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EDITORIAL

There are plans for a Jubilee issue to be published as the first of the next volume. Some ideas have been put forward but any more would be welcome.

With all the digging going on as a result of the challenge, hopefully there will be something good on this front to report soon. Good Luck!

CLUB NEWS

BE • IT • KNOWN • THAT • THROUGHOUT • THE • EMPIRE • THAT • A • CHARIOT • RACE • AND • PIG • ROAST • WILL • TAKE • PLACE • IN • THE • AREA • KNOWN • AS • THE • PITTS • BEING • PART • OF • THE • CELEBRATIONS • OF • THE • LTH • YEAR • OF • THE • WESSEX • ON • THE • VII • JULY • IVLY • MCMLXXXIV • COMMENCING • VI • HOURS • P.M.



Tickets £2.75 each for food. Rogius Dorsus will provide an ale tent. Further entertainments will include Jousting, Couch-Rugby, et cetera.

ROMANO • BRITISH • ATTIRE • PLEASE.

Vestal Virgins half-price (proof of identity required). Tickets, copies of this declaration, and rules are available from the Emperor's office, Senate Building, Upper Pitts, Priddy.

Anniversary Dinner Saturday, 3rd November. This year's dinner will be held at the Burgundy Suite, Cadbury Country Club at Congresbury. Tickets are expected to cost between £11-£12. A coach will be organised from Priddy. If there is sufficient interest, another may run from Bristol. Please let Phil Hendy know if you would like this facility, as it will only be possible if there are sufficient numbers.

Sales New items include Jubilee glass tankards, 1pt and ½pt, Club sweatshirts, lapel badges, miner's type kneepads at £6.70 small and £7.30 large. Publications now in stock include: guide books, 'Storms and Floods', and John Cornwell's Collieries series. Coming soon: Jubilee hand-made pottery coffee mugs and pewter tankards.

General The Fancy Dress Disco made a profit of £48.43, £10 of which is to be donated to the MRO.

New Members The Club welcomes the following new members:
Anthony D Owen, 49 Malborough Road, Forest Gate, London
Timothy R Mervin, 79 Hillcrest Road, Orpington, Kent BR6 9AQ
Terence J Tooth, 75 Talbot Road, Knowle, Bristol BS4 2NP
Anne Hale (changing address at time of publication)

Diary of Howard Kenney Apologies must be made for the poor quality of reproduction of the specific page of this diary that appeared in the last Journal. Rest assured that the final product will be much more legible. Some members have made the reasonable comment that £25 seems a little expensive. This figure does include binding in a hard cover using black buckram. However, in response to requests, it is likely that the diary will be made available either unbound, or in a limp cover at reduced cost. An estimate of cost will be forthcoming as production proceeds.

More thefts on Mendip It has unfortunately become necessary to remind members yet again to ensure the security of the hut and of their own property. If you see anything suspicious, please do not hesitate to contact a committee member or the police.

MENDIP NEWS

Hunter's Hole The Wessex got off to a flying start in the digging competition, with over 40ft of new passage being found by Jim Rands and Andy Reid. Disappointment came, however, when the passage was found to lead back into the main chamber.

Warren Farm Repeated efforts at this site have resulted in 25ft more depth. The dig, which is being carried out by Pete and Alison and helpers, is narrowing down and needs blasting again.

Whitsun Hole was looked at by Pete and Alison but has been given up as hopeless after five digging/banging trips.

Twin Titties NASA are making good progress, aided by a wooden 'Cresta Run' to facilitate winching bags of spoil up to the surface. They were assisted over Easter by members of the Craven Pothole Club, who will be put out to learn that they stopped six inches short of a breakthrough. Soft mud was taken out to reveal a short vertical hole with clean rock on one side. Clean stones form the floor, which runs away to allow acrobatic midgets doing headstands to look into a low airspace, further progress downwards must, however, be postponed while certain engineering is done to stabilise the original backfilled entrance shaft, and shore the sides at the bottom.

Green Ore A burst water main at Green Ore Farm, opposite the garage, opened up a choked 'slocker hole' in early May. Whether it was a natural hole, or an old mineshaft, we shall never know, as the water board moved in at once and filled it all in again.

Pickwick Quarry This old freestone mine near Corsham is being opened up to the public as a mining museum. It should be ready for 1985, and tourists will be able to see the cranes, and other relics of the industry. Started in the early 19th century, the mine was finally closed in 1958, so a fair part of history should be preserved for the gaze of the curious.

IN THE REGIONS

A Wessex / Bath Univ. C.C. contingent spent Spring Bank Holiday in North Wales, to push the end of Ogof Hesp Alyn. Attempts to syphon the first sump had failed the previous weekend, and no further luck was had this time, so the divers went through on the second trip and the end boulder choke was banged. A large chamber was climbed down to, with water blasting out from a wide bedding plane. Downstream, the water disappears into further beddings. There is a very strong draught coming from the upstream end, and when the water level drops, the stream way to Loggerhead Sinks may be revealed.

