robins about flash etc etc. Harold got cheesed off, and decided to go caving, just to keep Keith quiet. Scotty had a few misunderstandings with his caving club, and joined us, to form an extremely active Cave Photographic Research Group. That all happened at the beginning of 1978; since then we have travelled 10,000 miles, done 250 caving trips, exposed 10,000 transparencies on 250 rolls of film, and currently have a stock of 4,000 good slides. The ones we throw out would probably please most cavers but we only want shots that will hold an audience's attention and capture their imagination.

Those of you who have seen our shows at Upper Pitts may be surprised to know that we improved it for the Hunter's Lodge show last April, and that it was bettered again for the M.N.R.C.'s dinner recently. We are still photo-caving once a week and are constantly replacing shots with better ones. There are many ways in which our shows could be further improved, such as sound effects, dual projectors with fade unit, and even stereoscopic projection with quadrophonic sound! But that would push up the price of a show from £3 - £5 to £20 - £30, which could price us out of existence.

At the present moment we are preparing our equipment for the Otter Hole rescue practice in July. For Pete and myself this will probably involve a 16 - 20 hour trip lugging a twelve-pound ammo box full of cameras. If you know nothing about Otter Hole, it's a tidal sump-protected cave near the mouth of the River Wye. The sump is 300 yards of muddy crawls and passages inside a locked entrance; most of it floods to the roof at every tide. Speed of operation is all-important not only for the photographers but especially for the rescuers. I have heard that on two previous occasions the body, or victim as they call it, had to be abandoned due to rising water; good job it wasn't a real rescue. For this particular trip my flashgun will be encased in a lexan box, so too will the camera. A coiled flash lead between the two will allow the 'flash at arm's length' technique to be used, therefore avoiding the steamy atmosphere appearance associated with the 'flash on camera' method. The only other gear will consist of two sets of NiCad batteries, six films, a spare electronic flash gun and a pub bar towel. The ammo boxes we will be using are the normal large ones but with 2½ inches cut off the bottoms, and car seat belts attached to improve handling and carrying while hands are otherwise occupied.

We had an unexpected exercise a few evenings ago in Eastwater bedding plane. C.P.R.G. tends to work in pairs, so Pete and I were inching our way across the bedding plane taking photos of each other trying (trying?) to make it look difficult, when Pete ran out of film. As he wanted more photos in this area he started to change films. I took a photo of this unusual scene, Pete asked me to take one of him, and horrors! I had run out as well, so Pete had one of me. The chances of this happening again must surely be several hundred to one.

On a trip into Brown's Folly Mine two years ago Scotty, who was at the time using an Instamatic underground, was asked to fire a flashgun in a multiple flash picture. As he had a Magicube in his hand he said, "I'll stick a screwdriver into this cube", which he did, and blinded everyone within ten feet. For those of you who are DIY bods there is a diagram accompanying this article which illustrates a very simple Magicube gun which should only take half-an-hour to make and cost 20 pence. The price per flash using this gun is 8 pence, there are no batteries or electrical connections. The light spread is around 180 degrees, with an output half a stop less than PF1B bulbs. Bulbs cost 10p each, use batteries costing 50p, give the same light spread, and can be affected by prolonged immersion in water. The long term effect of immersion has not been tested, because all three of us have used Magicube guns since Scotty blinded us with his brilliance. These little guns have been through sumps in overall pockets, dropped down Lamb Leer and squashed in squeezes but they still work every time. Another advantage is that four shots can be taken in quick succession (15 seconds) with the camera on B. They also work underwater if you are into cave diving photography. If Martin Farr would care to contact me I will send him one in return for a couple of slides of the results!

Judging by the quality of our slides it would be logical to assume that we use some really expensive equipment, but in fact we all use Practica SLRs costing £30 - 40 second-hand, and two electronic flashguns each, costing £9 - 19 apiece. My own outfit cost me £50 complete, including two sets of NiCad rechargeable flash batteries. Obtainable from photo or aero modeller shops for £1.25 or £2.25 respectively, these batteries do not last as long as Duracells but when recycling times approach 8 seconds they can be put on charge, thus saving a lot of time and embarrassment. Do make sure, though, that your flash will operate on them safely, as one or two new flashguns are designed in such a manner as to blow a fuse when powered by NiCads.