EQUIPMENT REPORT: THE TROLL BOLLARD

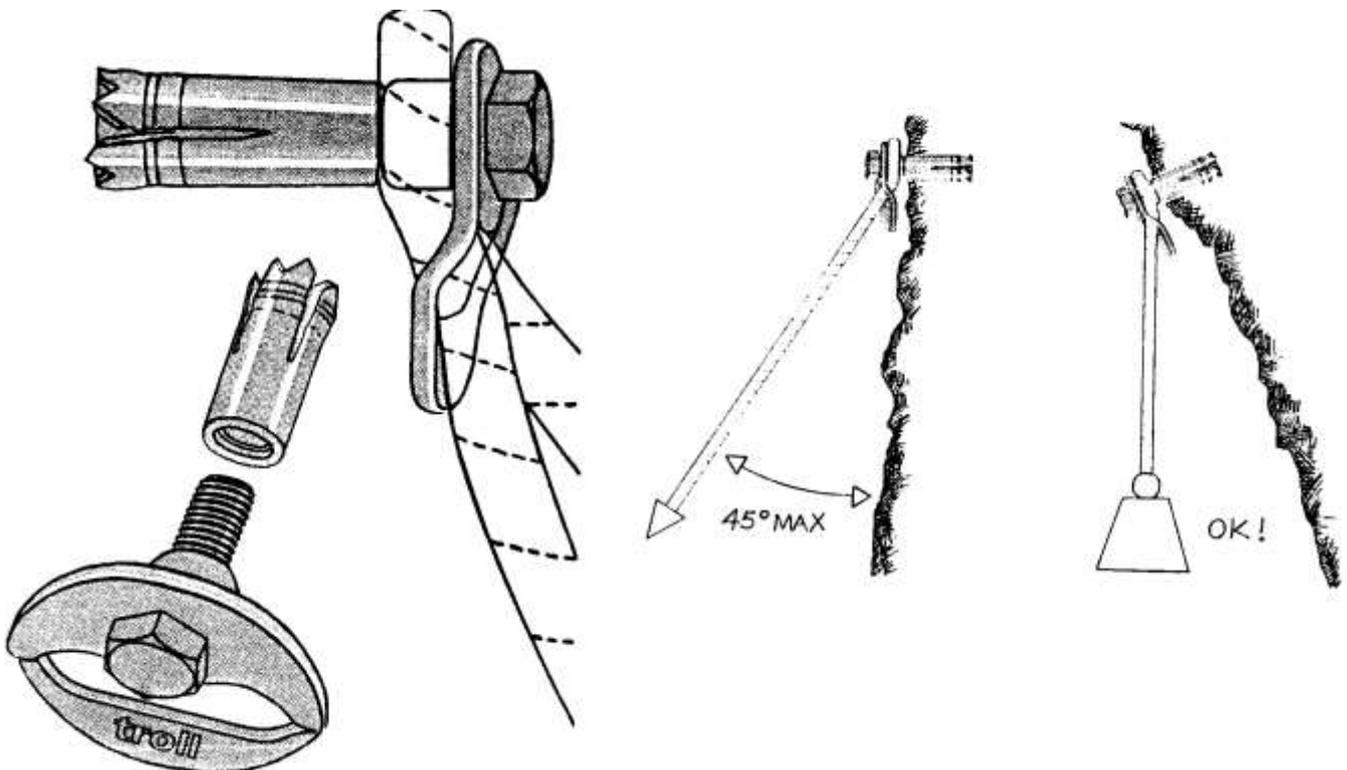
Steve Gough

The Troll Bollard is a recently developed, lightweight piece of equipment which provides for the attachment of a single rope to an 8mm anchor without the need for a karabiner or maillon. Although in some ways similar to the French CAT device, the Bollard is more versatile. I have used them quite extensively in Greece, France and Yorkshire during the past nine months, and I hope that Wessex members might be interested in my experiences.

The Bollard consists of a normal, high tensile 8mm bolt, the non-threaded end of which has a relatively flexible aluminium alloy cage through which the loop of a figure of eight or nine knot is threaded. This loop then fits over a nylon spacer which separates the cage from the thread. However, it is the thread, not the spacer, which limits the travel of the bolt into the rock, and any visual impression of leverage being applied to the bolt is therefore illusory. In fact the device is very strong (1800Kg) and works well in slightly overhanging rock (see diagrams).

In practice, The Bollard has two disadvantages. If used as an intermediate anchor, there is no karabiner or maillon into which a cow's-tail may be clipped. Instead, one clips into the loop of the knot, and this can be a little awkward. If it proves to be more than that, then put an intermediate karabiner through the loop and clip into that. It may be removed before continuing the ascent/descent. More seriously, it can be difficult, especially with 11mm ropes, to tell when the bolt is adequately tightened, and this can lead to over-tightening. One gets a feel for this with practice.

The advantages are considerable. The Bollard is self-contained, so there is much less fiddling about. It is significantly cheaper to buy than the conventional hanger/maillon arrangement and does its bit for cave conservation by discouraging the silly habit of leaving hangers in place. Above all, it is very light (25g). On a long trip I would not take anything else. I would be interested to hear of anyone else's experiences with this device. Personally, I think they are worth getting used to.



SOME PLEISTOCENE PROBLEMS ON MENDIP

Richard Kenney

Until the early 1960's there had always been an uneasy relationship between geologists and meteorologists. The text books that were available many years ago discussed the Carboniferous forests and the Triassic deserts but showed each on a discrete map. Any attempt to establish a palaeometeorological sequence for Britain was met with the cry, "Forget the climate and look at the fossils!" Then, at long last, came Plate Tectonics with its accompanying and elegant, but not necessarily correct, computer graphics.

Now we can see how this country has endured varying climates over the ages. There is no such thing as a British climate for we always seem to have everyone else's in turn. This is especially true for the last two million years - the period known as the Pleistocene.

The classical sequence of events during that epoch details four main cycles of glaciation, but local evidence in favourable locations points towards other intermediate but perhaps less severe cold spells. However, on Mendip, where there are no vast deposits to offer clues, one would be hard put to find traces of a second or subsequent cold spell. The only exception to this being by study of former stream profiles on the southern flank where the well-known but changing sea levels during this period have left their mark. So, for the purposes of this article I will use the term 'Cycle' to denote the change from temperate to polar and back again without worrying unduly whereabouts it lies in the scheme of things.

What are the problems that I should discuss? The most striking is, of course, the origin of Cheddar Gorge. Let's look at that subject first, then briefly mention dolines and end with some notes on caves in general.

To talk about a valley formed from a collapsed cave, as a possible Gorge origin, is not helpful until one has defined the situation. If Porth-yr-Ogof were to collapse then one still couldn't say that the valley was formed from a collapsed cave, for other more common erosional processes have always predominated in that area. Similarly, the river downstream of Bridge Cave, in the same area of the Brecon Beacons, shows some typical limestone deviations in its flow, and it is conceivable that at a future date a limestone bridge may span part of the valley. A bridge, then, is no guarantee of the collapse theory. The only circumstance that I can accept is where a cave rather like GB collapses its roof and a valley is subsequently formed where none existed beforehand. OK, but then what happens at the cave's lowest level? To form a true valley one needs to breach the intervening distance between cave and southern slopes of Mendip. Was there a cave sufficiently large at Cheddar? What was it doing so far south of the junction with the shales and the sandstone? If the higher parts of a large collapsed cave were modified by surface drainage where then is the knick point where the currently fashionable steep cave passage becomes the fairly gentle surface valley? The knick points have been well explained by Ford & Stanton (1) in terms of successive well-known Pleistocene sea-level changes, and there are none to spare.