After a lot of disappointments with various slide films, including Fuji, Agfa and Gaf, we decided that Kodak Ektachrome ED200 gave us the best colours, no grain, a high speed and a very low cost. It can also be easily uprated, although this has not yet been found necessary. Reids or Melbourne photographic advertise in Amateur Photographer each week as selling ED200 at £36 and £42 respectively for 30 metres. This gives 18 - 19 films of 38 - 40 exposures at around £2 each compared with a shop price of £4. Metal cassettes for loading with film cost 10p each and are also advertised in Amateur Photographer. These can be re-used several times if you develop the films yourself. DIY developing is by far the cheapest way of obtaining the finished article, ie. your much-prized slides. We have only tried two slide developers so far but we were so pleased with the results using Johnson's Photochrome six that we did not bother with any other make, apart from Lingcolour which cost us three films to discount as being of no use for our particular type of photography. Johnson's Photochrome Six kits will develop 9 films in 3 batches at up to 1-month intervals; this means that you do not have to use all nine films before you can start processing. It is also one of the most economical kits at £9.25 or £1.03 per film - shop price £3 - 4 !

In the first six months of the two years that CPRG has been around we completed over seventy caving trips. To someone living close to Mendip this would not be hard. But for us living 30 miles away it means leaving home at 6.30pm, caving from 8 to 10.30, pub until 11 and home again by lam, having stopped off in Glastonbury for a round of fish and chips. Quite often though, a trip can last for as much as five or six hours, meaning a bedtime of 3am the following morning. Try doing that for three or four times a week and you begin to see how we amassed 10,000 slides and knocked up 10,000 miles in the old car in only two years. Apart from the bags under our eyes and two cars on the scrapheap, we are none the worse for wear.

You can also see why we like showing off our slides whenever we get a chance. This brings me on to the subject of slide shows. If anyone would like a show with a difference, or some advice on underground photography, then drop me a line at the address below. We only charge a small fee to cover the cost of petrol to and from the venue, ie. Mendip £5, Bristol £7, South Wales £10 - £15 approximately. The larger the audience the better we like it, and there is no objection to an after pub show as we find that a few pints cover our mistake's, not that we have that many (pints or mistakes).

A lot of cavers are still using ammo boxes that are unlined, and protecting their cameras with a bit of old towelling or a piece of foam rubber. They do not realise that either of these protectives absorbs as much moisture as a bathroom sponge, and will pass this moisture in the form of condensation to any cold camera gear in the box. The best way of overcoming this problem is to line the box with polystyrene ceiling tile material. This not only protects the camera against knocks, but also against the cold and damp, as polystyrene does not absorb moisture. It does, however, hold heat extremely well, and the best way of getting it and the camera gear warm is by leaving it, complete with all accessories, in the airing cupboard overnight before going on a trip. An alternative is the top of a storage heater for half an hour. Either of these techniques will keep equipment condensation-free for up to four or five hours on a normal trip or three hours on a wet one (eg. Swildon's). In order to avoid tangling your gear in your fight against the elements, divide the box into compartments with a sheet of alloy; a piece twenty four inches long should do the trick. Place all your camera, flashguns etc, on a piece of paper and draw round it, now bend the alloy in the shape of the pencil line, remembering to keep within the size of the box. You may have to cut away portions here and there to allow access for your fingers, and brace wobbly bits with a length of coathanger wire and masking tape. Your camera and accessories should now be easily accessible even

when wearing gloves. So the next time I see you in Swildon's or wherever don't complain to me about condensation problems.

8 Mayfield Road
Yeovil, Somerset
BA21 51P

NOTES ON THE C.P.R.G. MAGICUBE FLASHGUN

Phil Hendy

Having studied the original sketch of this device, which was submitted with the above article, I decided to make one of my own. My comments may help interpretation of the drawing.

The Magicube works by releasing a spring-loaded pin, which triggers a piezo-electric crystal, supplying enough current to fire the magnesium wire in the bulb. The CPRG-gun is simply a small metal plate with a piece of springy metal attached; the top part of this is bent in a curve to retain the Magicube, while the bottom part forms the triggering device.

I used a piece of 3mm aluminium, 6cm x 4cm for the base plate, and a length of zinc strip for the retaining spring/trigger. The bulb sits in a 7mm diameter hole, with four slots set diagonally to the direction the flash is intended to be fired. Nine millimetres from the centre of this hole, a 1mm wide, 8mm. long slot is cut as shown on the plan, this is the trigger guide.

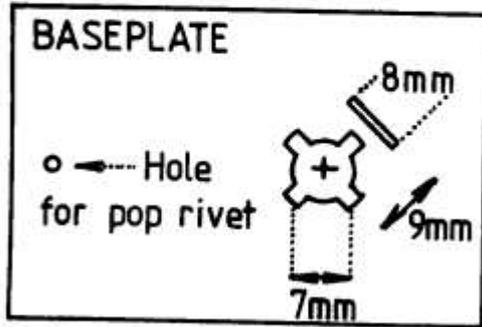
The spring is cut according to the diagram. It is bent at the dotted lines and fixed to the base plate by means of a pop rivet. The top part is bent in a curve to retain the Magicube, and the bottom part is bent so that the 'trigger' just rests in the slot. Firing is simply accomplished by pressing the trigger up into the cube. My own version requires a bit of 'furgling' to release the spring pin, but otherwise it seems quite easy to use. Time will tell, however, as I have not yet used it underground. One final point: As this is a hand-held device, it cannot be synchronised with the camera shutter, and it is essential to set the shutter to 'B', and fire (or have someone fire) the cube while the shutter is held open. When taking photographs of formations or other static scenes, this will not be a serious drawback.

NORTH AMERICAN NOTES

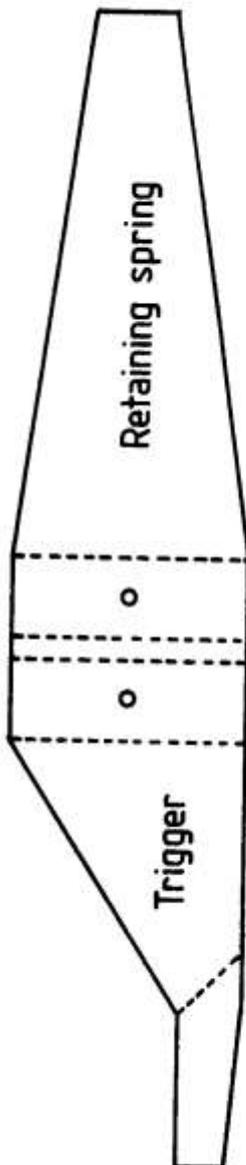
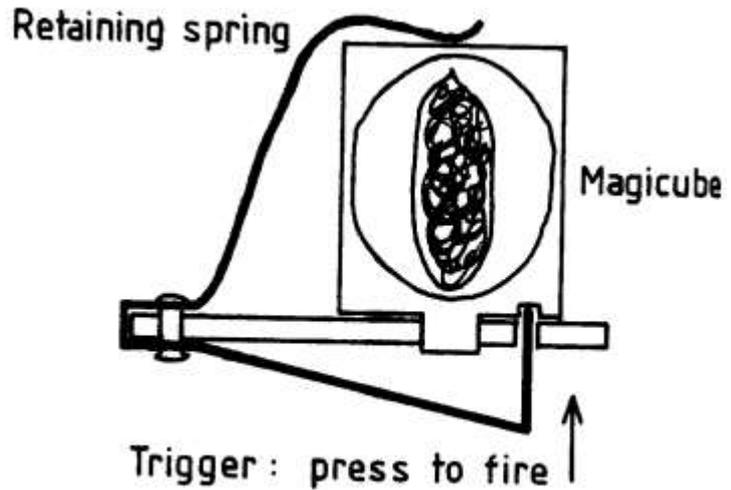
(Continued from Page 50)

On June 26th, Roy Jameson, Pattie Mathes and P. Kalpiel pushed Alf Luthor's dig beyond Tin Can Alley in Ontario extension of the Frion Hole system. They entered 300 ft of passage, and were stopped by a pit leading to a large canyon. This is going North!! to Clyde Cochran. There is a lot of potential here, in a cave already more than 33 miles long.