Our present knowledge of Mendip leads us to state that an active cave will descend steeply to the water table. This was not the prevalent theory some forty years ago. Perhaps under the influence of the surface topography some of us speculated on a Master Cave stretching from Hillgrove to Cheddar with all the usual holes such as Plantation Swallet, Eastwater and Swildons entering some vast mainstream tunnel rather like the way in which the Ooze enters GB Gorge. (Time it was reopened!) This philosophy in turn perhaps dominated the thoughts of those people seeking to explain Cheddar Gorge and its tributaries, and was certainly a contributing factor to the misplaced view that Swildons fed Cheddar.

The experts will have their own ways of tackling this problem, and possibly with no hard evidence to guide them will prefer to remain silent. The amateur like me, can afford to speculate. I want to provoke discussion and I am eager to hear opposing views.

One of the fascinations of geology is that any attempt to expand knowledge of a particular period entails one in seeking help from allied fields. One can't get far in volcanic studies, for example, without a good knowledge of chemistry. As another instance the ending of the reptilian era is involving students in a search for astronomical events that could have influenced the situation, whilst others are looking to the other extreme and are considering malevolent virus' and microbes.

Cheddar, then. The name of the game is water and we must look for clues wherever they can be found.

If Mendip's valleys were formed by Pleistocene surface water flow how about comparing them with other notable British Pleistocene valleys? What about the drainage from Lake Pickering or the Severn through Ironbridge Gorge? No, they won't do, for their scales are all wrong. Let's find an area where the drainage was more localized so that the results can be compared with Cheddar.

I have chosen part of North Wales, and the accompanying map displays all the features that I need to discuss. But first I must introduce one technical term for it has vital importance. 'THALWEG'. The thalweg connects the lowest points of all possible valley cross-sections and is followed by water flowing downstream on impervious strata.

Map features

1. Only the 900 feet contour is shown
2. Roads are only shown where they do not obscure the detail
3. Watersheds are indicated by ridge lines and by spot heights

Function

The creation of a valley by strong water flow acting as the dominant parameter.

Location

Five miles north of Llangollen.

Description

A valley having a north-south axis lying immediately to the east of, and parallel to, the Clwydian Range. The valley drains north and is confined on its eastern side by other hills such that it has a length of eight miles and a width of two miles. It is now drained by the River Alun.

Its northern end was blocked by ice, during the retreat from the last Ice Age, whose front probably had a northwest/southeast axis, which parallels the lower River Alun and also the coastline of the Dee estuary some six miles further north.

The ensuing lake level stabilized at the 900 feet contour, producing a lake of seven by one miles, until a local ice mass on the Clwydian Range disintegrated and allowed the level to drop by thirty feet. This drop was fairly rapid and has carved a 'V' shaped valley in the older features.

Notes

The Clwydian Range is Silurian, the River Alun valley forming the site of the lake is Carboniferous and the hills to the east are overlying Millstone Grit. The River Morwynion valley lies on a major fault and the area immediately to the south is disturbed but cannot easily be interpreted on the 1/625,000 map.

Tributary valleys to 'Lake Alun' average a mile in length and all valleys on both sides of the Clwydians are well rounded, or mature. It appears fortuitous that the draining valley from the lake has almost cut through the Clwydians, as if a similar cycle of events occurred in an earlier cold period. It also exhibits rounded features, but the most recent developments have carved the new channel down the thalweg.

The other cols out of the valley are well rounded, and although they may have acted as spillways at some time or other they do not show any violent episodes, in the geological sense.

The draining valley now carries a minute stream at its head which is culverted for most of its length. Where the valley issues onto the plain of the River Clwyd valley, the contours indicate its former flow as far as Ruthin where once again it only carries a minor stream. This route is indicated on the map by arrows.

The draining valley became dry when the ice retreated about two miles to the north, allowing the post-glacial course of the Alun to proceed around the north of the enclosing hills and in a south easterly direction towards Wrexham.

I consider that a fairly sudden drop in water level contributed the extra power to the flow that carved such 'sharp' features into the landscape. There may have been summer surges from melting ice on the northern ice field draining into the lake.

Conclusion

A comparison between this valley and Cheddar Gorge, between the New Road junction to Draycott and the confluence with Long Bottom.

The Welsh valley is young and its sides show none of the rounding to be found at Cheddar. Neither is its floor as wide, but both of these features are a sign of increased maturity which one would expect from an older system.

There is nothing at Cheddar, in my view, to show that the Gorge is anything other than a normal valley formed at times when drainage was carried on the surface of the ground, and the geological map shows where stream deposits came to rest in the upper valleys.

The cliffs? will form in strongly jointed limestone if the dip, strike and compass bearing of the valley is favourable. No-one would suggest that the Wye valley cliffs or those of the Eglwysegs (egg-glue-cigs) are derived from a collapsed cave.

What other attraction does my Welsh valley have? Like Cheddar, one can motor down the thalweg!

The next problem concerns dolines or shake holes but before they are discussed one should attempt to define the climates that were experienced during the cycle. At the start of a Cycle, Mendip may have been subject to that prevailing today, with drainage underground. At mid-Cycle, many books show the limit of ice advance prominent in South Wales, absent in the Bristol Channel and lower Severn and then reaching a little further south to embrace the Home Counties north of London. As good a guide as a fault line on a geological map. Were the natives basking in the sunshine of Somerset and points south? No, so let's see what conditions can be conjured up. For a start, we know that, working Polewards from the tropics, each current climatic band was present but the wide desert area was much smaller. One can then compress Mediterranean and Temperate into lower latitudes leaving a much large area for the Polar zone. The Gulf Stream, I imagine, ran a more southerly course.

Much evidence shows that the ice came from the north and its source was surely an initially ice-free Arctic. This leads on to the conclusion that the normal track of depressions had deserted our shores and have moved further north. As the books suggest, heavy ice moved in a southerly direction. As it melted towards the end of the Cycle it left its deposits behind, which now form the line on the map. Southern England probably remained ice free because it lay outside the effective zone of these depressions, or if you like, it lay in a rain shadow. The Bristol Channel and lower Severn? All evidence lost by a rising sea level.