THE C.P.R.G. MAGICUBE FLASHGUN



SIDE VIEW OF COMPLETE GUN



Flash lasts 1/30th second
 Works underwater
 Needs no batteries
 Only 1/2 stop less than FPI bulbs
 180 degree light spread

Overall dimensions arbitrary; see text for construction details

WCC RESCUE TEAM - PRACTICE RESCUE 19-7-80

VENUE: Swildon's Hole

OBJECTIVE: To recover a victim with a broken leg from the far side of Barne's Loop.

MEMBERS ATTENDED: Al Mills (victim) Rich Websell, Adrian Vanderplank, Brian Milton, Andrew Watson, Greg Villis, Tony Fouracres, Pete Lacey, Tony Denning, Dave Evans, Bob Brake.

REPORT: The team met at 9.00 am at Priddy village hall. RW and AV entered the cave at 9.30 am to tackle the Twenty pitch. GV, TF, PL and DE followed by 9.45 am taking the drag sheet and ropes to Barne's Loop. BM, AW and TD left at 9.55 am to lay a telephone cable to the Old Grotto, followed by AM and BD at 10.15 am. The whole party met at Barne's Loop at 10.45 am. AM's carbide lamp was promptly dowsed and he was inserted into a polythene boiler suit, (kindly lent to him by the MRO) and strapped into the drag sheet. We started out up through the rift below Barne's Loop which we found easier than we expected by sliding the victim over the backs of other members of the party. Using this method we could keep him at the required height to suit the size of the passage. It took 30 minutes to reach the top of the Double Pots, incurring no problems on the way.

On reaching the squeeze near the bottom of the Twenty RW deposited himself into the stream to enable the drag sheet to be slid over him without catching in the stream bed. At the Twenty we hoisted the victim from below using pulleys belayed by a rope about ten feet above the top of the pitch. Four people were at the top of the pitch, one on the ladder, three pulling on the hoist and two guiding the bottom rope of the drag sheet. It took one and a quarter hours to reach the top and de-tackle the pitch. There were no queues and no delays on the pitch apart from an odd Moody on his way to Black Hole.

TD and AW went out with the excess tackle and BM went on ahead to connect the telephone. After making the victim a bit damp on the waterfall below the Forty we reached the Old Grotto at 2.00 pm. Here we made contact with the surface from the telephones and the victim was allowed out of the drag sheet to walk around on his broken leg to warm up. After ten minutes he was strapped back in and we started off. BM went ahead reeling in the telephone cable. At the top of Jacob's Ladder (Dry Way) we met with BM, AW and TD who had brought in flasks of tea and coffee. After five minutes of refreshing the victim and supplying him with dry gloves we carried on, deciding to go through a small crawl which comes out above the second drop inside the entrance. The victim was quite a good fit in the passage which un-nerved him a little, but after a few tugs and heaves he came out without too much damage. We surfaced at 2.55 pm.

CONCLUSION: The actual removal of the victim took just under 3 hours, quicker than expected. It was a worthwhile trip, as a team and for individual experience. The route taken may not have been suitable depending on medical advice as to the victim's injuries.

VICTIM'S REMARKS "Pretty good for a bunch of-----kers."

Bob Drake

HILLGROVE ACCESS

A limited access has kindly been given by the new tenant/landlord of Hillgrove Farm. Anyone wishing to visit any of the swallets in the Hillgrove or Valley Wood area please contact Bob Drake beforehand, on Wells 74789.

SOME CAVES OF EASTERN FRANCE [Part I]

Nigel Graham

The intention of these articles is to describe a selection of caves in the Doubs and the Vercours areas of Eastern France. Based as they are on the practical experience of two visits to each area, and on the laborious application of 'schoolboy French' to reams of French speleological literature, not all the caves visited can be described fully. However, being custodian of the aforementioned reams does mean that anyone wishing to learn more about these caves may ask me for assistance. I may not have the information requested, but I can at least try.

Techniques: we used ladders and lifelines, some descents being abseiled and the return made by ladder. Deep water was crossed by swimming (French cavers we met were astounded, not having met wet-suited cavers before - they kept asking where our boat was). For the Grotte de Gournier entrance lake, some members found the additional buoyancy of a lifejacket useful.

Access: we obtained written permission for each area well in advance. As the local access officers change yearly, write to the Federation Francaise de Speleologie, who take ages to reply, asking them if they would supply you with the relevant names and addresses. The Grotte de Gournier and its neighbours in the Cirque de Choranche are under the control of the Grottes de Gournier show-cave management. We found the staff at the cave to be a friendly group - perhaps due to the money we spent in the cafe there!

Information: most of the French-language literature we have come from Anne and Tony Oldham; much of the rest was gleaned from various club journals etc. If at all possible, engage the services of a good linguist, at least for the letters to the French. We were lucky that someone was prepared to translate some of the cave descriptions for us, though as the translator was not a caver, the translations needed to be interpreted very carefully.

Maps: RAC road maps to locate towns, then Michelin maps locally. Grid references, where given below, refer to the IGN maps. These are the French version of the Ordnance Survey; purchase them locally. They are good, but pricey.

THE DOUBS

The following caves are all in an area around Ornans.

Grotte de Chauveroché (Ornans, 8874 2382. A. 405m L. 8209m)

From the centre of Ornans, take the D241 (to Chassagne), crossing first the River Loue then the Bonneille, a tributary. Shortly after, follow the rough track on the left, past new buildings. We did not follow the track right to its end, but stopped just before the woods, where a gate on the right gives access to a much fainter track (not for vehicles) up to the resurgence. This is easily recognised: it is a tiny gated cave, the water issuing from or just below it. The source is tapped for a water supply, via a nearby tank. The way to the cave is up the scree slope near here; trees hide the entrance ledge, which is indicated by the steel ladder up to it. The Chauveroché entrance is a bedding plane at the back of the ledge, opening immediately into a roomy passage floored with glutinous mud.

Follow the mud through a short easy stoop to a drier section. Beyond a long mud slope a rather evil mud pool under a low arch may be an occasional sump. Assuming it to be clear, careful wading and a muddy scabble up the far bank herald the start of the easiest stretch of the cave. A long walk in a high canyon to the lakes is only broken by a low bit under the memorial plaque and scrambling up and over a large boulder pile. This fossil gallery, which may still take flood water, ends rather abruptly. A low passage to the right is just an old inlet. Ahead, two ways on are a low duck, and to the right of that, up and round to the left over boulders to bypass it. Both ways meet again at the start of the Lakes.

Water dominates the remaining 6km of the cave, which is basically one long passage with a few side passages. The first series of two dozen lakes are passed by wading and swimming, to a stretch of shallower pools. This was as far as any of our teams reached - see Bob Lewis's letter (J. WCC Vol. 15 No. 179). Minvielle counted over 200 pools from entrance to end; to the terminal sump and back is a long, serious trip. Bob's warning should be heeded.

Full description, surveys P. Minvielle, 'Grottes et Canyons' (Pub. Denoel, Paris, 1977) The Club Library has a copy.

Footnote: those of us there who had spent many an evening grovelling in the little fossil streamways on Portland (Jurassic limestone) were tickled to find that the Ghauveroches' lofty gallerise live in Portlandian rock!

Grotte Sarrazine (Nans-sous-St-Anne, 8972 2250. A. 410m L. 1km approx.)

The Source du Lison, a beautiful resurgence sumped a short way in, is easy to locate, being a tourist beauty spot. Cross the Lisom just below the source, and follow the footpath round to the huge entrance porch of the Grotte de Sarrazine. The cave itself is entered through a smaller arch at the back of the porch, rapidly opening into a large chamber occupied by a lake (possibly intermittent). Climbing a stal bank opposite to a ledge, then a short but exposed climb leads to a succession of bedding plane galleries liberally supplied with potholes in the floor and debris on the roof. This appears to be the semi-active middle level of a complicated system. We did not explore much of it, nor do we have much information on it, apart from a plan-only survey. What we do know - our team were nearly caught - i.e. that the cave FLOODS VERY RAPIDLY, being a flood overflow for the Lison. The static entrance lake was a large river within about twenty minutes of a violent thunderstorm breaking.