Ice-free? Rather a loose term but easily defined as being an area where however low the temperature and however great the precipitation there is a balance or shortfall in the water budget so that active glaciers can never form. There may be small corrie glaciers or other areas of ice here and there but their mass is insufficient to modify the landscape in a way that leaves easily identifiable evidence.

If one were to look for possible sites on Mendip for these ice pockets then the best technique would be by detailed soil analysis to show local movement. However, one must be aware of the iniquitous habit of asset stripping, or top soil removal, practiced in various ways by profligate farmers the world over.

Consider a doline like Bishop's Lot. Drifting snow would tend to accumulate and eventually form ice which would become permanent until the ending of the Cycle. Each spring the topmost layer would melt leaving a lens of ice underneath. This water would gradually find its way through the bottom of the doline. Ford & Stanton show how this process can add infilling material, and the epic dig at Nod's Pot shows to what depth it can accumulate - at least eighty feet in that place.

Yes, some dolines were actually formed by local accumulations of ice, for there are exceptions to most rules, but articles in earlier Wessex Journals mention the dolines of Jamaica and Angola, for example, and they were certainly not formed in a glacial climate.

This process of solution from ice pockets could have important implications when related to sites on Mendip such as the area between Rickford and Blagdon, for previous writers have dismissed traditional glacial action because of the absence of till.

And now the caves themselves, with more about the climate. Britain probably enjoyed a Polar Maritime climate by virtue of its proximity to the iceberg-covered Atlantic. It is within the sub-divisions of that type that one encounters problems. Monthly mean temperatures for two years at the northern end of the Antarctic Peninsula look like this:- 32,30,23,23,18,12,10,9,18,27,27,29F. This is well within the glacial range but rain-shadow precipitation can inhibit glacial growth. At Grtvyken in South Georgia the range is 40,43,40,40,35,30,30,27,30,36,38,38F, but at these temperatures precipitation is much greater and glaciers can still be supported. Push the temperature higher and one loses the permafrost which was vital on Mendip for valley growth. I support the rain-shadow theory!

In the absence of vegetation other than lichen, the surface run-off would be spectacular during summer daylight. Much of this run-off would come from drifting snow blown onto the Mendips from regions further north, but how much water, if any, got into the caves? This can only be answered by solving questions relating to the permafrost. The nature of this on Mendip could have been totally different to that now found on the lowlands of Alaska or Siberia. There, the water content in the soil was already high so the effects could penetrate to a depth of fifty feet or more. A thin soil on solid rock would behave in a different way and it could be that open cave passages existed close to the surface.

Mendip permafrost, then, in favourable locations, could have been just a few inches of soil overlaying ice filled joints. Many of the summer flows could have punched their way through to the caves in just the same way as the Swildons forty-foot blockage was removed by the 1968 flood.

What would happen to this water? Perhaps it collected at lower levels and enhanced the phreatic stage of events? But would it flow? What would be the ambient temperature in a closed Mendip cave? At other stages in the Cycle, when vegetation was absent but permafrost was less general, large masses of surface material could have been swept into the caves, thus forming some of the deposits that we now find.

Water can soon form a passage large enough to admit a body. Consider the way in which places such as Eastwater Traverse have become smooth after thirty years of intensive caving. Say 1/1000 of an inch every year. Yes, that's right, 10 inches in 10,000 years which is enough for any self-respecting caver. Perhaps this is why so many of our Mendip caves have many passages near the surface. Perhaps their usage alternated much more than we realize allowing stalagmite to form in those that were temporarily out of use.

Consider the Swildons valley in the vicinity of the present entrance. A bank of ice across the valley with deep drifts upstream could lead to a situation where summer water flow was several feet above ground level, and a 'punched' hole to one side or the other could be unexpectedly high above the present entrance. This is another consideration when looking for dig sites. One must remember that water-flow will be entrenched on the surface of an ice-mass if topography or lack of movement inhibits the growth of crevasses.

Pleistocene water flow then, largely determined by today's contours on the ground, is, I feel, of paramount importance in locating new cave entrances, and there are several unworked sites that are full of Mendip promise. But, by the same token, there must be several important locations that have become hopelessly silted at the same time. Take your choice!