Grotte de Fermmanyeux (Mouthier, 9003 2331 A. 500m EC)

A pleasant ramble underground, which could be included in an exploration of the impressive river Loue valley. Footpaths to the cave are signposted from the Ornans-Pontarlier road, which climbs up through the length of the valley, a short distance up from Mouthier Haute Pierre and just beyond the road down to the power-station.

A steel ladder has been installed on the entrance, 'hanging' in the cliff face. Easy going along a big tunnel to a ramp, followed by a gentle boulder slope down to a deep pool. Pass this carefully, using the fixed wire, to reach the last few feet to the boulder choke. A small stream appears and sinks (the Pontet ?) Back at the top of the ramp, a smaller passage rises steeply to a window high in the cliff - a fine viewpoint.

The Source de Pontet lies a little further down the valley side. The stream rises from a choke in a rock shelter reached by yet another fitted ladder. We did not investigate a real nutmeg-grater of a crawl above it.

Puits de la Belle-Louise (Montrand-le-Chateau, 8822 2443. A. 445m SSP)

The following description is based on a report by Ian Wolff.

From Montrand-le-Chateau, follow the track (reputedly signposted) to the Grottes des Cavottes, past this to a junction. The Belle-Louise is just inside the woods by the junction.

The entrance is a rift about 3ft wide, alongside the smaller stream sink. Belay to trees for the entrance pitch of 212ft; initially against the wall, then some 80ft free-hanging to a steeply sloping ledge which indicates a stagger in the pitch. Ian found it necessary to change sides on the ladder here. The next section was free-hanging, but the ladder was pulled to one side making progress more awkward. The final forty feet, after a couple more ledges, is quite straightforward. NB: a pull-back line must be used in conjunction

with a lifeline.

Go to the second pitch via a short, awkward climb and a low bedding plane. The pitch is sixty feet, and is followed by a short stretch of high rift to the third pitch, about twenty feet, awkward take-off.

About 300ft of rift leads to a series of very large chambers, very muddy, leading to the stream sink at -412ft, and appearing to back-up considerably in flood.

Ref: 'Spelunca' IV (3) 1964 pp. 34,35.

Wolff, I. 'Puits de la Belle-Louise' Dorset C.G. J. IV (I) 'France '74,'75

Gouffre de Granges-Mathieu (Granges-Mathieu, 8757 2448. A. 388m L. 960m SC)

Situated in the tiny hamlet of Granges-Mathieu, near Epeugney; see Michelin map No. 66, 1:200,000. The tree-fringed pothole entrance lies just behind a couple of houses, and alongside a rough track leading from the hamlet North to Bonnet Bond. Look for a heavy overhead power cable going from a pole to the midst of a clump of trees; the cave has had electric lighting installed, as a caver's 'show-cave'. There is parking space between the cave and the track.

It seems permission is required to visit the cave, from the Groups Speleologique Belfort. Apparently, visits need a leader from them, and in fact the cave is gated. Since however we were not aware of this, we discovered the pirate route in; over the gate where it is obvious that many cavers had done likewise. We had permission to cave in the area anyway, and subsequently our consciences were more than soothed by our finding that despite gates and leaders, the French have left an appalling amount of litter in the poor cave - not to mention the amateurish wiring festooned throughout.

Entrance: a 70ft, mainly free, pitch through a collapsed section of passage roof. Belay to trees - we used those on the South side, nearer the houses. Two ways lead on. To the South, the passage ends at the second of two boulder falls. If this choke has still not yet been forced, it should have been by now - not that we attempted it either! North of the pitch bottom, is the infamous gate, a veritable lion's cage of a thing, passable by climbing over it (naughty !) - unless the G.S.B. have now blocked the hole up.

The gate is above a short drop into a chamber, whence another drop to the right onto a scree slope takes one down into a fine old canyon passage (the whole cave is fossil). This ends at a definite choke, but a fixed ladder into the roof is the way on. At the top, go left, round and behind a clump of stalagmites to regain the passage in an area which has obviously been redecorated at some time. The floor is coated with flowstone, embedding masses of shattered formations.

The cave is now really starting to show off. Whereas the Chauveroches's dry gallery is ageing with solemn dignity, the Granges-Mathieu has decided to bow out with the gay abandon of a Hollywood has-been on her fourth face-lift - only the cave is decidedly more attractive. The cave is essentially one very old, very large keyhole-section gallery with big chambers at intervals. So derelict is it that most of the original form is obscured by massive collapses, so progress along it is a series of climbs up and down between the chambers. Many of the climbs have fixed aids of a dubious nature on them, while the rock here is becoming slippery with the passing of many muddy boots; care is needed throughout. All this switch backing has a bonus though; from the first steel ladder on, the cave becomes steadily more and more richly decorated, each chamber having its own vantage point, the tops of the climbs. Up in the roof grottoes, mind your head as straw displays are met. Sadly, one of the finest of these has been completely spoiled by 'cavers' who could not resist fondling with muddy paws, several dozen bizarre stalactites the approximate size and shape of human breasts. Once evidently pure white, these are in the midst of a mass of short straws.

Halfway along is the Salle de Guano. Its floor is a mass of black er, um... which has apparently entered from a lofty aven. Bypass it by an ascending wire traverse and assorted ironmongery on the left wall.

Beyond, yet more stal of every shape and size, leading to the penultimate chamber. Here, care is needed to follow the left wall past a deep pit, to reach a short climb up into a stalled rift into the final chamber.

The last chamber is probably the most fitting end to this cave that can be thought of. It is entered at one end, a length of gallery modified by Ice Age frost-shattering of the relatively thin roof, the fresh-looking scree forming a bank along each wall and a deep layer on the floor (1). This is all merely a frame for the display. Starting a respectable few yards from the chamber entrance is a great group of superb stalagmites (the gallery is called 'Salle de Mille Colonnes': rather inaccurately as 'mille' is obviously an exaggeration, and none are columns). Of various heights up to about 40ft, each is of regular form and diameter from base to tip, discreetly tiered, some pointed on top. No other formations intrude: no stalactites to speak of, no curtains, wall flows or helictites. Unperturbed by the mass of thermoclastic scree accumulated around their feet, their tops reaching upwards towards their feeders, these stalagmites stand timelessly to attention, growing merely to correct a few CO₂ imbalances (?) - while just beyond, the gallery quietly ends in a couple of short branches.

Ref. (1): Y. Aucant & P. Petrequin, 'Le Gouffre des Granges-Mathieu... Un cas de gelifraction souterraine' 'Cavernes' (Bulletin des Section Neuchateloise de la Societe Siusse de Speleologie), XVI (2), August 1972. Contains description and survey.

Notes;

(1) This cave is very dry, in summer at any rate, so it is advisable to take water in with you, for drinking and carbide-lamp filling.

(2) Photography: a photographer's paradise, though lugging a loaded 6" ammo box up and down climbs is hard work! The scale of the cave and its formations requires both standard and wide-angle lenses to do it justice. Many scenes require at least two PF1B size flash-bulbs with large reflectors: Mike O'Connor's Bacofol Specials were most effective. We found that two photographers working simultaneously, each with different film and sharing flashbulbs, was a wise precaution against lost photographs due to errors or equipment trouble.

(3) Extensions: the role of the Gouffre de Granges-Mathieu in the local hydrology is known (ref 1. above), it being an abandoned upper series of the Grange-Rouge swallets to Source des Forges system, both running from North to South. The passage near the entrance pitch is a big vadose canyon, whose downstream end is South of the entrance. It seems reasonable to suppose then, that plenty of fine cave exists, or may exist, beyond the present terminal boulder choke. Whether or not this choke has been passed yet I would not like to say. In any case anyone wishing to attempt it is best advised to contact the Groupe Speleologique de Belfort first, if only as a point of etiquette: climbing over an unsuspected gate to do a tourist trip may be wrong, but I am not about to suggest snaffling the local's digs! It could well be that the choke is well and truly terminal anyway, even to the most determined Mendip Squeezes-and-Spoons team.