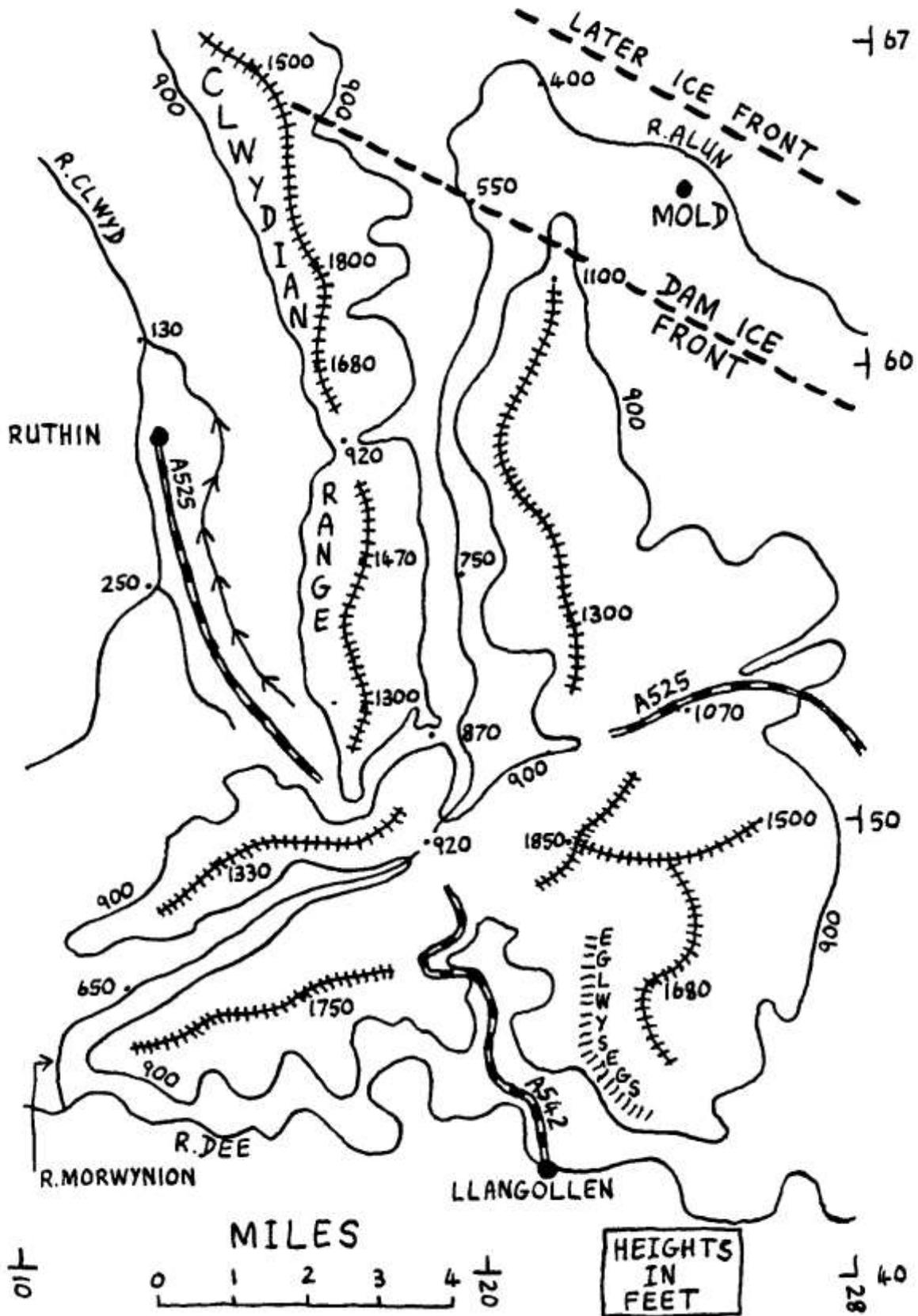
In conclusion, I have only highlighted some of the problems that need to be resolved, and I am sure that the relationship between Mendip caves and the Pleistocene is richly deserving of study. The student should preferably be knowledgeable in geology, proficient in meteorology and know a great deal about soil and soil mechanics, perhaps gained through the experiences of an agricultural upbringing.

References

1. Ford D.C. & Stanton W.I. The Geomorphology of the South-Central Mendip Hills. Proceedings of the Geologists Association. Vol 79. Part 4. 1968. pp 401-427
2. Davies F. Quoted by 'Cave Beetle'. Wessex Journal. Vol 7. No.92. Nov 1963. p 295. "Caves is where you find 'em".

GLACIER LAKE N. WALES

OS 1/25,000 SJ15 1/50,000 116 & 117 1/63,360 108



MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer for the Year ending 31st December 1983

It is sad to start this report by recording the death of Dr. Bob Everton early in the year. He was mainly interested in cave archaeology and, although we did not see him much on Mendip in recent years, he willingly and immediately responded to any cave rescue when we needed him. His last two rescues were among the more noteworthy, being when Dudley Soffe was firmly stuck in Swildon's Hole in 1971 and when Richard Bainbridge was badly injured in Lamb Leer nearly ten years ago now.

Apart from the log of incidents that follows, there have been other events which seem to be a growing part of essential liaison work. Wardens have attended British Cave Rescue Council and South West of England Rescue Association meetings as far afield as Ripley, Derbyshire, and Exeter. More practically helpful was the successful BCRC weekend conference in Settle to which several wardens and our doctors went. On our own account, we ran a day conference of lectures, films and demonstrations for the Central Electricity Board at Exeter. Their emergency work on electricity supplies in open country during bad weather and in effluent pipes from power stations pose some common problems of interest.

Back on Mendip, we have given many illustrated lectures and demonstrations to groups such as the Mendip CB Club in Wells, the St. John's Ambulance members at Clutton and the District Fire Brigades at Glastonbury. These local links produce much good will and a modest revenue through donations. We were especially pleased to be invited to join the Police for their Weston-super-Mare Division Open Days in the summer. Hundreds of visitors and tourists saw our exhibition of photographs prepared by Rich West and Phil Romford and, so, were able to gain some insight into the self-help nature of cave rescue work. Further links with the Avon and Somerset Constabulary at their Bristol headquarters resulted in a visit to their Force Control and I am grateful for the active support of Chief Superintendent Wilson and Inspector H. Young there. Support Services keeps all divisions throughout both counties up-to-date with MRO Callout details and this has proved to be very effective. All our rescue work these days relies upon such co-operation through understanding what each can do to help.

Audited annual accounts are given over page. They show a close balance of income against expenditure during a year in which we have deliberately kept equipment purchases to a minimum. The handsome surplus on hiring Nife cells through Brian Prewer deserves a special mention. It has become one way for newer and more distant groups to make contact with MRO and so to fund cave rescue work through their own caving activities. There has been a much better response from rescued parties this year too.

Established local clubs are the backbone of the Organization, as ever. It is vital to have their support through rescue practices and pleasant fundraising occasions. Here I must pay particular thanks to the Bristol Exploration Club for waiving the former share of the Belfry telephone bill paid by MRO since its installation. Most of all, of course, we value the help of all experienced cavers on actual rescues. This report is written with them in mind.

J.D. Hanwell

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1983

<u>Year to 31.12.82</u>	£	£	£
<u>Income</u>			
Donations:			
311			
			149
56			-
20			123
18			19
69			158

20			-
			20
			25
			57
-----			-----
494			551
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Equipment:			
			11
36			-
			23
			145
75			26
			27
60			60
124			97
55			-
65			65
5			5
10			10
20			56
			10
-----			-----
450			535
-----			-----
£ 44			£ 16
-----			-----
			Surplus for period

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

BALANCE SHEET AS AT DECEMBER 31, 1983

<u>1982</u>	£	£
<u>Current assets</u>		
Balance at bank:		
		300
		227
		28

		£555

		£571

<u>Representing:</u>		
<u>Accumulated funds</u>		
		511
		44

		£555

		£571

J.D. Hanwell, Hon. Treasurer, 50 Wells Road, Wookey Hole.

I have reviewed the above accounts which have been prepared from the books and records of the Mendip Rescue Organisation. In my opinion, and to the best of my knowledge, these accounts give a true and fair view of the state of the Organisation's funds as at December 31, 1983 and of the surplus for the year ended on that date.

R. Chant, A.C.A., F.T.I.L., 44 Wells Road, Wookey Hole.

January 1984

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

Cave Rescues and Incidents for the year ending 31st December 1983

There were 11 official Call-outs through the Police during the year. Five cavers required assistance owing to falls, being stuck or just exhausted. A large proportion of the calls involved parties being simply overdue and so it is necessary to repeat previous pleas for all to leave clear instructions about their trips with responsible cavers on the surface. Experience shows that it makes sense to allow a reasonable time to elapse before raising the alarm for overdue parties. Messages left with people back at home well away from Mendip are often misunderstood.

The following list brings the total number of incidents since 1951 to 230 with about 384 cavers being helped underground, excluding those involved in alerts. The figures in brackets to the right show the number of people going underground on rescues but does not include many more who willingly stand-by and help out on the surface. The extent of such help is evident in the accounts of each incident below.

9th January	Lamb Leer Cavern	2	Fall, bruises, rope burns	(6)
21st February	Thrupe Lane Swallet	7	Overdue party	-
28th May	Rhino Rift	4	Overdue party	-
22nd June	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion, unable to climb	(4)
9th October	Alert	?	Overdue party	-
17th October	Swildon's Hole	8	Overdue party	-
23rd October	Frome Storm Drain	2	Reported lost	(5)
23rd October	Sludge Pit	1	Fall, bruises, broken toe	(9)
31st October	Abandoned Car	1	Search for missing person	-
12th November	St. Dunstan's Cave	1	Trapped, stuck	(15)
13th November	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue party	-

Sunday 9th January

Lamb Leer Cavern

Fred Davies was contacted by Yeovil Police at 3.30 p.m. They reported that a caver had fallen from the Main Pitch and was injured. On reaching the informant at Beaconsfield Farm, it was found that Phillip Sutton and Malcolm Jackson of the Stroud Cave Rambling Club had entered the cave at about 11.30 a.m. but had been held up by a large party coming out. Their own descent of the Main Pitch was delayed until about 1.30 p.m. On returning, Phillip Sutton climbed first as the older and more experienced of the pair. He was lifelining Malcolm Jackson when the climber fell from the bulge about 20 feet from the top. In trying to lower him, Sutton sustained rope burns to his hands and was forced to leave his shaken colleague at the bottom of the Main Chamber whilst summoning help.

The Belfry was informed of the situation. Alan Butcher reached the cave by 3.45p.m. followed five minutes later by Tim Large, Martin Grass, Edric Hobbs., Robin Gray and Howard Price with hauling gear and First Aid. They entered the cave at 4.00 p.m. with Pete Hann in support. In just 36 minutes they had brought Jackson out unharmed. Meanwhile, an ambulance called by the Police took Phillip Sutton to the Royal United Hospital, Bath, for treatment.

Monday 21st February

Thrupe Lane Swallet

Yeovil Police informed Brian Prewer in the early hours at 1.30 a.m. about an overdue party. A wife from Salisbury had resorted that her husband should have been home by 11.00 p.m. on the Sunday following a trip with six other experienced cavers from Salisbury organised by Mr. and Mrs. Goodhead. Brian went to the cave but could not find the car of the overdue cavers at the farm. As there was a chance that they might have gone to Stoke Lane Slocker instead, Bob Cork checked for vehicles in Bector Lane. His search also proved to be fruitless and so the Police were requested for more details from the informant.

At 2.50 a.m., news came that the party had returned home safely having stopped for coffee on the way back to Wiltshire. Despite leaving late from Thrupe Farm well after midnight, they had thought it sufficient to "toot" their horn in the hope that Mrs. Butt would be aware of their departure. No one thought it necessary to contact anyone in Salisbury to prevent the call-out.

Saturday 28th May

Rhino Rift

A party of four from Abson failed to report home at 2.00 p.m. after a trip down the cave during the morning. One of the mothers alerted Yeovil Police at 5.50 p.m. and Brian Prewer was informed straightaway. Chris Batstone stood by with a possible rescue party at the Belfry. Shortly afterwards at 6.00 p.m. the party arrived home. They had not bothered to report having surfaced safely.

Wednesday 22nd June

Swildon's Hole

Richard West was contacted by Yeovil Police at 9.50 p.m. with news that Gordon Lynch had phoned them from Priddy Green to say that someone could not climb the Twenty Foot pitch. The informant then left the call box and could not be reached there for further details. So, Jeff Price was alerted at the Hunters' Lodge and asked to assess the situation at the cave. Meanwhile, Glyn Bolt had chanced across Lynch at Priddy and organised a small hauling party from the Wessex Cave Club to help.

It was found that Mrs. Karen Lynch, the wife of the informant, had become tired and intimidated by the waterfall on returning from a trip to Sump I. There were three in the party led by her husband, all were well-equipped and the stream was low. Inexplicably, a stronger party of five non-club cavers from Bath had passed by the incident at the Twenty but had merely put Karen in a poly bag to await other rescuers. The four Wessex cavers went down and simply hauled Karen Lynch up the short climb. She was then able to help herself and was out of the cave before 11.00pm.

Sunday 9th October

Alert

A Mr. Drinkwater rang the Police at Yeovil as he was worried that his son had not returned home. The son was on a caving trip with Long Levens Scout Group but the only other information was that the party was using a marked minibus. After the police had informed Brian Prewer at 8.33 p.m., John Turner went to look for the minibus around Priddy whilst Martin Bishop stood by to form a rescue team if required. Shortly afterwards at 8.46 p.m., Mr. Drinkwater phoned again to say that he had been called by his son with news that the minibus had broken down on the motorway after leaving Mendip.

Monday 17th October

Swildon's Hole

A party of eight girls with two teachers from Hayesfield School, Bath, was reported overdue by a Mr. Hughes at 9.20 p.m. After being contacted by Yeovil Police, Brian Prewer rang Mr. Hughes who told him that he had been called by the teachers concerned before they entered the cave at 6.20 p.m. and asked to raise the alarm if not contacted again by 9.00 p.m. when the party hoped to surface. He had done as he was told! Brian suggested that the cavers had not given themselves enough time for their trip.