(4) Others: 'Grottes et Canyons' lists a couple of similar, but shorter caves - the Granges-Mathieu seems a strange omission,

Further References

Not sampled by our teams, but included here as a cross-reference, are the following caves:

La Grotte de Moulin des Isles, La Grotte des Cavottes, Las Source de la Loue (not enterable - sumped, and dammed by the E.D.F.), Gouffre de Pourpeville, Gouffre de Bournois.

Di Beeching and Paul Hadfield, 'Some Continental caves', J. WCC Vol XV No. 194 (1978) pp. 83-84 & pp 88-90 (descriptions).

Camping etc.: We used only one campsite in the Doubs; small, privately-owned and reasonably-priced, we found it most acceptable. Follow the Ornans to Pontarlier road up the Loue valley through the village of Lods. Just past Lods, the road curves round the base of a cliff at the entrance to the 'real' valley. The campsite is on the right, between the road and the river, just beyond. The owner lives in the house at the upper end of the site. Facilities in 1978 were clean, well-maintained toilets and washrooms, plus external taps and sinks. NB., the toilets and the campsite itself are separated by a small field, which is private.

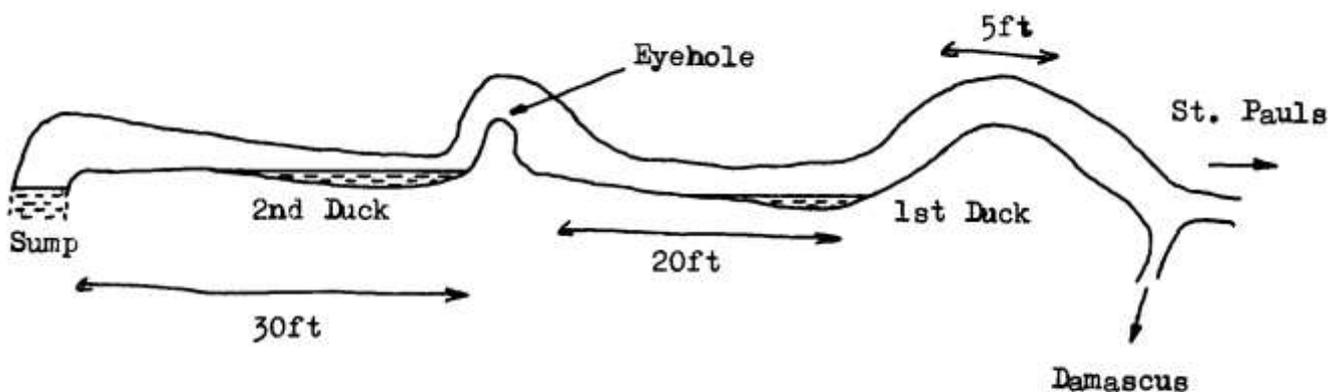
Up-valley, Mouthier Haute-Pierre has a restaurant and a cafe, and did have a 'Spar' shop / filling station, which may have re-opened. Most supplies can be purchased in Ornans, a fairly prosperous and attractive little town straddling the Loue.

to be continued.

FROM THE LOG

22nd Dec. Swildon's Hole - Damascus. Pete and Alison Moody. The banged eyehole was large enough to allow Alison to squeeze through. Beyond, a straight passage led to a 15ft duck, long and deep. This opened into a comfortable passage 3ft wide and 5ft high, ending in a sump which should be baleable. Before pushing we must make sure the ducks do not sump with the baled water.

29th Dec. Swildon's Hole - Damascus. Dave Walker, Pete and Alison. Pete tried to pass the sump with Dave and Alison watching the ducks. Baling resulted in the duck levels rising. Attempts to solve this failed, so a charge was laid. On leaving, the duck below the pot was barely passable - we seem to have lost 50ft of new passage.



Section (not to scale)