Jane Thomas at Priddy was asked to check whether the school's minibus was still on Priddy Green, At 9.28 p.m., Mr. Pritchard, one of the teachers in the party, rang in to say that they had just surfaced having underestimated the length of time their trip would take and that the call box had been occupied earlier. He was advised to allow longer for such contingencies in future.

Sunday 23rd October

Storm Drain in Frome

Someone in Frome raised the alarm with Yeovil Police after seeing two young boys remove a drain cover and crawl into a three feet high culvert. The informant was sure that they were still inside and said that voices could be heard. After being contacted by the Police for assistance, Brian Prewer alerted the Wessex Cave Club and a search party left to investigate comprising Glyn Bolt, Julie Wootton, Pete Hann, Al Keen and Hich Worman. Since there was a lot of water reported to be flowing into the culvert, Trevor Hughes was asked to stand by as a diver. Glyn Bolt's party searched the drain but found no one. It was concluded that the informant had failed to spot the boys leaving the site and no children had been reported as missing.

Sunday 23rd October

Sludge Pit

A party of four cavers from Radstock went down the cave in the afternoon using their own tackle for the Twenty Foot pitch near the entrance. After lifelining the first three down the ladder, Frank Norton who was leading the trip started his descent without a line. Whilst still some way above the floor, his homemade wire tether broke so he fell and it was first thought that he had fractured a leg. The alarm was raised through the Police from Upper Pitts at 4.00 p.m.

Dany Bradshaw, Bob Cork, Al Keen, Pete Hann, Mike Duck and Graham Bolt went down the cave with medical and hauling gear at 4.30 p.m. They found the patient able to sit up and move his legs despite complaints of pains in the back and chest. He was made comfortable and then hauled out within 45 minutes. A Range Rover ambulance took the patient to the Royal United Hospital, Bath, at 6.25 p.m. where it was reported later that, apart from bruises, he had only broken a toe.

The wire tether belonging to Norton had single U-clamps fastening both c-links. These had become loose but the danger had not been spotted because they had been covered by electrical tape. Mr. Norton was the heaviest member of his party!

Monday 31st October

Abandoned Car

Mr. Mercan Jefferies at Manor Farm, Charterhouse, reported to Wells Police that a mini car belonging to a caver had been parked in nearby Velvet Bottom since the weekend. He was concerned that the occupants might still be underground. Brian Prewer and Jim Hanwell set out to make a check of the car and possible caves around 4.00 p.m. They were stood down after the Police contacted the car's owner in Wells. Apparently the mini had broken down and was left to be picked up later.

Saturday 12th November

St. Dunstan's Cave

Yeovil Police alerted Brian Prewer at 8.06 p.m. because a caver had been reported as stuck in the squeeze before the sump. He had been jammed for two hours by that time. Four well equipped and wet- suited cavers associated with Aberystwyth University went down the cave at about 5.4-5 p.m. In following the rest to the sump, 25-year old Howard Davies inadvertently strayed off the main route and became firmly stuck by his hips in a bypass. He had attempted to descend a steeply inclined side rift head first. Fortunately, he could be approached from either end but there was little room to help. Myr Roberts left the cave to raise the alarm.

Tim Large and Fiona Lewis were alerted and reached the Cerberus Cottage within ten minutes of the call out. Fred Davies arrived shortly afterwards. Other rescuers stood by at Priddy whilst Brian Prewer and Chris Batstone set out to establish a telephone line down the cave and a radio relay via Beacon Hill. Julie Wootton took messages near the entrance and Mike York was stationed on the road with a handset. Tim Large, Pete and Alison Moody, Tony Jarrett, Pete Hann, Dean Fenton, Catherine Howard and Bill Haynes carried in comforts and hauling gear.

They were unable to free Davies after assisting for over an hour. At 9.45 p.m. they requested hammers and chisels to open up the passage. As the patient was now delirious and complaining of going numb, it was decided to call in Dr. Peter Glanvill who knew the cave well. Dr. Don Thomson was also informed and stood by on the surface. Additional kit was taken underground by Glyn Bolt with Bob Lewis, Al Keen and Sarah Bishop. Fred Davies and others already underground set about clearing the gravel to enlarge the Domestos Bend squeeze.

At 11.00 p.m. after the patient had been firmly stuck for five hours and was distressed, a message came out that was interpreted as a warning that a carbon dioxide build-up could be a danger; also, that a rock drill would probably be necessary to open up the rift. Jim Hanwell and Rich West took along heavy hauling gear and further medical supplies and it was decided to request a compressor from the Fire Service to clear the air and provide drilling power. An appliance set out from Yeovil whilst Brian Workman and Dave Turner collected high pressure hose from NHASA. The rescuers underground continued chiselling and reached a point where the patient's belt could be cut away.

Dr. Peter Glanvill entered the cave at 11 30 p.m. followed by Kevin Clarke and Edric Hobbs with more medical supplies. The persistence of those underground eventually paid off and Howard Davies was freed at 11.45 p.m. He was able to help himself even though being stuck fast for nearly six hours and despite getting into quite a state. All were out of the cave by 12.40 a.m. Apart from rather ugly "instant bedsores" around his hips, Howard Davies was in surprisingly good spirits and much appreciated the help he had received.

A party of Birmingham University Caving Club cavers used the Emergency Call-out procedure to stop their friends staying at the MCG Hut from calling out MRO because they were overdue and had run out of petrol. In fact, it was 6.10 p.m. and they were supposed to be back by 7.00 p.m. All Brian Prewer had to do was to pass the message by telephoning the Stirrup Cup Cafe next door to the hut'.

Other information

On Tuesday 9th August, B. Prewer was alerted by the Police at 5.11 p.m. because the Cheddar Cliff Rescue Team was wanted to help a lad stuck on a ledge. Apparently a tourist had slipped whilst scrambling. In the event, two climbers in the vicinity at the time were able to solve the problem and the Cliff Rescue Team was stood down shortly afterwards. The MRO Call-out is also used for cliff rescue calls to avoid confusion on such emergencies. This incident, therefore, is not an official MRO cave rescue incident.

The following account summarises a report sent in by Ealing College Adventure Unit (St. Marys Underground Team) after an incident in Longwood Swallet on Sunday 13th March. This was a self-rescue and shows what can be done in contrast to some of the call outs on record.

"A party of six people entered the cave at approximately 12 noon. Party members were; D. Higginson, A. Melton, P. Dymont, P. Jochan, Miss D. Jackson and A. Barker. The first three had considerable knowledge of the cave and had led parties in the cave on previous occasions. Miss Jackson had also visited the cave previously. Another party was in the cave at the time consisting of Mr. Chester and Mr. (Mike) Wigglesworth.

"The incident occurred at about 1.00 p.m. at the bottom of the second pitch. Shortly after Andrew Barker descended the pitch, a boulder fell and injured his right foot. It was clear that the injuries were serious and assistance was offered by Mike Wigglesworth and his friend. After weighing up the options, it was decided to move the patient out of the cave with those present and, if the situation deteriorated, to request cave rescuers. This self-rescue was accomplished in 2½ hours and the party surfaced at about 3.30 p.m.

Andrew Barker was taken immediately to Bristol Royal Infirmary. Initial diagnosis indicated three broken bones, two crushed toes and a severe wound. He was detained in hospital overnight for treatment.

Discussions following several of the bigger rescues in recent years have highlighted the need to have an obvious control point to which all cavers who are helping should report for information and instructions. Circumstances at the time will dictate where this is best set up and it is likely that the cave entrance itself will not be suitable for certain communication needs and general crowd control. In such cases, the Warden in charge of the Surface Control will carry a flashing yellow beacon and will probably be in close liaison with any Police vehicle in attendance. Please remember that MRO is only officially in action when called by the Police, All such calls require precise records of who is doing what and why. On long rescues this can become a formidable task, especially when other services and the media turn up as well. However well-intentioned, those who bypass the control will not get the full story and are unlikely to be helpful as a result.

Radio communications and the proximity of most Mendip caves to roads generally indicate that it is much better for those who are standing by to wait in comfort back at Priddy. With any luck, they might not be bothered further; however, it seems better to leave the celebrations until the rescue is well and truly over!

DIARY DATES

FRIDAY NIGHT TRIPS FOR 1984

- June 16 Saturday trip. O.F.D. through trip or Pendulum Passage
22 Goatchurch Cavern Summer Barbeque
29 Manor Farm
- July 14 Saturday trip. Otter Hole. Details later.
27 Stoke Lane
- Aug 10 Rhino Rift (S.R.T)
24 Sludge Pit and Nine Barrows
- Sep 7 Charterhouse Cave (limited places)
21 Swildon's Hole, Blue Pencil Passage - round trip
- Oct 5 Cuckoo Cleeves
21 Saturday trip. Dan-yr-Ogof or O.F.D. depending on leaders
- Nov 2 Thrupe Lane. SRT to Atlas Pot
16 Eastwater exchange trip. Twin Verticals - Dolphin Pot
30 Reservoir Hole - limited places, names to Brian Prewer, Wells 73757
- Dec 14 Swildon's, Old Grotto Christmas Party
28 Cold turkey buffet, Goatchurch Cavern.

All trips will start at 7.15 at the cave entrance. South Wales trips will involve an early morning start which will be decided on nearer the date concerned. On trips where limited numbers have been indicated, places will be reserved on a first come, first served basis. For further information, please contact Ashley Hardwell on Bristol 422655 or Shepton Mallet 4789.

FROM THE LOG

29 Jan 84 Hunter's Hole Jim Rands, Andy Reid. 40 ft plus of passage in Hanging Death. Can see on approx 8 ft of large chamber - needed a crowbar to get on, so set about the approach to the first chamber, with a lump hammer to eliminate the very tight squeezes. 3 hours. J.R.

5 Feb Wookey Hole Paul Whybro. Trip to 12 and 13. Climb out of water in 12 after hanging kit on line, reaches nice chamber with hands and knees passage leading off 20ft to 13. Aven above chamber climbed for 30ft to a sloping ledge. Way on continues above but appears to close down. To right is a window into parallel aven which seems to enlarge at its base. This is fairly tight at the top, so did not enter. It would be useful to have a rope or ladder and someone else around whilst attempting this. P.W.

24 Feb Aggie Jeff Price, Doug Adams, Jim Fussel and seven others. North-West Stream Passage. Nice little trundle down streamway. Met Bob Drake & Co. on way out for practice rescue. 3½ hrs. J.P.

3 Mar Longwood Valley Sink. Rich Whitcombe, Simon Meade-King, Nigel Graham. The Adit has finally met the natural cave at long last!! A lot more work is still needed in the adit and in backfilling over it, but we're making obvious progress now. 2½ hrs. N.G.

3 & 4 May Swildon's Hole G Wright and I Jepson to Vicarage Passage to sort out drainage in the dig and remove six sacks of spoil. 4½ hrs. To Abandon Hope to dig. Removed 20 buckets of water, 40 of slurry and 12 sacks of solid spoil. Things now looking quite good again. 4½ hrs. I.J.

17 May Peak Cavern to Speedwell Chris, Paul Whybro, Annie, Brian Hague, Clive Westlake. All passed Treasury Sump to Speedwell. The water level was reasonably low, which made progress upstream relatively easy. General tourist trip with an attempted photographic service by Clive Westlake. A.L.

5 May Swildon's Pete Moody and Jeff Newton. Cleared debris from passage in St. Paul's Oxbow - it's still looking bloody small. Went on to Paradise regained where we met Annie and Alison just back from Watergate (via Lower Fault) where they had been doing a bit of surveying. On to Renascence for more surveying and clearing up the remaining digging equipment. P.M.

12 May Swildon's Nine Pete and Alison and Alan? (BEC). Enough time had elapsed since the last trip (Feb '83) for a return to Thrutch Tube to be made. The digging was easy - soft, layered mud - but stacking is a real problem; there's just nowhere to put it. Alison got in about 12-15 ft to where the passage swings right. Further digging is required. The only way to work this site is to use spoil bags and a digging boat. A strong draught at the end.